



## SPD SPECIAL REPORT

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# How Are We Doing? Getting Feedback From the People We Serve

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This Special Report presents the findings from a series of brief, customer service surveys undertaken by the Seattle Police Department. The purpose of the surveys was to ascertain how community members view the services provided by the Department and to determine where improvements can be made. In addition, the surveys have been developed to serve as a baseline on community satisfaction and expectations prior to full implementation of the Department's Neighborhood Policing Project. Use of this baseline will help us to capture changes in public perceptions and attitudes before and after significant public safety initiatives as that Project proceeds.

The Report focuses on three surveys administered in three separate time periods: June 2006, November 2006 and April 2007. Although minor changes in the survey protocol as well as the survey instrument were made in each of the three survey waves, data on most items are available across all three samples.

Survey participants were selected from among those who had called 9-1-1 for assistance and had an officer dispatched to the call. They were contacted by telephone and interviewed for approximately five minutes. Participants were also given the opportunity, if they chose, to speak at greater length about their experience, with an officer in the Department's Audit, Accreditation and Policy Section.

Internally the results of the surveys have been presented to and are being vetted by the Department's Command Staff and by the command structure of the five Patrol Precincts. Together they will be responsible for implementing the Neighborhood Policing Project and for meeting the needs and expectations of the many communities we serve.

## *Survey Design and Protocol*

In developing the customer service survey, the Department was intent on exploring how those actually receiving police services assess their quality and utility. Previous surveys undertaken by the City have surveyed the general population, rendering them of less value from a service improvement standpoint. In the former citywide surveys, for example, many of those interviewed had not had contact with the Department and the questions about police services were too general to guide service improvement initiatives. Actual contact with the Department was not a criterion for participation in the more recent VERA surveys either, and in some cases, those with the most extreme opinions about police services were those without direct experience with Department services and personnel. This is not to suggest that the opinions of such persons are without interest or importance, but rather that they are of limited value from the perspective of designing service quality improvements.

The best means of access to those receiving police services is 9-1-1, the point of contact for the majority of the Department's customers. Names of potential survey participants were drawn from among those making 9-1-1 calls *to which an officer was dispatched*. Callers that were transferred to the Telephone Response Unit (TRU), hang-ups, those who gave no contact information or those handled only by the 9-1-1 operators were not included. Also excluded were callers deemed likely to object to being contacted by third parties on the basis of their victimization. These included sexual assault and domestic violence victims, or persons reporting child abuse cases or homicides. All callers meeting the participation criteria over two, four-day periods were included in the survey sample. Calls were made until 200 interviews were completed.

In timing the first two surveys it was important to balance the ability of participants to recall their experiences with the desire to gather information about the work of follow-up investigators. For this reason the telephone interviews occurred four to six weeks after the calls to 9-1-1. In the third survey, participants were not being queried about interactions with follow-up investigators (for reasons noted below), so the interviews occurred within two weeks of the calls to 9-1-1.

The protocol for the telephone interview explained the purpose of the survey - to improve services - and assured participants of the confidentiality of their responses. Participants who had questions about the survey were given a number to call to verify its legitimacy. Over the course of the three survey waves, only two phone calls were made for survey verification.

## *Survey Instrument*

Topics covered in the surveys included the participants' overall satisfaction with the Department and with the various personnel with whom they interacted, opinions about the Department and its personnel on a variety of quality dimensions, and queries about participants' feelings of safety in general and in the context of the incident that led to their 9-1-1 calls. The interview also solicited suggestions from participants on how services could be improved.

Several changes to the survey instrument occurred over the three waves. As noted above, participants in the first two surveys were queried about their interactions with follow-up investigators. However, after the first two surveys were completed, it was determined that the small number of survey respondents who had contact with detectives did not warrant keeping

that series of questions. Instead the Department is exploring other methods for evaluating the services of follow-up units. To replace the items on follow-up investigators, the survey instrument was revised to gather information contrasting participants' opinions about the Department overall and the officers in their neighborhoods, on a series of service quality dimensions. These questions will become more useful as the Department's Neighborhood Policing Project moves forward.

