

# **POLICE 1**

**DIGITAL EDITION**

# **WHAT COPS WANT IN 2021**

**4,000 officers speak up about  
police reform, recruitment  
and more in Police1's  
State of the Industry survey**

## **Inside:**

- **Opinions on the changing law enforcement landscape**
- **How satisfied are cops with their careers?**
- **Police recruitment and retention challenges**

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# EDITOR'S NOTE

2020 was a year of unprecedented change and uncertainty for law enforcement agencies. Months of civil unrest, looting and violence has turned communities against one another and against cops. Calls for police reform and defunding have dominated headlines in the mainstream media, but the future of the criminal justice system is being dictated and decided by everyone except police officers.

To provide officers a voice in setting the future of policing, Police1 conducted our first State of the Industry survey to understand how the law enforcement profession wants to evolve. More than 4,300 LEOs responded from agencies large and small serving urban, suburban and rural areas. Just over half of the respondents have more than two decades in law enforcement, 30% have 10-20 years under their duty belt and 17% have fewer than 10 years.

Respondents answered key questions about the profession including ongoing concerns about recruitment and retention and the duties that are of most importance to officers. The survey also

addressed the policy and legislative changes police officers want, as well as the services currently being performed by cops that officers think should be handled by other government agencies.

"By astutely leveraging the data from this survey to target public information outlets, the truth about who the police are, what they believe, what they are doing and what they hope for the future can serve as a means to advocate for the profession while producing one of many positive, intended consequences: successful recruitment and retention of quality police officers," observes criminal justice professor and former police officer Janay Casparini, P.h.D.

2021 will be a defining year for law enforcement. We hope the results of this survey can help police leaders better communicate with elected officials, the media and the public about what is at stake.

**Nancy Perry**  
Editor-in-Chief, Police1

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# WHAT DO LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICERS WANT FOR THE FUTURE OF POLICING?

Police1's State of the Industry survey offers key findings upon which we can engage the community, and each other, for action

By Bob Harrison and John S. Hollywood  
Center for Quality Policing, RAND Corporation

In a year where so much has transpired, voices are being heard on what may be the most critical issue facing America – how should citizens be protected, and who should lead work to ensure public safety?

With the United States already facing the uncertainty of COVID-19 affecting communities across the nation, the death of George Floyd transformed a long-simmering concern about police abuse into a crisis that has seen cities endure protests and riots, property burned and destroyed, and what some see as an existential crisis of confidence in the police.

Has the public been too tolerant of police misconduct? Are the police acting in ways that have eroded confidence in how they do their work to unacceptable levels? Should police be defunded? How, and in what ways, should they be transformed? Are the police too cynical, too burned out, or too racist, to be agents of change? Or, perhaps, are they still committed to their communities and confident about the future?

These questions have been bantered about in the media, on talk shows and in opinion pieces appearing almost daily. There is one segment of the population from whom very little has been heard – the police themselves. National and state police organizations have published statements calling for a dialog about the scope

of police services, often acknowledging the need for change. What do the cops themselves think about it? What changes would they support, and what perspectives do they hold?

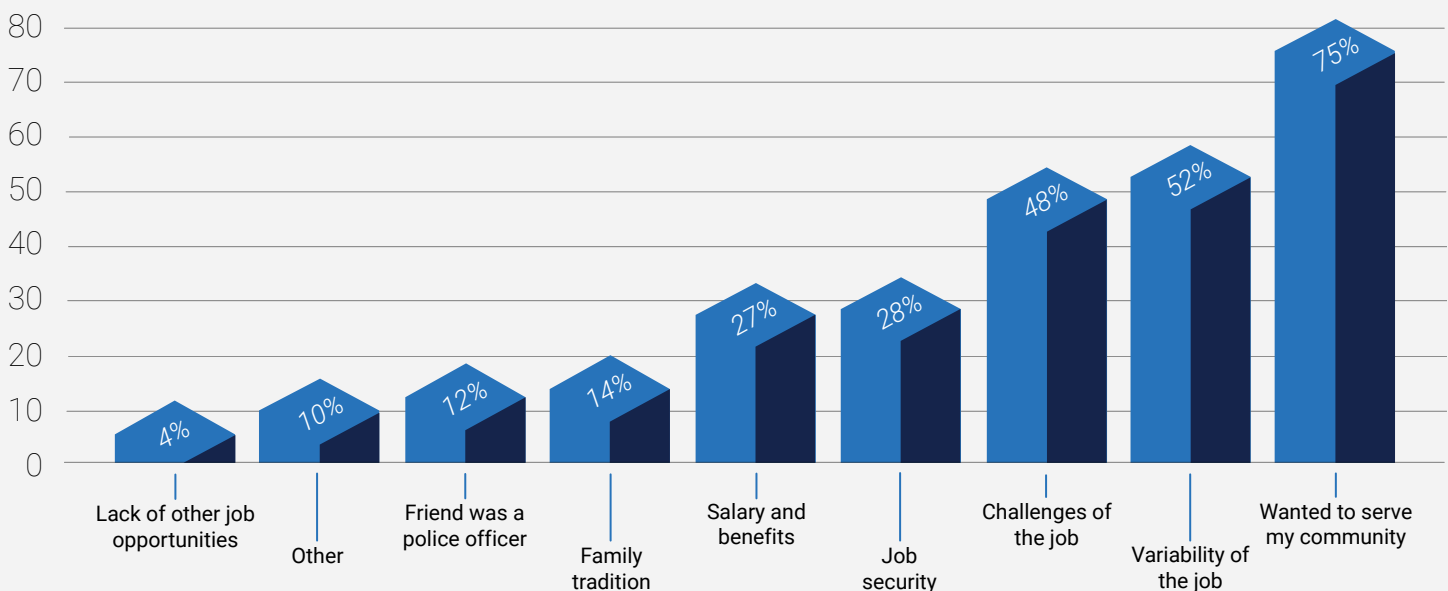
To answer those questions, Police1 conducted a national survey in September 2020, which saw more than 4,300 responses from active duty and retired officers to a 40-question online survey covering a broad array of topics. Chief among the questions asked were those related to:

- Why respondents became a police officer, their satisfaction with the job, and the most and least satisfying aspects of their professional lives.
- The types of police reform the respondent thought was appropriate, and which they would support.
- How the respondents view levels of community support and critique.

As our discussion will show, there are some key findings upon which we can engage the community, and each other, for action. These key findings are:

- Respondents showed a strong desire to serve their communities and increase the amount of time they spend doing community policing and crime prevention. This is resonant with the growing public and political consensus for change.
- Respondents largely want to transfer some response categories to others better trained to resolve the issues; this is also resonant with public sentiment regarding changes for the police.
- Respondents report being more satisfied with the job than some might expect, but there are significant warning signs; only a quarter of respondents would encourage young people to choose policing as a career.
- Major problems of “police always being wrong,” political pressures and inadequate leadership need to be addressed.
- The survey responses echo some public sentiment, but not to the extent that a transformative change might occur. This indicates the police may be less willing to enact novel changes, especially if it diminishes the police role or diverts funding from what officers see as “their” job.

## Why did you choose law enforcement as a career?

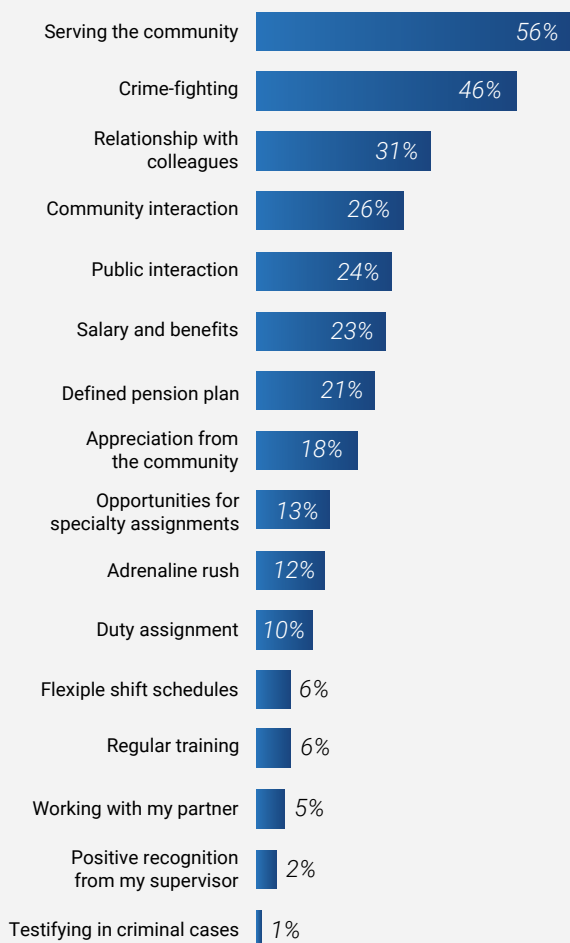


## SURVEY RESULTS AND IMPLICATIONS

The overwhelming majority of those responding chose law enforcement as a career because they wanted to serve their communities (75%). From a list of several other reasons – they could mark all that applied to them – about half (52%) were attracted to the variety of daily duties, and 48% noted that the challenges of the job attracted them to policing. Job security and compensation were less important, with 28% and 27% respectively. Only 4% said they chose police work due to a lack of other job opportunities.

Once on the job, serving the community was the most satisfying aspect of the job (55%),

### Which three of the following are the MOST satisfying to you about working in law enforcement?



followed closely by crime-fighting (46%). Third on a list of 16 options from which to choose was community interaction, with 26% citing that as the most satisfying aspect of the job. On the other side of the coin, a public presumption that the police are wrong leads the list of least satisfying aspects of a law enforcement career, with a 66% response rate. Being in the media spotlight (45%), attention from politicians (43%) and poor agency leadership (45%) are also high on that list.

Despite the negatives, more than half (56%) are either somewhat or very satisfied. Nine percent, though, are “very unsatisfied” and about 17% are somewhat unsatisfied. The current social climate indicates a troubling reality: 28% said it has strengthened their commitment to serve the community, but 44% said it had lessened that commitment. Further, although 39% said the current climate had strengthened their pride in being a law enforcement officer, 34% said it has lessened it. Not unsurprisingly, only a quarter said they’d recommend a career in law enforcement to young people. These sentiments are not new.

