



Public Awareness Baseline Assessment

DATE PUBLISHED: JULY 2019

Table of Contents

1. Introduction and Purpose.....	2
2. Key Findings.....	2
Awareness	2
Perceptions.....	2
Communication and Engagement	3
3. Methodology.....	3
4. Interview Analysis	5
APPENDICES	8
Appendix 1: Interview Questions	8
Appendix 2: Survey Analysis by Questions.....	9

1. Introduction and Purpose

The Office of Police Accountability (OPA) conducted a Baseline Assessment of current public awareness, perception, and knowledge of OPA during the first quarter of 2019. The purpose of this assessment was to understand public perceptions of OPA and the effectiveness of current outreach and engagement tools, as well as gather ideas on how to engage and communicate with the public in the future. The findings will help inform OPA's Outreach and Engagement Plan for 2019 through 2020.

This report summarizes the key findings and then provides an overview of the research questions and methodologies used to gather information for the Baseline Assessment.

2. Key Findings

Awareness

General awareness of OPA is mixed, and both assessment methods indicated there are still many within the community who have never heard of OPA. Among those who have heard of OPA, most are only somewhat familiar with the services OPA provides.

- About half of survey respondents had heard of OPA. Of those, a fourth first heard of OPA within the past year.
- Among survey respondents who knew about OPA, most were only somewhat familiar with what OPA does. A fourth of respondents reported they were extremely familiar with OPA.
- Interviews with community leaders indicated some understanding of OPA and police accountability broadly, but there is lack of understanding about OPA specifically among community organizations and community members. Communities that have been involved with the Consent Decree were generally more familiar with OPA.

Perceptions

- Half of survey respondents expressed a favorable view of OPA; about 20% expressed an unfavorable view; and 30% did not have an opinion.
 - Black respondents were more likely to view OPA unfavorably, and Asian respondents were more likely to have an extremely favorable view of OPA.
 - Male respondents were more likely to view OPA unfavorably compared to female respondents.
 - Adults 50 and older were more likely to view OPA favorably compared to teens and adults younger than 50.

- About half of survey respondents said they would feel comfortable making a complaint, but a third reported they do not know how.
 - White and Asian respondents would be less afraid to file a complaint.
 - Non-white respondents are more likely to believe filing a complaint will not change anything; they also have less trust in OPA.
 - Adults 50 and older are more likely to feel comfortable filing a complaint.
 - Teens and young adults are more likely to not know how to make a complaint; they also reported feeling that filing a complaint will not change anything.
- Interviews highlighted fear and mistrust of law enforcement among certain communities.

Communication and Engagement

- Most survey respondents reported hearing about OPA through the news, the Seattle Police Department (SPD), word of mouth, and social media.
- Interviewees highlighted a need for OPA to more frequently engage with and educate the community. They emphasized that outreach should take a tailored approach in each different community to address that community's particular challenges and perceptions.
- Interviewees and survey respondents highlighted a need for more clear communication from OPA, particularly regarding high-profile cases covered in the media.
- When defining what accountability means to them, popular terms included follow-through, transparency, and openness.

3. Methodology

The Baseline Assessment utilized two methodologies—survey and interviews—to gather quantitative and qualitative data on the following research questions:

1. What is the public's current understanding, attitudes, and perceptions of OPA and police accountability?
2. How are current OPA outreach and engagement tools being used?
3. What are the best ways or preferred methods to engage with communities in the future?

Survey

OPA created a survey with nine primary questions and a few additional questions to gather information on respondent demographics. The survey was available in English and Spanish,

both online through Survey Monkey and on paper, but the translated survey did not receive any responses. The surveys were available and distributed from February 5 through March 19, 2019.

OPA advertised the survey on its own website and Twitter account, as well as on the Department of Neighborhoods’ website and the Community Police Commission’s Facebook page. Paper copies of the survey were distributed at SPD Demographic and Advisory Council Meetings in February and March, as well as at South Park, Rainier Beach, Loyal Heights, and Queen Anne Community Centers.

The survey was not intended to provide statistically valid data, but rather to gain a broad sense of how the community perceives OPA. The survey could be repeated in subsequent years to assess how effective OPA outreach and engagement strategies have been, but with the understanding that the responses will not be a representative sample and therefore will not be statistically valid. The following table provides a summary of distribution methods and the number of completed surveys received through each collector.

For more details on survey results, see Appendix 2: Survey Analysis by Questions.

Figure 1: Survey Collection

Collector Name	Type	Date	Count
Online Survey Link (Survey Monkey)	online	2/5 - 3/19	64
SPD East Precinct Advisory Council Meeting	paper	1/24	8
SPD Southeast Asian Advisory Council	paper	2/19	4
Rainier Beach Community Center and Rainier Beach Action Coalition	paper	2/26	40
SPD Filipino Advisory Council Meeting	paper	2/27	6
SPD North Precinct Advisory Council Meeting	paper	3/6	13
SPD LGBTQ Advisory Council Meeting	paper	3/12	6
Loyal Heights Community Center	paper	3/13	16
South Park Community Center	paper	3/14	9
Queen Anne Community Center	paper	3/18	29
Total			195

Interviews

OPA created a list of interview questions to ask key community partners (see Appendix 1: Interview Questions). The questions were intended to gather insight into current engagement with specific communities and populations within Seattle.

