

Chief and Sheriff Feedback Survey:
Their Platform Experience
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Purpose

A sample of 100 police and sheriff agencies participated in the National Police Research Platform over the course of two years. With varying levels of agency participation, the Platform collected data via multiple survey methods: three Law Enforcement Organizational (employee) surveys, a Chief Executive Officer survey, a Departmental Characteristics survey, and a Police-Citizen Interaction (community) survey. For most of these surveys, the Platform provided each agency a feedback report which summarized how their agency responded and how these responses compared with all other agencies and similar agencies in our sample. At the completion of this two-year period, the Platform research team was interested in receiving feedback from the chiefs and sheriffs regarding their experiences as Platform participants and their assessments of the overall utility of the Platform of police agencies. We also felt that this type of feedback was important in terms of understanding which components of the Platform were the most beneficial to agencies, and thus, may influence the future content and direction of the Platform. Additionally, we sought to assess the level of interest in future participation.

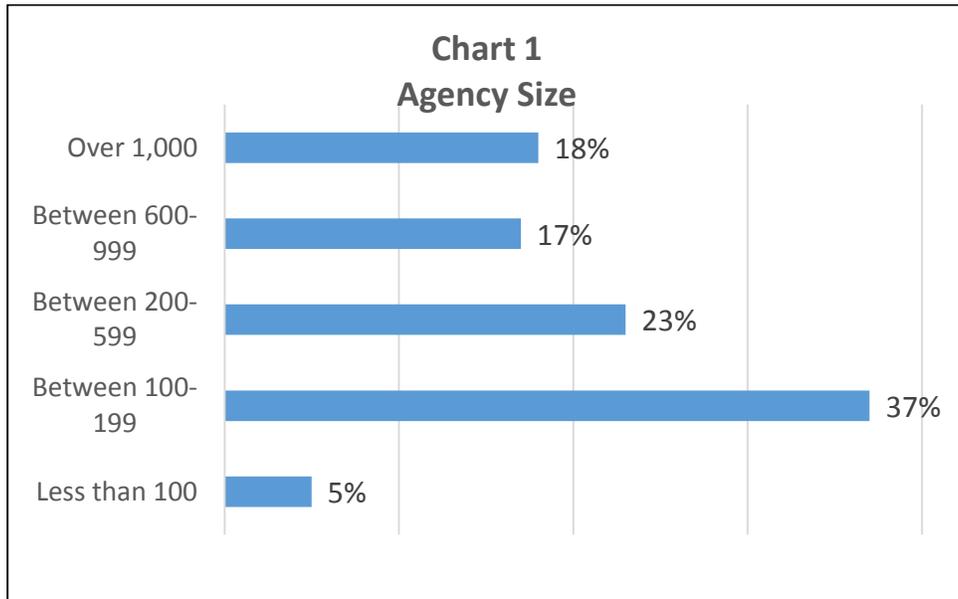
Methods

To accomplish this feedback, participating chiefs and sheriffs were invited to take an on-line survey. Chief executives from all 100 agencies received the survey. The survey period ran from mid-March through the end of April, 2015. The participation rate was 77 percent. Of that 77 percent, 64 percent provided enough data for meaningful analysis. Hence, this report is based on responses from 64 chiefs and sheriffs.

The survey asks chief executives for feedback on their overall Platform experience and specific data collection components. The survey also queried chiefs and sheriffs about whether and how the findings were distributed and/or used to make changes within their organizations. A number of open-ended items were included to seek suggestions and recommendations, as well as estimates of the likelihood of future participation in the Platform.

