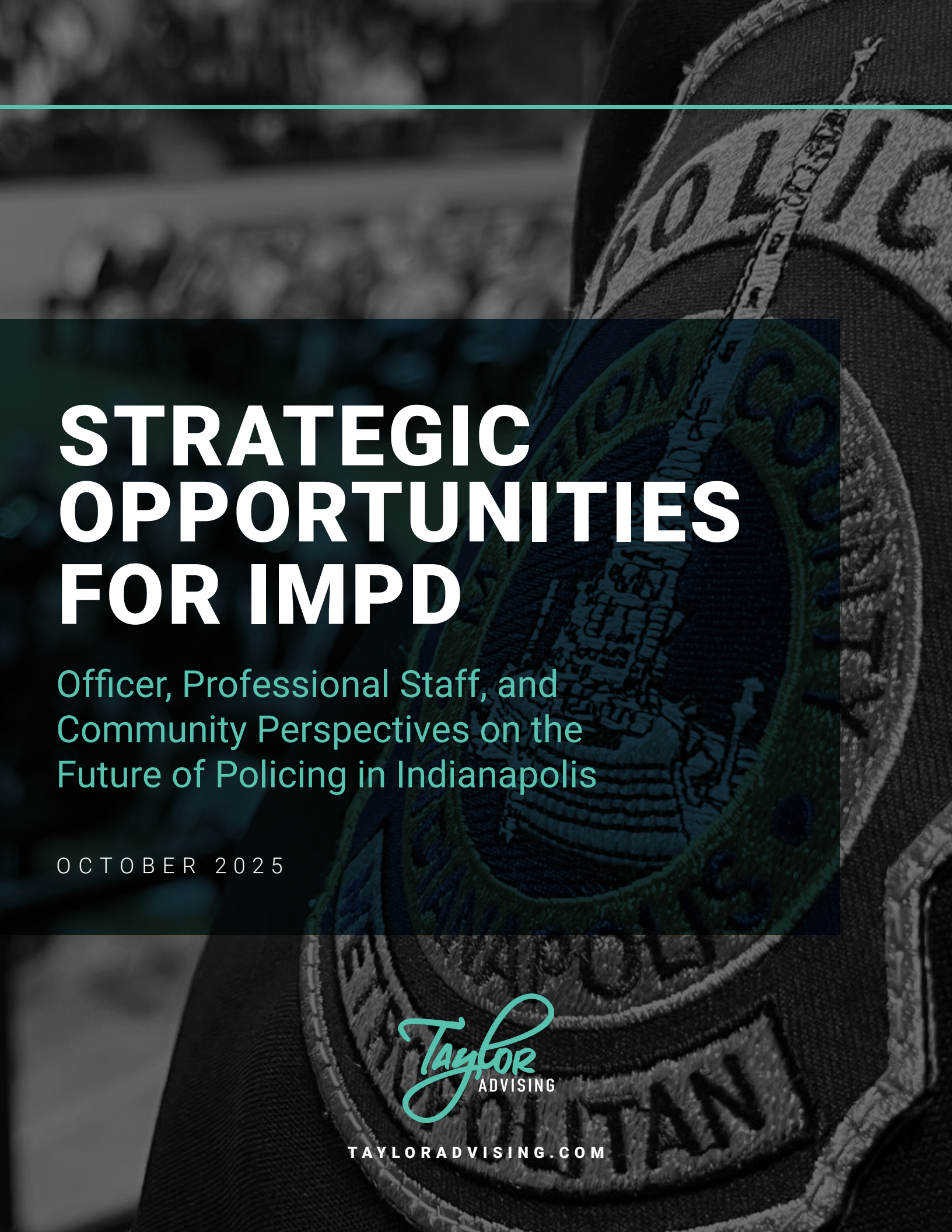




STRATEGIC OPPORTUNITIES FOR IMPD

Officer, Professional Staff, and
Community Perspectives on the
Future of Policing in Indianapolis

OCTOBER 2025



[TAYLORADVISING.COM](https://tayloradvising.com)



Taylor Advising is an Indianapolis-based, women owned consulting firm specializing in community informed landscape analysis, strategic planning, and capacity building for organizations focused on social good.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	3
METHODOLOGY	6
KEY FINDINGS	13
THE DEPARTMENT'S PURPOSE	13
<i>The Role of IMPD</i>	13
<i>Community Priorities</i>	16
CULTURE & HUMAN RESOURCES	20
<i>Morale & Wellness</i>	20
<i>Professional Development</i>	22
<i>Recruitment & Retention</i>	26
<i>Building a Culture of Trust</i>	27
DEPARTMENT INFRASTRUCTURE	33
<i>Facilities, Technology, & Equipment</i>	33
<i>Policies & Data</i>	34
COMMUNITY RELATIONS	35
<i>Building Bridges & Trust with the Community</i>	35
<i>Relationships with Specific Community Groups</i>	40
CONCLUSION	44
APPENDIX A: REFERENCES	45

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Effective strategic planning is crucial for any police department striving to allocate resources efficiently, address crime effectively, and strengthen trust and relationships with the community it serves. To support this aim for the Indianapolis community, the Indianapolis Police Department (IMPD) partnered with the trusted, Indianapolis-based consulting firm Taylor Advising to facilitate an inclusive strategic planning process from February 2025 to January 2026, preparing the department to establish a roadmap for the next five years.

As a critical step toward IMPD prioritizing the needs of its officers, professional staff, and the community as they plan for the future of the department, Taylor Advising began the planning process by soliciting candid input about key opportunities and challenges for the department within IMPD and across the Indianapolis community.

From April through July 2025, 1,283 responses were provided by IMPD employees, including: 1,052 responses to an anonymous department-wide survey, 213 participants across 16 employee listening sessions hosted within all IMPD districts, and 18 individual interviews with employees across a variety of roles, divisions, and ranks within the department. During this same time period, 2,288 responses were provided by members of the Indianapolis community, including: 2,098 responses to an anonymous public survey, 77 participants across 7 public listening sessions hosted at safe, accessible community spaces housed within each police district throughout the city, 7 individual interviews with representatives from the City County Council, the Mayor's Office, and the Prosecutor's Office, and 106 participants across 12 population-specific focus groups ensuring representation from communities that may have unique relationships or interactions with law enforcement. Promising practices from other police departments addressing similar opportunities and challenges across the country were also uncovered for IMPD's consideration.

To foster an inclusive, accessible, and confidential environment for IMPD employees and Indianapolis community members to voice their perspectives about the opportunities and challenges facing the department, all data was collected through anonymous participation methods, surveys were made available in the top six languages spoken in Indianapolis, multilingual community ambassadors worked alongside the Taylor Advising team to facilitate sessions for groups with diverse language needs, and feedback was collected in safe, confidential spaces made available by ambassadors within each department district and throughout Indianapolis neighborhoods. Strategic efforts were made to engage a representative cross-section of voices from within IMPD and the Indianapolis community; however, engagement methods may have excluded some voices due to scheduling conflicts, session locations, language barriers, concerns around trust in policing, and varying levels of interest or investment in police initiatives.

Through careful qualitative and quantitative analysis of all data collected through this comprehensive research process, 34 key findings emerged within four overarching areas related to IMPD: the Department's Purpose, Culture and Human Resources, Department Infrastructure, and Community Relations. While a wide variety of valuable perspectives were shared through this process, it is important to note that the key findings reflect the patterns and thematic insights that consistently surfaced across all officer, professional staff, and community member input.

Ultimately, the following key findings are intended to support IMPD in determining the strategic priorities that will guide the department for the next five years, ensuring that the final vision and strategy for policing in Indianapolis is both employee and community driven. Supporting data for each key finding is included within the full report.

KEY FINDINGS SUMMARY

I. THE DEPARTMENT'S PURPOSE

THE ROLE OF IMPD

1. IMPD employees and Indianapolis community members alike want officers who protect and serve with kindness and empathy, while still enforcing the law.
2. Many see Indianapolis's criminal justice system as a "revolving door," and the widespread lack of understanding about IMPD's responsibilities vs. the judicial system's responsibilities can lead to misplaced frustrations.
3. Community members want greater transparency, communication, and accountability from IMPD, especially following incidents of excessive force or other critical events.
4. A lack of understanding about the day-to-day realities of policing can lead to unrealistic expectations about officer capacity and abilities to solve community problems.

COMMUNITY PRIORITIES

5. Most community members report feeling relatively safe in Indianapolis during the day, but perceptions vary across geographies, time of day, and income level.
6. The most pressing concerns for Indianapolis community members and IMPD employees alike are gun violence, homelessness, mental health, drug abuse, economic insecurity, traffic issues/residential speeding, and burglaries/theft.
7. Both IMPD employees and the community strongly support a shift toward preventative, data-driven policing and collaborative, community-based partnerships, as well as systemic changes that prioritize alternative interventions.

II. CULTURE & HUMAN RESOURCES

MORALE & WELLNESS

8. IMPD leaders recognize the urgent need to rebuild collective pride and purpose within the department to counterbalance the persistent public scrutiny, demands on officers' mental health, and work-life balance challenges that are contributing to low morale and officer attrition.
9. Despite IMPD's extensive efforts to expand and destigmatize wellness resources, many employees continue

to express a need for more holistic, flexible wellness supports, noting that concerns about stigma and confidentiality still limit their willingness to access available mental health services.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

10. While officers agree that disciplinary practices have become more consistent and effective in recent years, there remains room for improvement, particularly in performance review processes and employee recognition.
11. Both IMPD employees and community members want more tailored and relevant training to support frontline IMPD employees and leadership so they can meet the demands of modern policing.
12. There is widespread agreement that department-wide succession planning with a focus on developing leaders from within the department should be a priority.
13. IMPD employees believe professional staff are essential to IMPD's work in the community and should receive the requisite compensation, as well as professional growth and leadership opportunities.
14. Many minority employees at IMPD, including BIPOC and female officers, report facing bias, inadequate support, and obstacles to advancement. These challenges may contribute to feelings of isolation, mistrust, and a diminished sense of belonging within the organization.

RECRUITMENT & RETENTION

15. There is widespread agreement that IMPD's staffing shortages are directly impacting officer morale and the department's ability to reduce crime, and could threaten the department's long-term sustainability.
16. National police departments are adopting bold, structural changes to address workforce crises.

BUILDING A CULTURE OF TRUST

17. There is a perceived disconnect within the department between leadership, front line officers, and professional staff.
18. It is widely believed that more facetime between officers and department leadership could help to build genuine, trusting relationships within the department and lead to stronger relationships with the community.
19. Many key department updates, such as policy changes,

staffing adjustments, or department-wide initiatives, are often communicated inconsistently or without context, which can leave officers feeling uninformed or out of the loop.

- 20. There is widespread agreement that clearer, more intentional lines of internal communication within the department could help rebuild trust, reduce frustration, and make sure everyone feels more informed, respected, and connected.

III. DEPARTMENT INFRASTRUCTURE

FACILITIES, TECHNOLOGY, & EQUIPMENT

- 21. Outdated department facilities are having a direct, negative impact on IMPD employee morale and ability to meet the demands of their jobs.
- 22. IMPD employees share concerns that outdated technology and reliance on multiple, unintegrated systems often hinder the department's daily work and agree that streamlined technology could improve efficiency and reduce training challenges.

POLICIES & DATA

- 23. There is widespread agreement that updating and streamlining internal policies could greatly improve efficiency and morale of IMPD employees.
- 24. IMPD employees and Indianapolis community members alike believe that a modern data collection strategy and enhanced reporting systems would allow for increased law enforcement accountability, efficiency, and transparency.

IV. COMMUNITY RELATIONS

BUILDING BRIDGES & TRUST WITH THE COMMUNITY

- 25. Officers and community members agree that building mutual, meaningful relationships based on familiarity and trust is an essential part of effective policing and public safety, however, the department may be overestimating the positive impact of their current communication and relationship building efforts.
- 26. To more effectively build trusting relationships, community members want more facetime with officers in non-crisis situations.

- 27. There is widespread recognition that transparent, two-way communication between IMPD and the community is an essential, yet missing part of the current dynamic in Indianapolis.
- 28. The Indianapolis community is most likely to get their information about IMPD from the local news or word of mouth, rather than directly from the department.
- 29. Community members want communication about public safety related incidents to be transparent, factual, and consistent regardless of the source of information.

RELATIONSHIPS WITH SPECIFIC COMMUNITY GROUPS

- 30. There is widespread acknowledgement that historical tensions between law enforcement and historically marginalized groups influence how the community views IMPD today.
- 31. As Indianapolis's non-English speaking and immigrant communities have grown, the community and the department share concerns about officers having the right tools and understanding to best work with and support the public safety of these communities, knowing that more focused training, translation services, and/or other supports are needed to equip the department to serve and protect immigrant communities.
- 32. Many community members who do not speak English as their first language are often unsure how to contact the police and/or don't have a clear understanding of local laws and fear that interacting with the police could put them in danger.
- 33. IMPD employees and the community share a desire for alternative interventions and partnerships to better address incidents where mental health is a factor and where youth are involved.
- 34. There is widespread agreement that cultural awareness training is essential to building trust, improving safety, and effectively de-escalating encounters.

By drawing on these key findings, IMPD will determine strategic priorities for the department that will serve as a guiding roadmap for the next five years. The resulting five-year strategic plan will be published in early 2026, helping IMPD remain responsive to the evolving needs of officers, professional staff, and the Indianapolis community.

METHODOLOGY

Effective strategic planning is crucial for police departments striving to allocate resources efficiently, address crime, and strengthen community trust. To support this aim, the Indianapolis Police Department (IMPD) partnered with Taylor Advising, a local consulting firm, to design and facilitate an inclusive strategic planning process from February 2025 to January 2026. During the months of April, May, June and July, the process prioritized input from both department employees and a broad cross-section of the community, employing a mixed-methods approach that incorporated quantitative and qualitative data sources, as well as a review of national best practices in policing.

IMPD EMPLOYEE INPUT | DATA COLLECTION

- **IMPD Department Survey**

An anonymous survey was offered to all IMPD employees. The survey was open for 64 days, from April 9, 2025, to June 12, 2025. It was promoted through internal email communications, QR codes, roll calls, and other departmental gatherings. Special recognition is given to IMPD Public Affairs for leading promotional efforts. In total, 1,052 survey responses were collected, providing robust quantitative insights into departmental perspectives.

- **IMPD Employee Listening Sessions**

Employee input was further solicited through sixteen (16) listening sessions organized internally and offered to all IMPD employees. These sessions brought together a total of 213 officers, command staff, and professional staff to discuss department strengths, challenges, and ideas for operational improvements. Sessions were guided by facilitators, emphasized confidentiality, and encouraged open discussion of both everyday experiences and strategic priorities. Insights from these sessions were thematically analyzed and cross-referenced with survey results and employee interviews.

- **1:1 Employee Interviews**

In-depth interviews were conducted with 18 IMPD em-

ployees, including representatives from command staff, district leadership, officers, and professional staff. Interview participants were selected to ensure a diverse range of roles and perspectives, enabling deeper exploration of strategic and operational issues.

- **Total Responses from IMPD Employees: 1,283**

IMPD EMPLOYEE INPUT | DEMOGRAPHICS

All IMPD employees were invited to participate in the employee survey and listening sessions. Across the survey, listening sessions, and departmental interviews, a total of 1,283 employees contributed to the strategic planning process. While not all survey respondents chose to provide demographic or position-related information, Figures 1-3 present data for those who did share these details.

COMMUNITY INPUT | DATA COLLECTION

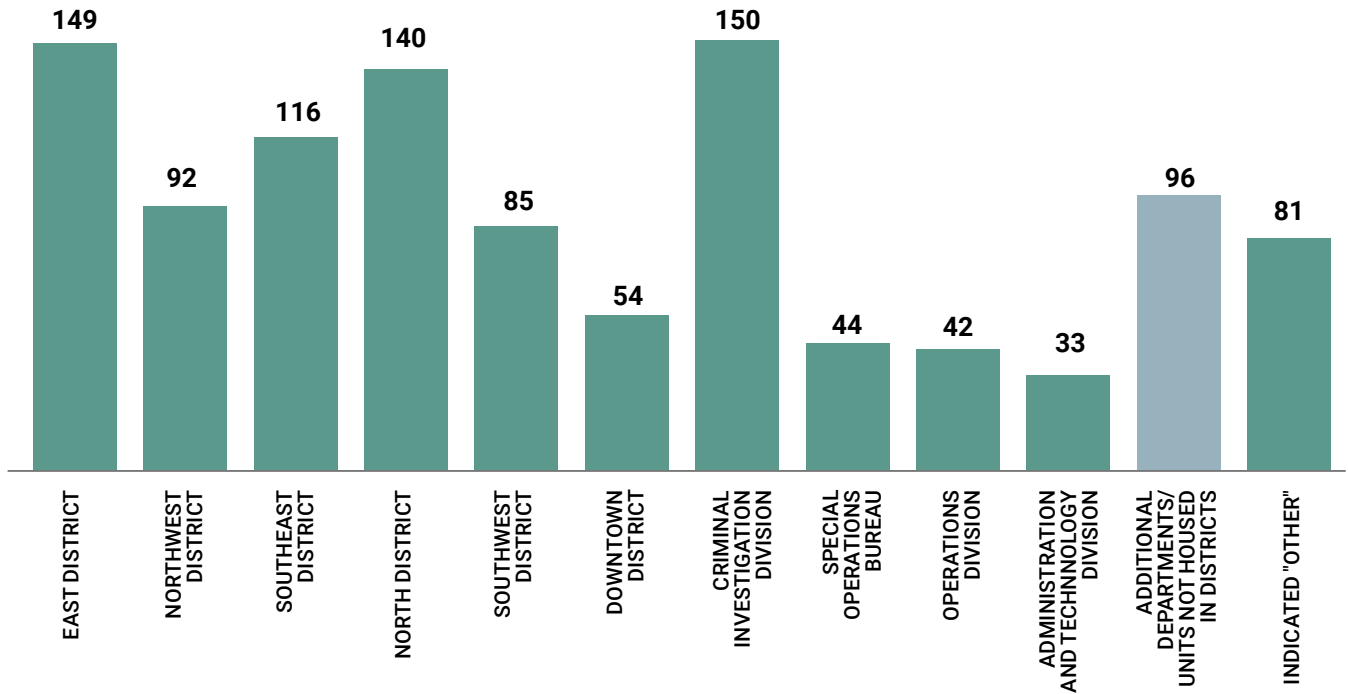
The perspective of the community is essential to ensuring IMPD's strategic priorities align with the needs, expectations, and experiences of those it serves. As part of the department's inclusive strategic planning process, community input was extensively solicited between April and July 2025, utilizing a mixed-methods approach that provided both quantitative and qualitative data and included outreach to historically underrepresented groups, as requested by IMPD.

- **Public Community Survey**

An anonymous public survey was designed to gather broad-based quantitative insights on public safety concerns, perceptions of police services, and community priorities. The survey launched on April 10, 2025, and remained open for 77 days, closing on June 25, 2025. Promotion efforts were multi-faceted, including a public press conference, coordinated pushes via IMPD and Taylor Advising media channels, email outreach by community partners, and wide distribution of multilingual flyers across Marion County. Surveys were available in 6 languages, including English, Bur-

FIGURE 1: IMPD EMPLOYEE INPUT BY DISTRICT

Department Survey Responses and Department Listening Session Participants.



Additional Departments/Units not housed in districts" consist of: Training Bureau, Office of the Chief of Police, Comm. Engagement & Outreach Bureau, Professional Standards, and Public Safety Communications.

FIGURE 2: IMPD POSITION TITLE

Department Survey Responses.

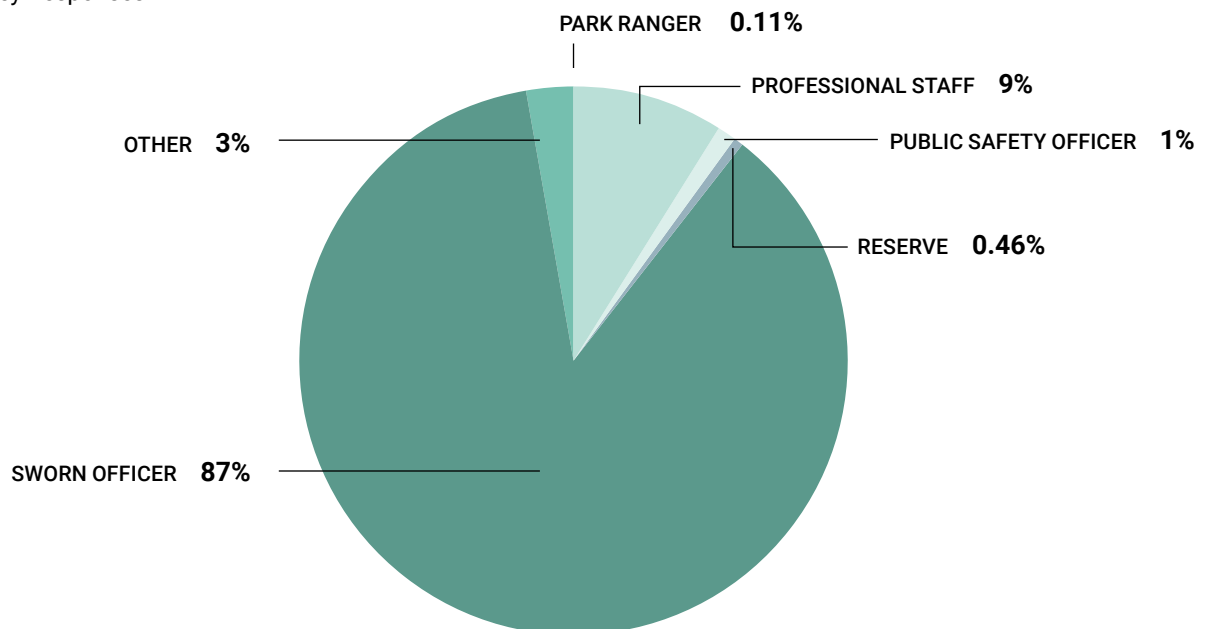
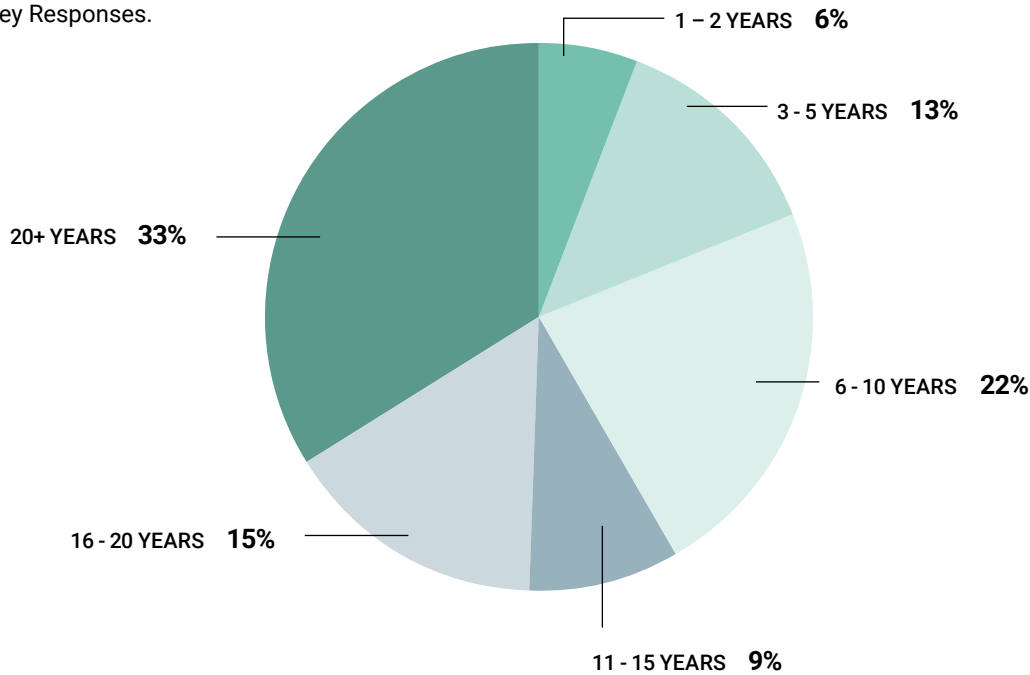


FIGURE 3: IMPD EMPLOYEE INPUT BY IMPD TENURE

Department Survey Responses.



From November 2011 to June 2014, IMPD had a hiring freeze and did not hire any additional officers.

mese, French, Haitian Creole, Mandarin Chinese, and Spanish. Local community centers and designated Community Ambassadors, selected for their established relationships and reach within their respective neighborhoods, supported further dissemination of the survey. In total, 2,098 surveys were submitted, including 1,140 responses with completed demographic information.

• **Public Listening Sessions**

A series of seven (7) public listening sessions were held at community centers and public libraries in each of IMPD's six districts, with an additional session in the Downtown district. These sessions provided a forum for open dialogue regarding department strengths, challenges, and opportunities for improved community-police collaboration. Sessions were advertised via press releases, social media, and in partnership with local organizations. Facilitators emphasized confidentiality and encouraged honest feedback. Seventy-seven (77) community members participated in these sessions.

• **Population-Specific Focus Groups**

Recognizing the importance of including voices from communities that may have unique relationships or in-

teractions with law enforcement, IMPD identified a series of population-specific groups for targeted outreach. Participation in population-specific focus groups was by invitation to ensure representation from:

- Immigrant Communities
- Mental Health Providers
- African American Coalition (AACI)
- LGBTQ+ Service Providers
- Homelessness Service Providers
- Justice Involved/Re-entry Service Providers
- CHIN/Burmese Communities
- Haitian/Creole Communities
- Violence Reduction Advocates
- Latino/a/x Communities
- Youth Service Providers
- Faith Leaders

Multilingual community ambassadors worked alongside the Taylor Advising team to facilitate sessions for groups with diverse language needs. Overall, 106 individuals participated in these focus groups, sharing targeted insights into barriers, opportunities, and priorities within each sub-population.

• 1:1 Community Stakeholder Interviews

To deepen understanding of city-wide perspectives, key stakeholders—including all 25 City County Council members, the Mayor’s Office, the Prosecutor’s Office, and representatives from the Indianapolis Fraternal Order of Police—were invited to participate in in-depth, semi-structured interviews. Seven (7) stakeholders accepted the invitation and shared their views on department strategy, community needs, and interagency collaboration.

• Total Responses from Community Input: 2,288

COMMUNITY INPUT | DEMOGRAPHICS

Across the community survey, listening sessions, focus groups, and interviews, a total of 2,288 community members contributed to IMPD’s strategic planning process. While not all community survey respondents chose to provide demographic information, Figures 4 -7 present data for those who did share these details.

PROMISING PRACTICES ACROSS THE NATION

To ensure IMPD’s strategic planning process is informed

by current, high-impact approaches in public safety, a comprehensive review of promising and evidence-based practices was conducted. This review focused on identifying strategies and programs with demonstrated success in police departments across the nation and considered their relevance and adaptability to the local context.

Departments were selected for examination based on one or more the following criteria:

- City size and demographics
- Police department size
- Documented success in key strategic areas, including:
 - *Recruitment and retention of personnel*
 - *Internal and external communication strategies*
 - *Leadership development and succession planning*
 - *Community engagement and approaches to policing*
 - *Innovative adoption of technology and equipment*
- Alignment with priorities and concerns identified through IMPD Employee and Community Input

FIGURE 4: COMMUNITY INPUT BY IMPD DISTRICT

Community Survey Responses and Community Listening Session Participants.

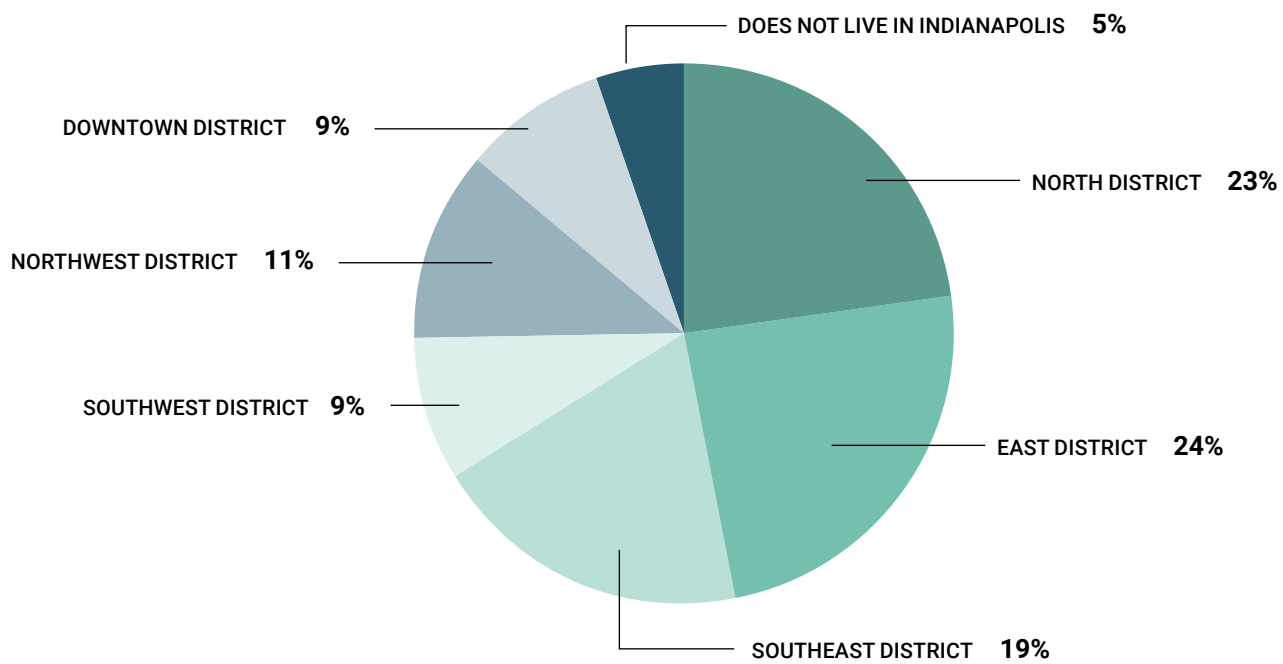


FIGURE 5: COMMUNITY INPUT BY ZIP CODE
Community Survey Responses.

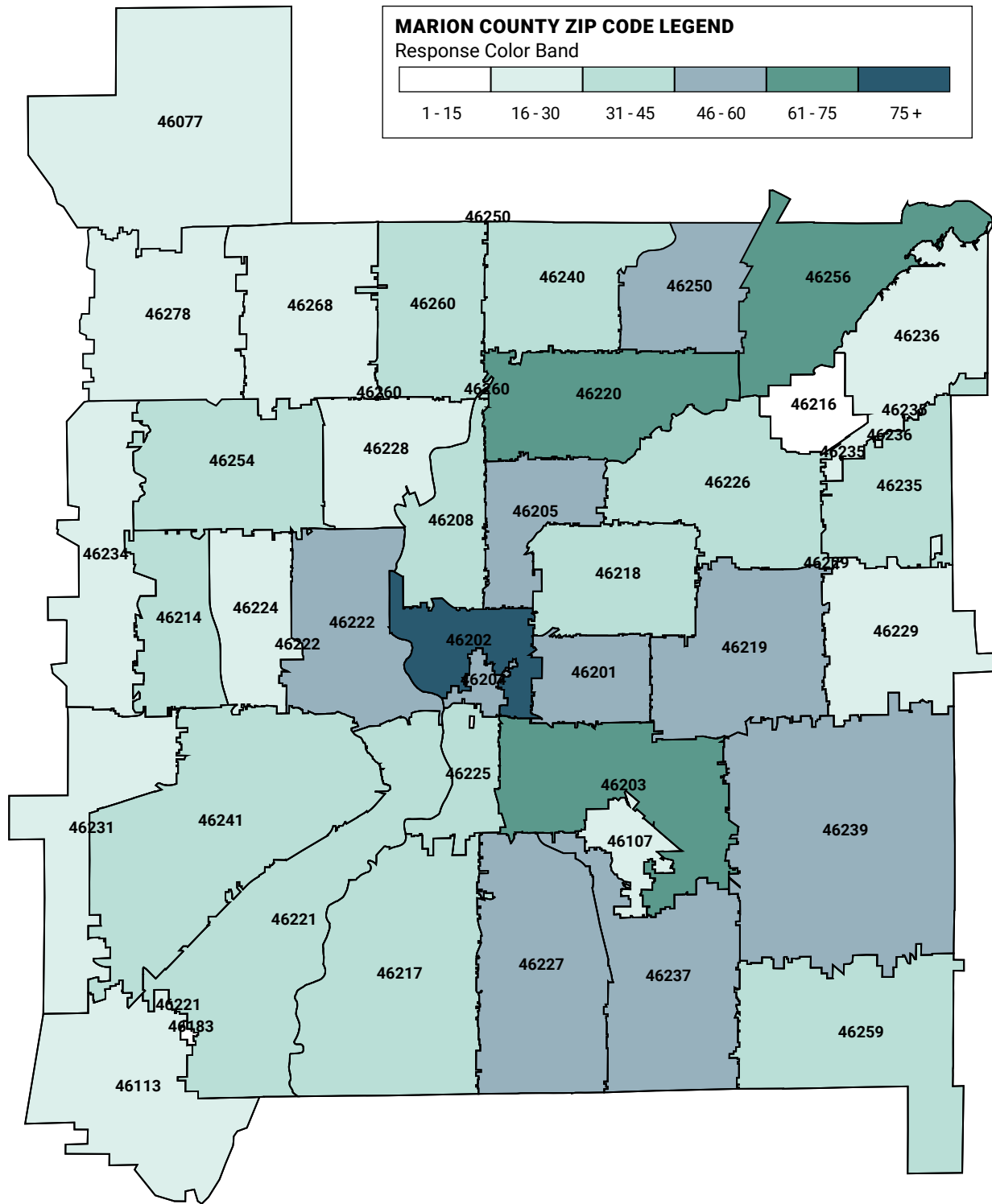


FIGURE 6: COMMUNITY INPUT BY AGE

Community Survey responses, Listening Session Participants, and Focus Group Participants.

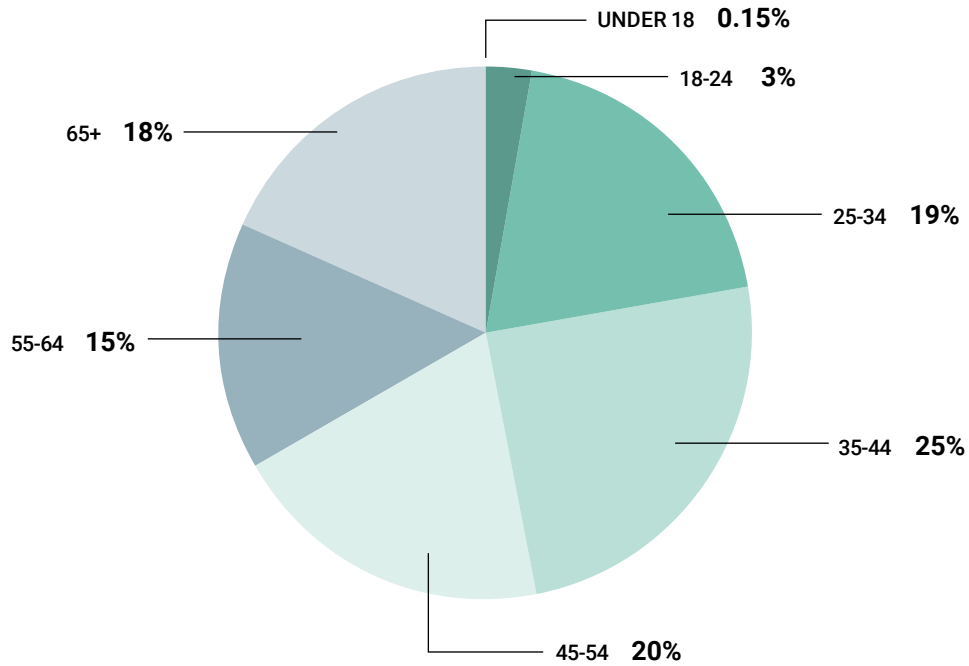
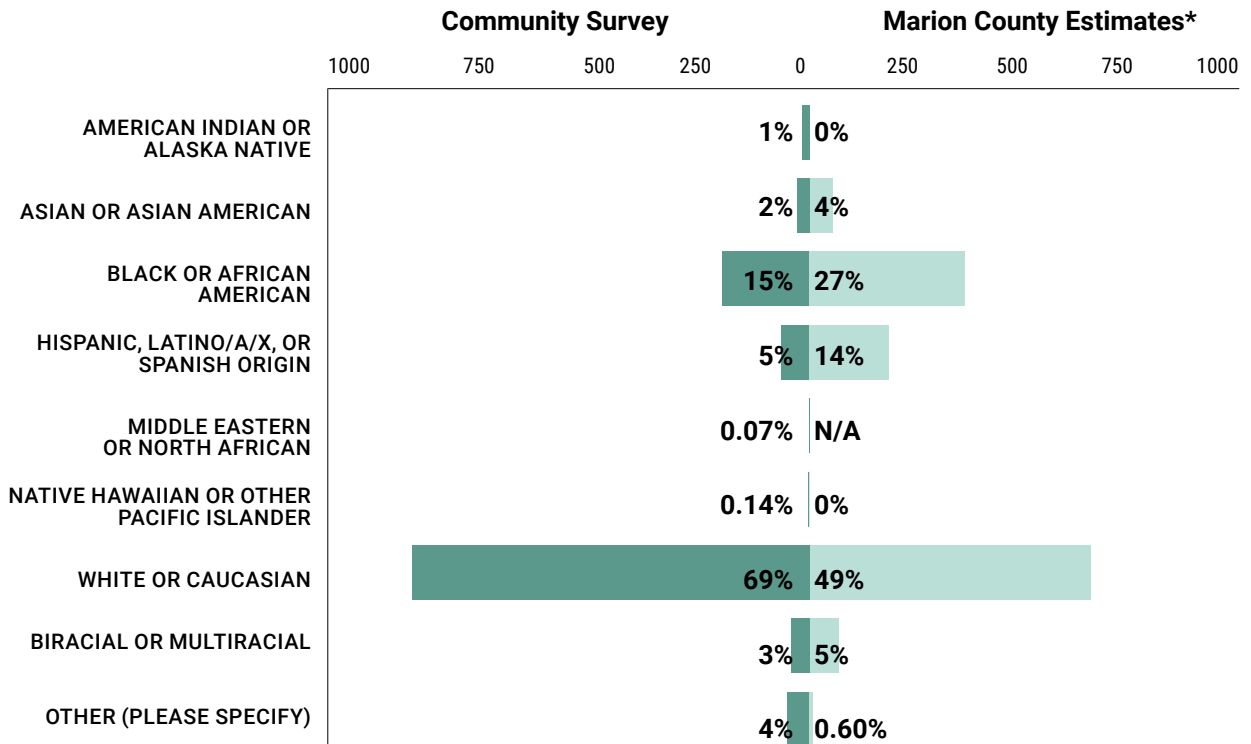


FIGURE 7: COMMUNITY INPUT BY RACE/ETHNICITY

Community Survey responses, Listening Session participants, and Focus Group participants.



*Marion County Estimates (Source: American Community Survey, 2023 ACS 1-Year Estimates)

Key police departments reviewed included, but were not limited to:

- Albuquerque Police Department
- Bloomington Police Department
- Boston Police Department
- Charlotte-Mecklenberg Police Department
- Chicago Police Department
- Chula Vista Police Department
- Columbus Police Department
- Denver Police Department
- Houston Police Department
- Louisville Metro Police Department
- Memphis Police Department
- Metropolitan Nashville Police Department
- Michigan City Police Department
- New Orleans Police Department
- Portland Police Bureau

Taylor Advising engaged with some of these departments directly through interviews, while others were explored through analysis of publicly available reports and documentation.

In addition, the review incorporated insights from leading professional organizations, practitioner and academic journals, and major research forums—such as the International Association of Chiefs of Police, Department of Justice Community Oriented Policing Services, and prominent criminal justice research publications. These sources provided national context and research-driven recommendations to ensure the strategic plan reflects best practices and addresses identified local priorities.

DATA ANALYSIS

All quantitative data from employee and public surveys were analyzed to summarize trends and identify areas of consensus or concern. Qualitative data from interviews, listening sessions, and open-ended survey questions were coded and thematically analyzed by the project team. Findings from each engagement method were triangulated to raise confidence in key insights and to surface recurring themes, as well as to identify differences across stakeholder groups.

LIMITATIONS

- Community engagement methods may have excluded some voices due to scheduling conflicts, session locations, language barriers, concerns around trust in policing, and varying levels of community interest or investment in police initiatives.
- Interview participant selection and voluntary participation may have introduced selection bias.
- Response rates and representativeness of certain demographic groups (e.g., marginalized or harder-to-reach communities) may limit the generalizability of findings.
- The review of national practices was necessarily selective and may not reflect the full breadth of emerging innovations.

Efforts were made to address these limitations by employing multiple outreach methods, offering confidential participation options, and seeking broad representation across demographic and stakeholder groups.

The following key findings outlining strategic opportunities and challenges for IMPD emerged through the analysis of all officer, professional staff, and community input collected by the trusted Indianapolis-based consulting firm Taylor Advising from April through July 2025. Through a combination of surveys, listening sessions, and interviews conducted to help inform the future of IMPD, 1,283 responses were provided from IMPD employees and 2,288 responses came from members of the Indianapolis community. While a wide variety of valuable perspectives were shared through this process, it is important to note that these findings reflect the patterns and thematic insights that consistently surfaced across all officer, professional staff, and community member input collected. Promising practices from other police departments addressing similar opportunities and challenges across the country are also highlighted below for IMPD's consideration. Ultimately, these key findings are intended to support IMPD in determining the strategic priorities that will guide the department for the next five years, ensuring that the final vision and strategy for policing in Indianapolis will be both employee and community driven.

KEY FINDINGS

I. THE DEPARTMENT'S PURPOSE

THE ROLE OF IMPD

1. IMPD EMPLOYEES AND INDIANAPOLIS COMMUNITY MEMBERS ALIKE WANT OFFICERS WHO PROTECT AND SERVE WITH KINDNESS AND EMPATHY, WHILE STILL ENFORCING THE LAW.

Officers and community members often share similar stories about what good policing looks like. “Being a good police officer is about more than just enforcing laws,” one command staff member said, “It’s about how you carry yourself, how you treat people, and how you represent the department every single day.” Another command staff member reflected on the values that drive this work: “Empathy. A sense of purpose. Being drawn to the why... If you ask everyone their why, they’ll probably all say it’s to serve, protect, give back to community, serve something bigger than yourself, put others first, those are the values that are important. Kindness. Strength.”

“Being a good police officer is about more than just enforcing laws, it’s about how you carry yourself, how you treat people, and how you represent the department every single day.”

— IMPD Command Staff

Pride in the department’s work is also repeatedly voiced by IMPD employees as an important value. “Officers should take pride in their work and how they show up, whether that’s in their uniform, their attitude, or how they talk to someone in a tough situation,” one Command Staff leader said. “The

best officers are the ones who can protect and serve at the same time, who can make tough calls when needed, but who also treat people with respect and dignity.”

A community member recalled how an officer patiently walked them through the process after their car was stolen, gave them a direct contact number, and followed up personally when the car was recovered. These moments of connection reflect the empathy, respect, professionalism, and pride that many believe are essential for building trust and legitimacy in the community.

2. MANY SEE INDIANAPOLIS’S CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM AS A “REVOLVING DOOR,” AND THE WIDESPREAD LACK OF UNDERSTANDING ABOUT IMPD’S RESPONSIBILITIES VS. THE JUDICIAL SYSTEM’S RESPONSIBILITIES CAN LEAD TO MISPLACED FRUSTRATIONS.

IMPD employees and community members express frustration with what they describe as a “revolving door” in the criminal justice system, where repeat offenders can be released quickly after an arrest, even when violence was involved. “We have too many repeat offenders being released for violent crimes,” one IMPD employee shared. Another put it bluntly, “Policing is just one piece of the system. If the courts or prosecutors aren’t holding up their end, it undermines the whole structure.”

Survey results reinforce these concerns, 77% of department survey respondents say they do not feel supported by government officials, and 37% want better alignment with the Prosecutor’s Office. As one IMPD employee explained, “Unfortunately, the criminal justice system does a very poor job of protecting victims and rehabilitating offenders... An outward facing position of holding those accountable for the failures of the justice system would

go a long way to improving morale and the belief that our actions count.” Another IMPD employee shared, “Many in the community get frustrated when they see repeat offenders back on the streets shortly after being arrested... We’re doing our best to build bridges and create change, but we also need support and understanding from every part of the system to truly move forward together.”



37%

OF DEPARTMENT SURVEY
RESPONDENTS EXPRESSED A DESIRE
FOR IMPROVED ALIGNMENT WITH THE
PROSECUTOR’S OFFICE

“We’re doing our best to build bridges and create change, but we also need support and understanding from every part of the system to truly move forward together”

— IMPD Employee

Community members echoed this perspective. One community member shared, “If we do not change the court system, it doesn’t matter what our police officers are doing to improve crime... Citizens lose faith in the justice system when they see crimes go unpunished... Police mo-

rale suffers. Officers risk their lives to make arrests, and if those efforts are constantly undone by revolving-door justice, it leads to burnout and disillusionment.”

One community member shared, “I’ve heard neighbors complain that IMPD isn’t doing enough, but I think a lot of that comes from not knowing what happens after someone is arrested. That’s not the police, that’s the courts.” The overarching message from both inside and outside the department is clear: without broader system-wide clarity and accountability, even the best policing efforts risk being undermined, leaving public trust, and officer morale, on the line.

3. COMMUNITY MEMBERS WANT GREATER TRANSPARENCY, COMMUNICATION, AND ACCOUNTABILITY FROM IMPD, ESPECIALLY FOLLOWING INCIDENTS OF EXCESSIVE FORCE OR OTHER CRITICAL EVENTS.

When asked if they believe IMPD is trustworthy, 50% of community survey respondents agreed, while 24% disagreed, and 39% agreed that IMPD is transparent in its policies and practices. See Figures 8-9. Community members and department employees emphasized that building trust requires consistent, open communication, especially following critical incidents. Others pointed to the importance of keeping victims informed throughout the judicial process. “The lack of communication with victims [after a crime] not only adds to their frustration but also damages trust in the entire system. Improving transparency and communication throughout the judicial process could help bridge the gap between public expectations and the reality of what law enforcement is up against,” an IMPD employee shared.

Community members also suggested more proactive public reporting. “I think there is opportunity for more transparency with the issues that are being addressed, like in a quarterly report showing how review boards are working internally and the sharing of data. That information should be public. Anyone should be able to pull that up at any time. That transparency will be very helpful,” said a faith focus group participant. These suggestions align with national best practices, such as the Washington, DC

Metropolitan Police Department's structured community engagement and procedural justice strategies, which foster dialogue and transparency before and after critical incidents (1). This proactive approach helps close the gap

between public perception and official communication, strengthening trust and accountability in the process.

FIGURE 8: COMMUNITY TRUST OF IMPD

When asked to rank their agreement with the statement "IMPD is trustworthy", community survey respondents indicated the following.

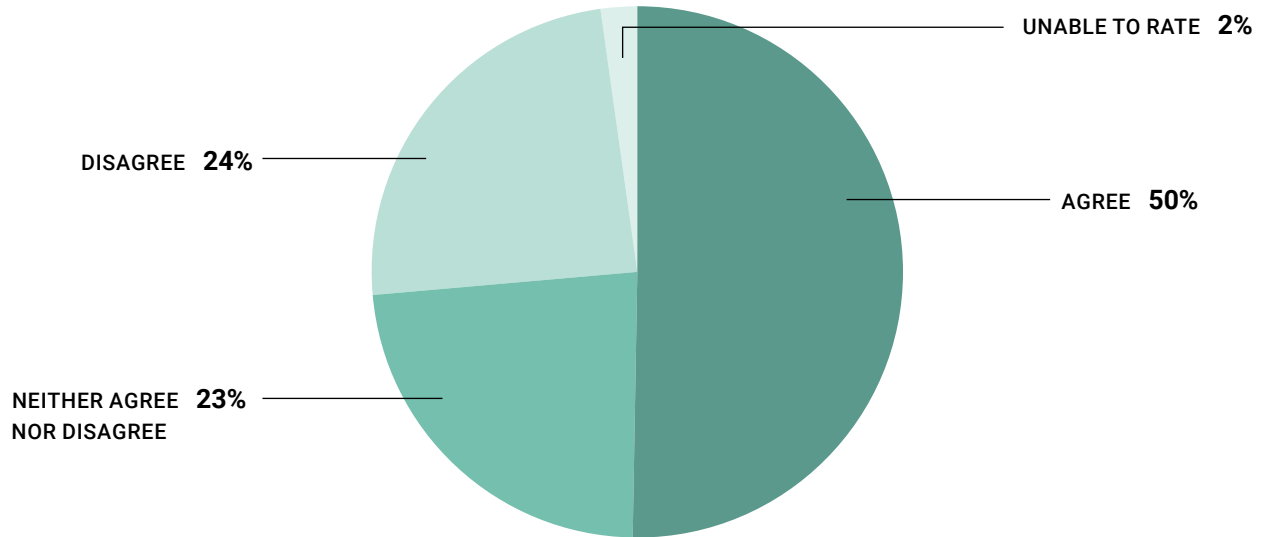
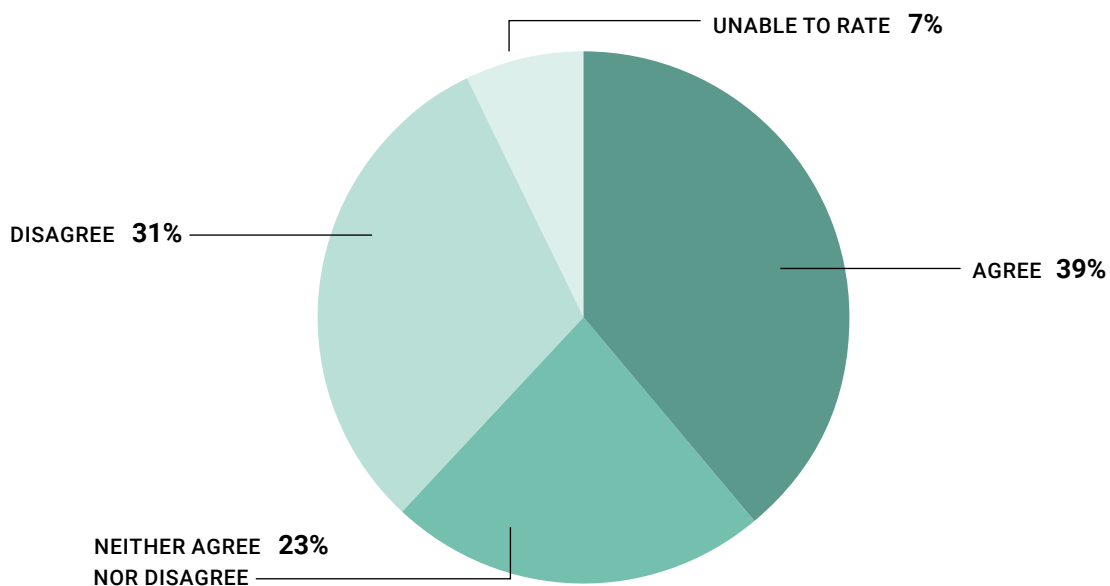


FIGURE 9: COMMUNITY PERCEPTION OF IMPD TRANSPARENCY

When asked to rank their agreement with the statement "IMPD is transparent in its policies and practices", community survey respondents indicated the following.



4. A LACK OF UNDERSTANDING ABOUT THE DAY-TO-DAY REALITIES OF POLICING CAN LEAD TO UNREALISTIC EXPECTATIONS ABOUT OFFICER CAPACITY AND ABILITIES TO SOLVE COMMUNITY PROBLEMS.

Officers want the public to better understand the realities they face, such as high call volumes, staffing shortages, increased administrative tasks, and the emotional toll of repeated exposure to crises. “Sometimes the community assumes we’re ignoring things or not doing enough,” one officer said, “but the reality is, we’re stretched thin.”

“The community’s expectations of what they want from the police department is evolving, and more is being asked of the police.”

— Indianapolis Government Employee

These operational pressures can limit opportunities for proactive policing and relationship-building, which in turn can reinforce public misconceptions. As one government employee expressed, “The community’s expectations of what they want

from the police department is evolving, and more is being asked of the police.” While community members consistently share a broad set of expectations about the scope of police responsibilities, many also recognize these expectations may not be realistic. One community member offered, “I can respect that IMPD cannot be all things to all people.” Closing this understanding gap is critical to improving trust and cooperation between IMPD and the people it serves.

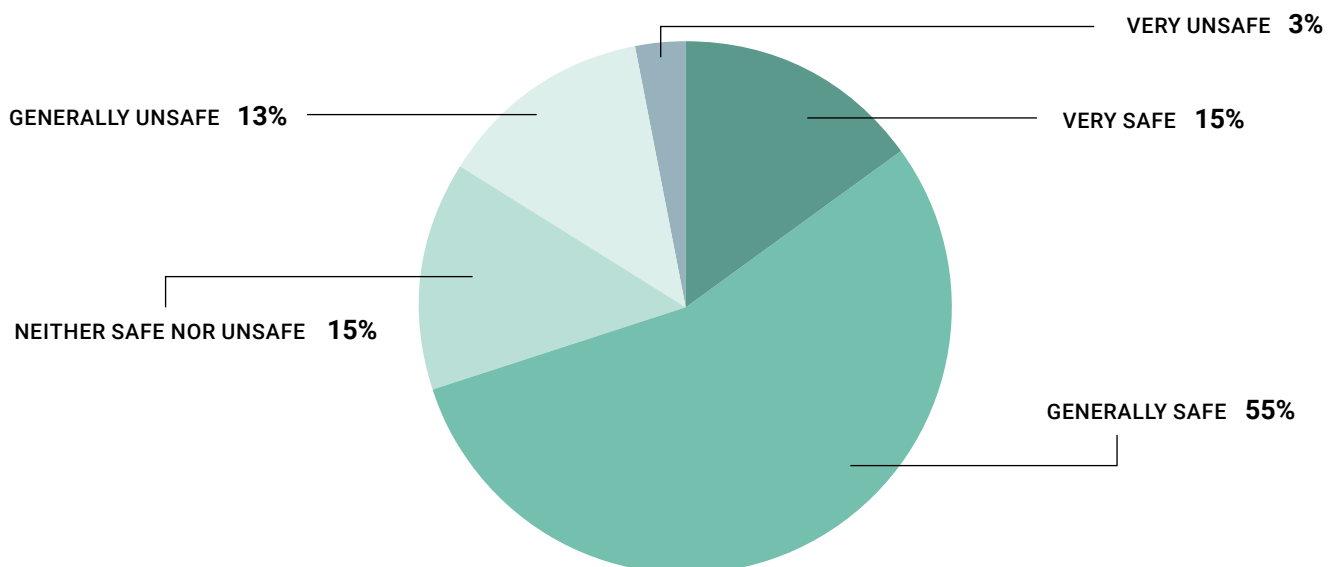
COMMUNITY PRIORITIES

5. MOST COMMUNITY MEMBERS REPORT FEELING RELATIVELY SAFE IN INDIANAPOLIS DURING THE DAY, BUT PERCEPTIONS VARY ACROSS GEOGRAPHIES AND TIME OF DAY.

When asked how safe they feel in Indianapolis when outside alone during the day, 70% of community survey respondents said they feel “very safe” or “generally safe.” However, just 42% of community survey respondents indicated they feel safe outside at night, with community members residing in some districts reporting even lower feelings of safety at night, including those in East District (29%), Southeast District (29%), and Northwest District (33%).

FIGURE 10: COMMUNITY PERCEPTIONS OF SAFETY

When asked to rank their agreement with the statement “How safe do you feel in your community when you are outside alone during the day?”, community survey respondents indicated the following.





79%

**OF COMMUNITY SURVEY PARTICIPANTS
AGREED OR STRONGLY AGREED WITH
THE STATEMENT: "IF I SAW A CRIME
IN MY NEIGHBORHOOD, I WOULD CALL
IMPD TO REPORT IT."**

When asked, 79% agreed or strongly agreed they would call IMPD to report a neighborhood crime, and 84% said they would report if they were the victim of a crime. However, 17% shared that a negative interaction or distrust of law enforcement made them feel less safe when officers were present. As one community member put it, "Unfortunately, I feel more unsafe when I see police presence. I think I would need to see a lot of proactive goodwill and attention to mental health and de-escalation before my feelings could shift."

**6. THE MOST PRESSING CONCERNS
FOR INDIANAPOLIS COMMUNITY
MEMBERS AND IMPD EMPLOYEES ALIKE
ARE GUN VIOLENCE, HOMELESSNESS,
MENTAL HEALTH, DRUG ABUSE,
ECONOMIC INSECURITY, TRAFFIC
ISSUES/RESIDENTIAL SPEEDING, AND
BURGLARIES/THEFT.**

Survey data shows alignment between officers and community members on top issues, though the emphasis differs. Among IMPD employees, 57% identified gun violence, 56% identified mental health, 42% named drug abuse, and 28% listed homelessness as top concerns. In the community survey, gun violence (39%), traffic issues (27%), homelessness (26%), and mental health (26%) led the list, with access to affordable housing (25%) also emerging as a priority. See Figure 11.

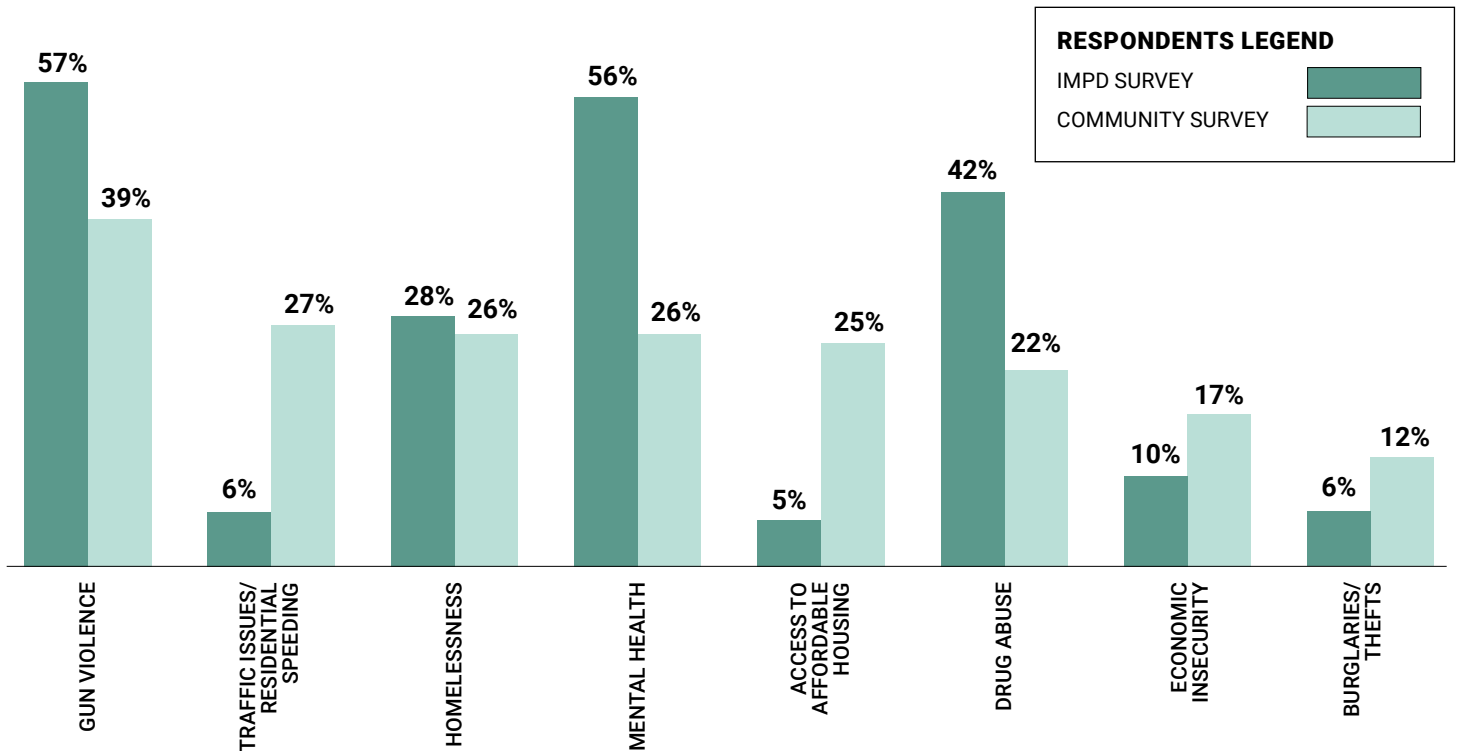
It is important to note that while Indianapolis has experienced a 29% reduction in murders and nonfatal shootings since launching the Gun Violence Reduction Strategy in 2022 (2), gun violence remains the top concern for community members and IMPD employees alike. Even as the city has seen three consecutive years of sustained decline in murders and nonfatal shootings for the first time in 15 years, the topic remains deeply sensitive. Each incident of gun violence reverberates through neighborhoods, impacting perceptions of safety, mental well-being, and trust in public institutions. Community members consistently describe the trauma of gun violence as cumulative, its effects extending far beyond the individuals directly involved.

Regarding traffic complaints, officers expressed frustration that restrictive pursuit policies limit their ability to address traffic-related crime, while community members described unsafe driving and speeding as daily hazards. "The complete lack of traffic enforcement has made it much more unsafe for me as a pedestrian and a driver," one community member shared.

Models like Columbus, Ohio's Vision Zero plan, which combines targeted enforcement, public education, and infrastructure changes, illustrate how traffic safety improvements can be pursued without diverting officers from other urgent duties. Other solutions throughout the country have demonstrated how leveraging non-sworn officers to support traffic control can be an effective strategy as well. In fact, several departments, including Yuma, Arizona, Fayetteville, North Carolina, and Albuquerque, New Mexico use traffic accident investigators who are not sworn officers. These investigators are well equipped to handle this task, with diverse educational backgrounds including mathematics and physics. Because these traffic

FIGURE 11: COMMUNITY AND IMPD TOP SAFETY CONCERNS IN INDIANAPOLIS

IMPD employees and community members were asked to select the top issues they believed to be the greatest problems within their community via the IMPD Department Survey and the public Community Survey. Survey respondents indicated the following

**CASE STUDY: VISION ZERO PLAN****COLUMBUS POLICE DEPARTMENT**

Launched in 2021, the Columbus Police Department's Vision Zero plan aims to eliminate all traffic fatalities and serious injuries in Columbus by 2035. The initiative prioritizes "lives above all else" and acknowledges that human error is inevitable, so infrastructure is redesigned to prevent mistakes from becoming tragedies.

Data analysis revealed nearly 40% of traffic deaths were occurring in vulnerable neighborhoods, and two-thirds of severe crashes were happening on just 10% of streets. In response, the city has implemented targeted strategies, including reducing downtown speed limits, adding 25 miles of protected bike lanes, upgrading dangerous intersections annually, and modernizing crosswalks and transit stops.

The plan's four pillars, Safe People, Safe Speeds, Safe Streets, and Safe Vehicles are driven by a multidisciplinary advisory committee. The Columbus Police Department collaborates with city agencies and community partners to enforce distracted driving laws, advance connected vehicle technology, and create safer streets for all users.

Community engagement is central, with public meetings, surveys, and working groups shaping neighborhood-specific solutions. As a living document, the plan is continually updated with new data and strategies, positioning Columbus as a leader in equity-focused, data-driven traffic safety.

SOURCES: 5, 6, 7

enforcement focused staff handle traffic crashes, sworn officers can devote more time to other enforcement (3).

Indianapolis released a draft of the city's own Vision Zero plan in June of 2025 (4), which outlines a traffic enforcement role for IMPD that balances education, visibility, and consistency. Vision Zero's approach emphasizes the use of data to enforce traffic laws, shifting decision-making from the current balance of 60% officer judgment/40% data toward a more evidence-based model of 70% data/30% officer discretion.

Indianapolis's Vision Zero approach will also be supported by a public-facing map and dashboard that track crashes, fatalities, citations, and complaints, with the goal of increasing transparency and community trust. Ultimately, education-first messaging paired with consistent, data-informed enforcement represents the foundation of Indianapolis's Vision Zero strategy, and national models demonstrate that a stronger traffic division with both sworn and non-sworn roles can help a city reach its traffic safety goals.

7. BOTH IMPD EMPLOYEES AND THE COMMUNITY STRONGLY SUPPORT A SHIFT TOWARD PREVENTATIVE, DATA-DRIVEN POLICING AND COLLABORATIVE, COMMUNITY-BASED PARTNERSHIPS, AS WELL AS SYSTEMIC CHANGES THAT PRIORITIZE ALTERNATIVE INTERVENTIONS.

When asked to describe their current approach to crime prevention, 57% of department survey respondents described IMPD's approach as "somewhat" or "extremely" reactive. Thirty-six (36%) of community survey respondents indicate they want to see more collaboration and social interventions in IMPD's approach to crime reduction in Indianapolis. Many officers agree that more collaboration with professionals from other fields could better equip the department to address complex community needs. There are too many social issues



CASE STUDY: COMMUNITY-BASED PARTNERSHIPS FOR PREVENTATIVE POLICING

BOSTON POLICE DEPARTMENT

The Boston Police Department (BPD) provides a compelling example of a modern law enforcement agency reorienting its approach toward preventative policing and community-based partnerships, especially in its response to individuals experiencing mental health crises. This shift is rooted in both officer and community desire for solutions that prioritize diversion, de-escalation, and collaborative engagement over criminalization, while leveraging data and evidence-based best practices.

BPD's approach emphasizes early intervention and long-term support through programs like the Co-Responder Program with Boston Emergency Services Team (BEST), the Shannon Community Safety Initiative, and the Safe and Successful Youth Initiative. The department also participates in Sequential Intercept Mapping and The HUB, tools that enable multi-agency collaboration and data-driven resource deployment for individuals and families at elevated risk.

Since launching dedicated co-responder units in 2019, these multi-agency teams have prioritized follow-up and proactive outreach together. Most cases are resolved informally or through voluntary services, with formal tools like involuntary commitment used sparingly. Officers and clinicians report higher satisfaction, improved safety, and stronger community trust.

By integrating mental health expertise into police response, BPD demonstrates how multidisciplinary partnerships and data sharing can prevent crises, improve outcomes, and strengthen public confidence in policing.

SOURCES: 8, 9, 10, 11

we're expected to solve without the right partnerships," one officer shared.

As another IMPD employee explained, "Many crimes, particularly those related to substance abuse, mental health issues, and homelessness, are symptoms of broader social challenges. IMPD should build stronger partnerships with local social service agencies, mental health professionals, and rehabilitation programs to address the root causes of crime... Mental health is not a crime."

"There are too many social issues we're expected to solve without the right partnerships."

– IMPD Employee

Best-practice models like Boston Police Department's Co-Responder Program, with clinicians riding along to address mental health crises, and the Safe and Successful Youth Initiative, which reduced incarceration rates by 58% among proven-risk youth, show that targeted interventions and strong community partnerships can prevent crime, reduce repeat offenses, and improve public trust. See Case Study: Community-Based Partnerships for Preventative Policing, Boston Police Department.

II. CULTURE & HUMAN RESOURCES

MORALE & WELLNESS

8. IMPD LEADERS RECOGNIZE THE URGENT NEED TO REBUILD COLLECTIVE PRIDE AND PURPOSE WITHIN THE DEPARTMENT TO COUNTERBALANCE PERSISTENT PUBLIC SCRUTINY, DEMANDS ON OFFICERS' MENTAL HEALTH, AND WORK-LIFE BALANCE CHALLENGES THAT ARE CONTRIBUTING TO LOW MORALE AND OFFICER ATTRITION.

Only 26% of department survey respondents believe that law enforcement is a respected profession in Indianapo-

lis, and 54% said negative public perception has a direct impact on their daily work, morale, and interactions with the community. "Public perception of IMPD affects me every single day on the job. When the public has a negative view of the department, whether from misinformation, media bias, or political pressure... I'm expected to do my job under a microscope, with little support or understanding," one employee shared in the department survey.

Officers described the cumulative toll of working in an environment where they feel they must constantly defend their profession. One community member voiced hope that IMPD could lead the way nationally: "My hope is that IMPD would invest as much in the mental health of their officers as they do in other types of training and that IMPD could become a model of healthy, effective, protective practices for the rest of the nation."

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– Community Member

Staffing shortages and frequent city sponsored events requiring additional police presence can also exacerbate stress, creating a need for frequent overtime or canceled days off. Across the nation, law enforcement agencies are grappling with a staffing crisis fueled by poor work-life balance, unpredictable schedules, and inadequate wellness support. Young officers increasingly prioritize flexibility and mental health over traditional benefits like pensions, and national surveys confirm that stress, erratic hours, and staffing shortages are worsening retention and morale concerns in police departments across the country. These challenges can contribute to low morale and higher attrition rates, exacerbating staff shortages and increasing fatigue among remaining personnel (12).

Locally, an IMPD employee shared, "You have to invest in people's families. This department is tired. People can't get time off work. That goes a long way toward morale... I understand we can't accommodate everyone, but at the same time we need to make some efforts." "Late shift means missing your kids' games, your anniversary, everything," another department employee said.

9. DESPITE IMPD'S EXTENSIVE EFFORTS TO EXPAND AND DESTIGMATIZE WELLNESS RESOURCES, MANY EMPLOYEES CONTINUE TO EXPRESS A NEED FOR MORE HOLISTIC, FLEXIBLE WELLNESS SUPPORTS, NOTING THAT CONCERNS ABOUT STIGMA AND CONFIDENTIALITY STILL LIMIT THEIR WILLINGNESS TO ACCESS AVAILABLE MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES.

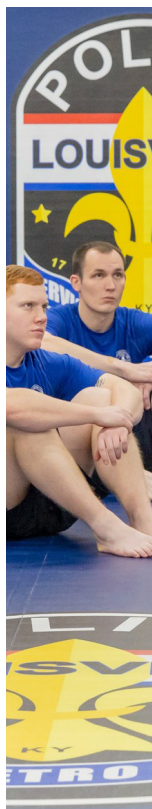
While IMPD offers multiple wellness programs, only 56% of survey respondents said they feel comfortable seeking mental health support through the department. IMPD employees repeatedly stress the need for resources not tied directly to the chain of command. "There needs to be a part of wellness that isn't connected to the department and doesn't report to the department," one IMPD employee said. "There's too many officers that won't use wellness due to a lack of trust." Yet the importance of officers accessing mental health supports cannot be denied, with recent national research from the Justice Center noting that police officers across the country are experiencing

unprecedented levels of fatigue and burnout, "American law enforcement officers are tired, working too many hours, and lacking time for proper nutrition and exercise. Equally concerning, officers are left emotionally raw by cumulative trauma and lack of rest after critical incidents (13)."

"There needs to be a part of wellness that isn't connected to the department and doesn't report to the department, there's too many officers that won't use wellness due to a lack of trust."

— IMPD Employee

Some police departments are effectively demonstrating that embedding independent mental health providers and requiring confidential annual check-ins, similar to healthcare post-trauma protocols, can increase participation rates and address issues before they escalate (14). This type of structural change, combined with leadership modeling and promoting healthy behaviors, can begin to close the gap between resources offered and resources used. National models, like the Louisville Metro Police De-



CASE STUDY: SUMMIT WELLNESS CENTER

LOUISVILLE METRO POLICE DEPARTMENT

In response to staffing shortages, high stress, and a Department of Justice investigation following the unrest of 2020, the Louisville Metro Police Department (LMPD) launched a holistic wellness strategy culminating in the 2023 opening of the Summit Wellness Center in a former University of Louisville facility. Developed with the Louisville Police Foundation and the Impetus Group, the off-site and non-city owned facility was designed to ensure confidentiality, encourage voluntary participation, and foster trust.

The center supports five wellness pillars: Physical (gym, classes), Mental (on-site psychologists, peer counseling), Spiritual (chaplain services), Financial (literacy classes, retirement planning), and Social (family events, sports activities). It operates 24/7, with professionals available during business hours.

Participation has been strong, particularly in fitness and financial planning programs. Officers report increased trust in leadership and stronger family engagement. Funded through public-private partnerships, the center demonstrates how public safety agencies can prioritize officer wellness, build cultural trust, and leverage partnerships to create sustainable change. By centering the holistic needs of its officers and families, LMPD has set a powerful precedent: wellness is not a luxury, it's a foundation for effective public service.

SOURCES: 15, 16

partment's Summit Wellness Center, can offer a blueprint for addressing these pressures through holistic wellness resources, physical fitness, financial literacy, family support, all delivered in a confidential, stand-alone space. Louisville's program, funded through public-private partnerships, has improved engagement by reducing stigma and ensuring privacy.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

10. WHILE OFFICERS AGREE THAT DISCIPLINARY PRACTICES HAVE BECOME MORE CONSISTENT AND EFFECTIVE IN RECENT YEARS, THERE REMAINS ROOM FOR IMPROVEMENT, PARTICULARLY IN PERFORMANCE REVIEW PROCESSES AND EMPLOYEE RECOGNITION.

Over 70% of sworn officers and 40% of professional staff who participated in the department survey said performance evaluations do not effectively identify or address performance issues. Employees noted that discipline is now applied more consistently thanks to intentional efforts from department leadership. However, many believe that performance reviews are often “check-the-box” exer-

cises that don't always provide meaningful feedback or growth opportunities.

“If we're serious about retention and morale, we have to move beyond checking boxes and start having real conversations about growth and performance,” one command staff member shared. Another emphasized that “mistakes and misconduct are different things. Discipline isn't always the best way to change behavior. We need to redirect and not lose the employee.” Denver Police Department's Education-Based Discipline Model offers an alternative; replacing certain penalties with targeted training to address issues quickly and build skills, which has led to improved morale and reduced repeat infractions. See Case Study: Education-Based Discipline Model, Denver Police Department.

“If we're serious about retention and morale, we have to move beyond checking boxes and start having real conversations about growth and performance.”

— IMPD Command Staff



CASE STUDY: EDUCATION-BASED DISCIPLINE MODEL

DENVER POLICE DEPARTMENT

The Denver Police Department (DPD) has redefined discipline by pairing accountability with professional growth. Its Education-Based Discipline (EBD) model offers officers who commit lower-level infractions an alternative to suspension through reflective training, coaching, and skill-building workshops.

This approach reduces the downtime associated with traditional discipline, keeps officers engaged, and reinforces that the department is invested in their development, not just focused on punishment. Serious misconduct still follows standard review procedures, ensuring accountability.

Officers report that the program's leadership-style workshops and targeted training foster greater self-awareness and operational improvement.

By focusing on development rather than exclusion, DPD shortens resolution timelines, retains talent, and strengthens a culture of continuous learning.

SOURCES: 17, 18

11. BOTH IMPD EMPLOYEES AND COMMUNITY MEMBERS WANT MORE TAILORED AND RELEVANT TRAINING TO SUPPORT FRONTLINE IMPD EMPLOYEES AND LEADERSHIP SO THEY CAN MEET THE DEMANDS OF MODERN POLICING.

Officers underscore the need for training that is scenario-based, regularly updated, and customized to each role. Topics like de-escalation, mental health response, updated legal requirements, and digital evidence handling were among the most requested. “What I need is realistic, hands-on training,” one officer said. “That means more scenario-based use-of-force training, updated law refreshers, and consistent de-escalation that works in high-stress environments, not just theory in a classroom.”

When asked if their professional development and training adequately prepares them for the day-to-day requirements of their positions, 57% of department survey respondents agreed or strongly agreed, while 22% disagreed or strongly disagreed. Several respondents reflected on how training standards have shifted over time. “Our training used to be the gold standard... We need to be training

harder to become better... our firearms staff has done a great job, especially as of late, with our trainings.”

“What I need is realistic, hands-on training... That means more scenario-based use-of-force training, updated law refreshers, and consistent de-escalation that works in high-stress environments, not just theory in a classroom...”

— IMPD Employee

Community members also emphasized the need for training in areas that directly impact trust and safety. “We absolutely need to see more training around understanding mental/behavioral health, de-escalation, threat assessment, and even ongoing training on racial bias,” one community member shared. The New Orleans Police Department (NOPD) offers a model for how to strengthen professional development. By integrating role-specific, scenario-based training into annual requirements, NOPD has improved officer confidence, enhanced decision-making under stress, and reduced costly errors in the field. Both IMPD staff and community perspectives indicate that pairing this kind of scenario-based training

CASE STUDY: OFFICER TRAINING STRATEGY

NEW ORLEANS POLICE DEPARTMENT

After years of operating under a federal consent decree following federal allegations of unconstitutional policing practices, the New Orleans Police Department (NOPD) developed a highly intentional career-spanning training strategy that integrates accountability, emotional intelligence, and peer intervention. Central to this is the EPIC (Ethical Policing Is Courageous) program, which trains officers to intervene when they witness misconduct.

Training extends beyond the academy. Officers revisit de-escalation and community engagement mid-career through live, scenario-based exercises, often with members of the New Orleans community. NOPD leadership notes that when officers have opportunities to role play under realistic pressure, it strengthens decision-making and improves procedural justice.

This model demonstrates that cultivating a culture of accountability requires continuous practice and reinforcement, ensuring that intervention becomes instinctive rather than reactive.

SOURCES: 19, 20



approach with more frequent refreshers in mental health response, de-escalation, and bias awareness, could address both skill gaps and community expectations.

12. THERE IS WIDESPREAD AGREEMENT THAT DEPARTMENT-WIDE SUCCESSION PLANNING WITH A FOCUS ON DEVELOPING LEADERS FROM WITHIN THE DEPARTMENT SHOULD BE A PRIORITY.

Many IMPD employees voice concern about leadership turnover and the absence of a clear pipeline to prepare future leaders. At a foundational level, there is clear recognition within the department that effective leadership development begins with intentional training, support, and development for those promoted into supervisory positions. Setting new supervisors up for success early not only strengthens day-to-day operations but also creates a pipeline for continued leadership progression over time.

Many noted that the department does not adequately prepare supervisors for the transition into leadership. “We don’t do a good job of preparing [supervisors] to lead people. [You move] from cop to sergeant rank [and] suddenly you’re the boss and that’s a big transition,” one com-

mand staff member shared. Another reflected, “The really high performers move up the ranks and suddenly they are supervisors, [but] they just don’t know what they’re supposed to be doing. We could give them more tools.”

Professional staff echoed these concerns, emphasizing the need for ongoing development and accountability: “We need to do a better job training supervisors... We need to equip supervisors with information to do better but also hold them accountable.” Others pointed out that “[we should be] leaning into supervisor training, especially first line supervisors. We put them on an island and do very little to support them and develop them.” Several noted that frequent leadership changes further complicate the issue: “As an agency, we change seats often... There’s no playbook left behind, no manual saying here’s what I’ve been working on and the things you need to watch out for. Sometimes these changes happen overnight.” “We’ve got a lot of untapped leadership in civilian roles,” one command staff member said, “We need to include them in the future of this department.” Chicago PD’s Building Legacy, Not Ownership initiative highlights how structured leadership development, combined with mentorship opportunities, can strengthen retention and ensure a shared vision across generations of leaders. See Case Study: Strategic Planning, Building Legacy, Not Ownership, Chicago Police Department



CASE STUDY: STRATEGIC PLANNING, BUILDING LEGACY NOT OWNERSHIP

CHICAGO POLICE DEPARTMENT

The Chicago Police Department (CPD) is reframing leadership around the idea of “legacy,” encouraging officers to focus on what they leave behind for their team and community rather than individual achievements.

This shift is embedded in leadership development, hiring, and strategy sessions, with prompts such as, “If I left tomorrow, what would I want to be true here in six months?” Officers participate in job shadowing, cross-training, and shared leadership roles to prepare successors and maintain continuity.

By fostering shared responsibility and long-term thinking, CPD strengthens organizational resilience and collective ownership of community safety goals.

SOURCES: 21

13. IMPD EMPLOYEES BELIEVE PROFESSIONAL STAFF ARE ESSENTIAL TO IMPD'S WORK IN THE COMMUNITY AND SHOULD RECEIVE THE REQUISITE COMPENSATION, AS WELL AS PROFESSIONAL GROWTH AND LEADERSHIP OPPORTUNITIES.

Professional staff are responsible for many critical support functions but often lack clear opportunities for growth within the department. "Professional staff are vital to IMPD's success but lack clear advancement pathways and access to development opportunities," one command staff member shared. In the department survey, professional staff respondents rated career growth opportunities significantly lower than their sworn counterparts. As one employee explained, "The department often uses police officers to perform professional jobs that don't require any police experience. Hiring professional staff to perform the jobs instead of using officers would allow for more officers to remain available for actual police duties."

"Professional staff are vital to IMPD's success but lack clear advancement pathways and access to development opportunities."

— IMPD Command Staff

Agencies like the Baltimore Police Department have expanded retention and capacity by civilianizing key investigative roles and investing in leadership development for professional staff (22). Addressing these concerns and investing in professional staff development could improve retention, free up sworn officers for frontline duties, and strengthen the department's overall capacity to serve the community.

14. MANY MINORITY EMPLOYEES AT IMPD, INCLUDING BIPOC AND FEMALE OFFICERS, REPORT FACING BIAS, INADEQUATE SUPPORT, AND OBSTACLES TO ADVANCEMENT. THESE CHALLENGES MAY CONTRIBUTE TO FEELINGS OF ISOLATION, MISTRUST, AND A DIMINISHED SENSE OF BELONGING WITHIN THE ORGANIZATION.

Survey responses and listening session feedback revealed recurring themes of underrepresentation and perceived inequities in promotional opportunities and support. "Too often, I hear negative commentary about people who don't fit the traditional mold, whether it's about race, gender, or appearance, and that's a real concern. We should be more intentional about embracing different cultures and identities," one officer shared. "If we're serious about retention and real progress, then representation and cultural openness have to be part of the conversation."

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— IMPD Employee

Nearly half of Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) IMPD employees (46%) and many white employees (51%) who responded to the department survey expressed concerns about equal opportunity for advancement in the department, with BIPOC staff more likely to strongly disagree. Qualitative feedback from BIPOC and female employees described the promotion process as "performative," "opaque," or reliant on personal connections. Other police departments across the country demonstrate that intentional mentorship programs for underrepresented employees can lead to higher retention rates and strengthened internal trust. Embedding cultural competency into leadership training, as modeled by the Portland Police Bureau's Equity and Inclusion Office, can help ensure that equity becomes a sustained organizational priority (23, 24).

RECRUITMENT & RETENTION

15. THERE IS WIDESPREAD AGREEMENT THAT IMPD'S STAFFING SHORTAGES ARE DIRECTLY IMPACTING OFFICER MORALE AND THE DEPARTMENT'S ABILITY TO REDUCE CRIME, AND COULD THREATEN THE DEPARTMENT'S LONG-TERM SUSTAINABILITY.

Staffing shortages within the department are one of the most frequently cited challenges voiced by officers, with employees linking them to slower response times and reduced opportunities for proactive policing. Although budgetary limitations are not currently a barrier to recruiting and hiring officers, in the department survey, respondents ranked "Hiring Additional Officers" as the top priority if the department were to receive an increase in budget. "Nothing damages wellness more than being overworked... and constantly picking up the slack for shift slates left unfilled," one employee shared in the survey. "Prioritize the officers for once ... Be the administration that heals the

department from the inside out," a community member urged.

Many officers describe working back-to-back calls with little downtime and frequent overtime, circumstances which can erode work-life balance. This is consistent with national trends, where understaffed agencies face higher attrition and decreased public engagement (25).

Bloomington, Indiana's integration of social workers into the police force demonstrates one way to relieve staffing pressure, diverting calls related to mental health, homelessness, and non-criminal issues to trained professionals, reducing repeat calls and freeing officers for core public safety functions. See Case Study: Integration of Social Workers in the the Policing, Bloomington Police Department.

**"Prioritize the officers for once ...
Be the administration that heals the
department from the inside out."**

— Community Member

CASE STUDY: INTEGRATION OF SOCIAL WORKERS INTO THE POLICING

BLOOMINGTON POLICE DEPARTMENT

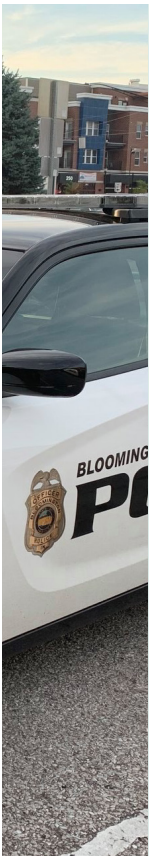
In recent years, like in many other communities across the country, Bloomington, Indiana faced increasing calls for police response to non-criminal issues rooted in social, behavioral, and economic challenges. Officers often lacked specialized training and resources to address these cases effectively, leading to repeated 911 calls, strained police capacity, and community frustration, especially among vulnerable populations.

To address repeated calls for non-criminal issues, such as mental health crises and housing instability, the Bloomington Police Department (BPD) embedded three full-time social workers directly into its operations. These professionals respond to stabilized scenes, provide crisis intervention, connect residents to resources, and offer follow-up care to reduce repeat calls.

Through this new model, the social workers train alongside sworn police officers in defensive tactics, CPR, and communication systems, creating a culture of mutual respect and collaboration. Fully funded by the City of Bloomington and budgeted as permanent positions, the program has improved service outcomes, enhanced community trust, and freed officers to focus on public safety.

Bloomington's model shows how embedding social workers into police operations can improve efficiency, outcomes, and public perception.

SOURCES: 27, 28



Events are often cited as a reason the department is stretched thin. As one government employee stated, “Our city calendar is nonstop. Pulling officers leaves neighborhoods thin.” Community members shared the same concern, “Indy’s nonstop conventions, races, and festivals pull dozens of officers off beats, stressing patrol coverage.” Nationally, it is documented that many police departments see significant fatigue among officers when there are consistent long shifts, overtime, and the unpredictable demands of events and city conventions. Extended hours and back-to-back shifts often leave little time for rest or recovery, factors that when observed in other police departments across the country can result in negative impacts on both physical and mental health. The need to cover city events and staffing shortages compounds this issue, necessitating officers to routinely work overtime or double shifts, impacting both personal well-being and job satisfaction (26).

16. POLICE DEPARTMENTS ACROSS THE COUNTRY ARE ADOPTING BOLD, STRUCTURAL CHANGES TO ADDRESS WORKFORCE CRISES.

Many agencies across the country are rethinking police recruitment strategies to expand applicant pools and retain experienced officers. Examples include the Memphis Police Department’s high school recruitment pipeline, Metro Nashville Police Department’s targeted recruitment campaigns, Portland Police Bureau’s out-of-town recruitment blitz, Charlotte-Mecklenburg Police Department’s use of community ambassadors to connect with diverse candidates, and Albuquerque Police Department’s innovative retention incentives. Officers at IMPD noted that competitive pay, improved benefits, and realistic workload expectations are critical to attract and keep talent. “We can’t keep asking people to do more with less,” one officer said. “If we want good people to stay, we have to make the job sustainable.”

ment’s high school recruitment pipeline, Metro Nashville Police Department’s targeted recruitment campaigns, Portland Police Bureau’s out-of-town recruitment blitz, Charlotte-Mecklenburg Police Department’s use of community ambassadors to connect with diverse candidates, and Albuquerque Police Department’s innovative retention incentives. Officers at IMPD noted that competitive pay, improved benefits, and realistic workload expectations are critical to attract and keep talent. “We can’t keep asking people to do more with less,” one officer said. “If we want good people to stay, we have to make the job sustainable.”

BUILDING A CULTURE OF TRUST

17. THERE IS A PERCEIVED DISCONNECT WITHIN THE DEPARTMENT BETWEEN LEADERSHIP, FRONTLINE OFFICERS, AND PROFESSIONAL STAFF.

In the department survey, 54% of respondents said they prefer to receive communication from leadership in person, yet many expressed that they rarely see executive staff in the field. This lack of presence is compounded by broader concerns about support and responsiveness. Over half of respondents (57%) said they do not feel supported by executive staff, and two-



CASE STUDY: HIGH SCHOOL RECRUITMENT PIPELINE

MEMPHIS POLICE DEPARTMENT

The Memphis Police Department (MPD) has developed a proactive recruitment strategy to address long-term staffing needs and build a committed local workforce. Through the Blue Path Program, created in partnership with Shelby County Schools and Southwest Tennessee Community College, high school seniors can begin police training immediately after graduation. Participants receive a salary while completing an associate degree in criminal justice and working part-time with MPD, eliminating many of the financial and logistical barriers to entering the profession.

By engaging students early, MPD cultivates “homegrown” officers who are invested in the communities they serve. This approach strengthens community trust and diversifies the force with younger recruits who reflect the city’s demographics. The program has positioned MPD for sustainable workforce growth by fostering a steady pipeline of locally trained and deeply connected officers, rather than relying on short-term hiring efforts.

SOURCES: 29, 30, 31



CASE STUDY: COMMUNITY CONNECTION RECRUITMENT

METROPOLITAN NASHVILLE POLICE DEPARTMENT

The Metropolitan Nashville Police Department (MNPD) has focused on leveraging community partnerships to strengthen recruitment efforts and attract candidates with deep ties to the city. Through collaborations with local colleges, workforce development agencies, and neighborhood organizations, MNPD has increased awareness of law enforcement careers among residents who might not have previously considered the profession.

This outreach includes attending community events, speaking in classrooms, and hosting informational sessions where prospective applicants can interact directly with officers. MNPD emphasizes the department's commitment to neighborhood-based policing and career development, positioning the role as both a public service and a pathway to professional growth.

The strategy has helped MNPD reach underrepresented populations, improve trust between the department and the community, and create a pipeline of candidates who reflect the city's diversity. By prioritizing relationships over one-time recruitment pushes, MNPD has built a steady flow of qualified applicants rooted in local commitment.

SOURCES: 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 37, 38



CASE STUDY: OUT-OF-TOWN RECRUITMENT BLITZ

PORTLAND POLICE BUREAU

Facing severe staffing shortages, the Portland Police Bureau (PPB) launched an aggressive national campaign to attract experienced officers and lateral hires from across the country. Recruitment teams traveled to other states and cities, particularly those experiencing budget cuts or low morale, to attend job fairs and personally connect with potential candidates.

To make relocation more appealing, PPB offered substantial incentives, including signing bonuses of up to \$25,000 and moving assistance. The campaign was supported by a refreshed recruitment brand that highlighted Portland's investment in public safety innovation, community policing, and officer wellness, countering negative perceptions about policing in the city.

The initiative succeeded in drawing interest from seasoned officers seeking a change of environment, helping PPB fill critical vacancies more quickly than traditional recruitment methods, demonstrating the effectiveness of pairing competitive incentives with a strong, values-driven recruitment narrative.

SOURCES: 39



CASE STUDY: RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION STRATEGIES

CHARLOTTE-MECKLENBERG POLICE DEPARTMENT

In response to significant staffing shortages, high attrition rates, and shifting public perceptions of policing, the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Police Department (CMPD) launched a comprehensive recruitment strategy to rebuild its ranks and modernize its image. Facing nearly 300 officer vacancies by 2023, CMPD responded with innovative community-based recruitment efforts, incentive programs, and strategic marketing to attract diverse, purpose-driven applicants. These efforts were guided by a clear focus: rebuilding trust, enhancing diversity, and creating sustainable pathways into public safety careers.

CMPD has boosted recruitment through a strategy combining early-career pipelines, community engagement, diversity outreach, innovative messaging, and competitive incentives. Programs like college cadets, paid internships, youth academies, and police explorers prepare young people for policing, while the Citizen's Academy, Citizens on Patrol, and transparency workshops build community trust.

Targeted initiatives such as "Where Women Shine," the "Divine 9" partnership, and the "30x30 Initiative" promote career growth, work-life balance, and leadership opportunities for women. Nontraditional media, social storytelling, and partnerships with marketing firms have helped reframe public safety careers. Incentives including hiring bonuses, education pay, and competitive salaries have supported these efforts, resulting in an 86% increase in sworn officer applications in early 2024, the largest recruit class in a decade. CMPD's approach demonstrates the impact of early engagement, cultural connection, and modern marketing on law enforcement recruitment.

CMPD's recruitment strategy represents a scalable blueprint for modern policing. By aligning messaging with purpose, expanding community touchpoints, and building pipelines of future leaders, Charlotte has reinvigorated its recruitment engine.

SOURCES: 40



CASE STUDY: LATERAL OFFICER FAST-TRACK

ALBUQUERQUE POLICE DEPARTMENT

The Albuquerque Police Department (APD) implemented a streamlined hiring process to attract experienced officers from other jurisdictions, quickly address staffing shortages. Recognizing that lateral hires bring valuable skills and require less training time, APD created an accelerated academy program tailored to officers already certified in other states. The department paired this with competitive salary offers, relocation assistance, and benefits designed to make transitioning to Albuquerque financially and professionally appealing.

The initiative reduced the time from application to active duty, enabling APD to fill priority positions without the long lead time of a traditional academy cycle. This approach also diversified the department's experience base, blending local recruits with officers who brought fresh perspectives from other regions.

By focusing on efficiency and competitive compensation, APD improved staffing levels while maintaining high professional standards.

SOURCES: 41

thirds of sworn officers, and about one in ten professional staff, reported that leadership does not appropriately address issues or concerns raised by officers. “I ... feel there is a massive disconnect between operations and professional staff. We often don’t understand why decisions are made,” one employee said.

About a quarter of sworn officers (23%) and roughly one third of professional staff (32%) said they feel cared for by the department. The perception of care for one another across roles is somewhat higher: 44% of sworn officers believe the department cares about professional staff, and 47% of professional staff believe the department cares about sworn officers. Although the reasons individuals within the department feel connected to or cared for by department leadership, or not, vary, IMPD employees consistently express a perceived lack of empathy, limited check-ins on well-being, and insufficient communication from those in leadership roles.

As one IMPD employee shared, “Sgts. and Lts. need to demonstrate a genuine care and concern for the officers on their shifts... This should include regular check-ins and feedback.” This perceived gap in visibility, support, and clear communication between department leadership and front-line staff may contribute to the sense of division within the department.

18. IT IS WIDELY BELIEVED THAT MORE FACETIME BETWEEN OFFICERS AND DEPARTMENT LEADERSHIP COULD HELP TO BUILD GENUINE, TRUSTING RELATIONSHIPS WITHIN THE DEPARTMENT AND LEAD TO STRONGER RELATIONSHIPS WITH THE COMMUNITY.

Employees shared that leadership visits are often limited to times of crisis or disciplinary matters, rather than proactive engagement. “We don’t see executive staff... It would mean a lot to see them out here more regularly, not just when there’s a problem,” one officer said. Another listening session participant echoed this sentiment, “It’s hard to trust leadership when you never see them. Presence matters. Just walking through a district or checking in could change a lot.”

Camden County Police Department’s community policing model emphasizes intentional, routine leadership visibility, such as regular “walk-and-talks” with members of the com-

munity, fostering accessibility, strengthens relationships, and builds public trust through consistent engagement (42).

We don’t see executive staff ... It would mean a lot to see them out here more regularly, not just when there’s a problem.”

– IMPD Employee

19. MANY KEY DEPARTMENT UPDATES, SUCH AS POLICY CHANGES, STAFFING ADJUSTMENTS, OR DEPARTMENT-WIDE INITIATIVES, ARE OFTEN COMMUNICATED INCONSISTENTLY OR WITHOUT CONTEXT, WHICH CAN LEAVE OFFICERS FEELING UNINFORMED OR OUT OF THE LOOP.

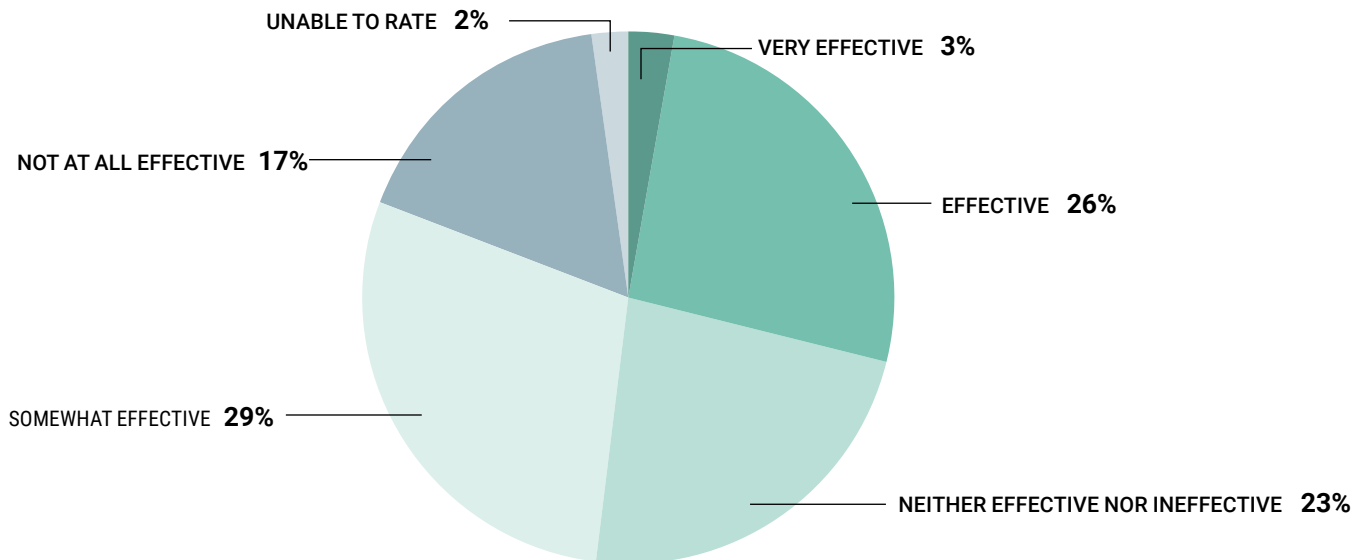
When asked how effective IMPD’s internal communication practices are, 29% of respondents rated them “very effective” or “effective”, 23% “neither effective nor ineffective”, and 29% “somewhat effective”. 17% indicated that internal communication practices were “not at all effective.” Officers and staff noted that inconsistent communication can fuel speculation and frustration. “There’s no consistency in how or when things are communicated. It depends on who your supervisor is and what shift you’re on,” one IMPD employee explained.

As one command staff member put it, “Improving communication and trust isn’t optional. It’s essential. We need to be intentional about how we lead, how we listen, and how we follow through.” The data underscores this concern; 51% of department survey respondents indicated that they disagree or strongly disagree with the statement, “When command staff implements a change, I trust they have a good reason for making that change.”

Another IMPD employee emphasized the need for internal-first updates, “I do not like receiving communication from department leadership through the news or social media at the same time as the public. Internal communication is important to happen before external communication occurs. It is also deflating to hear about new strategies or practices that are going to occur in the department via the news or social

FIGURE 12: IMPD EMPLOYEE PERCEPTIONS OF EFFECTIVENESS OF IMPD INTERNAL COMMUNICATION

IMPD employees were asked "How effective are IMPD's internal communication practices?" via the IMPD Department Survey. Survey respondents indicated the following.



media." For these internal-first updates to be effective, there is recognition within the department that there must be a shared commitment to allowing designated communications leaders and executive staff to manage communication with local media. Many IMPD employees note that when they learn information from the press before receiving an internal briefing it is often due to officers sharing information publicly, not because of a lack of internal leadership communication. Acknowledging this reality, and reinforcing expectations around information sharing, could help ensure internal-first communication efforts have their intended impact.

"Improving communication and trust isn't optional. It's essential. We need to be intentional about how we lead, how we listen, and how we follow through."

— IMPD Command Staff

Agencies across the country have addressed similar communication challenges by adopting internal-first communication policies, ensuring employees receive critical updates before the public, paired with clear rationale and opportunities for follow-up questions. Research from the Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS) Office and the Interna-

tional Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP) confirms that departments with well-structured internal messaging frameworks are more successful at implementing reforms, improving retention, and building officer engagement (43, 44)..

For example, Chula Vista Police Department routes public-facing press releases internally first, ensuring staff don't learn about department updates through the media. They also implement tailored messaging strategies for dispatch, professional, and field staff, recognizing that one message doesn't fit all. In the Camden County Police Department, weekly all-staff meetings and real-time mobile alerts helped reduce response-time errors and internal frustration by ensuring everyone received the same information, regardless of role or shift.

Departments like Seattle and Albuquerque have moved toward multi-channel communication platforms, combining SMS alerts, encrypted messaging apps, and scheduled updates to better reach officers who don't work from a desk. These strategies are often managed by internal communications leads or designated Public Information Officers who craft both crisis messaging and culture-building content, including peer recognition, leadership reflections, and morale surveys.

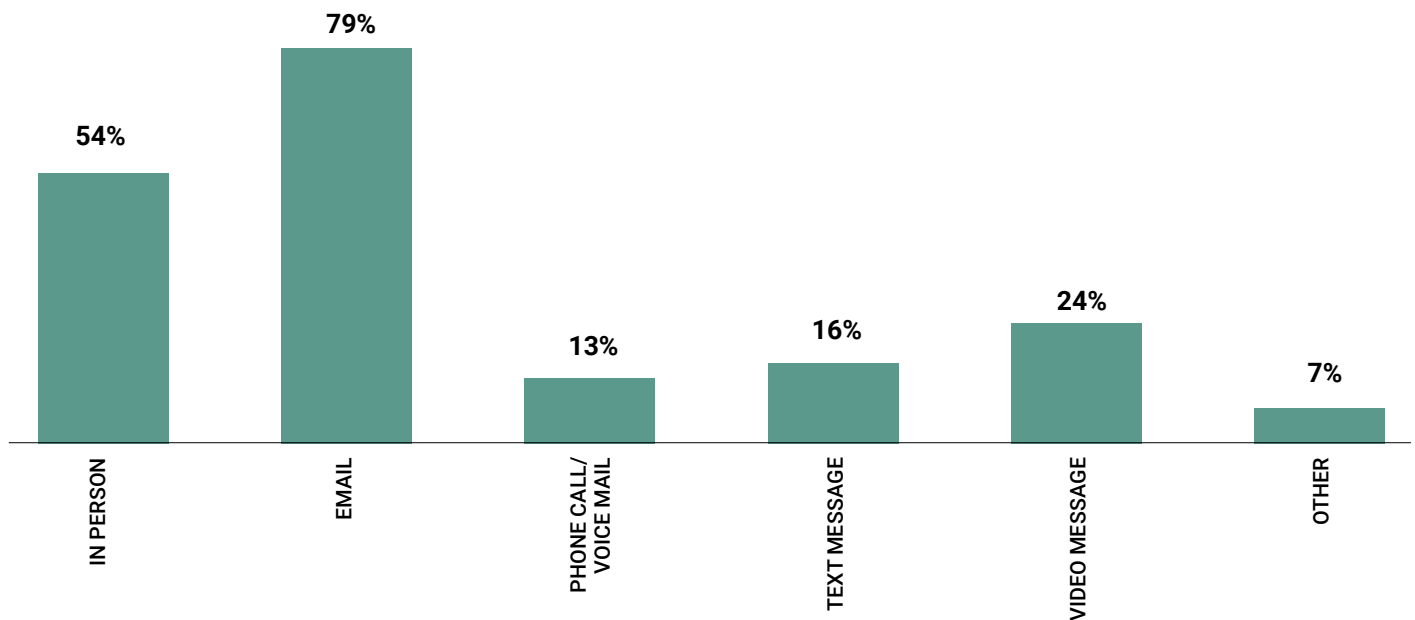
20. THERE IS WIDESPREAD AGREEMENT THAT CLEARER, MORE INTENTIONAL LINES OF INTERNAL COMMUNICATION WITHIN THE DEPARTMENT COULD HELP REBUILD TRUST, REDUCE FRUSTRATION, AND MAKE SURE EVERYONE FEELS MORE INFORMED, RESPECTED, AND CONNECTED.

Email (79%) and in-person communication (54%) are the top preferred methods for IMPD employees to receive internal information based on department survey responses, followed by video messages (24%) and text messages (16%). IMPD employees consistently share that aligning communication methods with employee preferences and providing consistent follow-through are key ways leaders can continue to build internal trust. Command staff echo these same points, emphasizing that trust begins internally, and that clear, respectful communication within the department ultimately strengthens credibility with the community.

Market research confirms this. International Association of Chiefs of Police (46) and Lexipol (45) stress that effective internal communication requires explaining the “why” behind decisions, fostering respect, engagement, and commitment. Police1 (47) notes that coaching rather than top-down command encourages reflection, questions, and two-way dialogue, supporting cultural change through two-way communication rooted in growth and development rather than punishment or compliance. Police Chief Magazine (48) adds that reform efforts need clear intent, outcomes, and personal impact to reduce resistance and build legitimacy, and that Internal messaging that connects reform to officers lived experiences helps reduce resistance and builds legitimacy. In “What Cops Want 2024” (49), officers note that they feel alienated by vague or late messaging; early, honest, and consistent updates improve morale and retention. IACP (45) and Lexipol (46) emphasize tailoring messages to sworn officers, dispatchers, and command staff to ensure all roles feel valued. A one-size-fits-all message often falls flat; tailored messaging reinforces that every role matters.

FIGURE 13: IMPD EMPLOYEE COMMUNICATION PREFERENCES

IMPD employees were asked “How do you prefer to receive communication from department leadership? (Select all that apply)” via the IMPD Department Survey. Survey respondents indicated the following.



III. DEPARTMENT INFRASTRUCTURE

FACILITIES, TECHNOLOGY, & EQUIPMENT

21. OUTDATED DEPARTMENT FACILITIES ARE HAVING A DIRECT, NEGATIVE IMPACT ON IMPD EMPLOYEE MORALE AND ABILITY TO MEET THE DEMANDS OF THEIR JOBS.

IMPD employees repeatedly cite the condition of district buildings as a point of frustration and embarrassment. “Updating facilities and tools isn’t just about looks, it’s about respect and creating a space that matches the level of pride and professionalism,” one officer shared. Officers described issues such as broken HVAC systems, outdated locker rooms, and cramped spaces for meetings or training, conditions that can undermine retention by signaling that their work environment is not a priority.

“Updating facilities and tools isn’t just about looks, it’s about respect and creating a space that matches the level of pride and professionalism.”

— IMPD Employee

Many community members see a need for upgraded IMPD facilities as well. One government employee shared, “My hope for the plan is that the department [will] prioritize capital needs...the buildings you have need to be part of it! ...I get police cars, weapons, technology, and Kevlar, and dash cams and body cams, but where you show up to work says a lot. “

Other departments have addressed similar challenges through targeted capital improvement programs. For example, Atlanta Police Department has invested in modernizing district facilities and public safety technology to improve functionality and officer morale, while Boston Police Department has leveraged facility upgrades as

part of broader crime reduction and operational efficiency strategies. These examples illustrate how intentional investment in facilities can enhance workflow, improve employee satisfaction, and create spaces that better serve both staff and the community.

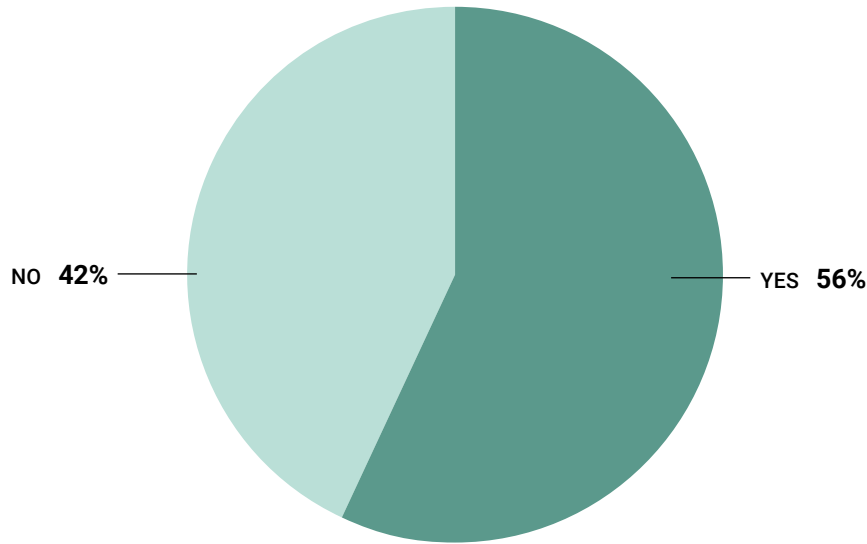
22. IMPD EMPLOYEES SHARE CONCERNS THAT OUTDATED TECHNOLOGY AND RELIANCE ON MULTIPLE, UNINTEGRATED SYSTEMS OFTEN HINDER THE DEPARTMENT’S DAILY WORK AND AGREE THAT STREAMLINED TECHNOLOGY COULD IMPROVE EFFICIENCY AND REDUCE TRAINING CHALLENGES.

In the department survey, 42% of respondents said current technology does not meet their day-to-day needs. Officers described having to navigate “four or more programs” to complete a single task, with no centralized system to link data. “Centralizing and streamlining data collection would make a huge difference,” one command staff member explained.

Agencies like the New Orleans Police Department have addressed similar challenges by integrating reporting, case management, and analytics into unified platforms, reducing redundancies, cutting down on training time, and making data more accessible across units (50). Even though innovations in technology and equipment have become central to modern policing, with nearly all U.S. law enforcement agencies implementing some form of advanced technology to improve operational efficiency and outcomes, a Stanford University report highlights that technology adoption often occurs without strategic planning and integration, potentially limiting its transformative impact on policing practices and agency success (51).

FIGURE 14: IMPD EMPLOYEE PERCEPTION OF TECHNOLOGY EFFECTIVENESS.

IMPD employees were asked "Does IMPD's current technology meet your day-to-day work needs?" via the IMPD Department Survey. Survey respondents indicated the following.

**POLICIES & DATA**

23. THERE IS WIDESPREAD AGREEMENT THAT UPDATING AND STREAMLINING INTERNAL POLICIES COULD GREATLY IMPROVE EFFICIENCY AND MORALE OF IMPD EMPLOYEES.

IMPD employees describe the current policy structure as overly complex and sometimes contradictory, making it difficult to apply rules consistently. "When policies are written clearly, applied consistently, and easy to access, it helps everyone feel more confident and supported in their work," one officer said. Clear, streamlined policies can also make accountability more straightforward for supervisors and help avoid misunderstandings that can harm morale. Denver Police Department's policy modernization initiative offers a model, organizing all policies into a centralized digital platform with keyword search, mobile access, and built-in update alerts (52).

24. IMPD EMPLOYEES AND INDIANAPOLIS COMMUNITY MEMBERS ALIKE BELIEVE THAT A MODERN DATA COLLECTION STRATEGY AND ENHANCED REPORTING SYSTEMS WOULD ALLOW FOR INCREASED LAW ENFORCEMENT ACCOUNTABILITY, EFFICIENCY, AND TRANSPARENCY.

"Centralizing and streamlining data collection would make a huge difference, so that instead of juggling disconnected programs, officers and staff would have one clear system where everything is stored, organized, and easy to access."

– IMPD Command Staff

Both sworn officers and professional staff emphasize the importance of transparent, accessible data. As one command staff shared, "Centralizing and streamlining data collection would make a huge difference, so that instead of juggling disconnected



CASE STUDY: TRANSPARENCY HUB

HOUSTON POLICE DEPARTMENT

Houston's Police Transparency Hub stands as a landmark initiative designed to foster open communication and deepen transparency between the Houston Police Department (HPD) and the community it serves. The HPD launched its Transparency Hub to provide public access to key policing data, including use of force, traffic stops, disciplinary actions, and employee diversity. Updated monthly via interactive dashboards, the hub enables residents to track trends, submit feedback, and participate in surveys.

The complaint system allows for anonymous, multilingual submissions, including compliments or grievances, with the option to upload supporting evidence. Submissions are reviewed by both the Office of Policing Reform and Accountability and the Independent Police Oversight Board.

Beyond data and reporting, the hub opens new channels for dialogue between residents and police administrators, helping HPD to shape strategies in real-time. The Transparency Hub is complemented by a focus on policy reforms, such as clear protocols for body-worn camera video release and broader crisis intervention efforts.

Built on Esri ArcGIS technology, the hub integrates crime records into public-facing and internal dashboards, enhancing real-time data access. This initiative advances trust by making policing practices visible, understandable, and open to community input.

SOURCES: 57, 58, 59, 60

programs, officers and staff would have one clear system where everything is stored, organized, and easy to access.”

The Houston Police Department's Transparency Hub provides an example of best practice, offering public dashboards with real-time data on crime, use of force, and community complaints, while also giving internal staff analytical tools to track performance and identify trends. See Case Study: Transparency Hub, Houston Police Department. Other departments, such as the Sacramento Police Department, allow citizens to submit reports electronically, including everything, from reporting accidents to theft/burglary, to violations of restraining orders, as well as drug, gang, and criminal or suspicious activity. Citizens who use this system immediately receive a report number and ability to print and review it (53).

Albuquerque's Smart 911 and RealTime Crime Center is another approach to integrating technology into public safety in a way that is practical, and people centered. Smart 911 lets community members share critical info, such as medical needs or household details, ahead of time so that dispatchers and responders already have what they need before arriving. This can be especially helpful in high-stress cases like mental health crises or do-

mestic violence calls. The Real-Time Crime Center (RTCC) builds on that by giving officers live info from cameras, license plate readers, and dispatch feeds. Meanwhile, analysts in the RTCC can spot patterns and flag risks before they escalate (54, 55, 56).

IV. COMMUNITY RELATIONS

BUILDING BRIDGES & TRUST WITH THE COMMUNITY

25. OFFICERS AND COMMUNITY MEMBERS AGREE THAT BUILDING MUTUAL, MEANINGFUL RELATIONSHIPS BASED ON FAMILIARITY AND TRUST IS AN ESSENTIAL PART OF EFFECTIVE POLICING AND PUBLIC SAFETY, HOWEVER, THE DEPARTMENT MAY BE OVERESTIMATING THE POSITIVE IMPACT OF THEIR CURRENT COMMUNICATION AND RELATIONSHIP BUILDING EFFORTS.

Half of community survey respondents said they believe IMPD is trustworthy. When asked about communication and engagement from IMPD, community and IMPD perceptions varied greatly. While 65% of department employees said IMPD regularly communicates with the public through websites, e-mails, or meetings, just 35% of community members agreed. Similarly, 63% of department employees felt the department often builds relationships with the community, compared with 31% of community members, and 22% said such efforts rarely or never occur. See Figure 15. Community members consistently shared that much of their contact with IMPD is reactive. “I tend to only hear from IMPD when something bad happens, so it would be helpful if we could get more positive news to reinforce that relationship with the police department,” one community member said. Another noted, “IMPD’s information is competing against apps like neighborhood alerts where citizens can observe and say what they think they heard rather than IMPD having the chance to say what is truth or what happened.”

From the department’s perspective, many officers see community engagement as central to the job. “Community engagement isn’t extra work, it’s THE work. When people know us, they’re more likely to call, cooperate, and work with us instead of against us,” one employee said. Another stated, “Public perception is an integral part to my job... We need witnesses to trust us enough and feel safe enough to come forward. We need families to cooperate. It is not possible for us to be effective without the help of the community.”

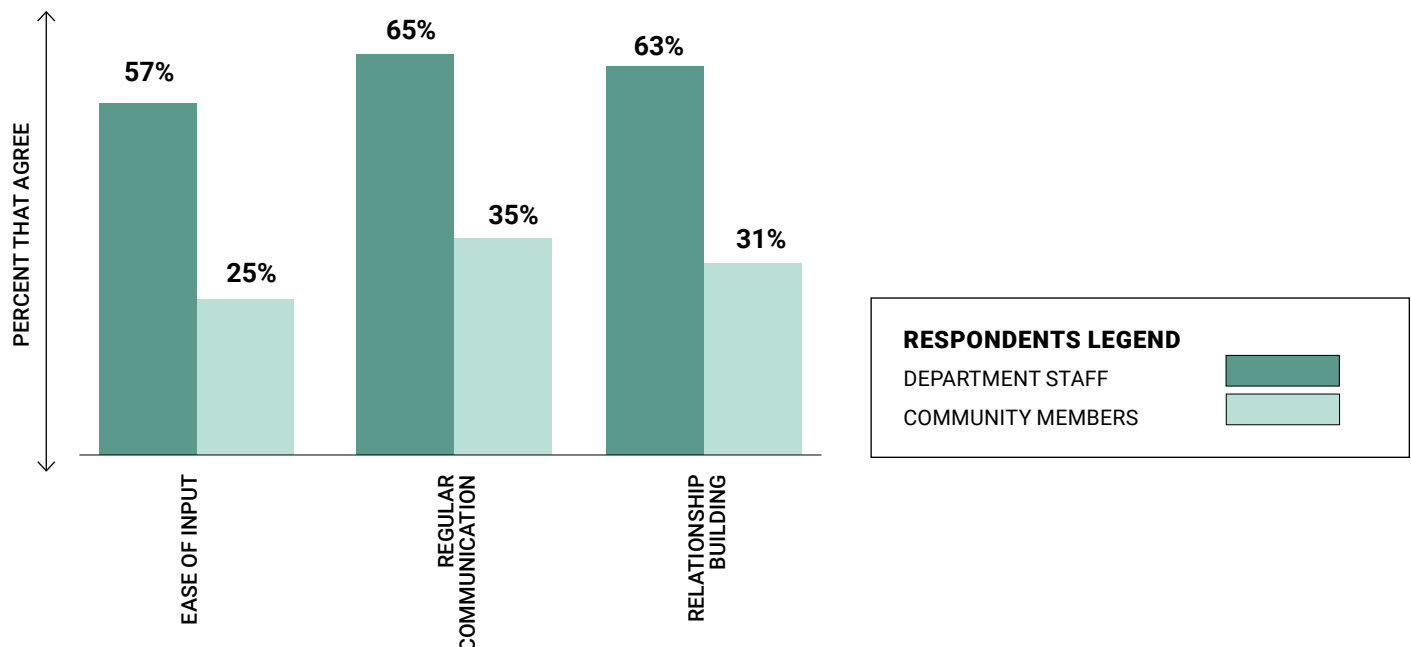
Best-practice examples also show how sustained, positive contact can reshape perceptions. Michigan City Police Department’s Citizens Police Academy offers community members an inside look at policing, fostering relationships that carry beyond the program into everyday interactions. Examples like this have shown positive results in other cities, where transparent communication and a balance of positive and critical updates have helped close perception gaps and strengthen trust between officers and community members.

FIGURE 15: COMPARING IMPD AND COMMUNITY VIEWS ON IMPD'S COMMUNICATION AND RELATIONSHIP BUILDING

Both IMPD employees and community members were asked: To what extent do you believe IMPD:

- Makes it easy for community members to provide input (e.g., comments, suggestions, and concerns)?
- Regularly communicates with community members (e.g., websites, e-mails, or public meetings)?
- Develops relationships with community members (e.g., residents, organizations, and groups)?

via the IMPD Department Survey. Survey respondents indicated the following.





CASE STUDY: CITIZENS ACADEMY

MICHIGAN CITY POLICE DEPARTMENT

The Michigan City Police Department's (MCPA) annual Citizens Police Academy is a free, six-week program that immerses residents in law enforcement operations. Meeting weekly, participants get an immersive, firsthand experience into law enforcement work, as they learn about criminal law, patrol tactics, crime scene processing, and specialty units such as K-9 and hostage negotiation.

Led by state-certified officers, the academy includes hands-on simulations, tours, and open dialogue with department leadership. By demystifying police work and fostering transparency, it reduces misconceptions and strengthens community relationships. The academy's open and inclusive approach, along with its provision of refreshments, materials, and giveaways, encourages diverse participation and fosters a welcoming atmosphere conducive to dialogue.

Graduates leave with a deeper appreciation for the police mission and enhanced ability to see how law enforcement serves and protects the community. This exemplifies the academy's success in promoting better community relations and fostering a collaborative, trusting relationship between Michigan City's police officers and its citizens.

SOURCE: 61

26. TO MORE EFFECTIVELY BUILD TRUSTING RELATIONSHIPS, COMMUNITY MEMBERS WANT MORE FACETIME WITH OFFICERS IN NON-CRISIS SITUATIONS.

Community survey respondents ranked increased police presence and engagement with neighborhood residents and businesses as the top priorities for IMPD's community policing strategy. For low-income community members, however, the priority shifted toward greater engagement paired with referrals to preventive social services, reflecting a desire for connection that goes beyond enforcement.

"You don't build trust and open minds if you don't show up," a community member explained. "It's just continuing to be there. Even though you know they don't trust you or like you, it's hard to dislike and distrust someone who continues to show up, listens, and takes feedback." A representative from the LGBTQ+ focus group echoed that genuine trust would require police to be more visible in positive ways, especially in neighborhoods where most contact is enforcement-based. An immigrant community member urged, "Don't just come to our community

when there's something wrong... be in relationship with us during good times and develop real relationships so I can trust you. Show up to meetings outside of uniform."

"Don't just come to our community when there's something wrong... be in relationship with us during good times and develop real relationships so I can trust you. Show up to meetings outside of uniform."

— Immigrant Community Member

Several community members shared positive experiences when officers were present for supportive, non-enforcement reasons. One recounted officers empathetically helping after their car was damaged by gunfire and proactively patrolling a child's bus stop to address safety issues with passing drivers. "It was also a great experience," they said. Best-practice examples like Michigan City Police Department's Citizens Police Academy show how structured, ongoing engagement outside of emergencies can strengthen familiarity, reduce suspicion, and create long-term trust between officers and the communities they serve.

27. THERE IS WIDESPREAD RECOGNITION THAT TRANSPARENT, TWO-WAY COMMUNICATION BETWEEN IMPD AND THE COMMUNITY IS AN ESSENTIAL, YET MISSING PART OF THE CURRENT DYNAMIC IN INDIANAPOLIS.

Strengthening communication strategies is a clear opportunity, as just 26% of department survey respondents believe Indianapolis community members are satisfied with how IMPD communicates with them. Community members across focus groups described a persistent gap between giving feedback and seeing action. “People share feedback and never hear what came of it. We need to know we’re being heard. IMPD needs to show they’re listening,” one faith leader said. Another added, “We’re always asked to show up and give our thoughts, at meetings, forums, listening sessions. But after that, it just feels like our words disappear. Were we heard? Did it matter? It’s like we’re talking into a void.” Community members also stressed the need for timely, relevant communication tailored to specific situations. As one community member expressed, “...when something happens near schools, [we need] texts, not press releases.” From the department’s perspective, many officers report investing significant time in preventative community work. 78% of Community Engagement and Outreach Bureau (CEOB) respondents said they engage in preventative contacts with community members 20 or more hours per week. District-level data shows that the Downtown District leads in time spent

on proactive engagement, with 34% of respondents logging more than 10 hours per week. Southwest (22%), Northwest (20%), and Southeast (20%) districts followed.

National best practices reinforce that meaningful engagement requires not just collecting input but visibly acting on it. The Policing Project at NYU School of Law emphasizes that building trust means closing the loop, showing communities how their feedback shapes decisions and delivering responses in ways that are accessible, timely, and specific to their concerns (62). Without this two-way accountability, even well-intentioned outreach risks feeling performative rather than productive.

28. THE INDIANAPOLIS COMMUNITY IS MOST LIKELY TO GET THEIR INFORMATION ABOUT IMPD FROM THE LOCAL NEWS OR WORD OF MOUTH, RATHER THAN DIRECTLY FROM THE DEPARTMENT.

When asked where they receive information about IMPD, community survey respondents across all demographics most often named: local news, social media, websites, or email newsletters, followed by TV, word of mouth, IMPD’s own social media accounts, and local radio. This suggests that much of the information community members receive about IMPD comes from indirect channels rather than direct communication from the department. “Most of the impres-

FIGURE 16: AMOUNT OF TIME SPENT ENGAGED IN PREVENTATIVE COMMUNITY WORK BY IMPD EMPLOYEES

IMPD employees were asked “During an average work week, how many hours do you spend engaged in preventative community work? (e.g. making informal contacts with residents, identifying potential problems and attempting to address them, etc.)”. IMPD Department Survey respondents indicated the following.

