

MISSOURI CRIME  
VICTIMIZATION SURVEY, 2016:  
PERCEPTIONS OF LAW  
ENFORCEMENT



Sociology  
University of Missouri



# PERCEPTIONS OF LAW ENFORCEMENT

## MISSOURI CRIME VICTIMIZATION SURVEY, 2016

### Description of Reports

A total of six reports, including this one, have been produced from the MCVS data. The following is a description of each report.

Summary Report: This report contains 1) an introduction that describes the sample and population demographics, a Missouri metro/nonmetro county map, and a description of demographic variables, and 2) cross tabulations between demographic characteristics and (a) crime percentage distributions, (b) follow up questions for crime victimizations, and (c) perceptions of crime, community, law enforcement, and policy. The appendices include the survey script, methodology, and the number of respondents per county.

Executive Report: This report presents overall prevalence of crime victimization for the state of Missouri, and summarizes results from the reports on perceptions of law enforcement, neighborhood trust, safety, and fear, and intimate partner violence. The report also includes a comparison of metro and nonmetro respondents, description of victims' experiences, methodological considerations, and directions for future research that have been gleaned from administering the Missouri Crime Victimization Survey.

Intimate Partner Violence Report: This report presents descriptive statistics for five types of intimate partner violence (IPV)—physical abuse, emotional abuse, harassment, stalking, and sexual abuse—by demographic characteristics.

Neighborhood Trust, Safety, and Fear Report: This report examines survey responses to questions about trusting neighbors, feeling safe in one's neighborhood, and fear of violent crime. The report presents responses to these questions by race, age, sex, education, income, and metro/nonmetro residence.

Perceptions of Law Enforcement Report: This report covers a wide array of perceptions of law enforcement, including assessment of their effectiveness regarding several types of crime (e.g. drugs, burglary) as well as whether or not they treat people fairly and with respect. The report breaks down the responses to these questions by race, age, education, and income.

**Suggested Citation:** Eileen Avery, Joan Hermsen, Katelynn Towne, and Don Willis. 2017. Missouri Crime Victimization Survey, 2016: Perceptions of Law Enforcement. University of Missouri, Columbia, MO.

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# PERCEPTIONS OF LAW ENFORCEMENT

## THE MISSOURI CRIME VICTIMIZATION SURVEY

The Missouri Crime Victimization Survey (MCVS) was conducted in spring 2016 to estimate statewide crime victimization of adults. The Missouri State Highway Patrol partnered with researchers from the University of Missouri and the Wyoming Survey & Analysis Center (WYSAC) to develop and conduct the survey, and analyze the data. This survey of 2,008 respondents was conducted via phone and largely modeled after the National Crime Victimization Survey. For technical details see the 2016 Missouri Crime Victimization Survey Summary Report.

### Key Findings

- **Overall, Missourians hold favorable views of law enforcement.**
- **Favorable views were most common among respondents who were White, older, and had higher education and income.**
- **Regardless of demographic group, most Missourians report that they are likely to call law enforcement in the event of a serious or violent crime.**

<i>Pages</i>	<i>Figures</i>	<i>Questions</i>
4-5	1-4	Overall, how would you rate the job law enforcement is doing in your neighborhood?
6-7	5-8	How confident or not confident are you in local law enforcement?
9-10	9-12	How effective would you say the law enforcement agency that services your neighborhood is when people in your neighborhood call them for help?
11-12	13-16	How effective would you say the law enforcement agency that services your neighborhood is in controlling violent crime?
13-14	17-20	How effective would you say the law enforcement agency that services your neighborhood is in controlling drugs?
15-16	21-24	How effective would you say the law enforcement agency that services your neighborhood is in controlling burglary?
17-18	25-28	How likely would you be to call this law enforcement agency to report a theft?
19-20	29-32	How likely would you be to call this law enforcement agency to report a minor crime?
21-22	33-36	How likely would you be to call this law enforcement agency to report a serious crime?
23-24	37-40	How likely would you be to call this law enforcement agency to report a violent crime where you were the victim?
25-26	41-44	To what extent do you agree or disagree? The law enforcement agency that serves your neighborhood treats people with respect.
27-28	45-48	To what extent do you agree or disagree? The law enforcement agency that serves your neighborhood treats people fairly.
29-30	49-52	In your lifetime, have you ever been unfairly stopped, searched, questioned, physically threatened or verbally abused by the police?
31-32	53-56	Overall, would you rate the interaction with the officer or officers as being positive or negative?

# PERCEPTIONS OF LAW ENFORCEMENT

## PERCEPTIONS OF POLICE

Perceptions about law enforcement are important because they predict the extent to which residents cooperate with law enforcement officers and the ways they view the job performance and legitimacy of police. As such, perceptions of law enforcement have several implications for how police and communities interact. In the following report, we present descriptive statistics on perceptions of law enforcement and also look at differences in these perceptions across demographic groups. In particular, we focus on comparisons across race<sup>1</sup>, age, education, and income.

Survey respondents were asked several questions about their local law enforcement, including how well they address certain issues (see table on previous page). For example, to assess feelings about the job law enforcement do in their neighborhood, respondents were asked: “Overall, how would you rate the job law enforcement is doing in your neighborhood?” Responses to these questions offer insight into how respondents perceive law enforcement across multiple dimensions.

## RATING THE JOB OF LAW ENFORCEMENT

Figures 1-4 display the percentage of respondents who rated the job of law enforcement as good, acceptable, or bad, across race, age, education, and income. In order to simplify the presentation of these data, those who selected “very good” are combined with those who selected “good,” and represented in these charts by the cluster labeled “good.” The same was done for those who selected “very bad.” The bars colored in shades of gold represent the different categories being compared and the black bars represent the responses for the total sample. This theme is repeated throughout the report.

As these figures show, the large majority of respondents rated the job of law enforcement as good or acceptable. Approximately 90% rated the job of their local law enforcement as acceptable or better, with only about 10% of respondents rating them below acceptable. Missourians, it appears, have a generally positive view of the job done by law enforcement in their neighborhood. Although the overall rating of law enforcement was positive, there were some substantial differences across demographic categories of race, age, education, and income.

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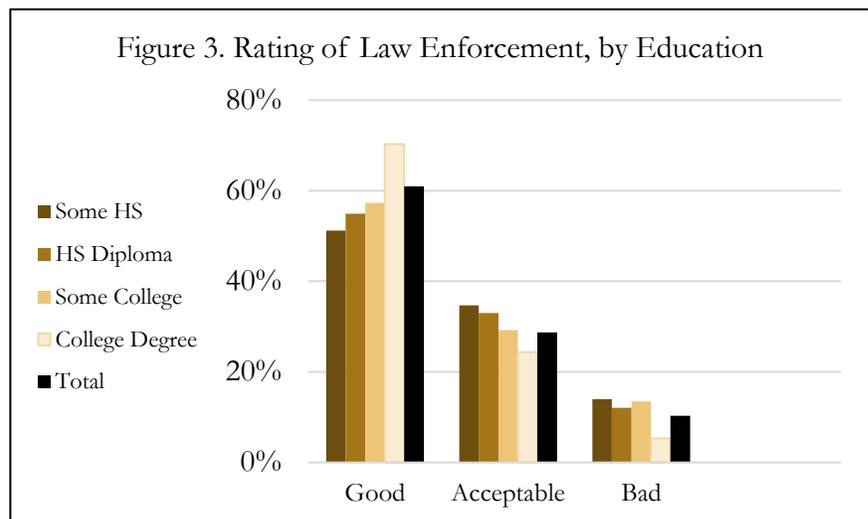
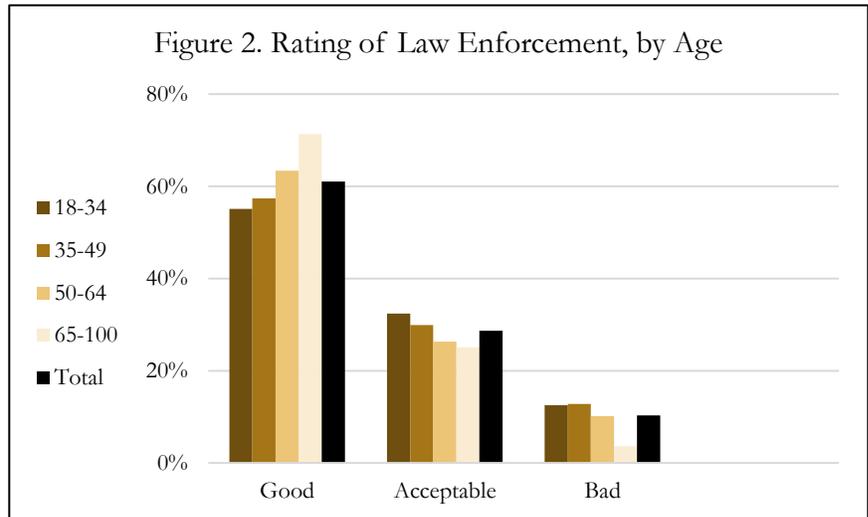
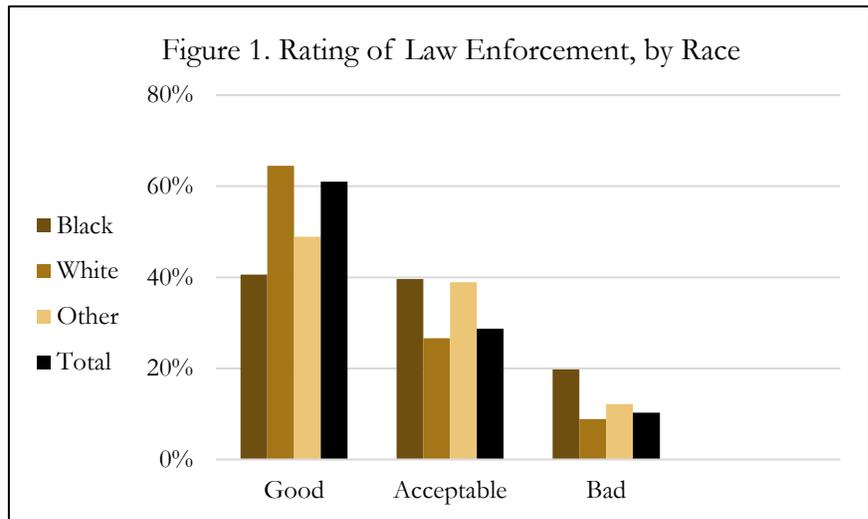
<sup>1</sup>Responses across race may vary compared to those presented in the Missouri Crime Victimization Summary Report due to a minor change in racial classification from the summary report. A small number of Others have been recoded based on qualitative responses. We use the term Black in this report to refer to those who identify as African American or Black.

# PERCEPTIONS OF LAW ENFORCEMENT

As shown in Figure 1, there are clear differences in the rating of law enforcement across racial groups. While the responses remain positive for all three racial categories, the percentage of respondents who rated the job done by law enforcement as good is substantially higher for Whites than it is for those who are Black or fall within some other racial category. Nearly two thirds of White respondents rated law enforcement as doing a good job. For those categorized as Other, that percentage drops to half. Among Black respondents, it drops even further to approximately two in five. In other words, while the overall view of law enforcement was positive, the degree to which responses were positive is dependent in part on the racial identity of the respondent.

Figure 2 shows that there are also differences across age categories. The percentage of respondents who rate the job of law enforcement as good is higher among older respondents than younger respondents. Over 70% of those age sixty-five and up rated their work as good compared to just 55% of those age 18-34.

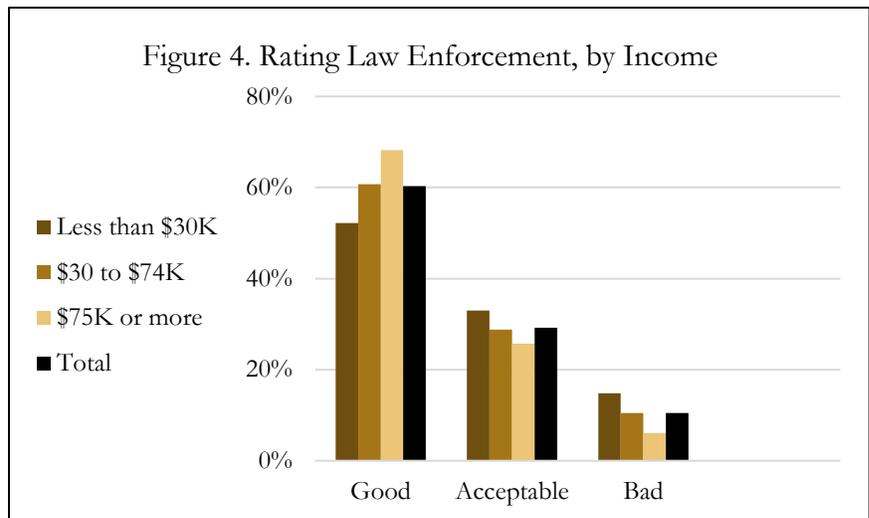
In Figure 3 we look at differences across education. In general, those with higher levels of education tended to respond with more favorable ratings of the job done by law enforcement in their



# PERCEPTIONS OF LAW ENFORCEMENT

neighborhood. The percentage who rated the job done by law enforcement as good ranged from roughly 70% among college graduates to about 50% among those who did not complete high school.

