

VERMONT ASSOCIATION OF CHIEFS OF POLICE



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VERMONT ASSOCIATION OF CHIEFS OF POLICE

To Vermont's Elected and Appointed Officials,

The Vermont Association of Chiefs of Police opposes any legislation that removes qualified immunity for law enforcement officers. We do commend the hard work and responsiveness of our state, communities, and the countless dedicated stakeholder groups and organizations. This collaboration has ensured professional policing standards, fairness, dignity preservation, and mutual respect are forefront for our profession. Our officers share these collective values and attributes that we as police executives demand from those we lead. We have, and always will, call for combating systemic racism, strengthening emotional intelligence, and adding co-responder models for service calls involving our communities most vulnerable and traditionally oppressed populations: the homeless, individuals and families in mental health crisis, and those suffering from addiction disorders. We endorse universal policies that promote transparency and accountability and have long advocated for enhanced community policing practices and programs.

As we all continue this critical work together, law enforcement in Vermont is coping with a dire inability to attract future generations, especially those from historically marginalized communities, to law enforcement. Nearly all agencies in our state are struggling to meet recruiting and retention goals, and the declining morale within our ranks due to the current anti-police climate is on a continuous and concerning downward trend. We also understand that the families and support systems of our personnel are gravely concerned about the safety and mental health of their loved ones and are anxious about the future of policing. These are proving to have a detrimental and long-lasting effect on the state of policing with concerns for long-term consequences that negatively impact both larger municipalities and small towns. They have severely impacted our ability to offer mutual aid and will inevitably influence the quality and amount of provided police services. Also, the fiscal costs to climb back from such a steep fall would be detrimental as we are still reeling from the economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. Still, officers and deputies consistently demonstrate a passionate commitment to their communities and profession.

In March 2021, the Vermont Association of Chiefs of Police conducted a straw poll for sworn Law Enforcement Officers (LEOs) within this state. Of the maybe 1,000 LEOs remaining in Vermont, 330 took part in this voluntary survey. The following information summarizes eleven sobering statistics, and it is something you all should read.

**VERMONT ASSOCIATION
OF
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Survey Statistic #1: *Approximately 71% of respondents were over the age of 35, and 80% have over six years of experience. 90% were full time, and nearly 80% were certified level III.*

Takeaway: **The participants represent the core of experience Vermont has left of its remaining law enforcement.**

Survey Statistic#2: *Approximately 47% were at the Deputy, Trooper, or Officer positions. The remaining 53% were Corporals, Sergeants or above.*

Takeaway: **This is a strong representation of LEOs at both entry and leadership levels.**

Survey Statistic #3: *Only about 28% of respondents felt they were supported a great deal or a lot by their respective communities.*

Takeaway: **As we continue to work hard to regain trust and legitimacy from our communities, we need you to publicly support us, openly acknowledge the accomplishments we've all made together, and provide positive reinforcement to keep us moving in the right direction. VT law enforcement officers are proud of their professionalism and find it hard to understand the constant anti-police theme coming from our elected leaders.**

Survey Statistic #4: *65% felt little to no support by locally elected officials, nearly 87% felt little to no support by statewide elected officials, and nearly 89% felt little to no support from nationally elected representatives.*

Takeaway: **Work with us to bridge the gaps and change the perceptions. Otherwise, those that are needed most in this profession, those trying to turn it around by being the example for the country to follow, are going to leave and what is left will be de-moralized and completely exhausted. The profession will not attract the quality we all want and need to be the next generation of law enforcement for Vermont. Agencies are already seeing a drastic reduction in recruitment and retention rates.**

Survey Statistic #5: *95% felt their concerns and voices were not being heard or respected in conversations regarding changes in policing.*

Takeaway: **Most Americans want a change in policing. So do we. We are all onboard with improving the profession and improving accountability and transparency. No LEO wants to work with someone who is abusive, disrespectful, and not dedicated to our sworn oath. We are not the enemy and want the opportunity to relay to you what we need to truly take Vermont law enforcement to the next level. Please just listen to and support us.**

Survey Statistic #6: *Nearly 50% believed their agencies provided little or no training, nor the resources or equipment needed to perform their duties and meet their responsibilities.*

Takeaway: **Law Enforcement leaders have long begged for more resources to provide the tools needed to keep staff safe and properly trained. This also strengthens retention by keeping officers engaged and excited about their work.**

Survey Statistic #7: *80% described overall morale in law enforcement as moderately low or low.*

Takeaway: **Again, we need your full-throated public voice in supporting law enforcement. Be just as vocal when acknowledging the positive strides and accomplishments as you are when publicizing what needs improvement. This is a critical and desperate time for us. A pat on the back from you goes a long way.**

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Survey Statistic #8: *Nearly 86% stated the loss of qualified immunity would bring them reluctance in the performance of their duties, and 47% stated if qualified immunity was no longer afforded, they would either leave immediately, within a year, or as soon as they found another job. Roughly 37% felt they were “stuck” in the profession and would have to “stick it out.”*

Takeaway: Please do not classify us as racists, homophobic, xenophobic, or authoritarians that must be stopped. Officers with these very real and legitimate concerns should not be categorized as needing to be “weeded out,” or those who would leave anyway because they would be exposed as violating rights, rules, and law. Such assumptions affect us more than is realized, and they hurt. Vermont has acknowledged oppression and racism to be systematic. All professions have a part to play in social inequality. Qualified immunity extends to all government workers (Judges, Attorneys, Teachers, and Elected Officials, etc.). There are just as many, if not more, examples of individuals among those ranks who have caused harm on local, national, and even global scales. If the problem is systemic, and qualified immunity protects those who perpetuate these abuses, then why only stop with police? We refer you to the joint law enforcement statement regarding qualified immunity.

