



December 20, 2019

## Perceptions of Portland Police Bureau among Persons with a Recent Police Contact: Results of an SMS Survey

In October 2019, the National Police Foundation disseminated a eight-question survey via text message (SMS), to Portland citizens who had recent contact with the Portland Police Bureau (PPB). Questionnaires were sent to adult victims of property crimes who contacted the police for assistance and who had a valid cell phone number. The survey attempted to capture perceptions of procedural justice with officers dispatched by the Portland Police Bureau.

The survey was created using Qualtrics software, and sent to victims as a text (SMS) message to their cell phones. A reminder message was sent 48 hours after the initial SMS invitation to those who had not yet responded. Of 2,318 invitations sent, the survey was completed by 538 respondents, yielding a surprisingly high response rate of 23%. Participation in the survey was fairly equal across precincts and genders. However, older residents were more likely than younger residents to complete the survey. We provide a detailed analysis below.

### Survey questions

As mentioned, the SMS invitation prompted citizens to respond to an eight-question survey about their experience with the PPB. The first two items established the type of interaction with police – in person or online. Persons who had had a face-to face encounter with a police officer were asked a series of five questions about the officer’s demeanor and actions (Questions 2-6 below) in addition to a general question about satisfaction with the incident (Question 7). Persons who had completed only an online report were only asked about their general satisfaction with the experience (Question 7). A final question allowed respondents to add free text comments about the police department. These comments are presented in Appendix A.

Items 1 – 7 were Likert scale questions. Each requested that respondents gauge their sentiment on a 5-point scale ranging from most positive (5) to most negative (1). Question 6 was on a 4-point scale ranging from most positive (4) to most negative (1).

| Number | Questions   |
|--------|---|
| Q1     | Did you speak with a member of the Portland Police Bureau?  |
| Q1.1   | IF “no,” did you fill out an online report?   |
| Q2     | At the start, did the officer greet you by saying hello and stating his/her name?                             |
| Q3     | How respectful was the officer to you?  |
| Q4     | How fair was the officer with you?  |
| Q5     | How well did the officer explain the reasons for his/her actions?   |
| Q6     | Did the officer listen to what you had to say?  |
| Q7     | Taking the whole experience into account, how satisfied are you with your recent interaction with the police? |
| Q8     | Any additional comments? (text box)   |

Each phone number was given a unique identifier that permitted researchers to link survey data to demographic and other individual information contained in the PPB CAD data including gender, race, police district, and offense type.

### Who Responded to the Survey?

The table below presents a breakdown of who completed the surveys according to gender, race, age, and precinct. The table shows that responses were similarly distributed between precincts. However, there were significant differences in survey completion by gender, race, and age. Non-white respondents were significantly less likely to complete the survey than white (18% of black respondents completed the surveys compared to 25% of white respondents). Surprisingly, younger residents were less likely to complete the SMS survey than older residents (17% of those 30 and under completed compared to 42% of residents 60 and over). Females were more likely than males to complete the survey (25% compared to 21%). The differences in completion rate by age category were large: 25 percentage points separated the youngest and oldest age categories. However, differences by gender and race, while statistically significant with this large sample size, were relatively small.

