



POLICE PERCEPTIONS AMID THE BLACK LIVES MATTER MOVEMENT



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01

INTRODUCTION

Background



October 31st, 2004

Age 5



WHAT SPARKED MY INTEREST?



My three main motivations:

- SOC 3640 – *Policing & Society*
- Career exploration
- To get “both sides of the story.”



Over 26,000,000 People

In all 50 States, all 5 U.S. territories

In over 60 countries worldwide

The largest protest movement
in U.S. history.

“I can’t breathe.”

GEORGE FLOYD

THE FERGUSON EFFECT



02

PURPOSE

Research Questions & Hypotheses

A photograph of police officers in riot gear, including helmets and shields, standing in a line at night. The scene is illuminated by streetlights and building lights in the background. A large, bold, yellow text overlay is centered over the image.

MAIN RESEARCH QUESTION

How have the perceptions held by WMUPS officers' regarding the Black Lives Matter movement been affected as an unintended consequence of the Ferguson Effect?

FOUR SUB-RESEARCH QUESTIONS

01 Public Perceptions

How do WMUPS officers feel police are perceived by the public?

02 Support for BLM

To what degree do WMUPS officers support the BLM movement?

03 Policing BLM Events

What have the experiences of WMUPS officers been at BLM events?

04 Ferguson Effect

Have officers' behavior in the line of duty been affected as a result of their fears regarding public/media scrutiny?

03

METHODS

Instrumentation & Participant Demographics

INSTRUMENTATION



How was the data collected?

- 22-question, anonymous online survey.
- MCQ, Likert-Scales, Free-Response

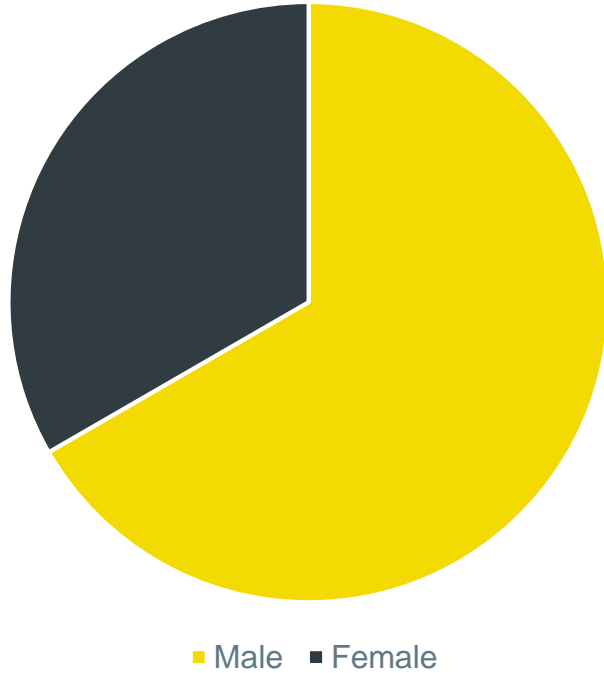
Who could participate?

- All sworn officers currently employed with the Western Michigan University Public Safety (WMUPS) police department.
- Total: 30 sworn officers

TIMELINE



GENDER



33.3%

Of the sample was female.



