

**Summary of Findings:**

**People United for a Better Life in Oakland  
(PUEBLO)  
2010 Youth Survey of Oakland High School Students**

**Survey design and administration:**

**PUEBLO**

**Data Analysis by:**

**Resource Development Associates**

## Executive Summary

Two of the most common views of the police amongst the youth were to “protect and serve” and to “harass and threaten.” This represents a polarity that is consistent throughout the data. Ethnic groupings explain some of the split, with Asian and Middle Eastern youth feeling more protected by the police and Native American students feeling the most threatened. Those students who see the police as protectors report that they feel more comfortable asking an officer for his or her name and are less likely to run from the police, whereas the reverse is true for those that feel the police harass and threaten. Those who felt safe around the police were also more likely to consider becoming a police officer. Students reported that they would be more likely to approach an African American or Latino officer and slightly more likely to approach a female officer than male. Female students report being more comfortable than male students with asking an officer for his or her name.

A large proportion of the students reported a negative last experience with the police, but for those who had a positive experience, being listened to was the most important reason, followed by the respectfulness and fairness of the officer(s) they encountered. Conversely, not being listened to and feeling that the officer was rude were the most common reason for students’ negative experiences.

While those who have been arrested or convicted of a crime were more fearful of the police, the greater the number of contacts with law enforcement that the students reported, the greater their comfort asking an officer’s name and the more likely they are to consider a career in law enforcement. The positivity or negativity of the student’s last experience with the police had a strong impact on whether they saw the police as protection vs. threat. Native American, African American, and mixed race students were most likely to report having a negative last experience. Male students were much more likely to report a negative experience than female students.

Very few students reported that they had filed a complaint after a negative experience and few were aware of the available avenues for filing a complaint. The primary reasons for not filing were feelings that their complaint would not make any difference or, similarly, that it wasn’t worth the time and effort. Results from PUEBLO’s 2010 survey of Oakland high school students provide a compelling look at the relationship between Oakland’s police force and an important part of the community, youth. This summary will provide a demographic breakdown of survey participants followed by three content areas: participants’ views of the police, their experience with law enforcement, and their understanding and view of the complaint process. Results from these three areas are reported below using both counts of responses and percents within categories.

## **Methodology**

On New Year's Day, 2009 BART police officer Johannes Mehserle shot and killed Oscar Grant in the back as he lay face down, restrained by at least two fellow BART police officers. Shortly thereafter, he resigned his position and left the state. Thirteen days later, he was returned to California and charged with the murder of Oscar Grant.

Like the Rodney King incident in Los Angeles in 1991, the incident was video taped and released on the Internet. The youth of Oakland, identified with Oscar Grant. Though Mr. Grant had been shot and killed by BART Police, it was a distinction almost completely lost by Oakland youth, who viewed this incident as yet another deadly example of police violence and abuse visited on Oakland youth.

In September of 2009, an Oakland Unified School District (OUSD) high school senior at Met West High, Tamara Lawrence, came to PUEBLO as an intern and expressed an interest in finding out how high school youth felt about the police and what experiences they have had, if any, with the Oakland Police Department.

PUEBLO enlisted the aid of Janice Embrey as Project Director and mentor to Tamara who decided to conduct a survey of OUSD students about their experience with and feelings about the Oakland Police Department.

The survey questionnaire was based on a 2005 Policing and complaint process survey, which PUEBLO had worked on with the Oakland Police Department and the City Administrator's Office. Unlike the 2005 survey, which was done by telephone, the 2010 survey was a written questionnaire and students were surveyed at their schools. Many of the questions were replaced with questions more appropriate for and relevant to youth. The questionnaire was pilot tested and reviewed by youth at McCullum Youth Court and the All-City Council of high school students and alterations were made as a result.

Letters were sent to the principals of the high schools and then emails. The first two rounds of outreach had few if any responses. PUEBLO's scheduled meeting with the new Chief of Police Anthony Batts included our discussion of the survey. He was interested in the project and agreed to give us a letter of endorsement. We were also able to get a letter of support for the survey from OUSD Superintendent Anthony Smith. With these two endorsements and the in valuable help of Raquel Jimenez, we then met with the All City Student Council - a group of representatives from participating student councils at various Oakland high schools. The questionnaire was then administered at an All City Council forum and a few more adjustments were made. Rekia Jibrin, a Graduate Student at UC Berkeley, expressed an interest in helping with the project and assisted with the final draft of the survey and the site by site deployment of the survey.

With the help of Raquel Jimenez and members of the All City Council, we were able to contact the responding schools and set up dates and times to survey their students. Those schools were: Oakland High School, Fremont High School, McClymonds High School, MetWest Alternative High

School, Rudsdale Continuation High School, Ralph J. Bunch Continuation High School, Lighthouse Charter High School and Street Academy Alternative High School.

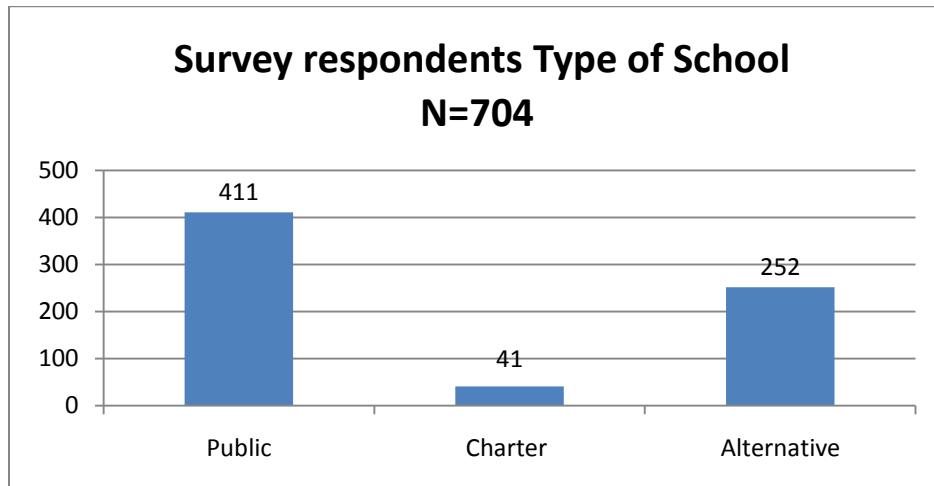
The following private high schools -- College Preparatory School, Head Royce and Bishop O'Dowd -- were all contacted but none of them responded affirmatively.

PUEBLO contracted with Research Development Associates (RDA) to create a data shell, train Oakland young people to do the data entry, and provide the data summary and analysis. PUEBLO had been contacted by a counselor at Westlake Middle School, seeking summer jobs for graduating youth at her school. When we met with her, we mentioned the survey and she felt that some of her seniors would be interested in the research and had good computer skills, so RDA trained their students and they started the data entry process.

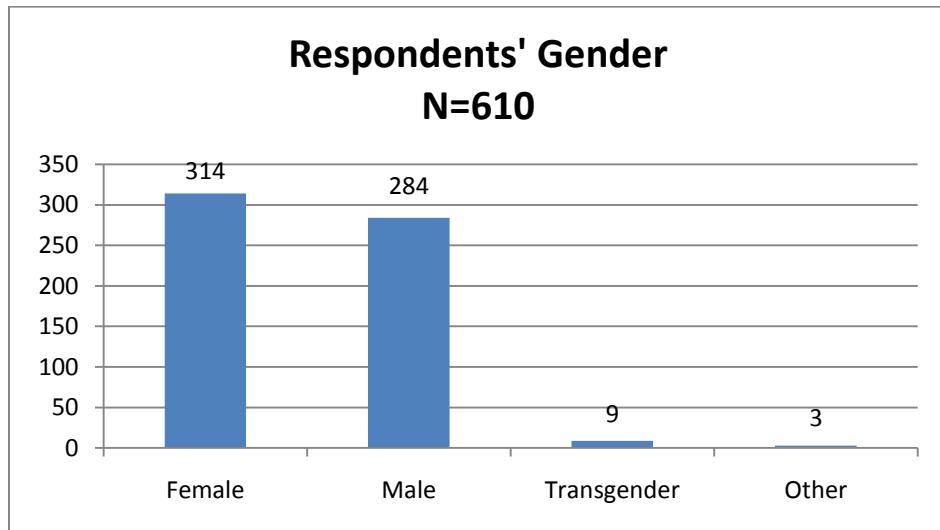
PUEBLO would like to acknowledge the Akonadi Foundation whose support enabled this project to move forward.

## **Demographics**

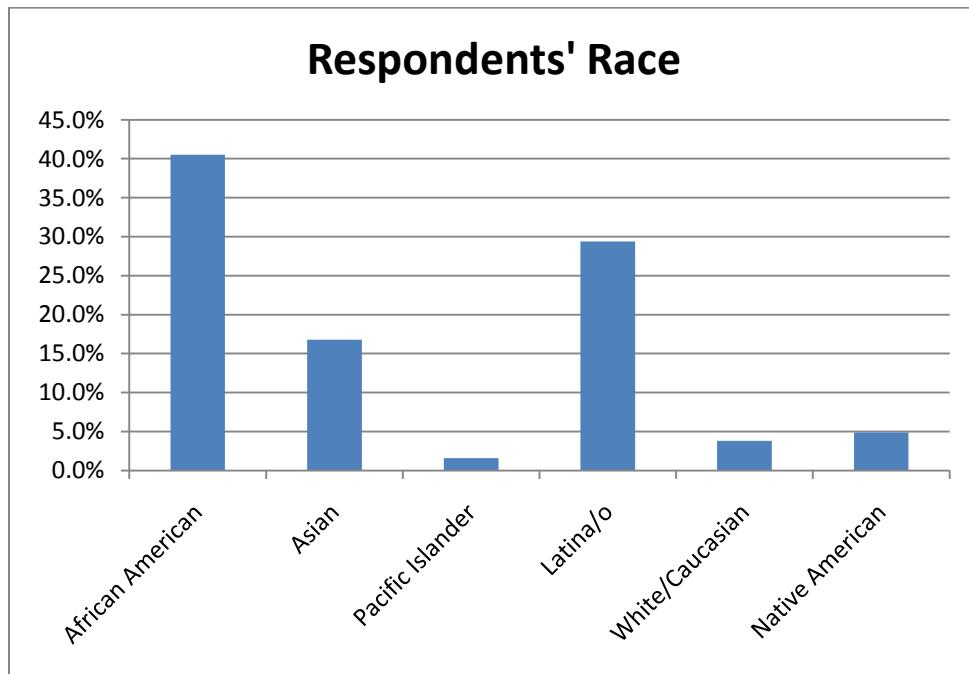
The majority of students came from public schools, with a large group from alternative schools and a small group from charter schools. Oakland's private schools were asked to participate but chose not to.



Females responded slightly more frequently than males, and a small transgender sample also responded.



The largest proportion of the respondents was African American, followed by Latino, Asian, mixed, Native American, white, Middle Eastern and Pacific Islander.

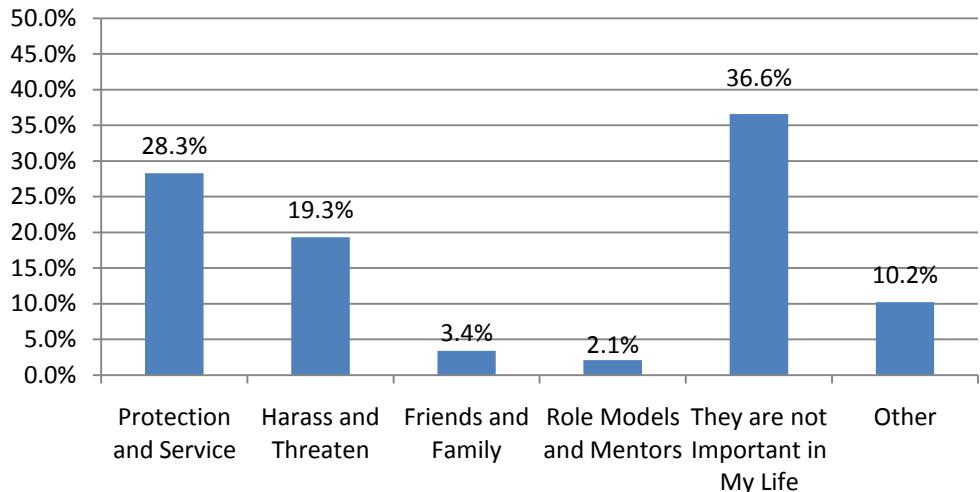


### Views of the Police

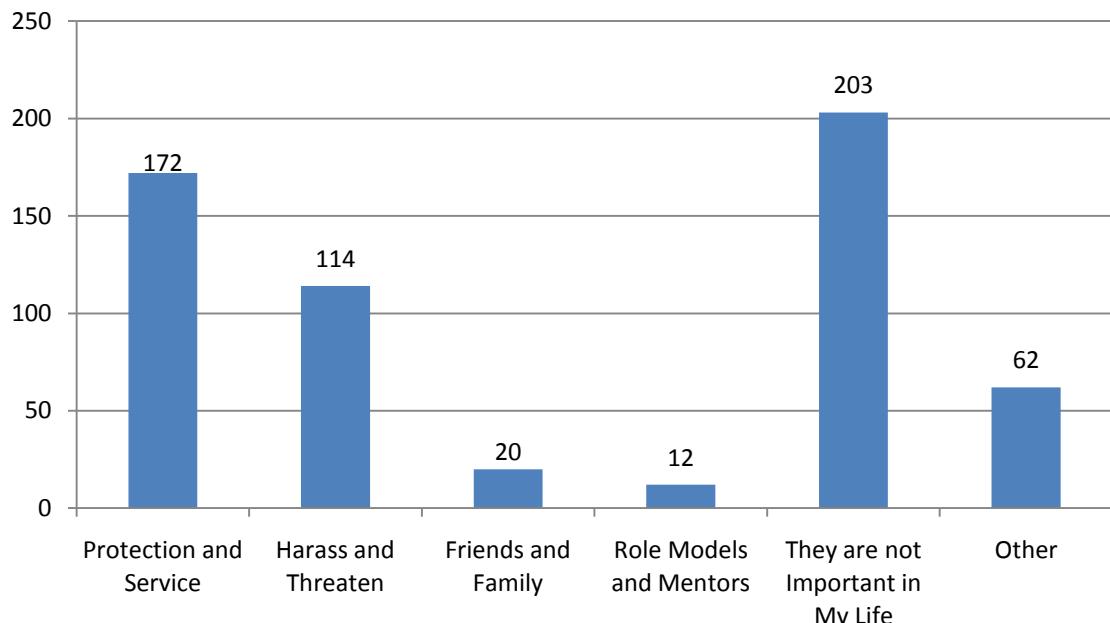
Two of the most common conceptions of the role of police were to protect and serve (28%) and to harass and threaten (20%), reflecting a bipolarity in the data.

## Role that Police Play in Respondents' Lives

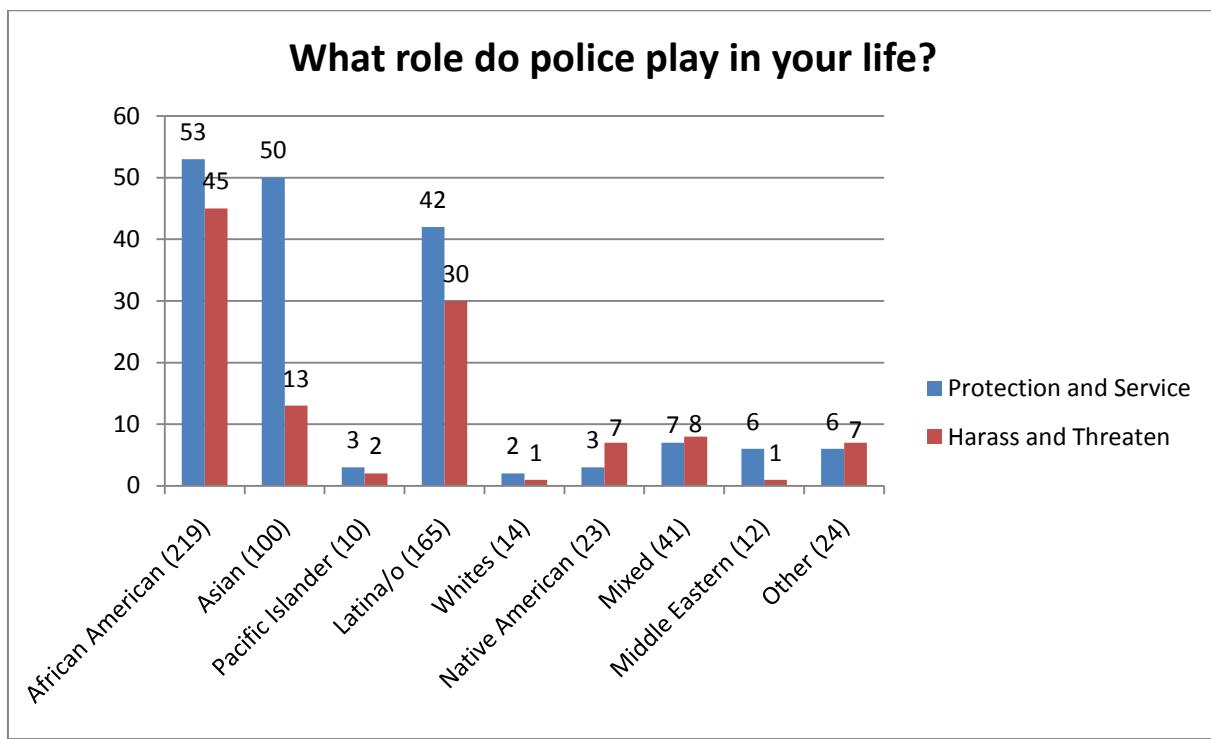
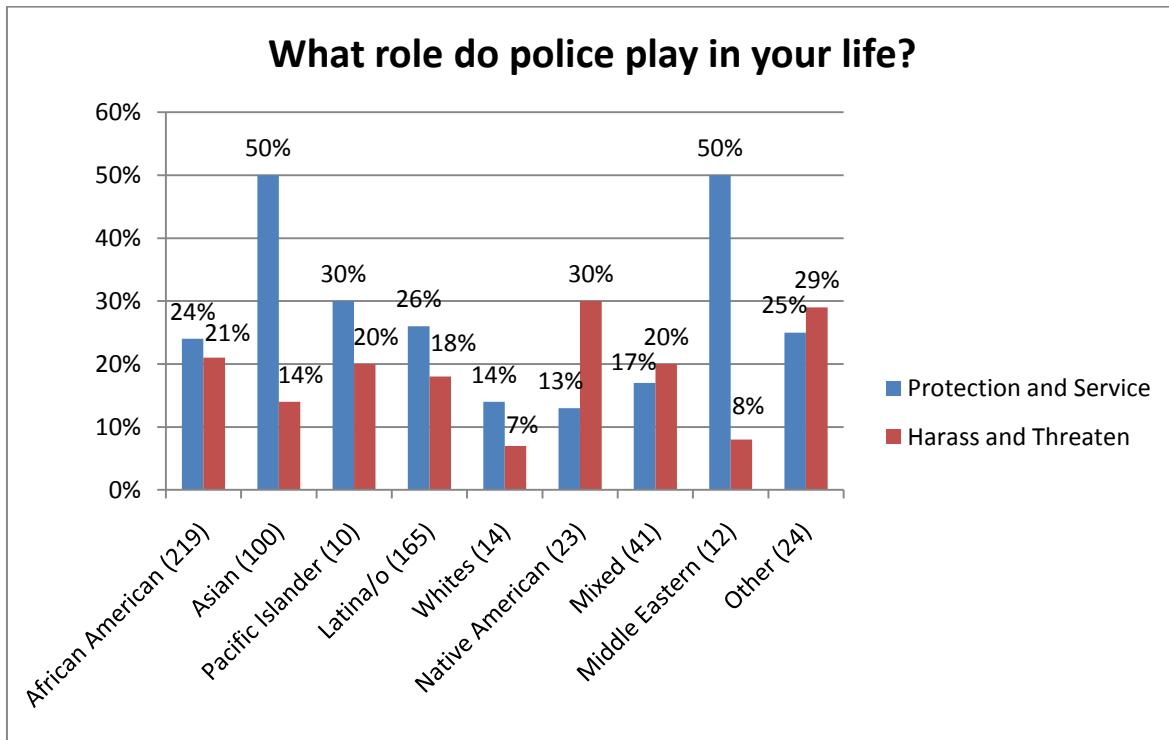
N=608



## Role that Police Play in Respondents' Lives N=608



As you can see in the graph below, different ethnic/racial groups see the police differently. In particular, Asian and Middle Eastern students tended to see police more positively, whereas a larger proportion of Native American students saw the police as more threatening.



