



**TO** Interested Parties

**FROM** Lori Weigel & Kathryn Hahne / New Bridge Strategy

**RE:** Views of Law Enforcement Officers

**DATE** February 12, 2020

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New Bridge Strategy completed a survey of 1000 voters throughout the United States in January 2020 regarding their views of law enforcement in their area and policies which would help address crime.<sup>1</sup> The survey demonstrates the overwhelmingly positive views voters have of local law enforcement officers, and nearly universal belief that law enforcement officers put their lives on the line doing a dangerous and challenging job. While positive regard for local law enforcement officers is exceptionally strong across all demographic groups, it is lower among African Americans.

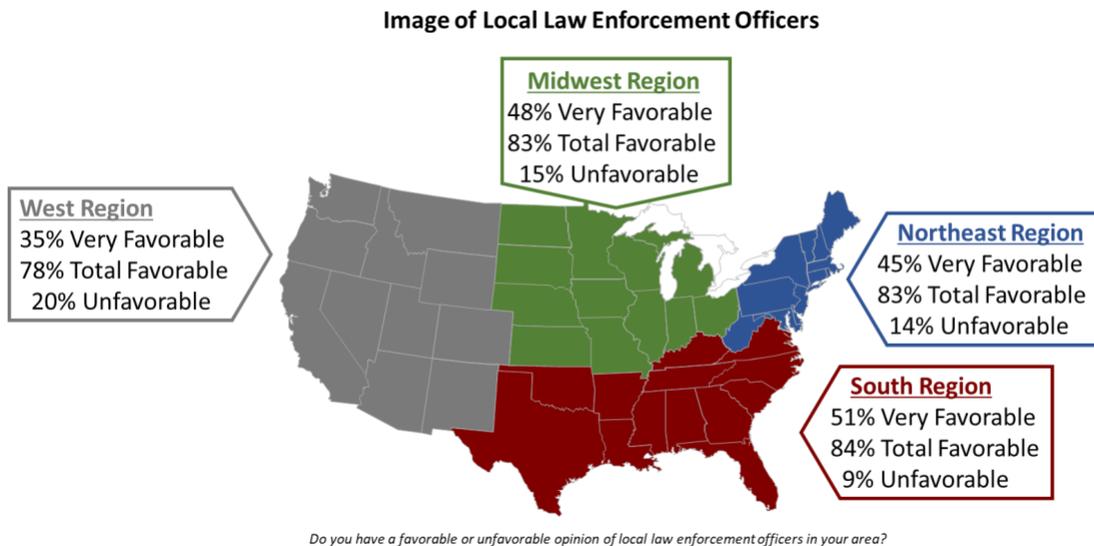
Voters would like to see law enforcement receive more training on handling stress, interacting with the mentally ill, and de-escalating conflicts. More broadly, there is also strong support for anti-poverty programs in high-crime neighborhoods and help for the mentally ill.

The specific key findings include:

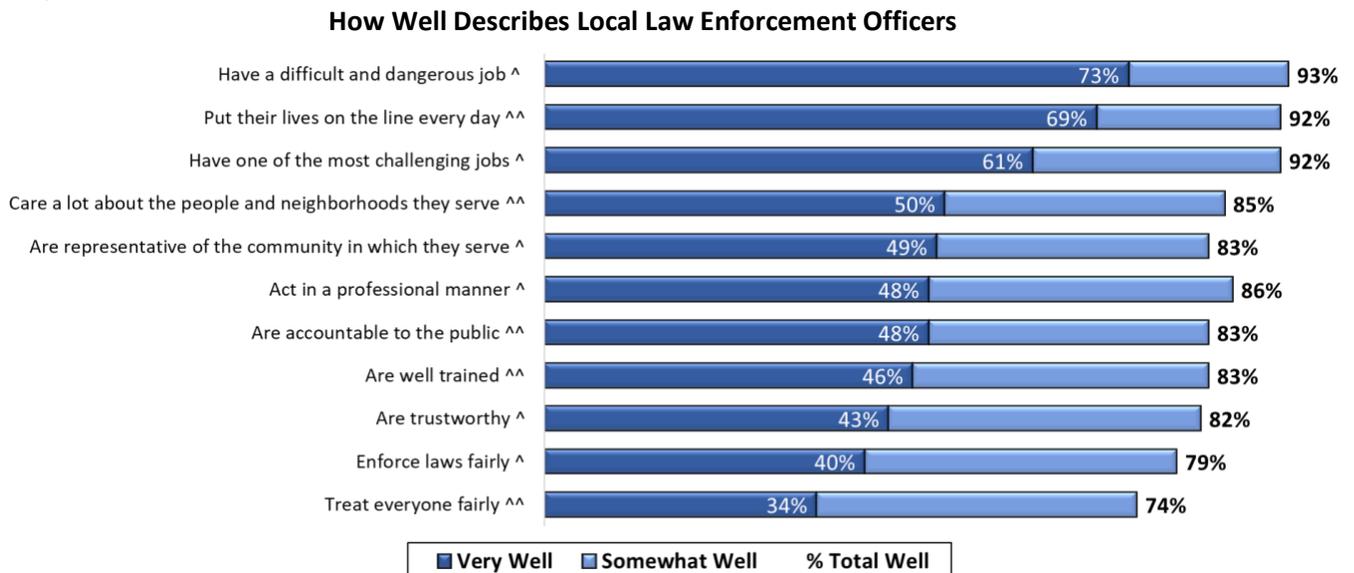
- **Four out of five voters have a favorable opinion of local law enforcement officers.** The survey found overwhelmingly positive views of “local law enforcement officers,” with 82 percent saying they hold a favorable impression, and fully 45 percent saying they hold a “very favorable” impression. Just 14 percent indicate holding an unfavorable view of local law enforcement officers, and a mere four percent are “very unfavorable.”
- **Positive regard for local law enforcement officers is widespread and broad-based.** While there are distinctions, a majority of Americans in every key sub-group we examined indicates having a favorable view of local law enforcement officers. This includes...
  - Majorities of Latino voters (91 percent favorable), whites (84 percent) and African Americans (62 percent) all express positive regard, albeit lower among African Americans.

<sup>1</sup> **Methodology:** From January 7-13, 2020, New Bridge Strategy completed 1000 interviews with registered voters throughout the United States on both landline phones, cell phones and in interviews drawn from online panels. The sample was drawn proportionally throughout the country and is demographically representative of the registered voter population. The credibility interval associated with this sample is +/-3.4%; with varying confidence for population subgroups within the sample. Due to rounding, not all totals will sum to 100%.

- Voters across party lines express positive views of local law enforcement officers, with Republicans (91 percent favorable), independents (82 percent) and Democrats (75 percent) in near agreement in their views.
- Voters in every type of community hold positive views of local law enforcement, with rural residents most positive (88 percent), but solid regard as well in small towns (78 percent favorable), suburbs (86 percent) and urban areas (76 percent).
- As one can see in the next graph, voters throughout the country also express favorable impressions of law enforcement officers in their local area.



- **Positive impressions of local law enforcement officers tend to be grounded in the view that officers put their lives on the line doing a dangerous and challenging job.** When asked how well a number of different phrases describe local law enforcement officers “meaning the police officers and sheriff’s deputies working in your community,” there is near unanimity about the challenging nature of these jobs.

