Criminal Justice
by Race and Ethnicity
July 2019
Survey Overview

The GenForward Survey, founded by Dr. Cathy Cohen at the University of Chicago, is the first of its kind—a nationally representative survey of over 3,250 young adults ages 18-36 conducted bimonthly that pays special attention to the ways race and ethnicity influence how young adults, both Millennials and Gen-Zers, experience and think about the world.

Given the importance of race and ethnicity for shaping the diverse perspectives and lived experiences of young people, we believe researchers make a mistake when they present data on young adults in a manner that assumes a monolithic Millennial generation and young adult vote.

In this slide deck, we present an empirical overview of young adults’ views on criminal justice in the United States. A total of 3,427 interviews were conducted between June 27th and July 11th, 2019 with adults ages 18-36, including completed interviews with 896 African American, 539 Asian American, 995 Latinx, and 903 white young adults.
Key Findings

- A plurality of young adults across racial groups say that criminal justice issues will influence their vote in the 2020 presidential election. Forty-three percent of African Americans, 40% of Asian Americans, 42% of Latinx, and 43% of whites agree that criminal justice issues will influence their vote.

- Across race and ethnicity, 70% of young adults strongly or somewhat support restoring the voting rights of all those who have served their time in jail or prison. Specifically, 70% of African Americans, 73% of Asian Americans, 70% of Latinx, and 69% of whites support restoring voting rights of the formerly incarcerated.

- A large majority (84%) of young adults somewhat or strongly agree that police are necessary for safe communities, including 72% of African Americans, 81% of Latinxs, 86% of Asian Americans, and 88% of whites.

- A majority of young adults (57%), across race and ethnicity, agree that police treat Black individuals worse than white individuals. African American young adults agree at 76%, as do 57% of Asian American, 59% of Latinx, and 50% of white young adults.
Key Findings

- A majority of young adults (51%) across race and ethnicity agree that police treat Latinx individuals worse than white individuals: 54% of African Americans, 57% of Asian Americans, 57% of Latinxs, and 47% of whites agree.

- A near majority of African American young adults (46%) say they “always” or “often” go out of their way to avoid contact with the police or other law enforcement. Only 21% of Asian American, 29% of Latinx, and 26% of white young adults say they “always” or “often” go out of their way to avoid police or other law enforcement.

- While African Americans are more likely to strongly support criminal justice and policing reforms, majorities of white, Latinx, and Asian American young adults also say that they somewhat support policies including putting police under the supervision of community review boards, making it more difficult to put people in jail for minor violations like failing to pay a traffic ticket, eliminating cash bond and other fines and fees needed to be released from jail, eliminating the question asking about prior criminal record (banning the box), and eliminating jail or prison time for non-violent offences.

- A large majority of young adults (78%) across race and ethnicity support policies that would make it more difficult to put people in jail for minor violations like failing to pay a traffic ticket. Specifically 75% of African Americans, 81% of Asian Americans, 74% of Latinxs, and 82% of whites somewhat or strongly support this policy.
Key Findings

- A large majority of young adults (75%) strongly or somewhat support policies that put police under the supervision of community accountability boards. Specifically, 78% of African Americans, 80% of Asian Americans, 77% of Latinxs, and 72% of whites support this policy.

- Majorities of young adults (54%), across race and ethnicity, strongly or somewhat support eliminating cash bonds, including 57% of African Americans, 59% of Asian Americans, 55% of Latinxs, and 52% of whites.

- A majority (58%) of African American and Latinx (53%) young adults support allowing individuals who are currently in jail or prison to vote. Majorities of Asian Americans (53%) and whites (56%) oppose this policy.

- Pluralities of young people support the status quo in terms of the structure of policing regarding funding and numbers of police officers. Specifically, 40% of African Americans, 43% of Asian Americans, 41% of Latinxs, and 45% of whites believe that funding for their local police departments should be kept the same. In addition, 43% of African Americans, 51% of Asian Americans, 43% of Latinx, and 50% of whites believe that their local police department has the right number of police officers.
Key Findings

- Majorities of young adults across race and ethnicity feel favorable towards their police departments: 57% of African Americans, 80% of Asian Americans, 69% of Latinxs, and 76% of whites feel very or mostly favorable towards their local police departments. The percentage of African American young adults who feel very or mostly favorable is smaller than other racial groups; even so, a majority still reports feeling favorable.