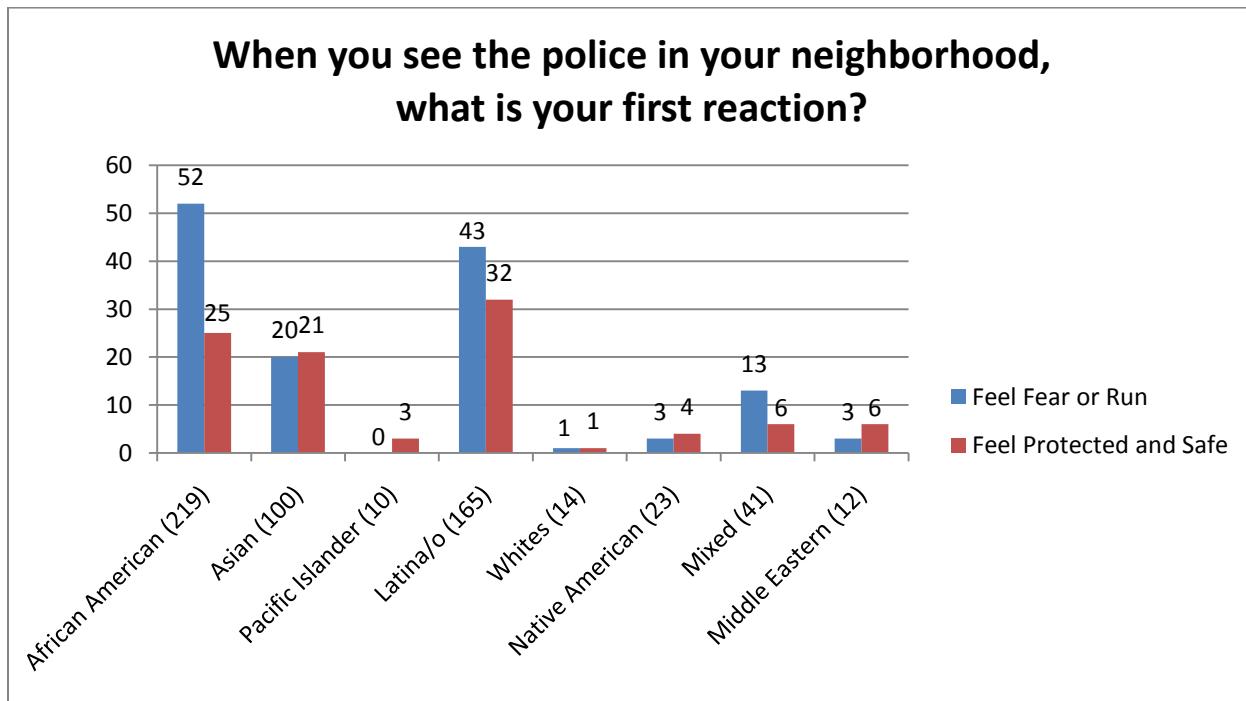
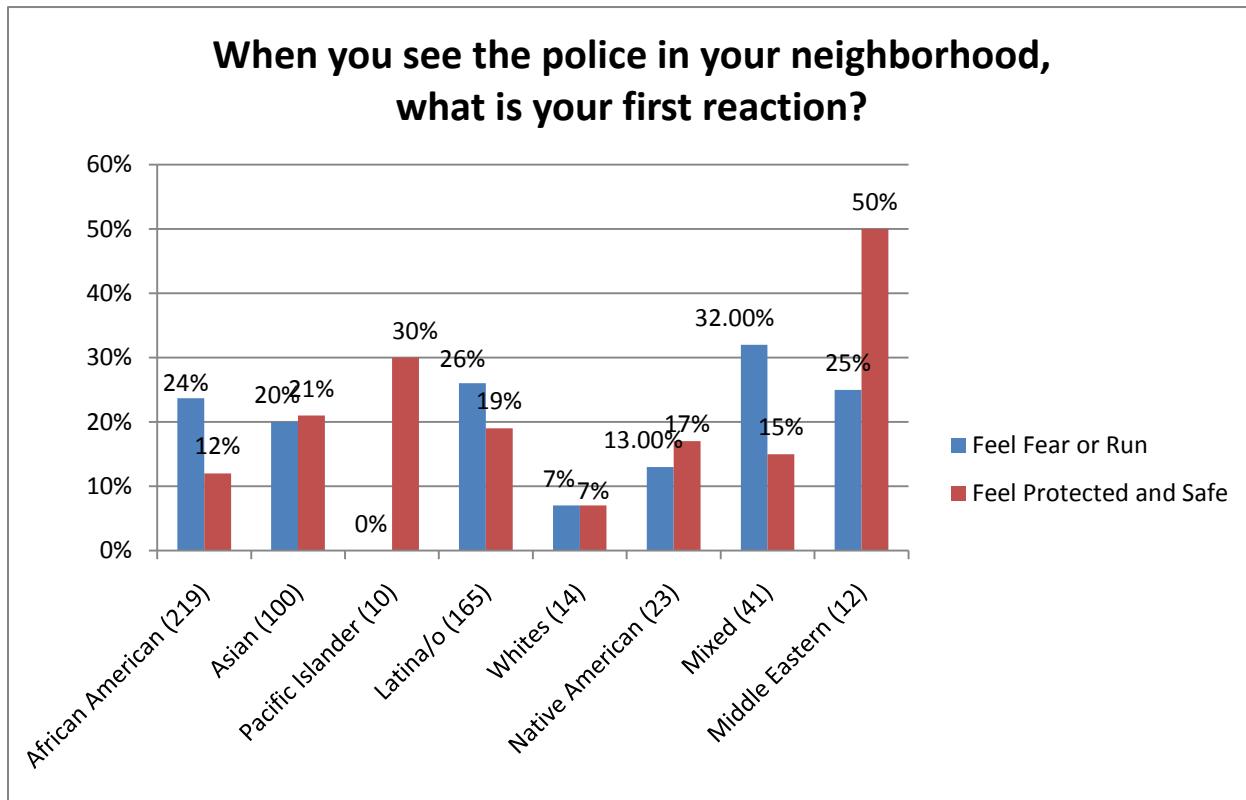
Not surprisingly, regression results (see table below) indicate that this dichotomy of protection vs. threat also affects students' behavior and response to the police. That is, those who saw the police as protectors were more likely to feel comfortable asking an officer's name and to feel safer when an officer is present, and less likely to run when they encounter the police. Further, those who reported feeling safe when police are present are more likely to consider being a police officer. Conversely,

those who see the police as a source of harassment were more likely to report feeling fear and running when they see the police and feeling less comfortable asking an officer for his or her name.

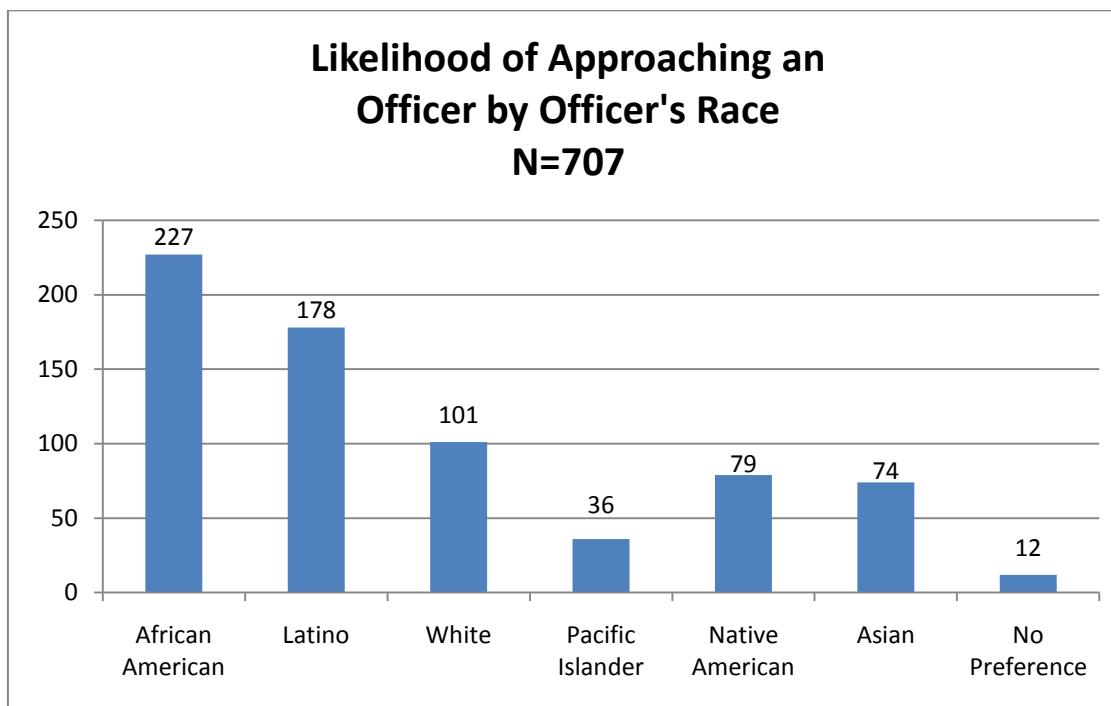
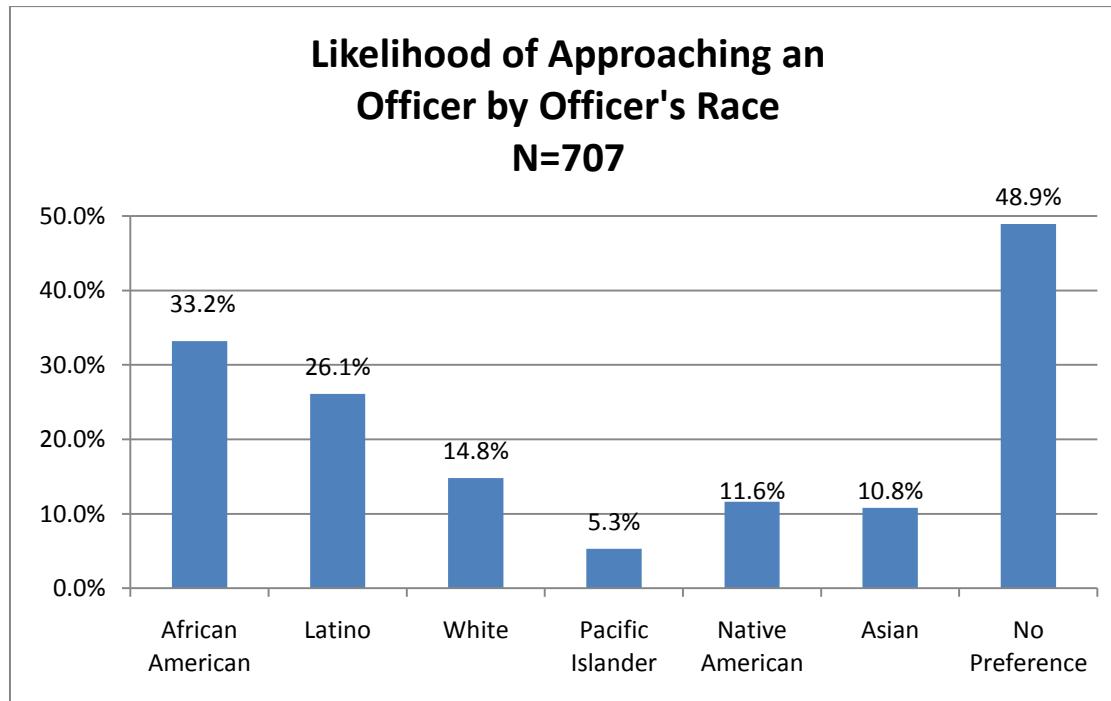
Outcome	See police as protectors	See police as harassers	Feel safe when police are present
Consider being a police officer			++*
Feel comfortable asking an officer's name	+-	-*	
Feel safe or protected around police	++*		Not applicable
Feel nervous around police		+-	Not applicable
Feel fear or run from police		++*	Not applicable
Run from police	-*	+-	Not applicable

+/- indicates a positive or negative relationship between variables  
 \* indicates statistical significance with a 5% margin of error  
 \*\* indicates statistical significance with a 1% margin of error

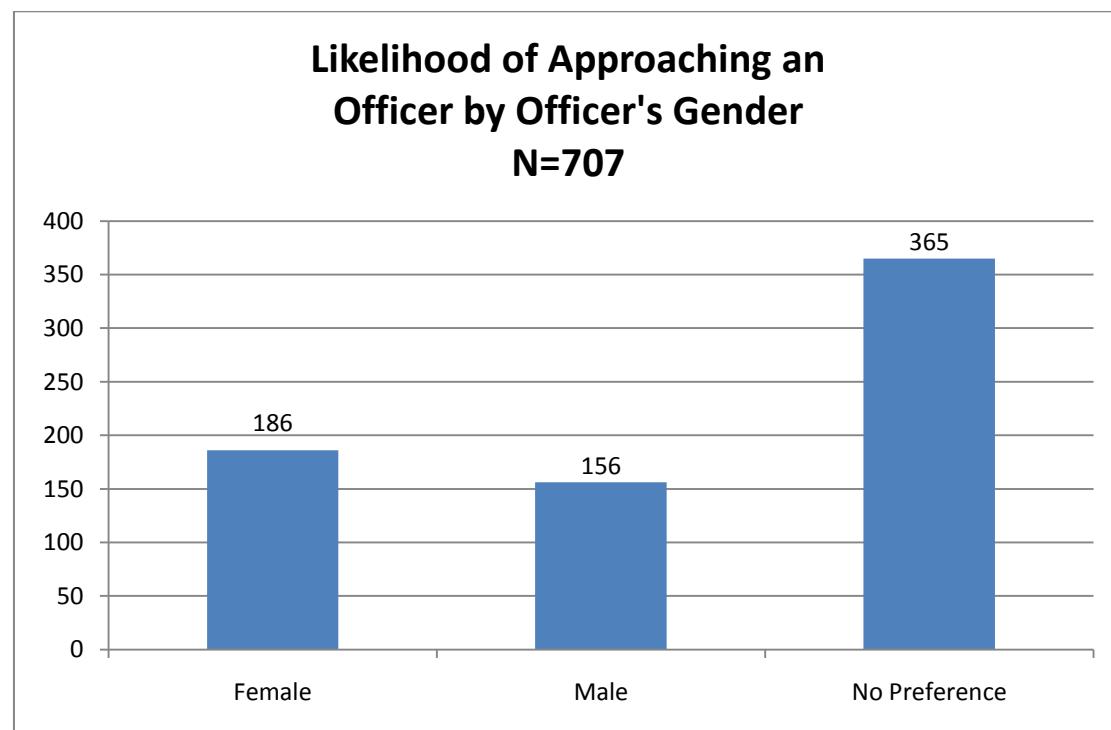
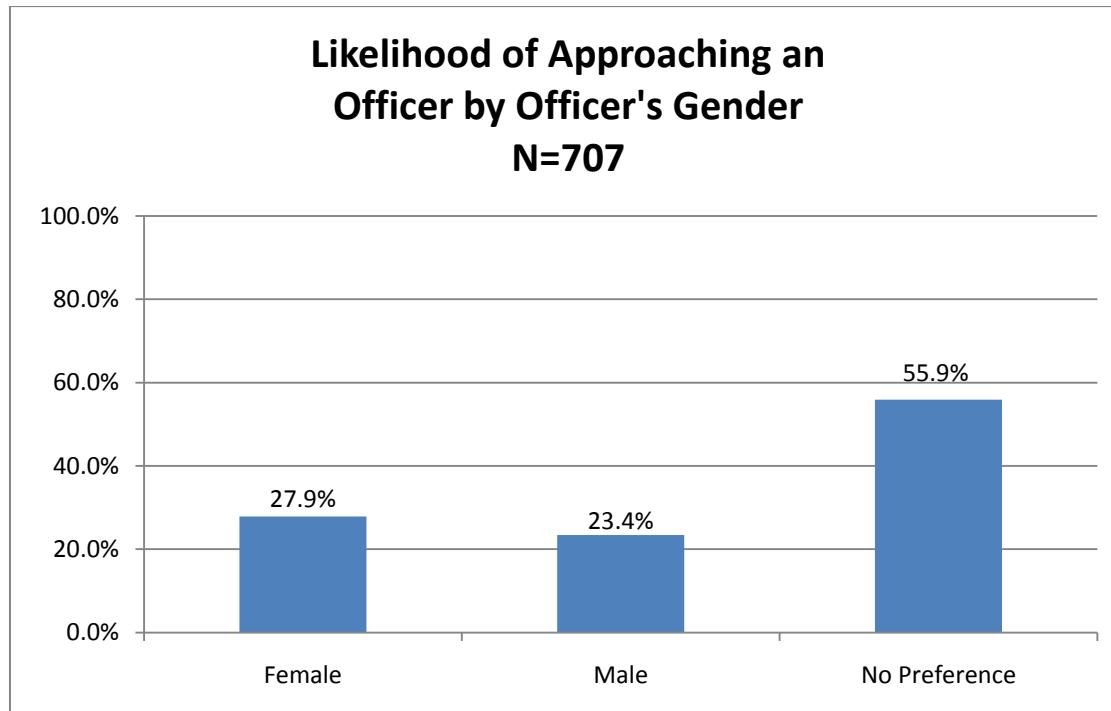
Ethnicity also predicted feelings of safety. A larger proportion of Middle Eastern and Pacific Islander students felt safe with police presence, and smaller proportion of Pacific Islander and white students reported feeling fear or running from the police.



