Law Enforcement Officers’ Perceptions of Crime Victims, Roles/Responsibilities in Victim Response, and Victim Services

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1. Executive Summary

Cayuga Counseling Services, Inc. and Le Moyne College collaborated with the Cayuga County Sheriff’s Office (CCSO) to learn about agency culture and the ways by which law enforcement officers’ perceptions may impact practice. In particular, we set out to explore officers’ perceptions relating to crime victims, roles/responsibilities in victim response, and victim services and whether any differences in attitudes, views, and/or beliefs were present that may influence or affect officers’ abilities to serve crime victims and engage in collaborative processes with victim services. Accordingly, the primary goal of the current study was to examine law enforcement officers’ perceptions of:

a) Crime victims/survivors (including a broad range of persons who experience crime)
b) Officer-related roles/responsibilities in victim response
c) Victim services

Through an examination of these three key areas, we hoped to gain insights into group and individual norms that may affect practice and the likelihood of a future sustained collaborative partnership. Additionally, to deepen understandings of officer-related perceptions, we asked officers about common calls for service, common crime victims encountered (and whether they existed in large quantities or were repeat victims), challenges officers believe crime victims have, challenges officers have in responding to crime victims, awareness/understanding of crime dynamics, whether they receive departmental encouragement for working with crime victims, what they feel are advantages/disadvantages to working with victim services, whether they know of resources in the community to assist crime victims, whether they engage victims in service referrals and how these determinations were made, and more.

To achieve our aims, we relied on a mixed-methods approach. Using an anonymous online survey distributed to all sworn officers in CCSO, we first gathered quantitative information that would help us recognize patterns relating to group norms. Secondly, we conducted several in-person interviews using purposive sampling that allowed us to derive contextual information relating to officers’ perceptions and actions. Through these strategies, we learned about officers’ views on crime victims, how they view their job in terms of victim response, and thoughts/engagement with victim services. We also gathered data on officers' referrals to crime victims for victim services and learned about some of the challenges officers experience(d).

We had a high response rate for the online survey (about 75.0%), albeit participation from officers for the in-person interviews was limited (e.g. only two officers participated). Findings from the survey data point to positive patterns overall indicative of informed perceptions relating to crime victims, officer roles/responsibilities, and victim services, yet there are a few areas where distributions were not as expected. Specific items (along with issues) are discussed. Also, findings from the in-person interviews indicated that the officers who participated were knowledgeable about victim services and community resources, and shared similarities relating to the types of crime victims they commonly encountered (n = 2). Both officers utilized victim services – and, specifically, the victim advocate - to better assist those affected by crime. Although their perceptions on crime and crime victims varied in part due to their positions, their approaches to responding to crime victims appeared very similar.

In all, the results demonstrate a culture where officers generally recognize the importance of crime victims, victim response, and victim services, albeit there are a few exceptions that may point to the need for officer trainings relating to aspects of crime victims’ experiences/realities, departmental policies that emphasize supportive practices as related to crime victims, resource sharing, and so on. The implications are discussed.
2. Literature Review

This research project studies Cayuga County Sheriff’s Office (CCSO) culture through investigating officers’ perceptions of crime victims, victim services, and their roles relating to victim assistance to see whether there are any group or individual social norms that may impact service delivery for crime victims and justice outcomes.

According to the International Association of Chiefs of Police, “[victims’] perceptions of the system can be influenced by the manner in which they are treated at the first response and during the follow-up investigation. How law enforcement agencies treat victims is a direct reflection of an agencies’ philosophy of policing and core values. Organizations that place a high priority on addressing the needs of victims of crime are likely to build greater community confidence, increase crime reporting, leverage significant resources through expanded collaborations with community partners, and eventually reduce crime”. Good police work and practice, therefore, involve appropriate, supportive, informed, and collective approaches to criminal victimization/crime victims that, in turn, contribute to safety and satisfaction of those served.

Crime victims play a crucial role in justice. For a long time, they have been ignored and left out of the justice process, yet they are ultimately the ones who are hurt/harmed and contribute to offenders being apprehended by police, held accountable by courts, and punished by corrections for law violating behaviors (Remnison & Dodge, 2022), thereby making them an important group. Approaches to policing, historically, have not relied on research/evidence-based practices; instead, crafted by beliefs and “local custom, opinions, theories, and subjective impressions” (Sherman, 1998, p. 6), practices have contained bias, created misunderstandings, and presented problems when interactions with the public. This disconnect between officers and those in the community they served, along other issues (e.g. social inequalities, corruption, etc.), have hindered justice outcomes. Over time, with a push for a more informed police force by moral and civic reformers, policing has been professionalized. August Volmer, the “father of modern law enforcement” and other individuals in the 20th century, argued that scientific research, education/training, etc. are needed in the American police force to effectively respond to crime, which has since resulted in many innovations that have transformed into modern practices (Carte, 1972; Oliver, 2017). Policing continues to evolve. As evidenced by the expansion of goals under the International Association of Chief of Police, policing is no longer about mere apprehension of offenders, but it is also about advancing police science, fostering collaboration and cooperation with other agencies, and promoting best practices for police service to reduce and prevent crime (see: https://www.theiacp.org/).

