

Mayor Strickland's Advisory Council

REIMAGINING POLICING

REPORT OF FINDINGS



City of
MEMPHIS



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National Context

On May 25, 2020, Minneapolis Police Officer Derek Chauvin, a white man; knelt on the neck of George Floyd a Black man, for eight minutes and 46 seconds, resulting in Floyd's death. This incident occurred during Mr. Floyd's arrest, which involved the passing of counterfeit bills. As the event transpired, 17-year-old Danielle Frazier filmed the entire occurrence and posted it on social media the next day. The video went viral, triggering a national and international visceral and physical response that rapidly spread. Such a response ignited what seemed to be an inextinguishable flame in men, women, children and non-binary persons of all races, cultures, nationalities, ages, gender identities and expression around the globe.

Many people around the world organized demonstrations in unprecedented numbers, in protest of unwarranted state-sanctioned (police) violence against Black and brown individuals. Once again, "Black Lives Matter" became their rallying chant; a chant of two civil rights activists' cry that began in 2013. This chant became a movement shortly after the acquittal of George Zimmerman of murder in the death of Trayvon Martin. During that time, for some the movement had been dismissed via the mainstream as divisive, radical, unseemly and unsettling.

Now with the world in the midst of a global pandemic and health crisis; many perspectives have changed and evolved. Watching a police officer kneel and crush the life out of a man lying face down on the ground, handcuffed, helpless, calling for his mother...made the once unseemly, politically prudent and the indigestible, more palatable.

The ignited flame for the widespread fight against racial injustice, came at a time when many leaders throughout various cities across the nation were in the throes of reshaping budgets and reconsidering allocations of overall funding. The impact of COVID-19 had already brought a sweeping economic downturn that impacted every city and municipality in the first wave of its wake. And while the "reimagining" of city funding was priority amongst the entire nation, the urgency around redirecting funds, particularly for police and public safety; was pushed to the forefront. Such a profound state, led to further movements such as: **Defund the Police, Abolish the Police**. This is the narrative that directly influenced the civil unrest and protests throughout the country today.

As much larger cities faced the initial funding challenges, such as: New York, Atlanta and Los Angeles; Memphis was also facing that same charge of reexamining strategy for funding of public safety in the future, while subsequently focusing on the police to define and position our city to better serve its constituents.

Local Context

In parallel to national events, Memphis has experienced its own issues and challenges relative to policing and the impact on citizens in the community. Citizens, organizations, activists, clergy members and others have issued a clarion call for reform in the police department over the past three years. Below are some local examples:

- On September 17, 2018, Martavious Banks was shot five times after fleeing during a routine traffic stop. He was armed with a loaded 9mm (1 in the chamber and 5 in the magazine). He had several outstanding warrants to including one for violating probation. Three officers were given unpaid suspensions for violating department policies related to body-worn camera, radio procedures, and pursuit policy.
- On November 19, 2020, WMC Action News 5 aired a report on excessive force complaints filed against Memphis Police Officers between 2015 and 2019. There were **126** complaints provided to the news outlet, with only **two** complaints sent to the Attorney General's office for investigation. This information supported public concern about the lack of a public and/or formal process for excessive force complaints filed against the Memphis Police Department.
- On May 31, 2020, an activist who refused to clear the area of a protest where officers had announced several disbursement orders attempted to run from police when she fell and was taken into custody after struggling with several officers. Departmental charges of excessive force were exonerated; however, three officers received corrective action for not filling out a Response to Resistance form.

These incidents and others have prompted some community groups and leaders to issue specific demands to the Memphis mayor and the police director, for systemic change and tangible reforms of the Memphis Police Department.

*Since the initiation of this report, Mayor Jim Strickland has made two announcements in response to the public outcry. The Memphis Group Violence Intervention Program has been created to coordinate, develop and uplift gun violence prevention efforts, occurring in the city of Memphis. In addition, a data dashboard will be implemented and accessible to the public for tracking excessive force complaints, while comparing such data to other cities.

Mayor's Advisory Council on Reimagining Policing Initiative

In September 2020, Memphis Mayor, Jim Strickland announced the formation of the Mayor's Advisory Council on Reimagining Policing (ACRP). Formation of the Council was intended as Phase II of an overall plan that the city developed in response to the wave of local and national protests for police reform and ending police brutality. The Council was also formed in part to continue conversations with community members and activists (Phase I) in an effort to bridge perceived gaps between the Memphis Police Department and the community it serves.

Key Objectives

Mayor Jim Strickland's Advisory Council of Reimagining Policing was created to evaluate police services and develop actionable recommendations to improve the Memphis Police Department. The Council's recommendations are to:

- Improve Transparency
- Increase Accountability
- Improve Community Relations
- Evaluate Use of Excessive Force

Advisory Committees

Clergy

- Apostle Bill Adkins – Greater Imani Church, The Cathedral of Faith
- Dr. J. Lawrence Turner – Mississippi Boulevard Christian Church
- Pastor Vernon Horner – Greater New Bethel Baptist Church
- Bishop Brandon B. Porter – Greater Community Temple Church of God in Christ

Civil Rights

- Van Turner – Chairman, NAACP Memphis Chapter
- Tonya Sesley-Baymon – President/CEO, Memphis Urban League
- Walter Womack – President, SCLC Memphis Chapter

Legislative

- Raumesh Akbari – TN State Senator, District 29
- Phyllis Aluko – Shelby County Public Defender
- Cheyenne Johnson – Memphis City Council, Districts 8-2
- Eddie Jones – (Chairman) Shelby County Board of Commissioners, District 11

Law Enforcement

- Bill Gibbons – President, Shelby County Crime Commission and Executive Director, Public Safety Institute
- John Covington – Chief Steward, Memphis Police Association
- Rosalind Harris – Official, Shelby County Sheriff's Office

Coplexity's Role

In October 2020, the City of Memphis contracted with The Coplexity Group, a Memphis-based, minority-owned company to work directly with the ACRP, in an effort to gather community input and feedback regarding policing in the City of Memphis. This effort was staffed by a four-person team. The Coplexity Group was tasked with completing three phases of the work:

- Phase I: This phase focused on connecting with the ACRP to schedule and plan focus group conversations across each committee members' network and connections. This included a wide representation of community members, in an effort to include diversity of voice, experiences with the Memphis Police Department, age, race and neighborhood affiliations. The Coplexity Group also provided a perfunctory training session with ACRP members who were tasked with facilitating the focus groups.
- Phase II: This was the planned execution and facilitation of focus groups across the city of Memphis. Each staff member attended, observed and managed focus groups as they were facilitated by the ACRP members.
- Phase III: This focus gathered, coded and reported qualitative data for the submission of a final report with recommendations.

Timeline

Date	Activity
September 10, 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ACRP Orientation and Kick Off Meeting • Define role of ACRP and Coplexity • Present areas of focus • Discuss focus group logistics and scheduling
September 29th – October 23rd	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Multiple meetings. with ACRP subgroups. (Civil Rights, Law Enforcement, Legislative, Clergy) • Create focus group participant lists • Facilitation training for ACRP members • Schedule focus groups
October 27th – December 1st	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilitate and manage focus groups
January 4, 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Submit draft set of recommendations to City of Memphis
January 13, 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Share recommendations with ACRP members
January 20, 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feedback and revisions due from ACRP • Document review meeting with ACRP
January 30, 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Final Report of Findings

The report that follows begins with an overview of best practices from other cities' public safety reform work. The next sections outline the methodology used for the report, findings and recommendations.

Framework

Memphis' Reimagining Police project follows similar projects in cities across the United States of America. Many of these projects result in the adoption of new training or programs for police officers. In reports about projects like this one, several recommendations from police departments show more transparency with regard to policies, practices, data and incidents with the communities they serve. The following are summaries of best practice insights gleaned from similar initiatives. There are four categories:

- Excessive Force
- Transparency
- Accountability
- Community Relations

Excessive Force

Research Questions

- How do participants define excessive force in the context of policing?
- From the perspective of participants, what factors contribute to police use of excessive force?
- From the perspective of participants, can the police department, policymakers, youth, clergy and nonprofits do to minimize police use of excessive force?

Summary of Best Practices

Police reform initiatives have identified two foundational principles regarding use of force: (1) Departmental Prioritization and (2) Officer Training.

Law enforcement agencies should prioritize and encourage de-escalation of situations as a first course of action and provide robust training for law enforcement officers in de-escalation techniques using realistic training methods. For example:

- The Baltimore Police Department uses standardized training materials for de-escalation training. (p.19). This effort should also include providing crisis intervention training and coordinating with other organizations and stakeholders, such as: non-profits or social service agencies. This will coordinate appropriate emergency response where possible.

Specific recommendations for use of force include: requiring officers to use the minimal amount of force necessary and to use alternatives (including verbal warnings); and to continuously assess situations to determine appropriate levels of force based on resistance. This was also cited by the United States Council of Mayors (p. 18).

Departments and officers should also encourage colleague intervention when excessive use of force is apparent. Furthermore, the use of chokeholds, strangleholds and carotid restraints should be completely banned. Practices such as shooting at moving vehicles (with the exception of extreme, life-threatening circumstances) should be curtailed.

Finally, law enforcement departments should require officers to report all uses of force. In the vein of transparency and continuous improvement, officers should routinely analyze all use of force reports to determine patterns of excessive force or excessive use of force against protected populations.

Other Studies for Reference

- The United States Council of Mayors report on Police Reform and Racial Justice: [Police Reform and Racial Justice - United States Conference of Mayors \(usmayors.org\)](https://www.usmayors.org/policy-reform-and-racial-justice)

Transparency

Transparency is a key measure in the Memphis ACRP project, due to its presence in similar public police reform projects.

Research Questions

- How do participants define transparency in the context of policing?
- From the perspective of participants, what policing policies and practices result in greater transparency?
- From the perspective of participants, what can policymakers, youth, clergy, and non-profits do, to improve transparency in policing?

Summary of Best Practices

A key tenet of transparency in community policing, is engaging with the public and making information about policies, procedures and data about disciplinary decisions readily available to the public. This was also cited by the United States Conference of Mayors (p. 28).

Departments must leverage all available tools, such as departmental websites, to make policies available for review. Additionally, information pertaining to disciplinary actions should be regularly posted. As such, law enforcement agencies should invest in robust data collection to create data dashboards for public access about arrests, use of force, summonses, complaints and other metrics (APD Use of Force, p. 68). The data should be aggregated by demographics (President's Task Force, p. 13). This allows for data comparisons across departments, regions, and states to establish benchmarks for improvement.

In addition, law enforcement agencies and supervisors should be proactive in providing information to the public about officer involved use of force; as well as support fair and accurate review and disclosure of body camera footage. Likewise, officers should wear body cameras and follow clear protocols for use of cameras for the review and release of camera footage (consistent with applicable public records retention and disclosure laws). For example, the Maplewood, Minnesota Police Department encourages a random audit of body cameras twice a month, to review footage and ensure cameras are operating successfully. Policies such as these should also facilitate a culture that supports officers in managing stress.

Other Studies for Reference

- United States Conference of Mayors Report on Police Reform and Racial Justice: [20.55.USCM_Police-Reform.Report.MEC.pdf \(usmayors.org\)](#)
- APD Use of Force Advisory Council 45 Day Report and Strategic Recommendations: [\(atlantaga.gov\)](#)
- [President's Task Force on 21st Century Policing \(2015\)](#)

Accountability

Research Questions

- How do participants define accountability in the context of policing?
- From the perspective of participants, who holds police officers accountable, and what are they accountable for?
- From the perspective of participants, what can the police department, policy makers, youth, clergy, and non-profits do to increase police accountability?

Summary of Best Practices

Best practices for improving accountability within law enforcement agencies focus on facilitating a cultural shift within departments. This includes revising current processes for community complaints against officers.

To begin, departments should shift from the current hierarchical, military-inspired structures, to those that center on community justice. To do so, they must acknowledge the historical role of police officers and how that role and practices have impacted the erosion of community trust over many decades. These priorities are in alignment with the President's Task Force (p.12).

Additionally, departments must make improvements to the complaint process, which will provide greater accessibility, transparency and ultimate accountability. This includes identifying and implementing controls to weed out frivolous or unfounded complaints.

While anonymous complaints against officers should not be allowed, complaints should not require in-person submissions. Additionally, departments should allow witnesses and victims to submit complaints. Complaint investigations should follow clear, publicly accessible guidelines that dictate the scope of a complaint investigation, who will conduct the investigation, and the rights of all parties involved. As part of this, departments should revise processes for submitting complaints that are simple, easy to understand, and available in all languages relative to the area (United States Conference of Mayors, p. 28).

For example, the Metropolitan Police Department in Washington, D.C. provides complaint forms in nine languages, which are also available in audio format. Furthermore, all investigations should continue in the events of non-cooperation of those filing the complaints or officer separation.

All of these actions must be overseen and managed by departmental supervisors, who should undergird departmental accountability; as well as monitor officers to ensure they are complying with departmental policies (United States Conference of Mayors, p. 29).

Other Studies for Reference

- United States Conference of Mayors Report on Police Reform and Racial Justice: [20.55.USCM_Police-Reform.Report.MEC.pdf \(usmayors.org\)](#)
- [President's Task Force on 21st Century Policing \(2015\)](#)

Community Relations

Research Questions

- How do participants describe the current state of police and community relations in Memphis?
- From the perspective of participants, what can the police department, policy makers, youth, clergy and non-profits do to improve community and police relations?

Summary of Best Practices

To follow best practices in community relations, law enforcement agencies must focus on building relationships and identifying and implementing alternative response methods. Departments should build active, intentional relationships with organizations and agencies that have a deep understanding of a community's unique needs. Doing so, will foster an environment that better meets those needs and serve as a crime prevention purpose (President's Task Force p. 42).

Furthermore, agencies should seek to collaborate with communities that are disproportionately affected by crime to create community policing strategies centered on improving relationships, community engagement, and cooperation (President's Task Force, p. 20).

For example, the Philadelphia Police Department works with the Philadelphia Department of Human Services, the local school district and other agencies and stakeholders, to reduce the number of arrests of minority youth for minor offenses.

Law enforcement agencies should also change the status quo and eliminate performance systems that incentivize unnecessary arrests. As part of this, agencies should implement crime interventions that do less harm to members of communities facing difficult circumstances, such as citations in lieu of arrest for minor infractions. Departments must also prioritize and create alternative response training programs for officers and develop plans that enable alternative first responders for situations that don't require a police presence, as cited in the APD Use of Force report (p. 57).

Finally, sound community policing starts with identifying youth as an important subcommunity. Building relationships with youth members and understanding youth development must be a priority. Agencies and communities should work together to affirm youth voices and create opportunities for positive interaction between police officers and youth in the communities. As stated by the President's Task Force (p. 47), "Communities should adopt policies and programs that address the needs of children and youth most at risk for crime or violence and reduce aggressive law enforcement tactics that stigmatize youth and marginalize their participation in schools and communities."

Other Studies for Reference

- [President's Task Force on 21st Century Policing \(2015\)](#)
- [APD Use of Force Advisory Council 45 Day Report and Strategic Recommendations: \(atlantaga.gov\)](#)

Methodology

This report was developed using qualitative research methodology as described below.

Data Collection

Advisory Council members selected and invited participants to focus groups by categories. Each member identified a subgroup of individuals that were invited to a 90-minute focus group conversation facilitated by that member. In order to maximize participation, Coplexity associates advised members to select group participants that were already a part of their programs, constituencies, networks or congregations. In addition, Coplexity staff provided advice on choosing invitees across multiple identities, ethnicities, genders and community orientations. To further broaden the scope of involvement, the mayor's office used the ACRP website to promote a set of meetings open for registration to the general public.

Between October 27 and December 1, 2020, more than 400 diverse members of the community attended over 30 focus groups hosted by Mayor Strickland's Advisory Council on Reimagining Policing (ACRP). The focus groups sought to capture input and feedback from the Memphis community about the Reimagining Policing project to help guide the initiative as it moves forward. Focus group attendees included members of the local clergy, law enforcement, civil rights groups, legislative bodies, and the general public. Representatives in these groups included leaders from community development organizations, neighborhood associations, and local advocacy groups, as well as elected officials and constituents.

Among the focus group participants who completed the pre-registration survey, a majority earned college degrees or had completed some college courses. Their professions ranged from educators and non-profit leaders to lawn care professionals and attorneys. Most participant ages ranged from late 30's to early 50's. Male and female participants were largely represented equally, as were African-American and Caucasian ethnicities. There was also some representation from the Hispanic community.

After participating in a 90-minute facilitator training session, Advisory Committee members facilitated the focus group conversations. In addition to gathering and inviting participants, members led conversations among participant groups using discussion questions developed by Coplexity. The majority of meetings were hosted via Zoom, with the legislative groups hosted via a podcast platform. All meetings were recorded, with participants' consent.

Data Analysis

Data for analysis consisted of meeting recording transcriptions, which were created using the Rev.com service, as well as meeting text chats. Categories consisted of the four focus areas pre-identified by the ACRP Council: excessive force, transparency, accountability and community relations. Within those categories, the Coplexity team generated emergent codes based on the words used and topics raised by participants.

To maintain focus on participants' views, words spoken or typed into the chat by meeting facilitators were not coded for analysis. Many codes were "en vivo" codes, indicating that they originated from actual participant quotes. Two members of the Coplexity team coded data using QDA Miner qualitative analysis software. They then exported coded text segments by code and category into Microsoft Excel to facilitate sorting and quantifying. The Coplexity team used the frequency of codes, as well as word counts to prioritize areas of focus and themes for presentation in the findings section, below.

*Findings were presented for review and discussion to the ACRP Council, which were charged with developing recommendations for Mayor Strickland and disseminating report outcomes to the community.

Reflexivity

In qualitative research, the researcher is the instrument. Reflexivity refers to the fact that researchers bring their experiences, perspectives and biases to the work. Researchers have to both, reveal and intentionally “bracket,” or set aside those perspectives in order to temper their influence on the data collection, analysis and interpretation.

Below, in first person, each researcher has briefly described his or her background, connection to the subject, beliefs/biases, interests and philosophical paradigm related to the topic of policing. They have also provided efforts to bracket the influence of those characteristics during the study.

Cheryl: I truly believe that decisions for community issues, transformative justice, and social welfare are made in conversations and meetings. It's imperative that the facilitation and moderation of these important conversations are effective, inclusive, and productive. As a facilitator and gatherer, my work is centered in calling in the whole system for true engagement in complex problems and challenges. Public safety and policing are complex issues that stretch and touch individuals in ways that can either support or impede the health and wellness of an entire community, particularly African American communities and people in poverty. If nothing else, this project allows us to create conditions for all of us to hear stories and share narratives about experiences that, hopefully, provide a starting point for everyone to be seen and heard on such a sensitive and emotional topic.

Tonya: Having worked as both a public information officer (PIO) for the Memphis Mayor's Office in a past administration, as a consultant on the City of Memphis 5-Year Strategic Fiscal Plan (2012/13) and as a regular citizen, I bring an inside, outside and 'adjacent' perspective to the project. As a member of the former Mayor's team, particularly in a communications role, I had the responsibility of engaging in internal discussions around public safety/police as a division under direct purview of the Mayor. As a member of the local consulting team to the 5-Year Strategic Fiscal Plan, I led efforts in facilitating the public input process and assisted in crafting final recommendations for the project – several of which were related to redirecting funding from public safety/police to social and community services that may better serve the needs of constituency. And as a regular layperson, I deeply love my city and am personally vested in how government (in general) dutifully serves in its role of helping good citizens find solutions to problems and issues we have the right and responsibility to continually raise.

Joy: Having a strong justice orientation based in my faith tradition and study of the history and culture of historically marginalized groups, the current spotlight on police killing of unarmed black civilians, along with the resulting social justice movement, has deeply moved me and motivated me to challenge traditional notions of public safety that centralize/reify policing and law enforcement. My intersecting roles as a clergy member and mother, wife, and sister to African American men also means that the subjects of policing and racial equity carry great emotional weight for me. As a qualitative researcher and instructor on qualitative methods, I am practiced in the intentionality of phrasing research and discussion questions in objective ways as well as avoiding injecting my personal points of view when facilitating discussions. I also attend to maximizing diversity in research participants as well as presenting divergent or dissenting views when analyzing and presenting data.

Troy: The Memphis Police Department has always been a controversial aspect of my life. As a kid, my entire neighborhood was heavily policed, as well as my school. Wherever I hung out, the police seemed to be there, too. I and my siblings as well as most of my friends have experienced violence at the hands of individual police officers. As a researcher, the perspectives and stories of your participants inevitably shape your understanding of the subject matter. I am grateful for previous research opportunities where I could practice active and intelligent listening, professional objectivity, supportive questioning, and other proven strategies that helped me relay data that is bias free and reflective wholly of participants' thoughts and experiences and not my own.

Limitations

The researchers identified the following limitations of the study, which are presented here to aid in interpreting the findings.

- The limited time available for the project prevented widespread promotion of the focus groups, which may have negatively influenced the amount and diversity of public participation.
- Pre-identification of the four areas of study narrowed the focus and may have prevented participants from reimagining public safety and policing to the greatest extent possible.
- Multiple comments from participants highlighted a perceived lack of public trust in the Mayor’s administration and the impetus for the project, which may have negatively influenced public participation in the process.
- The limited time available for the project meant that facilitator training was limited to a single session. While the ACRP Council Members are skilled facilitators, more guidance was needed to focus on the distinctives of focus group facilitation for research purposes, e.g., bracketing of personal views.
- Participants’ responses may have been influenced by the public nature of the process, as well as the presence of media in some groups.

Findings

The order in which the data are presented below reflects the prevalence of the focus areas as discussed by participants:

Focus Area	Number of Coded Statements	Number of Words in Coded Statements
Excessive Force	942	70,266
Accountability	649	46,932
Transparency	554	38,468
Community Relations	200	17,015

Within each focus area, data is organized by research question.

Excessive Force

Research question E1: How do participants define excessive force in the context of policing?

Personal Stories of Excessive Force

In all categories of groups: public, legislative, civil rights, clergy, and even law enforcement, participants shared personal stories of encountering excessive force during police interactions.

- “I also think about when I was a teenager growing up in Memphis and...I was roughly handled by a police where I was racially profiled and detained and questioned by the police. And so those things stick with you.”
- “A friend of mine recently sold her car to a young man. He was trying to get a job delivering pizzas for Pizza Hut and he needed a car, and she had a car and sold it to him and gets a call from him that he got pulled over for speeding down Union Avenue, was thrown over the hood of the car, violently handcuffed, had bruises and now PTSD.”
- “Lawrence’s case is a perfect example. Lawrence was walking down the street and, uh, the police were investigating a number of things, um, in his area or in his community. Um, and Lawrence will tell you, um, you know, he was in, he did evade the police, he evaded the police for whatever his reason was. You either, you, you run from the police in your neighborhood because you don’t want them to lock you up or it doesn’t matter. But, and when, when he ran and in the police gave chase, then what happened is then we begin to see this kind of, um, attempt to, uh, make him responsible for, um, any and all things that were going on in that neighborhood. So, if there was a number of thefts or robberies, um, well he ran so therefore, um, we’ll detain him and we’ll lock him up. And, um, you know, and, and so you see that. And, and so what should have been issued was a summons for running from the police. We could have dealt with that. If there were other issues or other concerns, um, they could allow him to have an attorney and meet with them. And so instead it was the old adage. The, um, the court was well in front of the horse in this situation. And unfortunately, Mr. Jackson had to sit down in detention for a month, um, till we could get the information to the prosecutor. And it wasn’t that the prosecutor fought back, the prosecutor was, was very receptive to what we were giving them, but, but the police are slow in turning their reports in.”
- “After the killing of Brandon Weber, we showed up to our permitted site to hold our event with about 50 clergy. And we’re surrounded by snipers on the tops of the buildings around us.”
- “Councilman Ford described this episode very recently to me, of watching someone being pulled over, pulled out of the car, beaten up, let go. And then he followed the policeman to the restaurant and the guy was having a bad day and he pulled someone out and beat him up.”

Police Response Not Matched to Situation/Offense

In 64 comments, participants described excessive force as incidents in which the police response is in excess of the offense or situation:

- “I just find it excessive force, a force that is unnecessary to control or handle a situation given the context of the situation.”
- “Anything that violates a person’s constitutional rights and exceeds what is necessary for compliance or control.”
- “The term ‘excessive’ in and of itself means ‘more than necessary.’”

In some cases, this is physical violence:

- “When somebody is subdued and they’re no longer a threat, then it’s no need to have access to force. That’s just going above and beyond what is necessary.”
- “Use of weapons on an unarmed suspect. Physical force after an individual has already been restrained. Physical force on anyone who has not exhibited physicality or threats.”
- “Shooting fleeing felons is excessive but routine.”

In some cases, it is disrespectful or aggressive communication:

- “Some officers, they feel like you can’t because they’re police officers, you can’t question. And if you question them then, um, you’re booking authority or, um, you know, something like that. And then they have to get more aggressive because of that, because you, somehow you breach that, that line of authority. And, um, it, it, it just does sometimes they take it there and they don’t need to take it there, know whether they do that verbally or physically.”
- “You are no longer treated as a human being. A lot of times, you’re not treated as a law-abiding citizen. You’re treated in many instances as a criminal, even though you have not committed any crimes.”
- “[Communication is] rough, it’s aggressive. And if you had any sort of question or anything at all, you get barked at, you get ordered. And the very next thing is, do you want to go to jail? And that is for me personally, that’s been almost exclusively 100% my experience.”

And in some cases, it is simply an outsized show of force:

- “In addition to physical force, the sheer exhibition of numbers of personnel or equipment that exceeds what is necessary.”
- “That’s excessive right there. Two and three units for traffic stops, etc.”
- “I’ve seen where they’ve got four or five people on one guy - that just seems excessive to me.”

Escalation

A commonly mentioned theme was escalation, police practices that served to escalate the level of force or potential level of force in a citizen/police interaction:

- “Just recently where we now have video of Memphis police department may see people in the eyes after they're handcuffed and my clients tell me they get Mason in the backseat of the squad car, they're kicking on the door, they'll reach in there and may some in the back of the car and close the door. Um, I think it's that kind of stuff that's that I can argue is just simply unnecessary and is on the verge of, I don't wanna use the word torture, but it's, it's, it's hurting somebody on purpose as opposed to having any excuse to say you were trying to, uh, uh, control the situation.”
- “I think excessive force, in my opinion, is anything that goes, uh, to the point of escalating, uh, confrontation, as opposed to deescalating....The number of police that you have responding to calls that's to me, it can be excessive in a way....That in itself is a way of triggering a fight or flight response, whether someone is guilty or not.”
- “The response, the way that police respond, I understand security and everything. Um, but for me, that's, that's the first point of it. There was the way that they respond and then anything, like I said, that leads toward more escalation of issues as opposed to deescalation.”

Difficulty of Judging Whether Force is Excessive

Twenty-three comments acknowledged the difficulty at times of judging between necessary and excessive force:

- “It just depends on the situation and the circumstances from my perspective, and, you know, with all the crime we have going on in this city, we need to be more aggressive in apprehending criminals, whatever it takes beyond, you know, going above your, you know, your, your, um, your guidelines, you got to do the right things that you're trained to do, but, um, we need to be more aggressive.”
- “I feel like it is kind of a judgment call, um, on the officer's part.”
- “I participated in the video that the Memphis police department asked us to, to the survey with the videos that they asked us to participate in as a part of this process and found it completely unhelpful. So, there were all these different movements and they had, you know, their, their, their titles of is this movement okay with you? How do you feel about this movement? But it was completely devoid of any context. And so I found that to be just a useless exercise, like tell me what led up to somebody even doing that very mild movement of, you know, redirecting someone's arm. I want to know the context that that would merit an officer, even putting his or her hands on somebody.”
- One participant commented, after hearing the MPD definition of excessive force: “I think the idea of the definition of excessive force being subjective is a bit terrifying. That could change depending on someone's emotional state, biases, etc.”

Research question E2: From the perspective of participants, what factors contribute to police use of excessive force?

Culture of Policing

Thirty-nine comments mentioned topics related to police culture:

- “I think for the most part when officers join the department their intentions are good but over time they form allegiance with officers who don’t care about citizens.”
- “These white police officers were taught a certain way of policing and that trickles down to the black police officers. So you got black police officers now that are worse than, than white police. ...This is the way they was taught, and they want to be accepted.”
- “It starts at the top, like [] said, if the top doesn't care, then the officers beneath them, they don't care. They going to get away with what they want to get away with, because there's no repercussions to what's happening in the streets.”

Emotional and Mental Issues

Many participants mentioned emotional and mental challenges on the part of police officers that result in use of excessive force.

- “I think the, um, the emotional intelligence piece is what's really at the heart of all of it, because we also have to understand like [] was saying that police officers are humans and humans come with baggage. So as you come onto the scene and you are feeling threatened, why are you feeling threatened? You're being triggered. Why are you being triggered is because there's really a perceived threat, or is this connecting to an experience you had before that you're bringing into this space? So I think there's a lot of emotional intelligence that we miss when we just focus on the data or just looking at the accountability. But the end part is the impact that that's having. And I think what we're seeing now, the impact of what has happened is a mistrust or this, because of all these things that have happened. And we're not recognizing that they are humans who are coming with baggage. And if there's no place to put that baggage is just going to keep, uh, it's gonna replicate it. It's just going to keep building, um, without an end. And the impact will continue to be what it is.”
- “You have to realize that they get put in a situation that, that not many of us can put in. Right? And they're, they're forced to make life and death decisions based on split seconds. Right. And so very, very few people have that position. I mean, you know, [], like you were saying as an MP, I mean, you, you maybe had some experience along that lines as well. It is, uh, it is a very challenging job. And if, if they're not being paid and making sure that they're trained appropriately and making sure that they have enough rest in between shifts and, and all the things that allow them to make those quality decisions or better quality decisions, um, then it's a challenge. And I think that sometimes when you get into these challenges, then you have to start getting to these questions of did the good I do today outweigh the one or two, maybe negative things that happened. And for the most, maybe that's the case.”
- “Being a police officer is a really hard job, um, that everybody you're dealing with, it's usually the worst day of their life. And a lot of the people are the worst people in society that you're dealing with. Um, so, or they've had a car wreck and it's the worst day of their life, or somebody who's been injured or hurt. And, you know, and that takes, uh, a mental toll on you, um, day in and day out that that's the thing you're dealing with all day every day. And there's typically absolutely no time, money and effort spent on monitoring the mental condition of police officers, um, and supporting that and helping them deal with that and that hard job, and that can contribute to

excessive force because you get people that are angry that are pent up, they're fed up, they've got a lot of aggression built up and without addressing that mental health issue with police officers, you're putting them in a position where you're almost leading to that kind of an outcome, um, if you're not addressing it and trying to help it. Um, and I don't know if the MPD has any, any, uh, anything in place to deal with that, but most police departments don't."

Emotional and mental issues on the part of citizens may also result in excessive force incidents:

- "It takes someone who's aware of the situation and someone who can recognize, you know, what, we don't need to pull our guns on this one, even though they have a knife, they're not harming anybody, we can tell that something is just mentally off. Um, and so let's call in a particular professional. Now, if that person lunges at you, if that person endangers another person...because we recognize the mental challenge, we still don't have to kill them. There's a way to subdue them to the point as to where we can maintain and regain control of that situation."
- "The incidents we've seen where people have had mental illnesses and the police have been called and they've used excessive force...."
- "To me, I think that, uh, excessive part is when, when you have an, uh, an individual citizen who is having an episode, I having a mental episode, the police need to understand how to handle, uh, those individuals that are having, uh, some type of mental crisis."

Anxiety/fear

Participants mentioned anxiety and/or fear 32 times as a factor in incidents involving excessive force.

The fear could be on the part of police officers or citizens:

- "White and Black officers seem to fear Black and Brown bodies."
- "Dealing with youth, I know they're just afraid of a police officer. It doesn't matter if they're black or white. Um, and I, I think there's this idea that there, these young folks are, and there's bad apples don't get me wrong. But I think for the most part, there are a lot more kids that are afraid of police because of the uniform."
- "And the problem is, is that I've never felt like when I got pulled over in a car that I'm going to die, not once, not never, but I know there are people that get pulled over and they think I may die right now. And that's a real thing. And when we talk about anxiety thinking, Oh, well, I deserve that ticket or I'm nervous. Cause I saw a police car go by. That's a lot different than I'm going to die. And so the anxiety and the level of emotion and adrenaline that's engaged and when you've got these two things coming together, then does that square peg always mean it should be a square peg, right? Does the same taking control of the situation necessarily always apply?"
- "They're afraid, you know, we're afraid, you know, and I tell my wife all the time. I said, my number one goal is to make it home tonight. You know, I'm coming home, I'm coming home."

Race/Differential Treatment

A number of comments (129) discussed the role of race in police use of excessive force and/or the perception of differential treatment by police. For context, this is more than any other single code or topic of discussion encountered in the focus group meetings:

- “I just believe that's because in the eye of the mainstream public, um, people are still marginalized based on race. I just cannot believe that no matter what a white person haddone that as a rule, it would be okay to shoot them in similar circumstances because there will be fear of public backlash....And so I just think it's fair to say, statistically, more violence....and I just think that policy-wise, that's why I am against, uh, more officers and particularly more officers coming from places outside of the city.”
- “I don't really have an expectation, uh, that if people are literally in danger, that they shouldn't be able to defend themselves. And I also don't have an expectation that they need to be, uh, unduly assaulted and trying to show some ridiculous constraint. But I think the public sentiment is that they find different levels of restraint depending on the color of the person's skin. So I think that, uh, you know, when I have this conversation, I generally say, do whatever you would do if they were white. Like if you would feel like it does not require busting their heads open or, or, uh, using a handgun, if they were white, don't do it when they're black.”
- “I need the Hispanic community is an easy target because of the vulnerability. We have police officers threaten that they are going to call ICE on them, you know?”

Power/Control

- “I am just like to say, I want to go back to talk a little bit about issues of control. And I think, uh, since we're going to reimagine policing, we need to realize that sometimes situations don't need to be controlled. We just need to let things go, you know, just walk away and leave it alone. So sometimes just trying to control the situation, caused it to get out of hand. So de-escalation sometimes requires you just to let things, let things come and go and not continue.”
- “After the one time we say calm down or stop or do this and they don't comply to the order ...police have an understanding that they have the right to make sure that they have control of that situation.”
- “So while I do believe there's absolutely cases where you have to take control of the situation and then figure out what's going on, it's unfortunate that the police don't have, um, more tools in their toolbox to be able to take control and, or assess while taking control or to my earlier point assess before taking control. And I think that is where the challenge is. It's the whole, once I succumb to the police, then am I gonna end up getting killed? Right. So there's a lot of people that are, that are pushing back against it. And it's just, it's unfortunate, but it's a challenge. So not to go too much more into it, but I think that's pretty fair.”

The following participant spoke to the intersectionality of issues of control and race: “Policing came from a place of racial disparity from the start, right. Not just disparity, but that control. And so I think that, um, unless we, uh, break that down, we can't, we can't even start to re-imagine anything that would be positive or productive.”

Research question E3: From the perspective of participants, what can the police department, policy makers, youth, clergy, and non-profits do to minimize police use of excessive force?

Officer Training

Cultural Bias Training

While 78 comments mentioned training generally, with respect to excessive force, another 28 comments mentioned cultural sensitivity/bias training specifically:

- “So then you get into the next question of, um, what kind of biases am I bringing to my response to a particular situation? So that backs me into, you know, some of the training that needs to happen with police officers.”
- “It is really a training needed so far. Currently we have four cultural types of training with the MPD. None of them address immigrants, none of them. And that is an important piece because sadly in Memphis, everything is black and white, but we have thousands of immigrants from different countries, not just Hispanic, Hispanic is the biggest minority of Indian here, but we have immigrants from too many places. So we have a clear violation of Title VI here every day.”
- “Know and understand the various cultures to deescalate in a way that can be less harmful/deadly. Hispanics will not react/respond as a Caucasian nor will Blacks react/respond as a Caucasian.”

De-escalation Training

- “I think that it needs to be more extensive training on police officers to able to diffuse situations, uh, you know, with reason instead of, uh, first thing to do is to slam a person onto the ground, whether it be a man or a woman, and then, you know, beat up on them and then want to try to talk it out after you, don't put your boots on my back and your knee to my neck and you push my mama down. Now you want to talk to me, you know, I don't think ... that's not going to work, but I think police have more training and ...not to come with the thought in their mind to, to, you know, to hurt somebody.”
- “So that everybody has a thorough experience so that we know that they're being told what excessive force is. Um, excessive force may be different to us in something for them. It may be completely different, um, based upon what, what they're doing and how they're taught. Um, I remember [] actually, uh, gave a statistic in regards to the training a couple of years ago. And he said that in certain situations, officers are trained to kill. And that's exactly what it is in certain situations.”
- “They have training. But I think that what we're finding and I sure as heck hate that word defunding, but you know, I think what we're finding is that some of the police that are going out don't really have the training. They're not trained in domestic violence and not trained in hostage taking they're not trained in how to deescalate some of these guys or women who've been on the police force are doing an incredible job. It must be scary as hell, but you get in that situation. What is your training? And I don't know if it would be helpful to help the police, in addition to having more police, that we do have more social workers and or that we have more, uh, people that know how to mitigate some of these situations.”

Police Culture

- “From there, uh, to, uh, rounding up deserting soldiers and slaves and, uh, to the modern, um, form, uh, where there’s still, uh, a mindset throughout, um, policing that officers are out on patrol hunting prey. I mean, there’s, there’s no around that. And there, you know, that is why throughout the communities like Memphis, uh, especially in poor and black communities, people feel like they’re being, uh, occupied by an occupying or invading force of some kind.”
- “We have a culture, we have a community where at every corner, there are blue lights at every stoplight. There’s a police car. Every police officer has a bulletproof vest and a rifle hanging up in the back of the car, like, right, there’s this, there’s this just battlefield mentality already. And we have to begin to unravel that. And as we do, I mean, I think what we would find is there is more ease and trust and understanding that a police officer is not there to, you know, is not performing some sort of assault in the military, military style in my community, right. That we begin to break down that stuff.”
- “I think for the most part when officers join the department their intentions are good but over time, they form allegiance with officers who don’t care about citizens.”
- “Police officers are trained to cover for each other. So when we talk about police corruption or police looking the other way, they’re trying to do that. Uh, and I know police officers, I’ve talked with them, a wonderful man, but either working or retired and they will all tell you candidly, behind the scenes off camera, that they are aware that there are bad police officers. They are aware that they’re ones that use excessive force, but they are trying to cover them. They are trying to have an us versus them mentality. So when they’re on the job, it’s, it’s them versus us. And they’re trained that way. Uh, you know, the training needs to change, and we don’t talk about the training.”

“Blue Wall”

- “You’re not going to be supported, as you said, by that blue wall of secrecy, you’re never going to get there as long until the leadership has decided that this is unacceptable behavior.”
- “I’m a supporter of unions, but the police union always backs the officers no matter what, I don’t actually know how to do this, but I’m saying, finding a way to make it obligatory for the police to report bad actors is absolutely necessary.”
- “The police culture is one that is a blue wall and focus is on protecting themselves from accountability. That is based on training and sense of punitive power rather than to serve and protect ALL citizens.”
- “Part of the police force, the fraternity of police, uh, there’s a code of don’t, don’t tell, you know what I’m saying? They don’t talk about it and they don’t tell it that somebody is a bad cop. They don’t say a word about it amongst themselves, instead of letting him know, letting everybody know that they’re a bad cop and they just don’t say anything at all.”

Importance of Leadership in Setting Culture

- “I believe it starts ...with the chief, if the chief sets a narrative on the way he wants his police, then I believe that's the way they will act. But as long as the police know they can get away with it and they ain't going to have a chief who bag them up on whatever they do, then they going to continue to do what they've been doing for years.”
- “It has to be relevant to who our new [MPD] director is, because if it's not, uh, we are all doing this in vain, uh, because it will, it just won't, it won't exist. And then also thinking in terms of, and that's what we also have to think in terms of, um, leadership from, from our mayor's office to our district attorney's office, um, to our County mayor's office, to our member of Congress, to our state representative and state senator, and city council and County commission, because it's all funded, it's all policies are implemented.”
- “We need leaders who are like, Nope, we're not gonna tolerate this. ...And then all sudden, Hey, okay, we're going to do something to you. Immediate action, showing that we don't, we don't, we won't accept this. And this is our organizations, how this is how we work. And I think that's one issue we have here in Shelby County, in your office, where we have a number of people that had too many chances, and we need to take care of you, to do it very, very early. Okay. It's your first year. Okay. You have a mistake. If you do this again, you're gone, that's that.”

Recruitment and Screening

- “And if in the Academy it turns out that somebody can't overcome their explicit racism and they cannot refuse to recognize their implicit racism, then tell them they don't get to be a policeman. Maybe they can be air traffic control, or I don't know, you know, they don't get to, they don't get to do, I don't know, get rid of them.”
- “I think a great solution or part of the solution is that, um, at the police stations they have psychological tests done, um, to make sure that someone hasn't thought of, you know, from their initial tests that they've done in the past, that they're not going in another direction. And I think those need to be done periodically to just check and see where the police officers and what they're thinking.”
- “I think they can hire better. We can, they can do better psychological profiling of the police officers before they actually train and hire them to be a police officer. Everybody's not cut out to be a police officer, and certainly cowards should not be police officers, because they're the first ones that want to draw the gun for any little penny, any situation. ...I remember ...when police officers was the most courageous people out there. And I don't think we have that too much nowadays.”

All but two of the 24 comments on the topic of recruiting from within the city, county or neighborhood advocated for the requirement that police officers reside in Memphis or in the neighborhood in which they work:

- “Residency requirements: if you are a city of Memphis police officer you should reside in the city of Memphis.”
- “If you're not in here, don't, don't police here. You don't, you don't care about this. You know, you're driving back out to...no, you need to live in Memphis. You need to live in this community. Be a part of this community. ...I need you to have a house. I need you to have residence here.”
- “Outside officers don't face departmental consequences OR community consequences.”

There were two dissenting voices within a law enforcement group who did not advocate for residency requirements. One is quoted below:

- “The police department is a government agency, right? So let's look at it from a corporation standpoint, populations don't limit themselves on the area from which they can hire. So treat them, treat the hiring of police department the same way when you limit your pool of candidates. You know, you're actually just, you know what my dad used to say, you know, like cutting your nose off to spite yourself or something like that, you know, broaden the area and find better candidates if we're, if we're not bringing in the best candidates from our pool that we're limited to broaden the area and bring in better candidates.”

Address Social and Mental Issues

Among Police Officers

- “I've talked to quite a few police officers, uh, in the community, and I sense a very, very strong sense of frustration with the police community, that when they arrest somebody, that person is oftentimes back on the street and rearrested time and time again, and nothing is ever done in the judicial system to hold those people accountable. And so they're spending their time and our resources arresting the same people for these crimes over and over and over again. And that's the frustration that they have. And I think that may be responsible for some of this poor behavior.”
- “Absolutely. It should be. I mean, why, why isn't it included? I mean, like, things are changing constantly all the time. I mean, guys are going on crime scenes and experiencing, and seeing things that, you know, it does something to a person I've seen that you've worked in law enforcement. You've seen it. You know, there are things that change these guys, you know, and it affects their personality that affects their attitude. It affects how they deal with the next person in the public in which they swore to protect.”
- “We overlook the need for mental health and police officers on a consistent basis because of the stigma associated with it. And the likelihood they feel like they're going to be reprimanded, fired or whatever the case may be. But these people walking around here with depression, officer's PTSD, anxiety, and we see evidence now at the end of the day, they're not going to be, I mean, that's not going to be brought up there. They're going to be penalized for what a bad choice they made. But when you go back and look at these guys' records, I promise you it's there. I promise you in all the cases it's there.”

Among Public

- “And I think that's where from some of the incidents I've seen recently, the process of taking control of the situation has had some challenges. So when I heard the CIT model, and, and again, if you...haven't read anything about the Memphis model and the Crisis Intervention Team it's an amazing story, they have people come in from all around the country who train to learn how to do what the Memphis CIT team does. Um, they're the only ones that have non-lethal force. They have, you know, stun guns and they have rubber bullets and they have all this stuff that they don't have to shoot somebody. Um, if they feel like something's, you know, if they need to escalate the situation more than just a physical, um, interaction. Um, and so what I was disappointed to hear was, you know, them say, well, just some of the cops aren't cut out for that.”

