

DEFUND THE POLICE?

Young Adult Attitudes on Policing | Laura Chen

In 2020, 2019, and 2016, the GenForward team asked young adults ages 18-36 various questions about policing, funding for policing, and their support for defunding the police and abolition. Throughout this memo we detail our findings.

The Cost of Policing

Policing in America has a long, painful and racist history that lives on even today. Two issues at the center of current struggles concerning policing are the high percentage of government expenditures dedicated to policing at the expense of other important needs, and the racial disparities that exist in contact, arrests, and harassment by the police.

% of total state and local government expenditures, 2017

Police and corrections



Hospitals



Transit



Housing and community development



*Census State & Local Government
Finance Historical Data, 2017*

State and local governments spend

\$115+
billion

on policing a year.

For most major cities,

25-40%
of general funds
are dedicated
towards policing

Racial Disparities in Policing

Black men are

2.5x

more likely to be killed by police than white men¹

Black women are

1.4x

more likely to be killed by police than white women¹

Transgender people of color are

6x

more likely to report experiencing police violence than white cisgender people²

1. Edwards et al. (2019). "Risk of being killed by police use of force in the United States", PNAS.

2. National Coalition of Anti-violence Programs, "Hate Violence Against Transgender Communities"

> **Black people shot and killed by police were more than twice as likely to have been unarmed** than white people shot and killed by police.

Nix, J., Campbell, B. A., Byers, E. H., & Alpert, G. P. (2017). "A Bird's Eye View of Civilians Killed by Police in 2015," *Criminology & Public Policy*, 16(1), 309–340.

> **Black people are 3 times more likely to report police use of force** in an encounter than white people. **Latinx people were 2.6 times more likely** than whites to do so.

Fryer, R. G. "An Empirical Analysis of Racial Differences in Police Use of Force." 62.

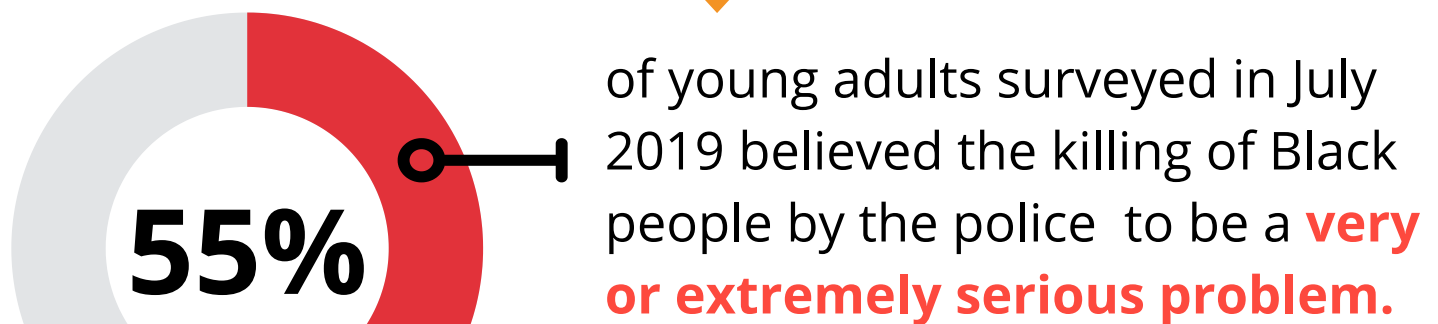
> **58% of reported stops** from New York City's Stop and Frisk data were of **Black people, despite Blacks only comprising 26% of NYC residents.**

Fryer, R. G. "An Empirical Analysis of Racial Differences in Police Use of Force." 62.

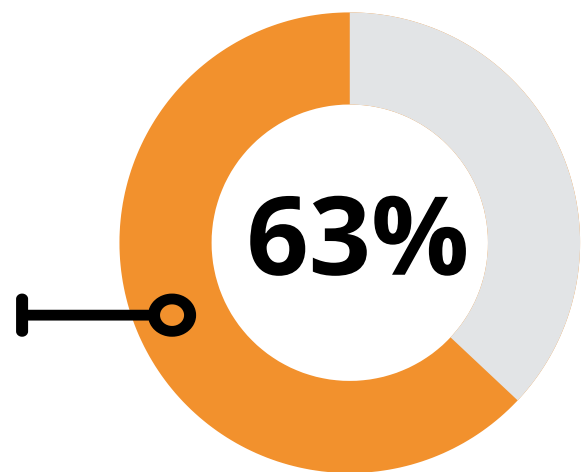
GENFORWARD DATA RESULTS

In 2019 and 2020, the GenForward team asked the following question about the killing of Black people by the police:

“ How serious a problem do you think the killing of Black people by the police is in the United States? ”



In August 2020, this number **rose across race and ethnic groups surveyed**, to an overall

