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BLACK VOTERS WANT TO REVOLUTIONIZE POLICING IN THE UNITED STATES
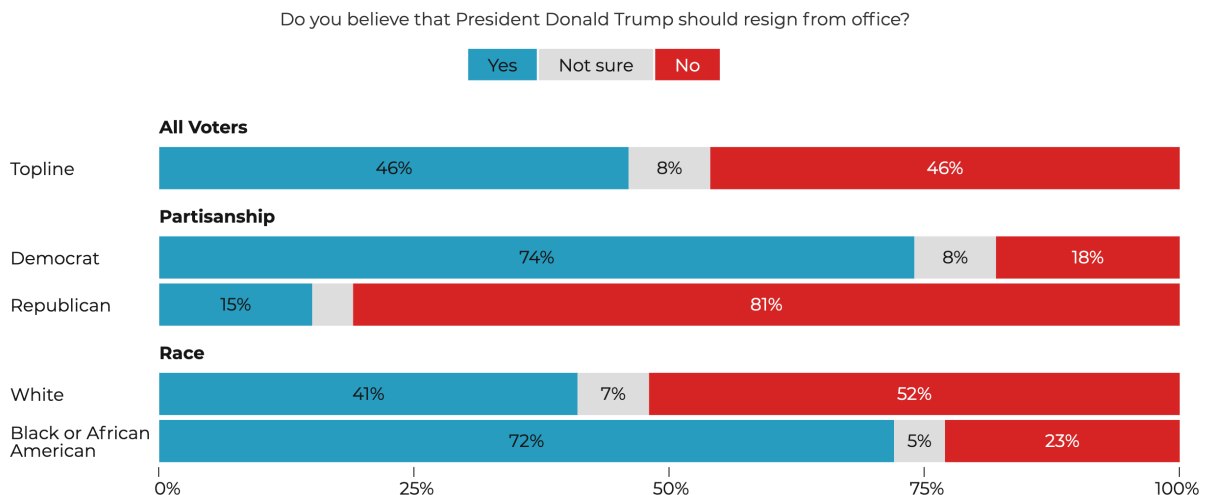
June 2020

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Black voters lead all other voters on support for proposed solutions to police violence

▶ This includes support for divestment from police, which 72 percent of Black voters support, and transitioning to community based safety models, with 56 percent support

▶ Black voters agree that President Trump should resign by a 49 percentage point margin.

▶ Black voters support a return of local control of institutions such as schools and police budgets by a 49 percentage point margin.

▶ The protests following George Floyd's murder have lead to wide ranging discussion on the role of police in American society. The way in which a militarized police state brutalizes and discriminates against Black Americans has, once again, been exposed.

▶ In a June survey, in collaboration with the Movement For Black Lives, Data for Progress polled voters about their beliefs about police, police violence, the recent protests, and proposed reforms. Overall, we found high levels of support, especially among Black voters, for an overhaul to the existing system of policing in the United States. On many issues tested, Black voters were more supportive of progressive reform ideas than even the average Democrat and are leading the movement to address the issues of police violence and discrimination.

To start, we asked voters if they think that President Trump should resign from office. We found that Black voters think Trump should resign by a 49-percentage-point margin (72 percent yes, 23 percent no.) This high level of support contrasts with more mixed support overall, with voters split evenly, 46 percent supporting resignation and 46 percent opposed.

Black Voters Think Trump Should Resign, While Voters Are Split Overall

Do you believe that President Donald Trump should resign from office?

