

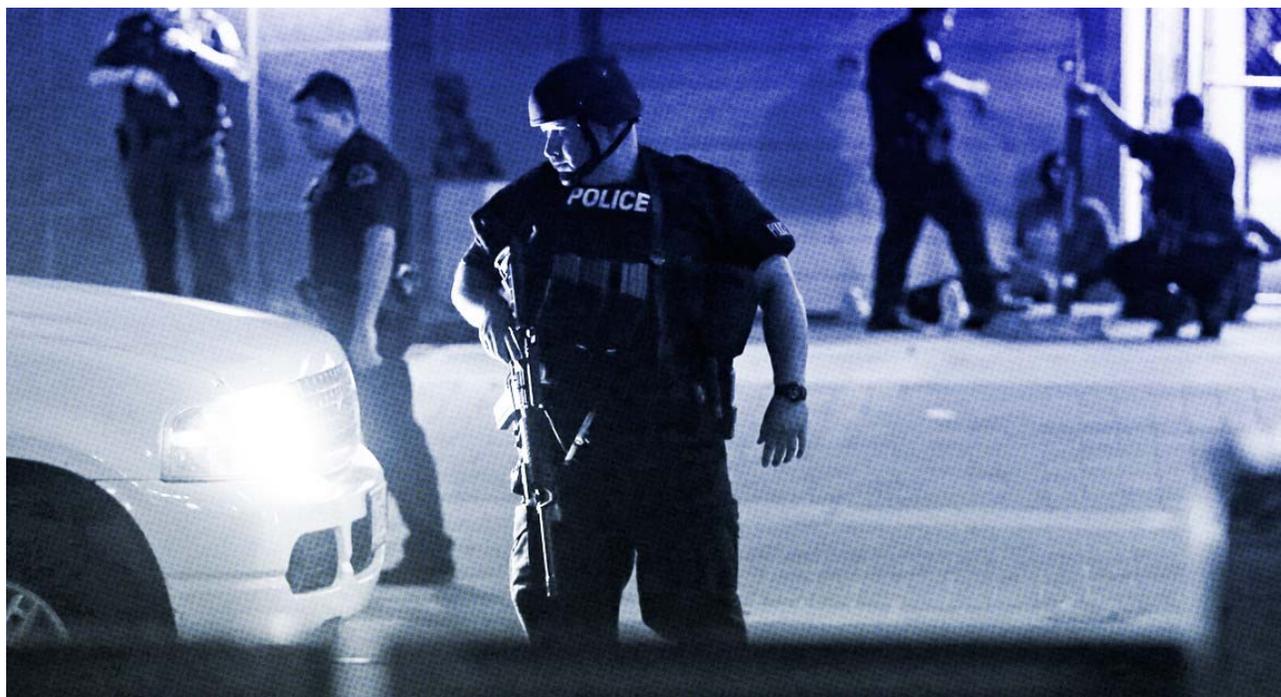
# POLITICO

## WHAT WORKS

### **America's Mayors: 'We're Afraid for Our Police'**

Two years after the unrest in Ferguson, America's mayors have a newfound fear for their cities' police officers.

By TAYLOR GEE and BEN WOFFORD | August 08, 2016



AP Photos

**A** year after America's mayors declared their concern that "Ferguson could happen to us," a more multifaceted anxiety over the relationship between police and minority communities has taken hold in the country's city halls, a new POLITICO MAGAZINE survey finds.

During one of the most tumultuous summers in urban politics, ignited by the murder of eight police officers after more controversial police shootings of black men, more than half of mayors say they are very worried about the safety of their black citizens but nearly three-quarters of mayors say they now fear for their officers' lives as well.

