

The Effects of the Black Lives Matter Movement on Modern Policing

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Abstract

The Black Lives Matter Movement dominated news broadcasts for months. Some cities had peaceful protests, but many had violent protests with physical confrontations between officers and citizens. Law enforcement officers worked weeks without a day off. Negative police rhetoric and calls to defund the police were on the news and on most social media sites. Simultaneously, officers were resigning or retiring in record numbers. This research looks at the effects of the Black Lives Matter Movement (BLM) on law enforcement's mental, physical, and emotional health as it pertains to officer retention, recruitment, proactivity, community policing, and rebuilding community trust.

Introduction

I started in law enforcement the summer of 1999. Police work was fun, honorable, and uncomplicated. I literally wanted to work every day. There was a long waiting list for officers to get hired back then. Technology was new and just starting to integrate into law enforcement. Fast forward 20+ years and defund the police headlines are all over the World Wide Web. Officers are resigning every day and hiring nationwide is at a record low. Officers complain of low morale. Technology is everywhere and officers are wearing body worn cameras to justify their actions. Two years of protests and criminal trials have rocked the entire country. How did we get here?

It seemed like a weekly occurrence, news outlets from across the country broadcasting images of another black male killed by the police. It didn't matter where in the country the incident occurred, officers across the country felt the effects and had to deal with the aftermath.

The brewing Black Lives Matter Movement went into overdrive after the death of George Floyd. Peaceful and violent protests erupted across the country and lasted in some parts for weeks. Shouts of "defund the police and hand's up, don't shoot," were heard in the air. Officers quickly went from being heroes to villains.

Police departments already suffering from low recruitment, are also dealing with officers quitting or seeking early retirement at rapid numbers due to the anti-police culture facing law enforcement. New York City had to limit how many officers could retire at a time after 15% of the department left at once in 2020 (Sexton, J. 2021).

Police work is a high stress job. When you add lack of public support, fear of losing your job or freedom, and working without proper staffing, you can easily equate low morale.

I have been asked by numerous citizens how I feel about the Black Lives Matter movement, being a black female in law enforcement. This is a sensitive matter, and my answers are always delicate. I feel the best way to respond is to look at the impact of the

Black Lives Matter on law enforcement. Thus, why I chose this subject for my research paper.

If public trust, community partnerships, and a dedicated police force (combating crime honestly, fairly, and equally for all) are needed to rebuild hope and move communities forward, how do we rebuild public trust?

“Through attention to little problems, the police, working together with the community, can reduce issues such as disorder and fear of crime as well as increase attitudes towards and trust in the police” (Crowl, J. 2017).

There has been a lot of attention focused on the Black Lives Matter Movement and a call for change in law enforcement practices and tactics. Conversely, there has been little study of the mental, physical, and emotional effect of the Black Lives Matter Movement on police officers.

This paper is not in any fashion intended to devalue or promote the BLM Movement. It is, however, my intent to see how policing has changed due to the movement and its effects on police officers. I am also interested post movement, how we can rebuild public trust. Is there an “Us vs. Them” mentality? Can we get to a “We” approach to law enforcement?

I believe it is important to look at history and where minority mistrust of law enforcement started. Has the BLM Movement changed the way officers’ police? Are officers more proactive or less proactive and if so, why? How do officers feel about the recent changes to police policy/practices and calls to defund the police? Did officers consider leaving law enforcement after the 2016 Dallas shootings or 2020 death of George Floyd? If so, what made them stay? Did BLM effect their mental, physical, or emotional wellness?

Literature Review

Mistrust

Many members of society still distrust the police because of actions taken during the Civil Rights movement. “Black Americans were constant victims of public and private aggression. Their civil and human rights were humiliated. Police murdered and brutally oppressed people’s fight for freedom and justice. Police misconduct is the major form of racist violence. It involves grave physical and psychological insult to people.” (Kubeer, 2019). When black Americans conducted non-violent marches, protests, sit-ins, and boycotts the police used tear gas, batons, dogs, and even high-pressure water against them (Nodjimbadem, 2017). “The violent police response gave black Americans valid reason to distrust the police” (Kubeer, 2019).

The Civil Rights Movement, the Black Panther Party, and the current Black Lives Matter Movement are all social actions seeking social change. These movements also hold a negative sentiment toward police and government. Affiliation with these groups have been labeled as controversial due to the different methods some of its members have used to cease oppression (Kubeer, 2019).

In 1995 Michael Jackson released the song, “They Don’t Really Care About Us.” Scholar Derrick Brooms uses the song as well as “The Souls of Black Folks” written by W.E.B. Du Bois as his points of reference as he examines the policing differences of black

and brown folks by police officers. “I situate Jackson’s song within the current #Black Lives Matter Movement and the ongoing killing of black and brown men, women and children in public by police and other paraprofessional individuals” (Brooms, 2017). According to the Mapping Police Violence Organization over 300 black Americans were killed by police in 2014, 2015, and 2016. Additionally, over a 42-month period (2013-2017) 894 Latino and 1,504 black Americans were killed by police. Brooms points out sociologist Victor Rios’ belief that young black men are under constant “surveillance” in schools, communities, and courts. Young black Americans are hyper-criminalized and over-punished (Brooms, 2017).

Media Influence

The Black Lives Matter Movement started circa 2013 after the controversial death of Trayvon Martin. It started as a social media movement that transformed to public protests (Kubeer, 2019). The BLM movement exists to “eradicate white supremacy and build local power to intervene in violence inflicted on Black communities by the state and vigilantes” (BlackLivesMatter.com, n.d.). Social media greatly facilitated the movement in that information was spread to anyone who had the internet. Information and images were sent to various social media sites within minutes. Much of the news was live and uncensored. News outlets, seeking notoriety and followers provided harsh headlines and continuous coverage of the shootings (Kubeer, 2019).

“Criticism faced by departments nationally is exacerbated by the media’s influence on the public’s perception of white officers using force, mainly deadly force, against Black Americans” (Dowler & Zawilski, 2007).

Many poor minorities feel they need protection from the police because of the numerous publicized deaths of minorities by police. The news also highlights negative encounters with the police vs. positive interactions (Kubeer, 2017).

April 12, 2015, Freddie Gray a black male, was arrested for carrying an illegal “switchblade.” He was arrested and transported to jail. He shouted out in pain during his arrest. 45 minutes later he was unconscious and not breathing. Reports indicate 80% of Gray’s spine was severed from his neck and he sustained massive injuries to his larynx and vertebrae due to him ‘not being safely secured in the police van’. Gray died after seven days in a coma. On June 17, 2015, Dylann Roof, a white male, killed nine black worshippers during church bible study. Reports indicate police officers bought him fast food after his arrest because he was hungry. The two incidents played out in the media. The stark contrast on how the arrestees were treated raised questions about police conduct and how minority lives are valued (Brooms, D. 2017).

October 2014, Laquan McDonald was shot by police in Chicago. July 10, 2015, Sandra Bland was found dead in her cell in Prairie View, Texas. July 5, 2016, Philando Castile was shot by police. On July 6, 2016, Alston Sterling was shot by police. The news stories received around the clock coverage. President Obama stated in response to the shootings, “When incidents like this occur, it’s a big chunk of our fellow citizens that feel as if because of the color of their skin they are not being treated the same, and that hurts. This is not a black issue. This is not a Hispanic issue. This is an American issue that we should all care about” (Brooms, D. 2017).

The perceived differences on how races are being policed is causing a disconnect. It also attributes to the different responses' minorities present when interacting with the police. Black Americans feel as if their neighborhoods are over policed. They see black and brown people being killed by police officers (justified or not). Police officers need to be "humanistic" when they enter minority communities. "Being fair-minded, empathic, truthful and practicing equality for all, will bring hope to people of color." (Brooms, D., 2017).

Effects of Black Lives Matter

The Ferguson Effect

Researchers have been examining the existence of the "Ferguson Effect" after the 2014 deaths of Michael Brown and Eric Garner. The theory is that homicide rates are increasing due to decreased police proactivity, due to heightened police scrutiny. Eadoin Grim surveyed the Western Michigan University Police Department about the Ferguson Effect. Her study concludes the Ferguson Effect does exist amongst officers. While most of the BLM (Black Lives Matter) protests were peaceful, many offices experienced "antagonism". Her research also concluded most of the departments facing the "Ferguson Effect" are large departments where levels of violence in the community are already high (Grim, E., 2021).

Travis Campbell, a PhD student of economics at the University of Massachusetts Amherst examined the effects of BLM on murders. From 2014 to 2019, Campbell tracked more than 1,600 BLM protests across the country, where there were 350,000 protesters. His main finding concludes there was a 15 to 20 percent reduction in lethal use of force used by police officers (roughly 300) during this time frame. The second finding was there was a 10 percent increase in murders in the areas that saw BLM protests (Demsas, J., 2021).

Officer Retention

As previously mentioned, New York City lost 15 percent of its police force at once. Cities across the country also experienced a huge number of retirements and resignations. The City of Asheville lost 80 out of 238 officers. Portland, Oregon had 69 officers resign and 75 retired between April 2020 and April 2021. The New York Times surveyed 200 police departments and learned retirements were up 45 percent and resignations were up 18 percent between April 2020 and April 2021 (Sexton, J. 2021).

Increased Violence Toward Police Officers

2016 was a deadly year for cops and Black Lives Matter may be to blame according to a New York Post article written by Andrea Peyser. Peyser references several shootings to include the December 20, 2014, ambush of New York City officers Rafael Ramos and Wenjian Liu. Both officers were sitting in their squad car when they were ambushed by Ismaaiyl Brinsley. Brinsley posted on Instagram his intend to put "wings on pigs" to avenge the deaths of Eric Garner and Michael Brown. On July 7, 2016,

an ex-Army reservist (who expressed hatred for Caucasians) shot five white police officers and injured seven others in Dallas, Texas. The week of Thanksgiving 2016, a police sergeant in St. Louis survived being shot twice in the head, and an officer in San Antonio, Texas was fatally shot during a traffic stop. The shootings were all described as targeted.

After the Dallas police shootings, police departments across the country started patrolling in pairs. According to the Associated Press, agencies to include New York, Washington D.C., Boston, and Vermont ordered officers to patrol in pairs for several weeks (Associated Press, 2016, ABC4.com, and Fox News, July 8, 2016).

Us v. Them Mentality

In the article, *Police Culture Now, but not Forever*, Jace Valcore explains most police officers join the force wanting to make a positive difference. Different experiences and cultural indoctrination, however, cause some officers to feel an “us versus them mentality,” whereas the public becomes the enemy. Some officers feel isolation due to the negative portrayals of police in the media and high-profile incidents of officer misconduct (Valcore, J., 2018).

Culture refers to the shared norms, values, and beliefs of a group of people. “Police culture (attitudes and beliefs about police work) whether held by an individual or the entire department directly impact police officer discretion, decisions and behavior.” Police culture impacts the day-to-day actions of police, will they give warnings or will they arrest (Valcore, J., 2018).

Defund the Police

Clark Merrefield exams “Defunding the Police” in the June 29, 2021 article “Defund the Police, what it means and what the research says on whether more police presence reduces crime.” Merrefield states for some defunding the police is a movement to abolish police departments, while others believe it is restricting funding for military-style equipment. Many people believe police should not respond to non-police issues such as mental health and housing (Merrefield, 2021).

More than 20 major cities have reduced their police budgets because of defund the police. The money has been redistributed to housing, mental health programs and food access. Many different activists campaigned to get police department funding cut this past year. Gregorios Casar, a council member from Austin, Texas helped pass a major cut to the city’s law enforcement budget and pushed for the dollars to go to housing programs. He said, “This will build momentum for changes to police budgets across the country” (Levin, 2020).

Community Policing

Community policing arose in the 1960’s due to the large-scale disconnect between the police and the community, especially the minority community. Almost all agencies have some form of community policing initiative. There is, however, “a lack of consensus on how community policing is conceptualized and operationally defined” (Crowl, 2017,

Connell, Miggans, & McGloin, 2008). According to Tom Tyler (Police 1 Magazine), the main principles of community policing are live where you work, interact with people in non-enforcement situations, volunteer in your community, and don't allow the media to interfere with your perceptions. Some cities require officers to live in the community they serve, while others do not require it. Some cities use statistical data to drive enforcement initiatives (losing the human element of policing.) Additionally, some cities require officers to volunteer, while others merely encourage it (Tyler, T., 2015).

Allowing officers to work assigned zones for long periods of time allow officers an opportunity to forge relationships with the community. Officers must do more than just patrol the neighborhood and have conversations. They must actively identify problems and find solutions. Listening to residents and hearing their interests and concerns is critical. Officers who take time to mentor kids and attend community events develop strong connections with those they serve (Eck, J. & Maguire, E. 2005).

Traffic stops are conducted when drivers commit violations such as speeding, running a red light etc. In the book *Pulled Over: How Police Stops Define Race and Citizenship*, authors Charles Epp, Steven Maynard-Moody and Donald Haider-Harkel exam traffic stops and public perception. Citizens are generally accepting of traffic stops for speeding, running a red light, and/or a stop sign. Investigatory/pre-textual stops on the other hand erode public trust. The stopping of someone for an equipment violation solely to see who is driving the car in a certain place and time due to their race undermines community policing efforts (Epp, Maynard-Moody, & Haider-Harkel, 2014).

On November 3, 2021, Philadelphia, Mayor Jim Kenney banned his officers from pulling over individuals for low-level offenses. This makes Philadelphia the first major city to end pretextual traffic stops. These stops include improperly displayed registration, taillight violations etc. "Proponents of the ability say such stops can uncover illegal drugs and weapons, while critics say the practice has led to Black and Latino motorists being unfairly stopped and searched at high rates" (ABC4, 2021).

Brooms states, that while progress has been made in policing black communities and throughout society, there is still a long way to go to improve many of the inequalities which continue to affect black and brown lives. Black and Brown people are still pre-perceived as criminals and are highly policed (Brooms, D. 2017).

Officer Wellness

Law enforcement subculture can be detrimental to police personnel. Police officers tend to act like superheroes and warriors and as if they can handle anything. Showing emotion and asking for help is often seen as weakness. The falsehood of "invincibility" and not addressing issues causes officers to avoid addressing their own mental, physical, and emotional health. Police departments not playing an active role in its officers' overall health may be enabling the subculture of invincibility and neglecting officers (Malimin, M., 2012).

An officer's fear of being labeled weak may prevent them from seeking help. Fear of being deemed unfit for duty is also a dangerous fear and may prevent an officer from addressing true feelings to medical staff (Malimin, M., 2012). "The costs of avoiding, ignoring, or burying the emotional aftermath of traumatic events can lead to serious short-term and long-term consequences. Officers' unresolved trauma and pain can lead to

depression, anxiety, aggression, and reliance on self-destructive coping mechanisms, such as heavy drinking and other substance abuse. A lack of wellness among officers can drive increases in sick leave usage, insubordination, suicides, lawsuits, and citizen complaints, just to name a few potential consequences” (Malimin, M., 2012).

If the police subculture is going to change, law enforcement administrators must create policies and practices addressing overall health. Asking for help must no longer be deemed as weakness. Accessibility to wellness help and an accepting agency culture toward receiving help will help officers seek out help when needed. Officers must believe they will not be overlooked for promotion or positions. Supervisors need to do more than simply ask if a person is alright. Officers must acknowledge and deal with their struggles (Malimin, M., 2012).

In the Police 1 article entitled: Roundtable: Preparing to Prevent Police Ambush Attacks, Ramsey County Sheriff’s Offices’ undersheriff, Booker Hodges states officers must be resilient to prevent an ambush. Long hours and stress can reduce and officer’s ability to be resilient. He hopes agencies are investing dedicated resources towards officer wellness programs (Perry, N.2020).

Rebuilding Trust

According to the International Association of Chief’s of Police, the start to rebuilding public trust is at the top of the agency and then every level throughout the organization (US. Department of Justice, 2007).

The Association for Psychological Science advised public trust and confidence in the police has been declining for years. Their research shows agencies who focused on respectful treatment and transparency were more successful in rebuilding public trust and saw more citizen cooperation with the police. Police legitimacy (treating people with respect and fairness) is extremely important in rebuilding trust. The article further discusses Procedural Justice and the need for public participation/buy in, neutrality, respect, and trustworthiness to rebuild public trust (Tyler, T., 2015).

A unified police/community relationship is the best way to combat crime. Police departments must be transparent and welcome citizen input. The community must have successful outreach programs to support the police. Police spend too much time responding to non-criminal social issues. Citizens who are proactive in their community with police back up are more likely to be successful in reducing crime. “Police departments must get rid of the mindset of being the sole enforcers of the law. The shift from ‘us’ and ‘them’ to ‘we’ reduces the burden and will reduce crime and improve community wellness” (Ward, S., 2021).

Police departments with a diverse force create an environment where officers must work, rely, trust, and interact with people of different race, sex, and cultures. This dynamic should significantly change interactions with the community because there is no “dissonance regarding race, sex and culture” because officers work with a variety of people (Kubeer, 2019).

The Dallas Police Department has worked to create a diverse make up of officers matching its community. The racial make-up of the police force and the community have strengthened bonds between the two and have reduced crime (Kubeer, 2019).

The city of Philadelphia has one of the largest populations of black Americans living in poverty. In the days after George Floyd's death the city had over 300 fires, 200 commercial burglaries, 150 acts of vandalism and 400 people arrested. Tens of thousands marched in the street. "The intensity and duration of the protest indicated the problems went much deeper than the lynching of a Black man in Minneapolis. Residents of Philadelphia had bitterness due to "neglect, indifference to poverty, drug addiction and housing insecurity." Philadelphia Mayor Jim Kenney made a pledge to deal with the issues of racism, police brutality and inequality in the city. He created a program called the Pathway to Reform, Transformation and Reconciliation to address the issues and create change (Taylor, K. 2021).

Methods

The purpose of this research was to identify the impact of the Black Lives Matter Movement (BLM) on modern policing. Did BLM effect police recruitment, retention, and officer health? Were officers policing differently out of fear of being the next news story? Lastly, can law enforcement rebuild public trust and work together to combat crime?

