



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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The WPPA'S 'LOST' 2020 POLL
What Wisconsin Residents Thought
Before COVID-19, George Floyd and Jacob Blake
Trends That Warned Us. Results That Informed Us.

(Madison, Wis.) – Today, the Wisconsin Professional Police Association (WPPA) is releasing the results of its 2020 survey for the first time. The results arrived 10 months ago, in March 2020, just before the world changed in a dramatic fashion.

The eighth annual statewide poll was to gauge perceptions on a variety of issues related to policing and was conducted by the St. Norbert College Strategic Research Institute. It was before the onset of the global COVID-19 pandemic, the tragic death of George Floyd in Minneapolis, and the controversial shooting of Jacob Blake by police officers in Kenosha.

“I don’t think anyone could have fathomed how dramatically and perhaps irrevocably the world would change when we surveyed Wisconsin residents last spring,” said Jim Palmer, executive director of the WPPA. “You could call it a lost poll, but sometimes the past can help inform the present. We believe that sharing the results of our 2020 poll at this time may help us measure the changes in public sentiment towards the police, and we are confident that these will be particularly important as we prepare for our 2021 survey.”

The [2020 Poll](#) included numerous key issues facing law enforcement and the communities they serve. In the eight years the WPPA has been conducting the poll, it has highlighted and the divergent views held by white respondents and those of minority respondents. Such an examination has help understand how different groups see law enforcement officers and the jobs that they perform.

Some key findings from the 2020 poll included:

- **Support for police** continued to be high (**77%**), especially among non-white residents
 - White 81%
 - Non-white 65%

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- **“Keeping communities safe”** remained the **Top Priority – 91%**
- Time spent **policing “your” neighborhood** – “About right”: **64%**; “Too Little” **21%**
“Too Little”: White 21%; Non-White 24%
- “How much of a problem is **Racism in our society**: “A major problem” – 31%
 - White 26%
 - Non-White 48%
- **56% Agreed** that **“Most people fatally shot by law enforcement officers in Wisconsin are Black, African-American, or a member of a minority group.”**
 - In reality, approximately 80% of those shot and killed by the police were white.
- **41%** believe “police violence against the public in Wisconsin” is either an extremely or moderately serious problem.
 - White 34%
 - Non-White 61%
- “Overall, 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 **by race**”?
 - White: “Isolated” 54%; “Broader” 29%
 - Non-White: “Isolated” 20%; “Broader” 63%
- Having **police in schools** make them “More safe” – 53%; “Less safe” – 30%
- Support for **body cameras** remains high at **88%**
- “Adequately **funding our local police force** is more important than funding any other services provided by our local community”
 - White: 53% Agree; 35% Disagree
 - Non-White: 37% Agree; 51% Disagree

“Knowing what we know today and having seen the emotional reactions in communities across the state, this poll underscores the disparate views that white and non-white residents have towards law enforcement,” said Palmer. “While the overall amount of public support for the police remains strong, we can’t ignore the distinctions that exists among people of different races. Being responsive to these distinctions will be crucial if we are ever to take meaningful steps to address the social injustices that exist throughout society.”

Last September, the WPPA unveiled a comprehensive reform package called ["A Blueprint For Change: Opportunities To Evolve Policing In Wisconsin"](#). Since then, Palmer has been named to the Speaker’s Task Force on Racial Disparities, which intends to explore and recommend tangible reforms to the state legislature in the coming months. The most cumulative set of reform proposals by any police group in the country, the WPPA’s reform proposals were recognized by a special episode of NBC’s “Dateline” show that aired on January 7.

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Survey Methodology

The emergence of the coronavirus in March of 2020 forced data completion to move entirely online.

- Online survey dates were from March 11, 2020 to March 25, 2020.
- 645 members of the general public completed the online survey:
 - 325 March 11-13, 2020.
 - 320 March 24-25, 2020.
- The survey represents a convenient quota sample drawn from Wisconsin adults with access to the Internet. Telephone data collection was interrupted by COVID-19. The second sample represents the sample collected after Covid-19 precipitated the closing of most workplaces in Wisconsin.

ABOUT WPPA

With more than 10,000 members from over 300 local association affiliates, the WPPA is Wisconsin’s largest law-enforcement group. Its mission is to protect and promote public safety, as well as the interests of the dedicated men and women who serve to provide it.