

# Supervising Smarter Not Harder: How Technology is Changing Community Corrections

Angella New

## **Abstract**

*The arena of community corrections is a largely misunderstood component of the criminal justice system, not only by the community they protect but also among many law enforcement and criminal justice counterparts. The tools of the trade in this field are ever evolving and having to acclimate to the clientele they service and innovation among multiple industries. Just how do probation officers take advantage of the various devices and technologies within an ever-changing work environment? They use them to supervise, surveil, and manage the data collected on those they are tasked with monitoring and transforming. The results of a survey completed by probation officers and other community corrections personnel from various agencies within Florida explores more about these subjects. Discussions continue by looking at areas where improvements and advancements can be incorporated into agency practices.*

## **Introduction**

Community Corrections is a widely expanding function of the US Criminal Justice System. In 2013, according to the Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS), 1 in 51 adult persons in the United States were on some form of community supervision (Herberman & Bonczar, 2014). The newest information contained in the BJS report show an estimated 1 in 58 adults in the U.S. were under community supervision at year-end 2018, which is more than twice the number of people incarcerated. Many state governments are deferring inmates from prisons and releasing them to a form of community supervision. In doing so, offenders with varying risk levels and criminal backgrounds are now being supervised within communities. In order to manage the continuing increase in caseloads and ensure public safety, taking into account the varied risk levels of the offenders, supervising smarter, not harder, by using technology and new ways of thinking and working become imperative to also managing officer workloads.

Within this research report, several terms will be used to describe specific persons or professions and agencies. Offender will be used to reference any person that is or has been on some form of community supervision to include probation, parole, or another supervised or deferred release program. Officer will be used as a reference to the professional staff member assigned to supervise an offender on community supervision. Office will be used to describe the agency or location where the offender reports to and the officer's assigned work location.

Many areas of law enforcement are generously funded and can purchase the latest technological devices often with origins from military applications. Some of these innovations eventually make their way to community corrections. Most of the technological tools used today in community corrections are not actually new and have been available and deployed for several years but continue to evolve. Some of the

primary areas of technology currently being used will be explored and new uses and updates for them will be presented. New and emerging ideas and technologies will also be introduced along with the advantages and disadvantages of these tools. Lastly, the changing office environment, as a result of these technological innovations and the pandemic of 2020, will be explored.

## **Literature Review**

### **Electronic Monitoring**

One of the most dominant uses of technology in community corrections involves the utilization of electronic monitoring also known as location tracking systems by using global positioning satellites (GPS). The most modern version of this technology-based tool was first introduced in 1996. Before the use of GPS, tracking individuals was limited to monitoring only a fixed location, typically the offender's residence. Current GPS technology allows for near real-time monitoring of offenders, resulting in enhanced accountability. In 2015, a survey by the Pew Charitable Trust showed that more than 88,000 persons were supervised using some form of a location tracking system. (Incorporating Location, 2019)

In comparison, there are over 5 million adults on some form of community supervision, according to the Bureau of Justice Statistics. This population for both is likely to increase based on several states diverting defendants from prison or extended periods of incarceration to sentences that include either, solely or partially, some form of community supervision often including the condition of electronic monitoring. The incidence of these new alternative sentencing practices is referred to as the "justice reinvestment movement", where tax dollars are used more wisely by investing in community supervision. (DeMichele & Payne, 2009)

The very first use of electronic monitoring in the criminal justice field occurred in Massachusetts in 1964. It involved using repeater stations in efforts to monitor juvenile offenders in a specific geographic area. Over the span of nearly 25 years, several other prototypes were developed and by 1987, 21 states were using some form of electronic monitoring to supervise 900 offenders. Today over 20 private companies are providing electronic monitoring equipment and services in the US. Additionally, nationwide several other countries report that approximately 20 percent of their offenders are on some form of electronic monitoring. (Gable, R.K. & Gable, R.S., 2005)

A location tracking system, depending on agency needs and the types of equipment provided by a vendor, will consist of either a single unit or up to a three-piece tracking system. The standard equipment pieces will typically consist of a bracelet that is attached to the offender and may also include a secondary tracking device. The bracelet has tamper-resistant measures built-in that will generate a notification if the strap is cut or damaged. The tracking device is usually about the size of a cell phone and used in concert with the bracelet. The systems utilize both hardware and software to track the offender in near real-time and provide data points and details on a map that can be viewed by the officer and the monitoring agency or vendor. The software can be programmed with specific inclusion zones (i.e., residence, treatment) and exclusion zones (i.e., victim,

crime location) that provide for increased monitoring of the offenders' condition compliance. (Incorporating Location, 2019)

As valuable and technologically advanced as GPS and other similar location tracking systems may be, there are environments where the functionality becomes limited. One of these locations is indoors or in areas that provide a limited satellite signal. Although you may know that an offender is in an apartment complex based on the GPS data, there is no way to indicate in which specific apartment they are located. By using existing broadcast television signal towers in complement with the GPS technology determining the location within a building is achieved by calculating the time-difference-of-arrival, where positions are determined in relation to the relative time it takes a signal to reach a receiver from a tower. (Russo, 2006)

Current advances in technology allow for vast expansion and utilization of the data that is provided by the location tracking systems. Recent software innovations allow for the data (tracking points) produced by offenders to be analyzed and routine travel patterns developed thus allowing the officer to detect deviations in behaviors or activities and address any possible infractions swiftly. Additionally, law enforcement agencies have made requests to be provided with these data elements. They are provided with information on specific offenders' locations and correlate that with other data when crimes have occurred. (Incorporating Location, 2019)

An additional fault of GPS monitoring is a result of one of the benefits of the technology, the mass amounts of data available. As a result, as with any technology or innovation, the need for capable, competent, and well-trained operators is essential. Based on the plethora of data that is provided, without continuous training and workload monitoring, officers can quickly become overwhelmed and no longer take advantage of the positive attributes provided by GPS as they monitor and supervise their caseload. (Heaton, 2016)

## **Kiosks and Telephone Reporting**

For nearly 30 years, some county and state probation offices have been allowing offenders to report for supervision without ever personally seeing a probation officer face-to-face. An offender will check-in at a machine or simply call a phone number to complete the monthly reporting requirement. Offenders who are typically presented with this form of technological supervision are determined to be low-risk offenders with little to no criminal record or history of violence. In New York City, the kiosks were largely used to free up resources and initially allowed 1,000 offenders to report via the kiosks. After a short amount of time, it became evident that there were several areas of noted offender improvement as a result of the kiosks. The reporting rates increased to 85%-90% per month, compared to only 50% with the typical office reporting design. Offenders in a higher risk category who require increased supervision were provided with just that, as the officers supervising this level of offender now had a caseload ratio of 35:1, as compared to up to 200:1, which was the norm prior to employing the kiosks. (Rogers, 2012)

The need to supervise larger populations of offenders in the most effective and efficient way, while ensuring public safety is the newest challenge to state and county supervision agencies. The kiosk system allows offenders determined to be low risk, the

opportunity to report to strategically placed kiosks at any time to complete the designated tasks imposed by the officer. The offender is first identified using a pre-designated and recorded form of biometric recognition. Once the offender's identity has been confirmed, the kiosks will then allow the offender to make payments, complete any reporting requirements, receive and provide messages to their officer, and even complete a breathalyzer test. (Evans, 1995)

Offenders assigned to do telephone reporting are able to report using a designated phone number in place of a face-to-face meeting with their officer. During the offender's initial enrollment their voice biometric is established. When the offender makes the monthly reporting call, the system first verifies the offender's identity through voice recognition and responses to a series of questions. Systems can be set up to call offenders to remind them if they do not complete their report by a specific date or call them in advance and provide reminders for the monthly call or other condition related requirements. These notifications and reminders give offenders the opportunity to report and remain compliant with the conditions of their supervision. The offenders avoid missing work and even having to go to a location where a kiosk is located. (Bauer et al., 2015)

Several studies have been conducted that look at the benefits of the kiosk or telephone reporting systems as they relate to probation departments, offenders, and the community. Most studies show that officers indicated the efficiency of the reporting process assisted them in focusing their energy and resources on more serious or high-risk offenders. They also praised the integration of the data received at the kiosk or telephone systems to their agency's case management program. The agency heads of probation departments reported fiscal benefits, in that, the systems were typically provided to the agencies at no cost or the costs associated with having the kiosks and telephone reporting systems were recouped by charging the offenders with a service or usage fee. Offenders acknowledged that although there were additional costs incurred in order to participate in the systems, not having to travel and take time off work to report to the probation offices and wait in the lobbies was a great benefit, as did their employers and family members. Providing public safety is paramount to probation agencies and expected by the citizens in a community. Regarding low-risk offenders, kiosk reporting and other forms of non-contact reporting provide similar violation or re-arrest results when compared to similar risk level offenders physically reporting to a probation office. In addition to the benefits listed above, by not reporting to a probation office filled with other criminals there is a lower likelihood of exposure to negative elements or association with criminal counterparts which ultimately provide for the continued and successful reintegration of offenders back into the community. (Bauer et al., 2015)

Another added benefit observed in some areas permits offenders in violation of their supervision to have the violation disposed of by an administrative or alternative method. Instead of an offender going to jail for several weeks while awaiting a court date, they are allowed to report to the kiosk and check in daily. Depending on the location of the kiosk, if not in an office, the officer is able to determine the approximant whereabouts of the offender when they do their check-in. This allows the officer to confirm the offender remains in the community. The officer can also continue to monitor the status of the offender's court ordered conditions, such as treatment programs or GED classes. (Evans, 1995)

However, not all comments are favorable for the kiosk reporting systems. In London, England, the chief inspector of probation has concerns about this type of reporting system and stated, "(I) was not opposed to the use of technology in delivering probation, but it should complement face-to-face meetings, rather than substitute for it." She also suggests that officers need to call and remain in contact with the offenders between the kiosk reporting events in order to maintain a higher quality and personable relationship. Studies in the UK also show there is little evidence to show kiosk or telephone reporting assists in rehabilitation or improves public safety. (Probation Chief, 2019)

This is not only the case in the United Kingdom, but it is also reflected in other studies and reports conducted in the United States. Many offenders often feel detached from society as a result of their criminal behavior. Having certain offenders report to a machine, which may be interpreted as not deserving of human contact, can be a detriment to their success on supervision and reintegration back into society. (Evans, 1995)

### **Condition Monitoring Tools**

Supervising offenders is frequently thought to be home and office visits along with occasional drug testing and treatment monitoring. Some higher-level maneuvers may include searching a residence which typically involves opening closets and going through dresser drawers. Today, with the use of technology, officers are now able to also peer into an offender's computer or social media. In about thirty percent of jurisdictions in the United States, sex offenders are not allowed to have access to the internet and in turn, use social media. That means many other sex offenders can, in fact, access the internet and be active on social media. As a matter of public safety, it is essential to have the ability to search a computer belonging to a sex offender. How does this occur when most officers have no formal IT training and using local or state law enforcement agencies is not always feasible? With the use of computer search software, such as Field Search, officers can instantly and efficiently search an offender's computer and create a detailed report. The report will provide detailed information on a specific user's internet search history which also may include searches of specific images or multimedia files and the software can also do keyword searches. (Russo, 2006)

Social media monitoring is not just limited to sex offenders. The rapid increase in the use of social media, especially among younger individuals, provides a valuable tool to assist officers in the performance of their jobs. Social media sites, like Twitter, Instagram, and Facebook, provide officers with the possible whereabouts or recent activities of the offenders they are supervising. Sometimes posts may indicate that an offender has access to weapons, drugs, or is associating with other criminals. The reality may, in fact, be completely the opposite and the offender may just be sitting in their residence only fantasizing about such things and making the provocative post. Despite, what may be *much ado about nothing*, when offenders make such posts, officers should at least take measures to properly investigate the validity of the posted claims. (Sweeney, 2012; The Changing Face of Probation, 2013)