### Survey Non-Response Analysis (N=2,318)

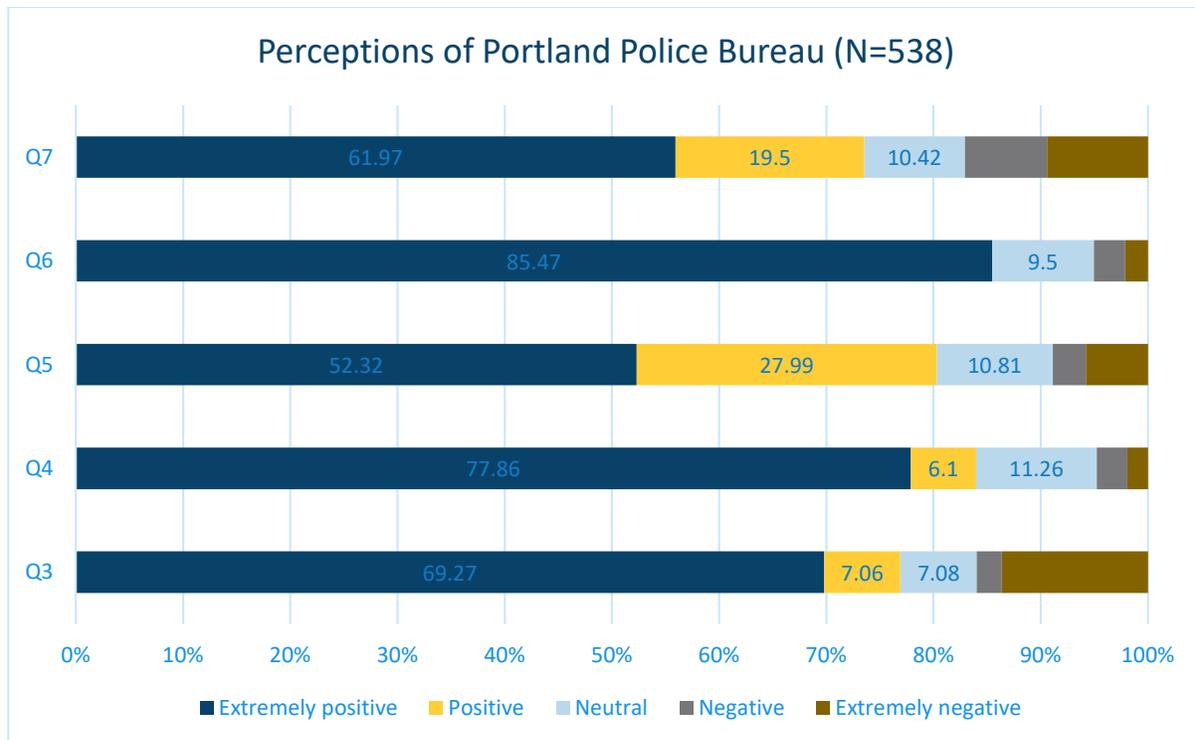
#### Response

| Gender |  |  |
|--------|--|--|
|        |  |  |

|                        |     |                |
|------------------------|-----|----------------|
| <i>Female</i>          | 25% | <i>p</i> < .05 |
| <i>Male</i>            | 21% |                |
| <b><i>Race</i></b>     |     |                |
| <i>White</i>           | 25% | <i>p</i> < .01 |
| <i>Other</i>           | 18% |                |
| <b><i>Age</i></b>      |     |                |
| <i>32 and under</i>    | 17% | <i>p</i> < .01 |
| <i>33-44</i>           | 21% |                |
| <i>45-59</i>           | 24% |                |
| <i>60+</i>             | 42% |                |
| <b><i>Precinct</i></b> |     |                |
| <i>CE</i>              | 25% | n.s.           |
| <i>CK</i>              | 0%  |                |
| <i>EA</i>              | 21% |                |
| <i>GR</i>              | 0%  |                |
| <i>NO</i>              | 24% |                |
| <i>NULL</i>            | 18% |                |
| <i>SO</i>              | 0%  |                |

### **Overall Results for Each Survey Item**

Overall, the survey results indicate a high degree of satisfaction with PPB among Portland residents. The graph below depicts responses to each question. For each of the questions 2 through 7 a majority of respondents held extremely positive views of the encounter and at least three-quarters of respondents registered a favorable opinion. Negative views constituted less than 20% of responses to each question.



