# George Floyd Case Verdict - Conviction of Derek Chauvin

## Why in news?

Derek Chauvin, a former Minneapolis police officer, was found guilty of murdering an unarmed African-American man, George Floyd in May 2020.

## What is the case about?

- Mr. Chauvin pinned Mr. Floyd's neck to the roadside with his knee until he stopped breathing.
- Mr. Floyd's final words, "I can't breathe", became the clarion call of a massive wave of street protests across the U.S.
- His murder ignited a nationwide storm of protest against police brutality and a worldwide outpouring of anger at America's racial injustice.
- The jury of six white people and six Black or multiracial ones came back with its verdict after about 10 hours of deliberations over two days.
- Chauvin was found guilty on all charges: second-degree unintentional murder, third-degree murder and second-degree manslaughter.
- All three charges are for an encounter that lasted around nine minutes.
- His bail was immediately revoked and he was led away with his hands cuffed behind his back.
- Chauvin, 45, could be sent to prison for decades.

## Why is the verdict significant?

- In most such cases, charges have been rare, and convictions rarer still.
- Analysis of these cases suggested that most often charges were dropped, or plea bargains and civil settlements agreed.
- Only in a minority of such instances (of what many consider police brutality against people of colour) does it result in convictions at trial.
- Four years under Mr. Trump did little to build, across communities, bridges of the sort necessary to bring about a greater measure of empathy and nuance in policing.
- Now, Mr. Biden's ambitious police reform bill is expected to go a long way in ensuring justice.
- The bill bans chokeholds, offers qualified immunity from lawsuits for law enforcement and creates national standards for policing towards greater

accountability.

## What are the notable features?

- The jury decided that Chauvin caused Floyd's death and that his actions were not that of a reasonable officer.
- Prosecutors didn't have to prove Chauvin's restraint was the sole cause of Floyd's death.
- They only had to prove that his conduct was a "substantial causal factor" for the death and that his actions were unreasonable.
- Because, Chauvin was authorised to use force as a police officer, as long as that force would be considered reasonable by an objective officer.
- **Second-degree unintentional murder** - It's also called felony murder.
- To prove this count, prosecutors had to show that Chauvin killed Floyd while committing or trying to commit a felony — in this case, third-degree assault.
- They didn't have to prove Chauvin intended to kill Floyd, only that he intended to apply unlawful force that caused bodily harm.
- **Third-degree murder** - For this count, jurors had to find Chauvin –

i. caused Floyd's death through an action that was "eminently dangerous"
ii. acted with a reckless disregard for and conscious indifference to the loss of life

- Prosecutors tried to prove this through testimony about the dangers of subduing a handcuffed person in the prone position.
- A police use-of-force trainer testified that officers are trained to avoid the neck when possible. What Chauvin did is not what he was trained to do.
- **Second-degree manslaughter** - Prosecutors had to show that Chauvin caused Floyd's death through culpable negligence that created an unreasonable risk.
- They also had to show that he consciously took the chance of causing severe injury or death.

**Source: The Hindu, The Indian Express**

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