Five Facts About Police That May Surprise You

By Jason Johnson

This year has yielded many historic moments, some we never saw coming. Along with this remarkable period in which we’re living, we’re now witnessing a world in which jumping to conclusions happens by the second every day on social media, on TV news, and in households across the country.

Sadly, it has become commonplace in 2020 to form opinions based on watching a few seconds of a police body cam video, reading an early news account of a violent incident, or listening to baseless accusations made at a protest march. What’s frequently missing from these knee-jerk public and media reactions are the facts.

Facts are hard. Digging for the truth can be time-consuming work. We get it. But the constant “rush to judgment” we see in big cities and small towns throughout our nation is irresponsible and dangerous to both law enforcement personnel and the general public alike. Opinions and decisions need to be based on facts, evidence, and data – not on emotion, politics, and TV ratings.

That’s exactly why we at the Law Enforcement Legal Defense Fund (LELDF) rely upon research from prestigious, respected, non-partisan groups such as the Pew Research Center and Gallup.

Between June 16 and June 22 this year, Pew Research Center surveyed just over 1,000 U.S. residents and asked them about their views of law enforcement and policing. Keep in mind, those interviews were conducted long after the highly publicized deaths of Breonna Taylor and George Floyd, and during the same time that sometimes-violent protests were occurring nightly across our country.

What Pew learned this past June from 1,000 everyday Americans may surprise you.

• The vast majority of Americans oppose defunding the police. In fact, more than 73% of those surveyed believe police funding should be increased or remain exactly the same.

Other relevant facts we found show:

• 81% of Black Americans and 83 percent of Hispanic Americans want more or the same level of police presence in their communities. (Gallup survey, 2020)
• 99.9% of police calls for service are resolved peacefully. They do not, as the nightly news might have you believe, end in brutality or violence. (Journal of Trauma & Accurate Care Surgery, 2018)
• When police were directed to “stand down” because of riots, protests, or court orders in large cities such as Baltimore, Chicago, and New York, arrests plummeted and murders skyrocketed. (Via NYPD, City of Chicago and Open Data Baltimore)

Additionally, a recent Michigan State University study found that white police officers are not more likely to shoot minority civilians than non-white officers.

Are you surprised that those facts don’t fit the narrative we often see in news media reports or hear from self-serving “social justice” politicians? We’re not. Unfortunately, these days loud accusations and unsubstantiated charges usually grab more headlines and TV cameras than solid facts, evidence, data, and the truth. We don’t like it, but that’s the world in which we live.
You can help us change these false narratives, and at the same time support our law enforcement community, by sharing these facts and data with your friends and social media followers. When someone you know makes an outrageous false allegation about police, tell them “Data actually shows that simply isn’t true.” When a news media outlet in your community skews a storyline to fit a more politically correct narrative, post Pew facts on your social media platforms or write a letter-to-the-editor.

We will do the same each and every time we are interviewed by a local or national TV station, radio station, or newspaper reporter. We will continually push back against false claims and insist on accuracy based on facts, data, and evidence.

Don’t get sucked into a rush to judgment or worse yet, a “jumping to conclusions” game. Our men and women in blue deserve better.