- Majorities of white (54%) and Asian American (51%) young adults feel you can trust the police to do what is right always or often. Only 30% of African Americans and 39% of Latinxs agree.

- Strong majorities of Asian American (68%), Latinx (58%), and white (67%) young adults say they would always or almost always call the police if they needed help—and a near majority of African Americans (48%) say they would do the same. However, approximately one in five (21%) of African American young adults say they would never or almost never call the police if they needed help.

- Majorities of young adults of color—African Americans (72%), Asian Americans (59%) and Latinxs (59%) believe that the killing of Black Americans by police are part of a larger pattern in the police’s treatment of Black Americans.
Key Findings

- A majority of African American young adults (57%) believe the killing of Black people by the police in the United States is an extremely serious problem. Majorities of Asian Americans (54%) and Latinxs (60%) believe this is an extremely or very serious problem. A majority of young whites (47%) do not recognize the killing of Black Americans by the police as an extremely or very serious problem, though a plurality of young whites (33%) think it is a moderately serious problem.

- A majority of young adults of color and a plurality of young whites believe the police get off too often when charged with the killing of Black people. African Americans agree at 76%, as do 53% of Asian Americans, 62% of Latinxs, and 49% of whites.

- Majorities of young adults (65%) somewhat or strongly support the Black Lives Matter Movement: 81% of African Americans, 67% of Asian Americans, 70% of Latinxs, and 57% of whites.

- A majority (53%) of African American young adults disagree that “courts generally get cases right, meaning most of the people convicted of a crime really are guilty...” However, majorities of Asian American (68%), Latinx (61%) and white (69%) young adults strongly or somewhat agree that courts generally get cases right.
Key Findings

- Majorities of African American (60%) and Latinx (52%) young adults do not agree that communities are safer when we send people to prison who are convicted of certain non-violent offenses. Majorities of Asian American (58%) and white (57%) young adults agree that communities are safer when we imprison nonviolent offenders.

- Majorities (65%) of young adults, across race and ethnicity, somewhat or strongly agree that the use of prisons has negatively impacted Black communities more than other communities: 81% of African Americans, 70% of Asian Americans, 64% of Latinxs, and 61% of whites agree.

- Majorities of Asian Americans (55%), Latinxs (52%), and white (52%) young adults somewhat or strongly oppose hiring private companies to operate prisons in the US. African Americans are more split on this issue, opposing this policy at 49%. However, 21% of African American young adults say that they “Don’t know” if they do or do not support private prisons, as do 18% of Asian Americans, 18% of Latinxs, and 23% of whites.
Importance of Criminal Justice for 2020 Vote

Pluralities of young adults across racial groups say that criminal justice issues will influence their vote in the 2020 presidential election.

Young adults who say criminal justice will influence their vote:

- African Americans: 43%
- Asian Americans: 40%
- Latinxs: 42%
- Whites: 43%

How important is the issue of criminal justice in choosing who you will vote for in the 2020 presidential election? Would you say it is the most important issue, it will influence my vote, it’s an important issue, but won’t sway my vote, or it’s not an important issue at all?
Voting Rights for Formerly Incarcerated

Across race and ethnicity, 70% of young adults strongly or somewhat support restoring the voting rights of all those who have served their time in jail or prison.

Those who strongly or somewhat support this policy:

- African Americans: 70%
- Asian Americans: 73%
- Latinxs: 70%
- Whites: 69%

Do you support or oppose the idea that once someone has served their time in jail or prison, their voting rights should be automatically restored?
Voting Rights for Currently Incarcerated

A near majority of young adults (48%) support allowing those currently in jail or prison to vote—though, this support is driven by African American and Latinx young adults.

Those who strongly or somewhat support this policy:

- African Americans: 58%
- Asian Americans: 47%
- Latinxs: 53%
- Whites: 44%
Local Police Department Funding

Pluralities of young people support the status quo in terms of the structure of policing regarding funding and numbers of police officers.

