

- The results of a poll conducted in December 2020 of New Mexico voters demonstrates strong and broad support for putting clear, statewide limits on the use of deadly force by police.
- While a majority of New Mexico voters have generally favorable views of their local police officers, use of deadly force is a clear red line that voters want tightly monitored and controlled.
- Nearly three quarters of voters in New Mexico express support for a bill that would aim to reduce the use of deadly force by police and would include:
  - ✓ Clear limits on when force can be used
  - ✓ A requirement that police officers try to use alternatives before resorting to force
  - ✓ A requirement that police officers only use lethal force as a last resort in response to a threat to human life
- The proposal has a broad base of support, finding strong backing among both Democrats and Independents, but also among 4 in 10 Republicans.
- Support is higher in the Albuquerque area (47% strongly support, 76% total support), where issues with policing have affected more residents.
  - ✓ Fully 53% of Albuquerque voters believe police in their community use deadly force too often, and a majority say they or someone they know personally has been harassed or harmed by police.
- The proposal is supported by both voters of color (46% strongly support, 73% total support) and white voters (40% strongly support, 72% total support).
  - ✓ Voters of color also reported higher levels of police harassment in this survey with 51% saying they or someone they know has been harassed by police.

**Would you support or oppose this bill?**

<i>% Strongly Support (% Total Support – Strongly + Somewhat support)</i>	<b>All Voters</b>	<b>Dem</b>	<b>Ind</b>	<b>Rep</b>
As you may or may not know, the New Mexico state legislature is considering a bill that aims to reduce the use of deadly force by police. It would place clear limits on when force can be used and require that police try to use alternatives before resorting to force. It would ensure that police only use lethal force as a last resort in response to a threat to human life.	42% (72%)	62% (93%)	46% (78%)	14% (41%)

- Almost three quarters of New Mexico voters support upping the standard for use of deadly force from “reasonable” to “necessary,” with nearly a majority (48%) strongly supporting this stricter rule.
  - ✓ A majority across the partisan spectrum support this higher bar including 92% of Democrats, 76% of Independents and 51% of Republicans.

**Would you support or oppose this proposal?**



<i>% Strongly Support</i> (% Total Support – Strongly + Somewhat support)	All Voters	Dem	Ind	Rep
<b>NEW RULE ON DEADLY FORCE:</b> Create a new rule that makes sure that police officers use deadly force only when necessary to protect another human life. This is a stricter standard than what is in place right now, which simply requires that it be 'reasonable' for an officer to use deadly force.	48% (74%)	71% (92%)	49% (76%)	19% (51%)

- Requiring police to de-escalate a situation before using force and use alternatives to deadly force whenever possible are also important principles for New Mexico’s voters.
  - ✓ These policies receive a cross-partisan embrace, with Republicans indicating broad and clear support for de-escalation and alternatives to deadly force.

### Would you support or oppose this proposal?

<i>% Strongly Support</i> (% Total Support – Strongly + Somewhat support)	All Voters	Dem	Ind	Rep
<b>REQUIRE DE-ESCALATION:</b> Require that police officers always attempt to de-escalate a situation before using force, for example, by keeping their distance and talking to a potential suspect for as long as possible before using a weapon. This has been proven to decrease the number of incidents where deadly force is involved.	59% (89%)	80% (96%)	56% (90%)	36% (80%)
<b>USE ALTERNATIVES:</b> Requiring police officers to work to de-escalate situations and use alternatives wherever possible, so that we can decrease the number of incidents where deadly force is involved.	56% (89%)	77% (95%)	58% (88%)	28% (81%)

- Support for new limits on use of force is underpinned by voters’ deeply held belief that we have granted police a serious and significant power when giving them tools of deadly force, and this should only be used in the most dangerous circumstances – when another person’s life is on the line.
  - ✓ 67% strongly agree, 88% total agree: *Police officers are given the most significant power we give to any public employee – the power to kill. We need to make sure police officers are **held accountable when they misuse that power, and that every fatal shooting by police is properly investigated.***
  - ✓ 50% strongly agree, 80% total agree: *Police officers should **only ever use deadly force if another person’s life is in danger.***
- Voters believe we can achieve a more balanced approach without infringing on the ability of police to do their job effectively. They think the events across the country over the past year have made clear that New Mexico’s leaders need to regulate use of force more stridently and two-thirds say deadly force should never be used in response to routine issues.



- ✓ 44% strongly agree, 80% total agree: *We can **strike a balance between keeping our communities safe and giving police officers the tools they need to do their jobs without giving them a blank check for when they can use force.***
  - ✓ 42% strongly agree, 71% total agree: *As communities across the country face issues of police violence and racism, **it is more important than ever that New Mexico takes real steps to reform** where, how and when police officers rely on the use of force.*
  - ✓ 38% strongly agree, 67% total agree: *When police are dealing with routine issues such as traffic stops, low-level offenses or responding to a mental health crisis, **they should never use deadly force.***
- Given these underlying attitudes, it is no surprise that voters across the political spectrum are fully on board with policies that demand greater accountability and transparency around use of force by police, including thorough investigations any time a police officer uses deadly force and public reports of incidents when force is used.
- ✓ Notably, support exists across the partisan spectrum, with Republicans demonstrating high levels of support for these policies as well as Democrats.

#### Would you support or oppose this proposal?

% Strongly Support (% Total Support – Strongly + Somewhat support)	All Voters	Dem	Ind	Rep
<b>COMPLETE INVESTIGATION:</b> Ensure that any time a police officer uses deadly force, the incident is subject to a thorough and complete investigation.	74% (93%)	89% (96%)	71% (92%)	57% (89%)
<b>INCREASE TRANSPARENCY:</b> Increase transparency by requiring all police departments in New Mexico to track and publicly report any incidents where the police used force.	61% (83%)	82% (92%)	62% (87%)	33% (70%)

- Passing and implementing these new use of force standards would likely address the underlying concern of a majority of voters that New Mexico police too often escalate routine incidents.
- ✓ 60% of voters said they believe police end up escalating and making problems worse either almost always, frequently, or sometimes when responding to routine issues such as traffic stops, noise complaints or mental health issues. Among voters of color, that number rises to 65%.

#### **Methodology**

*Benenson Strategy Group conducted 501 online and SMS text message interviews from December 7-10, 2020 on behalf of the American Civil Liberties Union of New Mexico. All respondents were registered voters in New Mexico who are likely to vote in the 2022 midterm general election. The margin of error for the data set is ±4.4% at the 95% confidence level and it is higher among subgroups.*

