



Perspectives of Women in the Field:

Results from a Survey
of Officers at Las Vegas
Metropolitan Police
Department



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Acknowledgment



CJI would like to thank the Las Vegas Metropolitan Police Department for their partnership in this project. We are grateful for the nearly two hundred women officers who shared their perspectives and experiences by completing the survey. A special thanks to Deputy Chief Prosser and Kelly McMahill. Without their support and commitment this project would not have been possible.

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OVERVIEW AND KEY FINDINGS

In the spring of 2022, the Crime and Justice Institute fielded an online survey of all sworn women officers at the Las Vegas Metropolitan Police Department (LVMPD). The survey touched on career fulfillment, promotions and professional development, and the representation and experiences of women at LVMPD. A total of 196 responses were received over a two-week period representing a response rate of 59 percent of sworn women officers. This chartbook highlights key findings that offer insight into the experiences of women officers and their opinions about representation in the law enforcement profession.

■ Becoming a Police Officer

- The most-cited reason for becoming a police officer was to give back to the community and help others.
- Officers most often became aware of a job in policing through a family member or friend.

■ Experiences as a Police Officer

- Women officers at LVMPD view their jobs as rewarding and fulfilling.
- Perceptions about the experiences of women at LVMPD vary.
- The most common reason for an interest in being promoted was an interest in different professional opportunities.

- Women who were not interested in being promoted cited a sense of contentment.
- Women officers at LVMPD felt like they have opportunities to advance their careers.
- Some women officers have concerns or don't know about LVMPD's promotional process.
- Most officers reported having a mentor and serving as a mentor at LVMPD.
- Opinions are split over LVMPD policy that officers cannot transfer or promote while on light duty.
- There was a notable lack of opinion about whether LVMPD provides sufficient support to officers with dependents or young children.
- There were mixed opinions about whether being the parent of a dependent child hurt women's professional trajectories.

■ Representation of Women in Policing

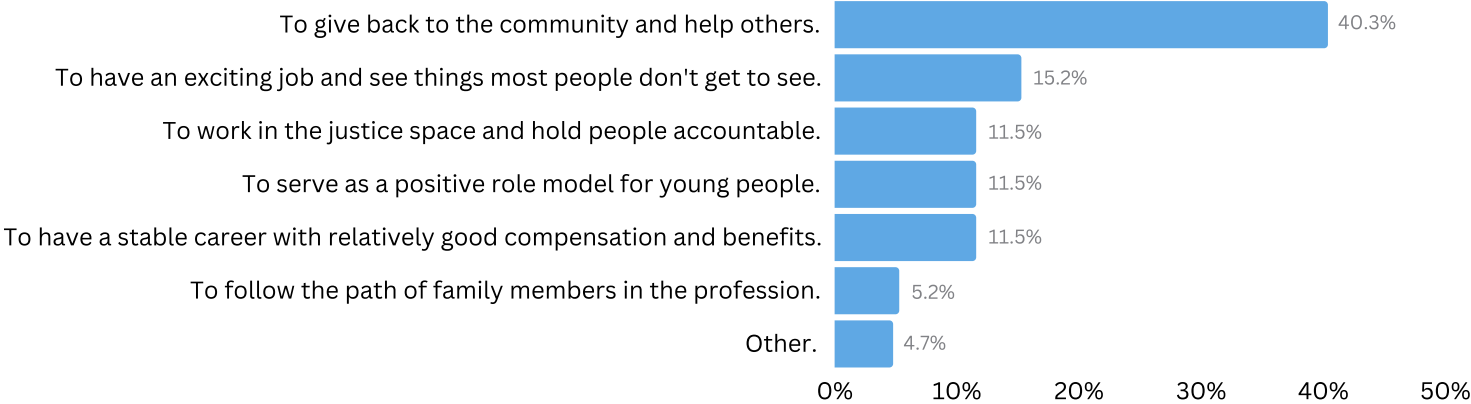
- Many reasons were cited when asked why women are underrepresented in the policing profession.
- Two-thirds of officers believed more women officers at LVMPD would be beneficial for the Department.
- Almost all officers believe women possess particular strengths that contribute to their ability to be good police officers.
- In terms of recruitment strategies, highlighting the strengths of women officers was considered the best way to increase representation.
- Targeted recruitment ranked first for action most likely to increase representation of women at LVMPD.

Figure 1

The most-cited reason for becoming a police officer was to give back to the community and help others.

Officers were asked to share their primary reason for becoming a police officer, acknowledging that individuals could be motivated by several reasons. Forty percent of respondents said that giving back to the community and helping others was their primary reason for becoming a police officer. Other reasons included having an exciting job and getting to see things most people don't see, working in the justice space to hold people accountable, and serving as a positive role model for young people.

Primary reason for becoming a police officer



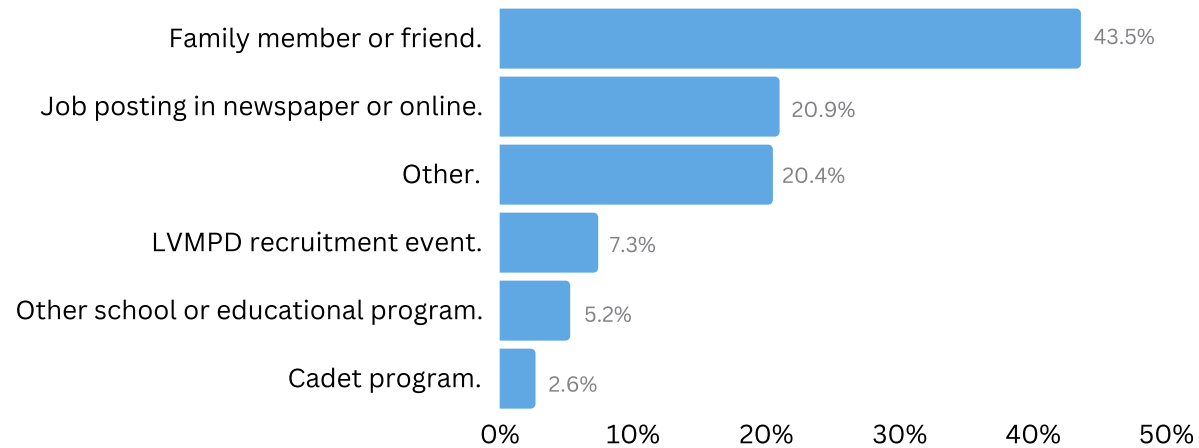
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Figure 2

Officers most often became aware of a job in policing through a family member or friend.