Those who believe that funding should be kept the same:

- African Americans: 40%
- Asian Americans: 43%
- Latinxs: 41%
- Whites: 45%
A plurality (47%) of young adults believe that their local police department has the right number of officers.

African Americans: 43%
Asian Americans: 51%
Latinx: 43%
Whites: 50%
A large majority (84%) of young adults somewhat or strongly agree that police are necessary for safe communities. Even so, fewer African Americans agree that police are necessary for safe communities than do other racial groups.

African Americans: 72%  
Latinxs: 81%  
Asian Americans: 86%  
Whites: 88%
Local Police Department Favorability

A majority (72%) of young adults across race and ethnicity feel favorable towards their police departments. The percentage of African American young adults who feel very or mostly favorable is smaller than other racial groups; even so, a majority still reports feeling favorable.

Those who feel very or mostly favorable towards their local police departments:

- African Americans: 57%
- Asian Americans: 80%
- Latinxs: 69%
- Whites: 76%

GenForward surveys are available at www.genforwardsurvey.com
A plurality (47%) of young adults believe you can trust the police to do what is right. However, young people are split along racial lines:

Majorities of white (54%) and Asian American (51%) young adults feel you can trust the police to do what is right always or often. Only 30% of African Americans and 39% of Latinxs agree.
A majority of young adults (57%), across race and ethnicity, agree that police treat Black individuals worse than white individuals.

African Americans: 76%
Asian Americans: 57%
Latinx: 59%
Whites: 50%
A majority of young adults (51%), across race and ethnicity, agree that police treat Latinx individuals worse than white individuals.

Those who agree that police treat Latinx individuals worse:
- African Americans: 54%
- Asian Americans: 57%
- Latinxs: 57%
- Whites: 47%
Violence Against the Police

A plurality of young adults (33%) believe that violence against the police is a moderately serious problem in the US.

African Americans: 26%
Asian Americans: 41%
Latinxs: 34%
Whites: 33%
Call the Police When in Need

Strong majorities of Asian American (68%), Latinx (58%), and white (67%) young adults say they would always or almost always call the police if they needed help—and a near majority of African Americans (48%) say they would do the same.

However, approximately one in five (21%) of African American young adults say they would never or almost never call the police if they needed help.
Have You Ever Been Stopped by Police?

Fifty-seven percent of young adults say yes they’ve been stopped by police, while 48% say someone they know has been stopped. Whites are the racial group that says they have been stopped by police the most at 61%.

Those who have been stopped by police:

African Americans: 59%
Asian Americans: 39%
Latinxs: 51%
Whites: 61%

Those who know someone who has been stopped:

African Americans: 52%
Asian Americans: 41%
Latinxs: 49%
Whites: 47%

Have you or someone you know ever been stopped by the police? Please select all that apply.
Have You Ever Been Arrested?

Few young adults (16%) report having ever been arrested themselves. However, around 52% report knowing someone who has been arrested.

Those who have been arrested:
- African Americans: 23%
- Asian Americans: 10%
- Latinxs: 19%
- Whites: 14%

Those who know someone who has been arrested:
- African Americans: 59%
- Asian Americans: 31%
- Latinxs: 48%
- Whites: 55%
Have You Ever Been Convicted of a Crime?

A small portion of young adults say they’ve been convicted of a crime--just 11%. Still, around 44% say they know someone who has been convicted of a crime.

Those who have been convicted of a crime themselves:

- African Americans: 13%
- Asian Americans: 7%
- Latinxs: 11%
- Whites: 11%

Those who know someone who has been convicted of a crime:

- African Americans: 54%
- Asian Americans: 24%
- Latinxs: 39%
- Whites: 46%

Have you or someone you know ever been convicted of a crime? Please select all that apply.
Fine or Fee for Non-criminal Offense?