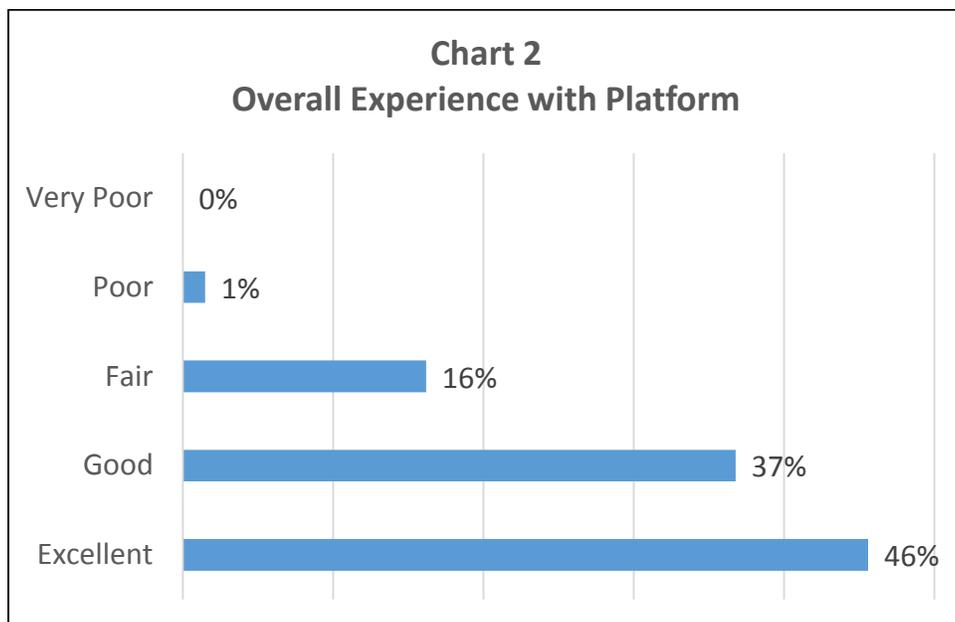
To help us interpret the findings, up front we asked participants if they had been the chief or sheriff since the beginning of the Platform and how many sworn officers were employed by their agency. Nearly three quarters (73%) of the participants were the chief or sheriff for the entire duration of the Platform project. Chart 1 shows a breakdown of the sample by agency size, with the largest numbers (37 percent and 23 percent) coming from agencies between 100-199 and 200-599 sworn employees, respectively. However, a substantial percentage of respondents were serving as the chief executive of larger agencies with 600 to 999 sworn employees (18%) or more than 1000 (17%). Only a few agencies were smaller than 100 sworn

employees, and their agencies were grandfathered because of their prior participation in the developmental stage of the Platform.



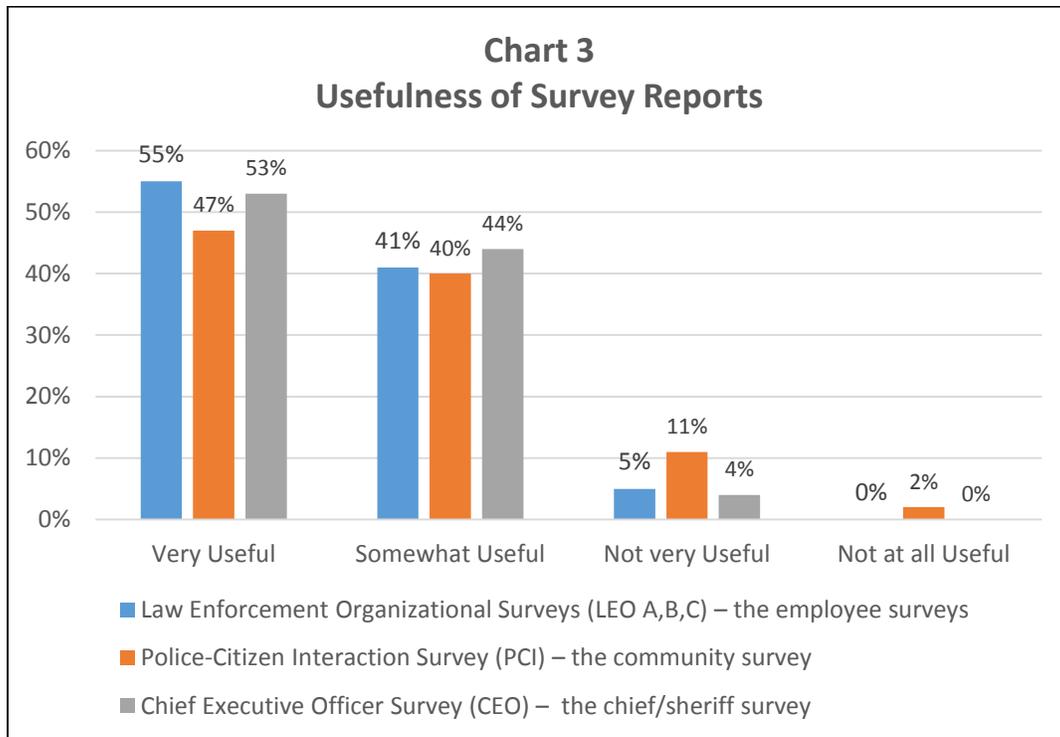
Overall Experience with the Platform

As shown in Chart 2, the large majority of respondents (83 percent) rated their overall experience with the Platform as “excellent” or “good.” Only 16% percent rated their experience as “fair,” and one percent rated their experience as “poor.” No agency rated their experience as “very poor.” In total, four respondents had not been in their position long enough to make a judgement about the Platform experience and were excluded.



