

# PHOENIX FUTURO

A PEOPLE'S REPORT ON  
POLICING AND SAFETY



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## INTRODUCTION:

# POLICING IN PHOENIX

### CURRENT STATE OF POLICING IN PHOENIX

Throughout June 2020, thousands of people took to the streets of Phoenix with collective rage and grief to protest the police murders of Black, Brown, and Indigenous people across the country and locally.

The Phoenix Police Department has a long history of violence, intimidation, and harassment against BIPOC, undocumented, queer, and poor communities. This includes killing more people in 2018<sup>1</sup> than any other department in the country, multiple acts of sexual violence with impunity<sup>2</sup>, and an active relationship with ICE that has resulted in the mass detention, deportation, and separation of immigrant communities<sup>3</sup>.

When COVID cases in Arizona were trending towards the *highest in the world*,<sup>4</sup> elected officials in Phoenix supported mass arrests without cause and allowed millions of taxpayer dollars to be wasted suppressing peaceful protests.<sup>5</sup> Meanwhile, countless residents were left to suffer the brutal impacts of the pandemic. In the months since the 2020 uprisings, these same elected officials have stayed silent while the Phoenix Police Department and the Maricopa County Attorney Office work together to politically persecute<sup>6</sup> community activists for protesting police violence. Their continued silence has allowed the police to accuse the protesters of being in a fictional “ACAB gang,” facilitating a politically

motivated prosecution under state gang laws, leaving innocent protestors to face potential decades of prison time, and sending a threatening message to the thousands demanding a future free from police violence.

**Despite these significant human rights issues, the Phoenix City Council continues to pour money into the police department rather than supporting and expanding other community resources.**

In June 2020, Phoenix City Council rejected calls from their constituents to defund the police and voted instead to increase the Phoenix police budget by \$24 million, bringing the total to \$745 million for fiscal year 2021.<sup>7</sup> Additionally, they illegally refused COVID<sup>8</sup> relief funds to undocumented and other immigrant constituents, instead using 48.8% (\$143 million) of the Phoenix COVID relief money to offset public safety salaries. Considering this history of police violence and the extraordinarily difficult challenges facing Phoenix residents in the fallout of the pandemic, these decisions are at best unimaginative, shortsighted, and a blatant rejection of community-identified needs for safety. At their worst, they are politically calculated moves in the service of maintaining structural white supremacy and the abandonment of low-income communities of color in Phoenix.



## NARRATIVE VS. REALITY

Why does the Phoenix City Council continue to increase police department funds if policing has been such a problem in Phoenix?

The council is operating on a popular cultural and problematic narrative that policing is the most vital component of public safety.

But, like many organizations that are run by and serve a majority of people of color, Poder in Action knows the harsh reality that policing was not created as a solution for community safety. It is a tool that has been used continuously throughout history to control the lives and movement of people of color, in particular Black people, and suppress those fighting back against oppression.

Policing is not only an ineffective means for public safety, it actively contradicts safety in our communities. In our work, we have witnessed the disproportionate number of Black, Indigenous, and Brown people who are killed at the hands of the police. We have worked tirelessly to fight the deportations of family members that are coordinated with Phoenix police.

The communities we work with want to be safe. We believe safety begins by taking proactive steps to support people as they navigate life's challenges. Safety is rooted in healthy and stable neighborhoods. Safety is access to the resources and opportunities community members need to thrive.

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**SAFETY IS ACCESS  
TO THE RESOURCES  
AND OPPORTUNITIES  
COMMUNITY MEMBERS  
NEED TO THRIVE.**

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## CHALLENGING THE NARRATIVE WITH COMMUNITY-DRIVEN DATA

Funding decisions for the Phoenix Police Department are being made without full community support or input. They are informed by a narrative that is not the reality, particularly for people of color. To formally challenge the narrative that police equals safety, Poder in Action conducted a community-driven research study to document resident perspectives and experiences with police. We collected survey data from over 10,000 people and found significant, though unsurprising, differences in how police treat different groups of people.

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## EVIDENCE FOR CHANGE

In addition to the deaths at the hands of officers, this community documentation of people's direct experiences is clear evidence of problems with the police department and a need to shift the narrative and lived realities of what it means to be safe.

Our community-driven data demonstrates the need to reconsider the role police are playing in our communities, and push elected officials and community leaders to re-imagine public safety in its entirety.

This report outlines the methods and findings that must inform needed policy and budget changes to keep all Phoenix residents safe.

# COMMUNITY-DRIVEN RESEARCH PROCESS

## COLLABORATIVE DESIGN

Traditional research often begins in academic institutions and is disconnected from the community it is researching.

**Poder In Action utilized a community-driven framework called Community-Based Participatory Action Research,<sup>9</sup> which emphasizes that communities have inherent knowledge to understand problems and should be valued as experts in the research process.**

Further, it is a framework that focuses on action and utilizes the findings to support community change. With this research study, organizers and community members led every aspect of the research process including project design, data collection, analysis, and reporting. The findings are meant to shape recommendations for the City of Phoenix and other entities that want to support BIPOC communities.

The process began with collaboratively designing a survey with community members to better understand their experiences with police. After a few iterations, our final survey was bilingual in Spanish and English and featured 25 items, consisting of Likert-scale items (in which the available responses are on a scale), dichotomous (yes/no) items, multiple choice items, and open-ended items, allowing the respondents to use their own words. Most of the items focused on people's experiences with the police, but we also included items asking for demographic data, such as age, race/ethnicity, gender, and sexuality.

## ANALYSIS

Poder received support from researchers at the Harvard Kennedy School, Arizona State University, and the University of Arizona to analyze the quantitative items in STATA software by generating descriptive statistics and conducting logistic regressions, proportion tests, and chi-squared tests. We analyzed the open-ended responses in two phases, with the second resulting in an Excel matrix, with each row representing a response and each column representing one of 34 codes.<sup>11</sup>

## SURVEY COLLECTION

Throughout 2018 and Fall 2019, scores of Poder in Action staff and community volunteers surveyed Phoenix residents, largely in **South Phoenix** and **Maryvale**. All were collected through face-to-face data collection, at events, businesses, or by going door-to-door. By the end of the data collection period, we had gathered more than 10,000 surveys, which we decreased to 9,066 during the data entry process, removing surveys with large quantities of missing data.

We collected information from a range of demographics:

Table 1. Survey Respondents Demographic Information

Demographic	Amount
Latinx	71.97%
White	11.97%
Black	10.08%
Cisgender female	51.12%
Cisgender male	47.94%
Transgender	0.94%
Straight	95.15%
Queer	4.85%

*Range of participants in terms of age, with ages 18 to 54 most represented<sup>10</sup>*

## KEY FINDING #1

# POLICE VIOLENCE ALONG LINES OF RACE, GENDER IDENTITY, SEXUALITY, AND AGE

Phoenix residents' experiences with police vary greatly, often along lines of race/ethnicity, trans or cisgender, sexuality, and age.<sup>12</sup>

Respondents who were Black, transgender, queer,<sup>13</sup> and/or young (ages 12-17) were more likely to report negative interactions with the police as compared to respondents who were white, cisgender, straight, and/or adult (ages 18+).

Though patterns and findings are complex, they point to discrimination and bias in policing.

## POLICE PROFILING

This bias can be seen in reports of police profiling. **There are disturbing differences in percentages of various groups who reported that they or someone they are close to have been profiled or targeted by the police.**

As shown in Figure 1, much higher percentages of Black, transgender, queer, and young respondents report profiling as compared to other groups. Our analyses showed that the odds of Black respondents or those they are close to being profiled or targeted by police are 31.39% higher than for white respondents.<sup>14</sup> And the odds for transgender respondents are 88.82% higher than for cisgender respondents.<sup>15</sup> Similarly, queer, and young respondents are significantly more likely to be profiled or targeted by the police than straight and adult respondents.<sup>16</sup>

When considering multiple identities, there is a 29.27% difference of reported profiling between Latinx respondents who also identified as being transgender and those who are Latinx and cisgender. Similarly, there is a 12.59% difference between Black respondents who identified as transgender and Black respondents who identified as cisgender. This data is evidence that multiple identities increase the likelihood of being profiled or targeted by police.

Figure 1. Police Profiling, by Race, Gender, Sexuality, and Age

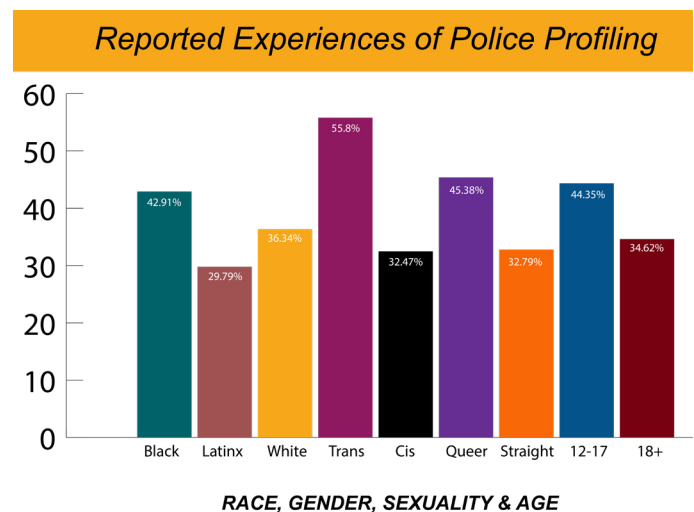
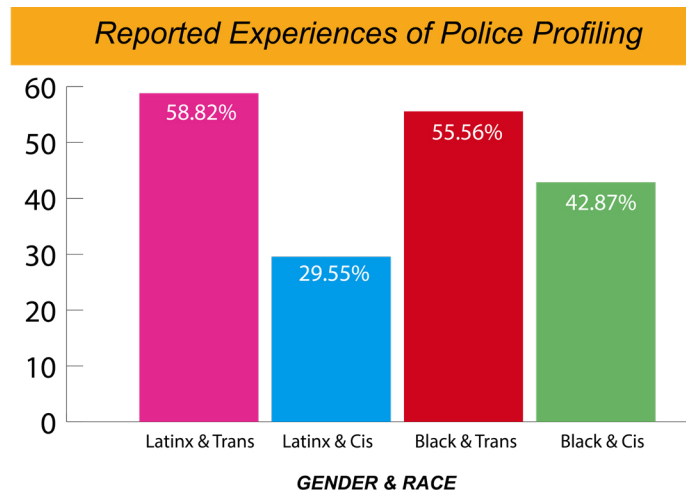


Figure 2. Police Profiling, by Race & Gender



## UNEQUAL TREATMENT BY POLICE

Bias also appears in officers’ treatment of community members when the police have been called. Of the respondents in our survey who reported calling the police, higher percentages of queer and Black respondents reported being disrespected or treated unfairly, as shown in Figure 3 and Figure 4, respectively. Our analyses indicate that the odds of queer respondents reporting mistreatment are a whopping 106% higher than for straight respondents.<sup>17</sup> Also, 16.51% of Black respondents reported unfair treatment, in comparison to 13.54% of white respondents.<sup>18</sup>

**As with being profiled, people with multiple identities experienced greater mistreatment.** There is a 34.82% difference between Black, queer respondents and Black, straight respondents. For Latinx respondents, there is a 5.98% difference between being queer and straight.

Figure 3. Police Mistreatment, by Sexuality

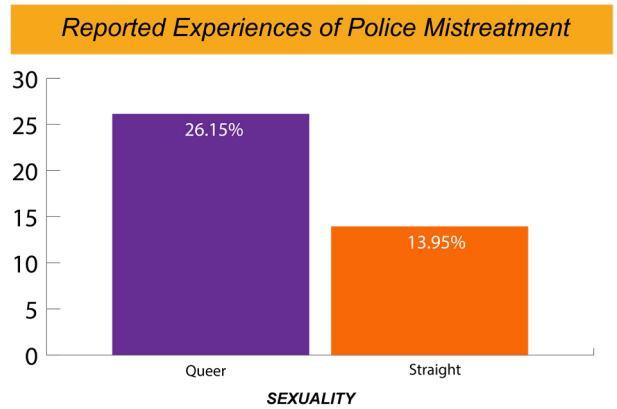
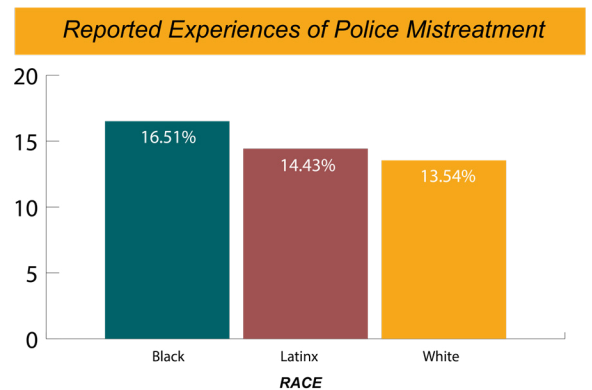
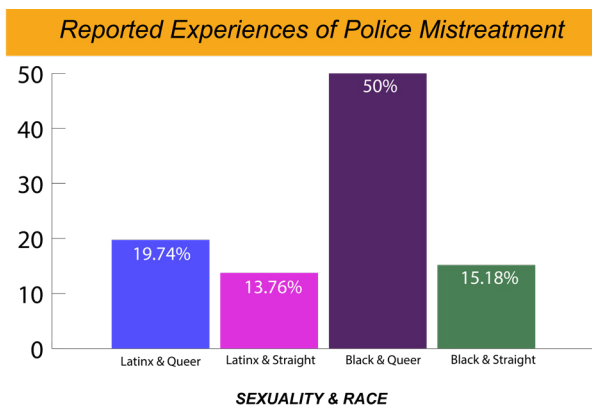


Figure 4. Police Mistreatment, by Race



# OUR ANALYSES INDICATE THAT THE ODDS OF QUEER RESPONDENTS REPORTING MISTREATMENT ARE A WHOPPING 106% HIGHER THAN FOR STRAIGHT RESPONDENTS.

Figure 5. Police Mistreatment, by Race and Sexuality



## ASKING FOR ID

We also found bias in response to a survey question asking whether respondents who had called the police had been asked for an ID. Overall, 59.75% of Black respondents and 54.81% of Latinx respondents answered “yes,” compared to 51.98% of white respondents, a difference that is statistically significant.<sup>19</sup> Likewise, young respondents are significantly more likely to be asked for an ID than adults.<sup>20</sup>

## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR POLICE

One of our open-ended questions asked, “If you could say anything to the police, what would you tell them? Any recommendations?” Overall, nearly a sixth of those who responded mentioned police bias, discrimination or profiling, as shown in the examples below:

**“Race, sexual orientation and looks don’t matter. Treat everyone the same.”**

Latina, queer girl, between 12-17

**“No racial profiling.”**

Latino, gay, cisgender man, between 25-34

**“You can’t judge a few to judge all. Not all Black folks are criminals.”**

Black, straight, cisgender man, between ages 18-24

**“Que no sean racistas” (Don’t be racist)**

Latinx, queer, transgender resident, between 25-34

Moreover, nearly a fifth of those who responded made remarks on police mistreatment **unprompted**, with about 60% of the comments coming from people who were not even asked the question about how police treated them (because they had not reported calling the police).

