

The Local Perception of Police and the Influences of the Media



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Question and Purpose

What is the perception of the police from Utah Valley Students, and how does the media affect this perception?

Depending on the results of our survey, we will be able to determine...

If the police need to search for ways to improve their public image.

If the media is a reliable and positive source for Utah Valley Students to base their opinions around.

How the perception from Utah Valley/ Utah County compares to the national perception of police.

What role ethnicity has on the perception of law enforcement.

Related Literature Reviews

- U.S. Department of Justice: Factors That Influence Public Opinion of the Police
- Measuring Influences On Public Opinion of the Police Using Time-Series Data: Results of a Pilot Study
- International Journal of Police Science & Management: Unpacking Public Attitudes to the Police: Contrasting Perceptions of Misconduct with Traditional Measures of Satisfaction.
- Journal of Criminal Justice: Public Perceptions of Police Misconduct and Discrimination: Examining the Impact of Media Consumption
- The Media, the Public, and the Law Enforcement Community: Correcting Misconceptions

Design and Data/ Problems Encountered

Our research involved a survey, including skip logic and a matrix of similar questions to gauge what people thought of the police, both locally and nationally.

Demographic questions were included, such as asking about political affiliation, age, gender, race, etc.

With opinion based questions like this, the response can vary based on the current “climate”, or events surrounding the research.

We had a sample of 500 UVU students, excluding those under 18, possibly incidentally including pregnant women or elderly individuals. However, this should not have affected our survey.

With a sample of 500 people, non-response was a bigger problem and more

Local Events Surrounding Our Research:

Officer Doug Barney, shot and killed January 17th, 2016 during a routine traffic stop.

The public support for this fallen officer was amazing. Tens of thousands of people lined the street for his funeral procession. Public support for police in this area increased quite a bit during this time.



Local Events Surrounding Our Research:

On February 27th, 2016 Abdullahi Omar Mohamed, age 17, was shot by SLPD after he refused to stop beating a man with a broomstick, then allegedly charged police with the same weapon.

Angry protests were held and rocks were thrown at police officers.

When body cam videos were not immediately released, the police department was not being transparent.

Our survey was released March 3rd, just days after.