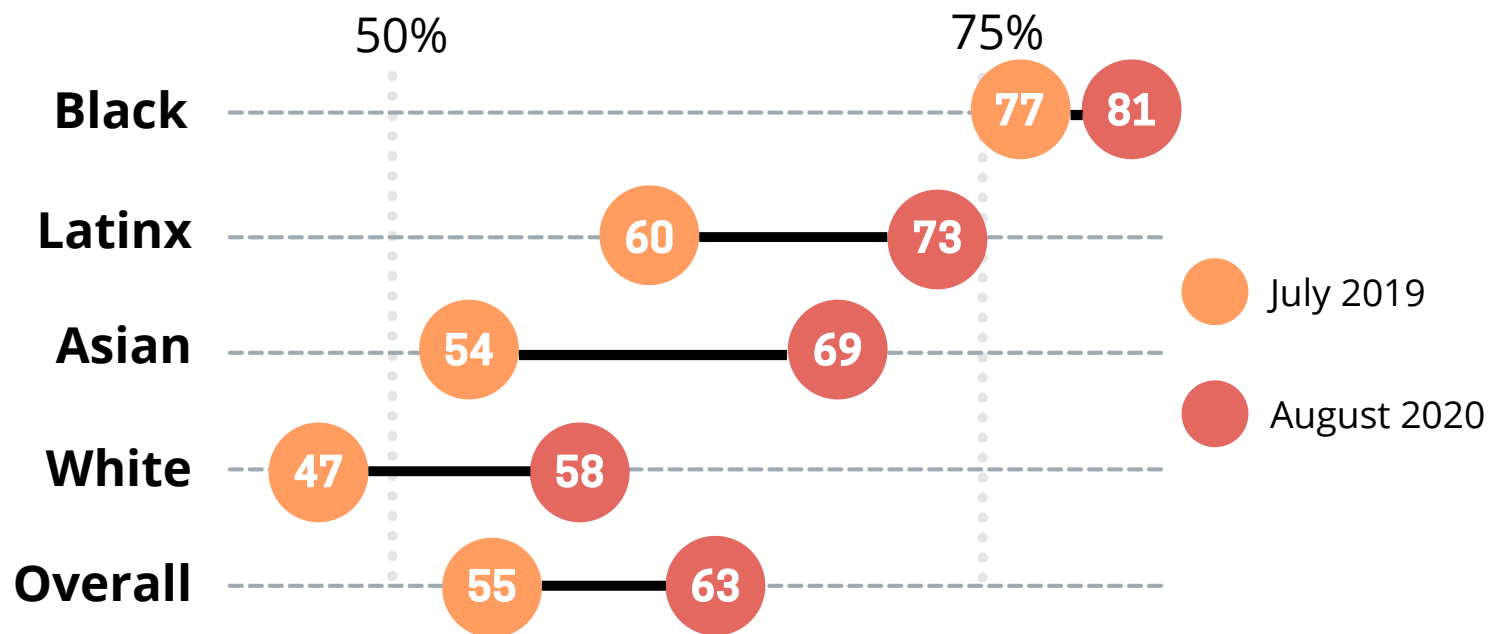


In 2020, **57% of young adults also believed these killings to be part of a larger pattern, rather than isolated incidents**, compared to 49% of respondents in a 2016 survey.



A CLOSER LOOK AT THE DATA

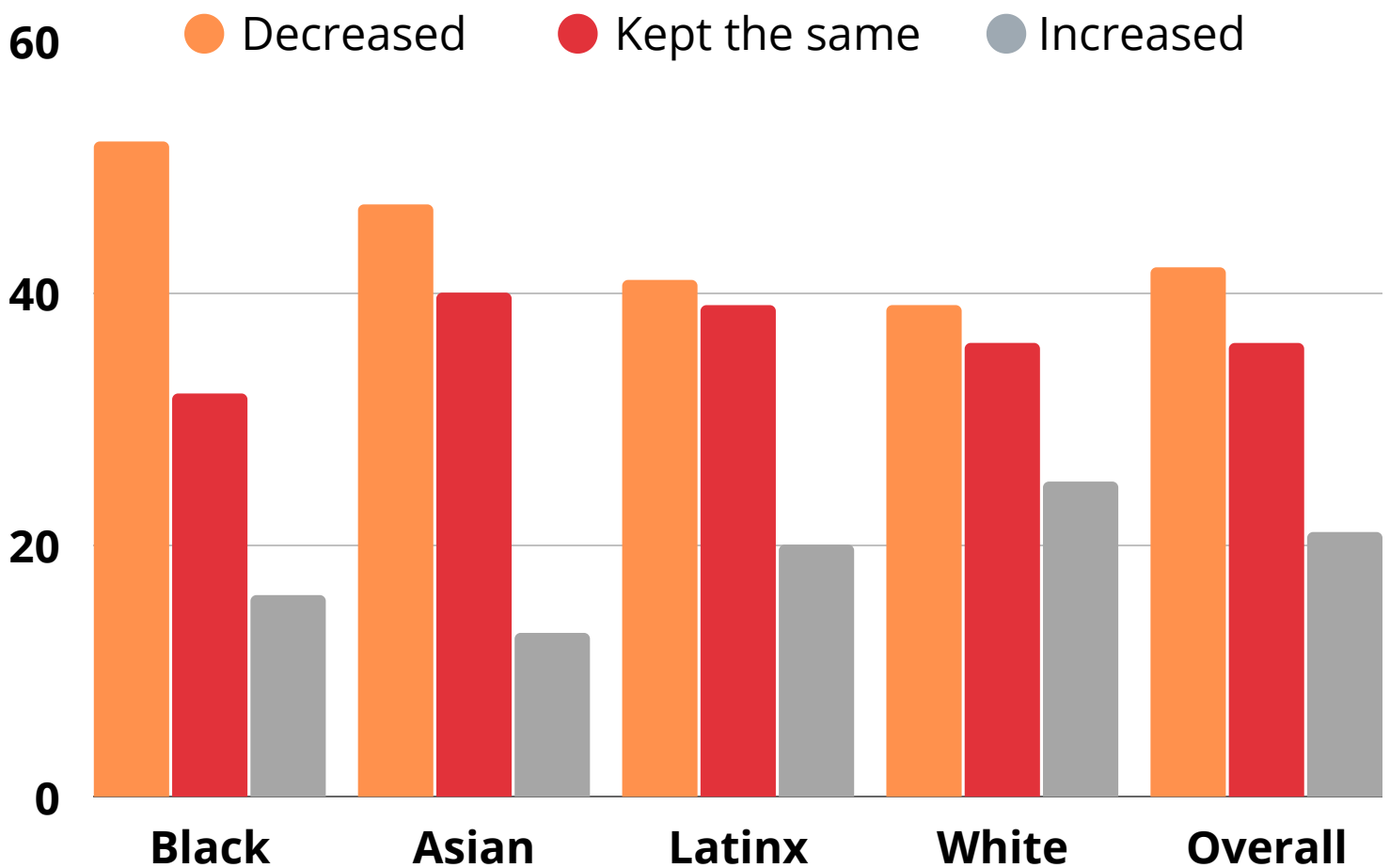
% who believe killing of Black people to be an extremely or very serious problem in the US, by race/ethnicity



- > In 2019, **less than a majority of white young adults** believed police killings of Black people to be an extremely or very serious problem.
- > In 2020, **the majority of all respondents across race and ethnicity indicated that they believed it to be an extremely or very serious issue**, but white young adults remained overall the least likely to do so.