Using the online survey tool "Survey Monkey" surveys were given to sworn members of the Tallahassee Police Department (TPD) and the Leon County Sheriff's Office (LCSO). TPD had 384 sworn officers and LCSO had 247 sworn deputies, at the time the survey was developed. The survey was specific in asking if officers/deputies had a negative feeling about the BLM protests and if they changed their policing habits because of BLM. Additional questions were asked about officer health (mental, physical, and emotional), the "Us versus Them" mentality, and if current community policing efforts were still effective. The survey questioned how much of an impact the media had on law enforcement proactivity.

The survey was anonymous to encourage participation and truthfulness. The data was collected, analyzed, and presented in graphs and written form. A weakness of the survey was officers/deputies not believing the survey was anonymous and reluctant to answer truthfully about such a sensitive topic. Additionally, the survey asked for participants to select N/A for questions that did not apply. A better method would have been to direct the participant to the next applicable question to prevent data from being skewed.

Results

Of the 631 surveys sent, I received a total of 213 replies, for a response rate of 33%. The questions were multiple choice and short answer. The percentages noted have been rounded to the nearest hundredth for simplicity. Questions allowing more than one answer choice will not equate to 100%. The survey was designed for questions not to be skipped. The first six questions were related to agency assignment, age, years of service, race, gender, and supervisory status. The remaining questions are specific to the research. Charts/graphs were used to highlight results. Questions allowing comments were categorized by themes.

1. What agency do you work for?

There were 114 (53.5%) responses from the Tallahassee Police Department and 99 (46.5%) responses from the Leon County Sheriff's Office.

2. What is your age range?

21-29 – There were 27 officers/deputies in this age range, (13%).

30-39 -- There were 56 officers/deputies in this age range, (26%).

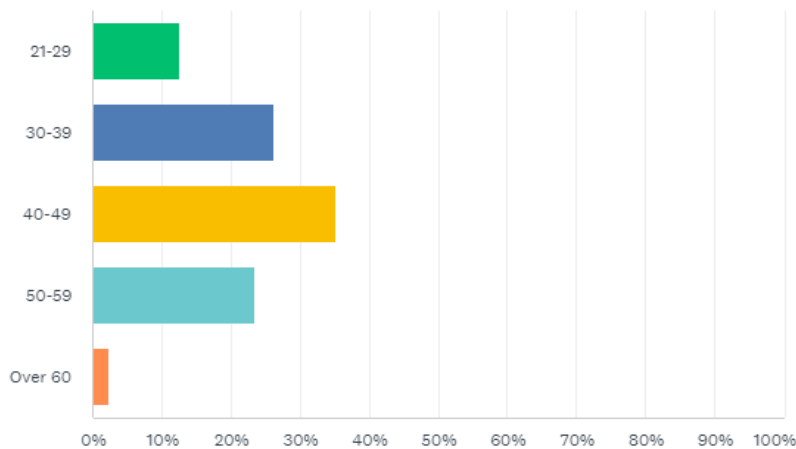
40-49 – There were 75 officers/deputies in this age range, (35%).

50-59 – There were 50 officers/deputies in this age range, (24%).

Over 60 – There were 5 officers/deputies in this age range, (2%).

What is your age range?

Answered: 213 Skipped: 0



3. How many years of service do you have?

5 or less – There were 31 officers/deputies who responded, (15%).

6-10 -- There were 31 officers/deputies who responded, (15%).

11-15 – There were 32 officers/deputies who responded, (15%).

16-20- There were 37 officers/deputies who responded, (17%).

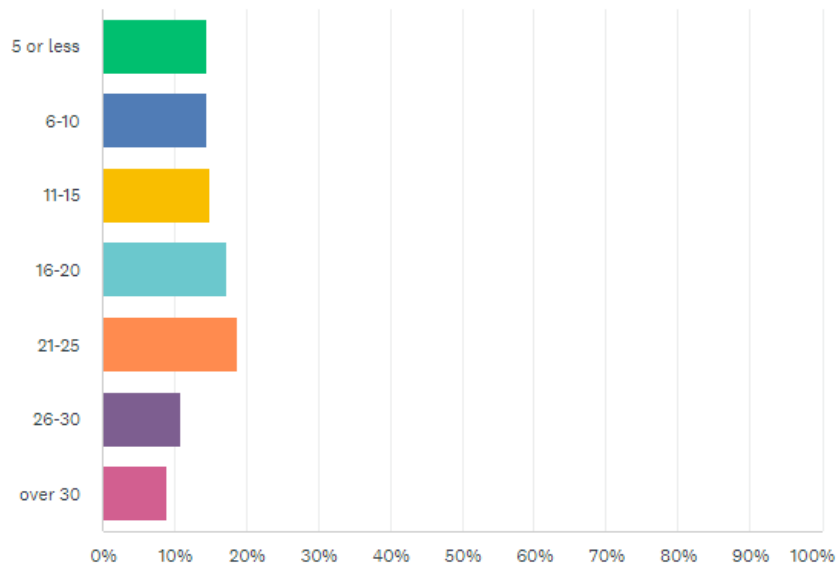
21-25 – There were 40 officers/deputies who responded, (19%).

26-30 – There were 23 officers/deputies who responded, (11%).

Over 30 – There were 19 officers/deputies who responded, (8%).

How many years of service do you have?

Answered: 213 Skipped: 0



4. What is your race?

White or Caucasian— 161 respondents were White or Caucasian. (76%)

Black or African American—29 respondents were Black or African American. (13%)

Hispanic or Latino American—10 respondents were Hispanic or Latino. (5%)

Asian or Asian American – 3 respondents were Asian or Asian American. (1%)

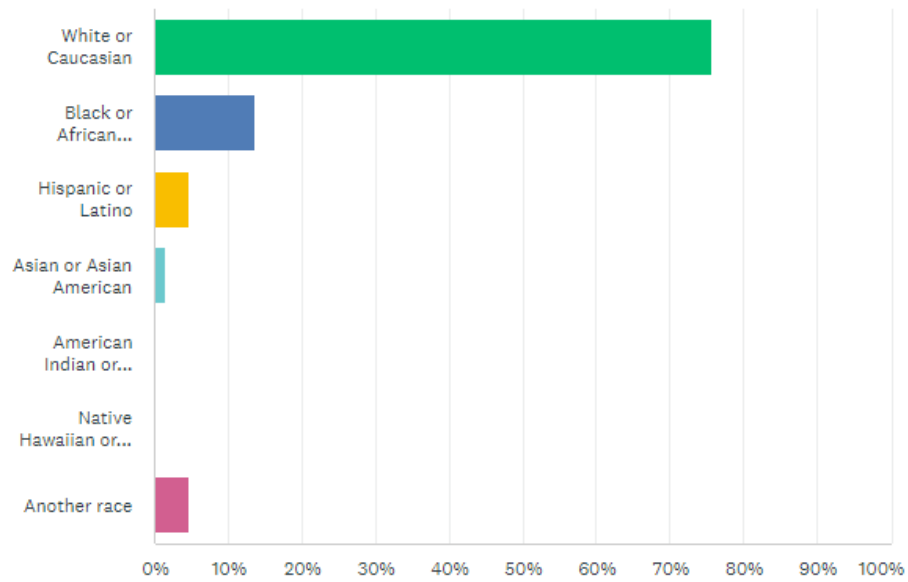
American Indian or Alaska Native—There were 0 respondents in this category. (0%)

Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander-- There were 0 respondents in this category. (0%)

Another race—There were 10 respondents in this category. (5%)

What is your race?

Answered: 213 Skipped: 0

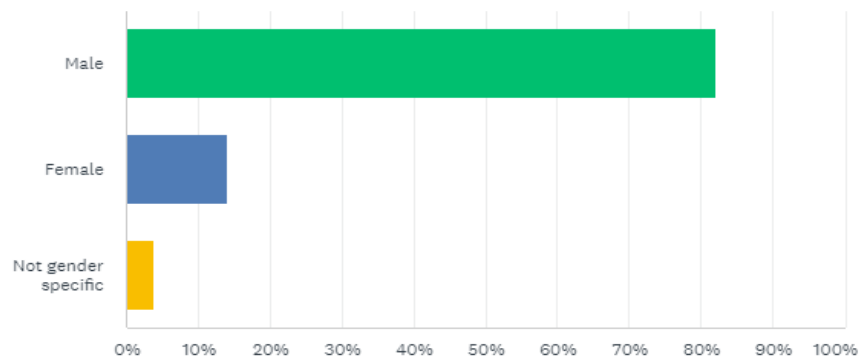


5. What is your gender?

There were 175 male officers/deputies (82%), 30 female officer/deputies (14%) and 8 (4%) non-gender specific officer/deputies participating in the survey.

What is your gender?