Survey Distribution

Desired Outcome

Sample Size

500 UVU Students

Expected Response

252

Interval Survey sent on March 3 - received 30 responses

❖ Survey sent on March 15 - received 13 more responses

4.35

Actual Outcome

Sample Size

500 UVU Students

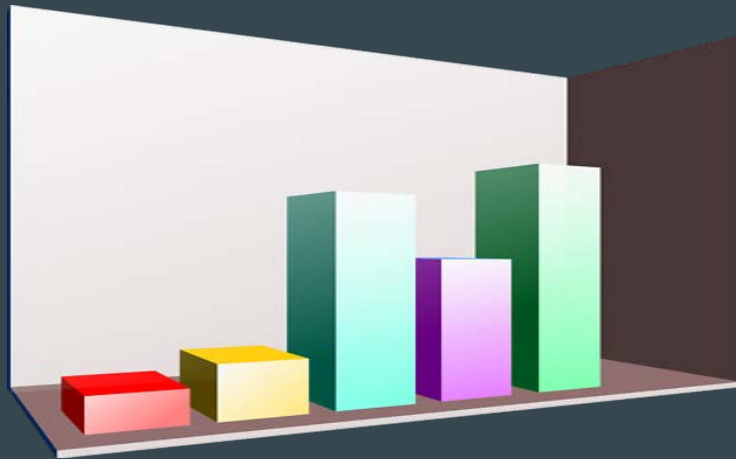
Response

43

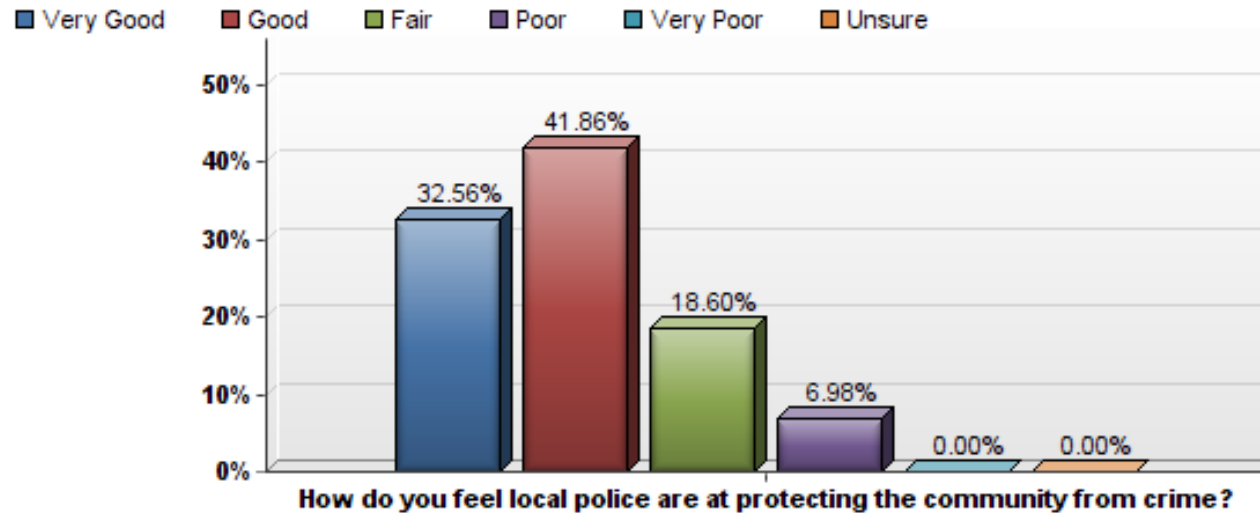
Interval

2.46

Survey Results

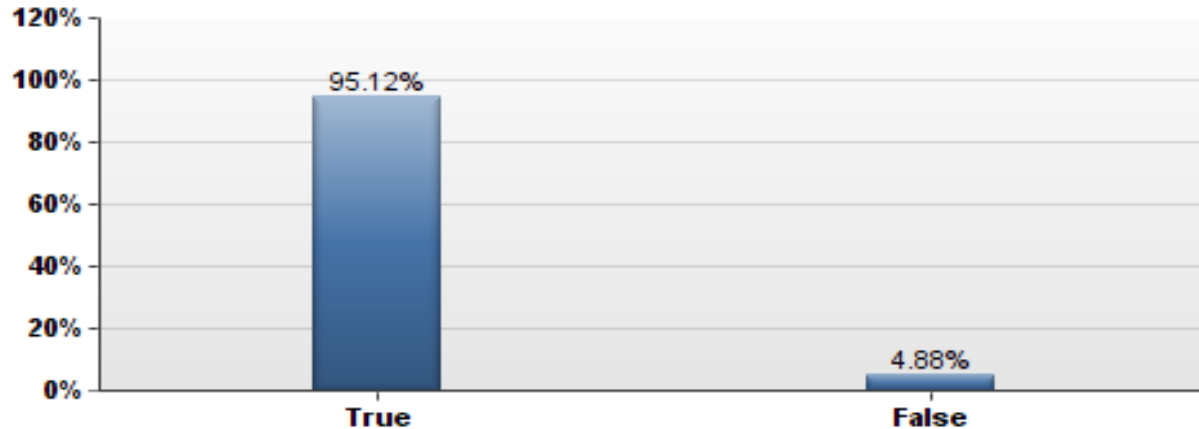


Effectiveness of Local Law Enforcement



