

# Report to San Mateo County Board of Supervisors

## *Study Session on Sheriff's Oversight*

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# Stanford | John W. Gardner Center for Youth and Their Communities

The John W. Gardner Center for Youth and their Communities was founded in 2000 as an expression of Gardner's vision for vibrant civic participation and civic life.

At the heart of this vision is a call to create the **systems, settings, and supports** that youth, families, and community members need to develop the knowledge, skills, habits, and relationships that facilitate their **full participation in civic life**.

Out of this vision, and in response to this call, the Gardner Center conducts research in partnership with others, and in so doing, builds our **collective capacity to promote positive and equitable** youth, family and **community outcomes**.

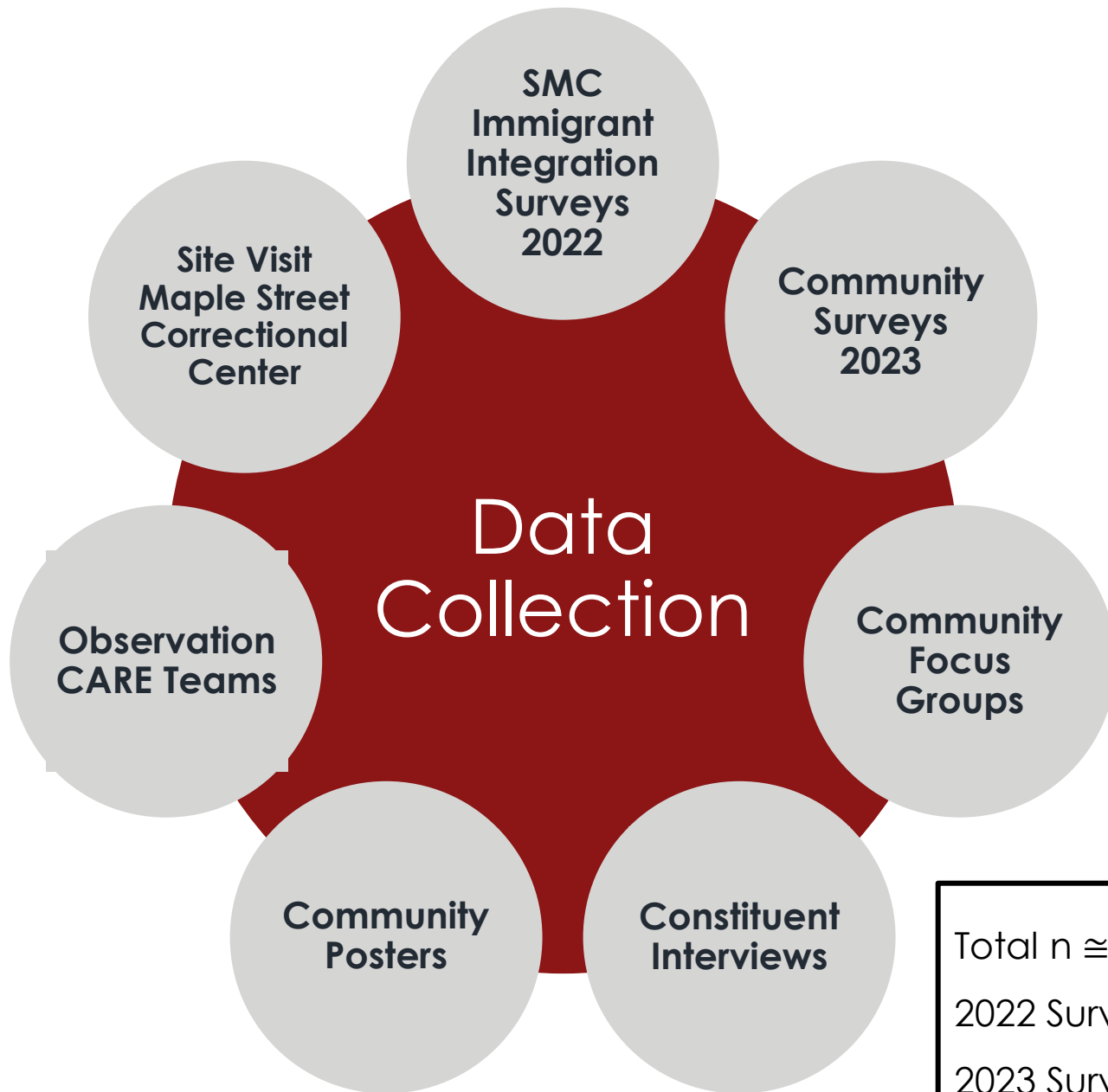
# Scope of Work & Presentation

Community members' experiences and perceptions related to:

