

October 18, 2016

To: Interested Parties

Fr: Brian Stryker

Re: Seattle Police Community Trend Survey

## **Purpose Statement + Key Findings**

This research was commissioned by the federal monitoring team to assess community perceptions of the Seattle police, gauge the prevalence of community interactions with the police, and understand the nature of those interactions. This is the third survey of its kind commissioned by the monitoring team, and it follows similar surveys conducted in August 2013 and August 2015. All questions in this survey were re-asked from 2015, in order to compare trend data over time.

Of particular note, the monitoring team set out to measure how often Seattle residents say they are the victims of racial profiling, excessive force, and verbally abusive language. In this survey we set out to measure any changes in attitudes on these issues from the previous research we conducted. As in the past, we looked at

- a) The incidence of specific types of events, including excessive force and discriminatory policing
- b) Changes in perceptions of how often these events happen
- c) How Seattleites perceive the police treat people in various racial, socioeconomic, and demographic groups.

As in 2015, we oversampled Latino and African American Seattle residents given that those communities have consistently given the Seattle PD lower marks on these areas. This allowed us to again look for differences in perceptions among these groups by key demographics and experiences (age, gender, interactions with police, etc.). We weighted the full survey results to be representative of Seattle's population.

Some of the key findings of the survey include:

- **The Seattle Police Department's performance rating continues to improve.** The number of people who approve of the job Seattle has increased from 60% (2013) to 64% (2015) to 72% (2016). Much of that improvement is among African Americans (49% approval 2013 / 62% 2016) and Latinos (54% 2013 / 74% 2016), though we see growth among whites (60% 2013 / 72% 2016) and Asian Americans (67% 2013 / 72% 2016) too. Disapproval of SPD has also trended down (34% 2013 / 25% 2015 / 20% 2016), with similar movement across racial and other demographic lines.
- **Again, fewer people are reporting problems with SPD from their personal interactions.** People who are stopped by SPD are more likely to approve of the way that

Anzalone Liszt Grove Research conducted n=700 live cellphone and landline telephone interviews with adults 18 and older in Seattle, with an additional 95 interviews among Latinos and 105 interviews among African Americans. General-population respondents were selected at random, with interviews apportioned geographically, by police precinct, based on Census information. Care was taken to get a representative number of interviews via cellphone to insure a survey that was representative of the city's population by race, age, and income. Oversamples among Latinos and African Americans were conducted using listed sample with predictive modeling of race, and with random-digit dialing of areas with high concentrations of each population according to Census information. The survey was then weighted to accurately reflect the distribution of the population by various demographic characteristics. The expected margin of sampling error is + 3.7% at the 95% confidence level for all adults and higher for subgroups. The monitor engaged the Department of Justice and the City of Seattle, during the survey drafting process, who all provided valuable guidance on questionnaire design and methodology.

stop is handled (71% approve) than they were in 2013 (65%) or 2015 (70%). This includes all-time high numbers among people who had non-traffic stops (60% approve), African Americans (58%), and Latinos (65%), all groups which have consistently trailed the citywide numbers.

- **Few people have personally been victims of excessive force from SPD in the last year.** One percent of people say they have been victims of excessive force in the past year. That includes less than 1% of Latinos and African Americans.
- **Less than one percent of Seattleites say they were victims of SPD racial profiling in the past year, statistically unchanged from the previous year.** This includes 3% of African Americans, 1% of Latinos, and less than one percent of Asian Americans.
- **At the same time, people are more likely to say that SPD is keeping them safe.** The number of people who say SPD does a good job keeping them safe (76%) is at a high in our polling.
- **Perceptions of racial profiling and excessive force are starting to drop.** People are more likely to perceive SPD treats people respectfully than in the past, and they are less likely to perceive SPD uses excessive force, verbal abuse, racial profiling, or racial slurs as often as they perceived in 2013. That's a change from 2015—in 2015 we had fewer people report being victims of those incidents, but the citywide perception of their frequency hadn't yet changed.
- **Latinos' and African Americans' experiences still back up the public's perception that SPD treats them worse than others—though the gap, that said, is much smaller than in 2013.** In 2013, there was a wide gulf between the lived experiences of African Americans + Latinos and other Seattleites when it came to police interactions. That difference has shrunk, but it still exists.
- **Word of mouth is still a serious factor in SPD opinions, though its downward pressure is attenuating.** Last year we wrote the following in our analysis:

*"It's very likely that perceptions of police are a trailing indicator, and that there has to be a lot of years of good policing to negate perceptions in some communities. Given the positive trend in SPD approval overall and in the SPD's treatment of people they stop, there's reason to be hopeful that this process is beginning to occur."*

That process is occurring in the data: people are starting to perceive SPD is getting better on these issues following people reporting fewer problems over the last few years. With that said, people still are likely to think their friends/families/relatives have had worse experiences with the police (63% approve / 31% disapprove) than people have had themselves (71% approve / 26% disapprove).

- **There are a few troubling data points among Asian Americans, suggesting a need for deeper research among this group in future work.** The number of Asian Americans who know someone who's been a victim of racial profiling is at an all-time high. The number who say SPD engages in racial profiling very often is also tied for an all-time high. The sample of Asian Americans in the poll is small, and we don't want to draw sweeping conclusions from a subsample with a  $\pm 10\%$  margin of error. This year we conducted an oversample of Latinos and African Americans including Spanish-language dialing, but we did not oversample Asian Americans nor conduct interviews in any Asian languages given budgetary constraints. Given the downward trajectory

among Asian Americans in two successive polls, though, we suggest further investigating this in a later poll with an oversample and non-English interviews.

### **Overall Attitudes Towards Seattle Police**

Opinions of police have substantially improved since 2013, from 60% approve / 34% disapprove (2013) to 64% approve / 25% disapprove (2015) to 72% approve / 20% disapprove (2016). Some of the notable groups who are more supportive of Seattle police this year include:

	<b>2016 Approval</b>	<b>2015 Approval</b>	<b>2013 Approval</b>
<b>Overall</b>	72	64	60
<b>African American</b>	62	48	49
<b>Latino</b>	74	65	54
<b>Asian American</b>	72	70	67
<b>White</b>	72	66	60
<b>Latino + African American men</b>	73	56	52
<b>Latino + Af Am &lt;35 years old</b>	72	59	52

This also is in the climate of Washington State Patrol's numbers remaining unchanged for several years (74% approve 2013 / 73% 2015 / 75% now). That includes no changes among African Americans (70%), Latinos (76%), and Asian Americans (69%). So while three years ago SPD had a large deficit to WSP in approval ratings, that gap has shrunk considerably overall and among people of color in particular. The most dramatic this year was among African Americans, who today view SPD better than whites did three years ago. Kathleen O'Toole's numbers also continue to go up, from 61% approval last year to 66% approval.

This coincides with regional improvement for SPD, especially in the three most diverse precincts (East/South/Southwest):

	<b>2016 Approval</b>	<b>2015 Approval</b>	<b>2013 Approval</b>
<b>North</b>	72	67	62
<b>West</b>	66	73	61
<b>East</b>	62	52	49
<b>South</b>	73	56	59
<b>Southwest</b>	82	68	63

### **Police Public Safety Ratings**

People still think Seattle PD is doing a good job keeping them safe: 76% of people agree the SPD keeps people safe, statistically unchanged from 71% (2015) and 74% (2013).

There is also no real movement in perceptions of:

- Doing a good job of serving my neighborhood (73% now / 68% 2015 / 72% 2013)
- Quickly solve crimes and arrest criminals (65% now / 65% 2015 / 63% 2013)

None of these public-safety ratings differ significantly by race, geography, age, or gender—the police have majority support on each area across the city. It's telling that police's overall ratings have gone up at the same time that these numbers have not changed: Clearly, there are other factors at work than just perceptions of how SPD prevents and solves crime.