### Differences in Perceptions of the Police between Subgroups

This section breaks down perceptions of the police encounter by gender, race, age, and sector. Gender was decently split between men and women (290 versus 244), so categorization was easy. For race, we had a total of 7 categories in the data provided by PPB. However, since 86% of the sample was white, we were forced to categorize race simply as “White” versus “Other”. For age, we broke the sample roughly into quartiles yielding categories of 32 & under, 33-44, 45-59, and 60 & over. Lastly, the 3 sectors in the response dataset were recoded into the geographic areas based on the PPB designations—central, north, and east.

We created two dependent variables to measure satisfaction with the encounter. The first, a procedural justice scale, was created by summing q3 through q7, where higher scores represent more positive perceptions. The analysis of this scale was used only for victims who had had a face to face encounter with an officer. We used Cronbach’s alpha to measure internal consistency of the the scale: the alpha indicated that the items were strongly intercorrelated (0.85). The second dependent measure was overall satisfaction with the experience, represented by Question 7. This

measure was used for the whole sample, regardless of whether the respondent had a personal encounter with an officer or just reported online. Results are presented below:

|                            | <b>Procedural Justice</b><br><b>(Questions 3-7)</b><br>N=486<br>M(SD) | <b>Overall Satisfaction</b><br><b>(Question 7 only)</b><br>N=538<br>M(SD) |
|----------------------------|---|---|
| <b><i>Gender</i></b>       |   |   |
| Female                     | <b>2.95 (1.48)</b>  | <b>4.00 (1.37)</b>  |
| Male                       | <b>3.17 (1.33)</b>  | <b>4.08 (1.31)</b>  |
| <b><i>Age*</i></b>         |   |   |
| Under 30                   | <b>2.87 (1.51)</b>  | <b>3.87 (1.41)</b>  |
| 31-40                      | <b>2.88 (1.49)</b>  | <b>3.84 (1.42)</b>  |
| 41-60                      | <b>3.26 (1.21)</b>  | <b>4.06 (1.31)</b>  |
| 61+                        | <b>3.29 (1.32)</b>  | <b>4.40 (1.13)</b>  |
| <b><i>Race</i></b>         |   |   |
| White                      | <b>3.05 (1.40)</b>  | <b>4.04 (1.34)</b>  |
| Other                      | <b>3.15 (1.42)</b>  | <b>4.08 (1.33)</b>  |
| <b><i>Precinct</i></b>     |   |   |
| Central                    | <b>3.08 (1.41)</b>  | <b>4.11 (1.23)</b>  |
| North                      | <b>3.07 (1.41)</b>  | <b>4.01 (1.43)</b>  |
| East                       | <b>3.06 (1.40)</b>  | <b>3.98 (1.23)</b>  |
| <b><i>Report Type*</i></b> |   |   |
| Online                     | N/A   | <b>2.94 (1.22)</b>  |
| Traditional                | N/A   | <b>4.16 (1.30)</b>  |

\* Significant at .01 level.

These initial analyses showed that, in simple bivariate relationships, age, and online reporting were significant predictors of overall satisfaction (Q7). Older respondents were more satisfied overall, while persons who reported online were less satisfied overall. Similarly, we found that age was the *only* significant predictor of perceptions of procedural justice among persons who had a face-to-face encounter with an officer. We did not find any significant differences in perceptions according to gender, race, or precinct either for the whole sample or for persons who had had a personal encounter with an officer. Results of the one-way ANOVA tests conducted to assess differences are presented in Appendix B.

When assessing the effects of a number of variables on measures such as the procedural justice scale, it is useful to also conduct multivariate analyses in order to assess the independent contribution of each variable while holding constant the effects of the other variables. The multivariate analysis that we conducted is contained in Appendix C. It confirmed the results of the bivariate analysis: Age remained significantly related to satisfaction both for the entire sample and among persons who had had a face-to-face encounter. Report type remained significantly related to overall satisfaction when analyzing the entire sample.