- Sense of safety
- Factors impacting sense of safety
- Law enforcement and Sheriff's Office

# Data Collection Strategies and Sample

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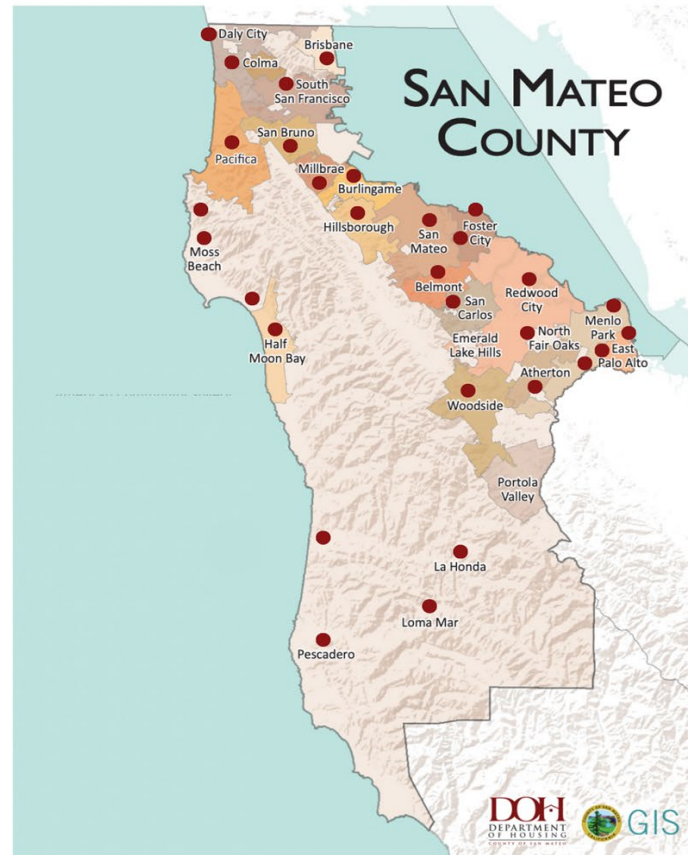