Figure 4 displays the rating of law enforcement by income. It is clear that those in higher income brackets had a higher prevalence of respondents who rated law enforcement as good. The reverse is true for responses of acceptable or bad, which have a higher prevalence among the lower income brackets. In general, the favorable rating was most common among respondents with higher income.



# PERCEPTIONS OF LAW ENFORCEMENT

Figure 5. Confidence in Law Enforcement, by Race

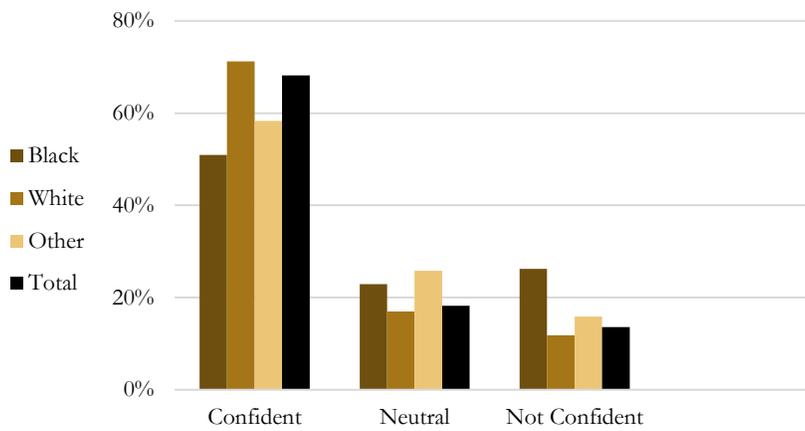


Figure 6. Confidence in Law Enforcement, by Age

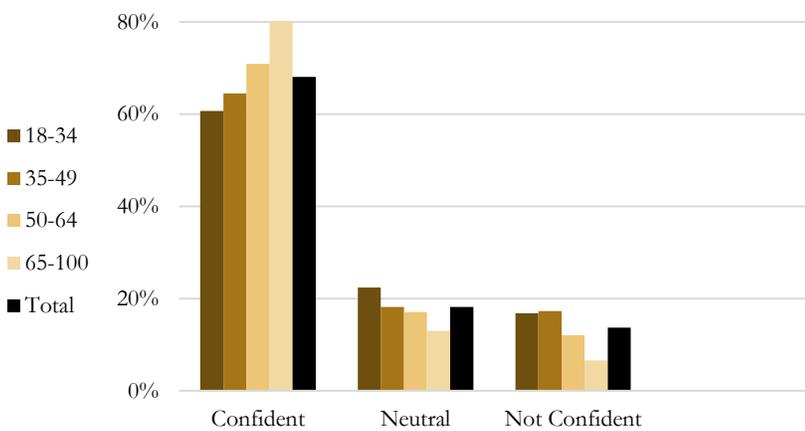
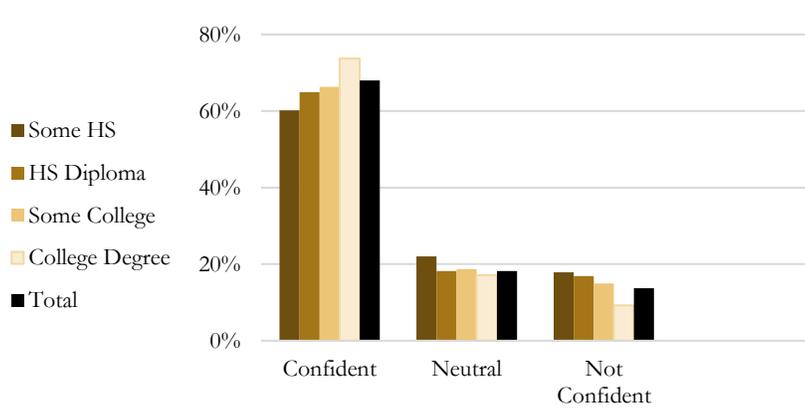


Figure 7. Confidence in Law Enforcement, by Education



## CONFIDENCE IN LAW ENFORCEMENT

Overall, respondents appear to have high confidence in their local law enforcement as evidenced by their responses to the question, “How confident or not confident are you in local law enforcement?”

As was done in Figures 1-4, Figures 5-8 present responses that have been combined for ease of data presentation. The category presented as “confident” includes responses that were initially either “confident” or “very confident.”

Thus, the total column for Figure 5 shows that nearly 70% of all respondents said they were either “very confident” or “confident” in their local law enforcement.

Similarly, the category presented in these figures as “not confident,” includes responses that were initially either “not confident” or “not very confident.”

Figure 5 highlights the differences in confidence across race. Whites have the highest percentage (71%) of respondents who are very confident or confident in law enforcement, while Black respondents have the lowest (51%). This gap in confidence is further shown with over 25% of Black respondents having no confidence while under 12% of Whites report the same.

# PERCEPTIONS OF LAW ENFORCEMENT

Figure 8. Confidence in Law Enforcement, by Income

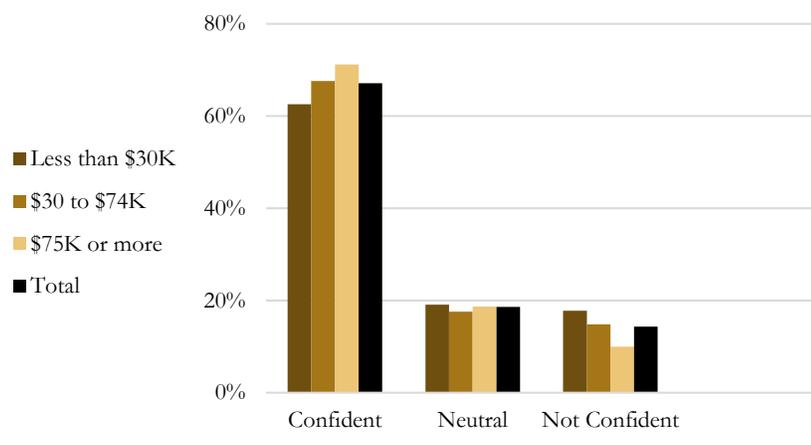


Figure 6 shows a higher prevalence of confidence in law enforcement as age increases. Among respondents age 65 or over, approximately four in five reported confidence in law enforcement. Among the youngest group—those age 18 to 34—the prevalence of confidence is lower: three in five are very confident or confident in local law enforcement.

Figure 7 shows that confidence in police also varies across education level. Respondents with higher education had a higher prevalence of confidence in their local law enforcement. Nearly 70% of those with college degrees reported confidence in them, while around 60% of those with only some high school said they were very confident or confident in local law enforcement. Still, nearly 20% of those with a high school diploma or less are not confident.

Figure 8 displays confidence by income. Those with higher income had a higher prevalence of confidence in law enforcement than those in the brackets below them, ranging from just over 70% among the highest income category to just over 60% among the lowest.

# PERCEPTIONS OF LAW ENFORCEMENT

## RATING LAW ENFORCEMENT EFFECTIVENESS

Figures 9-24 show the prevalence of respondents who rated law enforcement as effective across multiple domains. Responses of “very effective” and “effective” have been combined for these figures, as have “very ineffective” and “ineffective”—both combinations are presented as simply “effective” or “ineffective” in the following sections.

Missourians overwhelmingly rated law enforcement as effective when they called them for help, and in controlling violent crime, drugs, and burglary. That said, there is some variation in the rating of effectiveness by demographic categories—race, age, education, and income—as well as in the specific problem referred to in the question (e.g. violent crime, drugs, burglary).

Nearly 90% of respondents rated the job done by law enforcement as effective when asked about general effectiveness when called for help (see Figures 9-12). Although the overwhelming majority continued to rate them as effective, for the more specific issues of violent crime, drugs, or burglary, the percentage of respondents rating them as effective is lower as can be seen in Figures 13-24. For these more specific issues, the prevalence of respondents who rated them as effective ranged from 60% when it came to controlling drugs to 86% regarding the control of violent crime. The only instance where less than half of a group of respondents rated law enforcement as effective is in Figure 17—under 50% of Black respondents rated law enforcement as effective in controlling drugs.

Although demographic differences are not as pronounced for many of these questions as they were in Figures 1-9, we can see some substantial gaps. Most notably, race appears to be an important factor in shaping how respondents view the effectiveness of police, particularly when it comes to controlling violent crime (see Figure 13) where the racial gap in perceived effectiveness of law enforcement appears substantial. Prevalence of viewing law enforcement as effective is lower among Blacks and those of Other race. Differences across other demographic categories tended to be similar to differences shown in previous figures—those who are older, have higher education, and who have higher incomes, tend to rate law enforcement higher on effectiveness.

# PERCEPTIONS OF LAW ENFORCEMENT

## EFFECTIVENESS WHEN CALLED FOR HELP

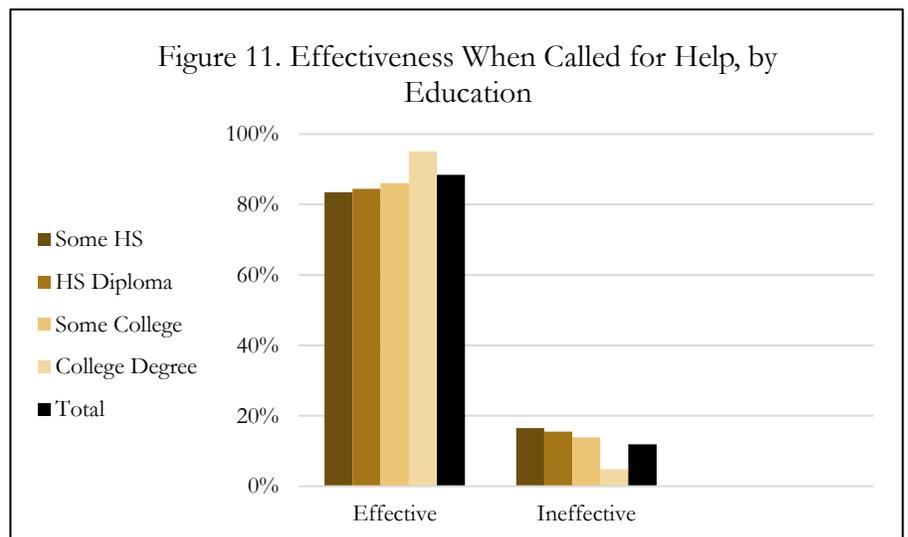
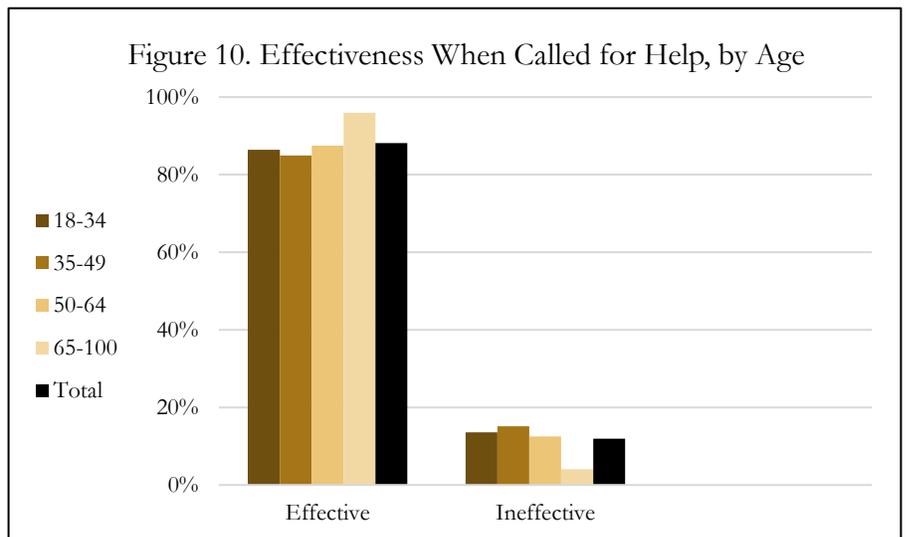
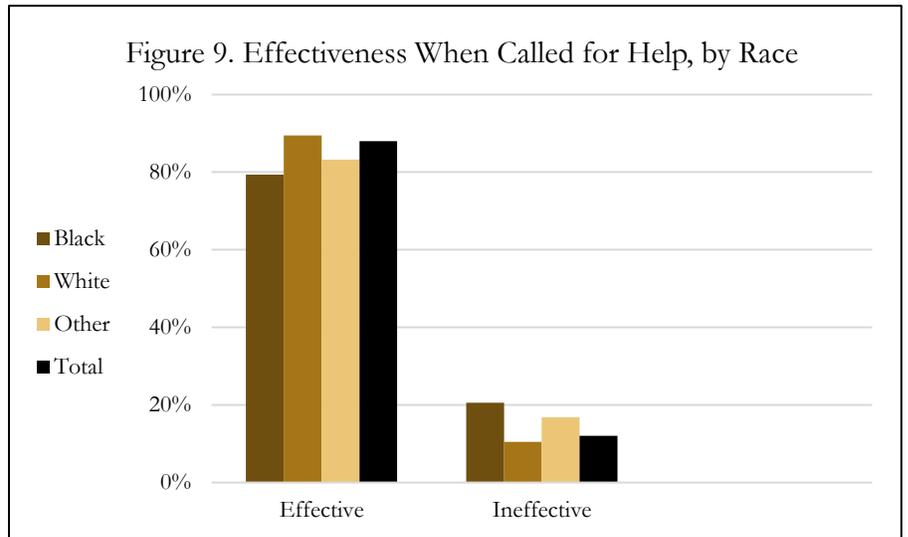
Figures 9-12 show that respondents overwhelmingly view law enforcement as effective when called for help.

