

LOS ANGELES TIMES POLL ALERT

Hahn, Bratton and the LAPD

In the wake of the LAPD officer-involved shooting of 13 year old African-American teenager Devin Brown which has stirred up concerns about unequal treatment meted out by the LAPD, most registered voters in Los Angeles continue to give Police Chief William J. Bratton and the city's police department a strong vote of confidence, according to the latest Los Angeles Times Poll. However, voters, and especially black voters, were less happy with how Bratton and Mayor James K. Hahn handled the Devin Brown situation. LAPD job approval ratings, while still positive, slipped.

One month ago, before the Devin Brown incident, a Times Poll measured Bratton's approval rating among registered voters at 65% while only 15% disapproved. The current survey, taken after the incident had been in the news for a couple of weeks, found little fallout for the chief. A very similar 63% of voters approved of the job he's been doing and the proportion of those who disapproved rose only slightly to 20%. Interestingly, the chief's popularity declined more among Latino voters than any other segment of the city. A month ago, Bratton enjoyed a rather whopping 70% approval rating among that group with only 11% disapproving. However, approval among Latinos dropped 13 points to 57% in the current poll while disapproval more than doubled at 25%. African-American and white voters' opinions have changed much less dramatically over that time. Black voters overall in the current poll split evenly—as many disapproved of the job Bratton is doing as approved. Approval of the chief among black voters divides up along age lines - nearly half those over 65 were supportive of Bratton's efforts while a similar proportion of younger black voters (18-44) were not. Those between ages 45 and 64 were split. White voters gave Bratton an overwhelming thumbs up at 73% to 12%.

Virtually all (95%) voters in the city said they have heard at least something about the incident in which an L.A. police officer fatally shot a 13 year old boy, and more than half said they've seen or heard a lot about it. Black voters in particular reported following the story, which has generated a great deal of emotion and stirred up ongoing concerns over both police procedures and the problems of parenting teenagers. About seven in 10 black voters said they'd heard a lot about the story, along with 55% of whites and 52% of Latinos. The incident is still being investigated. Police and city official held a series of forums across the city last Sunday where activists, police, and community members could discuss their concerns. These forums took place on the last day of this survey and thus had little or no chance to impact the opinions reported here.

Mayor James K. Hahn, who has been concentrating his re-election campaign in the black community in order to reconnect with the voters who helped put him into office four years ago, quickly reacted to the Devin Brown situation by publicly calling for the Police Commission to tighten restrictions on officer shootings at moving vehicles. Hahn then called a press conference to thank the commission for their rapid response in issuing a changed policy ruling. The mayor did not attend Devin Brown's funeral, possibly out of sensitivity to attacks that he was attempting to exploit an unhappy event for political gain. One way or the other, the survey found that voters were happier with, and seemingly more knowledgeable about, Chief Bratton's handling of the Devin Brown shooting than they were about how Hahn handled the situation.

Thirty-six percent of registered voters citywide said they approved of how Hahn handled the situation while 29% said they didn't approve and 35% didn't know. In particular, fewer than three in 10 black voters said they approved of the way Hahn has handled the situation, while 45% disapproved and 26% weren't sure. Not that black voters were happy with Bratton's handling of the situation either— 49% disapproved of how the police chief has responded, 30% approved and 21% weren't sure. Citywide, Bratton fared better—almost half of the voters in the city (48%) said they approved of how he has handled the Devin Brown situation so far and 27% disapproved. Another one in four weren't sure.

Not surprisingly, approval of the police department has taken a hit due to this issue. While the department's job rating is still pretty firmly in positive territory at 59%, that is an 11 point slide from 68% in last month's poll. At the same time the proportion who disapproved grew from 26% last month to 34% in the current poll. The Devin Brown shooting has stirred up concerns about brutality and racism in the police department, which has been periodically dogged by such complaints. Approval ratings of the police tend to rise and fall with the headlines and the Times Poll has measured LAPD approval as low as 34% (vs. 59% who disapproved) in the 1991 aftermath of the Rodney King beating; and as high as 71% in 1995, when a Times Poll found strong citywide support for the department even though the Police Commission was taking its then-chief Willie Williams to task over allegations of misconduct.

