



WPPA 2021 WISCONSIN PUBLIC SURVEY



Since 2013, the Wisconsin Professional Police Association has been the only law enforcement group in the country to consistently commission objective public polling on issues related to policing in our communities. As Wisconsin’s largest law enforcement group, we have undertaken this effort out of a genuine desire to better understand the communities we serve and a commitment to be part of the solution to the problems that we collectively face as a state. Conducted annually by the St. Norbert College Strategic Research Institute, the WPPA’s polling has helped us take a leading and constructive role in the public dialogue on these issues.

The WPPA’s 2021 statewide survey – our 9th consecutive – comes on the heels of one of the most traumatic and divisive years in our nation’s history. Events such as the deaths of George Floyd and Breonna Taylor, the shooting of Jacob Blake, and a contentious presidential election all served to make the issues surrounding policing more intense and polarizing than ever before.

As calls for major police reform pervade every level of government, this year’s survey effectively pierces the divisive rhetoric which often suggests that supporting the cause for social justice and supporting the police are mutually exclusive. While both illustrative and concerning, the results of the WPPA’s 2021 poll shed some much-needed light on the public’s views towards law enforcement and the type of policing they want to see from their local agencies.

KEY FINDINGS

COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

RATE YOUR COMMUNITY **29%** EXCELLENT **53%** GOOD **14%** POOR

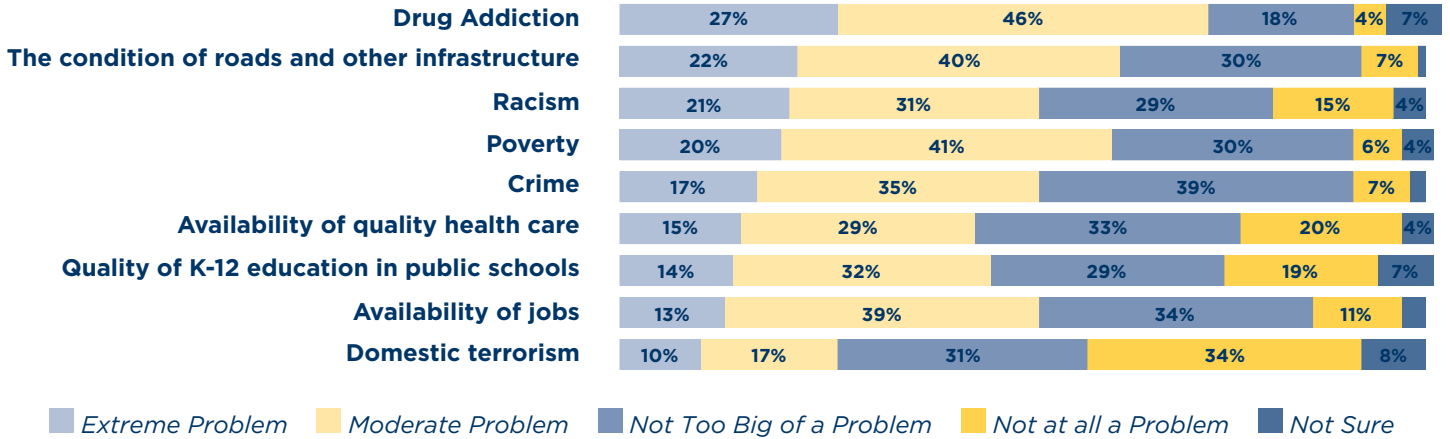
PRIORITIES	“High Priority”
KEEPING COMMUNITIES SAFE FROM CRIME WHITE 65% NON-WHITE 69%	66%*
IMPROVING EDUCATION	56%
MAINTAINING ROADS AND HIGHWAYS	56%
IMPROVING LOCAL ECONOMY	55%
HOLDING THE LINE ON TAXES AND GOV’T SPENDING	49%
PROTECTING THE ENVIRONMENT	48%

* This is the **9th consecutive year** “Keeping Communities Safe from Crime” has been the #1 priority for residents polled

COMPARED TO 5 YEARS AGO, IS YOUR COMMUNITY LESS SAFE, THE SAME OR SAFER? **25%** LESS SAFE **61%** THE SAME **9%** SAFER

PERSPECTIVE - CONTEXT

HOW MUCH IS EACH A PROBLEM IN YOUR LOCAL COMMUNITY?



RACISM IS AN “EXTREME PROBLEM” AMONG

- ▶ AGE 18-34 (33%) & 35-44 (31%)
- ▶ NON-WHITES (45%) VS. WHITES (15%)
- ▶ COMMUNITIES WITH POPULATIONS OF 150,000 OR MORE (32%)

POLICE APPROVAL RATINGS

OVERALL, HOW DO YOU RATE THE WAY YOUR LOCAL POLICE FORCE IS HANDLING ITS JOB?