OPA interviewed six community organizations that represent a range of communities and populations that may be of interest to OPA in future outreach and engagement efforts (see Figure 2). These include hearing from organizations that work with communities of color and vulnerable populations, such as homeless individuals and families.

Figure 2: Stakeholder Interviews

Community Organization	Population Served or Focus Area	Neighborhood/Region
1 Seattle Chinatown ID Preservation and Development Authority	Asian, Chinatown ID neighborhood residents and businesses	Chinatown ID
2 Not This Time	Police accountability advocates	Citywide
3 El Centro de la Raza	Hispanic and Latinx	Beacon Hill, South Seattle, Citywide
4 Asian Counseling and Referral Services	Asian and Pacific Islander	Citywide
5 Filipino Community Center	Filipino and Pacific Islander	South Seattle
6 Rainier Beach Action Coalition	Rainier Beach neighborhood residents, youth	Rainier Beach neighborhood, South Seattle

4. Interview Analysis

The following provides an analysis of all six stakeholder interviews.

Community and Organizational Awareness of OPA

Community organizations had different levels of awareness and knowledge of police accountability and OPA. In general, many of the organizations interviewed said the communities and populations they serve have little understanding or familiarity with OPA and the services it provides.

Meaning of Accountability

Among the interviewees, there were many definitions and aspects of accountability:

- Police protecting people without doing further harm
- Checks and balances on police power with public oversight
- Fairness and consequences for officers who violate policies
- Clear communication and follow-through with the public

Perceptions, Challenges and Barriers

Interviewees also provided insights into possible perceptions, challenges and barriers within their community regarding public safety, interactions with law enforcement, and police accountability. Many of these challenges are specific to the community or population, but some thematic concerns resonated among all groups:

- Lack of trust in law enforcement:
 - Calling the police to report crime will not produce desired results or change anything, so why bother.
 - Concerns about personal safety when interacting with police.
 - Public and high-profile incidents that involved a member of their community have affected community confidence.
- Cultural barriers and perceptions that prevent certain groups from relying on SPD, such as language barriers, not wanting to get involved, perceptions of law enforcement from native country, fear of being in trouble.
- Fear of speaking up or making a complaint.
- Perception of law enforcement has gotten worse over time.
- Lack of trust in accountability system to provide necessary discipline; the accountability system is influenced by officers and is not independent.

Best ways to Engage and Communicate

- Many interviewees said that increasing presence in the community, building relationships, and educating the public by providing clear information on OPA services are the best ways to engage and inform.
- Interviewees working with specific groups or populations also gave feedback on more targeted techniques for engaging with the communities they serve, such as providing translated materials and suggesting particular places, events, or ideas for presenting or attending events.
- Several organizations indicated a desire for more consistent, clear communication, particularly for follow-up on high profile cases covered in the media. Several interviewees wanted OPA to provide more information and communication with communities regarding these cases.

APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Interview Questions

Interview Questions

Warm-up

- Tell me a bit about yourself- your role, your organization, and the community/communities your organization serves.

Awareness

- How familiar is your organization, or the communities you serve, with Seattle's police accountability system? With OPA specifically?
 - When did your organization/community first learn about OPA?
 - How does your organization/community hear or learn about OPA (e.g., website, speaker, media, word of mouth)?
 - Which methods are best for communicating with your organization/the community you serve?

Perceptions

- In your own words, can you briefly describe what OPA does/what services it provides?
- What is the community's perception of OPA and Seattle's police accountability system? Has this changed over time? If so, how and why?
 - What does police accountability mean to your organization/community?
 - What challenges or barriers exist, if any, to filing a complaint with OPA?

Future OPA Efforts

- What, if any, does your organization/community need from OPA? Any thoughts on how best to work with your organization/engage the community around what OPA does, the services it provides, or about the system of police accountability?

Appendix 2: Survey Analysis by Questions

Q1: When did you first hear about OPA?

Nearly half of participants (45.9%) have never heard of OPA. About a quarter of respondents (25.5%) learned about OPA within the past year. Nearly 30% heard about OPA more than one year ago.

Answer Choices	Responses	
In the last 6 months	13.3%	26
In the last year	11.2%	22
In the last 3 years	10.7%	21
More than 3 years ago	18.9%	37
I've never heard of it (before today)	45.9%	89
	Answered	195

Only respondents who had heard about OPA responded to Questions 2 through 6. Those who had never heard of OPA skipped to Question 7.

Q2: How familiar are you with what OPA does (e.g., OPA's purpose, mission, and services provided)?

Among respondents who had heard of OPA, most were only somewhat familiar with what OPA does (40%). Twenty-seven percent said they were very or extremely familiar with OPA, and 33% said that they were not familiar with OPA.

Answer Choices	Responses	
Extremely familiar	11.0%	11
Very familiar	16.0%	16
Somewhat familiar	40.0%	40
Not so familiar	23.0%	23
Not at all familiar	10.0%	10
	Answered	100

Q3: In the past year, how have you seen or heard about OPA? Select all that apply.

Respondents indicated they heard about OPA through a variety of channels. Most respondents heard about OPA through the news (46%), through SPD (37%), and by word of mouth (33%).

