



# Race and Police Violence

Many Detroiters perceive racial inequality in police violence, including in their own city.

## FOR MEDIA OR OTHER INQUIRIES:

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## Race and Police Violence

### Overview

A slew of highly publicized killings of African Americans by police that many perceive as racially motivated have captivated the nation over the past several years. More than half of Detroit residents feel race did play a role in these killings and see problems with race relations as a major cause of police violence. At the same time they attribute police violence to additional factors beyond race, such as minimal consequences for police killings in the line of duty and lack of appropriate training. African-American and white Detroiters largely agree about the relationship between race and police violence, though the data show large differences among Detroiters based on education, income, and gender.

These findings come from the Winter 2017 Detroit Metropolitan Area Communities Study, a representative survey of 444 Detroiters.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Interviews were self-administered and conducted online as well as using paper and pencil between March and June 2017. Respondents were recruited via mail and email from the list of 714 adults who responded to the Fall 2016 wave of the DMACS survey. The margin of sampling error for a random sample survey of this size is 4.7 percentage points at the 95% confidence level. The data have been weighted using a raking procedure by age, education, sex, and race to match Census estimates for the City of Detroit.

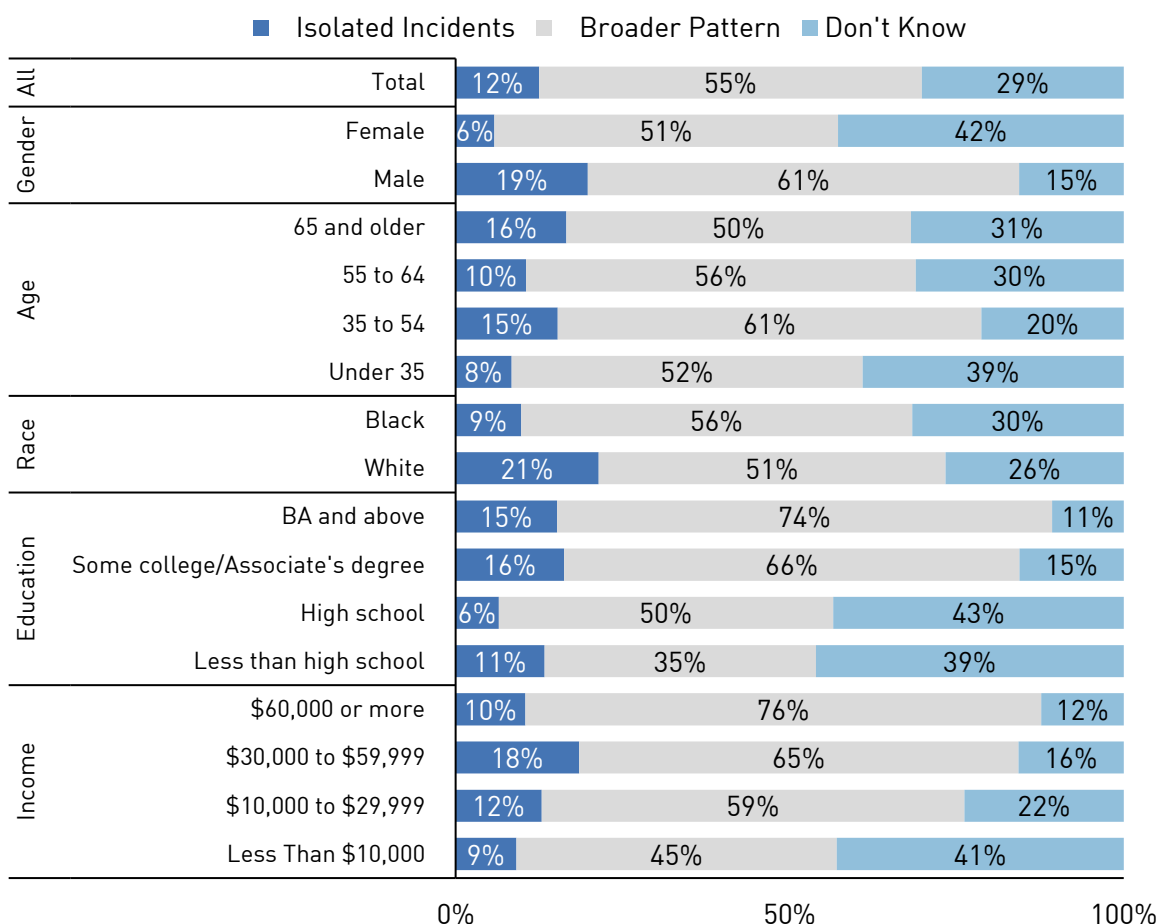
## Key Findings

### A majority of Detroiters see race playing a role in police killings

A majority of Detroiters (55%) views recent killings of African-American men by police as “part of a broader national pattern of how police treat African Americans,” while only 12 percent describe them as “isolated incidents,” and almost three in ten (29%) don’t know.

