

What are the perceptions of procedural justice and system legitimacy among NYC residents?

The MOCJ Strategic Plan for Fiscal Years 2019- 2021 states that a successful public safety system is assessed not only by capturing metrics like arrest and recidivism rates, but also by the quality of the justice it provides. MOCJ’s goal is for all New Yorkers to be safe and to be treated fairly and with dignity. The Strategic Plan goes one step further and promises to “put into practice principles of fairness and procedural justice.” It includes an action item to identify issues about New Yorkers’ perceptions of fairness of the justice system through surveys, other feedback mechanisms, and engagement.

In partnership with Yale Law School’s Justice Collaboratory, this study is the first step toward fulfilling that goal.

In 2017, with support from MOCJ, The Justice Collaboratory (the JC) began a quantitative-qualitative research methodology. The JC administered a 38-item survey to 2500 New York City residents, complimented with an in-depth community interview with 200 NYC residents. The findings are supported with prior research and indicate that fairness is experienced differently based on individual (e.g.: race,

income) and contextual variables (e.g. perception of city government and contact with NYPD).

The goal of this study was to explore NYC residents’ perception of community and neighborhood involvement, their relationship to the NYC government and perceptions of procedural justice in the criminal justice system, and to deliver indicators and next steps to MOCJ.

This study was designed around four primary research questions:

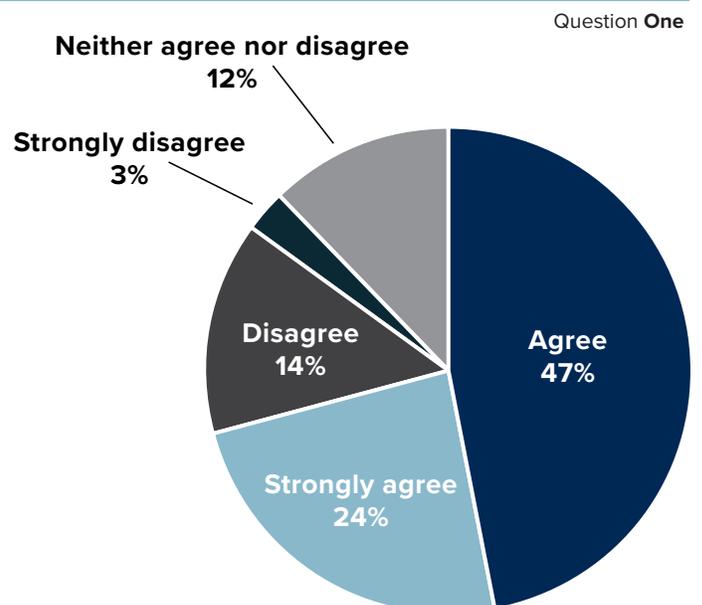
- Q1** How do NYC residents perceive their neighborhoods and community involvement?
- Q2** How do NYC residents view community voice in public policy?
- Q3** What are the individual perceptions of procedural justice of and within the NYC criminal justice system?
- Q4** What is the impact of community-level actions taken by police to build trust - and does the community perceive these reconciliation efforts as sincere?

KEY FINDINGS:

Q1 *How do NYC residents perceive their neighborhoods and community involvement?*

A1 Community survey participants were asked to reflect on the relationship between their sense of identity and their neighborhood. We asked:

“Do you agree or disagree that being a part of the neighborhood you live in is important to the way you think of yourself as a person?”



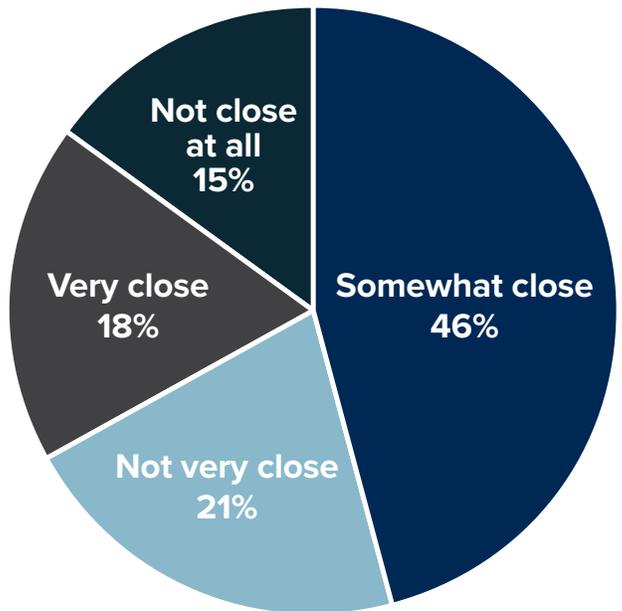
KEY FINDINGS:

Question One

to which most survey respondents agreed (approximately 70%). This held true across race, gender, and borough with slight variations and statistically significant differences between Black and non-Black residents. Staten Island had the highest level of agreement, significantly higher than Bronx and Brooklyn (other differences were not significant). Black respondents have significantly less positive responses than whites; Hispanic and Asian respondents also have less positive responses to a marginally significant degree.

While some participants provided their definition of a “strong-neighborhood” to include availability of services, most responses focused on citizens’ “involvement” in local problems and politics, and caring about the neighborhood’s “maintenance and cleanliness.” Answers also referenced relational characteristics such as “good relationships with neighbors,” “sense of community” and the presence of people who “care for each other.” The word “together” was used most frequently by respondents (30%).

How close do you generally feel to other people in your neighborhood?



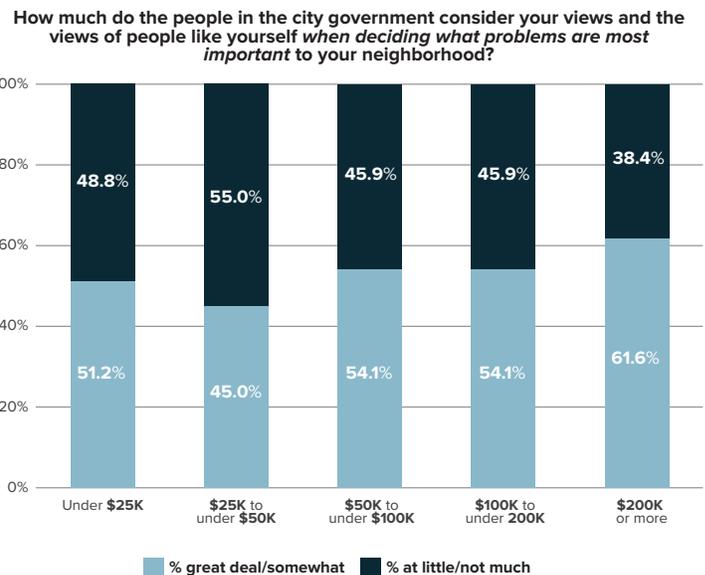
KEY FINDINGS:

Question Two

Q2 How do NYC residents view community voice in public policy?

A2 Survey respondents were asked whether they feel that their opinions inform NYC public policy.¹ The majority of respondents did not feel heard. “Somewhat” and “a little” were the average responses - and less than 200 people felt their views were considered a “great deal” when making decisions - indicating that residents don’t feel that they have much voice in identifying and addressing neighborhood problems. Additional means testing indicated significant disparity in responses by race, gender, and income.

by the city government somewhat or a great deal compared to 45% of respondents with a reported income of \$25k to \$50k.



Nearly 62% of individuals who reported a family income of \$200k or greater in 2016 believed that their opinions were considered

¹ We asked: “How much do the people in city government consider your views and the views of people like yourself when deciding what problems are most important in your neighborhood? (Q14a)

Q3 *What are the individual perceptions of procedural justice of and within the NYC criminal justice system?*