Yes   Not sure   No

All Voters

| Topline | 46% | 8% | 46% |

Partisanship

| Democrat | 74% | 8% | 18% |
| Republican | 15% | | 81% |

Race

| White | 41% | 7% | 52% |
| Black or African American | 72% | 5% | 23% |

0%   25%   50%   75%   100%

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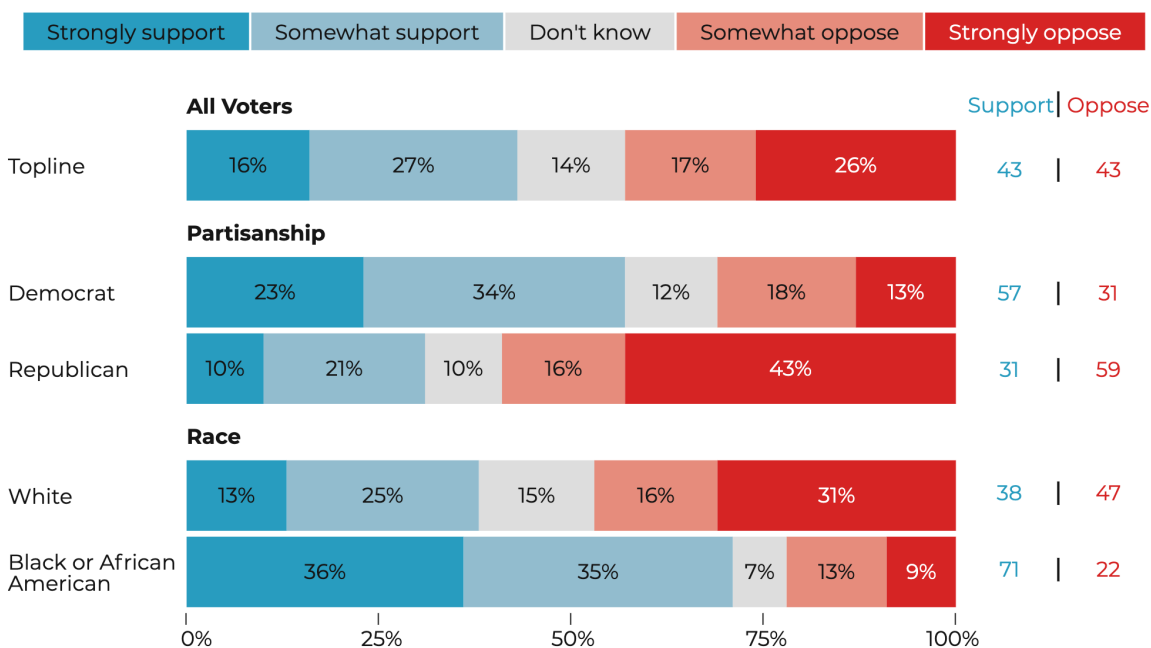
Next, we asked voters if they thought that Black Americans should gain control over local institutions such as schools, local budgets, and police departments. Across the United States, Black control over democratic institutions has been hollowed out. In Camden, New Jersey, for instance, a case sometimes heralded as a success of a reformist approach to police departments, control of the local police force was actually removed from the community level and responsibility for managing it was vested with the county. The governance of Detroit, Michigan tells this same story on an even larger scale. The Republican Governor of Michigan Rick Snyder, who is white, placed the city in a financial receivership program that "essentially stripped power from the City Council and mayor's office." Restoring genuine small-d democratic governance to Black communities is an urgent political project, one that demands swift and sizable action to address.

Black voters strongly back this, supporting it by a 49-point margin (71 percent support, 22 percent oppose). Attitudes were also split along partisan lines, with Democrats in favor while Republicans largely opposed. Among all voters, meanwhile, attitudes were split with support and opposition both sitting at 43 percent--the remaining 14 percent weren't sure. Opinions were also divided.

Black Voters Support Giving Black Communities More Control Over Local Institutions

Some people are suggesting that Black communities gain control over local institutions such as schools, local budgets and police departments. Would you support or oppose giving Black communities more control over local institutions?

| Strongly support | Somewhat support | Don't know | Somewhat oppose | Strongly oppose |

All Voters

Support | Oppose

					Support	Oppose
Topline	16%	27%	14%	17%	26%	43	43

Partisanship

| Democrat | 23% | 34% | 12% | 18% | 13% | 57 | 31 |
| Republican | 10% | 21% | 10% | 16% | 43% | 31 | 59 |

Race

| White | 13% | 25% | 15% | 16% | 31% | 38 | 47 |
| Black or African American | 36% | 35% | 7% | 13% | 9% | 71 | 22 |