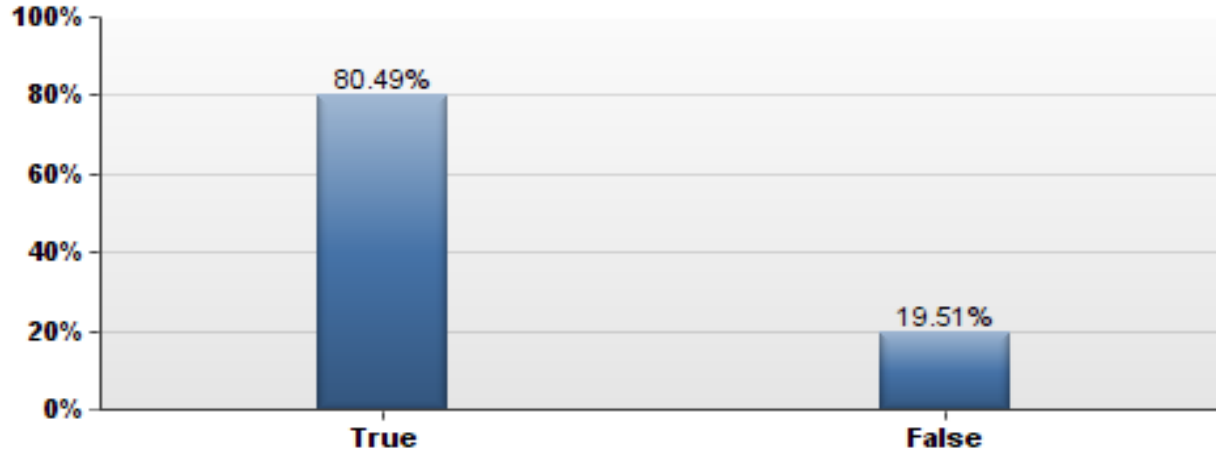
Confidence in Local Law Enforcement

I have confidence in the *Local* Police.



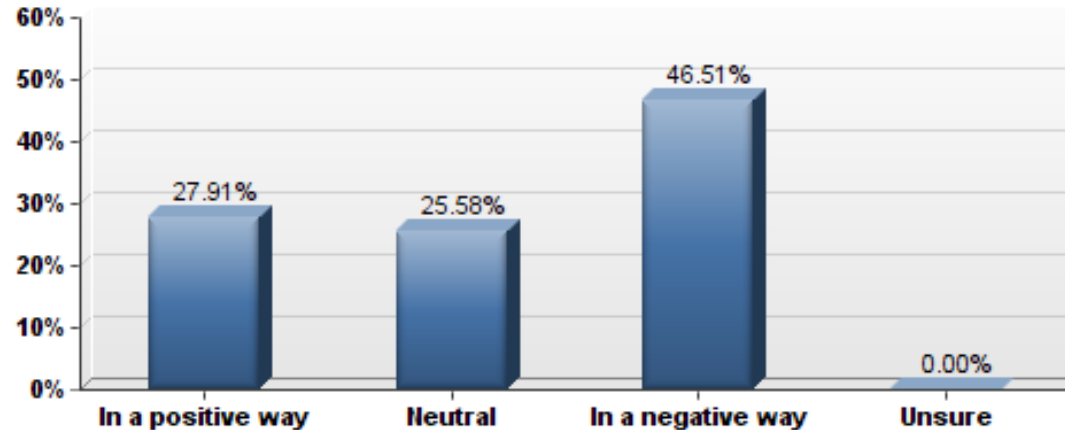
Confidence in National Law Enforcement

I have confidence in the *National* Police.



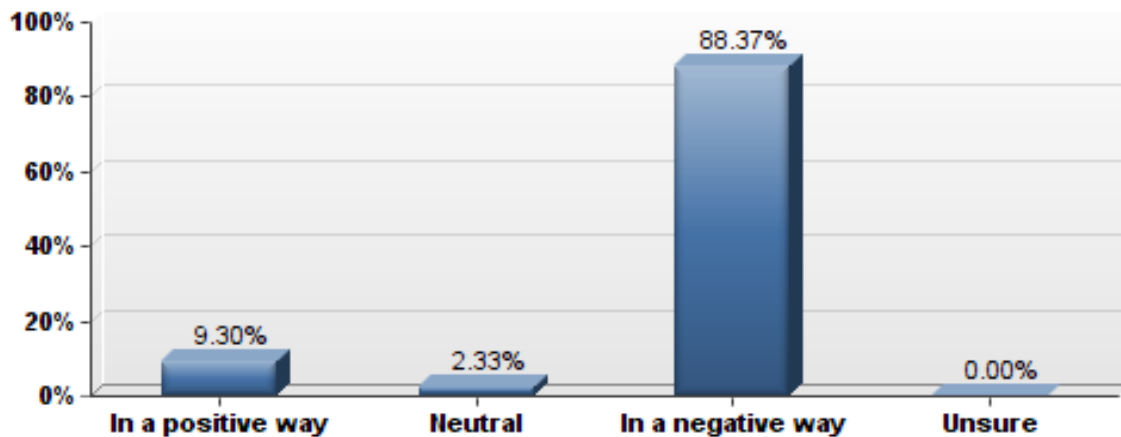
Local Media Portrayal of Law Enforcement

How would you say the *Local* news that you have read, heard, or seen recently, has portrayed law enforcement?