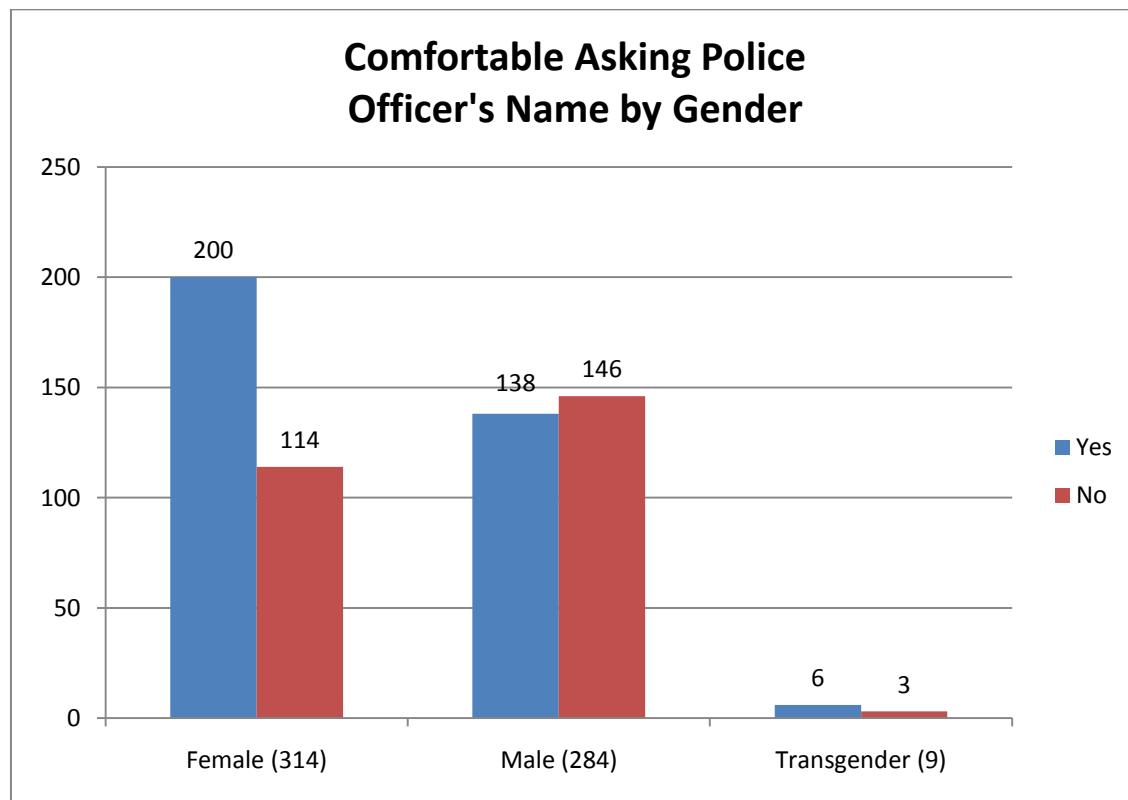
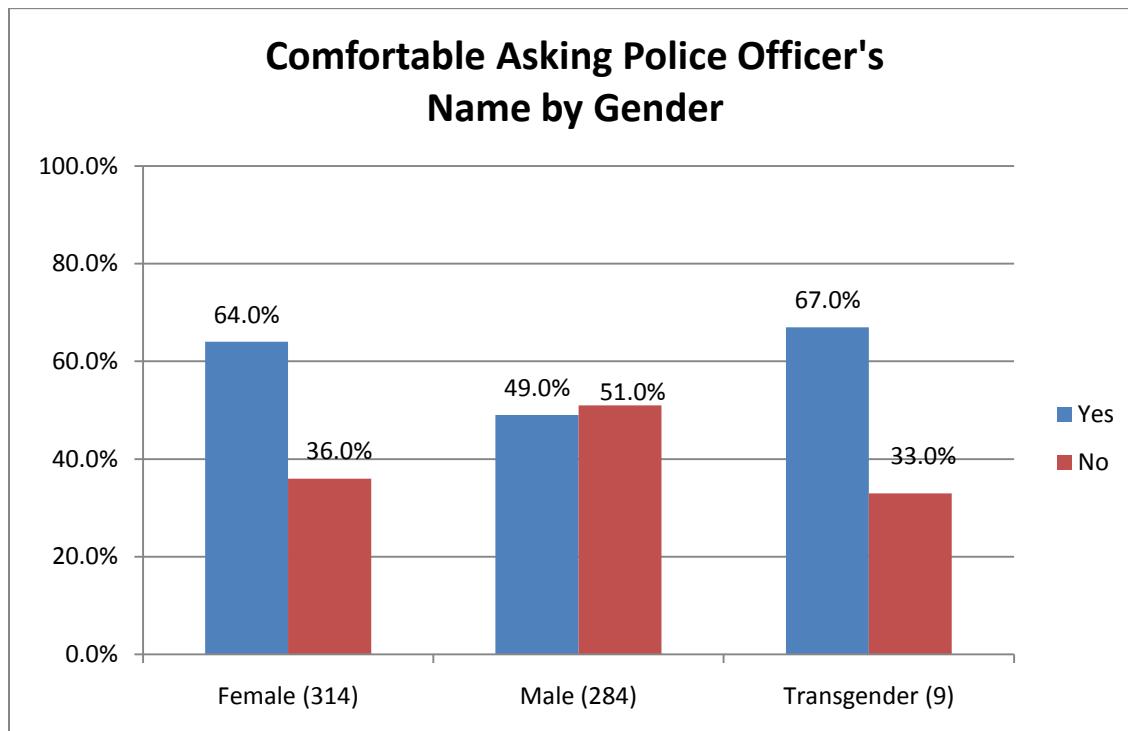
The ethnicity/race of the police officer also had an impact, with more students preferring to approach an African American officer, followed by a Latina/o officer.



The gender of the officer had only a minor impact, with female officers being mildly more approachable.

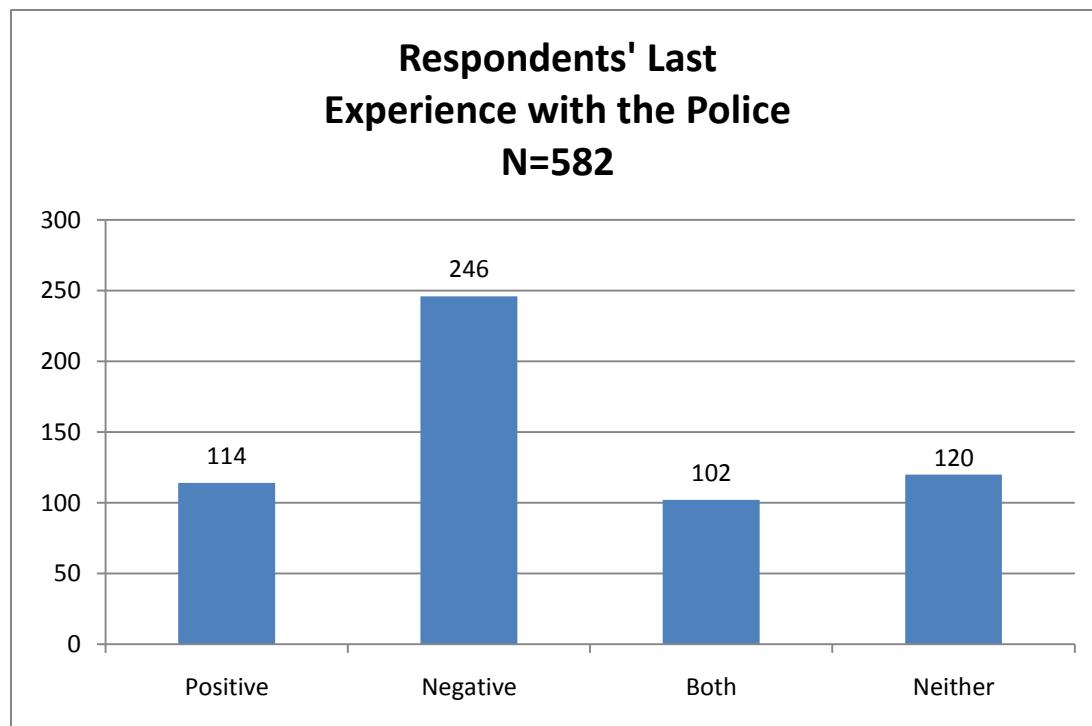
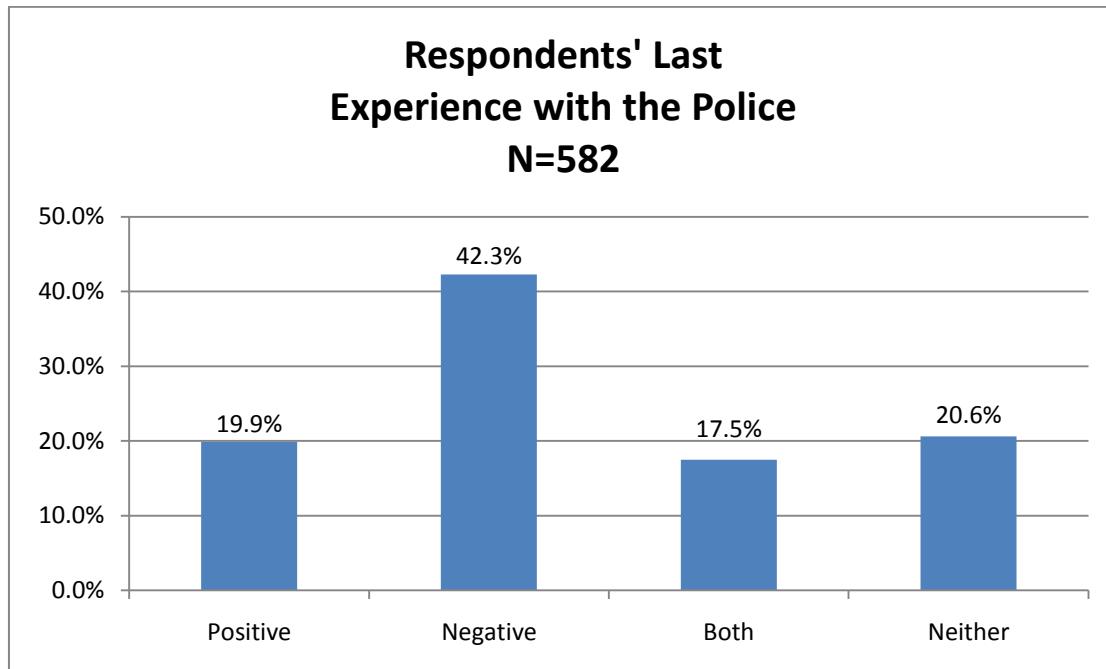


Female students were much more likely to feel comfortable asking an officer's name.

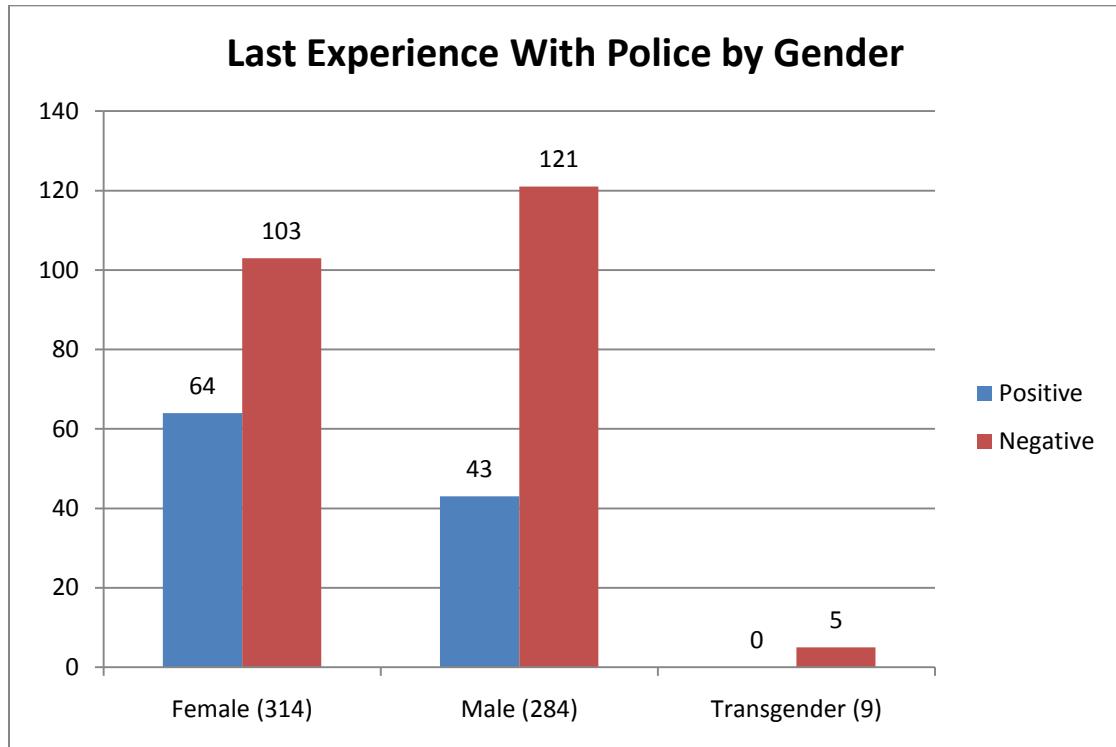
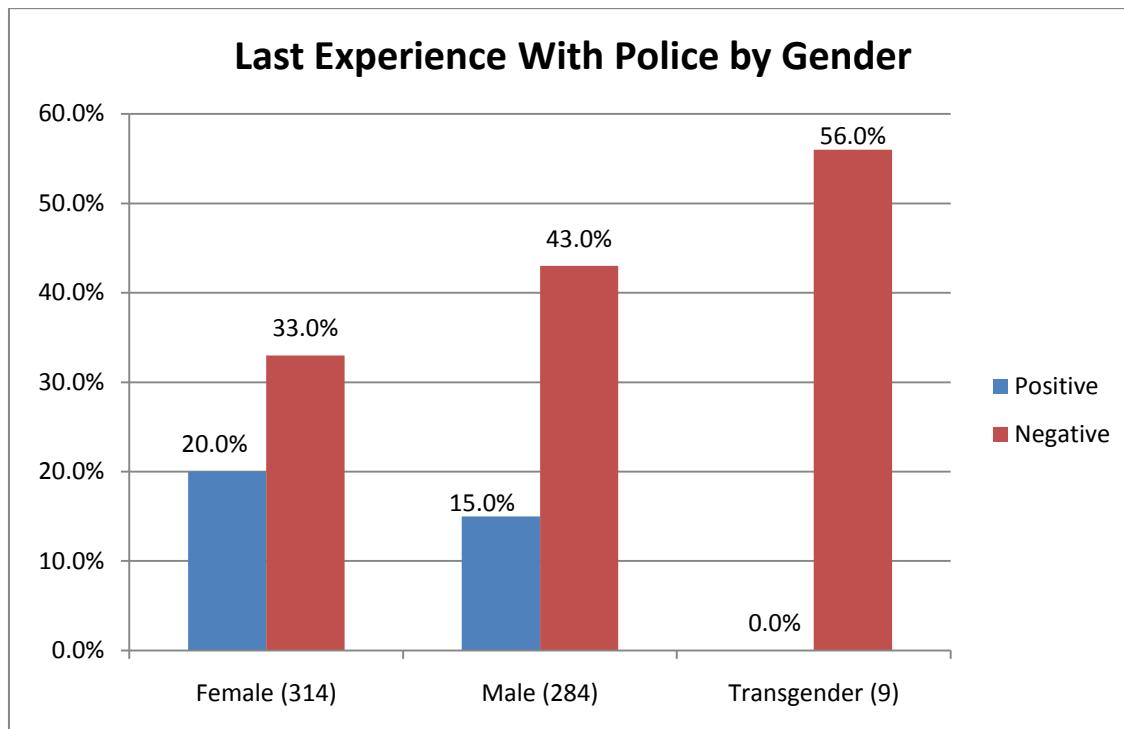


## Experience with the Police

Participants' experiences with the police also impacted their views on and response to the police. Many more participants reported a negative last experience with the police than a positive experience.



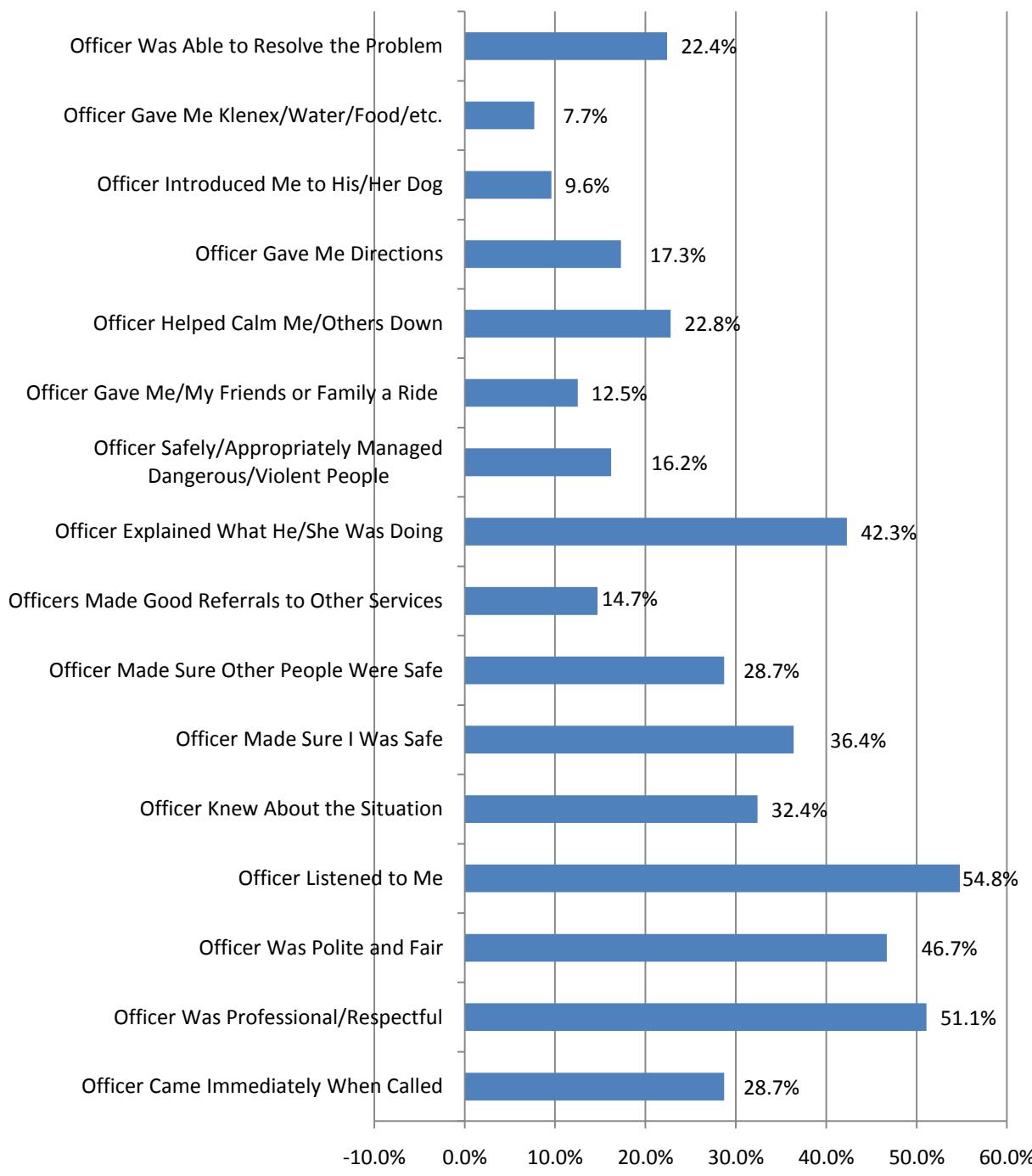
Responses differed by gender, with female students reporting more positive experiences.



The most powerful influence on whether a respondent reported a positive or negative experience was whether the officer listened to them. Students also positively responded to officers explaining what s/he was doing, being professional and respectful, and being polite and fair. The strongest reason for a negative experience was that the officer was rude.

