Research Report

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Organizational Assessment of the Los Angeles Police Department

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About This Report

The Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD), like many law enforcement agencies nationwide, faces challenges related to staffing and morale along with other organizational issues. RAND was asked by the Los Angeles Police Foundation to assess LAPD recruitment, hiring, and retention; the Department's complaint system and disciplinary practices; and the LAPD's organizational structure. This report presents the findings related to an overall assessment of the Department and presents a series of recommendations for the Chief of Police.

Justice Policy Program

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Summary

The Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD) faces several pressing and interrelated challenges, with low staffing levels affecting how the Department responds to other challenges. The decline in staff levels is affecting the Department's mission and the community's expectations while producing internal strain. There are significant concerns in terms of Department morale; these issues are affected by a variety of internal and external pressures, including staffing, the complaint system, the operational tempo, perceptions of leadership, and the political and social atmosphere. The complaint system is cumbersome and overburdened. The Department is also working to refine and reorganize its structure to operate efficiently and effectively. We evaluated multiple aspects of the LAPD to provide guidance for the future.

In this report, we provide more than 50 recommendations for the LAPD to consider to help the Department improve staffing levels, the complaint and discipline system, and morale and simplify organizational structure. In this summary, we highlight the highest priority recommendations for the Department to consider.[1] We recognize that some recommendations require resources to implement, while others can be accomplished through policy or culture change. The Department should actively pursue City and external funding sources and/or shifting existing resources to accomplish the recommendations that require monetary investments.

Staffing Issues

Key Findings—Staffing, Recruitment, and Hiring

Overall, LAPD sworn staffing has declined steadily since 2018. Sworn attrition has increased, and hiring has not been able to keep pace with the personnel losses. At the same time, there is sustained—and increasing—interest in Department jobs, according to recruitment data. There are several factors that have affected the ability of the LAPD to recruit and hire personnel:

- The hiring process is slow and cumbersome for applicants; it currently takes 349 days on average to process a sworn applicant.
- The background investigation takes a significant amount of that time. Efforts to increase efficiency have been met with roadblocks between LAPD and the City Personnel Department.
- Academy throughput and capacity hinder the ability of LAPD to replenish its losses.

[1] These are the recommendations that are ranked as "high priority" in Chapter 7. The Department should focus on making these changes first because they could be the most impactful.

High-Priority Recommendations—Staffing, Recruitment, and Hiring

The LAPD needs to prioritize changes to hiring, recruitment, and the academy to increase the number of sworn officers. Our high-priority recommendations for staffing, recruitment, and hiring are the following:

- Increase class sizes to 60 or more recruits per class.
- Hire civilian personnel to fill critical positions currently staffed by sworn officers.
- Add staff to recruitment and employment division.
- Use data and analytics to identify the greatest return on investment for recruitment activities; modify activities accordingly.
- Implement a digital hiring portal for candidates to track their progress.

It should be noted that the City of Los Angeles is experiencing a budget shortfall and a hiring freeze. To make some changes, the City may have to allow for a public safety exception to adequately staff the LAPD. If such exception is not made, the LAPD will continue to face difficulties in staffing, which is likely to place additional strain on the workforce and affect the provision of services to the community.

Complaint System and Disciplinary Process

Key Findings—Complaint System and Disciplinary Process

The complaint system is a significant point of contention in the Department. Many sworn officers report that it is stressful and discourages proactive police activity and say that it hampers their career progress. The second major finding is that the sheer volume of complaints, combined with the time to adjudicate each of them, is burdensome and inefficient. These findings are highlighted by the following:

- More than 3,700 complaint cases are received annually, and a substantial proportion of complaints involve allegations that should be easily reviewable with body-worn video, such as conduct unbecoming of an officer and discourtesy.
- Nearly all conduct unbecoming and discourtesy investigations are complete within one year of being issued, though just one-third are complete within 150 days.
- Survey results show that there is a lack of understanding of the complaint process across the Department; the system is viewed as unfair and lacks transparency.
- There are key opportunities to screen and process easily disputable and nondisciplinary complaints quickly, allowing the Department to focus on more complex allegations.[2]

[2] All complaint allegations are certainly of importance to the complainant and should be fully investigated by the Department, but reaching a timely resolution is also important for all involved.

High-Priority Recommendations—Complaint System and Disciplinary Process

The high-priority recommendations for the complaint system and disciplinary process are the following:

- Improve supervisors' ability to handle nondisciplinary cases through guidance and training.
- Improve how supervisors and command staff communicate with subjects of complaints and those who are being disciplined.

Morale, Culture Change, and Retention

Key Findings—Morale, Culture Change, and Retention

Overall Department morale is low and has been affected by a variety of factors. However, our survey results indicate that personnel are hopeful for change and that their voice is heard by leadership. Our findings are as follows:

- Effective internal communications are lacking, especially between ranks (and involving personnel of lower ranks); this is coupled with a perceived lack of respect.
- Many sworn officers indicated that increased pay and incentives would improve their work experience, although it is difficult for the Department to support efforts to enhance salary and benefits in the current economic climate.
- There is a disconnect in perceived levels of respect between civilian and sworn employees.
- Retention is difficult, and the Department needs to focus on various changes to maintain staffing levels.

High-Priority Recommendations—Morale, Culture Change, and Retention

The high-priority recommendations for morale are the following:

- Implement culture and policy shifts to improve in-person communication by command staff.
- Recognize the importance of civilian staff and their work.
- Reinforce the practice of recognizing high-ranking civilian staff as the Department would for equivalent sworn staff.

Organizational Structure

Key Findings—Organizational Structure

The Office of Operations faces significant challenges in deploying adequate numbers of officers. There is also a significant desire from sworn personnel in the Department to focus on the LAPD's core policing mission. This work is centered on increasing staffing in the Office of Operations, rather than in administrative roles. There is also an openness to civilianization of

certain roles in the Department and to the reorganization of certain units (e.g., Offices, Bureaus, Groups). These challenges are highlighted by the following:

- There is a perception that some units do not have a clear nexus to operations.
- There is a perception that the Department is too top heavy, with too many personnel with the rank of Captain and above.
- Survey respondents indicated that there are many areas of the Department that could be disbanded or reallocated to the Office of Operations. However, many of these are in critical areas that require staffing (e.g., certain investigations units, COMPSTAT).
- The Department may be able to reallocate staff from some units and realign others to best support patrol operations.

High-Priority Recommendation—Organizational Structure

The high-priority recommendation for organizational structure is the following:

- Identify sworn officers in administrative positions who can be moved to Patrol (start with volunteers), or consider limiting tenure in administrative roles for sworn officers.

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Chapter 1. Introduction

The Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD) is not alone with regard to issues of staffing, such as selection and retention of staff. Nor is concern about the equity and effectiveness of the disciplinary system an isolated concern. Nationally, especially in the aftermath of the George Floyd, Jr., homicide and subsequent protests, riots, and unrest, policing has been in a state of crisis as it experiences significant shortages of people applying to be police officers and accelerated retirement of veteran officers.[3] In many ways, the landscape and realities of policing have shifted, and we see a transition toward a future with increased police transparency and accountability. In the midst of this uncertainty, opportunity exists to build policing organizations that meet the demands of the present moment.

The LAPD has advantages as it strives to serve the City of Los Angeles. Even amid dissatisfaction with the status quo, members of LAPD believe that their police department is capable of improving its performance. LAPD is a prominent police agency that has been featured in movies, television, and in the media, both positively and negatively, for more than six decades.

The image of the LAPD could be its strongest recruiting tool: It is a destination for police careers, one that is a strong draw for those seeking to be police officers. That reality also carries the weight of expectation. Because officers see unfairness, inefficiencies, and inconsistencies, their tolerance for the current state is low. However, the advantage of this motivated workforce is officers' desire to make things better, both as members of LAPD and for the safety of the city they serve.

At the time of this writing, the LAPD faces several pressing and interrelated challenges (principle among them being declining staffing levels) that affect the Department's mission and the community's expectations. Low staffing levels are also producing internal strain that affects Department morale, another significant concern. Other internal and external pressures are also of concern, including a cumbersome and overburdened complaint system, lack of operational tempo, perceptions of leadership, and the strained political and social atmosphere.

It is in this context that RAND was asked by the Los Angeles Police Foundation in October 2024 to conduct a study of the recruitment and retention, disciplinary practices, and organizational structure of the LAPD to inform a roadmap for change in the Department. The objective of this study was to research the current state of each issue and make recommendations to the Chief of Police in mid-2025. This report is the outcome of that work.

[3] See, for example, Libor Jany, "A Slimmed-Down LAPD Seems Here to Stay. What Happens to Crime with Fewer Cops?" *Los Angeles Times*, January 24, 2025; and Police Executive Research Forum (PERF), "New PERF Survey Shows Police Agencies Are Losing Officers Faster Than They Can Hire New Ones," webpage, April 1, 2023.

To achieve a better understanding of the three elements of the LAPD in the scope of this study, we

- began by conducting more than 60 one-on-one and group interviews with personnel and leadership in the LAPD and the Los Angeles City Personnel Department, including with internal sworn and civilian stakeholders at the command, management, and line levels
- used the information gained through these interviews to develop and field an agencywide survey of all LAPD members from January 29, 2025, to February 19, 2025, to assess their satisfaction with the workplace, areas of concern, views on the disciplinary process and how it affects a member's work, and related issues
    - In addition to gaining better insight about the effects of staffing shortages, discipline, and the ways the organization is structured, the survey was a valuable resource to assess the culture of the organization (e.g., the way things are done and how people feel about being a member of LAPD). We received a total of 1,817 responses (449 civilian and 1,368 sworn officers), which was a 15.6 percent response rate. Results of each area of inquiry are captured in this report. Supplemental survey results are contained in Appendix C.
- supplemented these inputs by reviewing relevant documents, including staffing numbers (allocated and actual), more than 3,700 disciplinary cases annually from 2021 through 2024 (year-to-date)[4] and their resolution, the organization's structure, and ways different units are aligned
- studied the history of relevant programs and services, from the original Basic Car Plan in the 1960s to the Community Safety Partnership, LAPD's newest Bureau.

We used a strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT) analysis to assess the general themes, capabilities, and constraints associated with the mosaic of issues and opportunities related to recruiting and the hiring process that might offer insights for future Department planning and policies. A synthesis of the information and data captured from all components of the methodology informed the findings and recommendations discussed in the chapters that follow. Appendix A contains details of the methodology.

City officials and LAPD's leadership should see this as a point-in-time snapshot of the current state of the organization. Used well, these outcomes and recommendations will serve as a starting point to create the LAPD of the future, one in which the Department draws the best candidates, trains them accordingly, and then sends them into the community to deliver the kind of police services the public demands and expects.

Organization of This Report

This report is organized into six additional chapters. Chapter 2 describes staffing at the LAPD. Chapter 3 describes recruitment and hiring in the Department, as well as training

[4] According to data provided by LAPD, there were 3,976 disciplinary case dispositions in 2021, 3,764 in 2022, and 3,704 in 2023. Data for 2024 were incomplete; however, 546 case dispositions were assessed.

limitations posed by the police academy. Chapter 4 presents our analysis of the complaint system and disciplinary process. Chapter 5 describes the morale among personnel in the Department and describes opportunities for cultural change. In Chapter 6, we present our findings related to the Department's organizational structure. In each chapter, we summarize our findings and recommendations associated with each topic. Chapter 7 groups the recommendations for the Department from each chapter by priority, including considerations for a timeline to implement change and the overall feasibility of those recommendations.

Three appendixes present supplemental information. Appendix A describes our methods in detail. Appendix B summarizes results from the SWOT analysis. Appendix C presents additional survey details that might further assist the Department in gauging its current situation.

It is critical to note that these topics are interrelated and that changes to one area are likely to affect the others, or the Department writ large.

Chapter 2. Staffing in the Los Angeles Police Department

Staffing levels, recruitment, and hiring are interrelated issues that the LAPD faces. As staffing levels decline, officers are tasked to do more work with fewer resources, affecting morale and service delivery. To reverse this trend, the Department needs to hire more sworn (and civilian) staff. To do so, there are critical changes that should be considered to make recruitment and hiring more effective. Table 2.1 highlights the key need and recommendation regarding sworn staffing levels.

Table 2.1. Need and Recommendation for Staffing

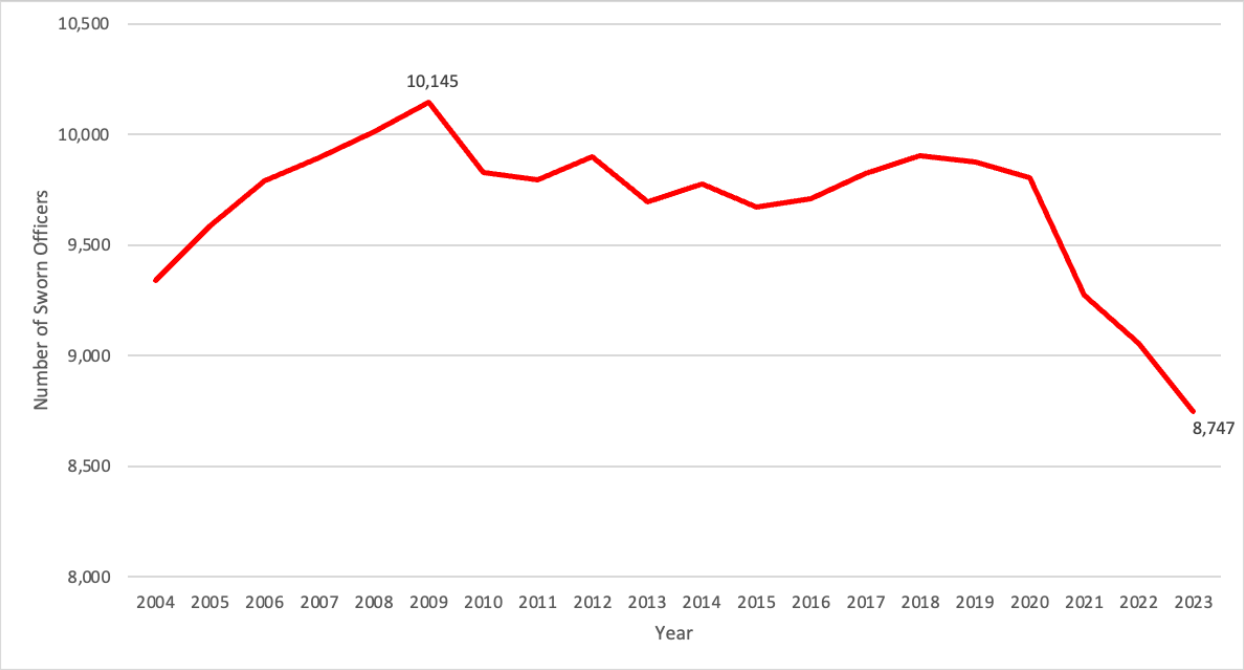
Need	Recommendation
Fill shortfalls in patrol staffing	• Hire civilian personnel to fill critical positions currently staffed by sworn officers

Staffing Levels of Sworn Officers

LAPD sworn staffing levels have been declining consistently since reaching a high of more than 10,000 officers in 2009, as shown in Figure 2.1. LAPD's sworn staffing then dropped to between 9,600 and 9,800 for the next several years before seeing a sustained drop in sworn numbers beginning in 2020 to 8,747 officers in 2023. Although there are possible explanations for these staffing changes, it is noteworthy that the nation experienced a recession beginning in 2009 as a result of the housing crisis, accounting for a drop in staffing to mitigate the reality of smaller budgets. The decline preceding present-day levels started near the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020—a time when staffing in law enforcement agencies nationally fell sharply.[5]

[5] A study by PERF shows staffing decrease over the past two years (PERF, "PERF Survey Shows Steady Staffing Decrease over the Past Two Years," webpage, undated).

Figure 2.1. Sworn Officers in the LAPD, 2004–2023



SOURCE: Features data accessed on March 3, 2025, from FBI Uniform Crime Reporting Program, "FBI Crime Data Explorer," webpage, undated.

A 2021 study reporting on LAPD's Basic Car Area Boundaries disclosed conflicting data with regard to the staffing of patrol functions comparing 14 policing agencies nationally.[6] It is difficult to conduct a direct comparison of staffing from one law enforcement agency to the next given the unique characteristics and regional differences in how the police are traditionally staffed and deployed. LAPD saw a sharp rise in sworn staffing beginning in 1995, where the numbers rose from about 7,800 officers to almost 10,000 by 2015.[7] Even with these increases (and subsequent declines), LAPD's sworn staffing as expressed in the numbers of officers per 1,000 residents remains substantially below its regional and national counterparts. Beginning in 2017, LAPD also began redeploying officers from certain specialized functions back to patrol, resulting in an increase of 599 patrol staffing positions by 2018.[8] This increase was still short of the number needed to fulfill the intent of the 7-40 patrol staffing mandate.[9]

[6] Matrix Consulting Group, *Report on the Basic Car Area Boundary Study*, March 17, 2021.

[7] Matrix Consulting Group, 2021, p. 14.

[8] Matrix, Consulting Group, 2021, p. 15.

[9] The Patrol Plan mandates that all emergency calls should receive a response within seven minutes and that field units should have 40 percent of their time available for proactive policing. The Matrix report recommended increasing patrol staffing by 170 additional positions in 2021 to meet the goals of code three response times and available time as required in the 7-40 Patrol Plan.

More-recent staffing numbers have also been affected by the Deferred Retirement Option Plan (DROP), a program designed to extend the service tenure of experienced officers. DROP is a retirement incentive program approved by the City's voters in 2001.[10] DROP has been a controversial program, with assertions that personnel in DROP in 2016 took more than twice as much sick and disability time off than other employees.[11] A May 2022 report from LAPD to the Police Commission studied the number of sworn officers who retired on regular or disability pensions and the number of officers who participated in DROP.[12] From fiscal year (FY) 2017–2018 to 2023, 984 sworn employees retired on regular service pensions or disability pensions, while 1,147 officers participated in the DROP program prior to separating from the agency. Interestingly, only 322 officers completed the full five-year DROP period before retiring, though a significant majority did complete more than four years of added service before leaving.

Given the decline in LAPD sworn staffing, we examined recent crime trends to explore the relationship between staffing and crimes as a proxy for workload.[13] Property and violent crimes fell from 2017 to 2020, while the Department had modest decreases in staffing. However, in 2022 and 2023, property and violent crime rates surged (above the levels experienced in 2017), at the same time that sworn personnel dropped precipitously. These trends signal that the Department and, in particular, officers assigned to patrol had to handle more crimes with fewer personnel.

Throughout our interviews with LAPD personnel, staffing was a consistent theme, regardless of the rank or position of the interviewee. Interviewees from various units talked about how understaffing affects operations, response times, and the ability to handle high-profile cases. They pointed out that the shortage is exacerbated by budget cuts and retirement of experienced personnel. Shortages of sworn officers mean the force has to do more with fewer officers, and it becomes more difficult to adequately staff units in patrol. Interviewees made it clear that the lack of staffing (primarily sworn officers) is having a perceived negative impact on the Department's mission.

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[10] Los Angeles Fire and Police Pensions (LAFPP), *Deferred Retirement Option Plan Handbook*, undated.

[11] Reason Magazine published an assessment of the Los Angeles Times's report on DROP in February 2018 with these and related data (Scott Shackford, "It's Not Enough to Get Paid for Not Working: These L.A. Police and Firefighters Figured Out How to Double It," *Reason*, February 5, 2018).

[12] Michel R. Moore, "Information on the Department's Attrition, Retention and Recruitment," memorandum to The Honorable Board of Police Commissioners, May 30, 2023.

[13] We considered comparing the staffing levels against calls for service and crime. However, because of records management system changes, uncertainty of data, and changeover from UCR to NIBRS, we did not use this information.

The survey results also highlighted that staffing the Department adequately is an issue that LAPD and the City needs to prioritize. Sworn respondents indicated that they both want and need additional personnel in the Department, whether sworn or civilian (or both), to handle their workload. Asked about the top three things that would most improve their experience at work, 28.3 percent (confidence interval [CI] = 26.2 to 30.4) of all survey respondents included hiring more sworn officers in their response; 19.0 percent (CI = 17.2 percent to 20.8 percent) included hiring more civilians in their top three.

> "This police Department is on the brink of collapse due to overworked officers at all levels. They need to hire more qualified officers. There is no way this Department can serve the community of millions of people and expect to provide a level of service the community should expect. This can't be fixed by overtime only due to officer burnout."
> –**Detective respondent**

Interviewees also reflected on the need for the LAPD to hire qualified individuals. Interviewees noted that they believe many qualified applicants get stuck in the hiring process, leading to them being hired at other agencies. Others noted that some types of recruiting events could be better designed to recruit candidates who have the qualities LAPD is looking for in its officers and those who are most likely to meet LAPD standards and ultimately complete their probationary period as officers. Some interviewees talked about the need to strike a balance in attracting the overall best candidates as the main priority in hiring, perceiving that there is currently an organizational over-emphasis on diversity for hiring new officers.[14]

> "Staffing levels in patrol are a serious concern. Patrol Operations are severely understaffed and this leads to stress and burnout."
> –**Sergeant respondent**

The desire among LAPD personnel to add more sworn officers to the Department also relates to the strong connection between staffing and morale. Although we discuss this topic at length in Chapter 5, we offer some insights here. When asked what items would most improve the experience at work, hiring more sworn personnel was in the top three answers (28.3 percent; CI = 26.2–30.4 percent), behind pay (59.0 percent; CI = 56.7–61.2 percent) and retention bonuses (32.2 percent; CI = 30.1–34.4 percent). These results are consistent with the literature on ways to improve morale in policing organizations.[15]

[14] The racial composition of the Department overall is similar to that of the City of Los Angeles, and the proportion of women in the department is similar to that in other large agencies. Nevertheless, the tensions around diversity, equity, and inclusion that were highlighted in the 2022 Los Angeles Citywide Workplace Climate Assessment still appear to be an issue in the Department. Recommendations from that study are likely still relevant.

[15] Chris D. Lewis, "What Really Impacts Morale in Policing?" *Police1*, March 1, 2022.

Comparison of LAPD Staffing to Other Agencies

We examined, as a baseline, how LAPD compares with other agencies in terms of officer-to-population and officer-to-civilian personnel ratios, shown in Table 2.2. In terms of sworn staffing in select large agencies nationwide, LAPD has a lower officer-to-population ratio. When compared with agencies in the local area, LAPD staffing per 1,000 people is higher than most Departments. However, it is important to take the local context into account in evaluating comparisons with other agencies given such differences as crime rates, budget, and community needs.[16]

Table 2.2. Sworn Officer Staffing Comparisons

Locale	Officers per 1,000 Population	Agency Comparison
Beverly Hills PD	7.55	Local
DC Metro PD	5.9	National
Chicago PD	4.49	National
New York PD	4.07	National
Miami Dade PD	3.67	National
Philadelphia PD	3.51	National
United States overall	3.51	NA
Newport Beach PD	2.61	Local
Santa Monica PD	2.39	Local
San Francisco PD	2.39	Other CA
LAPD	2.35	NA
California Overall	2.28	Other CA
Houston PD	2.25	National
Burbank PD	2.1	Local
Torrance PD	1.97	Local
Las Vegas Metro PD	1.89	National
Santa Ana PD	1.85	Local
Anaheim PD	1.73	Local
Ventura PD	1.62	Local
Pasadena PD	1.61	Local
Long Beach PD	1.57	Local
Huntington Beach PD	1.57	Local
West Covina PD	1.34	Local
San Diego PD	1.29	Other CA

[16] We did not include the staffing levels for the Los Angeles Sheriff's Department in this analysis, because the figure might be skewed by sworn personnel not involved in policing activities (e.g., custody, courts, and transportation).

Locale	Officers per 1,000 Population	Agency Comparison
Glendale PD	1.23	Local

SOURCE: Features data accessed on January 14, 2025, from FBI Uniform Crime Reporting Program, undated.
NOTE: DC = District of Columbia; NA = not applicable; PD = police department.

These comparisons suggest that if LAPD seeks to add more sworn officers to its staffing, doing so is defensible as a means to restore capabilities to serve the community, to meet the established 7-40 patrol standard, and to achieve general staffing levels consistent with agencies in the region and across the nation. Rather than merely adding sworn staff, the Department may wish to assess opportunities to add staff at a lower cost that also frees sworn officers for tasks and incidents requiring an officer's training and expertise. There are two ways such outcomes can be achieved: (1) transition positions now allocated to and filled (or unfilled) by officers to positions that can be staffed by civilian employees or (2) employ existing and emerging technology platforms and services to offload rote and routine work from humans to systems that can create the same output and outcomes in a more effective and cost-efficient manner. We explored civilian staffing specifically in our research.

Enhancing Civilian Staffing

Several policing agencies nationally have a history of employing civilian staff in work areas beyond dispatch, records, parking control, or administrative duties. This expansion of civilian workforce roles has generally occurred to (1) achieve the same outcomes at a lower personnel cost by freeing officers in the field from routine noncritical duties, (2) amplify the presence of the police in neighborhoods and other areas by using uniformed civilian staff to respond to noncritical calls for service, and (3) enhance department responsiveness and engagement with the public by resolving minor issues, such as taking reports and similar duties. These roles are in addition to civilian staff that could be assigned to support investigations or assist in the background investigations process.[17]

Although civilian staff are being used in police agencies in a wide variety of ways, there are no set standards dictating the number of civilian employees in a police agency, and there are no metrics for the percentage of civilian employees who can or should be assigned to noncritical community engagement or calls for service. In spite of the lack of standards, the sustained difficulty experienced by policing nationally to find qualified applicants for vacant positions has prompted many departments to explore how transitioning to larger cadres of civilian staff could ease this critical shortage.[18]

[17] PERF, *Embracing Civilianization: Integrating Professional Staff to Advance Modern Policing*, July 2024.

[18] Deirdre Rockefeller-Ramsey, "The New Era of Law Enforcement: Civilianization," *Police1*, October 2, 2023.

As early as 1993, the International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP) developed a model policy for the hiring and use of civilian personnel in police agencies.[19] However, a 1995 commentary by IACP on that policy noted that the 15 position classifications described should be regarded "as a conservative estimate of the possible array of positions that could be so classified."[20] The model policy and commentary specifically prohibited civilian employees from being assigned duties and responsibilities for which a sworn officer is required. A 2024 PERF report echoes the perspectives of IACP's model policy, profiling 20 police agencies nationally from which PERF drew its conclusions and recommendations.[21] The report notes the ongoing workforce crisis, especially prevalent in larger police departments that were continuing to operate at staffing levels far below their authorized levels, and recommended an expansion of civilianization as a solution to that crisis.[22]

The report listed six primary benefits of transitioning to larger numbers of civilian staff (which PERF recommend be renamed *professional staff*):

1. It can free up police officers' time for duties that require their training, skills, and responsibilities.
2. It can improve service.
3. It can bolster productivity.
4. It can lower costs for some functions (in positions formerly staffed by sworn officers).
5. It can bring greater levels of stability to key agency roles.
6. It can enhance professionalism and quality of work as trained professionals displace officers in various roles.[23]

The report listed more than 20 positions that had been transitioned to civilian employees (in addition to the use of Community Service Officers, commonly staffed as field positions), whose responsibilities included a wide variety of noncritical field police duties.[24]

Some police departments have taken the concept even further. An example is a recommendation to the Milwaukee, Wisconsin, Police Department in 2023 to add only 11 sworn officers but 116 civilians in positions that offloaded noncritical duties to civilians to meet the agency's goal of achieving a 35 percent available proactive time for sworn officers in the field.[25]

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[19] IACP, "Civilian Personnel: Model Policy," October 1993.

[20] IACP, National Law Enforcement Policy Center, "Civilian Personnel: Concepts and Issues Paper," February 1995.

[21] PERF, 2024.

[22] PERF, 2024, p. 6.

[23] Interestingly, LAPD was one of the agencies studied in the PERF report. Former Chief Michel R. Moore noted that, in the 1980s and 1990s, police service representatives were created to handle front-desk services and other administrative tasks. From 2010 to 2024, crime analysis was professionalized, as were audits and inspections related to body-worn and digital car video.

[24] PERF, 2024, pp. 29–31.

[25] Elliot Hughes, "Milwaukee Police Staffing Study Stresses Civilianization, Addressing Disparities," *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, January 10, 2023.

Similarly, the Phoenix, Arizona, Police Department elected to hire 25 civilian employees to serve as investigators in 2022.[26] A list of specific duties for civilian staff for agencies nationally is not available, though the data shown in Table 2.3 reflect that a majority of police agencies in the region have more (often substantially more) civilians than LAPD's 22.5 percent of total personnel.

