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Americans Consider Demonstrations Legitimate...

Trump Seen as Escalating Tensions...

Biden Maintains Lead as Trump's Disapproval Rating Climbs

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This NPR/PBS NewsHour/Marist Poll Reports:

More than six in ten Americans (62%) say the demonstrations in the aftermath of George Floyd's death in Minneapolis at the hands of police are legitimate protests and not people acting unlawfully (28%).

A distinct partisan divide exists, but a notable 30% of Republicans say the demonstrations are legitimate. Most Democrats (87%) and nearly two in three independents (65%) also have this opinion. Close to six in ten Republicans (59%) believe these public actions are mostly unlawful.

While African Americans (77%) are more likely than white Americans to consider the demonstrations to be lawful protests, a majority of white Americans (58%) also share this opinion. Latinos (70%), residents under the age of 45 (70%), and a majority of older Americans (55%) agree.

"By more than two-to-one Americans side with the demonstrators," says Dr. Lee M. Miringoff, Director of The Marist College Institute for Public Opinion. "White House efforts to undercut the legitimacy of the protests have come up short."

It follows, then, that many Americans (61%) are more likely to describe the demonstrations as "protests" as opposed to "riots" (31%). Among Democrats, 85% characterize the demonstrations as "protests." 65% of independents and a noteworthy 31% of Republicans agree. Nearly six in ten Republicans (59%) describe the demonstrations as "riots." 79% of African Americans choose to use the term "protests," not "riots," to describe the demonstrations. 68% of Latinos and 56% of whites share this opinion. Though younger Americans (70%) are more likely than those age 45 or older to call these public actions "protests," a majority of older Americans (53%) also agree.

President Trump's response to the demonstrations draws criticism from more than two-thirds of Americans. 67% of residents nationally say the president has mostly increased tensions. 18%

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think his reaction has mostly decreased tensions, and 15% are unsure. Although a plurality of Republicans (41%) think the president has eased tensions, 29% say he has made them worse, and a notable 30% are unsure about whether or not the president's reaction has mitigated or exacerbated tensions. Most Democrats (92%) and more than seven in ten independents (73%) believe Trump has intensified tensions following Floyd's death.

While President Trump's job approval rating (41%) is comparable to the 43% score he received in March, his disapproval score has increased five points to 55% from 50%. The last time Trump received a 55% disapproval rating was February 2019. His all-time high was 56% which he received in December of 2017.

The intensity of Americans' disapproval of how President Trump is doing his job has grown. 47% of Americans who disapprove say they strongly do so. This is up from 41% in March and is the highest "strongly disapprove" rating of the president's term. 28% report they strongly approve, notched down from 32%.

A noticeable change has occurred among independents. 43% of independents say they strongly disapprove of the president's job performance, an increase from 33% three months ago. The proportion of independents who say they strongly approve stands at 20%, little changed from 22% in March. Among Democrats, a similar shift has occurred. 88% of Democrats, up from 77%, now say they strongly disapprove of the president's job performance. 71% of Republicans, down slightly from 76%, say they strongly *approve* of how the president is doing in office.

The president's low job approval rating factors into his standing against Joe Biden. In a head-to-head matchup between Trump and Biden, Biden has a 7-point advantage against the president. 50% of registered voters support Biden, and Trump garners 43%. In February, Biden (50%) had a 6-point lead against Trump (44%).

"Most Americans have already picked sides," says Dr. Lee M. Miringoff, Director of The Marist College Institute for Public Opinion. "As long as the contest remains largely a referendum on the president, he will continue to trail Biden nationally."

Americans think Biden (52%) would better handle race relations as president than Trump (34%). This includes 92% of Democrats, a plurality of independents (48%), and about one in ten Republicans (11%). With the exception of Republicans, white Americans without a college degree, white Evangelical Christians, and Americans living in rural regions, Americans are more likely to think Biden is more capable of handling race relations than Trump.

When looking at Americans' perceptions of their local police officers, confidence has declined since 2014. 35% of residents have a great deal of confidence in law enforcement officials to treat white people and black people equally. 28% have a fair amount of trust in them to not favor

one race over the other while 17% have just some confidence in them to do so. 18% have very little trust in law enforcement to disregard a person's race. When The Marist Poll last reported this question at the end of 2014, 41% of Americans had a great deal of confidence in police officers to treat people equally regardless of race. 30% had a fair amount of trust in them to do so, and 11% had just some. 16% had very little confidence in law enforcement to act equitably without taking a person's race into account.

While a plurality of white Americans (42%) have a great deal of confidence in police to treat everyone equally, nearly half of African Americans (48%) have very little confidence in police officers to do so.

A majority of Americans do not think police are responding appropriately to the demonstrations occurring in the aftermath of George Floyd's death. This includes 35% who say the police are being too aggressive, and 18% who say they are not being aggressive enough. 38% think the police are responding appropriately to the demonstrations. 10% are unsure.

Half of African Americans (50%) think the police are responding too aggressively, though 32% think the police have been reacting appropriately. Among white Americans, a plurality (41%) think the response has been appropriate, 31% say it has been too aggressive, and 20% think the police have not been aggressive enough.