Three other emerging monitoring tools are available to assist officers in overseeing offender compliance with conditions relating to substance and alcohol abstinence, in addition to monitoring driving restrictions. The exercise of having to conduct drug testing

by urinalysis on offenders ranks near the bottom of the list of 'reasons I love my job' for officers. Luckily, there is a newly available tool that may eliminate the need for urine testing for offenders, at least as the initial screening tool. This technology uses sleep pattern analysis as a prescreening measure to determine if further testing is needed. Research has shown that there is a connection between sleep patterns and substance abuse. The use of certain controlled substances has been shown to induce sleep disorders. The offender is fitted with a tamper-resistant actigraphy device that measures sleep quality. The device is placed on a reader when the offender reports to the office, the data is analyzed, and a report is then provided to the officer and indicates if drug or alcohol use is suspected. Additional alcohol testing capabilities using ethyl glucuronide are also now available and provide information on alcohol intake up to 80 hours after consumption. Another type of alcohol test provides for a non-intrusive method using a light source, near-infrared spectroscopy, to measure alcohol content in the body tissue. The results have been shown to be comparable to other more widely used testing methods such as a breathalyzer or blood test. Lastly, offenders that are not permitted to legally drive as a result of a revoked or restricted driver license pose unique challenges to officers. Nearly three-quarters of all persons with revoked or restricted licenses continue to drive. Sensing and surveillance technology have been developed that detect body movements and compares those with similar movements that are consistent with vehicle operation. By observing and monitoring a person, as opposed to a vehicle, this technology, especially when used in conjunction with other driver monitoring tools such as the interlock device, may prove to be a solution to this frequently occurring criminal law violation. (Russo, 2006)

## **Smartphones and Case Management**

It is time that probation offices get plugged into the 21<sup>st</sup> century and distance themselves further from the traditional pen and paper. Smartphones provide some of the newest technology tools for officers to use, not only in the field but in database and case management processes. The use of smartphones by both the officer and offender can provide some relief to the increased workload experienced by many officers across the country. Several case management programs are developing apps that are available for download to smartphones. Moving away from antiquated systems to more modern voice-enabled tools will allow officers to enter notes into a case management program while in the field. (Pattavina & Corbett, 2019)

The notification, communication, and tracking advantages in using smartphones may prove to result in improved outcomes for those on supervision. Sending out reminders to offenders for appointments and other scheduled events such as treatment activities can prove to be a great benefit to ensuring offenders report as instructed and remain compliant with the terms of their supervision. Communication and notification of job fairs, hiring events, and other community resources can provide information that will assist the offender in re-entry efforts. Even a simple positive message of encouragement sent when the offender completes a required task will provide positive reinforcement. This form of incentive can help convey the sense that the officer is being supportive and assists in developing a good working relationship between the officer and the offender. In areas where access to offender cell phones is an approved practice or where cell (smart)

phones are provided to offenders, this modified version of location tracking, especially with the lower risk level offenders, can provide verification and tracking on offender status. If an offender is scheduled to attend a treatment program, the officer can be notified when the offender arrives and when they leave that location instantly instead of being informed of an absence a day or even weeks later. (Pattavina & Corbett, 2019)

With the continuous inundation of information collected using these various technological tools, a vital need is in updated case management programming and software. The data is already being collected in varied formats including field sheets, vendor reports, spreadsheets, but integrating and compiling the information will be key. In recent studies, it has been determined that software companies need to continue to develop systems where the various data sources are processed under predetermined formulas and be able to calculate offender progress and provide visuals and indicators for offenders heading for trouble or those who are on track to successful outcomes. This will assist officers with getting or using resources more wisely and effectively. (Pattavina & Corbett, 2019)

### **Smarter Offices**

By employing technology and innovation to improve operational efficiency, decreasing the amount of workspace needed for each officer while still allowing them to fully function in a safe and productive environment can now be accomplished. Removing the necessity of large lobbies can be accomplished when agencies establish partnerships with vendors that provide kiosk or telephone reporting services which can then eliminate the need for those participating offenders to report into offices each month. Utilizing modern and streamlined computers or even laptops or tablets decreases the need for ample desk space. When the need for individual offices is nearly eliminated by utilization of these devices, the transition to a cubicle and rotating office working area can be initiated. When the concept of cubicles and rotating offices are put into practice the amount of square footage needed in each office will be minimized, while still providing a safe, secure, and professional working environment. It will still allow for ample workspaces, a dedicated drug testing area, supervisor work areas, conference and training room space, a break area for staff, as well as a quiet and confidential interview area for officers and offenders. (Probation Office Pilots, 2014)

Another widely explored concept is telecommuting or teleworking, which would also allow for the decreased need for office space. Many federal and state agencies are currently utilizing telecommuting with great success. Officers can view information and update their case management programs from remote locations in the community or their home. However, officers will occasionally have to report to the office to submit their work assignments and conduct office visits with offenders. Ultimately, this allows officers the ability and flexibility to spend more time out in the field and community, supervising offenders. It also provides an increased presence in the community and allows officers can have more contact with the higher-risk offenders. Additionally, it enables agencies to experience decreases to rent and other fiscal costs, sometimes by as much as fifty percent. (Probation Office Pilots, 2014)

These new office concepts have become more typical in newer start-ups and tech-savvy companies for several years. As the workforce begins to transition from the baby-

boomers, who are accustomed to traditional workspaces and offices, to Generation Y and Z, who appreciate collaboration and mutual workspaces and thrive on technology; even in the very historically traditional office setting, like a probation office, this model is bound to flourish. (Probation Office Pilots, 2014)

## **Methods**

The purpose of this study was to get the scope of technology available in those specific areas previously discussed and inquire about other modern enhancements used and or desired across probation departments in Florida that included federal, state, and county probation offices. The population and sampling for the office locations were determined by systematic sampling of 15% of the 67 Florida counties or more specifically, every seventh county in an alphabetical list.

Data was gathered through surveys provided to agencies and accessed via the internet using Survey Monkey. The survey was sent to ten county probation offices that supervise adult misdemeanants, specifically located offices in all three districts of (Federal) U.S. Probation in Florida, and ten circuit probation offices within all four regions in the Florida Department of Corrections (FDC), Office of Community Corrections. The latter two agencies supervise both felony and misdemeanor offenders. The locations were determined by the geographic sampling results. Data was gathered from all levels of staff that supervise offenders, other subordinates, and supervisors in each of these locations, to get a broad spectrum of responses based on the participants' current job description. Survey questions were designed to allow the maximum number of respondents to participate in the entire survey by allowing some open-ended responses to questions for those participants that currently do not have some of the subject areas (tools, technology, etc.) available to them, but would like to have them offered by their agency.

The initial introductory questions were incorporated into the survey so results can be separated and further analyzed by agency, current position, and length of service in the criminal justice field, along with the length of time the respondents have been with their current agency.

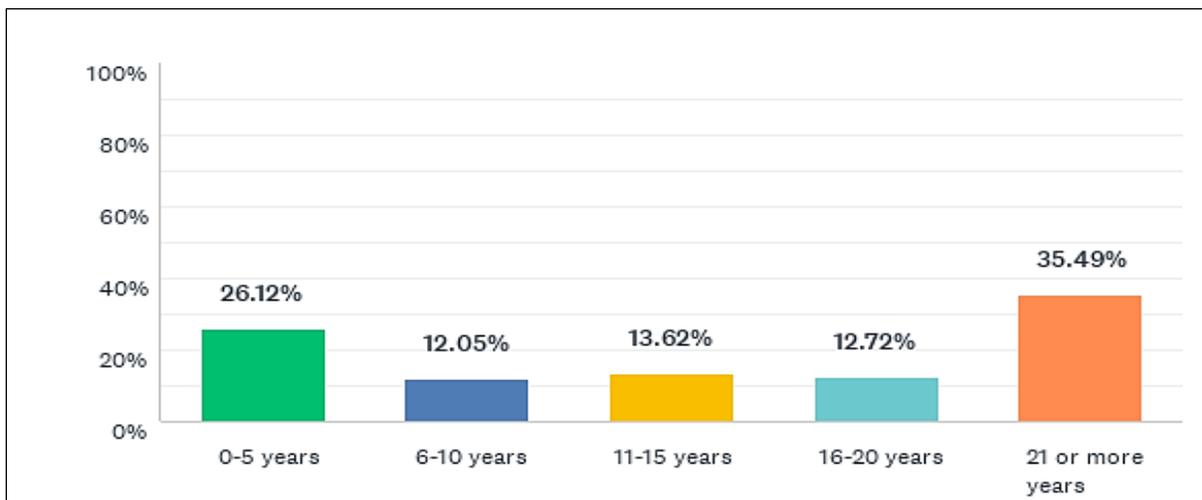
The survey was also anonymous to provide respondents with a level of comfort and encourage candid and truthful responses and to increase the level of returned surveys. The survey did have weaknesses in that, information on disadvantages in certain topic areas was not collected, only the advantages or benefits. Additionally, there was a limited, although varied surveyed population, so data collected was limited to the specific geographical locales and agencies surveyed.

## **Results**

The survey was sent to 594 persons employed in private, county, state, and federal probation offices. The response rate was 75%, 448 surveys were completed and returned. Some questions were skipped either by the logic within the survey or by the election of the respondents.

The initial questions in the survey were to gauge the respondent's level of experience in the criminal justice profession and in their respective agencies. The other introductory questions also inquired as to what agency they were currently employed with and their position within that agency. As a response to the first question, most respondents (35.49%) have twenty-one or more years of criminal justice experience, which includes law enforcement, corrections, or supervision. The second largest group has five years or less experience (26.12%), and the remaining respondents had between six-ten years (12.05%), eleven-fifteen years (13.62%), and sixteen-twenty years (12.72%) of overall criminal justice experience.

TABLE 1/Question 1: Years in the field of criminal justice



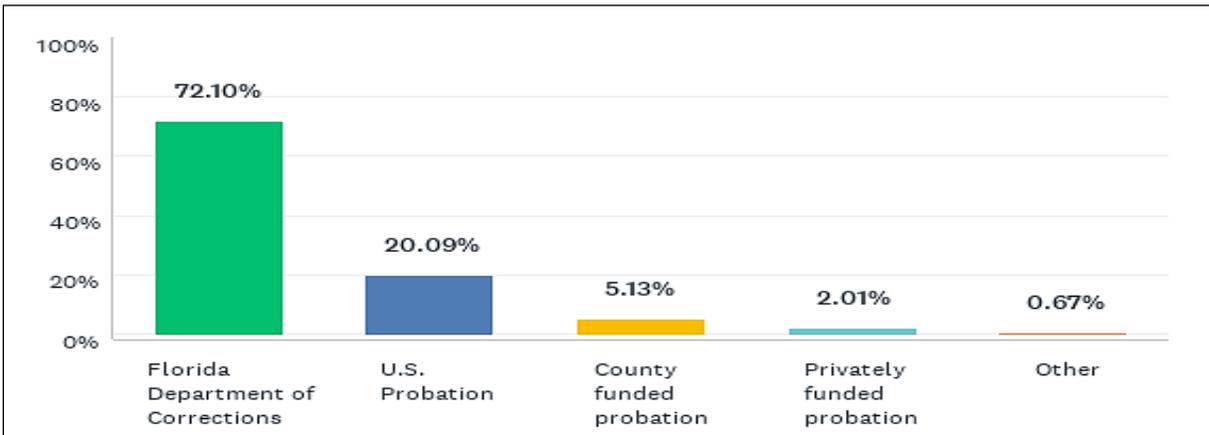
Question two inquired about their current agency.

