



Results from the Police-Community Interaction (PCI) Survey¹

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At a time when police-community relations are strained and police legitimacy is being questioned as a result of high-visibility use-of-force incidents, there is a compelling need to establish a new set of metrics to assess the quality of police-public interactions. The Police-Community Interaction (PCI) Survey is a joint initiative involving local police departments, sheriff's offices, the National Police Research Platform, and the National Institute of Justice. The PCI survey gives local residents the opportunity to evaluate their recent interactions with local police officers and sheriff deputies. The survey methodology, validated in prior research (Rosenbaum et al., 2015), was implemented in 58 U.S. cities. This report provides a brief overview of selected findings.

Methodology

Agencies were recruited from a national sample of 100 agencies that participated in the National Police Research Platform. This was a stratified random sample drawn from the 2007 Law Enforcement Management and Administration Statistics (LEMAS) sample, but it was supplemented by a few small and large agencies, including some that participated in an early phase of the research. Participating agencies were involved in a process of identifying persons with recent police contact, downloading their mailing information, and sending out invitations to complete the survey. The letter emphasized that the survey was voluntary, completely independent of the police department (managed by the University of Illinois at Chicago), and that neither the police department nor anyone else would see their survey responses. In participating jurisdictions, community members who reported a crime incident or a traffic accident, or who were stopped for a traffic violation in the previous two weeks, were sent a letter from the police chief or sheriff inviting them to complete a satisfaction survey, though cases involving domestic violence, sexual assault, minors, or sensitive investigations were excluded. Community members were given the option of completing the PCI survey over the telephone using interactive voice technology or on the Internet. Each option was available to community members in both English and Spanish.

A total of 58 agencies participated in the PCI Survey. Of these agencies, 21 had 180 or fewer sworn employees, 17 had 181 to 499 sworn employees and 20 had 500 or more sworn employees. The results are reported by agency size, as defined by the number of sworn officers (180 or less, 181-499, and 500 or more). The results are unweighted, so percentages for the total sample are not reported.

Demographics of Survey Respondents

This report presents information from persons who had contact with an officer between January 3, 2013 and September 30, 2014. As of October 17, 2014, 16,787 community members had taken the PCI survey. Of these cases, 6,936 interactions were traffic or pedestrian stops, 4,051 were traffic crashes, and 5,800

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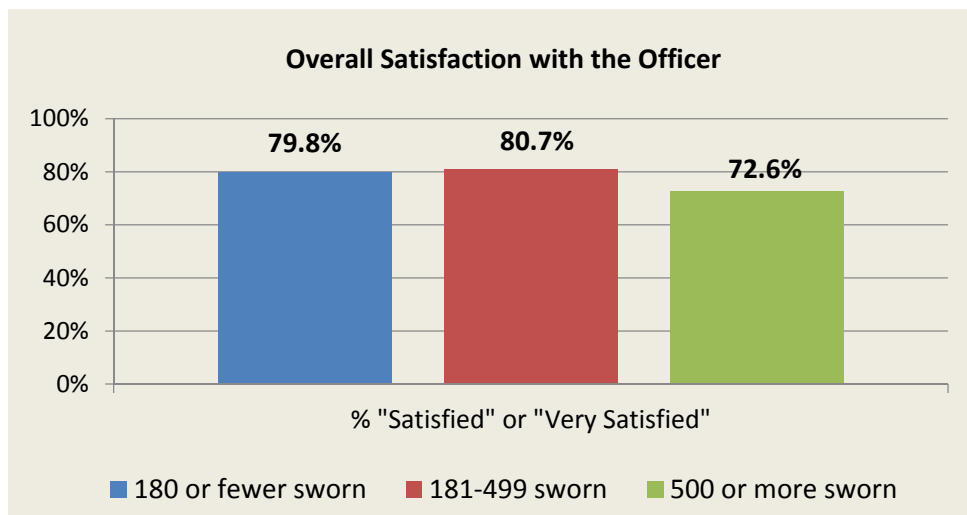
reports of crime. Demographic characteristics of persons completing the survey are reported below. Also presented is the percentage of respondents who elected to complete the survey via telephone (automated interactive voice) versus online.

