

PRESS RELEASE



OVERVIEW OF THE PARSONS POLICE COMMUNITY SURVEY

For Immediate Release

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Parsons Police released the results of their community survey that was conducted this Spring. The results exceeded expectations according to Parsons Chief of Police Robert Spinks.

The survey was created as part of a **US Department of Justice (DOJ) Office of Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS) grant through the Collaborative Reform Initiative Technical Assistance Center (CRI-TAC)** administered by the International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP). There are 8 other law enforcement professional groups that provided support to this program. The Parsons grant in-part funded the creation of a police-community survey that followed US DOJ standards for policing surveys. This part of the project was assigned by CRI-TAC to an Associate Professor at Southern Illinois University.

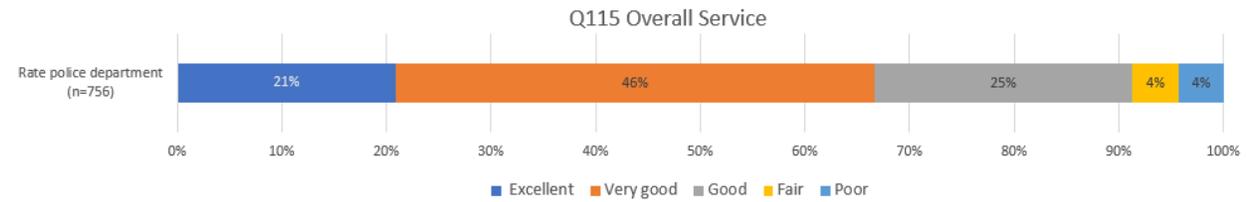
For tabulation and interpretation, the City contracted with ***The Docking Institute for Public Policy at Fort Hays State University***, which has the mission “to facilitate effective policy decision-making among governmental and nonprofit entities.” The Director of the Institute is Brett Zollinger, Ph.D. The final report was prepared by **Morgan Steele, Ph.D., a Policy Fellow at the Docking Institute.**

The survey was then sent out to all mail addresses in the Parsons zip code this past Spring.

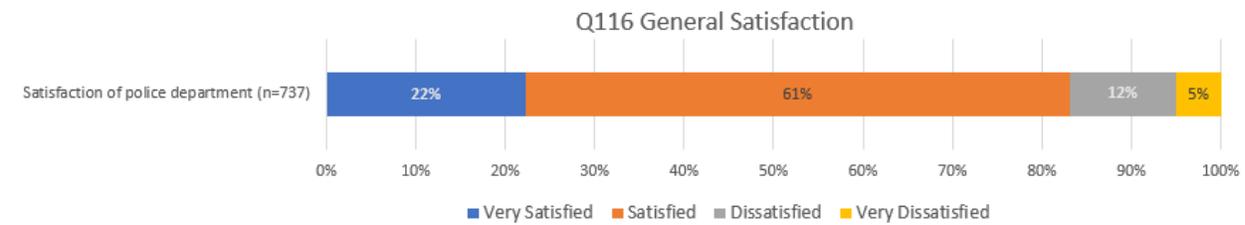
The community returned 799 completed surveys (an average election in Parsons usually draws about 800 voters). These were sent in bulk to The Docking Institute for tabulation. A final report was compiled, and the survey question results were tabulated and grouped. The City had no input in the tabulation nor the interpretation of the findings. The attached Excel spreadsheet provides the

detailed tabulation for each of the 125 questions asked in the survey. The Docking Institute then grouped the questions into 22 clusters to create graphs for those clusters.

Overall, the **community rated policing service at 96%** (excellent, very good, good, or fair).



With a **general satisfaction rate of 83%**.