Traditionally, interventions to reduce and prevent violence have focused on offender accountability through the criminal justice system while those aimed to assist crime victims/survivors have been non-existent or limited and present through other institutions such as the social service system. Contemporary practices have advanced over time to include evidence-based practices (e.g., Laub & Frisch, 2016; Welsh & Farrington, 2001) and collaborative strategies (e.g., Carnwell & Buchanan, 2008; Pycroft & Gough, 2019), which have shown great promise in addressing crime victims’ needs, reducing future victimization, and increasing satisfaction among those seeking help and keeping society safe. It is now well-understood that policing in a diverse society requires multi-agency, community-based approaches (Pycros & Gough, 2019) that take scientific research into consideration and work on sustained partnerships (e.g. www.popcenter.org). Law enforcement practitioners, therefore, are working closely with others in the community such as victim service professionals, researchers, etc. to better understand, analyze, and respond to crime - and perpetrators as well as victims.

Law enforcement officers respond to a variety of calls for service, some of which involve repeat crime victims, offenders, and events. Domestic situations, for example, comprise one of the most
common calls for service (Eigenberg et al., 2012) with domestic violence being a common crime (Catalano et al., 2009). It is important to note that most of these victims do not reach out for help from formal institutions like police (Breiding et al., 2014; Tjaden & Thoennes, 2000); in fact, they are less likely to do so than other victims of violence due to fear of reprisal, privacy issues, and other concerns (e.g., Felson et al., 2002) and we “severely underestimate the magnitude of the problem” (Roe, 2004). Instead, these crime victims are more likely to seek social support from family, friends, and social service agencies (Kaukinen, 2004). When they do reach out for help from the police, it is most often after repeat incidents that have escalated in frequency and severity, and when weapons and injury are present (Akers & Kaukinen, 2002). Like these victims, sexual assault survivors commonly hesitate to report their victimization for numerous reasons, including shame/self-blame and the belief that their credibility may be questioned due to risk-taking behavior, clothing styles, or other factors (O’Neal, 2019), and child victims are often hidden and largely unable to report their victimizations (Finkelhor et al., 2012).

Historically, and tied to cultural factors, victims of gender-based violence have been treated less seriously than other crime victims. They not only have been blamed for another’s actions, but also doubted, dismissed, etc. by police as well as others in the criminal justice system (e.g. Lutze & Symons, 2003), resulting in secondary victimization (Campbell, 1998) that has contributed to consequences like continued abuse and injustice. Education and advocacy (e.g. women’s movement), research (e.g. the Minneapolis Domestic Violence Experiment), and landmark cases (e.g. Thurman v. Torrington, CT), have created changes in the way we understand and process these events - and legislation has been adopted to recognize these offenses as crimes. Officers have shifted from seeing these issues as private or personal matters to those that warrant intervention (Gover et al., 2011), with practices now aiming to protect these crime victims from harm. Although officers have discretion (Lee et al., 2013), law enforcement agencies across the U.S., for instance, now have mandatory or pro-arrest policies in cases of intimate partner violence when there are noticeable indicators of violence (Lutze & Symons, 2003). Additionally, trauma-informed interviewing/training has been increasingly integrated into departmental curriculum. Still, issues remain in the present day that must be addressed to improve police services (e.g. DeJong et al., 2008; Stewart et al., 2013). For example, while shifts in the ways officers think about gender-based violence have been documented, research has found some officers still subscribe to problematic myths and hold negative attitudes towards victims/survivors (e.g., about one-third of officers in one study blamed victims for the perpetrator’s abuse and most felt victims could easily leave if they wanted to (Toon & Hart, 2005); such beliefs can harm crime victims and contribute to negative interactions and outcomes (Johnson, 2004).

Most crime victims do not report victimization to police. It is estimated that around 41% of violent crime victimizations are reported to police, and less property crime victimizations, which includes financial crimes like burglary and theft along with other crimes, are reported (about 33%) according to the National Crime Victimization Survey (Morgan et al., 2020). Variations exist within these results. For example, while some property victimizations are frequently reported (e.g. auto theft), others often are not (Deem et al., 2007; Morgan et al., 2020). These crime victims may not come forward for many reasons, including thinking that their victimization is not significant enough to report it, believing the police might not be able to do anything about it, fear of being blamed, etc. Consequently, most crime is not reported to law enforcement and thereby not reflected in most crime data sources, which seriously underestimates the extent of crime (victimization surveys, however, help us see the “dark figure” of crime). Of those who do report their victimization to police, around half express unfavorable encounters whereby their experiences were minimized, disbelieved, denied, or dismissed (e.g. Patterson, 2011; Stephens & Sinden, 2000). Such secondary victimization (Campbell, 1998) further harms those already harmed and it may contribute to or exacerbate negative mental health, social, behavioral, and other outcomes (e.g. Halder & Jaishankar, 2011; Patterson, 2011; Sigurvinsdottir & Ullman, 2015). Because law enforcement is a heavily masculinized institution, some crime victims may hesitate coming forward due to fear that police will
identify with male perpetrators and fail to support or otherwise protect female victims from harm (e.g. Xie & Baumer, 2019), due to internalized gender perceptions that a man can/should deal with his own victimization, or other reasons. Some officers may indeed hold such problematic attitudes toward crime victims that can be discouraging, ill-disposed, etc.