66.7%

Of the sample was male

RACIAL COMPOSITION



■ White ■ Missing Value

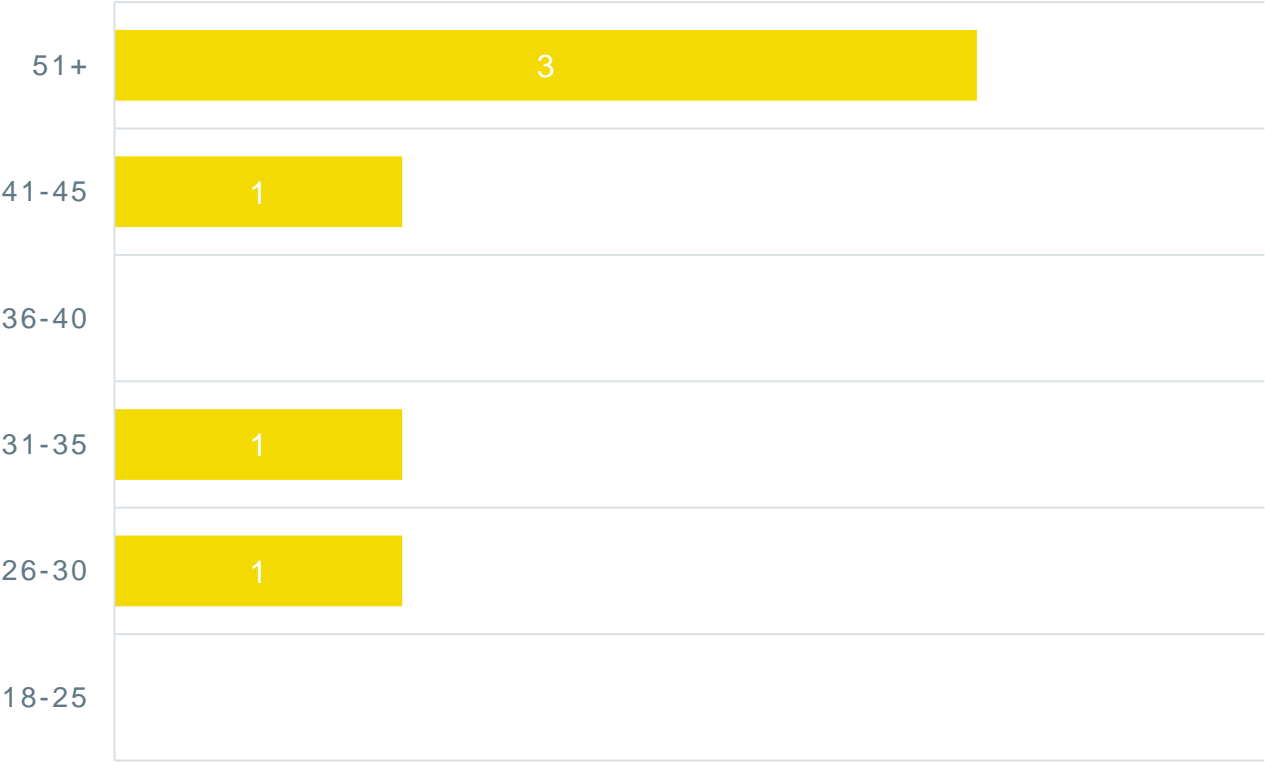
83.3%

Of the sample was White/Caucasian.

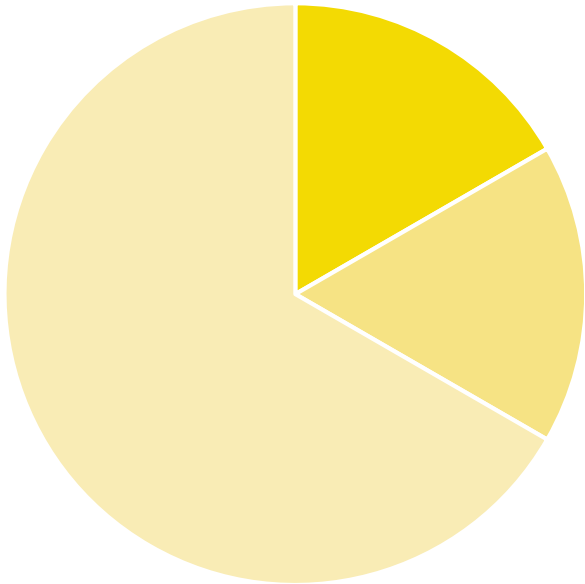
16.7%

Of the sample did not answer this question.

AGE



EDUCATION



- High School/GED Program
- Vocational Training
- 2-Year College/Associate's Degree
- 4-Year College/Bachelor's Degree
- Graduate/Professional Degree

66.7%

Of the sample had attained a Graduate/Professional Degree

16.7%

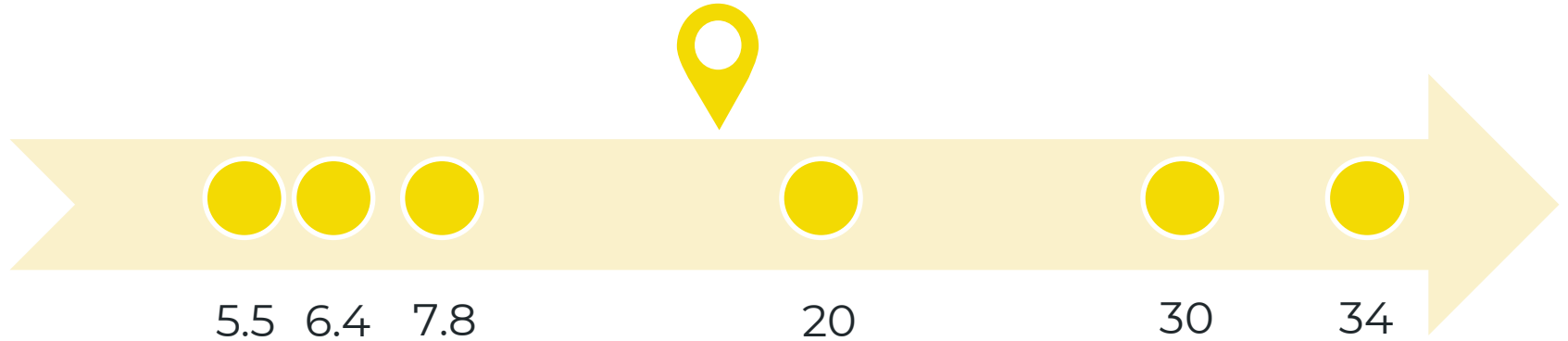
Of the sample had attained a Bachelor's Degree

