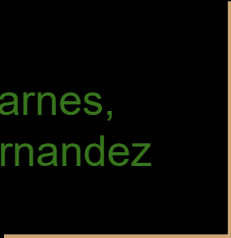




# Perception of Police

Sam Bush, Brooke Barnes,  
Tyler Eatchel, Myra Hernandez



# Abstract

- Our objective in this study was to determine whether contact with police officers or viewing of media had more influence on UVU students in regards to their perceptions of law enforcement.
- For our project, we recorded responses from students at Utah Valley University by using an online survey. We compared the results of students that have not had any interaction with law enforcement in the past year with students that have as well as media viewing habits.
- This project helped to identify what kind of interactions students have with law enforcement.
- This project also helped to identify whether students perception of law

# Benefits And Risks

The benefit of this project was to determine how often UVU students come in contact with police. Then, we were able to determine if personal interactions had any negative or positive impact on the students' opinions.

The risks of this project could included subjects being induced to remember bad interactions with police, subjects could be offended by the questions asked, and subjects could have lied about interactions. The subjects emailed had an opportunity to opt of of the survey if they desired.

# Literature Review

- In a journal written by Ben Brown and Wm Reed Benedict they discovered that positive contact with police improved perceptions with law enforcement. On the other hand, negative contact with police hampers perceptions.
- They also found that a citizen will more likely be in favor of police if they initiated the call.
- According to Brown and Benedict, there are only four categorizes that alter the perception of police: contact with law enforcement, race, income level or neighborhood, and age.
- When Brown and Benedict studied journals they found that increased media presence over police brutality created a decline in approval ratings.

# Literature Review

Mengyan Dai and Xin Jiang conducted a study to find out if perceptions of law enforcement across international boundaries are the same. The research was conducted in Cincinnati, Ohio, USA and Queensland, Australia.

The survey used had extensive questions regarding the perception of police, prior experiences or interactions with police and the citizens' neighborhoods.

Random sample of 1500 phone numbers were collected and the interviewer explained the purpose of the survey; then they asked for a person over the age of 18 who had lived there for at least six months.

People from a different background than the majority tend to have a more negative perception to the police.

# Literature Review

- In the journal written by Rosenbaum, Schuck, Costello, Hawkins, and Ring. They studied past research and reinterviewed subjects a year later to determine if new encounters with police changed the perception of the subjects.
- In the original survey 2500 individuals were interviewed, a year later 505 were reinterviewed. A sampling method using prior contact with law enforcement, race, age and perceptions of police was used.
- 61% of the respondents were from a minority group. 48% of the sample stated they made contact with police in the last year. 18.6% was police initiated and 39.5% was citizen initiated.
- The researchers found that there was a greater negative connotation when subject heard of poor treatment by police than experiencing it.

# Research Method

The research method we used was the online survey website Qualtrics.

The survey was then sent to UVU students' email addresses.

We sent out a 40 question survey relating to police interactions, age, race, type of interactions etc.

Our subjects were chosen by random student emails; the students are between the ages of 18 and 65, both male and female.

Population size 33,211

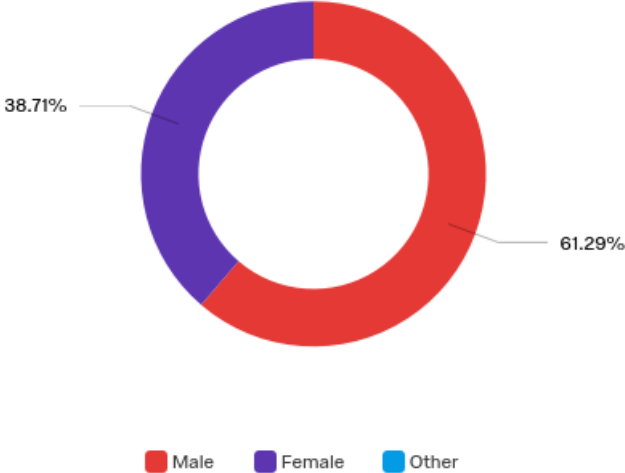
Sample size of 500 students

36 responses

Margin of error 16.32 with a 83.68 confidence level.

# Survey

What is your gender?



#	Field	Choice Count
1	Male	61.29% 19
2	Female	38.71% 12
3	Other	0.00% 0
		31



# Survey

What is your age?

18-21    4

21-25    14

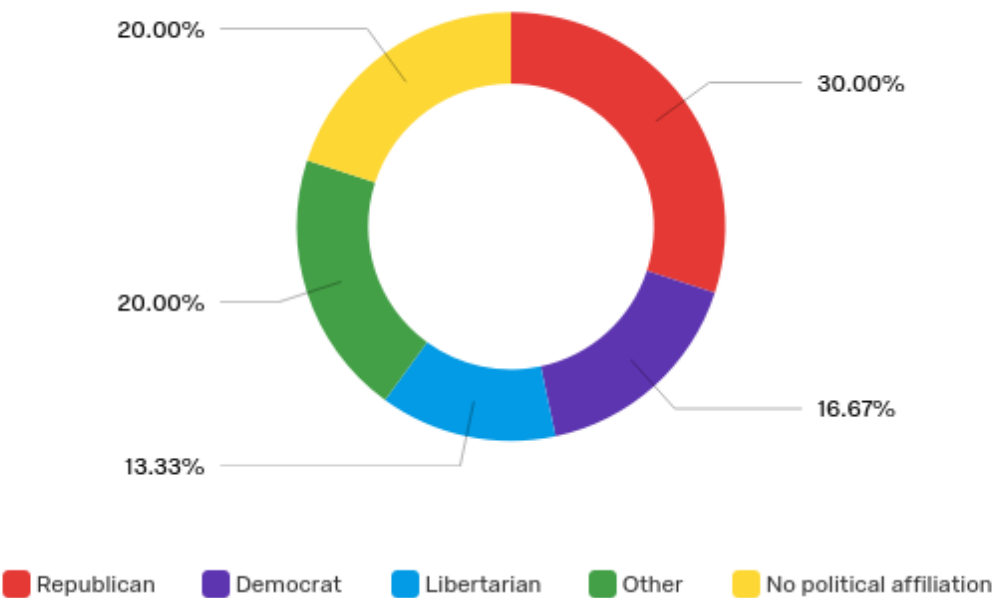
25-30    6

30-40    3

40-65    2

# Survey

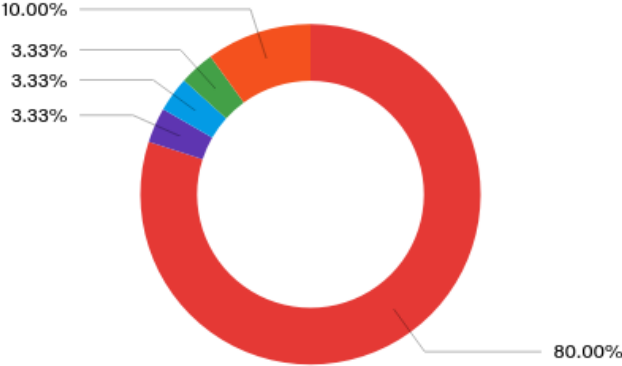
What is your political affiliation?



#	Field	Choice	Count
1	Yes	6.45%	2
2	No	93.55%	29

# Survey

What is your ethnicity?



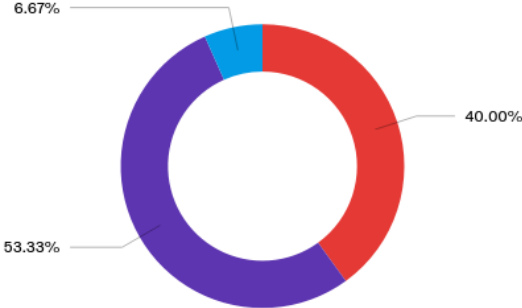
White Black or African American American Indian or Alaska Native Asian  
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander Hispanic or Latino Other

#	Field	Choice Count
1	White	80.00% 24
2	Black or African American	3.33% 1
3	American Indian or Alaska Native	3.33% 1
4	Asian	3.33% 1
5	Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	0.00% 0
6	Hispanic or Latino	10.00% 3
7	Other	0.00% 0
		30

# Survey

How do you think the ratio diversity in the police force reflects your community?

All minority races that took the survey said that they were under represented.



