

## **Racial, Generational & Political Divisions Mark Americans' Attitudes on Ferguson**

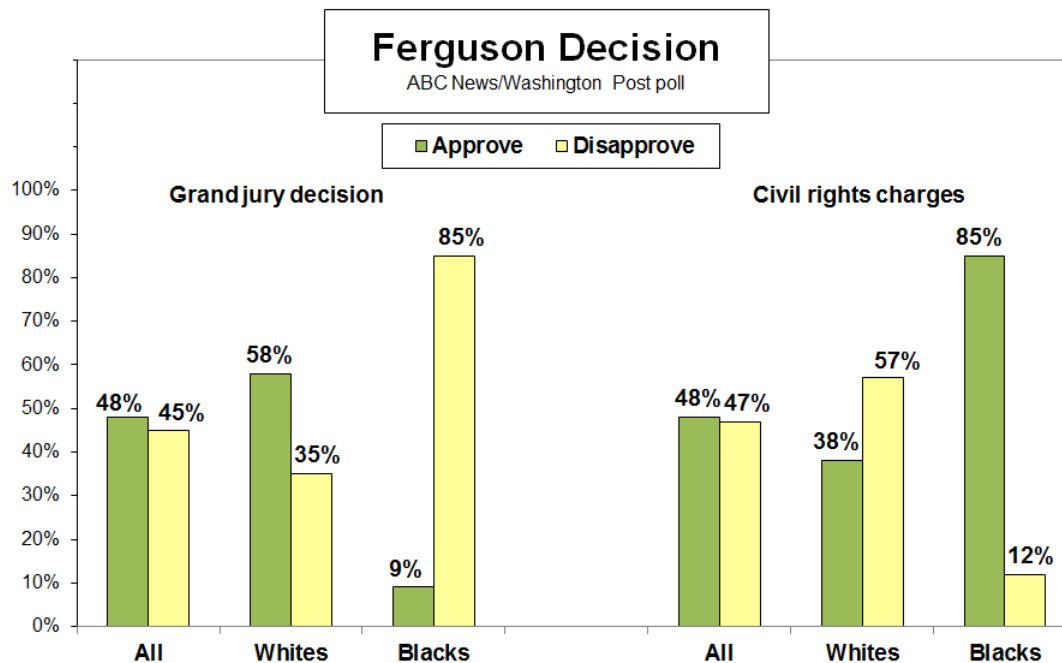
Americans divide evenly on last week's grand jury decision in Ferguson, Missouri – with vast racial, political and generational gaps defining public attitudes on the volatile issue.

Overall, 48 percent in this ABC News/Washington Post poll approve and 45 percent disapprove of the grand jury's decision not to bring criminal charges against police officer Darren Wilson, who is white, in the fatal shooting of black teenager Michael Brown last August.

Underlying divisions are profound. Fifty-eight percent of whites approve of the grand jury action, compared with 9 percent of blacks and 32 percent of Hispanics, the nation's two main racial and ethnic minorities. Eighty-five percent of blacks and six in 10 Hispanics disapprove.

Indeed, 73 percent of blacks "strongly" disapprove of the decision not to charge Wilson, a remarkable level of strong sentiment on any issue. Forty-five percent of Hispanics also strongly disapprove – while among whites, 42 percent strongly approve of the grand jury's decision.

There's also an even split, 48-47 percent, on whether the federal government should bring civil rights charges against Wilson. In this case 85 percent of blacks say they'd approve, as do 67 percent of Hispanics – falling to 38 percent among whites.



This poll, produced for ABC by [Langer Research Associates](#), highlights the stark social divisions in opinions of the case, many of which mirror broader attitudes about the criminal justice system. Views divide sharply not only by race, but also by political party affiliation, ideology and age, among other factors.

Seventy-six percent of Republicans, for example, approve of the grand jury’s decision, while half of political independents and just 27 percent of Democrats agree. Views on civil charges run just as sharply in the opposite direction: Nearly three-quarters of Democrats say they’d approve, dropping to fewer than half of independents and just 21 percent of Republicans.