Usefulness of the Feedback Reports

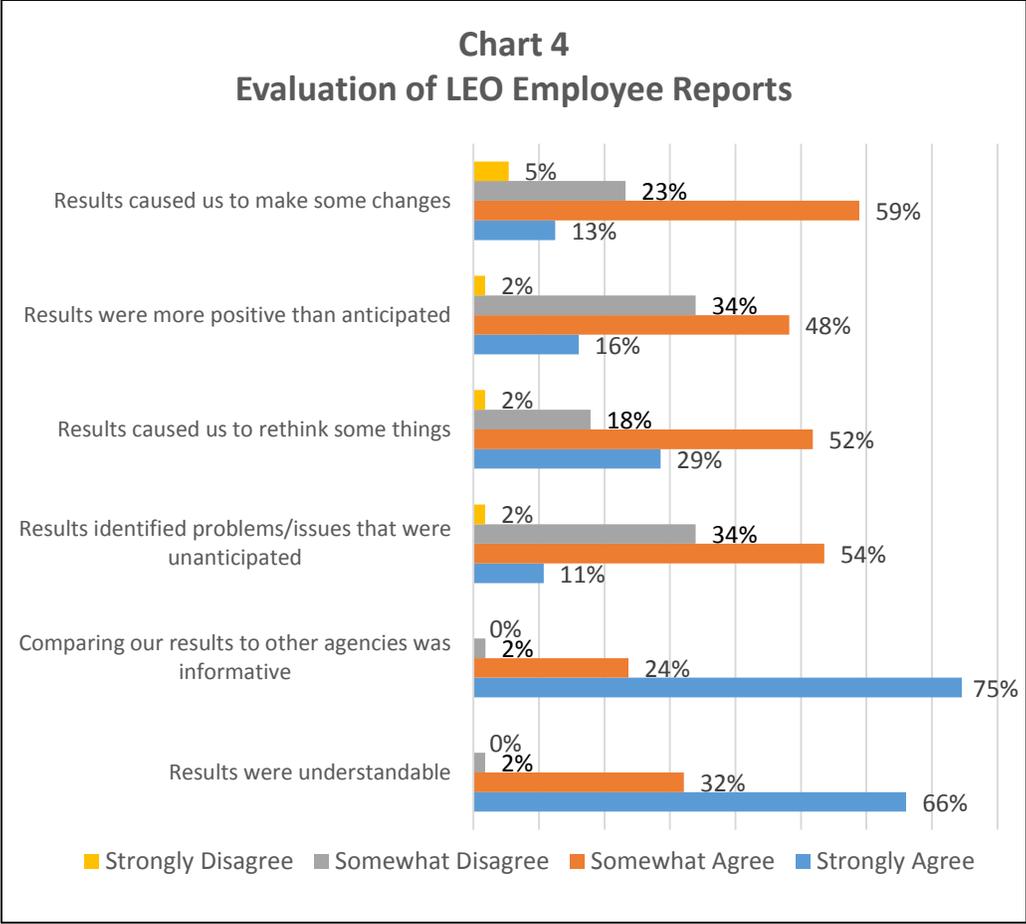
As noted earlier, each agency was provided with feedback reports from the PCI Survey, LEO survey, and CEO survey, including comparisons to other agencies. When asked about the usefulness of these individual reports, the great majority found the reports to be “very useful” or “somewhat” useful (See Chart 3). Within the agencies participating in each respective survey portion, the CEO survey was judged the most useful (97%), followed by the LEO survey of employees (96%) and the PCI survey (87%).



We asked the chief executives to evaluate each report in greater detail. These findings are summarized below.

