Engaging the Hard-to-Reach in Your Community: Smart Strategies for Success

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Today We Will Discuss:

- Trust in local government.
- Steps cities have taken to understand and respond to resident public safety needs, priorities, and expectations.
- Recommended strategies for developing strategiesthat will help community leaders and local government jurisdictions navigate disruptive times successfully.

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The National Challenge for Communities

Communities are facing unprecedented disruption.

- COVID-19 has brought disruptions to residents, local businesses, and public agencies and we are still dealing with the fall out.
- Concern about disparities in policing have surfaced or ignited distrust among some residents.
- Demands on personnel, during these challenging times can lead to staff, budget, and other organizational issues.

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Why should we care about TRUST?

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Trends in Public Trust

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THE NPSS™
THE NATIONAL POLICE SERVICES SURVEY™

Developed by professional survey scientists and law enforcement experts

Informed by academic literature and practitioners

Calibrated with multiple scientific national samples

Trendlines and benchmarking comparisons

Community Quality of Life

Sense of Safety

Community Safety Issues

Departmental Performance

Contact with Police

Types of Police Interaction

Police Officer Performance

Community Safety Priorities

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THE NPSS™
THE NATIONAL POLICE SERVICES SURVEY™

- 2018 Survey
- 2,000 completed responses
- Weighted by tenure (rent vs. own), housing unit type (attached vs detached), race, ethnicity, gender and age within each region
- August 2018

- 2020 Survey
- 2,973 completed responses
- Weighted by tenure (rent vs. own), housing unit type (attached vs detached), race, ethnicity, gender and age within each region
- Summer 2020

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The National Police Services Survey

THE NPSS™
THE NATIONAL POLICE SERVICES SURVEY™

Goals of engagement:

1. Assess resident perceptions of community safety
2. Gauge quality of police resident interactions
3. Evaluate the quality of public safety services
4. Measure public trust
5. Identify public safety priorities

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National Panel Results

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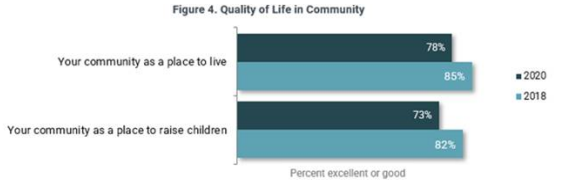
Perceptions of Safety



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Perceptions of Safety

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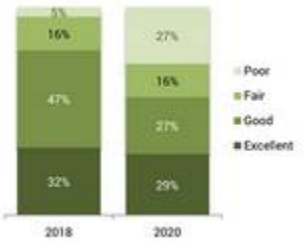
Overall Quality of Police Services



Of 17 police services -- all scored lower in 2020

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Police-Resident Interactions

In 2018, 8 in 10 respondents reported their encounter with officers or staff as excellent or good in all areas assessed. However, in 2020, this dropped to about 6 in 10 respondents.

Figure 12: Ratings of Interactions with Police

- ✓ Fairness
- ✓ Responsiveness to requests
- ✓ Treating all people in a respectful manner
- ✓ Knowledge
- ✓ Timeliness
- ✓ Resolution of concerns
- ✓ Overall impression

Proportion of respondents who had contact with law enforcement giving excellent or good ratings to the interactions

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Public Trust

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Disparities Indicated in Ratings

Residents more positive towards the police tended to be…

- Older
- Lived in single-family homes
- Higher income
- Male
- Results mixed by race/ethnicity

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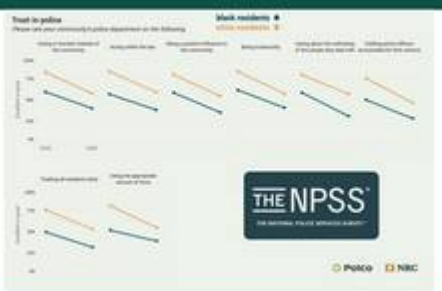

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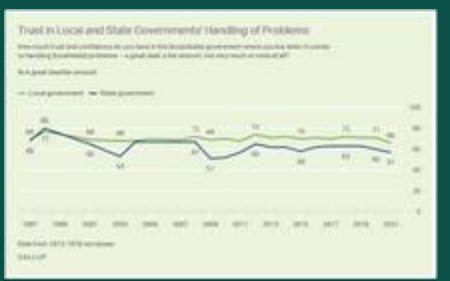
Trust in State and Local Government



Through 2020 Americans' trust in local government has remained stable over the past decade while their trust in state government and other institutions associated with the federal government declined and has yet to fully recover. There was a dip in 2021 of 51%, which was greater than the dip for state government. This is also the first time trust has been that low in this poll.