[A 2017 National Survey of police officers](#) conducted by the Pew Research Institute reflected some of the same (conflicting) perspectives. As a result of fatal encounters between the police and Blacks, the Pew survey found 93% had become more concerned about their safety, and 76% were more reluctant to use force. Even then, 86% said policing was harder as a result of those incidents. Conversely, 79% had been thanked in the past month for their service (67% also reported they had been verbally abused). The majority (58%) said policing makes them feel proud, but 51% also noted it makes them frustrated. Fewer say the job fulfills them (42%), and 22% say the job makes them angry. With regard to the need for more change to achieve equality, there was a significant difference between Black and white officers; 92% of white officers said the country had already made the changes needed to give Blacks equal rights, while only 29% of Black officers felt that way. Public sentiment was markedly lower on both accounts.

Even with the prevalence of adverse sentiments toward the rigors of the job and perceived lack of public support, Police1 survey respondents are still largely committed to serving their constituents. Choosing from a list of most important duties, 64% said community policing and responding to emergencies were their top duties, followed by general patrol (41%) and violent crime investigation (40%). More than 57% said they would want to spend more time on crime prevention, with about 44% wanting more time for public interaction and crime investigation.

## DEFUNDING, REDIRECTING AND REVITALIZING THE POLICE

As the public, legislators and the police themselves consider changing the nature of law enforcement, respondents weighed in with their perspectives:

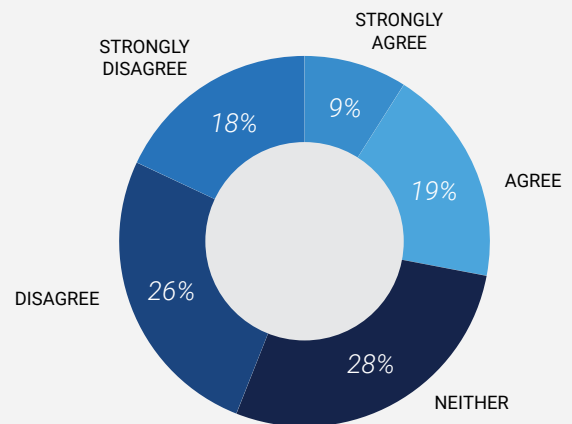
- 87% want more training on communications skills, and 79% want training in weaponless defense and control skills;
- More than 70% want crisis intervention, de-escalation and less-lethal skills training;
- Far fewer (30%) want training on implicit bias.

If they could transition to service delivery by others for functions now usually performed by the police, the top choices to do so were in these areas:

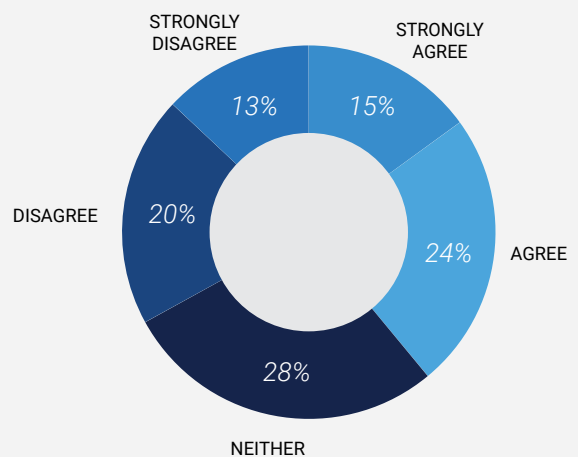
- Finding housing for persons experiencing homelessness (93%);
- Animal control (88%);
- Nuisance abatement (64%);
- Parking enforcement (61%);
- Interestingly, support for moving response to persons experiencing a mental health crisis was much lower (45%), even though this is one of the issues most prominently mentioned in the dialog of changing police duties.

The survey responses contrast from some of the more draconian changes demanded by some but are similar to public sentiments to redirect mental health issues to non-police resources, and also to create community-based organizations to deal with incidents for which the police are summoned today. In a [RAND Corporation Perspective published in August 2020](#), police officers and their chiefs readily acknowledged the need to change in significant ways. This included support to empower community members to resolve

### The current climate has strengthened my commitment to serve my community.



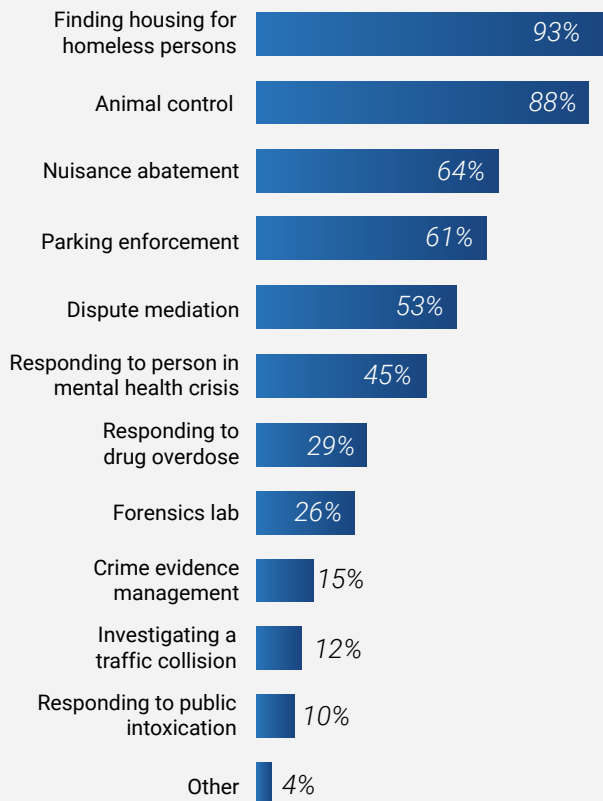
### The current climate has strengthened the pride I have in being a law enforcement officer.



their problems without the police, using the police as responders of last resort, and using professionals trained in mental health, substance abuse and other needs instead of relying on the police.

Among the most effective tools noted by RAND were collaboratives such as Crisis Intervention Teams, Angel programs for persons experiencing substance use disorders, and Homeless Outreach Teams. Although there are differences in the specific approaches supported, the consensus is that defunding is more appropriately seen as redirecting funds to resources (existing or to be developed) to remove police officers from being the “one-stop-shop” for all of the social ills to which they currently respond.

### Which of these services, often performed by law enforcement, SHOULD be performed by other governmental or non-governmental agencies?



## SURVEY DEMOGRAPHICS

Survey respondents were mostly white, male sworn officers with more than 10 years on the job. Some could say they may represent more of the past of policing than its future.

At the same time, those in policing who are similar to them are largely the same ones who are in charge right now – they are supervisors, managers and executives. In those roles, it could be more important for them to consider ways to modernize police work to make it more responsive and accountable to their public. Understanding the perspectives of this segment of officers could be a critical starting point to create change.

In general, respondents were:

- Overwhelmingly active duty peace officers (88%).
- Overwhelmingly white or Caucasian (78%) and identify as a male (86%).
- Mostly veteran officers with years of experience (65% had more than 10 years on the job; 18% had more than 30 years of experience as a police officer).
- Thirty-nine percent hold bachelor’s degrees and 16% have master’s degrees or higher. Some (20%) have only a high school education.

The types of communities were split amongst rural (22%), suburban (40%) and urban (38%) areas.

Respondents held a variety of ranks and positions in policing. Patrol and investigative personnel comprised 45% of the total; line supervisors added 15% to that total, meaning that about 60% of respondents were engaged in line police functions daily.

Smaller agencies were underrepresented, with only 5% of the total. Agencies of all other sizes were more evenly represented, with departments of 10-24 officers (13%), 25-49 officers (14%)

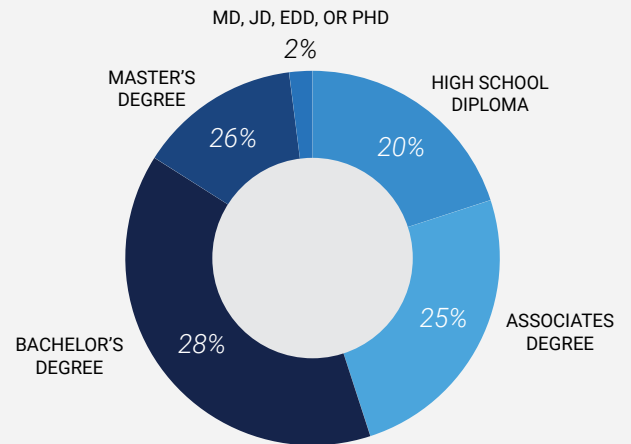


and 50-99 officers (16%) represented. Agencies with 500-1000 people had only nine percent of the total responses, but those with 100-499 (27%) and more than 1,000 (16%) had ample representation in the survey.

This contrasts with the general demographic of law enforcement, but not by as much as one might think. In the latest tally of local police staffing from the Bureau of Justice Statistics, about one in eight officers, and one in 10 supervisors, were female. About 1 in 4 and 1 in 5 first-line supervisors were Black or Hispanic. More than two-thirds of officers serve cities with populations of less than 10,000 residents. Less than 3% of officers served communities larger than 100,000, but they comprise about half of all officers.