This survey found that voters' experience with the police varies depending on their ethnicity and the area where they live. When asked who in the city gets the roughest treatment from the police, a 46% plurality of voters citywide said that the LAPD is harder on blacks than any other racial or ethnic group. Another 8% said Latinos have the hardest time. Fewer than 1% each named whites or Asians and about a third said the LAPD treats everyone the same. There is also a perception in the city that the police use more force than necessary. Just over half (52%) of voters citywide said they think that incidents of brutality by police are very (21%) or fairly (31%) common, a view shared by almost eight in 10 blacks, two-thirds of Latinos, and seven out of 10 voters in the southern region of the city. A majority of black voters (53%) said overly violent encounters with the police are "very" common. White voters and those living in Valley and Westside areas have a different experience. A majority of white voters (58%) said incidents of police brutality are fairly (42%) or very (16%) uncommon, along with 54% of San Fernando Valley voters and 50% of the Westside.

As for the police procedures that led to the death of Devin Brown, the police commission has said that shooting into a moving car in that situation was consistent with police department policy as stated at that time. Police reports of the incident claim officers began to pursue Brown after he ran a red light sometime before dawn. Brown eventually lost control of the vehicle and drove onto the sidewalk, then began backing into the patrol car which had pulled up behind. One of the pursuing officers fired 10 shots into the car, which killed the boy. It was later discovered that Brown was a teenager and the car had been reported stolen. The survey found that more than half of voters citywide (56%) thought the officers overreacted. About three in 10 said it was a reasonable response and 12% weren't sure. There was also some concern that police response in tense situations might vary depending on just where the situation takes place. Just over half (53%) of voters citywide said that police officers would have handled the situation differently if Devin Brown had been a white teenager driving in a middle class neighborhood. Just three in 10 said it would have made no difference to the situation and 11% weren't sure.

The sense that police have hair-trigger reactions in their communities was palpable among Latino and especially black voters. Three quarters of black voters said that the police department is tougher on blacks than any other group in the city while only 11% said that all groups get the same treatment. More than eight in 10 black voters felt the Devin Brown situation would have been handled differently by police in a middle class white area. About six in 10 Latinos agreed with that assessment. More than eight in 10 blacks

and six in 10 Latinos also said that shooting into Devin Brown's car was not a reasonable response, an assessment that only 45% of white voters shared. The survey found that just about as many white voters said that the LAPD treats everyone the same (40%) as said that blacks get a rougher shake (43%), so it isn't too surprising to find white voters split 45% to 42% over whether the incident with Devin Brown would have gone down differently in a white neighborhood or not.

Police Officers and the City's Sales Tax

More than half (52%) of the city's voters said while they agree the city needs more police, they aren't willing to back Mayor Hahn's proposal to increase the city sales tax to pay for them. Only 26% said they'd support such an increase while 18% said they think the city has enough police. Support for more police on the street but opposition to raising the sales tax to pay for them increases to 55% among likely voters, 28% of whom favor an increase and 14% who don't want any more police at all. A sales tax increase to pay for police is not popular in any particular area of the city—the most support it gets is about a third each of Westside and white likely voters. Among black and Southside likely voters, opposition to any more police rises to 26% and 27% respectively. Mostly, voters agree that the city needs more police, but don't want to raise the sales tax to pay for them.

Analysis by Jill Darling Richardson

Results from the Times Poll LA City Poll

February 21-27, 2005

Guide to Column Headings

Among registered voters:

ALL	All registered voters
DEM	Democrats
REP	Republicans
WHT	Whites
BLK	Blacks
LAT	Latinos
WES	Westside
SFV	San Fernando Valley
CEN	Central Los Angeles (City of LA, including east of Beverly Hills and North of 10 FWY)
SOU	Southern Los Angeles (City of LA, including south of the 10 FWY and San Pedro)

Note

- All results are among registered voters in the city of Los Angeles.
- (Vol.) indicates a voluntary response
- ‘-’ indicates less than 0.5%

Q35. Do you approve or disapprove of the way William J. Bratton is handling his job as chief of police of Los Angeles? (IF APPROVE OR DISAPPROVE) Do you (approve/disapprove) strongly or (approve/disapprove) somewhat?

