

Barnegat Police Department



2011 Community Survey Report

Prepared by Lieutenant Keith Germain

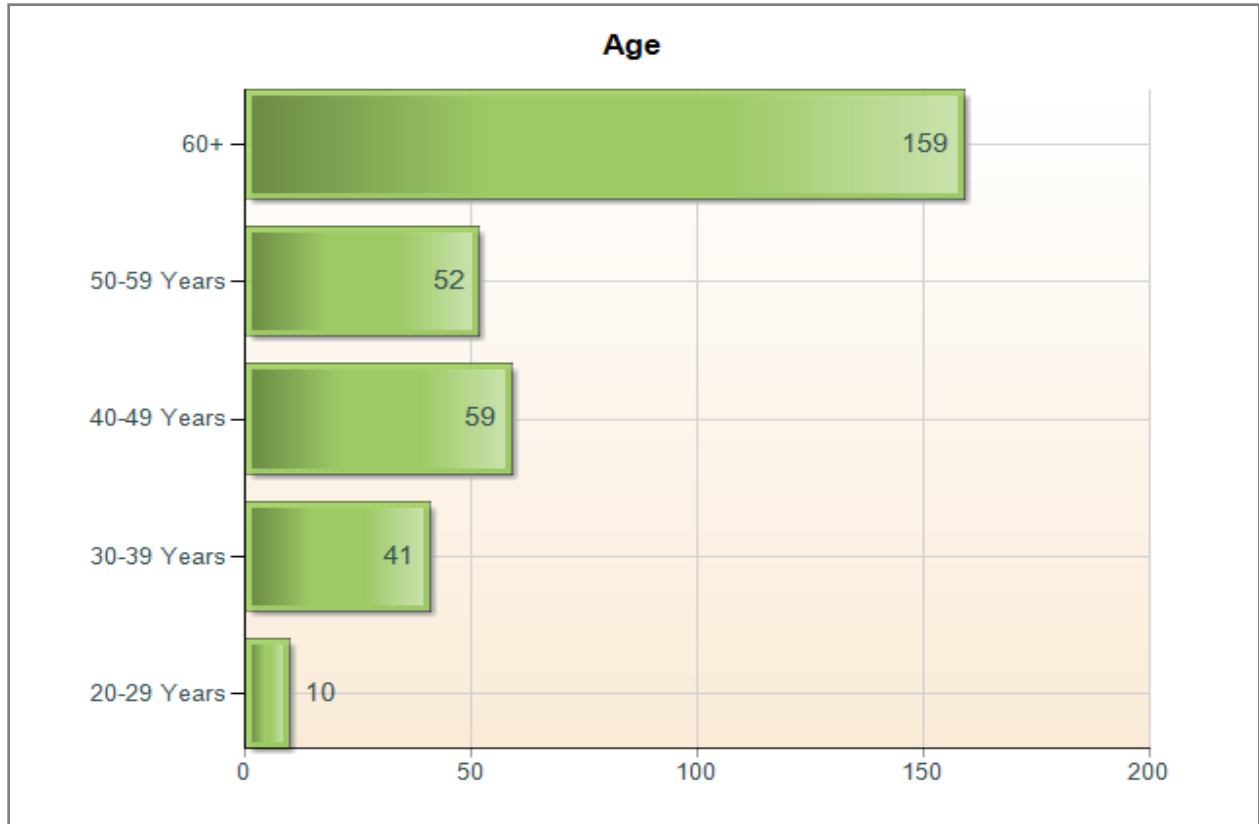
May 2011

Introduction

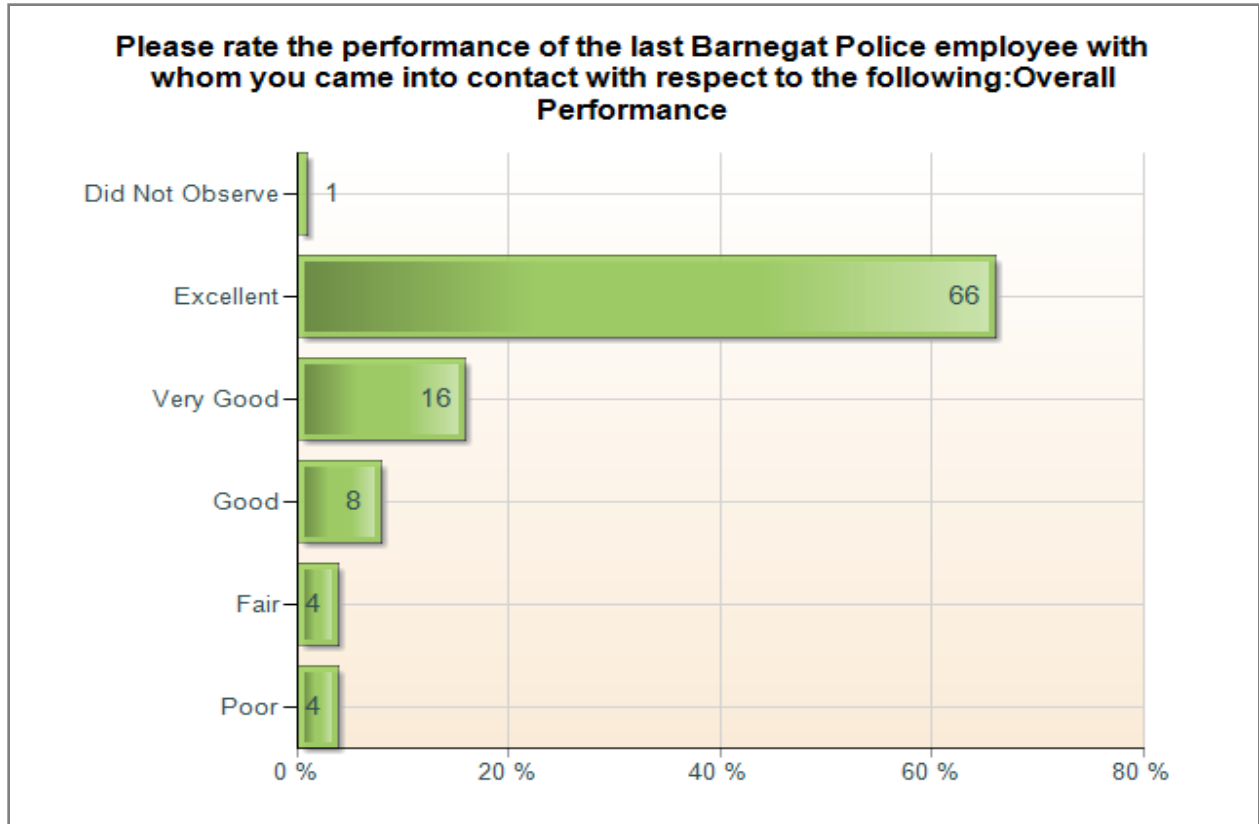
The Barnegat Police Department conducted its second community survey in February and March of 2011 to assist in gauging public perception of the police department and its performance.

Beginning February 21, 2011 the department began accepting electronically completed surveys via the Zoomerang survey website. The survey remained opened until March 15, 2011. There were 323 surveys completed. This compares to 369 surveys which were returned over the course of three weeks during the 2008 survey. The change from a mail based paper survey to an internet based survey was both a cost-saving measure and was less personnel-resource intensive. The cost of conducting the 2011 survey was 2/3 less than the cost of conducting the 2008 survey, and also resulted in an estimated 90% reduction in the number of personnel hours necessary to complete the survey and analysis.

Completion of surveys from the geographic locations in town were in line with expectations with 42% of the survey respondents coming from age restricted communities (41% in 2008). More surprising was the age demographic associated with respondents. The web based survey platform combined with advertising of the survey via Nixle, Facebook, and Twitter seems to have brought in a younger demographic of participant, however, more than half of the surveys completed (53%) were completed by participants 60 or older. Of all surveys returned, over 70% were from residents 50 years of age or older.



Overall results were very encouraging. On a scale of 1 to 5 with 1 being the lowest, the survey respondents rated the department’s overall performance at an average of 4.4. That is a slight improvement over the 4.3 the department received in 2008.