Answered: 213 Skipped: 0

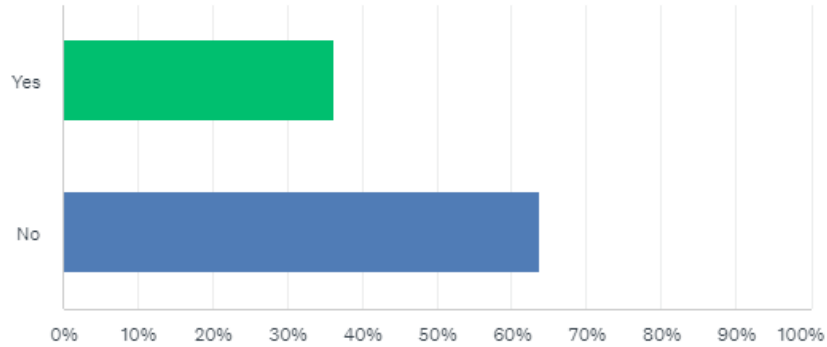


6. Are you a supervisor?

A total of 77 (36%) supervisors and 136 (64%) officer/deputy participants in the survey.

Are you a supervisor?

Answered: 213 Skipped: 0

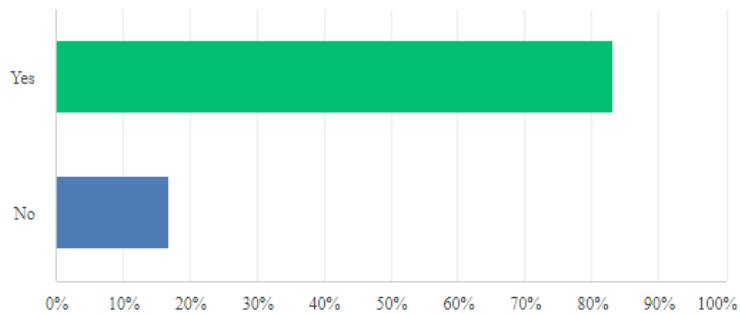


7. Did/Do you have a negative opinion of the Black Lives Matter protests?

177 (83%) officers/deputies participating in the survey had a negative opinion of the BLM protests. Only 36 (17%) of participants did not have a negative opinion of the protests.

Did/Do you have a negative opinion of the Black Lives Matter protests?

Answered: 213 Skipped: 0



8. If yes to question 7, why? Select all that apply. If you answered no to question 7, select N/A.

Officers/deputies were allowed to pick more than one answer and/or specify their reasoning via short answer for this question. There were 429 answers (which confirms respondents selected more than one answer).

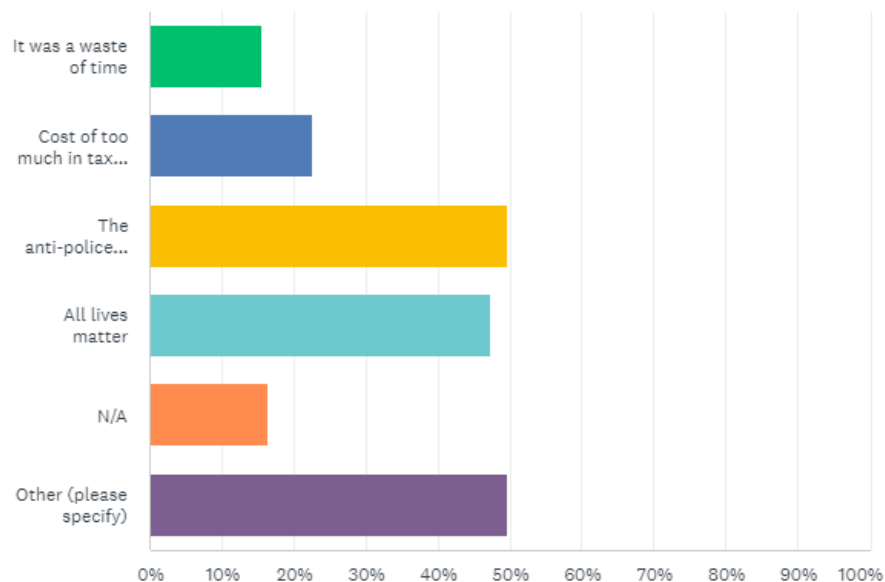
- **It was a waste of time**- 33 officers/deputies, (15%)
- **Cost too much in taxpayer dollars**- 48 officers/deputies, (23%)
- **The anti-police rhetoric made me angry** - 106 officers/deputies, (50%)
- **All Lives Matter**- 101 officers/deputies, (47%)
- **N/A**- 35 officers/deputies, (16%)
- **Other (please specify)**: 106 responses, (50%)

Categorizing the short answer responses, the main themes were:

- I. BLM does not address black on black crime.
- II. Some of the protests were not peaceful, and citizens and businesses suffered.
- III. BLM is political and meant to divide.
- IV. BLM is based on false premises.
- V. BLM is a racist organization instigating hate and violence against the police.
- VI. The media coverage negatively portrayed law enforcement and made positive police/community counterproductive.
- VII. The movement was hijacked and is no longer operating under its original intention.

If yes to question 7, why? Select all that apply. If you answered no to question 7, select N/A.

Answered: 213 Skipped: 0

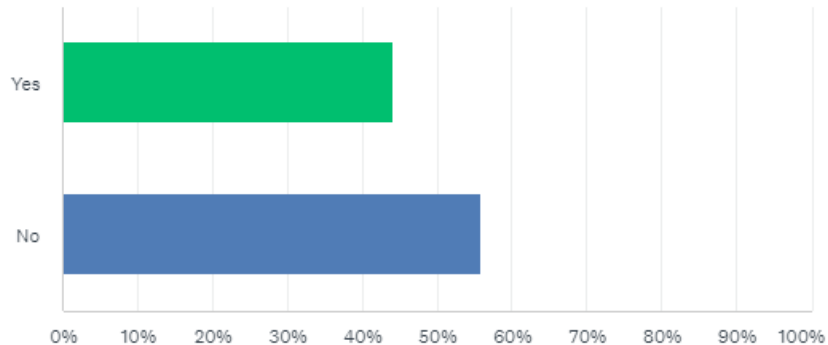


9. Did you express your feelings about BLM to anyone at work?

119 (56%) of participating officers/deputies did not express their feelings about BLM at work. Conversely, 94 (44%) of officers/deputies did express their feelings.

Did you express your feelings about BLM to anyone at work?

Answered: 213 Skipped: 0



10. If you answered no to question 9, why? Check all that apply. If you answered yes, select N/A.

- **Fear of being labeled or misunderstood**- 50 officers/deputies, (23%).
- **Didn't want to get involved**- 23 officers/deputies, (11%).
- **Didn't feel like my comments would matter**- 38 officers/deputies, (18%).
- **Fear of retribution**- 38 officers/deputies, (18%).
- **I never discuss race sensitive matters at work**- 63 officers/deputies, (30%).
- **N/A**- 93 officers/deputies, (44%)
- **Other** (please specify)- 29 officers/deputies, (14%).

The categorized themes were as follows:

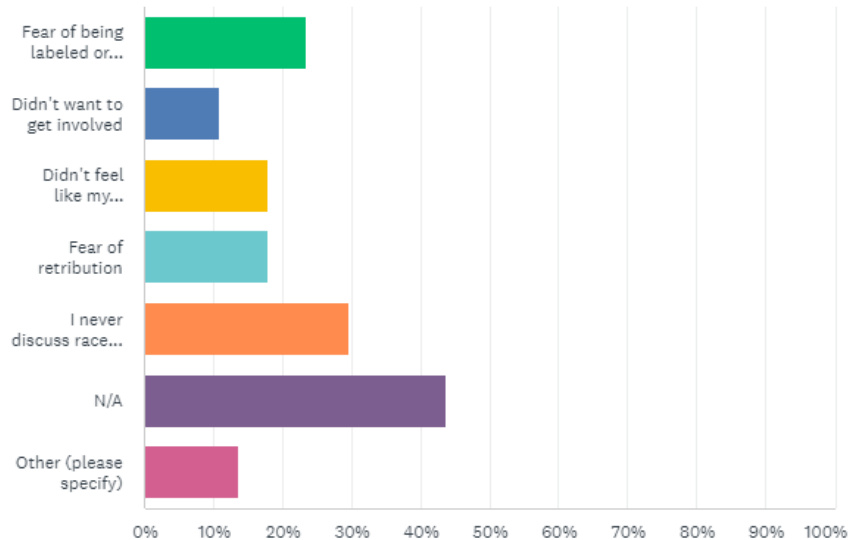
- I. Feelings were shared with close friends and colleagues.
- II. Fear of being branded or labeled a racist.
- III. Fear of conflict at work.
- IV. I mind my business at work.

Responses of note:

- a. "This is a good way to get branded or cancelled. This is not a subject where you can recover from if you get labeled something unpleasant."
- b. "My political views are my business. Besides, people feel threatening of organizations like NAACP or BLM and criticize the groups when they've never experienced life in black or dark skin. Black people don't want special treatment but just fairness, acknowledging us as a people and respect."

If you answered no to question 9, why? Check all that apply. If you answered yes, select N/A.

Answered: 213 Skipped: 0



11. Has BLM changed the way you police? (Example- officer safety, documentation)

Seventy-eight (37%) officers/deputies indicated they changed the way they police due to BLM, and 135 (63%) officers/deputies advised they did not change the way they police.

