



SPD SPECIAL REPORT

2009 Service Quality Update

Feedback From the People We Serve

This report briefly summarizes the feedback being received by the Seattle Police Department from 9-1-1 callers who have had an officer dispatched to assist them and are later surveyed by telephone.

Overview of 2009 Report Findings:

This report briefly summarizes the feedback being received by the Seattle Police Department from 9-1-1 callers who have an officer dispatched to assist them and are later surveyed by telephone. To date, the Department has conducted eleven such surveys, beginning in 2006 and continuing through 2009.

Among the findings from these surveys are the following:

- Overall satisfaction with the services provided by the Department has remained around 4.00 on a scale of one to five, where five means “extremely satisfied” and one means “not at all satisfied.” Over the course of the eleven surveys, the average rating in overall satisfaction with the Department’s services is 4.11.
- When 9-1-1 callers are asked their level of agreement with a series of statements about the officers who first responded to their calls, on average the callers agree that officers are professional and courteous, at a rate of 4.46 on a five-point scale where five is high; that officers provide the information they need, at a rate of 4.18 out of five points; that officers clearly explain procedures and requirements, 4.06 rating; and that officers told them what would happen next, 3.97 rating.
- Service quality ratings tend to be higher for Department personnel with whom survey respondents have direct contact [in particular patrol officers dispatched to calls] when compared to the Department overall.
- Improvements in service quality ratings track with milestones in the Department’s implementation of the Neighborhood Policing Project.
- People who had called 9-1-1 were understandably affected by the incidents that led to their calls, with an average of 28% saying the incident had made them feel “less safe” than before. After receiving services from the Department, however, only 10% of the survey respondents reported feeling “less safe” and 33% felt more safe than before.

9-1-1 Caller Surveys: About the Process

Survey Purpose- The purpose of the caller surveys is 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 (NPP). Internally the results of the surveys are presented to the Department's Command Staff and to the command structure of the five Patrol Precincts who are responsible for implementing the NPP, and for meeting the needs and expectations of the many communities we serve.

Survey Design- 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 surveyed residents on all city services, rather than just the Police Department.¹ In these former citywide surveys, many of those interviewed had not had contact with the Department and the limited number of questions about policing services that were included in the survey, provided information too general to guide service improvement initiatives. Actual contact with the Department was also not a criterion for participation in the more recent community telephone surveys about the policing services, undertaken as part of the City's Race and Social Justice Initiative.² In these surveys, some 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 surveys reported on here use the best means of access to those receiving police services, the 9-1-1 dispatch system, which is the point of contact for the majority of the Department's customers. Names of potential survey participants are 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 are not included.

Survey Methodology- A professional survey firm contacts respondents by telephone within two weeks of their having called 9-1-1 and having an officer dispatched to assist them. The telephone interview lasts about ten minutes. Callers are selected from among those who call 9-1-1 on randomly selected dates. Certain types of calls to 9-1-1 are excluded, such as hang-ups or persons who may object to being contacted by third parties as a result of their victimization, for example, sexual assault victims. Callers are contacted until a total of 200 interviews are completed. To date eleven surveys have been conducted, two in 2006, three in 2007, three in 2008 and three in 2009.

¹ See, for example, *Citywide Residential Survey 2001*, City of Seattle Performance Resource Group, 2001. Survey conducted by Northwest Research Group, Inc.

² See, for example, *Community Assessment of Policing and Public Safety In the City of Seattle, 2009 Survey Report*, Office of Policy and Management, City of Seattle, October 2009. This is the most recent in a series of biennial telephone survey of the community that began in 2003.

Survey Instrument- Topics covered in the survey include the respondents' 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 service 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 solicits suggestions from participants on how Department services can be improved; and participants are given the opportunity at a later date, if they choose, to speak at greater length about their experience, with an officer in the Department's Audit, Accreditation and Policy Section.

Survey Results Highlights- In September 2007, the Department issued a report on the results of the first three surveys that were conducted; and an update covering the results of the first seven surveys was issued in August 2008. These reports are posted on the SPD website at www.seattle.gov/police/publications . What follows are rating trends in items repeated in at least ten of the eleven surveys and where changes in results over time are statistically significant. Unless otherwise noted, the ratings are on a five-point scale.

