

Bryan County Sheriff's Office

Community Survey

Sheriff Mark Crowe
Deputy Jennifer Fleming
Bryan County Sheriff's Office

Amanda Graham
Logan Somers
Kristina Thompson
Chad Posick
Georgia Southern University

January 2022



Table of Contents

Overview	3
Part I: Bryan County Sheriff's Office - Overall	5
Part II: Bryan County Sheriff's Deputies	8
Part III - Qualitative Analyses	12
Part IV: Summary of Recommendations	16
Part V: BCSO Responses to Recommendations (Provided by Deputy Jennifer Fleming)	18
References	20
Appendix: Methods	21
Table A1. Responses by Zip Code	22
Table A2: Overall Performance (mean, standard deviations presented)	23
Table A3: Satisfaction with the Sheriff's Office (mean, standard deviations presented)	24
Table A4: Trust and Communication (mean, standard deviations presented)	25
Table A5: Procedural Justice & Procedural INJustice (mean, standard deviations presented)	26
Table A6: Procedural INJustice (mean and standard deviation)	27
Table A7: Police Legitimacy (mean, standard deviations presented)	28
Table A8: Police Effectiveness (mean, standard deviations presented)	29
Table A9: Cooperation with Bryan County Sheriff's Office (mean, standard deviations presented)	30

Overview

Bryan County is a growing community located along Georgia's coastal region. The county is unique in that it is split into a northern and southern end by the Fort Stewart and Hunter Army Airfield Base. In the northern end lies the incorporated city of Pembroke, Georgia, and interstate I-16. The southern end includes the incorporated city of Richmond Hill and interstate I-95 and is also very close to downtown Savannah, Georgia. Current population estimates from the U.S. Census Bureau note that close to 40,000 citizens reside within Bryan County. Other characteristics of individuals within the county include its racial and ethnic makeup (72% White, 15% African American, 8% Hispanic, and 5% other), education level (92% high school or GED completion, 33% with a bachelor's degree), median income (\$72,624), and the percentage of persons living in poverty (8%). The Bryan County Sheriff's Office is responsible for many of the public safety concerns within the county and they also operate the Bryan County Detention Center. Currently, the department employs 65 sworn officers who are allocated to patrol, investigations, traffic, task forces, the detention center, and K9 divisions. An additional staff of 17 civilians is spread across the department's administration, the 911 dispatch center, and kitchen personnel that are housed within the detention center.

Bryan County Sheriff Mark Crowe took office in 2021 with numerous aspirations in mind. These goals included rebuilding community relationships, developing interagency collaborations, increasing department transparency, creating new specialized units (i.e., traffic, K9), and bettering the department's technological equipment. In line with these objectives, the Bryan County Sheriff's Office reached out to the faculty of the Criminal Justice and Criminology Department at Georgia Southern University in May of 2021 to inquire about the possibility of collaborating on many of the initiatives the agency was interested in pursuing. Through both a formal meeting and a host of informal communications (i.e., emails, phone calls) between department personnel and university faculty, it was decided that the most advantageous first step would be to survey the residents of Bryan County about their perceptions of the sheriff's office and how they view the major public safety problems that Bryan County currently faces.

The survey was distributed to community members, both online through social media and by paper/pen, between July 22, 2021 and October 8, 2021. As a whole, a total of 117 Bryan County residents completed the survey in its entirety. Table 1 provides an overview of the respondents' profile. On average, respondents were 48 years old, more likely to be female, white, married, employed full-time, and have a close friend/family member who is a law enforcement officer. Only a small portion of respondents were Black, active-duty military members, veterans, current or former law enforcement officers, lived inside of city limits, were stopped by Bryan County Sheriff's Officers, or had called Bryan County Sheriff's Officers for assistance. When taking the subsequent findings into account, these profile characteristics should be considered.

In brief, the majority of respondents in this survey reported that they were satisfied with the Bryan County Sheriff's Office but were less enthusiastic about the transparency and communication of the Sheriff's Office. Likewise, the majority of respondents felt that Bryan County Sheriff's Officers treated community members with procedural justice (i.e., were respectful, gave citizens a voice during encounters, etc.), were legitimate authorities, were effective, and would cooperate with officers. However, a small, but substantial, portion of respondents felt officers acted in procedurally unjust ways, were illegitimate authority figures, and were ineffective in their duties.

Qualitative evidence provided additional insight regarding salient concerns and expectations for both satisfied and unsatisfied respondents. Notably, respondents across all parts of the county, and with varied perceptions of the BCSO cited hopes for enhanced community-police partnerships, and they frequently indicated their receptiveness to the prospect of improved communication and outreach. Although citizens held

diverse views regarding the major challenges facing the county, the most common issues included traffic enforcement and the proliferation of drugs (particularly as it related to youth access).

Table 1. Respondents' Profile

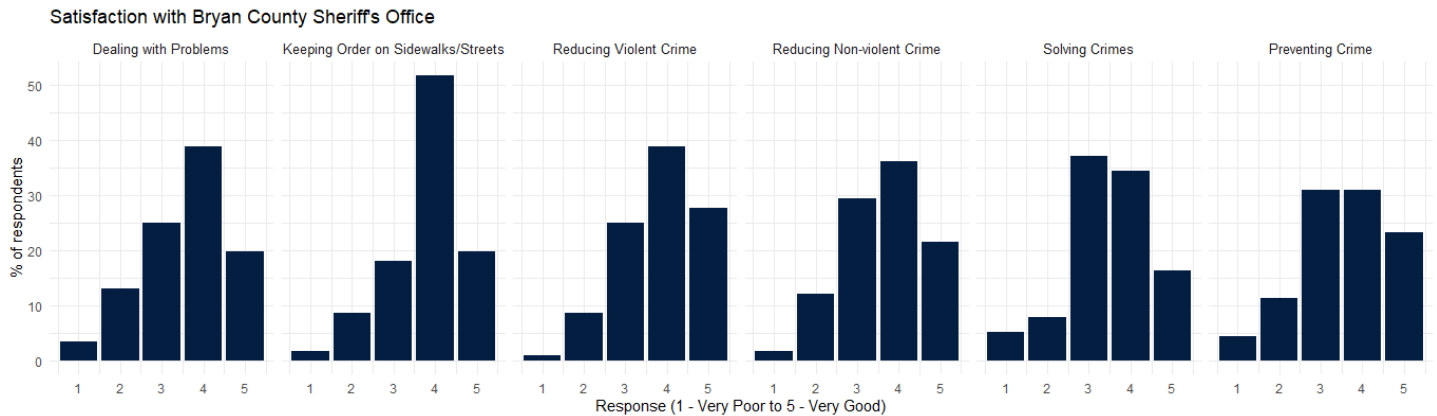
	Total
N (Number of respondents)	117
Average Age (standard deviation)	48.31 (11.48)
% Female	64.96
% White	90.60
% Black	2.56
% Married	83.76
% Full-time Employed	62.39
% Active-Duty Military	5.13
% Veteran	17.09
% Law Enforcement Member (Past or Present)	11.97
% Close Friend/Family in Law Enforcement	52.99
% Inside City Limits	34.67
% contacting BCSO	28.21
% stopped by BCSO	5.13

As a result of these findings, we have provided several recommendations, including future community surveys to gain input and insight from community members, the adoption of principles of community-oriented policing and problem-oriented policing, the adoption of procedural justice by deputies, the examination of response times, a review of the use and location of traffic enforcement, conduct a needs assessment to address drug use, and the use of victim services as well as established community partners to address community problems. We hope these findings will serve as a starting point for the Bryan County Sheriff's Office and Bryan County community to build their relationship as well as work together in addressing issues within Bryan County.

Part I: Bryan County Sheriff's Office - Overall

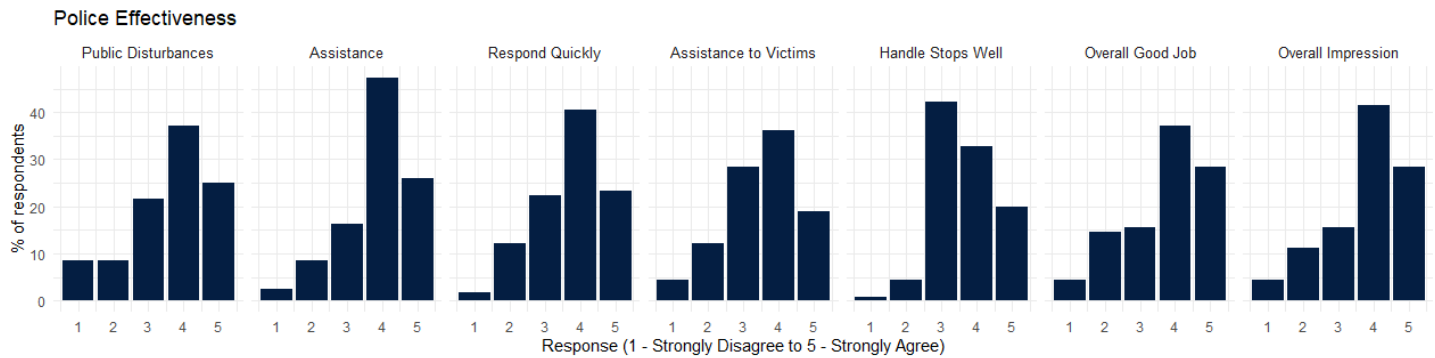
One key area of interest for this survey was understanding how community members felt about the Bryan County Sheriff's office as a whole. Given the Sheriff's interest in improving community relations, we sought to understand how satisfied the community was with the Sheriff's office, their perceived effectiveness of deputies, as well as how the community felt about the trust and communication between themselves and the Sheriff's office.

To do this, the first set of questions tapped into citizens' satisfaction with how good of a job the Bryan County Sheriff's Office has done addressing a host of law enforcement and order-maintenance-related problems. The response categories that were available to citizens ranged from "very poor" to "very good." Generally, citizens appear to be satisfied with the work that the Sheriff's Office is doing. The particular problems that citizens had the highest satisfaction with had to do with the department's ability to reduce violent crime (65.81% good or very good) and keep order on the streets/sidewalks (71.55% good or very good). Overall, these results should be interpreted as a sign that citizens believe that the Sheriff's Office has a fairly good handle on the problems that face the communities they serve. However, there is still some room for improvement.

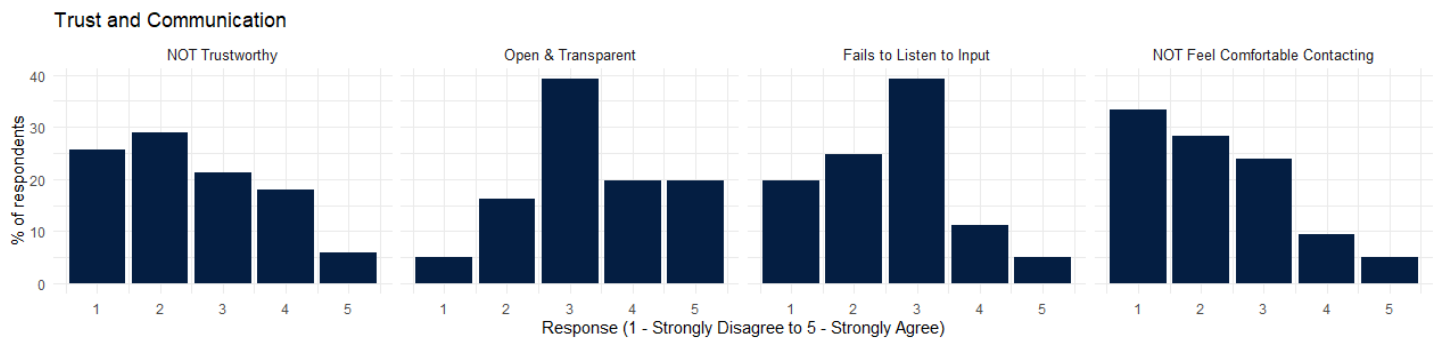


Second, as seen in the figure below, respondents were asked to report their agreement or disagreement with 7 statements about how effective the deputies were in performing their duties, using a 5-point scale. The vast majority of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that officers were effective in handling public disturbances, providing assistance (in general and to victims), responding quickly, handling stops well, doing an overall good job, and having an overall good impression.

Still, responses varied in their enthusiasm with some respondents disagreeing with these statements. For example, a minority but substantial proportion of respondents did not agree (or strongly did not agree) that officers responded quickly to calls for service (13.79%), did not agree that officers provided assistance to victims (16.38%), and did not agree that officers did an overall good job (18.97%).



Third, the figure below details the extent to which citizens of Bryan County agreed or disagreed with statements related to trust and communication with the sheriff’s office. Note that some of the items are worded positively while others are worded negatively. The questions were asked in this format in an effort to increase the reliability of the results. The findings are somewhat mixed in terms of trust and communication. For example, though citizens were more likely to agree or strongly agree with the statement that, “the sheriff’s office is open and transparent” (39.32%), they were more neutral when it came to whether they felt the department listens to their input when it comes to public safety (39.32% neither agree nor disagree). Collectively, these results do identify a couple of areas in which the sheriff’s office may consider addressing moving forward.



Recommendation 1: Collect more input from the community and use this to tailor policing strategies to address issues identified by the community. (See President’s Task Force on 21st Century Policing recommendation 1.7; community policing, problem-oriented policing). This survey is a first step in this process. However, additional surveys or listening sessions/groups, as well as one-on-one listening by officers, will be needed to address this area. As will be discussed below, this may also help address perceptions of trustworthiness.

Recommendation 2: Examine calls for service data to understand response times. Using problem-oriented policing as a strategy, scan this data for potential problems, analyze the underlying cause for this problem, develop a strategy to address the problem, and, after implementation, reassess to evaluate whether the problem was reduced. Considerations for strategies may include implementing differential response strategies to help prioritize calls for service, adopting online or telephone reporting of less serious crimes, and adjusting caller expectations by advising callers about how long it may take for deputies to arrive. This may also involve a staffing study to understand if this problem is driven by a need for more deputies.

Recommendation 3: Identify victim resources within the community and partner with them to assist victims. This may include developing a document for deputies to refer to for providing information about resources in the community, providing deputies with documents to give to victims with this information, and alerting deputies to these resources so they may link victims to them.

Recommendation 4: Identify existing community events and develop additional opportunities for receiving community input. As evidenced in the qualitative findings, citizens are eager to develop bidirectional lines of communication between the office and residents. In line with both community policing perspectives and problem-oriented policing strategies, it is essential to develop networks that can support robust discussions regarding the challenges faced across the county. Prior work suggests that receptiveness to citizen voices can increase general satisfaction with police services and quality of life (Dukes, Portillos, and Miles, 2008; Weitzer and Tuch, 2002). Moreover, transparent and clearly articulated public safety campaigns may be particularly effective strategies to increase community perceptions of trustworthiness and legitimacy (Kochel and Skogan, 2021).

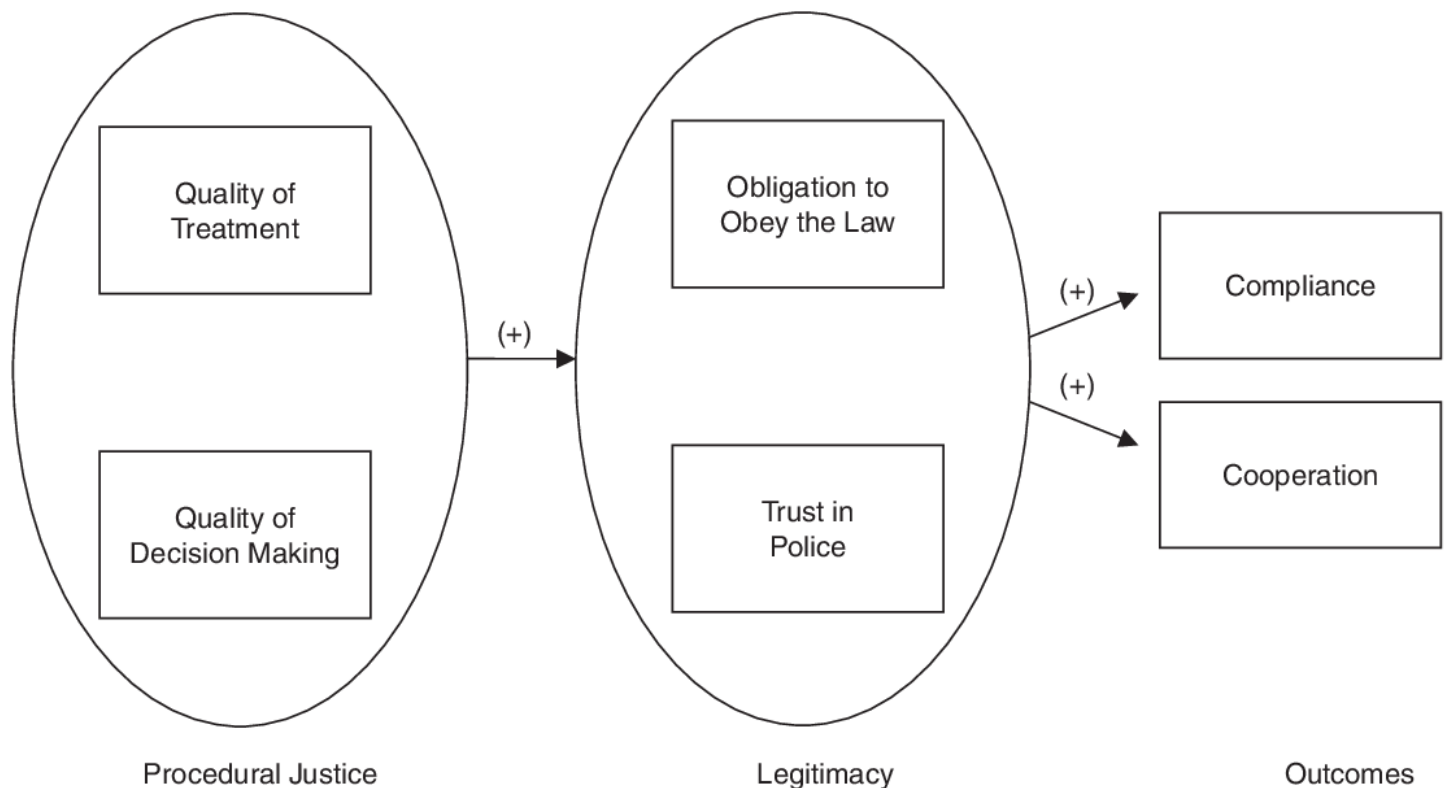
Recommendation 5: Review current traffic enforcement strategies and assess for opportunities to more efficiently cover areas of concern. Survey respondents held diverse views regarding the most dangerous traffic locations, yet a great majority indicated that visibility was essential to enhance public safety. Notably, *increased visibility* on highways and interstates may be sufficient to address traffic safety concerns and additional enforcement and ticketing may not be necessary to see benefits. Recent studies suggest that simply the presence of a patrol car (or even a realistic cut-out) could slow down highway drivers (Kaplan et al., 2000; Ravani & Wang, 2018; Simpson et al., 2020).

Recommendation 6: Conduct a needs assessment to grapple fully with the nature and context of drug use in communities. Such an undertaking would best be done in consultation with local programs aimed at addressing drug proliferation in the area as well as other stakeholders (e.g. schools). If, as suggested from the qualitative responses, the drug issue is two-pronged (substance abuse among adults and access to drugs among youth), interventions will necessarily need to be tailored. For example, community harm reduction approaches may be warranted for adult drug use (Childs et al., 2021), while community-oriented, long-term intervention strategies such as the [Communities that Care program](#) may be better suited to curb youth substance use (Oesterle, 2010).

Part II: Bryan County Sheriff's Deputies

The second key area that this survey focused on was how community members felt about the deputies that make up the Bryan County Sheriff's office. We focused our attention on the guiding recommendations of the President's Task Force on 21st Century Policing (2015), specifically Pillar 1 - "Building Trust & Legitimacy."

This pillar argues that police departments around the country were asked to engage in policing that embraces procedural justice as a means of improving trust between the police and community, while also addressing crime. As described in the figure below from Reisig and colleagues (2007), when officers use procedural justice, the community will see the officers as more legitimate. That is, treating community members fairly and respectfully as well as making decisions in an unbiased way is theorized to lead to the perception that officers and the law are worthy of being obeyed and that the community has trust in officers. As a result, community members will be more compliant with the law and officer requests, more likely to cooperate with law enforcement officers, and be more satisfied with officers.



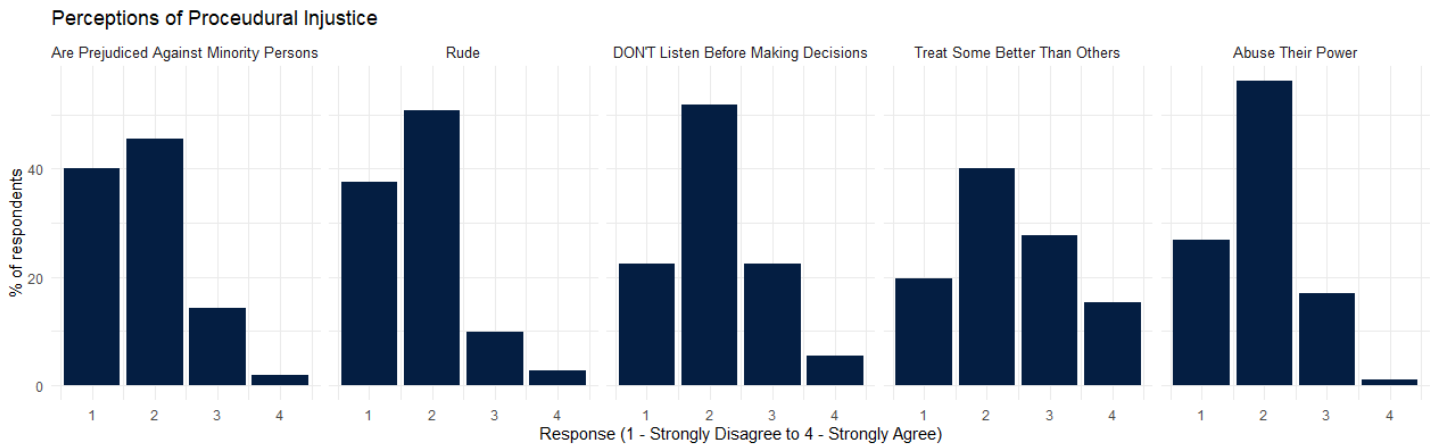
From: Reisig et al., 2007

To evaluate Bryan County Sheriff's deputies in this model, we measured elements of this model as well as other related ideas. As seen below, we asked respondents to report their agreement or disagreement on a 4-point scale to 10 statements relating to the perceived procedural justice of Bryan County Sheriff's deputies. The vast majority of respondents (agree and strongly agree) reported that officers were honest, respected their basic rights, courteous, and trustworthy. Additionally, the majority of respondents felt that officers could be trusted to make decisions for the community, made decisions in fair ways, provided deserved outcomes, tried to be fair, and usually treated people with respect. This trend was consistent across zip codes.

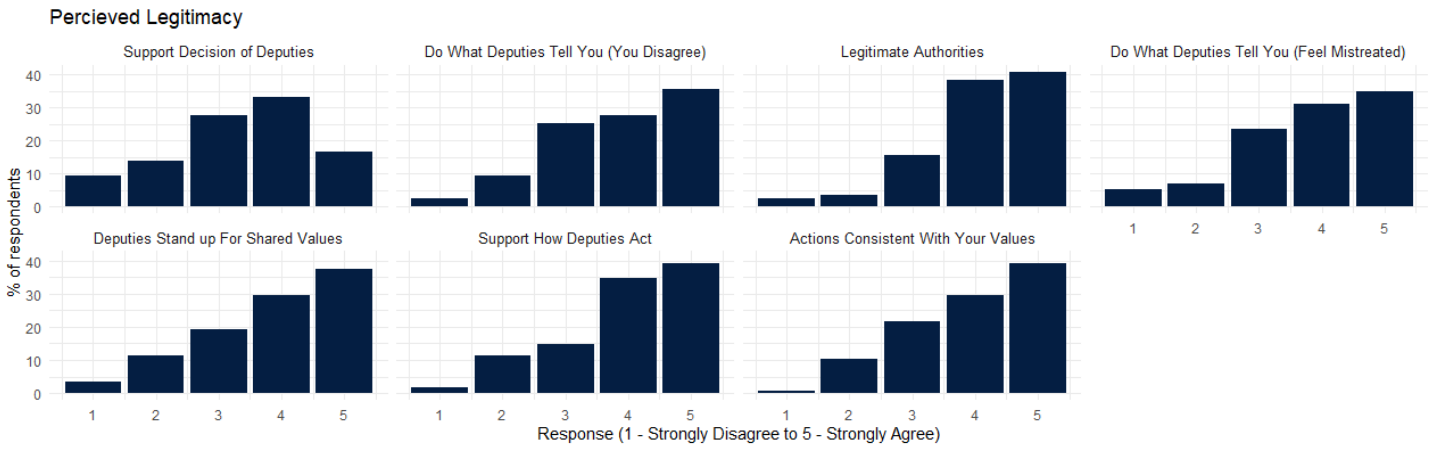
Still, an important, yet small percentage of respondents disagreed with these statements about Bryan County Sheriff's officers, which suggests that there is still room for improving police-community relations in the way of procedural justice.



To contrast perceptions of procedural justice, respondents were also asked about their perceptions of procedural injustice relating to Bryan County Sheriff's officers. As with procedural justice, respondents reported their agreement or disagreement on a 4-point scale, but this time in response to five statements seen in the figure below. The majority of respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed that officers were prejudiced against minority persons, were rude, or abused their power. This aligns with perceptions that officers were perceived as procedurally just or fair. Still, a small but substantial proportion of respondents felt that officers did not listen before making decisions (27.19%) and treated some community members better than others (41.74%).



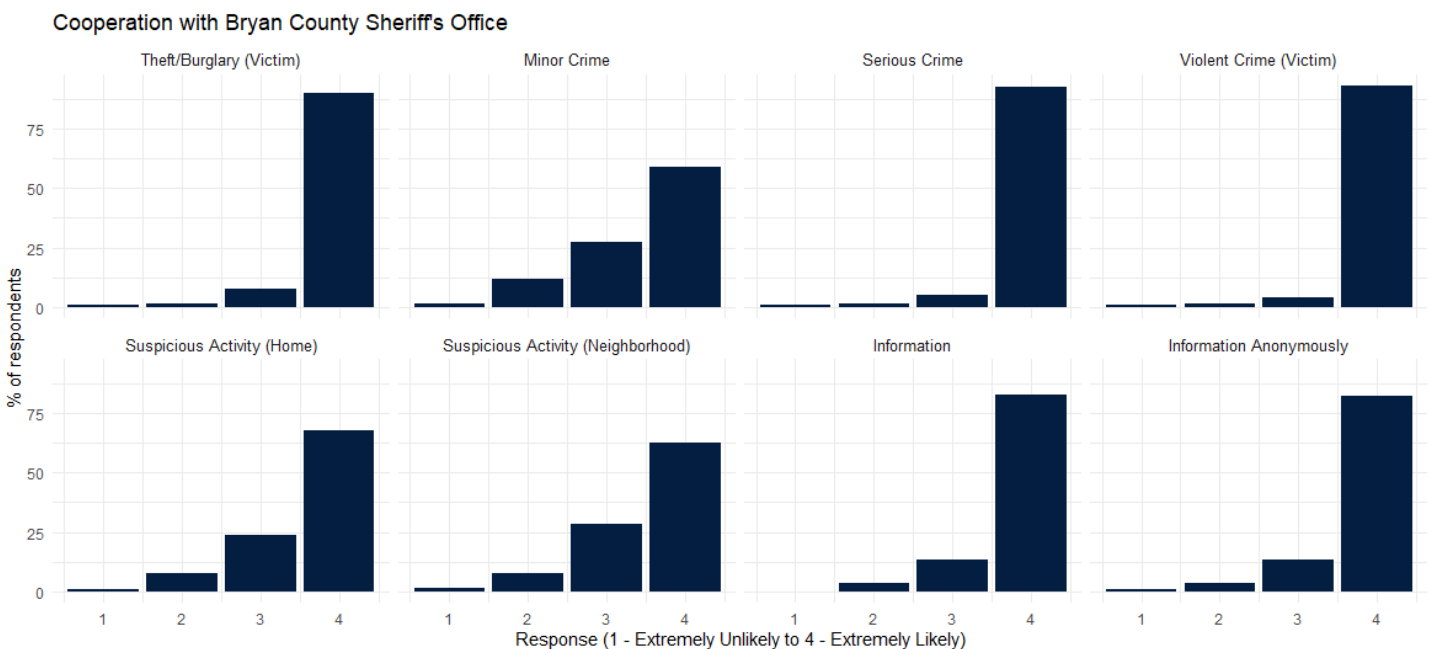
How legitimate did Bryan County Residents feel the officers were? The figure below shows the responses to seven statements that evaluate respondents' perceived legitimacy of Bryan County Sheriff's Officers. Respondents rated their level of agreement or disagreement to seven statements using a 5-point scale. As shown in this figure, the vast majority of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that they should support the decisions of Bryan County Sheriff's Officers and do what the officers told them to do (even if they disagreed or felt mistreated). Likewise, the majority of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that officers' actions were consistent with their values, that deputies stood up for shared community values, and that officers were legitimate authorities.



Given that most respondents viewed Bryan County Sheriff’s Officers as procedurally fair and legitimate authorities, it was important to examine how respondents felt about the effectiveness of these officers and whether they would cooperate with officers.

An additional section of the survey measured the community’s willingness to cooperate with the Bryan County Sheriff’s Office. To do this, residents were asked how likely they would be to call the sheriff’s office to report a number of different crimes and suspicious behavior, or to provide information to the department regarding suspected criminal behavior. Responses were recorded using categories that ranged from “extremely unlikely” to “extremely likely”.

As can be seen in the figure below, the vast majority of survey respondents noted that they would be likely or extremely likely to call the sheriff’s office to report a theft or burglary, a serious (felony) crime, as well as a violent crime in which they were the victim. Further, respondents were likely to state that they would call the sheriff’s office to report a minor (misdemeanor) crime, to call about suspicious activity near their house or neighborhood, or to provide information to help find a suspected criminal regardless of whether their tip would be anonymous. These findings were also stable across the three zip codes. Taken together, the results from this figure can be interpreted as a sign of a strong willingness from the Bryan County community to cooperate with the sheriff’s office.



Recommendation 7: Embrace the principles of procedural justice consistently across all aspects of law enforcement. Train deputies to engage with community members in a way that conveys trustworthy motives, is neutral and transparent in decision-making processes, provides community members a voice to express their situation during encounters, and promotes treating people with dignity and respect in these encounters. This includes deputies embracing a guardian mindset (as opposed to a warrior mindset) in their duties, openly acknowledging past and present injustices, having a culture of transparency and accountability, and engaging in nonenforcement interactions with the community. (See President’s Task Force on 21st Century Policing Pillar 1). As suggested by research, these simple but powerful actions can improve police-community relations, build legitimacy, and enhance cooperation, while also addressing crime in communities.

Part III - Qualitative Analyses

In addition to quantifiable survey questions, the department and research team also solicited qualitative, open-ended questions related to current public safety concerns, strengths and areas for improvement in the department, and suggestions for improvement. Specifically, the survey asked:

1. What are the biggest public safety problems that Bryan County faces today?
2. How do you think these problems should be addressed?
3. In what ways (if any) can the Sheriff's Office improve its relationships with the community?
4. In what areas of public safety do you think the Sheriff's Office is doing a good job?
5. In what areas do you think the Sheriff's Office could improve?
6. Do you have any other comments or suggestions for the Sheriff's Office?

Using an "in vivo" coding technique to capture topical themes and process coding to identify the action and intention noted in responses (Saldaña, 2011), we identified several emergent themes – with varying levels of consensus from Bryan County residents. Importantly, these themes transcended individual questions. We present our findings organized around the overarching topics of discourse, with specific attention to similarities and differences in how citizens viewed the topic in question.

Information Sharing and Outreach

Citizens across the county, both those who expressed general satisfaction with the Sheriff's office as well as those who raised criticisms, shared a broad consensus that **community engagement and information sharing** were crucial to enhance public safety. Further, sentiments did not concentrate at any particular level within the organization but ranged from deputy-level interactions and the demeanor of dispatch to communication of pressing crime issues along with the department's proposed set of action plans at the highest level.

Present barriers to success with regards to better partnerships in the community commonly included the geographical characteristics of the county (most notably, how spread out it is),¹ resource constraints regarding personnel (e.g., higher pay, higher standards for hiring, and more training) and technology (e.g., implementation of body and dash cams and improved equipment and technology for investigations). In addition, a number of residents expressed the perception that there is patterned differential treatment. To this last point, respondents intimated that enforcement was not equitable across socio-economic class. For instance, one Richmond Hill resident noted *that "long established families maybe are handled with a "light touch" (Respondent #766362), and the term "good ole' boy system" was used by residents in different communities as they described concerns with fairness (Respondent #'s 179482; 88095). Says one Pembroke respondent, "Treat all people the same. No matter their finances or who backed the sheriff in the election" (Respondent #424665).*

A handful of community engagement strategies emerged consistently throughout responses. First, citizens consistently identified community events – already existing and in the form of "townhall style meetings" – as a key place for the Sheriff's Office to engage with citizens. While most generally referred to community events in the broad sense, others identified specific seasonal and annual opportunities for the Sheriff's department to interact with fellow citizens. More specific examples of public engagement included a presence at the Seafood Festival (Richmond Hill), Fireworks and Christmas Parades, school events, and events facilitated by the Black community. Further, citizens recognized the potential for the Sheriff's Office to host its

¹ Consistent with quantitative findings, a handful of citizens noted they were particularly satisfied with response times, which suggests that the department has generally been able to traverse distances effectively, however, it should be noted that a small but substantial minority in the quantitative results indicated long response times, and thus, parity across the jurisdiction may need to be assessed.

own listening sessions and outreach endeavors that ranged in formality from hosting a “National Night Out,” to more intentional attempts by patrol officers to exit their vehicles and introduce themselves to neighborhoods and communities.² Such activities align with prior work on the formation of attitudes about police and the importance of community-citizen interactions (Bridenball and Jesilow, 2008). Overwhelmingly, these requests indicate an earnest desire to build beneficial relationships with law enforcement in positive settings and to develop more consistent and equitable familiarity between the Sheriff’s Office and the communities they serve.

Although in the above suggestions, citizens identified the need for the department to be receptive to citizen needs (listening), further themes emerged with regards to **proactive information sharing and transparency**. More specifically, residents aimed their suggestions at three interrelated outreach approaches. First, citizens sought the **sharing of up-to-date crime data** and analyses of pressing safety concerns. Some noted that social media might be a way to inform residents of any salient concerns on the part of the Sheriff’s Office, while others requested a more convenient way to view arrests³, crime trends, and live traffic monitoring. Second, multiple respondents expressed a desire for more prevention education, with a focus on **public safety messaging**. For instance, evidence-based practices to reduce the likelihood of property victimization. Additionally, respondents emphasized that better information sharing could further assist the public in cooperating by making them more aware of potential situations and report when relevant (Respondent #824922).

Finally, citizens suggested that the initiatives and coordinated actions on the part of the Sheriff’s office to address public safety problems be communicated clearly to community members, along with a clear rationale. Beyond **transparency** with regards to planning, many residents also noted that transparency extended far beyond any approaches to crime prevention. More specifically, respondents commonly identified the importance of transparency in personnel hiring and discipline decisions, as well as the nature and extent of training among sworn officers. Throughout survey responses, the concept of transparency (particularly in ill-handled instances) was linked to the public viewing the Sheriff’s Office as engaging in a good-faith partnership with the community writ large.

Traffic

Traffic emerged frequently when asking citizens about the biggest safety concerns they had in the county (42 percent of the sample). When elaborated, two broad themes emerged. First, respondents identified a range of **driver behaviors** they viewed as especially threatening to public safety in the county. Speeding and reckless or aggressive driving are noted as issues among a relatively large segment of those identifying traffic issues all together (22 of the 49), with one respondent noting, *“I drive a lot locally and I feel that road rage, speeding and reckless driving are very common”* (Respondent #751767).

Concerns about individual violations of traffic laws were often linked to the second major traffic theme, **area characteristics**. For example, Respondent #741767 (quoted above) noted their concerns were particularly centered *“along the routes where posted speed limits are 45/55.”* Similarly, a number of individuals remarked that speeding was a big safety problem in neighborhoods, subdivisions, and rural communities. Although a good portion of citizens remarked that the problems in traffic often related to off-highway/off-interstate locations, others identified the flow and safety of traffic on more major roads and thruways as an especially prevalent safety concern. Often paired with statements about growing populations and increased traffic activity, citizens that frequent the highways and interstates raised a number of concerns about Bryan

² While this theme emerged in both North and South Bryan county, it is worthy of note that more than one North county respondents suggested that their communities were most in need of this type of engagement, and they indicated that they sometimes felt “ignored” when compared to the Richmond Hill area.

³ A specific recommendation included a partnership with [the Georgia Virtue](#).

County’s current road infrastructure. For instance, one respondent indicated that the community was negatively affected by semi-trucks detouring around the weigh station on I-95. Moreover, it was common for citizens to recommend additional traffic lights and better merging conditions. Table 2 outlines noted locations as well as the related concerns residents indicated (when available).

Table 2: Identified Traffic Problem Areas

Location	Stated Concern
Hwy 144	“riding down the side of 144 is extremely dangerous for drivers and pedestrian”
Hwy 144 intersections	“...danger zones. We have too many cars now and pulling out onto 144 has become a safety concern”
Hwy 280	Speeding Increased traffic, need for lights (I-16 and 280) 280 at the exit of 16 and 280 at Wilma Edwards are both death traps.
Hwy 280 & Hwy 80	Semi-trucks using the highways to skip scales. Blitchton named specifically
Hwy 17	Highway 17 and speeding We need a light at Belfast to slow people down; so I don't die coming out of Daniel Siding Rd.
Belfast Keller and Belfast River Road	Can you do something about the off-road vehicles driving in the area of Belfast Keller and Belfast River Road to include Cranston Bluff and Waterford landing subdivision

It is worthy of note that not all respondents viewed traffic management as a central issue for the department to tackle. *In fact, when asked about the issues where BCSD was doing a good job, a handful of citizens – across all three communities – cited traffic management.* In addition, some citizens were clear to note that they did not necessarily view the department’s main role as oriented towards traffic enforcement. In contrast, they suggested that excelling in traffic enforcement relative to other issues was not aligned with their view of the BCSD’s charge to the Bryan community. These individuals suggested that speeding tickets and moving violation infractions (e.g., ticketing for failure to yield in roundabouts) should take less priority over other issues in the county (community building, investigations, and stemming drug use).

Overall, citizens held diverse views on how the department should prioritize or deprioritize traffic concerns. In addition to those indicating that the department should not consider adeptness as traffic

management as a strength, an additional segment of the population suggested that the department should refocus traffic enforcement beyond the interstates (largely, more traffic patrol on highways and within communities), and for different offenses (e.g., DUIs). While heavier citation enforcement and similar measures (speed traps, radars, and traffic stops) were commonly noted by survey respondents, a greater proportion noted visibility and general patrol as the primary way to augment bad driving behaviors. Says one respondent, “They prevent accidents by being present.”

Substance Use

Residents across the county reported drug use as a chief problem for the community, with north county (Pembroke and Ellabell) respondents especially likely to identify the issue as a pressing concern (35%). While few details were provided concerning drug types⁴ or the context that they were being used, some respondents did frame the issue as it relates to youth drug use. Such concerns focused on access to drugs and inadequate monitoring of drug activities (as well as vapes) within the school setting.

With regards to addressing drug issues, most respondents indicated that they would like to see focused law enforcement efforts, but it is interesting to note that requested techniques often differentiated between drug dealing and drug using. For the former, residents suggested enhanced enforcement practices, with some recommending a special drug investigation unit and focused attention on disrupting drug trafficking. For the latter, residents highlighted the need for enhanced partnerships with an array of social services programs (e.g., mental health professionals, homeless shelters, and welfare services). Respondents also indicated that such partnerships should be localized. Says an individual from Richmond Hill, “*We have in town services that the county refuses to fully financially support. We should be referring people in need to The Cottage*” (Respondent #981543). Because the impact of drug use was especially concerning to citizens with regards to youth, it is perhaps not too surprising that requests for the sheriff’s presence at schools, drug dogs, and “scaring” kids were mentioned in some survey responses. It should be noted that such sentiments are consistent with general support for “get tough” school policies and initiatives, such as Drug and Alcohol Resistance Education (DARE), yet there is little evidence that these approaches are effective at reducing drug use (Rosenbaum et al., 1994; West and O’Neal, 2004).

⁴ One respondent indicated opioids specifically. With regards to youth, respondents sometimes mentioned smoking and vaping or underage drinking.

Part IV: Summary of Recommendations

Recommendation 1: Collect more input from the community and use this to tailor policing strategies to address issues identified by the community. (See President’s Task Force on 21st Century Policing recommendation 1.7; community policing, problem-oriented policing). This survey is a first step in this process. However, additional surveys or listening sessions/groups, as well as one-on-one listening by officers, will be needed to address this area. As will be discussed below, this may also help address perceptions of trustworthiness.

Recommendation 2: Examine calls for service data to understand response times. Using problem-oriented policing as a strategy, scan this data for potential problems, analyze the underlying cause for this problem, develop a strategy to address the problem, and, after implementation, reassess to evaluate whether the problem was reduced. Considerations for strategies may include implementing differential response strategies to help prioritize calls for service, adopting online or telephone reporting of less serious crimes, and adjusting caller expectations by advising callers about how long it may take for deputies to arrive. This may also involve a staffing study to understand if this problem is driven by a need for more deputies.

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Recommendation 4: Identify existing community events and develop additional opportunities for receiving community input. As evidenced in the qualitative findings, citizens are eager to develop bidirectional lines of communication between the office and residents. In line with both community policing perspectives and problem-oriented policing strategies, it is essential to develop networks that can support robust discussions regarding the challenges faced across the county. Prior work suggests that receptiveness to citizen voices can increase general satisfaction with police services and quality of life (Dukes and Portillos, 2008; Weitzer and Tuch, 2002). Moreover, transparent and clearly articulated public safety campaigns may be particularly effective strategies to increase community perceptions of trustworthiness and legitimacy (Kochel and Skogan, 2021).

Recommendation 5: Review current traffic enforcement strategies and assess for opportunities to more efficiently cover areas of concern. Survey respondents held diverse views regarding the most dangerous traffic locations, yet a great majority indicated that visibility was essential to enhance public safety. Notably, *increased visibility* on highways and interstates may be sufficient to address traffic safety concerns and additional enforcement and ticketing may not be necessary to see benefits. Recent studies suggest that simply the presence of a patrol car (or even a realistic cut-out) could slow down highway drivers (Kaplan et al., 2000; Ravani & Wang, 2018; Simpson et al., 2020).

Recommendation 6: Conduct a needs assessment to grapple fully with the nature and context of drug use in communities. Such an undertaking would best be done in consultation with local programs aimed at addressing drug proliferation in the area as well as other stakeholders (e.g., schools). If, as suggested from the qualitative responses, the drug issue is two-pronged (substance abuse among adults and access to drugs among youth), interventions will necessarily need to be tailored. For example, community harm reduction approaches may be warranted for adult drug use (Childs et al., 2021), while community-oriented, long-term intervention strategies such as the [Communities that Care program](#) may be better suited to curb youth substance use (Oesterle, 2010).

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encounters. This includes deputies embracing a guardian mindset (as opposed to a warrior mindset) in their duties, openly acknowledging past and present injustices, having a culture of transparency and accountability, and engaging in nonenforcement interactions with the community. (See President's Task Force on 21st Century Policing Pillar 1). As suggested by research, these simple but powerful actions can improve police-community relations, build legitimacy, and enhance cooperation, while also addressing crime in communities.

Conclusion:

Provided these recommendations, it may be essential for the Bryan County Sheriff's Office to apply for grants to help address these recommendations. Such grants may come from the Office of Community Oriented Policing Services within the Department of Justice (e.g., the COPS Hiring Program, Community Development Microgrants Program, School Violence Prevention Program), the National Institute of Justice, the Bureau of Justice Assistance (e.g., body camera/equipment grants, Community-based Crime Reduction Program), the Edward Byrne Memorial Justice Assistance Grant (JAG) Program, and the Georgia Governor's Office of Highway Safety.

Part V: BCSO Responses to Recommendations (Provided by Deputy Jennifer Fleming)

Recommendation 1: We would love to do additional surveys to continue to collect additional information from the community. We spoke about more community meetings and we will get those scheduled in the beginning of the new year. As discussed, we will look at various options on how to better incorporate everyone (such as Zoom).

Recommendation 2: We will have a meeting with Jodi Jernigan, our 911 Communications Director, about incorporating response times. We recently had a financial meeting with SSI (our new protentional operating system) and that system will be a lot more accurate in helping us determine response times. The Board of Commissioners also approved our proposed budget for the new year. Our phone application that is currently being developed, will allow for community members to submit anonymous tips (or they can provide their information if they want a follow up or to speak with someone). We definitely know we need more deputies.

Recommendation 3: Bryan County has been growing in victim services to help assist victims. I believe that we can do better about getting that information out to the community. We discussed potentially having an event and inviting all victim services and the community so everyone can learn more about what Bryan County has to offer. I also believe that our deputies need better training on these services so they can also better link victims to these services.