Table 2.3. Civilian Personnel as a Percentage of Total Personnel in Select Agencies

Agency Name	Civilian as Percentage of Total Personnel	Agency Comparison
Santa Monica PD	49.9	Local
Beverly Hills PD	41.8	Local
Santa Ana PD	39.2	Local
Newport Beach PD	37.6	Local
Torrance PD	34.4	Local
Huntington Beach PD	34.2	Local
Pasadena PD	33.4	Local
San Francisco PD	31.3	Other CA
West Covina PD	31.2	Local
Burbank PD	30.7	Local
NYPD	29.7	National
Anaheim PD	28.4	Local
Long Beach PD	28.3	Local
Ventura PD	26.6	Local
Miami Dade PD	26.0	National
San Diego PD	24.2	Other CA
LAPD	22.5	—
Glendale PD	21.4	Local
DC Metro PD	16.9	National
Houston PD	16.3	National
Philadelphia PD	13.1	National
Chicago PD	5.1	National

[26] Rachel Cole, "'It's an Amazing Opportunity to Help Out': Civilian Investigators with Phoenix Police Helping to Fill Holes Left by Staffing Shortage," *Phoenix NBC12 News*, November 19, 2022.

Agency Name	Civilian as Percentage of Total Personnel	Agency Comparison

SOURCE: Features data accessed on January 14, 2025, from FBI Uniform Crime Reporting Program, undated.
NOTE: NYPD = New York City Police Department.

For the local area, including comparable agencies in California, LAPD lags its peers in civilians as a percentage of total personnel. At the national level, there is more variation. However, the trends shown in the table signal that there may be some opportunity to bolster the number of civilians working in the LAPD as a whole, if the Department is able to hire this type of employee. To optimize this staffing, LAPD could also consider using professional staff for background investigations, criminal investigations, community engagement, field staffing to enhance officer responsiveness to critical calls, and a variety of other roles to increase the Department's effectiveness. Staff who participated in interviews agreed that the Department was in need not only of hiring new sworn officers but also of hiring civilians in certain roles. They pointed out that certain roles could be civilianized to free up sworn officers for field duties. More civilians are also needed in administrative and technical roles. Some interviewees noted that, in many instances, sworn officers are now in positions that were once staffed by civilian personnel.

Recommendations to Improve Staffing

Trends in staffing at the LAPD and feedback from interviews and survey respondents that acknowledges those trends and the implications on workload in the Department suggest the need for an increase in sworn officers and a potential rebalancing of how positions are staffed.

If LAPD were unconstrained by fiscal realities, it could elect to merely work to increase sworn staff numbers to meet community expectations of call response to all call criticalities and to respond to community and quality-of-life issues. Given the ongoing crisis in law enforcement staffing and sustained constraints posed by limited funding available to administer the agency, it makes sense to assess the viability of repurposing or expanding civilian staff to perform duties at a lower cost than through traditional means and, in doing so, free up officers to focus on critical duties.

Therefore, we recommend that LAPD hire civilian personnel to fill critical positions currently staffed by sworn officers. By hiring civilian staff to fill various positions in the Department currently staffed by sworn personnel, some of whom are backfilling vacant civilian positions, more sworn staff can be moved to patrol, detective, or special assignments—an approach that has been successfully implemented by some police departments. Civilians might also provide an advantage because they may be able to stay in certain roles for longer periods than sworn officers, who tend to leave positions as they advance in their careers. Implementation of this recommendation could require the Department to work with the City and mayor's office to create a public safety exemption to allow civilian hiring during the current hiring freeze.

Chapter 3. Recruiting Efforts and Hiring Process

Given the current situation, it is of the utmost importance that the Department take steps to prioritize changes to hiring, recruitment, and the academy to increase the number of sworn officers above other Department efforts. This chapter highlights changes and recommendations that the Department can act on to address the staffing issues outlined in Chapter 2.

LAPD has a suite of recruitment efforts aimed at connecting with prospective officers. These include conducting community outreach and engagement (e.g., job fairs, visits to community sites), offering pocket testing, conducting hiring seminars, engaging with specific populations of interest (e.g., visits to military bases, SkillBridge Program), having a social media presence, placing traditional advertising, and encouraging internal referrals through incentive programs. LAPD also offers candidate mentoring and the Candidate Advancement Program to prepare recruits for the academy.

Once recruited, candidates enter a nine-step hiring process aimed at preparing qualified candidates for positions in the Department.[27] The process used by the LAPD is fairly common across law enforcement agencies, but the sequencing might vary. For the LAPD, the time to complete the hiring process is lengthy—driven primarily by the background investigation and polygraph steps. In addition, limitations on academy class size also constrain the hiring process.

As part of our research, we conducted a SWOT analysis of LAPD's recruiting and hiring processes. Findings in this chapter are informed by the results of that analysis and from interviews, survey data, LAPD organizational structure, LAPD organizational functions, LAPD documents (including past surveys for the Department), and comparable agency information. Although we discuss recruiting and hiring as two distinct functions of the LAPD, it should also be noted that recruitment efforts overlap with hiring steps**.** Table 3.1 features the needs and recommendations that resulted from our evaluation. Appendix B contains additional results of the SWOT analysis.

[27] For details on the hiring process, see, LAPD, "LAPD Hiring Process," webpage, undated. The Department advertises the process as having seven steps, although step four is composed of three parts: Department interview, polygraph, and physical fitness qualifier.

Table 3.1. Needs and Recommendations for Recruiting and Hiring

Needs	Recommendations
Improve recruitment	• Use data and analytics to identify greatest return on investment for recruiting activities; modify activities accordingly • Add staff to Recruitment and Employment Division (RED) • Increase social media presence for recruiting and hiring
Improve hiring process	• Refine hiring and testing events • Augment background investigator staffing with sworn personnel • Augment background investigators with contractors • Modify polygraph use through targeted use of polygraph exams or by removing the polygraph exam from the hiring process • Work with the mayor's office to convene meetings with the City Personnel Department and LAPD leadership to resolve implementation issues • Provide information to candidates about initial costs earlier in the hiring process so that they do not drop out or choose not to attend the academy because of financial constraints • Take over the background investigation process • Implement a digital hiring portal for candidates to track their progress
Increase academy throughput	• Increase class sizes to 60 or more recruits per class

Recruitment Needs

LAPD's recruitment efforts can build on several of its internal strengths. LAPD's public and professional prominence is perhaps its greatest strength. The Department is known worldwide, which is both its strength and a potential weakness, as misconduct or allegations of impropriety are magnified significantly because of its status. The agency should strongly consider amplifying work already in progress to emphasize the mission of policing and the ways in which LAPD works to help and protect the community. This might have recently been seen during the wildfires in January 2025, which paralleled a surge in applications.

The size of the Department and breadth of opportunity, whether through promotion or specialized assignment, is a special draw, especially when compared with smaller surrounding agencies. Although it should not be the only focus of an advertising campaign or hiring push, the Department can showcase this strength by highlighting these opportunities. LAPD also has a diverse workforce, which can be a draw for candidates of all backgrounds.

LAPD conducts several activities that are empirically supported or promising practices. These include physical training, the Police Academy Magnet Schools, a cadet program, mentorship, and targeted recruitment efforts.[28] The Department also has staff dedicated to recruiting, hiring, and mentoring activities.

[28] See, e.g., M. Korre, K. Loh, E. J. Eshleman, F. S. Lessa, L. G. Porto, C. A. Christophi, and S. N. Kales, "Recruit Fitness and Police Academy Performance: A Prospective Validation Study," *Occupational Medicine*, Vol. 69, Nos. 8–9, December 2019; Ivonne Roman and Maureen Q. McGough, "Perspective: Improving Police Recruitment Outcomes for Women Through Physical Fitness Support Programs," *Policing*, Vol. 18, 2024; and Thomas S. Whetstone, John C. Reed, Jr., and Phillip C. Turner, "Recruiting: A Comparative Study of the Recruiting Practices of State Police Agencies," *International Journal of Police Science and Management*, Vol. 8, No. 1, 2006.

Lastly, the Department offers testing and hiring events throughout the City and the region in various formats (seminars, pocket testing). These events, combined with a unit dedicated to recruitment and hiring in the Department, are a core strength.

LAPD also faces recruitment challenges, including in terms of pay. Competition among agencies for viable candidates is a threat to LAPD hiring and recruitment. This is a nationwide trend that should be recognized.[29] LAPD in particular has difficulty competing for local officers because of the lack of competitive pay and incentives for attracting candidates, as well as the speed of the hiring process (discussed in the next section). Pay and incentives have been used frequently to entice officers to apply, transfer, or stay in police organizations. In the local area, incentives range from $6,000 to $40,000 (for laterals).[30] Although likely not feasible in the short term, LAPD could consider its own incentive programs to be more competitive with local agencies. It should be noted that, in the past, LAPD did have incentives for hiring, including housing subsidies. If feasible, reimplementing such programs would assuage the high cost of living in the area.

Funding for recruitment efforts from the City is also problematic because the budget has been significantly decreased. This goes hand-in-hand with a loss of personnel involved in recruiting and hiring efforts for both the LAPD and City Personnel Department.

Interest in Sworn Positions in LAPD Is Increasing, but Quality Is a Concern

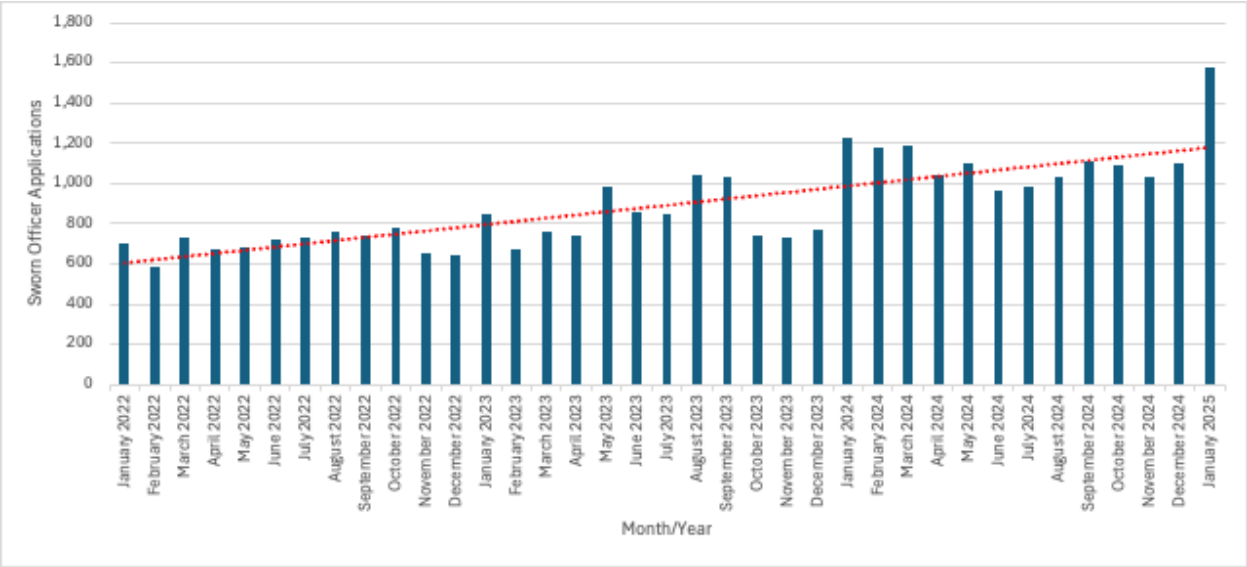
Interest in sworn positions in the LAPD is increasing, as evidenced by the increase in monthly applications, denoted in Figure 3.1. In calendar year (CY) 2022, a total of 8,408 candidates submitted applications for sworn officer positions; this number surged by 55.2 percent, to 13,407 applications, in 2024. The growth in applications indicates a strong and growing interest in a job at LAPD. The multiple-choice test also shows generally increasing levels of interest in testing for positions at LAPD (see Figure 3.2). Multiple-choice tests are also increasing year-over-year. However, fewer applicants take the test than the number who apply. For example, in CY 2024, 7,566 multiple-choice tests were completed, compared with 13,047 applications received.[31]

[29] PERF, *The Workforce Crisis, and What Police Agencies Are Doing About It*, September 2019; PERF, *Responding to the Staffing Crisis: Innovations in Recruitment and Retention*, August 2023.

[30] City of Burbank Police Department, *Sworn Recruitment Plan: 2023–2025*, undated.

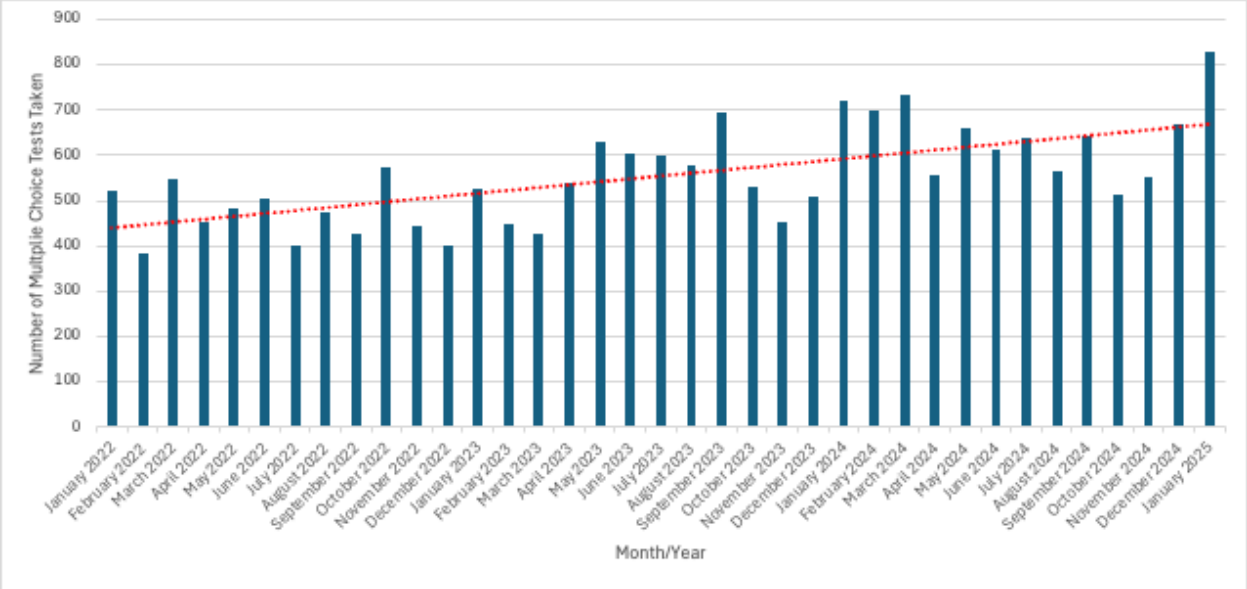
[31] This number does not include those who have applied or tested multiple times.

Figure 3.1. Monthly LAPD Sworn Officer Applications: January 2022–January 2025



SOURCE: Features data provided by LAPD RED.
NOTE: Red line denotes the linear trendline.

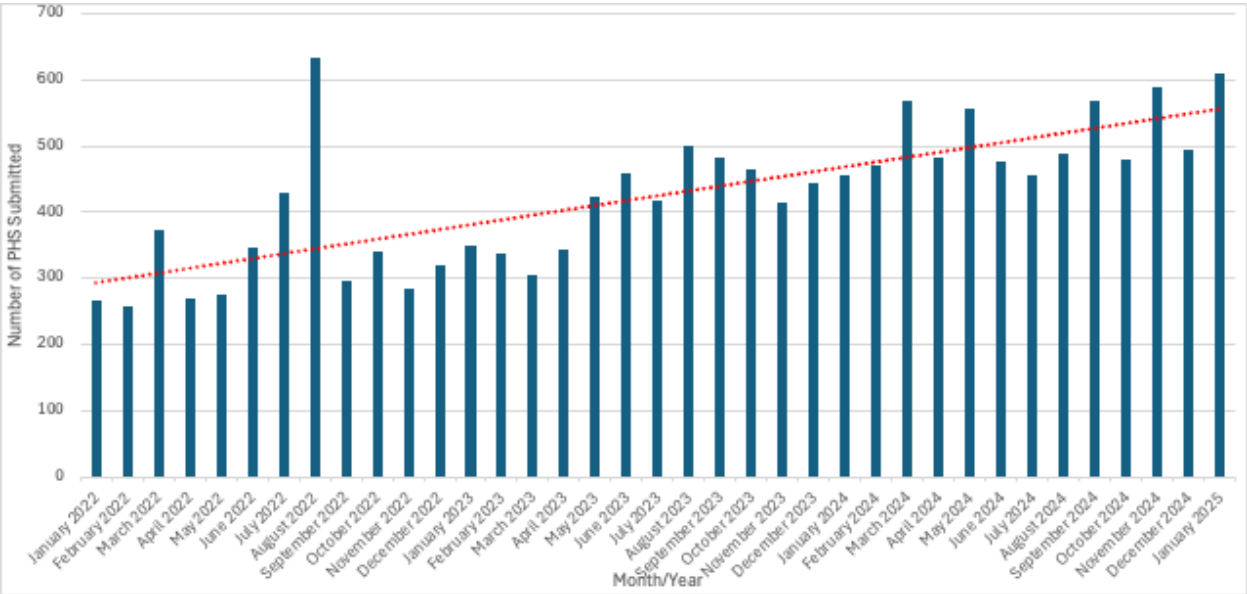
Figure 3.2. Monthly Multiple-Choice Tests Taken: January 2022–January 2025



SOURCE: Features data provided by LAPD RED.
NOTE: Red line denotes the linear trendline. Data include all applicants.

According to our discussions with LAPD personnel, the Personal History Statement (PHS) can be arduous for candidates, and interested applicants may need assistance navigating the process. Although the number of PHSs submitted is a fraction of the total applications, there were still roughly 507 PHSs submitted monthly in 2024, as Figure 3.3 indicates.

Figure 3.3. Monthly Personal History Statements Submitted: January 2022–January 2025



SOURCE: Features data provided by LAPD RED.
NOTE: Red line denotes the linear trendline. Data include all applicants.

Although a significant number of applicants are progressing through the early steps of the application and hiring process, attrition is still high. Quality of recruits is an issue that became apparent after reviewing data from the City Personnel Department; this was also a concern noted by personnel we interviewed. The recruitment function is encouraged to solicit and accept applications from all persons who are interested in careers as police officers. The vetting of candidate qualifications in this initial step in the hiring process translates to a significant number of applicants who are unsuited or unprepared for hire being inserted into the candidate pool, thus occupying time and effort during testing that could unduly slow the assessment process. We reviewed several sources, including the report from the City Personnel Department to the Personnel, Audits, and Hiring Committee that highlighted various quality issues in recruits in the local area.[32] Nationally, this is also an issue that has been highlighted in various reports.[33]

[32] City of Los Angeles Personnel Department. Subject to Council File 24-0981, Sworn Hiring Incentive Program / June 2023 Through August 2024 Statistics / Recruitment / Attrition. City Council File CF24-9081, November 22, 2024.

[33] See, e.g., International Association of Chiefs of Police, "The State of Recruitment and Retention: A Continuing Crisis for Policing," undated-b; International Association of Chiefs of Police, "The State of Recruitment: A Crisis for Law Enforcement," undated-a; and Jeremy M. Wilson, Erin Dalton, Charles Scheer, and Clifford A. Grammich, *Police Recruitment and Retention for the New Millennium: The State of Knowledge*, RAND Corporation, MG-959-DOJ, 2010.

Recommendations for Improving Recruiting

Recruitment faces challenges in terms of funding, the number of personnel involved in the process, and attracting the best candidates, although the interest in a career with LAPD appears to be increasing (according to hiring statistics). We recommend that the Department use data and analytics to identify the greatest return on investment for recruitment activities and modify its current investments accordingly. By focusing on the candidate pools and activities that are most fruitful (e.g., military veterans, pocket testing), LAPD can best deploy its limited resources to reach candidates. In this vein, the recent partnership with an external marketing and advertising agency could also boost recruitment prospects, especially because the City and Department focus on personnel and law enforcement as their core missions.

Our interviewees indicated a desire for additional targeted outreach to specific areas: community colleges, military bases, and other potential applicant pools. At the same time, some current efforts could be refined. The use of Indeed (a job search app) was seen as detrimental to recruiting and testing efforts, often bringing in candidates who did not have the skills or abilities required to become LAPD officers. Hiring seminars also need to be revisited because of the low show rate (approximately 10 percent) compared with pocket testing and the perceived candidate quality concerns associated with candidates specific to these events. In the future, LAPD might wish to condense the frequency of the seminars and focus marketing efforts on viable candidate pools. Therefore, we recommend that the Department refine hiring and testing events. This can be done either in advance of or informed by analytics.

Interviewees also suggested that increased and coordinated social media outreach would be beneficial to recruitment efforts. We recommend that the Department increase social media presence across platforms to reach the appropriate audiences. In conjunction, coordinate the various social media communications from the LAPD to ensure consistent messaging.

Recommendations to change recruiting efforts (in tandem with other hiring processes detailed in the following section) will likely incur a personnel cost. Interviewees were vocal that staffing in the RED is down and that additional staff in that office would be beneficial to its mission. We recommend that staff be added to RED to support efforts to increase the quality of recruits, recruiting efforts, and hiring. Given the recent turmoil and staff turnover in this division, an assignment in RED might not be perceived as desirable. However, it is actually an opportune moment to staff RED with personnel who are committed to the Department's mission to hire highly qualified candidates.

The Hiring Process

We examined the trends in hiring timelines at LAPD to understand the overall amount of time it takes candidates to progress through the hiring process. The past six academy classes took an average of 387 days to complete the hiring process—in excess of a year, as Table 3.2 shows. Caution should be used in examining the average days in the process for candidates who did not

have candidate-initiated delays, because 58.2 percent of the candidates (106 out of 182) had self-initiated delays. Roughly 30 percent of the time spent in the hiring process happens during the background investigation phase.

Table 3.2. Hiring Timelines in the LAPD, September 2024 Through February 2025

Academy Number	Average Days in Hiring Process	Average Days in Process Net of Candidate-Initiated Delays	Hiring Process (Days)	Average Length of Background Investigation	Time to Conduct Background Investigation (Days)
9/24	318	240	129–587	128	28–337
10/24	404	251	204–919	124	28–451
11/24	387	220	161–828	98	18–273
12/24	408	270	167–935	130	37–275
1/25	426	250	189–1,197	118	35–216
2/25	390	241	94–1,067	108	20–235

SOURCE: Features data provided by LAPD RED.

It should be noted that the City Personnel Department recently created a hiring timeline dashboard that outlines each part of the process by number of days. As of March 18, 2025, the timeline for hiring was, on average, 349 days from application submission to date of hire. Figure 3.4 shows the current hiring timeline statistics, according to the City Personnel Department.

Figure 3.4. Timelines for Sworn Officer Hiring, as of March 18, 2025

SOURCE: Reproduced from City of Los Angeles Personnel Department, "Police Officer Hiring Metrics," webpage, accessed on March 18, 2025.

Although it is difficult to provide a direct comparison to other agencies, LAPD's hiring process tends to be relatively slow compared with surrounding agencies competing for the same limited pool of applicants. A recent IACP report noted that most agencies extend a job offer to applicants within three months.[34] Although the IACP does provide some national context, caution must be used when interpreting the applicability of that timeline to the LAPD. Although some large agencies have hiring processes that average over one year from application to hire (e.g., Chicago), others have time frames in the four- to six-month range (e.g., Seattle and Minneapolis).

Department personnel with whom we spoke indicated that the time to hire candidates is a significant problem and that quality candidates go to other departments where they can be hired more efficiently. There is palpable fear that LAPD is losing potential officers to other departments that have faster processes, some of which is because of reported gaps in effective communications and inefficiencies in a process that is bifurcated between the City and the Police Department. This tension is seen as a weakness by those we interviewed (including by recruits in the academy).

[34] International Association of Chiefs of Police, undated-b.

It is not unreasonable for LAPD to take steps to make its process faster and more efficient. Two priority areas of the hiring process account for a significant amount of the time candidates spend in the process and should be modified with urgency: the polygraph examination and background investigations. Addressing these two areas would solve the bottleneck that the Department and candidates face. In addition, tensions between the LAPD and the City Personnel Department frustrate the process.

Polygraph

Many interviewees expressed that the use of polygraphs is an important part of the hiring process. Anecdotally, they said that it was a tool with which candidates divulge additional information that could be missed or overlooked in a background investigation. Key details about this step in the LAPD hiring process are as follows:

- The time between the interview passing date and the polygraph test date is 51 days, on average.
- The polygraph evaluation stage takes approximately 21 days to complete.
- Polygraphs have a 68 percent pass rate.[35]
- Many candidates have to take the polygraph evaluation multiple times.
- Polygraphs contribute to disclosures that might not have otherwise been revealed.

From the most recent *Law Enforcement Management and Administrative Statistics, 2020* data, approximately 49 percent of law enforcement agencies do not use polygraphs as a screening technique for sworn officer or deputy recruits, while roughly 26 percent do use polygraphs (see Table 3.3).[36] Similar percentages were observed for all local police departments. However, among large local police departments (100 or more officers), 67 percent answered in the affirmative.

Table 3.3. Use of Polygraphs in the Hiring Process, by Agency Type

Polygraph Use	All Law Enforcement Agencies (%)	Municipal Police Departments (%)	Large Municipal Police Departments (%)
Unavailable	25.1	23.7	11.8
Yes	25.6	26.3	67.4
No	49.2	50.0	20.8

NOTE: Percentages are weighted proportions to reflect the 14,905 municipal law enforcement agencies nationwide (*n* = 3,499). *Large municipal police departments* are defined as those with 100 or more officers.

[35] This figure includes passing and passing/administrative out of the total polygraph appointments.

[36] U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, and Bureau of Justice Statistics, *Law Enforcement Management and Administrative Statistics (LEMAS), 2020*, Inter-University Consortium for Political and Social Research, ICPSR 38651, March 7, 2023.

Research on the use of polygraphs in law enforcement screening suggests that polygraph results alone should not be used to disqualify candidates from employment.[37] Other research has found that the polygraph might dissuade certain candidates, even given the question of its reliability.[38] A National Research Council report calls into question much of the use of polygraph, including when it is used in preemployment screening, stating,

> The relevance of available research to preemployment polygraph screening is highly questionable because such screening involves inferences about future behavior on the basis of polygraph evidence about past behaviors that are probably quite different in kind. The validity for such inferences depends on specifying and testing a plausible theory that links evidence of past behavior, such as illegal drug use, to future behavior of a different kind, such as revealing classified information. We have not found any explicit statement of a plausible theory, let alone evidence appropriate for judging either construct or criterion validity for this application.[39]

Background Investigations

Background investigations for candidates who are offered employment take significant time to complete, exposing LAPD to the potential to lose candidates to other law enforcement agencies that can complete their processes in a more expedited manner. The background investigation process is conducted by both the City Personnel Department and LAPD. Presently, personnel from the City work on backgrounds, supplemented by eight to ten sworn officers loaned from the LAPD. In addition, LAPD has assigned ten officers to training to assist with background investigations in the future. According to examination of preliminary data, background investigations are completed faster by sworn LAPD personnel.

A previous RAND report found that the background investigations took fewer than 47 days for half of the applicants, and fewer than 72 days for 75 percent of applicants.[40] At the time of this writing, the data show that these timelines are not being met and that there is room for improvement. In addition, our interviews with the City Personnel Department, LAPD personnel, and academy recruits show a desire to improve the current process. As of March 18, 2025, data from the City Personnel Department show that background investigations are completed in an average of 117 days.[41]

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[37] Mark Handler, Charles R. Honts, Donald J. Krapohl, Raymond Nelson, and Stephen Griffin, "Integration of Pre-Employment Polygraph Screening into the Police Selection Process, *Journal of Police and Criminal Psychology*, Vol. 24, No. 2, October 2009; and Daniel Linn White, "Police Candidate Selection: Assessing the Effectiveness of Pre-Employment Polygraph Screening," *Policing*, Vol. 14, No. 4, 2018.

[38] White, 2018.

[39] National Research Council, *The Polygraph and Lie Detection*, National Academies Press, 2003, p. 216.

[40] Nelson Lim, Carl Matthies, Greg Ridgeway, and Brian Gifford, *To Protect and to Serve: Enhancing the Efficiency of LAPD Recruiting*, RAND Corporation, MG-881-RMPF, 2009.

[41] City of Los Angeles Personnel Department, 2025.

Tension Between the LAPD and the City Personnel Department

The increase in applications and the number of candidates moving into the hiring process increases the application processing workload on LAPD and, consequently, Los Angeles City Personnel Department staff. But the recruitment, hiring, and onboarding processes for LAPD are fragmented and shared among different units of the Police Department, the City Personnel Department, and human resources. This separation of functions can inhibit the speed at which candidates progress through the hiring process.

Complicating that timeline are issues between the City Personnel Department and LAPD. According to our interviews, there is significant tension and disconnect between the City and LAPD, especially sworn officers, in terms of control of the process, accountability, and efficiency. At the time of this writing, the City of Los Angeles controls the hiring process for officers, not the LAPD. From the LAPD side, personnel reported that a sense of accountability and mission-oriented mindset are lacking in the City Personnel Department. LAPD personnel expressed extreme frustration with working with the City Personnel Department, which they see as a significant impediment to hiring new officers.

On the City side, the view is that the LAPD slows the process by being involved, or attempting to be involved, in multiple steps along the way, which might cause delays. The City Personnel Department has experienced its own attrition and inability to hire, which hinders its ability to support the LAPD. We also note that there are significant communication barriers (e.g., lack of sharing information, delayed information requests) between the City and the Department, none of which foster a positive or efficient working environment. There are also ongoing labor issues spurred by LAPD sending staff to assist the City Personnel Department, which exacerbates this situation.