Respondent Demographics (by Agency Size)

		180 or fewer sworn	181-499 sworn	500 or more sworn
Gender	Male	50.1%	51.9%	53.1%
	Female	49.9%	48.1%	46.9%
Race	White	83.1%	79.9%	65.4%
	Non-White	16.9%	20.1%	34.6%
Age	Under 30 years old	13.1%	12.9%	14.1%
	30 to 50 years old	34.3%	34.3%	38.3%
	51 years and older	52.7%	52.8%	47.6%
Survey Type	Automated phone	38.2%	36.1%	39.1%
	Web survey	61.8%	63.9%	60.9%
Interaction Type	Traffic stop	43.1%	46.9%	37.0%
	Traffic crash	27.1%	29.8%	19.2%
	Reporting a crime	29.9%	23.3%	43.8%

Overall Satisfaction with the Officer

On a 4-point satisfaction scale, respondents were asked, "Taking the whole experience into account, how satisfied are you with the way you were treated by the officer in this case?" This figure shows overall satisfaction with the treatment they experienced during the contact with the officer by agency size². Public satisfaction with police contacts is lower for the largest departments with 500 or more sworn officers.



²The percentage of ticketed stops is shown in the "Officer Behavior During the Interaction" graphic. Agencies with ticketing rates above the norm tended to have lower overall satisfaction scores.

Satisfaction by Survey-Respondent Characteristics

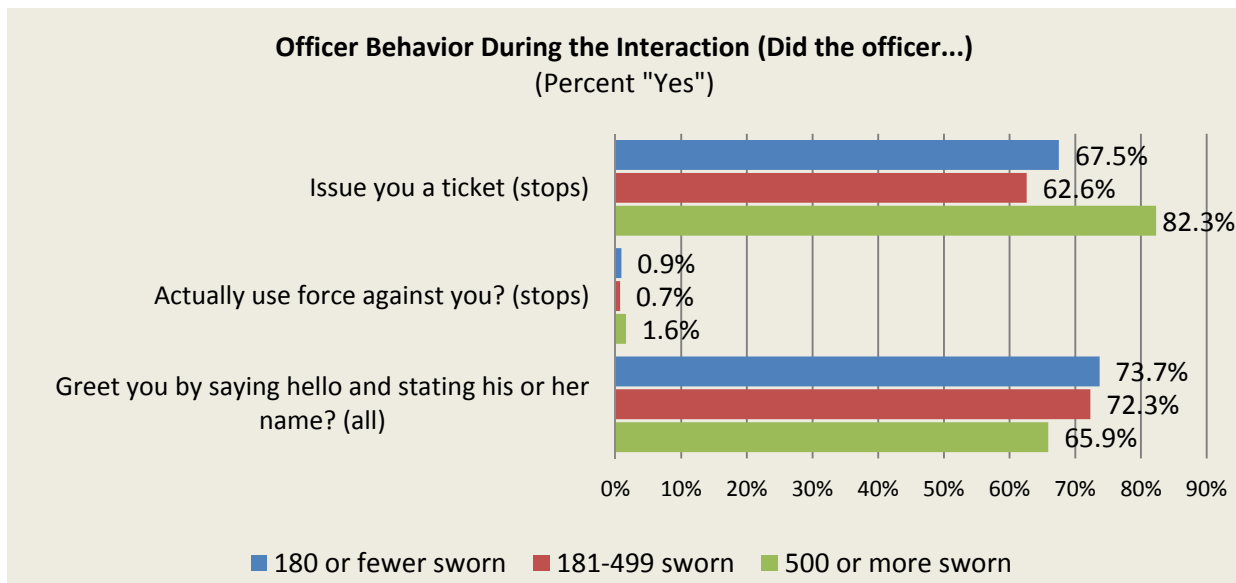
The following table shows overall satisfaction by community demographics. As expected, regardless of agency size whites are more satisfied than are non-whites with their experience, and older community members are more satisfied than younger community members. Gender does not seem to play a role.

