

NEW SURVEY ON AMERICANS' VIEWS ON LAW ENFORCEMENT, VIOLENCE, AND RACE

Attitudes differ significantly based on race, political partisanship, and personal interactions with the police

Chicago, August 5, 2015—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 civilians by 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.

About AmeriSpeak Omnibus

AmeriSpeak Omnibus is a once-a-month, multi-client survey using a probability sample of at least 1,000 nationally representative adults age 18 and older. Respondents are interviewed online and by phone from NORC's AmeriSpeak panel—the most scientifically rigorous multi-client household panel in the United States. AmeriSpeak households are selected randomly from NORC's National Sample Frame, the industry leader in sample coverage. The National Frame is representative of over 99 percent of U.S. households and includes additional coverage of hard-to-survey population segments, such as rural and low-income households, that are underrepresented in other sample frames. More information about AmeriSpeak is available at [AmeriSpeak.NORC.org](https://www.amerispeak.norc.org).

About the Survey

Respondents were interviewed online and by phone from NORC's AmeriSpeak panel. The overall margin of sampling error is +/- 4.2 percentage points at the 95 percent confidence level, including the design effect. The margin of sampling error may be higher for subgroups; it is +/- 9.1 percentage points for the oversample of blacks. A full description of the study methodology can be found at www.apnorc.org.

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Contact: For more information, contact Eric Young for NORC at young-eric@norc.org or (703) 217-6814 (cell); Ray Boyer for NORC at boyer-ray@norc.org or (312) 330-6433; or Paul Colford for AP at pcolford@ap.org or info@apnorc.org.