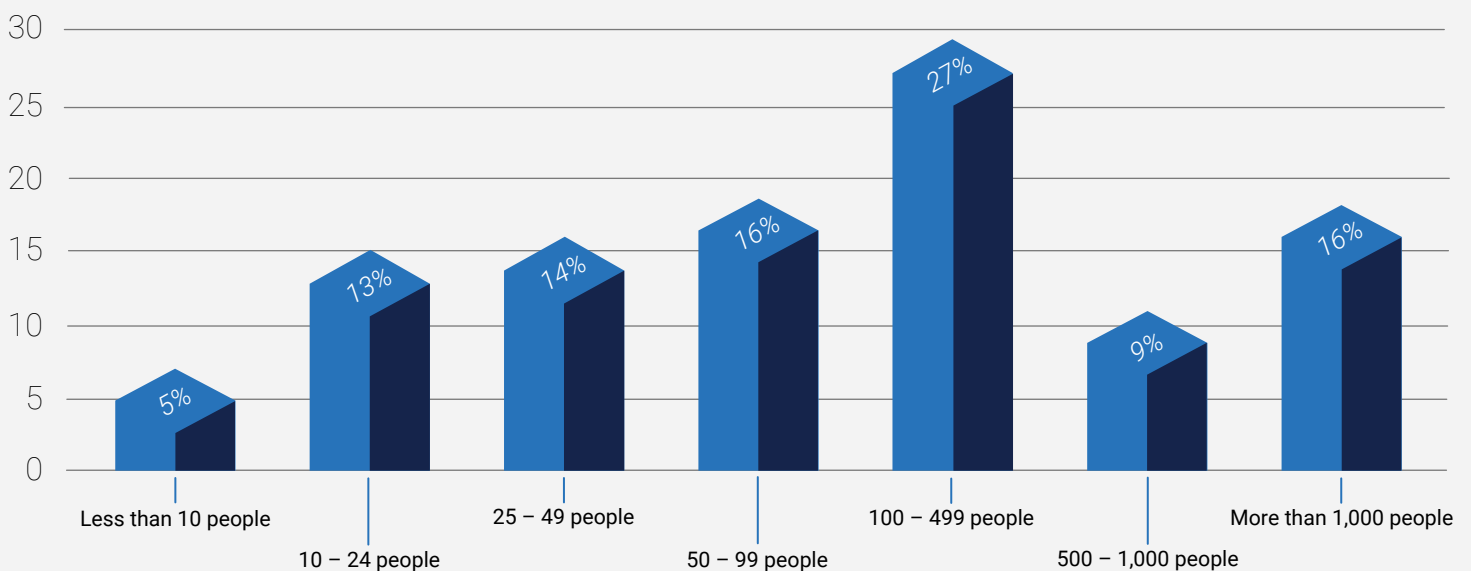
The [educational level of respondents](#) is higher than national averages, but not by as much as some might think. More than half of American police officers hold at least a two-year degree;

## What is your highest level of education?





## What is the size of your department?



30% have four-year degrees and 5% have graduate degrees. Twenty-eight percent of chiefs and sheriffs (the CEOs) hold four-year degrees, and 31% have master's degrees (3% more have doctorate or terminal degrees).

Survey respondents are older, better educated, white and male – they are part of the long-term culture, so the public may think they'd be more resistant to change than younger officers. Rather than focusing on the differences between the police and the public they serve (which can be significant), one suggestion might be to start with what most interested parties already agree on; that the police must change substantially

if they are to remain relevant and supported by those they serve.

There are other areas of agreement that could be used as starting points: There are social service functions that should be primarily delivered by non-policing organizations and chief among those could be homeless services, chronic mental health needs, sub-critical dispute resolution, and even parking enforcement and animal control.

The trade-off for offloading some services and response obligations should be the creation of better, more educated and more responsive

# ***SURVEY RESULTS SHOW A WILLINGNESS TO BEGIN OR CONTINUE THE DIALOG OF SHIFTING RESPONSIBILITIES FOR SOME SERVICES AWAY FROM THE POLICE.***



police agencies. Individual officers should be more transparently accountable for their actions, and processes to end the employment of deficient officers should be strengthened.

As a partnership emerges between the police and the people, confidence in law enforcement may rise, and a general level of support that translates to better public safety could be a result.

Inevitably, there may be issues on which police officers and the public may disagree. Defunding the police is perhaps the most significant, as could be strategies to police urban communities and ways to treat all persons equitably and respectfully. Survey results show a willingness to begin or continue the dialog of shifting responsibilities for some services away from the

police (along with funding necessary to create that change), but substantial room remains to close the gap between what the police may be willing to do, and the changes their public will demand. **P1**)

## **About the authors**

John S. Hollywood leads work in the Center for Quality Policing at the nonprofit, nonpartisan RAND Corporation; Bob Harrison is a member of that Center researching homeland security and justice policy issues.

This article and any commentary by the authors do not represent the outcomes of RAND-sponsored research; it is an analysis of the survey conducted by Police1 with insights into its meanings and ways it can contribute to the dialog regarding the future of law enforcement.



# OFFICER OPINIONS ON **THE CHANGING LANDSCAPE OF THE POLICING PROFESSION**

Survey results provide insight into what LEOs think about reform, police training initiatives and reallocating calls for service

By Barry Reynolds

While it remains to be seen whether recent election results will either slow or accelerate the calls for police reform that have echoed across the country during the second half of 2020, it is likely certain that at least some reform efforts will result in changing the landscape of the policing profession.

Over the past few months, legislative inquiries and public focus groups have attempted to identify critical areas of police reform that should be pursued and enacted, with little consensus thus far. Many of the discussions among national and state legislators have centered on specific

challenges that have been recognized across policing, and a majority of those have focused on use of force issues.

The report on the survey, “What do law enforcement officers want for the future of policing?” provides insight into the mindset of our nation’s law enforcement officers and their thoughts on police reform, and even provides a unique glimpse into the differences in thought among members of our police population.

## MOST-SUPPORTED REFORM EFFORTS

Let’s first examine the results from the question, “What policy and legislative changes do police officers want? We want to know your level of support about a variety of policy changes and legislative mandates that have been implemented in some jurisdictions and are proposed in others.”

In analyzing each of the proposed policy or legislative reform ideas presented in the survey and calculating the results according to the overall level of support indicated by the respondents, the following were identified as having the most support:

Reform Idea	Level of Support
Increase training funding	93%
Mandatory prosecution of assaults on police officers	92%
Patrol officers equipped with a body-worn camera	84%
Assaulting a police officer prosecuted as a hate crime	83%

It should not be too surprising that reform efforts that aim to increase police funding are among the most popular with officers. Unfortunately, many of the external conversations occurring in today’s environment are aimed at doing the exact opposite. The value and importance of effective police training cannot be overestimated, but, unfortunately, the attempts to reduce funding

and training are almost being wielded as political weapons.

We know that effective training for officers often results in incident outcomes that are less problematic, indicating that training works to help resolve confrontational incidents without physical violence. So, it is ironic that the very thing that the reformers who are looking to reduce police funding would like to accomplish could eventually be impacted in the opposite direction by their efforts. Both the police and the police reform advocates clearly want less confrontation, fewer incidents that results in violence, and higher levels of communication and respect between the police and of their communities. They only seem to differ on how to get there.

Among the other responses, mandatory prosecutions for those who have assaulted officers and funding for patrol officers to be equipped with body-worn cameras were also extremely favorable. One of the more interesting results pertains to the issue of classifying the assault of an officer as a hate crime. The concept of this reform effort is easily understandable, the reality of implementing this type of change however is much more difficult.

While the exact definition and applicability of hate crime statutes vary from state to state, the FBI defines a hate crime as a “criminal offense against a person or property motivated in whole or in part by an offender’s bias against a race, religion, disability, sexual orientation, ethnicity, gender, or gender identity.” A broader view of the legal definition of a hate crime however merely addresses the particular “status” of the victim, which in this case would be their employment as a police officer.

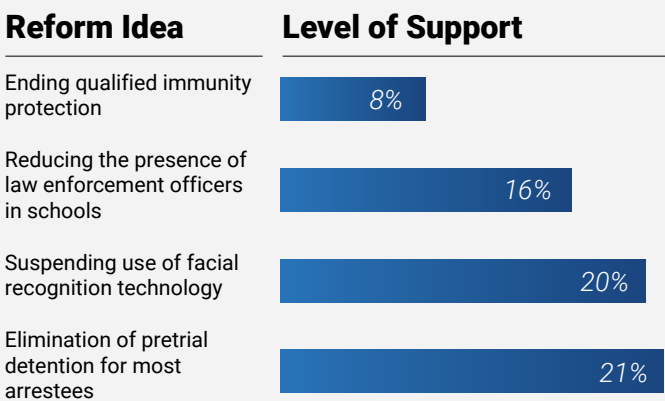
The burden of proof in nearly all hate crime cases eventually comes down to the identification of the motives behind legal intent. The U.S. Supreme Court has cited precedent that permitted the “evidentiary use of speech to establish the elements of a crime or to prove

motive or intent.” This means that persons are free to express their thoughts or biases against police, but when they cross that line and engage in unlawful conduct based upon these beliefs, their legal intent may then be conferred as motivated by hate.

Such an application of the current hate crime statutes would likely require a broader revision of those statutes, and most certainly would be followed by a judicial review as to the constitutionality of this particular use of the hate crime statutes.

## LEAST-SUPPORTED REFORM EFFORTS

Among survey respondents, the following policy or legislative reform ideas were identified as having the least amount of support:



It is not surprising that the reform item that received the lowest level of support was the proposal to end qualified immunity protection. It remains unclear, however, whether the qualified immunity doctrine may be altered or eliminated solely through legislative edict. The qualified immunity doctrine was confirmed via a decision by the U.S. Supreme Court and is intended to protect police officers from private liability stemming from frivolous lawsuits, and from the adverse results of well-intentioned split-second decisions made during stressful and tense situations.

In 2020, advocates attempting to convince the Supreme Court to revisit this doctrine have

petitioned for the court to hear at least 12 cases. Until now, the Supreme Court has declined to take up any of those cases and consider reviewing the qualified immunity doctrine. However, the court did hear arguments in a qualified immunity case in [November 2020](#). Any decision on this case, and perhaps applicability to other cases, is likely several months away.

It is also interesting to note that reforms aimed at reducing the presence of law enforcement officers in schools received very little support among all respondents to the survey, with one exception. Officers from agencies of 1,000 sworn personnel or more were more likely (29%) to support a reduction of police in schools than their counterparts from smaller agencies.

## FACTORS IMPACTING SURVEY RESULTS, AND WHAT THEY TELL US

Survey respondents were asked to select certain identifiers that helped to categorize their survey responses according to population segments. For example, respondents were asked to identify their years of service, primary response area, current role, agency size and level of education, among others.

These breakdowns provided insight into the differences in opinion among the officers who answered the survey. For example, bans on all types of chokeholds were consistently more likely to be supported by officers with higher levels of experience in comparison to those with less experience. And a ban on no-knock warrants received only half of the support from SWAT and undercover detectives than from those in other assignments.

In another example, the general survey results in response to the question regarding support for a ban on shooting at moving vehicles did not show any telling results. Approximately 50% of the respondents indicate no or not much support, and 50% were either unsure or showed support for a ban on shooting at moving vehicles. However, when considering the years of experience of the respondents, officers at

the highest level of experience were more likely (58%) to support the ban than the most junior officers who responded to the survey.

Of these many different variables, however, the respondents' level of education proved to have the most identifiable and consistent influence on answers to the survey.