In recent years, research has emerged on crime victims’ decisions to call police (e.g. Kaukinen, 2002; Xie & Baumer, 2019), their perceptions of police (e.g., Koster et al., 2016) and police interviews (e.g. Holmberg, 2004), their satisfaction with police (e.g. Tweksbury & West, 2001), and more. The findings overall show that crime victims’ decisions to report victimization to authorities vary not only across crimes, but also across gender, race, and other lines. Complexities exist relating to these factors and other characteristics/dynamics. Research shows, for example, that reporting varies based on one’s racial background (e.g. Kaukinen, 2004), yet there are mixed results relating to whether certain groups are more or less likely to report victimization to police (e.g. studies show that persons of color are more likely to report intimate partner victimization to police than White counterparts but less likely to report for some other crimes). Nevertheless, given the challenging nature of crime reporting and coming forward to police for support, it is important to examine how justice practitioners see and assist crime victims. Research suggests that officers’ ability to demonstrate understanding and empathy towards crime victims can increase satisfaction (e.g. Maddox et al., 2011).

The interactions crime victims have with law enforcement can contribute to assistance, resource connection, etc., which can facilitate their healing, justice engagement, and more. However, when problematic encounters or reactions are experienced, harm and injustice result. Cultural beliefs/group social norms - along with individual attitudes and preferences - may influence officers’ treatment of crime victims, the likelihood of supporting crime victims, and their willingness to work with victim services. This has obvious implications for justice outcomes. Officer views/reactions to crime victims have the potential to help or harm them. If these victims are doubted, blamed, or otherwise attacked, they may not cooperate and offenders therefore will not be brought to justice (Kaiser et al., 2017). Since police represent important agents who can help victims pursue justice, understanding their beliefs and interactions may help facilitate justice outcomes. Investigating whether bias or misunderstandings exist in agencies is therefore paramount to justice. If we can be confident that officers are well attuned to the realities of victimization and related issues, and if we understand whether they are also open to working with other agencies that victims may consider, we can better assess the prospect of integrative practices that meet the needs of crime victims. A small portion of the population accounts for a large portion of those who experience victimization (Bland & Ariel, 2020) and research shows that those who use victim services can significantly reduce future victimizations (Xie & Lynch, 2017). As such, when crime victims come into contact with police, it is imperative for police to treat them fairly and objectively, and to connect them with social support that can address resource loss or other harms, to better meet the needs these victims may have.

Researchers have spent considerable time studying police occupational and organizational culture, including those involving citizens (see Paoline, 2003). Recently, studies of police perceptions of crime victims, victim services, and officer-related roles/responsibilities in victim response (the main areas in this study) have taken place. Officer perceptions involving others are important to examine as whether or not officers subscribe to myths/misconceptions can influence and impact the treatment of crime victims, willingness to collaborate with victims services, and more. Various instruments have been created and tested to study law enforcement attitudes towards crime victims. Many focus on gender violence (e.g. intimate partner violence, sexual violence, and stalking); and these have been helpful in addressing many misperceptions and myths. Examples include tools related to trauma reactions (e.g., Franklin et al., 2020), rape and domestic violence myths (e.g., Garza & Franklin, 2021; Gerger et al., 2007), and victim-blaming attitudes or beliefs (Venema, 2019). Other tools also exist. Generally speaking, research shows that cases
falling outside stereotypical views impact the thoughts and actions of officers. One study by O’Neal (2017) found that officers challenged victims’ credibility of rape when the victimization differed from what they thought was “real rape” (stranger, force, etc.), there was inconsistency in victim statements/testimony, and “character flaws” relating to mental health, activities, etc. were observed. Other studies also revealed that officer beliefs impact practice (Goodsen et al., 2020; Lutze & Symons, 2003). Goodsen and colleagues (2022) note that research on cultural myths suggest that misconceptions shape expectations and create challenging power dynamics that influence interactions with crime victims and the respective outcomes. Accordingly, we would like to learn about officers’ perceptions of crime victims of gender violence, and, because many other persons also experience victimization, we would also like to learn about officers’ perceptions of victims of financial and other crimes to see whether myths exist and whether they relate to officers’ service referrals.

Beyond officers’ perceptions of crime victims, recent studies have explored officers’ perceptions relating to the role police officers have in victim response, such as for intimate partner violence, sexual assault, and other victims (e.g., Lynch & Logan, 2015; Johnson & Dai, 2016). For example, one study looked at officers' willingness to help victims of intimate partner violence, arrest perpetrators, and provide support, finding that they were more likely to do so when they identified strongly with the in-group but did so to a lesser extent when they belonged to an out-group (Baldry & Pagliaro, 2014) [other studies also found that concentrated disadvantage increased the likelihood for perpetrator arrest - Lee et al., 2013]. Additionally, studies have looked into whether officers feel prepared for victim response by asking them about training in the academy and on the job, in addition to other factors, and how this impacts their performances (Watson et al., 2014).

Research has also commenced on officer perceptions of and engagement with victim services (e.g., Goodsen et al., 2020; 2022). The findings show that officer characteristics relate to police-initiated victim service referral (e.g. Goodson et al., 2020; Stalans & Finn, 1995, 2000), and the likelihood for referrals is increased when the victim is younger in age and when physical abuse is present (Goodsen et al., 2022). Research has demonstrated that victim services such as advocacy and counseling can greatly assist crime victims in addressing the loss of resources, safety, and healing (e.g. Bennett et al., 2004); these services are often rated by victims/survivors as the most important type of support (Erez & Belknap, 1998). Further, the use of such services relates to reductions in subsequent victimization - around a 40% reduction compared to a 34% reduction associated with reporting only to police (Goodsen et al., 2022). As such, victim services represent a vital component to justice, yet we know little about whether officers resist assisting crime victims by connecting them to victim services. This is especially important to examine here as policing, like other criminal justice careers, is a masculinized occupation that focuses on being “tough”, apprehending offenders, etc. while social services are frequently feminized and seen as “soft”, thereby possibly presenting conflicting views that create boundaries to working together in service of others (Buzawa & Buzawa, 2003; Roberg, 2004).