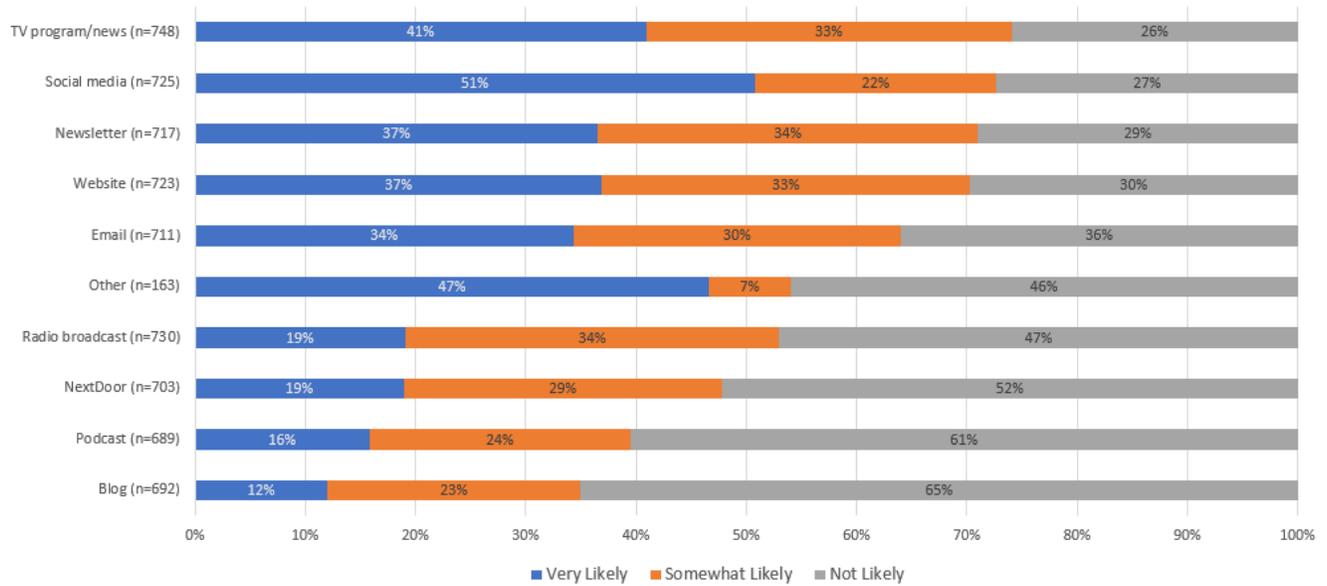


The report itself includes significant statistical data. Other core findings were:

Demographics

- The average age of respondents was 63.96 years, though this **ranged from 18 to 102**. This is consistent with most community surveys as older residents tend to be more willing to complete paper surveys. This is also consistent with many election participant demographics.
- Over 80% of respondents listed their race as Caucasian, with less than ten percent identifying as a racial or ethnic minority. Nearly 50% of respondents reported that they were married, with 132 individuals being single (16.5%). Over one quarter of respondents said that they were either divorced (10.8%) or widowed (15.1%).
- Respondents generally receive information about Parsons from TV program/news (74%), social media (73%), newsletter/insert (71%), Website (police) (70%), email/text alert (64%).