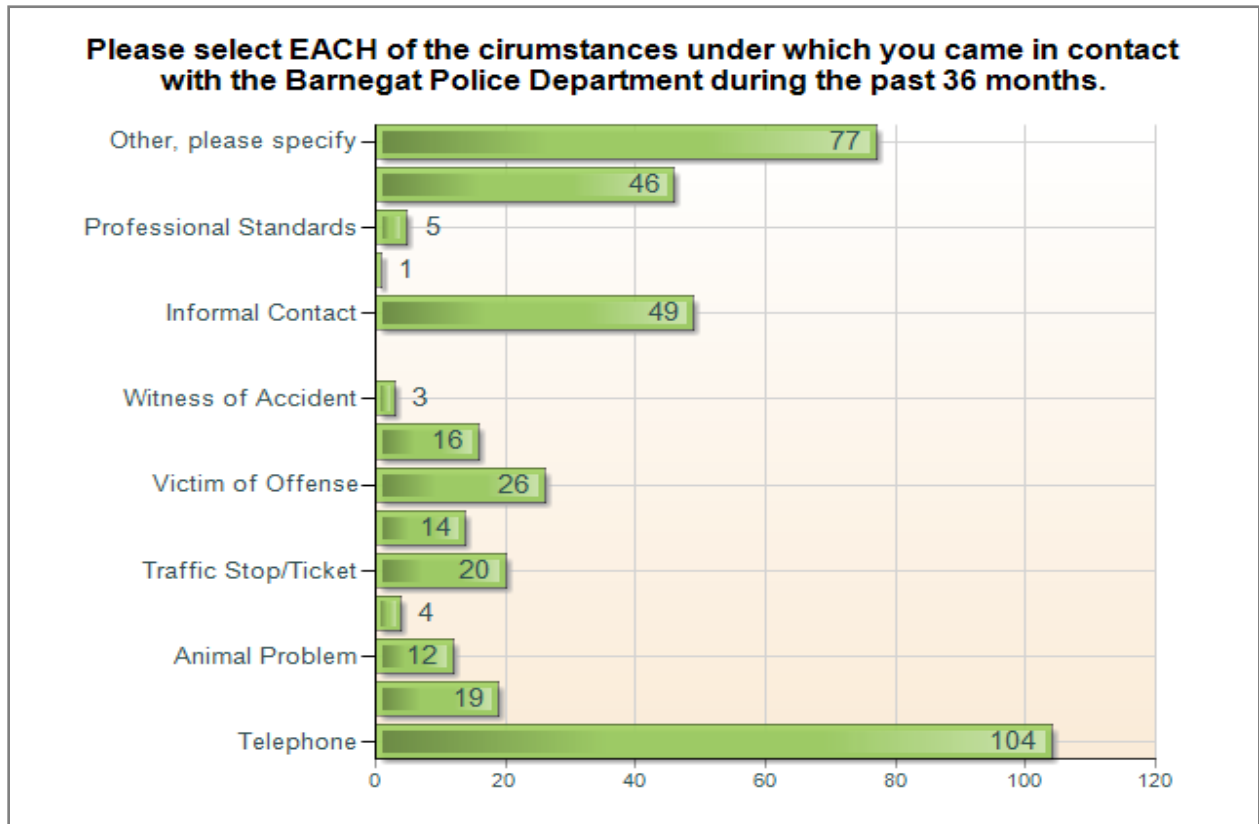


Data Analysis

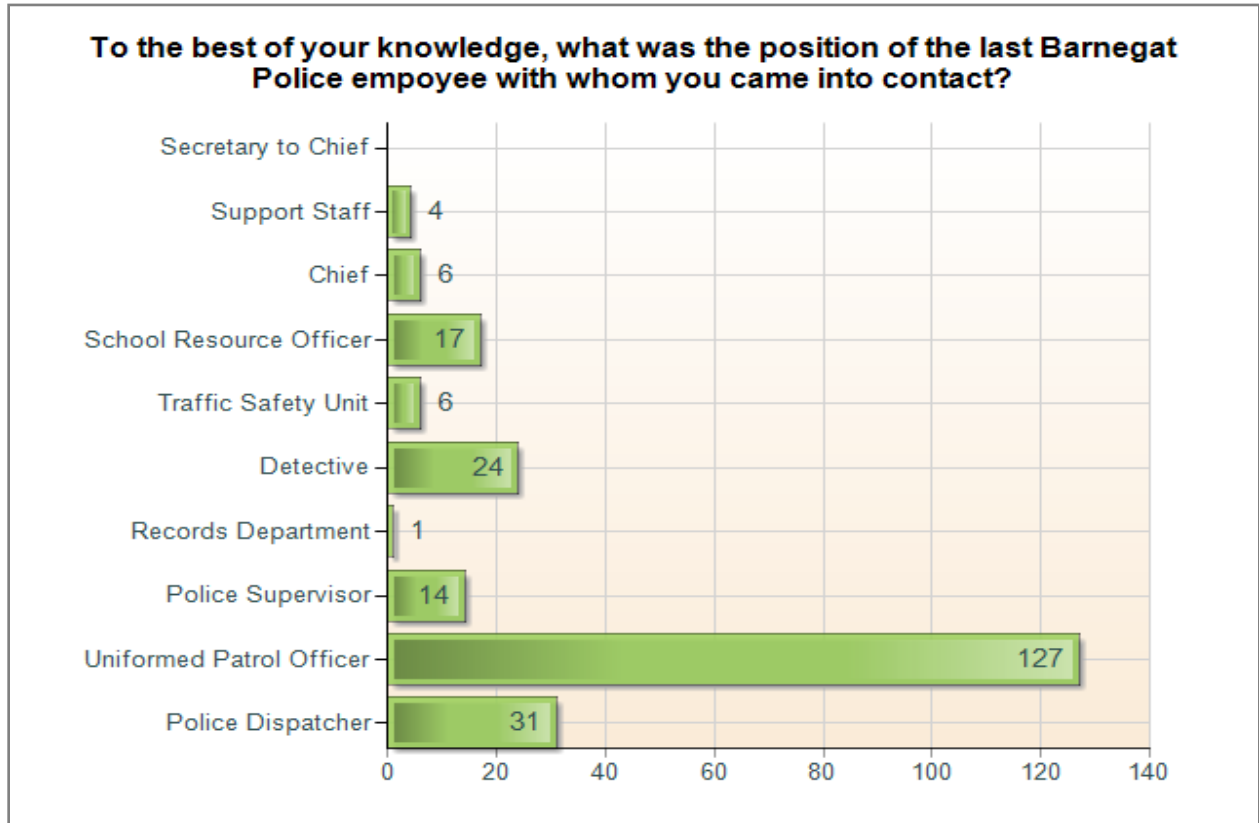
Questions 1 through 12: Department Contact and Related Performance

Of the 323 respondents, 66% had contact with the department during the prior 36 months (62% in 2008). Most contact was made via telephone with mostly communications officers and patrol officers. Community Related Event/Class was the second most common form which speaks well of the effectiveness of the agency’s community policing program. These numbers show that the telephone demeanor of both dispatchers and police officers has a large impact on the public’s perception of the department as this type of contact accounts for nearly half of the final reported contact in the survey.

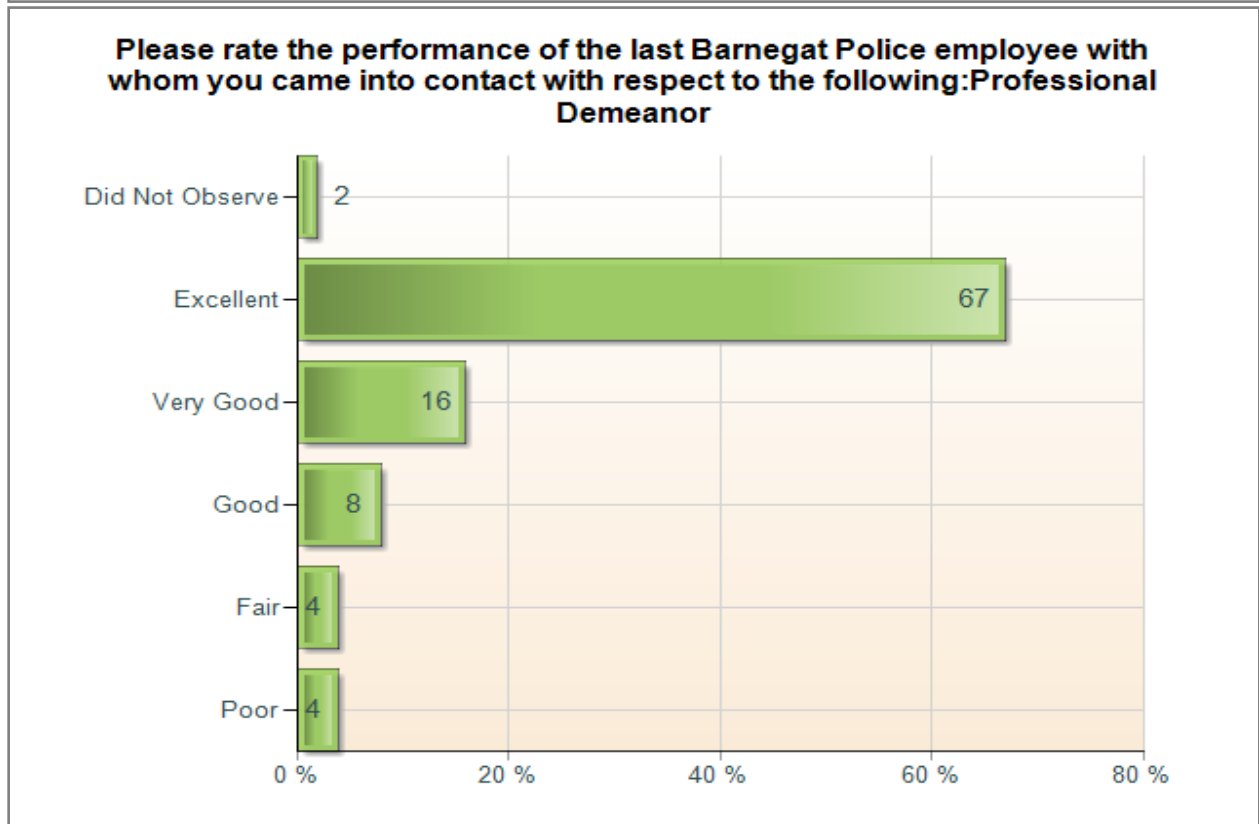
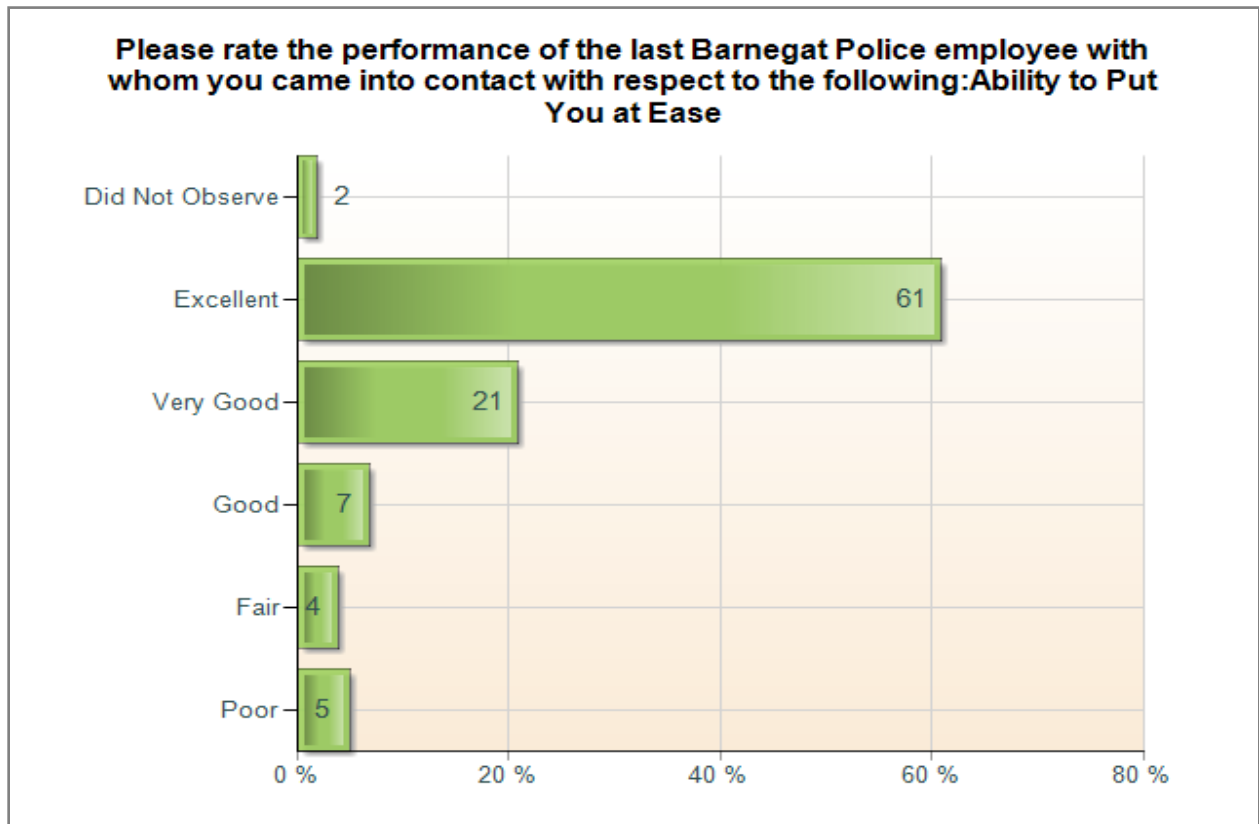
Analysis of the survey results when broken down by position shows that the communications workers universally receive a much lower rating than any other agency position when it comes to the performance related survey questions. In response to this, agency policy was changed to mandate a random review of all communications workers recorded telephone calls. It is hoped that this will aid in identifying any problems with dispatcher conduct and will serve to improve the agency’s overall performance. Analysis to be conducted on the 2014 community survey will look for an improvement in this area to gauge the effectiveness of the policy revision.

