

TO: Interested Parties
FROM: Katie Connolly, Senior Vice President
RE: ACLU-CT Research on Police Reform in Bridgeport, Hartford and New Haven
DATE: October 29, 2020

- A recent poll of 545 registered voters in three Connecticut cities – Bridgeport, Hartford and New Haven – demonstrates broad support for changes to policing. The data suggests that voters have a real appetite for reinvesting a substantial portion of funding currently allocated to police in other valued public services, namely health and public education.
- Voters across the three cities we surveyed want to see city budgets that more accurately reflect their priorities. They broadly agree that spending on police is overshadowing the investments they'd like to see in education and health.
 - 75% total agree and 49% strongly agree:
*“Spending on police and law enforcement often makes up very large portions of local government budgets, overshadowing spending on education and mental health care. **Communities should redirect some of this funding to social services instead of expecting police to act as mental health experts and social workers.**”*
 - Black voters across the cities are even more in agreement: 84% total agree, 60% strongly agree.
 - In Bridgeport: 76% total agree, 43% strongly agree.
 - In Hartford: 68% total agree, 49% strongly agree.
 - In New Haven: **80%** total agree, **54%** strongly agree.
- Our respondents view reallocation favorably in principal – 68% say they support “reallocating money from police departments to other services.” But when we provided them with examples of what their taxpayer dollars could be spent on instead, support rises 13 points.
 - 81% total support, 54% strongly support: *“If you knew the phrase ‘reallocate money from policing’ means to divert some money that currently goes to policing to instead go to things like mental health, substance abuse, housing, employment, violence prevention and other programs that make communities healthier and safer, would you support or oppose such a policy?”*
- Voters in each city were asked about a specific proposal to reallocate some funds from their local police budgets. Large majorities responded favorably in each municipality.
 - Bridgeport in particular is on board with the proposal to divest from its \$102 million-plus budget, with a majority *strongly* supportive.

% Strongly Support (Strongly + Somewhat Support)	Bridgeport
Divest \$50 million from Bridgeport's \$102 million-plus police budget , which would still place its police budget higher than New Haven or Hartford's, and reinvest those funds in public education and community-based violence prevention programs for youth, infrastructure improvements for the city, and job creation programs for Bridgeport residents.	56% (77%)



% Strongly Support (Strongly + Somewhat Support)	Hartford
Divest \$22 million from Hartford's \$44 million-plus police budget and re-invest it in mental healthcare, addiction services, education, housing, and a crisis intervention program that protects the community by responding to emergencies with trained counselors, social workers, and health workers to deal with issues like homelessness, mental health and drug addiction instead of having police handle these concerns.	45% (79%)

% Strongly Support (Strongly + Somewhat Support)	New Haven
Divest \$33 million from New Haven's \$43 million-plus police budget and re-invest those funds in public education and community-based violence prevention programs for youth.	30% (63%)

- Reallocating money to public education is particularly compelling to voters, especially when they are given a concrete example of what that could look like in practice.
 - 74% total support, 48% strongly support a policy to:
 - “*End the school-to-prison pipeline by getting rid of police presence in K-12 schools and instead funnel that money into school counselors, school social workers, nurses, special education teachers and programming to keep kids in positive environments.*”
 - Black voters across the cities are even more supportive: 78% total support, 57% strongly support.
 - Hartford as a whole is also more intense with its support: 82% total support, 57% strongly support.
 - In Bridgeport: 70% total support, 38% strongly support.
 - In New Haven: 70% total support, 50% strongly support.

- Voters express a desire for more police accountability. This is likely driven in part by the 52% of voters who said that they or someone they personally knew had been harassed or harmed by police.

- Reforms aimed at addressing systemic racism in policing – including who the police in Connecticut pull over in routine traffic stops – were met with broad and strong agreement across the cities surveyed. With protests for racial equality happening throughout the country, majorities of these voters say want their cities to meet this moment.
 - 81% of voters agree – with 48% strongly agreeing – that **“As communities across the country face issues of police violence and racism, it is more important than ever that [Bridgeport/Hartford/New Haven] takes real steps to reform its criminal justice system.”**
 - This was especially resonant for Black voters: 86% total agree, 59% strongly agree.
 - 74% of voters agree – with 43% strongly agreeing – **“Connecticut needs to address the racial difference in who the police in our state pull over for traffic stops, searches and arrests. This trend is getting worse and damages community trust.”**



<i>% Strongly Agree (Strongly + Somewhat Agree)</i>	All Voters	Bridgeport	Hartford	New Haven
As communities across the country face issues of police violence and racism, it is more important than ever that [Bridgeport/Hartford/New Haven] takes real steps to reform its criminal justice system.	48% (81%)	44% (81%)	47% (81%)	52% (81%)
Connecticut needs to address the racial difference in who the police in our state pull over for traffic stops, searches and arrests. This trend is getting worse and damages community trust.	43% (74%)	33% (67%)	47% (74%)	48% (81%)

- With nearly two in three voters (63%) in these cities agreeing that **“Police officers are rarely held accountable for their actions when they abuse power,”** there is strong support for more effective oversight and transparency for police forces and policies that shift focus onto community well-being and safety.
- And when it comes to police officers who commit violence or misconduct, voters are clear and unified: fully 85% of support firing them.

<i>% Strongly Support (Strongly + Somewhat Support)</i>	All Voters	Bridgeport	Hartford	New Haven
Fire police employees who commit violence or misconduct , including those who have been named in excessive force complaints.	66% (85%)	65% (83%)	64% (83%)	69% (88%)
Create a new department of community well-being and safety, separate from the police department , that responds to emergencies with trained counselors, social workers, and health workers to deal with issues like homelessness, mental health and drug addiction instead of having police handle these concerns.	58% (80%)	56% (79%)	57% (79%)	62% (82%)
End closed-door negotiations of police union contracts that lead to mandatory yearly increases in police budgets by requiring elected officials to hold to negotiations in public and hold public hearings about the city police contracts.	49% (77%)	52% (84%)	45% (73%)	49% (74%)

Methodology

Benenson Strategy Group conducted 545 telephone and online interviews from September 18 to October 5, 2020 on behalf of the American Civil Liberties Union of Connecticut. All respondents were registered voters in Bridgeport, Hartford and New Haven, Connecticut. The margin of error for the data set is $\pm 4.2\%$ at the 95% confidence level and it is higher among subgroups.