Q104-113 Likelihood of Receiving Information about Parsons

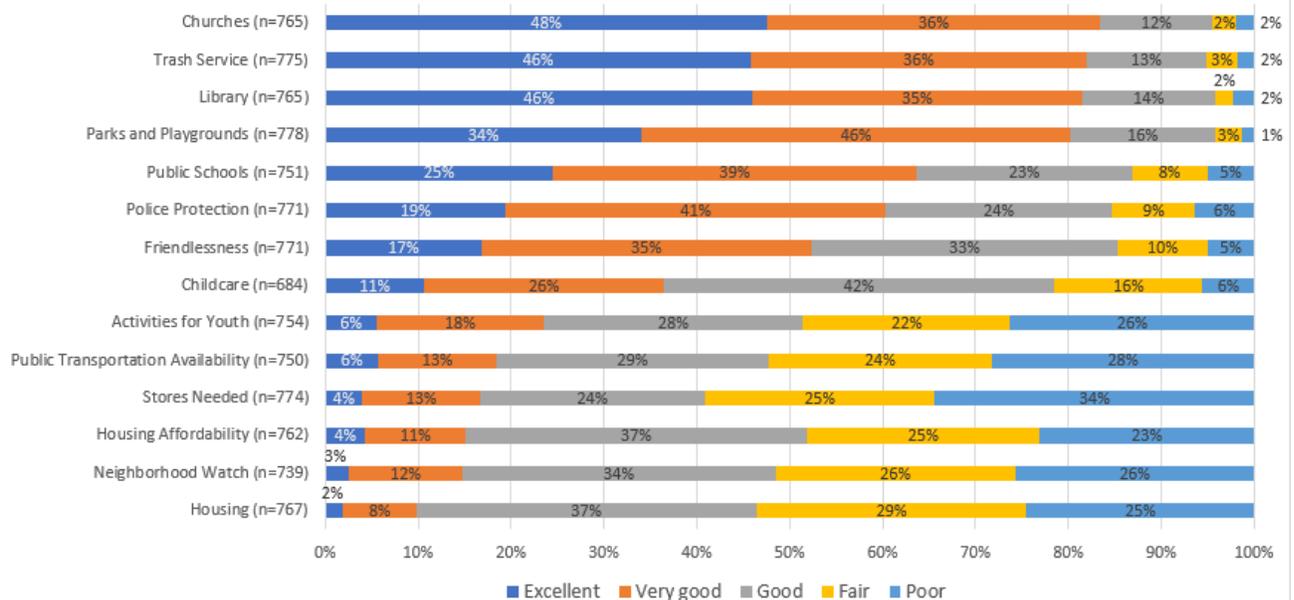


- The least likely modes of receiving information (but still important) about Parsons were radio broadcast (53%), NextDoor.Com (48%), Podcast (Police) (40%) and Blog (police website) (35%).

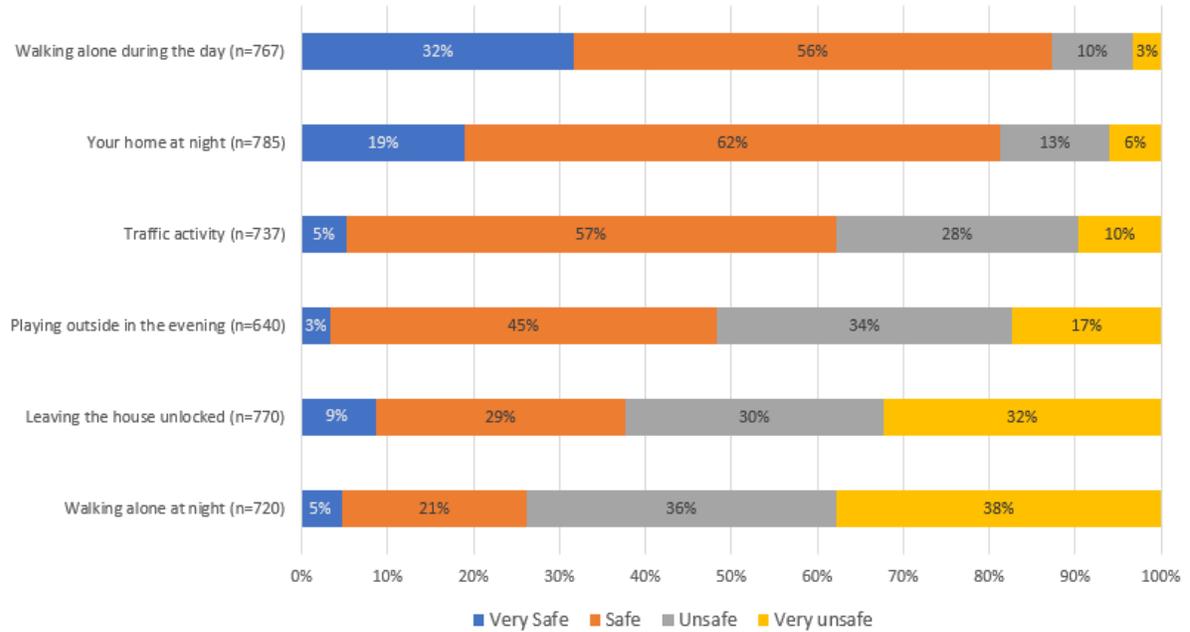
Noteworthy Questions

- Only 6% rated policing services as poor.** Churches, trash service, library along with parks and playgrounds and public schools scored higher levels in quality by respondents than the police. Friendliness, childcare, activities for youth, public transportation, stores needed, housing affordability, neighborhood watch and housing scored worse than the police.