- “I mean, it does seem that oftentimes dubious uses of force, uh, occur in situations where somebody is psychologically unstable. And, um, I'm curious if there are any plans in the MPD to partner with social workers so that when situations arise, where there is an individual involved in the situation that is known to have a psychological disability or illness, because I, I think another thing too, is we can, it seems to me, you know, as it is, and, and working in a university, we can't expect the police to be experts on everything and how to handle every situation. And so dealing with people that have a psychological illness and partnering with social workers, who would also arrive on a scene to help deescalate, um, would seem to be a, uh, a positive, productive partnership. To me, it would be wonderful if they had that resource available to them.”
- “They have mental illnesses. And I work with these people on a regular basis. So I know they have mental illnesses. So we just have to figure out a way for the police to be more sensitive to those people, instead of taking them to jail and thinking they've done something, but really you made the situation worse.”

Address Systemic and Institutional Racism

Fourteen comments suggested that addressing systemic and institutional racism could help curb use of excessive force.

- “I think a lot of these conversations end up being around the individual actions of each police officer and, and it can lead to the push for community policing or having folks that, you know, look like the people in the neighborhood policing the policing people in the neighborhood. But to me, I feel like all of this is contextualized more broadly, um, in the, the, the racism of our country and the value we put on individual lives. Right? So when you see a young black man, what do you think of first in a certain neighborhood walking outside versus a young white man walking around the suburbs, what are the assumptions that are made? And, you know, I want to be real that whether you're a black cop or a white cop, there are some real assumptions made in terms of the potential of young people in terms of, um, how we see their future lies in terms of the mistakes they can make. Right. And in terms of, you know, what, what, what they're doing at any given point in time. And so, um, that, that flows into how we police and how we do everything as a society. I think that the concern with policing becomes you have people who have weapons and who are put in the place of, of enforcing laws and of, you know, regulating and they have all of these biases. They have all of these assumptions behind everything that they're doing, and that comes out in terms of how they treat people and how they treat young people. And so, um, you know, for me, I think it's, it's less about the individual race and more about how we think about race as a whole, in terms of our society and the impact of, of historical racism. I also think we can't get away from the history of police. And the role that police played in enforcing both, you know, racist laws, but also in terms of their general treatment of black people over time. And so that stuff doesn't just go away. And I think if you were to look at it and peel back the layers, even within police forces of how race plays a role in terms of police officers in their interactions with each other, you would see race come up and play a real role as well.”
- “I think this is about a wider conversation about racism and how it permeates the police department and maybe what policies we can do to mitigate that.”
- “We're pretty even keeled solid folks who are asking for change for addressing systemic and institutional racism, because it is the root of our issues.”
- “That's what policing is that's how policing began. It began as just one more tool, uh, in society's tool belt to protect white supremacy.”

Police Presence In & Knowledge of Community

- “And, it really speaks to, gosh, you ...got me thinking where it really just comes down to once again that, um, that community presence, right? Because what I've heard from cops is, well, you know, I thought even though they were a threat at the moment they ran and I don't want to lose them. Cause they might be a threat to the community. Well, no, usually no, that's not true. And if this cop was familiar with the community and they knew that actually had the best interest of the person in mind ...Once again, running is not a threat. Running is not a threat. Now it's an inconvenience. Cause now you either got to run after this person or follow up later, but it's not a threat.”
- “Just from a, a cultural standpoint, I think it really goes a long way. Um, just understanding where people are coming from. I think that there is, there's a lot to be said, um, understanding people's circumstances and you know, why this action had to happen. Um, and I think, you know, some of, some of, I think some of the best people, the best officers, you know, take that kind of personal step they're yes, they're, they're an officer of the law and they're there to protect you, but at the same time, they're, they're just another citizen. Like you are, um, another human being. And I think, um, you know, de-escalation on, on that note, just to kind of understand where they're coming from to not be so quick to maybe a verbal action that may come off as threatening or, um, a physical action that may come off as threatening, because ultimately, I understand that the officer and the citizen who may be involved are both scared, right? It's, it's, there's an emotional aspect to that.”
- if people are, are familiar with the community and comfortable there, that's, that's progress. That's less likely to happen.”

Mutual Respect

Police Respect for Citizens

- “A safe community is one where all people are respected, regardless of skin, color, economic status, sexual orientation.”
- “Law enforcement needs better relations with the community, so they will know, so they will know them better, and there is a chance to respect one another.”
- “One of the trends I know we're seeing, and I'm not sure how this will show up is quite frankly, simply down to this customer service, um, in how people are engaging with people, with respect and honor for their humanity. But, uh, the voices around, you know, we don't need them have been very small. It's more so we need you, but we need you to engage with us as if we matter.”

Citizen Respect for Police

- “I think sometimes we need to educate the public on what police officers go through and how they should respond if they're pulled over by a police officer. Um, you know, I've been pulled over before and it was all ways. Yes, sir. No, sir. You know, but, uh, certainly, you know, the way things are in America now, I'm not just speaking about Memphis. Um, you know, people have no respect and they think that they can get away with things and they don't have to abide by what a police officer says.”
- “I remember my parents telling me about those things and that the, the, the police are ultimately in, uh, I understood that they are ultimately a position of authority and they're there to protect you. Right. But at the same time, because they're in that position, you have to respect them.”

- “I was maybe a, um, maybe a video or something. How to effectively communicate with the police officer, um, the language and how you're supposed to conduct yourself when you do get pulled over. Um, a lot of parents are telling their students, I mean, not their students, their child or young person to, you know, put their hands on the wheel. I don't know the protocol of what you're supposed to actually do and say when you're talking to a member in authority, but how to not provoke or, you know, dig a hole deeper for yourself. So that's just in my age group. One thing I know that we deal with how to properly respond to a police officer.”

Citizen Involvement

Clergy

- “Some, something that the churches can do is, um, uh, we can have, um, uh, maybe PSA's of, uh, live, uh, those, uh, body cameras and how we should be approaching these things. We can put that out in church. And if we play that in church, we can put it out into the community, uh, how you should handle this type of situation, uh, live. They get those body camera events on film. And that's something that we can, you know, that we can show, um, you know, maybe in the church: Hey guys, here's how you should handle this in case the situation happens.”
- “And one thing, so how can clergy help in that regard? As far as the excessive force, if I work and I was in a neighborhood where I didn't really know anybody and I suddenly saw three to eight people gathering around me, I would be scared because it's natural. You already know because the culture is, the police are scary people. You don't want them there. Um, but if the clergy, the church, which is so important to have most people of color communities, you know, um, if they could bring these groups together in that community way, because it just comes down to getting to know people, right? ... And so I think the church has an incredible opportunity. You know, I'm in South Memphis right now. I'm looking out the window, there's a church right there. And I know that people in the community walk to that church. And if the police officer could go to that church and be introduced to the congregation and say, this is Officer Billy. He's going to be patrolling, he's around here every Saturday and Tuesday night. You know what I'm saying? So I think that's what clergy could do.”

Non-profits

- “Um, and also with non-profits, I just wrote down, like when you were saying that with the clergy, I just wrote down that nonprofits should organize events to, um, and or gatherings to engage the community with the police officers. And those are the only two things I think I have there.”
- “There are several reentry programs in Memphis that have workforce development initiatives. It will take working closely with the city to ensure citizens that are in need of the services are tapping into them. In most cases, people don't know the resources exist.”
- “Maybe the neighborhood association, some of the Masonic, uh, largest, uh, Eastern Stars and whomever, and making people aware that if you lock your gun up, if you're going to keep your gun in the car, you know, then those safety locks are made available and they free. And so now it's up to us to help as citizens. That's what we were saying with the Elks to help the police officers get the information to the associations and the neighborhood association, um, you know, and try to tell people this would cut down on some of this stuff with guns.”

Media

- “The media has an extremely, you know, crucial role in the ways in which, you know, black folks, black men, especially, are viewed in this country. Right? And so, again, as we think about who needs to be involved in some of these conversations, these, um, community-based policing, um, strategies and strategic planning efforts, you know, the media needs to be part of it because what are the narratives that they are crafting when it comes to black men? And how is that contributing to the stigma and to the bias and to the fear and anxiety that white, all the teachers, even black officers have around, you know, black men or black women when they're serving them when the aim is to protect them?”
- “What is the role of the media and perpetuating these violent stereotypes that are really unhelpful for forwarding the mission or the mission of law enforcement, which is really to protect and serve?”
- “When you see those things that the media is showing, they should be showing those things they should be showing when there is brutality, but we should be able to dissect it, find out why that brutality is happening, help those police help those neighborhoods.”

Accountability

- “Anytime there is an allegation of excessive force, um, I think there should be a disciplinary process. And I mean, you don't have to have a written opinion, but you lay out what the allegations were, what the factual findings were, and then you explain why those factual findings do or do not suggest that there was excessive force under the policy. And then you make, um, you make those findings. And that application of the law of those findings should make them available to not just the police department to the public. And so you see how these decisions are being made and on what basis they're being made.”
- “It creates a problem when there's a hierarchy in the courtroom and the hierarchy puts the police officer above everyone else in the court. If the judge is disciplined or accused of wrongdoing, it's a matter of public record. If either of the lawyers, prosecution or defense are accused of wrongdoing, um, or, or, uh, even if they stand trial, it's, it's a matter of public record for the ethics board. The defendant's charges are a matter of public record, the police officer's not. So for some reason, the police officer is placed on a pedestal. Um, uh, more than the judge, either of the lawyers or the defendant, uh, that's not equity, that's not justice.”

Many more data and themes related to accountability will be displayed in that specific section of the report, below.

Laws and Policies

- “We can develop, uh, come together and have a task force, uh, with some strategic planning as to how we need to word, uh, potential, uh, laws that we need to be read. We need to engage our, um, uh, representatives, state representatives, or whoever we need to help us to get those things in place.”
- “Yeah, but I think that's the issue. The issue is with our, uh, our political leaders, uh, you know, from one party to the, to the, to the other party that we can get laws passed that we need, uh, to combat some of this. Uh, so I just think that the politicians are, are an issue. We have to elect the leaders who, uh, can help us on this. Uh, right now we're, we're, our hands are tied.”

Youth

- “I think where the problem lies with excessive force is that police, um, do not know how to deal with, um, when their authority is challenged. You know, people are different now. They are always evolving. Um, you know, we're not necessarily in a yes, ma'am no ma'am yes sir. Yes, sir, world anymore. People are more outspoken. People are more, um, influenced by social media, by whatever it is, but it's a very fast paced society and it's a, and it's an opinionated society at times. And I think what has happened is that the police, um, especially when they're dealing with young African Americans, if that young African American male or female chooses not to go directly into a yes or no sir mentality, then they already begin to accelerate this continuum. This heightened sense of, I have to start to prepare for confrontation. I have to start to, um, control this person's mouth, so to speak, I have to control them. Uh, and that's when then you start to see, um, uncomfortable officers who are now fearful overreacting, and then trying to justify these overreactions because they lost control of the situation. And so what I think has to happen is they have to understand that it is not a personal attack on them. It is not a challenge to their authority, but if somebody like [] asks them questions, like why are you arresting me? And what have I done? And, and I don't like the police. Um, they have to be, they have to understand now that that's part of policing. Um, and so to try and minimize conflict, um, I think that will address excessive force. Cause I think excessive force comes from loss of control, challenge to authority, and then fear.”
- “We see obstruction of highway or passageway, a reason to stop young people that are standing on the street corner, uh, and search them, um, instead of having reasonable suspicion or probable cause or things like that.”
- “I don't think it's solely the responsibility of MPD, you know, to fix our community. We're talking about parents here. I, a single parent of four children for 20 years, all of my children are successful because of how I raised them. So to say to MPD, you're responsible for making sure my child doesn't kill someone, I think that's been on that side of error.”

Transparency

Research question T1: How do participants define transparency in the context of policing?

Participants defined transparency as a fundamental honesty on the part of the police department that is a pre-requisite for community trust. Fifty-four statements discussed the importance of transparency; arguing that transparency should be a major goal of any reform effort:

- “I think the public should always be aware of what’s going on.”
- “It’s really going to be a challenge until the point of being honest with the public.”
- “I think more forthcoming information from the police could be really useful.”

Participants expect transparency from government entities because of their public nature:

- “I think transparency in all things government, especially the police department, should be there, period...I mean, there’s no reason to hide anything.”

Participants recognized the connection between transparency and other aspects of the work, including accountability and community relations. Transparency; having a clear sense of what is happening currently, is necessary to understand what needs to change and how to change it:

- “They’re interconnected because they affect one another. And so you have to have transparency.”
- “You can’t even get to minimizing excessive force and improving relations or accountability unless you have full transparency and I think that we definitely don’t have full transparency.”
- “Like we see going on across the nation, if they’re more involved and more informed, they can make better decisions on their law enforcement agency.”
- “How can we hold anything accountable or address any of these systemic problems when...nobody takes the data?”

However, there was a consensus among participants that policing in Memphis lacks the necessary level of transparency. Of the 554 comments regarding transparency, only **one** expressed an opinion that it is currently possible for citizens to obtain desired information regarding policing.

In response to the question of what grade they would assign the police department and why, two of three participants who mentioned transparency gave the department an “F” and one gave a grade of “D.”

- “The question is asked, do we need more transparency? Yes, we do.”
- “The idea that you can’t tell on someone who is doing something wrong.”
- “There has to be transparency and accountability, if it’s happening, whatever’s happening. ...Their hearings, their internal affairs information that’s happening, it’s not being disseminated to the public in a readily available way. You have to literally ask for it. ...and then go in downtown to look at it. It’s just not, there’s no transparency, transparency and accountability.”

- “We just have to be a little bit more mindful and be willing to be more transparent. Um, systems can be put in place to, um, be more apparent to our citizens as to what is going on in our districts and in our state, in our city, um, when it comes to policing and when a police officer does something, it can't be where we drag out the investigation, true investigations should take place. Yes. But dragging it out in hopes that the community would forget about it and move on is something that we have to avoid.”
- “The Memphis police consistently put up roadblocks to transparency.”
- “I just feel like...in a lot of ways with the Memphis police, it's more about controlling a narrative than speaking truth and being transparent about stuff.”

This perceived lack of transparency breeds distrust:

- “The police are the folks that we want to be able to call, but there has to be that trust relationship and also transparency in how they're acting.”
- “That's part of the problem because that, again, leads to distrust and this feeling that there's a lack of transparency.”
- “Usually I guess we can all...admit that whenever any entity refuses to embrace transparency, it's because there's something to hide.”
- “By not releasing information, by not having information publicly available, but not being transparent enough, I think it erodes trust....”

For example, a former police officer stated, “If everyone had filed a complaint every single time a police officer got out of line, used excessive force, or whatever the case may be, there would be a lot of complaints. But why aren't people complaining? Because there's no trust, there's no transparency. They're not trusting that something is going to be done about it.”

Alternatively, providing transparency is discussed by participants as a way to build trust between police officers and the public:

- “Transparency is key. What transparency does to the public is it builds relationship in essence and builds trust.”
- “I think transparency on any level of policing, government, organizations, corporations - transparency is key to trust.”
- “The more open you are, the more willing the community is to accept what you say.”
- “If you do the core work around transparency, around dealing with complaints around officer conduct and responding in inappropriate ways around...communicating effectively that inherently improves the relationship that police officers have with communities.”