	<u>ALL</u>	<u>DEM</u>	<u>REP</u>	<u>WHT</u>	<u>BLK</u>	<u>LAT</u>	<u>WES</u>	<u>SFV</u>	<u>CEN</u>	<u>SOU</u>
Approve (Net)	<u>63</u>	<u>63</u>	<u>72</u>	<u>73</u>	<u>42</u>	<u>57</u>	<u>66</u>	<u>71</u>	<u>62</u>	<u>49</u>
Approve strongly	<u>27</u>	<u>27</u>	<u>33</u>	<u>35</u>	<u>14</u>	<u>23</u>	<u>31</u>	<u>30</u>	<u>24</u>	<u>20</u>
Approve somewhat	<u>36</u>	<u>35</u>	<u>39</u>	<u>38</u>	<u>27</u>	<u>34</u>	<u>35</u>	<u>41</u>	<u>38</u>	<u>29</u>
Disapprove (Net)	<u>20</u>	<u>20</u>	<u>18</u>	<u>12</u>	<u>42</u>	<u>25</u>	<u>15</u>	<u>15</u>	<u>19</u>	<u>33</u>
Disapprove somewhat	<u>11</u>	<u>11</u>	<u>11</u>	<u>8</u>	<u>18</u>	<u>13</u>	<u>9</u>	<u>9</u>	<u>10</u>	<u>16</u>
Disapprove strongly	<u>9</u>	<u>9</u>	<u>8</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>24</u>	<u>12</u>	<u>6</u>	<u>6</u>	<u>9</u>	<u>17</u>
Don't know	<u>17</u>	<u>17</u>	<u>10</u>	<u>15</u>	<u>16</u>	<u>18</u>	<u>19</u>	<u>14</u>	<u>19</u>	<u>18</u>

Q36. Do you approve or disapprove of the way the Los Angeles Police Department is handling its job? (IF APPROVE OR DISAPPROVE) Do you (approve/disapprove) strongly or (approve/disapprove) somewhat?

	<u>ALL</u>	<u>DEM</u>	<u>REP</u>	<u>WHT</u>	<u>BLK</u>	<u>LAT</u>	<u>WES</u>	<u>SFV</u>	<u>CEN</u>	<u>SOU</u>
Approve (Net)	<u>59</u>	<u>54</u>	<u>75</u>	<u>70</u>	<u>28</u>	<u>53</u>	<u>65</u>	<u>69</u>	<u>55</u>	<u>41</u>
Approve strongly	<u>21</u>	<u>16</u>	<u>38</u>	<u>27</u>	<u>7</u>	<u>20</u>	<u>21</u>	<u>29</u>	<u>17</u>	<u>11</u>
Approve somewhat	<u>38</u>	<u>39</u>	<u>37</u>	<u>43</u>	<u>21</u>	<u>33</u>	<u>44</u>	<u>40</u>	<u>38</u>	<u>30</u>
Disapprove (Net)	<u>34</u>	<u>38</u>	<u>21</u>	<u>23</u>	<u>65</u>	<u>39</u>	<u>29</u>	<u>25</u>	<u>35</u>	<u>54</u>
Disapprove somewhat	<u>17</u>	<u>19</u>	<u>12</u>	<u>16</u>	<u>21</u>	<u>17</u>	<u>14</u>	<u>17</u>	<u>16</u>	<u>22</u>
Disapprove strongly	<u>17</u>	<u>19</u>	<u>10</u>	<u>7</u>	<u>44</u>	<u>22</u>	<u>15</u>	<u>8</u>	<u>19</u>	<u>32</u>
Don't know	<u>7</u>	<u>8</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>7</u>	<u>7</u>	<u>8</u>	<u>6</u>	<u>6</u>	<u>10</u>	<u>5</u>

Q37. Generally speaking, do you think the Los Angeles Police Department is tougher on blacks, or tougher on Latinos, or tougher on Asians, or tougher on whites, or do you think the police treat all groups the same way?