## **Discussion**

Overall, the survey found a high degree of satisfaction with officers' demeanor and actions as well as satisfaction with the overall experience of reporting a crime. Consistent with other studies, older residents generally held more positive opinions of the police than younger respondents. We did not find differences in satisfaction according to sector or (in contrast to much past work) according to race or gender. However, since sample size limited the analysis to whites versus other races combined, more data is needed to confirm that specific non-white subgroups – especially African Americans -- share similar satisfaction rates to whites.

The sample obtained using the SMS methodology was not representative of all property crime victims, particularly when it came to age. We were surprised to find that older victims were substantially more likely to complete SMS surveys than younger victims. This has been true for telephone surveys, but we expected that SMS would skew more toward younger persons. Weighting techniques could be used in future surveys to compensate for these differences should PPB want to continue text surveys. Also, future text surveys also should seek ways to increase response rates among those groups less well represented in the sample.

Based on a reading of comments made by survey respondents, we conclude that one actionable result from the survey is that satisfaction among persons reporting crimes online could be increased by providing feedback to complainants on case progress or final outcome of their complaint. For example, one respondent represented the views of many on-line reporters when he said, “I filed a report about someone breaking into my car and stealing property, but I haven’t received a single communication about it from the Portland police.”

Most comments offered by respondents contained predominantly positive notes about the officers residents encountered. For example, one resident expressed,

*I’ve always respected the Portland police and the job they do. I’ve never had a interaction with them that was bad or that I felt in danger. They have always been respectful and fair and always give me the best information that they can supply. I don’t like the things people are saying about the Portland police and do not agree one bit. I am proud to live in a city protected by these honorable men and women.*

However, there were still a substantial amount of grievances. One discouraged respondent said:

*The police was no help. The person who took my call at the non emergency phone line acted like I was wasting her time....When I needed the police they didn't have time for me.*

Other categories of comments focused on lack of follow-up, comments about online reporting, overall criminal justice system grievances, and suggestions for improvement.

The test of using SMS as a vehicle for assessing satisfaction with police encounters was largely successful. The response rate of 23% was considerably higher than the 10% we had hoped for. At just one cent per survey invitation, the Qualtrics costs were slightly over \$0.43 per completed survey. Labor costs in generating the invitations and reminders are fairly minimal. This method of collecting sentiment toward the police is a fraction of the cost of phone surveys or survey invitations delivered by mail, and the response rate is not substantially lower than either of the more expensive alternatives. This survey also can serve as a benchmark for satisfaction with PPB. We recommend that the department repeat the survey process quarterly to determine changes in satisfaction that may result from changes in police policies or training or media coverage.

## **Appendix A: Additional Comments of Respondents**

In this section, we present a sample of the optional free text responses that some respondents added to the survey. In total, there were 240 text responses. They are grouped according to Affirmations, Online Report, Lack of response/Follow Up, Grievances, Suggestions, and Overall Justice System Grievances.

### *Affirmation*

**Praise for the officers who responded to their incident. These respondents were focused on the professionalism of officers, with a number commenting on the fact that officers went out of their way to provide helpful service.**

- It would have been better if he caught the thief but it was still great.
- observer was polite and kept appropriate space between officer and me
- Everything went great with process. I think just the situation makes it seem like it was bad, but that's not the officers fault. It went as good as it could
- Officer [redacted] was fast to respond and very helpful glad to have him protecting our city
- Officer was everything I want all of our officers to be, very kind, respectful, funny and just down to earth. Great job and hire more like him!
- Officer [redacted] is excellent but I would love some results from the investigation
- Officer was very helpful and didn't mind helping me I appreciate that very much.
- I wish we had more on the force in Portland, I work downtown and I know they can't always come out if we have something going on. BUT every officer I've ever encountered which has been many are super awesome! Keep up the great work guys and gals! We appreciate everything you do.
- Everyone was great!
- Very good training
- the officer did his job and took my information. it was a brief and professional interaction, nothing more.
- Had a couple incidents where police presence was necessary. I've seen nothing but true professionalism from the officers that responded. Big salute to the east precinct
- He came out of his way to bring me papers that needed to be signed by me only.
- I was hoping they would catch the guy who stole my car but my interactions with the officer were good and reassuring.
- I've had 2 recent interactions with the police, both were very positive
- Exceptionally pleased with the wonderful help that Officer [redacted] provided.
- My interaction was really positive, reassuring, professional, and helpful.
- I phoned the police after a robbery. I was extremely happy with Officer [redacted].
- My car was stolen and it was recovered in just over a day!!
- I am very grateful and appreciative of the service Portland Police provides to our communities. Stay safe and keep up the good work!