## POLICE VIOLENCE

We often heard comments criticizing police killings and violence. For instance, a Black, queer, cisgender woman, between 18-24, simply urged, “Stop killing us.” A white, straight, cisgender woman, between 25-34, exclaimed, “Stop shooting! There are better ways to deal with situations.” And many mentioned mistreatment in general, such as a Latino, straight, cisgender man, between 18-24, who stated, “Estamos hartos como comunidad de ustedes y su malos tratos” (As a community, we are fed up with you and your bad treatment).

## INHUMANE TREATMENT

Even comments that were not about police behavior on the surface point to misconduct. For instance, many respondents said a version of the following: “We are not criminals.” Most disturbing were the comments that urged police officers to see community members as human. A Latina, queer, cisgender woman commented, “Nosotras las gay también somos humanas” (We gay women are also human). A white, straight cisgender man, between 35-44 said, “Do not treat good people like animals,” while a Latino, straight, cisgender man of the same age range, quoted above, stated, “Treat us like humans.”

**“TREAT US LIKE HUMANS.”**



## NEED FOR IMPROVEMENT

In addition to these types of comments, many people urged for better police behavior overall or provided specific advice for improvement. Respondents told police, for example, to be calm, fair, empathetic, honest, responsible, and to listen better.

- A multiracial, queer, cisgender woman, between 55-64, exhorted, **“Be patient and more understanding of culture.”**
- An Indigenous, straight, girl, between 12-17 suggested, **“Be kinder.”**
- For example, a Latina cisgender woman, between 65-74, said, **“Be fair with everyone”**
- A white, straight, cisgender woman, between 45-54 commented, **“Just do your job in a respectful manner,”**
- And a Latina cisgender woman, between 25-34, referring to unjust treatment of immigrants, urged, **“Que tengan piedad de los niños; que no los separen de la familia” (Have pity on the children; don’t separate them from the family).**

## OTHER RESPONDENTS COMMENTED

**“PUT YOURSELF  
IN MY SHOES”**

(Don’t be liars)

**“QUE NO SEAN  
MENTIROSOS”**

(Don’t be liars)

**“QUE SEAN MAS  
AMABLES”**

(Be nicer)

**“BE MORE  
UNDERSTANDING”**

**“DEBERÍAN  
ESCUCHAR LO QUE  
LA COMUNIDAD  
NECESITA”**

(You should listen to what the community needs)

**“HAVE MORE  
PATIENCE.”**

## KEY FINDING #2

# THE PARADOX OF SAFETY AND FEAR

We found complex results about community safety and the police, pointing to a concerning paradox. Only about one in four respondents (23.85%) reported that they always trust the police. Also, nearly half (47.60%) of respondents reported they feel scared, anxious, nervous, and/or intimidated when they see a police officer or car, while only 4.44% reported feeling safe in the same situation. However, 45.99%, said that police presence increases safety.

**In other words, the majority of community members fear and distrust the police and at the same time many view the police as contributing to safety, despite their personal experiences.**

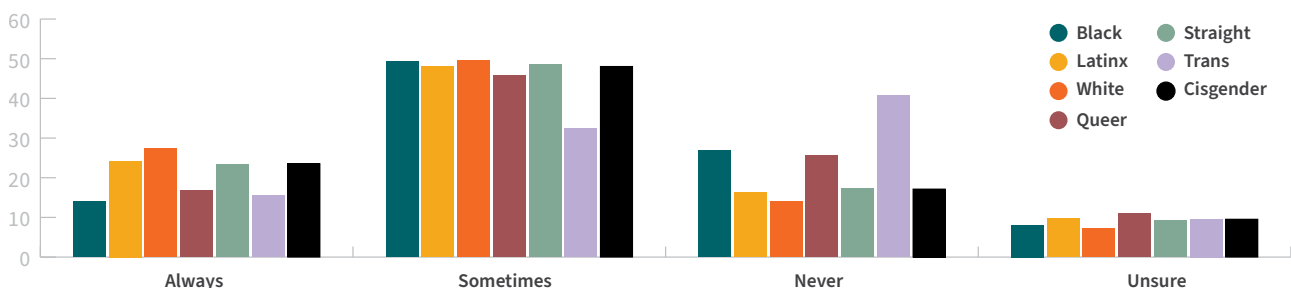
## DISTRUST

There are stark differences among groups related to fear, distrust, and safety. In response to our question asking how often respondents trust the police, higher percentages of Black, Latinx, queer, and transgender respondents answered with “never,” “sometimes,” or “unsure” in comparison to white, straight, and cisgender respondents, as shown in Figure 6. Our analyses show that the odds of Black respondents distrusting the police are 127.63% higher than for white respondents, and the odds of queer respondents are 50.26% higher than straight respondents.<sup>21</sup> Only 8 of the 56 Latinx transgender respondents reported they could always trust the police, while 24 of the respondents said they could never trust the police. None of the 9 Black transgender respondents reported they could always trust the police.

## ONLY 4.44% REPORTED FEELING SAFE WHEN THEY SEE A POLICE OFFICER OR CAR

### How often do you trust the police?

Figure 6. Reported Feelings of Trust



## ONLY ABOUT ONE IN FOUR RESPONDENTS (23.85%) REPORTED THAT THEY ALWAYS TRUST THE POLICE.

One factor that may influence trust of the police is the police’s cooperation with Immigrations and Customs Enforcement (ICE).

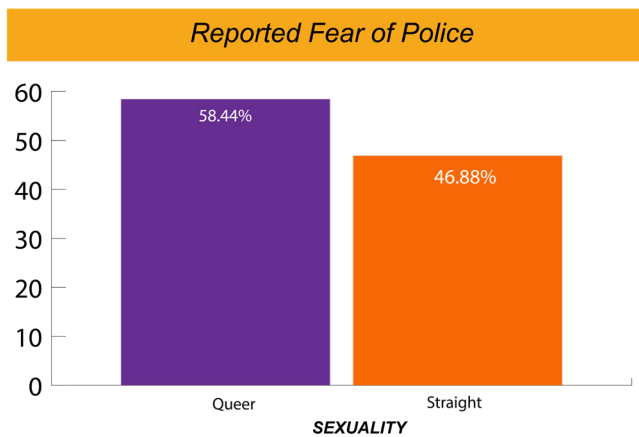
**Respondents were overwhelmingly against such cooperation, with 86.64% marking “no” when asked whether the Phoenix police should work with ICE agents, though we found differences among groups.**

Taking a closer look at these findings by ethnicity/race, it was found that the odds of Latinx and Black respondents being against the police working with ICE were 200.41% and 78.73% higher than for white respondents, respectively.<sup>22</sup>

## LEVELS OF FEAR

Levels of fear of the police also varied among groups, as shown in Figure 7, 8, and 9.<sup>23</sup> In response to a survey item, 48.57% of Latinx and 47.03% of Black respondents indicated they feel scared, nervous/anxious and/or intimidated when they see a police officer or car. In comparison, 43.3% of whites feel the same, a statistically significant difference.<sup>24</sup> Also, the percentages of queer and young respondents reporting these feelings are much higher than straight and adult respondents. Tellingly, the odds that queer respondents fear the police are 41.79% higher than for straight respondents, and the odds for young people are 75.78% higher than for adults.<sup>25</sup> The disproportionate fear among Latinx, Black, queer, and young respondents is deeply troubling.