Less than a quarter (22%) of young adults report having been charged a fine or fee for a non-criminal offense. More young adults say they know someone, however, that has been charged. Those who have been charged a fine or fee themselves:

- African Americans: 26%
- Asian Americans: 15%
- Latinxs: 22%
- Whites: 22%

Those who know someone who has been charged:

- African Americans: 47%
- Asian Americans: 24%
- Latinxs: 39%
- Whites: 46%

Have you or someone you know been charged a fine or fee for a non-criminal offense, such as driving without insurance, disorderly conduct, or loitering? Please select all that apply.

GenForward surveys are available at www.genforwardsurvey.com
Parole or Probation?

Just 9% of young adults report having been on parole or probation themselves. Yet, 44% say they know someone who has ever been on parole or probation. More African Americans than any other group says they or someone they know has been on parole or probation. Those who have been on parole or probation themselves:

African Americans: 13%
Asian Americans: 5%
Latinxs: 9%
Whites: 8%

Those who know someone who has been on parole or probation:

African Americans: 55%
Asian Americans: 24%
Latinxs: 40%
Whites: 45%
Jail or Prison?

Few young adults report having been in jail or prison—just 10%. Fifty percent say they know someone who has been in jail or prison, however. More African Americans than any other racial group say they’ve been in jail or prison or know someone who has.

Those who have been in jail or prison:

- African Americans: 13%
- Asian Americans: 7%
- Latinxs: 11%
- Whites: 9%

Those who know someone who has been in jail or prison:

- African Americans: 64%
- Asian Americans: 27%
- Latinxs: 50%
- Whites: 48%

Have you or someone you know been in jail or prison? Please select all that apply.
Experienced Police Violence

Twelve percent of young adults say they have experienced police violence and 29% say they know someone who has experienced police violence.

Those who have experienced police violence:

African Americans: 20%
Asian Americans: 6%
Latinxs: 15%
Whites: 10%

Those who know someone who has experienced police violence:

African Americans: 45%
Asian Americans: 20%
Latinxs: 33%
Whites: 24%
Avoiding Police or Other Law Enforcement

A near majority of African American young adults (46%) say they “always” or “often” go out of their way to avoid contact with the police or other law enforcement.

Only 21% of Asian American, 29% of Latinx, and 26% of white young adults say they “always” or “often” go out of their way to avoid police or other law enforcement.
Body Cameras

Majorities of young adults across race and ethnicity support requiring on duty police officers to wear video cameras that would record their interactions with the public as they occur.

Those who support this policy:

African Americans: 64%
Asian Americans: 63%
Latinxs: 62%
Whites: 59%
Minor Violations

A large majority of young adults (78%) across race and ethnicity support policies that would make it more difficult to put people in jail for minor violations like failing to pay a traffic ticket.

Specifically 75% of African Americans, 81% of Asian Americans, 74% of Latinxs, and 82% of whites somewhat or strongly support this policy.
Community Accountability Boards

Here are some policy changes that have been suggested to help prevent police violence against civilians. For each one, please tell me whether you support or oppose the policy change. Putting police under the supervision of community accountability boards to give local residents an opportunity to influence policing strategies and hold local police accountable.

A large majority of young adults (75%) strongly or somewhat support policies that put police under the supervision of community accountability boards.

Specifically, 78% of African Americans, 80% of Asian Americans, 77% of Latinxs, and 72% of whites somewhat or strongly support this policy.
Community Policing

A plurality (39%) of young adults somewhat support community policing, a strategy that emphasizes close collaboration between police and community members.

Those who somewhat or strongly support this policy:

African Americans: 76%
Asian Americans: 81%
Latinxs: 76%
Whites: 77%
Eliminating Cash Bonds

Here are some policy changes that have been suggested to help reform the criminal justice system. For each one, please tell me whether you support or oppose the policy change. Eliminating cash bonds, or the fees and fines individuals must pay to be released from jail after being charged with a crime.

Majorities of young adults (54%), across race and ethnicity, strongly or somewhat support eliminating cash bonds, including 57% of African Americans, 59% of Asian Americans, 55% of Latinxs, and 52% of whites.
A majority (63%) of young adults strongly or somewhat support eliminating jail or prison time for non-violent offenses.

