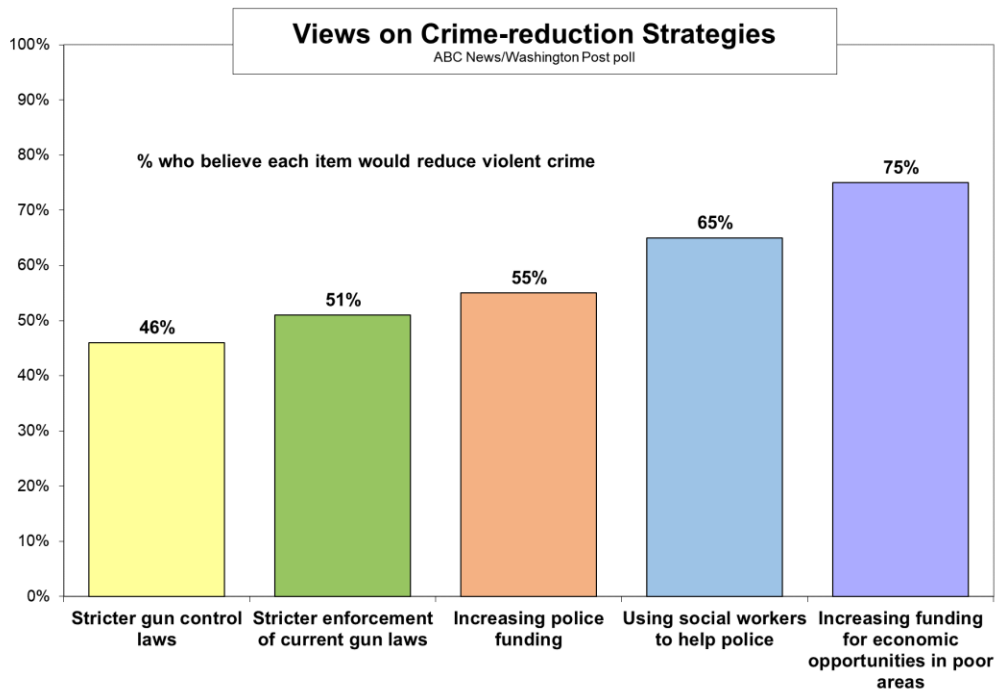


Biden is Rated Poorly on Handling Crime; Alternative Approaches Win Broad Favor

The number of Americans seeing crime as an extremely serious problem in the United States is at a more than 20-year high, Joe Biden is underwater in trust to handle it and broad majorities in an ABC News/Washington Post poll favor alternative crime-fighting strategies to address it.

A sweeping 75 percent in the national survey say violent crime would be reduced by increasing funding to build economic opportunities in poor communities. Sixty-five percent say the same about using social workers to help police defuse situations with people having emotional problems.

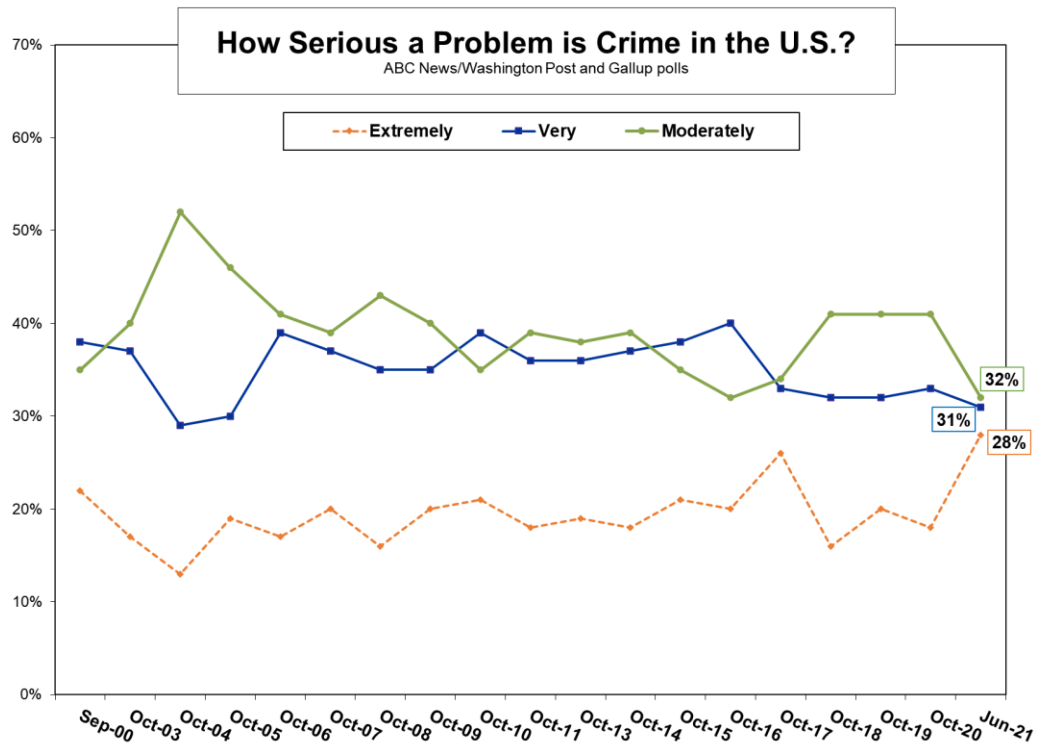
These measures, aimed at underlying causes of crime, are most apt to be seen as effective, by substantial margins, of five that were tested. Among the others, 55 percent think increasing funding for police departments would reduce violent crime, 51 percent say the same about stricter enforcement of existing gun laws and 46 percent say so about stricter gun control laws.