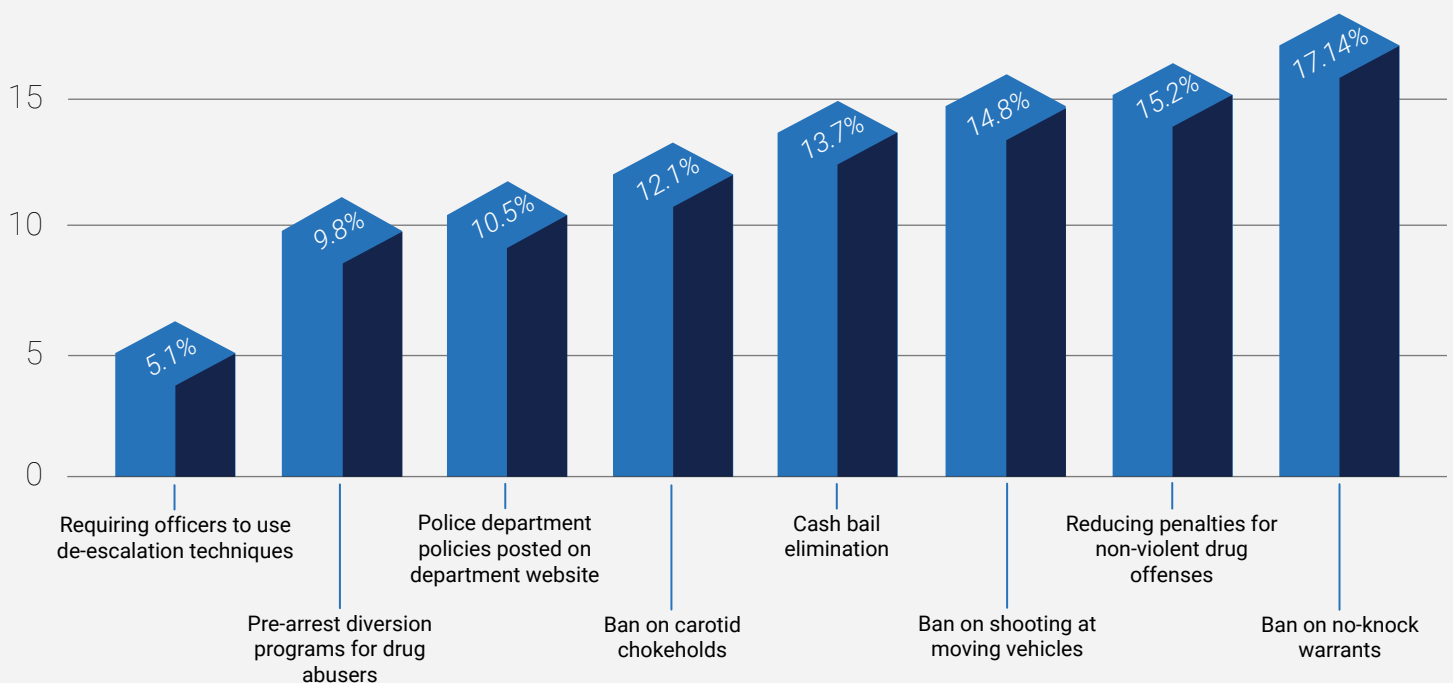
In the question regarding the ban on shooting at moving vehicles, for instance, respondents with a bachelor's degree or higher were 15% more likely to support a ban on shooting at moving vehicles than were respondents with an associate degree or less.

This question was not the only one in which the level of education appeared to play a significant role. Respondents with a bachelor's degree or higher indicated a higher level of support for each of the following policy or legislative reform proposals listed below, albeit by varying degrees.

**EFFECTIVE TRAINING FOR OFFICERS OFTEN RESULTS IN INCIDENT OUTCOMES THAT ARE LESS PROBLEMATIC.**

One of the hallmarks of any profession is the extent and degree to which the profession's members commit themselves toward educational advancement, and the policing profession has made remarkable strides in this area. While there is not enough information available to fully assess the impact that advanced education has on the overall support

**Percentage level of support for reform proposals by those officers with bachelors degree and above, in comparison with those with associate degrees or less**



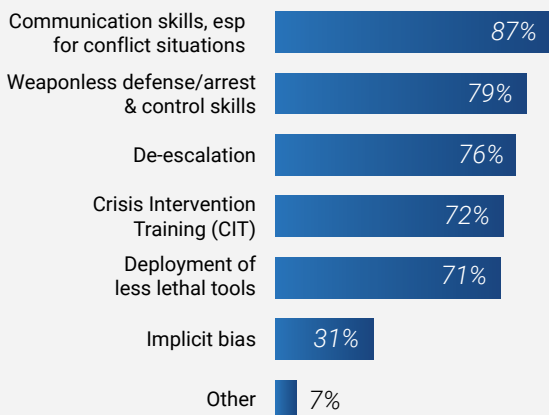
\*Percentage of higher support by those with a bachelor's degree or above.

for reform proposals, it is clear that there is some correlation between the levels of higher education and the level of support for some police reform proposals.

## WHAT TRAINING DO OFFICERS VALUE?

Respondents were then asked, “Which of these training topics is of value to your work as a police officer?”

### Many reform proposals prescribe specific types of training for police officers. Percentage level of support for these training topics:



Over 87% of all answers to this question indicated support for communications skills training, especially for conflict situations. The overwhelming support for this topic is a strong indicator of the importance officers place on effective communication skills in avoiding conflict situations. This trend continued across the remaining training topics with 78% support for weaponless defense/arrest & control skills, and 75% support for de-escalation training.

It is interesting to note that the one training topic that received considerably less support than all others was implicit bias training. Several of

the free text comments submitted by survey respondents seriously question the validity and value of implicit bias training, although it is unclear if the authors of those comments have attended such training. Two population segments also showed significantly less support for implicit bias training: officers with more than 30 years of experience and officers with post-graduate degrees.

## WHAT SHOULD LAW ENFORCEMENT BE DOING?

The survey then asked, “Which of these services, often performed by law enforcement, SHOULD be performed by other governmental or non-governmental agencies?”

The respondents’ answers to this question showed a significant range of support across the answer alternatives. Over 93% of the respondents indicated that other governmental or non-governmental agencies should be involved with finding housing for homeless persons, while less than 10% indicated supported having some other agency, other than the police, respond to incidents of public intoxication.

While there were not many significant trends in response to this question when categorized by agency type or size, or level of education, there was one interesting result that might be a bit surprising. Overall, just 53% of the respondents were in favor of having someone other than the police handle dispute mediation. However, when responses are evaluated in comparison to years of service, younger officers were 10% more likely to think that police should not handle dispute mediation than were the most senior officers.

This means that the most experienced officers, who have likely handled the highest number of citizen disputes throughout their career, still are more likely to believe that the police are the best option to handle dispute mediation.



# METHODOLOGY

For the purposes of this article the survey results from all respondents were converted to a statistical percentage between 0% (no support) and 100% (full support). This methodology provides for a more intuitive analysis of the relative differences between each category of survey results, and provides further insight into the levels of support from the sub-populations within the overall survey results.

## CONCLUSION

While there are stark differences between many of the proposals being pursued by reform advocates and the level of support for reform that exists among those within the policing profession, there is at least some common ground on which both can agree. Equipping more officers with body cameras and requiring officers to use de-escalation techniques are just two topics that could be used to build a shared consensus on more issues.

If it is to be successful, the next era of the policing profession will require that both the police and the public agree on their shared responsibilities for producing positive public safety outcomes. Hopefully, over the next few months, reforms that are crafted in the best interests of both the police and the public will rise to the top. **P1**

## About the author

Barry Reynolds is the director of The Center for Excellence in Public Safety Leadership and associate professor of criminal justice at Cardinal Stritch University in Milwaukee. Barry has over 35 years of professional experience, including 31 years as a law enforcement officer and supervisor. Barry also served with the Wisconsin Department of Justice as a senior training officer in the Training and Standards Bureau.

Barry is certified by the IACP as a leadership instructor in the Leadership in Police Organizations Program. He is a national columnist on law enforcement management and leadership issues and serves as a consultant to law enforcement agencies. In addition to his criminal justice degree, Barry holds a degree in business and an MS in management.

*Statistical analysis for this article provided by Bryce Reynolds, a senior data analyst for a Fortune 100 company with experience as a data scientist. Bryce graduated magna cum laude with degrees in economics, mathematics and statistics, and has a wide array of experience across several data science disciplines including machine learning, forecasting and text analytics.*

# HOW SATISFIED ARE COPS WITH THEIR CAREERS?



Survey results show most officers are drawn to police work for altruistic reasons and many are having at least some of their motives satisfied

By Tim Dees

While it's no secret that law enforcement is a trying profession these days, quantifying the level of difficulty is harder to do. Police1's State of the Industry survey of law enforcement officers sheds some light on the challenges of the job, what is driving cops and where officers are finding the most frustration.

## SURVEY DEMOGRAPHICS

There were more than 4,300 responses, 87% of which were current, actively serving law enforcement officers. The remainder were retired or non-sworn police employees. More than 60% of respondents had between 10 and 30 years of experience, with another 18% working in law enforcement for over 30 years. Thirty-nine percent of the officers polled worked in urban agencies, 38% in suburban departments, and 22% came from rural agencies (totals may not sum to 100% due to rounding). A third of respondents worked in patrol, the most common assignment. The remainder worked in administration, investigations, training and other roles.

## PROS AND CONS OF BEING A COP

Most officers were drawn to police work for altruistic reasons. Seventy-five percent said they chose law enforcement to serve their communities, with challenges (48%) and variety (52%) of the job cited as the most common reasons. Other reasons included family tradition (14%) and job security (28%) as motives. With this and some other questions, respondents provided up to three responses, so totals exceed 100%.

Most officers have at least some of their motives satisfied. Fifty-five percent found community service their most satisfying reward, with crime-fighting (46%) and the relationships they enjoyed with other cops (31%) the other most common responses. Twenty-three percent were satisfied with their salary and benefits, and 24% enjoyed the interaction they had with the public. Officers were more outspoken in citing the downsides of law enforcement. Over 40% cited attention from politicians (43%), being in the

## WHAT OFFICERS SAID:

# What do you find most satisfying about law enforcement?

Our community generally supports us, and I feel we play a very important role in protecting our community.

I work for an outstanding agency with a chief who listens to new ideas and accepts input with our shared leadership group.

I continue to take pride in serving those in need.

I have the most joy in knowing that I've made an impact in someone's life in a positive way when the criminal is held accountable for the crime that they committed against an innocent person.