- 323 (72.10%) advised they work for the Florida Department of Corrections
- 90 (20.09%) advised they work for U.S. Probation
- 23 (5.13%) advised they work for a county funded probation office
- 9 (2.01%) advised they work for a privately funded probation office
- 3 (.67%) advised of Other; this includes non-profit and/or county per comments provided

As an aside, actual response rate by agency:

- 76% for private, county, and other related agencies
- 71% for the Florida Department of Corrections
- 96% for U.S. Probation

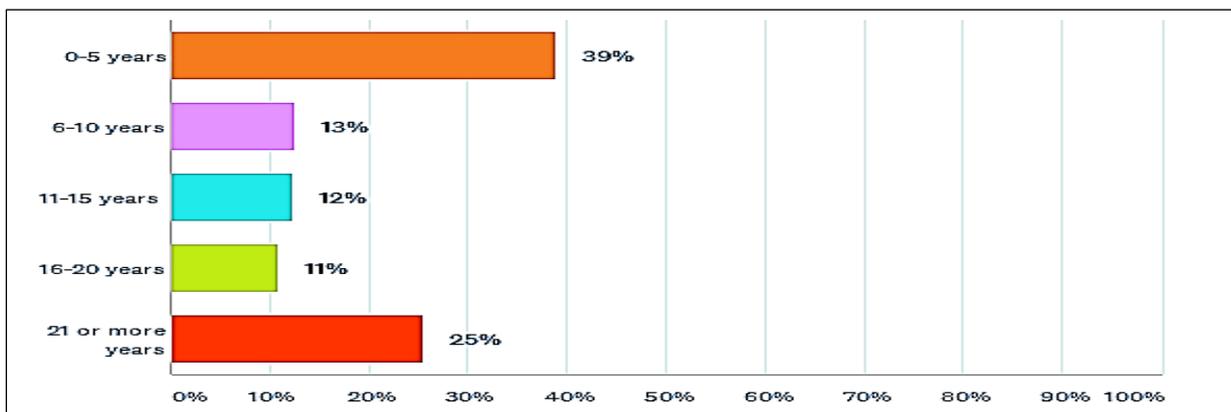
TABLE 2/Question 2: Current agency



Question three inquired about their time employed with that agency.

- 174 (39%) respondents stated they have been with their current agency 0-5 years
- 56 (13%) respondents stated they have been with their current agency 6-10 years
- 55 (12%) respondents stated they have been with their current agency 11-15 years
- 49 (11%) respondents stated they have been with their current agency 16-20 years
- 114 (25%) respondents stated they have been with their current agency 21 or more years

TABLE 3/Question 3: Years employed with current agency

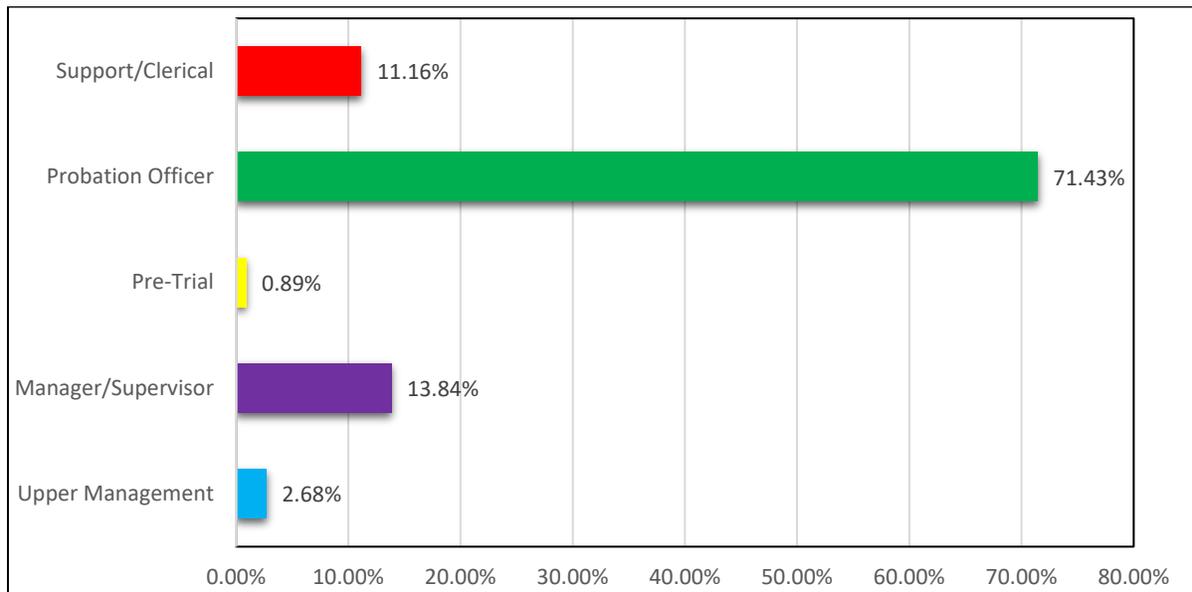


The final question in the introductory section, question four, was open-ended and asked each respondent to identify their current position. The results outlined below are a summary of the replies provided. The support/clerical positions include, but are not solely limited to, field office managers, administrative assistants, support staff, and probation

and parole specialists. Probation officer includes all levels within each agency (i.e., senior, specialist, trainee, etc.). The upper management category includes all those identifying in a senior leadership or a non-supervisory position with respect to field/line staff.

- 50 (11.16%) respondents identified as being in a support/clerical position
- 320 (71.43%) respondents identified as being in a probation officer position
- 4 (.89%) respondents identified as being in a pre-trial position
- 62 (13.84%) respondents identified as being in a supervisor position
- 12 (2.68%) respondents identified as being in an upper management position

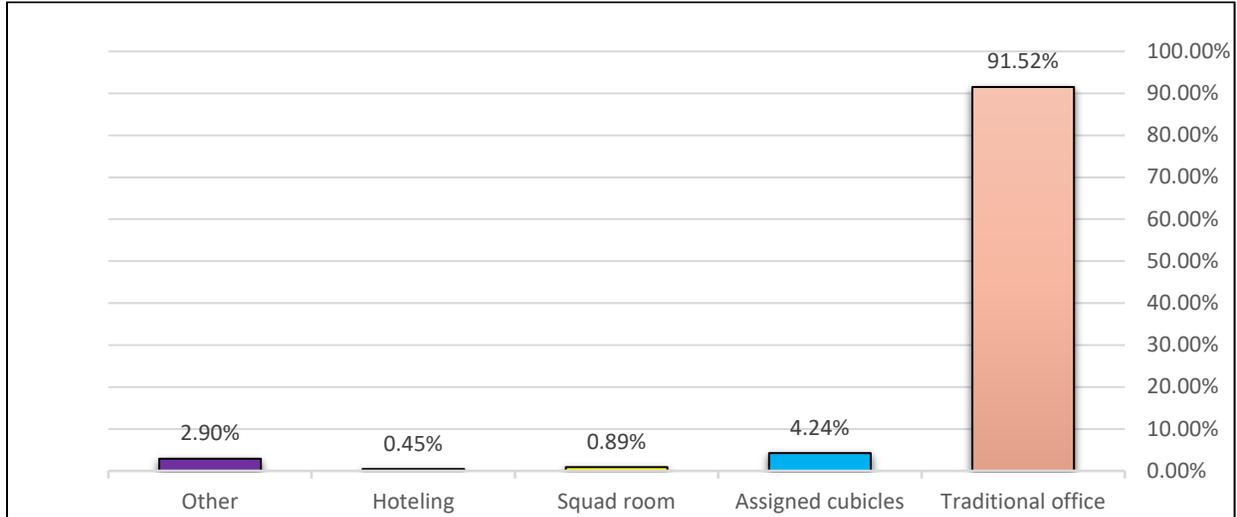
TABLE 4/Question 4: Current position



The next group of questions inquire about work environments and teleworking. In question five, respondents described their office environment in one of four categories or provided an “other” response with additional details.

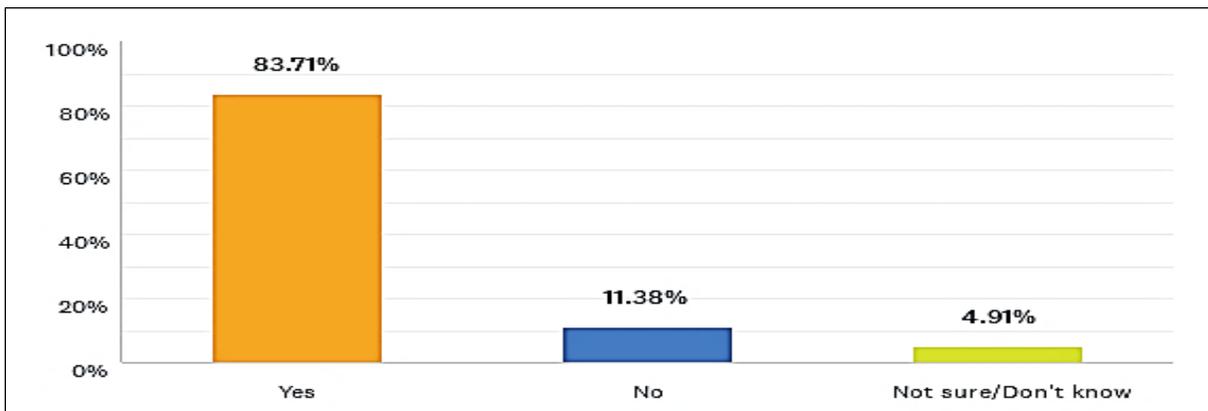
- 410 (91.52%) report working in a traditional office (walls, doors, hallways, etc.)
- 19 (4.24%) report working in assigned cubicles
- 4 (.89%) report working in a squad room or a rotating workspace
- 2 (.45%) report working in a “hotel” setting (internet/network workstations, no assigned space)
- 13 (2.90%) report working in an “other” type of environment

TABLE 5/Question 5: Office environment



Respondents were also asked if their agency allowed for teleworking or home-based working and lastly if they were currently teleworking. The latter question included results from only those that responded yes to question six. In question six, 375 (83.71%) respondents report their agency allows for teleworking and there was a combined total of 73 respondents that answered either no (11.38%) or not sure (4.91%) which then obliged them to skip the next question due to the survey logic.

TABLE 6/Question 6: Agency allows for teleworking

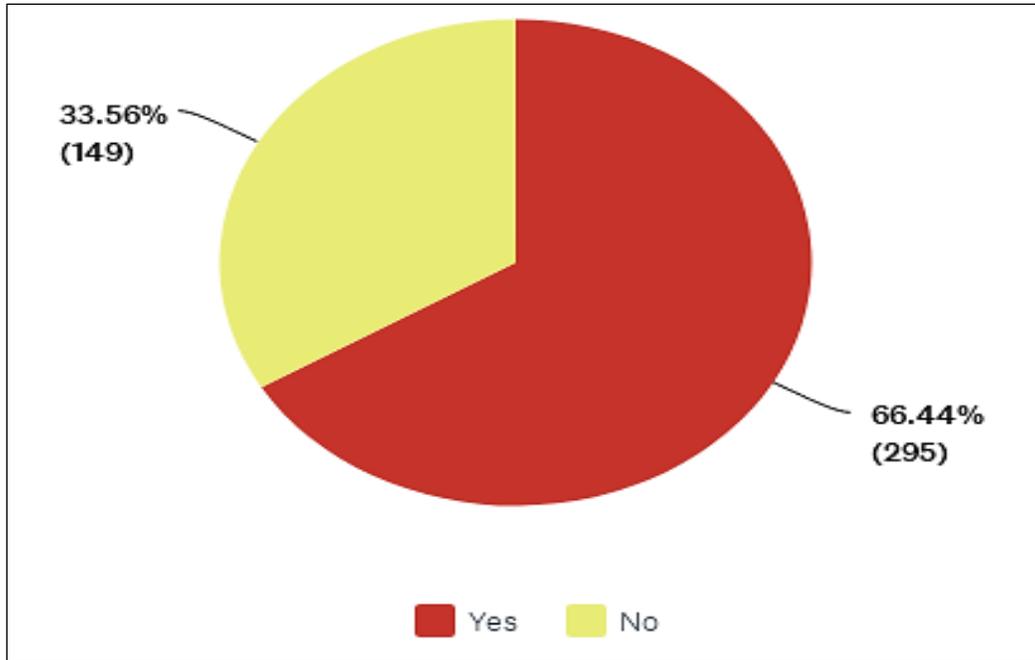


As to question seven, of the 83.71% of respondents to report their agency allows for teleworking, the responses were nearly split right down the middle (49.60% responded yes and 50.40% responded no) to currently teleworking (either full or part-time).