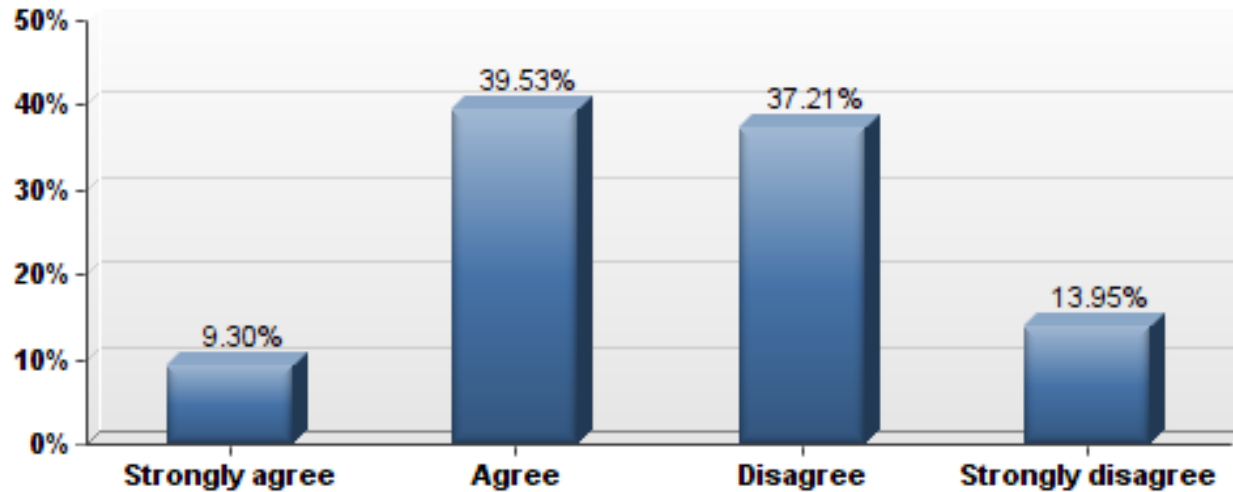
National Media Portrayal of Law Enforcement

How would you say the *National* news that you have read, heard, or seen recently, portrayed law enforcement?



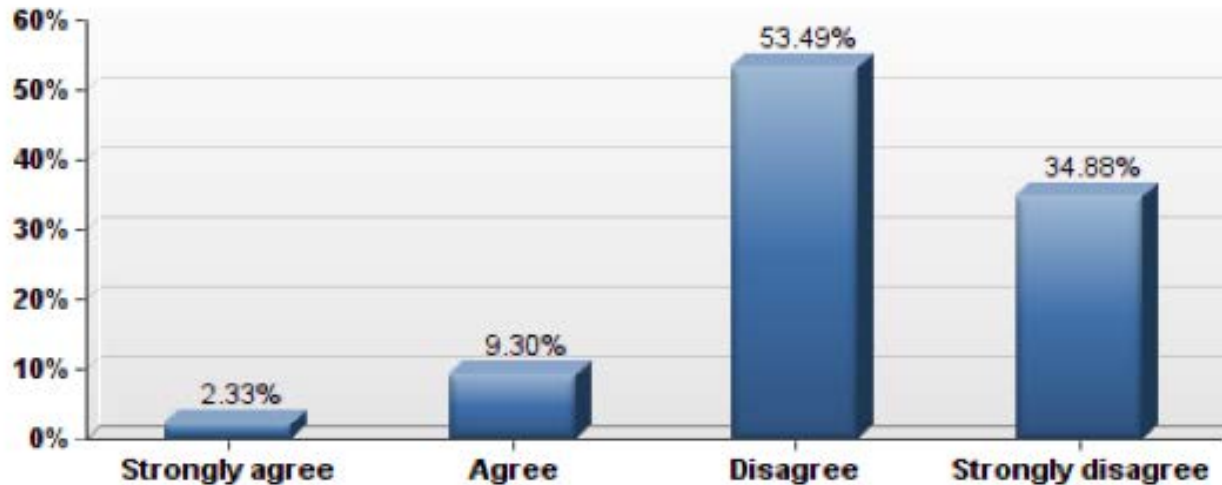
Local Media Portrayal of Law Enforcement

The media portrays *Local* law enforcement in a positive way.