In addition to networks of family and friends, job postings in newspapers and online were also a source of connection. Notably 20 percent of respondents said that they became aware of a policing job through other sources not listed below. This speaks to the diversity of avenues that led these individuals to a position in policing.

Awareness of policing job



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Figure 3

Women officers at LVMPD view their jobs as rewarding and fulfilling.

Most women officers who responded to the survey view their job as a police officer as one that is rewarding and fulfilling. These officers by and large feel respected by their male and female peers and their command staff at LVMPD, although the sense of respect is lower from male peers than female peers.

Perceptions of satisfaction and respect



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Figure 4

Perceptions about the experiences of women at LVMPD vary.

Survey respondents were asked about the extent to which they agreed with a series of statements related to the experience of women officers at LVMPD. As shown in the figure below, there is a notable split in their perceptions. For example, 41 percent agreed that they were satisfied with the number of women in leadership positions, while 42 percent disagreed. Forty one percent agreed that men and women are generally treated the same at LVMPD, while 45 percent disagreed. The share choosing “don’t know” is notable for several statements. In particular, 45 percent of respondents said they didn’t know if increasing the number of women would help improve the work environment at LVMPD.

Perceptions about women officers at LVMPD

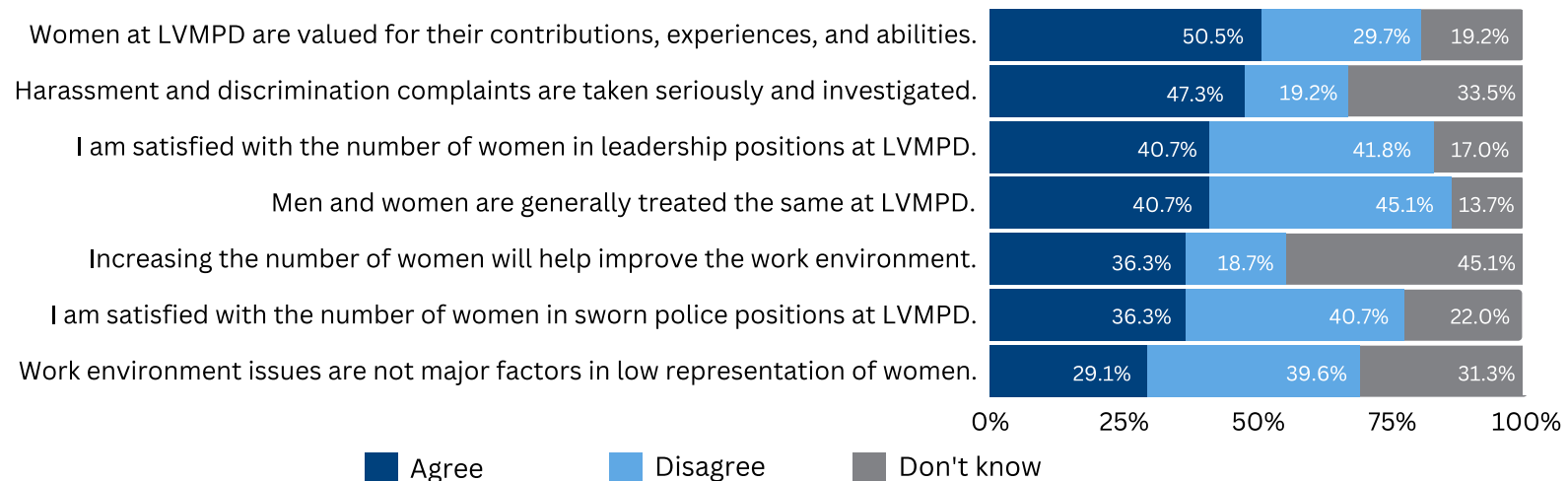
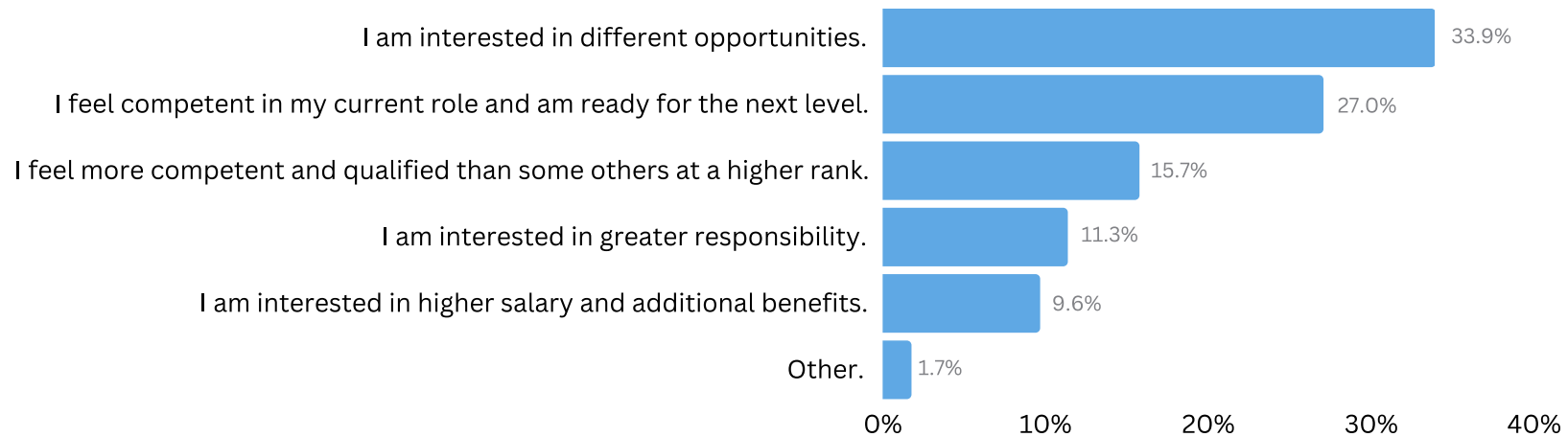

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Figure 5

The most common reason for an interest in being promoted was an interest in different opportunities.

Officers were asked about their interest in being promoted. Of the 75 percent who expressed an interest in being promoted, one-third said they were interested in experiencing different opportunities. Feeling ready for the “next level” after achieving a sense of competence in their current role was also mentioned. Notably, less than 10 percent said higher salary and benefits were driving their interest in promotions.

Interest in promotion



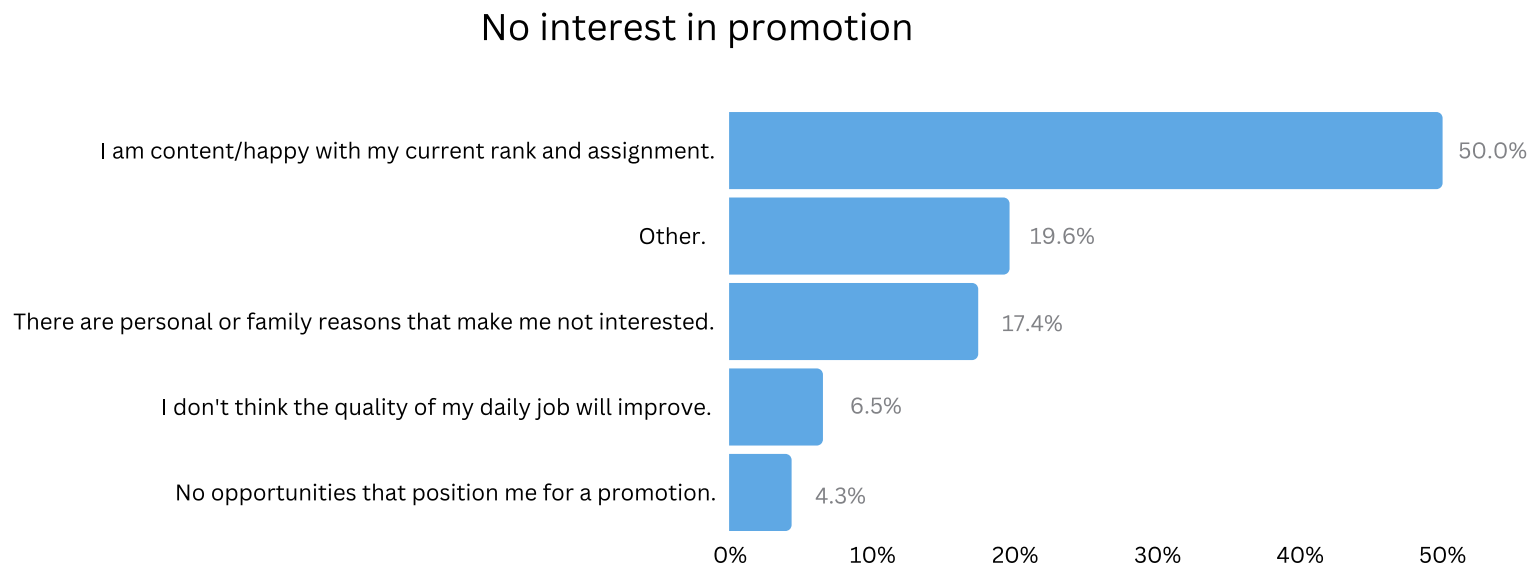
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Figure 6



Officers who were not interested in being promoted cited a sense of contentment.

Officers were asked about their interest in being promoted at some point in the future. For the 25 percent of survey respondents who said they were not interested in being promoted, half said that it was because they were content and happy with their current rank and assignment. The notable share of “other” reasons speaks to the complexity of factors behind officers wanting to move up the ranks.



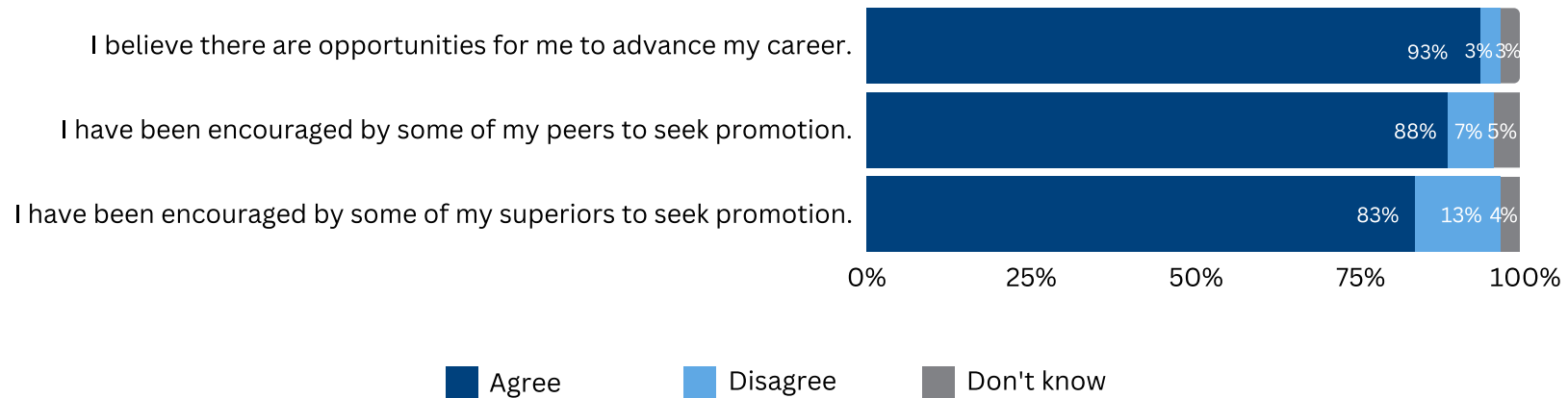
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Figure 7

Women officers at LVMPD felt like they have opportunities to advance their careers.