	<u>ALL</u>	<u>DEM</u>	<u>REP</u>	<u>WHT</u>	<u>BLK</u>	<u>LAT</u>	<u>WES</u>	<u>SFV</u>	<u>CEN</u>	<u>SOU</u>
Blacks	<u>46</u>	<u>55</u>	<u>24</u>	<u>43</u>	<u>75</u>	<u>36</u>	<u>53</u>	<u>36</u>	<u>47</u>	<u>60</u>
Latinos	<u>8</u>	<u>9</u>	<u>6</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>22</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>8</u>	<u>11</u>	<u>8</u>
All the same	<u>32</u>	<u>23</u>	<u>57</u>	<u>40</u>	<u>11</u>	<u>32</u>	<u>30</u>	<u>41</u>	<u>31</u>	<u>20</u>
Don't know	<u>14</u>	<u>13</u>	<u>13</u>	<u>14</u>	<u>12</u>	<u>10</u>	<u>13</u>	<u>15</u>	<u>11</u>	<u>12</u>

Q38. Do you think incidents of police brutality involving the Los Angeles police department are very common, or fairly common, or fairly uncommon or very uncommon?

	<u>ALL</u>	<u>DEM</u>	<u>REP</u>	<u>WHT</u>	<u>BLK</u>	<u>LAT</u>	<u>WES</u>	<u>SFV</u>	<u>CEN</u>	<u>SOU</u>
Common (Net)	<u>52</u>	<u>59</u>	<u>33</u>	<u>37</u>	<u>79</u>	<u>63</u>	<u>45</u>	<u>40</u>	<u>59</u>	<u>71</u>
Very common	<u>21</u>	<u>27</u>	<u>7</u>	<u>8</u>	<u>53</u>	<u>33</u>	<u>14</u>	<u>12</u>	<u>23</u>	<u>43</u>
Fairly common	<u>31</u>	<u>32</u>	<u>26</u>	<u>29</u>	<u>26</u>	<u>30</u>	<u>31</u>	<u>28</u>	<u>36</u>	<u>28</u>
Uncommon (Net)	<u>42</u>	<u>36</u>	<u>61</u>	<u>58</u>	<u>15</u>	<u>31</u>	<u>50</u>	<u>54</u>	<u>34</u>	<u>24</u>
Fairly uncommon	<u>30</u>	<u>27</u>	<u>37</u>	<u>42</u>	<u>9</u>	<u>19</u>	<u>38</u>	<u>39</u>	<u>24</u>	<u>15</u>
Very uncommon	<u>12</u>	<u>9</u>	<u>23</u>	<u>16</u>	<u>6</u>	<u>11</u>	<u>12</u>	<u>15</u>	<u>10</u>	<u>9</u>
Don't know	<u>6</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>6</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>6</u>	<u>6</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>6</u>	<u>7</u>	<u>5</u>

Q39. Have you heard or read anything about a Los Angeles police officer fatally shooting Devin Brown, a thirteen year old African-American, who the police were pursuing after he ran a red light? (IF YES) Have you heard or read a lot about it, some or a little?

	<u>ALL</u>	<u>DEM</u>	<u>REP</u>	<u>WHT</u>	<u>BLK</u>	<u>LAT</u>	<u>WES</u>	<u>SFV</u>	<u>CEN</u>	<u>SOU</u>
Heard/read (Net)	<u>95</u>	<u>95</u>	<u>95</u>	<u>97</u>	<u>96</u>	<u>91</u>	<u>96</u>	<u>96</u>	<u>92</u>	<u>95</u>
Heard/read a lot	<u>55</u>	<u>57</u>	<u>55</u>	<u>55</u>	<u>71</u>	<u>52</u>	<u>50</u>	<u>56</u>	<u>51</u>	<u>63</u>
Heard/read some	<u>27</u>	<u>27</u>	<u>22</u>	<u>28</u>	<u>17</u>	<u>27</u>	<u>30</u>	<u>27</u>	<u>27</u>	<u>23</u>
Heard/read a little	<u>13</u>	<u>11</u>	<u>18</u>	<u>14</u>	<u>9</u>	<u>12</u>	<u>15</u>	<u>13</u>	<u>14</u>	<u>9</u>
Not heard/read (Net)	<u>4</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>6</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>6</u>	<u>3</u>
Don't know	<u>1</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>2</u>

Q40. Do you approve or disapprove of the way James Hahn is handling the police shooting of Devin Brown? (IF APPROVE OR DISAPPROVE) Do you (approve/disapprove) strongly or (approve/disapprove) somewhat?