9-1-1 Caller Surveys: Survey Results

Overall satisfaction- participants were asked to rate their overall experience with the Department from the time they called 9-1-1 to all the contacts they had with SPD personnel. They were asked to choose a rating from 1, "not at all satisfied" to 5, "extremely satisfied." The Department has consistently received ratings just under or just over 4.0. In addition, there has been a notable upward trend in overall satisfaction that is statistically significant. This means that this trend most likely did not occur by chance, but rather as the result of actual service quality improvements. Across the eleven surveys conducted to date, the average satisfaction rating given by 9-1-1 callers is 4.11 on the five-point scale.

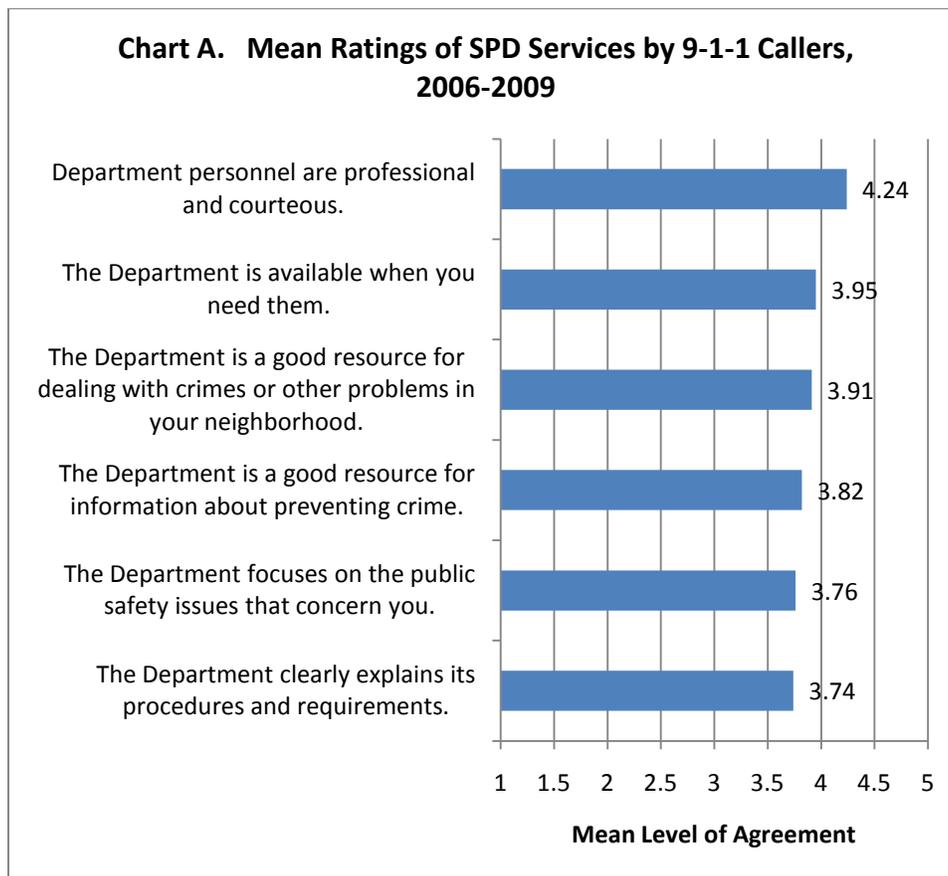
Perceptions of Department Services – six survey items relating to perceptions of SPD services overall have been used in all eleven surveys and each has shown statistically significant improvement over time. The ratings show level of agreement with each statement on a five-point scale where five is high.

- *Department personnel are professional and courteous* – the mean level of agreement with this statement over the eleven surveys is 4.24, with a range of 3.85 to 4.44.
- *The Department is available when you need them* – the mean agreement rating over eleven surveys is 3.95, with a range of 3.64 to 4.13.
- *The Department is a good resource for dealing with crimes/problems in your neighborhood* – the mean agreement rating over eleven surveys is 3.91, with a range of 3.33 to 4.21.
- *The Department is a good resource for information about preventing crime* – the mean agreement rating over eleven surveys is 3.82, with a range of 3.63 to 4.03.