Survey Statistic #9: *Outside the discussion of Qualified Immunity, about 37% of respondents planned to stay because they enjoyed their jobs, but 23% planned to stay but no longer enjoyed the work. 23% either planned to seek opportunities in another state or federal agency or planned to leave law enforcement entirely and as soon as possible.*

Takeaway: Something must be done quickly to stem the hemorrhaging and it requires your help. Let’s all come to the table to discuss this crisis with mutual respect and understanding. Our government has been villainizing itself, and society is feeding on that negative behavior making true debate and true governance dysfunctional. If we continue down this path, our discussions will remain rooted in cynicism, negativity, and finger pointing rather spending our energies on finding mutual ground to get things done.

Survey Statistic #10: *75% of respondents said they would not recommend policing to anyone as a career.*

Takeaway: With public opinion of law enforcement in sharp decline, and police agencies receiving fewer and fewer applications, how can we hope to secure the safety of our communities and the future of this profession if even those within it do not recommend it as a career choice? We can stem this tide with your support. For better or worse, you should know, LEOs are not considering Vermont as a place they want to work in.

Survey Statistic #11: *Nearly 72% stated they’ve had conversations with their households or support systems as to whether they should remain in law enforcement due to the current climate of policing.*

Takeaway: LEOs and our families have enough to worry about from anxiety, to PTSD, depression, suicide, or whether a loved one is going to make it home. Our families deserve to know you will support us as they send us off to start our shifts.

We are reaching out to our communities for support in creating a renewed sense of positivity towards the policing culture to recruit and retain highly skilled and committed officers. The future of our profession and the safety and well-being of our communities depend on a collaborative, non-disparaging effort between law enforcement, elected officials and leaders, and our communities to address the complex issues we all face together.

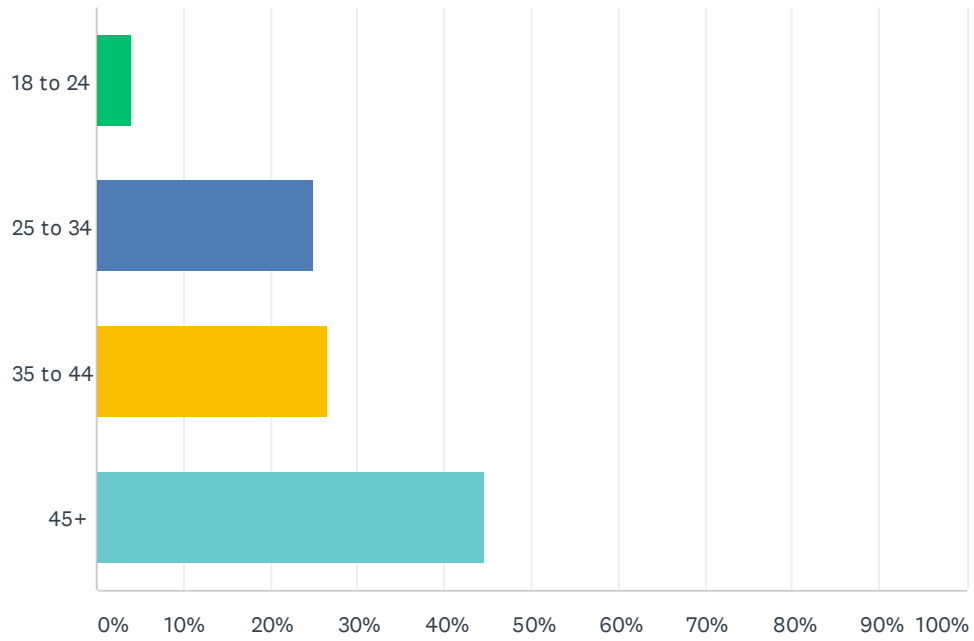
As we strive to strengthen police-community relations and re-build legitimacy and trust, it is our hope that we build-upon our mutual commitment and respect for each other and for our communities, that our dialogue remains constructive and supportive, and that we find the resources to address needed programs that encourage and create a holistic approach to policing to bring about lasting positive change.

Respectfully,
The Vermont Association of Chiefs of Police

P.O. Box 139
Bondville, Vermont 05340
Founded in 1966

Q1 What is your age?

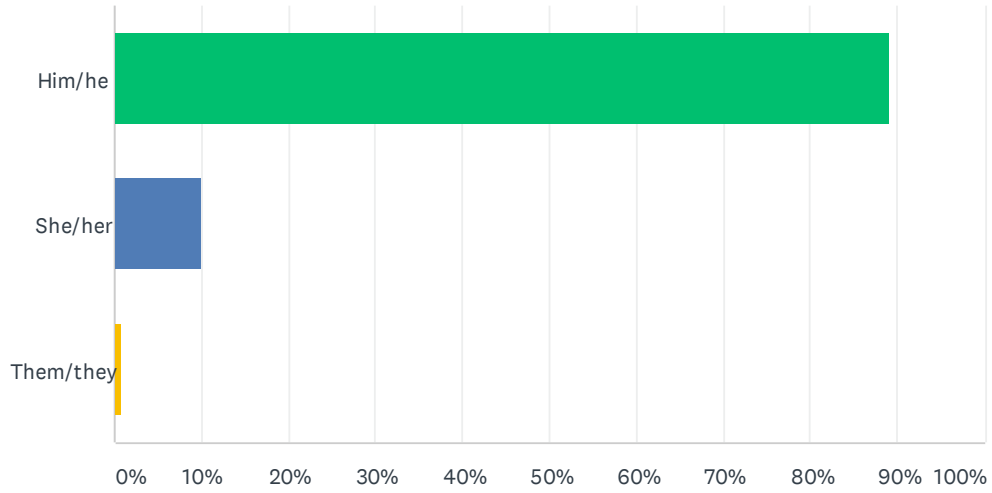
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ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
18 to 24	3.94%	13
25 to 34	24.85%	82
35 to 44	26.67%	88
45+	44.55%	147
TOTAL		330

Q2 How do you identify?

