

Community Concerns and Desires: Analysis of Avenue D TIPS Initiative (July 2015)

**Working Paper #2016-03
January 2016**



Christina Burnett
Research Assistant
ccb4268@rit.edu

Jamie Dougherty
Research Associate
(585) 475-5591
jmdgcj1@rit.edu

John Klofas, Ph.D.
Director, Center for Public Safety Initiatives
Rochester Institute of Technology
(585) 475-2432
jmkgcj@rit.edu

Survey

On July 16, 2015 the TIPS (Trust, Information, Programs, and Services) initiative was implemented around Avenue D and Conkey Avenue in Rochester, NY. The purpose of this initiative is to improve relations between the community and law enforcement as well as to investigate the community's feelings towards their neighborhood and local law enforcement. This report will analyze and discuss the findings of the collected surveys. In 2015, we made changes to the TIPS survey. In addition to asking residents about their concerns, satisfaction with local law enforcement, and perceptions of the community, we also asked questions relating to collective efficacy and involvement in neighborhood events or activities. We hope that adding these questions will give us a better insight into the surveyed neighborhoods and are piloting these survey changes.

Methodology

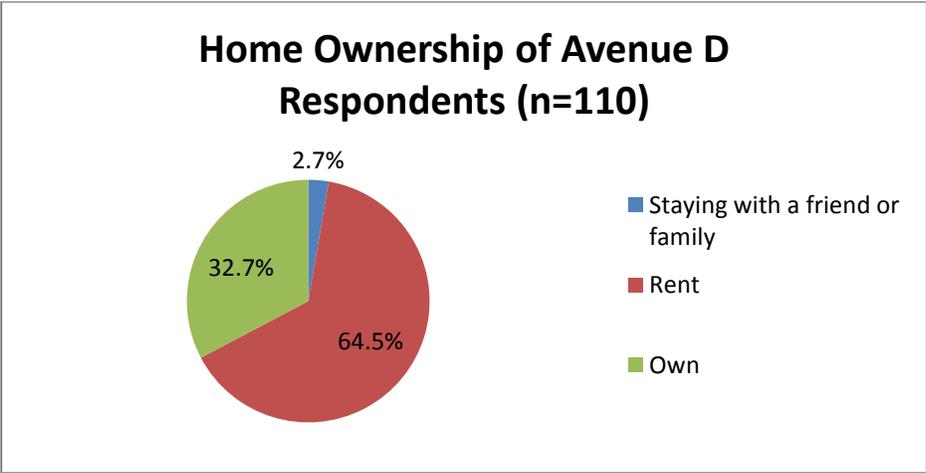
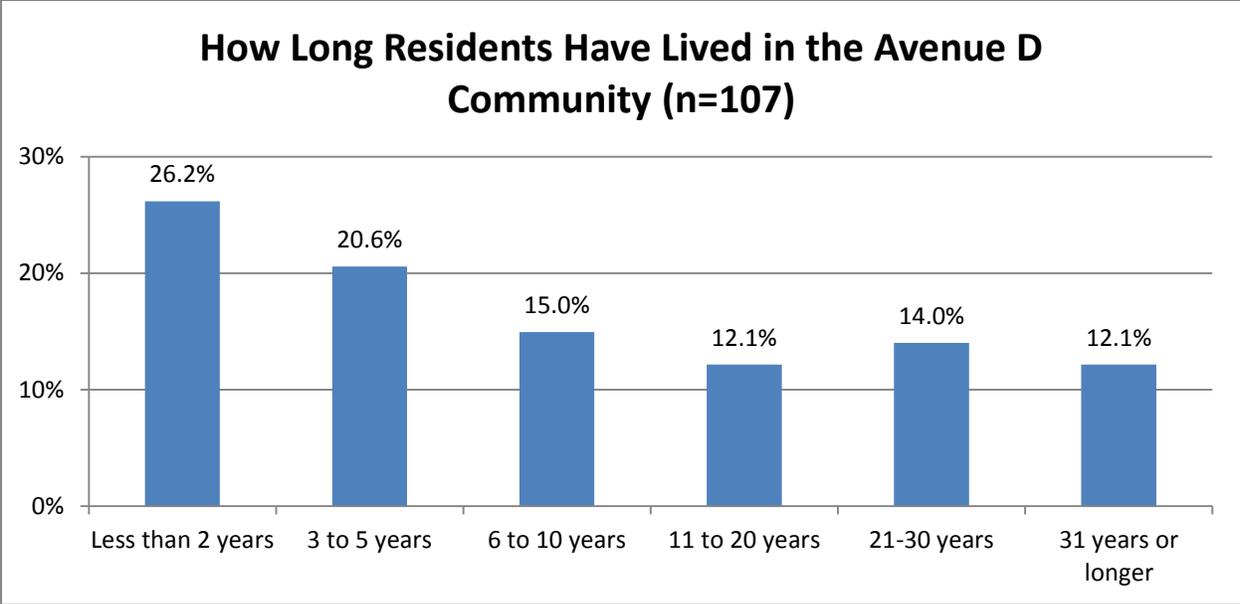
Groups of two or three volunteers are sent out with a law enforcement officer to administer the survey to preselected streets in the neighborhood. Each group was instructed to travel down one side of the street and then return on the other side, knocking on every door. When residents answered, the volunteers were to read a readymade script to the participant, obtain consent, and then verbally conduct the survey. Some respondents were also stopped on the street and asked to participate if they lived in the area. Only surveys of adults who lived in the area and agreed to take the survey are included in the sample.