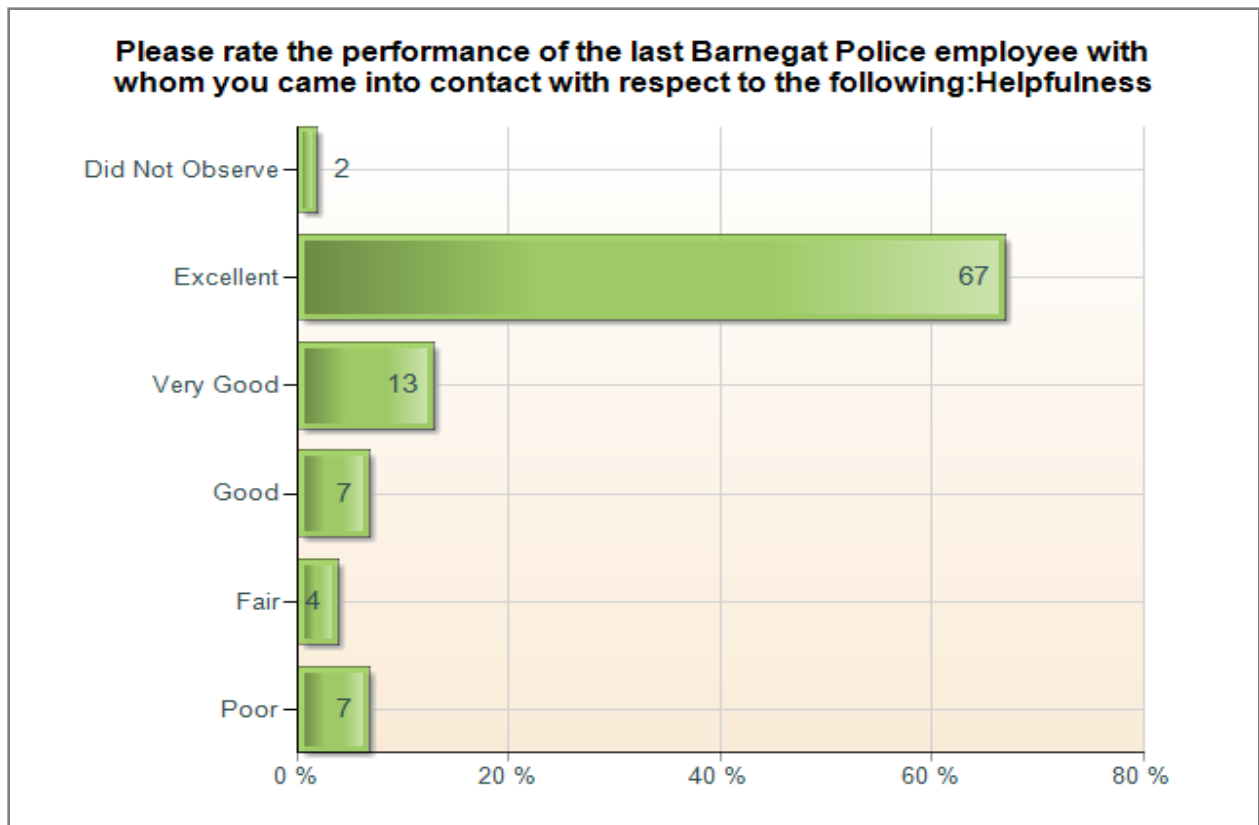
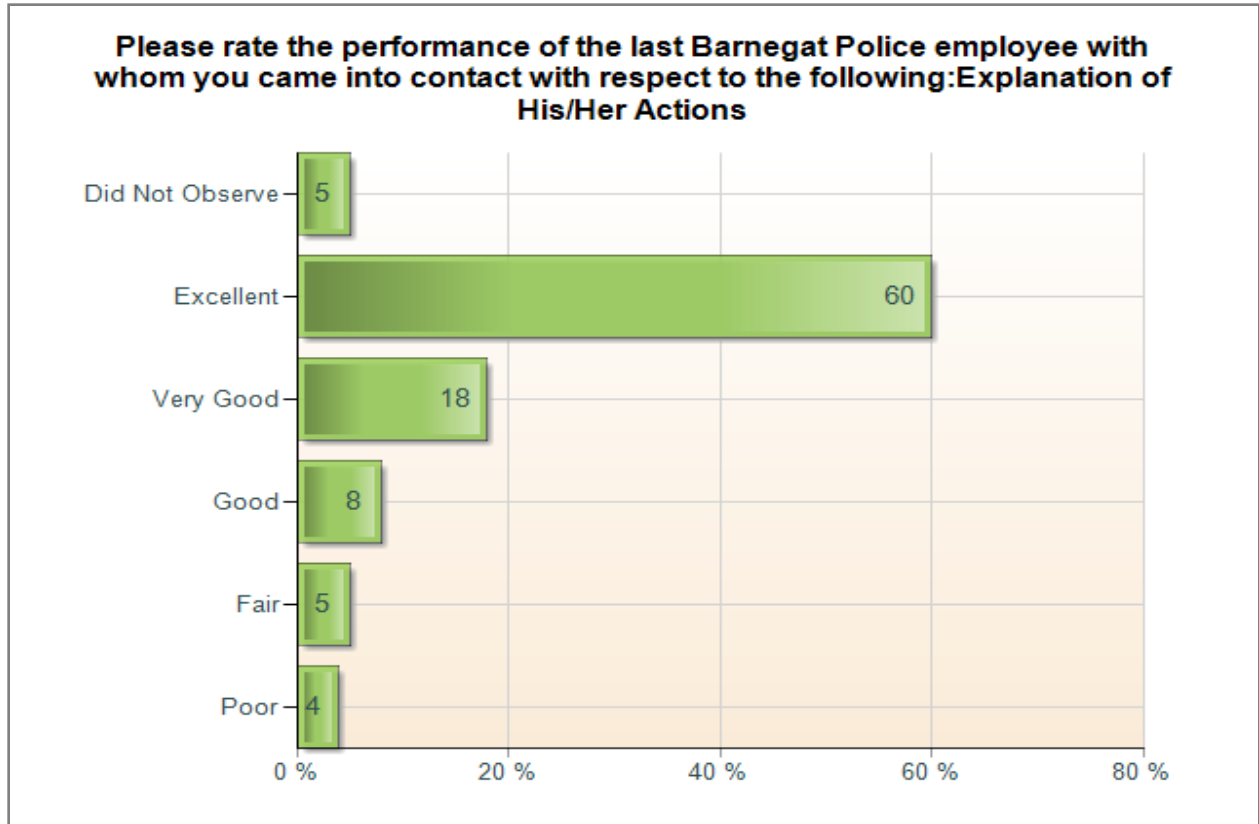