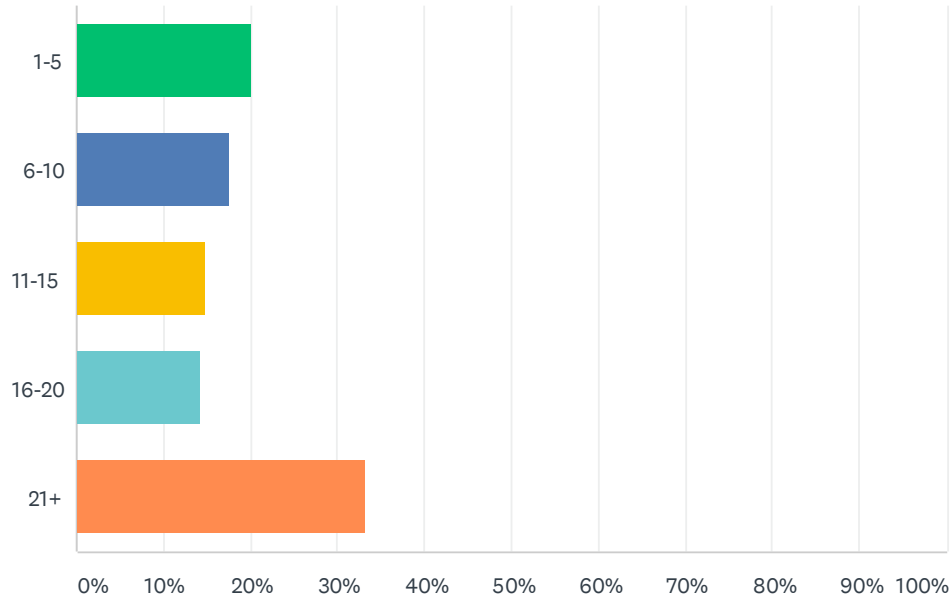
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ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Him/he	89.09%	294
She/her	10.00%	33
Them/they	0.91%	3
TOTAL		330

Q3 How many years do you have in law enforcement?

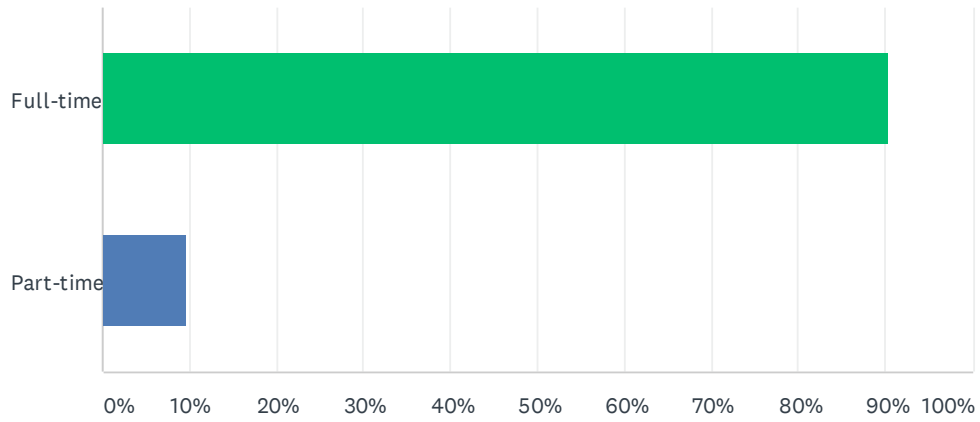
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ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
1-5	20.00%	66
6-10	17.58%	58
11-15	14.85%	49
16-20	14.24%	47
21+	33.33%	110
TOTAL		330

Q4 Are you?

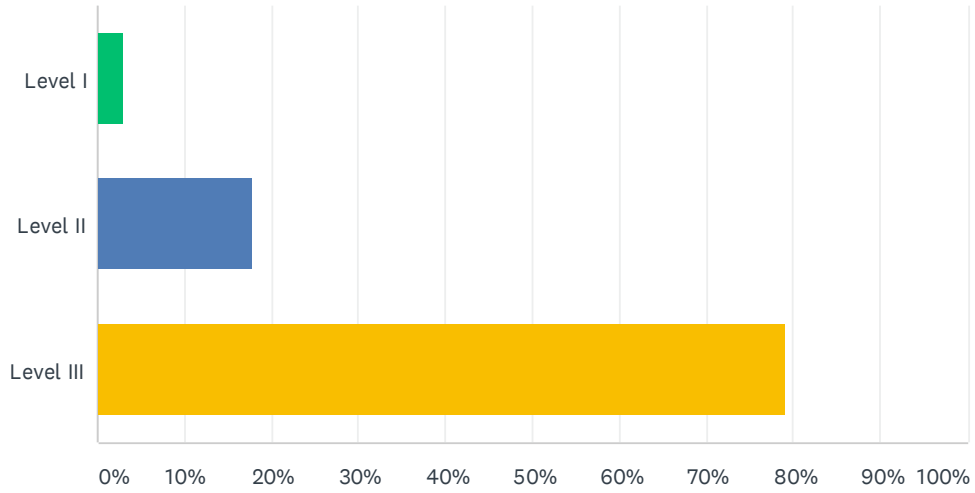
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ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Full-time	90.30%	298
Part-time	9.70%	32
TOTAL		330

Q5 What is your certification level?