Percent Satisfied or Very Satisfied (by Agency Size)

		180 or fewer sworn	181-499 sworn	500 or more sworn
Gender	Male	79.8%	81.5%	72.0%
	Female	80.0%	79.9%	73.4%
Race	White	81.1%	82.5%	77.4%
	Non White	73.8%	72.9%	64.0%
Age	Under 30 years old	65.0%	68.7%	57.1%
	30 to 50 years old	75.3%	77.0%	67.8%
	51 years and older	86.5%	85.9%	81.0%

Officer Behavior During the Interaction

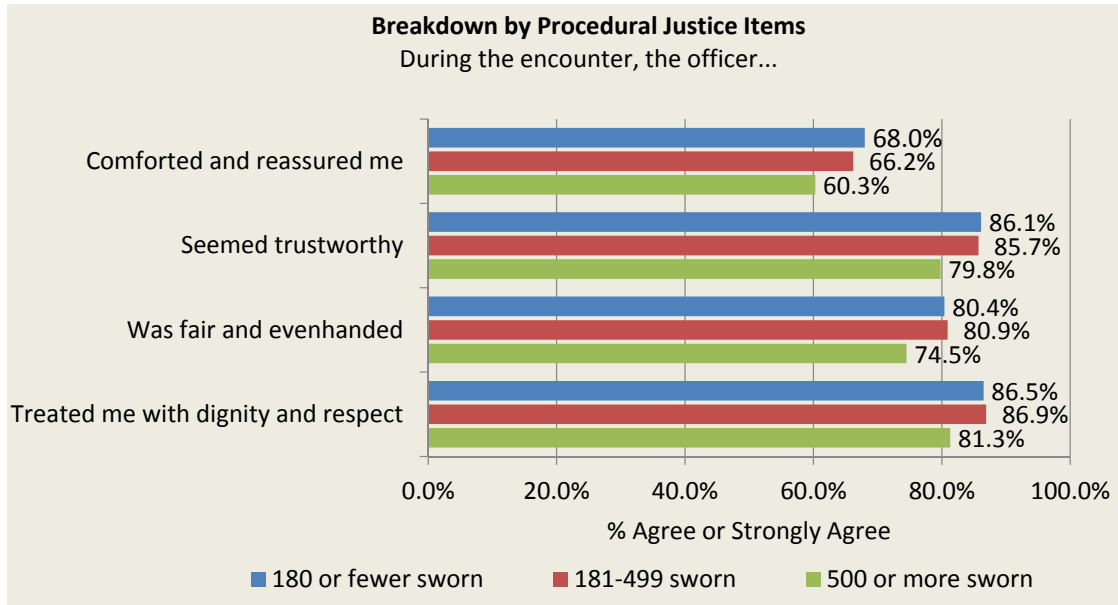
The figure below shows whether the officer engaged in specific behaviors during traffic stops. These items required a yes/no answer. According to the respondents, officers from agencies in the largest size category were more likely to issue traffic tickets; less like to introduce themselves by name and say hello; and somewhat more likely to use force during the encounter than were officers from smaller agencies. Consistent with prior research, however, force is very rare, hovering around 1 percent.