While there are some differences across race, age, education, and income, these differences appear less pronounced than in previous figures. The largest gap that can be seen in these charts is between White and Black respondents, who rated law

enforcement as effective at 90% and 80% respectively.

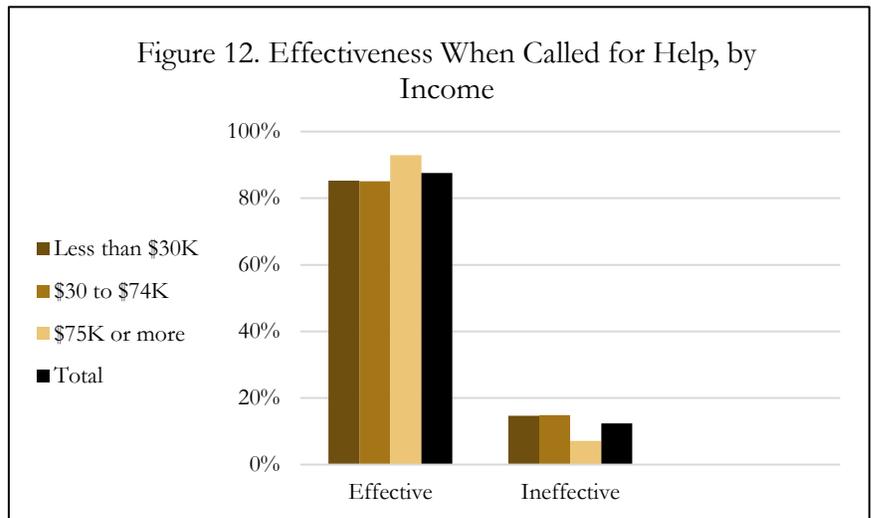
Figure 10 displays differences in the rating of law enforcement effectiveness when called for help across age groups. There is only a minimal difference in rating the effectiveness of law enforcement, with a higher percentage of those age 65 and over rating law enforcement as effective compared to younger Missourians.

Figure 11 shows comparisons of rating effectiveness across educational categories. Differences by education are also minimal; although, those with college degrees stand out as having a particularly high percentage of respondents who view them as effective in this regard.



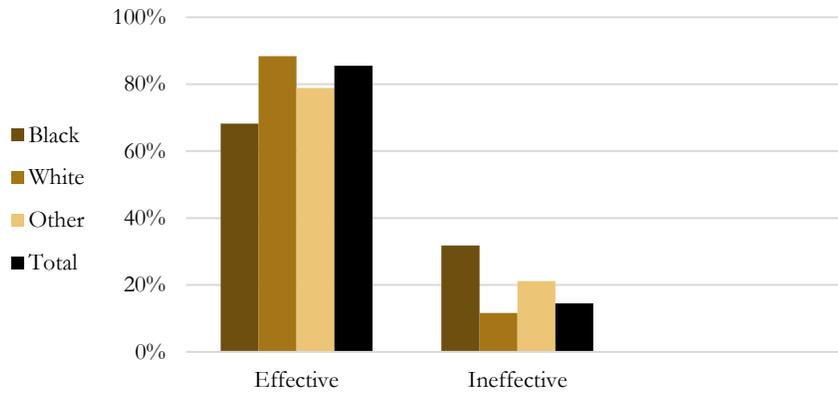
# PERCEPTIONS OF LAW ENFORCEMENT

Figure 12 displays the differences in the prevalence of rating law enforcement as effective when called for help by income categories. While the two lowest income categories show little to no difference in whether they view law enforcement as effective when called for help, the prevalence of rating law enforcement as effective was clearly higher among those with an income of \$75,000 or more.



# PERCEPTIONS OF LAW ENFORCEMENT

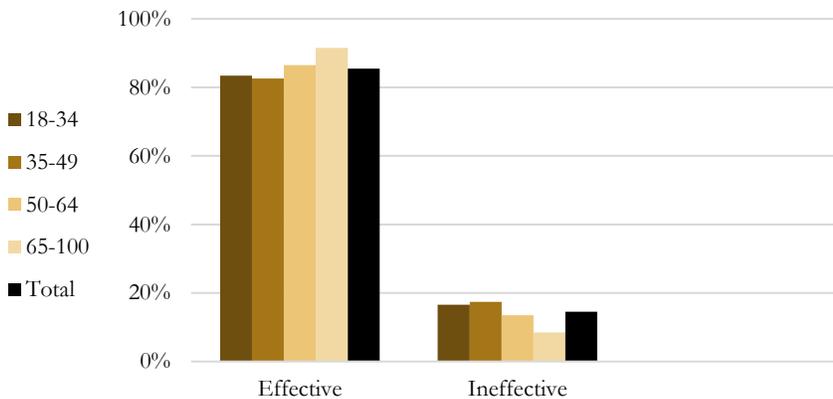
Figure 13. Effectiveness Controlling Violent Crime, by Race



## EFFECTIVENESS CONTROLLING VIOLENT CRIME

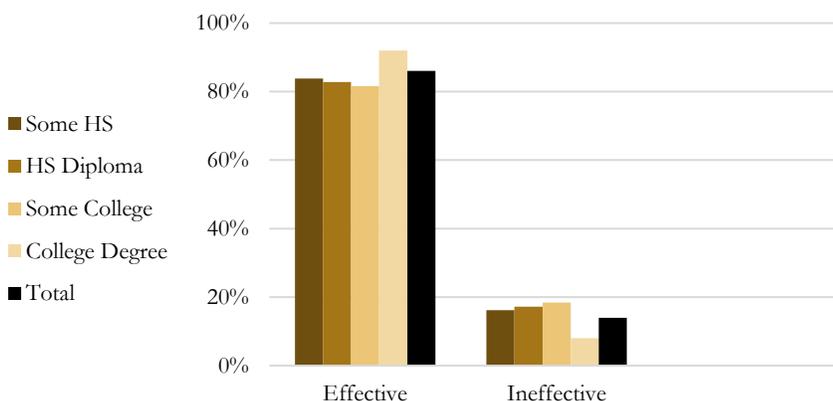
Figures 13-16 show less agreement regarding the effectiveness of law enforcement in controlling violent crime than other questions about law enforcement effectiveness. Although the responses are quite positive, there is a substantial gap between Black and White respondents. While nearly nine in ten White respondents rated them effective at controlling violent crime, less than seven in ten Black respondents rated them as effective.

Figure 14. Effectiveness Controlling Violent Crime, by Age

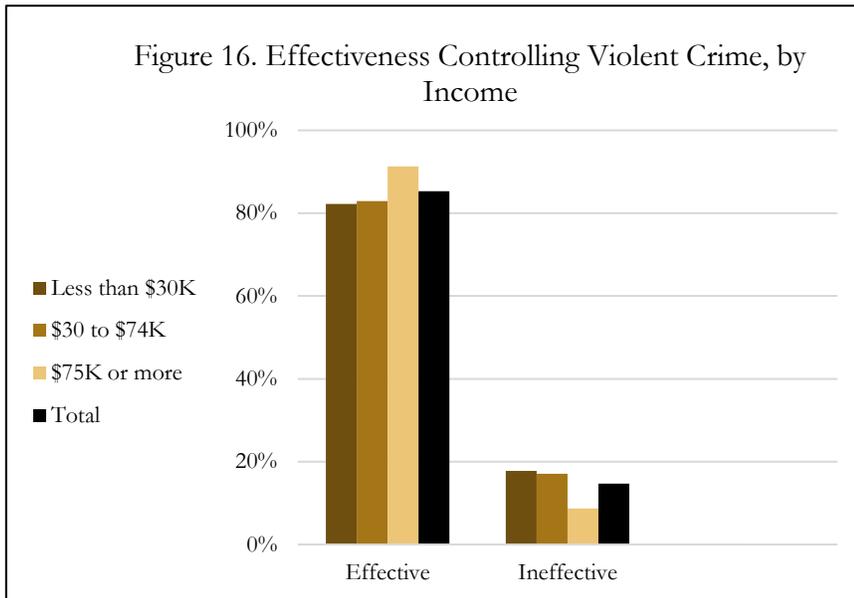


Differences across age appear to be minimal as is seen in Figure 14; however, the oldest age group does stand out as having a slightly higher percentage of respondents rating law enforcement as effective in controlling violent crime than other age groups.

Figure 15. Effectiveness Controlling Violent Crime, by Education



# PERCEPTIONS OF LAW ENFORCEMENT



Education differences shown in Figure 15 also appear to be slight, with one group standing out: a higher percentage of those with a college degree rate law enforcement as effective than those in every category with less education. Among those without a college degree, the percentage who saw law enforcement as effectively controlling violent crime hovered just above 80%. For those with a college degree, the percentage rises to just above 90%.

Figure 16 shows comparisons of income groups. As is the case in Figure 12, the two lowest income categories are nearly identical in the prevalence of those who rated law enforcement as effective in controlling violent crime while the highest income category—those making \$75,000 or more annually—stand out. Among this group of highest income earners, over 90% rated law enforcement as effective. The prevalence among those in the lower income categories is just above 80%.

# PERCEPTIONS OF LAW ENFORCEMENT

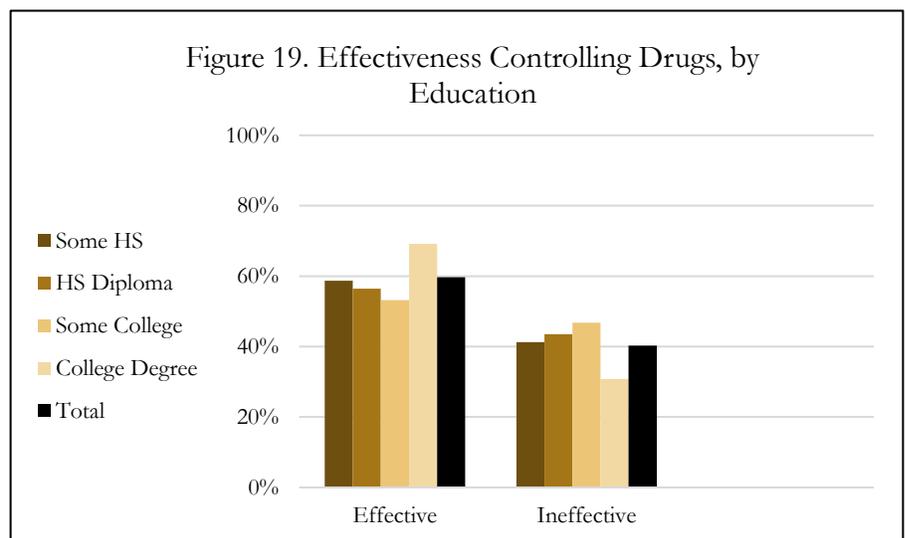
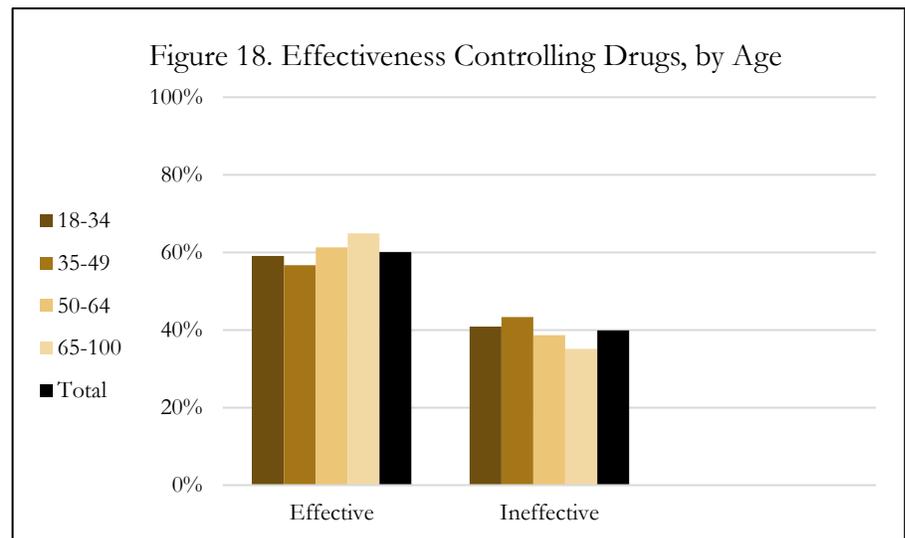
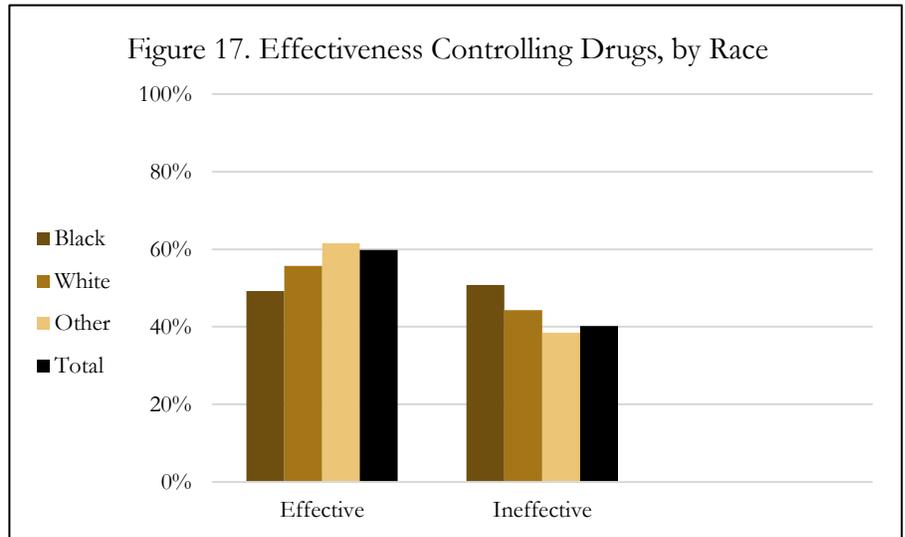
## EFFECTIVENESS CONTROLLING DRUGS