Total  $n \cong 3,000$   
2022 Survey  $n > 2,770$   
2023 Survey  $n = 104$

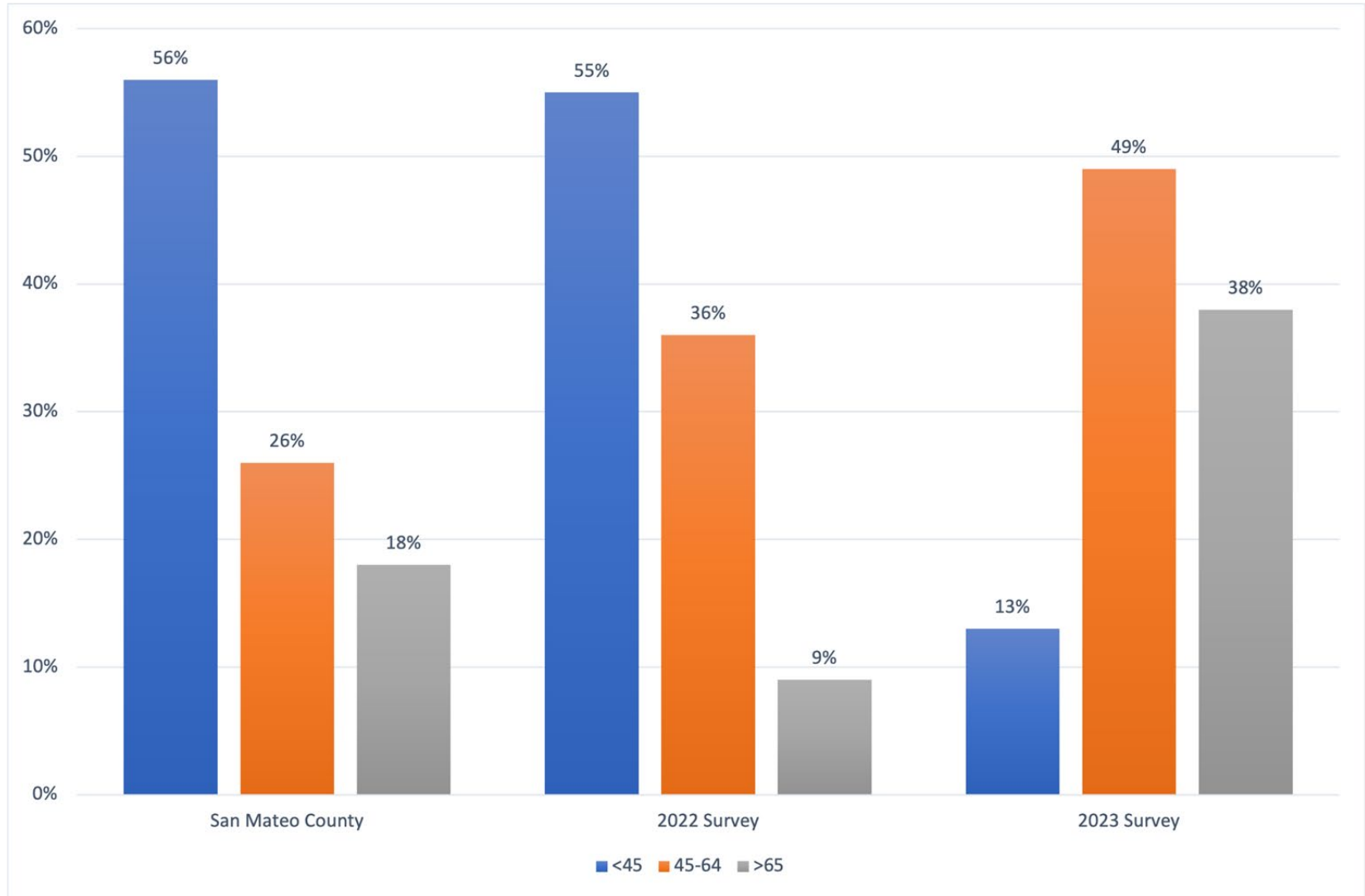
# Survey Respondents:

## City/Community of Residence

Belmont  
Daly City  
East Palo Alto  
Half Moon Bay  
Hillsborough  
Menlo Park  
Millbrae  
Pacifica  
Pescadero  
Redwood City  
San Bruno  
San Carlos  
San Francisco  
San Mateo  
South San Francisco  
San Gregorio



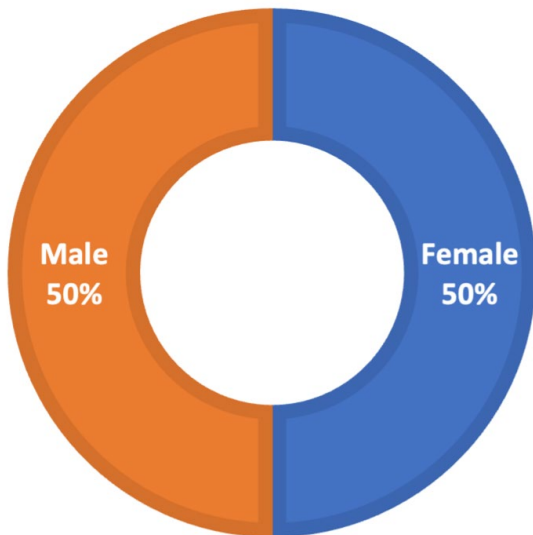
# Survey Respondents: Age



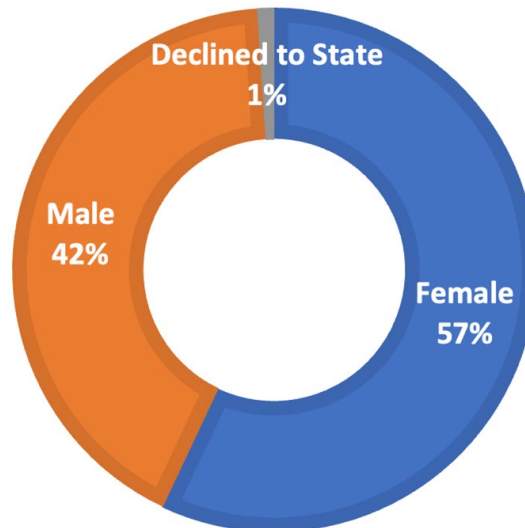
The San Mateo County statistics represent Census 2022 ACS 1-year Survey results.