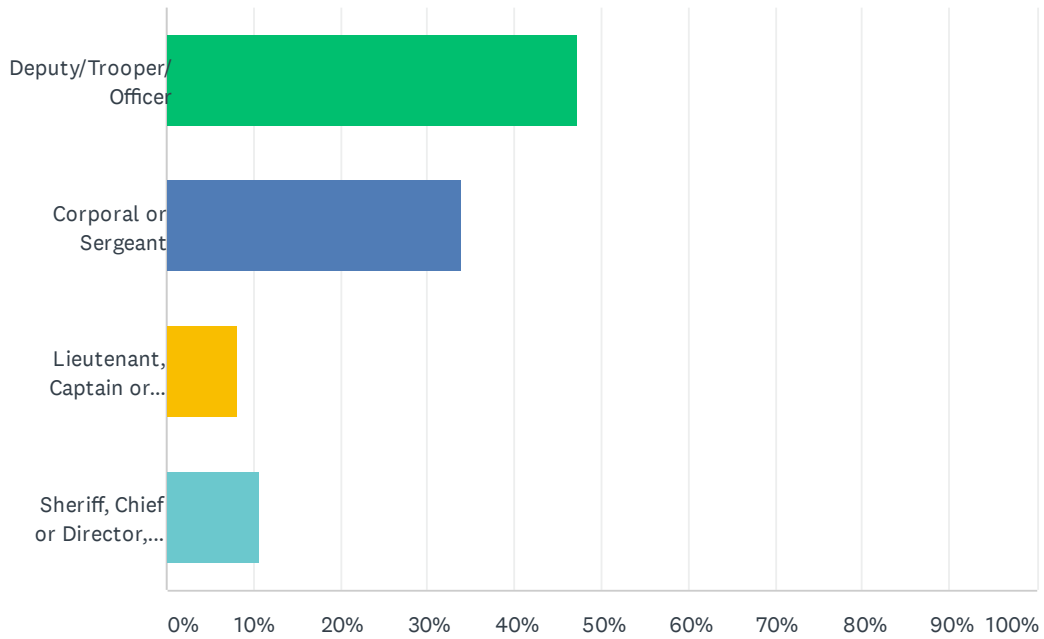
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ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Level I	3.03%	10
Level II	17.88%	59
Level III	79.09%	261
TOTAL		330

Q6 What is your current position at your respective agency?

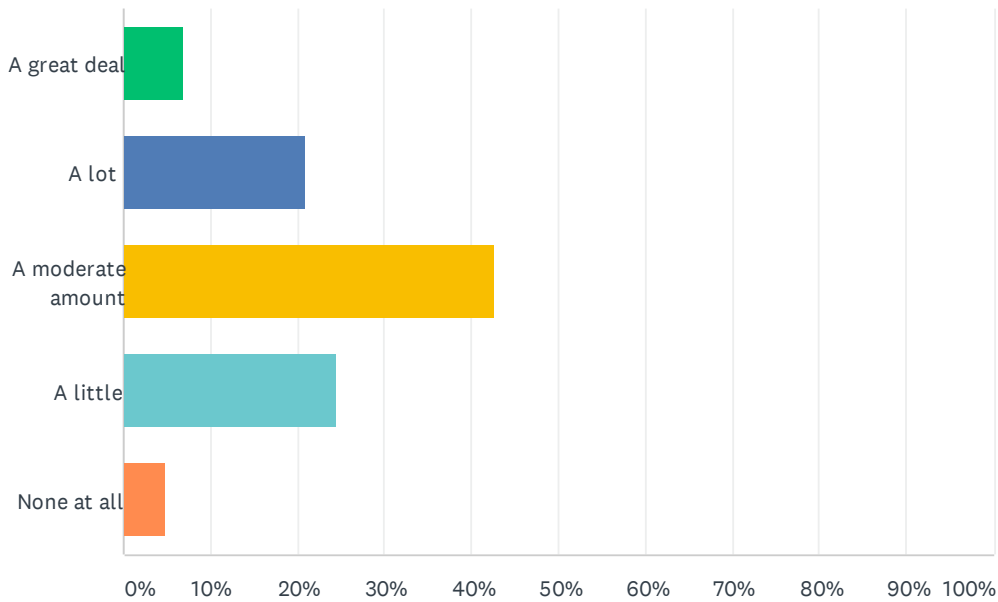
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ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Deputy/Trooper/Officer	47.27%	156
Corporal or Sergeant	33.94%	112
Lieutenant, Captain or Major, etc. Agency Head	8.18%	27
Sheriff, Chief or Director, etc.	10.61%	35
TOTAL		330

Q7 As a law enforcement professional, do you feel supported by your community?

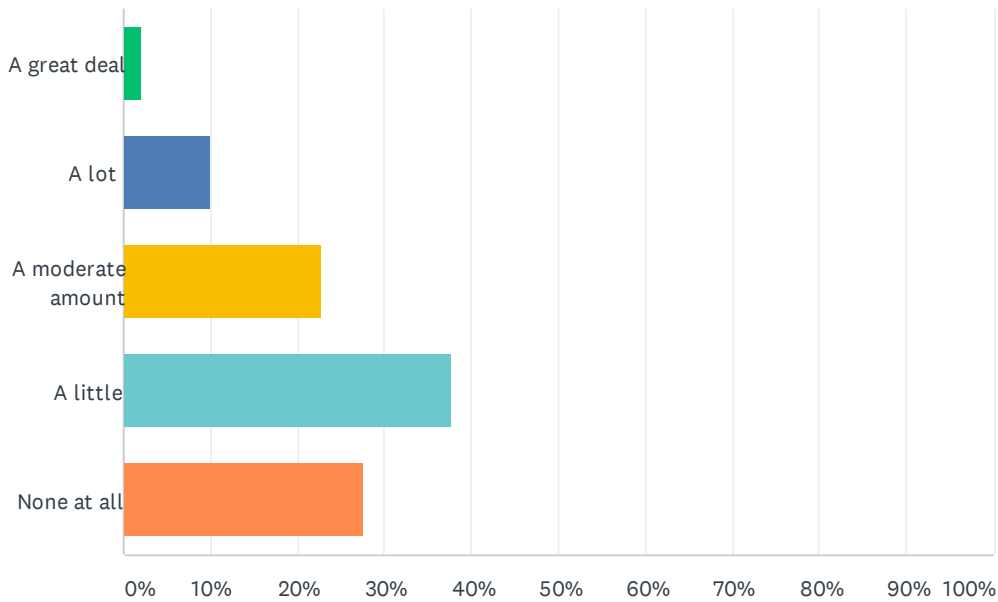
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ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
A great deal	6.97%	23
A lot	20.91%	69
A moderate amount	42.73%	141
A little	24.55%	81
None at all	4.85%	16
TOTAL		330

Q8 As a law enforcement professional, do you feel supported by your local elected representatives?