As shown in [Figure 1](#), roughly equal majorities of black (56%) and white (51%) Detroiters say the killings are part of a broader pattern, though white Detroiters (21%) are somewhat more likely than their black neighbors (9%) to see the killings as isolated.

**Figure 1: Do you think recent killings of African American men by police are isolated incidents or are they part of a broader pattern of how police treat African Americans?**



Perspectives on the role of race in police killings differ by gender, with men being more opinionated at both ends of the issue. Six in ten men (61%) say that police killings of

African American men reflect a broader pattern, compared to roughly half of women (51%).

But men are also more likely than women to say that police killings of African American men are isolated incidents. The reason it is possible for men to be more likely than women to express both of these contrasting views is that a much higher percentage of women (42%) than men (15%) say they do not know if they are isolated incidents or part of a broader pattern.

The data also reveal a wide gap in views on this issue based on education and income.

- People with higher household incomes are more likely to view police killings of African-American men as part of a broader pattern. This view is endorsed by 76 percent of people with household incomes of \$60,000 or more compared to only 45 percent of people below \$10,000.
- Similarly, people with higher levels of education are more likely to view police killings of African Americans as part of a broader pattern. Seventy-four percent of people with college degrees hold this view compared to only 35 percent of those with less than a high school degree.
- Those at lower income and education levels are more likely to say they do not know, but there is little difference by education or income in the portion describing these as isolated incidents.