12. Please explain:

This was an open-ended question, as a follow-up to question 11. Participants were asked to explain how BLM has changed the way they police. All 213 officers/deputies responded. I listed the answers by theme for brevity and quoted some of the answers.

By Theme:

- I. Less proactive.
- II. More aware of race sensitive issues.
- III. I police as the law and policy allow, regardless of race.
- IV. I explain my actions well, so I am not perceived in a negative way.
- V. Increased documentation.
- VI. Less likely to intervene in low level crimes unless absolutely necessary.
- VII. More conscience of the camera and being baited into something.
- VIII. Worry over agency and State Attorney support.
- IX. BLM has given civilians a false sense of inferiority.
- X. Less proactive due to fear of public scrutiny and false accusations.
- XI. Police agencies don't stand up for law enforcement when they are in the right.

Officer/deputy quotes:

- a. "I am scared to do my job. I believe that I would be crucified if I made a mistake. The court of public opinion would force the powers that be's hands."
- b. "My approach to policing and documenting my actions has not been influenced by BLM. I do however believe it has caused more officers to think more regarding to appropriate types of responses when dealing with all citizens."
- c. "It has emboldened citizens to question and interfere with police matters when that type of behavior was not mainstream prior to the BLM movement. That creates obvious officer safety issues and increases the amount of negative or combative interactions between police and citizens which is only going to create more issues."
- d. "The BLM movement has made it so that an officer/deputy has to worry about if the agency will support them if they have to take action and how the liberal media will spin the story. Will the SAO bend to the political pressure or will they give the officer a fair unbiased look at the incident?"
- e. "Officer safety, lack of respect, expecting only half the story being conveyed and knowledge my agency will believe the other side before hearing mine. It has completely taken my desire to be proactive."
- f. "Policing has changed in the last decade significantly. Although I still enjoy my job the threat of social media and having my name smeared through the media for doing my job is not appealing. For this reason, I am more careful to how I respond to people who may be more sensitive in certain situations."
- g. "In a lot of the training over the years, scenario-based training for about 90% of the time use a black person as the suspect/perp. It's like conditioning LEO to automatically think a black person is involved in an incident when being dispatched for CFS. That I thought needed to be addressed."
- h. "Due to the BLM movement, there is a feeling that the agency and command will not have our backs when trying to do our job. We can do everything right, but the public opinion now outweighs the truth and law. This has led white officers to be scared to deal with the minority public leading to officer's safety issues. There is a fear that even if you do the right thing, you are still wrong."
- i. "No proactive police work and I avoid taking any enforcement action as much as possible. It's not worth the risk of being fired or incarcerated for doing nothing other than my job."

13. [Did the BLM protests negatively affect your mental, physical, or emotional wellness?](#)

Of the officers/deputies surveyed, 108 (51%) said BLM did not negatively affect their mental, physical, or emotional wellness. Whereas 105 (49%) officers/deputies advised BLM did affect their mental, physical, or emotional wellness. Sixty-seven officers/deputies wrote a comment.

Sample of Officer statements:

- I. "Having been directly involved with the OIS involving Tony McDade and the protests all occurring around the same time was very negative. I found it difficult to 'turn off my brain' while off work."
- II. "I didn't want to come to work."
- III. "When enough of the population hate you, it makes you want to leave your job."

- IV. “Not by much, but it plays a factor in how I treat/interact with the black community. I feel as though being a white/male cop and interacting with African-Americans, I am having to walk on glass, so I am not labeled as biased or racist.”
- V. “13 days straight without a day off leads to physical and mental stress.”
- VI. “The multiple hours/days off cancelled along with the media driving a wedge between people. The actual work was easy. The hardest part was the media misrepresenting facts of cases to the American people.”
- VII. “I don’t know if I want to do this job anymore. Is my life worth sacrificing for those that would speak ill of me while I was alive and maybe ill of me in death? I just want to have a normal life outside of work, but I can’t.”
- VIII. “Emotional seeing humans having to protest for basic rights because of their skin color.”
- IX. “I lose sleep regularly thinking about the issue. It is based upon a misconception that systemic racism is governing how we police. I want to educate the nation about the truth with statistics and examples but feel powerless to have a voice to change the perceptions.”
- X. “Being a black man in law enforcement is not easy. Black law enforcement are considered as ‘sellouts’, traders and I’ve even been called a house N—by other black people. People of other races (non-black people) who bandwagon with the BLM movement say they understand, and they stand for the cause, but unfortunately, they will NEVER understand a black person’s perspective, especially the perspective of a black law enforcement officer.”
- XI. “I was able to speak about it with other like-minded officers who were experiencing the same feeling as I was. By being able to vent, I was able to better cope.”

14. On a scale of 1-100, how much did the BLM protests effect your desire to come to work?

The majority (125) of the officers/deputies surveyed answered 50 or less reference the effect of BLM protests on their desire to come to work. 88 officers/deputies selected an answer above halfway mark.

The results:

0-5	70
6-10	3
11-20	6
21-30	16
31-40	7
41-50	23
51-60	17
61-70	10
71-80	18

81-90	10
91-100	33

15. **BLM has affected police recruitment and retention.**

Most of the officers/deputies either agreed or strongly agreed BLM affected police recruitment and retention. Only 8 individuals disagreed or strongly disagreed BLM has affected police recruitment and retention.

Strongly agree: 127- (60%).

Agree: 51- (23%)

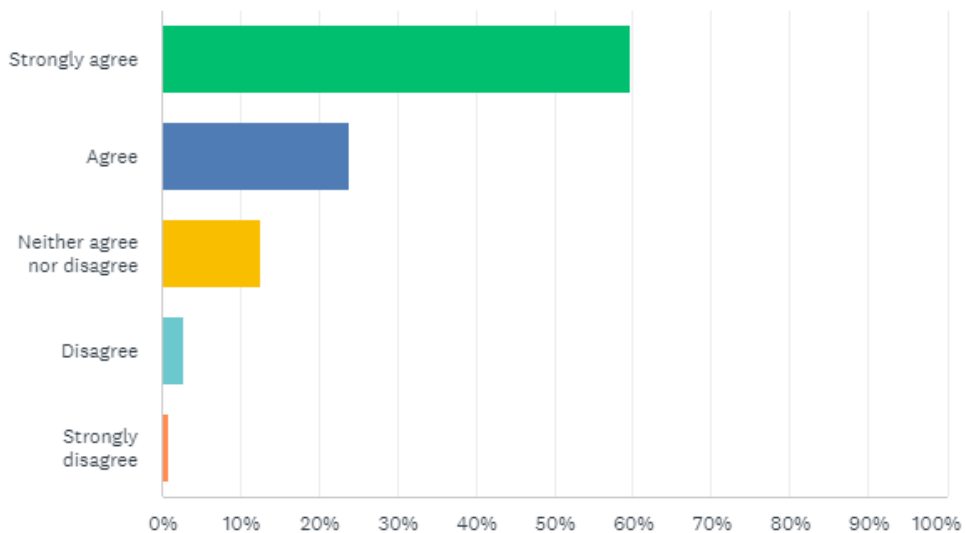
Neither agree nor disagree: 27 – (13%)

Disagree: 6 – (3%)

Strongly disagree: 2 – (1%)

BLM has effected police recruitment and retention.

Answered: 213 Skipped: 0



16. **What is the best way to recruit and retain officers post BLM?**

This was an open-ended question allowing the participants to express their thoughts and ideas. Overwhelmingly, officers and deputies believed money (increased salary), better benefits, support from Command Staff/City officials, transparency, calling out media mistruths, and city officials not bowing to political pressure are the best way to

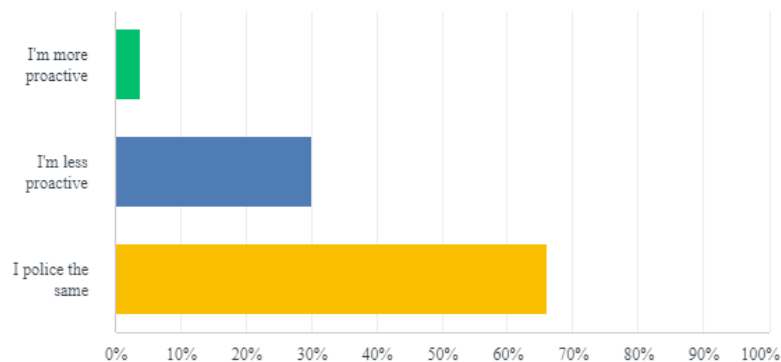
recruit and maintain officers. Several responses indicated the need to recruit more ex-military, and minorities.

17. [Did the high-profile police shooting between 2014 and 2020 change your proactivity?](#)

According to the survey, 141 (66%) officers/deputies have continued the same level of proactivity after the 2014 and 2020 police shootings. 64 (30%) of officers/deputies have advised they are less proactive. Only 8 individuals (4%) have indicated they are more proactive.

Did the high profile police shootings between 2014 and 2020 change your proactivity?

Answered: 213 Skipped: 0



18. [Did you consider leaving law enforcement after major police incidents such as the 2016 Dallas shootings or 2020 death of George Floyd?](#)

Of the 213 participants, 137 (64%) advised they did not consider leaving. There were 76 (36%) however, that did consider leaving.