Procedural Justice and Support During Interactions

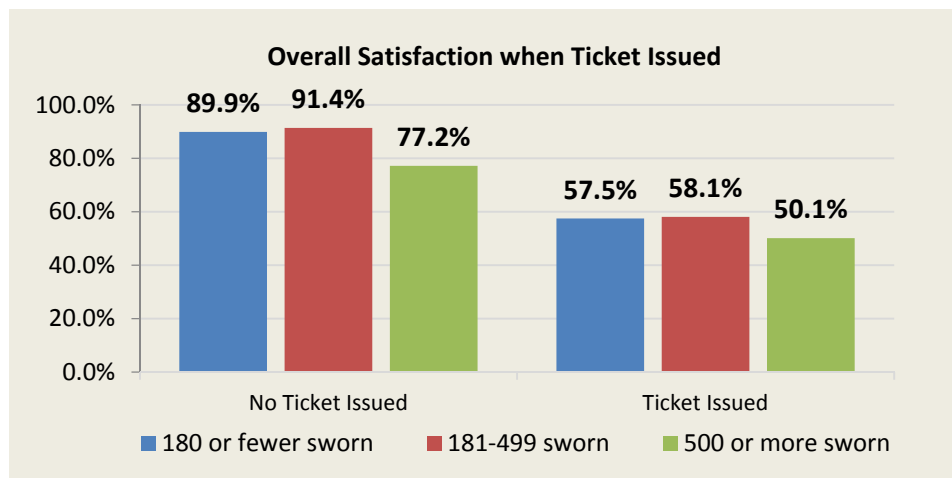
The survey measures procedural justice behaviors on the part of the officer that may be exhibited during police-community interactions. Prior research suggests that these behaviors are associated with greater public cooperation and compliance with police requests, as well as greater departmental legitimacy within the community. Community members were asked to evaluate the officer's behavior on specific dimensions such as procedural fairness, respectfulness, and conversational etiquette. Survey respondents were asked to agree or disagree with a series of statements using a four-point scale

(1 = strongly disagree; 4 = strongly agree), e.g., “The officer listened to what I had to say.” The figure shows ratings given to officers on different procedural-justice items. The findings show that officers working for agencies with 500 officer or more tend to receive lower procedural justice and empathy scores than officers working for agencies with fewer than 500 officers. The smaller size categories receive scores similar to each other. In general, officers receive lower scores on empathy and reassurance than on procedural justice.

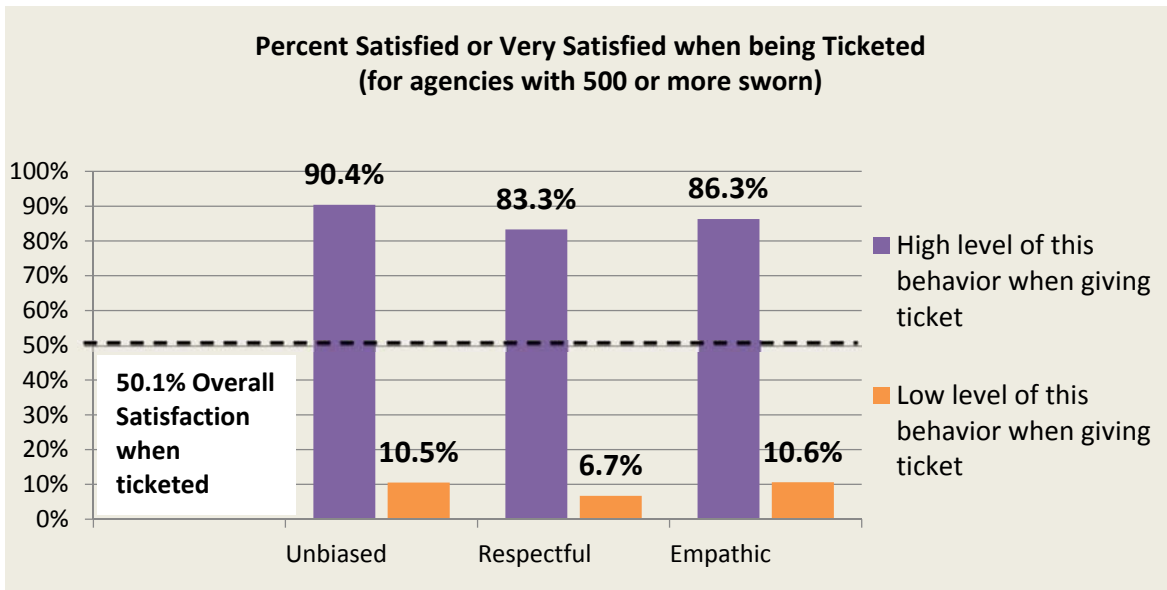


Public Satisfaction with Officer Demeanor During Traffic Stops and Issuing of Ticket