# Survey Respondents: **Gender**

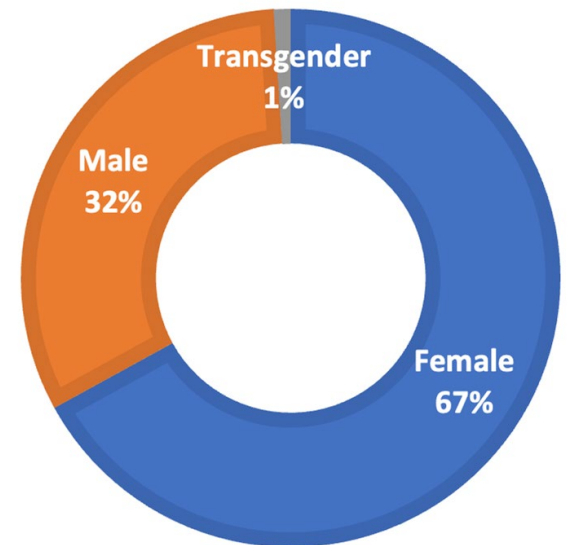
**SAN MATEO COUNTY**



**2022 SURVEY**



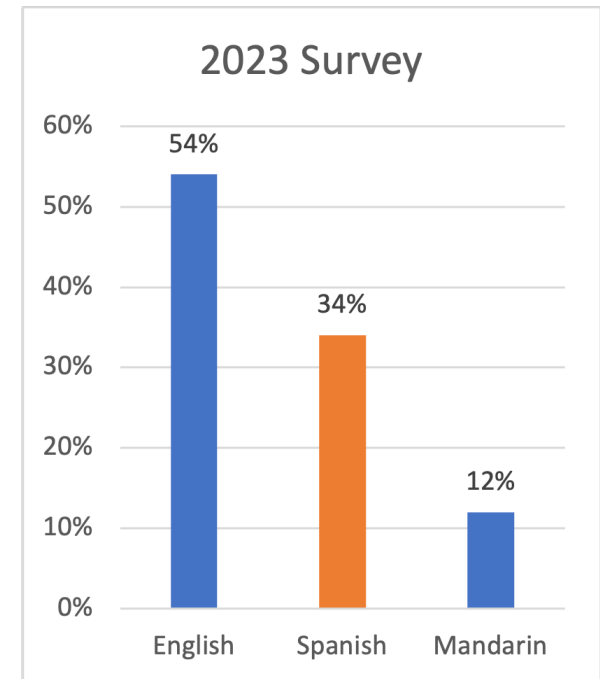
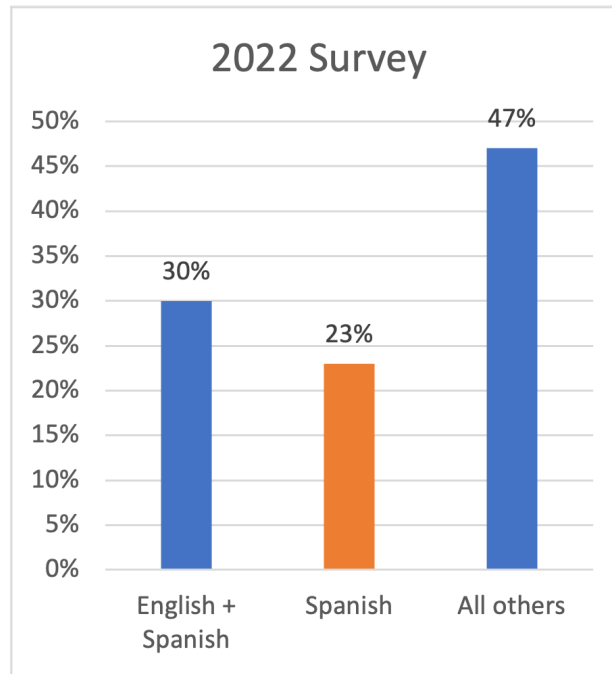
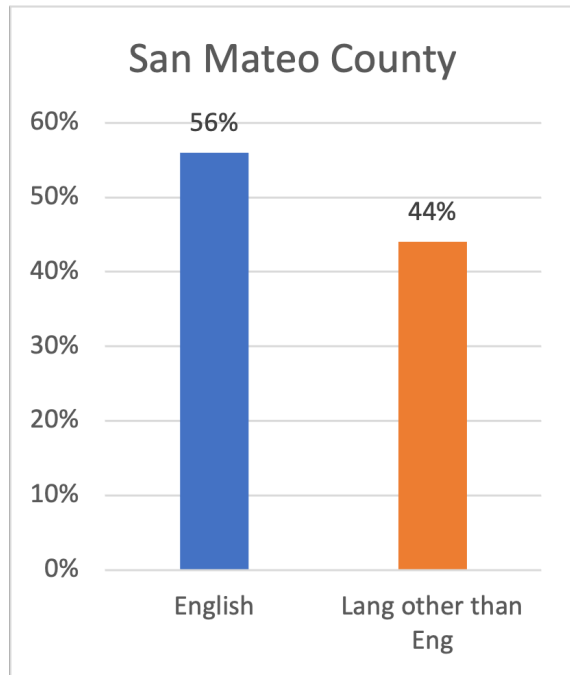
**2023 SURVEY**



