

Elections & Public Safety

June 2024



Zencity, in partnership with the States United Democracy Center (SUDC), conducted state-wide representative surveys in Arizona, Michigan, Pennsylvania, and Wisconsin in February 2024. The surveys aimed to understand respondents' level of trust and perceptions of efficacy of their local law enforcement, their perceptions of safety around voting, and their opinions about trust and safety-enhancing interventions.

The findings suggest that **as law enforcement agencies prepare for election season, there are real opportunities to improve their communities' perceptions of them and those communities' feelings of safety around casting their ballots**, by communicating about how they are preparing for election season. Notably, these findings suggest that these improvements to communities' perception of local law enforcement and feelings of safety around voting are available even among those demographics that trust law enforcement the least.

Main Findings

Perceived Trust, Respect & Listening to Concerns

- A large **majority of respondents** across all four states agreed that their local law enforcement was an organization that they could **trust** (between 60% and 72%), that **listens** and takes into account the **concerns of local residents** (between 64% and 70%), and that treats local residents with **respect** (between 68% and 77%).
- However, Black respondents in all four states generally reported lower than average levels of agreement with those statements (between 36% and 68%), as did Hispanic/Latino respondents (between 36% and 71%).

Perceived Efficacy

- The **majority of respondents** (between 53% and 78%) across all four states reported believing that their local law enforcement was **at least somewhat effective** at a list of general law enforcement responsibilities.
- Respondents reported that local law enforcement was most effective at **preventing violent crime, enforcing traffic laws, and responding quickly to calls for assistance**.
- Very few respondents reported that local law enforcement was "completely ineffective" at any of their responsibilities.

Perceived Physical Safety

- Between **60% and 82%** of respondents across all four states reported that they believe they will be **physically safe when voting** in the 2024 elections in their **local area** and **in the country as a whole**.
- The percentage of **'not safe'** consistently **remained below 10%**. However, across all four states, perceived safety was **higher** when asked about their **local area** as compared to the country as a whole.
- Overall, respondents in **Arizona** reported the **lowest levels** of perceived physical safety both in their local area and in the country as a whole. In comparison, respondents in **Wisconsin** reported the **highest levels** of perceived physical safety.
- **Black and Hispanic/Latino** respondents reported **lower than average** levels of feelings of physical safety while voting across all four states (between 46% and 72%).

Suggested Measures

- **Majorities of respondents** in all four states believed that each of the following measures would **increase their confidence** in law enforcement's handling of public safety around elections (between 62% and 72%) and would be **completely or mostly important for helping them feel physically safe** while voting in their local area (between 71% and 78%): Having local law enforcement officers **working with local election officials** to understand and address security gaps
- Having local law enforcement officers **receive training on how to talk to angry people** and calm them down
- Having local law enforcement **work with other law enforcement agencies** to **share best approaches** to protect voters and the public during election season.
- A majority of Black (between 60% and 80%) and Hispanic/Latino (between 51% and 77%) respondents report that each of these measures would be important in making them feel physically safe when voting in their local areas.

Methodology

Zencity, in partnership with the States United Democracy Center (SUDC), conducted four state-wide representative surveys in February 2024. The surveys were conducted in Arizona (*n*=804), Michigan (*n*=950), Pennsylvania (*n*=905), and Wisconsin (*n*=887).

Respondents were recruited using targeted ads on various platforms (e.g., social media, apps for Android and IOS) as well as online survey panels. Using data from the U.S. Census Bureau, the surveys employed quotas to match the distribution of race, ethnicity, age, and gender to ensure that the samples were representative of the entire population of each state. Rake-weighting was then used to balance out any remaining differences between the makeup of the survey respondents and that of the state.