

A 2017 Bethlehem Police Community survey

The Bethlehem Gadfly Police August 29, 2020

 *Latest in a series of posts about the Bethlehem Police* 

Bethlehem Police Community Survey 2017

by

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Purpose

The purpose of this study was primarily to investigate the perceptions of safety felt in Bethlehem neighborhoods by household residents in order for the Bethlehem Police Department to better target areas of concern. Secondly, the study aimed to better understand the degree to which Bethlehem residents are satisfied with the Bethlehem Police Department. Some key goals included identifying specific places where residents feel unsafe and what about the physical space(s) makes them feel unsafe during the day and at night. Another goal is to examine how residents feel about the Bethlehem Police Department in terms of their presence, professionalism, and responsiveness and how neighborhood and individual demographic factors may relate to these perceptions. The main hope is that this information can be used to better inform the police and the community about crime and police-community relations.

Highlights

- **Response Rate:** There was an overall response rate of 12%. While the sample of surveys distributed mirrored the distribution of households within each Bethlehem city zipcode, the responses from 18015 were under-represented. Additionally, the majority of the sample were older and white, thus there was a relative under-representation of younger and ethnic minority residents.
- **Neighborhood Problems:** In resident neighborhoods, respondents reported no or very few problems with crime, physical decay, or social disorder. About 80% percent reported no crime problems, 66% reported no physical decay problems, and 75% reported no social disorder problems in their neighborhoods.
- **Fear of Crime:** Respondents reported nearly no fear of crime while doing routine activities in their neighborhoods. The most commonly reported fear was walking or jogging alone at night, followed by taking public transportation after dark. Even so, the majority of respondents did not report being fearful of these activities. Additionally, very few respondents reported characteristics of their neighborhoods which made them feel fearful. The two most commonly reported factors were poor lighting or places to hide, but the majority of respondents did not report that these or any other factors made them feel fearful in their neighborhoods.
- **Confidence in Police:** In general, respondents were quite confident in the Bethlehem Police Department. About 74-95% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that they were confident in a variety of items such as responding to calls, investigating crimes, and trusting the leadership of the Bethlehem police.
- **Satisfaction with Police:** Overall, respondents were satisfied with the Bethlehem Police Department. About 67-94% agreed or strongly agreed that the Bethlehem police performed a number of duties such as providing quality service, acting professionally, and using the appropriate amount of force. The lowest level of support was expressed for informing the public of major issues (67%), but the rest of the items had 88-94% satisfaction.

- **Citizen Cooperation with Police:** Citizen cooperation with the police was measured in two main ways: citizen perceptions of involvement in active crime prevention and willingness to call the police. The majority of respondents reported that residents taking an active role in crime prevention is important. The item with the least support was getting involved with trash or illegal dumping in their neighborhoods, with only 42% suggesting that they would get involved. However, all other items ranged from 74-99%, suggesting that respondents take active measures to prevent crime. Regarding willingness to call police, 93-99% of respondents stated that they would call the police for burglary, drugs, prostitution, and violent crime. Overall, respondents report high levels of cooperation with the police.
- **Potential Target Areas:** The most common area of concern reported by respondents was speeding in their neighborhoods. Several respondents identified it as the main problem in their neighborhoods, especially those near schools. Litter and trash, overgrown lots, vandalism, drug use, poor lighting, and places to hide were other areas of concern for some respondents. Regarding the police, while most respondents were satisfied, some would like the Bethlehem police to improve their communication; particularly in terms of informing the community of major issues and crimes in their neighborhoods.
- **In sum,** respondents reported little to no crime, decay, or disorder problems in their neighborhoods. They had very low levels of fear of crime in general and in specific places. Respondents reported high levels of both confidence in, and satisfaction with, the Bethlehem police, and they reported willingness to call and cooperate with the police. While the sample was not entirely representative of the Bethlehem city population, those who did respond conveyed favorable views of their neighborhoods and the Bethlehem police.

See also:

[A Report on Citizen and Police Interactions](#)
[The Bethlehem PD Misconduct Directive](#)