19. [If you answered yes to question 18, what made you stay? Check all that apply. If you answered no, select N/A.](#)

Participants were allowed to pick more than one answer and/or provide an additional response for this question. Due to the allotment of more than one answer, percentages will not equate to 100%.

The results for this question were as follows:

I can't afford to leave- 42, (20%)

I don't want to start over- 43, (20%)

Dedicated, staying until retirement- 50, (23%)

N/A- 116, (54%)

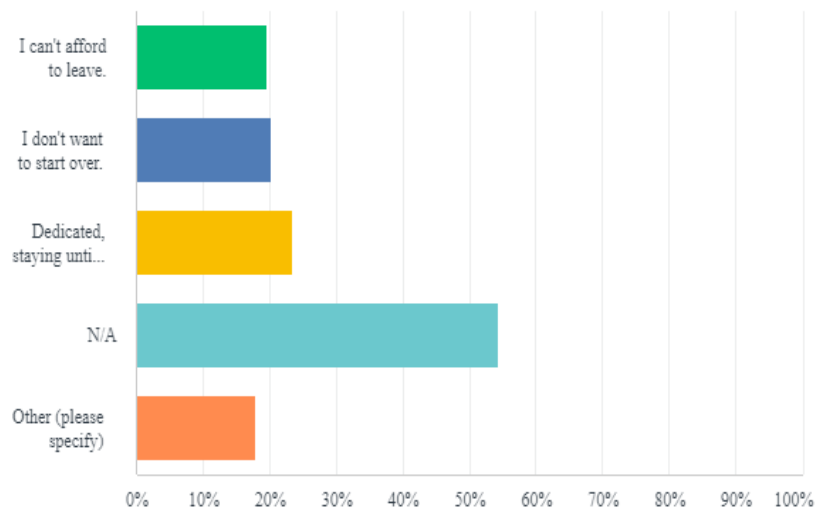
Other- please specify- 38, (18%)

Sampling of Comments:

- I. "This is all I want to do and want to retire as a law enforcement officer."
- II. "Been here too long. It would affect my retirement."
- III. "Wanted to be the change, show people not every cop is bad."
- IV. "I love my job but fear I cannot do it with people constantly telling me what I'm doing wrong without making effort to actually help us. But I can't afford to start over because I'm very engrained in Tallahassee community."
- V. "Some will support us, some never will. The majority will always support us. TPD does a great job."

If you answered yes to question 18, what made you stay? Check all that apply. If you answered no, select N/A.

Answered: 213 Skipped: 0



20. Have the efforts to reduce police funding affected you emotionally?

111 (52%) officers/deputies advised they were not affected emotionally by efforts to reduce police funding. 65 (31%) officer/deputies advised they were. 37 (17%) participants left comments.

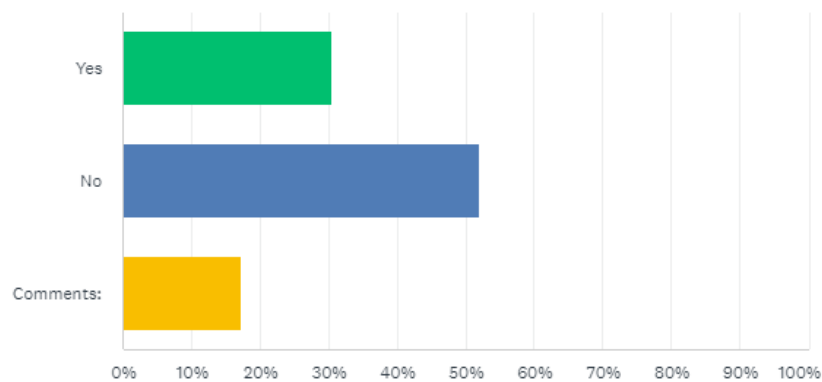
Comments of note:

- I- "It is discouraging to see the utter lack of understanding of many in society regarding the utilization of propaganda to implement efforts to undermine the need for police within our society."

- II- “Police defunding is just a political ploy to derate the position of a law enforcement officer.”
- III- “No. I agree with taking funding away and adding programs to help police. Police have become the scape goats for everything because they work 24/7 365 and will respond if asked to do so. Police are used for things they should not be. They get 1 to 40 hours of training in certain subjects and are expected to be experts when people that specialize in those fields spend years getting training or education.”

Have the efforts to reduce police funding effected you emotionally?

Answered: 213 Skipped: 0



21. Police funding should be reallocated for community health and housing needs.

The majority of the surveyed either disagreed or strongly disagree with this theory.

Strongly agree- 4 (2%)

Agree- 14 (7%)

Neither agree nor disagree- 34 (17%)

Disagree- 62 (29%)

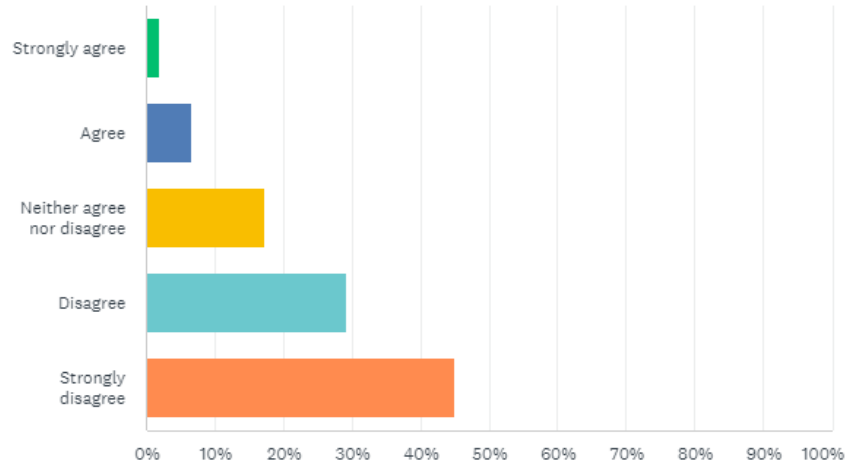
Strongly disagree- 96 (45%)

Sample of Comments:

- I. “There should be police funding and there should be funding for mental health and housing needs.”
- II. “Why just community, why are we not also focusing on police mental health?”
- III. “We need to take care of us as much as we take care of the public.”
- IV. “There should be funding for those things, but not form the police budgets. There are plenty of projects that waste money that could be re-allocated.”

Police funding should be reallocated for community mental health and housing needs.

Answered: 213 Skipped: 0



22. What is your outlet to deal with the stress of police work? Check all that apply.

The primary outlet identified to reduce stress is family. The next two outlets were hobbies and exercise. Only 5 participants indicated they did not have a hobby.

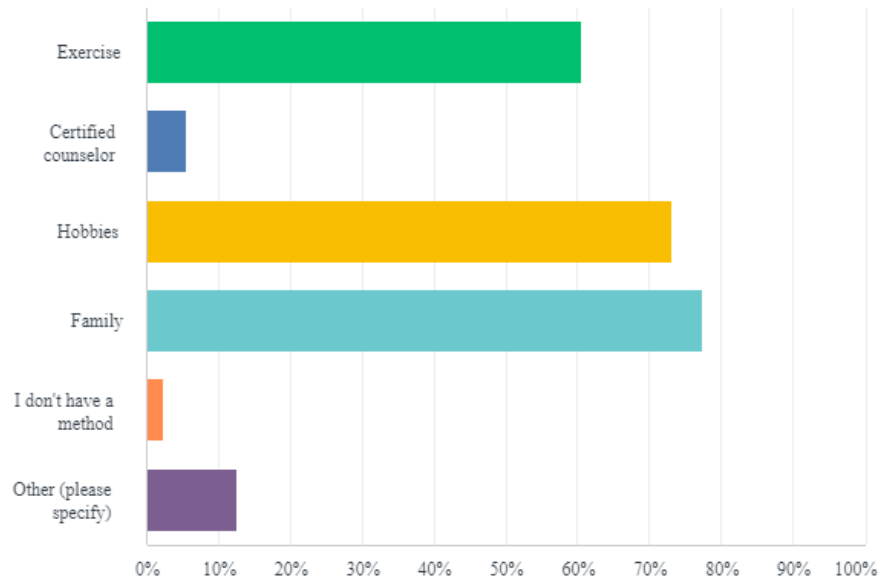
The results of the survey were:

- Exercise- 129
- Certified Counselor- 12
- Hobbies- 156
- Family- 165
- I don't have a method- 5
- Other, please specify -27

The participants indicated drinking, gaming, religion, thoughts of retirement, comedy and friends as their outlet.

What is your outlet to deal with the stress of police work? Check all that apply.

Answered: 213 Skipped: 0



23. Do you feel comfortable using your employers' Employee Assistance Program (EAP)?

113 (53%) officers/deputies advised they feel comfortable using their employers' EAP.

100 (47%) officers/deputies advised they did not feel comfortable using their employers' EAP.

24. Police officers avoid seeking help for their mental and emotional needs out of fear of being labeled weak or unfit for the job.

