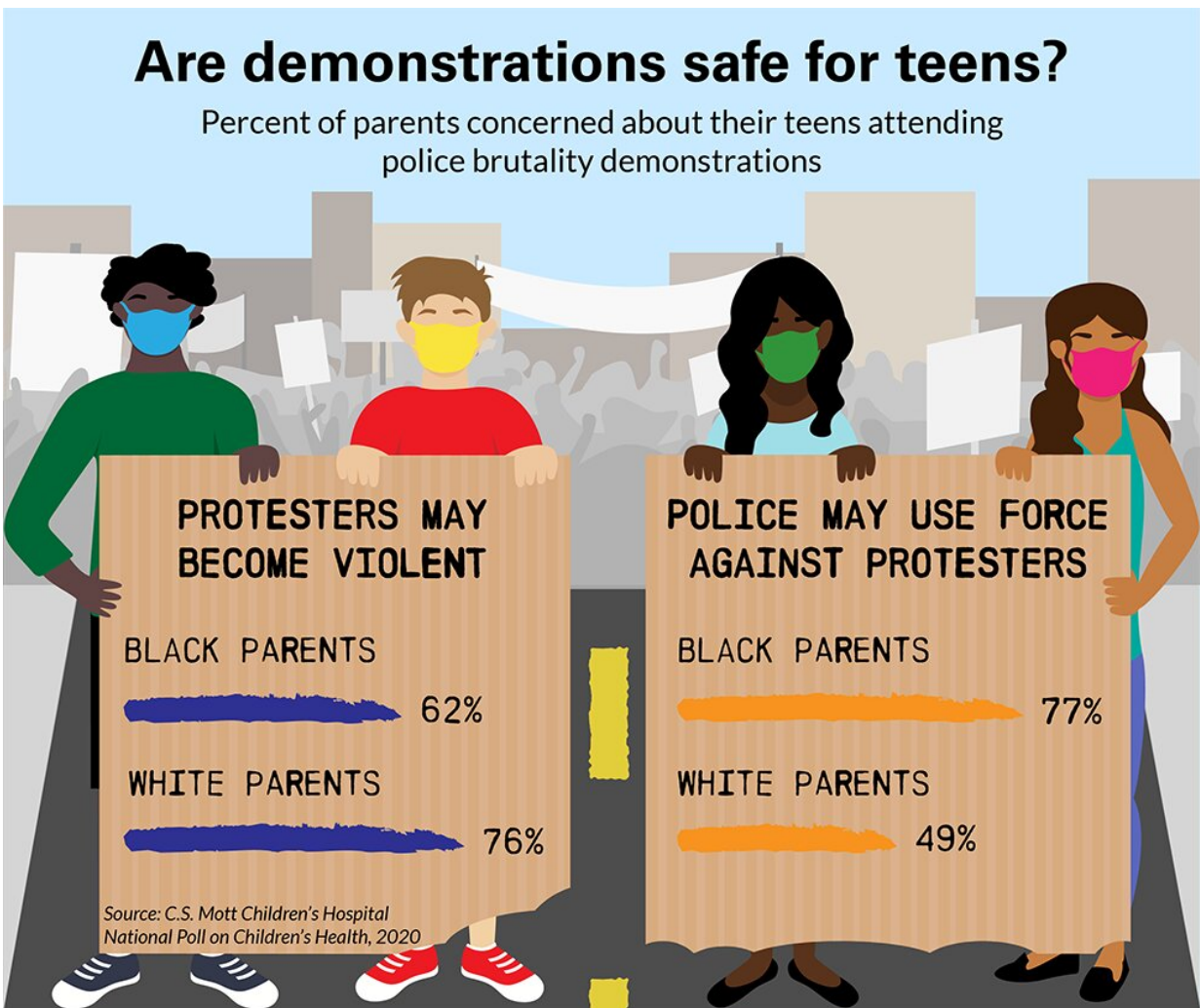


# 1 in 12 parents say their teen has attended a demonstration about racism or police reform

October 26 2020



Parents' top concern involving teens participating in demonstrations is their teen's safety. Credit: C.S. Mott Children's Hospital National Poll on Children's Health at Michigan Medicine

A growing number of demonstrators taking to the streets to protest police brutality and racial injustice may include teenagers, a new national poll suggests.

One in 12 [parents](#) say their teen has attended an event about [racism](#) or police reform this year, according to the C.S. Mott Children's Hospital National Poll on Children's Health at Michigan Medicine.

And while many parents are addressing the national issue with their children at home, the Mott Poll report indicates racial differences between families when it comes to these interactions.

Three quarters of parents say they've talked with their teen about the ongoing protests. But Black parents are more likely than [white parents](#) to report in-depth discussions (39% vs 29%) and to say their teen has attended an event about racism (16% vs 6%).

