

# I CAN'T BREATHE:

## The Divided Beliefs Behind a Seemingly United Movement

An Ipsos POV in Diversity & Inclusion

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GAME CHANGERS



FEMINIST

May 25 marks the one-year anniversary of the killing of George Floyd, an event that sparked outrage against police brutality—particularly toward Black people—in Floyd’s hometown of Minneapolis.

Soon after, Americans in over 2,000 cities across all 50 states began organizing demonstrations, with protests extending beyond America’s borders to all corners of the world. Though most of the protests were peaceful, there were instances of violence, vandalism, destruction and death in several cities, provoking escalated police intervention, curfews and in some cases, the mobilization of the National Guard.

The nationwide engagement with the Black Lives Matter movement throughout the 2020 protests, and data from a survey conducted nearly a year later showing 71% of Americans believed Chauvin is guilty of murder, paint the picture of a seemingly united people.

## ENGAGEMENT WITH THE GEORGE FLOYD PROTESTS MADE IT CLEAR THAT MANY AMERICANS ACROSS THE NATION ARE NO LONGER WILLING TO TOLERATE RACIAL INJUSTICE.

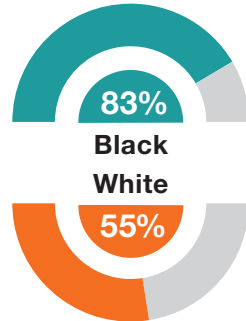
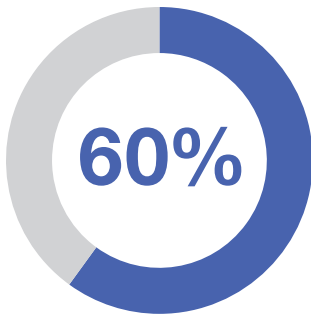
### Key Takeaways:

- However, major gaps in perception exist when comparing how Black and White Americans understood and perceived the 2020 protests.
- Ipsos conducted several national surveys throughout the duration of the Black Lives Matter protests to gain a sense of Americans’ attitudes and opinions towards the events that unfolded. Here’s what we found.



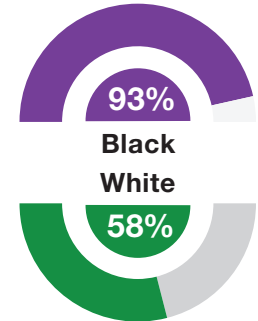
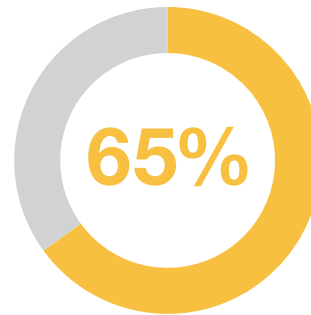
What is your personal view on the circumstances around the death of George Floyd in Minneapolis?

% It was murder.



Do you support or oppose the protests and demonstrations taking place across the country following the death of George Floyd in Minneapolis?

% Support



## George Floyd Protests: Divided Beliefs Towards a Seemingly United Movement

Looking at personal views surrounding George Floyd’s death in Minneapolis from a year ago, 60% of Americans appeared to be on the same page, describing it as murder. However, White Americans were much less likely to feel this way compared to Black Americans. Support for the protests and demonstrations taking place across the country following the death of George Floyd sat at 65% nationally. Here, too, major differences emerged when comparing results among Black and White Americans.

- The survey, which was conducted June 8–9, 2020, also asked whether Americans felt the protests to date had been mostly peaceful or violent.
- Black adults were significantly more likely to say they felt they had been mostly peaceful (75% vs. 51% of White Americans), while white adults were significantly more likely to feel these had been mostly violent (40% vs. 15%).
- When asked to choose between orderliness and the right to protest, White adults were most likely to believe law and order was the most important thing to ensure, even if it meant limiting peaceful protests (51% vs. 23% Black adults).
- Conversely, Black Americans were most likely to believe that the right to protest is the most important thing to ensure, even if it meant there were some incidents of violence (67% vs. 38% White adults).

**ONE YEAR LATER, THESE DIFFERENCES HOLD, WITH WHITE AMERICANS MOST LIKELY TO BELIEVE LAW AND ORDER IS MOST IMPORTANT (52% VS. 31% OF BLACK AMERICANS) WHILE BLACK AMERICANS CONTINUE TO HOLD THE RIGHT TO PROTEST AS THE PRIORITY (47% VS. 28%).**