At the same time, the ability of the City Personnel Department to support various hiring processes is strained. According to our interviews, this is problematic; if the City continues to lead all hiring efforts, then it needs adequate resources. With the City's hiring freeze, this presents an ongoing issue that, if not addressed, will continue to hamper the ability to field sworn officers in the Department.

Recommendations to Improve the Hiring Process

Modify Use of the Polygraph Evaluation

The Department, like others, has found anecdotal evidence of polygraph effectiveness, and other agencies in the local area rely on this step in the hiring process. Accordingly, the LAPD could consider the following changes in the use of the polygraph:

1. Move the polygraph step to after the background investigation is completed.
2. Alter the use of polygraph outcomes to be advisory.

3. Reduce reliance on the polygraph as a critical part of the selection process, and implement a policy that outlines the select circumstances under which it should be used, or by removing the polygraph exam from hiring process.[42]

We recommend the third option, which has the greatest ability to affect the hiring timeline, reducing the process by approximately **one month**. Removing or reducing the use of polygraph could save the additional time (51 days) it takes to schedule the polygraph appointment.

Augment Background Investigator Staffing

We recommend augmenting background investigator staffing with sworn personnel in the short term. The Department needs to finalize training for sworn staff to assist in the background investigation process. This could reduce background investigations by 14 days or more. In addition, we recommend that the mayor's office convene the City Personnel Department and LAPD leadership to resolve implementation issues.

The LAPD has several options for long-term change, which should be determined according to an evaluation of future data as a result of changes made in the short term. Long-term options include (1) augmentation of personnel conducting background investigations with contactors, and (2) LAPD takeover of the background investigation process. The first option can allow more officers to resume sworn duties through hiring qualified external personnel. However, this will require monetary investment. For the second option, LAPD could look to take over hiring and background investigation functions and have civilian and sworn personnel working in these roles. This second option would give the LAPD greater control and accountability for hiring.

Options to Improve the Relationship with the City Personnel Department

At the time of this writing, there is a critical need to repair relationships with the City Personnel Department and a need to accomplish key tasks in the hiring process. To be more effective in recruitment and hiring, LAPD needs to reevaluate its short- and long-term relationships with the City Personnel Department. According to our evaluation of the situation, which is informed by interview data, LAPD and City documents, and timelines, the Department could pursue five main options in this regard:

1. status quo
2. status quo overcoming tension between City and Department
3. augmentation of sworn officers
4. augmentation of contractors
5. LAPD takeover of City functions.

First, the status quo is broken, and changes need to be made. We recommend, at a minimum, that LAPD work to assuage the tension between the City and the Department. If staffing the LAPD is a priority for the City (itself) and key stakeholders, then issues should be resolved using

[42] If the Department chooses this option, it will be important to create criteria that do not use or disproportionately impact protected categories in California's Fair Employment and Housing Act and/or other related policies.

an intermediary, such as the mayor or mayor's office. However, with the current workloads facing the Department and the City, we recommend LAPD pursue options 3 and 4 in the short and medium terms. These options will require buy-in and assistance from an intermediary but will have the potential to positively affect recruiting (mainly sworn officers, although contractors should be considered) and hiring (sworn officers in background investigations, contractors for background investigations, polygraph evaluation, and other areas as desired).

These options also come with costs. Option 3 is likely the most budget friendly because officers already work for the Department, but their roles need to be backfilled. The use of contractors can be valuable because it allows the Department to keep officers in roles meant for sworn officers and introduces an accountability measure. Although the use of contractors might not be a solution in the short term given budget constraints, the Department should consider it for the future. Lastly, LAPD should examine the feasibility of reincorporating all aspects of recruiting and hiring under its authority. This would be a longer-term change. But, if staffed appropriately in terms of skilled civilians and sworn officers, it implements more control and accountability into recruiting and hiring.

Other Hiring Process Improvements

We examined other process improvements by which the Department could decrease time to hire new officers. Communication is an area that could be improved, primarily for recruits. Interviewees expressed a desire for a more candidate-friendly process. Therefore, we recommend that the Department examine the feasibility of implementing a hiring portal, with which candidates would be able to track their progress through the hiring process. A more-transparent process might encourage candidates to stay in the hiring pipeline with LAPD. This option might be viable for the Department to consider in the medium or long term.

Although the LAPD makes efforts to educate the public about the academy, the Department should continue to be transparent about the physical and financial requirements involved in training. At the time of this writing, the Department does not advise new recruits about the cost involved in attending the academy until they receive a letter about their academy start date (typically at the very end of the process). The current costs are between $1,000 and $2,000 for boots, uniforms, and gear. We recommend that the Department (or RED) provide this information to candidates earlier in the hiring process so that they do not drop out or choose not to attend the academy because of financial constraints.

The Department should also consider online testing, whether it is done in a formal or informal setting, because many tests are currently administered using Scantron cards. The Department might also wish to explore the use of artificial intelligence (AI) to assist throughout the candidate selection process; AI could also be used to analyze and identify recruits who are most likely to succeed in the academy and in their career, although it would also need specific use cases and policies governing it. The Department might be able to outsource some of its processes to save time. Examples include using contractors or others (e.g., medical professionals)

in background investigations, polygraph examinations, medical screening, and psychological evaluation. At the time of this writing, the Department conducts only a Physical Fitness Qualifier that signals an applicant's physical abilities but does not preclude a candidate from attending the academy. In the future, LAPD should consider integrating a scored assessment as a "screening out" tool to ensure that candidates are prepared for the academy.

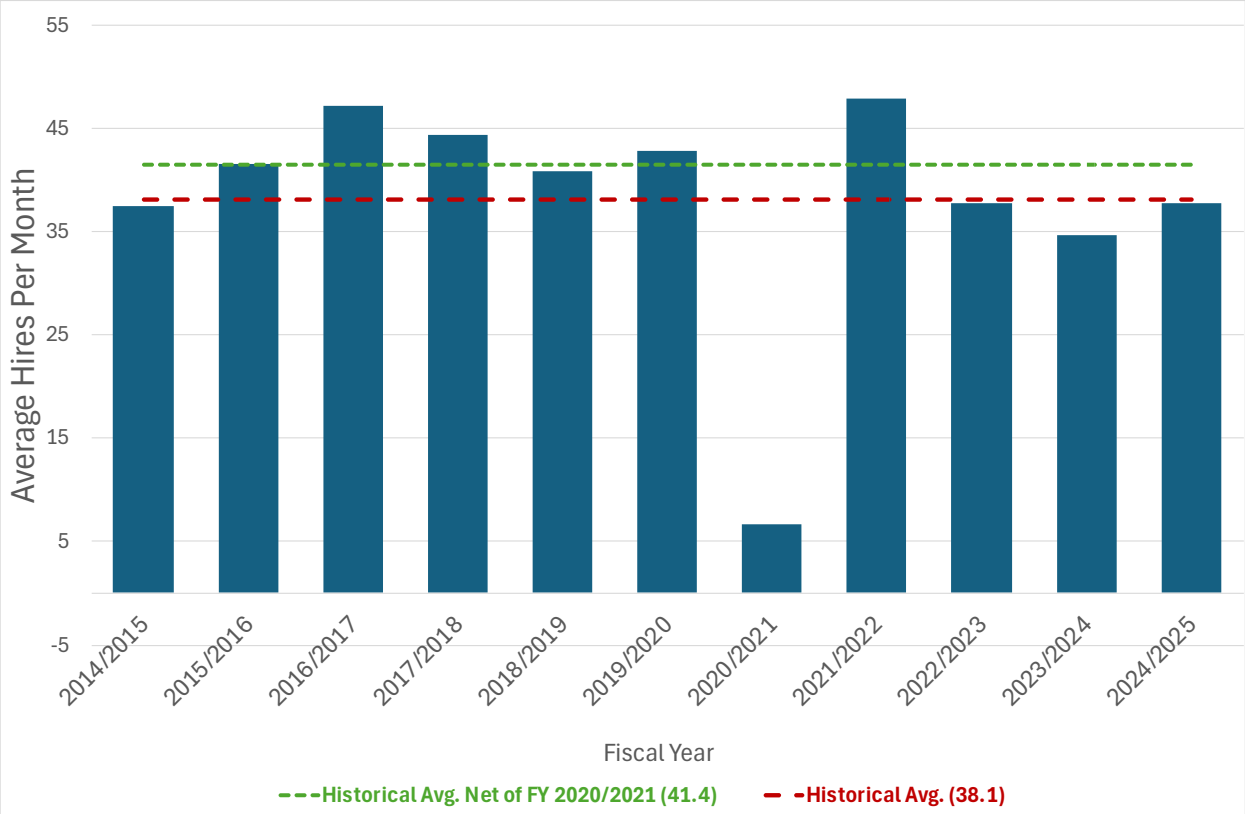
We also examined whether other modifications to recruitment and hiring might be an option for the Department. Although many organizations have opted to allow visible tattoos and facial hair, for example, there were only limited responses on these issues from the Department survey when compared with other suggestions for change. Where pushback was noted, it was often to preserve the professional appearance of the Department; when policies were urged to be relaxed, it was to be more modern.

Academy Changes Are Needed to Increase the Number of Sworn Officers

Although there are more than 1,000 applicants per month, only a small fraction are hired and make it into the academy. From FY 2014–2015 to FY 2024–2025, the average number of candidates entering the academy monthly was 38.1. Because FY 2020–2021 was an anomaly because of the COVID-19 pandemic, the average net of that year is 41.4 candidates entering the academy. This trend is illustrated in Figure 3.5. As these data show, the Department somewhat lags its historical averages in terms of monthly hires admitted to the police academy. Because staffing is a key problem LAPD is trying to address, there is a pressing need to get more applicants through the process and into the police academy.

Although LAPD can make changes to speed up candidate timelines, the recruit academy has a limited number of available recruit positions for each academy class. This could mean that candidates who are qualified for employment must wait until a new class starts to begin their initial training process. At the time of this writing, the academy can accommodate up to 650 recruits annually. This figure refers to the number of recruits who start on day one. The LAPD academy currently serves recruits from the LAPD and other agencies; over the past three CYs (2022–2024), 89.1 percent of recruits were from LAPD.

Figure 3.5. Average Hires per Month Accepted into the Police Academy



SOURCE: Features data provided by LAPD.

To understand how academy throughput affects the Department's strength, we analyzed academy throughput, academy attrition (for LAPD recruits), sworn attrition (current), sworn attrition (historical), and modeled options for LAPD according to potential changes. The results of these analyses for three scenarios are presented in Table 3.4.

According to these results, LAPD should strive to put forth the maximum number of recruits and move toward a higher throughput of recruits. At the same time, the Department should work toward lowering sworn attrition. To be able to meet Scenario 3, LAPD will need approval from the State of California Commission on Peace Officer Standards and Training (POST) to go beyond its current mandate.

Accordingly, we recommend class sizes at the academy increase to 60 or more recruits per class. This would allow for both the increased throughput to the field and provide a conventional academy setting. At the same time, it might produce a strain on training staff and require additional personnel. Downstream from this, any effort that increases new sworn personnel can incur a strain on field training officers involved in post-academy training. The Department could prepare for this possibility by ensuring adequate numbers of field training officers and providing incentives for this duty.

Table 3.4. Police Academy Capacity Options

Scenario	Annual Gain or Loss
Scenario 1: 45 recruits per class	
At current attrition	(189)
At 75 percent of current attrition	(31)
At historical attrition (CYs 2016–2019)	65
Scenario 2: 50 recruits per class (academy max = 650 starts per year)	
At current attrition	(140)
At 75 percent of current attrition	19
At historical attrition (CYs 2016–2019)	114
Scenario 3: 60 recruits per class (720 starts per year, assuming POST approval)	
At current attrition	(41)
At 75 percent of current attrition	118
At historical attrition (CYs 2016–2019)	231

NOTE: Attrition figures are according to POST historical attrition numbers, as reported by LAPD (California Commission on Peace Officer Standards and Training, "Agency Statistics," webpage, accessed on February 10, 2025). Historical attrition is according to CYs 2021–2023 (roundly 380 per year); historical attrition is according to CYs 2016–2019 (roundly 634 per year). LAPD academy attrition for these calculations is according to figures from LAPD recruit data from the 2022–2024, reflecting a 14.75 percent attrition rate. Scenarios reflect 13 classes per year.

To be able to make changes at the academy, LAPD must also consider staffing for various roles in that part of the organization. California POST requires a 1:25 ratio of drill instructors to recruits; if class sizes increase, so will the required number of drill instructors. The Department is also set to lose a complement of firearms instructors to retirement in the near term. To fill those vacancies, the spots will need to be advertised and filled, and officers will need to complete, at a minimum,

- 40-hour POST Academy Instructor Certification Course
- 40-hour POST Handgun Instructor Training School
- 40-hour POST Shotgun Instructor Training School.

Officers might need to complete additional training for some assignments (e.g., rifle instructor training, chemical agent training, armorer schools). A past memorandum from the Training Bureau estimated that, for a primary instructor, the full training program could take up to 18 months to complete. Depending on operational tempo, LAPD may be able to use some other

firearms instructors (i.e., officers assigned to Metro units) to help assuage this imminent staffing shortfall.[43]

In terms of overall staffing, the Training Division estimated that it would need a complement of 182 sworn officers (plus 20 staff) to be able to train classes of 60 recruits.[44] The current staffing of the Training Division is 172 sworn officers, not including any projected losses. Thus, the unit might be able to accomplish some of our recommendations in the short term but would require additional staffing if larger classes are implemented.

We also received feedback about the academy. Both academy staff and recruits have expressed a desire for additional instruction, potentially adding one month to the academy. Although this would make new officers better prepared for their duties, it would slow down the timelines of getting them into the field. Simultaneously, if the academy is run as it is at the time of this writing, it could negatively affect throughput. Lastly, LAPD could consider shortening its recruit academy. The academy currently provides 904 hours of instruction, while California POST requires a minimum of 664 hours of training.[45] There could be some benefits to shortening the academy in terms of throughput, but the negatives outweigh the positives, given the complexity of duties that police encounter.

[43] LAPD, Training Division, "Analysis of Vacant Positions at Training Division," internal memorandum, April 4, 2023.

[44] LAPD, Training Division, "Critical Vacancies and Limitations to Academy Training," internal memorandum, June 30, 2023.

[45] State of California Commission on Peace Officer Standards and Training, "Peace Officer Basic Training," webpage, January 22, 2024.

Chapter 4. Complaint System and Disciplinary Process

Many sworn personnel said that they do not fully understand the complaint system, feel it is unfair, see it as a source of stress, perceive that it has unreasonable effects on their career progress, and attest that it discourages them from being proactive on the job. Contributing to this negative experience is the volume of complaints and the length of time it takes for complaints to close. The slow progression of cases is partially a consequence of the high volume of complaints received, that the complaints process has many steps and layers of review, and that the systems for tracking complaints are outdated. The perceived lack of consistency in disciplinary decisions cannot be addressed because of the employee rights and confidentiality protections afforded through the Public Safety Officers Bill of Rights Act (POBRA). Table 4.1 summarizes the needs and recommendations we discuss in this chapter after providing an overview of the complaint system and disciplinary process.

Table 4.1. Needs and Recommendations for the LAPD Complaint System and Disciplinary Process

Needs	Recommendations
Process easily disputable and nondisciplinary cases more efficiently	• Set and track a goal of 150 days to complete easily disputable and nondisciplinary cases • Screen complaints that are frivolous and that can be easily reviewed, and do not place them in the employee's file • Improve supervisors' ability to handle nondisciplinary cases • Reduce layers of review for easily disputable and nondisciplinary cases • Limit how much the processing of easily disputable and nondisciplinary complaints affects promotions
Improve communication about complaints and discipline	• Educate staff about the complaint system and disciplinary process and their rights within • Improve how supervisors and command staff communicate with subjects of complaints and those being disciplined • Improve the system for tracking cases
Increase use of training and corrective measures for infractions with low-level penalties	• Prioritize training or other corrective measures for infractions with low-level penalties • Ensure appropriateness of nonpunitive discipline by including investigator's recommendation for consideration • Increase use of referrals to mental, behavioral, and physical health • Increase the use of mentoring and peer support

Complaint System and Disciplinary Process

Our interviews and survey findings suggest that many people in LAPD do not fully understand the complaint system and disciplinary process. By *complaint system*, we mean the process for adjudicating a complaint (e.g., sustained, unfounded, or some other outcome), which then feeds into the disciplinary process that decides the appropriate punishment, provides the

employee with an explanation of that punishment, and allows the employee to appeal. To begin, we detail the components and actors involved in the complaint system and disciplinary process. Then, we discuss key findings from our interviews and surveys regarding the timeliness, fairness, and general perceptions of the complaint system and discipline, identifying key areas for improvement.

Process Details

It is important to note, and our findings reveal, that the processes that exist on paper occasionally may not work as intended because the actors engaged in the process might adapt to different circumstances they encounter. The LAPD Manual Volume 3 sections 810 through 860 cover key elements of the procedures involved in the complaint system and disciplinary process. In addition, the Department has developed a variety of guides to assist in the processing of complaints and imposition of discipline, including *Complaints Investigations: A Guide for Supervisors*,[46] various notices about the processing and programs available to process different types of complaints (e.g., biased policing), checklists, manuals, interviewing techniques, forms and exemplars, altogether totaling 177 individual documents that we received. Personnel with authority to act in the complaint system include frontline supervisors, complaint coordinators at the area level, watch commanders, area commanding officers, bureau command, and Internal Affairs Group (IAG) investigators and command staff.

California state law and LAPD policy both require complaints to be accepted (and retained for five years), which begins the intake process. Intakes can happen directly with a supervisor during any civilian interaction, via submission to the Professional Standards Bureau (PSB), via submission to the Office of the Inspector General or Board of Police Commissioners, or internally from LAPD employees. The system for handling complaints following intake is generally up to the agency. Next, we describe the LAPD complaint system as it exists at the time of this writing.

First, intake involves preliminary investigation by a supervisor to determine whether the complaint is disciplinary or nondisciplinary. The nondisciplinary complaints process and alternative complaint resolution (ACR) process are outlined in Tables 4.2 and 4.3, respectively.

[46] LAPD, Complaint Investigations: A Guide for Supervisors, 4th edition, version 2, Internal Affairs Group, May 2015.

Table 4.2. Nondisciplinary Complaint Process

Steps	Actions	Notes
1. Preliminary investigation by supervisor	• Face sheet or case file number created • Identify all parties, record all interviews	• Case file number will be entered in case management system (CMS) and appears on employees' TEAMS II page • 15 days to submit
2. Recommended as nondisciplinary by supervisor, commanding officer makes classification decision (Vol. 3, Section 817.05)	• Attach preliminary investigation to case file • Watch commander or commanding officer sign-off or reclassification • Patrol Bureau review • Internal Affairs Division (IAD) review (Commander or Chief if Biased Policing complaint) • Employee notified with Letter of Transmittal (LOT)	• Concerns about supervisors investigating all allegations and pushing for nondisciplinary, particularly Demonstrably False, resolutions • Unknown how many are returned by commanding officer, Bureau, or IAD review
3. Case closeout	• Close case file by sending to IAD and send letter to complainant(s)	• CMS entry as Policy/Procedure, Not Misconduct, Actions Could be Different, Demonstrably False, No Department Employee

Table 4.3. Alternative Complaint Resolution Process

Steps	Actions	Notes
1. Preliminary investigation by supervisor	• Face sheet or case file number created • Identify all parties, record all interviews	• Case file will be entered in CMS and shows up on employees' TEAMS II page • 15 days to submit
2. Supervisor determines complaint meets criteria or is nondisciplinary and complainant expresses desire for ACR	• Complainant and employee agree to ACR • ACR signed by complainant • Commanding officer review and potential override	• Can happen immediately • Concern that supervisors are not having officers meet with complainants directly, instead communicating with each separately
3. Case closeout	• Sent to IAD for review and closeout	• CMS entry as Alternate Complaint Resolution

Interviewees noted concerns about the decisions made by supervisors on nondisciplinary cases, necessitating some level of review. First, field supervisors investigating a complaint might push to have a complaint labeled Demonstrably False because that designation means interviews are not required. When Demonstrably False is an appropriate classification, cases can be quickly processed (e.g., body-worn camera video clearly shows the allegation did not happen). However, if a supervisor rushes to adjudicate a complaint as Demonstrably False and any of the allegations require further investigation, that case could be sent back or sent for a supplemental investigation. Similarly, there is some concern about supervisors taking ACRs and talking to the officer and the complainant separately, without facilitating the actual ACR meeting.

Next, as shown in Table 4.4, the process for a disciplinary complaint is much longer, particularly for cases in which a substantial penalty is recommended (LAPD Manual Volume 3, Section 825). In general, where "review" is listed, there can be weeks or months of delays, because of requested clarification, request for more investigation, or conflicting recommendations across reviews.

Table 4.4. Disciplinary Complaint Resolution Process

Steps	Actions	Notes
1. Preliminary investigation by supervisor	• Face sheet or case file number created • Identify all parties, record all interviews	• Case file number will be entered in Complaint Management System and shows up on employees' TEAMS II page • 15 days to submit
2. Supervisor determines complaint is disciplinary	• Attach preliminary investigation to case file • Watch Commander or Commanding Officer review and confirm • IAD reviews and assigns case either to remain with IAD or back to the Area	• Disciplinary cases can still be investigated by chain of command as long as IAD review determines that is appropriate
3. Adjudication and recommended penalty if applicable	• Commanding officer of accused employee recommends adjudication • Bureau reviews • IAD Reviews	• The case can be adjudicated as unfounded, exonerated, not resolved, sustained, sustained—no penalty, insufficient evidence, withdrawn by COP, or duplicate • Penalty also recommended
4. Employee notified and allowed Skelly response prior to disciplinary action	• Employee provided a LOT by Commanding Officer • Employee can respond in Skelly hearing • Skelly officer will review and make recommendations	• A Skelly response challenges the findings and the adjudication of the complaint • Skelly officer can ask for further investigation, amended action, withdrawal, or approval to proceed,
5. Sustained allegation with penalty of Official Reprimand or Higher presented to Chief of Police by IAD	• Chief of Police makes final determination of penalty • Employee receives a new LOT	• The recommended penalty might change between Bureau review, IAD review, and COP review. • Months likely have passed between initial LOT and final LOT
6. If Removal is penalty, automatically goes to BOR review; if Demotion or more than 22 days, employee can opt for BOR review or Administrative Appeal	• BOR is comprised of two civilians and one sworn officer • BOR reviews, adjudicates, and recommends penalty • COP can impose recommended penalty or reduced penalty	• Legal representation for employee and officer representation for the Department

NOTE: BOR = Board of Rights.

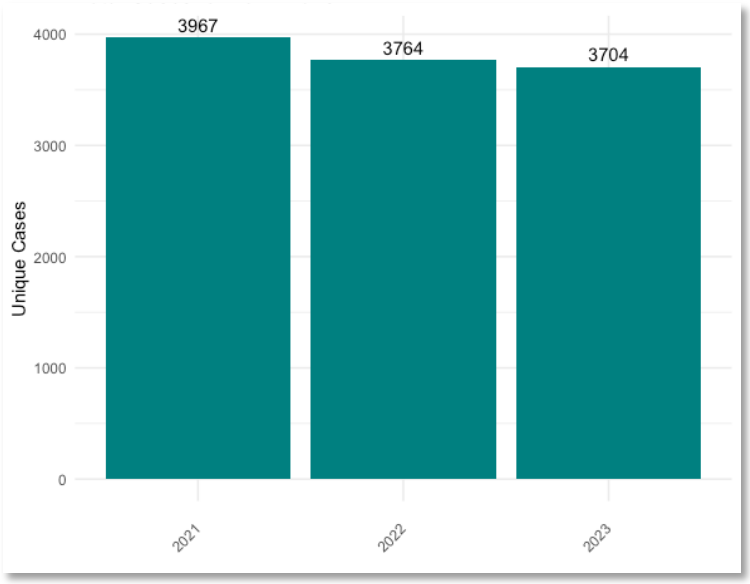
Needs to Address with the Complaint System

The variety of processes, procedures, and personnel that make up the complaint system are in place to ensure that complaints are dealt with appropriately and efficiently. In this section, we cover areas in which LAPD personnel identified issues or priority needs to address within the complaint system.

There Is a High Volume of Complaints, and the Complaint System Is Slow

The complaints and disciplinary data we received from LAPD show approximately 4,000 complaints were accepted (i.e., received a case file number) in 2021, dropping to about 3,700 in 2022 and 2023, as shown in Figure 4.1.[47] This presents a substantial burden on the subjects of complaints, frontline supervisors, complaint coordinators, IAG investigators, and even command staff. This was evident in our survey findings; 93 percent of sworn personnel reported that the complaint system is a source of undue stress, and this was consistent across ranks (range of 87 percent to 95 percent).

Figure 4.1. Total Complaint Cases, 2021–2023



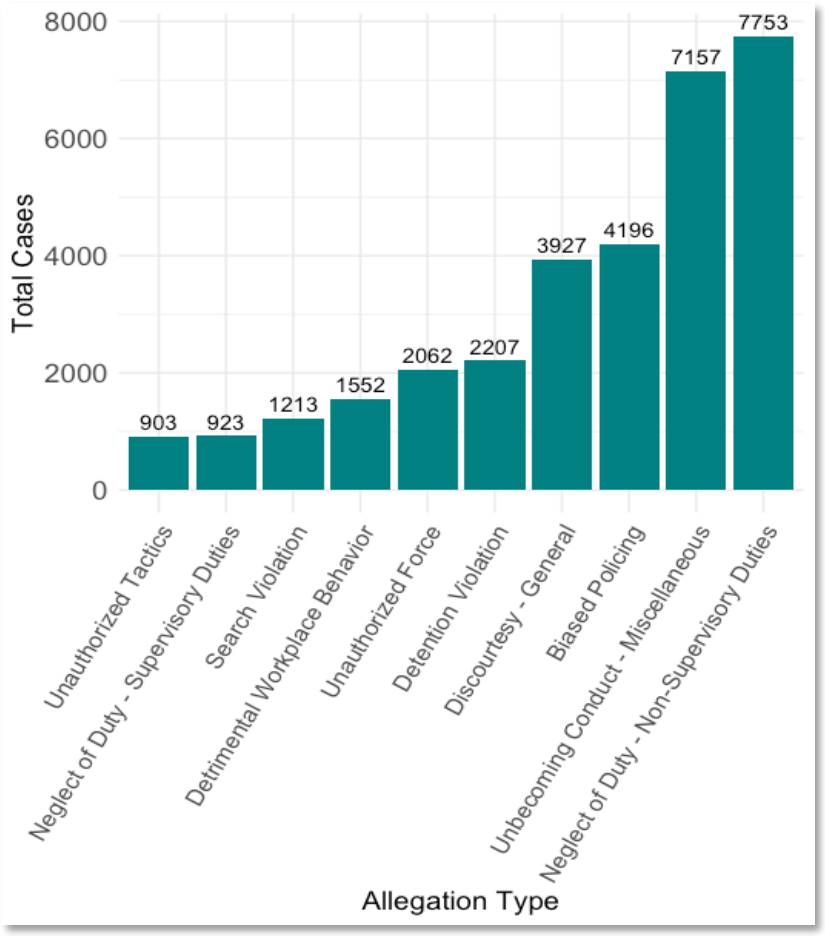
SOURCE: RAND analysis of data provided by LAPD.

Figure 4.2 shows the top ten categories of complaints from 2021 to 2023. As shown in Figure 4.2, the total number of complaints is comprised primarily of complaints consistent with poor interactions with community members, such as discourtesy, conduct unbecoming of an officer

[47] The average number of allegations associated with each complaint case file was 3.3 for this three-year period. Multiple allegations associated with the same case file could mean either multiple allegations for different types of misconduct and/or the inclusion of multiple officers in the same complaint.

(CUBO), and biased policing. Most cases have multiple employees involved and multiple allegations.

Figure 4.2. Top Ten Categories of Complaint Allegations, 2021 to 2023



SOURCE: RAND analysis of data provided by LAPD.