As part of transparency, participants expect information regarding several specific areas of policing:

Status of Complaints, Cases and Investigations

Citizen Complaints Regarding Police

- “If say you're brutalized by a police officer, you go in and file a complaint on that officer and you give a statement, they, they type it out and they hand it to you and have you sign it and you get a copy. Um, when they call that officer in to interview him, he gets handed the statement that you said every detail, and he gets to read over that statement. He gets to see your name, your information. And then he gets to doctor how he responds based on that. Like the, I have major, major concern with that. I think that if you follow a complaint on an officer, you need to hear his side point of view, instead of given, given your statement and to craft his statement in response to that, I want to hear what he authentic or they authentically have to say, and I'm not comfortable with them getting My information when I'm filing a complaint on them. And in most cases it is revolving around police abuse or some infraction. Uh, so in, in these regards, I don't have faith in the system at all. I don't have faith in the, in the simple concept of Memphis police policing, the Memphis police. I absolutely think it needs to be an independent entity investigating, uh, complaints against officers.”
- “I think it would be really positive to publish or in some way make public, uh, those officers who are cited with infractions so that we know what officers have eight infractions on their jacket.”
- “There ought to be a, a follow-up if, if I, as a citizen come to the police department and make a complaint against an officer against something that happened. And I never hear from you again, I make my complaint and I just don't hear from you again, that's unacceptable. If you make a complaint, I ought to look into it and, um, reach back out to you and contact you as the complainant and let you know, um, what has been done and what stage our investigation is in.”

Crimes

- “We've had several murders at the corner outside of my office in the, in the 15 years we've been in our current location. A mother of five got, got killed in a, in a carjacking. We never heard anything more about it now that, I mean, that wasn't, that wasn't a police activity, but it's important for us to have feedback as to what happened. Here's what happened. We arrested two people. Here's the outcome of that and et cetera, I think communication is, is really, um, inadequate.”
- “I feel like they can be honest and tell us something, even if it's just a base of just like, Oh, the case is developing and that's all they say, then at least we know the cases developing or if they come to a halt all, well, we haven't found any new leads or anything. We can't move forward in the case, you know, because we don't have any leads, like just basic things like that.”
- “Um, from start to finish almost to a point where we're getting too much information, just to agree with Nefertiti, what she had said. Um, even if it's just a public understanding of the protocol that's going on. So even if the public understands, this is where we are in the investigation, not even, um, right now, the way it say it fits exactly as an effort, he explain it's this thing happened. We don't hear anything about it for a few months. And then all of a sudden there's a conclusion and it's completely failed from the public. And it breeds that mistrust.”

Police Misconduct

- “All those misconduct allegations being overturned, and we're just not finding out about that. Um, I don't think they've been at all transparent. I think they've, I think they've been transparent when they're made to be and not just on their own, not voluntarily.”
- “Any individual complaint can be, you know, based on anything in the world, but there, it does tend to tell you something, if the same person is getting lots of them, then it is a reason to begin to look into things.”
- “We should also know what their backgrounds are. Um, if they've had examples of, um, excessive force in their background.”

Dissenting Opinion

- “If there is a pending investigation, um, the aspects of that investigation can not be made public.”
- “Speaking as a chaplain who is, has been on the scene of crimes deaths and things of that nature, there comes a point in time where they have to protect the integrity of the investigation and they can't allow certain information out cause the public. Uh, and I understand that.”

Police Operations

Strategies/Methodology

- “We also need to know what methods police are using such as stop and frisk or Blue Crush which may be older methods - current ones and why they are being used and how effective. Also to what extent military type vehicles, equipment or methodology are being used and what the costs specifically are for those items, training, etc.”
- “Citizens want to know that you are doing something when they have an accident, why do I need 10 police cars there for that accident? If you can't tell me how you're utilizing your time. So at some point, somebody ought to be able to say what that police officer is doing with their time all day, one day, where we have so many things going on in our community, uh, and the allocation of the time, we don't even know what they are doing with that.”
- “One thing that interests me is knowing what kind of changes are being made and the way they utilize their limited resources, because we have rising crime rates, how are they targeting, targeting effectively? So the police aren't getting burnt out as well, right? Like that'll help for better decision-making. I think that would be really helpful for the public to know the details of like, here's what we're doing differently.”

Regulations

- “I would love to see the information regarding the police department, its procedures. I mean, it may be there. I don't know, uh, regarding what the police are supposed to do, what the police are not supposed to do. What are the Heights that the citizens have if they're stopped, uh, what rights do we have? What, what is expected of us? And what's expected of the police, is that out of line for us to ask their bathroom number, is it out of line for us to ask for a supervisor to come to the same and things like that?”
- “Also I think the operations manual that they have in terms of what is considered threatening, what is considered not threatening, non-valid, what should they do? I think the public needs to know all of the operations that they are expected to a bad batch of the public can know as well.”
- “You adhering to, um, where the officer has the duty to, to, um, intervene or the duty to, to report.”

Community Support Initiatives

- “Those things are important to the community. It's important to our youth. And I believe that their presence in the community is beneficial. I have no problem with that, but we need to know you are doing it other than when you are asking me for some money.”
- “If there's a certain like initiative or focus that maybe like, uh, like part of the police department is focusing on, I feel like that's really important for the public to know about and kind of understand like how they're going to implement like certain things if they are like focusing on if that makes any sense. Cause sometimes I'll hear about like programs or initiatives or something, but I don't really even know any like what they're actually doing about it. So that's kind of what I think of.”
- “Regarding police operations, personnel and outcomes, it needs to be balanced. And what I mean by that is, you know, we talk about excessive force, but we also need to, um, show some of the community engagement that the police does in communities. That's often not shared.”

Reporting

Citizens shared their expectations regarding reporting, and stated that reporting should be comprehensive, timely and disaggregated by race and other demographics:

Comprehensive

- “Remaining anonymous does not... help accountability at all. No it doesn't. ...Other police departments have websites where people can go to and look on the website and see charges that have been made against police officers, uh, for, uh, brutality or whatever. Uh, that's not here in Memphis, uh, yet, but, um, there are several cities that have websites like that, uh, trying to bring that kind of transparency.”
- “There have been questions about the police getting, uh, the excess military equipment, what equipment they get. Uh, and if they do get this equipment, how is it going to be used? Or what is it going to be used for? So there are a lot of things I think the public should know. I mean, personally, I don't think there should be any aspect of the police operation that the public is not aware of, of course, uh, as long as it does not interfere with an ongoing investigation.”
- “We can do much better as a data-driven city administration in getting a majority of the information, uh, to the public.”

Timely

- “That information should be, should be known, uh, as soon as, as soon as practical, you know, why withhold information from the public, uh, about investigation, uh, information that is going to the, the citizen's review board.”
- “And so with frequency and dosage, I don't know because you also don't want to get into sensationalism where if there's a report every single day or every single week is overwhelming. The public's like, Whoa, this is too much. Um, I don't know. I think a monthly report to me and a monthly report, very much like nonprofits do that is specifically for external looking. It's not stats that a statistician can extrapolate data from. It's literally a monthly report that is for laypeople, people like you and me who maybe don't know much about the actual system, like the actual infrastructure of policing. I think a month is cool. So 12 reports out of the year with, you know, detailed information.”
- “quarterly basis or an annual basis.”

Disaggregated by Demographics, Including Race

- “So we want race, gender age, you know, we want everything to be collected, data collected, because otherwise, how do we start to analyze, um, disproportionate minority contact? How do we start addressing, um, youth issues?”
- “What we see in our office, when you see the police report...white ethnicity, zero. So at the end the data is not going to show that that [the person] is immigrant or is Hispanic, and that will reflect in the data.”
- “I want to know the racial demographics of people getting pulled over.”

Available Information

- “I do receive those Cyber Watch emails that y'all talked about earlier. Um, so I feel like there is information if you, you know, are willing to like, well, [] is just a good liaison for our neighborhood, so she gets it back to us. But if you don't have a [] in your neighborhood, I think you could get the information if you, if you looked for it.”
- “Certainly this information is potentially available to the public, but, public citizens are not going to do things like file a four year request, right? To get the type of information that the media then provides to us.”
- “I understand we have a crime issue in the city and I'm not mistaken. I think that's all tracked. There's some kind of crime tracking thing that we can look that up and see the, the crime, it may be delayed, but I think the crime is tracked.”

Difficulty/Expense of Public Records Requests

- “The amount of money that you have to pay to get access to documents and video recordings, uh, is astronomical. And outside of the realm of what happens in most other departments and divisions with the city and especially does not promote, um, um, transparency when, uh, you cannot, when the media even say, as they can not, they're not allowed to go into a room and take pictures of documents that are publicly available and accessible, or make their own copies and have to pay 15 cents a page, uh, for, uh, documents to be printed for them. Those are all things that are ridiculous in terms of transparency for the public and for, um, media.”
- “I personally regularly file for requests, Freedom of Information Act, which is open records. Like we have a right to that information. And I can tell you any journalists in the city, we'll talk about how often we get stonewalled in those regards.”
- “So I'm of the position that a lot of this information should be public, and we shouldn't be charging, you know, uh, an outrageous amount for information that the public should, there should be an, a public domain anyway.”

Research question T2: From the perspective of participants, what policing policies and practices result in greater transparency?

Body Cameras

- “Not one person....had a camera....So I don't know how you would hold somebody accountable. If you don't even have the equipment that we spent all this money on....I remember my first budget hearing with the city council. We spent a lot of money on those cameras and they're supposed to wear them and use them. You're chasing somebody and you don't have any data of it because nobody had anything on.”
- “There's been a lot of talk and a lot of controversy over the use of the, uh, body cam police cameras. So, uh, we, uh, supposedly spent a lot of money to provide those cameras to the police officers, but usually when something happens, for whatever reason, the camera wasn't on. And so the cameras are not recording this information. ...And that aspect, I think that, you know, as far as the police operations are concerned, you know, if they have been mandated to use the cameras, there should be no excuse, but no officer not having this camera on when he's on duty. And if this happens, then there should be some disciplinary action already. Uh, and it should be immediate.”
- “I thought that was the whole purpose of the cameras to provide that type of transparency.”

Website/Database/Dashboard

- “I would also add a social media platform. We have, um, a younger community that we need to make sure that we are reaching out to, and yes, we have, we can utilize the website. I totally agree. Um, but I also know that a lot of people utilize Facebook and Instagram for different things. And I've noticed that the city of Memphis, um, uh, the health department has taken to utilizing social media, make sure that they get things out to the public. And I think it would be a great way of great use of platform for us as well in this area.”
- “They already, they have a data partner in innovate, Memphis, uh, who has developed dashboards of that, uh, provide, uh, real-time updates of many of their services and response times. And so it's, there's a, there's a precedent that has been set.”
- “In New York city, um, the NYPD actually, you know, it definitely has its high points and its low points. Um, they actually have a great dashboard model. Um, the dashboard is, you know, digital. So as a community member, you're able to just log into the dashboard and you're able to see a host of information, including personnel, demographics. Um, so you know, like who are the police officers serving in your community? You know, what are their demographic breakdown, whether it's race, ethnicity, age, you know, background, something like that. Um, hate crimes dashboard, use of force dashboard. They have all of these really nifty ways that community members can interact with, you know, information and data in real time. And I think that it's a great way to keep people plugged into what's going on, but it also serves, I think for community members as a great advocacy tool, right? So if you're, if you're going to step into, um, a community board meeting, for example, and you want to address the things that are happening in your community regarding law enforcement, you actually have real-time information that you can select from that you can choose from. And that you can talk about if that's what you want to do. And so I think from an advocacy perspective, it's really useful to increase the transparency and the communication.”

Community Outreach/Communication

Seventy-six participant comments expressed the perspective that community outreach and communications on the part of the police would result in greater transparency:

One participant stated, “There really needs to be a more proactive approach by the police department to be out in the community to share information about what’s going on, about practices, about situations through staff or expanded PIO office...with the police director being out and about and making himself accessible and available.”

Central/PIO Office

- “I think the police departments can do a better job of getting that PIO out.”
- “I think the police department can use their public information office better. That needs to be the single source of information coming from the police department. You can’t have officers on the scene giving information out or asking questions. You need it to come from a public information officer.”
- I would love to know the changes that the director or the mayor are contemplating to resolve some of the citizen concerns that we have regarding policing.”

Neighborhood/Precinct Level

- “It could be something as simple as somebody at the precinct that is responsible for communicating with that neighborhood.”
- “If each precinct could share regularly what are the issues/problems they are working on that would be helpful.”
- “It think it’s vital that the police association, or even the police department, reach out to as many neighborhood associations and community organizations as they can to at least send one representative to show them that they’re there for the community and to have a working relationship with at least one person of their precinct...”
- “It could be, it could be something as simple as somebody in the precinct that is responsible for communicating with that neighborhood.”

Tone/Culture

- “So I think that transparency looks like them being able to share with community members who are walking by like, Oh, this is what we’re doing and this is why we’re doing it. And this is why we’re here. And this is why we have this many police cars here and being able to share that information without aggressively retaliating to community members.”
- “Continuous updates and still letting the public know that we’re still actively working on this. And...I do not have the information readily available, but I will give it to you. Not in a trying to blow them off type of environment, but actually letting them know that I’m keeping you informed and being transparent about the entire process.”
- “Unfortunately, it flies in the face of the immediate tendency and reaction of police agencies to not say anything about it. It looks bad. It’s gonna make us look bad. And in fact, when you try to keep yourself from looking bad, you tend to make yourself look worse. And as I say, perception’s where it’s at.”
- “I think it almost is even a cultural perception of the public...that really law enforcement’s approach is what information can we justify releasing. And really the perspective ought to be what information can we really justify concealing?”

- “I think you’re better off to say, Hey, that should never have happened. Here’s what we’re going to do to keep it from ever happening again. And then you’re a solution. You’re not a problem.”

Two-Way Communication

- “I think that transparency to me means that the police department is listening to the community and responding to the community’s concerns verbally, not necessarily through the hierarchy that gives these blanket statements where we’re going to look into there.”
- “We know that the police department hears what the neighbors are saying and what the neighborhood is concerned about, but we never hear anything back that this is something we’ve looked at....These are the things we’re concerned about, but there’s no response. And it seems like you could have somebody in each precinct that could respond to the concerns that they are hearing from the community.”
- “Streamlined way to report things like that to the police department where there’s not necessarily a victim.”
- “When you mentioned the word transparency, we’re also talking about communication and let’s be honest, serious failure of communication between law enforcement and the public. And I don’t think this is a nefarious thing. I think it’s only natural. I think that whatever field you’re in you become an expert in your field. You become, you speak a different language than other people you respond differently. So it’s often difficult to translate that from one body to another, especially I would think law enforcement and, um, the public. I really think that there needs to be a role for those who could be in between law enforcement and the public.”

Alternative View

“The current director has taken a proactive approach in meeting the public’s demand and by making himself available and trying to at least acknowledge something has occurred and then try and ease the situation.” Other positive past and current communications efforts included the CoAG Community Action units, virtual platform, clergy meetings with the MPD and FBI.