The next eleven questions allow the respondents to provide insight into the tools and technological devices they may use or are familiar with while partaking in their duties. Questions eight through twelve deal with electronic monitoring or location monitoring of offenders on supervision. In question eight, several respondents, 295 (66.44%), reported

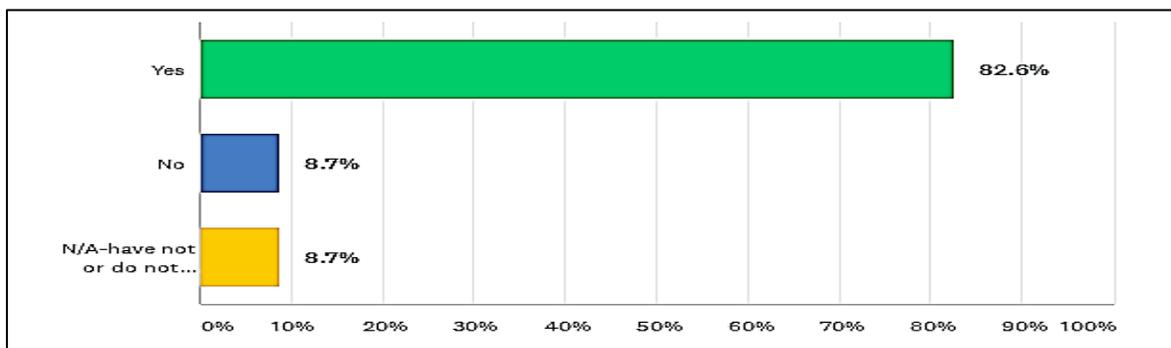
having experience with electronic monitoring systems in their current agency, 149 (33.56%) reported not having experience, and the question was skipped by four people.

TABLE 7/Question 8: Experience with electronic monitoring



For question nine, of the 295 that responded affirmatively to question eight and an additional three respondents that purposely skipped the previous question, resulting in 298 total responses, 246 (82.6%) reported currently using or previously using electronic monitoring with the offenders they supervise. Exactly 26 persons (8.7%) responded to both, not using electronic monitoring currently and N/A (not applicable)-have not or do not supervise offenders. There were 150 people that skipped this question, 149 were as a result of their no answer to the previous question along with the remaining respondent that skipped question eight.

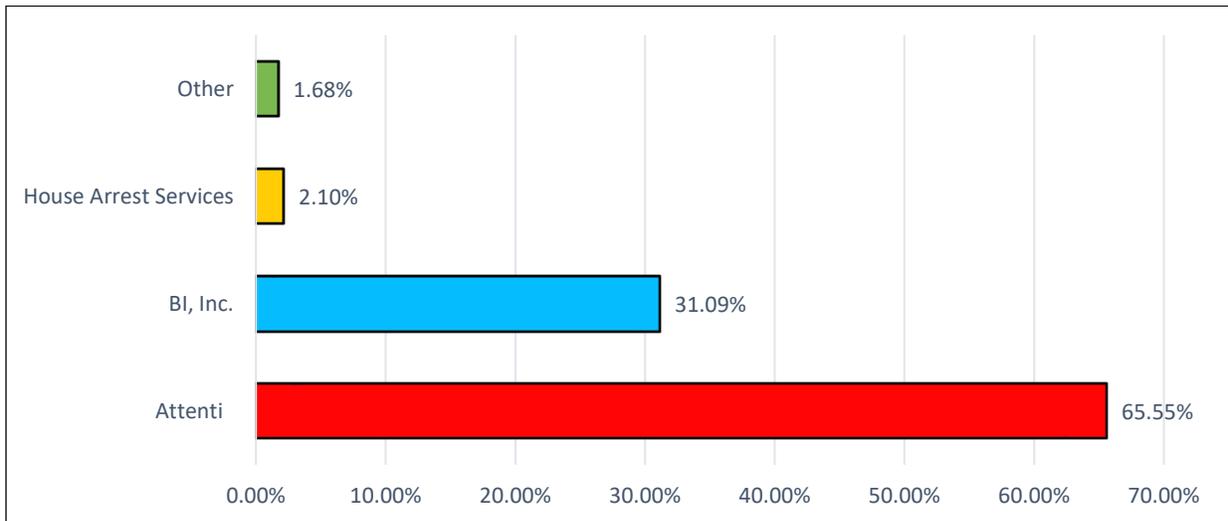
TABLE 8/Question 9: Currently using electronic monitoring



Question 10 inquired about the current electronic monitoring vendor used in their agency. Of the 246 respondents that were asked this question, nine chose to skip the question. One respondent provided multiple vendors.

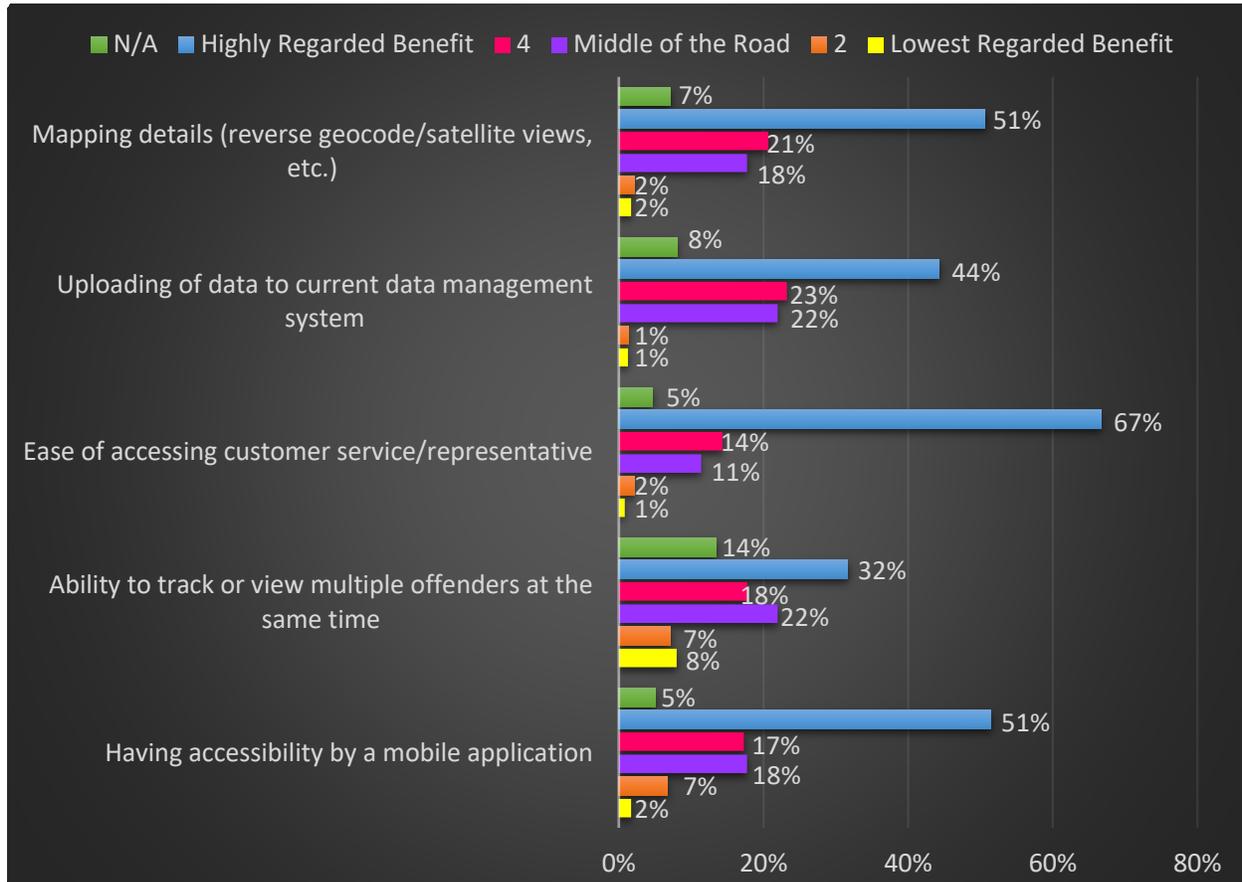
- 156 (65.55%) responded with Attenti
- 74 (31.09%) responded BI, Incorporated
- 5 (2.10%) responded House Arrest Services
- 4 (1.68%) responded Other

TABLE 9/Question 10: Electronic monitoring vendor



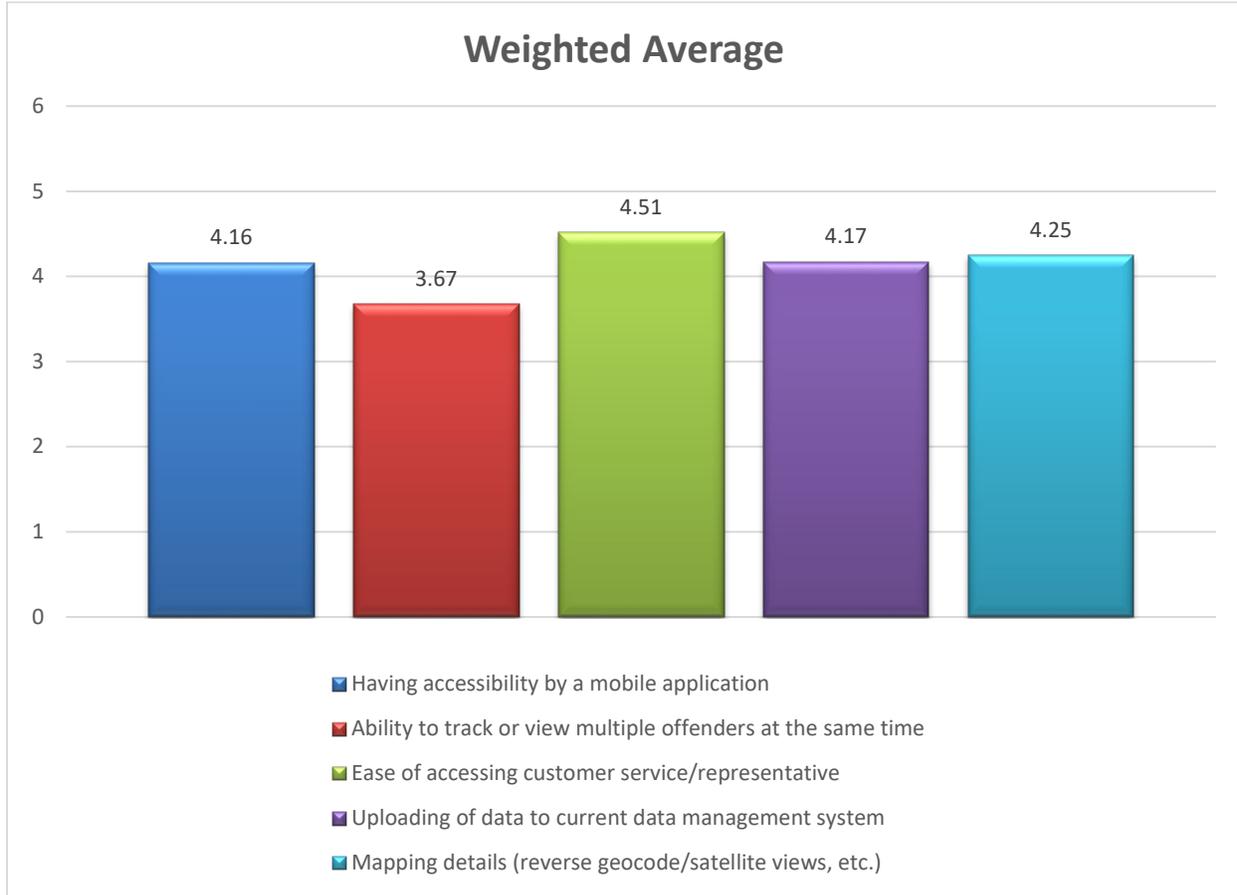
Question 11 asked respondents to rate the five features or benefits provided by their current electronic monitoring system or vendor. One eligible respondent skipped this question. If the vendor does not provide the listed feature, they were asked to mark it as N/A (not applicable). Individually, the most highly regarded benefit is the ease of accessing customer service or a vendor representative. The lowest regarded and the most non-available identified benefit, based on the percentage of responses, is the ability to track multiple offenders at the same time.

TABLE 10/Question 11: Features of the electronic monitoring system



Each level of response had a numerical or weighted value assigned to it. The scale and ranking were as follows: Lowest regarded benefit (1), Middle of the Road (3), Highly regarded benefit (5), N/A (0). When the responses were weighted and then averaged, they all were close in overall totals. The weighted results are nearly identical to those shown above. The highest weighted average benefit is the ease of accessing customer service or a vendor representative (4.51) and the lowest weighted average benefit is the ability to track multiple offenders at the same time (3.67).