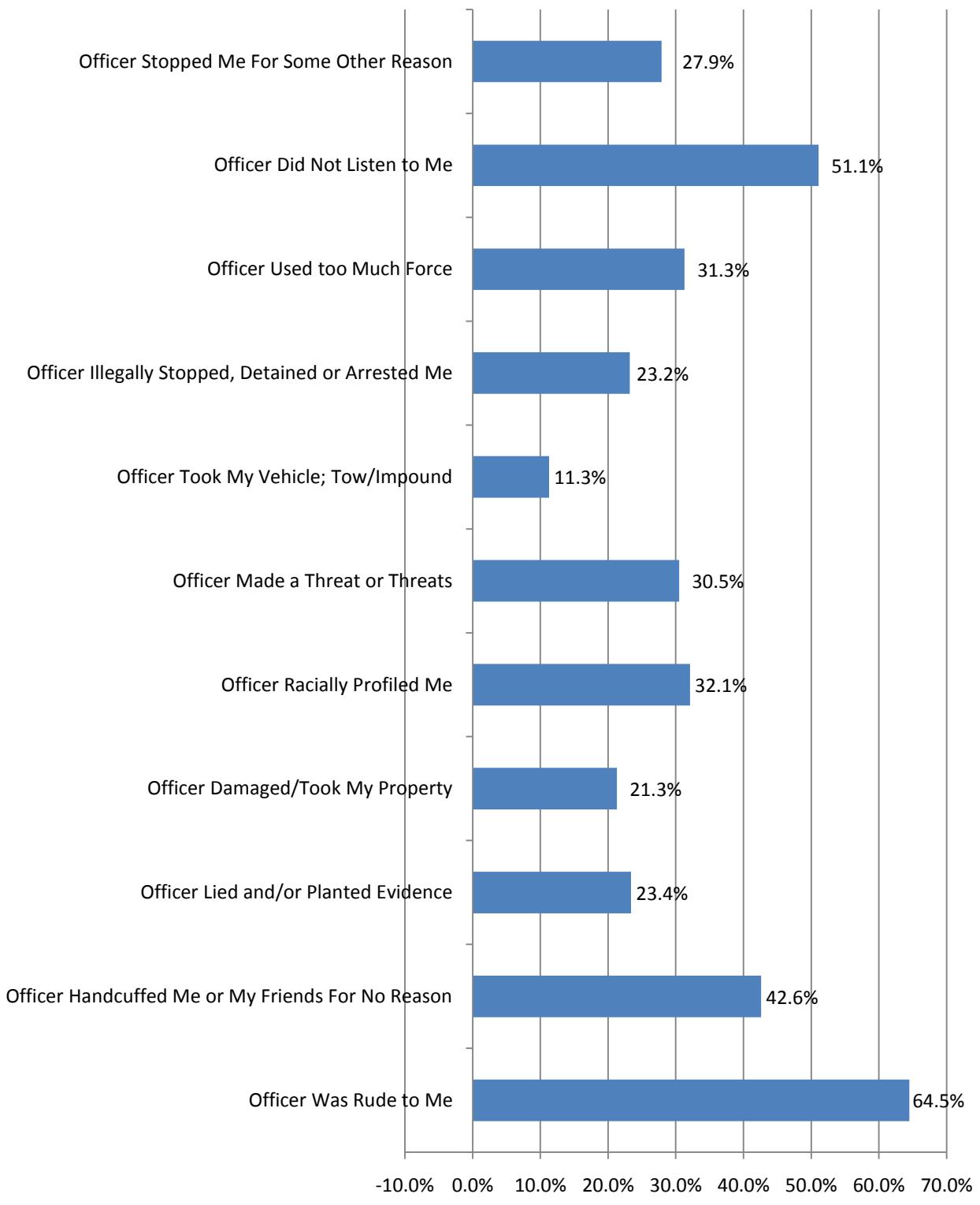
### Respondents' Themes of Positivity in Police Experience

N=707



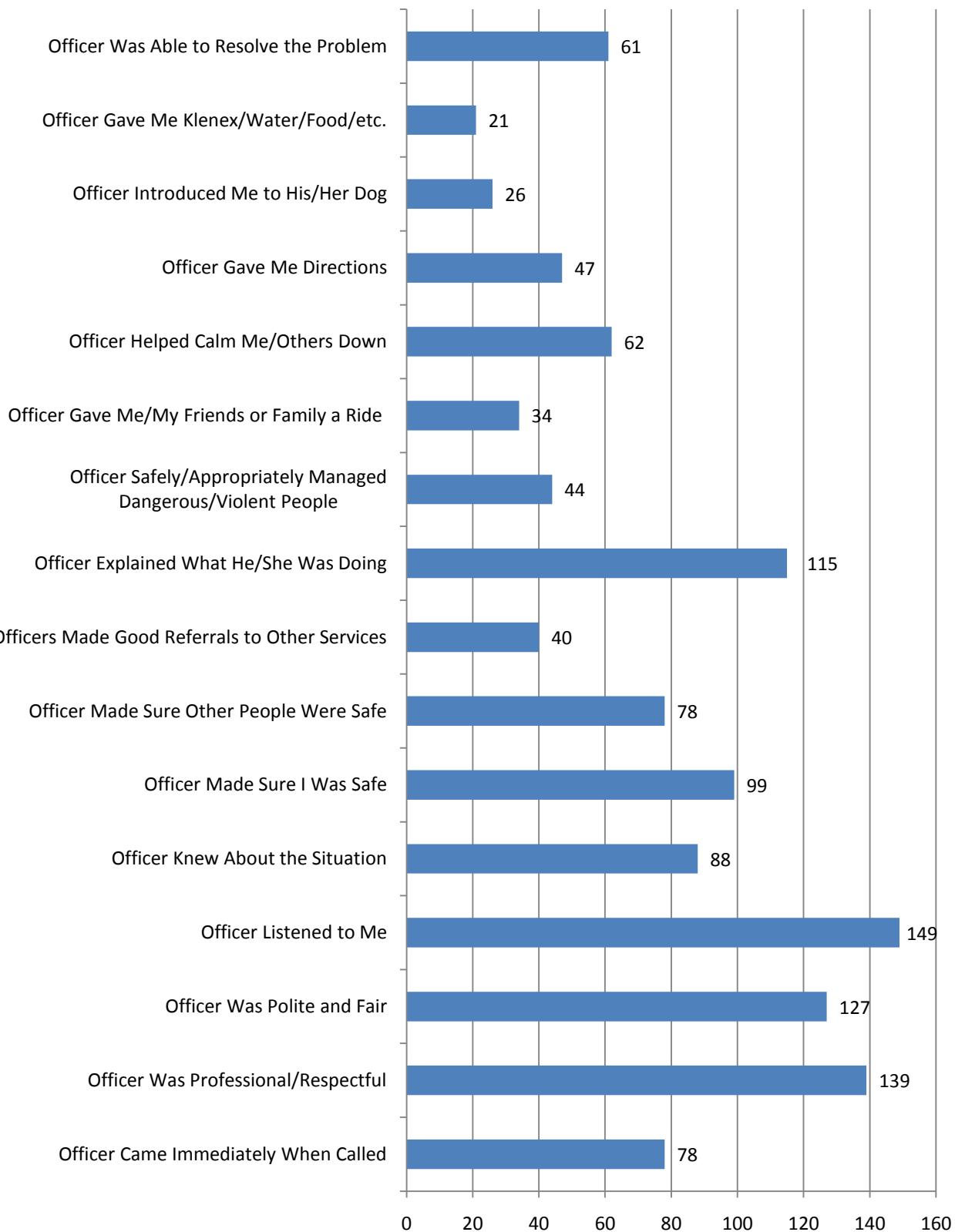
## Respondents' Themes of Negativity in Police Experience

N=707



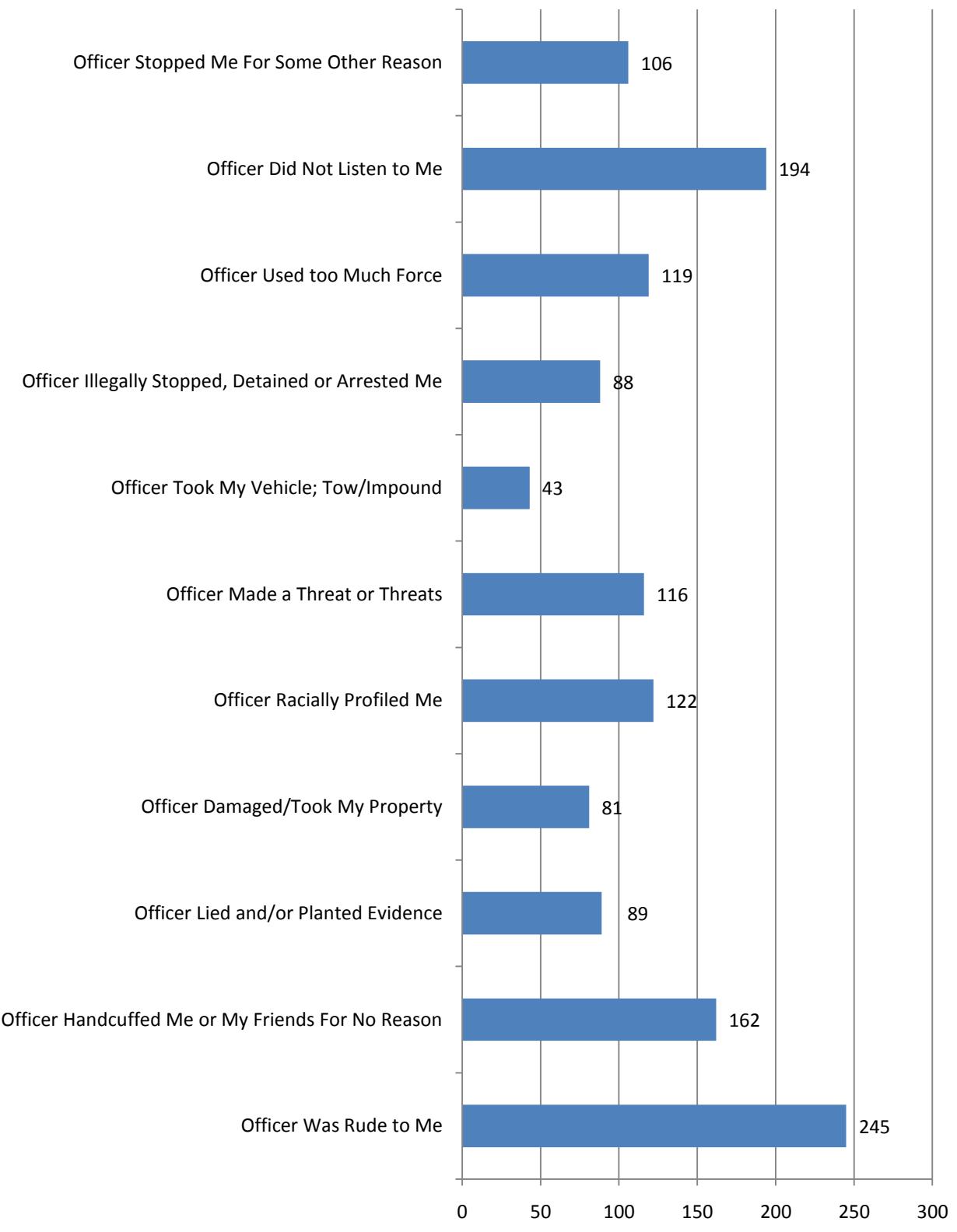
## Respondents' Themes of Positivity in Police Experience

N=707



## Respondents' Themes of Negativity in Police Experience

N=707

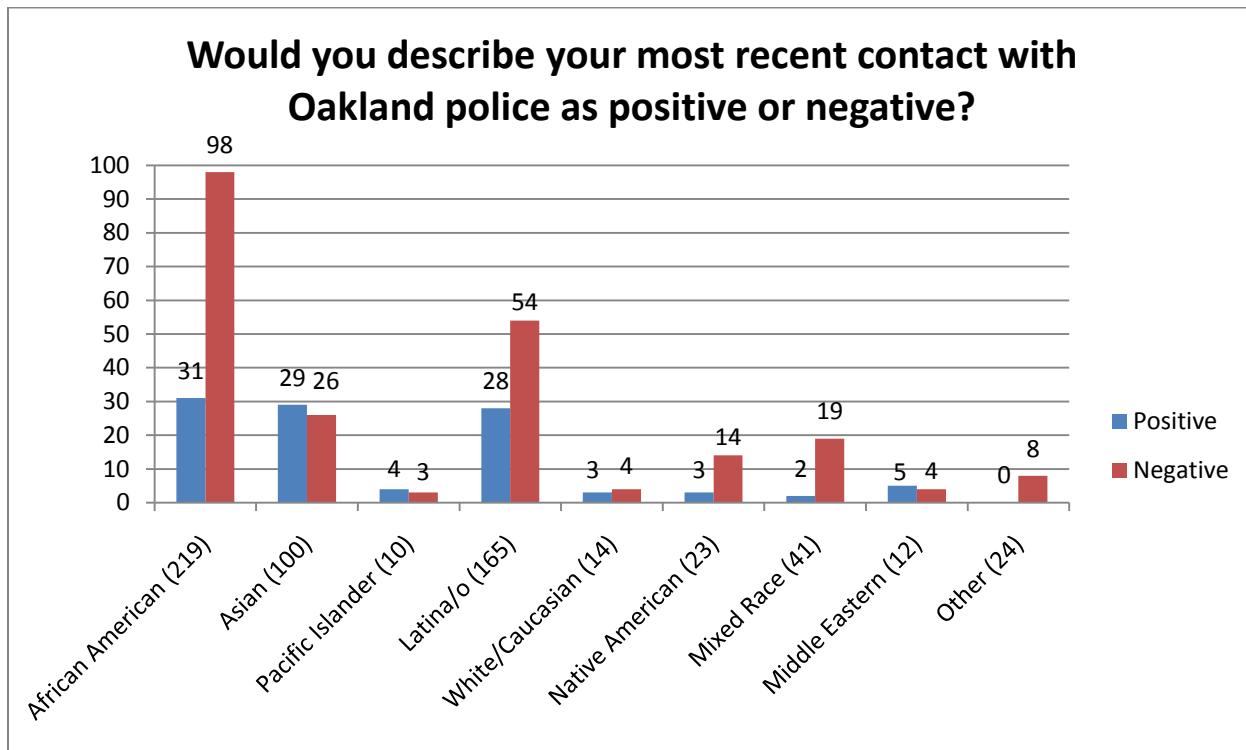
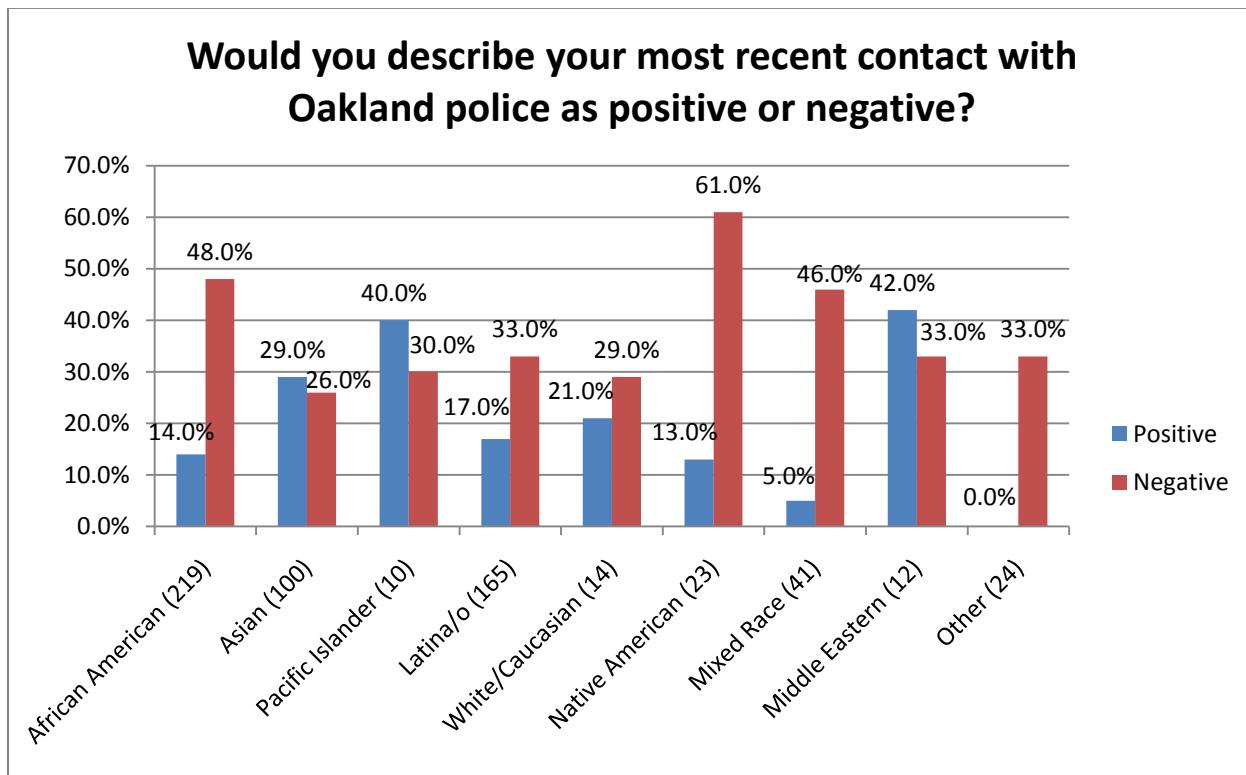


Not surprisingly, however, regression results suggest that students who have been arrested were less likely to feel safe and protected by the police, and more likely to feel fear or to run when they encounter the police. Interestingly, however, the number of contacts that a student reported having with the police was *positively* related to whether s/he would consider becoming a police officer and to whether s/he would feel comfortable asking the officer's name. Perhaps more contact with the police gives opportunities for positive experiences, suggesting that outreach by the police toward youth in the community may have a positive impact.