Broad support for alternative anti-crime measures comes against a backdrop of heightened high-level concern. Twenty-eight percent of Americans see crime in the United States as an extremely

serious problem, a relatively small group but the most to hold this view compared to nearly annual polls by Gallup from 2000 to 2020. The average across those previous polls is 19 percent.

Views of crime in the country as a high-level problem expand to 59 percent when including those who see it as very serious, not just extremely serious. As typically is the case, far fewer, 17 percent, see crime as an extremely or very serious problem in the area where they live, though this is at a numerical high (by a single percentage point) compared to Gallup polls since 2000.



This poll, produced for ABC News by [Langer Research Associates](#), finds a troubling difference in the experience of crime along racial and ethnic lines. While 13 percent of whites and 17 percent of Hispanics call crime an extremely or very serious problem in the area where they live, this jumps to 31 percent among Black people.

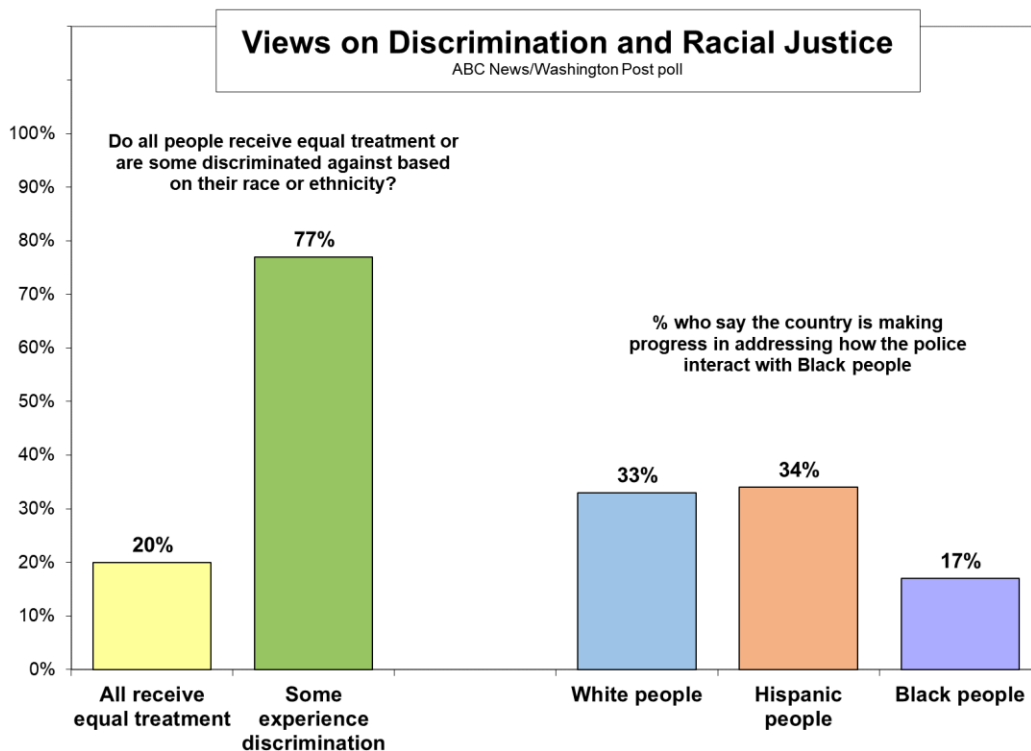
Politically, just 38 percent of adults overall approve of how Biden is handling the issue of crime in this country, with 48 percent disapproving. That said, Americans divide almost exactly evenly on which political party they trust more to handle crime – 36 percent pick the Republicans, 35 percent the Democrats, about the average difference between the parties on this question in polls back to 1990. Twenty percent volunteer that they don't trust either party on crime.

RACIAL JUSTICE – The survey also measures attitudes toward racial justice, finding broad recognition of discrimination and muted perceptions of progress a year after nationwide protests over the murder of George Floyd gripped the country.