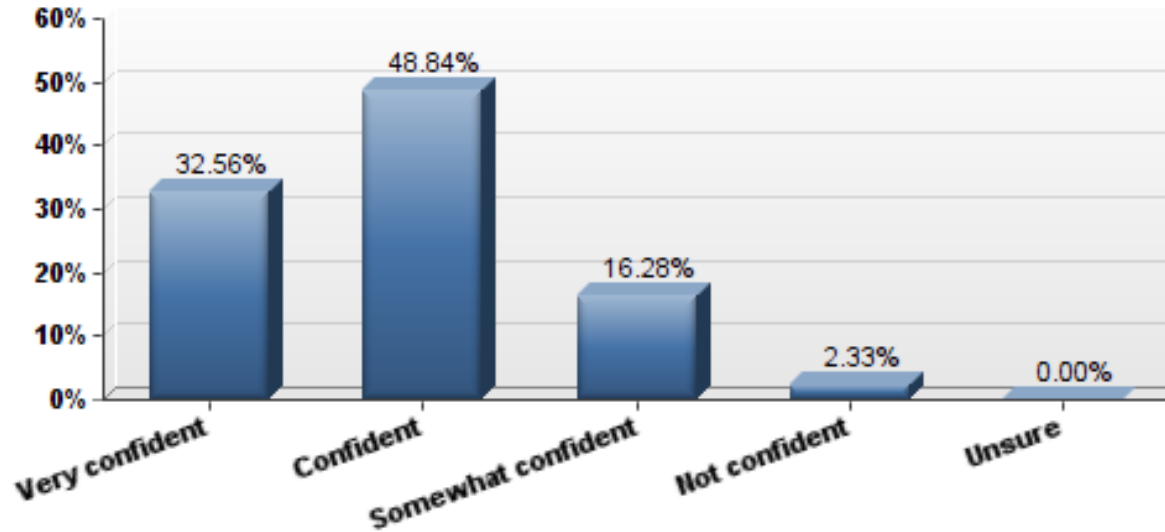
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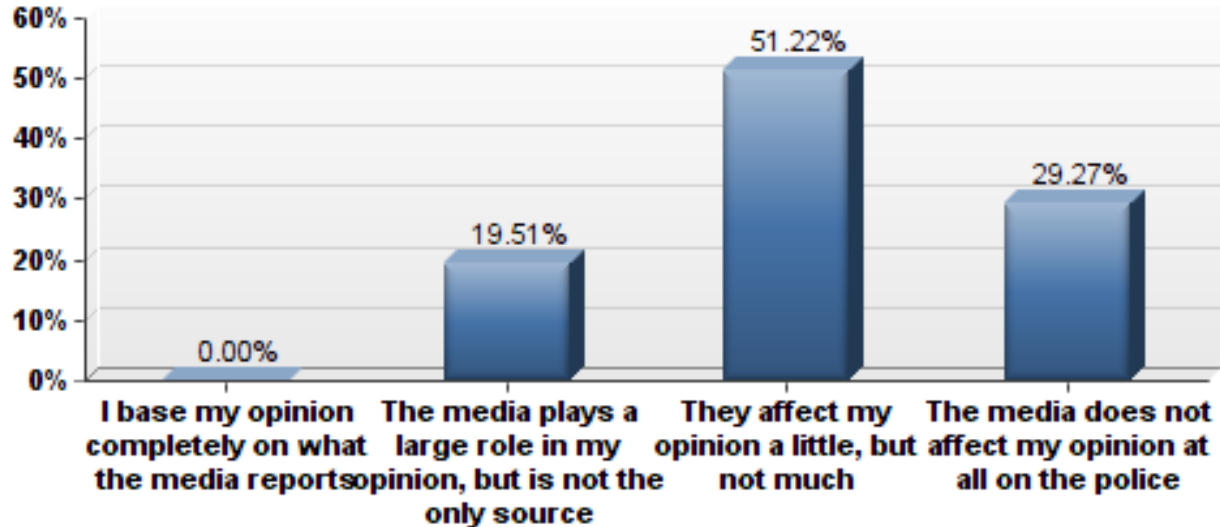
Gaining Trust

How confident are you that the police can gain the trust of the community?



Influence of the Media

How much does the media affect your opinion of law enforcement?