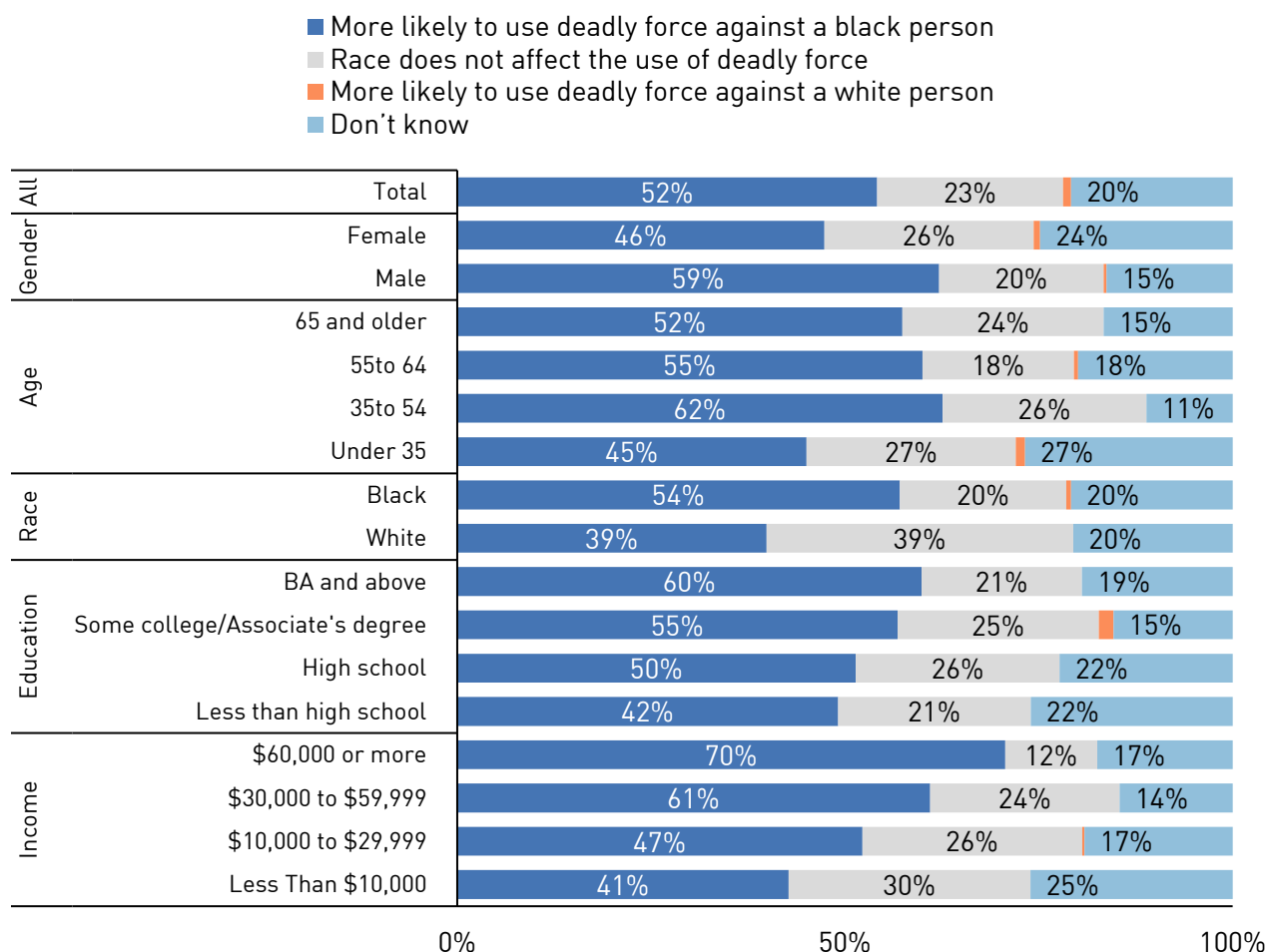
### **Most believe local police are more likely to use deadly force against a black person**

Detroiters worry that local police are likely to make different decisions about force based on race. As shown in [Figure 2](#), a slim majority (52%) believes police in and around Detroit are “more likely to use deadly force against a black person,” while only one percent believe they are “more likely to use deadly force against a white person,” and just under a quarter (23%) say “race does not affect police use of deadly force.” One in five (20%) is unsure.

There is a racial gap in answers to this question: while a majority of black Detroiters (54%) believe local police would be more likely to kill a black person, white Detroiters are less likely to hold this view (39%).

Detroiters with higher levels of education and income are more likely to see a racial problem in police violence in the Detroit area. While only 42 percent of those with household incomes under \$10,000 believe police in Metro Detroit are more likely to use deadly force against a black person, 70 percent of those above \$60,000 do. Similarly, 50 percent of those holding a high school degree say police are more likely to use deadly force against a black person, as compared to 70 percent of those with a college degree more.

Figure 2: In general, do you think the police in and around Detroit are more likely to use deadly force against a black person, or are more likely to use it against a white person, or do you think race does not affect police use of deadly force?