16.7%

Of the sample had attained an Associate's Degree

LENGTH OF EMPLOYMENT

17.28 YEARS



04 RESULTS

Key Findings

QUESTION ONE: PUBLIC PERCEPTIONS

01

RESEARCH QUESTION

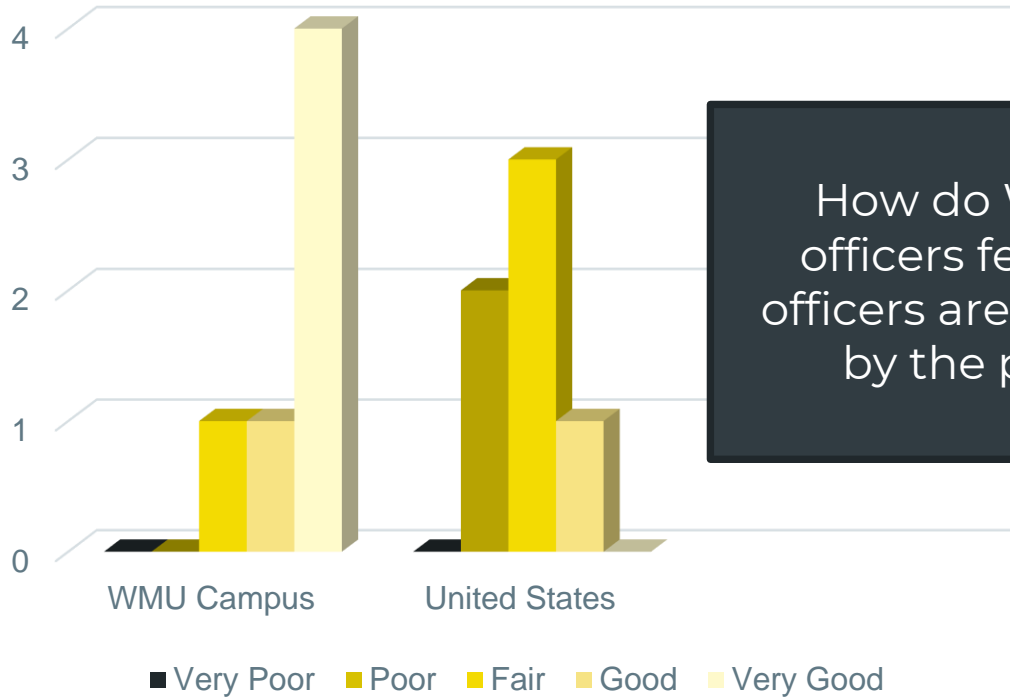
How do WMUPS officers feel police officers are perceived by the public?

HYPOTHESIS

Officers will rate public perception of police officers as being fairly poor, both on campus and across the United States.