Still, studies commonly overlook officer perceptions of challenges they face in serving these crime victims, which could be beneficial to understand as it may help to consider training or strategies that can better inform and shape future response. These should be examined and understood in the local context. Crime victims suffer serious costs and consequences associated with victimization, and this may lead to maladaptive behavior (e.g. substance use) which officers may encounter when responding to calls. Social, economic, and other issues may also be present in communities that impact interpersonal relationships and encounters. As such, it is critical to provide crime victims with support that may protect them and increase wellbeing while also reducing future victimization and preventing maladaptive behavior.

In summary, in addition to studying perceptions officers have of many different kinds of crime victims, this study will look at officers’ perceptions of their role in victim response and their perceptions
of victim services to see if there are group patterns warranting attention/intervention and discussion. It will also explore officer-related concerns/challenges to learn whether there are any obstacles to serving crime victims, what they may be, and whether new strategies that integrate victim service specialists into the police department can help better serve crime victims in our community. Attention will also be given to relevant community factors when contemplating issues and solutions.

2.1 Background Information & Local Context - CCS update in this section?

Following a violent crime decrease from the 1990s to 2015, we witnessed a slight increase in the rates of such victimization across the United States and here in New York. According to The National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS), in 2018, 3.3 million people 12+ years of age were the victims of violent crimes and there were an estimated 6.0 million violent incidents (Morgan & Oudekerk, 2019); in 2017, there were 3.1 million victims and 5.2 million incidents (Morgan & Truman, 2018). Preliminary reports from COVID-19 years suggest that the pandemic has contributed to an increase in violent crimes across the country (e.g. homicide - Coreley, 2021; domestic violence - Boman & Gallupe, 2020; Sharma & Borah, 2020). Such victimizations disproportionately affect marginalized groups (e.g., low-income, racial/ethnic minority, etc.- see Black et al., 2011; Rennison & Welchans, 2000). Also, over half of criminal victimizations are not reported to police (Morgan & Truman, 2020), indicating more needs to be done to bridge the gap between crime victims and law enforcement officers who are, based on the nature of their interactions, victim-responders. Collaborative approaches that combine law enforcement with victim services, then, become increasingly important for knowing about and responding to crime in ways that meet crime victims’ justice needs.

Because crime has various impacts on individuals (as well as families and communities), there is a need to support crime victims/survivors to effectively address the consequences of victimization. In 2021 (March), Cayuga Counseling Services, Inc. partnered with the Cayuga County Sheriff’s Office to implement the County’s second Law Enforcement Based Victim Specialist Program (the first being with the Auburn Police Department). This funding opportunity capitalized on our community-based partnership and the engagement of professionals from cross-disciplines to develop a comprehensive and collaborative approach in responding to and providing support for those who have been victimized. The Cayuga County Sheriff’s Department is the local public law enforcement Agency in Cayuga County which is located in the Central New York Region of upstate NY. The County has a population size of 76,576. Of the total population 50,122 live outside the only city in the County, Auburn. Cayuga County is a rural county whose geography alone can make accessing services difficult for those who reside in the northern and southern parts of the County. The County is 70 miles long with only one city, which can be more than a 45-minute drive from the farthest parts of the County. The size and rural nature of the county presents unique challenges to providing law enforcement and victim advocacy services to those that do not live within or near the City of Auburn. Almost all services offered are concentrated in that city (Auburn), which leaves many residents of Cayuga County with very limited access to resources.

The Cayuga County Sheriff’s Office is a small full-time agency consisting of 32 active sworn police officers, and the Sheriff’s Office Patrol Division covers three shifts and includes Road Patrol and a Criminal Investigations Unit. All officers identify as White (100%) and most are male (84.4%). Although the community may be remote, it has not remained isolated from the devastating effects of crime.

-In 2018, the Sheriff’s Office responded to 17,502 calls for service. The Patrol Division investigated 13 physical assaults, 9 sexual assaults, 6 robbery cases, 59 burglary, and responded to 501 domestic violence incidents with 389 total arrests.
-In 2019 the agency received 16,349 calls for service and investigated 12 physical assaults, 10 sexual assaults, 2 robbery cases, 48 burglaries, responded to 565 domestic violence incidents and made 439 arrests.
In 2020, the Sheriff’s Office responded to 15,432 calls for service. The Patrol Division investigated 15 physical assaults, 12 sexual assaults, 6 robbery cases, 73 burglaries, and responded to 534 domestic violence incidents with 394 total arrests.

In 2021, the agency received 15,293 calls for service and investigated 17 physical assaults, 8 sexual assaults, 1 robbery, 58 burglaries, and responded to 468 domestic violence incidents with 417 total arrests.

Since March 15, 2021, when the Victim Specialist began providing services, over 100 victims of crime have been provided with direct supportive services following their victimization (108 in the first year). This points to a need for victim services within policing, as many crime victims who were referred to the specialist by officers used services offered to them.

2.2 Aim of the Study/Purpose

The current study aims to examine CCSO’s perceptions of crime victims, their roles/responsibilities in victim response, and victim services as well as their use of victim services and any challenges/obstacles that might exist that impact practice. Specifically, we ask:

\textbf{RQ1:} “Do officers subscribe to victim-related myths (e.g. on trauma, victim presentation, victim blaming)?”