Because of this door-by-door sampling method, the resulting sample is not a random sample of the Avenue D community; therefore, the results should be interpreted cautiously. Despite this, the resulting analysis should give valuable insight into the various issues and overall feelings of the community.

Results

Volunteers surveyed 18 streets in the Avenue D community. Due to the small number of surveys collected on each street, it is difficult to accurately compare among streets. Therefore, all surveys collected were pooled together for analysis. This group will be referred to as "the Avenue D community." A total of 110 surveys were collected from the neighborhood.

Firstly, close to half of respondents reported that they have lived in the area five years or less, with 26.2% of respondents living in the area less than two years. Over half (64.5%) of respondents are renting their home.



The next question asked respondents to list one thing that they liked most about living in the Avenue D community. Because this was an open-ended question, responses were categorized for analysis. Of the 83 people who responded to this question, 41% liked that it was quiet or peaceful most of the time. Other respondents felt that the people and the community were “nice,” and some mentioned that the location was convenient for them. The other values respondents listed are below.

Avenue D and Conkey Community Values (n=83)

	Frequency	Percent
Quiet/Peaceful Most of the Time	34	41.0
Nice People/Community	20	24.1
Location	6	7.2
Active Community	5	6.0
Lived There a Long Time	4	4.8
Culture Diversity	3	3.6
Family/Friends	3	3.6
Park/Playground/Rec Center	3	3.6
House/Property	1	1.2
Safe	1	1.2
Affordable	1	1.2
Neighborhood Watch	1	1.2
Kids	1	1.2
Total	83	100.0
-99.00	27	
	110	

