Police Measurement Project

Public Listening Sessions Summary Report

February 1, 2023

MEASURES FOR JUSTICE

INTRODUCTION

Measures for Justice (MFJ) believes that data, and the use of that data to underscore and understand a holistic view of police work and engagement, is an important part of the broader conversation that is happening both nationally and locally around policing. As an organization, we have worked for years to develop a set of performance metrics for criminal justice systems across the country and make data available and accessible to the public.

In 2019, MFJ turned an eye towards police measurement and initiated our Policing Measurement Pilot Project. We began by having a conversation with a group of current and former police practitioners, consultants, and scholars, headed by the chair of President Obama's Task Force on 21st Century Policing. In that conversation, we asked the group who work with and produce policing data to think about the work of policing and identify key dimensions and areas to explore. We encouraged them also to discuss potential challenges related to the data, including availability, accessibility, and how it all gets communicated. In August of 2020, we reconvened to dive deeper into the work, this time including community members and leaders. This work also enabled MFJ to identify and begin discussions with possible pilot site jurisdictions and engage partners willing to be part of the dialogue.

In 2022, MFJ co-hosted a Roundtable alongside the Center for Open Data Enterprises (CODE) to engage community leaders, policymakers, and researchers in identifying key practices, functions, and actions related to police performance. The Roundtable served as an integral part of the national stakeholder engagement for this work. The discussion deepened the exploration of the dimensions and possible metrics MFJ had proposed to learn where this initial approach meets the needs of community leaders and where it needs to be built up. We summarized our findings here.

Informed by the national lens, the focus is now on shaping and implementing metrics with local communities, including the institutions that serve them. We believe that by applying what we've learned, and through collaboration with innovative departments and their communities, we will be able to create (1) a set of public Police measures, co-created with community and law enforcement, and (2) through the Commons sites, provide opportunities for the community to provide feedback to departments and build shared understanding. A conversation about reimagining police work should begin with what is currently happening, and necessitates reliable data.

To further this effort, we welcomed the public in our two pilot jurisdictions to discuss their experiences and questions around police in their cities. This report describes the sessions and analysis, summarizes the findings from this early local engagement, and outlines how the themes emerging from these discussions will inform the metrics we pilot. These themes will help shape the metrics within the dimensions first posed in 2019 and 2020 and considered by national experts in 2021, to benefit the communities in 2023 and beyond.

METHODOLOGY

Measures for Justice (MFJ) held listening sessions in Rochester, New York, and West Sacramento, California in the summer and fall of 2022[1]. As we began developing a platform for data transparency in policing, we wanted to be as educated as possible on what information would be most salient to community members, and what type of information should be prioritized in data collection. These listening sessions were open to the public to come and share their thoughts, opinions, and experiences surrounding policing. With the support of local community leaders, we offered three sessions in each city. We engaged local leaders in identifying when and where we should host these sessions. Any and all community members were welcome to join any session, but MFJ did not do any specific sampling of community members for these discussions. For all sessions, we promised anonymity to those who participated so they could feel safe to share their opinions and experiences openly.

In addition to listening sessions with members of the public, we held two with professionals in the criminal justice field and advocacy space. This included the Rochester Police Accountability Board and attorneys from Empire Justice. In both jurisdictions, the police departments were aware and supportive of MFJ holding these sessions, but agency representatives were not in attendance. In total, the discussions reflect viewpoints of approximately 45 people across the two communities.

Notes were taken during the listening sessions by multiple MFJ staff, and compiled as transcripts for later analysis. Exact language was documented as much as possible, though direct quotes are not attributed due to the promise of anonymity. Listening sessions held in a non-English language included representatives from the MFJ team, as well as translators fluent or native to the language, and a second person fluent in the language to take notes. The team read through those transcripts for sense-making, and then parsed the notes into shorter statements, to organize them for line-by-line codes. The coding process involved individual team members grouping these notes into shared sentiment groups within each session, followed by group discussion of the findings to avoid any one person's individual biases driving the analysis. From there, each team member refined the discussed sub-themes into three to four main areas. Once each coder extracted their individually identified themes, three overarching themes emerged.