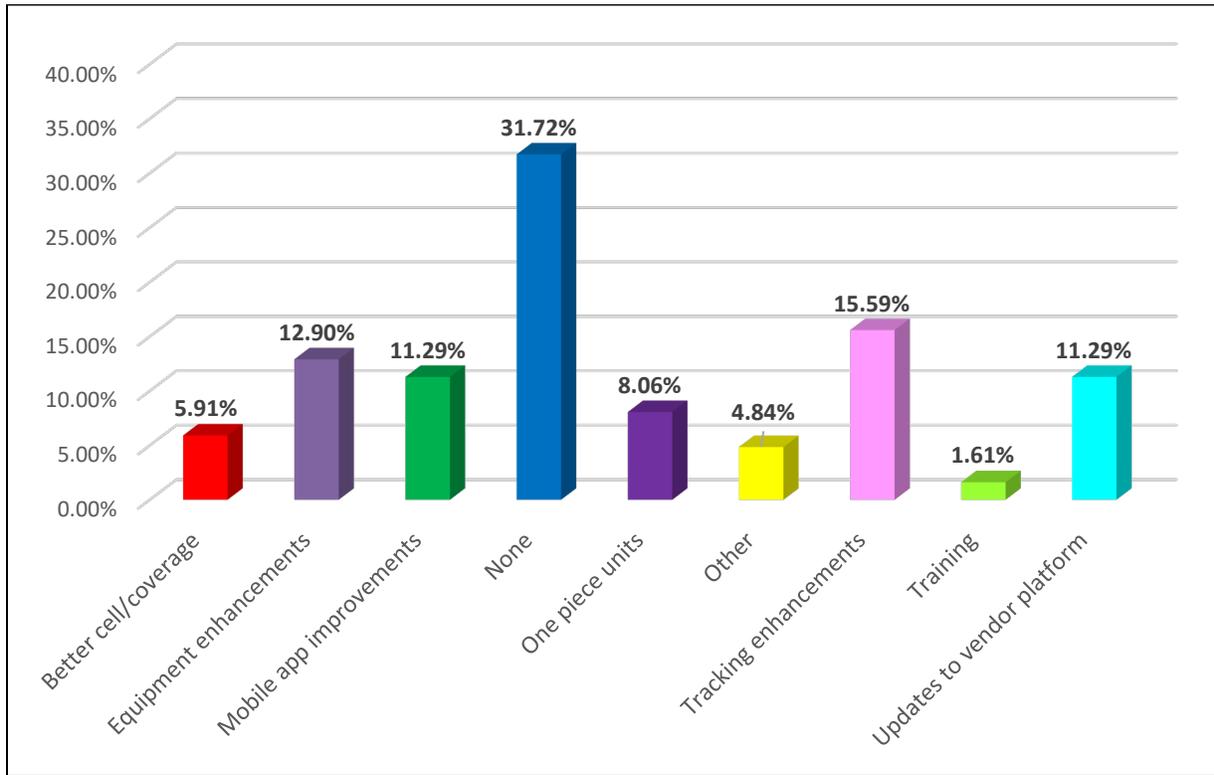
TABLE 11/Question 11: Weighted average of responses



The last question in the electronic monitoring category, question 12, was an open-ended question that asked respondents to provide any service or feature they want to see provided by their current vendor. The answers varied in length and specificity. Some responses contained more than one feature. The responses were tagged and categorized by specific topics and may include more than one category. This question was available to 246 respondents, and sixty respondents skipped the question.

- 59 (31.72%) of individuals reported None
- 11 (5.91%) of individuals reported better cell/coverage
- 24 (12.90%) of individuals reported equipment enhancements
- 21 (11.29%) of individuals reported mobile app improvements
- 15 (8.06%) of individuals reported one-piece units
- 29 (15.59%) of individuals reported tracking enhancements
- 3 (1.61%) of individuals reported training
- 21 (11.29%) of individuals reported updates to the vendor platform
- 9 (4.84%) of individuals reported “other”

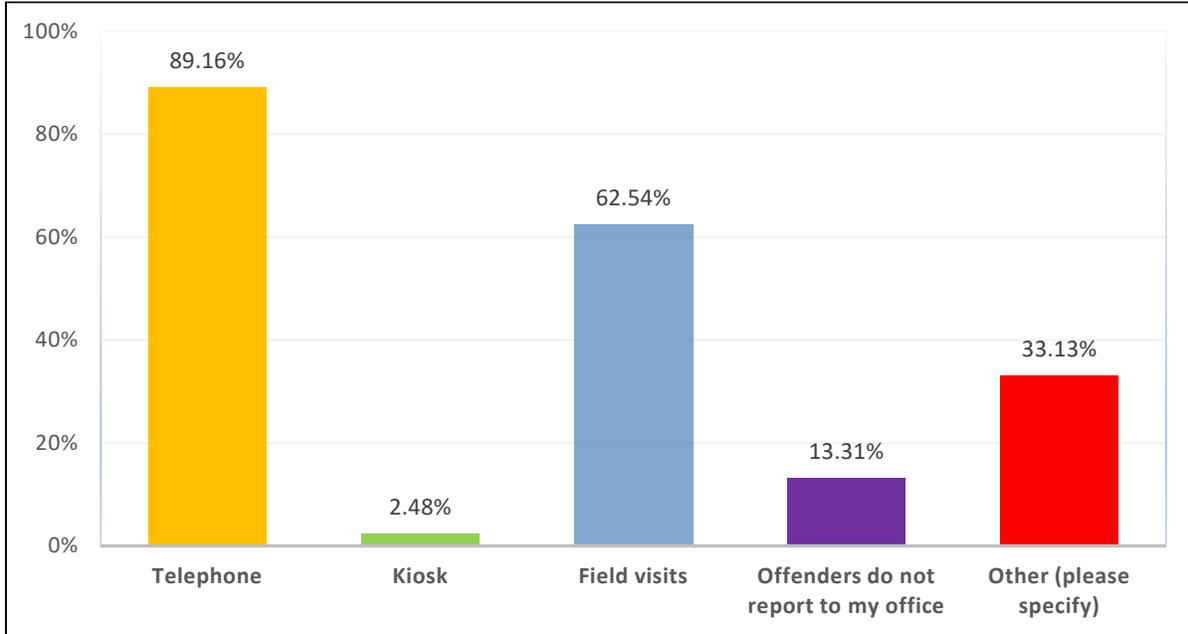
TABLE 12/Question 12: Service or feature requested-electronic monitoring



The next four questions, 13 through 16, inquire about alternative methods or systems for office reporting. Question 13 asked specifically if the respondents had an alternative method to traditional office reporting used in their office. Nearly all participants answered this question, it was skipped by eight individuals. An affirmative response was provided by 331 (75.23%) of respondents, 57 (12.95%) advised their office does not use an alternative method to office reporting, and 52 (11.82%) provided a not applicable (N/A) response. The follow-up question, 14, was to describe the type(s) of alternative office reporting system(s) used with the option to choose all that apply. Responses from the 339 eligible respondents (sixteen people did skip this question) are detailed below.

- 288 (89.16%) advise they use a telephone reporting system
- 8 (2.48%) advise they use a kiosk reporting system
- 202 (62.54%) advise they use field visits in lieu of office reporting
- 43 (13.31%) advise offenders do not report into their office
- 107 (33.13%) advise an “other” method of reporting

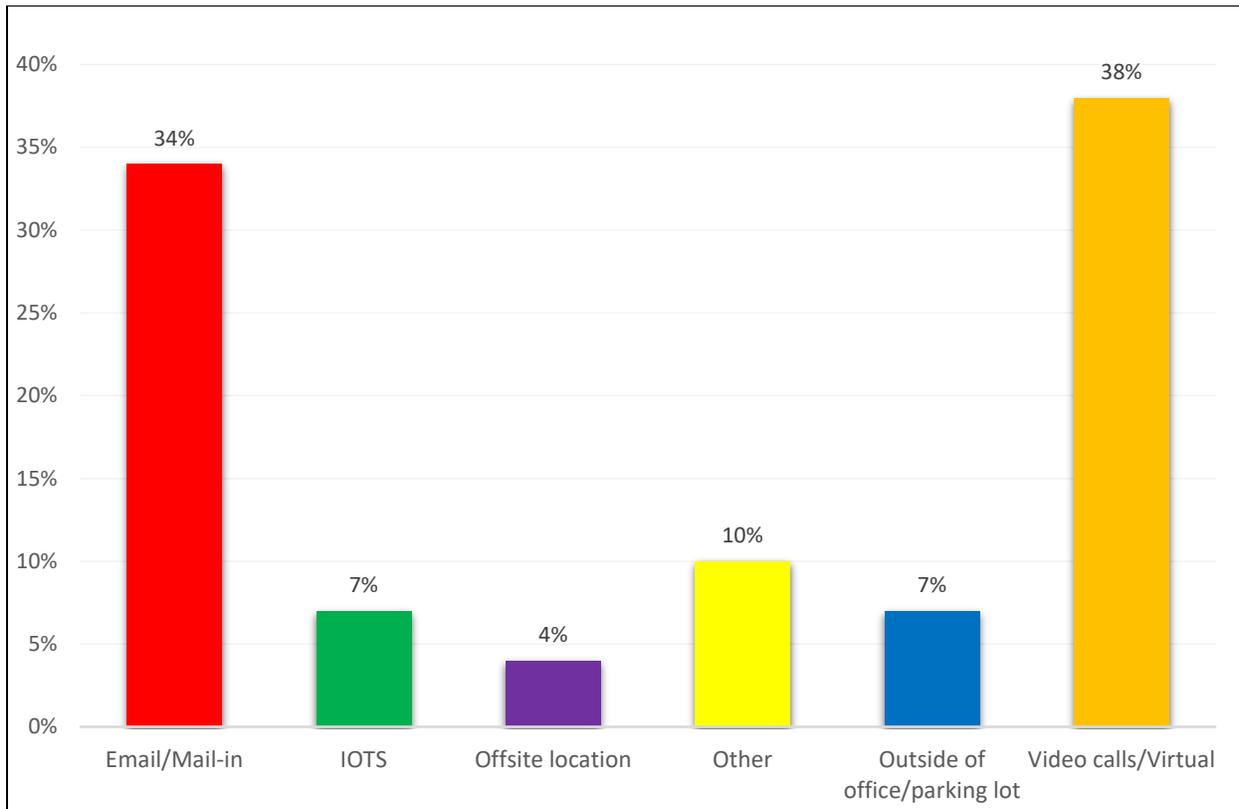
TABLE 13/Question 14: Type of alternative method of office reporting



A breakdown of the “other” category shows six groupings compiled from the open-ended comments that were provided by all 107 respondents.