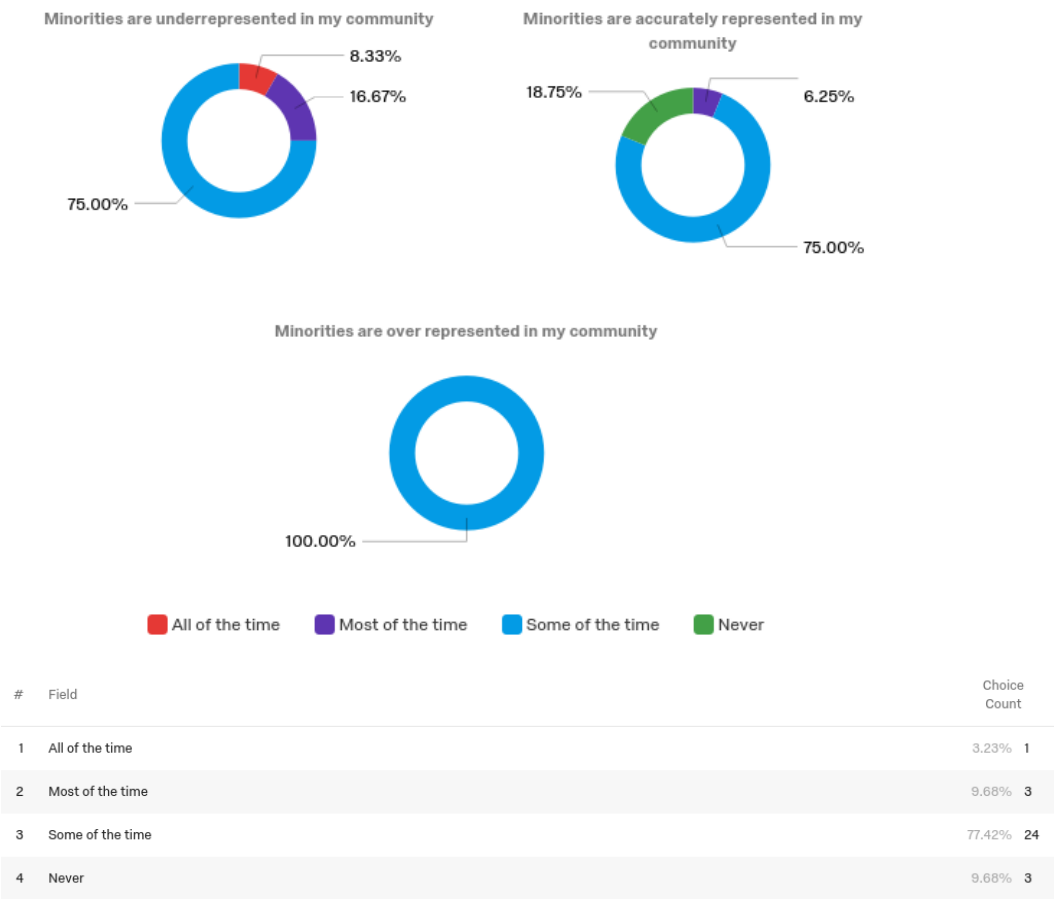
- Minorities are underrepresented in my community
- Minorities are accurately represented in my community

#	Field	Choice Count
1	Minorities are underrepresented in my community	38.71% 12
2	Minorities are accurately represented in my community	54.84% 17
3	Minorities are over represented in my community	6.45% 2
		31

# Survey

How much do you think law enforcement target minorities?

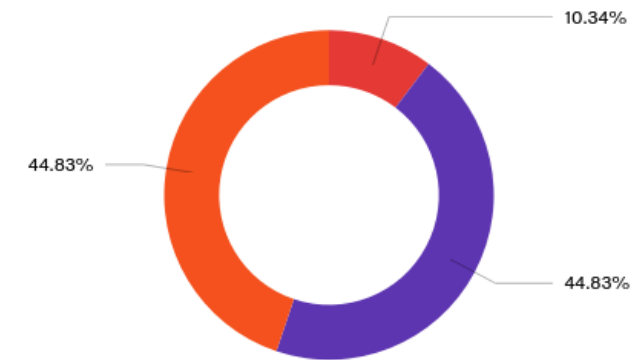
Compared to do you think minorities are underrepresented in the police force?



# Survey

Which minority do you think law enforcement targets the most?

Six of the thirteen other choices included Hispanic in their response.

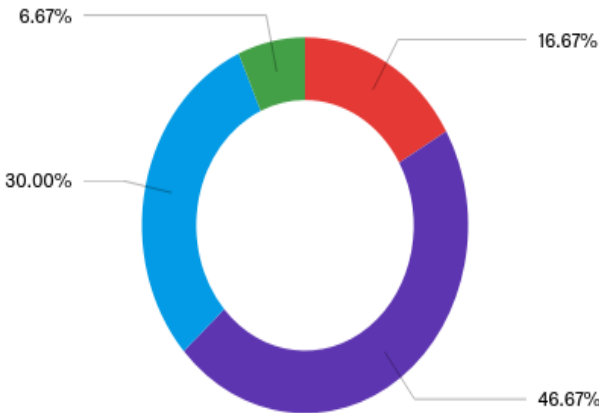


#	Field	Choice Count
1	Extremely satisfied	16.13% 5
2	Somewhat satisfied	48.39% 15
3	Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	29.03% 9
4	Somewhat dissatisfied	6.45% 2
5	Extremely dissatisfied	0.00% 0
		31

# Survey

Overall what are you feeling towards how well law enforcement officers are currently fulfilling their duties?

Majority said they are somewhat satisfied.



Extremely satisfied    Somewhat satisfied    Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied  
Somewhat dissatisfied    Extremely dissatisfied

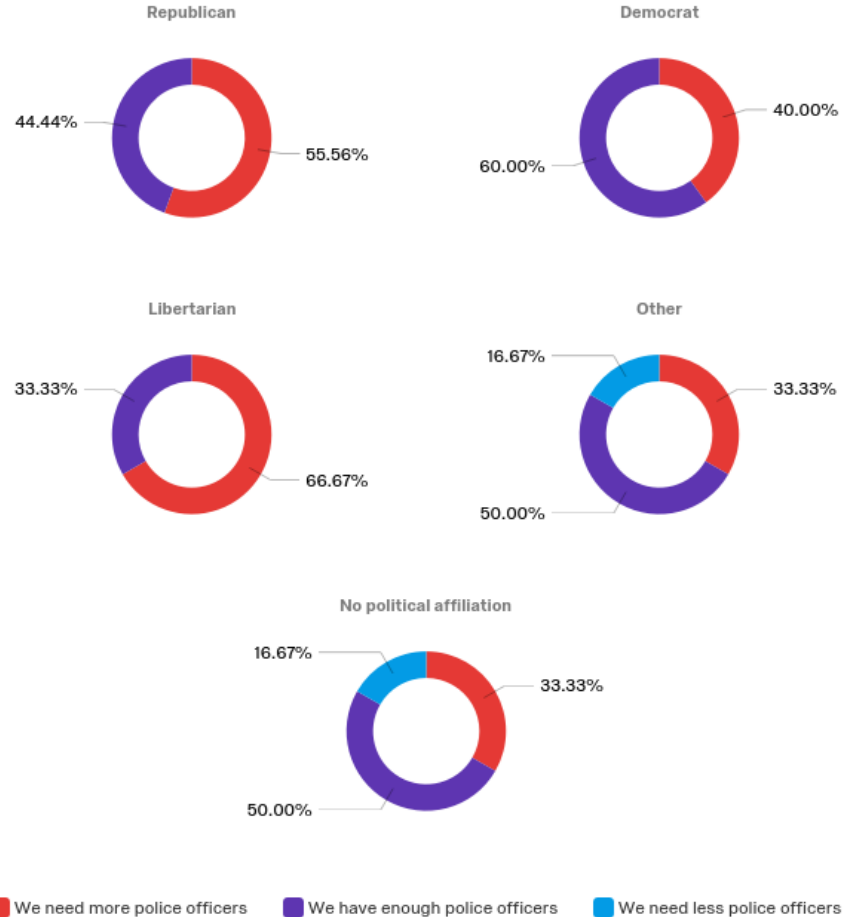
#	Field	Choice Count
1	Extremely satisfied	16.13% 5
2	Somewhat satisfied	48.39% 15
3	Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	29.03% 9
4	Somewhat dissatisfied	6.45% 2
5	Extremely dissatisfied	0.00% 0
		31

# Survey

What is your opinion on the number of law enforcement officers in the United States?

This chart is compared to political affiliation.

In total 50% said that we need more police officers. 43.33% said that we had enough and 6.67% said that we need less.



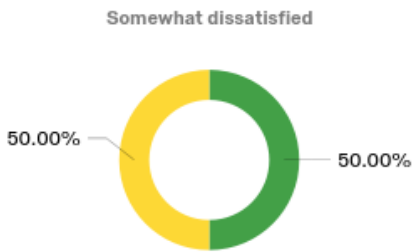
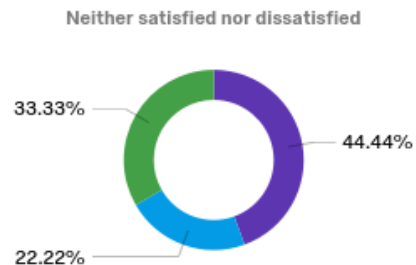
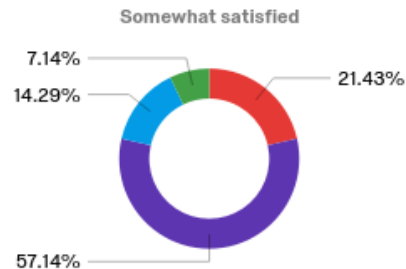


# Survey

How do you feel around a police officer?

This is the breakdown of how it compares to the survey question of how well do you think officers are performing their duties.

Most feel Mostly Safe around Police Officers



Extremely dissatisfied

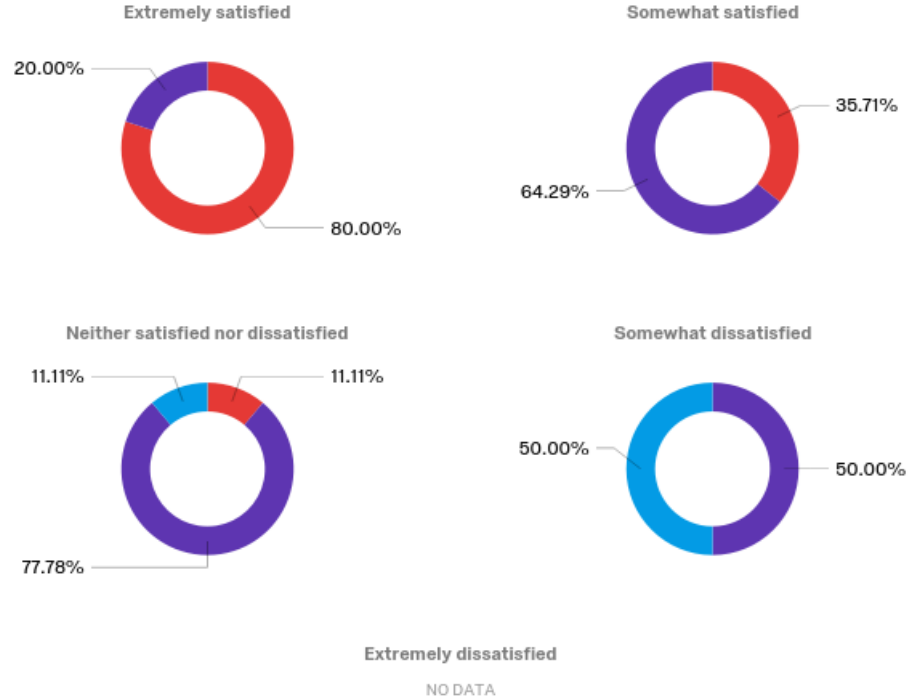
NO DATA



# Survey

How much do you trust law enforcement to respond appropriately during an emergency?