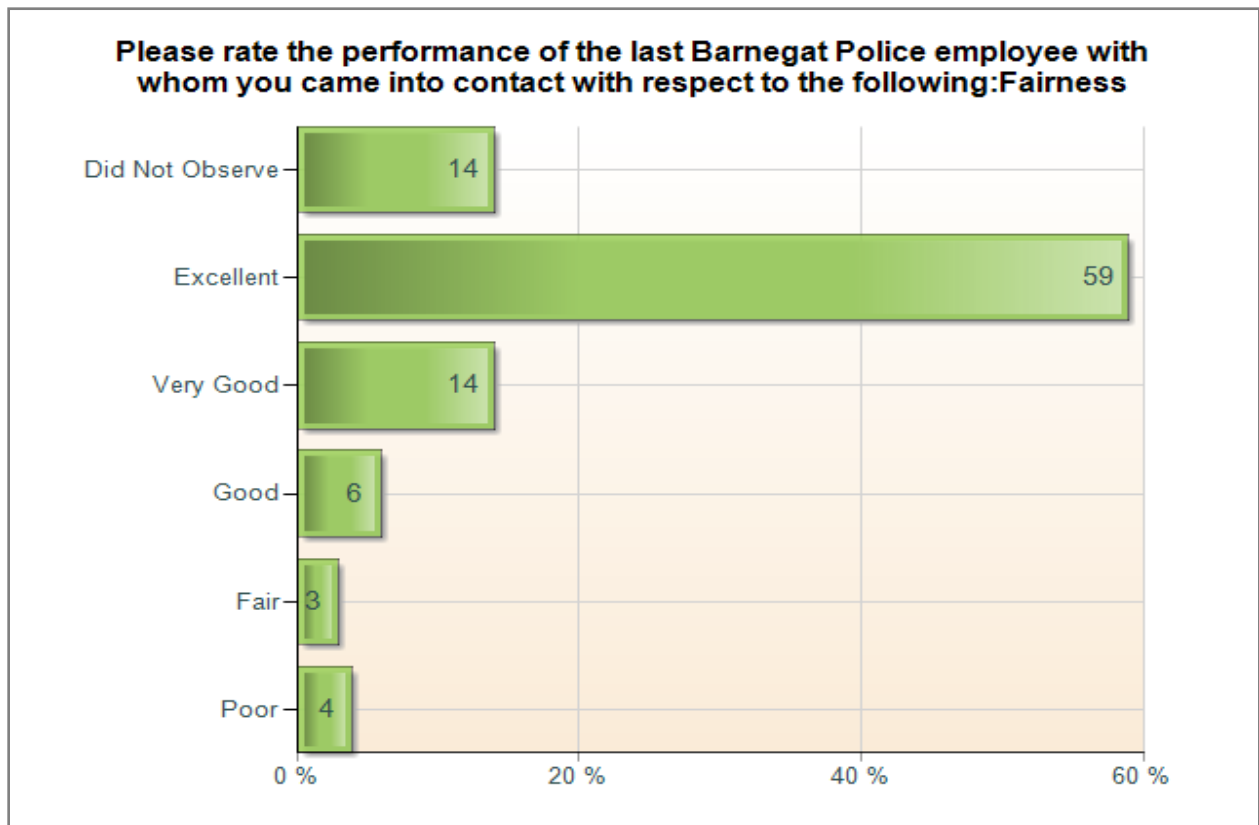
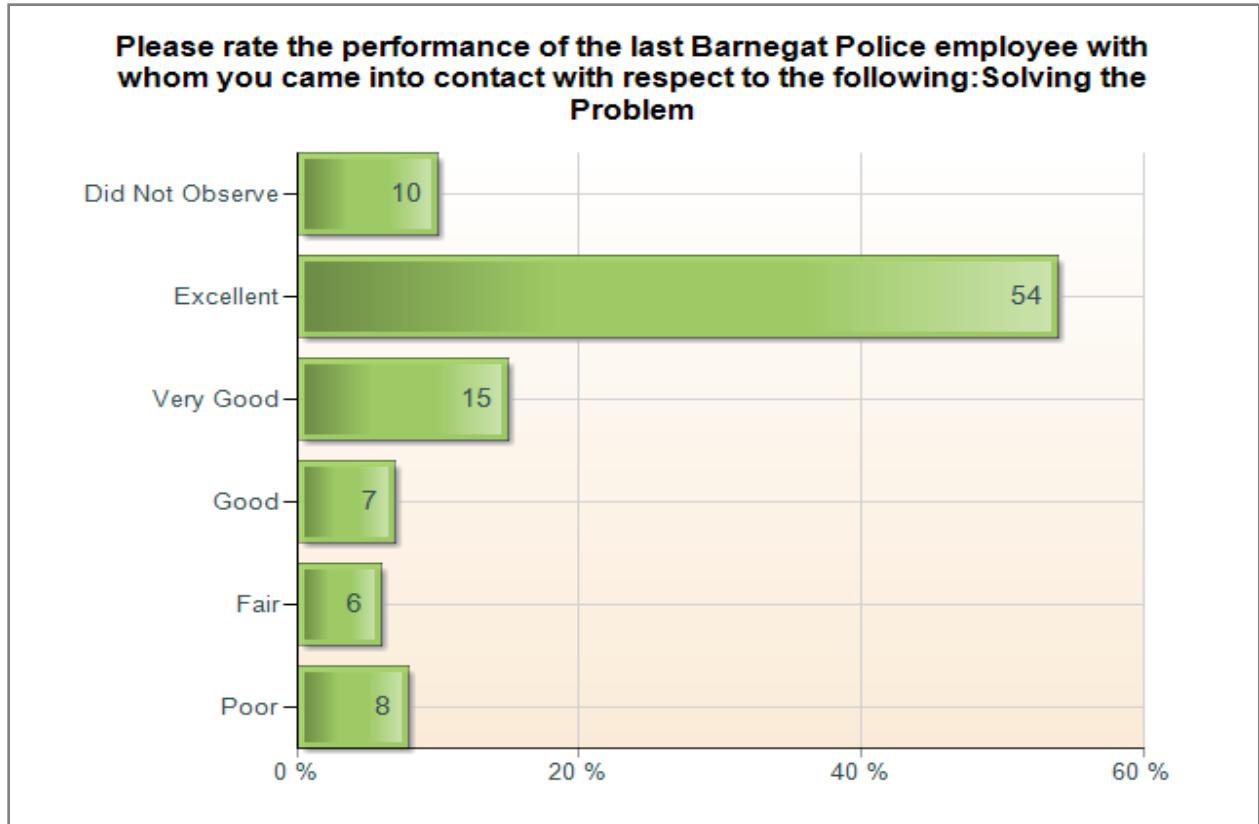
Primary contact continues to be made by uniformed patrol officers who accounted for nearly 60% of the reported last contact.



The Tables on the following pages show the performance ratings in 6 subcategories as well as overall. The highest percentage of excellent ratings was achieved in Helpfulness and Overall Performance.

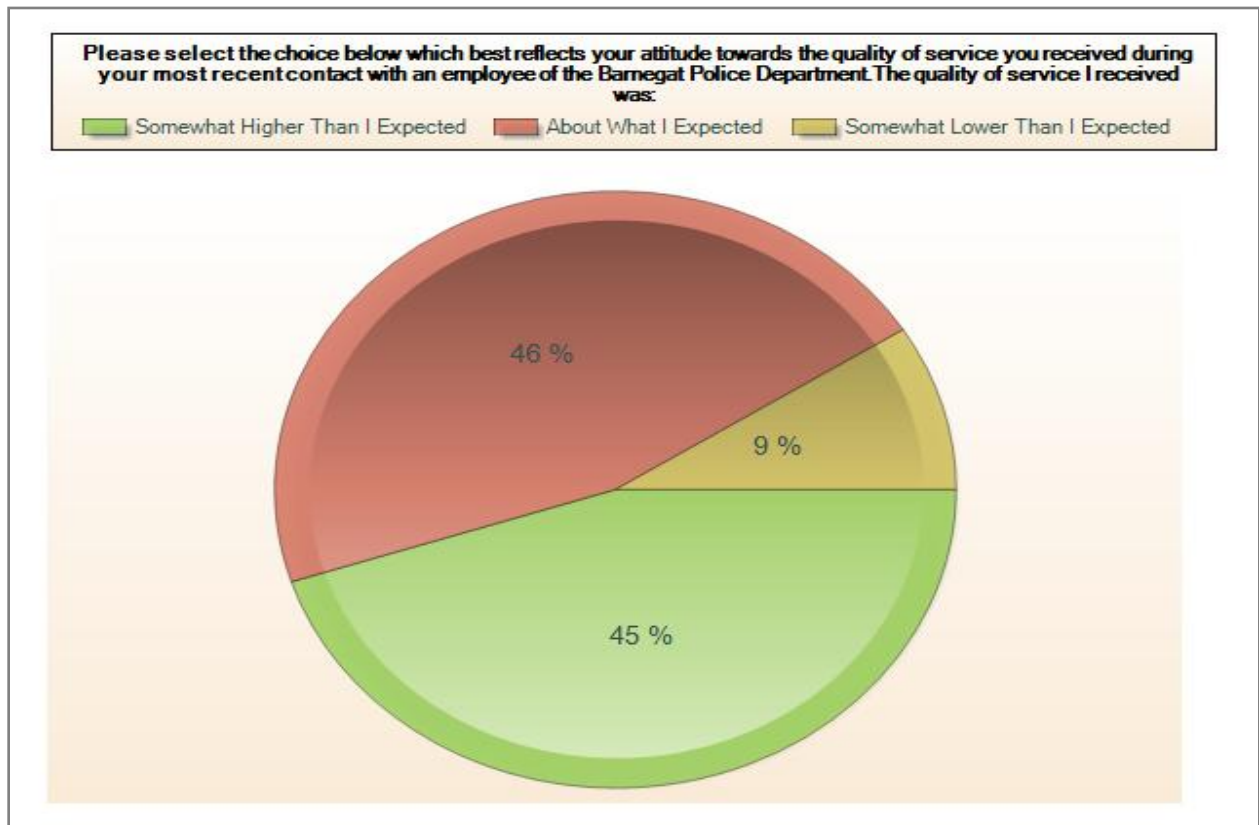






An important indicator of trending is question #12 that deals with whether the quality of service the respondents received from the agency was higher than, lower than, or as expected. 91% of respondents received service which they perceived to be either what they expected or better than what they expected. Only 9 % felt that the service received was lower than expected. These numbers represent a 2 percentage point improvement over the 2008 survey which is significant given the present climate surrounding public workers. It is also relevant given the decreased ratings given to dispatchers.

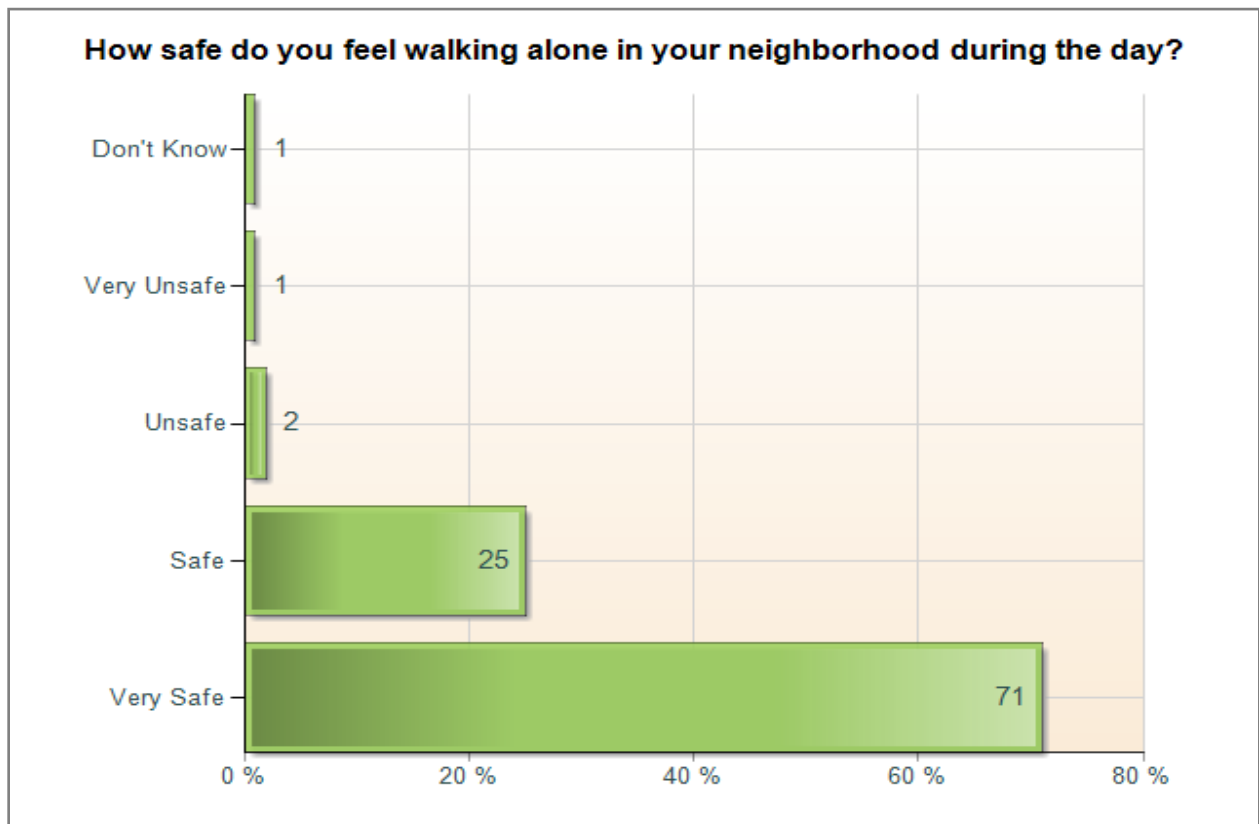
Of note is that 45% of respondents believed the service they received was higher than expected (42.5% in 2008). It was anticipated after the 2008 survey that this level would drop as residents came to expect a higher level of service from the agency. This has in fact not been the case which shows that members of the agency continue to perform above expectations.