In Figures 17-20 we can see that fewer respondents view law enforcement as effective in controlling drugs than they do in other areas. While the majority still see them as effective, this view is only held among 60% of respondents overall—a substantial drop from the nearly 90% who rated them as effective when called for help, or controlling violent crime.

Again, in Figure 17 we see clear differences across racial categories, with favorable views being most prevalent among White respondents. Moreover, at 49%, the prevalence of Black respondents who view law enforcement as effectively controlling drugs is the lowest of any group for any of the effectiveness questions.

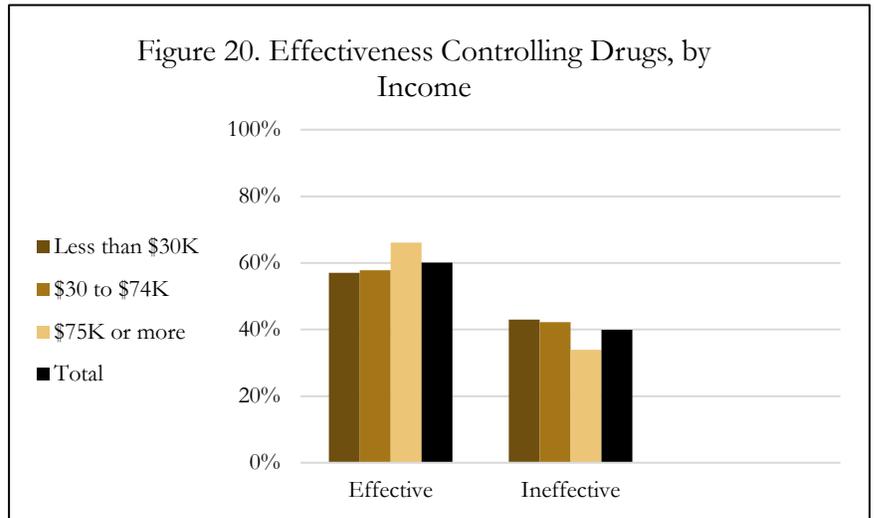
Figure 18 does not show a consistent increase with age; however, those in the oldest age category do have the highest prevalence (60%) of respondents who rated law enforcement as effective in controlling drugs.

Figure 19 displays the prevalence of effective responses across education categories. Those with a college degree have the highest prevalence (69%) of respondents who rated law enforcement as effective in controlling drugs.



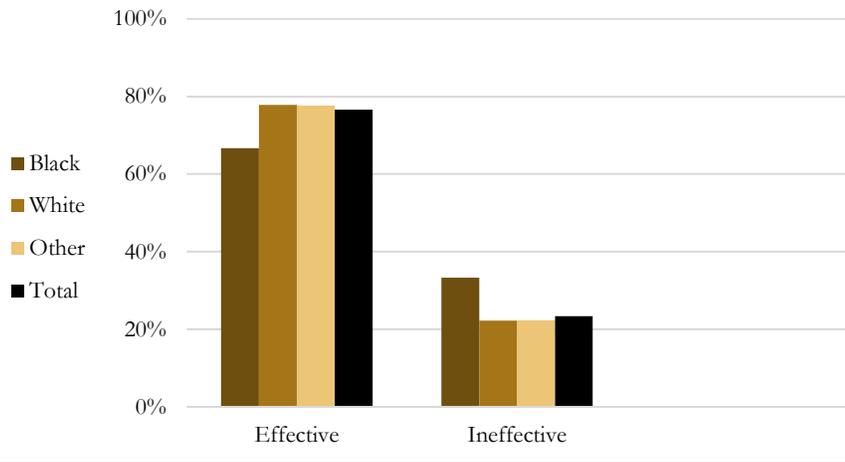
# PERCEPTIONS OF LAW ENFORCEMENT

Figure 20 shows the prevalence across income. Again, the first two income categories are nearly the same while those in the top category stand out as having the highest prevalence (66%) of respondents who rate law enforcement as effective for the specific issue of controlling drugs.



# PERCEPTIONS OF LAW ENFORCEMENT

Figure 21. Effectiveness Controlling Burglary, by Race



## EFFECTIVENESS CONTROLLING BURGLARY

Similar to earlier charts, Figures 21-24 show that roughly three out of four respondents felt that law enforcement did an effective job controlling burglary.

These charts are also similar in that they show little difference across groups, except for when it comes to race. Over 75% of White respondents rated them as effective while only 66% of Black respondents gave the same rating.

Those age 65 and up (Figure 22), and those with college degrees (Figure 23), have the highest percentage of responses rating law enforcement effective at controlling burglary. There is very little difference across income (Figure 24).

Figure 22. Effectiveness Controlling Burglary, by Age

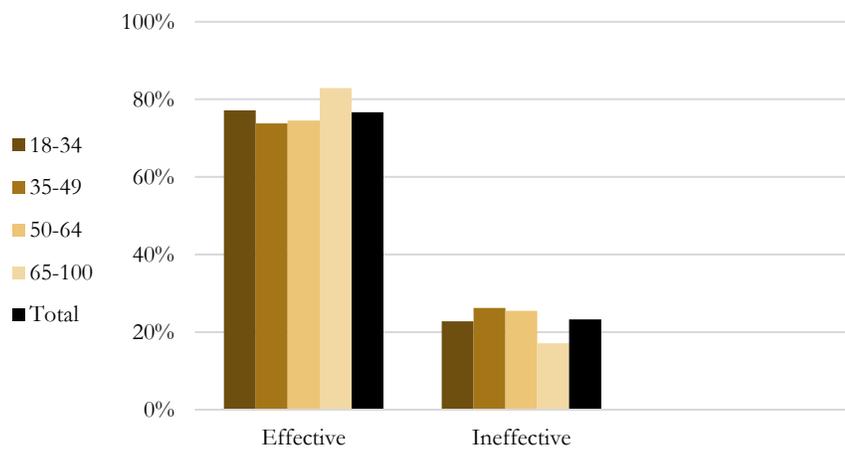
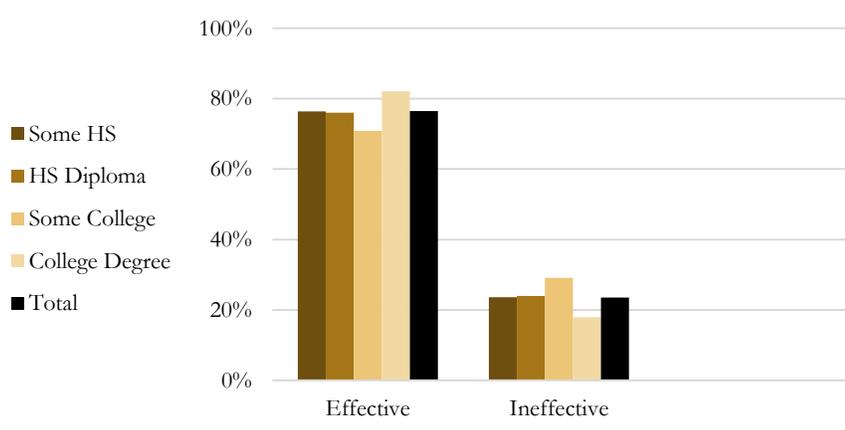


Figure 23. Effectiveness Controlling Burglary, by Education



# PERCEPTIONS OF LAW ENFORCEMENT

Figure 24. Effectiveness Controlling Burglary, by Income

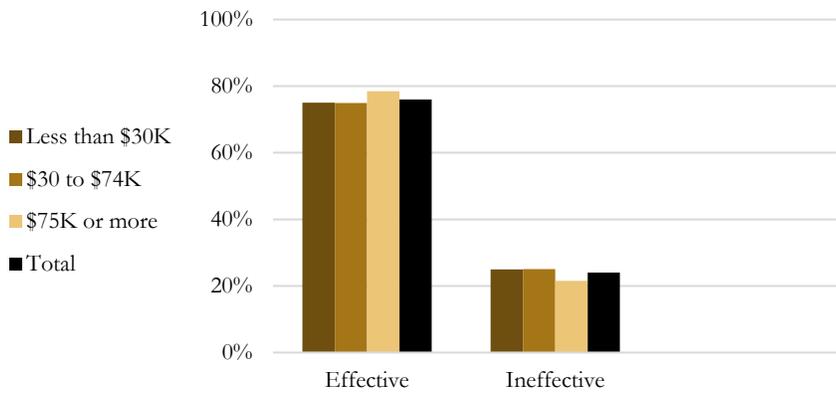


Figure 24 shows the least difference in income categories of any of the questions related to law enforcement effectiveness. Between 75% and 79% of all income groups rate law enforcement as effective in controlling burglary.

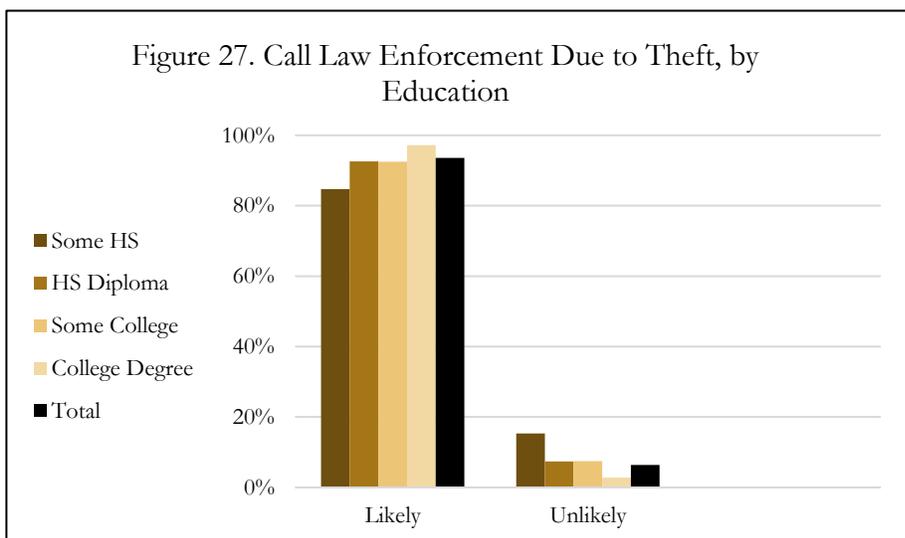
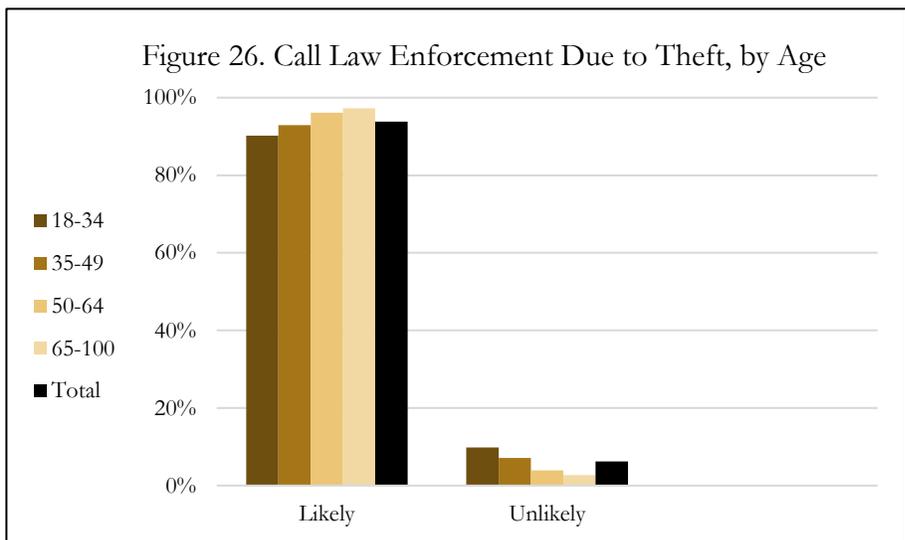
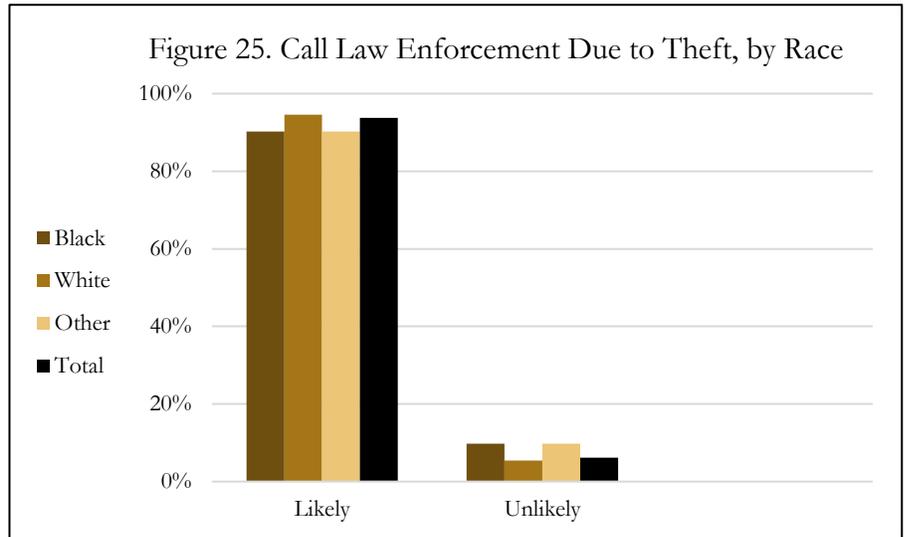
# PERCEPTIONS OF LAW ENFORCEMENT

