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The vast majority of Americans don't want to defund the police

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Police duties have grown to include things like responding to welfare checks and providing homeless services



As activists around the country enter their second month of protesting police brutality, a new survey finds that their messaging around [defunding local precincts](#) has fallen flat with the vast majority of Americans.

Forty-two percent say that spending on their local police should stay about the same as it is now, and 31% say that spending should be increased, [according to a Pew poll out Thursday](#).

Just a quarter of Americans say spending on policing in their area should be decreased, and only about half of those say it should be decreased a lot. The numbers come as budget battles are being fought in major cities like New York, San Francisco, and Los Angeles around the robust [funding of police forces](#).

Both major parties' presidential candidates have come out against the defund the police movement. President Donald Trump has deemed himself the defender of "law and order," and former Vice President Joe Biden told [CBS News](#) last week that he doesn't support defunding the police. Biden's plans for police reform fall largely in line with the Democratic congressional plan to condition funding on certain standards and to provide more support for training.

Still, the Trump campaign has regularly pushed the narrative that Biden supports ending funding for police precincts. The President's team is currently airing ads in both Minnesota and Wisconsin that link Biden to the progressive movement to decrease billion-dollar police budgets.

The advertisements, filled with dark imagery and dramatic music, depict a 911 call gone awry and then blame Biden for it.

"You have reached the 9-1-1 police emergency line. Due to defunding of the police department, we're sorry, but no one is here to take your call. If you're calling to report a rape, please press 1. To report a murder, press 2. To report a home invasion, press 3," the advertisement begins.

"Joe Biden's supporters are fighting to defund police departments. Violent crime has exploded. For all other crimes, leave your name and number, and someone will get back to you," it continues, overlaying Biden's image in flames. "You won't be safe in Joe Biden's America," it concludes.

Poll results back the tactic. In general, Americans still view police positively. Nearly 60% of Americans say police around the country do an excellent or good job of protecting people from crime, down just slightly from 62% in 2016.

But things are moving in a less positive trajectory when it comes to specific actions that police forces take. Just 35% of respondents said that police do an excellent or good job of using the right amount of force for each situation, down from 45% in 2016. Similarly, 34% believe the police do a good job treating racial and ethnic groups equally, down from 47% in 2016. The belief that officers are held accountable when misconduct occurs dropped from 44% to 31% over the same period.

The poll also found that Americans are more likely now than they were in 2016 to support ending “qualified immunity” and allow for the suing of police officers who use excessive force. Two-thirds of voters said that civilians need to have the power to sue police officers to hold them accountable for misconduct and excessive use of force, even if that makes the officers’ jobs more difficult.

There was also broad support for police training in nonviolent tactics, the creation of a federal government database to track officers accused of misconduct, a ban on chokeholds, and a requirement for police to live in the areas they patrol.

Pew surveyed 4,708 U.S. adults online in June 2020 and then weighted the results to be representative of the U.S. adult population by gender, race, ethnicity, partisan affiliation, education, and other categories.