Q15-28 Quality of Parson Amenities

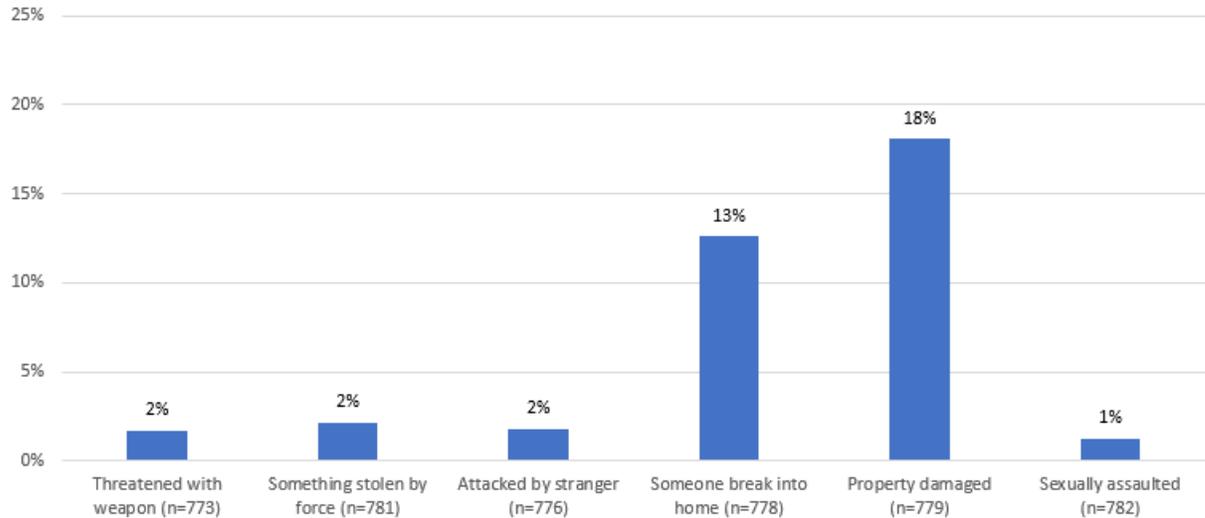


Q29-34 Feeling of Safety



- Walking alone at night or leaving the house unlocked were perceived as being generally unsafe or very unsafe. Even though the community is generally devoid of street crime.