0%   25%   50%   75%   100%

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We then asked voters if they would support a transition to a new kind of community-based safety model that focuses on addressing the root cause, rather than merely the symptoms, of crime. Voters were also provided statements both in support and against this idea. The former emphasized how this new model would provide a supportive environment to those facing mental health crises, substance abuse, or homelessness--instead of criminalizing this behavior--while the latter suggested that this community-based approach would be insufficient in keeping people safe.
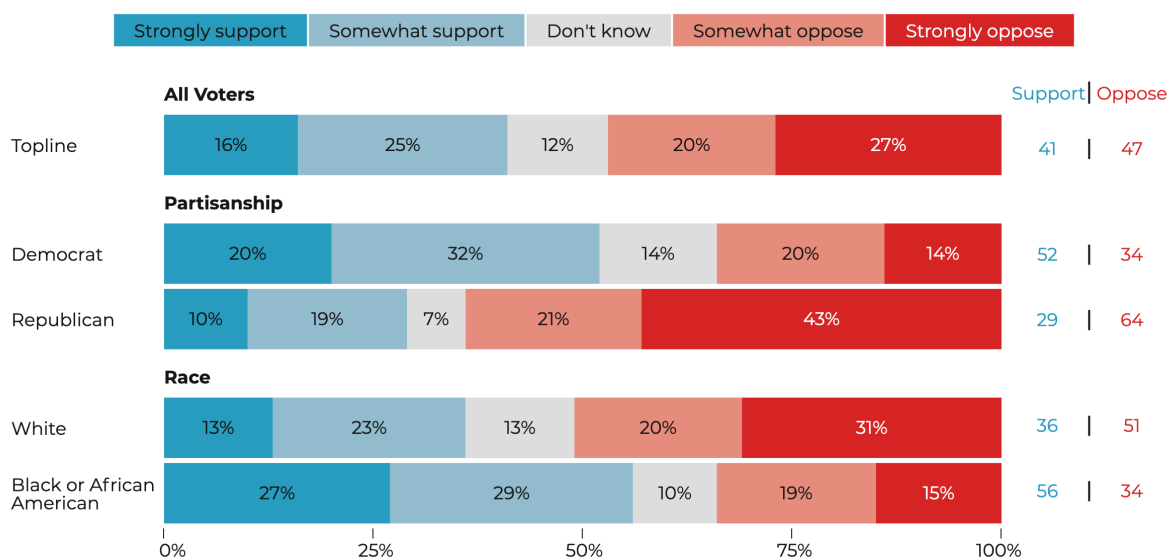
This idea, of creating an alternative to current modes of policing, is one gaining support both among voters and elected officials. In Albuquerque, New Mexico, for instance, officials are now moving to set up a system where "Instead of the police or fire departments responding to 911 calls related to inebriation, homelessness, addiction and mental health, the new division will deploy unarmed personnel made up of social workers, housing and homelessness specialists, and violence prevention coordinators." This would reduce the role of police in a variety of community services that can instead be staffed by trained, nonviolent personnel who are able to provide support and de-escalate conflict instead of inflicting violence.

We found that while voters narrowly oppose this proposal, Black voters are strongly supportive. Attitudes were largely correlated with partisanship and race. Voters who self-identify as Democrats support this proposal by a 16-point margin, but Black voters are once again out ahead, supporting it at a 22-point margin.

Black Voters Support Transitioning To A Community-Based Safety Model

Some are proposing that existing police departments be dismantled and replaced with a community-based public safety model that focuses on addressing the root causes of crime. Advocates of this community-based public safety model argue that it prioritizes the needs of the community by providing a supportive environment to those facing substance abuse, mental health, or homelessness, rather than simply criminalizing this behavior. Opponents argue that a community-based public safety model is insufficient and that it won't keep people safe. Crime is crime and police are needed to deal with it. Do you support or oppose transitioning towards a community-based safety model?