About three-quarters of Americans, 77 percent, say that some people in the United States experience discrimination on the basis of their race or ethnicity; three-quarters of white and Hispanic people alike say so, as do 86 percent of Black adults.

Among those who say racial or ethnic discrimination exists, just 37 percent say the country is making progress in overcoming it. Thirty-four percent say this isn't changing and 27 percent say the country is losing ground.

On a related, specific issue – addressing how the police interact with Black people – even fewer, 31 percent of Americans, see progress. More, 38 percent, see no change, and 24 percent think the country is losing ground. About a third of white and Hispanic people see progress on this issue, but that falls to just 17 percent of Black people themselves.



CRIME STRATEGY/GROUPS – Views on crime-reduction strategies differ among groups, sometimes sharply, with especially sizable gaps among Black people – who, as noted, are more apt to see crime as a serious problem in their area – compared with others.

For example, Black people are vastly more apt than whites to say stricter gun control laws would reduce violent crime, 76 percent vs. 37 percent, and to see stricter enforcement of existing gun laws as effective, 75-45 percent. (Hispanics fall in between, at 57 percent on both.) At the same time, Black people are far less likely than whites to see increased funding for the police as a way to reduce crime, 39 vs. 60 percent, likely given Black people's experiences of unequal treatment by police, explored in [previous](#) ABC/Post polls. (Again, Hispanics fall in between.)

On alternative approaches, 83 percent of Black people think using social workers to help defuse situations with emotionally distressed people would reduce violent crime, as do 73 percent of Hispanics, dropping to 60 percent of whites. There's less of a gap on building economic opportunities in poor communities – 87 percent of Black people, 81 percent of Hispanic people and 73 percent of white people think this would reduce violent crime.

There are differences by age on nontraditional crime-reduction strategies. Among 18- to 29-year-olds, 82 percent see the use of social workers as effective; just 53 percent of seniors agree. And while 87 percent of those younger than 30 think building economic opportunities will reduce violent crime, that falls to 67 percent – still a robust majority – of seniors.

Both creating new gun control laws and more strictly enforcing existing gun laws are more apt to be seen as effective by women compared with men, in the more liberal Northeast compared with other regions, and in urban rather than suburban or, especially, rural areas.

POLITICS – There are well-established partisan and ideological fault lines on these approaches. Eighty-one percent of Democrats see stricter gun laws as effective in reducing violent crime, for example; 42 percent of independents and just 13 percent of Republicans concur.

Many Republicans also are skeptical about using social workers – 42 percent think this would reduce violent crime. But more, 61 percent of Republicans, see increasing spending to enhance economic opportunities in poor areas as effective. That rises to 76 percent of independents and nearly all Democrats, 90 percent.

Other results underscore the country's sharp partisan lines on political issues. Just 6 percent of Republicans and 35 percent of independents approve of Biden's work on crime, compared with 74 percent of Democrats.

With an eye toward the 2022 midterm elections, Biden's party shows potential vulnerability on crime in two hotspots: the Midwest, where the Republican Party leads the Democrats in trust to handle crime, 43-28 percent; and in the suburbs, a 43-31 percent GOP advantage. Crime, as such, looks set to play a prominent role in political debate in the months ahead.

METHODOLOGY – This ABC News/Washington Post poll was conducted by landline and cellular telephone June 27-30, 2021, in English and Spanish, among a random national sample of 907 adults. Results have a margin of [sampling error](#) of 3.5 percentage points, including the design effect. Partisan divisions are 30-24-37 percent, Democrats-Republicans-independents.

The survey was produced for ABC News by [Langer Research Associates](#) of New York, N.Y., with sampling and data collection by Abt Associates of Rockville, Md. See details on the survey's methodology [here](#).

Analysis by Gary Langer.

ABC News polls can be found at ABCNEWS.com. Join our [mailing list](#) to get updates on all new poll releases.

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Full results follow.

1-2b, 3-9, 16 held for release. *= less than 0.5 percent

2. Do you approve or disapprove of the way Biden is handling [ITEM]?

6/30/21 - Summary table

	Approve	Disapprove	No opinion
c. the issue of crime in this country	38	48	14

10. In the United States, do you think (all people receive equal treatment regardless) of their race or ethnicity, or do you think (some people experience discrimination on the basis) of their race or ethnicity?

	All receive equal treatment	Some experience discrimination	No opinion
6/30/21 All	20	77	3
White people	20	76	3
Black people	12	86	2
Hispanic people	22	77	1

11. (ASK IF SOME PEOPLE EXPERIENCE DISCRIMINATION) Do you think the country is making progress in ensuring that people receive equal treatment regardless of their race or ethnicity, is losing ground on this, or is it staying the same?