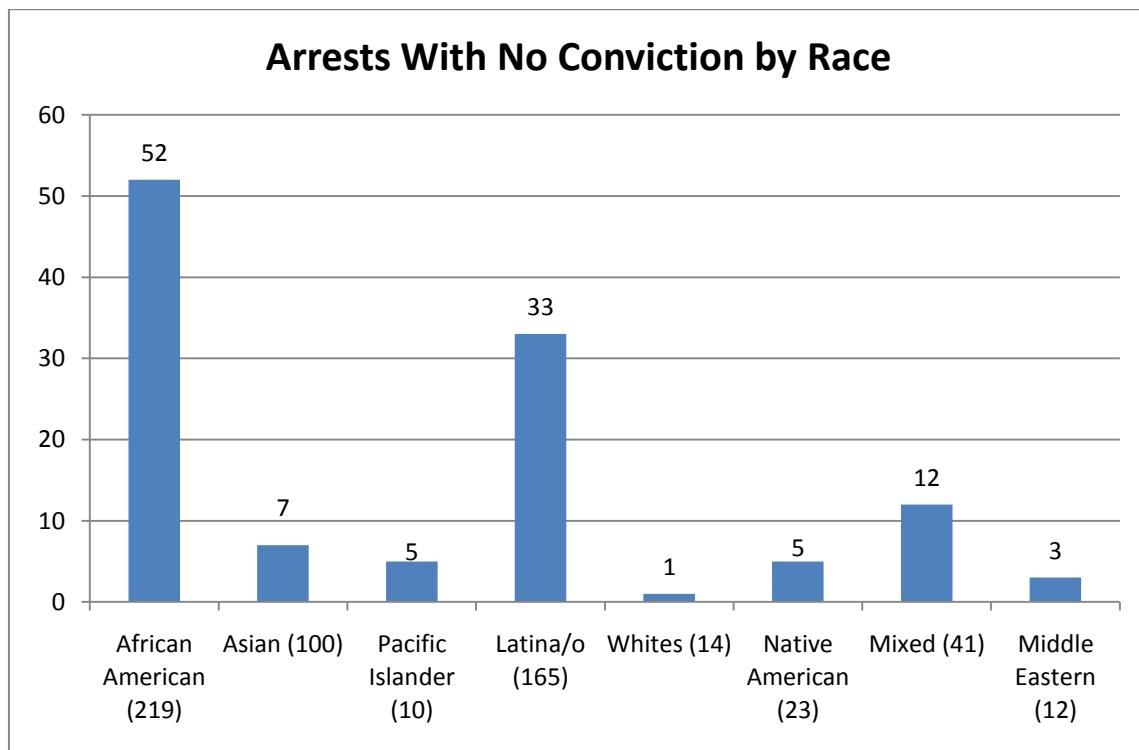
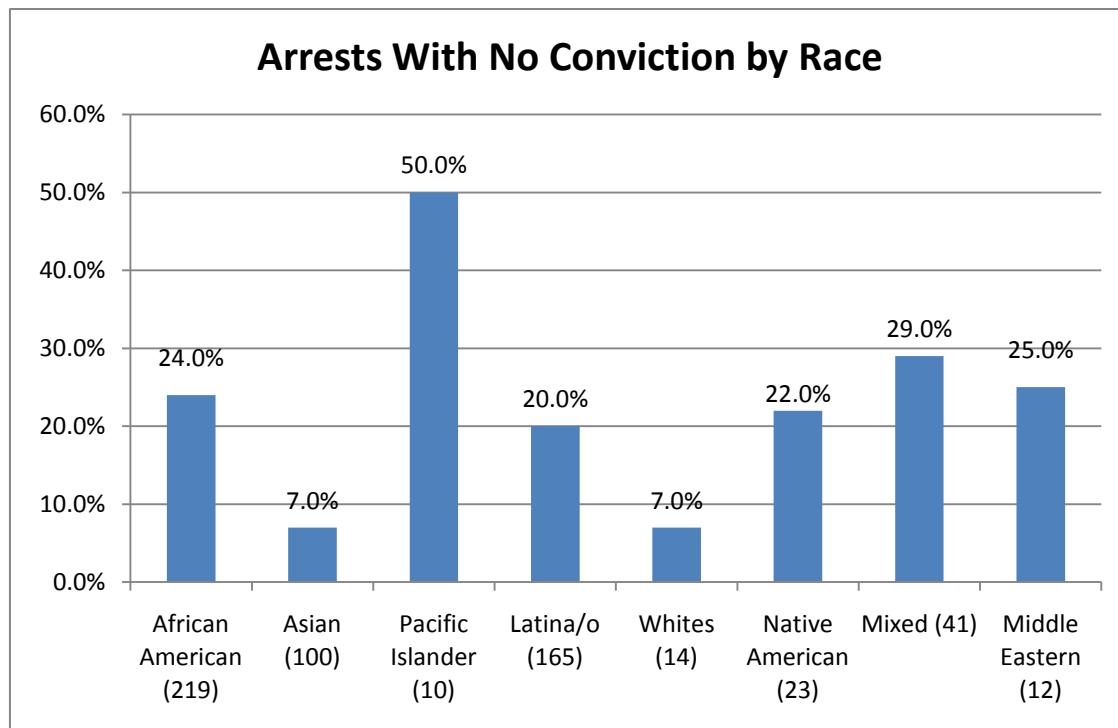
Outcome	Number of Contacts with Police	Have been arrested	Have been convicted	Had a positive last experience	Had a negative last experience
<b>Consider being a police officer</b>	+				
<b>Feel comfortable asking an officer's name</b>	+				
<b>Feel safe or protected around police</b>		-		++*	
<b>Feel nervous around police</b>			++*		
<b>Feel fear or run from police</b>		+	+		+
<b>Run from police</b>		+		-	

+- indicates a positive or negative relationship between variables  
 \* indicates statistical significance with a 5% margin of error  
 \*\* indicates statistical significance with a 1% margin of error

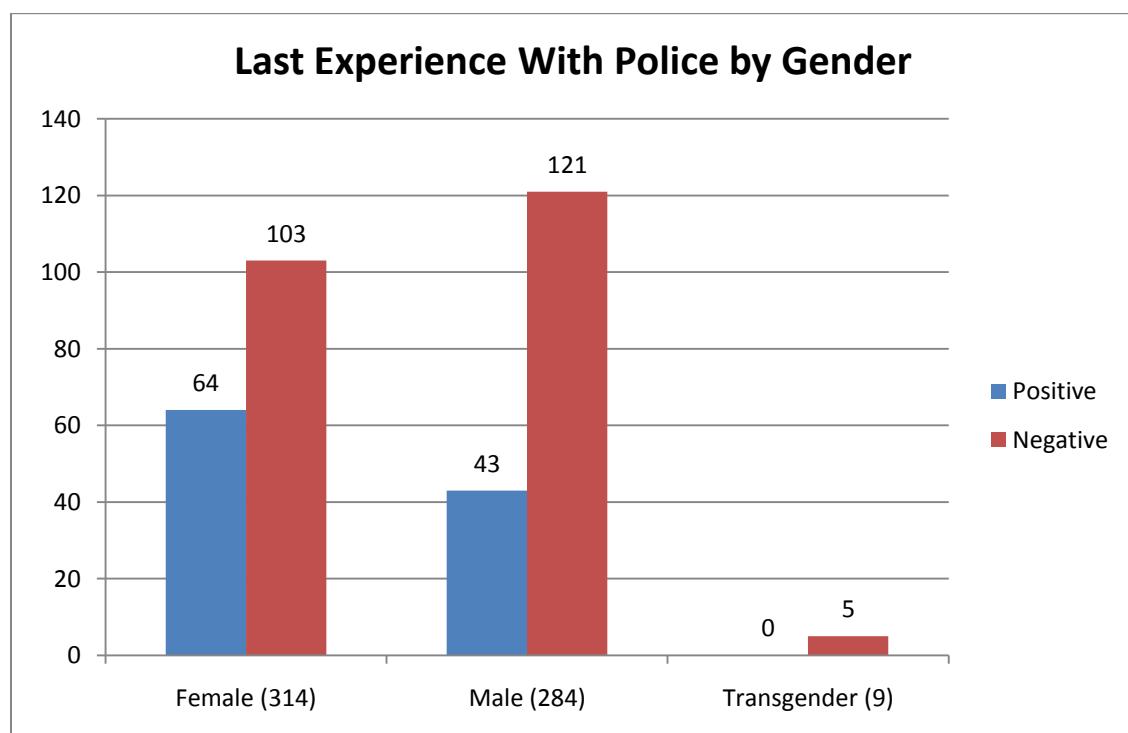
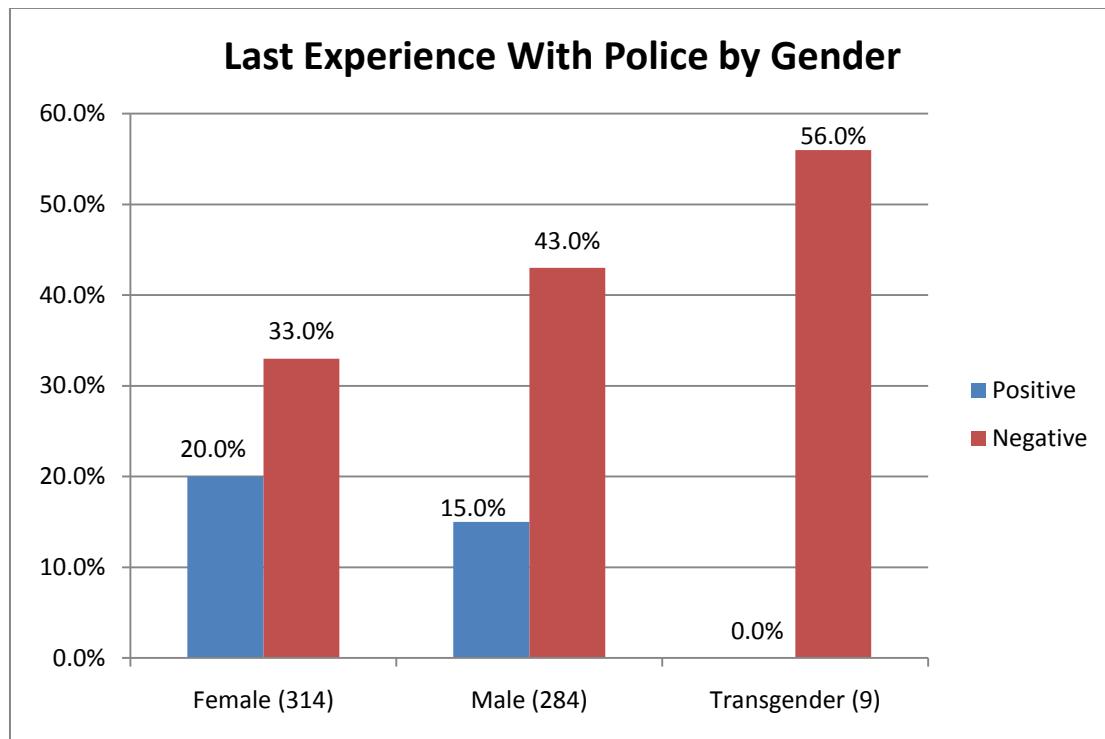
The positivity or negativity of the most recent contact with the police was different amongst different ethnic/racial groups, with Native American, African American, and mixed race students reporting disproportionately more negative experiences. Conversely, Middle Eastern and Pacific Islander students, while their numbers were small, were more likely to report positive experiences.



Interestingly, however, half of the ten Pacific Islanders in the study reported being arrested but not convicted, compared to about 20% for most of the other groups, and, at the other extreme, 7% of both Asian and white students reported being arrested but not convicted.

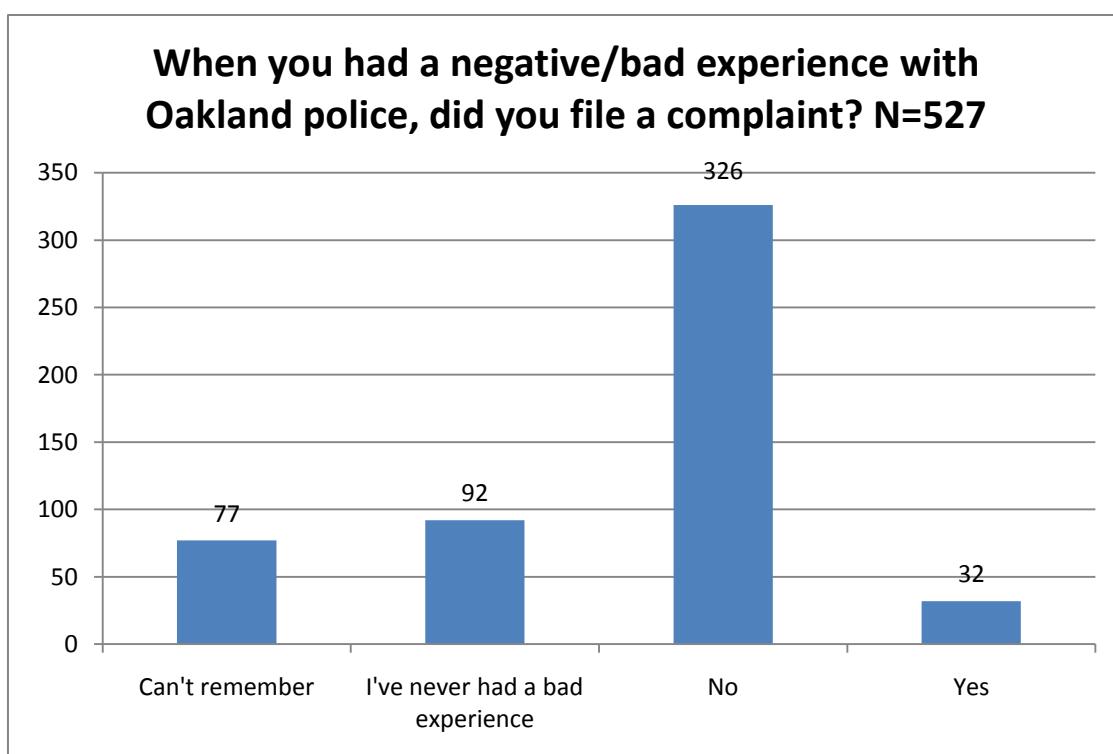
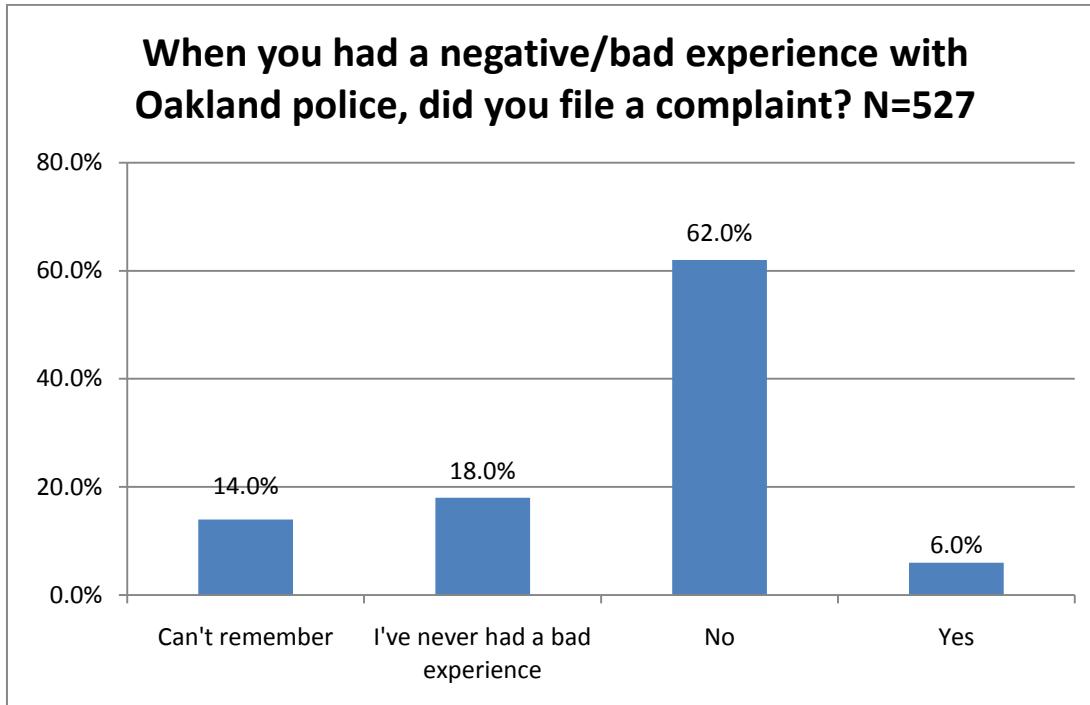


Male, female, and transgender individuals also reported different proportions of positive and negative experiences, with males reporting more negative experiences than females and transgender individuals, while a small proportion of the sample, reporting an even higher proportion of negative experiences.

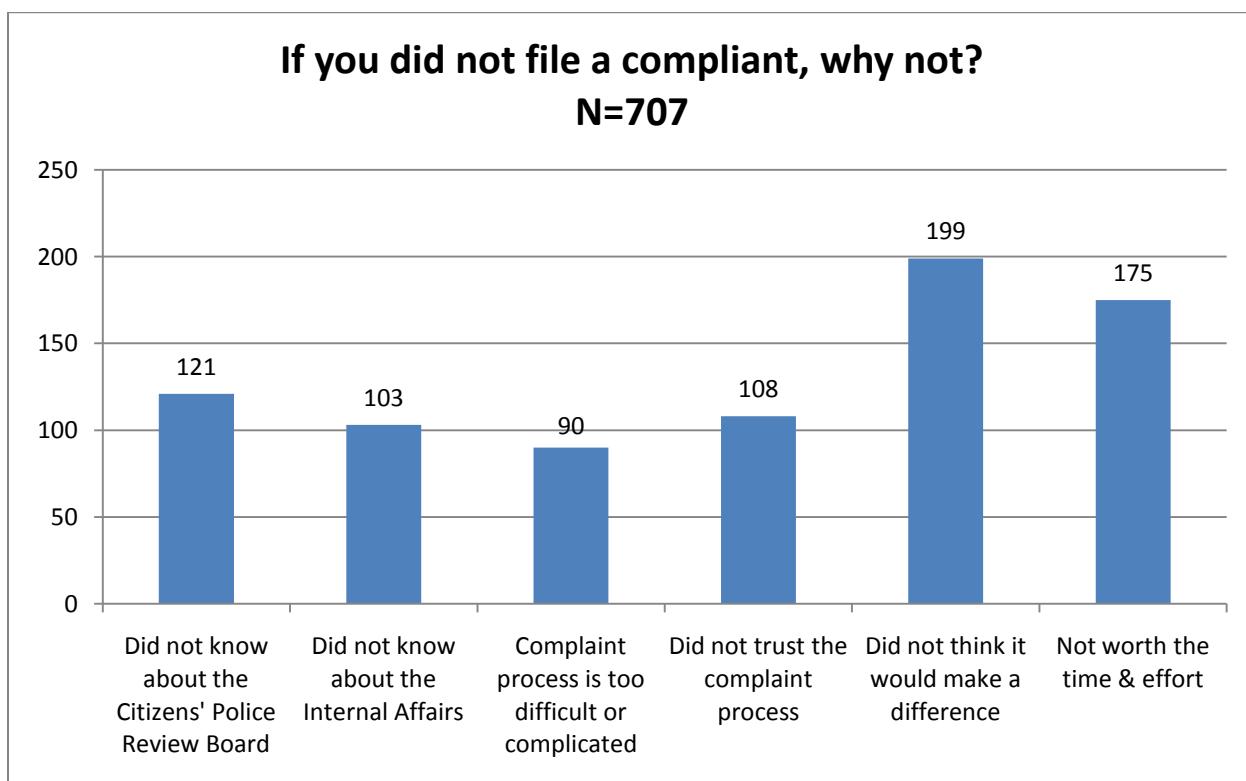
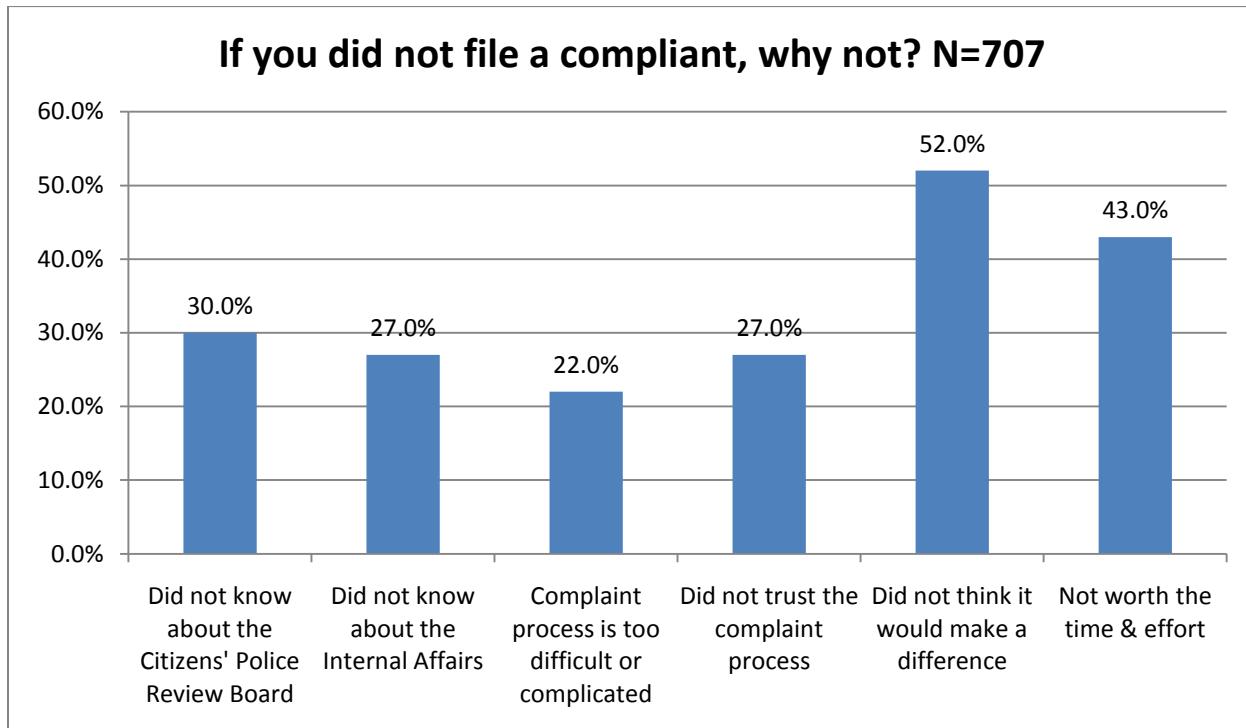


## The Complaint Process

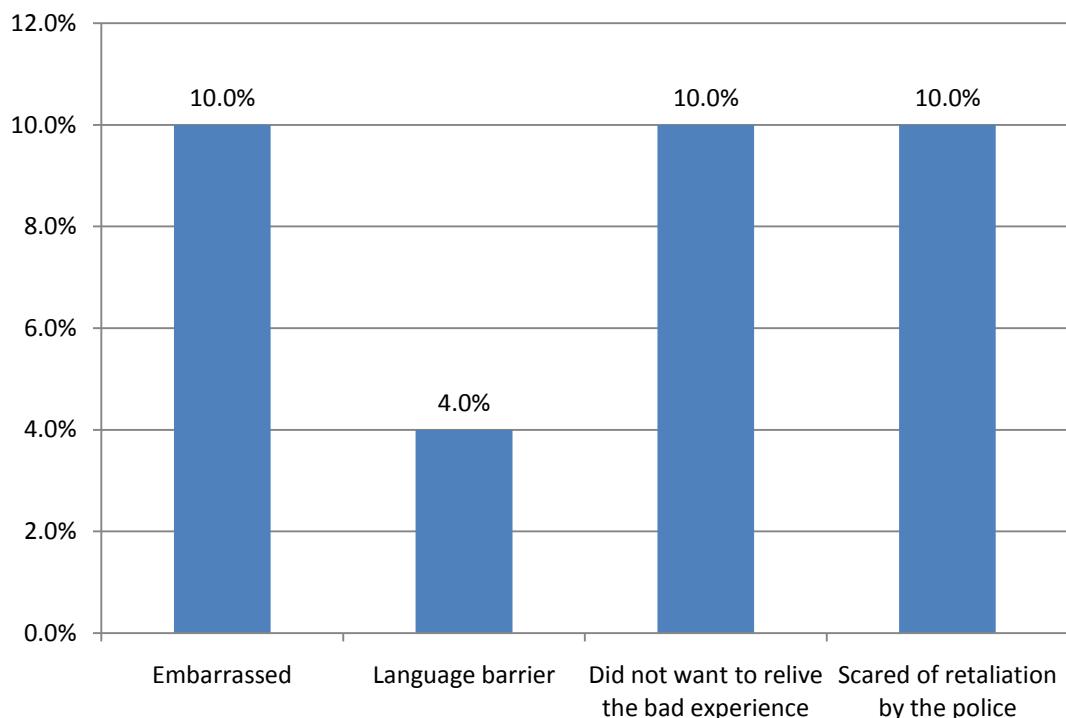
Only 6% of students who had a negative experience reported filing a complaint, with 79% unaware that they could complain to the Citizen's Police Review Board and 71% unaware that they could complain to Internal Affairs.