Another change in the survey instrument was the addition and expansion of inquiries about participants' feelings of safety. The first survey included no personal safety questions. In the second survey, participants were asked about their overall sense of safety, and how it was affected by the incidents they called about and the Department's response to them. In the third survey, participants were asked about feelings of safety in their neighborhoods in the daytime and at night, in addition to the safety questions added in the second survey wave. Again, these questions help to focus in on the key service objectives of the Neighborhood Policing Project.

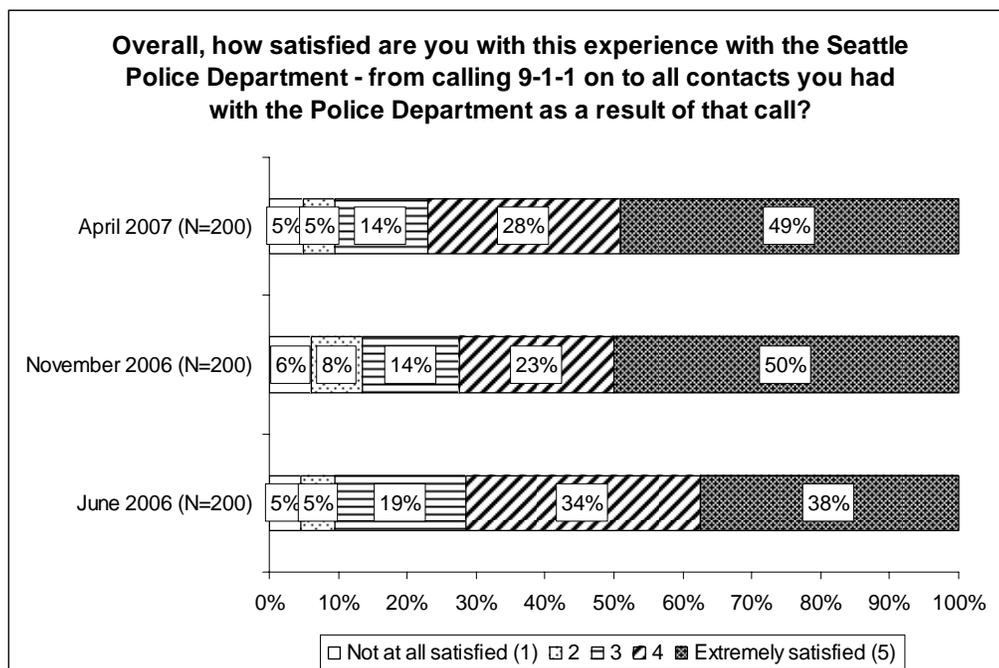
### Survey Findings

Findings from the three waves of the survey are presented in the series of charts that follow. Each chart indicates the wave(s) to which the data correspond as well as the number of survey respondents on which the data are based.

#### Overall Satisfaction with Department.

Survey respondents were asked to rate overall, on a five-point scale with "5" meaning extremely satisfied, their experience with the Department from their call to 9-1-1 through all contacts with Department personnel. Chart 1 [below] reflects their ratings. As can be seen, in all three surveys more than 70% of respondents rated their experience as either a "4" or a "5." Also fairly consistent, however, were the 5% of respondents who were not at all satisfied.

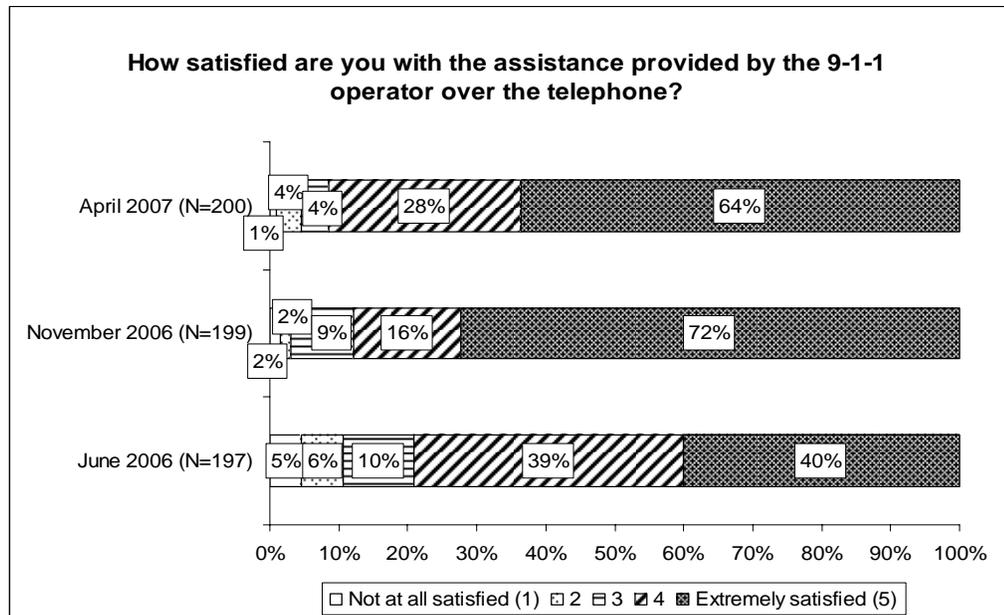
Chart 1.