Law Enforcement Organizational (employee) Survey

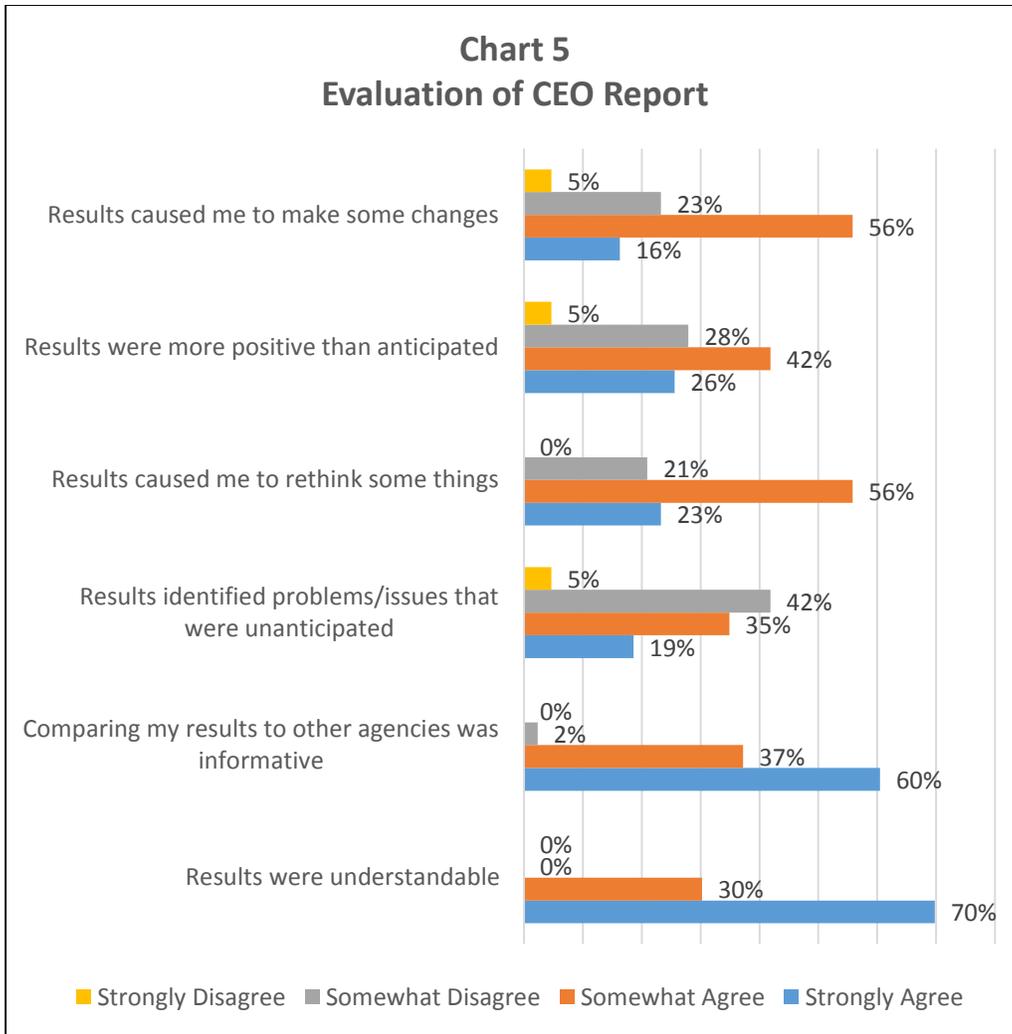
As shown in Chart 4, chief executives agreed (“somewhat” or “strongly”) that the feedback reports from the LEO (employee) survey were informative when comparing their results to other agencies (99%) and were understandable (98%). A strong majority also agreed that the results caused them to make change (72%), were more positive than anticipated (64%), caused them to rethink things (81%), and identified issues that were unanticipated (65%). Seventy-nine percent of CEOs distributed their results to their employees or others outside of the organization. Overall, 91 percent reported the findings were either “very positively” or “somewhat positively” received by those who were given access.



When CEOs were asked whether they would recommend any changes to the LEO (employee) survey, 75 percent said “no.” For the 25 percent that did have recommendations, there was no clear pattern to their responses. CEOs commented on a range of issues, including the tone of some questions, length of the survey, wanting more detailed feedback or more guidance on how change should be implemented in their department.