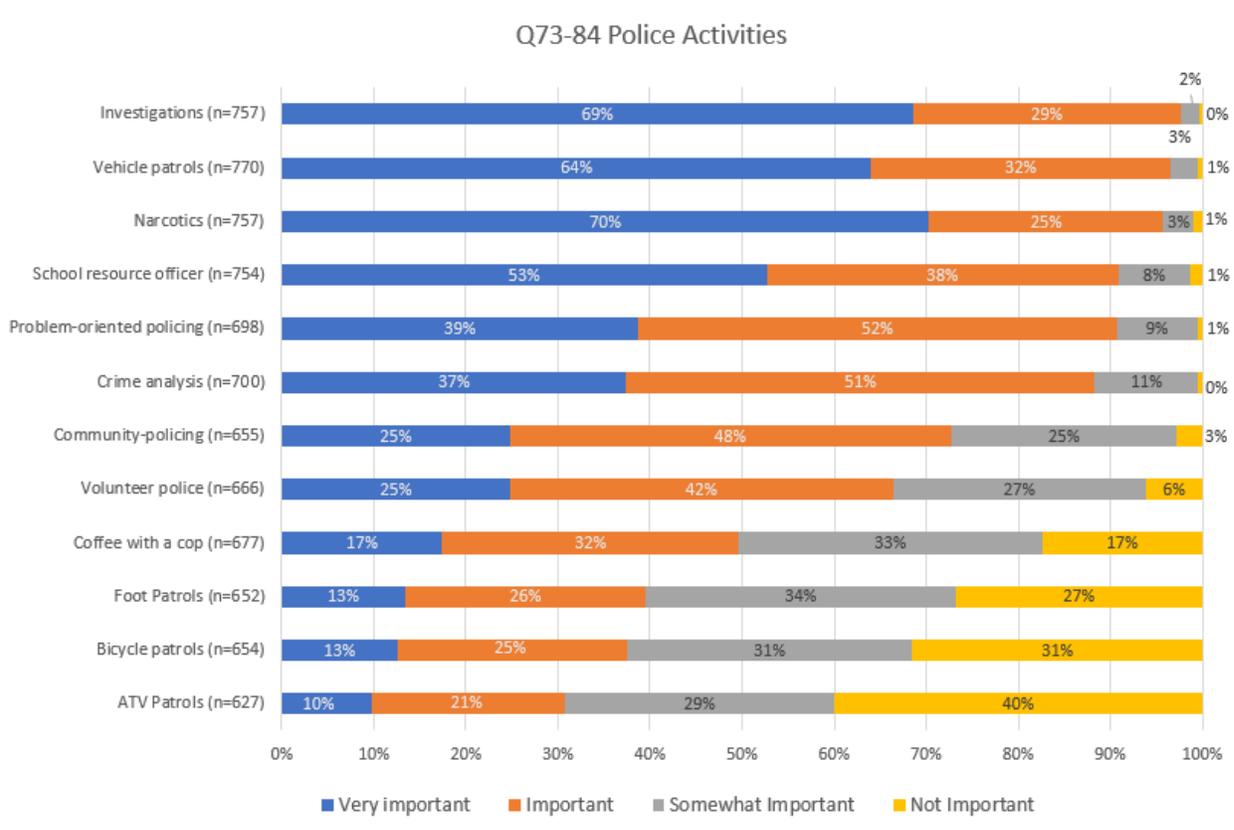
Q44-49 Community Concerns



- The two highest concerns noted by the community are damage to property (vandalism and theft) and someone breaking into a residence. Yet, while the respondents voiced concern about these specific crime risks, other than utilizing exterior lighting, little other action has been taken by citizens toward crime prevention other than visiting the police web site.
- Respondents are more aware of crime (74%) and perceive crime has increased (70%) even though the volume of actual crime being reported has decreased.
- 84% say the police respond quickly.
- 81% say police effectively respond to non-emergencies.
- 77% say the police are effective with traffic enforcement.
- 77% say the police effectively patrol.
- 69% support hiring more police officers.

Important Police Activities

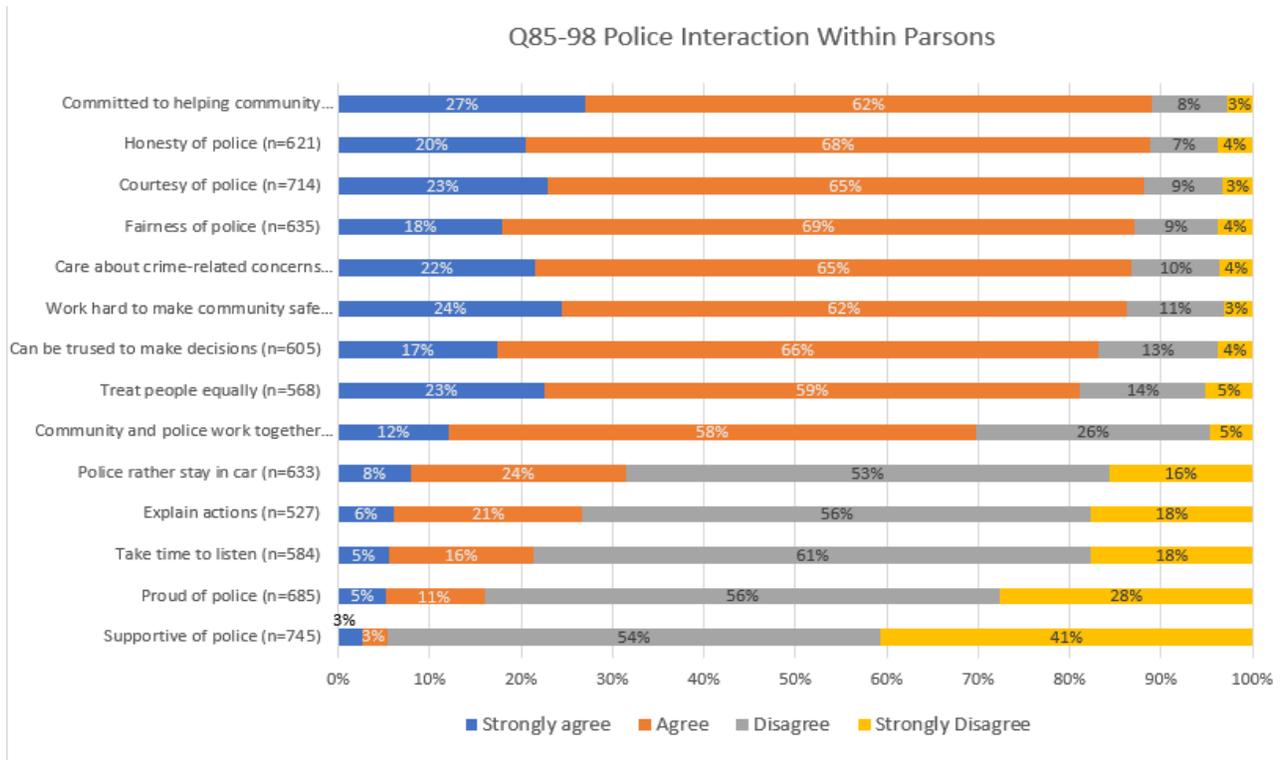
- Investigations scored the highest among police activities as being very important, important, or somewhat important at 100%.