## LIKELIHOOD TO CALL LAW ENFORCEMENT

Figures 25-40 present the percent of those who say they are likely to call law enforcement due to theft, minor crime, serious crime, or as the victim of a violent crime. Initial responses of “very likely” or “likely” are combined and presented in these figures as “likely.” The same was done for the “unlikely” category, which is a combination of both “unlikely” and “very unlikely” responses to the question.

The lack of difference across demographics in several of these charts tells a story: when people need help, they are overwhelmingly likely call. In these charts, we see that what has shaped the differences in perception of law enforcement in earlier charts has not necessarily shaped the likelihood to call on them when needed.

There are some gaps in the prevalence of those likely to call. For example, Whites, the elderly, the college educated, and those with the highest income levels, all have a slightly higher proportion saying they are likely to call law enforcement due to theft, minor crime, serious crime, or as the victim of a violent crime.



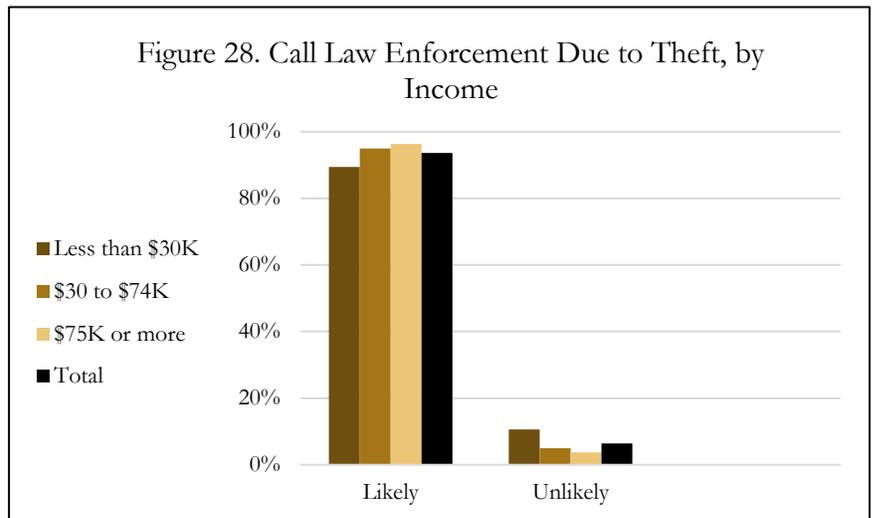
# PERCEPTIONS OF LAW ENFORCEMENT

## LIKELIHOOD TO CALL LAW ENFORCEMENT DUE TO THEFT

Figures 25-28 show whether or not people felt they were likely to call law enforcement because of a theft. A slightly higher percentage of Whites, seniors, college graduates, and those making more than thirty thousand dollars per year reported that they were likely to call due to a theft in comparison to their counterparts.

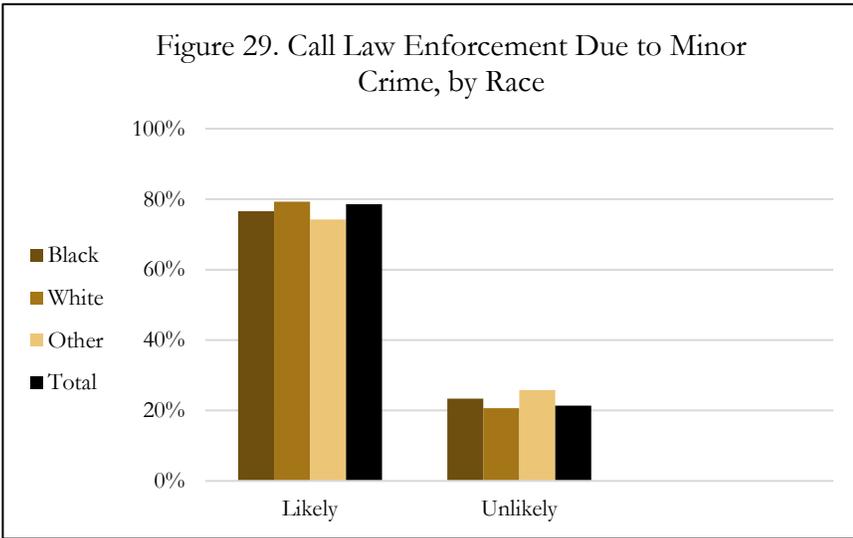
The most pronounced difference in

responses to this question appear in Figure 27, which compares responses by education. Among those with the lowest levels of education, only 85% said they would be likely to call in the event of a theft. By comparison, nearly 97% of college graduates said they would be likely to call.



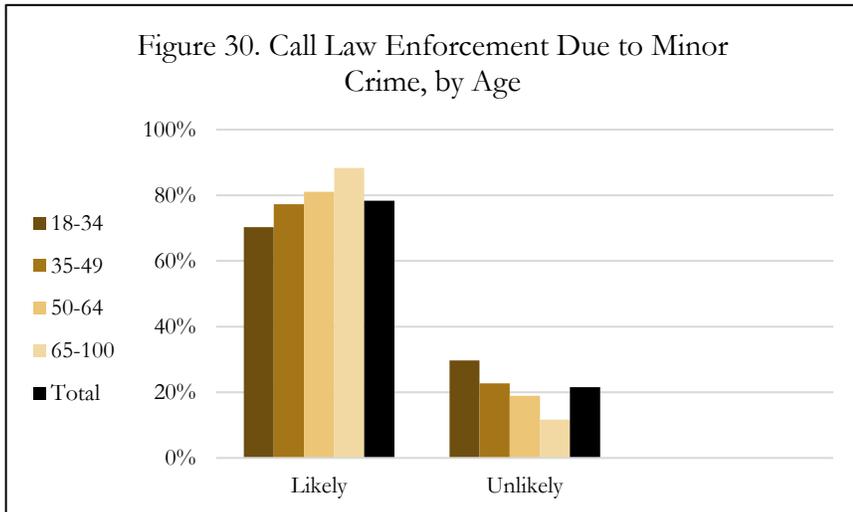
# PERCEPTIONS OF LAW ENFORCEMENT

## LIKELIHOOD TO CALL LAW ENFORCEMENT DUE TO MINOR CRIME

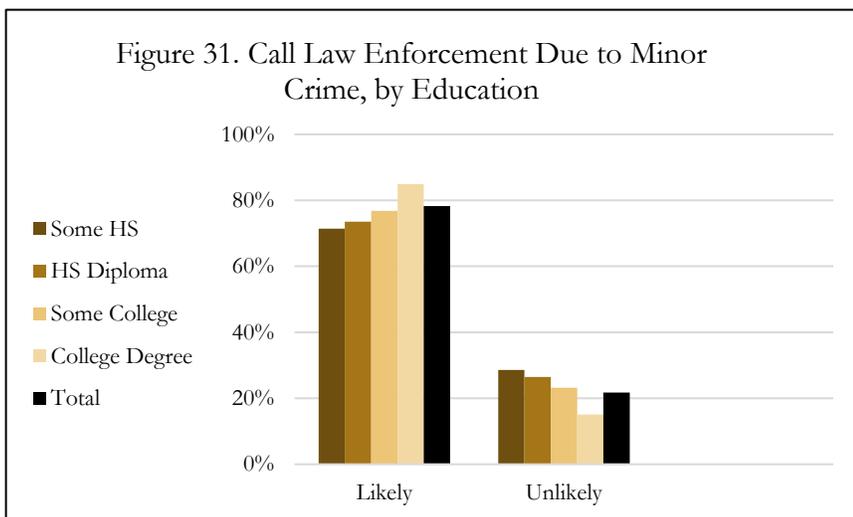


Figures 29-32 show the percentage of respondents who say they are likely or unlikely to call law enforcement due to a minor crime. Although it is still an overwhelming majority—nearly four in five—who say they would be likely to call, the overall percentage is slightly less than those who said they would call in the event of a theft.

Differences across race appear minimal; however, there are some clear differences across age and education. In Figure 30, the percentage who report that they would be likely to call in the event of a minor crime rises steadily from 70% to 88% between the youngest and oldest age groups.



In Figure 31 we see a pattern very similar to the previous figure. Each subsequent increase in educational attainment is matched by an increase in the prevalence of respondents who reported they would be either likely or very likely to call in the event of a minor crime.



# PERCEPTIONS OF LAW ENFORCEMENT

Figure 32. Call Law Enforcement Due to Minor Crime, by Income

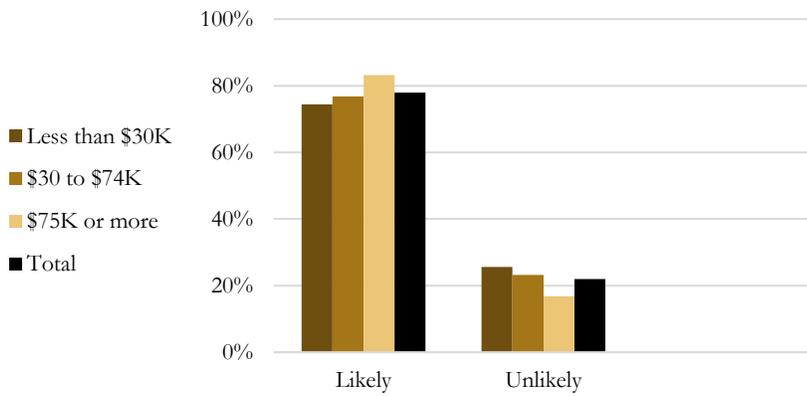


Figure 32 also shows a pattern of increasing prevalence in those likely to call law enforcement in the event of a minor crime as income level increase. The prevalence ranges from 75% among the lowest income category to 83% among the highest income group.

# PERCEPTIONS OF LAW ENFORCEMENT

## LIKELIHOOD TO CALL LAW ENFORCEMENT DUE TO SERIOUS CRIME

Figures 33-36 show the percentage likely to call law enforcement in the event of a serious crime. Nearly 100% of respondents said they would likely call.

Of all the questions looked at so far, this one has the least variation in responses across race, age, and education. Regardless of race, age, or education, almost all respondents reported that they would call law enforcement if there was a serious crime.