QUESTION ONE: PUBLIC PERCEPTIONS

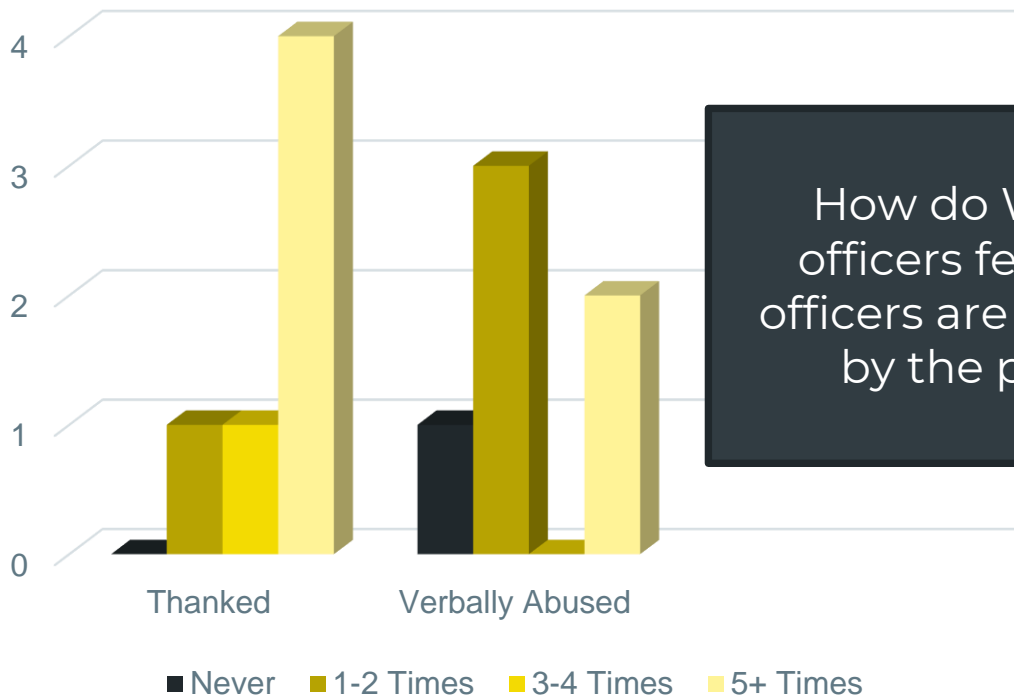
01



How do WMUPS officers feel police officers are perceived by the public?

QUESTION ONE: PUBLIC PERCEPTIONS

01

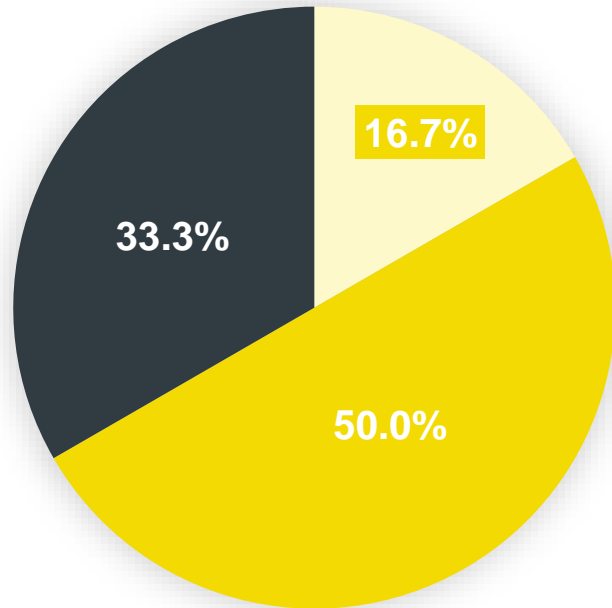


How do WMUPS officers feel police officers are perceived by the public?

QUESTION ONE: PUBLIC PERCEPTIONS

“The Black Lives Matter movement has caused a growing resentment and dislike for law enforcement among the general population.”

01



How do WMUPS officers feel police officers are perceived by the public?

Strongly Agree

Agree

Disagree

QUESTION ONE: PUBLIC PERCEPTIONS

01

RESEARCH QUESTION

How do WMUPS officers feel police officers are perceived by the public?

HYPOTHESIS

Partially
Confirmed

QUESTION TWO: SUPPORT FOR BLM

02

RESEARCH QUESTION

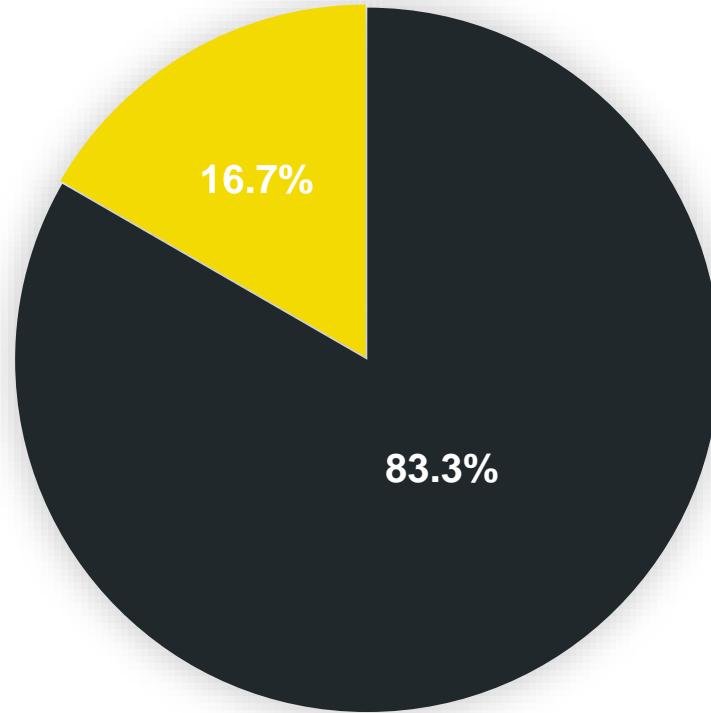
To what degree do WMUPS officers support the BLM movement?