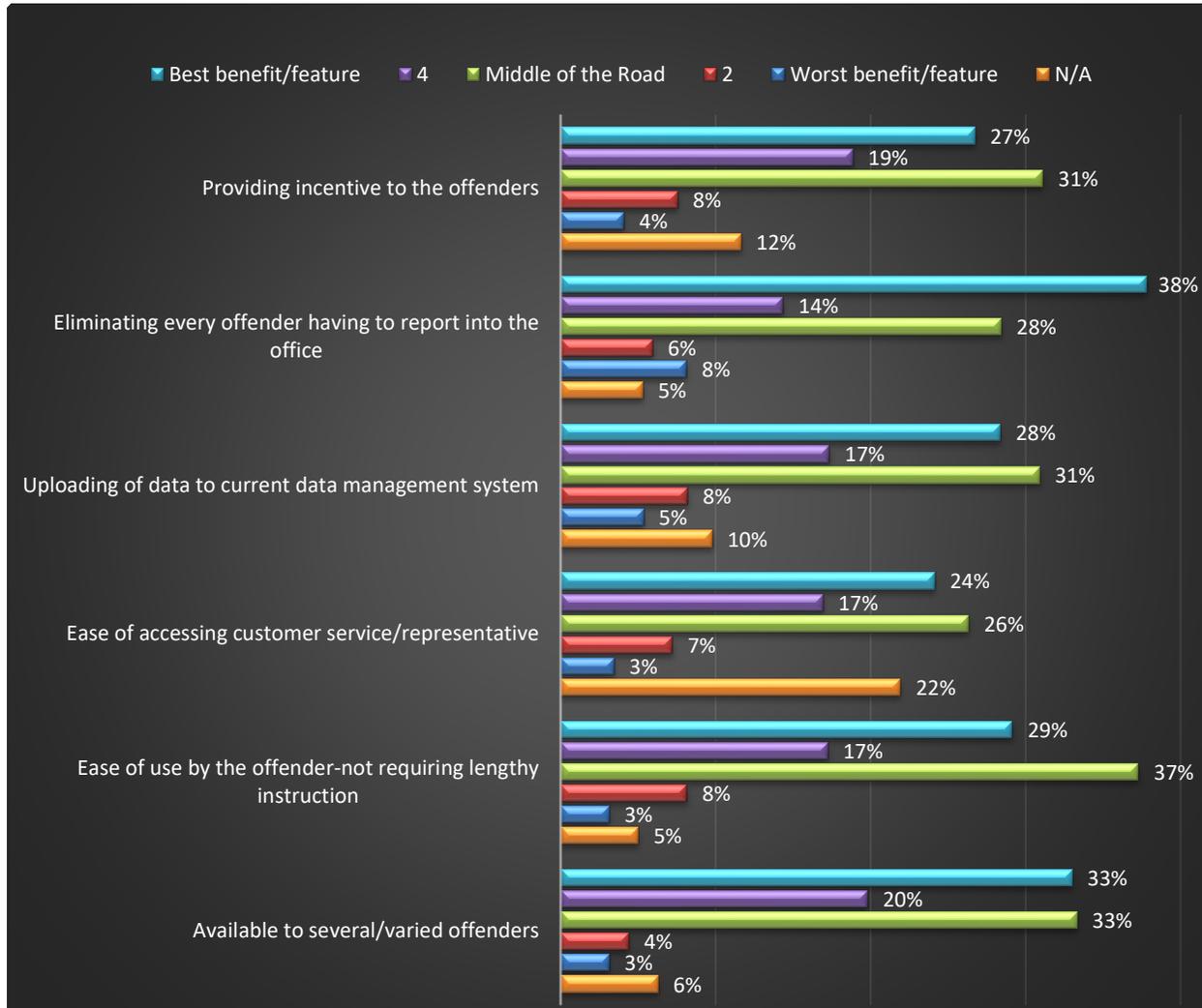
- 36 (34%) responded that they do email or mail-in
- 7 (7%) responded that they do IOTS (vendor supported telephone reporting system)
- 4 (4%) responded that they do offsite locations
- 11 (10%) responded that they do “other”
- 8 (7%) responded that they do outside of the office (parking lot)
- 41 (38%) responded that they do video calls or virtual reporting

TABLE 14/Question 14: “Other” types of alternative methods of officer reporting



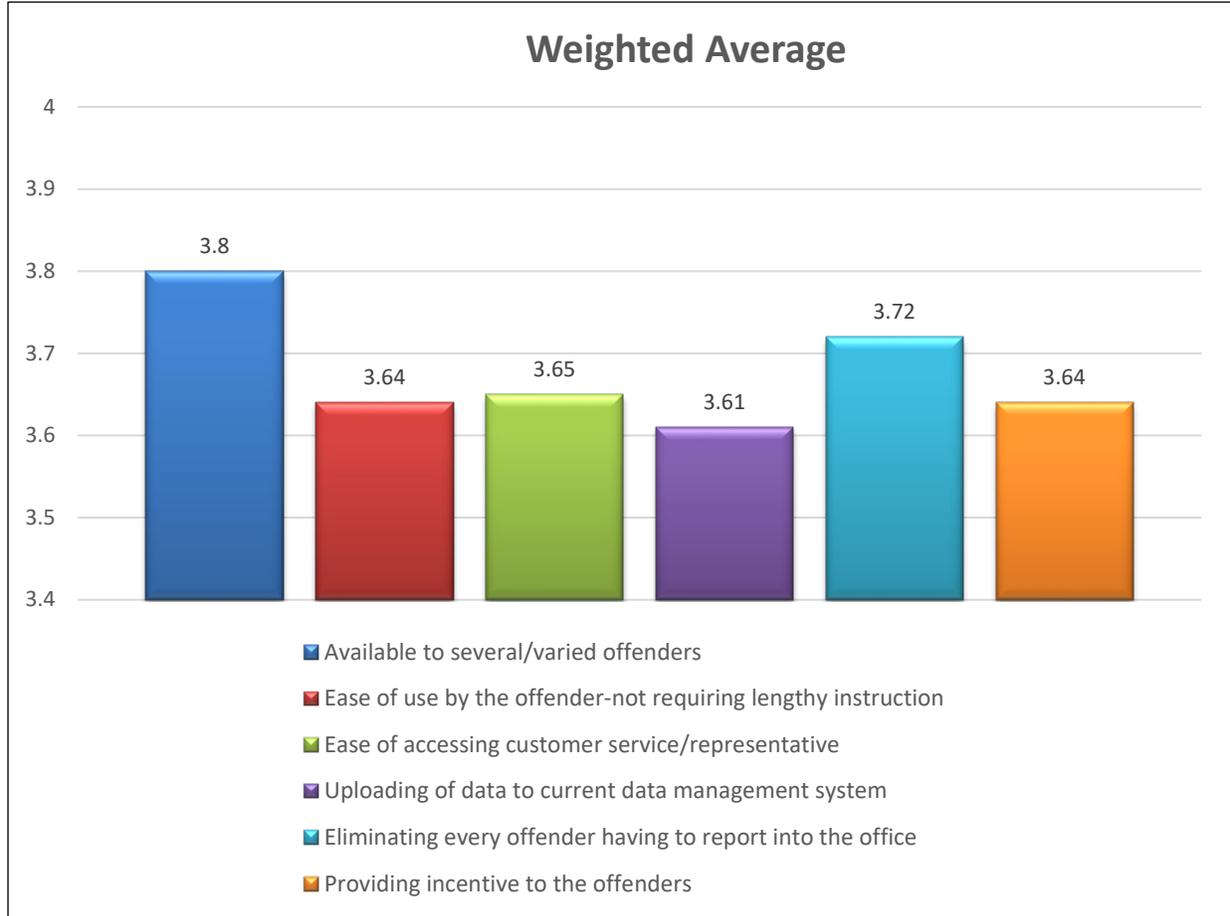
Question 15 asked respondents to rate six features of the current primary alternative office reporting process used in their office. Ten eligible respondents skipped this question. If the reporting process does provide for or include the listed feature, they were asked to mark it as N/A (not applicable). Looking at each category individually, the most highly regarded benefit is eliminating every offender from having to report into the office. The lowest regarded benefit, based on the percentage of responses, is a three-way tie that includes: ease of accessing customer service or a representative, ease of use by the offender in that it does not require lengthy instruction, and being available to several/varied offenders. The most noted non-available feature, based on the percentage of responses, is the ease of accessing customer service or a representative.

TABLE 15/Question 15: Features of the alternative office reporting process



As with question 11, each level of response had a numerical or weighted value assigned to it. The scale and ranking were as follows: Lowest regarded benefit (1), Middle of the Road (3), Highly regarded benefit (5), N/A (0). When the responses were weighted and then averaged, they all were close in overall totals. These results are nearly identical to those shown above. The highest weighted average benefit is it being available to several/varied offenders (3.80) and the lowest weighted average benefit is uploading of data to the current data (case) management system (3.61).

TABLE 16/Question 15: Weighted average of responses

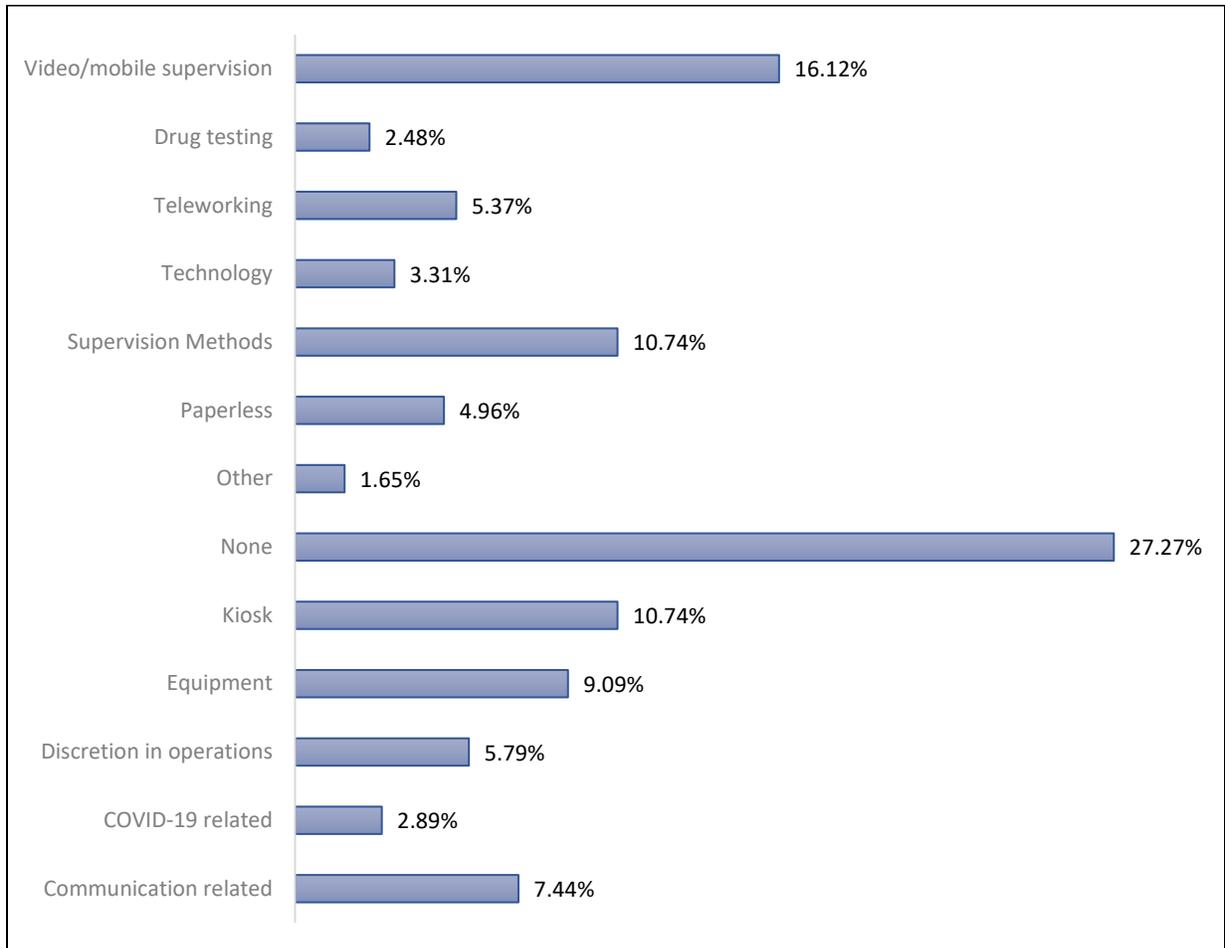


The last question in this topic area was an open-ended question that asked respondents to list any enhancement they want to see added to their current alternative office reporting process. The answers varied for question 16 in length and specificity. Some responses contained more than one feature. The responses were tagged and categorized by specific topics and may include more than one category. This question was available to 331 respondents, and 89 eligible respondents skipped the question.