The San Mateo County statistics represent Census 2022 ACS 1-year Survey results.



# Survey Respondents: **Languages Spoken**



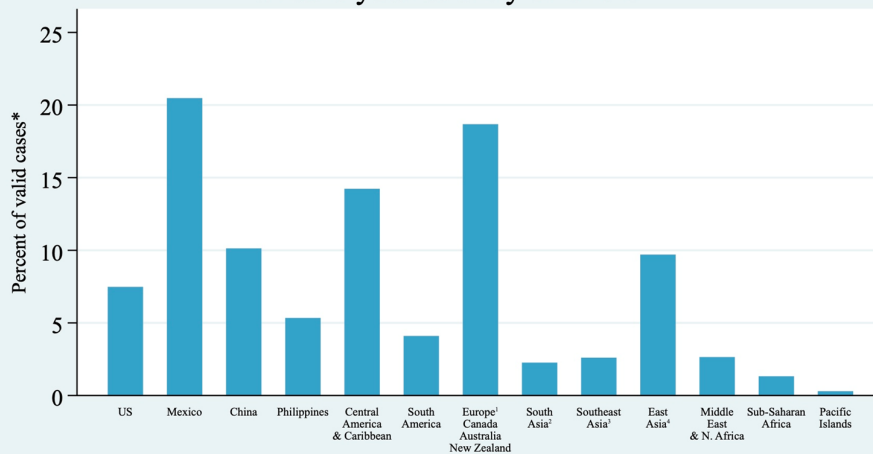
The San Mateo County statistics represent Census 2022 ACS 1-year Survey results.

# Survey Respondents: Country of Birth, Race, & Ethnicity

2022 Survey  
(N = 2,779)

2023 Survey  
(N = 104)

What is your country of birth?



\* The number of valid cases used as the base for the percentage calculation is 2,339 whereas the number of legitimate responses is 2,779.

Notes:

<sup>1</sup>Europe includes UK and Russia.

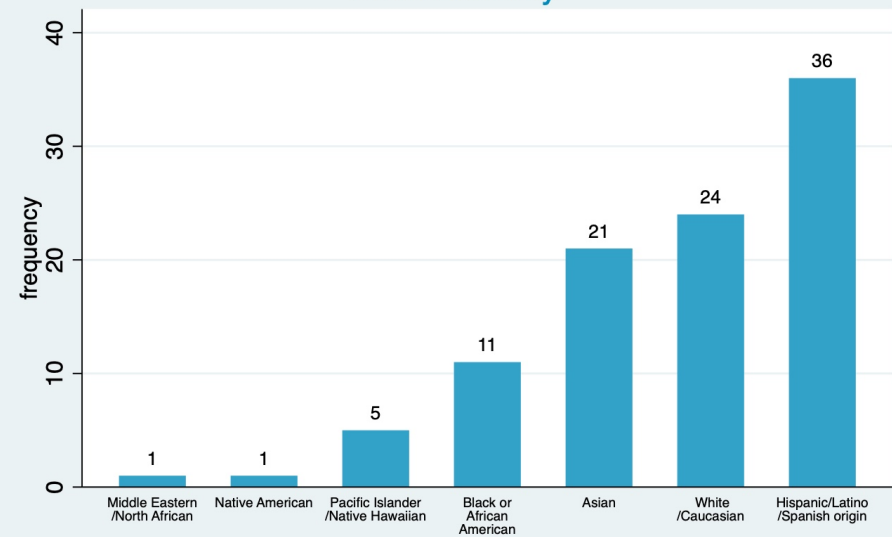
<sup>2</sup>South Asia includes India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Nepal, Bhutan.