### *Satisfaction with 9-1-1 Operator Assistance.*

When asked specifically about the assistance they received from the 9-1-1 operators, survey respondents showed increasing satisfaction over the course of the three waves. Chart 2 [below] presents this information. As can be seen, the proportion of “extremely satisfied” respondents grew from 40% in June 2006 to 72% in November 2006 and 64% in April 2007. Participants rating the assistance from 9-1-1 operators as either a “4” or a “5,” went from 79% in June 2006 to 92% in April 2007.

Chart 2.



### *Quality of Service Provided by First-Responding Officers.*

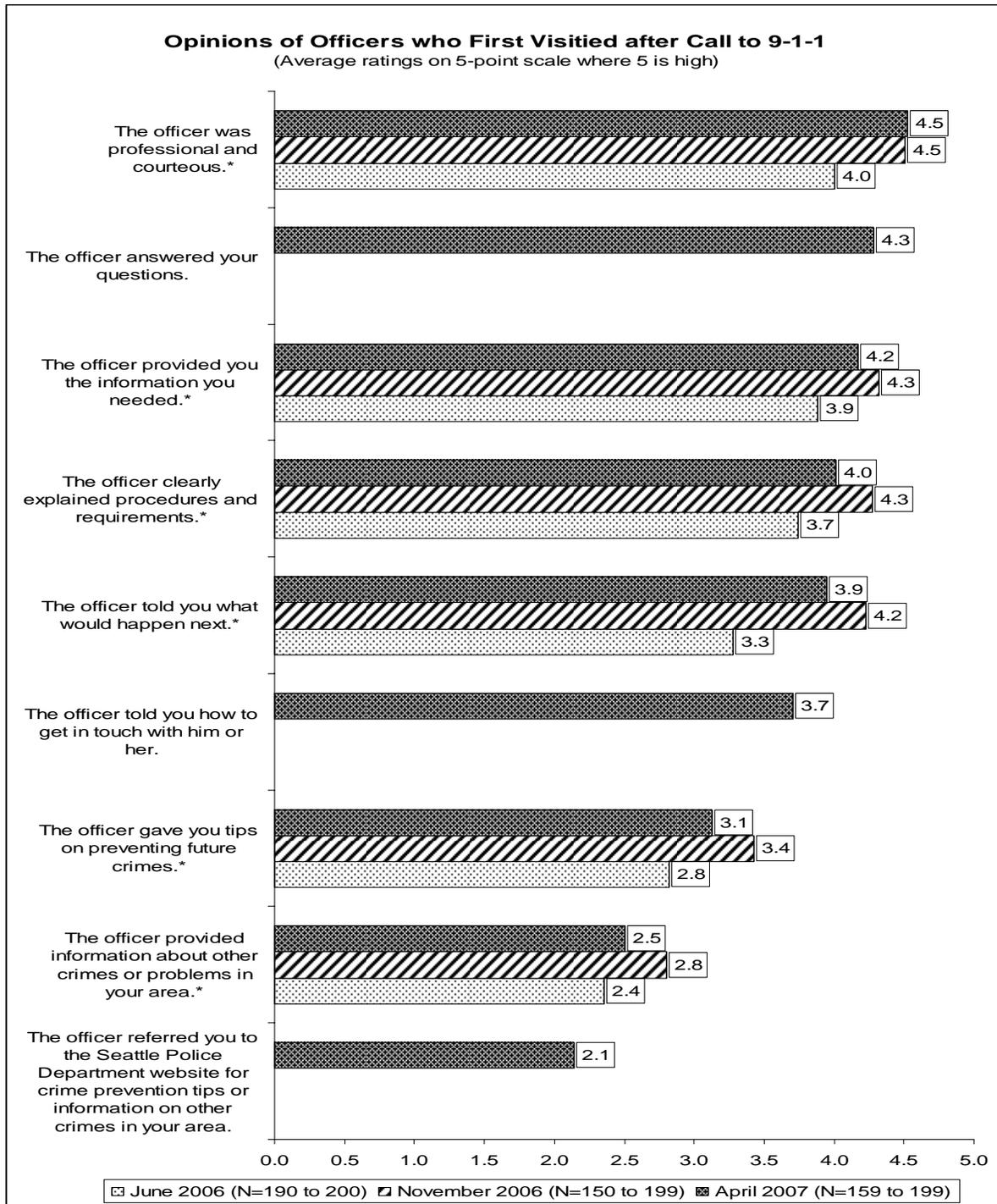
First-responding officers are the critical component of the Department’s customer service and the quality of their service delivery will become increasingly significant under the Neighborhood Policing initiative. Survey participants were asked about various aspects of the service provided by first-responding officers. Chart 3 [below] presents this information.