- All of my interactions with the PPD in the past few years have been greatly improved from how they were over a decade ago. The department policy shift has been a very real improvement, in my opinion.
- The police officer is so nice.
- Officer did his job very well... I was very impressed with the result... Thank you
- The officer was very efficient and very kind and did find my stolen car.
- The officer was apologetic for my situation (car break in) and asked if I felt safe and then gave me my options for reporting the incident.
- Great officer
- I had to call three time and each time I was amazed at how good I was treated. Thank you.
- Officer [redacted] is very professional and a great community police officer.
- I dont know that it was an officer i soike to when giving the report. There were two of them, areiced in a van, and did not carry a weapon or badge. The officer that i dealt with when my car was found was a sherrif, i believe. However overall was pleased with everyone i dealt with.
- [redacted] is an exemplary Portland Police Officer
- Im happy with the officer. But our car was broken in they took a backpack computer camera nook and gun. We were traveling through oregon. We waited 4 + hours for an officer to show up. Not happy with that. We even left and went to a precinct to talk with an officer but they told us no one there was able to help. They would need to call over an officer and we would have to wait. So we went back to where it happened and an officer came. 4 hours from when it happened.
- I'm from a family of police men n women n also military served. I know the hardship and I know every hardcore to the job.
- I think we have a wonderful police department. Sorry to hear they are under staffed.
- My vehicle was stolen and the cop came to take my report was very understanding and professional. He explained the process very well and thoroughly answered any questions i had. The cop who found my car was also very professional.
- Everyone I dealt with was very helpful
- Always easy to deal with.
- Very helpful!!
- Officer [redacted] deserves a promo
- Nice guy. Promote him.
- The officer did an outstanding job working on my case
- I spoke to the police after we had a robbery. Police were very nice but basically little they could do
- Keep doing what you're doing. Thank you!!

### *Online Reports*

**Persons who filed online reports were generally unhappy with the fact that they did not get updates on their complaint and were not notified of the final outcome.**

- I did not have an officer come to the scene, I just filed a police report because I was told that it would take the officer too long to arrive to me.

- My report was online. But I was expecting a follow up and I've heard nothing in almost an entire month.
- I had over 3000 dollars worth of artwork stolen. I was told to submit an online report, after doing so no one contacted me or followed up on my report.
- I live out of state and filed my report online. I did not have help from an officer.
- Never spoke to an officer in person. Whoever replied to my email did not give a name
- Police reports should be able to be filed over the phone as well as online
- I did not have contact with a police person. I did file a stolen bicycle report but I did that online.
- I talked to a dispatcher who directed me to the website. The actual officer just emailed me and never followed up
- I did an online report saying that three people in other cities that don't have exclusively all you have to do is put in your address and then quickly start typing start to the office anything section for a half hour a week sometimes it takes me a little bit longer to do it depending on what there is we can bring a team cleaners in or there's like some add-ons for \$10 a week you can help me vacuum your apartment depending on how large your puppy OK so it's 118 for the very first visit and for macula it's \$98
- I filed a police report online and had no interaction with an officer.
- I didn't speak to an officer I just filled out an online report and they responded to my email saying it was submitted
- I had a auto break in. I called the Police and was given the choice to have an officer come out or file a report online. I chose the Online option. The response of the filing was very quick, No problems.