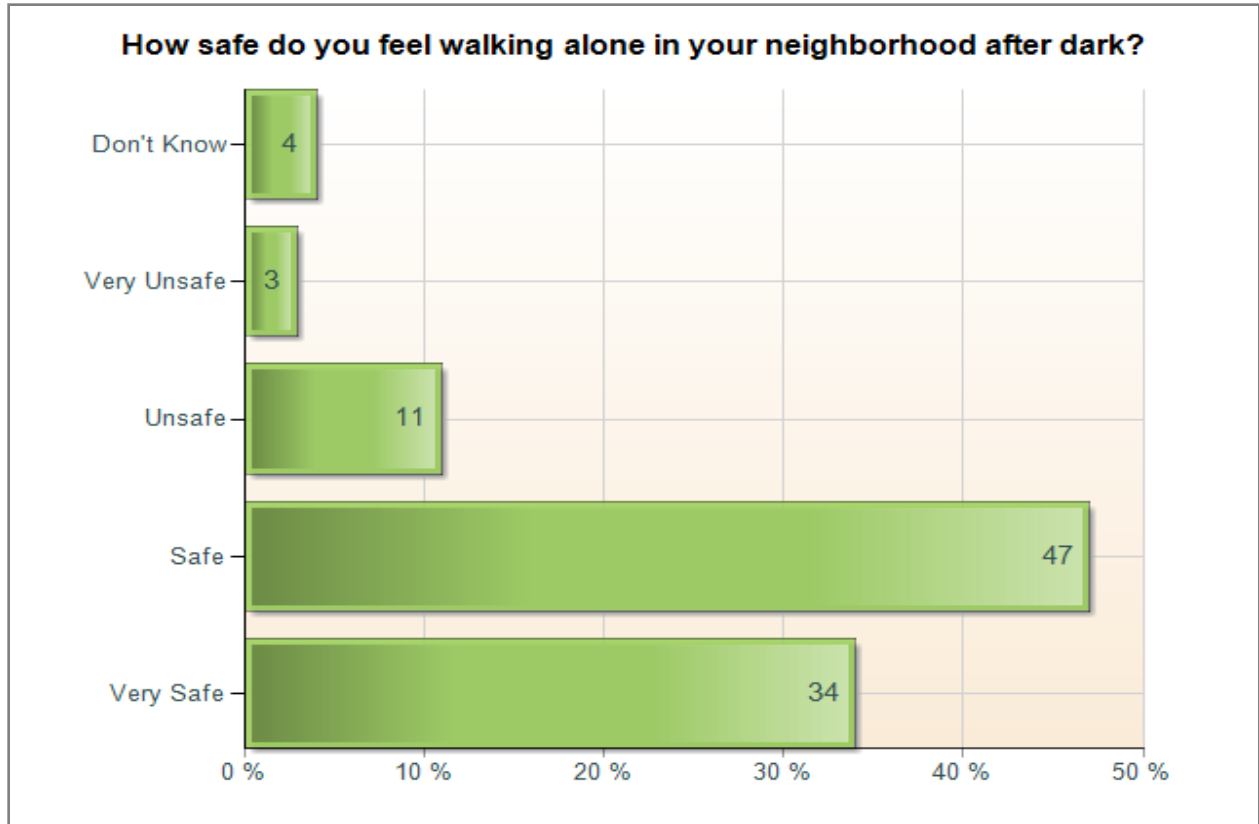


Neighborhood Issues

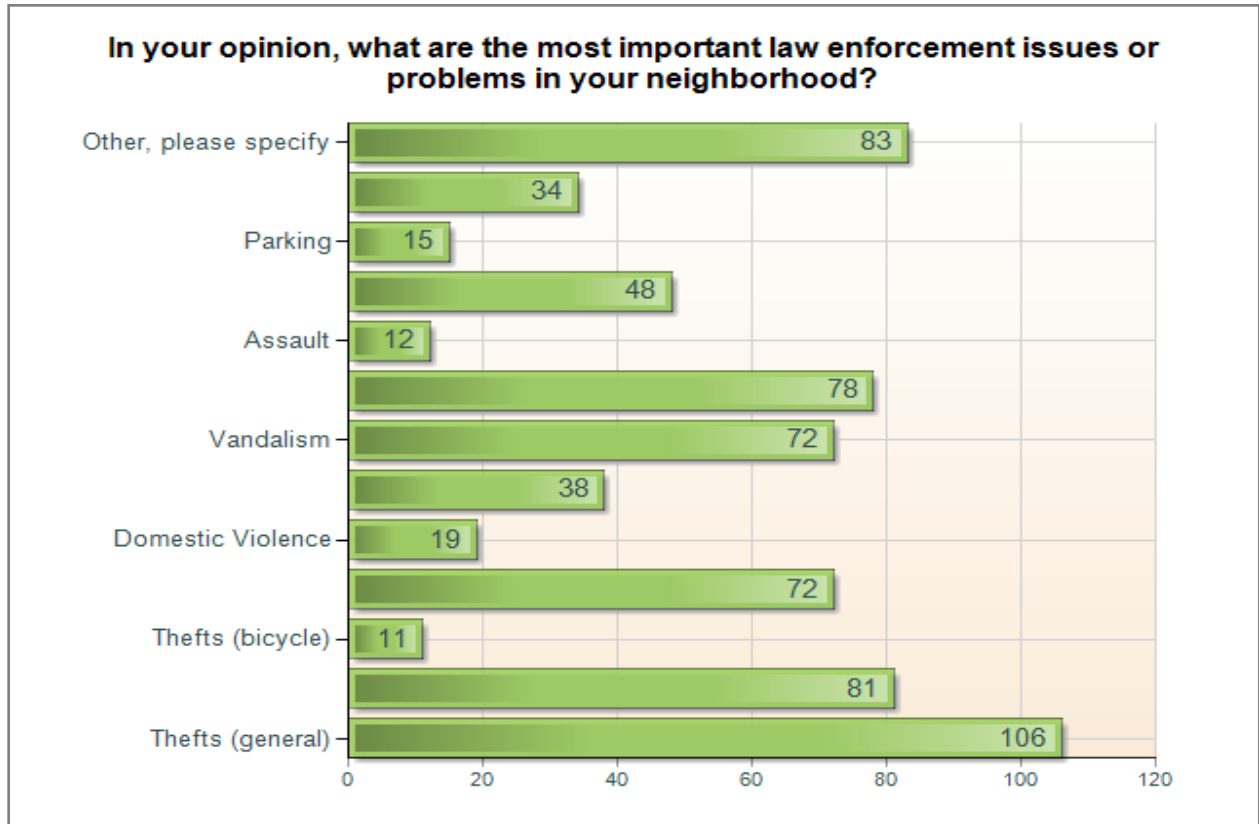
Questions 13-14: Perceived Safety and Neighborhood Problems

Questions 13 and 14 dealt with the respondent’s feeling of safety while walking alone in their neighborhoods both during the day and at night respectively. Overall , 96% of residents felt either very safe or safe during the day, an improvement over the 95.8% in 2008. This number dropped to 81% at night (79% in 2008). Studies show that regardless of neighborhood, night time is often perceived by individuals to be more dangerous than daytime. This is mostly based upon the stereotype that many criminals have a proclivity to operate after dark, as well as the limiting of human vision (the sense upon which we rely the most) at night. A natural consequence of this decrease in our most relied upon sense is a diminished feeling of security.





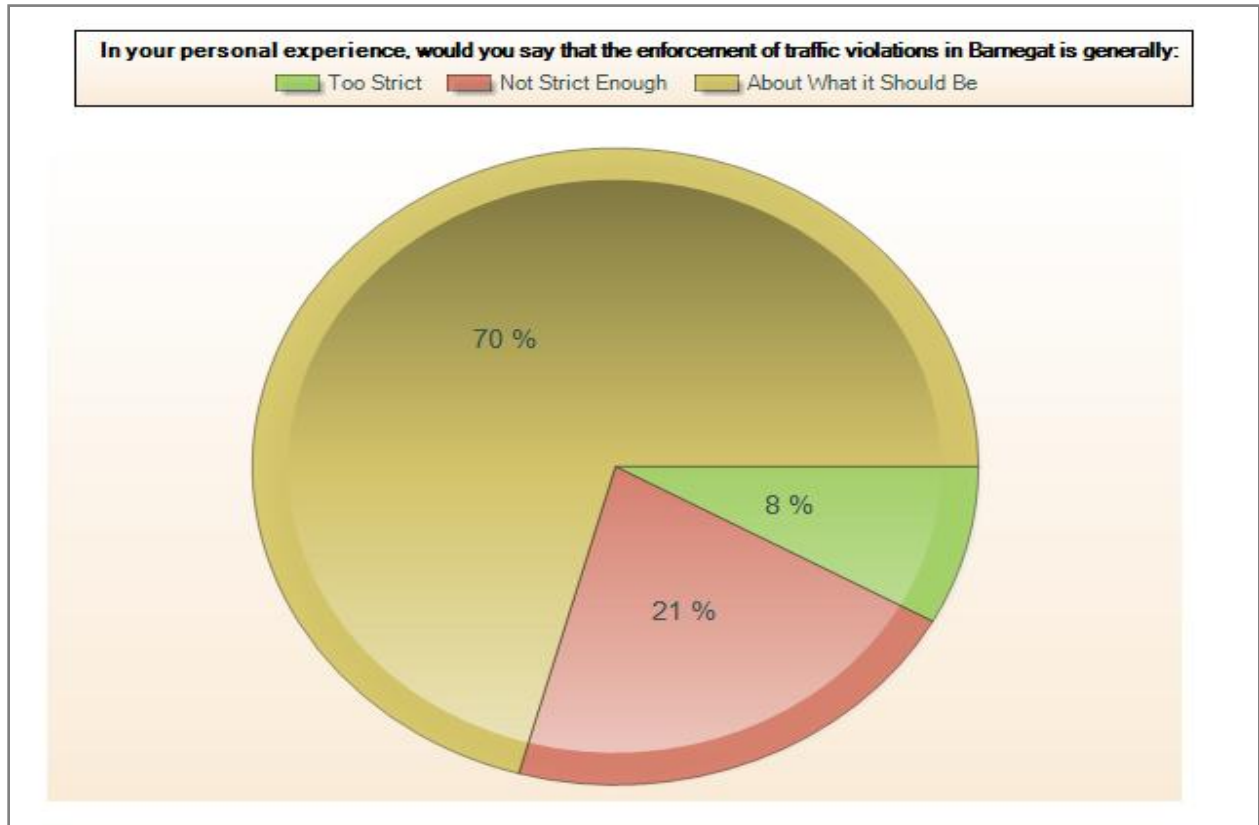
Question #15 dealt with what were perceived as the most important issues facing the respondent’s neighborhood. Respondents were encouraged to select all that applied allowing for multiple responses. Of the individual selections made by the respondents, thefts were the most prevalent issue (as was the case in 2008).