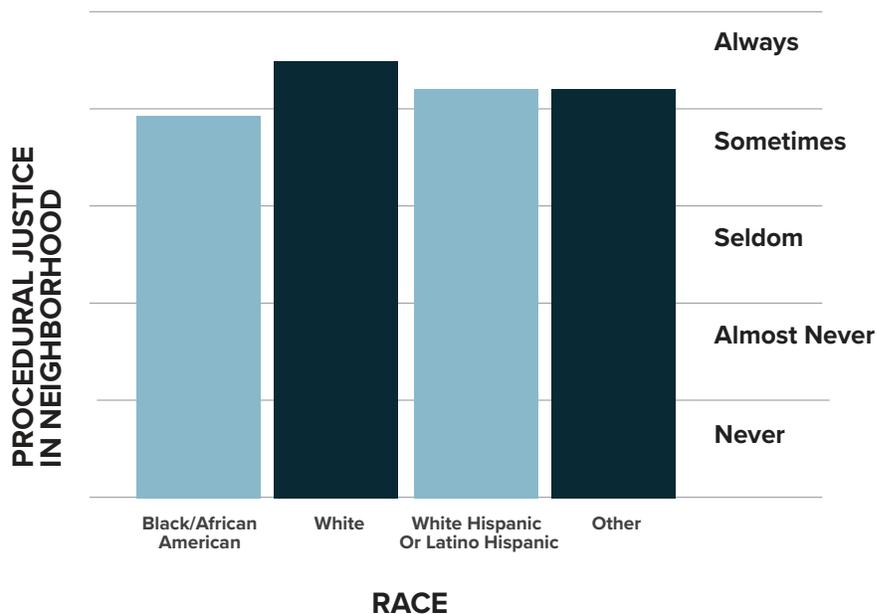
A3 Survey participants were asked about police in their neighborhood and reported different levels of agreement with statements that indicate procedural justice.² Although perceptions were overall positive, it was not universal. Residents from different populations do not all experience fairness in the same way.

“ [...] *I was not very happy. But the police officers who stopped me were polite, and courteous, and gave me my paperwork, and appeared broadly sympathetic, while at the same time, giving me the citation. So, I would say that was a posi– was a negative interaction because I didn’t want to be there, but it was positive in terms of their behavior.*

39 y/o, female, White, \$50-75k, Brooklyn resident)

During interviews, positive descriptions of encounters with police officers included the use of words such as “professional”, “respectful”, “pleasant” and “friendly” to describe officers’ behavior, in agreement with the theory of procedural justice. Factors such as how willing police officers were to listen to people and show concern for their circumstances were considered important, as were their general politeness and helpfulness.

Respondents were asked whether they agree (in a 5-point scale) with eleven statements that indicate procedural justice, e.g. whether they were treated by a police officer with respect, given voice, etc. The below graph demonstrates the most positive responses came from White, Hispanic, and Asian respondents. Significantly less positive responses come from Black respondents, whose responses ranged on average between “Seldom” and “Sometimes”.



Q3 *What is the impact of community-level actions taken by police to build trust - and does the community perceive these reconciliation efforts as sincere?*

A3 Respondents were asked broadly about community participation in policing, and if they knew of any initiatives (also known as gestures) by NYPD to build trust within their neighborhood. The data shows that knowledge of an initiative and community participation each predicted stronger beliefs about legitimacy of NYPD and more cooperative behavior.

Among those who knew of an initiative, we asked how much they agreed that NYPD sincerely intended for it to help the community. Most respondents viewed initiatives as sincere and meant to help the community – but, there was some variance.

To test the effect of an initiative that participants did not perceive as sincere we compared the respondents according to:

1. whether they knew of an initiative and reported it as sincerely intended to help the community;
2. whether they knew of an initiative and did not agree that it was sincerely intended to help the community; or,
3. whether they did not know of an initiative at all.

FINDING: The results demonstrated that people who reported knowing of an initiative and did not agree that it was sincerely intended to help the community viewed NYPD as less legitimate than people who did not know of an initiative at all. Initiatives may actually harm legitimacy when people do not perceive them as sincerely intended to help the community.

What type of Gestures did people mention?

Mention	Frequency
Meet/Meeting/Gather	247
Religious groups	24
Outreach/Reach out	53
School/youth/kids/child	131
Events	57
NCC/Community Affairs	5
Safe/Protect/Secure	24
Crime	19

“ *Because if there’s a way to build trust that we can trust the police, that would be beneficial to both the police and the local community, to all people, to elected officials, to our city as a whole, but I don’t know that we are there yet.*

(50 y/o, male, Hispanic, \$100-150k income range, Manhattan resident)

“ *I think it’s a long road. I think there’s a lot of damage that’s been done and there’s a lot of distrust. So, I think it’s going to take a long time but, you know, I think you’ve got to start somewhere.*

(27 y/o, female, white, \$100-150k income range, Queens resident)