

September 10, 2015

To: Interested Parties

Fr: Brian Stryker

Re: Seattle Police Community Survey Findings

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 second survey of its kind commissioned by the monitoring team, and it follows a similar survey conducted in August 2013 that asked many of the same questions to a similar audience.

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 2013 research we conducted. Like in 2013, we didn't just look at the incidence of specific events. We looked at changes in perceptions of how often these events happen, and how Seattleites perceive the police treat people in various racial, socioeconomic, and demographic groups.

Further, in 2015 we slightly changed the sample design of the survey to interview more people in the communities who gave the Seattle PD lower marks on these areas. Specifically, that means we conducted an oversample of Latinos—in English and Spanish—and an oversample of African Americans. This allowed us to analyze these communities not just as a monolithic bloc, but to 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 overall ratings improved, with disapproval of the department down sharply.** People are more pleased with the job SPD is doing this year (64% approve / 25% disapprove) than they were in 2013 (60% approve / 34% disapprove). Especially encouraging is that Latinos have grown more positive towards SPD (as have whites). African Americans remain a little more skeptical of SPD (48% approve / 40% disapprove) than residents overall.
- **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 stop is handled (70% approve) than they were in 2013 (65%). In particular, African Americans and Latinos (55% approve 2015 / 44% approve 2013) and people who have been stopped for something besides a traffic issue (65% approve 2015 / 47% approve 2013)

Anzalone Liszt Grove Research conducted n=692 live cellphone and landline telephone interviews with adults 18 and older in Seattle, with an additional 67 interviews among Latinos and 141 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.

have given SPD much better marks. Those same groups were the most likely to disapprove of SPD's handling of their interaction in 2013.

- **Very few people report personally being victims of excessive force from SPD in the last year.** Less than 1% of people say they have been victims of excessive force in the past year. That includes 1% of African Americans and 1% of Latinos, who in 2013 reported much higher rates of experiencing excessive force (5% and 9% respectively).
- **Four percent of Seattleites say they were victims of SPD racial profiling in the past year, identical to 2013.** This includes 10% of Asian Americans, 9% of African Americans, and 6% of Latinos who said they were treated differently because of their race—all within the margin of error of last year or down.
 - *Citizens nationwide have soured on police regarding race.* In August 2014 Pew found that only 30% of Americans have “a great deal of confidence in police to treat whites and blacks equally”; lower than 2009 (33%) and 2007% (37%). The Washington Post/ABC found in December 2014 that 54% of Americans think “blacks and other minorities do not receive equal treatment to whites in the criminal justice system”, up from 50% in July 2013. Seattle PD are swimming against the tide of national popular opinion in trying to improve community perceptions regarding racial profiling.
- **At the same time, people are not less likely to say that SPD is keeping them safe.** There's no evidence that people think Seattle PD is less able to do its core job at the same time that people are reporting more positive interactions with police.
- **Overall public perception isn't changing as quickly as people's personal interactions.** Just as many people today say they believe SPD uses excessive force very or somewhat often (46%) as said the same in 2013 (45%). The same goes for racial profiling: 55% of people say that police engage in it today very or somewhat often, compared with 53% who said so in 2013.
- **Latinos' and African Americans' experiences still back up the public's perception that SPD treats them worse than others.** African Americans' and Latinos' experiences have gotten better in the last two years, but they are still not the same as whites or Asian Americans. They are more likely than whites to disapprove of how police treat them, they are more likely than whites to say police used force in an interaction, and they are less likely than whites to say police engaged in a wide range of positive behaviors such as treated them respectfully and listened to them. And they are more likely than whites to report being stopped in the first place by SPD. Most Seattleites also think that SPD treats Latinos and African Americans worse than others in the city.
- **Word of mouth is still a serious factor in negative opinions of SPD.** Word of mouth is one of the most popular ways for communities to spread news about the police: among African Americans, it is second only to TV, as 49% of African Americans say they get much of their information about the police through word of mouth. We conclude based on the data that bad police interactions have a multiplier effect that flows through the community as people tell their family, friends, and neighbors about their experiences.

The bad news still travels faster than the good when it comes to community-police interactions: people are much more likely to disapprove of how the police treated someone they know who interacted with the police (31% disapprove) than they are to disapprove of how they were treated (23% disapprove). We fully expect to see a “data lag” here due to fundamentals of word of mouth communication and of human

psychology. 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.