\textbf{RQ2:} “Do officers believe they have a role/responsibility in victim response? Does the agency seem to support such activities?”

\textbf{RQ3:} “Do officers feel comfortable collaborating with victim services? What do they see as advantages/disadvantages to doing so?”

Other items will also be explored. In all, the study will allow us to examine law enforcement officers’ perceptions to learn about whether there are (un)favorable attitudes toward assisting crime victims and working with victim services, and whether there are training recommendations, promise for continued/sustained partnerships, and so on. In all, the data collected will be useful in learning about how persons served as viewed by officers, whether officers believe serving crime victims tied into their duties, and what officers see as the main advantages/disadvantages relating to victim services. The information derived from this will be used to consider strategies and shape actions that impact future practice.

3. Methodology

This study explores the culture of officers in CCSO through an examination of law enforcement officers’ attitudes/beliefs pertaining to crime victims, officer roles/responsibilities in assisting crime victims, and perceptions of victim services and victim service specialists to learn more about patterns and whether group/individuals norms exist that may affect officers’ ability to serve crime victims or work with victim services. To reach these goals, we relied on a mixed-methods approach. Through an anonymous online survey, responses will allow us to analyze culture by reflecting on group patterns indicative of perceptions/norms - and through in-person interviews, we can gain deeper insights into individuals’ views relating to crime victims, officer-victim dynamics, and the viability of sustaining a collaborative victim service partnership.

3.1 Participants and Procedures

Part 1 of the study involved an \textit{anonymous online survey} (see Appendix). We first located and reviewed existing research to identify relevant factors and tools that could assist us in the process of learning about law enforcement officers’ perceptions of crime victims, the victim specialist program, and their roles and responsibilities in victim response. For the section on crime victims, we included measures
asking about crime victims based on trauma (Franklin et al., 2020), victim myths (Garza & Franklin, 2021; Gerger et al., 2007), and victim blaming (e.g., Venema, 2019). For the section on office roles/responsibilities, we focused on duties and job-related items (Baldry & Pagliaro, 2014; Johnson & Dai, 2016), and for the section on victim services, we looked at attitudes towards victim services/advocates (e.g., Goodsen et al., 2020). We also adapted performance monitoring materials from the Enhancing Law Enforcement Response to Victims (ELERV) project site, which was the predecessor program to LEV, provided by the IACP, through the Law Enforcement and the Communities They Serve: Supporting Collective Healing in the Wake of Harm. This was used to consider questions relating to perceptions of crime victims more broadly and to learn more about perceptions of officer roles, responsibilities, and training while the previous items were reviewed for content in the three areas being studied (i.e., crime victims, officer roles/responsibilities, victim services). In short, we adapted our measures from existing projects in ways that worked well for our collaboration. We then added additional items based on our needs. The measures mostly included statements about crime victims, officer roles/responsibilities in serving crime victims, and victim services that officers would respond to on a Likert-scale (ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree). The survey sought to be inclusive in the different types of crime victims who officers may encounter. While much of the existing research focuses on crimes of gender violence, we expanded the kinds of crime victims to include these as well as other victims (e.g., financial crime victims, special groups). Additional inquiries were made into officers’ perceptions, interactions, experiences, and behavior.

The survey we created was distributed to all sworn officers in the department (n = 32). It was estimated to take 10 minutes to complete. An invitation to participate in the survey was sent to all CCSO officers during National Crime Victims’ Rights week. Two follow up email invitations were also sent to increase the response rate. The survey was open for approximately one month and yielded a high response rate (75.0%, n = 24). This information generated our quantitative results, which will be discussed later in this section.

Part 2 of the study involved conducting in-person interviews with a sample of officers using a semi-structured questionnaire (see Appendix) developed for purposes of this study. The questionnaire contained items about the three key areas (i.e., perceptions of crime victims, officer roles/responsibilities, and victim services) and also asked about actual use of victim services. Officers were also asked about challenges they think crime victims have, obstacles they encounter, advantages/disadvantages associated with victim service collaboration, and more.

Research has suggested that 6-12 interviews are needed to reach saturation of 70-92% (see Guest et al.’s (2006)). We invited 16 officers total to participate. The sampling frame involved 32 officers: Sheriff (3.1%, n = 1), Undersheriff (3.1%, n = 1), Deputy Sheriff Lieutenant (3.1%, n = 1), Deputy Sheriff Sergeant (15.6%, n = 5), Deputy Sheriff (53.1%, n = 17), Detectives (15.6%, n = 5), and identification Officers (6.2%, n = 2). There were seven different titles/ranks and we employed purposive sampling to reach a diverse sample of participants. Although not statistically representative, this strategy was selected as it is frequently relied upon by researchers when trying to reach people and because findings do not have to be statistically representative of the greater population to be qualitatively generalizable. Maximum variation through selecting officers from various ranks and backgrounds was used to produce a diverse range of responses. This derived much of our qualitative information, which was used to provide contextual information relating to the three areas noted to deepen our analysis.

3.2 Data Quality Issues & Challenges

The anonymous online survey yielded a high response rate, especially when considering that online surveys typically result in fewer than half the respondents participating. Around 75.0% of the sample (n =
24 of 32) participated, most of whom selected responses to the items (i.e., 20 or more officers of the 24 who participated answered most/all questions).