	Strongly support	Somewhat support	Don't know	Somewhat oppose	Strongly oppose		Support	Oppose
All Voters								
Topline	16%	25%	12%	20%	27%		41	47
Partisanship								
Democrat	20%	32%	14%	20%	14%		52	34
Republican	10%	19%	7%	21%	43%		29	64
Race								
White	13%	23%	13%	20%	31%		36	51
Black or African American	27%	29%	10%	19%	15%		56	34

0%   25%   50%   75%   100%

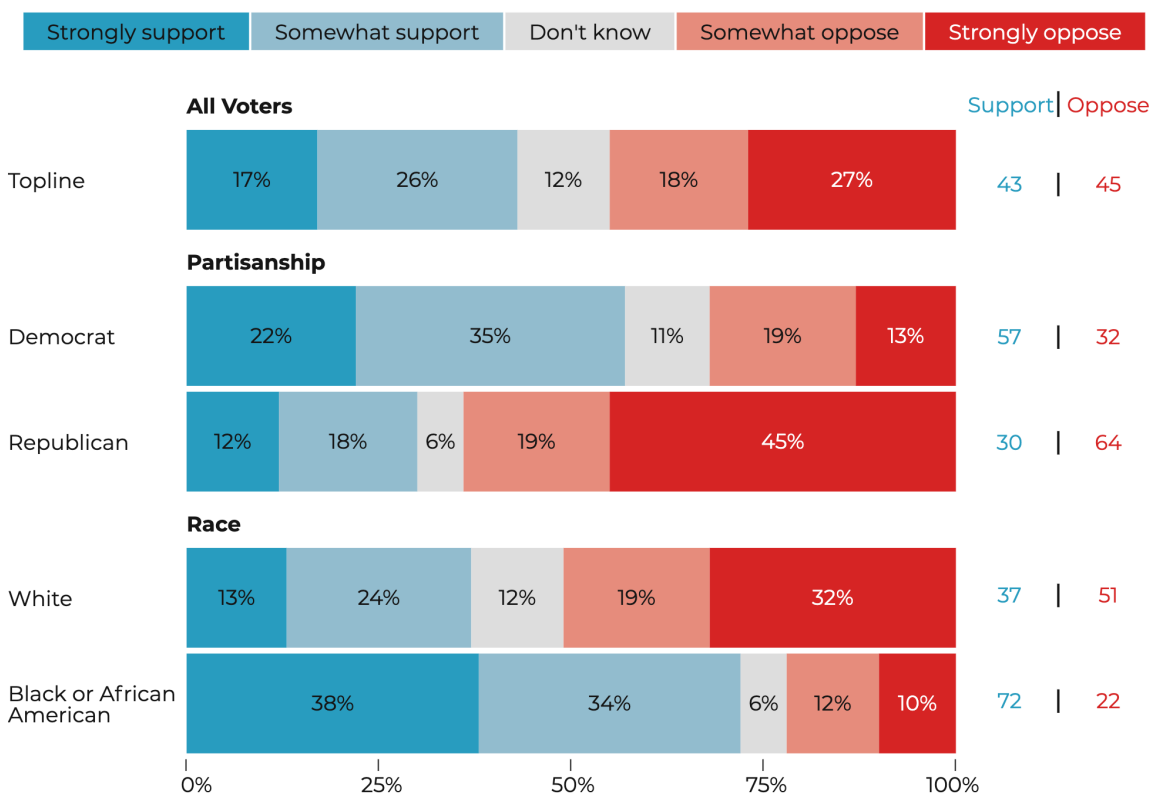Data for Progress

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We also asked voters if they would support divesting from police forces so that their budgets could be reinvested in areas such as healthcare, housing, and education. Discussions in Los Angeles and Dallas, for instance, are now ongoing about setting such a course. In Los Angeles, Black Lives Matter activists "urged members of the City Council on Monday to end the city's reliance on police officers and embrace new strategies for keeping neighborhoods safe," with some members of the council signaling an openness to the idea. In Dallas, meanwhile, a slated increase in the budget of the city's police department was delayed.

We found that while voters opposed it by a thin two-point margin, attitudes were again correlated quite closely with partisanship and race. Democrats support divestment from the police by a 25-point margin while Black voters support it by a massive 50-point margin.