Questions 19: Traffic Enforcement

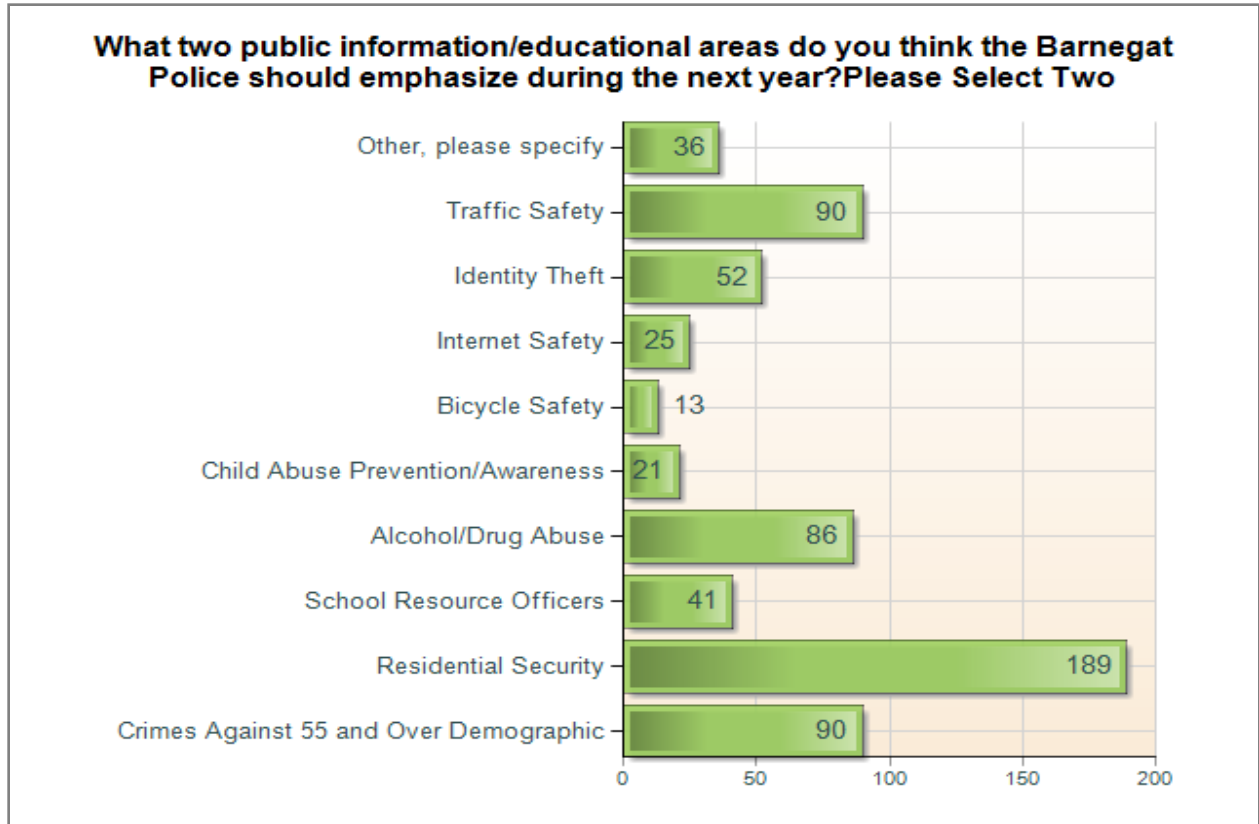
Question # 19 was of particular interest as it gauged whether residents feel that traffic enforcement in town is too strict, not strict enough, or about what it should be. Historically the department has received a steady wave of complaints from residents about speeders and other traffic problems. These complaints have been followed with requests for more traffic enforcement.

Returns showed that a majority of residents (70%) believed that traffic enforcement was now about what it should be. This number shows a marked improvement from the 58.6% who felt that way in 2008 . 21% believed that traffic enforcement was not strict enough (20% in 2008).



Questions 20: Police Information Campaigns and Program Importance

Question #20 asked respondents to select two of the listed public education/information areas which they felt the department should emphasize over the next year. The responses are categorized below.



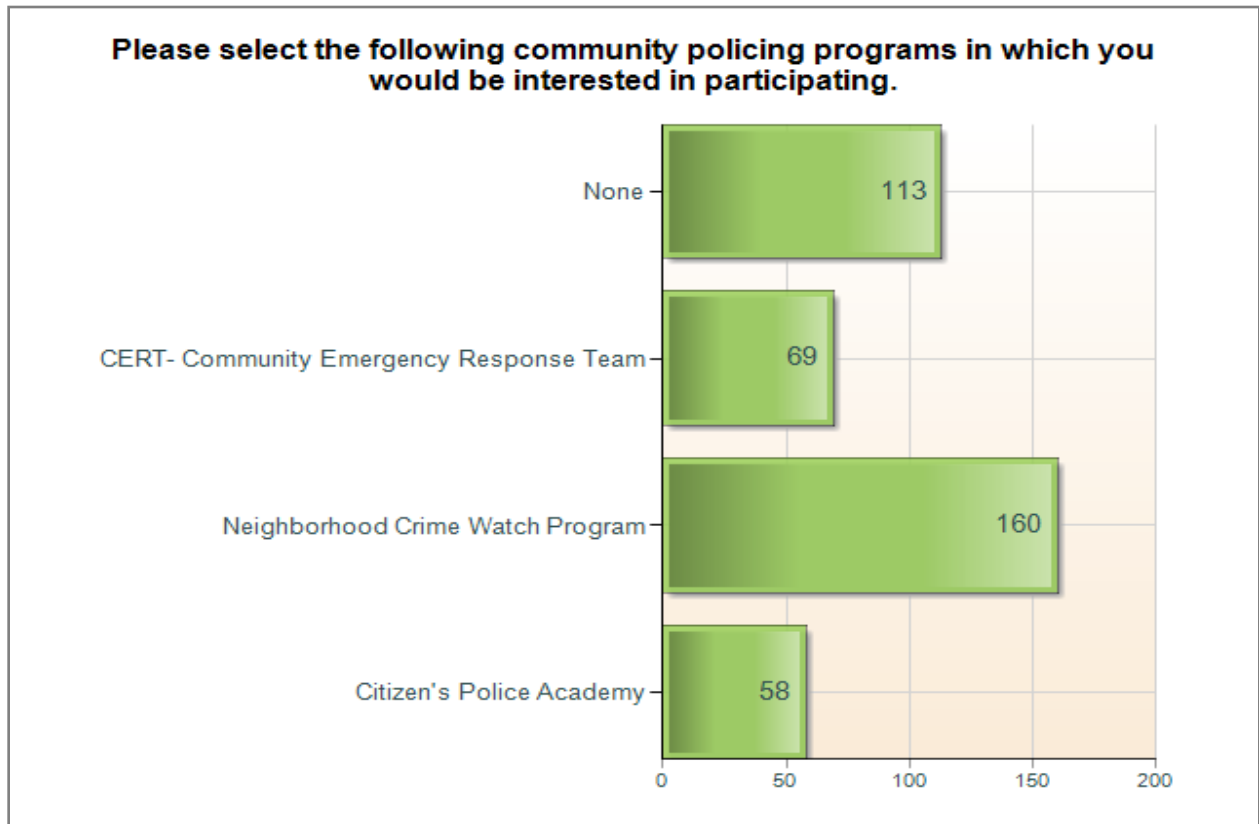
The numbers clearly show that residential security continues to be the primary area of concern as was the case in 2008. Traffic safety, alcohol/drug abuse, and crimes against the 55 and over demographic all comprised common areas of concern.

Questions 22: Community Policing Programs

Question #22 is a new question that seeks to gauge interest in community programs such as the Citizens Police Academy and CERT. The largest amount of interest was in Neighborhood Watch programs.

Of interest is the fact that the Citizen’s Police Academy received the lowest level of interest of the available choices.

One theory concerning this lack of interest is that the naming of the program imparts the view of a rigid learning environment, which is antithetical to the actual tenor of the program. One option may be to rename the program in order to give it a name that more accurately reflects its true nature.



Technology Exposure

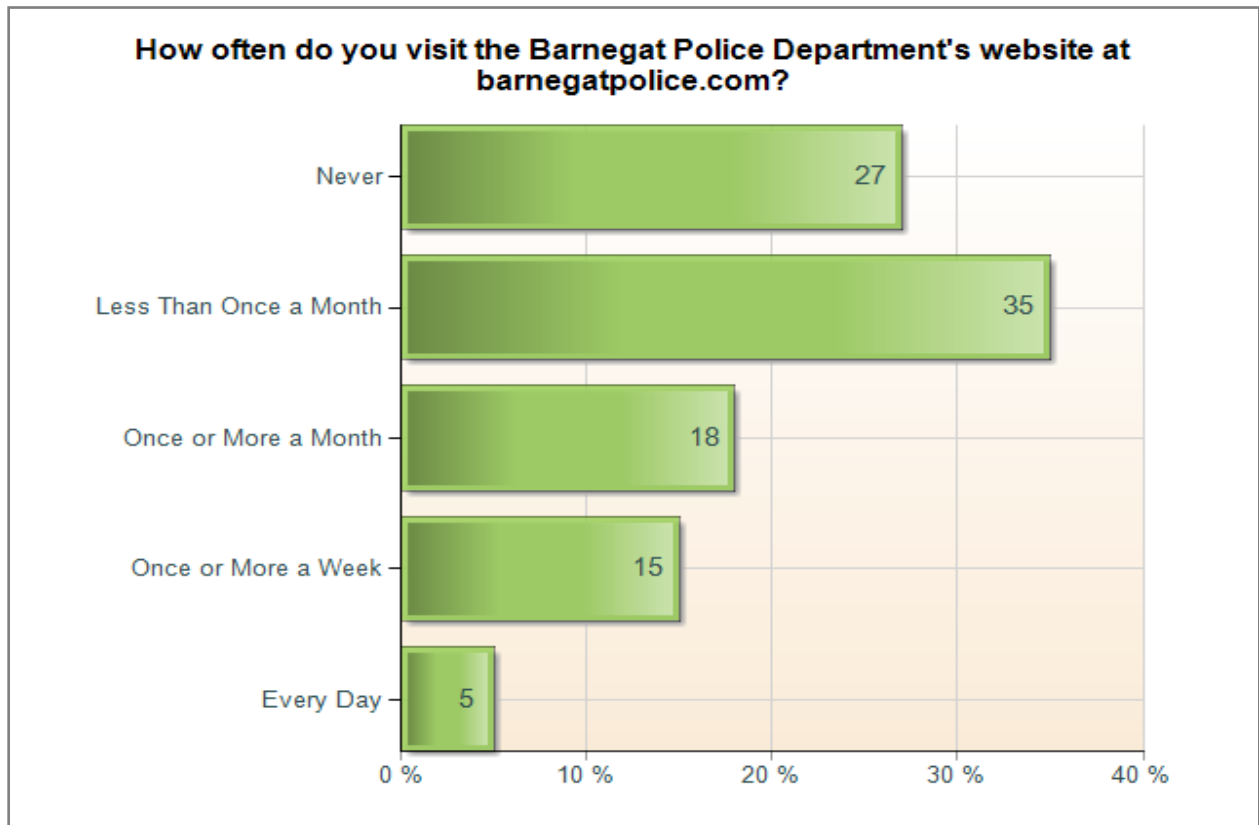
Since the last community survey was conducted, the agency has moved forward with both a dedicated website and the Nixle community notification system.