Recommendation 4: We are working on planning for community events. This would include not just having events in one location but also within the communities themselves. We would consider, depending on the manpower, additional surveys. We would love additional suggestions on how to also build on better communication events. We are working on becoming more transparent. We have been trying to get out information that we believe the community wants to know about, whether good or bad.

Recommendation 5: Traffic visibility is a double edge sword for us. One of the issues is the lack of number of deputies that we have. We do currently have a Traffic Team that strictly enforces traffic violations and that would be a great resource. We know where some of our problem areas are and we may need to discuss what resources we have to help with more law enforcement visibility. We can also ask additional departments (Pembroke, Richmond Hill, and GSP) to also help in those areas. We can also put out how many traffic enforcement citations we have issued in those areas to show we are enforcing traffic laws there. We would like to reach out to additional resources such as the Motor Carrier Compliance Division (MCCD) when addressing traffic.

Recommendation 6: We know Bryan County has a drug problem. To what extent, I do not believe that we fully know. This would be extremely helpful information for grant purposes (COPS is really good about hiring grants, grants that help develop drug suppression teams, and equipment to help combat drugs). We want to bring drug education back into the schools, but we also know sometimes we are providing kids with current information of drugs they haven't been exposed to yet. We have great resources to help us (such as churches, schools, health officials and businesses, etc.) get information into the community. It's a matter of doing the right way. We are open to suggestions.

Recommendation 7: We will need to get with the training coordinator, Sgt. David Hicks, about additional training on how to be more professional with their behaviors and actions when interacting with the community. We would also like to take you up on your offer about doing a survey for our deputies so we can

understand their thoughts better. We believe if we can see all angles of points of view, we can hopefully bring everyone together to create a better working relationship between law enforcement and the community.

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Appendix: Methods

Starting in mid-May of 2021, the research team met with Sheriff Crowe and members of the Bryan County Sheriff's Office to discuss evidence-based means of improving police-community relations. As a part of this discussion, the decision was made to develop a community survey to hear from residents about their perceptions of the Bryan County Sheriff's Office as well as the problems (and potential solutions) within Bryan County.

Developed in tandem with the Bryan County Sheriff's Office, the community survey was developed to be completed predominantly online (Qualtrics), with paper copies available for those wanting to complete the survey via pen/pencil and paper. The survey link was advertised heavily in Bryan County Sheriff's Office social media pages as well as discussed in community meetings. This survey began on July 22nd, 2021 and ended on October 8th, 2021. No completed paper surveys were submitted, leaving only online responses as part of this analysis.

Of the 257 completed surveys, 84 surveys only included partial responses and were removed from the analyses. Furthermore, given the intent of the survey was to understand the views of the Bryan County community, respondents living outside of the three predominant Bryan County zip codes (i.e., 31308, 31321, and 31324) were removed from the analyses, based on their reported zip code or the latitude/longitude associated with their survey response ($n = 56$). As such, the following analyses are based on the remaining 117 respondents. The sample size varies to marginal degrees based on item non-response for some items of interest.

Analyses were conducted using the full sample and were also broken down by zip code due to the nature of the county's diverse but segmented population. No statistically significant differences were found between counties (with the exception of 1 question), so the larger analyses were conducted using the full sample. For those interested, the analysis by zip code is presented below. This table also has columns that include both the demographic characteristics of all 117 respondents and estimates from the U.S. Census Bureau. When comparing the last two columns, it is evident that the survey respondents vary quite a bit from the population estimates on a number of characteristics. For example, nearly 65% of respondents were female while the population as a whole in Bryan County is roughly 51% female. Further, the respondents also varied from the population in terms of their racial and ethnic makeup. An overwhelming majority of respondents identified themselves as being White (91%), while very few were Black (3%) when compared to the U.S. Census demographics. Due to this lack of representativeness, we caution the reader to keep this limitation in mind as subsequent findings are reviewed.

Table A1. Responses by Zip Code

Zip	31308 (Black Creek/ Ellabell)	31321 (Pembroke / Nevils)	31324 (Richmond Hill)	Total	Community Demographics (US Census)
n	28	12	77	117	39,627
Average Age (standard deviation)	42.39 (9.39)	48.58 (8.65)	50.42 (11.91)	48.31 (11.48)	34.6 (median)
% Female	75.00	75.00	59.74	64.96	50.8
% White	92.86	100	88.31	90.60	78.3
% Black	3.57	0	2.60	2.56	15.2
% Married	75.00	58.33	90.91	83.76	57.1
% Full-time Employed	78.57	41.67	59.74	62.39	63.4
% Active-Duty Military	7.14	0	5.19	5.13	--
% Veteran	17.86	8.33	18.18	17.09	13.9
% Law Enforcement Member (Past or Present)	10.71	16.67	11.69	11.97	--
% Close Friend/Family in Law Enforcement	50.00	66.67	51.95	52.99	--
% Inside City Limits	--	66.67	37.66	34.67	--
% contacting BCSO	46.43	41.67	19.48	28.21	--
% stopped by BCSO	7.14	0.00	5.19	5.13	--

Table A2: Overall Performance (mean, standard deviations presented)

Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements, by circling the number which best represents your opinion.

	31308	31321	31324	Total (n = 116)
The sheriff's office has a good handle on the public safety problems in Bryan County.	3.39 (.92)	3.17 (1.03)	3.86 (.92)	3.67 (.96)
There are public safety problems in the community that the police should not be involved with.	1.86 (.80)	2.25 (1.14)	2.14 (.92)	2.09 (.92)
I do not feel as though the sheriff's office uses all the community resources they have at their disposal.	2.86 (.80)	2.92 (1.00)	3.14 (.98)	3.07 (.93)
The sheriff's office has built a strong relationship with the community	3.43 (1.14)	2.92 (1.24)	3.54 (1.00)	3.45 (1.07)

1 = "Strongly Disagree", 2 = "Disagree", 3 = "Neither Agree Nor Disagree", 4 = "Agree", 5 = "Strongly Agree"

Table A3: Satisfaction with the Sheriff's Office (mean, standard deviations presented)

Please tell us how good or poor you feel the Sheriff's Office performs for each statement.

How good...	31308	31321	31324	Total (n =116)
... is the Sheriff's Office doing in dealing with problems that really concern people in your neighborhood	3.43 (1.17)	3.33 (1.07)	3.68 (1.01)	3.59 (1.06)
...a job is the Sheriff's Office doing keeping order on the streets/sidewalks	3.68 (1.09)	3.50 (.90)	3.88 (.85)	3.79 (.92)
...a job is the Sheriff's Office doing in reducing violent crime	3.71 (.98)	3.58 (1.08)	3.91 (.93)	3.83 (.96)
...a job is the Sheriff's Office doing in reducing non-violent crime	3.64 (.99)	3.42 (1.16)	3.66 (.99)	3.64 (1.01)
...a job is the Sheriff's Office doing solving crimes once they occur	3.36 (1.03)	3.00 (.95)	3.61 (1.02)	3.49 (1.03)
...a job is the Sheriff's Office doing preventing crime in your neighborhood	3.39 (1.20)	3.25 (1.22)	3.69 (1.03)	3.58 (1.10)
Overall:	3.54 (.93)	3.35 (.96)	3.74 (.85)	3.65 (.88)

1 = "Very Poor", 2 = "Poor", 3 = "Neither Good nor Poor", 4 = "Good", 5 = "Very Good"

Table A4: Trust and Communication (mean, standard deviations presented)

Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements, by circling the number which best represents your opinion.	31308	31321	31324	Total (n = 117)
The sheriff's office is not viewed as a trustworthy agency	2.61 (1.26)	3.00 (1.35)	2.38 (1.18)	2.50 (1.22)
The sheriff's office is open and transparent.	3.43 (1.10)	3.25 (1.29)	3.30 (1.11)	3.32 (1.12)
I feel as though the sheriff's office fails to listen to my input when it comes to public safety.	2.68 (1.12)	2.67 (1.15)	2.52 (1.07)	2.57 (1.09)
I do not feel comfortable contacting the sheriff's office with questions or concerns.	2.54 (1.26)	2.75 (1.48)	2.06 (1.04)	2.25 (1.17)

1 = "Strongly Disagree", 2 = "Disagree", 3 = "Neither Agree nor Disagree", 4 = "Agree", 5 = "Strongly Agree"

Sheriff's Deputies Performance:

Table A5: Procedural Justice & Procedural INJustice (mean, standard deviations presented)

Now, we want to know how you feel specifically about the Bryan County Sheriff's DEPUTIES.

The Bryan County Sheriff's DEPUTIES in my community...	31308	31321	31324	Total (n = 109)
make decisions about what to do in fair ways	2.75 (.70)	2.75 (.87)	3.03 (.78)	2.94 (.78)
make sure citizens receive the outcomes they deserve under the law	2.82 (.67)	2.67 (1.07)	3.01 (.75)	2.94 (.78)
would treat you with respect if you had contact with them for any reason	3.04 (.65)	3.00 (.74)	3.16 (.68)	3.12 (.68)
usually treat people with respect	3.11 (.63)	3.00 (.85)	3.21 (.57)	3.17 (.63)
try to be fair	3.04 (.58)	2.67 (.89)	3.13 (.69)	3.06 (.70)
are usually courteous	3.00 (.62)	2.83 (.72)	3.26 (.53)	3.16 (.60)
are usually honest	2.96 (.64)	2.92 (.90)	3.18 (.63)	3.10 (.68)
respect your basic rights	3.11 (.63)	3.17 (.94)	3.19 (.59)	3.17 (.64)
can be trusted to make decisions that are right for your community	2.89 (.79)	2.83 (1.03)	3.07 (.65)	3.00 (.75)
can be trusted	3.04 (.69)	2.83 (1.03)	3.14 (.71)	3.10 (.73)
Overall:	2.97 (.60)	2.87 (.78)	3.15 (.57)	3.08 (.61)

1 = "Strongly Disagree", 2 = "Disagree", 3 = "Neither Agree nor Disagree", 4 = "Agree", 5 = "Strongly Agree"

Table A6: Procedural INJustice (mean and standard deviation)

The Bryan County Sheriff's DEPUTIES in my community...	31308	31321	31324	Total (n = 112)
don't listen to all of the citizens involved before deciding what to do	2.11 (.63)	2.25 (.87)	2.08 (.56)	2.10 (.80)
treat some people better than others	2.46 (1.00)	2.75 (1.06)	2.28 (.92)	2.36 (.96)
abuse their power	2.04 (.64)	2.17 (.94)	1.84 (.65)	1.92 (.68)
are prejudiced against minority persons	1.64 (.73)	2.17 (.94)	1.77 (.71)	1.77 (.74)
are usually rude	1.89 (.69)	2.00 (1.04)	1.70 (.68)	1.78 (.73)
Overall:	2.03 (.59)	2.27 (.84)	1.92 (.61)	1.99 (.64)

1 = "Strongly Disagree", 2 = "Disagree", 3 = "Neither Agree nor Disagree", 4 = "Agree", 5 = "Strongly Agree"

Table A7: Police Legitimacy (mean, standard deviations presented)

	31308	31321	31324	Total (n = 115)
You should support the decisions made by deputies even when you disagree with them	3.54 (1.08)	3.00 (1.04)	3.30 (1.24)	3.35 (1.17)
You should do what the deputies tell you even if you do not understand or agree with the reasons	3.79 (.96)	3.42 (1.31)	3.92 (1.10)	3.86 (1.07)
The deputies in your county are legitimate authorities and you should do what they tell you to do	4.11 (.83)	3.75 (1.42)	4.16 (.92)	4.13 (.92)
You should do what the deputies tell you to do even if you do not like how they treated you	3.75 (1.00)	3.58 (1.51)	3.88 (1.12)	3.85 (1.11)
The deputies stand up for values that are important to you	3.71 (1.08)	3.42 (1.44)	3.97 (1.11)	3.86 (1.15)
You generally support how the deputies act in your county	3.86 (1.01)	3.58 (1.44)	4.06 (1.02)	3.99 (1.06)
The deputies usually act in ways consistent with your own ideas about what is right and wrong	3.93 (.98)	3.42 (1.38)	4.03 (1.00)	3.97 (1.03)
Overall Average:	3.81 (.81)	3.45 (1.14)	3.94 (.87)	3.86 (.89)

1 = "Strongly Disagree", 2 = "Disagree", 3 = "Neither Agree nor Disagree", 4 = "Agree", 5 = "Strongly Agree"

Table A8: Police Effectiveness (mean, standard deviations presented)

	31308	31321	31324	Total (n = 116)
The Sheriff's Office is effective in controlling public disturbances in your neighborhood	3.38 (1.31)	3.08 (1.38)	3.78 (1.10)	3.60 (1.20)
The Sheriff's Office always provides assistance to the general public when needed	3.64 (1.03)	3.42 (1.08)	3.99 (.94)	3.84 (.99)
The Sheriff's Deputies respond quickly when they are called for help	3.54 (.84)	3.50 (1.03)	3.82 (1.15)	3.72 (1.01)
The Sheriff's Office is always ready to provide satisfactory assistance to the victims of crime	3.57 (.84)	3.17 (1.03)	3.58 (1.15)	3.53 (1.07)
When the Sheriff's Deputies stop people, they usually handle the situation well	3.57 (.69)	3.50 (.80)	3.72 (.95)	3.66 (.87)
Overall, the Sheriff's Office is doing a good job in my neighborhood	3.43 (1.26)	3.25 (1.14)	3.88 (1.10)	3.71 (1.16)
My overall impression about the performance of the Sheriff's Deputies in my neighborhood is good	3.57 (1.23)	3.17 (1.03)	3.95 (1.04)	3.78 (1.11)
Overall:	3.53 (.92)	3.30 (.82)	3.82 (.88)	3.69 (.89)

1 = "Strongly Disagree", 2 = "Disagree", 3 = "Neither Agree nor Disagree", 4 = "Agree", 5 = "Strongly Agree"

Table A9: Cooperation with Bryan County Sheriff's Office (mean, standard deviations presented)

How likely would you be to CALL the Bryan County Sheriff's Office...	31308	31321	31324	Total (n =117)
To report a theft/burglary where you were the victim	3.82 (.39)	3.67 (.89)	3.91 (.37)	3.86 (.45)
To report a minor (misdemeanor) crime	3.43 (.31)	3.00 (.90)	3.51 (.32)	3.44 (.77)
To report a serious (felony) crime	3.89 (.31)	3.50 (.90)	3.95 (.32)	3.89 (.43)
To report a violent crime where you were the victim	3.89 (.31)	3.67 (.89)	3.94 (.34)	3.90 (.42)
To report suspicious activity near your house/apartment/residence	3.50 (.75)	3.50 (1.00)	3.62 (.59)	3.58 (.67)
To report suspicious activity near your neighborhood	3.39 (.88)	3.42 (.90)	3.57 (.62)	3.51 (.71)
To provide information to help find a suspected criminal*	3.60 (.63)	3.75 (.62)	3.87 (.38)	3.79 (.48)
To provide information anonymously to find a suspected criminal	3.68 (.67)	3.83 (.39)	3.79 (.52)	3.77 (.55)
Overall:	3.65 (.48)	3.54 (.74)	3.77 (.36)	3.72 (.45)

*Statistically significantly different amongst zip codes ($p = .014$); 1 = "Extremely unlikely," 2 = "Somewhat unlikely," 3 = "Somewhat likely," 4 = "Extremely likely"