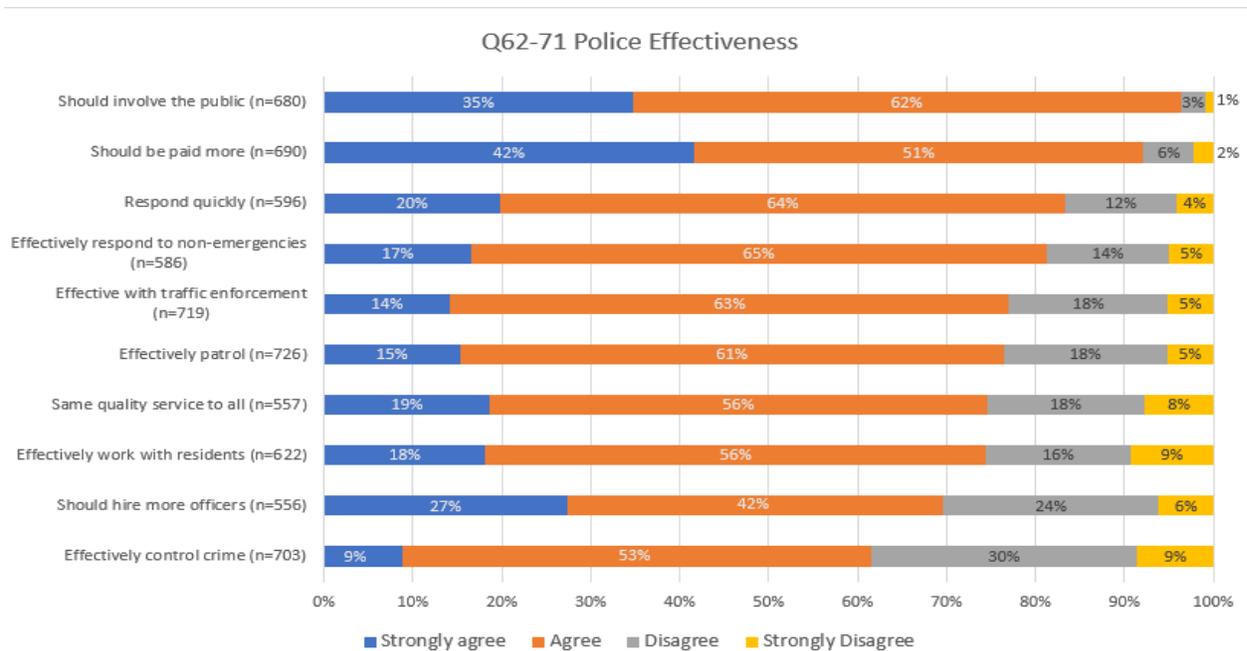
- Police patrol 99%
- Narcotics investigation 99%
- SRO Program 99%
- Problem-Oriented Policing 99%
- Crime analysis 100%
- Community policing 99%
- Coffee with a Cop 83%
- Foot patrols 73%
- Bicycle patrols 69%
- ATV patrols 60%

Evaluation of the Police

The police were ranked at over 80% in each of the following categories: committed to helping, honesty, courtesy, fairness, care about crime related concerns, working hard to make the community safe, trusted decision makers and treating people equally.