There’s a similar divide by ideology, with approval for the grand jury action ranging from 74 percent among strong conservatives to 47 percent of moderates and 29 percent of liberals. At the same time 62 percent of liberals say they’d approve of the federal government bringing civil rights charges; 51 percent of moderates agree, dropping to 29 percent of strong conservatives.

The generational differences are equally sharp, with 62 percent of seniors approving of the grand jury decision, compared with 30 percent of those under age 30. And while two-thirds of millennials approve of efforts to pursue a civil case, just a third of seniors agree.

	Approve-Disapprove	
	Grand jury decision	Civil rights charges
All	48-45%	48-47%
Whites	58-35	38-57
Blacks	9-85	85-12
Hispanics	32-61	67-29
Democrats	27-68	73-24
Independents	50-41	47-48
Republicans	76-18	21-74
Liberals	29-63	62-33
Moderates	47-44	51-44
Cons. NET	63-33	37-59
Very cons.	74-24	29-67
Age 18-29	30-64	65-34
65+	62-30	34-61
Under \$50K	35-57	58-37
\$50K-\$100K	58-34	42-52
\$100K+	71-25	35-63

Other gaps also appear, with support for the grand jury action and opposition to filing federal civil charges rising with income and higher among college graduates than non-graduates. Also, men are more likely than women to approve of the grand jury decision.

OFFICIAL RESPONSE – Majorities, meanwhile, look askance at the way local officials and Barack Obama alike have handled the situation. By 52-39 percent, the public disapproves of how

the police and other local authorities in Ferguson have dealt with the protests there. Obama's handling of the situation gets an identical score.

Views on both these questions are marked by further (but less sharp) racial and political gaps. Disapproval of the local response is highest among blacks, Democrats and liberals. These same groups are disproportionately likely to approve of Obama's efforts, as are political moderates.

**METHODOLOGY** – This ABC News/Washington Post poll was conducted by landline and cell phone Nov. 25-26 and 28-30, 2014, in English and Spanish, among a random national sample of 1,011 adults. Results have a margin of [sampling error](#) of 3.5 points. The survey was produced for ABC News by [Langer Research Associates](#) of New York, N.Y.

Analysis by Christopher Weiss.

ABC News polls can be found at ABCNEWS.com at <http://abcnews.com/pollingunit>.

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Full results follow.

1. As you may know, a grand jury has decided not to bring criminal charges against a white police officer in Ferguson, Missouri, over the shooting of an unarmed black teen-ager last summer. Do you approve or disapprove of the grand jury's decision not to charge the police officer? Do you feel that way strongly, or somewhat?

	----- Approve -----			----- Disapprove -----			No
	NET	Strongly	Somewhat	NET	Somewhat	Strongly	opinion
11/30/14 All	48	33	15	45	14	31	7
Whites	58	42	17	35	13	22	7
Blacks	9	5	4	85	12	73	6
Hispanics	32	20	12	61	17	45	7

2. Would you approve or disapprove of the federal government bringing civil rights charges against the police officer? Do you feel that way strongly, or somewhat?

	----- Approve -----			----- Disapprove -----			No
	NET	Strongly	Somewhat	NET	Somewhat	Strongly	opinion
11/30/14 All	48	30	18	47	14	33	5
Whites	38	21	16	57	16	41	6
Blacks	85	67	18	12	5	8	3
Hispanics	67	45	22	29	12	16	4

3. Do you approve or disapprove of the way the police and other local authorities have handled the protests in Ferguson? Do you feel that way strongly, or somewhat?

	----- Approve -----			----- Disapprove -----			No
	NET	Strongly	Somewhat	NET	Somewhat	Strongly	opinion
11/30/14 All	39	16	23	52	19	33	9
Whites	41	18	23	48	20	28	10
Blacks	25	13	12	70	19	50	5
Hispanics	39	13	26	55	19	37	6

4. Do you approve or disapprove of the way Barack Obama has handled this issue? Do you feel that way strongly, or somewhat?

	----- Approve -----			----- Disapprove -----			No
	NET	Strongly	Somewhat	NET	Somewhat	Strongly	opinion
11/30/14 All	39	15	24	52	17	35	9
Whites	34	11	22	58	17	41	8
Blacks	63	34	29	30	19	11	7
Hispanics	41	16	25	47	16	30	12

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