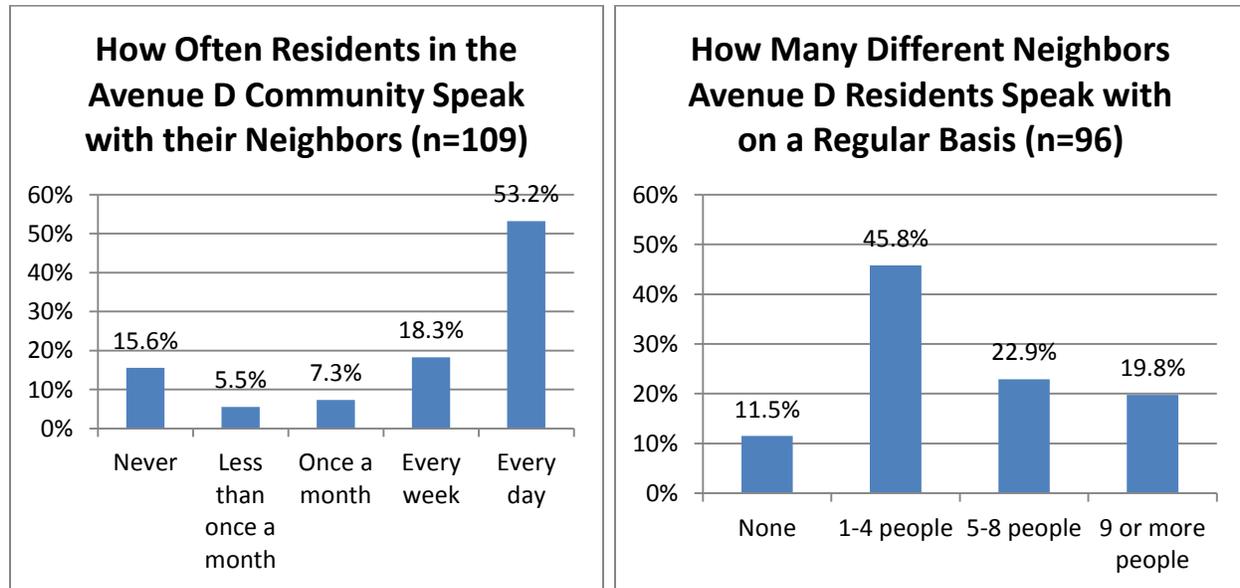
Involvement in the Community

By adding questions about how involved residents were in their community to the survey in 2015, we hoped to gauge residents' knowledge of services in their area as well as how willing they were to be involved in various activities. We also hoped to gauge how involved residents are with their neighbors. In June 2015, we asked questions about many specific services (i.e. PAC-TAC, neighborhood associations, etc.). This month, based on the results from last month, and to keep the survey as short as possible, we decided to include only one general question asking about all groups and organizations in the community.

Only 11% (n=109) of survey respondents in the Avenue D community are involved in some kind of neighborhood group or organization. People were most commonly involved in different churches in the area, a community garden, and a local block club. Those who are not involved expressed that they were too busy and/or did not know of any local groups or organizations. A couple of people mentioned that they would be interested in being involved but that they just moved into the area recently.

Having strong relationships among neighbors can promote collective efficacy and informal social control in a community. A little over half (53.2%) said they speak with their neighbors every day. In order to get a sense of how close-knit the community is in the Avenue D

area, we asked how many different neighbors they consistently speak with, and close to half (45.8%) of respondents said it is about 1-4 neighbors. Less than one in five respondents reported never speaking to their neighbors.



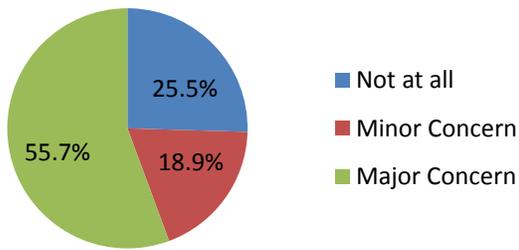
Community Concerns

Next, we asked residents to rate areas of concern as not at all a concern, a minor concern, or a major concern. We chose potential concerns to ask about based on several prior years' worth of open-ended responses. We felt that by having residents evaluate the degree of their concerns for each topic, we would get more valuable data. We could also provide more useful comparisons across communities.

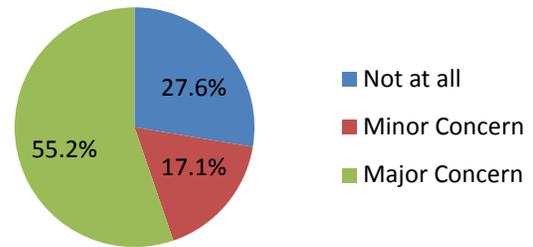
In the charts below, you can see that respondents felt that drug *selling* and drug *use* were both major concerns in the area; it seems that there was not a huge difference between the two. Respondents also felt that speeding and other traffic issues were a major problem.

As we have in past, we asked residents if there was anything they would like to share with law enforcement. Only about 20% of respondents left a response, although none of these responses had to do with specific crimes or criminal behavior. Overall, respondents listed concerns relating to drugs and speeding, reiterating the results above.

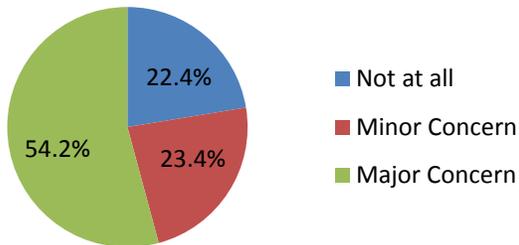
Drug Selling (n=106)



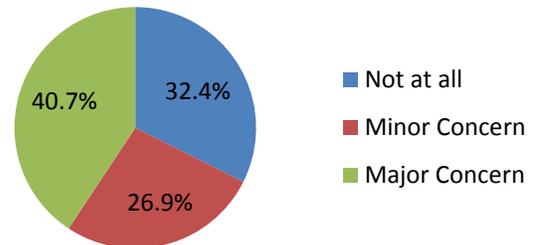
Drug Use (n=105)



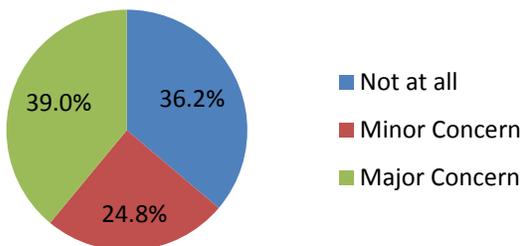
Speeding/Traffic (n=107)



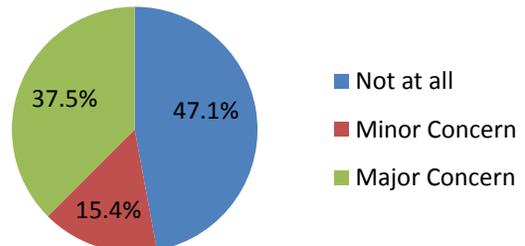
Violence (n=108)



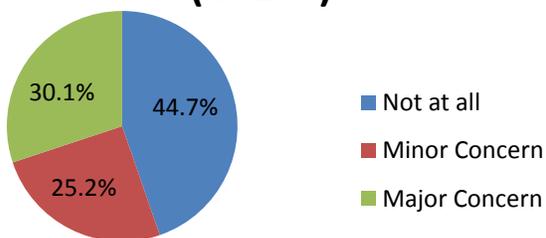
Theft/Burglary (n=105)



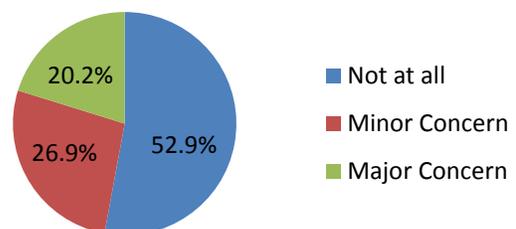
Gangs (n=104)



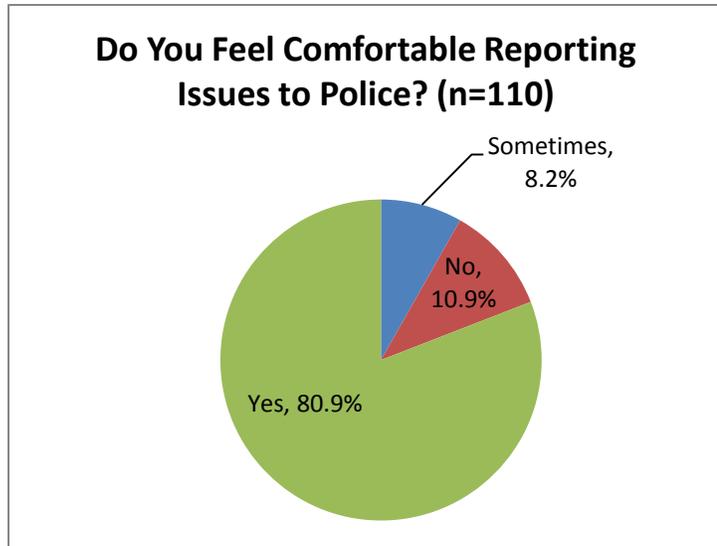
Property Maintenance (n=103)



Stray Animals (n=104)



Next, we asked residents if they felt comfortable reporting issues or suspicious behavior to police. The majority (80.9%) said they do feel comfortable reporting issues. Some respondents (10.9%) did not feel comfortable reporting issues to police. When asked why, almost half said that they felt that the police do not respond fast enough and sometimes not at all



when they have called in the past, so they feel that there is no point in reporting issues. Others felt that they could not trust the police, and one person mentioned that they were new to the area and were unsure of how their neighbors would react.

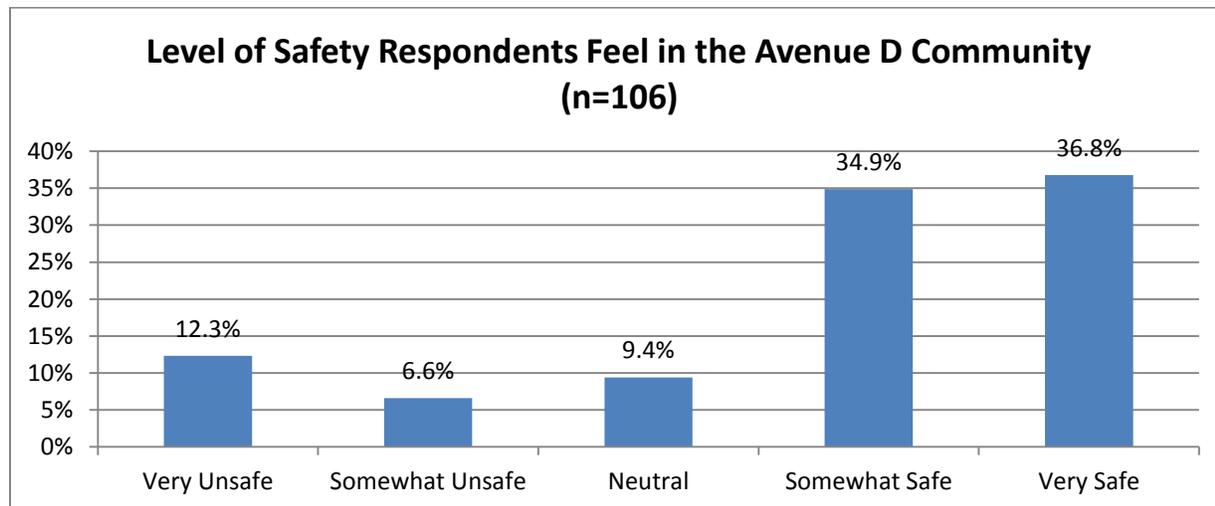
Earlier in 2015, Mayor Lovely Warren implemented a reorganization of the Rochester Police Department. Previously, the city was split into two law enforcement sections (east and west). One goal of reorganizing the department into five “quadrants” is to have increased officer presence and knowledge of the communities they patrol as well as improved relationships with residents. We felt that it was important to ask respondents if they knew any officers who worked in the area. As the years go by, it will be interesting to see if these numbers change and if this change could be



attributed to the reorganization. In the Avenue D community, a majority (77.8%) of respondents said that they did not know any police officers in their area.

We asked respondents to rate how safe they feel living in their community overall. About 72% of respondents said they feel somewhat safe or very safe in the Avenue D community. We also asked where and when respondents feel the least safe in their community. Some of the places mentioned were North Clinton Avenue, Conkey Avenue, and Avenue D. Some also mentioned that they felt the recreation center was unsafe due to recent fighting and violence.

Many people explained that they feel safest during the day. At night, it can be noisy, and some mentioned that nighttime is often when people from other areas of the city come into the neighborhood, which contributes to residents feeling unsafe.



Collective Efficacy

Many of the questions added to this revised pilot survey are based on the concept of collective efficacy. Collective efficacy is the ability of members in the community to control the behaviors of other people in the same community. According to Sampson, Raudenbush, and Earls (1997)¹ and Bandura (2000)², higher perceived collective efficacy is related to decreased neighborhood violence, motivational commitment to group missions, and resilience to adversity. We measure the perceived collective efficacy in communities in order to see if there is a correlation between levels of perceived collective efficacy and the responses to the other survey questions. We also will compare the levels of perceived collective efficacy across communities by collecting data over time through TIPS to understand the degree to which communities differ in their levels of ability to control behavior in their neighborhoods. This is an important consideration for police.

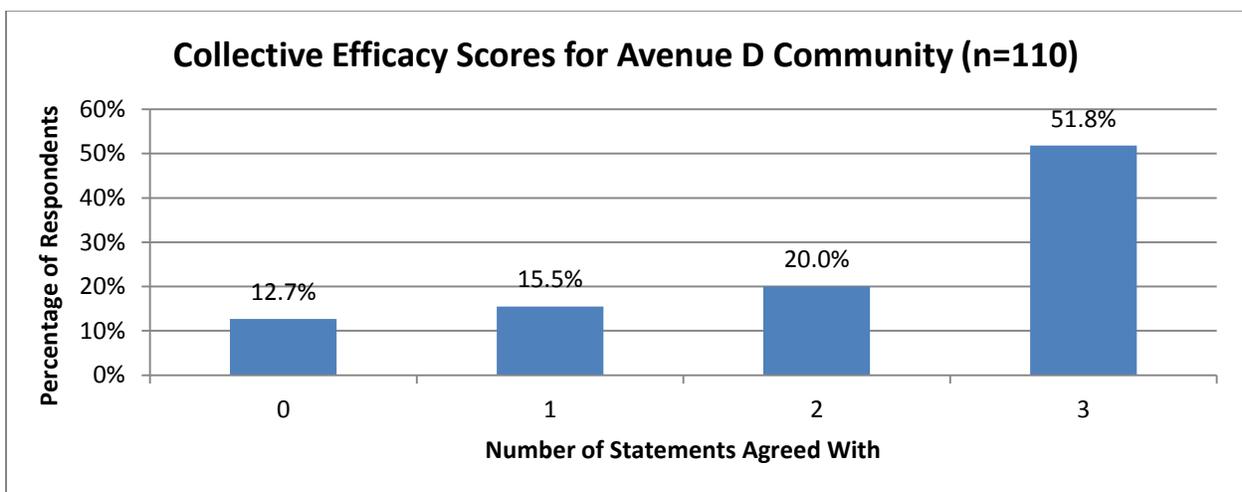
In order to measure the perceived collective efficacy in a community, we decided to use the scale used by Sampson, Raudenbush, and Earls (1997) in their study of Chicago neighborhoods. Unfortunately, the scale that they used was rather long, and because of the spontaneous and verbal nature of T.I.P.S., we need to keep the survey relatively short. In May of

¹ Sampson J. R., Raudenbush W. S., Earls F. (1997). Neighborhoods and violent crime: A multilevel study of collective efficacy. *Science*, 277, 918-924

² Bandura A. (2000). Exercise of human agency through collective efficacy. *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, 9(3), 75-78

this year, we tested the entire scale at a T.I.P.S. event by having those who were willing to spend a little more time with us respond to the statements on the collective efficacy scale by either agreeing or disagreeing with each statement. We analyzed those responses and found that six of the statements on the scale (out of the original ten used by Sampson et al. (1997)) seemed to be predictive enough to safely use them alone while still getting an acceptable measure. Then, we used these six statements from the collective efficacy scale on the T.I.P.S. survey in June 2015. After analyzing the results, we felt we were able to cut three more statements from this scale in order to keep the T.I.P.S. survey short. The three statements that we are going to move forward with are “People around here are willing to help their neighbors,” “People in this neighborhood share the same values,” and “I could count on my neighbors to intervene if a fight broke out in front of my house.” We plan to keep the collective efficacy scale at this length.

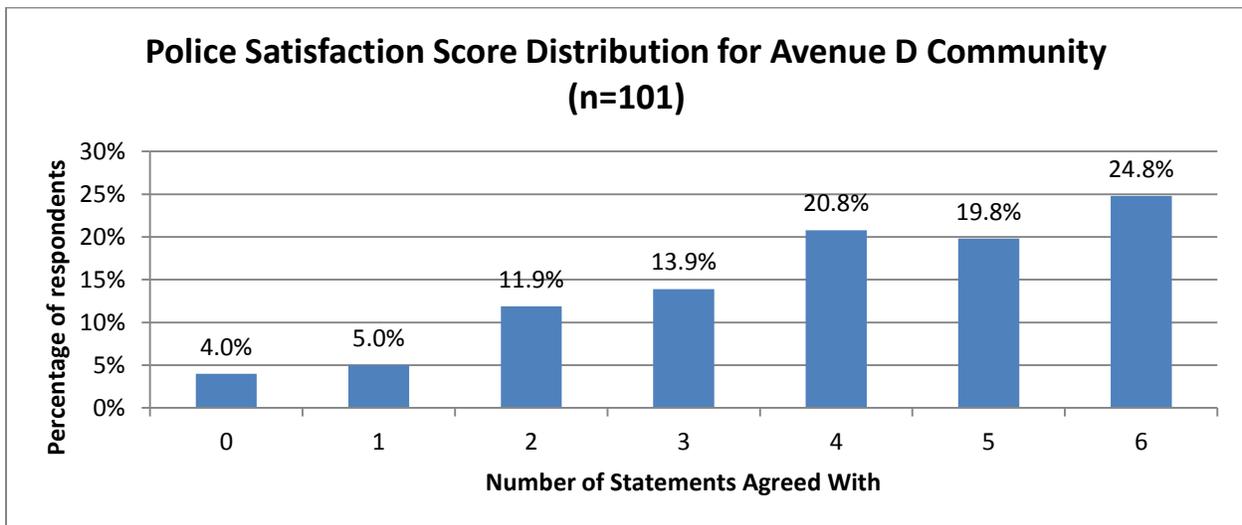
We calculate a collective efficacy mean “score” for the Avenue D community for each survey respondent. The highest score from any one respondent would be a “3,” meaning that the respondent agreed with all three statements and that they perceived a high level of collective efficacy. The lowest score would be a “0,” meaning that the person perceived little to no collective efficacy in the area and agreed with none of the statements. The mean score in the Avenue D community is 2.1, meaning that the average number of statements that respondents agreed with was 2.1. The chart below shows the distribution of individual respondents’ scores. About 50% of respondents agreed with all three statements and felt there was a high level of collective efficacy in the neighborhood.



Satisfaction with Law Enforcement

We added a table of statements regarding resident’s feelings about the Rochester Police Department (RPD). By asking people how much they agree or disagree with specific statements, as opposed to asking about their general satisfaction, we are able to more accurately measure satisfaction with police. These responses should also inform the RPD about specific aspects of their performance and suggest ways to improve that are of most concern to residents.

As with the collective efficacy scale, we were able to come up with a mean score for satisfaction with police. The highest possible score is a “6,” meaning that there is very high satisfaction with police based on how many statements in the scale respondents agreed with. The lowest score would be a “0,” meaning that there is little to no satisfaction with police in the area, and no respondents agreed with any statements. The mean score in the Avenue D community was 4.0; the average number of statements that respondents agreed with was 4.

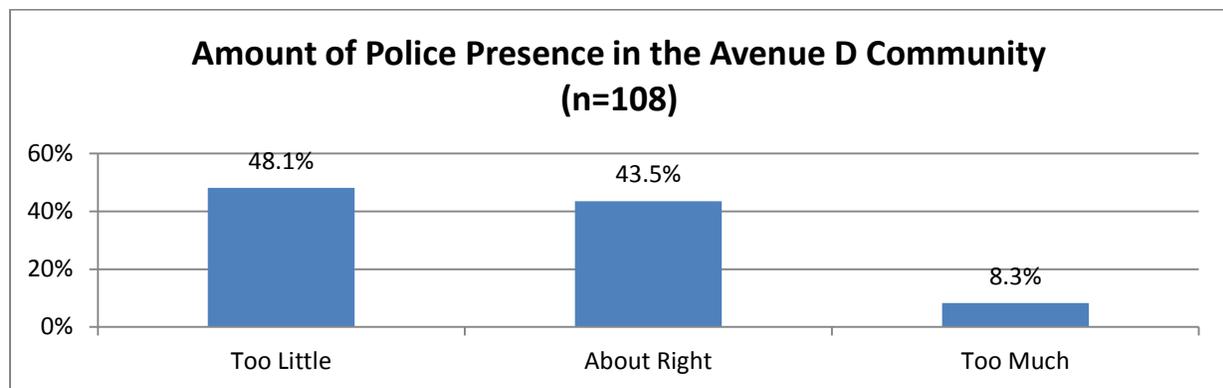


The table below shows the six statements. Close to 80% of respondents agreed that the RPD works with the Avenue D community to solve problems that really matter to residents. Nearly as many (77%) agreed that RPD officers listen to what they have to say and that the RPD does a good job preventing crime in the Avenue D community (73%). A majority (63%) of respondents feel that RPD response time is appropriate. A little over half (57%) of respondents felt that police use of excessive force is **not** an issue in their community, nor is the police stopping people without good reason. Note that for these last two items, agreement would imply dissatisfaction.

Percentage of Respondents who Agree With Police Satisfaction Statements	
Statement	Agree
The police work with the community to solve problems that really matter to people in my neighborhood (n=106)	78%
RPD officers listen to what you have to say (n=109)	77%
The RPD does a good job preventing crime (n=110)	73%
RPD response time is appropriate (n=105)	63%
Police stopping people without good reason is a problem in my neighborhood* (n=110)	46%
Police use of excessive force (verbal or physical) is an issue in my neighborhood* (n=109)	43%

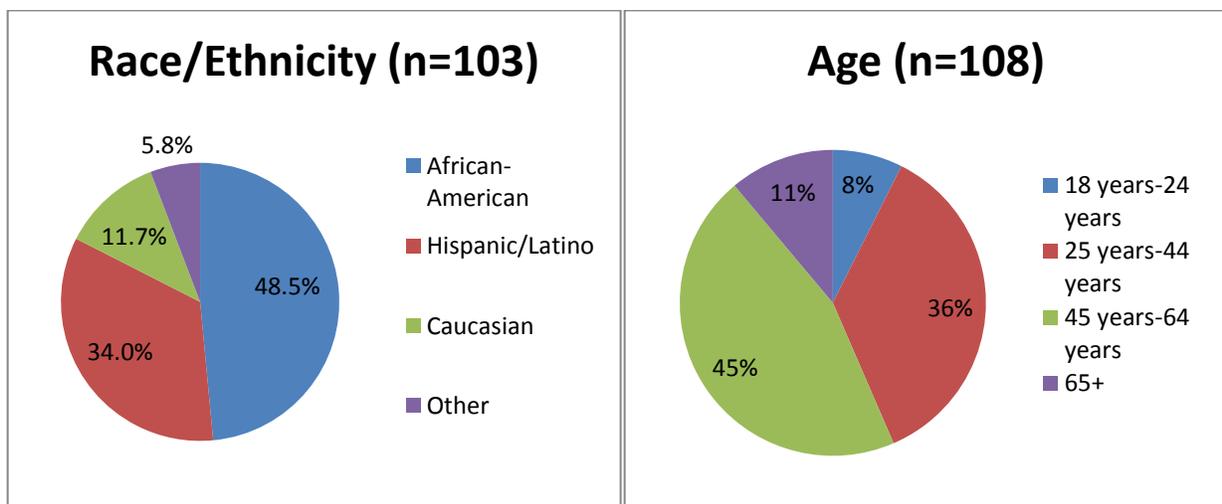
* These statements were reverse coded since agreement to these statements would imply dissatisfaction with the police

Very few respondents (8.3%) felt that there was too much police presence. Close to 50% felt that there should be more police presence in the Avenue D community.



Demographics

Most of the survey respondents were female. About half identified as African-American, and 34% identified as Hispanic/Latino. (This was an open-ended question, so respondents could choose whatever race/ethnicity was most appropriate for them.) We were able to obtain responses from a wide age range of residents.



Correlations

Bivariate analysis is the analysis of the relationship between two variables. Correlations make it possible to examine subsets of the population surveyed. It is important to mention that even if two variables are highly correlated, it does not mean they one is caused by the other.

We looked at whether the collective efficacy scores were related to certain variables. For example, do homeowners have higher perceived collective efficacy than renters? When we ran the correlation to answer this question, we found no significant relationship. We also found no significant relationship between residents who were involved in their neighborhood association and their perceived collective efficacy. We did find a moderate positive correlation between the number of neighbors residents spoke to regularly and their perceived collective efficacy ($r(96) = .32, p < 0.01$). Respondents who spoke to more neighbors on a regular basis tended to have a higher perceived collective efficacy. Similarly, we found a moderate positive correlation between the frequency of conversations residents had with their neighbors and their perceived collective efficacy ($r(109) = .39, p < 0.01$). Respondents who had conversations with their neighbors more frequently tended to have a higher perceived collective efficacy.

We also looked at correlations with the police satisfaction scores, but none of the variables were highly correlated with police satisfaction scores. Variables tested were gender, age, race, involvement in the community, frequency of conversations with neighbors, amount of neighbors spoken with on a regular basis, comfort reporting issues to police, years lived in the neighborhood, familiarity with officers in the area, and homeowner status.

One thing we did find interesting was the correlation between police satisfaction scores and perceived collective efficacy. There was a moderate positive correlation between the two ($r(101) = .37, p < 0.01$), meaning that people who have a higher perceived collective efficacy also have a higher level of satisfaction with police.

Policy Implications

We hope that some of this information can be of use to police and neighborhood groups working in this area. We specifically note the concerns regarding drug use/selling and speeding traffic in the area. Residents mentioned that they feel speed bumps and stop signs would help to improve traffic issues. Another issue that may need to be addressed is the idea that almost half of people surveyed believed that police use of excessive force and police stopping people without good reason is a problem in the Avenue D community. Other issues we felt should be addressed

by police in the area include the hesitation of some residents to report problems because of historically slow response times as well as residents who simply felt that the police would not take care of the issues adequately. We hope that people will begin to feel more comfortable reporting as they get to know the officers in their area.

Conclusion

In the Avenue D community, close to half of the people surveyed have lived in the area five years or less; over half also rented. Residents liked that the area was quiet or peaceful most of the time. Even though this was the most common answer, some people still mentioned that they had concerns about noise in the area at night. The major concerns in the area were drug use and selling, speeding, and other traffic concerns.

People in the Avenue D community interacted regularly with their neighbors. Only 11% of residents surveyed said that they were involved in local community organizations. Most people who were not involved told us that they were too busy but generally thought being involved would be good for the community. A small number of people (10.9%) felt uncomfortable reporting issues or suspicious behavior to police. Those people said that police took a long time to respond and/or that the police did not take care of the issues properly when they called in the past. A majority of the people surveyed (77.8%) did not know any police officers in the area. There were a number of respondents (36.8%) who felt very safe in the Avenue D community, but areas where respondents felt the least safe were North Clinton, Avenue D, Conkey, and the Avenue D recreation center. Some also explained that they feel particularly unsafe at night and in the summer when there is more activity.

On average, respondents agreed with about two out of three collective efficacy statements. We hope to be able to compare these scores across communities as we collect data over the next few years. Two of the variables we tested were moderately positively correlated with collective efficacy: the number of neighbors respondents spoke to on a regular basis and the frequency with which they spoke to neighbors.

The average police satisfaction score was four out of six. Close to half (46%) of respondents agreed that police stopping people for no good reason is a problem in their neighborhood. Interestingly, almost half of the respondents (48.1%) felt that the amount of police presence in the area was too little. Police satisfaction scores and perceived collective efficacy were mildly correlated.