The themes are outlined in this report in aggregate and represent throughlines from the conversations with both communities. However, they still contain important nuances across Rochester and West Sacramento. Experiences were not weighed more than others when MFJ reviewed the transcripts; rather we observed shared patterns that occurred throughout the sessions even if they were expressed in different ways. Importantly, MFJ was not looking for frequency of experiences or perceptions, but identifying shared patterns throughout the sessions. It was important for our team to be respectful of the listening session participants' exact words and sentiments, so we could assess them objectively. Therefore, wherever possible, team members

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[1] Measures for Justice acknowledges that local organizations, independent of MFJ in both Rochester and West Sacramento have and will continue to hold community forums about public safety in their respective cities.

took account of their own biases as well the organizational biases of Measures for Justice and the team tested one another's assumptions.

FINDINGS

When speaking to residents in their respective communities, three main areas of focus seemed to be the most prominent. The first theme, Understanding Police Work and Departmental Operations, covers the wide variety of interests people have about the processes of policing and wanting to gain more access and knowledge about how their police department functions. Community members were also very interested in how the police respond to calls for service and public safety concerns within the cities, which drives the second theme: Improved Responses to Problems as they Arise. The last theme, Community Relations and Proactive Engagement, reflects communities' desire to be a part of the public safety discussion as well as part of the solutions. Through these themes we will show how far reaching the topics of criminal justice data transparency can go and how deeply invested communities are about the cities they live and work in.

Below, we provide brief explanations of the overarching themes and how they relate to the Policing Dimensions (see below) that the Council and Roundtable assisted in developing.

Theme 1: Understanding Police Work and Departmental Operations

Aside from those who have experience working with police departments, many people do not have extensive knowledge of how police internal processes work. For those with no direct connections to police, whether personally or professionally, they learn about police work when interacting with an officer in the field or through the media. Most of the work in police processes happens outside of those moments of interaction. For example, the general public typically does not see what officers learn and experience during training, or how the complaint and commendation processes work. Participants really wanted to learn more about the parts of policing they do not normally get to see.

Training information

At the forefront of many people's minds is police training. It is a subject that affects many other topics and themes throughout this report. Listening session attendees want to know what officers are told and taught before entering a community. There were specific questions raised about who was conducting the officer training and whether certain groups are appropriate to train officers effectively. This could be a question that may lend itself to a quantifiable metric. While it is challenging to measure whether a training entity is the appropriate one for a jurisdiction - that is up to the city and its residents - it is possible to track hours of training invested in by the department and, importantly, to provide context around who is creating the training material and

who is teaching it. Training was more salient in Rochester than it was in West Sacramento, but both communities expressed the importance of more transparency overall in internal systems of policing.

Transparency: Information sharing, data sharing

The heart of many of the conversations centered around the absence of meaningful information about police activity, which leaves community members drawing only on personal experiences with the police to inform their understanding about how police operate. Community members would like to see their police departments more willing to share information and data, and would like to learn more about what information is already available. One participant shared:

> *"We just want the WSPD to make our living areas more secure so if this data is available for us [that] would be great."*

Responding to complaints

It was common for those we heard from to feel unclear about what happens after they make a report or complaint. Creating more access for community members to understand the complaint process could help to improve trust in the police department and establish more accountability. This feedback is also an important reminder that available data should include both the number of complaints or reports a department receives, as well as the outcomes of those reports.

The Commons platform could be filled with information to close this gap, such as an explanation of the complaint process and what community members can expect. Participants were interested both in this expectation setting and in tracking how often the process is implemented/used. Although the concern around accessing complaint information was more prevalent in Rochester, conversations suggested both jurisdictions could benefit from knowledge sharing and communication around this process.

Representation and residency

It is important for residents to feel seen and understood by the officers who serve them. Some participants raised concerns that departments whose staff are drastically different demographically will not serve diverse communities fairly. There were participants that expressed curiosity in what residency requirements are in place and the demographics of interviewers during the recruitment process. Policy information can help clarify some of these questions, as well as demographic data on hiring committees for departments. Listening session participants across communities we spoke to were very interested in seeing individuals like themselves represented in their police departments, and learning more about how departments build their staff. An open dashboard might be able to show valuable information on representation in the police department, as well as be a tool for those who may want to ask more questions concerning that issue.