- *The Department focuses on the public safety issues that concern you* – the mean agreement rating over eleven surveys is 3.76, with a range of 3.08 to 4.02.
- *The Department clearly explains its procedures and requirements* – the mean agreement rating over eleven surveys is 3.74, with a range of 3.43 to 3.96.

It should be noted that the highest level of agreement by 9-1-1 callers with each of these statements was achieved in the most recent survey that was conducted in December 2009.

Chart A below depicts the average level of agreement that 9-1-1 callers had with statements about the Department's services across the eleven surveys.

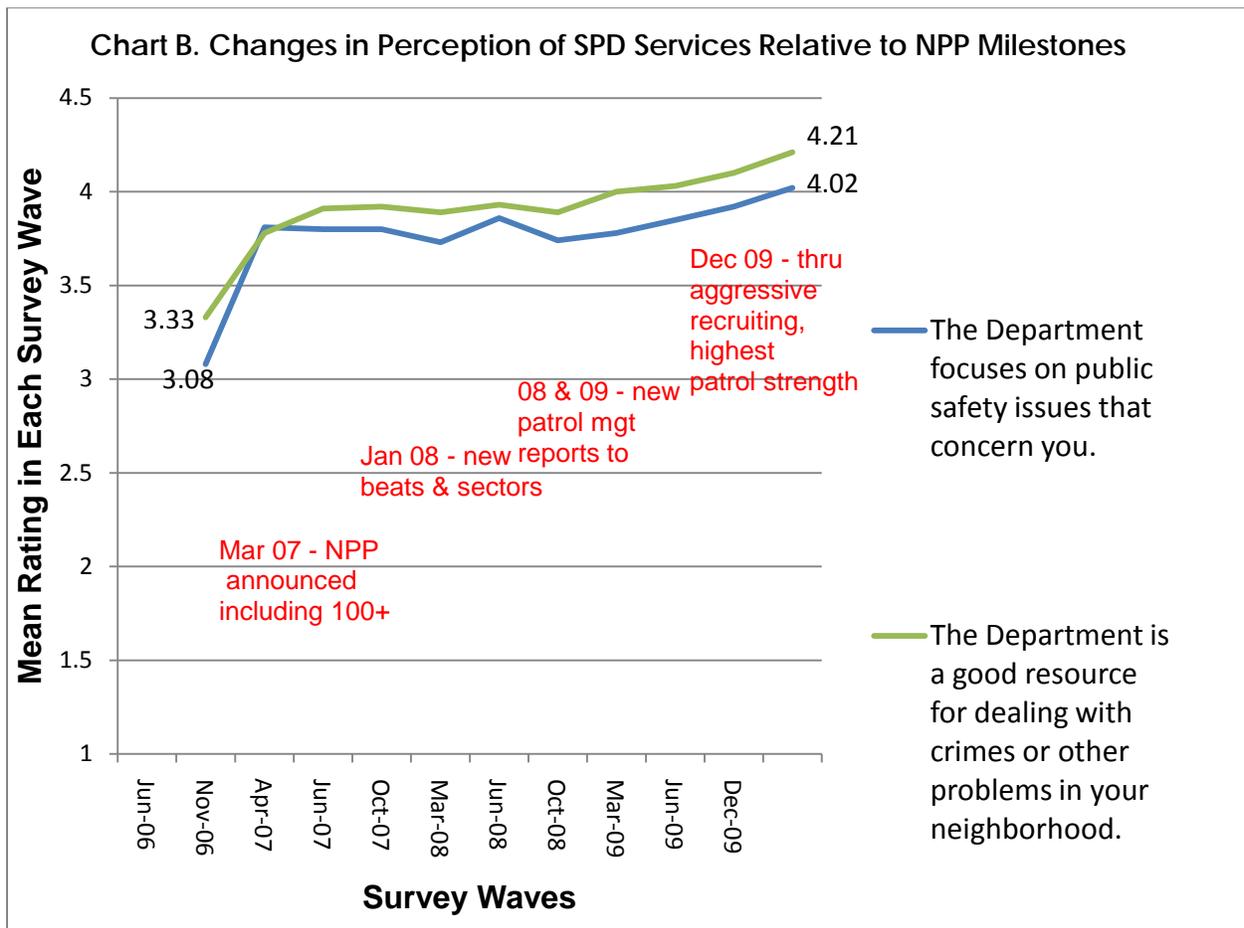


As can be seen in **Chart A**, those surveyed gave the highest level of agreement to the statements about the courtesy and professionalism of SPD personnel and about the Department being available when needed. Both the rating levels and the improvement shown in these two service quality dimensions are important since they are the fundamental aspects of the Department's overall mission.