	Making progress	Losing ground	Staying the same	No opinion
6/30/21 All	37	27	34	2
White people	41	29	28	2
Black people	18	30	47	5

(Inadequate sample size of Hispanic people)

12. Specifically in addressing how the police interact with Black people, do you think the country is making progress, losing ground, or are things staying the same?

	Making progress	Losing ground	Staying the same	No opinion
6/30/21 All	31	24	38	8
White people	33	24	35	8
Black people	17	30	45	8
Hispanic people	34	21	39	6

Changing topics,

13. Overall, how would you describe the problem of crime [ITEM] - is it extremely serious, very serious, moderately serious, not too serious, or not serious at all?

6/30/21 - Summary table

	--- More serious ---		----- Less serious -----	No				
	NET	Extremely	Very	Modrtly	NET	Not too	Not at all	op.
a. in the United								

States	59	28	31	32	7	6	1	2
b. in the area where you live	17	7	10	33	48	31	17	2

Trend:

a. in the United States

	Extremely	Very	Moderately	Not too	Not at all	No opinion
6/30/21	28	31	32	6	1	2
10/15/20*	18	33	41	7	*	*
10/13/19	20	32	41	6	1	1
10/10/18	16	32	41	7	1	2
10/11/17	26	33	34	6	1	1
10/9/16	20	40	32	7	*	1
10/11/15	21	38	35	4	1	1
10/15/14	18	37	39	4	1	1
10/6/13	19	36	38	4	1	2
10/9/11	18	36	39	5	1	1
10/10/10	21	39	35	3	1	2
10/4/09	20	35	40	3	*	1
10/5/08	16	35	43	5	*	1
10/7/07	20	37	39	2	*	1
10/12/06	17	39	41	2	*	1
10/16/05	19	30	46	4	*	1
10/14/04	13	29	52	5	*	1
10/8/03	17	37	40	4	1	1
9/5/00	22	38	35	3	1	1

*2020 and previous: Gallup

b. in the area where you live

	Extremely	Very	Moderately	Not too	Not at all	No opinion
6/30/21	7	10	33	31	17	2
10/15/20*	3	7	28	40	22	*
10/13/19	4	9	37	31	19	*
10/10/18	2	7	32	36	22	1
10/11/17	4	8	29	36	22	1
10/9/16	5	9	33	34	20	1
10/11/15	4	8	32	38	18	*
10/15/14	6	10	34	33	17	*
10/6/13	5	8	35	33	18	1
10/9/11	4	7	41	32	15	1
10/10/10	4	9	37	33	16	1
10/4/09	4	8	36	35	16	*
10/5/08	3	8	32	35	22	1
10/7/07	5	10	34	34	17	1
10/12/06	3	9	35	35	18	*
10/16/05	5	7	30	39	19	*
10/14/04	2	6	31	37	24	*
10/8/03	4	7	33	35	21	*
9/5/00	3	9	35	35	18	*

*2020 and previous: Gallup

14. Which political party, the Democrats or the Republicans, do you trust to do a better job handling crime?

	Democrats	Republicans	Both equally (vol.)	Neither (vol.)	No opinion
6/30/21	35	36	3	20	7
10/27/06*	38	36	5	9	12
10/25/02*	27	40	11	7	15

9/1/02**	31	45	7	7	11
6/6/99***	40	37	4	12	8
3/14/99	38	42	6	7	7
9/28/98****	44	45	NA	NA	12
7/12/98	40	39	5	8	8
1/19/98	39	42	5	9	5
7/8/97	38	34	7	16	4
10/23/94	36	34	5	19	6
9/11/94	43	33	6	13	6
2/27/94	39	32	7	18	3
2/2/92	39	35	7	11	7
12/15/91	34	35	8	15	7
3/4/91	28	46	9	12	4
1/16/90	31	43	8	12	6

*Newsweek

**Post/KFF/Harvard University

***Washington Post poll

****1998 and previous: "Handling the crime problem"

15. Do you think [ITEM] would reduce the amount of violent crime in this country, or not? (IF YES) Would it reduce crime a lot, or just somewhat?

6/30/21 - Summary table

	- Would reduce crime -			Would not	No
	NET	A lot	Somewhat	reduce crime	opin.
a. stricter gun control laws	46	27	19	53	2
b. stricter enforcement of current gun laws	51	26	25	47	3
c. increasing funding for police departments	55	31	24	40	5
d. using social workers to help police defuse situations with people having emotional problems	65	31	34	31	4
e. increasing funding to build economic opportunities in poor communities	75	39	37	21	4

Trend where available:

a. stricter gun control laws

	-Would reduce crime --			Would not	No opinion
	NET	A lot	Somewhat	reduce crime	
6/30/21	46	27	19	53	2
4/24/09	42	24	18	57	2
4/22/07	49	27	21	50	2
4/2/00	51	24	26	48	2
9/2/99	50	30	21	48	1

b-e: No trend.

*** END ***