<sup>3</sup>Southeast Asia includes Thailand, Vietnam, Myanmar, Laos, Cambodia, Malaysia, Indonesia, Singapore, Burma.

<sup>4</sup>East Asia includes Japan, South Korea, Taiwan, Hong Kong.

Filename: demobirthplace4.jpg

Race/Ethnicity



Note 1: Total number of valid survey responses = 104.

Filename: racegroup.jpg

# Community Experiences and Perceptions

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# What does safety mean to you?

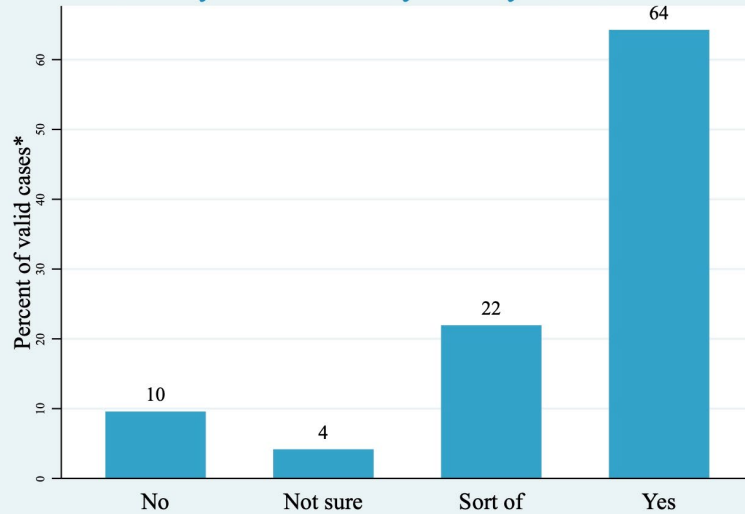
(CARE Meetings)

- Family safety
  - “My five sons will come home safely every night.”
- Physical Safety
  - Neighborhoods feel safe
  - Roads are well maintained and well lit
  - Cyclists, pedestrians and horse riders are confident about their safety
- Mental Safety
  - “First step of happiness.”
  - State of mind, a feeling
  - Not being afraid
- Community and Collaboration
  - “it’s a sense of belonging.”
  - “Takes everyone to make a community safe.”
  - Being aware of surroundings, laws, and one another
  - Community and law enforcement responsibility

# Perception of Safety

2022 Survey  
(N = 2,779)

Do you feel safe in your community when you are outside alone?\*

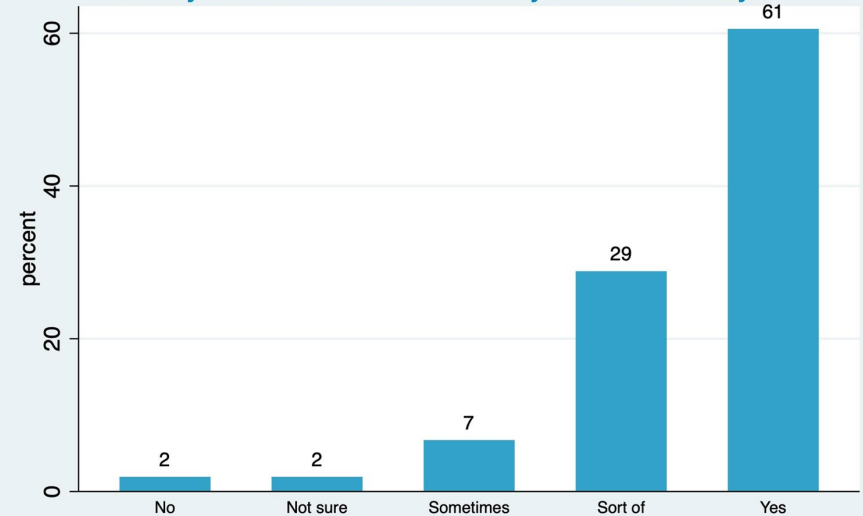


\*The number of valid cases used as the base for the percentage calculation is 2,606 whereas the total number of legitimate responses is 2,779.

Filename: safetynearby.jpg

2023 Survey  
(N = 104)

Do you feel safe when you are outside alone in your community?