	<u>ALL</u>	<u>DEM</u>	<u>REP</u>	<u>WHT</u>	<u>BLK</u>	<u>LAT</u>	<u>WES</u>	<u>SFV</u>	<u>CEN</u>	<u>SOU</u>
Approve (Net)	<u>36</u>	<u>36</u>	<u>35</u>	<u>36</u>	<u>29</u>	<u>36</u>	<u>39</u>	<u>34</u>	<u>34</u>	<u>37</u>
Approve strongly	<u>12</u>	<u>14</u>	<u>9</u>	<u>12</u>	<u>11</u>	<u>15</u>	<u>12</u>	<u>10</u>	<u>12</u>	<u>14</u>
Approve somewhat	<u>23</u>	<u>22</u>	<u>26</u>	<u>24</u>	<u>18</u>	<u>20</u>	<u>26</u>	<u>24</u>	<u>22</u>	<u>23</u>
Disapprove (Net)	<u>29</u>	<u>28</u>	<u>32</u>	<u>25</u>	<u>45</u>	<u>33</u>	<u>21</u>	<u>32</u>	<u>29</u>	<u>34</u>
Disapprove somewhat	<u>11</u>	<u>11</u>	<u>9</u>	<u>11</u>	<u>12</u>	<u>12</u>	<u>11</u>	<u>12</u>	<u>10</u>	<u>11</u>
Disapprove strongly	<u>19</u>	<u>17</u>	<u>23</u>	<u>14</u>	<u>33</u>	<u>22</u>	<u>10</u>	<u>20</u>	<u>19</u>	<u>23</u>
Don't know	<u>35</u>	<u>36</u>	<u>33</u>	<u>39</u>	<u>26</u>	<u>31</u>	<u>40</u>	<u>34</u>	<u>37</u>	<u>29</u>

Q41. Do you approve or disapprove of the way Police Chief William Bratton is handling the police shooting of Devin Brown? (IF APPROVE OR DISAPPROVE) Do you (approve/disapprove) strongly or (approve/disapprove) somewhat?

	<u>ALL</u>	<u>DEM</u>	<u>REP</u>	<u>WHT</u>	<u>BLK</u>	<u>LAT</u>	<u>WES</u>	<u>SFV</u>	<u>CEN</u>	<u>SOU</u>
Approve (Net)	<u>48</u>	<u>47</u>	<u>55</u>	<u>57</u>	<u>30</u>	<u>42</u>	<u>53</u>	<u>52</u>	<u>45</u>	<u>38</u>
Approve strongly	<u>19</u>	<u>19</u>	<u>24</u>	<u>23</u>	<u>11</u>	<u>19</u>	<u>21</u>	<u>20</u>	<u>18</u>	<u>17</u>
Approve somewhat	<u>29</u>	<u>28</u>	<u>32</u>	<u>34</u>	<u>19</u>	<u>23</u>	<u>31</u>	<u>32</u>	<u>27</u>	<u>21</u>
Disapprove (Net)	<u>27</u>	<u>29</u>	<u>24</u>	<u>21</u>	<u>49</u>	<u>30</u>	<u>20</u>	<u>26</u>	<u>26</u>	<u>39</u>
Disapprove somewhat	<u>13</u>	<u>14</u>	<u>11</u>	<u>13</u>	<u>12</u>	<u>12</u>	<u>14</u>	<u>14</u>	<u>10</u>	<u>15</u>
Disapprove strongly	<u>15</u>	<u>15</u>	<u>12</u>	<u>8</u>	<u>37</u>	<u>18</u>	<u>7</u>	<u>12</u>	<u>16</u>	<u>24</u>
Don't know	<u>25</u>	<u>24</u>	<u>21</u>	<u>22</u>	<u>21</u>	<u>28</u>	<u>27</u>	<u>22</u>	<u>29</u>	<u>23</u>

Q42. Based on what you have heard or read, do you think the police would have handled the situation differently if Devin Brown had been a white teenager driving in a middle-class neighborhood, or would it have been handled the same way?