Despite the negative media attention, I enjoy interacting with my community. My interactions, good and bad, do not reflect the representation by the media.

I derive my satisfaction from knowing I'm a professional, make a difference in the quality of life of the citizens I serve, advance the police-community relationship with most contacts and I get to put evil people in jail.



media spotlight (45%), poor agency leadership (44%) and presumption that the police are wrong (66%) as the least satisfying aspects of the job. Although cops have been known to complain about paperwork and court attendance, less than 5% cited report writing as a drawback, with presenting evidence (1.6%) and testifying (2%) getting even fewer votes.

## JOB SATISFACTION

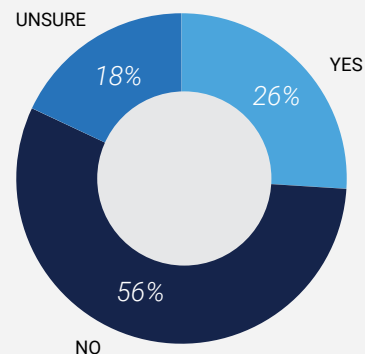
Most cops seem reasonably satisfied with their jobs. Over half (56%) said they were somewhat or very satisfied with police work, with 26% indicating they were somewhat or very dissatisfied. The remaining 18% were neutral or unsure.

Firefighters and paramedics may get to advertise their career choice, but cops are more reticent to let others know what they do for a living. Asked how they feel about displaying car decals, t-shirts, and other “I’m a cop!” paraphernalia, 70% said that they disagreed or strongly disagreed with the practice of publicizing their choice of career. Similarly, 75% said that when they were off duty, they didn’t feel it was important to let people know they were cops.

The current political climate regarding law enforcement has not completely soured cops’ perspective of their jobs, but there is significant dissatisfaction.

Asked about their sense of pride and commitment to serving their communities, 28% of officers surveyed neither agreed nor disagreed that their attitudes were affected.

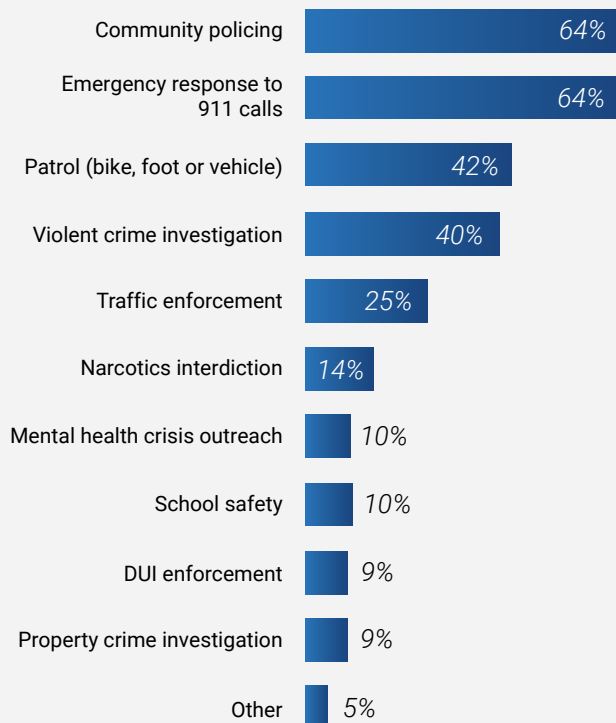
## Would you recommend a career in law enforcement to young people?



The distribution of those who agreed their pride and commitment was reduced was almost the same as those who disagreed. While it's gratifying that most cops are resisting or are neutral about the notion that public opinion is negatively affecting them, 44% feel their pride and commitment have eroded in light of public opinion. Over half (56%) would not recommend that young people pursue a law enforcement career. Forty-four percent are not optimistic about the future of law enforcement, 36% are unsure and only 20% see a brighter future ahead.

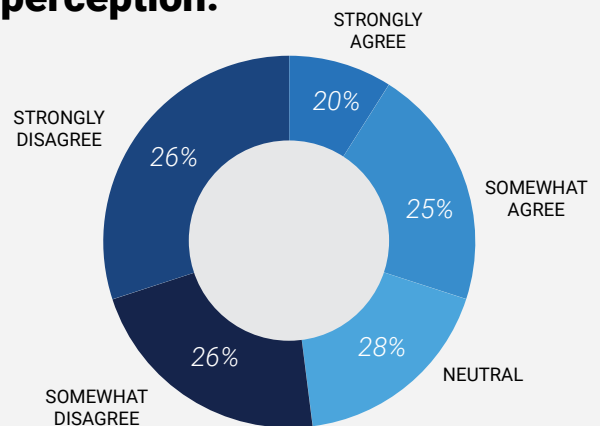
Asked to rank the most important tasks for law enforcement, community policing (64%), response to emergencies (64%), patrol (42%) and investigation of violent crimes (40%) scored highest. Other activities such as accident investigation, drunk driving enforcement, mental health intervention and narcotics enforcement were selected far less often.

### Choose the three most important duties for patrol officers.



When cops are asked about the way they feel toward agency leadership, the picture is not one of fraternity and harmony. They said that patrol officers are not consulted on policy changes (59%), their department emphasizes public perception over the concerns of officers (52%) and local government officials do not understand what the cops need (61%). Even so, officers do not have an entirely negative perception of the way their departments are run. Sixty-one percent were satisfied with the training they receive, 74% said they were adequately equipped with safety and personal protective gear, and 71% said the citizens they serve support them in their mission.

### My department puts officer concerns before public perception:

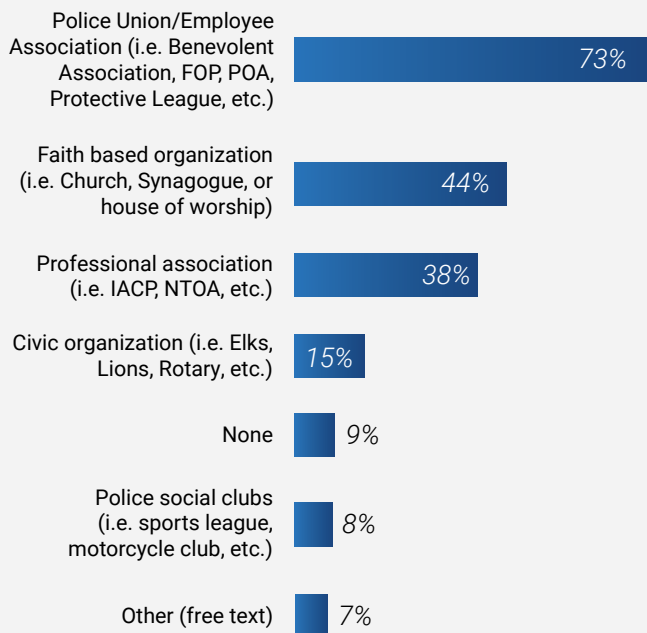


Conventional wisdom might predict that cops are mostly conservative, law-and-order types who favor stiff punishments for offenders and free rein on tactics and use of force options. This wasn't entirely borne out by the survey's results. Fifty-eight percent supported alternatives to jail for minor and first-time offenders and 49% were for a ban on the use of a respiratory chokehold. Support for other criminal justice reforms such as the elimination of cash bail (67% opposed) and ending qualified immunity protection of police (91% opposed) was less equivocal. Predictably, there was overwhelming support for mandatory prosecution for assaults

on officers (93%) and increasing funding for police training (94%); 84% wanted body-worn cameras for all officers.

While the police want to keep their use of force options open, they also want to expand their skillsets for less conventional techniques. Eighty-seven percent want to improve their communication skills, 72% want more training for crisis intervention, and 75% want de-escalation training. Seventy-nine percent want more and better weaponless defense and physical control skills.

## Which of these organizations are you a member of?



## BEHIND THE BADGE

The survey provided some insight into the personal lives of the country's police. Seventy-three percent belong to some type of union or police fraternal organization, 44% are members of a faith-based organization, and 38% have membership in a professional association like ILEETA or the NTOA. Fifteen percent belong to a service organization, such as Rotary or Lions Club. In the past year, 13% have attended a political rally, 23% donated to a political candidate and 67% voted in an election.

## WHAT OFFICERS SAID:

### What do you find least satisfying about law enforcement?

Public's lack of knowledge about police work, the law and existing controls on enforcement activities.

Assumptions made about the profession as a whole based on a few incidents.

Blaming law enforcement for problems we didn't cause and cannot solve (e.g., mental health).

The uncertainty of being supported by department and city officials if you have to use force.

Policing in a country that is governed by social media and the court of public opinion.

Politicians using police officers as their political pawns to pander to citizens.

Being called racist just for being the police.

# Educational achievement among law enforcement officers roughly mirrors the attainment of college degrees for Americans generally:

**24%**

have associate degrees

**40%**

have bachelor's degrees

**17%**

have graduate degrees

Political preference among those responding to the survey was not much of a surprise: 64% said that the Republican Party best reflected their political interests, 6% were Libertarians and only 5% were Democrats. Just over a quarter checked “other” or preferred not to answer.

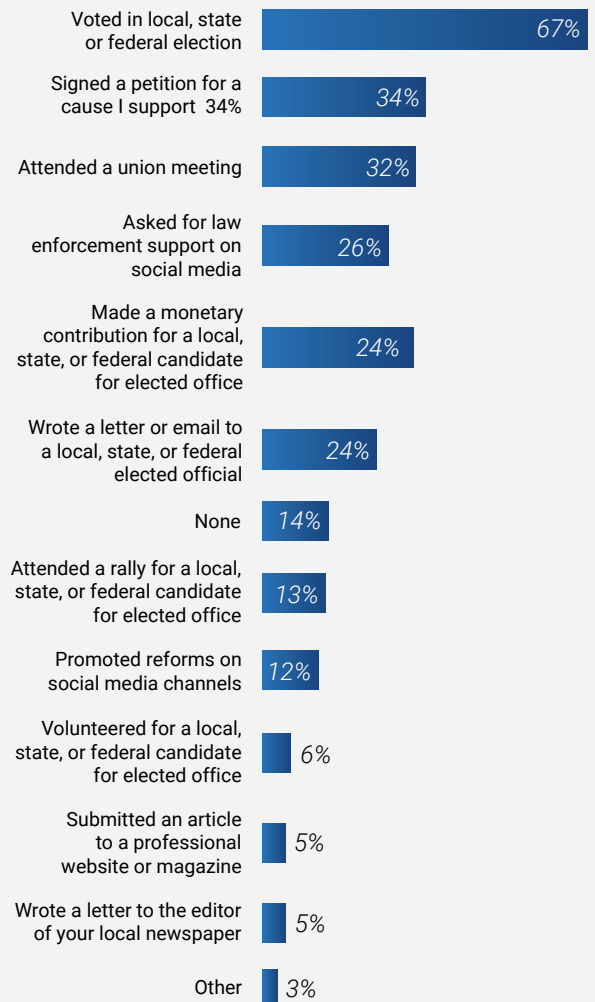
Of those surveyed, 78% identified as white or Caucasian, 7% were Hispanic, and 12.8% were Black; 86% were males. On the whole, the law enforcement profession, according to a [2018 U.S. Census Bureau estimate](#), was reported to be 65.5% identified as white or Caucasian and 12.8% were Black; 86% were males.