In reviewing the ratings on the Department's service quality dimensions over the course of all eleven surveys, the two items that have shown the largest numeric improvement

have a direct connection to the Neighborhood Policing Project (NPP). They are: *The Department focuses on the public safety issues that concern you* and *The Department is a good resource for dealing with crimes and other problems in your neighborhood*. Chart B below shows the rating trends in each of these items, plotted against the timing of some of the key milestones in the Department's implementation of the NPP.

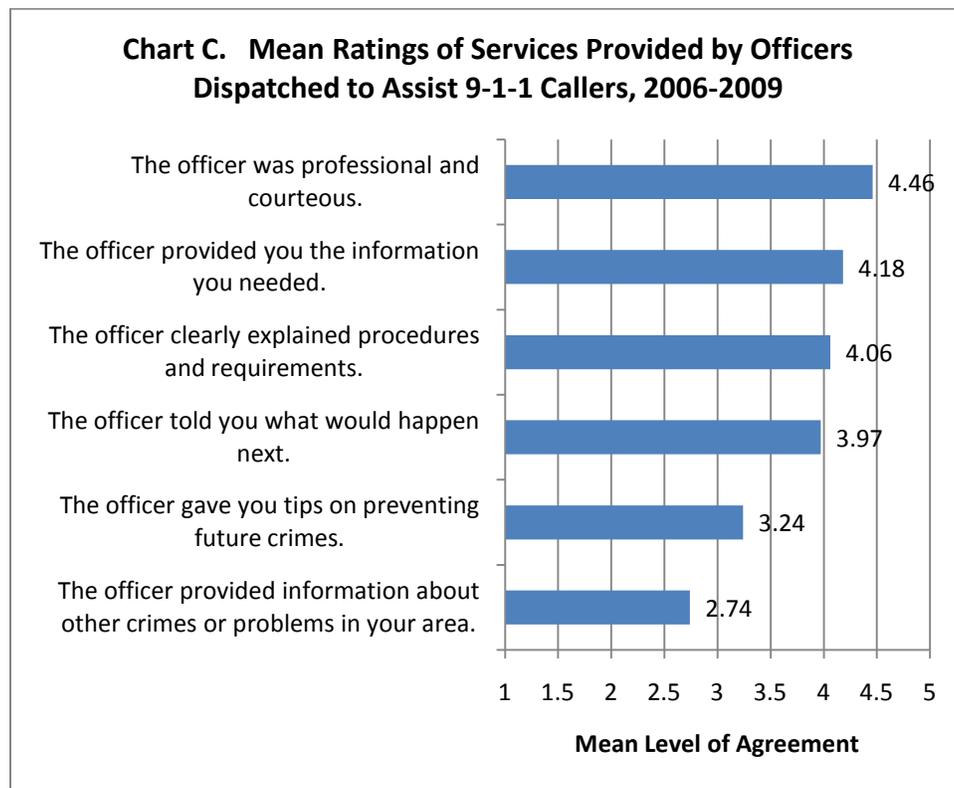
As can be seen in **Chart B**, there was a dramatic increase in the ratings of these two items in the month immediately after the NPP was announced, signaling the first major change in patrol deployment in more than thirty years and an augmentation of the Department's patrol force by over 100 officers. During 2008 and 2009, the Department achieved some important NPP milestones including drawing new beat, sector and precinct boundaries designed to more firmly embed officers in a defined patrol area and designing new management reports to give commanders better tools in making officer deployment decisions. At the same time, the Department was recruiting new officers aggressively and achieving hiring targets ahead of schedule. These milestones, however, were largely imperceptible to the public which may account for the leveling off on the ratings during that period. As the new officers began completing their ten-month training regimen and started being added to the Department's street strength, the ratings on these items began their steady improvement to the levels noted in December 2009, the highest over the survey period.