Theme 2: Improved Responses to Problems as They Arise

Residents from both Rochester and West Sacramento voiced a desire for improved responses to the issues that affect their communities. Both jurisdictions are very different, both in size and other important characteristics,[2] which naturally creates different areas of focus for police response. People are seeking more effective responses to many problems, from lower level offenses, such as graffiti, to much more serious offenses like robbery and assault. Problems requiring police response are often referred to as calls for service and crime incidents. In addition to calls for property and violent crimes, police departments are often tasked with responding to calls concerning those who are unhoused, and mental health crises. These issues are incredibly complex, and they were prominent areas of focus during all listening sessions.

Equitable responsiveness to communities

Each community has its own reactions, expectations and anxieties related to the protection provided by police. Community members want to feel safe in their neighborhoods and trust that the police will help when called upon. Some participants shared fears related to unfair or inequitable treatment and experiences in which officers failed to respond as they'd expected, or even made them feel less secure.

Participants in Rochester shared feelings of frustration and even hurt by how some officers responded to their calls. One participant recalled a large street fight, where police were called and took a long time to show up. The participant had been concerned that someone could have gotten seriously hurt. They told MFJ,

> The "officer said they were "low priority," because they have to deal with shootings."

When asked about the type of information that would help in these situations, the discussion turned to whether the department could share data or policy information on how calls for service are prioritized. Interest was also shown in recording data on the outcomes of calls for service if or when arrests have taken place.

Calls for service and response times

Response to calls appears to be central to the perception communities have of their police. While there are many other operations that police handle, responding to criminal activity or events of distress are primarily in the public eye. Community members noted the benefit they'd gain from seeing data and information to make sense of what they are experiencing. West Sacramento

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[2] Rochester and West Sacramento demographics differ greatly. For example, West Sacramento has a much larger proportion of residents who identify as Hispanic or Latino, with West Sacramento's being 33.3% to Rochester's 18.7%. In addition, Rochester and West Sacramento have different economies. The median income in Rochester is a far lower $40,083 in comparison to West Sacramento's $77,393 (however, it should be noted that West Sacramento does have a higher cost of living), and Rochester has a higher percentage of residents living in poverty at 29.3% compared to West Sacramento's 14.3% of their population living in poverty. (Census)

residents, in particular, wondered why it took a long time for officers to arrive to certain calls, and why sometimes they might fail to show up at all. Rochester residents shared similar sentiments, particularly around response times to various calls for service, as well as officer attitudes toward citizens when they did arrive. Like residents in West Sacramento, Rochesterians reflected on times the police never showed when they were called. In the absence of data related to police practice, participants drew on their own experiences, and those that they drew on most were related to how they were supported when they called for police help.

Community members also shared their positive experiences of officers acting quickly in moments of need. One participant shared a story of an officer who provided aid to a woman who was suffering from a drug overdose. The participant described that officer as efficient, polite, respectful and that he "...saved her life." However, both cities hold feelings that their police department's responses to calls for service are overall inadequate. Allowing community members to toggle between data that shows response times to various types of calls can provide much clarity on police duties and actions.

Priority setting and attitudes

In both West Sacramento and Rochester, MFJ heard participants express a disconnect between their own priorities and the priorities of the police department. Some felt disrespected by how police have treated them in the past, describing how they have been made to feel their concerns are not of importance. There is ample room for the police and community to gain more understanding of one another. Residents in Rochester felt more at odds with their police than those in West Sacramento. Rochester listening session participants questioned whether the department's training of officers included any guidance around interacting with community members.

Discussion also centered around better understanding related to allocation of budgets and training. Some listening session participants were particularly interested in how police departments spend funds, including: equipment purchased, the process of budgeting for needed positions, and how overtime is used.