79% STRONGLY OR SOMEWHAT APPROVE
83% WHITE **58%** NON-WHITE

HOW MUCH RESPECT DO YOU HAVE FOR THE POLICE IN YOUR COMMUNITY?

AMOUNT OF TIME POLICE OFFICERS SPENT POLICING NEIGHBORHOOD.

	WHITE	NON-WHITE		WHITE	NON-WHITE
A GREAT DEAL	65%	37%	TOO MUCH	7%	11%
SOME	31%	47%	ABOUT THE RIGHT AMOUNT	50%	44%
HARDLY ANY	4%	16%	TOO LITTLE	34%	36%

STATEMENTS ABOUT POLICING

HAVING A **WELL-TRAINED** POLICE FORCE HELPS MAKE OUR COMMUNITY A **SAFER PLACE** TO LIVE. **93%** **AGREE**

95% **WHITE** **86%** **NON-WHITE**

HAVING A **WELL-FUNDED** POLICE FORCE IMPROVES THE OVERALL **QUALITY OF LIFE** IN OUR COMMUNITY.

LAWMAKERS SHOULD ESTABLISH A LAW TO PUNISH UNNECESSARY, **RACIALLY-MOTIVATED CALLS TO POLICE** THAT ARE INTENDED TO HUMILIATE, HARM, OR HARASS OTHERS.

IN LIFE-THREATENING SITUATIONS, OFFICER'S USE OF A **CHOKEHOLD** SHOULD BE PERMITTED.

	WHITE	NON-WHITE
Agree	84%	66%
Disagree	10%	23%
Not Sure	6%	11%

Agree	80%
Disagree	11%
Not Sure	10%

Agree	49%
Disagree	37%
Not Sure	14%

SOCIAL JUSTICE & PROTESTS

PROTESTS HELPED OR HURT TO REFORM POLICING?

PROTESTS HELPED OR HURT TO INCREASE RACIAL JUSTICE?

STRONGER PENALTIES FOR INDIVIDUALS THAT DESTROY PROPERTY DURING PROTESTS?

STRONGLY HELPED	8%
SOMEWHAT HELPED	23%
SOMEWHAT HURT	23%
STRONGLY HURT	32%
NOT SURE	14%

STRONGLY HELPED	12%
SOMEWHAT HELPED	31%
SOMEWHAT HURT	21%
STRONGLY HURT	28%
NOT SURE	10%

STRONGLY AGREE	67%
SOMEWHAT AGREE	20%
SOMEWHAT DISAGREE	5%
STRONGLY DISAGREE	3%

I SUPPORT **REDUCING MY POLICE DEPARTMENT'S BUDGET** TO INCREASE SPENDING IN SOCIAL PROGRAMS, SUCH AS MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES AND THOSE TO ADDRESS HOMELESSNESS.

STRONGLY/
SOMEWHAT SUPPORT

42%

SOMEWHAT/
STRONGLY OPPOSE

49%

I SUPPORT **INCREASING SPENDING** FOR SOCIAL PROGRAMS, **BUT NOT AT THE EXPENSE OF MY POLICE DEPARTMENT.**

STRONGLY/
SOMEWHAT SUPPORT

66%

SOMEWHAT/
STRONGLY OPPOSE

25%

I SUPPORT **INCREASING LOCAL TAXES** FOR SPECIALLY-TRAINED MENTAL HEALTH OFFICERS.

STRONGLY/
SOMEWHAT SUPPORT

59%

SOMEWHAT/
STRONGLY OPPOSE

32%

RACE AND POLICE VIOLENCE

HOW MUCH OF A PROBLEM DO YOU FEEL **RACISM** IS IN OUR SOCIETY?

	WHITE	NON-WHITE
A MAJOR PROBLEM	33%	56%
SOMEWHAT OF A PROBLEM	40%	26%
NOT MUCH OF A PROBLEM	18%	12%
NOT A PROBLEM	8%	3%

POLICE **VIOLENCE AGAINST BLACKS** OR AFRICAN AMERICANS IN WISCONSIN.

	WHITE	NON-WHITE
EXTREMELY SERIOUS	21%	46%
MODERATELY SERIOUS	30%	27%
NOT TOO SERIOUS	24%	17%
NOT AT ALL SERIOUS	17%	6%

POLICE VIOLENCE **AGAINST THE PUBLIC** IN WISCONSIN.

	WHITE	NON-WHITE
EXTREMELY SERIOUS	11%	30%
MODERATELY SERIOUS	24%	34%
NOT TOO SERIOUS	35%	24%
NOT AT ALL SERIOUS	25%	7%

IN YOUR COMMUNITY, DO YOU FEEL THAT **DEATHS OF AFRICAN AMERICANS** AND OTHER MINORITIES BY POLICE OFFICERS ARE ISOLATED INCIDENTS OR A SIGN OF A BROADER PROBLEM BETWEEN AFRICAN AMERICANS, MINORITIES, AND POLICE?