Chief Executive Officer Survey

Chief executives were asked to evaluate the feedback report they were given pertaining to the CEO survey findings. The survey was only administered to the chief or sheriff in in each agency, however, they were provided with information allowing them to compare their own responses with those of other participating CEOs. The findings did not identify any specific agency and were presented as “all agency responses” and “agencies similar to your own.” As shown in Chart 5, the same pattern found in the LEO survey (noted above) was present in these findings as well. The majority of chief executives reported that the CEO survey results caused them to make some changes and rethink some things, and the results were understandable and informative.

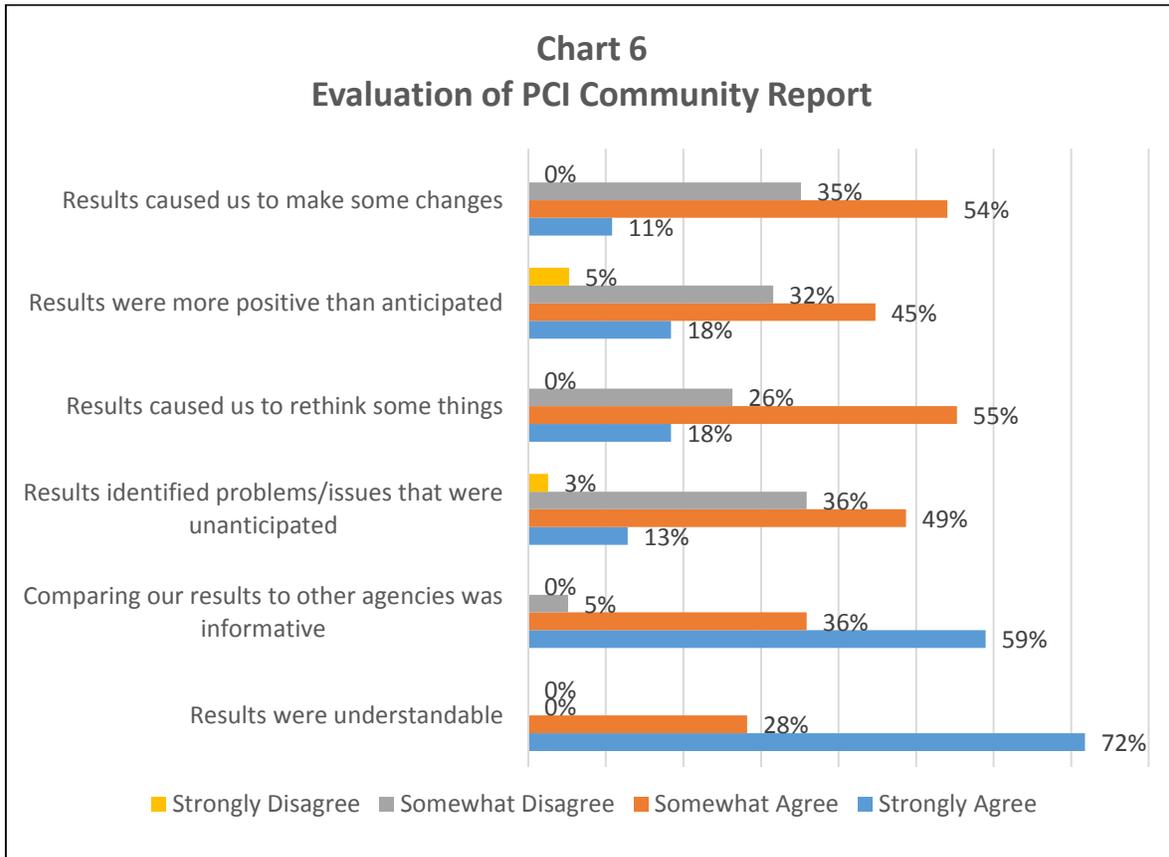


Police-Citizen Interaction (community) Survey

More than half of the national sample of agencies participated in the Police-Community Interaction (PCI) Survey that served as a “customer satisfaction” survey for citizens who had a recent (past 2 weeks) contact with a local law enforcement officer. Consistent with their evaluations of the CEO and LEO surveys, participating chiefs and sheriffs gave high marks to the feedback report they received regarding the PCI survey. As shown in Chart 6, high scores were given for the informative nature of comparing their results to other agencies, as well as the overall understandability of the report. Fifty-nine percent of CEOs distributed their results to their employees or others outside of the organization. Overall, 95 percent of CEOs reported that the recipients of the PCI survey results responded either “very positively” or “somewhat positively”.