Quality of life issues

The term "safe" is very broad, and encompasses many different things. There are many experiences in neighborhoods that are not necessarily violent that affect a resident's perception of how safe their home is. The police are often asked to address these issues, including: speeding, noise disturbances, and homelessness. For West Sacramento residents, these needs are very important. People want to know that they are living in a city that is safe for families and want to see action taken when others behave in ways they deem unsafe. Participants wondered if their department requires more officers to respond to these needs, particularly related to traffic enforcement, and expressed a desire to have access to this information to push for change.

Some community members in West Sacramento struggle with securing stable housing. West Sacramento residents who spoke to our team said they wanted to know more about what the police response has been to homelessness and if they need more resources to address it effectively. Using the Commons platform could create more clarity around funds police have access to for addressing issues like homelessness and how successful their efforts have been.

Theme 3: Community Relations and Proactive Engagement

The disconnect between communities and the police is ever-present in current conversations surrounding public safety, and varies by city, by county, and by state. Rochester and West Sacramento are physically located on opposite coasts, have very different histories, and possess different populations. These differences were present in our conversations, as were some vital similarities. A community's relationship with their police department is integral to understanding public safety.

Police's impact on public safety

Better data has the power to improve accountability. With more information and tools, community members will be better equipped to assess whether their police department is meeting the standards of their mission and the needs of their communities. Many people in Rochester shared that their neighborhood felt unsafe, but also referenced the ways in which their police department has exacerbated feelings of unsafety. One listening session participant used a common idiom to describe the impact that officers had when responding to the public's calls, and the limited resources utilized in that response, saying:

> *"If you're a hammer, everything looks like a nail."*

In West Sacramento, participants noted feelings that the police were not proactive enough. The metrics proposed for this pilot should lead to a better understanding of the police's impact on public safety, and feelings thereof. Providing accessible data to show the types of calls the department is asked to respond to, and what practices are actually taking place, is an excellent place to start. Establishing the shared language of data can enable beneficial discussions around the experiences of community members, and help departments better understand what safety looks like from a community member's perspective.

Involving community members in public safety

In both Rochester and West Sacramento, listening session attendees want to actively participate in how their city handles public safety issues. They want to be a part of the discussion. Participants were eager to know where the police needed support or alternatives for some of the things they do. In one Rochester session a participant asked:

"How do we help each other be builders of community with police, with people disenfranchised…"

Similarly, a West Sacramento resident said:

"We want to have a secure community so if there is any in our ability to help, we want to play our role."

Community members expressed a strong desire to help create solutions and break down the barriers that exist. Ideas on incorporating this perspective into the Commons platform need to be explored. A better understanding of the resources (external, but complementary to a department) a community can offer deserves to be evaluated and will remain a topic of discussion.

Youth and police
In the Rochester listening session, some participants expressed concern about how police treat the children of the community, and shared examples of negative experiences from when they were children themselves. There were also participants who shared positive experiences with police in their youth. One participant shared the impact a School Resource Officer (SRO) had on their life. The participant described the SRO instilling important values like respect and reliability. In West Sacramento, there was a commonly shared opinion that participants wanted to see officers back in the schools. Parents in West Sacramento worry about the threat of school shootings and the lack of positive role models, two areas in which a police officer presence could have an impact.

Access to localized information could help inform policies on police interactions with the youth. Creating metrics around the units that departments have, including those that directly interact with youth and the capacity of certain programs, is possible. These sentiments also reiterate the need to look at police work across multiple dimensions, as department practices impact many areas of a community's day-to-day life.

Language barriers and resource access
The discussions surrounding breaking down barriers between the community and the police also involved the issue of language. West Sacramento and Rochester are diverse cities with considerable immigrant populations.[3] As cities welcome people from across the world, they should practice equity to the best of their ability. That includes distributing material in the languages most used by members of their communities besides English. Residents from West Sacramento, especially, asked for this kind of accessibility.

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[3] Bureau, US Census. (2022, December 2). "Comparing 2012-2016 ACS 5-Year and 2017-2021 ACS 5-Year." Census.gov, https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/acs/guidance/comparing-acs-data/2021/5-year-comparison.html.