Cyber Watch Emails

- “I think that does have an arrangement and I don’t know enough of the details, where you can receive text messages about crimes occurring in your area.”

Problems participants mentioned with police department communication included:

- Individual citizens (not part of an organization) being ignored,
- Inaccessibility of information if not on social media,
- Lack of response to neighborhood concerns such as frequent gunshots, and
- Lack of citizen input.

Lack of positive news and communications:

- “I know there’s a lot of positive stuff that the police department does outside of just normal daily activities. I know that’s true with Mountain Rock. I’d like to see more stuff in media, as well as other important things that we see every day.”
- “The Memphis Police Department does have a communications staff. And I know they try to put out a lot of positive stories, but for better or worse, the media probably focuses more on the negative stories, but I know they do try. Maybe they could try more.”
- “I think there’s a huge gap here on the positive side of things. We’ve seen it in our community many, many positives, and it doesn’t make it out to the broader community.”

Other strategies mentioned by participants to increase transparency include:

- Geographically specific texts,
- Weekly press conferences,
- Social media campaign to hear from citizens,
- Ride-alongs,
- Police participation in neighborhood watch meetings; and
- Citizen input through focus groups.

Participant Questions Regarding Policing

In 47 statements, focus group participants asked questions about policing, indicating information that the City or Memphis Police Department could use to serve the public.

Questions are listed below.

Public Information Sharing

- “We would like to find out where we can get texts about local crime?”
- “It would be helpful to know what’s already on track...like, what is the police department already planning to implement or what thoughts have they already taken and are acting on?”

Police Policy/Philosophy

- “What is the philosophy for policing here in Memphis?”
- “I would want to know relative to this new director coming in, not just getting somebody in to fill the space, but to say, this is, this is, you know... how this person sees policing.”
- “What does that search criteria look like?”
- “What are the prioritized areas for the department and how are the standards set?”

Youth Outreach/Mentoring

- “How about these, you know, these middle schoolers and these, you know, somewhat older teams? Do we have any kind of mentoring going on male currently?”
- “Is there a PAL program in the Memphis city police department?”
- “Is there a program in place to foster the relationship with Memphis students and police within the schools (aside from SRO/security officers)?”

Officer Training

- “I’m wondering what type of training [is] within the police department. And, uh, in addition to that, I know that the City of Memphis has diversity and inclusion division. How, or what effect does that have with police department and whether or not the officers are required to go through such training?”
- “I don’t know how much, um, training police officers are requested or required to take throughout the year.”
- “I don’t know if there’s, um, training for officers on how to deescalate.”
- “Are we really offering de-escalation training?”

- “What happens if we do implicit bias training and an officer scores badly, or shows that they have high levels of implicit bias, a bias against black people or gay folks or whatever?”
- “What does that initial training and recruitment practices look like?”
- “How many officers are trained for Crisis Intervention Team?”
- “How much of current training is dedicated to de-escalation of conflict and nonviolent resolution of conflict?”
- “Are officers informed about ACE's on children?”
- “What type of solutions are being offered to bridge the generational/cultural gap between officers?”

Accountability/Transparency

- “When a lot of good police officers who know about bad police officers... is there a place where they can go and I don't know, tell, tell about this bad officer without them being, uh, put in any jeopardy?”
- “Do we have working definitions of accountability and transparency because those things mean a lot of different things to a lot of different people. What has been given?”
- “Do they expect to have to respond to questions from their superiors? Or what do you think happens there regards to their accountability after such an incident?”
- “Who are they accountable to? That's the-- I think that's the question, who are the police accountable to?”
- “When you have an officer that's been tagged for so many quote, uh, violations, it's like he said, [is] he, promoted or suspended for a day? Do they get counseling? Or how does that work? I don't, I'm not sure how they actually communicate to that police officer, that what he's doing is incorrect?”
- “To what capacity [are] mental health wellness exams given to police officers? Um, and like what, how was that measured?”

Outcomes

- “How are we going to move forward? Like what, what will come of this discussion? Um, what is, what is the mayor's plan? Is this just talking and hearing it, or are we going to continue to work on it?”

Excessive Force

- “What is the department's definition of excessive force?”
- “What is the definition of excessive force?”

Hiring

- “I don't know how they hire [in] the department. Do they have to be in the city, stay in the city or county to have a, to be a police officer?”
- “Are there mentorship programs that are working within police recruitment? How do you set those up within cities?”

Officer and Community Relations

- “How many police officers do we have that are from the zip codes they're patrolling?”
- “How many people are being called in from out of county who don't know the people that they're working with every day or the citizens [they are] interacting with?”
- “Why aren't there more people on the committee who have been arrested or those who have had bad experience with family members who have lost?”
- “What are the places within the system that really empowers officers, um, to even, to even be able to speak out what they think a community needs, meaning like how do we really actually equip them with the opportunities and, um, and empower them, uh, them to actually have the open forums of being able to go back to, um, the county commission or the city council and say like, this is what's made, or even, even to their supervisors?”
- “What would help us to move toward an approach that is focused on the well-being of the community and building community?”

Research question T3: From the perspective of participants, what can policymakers, youth, clergy, and non-profits do to improve transparency in policing?

Civilian Review

Participants discussed this topic of civilian review in much more detail as it relates to accountability; however, they also pointed out its relationship with transparency:

- “What we know about CLERB is that I believe all of their recommendations have been summarily dismissed by the police, uh, force him and Memphis police. I don't think a single one of them has been acted on so that that's clearly a broken system.”
- “Well, one thing I've learned as I started paying attention to CLERB more is that the information is available if you know, and if you dig, um, that they put everything out there, but then you, uh, I had to, you know, I, I started digging on the website and you can see all the recommendations that the clerk has made over the years. And you can see director Rawlings responses, but it never really, it hides from the public whether intentionally or not that none of the recommendations have ever been implemented, they've just been recommended. So it's like a pacifier for the public, like, Oh, we have a CLERB and look, they're making recommendations, but it never says anywhere, but none of these were ever adopted by the police director. They were all rejected by the mayor and the police director. So for me, that was disingenuous because the committee, the community is calling for civilian oversight and we're given it. But then if you ask people, even some people who I think are paying attention, but most people who, even aren't saying like, how often does the CLERB recommendation get actually adopted? It's never, as far as I've learned, I mean, they've made recommendations and spent a lot of time. And that's why a lot of people have, have, uh, who were on the board have dropped off because they spent so much time, um, making valid recommendations only for it always one from what I've heard, 100% of the time to be rejected. Um, that's not out in the public. So something, I think the public needs to know that if we are, if people are calling for a review board, um, yes, the whole, you know, everybody is like, you know, give it subpoena power, give it subpoena power. But if at the end of the day, even if they have subpoena power, they don't have to be adopted or any, you know, that they can just all be rejected. It's just like a pacifier for the public.”

- “Having an independent organization that can investigate officer involved shootings and killings is important.”

Local and State Laws/Voting

- “Local and state laws that hold them accountable, where they can't just say I feel threatened. And just because they feel threatened, they never get held accountable for killing somebody, or, or this seems like every case, if they say they feel threatened no matter what has happened, no matter what the evidence says, they don't get any jail time or get sentenced.”
- “I wholeheartedly agree with you on the fact that we have to have those definitions in place, because there are too many loopholes, even with existing state law around chokeholds.”
- “Other than that, the only way to switch it is through the ballot box. You got to get people out and get people in who will actually hear the concerns and carry the concerns of the people as, as it relates to a proposal into some positive legislation.”

Accountability

Research question A1: How do participants define accountability in the context of policing?

Definition and Importance of Accountability

Participants expressed the view that both transparency and accountability are necessary for trust. While there is some overlap between the two concepts, transparency was defined as having a complete picture of the current state of policing, while accountability focused on what should be done with that information. Due to the level of power held by police officers and the nature of the Memphis Police Department as a public agency funded by taxpayers, participants expressed great expectations of accountability and great concern for the perceived lack of it:

- “I think police have to recognize the, the power and the discretion that they have when dealing with the community. It is, it is a, a power that is unlike anything else out there. And it is, it is, it can be damaging, it can be traumatic, it can be intimidating.”
- “They're, they're funded by taxpayer dollars and accountability should be welcomed as a sign of good faith.”
- “I'm not going to make it seem like there's no positives that the police are doing, but there sure is a, a place and a space to acknowledge some of the ugliness that's going on in the police department and not hide it, because then it just, it just seems, you know, like a cloak of impropriety or unjustness. And so the community is less likely to be receptive to whatever the police may have. So in my position, I think increasing the accountability and acknowledgement might be, uh, the primary issue, uh, to address with the city of Memphis police department.”

Research question A2: From the perspective of participants, who holds police accountable, and what are they held accountable for?

Participants expressed that they expect police to perform four critical roles, for which they should be held accountable:

- Enforce the law.
- Protect and serve.
- Provide a timely response and respectful presence when called.
- Treat all citizens equally.

Police as a Threat to Safety

By contrast, participants expressed that rather than protecting and serving as expected, MPD is perceived as a threat to their safety. In some cases, that is due to misconduct and in others, it is due to an orientation to treat citizens like criminals.

Misconduct

- “I think that, you know, the amount, um, I think that they, um, said that there were 130 misconduct cases that they reviewed between 2015 and 2019. Um, and, um, they only sustained access the allegations in 26 of them, which is 20%.”
- “I just want to go back to the bad Apple statement. I think we have to be careful with that using that terminology, because when we talk about bad apples, as it relates to police, we're talking about, um, excessive force and we're talking about people's lives at stake. So we're not talking about people pulling pranks on someone, we're talking about citizens' lives. So we have to be careful about using that bad apples analogy when we're talking about the safety and security of the people they're sworn to protect”

Treating Citizens Like Criminals

- “Police have the authority to treat, to take, remove your rights. We've given them that right. We've given them the ability to come into our communities and treat us as if we're in a war zone. And I think you do remove that until we can figure something else out.”
- “A lot of them there, they tend to look at all young people for the most as criminals or potential criminals.”
- “I think excessive force. It looks like to me is when you assume that everyone is a criminal, uh, coming up a lot of times, it's not even asking the question of what a person is doing. I think that sometimes the excessive force piece comes in with the assumption of everyone is doing wrong.”

Grades Assigned to Police Officers

When asked what grade they would assign to the Memphis Police Department, participants' responses ranged from C to F, with the majority responding D or F.

Research question A3: From the perspective of participants, what can the police department, policymakers, youth, clergy, and non-profits do to improve accountability in policing?

Civilian Law Enforcement Review Board

Fifty-two statements mentioned CLERB, the Civilian Law Enforcement Review Board. The majority of these statements affirmed the need for such a body and/or decried its apparent lack of authority:

- “Um, well I think that, um, CLERB structurally, I think CLERB does a reasonably good job. It should be given subpoena power, but that's another issue. I think the problem is that there is no accountability when the director chooses to ignore clear recommendations. Um, and there's not enough publicity in the press about that. That no matter what CLERB says ought to be done, the director just essentially drops it in the shredder. He's never approved a single recommendation. And I think that that reflects more poorly on him and on the marriage refusing to hold him accountable than it does any dysfunction in the CLERB board.”
- “And if we have directors of police that don't ever take those recommendations, then again, it just completely neuters the power of a civilian oversight board. If you had an effective civilian oversight board, it takes care of this problem that the people within the communities don't have access to, um, to someone to listen to their grievances.”
- “They have the power to recommend, to make recommendations to the district attorney, but where the conflict comes in is there's no balance of power because command staff has the power to override, uh, charges of excessive force and, and dismiss those entirely. So CLERB is not the balance of power from that situation. If CLERB had the power to subpoena and that's being discussed, if CLERB had the power to take these cases straight to court without, uh, without the district attorney or without the police, uh, leadership, then that would give this, uh, you know, you could retool this committee to have teeth and to be the balance of power that's missing.”

Community-Level Accountability

- “They actually host meetings where they can talk to people in not in a sense of them being intimidating to people where there are real honest conversations that they have about what's going on and not from a place of them telling us what they go through, but in a place of them understanding that these are the challenges that happen in our respective communities. These are the crimes that may be happening. This is what the community experience, this is the culture and this particular community. So they can understand what we deal with so that when they come into our communities, whether it is to, um, find a suspect or there is a crime in progress, then they know exactly who and what they're dealing with and can properly deescalate things should come to them.”

Community Relations

Research question C1: How do participants describe the current state of community/police relations in Memphis?

Negative Relationship

- “If I lived in, I live in the community and I looked at it and was, um, turned off by the idea that I would ever have to interact with those police officers. Uh, if I needed a police officer, I wasn't going to those guys because I knew that they weren't there to help cause they, they were there with an agenda and at one agenda was to stop. As many cars, pull as many people out of the cars, searched in cars and put in the mind of the community that we have you on lockdown. And I don't like that lockdown mentality.”
- “Overall the police are not someone who our, um, general population feel are going to protect them or keep them safe.”
- “It's a thing now where officers are all seen as bad, but it's because a lot of officers are not just, like you said, relatable.”

Differences Between Neighborhoods

- “And so, um, but when I look around and after having the opportunity to go through the police Academy, the citizens police Academy, I realized comparatively what we're seeing is not anything like some of what, what our neighbors are seeing.”
- “If it's about community relations, one of the things that we see being fought in the city council space right now is if we need more officers, where should they come from? Right? And so if they're coming from communities that aren't our area, we don't expect them to have these relationships.”

Research question C2: From the perspective of participants, what can the police department, policymakers, youth, clergy, and non-profits do to improve community/police relations?

Community Policing

- “I can remember the day when we had for real community policing and the police did walk the block, a road block on bicycles, and they were visible within the neighborhood.”
- “Community policing or trusting the community and the community. You have to build that trust. And I can say that because it used to, we used to have a very good relationship in Klondike with, with community policing,”

Engagement with Children and Youth

- “I’m also a teacher and noted that the officers that led programming for our middle schoolers targeted “behaviorally challenged” students to work with for the year. This class was predominantly comprised of Black males and presented in a punitive way. There have to be more progressive programming ideas we can implement to build relationships between our youth and law enforcement.”
- “Speak to kids at a nonprofit organizations to do educational rallies. The key is to really get involved with the kids, oaths and teenagers at that age, uh, which can help to cut down on the relationship threat and just build a better relationship between teenagers, law enforcement and their parents, and make it more involved”

“Reimagining” Public Safety

While the four focus areas preidentified by Mayor Strickland for the Reimagining Police Initiative (excessive force, transparency, accountability, and community relations), all are focused on making improvements to the current system of policing. Many participants expressed concerns during the discussion regarding whether policing is a valid or sufficient approach to creating safe communities. In fact, 98 statements in focus groups mentioned or were coded as “re-imagining.” Combined with participants’ views of the characteristics of safe communities, these views were robust enough to constitute a fifth area of focus with insights for consideration and action.

What is a safe community?

