

Southwestern Regional Police Department Community Survey, 2019

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Survey Distribution

One thousand five hundred and twenty-six surveys were mailed to residents in the jurisdiction of the Southwestern Regional Police Department (SWRPD). Survey distribution was stratified by municipality. North Codorus Township (NCT) received 755 surveys, Heidelberg Township (HT) received 273 surveys, Manheim Township (MT) received 240 surveys, and Spring Grove Borough (SGB) received 258 surveys. Just over 550 surveys (n=557) were returned for a response rate of 37%. We received 260 surveys from NCT, 89 surveys from HT, 73 surveys from MT, and 76 surveys from SGB. We also received 59 surveys in which the respondent did not specify a municipality.

Part I: Demographic Profile of Sample

With regard to overall demographics, the majority of our sample is male (55%), and the average age of our sample is 60 years. The majority of our sample is white (97%), and most respondents are homeowners (97%) who live with a spouse and/or children (81%). With regard to level of education, the majority of our sample graduated from high school (34%), with some respondents indicating partial college completion (27%), college graduation (22%), and graduate school completion (12%). The majority of our sample indicated full-time employment (51%) and a salary of more than \$65,000.00 (42%).

Part I of the survey also asked respondents to indicate awareness and use of the SWRPD website. Approximately half of the respondents do not utilize the website. For those that do utilize the website, it was generally for the purpose(s) of recent updates, obtaining contact information, and viewing upcoming events in the community.

Part II: Feelings of Safety

Using a four-point scale ranging from feeling very unsafe (1) to feeling very safe (4), respondents indicated how safe they feel alone in their home during the day and night and walking alone in their neighborhood during the day and night. The responses were then collapsed into two categories: feeling unsafe (i.e., very unsafe and unsafe) and feeling safe (i.e., safe and very safe). The majority of residents feel safe alone in their home during the day (98%) and night (97%). The majority of residents also feel safe walking alone in their neighborhood during the day (97%) and night (81%).

With regard to the open-ended question about how the SWRPD can make residents feel safer, the majority of respondents indicated that they would feel safer if there were increased patrols and increased visibility of police officers.

Part III: Perceptions of SWRPD and Overall Satisfaction

Using a five-point scale ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5), respondents rated the professional image, presence, and approachability of the police. The responses were then collapsed into three categories: disagree (i.e., strongly disagree and disagree), neutral, and agree (i.e., agree and strongly agree). The majority of respondents agree that police convey a professional image (91%), police presence is appropriate for the need (73%), and police are approachable (90%).

With regard to the open-ended question about what, if anything, residents especially like about the SWRPD, common trends involve police professionalism, approachability, and closeness in location, which has allowed for faster response times and dependability.

With regard to the open-ended question about what, if anything, residents would like to see improved at the SWRPD, common trends involve improved presence and increased patrol, treating every call with the same importance, and controlling speed and traffic.

Using a five-point scale ranging from highly dissatisfied (1) to highly satisfied (5), respondents indicated their overall satisfaction with the SWRPD. The majority of respondents were either satisfied or highly satisfied (87%; 41% and 46%, respectively) with the SWRPD.

Part IV: Interaction with the Police

With regard to interaction with the police, respondents were first asked when the interaction with SWRPD occurred. The most common response was 1 to 5 years ago (32%). It is important to note that the remainder of the survey was completed by respondents who had one or more interactions with the police. Said differently, the survey was complete for those respondents who did not have an interaction with the police (27%).

Respondents were then asked to specify the reason(s) for the interaction(s). The most common response was “Other” (e.g., medical reasons, house alarms, and/or casual encounters) (35%), and the least common response was “Vandalism” (6%).

This section also explored the number of officers present at the time of the interaction and satisfaction with the interaction (if applicable). Seventy percent of interactions had one officer present. Using a five-point scale ranging from highly dissatisfied (1) to highly satisfied (5), respondents indicated their overall satisfaction with the SWRPD. The responses were then collapsed into three categories: dissatisfied (i.e., highly dissatisfied and dissatisfied), neutral, and satisfied (i.e., satisfied and highly satisfied). Overall, the majority of respondents were either satisfied or highly satisfied with their interaction with the SWRPD. When asked if officers arrived in a timely manner 77% were satisfied and highly satisfied, 6% were neutral, 3% were highly dissatisfied and dissatisfied, and 14% were not applicable. Respondents were asked if officers exercised an appropriate level of control and 78% were satisfied and highly satisfied, 7% were neutral, 2% were highly dissatisfied and dissatisfied, and 13% were not applicable. When respondents were asked if police communicated well, 87% were satisfied and highly satisfied, 3% were neutral, 3% were highly dissatisfied and dissatisfied, and 6% were not applicable. When asked if the police treated respondent with respect, 89% were satisfied and highly satisfied, 3% were neutral, 3% were highly dissatisfied and dissatisfied, and 4% were not applicable. In response to professional appearance of the police, 91% were satisfied and highly satisfied, 2% were neutral, 1% were highly dissatisfied and dissatisfied, and 5% were not applicable. Respondents were also asked about the professional demeanor of police and 89% were satisfied and highly satisfied, 4% were neutral, 2% were highly dissatisfied and dissatisfied, and 4% were not applicable. When asked about the police concern for safety of all involved, 84% were satisfied and highly satisfied, 4% were neutral, 4% were highly dissatisfied and dissatisfied, and 8% were not applicable. With regard to police resolving the problem as well as possible, 77% were satisfied and highly satisfied, 7% were neutral, 4% were highly dissatisfied

and dissatisfied, and 12% were not applicable. The final statement about direct interaction with the police involved meeting the expectations of the respondent, and 80% were satisfied and highly satisfied, 7% were neutral, 6% were highly dissatisfied and dissatisfied, and 7% were not applicable. The next two questions were related to respondents who called the police. When asked if the phone call was answered quickly, 64% were satisfied and highly satisfied, 22% were neutral, 1% were highly dissatisfied and dissatisfied, and 28% were not applicable. When asked if the call was professional, 67% were satisfied and highly satisfied, 3% were neutral, 1% were highly dissatisfied and dissatisfied, and 28% were not applicable.

The final two questions explored satisfaction before and after police interaction. Using the aforementioned rating scale, when questioned about satisfaction before the interaction with police, less than 1% of respondents were highly dissatisfied, less than 1% were dissatisfied, 7% were neutral, 33% were satisfied, and 51% were highly satisfied. The satisfaction before an interaction generally remained the same after the interaction for the majority of respondents who interacted with police.

Study Limitations

With any type of research, it is necessary to note limitations to the study. Because this survey was voluntary, some individuals did not respond to all questions. For instance, 59 respondents did not indicate a municipality, which allowed us to create a “Not Specified” category. Of the surveys that were distributed, approximately one third were returned. However, given the response rate, our sample is representative of the larger population. Finally, with regard to questions that were asked about interactions with police, memory recall for respondents could impact the study results.

Conclusions

When exploring the trends among open-ended responses, three common themes emerged. First, respondents very much appreciate the closeness (location-wise) of the Department and fast response times. Second, residents believe that police are approachable and expressed that they do not want to lose them. Lastly, despite overall feelings of safety as indicated in Part II, residents would like an increase in visible presence, especially in the townships of Manheim and Spring Grove Borough.

A breakdown of the data overall and by municipality can be found in the corresponding presentation slides. Please note: As indicated, not every respondent answered every question or selected more than one response where applicable, which is why some of the totals are not 100%.