When officers can communicate in different languages and important information is made accessible, communities can play a larger role in making their city safer. West Sacramento residents believe if this improvement is made, there will be more people serving in the community that can better understand them and the needs they express. This could then foster a stronger sense of connection between the police and the communities they serve.

EXPANDING DIMENSIONS OF POLICING

In the beginning stages of the Policing Measurement Pilot Project, MFJ convened a National Policing Council and National Roundtable to gather information from policing experts, stakeholders and community leaders. The National Policing Council helped create a framework for measuring police work, department functions, and relevant policies, by developing and defining eight overarching areas, or dimensions, of policing and police performance. These dimensions are defined below, and were the starting point in generating metrics and creating a framework for gathering community insights.

Trust, Legitimacy, and Community Engagement

The concept of "procedural justice" largely informs this dimension; the four pillars of procedural justice include voice, neutrality, respect, and transparency/understanding. The police are often the primary first responders to situations, and the most likely institution for the public to come in contact with; whether it is asking for directions, reporting nuisances or actual crimes, or as individuals suspected of a crime. It is critical for the police to have the community's trust and support in order to do their jobs effectively. Community trust is not a given, however, it must be earned. To earn the trust of the community and be seen as a legitimate institution, the police need to engage the community in respectful ways and display fair and equitable attitudes in their interactions with the public.

Crime Reduction and Calls for Service

Crime and crime reduction are arguably seen as the primary role of a police officer; the public typically sees them as crime fighters. This dimension also recognizes the importance of Calls for Service, and how the public can impact officers' awareness of crimes. These are typically two areas that can influence the public's perception of law enforcement performance. This assessment often focuses on the quality of the interactions with, and the services received from, law enforcement.

Use of Force

There is no consensus around a single definition of use of force. Research shows that the use of force by police officers is influenced by a number of factors, including department policy, training, peer pressure, working environment, chief and police officer individual philosophies, and situational factors.

Least Harm Practices and Alternatives to Arrest

This dimension focuses on alternatives to policing and arrests, which can include officer discretion as well as collaboration with other agencies. These alternatives are intended to best serve the needs of individuals and avoid harms that are not necessary by involving them in the criminal justice system. Police departments can improve community relations while keeping members of the public accountable by using evidence-based "least harm" practices that result in non-custodial outcomes, diverting community members from traditional criminal case processing, and connecting them to wrap-around services instead.

Internal and External Accountability Measures

Police must work with communities to co-produce public safety while protecting Constitutional rights. Communities and departments have established multiple methods to hold departments accountable to their mandates for due process, and the protection of civil liberties. What can support or enhance this work is making the information from, or surrounding these methods, more accessible to the public. Establishing safe and informative lines of communication between community members and the entities that serve them can help bolster accountability processes.

Officer Safety and Wellness

Law enforcement officers are tasked with many responsibilities, not least among them, serving whole communities. Their work may require long shifts, physical endurance, and occasionally, dealing with trauma on the job or elsewhere that may have long-lasting effects. Departments that provide services and regulations to improve the physical and mental well being of their officers may improve effectiveness, and increase their officers' ability to de-escalate conflict and have positive interactions with the community, and increase job satisfaction and career longevity for those who are serving their communities as members of policing organizations.

Fiscal Needs and Responsibilities

Local government has a responsibility to fund law enforcement agencies. Therefore, law enforcement agencies must make fair, efficient, and effective use of financial resources and be accountable to taxpayers for how those resources are allocated. Making effective use of fiscal resources should be undertaken with input from the community complementing the normal rigor of government budgeting and procurement processes. How government agencies budget and spend financial resources should be made transparent.

Recruitment, Training, and Education

Law enforcement officers require substantial training to perform their duties effectively. Monitoring an agency's ability to provide training courses, seminars, and a strong recruitment pool can ensure better law enforcement outcomes. Training, both in the academy and ongoing, supports officers' ability to respond to the demands of their work.