Services provided by officer(s) responding to the call – six items have focused on the qualities of the service provided by the officer(s) responding to the 9-1-1 call. These items have been used in all eleven surveys and have shown statistically significant improvement over time. Ratings are of the level of agreement with each statement on a five-point scale where five is high.

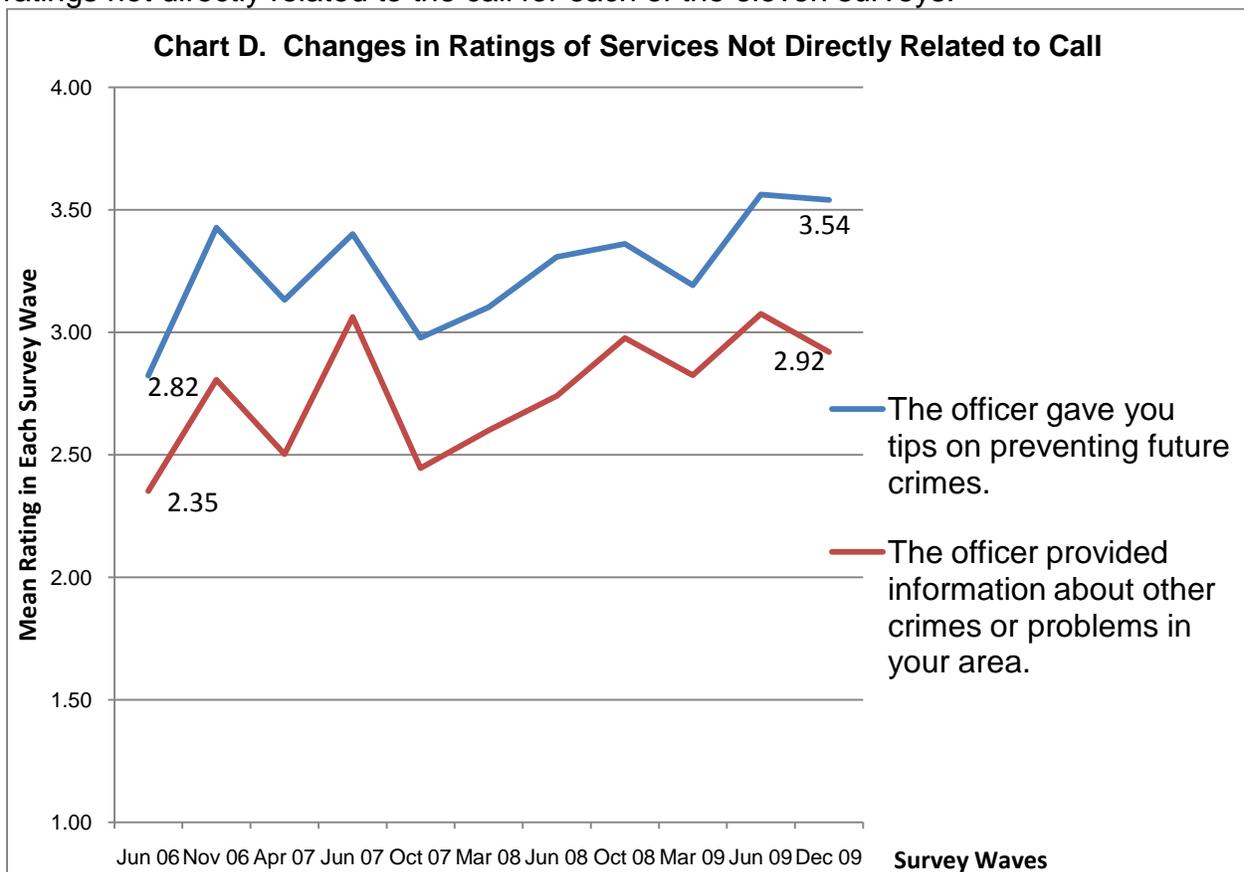
- *Officer was professional and courteous* – the mean level of agreement with this statement over all eleven surveys is 4.46, with a range of 4.00 to 4.65. The highest mean rating on this item was achieved in the most recent survey in December 2009.
- *Officer provided the information you needed* – the mean agreement level over eleven surveys is 4.18, with a range of 3.88 to 4.35.
- *Officer clearly explained procedures and requirements* – the mean agreement rating over eleven surveys is 4.06, with a range of 3.74 to 4.28.
- *Officer told you what would happen next* – the mean agreement rating over eleven surveys is 3.97, with a range of 3.28 to 4.23.
- *Officer gave you tips on preventing future crimes* – the mean agreement rating over eleven surveys is 3.24, with a range of 2.82 to 3.56.
- *Officer provided information about other crimes or problems in your area* – the mean agreement rating over eleven surveys is 2.74 with a range of 2.35 to 3.08.