Figure 8. Fear of the Police by Sexuality



## COMMUNITY SAFETY

However, despite this widespread fear and distrust, very few respondents reported that police presence decreases community safety. Of note, the respondents who reported feeling scared were less likely to believe that police presence makes the community safer.<sup>26</sup> **Overall, 45.99% of respondents reported that the police make the community safer and 40.12% reported that their presence makes “no difference.”** Our analyses show that the odds that Black respondents viewed police as increasing safety were 31.58% lower than for white respondents.<sup>27</sup> A higher percentage of Latinx than white respondents viewed police presence as making the community safer; however, the difference was not statistically significant. Also, the odds that transgender respondents viewed the police as increasing safety were 65.60% lower than for their cisgender counterparts.<sup>28</sup>

Figure 7. Fear of the Police by Race

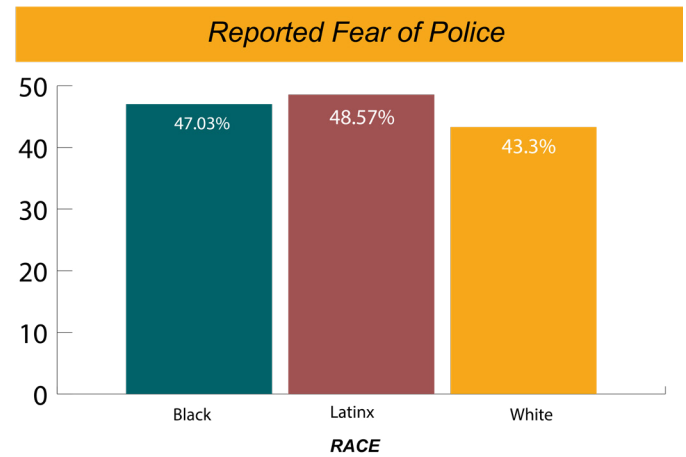
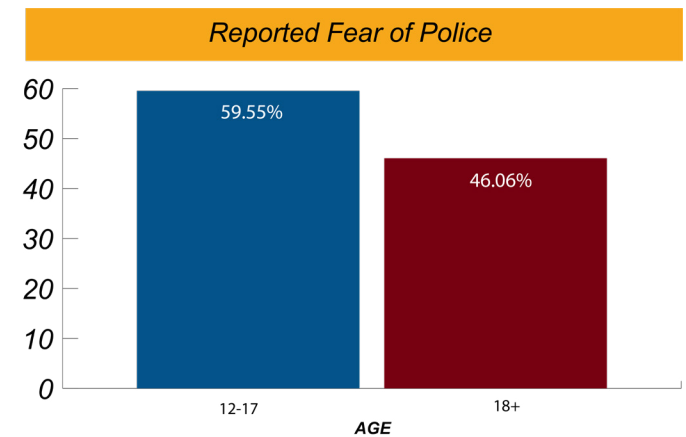


Figure 9. Fear of the Police by Age



**OVERALL, 45.99% OF RESPONDENTS REPORTED THAT THE POLICE MAKE THE COMMUNITY SAFER AND 40.12% REPORTED THAT THEIR PRESENCE MAKES “NO DIFFERENCE.”**

## OPEN-ENDED COMMENTS

The views of the police as either or both a source of fear or a provider of safety were apparent in our open-ended comments as well. Many people discussed their or the community's fear and distrust:

**“Tengo miedo a la policía”  
(I’m scared of the police)**

Latino, straight, cisgender, man,  
between 35-44

**“Stop putting fear into people,”**

Latina, straight, cisgender  
woman, between 35-44

**“No need to be aggressive. People  
already fear you enough.”**

Black, straight, cisgender, girl, between 12-17

**“I don’t trust any of them.”**

Black, straight, cisgender, man,  
between 25-34

**“Que no puedo confiar en ellos.”  
(That I can’t trust them.)**

Latino, queer, cisgender man

**“No confío en ustedes porque tengo miedo  
que me deporten.” (I don’t trust you  
because I’m scared you’ll deport me.)**

Latino, straight, cisgender man, between 25-34

On the other hand, some respondents called for the police to do more to ensure safety in their communities or to increase the police presence:

**“They need to get more police.”**

Latina, straight, cisgender  
woman, between 18-24

**“Que vigilen más mi área”  
(Guard my area more).**

A Latino, straight, cisgender man,  
between 35-44

**“Que patrullen este Food City”  
(Patrol this Food City.)**

Latina, straight, cisgender women,  
between 35-44

**“Keep drugs out.”**

White, queer, cisgender woman,  
between 18-24

A few respondents even captured the paradox of fear and safety in their comments, such as a Black, queer, cisgender man, between 18-24, who commented,

**“KEEP US  
SAFE; DON’T  
MAKE US FEEL  
SCARED AND  
INTIMIDATED.”**



# SUMMARY AND ANALYSIS OF KEY FINDINGS

## SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

**The findings from this community-driven study tell a story of what people in Phoenix are experiencing in their neighborhoods with police.**

Police violence and misconduct was an important issue for a diversity of respondents, who commented on police bias, discrimination, profiling, killings, and other forms of violence. Community members urged for better police behavior and for police officers to see community members as human. Overall, we found that respondents fear and distrust the police.

Our study also found that police violence varies based on people's racial/ethnic identity, gender identity, sexual identity, and their age. Specifically, Black, transgender, queer, and young respondents are more directly impacted by police violence in the form of profiling and being targeted by police, being disrespected or treated unfairly when interacting with police, and being unjustly asked for identification. We can also deduce that Black respondents in particular, who are transgender, and/or queer, and/or young are more likely to have negative experiences with police. Folks in these identity groups are also most directly impacted by other systems of injustice, and, though not examined in this paper, often hold intersecting identities that put them at higher risk for experiencing violence.<sup>29</sup>

These findings, though disturbing and upsetting, are unfortunately not surprising and align with other evidence pointing to the inherent and incessant culture of violence that exists within policing.<sup>30</sup>

## ANALYSIS OF POLICE VIOLENCE AND MISTREATMENT

Since its beginning, policing has been rooted in anti-Black violence, in the service of white supremacy, patriarchy,

and capitalism. In America, organized policing began as a form of protection against immigrant communities in major cities and a means to uphold the institution of slavery and prevent enslaved people from revolting in the South.<sup>31</sup> Policing was never designed to address the root causes of social issues facing our communities.

From disproportionate experiences of mistreatment and profiling reported by Black respondents, to Phoenix police shooting Black residents at twice the rate of the Black population, evidence of this history is still clear today. Policing isn't safety for everybody, and actually negatively impacts the lives of Black, Latinx, transgender, queer, and youth in Phoenix by being a source of violence and decreasing community safety.<sup>32</sup> Additionally, research by the Arizona Republic shows "68% of the Phoenix police shootings from 2010 to 2019 occurred in neighborhoods where the majority of residents are people of color and where the estimated median family income is \$36,465."<sup>33</sup> Recent reports by The New York Times, Washington Post, and USA Today have all challenged the idea of police contributing to safe neighborhoods and provide evidence that increasing police does not mean increasing safety.<sup>34</sup>

In 2020, before George Floyd was killed, Phoenix police were averaging one shooting about every 24 days. Once the protests began, the rate of officer involved shootings nearly tripled, with a shooting occurring on average every 9 days. It is no surprise that communities of color have such high levels of distrust when their neighborhoods are under regular attack from police and ICE.

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**ONCE THE PROTESTS BEGAN,  
THE RATE OF OFFICER  
INVOLVED SHOOTINGS  
NEARLY TRIPLED**

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## ANALYSIS OF THE SAFETY AND FEAR PARADOX

**With the widespread mistreatment and fear shown through this study, how is it that many respondents still view the police as contributing to safety?**

We hypothesize that this paradox reflects society's difficulty envisioning a reality that goes beyond police as the ultimate option for community safety. Policing is tenaciously presented as the only option for public safety by all major systems and institutions that impact our lives, including government, corporations, healthcare, education, and in media, creating this dominant culture.<sup>35</sup> This information leads us to believe that policing equals safety but, as this study has demonstrated, policing in Phoenix has proven itself untrustworthy.