Survey respondents were asked to agree or disagree with several statements related to career advancement at LVMPD. A striking 93 percent agreed that there are opportunities to advance their career. The large majority of officers reported that they were encouraged to seek a promotion by their superiors or their peers.

Perceptions around career advancement



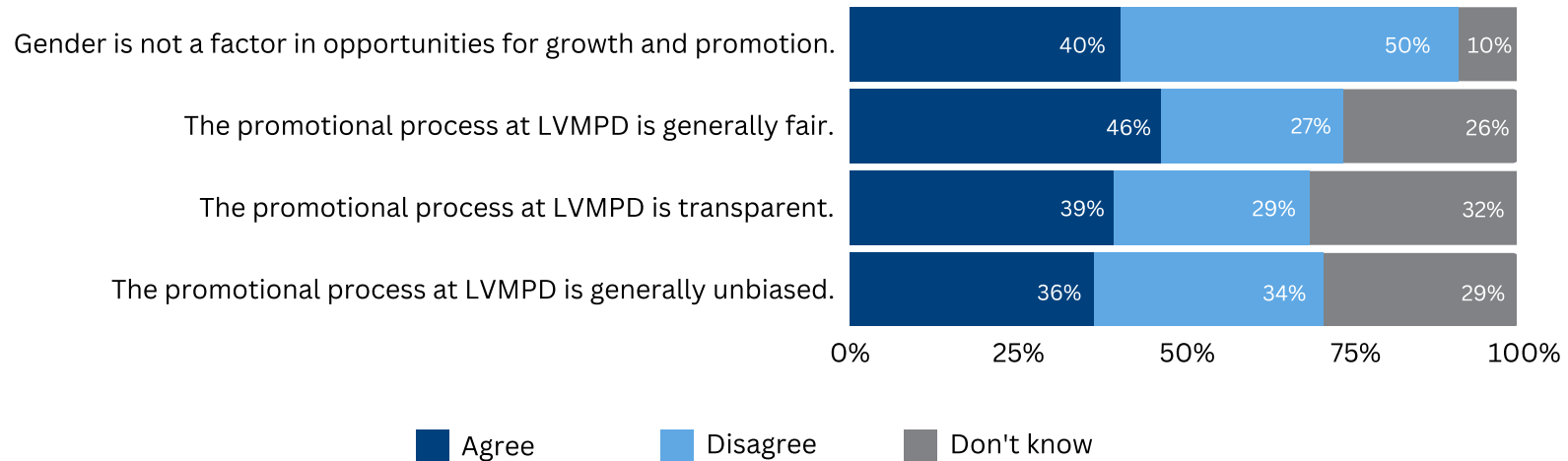
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Figure 8

Some women officers have concerns or don't know about LVMPD's promotional process.

Feelings about the fairness and transparency of the promotional process was mixed. Half of respondents disagreed that gender is not a factor in promotions. While 39 percent believe the promotional process is transparent, 29 percent disagreed and 32 percent did not know.

Perceptions around promotion



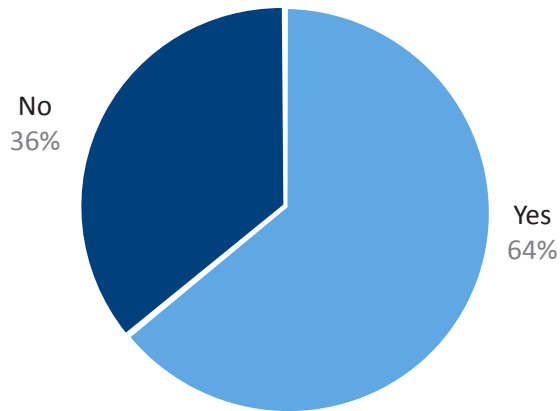
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Figures 9 and 10

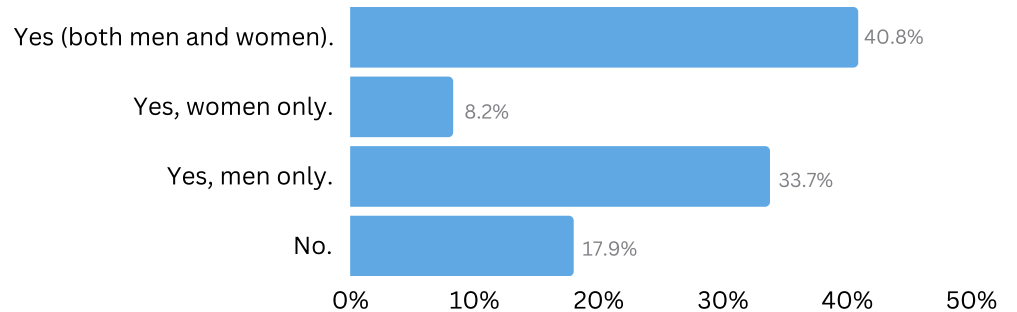
Most officers reported having a mentor and serving as a mentor at LVMPD.

Most women officers (over 80 percent) report having a mentor within LVMPD. This is mostly an informal role, meaning not part of a formal mentoring program that is served by men and women. Sixty-four percent of women officers reported serving as mentor to another woman in the Department.

Have you served as a mentor to women in the Department?



Have you had mentors in the Department?



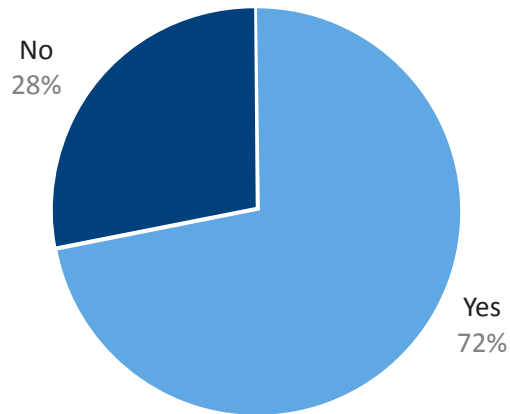
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Figures 11 and 12

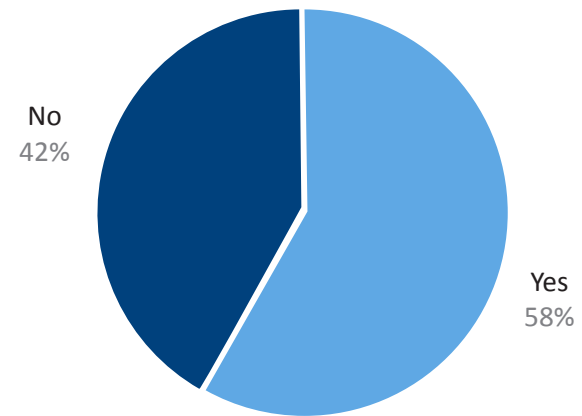
Opinions are split over LVMPD policy that officers cannot transfer or promote while on light duty.

At LVMPD it is a policy that officers cannot be transferred or promoted while on light duty. It is also the case that pregnant women are often assigned to light duty, essentially limiting their opportunities during that time. Nearly three quarters of surveyed officers were aware of this policy. Of those who were aware of it, 58 percent said they were supportive of it and 43 percent said they were not.

Are you aware of the LVMPD policy that officers cannot be transferred or promoted if they are on light duty?



Do you support the policy that officers on light duty cannot be transferred or promoted?



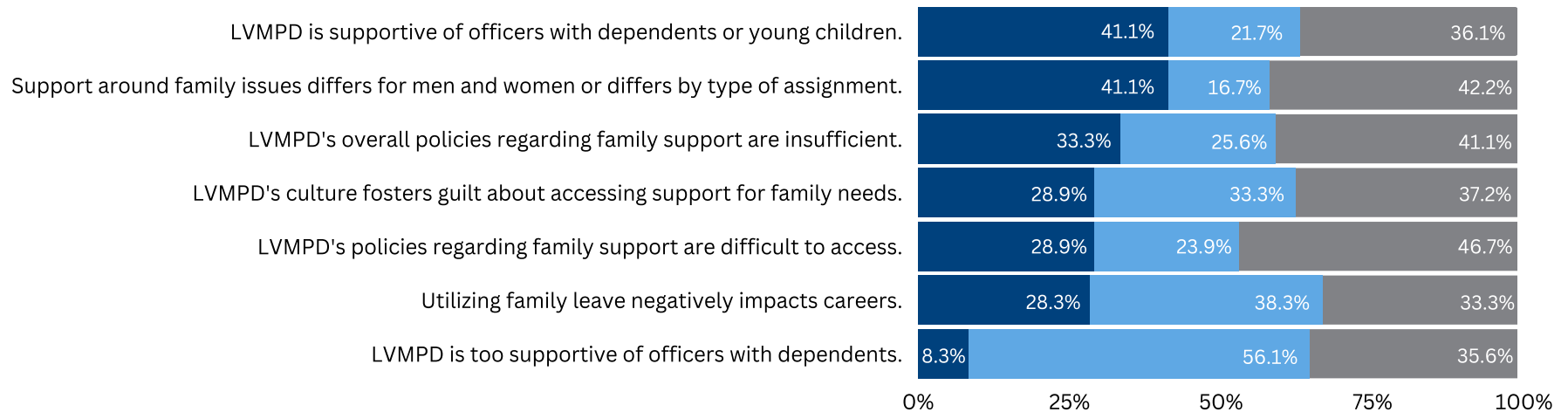
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Figure 13

There was a notable lack of opinion around whether LVMPD provides sufficient support to officers with dependents or young children.

All survey respondents were asked whether they agreed or disagreed with a series of statements about the experiences of officers with dependents or young children. While the share agreeing or disagreeing with these statements were split in most cases, the share who responded “don’t know” for all of the statements is particularly notable. More than a third of women officers did not agree or disagree with statements about dependents or young children, indicating these issues are not priority issues for many women.

Support for officers with dependents



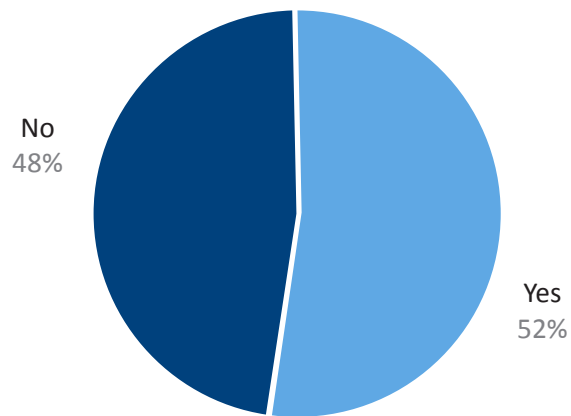
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Figures 14 and 15

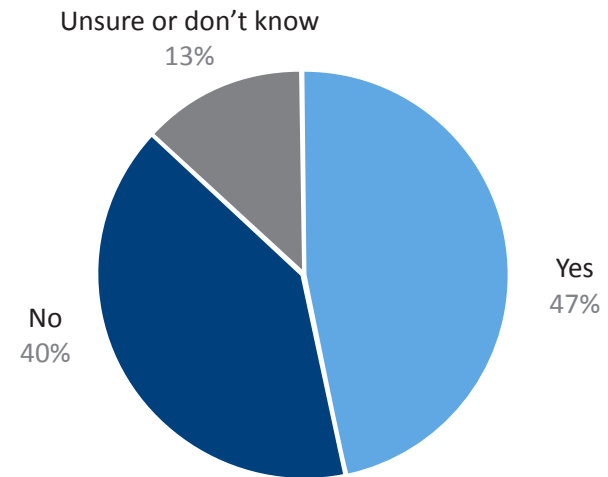
More than half of women officers were parents of dependent children at some point. Results were mixed on whether that hurt their professional trajectories.