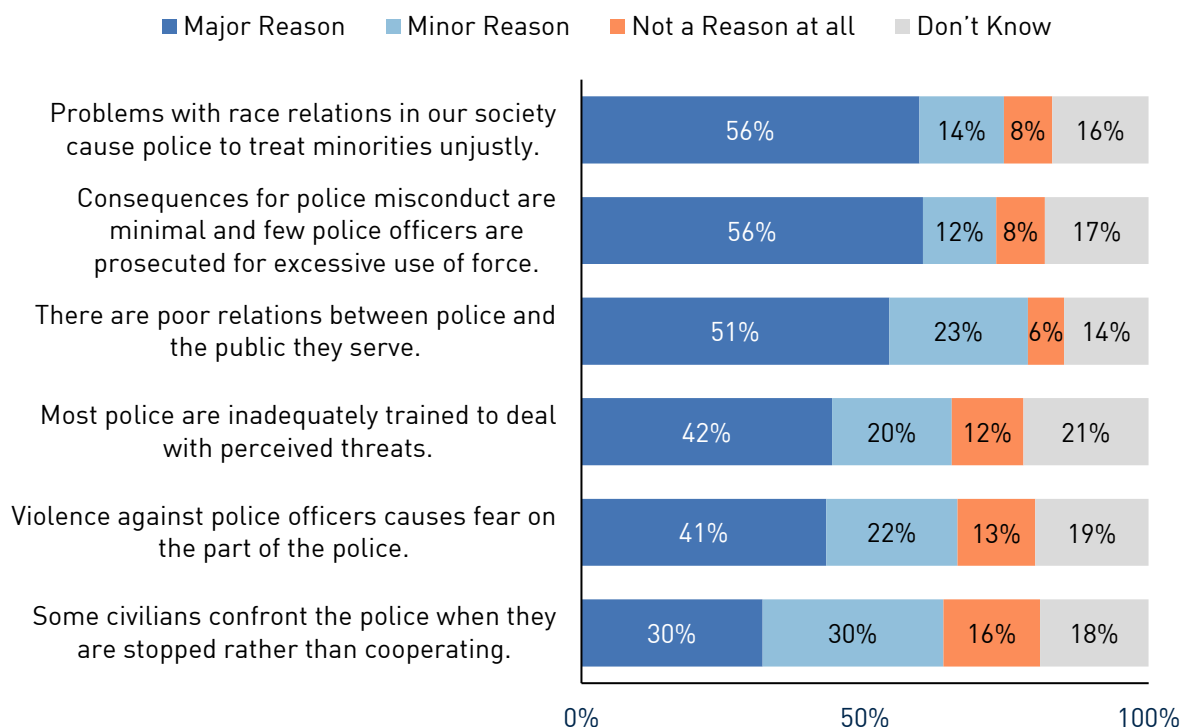
**Detroiters see the causes of police violence as multi-faceted, with race as one key factor**

As shown in [Figure 3](#), a majority of Detroiters (56%) says problems with race relations are a major reason for police violence against civilians, along with 14 percent who see it as a minor reason for violence, while just 8 percent say it is not a reason at all.

However, race is not the only factor they see as contributing to police violence. An equally large share of Detroiters (56%) believes that the tendency for police to escape sanctions for misconduct and excessive use of force is another major reason for police violence against citizens, and almost as many Detroiters (51%) see poor relations between police and the public as a major reason for police violence. Around four in ten say inadequate training (42%) and the fact that “violence against police officers causes fear on the part of the police” (41%) are major causes of police violence. Smaller

numbers lay the blame on victims, with only 30% saying say civilians confronting the police is a major reason.