Besides the categorical responses, there were several opportunities for those surveyed to enter free-form text. Just the narrative answers to the question on job satisfaction ran for 160 pages, and the tone differed widely. Some answers were from cops who loved the job, and others reflected a darker point of view. The variation of these answers illustrates what many outsiders forget about cops: every one of them is an individual with their own ideas, biases and affinities. The police microcosm mirrors the society it serves, as it should. No one can truly speak for the whole. **P1**

## About the author

Tim Dees is a retired police officer and the former editor of two major law enforcement websites who writes and consults on technology applications in criminal justice.

## Which of these advocacy efforts have you participated in during the last 12 months in support of law enforcement?

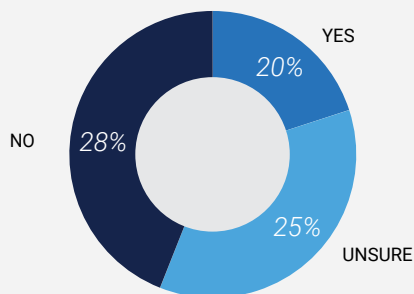


# HOW OPTIMISTIC ARE POLICE OFFICERS ABOUT THE FUTURE OF LAW ENFORCEMENT?

## THE ANSWER, NOT THAT MUCH.

To improve retention efforts, police leaders must address the top reasons why officers are experiencing a lack of optimism about the profession

### I am optimistic about the future of policing



*The Police1 survey asked officers if they were optimistic about the future of policing: 20% answered yes, 36% were unsure and 44% said no. Those respondents who reported feeling not optimistic about the future of the profession were asked to explain why, which elicited over 1,000 comments that produced several themes.*

*Here Janay Gasparini, Ph.D., a former police officer and current assistant professor of criminal justice at Shepherd University in West Virginia summarizes what police leaders should consider in light of the responses.*



To improve retention efforts, we should begin by addressing the top reasons why officers are experiencing a lack of optimism about the profession. The emergent themes on this issue across the data are as follows:

**Clarify expectations:** Members of the public and politicians must clarify expectations of what they want police to do. This seems to be ever-changing and highly reactive and dependent on societal whims and what is in the news. The result is mass confusion.

**Create policy and legislation based on evidence and experience:** Clarifying expectations is important but given the reality that many officers feel they are being asked to perform too many functions that are beyond the scope of the profession, it becomes even more imperative that policymakers and legislators make decisions based on empirical evidence and/or experience.

**Stop the diminishing of offender accountability:** There is a perception that offender accountability in society, and more aptly in the court system, continues to decrease, which again sends a mixed message about expectations of police officers.

**Combat the defunding movement and avoid knee-jerk reform measures:** Here again, empirical evidence must be at the foundation of all decisions. Defunding efforts will further compromise slim training budgets at a time when more training is being called for by society and police officers alike.

**Educate the public, politicians and media:** Several respondents suggested that better education of policymakers and influencers is needed to anchor unrealistic expectations that exist about police work. This came across the data as especially true in instances involving split-second decisions and performances concerning the realities of human physiological limitations in such instances.



# WHAT OFFICERS SAID

“There is an increasing disconnect between the public, politicians, media and law enforcement regarding the expectations of law enforcement. If the law makers can’t define what they want and need from law enforcement, how can they expect law enforcers to be successful?”

“There is a major disconnect between the realities of human performance in highly dangerous and dynamic environments vs. expectations for outcomes.”

“No, I am not optimistic about the future of policing. The public outcry is for defunding of police. Along with this cry is, ‘They need more training!’ What they fail to realize is the training they speak of comes with a financial cost. Our department is a small one, which operates with an even smaller budget. We barely have the funds to keep our people trained to the bare minimum the state requires of us, much less any specialized training.”

“People have no understanding of what the police do or why, and are only interested in the outcome of critical incidents rather than the facts. The criminal justice system as a whole is broken, but people are perfectly happy to lay the blame for all of that on the police.”

“Without the understanding and support of elected officials, policing will continue to become mired in political turf battles and abandonment of officers by administration failures to support line officers in the name of ‘political expediency.’”

“No other profession in society is criticized more frequently and more harshly than law enforcement is for mistakes and misconduct. People expect us to be perfect officers, making the correct decisions 100% of the time in often chaotic and dangerous incidents where our reactions must be within tenths of a second and we have to make the best call we can. If we are wrong, we lose our lives or our careers.”

“Retention and failure to adapt to constantly changing cultures prevents law enforcement agencies from being flexible enough to change. Police leadership training has increased, but true leaders are few and far between to effectively train new leaders.”



# BODY-WORN CAMERAS CAN IMPROVE POLICE TRANSPARENCY

WHILE PROMOTING OFFICER SAFETY

Sponsored By **Getac**<sup>®</sup>

Getac Body-Worn Cameras can charge on the go with their magnetic break-away charging cable while allowing them to quickly exit the vehicle. (image source: Getac)



## A substantial majority of police officers see positive reasons for wearing body-worn cameras, according to Police1's State of the Industry survey

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By James Careless

Based on the positive benefits provided by body-worn cameras, 82% of police officers say they want to wear them on the job.

That's one of the telling facts revealed by Police1's State of the Industry survey. Conducted in September 2020, this online survey fielded 40 questions on a wide range of topics to active duty and retired U.S. police officers – and received responses from more than 4,300 of them.

In this same survey, 75% of respondents said that they joined the police to serve their communities. And despite the multiple issues being faced by today's law enforcement officers, 56% cited serving their communities as being the most satisfying part of their jobs.

### **BWCS VIEWED POSITIVELY, AND WITH GOOD REASON**

The above positive police attitude towards BWCS is not new. In 2017, a [Pew Research Institute](#) survey of police and the public found that:

*"Two-thirds of the police (66%) and an even larger share of the public (93%) favor the use of body*



*cameras by police to record interactions between officers and the public. Half of officers and two-thirds of the public (66%) say a police officer would be more likely to act appropriately when wearing a body cam (BWC)."*

According to a 2017 [National Criminal Justice Reference Service study](#) of more than 400 members of the Las Vegas Metropolitan Police Department – some wearing bodycams, some not – these expectations are backed up by facts.

"We find that BWC-wearing officers generated significantly fewer complaints and use of force reports relative to control officers without cameras," said the NCJRS study. "In addition, our cost-benefit analysis revealed that savings from reduced complaints against officers, and the reduced time required to resolve such complaints, resulted in substantial cost savings for the police department."

The study authors estimated that BWCs cost between \$828 and \$1,097 per user per year but generate net annual savings of between \$2,909 and \$3,178 per user."

## **BOOSTING TRANSPARENCY**

The recording of police actions using BWCs makes it easy for police commanders, the courts and the public to see what actually happened during an incident. This level of video-based transparency eliminates any cause for dispute or

doubt on anyone's part. The facts are there for everyone to see.

At a time when anyone with a smartphone can capture a police/public interaction and then selectively choose when to start and stop a posted video to support their own agenda, having unaltered video from the police perspective of what actually transpired is vital.

As Police1's State of the Industry survey found, one of the major problems facing law enforcement today is the public's stereotypical bias of the "police always being wrong." Law enforcement agencies need to be able to prove how their officers responded in high-stress situations – especially during the majority of times when those officers reacted in a professional, restrained and polite manner.

BWCs make this kind of transparency possible, particularly when they are set to automatically engage any time an officer leaves the station or their patrol cars. (Allowing officers to manually control their BWCs undercuts this transparency, because the public will always be suspicious about their reasons for turning the cameras off.)

Nothing tells the truth like video (and audio) captured by a BWC. Not only does this video show what happened, but it does so from the officer's point of view when they are encountering unwarranted hostility from the people they are dealing with.



## ENCOURAGING PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT

According to the NCJRS study, the number of civilian complaints lodged against members of the Las Vegas Metropolitan Police Department dropped for those officers who were measured before being given bodycams (pre-intervention) and afterward (post-intervention). This drop in complaints was significant.

“Between the pre-intervention and intervention periods, the percentage of treatment officers that generated at least one complaint decreased by 16.5% from 54.6% to 38.1%,” said the NCJRS study. “By comparison, the percentage of control (no BWC) officers that generated at least one complaint decreased by only 2.5% from 48.0% to 45.5%.”

Evidently, knowing that these complaints were being scrutinized did motivate some LVMPD officers to act with more restraint during the NCJRS measurement period. Not measured was how much being captured on camera motivated some perpetrators to exercise restraint as well. Nevertheless, the positive impact of BWCs on officer conduct is clear.

“The results of our randomized controlled trial suggest that the placement of BWCs on LVMPD officers reduced complaints and use of force reports for treatment officers relative to non-BWC comparison officers,” said the NCJRS study. “These results support the position that BWCs may de-escalate aggression or have a ‘civilizing’ effect on the nature of police-citizen encounters.”

## BWC RELIABILITY MATTERS

Getac cameras have clear extensive logging and audit trails that may prove a technical glitch or battery exhaustion in the event of a recording issue, preventing unintended perception of wrongdoing — the data tells the story and protects the citizens and officers.

This is why agencies should have tough and reliable BWCs, such as those made by [Getac](#). This company’s BWCs are rugged enough to meet the Department of Defense’s [MIL-STD 810G](#) standard, which requires such devices to be repeatedly dropped from a height of five feet and still function, and do so in a wide range of temperature, climate and altitude extremes. Getac’s BC-02 and BC-03 BWCs also meet the IP68 standards for dirt and dust resistance, plus



Getac BC-03 LTE Body Camera with Getac Mobile Edge Windows 10 computing and In-Car Video. Replace your MDT and In-Car Video with one solution. (Image source: Getac)

remaining fully functional after being immersed in five feet of water for 30 minutes. However, devices have been retrieved from the ocean fulling functioning after 8 hours and 30 feet under water.