This is the breakdown of how it compares to the survey question of how well do you think officers are performing their duties.



■ I always trust law enforcement to respond appropriately during an emergency

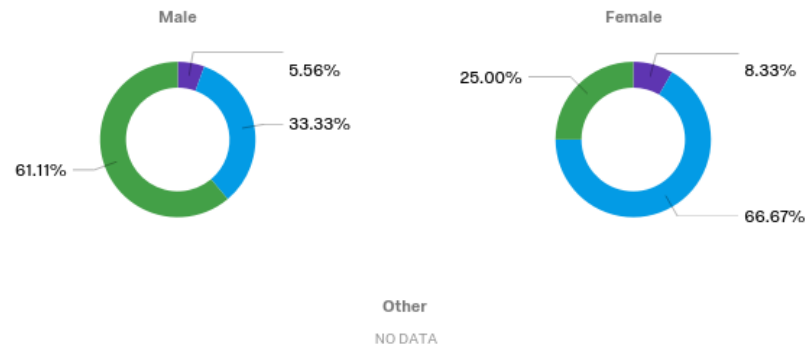
■ I somewhat trust law enforcement to respond appropriately during an emergency

■ I do not trust law enforcement to respond appropriately during an emergency

# Survey

What is your opinion on law enforcement and violence?

This is a Male vs Female Breakdown.



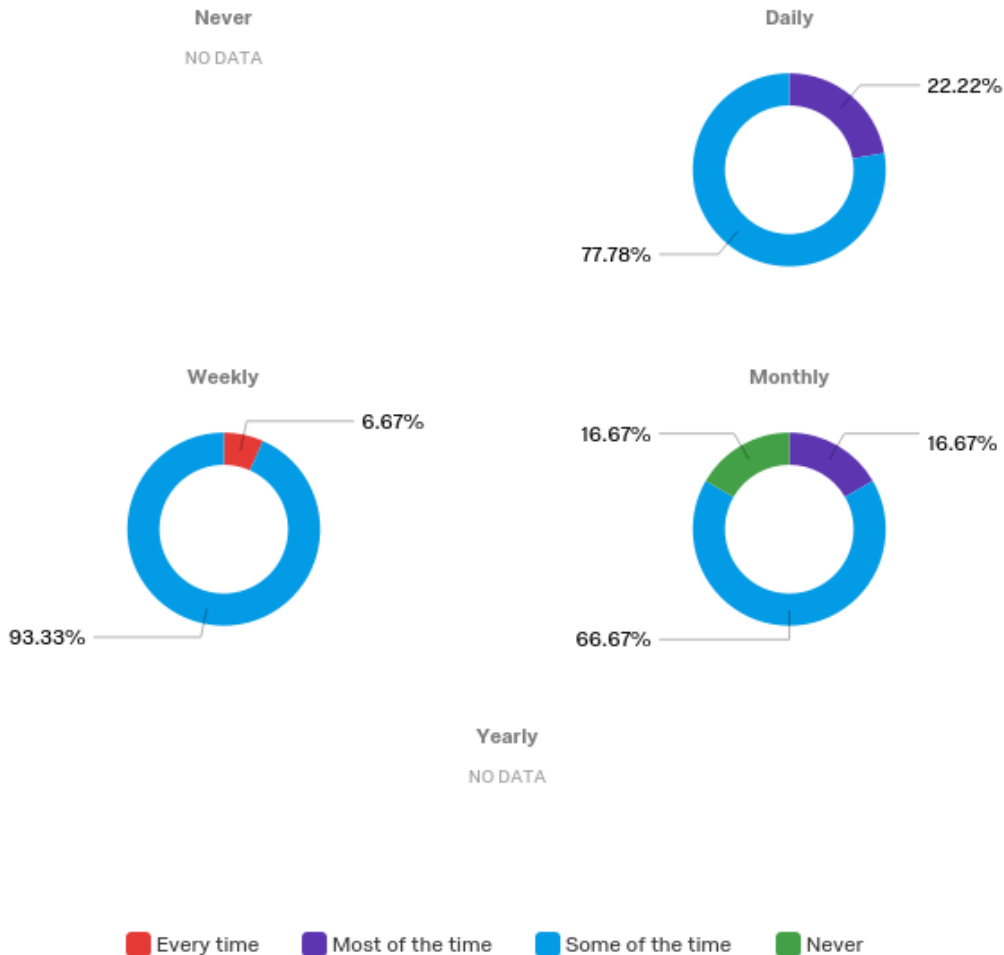
- Law enforcement officers are always too violent
- Law enforcement officers are violent most of the time
- Law enforcement officers are too violent some of the time
- Law enforcement officers are not too violent

#	Field	Choice Count
1	Law enforcement officers are always too violent	0.00% 0
2	Law enforcement officers are violent most of the time	6.45% 2
3	Law enforcement officers are too violent some of the time	48.39% 15
4	Law enforcement officers are not too violent	45.16% 14

# Survey

In police shootings, how often do you think that the police are too quick to shoot?

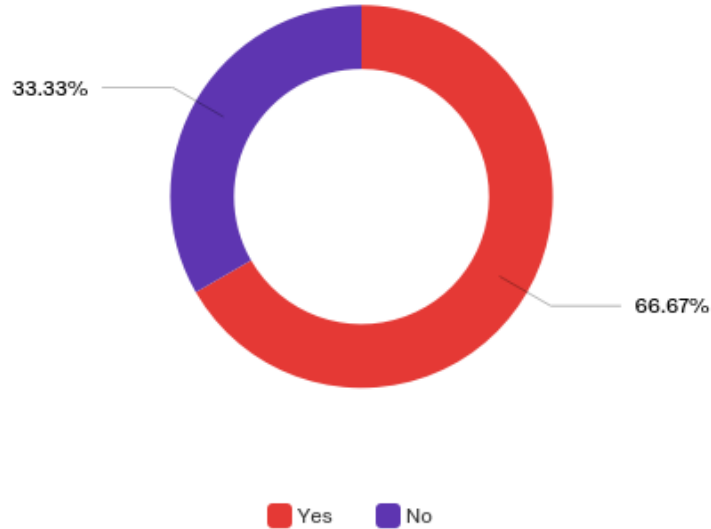
As compared to how often they see police in the media.



# Survey

Do you think there is ever a situation where shooting an unarmed man by police could be justified?

Every political affiliation category had a yes.



#	Field	Choice Count
1	Yes	64.52% 20
2	No	35.48% 11

# Survey

What is your opinion on corruption in law enforcement?

Compared to do we need more law enforcement responses.



# Survey

Do you think law enforcement should carry weapons?

This is the breakdown compared to the responses on police officers being too violent.

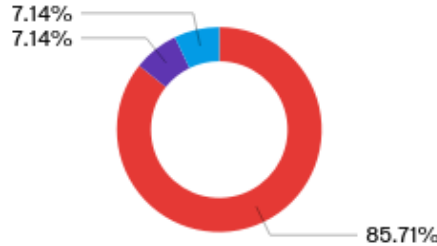
Law enforcement officers are always too violent

NO DATA

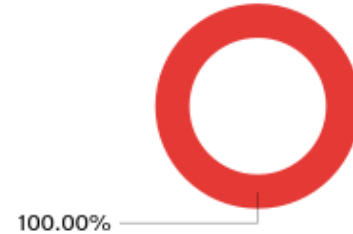
Law enforcement officers are violent most of the time



Law enforcement officers are too violent some of the time



Law enforcement officers are not too violent



■ All law enforcement should carry a weapon

■ Only supervisors should carry a weapon

■ Only special tactical teams (SWAT) should carry weapons

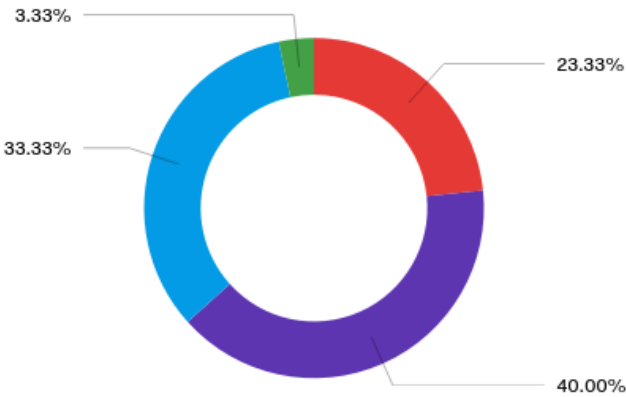
■ No law enforcement should carry a weapon





# Survey

Do you think law enforcement should have access to tactical weaponry such as assault rifles, tanks, etc?



- Law enforcement should have access to tactical weaponry
- Law enforcement should have access to tactical weaponry only in special circumstances
- Law enforcement should have access to tactical weaponry only in special circumstances when approved by government officials
- Law enforcement should not have access to tactical weaponry under any circumstances

#	Field	Choice Count
1	Law enforcement should have access to tactical weaponry	22.58% 7
2	Law enforcement should have access to tactical weaponry only in special circumstances	38.71% 12
3	Law enforcement should have access to tactical weaponry only in special circumstances when approved by government officials	35.48% 11
4	Law enforcement should not have access to tactical weaponry under any circumstances	3.23% 1

# Survey

What thing about police would you change?