Most officers/deputies surveyed advised they agree or strongly agree officers avoid seeking help due to of fear of being labeled weak or unfit for the job.

The results are as follows:

Strongly agree: 71 (33.3%)

Agree: 84 (39.4%)

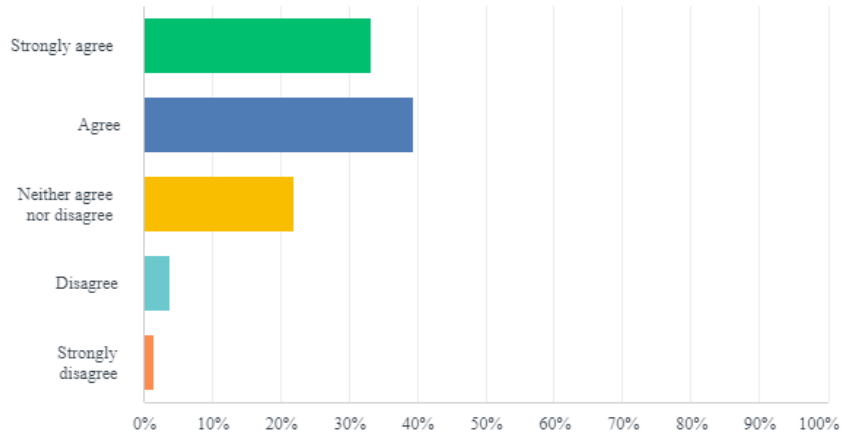
Neither agree nor disagree: 47 (22.1%)

Disagree: 8 (3.8%)

Strongly disagree: 3 (1.4%)

Police officers avoid seeking help for their mental and emotional needs out of fear of being labeled weak or unfit for the job.

Answered: 213 Skipped: 0



25. Do you feel traditional community policing initiatives are effective in reducing crime?

Most of the respondents believed traditional community policing initiatives are effective.

The results:

Strongly agree: 34, (16%)

Agree: 92, (43%)

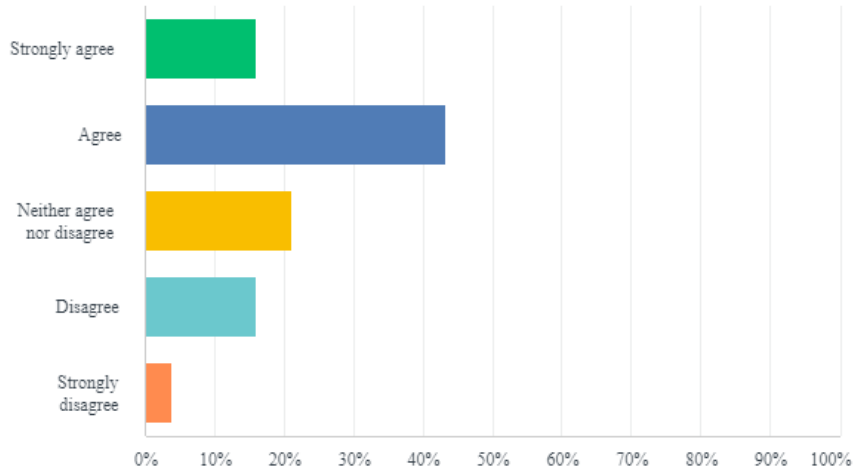
Neither agree nor disagree: 45, (21%)

Disagree: 34, (16%)

Strongly disagree: 8, (4%)

Do you feel traditional community policing initiatives are effective in reducing crime?

Answered: 213 Skipped: 0



26. There is a united effort (police and community working together) to combat crime in Tallahassee.

The majority of the surveyed do not believe there is a united effort to combat crime.

Results:

Strongly agree- 12, (6%)

Agree- 53, (24%)

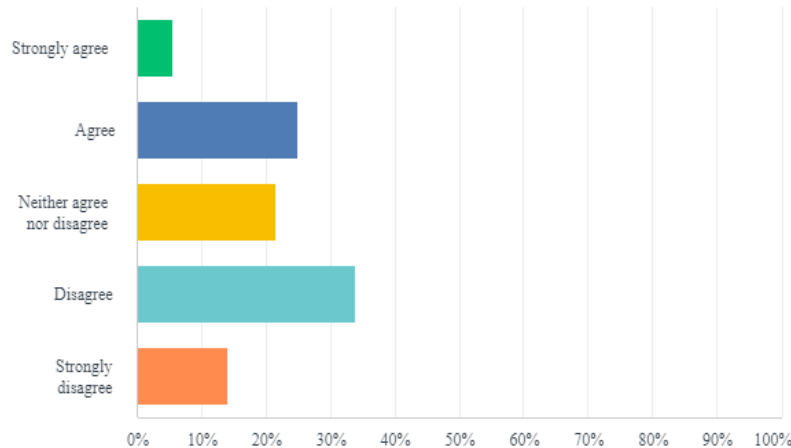
Neither agree nor disagree- 46, (22%)

Disagree- 72, (34%)

Strongly Disagree- 30, (14%)

There is an united effort (police and community working together) to combat crime in Tallahassee.

Answered: 213 Skipped: 0



27. How do we get a “We” (police and community) approach to fighting crime?

This was an open-ended/short answer question. All participants answered. The responses by theme were:

- I- More education for the public about what we (LEO) do.
- II- More programs in the schools.
- III- Treat people with respect.
- IV- The City needs more professional mental health, family, and marriage counselors to handle non-criminal calls for service.
- V- Officers need to get out of the car, talk to people, and build bonds with the community.
- VI- The Judicial branch needs to be consistent and fair.
- VII- The community needs to see past the uniform. Police need to be involved and participating in community programs.
- VIII- Enforce the law.
- IX- Community buy-in.
- X- Point out misinformation.
- XI- Communication
- XII- Re-write the narrative the media is pushing.

28. How much has the media effected the way you police?

This question was a 0-100 slighting scale. Officers/deputies were asked to slide the scale to the number that represented their belief. Most of the officers/deputies replied 5 or less. The median number is 47. Grouping the answers into five, the responses were as follows:

0-5	62
6-10	6
11-15	5
16-20	3
21-30	13
31-40	5
41-50	28
51-60	11
61-70	7
71-80	18
81-90	13
91-100	42

29. Crime is going up because officer/deputies are not actively policing out of fear of being the next news story.

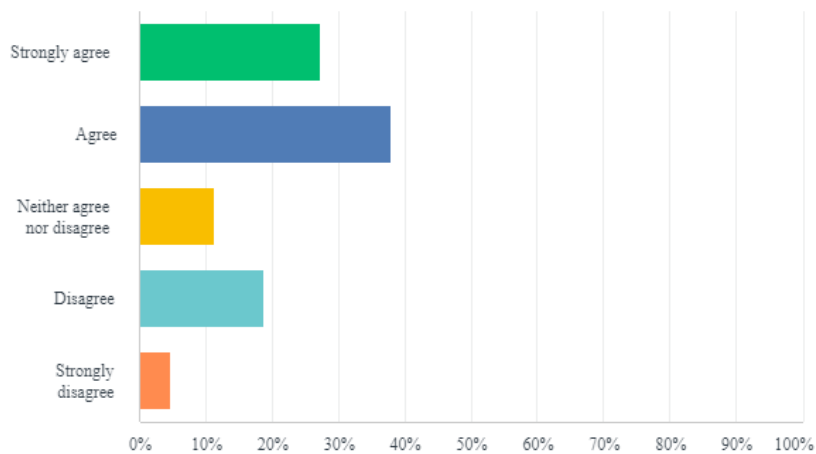
Of the responses, 139 officers/deputies either agreed or strongly agreed with this statement. Conversely, 50 officers/deputies either agreed or strongly disagreed. 24 officers/deputies neither agreed nor disagreed.

Results:

- Strongly agree: 58, (27%)
- Agree: 81, (38%)
- Neither agree nor disagree: 24, (11%)
- Disagree: 40, (19%)
- Strongly disagree, 10 (5%)

Crime is going up because officers/deputies are not actively policing out of fear of being the next news story.

Answered: 213 Skipped: 0



30. Systemic racism exists in law enforcement.

The results:

Strongly agree: 12, (6%)

Agree: 32, (15%)

Neither agree nor disagree: 31, (15%)

Disagree: 61, (28%)

Strongly disagree: 77, (36%)

Discussion

Black Lives Matter was the largest movement in U.S. history. More than half a million people marched in 550 places across the United States (Buchanan, 2020). Whether people want to admit it or not, BLM changed America. BLM changed policing.

I have asked myself at least 4 times, “what were you thinking choosing this topic?” This topic is controversial. This subject matter may rub feathers wrong. The last thing I want to do is give false perceptions, start drama, or cause a racial divide. I want to bring unity, discussion, and help the Tallahassee community trust in its law enforcement family. The only way I think this can be accomplished is to have the tough conversations and examine the uncomfortable.

Most of the officers/deputies participating in my survey were white males who had a negative opinion of BLM. They had various reasons for their negative opinion but the most popular was the anti-police rhetoric made them angry. Some officers felt comfortable discussing their feelings about BLM, but the majority did not out of fear, or they never discuss race related matters at work.