The figures that follow indicate that community members’ overall satisfaction with a police officer during a traffic stop depends on whether the officer issued a ticket and whether the officer was fair and polite during the interaction. Looking only at data from traffic stops, drivers’ overall satisfaction with their treatment by the officer declined precipitously (by roughly 30 percentage points) when a ticket was issued, thus indicating that the outcome of the encounter does matter to the driver.

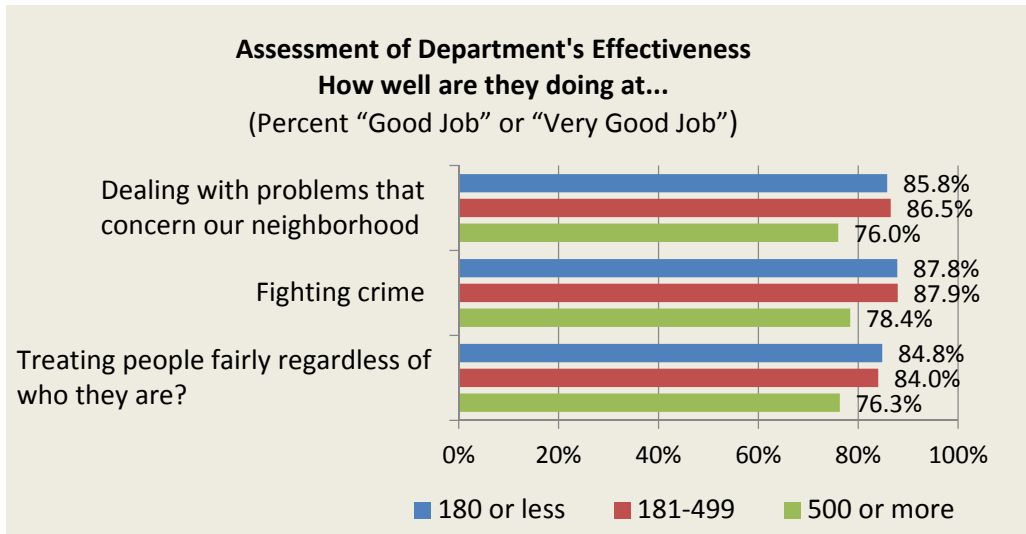


However, as the next figure indicates, “car-side manners” (procedural justice) also had a significant impact on the overall rating of officers who issued tickets. Here we illustrate this effect for departments with 500 or more sworn employees. Using the overall level of satisfaction among individuals being ticketed as the baseline (50.1 percent), the figure shows the number of favorable percentage points gained by agencies whose officers/deputies are considered respectful, unbiased in the decision, and supportive or empathic regarding the driver when issuing tickets. Correspondingly, the figure reveals the number of percentage points lost when officers/deputies do not exhibit these behaviors while issuing a citation. Thus, in these communities, engaging in procedurally just and supportive behaviors is strongly associated with a residents’ overall satisfaction with an officer’s performance during the interaction.