The bad reputation they have lately.

Maybe appear more friendly to everyday people. Such as smiling and such.

Police in Utah are oversaturated, causing them to treat situations as much more severe than they actually are. Too many dream of being a "hero". Utah is relatively safe, we need far fewer cops, especially parking cops and highway patrol.

Use precautions to not let racist people into the police force, mandatory anger management perhaps.

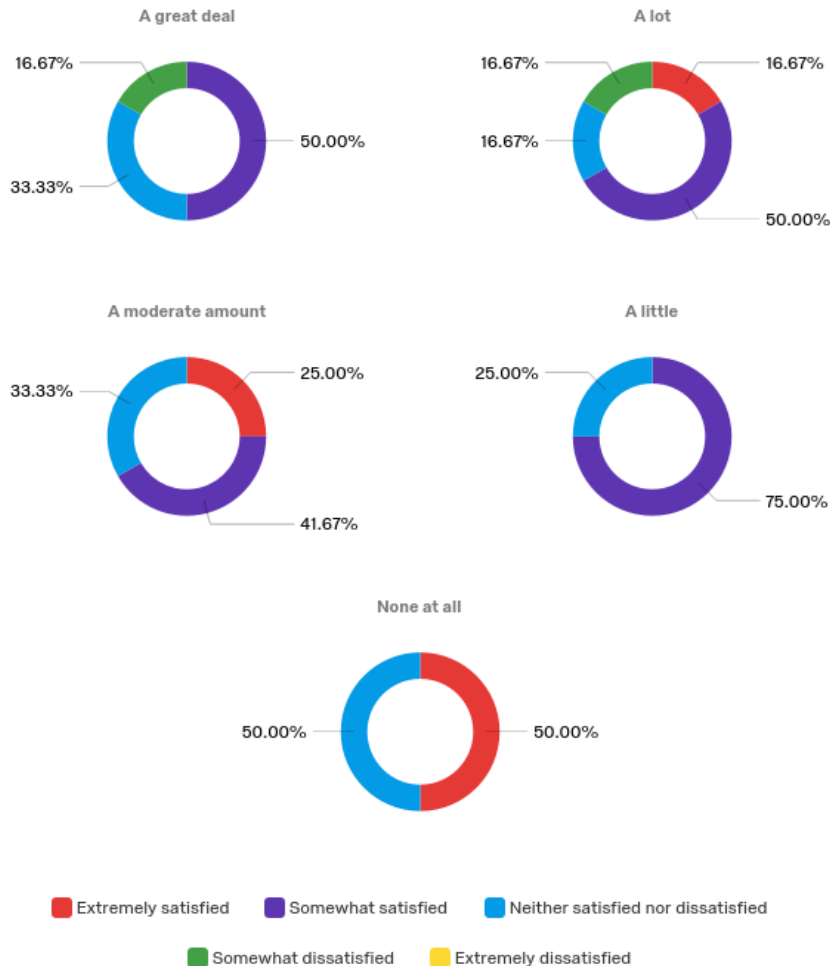
more training on how to better handle conflicts. Also a requirement of some sort of degree to be a police officer.



# Survey

How much is your opinion of law enforcement influenced by your personal experiences with them?

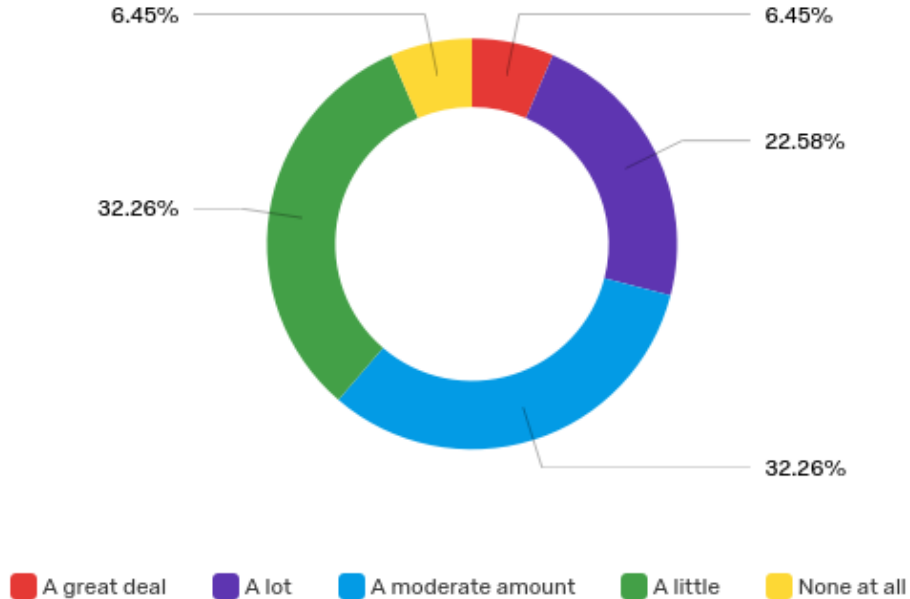
Compared to overall feelings towards police officers.



# Survey

How much is your opinion of law enforcement influenced by others' experiences with law enforcement? (family, friends, acquaintances, etc.)

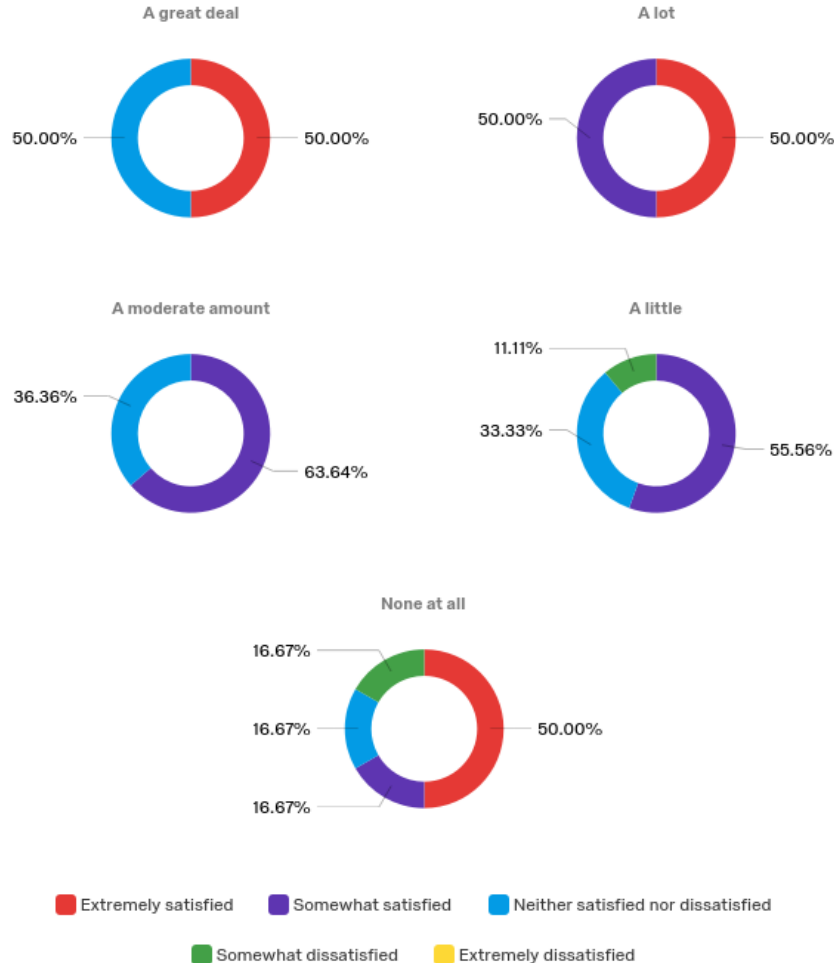
Compared to overall feelings towards opinion towards police officers.



# Survey

How much is your opinion  
of law enforcement  
influenced by the media?

Compared to overall  
feelings towards opinion  
towards police officers.





# Survey

What is your main influence on your opinion of law enforcement?

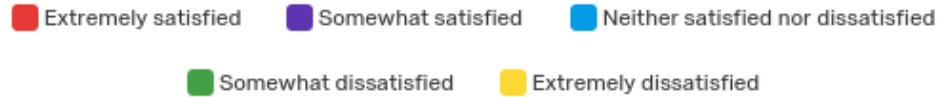
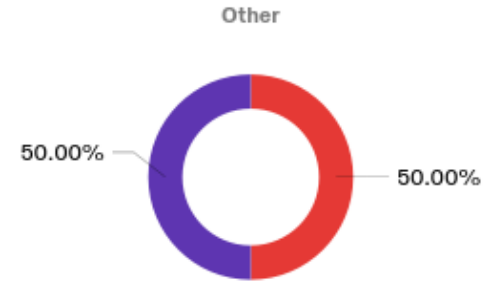
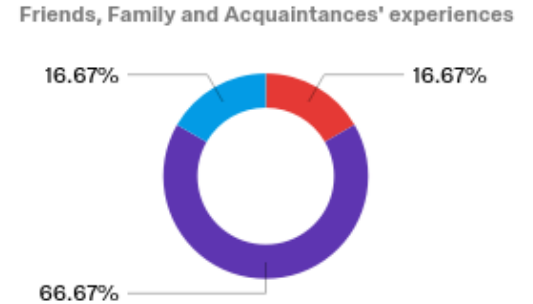
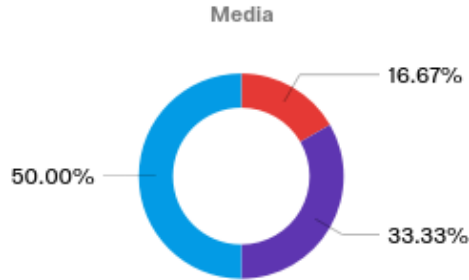
Almost half said their own experiences.