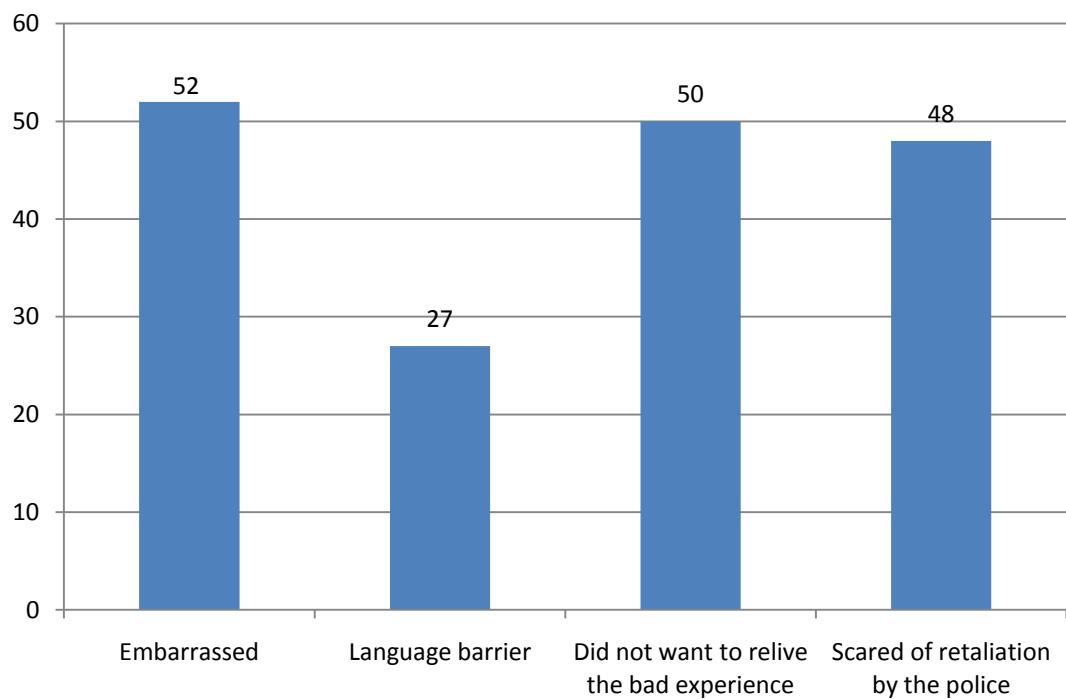
The reasons most often given were that students felt that a complaint would not make a difference or that it was not worth the time and effort.



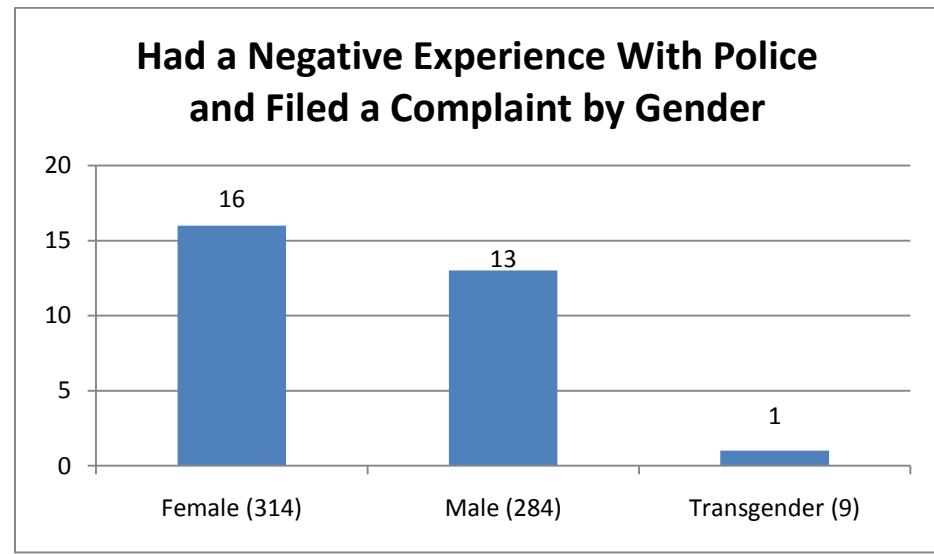
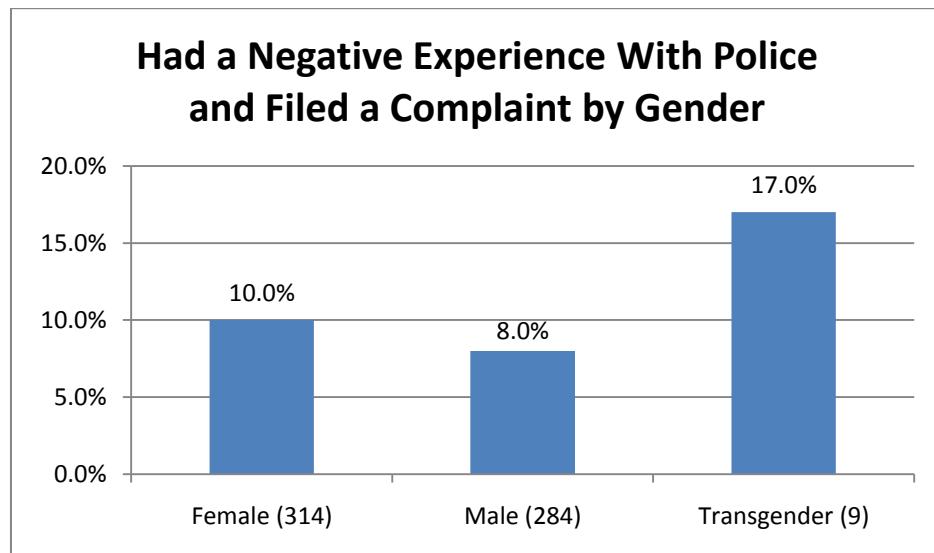
### If you did not file a compliant, why not? N=707



### If you did not file a compliant, why not? N=707



Males and females were almost equally unlikely to file a complaint.

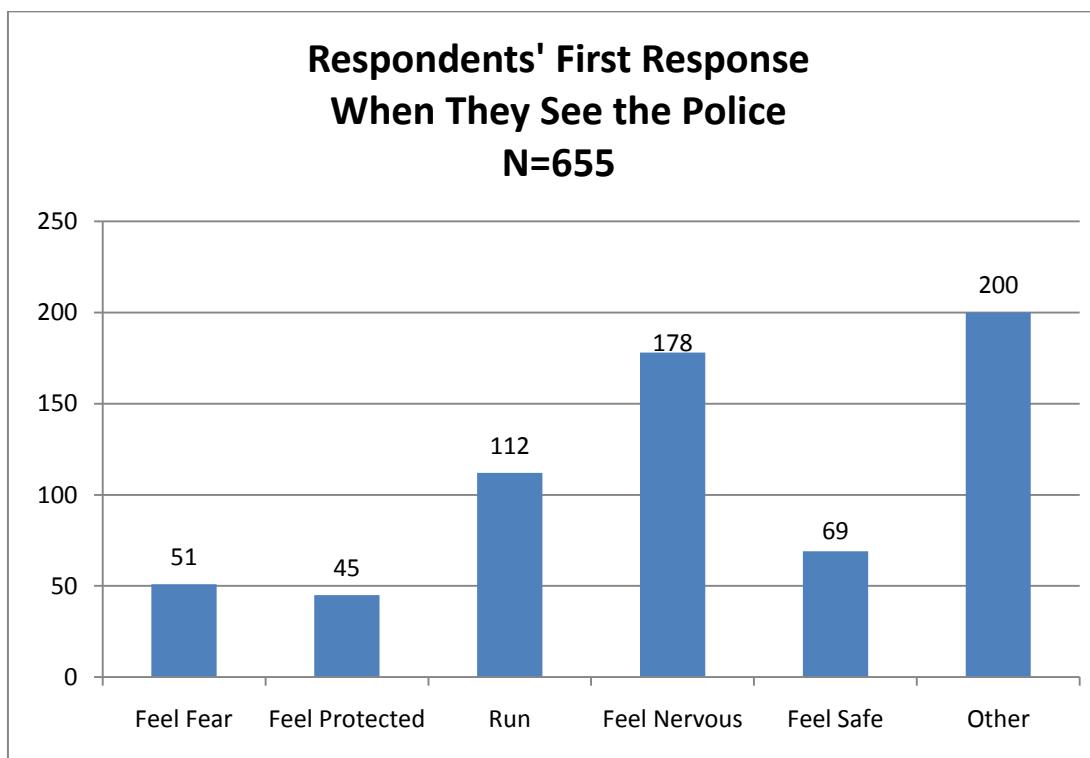
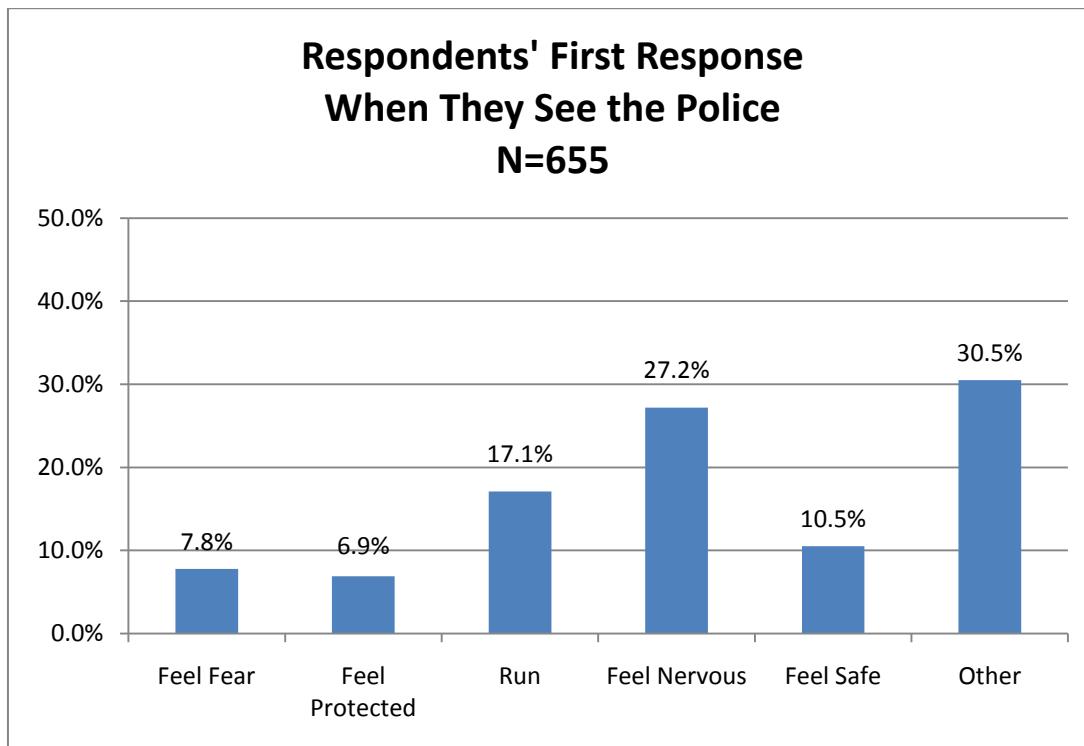


Regression results showed no impact of the students' perceptions of and experiences with the police on how likely they were to report a complaint. However, since only 32 out of 326 respondents filed a complaint, variance may not have been sufficient to show an effect.

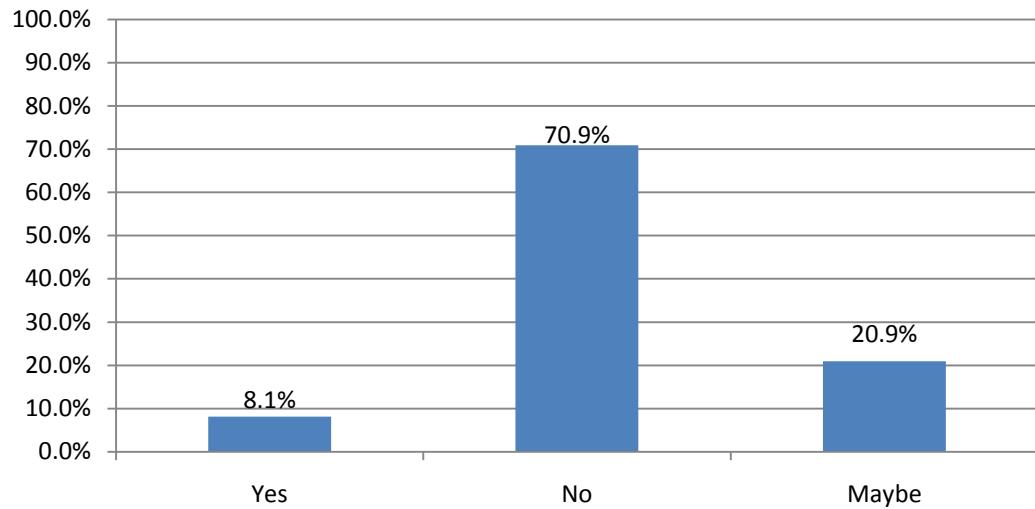
## Implications

Overall, results suggest that an outreach campaign by the police force to allow positive contact between youth and the officers may have a powerful impact on the young people's response to the police. Further, the simple acts of listening to the young people, explaining what they are doing, and being polite and respectful had a strong impact on students' perceptions of their experience, suggesting an inexpensive and powerful way to build a stronger relationship with the community's future. And, lastly, giving the youth a voice by informing them about the complaint process may also empower them rather than making them feel like victims of the system.

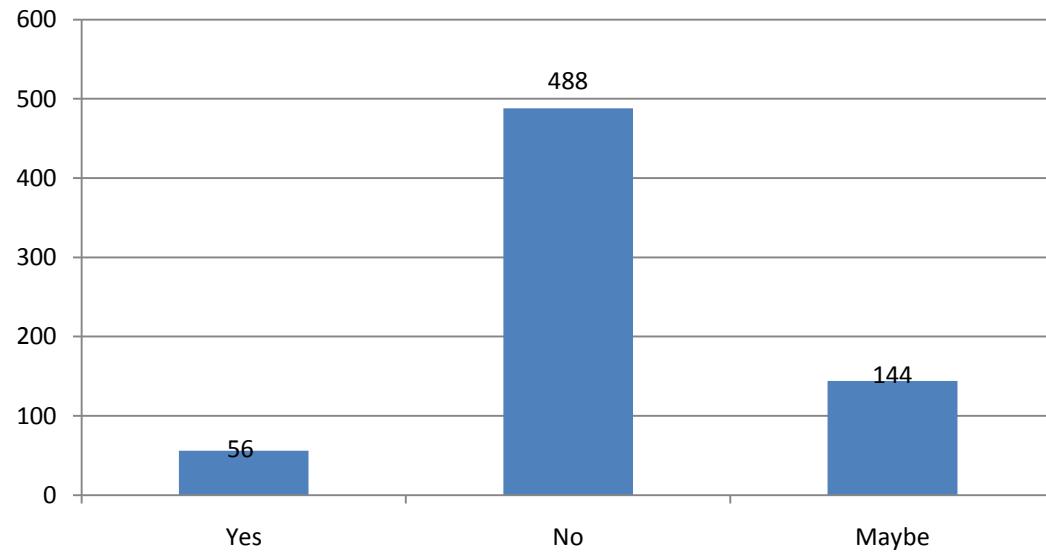
## APPENDIX



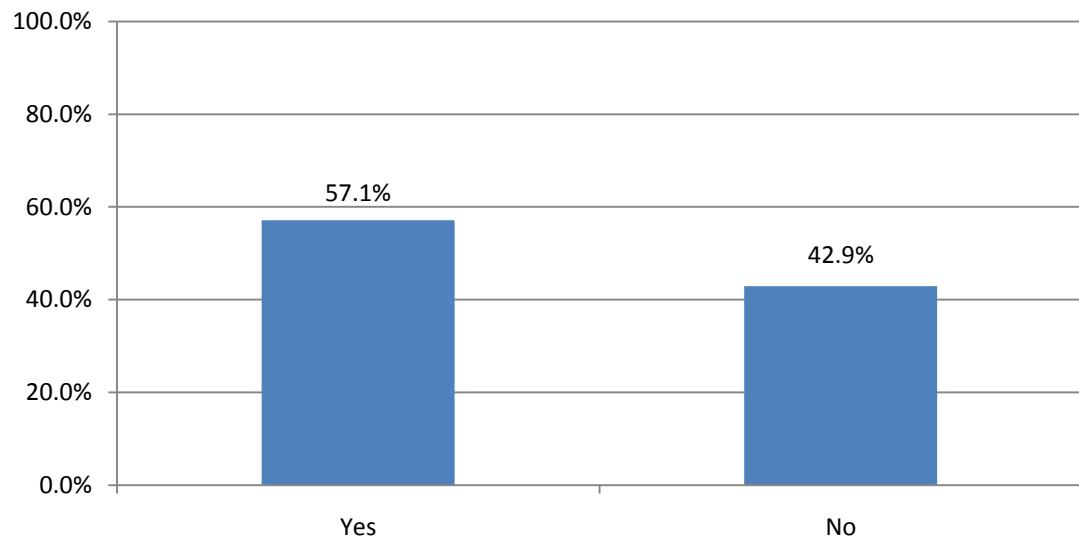
**Percentage of Respondents Who  
Want to be Police Officers  
N=688**



