Low Support for Defunding Police

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It's become a trending hashtag on social media and filled up signs of thousands of protesters calling for cities to defund police departments but a Yahoo! YouGov poll finds just 16 percent of those polled support providing less funding to police while 65 percent oppose it.

 When it comes to party lines there is not much difference, with 16 percent of Democrats responding saying they support it while 15 percent of Republicans do. Broken up into races you begin to see some more divide but no race overwhelmingly supports the idea.

Defunding police has the strongest support among Blacks, with about a third of respondents saying they support it, a third of respondents saying they oppose it, and a third do not have a strong opinion on it one way or the other. That's compared to 17 percent of Hispanics answering they support the idea and 12 percent of whites.

"You can see there's just not widespread support for this," said Emily Ekins, a research fellow, and director of polling at libertarian think tank Cato Institute. "Really what it is is kind of a rallying cry for many people who feel like previous efforts to bring accountability to policing in America have been insufficient to bring about the accountability that we should all expect from law enforcement."

A large divide can be seen when you break it into city and suburbs with 27 percent of city dwellers supporting the move and just 9 percent of suburbanites saying they do, most of those polled however support the protests.

"People are on their side when it comes to bringing more accountability into policing," said Ekins. "But insofar that the activists push for something more radical by saying to defund the police, it could have a backfire effect."

There is strong support for police reform as well across America.

"People feel that the police do not treat people of different races equally in their policing, they want that to stop and they support the protesters trying to bring accountability into policing," said Ekins. "But that does not mean that Americans don't support having law enforcement there to enforce laws and protect them."

Of those polled the overarching amount of respondents believed police needed better training to learn how to de-escalate situations without using force (88%), wear body cameras (87%), adopt an early warning system to identify problematic officers (80%) and ban neck restraints (67%).

Calls for defunding the police department do not mean eliminating police in cities but rather changing the way they are funding and the responsibilities of the police department and can have different meanings to different people. K.A. Owens, a board member on the Kentucky Alliance Against Racial and Political Repression points out police have not always been around until people increasingly started living in cities.

"In America, a lot of policing had to do with fear of slave revolt and even controlling behavior of free blacks," Owens said. "So what we call policing definitely needs to be redefined in the United States there is no question about that."

The poll was conducted on May 29-30, during the beginning days of the nationwide protests but after the killing of George Floyd made national headlines it has a margin of error of 4.3 percent.