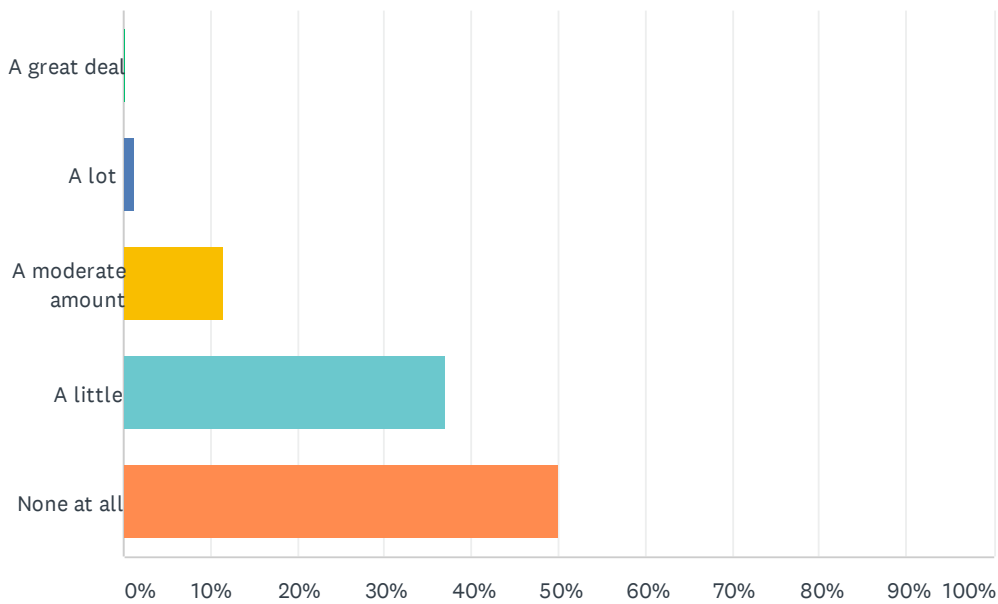
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ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
A great deal	2.12% 7
A lot	10.00% 33
A moderate amount	22.73% 75
A little	37.58% 124
None at all	27.58% 91
TOTAL	330

Q9 As a law enforcement professional, do you feel supported by statewide elected representatives?

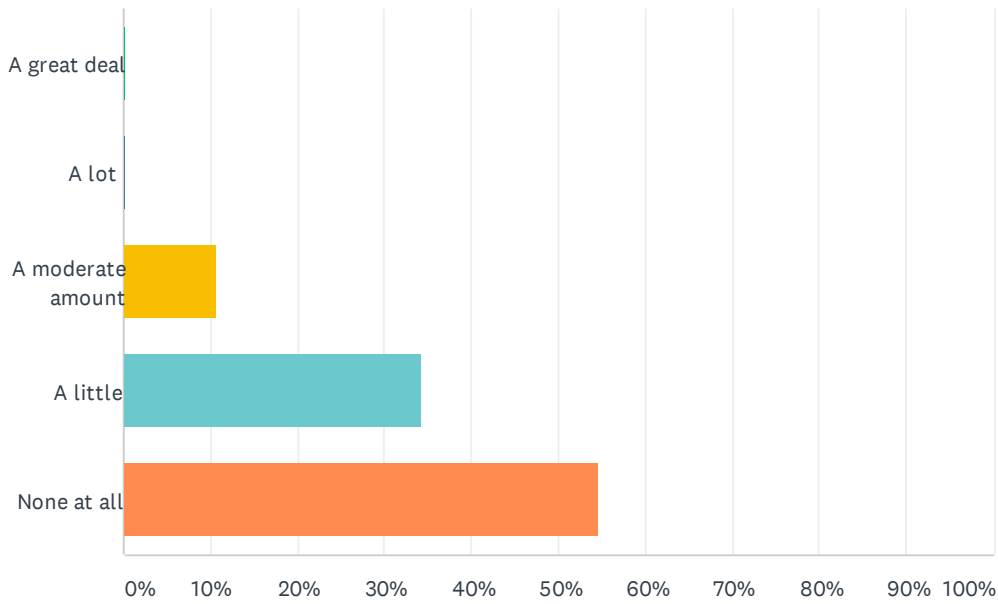
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ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
A great deal	0.30%	1
A lot	1.21%	4
A moderate amount	11.52%	38
A little	36.97%	122
None at all	50.00%	165
TOTAL		330

Q10 As a law enforcement professional, do you feel supported by nationally elected representatives?

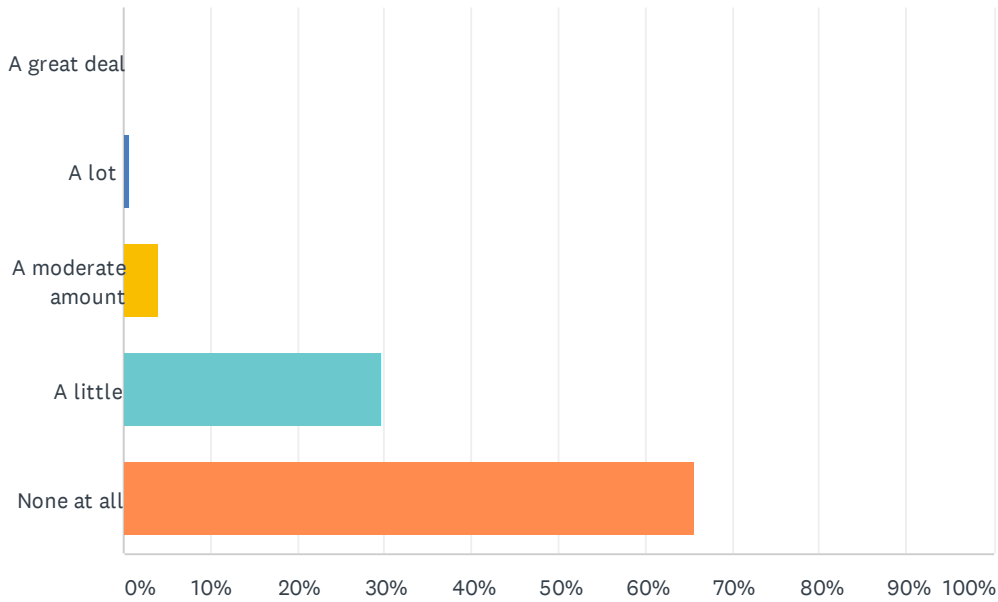
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ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
A great deal	0.30% 1
A lot	0.30% 1
A moderate amount	10.61% 35
A little	34.24% 113
None at all	54.55% 180
TOTAL	330