HYPOTHESIS

Relatively lower among WMUPS officers than it is among the general public, but higher relative to municipal police departments

QUESTION TWO: SUPPORT FOR BLM

02



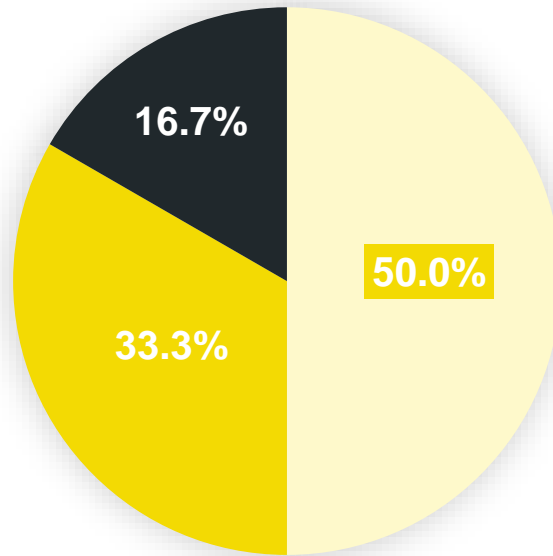
■ Neutral ■ Support

To what degree do WMUPS officers support the BLM movement?

QUESTION TWO: SUPPORT FOR BLM

“The Black Lives Matter movement has made my job more difficult.”

02



■ Agree

■ Neither agree nor disagree

■ Disagree

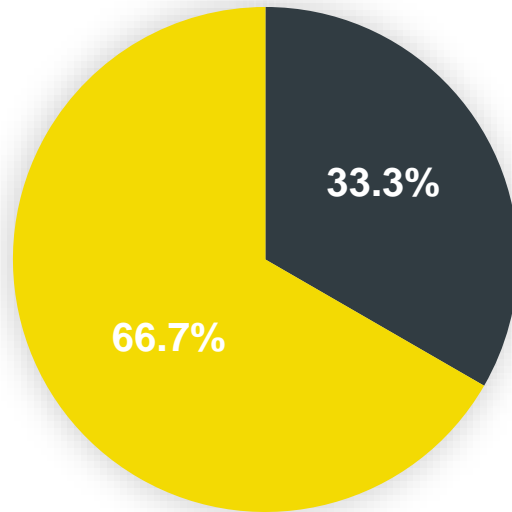
To what degree do WMUPS officers support the BLM movement?

QUESTION TWO: SUPPORT FOR BLM

“How well do you think you understand the goals and ambitions of the Black Lives Matter movement?”

To what degree do WMUPS officers support the BLM movement?

02

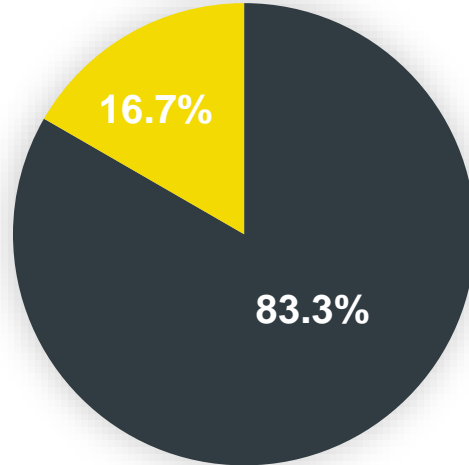


- I understand most of the goals
- I understand some of the goals

QUESTION TWO: SUPPORT FOR BLM

02

“The phrase "black lives matter" has brought national attention to the idea that the lives of black people have been routinely and systematically undervalued in the United States.”



■ Agree

■ Neither agree nor disagree

What meaning do WMUPS officers attribute to the phrase "Black lives matter"?

QUESTION TWO: SUPPORT FOR BLM

02

RESEARCH QUESTION

To what degree to
WMUPS officers
support the BLM
movement?

HYPOTHESIS

Confirmed

QUESTION THREE: POLICING BLM EVENTS

03

RESEARCH QUESTION

What have the experiences of WMUPS officers been at BLM events?

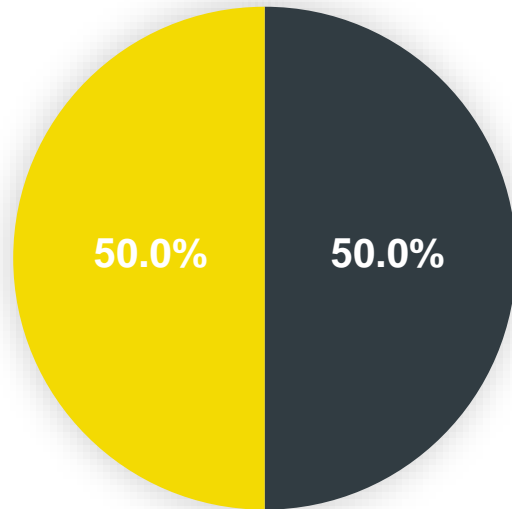
HYPOTHESIS

Experiences of WMUPS officers will not be particularly negative.