The questions come on the one-year anniversary of POLITICO's first race and policing

survey, which found deep anxieties that the unrest in Ferguson could spread to their city. Today, two years after the death of Michael Brown, many of those same mayors have achieved a perspective that comes with having had time to address some of the underlying problems that contributed to the volatile relationship between citizens and cops in cities. New programs like diversity initiatives and unconscious bias training have come at the behest of a greater public awareness since the events in Ferguson and elsewhere, which Urban Institute expert Jesse Jannetta described as having "supercharged efforts around policing across the country." While the effectiveness of those programs has yet to be measured, they may be the reason why nearly 90 percent of mayors say their police have good or excellent relations with communities of color, and in an interesting change from 2015, no mayors rated their department's relationship with those communities as poor.

The findings arrived as part of POLITICO MAGAZINE's sixth quarterly national Mayors' Survey, conducted over the course of July as part of the magazine's award-winning "What Works" series. The anonymous survey heard from a record 71 mayors—dotting the country from Philadelphia to Tampa, Providence to Denver, Chattanooga to Maui. While not a scientific poll—the vast majority of respondents were Democrats (over 80 percent, reflecting the leftward-tilt of city politics)—the survey represented a diverse range of cities and political cultures, including two cities that in recent years have grappled with the fallout of law enforcement shootings and death—Dallas and Minneapolis.

Mayors appeared conflicted about their support for their police—emphatic that their departments were well-trained, yet still dissatisfied with the structural chasm that separates white officers from communities of color. When asked whether their departments accurately reflect the racial makeup of their communities—a measure that reformers say is crucial to building trust with police—65 percent said no. That critical self-assessment has increased since 2015 by 11 percent since 2015. Mayors are not imagining this problem. Alan Berube, a Brookings Institution fellow who recently authored a report on police department demographics, told POLITICO that, "On average people of color in major local law enforcement agencies are underrepresented by an average of 24 percent compared to their share of the local population." But on the positive side, an indication perhaps of the mayors' clearer understanding of the situation in their cities and work they have undertaken to improve things, the number of mayors decreased who say their police demographics are an extremely inaccurate depiction of their cities' makeup. Asked about whether race and policing is a concern in their city, an overwhelming 81 percent said yes, with nearly a quarter calling it a "deep" concern.

How can mayors describe their officers' interactions with people of color as good, then

express grave concern at the issue? The dichotomy, two mayors told POLITICO during in-depth interviews, was suggestive of the difficult political line mayors must now walk. While the mayors recognize an obligation to stand with victims of police practices, the recent killings of police are reminder of the need to be everybody's leader.

"My advice for mayors is, you better be a mayor for all of your city," Los Angeles Mayor Eric Garcetti told POLITICO. "You better be a mayor for those who still feel there's a gulf between them and their police department. And you better have the backs of your police officers who are your city employees, who are the face of your city and who we depend on for safety in our communities." Addressing the issue of police demographics, Garcetti described the psychic legacy of the Rodney King riots in 1992 that permanently transformed L.A.—painstaking efforts he said are beginning to pay off more than 20 years later.

Garcetti recounted a police academy graduation he attended on the morning after the Dallas shootings that claimed the lives of five officers on duty at a Black Lives Matter protest march. During the graduation ceremony, a group of protesters arrived on the scene. "They probably had one idea of who police officers were," said Garcetti. But the class that graduated that day included a man from a public housing program, Latina women from the east side of LA and an Indian immigrant who was class president. All told, the newly minted police officers included eight white, 22 Hispanic, one black, one Filipino, and five Asian men and women. In a moment that shocked Garcetti and onlookers, the protesters paused their march to join the mayor at a news conference outside the graduation.

"It showed the seeds we've been planting for years are beginning to flower and blossom," Garcetti added, who says new estimates this year indicate LA's police demographics mirror the city's "almost exactly."

Perhaps the one mayor in America no one wants to be right now—Mike Rawlings of Dallas—explained a political mood in his city that made sense of some data: Since the Brown shooting on Aug. 9, 2014, the department has been building up social capital, which it needed at just at the moment when the city was tested most. "I think that we were very fortunate," Rawlings said. "If there is any fortune in this terrible tragedy, it's that it came when it did."