Q11 As a law enforcement professional, do you feel the concerns and voices of law enforcement are being heard and/or respected in conversations regarding changes in policing?

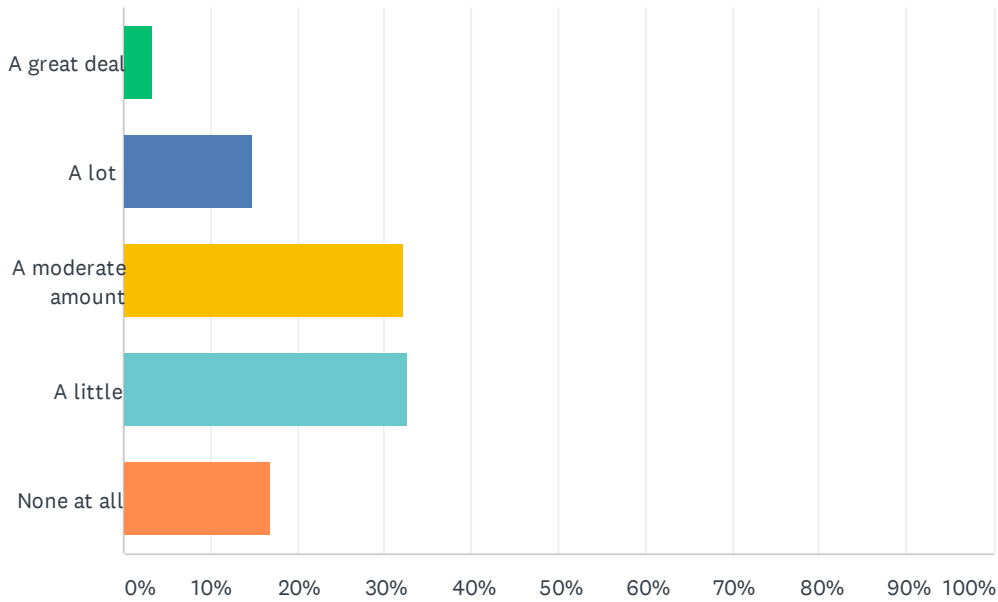
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ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
A great deal	0.00% 0
A lot	0.61% 2
A moderate amount	3.94% 13
A little	29.70% 98
None at all	65.76% 217
TOTAL	330

Q12 Do you believe your agency has the appropriate amount of personnel, training, resources, and equipment to perform your duties and meet your responsibilities?

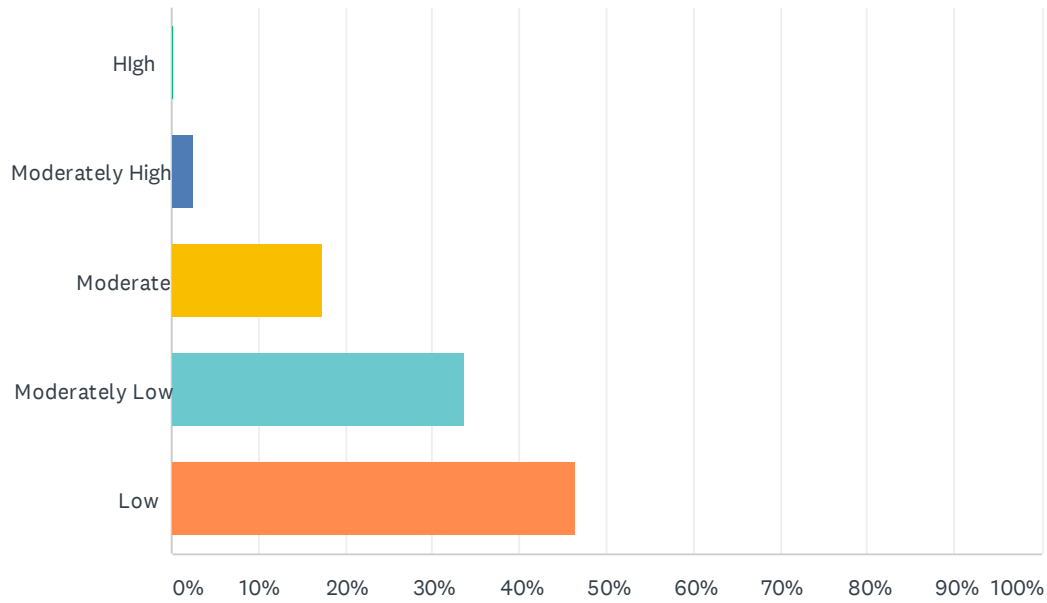
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ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
A great deal	3.33% 11
A lot	14.85% 49
A moderate amount	32.12% 106
A little	32.73% 108
None at all	16.97% 56
TOTAL	330

Q13 How would you rate overall morale in law enforcement?