Those who support the policy:

African Americans: 71%
Asian American: 67%
Latinxs: 64%
Whites: 60%
Here are some policy changes that have been suggested to help reform the criminal justice system. For each one, please tell me whether you support or oppose the policy change. Eliminate the question asking if a person has a criminal record on applications like those for employment, housing, and college admissions (“Ban the Box”).

A majority (56%) of young adults support eliminating the question asking if a person has a criminal record on applications for employment, housing, and college admissions. African Americans are the most supportive of this policy, at with 34% strongly supportive of the policy and 31% somewhat supportive.

Those who support this policy:

African Americans: 65%
Asian American: 57%
Latinxs: 60%
Whites: 52%

GenForward surveys are available at www.genforwardsurvey.com
Release those serving Time for Nonviolent Offenses

Here are some policy changes that have been suggested to help reform the criminal justice system. For each one, please tell me whether you support or oppose the policy change. Release everyone serving time in jail or prison for non-violent offenses.

Though a majority (54%) of young adults support this policy, African American young adults are the most supportive of releasing everyone serving time in jail or prison for nonviolent offenses, strongly or somewhat supportive at 65%.

Those who support this policy:

African Americans: 65%
Asian American: 54%
Latinxs: 53%
Whites: 51%
Police Killings of Black Americans

Majorities of young adults of color—African Americans (72%), Asian Americans (59%) and Latinxs (59%) believe that the killing of Black Americans by police are part of a larger pattern in the police’s treatment of Black Americans.
A majority of African American young adults (57%) believe the killing of Black people by the police in the United States is an extremely serious problem. Majorities of Asian Americans (54%) and Latinxs (60%) believe this is an extremely or very serious problem. A majority of young whites (47%) do not recognize the killing of Black Americans by the police as an extremely or very serious problem, though a plurality of young whites (33%) think it is a moderately serious problem.
A majority of young adults of color and a plurality of young whites believe the police get off too often when charged with the killing of Black people. African Americans agree at 76%, as do 53% of Asian Americans, 62% of Latinxs, and 49% of whites.
Support for Black Lives Matter Movement

Majorities of young adults (65%) somewhat or strongly support the Black Lives Matter Movement.

Those who say they somewhat or strongly support the Black Lives Matter Movement:

- African Americans: 81%
- Asian Americans: 67%
- Latinxs: 70%
- Whites: 57%
Courts Generally Get Cases Right

A majority (53%) of African American young adults disagree that “courts generally get cases right, meaning most of the people convicted of a crime really are guilty…”

However, majorities of Asian American (68%), Latinx (61%) and white (69%) young adults strongly or somewhat agree that courts generally get cases right.
Community Safety and Non-Violent Offenses

Majorities of African American (60%) and Latinx (52%) young adults do not agree that communities are safer when we send people to prison who are convicted of certain non-violent offenses.

Majorities of Asian American (58%) and white (57%) young adults agree that communities are safer when we imprison nonviolent offenders.
Prison or Jail as Deterrents

A small majority of young adults (52%) do not agree that time in prisons and jails reduces the likelihood that a person will commit more crime in the future.

Those who disagree with this statement:

- African Americans: 53%
- Asian Americans: 48%
- Latinxs: 45%
- Whites: 55%

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Please indicate how much do you agree or disagree with the following: Time in prison or jail reduces the likelihood a person will commit more crime in the future.
Impact of Prisons on Black Communities

Majorities of Asian Americans (55%), Latinxs (52%), and white (52%) young adults somewhat or strongly oppose hiring private companies to operate prisons in the US. African Americans are more split on this issue, opposing this policy at 49%.

Still, 21% of African American young adults say that they “Don’t know” if they do or do not support private prisons, as do 18% of Asian Americans, 18% of Latinxs, and 23% of whites.
Majorities of Asian Americans (55%), Latinxs (52%), and white (52%) young adults somewhat or strongly oppose hiring private companies to operate prisons in the US. African Americans are more split on this issue, opposing this policy at 49%.

However, 21% of African American young adults say that they “Don’t know” if they do or do not support private prisons, as do 18% of Asian Americans, 18% of Latinxs, and 23% of whites.
Survey Methodology
The GenForward July survey is a project of Professor Cathy J. Cohen at the University of Chicago. Interviews were conducted with a representative sample from GenForward℠, a nationally representative survey panel of adults ages 18-36 recruited and administered by NORC at the University of Chicago.