Figure 33. Call Law Enforcement Due to Serious Crime, by Race

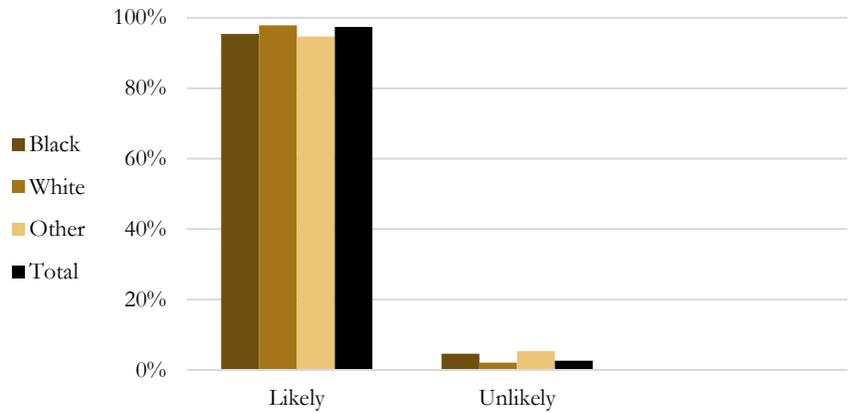


Figure 34. Call Law Enforcement Due to Serious Crime, by Age

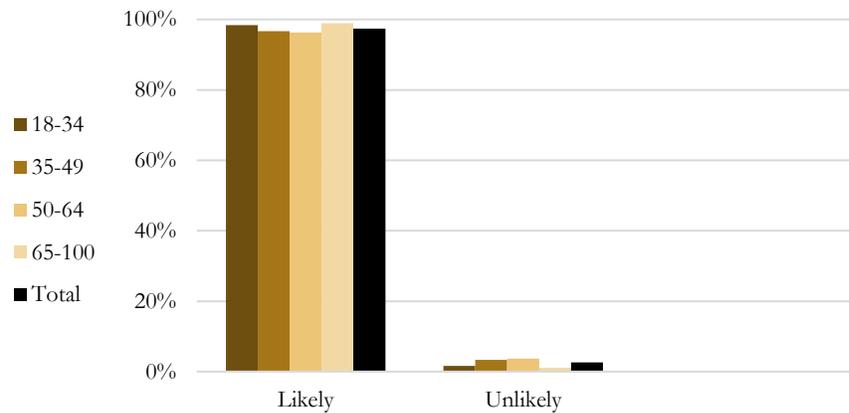
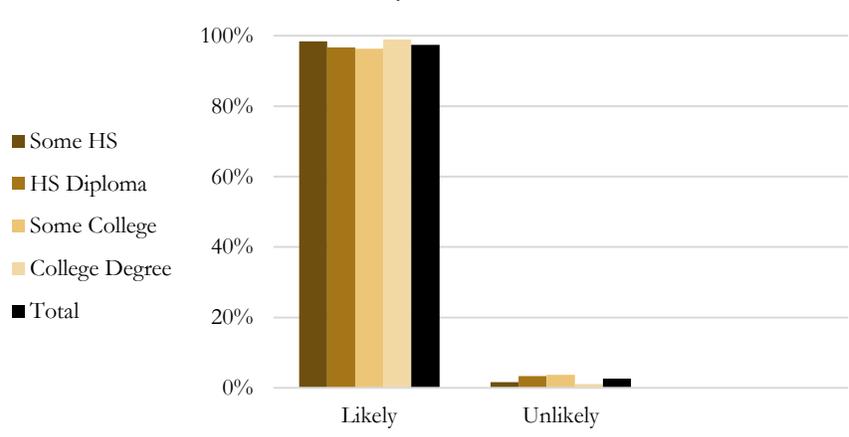
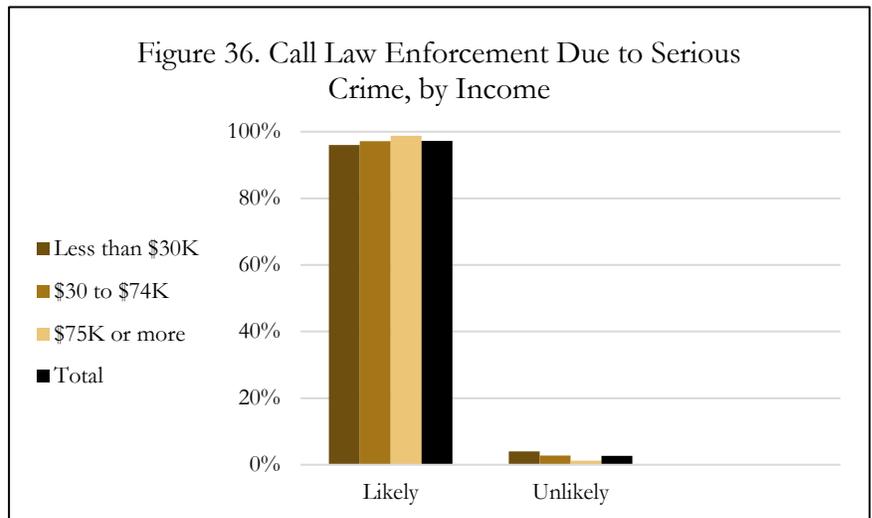


Figure 35. Call Law Enforcement Due to Serious Crime, by Education



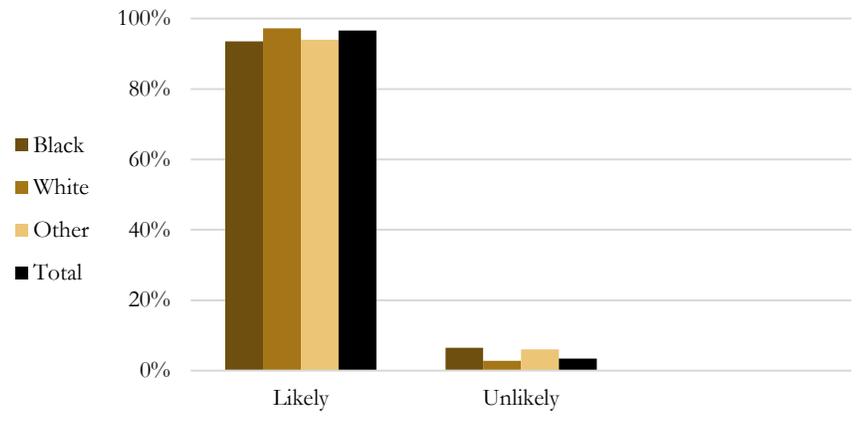
# PERCEPTIONS OF LAW ENFORCEMENT

Figure 36 confirms that, like race, age, and education, there are not substantial differences across income categories in the prevalence of respondents who say they are likely to call due to a serious crime. As with the comparisons in Figures 33-35, nearly all respondents reported that they would be likely to call in such an instance.



# PERCEPTIONS OF LAW ENFORCEMENT

Figure 37. Call Law Enforcement as Victim of Violent Crime, by Race



## LIKELIHOOD TO CALL LAW ENFORCEMENT AS VICTIM OF VIOLENT CRIME

Figures 37-40 display results for whether or not respondents were likely or unlikely to call law enforcement if they were the victim of a violent crime. As in earlier charts, the percentage likely to call is very high—almost 100%.

Variation in the prevalence of likely and very likely responses across groups appears to be low; however, there are some slight differences. Whites, seniors, the college educated, and those making thirty thousand dollars or more all show the highest percentages of respondents likely to call as victims of a violent crime.

Figure 38. Call Law Enforcement as Victim of Violent Crime, by Age

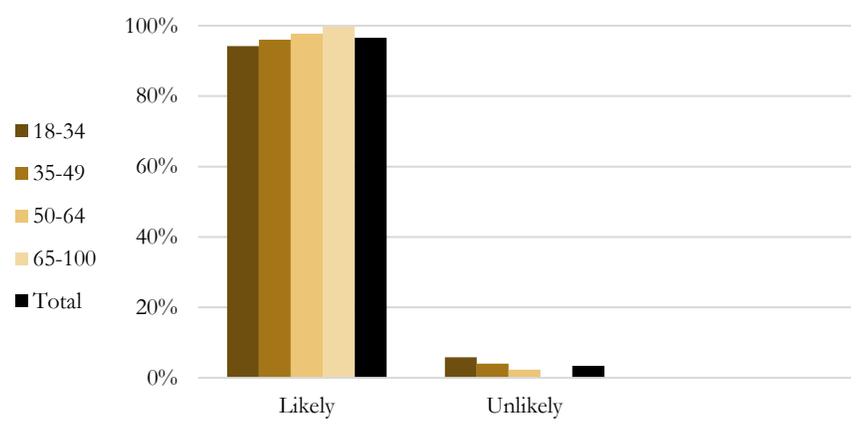
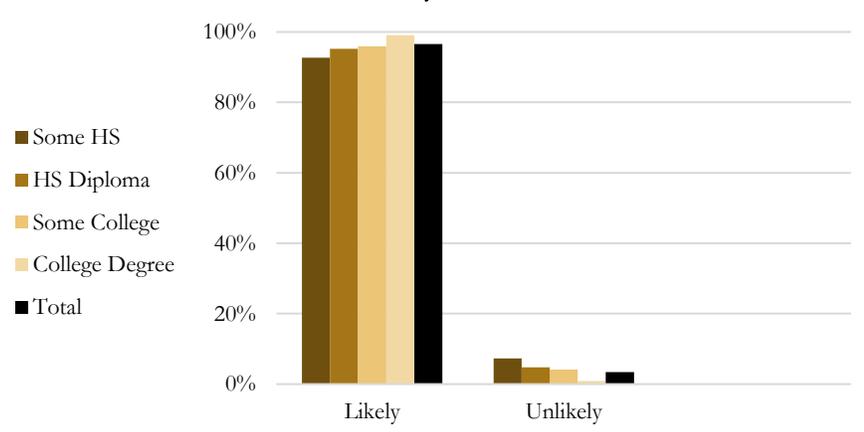
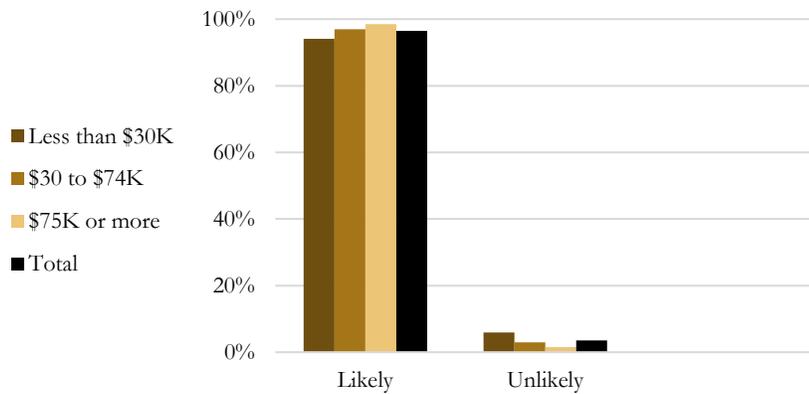


Figure 39. Call Law Enforcement as Victim of Violent Crime, by Education



# PERCEPTIONS OF LAW ENFORCEMENT

Figure 40. Call Law Enforcement as Victim of Violent Crime, by Income



Though the differences are small in Figure 40, the largest gap appears to break between those making less than thirty thousand dollars and those who make at least that or more.

In all of these comparisons, not a single group had less than 90% who said they would be likely to call in such an instance.

# PERCEPTIONS OF LAW ENFORCEMENT

## TREATMENT BY LAW ENFORCEMENT: RESPECT AND FAIRNESS

Overall, respondents appear to view local law enforcement as treating people respectfully and fairly.

Roughly three in four agreed with both statements regarding respectful and fair treatment. Responses of “agree” and “strongly agree” are combined in these figures and reported as simply “agree.”