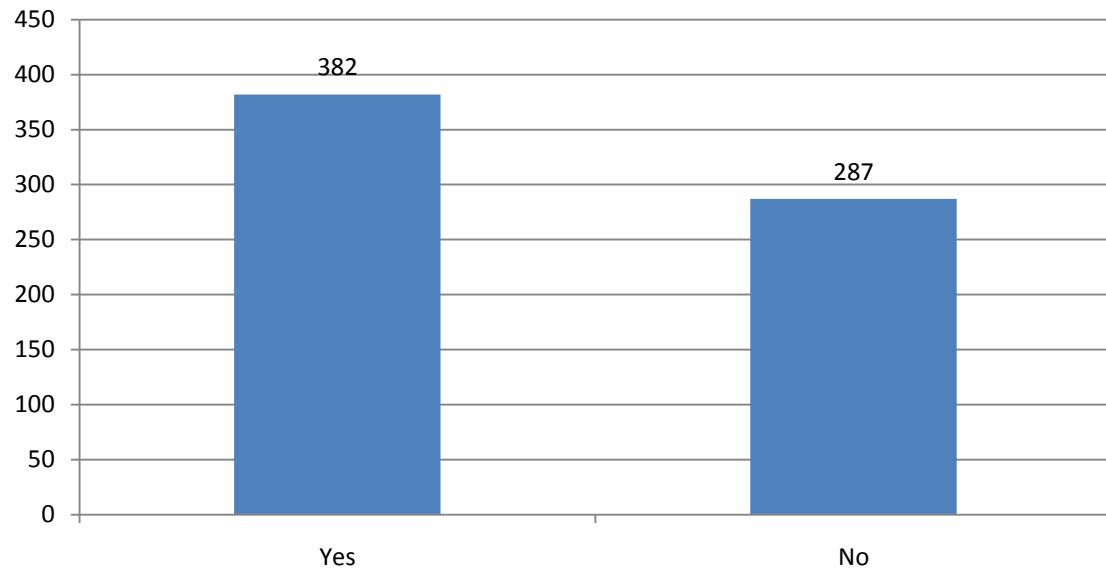
**Number of Respondents  
Who Want to be Police Officers  
N=688**

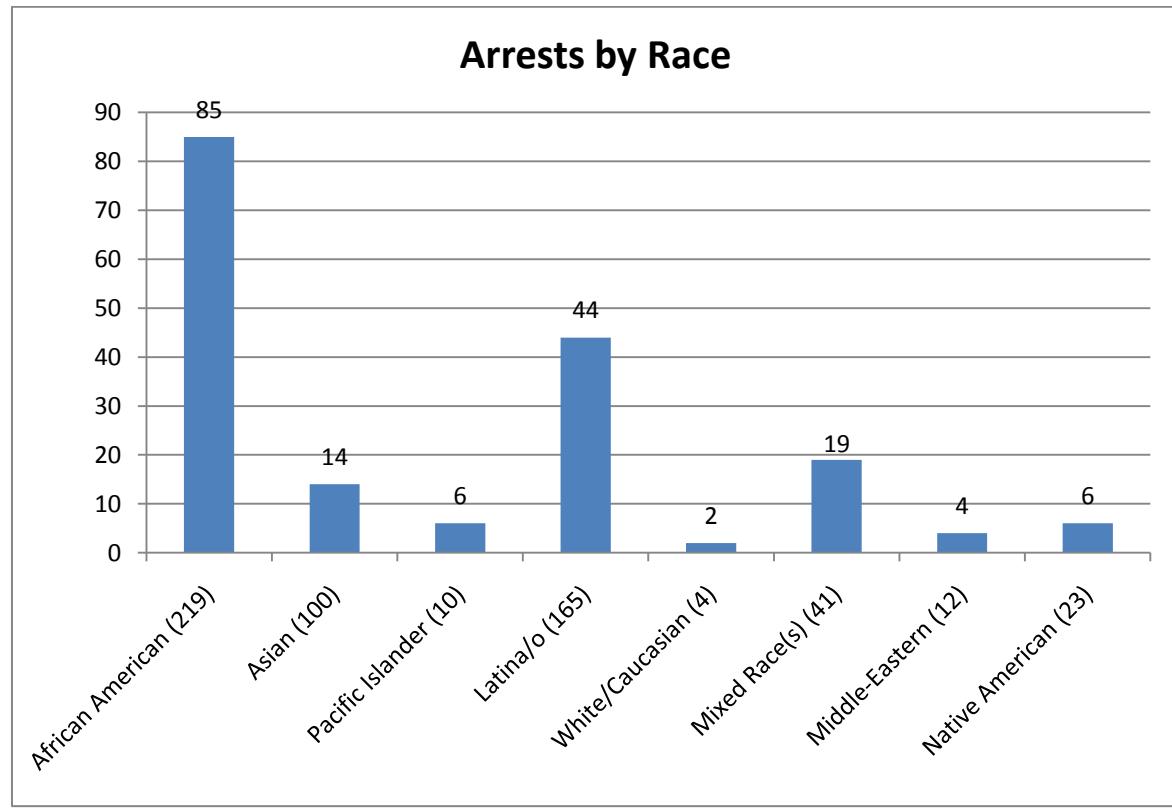
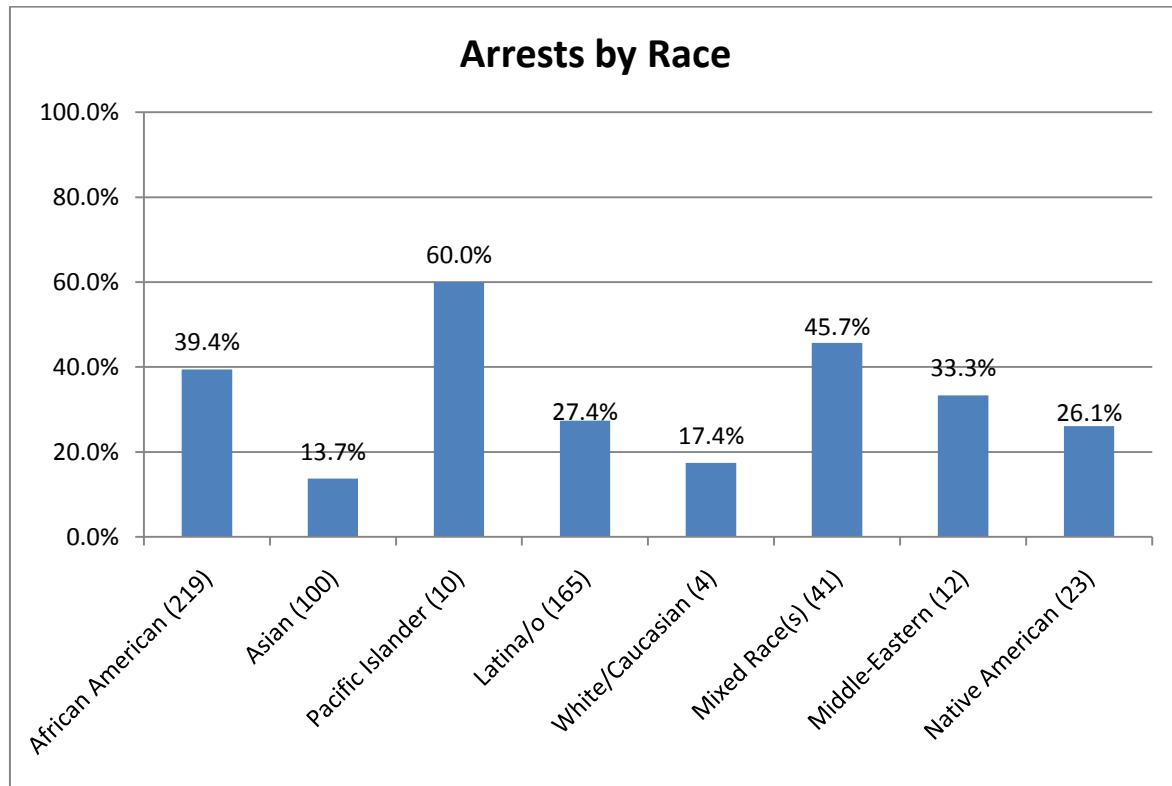


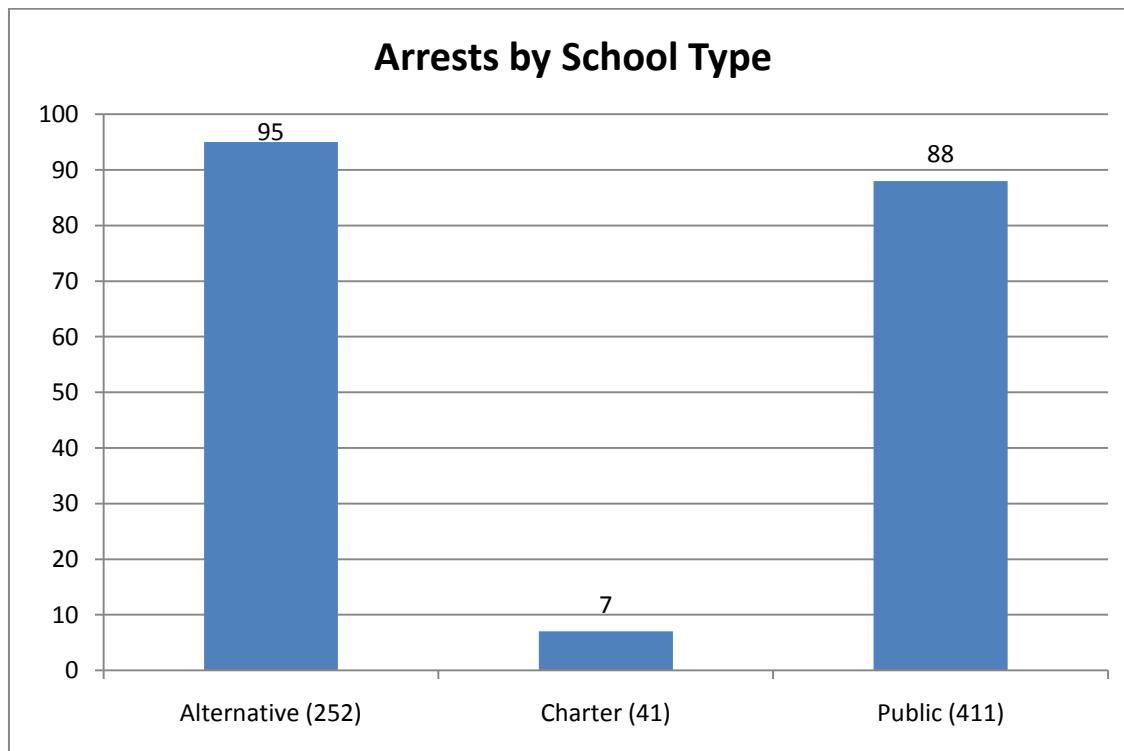
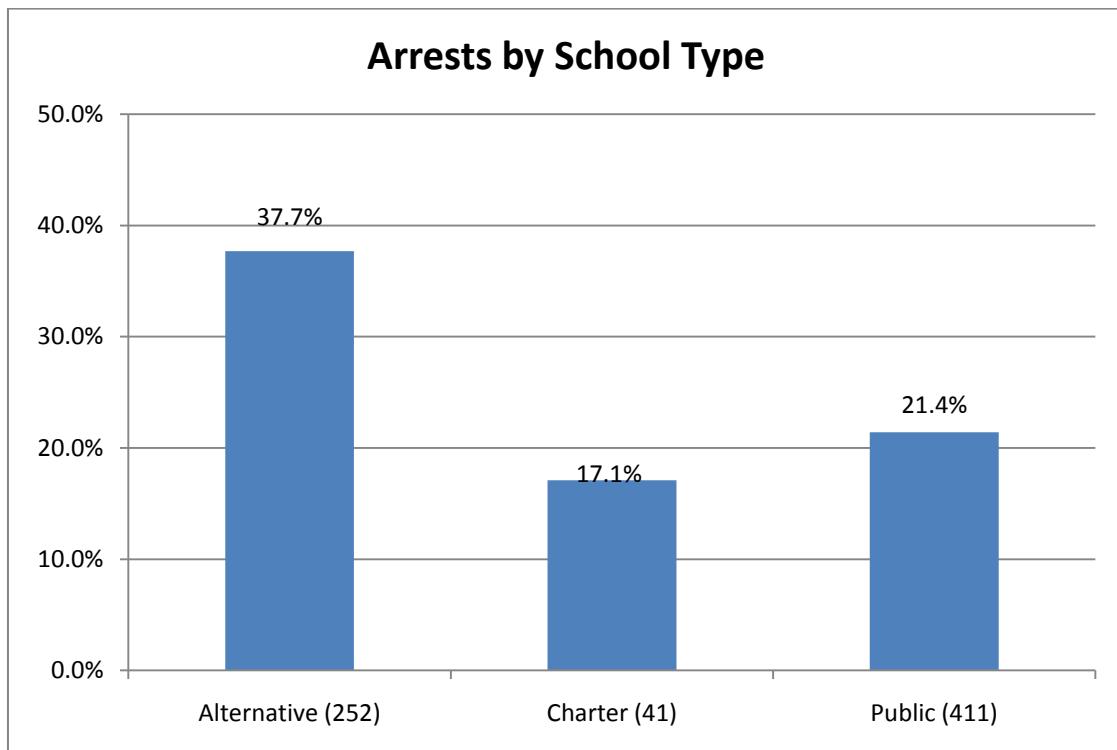
**Respondents' Comfort Level  
Asking the Police Their Name  
N=669**

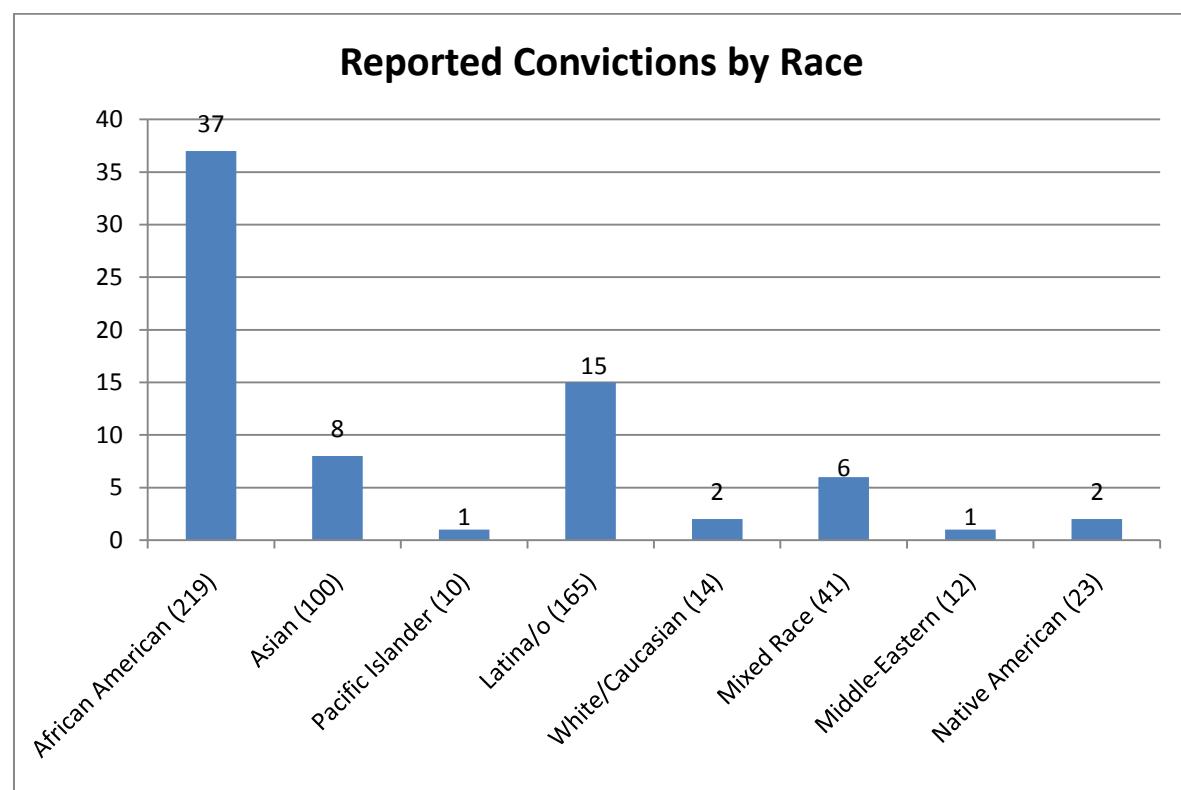
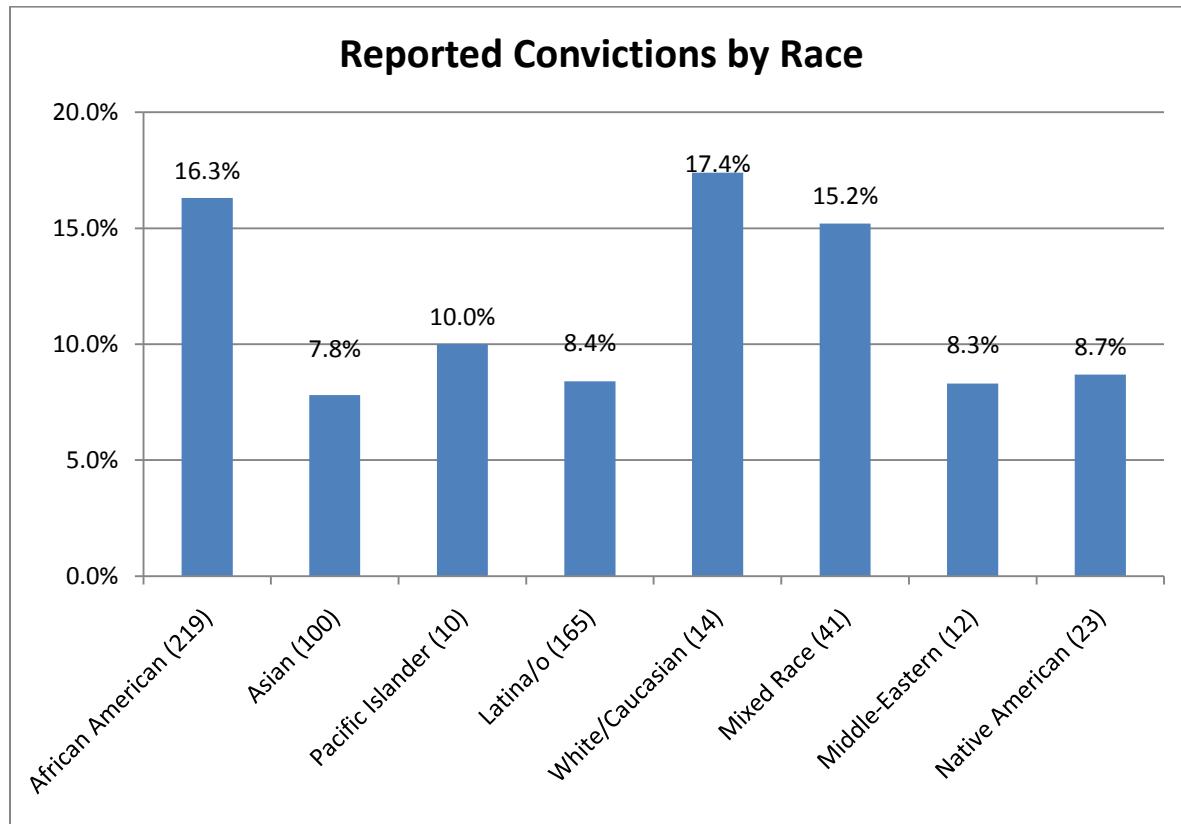


**Respondents' Comfort Level  
Asking the Police Their Name  
N=669**

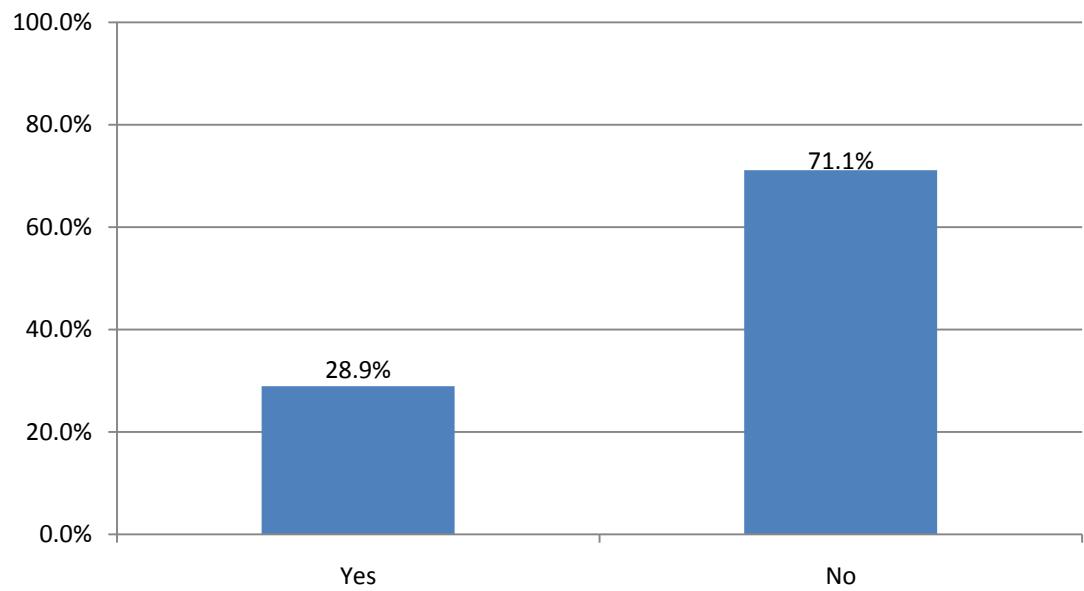




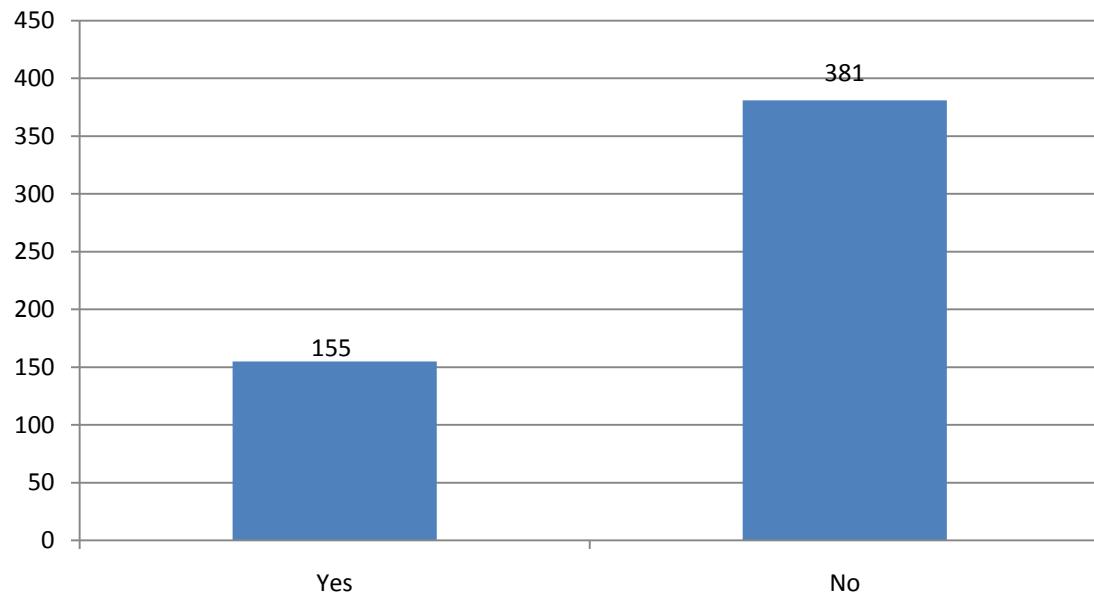




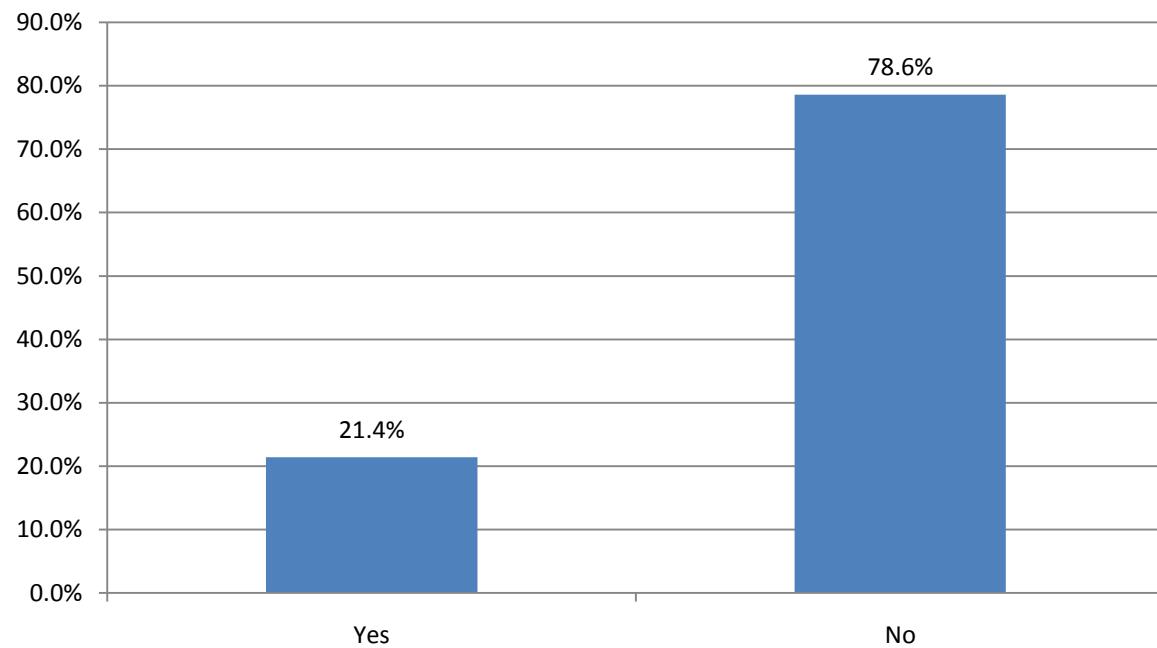
**Percent Aware that One Can Report Complaints  
to the OPD Internal Affairs Division N=536**



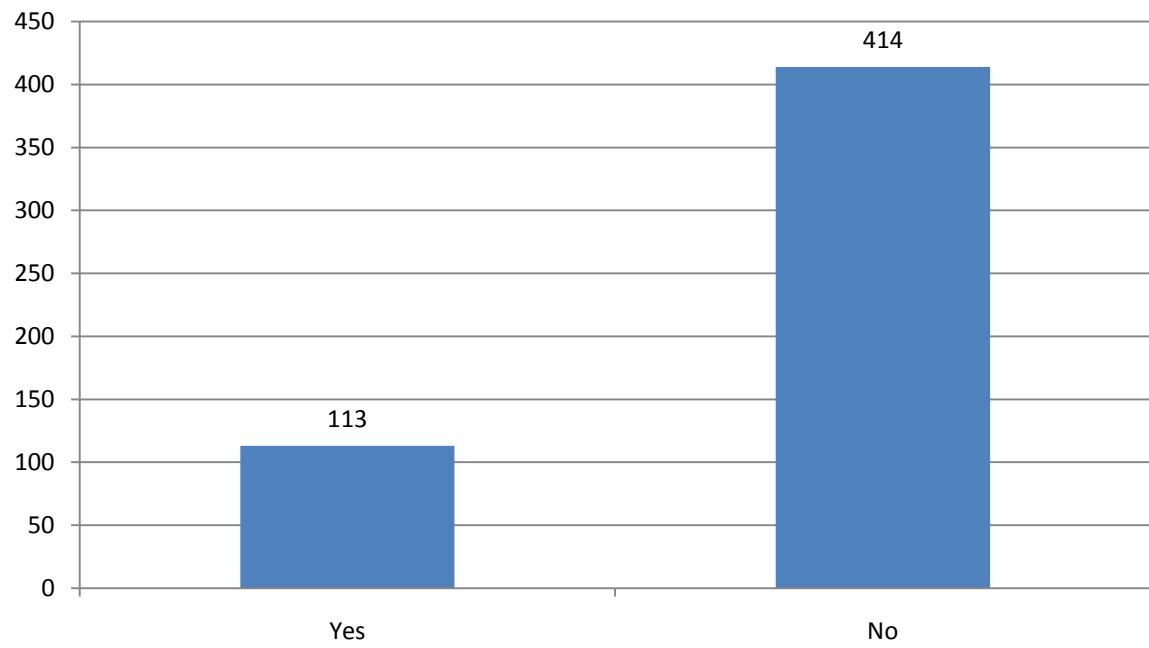
**Number Aware that One Can Report Complaints to  
the OPD Internal Affairs Division N=536**



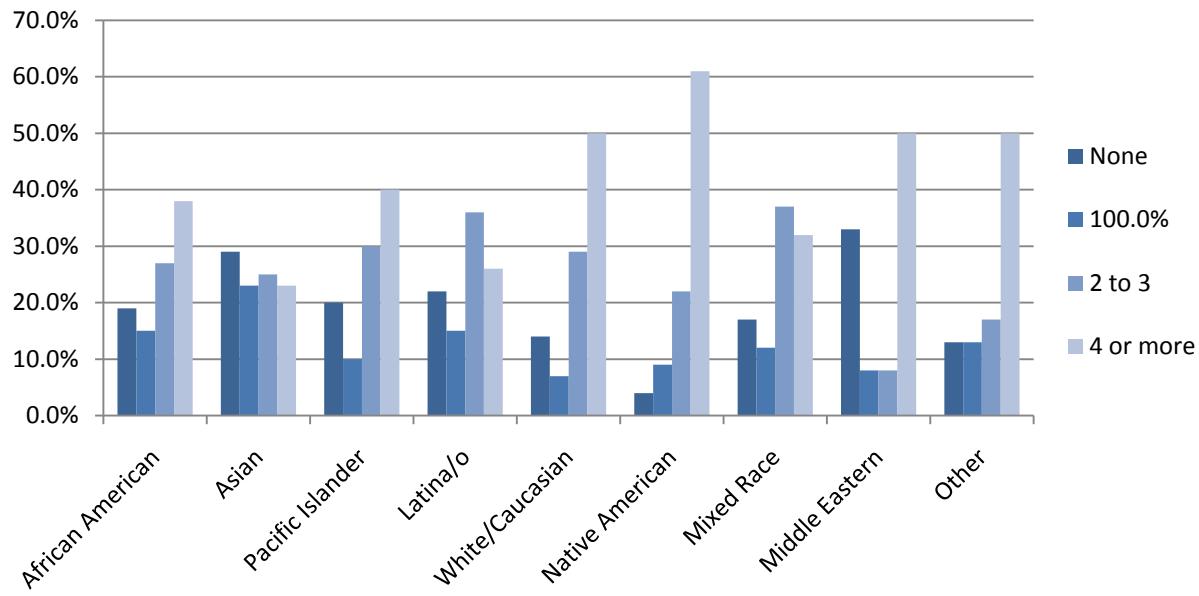
**Percent Aware that One Can Report Complaints to  
the Citizens' Police Review Board N=527**



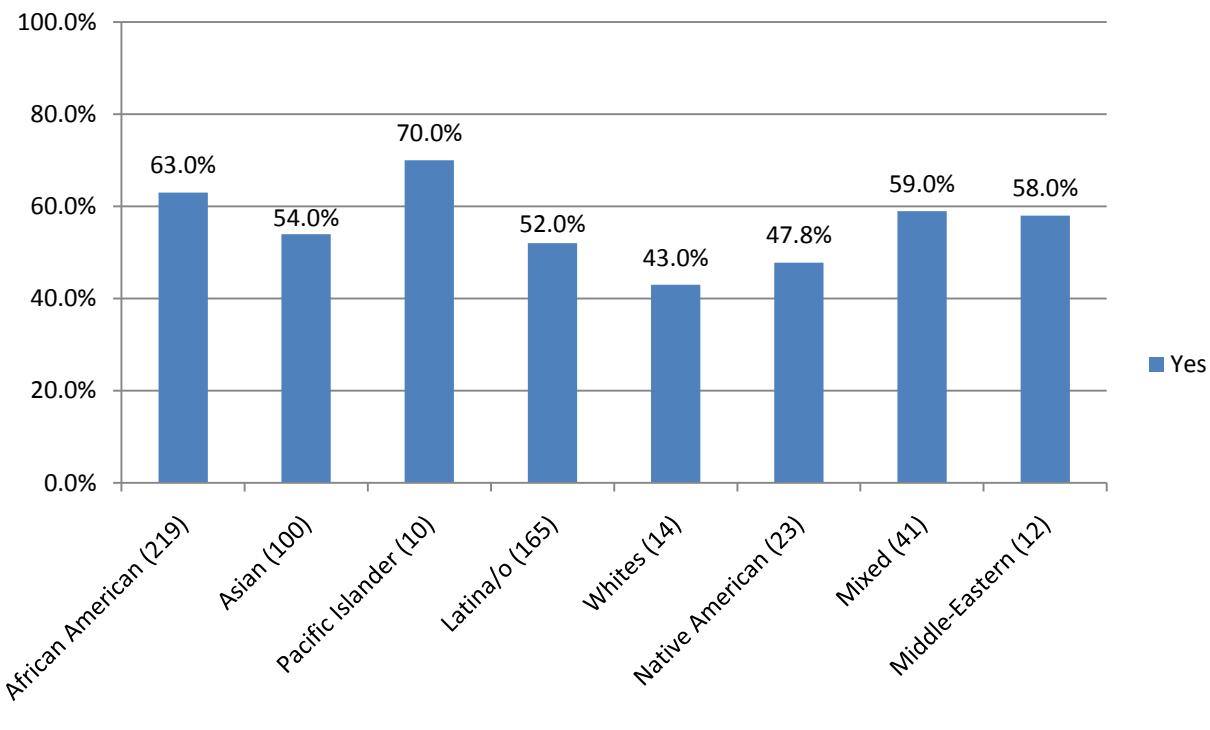
**Number Aware that One Can Report Complaints to  
the Citizens' Police Review Board N=527**



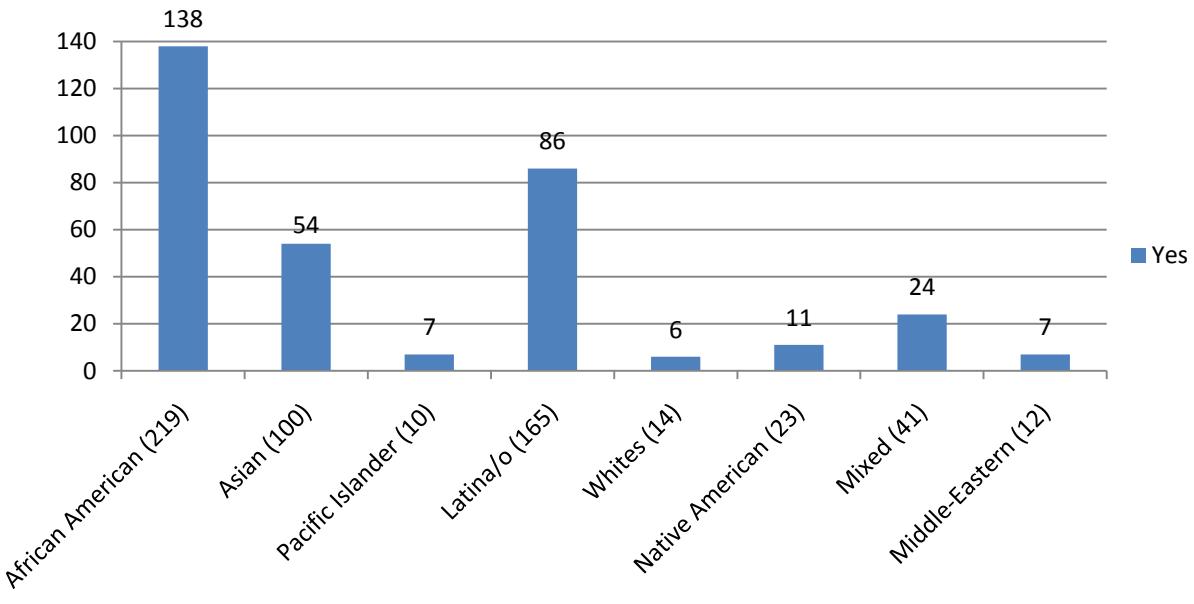
## How many contacts have you ever had with an Oakland police officer?



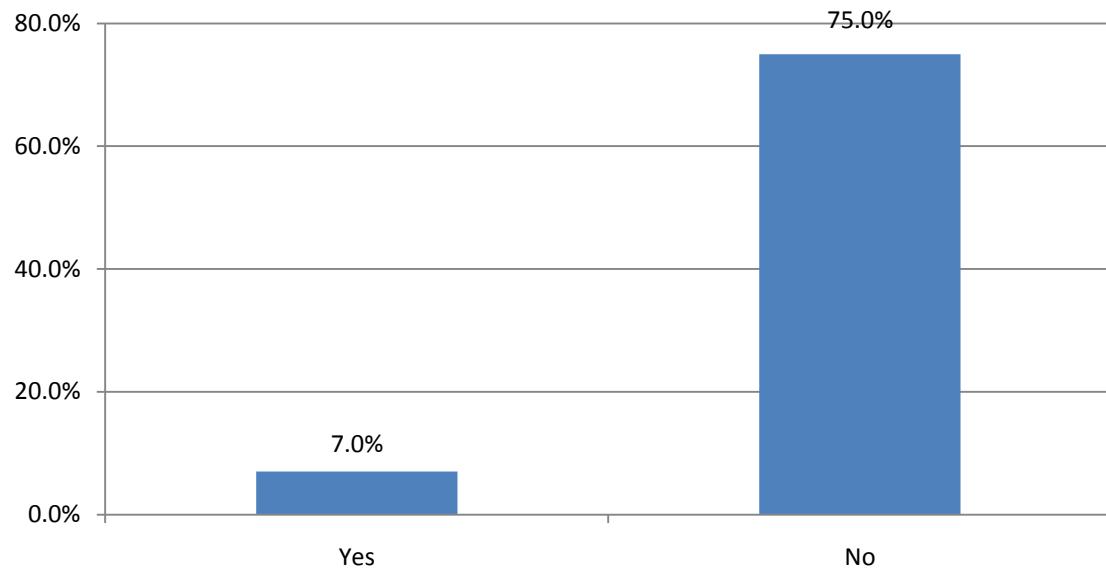
### Would you feel comfortable asking a police office for their name?



### Would you feel comfortable asking a police officer for their name?



**Percent That Filed a Complaint of Those With a  
Negative Experience**  
**N=246**



**Percent That Filed a Complaint of  
Those With a Negative Experience**  
**N=246**