Gallup's annual Governance poll, September 2021

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Confidence in Local Government

NRC's Benchmark Database

Aggregated resident ratings of community livability and local government performance from NRC and non-NRC surveys

2,276 survey administrations
847 unique jurisdictions

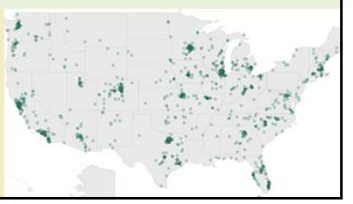
Years: 1989-2020

The National Community Survey™

Templatized community livability and local government performance survey of residents (partnership between NRC & ICMA)

- 676,442 respondents
- 1,079 survey administrations
- 441 unique jurisdictions

Years: 2001-2020



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Overall confidence in local government

Differences by individual respondent characteristics

20 Percent excellent or good

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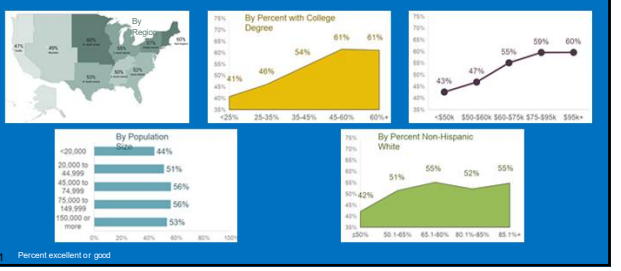
Overall confidence in local government

Differences by jurisdiction characteristics



21 Percent excellent or good

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Questions?

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Small Group Discussion

Do you feel like your community trusts their local government?

What has influenced the level of trust?

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Where do we go from here?

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Who Are the Hard to Reach?

EVERYONE!!

Fewer than 20% have ever attended a meeting

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Barriers to Civic Engagement from a resident's perspective

- Lack of time
- Limited understanding of local government
- Privacy/anonymity
- Political Climate
- Meetings can be intimidating
- Effort

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Value of Resident Input

- Helps to define desired "Return on Investment"
- Increases transparency and accountability
- Guidance on tax tolerance
- Perspectives can enhance projects

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Discussion

Who do you find is hard to reach in your community? (the answers can change by community!)

What methods of outreach do you use now?

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Best Practices

- Engage the community
- Be accessible
- Build relationships with community partners
- Continually ask for feedback
- Close the loop

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Engage the Community

Chief Anthony Holloway
St. Petersburg, Fla. Police

"Much of what the community knows is what they see on television," Holloway said. "That's a perception that turns into reality when an officer only comes into the community to take someone to jail. So we have to change that perception. Law enforcement is there to help you."

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Engage the Community

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Engage the Community

Brainstorming session:

How else can we engage the community?

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Who Are the Especially Hard to Reach?

- Low income
- Youth
- Undocumented residents
- People of color
- People with limited English proficiency

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Be Accessible

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Be Accessible

Questions to ask:

1. Tell me about our community- what do we do well and what could we do better?
2. What should I know about your neighborhood/subdivision?

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Small Group Discussion

- How accessible is your leadership to your community now?
- What barriers are in the way?
- How can you become more accessible?

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Build Relationships

When should you build relationships with community leaders?

Before you need them!

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Build Relationships

Brainstorming session:

Who should we be building relationships with in our community?

Why?

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Small Group Discussion

What prevents you from building relationships in the community?

How can you remove those barriers?

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Continually Ask for Feedback

Disruptive Times

- Survey Fatigue
- Public trust
- Technology
- Access
- Frenetic schedules
- COVID-19

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Continually Ask for Feedback

- Higher reliance on technology
- Shorter and more frequent
- Part of routine
- Inclusion
- Larger samples
- Relationships - Use of panels
- Closing the feedback loop

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Probability VS Non-Probability Surveys

Probability

- Random Sample (statistically represents community)
- High Confidence in Results
- Can extrapolate results to entire population
- Often more expensive
- Often conducted on an annual or biennial basis
- Comprehensive community assessments

Non-Probability

- Opt-in sample (may not be representative of community)
- Quick
- Inexpensive
- Often conducted on a frequent basis
- May be easier to contact hard to reach populations (snowball sampling)
- Topical, shorter surveys and polls

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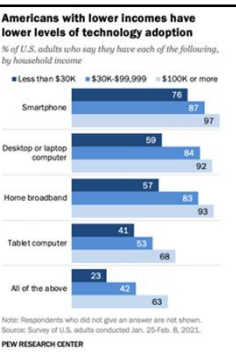
Continually Ask for Feedback

Mobile responsiveness needs to be viewed as a requirement for all outbound communications



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Continually Ask for Feedback

Learn from COVID Response!

- Online interactions allow more of your community to participate
- Add a virtual component to your plans- have both an in-person and virtual focus groups and meetings

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Small Group Discussion

When do you ask for feedback from your community?

How often do you do it? What would help you do it more often?

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Close the Loop

- Do outreach on outbound channels to share results
- Share at least partial data
- Graphs and charts are easy to read
- Shows residents their time is valued
- Encourages others to participate
- Allows more information to be given if needed

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Define Success to Avoid the Pitfalls!

- Determine demographic information you want in advance
- Location, location, location
- Determine distribution keeping possible bias in mind
- Be mindful of barriers to participation in your community
- Make it easy to participate
- Get input in the beginning of the process
- Always close the loop

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Conclusions

- It is more important than ever to engage the hard-to-reach in your community
- Public trust in local government has decreased in the last two years, and trust in police has declined significantly from 2018 to 2020
- Public trust must be built through engagement before a crisis, because it will be extremely difficult to build during or after.

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Thank You

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