	<u>ALL</u>	<u>DEM</u>	<u>REP</u>	<u>WHT</u>	<u>BLK</u>	<u>LAT</u>	<u>WES</u>	<u>SFV</u>	<u>CEN</u>	<u>SOU</u>
Handle differently	<u>53</u>	<u>62</u>	<u>25</u>	<u>42</u>	<u>81</u>	<u>61</u>	<u>52</u>	<u>42</u>	<u>59</u>	<u>65</u>
Handle same way	<u>34</u>	<u>26</u>	<u>59</u>	<u>45</u>	<u>10</u>	<u>27</u>	<u>34</u>	<u>45</u>	<u>28</u>	<u>23</u>
Don't know	<u>13</u>	<u>12</u>	<u>16</u>	<u>13</u>	<u>9</u>	<u>12</u>	<u>14</u>	<u>13</u>	<u>13</u>	<u>12</u>

Q43. Based on what you have heard or read, do you think the police officers in this situation overreacted or did they react in a reasonable way?

	<u>ALL</u>	<u>DEM</u>	<u>REP</u>	<u>WHT</u>	<u>BLK</u>	<u>LAT</u>	<u>WES</u>	<u>SFV</u>	<u>CEN</u>	<u>SOU</u>
Overreacted	<u>56</u>	<u>66</u>	<u>30</u>	<u>45</u>	<u>83</u>	<u>64</u>	<u>52</u>	<u>45</u>	<u>62</u>	<u>73</u>
Acted reasonably	<u>31</u>	<u>22</u>	<u>54</u>	<u>38</u>	<u>8</u>	<u>28</u>	<u>31</u>	<u>41</u>	<u>24</u>	<u>18</u>
Don't know	<u>13</u>	<u>12</u>	<u>16</u>	<u>17</u>	<u>9</u>	<u>8</u>	<u>17</u>	<u>14</u>	<u>14</u>	<u>9</u>

(ORDER OF STATEMENTS IS ROTATED)

Q30. As you may know, Los Angeles Police Chief William Bratton says the city needs to hire 1,200 more police officers in order to provide adequate protection for residents. Mayor Hahn has proposed increasing the city sales tax to pay for additional police. Which of the following statements comes closer to your view "I agree the city needs to hire 1,200 more police officers and should increase the sales tax to pay for it," or "I agree the city needs to hire 1,200 more police officers, but I think the city can afford to do that without raising the sales tax," or "I do not think the city needs to hire 1,200 more police officers"?

	<u>ALL</u>	<u>DEM</u>	<u>REP</u>	<u>WHT</u>	<u>BLK</u>	<u>LAT</u>	<u>WES</u>	<u>SFV</u>	<u>CEN</u>	<u>SOU</u>
More police/increase tax	26	26	26	31	15	23	36	25	25	18
More police/no increase tax	52	52	55	52	53	51	49	56	49	51
No more police	18	18	17	14	28	21	14	15	20	28
Don't know	4	4	2	3	4	5	1	4	6	3

How the Poll Was Conducted

The Times Poll contacted 2,525 adults in the city of Los Angeles by telephone February 21 through 27, 2005. Among them were 1,636 registered voters. Telephone numbers were chosen from a list of all exchanges in the city, and random digit dialing techniques allowed listed and unlisted numbers to be contacted. Multiple attempts were made to contact each number. Additional African American and Latino voters were contacted in separate random samples to allow more accurate analysis of their subgroups. Adults in the entire sample were weighted slightly to conform with their respective census proportions by sex, ethnicity, age, education, city region, and party registration. The margin of sampling error for registered voters is plus or minus 3 percentage points in either direction. For certain subgroups, the error margin may be somewhat higher. Poll results may also be affected by factors such as question wording and the order in which questions are presented. Interviews in the supplemental samples were conducted by Interviewing Service of America, Van Nuys. While Asian voters were interviewed and are included as part of the overall results in this poll, they are too small a subgroup of the sample to be separately reported. Interviews in all samples were conducted in both English and Spanish.