Filename: feelsafe\_percent.jpg

# Factors Impacting Sense of Safety

2023 Surveys & Focus Groups

## “Structural”

*“We feel safe, we have food to eat, we can see the doctor, we feel good in this city.”*

- road, park & neighborhood conditions (lighting, signage)
- adequacy of social services
- police presence and reporting of what they do

## “Community”

*“Takes everyone to make a community safe.”*

- familiarity with neighbors
- nature of interactions with neighbors and in schools
- knowledge of community resources

Presence/pervasiveness of crime

*“low crime rate”*

# Do you understand the distinctions between the Sheriff's Office & other law enforcement agencies?

2023 Survey Responses

59% "Yes" • 29% "sometimes" • 10% "no" • 2% "other"

**Understanding varies widely - even among those who responded "yes."**

## Yes

*"Sheriff covers unincorporated areas while police departments are typically served by the city police departments."*

## Sometimes

*"I think I understand the jurisdictions and distinctions, but there are gray areas."*

## No

*"Didn't realize they're different."  
"I don't know where one begins and the other ends."*

# Familiarity with SO Programs and Events

## Programs

Community Alliance to Revitalize Our  
Neighborhood (CARON) Program  
Drug Abuse Resistance Education  
Sheriff's Activities League  
School Resources Program  
START Camp Program  
CARE Community Advisory  
Swimming Program  
Autism Training  
Compassion K9s  
Fireworks Buyback  
Teen Defensive Driving Program  
Women's Boot Camp  
Gun Safety Storage  
Sheriff's Explorer Program

## Familiarity

### Highest rate of familiarity (20%):

- DARE & CARON

### Across all programs:

- 10% rating 9-10 (very familiar)
- 65% rating 1-2 (not familiar)



# **“My personal interactions with the Sheriff’s Office have been positive.”**

2023 Survey, n=104

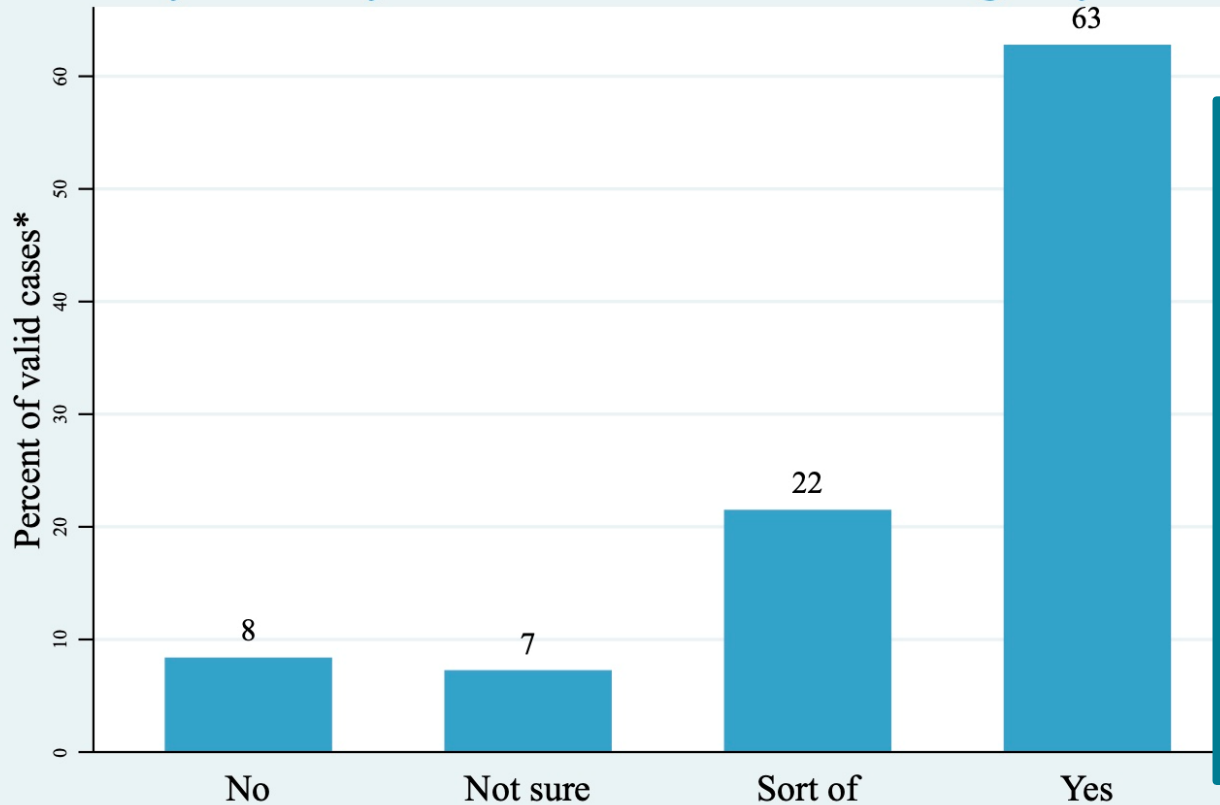
	all n=96
agree	54%
neutral	15%
disagree	13%
n/a or not sure	18%