Physical Resources

- “A safe community has a good school in the neighborhood, has a grocery store where you can get healthy food, has an area for kids to play for moms to take kids to safely priced somewhere, that type of stuff in a safe community.
- “Safe communities are communities with equality in resources, homes, streets, parks, lights, accessible health care, etc.”
- “A safe community is where property can be sold for a higher value.”
- “They’re walkable, they’re, you know, they’re, they aren’t, you know, overly consumed with eyesores.”

Communal Life

- “What I imagine is a neighborhood, uh, where we have neighborhood policing, where the spirit of the neighborhood is we are our brother’s keeper that we look out for each other that, uh, if, if the city has a situation where, uh, this particular neighborhood has to have a problem, that we have community leaders and we have, uh, we have, uh, community leaders where we can talk to where people can go to....I imagine that we would have a substation there that we would have activities for young people, that we would have places for people to go for whatever, a job resources, community resources, as we said, mental health resources, that we would have all that. And the police basically are assisting us there. They’re not there to police us. They’re not there to, to, uh, uh, arrest people that look suspicious. ...I see the city using its resources instead of, uh, spending them on hiring more police, that they would invest that money into the neighborhoods and have the neighborhoods to, uh, be what they imagined it to be. And the people, uh, um, solve a lot of their own problems without having to, uh, call the police because they get along.”

History of Policing

Several participants pointed out that the system of policing is historically problematic due to its origins:

- “I don't think we can do any re-imagining until we break down the history, right. Until we recognize and acknowledge the history, the past, where it began and what it's evolved into.”
- “If we think about just the historical context of policing and where it sits in terms of policing being, going and getting the slaves that have run away, the historical context of policing is also embedded in there. So black people are not going to fully trust the police because of the historical context. And then when you add to that cases, like, um, for the purpose, like, what do you expect? Like there is not going to be a full trusting situation. That's going to happen here based on what I know is your context and how you were formed, how you were developed. And so that's just gotten worse in terms of the technology and the ability of people to become police officers and, and act out on the beliefs that are in their heart. So it's really going to be a challenge until the point of being honest with the public. I think the connection of those, of the thought of the way that policing is situated in history and the idea that you can't tell on someone who is doing something wrong. The question for me is who are you there to serve and protect. You're not there to serve and protect the community. If you have a fear of actually serving and protecting the community, like something is wrong with that. And I think some of that has to do with just the historical context of policing and who you were actually protecting the white people in that timeframe. We're not going to protect the black people that they were going to get the slaves that they were going to get. That was not their role. And I think that's just generationally what we've seen. It's just phrased differently and it presents differently because now we have black officers.”
- “Going back to the slave catchers, do what they were hired for, to go out there and look for runaway slaves. You know? So that mentality that just carried all from one generation to another, there's been no time a process during the history of it, that that has been reversed, but there's just been something that's been passed down from one generation to another.”

According to participants, these historical issues are reflected in the present-day culture of policing and are reflected in the system's perceived inequities:

- “MPD is about average for policing in the US... which overall is more like a D or even an F. Policing is part of a criminal justice system that is rank with racism and classism, that is focused on retribution rather than rehabilitation/redemption.”
- “All the police forces were created to keep the people under control so that they don't rise up against the people involved. Okay. And the police departments may put it on the, on their car that they serve and protect. But I don't think that mission really has changed, but the police department, you know, I don't think they have really bought into the serve and protect. They still are using the same policies that were there a hundred years ago to keep the people in check so that they don't rise up.”
- “I believe that if we're really going to try to move this imagining police reform forward, we have to get into those like ingrained histories. Like this is an inherent distrust of police departments over generations, not just one generation, this is a historical thing. So this can't be done in a couple of community meetings and then say, okay, now we have a policy let's move forward.”

Creative Approach

The term “re-imagining” prompted reflection on the scope of the conversation:

- “Looking at it, you know, the whole reimagining, the word re-imagining policing and looking at, um, the four areas. It seems, it doesn't seem like a re-imagining, it seems like a do better what we're doing, um, you know, improve transparency better than what we're doing, increase accountability better than what we're doing, improve the community relations better than what we're doing and evaluate excessive force to hopefully do it better than what we're doing. So is it, are, are we, are we really able to under the confines of those four pillars, are we able to talk about re-imagining where, when we're talking about needing to add, you know, get up to 2,800 or whatever the new, the number is, uh, you know, at that, that we're really thinking about it in a re-imagined way, not in an improving and existing model way, because those four pillars to me, when I saw them, it just seems like let's improve our policing.”
- “I think we gotta be able to re-imagine this to a level that we've never thought of before.”
- “I don't know how you re-imagine that because it's, I think it's flawed from its outset the way it's framed right now. So maybe we reframe it along with re-imagining, right?”

At the same time, several expressed skepticisms regarding the will of city leaders to truly take advantage of this opportunity to reimagine:

- “We'd be shooting ourselves in the foot to pretend that the mayor has not already established what they, what he, what, what he wants policing to look like. Like he is still pushing for more officers. He's still pushing for criminalization, tough on crime. So I think to me, this is it guys, the whole premise of him being open to re-imagining policing specifically seems at odds with the strategy that he's pushing, pushing back on. So I think, again, I think there's a way that these task forces and conversations get used as the space. And this is like, literally what they do is say we had a conversation, but then move on. So I do just want to be on record for saying that I don't trust that that's, that there's a genuine effort or attempt to re-imagine policing in Memphis at this time under this administration.”
- “Through my years of being politically engaged and paying attention and fighting a lot of these police accountability and transparency measures, um, it seems like the exact opposite of what they really want, you know, even around this re-imagining police stuff. Uh, I, it does feel like a, just to be full honest, it feels like a scam, uh, historically, especially in Memphis, it's about controlling the narrative. It's not about truth. It's about transparency. It's about coming up with the most palatable story, protecting the police and sticking to that story. Um, you know, and that leads into like why there was no grassroots activists or people that are really engaged in this work. They're treated like enemies. Um, and then you pick a team of predominantly, you know, go along to get along people to re-imagine police. Um, yeah. So, you know, in light of, you know, everything that I've seen, it's, it's more about controlling a narrative and this re-imagining police fits into that narrative. When I think that like, nationally, especially in Memphis, people want real reforms or real alternatives to policing.”

Several pointed to the fact that the four stated focus areas of this initiative are all focused on “tweaking” the existing system of policing, rather than making fundamental changes to the city’s approach to public safety. Such change would be in alignment with citizens’ vision for safe communities:

- “I know that you have four neat categories, uh, that are sorta pre prescribed, but I think the things that are implied in that I'd like to be on record for saying is that part of my re-imagining police is, um, the shrinking and the curtailing of the responsibility given to police.”
- “We're talking about four buckets that have been decided. Um, and these are kind of generalities. These are all good things, but we're trying to reimagine good things, overlaying them on something that's already built incorrectly, uh, built wrongly. So what you end up having is like putting lipstick on a pig....if you want to create something built on the right foundations with the right motives, with the right objectives, really wanting to protect everybody, all of the people, not just certain groups and not just, you know, um, make of certain groups, then you'd have to look at it very differently...Honestly, everybody has good intentions and I don't believe anyone that's been doing these focus groups or being the facilitators are helped ill, ill will, or ill intention want to do the right thing. But I'm concerned that we'll end up in the same place we were before they started.”

Redirecting Resources

In light of findings regarding the current state of policing, participants wondered whether increasing resources for the Memphis Police Department, was an effective means to address citizens’ priorities for public safety:

- “I don't believe more jails or more police, uh, quite to a safe community. I think people are frowning upon the idea of defunding the police, but I think it should be more of a redirecting of resources, um, so that they can police in a matter that strengthens the community, right? Like, uh, reallocating funds toward education, healthcare, homelessness, mental health, affordable housing, those are solutions to position our city to thrive.”
- “I find it very confounding that our city is currently talking about reimaging policing AND AT THE SAME TIME increasing the police force. If we add more officers to what exists, we are just expanding the un-reimagined police force.”
- “We have to reimagine public safety. I mean, we have to, you know, so is it safety from people or safety for people? You know, when you say public safety that is so chargedSo whatever term we, we use, it's going to have to be re-imagined because we know it's built on, um, you know, layers and layers of systemic racism. Um, that's public safety means, um, these people are criminals. Um, we need to pour more police into certain neighborhoods. We need to, um, you know, take them and force them into a plea and get them locked up so that they're off of the streets. And that's what happens.....We can only truly have a re-imagined police, a reimagine public safety, if there is, um, uh, supported counter narrative to the narrative that has been drilled into our community for generations.”

When asked about how resources are to be directed to the Memphis Police Department, participants expressed that they should be targeted to policing strategies most likely to result in safer communities and more equitable outcomes:

- “Reimagining speaks to funding more in Crisis Intervention Team (CIT)...Whereas a lot of funding appears to be allocated to tactical defense.”
- “We need to find ways to get weapons out of our communities. We need to provide tools that allow us to redress our grievances without using weapons. This includes the police.”

- “Maybe, maybe we look to have a, um, more of a, um, I don't wanna say unarmed unit, so to speak, but more of a conflict resolution team, a team that's trained in, um, different cultural needs, like translation, interpreters, mental health services, and coordinate with the department of children's services. Um, you know, some kind of specialized unit that is designed to be there for community needs, not necessarily, um, the enforcement aspect.”

Non-Policing Strategies for Public Safety

- “I think unfortunately law enforcement continues to stay in a very, um, stick and stone, brick and mortar, um, handcuff mentality. Uh, now I think they've made advances. I do. And I think that there were some very compassionate and caring people in law enforcement, but it is still a profession that is antiquated, and it has to catch up and understand, um, that it is a, the need for law enforcement is community driven. It is the community that the law enforcement agencies serve, not the other way around.”
- “The first thing is to remove policing from every single aspect of our life and think about the things that are necessary in those spaces and said, and instead, and so what does it mean to have resource officers in school that are actually equipped to handle mental health crises, family support and needs? What does it mean to have folks that are able to deal with folks who are in drug overdose crisis or needs, or, or violence interrupters that deal with street violence?”
- “We have been talking about looking at public safety in a whole new way, and that's what we, and I wrote Jim about it and got a lovely letter. Thank you. That sounds great. You know, all this stuff, I, we really, we really need to think about what's needed in public safety and it may not always be somebody in a uniform with a gun who shows up. Now, if it's a social worker, we're going to have to do extra training for that social worker, they're going to have to have self-defense, they're going to have to wear an emergency button to press where policemen do show up in case things get dicey, the same lift the psychologist, the same with the traffic patroller. I'm just, we're, we're just thinking that our police are not prepared for some of the things they're called upon to do. And we would also eliminate the problem of needing to go out of the county for police officers.”

Anti-Poverty Supports

- “It's unfortunate because I know that this is primarily about re-imagining police. I don't think that police are the answer to that, but if, if I were trying to make a safe world, then it would start with a robust economic plan. And so the people that we gain a genius job, creators and finance seers, um, who can, you know, work fiduciary magic. I think that we just would like to see, um, that actually mean that people are brought to full employment, living wages with fair benefits, robust labor rights and this sort of a thing. And I think that that would mean that people, for instance, have healthcare and if they have mental health challenges that they have access to that. And I think that that would diminish greatly, uh, people's petty theft, drugs to check out of, uh, environments that they don't want to live in.”

- “We're getting to a place now that I was waiting for us to get. And that is to address poverty. I have said on many occasions that if, if we're going to address policing and other elements that are before us, uh, in the city to, to, to deal with and re-imagine and make better, uh, why don't we start with the biggest problem we have first, I was worked at juvenile court, uh, 53% of our youth live at, or below the poverty level in this city, the driving, the driving force behind crime is generally going to be poverty in our city. So I wouldn't like very much for our police officers, uh, to be given a diversity training and to look more like us and all of the things that have been mentioned, but I would be remiss if I sat here for an hour and listened in the last 10 minutes here, and every heard comments about poverty and we've not addressed poverty, poverty is the main issue. ...What we're doing is putting a Superbowl ring on a kid that hadn't played Pop Warner ball. Yet, when we start talking about re-imagining policing, we've got to re-imagine ways to eliminate poverty. First. I'm not throwing this issue under the bus, not by any means, but as long as we have folks trying to feed their families illegally, we're going to have interactions with police that are going to end up in ways that we don't want them to end up. Uh, so I just think that poverty needs to be equally as important in this conversation and the addressing of it as everything else we're talking about.”
- “But then let's also add in what can we do in Shelby County that will directly, that will change what is happening with our young men and young women who are coming out of the system who need an outlet, who needs employment, who needs something different that will sustain their families because making \$8 an hour in Shelby County barely will pay your rent and let alone, uh, put food on your table. And so when you see them out there doing these other things, this is why we have some of the, um, the, where we're repeating, where we have repeat offenders, and we need to address that as well.”

Mental Health Supports

- “In order to reimagine, we have to re-imagine everyone being trained on different types of disabilities, because we have adults who are autistic. We have adults who have, uh, intellectual disabilities. We have adults who, um, are not diagnosed, but have intellectual disability that may as my son.”
- “I think people see in our community because there might not be enough resources or other, um, helps or aids. They see policing as assault or a primary constructive way to handle the issue. We see that when you let's call the police, that's the first line of defense that we're going to do. I think if the city were to address that there are other ways and other means to get help or to get aid. We have people who suffer from mental disabilities and families call them because they want a mental health rod for their youth or their loved one. Who's an adult, but they're, they're faced with police. We should have another infrastructure, some, some other agency in our infrastructure to address those things besides policing.”

Focus Group Participants – Demographics

31 focus groups

438 participants

254 people responded to all of the demographic prompts

Race

*308 people reported race/ethnicity (70% response)

Race/Ethnicity	Actual	%
Black/African American	189	
Hispanic/Latino	11	
Multi-Ethnicity	5	
Native American/Alaskan	5	
White/Caucasian	113	
Prefer Not to Say	1	

Gender

*413 people reported gender (94%)

Gender	Actual	%
Men	185	
Women	241	
Transgender Women	1	
Prefer Not to Say	2	

Level of Education - *252 people reported education level (58% response)

Education Level	Actual	%
Associates Degree	17	7%
Bachelor's Degree	74	30%
Graduate Degree	109	43%
High School Diploma	8	3%
Less than HS Diploma	3	1%
Some College/No Degree	41	16%

Zip Code	Actual #
38016	3
38017	9
38018	7
38028	1
38088	1
38103	24
38104	21
38105	9
38106	4
38107	5
38108	2
38109	3
38111	15
38112	12
38114	4
38115	5

Zip Code	Actual #
38116	3
38117	6
38118	7
38119	20
38120	4
38122	6
38124	1
38125	8
38126	2
38127	6
38128	2
38133	2
38134	9
38135	4
38139	1
38141	3

*239 reported zip codes (48% response)

- 87% of respondents reported zip codes in the City of Memphis
- 5% of respondents reported zip codes in Shelby County/outside city limits
- 8% reported zip codes outside of Shelby County

Participant/Community Findings

These recommendations represent “priority” recommendations that were generated by the frequency of times mentioned amongst all of the focus groups.