The mean level of agreement with each of these statements about the services provided by officers responding to 9-1-1 calls is depicted in **Chart C** below.



As can be seen in **Chart C**, 9-1-1 callers who had interacted directly with officers tended to rate their level of courtesy and professionalism higher than they did the Department as a whole on those qualities. The level of agreement about clearly explaining procedures and requirements was also higher when callers had direct contact with officers as opposed to their overall impressions of the Department. The differences in the mean ratings on these items when comparing responding officers to the Department as a whole are statistically significant. In other words, service quality ratings improve when the public has direct contact with Department personnel.

All of the items listed in **Chart C** have shown statistically significant improvement across the eleven surveys. Among the items listed in the chart, the four at the top of Chart C concern services directly related to the call. The other two items – the officer gave information on other crimes/problems in the area, and the officer gave tips on preventing future crimes - involve services that go beyond the call. In addition, they imply certain prerequisites, not the least of which is that officers feel they have the time and the knowledge base to provide these additional services. These are two attributes of service delivery that the NPP is designed to achieve by fielding more officers, matching their deployment to service level demands and giving officers a more defined service delivery area that they can come to know well. As these goals of the NPP come closer to being achieved, then, the expectation is that these items will see more improvement. **Chart D** below provides the mean ratings on the two service quality ratings not directly related to the call for each of the eleven surveys.



As can be seen in **Chart D**, the ratings on these items have fluctuated, but they have remained consistently higher than when first measured in June 2006. These are important baseline items for measuring the service qualities the NPP is designed to achieve and give Department commanders a way to monitor expected service delivery improvements as full implementation of NPP is realized.

Perception of Neighborhood Officers – Beginning in April 2007, survey participants have been asked their perceptions of services provided by neighborhood officers as a group, beyond the particular officer who responded to their call. Similar to responding officers, neighborhood officers have been rated more highly than the Department as a whole on similar survey items. For example, on being “*a good resource for dealing with crimes or other local problems*,” police in the neighborhood received a mean rating over nine surveys of 3.99 on a five-point scale compared to the Department’s mean rating of 3.91; and on focusing on “*the public safety issues that concern you*,” neighborhood officers were rated 3.82 compared with a 3.76 rating for the Department as a whole. Though not statistically significant, these results suggest that, from the perspective of 9-1-1 callers, neighborhood officers as a group are seen as being responsive to the communities they serve.