In 2019 and 2020, the GenForward team asked a series of questions about the funding for police.

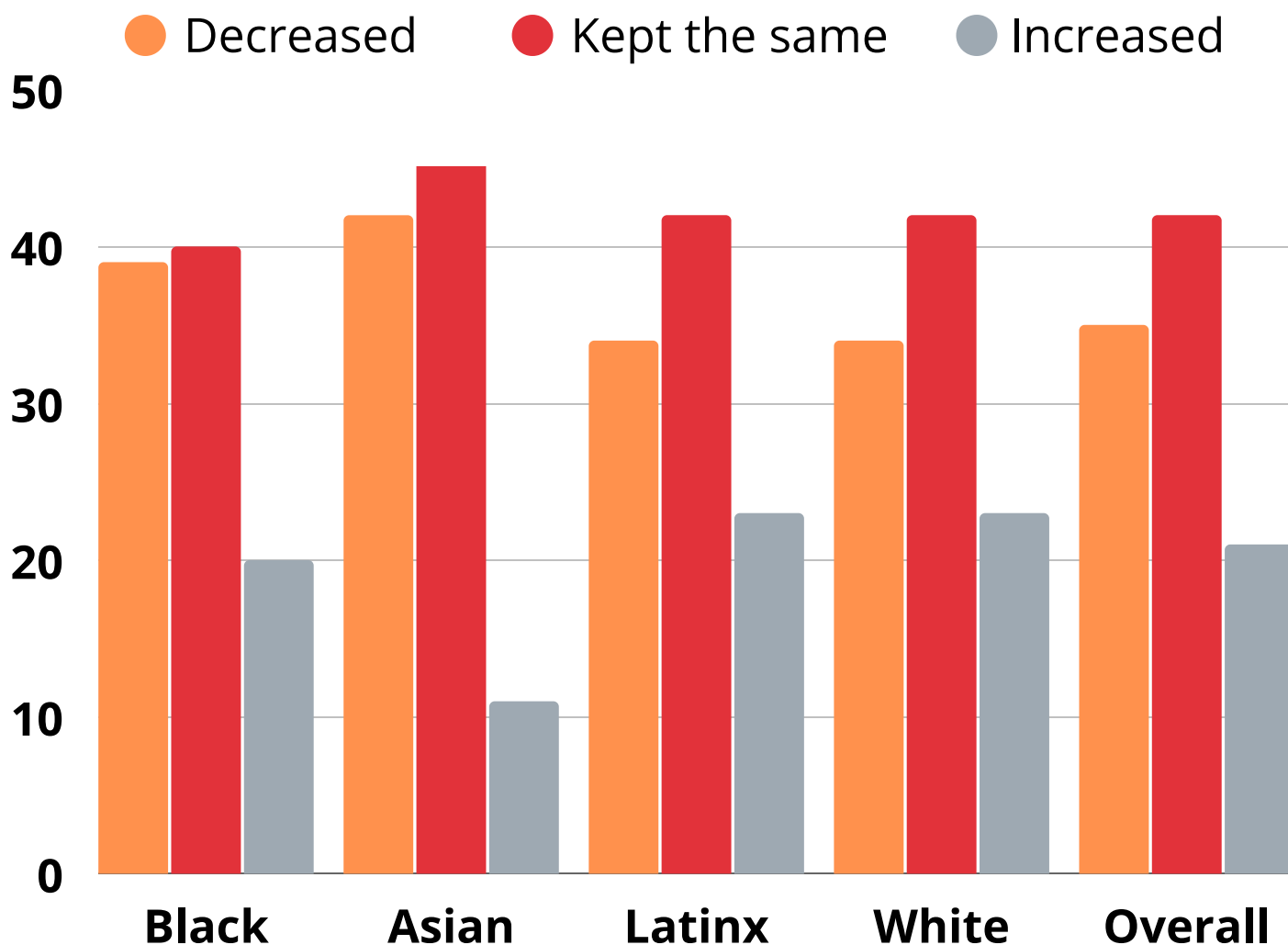
“ Do you believe the funding for the police should be increased, decreased, or kept the same? ”



In 2020, pluralities of young adults across race and ethnicity believed police funding should be decreased. However, opinions among white and Latinx respondents were largely split between decreasing versus keeping the same.



Do you believe the funding for the **local** police department should be increased, decreased, or kept the same?



When asked specifically about their local police department, **pluralities of young adults across race and ethnic groups surveyed believed funding for their local police department should be kept the same.**