Overall, there was improvement on all aspects of first responder service delivery between June and November 2006. Some of these improvements tailed off a bit in April 2007, but service was rated higher in April 2007 than in June 2006 on all aspects of service except “The officer provided information about other crimes or problems in your area.” Performance in this area did not decline significantly between November 2006 and April 2006, but the improvement between June 2006 and April 2007 was not significant

As can be seen, several items were added to the third wave of the survey having to do with answering participants’ questions, telling participants how to get in touch with them and directing participants to information on the Department’s website. These items are prospective in nature and reflect the dynamic quality of this survey tool. As the Department makes changes to its website and moves toward implementation of the new deployment plan under the

Neighborhood Policing Project, these survey items will help us gauge how well new service delivery models are taking hold and viewed by the communities we serve.

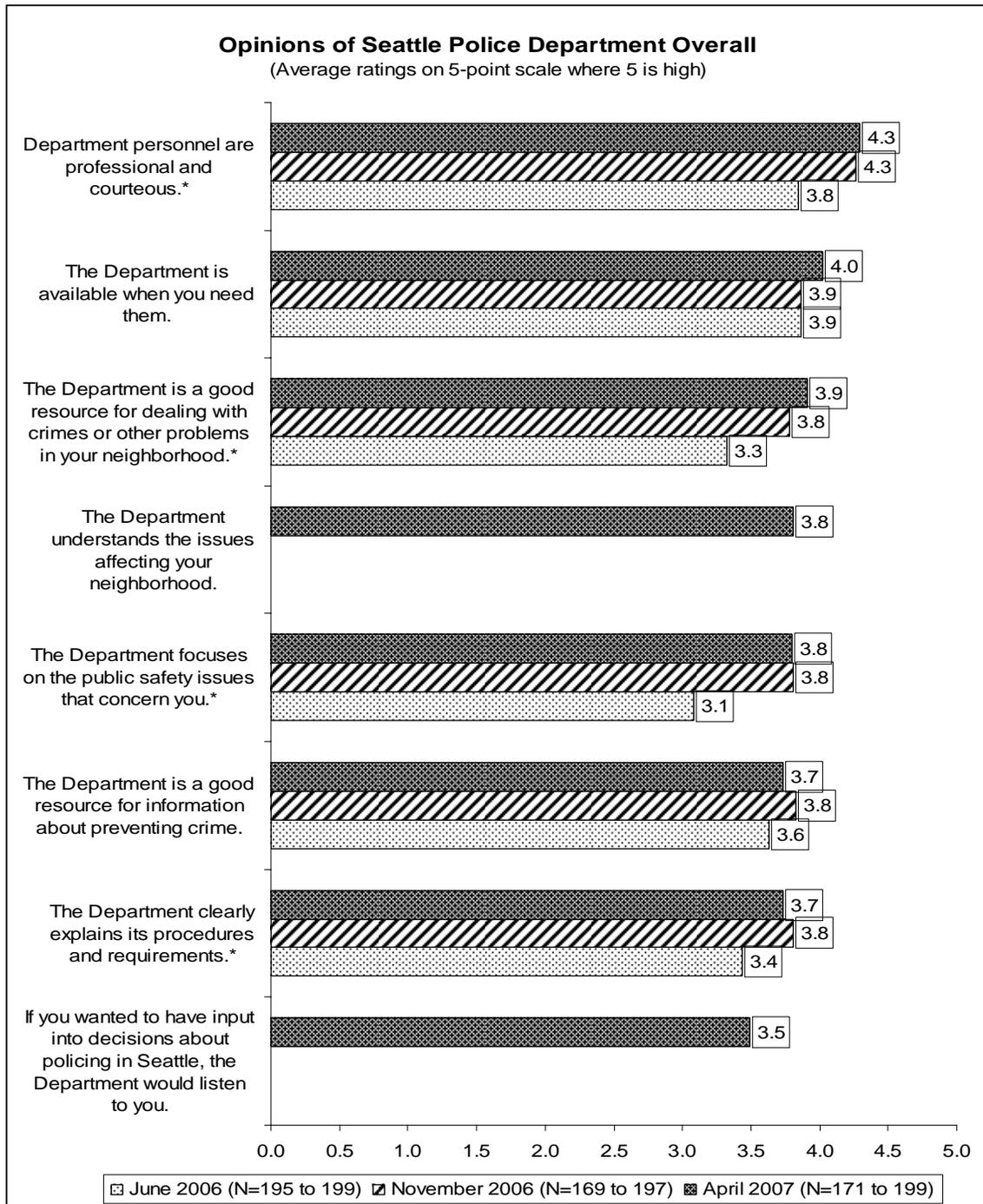
Chart 3.