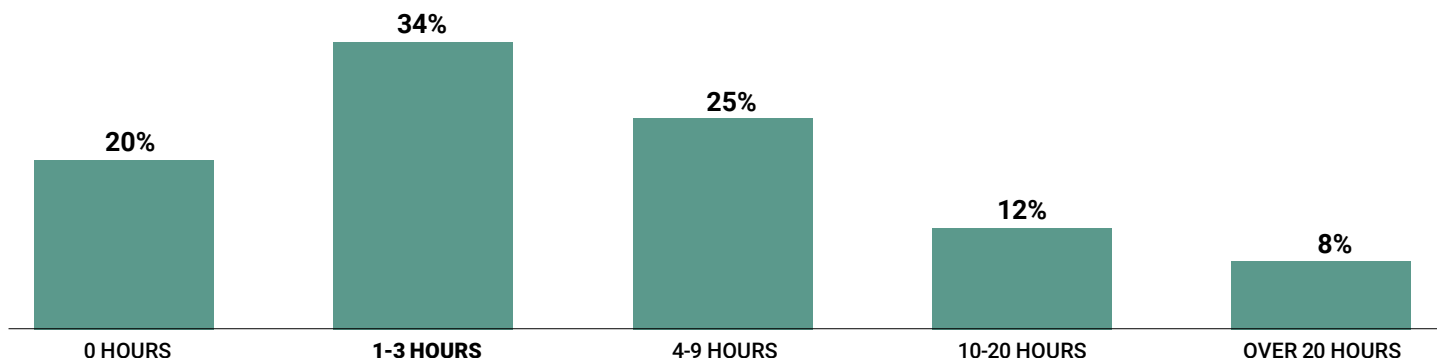
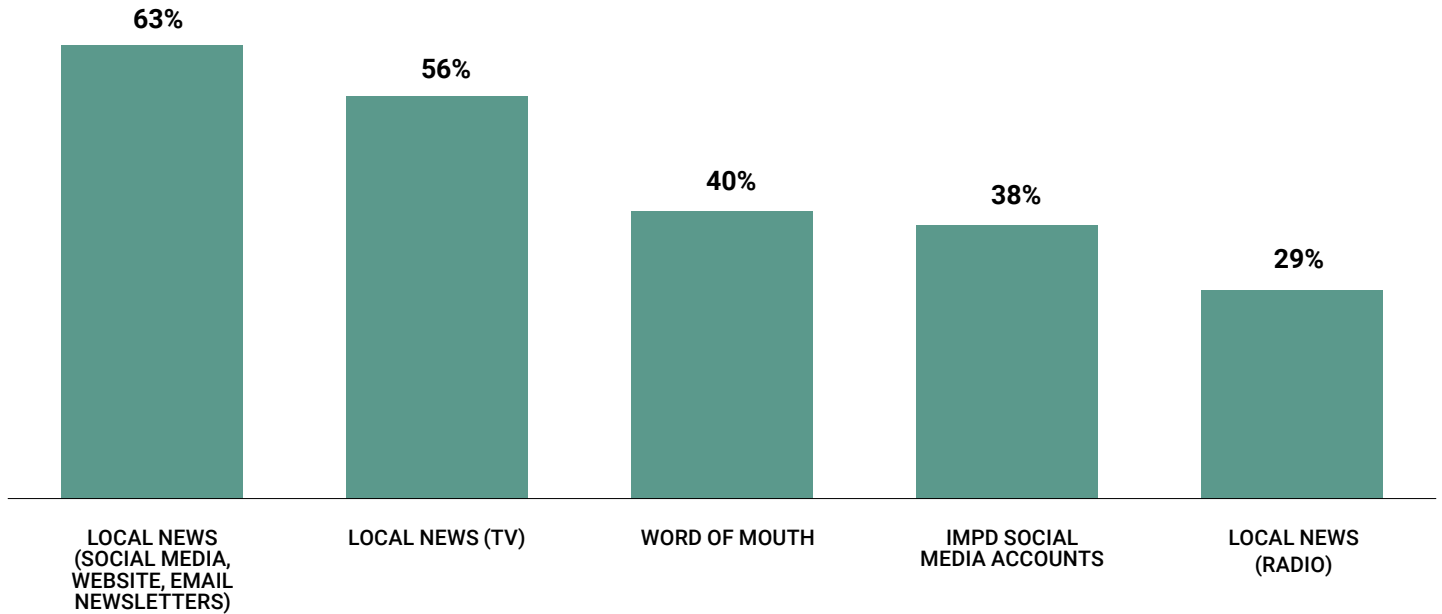


FIGURE 17: WHERE INDIANAPOLIS COMMUNITY RECEIVE INFORMATION ABOUT IMPD

Indianapolis community members were asked "Where do you receive information about IMPD? (Select all that apply)". Community Survey respondents indicated the following.



sions that are received is through the media about IMPD and that's why a lot of folks are trying to establish what the facts are," one faith leader explained. Other community members shared that direct communication from the department is rare and usually comes through personal connections. "I don't really receive information from IMPD, so when I do, it's through IMPD officers that I am familiar with or have a connection to," said a mental health professional.

"I don't really receive information from IMPD, so when I do, it's through IMPD officers that I am familiar with or have a connection to."

— Mental Health Professional

Some praised IMPD's visibility in certain channels, particularly social media. "[IMPD does] very well on social media and in interactions with media! They're outstanding with communicating different things. Chief Bailey will be having fun outside and also being serious about IMPD presence and expectations," a community member noted. These positive examples suggest opportunities to expand the department's direct outreach, ensuring that accurate, timely information reaches more community members without being filtered through outside sources.

29. COMMUNITY MEMBERS WANT COMMUNICATION ABOUT PUBLIC SAFETY RELATED INCIDENTS TO BE TRANSPARENT, FACTUAL, AND CONSISTENT REGARDLESS OF THE SOURCE OF INFORMATION.

Nearly half of community survey respondents (46%) agree that IMPD is accountable to the community for its actions, though perceptions vary by geography, ranging from 55% agreement in the Southwest District to 39% in the East District. For many members of the community, trust begins with accountability. "Trust looks like accountability. If something happens, we as citizens should be able to trust that a complaint will be filed and will be followed through," a community member said.

Some community members voiced concern about IMPD leadership making statements before all facts are known. "When the Chief defends an officer before the facts are out, people say, 'See, they're all blue, not for us,'" one government employee observed. Another noted the inherent tension: "The Chief ends up walking a tightrope. The community wants accountability; the troops want defense."

These perspectives highlight the need for a communication approach that is fact-driven, consistent across channels, and structured to reinforce both transparency and accountability, ensuring that all audiences receive the same clear and complete information, regardless of where or how they hear it.

RELATIONSHIPS WITH SPECIFIC COMMUNITY GROUPS

30. THERE IS WIDESPREAD ACKNOWLEDGEMENT THAT HISTORICAL TENSIONS BETWEEN LAW ENFORCEMENT AND HISTORICALLY MARGINALIZED GROUPS INFLUENCE HOW THE COMMUNITY VIEWS IMPD TODAY.

Many community members and IMPD employees recognize that present-day trust is shaped by a long history of strained relationships between law enforcement and marginalized groups. “One of the biggest challenges I see is the lack of trust between law enforcement and the communities we serve. History plays a big role, and so does representation. When people don’t see officers who look like them or understand their lived experiences, it naturally creates hesitation and distance,” one IMPD employee shared. Another command staff member noted, “Just one interaction with a police officer will set up your perception for the rest of your life. Sometimes it’s a historic interaction, especially with the Black community, even if you personally have never had a negative encounter.” A Latinx focus group participant added, “[There’s a lot of] stigma and historical context... residents are not going to try and communicate with IMPD if there is still tension or lack of trust.”

Research supports the idea that effective communication and performance drive trust more than demographics alone. A study by Stauffer, Song, and Shoub (63) found that increasing racial and gender diversity in a police agency can boost public trust, but only at very high levels of representation. In contrast, policy effectiveness and strong performance, measured by high felony solve rates, low use of force, and fewer civilian complaints, have a

consistently stronger and broader impact on citizen confidence and willingness to engage.

Specific communities also report perceived disparities in how cases are handled. “The main issue is a lack of seriousness in how LGBTQ+ cases are treated compared to heterosexual cases,” said one LGBTQ+ focus group representative. Another community member reflected, “I want to express my deep appreciation and respect for the many law enforcement officers who serve with integrity, compassion, and a strong commitment to public safety... At the same time, it’s important to acknowledge that not all experiences with law enforcement are positive, and that some practices and behaviors continue to erode trust, particularly in communities that have historically faced disproportionate harm.”

“One of the biggest challenges I see is the lack of trust between law enforcement and the communities we serve. History plays a big role, and so does representation. When people don’t see officers who look like them or understand their lived experiences, it naturally creates hesitation and distance.”

— IMPD Employee

Models adopted by other police departments across the country underscore the need to address these issues directly. Chicago’s 2016 Police Accountability Task Force report (64) confronted systemic bias and public mistrust head-on, reinforcing that transparency isn’t optional. Its follow-up Organizational Excellence Strategy shifted focus inward, giving officers a voice in shaping reform and creating space to reflect on their legacy. In other cities, facilitated forums between command staff and frontline officers to co-design accountability goals have been used to address similar gaps identified by the Indianapolis community.

31. AS INDIANAPOLIS'S NON-ENGLISH SPEAKING AND IMMIGRANT COMMUNITIES HAVE GROWN, THE COMMUNITY AND THE DEPARTMENT SHARE CONCERNS ABOUT OFFICERS HAVING THE RIGHT TOOLS AND UNDERSTANDING TO BEST WORK WITH AND SUPPORT THE PUBLIC SAFETY OF THESE COMMUNITIES, KNOWING THAT MORE FOCUSED TRAINING, TRANSLATION SERVICES, AND/OR OTHER SUPPORTS ARE NEEDED TO EQUIP THE DEPARTMENT TO SERVE AND PROTECT IMMIGRANT COMMUNITIES.

Both community members and IMPD employees acknowledge that language and cultural barriers can lead to misunderstandings, mistrust, and reluctance to engage with police. "Language and cultural difference can create misunderstandings, fear, or mistrust during interactions with police, causing community members to be less likely to report crimes or seek help," a Latinx focus group representative explained. For many immigrants, these challenges are compounded by past experiences with law enforcement in their home countries. "Our people still have trauma from police... When we arrive in America most of us get triggers or trauma from seeing police cars nearby," an immigrant community member shared.

"Language and cultural difference can create misunderstandings, fear, or mistrust during interactions with police causes community members to be less likely to report crimes or seek help."

— Latinx Community Member

IMPD employees share concerns about being effectively prepared to engage with these specific groups. Only 48% of department respondents feel very prepared to engage with undocumented individuals, and just 26% feel very prepared to engage with non-English speakers. Community perceptions are even more limited, when asked how effectively IMPD communicates with community members whose primary language is not English, nearly

a quarter said "never" or "rarely," and 40% indicated they were unable to rate.

Community members offer concrete suggestions for improvement, from expanding language access to building trust through culturally informed training. "It would be useful that IMPD would invest in language translation to ensure that they are meeting their community members where they're at," an immigrant focus group participant recommended. Others emphasized the importance of respectful first impressions. "First impressions matter. They get to have an attitude because they're law enforcement, but we don't or can't because we're from a different community," one Latinx participant said. IMPD employees and community members alike recognize that targeted training, expanded translation services, and sustained community engagement can bridge cultural divides and support safety and trust for immigrant communities.

32. MANY COMMUNITY MEMBERS WHO DO NOT SPEAK ENGLISH AS THEIR FIRST LANGUAGE ARE OFTEN UNSURE HOW TO CONTACT THE POLICE AND/OR DON'T HAVE A CLEAR UNDERSTANDING OF LOCAL LAWS AND FEAR THAT INTERACTING WITH THE POLICE COULD PUT THEM IN DANGER.

Immigrant focus group participants described uncertainty, confusion, and fear as common barriers to engaging with IMPD. "There's a lot of confusion and injustice when people get arrested and they have no idea what is going on or what is being said or done," one immigrant community member shared. Cultural differences can also create misunderstandings about what is considered acceptable behavior. "There is a disparity on what is common sense in our culture and what is common sense in America," another participant explained, noting an incident where someone was arrested for walking outside without shoes.

Fear of immigration enforcement further compounds this hesitation. "With ICE sweeping around and masking the cars, it has a lot of folks in our community scared. A lot of the cars look like ICE cars, so how do they know they can trust the police?" an immigrant community member asked. Others pointed to challenges in knowing where to seek help. "There are attitudes at times because you don't

speak English and [you don't understand] what district to call," a Latinx participant said. Some community members expressed appreciation for moments when IMPD has clarified its stance on immigration enforcement. "I really appreciated the public statement from IMPD announcing its intentions not to work with ICE or change its immigration practices," one immigrant participant shared. "Things are changing so often and feel so volatile at the national and state level, that I really appreciate the updates on where IMPD stands."

Community members and service providers described the value of clear, multilingual information on how to contact police, understand local laws, and navigate public safety services, along with consistent public messaging about department policies.

33. IMPD EMPLOYEES AND THE COMMUNITY SHARE A DESIRE FOR ALTERNATIVE INTERVENTIONS AND PARTNERSHIPS TO BETTER ADDRESS INCIDENTS WHERE MENTAL HEALTH IS A FACTOR AND WHERE YOUTH ARE INVOLVED.

Both officers and community members emphasize that not every call for service requires a law enforcement-led response, particularly when mental health or youth are involved. While 59% of officers who responded to the department survey feel prepared to handle someone experiencing a mental health crisis, many also expressed the need for specialized support. "We're not social workers. We need people trained to deal with this stuff riding with us, or instead of us," one officer said. Another noted the lack of availability of Mobile Crisis Assistance Teams (MCAT) for certain shifts: "There are none available on late shift, so late shift officers are unable to utilize the resource when needed."

Community and department voices alike see value in expanding partnerships with mental health professionals, schools, and other social service agencies. "Licensed therapists should be able to enforce emergency detentions so officers can secure the scene and leave," suggested one mental health professional. Notably, current

state law requires officers to remain on the scene. Others pointed to schools as a critical partner in early prevention. "School systems are the first place to target youth crime prevention... not just high school but earlier, in the elementary setting," one community member shared. A department employee added, "Partnering with schools could prove beneficial as they see much of what we do only early on, poverty, abuse, poor attendance, substance abuse, mental health, lack of family support."

Examples from other police departments demonstrate the impact of community-first approaches. Chicago's People's Plan for Community Safety centers on jobs, housing, mental health care, and targeted support for neighborhoods and individuals most affected by violence. By weaving together community outreach, youth employment programs, and expanded access to care, the strategy addresses the root causes of harm rather than only the symptoms. Locally, similar partnerships, where clinicians lead in mental health crises, officers provide backup, and early intervention programs support at-risk youth, could reduce repeat calls, improve safety outcomes, and free up officers to focus on core law enforcement responsibilities (65, 66).



59%

OF OFFICERS WHO RESPONDED TO THE DEPARTMENT SURVEY FEEL PREPARED TO HANDLE SOMEONE EXPERIENCING A MENTAL HEALTH CRISIS

34. THERE IS WIDESPREAD AGREEMENT THAT CULTURAL AWARENESS TRAINING IS ESSENTIAL TO BUILDING TRUST, IMPROVING SAFETY, AND EFFECTIVELY DE-ESCALATING ENCOUNTERS.

Community members and IMPD employees alike stressed that understanding cultural differences is critical to fair, safe, and effective policing. “We need more in-depth bias training, especially when it comes to dealing with people from different backgrounds, cultures, and walks of life,” one IMPD employee shared. “If we want to build trust and truly represent the people we serve, we have to start with accountability and understanding from within.”

Members of the community echoed the need for more meaningful, sustained training, delivered by the communities themselves. “They need to be trained by us, not just about us,” an immigrant community representative said. “One training isn’t enough. You can’t understand our experiences in a two-hour session and think you’re done,” added a representative from the LGBTQ+ community. Others emphasized that cultural awareness extends beyond race to include language, trauma, and approach. “It’s not just about race, it’s about culture, language, trauma, and how you approach people,” an immigrant focus group representative noted. “Cultural humility means showing up like you don’t know everything, and being okay with that,” a Latinx participant explained.

“It’s not just about race, it’s about culture, language, trauma, and how you approach people.”

— Immigrant Community Member

Several community members pointed out that officers who build real relationships are more successful at resolving situations safely. “We’ve seen officers do it well when they actually know the people they’re dealing with. Relationships matter,” said a community member. Ongoing, community-led cultural awareness training, paired with relationship-building efforts, are described both by members of the community and service providers as effective ways to build trust, support safety, and improve the effectiveness of de-escalation.

CONCLUSION

BUILDING THE FUTURE OF IMPD

Throughout this process, officers, professional staff, and community members have spoken candidly about both the challenges and the opportunities ahead for IMPD. While many responses point to areas in need of change, there is also clear recognition and appreciation of the department's willingness to listen and take steps toward improvement.

One IMPD employee shared: "I am grateful that leadership is taking this step to listen to their people... Leadership is about service. When leaders seek to support their officers and detectives, equip and train them appropriately, and take care of them physically and mentally, they will see better service to the City of Indianapolis... I see this as a good first step in fixing these issues and am grateful that leadership is finally realizing that something has to change and something different must happen."

Similarly, a community member reflected on the value of strong relationships and a shared commitment to progress: "I want to express my deep appreciation and respect for the many law enforcement officers who serve with integrity, compassion, and a strong commitment to public safety... At the same time, it's important to acknowledge that not all experiences with law enforcement are positive... We must shift priorities toward more robust training in areas like de-escalation, mental health response, and cultural competency... Building stronger relationships between officers and the communities they serve is essential to ensuring safety, justice, and mutual respect. The path forward requires collaboration, accountability, and a shared commitment to doing better for everyone."

These reflections highlight a shared vision where listening leads to meaningful action, relationships are built on mutual respect, and trust is strengthened through consistent service, transparency, and accountability. By drawing on these shared commitments and the key findings high-

lighted within this report, IMPD will determine strategic priorities for the department that will serve as a guiding roadmap for the next five years. The resulting five-year strategic plan will be published in early 2026, helping IMPD remain responsive to the evolving needs of officers, professional staff, and the community, charting a path toward a safer, more connected Indianapolis.

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