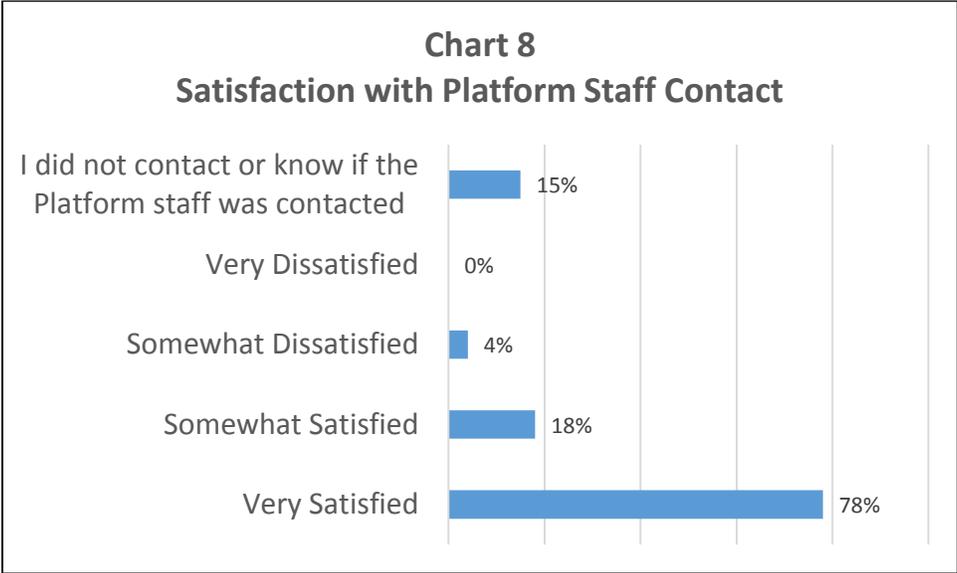
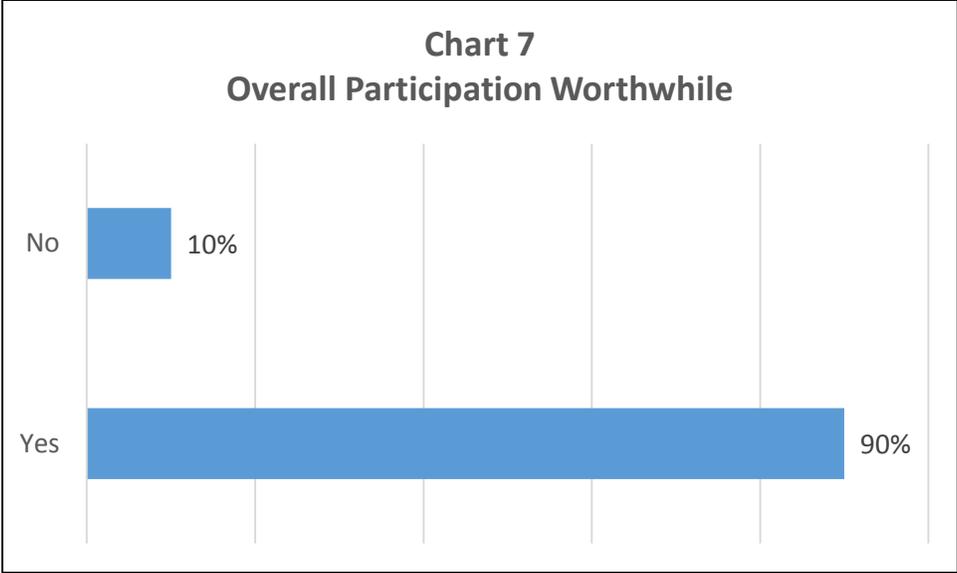
When CEOs were asked whether they would recommend any changes to the PCI survey, 85 percent said “no.” For the 15 percent that did have recommendations, they were along the lines of being able to increase the number of citizens who responded to the survey. While the

feedback has proved to be very useful to these agencies, future modifications to the methodology are expected to increase response rates.