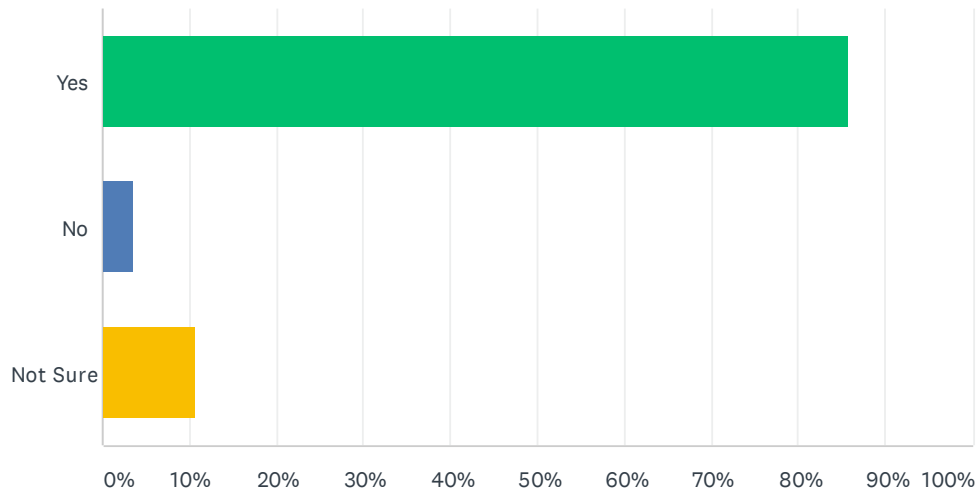
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ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
High	0.30% 1
Moderately High	2.42% 8
Moderate	17.27% 57
Moderately Low	33.64% 111
Low	46.36% 153
TOTAL	330

Q14 Would the loss of qualified immunity bring you reluctance in the performance of your duties?

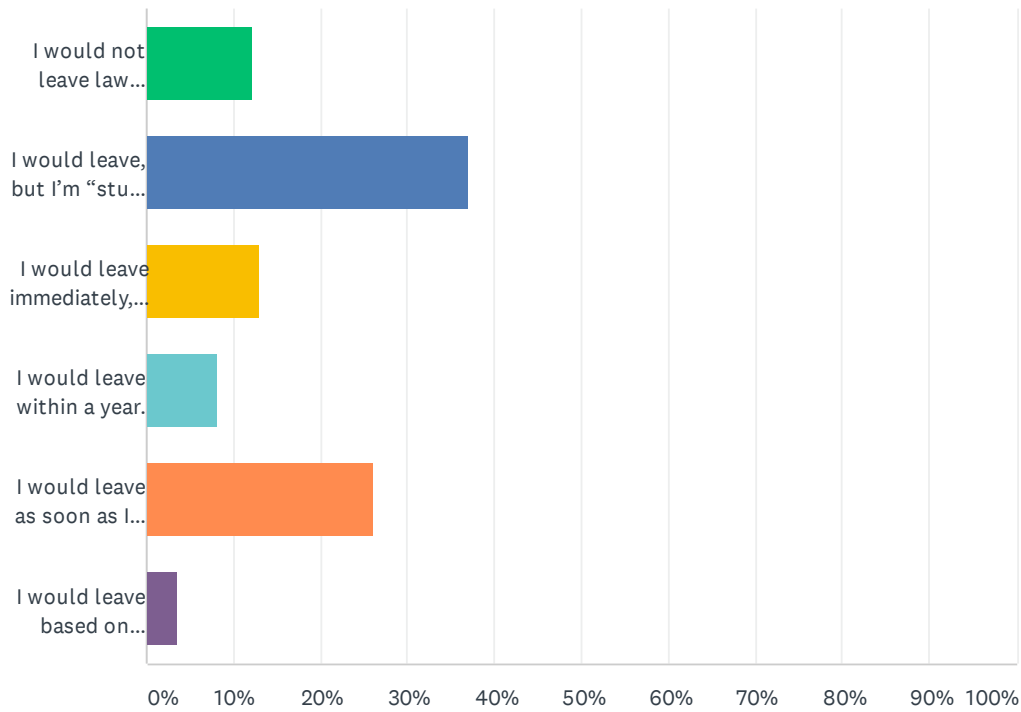
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ANSWER CHOICES		RESPONSES	
Yes		85.76%	283
No		3.64%	12
Not Sure		10.61%	35
TOTAL			330

Q15 If you were no longer afforded qualified immunity, would you still plan to stay in law enforcement?