QUESTION THREE: POLICING BLM EVENTS

“Have you worked security at a Black Lives Matter event or protest on WMU's campus or in the city of Kalamazoo?”

03



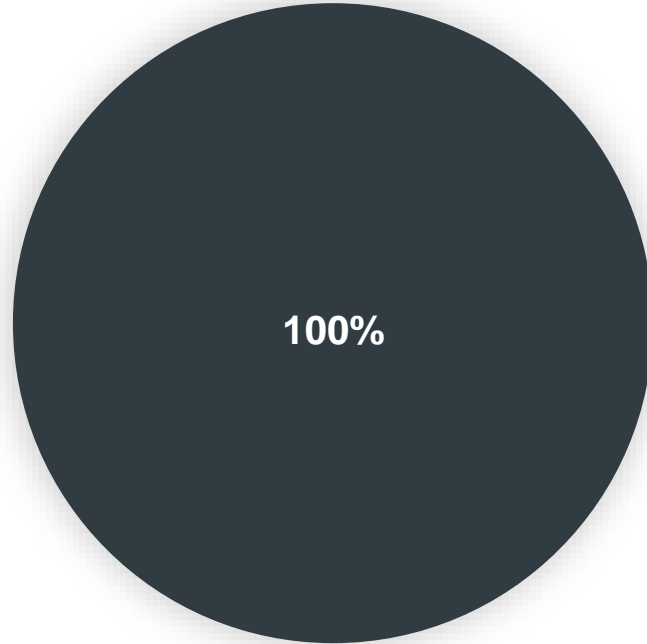
What have the experiences of WMUPS officers been at BLM events?

■ No ■ Yes

QUESTION THREE: POLICING BLM EVENTS

Of those who had worked a BLM event, 100% indicated that they had had a negative experience.

03



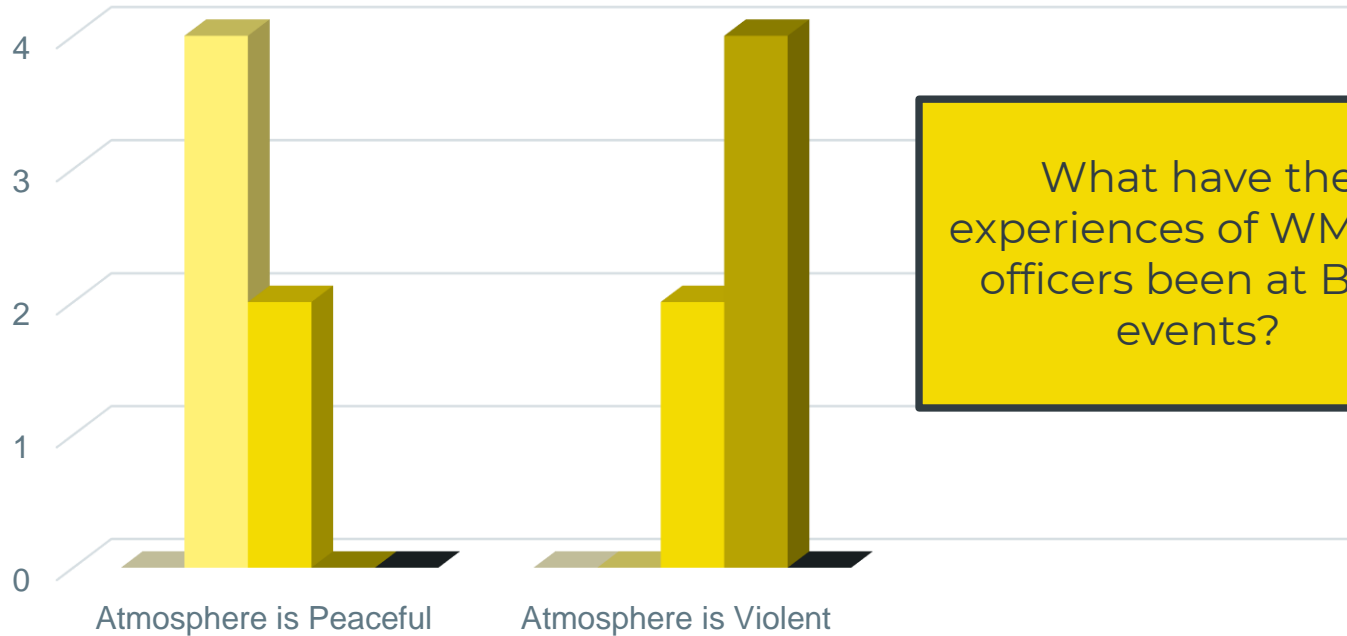
What have the experiences of WMUPS officers been at BLM events?