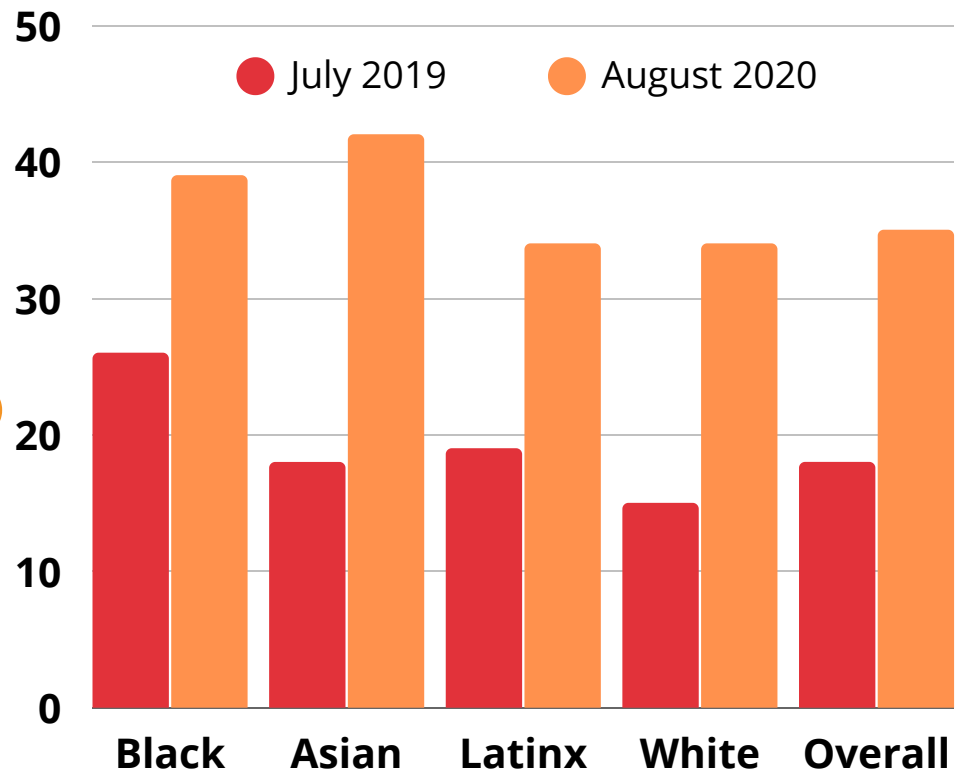


A CLOSER LOOK AT THE DATA

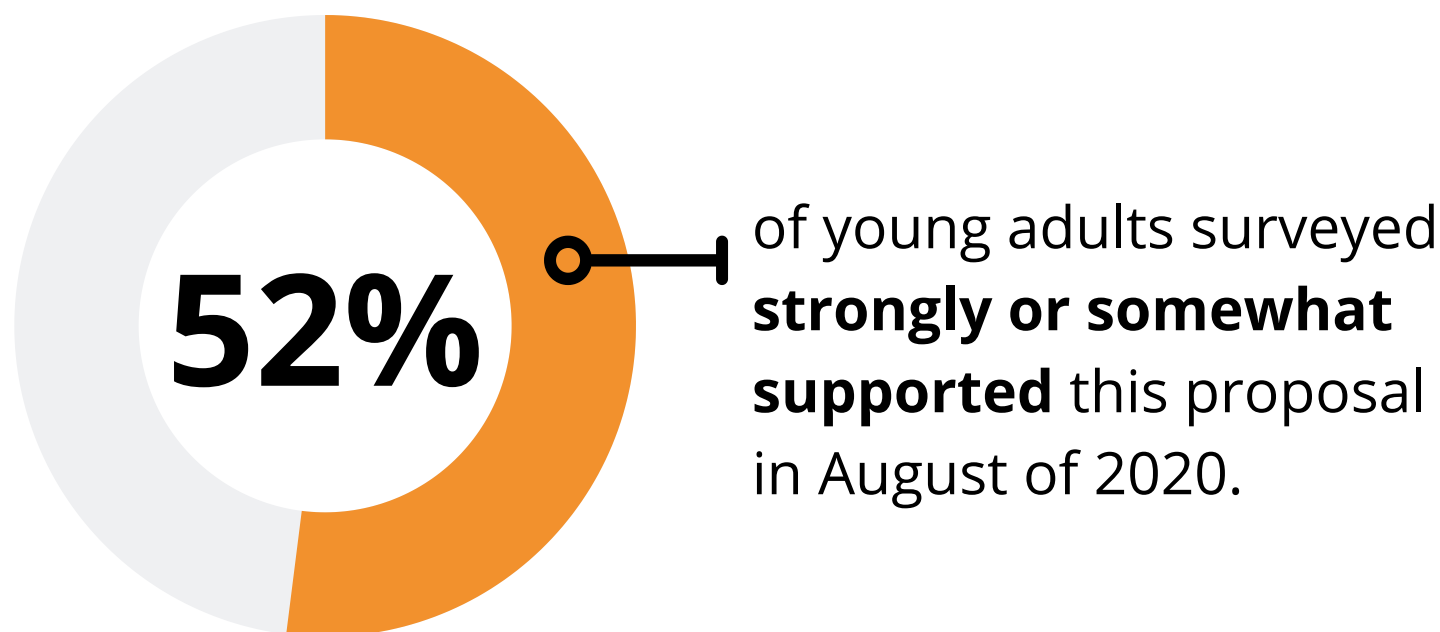
- > Young adults were **more likely to support decreasing funding for the police than decreasing funding for their local police department.**
- > Between July 2019 and August 2020 surveys, **support for decreasing local police department funding nearly doubled**, jumping from 18% to 35% overall.

% of respondents who believed funding for local police department should be decreased

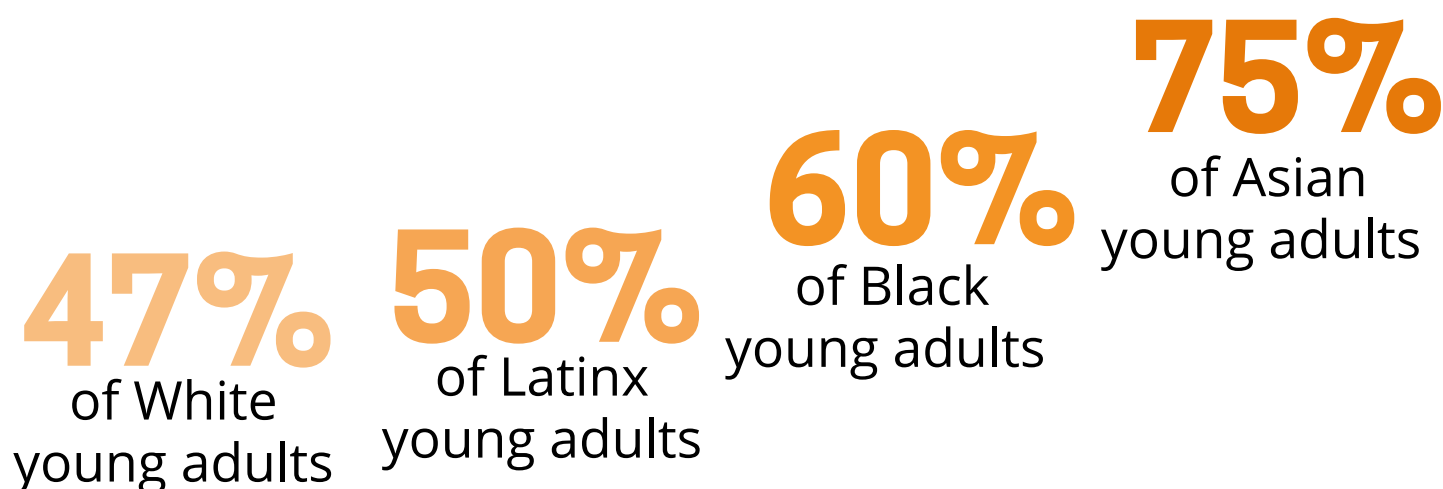
Support for decreasing local police funding grew among all young adults, **across race and ethnic groups surveyed.**