## **Who is Getting Stopped by Police?**

When it comes to involuntary interactions<sup>1</sup> with the police, race is still a significant factor in whether people are stopped or not (traffic or non-traffic). That's been true every year we've conducted the poll. African Americans are more likely to be stopped in their car (23% in the last year) than Latinos (19%), who are in turn more likely than Asian Americans (8%) and whites (10%). African Americans are also more likely to have a non-traffic interaction with the police.

The pattern persists for non-traffic interactions: African Americans have experienced 2-3x as many per person in the last year (21%) as Whites (7%), Latinos (10%), and Asian Americans (11%). This number spikes for Black men (27%).

## **Experiences of Those Who Were Stopped**

Overall approval of stops has remained constant with 2015, which was better than 2013. Underneath that topline number, we see improvements on many aspects of how people were treated with respect to use of force, verbal threats, and other measures. That includes among African Americans and Latinos, who were (and are) most likely to report specific behaviors like use of force and threats.

Overall and among most demographic groups, approval is constant from 2015 and remains elevated from 2013:

Approve – disapprove of police handling of stops, 2015 v 2013

	2016	2015	2013
<b>Overall</b>	71 – 26	70 – 23	65 – 34
<b>African American</b>	58 – 42	57 – 36	(sample too small)
<b>Latino</b>	65 – 26	52 – 39	(sample too small)
<b>African American + Latino</b>	61 – 35	55 – 37	44 – 56
<b>White</b>	79 – 18	75 – 19	77 – 22
<b>Non-traffic stop</b>	60 – 38	65 – 25	47 – 53

A sizable 10% of people had a non-traffic related interaction, and 20% of Seattleites either had this type of interaction themselves or know someone who has. We focus more on these non-traffic incidents for two reasons: 1) they are often the more serious category of interaction, such as being arrested or detained, and 2) in 2013 people who had a non-traffic interaction with SPD had much more negative experiences than those with traffic interactions. We also focus on stops with African-Americans and Latinos because these groups were most likely to report a negative interaction with police in 2013 (traffic or non-traffic stop).

The main point of concern in this data is the non-traffic stops. We'll need to keep a close eye on whether this is a trend, or whether it's a statistical blip.

Despite that three-year improvement Latinos and African Americans, the racial differences are still very real in how people are interacting with police. Those experiences have come a long way since 2013, but African Americans and Latinos are still twice as likely to report a negative interaction with police (35% disapprove) as are whites (18%). We unfortunately can't speak to Asian Americans' experience due to their relatively small population combined with the relative infrequency with which they interact with police.

---

<sup>1</sup> Defined as being stopped by SPD while walking or standing in a public place or street, or being involuntarily questioned by SPD at home.

### Changes in specific attributes of stops

We're also seeing drops in the number of people in each of the three racial groups who report specific problems during their interactions. That said, all negative interactions are still higher among people of color than white Seattleites:

	Af Am '16	Af Am '15	Latino '16	Latino '15	White '16	White '15
<b>Used verbally abusive language</b>	14	20	13	23	7	7
<b>Threatened to use physical force other than handcuffing</b>	13	22	4	11	5	12
<b>Used physical force other than handcuffing</b>	8	18	7	13	3	8

### Trend from 2013

These numbers show the same trends as the overall interaction ratings: improvement across the board, with even more substantial improvements within the African American and Latino communities. On many specific areas, Latinos and African Americans today had similar interactions as the overall population did in 2013. So we aren't yet at parity, but there's broad improvement going on both generally in overall police interactions and specifically in interactions among groups we identified as the biggest worries two years ago.