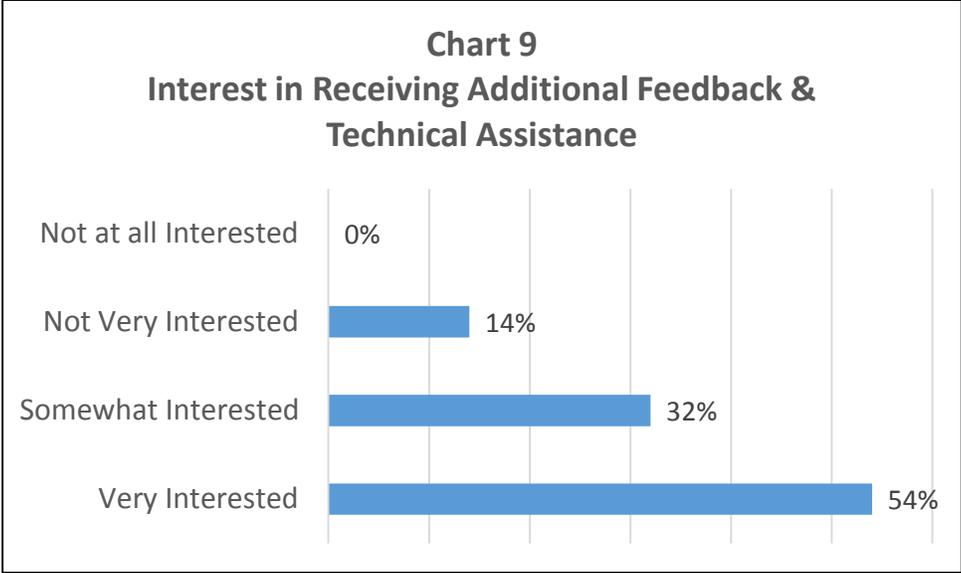


Overall Evaluation of Platform Staff

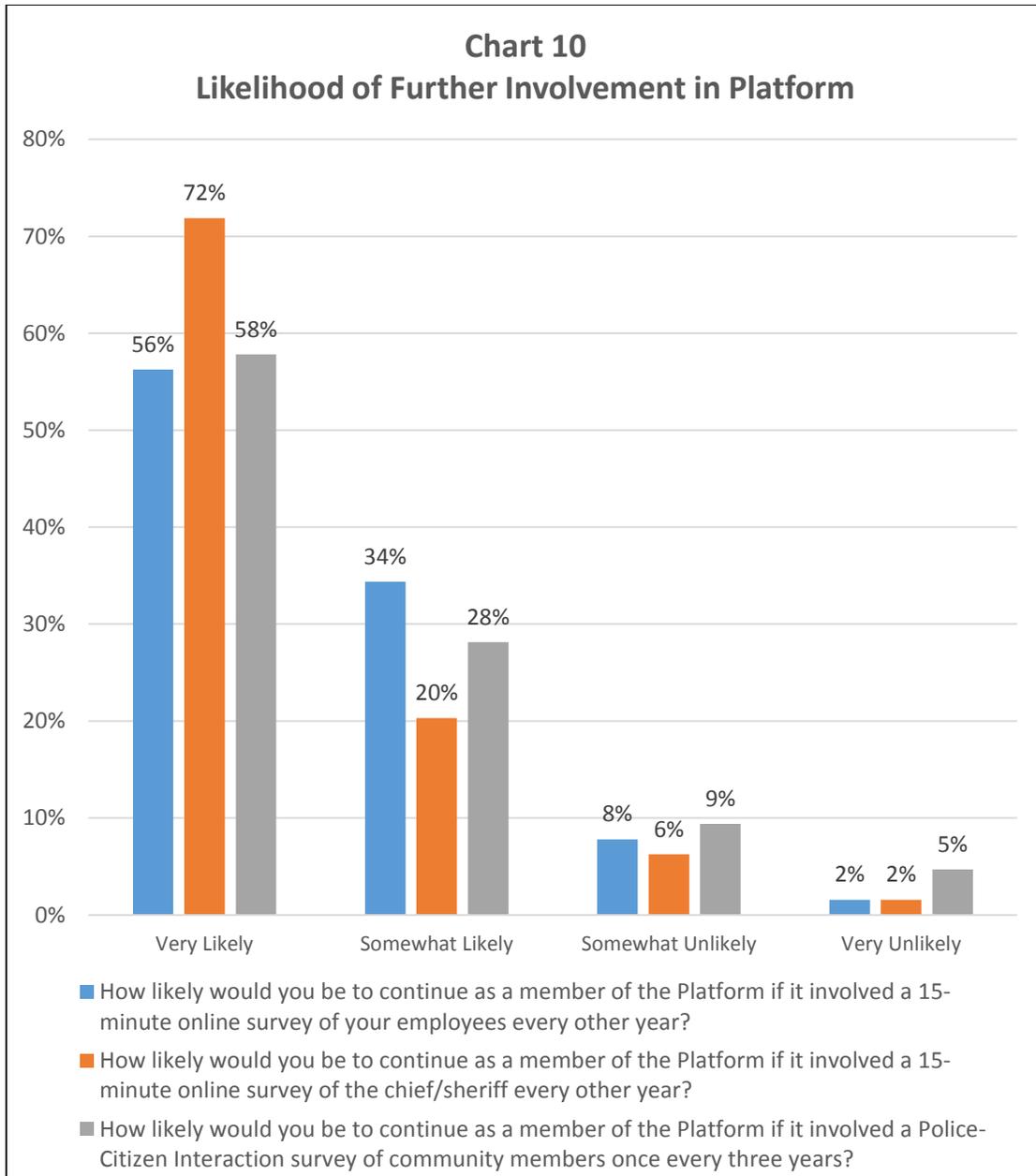
When asked if the overall participation in the Platform was worthwhile, 9 out of 10 chief executives (90%) reported “Yes” (see Chart 7). The majority of agencies (78%) who had contact with the Platform staff were “very satisfied,” and another 18% were “somewhat satisfied” (see Chart 8), bringing the total satisfied with Platform contact and services to 96%.