## Other Responses

“Both friends, family, and personal experiences”

“My own experiences and comprehending the difficult work they take on every day. It isn't just black and white.”

“It is necessary to have a well rounded understanding of the world through a variety of sources. I would not put one above the other.”



# Survey

Have you had an interaction with a law enforcement officer in the past year?

About a third have had an interaction with police in the last year.

55% of people who said Yes said they based their opinions of law enforcement off of their own experiences as opposed to 36.36% who said no.



#	Field	Choice Count
1	Yes	64.52% 20
2	No	35.48% 11



# Survey

If yes, how many interactions have you had?

Margin of Error: 16.32

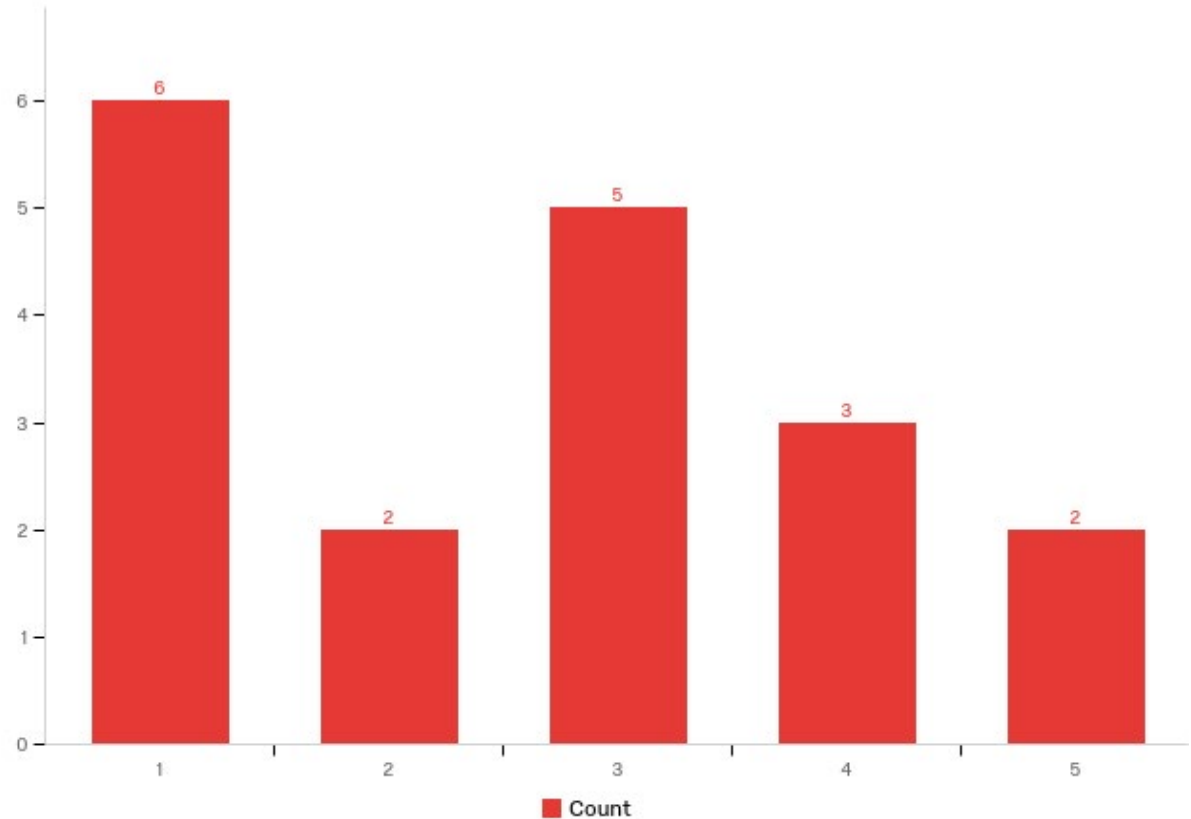
Confidence Level: 83.68%

Sample Size: 36

Sample Mean: 2.53

Sample Standard Deviation: 1.39

Confidence interval 2.2 to 2.86

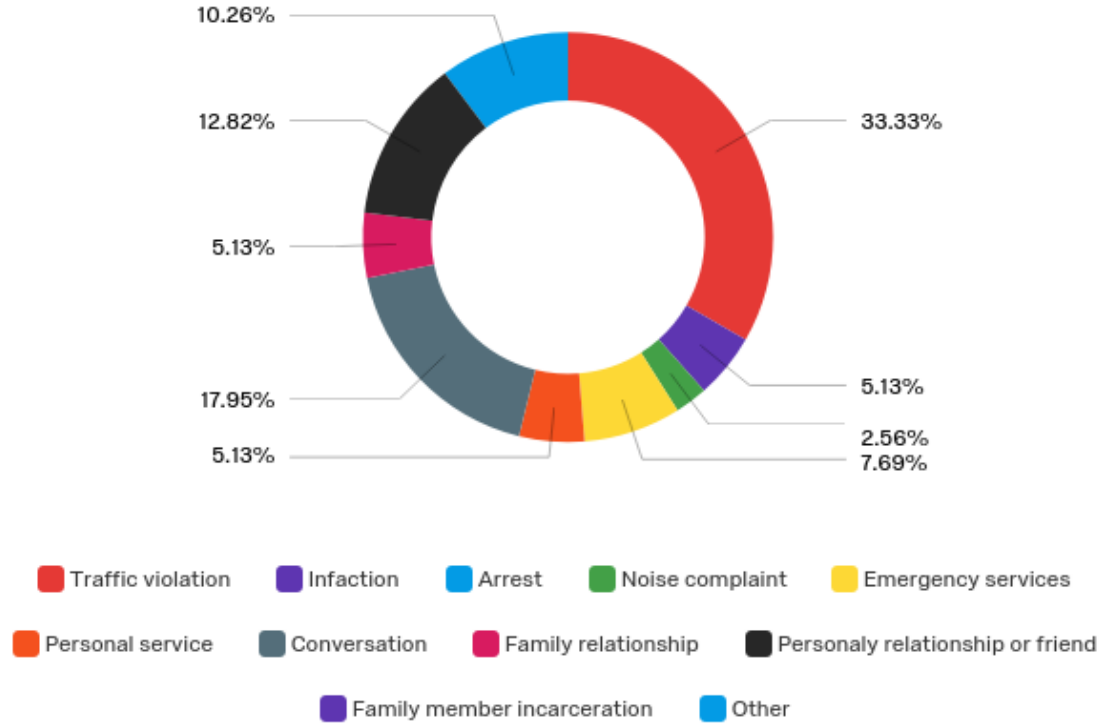




# Survey

What type of interaction did you have?

The responses with the highest count of interactions were traffic violations then conversation.



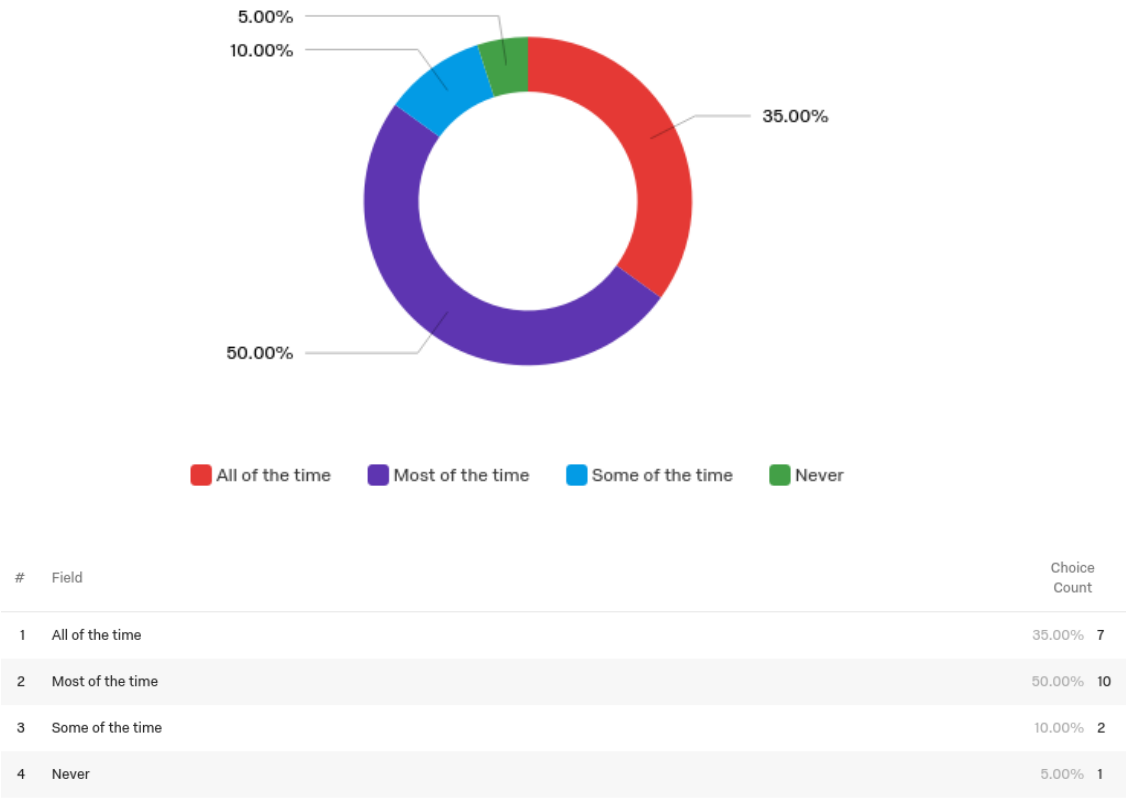
#	Field	Choice Count
1	Traffic violation	65.00% 13
2	Infaction	10.00% 2
3	Arrest	0.00% 0
4	Noise complaint	5.00% 1
5	Emergency services	15.00% 3
6	Personal service	10.00% 2
7	Conversation	35.00% 7
8	Family relationship	10.00% 2
9	Personaly relationship or friend	25.00% 5
10	Family member incarceration	0.00% 0
11	Other	20.00% 4
		20

Showing Rows: 1 - 12 Of 12

# Survey

How often are police officers courteous during your interactions?