*Opinions about Service Quality Dimensions for Department Overall.*

Survey respondents were queried about a series of service dimensions for the Department overall ranging from being a good resource for dealing with neighborhood crime and other problems, to clearly explaining its procedures. Chart 4 [below] presents this information. As can be seen, in the four of the six items included in all survey waves, opinions about the Department's service quality have improved significantly (\*indicates statistical significance) since June 2006.

Chart 4.



It should also be noted that two new service quality dimensions were added to this series of questions in April 2007. These have to do with the Department’s understanding of the issues important to neighborhoods and participants’ sense of being listened to, by the Department. Once again, these are important service quality components of the Neighborhood Policing Project and it will be valuable to chart the public’s opinions on them over time.

*Opinions about Service Quality Dimensions for Neighborhood Officers.*

When the questions about follow-up investigators were dropped in the third wave of the survey, this series of questions was added. It asks some of the same service quality dimensions as for the Department overall, permitting us to contrast how survey participants compare locally assigned officers to the Department. Chart 5 [below] shows the ratings for neighborhood officers in April 2007. Average ratings ranged from 3.6 to 4.2 on a five-point scale with between 63% and 86% of survey respondents saying they agree with each of the service quality statements. Neighborhood officers receive the highest ratings for being professional and courteous and the lowest for controlling speeding and other traffic problems.

Chart 5.