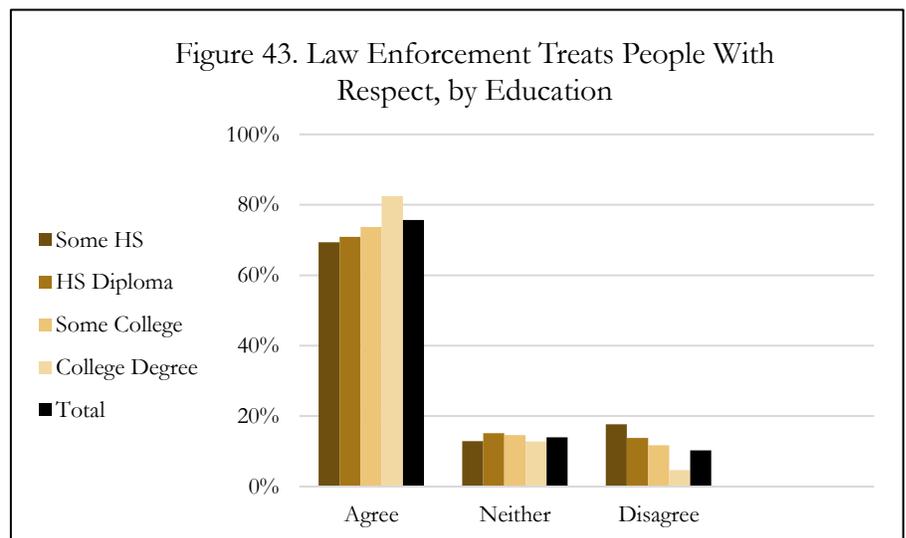
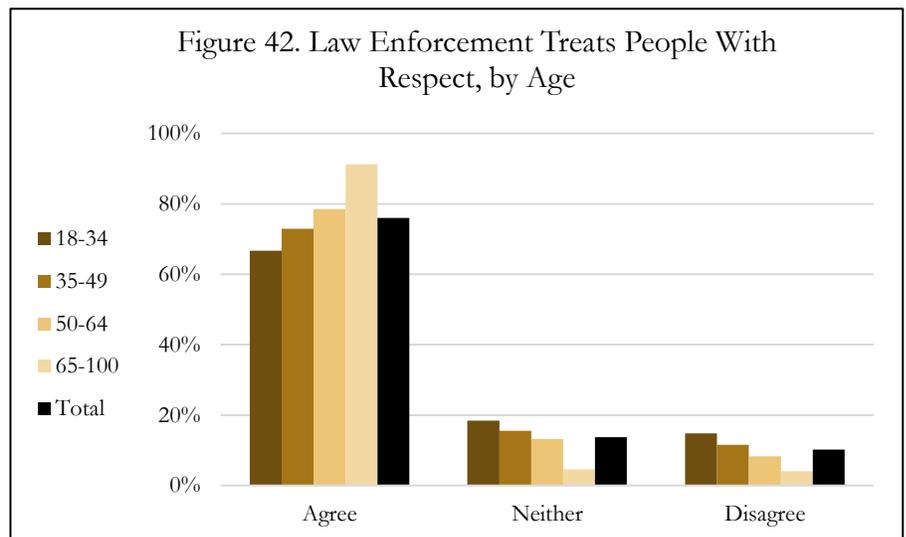
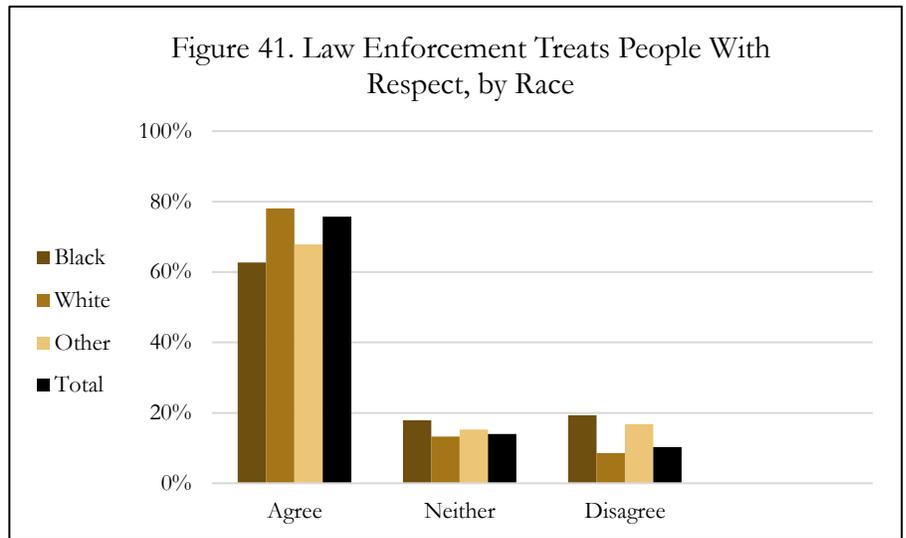
Responses of “disagree” and “strongly disagree” are combined as well, and reported as “disagree.”

Despite the overall favorable views of law enforcement, responses to these questions differed substantially across race, age, education, and income. As has been the case with nearly every measure regarding the perception of law enforcement, the prevalence of favorable views is highest among Whites, older age groups, those with higher levels of education, and those in the highest income categories.

### RESPECT

Figure 41 displays the percent who agree that law enforcement treats people fairly by race. While 78% of Whites agreed with the statement that law enforcement treats people with respect, only 62% of Blacks agreed.

In Figure 42, the percent in agreement across age ranges from

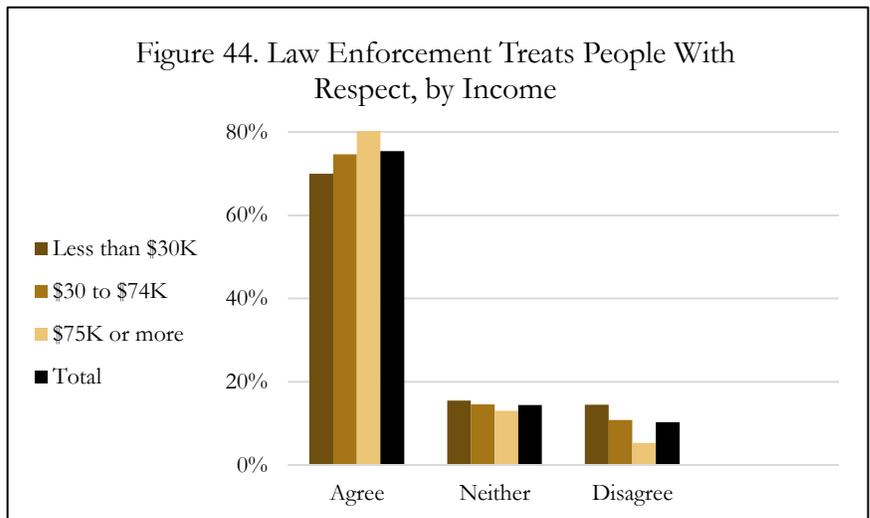


# PERCEPTIONS OF LAW ENFORCEMENT

66% to 91%, increasing with each consecutive age group.

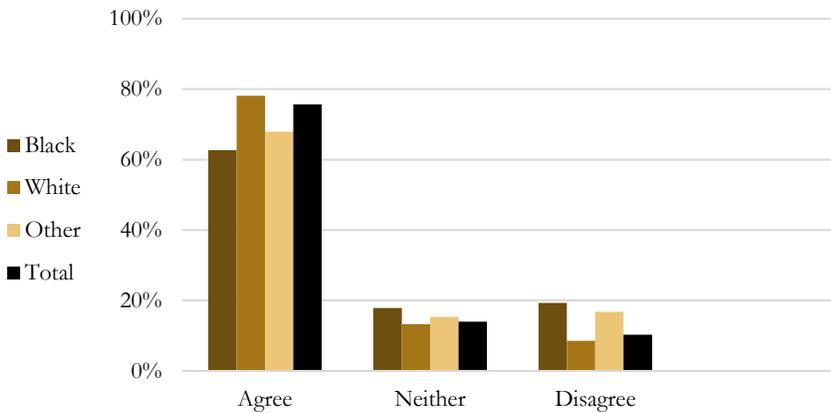
In Figure 43, on the previous page, the percent in agreement across education follows a similar pattern of increase in agreement as educational attainment increases, ranging from 69% to 83%.

Figure 44 shows that those in higher income categories also have a higher percent of respondents in agreement that law enforcement personnel treat people with respect.



# PERCEPTIONS OF LAW ENFORCEMENT

Figure 45. Law Enforcement Treats People Fairly, by Race

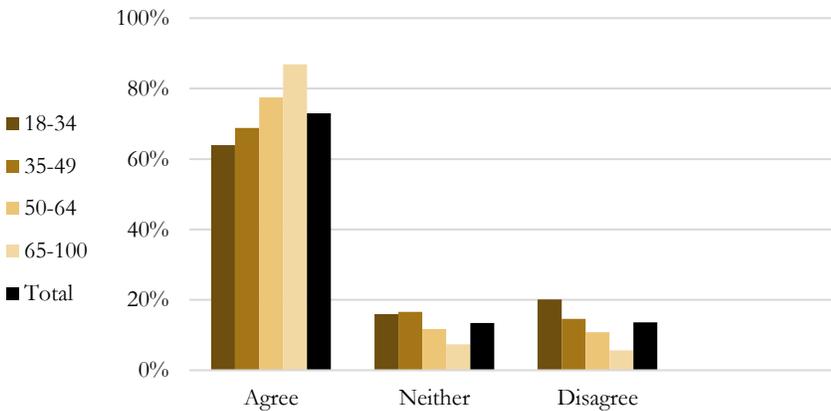


## FAIRNESS

Responses are similar to respect when examining fairness in treatment. While 78% of Whites agreed or strongly agreed with the statement that law enforcement treats people fairly, only 63% of Black respondents agreed.

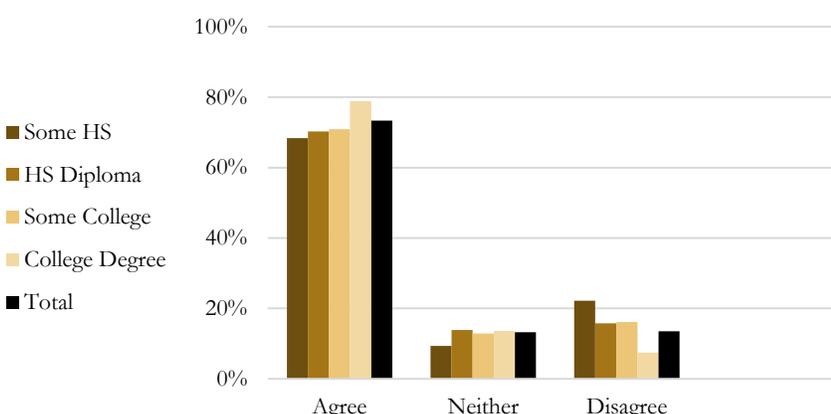
There are substantial differences across age groups in beliefs that law enforcement treats people fairly. For instance, 63% of 18-34 year olds agree that law enforcement treats people fairly compared to 87% of individuals 65 and over.

Figure 46. Law Enforcement Treats People Fairly, by Age



The percent who agree law enforcement treats people fairly also differs by education level—68% of those with no high school degree, as compared to 79% of those with a college degree, agree law enforcement treats people fairly.

Figure 47. Law Enforcement Treats People Fairly, by Education



# PERCEPTIONS OF LAW ENFORCEMENT

Figure 48. Law Enforcement Treats People Fairly, by Income

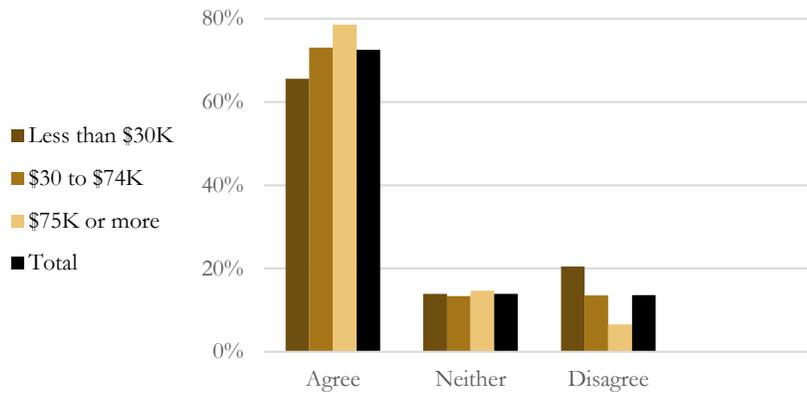
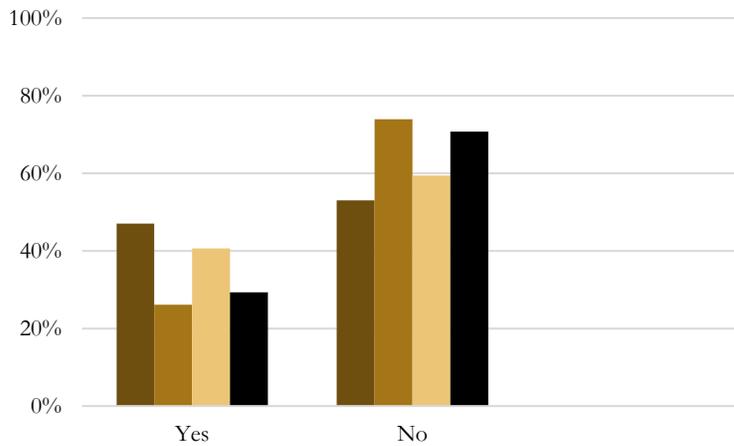


Figure 48 shows clearly that responses of agree or strongly agree were more prevalent among those in higher income categories. Roughly 66% of those in the bottom income category agreed or strongly agreed that law enforcement treats people fairly while nearly 80% of those in the top income category said the same.

# PERCEPTIONS OF LAW ENFORCEMENT

Figure 49. Unfair or Abusive Stop, by Race



## UNFAIR OR ABUSIVE STOPS BY POLICE

Figures 49-52 show the percentage of respondents who answered yes or no to the following question: “In your lifetime, have you ever been unfairly stopped, searched, questioned, or physically threatened or verbally abused by the police?”

Figure 49 displays notable differences in unfair or abusive stops across racial categories. Nearly 50% Black respondents reported that they had been unfairly stopped, searched, questioned, physically threatened or verbally abused by police in their lifetime. By comparison, only 26% of White respondents answered yes to this question.