	WHITE	NON-WHITE
ISOLATED INCIDENTS	57%	27%
A BROADER PROBLEM	31%	55%
NOT SURE	12%	18%

PERCEPTIONS

AGREE OR DISAGREE:
A MAJORITY OF
THE INDIVIDUALS
FATALLY SHOT BY
POLICE OFFICERS
IN WISCONSIN LAST
YEAR **WERE ARMED**
WITH A WEAPON.

**REALITY
2020**

AGREE OR DISAGREE:
MOST OF THE PEOPLE
THAT ARE SHOT BY
LAW ENFORCEMENT
OFFICERS IN
WISCONSIN ARE
BLACK, AFRICAN
AMERICAN, OR
A MEMBER OF A
MINORITY GROUP.

**REALITY
2020**

56% strongly agree or
somewhat agree

24% somewhat or
strongly disagree

35% of non-white respondents
agree that a majority of individuals
fatally shot are armed.

**100% were
armed**

W N-W
47% **71%** strongly agree
or somewhat
agree

32% **19%** somewhat
or strongly
disagree

**42% of people
shot by police
were non-white**

POLICY & REFORMS

REQUIRING LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICERS
IN YOUR COMMUNITY TO WEAR BODY **VIDEO
CAMERAS**: AN IMMEDIATE PRIORITY,
SOMEWHAT OF A PRIORITY...?

85%* IMMEDIATE OR SOMEWHAT
OF A PRIORITY

* 60% Non-Whites considered body cameras an "Immediate Priority" vs. 44% Whites

WOULD YOU FAVOR OR OPPOSE
INCREASING LOCAL TAXES TO PAY
FOR BODY VIDEO **CAMERAS** FOR LAW
ENFORCEMENT OFFICERS?

59% STRONGLY OR
SOMEWHAT FAVOR

35% STRONGLY OR
SOMEWHAT OPPOSE

WOULD YOU FAVOR OR OPPOSE THE
STATE ESTABLISHING A **LAW TO PROTECT
OFFICERS FROM RETALIATION** BY THEIR
AGENCIES FOR REPORTING POTENTIAL
INSTANCES OF EXCESSIVE FORCE?

75% STRONGLY OR
SOMEWHAT FAVOR

13% STRONGLY OR
SOMEWHAT OPPOSE

DO YOU SUPPORT OR OPPOSE THE LAW THAT ALLOWS JUDGES TO ISSUE **SEARCH WARRANTS** THAT ALLOW POLICE TO ENTER A PROPERTY **WITHOUT KNOCKING** WHEN THERE IS A SIGNIFICANT CONCERN FOR OFFICER SAFETY OR THAT EVIDENCE WILL BE DESTROYED?

51% **STRONGLY OR SOMEWHAT SUPPORT**

39% **STRONGLY OR SOMEWHAT OPPOSE**

DO YOU SUPPORT ESTABLISHING PENALTIES FOR INDIVIDUALS THAT KNOWINGLY **FILE FALSE COMPLAINTS** AGAINST POLICE OFFICERS?

88% **STRONGLY OR SOMEWHAT SUPPORT**

6% **STRONGLY OR SOMEWHAT OPPOSE**

DO YOU SUPPORT OR OPPOSE CHANGING THE LAW SO THAT **POLICE OFFICERS CAN BE SUED** FOR MISCONDUCT EVEN IF THERE IS NO PREVIOUS LEGAL CASE WITH SIMILAR FACTS?

26% **STRONGLY SUPPORT**

32% **SOMEWHAT SUPPORT**

16% **SOMEWHAT OPPOSE**

11% **STRONGLY OPPOSE**

METHODOLOGY

AN ONLINE PANEL OF WISCONSIN ADULTS.

- ▶ Online survey dates were from February 11, 2021 to March 9, 2021.
- ▶ 1,001 members of the adult general public of Wisconsin completed the online survey.
- ▶ The survey represents a quota sample drawn from Wisconsin adults with access to the Internet.

The analyses are weighted to reflect the age, race/ethnicity, income, education, and gender demographic profile of the state of Wisconsin.

All questions were cross tabulated with the various demographic groups; only differences at the .05 level are reported. Group differences at the .05 level suggests that we can be 95% sure that the association between two values did not occur by chance only.

For analysis, race and ethnicity are combined into the following categories: White non-Hispanic, Black non-Hispanic, Asian non-Hispanic, Native American, Hispanic, and Other non-Hispanic. The sample is then separated into two groups: White non-Hispanic, referred to as White, and Non-White

ONLINE SURVEY QUALITY

All panel respondents are recruited from multiple sources and vetted for quality. Criteria for exclusion include:

- ▶ Random responses
- ▶ Illogical or inconsistent response patterns
- ▶ High frequency of non-response
- ▶ Rapid survey completion

Panel members have their identity verified and are routinely vetted for quality and engagement. All survey respondents for this sample were recruited by email.