Rawlings, who came into office in 2011, suggested community policing reforms in his department had made strides with the community; he reminded POLITICO that many of the officers at the march were posing with marchers and joining in chants, just moments before shots rang out. "Because of the work that has taken place over the last three or four

years in regards to police strategies, a focus on de-escalation, the money we've spent on community policing," said Rawlings, "we were able to fall back on those." While the Dallas Police Department is not particularly aligned demographically with its citizens, it is markedly closer than the suburban departments of Dallas County. As recently as 2014, four Dallas suburbs had more than twice the percentage of white police officers as they had white citizens.

The overwhelmingly Democratic mayors could hardly be said to have put race and policing on the back burner—a slim majority, 50.7 percent, told POLITICO that they were at least "worried" about the safety of people of color in officer interactions. But in a striking finding, that number paled in comparison when the question was reversed: Eighty-six percent of mayors suggested they were "worried" or "very worried" for their officers' safety.

"It's a hard job. It's a job I don't think I could do," Rawlings said. Dallas is said to have one of the lowest-morale departments in the country; in a survey of Dallas police officers last year, 72 percent of respondents reported that morale is "low" or the "lowest its ever been. Added Garcetti: "You can't help but be affected by these killings, whether it is unjustified shootings by police officers or the cold-blooded assassinations of police officers."

Tellingly, mayors resisted "Blue Lives Matter" and "Black Lives Matter" dichotomies—of the 36 mayors who expressed concern for the safety of people of color when they interact with the police, 35 did so, too, for the safety of their police. Only a minority of respondents indicated that they believe only one group—either the police or people of color—faces worrisome dangers while the other does not.

Rawlings agreed. "I am an ex-marketer so I appreciate catchy slogans," said Rawlings. "But I think it does a disservice to everyone to simplify these things in such terms. The African-American struggle is much more complex than just Black Lives Matter, and blue lives." He added, "These things just have a tendency to create separatism. And that's what worries me."

The remarks mirrored those of President Barack Obama, who attended the Dallas memorial service of the five slain officers and spoke movingly of "family and community, rights and responsibilities, law and self-government that is the hallmark of this nation." The Democratic mayors, unsurprisingly, are supportive; 73 percent responded he's handled the issue "well" or "very well." But mayors, in an interesting development, seemed to be cooling to Obama's leadership on the issue—perhaps as they look more to local leaders and solutions than the bully pulpit in a time of crisis. From last year, the number of respondents who reported that Obama has handled the issue of race and policing "neither

well nor poorly” jumped from 3 to 18 percent, and his approval numbers among mayors fell 13 percentage points, from 86 percent last year.

Mayors also seemed less inclined to indict their police officers, even in the aftermath of two controversial shootings of black men, Philando Castile and Alton Sterling. Asked to rank on a scale of 1 to 10 how well their police officers are trained to handle use-of-force situations, mayors gave an average ranking of 7.5—and just shy of 60 percent gave their officers an “8” or higher.

The issue of training, once a flash point in the police wars, has seemed to lose some of its crusading zeal—but Mayors Rawlings and Garcetti suggested their cities are in step with new training regimens. “You’ve got to train, you’ve got to constantly go back and retrain,” Rawlings said. “That’s what you need. That’s what any great operations company does. I don’t believe across the country the passion around training is there the way it should be.” Garcetti added that far-off tech breakthroughs—like the much-discussed body cameras for police—are coming soon to LA, where by the end of next calendar year, all patrol divisions will wear them. “I think the cameras are a big enabler. But I’ve always said they’re not the end all be all, just as radios were really important to take policing to the next step.”

The mayors’ answers and remarks reflect a sense that this generation of mayors will be assessed by how well they responded to this challenging historical moment, perhaps not unlike the mayors of the late '60s. It seems unlikely to be a coincidence that in POLITICO MAGAZINE’s concurrent survey, the top three mayors ranked as best qualified for president—Garcetti, Rawlings and Stephanie Rawlings-Blake of Baltimore—preside in cities that have become hot spots for tumultuous political and policy debates around race and policing.