Law enforcement officers see and hear negativity everyday they’re at work. They see people at their worst and must find a resolution to their problems. Officers are expected to be strong, courageous, above reproach, leaders, committed, and more. Did we forget, they are human?

Officers need an outlet to vent. This outlet could be via a mental health provider, peer support group, or chaplain. The stigma surrounding asking for help must be removed. If officers are not going for help, bring the help to them. Officers are told they can take advantage of the Employee Assistance Program (EAP). We don’t however make them go unless they are in a specialized unit, getting promoted or have had a traumatic event. Would it be better to mandate it every three years? The mental health check-ups could reduce complaints, remove the negative stigma, reduce sick leave, and prevent possible lawsuits.

Most (135) of the officers/deputies surveyed advised BLM did not change the way they police. However, there were 78 officers/deputies who advised it did. There were multiple (survey) comments reference efforts to treat everyone the same, fairly, and just. For example, “I am more aware of race sensitive issues,” and “I am aware of my implicit bias more and make a conscious decision to police fairly and document appropriately.” These statements and observations are good, and a great step toward fair and unbiased policing. There were however statements such as, “I am less likely to get out with a person of color unless the reason is open and shut. If something goes bad, I don’t want to be labeled as a racist or some other BS.” “...Officers are less likely to take proactive

enforcement, less likely to go “hands on”, less likely to escalate force, and more likely to use less force than the situation called for. I believe all of these things are reflected in the data.” If officers/deputies are more aware of their implicit bias and more conscious to police fairly, and BLM was the reason, this is great success linked to BLM. However, if officers/deputies are not being proactive out of fear of being the next news story, fear of lack of support from their agency/city, or no longer feeling valued in the community, and it is because of BLM, then this is an epic failure. Avoiding proactivity because of fear, undermines policing and public safety efforts. The only winners are the criminals.

The continuous media and social media coverage of BLM and the negativity displayed toward law enforcement took a toll on officers/deputies. There were so many comments made by those surveyed about thoughts of leaving the job they love due to not feeling appreciated. They don’t want to start over, so they work, solely looking forward to their pension. Did BLM cause this? Yes, I believe so.

Rewriting our police narrative is very important to the officers. If a story with misinformation is printed, they want to see their agency print the truth. Not doing so sends a negative message to the troops. The number of officers/deputies who expressed a lack of desire to come to work during the BLM protests further supports the “Ferguson Effect” theory. Lack of proactivity leads to higher crime rates and rise in violence in the community.

139 officers/deputies said crime is going up because of fear of being the next news story. There were many comments about needing Command Staff and City support. A clear message of support should be relayed continuously. If you do your job within the law and policy, your agency and city/county government will support you 100%.

Community engagement is needed to rebuild public trust. Arresting criminals and then going home to the suburbs will not get the community support needed. Cleaning up neighborhoods, attending community functions, being active in schools and churches will build relationships. Creating a police culture of “community engagement is expected” versus “voluntary” will build community support and trust.

The fight for racial equality is still going on in America and will probably continue for many more years. Some cities are better than others. Most of the law enforcement surveyed disagreed with the messages, tactics, rhetoric, and propaganda of BLM. I say, BLM brought more awareness to issues. BLM has made officers police themselves more. This is the biggest change post BLM. The Thin Blue Line is disappearing. Bad officers can not remain because they hurt the whole law enforcement family. A duty to intervene is here to stay.

Lastly, if asked what my opinion of BLM is after doing this research, I will say, it’s still the same, delicate. I am thankful for the awareness BLM brought and sad race is still an issue.

Recommendations

I would like to make the following recommendations post research:

1. More focus on recruiting minority officers of all races. This will create a more inclusive agency and be representative of the community we serve.
2. Keep officers in assigned patrol zones for at least 2-3 years (unless they are transferring to specialty positions). This will help them build relationships with the people they serve. Transferring officers every 6 months or every year prevents bonds forming.
3. Track community service hours and community initiatives (via Telestaff) and reward officers for their service. Examples of service hours would be coaching, teaching, attending neighborhood functions, scouts, Habitat for Humanity, Meals on Wheels, Big Brothers/Big Sisters etc.
4. Create a culture of community service is expected, not voluntary.
5. Require officers to see the city psychologist every 3 years.
6. Have the city psychologist set up support groups for officers.
7. Agencies need to tactically correct any untruths about officers in the media.
8. Bring back the DARE Program or some other juvenile program for elementary schools.
9. Have a police component in the middle and high schools as a mechanism for police recruitment. This could be yearly participation at an assembly talking to the kids about consideration and requirements to be a police officer.
10. Continue racial inclusion trainings.

Captain Danielle Davis began her law enforcement career with the Tallahassee Police Department on July 12, 1999. Her officer background includes Patrol, Crime Prevention, Internal Affairs, Field Training, Property Crimes and Public Information. She was promoted to Sergeant in 2011. After serving as a Patrol sergeant, Property Crimes Sergeant, and Special Events Sergeant she was promoted to lieutenant in 2018. Before being promoted to Captain, she was a Watch Commander and Administrative Services Lieutenant. Captain Davis has dedicated her entire career to working with youth through DEFY, Scouts, and literacy programs in the school system. Captain Davis obtained her Bachelor's Degree from Florida A&M University.

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Appendix

The Effects of the Black Lives Matter Movement on Modern Policing

The purpose of this survey is to examine the effects of the Black Lives Matter Movement on law enforcement recruitment, retention, and health. The study also looks at current community policing efforts and rebuilding public trust. There are 30 multiple choice or short answer questions. The survey should take approximately 10 minutes to complete. The survey is completely anonymous, and no effort will be made to identify participants. Thank you for your participation.

1. What agency do you work for?

Tallahassee Police

Leon County Sheriff’s Office

2. What is your age range?

21-29

30-39

40-49

50-59

Over 60

3. How many years of service do you have?

5 or less

6-10

11-15

16-20

21-25

26-30

Over 30

4. What is your race?

White or Caucasian

Black or African American

Hispanic or Latino

Asian or Asian American

American Indian or Alaska Native

Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander

Another race

5. What is your gender?

Male

Female

Not gender specific

6. Are you a supervisor?

Yes

No

7. Did/Do you have a negative opinion of the Black Lives Matter protests?

Yes

No

8. If yes to question 7, why? Select all that apply. If you answered no to question 7, select N/A.

It was a waste of time

Cost too much in tax dollars

The anti-police rhetoric made me angry

All lives matter

N/A

Other (please specify)

9. Did you express your feelings about BLM to anyone at work?

Yes

No

10. If you answered no to question 9, why? Check all that apply. If you answered yes, select N/A.

Fear of being labeled or misunderstood

Didn't want to get involved

Didn't feel like my comments would matter

Fear of retribution

I never discuss race sensitive matters at work

N/A

Other (please specify)

11. Has BLM changed the way you police? (Example-officer safety, documentation)

Yes

No

12. Please explain

13. Did the BLM protests negatively effect your mental, physical, or emotional wellness?

Yes

No

14. On a scale of 1-100, how much did the BLM protests effect your desire to come to work?

15. BLM has affected police recruitment and retention.

Strongly agree

Agree

Neither agree nor disagree

Disagree

Strongly disagree

16. What is the best way to recruit and retain officers post BLM?

17. Did the high-profile police shootings between 2014 and 2020 change your proactivity?

I'm more proactive

I'm less proactive

I police the same

18. Did you consider leaving law enforcement after major police incidents such as 2016 Dallas shooting or 2020 death of George Floyd?

Yes

No

19. If you answered yes to question 18, what made you stay? Check all that apply. If you answered no, select N/A.

I can't afford to leave.

I don't want to start over.

Dedicated, staying until retirement.

N/A

Other (please specify)

20. Have the efforts to reduce police funding affected you emotionally?

Yes

No

Comments:

21. Police funding should be reallocated for community mental health and housing needs.

Strongly agree

Agree

Neither agree nor disagree

Disagree

Strongly disagree

Comments:

22. What is your outlet to deal with the stress of police work? Check all that apply.

Exercise

Certified counselor

Hobbies

Family

I don't have a method

Other (please specify)

23. Do you feel comfortable using your employers' Employee Assistance Program (EAP)?

Yes

No

24. Police officers avoid seeking help for their mental and emotional needs out of fear of being labeled weak or unfit for the job.

Strongly agree

Agree

Neither agree nor disagree

Disagree

Strongly disagree

25. Do you feel traditional community policing initiatives are effective in reducing crime?

Strongly agree

Agree

Neither agree nor disagree

Disagree

Strongly disagree

26. There is an united effort (police and community working together) to combat crime in Tallahassee.

Strongly agree

Agree

Neither agree nor disagree

Disagree

Strongly disagree

27. How do we get a "We" (police and community) approach to fighting crime?

28. How much has the media effected the way you police? (Slighting scale)

Not at all

Somewhat

Very much

29. Crime is going up because officers/deputies are not actively policing out of fear of being the next news story.

Strongly agree

Agree

Neither agree nor disagree

Disagree

Strongly disagree

30. Systemic racism exists in law enforcement.

Strongly agree

Agree

Neither agree nor disagree

Disagree

Strongly disagree