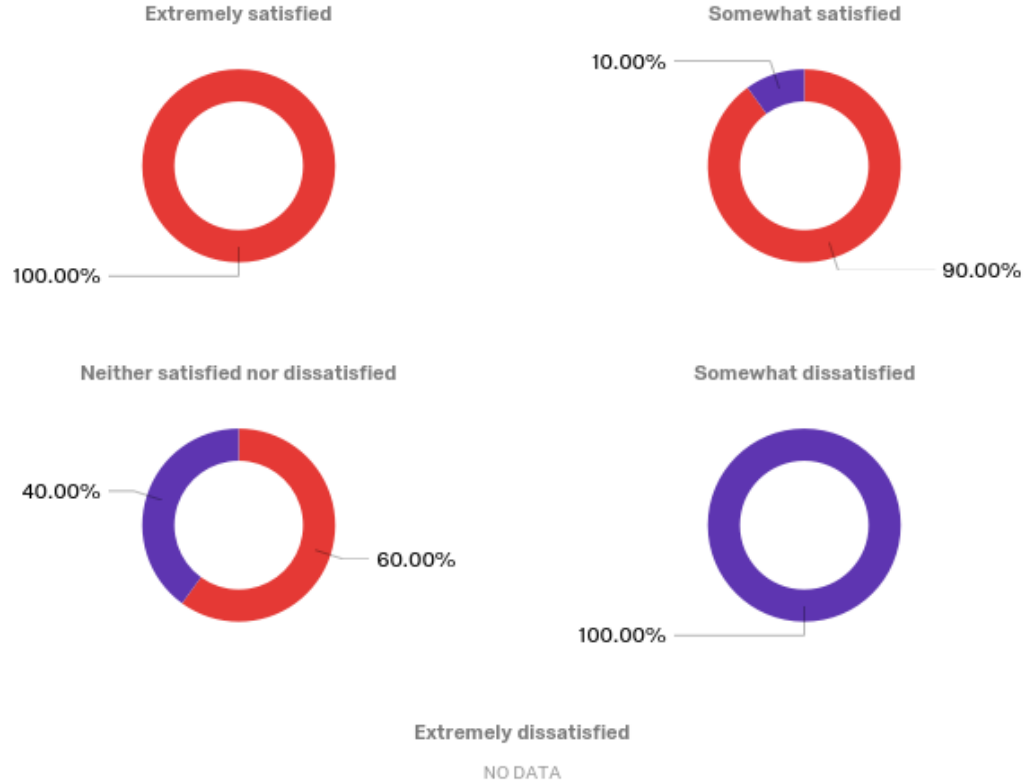
Only Traffic Violations and Infraction type of interactions said some of the time or never.



# Survey

Was this/these  
interaction(s) generally  
positive or negative?

Compared to how well  
they think police officers  
are doing their job.



Positive Negative

# Survey

If negative, would you describe the officer's behavior as professional or unprofessional?

$\frac{2}{3}$  of traffic violations and 100% of responses for infractions described the officer's behavior as unprofessional.



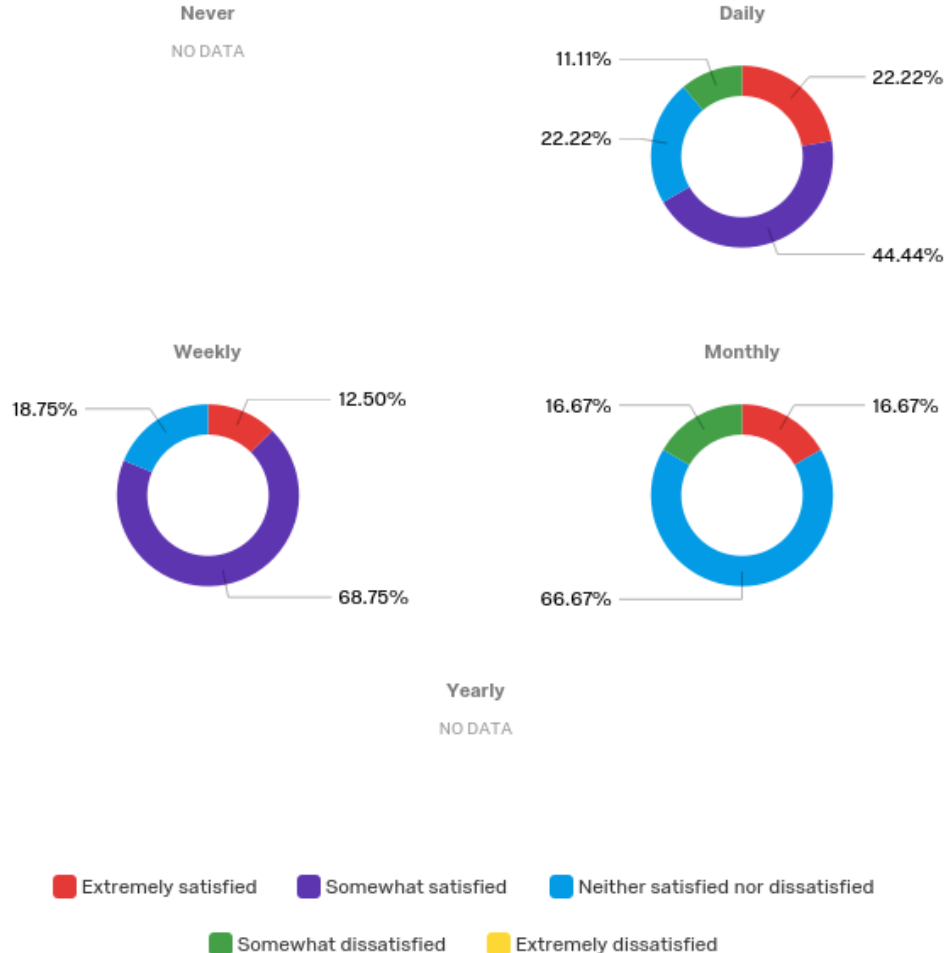
#	Field	Choice Count
1	Professional	40.00% 2
2	Unprofessional	60.00% 3

# Survey

How often do you seen news coverage involving law enforcement?

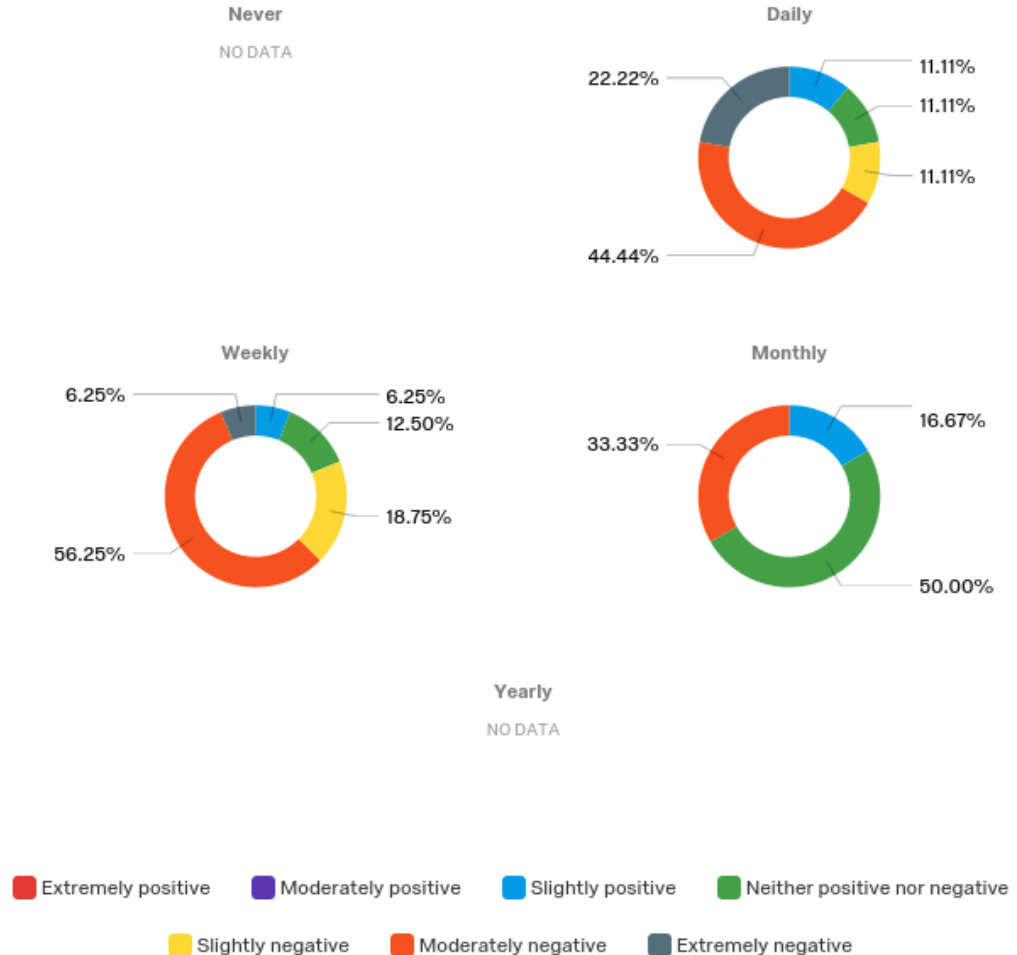
Compared to how well they think officers are doing their job

The more police are seen in the media the higher opinion respondents have of police suggesting positive daily media coverage but also could suggest that news stories that actually reach people are more negative.