In addition to providing feedback, the Platform provided technical assistance as various stages of the data collection. However, we wanted to know if the CEO was interested in receiving additional feedback and technical assistance in the future. As seen in Chart 9, 86% reported they were either “very interested” or “somewhat interested” in receiving this type of information and assistance.



Finally, we asked how likely their agency would be to participate in the Platform should it continue. We specifically asked about their interest in specific data collection components of the Platform. As seen in Chart 10, the majority of agencies reported being interested in further involvement for all three data collection components. Of particular note, while some agencies reported earlier that the Police-Citizen Interaction survey was labor intensive, 58 percent still reported they would be “very likely” to continue with this type of data collection.



Final Thoughts and Recommendations by Chief Executives

We asked some additional open-ended items including whether the CEOs or their staff had any recommendations to improve the Platform, what was the most important thing they learned from the Platform, and if they had any final comments about the Platform.

Thirteen percent provided at least one recommendation. A few mentioned shortening one or more of the surveys, the desire to better understand the causative nature of the survey responses, the desire to have a wrap-up conference, help with providing future direction for their agencies, and having “best practices” provided at the end of the project. Additionally,

there were a couple of comments on the need for supplemental funding for the Police-Citizen Interaction survey, which did have cost implications for the agencies.

When asked to discuss the most important thing that they learned from the Platform, 70 percent provided a comment. The comments fell into the following categories: 1) results were more positive than expected, 2) results were less positive than expected, 3) the survey targeted specific areas which need improvement, 4) having the data provided the impetus to implement change in the agency, 5) the Platform allowed us to hear the voices of the officers, and 6) the Platform allowed us to hear the voices of the community.

When asked if there was anything else they'd like to comment on, 22 percent provided a response. All of the responses were positive. Almost all of the responses had to do with expressing their appreciation for the opportunity to participate in the Platform.

Conclusions

Based on the feedback provided by the CEOs, the Platform appears to have been an overwhelmingly positive experience that provided useful information to the participating agencies. While some data collection components were more task-intensive than others, we learned a great deal about how these components could be made more "user friendly" in future Platform initiatives. Thus, the Platform was a learning experience for both the participants and the researchers.

In addition to generating new knowledge about police practices in the United States, the Platform was able to provide useful feedback at the local level. Feedback systems were well received and seemed to encourage reflection on organizational practices and a desire to introduce change. However, as stated above, these chiefs and sheriffs expressed a desire for more guidance on how to interpret the findings and implement desired changes within their organizations. While the research team created these feedback systems, the current NIJ project did not include funding to translate the research findings for the law enforcement community or provide technical assistance. (The primary objective was to create a sustainable set of standardized metrics on organizational performance). This should be an important consideration when planning future Platform projects. In sum, the Platform has created a solid research foundation on which to build future partnerships with law enforcement organizations and bridge the gap between science and practice.