

New survey on Americans' views on law enforcement, violence, and race

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A new national survey conducted by The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research reveals a disparity among blacks' and whites' perception of violence against civilians by police. Nearly three-quarters of black respondents consider violence against civilians by police officers to be an extremely or very serious problem, compared to less than 20 percent of whites. However, the poll also finds agreement across racial groups on many of the causes of police violence, as well as further consensus that changes in policies and procedures could be effective in reducing tensions between minorities and police and in limiting violence against civilians.

The nationwide poll was collected July 17 to 19, 2015, using the AmeriSpeak Omnibus, the probability-based panel of NORC at the University of Chicago. Online and telephone interviews using landlines and cell phones were conducted with 1,223 adults, including 311 blacks who were sampled at a higher rate than their proportion of the population for reasons of analysis.

"This survey indicates that while there is a deep divide among Americans on these issues, there are key points of agreement as well," said Trevor Tompson, director of The AP-NORC Center. "There is widespread agreement that [race](#) relations in the United States are in a sorry state, and blacks and whites agree that changes in policies and procedures could be effective in reducing tensions between minorities and police and in limiting [violence](#) against [civilians](#)."

Some of the poll's key findings include:

- Many Americans, regardless of race, say that violence against police is also an extremely or very serious problem in the United States. And half of all Americans, regardless of race, say fear caused by the physical danger that [police officers](#) face is a major contributor to aggression against civilians.
- An overwhelming majority of blacks say that, generally, the police are too quick to use deadly force and that they are more likely to use it against a black person. Most whites say police officers typically use deadly force only when necessary and that race is not a factor in decisions to use force.
- Blacks and whites are sharply divided on whether police officers who injure or kill civilians are treated too leniently by prosecutors and on how much that contributes to the use of force against members of the public.
- Half of black Americans report being treated unfairly by police because of their race, and their views of law enforcement are shaped by this experience.
- Minorities are more concerned about crime and more skeptical about law enforcement's efforts to control it.
- Blacks and whites agree that changes in policies and procedures, such as community policing programs and police body cameras, could be effective in reducing tensions between minorities and police and in limiting violence against civilians.
- There is widespread agreement that race relations in the United States are in a bad state, but racial division exists on whether this contributes to [police](#) violence.

Provided by University of Chicago

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