Two questions in the community survey attempted to garner information on the typically frequency of use of the agency website, along with familiarity and use of the Nixle system.

With respect to the agency website, 27% of respondents had never previously visited the site. The majority of respondents (35%) access the site less than once a month, while 15%

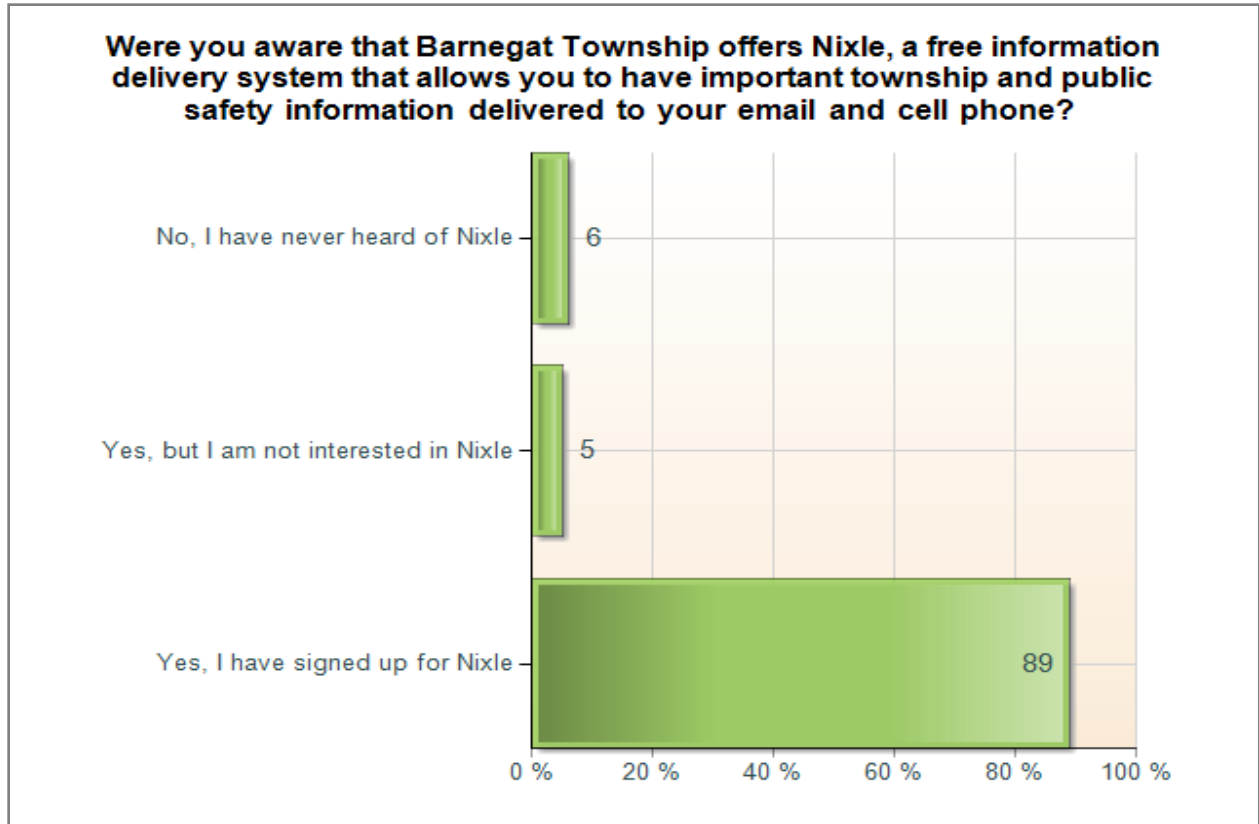
access it once or more per month. Only 15% access the site once or more a week, with an even smaller percentage (5%) accessing it daily.

These results could tend to indicate that the website is not necessarily the best tool to provide time-pertinent information to our residents. Other outlets which we have recently pursued including Twitter and Facebook in conjunction with Nixle are probably better suited for timely information dissemination.



With respect to Nixle, a significant number of respondents (89%) are Nixle users. While impressive, this number probably owes more to the fact that the community survey was advertised via Nixle, hence increasing the likelihood that Nixle users would make up a larger proportion of survey respondents.

Of the 11% of respondents who are not Nixle users, 6% indicated that they had never heard of Nixle, while 5% indicated that they were familiar with Nixle but had no interest in participating.

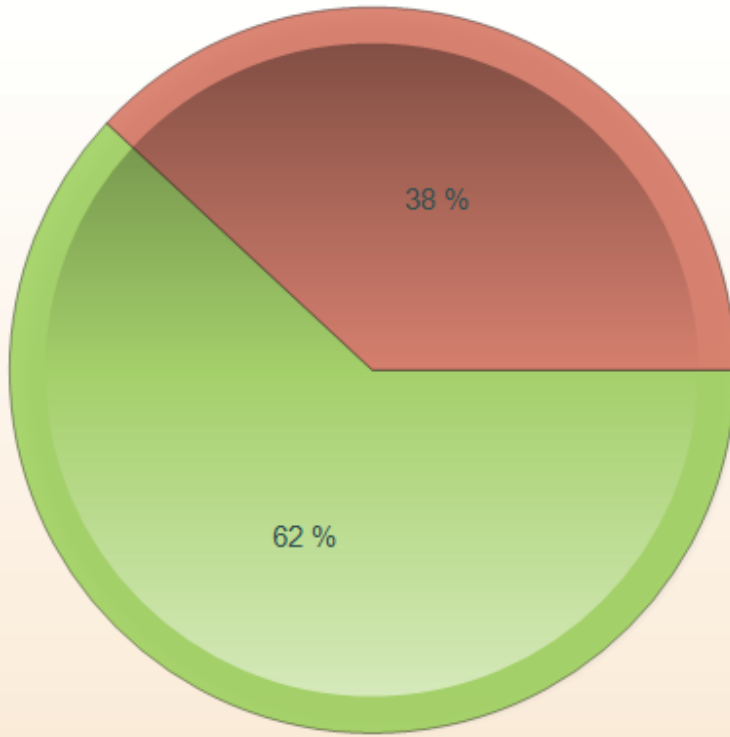


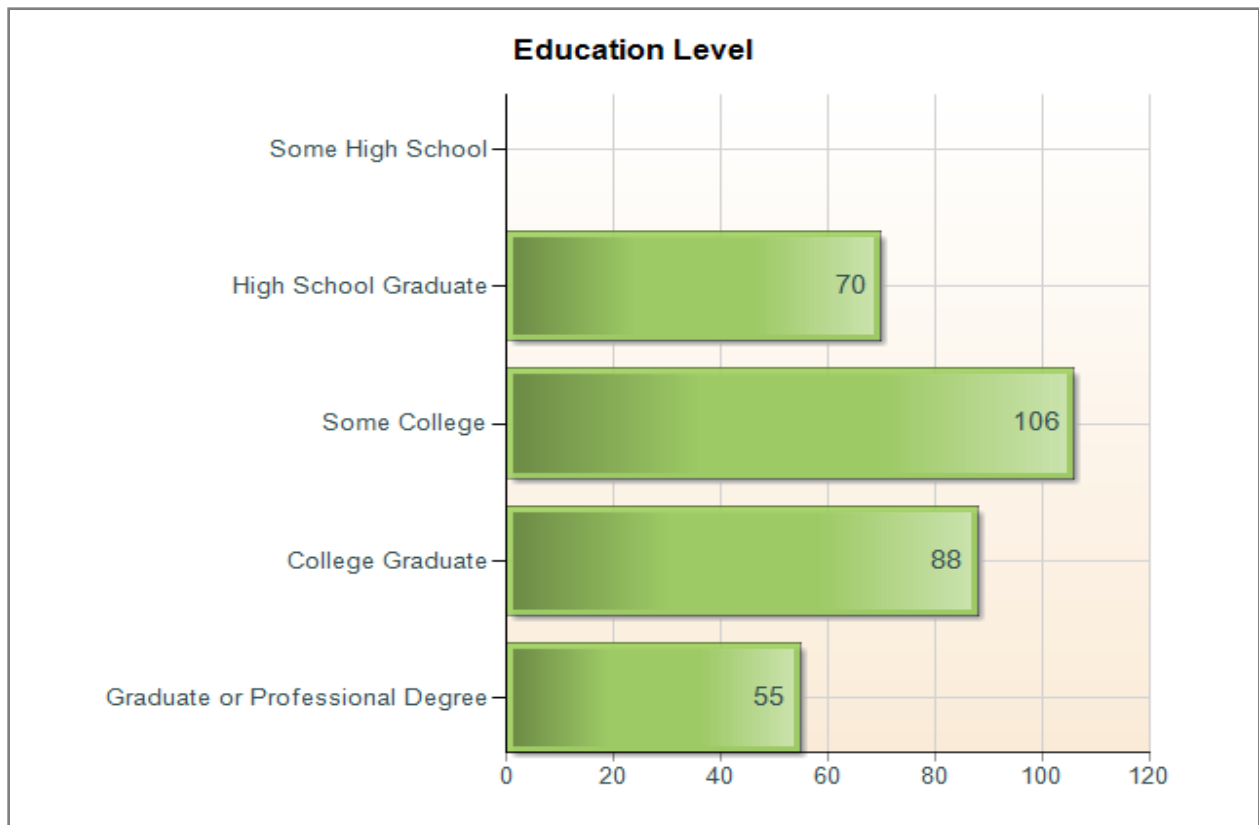
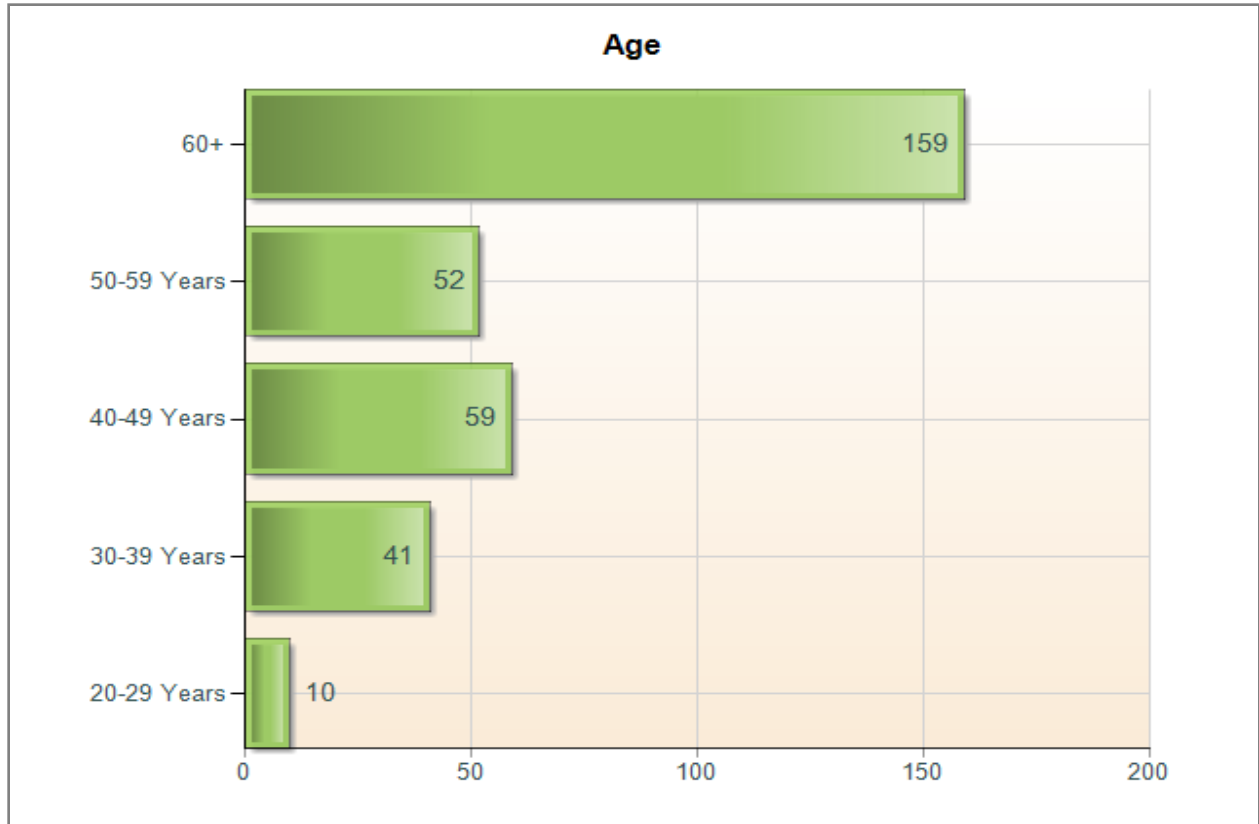
Demographic Data