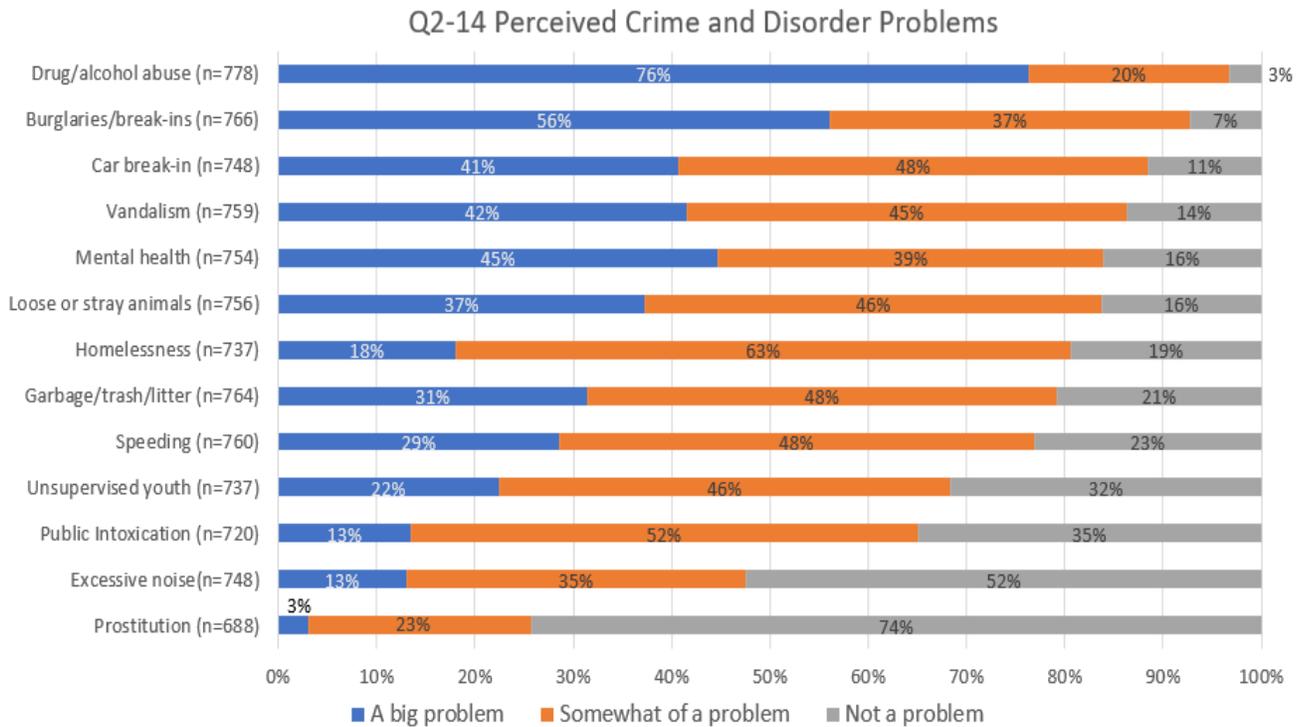


There is room for improvement in how respondents rated the police in explaining their actions (27%) and taking time to listen (21%).