Beyond being tough, Getac's BWC records in full-HD video, even in low-light conditions. The system has a built-in prerecording function that captures up to 120 seconds before the device is automatically triggered by Getac's [Trigger Box](#). (Prerecording is based on camera and configuration.) Located close to the officer in their vehicle or station, the Trigger Box activates their BWC whenever the car's light bar is activated, car door is opened, weapon is drawn or any departmentally configured combination of up to 14 triggers triggers. 1-1 Automatic Activation is also available.

The recorded video is geotagged with the officer's location and time/date stamp, and then the footage is offloaded from their BWC to Getac Enterprise, the evidence management solution provided by Getac. The footage can be offloaded via the 8-port Multi-dock housed at the station, or in the vehicle if the agency uses Getac's In-Car Video solution.

Getac offers a state of the art in-car video platform with server grade computing capabilities in the VR-X20 device. With the small footprint of the cameras and the ability to replace a wireless mic with the body worn camera, it is a no brainer to run these fully integrated solutions.

## RESTORING AND MAINTAINING PUBLIC TRUST – AND OFFICER SAFETY

When it comes to proving the truth, videos with clear, extensive data logs are priceless.

BWCs are an effective way for law enforcement agencies to document and then prove what their officers did on the job for everyone to see. Providing such proof as a matter of course can restore and maintain public confidence in their police, while keeping good officers safe from false and malicious complaints. **P1**

### About the author

James Careless is a freelance writer with extensive experience covering law enforcement topics.



ROUNDTABLE:

## **PREDICTING THE FUTURE OF POLICE RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION**

Experts interpret the results of Police1's State of the Industry survey and implications for the future law enforcement workforce





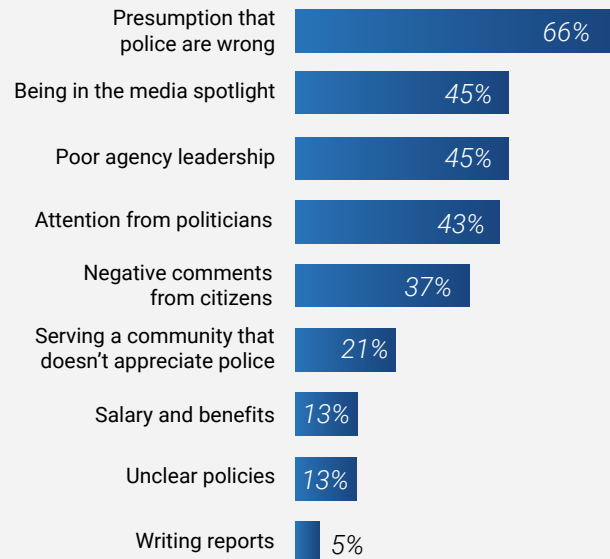
By Nancy Perry

Police1's State of the Industry survey explored how the events of 2020 impacted police officers. We asked law enforcement professionals to analyze what the results mean for policing and how they can guide recruitment and retention efforts.

## PANELISTS:

- **Scott L. Bohn**, executive director, Pennsylvania Chiefs of Police Association
- **Terry Cherry**, BA, MBA, recruiter, Charleston Police Department
- **Sergeant Matt Cobb**, lead instructor, Topeka Police Department Academy
- **James Dudley**, criminal justice faculty, San Francisco State University
- **Janay Gasparini**, Ph.D., assistant professor of criminal justice, Shepherd University, West Virginia

## Which three of the following are the LEAST satisfying about working in law enforcement?



of engagement, lack of creative vision and adversity to change could be some of the reasons why policing is in its current predicament.

**Cobb:** Not necessarily surprising, but a finding everyone should pay close attention to is that almost half of the respondents cited “poor agency leadership” as one of the least satisfying components of law enforcement (this is with 35% of respondents stating their current role is in administration, leadership and supervision).

Almost half of law enforcement citing poor police leadership is a significant problem. Police leaders must gain the trust of the officers they supervise, be seen as credible leaders and lead by example. Unfortunately, we find ourselves with administrators that, for whatever reason, the rank and file don't trust; managers that have no legacy (or worse, a negative one) and erode the very meaning of credibility; and others that never did and still don't measure up to today's expectations.

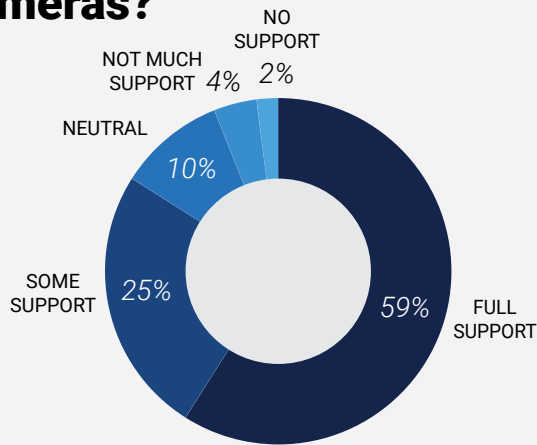
**Dudley:** I was most surprised at the answers that I feel certain the public is not aware of, which is

## P1 WHICH FINDING SURPRISED YOU THE MOST?

**Bohn:** I am surprised and perhaps saddened that the survey results representing a cross-section of police function, rank and assignment suggests that the current climate has weakened law enforcement's collective resolve to serve its communities as stated by over 72% of survey respondents.

**Cherry:** I was most surprised that 48% of the individuals polled do not participate in committees or task forces to research and develop new policies or consider department changes. If opportunities are offered to participate in changing or advancing an agency, why are officers not taking the opportunity to have a role in the transformation but are willing to complain about the outcomes? Passivity, lack

## What is your support for patrol officers being equipped with body cameras?



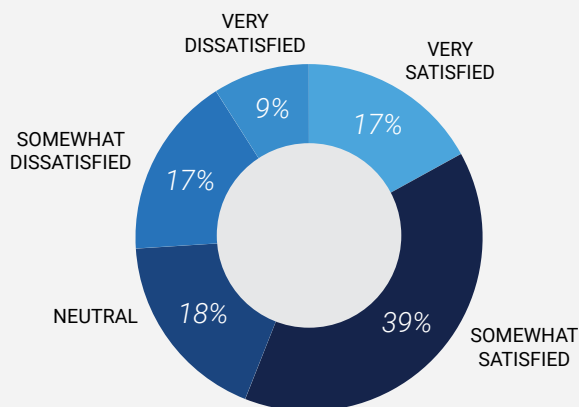
that law enforcement professionals may want the same things the public wants. Certainly, police officers want training (95%), they want to be appreciated, they want to carry out policing duties such as serving the community (55%) and conducting investigations (45%) and leave behind to others the superfluous duties they have accumulated along the way. Officers want body-worn cameras (82%) and assistance from technology to help them do their jobs better. They also want assurances that there is transparency in their organizations, as well as with the public, in helping citizenry understand the job they are doing.

**Gasparini:** Despite the current climate and the challenges cited by officers in the study – particularly as they pertain to lack of media, political and administrative support – roughly 56% of the respondents were somewhat or very satisfied with the job; whereas, roughly one quarter were somewhat or very unsatisfied with the job. Given that this is arguably one of the most challenging moments in the history of American policing, I was expecting a much lower percentage in the job satisfaction category.

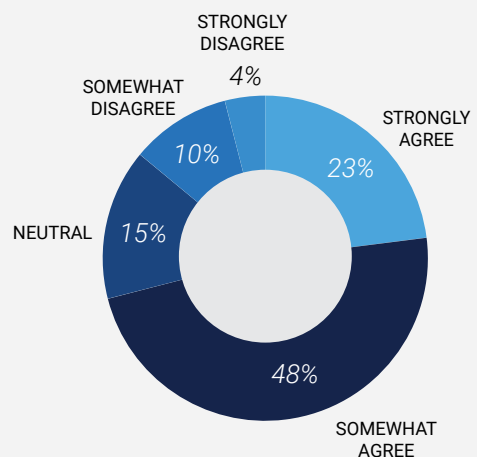
I believe that the job satisfaction rate can be explained by other data points that reveal the intrinsic reasons why police officers choose the profession and what officers find most satisfying about their work, i.e., serving their communities and the challenges and variety presented by job tasks. According to the data, these elements are what drive individuals to become officers and, well into their careers, officers are still citing these reasons as main sources from which they derive satisfaction, so it makes sense that the overall job satisfaction rate is higher than one might anticipate.

Another finding that stood out to me was that roughly 47% of officers agreed and 23% strongly agreed with the statement: “My department’s citizens support police officers.” This reflects the feelings of roughly 70% of the survey respondents, seemingly challenging the “us versus them” narrative.

## What is your overall job satisfaction?



## My department’s citizens support police officers.





## HOW DOES THE RECENT CIVIL UNREST SHAPE OUR INTERPRETATION OF THE DATA?

**Dudley:** The same survey should be given in another year to the same respondents to see if opinions differ. Law enforcement has always been the most visible form of government representation and since March 2020, the negative feelings associated with the COVID-19 pandemic shelter-in-place rules and public prohibitions may be associated with the police. Protests regarding elections or civil rights marches always seem to include some anti-police sentiment or aspect. Certainly, law enforcement representatives across the country have heard the message.

**Gasparini:** Officers are asking for more training in areas which they, we can presume, feel would help them improve job performance and increase favorable outcomes in citizen interactions. These areas also happen to mirror police reform ideals. Some of the top training areas identified by officers included communication skills,

### Of these typical patrol officer tasks, select the two tasks you would like to spend more time doing:



de-escalation skills and crisis intervention. Officers were also asked to rank their top priorities in patrol duties. Here again, we see congruencies with police reform ideals: community policing, responding to emergency 911 calls, general patrol (bike, foot, or vehicle) and investigating violent crimes. Further, when asked to choose two activities from a list of common patrol officer tasks that officers would like to spend more time doing, the top answer was crime prevention followed by a near three-way tie among interacting with the public, training and crime investigation.

In conclusion, there is significant overlap in ideals between police and reformers depicting alignment toward a common vision and direction for the future. This is the opposite of what is often portrayed in the media. This information must be widely shared to bolster police and community partnerships.