“ Would you support or oppose divesting from police departments and putting their entire budgets toward investments into other areas such as healthcare, education and housing? ”

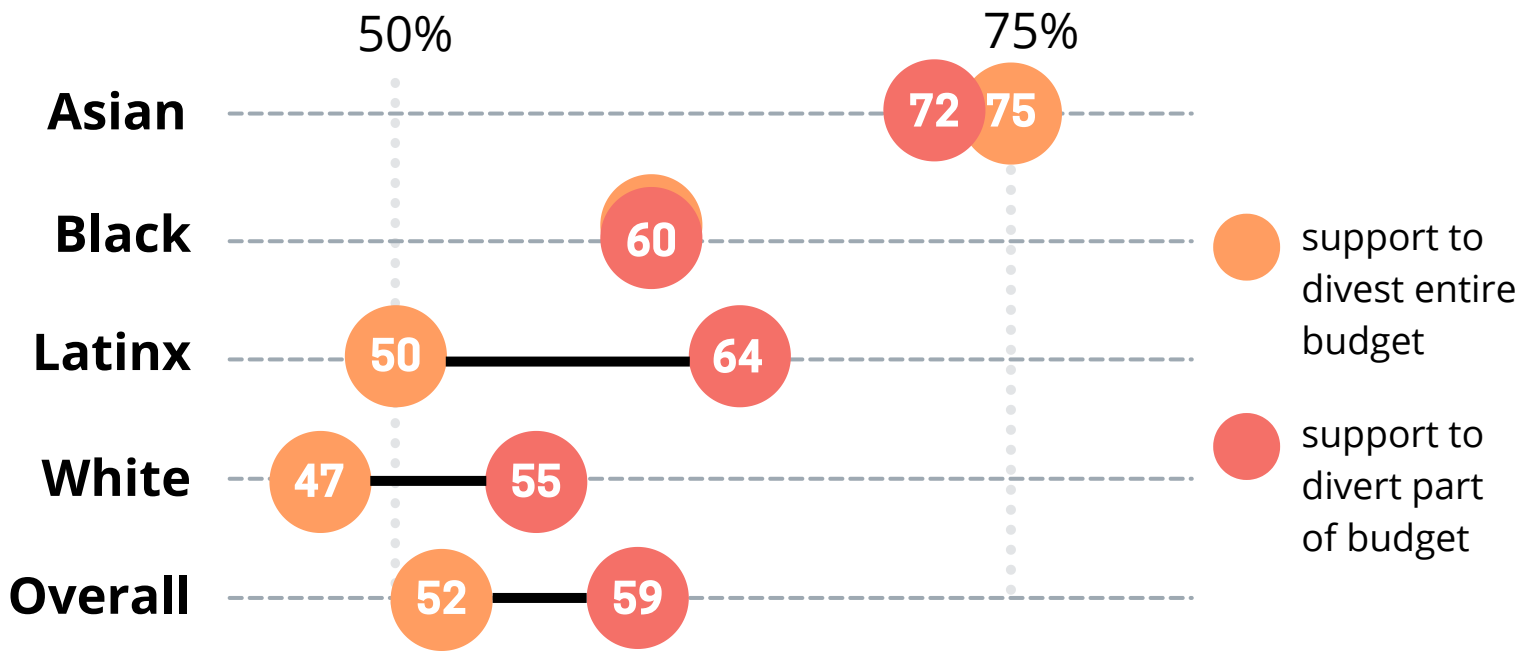


Degree of support varied by race and ethnicity, ranging from:





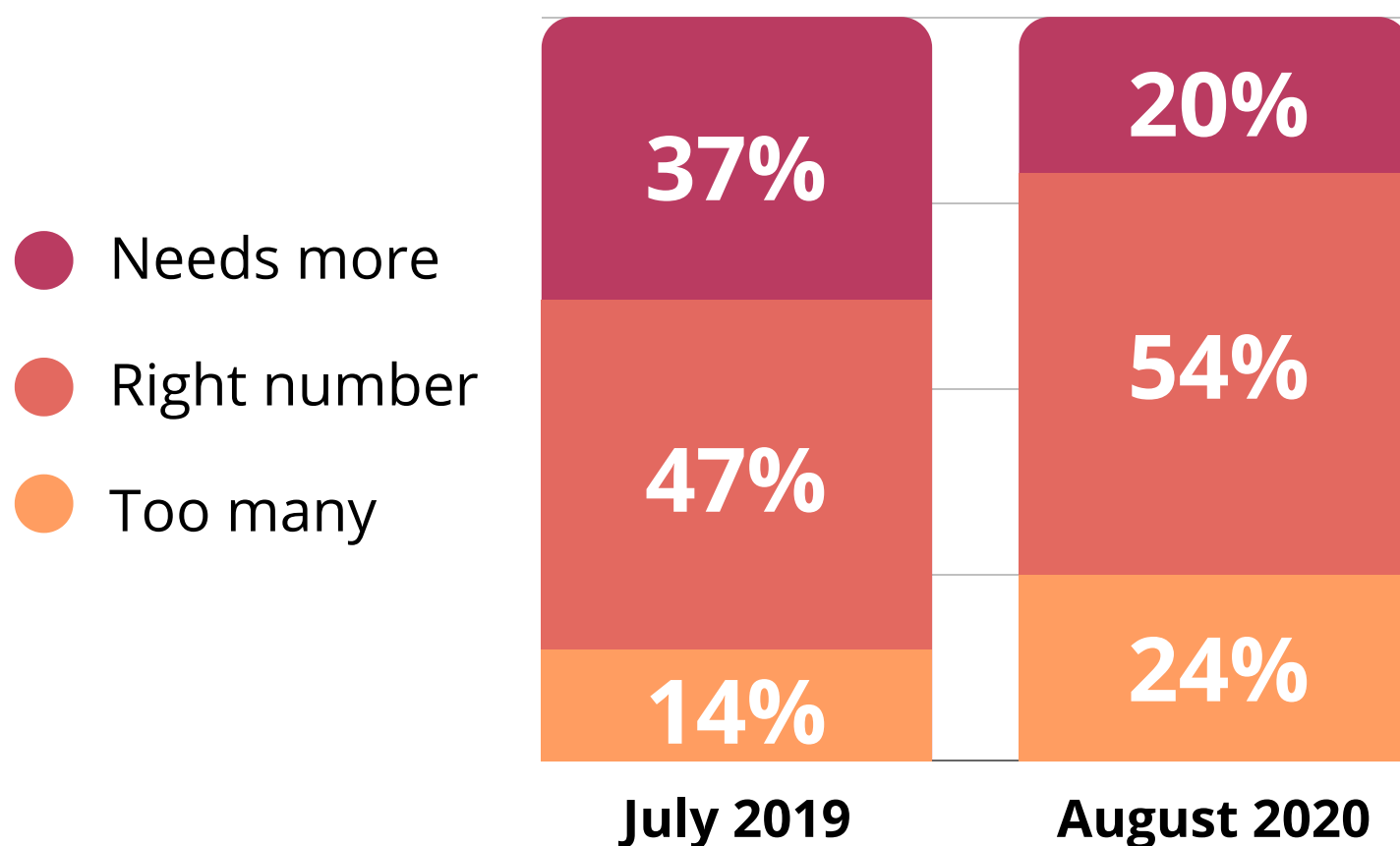
A CLOSER LOOK AT THE DATA



- > When instead asked about divesting only **part** of the police budget towards these areas, a majority of young adults across race and ethnicity indicated strong or somewhat support.
- > **Rates of support among Black young adults were consistent** when asked about divesting the entire versus only part of the budget.
- > For Latinx and white young adults, **rates of support were much higher when asked about divesting part of, rather than the entire police budget.**

In July 2019 and August 2020, the GenForward team asked young adults about their opinions on the number of police officers.

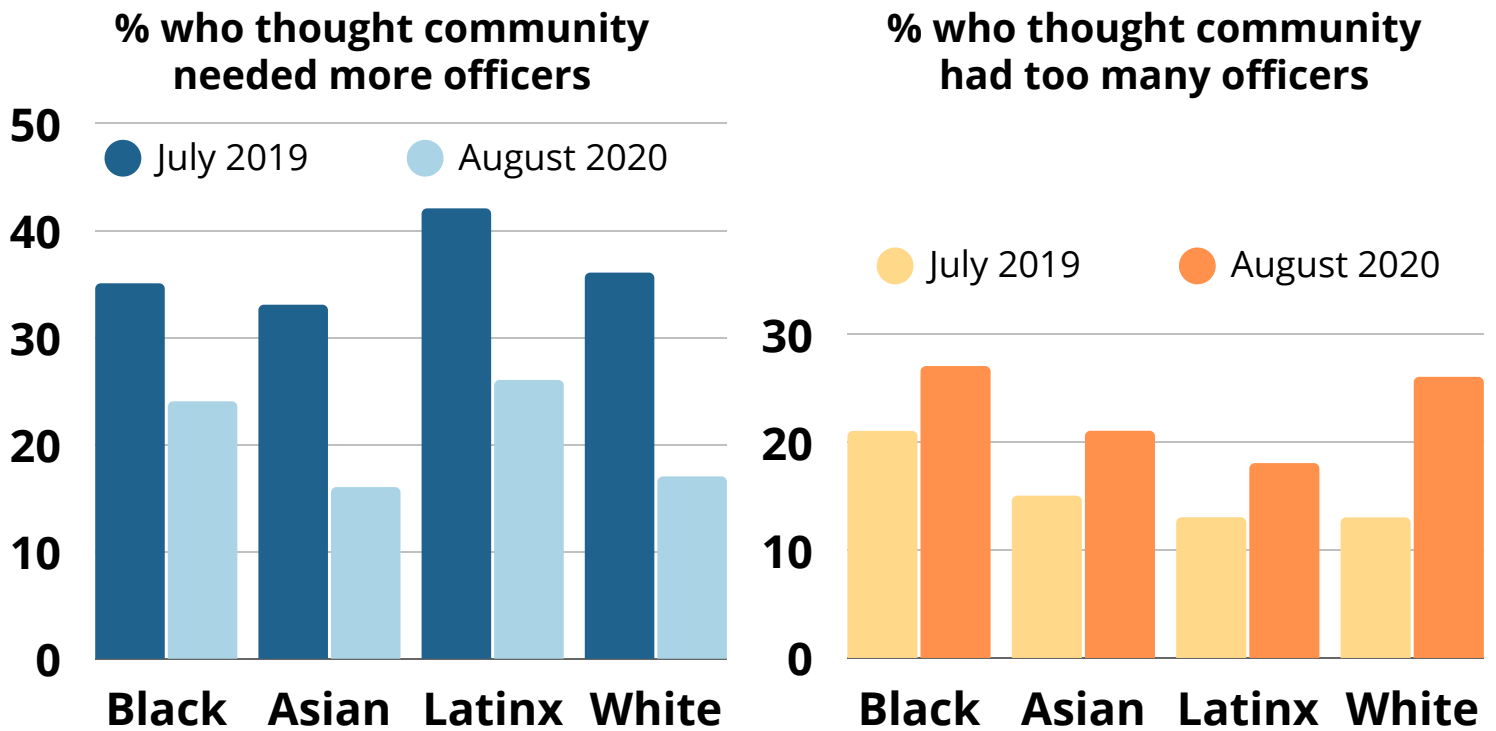
“ Do you think **your community** has the right number of police officers, needs more, or has too many? ”



In 2020, the majority of young adults believed their community had the right number of officers. However, in 2020 a larger percentage of young people (nearly one out of four, or 25%) believed their community had too many police officers.