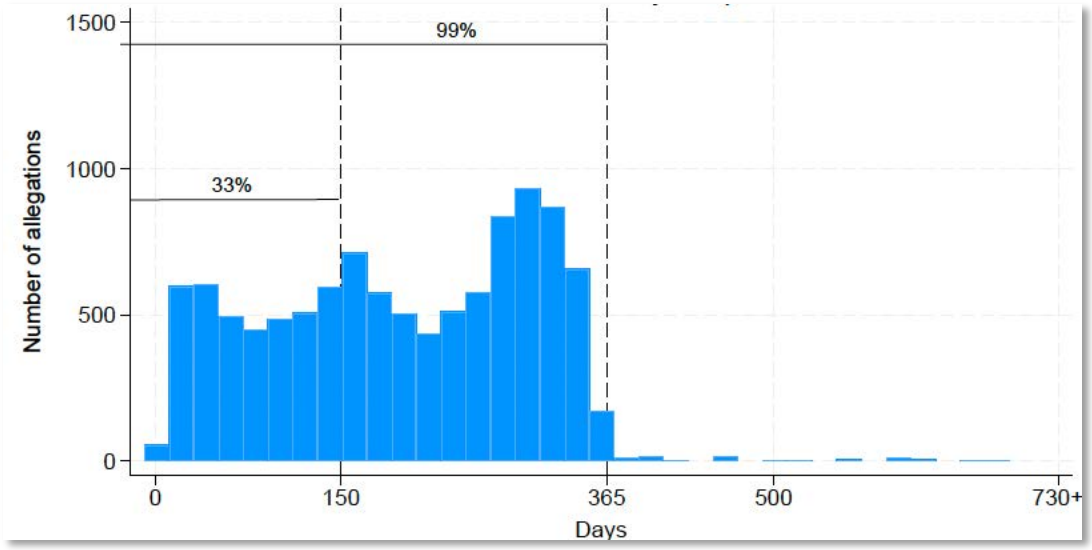
Figures 4.3 and 4.4 show the number of days that complaints spent in the investigation process between June 1, 2021, and November 23, 2024, for two common types of complaints that are likely to be captured on body-worn video and are least likely to require complex or lengthy investigations:[48] CUBO and discourtesy.[49] These analyses use cases where the complaint

[48] These allegation types were chosen to examine complaint investigation timelines under conditions that would likely result in a faster investigation. Additionally, given their frequency and nature, allegations that an officer was rude, officious, or used gratuitous or demeaning language is a significant area of concern to Department leadership and the community.

[49] Complaints related to CUBO include the following: Unbecoming Conduct—Computer Violation, Unbecoming Conduct—Convert On-Duty Contact to Off-Duty Relationship, Unbecoming Conduct—Criminal, Unbecoming Conduct—Encounter with On-Duty Law-Enforcement Personnel, Unbecoming Conduct—Miscellaneous, and

type is CUBO or discourtesy only (see Appendix A for more detail). It should be noted that in some cases, CUBO violations are part of more complex and egregious allegations, often which include numerous other policy violations. The consent decree and current LAPD policy (Volume 3, Section 824) set a goal of completing most complaint investigations within 150 days of the Complaint Form being received by IAD.[50] In the event that the agency determines disciplinary action will be taken against an employee for misconduct, the investigation must be completed within one year of the agency's discovery by a person who is authorized to initiate an investigation (with some exceptions).[51]

Figure 4.3. Investigation Length for Conduct Unbecoming of an Officer and Discourtesy Complaints



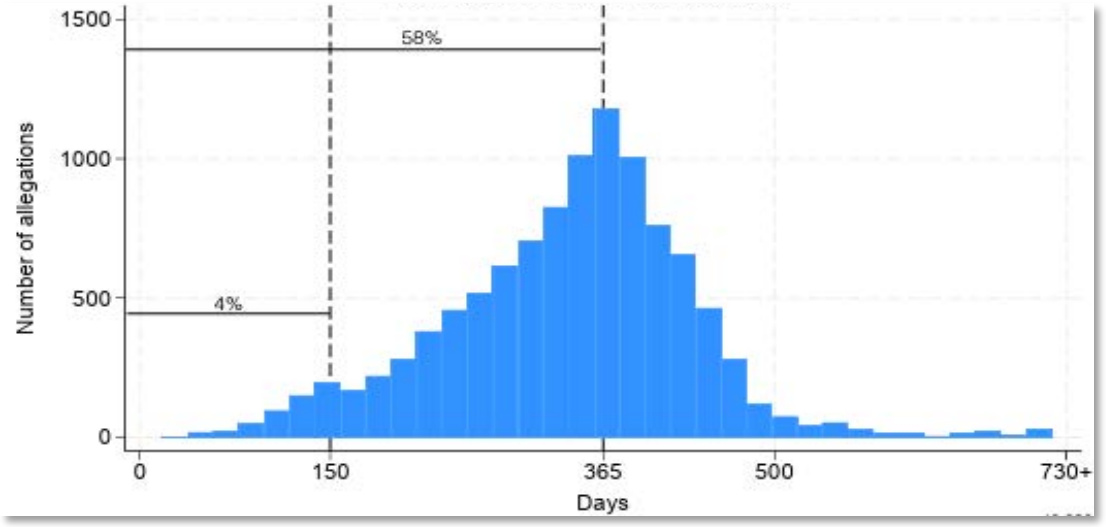
SOURCE: RAND analysis of data provided by LAPD.
NOTE: *Investigation length* refers to the number of days from the issue date to the investigation complete date.

Unbecoming Conduct—Social Media. Discourtesy complaints include the following: Discourtesy—Disability, Discourtesy—Ethnic, Discourtesy—Gender, Discourtesy—General, Discourtesy—Religion, Discourtesy—Sexual Orientation Identity.

[50] *Complete* means the primary investigator has submitted their findings for commanding officer review. The date can change if the case is sent back for further investigation at any point.

[51] Common exceptions include if there are parallel criminal investigations or other delays in the start of the complaint investigation (e.g., military leave).

Figure 4.4. Issue Date to Close Date for Conduct Unbecoming of an Officer and Discourtesy Complaints



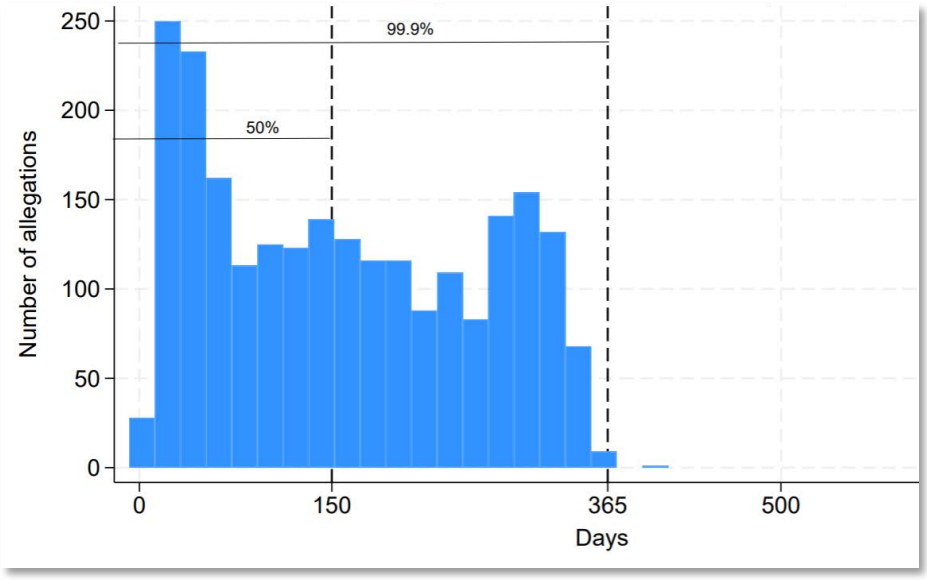
SOURCE: RAND analysis of data provided by LAPD.

Figures 4.3 and 4.4 reflect cases with **any** disposition for these cases. However, given that some cases have multiple complaint subjects and varying dispositions, case length could be affected by this complexity. Figure 4.5 tracks case length for CUBO and discourtesy complaints that resulted only in a disposition of Demonstrably False.[52] This shows that nearly all investigations are complete within one year of being issued, though just one-third are complete within 150 days. Figure 4.6 shows that there is a significant delay between completing the complaint investigation and closing the case, even for Demonstrably False cases. This suggests room for improvement in both case completion and closeout for these types of complaints.

[52] The LAPD *Department Manual*, volume 3, section 818, defines *Demonstrably False* as follows:

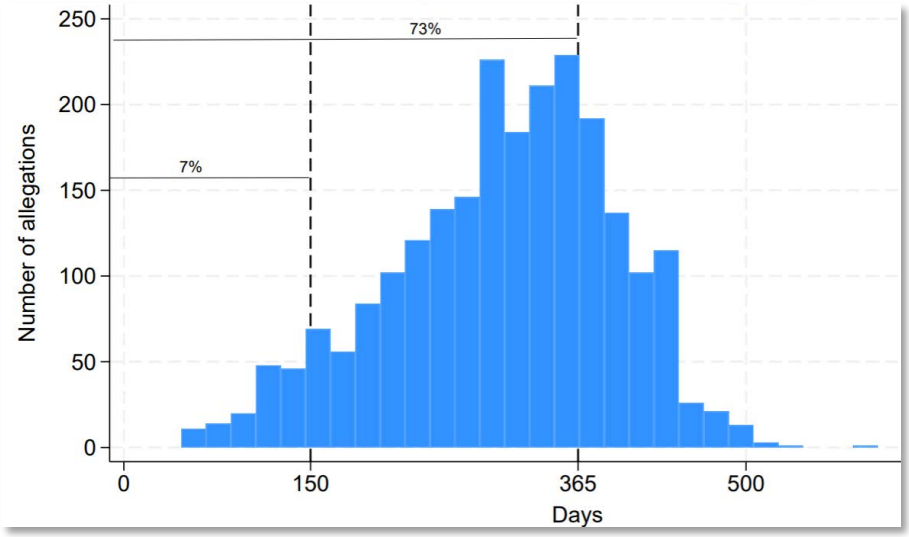
> "When it is clearly proven that an allegation did not occur . . . under the following circumstances: The complainant is determined to be vexatious, i.e., the complainant demonstrates an irrational thought process and/or has established a pattern of making chronic or false complaints; or, Body Worn Video (BWV) or Digital In-Car Video System (DICV) footage, or other audio or video evidence captured the entire incident or citizen contact, and conclusively shows that the employee(s) did not commit the alleged misconduct or did not violate Department policy or procedures." (Los Angeles Police Department, *Department Manual*: Vol. 3, *Management Rules and Procedures*, 2022)

Figure 4.5. Investigation Length for Demonstrably False Conduct Unbecoming of an Officer and Discourtesy Complaints



SOURCE: RAND analysis of data provided by LAPD.
NOTE: *Investigation length* refers to the number of days from the issue date to the investigation complete date.

Figure 4.6. Issue Date to Close Date for Demonstrably False CUBO and Discourtesy Complaints



SOURCE: RAND analysis of data provided by LAPD.

People Are Concerned the Complaint System Hampers Their Career and Proactivity

Because cases lag in the system for some time, people who seek promotion but have pending cases may prefer to wait until the case is closed to attempt to promote. A pending case can technically be viewed by a commanding officer who is making promotion selection,[53] although some interviewees said that should not be a problem for low-level cases. According to some respondents, this is particularly frustrating when the complaint is perceived to be frivolous or retaliatory in nature.

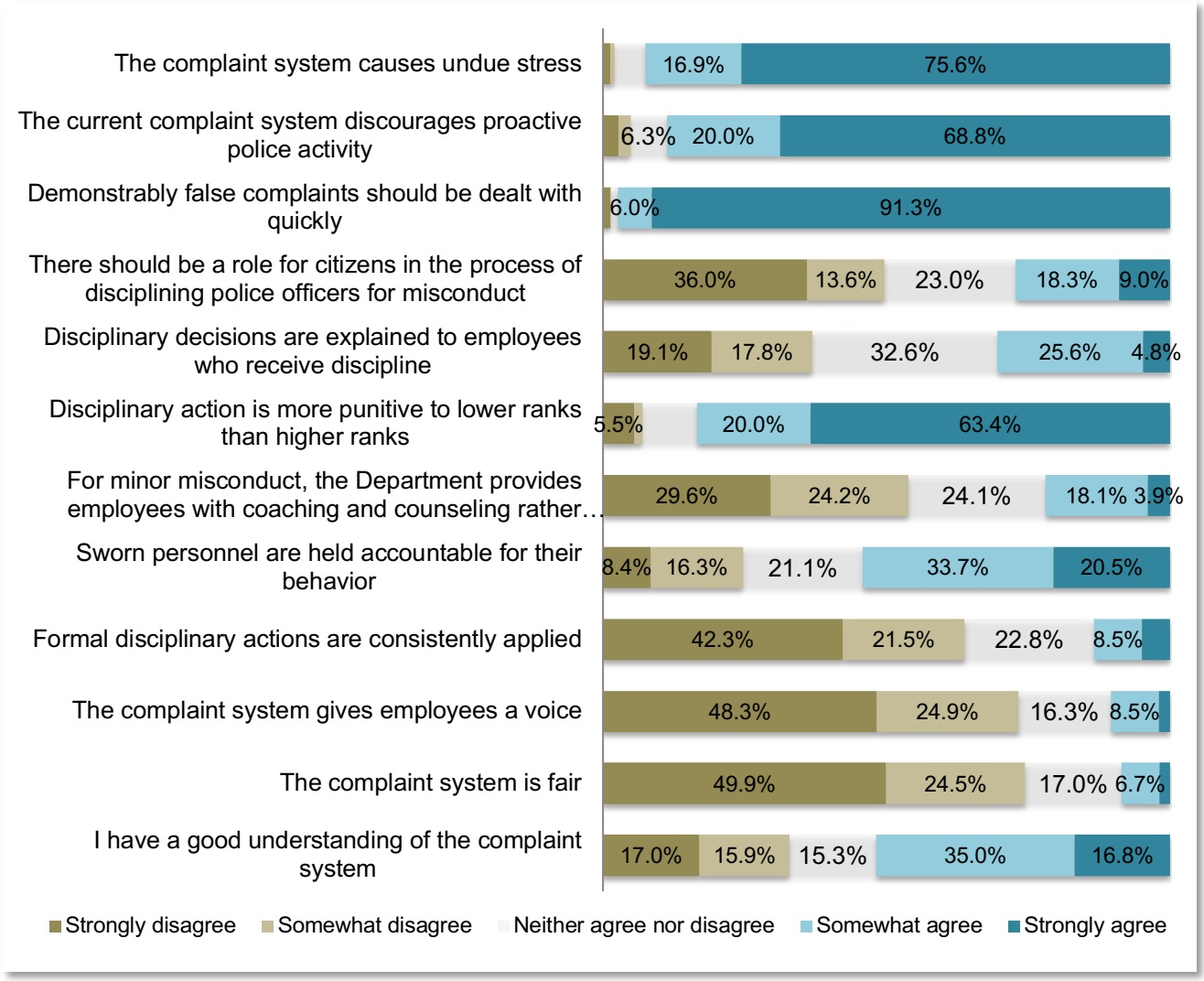
> [The complaint system is] not fair to the lower ranking members of this Department. This encourages the young officers to not go out and engage in proactive police work.
> –**Police Officer survey respondent**

Additionally, there is concern that complaints negatively affect promotion potential. That is, officers who are more active in proactive police work (e.g., stops) or work in more challenging assignments are more likely to receive complaints over time and will look less favorable for promotion relative to officers who work in administrative positions or take on less challenging work. Approximately 89 percent of sworn respondents to the survey agreed that the complaint system discourages proactive police activity. Moreover, perceptions of favoritism and unfairness bleed into perceptions of the complaints and disciplinary system (e.g., people with connections are less likely to receive sustained complaints or lesser punishment), further exacerbating the perceived impact of complaints.

Figure 4.7 presents survey findings from sworn respondents on their views about the complaint system and disciplinary process. Importantly, a little more than half of respondents who had been a subject of the complaint system reported having a good understanding of it. They also said that the complaint system is a source of undue stress, is unfair, and does not give employees a voice.

[53] See LAPD, 2022, Volume 3, section 761.

Figure 4.7. Sworn Personnel Perceptions of the Complaint System and Disciplinary Process



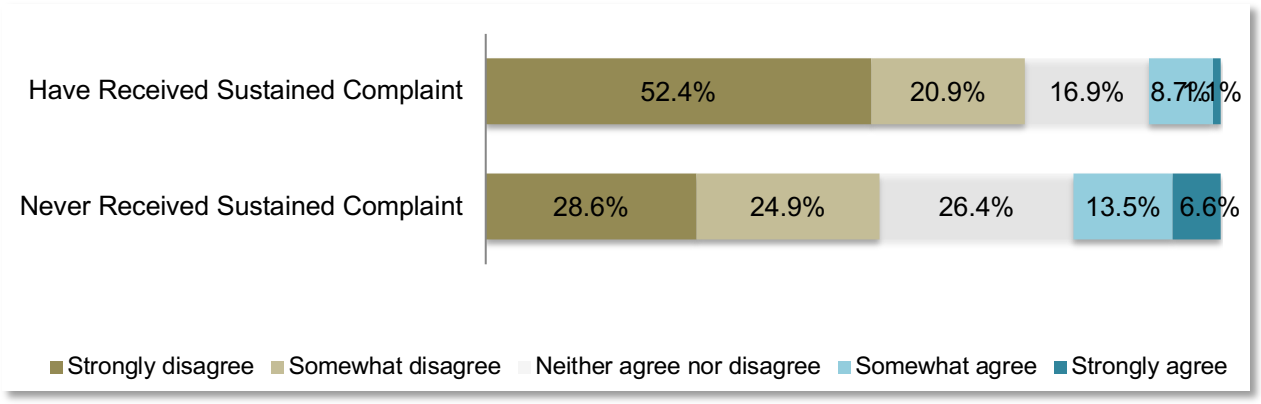
NOTE: The modal average confidence interval across items is +/− 2.0 percent for these survey questions. The range is +/− 0.2 percent to +/− 2.7 percent

There Is a Lack of Transparency About Case Status

Finally, because of the multiple actors and steps involved in the complaint investigation process and the potential for decisions to be revisited, many subjects of the complaint system do not know where their case stands and when it is likely to be resolved. This creates an impression that they are excluded from the process, which can create a sense of alienation and a lack of support and is generally stressful. Of survey respondents who had been the subject of a complaint and had received at least one sustained complaint (50.4 percent of our sample), Figures 4.8 and 4.9 show that 53 percent reported feeling alienated while being investigated and that 73 percent did not feel supported. Approximately half of those who had never had a

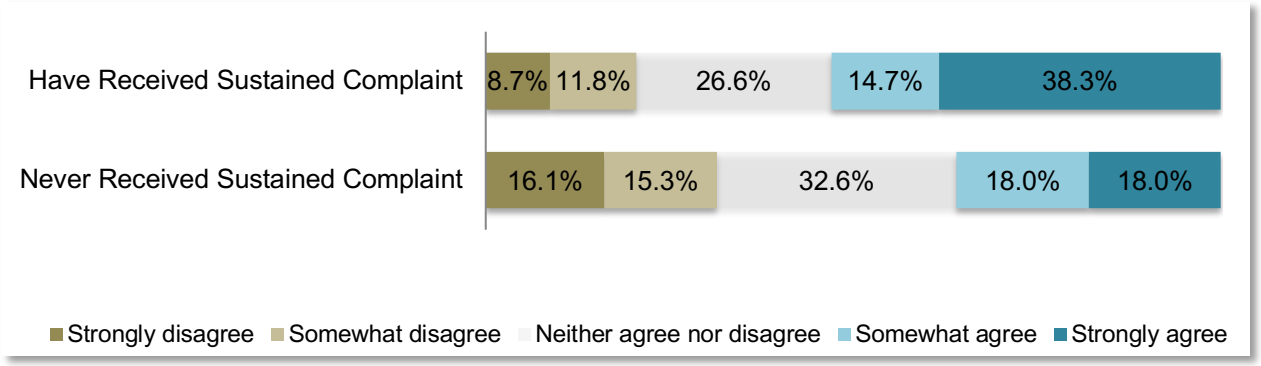
sustained complaint but had been the subject of an investigation expressed a lack of support, and 36 percent reported feeling alienated.

Figure 4.8. Sworn Personnel Perceptions of Support While Going Through the Complaint System



NOTE: For employees with a sustained complaint, the average margin of error is +/− 2.5 percent and for employees without a sustained complaint, the average margin of error is +/− 2.8 percent

Figure 4.9. Sworn Personnel Perceptions of Alienation While Going Through the Complaint System



NOTE: For employees with a sustained complaint, the average margin of error is +/− 2.9 percent and for employees without a sustained complaint, the average margin of error is +/− 2.9 percent

Recommendations for Changing the Complaint System

We identified several opportunities for LAPD to improve the efficiency, transparency, and fairness of the complaint system. Making some of these changes would signal to employees that the Department is serious about their concerns.

Set and Track Goal of 150 Days to Complete Easily Disputable and Nondisciplinary Cases

Complaint allegations that are easily disputable (i.e., those that can be readily assessed via body-worn video) or are nondisciplinary (i.e., would not result in discipline or determined to be Demonstrably False in the preliminary investigation) sometimes lag in the complaint system as

seen in Figure 4.5 and Figure 4.6. Completing these cases within the 150-day timeline as set out in policy is a goal that requires serious attention and reportedly used to be implemented as the standard in PSB (from the moment they received the case file, which can be up to a month after complaint intake). Setting this goal communicates to both the public and officers that complaints are taken seriously and helps to free up time to direct more attention to more-serious cases.

Importantly, there are a variety of both intended and unintended reasons why many cases may extend beyond the 150-day mark. Cases requiring several iterations of corrections during the review process, cases involving multiple officers, and cases for which new evidence is discovered could be examples of circumstances that result in not meeting the 150-day goal. Additionally, there are exceptions in which cases might extend beyond the one-year limitation period established by POBRA. For example, multijurisdictional investigations, cases involving civil litigation, or cases that have a parallel criminal investigation might be tolled and require extended time to completion. Additionally, these circumstances might increase the risk of investigations being rushed and investigators committing errors. An analysis comparing cases handled at the area level and similar cases handled by PSB could help inform whether the deadline affects quality and whether that differs depending on who handles the investigation. Staffing and the lack of civilian positions also hampers IAD's ability to meet the 150-day goal, but it remains a useful benchmark.

Screen Cases Before They Enter the Complaint System

Early review of complaints by frontline supervisors allows for the opportunity to identify those complaints that are clearly proven false at an early screening. Such cases, although subject to reporting on a complaint form, do not need to be processed in the same manner as a disciplinary complaint. For example, complaints that are patently false or frivolous could be categorized separately and not included in an employee's TEAMS II report. This separate process could allow for more accurate analysis of legitimate complaints. These cases should be closed at the lowest level possible (e.g., at the area level). Providing additional training for field supervisors who initially screen complaints could provide them the confidence and knowledge to make these crucial decisions (e.g., through use of body-worn video). Regular audits of complaints can help to identify patterns and systemic issues that need attention and ensure that these processes are being appropriately adhered to.

Speed the Processing of Easily Disputable and Nondisciplinary Cases

As discussed, sergeants have substantial discretion to ensure nondisciplinary complaints are handled quickly, particularly if they are Demonstrably False. The exact reasons why sergeants might not be executing this discretion consistently or why there is variation across sergeants are questions the Department should investigate further. Most likely, this is because of their lack of familiarity and comfort with investigating complaints. The consent decree, known errors by supervisors, a lack of trust in supervisors' investigations, and previous efforts to hold sergeants

accountable that were highly punitive (e.g., days of punishment for an initial offense) might be contributing factors. Interviewees explained that a prior punitive approach to errors led to sergeants subsequently creating case files prematurely for things that could possibly be resolved in the moment, increasing investigative burden. The concern from the consent decree was that sergeants were discouraging people from submitting complaints, but body-worn video reduces this risk.

LAPD should increase training for sergeants on this matter. PSB has already developed a training to improve sergeants' handling of nondisciplinary cases. This training had been well attended initially, but attendance has since dropped off. Interviewees expressed a sense that the number of new sergeants in the Department is high because of staffing shortages, making it a critical period to emphasize training. Ensuring that sergeants are adequately trained to conduct better complaint investigations, providing guidance and coaching, and holding them progressively accountable (i.e., an expectation to not make the same mistake twice) will be an important balance to strike.

Another factor that would speed the processing of easily disputable and nondisciplinary cases is to remove layers of review for those cases. In particular, PSB reviews all nondisciplinary cases at closeout. But this detailed review could be shifted to the Bureaus, leaving PSB to simply complete the administrative closeout process. PSB could then conduct random audits of nondisciplinary cases to ensure that they are being investigated and adjudicated properly and provide Departmentwide guidance as necessary. A special case is Biased Policing complaints, which take time and currently require PSB Commander review. This level of review could be removed for cases determined to be Demonstrably False, assuming the Operations Bureau has already reviewed and concurs with how the complaint was adjudicated. Notably, none of the Biased Policing complaints in the data we received were sustained.[54]

Shifting discretion to supervisors and reducing layers of review creates a risk that something critical could be missed. One risk is that complaints and underlying allegations will not be properly classified—which is an existing issue in the current system that would need to be monitored, although Operations Bureau review would remain. Other concerns that would need to be monitored include proper documentation of case files and interviews in the CMS. Finally, it is important to consider the public perception of any policy change that reduces layers of oversight

[54] The matter of zero Biased Policing complaints being sustained has received media attention and public concern previously. Given the number of these complaints that exist, this is problematic, but removing the high-level PSB review for cases in which the outcome is Demonstrably False is unlikely to change this outcome, because the base rate of sustained cases is already zero. In our interviews, officers explained that any statement that could be perceived to be an accusation of Biased Policing results in a face sheet or CF number being generated, even if the accusing party does not want to proceed with a formal complaint. It is unclear how many cases this explains without more detailed data. A review of Biased Policing investigations specifically might be warranted to better understand the low rate of sustained Biased Policing complaints. For an example of media attention this issues has received, see Kevin Rector, "Once Again, LAPD Upholds Zero Biased Policing Complaints Against Its Officers," *Los Angeles Times*, May 10, 2022.

in complaint investigations. Communicating how decisions are made, what oversight or review exists for ensuring that complaints are handled properly, and seeking community input are critical.[55]

Make Sure Open Complaints That Are Easily Disputable Are Not Preventing Promotion Opportunities

The LAPD Manual volume 3, section 761 describes the process for how pending complaints might affect promotional opportunities. It states that a pending complaint investigation can only be used as grounds for denial of promotion "when published expiration date of an eligibility list is due to expire within 45 calendar days." It is not clear in practice how often an open complaint results in denial or delay of a promotion, for which types of complaints, or how often this prevents people from seeking promotion. Although employees can appeal such a decision, given the potentially slow investigations process for easily disputable or nondisciplinary cases, this is perceived as a substantial source of unfairness. Although some of our interviewees expressed that open complaints should not prevent promotions, it is allowed by policy in some cases, and others saw it as a rational part of the calculus by command staff who are selecting someone for the position.

Address Barriers to Transparency and Case Closure

The last opportunity is to ensure that the complaints process is transparent for officers. This should involve efforts to educate officers about the complaint investigation process and their rights according to POBRA. It should also involve more-frequent communication with officers who are the subject of a complaint regarding the status of their case. First and foremost, we learned that some officers were not notified of a complaint until it had been adjudicated, which is unacceptable unless the complaint is being cleared at initial review, as we discuss previously. We believe IAD is working on a resolution to this, but the resolution should be confirmed. Next, LAPD Policy Manual volume 3, section 825.30 mandates a notice to the subject of the complaint from the investigator within one week of the five-month anniversary of the complaint receipt date. An improvement would be to provide a status update every 30 to 60 days or to provide a notice when key aspects of the investigation have concluded (e.g., interviews completed). Alternatively, creating an automated notice in the current CMS system (if possible) or creating a new CMS system that has capabilities to automate notifications could be beneficial.

There are two key issues with case closure that have an unnecessary impact on employees. First, the case file number is linked to all officers involved in a case and is the main identifier for tracking cases. However, the case file number cannot be closed out for individual officers, only for the entire case. This means if one officer submits an appeal, the case remains open as pending

[55] Note that complaints that are not decided until near the one-year cutoff may also be perceived as unfair by complainants who may want to appeal the decision.

for all officers linked to that case file number. Because the appeal can take a substantial amount of time, and pending cases can have an impact on promotions either formally or informally, this process is an unnecessary source of stress. Efforts should be made to modify this component of the system by adding a unique identifier for individuals that allows their case to be closed out or some other option, such as hiding pending complaints from the TEAMS II application.

Another issue is that many supervisors are not comfortable closing out complaints. Factors contributing to this issue are likely a lack of knowledge about the process and lack of comfort with exercising their authority. Issues at this juncture often result in additional communication with IAG or forms being returned to the area supervisor from IAG for corrections, which further impedes the process. In particular, supervisors might use the wrong term for the adjudication or not know which form to use (e.g., using a Complaint Adjudication Form for a disciplinary complaint). We recommend eliminating the use of unique adjudication terms for nondisciplinary cases and instead relying on the adjudication terms defined by law.

Disciplinary Decisions

There are perceptions that disciplinary decisions are inconsistent, involve too many layers of review, are more punitive to lower ranks, are not explained to employees, and are overly formal and punitive as opposed to supporting positive employee development (e.g., training, coaching, counseling). As noted in Table 4.4, a complaint that has an associated penalty follows several decision points and layers of review. First, once an adjudication is determined, the subject of the complaint must be notified with a LOT (LAPD Manual volume 3, section 831.10), usually from their immediate commanding officer, which details the complaint adjudication and proposed penalty. At this point, the employee can respond to the adjudication through the Skelly process. If requested, an officer is afforded a Skelly Hearing (pre–disciplinary hearing) that provides employees with an opportunity to respond to their disciplinary actions prior to those actions being finalized. Next, the proposed penalty and Skelly process is reviewed at the Bureau level (Commander or Deputy Chief), who may recommend a different penalty or military endorsement of the current penalty. IAD also can make a recommendation at this point. If the penalty involved is an Official Reprimand or higher, IAD will prepare the entire case package for the Chief of Police to review, and they will issue their chosen penalty, which might also differ from that spelled out in the LOT, the Bureau recommendation, and the IAD recommendation. Then, a new LOT will be sent to the employee with the final disposition from the Chief of Police.