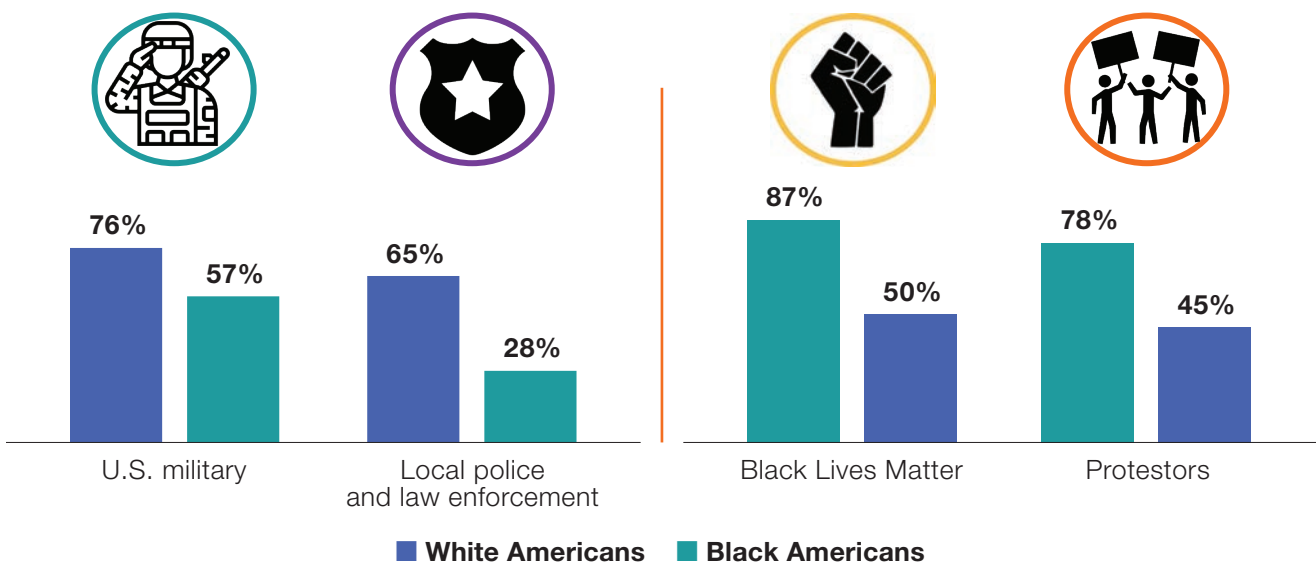


## Promoting justice and equal treatment for people of all races

Major differences in perception also surfaced when it comes to which institutions Americans trust to promote justice and equal treatment for people of all races. For white Americans, faith is greatest in the U.S. military and local police/law enforcement.

Black Americans, in turn, are most likely to trust the Black Lives Matter movement and protestors to promote justice and equal treatment for people of all races.

**How much do you trust the following, if at all, to promote justice and equal treatment for people of all races?  
Top two responses for each group**



**01** | On June 1, 2020, hundreds of protesters gathered peacefully outside the White House. Around 6:30 p.m., police began advancing on the crowd, firing rubber bullets and chemical gas, half an hour before Washington, D.C.'s 7 p.m. curfew.

**02** | Looking at the events that took place on this day, both Black and White Americans showed similar support for protesting peacefully outside the White House.

**03** | However, White adults were nearly three times more likely to support deploying military forces to other states (47% vs. 17%), firing rubber bullets and tear gas into the crowd (34% vs. 10%), and arresting protestors (48% vs. 15%).

**04** | When it comes to support for looting, starting fires and other destruction of nearby property, Black Americans were four times more likely to support these actions following the unprovoked police escalation that took place at the White House on this day (21% vs. 5%).

**BY JULY 2020, JUST OVER HALF OF AMERICANS FELT THAT HAVING FEDERAL LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICERS RESPOND TO PROTESTS IN CITIES WAS MAKING THE SITUATION WORSE (52%)—THOUGH THIS JUMPED TO 73% AMONG BLACK AMERICANS (VS. 45% OF WHITE AMERICANS). ONLY ONE IN TEN BLACK AMERICANS FELT IT MADE THE SITUATION BETTER (9% VS. 36% OF WHITE RESPONDENTS).**

By September, 68% of White Americans believed that the Black Lives Matter movement had made protests across the country more dangerous, compared to 30% of Black adults who felt the same way. Black Americans were instead twice as likely to think local police made the protests more dangerous (66% vs. 32% of white adults) or blame

Trump for his role in inciting unprovoked violence (72% vs. 50%). The survey also found that White Americans were significantly more likely to agree that the Black Lives Matter movement had done more harm than good (59% vs. 30%) and that the government should deploy more police to get protests and unrest under control (61% vs. 34%).

**01** While on the surface public opinion against racism, police violence and protests may appear united, there are still deep divisions amongst Black and White Americans. Consumers want deeper social-justice commitments from brands and as such, it's more important than ever for brands to be able to react to changing consumer behavior to remain relevant in an increasingly divided world.

**02** These divisions extend beyond race/ethnicity. For instance, when looking at the protests and demonstrations that took place last summer, support was significantly greater among young adults (76% of those aged 18–34 vs. 56% of those aged 55+) and Democrats (84% vs. 44% of Republicans). Younger adults and Democrats were also significantly more likely to stress the importance of having the right to protest, while a majority of older adults and Republicans felt law and order was instead the most important thing to ensure.

**03** Despite the progress that the Black Lives Matter protests achieved, the fight for racial equality continues. A recent poll (March 2021) finds that 47% of Americans feel race relations have neither improved nor worsened in the past year. In contrast, the number of people saying race relations have worsened is nearly four times the number saying improved (40% and 13%, respectively).

**04** Companies have the power to make significant advances in improving race relations. To achieve this, many brands are striving to get closer to their consumer, using consumer insights to drive the business. While some acquire vast amounts of consumer data, others are using market research to find interesting insights or providing personalized offers to their consumers.

**05** However, much like the fight for racial equality, companies must take a holistic approach when aiming to become consumer centric—helping to become more attuned and aware of the many needs of a seemingly united people.



*Our hope is that by uncovering the gaps in perception, attitudes, and experiences across the different ethnic/racial groups that define our nation, we can better address issues that exist and start to bridge the divide, driving action and change to better our nation for generations to come.*

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