- **On the flip side, Seattle PD community engagement makes people like the department more.** These personal meetings and interactions such as neighborhood/block watch programs make a big difference. Thirty-nine percent of people have been to one of these type of meetings, and those people are more likely to give SPD a positive job rating (68% approve / 25% disapprove) than Seattleites overall. People who have participated in a neighborhood/block watch program (75% approve) or a living room conversation (75% approve) are especially supportive of the police.

Overall Attitudes Towards Seattle Police

Opinions of police have substantially improved since 2013—the amount of people who disapprove of the police (25%) is significantly down from 2013 in particular (34%). Some of the notable groups who are more supportive of Seattle police this year include:

- Latinos: 65% approve / 23% disapprove 2015, 54% approve / 39% disapprove 2013
- LGBT Seattleites: 72% app / 27% dis 2015, 55% app / 44% dis 2013
- Asian Americans: 70% app / 17% dis 2015, 67% app / 27% dis 2013
- Whites: 66% app / 25% dis 2015, 60% app / 35% dis 2013

Given that Washington State Patrol's approval rating hasn't changed (73% approve now / 74% 2013) nor have Seattle FD (90% approve now / 92% 2013) or Seattle schools (53% approve now / 52% 2013), it's likely this change is about SPD more than a general positivity towards local and state institutions. Chief Kathleen O'Toole is also popular with Seattleites (61% approve / 11% disapprove), and her job approval rating is similar among racial lines (63% with whites / 59% with African Americans / 53% with Latinos / 62% with Asian Americans).

The most notable group that has not warmed towards SPD statistically is African Americans. A small plurality approved of SPD in 2013 (49% approve / 42% disapprove), and that's still true today (48% approve / 40% disapprove). However, outside of this group all movement is positive. African Americans are also the only group more likely to strongly disapprove of Seattle PD (27%) than they are to strongly approve (13%)—Latinos had a similar dynamic in 2013, but now they are more likely to strongly approve of SPD (29%) than strongly disapprove (11%).

There are also regional changes in SPD's job rating. In particular, approval of the police has gone up sharply in the West precinct at the same time disapproval has dropped. In all regions but the East, the police's disapproval rating has dropped, and the East and South precincts continue to have worse ratings for the police than the rest of Seattle.

Police job rating by precinct (% approve / % disapprove)

Precinct	Job rating, 2015	Job rating, 2013
North	67 / 23	63 / 30
West	73 / 22	61 / 36
East	52 / 34	49 / 45
South	56 / 31	59 / 31
Southwest	68 / 19	63 / 35

Police Public Safety Ratings

People still think Seattle PD is doing a good job keeping them safe: 71% of people agree the SPD keeps people safe, statistically unchanged from 74% who thought so in 2013. People also broadly agree they do a good job of “serving my neighborhood” (68% agree they do so today / 72% in 2013). Asked whether the police quickly solve crimes and arrest criminals very or somewhat often, the same amount of people say they do so now (65%) as said so in 2013 (63%). 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.

Who is Getting Stopped by Police?

Much of the city interacts with the police in an involuntary manner every year¹. Twenty nine percent of people did so in the past year (up from 23% in 2015), and 28% know a friend who has done so (these groups are not mutually exclusive). Combined, 42% of people have either had a personal interaction with police in the past year or know someone who has—that number is slightly up from 39% in 2013. Just like in 2013, most of these stops were traffic related².

Race is a significant factor in whether people are stopped or not (traffic or non-traffic), as it was in 2013. African Americans are far more likely to be stopped in their car (28% in the last year) than whites (13%), Asian Americans (19%), or Latinos (18%) That’s doubly telling since this question does not account for the time people spend in a car. The Census shows that Latinos and African Americans in Seattle are far less likely to own a car and far less likely to drive cars as often as whites, so the per-mile rate that African Americans and Latinos are stopped is likely even higher than these results suggest on their face.

The pattern persists for non-traffic interactions: African Americans have experienced far more of these per person in the last year (20%) than Whites (10%). Again Latinos (19%) and Asian Americans (14%) are stopped more than whites. Age is a factor as well: African Americans under 40 are most likely to experience these interactions (21%).

Experiences of Those Who Were Stopped

People had better experiences with police stops in 2015 than in 2013. They were more likely to approve of how they were treated during stops overall (traffic or non-traffic). Most importantly, many of those gains came among some of the groups who say they were treated the most problematically in the past.

One of the key stories in the data in 2015 is how much better interactions between the police and African Americans/Latinos have gone, and how much better in general interactions with police have gone in non-traffic stops. A sizable 13% of people had a non-traffic related interaction³, and 25% 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

¹ Defined as being stopped by SPD while in your car, being stopped by SPD while walking or standing in a public place or street, being involved in a traffic accident that was reported to police, or being involuntarily questioned by SPD at home

² Defined as being stopped by SPD while in your car or being involved in a traffic accident that was reported to Police.