“In these rough times, I’ve seen more connections in the last few weeks, and more bright lights in the midst of this tragedy than I’ve felt in a long time,” Garcetti said.

For mayors expressing disgust at the problem but optimism with urban leadership, it was Obama’s words in Dallas, standing next to Rawlings, that best summed up the survey’s results.

“I strongly believe that there is no contradiction, between us protecting our officers and honoring our officers and making sure that they have all the tools that they need to do their job,” said Obama, “and building trust between police officers and departments and the communities that they serve.”

*PARTICIPATING MAYORS (71): Steven S. Choi, Irvine, CA; Noam Bramson, New*

*Rochelle, NY; Nan Whaley, Dayton, OH; Betsy Hodges, Minneapolis, MN; Steve Hogan, Aurora, CO; Stephanie Miner, Syracuse, NY; Rick Kriseman, St. Petersburg, FL; Sly James, Kansas City, MO; John Marchione, Redmond, WA; Madeline Rogero, Knoxville, TN; Dan Horrigan, Akron, OH; Mick Cornett, Oklahoma City, OK; Lovely Warren, Rochester, NY; Steve Adler, Austin, TX; Nina Jonas, Ketchum, ID; Buddy Dyer, Orlando, FL; Jeri Muoio, West Palm Beach, FL; Larry Wolgast, Topeka, KS; John Sawyer, Santa Rosa, CA; Chin Ho Liao, San Gabriel, CA; Andrew Gillum, Tallahassee, FL; Gregory J. Oravec, Port St. Lucie, FL; Hardie Davis, Augusta, GA; John Giles, Mesa, AZ; Jon Mitchell, New Bedford, MA; Jennifer Roberts, Charlotte, NC; Mike Huether, Sioux Falls, SD; Helene Schneider, Santa Barbara, CA; Jonathan Rothschild, Tucson, AZ; Paul Dyster, Niagara Falls, NY; Edwin M. Lee, San Francisco, CA; Adrian O. Mapp, Plainfield, NJ; Mark Stodola, Little Rock, AR; Robert Stephens, Springfield, MO; Miro Weinberger, Burlington, VT; Kitty Pierch, Eugene, OR; Kathy Sheehan, Albany, NY; Jim Kenney, Philadelphia, PA; Betsy Price, Fort Worth, TX; Bao Nguyen, Garden Grove, CA; Marilyn Strickland, Tacoma, WA; Ras J. Baraka, Newark, NJ; Pete Buttigieg, South Bend, IN; Robert Garcia, Long Beach, CA; Ethan Strimling, Portland, ME; Frank Ortis, Pembroke Pines, FL; Andy Berke, Chattanooga, TN; Alan Arakawa, Maui County, HI; Suzanne Jones, Boulder, CO; Mike Spano, Yonkers, NY; Charlie Hales, Portland, OR; Mary Casillas Salas, Chula Vista, CA; Karen Freeman-Wilson, Gary, IN; Acquanetta Warren, Fontana, CA; Marni Retzer, Cape Coral, FL; Domenic J. Sarno, Springfield, MA; Dewey F. Bartlett Jr., Tulsa, OK; Denny Doyle, Beaverton, OR; Michael S. Rawlings, Dallas, TX; Jorge O. Elorza, Providence, RI; Carolyn Goodman, Las Vegas, NV; Toni H. Harp, New Haven, CT; Mitch Landrieu, New Orleans, LA; William Capote, Palm Bay, FL; Stephanie Rawlings-Blake, Baltimore, MD; Pauline Russo Cutter, San Leandro, CA; Javier M. Gonzales, Santa Fe, NM; Bob Buckhorn, Tampa, FL; Joseph M. Petty, Worcester, MA; Byron W. Brown, Buffalo, NY; Michael Hancock, Denver, CO*