■ Negative Experience

■ Positive Experience

QUESTION THREE: POLICING BLM EVENTS

03

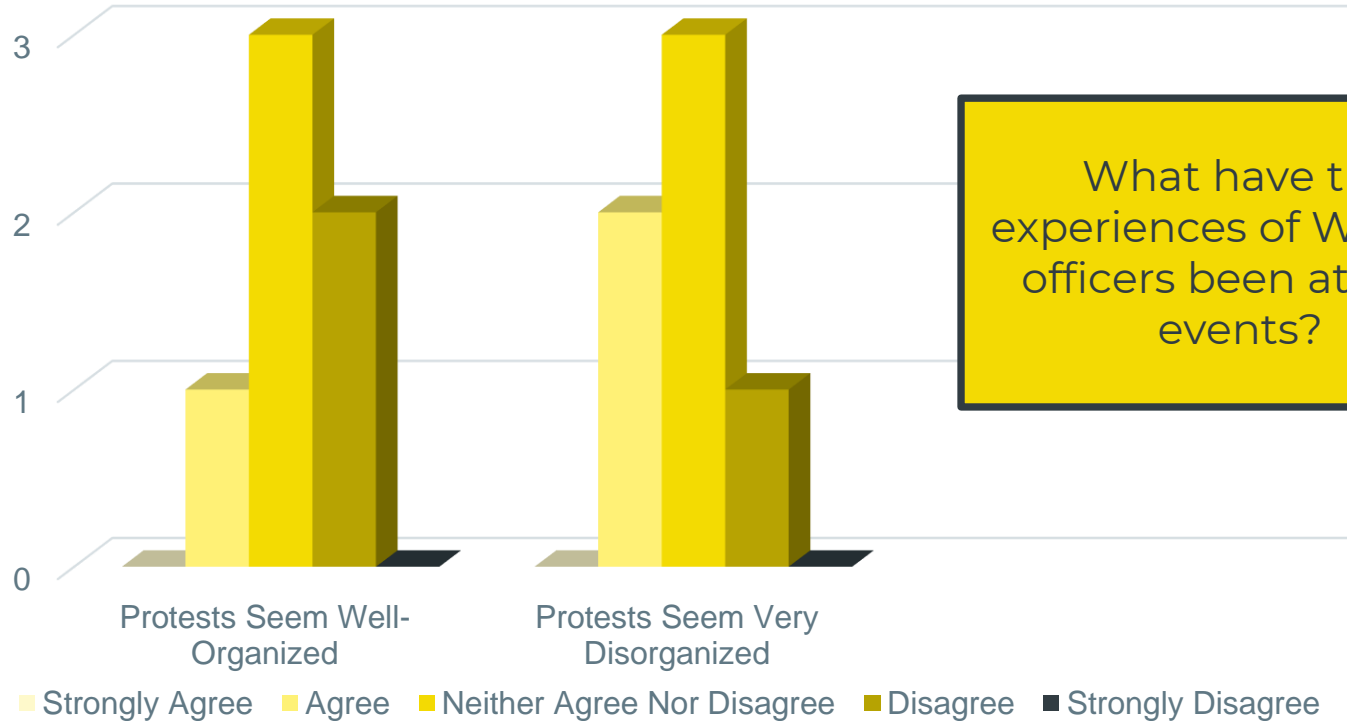


What have the experiences of WMUPS officers been at BLM events?

Strongly Agree Agree Neither Agree Nor Disagree Disagree Strongly Disagree

QUESTION THREE: POLICING BLM EVENTS

03



QUESTION THREE: POLICING BLM EVENTS

03

RESEARCH QUESTION

What have the experiences of WMUPS officers been at BLM events?

HYPOTHESIS

Not Confirmed

QUESTION FOUR: FERGUSON EFFECT

04

RESEARCH QUESTION

Have officers' behavior in the line of duty been affected as a result of their fears regarding public/media scrutiny?

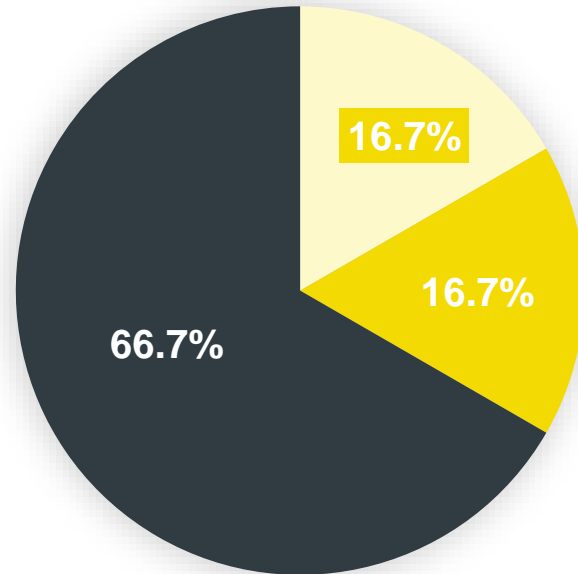
HYPOTHESIS

Officers will report that their behaviors have been moderately affected by their fears of public/media scrutiny.