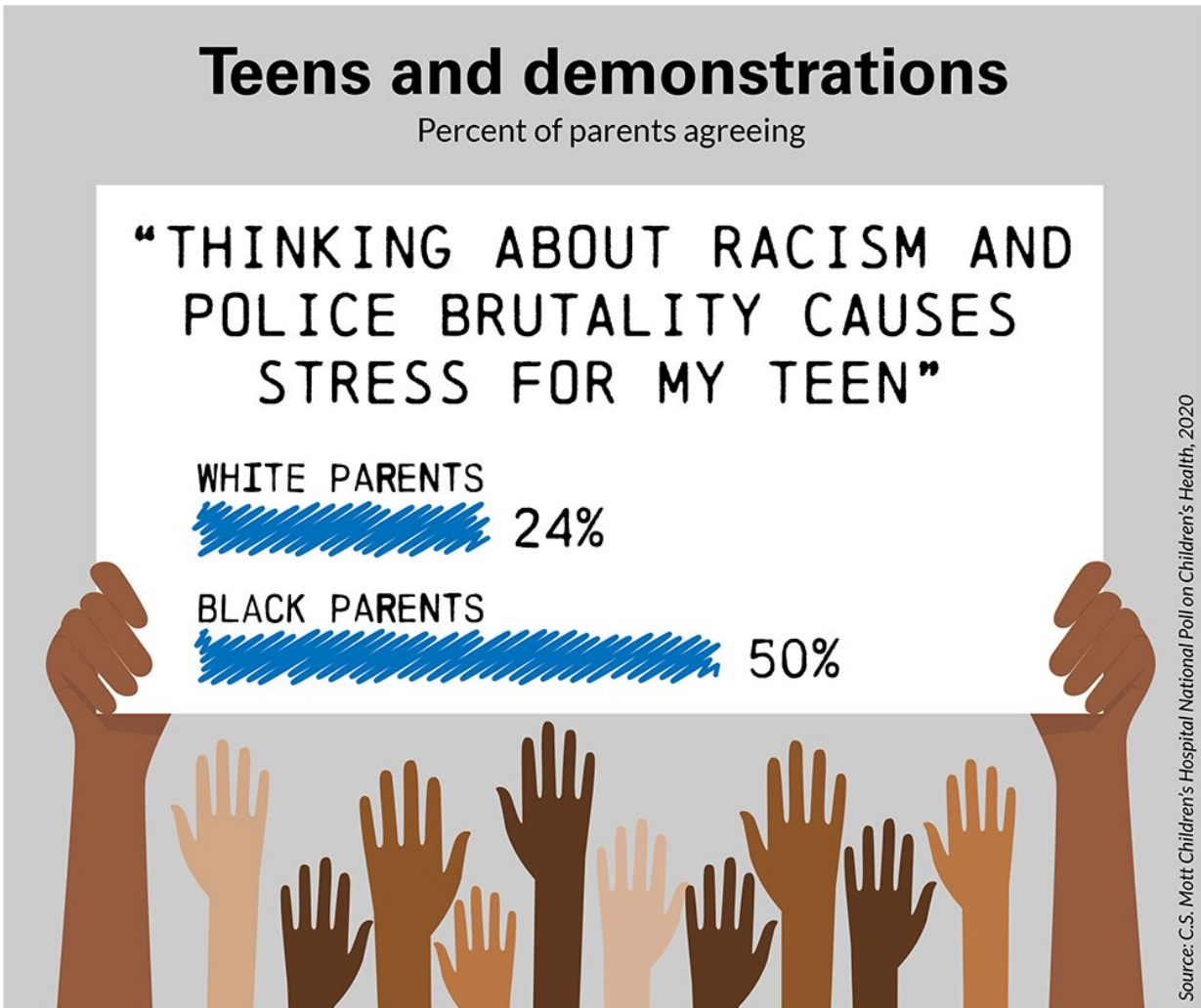
"Many families are engaging around the topic of racism and what's been happening in the country over recent months, with one in three white parents and two in five Black parents having deep conversations about the protests with their teens," says Mott Poll co-director Sarah Clark, M.P.H.

"Parents may have seen their teen showing a more complex interest in the world around them and a substantial number of these young people appear to have moved beyond discussion to taking action."

Meanwhile, 43% of parents surveyed have had some discussion with teens and 27% say they've had minimal or no conversations about the demonstrations with their kids.

## **Concerns about teen's safety at demonstrations**

The vast majority of parents whose teen attended a demonstration or other event about systemic racism supported their teen's involvement (55 % enthusiastically and 38 % with some reservations); 5% of parents disapproved and 2% did not know about the teen's attendance, according to the report.



Black parents were more likely to say the topic is stressful for their teen, who may have a higher risk of encountering police brutality. Credit: C.S. Mott Children's Hospital National Poll on Children's Health at Michigan Medicine

White parents are nearly twice as likely than Black parents (57% vs 31%) to believe teens do not belong at these demonstrations.

Parents' top concern is their teen's safety: 73% of parents worry the demonstrators may become violent while 58% are concerned the police may use force against protesters. Concern about demonstrators becoming violent is higher among white parents (76% vs 62%), while concern about police use of force is more common among Black parents (77% vs 49%).

Almost half of parents (45%) say they are worried that their teen does not understand the risks of participating in demonstrations. This includes concern that teens attending demonstrations could get arrested (39%) and don't know their legal rights (35%).

"We saw substantial [racial differences](#) involving views on who might instigate violence at a demonstration," Clark says. "Black parents are much more concerned than white parents about the use of force by police while white parents are more concerned about the demonstrators becoming violent.

"This may reflect parents' own experiences, as well as the influence of media portrayals of the demonstrations and the events leading up to them."

More white parents than Black parents believe that teens are too immature to understand the real challenges that police face (46% vs 21%) and that demonstrations show a lack of respect toward police (46% vs 13%).

Black parents were also more likely to say the topic is stressful for their teen, who may have a higher risk of encountering police brutality. Half of Black parents say thinking about police brutality and racism causes

stress for their child compared to a quarter of white parents.

"The higher stress level reported by Black parents is understandable. The demonstrations highlighted numerous Black victims of [police](#) violence, and Black teens may see themselves at risk," says Clark. "Many Black parents have difficult conversations with their children from early on about how racism may impact their lives.

"Our poll findings reflect families' different lived experiences and perspectives. These experiences will likely shape parents' views on their teens being involved in demonstrations and other actions to address systemic racism."

The national-representative poll is based on 1,025 responses from parents of teens 13-18 years who answered questions about their views on [teen](#) involvement in demonstrations.

Provided by University of Michigan

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