A key example of this paradox is reflected in Latinx respondents' experiences with ICE. Our study found that Latinx folks agreed at high rates that police make their communities safer, but also had the highest percentage reporting that Phoenix police should not work with ICE. The Phoenix Police Department has a history of racial profiling and working with ICE and the Maricopa County Sheriff's Office to deport community members, calling ICE on Phoenix residents over 6,000 times from 2017 through 2019.<sup>36</sup> Of these 6,169 calls, only 309 people were found to be in the country without proper paperwork. Each call has been an act of violence against our communities, and this does not contribute to the safety of the Latinx community--or any community--in Phoenix. Latinx folks fundamentally understand that one solution to increasing safety is for the police to stop working with ICE.

True safety does not manifest as fear, distrust, or violence.

**Communities directly impacted by police violence do not want police, they want to be safe.** Phoenix has a long history of structural racism<sup>37</sup> that has left directly impacted communities without access to fresh, non-processed food, stable housing, strong education, good-paying jobs, mental health care, and programs for children and youth. For decades, the city of Phoenix has relied on policing and incarceration to "solve" problems in communities most impacted by structural racism. This has been a massive failure in Phoenix, and also across the country, leading to racialized police violence, families

being torn apart through deportation and incarceration, and neighborhood instability.

And yet, the city of Phoenix continues to allocate millions of public tax dollars into policing while the resources that actually contribute to health, wellbeing, and safety have remained stagnant.<sup>38</sup> This truth is evident in the neighborhoods of Phoenix where most of the city's people of color live, in South Phoenix and Maryvale in west Phoenix. These communities are left with a violent police force that offers no solutions to the root issues surrounding housing, job security, education, and health that they face every day. In fact, there are specific neighborhoods considered million dollar blocks where between \$0.5 million and \$2 million public dollars are spent on incarceration annually.<sup>39</sup> It is time for this intentionally racist, violent pattern to end and for the city of Phoenix to invest fully in directly impacted communities.

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**LATINX FOLKS  
FUNDAMENTALLY  
UNDERSTAND THAT  
ONE SOLUTION TO  
INCREASING SAFETY  
IS FOR THE POLICE  
TO STOP WORKING  
WITH ICE.**

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# THE NEED FOR SAFETY BEYOND POLICING

**Concerns about police misconduct is widespread, and points to the reputation that police have established as dangerous and untrustworthy.**

With Black respondents disproportionately impacted by police misconduct and publicly available data indicating disproportionate rates of violence against Black and Indigenous residents, there is a strong indication that local police departments are, and will continue to be, unable to reform beyond the anti-Black roots of the system of policing.<sup>40</sup> Respondents' comments, paired with the statistical findings outlined in the previous section, establish a chilling reality about police bias, mistreatment, and violence experienced by Phoenix residents, reinforcing the need for options for safety that do not include police.

Elected officials default to police reform and trust-building as the only solution to police violence. While “building trust with community” has often been lauded as a key solution to police violence by elected officials, the Phoenix Police Department, and even historically impacted communities, a 2019 report showed that 30 years of attempted reform and “trust building” has done nothing to reduce violence at the hands of Phoenix police.<sup>41</sup> In fact, the average number of officer-involved shootings per year by Phoenix police has actually increased from 21 shootings per year from 2001 - 2010<sup>42</sup> to 24 shootings per year from 2011 - 2020.<sup>43</sup>

Attempts at fixing or reforming policing in order to decrease police violence are insufficient and have proven to not work. Decades of failed police reform, locally and nationally, has shown there is no effective combination of policy changes, training, or officer diversity that

keep police from harassing, killing, and tearing families apart.<sup>44</sup> A system founded on anti-Blackness and white supremacy cannot be reformed. A future free from police violence is only attainable through a future without policing.

Instead of policing, we demand investment into our communities, and that investment must come from the funds that are allocated to the Phoenix police.

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**WE ARE CALLING FOR THE CITY OF PHOENIX TO COMMIT TO DIVESTING FROM POLICE AND ADEQUATELY INVEST IN THE SERVICES, RESOURCES, AND LIFE CONDITIONS THE PEOPLE OF PHOENIX NEED TO BE HEALTHY AND SAFE.**

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# ALTERNATIVE INVESTMENTS TO POLICING

## CURRENT POLICE INVESTMENT

City budgets are moral documents that make clear the values and priorities of decision makers. In June 2019, Phoenix city council members passed a \$721 million budget for the police department, an increase of \$33.4 million from the prior year. The council passed this budget as the Phoenix police were under intense local and nationwide scrutiny; in the preceding months, video came out of a young Black family being brutalized and held at gunpoint, a searchable database revealed a series of racist Facebook posts by officers, and reports emerged that Phoenix PD had shot more people than any other department in the country in 2018.

The dangerous lie that police mean safer neighborhoods has allowed for billions of dollars<sup>45</sup> to be routed into local police department budgets for decades. In 2011, an efficiency study of the Phoenix Police Department found overstaffing, underworked patrol officers and even recommended redistributing hundreds of positions since nearly half of the total police budget went to paying almost 2,000 patrol cops. Despite these findings, the city has increased the department's budget by over \$200 million since 2011.

**During this same period of time in 2019, Phoenix council members allocated \$117 million to the parks department, \$101 million to housing, and \$94 million to human services- a total of \$312 million, not even half of what was spent on the police department.<sup>46</sup>**

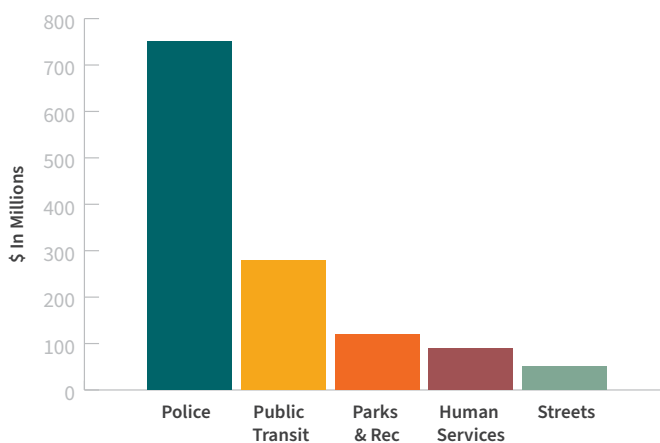
When looking at budget allocations from the general fund specifically, which is the city's unrestricted source of revenue, we see that Phoenix police consistently receive over 40% of these unrestricted funds every year. The general fund is sourced through state and city taxes and fees that Phoenix residents and community members

pay out of pocket. As can be seen in Figure 10, there is a clear and significant disparity between the police budget and that of other city departments. The Phoenix police department receives more funding than any other single department in the city.

Things like access to quality healthcare and education, economic and housing stability, and clean air and water all play key roles in determining community safety and personal health, yet the Phoenix council members refuse to prioritize investments in community wellness that don't involve police.

## THE PHOENIX POLICE DEPARTMENT RECEIVES MORE FUNDING THAN ANY OTHER SINGLE DEPARTMENT IN THE CITY.

Figure 10. City of Phoenix Departmental Expenditures 2019-2020 General Fund Budget.





## INVESTING IN HEALTH

Now more than ever, it is time to rethink public safety and attempt something new that is not rooted in anti-Black violence. When those most targeted by policing are safe from its violence, we all benefit and safety increases for everyone.

**It is time to invest in and develop systems of safety that are not dependent on violence or punishment, systems that cultivate health and wellbeing that ultimately contribute to safety.**

Safer, healthier neighborhoods are not contingent on bigger police budgets and more officers. Research from the American Public Health Association identifies police violence as a critical public health issue, and points to the role of police departments in maintaining social inequities.<sup>47</sup> In fact, in Phoenix, there is significant overlap between the neighborhoods with the highest numbers of officer-involved shootings, decreased life expectancy, communities of color, and low-incomes. In South Central Phoenix zipcode 85004, the life expectancy is 71 years old with 8 officer-involved shootings from 2017 - 2020 in the neighboring zip code of 85009. Compare this with the North Phoenix zip code of 85050, where residents have a life expectancy of 81 years old and saw 0 shootings during the same time period. This startling contrast forces us to contend with the role of police in our neighborhoods, and brings into question the ways in which we are currently conceptualizing, structuring, and funding “public safety” in Phoenix.