³ Defined as being stopped by SPD while walking or standing in a public place or street, or being involuntarily questioned by SPD at home.

because these groups were most likely to report a negative interaction with police in 2013 (traffic or non-traffic stop).

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

	2015	2013
Overall	70 – 23	65 – 34
African American	57 – 36	(sample size too small)
Latino	52 – 39	(sample size too small)
African American + Latino	55 – 38	44 – 42
White	75 – 19	77 – 22
Non-traffic stop	65 – 26	47 – 53

Simply, people are reporting much more equal treatment from police than in the past.

There still are serious racial differences in how people are interacting with police. African Americans and Latinos report being treated better by police than they were in 2013, but by no means are they reporting the same satisfaction as whites with personal police interactions. 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.

When we dive deeper than just overall approve/disapprove ratings, we also see African Americans and Latinos more likely than whites to report specific problems with their interactions. They are more likely than whites to say police engaged in the following during their most serious interaction with the police in the past year:

- Use verbally abusive language (Latino 23 / African American 20 / White 7)
- Threatened to use physical force other than handcuffing (African American 22 / Latino 11 / White 12)
- Used physical force other than handcuffing (African American 18 / Latino 13 / White 8)

And they are less likely than whites to report the police conducting the following positive items happen during their interaction:

- Treated them respectfully (White 79 / Latino 73 / African American 60)
- Had a valid reason for stopping me (White 64 / Latino 52 / African American 43)
- Explained the reason you were stopped in a clear way (White 73 / Latino 65 / African American 61)
- Stopped them for a reasonable amount of time (White 74 / Latino 59 / African American 56)
- Answered all of their questions (White 74 / African American 60 / Latino 52)
- Listened to what I had to say (White 75 / Latino 61 / African American 57)
- Kept them informed of what was going to happen next (White 66 / Latino 53 / African American 49)

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

	2015 – 2013 (overall)	2015 – 2013 (AA + Latino)
Verbally abusive language	13 – 18	22 – 36
Threatened with force	12 – 12	17 – 30
Used physical force	11 – 11	16 – 25
Treated respectfully	72 – 72	67 – 54
Valid reason for stop	58 – 60	48 – 48
Explained reason of stop	69 – 71	63 – 45
Stopped reasonable time	69 – 67	58 – 48
Answered all questions	69 – 69	56 – 56
Listened to me	68 – N/A	59 – N/A
Kept me informed	62 – N/A	51 – N/A

Overall, specific negative and positive events within interactions happened at a similar rate in 2015 and 2013. However, we did see substantial movement among African Americans and Latinos in a positive direction. Those two groups were much less likely to report having forced used on them, and they were less likely to report being verbally threatened with force or verbally abused. They also were more likely to say their stops were reasonable, their stops were explained, and they were treated with respect.

Public perception of police treatment

Even though people have been having better interactions with police, it has not at this point filtered up to changes in broader public perception. Most Seattleites (55%) believe that SPD engages in racial profiling very or somewhat often, statistically unchanged from 2013 (53%). The same is true on whether SPD treats people differently because of their race (54% 2015 / 52% 2013). These perceptions are still far more common among African Americans (71%) and Latinos (61%), but whites (53%) and Asian Americans (51%) also see this as a problem⁴.

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)

	2015	2013
Homeless people	27 / 58	25 / 59
African Americans	31 / 57	32 / 54
Latinos	35 / 51	33 / 49
Native Americans	35 / 48	33 / 48
Young people	45 / 41	45 / 39
Asian and Pacific Islanders	62 / 21	56 / 24

None of these changes are statistically meaningful, so it's hard to claim any progress or backsliding on this perception. We also see that African Americans think they are being treated worse than the public does—73% say they aren't treated as well as other groups. That's not

⁴ For subgroup analysis on this question we combined two split-sampled questions: “Seattle Police engage in racial profiling” (55% very/somewhat often) and “Seattle Police treat people differently because of their race” (54% very/somewhat often)

true among Asian Americans (17% think they are treated not as well). Latinos (53% not as well) also have similar perceptions of their treatment as non-Latinos do. Last year more Latinos thought they were mistreated (59%) than did the city overall. Similarly, people 18-24 years old (46% not as well) view their own treatment about as the public does.