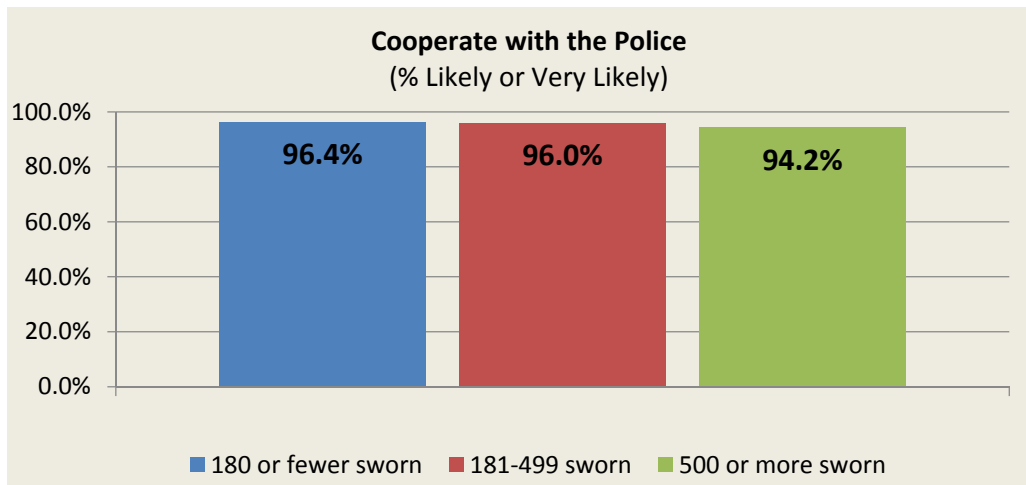
Assessment of Department Effectiveness

Beyond specific contacts with the police, community members were asked to assess the department’s performance or effectiveness in achieving goals. Survey respondents were asked, “Please rate how good a job you feel the [local] police are doing in your neighborhood” (on a 4-point scale, from “very poor job” to “very good job”). Overall, community members rated the effectiveness of local agencies positively, although agencies with 500 or more officers received lower scores on fighting crime, dealing with neighborhood concerns, and treating everyone fairly regardless of who they are.



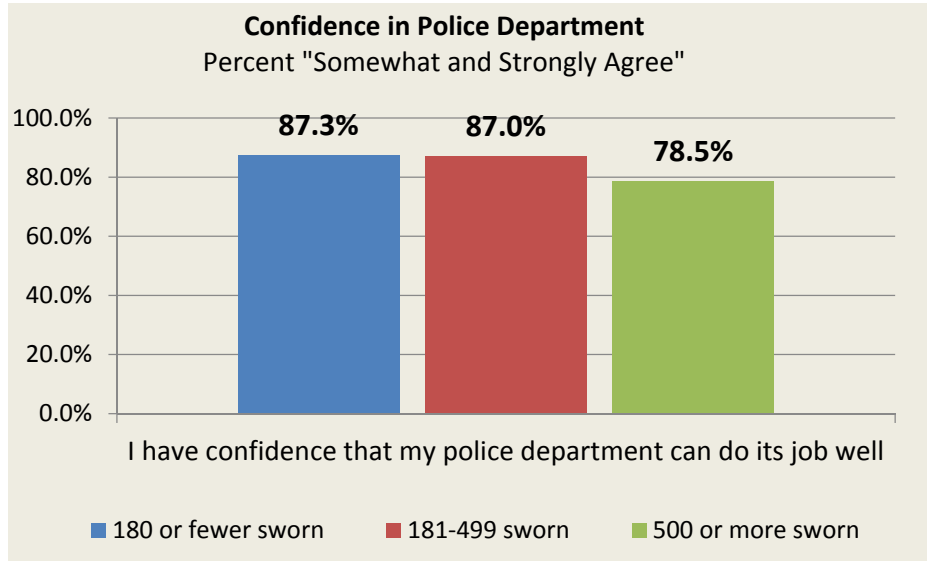
Community Cooperation

Having community members cooperate with the police is important when officers are trying to enforce the law, maintain order, or investigate a crime. Community members were asked to indicate how likely they would be to cooperate with the local police to solve a crime, from "very likely" to "very unlikely". As this figure shows, nearly every respondent reported that he/she would be either "somewhat" or "very" likely to cooperate.



