

Racial Profiling in Law Enforcement: What Alabama Thinks

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Ask-Alabama Poll, Winter 2005
 Center for Governmental Services
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Significant Findings

- Over a majority of Alabamians (54%) believe that racial profiling by local law enforcement officers is occurs at least occasionally. Thirty-three percent of minorities believe that racial profiling is widespread, compared to 14% of non-minorities.**

	Total	Minority	Non-Minority
Widespread Practice	18%	33%	14%
Occasionally Occurs	37%	32%	39%
Rarely or Never Occurs	37%	27%	40%
No Opinion or Don't Know	9%	9%	8%

A majority of Alabamians agree that racial profiling is at least an occasional practice among police and sheriff deputies in Alabama. Many more in Alabama's minority communities believe that racial or ethnic profiling is a much more prevalent practice than is the case among non-minorities. By definition, profiling is a personal experience for many in the minority community, and it is understandable, but not excusable, that police officers and sheriff deputies are perceived by many in the minority community to be singling racial and ethnic minorities out for unwarranted suspicion and attention.

- Sixty percent of all Alabamians disapprove of the practice of racial/ethnic profiling by local law enforcement. High percentages of both minorities and non-minorities disapprove**

	Total	Minority	Non-Minority
Strongly Agree	9%	10%	8%
Agree	27%	29%	27%
Disagree	17%	16%	17%
Strongly Disagree	43%	40%	44%
No Opinion or Don't Know	5%	5%	4%

Relatively few Alabamians condone racial or ethnic profiling. There is widespread condemnation of the practice among both racial and ethnic minorities, as well as among non-minorities in the State. There appears to be strong grassroots support for our State and local leaders to act firmly and decisively against this practice in the State as well as in our local communities.

3. Minorities are more than five times as likely as non-minorities to report personal or family experiences of being stopped by a police officer during the last year or so that they attributed to their racial or ethnic background.

	Total	Minority	Non-Minority
Yes - Racial/Ethnic Profiling	9%	28%	5%
Yes – Age Profiling	10%	22%	7%
Yes – Clothing Style Profiling	8%	22%	5%

Combating racial or ethnic profiling is not always single dimensional and easily identifiable. Certain individuals may feel singled out for attention because of their age, how they dress, their choice of music, as well as their race or ethnicity; and all of these attributes may be linked together. This survey underscores that minorities have grounds for concern regarding racial profiling, that many feel that they have been subject to profiling, and that they do not like it.

Poll Facts

Dates of Survey: January 24 – February 3, 2005
Sample Size: 624 Alabama residents
Estimated Margin of Error: +/- 4%
Type of Survey: Random telephone survey of Alabamians 19 or older