Note: we didn't interview enough African Americans and Latinos in 2013 to speak to their individual experiences with police—that's why we oversampled them in 2015—so these results are presented with those two groups combined in order to obtain sufficient sample sizes for comparisons.

### Frequency of event reporting during interaction with police

	<b>2016 – 2013 (overall)</b>	<b>2016 – 2013 (AA + Latino)</b>
<b>Verbally abusive language</b>	11 – 18	14 – 36
<b>Threatened with force</b>	8 – 12	9 – 30
<b>Used physical force</b>	7 – 11	8 – 25
<b>Treated respectfully</b>	73 – 72	63 – 54
<b>Valid reason for stop</b>	61 – 60	49 – 48
<b>Explained reason of stop</b>	74 – 71	69 – 49
<b>Stopped reasonable time</b>	75 – 67	63 – 48
<b>Answered all questions</b>	70 – 69	65 – 56
<b>Listened to me</b>	67 – 68 (2015)	60 – 59 (2015)
<b>Kept me informed</b>	66 – 62 (2015)	61 – 51 (2015)

We continue to see movement on these measures among African American and Latinos who are stopped—upwards movement on positive attributes, and downwards movement on negative attributes. We would highlight the strong downward shift in reports of use of force and threats of force. We can no longer report on whether people who had force used felt it was justified with any statistical reliability; the number of people with said experiences is simply too small.

### Public perception of police treatment

Last year we reported that “even though people have been having better interactions with police, it has not at this point filtered up to changes in broader public perception.” For the most part,

that continues to be true. Most Seattleites (52%) believe that SPD engages in racial profiling very or somewhat often, statistically unchanged from 2013 (53%) or 2015 (55%). The same is true on whether SPD treats people differently because of their race (50% 2016 / 54% 2015 / 52% 2013).

When we drill down deeper, most Seattleites still think that Latinos and African Americans are being mistreated by police. That's also true for homeless people.

Perceived treatment of groups by police (% treated the same as others / % treated not as well)

	2016	2015	2013
<b>Homeless people</b>	28 / 60	27 / 58	25 / 59
<b>African Americans</b>	31 / 56	31 / 57	32 / 54
<b>Latinos</b>	36 / 49	35 / 51	33 / 49
<b>Native Americans</b>	35 / 52	35 / 48	33 / 48
<b>Young people</b>	49 / 36	45 / 41	45 / 39
<b>Asian and Pacific Islanders</b>	63 / 22	62 / 21	56 / 24

We again see that African Americans think they are being treated worse than the public does—76% say they aren't treated as well as other groups. That's not true among Asian Americans (28% think they are treated not as well) or Latinos (48% not as well), who have similar perceptions of their treatment as others do.

### **Perceived Harassment/Excessive Force Frequency**

We're starting to see big perception changes in how often Seattle PD engages in the following bad behavior—especially among the number of people who say the police do so very often. That trend is happening at the same time as a) people's own interactions with police are getting better and b) overall approval of SPD is going up.

% saying the Seattle Police does each item often (very often 2016 / very often 2013)

	All Adults	African Americans	Latinos	Whites	Asian-Americans
<b>Uses excessive physical force</b>	8 / 13	19 / 41	8 / 30	5 / 8	11 / 8
<b>Use verbally abusive language</b>	7 / 9	8 / 25	7 / 25	5 / 6	9 / 2
<b>Use racial slurs towards minorities</b>	5 / 7	9 / 27	4 / 14	3 / 4	4 / 4

Note that this measured perceptions of excessive force, abusive language, and use of slurs towards everyone, not just towards one's specific racial group.

### **Community Engagement Ratings**

This year, more people agree that Seattle PD takes the time to meet members of their community (48%) than did in 2015 (44%) or 2013 (40%). Those numbers have improved the most since 2013 in:

- Southwest precinct (42% 2013, 58% today)
- West Precinct (30% 2013, 43% today)
- North Precinct (38% 2013, 47% today)

The sharpest improvement of a demographic group came among Latinos (32% 2013, 53% today).