Answer Choices	Responses	
News (online or print)	46.0%	46
Seattle Police Department	37.0%	37
Word of mouth (friends, family members, colleagues, etc.)	33.0%	33
Social media (Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, Nextdoor, etc.)	23.0%	23
Community organization (place of worship, non-profit, community service organization, etc.)	20.0%	20
Government entity (other than Seattle Police Department)	19.0%	19
Other (please specify)	8.0%	8
Online search	6.0%	6
I don't remember seeing or hearing information about OPA in the past year.	4.0%	4
School	2.0%	2
	Answered	100

Q4: In the past year, have you used any of the following OPA services? Select all that apply.

Most respondents have not used OPA services in the past year (72%). Only 18% of respondents have visited the OPA website, and 5% had filed a complaint with OPA.

Answer Choices	Responses	
Participated in the OPA mediation program	1.0%	1
Other (please specify)	4.0%	4
Filed a complaint with OPA	5.0%	5
Used the online Complaint Tracker	5.0%	5
Collaborated on the topic of police accountability	5.0%	5
Visited OPA's website	18.0%	18
None of the above	72.0%	72
	Answered	100

Other Responses

- Helped family member or relative file a complaint (2)
- Complimented an officer (1)
- Viewed summary reports (1)

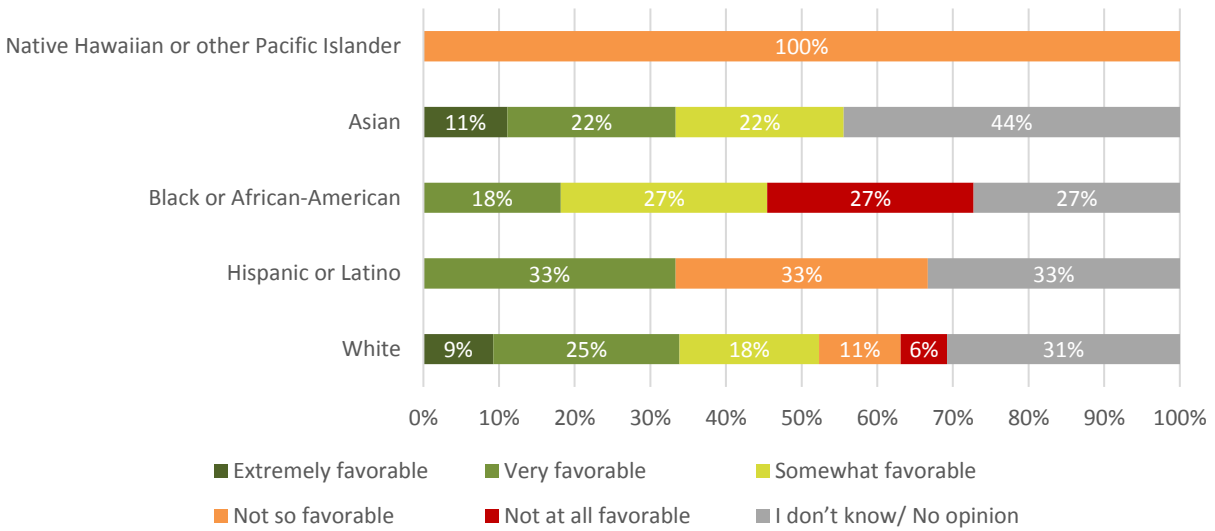
Q5: How would you describe your overall opinion of OPA?

About half of respondents have a favorable opinion of OPA, with 50% indicating they have an extremely, very, or somewhat favorable opinion of OPA. About a fifth of respondents have an unfavorable opinion of OPA, and 31% of respondents have no opinion.

Answer Choices	Responses	
Extremely favorable	9.0%	9
Very favorable	22.0%	22
Somewhat favorable	19.0%	19
Not so favorable	9.0%	9
Not at all favorable	10.0%	10
I don't know/ No opinion	31.0%	31
	Answered	100

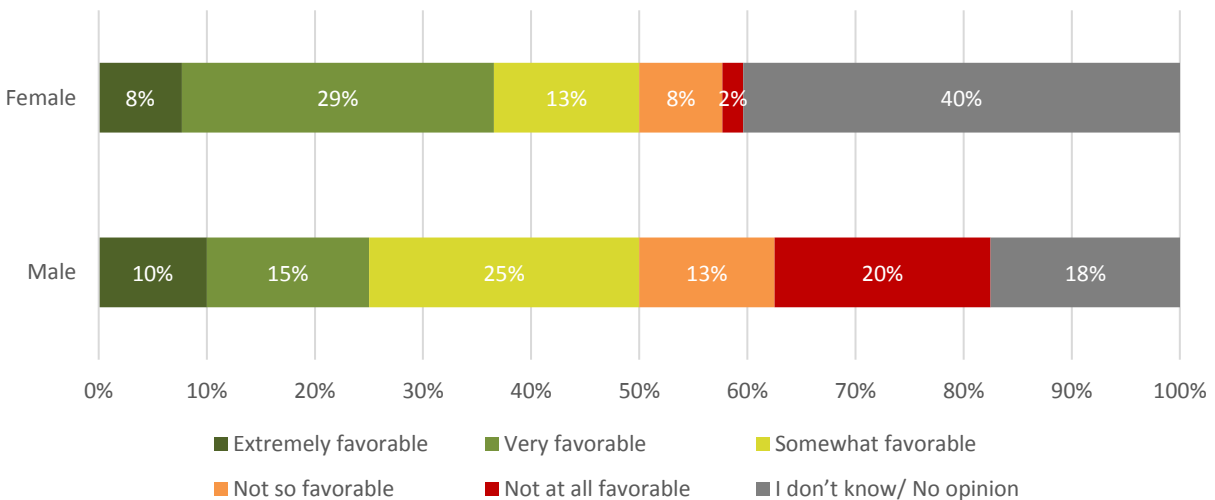
- Black respondents were more likely to view OPA unfavorably, where 27% of respondents who identified as Black had a not at all favorable opinion of OPA, above the average of 19% across all respondents.
- Asian respondents were more likely to have an extremely favorable view of OPA (11% of Asian respondents). They were also more likely to have no opinion of OPA (44% of Asian respondents).

Q5 by Race/Ethnicity: How would you describe your overall opinion of OPA? (N=87)

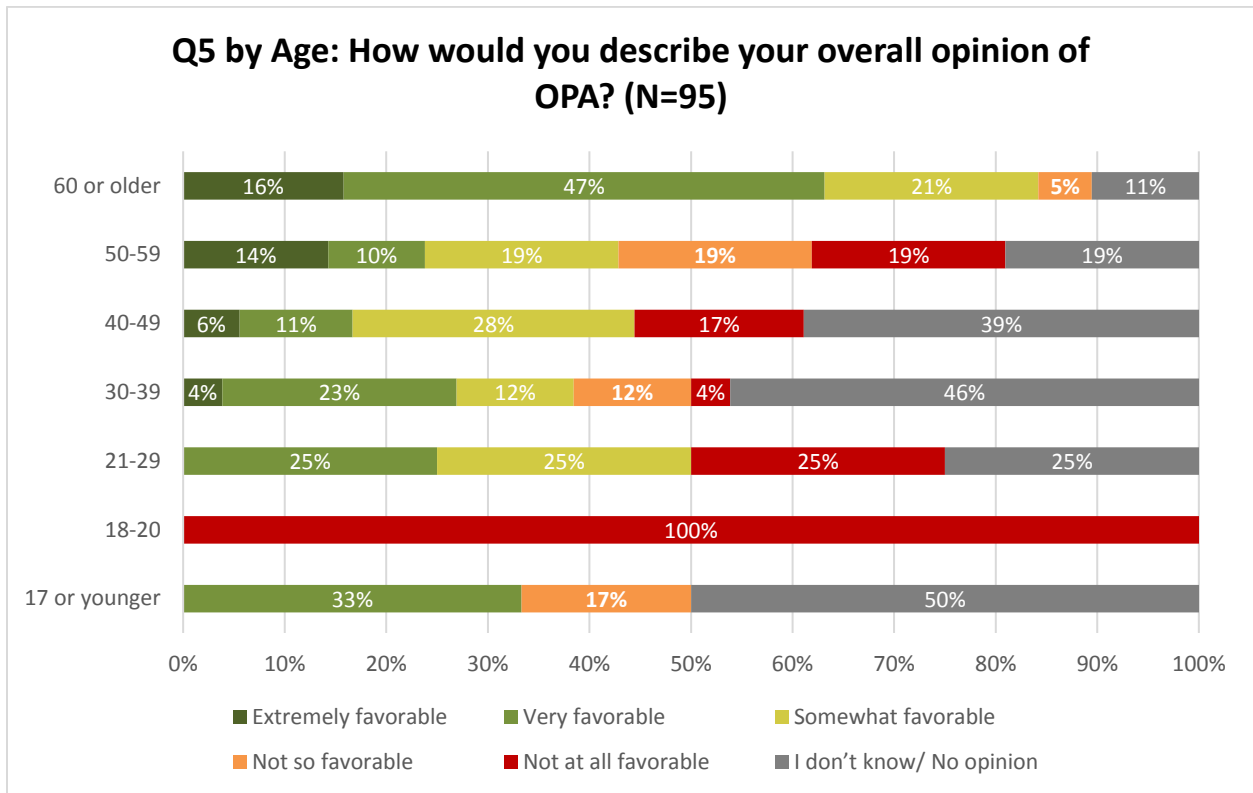


- Male respondents were more likely to view OPA unfavorably compared to female respondents. About a third of males viewed OPA not so or not at all favorably, compared with only 9.6% of females.

Q5 by Gender: How would you describe your overall opinion of OPA? (N=92)