While the non emergency officer told me about the online filing option he didn't recommend it over waiting for a police officer. I'd never been in that situation before and was kind of distraught. I wish they had just let me know for minor crimes like a car break in it was easier and faster to file online. I waited around for 2 hours and finally talked with an officer who said I should just file online. Which I did and it took no time at all, it was extremely convenient. In the future I would definitely file online.

#### *Lack of response/Lack of Follow-up*

**Comments on lack of follow up with their complaints, many filed online. These respondents, similar to those in the previous category (Online Reports), were upset that they did not get feedback on the status of their report or the final outcome.**

- Not sure if I initiate follow up, or she will. That was unclear
- My only complaint is that when I followed up with an issue by email (which the officer gave me), I didn't get a response. Overall I was very appreciative of their response.
- My only upset is I didn't get a call after he looked through the footage. However, he was very respectful and helpful.
- There was no follow up to the report of my stolen purse at budget rental car at the Portland airport. They were supposed to check camera records from budget.
- Never had anyone reach out to me...
- Am very upsetting with the Pdx police Dept. Tried several times to contact officer [redacted] to find out progress with my case. ...never heard back...received a call from

elder fraud volunteer asking if I was okay. They then informed me my case was inactive and suspended...this is very discouraging as 7-11 store has her on video using my credit card and a picture of the car they were driving within two hours of the crime...as a tax payer in Multnomah county I do not have very nice things to say about Pdx police Dept at this time. It has been a nightmare changing all my accounts and credit cards

- The officer took my info but didn't say anything about next steps or even what would be done with the info in my report leaving me to think that it was pointless, even though the officer was respectful on the phone.
- Never spoke with anyone. After 20+ minutes of voice messages I filed a report online.
- I filled out a report but never heard back.
- Officer was in area on similar crime said he would come to my car to take a report but never arrived.
- I have not been contacted.
- The officer was blunt, which is understandable. He listened to my interpretation of the situation, answered the questions I had. I wish he would've followed up about the situation (because we had talked about how the issue was a reoccurring one and we were looking for help on the matter)

### *Grievances*

#### **Various complaints about the way their incident was handled or about MPD in general.**

- The only issue is response time.
- I called because I was visiting in town and my car was broken into in a parking garage and they told me it would be over an hour for someone to come to me so I could file a report and that I shouldn't stay where I was cause I was alone and it was most likely not safe I expressed how I didn't want to leave my car with the window broken because someone could take the stuff that hadn't been stolen while I was on the phone a guy on a bike that was patrolling the lot rode by so I told the police on the phone that I was gonna stop him and see if he could help me I didn't know if he was a bike cop or not the policeman on the phone hung up while I was talking to this patrol man who I learned was not an actual officer, while I was in the phone the cop told me that if I didn't want to wait the hour I should leave and fill out a report online which I ended up doing but I felt like it was crazy that it would be a whole hour for someone to come help me and that the cop just hung up before knowing if I was being helped by the guy on the bike. I live in Philadelphia for 12 years and never experienced such a lack of care or concern also my cousin is NYPd and they would never have treated a citizen this was especially someone who was from out of town and didn't know anything about there safety or how to get help it was extremely disappointing
- Only dissatisfied because it didn't really matter that we called the police.
- They don't really care. No one helped me when my phone got stolen. A man threatened and extorted me and the police didn't do anything. I have his information but no one cares.
- The officers in your department were exceptional and I always have been. On the flipside, I'm not very happy with Portland police in general for being so cavalier about something as serious as the theft of an automobile.