The in-person interviews proved to be more challenging. We initially invited 10 and hoped that 6-9 would be willing to accept the invitation. We heard back from two respondents who completed the interview. We reached out to other officers via follow up emails and, after a period of time passed, moved onto other possible respondents. In all, we sent invitations to 16 officers from various ranks, and we received two volunteers. Part of the challenge, as noted by members of the team, was that several email addresses blocked communications from the LEV Project email address and bounced back. We then asked the Sheriff to assist us by sharing the invitation with all sworn officers, although this did not yield any additional interviews.

Another challenge experienced related to receiving data for the incident-based reports to look at patterns of crime in the county pre- and post-implementation of the Victim Service Specialist Program. Although several requests were placed for the data, we did not receive this. There appeared to be challenges with the system and so we did not gain access to these reports. Instead, we were provided summary information that is contained in the current report. As such, we could not examine crime victimization patterns pre- and post- implementation of the victim service specialist in the CCSO and conduct analyses for an outcome evaluation here. Our report, therefore, focuses only on findings from the online survey and in-person interviews, which has given us much to work with in terms of analyzing agency culture and whether/how perceptions may impact interactions with crime victims and collaboration with victim services.

4. Results

The online survey produced descriptive information that allowed us to visualize patterns while the in-person interviews generated deeper insights on officers’ perceptions and actions.

4.1 Online Survey

The survey data revealed that most officers who responded were Male (80.0%, n = 16), followed by Female (15.0%, n = 3), and “Rather not say” (5.0%, n = 1). All respondents were White (100.0%, n = 20). Nearly two-thirds of the respondents had completed some college or had an associate degree (60.0%, n = 12), about one-fifth had a bachelor’s degree (20.0%, n = 4), and a smaller percentage had a high school diploma (15.0%, n = 3). The mean years of officer service is 13 years, with a range of 1 to 25 (s.d. = 8.6). Responses on position included a range of positions such as Sheriff, Undersheriff, Deputy Sheriff, Sergeant, Detective, and Patrol Officer.

Officers were next asked about perceptions relating to crime victims, officer roles/responsibilities, and victim services, with all items on a Likert scale containing response categories ranging from Strongly Disagree (1) to Strongly Agree (5). For ease of reporting and interpreting the results, attitudinal responses were collapsed into three groupings - strongly disagree/disagree, neutral, and agree/strongly agree (note: the full five category response options and results can be found in the materials in the Appendix - see Tables & Charts). Additionally, for items that apply, we assigned a Myth Awareness Rating for appropriate items. A ✓/green indicates that most officer responses, or at least the largest choice grouping, reflected the most desirable response option (i.e., low endorsement of myths or high endorsement of realities); on a few occasions, we noted when items were in line with expectations yet should be
revisited/discussed with a ✓/orange if over 10% of the officers subscribed to the myth/misperception. Also, we noted X/red when the item was misunderstood.

4.1.1 Officer Perceptions of Crime Victims

The survey items responded to by officers relating to perceptions of crime victims (see “Perceptions (of Crime Victims)” in 7.1 Survey in the Appendix) are discussed below. We presented statements into four areas based on discussions we had together: general, gender-based violence, financial crimes, and other.

GENERAL

1. A crime victim’s reluctance to give a detailed account of the crime to an officer is an indicator of the accuracy of their statement.

This statement is generally false. Many crime victims may be reluctant to give detailed accounts of crimes to police, and their reluctance is not an indicator of the accuracy of their statement. As previously noted, there are many reasons people may hesitate to report crimes to police and so they may be timid about disclosing details when they do. The results for this item revealed that 39.1% (n = 9) of officers strongly disagreed or disagreed with the statement and the same percent, 39.1% (n = 9), were neutral. About 21.7% (n = 5) agreed; no one strongly agreed. Myth Awareness Rating: ✓ (But please revisit/discuss this item with officers)

2. A crime victim’s inability to recall details about the event is reason to question the accuracy of his/her statement.

Crime victims respond differently to their victimization. Sometimes, victims are unable to recall details about traumatic events and this is a natural response to unnatural occurrences as documented by medical and social scientific research. The results for this item revealed that most officer perceptions reflect this understanding as 56.5% (n = 13) of officers disagreed with the statement (but no one strongly) while 26.1% (n = 6) were neutral and 17.4% (n = 4) agreed (no one strongly). Myth Awareness Rating: ✓ (Please revisit/discuss)

3. Crime victims’ reactions differ between people with different cultural backgrounds.

This statement is largely true. Cultural and ethnic identities of crime victims can influence their perspectives on the victimization. The results for this item revealed that most officer perceptions reflect this understanding as 82.6% (n = 19) of officers agreed or strongly agreed with the statement while 13.0% (n = 3) were neutral and only 4.4% (n = 1) disagreed (no one strongly). Myth Awareness Rating: ✓

4. The type of relationship a crime victim and perpetrator have (e.g. intimate, peer, stranger) influences the victim’s emotional expressions and behavior.
The results for this item revealed that nearly all officers held this perception; 82.6% (n = 19) of officers agreed or strongly agreed with the statement and 17.4% (n = 4) were neutral. No one disagreed or strongly disagreed with this statement. *Myth Awareness Rating: ✓*

**GENDER BASED VIOLENCE**

7. *Victims of intimate partner violence often provoke their partners’ violence.*

The only person responsible for violence is the one perpetrating it. The results for this item revealed that 60.9% (n = 14) of the officers strongly disagreed/disagreed with the statement, suggesting most hold this attitude. About 26.1% (n = 6) were neutral while 13.0% (n = 3) agreed (no one strongly agreed) with this statement. *Myth Awareness Rating: ✓ (Please revisit/discuss)*