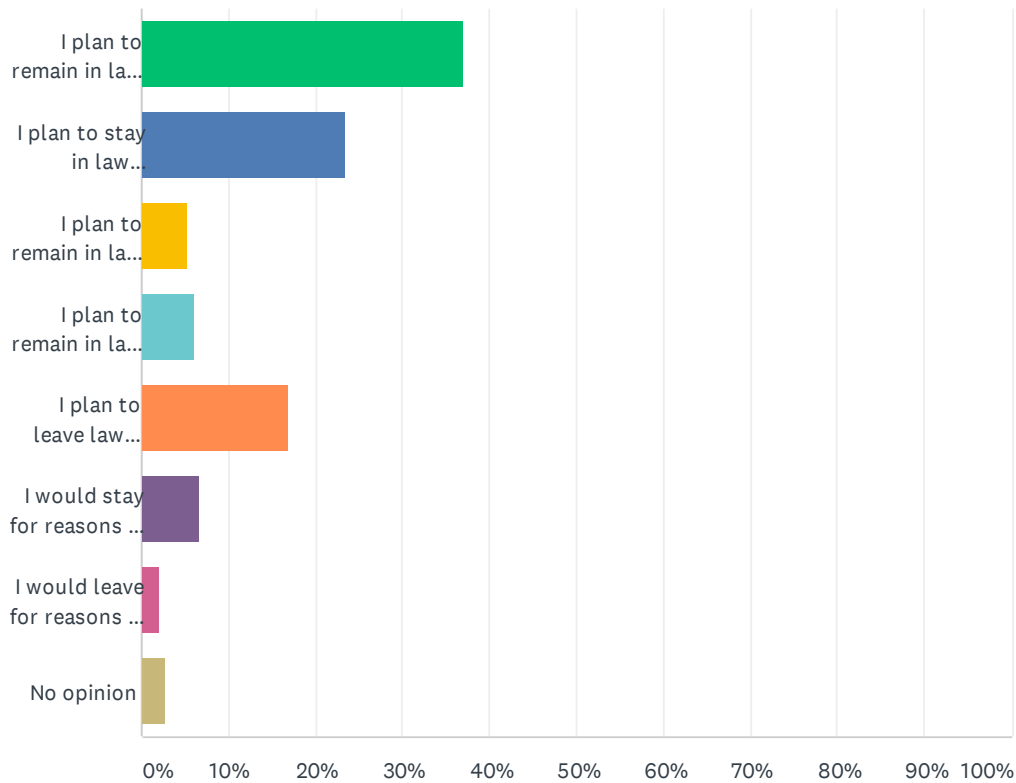
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ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
I would not leave law enforcement.	12.12%	40
I would leave, but I'm "stuck" and have to "stick it out" (would not leave due to financial reasons, family obligations, vested in a pension, no other work opportunities, need to wait until retirement, etc.).	36.97%	122
I would leave immediately, or within thirty days.	13.03%	43
I would leave within a year.	8.18%	27
I would leave as soon as I found another job.	26.06%	86
I would leave based on another reason not listed.	3.64%	12
TOTAL		330

Q16 Not considering the topic of qualified immunity, what are your plans to remain in the law enforcement profession?

Answered: 330 Skipped: 0



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
I plan to remain in law enforcement in my current agency or municipality because I enjoy the job.	36.97% 122
I plan to stay in law enforcement, but no longer enjoy the job.	23.33% 77
I plan to remain in law enforcement, but I plan to seek opportunities in another agency or municipality within in this state.	5.15% 17
I plan to remain in law enforcement, but I plan to seek opportunities with another state or federal agency.	6.06% 20
I plan to leave law enforcement entirely and as soon possible (e.g. when another opportunity presents itself).	16.97% 56
I would stay for reasons not listed (please provide a brief explanation)	6.67% 22
I would leave for reasons not listed (please provide a brief explanation).	2.12% 7
No opinion	2.73% 9
TOTAL	330

Q17 I would stay for reasons not listed (please provide a brief explanation)

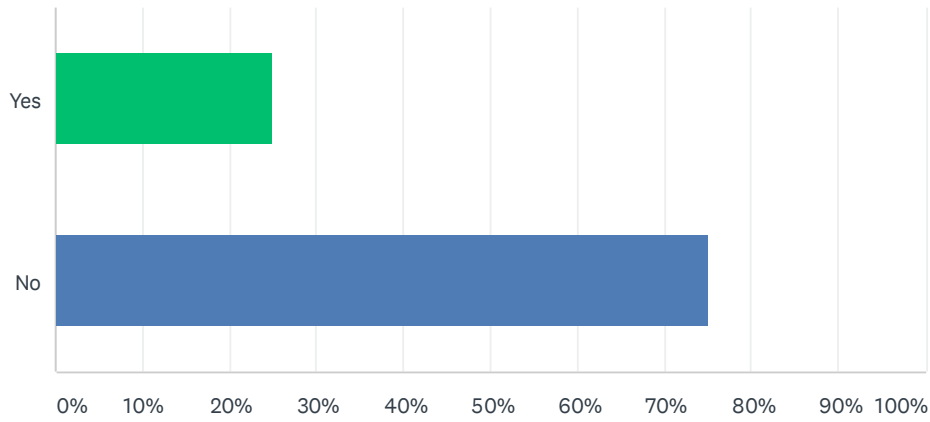
Answered: 22 Skipped: 308

Q18 I would leave for reasons not listed (please provide a brief explanation).

Answered: 7 Skipped: 323

Q19 Would you recommend policing to anyone considering it as a career?

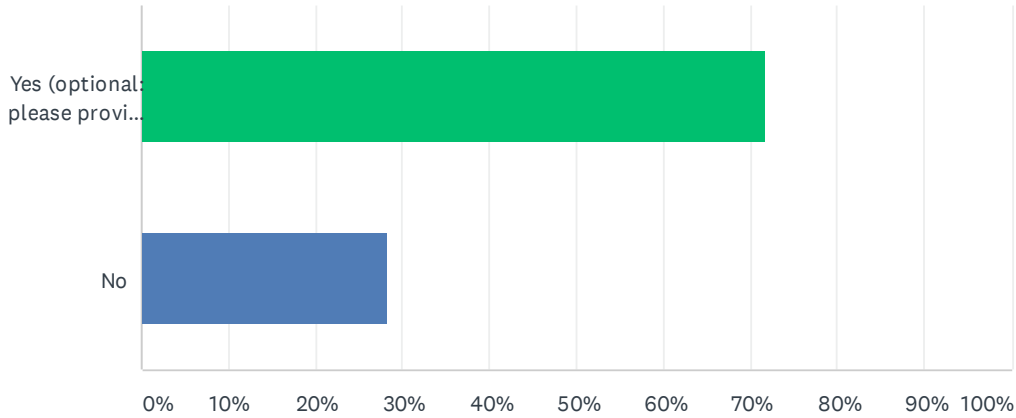
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ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	24.85%	82
No	75.15%	248
TOTAL		330

Q20 Have you had discussions within your household or support system as to whether or not you should remain in law enforcement due to the current climate of policing?

Answered: 330 Skipped: 0



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes (optional: please provide a brief summary of those conversations)	71.82%	237
No	28.18%	93
TOTAL		330

Q21 Please provide a brief summary of those conversation(s) you had within your household or support system as to whether or not you should remain in law enforcement due to the current climate of policing?

Answered: 172 Skipped: 158