Diverting From Police Has Strong Support Among Black Voters

Would you support or oppose divesting from police departments and putting their budgets towards investments into other areas such as healthcare, education and housing?
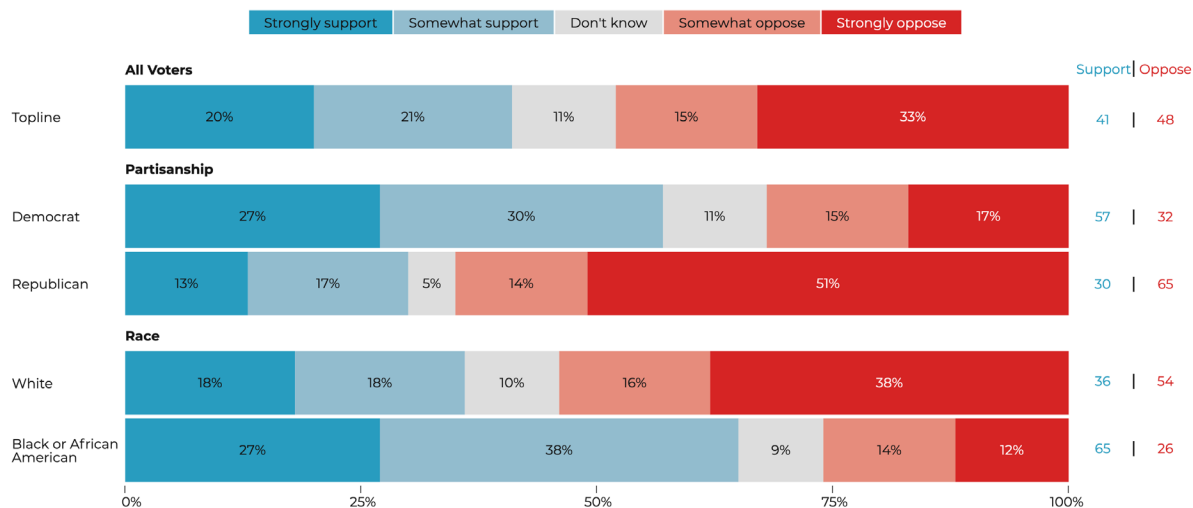
| Strongly support | Somewhat support | Don't know | Somewhat oppose | Strongly oppose |

All Voters

Support | Oppose

	Strongly support	Somewhat support	Don't know	Somewhat oppose	Strongly oppose	Support	Oppose
Topline	17%	26%	12%	18%	27%	43	45

Partisanship

	Strongly support	Somewhat support	Don't know	Somewhat oppose	Strongly oppose	Support	Oppose
Democrat	22%	35%	11%	19%	13%	57	32
Republican	12%	18%	6%	19%	45%	30	64

Race

	Strongly support	Somewhat support	Don't know	Somewhat oppose	Strongly oppose	Support	Oppose
White	13%	24%	12%	19%	32%	37	51
Black or African American	38%	34%	6%	12%	10%	72	22

0%   25%   50%   75%   100%

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Black Voters Support The Minneapolis City Council Decision To Dismantle Their Police Department

The Minneapolis City Council voted to dismantle the city's existing police department. Council members are now looking to replace the department with a community-based public safety model. Do you support or oppose this decision?

Strongly support | Somewhat support | Don't know | Somewhat oppose | Strongly oppose

	Strongly support	Somewhat support	Don't know	Somewhat oppose	Strongly oppose	Support	Oppose
All Voters							
Topline	20%	21%	11%	15%	33%	41	48
Partisanship							
Democrat	27%	30%	11%	15%	17%	57	32
Republican	13%	17%	5%	14%	51%	30	65
Race							
White	18%	18%	10%	16%	38%	36	54
Black or African American	27%	38%	9%	14%	12%	65	26

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Last, we asked voters about the Minneapolis City Council's <u>recent decision</u> to seek out ways to dismantle their police department and replace it with a community-based safety model. We found that, among all voters, this decision is seven points underwater (41 percent support, 48 percent oppose). Democrats, however, support the council's choice by a 25-point margin while Black voters support it by a 39-point margin.

Despite the narrative from some moderate elements within the Democratic Party that the defunding of police is unworkable, there's substantial support for it among voters, especially among Black voters. Black voters overwhelmingly back a series of proposals geared to create nonpolice alternatives to provide for community-based safety and are enthusiastic about the idea of divesting from the police so that their budgets can be reinvested in things like schools, housing, and healthcare.

AUTHORSHIP & METHODOLOGY

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COVER PHOTO
Clay Banks/Unsplash