True safety exists when neighborhoods are healthy and fully resourced. Investing in safety involves affordable housing, health services, community development, and education.

Table 2. Comparison of Phoenix Zip Codes by Life Expectancy, Officer Involved Shootings, Race, and Household Income.<sup>48</sup>

Zip code	Life expectancy	Shootings	% POC	% White	Household Income
85051	76 years old	8	62.2%	37.8%	\$43,942
85009	76 years old	8	88.1%	11.9%	\$32,893
85003	75 years old	5	46.3%	53.7%	\$44,140
85028	81 years old	0	19.4%	80.6%	\$92,357
85050	81 years old	0	24.8%	75.2%	\$94,450

Figure 11: Overlap of officer involved shootings and household income

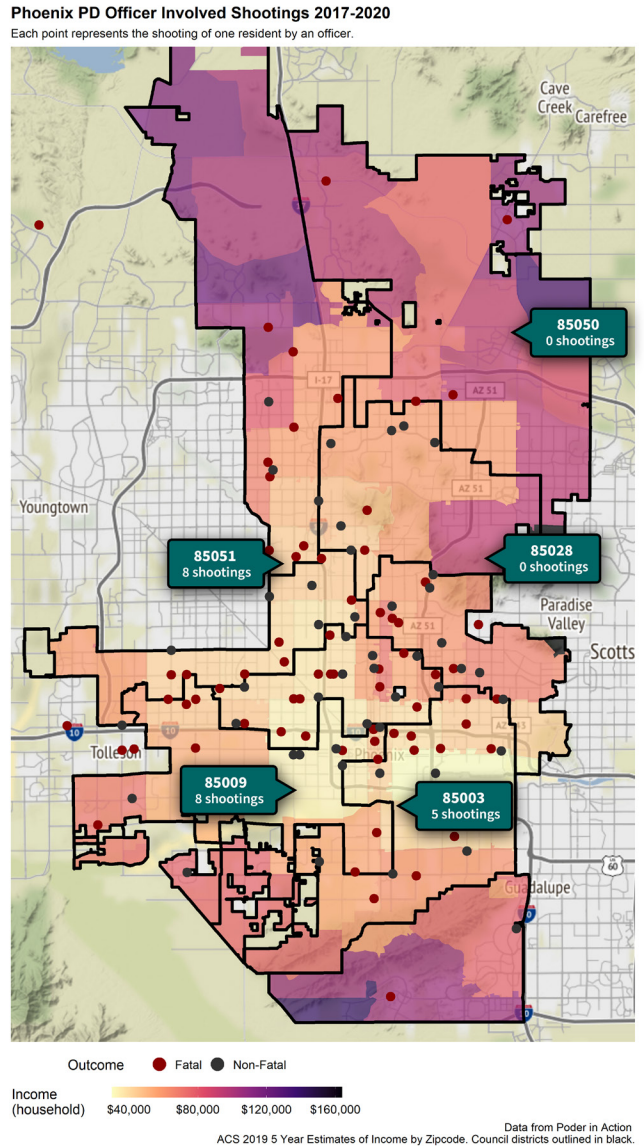
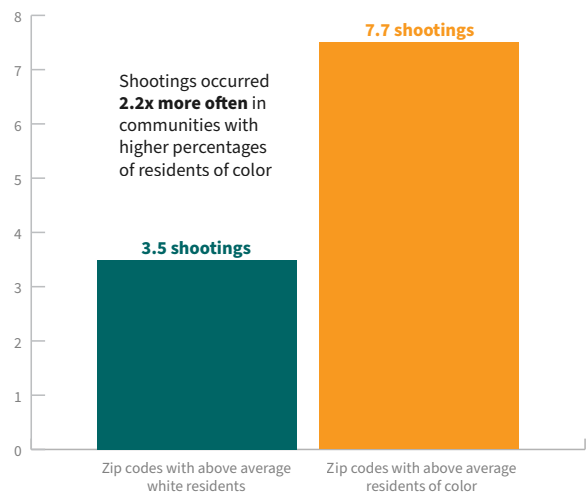


Figure 12. Phoenix Officer Involved shootings by Zip Code and Race (2017-2020)



# CALL TO ACTION: SUPPORTING SAFETY BEYOND POLICING

Reimagining safety is more than a shift in perception, reimagining safety requires an active and intentional change in individual and collective behavior and a restructuring of society.

This is a call to action for decision-makers and stakeholders in government and non-government institutions to do better and follow the lead of their constituents, client populations, and other cities, especially those most directly impacted by policing and police violence.

We have outlined concrete actions that can be done at a personal, institutional, and government levels to decrease funding and reliance on policing and instead invest in alternative practices, infrastructure, and resources to create true safety, healing, and health in our communities.



## GOVERNMENT AND ELECTED OFFICIALS

There are several actions that the city of Phoenix, particularly elected officials, can take to work towards a safer future for all.

### **Decrease the Police Budget.**

We are calling on elected officials to commit to decreasing the Phoenix police budget, and to reject future attempts to increase the police budget or the number of sworn officers. Phoenix will thrive when the social infrastructure that supports the health, safety, and wellbeing of all people is built, starting with those who have been most impacted by systemic racism and intentional neglect by the city. Divestment from policing means investment in Black, trans, queer, and young lives. Additionally, we call on elected officials to be champions for a true participatory budget process.

### **Reject Law Enforcement Organization Contributions and Endorsements.**

We are calling on elected officials to reject all contributions and endorsements from law enforcement organizations, and to also reject donations to the police department from law enforcement charities.

### **Public Police Negotiations Process.**

We call on elected officials to advocate and push for fully public negotiations for law enforcement association contracts and to reject contracts that reduce accountability for police officers.

### **Support Family Bill of Rights.**

We call on elected officials to support a family bill of rights that guarantees and outlines rights and protections for victims and witnesses of police violence, and their families.

### **Stop Collaboration with ICE.**

We call on elected officials to stop the collaboration between Phoenix police and ICE, and to decriminalize poverty, homelessness, sex work, and drug use.

### **Fund Alternatives to Public Safety.**

We call on elected officials to advocate for funding to research and implement community supported initiatives for public safety, violence prevention, mental health care, and drug use that do not involve police, incarceration, or involuntary confinement.

### **Center Those Most Impacted.**

We call on elected officials to center the voices and experiences of people directly impacted by police violence, and to take the leadership of constituents in decision-making. We call on elected officials to stand with your constituents, even if it jeopardizes your political career.



## INSTITUTIONS

There are several actions institutions such as nonprofit organizations, schools, and foundations, can take to support a safer future for all.

### **Cut partnerships.**

Cutting partnerships and relationships with the police for the safety of the people you directly and indirectly serve.

### **Divest from Law Enforcement.**

We call on institutions to closely examine where your financial investments are going, and to discontinue funding to law enforcement agencies and other surveillance-based entities (e.g., Home Owners Associations, block watches).

### **Examine Organizational Practices and Programming.**

We call on institutions to reflect on whether your theory of change, operations, structure, and/or programs make you an active player in police violence, including determining whether your services and initiatives are truly addressing the needs of your target population, or are they entry points for interactions with police or other sources of state violence that decrease the safety, health, and wellbeing of your clients. This also includes identifying and making the appropriate changes to decrease, and ultimately eliminate, reliance on police and policing within the organization's functioning.

### **Fund Alternatives to Public Safety.**

Advocate for funding to research and implement alternatives to public safety, violence prevention, mental health care, and drug use that do not involve police, incarceration, or involuntary confinement.