Penalties for Sustained Complaints for Sworn Personnel

- No penalty
- Admonishment
- Official reprimand
- Suspension
- BOR (Termination)
- Demotion
- Suspension and demotion
- Termination or probation.

Disciplinary Needs

The adjudication and imposition of disciplinary penalties is a major challenge in law enforcement agencies. LAPD employees said they do not perceive disciplinary decisions to be consistent or fair, which is a major issue for not only morale but also the purported effectiveness of the discipline itself and for deterring misconduct by staff.

Employees Said They Do Not Feel the Disciplinary Process or the Imposition of Discipline Is Consistent or Fair

Through our interviews, we learned about the challenges with the disciplinary process as it exists. First, there is likely substantial variation across commanding officers (usually Captains) in their review of cases and recommendations of punishment. Some command staff might not put enough effort into reviewing the case and considering the employee as an individual, leading to recommendations for penalties that are either too lenient or too harsh.

Next, the Department attempts to address this by including several layers of review before a penalty is enacted, but this makes the penalty decisions appear arbitrary and even more inconsistent. Because the employee is served with an initial LOT from their commanding officer and then the case is reviewed by the Bureau, IAG, and sometimes the Chief of Police, which may produce a different recommendation and new LOT, the employee might perceive that IAG and command staff are working against them, particularly if the penalty increases in severity.

Finally, commanding officers do not always do an adequate job of explaining disciplinary decisions. This adds to perceptions of unfairness and inconsistency, and this is at least partially because of the potential presence of multiple LOTs with different penalties. We cover this in more detail in the next section, but it is important that commanding officers do not take the easy way out by blaming the imposition of discipline on higher ranking command staff. Having courageous conversations with employees and explaining why their penalty was appropriate is essential for improving perceptions of fairness. Indeed, only 30 percent of sworn survey respondents agreed that disciplinary decisions are explained to employees who receive discipline.

Adding to this sentiment that disciplinary decisions are unfair is the perception that discipline is more punitive to lower ranks than higher ranks. This is partially because of the higher volume of complaints received by lower ranks due to their work and partially because of the perception that command staff will be more lenient toward their peers. Eighty-three percent of sworn survey respondents said that this was the case, whereas only 13 percent agreed that formal disciplinary decisions are consistently applied.

Employees Said There Is Too Much Emphasis on Punishment

> There is a prevailing atmosphere of a "gotcha" mentality . . . the overarching theme should be that the leaders and the organization are here to develop employees and provide adequate training to fix mistakes and help employees develop and grow.
> –**Sergeant or Lieutenant survey respondent**

Given their roles, sometimes the only interaction a police officer working patrol has with their Captain is negative. Particularly if the interaction involves an investigation and a disciplinary penalty that is not explained well, the employee is unlikely to feel that their best interests are being considered. It is common for police officers to express that disciplinary decisions should distinguish between mistakes and willful violations, a sentiment best captured by the phrase, "A mistake of the mind or of the heart." There is a strong sentiment in the Department that an overreliance on punishment for mistakes is unnecessary and even detrimental, contributing to disgruntled employees who have the potential to undermine command staff, and is ineffective for changing behavior. Fewer than one-quarter of sworn survey respondents agreed (22 percent) that the Department uses counseling and coaching rather than punishment for misconduct that carry lower levels of punishment (e.g., less than formal discipline).

Moreover, employees who are being disciplined because of mistakes might be struggling with some aspect of their work or personal lives. The fact that an officer exhibits behavior that results in discipline could mean that there was a lack of attention to issues they were having previously by their supervisors or commanding officers. Providing these officers with the necessary correction and support can improve behavior and prevent future issues. Although training over discipline is a common sentiment in policing, there is a lack of readily available and well-researched alternatives. Examples such as education-based discipline are often mentioned by those advocating for a move toward improved disciplinary practices in policing,[56] but none of these alternatives have been evaluated scientifically.

Recommendations to Improve Disciplinary Process and Decisions

Improve How Supervisors and Command Staff Communicate with Those Involved in the Complaint Process

Given that supervisors and commanding officers are sometimes overruled during the disciplinary process, they might not fully understand or communicate the reasoning for some disciplinary decisions. Additionally, they could use this as an excuse to avoid harming their relationship with the employee. Therefore, their communication about disciplinary decisions might fail to adequately explain the disciplinary decision or might even undermine the

[56] Darrell W. Stephens, "Police Discipline: A Case For Change," *Journal of Current Issues in Crime, Law and Law Enforcement*, Vol. 7, No. 2, 2011.

disciplinary decision. For instance, a commanding officer can still follow policy and rely only on the text in the LOT or CAF for communication about adjudication of the complaint and the disciplinary decision. That is likely insufficient to communicate the reasoning for a sustained complaint and the appropriateness of a disciplinary decision. Improving commanding officers' communication around disciplinary decisions likely requires training and guidance about how to best communicate these matters in different contexts. This could reduce perceptions of unfairness and improve prospects for behavior change while reducing how formal the disciplinary process feels to those subject to discipline. However, this will require some training for commanding officers and could backfire if this training is ineffective. It might be necessary to change the broader cultural impediments to communication first (e.g., command staff being open to dialogue).

Increase Responsibility of Internal Affairs Division Sergeant by Including Recommendation of Finding to Management

IAD already has a role in reviewing and recommending discipline when a case is prepared for review by the Chief of Police, but it is not clear at what level this recommendation is made. Ideally, someone directly involved in the investigation who is informed by all of the investigation details will have some input. This could be the investigating supervisor or investigator. Such input might improve consistency in recommended discipline across similar cases, could make the process faster, and could increase transparency about why certain disciplinary decisions are justified. However, this option could also backfire by increasing the perceived adversarial nature of investigators, making them decisionmakers rather than impartial fact finders. Additionally, these individuals might be reluctant to weigh in, given the existence of command staff overrides. Conversely, command staff might not approve of their decisions being influenced by lower ranking staff or may be hesitant to override those decisions when appropriate.

If this or a similar process is implemented, it will be essential to ensure that supervisors are communicating clear and consistent expectations of their employees and engaging in courageous conversations when an employee's performance is not meeting expectations. Furthermore, supervisors need to be given clear expectations by their command to reduce the potential for significant differences in disciplinary recommendations. Finally, to rely solely on email communication for guidance from command on such a complex and stress-provoking process will likely fall short of an outcome perceived as fair by all involved. In many cases, dialogue and mentorship from command will be necessary to ensure the supervisor is provided support needed for a positive outcome.

Prioritize Training or Other Corrective Measures for Infractions with Low Penalty Levels

Interview participants and survey respondents commented that discipline is solely punitive and does not focus on correcting behavior or spurring positive development for the employee.

Particularly, if perceived as unfair, punishment is likely to negatively affect performance and might lead to undermining behaviors. Taking a corrective approach or using training could help change behavior, improve perceptions of fairness, and improve relations between command and line staff.

However, this will not happen overnight. The Department will need to develop appropriate training or corrective measures, which will take time and resources, but some of this could be implemented through the existing online academy. It is also possible that these interventions will still be seen as unfair and improper by officers or by command staff who feel more severe punishment is necessary. The community might also perceive the use of corrective measures other than punishment as a signal that the Department is treating misconduct too leniently. Expanding the use of alternatives that involve the complainant in the process could be useful to consider (e.g., alternative complaint resolution). Being able to justify and communicate why training or other alternatives are appropriate in some cases will be critical.

Increase Support During the Complaints and Disciplinary Process

Officers report not understanding the complaint system, feeling stressed, and not feeling supported by the Department while going through the complaint system and disciplinary process. However, except for cases of serious misconduct, these employees are still expected to continue working in their current roles and maintaining their performance while they are actively being investigated by their chain of command. Efforts to improve mentorship for employees in general or provide more-focused peer support during the complaints investigation process could improve knowledge, reduce stress and alienation, and provide officers with guidance for navigating the complaint system or avoiding issues in the future. This approach might require some training, time, and resources for mentors or peers but would not need to be a substantial effort. Moreover, ensuring that these interactions are positive and that proper guidance is provided will take some oversight but, in general, would be a net positive. The current Peer Support Team is the ideal place to locate and expand at least some of these efforts (e.g., automatic referral),[57] and Department support could involve incentives for participating as Peer Support Members.

Prevention of Complaints Through Enhanced Mental, Behavioral, and Physical Wellness Opportunities

Dealing with complaints more efficiently will help one aspect of the complaint system, but an equally important goal should be to reduce the overall number of complaints and to send

[57] The LAPD Peer Support Team is located within the Behavioral Support Services Division and is meant to be a resource to employees who would prefer assistance from their peers. They are trained and act as a confidential support network to help those seeking assistance to access resources or resolve issues. Peer support teams are a common practice in police departments, and are recommended as an early intervention option, along with police chaplains (Daniel M. Blumberg, Konstantinos Papazoglou, and Michael D. Schlosser, "Organizational Solutions to the Moral Risks of Policing," *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, Vol. 17, No. 4, October 2020a).

signals that the Department is trying to build a healthy workforce. Improving the availability of wellness programming, providing Department resources for wellness (e.g., on the clock), and reducing the stigma of participating in wellness programs should be the ultimate goals of this effort. There is a growing recognition that operational and organizational stressors, including trauma, exposure to traumatic events, physical injury, and moral injury are important to consider when taking a holistic approach to managing a high performing police workforce.[58] Moreover, there is recognition that these factors might be linked to misconduct,[59] though there is a lack of research or guidance on which wellness approaches might be effective.[60] Still, integrating wellness into early intervention systems and subsequently into intervention systems is a practice that is being adopted across the country.[61] As noted in Figure 4.10, a sizable proportion of survey respondents report that the demands at work are a source of stress. Perceptions about wellness resources currently provided by LAPD are mixed, and providing more access to wellness would be positively received by employees.

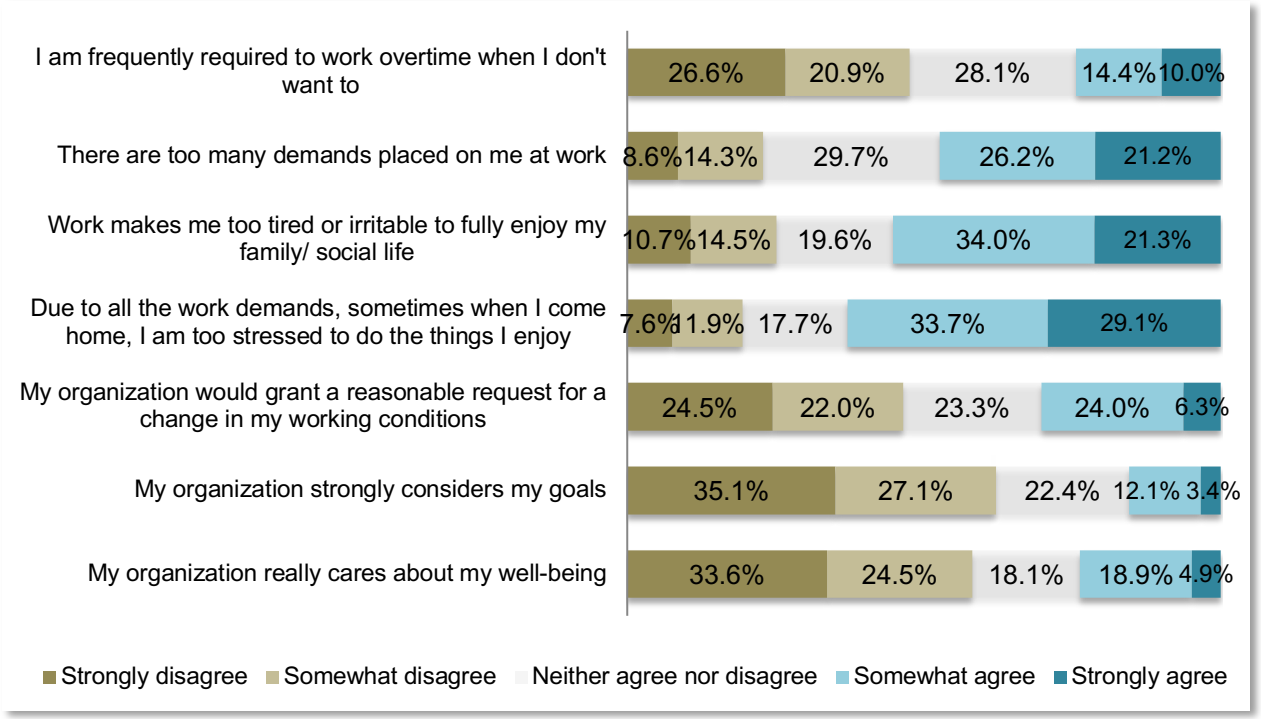
[58] R. Nicholas Carleton, Tracie O. Afifi, Tamara Taillieu, Sarah Turner, Julia E. Mason, Rosemary Ricciardelli, Donald R. McCreary, Adam D. Vaughan, Gregory S. Anderson, Rachel L. Krakauer, Elizabeth A. Donnelly, Ronald D. Camp II, Dianne Groll, Heidi A. Cramm, Renée S. MacPhee, and Curt T. Griffiths, "Assessing the Relative Impact of Diverse Stressors Among Public Safety Personnel," *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, Vol. 17, No. 4, 2020.

[59] Daniel M. Blumberg, Konstantinos Papazoglou, and Michael D. Schlosser, "The Importance of WE in POWER: Integrating Police Wellness and Ethics," *Frontiers in Psychology*, Vol. 11, December 2020b; Jana L. Raver and Megan McElheran, "A Trauma-Informed Approach Is Needed to Reduce Police Misconduct," *Industrial and Organizational Psychology*, Vol. 15, No. 4, 2022; Greg Stoddard, Dylan J. Fitzpatrick, and Jens Ludwig, *Predicting Police Misconduct*, National Bureau of Economic Research, No. 32432, May 2024.

[60] Some interventions have been developed for police well-being that suggest improvements in psychological capital, stress, depression, anxiety, and trauma symptoms, but have not linked them to misconduct. See Daniel M. Blumberg, Luciano Giromini, Konstantinos Papazoglou, and A. Renee Thornton, "Impact of the HEROES Project on First Responders' Well-Being," *Journal of Community Safety and Well-Being*, Vol. 5, No. 1, 2020; and CCJ Task Force on Policing, "Assessing the Evidence: Evaluations of Proposed Policing Reforms," undated.

[61] Christi L. Gullion and William R. King, "Early Intervention Systems for Police: A State-of-the-Art Review," *Policing*, Vol. 43, No. 4, 2020.

Figure 4.10. Sworn Personnel Reported Work-Life Balance



NOTE: The modal average margin of error across items is +/− 2.0 percent. The margin of error range is +/−1.5 percent to +/−2.7 percent

Although some departments allow for an hour of wellness time per shift,[62] that is likely unreasonable, given low staffing. An option would be to allocate an annual amount of wellness time or reimbursable funding that does not roll over. Because crime and calls for service are seasonal, wellness time could be used during slower periods. Moreover, survey respondents noted that Department wellness resources are often not available near their homes, reducing accessibility. Enhancing virtual wellness options and reimbursement options could improve access.

Relatedly, it is important to ensure that employees are not willingly overworking themselves, and setting caps on overtime or minimum times between shifts might be necessary. A related issue is that some officers are taking additional overtime shifts on a secondary assignment (e.g., transit) and calling in sick for their regularly scheduled shift in order to rest. This behavior is disruptive to normal operations and costly. However, the extent to which this is occurring is unclear. Commanding officers might feel unable to substantially intervene due to employee wellness, but the context should be considered.

[62] Portland Police Bureau, for example: City of Portland, Oregon, "Talking Beat—PPB Wellness Program," webpage, August 30, 2024.

Chapter 5. Morale, Culture Change, and Retention

Morale among personnel in the LAPD is low, though many of the observed issues are common in law enforcement. From our interview and survey analysis, this appears to have been affected by the political and media climate both nationally and locally, Department initiatives (e.g., the perceptions of diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts), leadership and communications, a workforce stressed by declining staffing, and the complaint system. Although we collected more than 1,800 surveys rich in both quantitative and qualitative data, it is difficult to address every facet of morale specific to each member of the Department. Moreover, improving staffing and key issues with the complaint system, as discussed in the previous two chapters, will likely improve morale by reducing stressors associated with those areas. Table 5.1 highlights actions that LAPD leadership can directly take to help improve morale by making all members of the Department feel respected, valued, and empowered to succeed in their work.

Table 5.1. Needs and Recommendations Related to Morale

Needs	Recommendations
Improved communication and dialogue to improve understanding, engagement	• Implement culture and policy shifts to improve in-person communication by command staff
Improve strategic information-sharing and responsivity to input from others by command staff, including other command staff	• Communicate changes made that are derived from Department member feedback • Increase formal and informal information-sharing across command staff, including lessons learned discussions from key areas, such as Ombuds Section, Risk Management, OCPP, Training, and others • Establish interrank working groups for understanding critical problems • Consider 360-degree reviews for command
Support and respect for civilian staff	• Recognize the importance of civilian staff and their work • Reinforce practice of recognizing high-ranking civilian staff as they would equivalent sworn staff • Provide opportunities for recognition, development, increased pay, and promotions for civilian staff

NOTE: OCPP = Office of Constitutional Policing and Policy.

Staffing the Department also requires retaining officers. Although LAPD will always lose some officers because of terminations and retirements, there is an opportunity to reduce other aspects that cause officers to leave early or pursue retirement when they would otherwise stay on the job. Low morale is one such contributor, but there are others. It should also be recognized that sworn attrition has been a significant problem since 2020 and is higher than in the past. These issues might be traced to various circumstances noted throughout this report that are

interconnected with retention, and, as with morale, solutions to those concerns should have a positive impact on retention. We have included retention-specific needs and recommendations that can be accomplished by the Department in Table 5.2.

Table 5.2. Needs and Recommendations Related to Retention

Needs	Recommendations
Organizational emphasis on improving retention	• Create a Chief Retention Officer position
Collect additional information about why people stay and why people leave the organization	• Conduct exit and stay interviews
Emphasize development for sworn and civilian staff	• Build or expand career and leadership development programming • Provide Annual Wellness Screening or Reimbursement Program for Wellness

Current State of Department Morale

Staffing, the complaint system, and the disciplinary process are substantial drivers of morale. Resolving staffing issues would likely improve many issues discussed by respondents. Improving how complaints are handled and the response to sustained complaints would also improve morale directly. There are other issues that appear to affect morale for many of our respondents. Survey and interview findings suggest concerns about qualifications and motivations of some in current leadership and a desire to improve dialogue. Respondents noted that people within LAPD should be treated according to their contributions, regardless of their role or personal connections. Respondents (particularly sworn respondents) expressed a desire to be respected and to be recognized for their expertise.

In fact, morale, staffing, and retention are intertwined: Each aspect of this triad either supports or diminishes the state of the others. If staffing is low, workloads increase, as does fatigue and time away from family. If retention increases, staffing numbers rise, easing individual burnout. If morale is low, especially in an era of increasing transparency and public scrutiny, resignations increase, and staffing suffers.[63] Morale is generally a state of mind that emerges from the realities of work rather than an issue that leaders can enhance by simply "adding morale" to their efforts. That means that focusing on effective leadership and responsive organizational structures, enhancing engagement, and ensuring adequate staffing to allocate a reasonable workload to individual officers are necessary elements of any effort to raise morale.

As shown in Figure 5.1, survey respondents tend to lack knowledge and confidence in the direction that leadership is taking the Department. They also lack confidence in the qualifications

[63] Eric Westervelt, "Cops Say Low Morale and Department Scrutiny Are Driving Them Away from the Job," *National Public Radio*, June 24, 2021.

of leadership at the time of this survey but are more positive about how they are treated by supervisors. Additionally, there appears to be positive sentiment toward supervisors, and a later question shows that most respondents said they have a mentor in the Department.

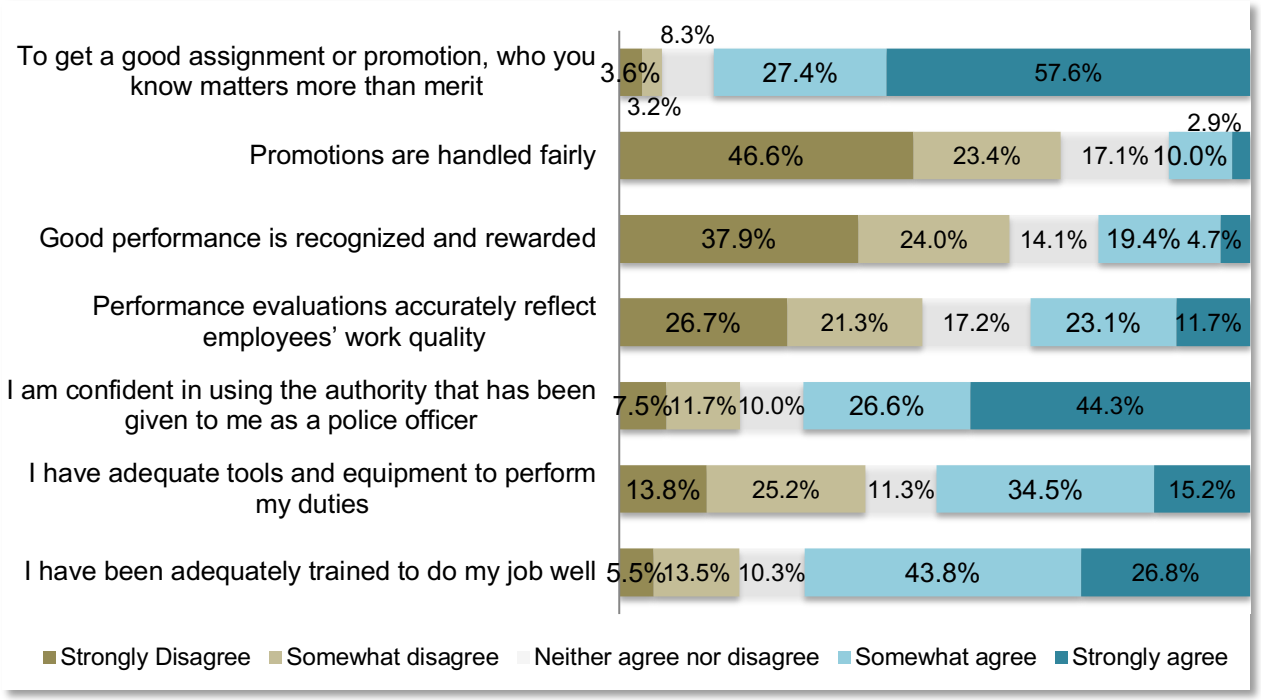
Figure 5.1. LAPD Employee Perceptions of Department Leadership and Supervisors

NOTE: Modal average margin of error across items is +/− 2.0 percent. Range of margin of error is +/− 0.9 percent to +/− 2.7 percent

Survey respondents also tend to be confident in their training and ability to use their authority (for sworn respondents) (Figure 5.2). These are strengths the Department can build on. Despite the positive outlooks in terms of their ability to do their jobs, survey responses appear to indicate substantial concerns around performance reviews and promotions. Only 28 percent of respondents said that good performance was recognized and rewarded, and 35 percent said performance evaluations are accurate. Similarly, promotions were reported to be unfair and associated with connections more than merit.

The perspectives on performance evaluations and promotions are connected to perceptions of leadership because a majority have concerns about the ethical standards of command staff and lack understanding of the direction that leadership is taking the organization, while slightly fewer than half question the qualifications of command staff. This perception is connected to the impression that many in leadership are focused only on their own careers and are disconnected from the work of lower-level officers. As one survey respondent explained, “Command only cares about themselves and their next promotion. They could [not] care less about their employees.”

Figure 5.2. LAPD Employee Perceptions of Performance and Promotions

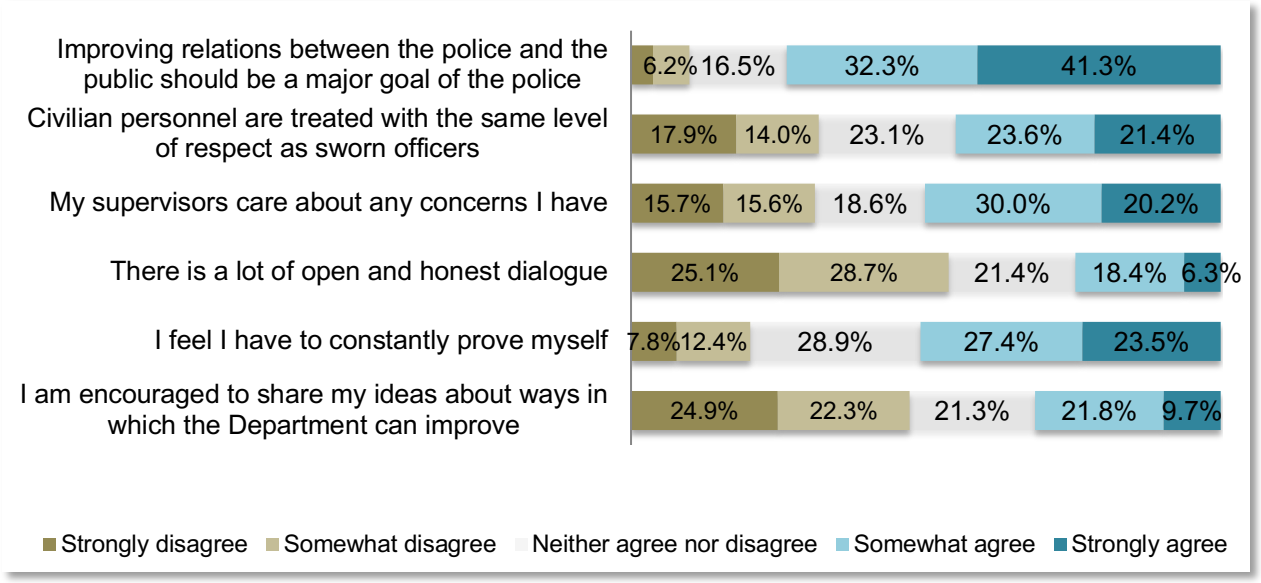


NOTE: Modal average margin of error across items is +/− 2.0 percent. Range of margin of error is +/− 0.9 percent to +/− 2.7 percent

The survey results also highlight staff perceptions of whether their input is valued. Although staff generally said that supervisors were responsive to their concerns, the emphasis on sharing ideas for improvement for the Department is lower, as is the level of open and honest dialogue. During interviews, we learned that many of the disconnects in the Department, whether they are about discipline, performance, promotions, or Department strategy, come down to a lack of dialogue and meaningfully engaging all employees in an effort to improve their working environment and therefore their performance. This stems from a deference to chain of command and is supported by an environment in which speaking up could lead to retaliation or defensiveness. Figure 5.3 also shows that the focus moving forward should not be limited to internal communications because respondents also value building a positive relationship with the community.

> Overcoming these challenges requires fostering an environment where feedback is welcomed and seen as an opportunity for growth and improvement, rather than a threat. Encouraging transparency and accountability can help mitigate the fear of retaliation and promote a more adaptive and responsive organizational culture.
> **–Captain or Above interviewee**

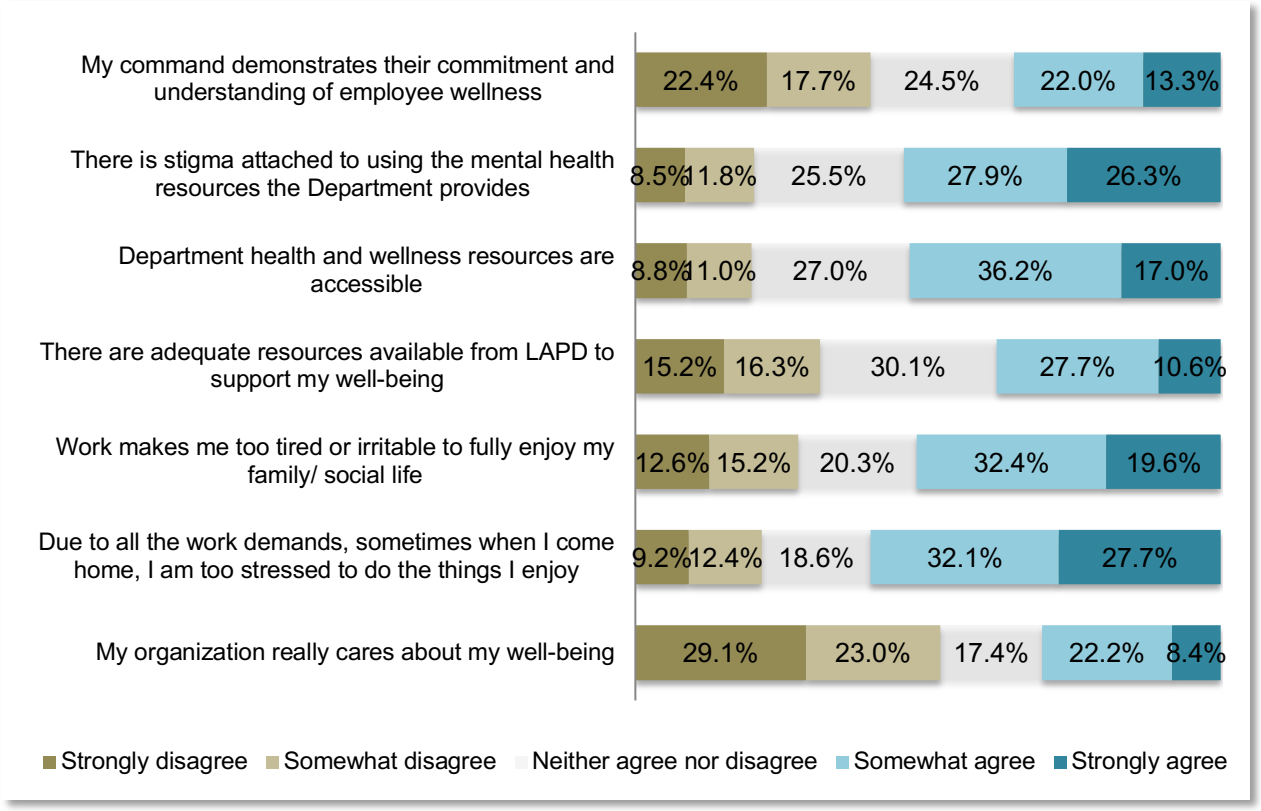
Figure 5.3. LAPD Employee Perceptions of Their Working Environment



NOTE: Modal average margin of error across items is +/− 2.1 percent. Range of margin of error is +/− 1.2 percent to +/− 2.6 percent

We also examined the impact of the current working conditions on officers and how those conditions align to their well-being and relationships at work. Work demands in particular seem to affect employees, and a focus on employee wellness is important. As shown in Figure 5.4, employees report being stressed by work even when they are not working, a substantial number are asked to work more than they want to, and there is substantial room to improve whether employees report that the Department cares about their wellness. Importantly, there seems to be a positive perception of wellness resources but stigma and a lack of priority from the Department about using those resources.

Figure 5.4. LAPD Employee Well-Being

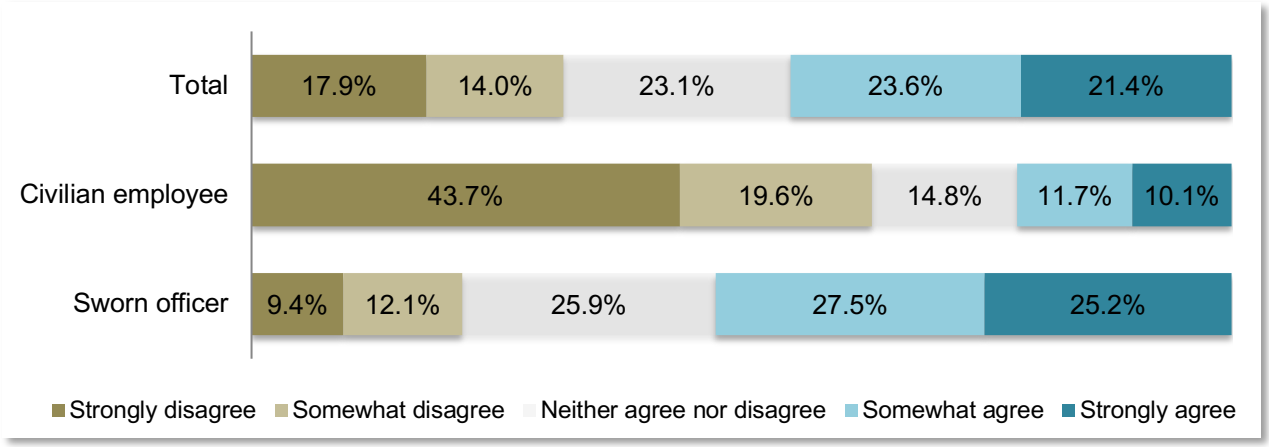


NOTE: Modal average margin of error is +/− 2.1 percent. Range of margin of error is +/− 1.2 percent to +/− 2.6 percent

Civilian Employees' Morale Depends on the Way They Are Treated by LAPD

Recognizing civilian employees as a key part of the organization and improving their morale are also critical. Our survey results from civilian employees indicate that they feel secondary to sworn staff. In terms of respect for civilians, their perceptions are in stark contrast to what sworn officers reported (see Figure 5.5). Civilian staff said they have a lack of opportunities for recognition, development, increased pay (e.g., no overtime), and promotion. They also observe sworn staff in administrative positions who might not be qualified to do that work or could be better utilized in another capacity.

Figure 5.5. Perceptions of Whether Civilian Personnel Are Treated with the Same Respect as Sworn Personnel



NOTE: For civilian survey respondents, the average margin of error for this item is +/−3.5 percent and for sworn survey respondents the average margin of error is +/− 2.1 percent

Recommendations for Morale, Leadership, and Culture Change

Aside from staffing, pay, and stress related to the work, leadership is the most visible change that can improve the working environment for all staff. Current perceptions of leadership are likely linked to the challenges faced in the current work environment and perceived lack of support. LAPD employees expressed optimism about concerns about the qualifications and experience of those in leadership positions and perceived favoritism in promotions, as well as a desire to have their input valued and for more responsiveness from the organization.

Still, like other police agencies, LAPD is a hierarchical, quasimilitaristic organization. Respect for rank and chain of command are important internally. However, interviewees and survey respondents noted an environment in which there is perhaps an overemphasis on formal processes and formal communication and a hesitation for open dialogue or for bringing up issues, particularly for those of lower rank. Ultimately, participants said that people should be rewarded for bringing up and solving issues and taking measured risks or innovating within their current position.

Encourage and Monitor Cultural and Policy Shifts to Improve In-Person Communication by Command Staff

It should be a high priority to improve communication and communication skills among command staff. Communication has implications for executing current policy and procedure, but it is particularly important for organizational change. Modeling the new style of communication needs to start at the very top and diffuse downward through the organization. Some simple and more-complex changes are recommended here. First, it is important to not rely on email for critical messages. Attending briefings or calling a meeting is something every captain should be comfortable doing, and they should use them to convey important information. Relatedly, having

positive in-person interactions with lower ranking and civilian staff goes a long way toward building rapport and setting the stage for productive dialogue about issues as they arise. Having an open-door policy is often not enough to encourage subordinates to bring up issues with their superiors.

Next, a theme from our interviews was that supervisors and managers have a tendency to want to be liked or lack experience and might not have courageous conversations with subordinates at key points. This is most obvious when adjudicating complaints and notifying employees about disciplinary penalties. It is important that commanding officers explain these decisions and not distance themselves from disciplinary situations. Similarly, dealing with workplace conflict requires proactive dialogue from commanding officers. That some command staff do not take action to address issues identified in Ombuds Section workplace assessments is a clear sign that the skills for having courageous conversations are lacking or need to be emphasized more.

In the longer term, planning and developing a leadership development program that emphasizes effective and proactive communication should be considered. LAPD has an existing training program for command staff, but it is unclear whether this involves communication-related training.

Improve Strategic Information-Sharing and Responsivity to Input from Others

A related finding is that strategic information-sharing could be improved, both vertically and horizontally in the organization. Some of this is because of low staffing and the current operational pace, but, more importantly, there is a cultural attitude among command staff that they should have ultimate authority over their command, and asking for help or being given advice—even from peers—is frowned upon.[64] Lower-ranking employees feel afraid to bring up their concerns or that they are not heard, nothing is done with the feedback they submit via surveys, and there are few opportunities to influence Departmental practices.

Therefore, we recommend several practices to support feedback and information-sharing so that it is useful for individual and organizational improvement. First, leadership should respond to ideas and concerns received from staff through surveys or other sources by communicating that they understand employees' perspectives, document what can and cannot be done, and what is being done to address concerns or move forward. This allows for clarification of the key issues and proposed solutions and shows employees that their input is being considered.

Next, more-focused information-sharing among command staff could help with building management and leadership best practices from lessons learned discussions or information-sharing from key areas, such as the Ombuds Section, IAD, the Risk Management Division, the OCPP, and the Training Bureau.

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[64] We did hear from some command staff that there can be communication overload from upper leadership in terms of things perceived as critical to the Department, including texts, calls, emails, and requests for information.

Another strategic information-sharing practice we recommend the Department adopt involves creating interrank working groups that can focus on critical or complex issues to work toward solutions. Although soliciting open feedback can be useful, it is usually not tailored toward clearly defining an issue or working through the proposed solutions and potential barriers.[65] These working groups could be designed for both ongoing and short-term issues, with a focus on developing a useful format for resolving issues with input from line staff, civilian staff, supervisory staff, and command staff, with the appropriate personnel or subject-matter experts (including union representatives) selected according to the topic at hand. To avoid the appearance of favoritism or bias, selection for these groups should include an open application process and transparency around selection criteria. The Department has already established working groups for some topics, but the structure and selection of these groups is not clear.

Finally, the Department should consider piloting 360-degree reviews for leadership. 360-degree reviews involve collecting feedback from supervisors, peers, and subordinates, which can make them somewhat resource-intensive and conflict somewhat with the cultural deference to rank. However, they can be a useful source of feedback when used for development, that is, connected to self-improvement goals and coaching or mentoring.[66] The 360-degree feedback can also be used to assess leadership across the Department and identify strengths, weaknesses, or poor fit for certain leadership styles. Currently, an unofficial source of this kind of information involves surveys conducted by the police officers' union that ask staff to rate their commanding officers, but the usefulness of that information is limited by unclear methodology. Importantly, implementing 360-degree reviews or something similar would potentially address concerns we heard from interviews and in survey results about a perceived lack of qualifications or low performance for some command staff.

Support and Respect for Civilian Staff

More attention to and workforce planning for civilian staff could go a long way toward improving morale and retention for this group. Developing ways to recognize civilian staff for their work is a simple and effective way to begin to change perceptions of not being valued employees. Relatedly, communicating that civilian staff should be addressed appropriately according to their position and sworn equivalent would further recognize these staff members as key contributors. In addition, a long-term strategic approach that provides more opportunities for career development, pay increases, and promotions for civilian staff would enhance the perception of civilian positions being a valued career in the LAPD and help improve organizational commitment, performance, and retention.

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[65] Margaret C. Lohman, "Cultivating Problem-Solving Skills Through Problem-Based Approaches to Professional Development," *Human Resource Development Quarterly*, Vol. 13, No. 3, 2002.

[66] Chaitra M. Hardison, Mikhail Zaydman, Tobi Oluwatola, Anna Rosefsky Saavedra, Thomas Bush, Heather Peterson, and Susan G. Straus, *360-Degree Assessments: Are They the Right Tool for the U.S. Military?* RAND Corporation, RR-998-OSD, 2015.

> This Department clearly views civilian employees as 2nd tier. We are seen as "in support of" not equal to. Yes, we are not risking our lives in an immediate way - but this Department would not function without civilians . . . . Not one sworn person has shown respect to the institutional, job-related knowledge we have, and we cannot make any decisions to the betterment of our Division because we are not sworn.
> –**Civilian Respondent**

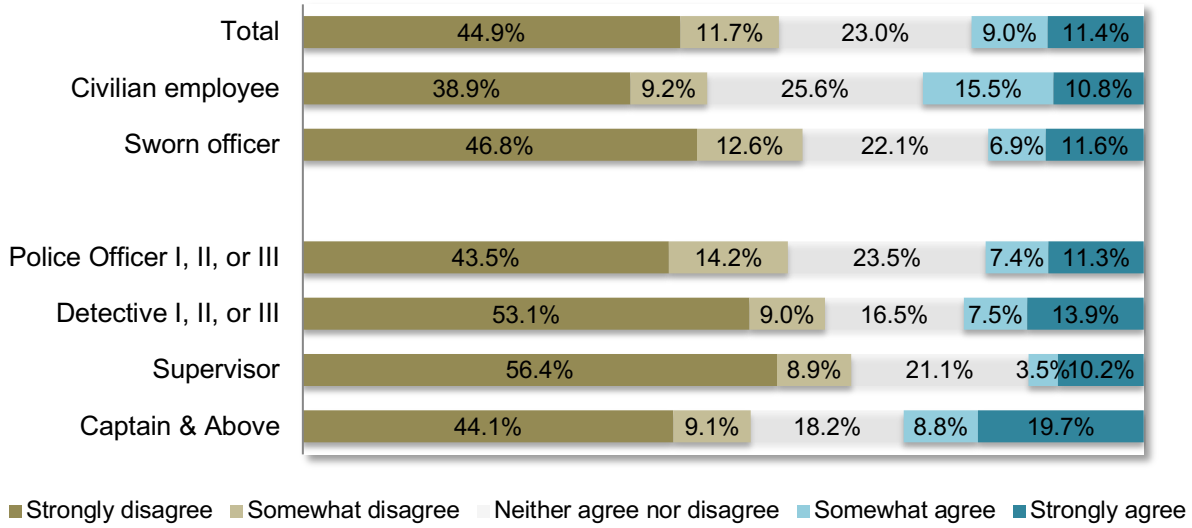
An Emphasis on Retention is Critical

Morale fluctuations are a normal part of most organizations. However, LAPD leadership should not wait to discover that morale is down only after a large number of people have left the organization. Although morale is suffering for a variety of reasons, the survey findings indicate that many respondents are not happy with their current working conditions. Survey responses from sworn officers highlight being overworked, a perceived lack of support from leadership, and a mismatch between Department needs and the needs or well-being of officers. About 20 percent of all respondents mentioned that they plan to look for a new job in the next 12 months.

As seen in Figure 5.6, respondents at the rank of captain or higher are more likely to be planning to look for a new job, as are employees with fewer than five years of tenure, somewhat surprisingly. Additionally, it is likely that many respondents with more than 20 years in the Department are not looking for a new job but could be looking to retire. As of January 27, 2025, there are 2,915 sworn employees (33.2 percent) and 638 civilian employees (23.9 percent) with more than 20 years served with LAPD. Another wave of retirements is just around the corner for the Department.

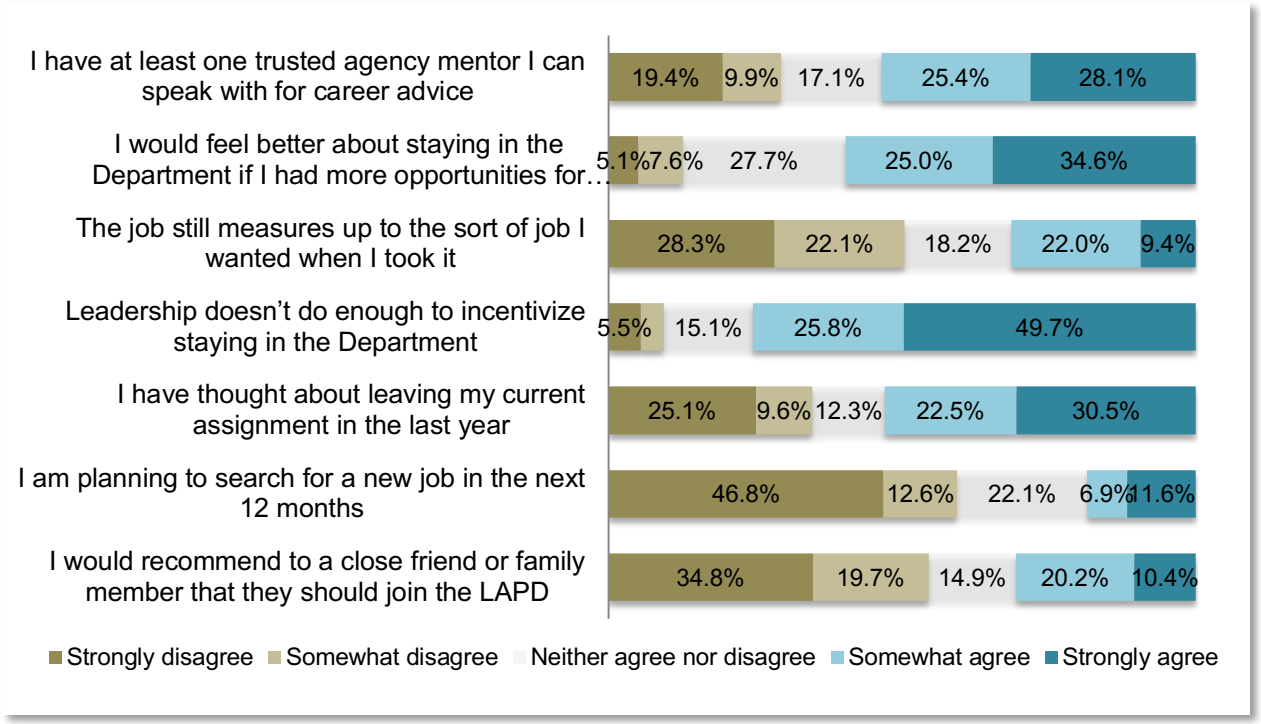
Moreover, other measures of job satisfaction could also be improved, as shown in Figure 5.7. Many sworn employees said the job does not measure up to the type of job they wanted at the start of their career, that there are not enough incentives to stay, and that they would not recommend the Department to a friend or family member. Civilian respondents were significantly more positive on these items.

Figure 5.6. Intentions to Search for Another Job in the Next 12 Months



NOTE: The question posed in the survey was "I am planning to search for a new job in the next 12 months." The average margin of error across categories is +/− 2.0 percent.

Figure 5.7. Indicators of Job Satisfaction for Sworn Personnel



NOTE: The modal average margin of error is +/− 2.1 percent. The margin of error range is +/− 1.2 percent to +/− 2.7 percent.

When we asked employees to rate the top three items that would most improve their experience at work, most (59 percent; +/−2.3 percent margin of error) said increased salary, followed by retention bonuses (32 percent; +/−2.2 percent margin of error) and hiring more sworn personnel (28 percent; +/−2.1 percent margin of error). This was followed by incentives for staying in patrol, improved equipment and facilities, hiring more civilian staff, improved work-life balance, increased benefits, policy changes, and better rewards or commendations (15 percent to 26 percent). The Department is unlikely to have the ability to act on many of these items in the short term, making it very important to focus on improving the working environment in the ways that can be achieved in the short term, including improving guidance from leadership, ensuring that employees have the tools they need to do their jobs, and recognizing employees for their work.

Recommendations to Improve Retention

Making retention an organizational priority to help slow attrition is equally as important as improving recruitment and hiring. However, many of the efforts we suggest here will have long-term timelines for results.

Create a Chief Retention Officer Position

First, creating a Chief Retention Officer position recognizes the importance of retention as a priority and creates a position that is accountable for retention-related practices, information gathering, and long-term planning (e.g., projected retirement waves). This could be a sworn or civilian position but should be someone with expertise in personnel issues and union relations. Additionally, an ideal candidate for this position would have some of the skills and background that are valued by members of the Department, such as substantial experience in the Office of Operations. If sworn, this position should be filled by a person who can commit to a set time frame in the role and not be close to retiring themselves, as this could set a poor precedent.

Conduct Stay and Exit Interviews and Ensure That This Information Is Used

We recommend efforts to collect more information about why people stay with LAPD via stay interviews and better understand why people leave via exit interviews.[67] Information gathered from these interviews will improve understanding of conditions that employees value in their workplace and those that push people out of the organization. Although some of these factors may be out of the Department's control, identifying factors that are under Department control is critical. Next, analyzing the characteristics of officers who leave early versus stay in the Department and those who excel in key performance areas could help with rescoping

[67] We heard conflicting information about whether LAPD conducts exit interviews. It does not appear this information is consistently used by the Department to adjust hiring or retention strategies.

recruitment efforts to improve selection of employees who are the best fit with the Department and most likely to succeed.

Build Career and Leadership Development Programming

One of the most appealing features of working at the LAPD is the variety of opportunities available across the Department. Interview and survey findings suggest both sworn and civilian staff are looking for more opportunities for development and training. Creating or expanding career development and leadership development programming for staff would provide structured guidance and resources about potential development opportunities or career pathways. Additionally, although some staff might be interested in gaining broad experience, others might have highly specialized skills, and the creation of sworn and civilian staff technical specialist positions would be a way to both utilize and recognize those skills.

Provide Annual Wellness Screening or Reimbursement Program for Wellness

Another key theme from our survey respondents was that the Department as a whole pays attention to wellness at the surface level. For instance, staff wellness days involve attending cookouts rather than actual wellness activities. Although some units may have sufficient wellness support, ensuring that there is an emphasis on wellness across the Department is vital. The Department should consider mandating an annual wellness screening or wellness hours or reimbursement funds that expire on an annual basis.

Chapter 6. Organizational Structure

The last topic we examined was the LAPD's organizational structure,[68] which yielded some considerations for change. However, we believe that the Department should place more focus on efforts related to staffing, recruitment, and the complaint system first. Changes to the organization may yield some efficiencies but are unlikely to add large numbers of officers to support the Office of Operations without other changes (e.g., hiring civilian staff). Nevertheless, changes to organizational structure could be supportive of challenges raised in the previous chapters.

Table 6.1. Needs and Recommendations Related to Organizational Structure

Needs	Recommendations
Prioritize organizational alignment to support Patrol and reduce redundancy	• Identify sworn officers in administrative positions who can be moved to Patrol (start with volunteers) or consider limiting tenure in administrative roles for sworn officers • Review specialized units and task forces and merge or downsize where there are redundancies (Vice, Metro, Commercial Crimes, Mounted, Off-road Motorcycle, Hazardous Materials [HazMat]) • Consider moving Community Relations Section to Division level • Consider moving Traffic Bureau into Office of Operations • Create strategic plan to better integrate Community Safety Partnership activities into Office of Operations • Reallocate staff from Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Group to other positions
Create new positions to increase expertise in key areas and move LAPD toward being a thought leader in those areas	• Create a Civilian Chief Technology Officer position • Create a Chief Retention Officer position • Create a Strategic Initiatives Unit to focus on long-term planning, organizational change, measuring progress
Ensure that command staff are empowered to innovate within their commands and hold those command staff accountable	• Review COMPSTAT and RIPA COMPSTAT and revamp as necessary • Decentralize deployment decisions to allow Captains more freedom with staffing • Ensure that Captains are responsive to Ombuds workplace assessments

It should be noted that there is not an overall best practice or evidence-based strategy to inform police department organization. It is also difficult to make comparisons to how other agencies organize their functions because agencies that might be comparable differ in size, geography, and history. We reviewed staffing within individual units, but without detailed information about what every person does within these units, it is difficult to recommend a particular reorganization at the micro level. We also note there are some specific concerns about

[68] For the current organizational chart of the LAPD, see: City of Los Angeles, "Los Angeles Police Department Organization Chart," organization chart, March 18, 2025.

changes at the micro (e.g., area) level, such as shifting kit room officers to the field. This is not likely to create a large impact on staffing and removes a position that an injured officer may occupy. Therefore, our findings in this section are more strategic in nature and informed by interviewees and survey data.

Organizational Structure Needs

Staffing shortages that are likely to persist for some time have created some incentive for LAPD to assess how the organization as a whole is structured and staffed. In this section, we discuss key information for LAPD leadership to consider when making changes to the organizational structure. Primarily, the mission of the organization is to respond to calls for service and crime. Examining other organizational units that have developed over time and whether they support this primary function is incredibly important, but there are also many other functions that are critical for the Department to maintain. Identifying areas where there are (1) redundancies, (2) improper communication or reporting channels, or (3) improper staffing was the focus of our inquiry.

Prioritize the Patrol Function

First, many interview and survey respondents noted staffing shortages and how they affect the patrol function. Many expressed a desire for support from other parts of the organization, particularly from those in administrative roles. Participants noted that there are many sworn officers filling administrative duties that could be performed by civilian personnel and some units that primarily have an administrative function. Unfortunately, the city of Los Angeles is under a hiring freeze for civilian personnel. Many participants highlighted specialized investigative units and task forces, smaller units that often interact with patrol (e.g., Traffic), or units that are Departmentwide but that are perceived by some to have unclear benefits to patrol (e.g., Community Relations Section; Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Group). In particular, interviewees and survey respondents noted a strong desire to reduce or eliminate some of these units. These additional units have command staff and thus contribute to the perception that the Department is top heavy—having too many Captains, Commanders, and Deputy Chiefs. There are 118 people at the rank of Captain or higher at the time of this writing. Although this only represents 1.3 percent of sworn personnel, this figure might also be perceived to be skewed because 29.3 percent of the Department holds the rank of sergeant or above.

There Is a Desire to Move LAPD Forward as a Thought Leader in Policing

Some interviewees expressed that LAPD needs to refocus on being a thought leader and driver of innovation in policing. To this end, they again highlighted the importance of having expertise in certain civilian positions (e.g., Chief Technology Officer). The first steps would be

to modernize the Department to update the technological and personnel systems with which employees frequently interact.

Command Staff Need to Feel Empowered to Innovate Within Their Commands

Many interviewees discussed the administrative burden related to requests for information, constant communications on policy or procedural changes, and strict requirements regarding local deployment plans. This includes monthly meetings for COMPSTAT and RIPA COMPSTAT preparation, which requires administrative resources,[69] requires time for Captains to travel downtown, and creates an unclear sense of whether the process improves outcomes. The two separate meetings may even conflict in terms of recommended courses of action (e.g., because RIPA COMPSTAT focuses on disparities, there might be a recommendation for fewer traffic stops, while COMPSTAT might suggest more traffic stops for crime suppression). Next, the Field Deployment Unit determines outputs for determining deployment levels, but Captains are not allowed to provide input or deviate from this plan according to local context. Combined with COMPSTAT, this contributes to a prevailing sense that Captains are not encouraged to innovate or take calculated risks within their commands.

Recommendations for Organizational Change

Overall, our findings suggest that LAPD should consider ways to prioritize support to the Office of Operations. Many interview responses highlight changes that are needed to the organizational structure of the Department (e.g., allocation of officers). We also recognize that the Department has experienced significant losses of sworn and civilian personnel who perform various support and investigative activities, making it difficult to make blanket statements to disband or shift officers from specific units or functions.

To prioritize organizational alignment to support Patrol and reduce redundancy, LAPD should explore and implement the following changes:

- Identify sworn officers in administrative positions that can be moved to Patrol (start with volunteers) or consider limiting tenure in administrative roles for sworn officers.
- Review specialized units/task forces and merge or downsize where there are redundancies (e.g., Vice, Metro, Commercial Crimes, Mounted, Off-Road Motorcycle, HazMat).
- Consider moving Community Relations Section to Division level.
- Consider moving Traffic Bureau into Office of Operations.
- Consider changes Community Safety Partnership Bureau to interact and integrate better with the Office of Operations.
- Consider reallocating staff from Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Group.

[69] COMPSTAT and RIPA COMPSTAT are located in different parts of the organization, with COMPSTAT being located in the Detective Bureau and RIPA COMPSTAT being located in OCPP.

Explore Consolidating Human Resources Functions into the Office of Support Services

Another organizational restructuring opportunity involves consolidating units that perform human resources–related functions but are spread throughout the Department. Most clearly, this includes Employee Relations Group, which is housed in the Chief of Staff's office, and the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Group along with the Ombuds Section, which is housed in OCPP. The Office of Support Services currently has Behavioral Science Services, RED, Employee Assistance Unit, Officer Representation Unit, and Personnel Division. Integrating these employee services–type components of the organization under one Office or Bureau could help ensure that human resources functions and employee services are aligned with a cohesive approach.

Create New Positions to Increase Expertise in Key Areas

Second, LAPD should create units or positions, according to availability of staff, to support organizational change and push LAPD toward modernizing the Department and being a thought leader in key areas. With the exception of the Chief Retention Officer position, these are longer-term considerations for the Department and would bolster the ability of LAPD to make long-term, stable efforts in technology and strategic initiatives, especially when staffed by civilian personnel:

- Create a Civilian Chief Technology Officer (or Chief Information Officer) position.
- Create a Chief Retention Officer position (previously mentioned).
- Create a Strategic Initiatives Unit to focus on long-term planning, organizational change, measuring progress.

Review Existing Structures to Support Innovation While Holding Command Staff Accountable

First, a review of the inputs, outputs, and outcomes associated with COMPSTAT and RIPA COMPSTAT meetings should be conducted to determine whether the current implementation of these planning meetings are achieving their desired purposes. Additionally, the Department should consider whether these meetings might be modified at least occasionally to support collaborative efforts to share lessons learned and best practices on common issues, particularly workforce-related issues. To this end, Ombuds workplace assessments and recommendations could be shared at such meetings, or Captains should be required to present detailed plans and progress updates for implementing Ombuds recommendations.

Although reducing crime and reducing disparate policing are both laudable goals, many of the management and leadership issues that prevail in policing organizations require attention as well. CS360 is an example of a management model that incorporates Organizational

Effectiveness as a core component of a COMPSTAT-like process.[70] Such a framework could also be used to integrate across COMPSTAT and RIPA COMPSTAT.