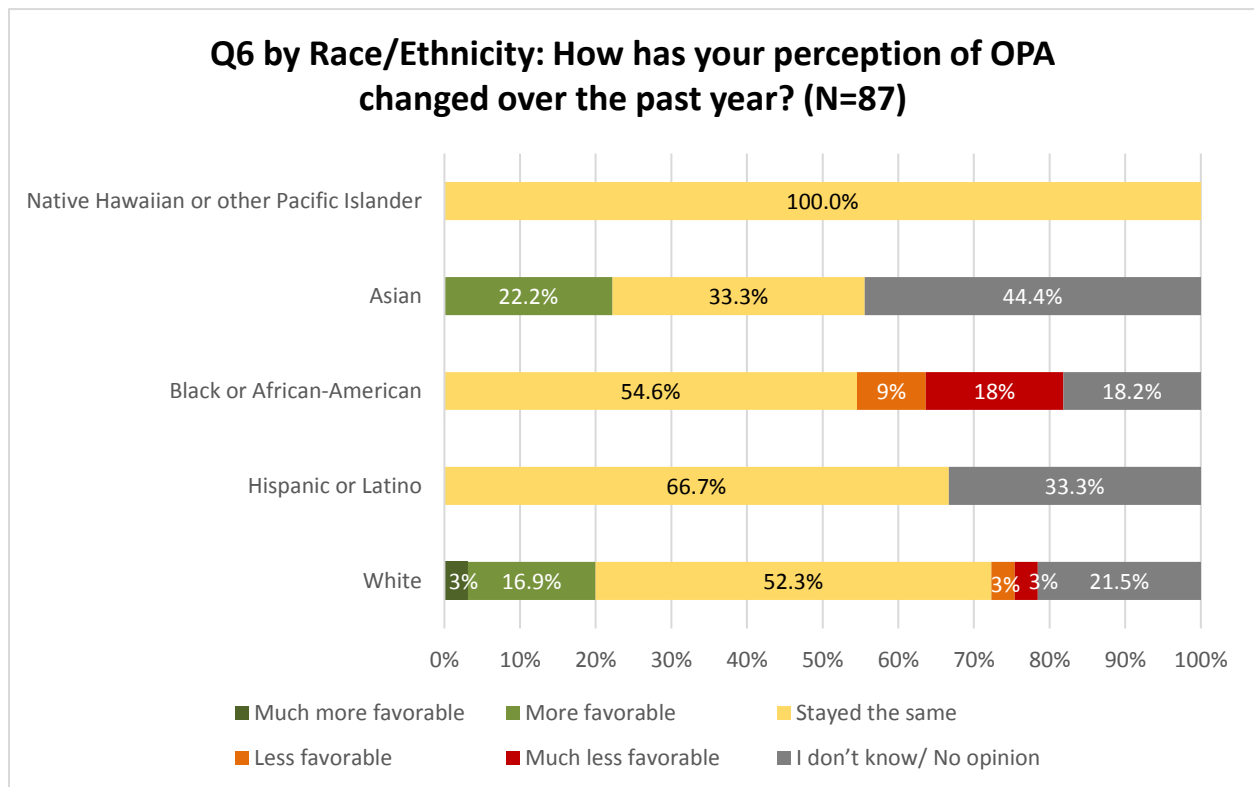
- Respondents 60 and older tend to view OPA more favorably compared with other age groups, where 62.7% of respondents in this age group had an extremely favorable or very favorable opinion of OPA.



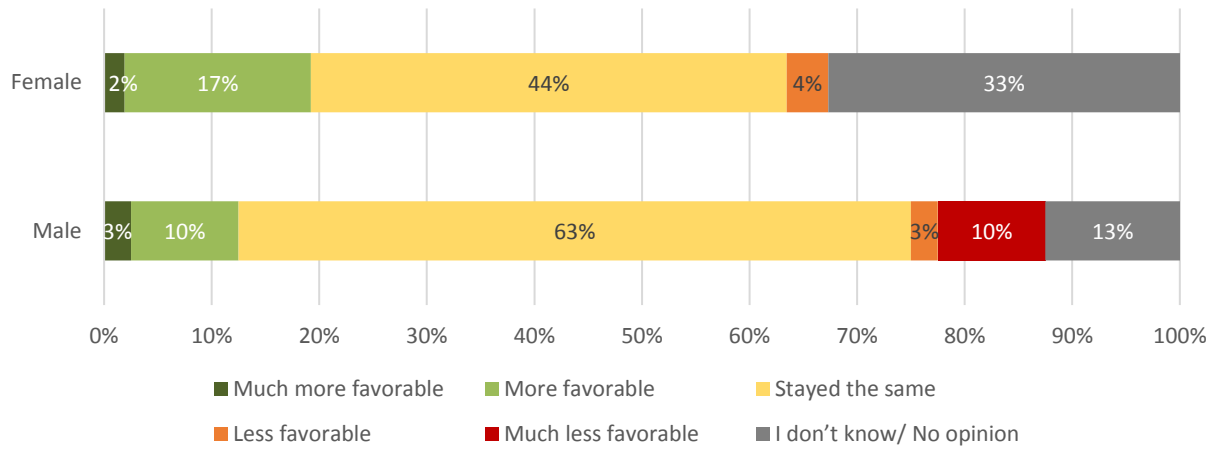
Q6: How has your perception of OPA changed over the past year?

- About half of respondents said their opinion of OPA has stayed the same over the past year. Fifteen percent of respondents said their perception became more favorable or much more favorable, and 8% of respondents said their opinion became less favorable. A quarter of respondents did not have an opinion.
- White and Asian respondents were more likely to say their perception became more favorable, and Black respondents were more likely to say their perceptions became less favorable.
- Male respondents were more likely to say their opinion has become less favorable in the past year (12.5% of all male respondents) compared to female respondents (3.8% of all females).
- Respondents 60 and older were more likely to say their opinion became more or much more favorable over the year compared with other age groups. About 30% of respondents in this age group held this opinion, compared with 15% across all respondents.