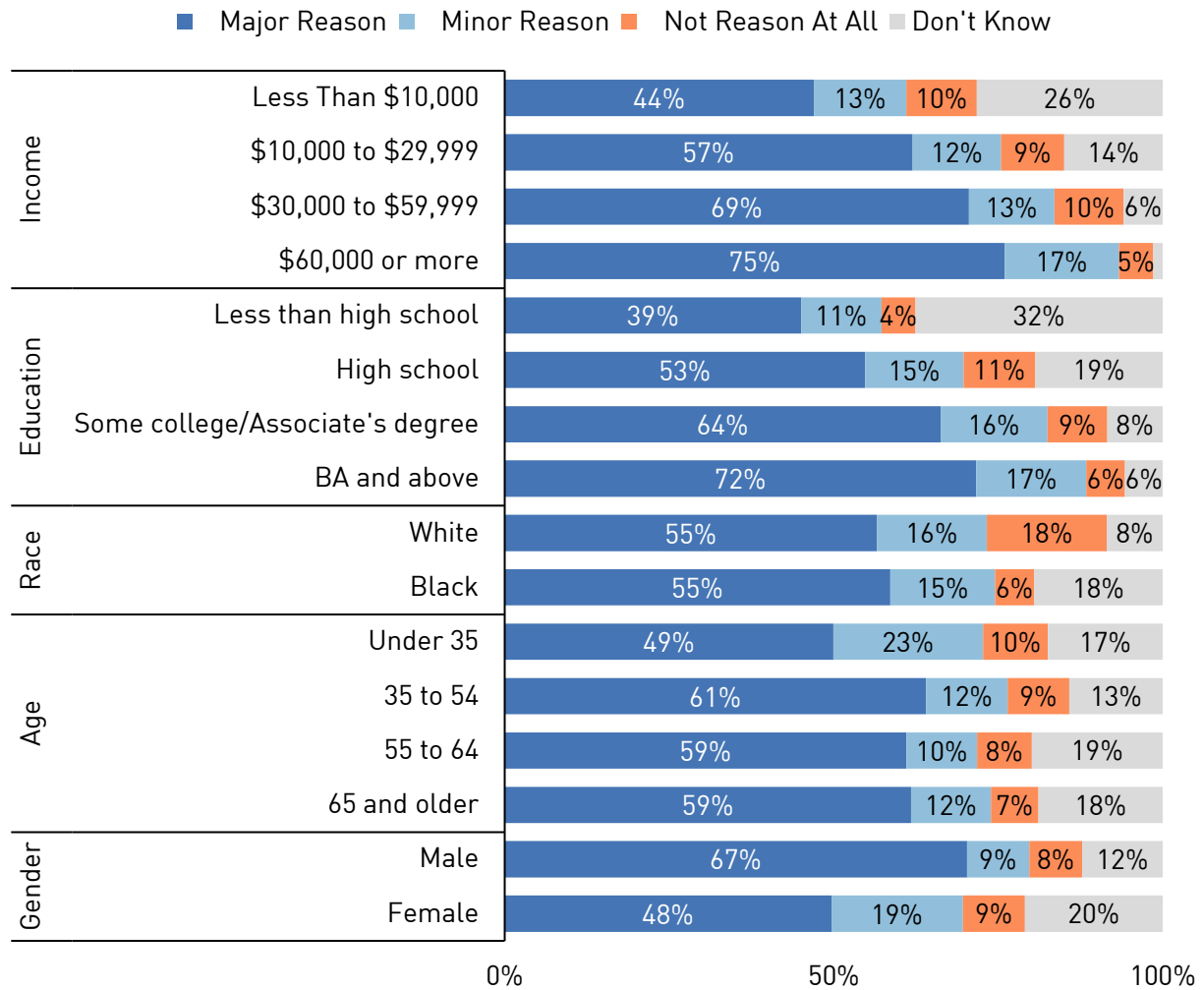
Figure 3: Here are some reasons that have been given for police violence against civilians. For each one, please indicate whether you think it is a major reason, a minor reason, or not a reason at all.



As in the other questions about race and policing, views on the impact of race relations as a cause for police violence vary by education and income level. The view that problems with race relations are a major contributor to police violence is more common among those with higher incomes and levels of education. For example, nearly three quarters (75%) of those with household incomes over \$60,000 view race relations as a major reason for police violence compared to less than half (44%) of those with income less than \$10,000. Similarly, 72 percent of Detroiters with a college degree view race relations as a contributor to police violence compared to only 39 percent of those with less than a high school degree.

Views also vary by sex, with 67 percent of men agreeing that race relations are a major reason for police violence compared to only 48 percent of women. However, the belief that problems with race relations is a major reason for police violence does not vary substantially by race, with the same proportion of black (55%) and white (55%) Detroiters endorsing this view.

Figure 4: “Problems with race relations in our society cause police to treat minorities unjustly” as a cause of police violence by demographic group



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