8. *Women who stay in abusive relationships are to blame for their own victimization because if it really were bad, they would leave.*

A symptom of being abused in staying in a harmful relationship. This reflects the phenomenon of learned helplessness. The results for this item revealed that 91.3% (n = 21) of the officers strongly disagreed or disagreed with the statement, which shows they are aware of this reality. About 8.7% (n = 2) were neutral. No one agreed or strongly agreed with this statement. *Myth Awareness Rating: ✓*

9. *When a man is accused of rape, it is more often than not due to a woman who misinterprets or lies about what happened, or seeks retaliation for some kind of relationship failure.*

This is false. The results for this item revealed that 87.0% of the officers strongly disagreed or disagreed (n = 20) with the statement, suggesting most hold this attitude. Around 13.0% (n = 3) were neutral. No one agreed or strongly agreed with this statement. *Myth Awareness Rating: ✓*

11. *In same-sex relationships, the more masculine, bigger and/or stronger partner is typically the abuser.*

This is a myth. The results for this item revealed that 70.2% (n = 17) of the officers strongly disagreed or disagreed with the statement, suggesting most hold this attitude. About 26.1% (n = 6) were neutral and no one agreed or strongly agreed with this statement. *Myth Awareness Rating: ✓*

**FINANCIAL & CYBER CRIMES**

6. *Victims of financial crimes face limited consequences compared to other crimes - mainly loss of money, but rarely other harms.*
The results for this item revealed that 51.7% (n = 12) of officers strongly disagreed or disagreed with the statement. About 21.7% (n = 5) were neutral and 26.1.0% (n = 6) agreed (no one strongly). *Myth Awareness Rating: ✓ (Please revisit/discuss)*

10. Technology-facilitated violence (e.g. cyberbullying, cyberstalking, etc.) is not real violence and those experiencing it should ignore it.

Cyber, digital, and technology-facilitated harms have consequences that parallel other kinds of crime victimization. The results for this item revealed that 78.3% (n = 18) of the officers strongly disagreed or disagreed with the statement, which shows awareness. About 17.4% (n = 4) were neutral and 4.4% (n = 1) agreed (no one strongly) with this statement. *Myth Awareness Rating: ✓*

**OTHER**

5. A person injured during an attempt to buy drugs is a victim.

The results for this item revealed that nearly half of the officers who responded agreed or strongly agreed (47.8%, n = 11) with the statement. However, 26.1% (n = 6) were neutral and 26.1% (n = 6) disagreed or strongly disagreed with this statement. *Myth Awareness Rating: ✓ (Please revisit/discuss)*

12. Homeless individuals perpetrate crime more often than they are victims of it.

This is false as they are more likely to be victims than perpetrators. The results for this item revealed that 43.5% (n = 10) were neutral, 34.8% of the officers (n = 8) disagreed (no one strongly disagreed), and 21.7% (n = 5) agreed (no one strongly agreed). *Myth Awareness Rating: X (Address)*

13. Alcohol is often the culprit underlying most violence.

Alcohol brings out behavior in individuals who are predisposed to acting in a certain way. Not everyone who drinks becomes violent, meaning that alcohol is a facilitator but not a true cause of one’s behavior (if it were causal, everyone who consumes it would become violent). The results for this item revealed that 8.7% (n = 2) of the officers disagreed (no one strongly) with the statement, which shows awareness by those individuals on this item. However, about 60.9% (n = 14) were neutral and 30.4% (n = 7) agreed or strongly agreed with this statement. *Myth Awareness Rating: X (Address)*

14. Individuals experiencing mental or behavioral health issues are more likely to be victims compared to those who are not experiencing these issues.

This is a true statement. Persons with mental health issues experience higher rates of victimization than their counterparts. The results for this item revealed that 26.1% (n = 9) agreed (no one strongly agreed), 34.8% (n = 8) were neutral, and 39.1% (n = 9) disagreed (no one strongly disagreed). *Myth Awareness Rating: X (Address)*
15. Perpetrators of crime also commonly have histories of victimization.

This is true. However, most officers were neutral here. The results for this item revealed that 34.8% (n = 8) of the officers agreed with the statement (no only strongly agreed), around 43.5% (n = 10) were neutral, and 21.7% (n = 5) disagreed (no one strongly disagreed). Myth Awareness Rating: X (Address)

16. Many crime victims exaggerate the extent to which they have been harmed.

This is a myth. The results for this item revealed that 52.2% (n = 12) of the officers disagreed with the statement (no one strongly), suggesting most hold this attitude. About 43.5% (n = 10) were neutral and 4.4% (n = 1) agreed (no one strongly agreed) with this statement. Myth Awareness Rating: ✓

17. After a crime, victims receive ample support (e.g., therapy, counseling, shelters, etc.).

According to research, most crime victims do not receive the support they seek or need. The results for this item revealed that 52.2% (n = 12) were neutral, 26.1% (n = 6) strongly disagreed or disagreed, and 21.7% (n = 5) agreed or strongly agreed with this statement. Myth Awareness Rating: X (Address).

4.1.2 Officer Perceptions of Roles/Responsibilities in Victim Response & Preparation

RESPONSIBILITIES

18. As an officer, my job is to respond to calls for serving and ensure safety of the public/citizens through investigating crimes and apprehending offenders; it is not to help crime victims with the needs they may have.

The results for this item revealed that 85.7% (n = 18) of the officers strongly disagreed or disagreed with the statement, and 14.3% (n = 3) were neutral. No one agreed/strongly agreed with this statement.