How Viewing the Local News Affects Perceptions

		Please rate your local police in the following areas: - How would you rate the performance of your local police?						Total
		Very Good	Good	Fair	Poor	Very Poor	Unsure	
How often do you watch the local news?	More than once a week	4	4	4	0	0	0	12
	About once a week	6	3	1	0	0	0	10
	One-three times per month	2	2	2	0	0	0	6
	Less than once per month	4	5	0	0	0	0	9
	Never	5	0	1	0	0	0	6
	Total	21	14	8	0	0	0	43

How Viewing the National News Affects Perceptions

		How do you feel the national police are at protecting the community from crime?					Total
		Very good	Good	Fair	Poor	Unsure	
How often do you watch national news?	More than once a week	0	7	4	1	0	12
	About once a week	0	5	4	0	0	9
	One-three times per month	1	5	1	0	0	7
	Less than once per month	2	4	1	1	1	9
	Never	1	3	0	2	0	6
Total		4	24	10	4	1	43

How Age Relates to Confidence in Local Law Enforcement

		How much confidence do you have in local police officers to enforce the law?					Total
		Great amount	Fair amount	Some	Very little	Unsure	
What is your age?	18-29	17	12	4	0	0	33
	30-39	2	0	1	1	0	4
	40-49	1	3	0	0	0	4
	50-59	0	0	0	0	0	0
	60-69	0	0	0	0	0	0
	70 or older	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Total	20	15	5	1	0	41

How Ethnicity Relates to Confidence in Local Law Enforcement

		What is your ethnicity origin or race?					
		White	Hispanic or Latino	African American	Native American or American Indian	Asian/Pacific Islander	Other
I have confidence in the local police.	True	31	4	1	0	1	2
	False	2	0	0	0	0	0

Ethnicity As it Relates to Treatment of Minorities

		Do you feel that those of African-American decent are treated the same as Caucasians by the local...			Do you feel Hispanics are treated the same as Caucasians by the local police?		
		Yes	No	Unsure	Yes	No	Unsure
What is your ethnicity origin or race?	White	20	7	6	17	9	7
	Hispanic or Latino	3	1	0	3	1	0
	African American	1	0	0	0	1	0
	Native American or American Indian	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Asian/Pacific Islander	1	0	0	1	0	0
	Other	2	0	0	2	0	0

Brutality and the Effects on the Public's Perception

		Did witnessing this have a negative effect on your perception of police?			Total
		Yes	No	Unsure	
Have you witnessed police brutality on local or national news in the last week?	Yes	5	10	1	16
	No	0	0	0	0
	Unsure	0	2	1	3
	Total	5	12	2	19

Conclusions

Do the police need to search for ways to improve their public image / perception?

The public perception of law enforcement, especially Local law enforcement, seems to be very positive regardless of how the media portrays them. Our sample exhibited a high level of confidence in law enforcement due to the effectiveness and ability of law enforcement to protect the community. Therefore, law enforcement has created a quality public image through effective policing and needs to continue enhancing their image through their strong efforts.

Is the media a positive and reliable source for Utah Valley students to base their opinions around?

While both National and Local media sources were reported to portray law enforcement in more of a negative than positive way, our results concluded that the Local media provided a dramatically greater rate of portraying Law Enforcement in a positive way than the National news. Therefore, Utah Valley students are more exposed to a positive media influence than the national population, but still cannot rely solely on the media for accurate information.

How does the perception of law enforcement from Utah Valley Students differ from the National perception?

According to our results, the public's perception of both National and Local law enforcement agencies are very positive, but Utah Valley students show an even greater appreciation and confidence in Local law enforcement. Once again, these results are a product of the ability of Local law enforcement to do their job and maintain a good public image.

Conclusions

What role does ethnicity have on the perception of law enforcement?

We do not believe that enough data was gathered to make a valid conclusion due to the lack of diversity among respondents. With that being said, all ethnicities that responded expressed confidence in Local law enforcement. The majority of *minority* respondents believe that Local law enforcement treats everyone equal, while almost 25% of *caucasian* respondents believe that minorities are treated unequally by Local law enforcement. This data cannot be considered conclusive until a more diverse sample is taken.

Is Utah County a desirable place to live due to the perception of Local law enforcement's ability to protect the community?

The perception and confidence in Local law enforcement to protect the community is so high that Utah County emerges as an exceedingly desirable place to live. Students and families that are concerned with safety can look at the results of our project and discover that the public perceives Utah County as a remarkably safe place to live due to the ability of Local law enforcement to protect the community.