Is the news coverage generally positive or negative?

Results suggest that those who view media daily see more negative news stories about police.



# Survey

What do you remember as the most significant detail about the Ferguson Shooting in August 2014?

the shooter was hispanic, the youth shot was involved in criminal actions

Mike Brown charged the police officer

activists influencing how the story was told

an unarmed black teenager was shot by a white police officer.

Most answers had to do with race.



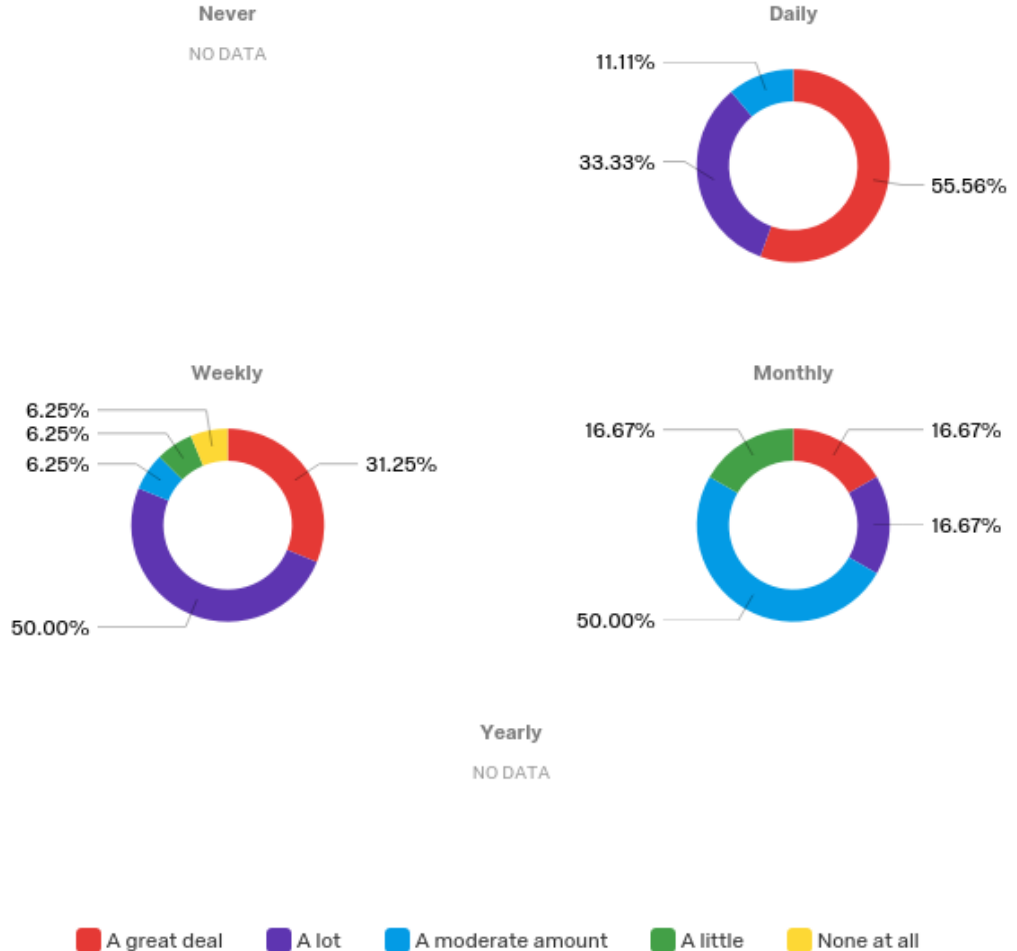


# Survey

The Ferguson effect is the idea that increased scrutiny and mistrust toward police following the shooting in August 2014. How much of the media about police do you think is being influenced by the Ferguson effect?

Compared to how often they see police in the media. The events at Ferguson greatly impacted those who view media more often.

The more often they view media the more their perception has been impacted because of the Ferguson effect.

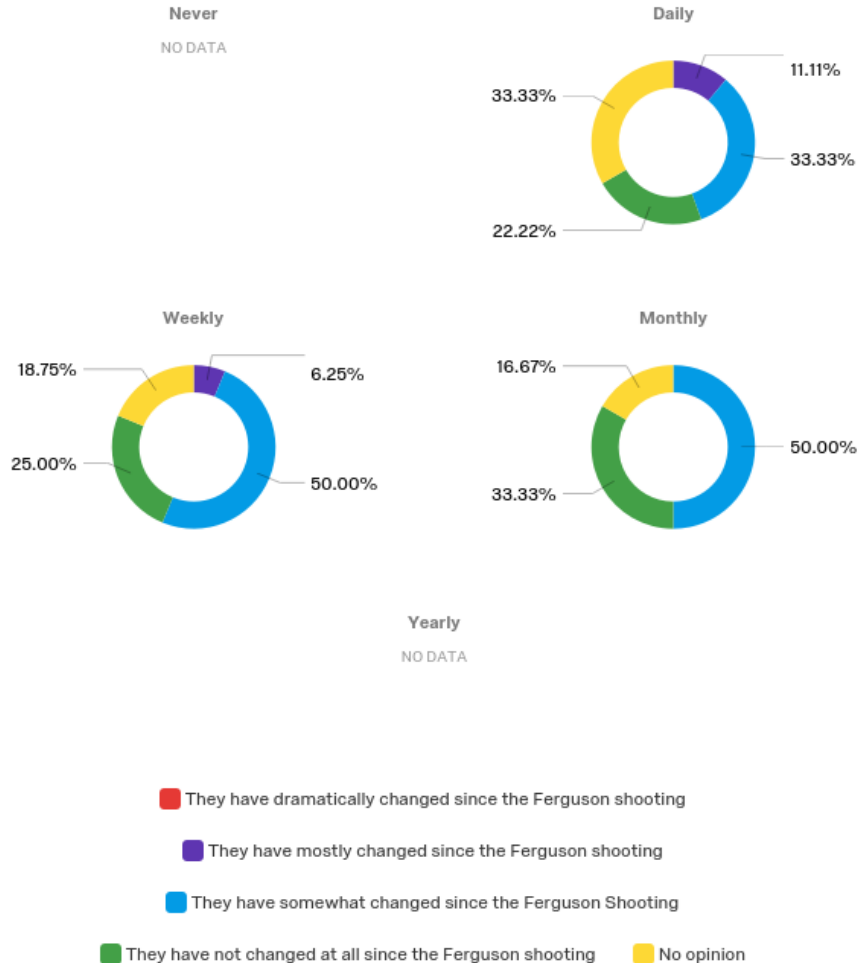


# Survey

Have your opinions about law enforcement changed since the Ferguson Shooting?

Compared to how often they see police in the media.

Also impacted people who view media more often.



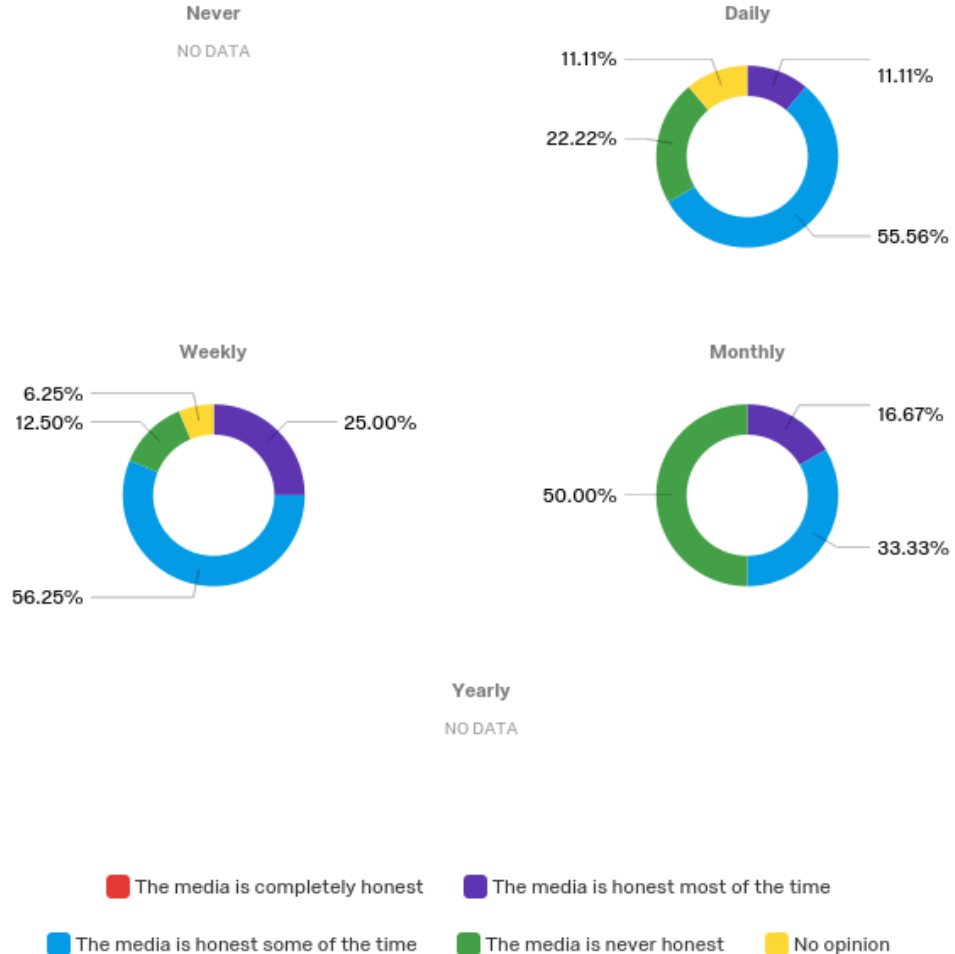
# Survey

Do you think the media is honest?