- 39 (16.21%) stated allowing for video or mobile supervision
- 6 (2.48%) stated changes to the substance abuse testing process
- 13 (5.37%) stated updates to the teleworking process
- 8 (3.31%) stated technology related enhancements
- 26 (10.74%) stated changes to supervision methods
- 12 (4.96%) stated going paperless
- 4 (1.65%) are categorized as “other” responses
- 66 (27.27%) stated no enhancements were needed
- 26 (10.74%) stated a kiosk system
- 22 (9.09%) stated equipment related changes
- 14 (5.79%) stated a change in the discretion with operations

- 7 (2.89%) stated responses in relation to COVID-19
- 18 (7.44%) stated communication related changes

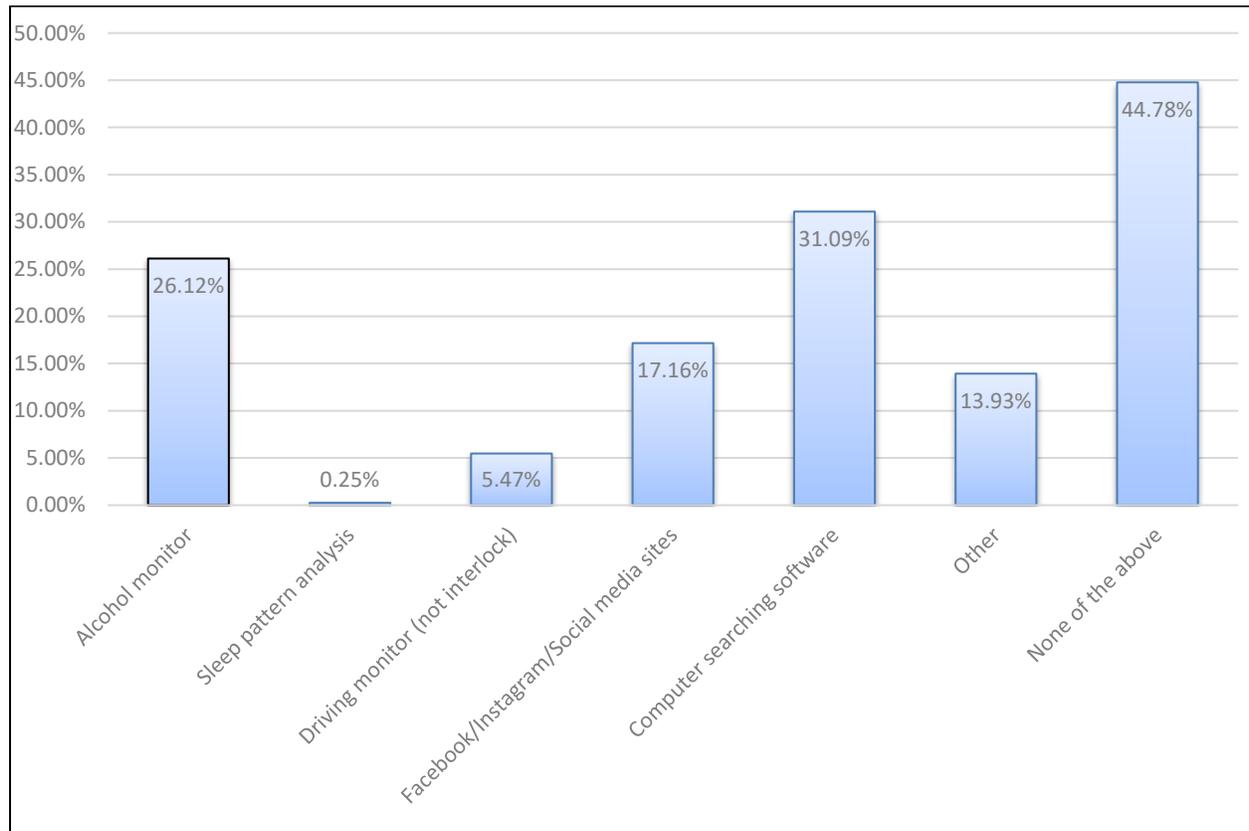
TABLE 17/Question 16: Enhancement to alternative office reporting method



Question 17 asked respondents to identify what offender monitoring tools were currently used in their agencies, with the option to choose all that apply. The question was skipped by 46 persons.

- 105 (26.12%) identified alcohol monitoring
- 1 (.25%) identified sleep pattern analysis
- 22 (5.47) identified driving monitoring (to not include the interlock or similar device)
- 69 (17.16%) identified social media (Facebook, Instagram, etc.)
- 125 (31.09%) identified computer searching software
- 56 (13.93%) identified an “other” type of monitoring tool
- 180 (44.78%) identified none of the above

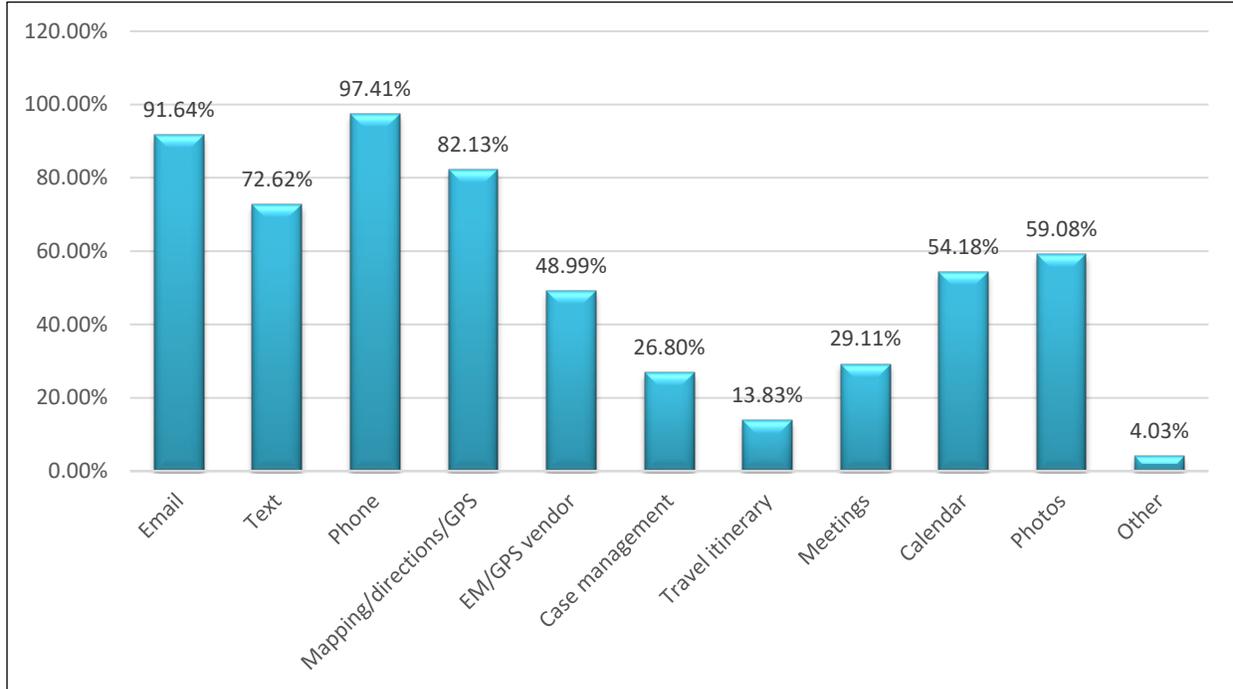
TABLE 18/Question 17: Offender monitoring tools



Questions 18 and 19 inquired about smartphone issuance and functions used within the phone for supervision purposes. All but twenty respondents answered question 18 and an overwhelming majority, 343 (80.14%) stated they are issued a smartphone by their agency, 80 (18.69%) stated they are not, and 5 (1.17%) provided an “other” response and they were allowed to also answer question 19. Of the 348 eligible individuals, all but one responded to question 19, which asked them to select any of the listed operational functions they use on their agency issued smartphone.

- 318 (91.64%) stated they use the phone for email
- 252 (72.62%) stated they use the phone for texting
- 338 (97.41%) stated they use the phone for phone calls
- 285 (82.13%) stated they use the phone for mapping/directions/GPS
- 170 (48.99%) stated they use the phone for accessing their EM/GPS vendor
- 93 (26.80%) stated they use the phone for case management
- 48 (13.83%) stated they use the phone for creating a travel itinerary
- 101 (29.11%) stated they use the phone for virtual meetings
- 188 (54.18%) stated they use the phone for calendaring
- 205 (59.08%) stated they use the phone for photos
- 14 (4.03%) stated they use the phone for “other” reasons not listed above

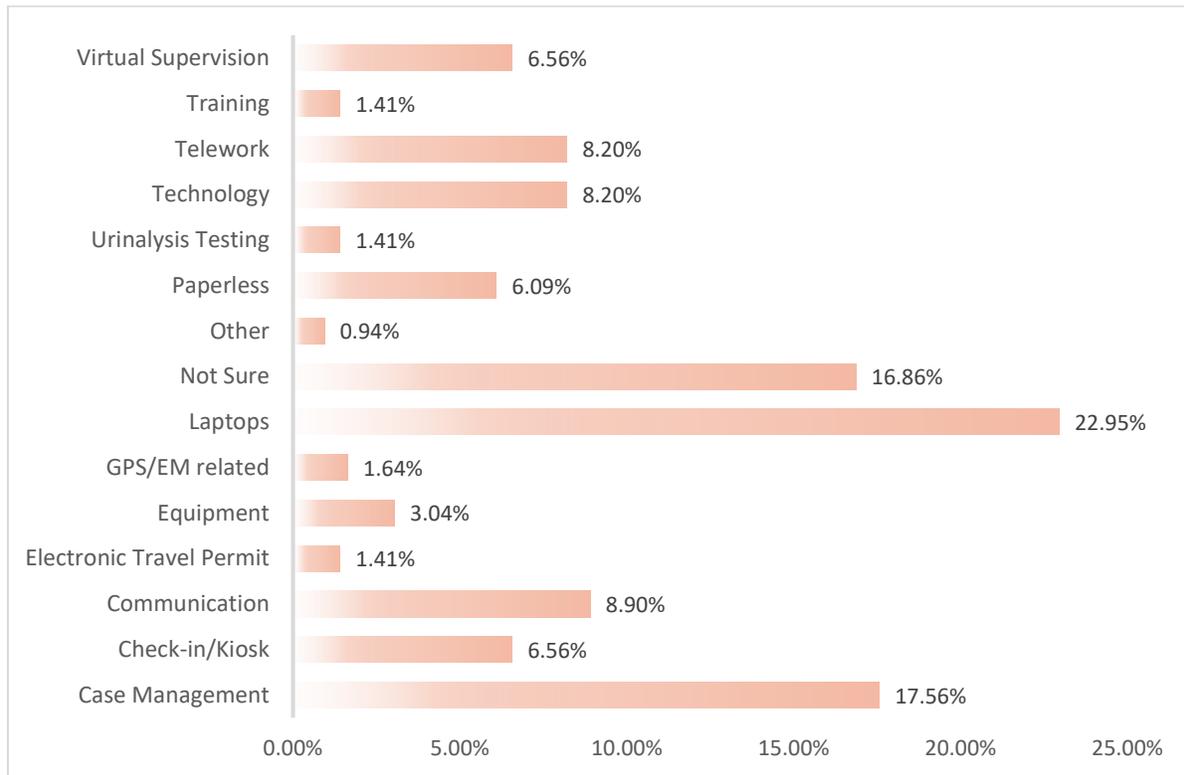
TABLE 19/Question 19: Smartphone operational tools



Question 20, the final question in the survey, was an open-ended question that asked respondents to provide the number one technological advancement they would like to have available within their agency in the next two years. The answers were often not limited to just one advancement and varied in length and specificity. The responses were tagged and categorized by specific topics and may include more than one category. This question was available to all respondents, and 21 respondents skipped the question.

- 28 (6.56%) responded they would like to be able to conduct supervision virtually
- 6 (1.41%) responded they would like to see updates or changes in training
- 35 (8.20%) responded they would like to have the ability to telework
- 35 (8.20%) responded they would like to have technology advancements
- 6 (1.41%) responded they would like to have changes in urinalysis testing
- 26 (6.09%) responded they would like to go paperless
- 4 (.94%) responded with an “other” or uncategorized topic
- 72 (16.86%) responded that they did not have any recommendations
- 98 (22.95%) responded they would like laptops or tablets
- 7 (1.64%) responded they would like changes to the electronic monitoring system
- 13 (3.04%) responded they would like equipment updates or changes
- 6 (1.41%) responded they would like to have an electronic travel itinerary
- 38 (8.90%) responded they would like to have updates to communication systems
- 28 (6.56%) responded they would like to have an offender check-in device or kiosk
- 75 (17.56%) responded they would like to have updates to their case management system

TABLE 20/Question 20: Technological advancement desired



### Discussion

It needs to be noted as a disclaimer regarding the survey results noted above and any further discussion, for the purpose of historical significance and complete transparency, the survey was completed during the COVID-19 pandemic of 2020. The responses provided were largely motivated by the current work environment that included remote working, large numbers of staff out of the office for multiple reasons, and a change in mindset about how daily tasks should or could be done.