Over half of the women officers surveyed had been a parent to a dependent child while working at LVMPD. Of those who were parents, nearly half (47 percent) thought that being a parent hurt their professional trajectory, while 40 percent said it hadn't and 13 percent were unsure.

Have you been a parent to a dependent child while working at LVMPD?



Has being a parent hurt your professional trajectory?



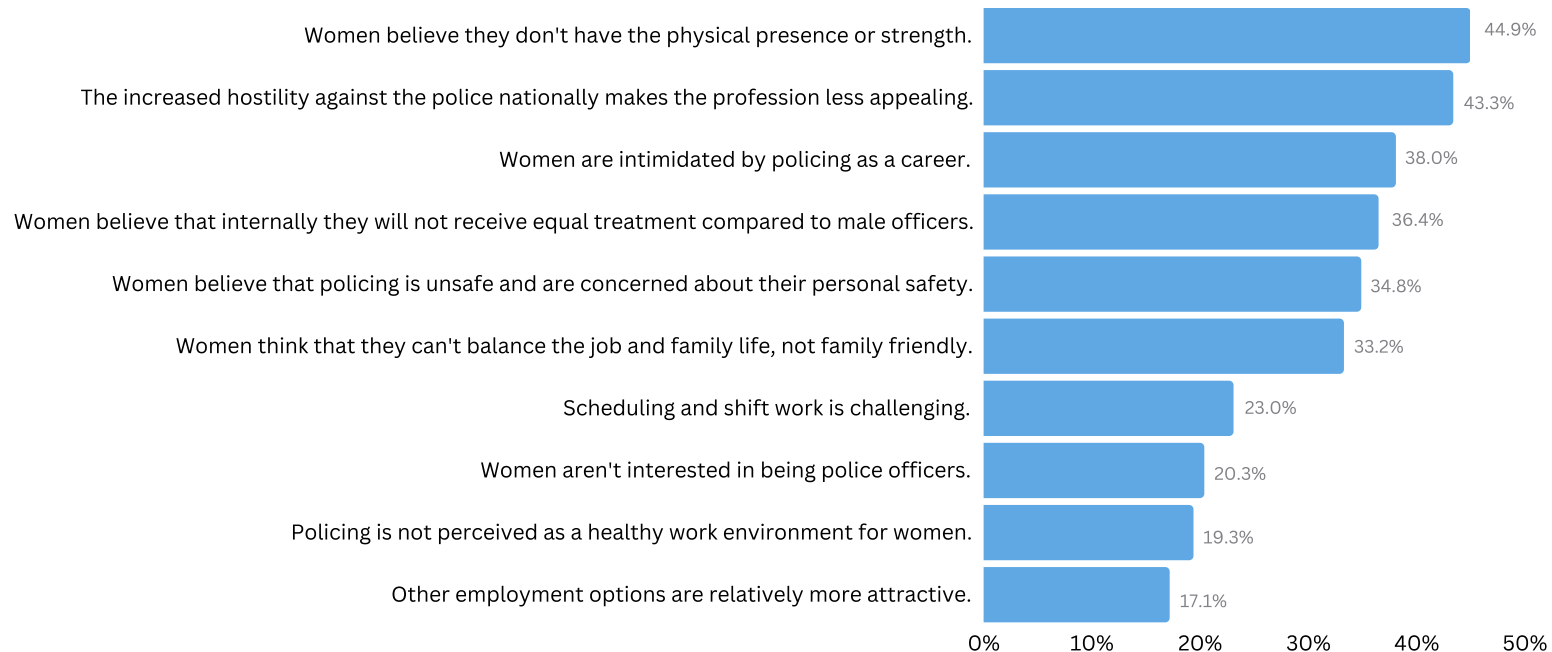
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Figure 16

Many reasons were cited when asked why women are underrepresented in the policing profession.

Officers were asked about why they think women are underrepresented at LVMPD and across the country. Respondents were able to choose more than one reason. The multitude of responses shown in the table below indicates that officers believe a combination of factors is behind the low representation of women in policing. Perceived challenges related to physical presence or strength and increased hostility toward the policing profession in general were the two most-cited reasons.

Why are women underrepresented in policing?



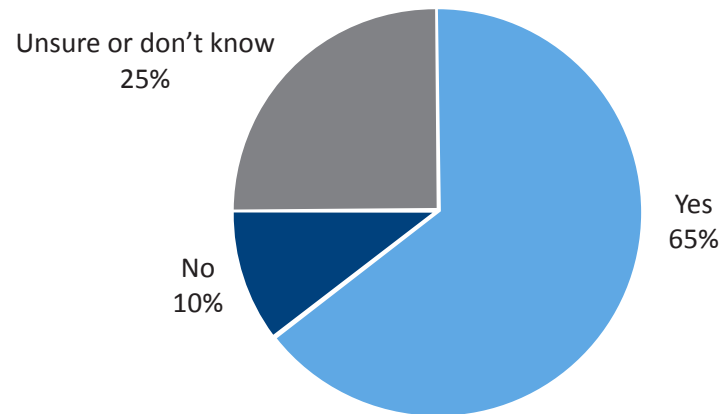
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Figure 17

Two-thirds of officers believed more women officers at LVMPD would be beneficial for the Department.

