

COVID19 POLICING PROJECT

The pandemic of policing is fueling the COVID-19 public health crisis.

As hundreds of thousands rise up in over 100 U.S. cities and globally against a pandemic of police and state violence against Black people, demanding justice for George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Tony McDade, Nina Pop, Ahmaud Arbery, Mychael Johnson, Regis Korchinski-Paquet, David McAtee, and all Black lives, police responses are perpetrating further violence against protesters and fueling the COVID-19 pandemic.

Police protest suppression tactics have included violently attacking and detaining people taking part in these actions, increasing the risk of COVID-19 infection among Black and Brown communities disproportionately bearing the brunt of the pandemic. In many cities police officers have rates of infection double or triple the general population, increasing risk of exposure to the coronavirus through any contact with an officer. Adding insult to injury, police are using tear gas, pepper bullets and spray, and other chemical agents that attack the eyes and lungs in the midst of a respiratory pandemic, causing coughing and secretions from the eyes and nose that elevate the likelihood of transmission. Police have [seized thousands of masks shipped by the Movement for Black Lives intended for protesters](#), and in many cases have pulled masks off people during arrests or to pepper spray them. Some activists have equated these tactics with biological terrorism or characterized them as epidemiological police violence, or viral police violence.

Police have also been routinely corralling protesters—many of whom are attempting to practice social distancing while protesting—into small spaces on the streets, into private homes to seek safety during curfew hours, and, after arrest, into buses and cells where physical distancing is impossible, masks are removed, and sanitizer and handwashing are not available. Jails, prisons, and ICE facilities are sites of the highest documented rates of infection, leading organizers to mount campaigns to release incarcerated people in the name of public health. Instead, law enforcement is fueling the COVID-19 public health crisis by arresting and detaining thousands more, and in some cases deliberately holding protesters—including high risk elders, disabled people, and pregnant people, for extended periods of time in an effort to chill and deter protests.

Curfews imposed in dozens of cities across the country only increase opportunities for police violence, exposure, and arrest.

If you or anyone you know has experienced increased police-related exposure to COVID19 during protests, please report it at covid19policing.com. And we encourage you to protest safely—[here are some resources!](#)

Also, please check the website to see the quarantine requirements in your state—some mandate a 14-day quarantine after a positive test, some mandate quarantine after exposure, and

some mandate quarantine once a person has symptoms of COVID19. **We strongly encourage everyone to prioritize their health and that of their communities, and to follow sound public health guidance by isolating if you test positive, experience exposure, or experience symptoms of COVID19.** And, we are concerned that officials may use quarantine laws to force protesters to stay at home or criminalize them on the pretext that they may have been exposed to COVID-19 during protests—in all states, violation of a valid quarantine order is a misdemeanor offense. We are also worried that contact tracing will be used to criminalize protesters instead of protecting communities. **If you see this happening in your community, please let us know and let's strategize together to keep protesters and communities safe while resisting further criminalization and suppression of protest.**

As the powers that be [attempt to craft a narrative](#) that our resistance is spreading COVID-19 when it is in fact the police—and the lack of medical care, income supports, structural inequalities, and the accelerated re-opening of the economy without protections for communities hardest hit, including Black communities—it is more imperative than ever that we take precautions to protect ourselves from this escalated threat against resistance.

Racial disparities in policing the pandemic:

As global restrictions begin to lift, and public health orders increasingly focus on individual behaviors, we are keeping an eye out on how these new requirements—wearing a mask in public (to go to work, ride transit, enter stores, recreate in parks), ever-changing limits on group gatherings, and containment of smaller areas and communities—are being enforced.

As now widely known, media reports have exposed racial disparities in patterns of policing under COVID-19 public health orders. Majority-Black and Latinx neighborhoods became prime sites for violent and uneven enforcement of social distancing, facial covering, and shelter-in-place requirements. In [Chicago](#), all 13 arrests and 11 of 13 citations for violations of stay-at-home orders happened on the South and West sides. Of those arrested, ten were Black, one was white, and two were juveniles whose race was unreported. According to [NYPD data](#), 81% of the 374 social-distancing enforcement summonses between March 16th and May 5th were issued to Black and Latinx residents of New York City. In Brooklyn, [35 of the 40](#) people arrested for social-distancing violations were Black, four were Latinx, and one was white.

In Ohio, various cities are seeing [racial disparities](#) in COVID-19 related enforcement actions. 61% of the 107 people charged with violating orders in Cincinnati were Black. In Toledo, 18 out of 23 of those charged were Black. In Franklin county, Black residents accounted for 57% of 129 arrests from the start of shelter-in-place until May 4th.

Here at the [COVID19 Policing Project](#), we will continue to monitor enforcement of orders as they shift, and continue to develop alternative approaches to the dual threats of COVID-19 and cops as we all work to transform the world.

Check out our [statement](#) supporting movement [demands to #DefundPolice](#), invest in Black communities, and create a long-term plan for a just recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic.