

Police Transparency and Accountability Task Force

Listening Sessions Survey Summary Results

October 20, 2020

Introduction

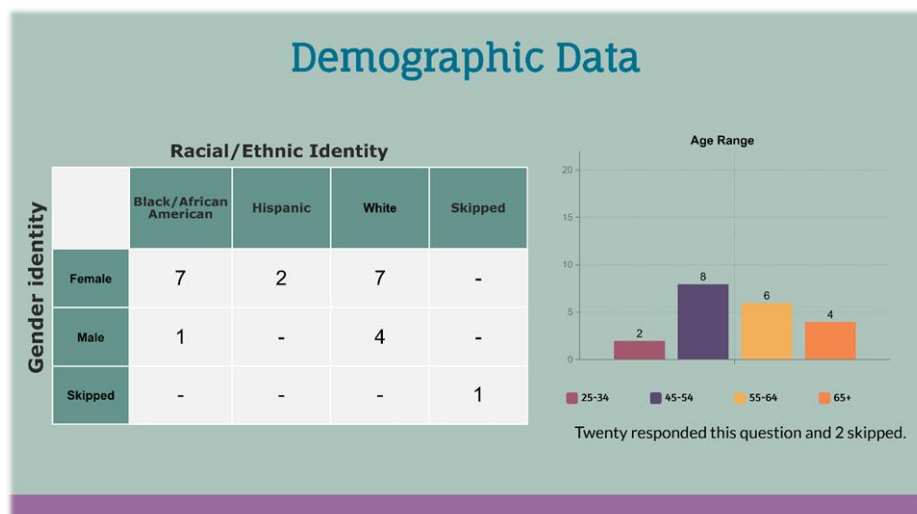
The Connecticut Police Transparency and Accountability Task Force held eight Listening Sessions in September 2020. There were two Listening Sessions every Thursday. After the passing of Public Act 20-1, one of the remaining charges of the Task Force is the ability of Task Force members to form recommendations on “any other police transparency and accountability issue that the Task Force deems appropriate.” The Task Force hosted Listening Sessions with the goal of gathering public input around what topics the Task Force could focus on to work towards police transparency and accountability. Each participant was given three minutes to share their testimonies. Initially, in-person Listening Sessions were planned for specific locations such as New Haven, Bridgeport, Hartford, and New London. However, due to COVID-19 and social distancing measures, all of the Listening Sessions were conducted virtually on the Zoom platform. This report summarizes results from surveys sent to participants who testified during the Listening Sessions.

Method

The Evaluation, Research and Learning (ERL) team at Everyday Democracy designed the survey using Survey Monkey. The Institute of Municipal and Regional Policy at Central Connecticut State University emailed the survey link to participants after each Listening Session. ERL analyzed and reported on the survey results.

Respondent Characteristics

Of the 56 participants who testified in the Listening Sessions, 22 participants responded to the survey, which is a 39% response rate. The demographic data pictured in the infographic below shows that most respondents identified as white, there were more females than males represented, and most people reported being between the ages of 45-54.



Eleven respondents indicated that they were not affiliated with any organization. Nine respondents represented advocacy organizations, one represented the business sector, and one represented a service provider.

Respondents resided in a variety of counties in Connecticut. The results in the table below show the counties that were represented. Three respondents skipped this item. For a breakdown of the cities and towns, please see the table in the **Appendix**.

Counties	Hartford	New Haven	Fairfield	Windham
Number of Respondents	12	4	2	1

Listening Session Results

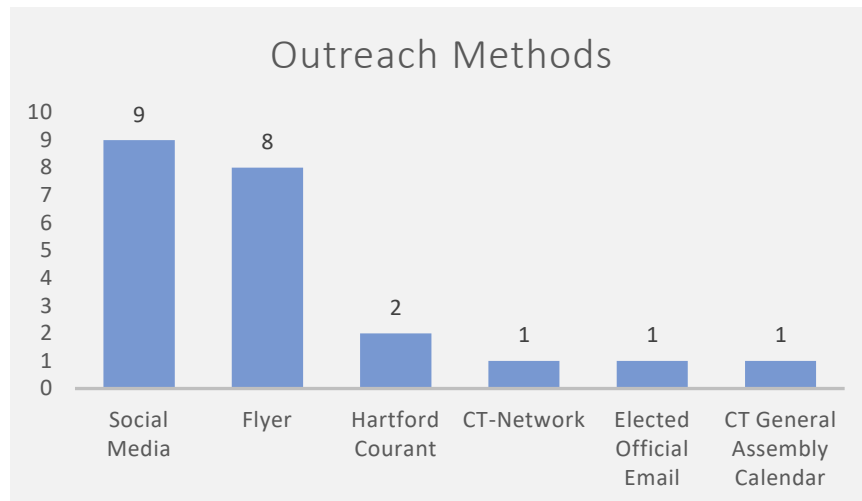
Most respondents felt comfortable and heard. Respondents rated their experience in the Listening session in four areas using an agree/disagree Likert scale ranging from ‘strongly disagree’ to ‘strongly agree.’ They also had a ‘not sure’ option.

The percentages for agreement/strong agreement were combined as were the percentages of disagreement/strong disagreement to give an aggregate total percent for each item. The results are shown in the table below.

Survey Items	Percent disagree/strongly disagree	Percent agree/strongly agree	Percent Not sure
1. I felt comfortable sharing in the Listening Session.	9%	91%	0%
2. I felt that what I shared was heard.*	9%	82%	5%
3. I felt that Task Force members were listening to suggestions for improving police transparency and accountability.	9%	82%	9%
4. I feel that suggestions for improving police transparency and accountability will be used to make improvements.	5%	59%	36%

*One respondent skipped this item.

Best outreach approach was social media. Respondents were asked to indicate how they heard about the Listening Sessions. The chart below shows the different ways they learned about it and the method that reached the most people.



Advocacy strong motivator for testifying. Respondents were asked to provide a brief statement for what motivated them to participate in the Listening Session. Nine respondents indicated advocating for individuals or communities who are disproportionately affected by the police. One respondent commented that police transparency was a “*life or death*” matter for their community.

Interactions with panelists most helpful. This result was reported by a majority of respondents. Additional helpful aspects of the Listening Sessions people identified were: being able to share personal views and hearing other’s points of view. Some comments were as follows:

“Informal Q & A following some testimonies, receptivity of Task Force members.”

“The taskforce members reflecting back what they heard.”

“Chairperson’s style made all testifying very comfortable.”

“Opportunity to share my story and be heard.”

“Listening to opinions of others from different areas and backgrounds helps to get a better look at how people in the state feel about policing and what they think needs to change.”

No follow up plan least helpful. This result was the most pronounced for respondents in the Listening Sessions. A few respondents also commented about the time allotments and the lack of engagement from law enforcement as not helpful. Some comments included:

“Not knowing what will happen to our recommendations.”

“Disproportionate use of time. Early testimony went on for long periods and those at the end of the session got 3 min with no dialogue or questions exploring subject matter.”

“3 minutes was much too short for me because there was decades of police injustice...in telling the story it was re-traumatizing and became emotionally overwhelming.”

“The chiefs of police did not speak during the session, it would have been beneficial if recognized they heard the speaker.”

Conclusion

According to the survey data, the Listening Sessions were a meaningful way for the public to engage and share recommendations with the Task Force. This was evidenced by responses and comments of respondents about the experience. For example, some people referenced the positive interaction between them and the Task Force members and panelists. In particular, being acknowledged by the chairperson who also showed interest through follow up questions, helped them feel heard.

While the Listening Sessions were, for the most part, a positive experience according to survey respondents, some areas for improvement did emerge. In moving forward with similar public engagement events, some areas to consider include:

- Providing a clearer follow up plan that lays out how participants' recommendations will be used.
- Examining ways to enhance engagement between all groups at public events, especially between participants and law enforcement.
- Assessing outreach practices to ensure that there is representation from communities of primary interest for future events. In this case, the data revealed that few participants in the Listening Sessions who completed the survey, resided in the cities/towns that the Task Force was seeking to engage, initially.

Overall, these survey results provide validation that the Listening Sessions proved to be a productive first step for engaging the public to get their input and recommendations on improving police transparency and accountability in Connecticut. An important takeaway is that among survey respondents, there is interest in being involved with future activities of the Task Force.

Appendix

City/Town of Respondents

City or Town	Total Number of Respondents
Hartford	3
West Haven	2
Bloomfield	2
Newington	2
Shelton	1
Brookfield	1
Simsbury	1
Manchester	1
Willimantic	1
Cheshire	1
Milford	1
Wethersfield	1
West Hartford	1
Avon	1
	3 Skipped