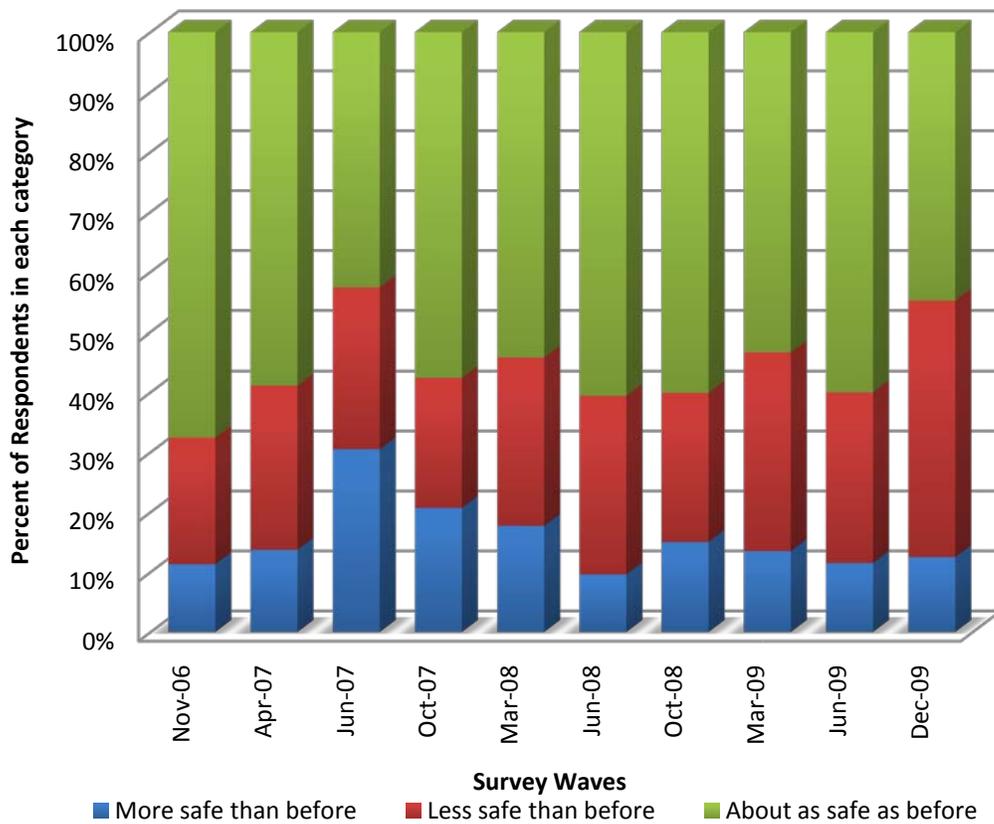
Impact of the Incident that Led to the 9-1-1 Call – In ten of the eleven surveys, respondents have been asked two questions about the incident that caused them to call 9-1-1. Specifically they are asked how that incident affected their sense of personal safety; and then, how they feel about their personal safety after having received the Department’s services. Across all ten surveys, the following has been found:

- About 28% of respondents indicate that the incident that led them to call 9-1-1 made them feel “less safe” than they had before. This ranged from a low of 21% to a high of 43% in the most recent survey in December 2009.
- After receiving SPD services, however, the proportion of respondents feeling “less safe” than before was reduced on average to 10%. In addition, the proportion of respondents feeling “more safe” went from 16% on average to 33%, after receiving SPD services.

In spite of the incident that necessitated a call to 9-1-1, then, a number of survey respondents had their feelings of personal safety bolstered and felt reassured after the Department’s response.

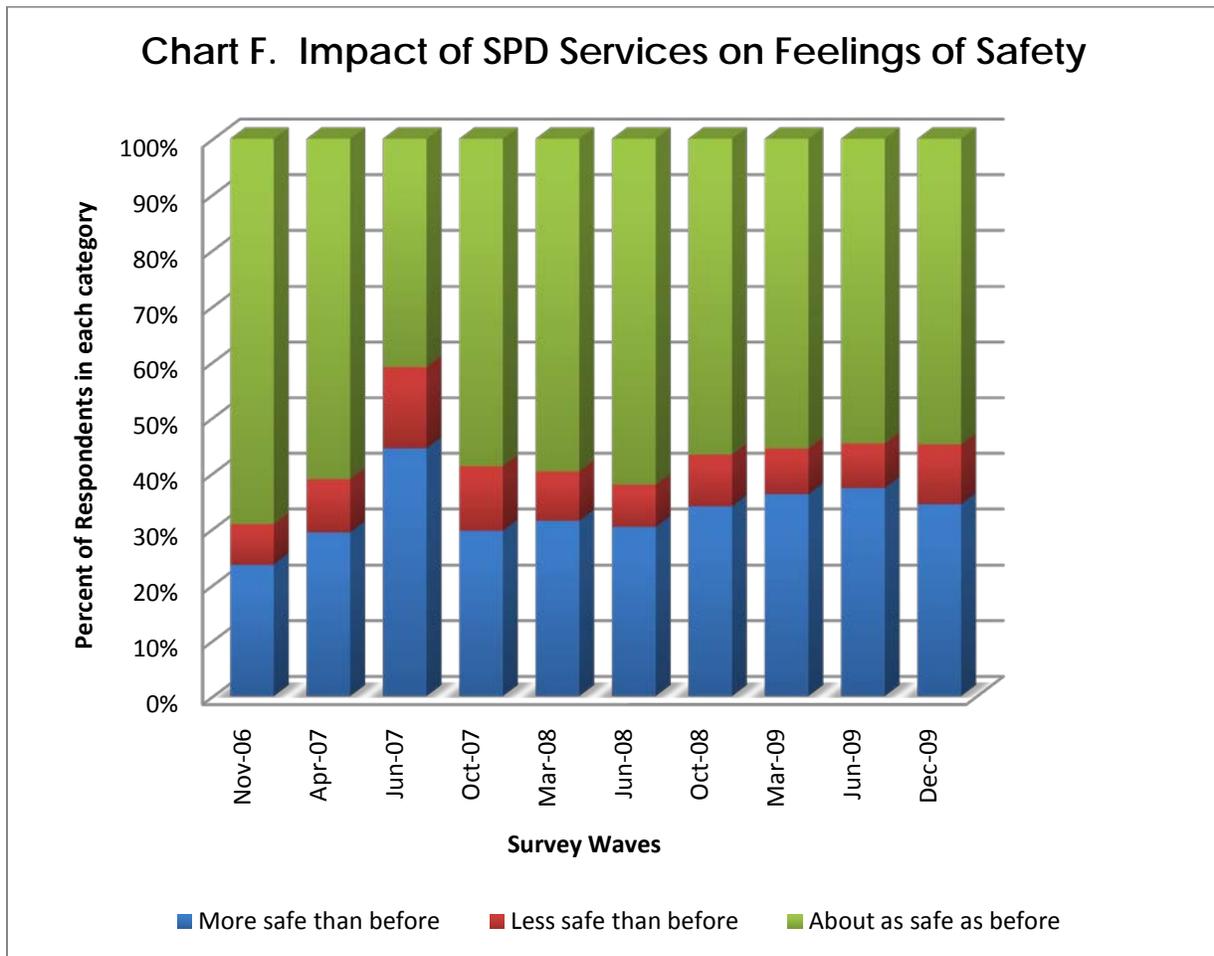
This finding has been consistent over time as depicted in **Charts E and F** below.