MAPPING LISTENING SESSION THEMES TO POLICING DIMENSIONS

The themes that emerged from the listening sessions keep with the policing dimensions and provide further clarity on what communities are most interested in.

The first theme, understanding police work and departmental operations, can relate to several dimensions. These can include Recruitment, Training, and Education, Trust, Legitimacy, Community Engagement, and Accountability. These dimensions cover information around hiring practices, training information, information-sharing, the complaints process, and department oversight. A better understanding of these areas can allow the community to trust their police department, as well as see them as a legitimate institution.

Improved responses to problems as they arise overlaps with Crime Reduction/Calls for Service, Least Harm Practices, Trust/Legitimacy/Community Engagement, and potentially Use of Force. Crime response and reduction is typically the first thing we think of when talking about police, and communities are often concerned with violence and victimization. Understanding how police address these issues, and how they determine which calls get prioritized, can open a conversation on matching up concerns and priorities. Least Harm Practices can inform this theme by showing the public when officers have to make an arrest, versus when they have the discretion to make a referral to services. This also can include determining which calls are dispatched to mental health professionals in addition to police. Improved responses may include de-escalation tactics to prevent major use of force incidents, as well as a clearer definition of when force is permitted in interactions.

Finally, Community Relations and Proactive Engagement ties into Trust, Legitimacy, and Community Engagement, as well as Crime Reduction and Calls for Service strategies. The public can help reduce the calls for service load if they are aware of other outlets beyond 911 for minor issues. MFJ has already been considering how diversion and alternatives to police data could reveal how the rest of the community's resources are used. With trust between the police and their community, they may be better equipped to work together and prevent and solve crimes in their area.

While the dimensions Fiscal Needs & Responsibilities, Recruitment and Officer Wellness were not explicitly mentioned in the listening sessions or directly tied into the themes above, that does not mean the public is not interested or concerned about these areas. The themes were driven by community remarks and the things they would like to see, and summarized as succinctly as possible. Examples of these remarks include "We have filed multiple reports with the WSDP about break ins, but the process stops there", and "[we] need to be able to call for accountability as a community". These remarks are taken into consideration, and worked into a measurable metric that can be informed with data from the departments. The table below displays examples of some of the comments from the listening sessions, and how this can look.

Public Comment	Potential Metric
"Is there a shortage of police officers?"	Budgeted positions versus department vacancies
More patrolling should happen at all hours of the day in neighborhoods in neighborhoods across the community, not just at night.	Number of officers employed, broken down by days/shift times they work
"Many break-in crimes [and similar] happen by homeless people."	Number of calls for service for property crimes committed in areas with high rates of homelessness Number of property crime arrests allowing for a breakdown by individual demographics and housing status

Visualization showing how a public comment can become a possible metric displayed in the transparency platform.

CONCLUSION

Following listening sessions in our two pilot communities with system actors, reform advocates, and the general public, we identified three major themes the communities are most interested in exploring together. We explored how departments might help communities better understand the work they do generally, and specific operations such as training and responding to complaints. Further, communities demonstrated a desire for more equitable responses to calls for service across community areas, and increased attention to specific quality of life and traffic concerns. In all cases, the public showed an interest in working with their local police department to improve relations and public safety together.

The emerging themes discussed here resulted from the experiences and stories of listening session participants, and are meant to help inform the types of data that should be maintained by police departments and ultimately displayed in a Commons platform. However, these voices are also important to ensure that a list of dimensions and published metrics related to police work (with or without an interactive data platform) would be comprehensive and responsive to the desires of the public and not solely researchers or practitioners. Thus, MFJ's immediate next step is to incorporate these themes into measure development and calculation of metrics for publication. The full set of metrics will be published with an eye toward the assessment of their feasibility in local pilot jurisdictions, and for any others working in this space to implement or build upon. MFJ intends to bring useful information back to the communities, and we welcome any feedback community members may have. The resulting Commons platforms will enable the pilot communities, including the institutions that serve them, to work together to define and set policy and data goals moving forward. While all elements and metrics may not be feasible at the outset, the themes in this report and the work of the pilot jurisdictions will directly inform the future of policing data and practice.

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