## PERSONAL COMMITMENTS

There are several personal actions individuals can take to support a safer future for all.

### **Build Relationships.**

As individuals, we can build relationships with the people in our neighborhood and communities, including having conversations about what is needed to be safe and healthy.

### **Civic Participation.**

We can advocate for solutions to public safety and community wellbeing that do not involve the police, and oppose increases to criminalization, policing, immigration enforcement, prisons, and jails.

### **Vote With Your Values.**

For those of us who are eligible, we can vote for candidates and initiatives that prioritize people over police, property, and prisons, and mobilize friends and family to vote. We can put the safety and wellbeing of others first by practicing alternatives to calling the police whenever possible.<sup>49</sup>

### **Share Resources.**

We can exchange resources and skills amongst ourselves to strengthen our health, safety, and autonomy.

### **Center BIPOC Leadership.**

We must follow and center the leadership of people directly impacted by police violence, people who are at the intersection of current and historical oppression.

### **Self Development and Education.**

We must work on dismantling the patriarchy, white supremacy, and anti-Blackness within ourselves.

# CONCLUSION

In a truly safe and healthy Phoenix, there is no role for policing. True safety will not be found in criminalization, incarceration, and heavily policed neighborhoods. True safety is the freedom to live, work, learn, and exist without fear of being stopped by police based on skin color, appearance, or identity.

We know that true public safety cannot be built on violence and punitive measures. It must be built on prioritizing the humanity and wellbeing of all members of our community, and ensuring everyone has what they need to thrive. This starts with the people who have been most often dispossessed and violated through our current system.

Other cities have listened to community members and begun to defund local police departments, while identifying ways to build infrastructure that prioritizes meeting people's needs and preventing violence.<sup>50</sup> Phoenix has one of the deadliest police departments in the country. Everyday we wait to start divesting from police and investing in community safety is a day we are putting the lives and wellbeing of Black, Indigenous, Brown, queer, trans, and poor residents at risk.

Our city and institutional leaders should be proud to play a role in building a new social infrastructure that honors Black, trans, queer, and young lives, and supports the wellbeing of *all Phoenix residents*.

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**TRUE SAFETY IS THE FREEDOM TO LIVE, WORK, LEARN, AND EXIST WITHOUT FEAR OF BEING STOPPED BY POLICE BASED ON SKIN COLOR, APPEARANCE, OR IDENTITY.**

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- 12 In our study, we analyzed the experiences and perspectives of groups of respondents separately by their race/ethnicity, trans- or cisgender, sexuality, and/or age. In this report, we share findings only from analyses of the experiences and perspectives of individual groups of residents. We are not reporting on the experiences of a group at the intersection of two or more of these identities, such as for queer Latinx residents or young Black residents. However, these intersecting identities are known to have compounding effects in terms of experiences with the police, as shown by research (e.g. see the 2020 Taylor et al. article, “Race and Sexual Orientation: An Intersectional Analysis and Confirmatory Factor Analysis of the Perceptions of Police Scale”).
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- 15 Holding other predictors constant, Model 1,  $\beta = 0.64$ ,  $p < 0.05$ .
- 16 Model 1,  $\beta = 0.38$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ;  $\beta = 0.58$ ,  $p < 0.001$ .
- 17 Holding other predictors constant, Model 2,  $\beta = 0.72$ ,  $p < 0.01$ .
- 18 This difference was not statistically significant.
- 19  $\chi^2(3) = 12.46$ ,  $p < 0.01$ .
- 20  $z = 4.19$ ,  $p < 0.001$ .
- 21 Holding other predictors constant, Model 3,  $\beta = 0.82$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ;  $\beta = 0.41$ ,  $p < 0.05$ . The difference between trans and cisgender respondents was not statistically significant, holding other predictors constant.
- 22 Holding other predictors constant; Model 4,  $\beta = 1.10$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ;  $\beta = 0.58$ ,  $p < 0.001$ .
- 23 Logistic regression did not indicate a statistical difference between Black and white respondents for this question, holding other predictors constant. However, all other differences are significant.
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# METHODOLOGICAL APPENDIX

In 2018, Poder in Action conducted a series of community events in which a survey was collaboratively designed, reflecting the input of dozens of individuals. Our final survey featured 25 items, consisting of Likert-scale items (in which the available responses are on a scale), dichotomous (yes/no) items, multiple choice items, and open-ended items, allowing the respondents to use their own words. Most of the items focused on the police, but we also included items asking for demographic data, such as age, race/ethnicity, gender, and sexuality. Some of the items were asked only if triggered by a “yes” response to this question: Have you ever called the police? Also, the survey was bilingual, in Spanish and English. From Fall 2018 through Fall 2019, scores of Poder in Action staff and community volunteers surveyed Phoenix residents, largely in South Phoenix and Maryvale. In most instances, we verbally asked the respondents the survey questions, face-to-face, noting responses on a paper copy of the survey. Most of the open-ended survey responses that we collected are our real-time transcriptions of the respondents’ words, as close to verbatim as possible. By the end of the data collection period, we had gathered more than 10,000 surveys, which we decreased to 9,066 during the data entry process, removing surveys with large quantities of missing data.

## SAMPLING

We collected survey responses at community centers, community events, and businesses, and also by going door-to-door. Since the survey collection was not done randomly, the data from this survey cannot be extrapolated to fully represent the attitudes of these communities or any demographic subgroup from these populations. Although the data from this survey are not fully representative of some groups, the impressive number of observations collected for this survey should not be taken lightly, as they represent the views of thousands of Phoenix residents.

Please see the tables below for demographic information about the respondents. Missing data in some surveys is the reason why the “Total #” column does not equal to 9,066, the total number of surveys we analyzed. As shown in Table 1, Latinx residents comprised the largest

share of the respondents, followed by Black and white residents. This table uses the terminology of the English-language survey, which we changed in some cases in writing our results. For instance, we use the term white in this report instead of European/Caucasian. Table 2, describing the genders of the participants, shows that 0.94% of respondents were transgender, 51.12% were cisgender female, and 47.94% were cisgender male. Table 3 shows the sexuality of the respondents; 4.85% of our sample was queer and 95.15% straight. We use the term queer to refer to sexuality only (written as “gay, lesbian, bisexual” in the survey), and thus the term does not include transgender residents, unless they also indicated they are queer. In this way, our use of queer does not fully align with the term LGBTQ—Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer/Questioning—which, as the acronym indicates, includes transgender people. As shown in Table 4, we had a range of participants in terms of age, with ages 18 to 54 most represented.

Table 3. Race/ethnicity of respondents

Race/Ethnicity	Total #	Percent
African American	878	10.08%
Asian	37	0.42%
European/Caucasian	1,043	11.50%
Latina/o	6,269	71.97%
Middle Eastern/N. African	52	0.60%
Multiracial	236	2.71%
Native American	153	1.69%
Other (write-in)	21	0.23%
Pacific Islander	9	0.10%
Sub-Saharan African	12	0.13%

Table 4. Gender of respondents

Gender	Total #	Percent
Transgender	83	0.94%
Cisgender female	4,521	51.12%
Cisgender male	4,240	47.94%

Table 5. Sexuality of respondents

Sexuality	Total #	Percent
Queer	399	4.85%
Straight	7,836	95.15%

Table 6. Age of respondents

Age Range	Total #	Percent
12-17	976	11.27%
18-24	1,527	17.64%
25-34	2,201	25.42%
35-44	2,191	25.31%
45-54	1,043	12.05%
55-64	475	5.49%
65-74	197	2.28%
75+	48	0.55%

## QUANTITATIVE ANALYSIS

Our data analysis process was multi-phased, and involved the participation of one tenured Arizona State University professor and three doctoral graduate students, representing Arizona State University, the University of Arizona, and Harvard University, in addition to a team of Poder in Action staff.

