

To: Legislators

From: Data For Progress and The Justice Collaborative Institute

Re: The Public Favors Supporting Students, Not Policing Them

Date: 7/21/2020

Amidst the larger debate about funding for law enforcement, Data for Progress and The Justice Collaborative conducted a national survey to examine attitudes toward police presence in schools.¹ Programs that keep “school resource officers” in schools are prohibitively expensive, running into the millions of dollars, and have not prevented a single school shooting.

Officers’ presence in schools doesn’t just exacerbate racialized trauma—it increases the likelihood that students will be criminalized, sent to court instead of the principal’s office for minor infractions.² This is especially true for Black and brown students, who make up 70 percent of those involved in school-related arrests or referred to law enforcement from schools. Although they make up just 12 percent of the student population, Black students are 2.3 times more likely to be arrested in school or sent on to law enforcement.

Our research shows that even without the background above, a strong majority of voters favor funding student behavioral, mental, and emotional health initiatives over keeping police on campuses. Specifically, our survey gave voters two statements to choose from, asking them to pick the one that more accurately represented their beliefs:

Cities and schools should invest more money in behavioral, mental health, and emotional support for students, even if it means cutting the number of school resource (police) officers on campuses.

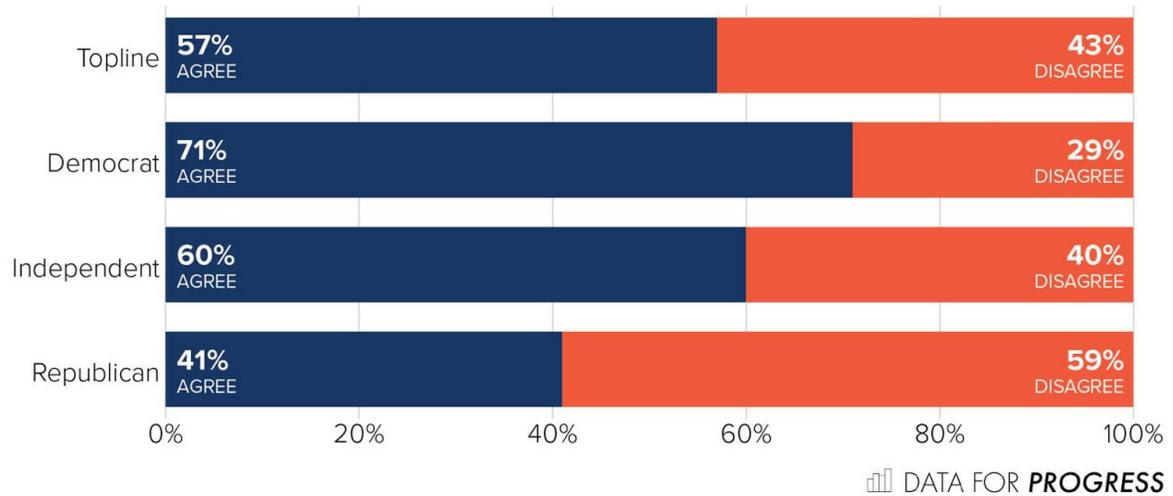
Cities and schools should continue to invest in having school resource (police) officers on as many campuses as possible, even if it means cutting some funding to programs like behavioral, mental health, and emotional support for students.

The majority of voters (57 percent) support the first statement. That includes 71 percent of Democrats and 60 percent of Independents. Just 43 percent of voters overall supported the second statement, which prioritized police over services that support students.

¹ From 7/17/2020 to 7/17/2020 Data for Progress conducted a survey of 1,225 likely voters nationally using web panel respondents. The sample was weighted to be representative of likely voters by age, gender, education, race, and voting history. The survey was conducted in English. The margin of error is +/- 2.8 percent

² Emily Hughes, [Replacing School Police with Targeted Student Resources](#), The Justice Collaborative Institute and Data for Progress, July 2020.

Do you agree or disagree that cities and schools should invest more money in behavioral mental health, and emotional support for students, even if it means cutting the number of school resource officers on campuses?



It is imperative that legislators pave the way for districts to follow the lead of Portland, Oregon; Minneapolis, MN; and Charlottesville, VA, among others, removing cops from schools. School board members and teachers' unions from Denver, CO, to Oakland, CA; Chicago, IL; Madison, WI; and Seattle, WA, are pushing to follow suit.