A total of 3,427 interviews were conducted between June 27th and July 11th, 2019 with adults ages 18-36, including completed interviews with 896 African American young adults, 539 Asian American young adults, 995 Latinx young adults, 903 white young adults, and 134 young adults with other racial and ethnic backgrounds. The survey was offered in English and Spanish and via telephone and web modes.

The GenForward survey was built from two sample sources:

- Fifty-one percent of the completed interviews are sourced from NORC’s AmeriSpeak® Panel and from the Black Youth Project (BYP) panel of young adults recruited by NORC. AmeriSpeak is a probability based panel that also uses address-based sample but sourced from the NORC National Frame with enhanced sample coverage. During the initial recruitment phase of the AmeriSpeak panel, randomly selected U.S. households were sampled with a known, non-zero probability of selection and then contacted by U.S. mail, email, telephone, and field interviewers (face-to-face). The BYP sample is from a probability-based household panel that uses an address-based sample from a registered voter database of the entire U.S. Households were selected using stratified random sampling to support over-sampling of households with African Americans, Latinxs, and Asian Americans ages 18-36. NORC contacted sampled households by U.S. mail and by telephone, inviting them to register and participate in public opinion surveys twice a month.
The AmeriSpeak panel sample was supplemented with respondents from the Dynata nonprobability online opt-in panel. Forty-nine percent of the completed interviews are sourced from the Dynata panel. To help to reduce potential bias in the nonprobability sample, Dynata attempted to balance the nonprobability respondent sample by age, race and ethnicity, gender, and partisanship. In order to incorporate the nonprobability sample, NORC used TrueNorth calibration services, an innovative hybrid calibration approach developed at NORC based on small area estimation methods in order to explicitly account for potential bias associated with the nonprobability sample. The purpose of TrueNorth calibration is to adjust the weights for the nonprobability sample so as to bring weighted distributions of the nonprobability sample in line with the population distribution for characteristics correlated with the survey variables. Such calibration adjustments help to reduce potential bias, yielding more accurate population estimates.

Panelists on both the BYP and AmeriSpeak panels are invited to register for the panel via the web or by telephone to participate in public opinion surveys.

Of the 3,427 completed interviews in the GenForward July survey, 98 percent were completed by web and 2 percent by telephone. The survey completion rate is 20.0 percent. The weighted AAPOR RR3 panel recruitment rate is 20.3 percent and the weighted household panel retention rate is 85.5 percent, for a cumulative AAPOR Response Rate 3 of 3.4 percent. The overall margin of sampling error is +/- 2.40 percentage points at the 95 percent confidence level, including the design effect. Among subgroups, the margin of sampling error at the 95 percent confidence level is +/- 4.13 percentage points for African Americans, +/- 5.68 percentage points for Asian Americans, +/- 4.98 percentage points for Latinxs, and +/- 3.73 percentage points for whites.

To encourage cooperation, respondents were offered incentives for completing the survey that ranged from the cash-equivalent of $3 to the cash-equivalent of $10.
Survey Methodology (3 of 3)

The interviews from the two probability-based sample sources were combined for statistical weighting and analysis. The combined panel samples provide sample coverage of approximately 97% of the U.S. household population. Those excluded from the sample include people with P.O. Box only addresses, some addresses not listed in the USPS Delivery Sequence File, and some newly constructed dwellings. The statistical weights incorporate the appropriate probability of selection for the BYP and AmeriSpeak samples, nonresponse adjustments, and also, raking ratio adjustments to population benchmarks for 18-64-year-old adults. A poststratification process is used to adjust for any survey nonresponse as well as any non-coverage or under- and over-sampling resulting from the study-specific sample design. The poststratification process was done separately for each racial/ethnic group and involved the following variables: age, gender, education, and census region. The weighted data, which reflect the U.S. population of adults ages 18-36, and the 18-36-year-old populations for African Americans, Latinxs, Asian Americans, and non-Latinx whites, were used for all analyses.
Full details are available at www.genforwardsurvey.com