For the quantitative analysis, we began by running descriptive statistics for all survey items except the open-ended responses. We then ran descriptive statistics for these items through the use of two-way tables to show differences in percentages by race/ethnicity, gender, sexuality, and age. Then we conducted proportion tests and/or chi-squared tests to analyze whether there are significant differences between different racial, age,

gender, sexuality groups on seven of the survey questions (Table 5). Also, we ran a correlation test between the variable “Feeling scared (composite)” and “Community safety.”

Based on results from the proportion tests and chi-squared tests, we then constructed logistic regression models in order to examine the effect of race/ethnicity, gender, sexuality and age on the probability of being profiled or targeted by the police, feeling unfairly or disrespectfully treated by the police, trusting the police, believing that the police should not work with ICE, feeling scared when the police approach, and believing that the police make the community safer, respectively. Table 5 shows all the variables that we used in the logistic regression models. In Table 6, we report the coefficients from the six logistic regression models.

Table 7. Variables used in the proportion tests, chi-squared tests and logistic regression analysis

Variables	Scale	N	Mean	Original Survey Item
<b>Dependent Variables</b>				
Being profiled	1 = Yes, 0 = No	8,923	0.33	Have you or someone close to you ever been profiled or targeted by the police?
Unfairly treated	1 = No, 0 = Yes	3,132	0.15	Do you feel the police officer(s) treated you fairly and respectfully?
Trust	1 = Always, 0 = Sometimes, Never, Unsure/Don't know	9,029	0.24	How often do you trust the police?
Against ICE	1 = No, 0 = Yes, Neutral	8,872	0.87	Do you agree the City of Phoenix police should be working with immigration agents (ICE)?
Feeling scared (composite)	1 = Yes, 0 = No	8,974	0.47	How do you feel when you see a police office or police car approaching you?
Community safety	1 = Make it safer, 0 = Makes No Difference, Makes It Less Safe	8,948	0.46	How does police presence impact your community's safety?
Asked ID	1 = Yes, 0 = No	3,200	0.54	Were you asked for an ID?

Variables	Scale	N	Mean	Original Survey Item
<b>Independent Variables</b>				
Race	1 = Latina/o, 2 = African American, 3 = European/Caucasian, 4 = Other	8,710 8,710 8,710 8,710	0.72 0.10 0.12 0.06	
Age	1 = Young (12-17), 0 = Older (18+)	8,658	0.11	
Gender	1 = Transgender, 0 = Cisgender	8,844	0.01	
Sexuality	1 = Queer, 0 = Straight	8,235	0.05	

Table 8. Coefficients from the logistic regression models

	Model 1 Being profiled	Model 2 Unfairly treated	Model 3 Trust	Model 4 Against ICE	Model 5 Feeling scared (composite)	Model 6 Community safety
<b>Race</b>						
Latina/o	-0.25**	0.13	-0.18*	1.10***	0.18*	0.11
African American	0.27**	0.32	-0.82***	0.58***	0.14	-0.38***
Other	0.31**	0.25	-0.23	0.18	0.11	-0.00
<b>Age</b>						
Young	0.58***	-0.30	0.09	-0.17	0.56***	0.12
<b>Gender</b>						
Transgender	0.64*		-0.45		0.30	-1.07**
<b>Sexuality</b>						
Queer	0.38**	0.72**	-0.41**	-0.09	0.35**	-0.07
<b>Intercept</b>	-0.66***	-1.97***	-0.96***	1.09***	-0.34***	-0.24***
<b>N</b>	7,710	2,748	7,787	7,719	7,753	7,740

Note: Reference category for the Race variable is “European/Caucasian”. Gender variable is not included in Model 2 and Model 4 because there are inadequate responses to meet the assumption of logistic regression.

\*\*\*p < 0.001; \*\*p < 0.01; \*p < 0.05

## QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS

In the survey, we asked three open-ended questions. For one of these, we did not analyze results because the yes/no question that triggered this question was removed from the analysis. Of the other two questions, one was a follow-up to the yes/no question asking whether the police officer treated them fairly and respectfully. And, as explained above, the question about treatment was answered by a subset of respondents, only those who had answered “yes” to the question asking whether they had called the police. For these reasons, the number of responses was limited—342, just 0.04% of all respondents. Thus we do not report findings from this

question. Instead, we focus on this open-ended item: “If you could say anything to the police, what would you tell them? Any recommendations?” For this open-ended item, we gathered comments from 5,397 respondents, more than half of the overall sample. The proportions of racial/ethnic groups of those who provided comments for this item roughly mirror the racial/ethnic proportions of the sample overall, as shown in Table. 7.

We analyzed these 5,397 open-ended responses in two phases. In the first phase, we analyzed 1,000 of the responses, using a content analysis approach. Codes were initially developed by looking for themes in a preliminary review of the data, which were further refined during the coding process. This first-phase analysis



resulted in 27 codes that fell within three overarching categories: 1) perceptions of police behavior, 2) general perceptions of police, and 3) improvement in service. This analysis informed the approach to the second phase of the analysis. In the second phase, all 5,397 responses were placed in an Excel file, with each row representing an individual respondent, and including the open-ended response, in addition to all of that person’s responses to the demographic questions on the survey. We then used the “Find” function within Excel to search for words among the responses related to the previously created codes. This process continued in an iterative fashion as new codes and code categories were created and code definitions were created and sometimes recreated during the process. Overall, 34 codes were created in this process, falling into the several categories: 1) problematic police behavior, 2) fear and distrust of the police, 3) exhortations to police to do their job better, 4) requests to improve behavior overall or in specific areas, 5) complaints that the police either never came when called or came late, 6) requests to increase the number of police or increase community safety, 7) comments thanking the police or telling them they have done a good job, 8) recommendations to the police beyond police behavior, and 9) comments that, when police arrived, they didn’t care about the situation or didn’t do enough. For each of the 34 codes, we used a list of search words or phrases in both Spanish and English, and used variations of a given word. For instance, the list of words for the code “Fear of the Police” was the following: miedo, temor, atemoriz(ar),

terror, scared, safe, terrify, fear, asust(ar), anxi(ous)/(ety). Each of the 34 codes was a column in the Excel spreadsheet. When we found a response, through the word searches, that fit the code, we marked a “1” in that column for that respondent. Any response/respondent could have a 1 marked in more than one code column. After completing this lengthy process for all search words for all 34 codes, we calculated the sum of the 1’s and the percentage of the open-ended responses overall. This Excel spreadsheet—a matrix—allowed us to sort responses in various ways, exploring further analyses. In general, we avoid reporting the sums and percentages, though, because we recognize that the word searches could have missed some responses that should have been categorized with one or more of the 34 codes.

The findings for the analysis of the open-ended responses alone could fill an entire report. However, we focused on the themes that triangulated with the quantitative findings. Some of the qualitative themes that are not reported in the findings can be inferred from the names of the codes. For instance, as mentioned in the introduction, a sizable chunk of open-ended responses—about 18%—fell into the code category 7, comments thanking the police or telling them they’ve done a good job. Other than these responses, though, the vast majority of responses were critiques of the police or implied a critique in exhorting improved police behavior, with the greatest percentages of comments falling within code categories 1-4.

Table 9. Comparison of race/ethnicity of open-ended respondents to overall sample

Race/Ethnicity	% who answered open-ended item	% in overall sample
African American	11%	10.08%
Asian	0.35%	0.42%
European/Caucasian	11.81%	11.50%
Latina/o	71.84%	71.97%
Middle Eastern/N. African	0.48%	0.60%
Multiracial	2.28%	2.71%
Native American	1.86%	1.69%
Other (write-in)	0.23%	0.23%
Pacific Islander	0.10%	0.10%
Sub-Saharan African	0.06%	0.13%