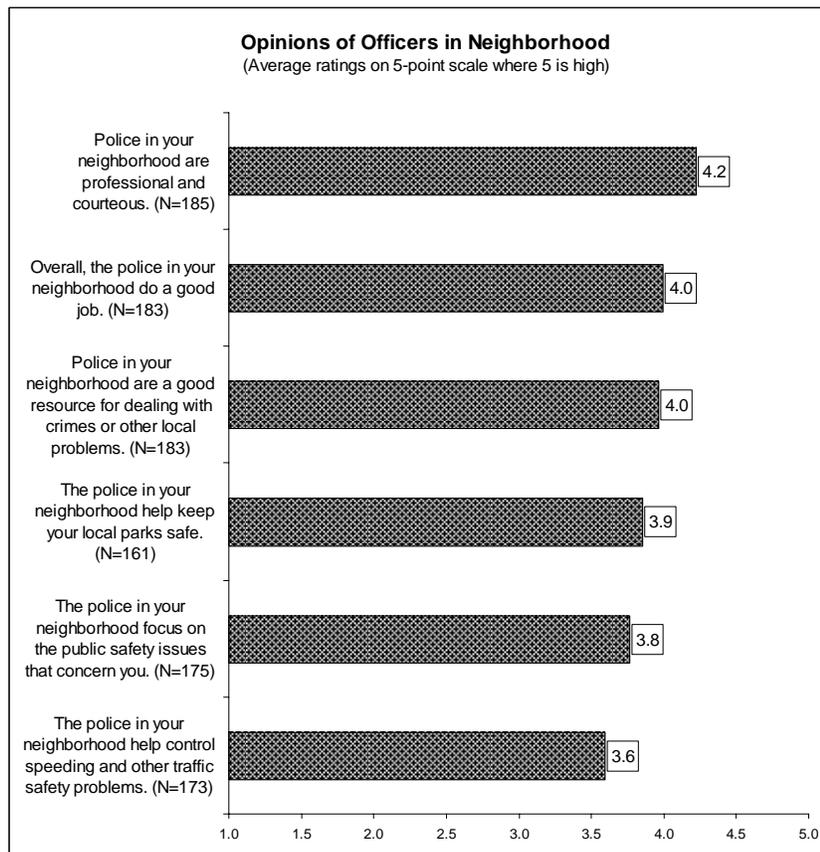
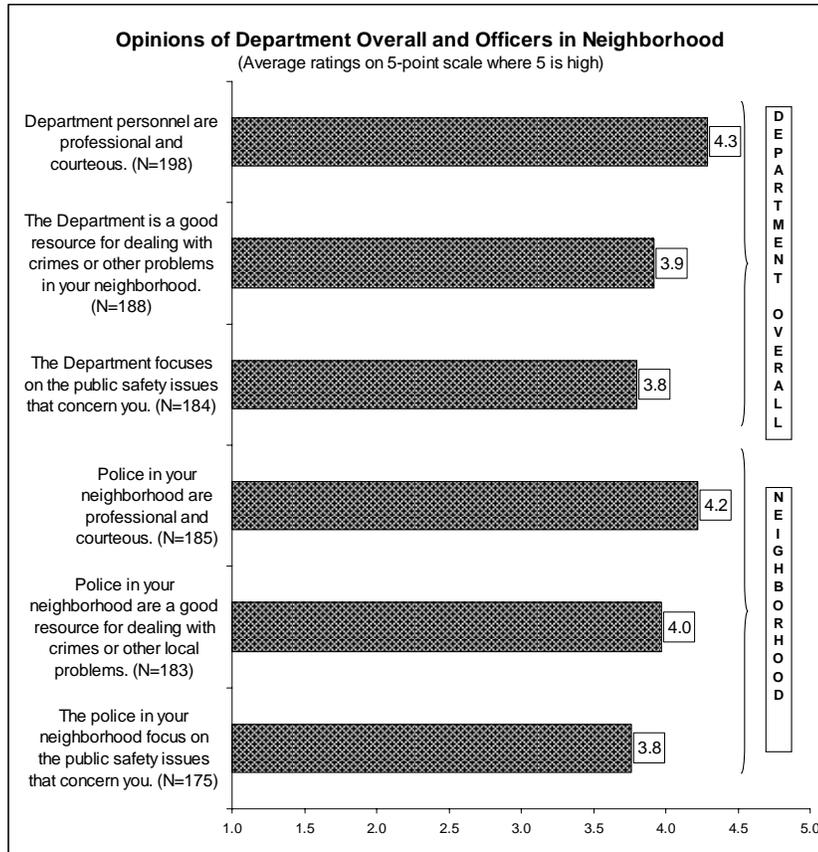


Chart 6 [below] compares the survey participants’ opinions about neighborhood officers with opinions about the Department overall. As can be seen, the ratings were quite similar on the comparable survey items.

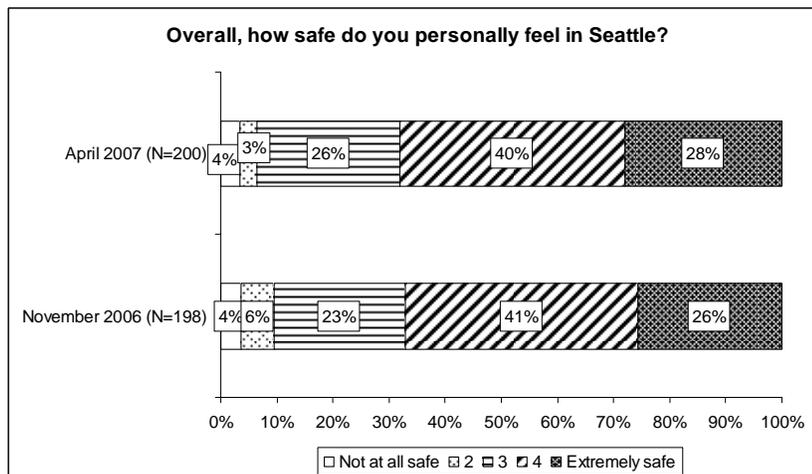
Chart 6.