Chart E depicts the reported change in feelings of personal safety brought about by the incident that caused survey participants to call 9-1-1.

Chart E. Impact of Incident on Feelings of Safety

As can be seen in **Chart E**, a substantial proportion of respondents report either no change in their sense of personal safety (those represented in green) or having their sense of personal safety eroded (those represented in red), as a result of the incident that caused them to call 9-1-1. The smallest group of respondents in Chart E (represented in blue) are those who reported feeling “more safe” as a result of the incident.

Chart F below shows the changes in feelings of personal safety after survey participants had received services from the Department.



As can be seen in **Chart F**, the Department’s response served to restore feelings of personal safety for many survey respondents. This is seen in the reductions in the red portions of each bar and the increases in the blue portions, representing those respondents who reported feeling “more safe,” after receiving SPD services. These trends have been consistent across all ten surveys in which these questions have been posed.

Feedback from Those We Serve: A Summary

Through periodic surveys of 9-1-1 callers, the Department is able to chart the quality and efficacy of its services from the perspective of those receiving them. Several findings from these surveys are of particular interest:

- Overall, the Department receives relatively high ratings for service quality, averaging about 4.1 on a five-point scale where five is high. This suggests that, in general, the Department is achieving its mission of delivering “respectful, professional and dependable police services.”
- As solid as these ratings are, those surveyed tend to rate the service quality of Department personnel who are most visible to them (their neighborhood officers) even more highly. This confirms that command and line personnel in the Precincts are in touch with and responsive to the needs and concerns of the communities they serve.
- Even higher ratings are given to officers responding to 9-1-1 calls, who receive especially high marks for their courtesy and professionalism and for the services they provide in direct response to the dispatched incident. In fact, over 70% of those who felt their personal safety was most threatened by these incidents (averaging about 28% of callers), report that their feelings of safety were restored as a result of the officers’ assistance.
- Service dimensions not related directly to the dispatched incidents - for example, giving general crime prevention tips, or providing information about other crimes in the area – have shown improvement over time, but generally receive lower ratings. These findings indicate that the community is seeking both breadth and depth in the Department’s services. They also serve to underscore the importance of the Neighborhood Policing Project, which is designed to give officers fixed patrol geography and familiarity within service areas, and to increase the amount of proactive time available to engage community members and address their public safety concerns.