When asked if it would be beneficial for LVMPD to have more women police officers, nearly two-thirds responded yes. Only 10 percent said that they did not think more women officers would be beneficial. Notably, 25 percent of women respondents were unsure or did not know if more women police officers would benefit the Department.

Would it be beneficial for LVMPD to have more women officers?



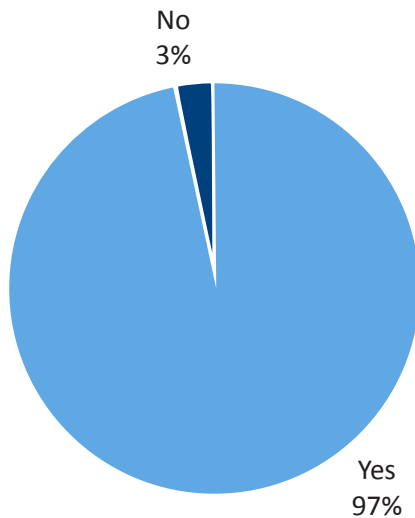
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Figures 18 and 19

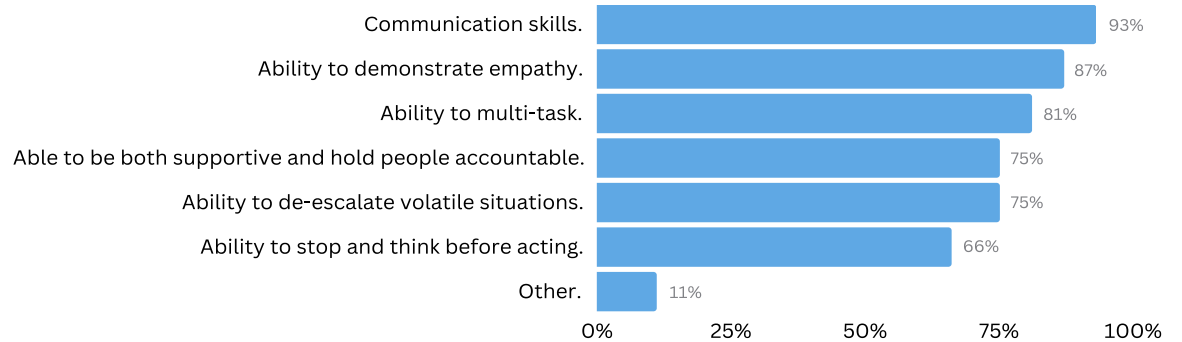
Almost all officers believe women possess particular strengths that contribute to their ability to be good police officers.

Ninety-seven percent of women officer respondents agreed that women possess particular strengths that contribute to their ability to be good police officers and possibly different from male police officers. Only three percent of respondents did not agree. When asked about specific strengths, most officers noted several including good communication skills, and abilities to demonstrate empathy, multi-task, and de-escalate volatile situations, among others.

Do you think women possess particular strengths that contribute to their ability to be good police officers different from male police officers?



Key strengths that make women good police officers



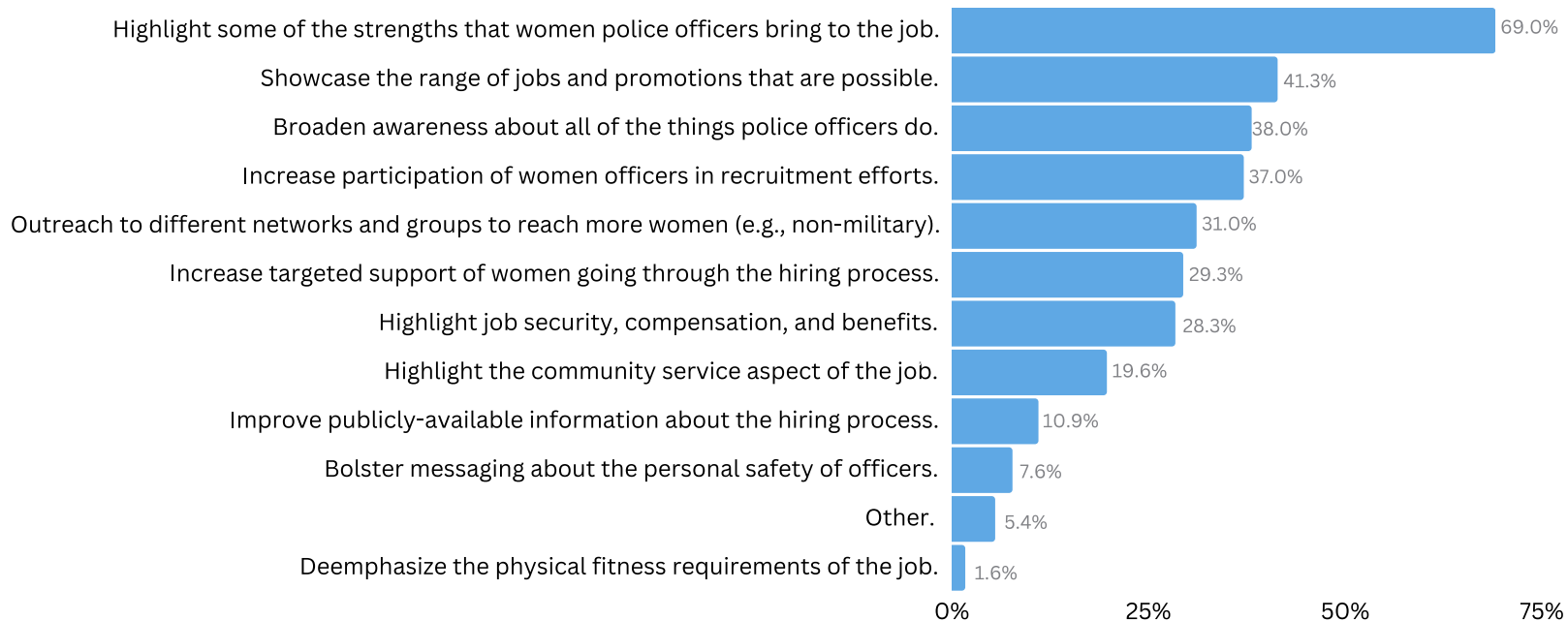
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Figure 20

In terms of recruitment strategies, highlighting the strengths of women officers was considered the best way to increase representation.