*Feelings of Personal Safety.*

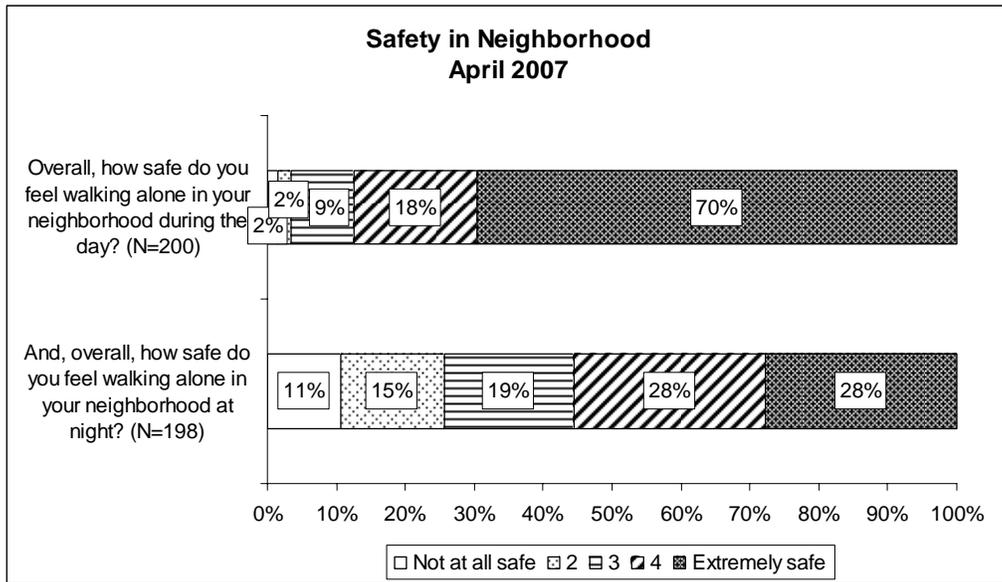
As noted above, survey participants were queried about personal safety beginning with the November 2006 wave of the survey. Chart 7 [below] compares the safety feelings of the survey participants last November and in April 2007. As can be seen, participants' feelings of safety were similar in both waves with over a quarter saying they feel "extremely safe" in the city.

Chart 7.



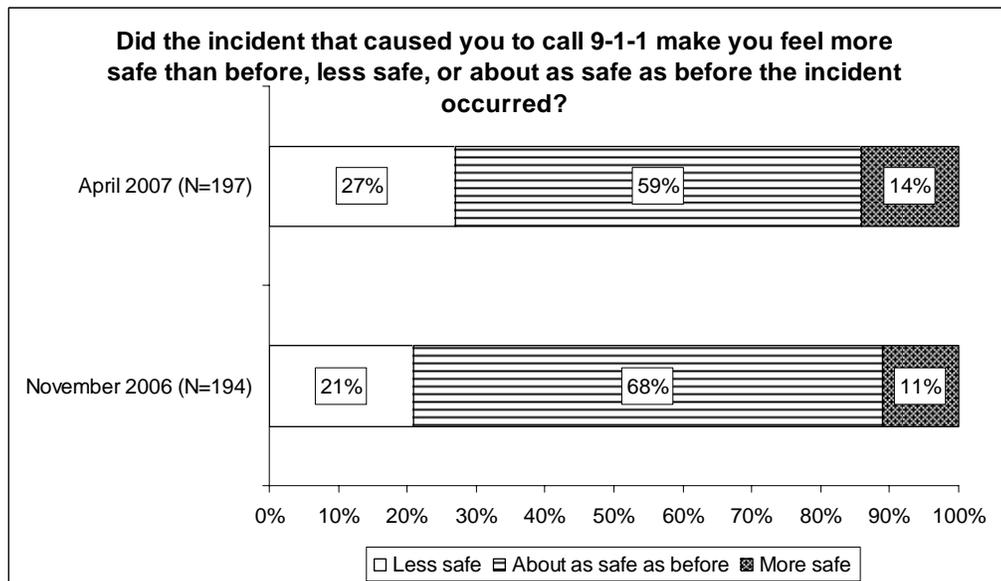
The question about feelings of safety in their neighborhoods was added to the survey in April 2007. Chart 8 [below] shows the findings from this question. As can be seen, significantly more survey participants feel “extremely safe” walking alone in their neighborhoods during the day than they do at night.