Excessive Force

1. Update MPD Excessive Force Policy and Procedures

Revise the Memphis Police Department’s policy regarding excessive force to make it less subjective and to incorporate citizen expectations that the force used by officers should:

- a) be aligned with the situation, incident, or offense; and
- b) not escalate the level of force in the interaction.

Expand the definition of excessive force to include the following practices when excessive force is unwarranted: *derogatory or offensive language, yelling, and/or references to violence; excessive number of officers actively present for non-violent offenses or incidents; and use of military-like equipment that positions police as a paramilitary organization at war with citizens instead of as officers charged with public safety.*

By policy, define the following practices as misconduct:

- the use of physical force and/or weapons in situations where individuals have been disarmed, restrained, subdued, taken into custody, are running away, or are otherwise not a threat or causing physical harm to officers or others;
- the failure of an officer to report the observed use of excessive force by another officer;
- the use of carotid restraints (choke holds); and
- officer failure to operate his or her body camera when using force.

In the policy, provide a clear procedure for internal handling and external review of allegations of excessive force that includes:

- Layout of allegations along with factual findings and/or any additional information that emerges during an investigation;
- Explanation for how the findings do/do not support evidence of excessive force based on the policy; and
- Making findings and disciplinary consequences available to the public.

2. Provide Emotional and Mental Screening and Support for Officers

Provide the following mental and emotional support resources throughout the duration of police officers careers:

- Mental and emotional screening criteria during the recruitment and selection process for officers. This would include the ability to make quick, rational decisions in highly charged situations and screen an individual’s views of control, power and authority;
- Periodic assessments of mental and emotional wellness, including levels of fear and anxiety; and
- Ongoing access to spiritual and mental care after witnessing or engaging in incidents of violence, use of force, incidents of child abuse, etc.

3. Measure and Address Differential Treatment on the Basis of Race

Collect and share data disaggregated by race and ethnicity regarding:

- a) excessive force complaints by citizens; and
- b) all instances of officer use of force

Data should include the nature of the interaction/infraction, the type and severity of force used and the outcome.

Recruit, hire, train and develop BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and People of Color) officers, other personnel, bilingual officers, as well as officers who reside in Memphis/Shelby County. This approach will increase officer knowledge of cultural context and complexities within the city.

Provide ongoing training for all officers aimed at cultivating a broader awareness and understanding of culturally competent behaviors and practices. Such training will demonstrate how to manage conflict, de-escalate situations and develop trust in BIPOC communities, specifically among BIPOC youth.

4. Partner with Community Members to Cultivate Respectful Relationships

Provide opportunities for respectful, meaningful dialogue between police officers and community members that build trust and deepens relationships.

- Engage non-profit organizations and churches as partners in assisting with relationship building efforts between police and communities.
- Partner with local providers, organizations and healthcare providers as resource partners for specific issues. Partner with content experts who can provide insight and training on specific issues such as interacting with citizens experiencing mental health crises.

Partner with clergy, churches and non-profits to establish open dialogue and gatherings between police and BIPOC communities. Encourage community members to share their personal experiences with excessive force as part of this dialogue.

Interact with youth in non-policing activities and include their feedback in decision-making that impact youth-related issues. For example, issues that involve the police and juvenile justice system. There should be an intentional effort to engage youth who have had contact with the juvenile justice system.

Utilize community engagement to publicize and explain the Memphis Police Department's excessive force policy, as well as procedures for filing complaints, internal investigations and external reviews.

5. Establish New MPD Leadership Culture

Hire and evaluate new Memphis Police Department Chief with a focus on the following expectations:

- Establish, communicate and act upon standards of what will and will not be tolerated with regard to officer use of force.
- Establish internal police culture of transparency and accountability, including addressing the “blue wall” or code of silence.
- Focus on establishing a “serve and protect” relationship with all communities through:
a) addressing unwarranted disrespectful and adversarial officer interactions; and b) increasing positive community engagement.

Establish reporting and evaluation procedures that make the new police chief accountable to the mayor and other elected officials, as well as to CLERB or another citizen body.

Other Relevant Recommendations:

- Establish policies that require police officers to reside within the city limits or provide preferential recruitment and hiring of officers from the City of Memphis.
- Partner with public health officials, community advocates and neighborhood-based organizations to examine how use of excessive force impacts community health and wellness.
- Examine systemic and institutional racism as a community issue including how it influences police policy and practice.
- Train officers in trust building and de-escalation techniques specific to youth, elders, LGBTQ+, domestic violence, undocumented immigrants, non-English speakers, individuals with disabilities and individuals with mental illness.

Transparency

1. Clarify Citizen Complaint Procedures and Improve Follow-Up

Provide clear and accessible methods for citizens to file policing-related complaints while preserving their safety and privacy. Communicate and adhere to a standardized timeframe for follow-up that provides the complainant with updates and information regarding the outcome or resolution of the complaint.

Make summary statistics regarding citizen complaints available to the community, including the nature of complaints, as well as their outcome/resolution.

2. Increase Comprehensiveness of and Access to Policing Data

Make the following policing data available to the public on a monthly or quarterly basis:

- Policing methodology, including military-grade equipment spending, rationale for patrol assignments, and officer time and effort spent on various duties;
- Policing outcomes, including police interactions by type (e.g., arrests, traffic stops, use of force, etc.) and disaggregated by demographics such as citizen race, neighborhood, and age;
- Crime and safety data;
- Status updates about cases and investigations, especially highly publicized cases and those citizens consider critical;
- Officers with disciplinary actions against them, including actions prior to their employment by MPD.

Increase the timeliness and reduce the cost of Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) requests.

3. Create a Publicly Accessible Web-Based Accountability Dashboard

Leverage technology and partnerships (e.g., Just City, Innovate Memphis, etc.) to provide real-time policing data to the community at large. Develop a web-based dashboard updated regularly with comprehensive, real-time data that policymakers and citizens can use for decision making and advocacy.

4. Engage with Citizens Using Multiple Means of Communication

Use the MPD website and other communications and public relations channels to provide citizens with policing data and answer their questions regarding policing policies, procedures, and operations. Strategies to increase transparency include, but are not limited to:

- Geographically specific texts,
- Weekly press conferences,
- Social media campaigns to hear from citizens,
- Ride-along, and
- Police participation in neighborhood watch and other community meetings.

Accountability

1. Redefine Role and Evaluate Effectiveness of MPD

Develop a process to evaluate the Memphis Police Department, its officers and personnel; including the police chief, in accordance to performance of the following critical duties:

Enforce the Law

Protect and Serve

Provide Timely Response and Respectful Presence When Called

Treat All Citizens Equally

Establish performance indicators related to the aforementioned expectations by linking rewards and disciplinary actions to performance indicators. Incorporate the transparency data outlined above which is disaggregated by race, ethnicity and neighborhood into evaluations of Memphis Police Department leaders and personnel.

Recruit and hire a police director and other public safety leaders who commit to fostering this expected culture of service.

2. Develop and Implement a Community Policing Model

Collaborate with neighborhood leaders and civic groups to create and implement a community policing model focused on deepening relationships, repairing the department's credibility among constituencies, understanding local context, recruiting and hiring from the community and building mutual trust. This model should incorporate community engagement with police in non-emergency situations, to build mutually trusting relationships and create a police culture of accountability to all communities.

Actively adopt strategies to build relationships between youth and police officers in school and community-based settings. This includes non-punitive, non-threatening approaches that engage youth and officers in shared problem solving, decision making and storytelling.

Adjust the Memphis Police Department's allocations of human and financial resources to increase budget support for relationship-building and community engagement strategies, while decreasing the percentage devoted to weaponry and punishment.

3. Revamp the Civilian Law Enforcement Review Board for Maximum Effectiveness

For the purpose of increasing community accountability and awareness, revisit CLERB or establish another citizen review board that is fully trained, resourced and empowered to handle citizen complaints about the police. For objectivity, this body should not include current or former MPD personnel. Ensure that this body operates independently from the police department and has the power to receive complaints, conduct full investigations with subpoenas, and provide elected officials and the public with its findings and recommendations.

Community Relations

1. Engage Officers in Community Support Initiatives

Engage all Memphis Police Department officers and personnel in initiatives in areas of focus that are community-based and focused on deepening trust relationships with individuals, neighborhoods and organizations. Encourage officers and staff to participate in community development and engagement efforts. Require officers and leaders to engage with communities in alternative roles and help provide solutions to pressing community issues. This includes participating on advisory boards, coaching youth, volunteering, attending community events and activities out of uniform, etc. Cultivate an overall culture of public service among police officers that supports interactions with the general public that demonstrate humanity toward each individual.

Show and share these community engagement efforts with citizens and elected officials through all available communication channels.

2. Engage in Proactive Community Outreach and Communications

Employ a proactive approach to information sharing that includes the Police Chief and/or Public Information Office (PIO) office being visible, accessible and available. Expand the Public Information Office to be a central point of information on a variety of issues including pending changes and/or considerations of specific citizen concerns regarding policing.

Explore models of successful precinct-level community engagement such as Green Hills and use this model as a framework to create similar processes in other neighborhoods. Equip each precinct and sub-station with the resources needed to communicate effectively and regularly with the communities they serve. This includes attending community meetings, engaging with community organizations and neighborhood associations on a consistent basis.

Develop two-way communication channels between police and community members that encourage conversation, frequent engagement and information-sharing. In all communications, use language that is clear and understandable to all members of the community.

3. Create a Task Force to Diversify and Amplify Community Input

Expand the current ACRP to create a community-based task force that provides insight and recommendations regarding community-police relations. This task force should maximize diversity of representation by including people with relevant, real-world experiences. Including police force, police misconduct and incarceration; as well as people from groups not currently represented in the dialogue, including grassroots activists.

4. Create Community-Police Dialogue regarding the History of Policing in Memphis

Bring together citizens with MPD officers and personnel to learn about and discuss the origins of policing and its connection to

- a) national and local history,
- b) racism and classism; and
- c) an approach to justice focused on retribution rather than redemption and rehabilitation.

Examine the long-term, inherent distrust held by communities and individuals towards the police department and uncover the behaviors and practices that continue to contribute to these opinions and beliefs. This dialogue should include an investigation of the negative place-based impacts of over-policing.

“REIMAGINING” PUBLIC SAFETY STRATEGIES

The following are suggested public safety strategies that do not center on policing:

1. Create Specialized Support Units

Create specially trained units that support data-driven, community-identified needs for community safety such as conflict resolution, translation, mental health, youth development, drug and alcohol dependency, homelessness, etc.

2. Build a Comprehensive Economic Development Plan

Build and implement a robust economic plan that addresses poverty and brings people to full employment with living wages, labor rights, healthcare, and transportation. Redirect resources to make investments in neighborhoods with the greatest need.

3. Think Creatively about Public Safety

Continue conversations and engagement to develop a comprehensive understanding and strategy for public safety and policing that considers multiple perspectives and integrates them into shared strategies and solutions. Create processes, conversations, and contexts in which elected officials, MPD personnel and citizens identify the non-policing aspects of public safety. Additionally, fully invest in innovative frameworks that imagine and create safe communities.

Additional Recommendations

These recommendations represent a combination of

- a) relevant recommendations that focus group participants mentioned with less frequency than those above; and
- b) language and/or recommendations presented by members of the ACRP Committee.

EXCESSIVE FORCE

Provide Emotional and Mental Screening Supports for Officers

Screen periodically for officers who ascribe to ideologies or are members of groups that would inhibit the officers' ability to serve and protect a diverse community fairly and equitably in accordance with democratic constitutional principles. An officer who views others as less deserving of fair and equitable treatment based on class or immutable characteristics will probably be more likely to use excessive force when interacting with members of those groups.

Officers should be screened periodically to ensure that they understand and are willing to follow policies that promote fulfillment of the duty to serve and protect our community, rather than promoting the view that officers should be a militaristic occupying force in those communities.

Through better screening and vetting, make an extra effort to recruit new police officers who are motivated by public service, not the power of carrying a gun and badge; stress use of force policies in continual in-service training.

Instill a culture within the Memphis Police Department that addresses, and hopefully overcomes what is an understandable jaded or hardened approach many officers develop over time toward criminal suspects.

Once the Memphis Police Department administrative process determines that an officer has engaged in excessive force that results in serious physical injury, submit the investigative file to the District Attorney's office to consider criminal charges.

Other Relevant Recommendations

Law enforcement officers should be required to move to the City of Memphis within 30 days of joining the police force.

A collaborative system should be implemented where if feasible, mental health crisis professionals are automatically called to assist law enforcement when interacting with mental health consumers. If such professional mental health resources are not requested, officers should be required to document why the resources were not used.

An introspective evaluation of the current culture of local law enforcement is needed as a prerequisite to meaningful positive change. This includes an evaluation of current policies and procedures that promote or permit negative, counterproductive cultural norms within law enforcement.

COMMUNITY RELATIONS

Engage in Proactive Community Outreach and Communication

Initiate and maintain connection and communication with crime victims and providers of services to victims.

Create Community-Police Dialogue Regarding the History of Policing in Memphis

Require all MPD officers to participate in and successfully pass a mandated class on the history of policing and implicit bias in Memphis. A mandate for full participation in this class about the historical context is necessary to:

- Create an environment that does not tolerate excessive force;
- Improve community relations;
- Promote meaningful reflection about information that contradicts long-held cultural beliefs;
- Lay the foundation to build a “serve and protect” culture in law enforcement.

The mandated class on the history of policing should include the following concepts:

- Knowledge of how law enforcement, historically, has been used to enforce unfair racial and social codes. This might create more understanding and appreciation for the necessity of creating new rules designed to ensure that law enforcement is serving and protecting our community fairly;
- Understand how post-Civil War criminal laws were enacted in our community with the intent of maintaining white supremacy;
- How convict leasing used law enforcement as a mechanism by which to support a system of de facto slavery;
- How purportedly race neutral laws have tended to be enforced inequitably against communities of color;
- How current data demonstrates that officers disproportionately choose to use excessive force when facing a person of color. Focus on gaining a better understanding of the context surrounding the mistrust of law enforcement that exists in many communities of color;
- Present positive examples of law enforcement that can provide the foundation for encouraging the kind of analytical thought leading to acceptance of rules designed to promote a “serve and protect” culture.

Other Recommendations

There is a real need for a demonstration of commitment to positive systemic change *beyond* a public showing of allowing the community to voice its concerns.

- This can start by using the Advisory Council’s core recommendations as a framework for selecting a new leader of the police department to demonstrate a real commitment to creating positive cultural change;
- Include reform-minded community activists in the selection process as a means of encouraging the community to gain trust and hope again.

Conclusion

We suggest the following as next steps to extend learning from this project:

- Conduct a quantitative survey to gain a larger participant pool and clearly differentiate between the views of various demographic sub-groups. This survey could also be administered in multiple neighborhoods and include quality of life measures, in order to better understand the connection between participants' neighborhoods and their perception of policing and public safety.
- Audit police time and resources spent on various services and determine which should fall within the realm of police duties and which should be referred/assigned to other entities within the associated resources. Such an audit would help to clearly identify services that police are doing that could be better handled by other entities. This is a necessary step to determine whether an enlargement of the Memphis Police Department force is necessary.



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