Survey respondents were asked their opinion about the most effective recruitment strategies to increase representation of women. The most common recruitment strategy was to highlight the strengths that women bring to the job. Recruitment strategies that broadened the public's understanding of a police officer's job were also thought to be effective. A notable share of respondents said that including more women in recruitment efforts and recruiting in different networks would also be effective.

Most effective recruitment strategies to increase representation of women



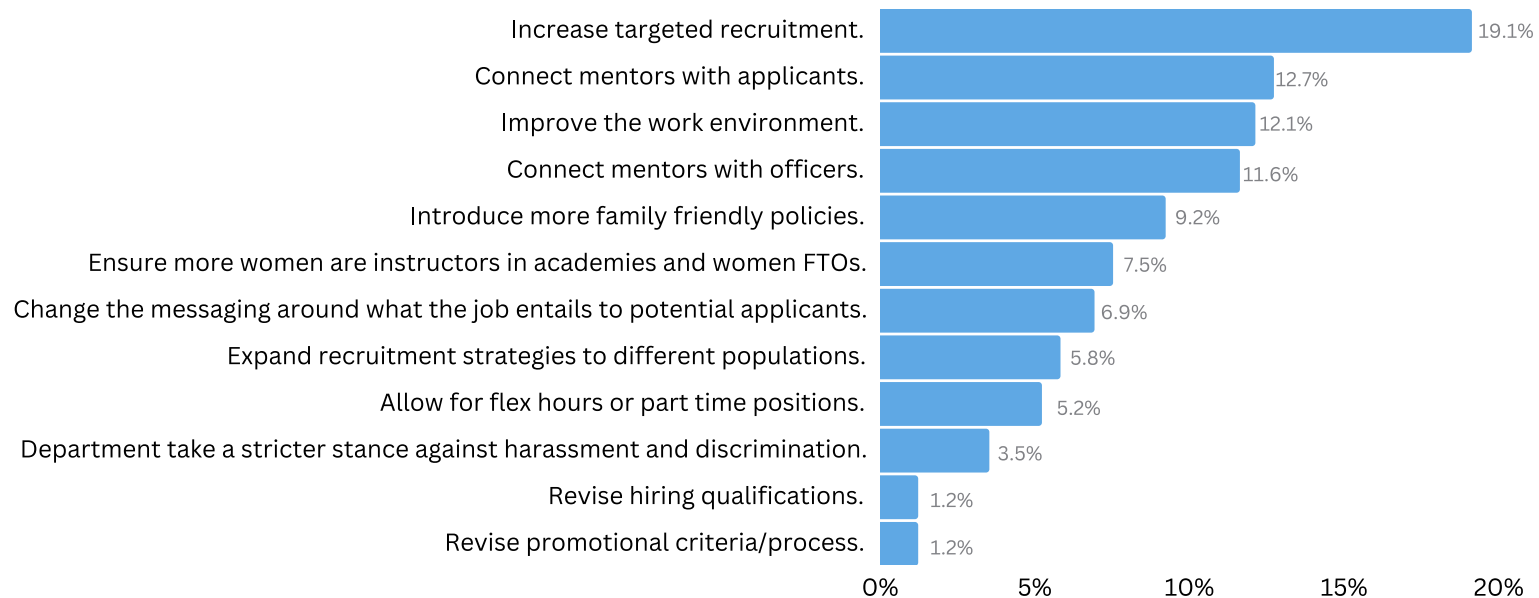
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Figure 21

Targeted recruitment ranked first for action most likely to increase representation of women at LVMPD.

Officers were provided a list of actions that LVMPD could take to increase the representation of women in the Department and asked to rank those actions. The chart below shows the actions that were ranked first by survey respondents. Nineteen percent of respondents ranked increase targeted recruitment first, 12.7 percent ranked connecting mentors with applicants first, and 12.1 percent ranked improving the work environment first. Actions related to internal policies and processes, such as allowing for flex hours, revising hiring qualifications, and revising promotional criteria, were not ranked as a top action to increase the representation of women.

Top ranked action to increase representation of women at LVMPD



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Methodology and Sample Overview



CJI fielded an online survey of all sworn officers at the Las Vegas Metropolitan Police Department (LVMPD) in the spring of 2022. A total of 196 responses were submitted over a two-week period representing a response rate of 59 percent (196 of 330 women officers).

- Survey responses largely reflect the opinions of police officers I or II. Nine percent of respondents were of the rank police officer I; 78.4% were police officer II; 6.8% were sergeants; 2.3% were lieutenants; 1.7% were captains; and 1.7% were deputy chiefs.
- Respondents had worked at LVMPD for an average of 9.7 years, ranging from a low of one year to a high of 27 years.
- The average age of survey respondents was 36.3 years, ranging from a low of 22 years to a high of 57 years.
- Over three-quarters of survey respondents self-identify as white (78.3%); 7.2% indicated an “other” race, 6.1% identify as Black; 5.6% as Asian; and 6.7% preferred not to answer when asked about their self-identified race.
- When asked about ethnicity, 28.4% self-identified as Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish Origin; 63.6% not Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish origin; and 8% preferred not to answer.
- Fifty-two percent of respondents said they were a parent to a dependent child while working at LVMPD.
- In terms of highest level of educational achievement, 29.4% had a high school diploma or G.E.D; 20.9% had an associate’s degree; 41.8% had a bachelor’s degree; and 7.9% had a master’s or other graduate degree.

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