QUESTION FOUR: FERGUSON EFFECT

“The Black Lives Matter movement and ensuing polarization has made me more fearful when I am dealing with people of color in my capacity as a law enforcement officer.”

04



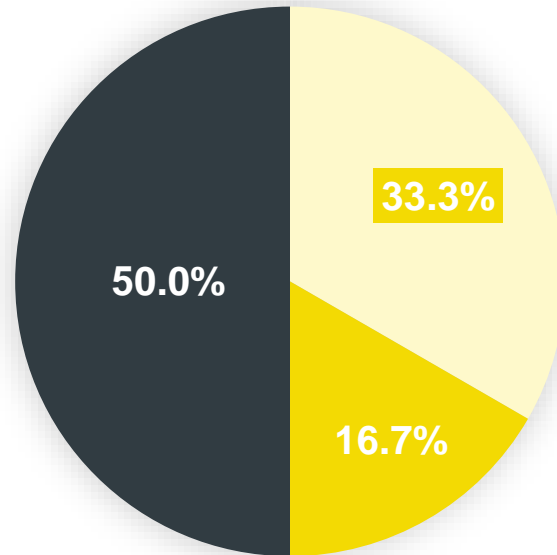
- Agree
- Neither Agree Nor Disagree
- Disagree

Have officers' behavior in the line of duty been affected as a result of their fears regarding public/media scrutiny?

QUESTION FOUR: FERGUSON EFFECT

“Since the Black Lives Matter movement has gained increasing momentum (since May, 2020) I have found myself in situations where I felt pressure to NOT make an arrest or take official actions when dealing with people of color out of fear of public scrutiny

04



Have officers' behavior in the line of duty been affected as a result of their fears regarding public/media scrutiny?

- Strongly Agree
- Neither Agree Nor Disagree
- Disagree

QUESTION FOUR: FERGUSON EFFECT

04

RESEARCH QUESTION

Have officers' behavior in the line of duty been affected as a result of their fears regarding public/media scrutiny?

HYPOTHESIS

Confirmed

05 DISCUSSION

Why it matters

FOUR SUB-RESEARCH QUESTIONS

01 Confirmed

WMUPS officers rated national public perceptions of police as being fairly poor.

02 Confirmed

The majority of WMUPS officers surveyed rated their level of support for the Black Lives Matter as being “neutral”

03 Refuted

WMUPS officers reported their experiences at BLM events as being very negative.

04 Confirmed

A perceptual belief in the Ferguson Effect was found to affect the behaviors of some of the WMUPS officers surveyed.

06

CONCLUSION

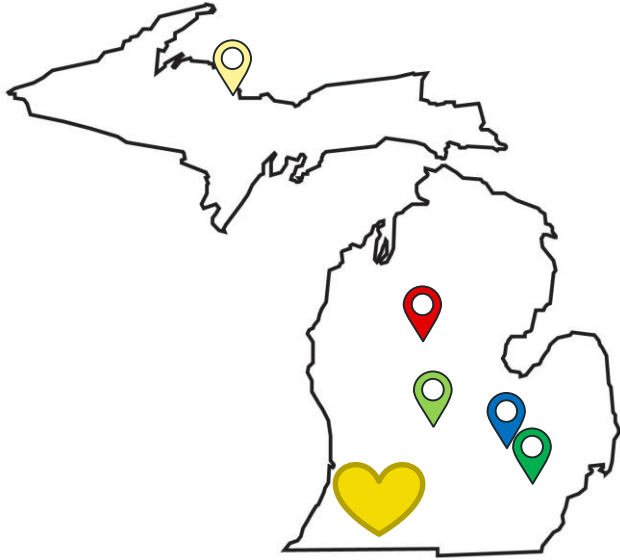
Reccomendations for Future Research

IN CONCLUSION...



- ✓ perceptual belief in F.E.
- ✓ negative perceptions of B.L.M. movement
- ✓ Campus PD's and community policing

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH



**THANK
YOU**

ANY QUESTIONS?

National public perceptions of police rated as being fairly poor.

WMUPS officer support for BLM = "Neutral"

WMUPS officers experiences at BLM events = very negative.

Ferguson Effect impacts the behaviors of some WMUPS officers.