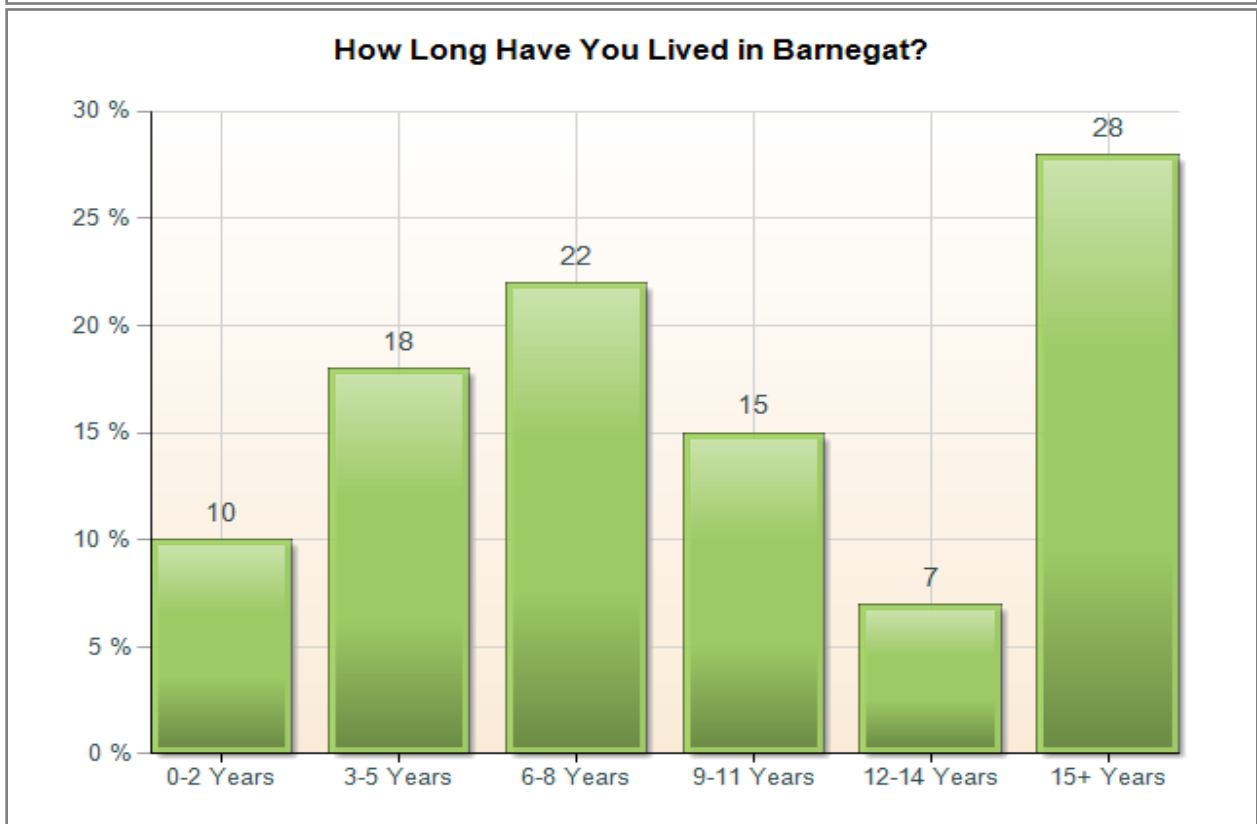
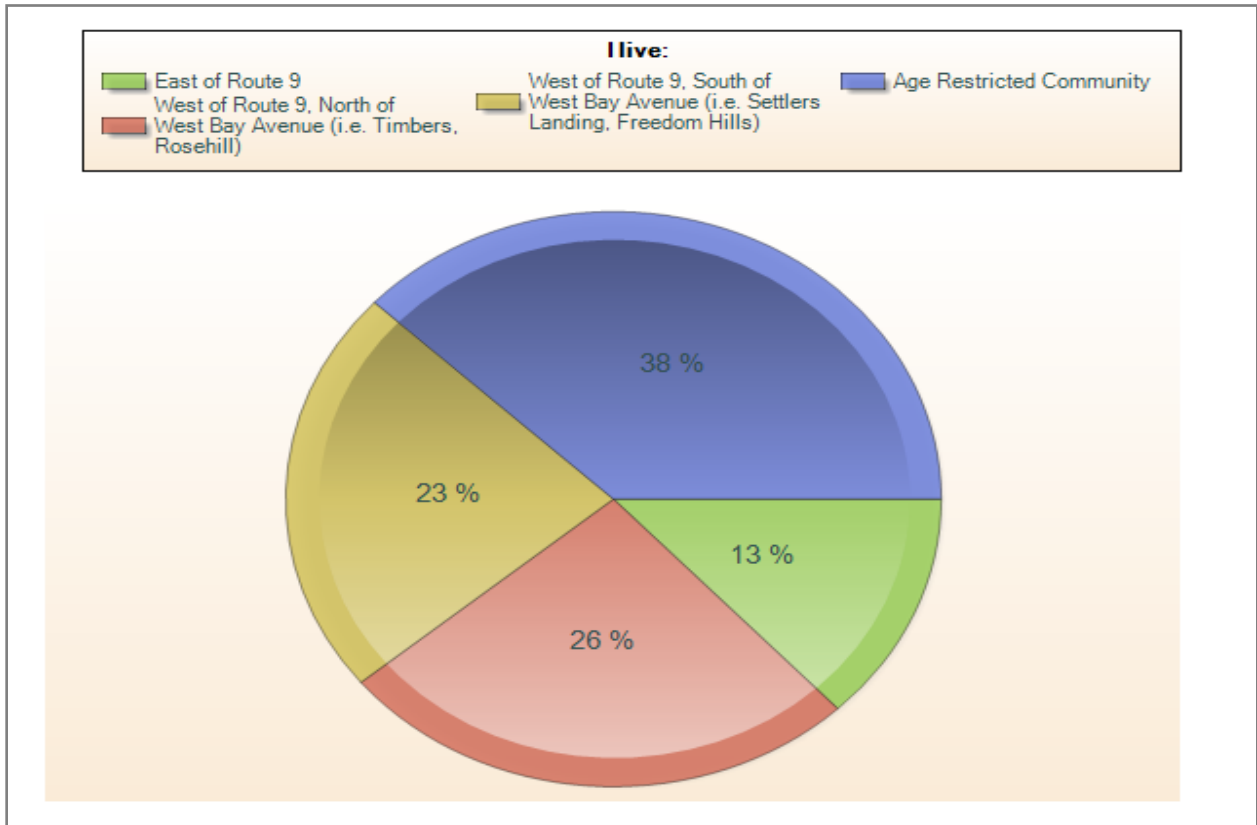
The following tables catalog the demographics of the survey respondents. Percentages are based upon those who completed this optional portion of the survey.

The following questions (25-29) are asked for analytical purposes only and are optional. Gender:

Male Female







Survey Related Changes

There have already been two changes made to agency operation based upon both survey results and feedback from respondents.

As previously mentioned, the review of dispatcher/call taker DVL recordings to ensure quality control was undertaken in an attempt to identify problems and improve customer service.

Also, in response to a suggestion made by a respondent, we have added a Facebook page and Twitter account to our social networking resources.

Other changes are pending continued review of this analysis and respondent feedback.

Conclusion

The 2011 Community Survey analysis results were much better than anticipated considering the current climate surrounding public workers and law enforcement.

We are clearly in difficult economic times where we find public employees, and specifically law enforcement, vilified almost daily in the local and state media.

The fact that the survey results not only remained positive, but actually improved overall is a testament to the men and women of this agency and their dedication to serve the residents of Barnegat Township.

The concerns going forward will clearly be associated with maintaining the high level of services and public satisfaction while adjusting to a more restrictive budget and more limited personnel resources.