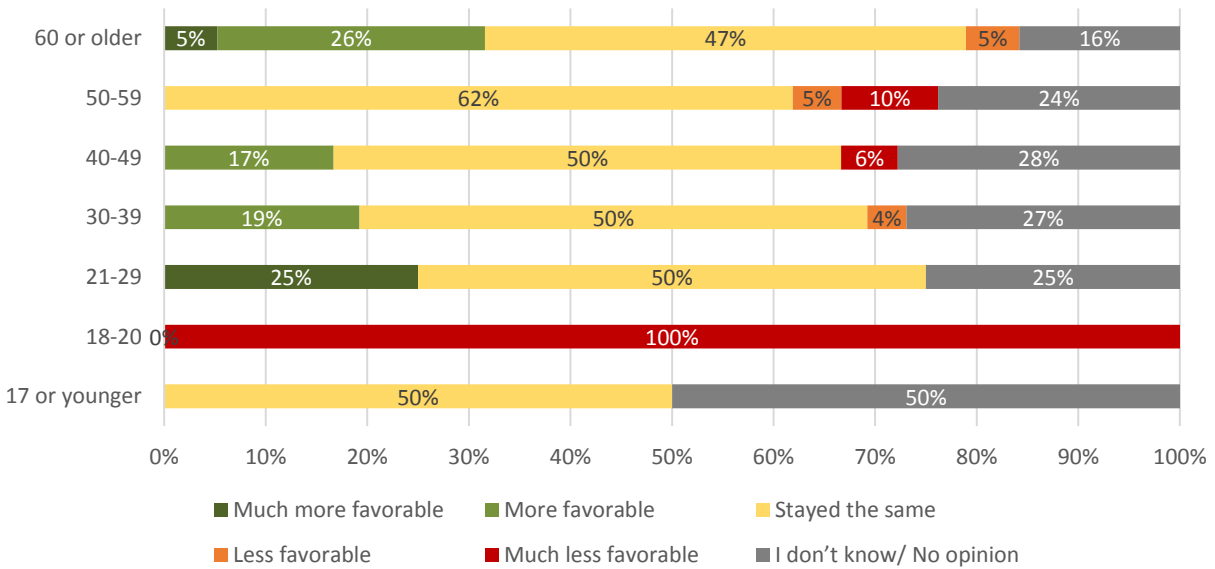
Answer Choices	Responses	
Much more favorable	2.0%	2
More favorable	13.0%	13
Stayed the same	51.0%	51
Less favorable	3.0%	3
Much less favorable	5.0%	5
I don't know/ No opinion	26.0%	26
	Answered	100



Q6 by Gender: How has your perception of OPA changed over the past year? (N=92)



Q6 by Age: How has your perception of OPA changed over the past year? (N=95)



Q7: What words do you associate with “police accountability”? What does police accountability mean to you? (N=165)

- Words most associated with police accountability included responsibility, upholding the law, following policies and principles, justified use of force, transparency, honesty and openness with the public and community, and providing independent and civilian oversight.
- Some respondents had associated accountability with many negative aspects of police and community relations, such as biased and racist policing and excessive use of force.
- Some respondents associated accountability with the ability of police to deliver responsive and timely services for crime prevention.

Code	Count	Comment Samples
Responsibility	19	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Great responsibility in building relations between police and community • Police are responsible for their actions
Law-abiding, upholding the law, following policies, principles	15	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are they acting within the law and following procedures properly? • Playing by the rule book • Following procedures, policy, and orders
Use of force	12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appropriate use of force • Make sure use of force is justified • Too many people getting beat up by police for no reason • Oversight around police use of force
Transparency, Openness	13	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Open processes • Openness to the public • Remaining transparent to the community SPD serves • Being honest about police conduct
Independent or Civilian Oversight	12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Civilian oversight • Independent review of policy/procedures and their execution
Integrity, Honesty, Respect, Personal Conduct	10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Doing the right thing • The way police conduct themselves

Code	Count	Comment Samples
Negative associations with accountability	10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cover ups, bias, liars, retaliatory • Above the law, racist • Arrests and killings of Black males, prison industrial complex • Racism – disproportionate treatment of people of color
Providing public safety, being responsive	10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Responsive – on time when danger arrives • Responsible for effectively delivering basic services of crime control
Training	9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Well-trained in de-escalation techniques • Receive training as form of discipline • Being well-trained

Q8: Is there anything that would prevent you from filing a complaint with OPA about a Seattle police officer? Select all that apply.

- **I would feel comfortable filing a complaint:** Most respondents (53.3%) indicated that they would feel comfortable filing a complaint.
 - Hispanic, Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, and White respondents were more likely to feel comfortable filing a complaint compared to Black and Asian respondents.
 - Adults 50 and older are more likely to feel comfortable filing a complaint compared to teens and younger adults age 20-39.
- **Don't know how:** Nearly 30% of respondents said they don't know how to file a complaint. Youth and young adults were especially likely to comment that they did not know how to file a complaint. Black (32.5%) and Asian (52.2%) respondents were more likely to not know how to file a complaint.
- **Filing a complaint won't change anything:** About a quarter of respondents have reservations that filing a complaint would change anything or that they could trust the process.
 - Younger adults in their 20s and 30s were more likely to agree with this statement than older adults.
 - Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islanders, Alaskan Native, and Black respondents agreed with the statement slightly more than the average overall.
- **I'm afraid to file a complaint:** About a dozen respondents (6.5%) said they were afraid to file a complaint.
 - Among the 12 respondents who said they were afraid, five respondents identified as Black or African American.
 - White and Asian respondents are less afraid to file a complaint.
 - Older adults (50 and older) are also slightly less afraid to file a complaint than younger adults in their teens, 20s and 30s.
- **I don't trust OPA:** White respondents trust the OPA process more than non-white respondents. Only 7.7% of White respondents agreed with this statement, compared to 12.5% of Hispanic and Latino respondents, 17.5% of Black respondents, 100% of American Indian respondents, and 13% of Asian respondents.