Next, a review of deployment decisions across areas should be undertaken to assist Captains in being more responsive to local issues. The Field Deployment Unit and Captains should work together to understand and implement potential changes to deployment models.

[70] CS360, homepage, undated.

Chapter 7. Prioritization of Recommendations

Many of our findings and recommendations address efforts to improve implementation of existing systems, processes, and communications. In this chapter, we summarize the recommendations provided throughout the report and assign corresponding priorities, projected timelines, and the feasibility of implementing changes. By taking this approach, LAPD leadership can focus their efforts as timelines and budgets allow while tracking other efforts for the future. We recognize that some recommendations will require additional funding or staffing, and the current budget situation in the City of Los Angeles might not support additional funds to LAPD. However, this could change, whether through City, state, or other sources of funding.

> "We have various large changes to accomplish to help this Department succeed. The changes are going to be hard fought, difficult, and probably not going to be a popular change. But . . . we didn't take this job because it was easy, we started this job because we wanted to do the right thing and help our communities."
> –**Police Officer Respondent**

Four team members with law enforcement and policing research backgrounds scored each recommendation by priority (low, medium, or high).[71] The ratings are informed by our review of LAPD data, survey results, and analysis of interviews. We created aggregated scores for each recommendation and discussed items to achieve agreement as needed. The same team members also assessed the expected timelines associated with implementation of each recommendation (short = 0–3 months; medium = 3–6 months; long = more than 6 months). In addition, we include ratings for feasibility, defined in terms of how burdensome the changes are for the Department. We also conducted follow-up meetings with key leadership in LAPD to better inform our recommendations and our ratings of priority, timeline, and feasibility.

The recommendations listed in Tables 7.1 through 7.5 are sorted by topic area—staffing, recruiting, and the hiring process; complaint and the discipline system; department morale and culture; retention; and organizational structure, respectively—with associated ratings. We have included our full list of recommendations in this section. Although some recommendations may have been judged to be low priority, long term, and more difficult for the Department to execute, we have nevertheless included them in this chapter because internal or external conditions might change, and they could inform long-term planning in the LAPD.

[71] By *priority*, we mean the importance of addressing that item. Our timeline assessments assume ideal conditions, and we recognize there could be a variety of unobserved impediments to taking certain actions. Our feasibility assessment factors in whether the recommendation would require additional staff, training, or other supports (e.g., funding) and how likely it is to be successfully implemented.

Table 7.1. Recommendations Related to Staffing, Recruiting, and Hiring Sworn Officers

Recommendation	Priority	Timeline	Feasibility
Hire civilian personnel to fill critical positions currently staffed by sworn officers	High	Short	Low
Increase class sizes to 60 or more recruits per class	High	Medium	Medium
Implement a digital hiring portal for candidates to track their progress	High	Long	Low
Add staff to RED	High	Short	High
Use data and analytics to identify greatest return on investment for recruiting activities; modify activities accordingly	High	Long	High
Work with the mayor's office to set meetings the City Personnel Department and LAPD leadership to resolve implementation issues	High	Long	Medium
Provide information on academy costs to candidates earlier in the hiring process so that they do not drop out or choose not to attend the academy because of financial constraints	Medium	Short	High
Refine hiring and testing events	Medium	Medium	High
Augment background investigators staffing with sworn personnel	Medium	Medium	Medium
LAPD takeover of the background investigation process	Medium	Long	Medium
Increase social media presence for recruiting and hiring	Low	Short	High
Modify polygraph use either (1) through targeted use of polygraph exams or (2) by removing the polygraph exam from the hiring process	Low	Short	High
Augment background investigators with contractors	Low	Long	Low

Table 7.2. Recommendations for the Complaint and Discipline System

Recommendation	Priority	Timeline	Feasibility
Improve supervisors' ability to handle nondisciplinary cases	High	Short	High
Improve how supervisors and command staff communicate with subjects of complaints and those being disciplined	High	Medium	Medium
Reduce layers of review for easily disputable and nondisciplinary cases	Medium	Short	High
Set and track a goal of 150 days to complete easily disputable and nondisciplinary cases	Medium	Short	High
Make sure open complaints that are easily disputable are not preventing promotion opportunities	Medium	High	High
Prioritize training or other corrective measures for infractions with low penalty levels	Medium	Medium	Medium
Ensure appropriateness of nonpunitive discipline by including investigator's recommendation for consideration	Medium	Medium	Medium
Screen complaints that are frivolous and that can be easily reviewed, and do not place them in the employee's file	Low	Short	High
Educate staff about the complaint system and disciplinary process and their rights within	Low	Short	High
Increase use of referrals to mental, behavioral, and physical health	Low	Short	Medium
Increase the use of mentoring and peer support	Low	Medium	Medium
Improve the system for tracking cases to keep subjects of complaints informed and to close out cases faster	Low	Long	Low

Table 7.3. Recommendations for Department Morale and Culture

Recommendation	Priority	Timeline	Feasibility
Implement culture and policy shifts to improve in-person communication by command staff	High	Medium	Medium
Recognize the importance of civilian staff and their work	High	Short	Medium
Reinforce practice of recognizing high-ranking civilian staff as they would equivalent sworn staff	High	Medium	Medium
Communicate changes made that are derived from Department member feedback	Low	Short	High
Increase formal and informal information-sharing across command staff, including lessons learned discussions from key areas like Ombuds, Risk Management, OCPP, Training, and others	Low	Medium	Medium
Establish interrank working groups for understanding critical problems	Low	Medium	High
Consider 360-degree reviews for command	Low	Medium	Medium
Provide opportunities for recognition, development, increased pay, and promotions for civilian staff	Low	Medium	Medium

Table 7.4. Recommendations for Retention

Recommendation	Priority	Timeline	Feasibility
Provide annual wellness screening or reimbursement program for wellness	High	Medium	Low
Create a Chief Retention Officer position	Medium	Short	High
Conduct exit and stay interviews	Medium	Short	High
Create career development programming	Low	Long	Medium

Table 7.5. Recommendations for the Organizational Structure of the Department

Recommendation	Priority	Timeline	Feasibility
Identify sworn officers in administrative positions that can be moved to Patrol (start with volunteers) or consider limiting tenure in administrative roles for sworn officers	High	Short	High
Create a Strategic Initiatives Unit to focus on long-term planning, organizational change, and measuring progress	Medium	Medium	Medium
Ensure that Captains are responsive to Ombuds workplace assessments	Medium	Medium	Low
Review specialized units/task forces and merge or downsize where there are redundancies (e.g., Vice, Metro, Commercial Crimes, Mounted, Off-road Motorcycle, HazMat)	Low	Short	Low
Consider moving Community Relations Section to Division level	Low	Medium	High
Consider moving Traffic Bureau into Office of Operations	Low	Medium	High
Consider reallocating staff from Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Group to other positions	Low	Short	High
Review COMPSTAT and RIPA COMPSTAT and revamp as necessary	Low	Medium	Medium
Decentralize deployment decisions to allow Captains more freedom with staffing	Low	Short	High
Consider changes Community Safety Partnership Bureau to interact/integrate better with the Office of Operations	Low	Long	Low
Create a Civilian Chief Technology Officer position	Low	Long	Low

Although we present our findings in separate chapters, there are significant interconnections across the topical areas. By making changes in one space, such as staffing, there are real opportunities to improve morale. There are three overarching areas for the LAPD that, if addressed, can have a positive impact on the organization as a whole:

1. There is the need to hire more officers faster and better equipped for the demands of 21st-century policing.
2. There is a pressing need to reduce the impact of the complaint system on employees while still ensuring that the Department can appropriately respond to problematic behavior.

3. There is a need to improve morale, which can be accomplished through improvements in internal communication balanced with an emphasis on the mission, which requires trust and empowerment from a strategic standpoint.

Our recommendations feed into ways the Department can address these needs by improving its processes, with considerations for structural changes. The Department might also consider tracking and reprioritizing these recommendations as they are implemented or if conditions change in the City or internally to the Department.

> "As a woman with the LAPD, I have felt supported, mentored, and developed. This is truly the best law enforcement agency in the world, and I am proud to be a member of the LAPD. I look forward to the future changes that will help improve the overall workforce strength, impartiality in application, and wellness."
> –**Sergeant or Lieutenant respondent**

Overall, LAPD faces many organizational challenges, but Department leadership has the opportunity to pursue short-term change while laying the foundation for long-term improvements. Although it is generally acknowledged in the field that cops hate two things: **change** and **the way things are**, the LAPD is at a crossroads where leadership will need to take strong action across the organization to carry out its mission. It will be important to move at the speed of trust when implementing some of the recommended changes, but this document attempts to address what is possible now and what will need to be built strategically. Given the significant challenges facing the entire Department in terms of staffing, the complaint system, and morale, coupled with the strong desire reflected in survey responses to make change, the Department is at a critical turning point to implement and sustain modifications to the organization's structure, policies, and practices.

Appendix A. Methods

This organizational assessment of LAPD undertook a variety of data collection activities to capture a variety of perspectives on the key focal areas of: recruitment, hiring, and retention, the complaint system and disciplinary process, organizational structure, and morale. We conducted interviews, focus groups, a survey, and secondary data analysis to uncover the most important features of these focal areas while triangulating findings across each of our data collection approaches. Our approach began with semi-structured interviews with command staff, which fed into the development and fielding of a Department-wide survey. We conducted focus groups with training academy recruits and other stakeholders across the key focal areas to better inform our findings and recommendations and used secondary data analysis to project the impact of proposed recommendations.

Interviews and Focus Groups

First, we conducted targeted semi-structured interviews with personnel and leadership in the LAPD and the Los Angeles City Personnel Department. In total, we gathered input from more than 60 personnel in these roles. Interviews were conducted via Microsoft Teams, in-person visits, and in group settings, including one set of interviews with academy recruits. Participants were recruited via email, with the exception of academy recruits, and a time to meet with them was provided by LAPD staff. During the interviews, oral consent was given providing the context and human subjects protection. A RAND staff member took notes during each of the interviews.

Our interview protocol included questions specific to the organizational structure of the Department; the complaint system and disciplinary process; and recruitment, retention, and hiring. The list of interview questions is included below.

Organizational Structure

- What is your current assignment and where does it sit within the LAPD Organizational hierarchy?
- Is your unit staffed logically (e.g., does staffing match the stated goals and objectives of the unit)?
- Do officers and professional staff understand where they fit in the larger organization?
  - Do they understand what each other do?
- Is there adequate communications and cooperation amongst units in your bureau/division?
- Do you receive adequate updates from supervision or command staff regarding Department activities and changes?

- Are there clear lines of communication and collaboration between your unit and those in other chains of command?
- LAPD has reorganized in recent years to create a new bureau for Community Safety Partnerships and Constitutional Policing and Policy. Do those units, considered individually, "fit" with the existing organization? Do people outside of those units understand their work?
- Are line level officers involved in the development of policy and protocols (e.g., use of force)?

Disciplinary Process

- Do officers and professional staff have a good general understanding of LAPD's disciplinary process?
- Do they understand the initial steps of the complaint and its classification?
- Do they understand how complaints can be classified as nondisciplinary?
- Does the Department generally follow the requirements of POBR as it is applied in the complaints process?
- Do officers and staff who are found culpable in a sustained complaint feel they can use the appeals and boards of rights without being formally or informally sanctioned by the Department?
- Are you familiar with the Department's internal complaint mediation process?
  - Have you had experience with the mediation? (if not, next question; if so, ask them to describe it)
  - What are people saying about its effectiveness? Do they cite specific cases, or use generalities to convey their thoughts?
  - Did the mediator appear to be neutral?
- Is the boards of rights process for arriving at an objective finding working?
  - How is the City or LAPD viewed in relation to boards of rights?
- Is the punishment for sustained complaints applied fairly across the organization, and across the ranks and levels of the Department?
- Does discipline result in positive change for the individual or Department? How do you measure that?
- How is discipline documented? Watch files, evaluations?
- If deficiencies are identified through the disciplinary process, does supervision or command staff assign training to improve performance for those involved?
  - Can you tell me about the follow through with regard to training?
- What is the relationship between the union and the disciplinary process?
- What types of responses do you see from officers when someone receives substantial discipline?
  - Probe: Are employees allowed to fundraise for those who are given nonpaid leave or suspensions as a result of the disciplinary process? Allowed to fundraise at the station/unit location?

The interview questions were tailored to the role of the interviewee. For example, if staff participating had key information about hiring and recruiting, such as those working in the

Office of Support Services, our questions focused on those areas specifically. However, many of those interviewed also had input on other areas of interest that we include in our analysis (e.g., staff involved in recruiting and hiring also opined on the complaint system).

Interview Analysis

Notes from interviews were combined into documents for analysis using RAND Chat. RAND Chat is a large language model (similar to ChatGPT) that operates within RAND's secure computing environment. For example, the recruitment, hiring, and retention-specific interview notes were collated into one document. We used RAND Chat to assist with the analysis and applied human judgement to the outputs. We also analyzed the notes to identify themes ahead of this process. For example, in recruiting and hiring, some core themes that emerged were the issues with background investigations, LAPD's brand as a major draw, and there is tension between the City Personnel Department and the LAPD/RED. To provide top-level results, we prompted RAND Chat to provide a summary of key themes and insights from the interviews. We then followed up with specific prompts about issues and questions that arose, which included the following examples specific to recruiting, hiring, and retention:

- Please summarize the key issues and findings on recruiting challenges, and suggestions for improvement.
- Please give me a list of the suggestions for change in the recruiting and hiring process.
- What is the consensus on using LAPD uniformed officers to speed up the background process?
- Please describe the tension between Los Angeles City Personnel Department and the LAPD.
- Provide a summary of retention-focused results.
- Provide me a detailed list of retention strategies that were mentioned in the interviews.

We repeated this process for other areas assessed in the study (organizational structure, complaint system) to rapidly gain an understanding of the interviews. The common themes that emerged were in sync with the findings of the research team that participated in the interviews, and some of these themes were chosen to be further explored in the survey.

Survey

Our survey was developed for both sworn officers and civilians focusing on the overall experience as an LAPD employee. Survey questions sought to understand the following topics: leadership, training, discipline, handling of complaints, and promotion practices. The survey included items for participants to rate on a 5-point scale and multiple opportunities to provide open-ended input. Survey questions were developed using questions used in prior studies of

LAPD, and other academic studies relevant to the topics of interest.[72] Some questions from previous instruments were modified to best fit the needs of LAPD personnel.

We worked with LAPD's Employee Relations Group (ERG) to iterate on questions in the survey to make them appropriate for the Department's needs. This also included input from the Los Angeles Police Protective League and other unions. Once all input was complete, we programmed the survey in Qualtrics and tested it with users from the ERG to ensure its functionality. For dissemination, the LAPD provided a list of email addresses for members of the Department, which were uploaded into Qualtrics. Ahead of the survey being launched, ERG sent an email to members of the Department that RAND would be sending out the survey; they also sent a follow-up before the survey closed. RAND then emailed the survey out from Qualtrics to all sworn and civilian staff and subsequently sent a reminder email out with the survey link. The survey was open from January 29, 2025, to February 19, 2025. It should also be noted that recent wildfires might have affected staff perceptions of workload in the survey, as it launched three weeks after fires started, but dangerous conditions lasted at least two weeks, and support for fire areas persisted beyond that time frame.

We received a total of 1,817 usable responses from the survey, which was a 15.6 percent response rate. There were 449 civilian respondents (15.8 percent response rate) and 1,368 sworn responses (15.5 percent response rate). Respondents that sped through (completion duration of less than four minutes) or straight-lined a high proportion of responses (more than 50 percent) were removed. Survey response information follows in Figures A.1–A.3.

[72] Corinne Bendersky, Joyce He, Heather Caruso, Jana Gallus, Gloria Cheng, Samantha Kellar, Daniel Choi, and Sivahn Barli, *2022 Los Angeles Citywide Workplace Climate Assessment*, Anderson School of Management, University of California, Los Angeles, undated; Jack McDevitt, Susan M. Hartnett, Dennis Rosenbaum, Lorie A. Fridell, Wesley Skogan, Gary W. Cordner, and Stephen Mastrofski, "National Police Research Platform, Phase I [United States], 2009–2011," Inter-University Consortium for Political and Social Research, August 31, 2016; Melissa M. Moon and Cheryl Lero Jonson, "The Influence of Occupational Strain on Organizational Commitment Among Police: A General Strain Theory Approach," *Journal of Criminal Justice*, Vol. 40, No. 3, 2012; Rich Morin, Kim Parker, Renee Stepler, and Andrew Mercer, *Police Culture*, Pew Research Center, January 11, 2017; Justin Nix, Justin T. Pickett, Hyunin Baek, and Geoffrey P. Alpert, "Police Research, Officer Surveys, and Response Rates," *Policing and Society*, Vol. 29, No. 5, 2019; Samuel Peterson, Dionne Barnes-Proby, Katherine E. Bouskill, Lois M. Davis, Matthew L. Mizel, Beverly A. Weidmer, Isabel Leamon, Alexandra Mendoza-Graf, Matt Strawn, Joshua Snoke, and Thomas Goode, *Understanding Subgroups Within the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department: Community and Department Perceptions with Recommendations for Change*, RAND Corporation, RR-A616-1, 2021.

Figure A.1. Percentage of Sworn Respondents, by Time Served with LAPD

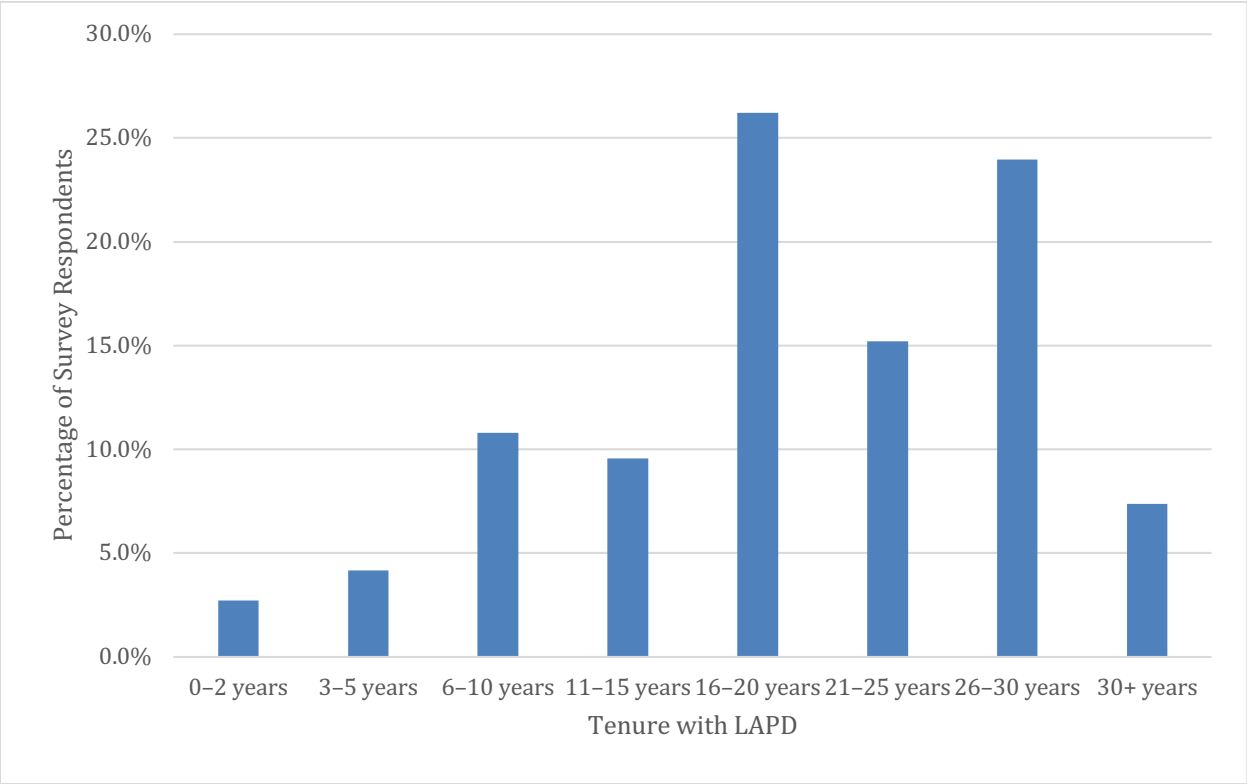


Figure A.2. Percentage of Sworn Respondents, by Rank

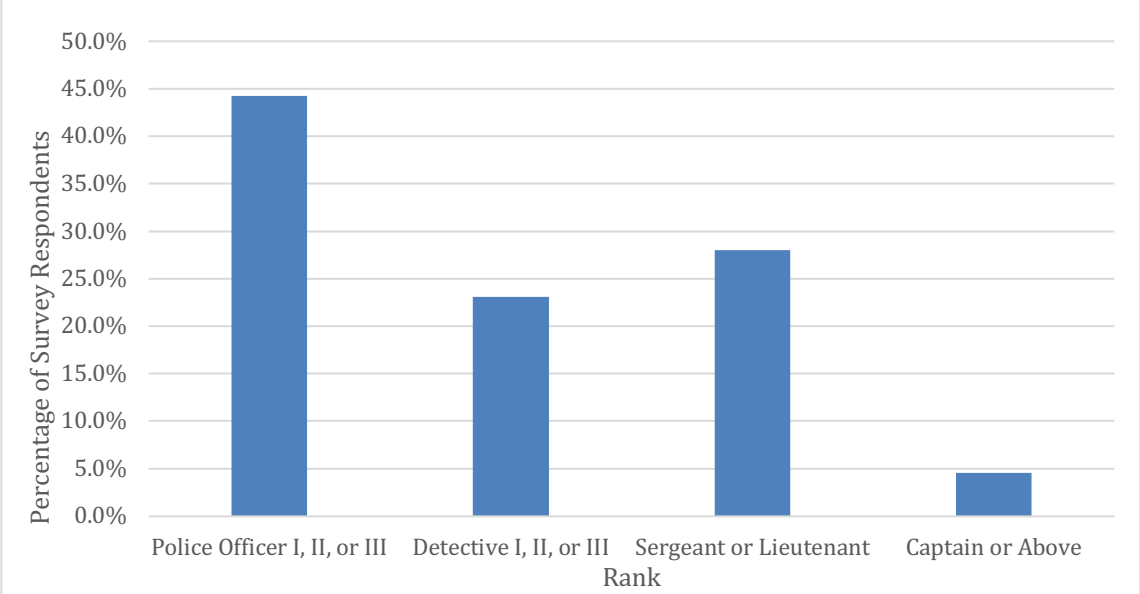
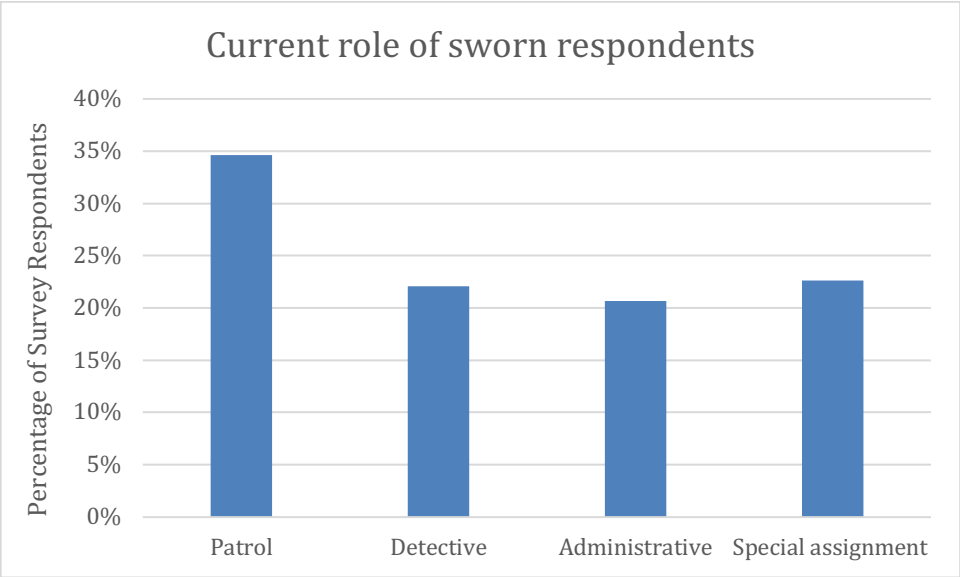


Figure A.3. Current Role of Sworn Respondents



We received demographic variables separately for civilian and sworn personnel. Weights were assigned to the survey results using raked weighting for the following variables: sworn or civilian status, tenure with LAPD, rank (for sworn personnel), gender, and race. This was done using the Qualtrics Raked weighting procedure using the Waves option, allowing for both overall weights and separate weights across sworn and civilian personnel, which is critical because their demographic distributions and work experiences vary substantially (e.g., sworn are 80 percent male and civilian are 57 percent male).

Table A.1 Unweighted and Weighted Demographic Percentages, by Staff Type

	Civilian		Sworn	
Variable	**Unweighted**	**Weighted**	**Unweighted**	**Weighted**
Male	43.2	57.3	83.2	81.1
Female	56.8	42.7	16.8	18.9
Race				
Hispanic	36.0	49.3	36.9	55.8
White	25.7	15.9	40.2	24.1
Black	14.7	17.5	5.5	8.5
Asian-PAC-Filipino	15.2	15.7	8.5	10.7
Other	8.4	1.6	8.9	0.9
Tenure				
0–2 years	12.4	17.2	2.7	7.4
3–5 years	10.2	9.7	4.2	9.2
6–10 years	23.3	28.6	10.8	18.1
11–15 years	3.6	5.2	9.6	9.8
16–20 years	18.0	15.4	26.3	22.4
21–25 years	17.8	12.5	15.2	11.6
25+ years	14.7	11.4	31.2	21.6
Rank				
Police officer I, II, or III			44.5	70.7
Detective I, II, or III			28.0	14.3
Supervisor (Sgt. Or Lt.)			23.1	13.6
Captain and above			4.4	1.3

Review of LAPD and External Data

Recruitment, Hiring, and Retention Data

Our analysis was supplemented by collecting a variety of quantitative information and documents from the LAPD. This includes organization charts, staffing by Office, Bureau and individual units, span of control data, calls for service, and past surveys conducted pertaining to the LAPD. We also received and analyzed data specific to recruiting and hiring, focusing on the following:

- multiple choice test bookings
- community tests administered
- pocket tests administered
- online tests administered
- seminars and events

- other tests and events.

The City Personnel Department also posted a live dashboard of hiring statistics on March 14, 2025. The dashboard includes information from application, testing and hiring for sworn officer positions, including days associated with each step in the process. We reviewed dashboard data to understand the overall timeline and which stages could benefit from process efficiencies.

We also reviewed recent, relevant reports from LAPD and the City that pertain to recruitment, staffing, and retention to gain an understanding of current and historical efforts that may affect recruitment and retention of officers.

Complaints and Discipline Data

We received roughly 51,000 cases of de-identified complaint data from LAPD. This includes case file or case file number, allegation type, allegation ID, disposition, rank, office, bureau, issue date, complete data, and close date. Data analysis focused specifically on allegations and dispositions, with associated timelines, to give LAPD actionable recommendations according to our interviews regarding the complaint system and disciplinary process. In particular, our understanding of key issues in the complaint system informed our data analysis, focusing on areas where the LAPD might make the most substantial improvements. Specifically, our analyses related to case processing focused on Unbecoming Conduct and Discourtesy complaint types and only for those cases where there were not other allegation types. This theoretically presents the subset of cases that are likely to be captured on body-worn video and are least likely to require complex or lengthy investigations. Moreover, to better understand the policies, procedures, and implications of any recommended changes, we also received and reviewed 101 sets of manuals, references, and notices and 77 departmental forms and exemplar documents for the complaint system and disciplinary process.

Comparisons to Other Police Departments

Where appropriate, we reviewed external agency data from the local area and comparable agencies nationwide. This allowed us to provide input for the SWOT analysis, and hiring timelines, incentive programs, recruitment efforts, organizational makeup (sworn versus civilian officer ratios), and ratio of officers to population.

Synthesis of Data Sources

To ensure our various sources of data collection were aligned, we created a crosswalk that combined themes, survey questions, and secondary data for each key focal area: recruitment, hiring, and retention, complaints and discipline, organizational structure, and morale. The selected quotes shown in the text are primarily from open-ended survey responses and are not intended to be representative of all respondents, but to reflect a range of perspectives or to provide additional detail on the focal areas of the report.

Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats Analysis

To assess the general themes, capabilities and constraints, we elected to use a SWOT analysis to study the mosaic of issues and opportunities for the future of the Department. We chose SWOT because it provides general perspectives and issues that can be used as a road map to begin the process of moving from the general to the specific. It encourages organizational leaders to uncover opportunities and consider both internal deficits and external threats that should be considered in the strategy planning process. SWOT can also prompt dialog as a prelude to developing plans and actions for the future of the organization. If used internally, it can be susceptible to an organization's culture and worldview in ways that limit an objective assessment of capabilities and limitations. However, in this setting, a SWOT constructed by the research team emerges from the team's assessment of issues identified in the study process.