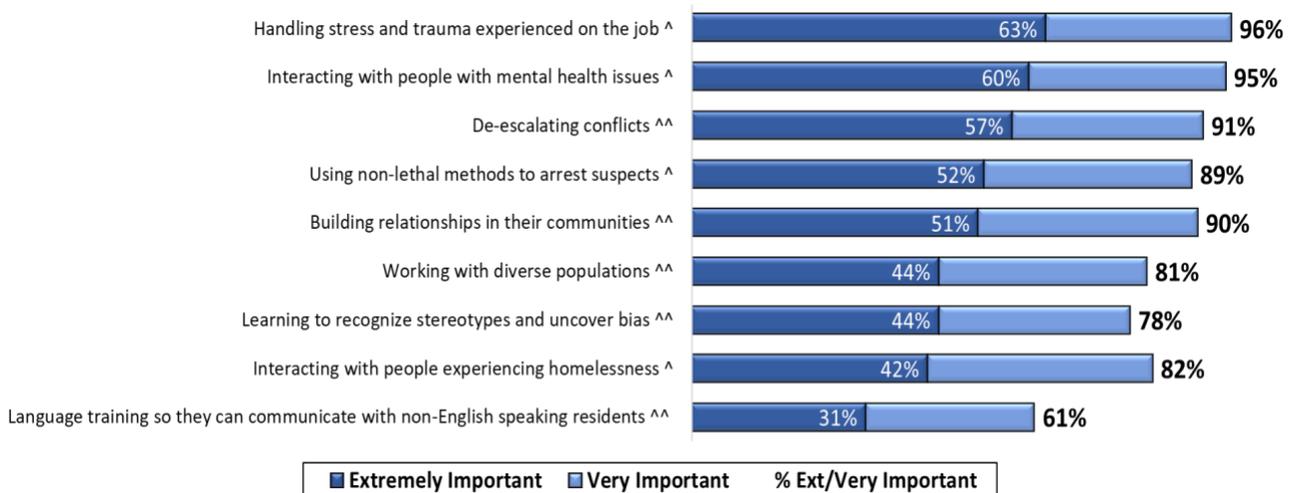


As the previous graph demonstrates, overwhelming majorities of American voters also describe law enforcement officers in their communities as caring about the people they serve, professional, accountable, trustworthy, and fair in enforcing laws and how they treat people.

Far fewer voters believe more negative characteristics describe law enforcement officers in their areas: 39 percent say “often use too much force when making arrests” describes local officers, although only 13 percent say it describes them “very well;” and 34 percent say that “biased against African Americans and people of color” describes local officers although again just 14 percent say it describes them “very well.” That said, just over two-thirds of African Americans say these describe local law enforcement officers well to them (68 percent and 66 percent, respectively).

- **While the vast majority of American voters view local law enforcement officers as “well-trained,” voters would like to see law enforcement receive more training, particularly on handling the stress of their jobs, interacting with the mental ill, and de-escalating conflicts.** The vast majority say every single type of training is extremely or very important for law enforcement officers in their area to receive that kind of training, as evidenced in the following graph:

**How Important for Local Law Enforcement Officers to Receive that Type of Training**



- **U.S. voters also express very strong support for a number of policies that would benefit public safety.** Some of these policies receive nearly universal support, including...
  - “Increase and improve training for police officers on de-escalating conflicts with people experiencing mental illness or chronic homelessness” 96 percent support (72 percent strongly support);
  - “Increase anti-poverty programs in high crime communities, such as job training, skilled trades apprenticeships, and education programs” 96 percent support (70 percent strongly support);
  - “Increase and improve services for the mentally ill” 96 percent support (69 percent strongly support);

- “Educating the public to understand how better to interact with law enforcement officers in tense situations and their rights to file complaints and seek solutions afterward if an officer oversteps his or her authority” 94 percent support (63 percent strongly support); and
- “Require those convicted of drug-related crimes participate in drug treatment programs to help ensure they receive help for chronic drug abuse” 93 percent support (63 percent strongly support).

Support for these public safety efforts is also broad-based and widespread, with majorities of all major demographic groups supporting each policy, including across political lines, ages, racial/ethnic groups, education levels, and regions of the country.

**About New Bridge Strategy**

New Bridge Strategy is a national opinion research firm. Lori Weigel is the Principal of New Bridge Strategy. Weigel has directed research efforts for hundreds of political and public affairs campaigns throughout the country, including assisting with efforts at the presidential level four times.

Her experience polling on policy issues extends to such varied areas as health care, energy, land use, food and alcohol regulation, recreation, technology, tort reform/litigation, corporate image, employee/union relations and crisis management.

Formerly serving as the political pollster for Denver’s News 4 and the Rocky Mountain News, she is frequently quoted on politics, including in The New York Times, the New Republic, and other major publications. Weigel was previously a partner for over twenty years with Public Opinion Strategies, the largest Republican polling firm in the country.