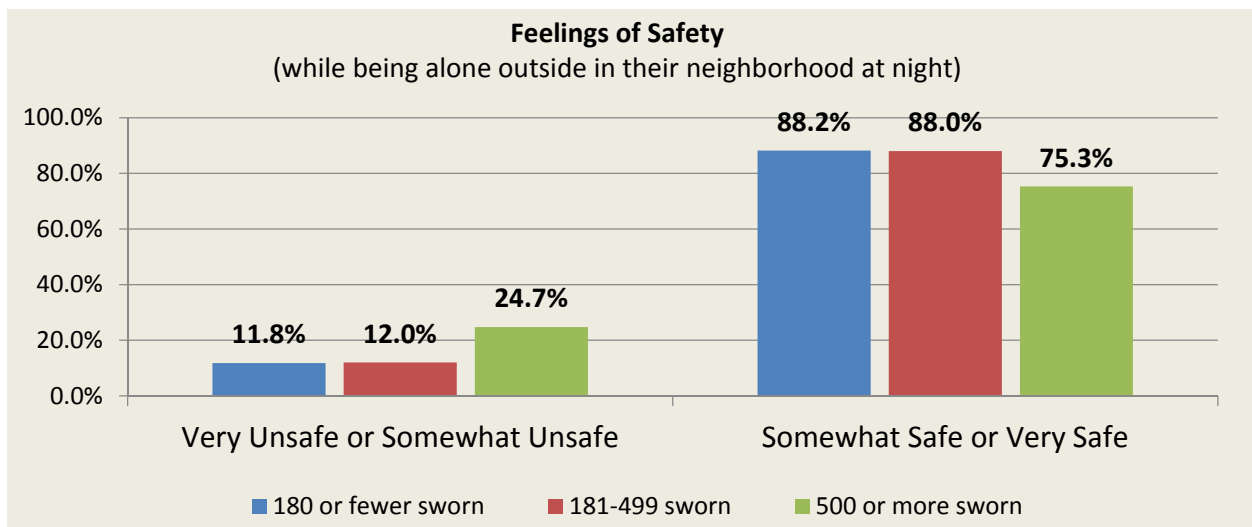
Assessment of Police Department Legitimacy

Police legitimacy is defined by the hearts and minds of the community, and indicates whether community members have trust and confidence in their local police to act on their behalf and use authority appropriately for the good of the community. Community members were asked to indicate whether they agree with the statement, “I have confidence that my police department can do its job well.” For agencies with fewer than 500 employees, roughly 87 percent of the community reported agreeing with this statement. This number dropped to 78.5 percent for agencies with 500 or more sworn personnel.



Feelings of Safety

Community members were asked – on a 4-point scale from Very Unsafe to Very Safe – “How safe do you feel, or would you feel, being alone outside in your neighborhood at night?” As shown in this figure, the vast majority of community members report feeling somewhat or “very” safe in their neighborhood, but these percentages are 13 percentage points lower in jurisdictions with 500 or more officers/deputies.



Conclusion

The Police-Community Interaction (PCI) Survey is an important tool for measuring levels of procedural justice, empathy, and other aspects of police-public encounters that are important for building trust and enhancing organizational legitimacy. On the whole, most police officers in the 58 American cities received high ratings for the way they interacted with members of the community. These findings vary by agency size, as police officers in agencies with 500 or more officers tended to garner lower grades from the community than did police officers in smaller agencies. However, agency size does not appear to make a difference when the number of sworn personnel is less than 500 (e.g., 150 vs. 350 sworn). Future research should explore this reality and seek to determine factors that contribute to these differences, including community characteristics (such as levels of poverty, violent crime, and racial composition) and organizational characteristics (such as leadership priorities, accountability systems, procedural justice training, and quality of supervision).

References

- Rosenbaum, D. P., Lawrence, D. S., Hartnett, S. M., McDevitt, J., & Posick, C. (in press).
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Interaction Survey. *Journal of Experimental Criminology*.