\*Scale of 1 (strongly disagree) - 10 (strongly agree) with n/a/not sure as an additional option

# Perceptions of Law Enforcement/Sheriff's Office

2022 Survey, >90% respondents born outside of the U.S.

Do you trust your local law enforcement agency?\*



Additional context: 53%  
“trust local government  
to work in the  
community’s best  
interest always or most  
of the time”

—SMC Health and Quality of  
Life Survey 2022

\*The number of valid cases used as the base for the percentage calculation is 2,584  
whereas the total number of legitimate responses is 2,779.

Filename: safetycops.jpg

# Perceptions of Law Enforcement/Sheriff's Office

2023 Survey, n=104

	Rating 5-10* (all respondents)
SO is trustworthy	77%**
Feel safer when officers from SO are in my community	84%
SO effectively addresses community concerns	73%**
Comfortable contacting SO for assistance	78%
SO handles complaints & feedback effectively	52%

\*Scale of 1 (strongly disagree) - 10 (strongly agree) with n/a/not sure as an additional option

\*\*Slightly lower ratings among respondents who identify as People of Color (Black/African American, Pacific Islander/Native Hawaiian, Asian, Hispanic/Latino/Spanish origin, Middle Eastern/North African and Native American).

# Opportunities for Improving Community Engagement

2023 Survey, n=104

	Rating 5-10* (all)
Community should be given more opportunities to be involved in SO initiatives	95%
Increasing community-SO collaboration can enhance trust & safety	97%
I know how to get involved with SO programs/events	47%
I want to be more involved in SO programs/event	85%

\*Scale of 1 (strongly disagree) - 10 (strongly agree) with n/a/not sure as an additional option

# Focus Group Participants' Suggestions for Strengthening Community-SO Engagement

- “...mostly with young people...that’s something I would have liked, for them to teach some classes because there aren’t any anymore.”
- “Maybe there's not enough information...update their website because it is very confusing to navigate on their website...Especially for us Latinos who are older.”
- “It's better those police can speak with us in Cantonese...Live translation is the best. So...we can talk to them.”
- “All the coffee at every school was good, we used to go, they made coffee one day a week, they provided coffees and they provided you with education. I am still in the district and there is no school that has coffee with the Sheriff...”



“...it would be nice to have built relationships when there's not a problem. Showing up when there's something bad happening or people fighting or whatever is not the greatest time to be trying to build a relationship with the community, **the best time to develop relationships with the community [is] when there isn't a problem.** Or you're showing an interest in the development of the community and trying to build trust and build relationships...And what I call it is ‘a ride along’ a ‘community ride along,’ not us [riding] along with the cops, but the cops coming into the community and seeing what we go through.”



# Considerations & Opportunities

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# Considerations & Opportunities (Slide 1 of 2)

Community perspectives related to sense of safety and perceptions of law enforcement and Sheriff's Office:

- Majority of community members report they generally feel safe.
- Community members' experiences with, perceptions of, and trust in law enforcement are generally positive, with more variability among respondents of color.
- Community members report low levels of familiarity with Sheriff's Office programs.
- Community members report interest in becoming more involved with Sheriff's Office initiatives, programs, and events.



# Considerations & Opportunities (Slide 2 of 2)

Community perspectives related to factors impacting sense of safety:

- Community members attribute sense of safety to both structural and community factors.
- Community factors are mentioned more often than structural factors, particularly among people of color.
- Factors contributing to community members' sense of safety are not limited to those in the purview of law enforcement/Sheriff.

*We are continually faced with  
a series of great opportunities -  
brilliantly disguised as insoluble problems.*

*John W. Gardner*

# Thanks for joining us today!

The John W. Gardner Center partners with communities, researchers, and practitioners  
to produce research to improve and strengthen the well-being of youth,  
inform policy and practice, and emphasize equity and capacity-building in youth-serving organizations.

*<https://gardnercenter.stanford.edu>*

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Youth and Their Communities