

Mark your confusion using Thinking Notes.
Show evidence of a close reading with 7-10 annotations.
Write a 1-pg reflection or post a paragraph on the blog.

Millennials doubt fairness of justice system, poll finds

Source: Associated Press, adapted by Newsela staff/04.30.15

Grade Level **9** Word Count **501**

BOSTON, Mass. — About half of millennials believe that America's criminal justice system is unfair, according to a survey released Wednesday by Harvard University. At the same time, few millennials believe that protests over the killings of black men by police will make a significant difference.

In Baltimore, protests over the death of 25-year-old Freddie Gray in police custody have turned violent this week. The survey was taken before the current controversy. It polled 18-to-29-year-olds from March 18 to April 1.

After Gray's funeral on Monday, rioters in Baltimore looted and burned businesses and clashed with police. In response, Maryland's governor, Larry Hogan, deployed the National Guard to keep order, and Baltimore Mayor Stephanie Rawlings-Blake imposed a weeklong curfew, making it illegal to be out after dark.

This survey suggests that young people are genuinely interested in seeing real change in the criminal justice system, not just rhetoric, or talk, said John Della Volpe, director of polling at Harvard's Institute of Politics.

Even Before Baltimore, Few Thought Protests Would Work

"What I think they're asking us through this data is to have a meaningful, non-ideological conversation about this," he said. "Even before the violence in Baltimore, you only had a minority of 18-to-29-year-olds believing the protests would create change."

The survey polled over 3,000 millennials across the country.

It showed about 49 percent of millennials have little or no confidence that the judicial system can fairly judge people without bias for race and ethnicity. Another 49 percent have "some" to "a lot" of confidence in the judicial system.

The disparity is more pronounced among black millennials, with 66 percent expressing little or no confidence compared with about 43 percent of white millennials and 53 percent of Hispanic millennials.

Black millennials also showed much stronger support than their white and Hispanic counterparts for "Black Lives Matter," the protest movement sparked by recent police killings of black men in Ferguson, Missouri; New York City, and other cities.

Generation Seems Skeptical About Change

Overall, though, American millennials aren't confident that the movement will be effective in bringing meaningful change. Just 39 percent of those polled believed the efforts would be "somewhat" or "very" effective.

"This is a more cynical generation," Della Volpe said. "They're willing to volunteer and participate if they're inspired, feel like it matters and believe it can create change. But right now, they feel like no one is really listening to them."

Many of the young people polled strongly supported solutions that the protest movements have highlighted. About 80 percent believe requiring police officers to wear body cameras can be effective, for example.

The poll also asked young people for their feelings on U.S. foreign policy.

A solid majority of millennials — about 57 percent — supported sending U.S. ground troops to fight the extremist Islamic State group in the Middle East, and a growing number support pre-emptively attacking countries that could be a threat later.

The survey shows that young adults have a growing desire for more aggressive foreign policy, Della Volpe said.

Possible Response Questions:

- How do you feel about America's criminal justice system? Provide support to your stance.
- What type of change do you think needs to occur to be effective for our criminal justice system? Explain.
- Select any passage and respond to it.