For our SWOT analysis, the research team used the qualitative data to outline the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats in terms of recruitment and hiring. We included all pertinent information in an internal draft.

Data and Analysis Used in Recommendations

The recommendations provided throughout the report are guided by all of the methods described above and are derived from a variety of data sources. We map the key data sources to each recommendation in Table A.2.

Table A.2. Mapping Recommendations to Data Sources

Recommendation	Interviews	Data Review	Lit/Best Practices	Survey
Staffing, Recruitment, and Hiring Recommendations				
Implement a digital hiring portal for candidates to track their progress			X	
Add staff to RED	X	X		
Hire civilian personnel to fill critical positions currently staffed by sworn officers	X	X	X	
Use data and analytics to identify greatest return on investment for recruiting activities; modify activities accordingly			X	
LAPD takeover of the background investigation process	X			
Refine hiring and testing events	X	X	X	
Augment background investigators staffing with sworn personnel	X	X		
Augment background investigators with contactors			X	
Work with the mayor's office to set meetings the City Personnel Department and LAPD leadership to resolve implementation issues	X			
Provide information on academy costs to candidates earlier in the hiring process so that they do not drop out or choose not to attend the academy because of financial constraints	X			
Increase social media presence for recruiting and hiring	X			
Modify polygraph use through either: (1) targeted use of polygraph exams; or by (2) removing the polygraph exam from hiring process		X	X	
Increase class sizes to 60 or more recruits per class		X		
Complaints and Discipline Recommendations				
Improve supervisors' ability to handle nondisciplinary cases	X			X
Improve how supervisors and command staff communicate with subjects of complaints and those being disciplined	X		X	X

Recommendation	Interviews	Data Review	Lit/Best Practices	Survey
Reduce layers of review for easily disputable and nondisciplinary cases		X		X
Set and track a goal of 150 days to complete easily disputable and nondisciplinary cases	X		X	
Prioritize training or other corrective measures for infractions with low-level penalties			X	X
Ensure appropriateness of nonpunitive discipline by including investigator's recommendation for consideration			X	
Screen complaints that are frivolous or that can be easily reviewed before assigning a case file number		X		
Educate staff about the complaint system and disciplinary process and their rights within	X			X
Improve the system for tracking cases	X			
Increase use of referrals to mental, behavioral, and physical health			X	X
Increase the use of mentoring and peer support			X	
Morale and Culture Recommendations				
Implement culture and policy shifts to improve in-person communication by command staff	X		X	
Recognize the importance of civilian staff and their work	X			X
Reinforce practice of recognizing high-ranking civilian staff as one would equivalent sworn staff	X			X
Not relying on email for critical messages (e.g., go to briefing)	X			
Communicate changes made that are derived from Department member feedback	X			X
Increase formal and informal information-sharing across command staff, including lessons learned discussions from key areas like Ombuds, Risk Management, OCPP, Training, and others	X		X	
Establish interrank working groups for understanding critical problems	X		X	
Consider 360-degree reviews for command	X		X	
Provide opportunities for recognition, development, increased pay, and promotions for civilian staff	X			X

Recommendation	Interviews	Data Review	Lit/Best Practices	Survey
Retention Recommendations				
Provide annual wellness screening or reimbursement program for wellness	X		X	X
Create a Chief Retention Officer position	X			
Conduct exit and stay interviews	X		X	
Create career development programming	X		X	
Organizational Structure Recommendations				
Identify sworn officers in administrative positions that can be moved to Patrol (start with volunteers) or consider limiting tenure in administrative roles for sworn officers	X			X
Create a Strategic Initiatives Unit to focus on long-term planning, organizational change, measuring progress			X	
Ensure Captains are responsive to Ombuds workplace assessments	X			
Review specialized units/task forces and merge or downsize where there are redundancies (Vice, Metro, Commercial Crimes, Mounted, Off-road Motorcycle, HazMat)	X			X
Consider moving Community Relations Section to Division level	X			
Consider moving Traffic Bureau into Office of Operations	X			
Consider changes Community Safety Partnership Bureau to interact/integrate better with the Office of Operations	X			X
Reallocate staff from Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Group to other positions	X			X
Create a Civilian Chief Technology Officer position	X			
Review COMPSTAT and RIPA COMPSTAT and revamp as necessary	X			X
Decentralize deployment decisions to allow Captains more freedom with staffing	X			
Ensure command staff ranks match level of authority needed	X			
Ensure number of command staff positions are appropriate	X		X	

Appendix B. Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats Analysis of Recruiting and the Hiring Process

We conducted a SWOT analysis that informed the discussion of recruiting and the hiring process in Chapter 3. We used a variety of data sources to support this analysis, including interviews, review of LAPD documents, LAPD statistics, recruiting and hiring processes, LAPD organizational structure (e.g., recruiting unit), and our familiarity with the Department and policing and police agencies in the area and nationwide.

Table B.1 contains a summary of the findings that resulted from that analysis.

Table B.1. Findings from Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats Analysis of the Recruitment and the Hiring Process

Metric	Findings
Strengths	• LAPD brand • Size of Department • Opportunities for specialized assignments • Opportunities for promotion • Racial/ethnic makeup of the Department • Dedicated recruiting personnel • Multipronged, academically supported efforts in recruiting • Offers a compressed hiring process • Community recruitment
Weaknesses	• Speed of processes • Tension between City Personnel Department and LAPD • Lack of personnel in recruiting efforts • Background investigation backlog and staffing • Department morale • Effects of Department policies (e.g., complaint system) • Pay relative to competing agencies • Lack of competitive, sustained hiring incentives • Size/throughput limitations of recruit academy • Lack of telework opportunities and incentives for civilians • Lack of prerecruitment/pretest quality control • Lack of physical fitness qualifying score • Quality of recruits
Opportunities	• External marketing agency/efforts • Improving relations with City Personnel Department • LAPD control over recruitment and hiring • Changes to recruiting/hiring efforts • Enhanced effort to recruit experienced officers • Improving police-community relations • Improving agency image • Pay/salary • Improve the supply of affordable housing for staff • Academy flexibility
Threats	• LA City policies • City Personnel Department staffing and workload • Funding for recruitment • Competing agencies' processes • Competing agencies' pay • Cost of living • Public view of law enforcement (locally and nationwide) • Media • Recruitment barriers • Recruit chatter • Ability to fund incentive programs

Appendix C. Additional Survey Results

The additional figures in this section are provided for context. Figures C.1 through C.6 provide the overall responses from all survey respondents, weighted by sworn or civilian status, tenure with LAPD, gender, and race. These differ slightly compared to some of the figures shown in-text because rank was not included as a weighting variable in the below figures.

Figure C.1. Employee Perceptions of the Organization

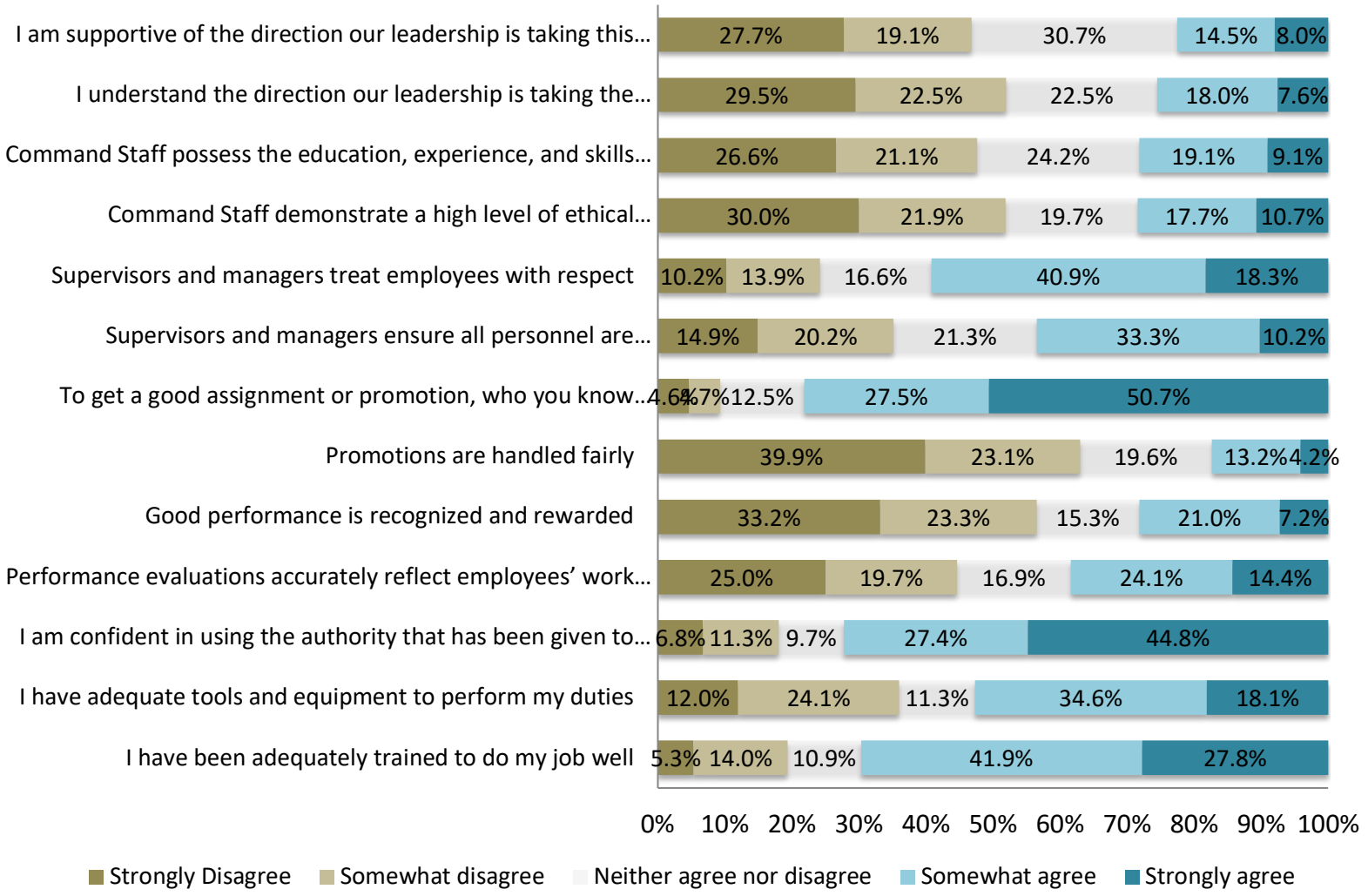


Figure C.2. Engagement and Interdepartmental Relations

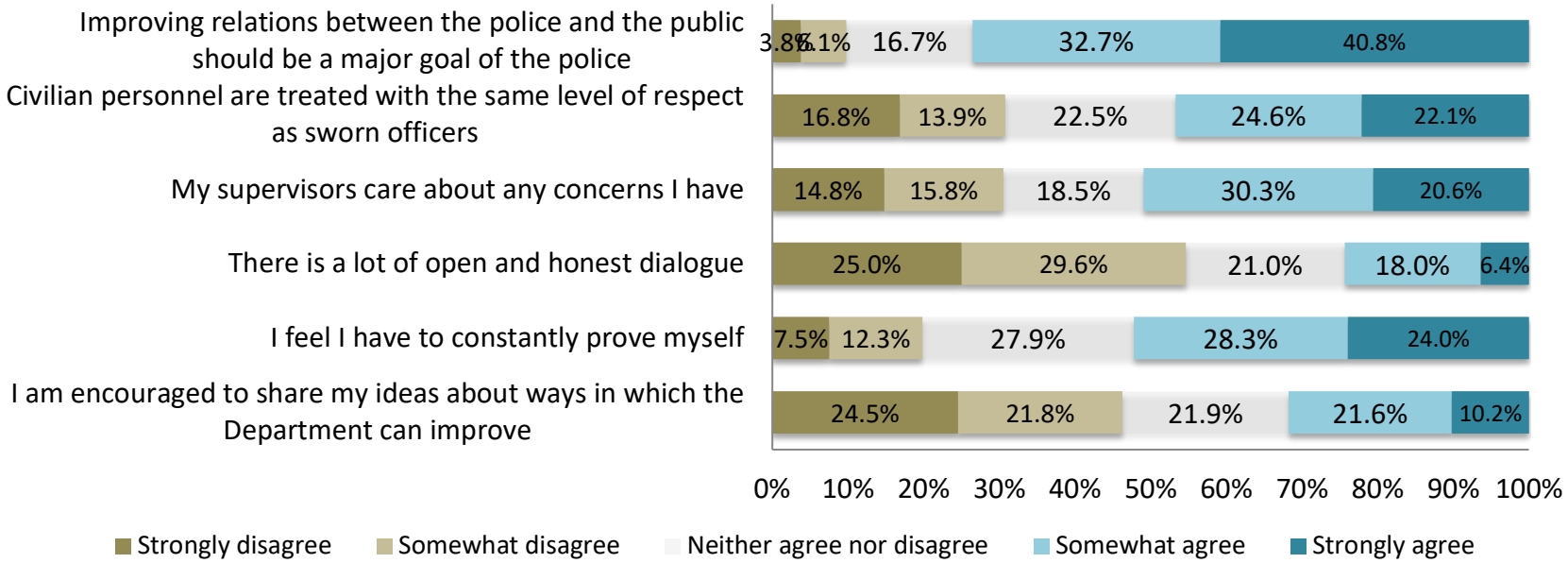


Figure C.3. Perceptions of the Complaint and Disciplinary System

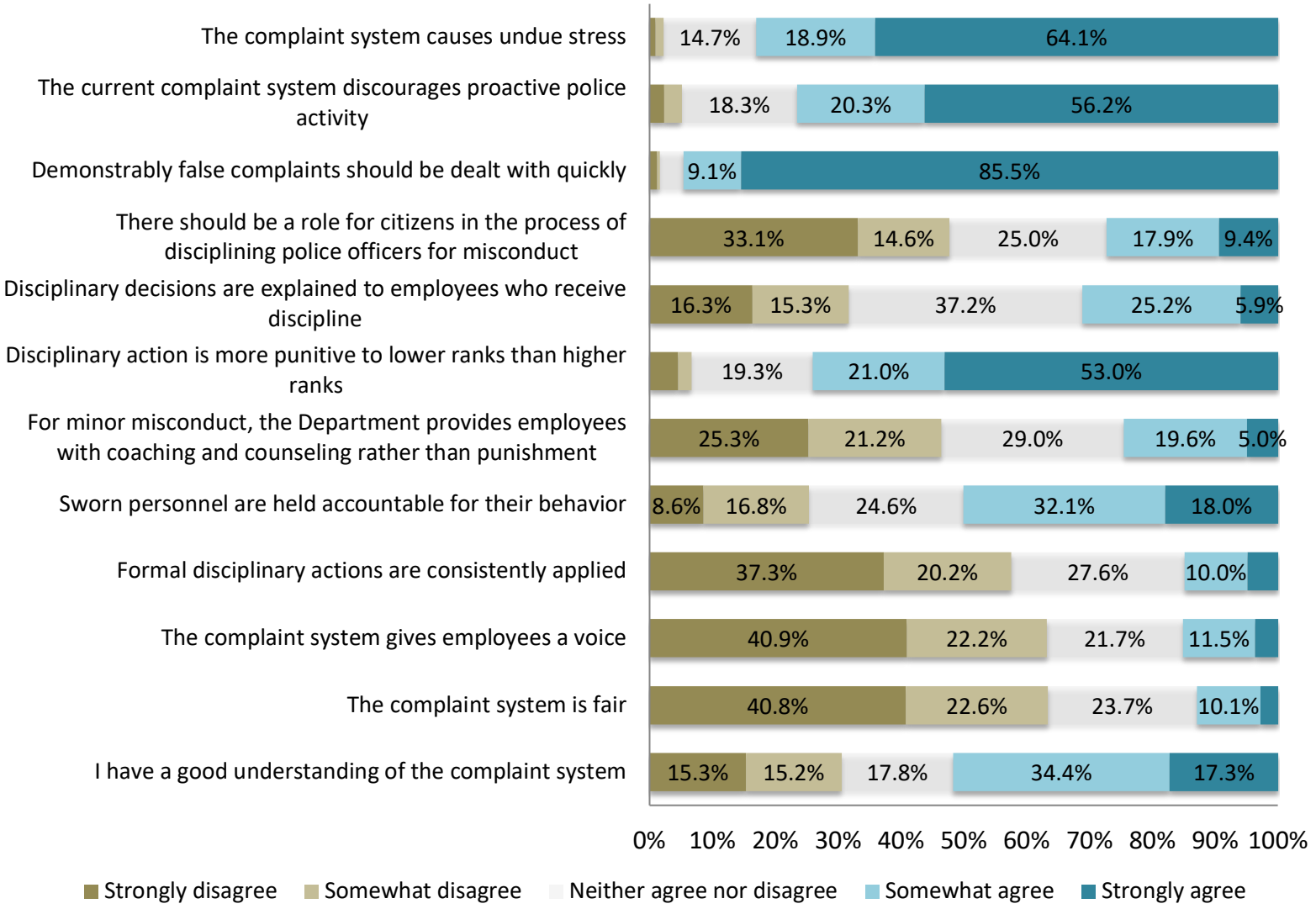


Figure C.4. Well-Being and Work-Life Balance

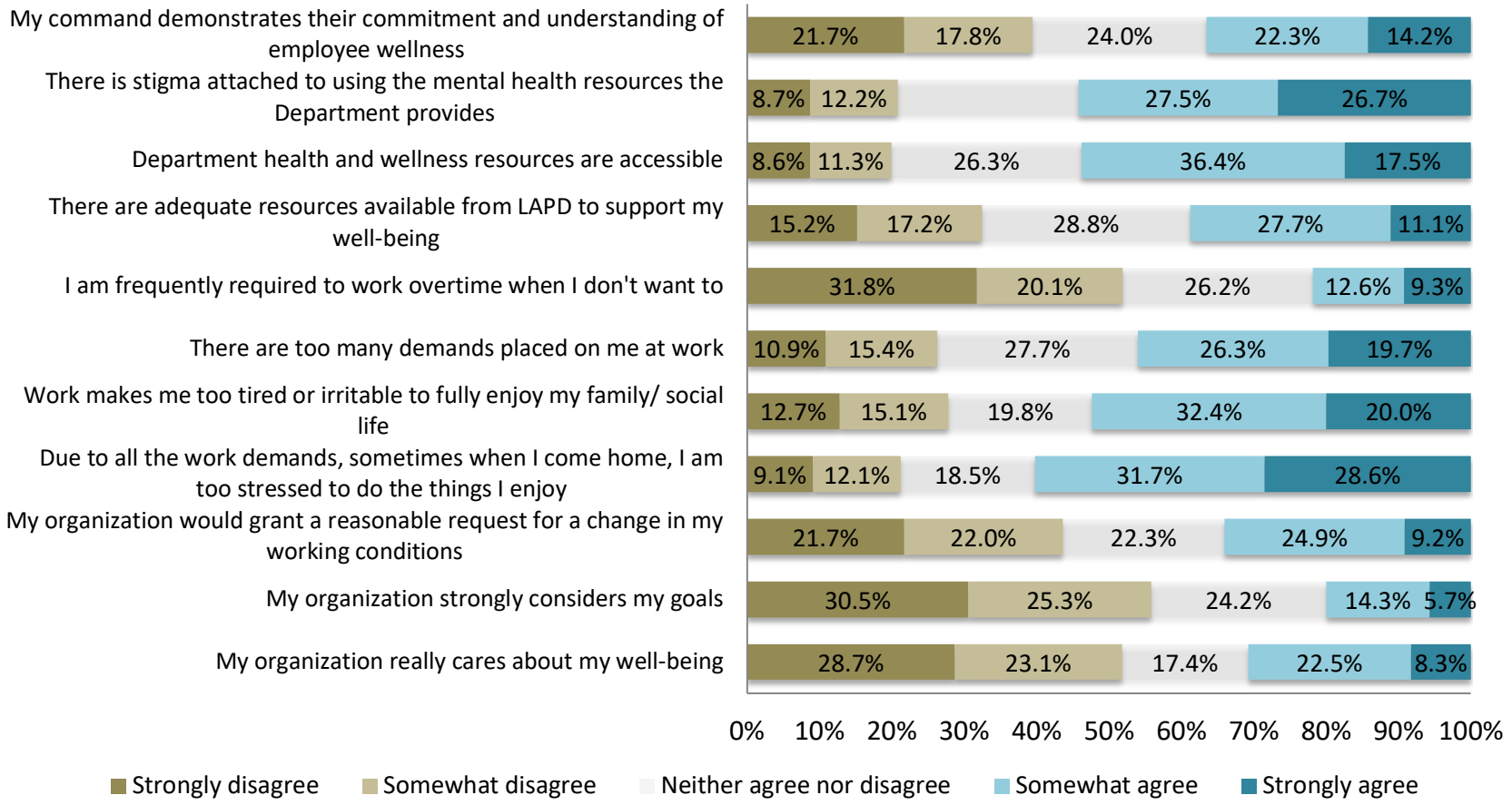


Figure C.5. Employee Retention and Work-Life Balance

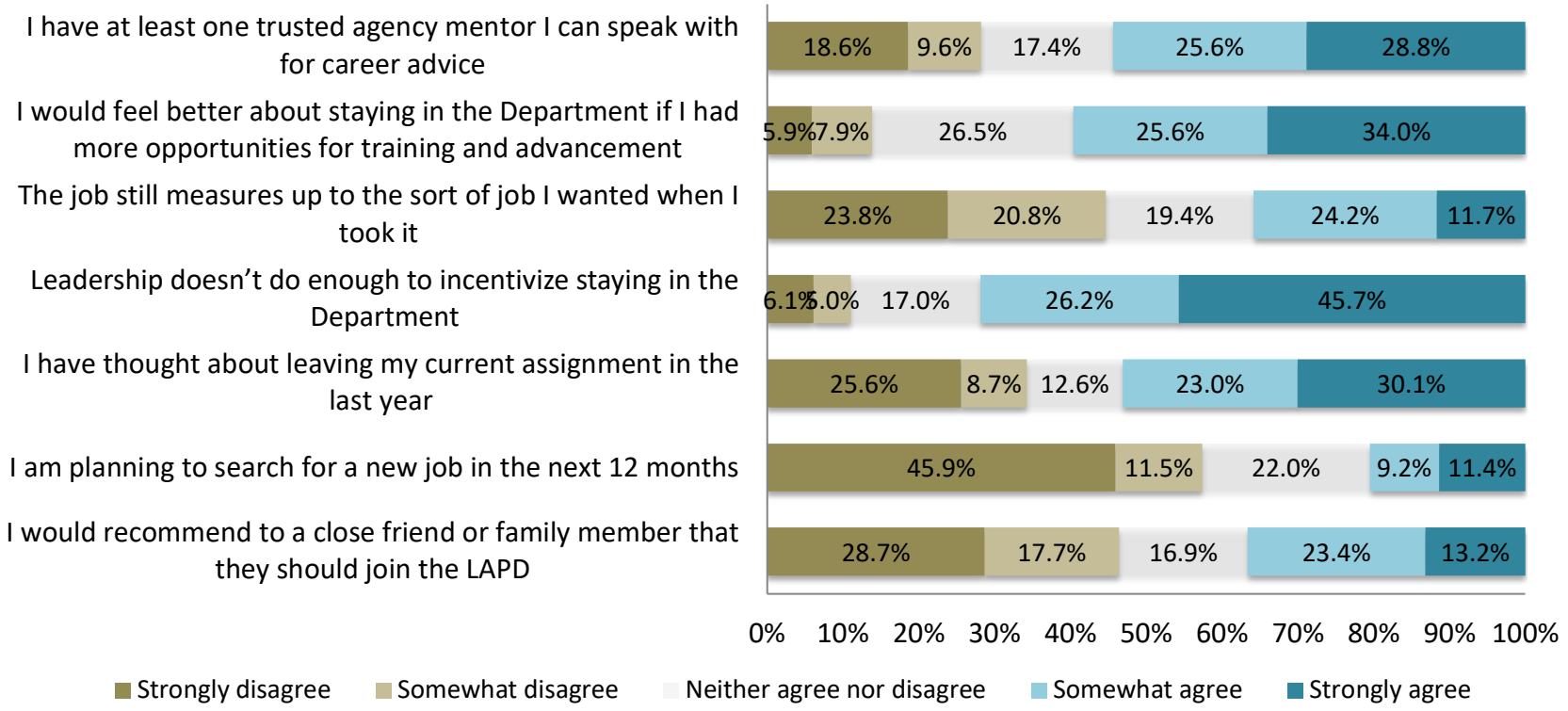
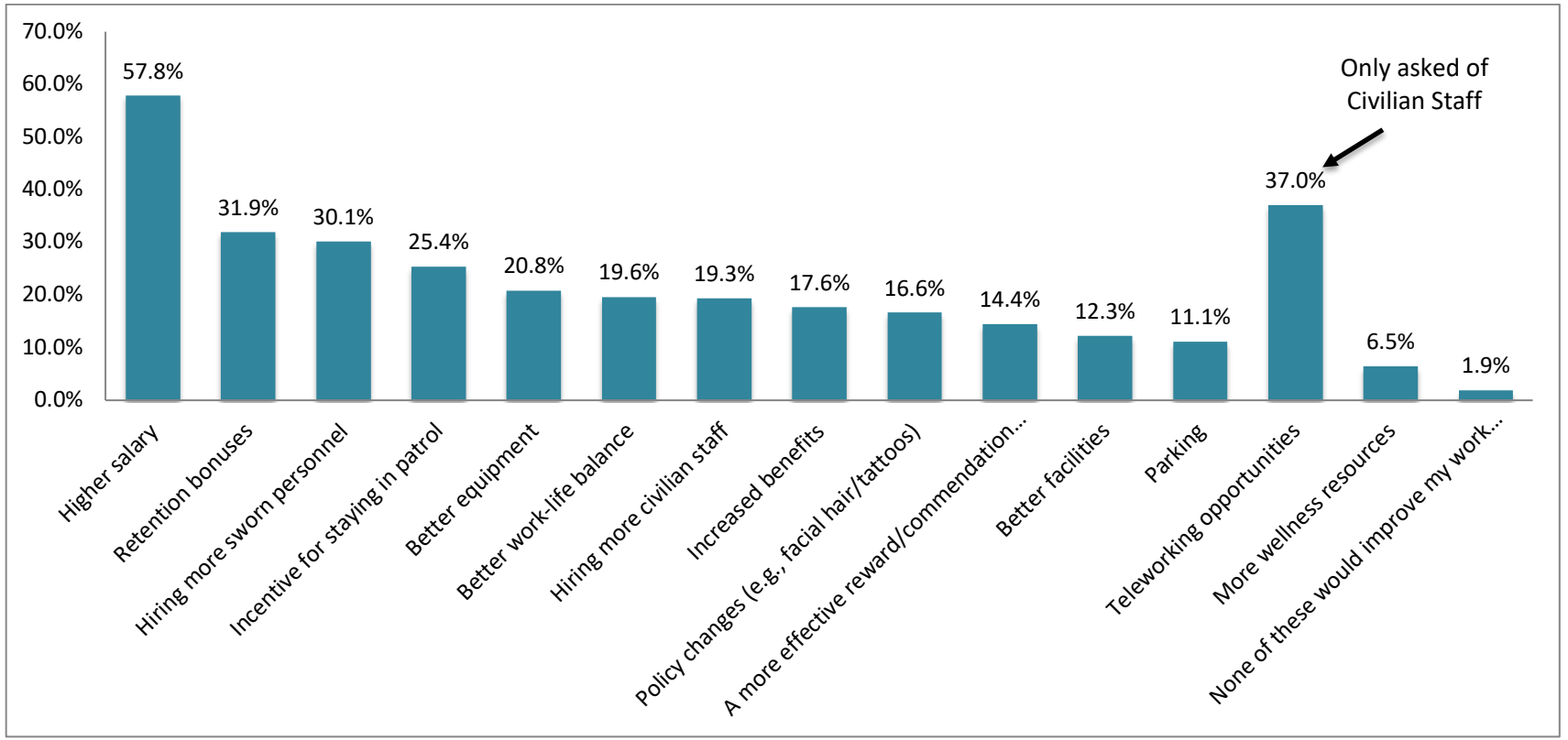


Figure C.6. Top 3 Items That Would Most Improve Your Experience at Work



Abbreviations

ACR	alternative complaint resolution
BOR	Board of Rights
CI	confidence interval
CMS	case management system
CUBO	conduct unbecoming of an officer
CY	calendar year
DC	District of Columbia
DROP	Deferred Retirement Option Plan
FY	fiscal year
HazMat	Hazardous Materials
IACP	International Association of Chiefs of Police
IAD	Internal Affairs Division
IAG	Internal Affairs Group
LAPD	Los Angeles Police Department
LOT	Letter of Transmittal
NA	not applicable
OCPP	Office of Constitutional Policing and Policy.
PD	police department
PERF	Police Executive Research Forum
PHS	Personal History Statement
POBRA	Public Safety Officers Procedural Bill of Rights Act
POST	Peace Officer Standards and Training
PSB	Professional Standards Bureau
RED	Recruitment and Employment Division
SWOT	strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats

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