Perceived Harassment/Excessive Force Frequency

Again, there haven't been any big changes in here—perceptions of individual SPD bad actions have been relatively stagnant. Forty-six percent of Seattleites believe the police commit excessive force very or somewhat often, unchanged from 45% saying the same in 2013. African Americans are more likely to believe the police engages in many different bad behaviors today than the general public. Below is a chart showing the static nature of general bad-behavior perceptions:

% saying the Seattle Police does each item often (very + somewhat often 2015 / very + somewhat often 2013)

	All Adults	African Americans	Latinos	Whites	Asian-Americans
Uses excessive physical force	46 / 45	69 / 70	43 / 62	44 / 43	39 / 31
Use verbally abusive language	33 / 33	49 / 50	38 / 48	29 / 32	34 / 22
Use racial slurs towards minorities	26 / 26	46 / 49	31 / 45	21 / 23	33 / 22

There were some overall positive trends among Latinos on these measures, matched by some overall negative trends among Asian Americans. 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

The SPD receives slightly improved ratings on whether it takes the time to meet members of your community (44% agree / 38% disagree) compared with 2013 (40% agree / 42% disagree). SPD receives strong marks from Asian Americans on this (55%) as they did in 2013, and they get high marks the West precinct (56%). They are weakest in the East (34%) and among Latinos under 35 (31%).

Formal Complaint Filings Low, Compared to Negative Interactions

Most people who had a bad interaction with police still aren't filing complaints. In 2013, only 28% of people who had a bad interaction filed a complaint. That is 23% in 2015, statistically no different than 2013. Based on the data and information provided by respondents discussed below, we do not believe complaints are a valid measure of overall opinions relation to police-community interactions.

This year we dove deeper into why people aren't filing complaints. We allowed people who had a bad experience and didn't file a complaint to give more than one reason for not doing so.

Many reasons fell into the category of cynicism or even fear that their complaint would produce no positive outcome:

- I didn't think it would make any changes in the department (81%, top response)
- I have heard about others filing a complaint and not having a good experience (40%)
- I was worried about being harassed by the police if I filed a complaint (24%)

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 (51%)
- The police addressed my issues without me having to file a formal complaint (22%)

An additional group (46%) didn't know the process for filing a formal complaint. So ignorance certainly play a role in the low ratio of complaints to actual bad interactions with police. Given that, there's work to be done educating people on the complaint process and showing them positive results from that process. But one can't take that 23% who filed a complaint and assume that for every complaint there are three people who had just as bad of a problem and didn't file a complaint. Many who don't file a complaint either had less serious problems or had those problems resolved outside the formal process.

Experiences of racial profiling + excessive force

Two things are true at the same time here that follow the thread of the rest of the survey:

1. **Many, many fewer people feel they are the victim of these two behaviors.** Less than 1% of Seattleites report being a victim of excessive force in the past year, and even among groups who reported higher levels in 2013 there's virtually nobody experiencing this. The same with racially different treatment: the amount of African-Americans and Latinos who report this has been cut in half.
2. **People are still reporting that someone they know experienced one of these at high rates.** We can't answer why this number isn't going down in tandem with personal experience. Perhaps people are conflating timelines, and they heard a story recently that actually happened long ago. Perhaps the stories are shifting to more distant and distant acquaintances, making the "magnifier effect" of each story larger as the actual population incidence goes down. And perhaps the increased national stories around police shootings have prompted people to tell their own stories more than in the past. Regardless of the reason(s), it is clear that these stories are still echoing around the community in a way that is harmful to community perceptions of police. Because the data doesn't say why this is happening, it also can't point to potential solutions. This does, however, help explain why individual events are going way down yet community perception isn't changing.

It's also worth noting the (small) uptick of Asian Americans feeling differently because of their race. This is a minor change and barely outside the margin of error, but if we conduct this survey again we think it's important to make sure we're monitoring that group for any changes. I also could see a benefit to conducting qualitative research among Asian Americans, especially with people from different countries of ancestral origin. That would be a useful tool in gauging perceptions among that community which has a lot of diversity within itself.

2013 vs 2015 reporting of racially different treatment and excessive force (2015% / 2013%)

	All Adults	African Americans	Latinos	Whites	Asian Americans
Experienced racially different treatment (self)	4 / 4	9 / 16	6 / 17	1 / 1	10 / 5
Experienced racially different treatment (someone you know)	23 / 21	44 / 36	34 / 41	18 / 17	24 / 16
Experienced excessive force (self)	0 / 1	1 / 5	1 / 9	0 / 0	0 / 0
Experienced excessive force (someone you know)	7 / 8	14 / 17	10 / 28	5 / 5	3 / 5

Body cameras

Seattleites overwhelmingly want to see body cameras on their officers. This is almost universally popular (89% support / 7% oppose), and it's not possible 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.