In response to concerns with last year's poll we examined the possibility that, last year and this year, we have oversampled people who have participated in SPD events such as neighborhood watch programs. We did not find that to be a problem, and we think the two most likely explanations for a discrepancy between attendance rates and reported attendance are:

1. Social desirability bias, in where people over-report perceived positive behaviors such as attending community meetings (this has been shown in research to occur with volunteering, community events, voting, donating to charity, and other behaviors)
2. Our question does not set a time frame—it asks people if they have ever been to such an event—so it's quite likely people are reporting attendance of events years or even decades ago.

### **Formal Complaint Filings Still Low, Compared to Negative Interactions**

Most people who had a bad interaction with police still aren't filing complaints—only 10%, in keeping with the past. It is still our position that complaints are not a valid measure of how police-community interactions are going, based on widespread underreporting of problems.

Again, people who didn't do so tended to be cynical or afraid of the complaint's outcome:

- I didn't think it would make any changes in the department (69%, top response)
- I have heard about others filing a complaint and not having a good experience (37%)
- I was worried about being harassed by the police if I filed a complaint (20%)

At the same time, many people weren't dissatisfied enough to file a complaint, or their problems were resolved without the process:

- The incident was so minor it didn't seem worth the trouble (40%)
- The police addressed my issues without me having to file a formal complaint (21%)

Far fewer people reported not knowing how to file a complaint this year (24%) than last year (46%), so it's possible that Seattle PD is better informing people of the process. The sample size on this question is so small, though, that we would want to see this trend repeated in at least one more poll before concluding there has been a real change.

### **Experiences of racial profiling + excessive force**

We're seeing some movement here overall after stagnation in 2015—but some of that movement (especially among Asian Americans) is backwards.

1. **Reports of hearing about excessive force are going down.** One percent of people report being victims of excessive force—too small to measure the change year over year. The number of people who have experienced it themselves or know someone who has keeps dropping, from 9% (2013) to 7% (2015) to 5% (2016).
2. **That trend isn't as clear for racial profiling.** Fully one fifth of Seattleites say they've been treated differently because of their race or they know someone who has. That's similar to 2013 (21%) and 2015 (23%). Less than one percent of people report having experienced this themselves, consistent in the past two surveys.

3. **Regardless, the “multiplier effect” for these experiences is still a clear factor.** People’s interactions with police continue to improve, and people’s perceptions of their friend/family/neighbors’ stops are getting better too. But there are still four people hearing about incidents of excessive force for one who experiences it, and that ratio is closer to 7:1 for racially-based disparate treatment. The overall trend data is clearly positive for police/community interactions as well as community perceptions of the police. But this data serves as a further reminder that it does not take very many bad interactions to have a big effect in the communities the police serves.
4. **Asian Americans are hearing more about racially-disparate treatment, while Latinos are hearing about it less.** More than a quarter of Asian Americans report having been or knowing someone who’s been treated differently because of their race (26%), as high as 2015 (25%) and up from 2013 (16%). That number is down for Latinos (24% now / 34% 2015 / 41% 2013) and African Americans (43% now / 45% 2015 / 39% 2013). This tracks with the fact that Asian Americans are more likely to say SPD engages in racial profiling very often (17%) than they were in 2013 (11%). The 28% who say Asian Americans are not being treated as well is also the highest it’s been. ***We recommend an oversample of Asian Americans in future research to see if this is statistically real, perhaps with multiple interview languages (starting with Mandarin).***

### **Body cameras**

Seattleites overwhelmingly want to see body cameras on their officers. This is almost universally popular (92% support / 5% oppose), like it was in 2015 (89% support / 7% oppose). It’s again impossible to find a statistically significant population in the city who supports this by any less than 80%. This is similar to the 87% of people who think it’s a good idea nationally, according to Pew Research’s December 2014 poll.