Compared to how often they view police in the media.

Respondents who view media more often tend to trust the media more.

Notice nobody said the media is completely honest and there is more negative than positive results



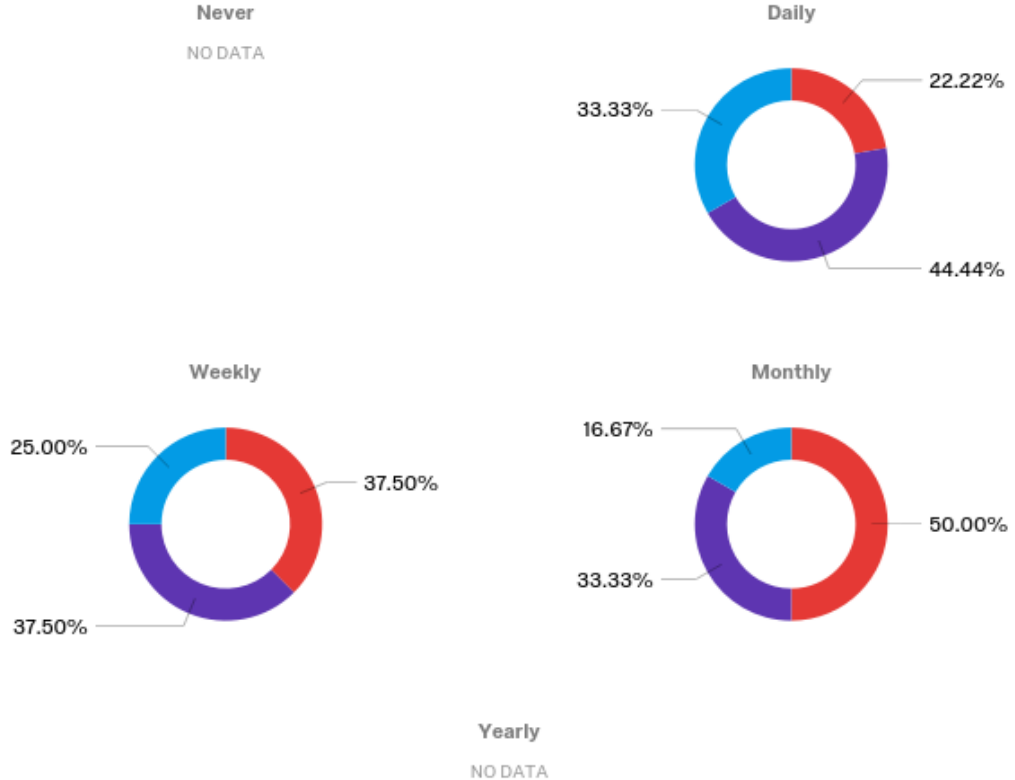
# Survey

Do you think the media concerning law enforcement is exaggerated?

Compared to how often they view police in the media.

The more respondents view media the more they take the media's word.

Also more exaggerated than not.

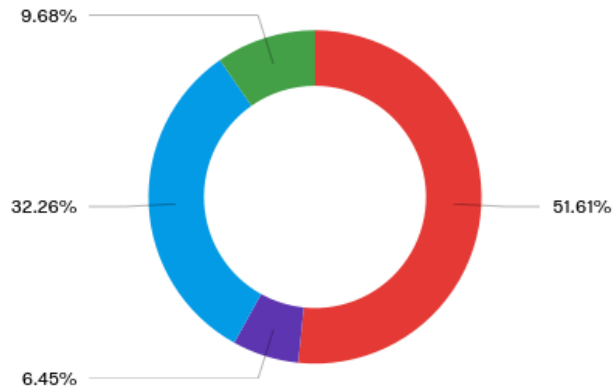




# Survey

How often do you report crime?

Those that felt more comfortable around law enforcement officers tended to report crime more often.



■ I report crime whenever I see it ■ I report crime only when it impacts me  
■ I report crime only when it's an emergency ■ I never report crime

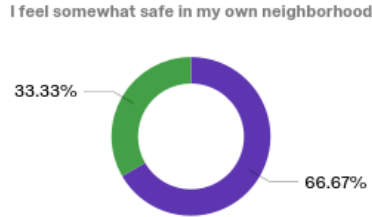
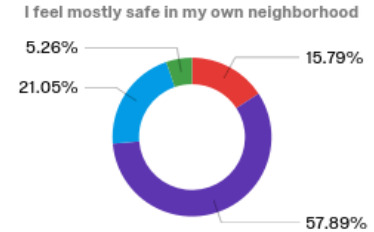
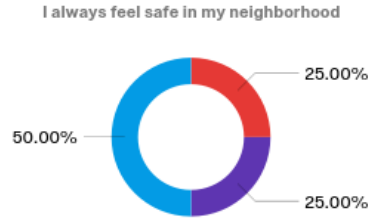
#	Field	Choice Count
1	I report crime whenever I see it	51.61% 16
2	I report crime only when it impacts me	6.45% 2
3	I report crime only when it's an emergency	32.26% 10
4	I never report crime	9.68% 3

# Survey

Do you feel safe in your own neighborhood?

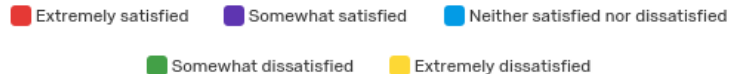
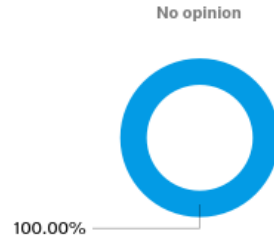
Compared to how well they view police officers are doing their job.

Those who felt more safe in their neighborhood thought that the police were doing a better job.



I never feel safe in my own neighborhood

NO DATA



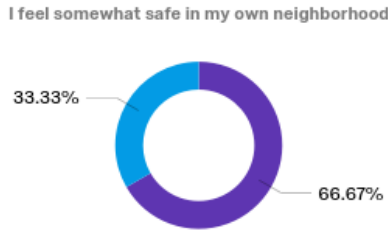
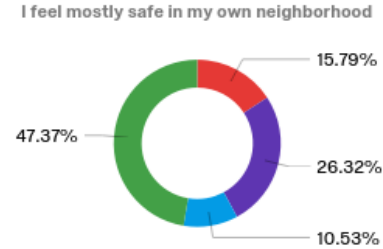
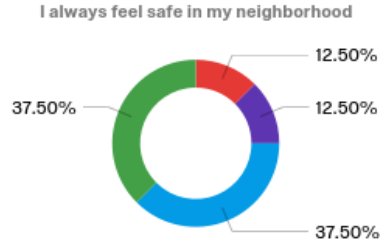


# Survey

How often have you been a victim of crime?

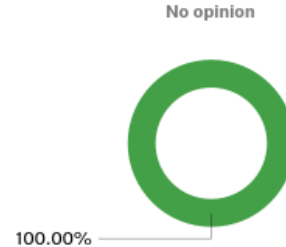
Compared to how safe they feel in their own neighborhood.

The more frequently respondents experience crime the less safe they feel in their neighborhood.



I never feel safe in my own neighborhood

NO DATA



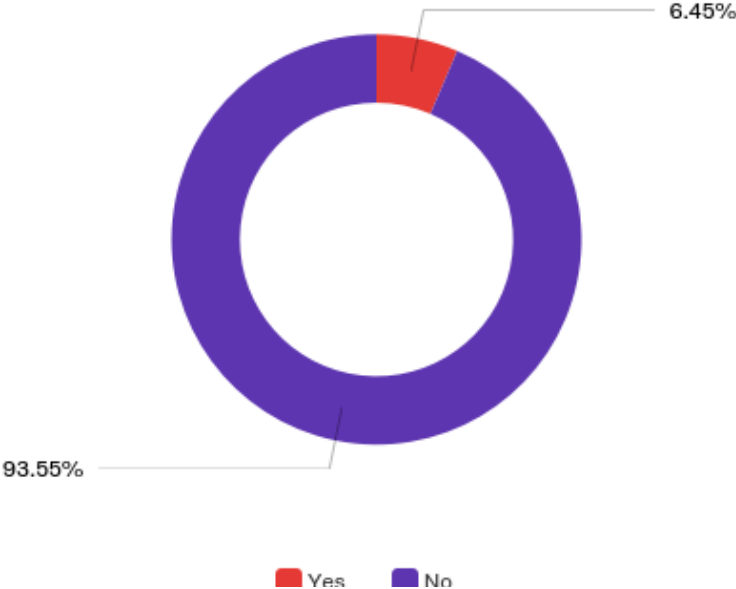
Once Twice More than twice Never

# Survey

Have you personally been a victim of police brutality?

Compared to what most influences their opinion about law enforcement.

Those that have been victims of police brutality largely base their opinion of police off of their own experience.



#	Field	Choice	Count
1	Yes	6.45%	2
2	No	93.55%	29

# Problems and solutions

- What we could have done to improve response rate. Sent survey out twice. Could have included even more information about our project and how it will benefit the community.
- We had a small survey so we expanded to include more opinions about law enforcement and the safety of their neighborhood.
- We should have added the question about how often they view media instead of how often they see police in the media.
- We had some ambiguous responses. We could have wrote the response options so that they express their opinion.

# Conclusion

Results suggest that experiences carry more weight when people consider their opinions about law enforcement. The more interactions they have with law enforcement the less satisfied they are the job performance of police in general. Results also suggest that people don't typically interact with law enforcement unless it's has a negative outcome such as traffic stops, citation, arrest.

As far as the media those who see police officers in the media more often say that the media coverage about police is increasingly negative. However, the more the people watch the media the better their opinion is about police. This is probably because the overwhelming majority of respondents believe that the media is dishonest or exaggerated.