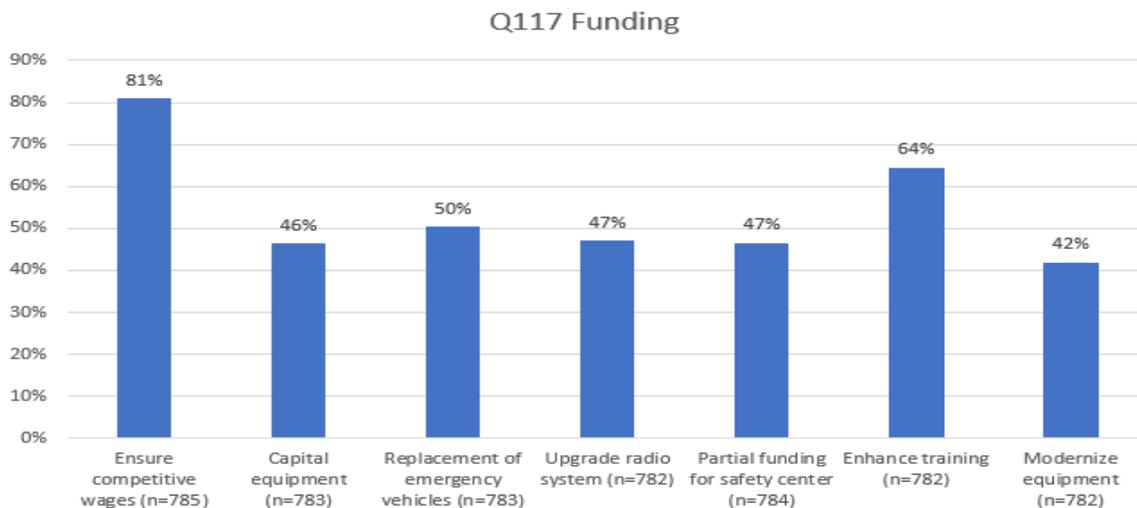
Victimization

- Around 20% of the sample reported experiencing criminal victimization (20%), with slightly more having reported a crime to law enforcement (21%).
- While respondents’ perception of many crime problems is validated against the real level of crime faced by law enforcement (drugs, burglaries vandalism, car break-ins and speeding), generally in-line with reality, **the fear of crime was higher than the true rate of crime experienced in the city.**
- **Mental health issues received a high level of concern from respondents** nearly 80% of respondents believed that mental health presented a problem for Parsons, with over 40% considering it to be a big problem for the city. This perception is correct.
- **Disorder Problems** (sometimes reflective of quality of life in a community), had respondents considering stray animals, garbage, unsupervised youth, and homelessness as a problem by 60-70% of the community. Excessive noise, in contrast, was not a problem for nearly 50% of respondents (49.1%), with it being primarily somewhat of a problem for nearly one-third of residents (32.4%).



Public Safety Sales Tax

- A public sales tax should emphasize how the revenue will help the police be more visible in the community, provide additional investigative services and feedback to victims or adopt problem- or community-oriented policing tactics.
- The community wants visible police patrols in the community, a problem and community-oriented approach, and proactive investigations (including drug enforcement).
- **The highest support (80%) for use of the sales tax was to give pay raises to police and firefighters (92% believe the police should be paid more).** This was followed by enhanced training (63%). Approximately 40% – 50% of respondents believed that the additional funds should be used to replace or upgrade vehicles, equipment, and fund the potential new safety center, with about the same opposing those priorities. These differences in support versus opposition were not evenly distributed, indicating that the areas of competitive wages and enhancing training are truly supported by the community.



“This type of in-depth community survey is valuable to our agency,” said Chief Spinks. “It provides insight into people’s perceptions; it gives our staff feedback on what the community expects from their police department, and it quantifies the level of support that we have been able to build here in Parsons.”

“We’ll take this feedback into consideration as we are building the 2024 budget; we’ll share it with senior city staff and City Commissioners too,” said Deputy Chief Dennis Dodd. “Obviously, the importance of public expectation in investigations is clear, we are rebuilding from staffing losses that happened during COVID when many smaller city police department were raided by suburban police departments offering higher pay and benefits. Here the community identified that the number one object of our current half cent sales tax should be competitive compensation for police officers and fire fighters. We agree that we want to retain staff instead of training them for the suburban police departments.”

“At the end of the day, our staff has worked hard to build trust and a connection with our community,” said Spinks, “the survey validates our success, but we still have work to do,” says Spinks. “We are currently engaged in preparing for the Kansas Law Enforcement Accreditation Program (KLEAP), which will validate our professional operations. We should be ready for our on-site assessment at the end of 2024. Just another step moving forward.”