## HOW DO THE FINDINGS ALIGN WITH PREVIOUS TURBULENT TIMES IN LAW ENFORCEMENT, SUCH AS AFTER FERGUSON?

**Bohn:** The survey results suggest that police officers may be fatigued by the mixed messages they often receive from officials and the communities that they serve. It is perplexing that a portion of the public is blaming the police for an increase in crime and civil discord while at the same time blaming them for engaging in proactive policing that inevitably leads to more confrontation.

History has shown us that in these conditions, total crime goes up while police activity effectively decreases as interactions with the public are reduced. Ill-considered measures will often have unintended and negative consequences.

**Cobb:** What’s happening today is different, so I believe the data is different. Most obvious are the defund the police movement and local governments writing ad hoc reform laws banning police tactics and techniques and trying to influence policy. These aren’t conversations, they’re being implemented around the nation. There were a lot of conversations after Ferguson – but not this time.

**Dudley:** Since the Ferguson incident, I have felt that law enforcement officers conveyed palpable feelings of frustration that the truth was not being conveyed to the public. Public perception is important and the answers in the survey seem to convey that department policies are not transparent. The public wants policies to be on display on department websites. The least satisfying parts of the job have to do with the negative perceptions from politicians, the public and the media. The majority felt that there were perceptions of officers “always being wrong.”

## P1

### WHAT CAN WE LEARN FROM THE FINDINGS TO TAILOR RECRUITMENT EFFORTS?

**Bohn:** An “emotional wave” has swept across the country following nationwide anti-police protests. The perceived aggression toward law enforcement has led to an apparent decline in policing numbers. This gravely impacts public safety and police-community relations as fewer police officers will likely mean an increase in crime. Seventy-five percent of respondents chose law enforcement as a career to serve their community. Half of the respondents indicated serving the public is one of the most satisfying aspects of working in law enforcement. Unfortunately, only approximately 56% of respondents indicated experiencing overall job satisfaction.

**Cherry:** I see several considerations from the data regarding improving recruitment efforts:

- Do not have 10+ year male officers conduct modern, progressive recruitment efforts (as 85% of the study was male and 56% of those polled would not recommend a career in law enforcement).
- Focus on attracting new applicants through relational policing and crime reduction methods.
- Diversify law enforcement with additional underrepresented groups.
- Potentially a young workforce is not a negative point, as they are entering law enforcement when such things as community involvement/oversight, body-worn cameras and community-based police engagement are normalized. Therefore, attrition of 10+ year officers and retirements may be the way to change the face of the policing industry and leave room for new creative and innovative policing strategies.

**Cobb:** Almost all research points to “purpose.” Look at how the respondents answered, “Why did you choose law enforcement as a career?” Seventy-five percent selected to serve the community, 52% selected variability of the job and 48% picked the challenges of the job. Take those three topics and tailor to your department –there’s your recruiting message. Then dive a little deeper: many respondents may not have chosen law enforcement because of pay and benefits, but they may have settled with a certain agency because it had the best of one or both.

Start with the purpose and fulfillment of a career in law enforcement, then follow up with selling your specific agency. If you have Mayberry, sell Mayberry. If you have the beach, the best schools, the highest pay or cheapest healthcare, sell it.

**Gasparini:** The first step to tailoring recruitment efforts is to look at the data and to derive an understanding of why police officers are reluctant to recommend the profession to youth. Additionally, if policing professionals are not optimistic about the future of the field, we

cannot expect them to represent the profession to prospective officers in its best light.

Themes that emerged from the data about current officers' lack of optimism toward the future of the profession reveal one simple reality: policing has suffered a significant image problem in the media and society at large. The gross mischaracterization and maligning of the profession by some pundits, news outlets, politicians and celebrities have not only taken a dire toll on officers but has significantly impacted how police are viewed by would-be candidates.

To tailor and improve recruiting, we must identify effective means to push forth the truth and balance the errant and pervasive narratives that are pummeling officer morale and, in turn, negatively impacting recruitment.

## **P1** WHAT CAN WE LEARN FROM THE FINDINGS TO TAILOR RETENTION EFFORTS?

**Bohn:** Retention efforts should address our policing culture and provide officers with the tools to prevent misconduct, avoid police mistakes, increase community engagement, and promote officer health and wellness. Respondents' have a desire for and recognize the value of training on de-escalation, crisis intervention and communications.

**Cobb:** That we haven't lost everyone, but if things don't change, we might be in trouble.

**Dudley:** Retention efforts can start with an emphasis on giving law enforcement officers the best training, technology and equipment to do the basic policing tenets: To serve the community, to do prevention policing and to investigate crime. Rather than resist any movement to take some duties from police, agencies should embrace the help and give some duties to other departments that are

best suited to address. Respondents want to see animal-related calls for service (87%), finding shelter for the homeless (93%), handling nuisance complaints (64%), handling disputes (53%) and addressing calls involving mental illness (45%) handled by other agencies; 70% want to see crisis intervention teams respond to calls involving the mentally ill.

## **P1** WHAT DO THE FINDINGS SHOW POLICE WANT FOR THE FUTURE OF LAW ENFORCEMENT?

**Bohn:** We can learn from the survey results that law enforcement leaders, practitioners and subject matter experts must educate elected officials and the public we serve regarding best practices and the current training standards that exist for our law enforcement officers. Police officers need clear guidance.

**Cherry:** The 1- to 10-year officer is the future of law enforcement, as they are re-shaping what policing is and will become. This survey solidified that change is difficult, particularly for mid-career officers. The future of law enforcement will be driven by officers who are engaged in building community partnerships and actively making internal change, community stakeholders, societal influences and the courts.

**Cobb:** The future needs strong leadership that the rank-and-file trusts to do the right thing. We need advocacy in the community reigning in radical presumptions and knee-jerk proposals and resolutions. Other than 66% of the respondents voting in elections, advocacy efforts were unremarkable. I understand officers not personally advocating, but we can support the various groups that support us. We can engage the power players in our communities, explaining where we're at and what we need and find out what the community needs. Most departments don't need local businesses catering lunch, we need those business owners engaging the local government. The community may not need

police to set up a popcorn and slushy stand, they may need someone to sit between gang leaders and try to figure out how we're going to stop the killings. The future of law enforcement calls for getting back to the basics of American policing where our focus is on making our communities safer.

**Dudley:** The future of law enforcement depends on improving communication and bonds with the community. Law enforcement career emphasis should be on the primary functions of serving the community, stopping crime and investigations. Training, technology and confidence should be placed high on the list of priorities of the next recruitment phase for tomorrow's law enforcement officers (95% wanted priority in training funding, 82% wanted body-worn cameras and 74% wanted facial recognition technology). Respondents expressed the need for more transparency, better communication and more support. Ninety percent of officers want continued support in qualified immunity while doing their job, 58% wanted to keep "no-knock" warrants and nearly 75% did not like the idea of mandatory verbal warnings before a firearm discharge. The public should be given reasons to understand why those are necessary for the safety of the officer.

Officers had no problem with de-escalation techniques and 70% agreed with compensation to be provided for officers to live in the communities that they serve.

## **P1** WHAT FINDING ARE YOU MOST OPTIMISTIC ABOUT?

**Bohn:** While the emotion our profession feels is real, we must always be mindful that law enforcement is a noble profession. I am certain that law enforcement leaders will meet the current challenges and challenges ahead. The first responsibility of those who govern is public safety and law enforcement is critical to ensuring that safety.

***"I AM MOST OPTIMISTIC ABOUT ALL OF THE FINDINGS THAT INDICATE AN ALIGNED VISION FOR THE FUTURE BETWEEN POLICE OFFICERS AND THEIR COMMUNITIES."***

**Cherry:** I am optimistic that 10+ year officers are open to some progressive policy changes, i.e., alternatives to incarceration for those convicted of minor crimes/or first-time offenders, patrol officers equipped with a body-worn camera, police department policy posted on the department website and a ban on respiratory chokeholds. I think the responses of "some support" and "full support" show that policing attitudes are creeping toward the acceptance of some change.

**Cobb:** That 83% of the respondents have 10 to 30+ years in the profession. So much time and so many resources have been spent recruiting and hiring since 2008-2009. I think we tend to write-off our 10-, 20- and 30-year veterans as burnt out with bad attitudes and retired on duty. This shows that officers from 10 years of service to 30-plus years of service still care and want their voices heard. And that they haven't given up.

**Dudley:** I am most optimistic about the finding on the background of the respondents. More than 82% possess an associate, bachelor's, master's, or higher degree. I believe the number will increase over time, showing a progression toward a better-educated law enforcement profession.

**Gasparini:** I am most optimistic about all of the findings that indicate an aligned vision for the future between police officers and their communities.

The data shows police officers are prioritizing training areas geared toward community policing objectives to include improvement of communication and de-escalation skills and crisis intervention training.

The data also shows crime prevention and interaction with the public at the top of the list of activities in which officers would like to spend

more time not only training but engaging during their workday.

The fact that officers are for these community-oriented principles; the fact that serving the community remains the top reason people are drawn to the profession; and the fact that serving the community remains the top reason for job satisfaction overall should hearten community members, reformers and critics alike. **P1**

## ABOUT THE PANEL



**Scott L. Bohn** is executive director of the Pennsylvania Chiefs of Police Association. He previously served as police chief for the West Chester Police Department from 1999-2020, having joined the agency in 1986.



**Officer Terry Cherry** has been with the Charleston (South Carolina) Police Department for 8½ years and currently serves as the agency's recruiter. In her role, she developed a five-year recruitment strategic plan in compliance with the department's racial bias audit and developed measures to track the plan's success.



**Sergeant Matt Cobb** has served with the Topeka (Kansas) Police Department for 13 years. He currently is the lead instructor for and administers the Topeka Police Academy.



**James Dudley** is a 32-year veteran of the San Francisco Police Department where he retired as deputy chief of the Patrol Bureau. He is currently a member of the criminal justice faculty at San Francisco State University, consults on organizational assessments for LE agencies and hosts the Policing Matters podcast for Police1.



**Janay Gasparini, Ph.D.**, is a proud former police officer who served as a police instructor, FTO and crime scene technician. Gasparini has taught collegiate criminal justice courses since 2009 and is currently an assistant professor of criminal justice at Shepherd University, Shepherdstown, West Virginia.

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### THE NEXT STEPS IN CURTAILING CALLS FOR SERVICE

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