Based on these implications, the responses provided by the surveyed individuals may not have been observed in a different time and place. The availability of teleworking has now largely become a familiar mechanism for all different professions as a means to continue functioning despite the requirements for social distancing and ensuring for staff's health and well-being. The final question showed that a possible reason for the number of surveyed respondents not being able to telework may be the result of them not having a laptop or other mobile computing device and thus additionally amounting to the largest requested technological advancement. The largest identified agency group that does not allow for teleworking were those in the privately funded agencies with two-thirds responding their agency does not allow for teleworking.

As teleworking continues to be revered by employees and becomes more widely accepted by most supervisors and those in upper management, the need for large offices

will become obviously superfluous. In all agencies surveyed, nearly 90% of respondents still report being in large traditional offices or cubicle work areas. Although, the county and private sector agencies were somewhat less. The word cubicle is now wrought with thoughts of an unhealthy and unwanted work environment. It may have previously been thought of as the office concept of the future, but now will likely see its extinction in this current environment. As leases reach their expiration, discussions focusing on the need to no longer invest dollars in brick and mortar and move funding more to the area of technology will hopefully begin to take off.

Another area impacted by COVID-19, in relation to responses, was with the alternatives to offender office reporting. When looking individually at each agency, none of them reported less than 70% when affirming an alternative method to office reporting. The question was possibly either misinterpreted or not fully comprehended around the fog of the pandemic. The question was intended to determine, in line with the research conducted, how many agencies have kiosks or other methods for offenders to report into an office outside of the traditional office reporting structure. Aside from the suspected telephone and field contacts, when looking closer at the other responses, over 53% report having offenders mail-in or email their monthly reports.

To dare stay it is a silver lining and may lead to the possibility, as a result of the pandemic, that these diverse Florida probation agencies use the experiences and experiments that resulted from the immediate and forced need to change what they were doing to adapt to the “new normal” as a springboard that may ultimately allow them to move forward with new ways of supervising. The perceived need for the laboring office appointment will now be unnecessary and the evolution to virtual reporting or expanding the use of kiosks or telephone reporting systems can now be the “new normal”. In most agencies, there is at least one-third of the reporting offender population that would be deemed low-risk/low needs. This specific group would likely be the benefactors of this new technological form of supervision.

Moving away from the responses and data collected that were possibly impacted by the pandemic, looking closer at the results regarding the electronic monitoring vendors, most survey participants appear to be generally pleased with the service and performance of the electronic monitoring equipment and the vendor currently contracting with their agency. When you look further into each agency, the results become more specific as to the service or feature where changes were requested. Two of the largest requests are updates to the mobile app and the vendor platform. With now nearly a quarter-million offenders on an electronic monitoring system nationwide, the need to provide ease of use and access to the clients and customers that use it daily is paramount.

It is unfortunate that many respondents identified that they and their agency are not using any of the condition monitoring tools listed in the survey. The two most widely reported used monitoring tools are alcohol monitoring technologies and computer searching software. Interestingly, many of the respondents also provided comments and advised they would like to have all the monitoring tools listed and specifically the ability to conduct searches on the offender’s computers. Likely, as a result of COVID-19, saliva-based drug testing was also widely reported as a new tool.

One of the most surprising results of the survey was that the private probation offices do not issue smartphones to their staff and under twenty percent of those in the county probation offices reported being issued phones. The use of these essentially hand-

held computers is expanding and what features are most commonly used outside of the typical text, phone, mapping, email, calendars, and photos; in one agency is case management and meetings, other agencies also use it for checking offenders on electronic monitoring. Several vendors in varied areas of offender case management, electronic monitoring and tracking, decision support engines, among others, include apps or web-based platforms for accessing their information remotely.

A glaring observation, although always known across most industries and specifically governmental agencies, is the disparity of the ages and work experience among its workforce. As outlined in question 1, over 30% of the survey participants report having either under ten years of criminal justice industry experience or over twenty-one years of experience. Of the respondents that report ten years or less of criminal justice field experience, 78% work for the Florida Department of Corrections and 13% for U.S. Probation (Federal). This more novice group also has 85% reporting that they have only been with their current agencies under five years and 80% list their current position as a Correctional Probation Officer. On the other end of the spectrum, of the respondents with over twenty-one years with their current agency, 85% work for the Florida Department of Corrections and 12% work for U.S. Probation (Federal). These respondents are primarily serving in roles as Correctional Probation Officers, 45%, or in manager or supervisory positions, 35%.

This shows in a snapshot that the largest portions of the workforce are either relatively new in their agency or are now nearing retirement. Surprisingly, when looking more in-depth at the final question of the survey, the responses by both groups were primarily in three categories, laptops, case management, and not applicable or none. The newer employees responded with 21% requesting laptops and 29% requesting updates to their agencies' case management programs. The more veteran employees also report wanting laptops at a rate of 23% and no advancements at a rate of 19%.

## **Recommendations**

Although the Florida corrections system as a whole, is often viewed by its cohort peer agencies as a model or looked at through a magnifying glass by its faultfinders, the state has fallen behind other states. Florida has also lagged in the implementation of new processes based on some of the newest research documented in many community corrections related publications. As a result of this research and the survey results, there are several areas in community corrections, among all the agencies, where a progression to begin incorporating new tools and technology should begin. Neighboring states have a very progressive remote office concept where nearly all office buildings have been converted from standard probation offices to daily reporting centers or repurposed. Officers are supervising in their communities and completing reports and case management updates in all types of non-traditional locations, for instance in a park.

As evidenced by the disparity of the workforce when considering experience and time with the agency, a newer more technology-driven employee is emerging. To keep them engaged and loyal to their current employer, the employer will need to begin to adapt to the desires and work tools familiar to these younger and influential employees. Teleworking and remote work environments are preferred, and data and research-driven

practices and techniques are often embraced, in contrast to the way it has always been done.

Florida agencies need to explore some of these innovative technologies and embrace the changing desires of the new Generation Z workforce to keep them engaged with their agencies. Integrating many of these technological tools into daily interactions in concert with offender supervision techniques can also assist the offender populations in making appropriate adjustments to supervision. These supervision techniques and tools that aid in reintegration while also incorporating needs-based activities and interventions benefit offenders and can ultimately lead to them making life-changing decisions. These tools and the benefit for both the officer and offender need to continue to be explored and facilitated by the agencies.

Additionally, the COVID-19 pandemic has altered the manner that many officers supervise and where they supervise. Offices in most locations were now off-limits to offenders or access remains extremely limited. Conducting a typical office appointment in a parking lot or under a tent or tree is now commonplace. As a result, the evolution of the traditional office design has been put on turbo. How offenders are supervised and the need for the office appointment is also being explored. More office appointments are being done virtually or by the use of an alternative office reporting method. A silver lining, maybe, but when it comes to moving community corrections forward, the coronavirus has forced a change in this profession as it did in many others.

Unfortunately, COVID-19 has also changed the way the entire country currently operates, thinks, and interacts with each other on a personable level. The field of community corrections was no exception and was forced to continue to evolve because of the “new normal” due to the pandemic that forced changes overnight. Additionally, the ever changing manner in how those in this profession conduct the work they do, either because of new and thought provoking research into the nature of human responses to sanctions and incentives, or using technology to aid and assist in supervising offenders, the field of community corrections has the capability to enrich itself. It will always continue to be a profession that continues to try to define what it is and does among those in criminal justice.

Angella Michele New began her career with the Florida Department of Corrections in September 1998. In those twenty-two years she has worked in several different positions around the state, beginning as a Correctional Probation Officer, rising through the ranks to a Supervisor and then relocating to Tallahassee to work at the department’s Central Office. She returned to the field as a Deputy Circuit Administrator and upon being promoted came back to Central Office in January 2020 as the Bureau Chief of Community Programs for the Office of Community Corrections. She now oversees the Interstate Compact and Victim Services units, along with Public Records, and conducts Legislative bill analysis in addition to completing numerous special projects. She obtained a Bachelor of Science degree in Criminal Justice from the University of Central Florida.

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## Appendix A



**Survey:** How is Technology Changing Community Corrections?

### **Technology in Community Corrections**

You have been selected to participate in this survey in order to provide anonymous insight and information about any current and innovative practices within your organization. The survey also has an open comment area to provide suggestions on technological advancements you would like your agency to consider for future exploration and implementation. Your responses will be reviewed and analyzed to assist in providing a greater understanding of the technological tools and enhancements currently used or needed in the field of community corrections. Your responses will be anonymous, so please answer candidly. I appreciate you taking your time and deciding to participate in this survey. Your responses will help in developing the future work environment for yourself and your colleagues.

## Getting to Know You

1. How many years have you been in the career field of criminal justice (corrections/supervision/law enforcement)?

0-5 years

6-10 years

11-15 years

16-20 years

21 or more years

2. What agency are you currently employed with?

Florida Department of Corrections

U.S. Probation

County funded probation agency

Privately funded probation agency

Other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

3. How many years have you been employed in your current agency?

0-5 years

6-10 years

11-15 years

16-20 years

21 or more years

4. What is your current position in your agency? \_\_\_\_\_

## Your Office Environment

5. Please select the description below that best describes your current office environment.

Traditional office set up (walls/doors, hallways)

Assigned cubicles

Squad room/rotation of workspace (availability)

Internet/network workstations, no assigned workspace

Other (please specify)

6. Does your agency currently allow for teleworking or home-based working?

Yes

No

Not sure/Don't know

7. Are you currently teleworking (either full-time or part-time)?

Yes

No

**Electronic Monitoring**

8. Do you have any experience with electronic monitoring EM/GPS (location tracking) systems in your current agency?

Yes

No

9. Are you currently using or have previously used an electronic monitoring EM/GPS (location tracking) system with the offenders you supervise?

Yes

No

N/A-have not or do not supervise offenders

10. Who is the current vendor for your agencies electronic monitoring EM/GPS (location tracking) system? \_\_\_\_\_

11. Rate each feature of the current electronic monitoring EM/GPS (location track system using the scale below. By benefit, it is how often you either use or find advantage to using the feature. The more positively you regard a feature, the higher you would rate it. The more negatively you regard a feature, the lower you would rate it. If your vendor does not have the feature listed, mark it as N/A

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	N/A (0)
Having accessibility by a mobile application	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Ability to Track or view multiple offenders at the same time	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Ease of accessing customer service/ representative	<input type="checkbox"/>					

Updating of data to current data management system

Mapping details (reverse geocode/satellite views, etc.)

12. What service or feature do you want to see provided by your current electronic monitoring EM/GPS (location service) vendor?

---

**Alternative to Office Reporting**

13. Are you using an alternative method to traditional office reporting with any of the offenders that report into your office?

- Yes
- No
- N/A

14. What type of alternative system of office reporting are you using in your agency? (Please choose all that apply)

- Telephone
- Kiosk
- Field visits
- Offenders to do not report to my office
- Other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

15. Rate each feature for the **current primary** alternative office reporting process used in your office using the scale below. Rate each feature or benefit by determining how often you either use or find advantage to using the feature. The more positively you regard a feature, the higher you would rate it. The more negatively you regard a feature, the lower you would rate it. If your process does not have the feature listed, mark it as N/A

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	N/A (0)
Available to several/ varied offenders	<input type="checkbox"/>					
Ease of use by the	<input type="checkbox"/>					

offender-not requiring lengthy instruction

Ease of accessing customer service/ representative

Updating of data to current data management system

Eliminating every offender having to report into the office

Providing incentive to the offenders

16. What enhancement to you want to see added to your current alternative office reporting process?

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### Monitoring Tools

17. What offender monitoring tools listed below are currently used in your agency? (Please choose all that apply)

- Alcohol monitor
- Sleep pattern analysis
- Driving monitor (not interlock)
- Facebook/Instagram/Social media sites
- Computer searching software
- Other
- None of the above
- Comments \_\_\_\_\_

18. Has your agency issued you a smartphone?

Yes

No

Other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

19. What operation functions do you use on your issued smartphone? (Please choose all that apply)

Email

Text

Phone

Mapping/directions/GPS

EM/GPS vendor

Case management

Travel itinerary

Meetings

Calendar

Photos

Other

Comments \_\_\_\_\_

### **Wrap Up**

20. What is the number one technological advancement you would like to have available in your agency in the next two (2) years?

\_\_\_\_\_