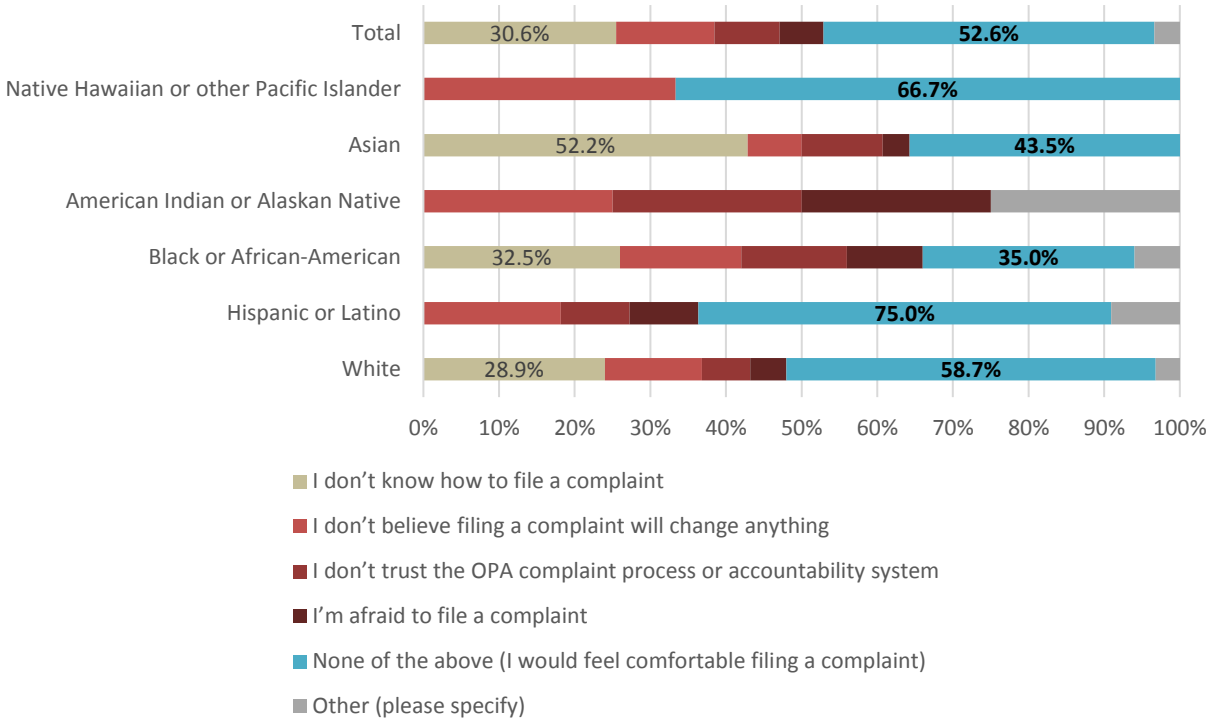
Other Responses

- Poor communication - Never heard back to know complaint was heard.
- Unsure of how OPA functions in relationship to city council, mayor, to better understand the power dynamics involved.
- Complaint type doesn't matter (e.g., reckless driving without an emergency).

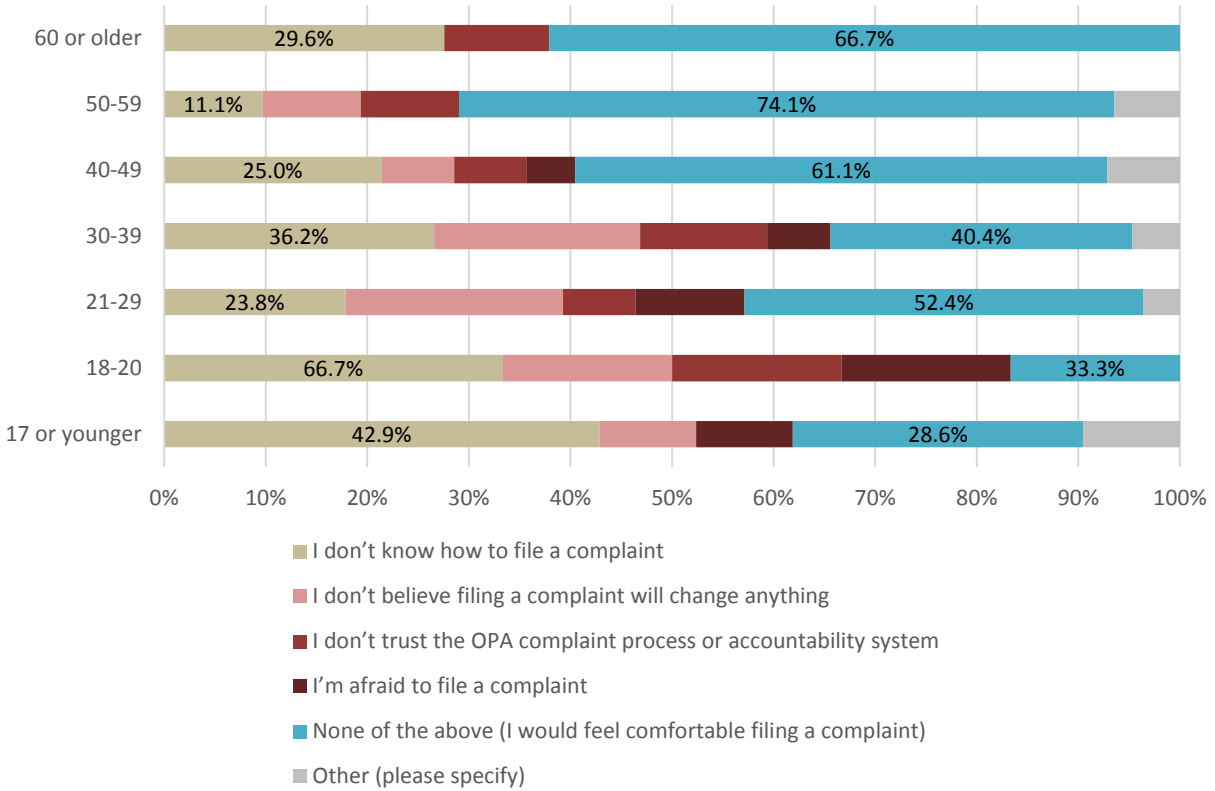
- Would only use for serious misconduct.
- SPD officers engage in abuse or revenge against complainants through a network of harassment (retaliation for complaining).