Chart 8.



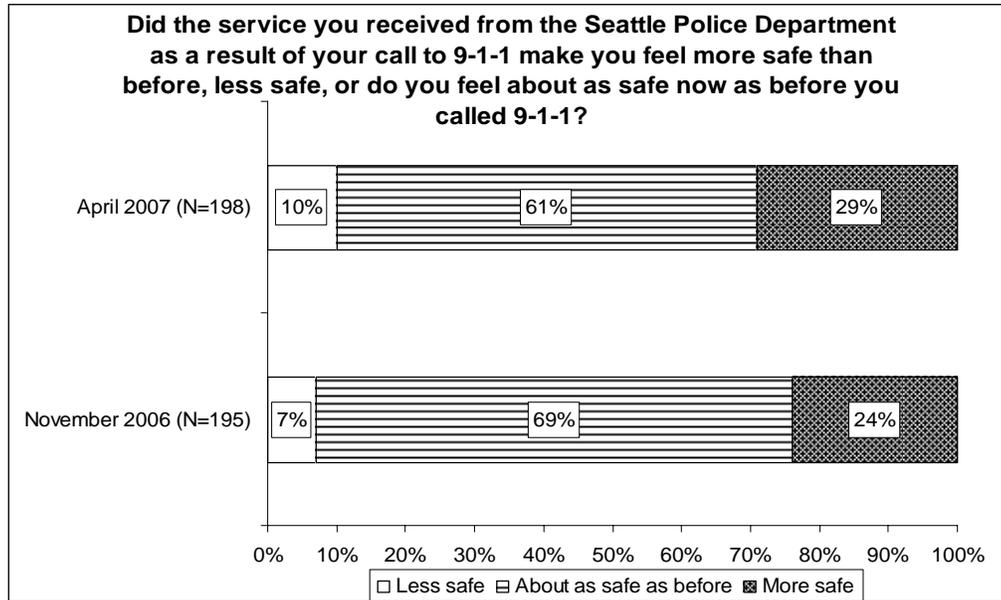
Survey participants in both November and April were asked what impact the incident that led them to call 9-1-1 had on their feelings of safety. As might be expected, most respondents said the incident had caused them to feel either “less safe” or “about as safe as before.” Chart 9 depicts these findings.

Chart 9.



Survey participants were then asked how about their feelings of safety, after having received the Department’s services. Their responses to this so-called “reassurance” question were most interesting and gratifying to see. Chart 10 [below] depicts this information.

Chart 10.



The services provided by the Department appear to have restored many respondents’ feelings of safety with 24% and 29% saying they felt “more safe” than before the incident. Also striking was the reduction in those saying they felt less safe. In Chart 9, for example, 21% and 27% of survey participants indicated that the incident they experienced had left them feeling “less safe” than before. After the services provided by the Department, however, only 7% and 10% respectively expressed those feelings.

*Conclusions.*

The telephone surveys of 9-1-1 callers are proving valuable in assessing the services we deliver from the public’s point of view. Several points from the surveys thus far are worth noting here:

- Feelings of safety are easily shaken when one has been the victim of a crime. The Department is heartened that our response to such incidents helps to restore community members’ sense of security.
- 70% of those who received services were “extremely or very satisfied,” validating high quality performance by Department personnel.
- People feel that the Department understands and focuses on the public safety issues that concern them, confirming that we are “in sync” with those we serve.
- The high ratings of those who have dealt with the Department as the result of a call to 9-1-1 underscore that the future direction of Neighborhood Policing, with improved staffing and geographic stability, is the right course.