Figure 50. Unfair or Abusive Stop, by Age

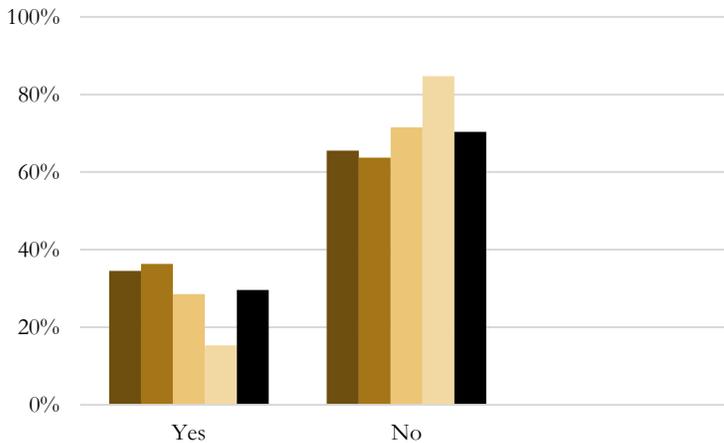


Figure 50 shows differences in unfair or abusive stops across age categories. In general, older age groups had lower percentages answer yes to the question about unfair or abusive stops.

Figure 51. Unfair or Abusive Stop, by Education

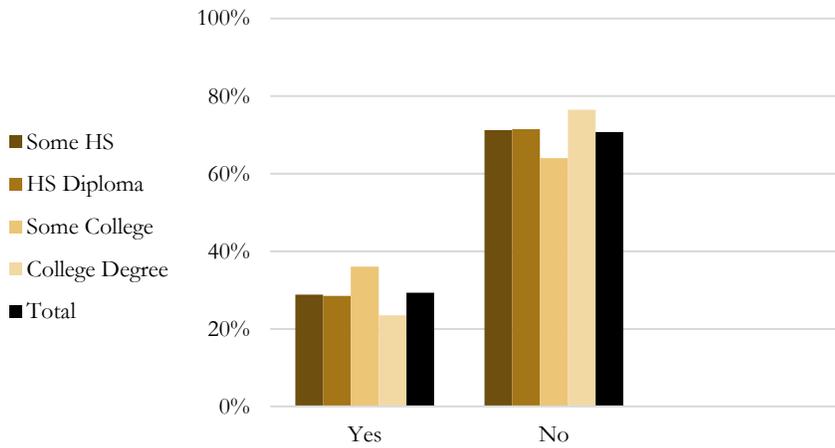
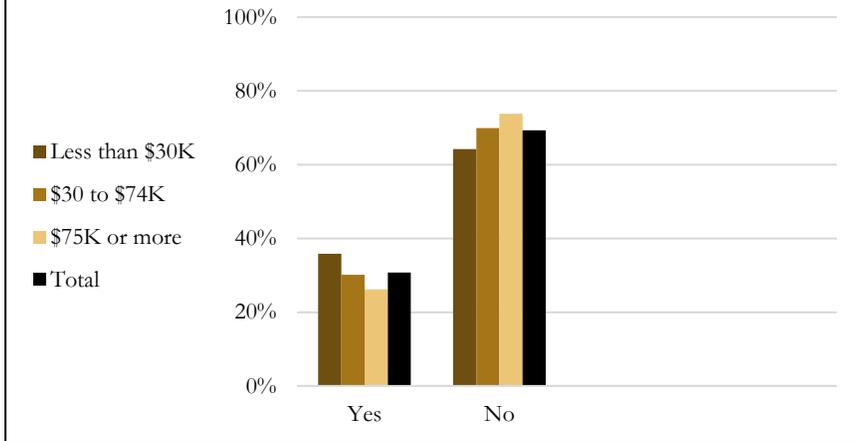


Figure 51 shows differences in unfair or abusive stops by education. Respondents with some college had the highest percentage (36%) reporting unfair or abusive stops in their

# PERCEPTIONS OF LAW ENFORCEMENT

Figure 52. Unfair or Abusive Stop, by Income



questioned, physically threatened or verbally abused by police in their lifetime. By comparison, approximately 36% of those who make less than \$30,000 reported the same thing.

lifetime.

Figure 52 shows unfair or abusive stops by police across the lifetime by income categories. Those in higher income categories have lower percentages of respondents who report unfair or abusive stops by police in their lifetime. For instance, among those who make an income of \$75,000 or more, 26% report that they have been unfairly stopped, searched,

# PERCEPTIONS OF LAW ENFORCEMENT

## INTERACTIONS WITH LAW ENFORCEMENT

First, note that there are two sets of clusters in Figures 53-56. Those with LE in front of them include only responses in cases where interactions with law enforcement were initiated by officers. Those with R include only cases where interactions were initiated by the respondents themselves.

Let's start by comparing the two sets of clusters, those who initiated contact and those where contact was initiated by the officer. Notably, positive interactions are more prevalent in cases where respondents themselves have initiated the interaction. In total, we see that roughly 80% of respondents viewed the interaction as positive when initiated by the officer while more than 90% viewed it as positive when they initiated the interaction themselves.

Moreover, while there are considerable differences across race among the cases where law enforcement initiated the interaction (Figure 53), these differences appear minimal in cases where the respondent initiated contact. When officers initiated contact, fewer

Figure 53. Law Enforcement Interactions, by Race

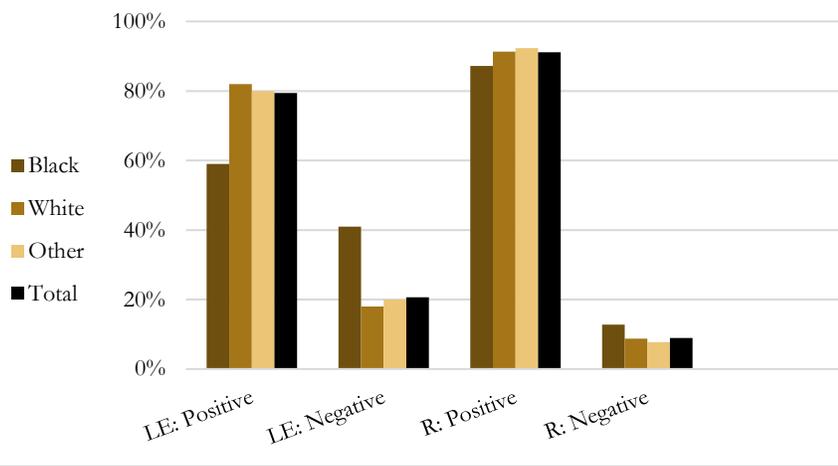


Figure 54. Law Enforcement Interactions, by Age

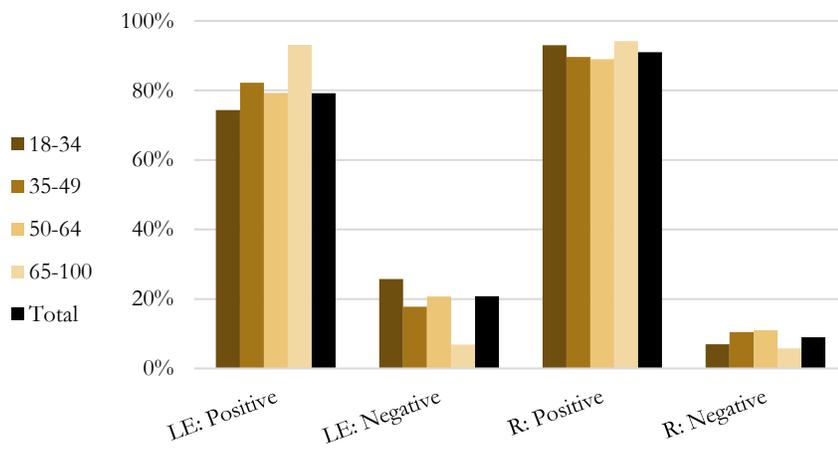
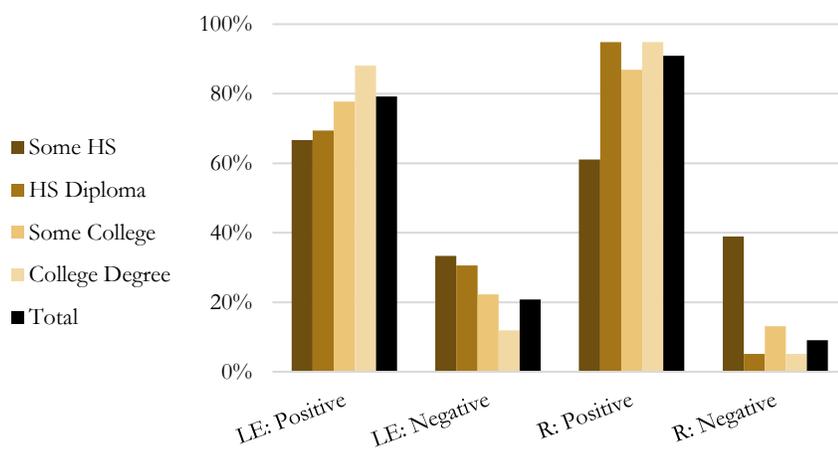
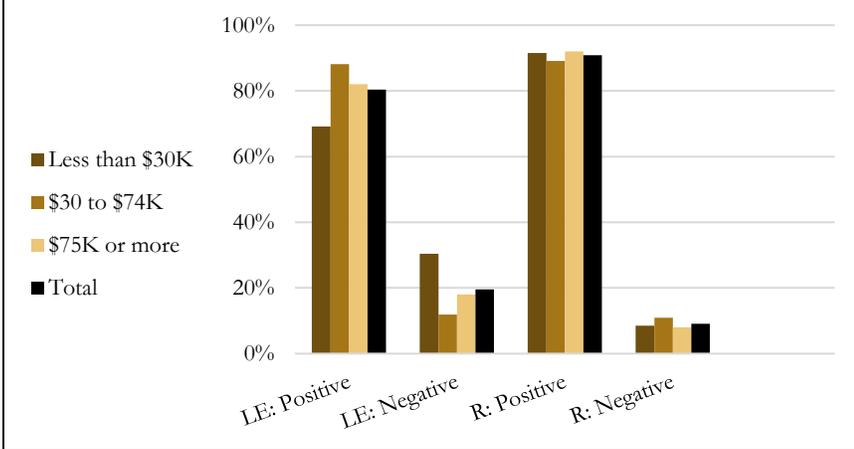


Figure 55. Law Enforcement Interactions, by Education



# PERCEPTIONS OF LAW ENFORCEMENT

Figure 56. Law Enforcement Interactions, by Income



respondents view the interaction as positive. This drop is especially pronounced for Black respondents: less than 60% rated the interaction as positive if it was initiated by an officer.

Positive ratings of law enforcement interactions are most prevalent among the oldest age group. Less than 75% in the youngest age group rated their interaction as positive when

initiated by an officer, whereas over 90% in the highest age group rated the interaction as positive.

Across education, we see a similar trend in cases initiated by officers. As education increases, so does the prevalence of positive views of the interaction. What is especially interesting in Figure 55, however, is that when respondents themselves initiated the contact, the difference in views remains for the least educated group—those with only some high school education. Whereas differences tended to disappear across race and age when looking only at cases initiated by respondents, this difference remains when it comes to education. In other words, for those with little education, the interaction with law enforcement does not appear to improve when they initiate the contact themselves as it does with Black or young respondents. In fact, the prevalence of positive views decreases when those with only some high school initiate the interaction themselves.

Figure 56 displays these differences across income. Again, we see only minimal difference when the interaction is initiated by the respondent but large differences when it is initiated by an officer. Those making less than thirty thousand dollars in income have the lowest prevalence of positive interactions with law enforcement when the officer has initiated the contact.

# PERCEPTIONS OF LAW ENFORCEMENT

## SUMMARY

This report offers a look at attitudes towards law enforcement in Missouri. Moreover, demographic comparisons offer a look at how Missouri residents view their local law enforcement similarly or differently.

Key points:

- Overall, Missourians hold favorable views of law enforcement.
- Some groups of Missourians hold more favorable views than others—namely, Whites, older respondents, those with higher education, and those in higher income brackets.
- Very little variation across groups exists when it comes to whether or not respondents said they would be likely to call law enforcement in the event of a serious or violent crime.

The general view of law enforcement is positive, whether it be in regard to effectiveness, fair and respectful treatment, rating of interactions, or likelihood to call local law enforcement in the event of a crime. However, the prevalence of that positive perception differs across demographic groups—particularly across racial, age, educational, and income categories. Specifically, Whites, seniors, the college educated, and those with higher incomes had higher percentages who reported favorable views of law enforcement than their counterparts—Black respondents, younger age groups, and those with less education and income. Of particular concern are the apparent differences across racial groups. Clear racial differences are apparent in almost every perception or rating of law enforcement; yet, these results suggest a difference in degree, not a difference in overall perception. Finally, while there were clear differences in perceptions, differences across groups were minimal when it came to calling on the police for help. Most people are likely to call the police in the event of a crime. This makes particular sense in light of the final figures of this report, where we see that negative interactions with police tend to be less prevalent when respondents themselves initiate the interaction. If they are making the call, they may have reason to expect the interaction to be a positive one.

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