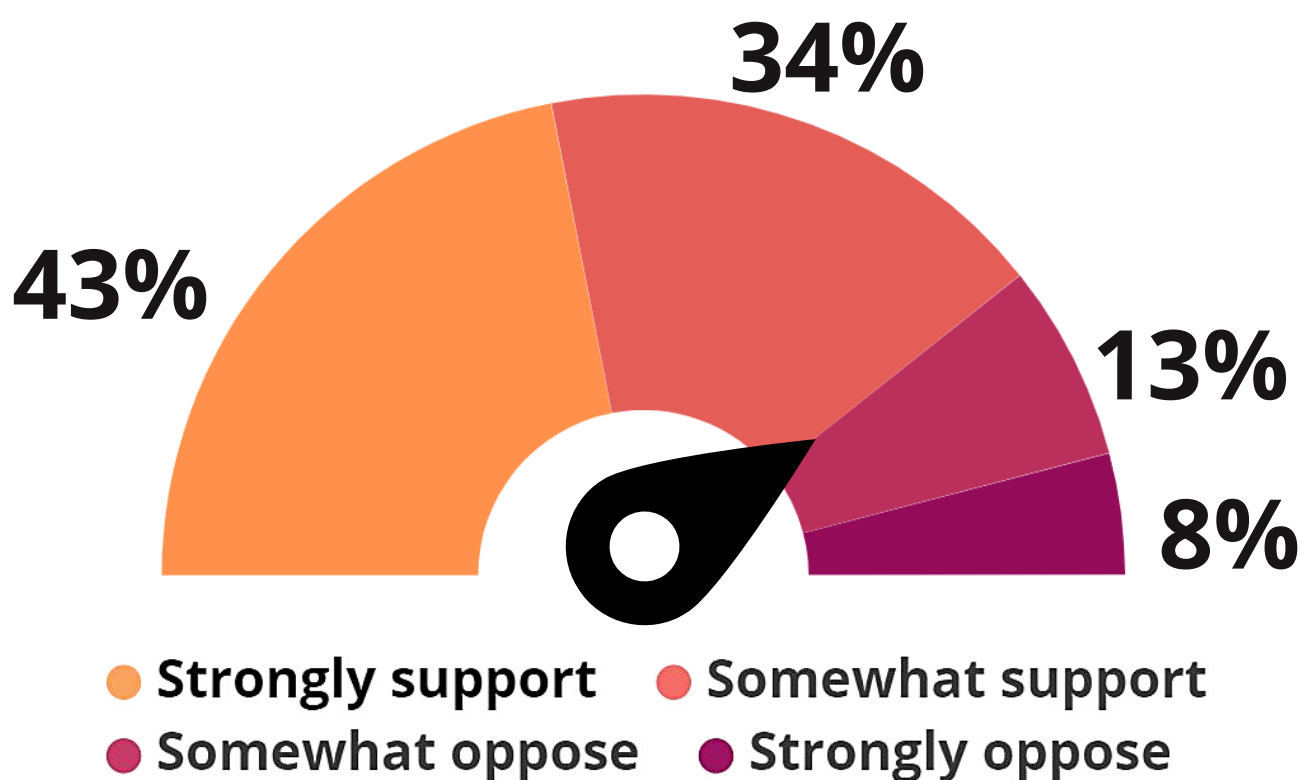
A CLOSER LOOK AT THE DATA



- > Black young adults were the most likely to believe their community had too many officers.
- > Asian young adults were the least likely to believe their community needed more officers.
- > The number of white young adults surveyed who thought their community needed more officers halved from 2019 to 2020, while the number who thought it had too many officers doubled.

In August 2020, the GenForward team asked young adults whether they would support creating a new agency to provide for public safety

“ Would you support or oppose creating a new agency of first responders that specialize in de-escalation of violence, providing mental health support, and other social services that would take over these responsibilities from the police? ”



The creation of a separate agency to handle issues such as de-escalation of violence and mental health was heavily favored among young adults, with 77% of all respondents strongly or somewhat supporting the idea.