19. As an officer, I believe that it is my responsibility to connect crime victims with community support/resources that can assist them.

The results for this item revealed that 85.7% (n = 18) of the officers agreed/strongly agreed with the statement, 9.5% (n = 2) were neutral and 4.8% (n = 1) disagreed (no one strongly disagreed).

20. Too many social problems like mental health, substance abuse, and other social service needs are often hefted onto the police.

The results for this item revealed that 76.2% (n = 16) of the officers agreed/strongly agreed with the statement, 9.5% (n = 2) were neutral and 14.3% (n = 3) strongly disagreed/disagreed with this statement. This may be reflected upon.

TRAINING/PREPARATION
21. I feel that I received adequate training while in the Academy on providing support when interacting with victims, both on and off scene.

The results for this item revealed that 45.0% (n = 9) of the officers agreed/strongly agreed with the statement, 20.0% (n = 4) were neutral and 35.0% (n = 7) strongly disagreed/disagreed with this statement. This is an item worth revisiting and discussing as over one-third believed training was inadequate.

22. I feel that I received adequate training within the Academy to address the needs and understand the differences across a diversity of victims and crime types.

The results for this item revealed that 45.0% (n = 9) of the officers agreed/strongly agreed with the statement, 15.0% (n = 3) were neutral and 40.0% (n = 8) strongly disagreed/disagreed with this statement. This is an item worth revisiting and discussing.

23. I have continued to receive formal training that is relevant and useful on providing support when interacting with victims, both on scene and off scene, since graduating from the Academy.

The results for this item revealed that 71.4% (n = 15) of the officers agreed/strongly agreed with the statement, 14.3% (n = 3) were neutral and 14.3% (n = 3) disagreed with this statement. This may be discussed/reflected upon.

24. When responding to victims on scene, I’ve been trained to immediately ensure the safety of victims, render first aid to all harmed individuals, and to request medical assistance as needed.

The results for this item revealed that 100% (n = 21) of the officers agreed or strongly agreed with the statement.

25. When responding on scene, I’ve been trained to ensure emotionally distraught victims are not left alone and receive access to crisis intervention.

The results for this item revealed that 90.5% (n = 19) of the officers agreed/strongly agreed with the statement and 9.5% (n = 2) were neutral. No one disagreed/strongly disagreed.

26. When responding on scene, I’ve been trained to be perceptive and patient to the victim’s psychological state while obtaining evidence.

The results for this item revealed that 90.5% (n = 19) of the officers agreed/strongly agreed with the statement, and 9.5% (n = 2) disagreed with this statement (no one strongly).

27. When responding on scene, I’ve been trained to consider the method, manner, location, and timing of the victim interview to best meet the needs of the victim and gather meaningful information from him/her.

The results for this item revealed that 85.7% (n = 18) of the officers agreed/strongly agreed with the statement, 4.8% (n = 1) were neutral and 9.5% (n = 2) disagreed with this statement.
28. When responding on scene, I’ve been trained to document in my report that the victim was provided with information and referrals regarding relevant victim services. The results for this item revealed that 90.4% (n = 19) of the officers agreed/strongly agreed with the statement, 4.8% (n = 1) were neutral and 4.8% (n = 1) disagreed (no one strongly) with this statement.

29. I feel equipped to effectively advise victims of rights and services that might help them deal with their victimization. The results for this item revealed that 85.7% (n = 18) of the officers agreed/strongly agreed with the statement, 4.8% (n = 1) were neutral and 9.5% (n = 2) disagreed (no one strongly disagreed).

30. I am knowledgeable about what services for victims are available in my jurisdiction to adequately inform victims. The results for this item revealed that 71.4% (n = 15) of the officers agreed/strongly agreed with the statement, 23.8% (n = 5) were neutral and 4.8% (n = 1) disagreed with this statement (no one strongly disagreed).

31. I am confident in my abilities to effectively respond to all types of crime victims, no matter their age, race, other characteristics, such as disability or mental health status. The results for this item revealed that 90.4% (n = 19) of the officers agreed/strongly agreed with the statement, 4.8% (n = 1) were neutral and 4.8% (n = 1) disagreed with this statement.

32. I have adequate time during calls for service and ensuing investigations to follow-up with victims of crime. The results for this item revealed that 29.6% (n = 6) of the officers agreed/strongly agreed with the statement, 33.3% (n = 7) were neutral, and 38.1% (n = 8) strongly disagreed/disagreed with this statement. This is worth revisiting and discussing as the largest response group disagreed.

33. I am encouraged to follow-up with victims, in the aftermath of an incident/crime, outside of specific calls for service. The results for this item revealed that 61.9% (n = 13) of the officers agreed/strongly agreed with the statement, 19.1% (n = 4) were neutral and 19.1% (n = 4) strongly disagreed/disagreed. This may be discussed.

4.1.3 Officer Perceptions of Victim Services
34. In general, seeking mental health or other related kinds of services is a sign of weakness; if the person were stronger, they would not need to rely on others.

The results for this item revealed that 95.27% (n = 20) of the officers strongly disagreed or disagreed with the statement. However, 4.8% (n = 1) agreed. Myth Awareness Rating: ✓

35. I believe that victim services are primarily for victims of violent interpersonal crimes (e.g. physical or sexual assault).

The results for this item revealed that 81.0% (n = 17) of the officers strongly disagreed or disagreed with the statement and around 19% (n = 4) were neutral. No one agreed/strongly with this statement. Myth Awareness Rating: ