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THESIS

**STRETCHED TOO THIN: THE IMPACT OF
HOMELESSNESS ON U.S. LAW ENFORCEMENT**

by

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December 2020

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**STRETCHED TOO THIN: THE IMPACT OF HOMELESSNESS ON U.S. LAW
ENFORCEMENT**

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ABSTRACT

As homelessness in the United States continues to impact local communities, law enforcement organizations situated at the forefront of the crisis are struggling to respond effectively. This thesis presents the findings of a nationwide survey of U.S. law enforcement personnel, which reveals that homelessness has a drastic effect on law enforcement organizations, and their attempts to respond appropriately cause many agencies to divert invaluable resources away from traditional law enforcement and homeland security efforts. The thesis delivers several recommendations and concludes that law enforcement leaders today must reconsider their role and acknowledge that other entities—nongovernmental, governmental, or a combination thereof—may be better suited to lead the effort to combat homelessness.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In response to the growing impact that homelessness has on communities across the United States, law enforcement leaders are making every effort to respond appropriately for their organizations. Many departments are pulling personnel from traditional police endeavors and staffing full-time units tasked solely with homeless-related issues. These are sizable staffing contributions during a period in law enforcement characterized by recruitment struggles, COVID-19 pandemic budget reductions, additional defunding efforts in response to racial injustice movements, and reports that many agencies are having difficulty filling their ranks with qualified personnel.¹ This thesis examines the burden that homelessness has on law enforcement organizations, specifically its effect on traditional policing and homeland security functions. The thesis also analyzes the enduring question surrounding the most appropriate relationship between law enforcement organizations and the homeless population in the United States.

Police leadership and policymakers have deliberated the appropriate role of police organizations in respect to homelessness in the United States since policing formerly materialized in the mid-nineteenth century.² Today, modern responses—for example, pairing police officers with social service professionals using an innovative co-response methodology—have evolved from these discussions. Recently, several jurisdictions have experimented even further and developed response units absent of law enforcement personnel entirely. Events such as the highly publicized death of George Floyd in Minneapolis in May 2020 and the police defunding movement that resulted have amplified this discussion and brought it to the forefront of police management dialogue once again.

This ambiguity, innovation, and role reallocation has created opportunity for change within law enforcement organizations. Nevertheless, the profession lacks a clear understanding of the impact homelessness is having on policing and the outcomes law

¹ Police Executive Research Forum, *The Workforce Crisis, and What Police Agencies Are Doing about It* (Washington, DC: Police Executive Research Forum, 2019), <https://www.policeforum.org/assets/WorkforceCrisis.pdf>.

² Eric H. Monkkonen, “History of Urban Police,” *Crime and Justice* 15 (1992): 547–80.

enforcement's efforts have had thus far. In pursuit of this information, this thesis presents the findings of a nationwide survey of U.S. law enforcement personnel that gauges the impact of homelessness on their organizations.

The survey responses reveal a substantial and increasing strain on law enforcement organizations in terms of calls for service, arrests, officers' time, and personnel allocation. More importantly, survey participants characterized the homeless populations in their communities as largely suffering from mental illness, addiction, and a general reluctance to accept services when offered. Several additional themes emerged from the data, including the perceived ineffectiveness of specialized homeless units, the failure to develop tangible measures of success for these units, the perception that police organizations do not have the resources needed to succeed, and the lack of communication between less experienced officers and their more tenured coworkers.

As mentioned, law enforcement efforts vis-à-vis the homeless population in the United States have led some to debate if police organizations are the right tool for the job. This debate, coupled with dwindling budgets and personnel shortages, is causing law enforcement leaders to reassess whether their organizations' response to homelessness is appropriate. However, the survey administered for this thesis reveals that these leaders may be inadvertently setting their personnel up for failure. Some areas of the country dedicate significant time and personnel to homelessness, and the survey shows that many law enforcement officers simply do not perceive the problem as resolvable. Law enforcement organizations in California and Texas, for example, are ill-equipped and under-resourced, and they face unsurmountable combinations of mental illness, addiction, and service resistance in the homeless community. These two states are home to many law enforcement organizations that, regrettably, are set up to fail.

Based on the survey and analysis, this thesis provides four main recommendations, the first of which is for law enforcement leaders to establish effective communication channels and recognize the tasks that are consuming their officers' time. The most prominent takeaway from the survey was the overall lack of effective organizational communication among law enforcement personnel. Less experienced officers reported vastly more daunting perceptions of homelessness than their senior colleagues did. These

data suggest that law enforcement leaders are not effectively communicating with line-level personnel and they are, therefore, lacking the pertinent information necessary to make informed policy decisions.

Second, police organizations must not only develop avenues to accurately establish tasks that are occupying the bulk of their officers' workday but also establish metrics to gauge actual progress in their interactions with the homeless community. The survey's open-ended questions reveal that many agencies that deploy teams to address homelessness have no capacity to measure these efforts' progress. It is irrational that many organizations are directing vast valuable resources toward a task for which they have no tangible or uniform ability to measure success.

Third, law enforcement organizations must be wary of reallocating resources without first ascertaining whether such efforts are likely to succeed. When policing organizations take on nontraditional, social-service-concentrated roles, they offer an expedient remedy but simultaneously prohibit other organizations from contributing and potentially yielding better results. Leadership should revisit, and scrutinize, the choice to prioritize and allocate personnel away from traditional policing efforts and toward homelessness.

Finally, law enforcement leaders must remain engaged and promote services that effectively lessen homelessness in their communities. Many survey respondents were troubled with the shortage of long-term mental health facilities, for example, but simultaneously indicated that some programs only draw members of the homeless community from other jurisdictions. Policymakers and police organizations should work to determine how the delivery of specific homeless services will impact their jurisdictions. Partnerships with local homeless service providers are critical, and collaborative efforts toward a balanced approach—incorporating services to address long-term mental illness and addiction concerns in conjunction with other services—are essential.

In closing, from both inside and out, the role of policing in the United States is once again in question. Externally, demands in many jurisdictions for reform, defunding of police departments, and increased oversight in police organizations are widespread.

Internally, law enforcement personnel are wondering how to navigate these demands and respond effectively to the changing needs of their communities, all the while continuing to ensure public safety. With this challenge comes opportunity. As budgets are reduced and human resources simultaneously grow scarce, law enforcement leaders must reconsider which of their programs are both vital and effective. The time to revisit law enforcement's role with homelessness has come.

Law enforcement organizations have long been willing to adopt additional roles and responsibilities. With the current trials and challenges facing policing organizations, however, leaders should reconsider prior commitments and be hesitant to accept new obligations that veer too far from traditional law enforcement duties. Decision-makers today must acknowledge that other entities—nongovernmental, governmental, or a combination thereof—may be better suited to engage in the struggle to lessen homelessness. Law enforcement leadership and policymakers must embrace this opportunity to rethink the role of police in the homeless community. Acknowledging the inadequacies identified in this thesis, and considering other organizations that could more effectively help those suffering from homelessness, is the first step to contributing effectively to the homelessness epidemic affecting the nation.

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I would like to thank each and every respondent of the “Impact of Homelessness on U.S. Law Enforcement” survey, who, in a period characterized by a worldwide pandemic and nationwide civil unrest, somehow found the time to contribute. I would also like to acknowledge the officers highlighted in this research who respond to calls for service involving homelessness every single day. With inadequate tools, scarce resources, limited time, and often only a minimal hope of success, these officers ceaselessly respond, offer help, provide direction, and do what they can to help strangers return home.

Above all, I must acknowledge my wife and son. Both have contributed and sacrificed far more than I have in the pursuit of this objective. I promise that any time lost with you while chasing this goal will be reimbursed in full. This milestone is dedicated to you both.

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I. INTRODUCTION

In early 2016, many U.S. cities began describing their homeless situation with terms like *epidemic* and *crisis*. Nearly three years later, Los Angeles Mayor Eric Garcetti began classifying the problem as a state of emergency.¹ In July 2019, after gathering support from mayors representing major cities across the country, Garcetti announced his intention to lead his peers and encourage Congress to take action. In response to his efforts, Garcetti acquired the support of mayors from major cities including Chicago, Boston, Philadelphia, Seattle, Dallas, Austin, Louisville, Sacramento, Oakland, Anaheim, Santa Ana, Riverside, and even Honolulu.² Currently, this diverse assembly of civic leaders, along with sponsoring U.S. Representative Maxine Waters, are collectively endorsing the passing of the Ending Homelessness Act of 2019.³ If successful, the bill will result in \$13 billion in federal funding to support communities hit the hardest by this ongoing crisis.⁴ The funds are intended to deliver critical resources to homeless residents and, theoretically, provide shelter to those most in need.⁵

Few dispute the fact that homelessness is affecting the country. In fact, some counts in Los Angeles County reflected a 31 percent increase in unsheltered homeless individuals between 2016 and 2019.⁶ Our nation's local law enforcement organizations, too, have been significantly affected. Homeless-related calls for service have placed an undeniable strain on local law enforcement. Seattle police, for example, report that one of every five

¹ “Finally Acknowledging the Obvious, Los Angeles Moves to Declare a State of Emergency on Homelessness,” Truthdig, September 24, 2015, <https://www.truthdig.com/articles/finally-acknowledging-the-obvious-los-angeles-moves-to-declare-a-state-of-emergency-on-homelessness/>.

² “Mayor Garcetti Leads Coalition of Mayors Calling for Federal Action to Confront Homelessness Crisis,” Office of Los Angeles Mayor Eric Garcetti, July 1, 2019, <https://www.lamayor.org/mayor-garcetti-leads-coalition-mayors-calling-federal-action-confront-homelessness-crisis>.

³ Office of Los Angeles Mayor Eric Garcetti.

⁴ Office of Los Angeles Mayor Eric Garcetti.

⁵ Office of Los Angeles Mayor Eric Garcetti.

⁶ “2019 Homeless Count by Community/City,” Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority, accessed December 15, 2019, <https://www.lahsa.org/data?id=13-2019-homeless-count-by-community-city>.

custodial arrests within their jurisdiction includes a homeless arrestee.⁷ Media reports and subsequent audits of the Portland Police Bureau reflect even higher homeless arrest ratios, well over 50 percent of total arrests.⁸ Furthermore, an analysis of the New York City correctional system revealed that 20 percent of those in custody had reported being homeless at the time of arrest, and up to one-third had been homeless within the two months preceding their apprehension.⁹

Police organizations across the country are making every effort to respond appropriately to the growing impact that homelessness is having on our communities. Although politicians are directing billions at the issue, police managers are contemplating if the promise of money can solve the problem. In the interim, law enforcement leaders are responding by taking actions that seem most appropriate for their specific organizations. Many departments are pulling personnel from traditional police endeavors and staffing full-time units tasked solely with homeless-related issues. The Santa Monica Police Department in Southern California, for example, designates one lieutenant, one sergeant, and eight officers to such a unit, and the San Francisco Police Department has established a ten-person team.¹⁰ These are sizable staffing contributions during a period in law enforcement characterized by recruitment struggles, COVID-19 pandemic budget reductions, additional defunding efforts in response to racial injustice movements, and reports that many agencies are having difficulty filling their ranks with qualified personnel.¹¹

⁷ David Kroman and Chelsea Lee, “In Seattle, 1 in 5 People Booked into Jail Are Homeless,” Crosscut, February 19, 2019, <https://crosscut.com/2019/02/seattle-1-5-people-booked-jail-are-homeless>.

⁸ Mary Hull Caballero, *Policy Review: Portland Police Bureau Should Identify its Role in Responding to the City’s Homeless Crisis* (Portland, OR: Portland City Auditor, 2019), <https://www.portlandoregon.gov/ipr/article/737546>; Melissa Lewis, “Take a Deeper Look at the Numbers behind Portland Police Arrests of Homeless People,” OregonLive, June 29, 2018, https://www.oregonlive.com/news/erry-2018/06/79b61635fd4450/portland_homeless_arrests_data.html.

⁹ David Michaels et al., “Homelessness and Indicators of Mental Illness among Inmates in New York City’s Correctional System,” *Psychiatric Services* 43, no. 2 (1992): 150–55.

¹⁰ “Downtown Services Section,” Santa Monica Police Department, accessed December 15, 2019, <https://santamonicapd.org/Content.aspx?id=51260>; “SFPD Launches Unit Dedicated to Homeless Issues,” ABC7 San Francisco, June 1, 2017, <https://abc7news.com/2059871/>.

¹¹ Police Executive Research Forum, *The Workforce Crisis, and What Police Agencies Are Doing about It* (Washington, DC: Police Executive Research Forum, 2019), <https://www.policeforum.org/assets/WorkforceCrisis.pdf>.

This thesis therefore asks: Does the current state of homelessness in the United States place an unreasonable burden on law enforcement resources, to the point that traditional policing and homeland security concerns are adversely affected?

A. LITERATURE REVIEW

Literature surrounding the topic of homelessness is substantial and ever-growing. There is less content, however, about the relationship between law enforcement and the homeless community. What literature exists falls predominantly into five categories. First is the debate as to whether legislative and police efforts have systematically criminalized the homeless community. Many scholars consider the enforcement of low-level offenses and quality-of-life ordinances to be inappropriate, ineffective, often unconstitutional, and even immoral.¹² Others, however, consider this police interaction coercive yet beneficial—effectively and subtly turning the homeless toward the resources necessary for a successful return to permanent housing.¹³ These competing interpretations of police activity involving the homeless community are a consistent theme throughout the literature.

The second sizeable portion of the literature, often interlaced with the above body of work, involves the study of policing the homeless community in terms of prime versus marginal space. Prime space is an area where, through the combination of legislation and police enforcement, it is not conducive for the homeless to linger for an extended time. Prime spaces often are subject to restrictive local ordinances, such as camping prohibitions or sit-lie ordinances that outlaw immobility.¹⁴ The ordinances, in conjunction with consequential enforcement efforts, make it difficult for homeless people to remain in these places, which often causes them to move toward marginal spaces such as freeway embankments, alleys, or industrial areas.

¹² Randall Amster, “Patterns of Exclusion: Sanitizing Space, Criminalizing Homelessness,” *Social Justice* 30, no. 1 (2003): 195–221.

¹³ Forrest Stuart, “From ‘Rabble Management’ to ‘Recovery Management’: Policing Homelessness in Marginal Urban Space,” *Urban Studies* 51, no. 9 (2014): 1909–25, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0042098013499798>.

¹⁴ Jennifer Wilking et al., “Understanding the Implications of a Punitive Approach to Homelessness: A Local Case Study,” *Poverty & Public Policy* 10, no. 2 (2018): 159–76, <https://doi.org/10.1002/pop4.210>.

The third theme captured in the literature involves distinct opposition to the criminalization school of thought. This body of work indicates that modern organizations police the homeless community with the goal of recovery management, and they strategically apply quality-of-life ordinances to coerce this population toward the goal of sobriety, if applicable, and ultimately housing. These scholars interpret enforcement action as a tough-love, shepherd-like approach that limits the possibility of regression on the path back to permanent shelter.¹⁵ This body of work also incorporates the idea that some vulnerable homeless individuals are at risk and exposed to elevated levels of violence and crime from other homeless subjects.¹⁶ Also coercive in nature, the role of the police portrayed in this literature involves the desire to lure the vulnerable out of homelessness to shield them from their current circumstances.

A fourth grouping acknowledges that those interacting and engaging with the homeless problem assume roles that vary across official responsibilities.¹⁷ Police agencies are providing resources, performing social work functions, and partnering with care-giving organizations not affiliated with law enforcement whatsoever; but those outside of law enforcement, too, such as shelter providers, simultaneously administer traditionally punitive measures.¹⁸ Many scholars recognize that this role modification is a direct result of an increasing and daunting homeless population. While some feel that involved organizations should adapt further and contribute more, other literature indicates that law enforcement, particularly, is simply not an appropriate instrument to address the situation.

The remainder of the literature focuses on how people perceive the homeless population. This body of work is often referenced to explain the varying viewpoints argued

¹⁵ Stuart, "From 'Rabble Management' to 'Recovery Management.'"

¹⁶ Sarah Johnsen and Suzanne Fitzpatrick, "Revanchist Sanitisation or Coercive Care? The Use of Enforcement to Combat Begging, Street Drinking and Rough Sleeping in England," *Urban Studies* 47, no. 8 (2010): 1703–23, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0042098009356128>.

¹⁷ Jennie Simpson, "Police and Homeless Outreach Worker Partnerships: Policing of Homeless Individuals with Mental Illness in Washington, D.C.," *Human Organization* 74, no. 2 (Summer 2015): 125–34, <http://dx.doi.org.libproxy.nps.edu/10.17730/0018-7259-74.2.125>.

¹⁸ Brian Hennigan and Jessie Speer, "Compassionate Revanchism: The Blurry Geography of Homelessness in the USA," *Urban Studies* 56, no. 5 (2019): 906–21, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0042098018762012>.

by scholars throughout the literature. Because homelessness is viewed through multiple, varying lenses, many comparable observations and studies generate conflicting interpretations. It is evident that similar police activity, particularly in response to homelessness, can be perceived through countless scholarly lenses and can produce vastly different interpretations. The following classifications of literature, without question, reflect that variance in perspective.

1. Demonization of Homelessness

It is a common assumption that police organizations lean into their punitive role more than their resource-providing or care-giving approaches. This argument contends that, through local quality-of-life ordinances, the police and legislators criminalize the homeless and calculatingly pressure the unsheltered from one area to the next.¹⁹ Randall Amster, for example, focuses his work on the criminalization of homeless individuals through the strategic application of anti-homeless laws and government limitations placed specifically on public space.²⁰ According to Amster, these limitations are found in municipal sidewalk ordinances and no-camping laws, for example.²¹ Policing and legislative efforts, according to several scholars, often materialize into large-scale gentrification projects that convert areas commonly occupied by the homeless into spaces that are unsuitable for them. Amster highlights how the “demonization” of the homeless acts as a catalyst for these laws and projects, highlighting an internal memorandum from the Tempe, Arizona, Police Department and a resulting sidewalk ordinance that specifically targeted the homeless community.²² Amster makes comparative references to Nazi Germany and genocide, concluding that the ultimate goal of anti-homeless legislation and criminalization efforts is extermination.²³ Don Mitchell uses similar emotive language and insists that anti-homeless laws represent the government’s struggle to control space, and

¹⁹ Stuart, “From ‘Rabble Management’ to ‘Recovery Management.’”

²⁰ Randall Amster, *Lost in Space: The Criminalization, Globalization, and Urban Ecology of Homelessness* (El Paso, TX: LFB Scholarly Publishing, 2008), ProQuest.

²¹ Amster.

²² Amster, 80–84, 143–67.

²³ Amster, “Patterns of Exclusion,” 214–15.

consequently, make a preliminary attempt to “annihilate” the people living in that space.²⁴ This collection of literature contends that lawmakers, police organizations, and many other members of society vindictively demonize the homeless in an effort to eradicate them from public space.

2. Prime versus Marginal Space

There are few scholars who agree fully with Amster and Mitchell. Many, however, adopt a similar assessment of the impact of policing on the homelessness in terms of prime versus marginal space. Andrew F. Smith proffers that local government and police organizations utilize enforcement opportunities, even harassment, to displace the homeless from popular work and leisure locations.²⁵ Smith also suggests that police activity is simultaneously a containment effort, aimed at pushing the homeless into a prison-like U.S. shelter system, where occupants can be contained and monitored by authorities.²⁶

The effects of policing in terms of prime and marginal space are highlighted in work by Jennifer Wilking et al. In a study aimed at determining the effectiveness of punitive policing measures, they examined the homeless community and the police department in Chino, California, after a series of seemingly anti-homeless ordinances were passed. After evaluating the number of homeless persons arrested and the locations of their arrests during a six-year period, Wilking et al. noted that the ordinances, as expected, resulted in an increase in homeless arrests city-wide, and homeless activity generally shifted away from the downtown area.²⁷ Wilking et al. also concluded that the city’s ordinances were enacted primarily out of economic interests and not in response to concern for the homeless population.²⁸ Coincidentally, however, the study revealed that the expected economic benefit to the community businesses was negated by the large expenses

²⁴ Don Mitchell, “The Annihilation of Space by Law: The Roots and Implications of Anti-Homeless Laws in the United States,” *Antipode* 29, no. 3 (1997): 305, <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-8330.00048>.

²⁵ Andrew F. Smith, “In Defense of Homelessness,” *Journal of Value Inquiry* 48, no. 1 (2014): 36, <http://dx.doi.org.libproxy.nps.edu/10.1007/s10790-013-9405-x>.

²⁶ Smith, 36.

²⁷ Wilking et al., “Understanding the Implications of a Punitive Approach to Homelessness.”

²⁸ Wilking et al.

incurred by the police department.²⁹ With that, Wilking et al. support the idea that policing using quality-of-life legislation effectively moves homeless individuals from prime to marginal space but is not fiscally sound. Although Wilking et al.'s study has similarities with other literature, it is unique in that it also highlights, regardless of the intent behind the enforcement—punitive or not—it was simply ineffective. The Chico study indicates movement from prime space, but in the opposite direction of service providers; this shows that the policing measures were not effective financially, nor did they appear to coerce the homeless toward service providers.

3. Recovery Management and the Vulnerable Other

Many works find balance between a punitive policing conclusion and the shepherd-like coercive-care assessment. Some scholars, interestingly, deem the relationship situational and even geographical at times. During a study of the infamous Skid Row, the nation's quintessential marginal space, Forrest Stuart concluded that the policing of the Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD) from the "prime" downtown was primarily punitive in terms of efforts to move the homeless out of the area.³⁰ Uniquely, however, studies of policing within the boundaries of Skid Row itself reveal that the approach remained disciplinary with regard to enforcement, but the intent of the actions taken were significantly more coercive.³¹ In fact, Stuart found that officers inside the community adopted more of a recovery management role.

Stuart goes on to conclude that police efforts within Skid Row were primarily of officers shepherding the homeless toward nearby service providers and rehabilitation-dedicated mega-shelters.³² Others who observed police action in Skid Row during the study revealed enforcement efforts seemingly aimed at preventing those suffering from addiction from accessing alcohol or narcotics.³³ Stuart offers the LAPD's frequent

²⁹ Wilking et al.

³⁰ Stuart, "From 'Rabble Management' to 'Recovery Management.'"

³¹ Stuart.

³² Stuart.

³³ Stuart.

ticketing of philanthropic organizations delivering food to the area as a prime example. Although the citations are issued officially for minor violations such as blocking the sidewalk, the intention, according to Stuart, is to impede the homeless population's access to resources outside of the nearby shelters; notably, nearby shelters impose behavior-changing mandates in exchange for services, while visiting food distributors do not.³⁴ According to Stuart, this coercive, recovery-focused approach is being used to "shepherd" homeless individuals into drug-recovery, life skills, and employment programs.³⁵

A small amount of the literature acknowledges the existence of coercive policing directed at an often overlooked population within the homeless community. Using a case study approach, Sarah Johnsen and Suzanne Fitzpatrick identify a concept they call "the vulnerable other": a new target of both compassion and coercion by law enforcement officers.³⁶ Their study, based on interviews with enforcement agents, homeless individuals, and service providers in several cities throughout England, reveals that police acknowledge that much of the crime committed by the "problematic street culture" in England is directed at the most vulnerable members within that group and not the general public. Therefore, coercive care efforts are also utilized to coerce at-risk individuals away from dangerous environments.³⁷ Simultaneously, traditional punitive policing efforts are directed at violent members of the same community. Their work is unique in that it does not involve the goal of shepherding or coercing the homeless toward beneficial services. Instead, the work suggests that police efforts are often aimed at simply removing a vulnerable population from precarious circumstances.

4. Blurred Lines

The blurred role of the police response to homelessness, reflected in major cities throughout the United States, is highlighted in the literature as well. In response to prior research analyzing law enforcement attempts to balance traditional police functions with

³⁴ Stuart.

³⁵ Stuart.

³⁶ Johnsen and Fitzpatrick, "Revanchist Sanitisation or Coercive Care?"

³⁷ Johnsen and Fitzpatrick.

the simultaneous application of services, Jennie Simpson reflects back on what she terms the “impossible mandate.” The impossible mandate refers to the requirement of police organizations to reduce crime through law enforcement while simultaneously providing social services.³⁸ Focusing primarily on the political economy of Washington, DC, and its influence on the multiple organizations and public systems associated with law enforcement, Simpson highlights how police officers now find themselves assuming responsibilities more analogous with social work than law enforcement.³⁹ To navigate these waters, officers are forging informal partnerships with local outreach workers.⁴⁰ Simpson concludes that unless changes are made, the criminal justice system will remain one of the largest mental health service providers in the nation.

Police agencies are not the only organizations battling variable roles, however. Brian Hennigan and Jessie Speer’s article discusses several instances of care-giving organizations, such as shelters, taking part in traditionally punitive actions. In fact, on multiple occasions, sheltering organizations have spearheaded private evictions and eradication efforts of homeless camps in public spaces.⁴¹ According to those involved in the evictions, the encampments were adversely affecting the shelters’ caregiving efforts. Hennigan and Speer point out that such organizations can demonstrate compassion for the poor and simultaneously urge city officials to bulldoze the nearby encampments that seemingly impede their efforts.⁴² The authors conclude that the roles of police and the care-giving community are often blurred; the police sometimes find themselves behaving like social workers, while shelter organizations can be found enforcing laws of their own.⁴³

³⁸ Simpson, “Police and Homeless Outreach Worker Partnerships.”

³⁹ Simpson.

⁴⁰ Simpson.

⁴¹ Hennigan and Speer, “Compassionate Revanchism.”

⁴² Hennigan and Speer.

⁴³ Hennigan and Speer.

5. Variance in Perspective

The diversity among interpretations of policing and legislative efforts across the literature can, in many ways, be attributed to perspective. Equivalent police behavior, observed through a diverse number of scholarly lenses, can be construed as punitive by some and compassionate by others. These variations in perspective were stressed in the aforementioned work by Smith. Building on assertions made by David Wagner, Smith argues that most people view homelessness in one of three categories.⁴⁴ The first, and most common, is the view that those suffering from homelessness are disruptive to the public order.⁴⁵ In short, homeless individuals should simply pull themselves together, overcome whatever obstacles are hindering them, and rejoin society. The second school of thought is much more charitable: the belief that the homeless should be shown compassion and therefore given assistance. This support is necessary to get the homeless rehabilitated and ultimately housed. Lastly, Smith references a therapeutic viewpoint. This group views the homeless as potential clients who, with proper treatment, can regain their self-confidence and social standing.⁴⁶ Smith argues that all of these views have one thing in common: they deem homelessness as substandard, undesirable, and even pathological. Smith uniquely strays from the bulk of the literature when he offers a fourth, minority viewpoint. In short, he asserts that homelessness should be viewed as a viable option and we should seek to help this population thrive while homeless.⁴⁷ Although Smith's unique viewpoint is somewhat of a minority in the literature, his categorization of viewpoints is applicable in attempting to explain the diversity in law enforcement's response to homelessness as well as the variation in interpretation of the same activity.

In conclusion, the literature surrounding policing organizations and homelessness, consistent with the problem itself, is expanding every day. Despite the wealth of scholarly information, however, police organizations continue to struggle to determine the

⁴⁴ Smith, "In Defense of Homelessness."

⁴⁵ David Wagner, *Checkerboard Square: Culture and Resistance in a Homeless Community* (New York: Routledge, 2018), <https://books.google.com/books?id=YMudwAAQBAJ>.

⁴⁶ Smith, "In Defense of Homelessness."

⁴⁷ Smith.

appropriate response for their agency. More importantly, as police leaders dedicate more and more resources and personnel to the swelling problem, police managers are being forced to decide which traditional police functions will be abandoned to help alleviate the homeless epidemic. Furthermore, the influence that homelessness is having on police organizations across the country has yet to be fully examined.

B. RESEARCH DESIGN

This thesis examines the enduring question surrounding the most appropriate relationship between law enforcement organizations and the homeless population in the United States. Although this discussion has been ongoing since the dawn of policing, significant events in 2020 have magnified the need to reevaluate the role of law enforcement in this setting. This thesis, in an effort to capture the current state of the law enforcement–homelessness relationship, presents the findings of a detailed survey of U.S. law enforcement personnel that centers on the impact of homelessness on various organizations. The thesis discusses perceptions of officers with different levels of experience and identifies significant communication shortcomings among law enforcement. The analysis addresses the potentially devastating impact of homelessness on law enforcement and offers policy recommendations to guide law enforcement leaders and policymakers. This research is essential in a time when budgets are tapering and communities are beginning to question the role of their law enforcement organizations.

C. THESIS OVERVIEW

Chapter II begins with a brief history of the relationship between the homeless and law enforcement and then turns to examine contemporary role deliberation and modern events that have intensified this discussion. The last section of the chapter introduces the design and delivery of the survey that informs the remainder of the thesis. Chapter III presents the survey results and provides an in-depth analysis of the survey. Chapter IV dives deeper into the survey results from California and Texas participants, whose experience accurately reflects the extent of the homelessness problem in some jurisdictions. Chapter V concludes the thesis, offering policy recommendations for moving forward and potential areas for future research.

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II. THE RIGHT TOOL FOR THE JOB?

Homelessness, in one form or another, is having a significant impact on the daily lives of Americans. Police agencies are at the forefront of this daunting problem. Historically, this affiliation is nothing new. This chapter first examines historical relationships and early, often contradicting, law enforcement responses to homelessness in the United States. It then highlights modern responses, to include the pairing of police officers and social service professionals in an innovative, co-response methodology, followed by the recent development of response units absent of law enforcement personnel entirely. The chapter considers contemporary events that bring this discussion to the forefront, such as the highly publicized death of George Floyd in Minneapolis in May 2020 and the resulting police defunding movement. The ambiguity, innovation, and role reallocation brought about by these events have created opportunity for change within law enforcement organizations. However, the profession lacks a clear understanding of the impact that homelessness is having on policing, nor the outcomes of current efforts. The remainder of the chapter introduces an anonymous survey created for this thesis and administered to U.S. law enforcement personnel in pursuit of this information.

A. POLICING THE HOMELESS

Homelessness has been associated with law enforcement in the United States since policing formerly materialized in the mid-nineteenth century.⁴⁸ Eric H. Monkkonen points out that early on, police agencies began assuming roles for which they had not been designed. Veering from their primary mission, police departments began to dispense various welfare services in response to citizen demands.⁴⁹ In a period when federal and state entities failed to provide for both orphans and the homeless, police departments acted as all-purpose civil servants. Police officers were asked to run soup kitchens, locate lost children, address sanitation concerns, and find overnight housing for thousands of

⁴⁸ Eric H. Monkkonen, “History of Urban Police,” *Crime and Justice* 15 (1992): 547–80.

⁴⁹ Monkkonen, 555.

homeless individuals.⁵⁰ In fact, police stations often contained separate lodging facilities, much like dormitory housing, for short-term accommodations.⁵¹

As law enforcement organizations took on roles to help the homeless population, some police leaders of the era enacted policies to contradict these efforts. In 1897, Theodore Roosevelt, the New York City Police Commissioner at the time, published an article in *The Atlantic*, boasting that he had abolished station-house homeless lodging in his jurisdiction, stating that the accommodations were “nurseries for pauperism and crime,” wrongly created in the “spirit of unwise philanthropy.”⁵² The practice of lodging within station-houses was ultimately eliminated, and soon thereafter, in the early 1900s, police activities narrowed to a crime-focused methodology.⁵³ The discussion surrounding the appropriate role of police organizations toward homelessness has been ongoing ever since.

Echoing the questions facing Theodore Roosevelt and other police leaders in the late nineteenth century, policymakers and police managers question law enforcement’s relationship with homelessness even today. As many agencies choose to create teams specifically designed to engage the homeless community, recently, some jurisdictions have employed decision-makers who advocate for the absence of law enforcement in the homeless realm altogether. Many of these communities have implemented programs that refrain from generating a law enforcement response and instead direct arguably more appropriate, professional personnel to address several types of nonviolent, emergency, or crisis situations.⁵⁴

⁵⁰ Monkkenen, 547.

⁵¹ Monkkenen, 555.

⁵² Theodore Roosevelt, “Municipal Administration: The New York Police Force,” *The Atlantic*, September 1, 1897, <https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/1897/09/municipal-administration-the-new-york-police-force/519849/>.

⁵³ Monkkenen, “History of Urban Police,” 547.

⁵⁴ Matt Vasilogambros, “If the Police Aren’t Needed, Let’s Leave Them Out Completely,” Pew Research Stateline, June 23, 2020, <https://pew.org/3hNK550>.

B. A CONTINUUM OF RESPONSE

In June 2020, the city of Denver launched a grant-funded program aimed at facilitating a transition of responsibility. The city's Support Team Assisted Response (STAR), currently in a pilot period with minimal personnel, consists of a mental health clinician and a paramedic who respond to calls that traditionally would require a response from a uniformed, armed police officer.⁵⁵ STAR monitors police radio frequencies and responds to dispatched calls involving homelessness, mental health crises, and even general addiction. The program embraces the idea that if the police are not needed, the most appropriate response is to exclude them from the situation entirely.⁵⁶ Police Chief Paul Pazen predicted that an expansion of programs such as STAR would not likely decrease the need for police officers.⁵⁷ He did, however, forecast the increased ability to focus officers on other priorities, such as violent crime and fatal traffic collisions.⁵⁸

As with many agencies across the country, the city of Denver also deploys a well-established co-responder program that pairs mental health professionals with uniformed police officers. This particular unit has been in place since 2016 and originally consisted of three mental health experts; as of June 2020, while paired with STAR, it aims to expand to twenty-five mental health professionals.⁵⁹ According to Chris Richardson, the associate director of Criminal Justice Services in Denver, STAR, the police department's existing co-responder program, and traditional police units combine to offer a "continuum of response that dispatchers can choose from."⁶⁰ This emerging diversity of programs within law enforcement organizations reflects the desire to provide alternative responses to homelessness. As some of these options omit a law enforcement presence altogether, it is

⁵⁵ Vasilogambros.

⁵⁶ Vasilogambros.

⁵⁷ Elise Schmelzer, "Call Police for a Woman Who Is Changing Clothes in an Alley? A New Program in Denver Sends Mental Health Professionals Instead," *Denver Post*, September 6, 2020, <https://www.denverpost.com/2020/09/06/denver-star-program-mental-health-police/>.

⁵⁸ Schmelzer.

⁵⁹ Schmelzer.

⁶⁰ Schmelzer.

clear that law enforcement agencies themselves are recognizing that perhaps uniformed police officers are not necessarily the right tool for the job.

C. THE MESSAGE AMPLIFIED

As shown in Denver and many cities across the nation, efforts involving the transfer of responsibilities away from law enforcement to outside organizations have been gradually taking place for some time. Dialogue surrounding this shift in responsibilities was amplified, however, following the highly publicized death of George Floyd in Minneapolis in May 2020. The national narrative that followed called for defunding and even abolishing law enforcement organizations. Several cities across the country responded by making proposals to transfer responsibilities away from law enforcement organizations. Berkeley, California, for example, proposed an unarmed civilian traffic and parking enforcement unit.⁶¹ Moreover, several members of the Los Angeles City Council have recently suggested transferring traffic enforcement efforts from police officers to unarmed Department of Transportation personnel.⁶²

Other cities have made strides to transfer responsibilities away from law enforcement, which has significantly reduced police budgets. In June 2020, San Francisco Mayor London Breed announced her vision to divert nonviolent calls for service away from the San Francisco Police Department and toward specific non-law-enforcement organizations.⁶³ Further, among other avenues of reform, Mayor Breed claimed that “divestments from law enforcement will support intentional investment of funds in programs and organizations that serve communities that have been systematically harmed by past City practices.”⁶⁴ In July 2020, the LAPD’s budget was cut by roughly \$150

⁶¹ Associated Press, “Berkeley Moves toward Removing Police from Traffic Stops,” ABC News, July 15, 2020, <https://abcnews.go.com/US/wireStory/berkeley-moves-removing-police-traffic-stops-71796720>.

⁶² “LA City Council Votes Unanimously to Replace Officers with Unarmed Crisis Response Teams for Nonviolent Calls,” CBS Los Angeles, June 30, 2020, <https://losangeles.cbslocal.com/2020/06/30/city-council-votes-unanimously-replace-officers-nonviolent-calls-crisis-response/>.

⁶³ “Mayor London Breed Announces Roadmap for New Police Reforms,” City of San Francisco Office of the Mayor, June 11, 2020, <https://sfmayor.org/article/mayor-london-breed-announces-roadmap-new-police-reforms>.

⁶⁴ City of San Francisco Office of the Mayor.

million and, according to Councilman Curren Price, funds were redirected into services for minority communities.⁶⁵ The severe loss of funding at LAPD will bring the number of officers down to a level not seen since 2008.⁶⁶ Revealing just how much the recent demands for defunding have swayed policymakers, Los Angeles Mayor Eric Garcetti supported the decision to drastically cut LAPD, despite the fact that just three months earlier he was requesting a 7 percent increase to the department's budget.⁶⁷

The events in Minneapolis in May 2020 have brought previously fringe role reallocation concepts to the forefront of law enforcement policymaking. Simultaneously, shrinking police budgets and pressure to reallocate law enforcement responsibilities to outside organizations have left law enforcement leaders wondering how best to navigate these changes. As a result, many law enforcement leaders, and countless other decision-makers across the nation, are questioning whether certain issues, such as homelessness, should fall under the purview of police departments.

D. SURVEY DESIGN AND DELIVERY

To answer questions of the past and present and effectively determine if law enforcement is the right tool for the job, it is imperative to understand the current strain that homelessness places on law enforcement and the overall effectiveness of policing efforts thus far. While no preexisting published survey has effectively captured the effect that homelessness has had on law enforcement in the United States, a comparable survey has captured the effects of the mentally ill population on law enforcement. A survey titled “The Impact of the Mentally Ill Population on Law Enforcement Resources” was created by now retired New Windsor, New York, Police Chief Michael C. Biasotti, who presented

⁶⁵ David Zahniser, Dakota Smith, and Emily Alpert, “Los Angeles Cuts LAPD Spending, Taking Police Staffing to its Lowest Level in 12 Years,” *Los Angeles Times*, July 1, 2020, <https://www.latimes.com/california/story/2020-07-01/lapd-budget-cuts-protesters-police-brutality>.

⁶⁶ Zahniser, Smith, and Alpert.

⁶⁷ Vanessa Romo, “Amid Protests against Police Violence LA Mayor Eric Garcetti Announces Cuts To LAPD,” NPR, June 3, 2020, <https://www.npr.org/2020/06/03/869242938/amid-protests-against-police-violence-la-mayor-eric-garcetti-announces-cuts-to-l>.

the findings in his Naval Postgraduate School thesis.⁶⁸ This survey, representing all fifty states, was conducted in early 2011 and ultimately produced 2,406 responses.⁶⁹ Due to its success and associated subject matter, the survey administered for this thesis emulates Biasotti's survey in both content and distribution.

An anonymous standard survey technique was used to gather data from law enforcement leaders surrounding the primary issues of this thesis, which involve the following principal questions:

- Over the course of their careers, have U.S. law enforcement executives observed an increased burden on their respective organizations as a consequence of homelessness?
- Does the current management of the U.S. homeless population place an unreasonable burden on law enforcement resources so as to adversely affect their ability to perform traditional policing and homeland security functions?
- If so, how can law enforcement manage this burden, remain effective in traditional policing efforts, and simultaneously contribute to the struggle against homelessness in the United States?

With these questions and existing literature in mind, the survey was designed to capture the observations of law enforcement managers regarding the overall impact and strain that homelessness has had on police organizations, both historically and in the profession today. The allocation of current resources in comparison to years past was of primary concern in formulating the questions within the survey. Thus, the survey intended to capture the perceived changes and organizational sacrifices surrounding homelessness over a law enforcement officer's career.

This survey included questions aimed primarily at gathering data from senior law enforcement officials. With over 900,000 sworn law enforcement officers now serving in

⁶⁸ Michael C. Biasotti, "Management of the Severely Mentally Ill and its Effects on Homeland Security" (master's thesis, Naval Postgraduate School, 2011), <https://calhoun.nps.edu/handle/10945/39405>.

⁶⁹ Biasotti.

the United States, this distinction of tenure was necessary and would ensure longevity and adequate expertise in responses.⁷⁰ The executives' perception of homelessness over a significant period identified contributing factors to the current dilemma.

Biasotti's original survey, distributed by the International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP), consisted of twenty-two questions, five of which captured demographics. To capture a comparable target group, the demographic questions for this survey were similar to Biasotti's. The demographic questions yielded general geographic information, length of career, and approximate size of the agency. These responses allowed for the collection of data critical for comparison but allowed the executives to remain anonymous.

The survey itself was developed in coordination with the Naval Postgraduate School Institutional Review Board, which approved the final list of questions. To ensure the survey was voluntary, the participant was first asked whether he or she was voluntarily contributing. Further, to ensure the respondent remained anonymous, no names, email addresses, organizations, IP addresses, or other identifying information, other than the demographic inquiries, were captured by the author. The survey itself was constructed using the LimeSurvey online statistical survey application. The electronic online format of the survey allowed for fast, nationwide distribution and ease of response.

The distribution of the survey was conducted by first identifying individual police chief associations recognized by the State Association of Chiefs of Police (SACOP). SACOP is the organizing body of the various U.S. chiefs of police associations and functions as the coordinating body between the various state associations and the International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP).⁷¹ The author, a member of the IACP, contacted each identified chief of police association in all fifty states to disseminate the survey. As a result of the request, representatives from SACOP recognized chief of police associations then distributed the survey link to their membership and peers within law enforcement.

⁷⁰ "Law Enforcement Facts," National Law Enforcement Officers Memorial Fund, accessed February 23, 2020, <https://nleomf.org/facts-figures/law-enforcement-facts>.

⁷¹ "State Associations of Chiefs of Police," International Association of Chiefs of Police, accessed July 10, 2020, <https://www.theiacp.org/working-group/division/state-associations-of-chiefs-of-police>.

Although the survey was distributed specifically through police chief associations across the United States, the survey participants likely included personnel beyond those holding the rank of police chief or sheriff. Although these associations focus primarily on issues facing law enforcement department heads, their membership often includes personnel from all ranks who desire to remain informed of issues concerning the command level. Thus, the survey results likely included responses from all levels of law enforcement and may even have included multiple responses from within the same agency.

In sum, the survey herein, titled “Impact of Homelessness on U.S. Law Enforcement,” targeted senior law enforcement personnel in the United States to capture the perceived burden that homelessness is having on law enforcement and, ultimately, its strain on homeland security. Participant involvement was achieved anonymously, electronically, and indirectly through the various professional associations affiliated with police chiefs and sheriffs across the country. As a result, the number of law enforcement personnel who received the invitation to participate in the survey is unknown. It is also clear that not all senior law enforcement personnel are necessarily members of their respective police chief associations. Despite these uncertainties, the study captured data from all fifty states and produced a significant sampling of law enforcement perspectives on the relationship between policing and homelessness that did not exist before.

A preliminary version of the survey was established and tested in advance in April 2020. Specifically, a maiden survey was launched and the author solicited feedback from several senior law enforcement members of cohorts 1903 and 1904 of the Center for Homeland Defense and Security at the Naval Postgraduate School. As a result of these responses, minor modifications were implemented, and the survey was officially launched on April 13, 2020. The survey was closed and no further responses were collected after June 29, 2020. In total, data from 703 participants representing all fifty states was collected.

III. SURVEY RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

The “Impact of Homelessness on U.S. Law Enforcement” survey included twenty-seven questions that intended to capture the perceptions of law enforcement officers from across the United States. As stated previously, the survey ran from April 13, 2020, through June 29, 2020. Despite being disseminated to law enforcement leaders during the height of the worldwide COVID-19 pandemic and in a period marked with surges of civil unrest, the survey successfully captured data from all fifty U.S. states and tallied 703 responses. This chapter details the strain cited by law enforcement officers in relation to homelessness.

A. VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION AND DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION: QUESTIONS 1–6

The first survey question captured the voluntary component of the participation. The remaining five upfront questions, 2 through 6, solely sought demographic information. These questions provided opportunity to capture and analyze varying responses based on amount of law enforcement experience, type of jurisdiction, state, size of organization, and the size of the population served by that organization.

1. Question 1: Voluntary Participation

This question prompted participants to input whether they were voluntarily participating in the survey. Presented in yes-or-no format, this question ensured the participant was not obligated to complete the survey in any way.

2. Question 2: Years of Experience

This question asked the survey participant to select the number of years served as a law enforcement officer or deputy sheriff. The question was presented in a multiple-choice format, allowing the participant to select experience in spans of five years. Participants with a tenure beyond thirty-one years were categorized as “over 31 years.” This survey, in part, relied profoundly on police officer perceptions over the length of their careers. This demographic question captured the participants’ experience in an effort to determine a frame of reference for their responses. Because several survey questions

involved perceived changes over the span of a career, data that captured the participants' years in the profession were critical to understanding the significance of those changes.

Although this survey was directed at senior law enforcement personnel, the tenure of participants who ultimately contributed was relatively dispersed. The bulk of the results were, unsurprisingly, produced by law enforcement officers with over twenty-one years of experience. However, the survey also produced significant data for those with less than sixteen years' experience (see Figure 1).

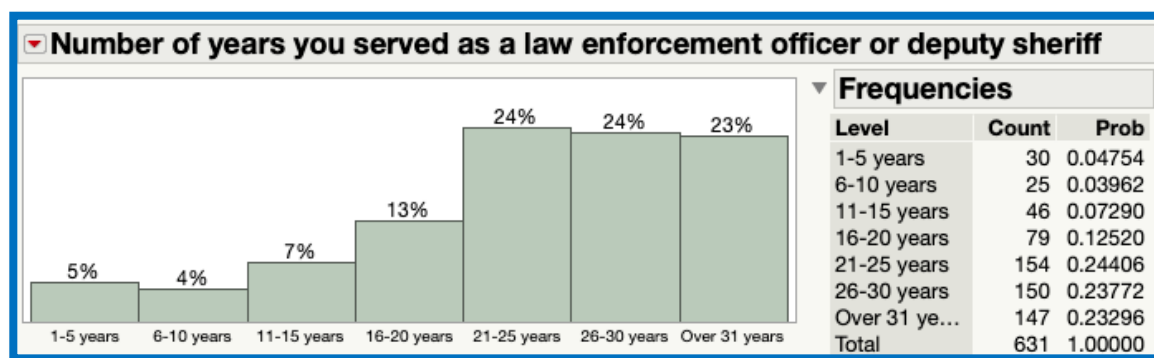


Figure 1. Number of Years Served in Law Enforcement

3. Question 3: Type of Jurisdiction

This question captured jurisdictional differences among the respondents. As the survey had been distributed via the various professional state police chiefs' associations, 78 percent of the respondents were composed of local law enforcement personnel. County law enforcement participants represented 17.2 percent while state law enforcement participants represented 3.78 percent. Tribal and federal law enforcement representation was negligible, comprising less than 1 percent combined (see Figure 2). Although the author intended to capture more significant data pertaining to all the jurisdictions queried, the method of survey distribution produced a dataset of predominantly local, county, and state responses. Although the outcome was not ideal in terms of jurisdictional representation, the survey did produce significant data from the jurisdictions that are most affected by homelessness and that, consequently, offer the bulk of experience.

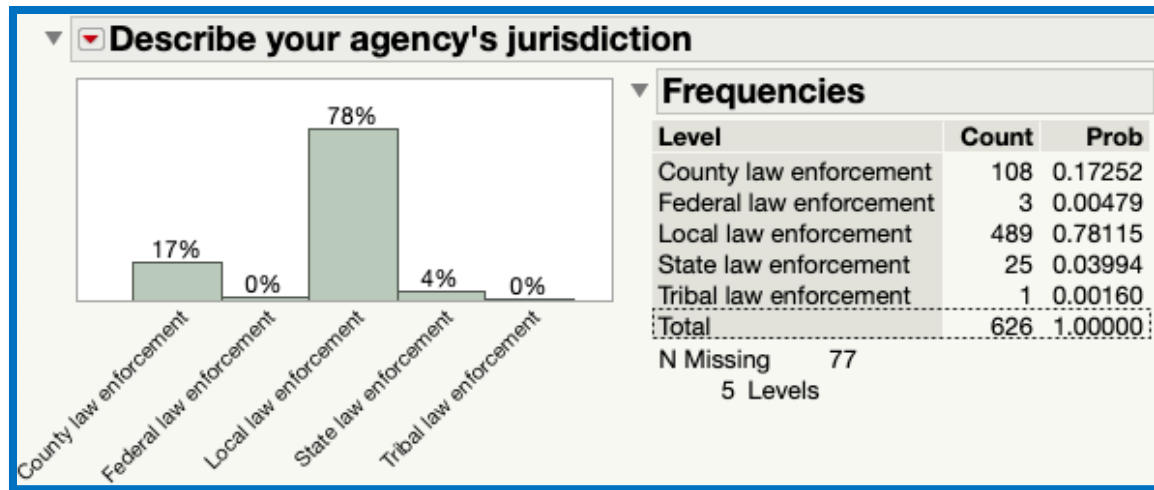


Figure 2. Type of Jurisdiction

4. Question 4: Location

This question asked participants to provide their agency's state, permitted the opportunity to analyze responses by state, region, or the combination of all law enforcement respondents throughout the United States. All fifty states and the District of Columbia were represented in the survey. For the number of responses by state, see Appendix B.

5. Question 5: Agency Size

This demographic question asked participants to provide the approximate size of their law enforcement organization in terms of sworn personnel. It provided an opportunity for analysis with respect to agency size and reflected the size of communities policed by these organizations, as explored further in question 6. The responses were well dispersed and ranged from small departments with fewer than ten sworn officers to major city police departments staffing well over 5,000 officers (see Table 1).

Table 1. Agency Size

No. of Sworn Personnel:	No. of Respondents (635):	Percentage of Total:
1-10	60	9.45%
11-50	187	29.45%
51-100	82	12.91%
101-250	114	17.95%
251-1000	82	12.91%
1001-5000	88	13.86%
5001 and over	22	3.46%

6. Question 6: Population Size

The final demographic question asked for the approximate population size of the participants' jurisdictional area. This data provided another wide-ranging sample of jurisdictions; as shown in Table 2, the data were well distributed among small communities and sizeable jurisdictions with populations exceeding one million residents.

Table 2. Population Size Served

Population Size	No. of Respondents (621)	Percentage of Total:
1-1,000	12	1.93%
1,001-5,000	82	13.20%
5,001-15,000	85	13.69%
15,001-30,000	66	10.63%
30,001-75,000	90	14.49%
75,001-150,000	63	10.14%
150,001-250,000	44	7.09%
250,001-500,000	41	6.60%
500,001-1 million	74	11.92%
1 million and over	64	10.31%

B. LAW ENFORCEMENT PERCEPTIONS: QUESTIONS 7–27

1. Question 7: Perception of Homeless Population Growth

This question aimed to determine if officers believed the homeless population in their communities increased over their careers. Most respondents affirmed that it did, with 87.33 percent indicating that the homeless population increased to some extent in their communities. Further, 37.33 percent answered that the problem has increased “a great deal” while 28.60 percent suggested only a “moderate” increase (see Figure 3).

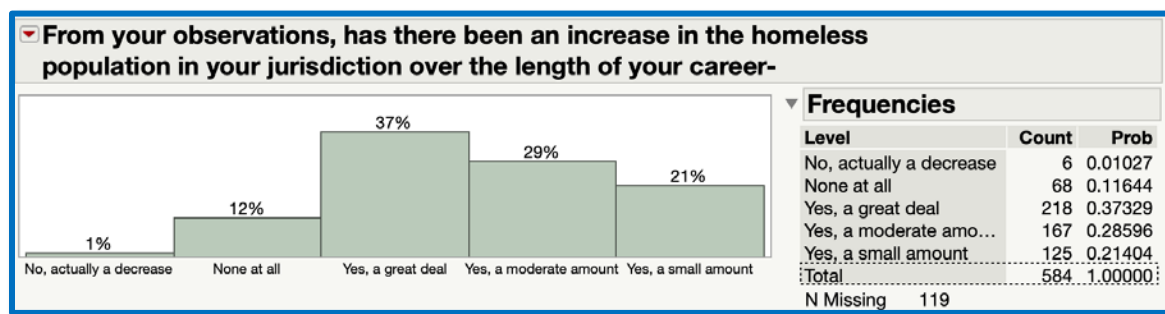


Figure 3. Change in Size of Homeless Population

There was a significant discrepancy in answers, however, between officers who reported having one to ten years in the profession and those of all other years of experience. The less experienced officers, for example, were more likely to report the homeless population in their communities as having grown: officers with one to ten years of experience observed some level of increase 96 percent of the time. By comparison, the more senior officers answered in the affirmative 86.44 percent of the time. This dissimilarity was amplified further with regard to the extent of the perceived change. Officers with one to ten years in the profession answered “increased a great deal” 64 percent of the time while those with eleven or more years responded in the same manner only 34.84 percent of the time. Although the homeless population certainly appears to have grown according to both experience classifications, the data suggest that the less experienced respondents perceive a more significant increase.

2. Question 8: Perceived Number of Homeless Arrests

To further gauge the actual impact of the increasing homeless population on law enforcement organizations, the next question gathered data on the perceived number of physical arrests and detentions of homeless individuals in each respondent's jurisdiction. Although the responses to question 7 revealed that officers believe the homeless population is growing, if these individuals are not being contacted by law enforcement personnel then they are not likely producing a measurable strain on the organization.

The responses to question 8, however, revealed that the increasing homeless populations highlighted in question 7 are, in fact, affecting law enforcement agencies. As with question 7, a vast majority of responding officers, 83.39 percent, reported an affirmative increase in the perceived number of homeless detainees/prisoners in their respective jurisdictions. Of the respondents, 26.05 percent answered that the number of homeless detainees or prisoners had increased "a great deal," 30 percent suggested only a "moderate" increase, and 27.45 percent reported only "a small amount" of upsurge in detentions and arrests (see Figure 4).

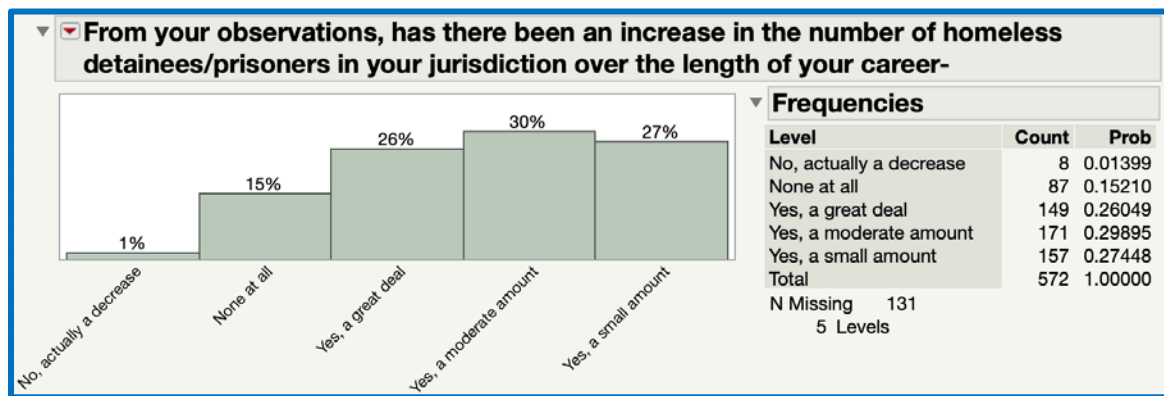


Figure 4. Change in Number of Homeless Detainees/Prisoners

3. Question 9: Related Number of Service Calls

The number of service calls to law enforcement agencies involving homeless individuals provides one valuable measure of the strain of homelessness on policing organizations. Question 9 asked participants to estimate the percentage of these calls for service in their agency. The results highlight the variations of impact that homelessness has on different jurisdictions. From a national perspective, the replies indicate that 43.76 percent of U.S. law enforcement agents believe that about 10 percent of their calls for service involve homeless individuals. Nearly 18 percent estimated that 20 percent of their calls involve homeless individuals, and approximately 10 percent estimated that 30 percent of their calls were in response to homeless-related issues. The percentages gradually decreased from there (see Figure 5).

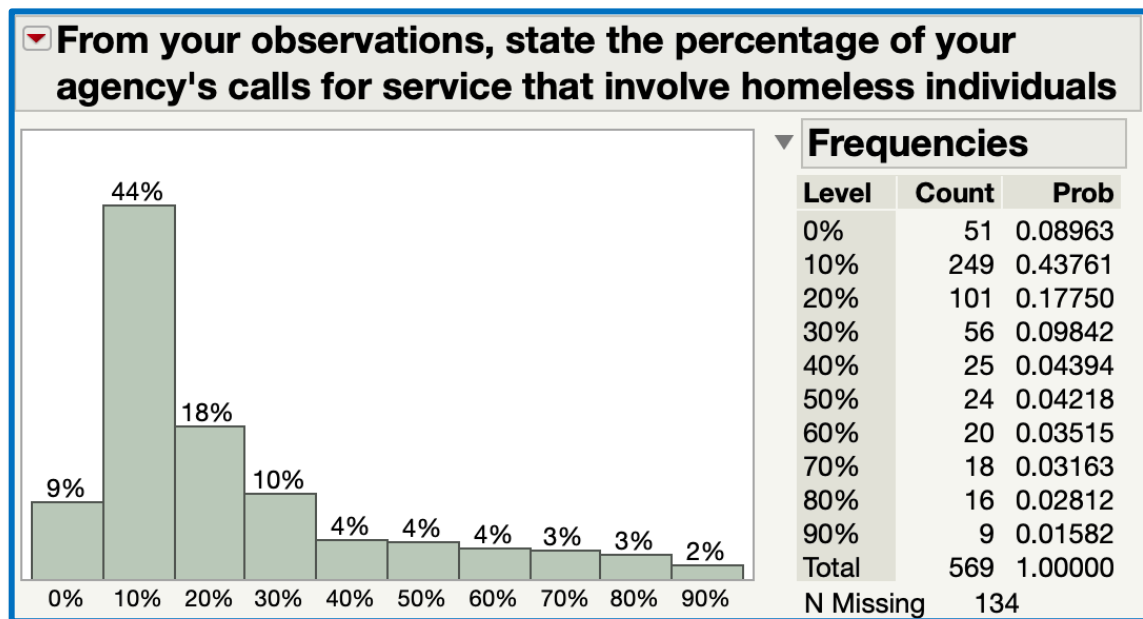


Figure 5. Percentage of Calls for Service

Although the most common response indicated 10 percent of calls for service involve homelessness, a significant number of respondents reported a much grimmer impact on their respective organizations. Remarkably, 15.29 percent of those queried reported that more than half of their calls for service involve homeless individuals. In fact,

and of greater concern, the survey reveals that 7.56 percent of officers perceive that homeless-related responses make up more than 70 percent of their call volume, while 4.39 percent reported calls in excess of 80 percent. These data grow more concerning when narrowed to specific officer experience range. For example, more than half (55.32 percent) of respondents in the one-to-ten-years-of-experience category perceive that 70 to 90 percent of their call volume is related to homelessness.

Not surprisingly, the percentage of calls for service involving homeless individuals varied significantly by state. Respondents from California, for example, provided significantly different answers than respondents from other jurisdictions. Namely, while only 15.29 percent of all U.S. law enforcement officers indicated that more than half their calls for service involve homeless individuals, 47.44 percent of California officers reported the same (see Figure 6). Texas offered similar numbers, also far exceeding the national reported average of 15.29 percent, with 64.2 percent of officers indicating that over half of their calls for service involve homeless individuals (see Figure 7). The states of California and Texas are examined further in Chapter IV.

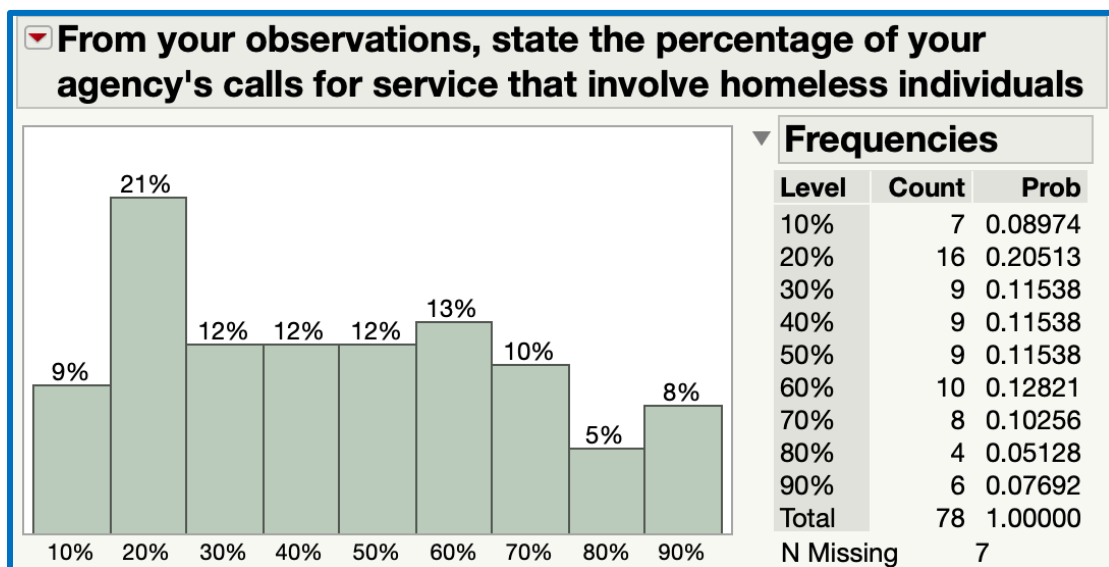


Figure 6. Question 9 Responses: California

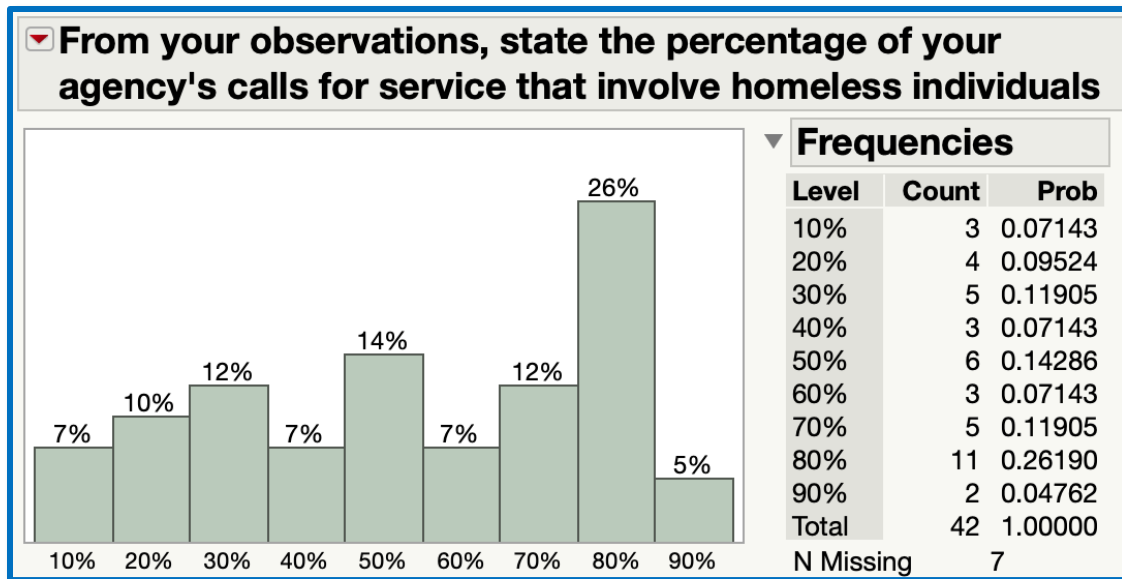


Figure 7. Question 9 Responses: Texas

4. Question 10: Percentage of Time

This question asked the participant to estimate the percentage of time their organization spends on calls for service or other activities involving homeless individuals. This inquiry was important for ensuring that the calls for service captured in question 9 produced additional workload or strain on the law enforcement organization. Echoing the results of the previous question, 15.49 percent of the respondents indicated that more than half of their time is spent on calls related to homeless individuals (see Figure 8). The remainder of the responses correlated with calls for service.

Also echoing the results of question 9, there were discrepancies in responses depending on the respondent's experience level and location. For example, over half (52.08 percent) of officers with one to ten years of experience reported that upwards of 70 percent of their field personnel's time is spent on calls involving homeless individuals. In comparison, participants with eleven or more years of experience reported the same only 3.68 percent of the time.

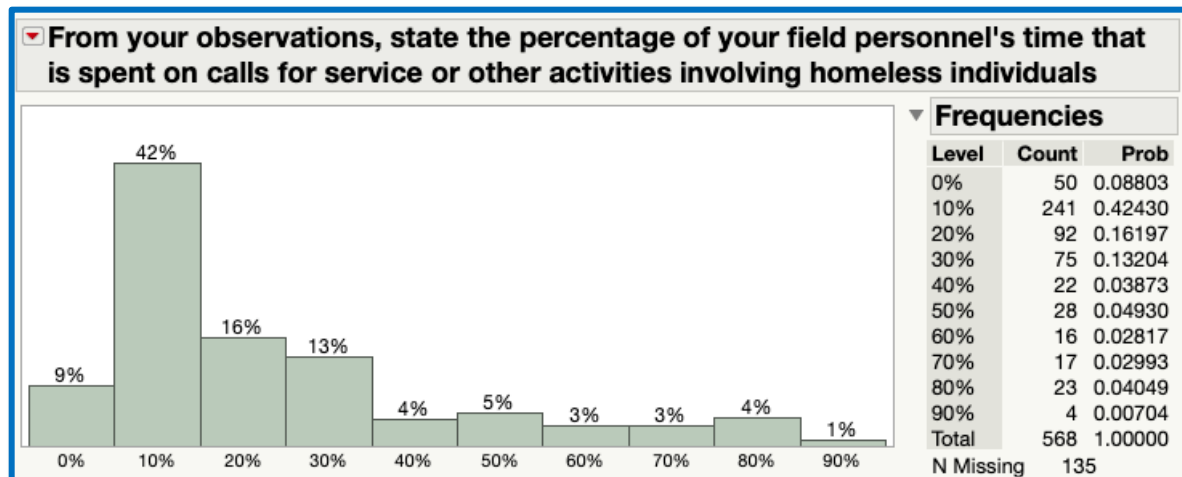


Figure 8. Percentage of Time Expended

5. Question 11: Percentage of Arrests

This question asked the participants to estimate, from their observations, the percentage of their departments' custodial arrests that consist of homeless individuals. Custodial arrests involve physically placing individuals into police custody, as opposed to simply detaining them temporarily or issuing a citation to appear in court at a later date. Custodial arrests involve additional strain on law enforcement organizations, as officers must transport the subjects to a custody facility, engage in lengthy booking procedures, and arrange additional transportation to obtain medical clearance, often required before they can house an arrestee within a jail facility.

As shown in Figure 9, nearly half of all participants indicated that only 10 percent of their organization's custodial arrests involve subjects suffering from homelessness. While 14 percent of responses indicated that custodial arrests do not involve homeless individuals at all, approximately 13 percent of the nation's respondents reported that more than half of their agency's custodial arrests involve homeless individuals. These data clearly indicate that homelessness disproportionately affects specific agencies and does not affect all U.S. law enforcement organizations uniformly.

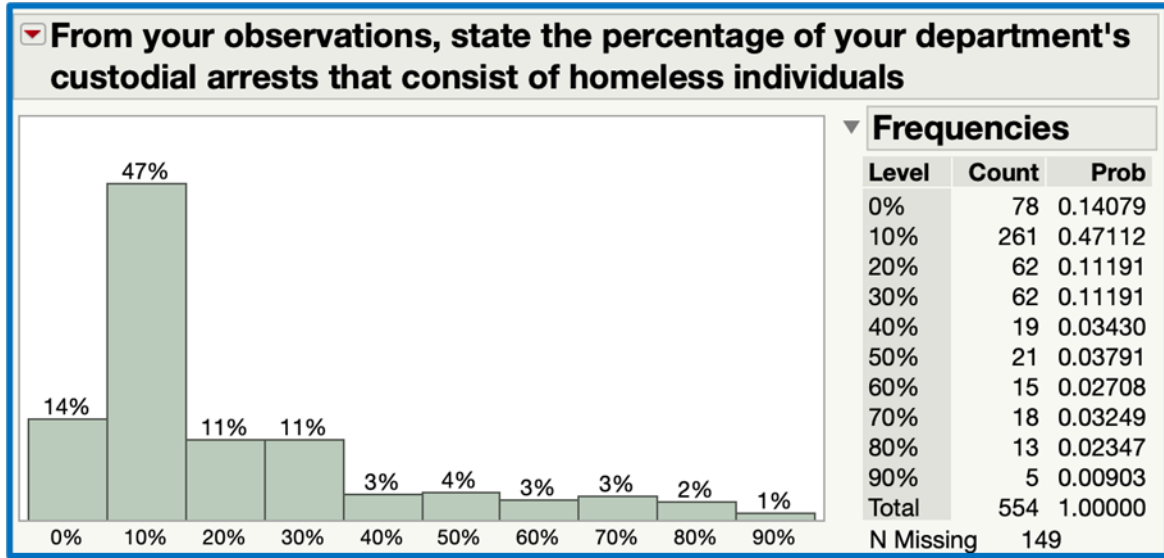


Figure 9. Percentage of Custodial Arrests

6. Question 12: Change in Time Spent over Career

This question captured the perceived change in time spent on calls for service involving homeless individuals over the length of the participant's career. While 14 percent of respondents indicated no observed increase and 1 percent actually reported a decrease in time spent, the responses predominantly reflect a general increase in time expended. In fact, 84.5 percent reported some observed increase in time spent, ranging from "increased a small amount" (25 percent), to "increased a moderate amount" (31 percent), to "increased a great deal" (28 percent); see Figure 10.

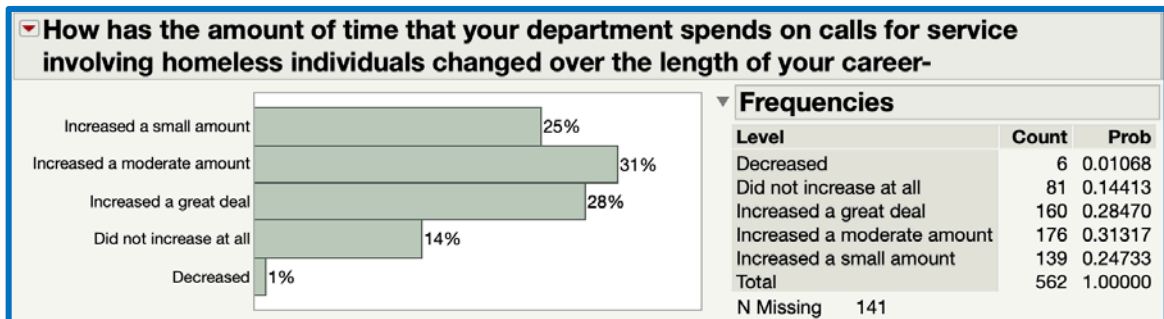


Figure 10. Change in Expended Time over Career

7. Question 13: Perceived Reason for Change

This question asked participants what they believe has caused the increased calls for service involving homeless individuals. This was the first open-ended question in the survey, allowing participants to respond in their own words. Among the 496 open-ended replies, several general themes surfaced. One of the most prominent was the perception that the increase in calls involved a nexus to mental illness. In fact, many responses specifically referenced mental health, the lack of mental health services in the community, or problems with the mental health service providers available to officers. Several respondents expressed frustration with mental health service providers, referencing revolving-door facilities that leave law enforcement incapable of achieving long-term solutions. One respondent highlighted that repetitive calls for service, often involving the same homeless, mentally ill subjects, contribute to the increase in calls and subsequent strain on law enforcement the jurisdiction.

Addiction was another theme in the responses. Alcohol and narcotics abuse, specifically methamphetamine and opioid addiction, were stressed as factors contributing to increased calls for service by a significant portion of the respondents. Respondents who referenced addiction often voiced frustration with recent drug decriminalization legislation and the sudden absence of mandated treatment opportunities in the criminal justice system. One participant explained simply, “The primary reason [for the increase in calls] is the reclassification of most drug offenses from felonies to misdemeanors. Offenders get a ticket and remain on the street.” Other responses offered criticism of bail reform during their careers, which purportedly allowed addicts to return to the streets almost immediately, failing to disrupt what many described as a “cycle of addiction.”

Many respondents indicated that their communities do not have adequate services to support the homeless, which contributes to increasing calls for service. These responses generally focused on the lack of mental health providers, but shelters and food programs were also discussed. Significantly more participants, however, indicated that local homeless services such as shelters, food distribution organizations, nonprofit service providers, and even generous community members often cause an increase of homeless individuals and a subsequent increase in related calls for service. New public transportation

systems and methadone clinics, for example, were two repeated examples that respondents claimed increased calls for service involving the homeless in their communities. This perception—that well-intentioned homeless service providers actually increase the strain on the local police agency—was evident throughout the responses.

Less prominent themes were scattered within the responses as well. Many participants correlated the increase in calls for service with an increasing homeless population. The responses attributed this increased population to perceptions of rising local housing costs, national economic factors, and even the migration of homeless individuals from neighboring regions. See Appendix B for the complete list of open-ended responses to question 13.

8. Question 14: Obstacles in Handling Calls

This open-ended question prompted participants to describe law enforcement’s obstacles in handling calls involving homeless individuals. The question produced 506 responses, and several themes, some of which echoes those found in response to question 13. One such theme involved officers’ inability to direct homeless individuals to adequate mental health and addiction services. Many also mentioned that, frustratingly, homeless individuals are reluctant to accept available services. Several respondents emphasized that they are rarely able to access resources necessary for success and, when they can, the prospective recipient is often “service resistant.” The “revolving door” of a lenient criminal justice system, a failing mental health system, the reluctance of the homeless to accept services, and the overall inability to collectively respond to this problem were recurring perceptions throughout the dataset.

Further, as in in the responses to question 13, respondents saw local politics, legislation, and related court decisions as hindrances to law enforcement’s ability to address calls involving the homeless. The responses also reflect a conflict between officers’ legal capabilities and the public’s expectation of law enforcement in these situations. This conflict is highlighted several times in the responses, as participants repeated that it is “not illegal to be homeless,” and with a declining number of low-level enforceable offenses, law enforcement is growing ineffective at responding to the public’s demands in this realm.

One respondent summarized these obstacles as simply a “[l]ack of resources and community support. The community demands police do something but [they] do not give us [the] tools to help.” See Appendix B for the complete list of open-ended responses to question 14.

9. Question 15: Related Injuries and Deaths of Police Officers

Question 15 asked participants to estimate the percentage of homeless people in their jurisdictions who have injured or killed police officers in the line of duty. As mentioned previously, the survey aimed to gather data pertaining to the overall impact that homeless individuals have on law enforcement organizations, and this question hoped specifically to determine if any of that strain comes from physical harm to officers. Most of the respondents, approximately 62 percent nationwide, reported that no officer deaths or injuries involved homeless individuals. One-quarter of participants indicated that 10 percent of their officer-injuring suspects were homeless and 5 percent indicated as high as 20 percent were homeless at the time of the violent incident (see Figure 11).

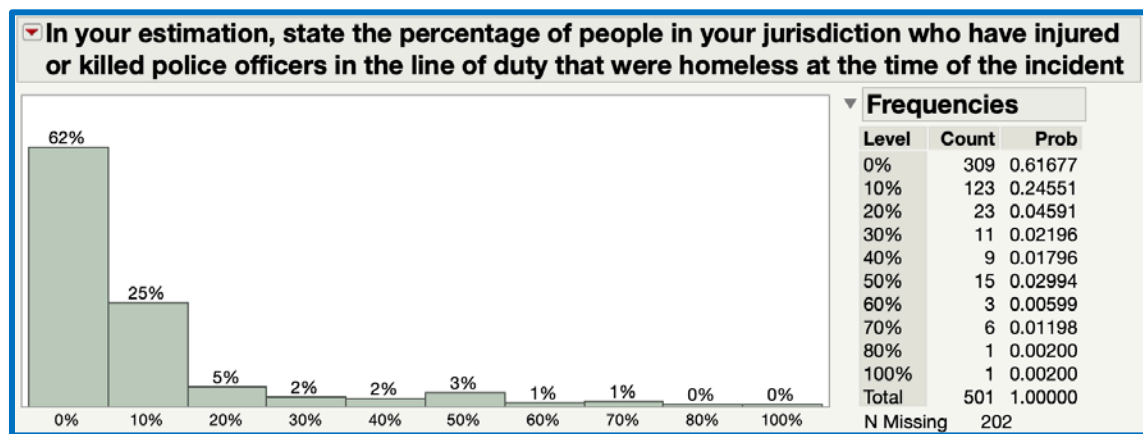


Figure 11. Homeless-Related Injuries and Deaths to Officers

10. Questions 16–18: Mental Illness or Drug or Alcohol Addiction

These three questions were unique in that they provided a glimpse into the respondents’ perception of various obstacles faced by law enforcement when interacting

with subjects suffering from homelessness. As was clearly stressed in the open-ended responses captured in questions 13 and 14, mental illness and addiction are perceived by law enforcement personnel as not only contributing factors that generate calls for service but also a significant hindrance in successfully addressing these interactions. Question 16 stated: In your estimation, state the percentage of your jurisdiction's homeless population that appears to be mentally ill. The respondent was allowed to select percentages ranging from 0 to 100, in increments of 10 percent.

The vast majority of those surveyed indicated that the bulk of homeless individuals in U.S. jurisdictions suffer from mental illness. In fact, as shown in Figure 12, 69 percent of respondents estimated a homeless population of which 50 percent or more suffer from mental illness. Moreover, 45.9 percent of participants estimated that more than 70 percent of their homeless populations have mental health problems. Only 5 percent of the respondents indicated that mental illness does not appear to be a factor. This overwhelming representation of mentally ill subjects within homeless populations, as perceived by law enforcement, is consistent with the open-ended responses to questions 13 and 14.

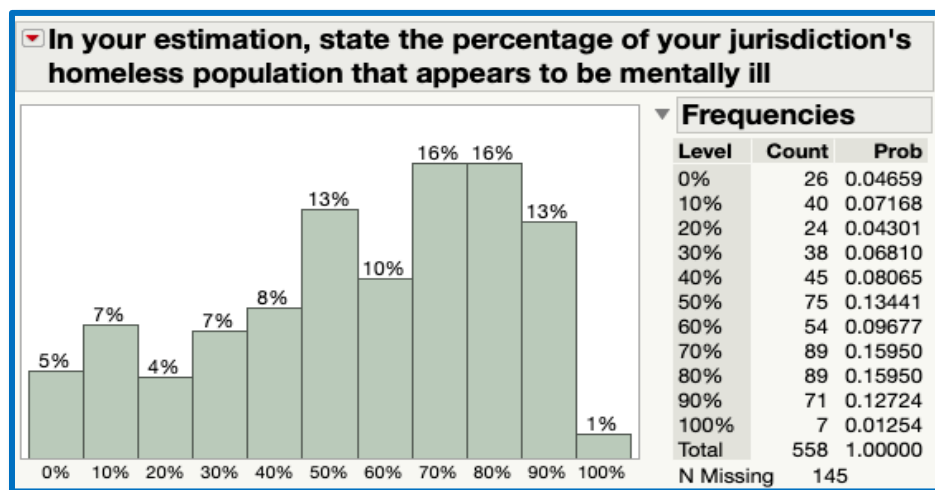


Figure 12. Homeless Population Perceived to Be Mentally Ill

Structured similarly to question 16, question 17 also captured obstacles that amplify the impact of homelessness on law enforcement organizations. This question asked of the participant: In your estimation, state the percentage of your jurisdiction's homeless population that appears to be suffering from narcotics addiction. This question produced parallel results to the mental illness inquiry in question 15. Comparably, 69.7 percent of survey respondents reported that more than half of the homeless population suffers from narcotics addiction (see Figure 13). Also similar to the above-listed mental illness responses, 47 percent of participants indicated that 70 percent or more of the homeless population suffered from narcotics addiction. More remarkably, 16.2 percent of participants estimated that more than 90 percent of their homeless populations suffer from narcotics addiction. Only 5 percent of the respondents indicated that narcotics addiction does not appear to be a factor.

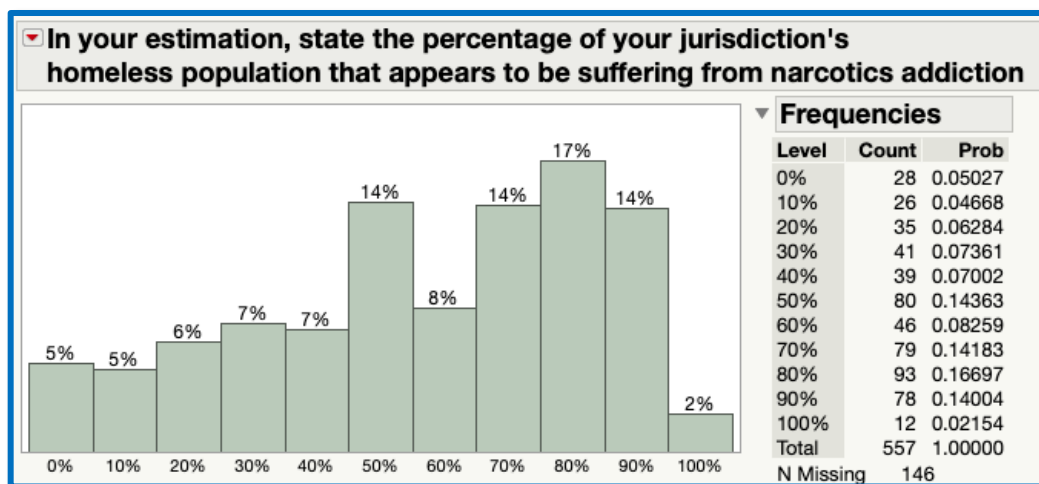


Figure 13. Homeless Population Suffering from Narcotics Addiction

The remaining dependence-related question involved alcohol addiction, stating: In your estimation, state the percentage of your jurisdiction's homeless population that appears to be suffering from alcohol addiction. The results were again strikingly comparable to the previous inquiries regarding mental illness and narcotics addiction. As shown in Figure 14, over 70 percent of the respondents reported that more than half of their respective homeless populations suffer from alcohol addiction. Also of note, 49.7 percent

reported perceived alcoholism within more than 70 percent of the homeless. More surprisingly, and representative of the impediments facing both the homeless community and law enforcement personnel, more than 20 percent of respondents indicated that more than 90 percent of the homeless population within their communities suffer from alcohol addiction. Only 4 percent of those surveyed indicated that alcohol addiction is not a characteristic of their jurisdiction's homeless population. The perceived high levels of addiction and mental illness among the homeless population are also indicative of multiple addictions combined with mental illness in the same individuals.

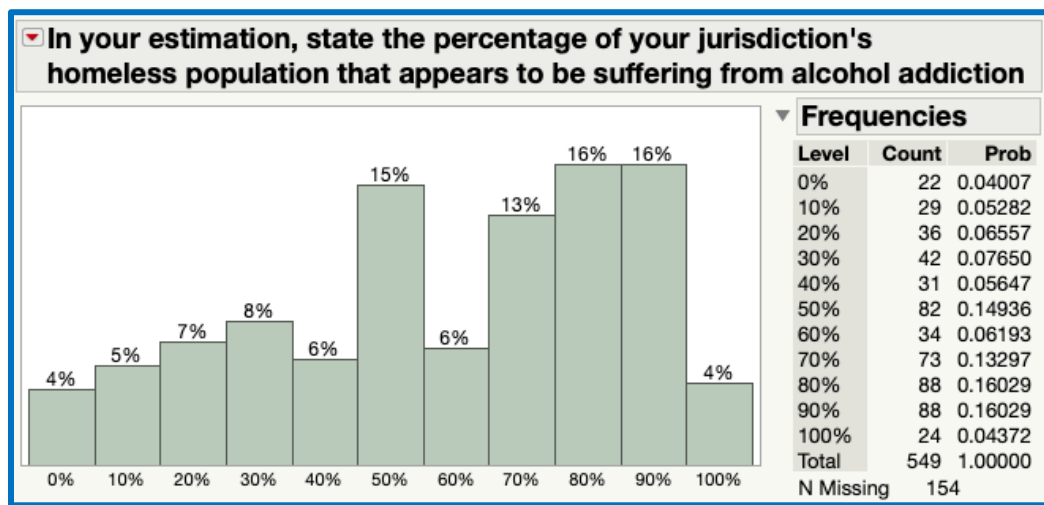


Figure 14. Homeless Population Suffering from Alcohol Addiction

11. Question 19: Service-Resistant Homeless Population

This question captured the perceived percentage of the homeless population that is reluctant to accept services. As shown repeatedly in the responses to the open-ended question 14, the concept of “service resistance” was often described as an obstacle by both service providers and law enforcement personnel. Question 19 aimed to capture the extent of that resistance within the homeless community, as perceived by law enforcement personnel. In short, the homeless population’s reluctance or unwillingness to accept services is arguably one of the most difficult for law enforcement organizations to overcome.

Question 19 stated the following: In your estimation, state the percentage of your jurisdiction's homeless population that is reluctant to accept services and/or resources when offered. Remarkably, the most common response to this question among the nation's participants was 90 percent, followed closely by 80 percent (see Figure 15). In fact, 21.2 percent of answers indicated that 90 to 100 percent of homeless individuals within the respondent's jurisdiction are service-resistant. The vast majority (73.2 percent) of the participants indicated that more than half of their homeless populations are reluctant to accept services or resources.

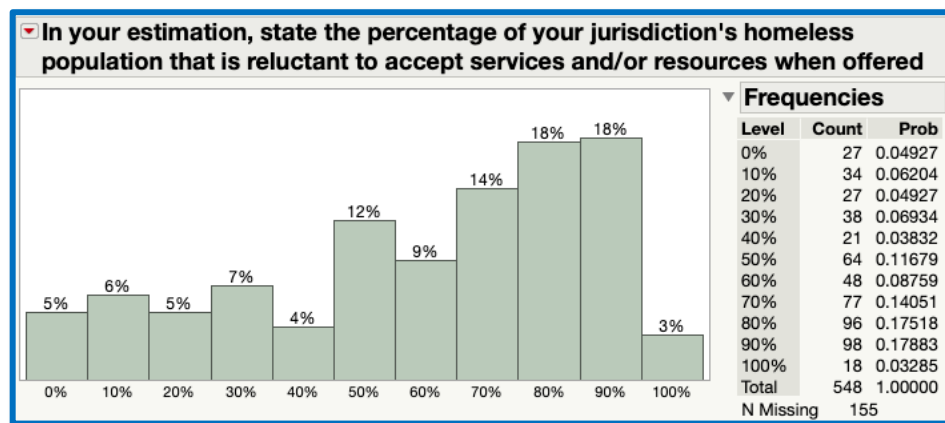


Figure 15. Homeless Population that is Service Resistant

12. Questions 20–25: Organizational Response

The following combination of questions focused primarily on law enforcement's organizational response to homelessness within the community. As shown in Figure 16, many law enforcement organizations have established specialized details or designated a certain number of personnel to address homeless-related concerns. The responses indicate that approximately one-third of U.S. law enforcement organizations use such a unit or specifically designated personnel.

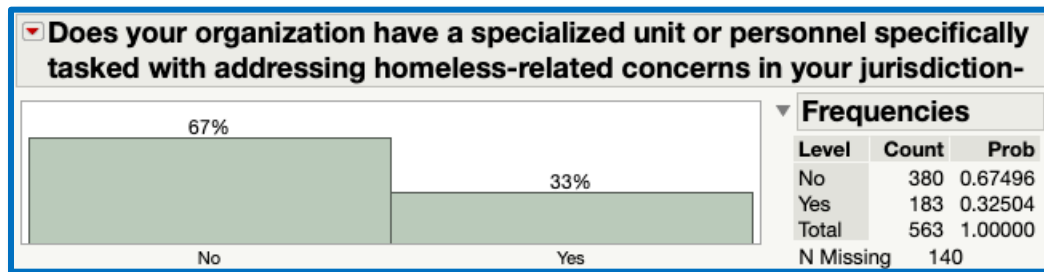


Figure 16. Specialized Unit

Question 21 asked how many officers were assigned to this detail. The most common response across the nation, consisting of 19.9 percent of the responses, reflected a two-person homeless detail. Relatively small details were the most common, with 33.9 percent or respondents reporting one- to-two-officer units, 31 percent with three to five officers, and 15.2 percent with six to eight (see Table 3). Details of 20 to 25 officers constituted 5.3 percent and the remainder of responses from the participants revealed units specifically tasked with homeless-related issues as large as 250 officers. The designation of personnel specifically tasked with homelessness is revealing and indicates the strain on law enforcement organizations nationwide.

Table 3. Size of Specialized Unit

Size of Homeless Detail	(N)	% of All Responses
1–2	58	33.9%
3–5	53	31%
6–8	26	15.2%
9–11	8	4.7%
12–19	7	4.1%
20–25	9	5.3%
50	2	1.2%
100	3	1.8%
200	2	1.2%
250	1	0.6%
Sample (n)	171	

Question 22 asked the participants to indicate whether these specialized homeless units or designated personnel, based on their observations, have been effective in lessening homelessness in their communities. The multiple-choice format allowed respondents to select one of five different levels of effectiveness, ranging from “yes, a great deal” to “no, in fact they are counter-productive” (see Figure 17). The most common response was “yes, a little,” which represented 47.4 percent of the participants’ replies. The observation that these types of details were only effective at lessening homelessness a “moderate amount” represented 17.1 percent of the responses while “yes, a great deal” represented 14.3 percent. Of greater concern are the 21.1 percent of responses indicating that the specialized units are either not effective at all (19.4 percent) or actually counter-productive (1.7 percent). Although law enforcement is committing valued personnel to these specialized units, over 68 percent of respondents indicated that these teams have little to no impact, or even a counter-productive effect, on lessening homelessness.

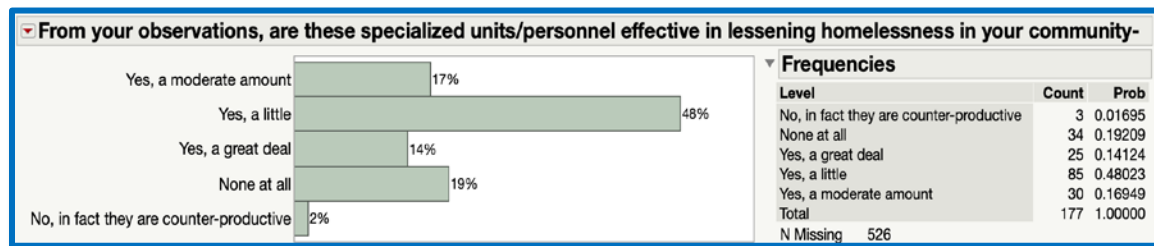


Figure 17. Effectiveness of Specialized Unit

Question 23, the final open-ended question, asked respondents to share how their agencies measure the success of these specialized homeless units. More than one-third of the participants indicated that their organizations generally quantify success by tracking the number of service offerings or referrals provided to the homeless. However, while many agencies track the number of referrals offered, others tally only the number of service referrals that are accepted by homeless individuals. In contrast, some organizations appear to gauge their homeless units’ success by monitoring fluctuations in homeless-related calls for service, citizen complaints, and general feedback from the community. Many respondents indicated that they simply total the number of interactions the unit has with

homeless individuals as a metric of success. Other recurring themes included reliance on biannual homeless counts or census data, the number of homeless camp abatements, and the organizations' general ability to address crime and concerns within these communities. Very few responses included counting or quantifying the number of successful transitions away from homelessness.

Another common theme captured with this question suggests many agencies that have a specialized homeless unit or designated personnel struggle to track the success of their units at all. Many responses conveyed frustration, presumably over the organization's inability to define success in this realm. Surprisingly, over 20 percent of the respondents indicated that either they do not know how success is measured or their organizations have not measured the success of their homeless-specific units at all. See Appendix B for the complete list of open-ended responses to question 23.

Questions 24 and 25 addressed the strain of these units on the organization as a whole. In a period when recruitment and retention in the law enforcement community has been of great concern, the allocation of highly valued personnel to specialized homeless-focused units or positions is challenging. Therefore, the survey asked those who indicated that their organization staffs homeless-specific units whether they currently have vacancies in other positions within their organizations. This survey question was designed to provide insight into which law enforcement positions are being abandoned, or deprioritized, to address homeless issues across the jurisdictions. In response to question 24, 42.1 percent of the respondents indicated that they have vacancies in their organization.

Question 25 asked the participant to specify which positions are being left unfilled. The respondents were asked to select from ten position categories, and the survey allowed for an "other" response with a free-form. Approximately 34.1 percent of the respondents indicated that patrol officer positions have been left vacant while law enforcement organizations direct personnel to staff units focused on homelessness (see Figure 18). The second largest category of vacancies fell in the general investigative/detective category (16.5 percent of the responses), followed by traffic enforcement (14.3 percent), narcotics enforcement (13.2 percent), gang enforcement (7.1 percent), and so on.

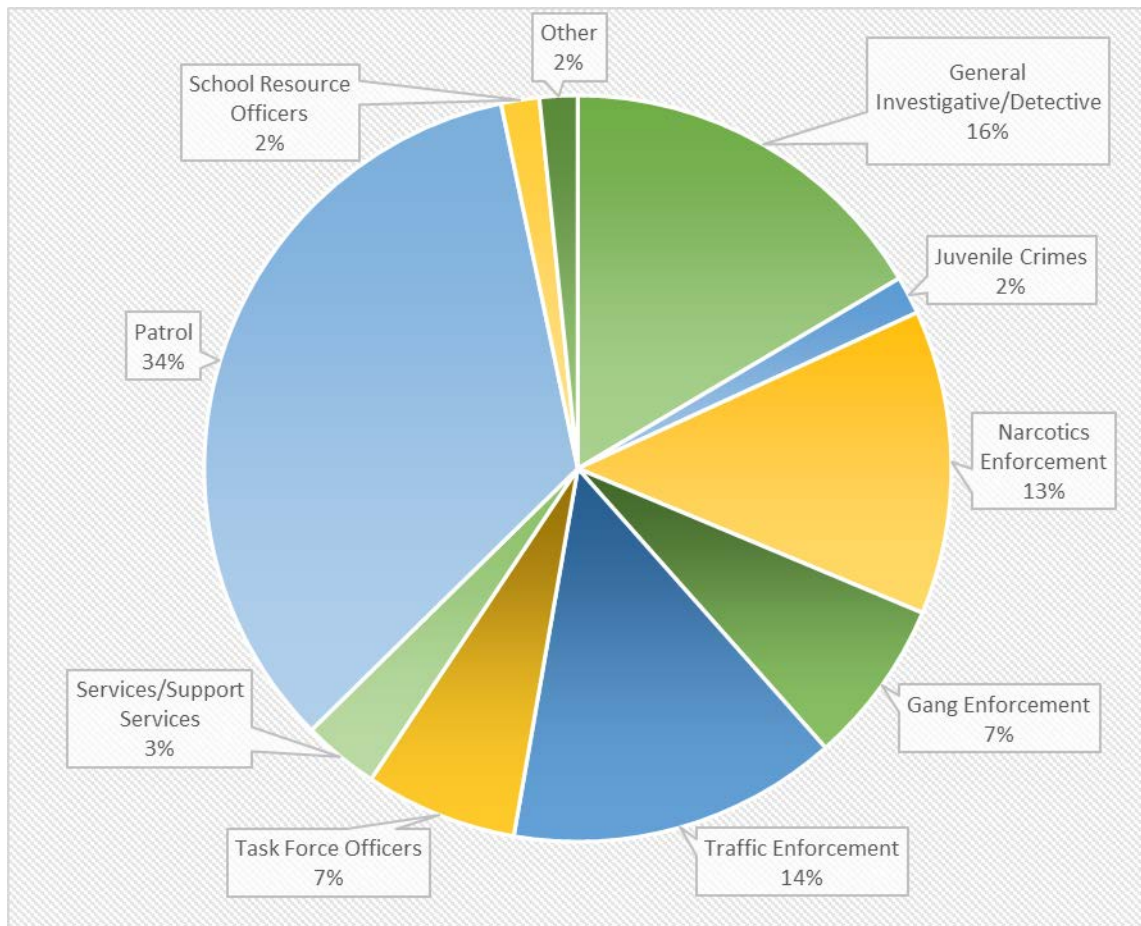


Figure 18. Unfilled Vacancies in Law Enforcement Organizations with Homeless Units

13. Questions 26 and 27: Non-Law-Enforcement Partnerships

Questions 26 asked if agencies had partnered with organizations outside law enforcement to address concerns involving homelessness; if so, question 27—the final question of the survey—asked the respondent to assess if these partnerships effectively lessen homelessness in their community. Responses to question 26 revealed that over 80 percent of the agencies have forged some type of partnership with non-law-enforcement organizations to address homelessness. This finding is revealing when compared to the results of question 20, which indicated that only 32.5 percent of police organizations have specialized units specifically tasked with homeless issues. These data indicate that many more organizations are relying on partnerships before creating and staffing specialized

units. Also of interest is that among those respondent agencies with a specialized unit, over 98 percent have forged partnerships with non-law-enforcement entities to address homelessness. The most common response to question 27, representing 46 percent of the answers, shows that the partnerships are effective, but only minimally (see Figure 19). Only 8.6 percent of the participants reported a “very effective” partnership while 20.7 percent consider the partnership “moderately effective.” In contrast, 24.8 percent of the responses indicated the partnerships are either “not effective” in or are “counter-productive” to lessening homelessness in the community.

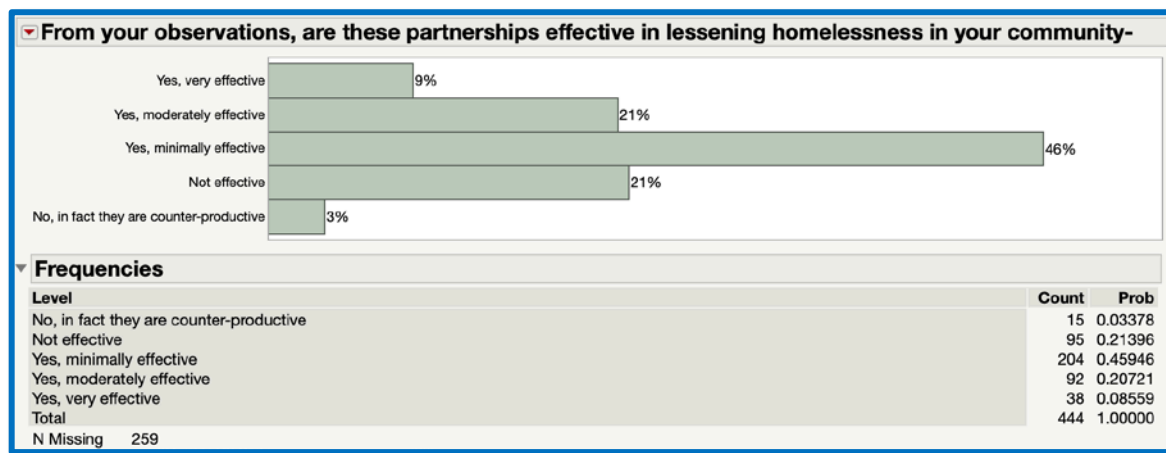


Figure 19. Effectiveness of Partnerships

C. ANALYSIS

Analysis of the survey responses reveals a vast discrepancy in perceptions between participants vis-à-vis the number of years served in law enforcement, as captured in demographic question 2. This generational gap is significant in terms of the overall perception of homelessness throughout the survey. As mentioned in Chapter II, this survey was distributed nationally with assistance from police chiefs professional associations. Recognizing that most participants in these associations are likely senior members of their organizations, the survey surprisingly produced significant representation from law enforcement personnel with far less tenure in the profession. While the respondents did consist primarily of senior law enforcement officials, as expected, with 71.5 percent

indicating they have over twenty-one years of experience in the field, 16 percent of the participants indicated they have less than fifteen years as sworn law enforcement officers, and 8.7 percent reported they have between one and ten years. This variation provides a unique opportunity to compare the perceptions of senior law enforcement officers to those with less experience.

Almost immediately upon analysis, it became evident that officers with less experience perceive the impact of homelessness on law enforcement to be far more daunting than their senior colleagues do. For example, 38.3 percent of respondents that reported they have between one and ten years of experience indicated that more than 80 percent of their calls for service involve homeless individuals (see Figure 20). Further, over 70 percent of the less tenured respondents indicated that half or more of their agencies' daily calls for service involve homelessness.

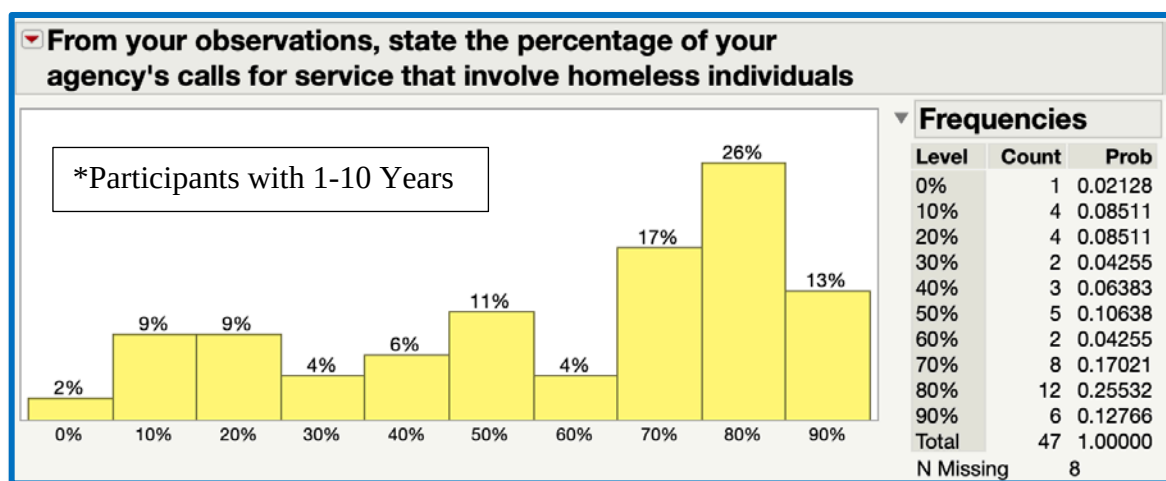


Figure 20. Calls for Service Involving Homeless Individuals: Responses from Officers with 1–10 Years' Experience

In contrast, participants who reported having sixteen years of experience or more indicated a much more minimal drain on resources related to homelessness. Figure 21 reflects responses from the same question shown in Figure 20, but from these more experienced respondents. The vast majority of senior law enforcement participants perceive homeless-related calls for service as much less taxing on their agencies' workload.

While less-experienced officers overwhelmingly reported that at least half of their daily calls for service involve homelessness, most senior law enforcement officers report quite the opposite: between 0 percent and 10 percent of their organizations' calls for service.

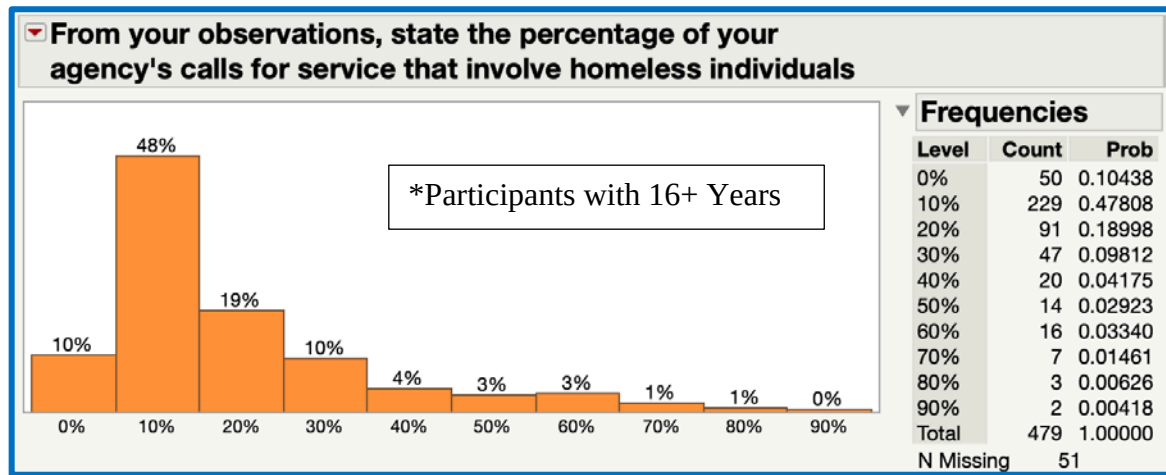


Figure 21. Calls for Service Involving Homeless Individuals: Responses from Officers with 16+ Years' Experience

The same discrepancy appeared when participants were asked to estimate the percentage of time their agencies spend dealing with calls for service or other activities related to homeless individuals; the results were equally unbalanced. The most common response from participants with one to ten years of experience was 80 percent (see Figure 22). Over half of these participants (52.1 percent) indicated that 70 to 90 percent of their agency's workday is spent addressing homelessness. In a stark contrast, the majority of senior law enforcement participants perceived that only 10 percent of their agency's time is spent on such calls, and the bulk of responses from this subgroup ranged from 0 to 30 percent (see Figure 23).

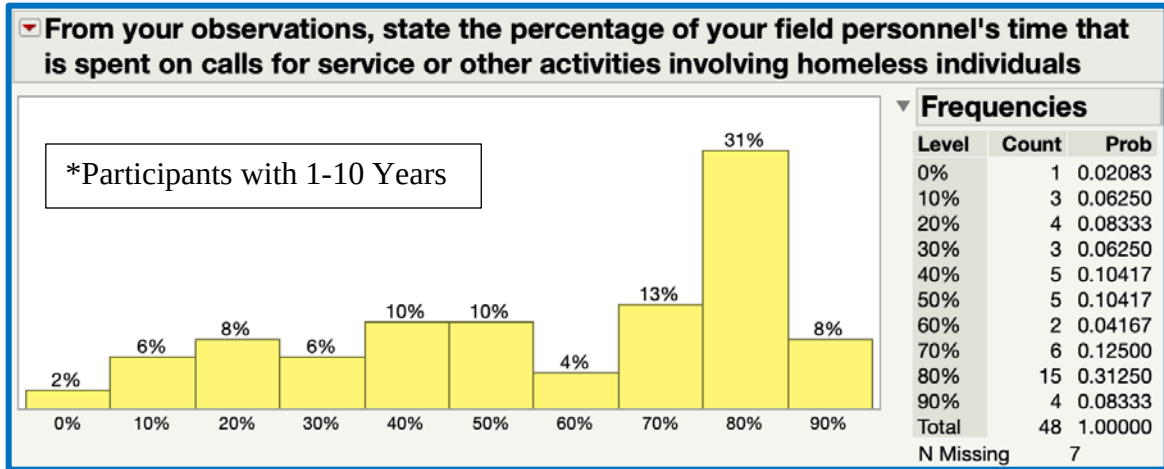


Figure 22. Time Spent on Service Calls: Responses from Officers with 1–10 Years' Experience

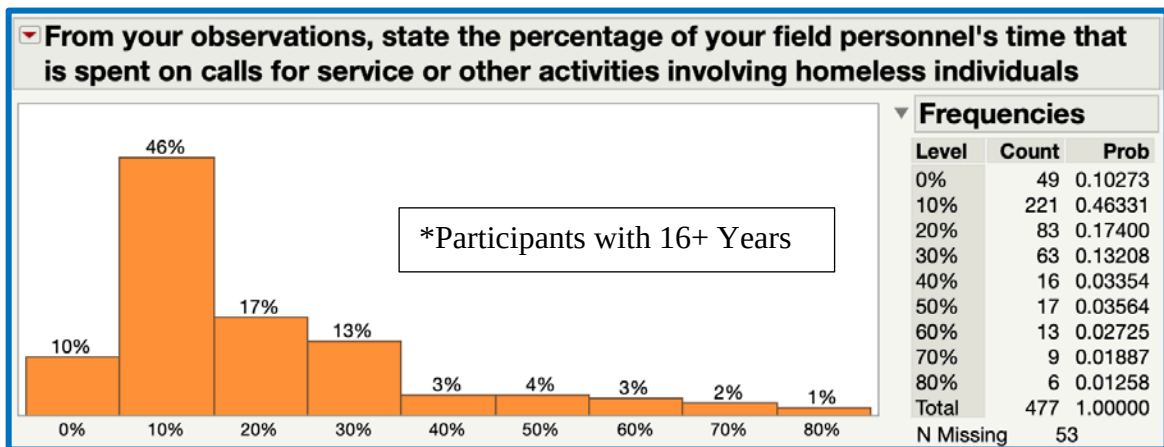


Figure 23. Time Spent on Service Calls: Responses from Officers with 16+ Years' Experience

Question 11, which requested the percentage of the agency's custodial arrests that consist of homeless individuals, also revealed differing perceptions between these two subgroups. In the less experienced group, only 4.3 percent of the respondents provided answers ranging from 0 to 10 percent (see Figure 24). Of the responses from senior law enforcement personnel, 68 percent fell within the same 0 to 10 percent range (see Figure 25). Remarkably, while 68 percent of senior law enforcement officials believe fewer than

10 percent of their agencies' arrests involve homeless individuals, 70 percent of less experienced officers believe homeless subjects represent more than half of their arrests.

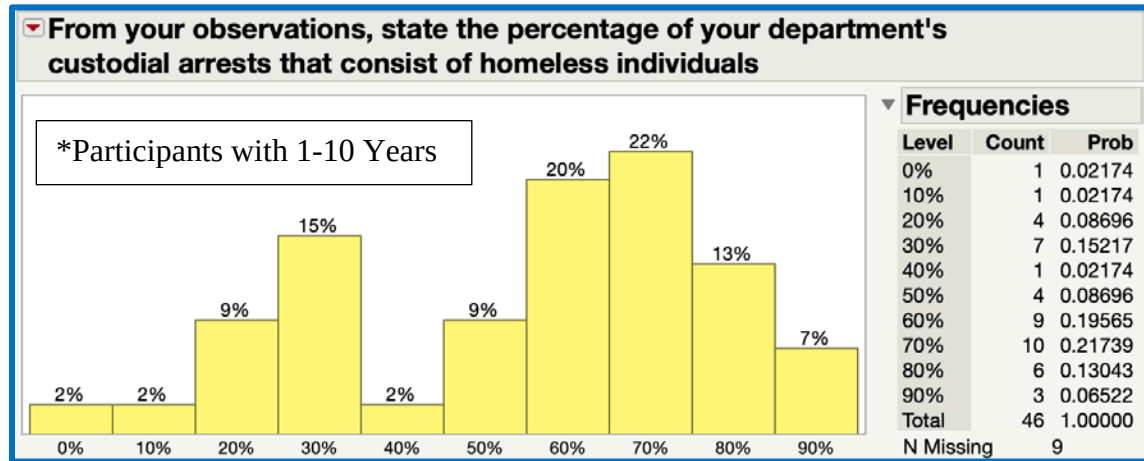


Figure 24. Arrests: Responses from Officers with 1–10 Years' Experience

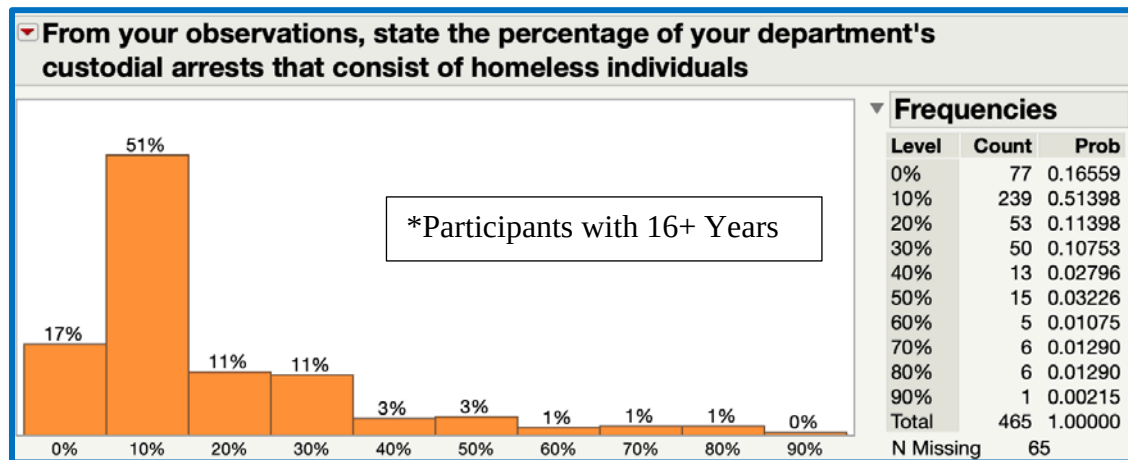


Figure 25. Arrests: Responses from Officers with 16+ Years' Experience

This discrepancy among officers with different experience levels is likely a result of the varying roles these officers traditionally fill. Officers who have been on the job for one to ten years are more likely to be in a uniformed, field enforcement position and are more prone to physically respond to calls for service involving homelessness. Thus, the less experienced officers are likely in a better position to witness the impact of

homelessness on their organizations firsthand. A field officer with minimal experience, for example, can assess what percentage of time he spends per day on calls involving homelessness with ease. Sworn personnel with more than sixteen years of experience, however, are more likely to be in investigative, administrative, or supervisory roles and, consequently, less likely to face calls for service associated with homelessness. Moreover, senior law enforcement officers are likely making assumptions about the impact of homelessness on their organizations rather than observing these types of calls firsthand. The data indicate a lack of communication between less experienced officers and those with more tenure.

This disconnect is problematic because senior law enforcement officers are also more likely to occupy command positions associated with policymaking, resource allocation, staffing, and general organizational decision-making. The data suggest that homelessness is having a much greater impact on law enforcement organizations than is perceived by their senior members. In short, senior law enforcement officers, presumably organizational decision-makers, are not communicating effectively with the less experienced, line-level officers who are engaging the problem firsthand. This is substantially more concerning when the responses to question 23 are included in the analysis—indicating that many agencies are doing very little to track the effectiveness of their efforts toward combatting homelessness.

IV. SET UP FOR FAILURE

As discussed in Chapter I, recent events have led to debate about whether police organizations are the right tool for the job when it comes to dealing with the homeless population. This debate, coupled with dwindling budgets and personnel shortages, is causing law enforcement leaders to reassess if their organizations' response to homelessness is appropriate. However, the survey administered for this thesis revealed that these leaders should also be considering the possibility that they are inadvertently setting their personnel up for failure. As some areas of the country commit significant time and resources to homelessness, it is critical that officers are set up for success. The survey showed, however, that many organizations' approaches leave officers spending a sizable portion of their day engaged with a problem they simply do not believe can be solved. California and Texas, among other states, offer examples of law enforcement organizations that are ill-equipped and under-resourced, and facing unsurpassable combinations of mental illness, addiction, and service-resistance in the homeless community. These states, discussed in more detail below, are the home to many law enforcement organizations that are, regrettably, set up to fail.

A. CALIFORNIA

Police organizations in the Golden State face overwhelming odds when engaging the homeless population. Arguably, California's homeless situation is the most daunting in the nation. In January 2019, California had a homeless population of approximately 151,278 on any given night, according to the U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness.⁷² Remarkably, California's homeless population represents 26.73 percent of the nation's total. The state with the next largest homeless population is New York, with 92,091 people experiencing homelessness during the same time frame.⁷³ And while California and New York offer the highest rates of homelessness in the country, at 38 and 46 people per 10,000

⁷² "Homeless in California Statistics 2018. Homeless Estimation by State," U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness, accessed September 26, 2020, <https://www.usich.gov/homelessness-statistics/ca>.

⁷³ "Homeless in New York Statistics 2018. Homeless Estimation by State," U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness, accessed September 26, 2020, <https://www.usich.gov/homelessness-statistics/ny>.

residents, California is distinctive in terms of its homeless population that is unsheltered.⁷⁴ Significant in terms of law enforcement strain, 71.7 percent of California's homeless population is unsheltered while only 4.4 percent of New York's population is similarly categorized.⁷⁵

Also of great concern for California law enforcement is the fact that, while homelessness declined in most states between 2018 and 2019, California observed a 16 percent increase, equating to 22,306 individuals.⁷⁶ This increasing population is particularly troubling compared to the rest of the states because California also claims the highest percentage of individuals deemed chronically homeless. According to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), the term *chronically homeless* “refers to an individual with a disability who has been continuously homeless for one year or more or has experienced at least four episodes of homelessness in the last three years where the combined length of time homeless on those occasions is at least 12 months.”⁷⁷ Remarkably, 27.47 percent of the state's homeless individuals are categorized as chronically homeless.⁷⁸ By contrast, only 7.8 percent of New York's homeless population is deemed chronically homeless.⁷⁹ Given these disconcerting statistics, California offers a unique opportunity to assess the impact that elevated levels of homelessness have on law enforcement organizations. The survey, as detailed in Chapter III, revealed multiple themes from which law enforcement leaders and policymakers across the nation can learn.

Agents from California who responded to the survey indicated that field personnel spend a significant amount of time dealing with issues related to the homeless population. Incredibly, when asked how much of their time is spent on calls for service from the homeless (question 10 of the survey), the most common response from California

⁷⁴ Meghan Henry et al., *The 2019 Annual Homeless Assessment Report (AHAR) to Congress, Part 1: Point-in-Time Estimates of Homelessness* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, January 2020).

⁷⁵ Meghan Henry et al.

⁷⁶ Meghan Henry et al., 1.

⁷⁷ Meghan Henry et al., 2.

⁷⁸ U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness, “Homeless in California Statistics 2018.”

⁷⁹ U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness, “Homeless in New York Statistics 2018.”

participants was 50 percent and the median response was 43.21 percent of the time (see Figure 26). Further analysis reveals that over 20 percent reported that more than 70 percent of their time is spent on such calls and almost 9 percent indicated that over 80 percent of their work day is spent answering calls related to homelessness. This exorbitant amount of time consumed by calls related to homelessness in California is concerning.

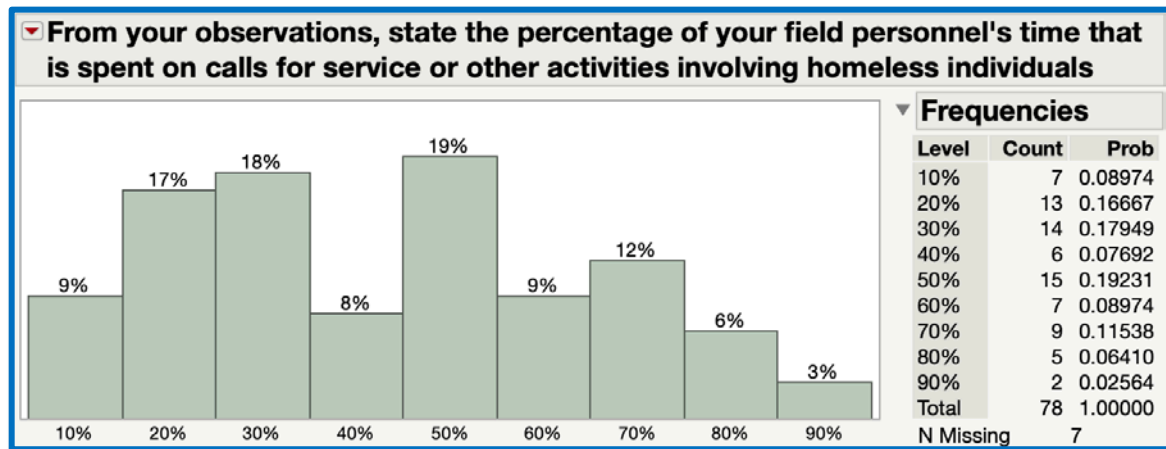


Figure 26. Time Spent on Calls: Responses from California Officers

This data is increasingly alarming when mental illness, addiction, and resistance to services are considered as well. Survey questions 16 through 19 captured the perceptions of respondents regarding mental illness, alcohol addiction, narcotics addiction, and reluctance to accept services among the homeless. California participants—like most other participants—reported that a drastically high percentage of the homeless population appears to be encumbered by these obstacles. When asked what percentage of the homeless population suffered from mental illness, California respondents reported 70 percent most frequently, and nearly half indicated that 70 percent or more of the homeless population seemingly suffers from mental illness (see Figure 27). The perception that a large percentage of the homeless community suffers from mental illness is not unique to California, however. In fact, total responses from across the nation are relatively consistent with the perceptions of California participants.

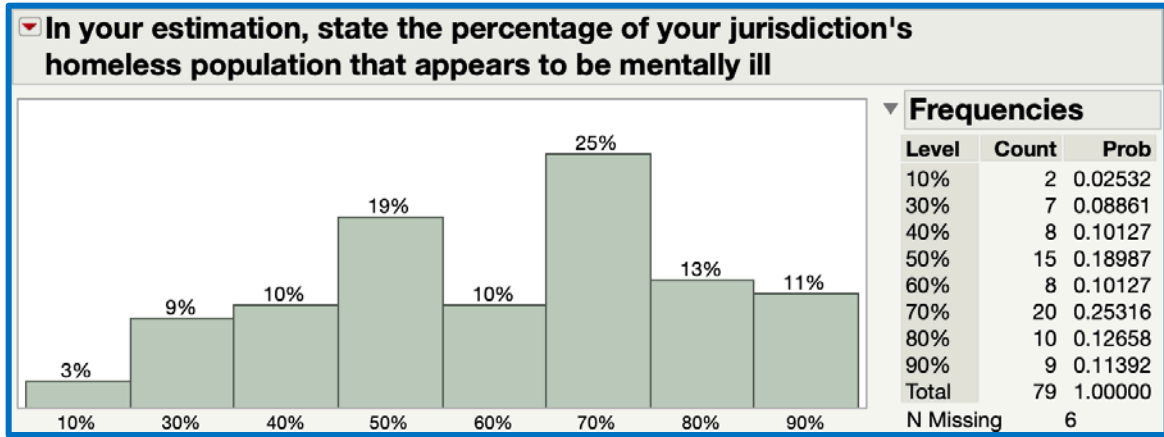


Figure 27. Mental Illness: Responses from California Officers

California respondents by and large perceive the homeless population as suffering from narcotics and alcohol addiction as well. In fact, addiction was indicated as more common than mental illness. The most common response from California participants was that 80 percent of the population suffers from such addiction (see Figure 28 and 29). California's median response related to narcotics addiction specifically was 67.01 percent, significantly higher than the nationwide median response of 56.91 percent.

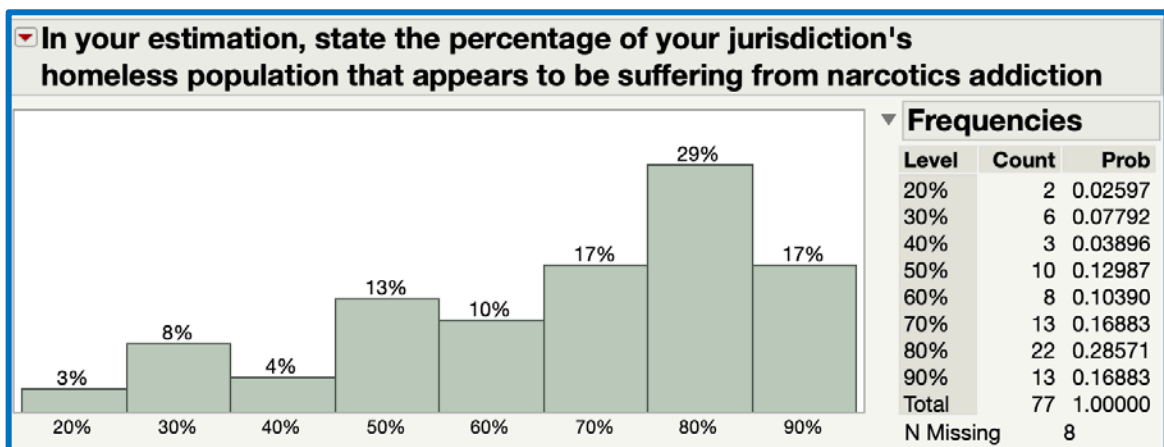


Figure 28. Narcotics Addiction: Responses from California Officers

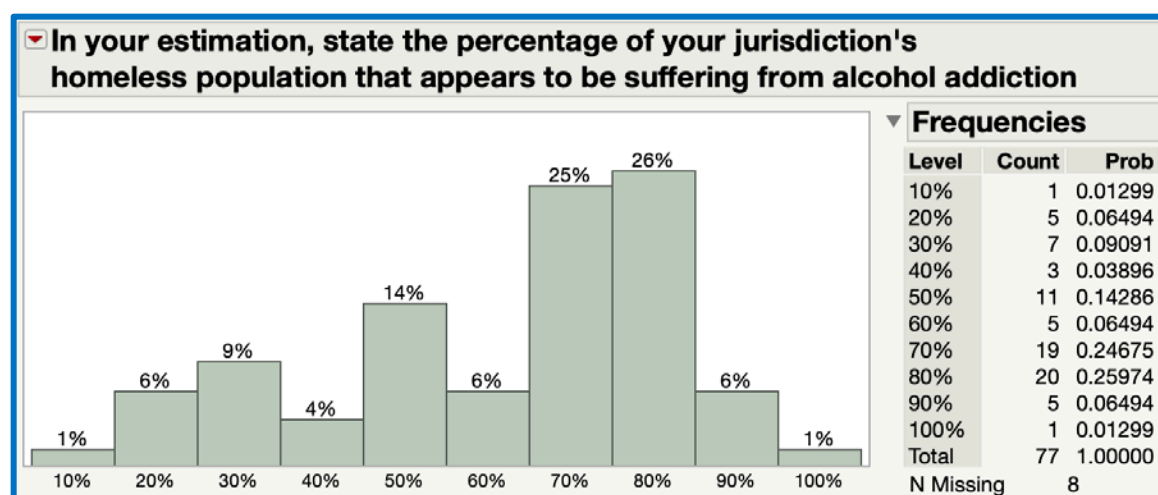


Figure 29. Alcohol Addiction: Responses from California Officers

The homeless population's resistance to accept services is a significant obstacle from the perspective of law enforcement officers. Similar to the national results, California participants most commonly reported that 90 percent of the homeless population they encounter are reluctant to accept services (see Figure 30). In fact, 41.02 percent of California participants indicated that 90 percent of the homeless population is service-resistant. Many California law enforcement organizations, similar to organizations across the country, are being asked to engage community members that, according to respondents, simply do not want their help.

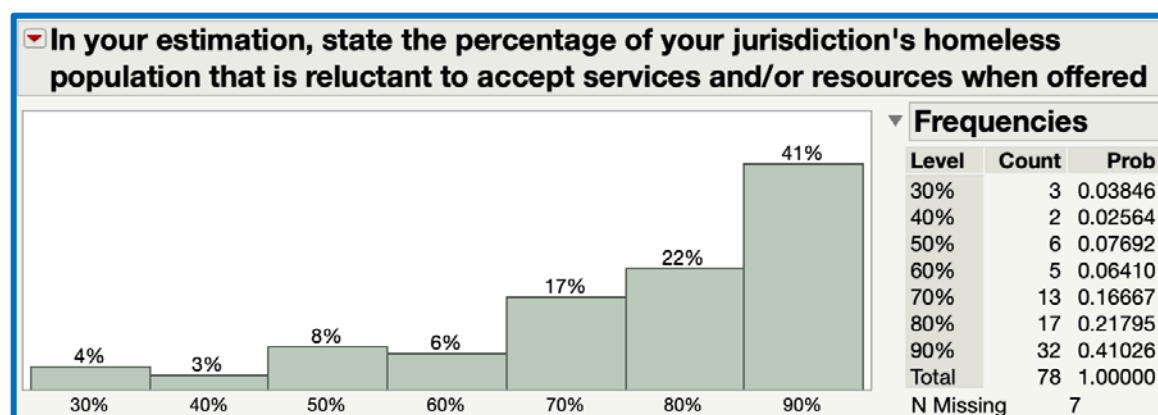


Figure 30. Resource-Resistance: Responses from California Officers

These responses reveal that California’s law enforcement personnel are spending a significant portion of their day—often most of their day—addressing problems that they are ill-equipped to resolve. Many of the open-ended responses from California officers to question 14 (which asked about obstacles when responding to calls) included frustrated references to the lack of available resources, specifically for long-term mental health care, and the recurring suggestion that the homeless community is reluctant to accept services. One California respondent reported, “Most homeless calls are cyclical and the issue is never solved.” Another indicated simply, “We do not have [the] tools for solving homelessness. . . . The homeless have much more [of] a need for social services, mental health treatment, drug/alcohol services, etc.” Another officer conveyed that the primary obstacle facing police organizations in their efforts with homelessness is “frustrated communities” that are “predominantly looking to law enforcement as the solution.” Data from the survey reveals that California law enforcement officers have a definite desire to help to combat homelessness, but participants certainly do not believe police organizations are capable of yielding a solution.

B. TEXAS

A substantial homeless population in the Lone Star State has had a drastic impact on law enforcement organizations as well. A January 2019 count revealed an estimated 25,848 homeless individuals residing within the state.⁸⁰ The sizable population of Texas—trailing only behind California, New York, and Florida—contributes 4.57 percent of the nation’s total homeless population.⁸¹ Texas’s geographical size produces a sizable contribution to the national homeless estimates; however, the rate of homelessness in the state (9 people experiencing homelessness per 10,000 people) is significantly lower than that national average of 17 per 10,000.⁸²

⁸⁰ “Homeless in Texas Statistics 2018. Homeless Estimation by State,” U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness, accessed October 14, 2020, <https://www.usich.gov/homelessness-statistics/tx>.

⁸¹ U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness.

⁸² Henry et al., *The 2019 Annual Homeless Assessment Report (AHAR) to Congress*, 12.

Although it trails behind California estimates, the chronically homeless population in Texas, which is 13.58 percent of the total homeless population, is nonetheless significant to law enforcement in the state.⁸³ Though it is only a fraction of the homeless population in the state, this subgroup is far more likely to reside unsheltered than are those without chronic patterns of homelessness.⁸⁴ Texas offers an opportunity to examine a state that has a significant homeless population but that does not reach the drastic estimates of California.

Survey respondents from Texas reported a significant amount of time spent on calls for service involving homelessness, actually surpassing that of California participants. While California participants produced a median response of 43.21 percent to the relevant question (question 10), Texas participants suggested that much more of their field personnel's time is spent on calls involving homelessness (see Figure 31), with a median response of 54.88 percent; further, more than one-third of the respondents indicated that 80 to 90 percent of their personnel's day is consumed by activities involving homelessness.

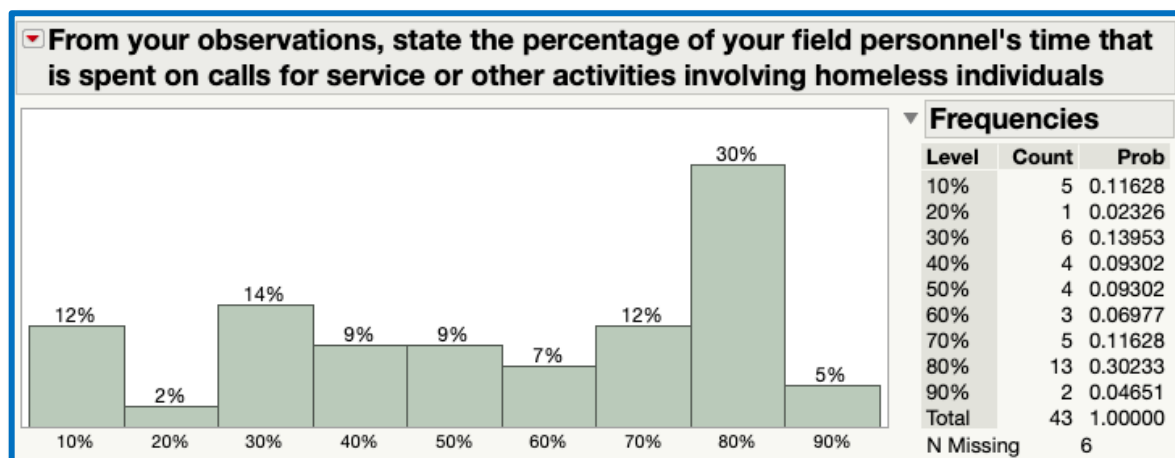


Figure 31. Time Spent on Calls: Responses from Texas Officers

⁸³ U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness, "Homeless in Texas Statistics 2018."

⁸⁴ Henry et al., *The 2019 Annual Homeless Assessment Report (AHAR) to Congress*, 66.

Texas participant responses to question 16, which asked the officer to estimate the percentage of the homeless population that appears to be mentally ill, were even more staggering than California responses, with a media response of 71.59 percent. The majority of the group estimated that 80 to 90 percent of the homeless population is struggling to overcome mental health obstacles (see Figure 32).

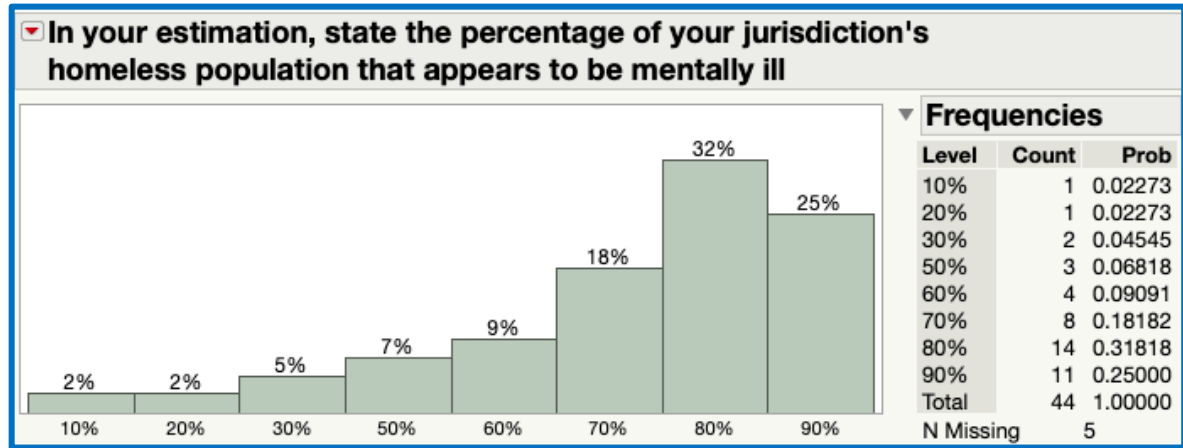


Figure 32. Mental Illness: Responses from Texas Officers

Addiction also emerged as a significant factor in Texas. The most common response from Texas participants indicated that 90 percent of homeless individuals they encounter appear to suffer from alcohol and narcotics addiction (see Figure 33 and 34). Again surpassing the state of California, the median response to the narcotics addiction inquiry in Texas was 78.37 percent while the median response to the alcohol addiction question was 73.72 percent. Both inquiries captured significant estimated addiction percentages in the state's homeless population.

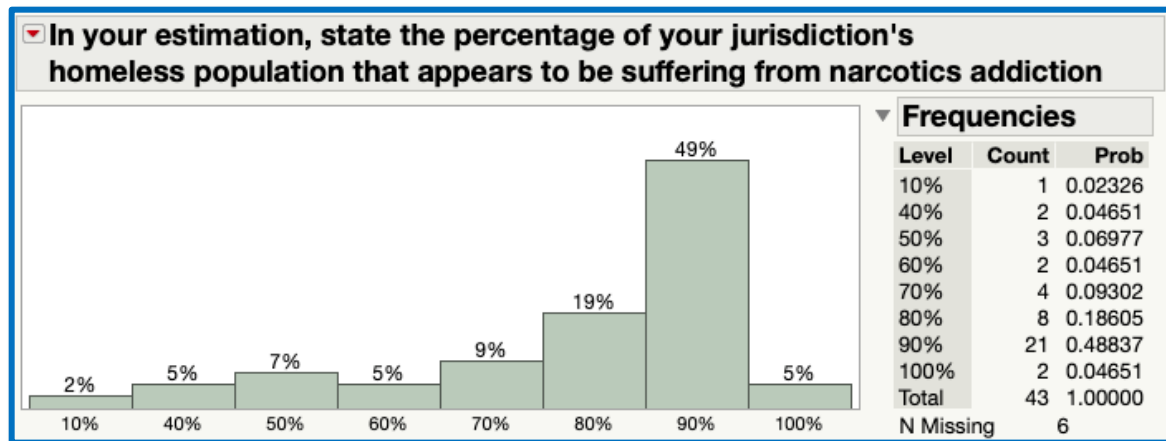


Figure 33. Narcotics Addiction: Responses from Texas Officers

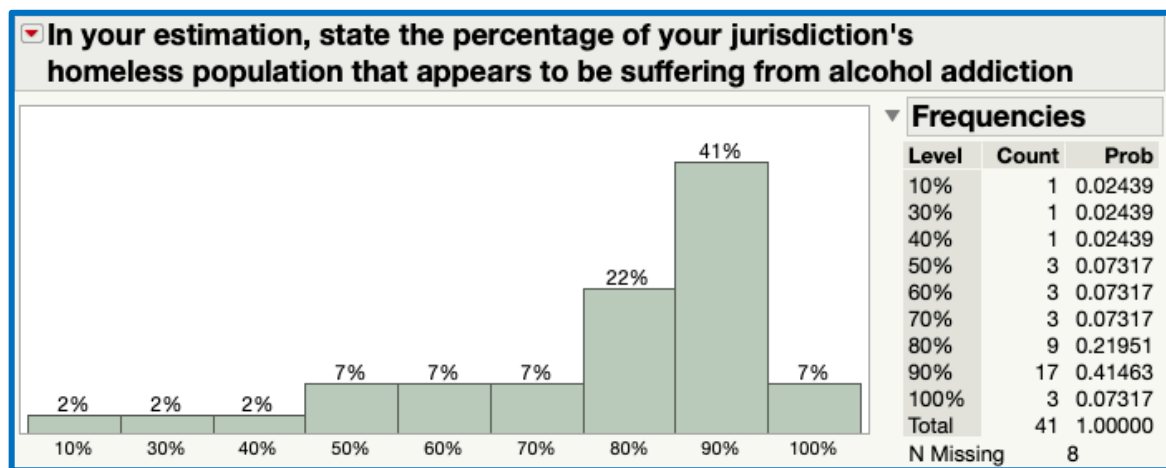


Figure 34. Alcohol Addiction: Responses from Texas Officers

In response to question 19, which asked the participant to state the percentage of the homeless population that was reluctant to accept services and/or resources when offered, Texas participants' most common response was 70 percent. Further, over one-third of the respondents indicated that more than 80 percent of the homeless population is service-resistant (see Figure 35). The preponderance of Texas participants (88.64 percent) indicated that half or more of their communities' homeless populations are service-resistant. Texas is unique in that respondents most commonly reported that 70 percent of the homeless community is service-resistant. In comparison, the most common answer in

both California and the United States as a whole was 90 percent. In Texas, the perceived resistance to accept assistance is lower than in other jurisdictions, but still substantial.

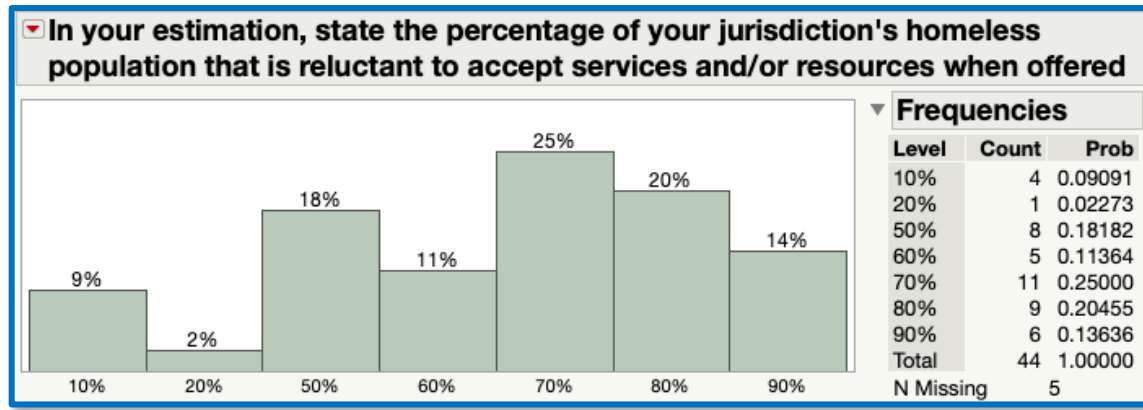


Figure 35. Resource-Resistance: Responses from Texas Officers

In short, Texas law enforcement personnel are spending a substantial amount of time on actions surrounding homelessness; simultaneously, they perceive their homeless populations to be overwhelmingly burdened by impasses that law enforcement officers are incapable of overcoming, such as mental illness and addiction. According to the survey responses, Texas officers, on average, are spending more than half of their day on activities surrounding homelessness. Of greater concern is the fact that over one-third of the respondents reported that 80 to 90 percent of a typical day in the field is consumed with such activities. Simply put, communities in the Texas are employing a substantial amount of costly, limited law enforcement resources to address calls for service that are perceived to have a meager chance of success.

The open-ended responses from Texas law enforcement personnel further describe this organizational strain and reflect a clear frustration within police organizations. Similar to data captured from California participants, for question 14, Texas officers placed great emphasis on the lack of mental health resources, overwhelming levels of addiction among the homeless population, and diminishing criminal statutes in their respective jurisdictions. One participant concluded, “The law enforcement calls for service are just a symptom of the underlying problems, mostly mental illness and addiction. The criminal justice system

is not designed to treat mental illness or addiction, which results in a revolving door of public order and nuisance crimes committed by the homeless.” Another participant indicated simply, “It’s an addiction problem, not a housing problem.”

Texas participants also frequently highlighted the perception that many homeless resources contribute to the problem. One participant indicated that his municipality “caters to the homeless and continues to funnel money to programs to benefit the homeless. This has only increased the homeless population in the city. It is drawing them here.” Despite such indications that some social programs may contribute to the problem locally, the overwhelming theme among the open-ended responses, from both California and Texas participants, is the perception that police organizations are expected, somehow, to address the rising homeless populations yet have no resources to do so.

C. ANALYSIS

The “Impact of Homelessness on U.S. Law Enforcement” survey data suggest that overwhelming obstacles are facing law enforcement in specific areas of the country. Organizations in Texas and California are deploying drastic law enforcement resources in environments that, quite simply, offer little chance for positive outcomes. These dire circumstances—illustrated by the alarming presence of reported mental illness, addiction, and resistance to services among the homeless population—have left law enforcement officers incapable of success. These environments, described repeatedly in the responses as deficient in applicable resources, have produced frustration among officers. The data from California and Texas indicate that many law enforcement organizations do not have access to resources to successfully resolve the problems that consume a substantial portion of their workday.

The most commonly absent resource mentioned in the open-ended responses from both California and Texas participants was access to suitable mental health facilities. One participant from Texas stated, “There is no long-term answer to deal with the mental health side of it.” A resounding tone of defeat in the responses reveals frustration with the use of the criminal justice system as the mechanism to address mental illness in the community. One respondent from Texas asserted, “The jails should not be the de facto mental health

facility.” While numerous others referenced a lack of inpatient mental health facilities or addiction-treatment programs and the need for additional social service resources in their communities, one officer stressed, “Everyone looks at the police to fix the problem” while another reported, “It’s a social issue [,] not a police issue.”

The survey has revealed that the strain of homelessness on law enforcement organizations is unmistakable in many communities across the nation. California and Texas are certainly no exception. Of greater concern to law enforcement leaders is the fact that police officers are spending a sizable portion of their careers engaging with problems they are ill-equipped to resolve. Moreover, this current policing strategy is potentially wasteful, as it misallocates resources. In a period characterized by severe recruitment and retention shortages, police managers should be more apprehensive than ever about creating environments where officers are tasked with unsurmountable problems.

V. CONCLUSION

The preceding chapters have examined the impact that the contemporary response to homelessness is having on law enforcement organizations in the United States. The research aimed to capture the perceptions of law enforcement personnel and provide police leaders and policymakers with an accurate understanding of what is being expended, what is potentially wasteful, and what avenues are best suited to effectively lessen homelessness and simultaneously unburden policing organizations. This final chapter provides recommendations for moving forward, addresses limitations in the research, highlights the possibility of future study, and concludes with final words emphasizing the opportunity for progress amid the challenges facing both law enforcement and the homeless community.

A. RECOMMENDATIONS

This thesis, including the results and analysis of the “Impact of Homelessness on U.S. Law Enforcement” survey, provides invaluable insight to law enforcement leaders and policymakers across the nation. Based on the drastic impact that homelessness is having on these organizations and personnel, and the perceived lack of opportunity for success that is evident in the data, this thesis offers a number of recommendations. Although law enforcement agencies differ substantially across the nation, as do the homeless populations they serve, current policies should be revisited and future policy decisions must integrate the information captured in this research.

1. Gain Knowledge from Less Experienced Personnel

The most prominent learning point produced from the data involves the overall lack of effective organizational communication among law enforcement personnel. The analysis in Chapter III highlighted the vast discrepancy between survey responses from participants with varying years of experience. In review, less experienced officers reported vastly more daunting perceptions of homelessness in comparison to their senior colleagues. For example, while a majority of the less experienced officers reported that 70 percent or more of their time and their organizations’ daily calls for service involve homelessness, most senior law enforcement officers indicated quite the opposite, estimating between 0

percent and 10 percent. This drastic variance is not only alarming, it also suggests that law enforcement leadership is not effectively communicating with line-level personnel. Law enforcement leaders must establish effective communication channels and be cognizant of what is consuming their officers' time.

2. Develop Tangible Measures of Success

Police organizations must develop avenues to accurately establish what is occupying the bulk of their personnel's workday, and they must also establish metrics to gauge actual progress in their interactions with the homeless community. The open-ended questions directed at agencies who deploy teams to address homelessness revealed that many lack the capacity to measure their progress. Agencies that did reply with some measure of success offered widely varying measurements, including calculating the number of contacts made with homeless individuals, the number of homeless-related calls for service, the number of homeless camp cleanups, homeless individuals' successful transition into permanent housing, or a combination of several approaches. Even responses within the same state reported widely varying methods, clearly incompatible for comparison purposes between jurisdictions. It is irrational that organizations are directing enormous amounts of valuable resources toward seemingly fruitless efforts, with no tangible or uniform ability to measure success.

3. Reallocate with Caution

Law enforcement leaders across the country are facing significant staffing shortages. Many go as far as describing recent recruitment and retention shortcomings as a workforce crisis, stressing a diminishing number of applicants and an increased number of officers leaving the profession after only a few years.⁸⁵ With 78 percent of agencies struggling to recruit qualified candidates and 25 percent forced to reduce services, units, or positions due to staffing issues, human resources are more valuable than ever.⁸⁶

⁸⁵ Police Executive Research Forum, *The Workforce Crisis*.

⁸⁶ International Association of Police Chiefs, *The State of Recruitment: A Crisis for Law Enforcement* (Alexandria, VA: International Association of Police Chiefs, September 2019), https://www.theiacp.org/sites/default/files/239416_IACP_RecruitmentBR_HR_0.pdf.

Although police organizations are describing a dire workforce emergency, many agencies—as indicated by nearly one-third of the survey respondents—staff specialized positions, even sizable, multiple-officer units specifically to address homeless issues in their communities. Without question, prioritization is completely necessary in law enforcement and an appropriate response to the constantly changing needs of the community. However, when 68 percent of survey respondents consider such teams to have little to no impact or even a counter-productive effect on lessening homelessness, law enforcement organizations must be wary of reallocating resources without first ascertaining whether such efforts have any likelihood of success. When policing organizations take on nontraditional social-service-concentrated roles, they offer an expedient remedy but simultaneously prohibit other organizations from contributing and potentially yielding better results.

A significant percentage of agencies that deploy homeless-specific personnel simultaneously reported leaving traditional policing positions vacant to staff these efforts. The most commonly abandoned positions were reported in uniformed patrol positions, investigative/detective units, traffic enforcement, narcotics enforcement, gang enforcement, various task forces, and other specialized positions. It is critical that leaders recognize which law enforcement and homeland security contributions are being discarded to employ teams specifically tasked with addressing homelessness. The prioritization and allocation of personnel away from traditional policing efforts and toward homelessness should be revisited and highly scrutinized.

4. Support and Encourage an Effective Balance of Services

The implementation of homeless services has potential, from the perspective of many law enforcement officers, to increase the strain on policing organizations. The open-ended survey responses revealed frustration with communities that offer very little in terms of long-term resources but simultaneously entice those suffering from homelessness toward other services. Many respondents were clearly troubled with the shortage of long-term mental health facilities, for example, but simultaneously indicated that other programs only draw members of the homeless community from other jurisdictions. As a result,

efforts intended to alleviate issues surrounding homelessness in many jurisdictions appear to create imbalance and ultimately lead to an increased homeless population.

Law enforcement leaders must remain engaged and attempt to promote a compilation of homeless services that effectively lessens homelessness in their communities. Policymakers and police organizations should work to predict and ascertain what impact the delivery of specific homeless services will have on their jurisdictions. A disproportionate distribution of resources is potentially counterproductive and can intensify the cyclical, revolving-door scenario described by many survey respondents. An elevated number of temporary shelters and food distribution programs, for example, without adequate mental illness or addiction treatment avenues can be devastating to a community.

The survey results indicate that partnerships with agencies outside of law enforcement are effective for many jurisdictions. In fact, over 75 percent of respondents indicated that these partnerships are, at the least, minimally effective. Nearly 30 percent described these relationships as moderately to very effective. Partnerships with local homeless service providers are critical and collaborative efforts toward a balanced approach—incorporating services to address long-term mental illness and addiction concerns in conjunction with other services—are essential.

B. LIMITATIONS

As mentioned briefly in Chapter III, the “Impact of Homelessness on U.S. Law Enforcement” survey was disseminated to law enforcement leaders during the height of the worldwide COVID-19 pandemic and in a period marked with surges of civil unrest following the May 2020 George Floyd incident in Minneapolis, Minnesota. This timeframe was far from opportune in terms of obtaining voluntary participation from U.S. law enforcement personnel. Although the survey was successful in capturing data from 703 participants representing all fifty states, the quantity of survey responses ultimately fell short of the numbers tallied in response to the 2011 Biasotti survey, from which this survey was modeled. As a result, the reissuance of this survey at a future date, when law enforcement is less burdened, may produce substantially more data for analysis.

One limitation of the research involves the unique makeup of the homeless population portrayed in the survey results and the subsequent analysis. For clarification, the survey captured law enforcement officers' perceptions of the homeless population in their respective communities. Therefore, the data were limited to the specific homeless populations encountered or observed by responding law enforcement personnel. Although it is accurate that law enforcement personnel routinely interact with those suffering from homelessness, officers are exposed predominantly to one segment of the existing homeless population. Police encounters with the homeless, originating from calls for service or proactive enforcement, most commonly involve homeless individuals who are causing disturbances, are suspected of criminal activity, or appear to be having some form of mental health crisis, for example. Further, the unsheltered and chronically homeless population is disproportionately represented in terms of exposure to police personnel. Countless individuals suffering from homelessness are sheltered, do not suffer from mental illness or addiction, and have little to no contact with law enforcement personnel. As a result, the perceptions of law enforcement captured in this research regarding mental illness, addiction, and service resistance should not be carelessly applied to the entire homeless population. The research does not represent the homeless population as a whole and should not be applied as such.

C. AREAS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

The "Impact of Homelessness on U.S. Law Enforcement" survey captured critical data regarding the strain that homelessness is having on law enforcement organizations across the United States. One unexpected outcome of the analysis was the indication that senior law enforcement personnel perceive a drastically different impact of homelessness on their organizations from their less experienced counterparts. In the dataset captured by the survey, the disconnect between the two subgroups was revealing but also produced additional questions. Future researchers could explore the cause of this generational disconnect, which may reveal avenues for improving communications within law enforcement.

Further research utilizing the existing data produced from the survey would also be advantageous. Additional analysis surrounding the demographic questions could identify distinctions and similarities between the various groupings of respondents. Individual states, climates, or geographic regions could be examined further, for example, which would likely reveal other themes within the existing data. Responses from local agencies could be compared with county agencies, or small organizations contrasted with their larger counterparts. Numerous variations of analysis could be conducted, associations could be dissected further, and all could provide valuable data.

One derivative topic of research that would be telling and complementary to this thesis would be a similar methodology gauging the impact of homelessness on fire and emergency medical services in the United States. Similar to law enforcement organizations, local, county, and state fire departments are being burdened by homelessness in many ways. To determine the impact that homelessness currently has on law enforcement and the fire service would provide a more complete picture concerning the impact on public safety. This research would provide decision-makers with critical information when weighing the cost of programs aimed at alleviating homelessness compared to the cost of the current strain on public safety.

D. FINAL WORDS

Law enforcement organizations are facing significant challenges. In early 2020, policing organizations struggled to find qualified candidates to fill their ranks. Recruitment and retention shortcomings were at the forefront of police leadership's anxieties. The future of law enforcement was in question, as some data suggested that only 7.2 percent of law enforcement officers would recommend the profession to a son or daughter.⁸⁷ To add fuel to the fire, a worldwide pandemic prompted drastic budget cuts and the fierce, national response to the George Floyd incident in Minneapolis has spurred increased scrutiny,

⁸⁷ "10,000 Officers Respond to Policing Poll: Only 7% Would Recommend Becoming a Cop," Police1, accessed November 1, 2020, <https://www.police1.com/police-jobs-and-careers/articles/10000-officers-respond-to-policing-poll-only-7-would-recommend-becoming-a-cop-Ee749RbuTcMG7bm5/>.

alarming demands for police reform, and a defunding movement that further threatens police budgets.

From both inside and out, the role of policing in the United States is once again in question. Externally, demands in many jurisdictions for reform, defunding of police departments, and increased oversight in police organizations are widespread. Internally, law enforcement personnel are wondering how to navigate these demands and respond effectively to the changing needs of their communities, all the while continuing to ensure public safety. With this challenge comes opportunity. As budgets are reduced and human resources simultaneously grow scarce, law enforcement leaders must reconsider what programs in their organizations are both vital and effective. The time to revisit law enforcement's role with homelessness has come.

Law enforcement organizations have long been willing to adopt additional roles and responsibilities within their jurisdictions. With the current challenges facing policing organizations, leaders should reconsider prior commitments and be hesitant to accept new obligations that veer too far from traditional law enforcement duties. Decision-makers today must acknowledge that other entities, perhaps nongovernmental, governmental, or a combination thereof, may be better suited for the task of lessening homelessness. With that, law enforcement leadership and policymakers must embrace this opportunity to rethink the role of police in the homeless community. Acknowledging the inadequacies identified in this thesis, and considering whether other organizations may be better suited to achieve positive outcomes and actually help those suffering from homelessness, is the first step to contributing effectively to the homelessness epidemic affecting the nation.

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APPENDIX A. SURVEY: THE IMPACT OF HOMELESSNESS ON U.S. LAW ENFORCEMENT

11/3/2020

NPS Enterprise Survey - The Impact of Homelessness on U.S. Law Enforcement

The Impact of Homelessness on U.S. Law Enforcement

The Center for Homeland Defense and Security

Naval Postgraduate School

Thank you for participating in our survey. Your feedback is important.

The purpose of this survey is to ascertain the level of impact that homelessness is having on U.S. law enforcement organizations. Although the data collected in this survey will be published, no individual or agency identifying information will be collected. As a result, the survey is completely voluntary and anonymous.

Homelessness is a topic that has become a priority for modern law enforcement in recent years. However, there is very little data to gauge how much of a strain this problem is having on organizations across the country. Homelessness is a difficult problem to measure, and its consequences can be even more obscured. With your participation, reliable data can be collected and the scope of the issue can be more accurately determined. With this enhanced understanding, an appropriate law enforcement response is more probable. The survey consists of 27 multiple choice questions that should require less than 10 minutes to complete.

There are 27 questions in this survey

Demographic

[1]

I am voluntarily participating in this survey

Please choose **only one** of the following:

- ☐ Yes
☐ No

[]

Number of years you served as a law enforcement officer or deputy sheriffPlease choose **only one** of the following:

- ☐ 1-5 years
- ☐ 6-10 years
- ☐ 11-15 years
- ☐ 16-20 years
- ☐ 21-25 years
- ☐ 26-30 years
- ☐ Over 31 years

[]

Describe your agency's jurisdictionPlease choose **only one** of the following:

- ☐ Local law enforcement
- ☐ County law enforcement
- ☐ State law enforcement
- ☐ Tribal law enforcement
- ☐ Federal law enforcement

[]

Current location (state)Please choose **only one** of the following:

- ☐ Alabama
- ☐ Alaska
- ☐ Arizona
- ☐ Arkansas
- ☐ California
- ☐ Colorado
- ☐ Connecticut
- ☐ Delaware
- ☐ District of Columbia
- ☐ Florida
- ☐ Georgia
- ☐ Hawaii
- ☐ Idaho
- ☐ Illinois
- ☐ Indiana
- ☐ Iowa
- ☐ Kansas
- ☐ Kentucky
- ☐ Louisiana
- ☐ Maine
- ☐ Maryland
- ☐ Massachusetts
- ☐ Michigan
- ☐ Minnesota
- ☐ Mississippi
- ☐ Missouri
- ☐ Montana
- ☐ Nebraska
- ☐ Nevada
- ☐ New Hampshire
- ☐ New Jersey
- ☐ New Mexico
- ☐ New York
- ☐ North Carolina
- ☐ North Dakota

- ☐ Ohio
- ☐ Oklahoma
- ☐ Oregon
- ☐ Pennsylvania
- ☐ Rhode Island
- ☐ South Carolina
- ☐ South Dakota
- ☐ Tennessee
- ☐ Texas
- ☐ Utah
- ☐ Vermont
- ☐ Virginia
- ☐ Washington
- ☐ West Virginia
- ☐ Wisconsin
- ☐ Wyoming
- ☐ American Samoa
- ☐ Guam
- ☐ Northern Mariana Islands
- ☐ Puerto Rico
- ☐ U.S. Virgin Islands

[]**Please provide the approximate number of sworn personnel within your agency**

Only numbers may be entered in this field.

Please write your answer here:

[]**Please provide the approximate population served by your agency**

Only numbers may be entered in this field.

Please write your answer here:

Observations

[]

From your observations, has there been an increase in the homeless population in your jurisdiction over the length of your career?

Please choose **only one** of the following:

- ☐ Yes, a great deal
- ☐ Yes, a moderate amount
- ☐ Yes, a small amount
- ☐ None at all
- ☐ No, actually a decrease

[]

From your observations, has there been an increase in the number of homeless detainees/prisoners in your jurisdiction over the length of your career?

Please choose **only one** of the following:

- ☐ Yes, a great deal
- ☐ Yes, a moderate amount
- ☐ Yes, a small amount
- ☐ None at all
- ☐ No, actually a decrease

[]

From your observations, state the percentage of your agency's calls for service that involve homeless individuals

Please choose **only one** of the following:

- ☐ 0%
- ☐ 10%
- ☐ 20%
- ☐ 30%
- ☐ 40%
- ☐ 50%
- ☐ 60%
- ☐ 70%
- ☐ 80%
- ☐ 90%
- ☐ 100%

[]

From your observations, state the percentage of your field personnel's time that is spent on calls for service or other activities involving homeless individuals

Please choose **only one** of the following:

- ☐ 0%
- ☐ 10%
- ☐ 20%
- ☐ 30%
- ☐ 40%
- ☐ 50%
- ☐ 60%
- ☐ 70%
- ☐ 80%
- ☐ 90%
- ☐ 100%

[]

From your observations, state the percentage of your department's custodial arrests that consist of homeless individuals

Please choose **only one** of the following:

- ☐ 0%
- ☐ 10%
- ☐ 20%
- ☐ 30%
- ☐ 40%
- ☐ 50%
- ☐ 60%
- ☐ 70%
- ☐ 80%
- ☐ 90%
- ☐ 100%

[]

How has the amount of time that your department spends on calls for service involving homeless individuals changed over the length of your career?

Please choose **only one** of the following:

- ☐ Increased a great deal
- ☐ Increased a moderate amount
- ☐ Increased a small amount
- ☐ Did not increase at all
- ☐ Decreased

[]

If there is an increase in your jurisdiction regarding calls for service involving homeless individuals, to what do you attribute the increase in calls?

Please write your answer here:

[]

What obstacles affect the ability of law enforcement to handle calls involving homeless individuals?

Please write your answer here:

Estimates

[]

In your estimation, state the percentage of people in your jurisdiction who have injured or killed police officers in the line of duty that were homeless at the time of the incident

Please choose **only one** of the following:

- ☐ 0%
- ☐ 10%
- ☐ 20%
- ☐ 30%
- ☐ 40%
- ☐ 50%
- ☐ 60%
- ☐ 70%
- ☐ 80%
- ☐ 90%
- ☐ 100%

[]

In your estimation, state the percentage of your jurisdiction's homeless population that appears to be mentally ill

Please choose **only one** of the following:

- ☐ 0%
- ☐ 10%
- ☐ 20%
- ☐ 30%
- ☐ 40%
- ☐ 50%
- ☐ 60%
- ☐ 70%
- ☐ 80%
- ☐ 90%
- ☐ 100%

[]

In your estimation, state the percentage of your jurisdiction's homeless population that appears to be suffering from narcotics addiction

Please choose **only one** of the following:

- ☐ 0%
- ☐ 10%
- ☐ 20%
- ☐ 30%
- ☐ 40%
- ☐ 50%
- ☐ 60%
- ☐ 70%
- ☐ 80%
- ☐ 90%
- ☐ 100%

[] In your estimation, state the percentage of your jurisdiction's homeless population that appears to be suffering from alcohol addiction

Please choose **only one** of the following:

- ☐ 0%
- ☐ 10%
- ☐ 20%
- ☐ 30%
- ☐ 40%
- ☐ 50%
- ☐ 60%
- ☐ 70%
- ☐ 80%
- ☐ 90%
- ☐ 100%

[]

In your estimation, state the percentage of your jurisdiction's homeless population that is reluctant to accept services and/or resources when offered

Please choose **only one** of the following:

- ☐ 0%
- ☐ 10%
- ☐ 20%
- ☐ 30%
- ☐ 40%
- ☐ 50%
- ☐ 60%
- ☐ 70%
- ☐ 80%
- ☐ 90%
- ☐ 100%

Specialized Unit

[]

Does your organization have a specialized unit or personnel specifically tasked with addressing homeless-related concerns in your jurisdiction?

Please choose **only one** of the following:

- ☐ Yes
☐ No

[]

How many officers are assigned this responsibility?

Only answer this question if the following conditions are met:

Answer was 'Yes' at question '20 [OrgUnit]' (Does your organization have a specialized unit or personnel specifically tasked with addressing homeless-related concerns in your jurisdiction?)

Only numbers may be entered in this field.

Please write your answer here:

[]

From your observations, are these specialized units/personnel effective in lessening homelessness in your community?

Only answer this question if the following conditions are met:

Answer was 'Yes' at question '20 [OrgUnit]' (Does your organization have a specialized unit or personnel specifically tasked with addressing homeless-related concerns in your jurisdiction?)

Please choose **only one** of the following:

- ☐ Yes, a great deal
☐ Yes, a moderate amount
☐ Yes, a little
☐ None at all
☐ No, in fact they are counter-productive

[]

How does your agency measure the success of these specialized units/personnel?**Only answer this question if the following conditions are met:**

Answer was 'Yes' at question '20 [OrgUnit]' (Does your organization have a specialized unit or personnel specifically tasked with addressing homeless-related concerns in your jurisdiction?)

Please write your answer here:

[]

Does your organization currently have vacancies in other positions while specialized homeless units/personnel are being staffed?**Only answer this question if the following conditions are met:**

((OrgUnit.NAOK == "A1"))

Please choose **only one** of the following:

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

[]

If so, what types of positions are being left vacant?**Only answer this question if the following conditions are met:**

Answer was 'Yes' at question '24 [UnitVac]' (Does your organization currently have vacancies in other positions while specialized homeless units/personnel are being staffed?)

Please choose **all** that apply:

- ☐ General Investigative/Detective
- ☐ Narcotics Enforcement
- ☐ Gang Enforcement
- ☐ Traffic Enforcement
- ☐ Patrol
- ☐ Task Force Officers
- ☐ Services/Support
- ☐ School Resource Officers
- ☐ Juvenile Crimes
- ☐ No Current Vacancies
- ☐ Other:

Partnerships

[]

Has your organization forged partnerships with other non-law enforcement organizations in order to address concerns involving homelessness?

Please choose **only one** of the following:

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

[]

From your observations, are these partnerships effective in lessening homelessness in your community?

Please choose **only one** of the following:

- ☐ Yes, very effective
- ☐ Yes, moderately effective
- ☐ Yes, minimally effective
- ☐ Not effective
- ☐ No, in fact they are counter-productive

11/3/2020

NPS Enterprise Survey - The Impact of Homelessness on U.S. Law Enforcement

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey. Your contribution is invaluable. If you have questions, or you are interested in obtaining a copy of the completed research (expected publication Spring 2021), please contact charles.fisher@nps.edu

06-29-2020 – 14:11

Submit your survey.

Thank you for completing this survey.

APPENDIX B. SURVEY RESPONSES



Quick statistics

Survey 343349 'The Impact of Homelessness on U.S. Law Enforcement'

Results

Survey 343349

Number of records in this query:	703
Total records in survey:	703
Percentage of total:	100.00%



Quick statistics

Survey 343349 'The Impact of Homelessness on U.S. Law Enforcement'

Field summary for Volunteer

I am voluntarily participating in this survey

Answer	Count	Percentage
Yes (A1)	625	88.90%
No (A2)	0	0.00%
No answer	36	5.12%
Not completed or Not displayed	42	5.97%

**Quick statistics**

Survey 343349 'The Impact of Homelessness on U.S. Law Enforcement'

Field summary for Time

Number of years you served as a law enforcement officer or deputy sheriff

Answer	Count	Percentage
1-5 years (A1)	30	4.27%
6-10 years (A2)	25	3.56%
11-15 years (A3)	46	6.54%
16-20 years (A4)	79	11.24%
21-25 years (A5)	154	21.91%
26-30 years (A6)	150	21.34%
Over 31 years (A7)	147	20.91%
No answer	30	4.27%
Not completed or Not displayed	42	5.97%

**Quick statistics**

Survey 343349 'The Impact of Homelessness on U.S. Law Enforcement'

Field summary for Jurisdiction

Describe your agency's jurisdiction

Answer	Count	Percentage
Local law enforcement (A1)	489	69.56%
County law enforcement (A2)	108	15.36%
State law enforcement (A3)	25	3.56%
Tribal law enforcement (A4)	1	0.14%
Federal law enforcement (A5)	3	0.43%
No answer	35	4.98%
Not completed or Not displayed	42	5.97%



Field summary for State

Current location (state)

Answer	Count	Percentage
Alabama (A1)	2	0.28%
Alaska (A2)	1	0.14%
Arizona (A3)	41	5.83%
Arkansas (A4)	9	1.28%
California (A5)	85	12.09%
Colorado (A6)	5	0.71%
Connecticut (A7)	1	0.14%
Delaware (A8)	11	1.56%
District of Columbia (A9)	6	0.85%
Florida (A10)	31	4.41%
Georgia (A11)	94	13.37%
Hawaii (A12)	1	0.14%
Idaho (A13)	23	3.27%
Illinois (A14)	7	1.00%
Indiana (A15)	9	1.28%
Iowa (A16)	14	1.99%
Kansas (A17)	23	3.27%
Kentucky (A18)	1	0.14%
Louisiana (A19)	5	0.71%
Maine (A20)	1	0.14%
Maryland (A21)	4	0.57%
Massachusetts (A22)	12	1.71%
Michigan (A23)	4	0.57%
Minnesota (A24)	4	0.57%
Mississippi (A25)	1	0.14%
Missouri (A26)	2	0.28%
Montana (A27)	13	1.85%
Nebraska (A28)	2	0.28%
Nevada (A29)	11	1.56%
New Hampshire (A30)	12	1.71%
New Jersey (A31)	4	0.57%
New Mexico (A32)	2	0.28%
New York (A33)	26	3.70%
North Carolina (A34)	22	3.13%
North Dakota (A35)	8	1.14%
Ohio (A36)	6	0.85%
Oklahoma (A37)	3	0.43%
Oregon (A38)	2	0.28%
Pennsylvania (A39)	1	0.14%
Rhode Island (A40)	21	2.99%
South Carolina (A41)	2	0.28%
South Dakota (A42)	9	1.28%
Tennessee (A43)	3	0.43%
Texas (A44)	49	6.97%
Utah (A45)	1	0.14%
Vermont (A46)	11	1.56%
Virginia (A47)	15	2.13%
Washington (A48)	4	0.57%
West Virginia (A49)	2	0.28%
Wisconsin (A50)	2	0.28%
Wyoming (A51)	3	0.43%
American Samoa (A52)	0	0.00%
Guam (A53)	0	0.00%
Northern Mariana Islands (A54)	0	0.00%
Puerto Rico (A55)	0	0.00%
U.S. Virgin Islands (A56)	0	0.00%
No answer	30	4.27%

**Quick statistics**

Survey 343349 'The Impact of Homelessness on U.S. Law Enforcement'

Not completed or Not displayed

42

5.97%

**Quick statistics**

Survey 343349 'The Impact of Homelessness on U.S. Law Enforcement'

Field summary for Sworn

Please provide the approximate number of sworn personnel within your agency

Calculation	Result
Count	635
Sum	1265039.0000000000
Standard deviation	15353
Average	1992.19
Minimum	1.0000000000
1st quartile (Q1)	25
2nd quartile (Median)	92
3rd quartile (Q3)	400
Maximum	360000.0000000000

Null values are ignored in calculations
Q1 and Q3 calculated using minitab method

**Quick statistics**

Survey 343349 'The Impact of Homelessness on U.S. Law Enforcement'

Field summary for Population

Please provide the approximate population served by your agency

Calculation	Result
Count	621
Sum	973712400.7640000000
Standard deviation	13338497.73
Average	1567974.88
Minimum	1.0640000000
1st quartile (Q1)	12000
2nd quartile (Median)	62000
3rd quartile (Q3)	350000
Maximum	300000000.0000000000

Null values are ignored in calculations

Q1 and Q3 calculated using minitab method

**Quick statistics**

Survey 343349 'The Impact of Homelessness on U.S. Law Enforcement'

Field summary for HomePop

From your observations, has there been an increase in the homeless population in your jurisdiction over the length of your career?

Answer	Count	Percentage
Yes, a great deal (A1)	218	31.01%
Yes, a moderate amount (A2)	167	23.76%
Yes, a small amount (A3)	125	17.78%
None at all (A4)	68	9.67%
No, actually a decrease (A5)	6	0.85%
No answer	14	1.99%
Not completed or Not displayed	105	14.94%

**Quick statistics**

Survey 343349 'The Impact of Homelessness on U.S. Law Enforcement'

Field summary for HomeDet

From your observations, has there been an increase in the number of homeless detainees/prisoners in your jurisdiction over the length of your career?

Answer	Count	Percentage
Yes, a great deal (A1)	149	21.19%
Yes, a moderate amount (A2)	171	24.32%
Yes, a small amount (A3)	157	22.33%
None at all (A4)	87	12.38%
No, actually a decrease (A5)	8	1.14%
No answer	26	3.70%
Not completed or Not displayed	105	14.94%

**Quick statistics**

Survey 343349 'The Impact of Homelessness on U.S. Law Enforcement'

Field summary for HomeServ

From your observations, state the percentage of your agency's calls for service that involve homeless individuals

Answer	Count	Percentage
0% (A1)	51	7.25%
10% (A2)	249	35.42%
20% (A3)	101	14.37%
30% (A4)	56	7.97%
40% (A5)	25	3.56%
50% (A6)	24	3.41%
60% (A7)	20	2.84%
70% (A8)	18	2.56%
80% (A9)	16	2.28%
90% (A10)	9	1.28%
100% (A11)	0	0.00%
No answer	29	4.13%
Not completed or Not displayed	105	14.94%

**Quick statistics**

Survey 343349 'The Impact of Homelessness on U.S. Law Enforcement'

Field summary for PersTime

From your observations, state the percentage of your field personnel's time that is spent on calls for service or other activities involving homeless individuals

Answer	Count	Percentage
0% (A1)	50	7.11%
10% (A2)	241	34.28%
20% (A3)	92	13.09%
30% (A4)	75	10.67%
40% (A5)	22	3.13%
50% (A6)	28	3.98%
60% (A7)	16	2.28%
70% (A8)	17	2.42%
80% (A9)	23	3.27%
90% (A10)	4	0.57%
100% (A11)	0	0.00%
No answer	30	4.27%
Not completed or Not displayed	105	14.94%

**Quick statistics**

Survey 343349 'The Impact of Homelessness on U.S. Law Enforcement'

Field summary for CustArr

From your observations, state the percentage of your department's custodial arrests that consist of homeless individuals

Answer	Count	Percentage
0% (A1)	78	11.10%
10% (A2)	261	37.13%
20% (A3)	62	8.82%
30% (A4)	62	8.82%
40% (A5)	19	2.70%
50% (A6)	21	2.99%
60% (A7)	15	2.13%
70% (A8)	18	2.56%
80% (A9)	13	1.85%
90% (A10)	5	0.71%
100% (A11)	0	0.00%
No answer	44	6.26%
Not completed or Not displayed	105	14.94%

**Quick statistics**

Survey 343349 'The Impact of Homelessness on U.S. Law Enforcement'

Field summary for TimeSpent

How has the amount of time that your department spends on calls for service involving homeless individuals changed over the length of your career?

Answer	Count	Percentage
Increased a great deal (A1)	160	22.76%
Increased a moderate amount (A2)	176	25.04%
Increased a small amount (A3)	139	19.77%
Did not increase at all (A4)	81	11.52%
Decreased (A5)	6	0.85%
No answer	36	5.12%
Not completed or Not displayed	105	14.94%

**Quick statistics**

Survey 343349 'The Impact of Homelessness on U.S. Law Enforcement'

Field summary for IncreaseAtt

If there is an increase in your jurisdiction regarding calls for service involving homeless individuals, to what do you attribute the increase in calls?

Answer	Count	Percentage
Answer	496	70.55%
No answer	102	14.51%
Not completed or Not displayed	105	14.94%

NOTE: The open-ended responses to this survey question are available upon request.

**Quick statistics**

Survey 343349 'The Impact of Homelessness on U.S. Law Enforcement'

Field summary for Obst

What obstacles affect the ability of law enforcement to handle calls involving homeless individuals?

Answer	Count	Percentage
Answer	506	71.98%
No answer	92	13.09%
Not completed or Not displayed	105	14.94%

NOTE: The open-ended responses to this survey question are available upon request.

**Quick statistics**

Survey 343349 'The Impact of Homelessness on U.S. Law Enforcement'

Field summary for EstKill

In your estimation, state the percentage of people in your jurisdiction who have injured or killed police officers in the line of duty that were homeless at the time of the incident

Answer	Count	Percentage
0% (A1)	309	43.95%
10% (A2)	123	17.50%
20% (A3)	23	3.27%
30% (A4)	11	1.56%
40% (A5)	9	1.28%
50% (A6)	15	2.13%
60% (A7)	3	0.43%
70% (A8)	6	0.85%
80% (A9)	1	0.14%
90% (A10)	0	0.00%
100% (A11)	1	0.14%
No answer	75	10.67%
Not completed or Not displayed	127	18.07%

**Quick statistics**

Survey 343349 'The Impact of Homelessness on U.S. Law Enforcement'

Field summary for EstMentIII

In your estimation, state the percentage of your jurisdiction's homeless population that appears to be mentally ill

Answer	Count	Percentage
0% (A1)	26	3.70%
10% (A2)	40	5.69%
20% (A3)	24	3.41%
30% (A4)	38	5.41%
40% (A5)	45	6.40%
50% (A6)	75	10.67%
60% (A7)	54	7.68%
70% (A8)	89	12.66%
80% (A9)	89	12.66%
90% (A10)	71	10.10%
100% (A11)	7	1.00%
No answer	18	2.56%
Not completed or Not displayed	127	18.07%

**Quick statistics**

Survey 343349 'The Impact of Homelessness on U.S. Law Enforcement'

Field summary for EstNarc

In your estimation, state the percentage of your jurisdiction's homeless population that appears to be suffering from narcotics addiction

Answer	Count	Percentage
0% (A1)	28	3.98%
10% (A2)	26	3.70%
20% (A3)	35	4.98%
30% (A4)	41	5.83%
40% (A5)	39	5.55%
50% (A6)	80	11.38%
60% (A7)	46	6.54%
70% (A8)	79	11.24%
80% (A9)	93	13.23%
90% (A10)	78	11.10%
100% (A11)	12	1.71%
No answer	19	2.70%
Not completed or Not displayed	127	18.07%

**Quick statistics**

Survey 343349 'The Impact of Homelessness on U.S. Law Enforcement'

Field summary for EstAlcohol

In your estimation, state the percentage of your jurisdiction's homeless population that appears to be suffering from alcohol addiction

Answer	Count	Percentage
0% (A1)	22	3.13%
10% (A2)	29	4.13%
20% (A3)	36	5.12%
30% (A4)	42	5.97%
40% (A5)	31	4.41%
50% (A6)	82	11.66%
60% (A7)	34	4.84%
70% (A8)	73	10.38%
80% (A9)	88	12.52%
90% (A10)	88	12.52%
100% (A11)	24	3.41%
No answer	27	3.84%
Not completed or Not displayed	127	18.07%

**Quick statistics**

Survey 343349 'The Impact of Homelessness on U.S. Law Enforcement'

Field summary for EstReluct

In your estimation, state the percentage of your jurisdiction's homeless population that is reluctant to accept services and/or resources when offered

Answer	Count	Percentage
0% (A1)	27	3.84%
10% (A2)	34	4.84%
20% (A3)	27	3.84%
30% (A4)	38	5.41%
40% (A5)	21	2.99%
50% (A6)	64	9.10%
60% (A7)	48	6.83%
70% (A8)	77	10.95%
80% (A9)	96	13.66%
90% (A10)	98	13.94%
100% (A11)	18	2.56%
No answer	28	3.98%
Not completed or Not displayed	127	18.07%

**Quick statistics**

Survey 343349 'The Impact of Homelessness on U.S. Law Enforcement'

Field summary for OrgUnit

Does your organization have a specialized unit or personnel specifically tasked with addressing homeless-related concerns in your jurisdiction?

Answer	Count	Percentage
Yes (A1)	183	26.03%
No (A2)	380	54.05%
No answer	8	1.14%
Not completed or Not displayed	132	18.78%

**Quick statistics**

Survey 343349 'The Impact of Homelessness on U.S. Law Enforcement'

Field summary for UnitSize

How many officers are assigned this responsibility?

Calculation	Result
Count	173
Sum	2923.0000000000
Standard deviation	81.06
Average	16.9
Minimum	0.0000000000
1st quartile (Q1)	2
2nd quartile (Median)	4
3rd quartile (Q3)	7.5
Maximum	1000.0000000000

Null values are ignored in calculations
Q1 and Q3 calculated using minitab method

**Quick statistics**

Survey 343349 'The Impact of Homelessness on U.S. Law Enforcement'

Field summary for UnitEff

From your observations, are these specialized units/personnel effective in lessening homelessness in your community?

Answer	Count	Percentage
Yes, a great deal (A1)	25	3.56%
Yes, a moderate amount (A2)	30	4.27%
Yes, a little (A3)	85	12.09%
None at all (A4)	34	4.84%
No, in fact they are counter-productive (A5)	3	0.43%
No answer	6	0.85%
Not completed or Not displayed	520	73.97%

**Quick statistics**

Survey 343349 'The Impact of Homelessness on U.S. Law Enforcement'

Field summary for MeasSucc

How does your agency measure the success of these specialized units/personnel?

Answer	Count	Percentage
Answer	164	23.33%
No answer	19	2.70%
Not completed or Not displayed	520	73.97%

NOTE: The open-ended responses to this survey question are available upon request.

**Quick statistics**

Survey 343349 'The Impact of Homelessness on U.S. Law Enforcement'

Field summary for UnitVac

Does your organization currently have vacancies in other positions while specialized homeless units/personnel are being staffed?

Answer	Count	Percentage
Yes (A1)	77	10.95%
No (A2)	87	12.38%
No answer	19	2.70%
Not completed or Not displayed	520	73.97%

**Quick statistics**

Survey 343349 'The Impact of Homelessness on U.S. Law Enforcement'

Field summary for Vac

If so, what types of positions are being left vacant?

Answer	Count	Percentage
General Investigative/Detective (SQ001)	30	4.27%
Narcotics Enforcement (SQ002)	24	3.41%
Gang Enforcement (SQ003)	13	1.85%
Traffic Enforcement (SQ004)	26	3.70%
Patrol (SQ005)	62	8.82%
Task Force Officers (SQ006)	12	1.71%
Services/Support (SQ007)	6	0.85%
School Resource Officers (SQ008)	3	0.43%
Juvenile Crimes (SQ009)	3	0.43%
No Current Vacancies (SQ010)	0	0.00%
Other	3	0.43%
Not completed or Not displayed	626	89.05%

ID	Response
107	Targeted crime groups
666	Motorcycles, Community
688	community police

**Quick statistics**

Survey 343349 'The Impact of Homelessness on U.S. Law Enforcement'

Field summary for AgPart

Has your organization forged partnerships with other non-law enforcement organizations in order to address concerns involving homelessness?

Answer	Count	Percentage
Yes (A1)	437	62.16%
No (A2)	109	15.50%
No answer	23	3.27%
Not completed or Not displayed	134	19.06%

**Quick statistics**

Survey 343349 'The Impact of Homelessness on U.S. Law Enforcement'

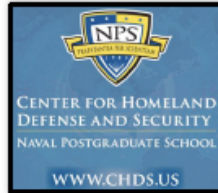
Field summary for PartObs

From your observations, are these partnerships effective in lessening homelessness in your community?

Answer	Count	Percentage
Yes, very effective (A1)	38	5.41%
Yes, moderately effective (A2)	92	13.09%
Yes, minimally effective (A3)	204	29.02%
Not effective (A4)	95	13.51%
No, in fact they are counter-productive (A5)	15	2.13%
No answer	125	17.78%
Not completed or Not displayed	134	19.06%

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APPENDIX C. SURVEY PARTICIPATION FLYER



Dear law enforcement participant:

On behalf of the Center for Homeland Defense and Security, the Naval Postgraduate School, and myself, thank you for participating in this survey. Your feedback is important. The purpose of this survey is to ascertain the level of impact that homelessness is having on U.S. law enforcement organizations. Although the data collected in this survey will be published, no individual or agency identifying information will be collected. As a result, the survey is completely voluntary and anonymous.

Homelessness is a topic that has become a priority for modern law enforcement in recent years. However, there is very little data to gauge how much of a strain this problem is having on organizations across the country. Homelessness is a difficult problem to measure, and its consequences can be even more obscured. With your participation, reliable data can be collected and the scope of the issue can be more accurately determined. With this enhanced understanding, an appropriate law enforcement response is more probable.

The survey consists of 27 multiple choice questions that should require less than 10 minutes to complete. Please use the following link to begin:

<https://survey.nps.edu/343349/lang-en>

Thank you,

**Lieutenant Charles Fisher
Torrance Police Department
Center for Homeland Defense and Security
Naval Postgraduate Cohort 1903**

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