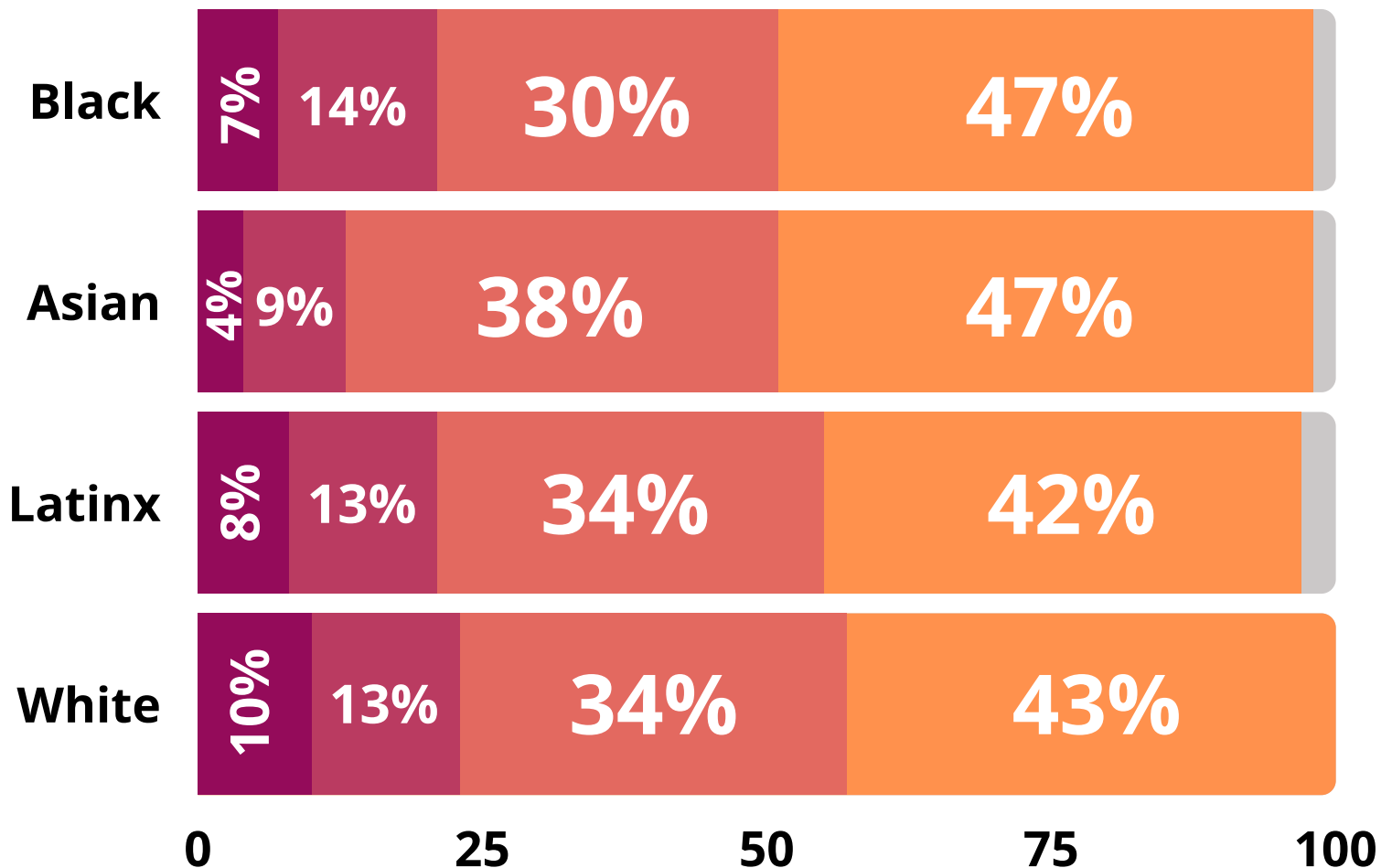


A CLOSER LOOK AT THE DATA



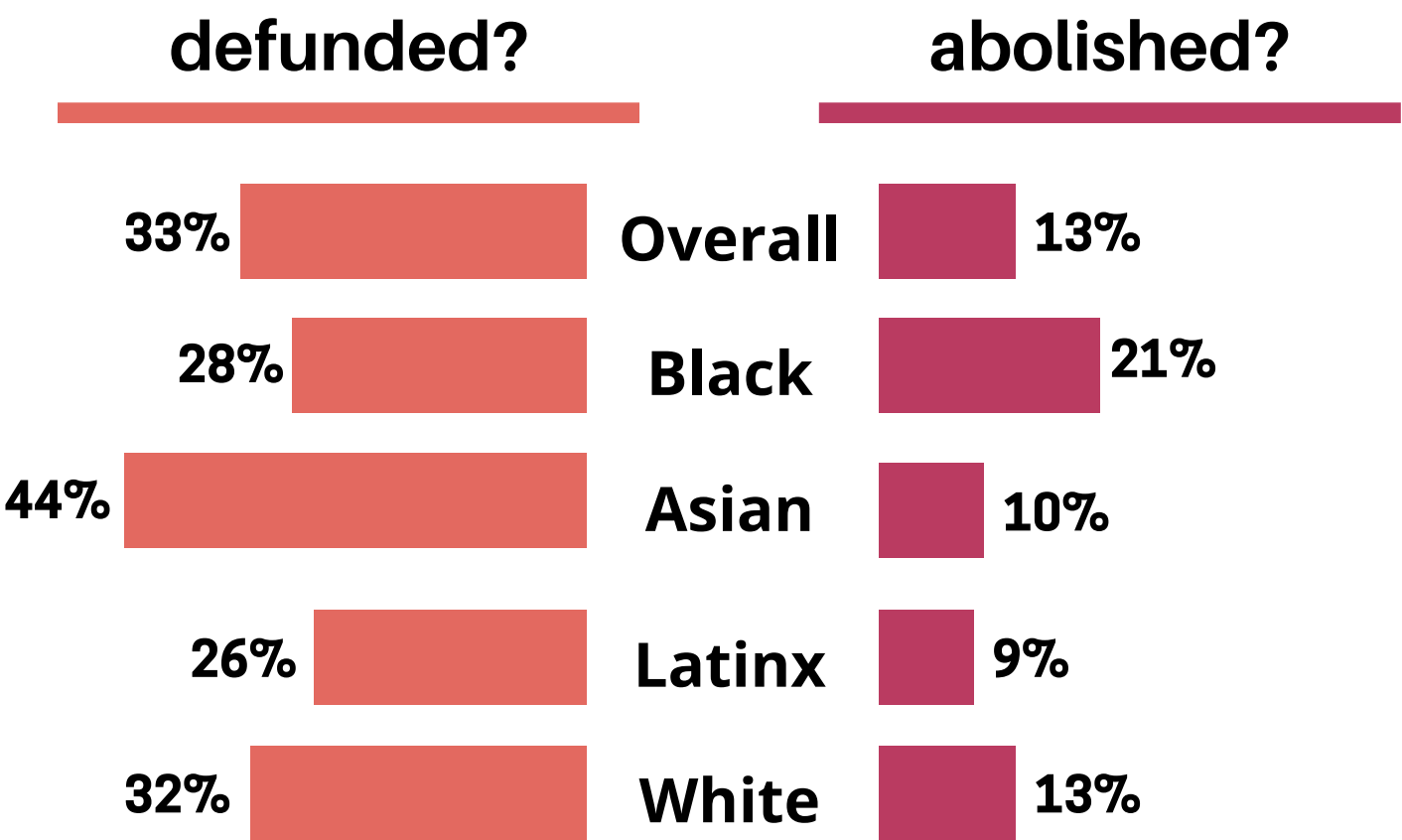
Rates of **support for creating a new agency** of first responders that specialize in de-escalating violence, providing mental health support, and other social services were **extremely high among race and ethnic groups surveyed.**

● Strongly oppose ● Somewhat support ● Don't know
● Somewhat oppose ● Strongly support



In 2020, GenForward also asked questions about defunding and abolishing police departments.

“ Do you think police departments in the United states should be... ”



In 2020, pluralities of Black and Asian American young adults responded that the police should be defunded, while pluralities of Latinx and white young adults responded that they should not be. Fewer young adults thought police departments should be abolished, though support for abolition was strongest among Black young adults.