Answer Choices	Responses	
I don't know how to file a complaint	29.4%	54
I don't believe filing a complaint will change anything	15.2%	28
I don't trust the OPA complaint process or accountability system	11.4%	21
I'm afraid to file a complaint	6.5%	12
None of the above (I would feel comfortable filing a complaint)	53.3%	98
Other (please specify)	6.0%	11
	Answered	184

**Q8 by Race/Ethnicity: Is there anything that would prevent you from filing a complaint with OPA about a Seattle police officer?
Select all that apply. (N=173)**



Q8 by Age: Is there anything that would prevent you from filing a complaint with OPA about a Seattle police officer? Select all that apply. (N=182)



Q9: How would you most like to hear about OPA and Seattle’s police accountability system? Select all that apply.

- Respondents were interested in a variety of methods to hear about OPA. The top three methods of getting information were reading articles online or in print (38%), visiting the OPA website (35.3%), and receiving email updates (26.1%).
- Teens and young adults in their 20s were more likely to not be interested in learning about OPA or police accountability. About a quarter of teens and 19% of 20-somethings were not interested, slightly higher than the 12% average overall.

Answer Choices	Responses	
Read articles online or in print	38.0%	70
Visit the OPA website	35.3%	65
Receive email updates	26.1%	48
Attend a presentation in my community or neighborhood	24.5%	45
Interact on social media (e.g., Facebook, Twitter, Nextdoor)	24.5%	45
Watch an online video or live stream	20.1%	37
I’m not interested in learning about OPA or police accountability	12.0%	22
Other (please specify)	9.2%	17
	Answered	184

Q10 – Q14: Respondent Demographic Information

The following questions were asked to ensure we heard from a diverse group of participants.

- Respondents represented a diverse range of ages, with responses from youth, adults, and seniors.
- There were more female respondents (58.8%) than male respondents (39.6%).
- Respondents represented a diverse range of ethnicities: 57.1% of respondents identified as White, 22% of respondents identified as Black or African American, and 12.6% of respondents identified as Asian.
- A large majority of respondents (85.2%) indicated they live in Seattle; 43.4% work in Seattle; and 3.3% visit Seattle.

- Respondents lived in all precincts, with most respondents living in the North Precinct (26.5%) and South Precinct (19.3%); 13.8% of respondents lived outside of Seattle.

Q10: What is your age?

Answer Choices	Responses	
17 or younger	11.5%	21
18-20	1.7%	3
21-29	11.5%	21
30-39	25.8%	47
40-49	19.8%	36
50-59	14.8%	27
60 or older	14.8%	27
	Answered	182

Q11: What is your gender?

Answer Choices	Responses	
Male	39.6%	72
Female	58.8%	107
Other (please specify)	1.7%	3
	Answered	182

Q12: What is your ethnicity? Select all that apply.

Answer Choices	Responses	
White	57.1%	104
Hispanic or Latino	4.4%	8
Black or African-American	22.0%	40
American Indian or Alaskan Native	0.6%	1
Asian	12.6%	23
Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander	1.7%	3
Other (please specify)	5.5%	10
	Answered	182

Q13: What is your connection to Seattle? Select all that apply.

Answer Choices	Responses	
I live in Seattle	85.2%	155
I work in Seattle	43.4%	79
I visit Seattle	3.3%	6
None of the above	3.3%	6
	Answered	182

Q14: What is your zip code?

Zip code Location	Percent	Count
North Precinct	26.5%	48
South Precinct	19.3%	35
West Precinct	13.3%	24
East Precinct	7.7%	14
South or East Precinct (98144)	7.7%	14
Southwest Precinct	3.9%	7
Outside Seattle	13.8%	25
blank	7.7%	14
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Answered		181