- Basically i got the run around, not our jurisdiction, call this other police dept, then rude about they just dont want to do their job do a report online, i stated i couldnt tried and bssically, try again. Had to call 6 tomes before he would take my police report and wouldnt take some of the most important information, names, dates he just said "yeah this happend hindreds of times a day, nothing is going to come of this report, it happens too often. Well if he did his job maybe these things wouldnt happen 100s of tomes a day
- Extremely unhelpful, never checked to see if we were ok, refused to send an officer to the scene, all around horrible experience.
- This officer kept talking hypothetically. It was very hard to distinguish what actully happened from her suppositional comments. She also told me I had 10 minutes to come retrieve my stolen item after I waited 3.5 hours to hear back from her. She told me "I don't even work this area, I'm just here helping out". Why would that have anything to do with her doing her job?
- still waiting for the police to recover my stuff.
- Unable to get a copy of the police report that I need for my insurance claim. The police records office and Mayor Ted Wheelers office are unhelpful in resolving the situation
- I feel crime is out of control in my neighborhood. Especially property crime. There are homeless camps that go on crime sprees all night. They are full of what is obviously stolen goods. One I have seen has had as many as 20 stripped bikes. They cops seem to ignore it. I am thinking of moving oit of Portland, because I feel the crime is too bad and the Mayor is doimg nothing about it.

### *Suggestions*

#### **Suggestions about how public safety could be increased.**

- Police reports should be able to be filed over the phone as well as online
- The report was fine. My biggest issue was it took a long time to actually find the report on the website. Your menu system needs to be improved.

### *Overall Justice System Grievances*

#### **Opinions about the overall criminal justice system.**

- I just wish there were more officers to help fight crime in my neighborhood. We are tempted to take matters into our own hands when it takes hours for officers to respond when some one is stealing from us.
- We want more cops like him.... but why does it take forever for cop to show?
- I've spoken with two officers within the past month and a half regarding my car being broken into twice (attempted theft first time) it's not the officer problem it's a problem with the city. The officers did what they could. I called in a week after the first break in as there was a suspicious subject hiding in the bushes at 2am who would come out and walk around my car looking in, I stayed up all night watching and 3 hrs after my call requesting an area check no one ever came. After the second break in, same guy hiding in the bushes was out and they did show up an hour later but he was gone by that point. I no longer drive my car and have it parked in a shop until I move into a house with a Garage.

## Appendix B: ANOVA Results

### Bivariate ANOVA tables

|  | df  | F     | P-value |
|--|-----|-------|---------|
| <b><i>Overall Satisfaction (Q7)</i></b>        |     |       |         |
| Gender   | 486 | 1.36  | 0.2572  |
| Race   | 485 | 0.04  | 0.8325  |
| Age  | 486 | 4.55  | 0.0037  |
| Precinct                                       | 486 | 0.31  | 0.248   |
| Report Type                                    | 452 | 39.74 | 0.0000  |
| <b><i>Procedural Justice (Sum of Q3-6)</i></b> |     |       |         |
| Gender   | 538 | 1.73  | 0.1774  |
| Race   | 537 | 0.27  | 0.6013  |
| Age  | 538 | 3.67  | 0.0122  |
| Precinct                                       | 538 | 0.04  | 0.9884  |

## Appendix C: Multivariate Results

### Multivariate ANOVA tables

|   | df  | F     | P-value |
|---|-----|-------|---------|
| <b><i>Overall Satisfaction (Q7)</i></b> |     |       |         |
| Gender                                  | 451 | 0.02  | 0.8763  |
| Race                                    | 451 | 0.16  | 0.6870  |
| Age                                     | 451 | 11.27 | 0.0009  |
| Precinct                                | 451 | 0.95  | 0.4139  |
| Report Type                             | 451 | 39.49 | 0.0000  |
| <b><i>Procedural Justice (Q3-6)</i></b> |     |       |         |
| Gender                                  | 418 | 0.01  | 0.9048  |
| Race                                    | 418 | 1.02  | 0.3121  |
| Age                                     | 418 | 15.04 | 0.0001  |
| Precinct                                | 418 | 0.94  | 0.4195  |