

The Louisville Metro Police Department is committed to fostering and sustaining strong police-community partnerships as a means of more effectively reaching the goals of public order and public safety within Metro Louisville. Strong and sustainable police-community partnerships are those that are built upon trust and promoted by regular, open communication and willingness from each “partner” to be responsive to the needs of the other.

A portion of the means of fostering strong, sustainable police–community partnerships is the ongoing evaluation and assessment of community needs and resources as well as the degree to which current projects and practices are meeting these needs. In an attempt to address the quality of service delivery, as well as the needs of the community, the Louisville Metro Police Department has, since 2012, contracted for a citizens’ attitude survey to be administered to residents of Metro Louisville.

This year, the survey has been revised to incorporate questions that address dimensions of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Policing Initiative. This initiative was developed to address “rifts in the relationships between local police and the communities they protect and serve.” (21<sup>st</sup> Century Policing, Task Force Report, 2015) In 2016, Louisville Metro was one of fifteen cities selected by the Department of Justice to participate in an initiative to “advance 21<sup>st</sup> Century Policing.” This eighteen-month project will result in the collection and assessment of “best practices and lessons learned” from the fifteen agencies. The findings will be published in a comprehensive report to be distributed to police agencies seeking to move toward the recommendations identified in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Policing Task Force Report.

The purpose of the surveys conducted by the Louisville Metro Police Department is to measure citizens’ perceptions of neighborhood disorder/ order, fear of crime, and the services provided by the Louisville Metro Police Department. The survey additionally addresses specific

concerns about crime and public order problems within neighborhoods and variations in these perceptions across various demographic categories. Since 2012, the Louisville Metro Police Department has contracted with the University of Louisville's Department of Criminal Justice annually to develop and administer the survey as well as to analyze the survey results. The 2013 through 2016 versions of the annual Citizen's Attitude Survey Report are posted on the LMPD Web Page - <https://louisvilleky.gov/government/police/lmpd-transparency>. Data collection for the 2017 survey will begin in late summer.

The findings from the 2016 report showed that citizens of Metro Louisville were satisfied with police and the quality of police services provided by LMPD. The majority of respondents perceived the police as very willing to work with local community leaders and groups and positively rated the quality of police services in crime prevention and order maintenance

A significant majority of individuals reported that the quality of their neighborhood, as well as neighborhood crime, had remained the same over the past year. Similarly, respondents reported low levels of fear of crime, in that the majority of respondents felt safe when being out alone at night. When asked about neighborhood problems, those reported most often were public order incidents such as loud music from cars rather than serious crime problems such as assault.

Citizens perceived the Louisville Metro Police as doing a good job helping crime victims. Respondents' attitudes toward police officers rated the police as respectful, helpful, and fair when interacting with neighborhood residents. Citizens perceived police as helpful in reducing crime and making the neighborhoods safer places in which to live.

Respondents additionally reported they generally trusted the motives of the Louisville Metro Police Department and believed that officers from the department respected individual dignity and cultural diversity within neighborhoods. The respondents additionally believed that

the department was generally transparent in its communication with the public and used all other means possible before using force.

While being satisfied with police services, respondents also believed that it was the responsibility of both residents and police to prevent neighborhood crime; and that, within their neighborhoods, a sense of community existed in that neighbors would assist neighbors and neighbors would report public order and crime incidents to police. Respondents additionally viewed the police as willing partners with community leaders and community groups.

The demographic variables of age, income and education were not related to satisfaction with police services. Ethnicity was related to satisfaction with police services but the differences between Caucasians and African Americans were not extreme. Within both ethnic groups, a significant majority reported satisfaction with police services. The review of the findings within each division did not produce division-specific findings that were counter to the trends evidenced in the overall Metro Louisville findings.

Author:  
Deborah G. Keeling, Ph.D.  
Professor, Department of Criminal Justice  
Associate Dean, College of Arts and Sciences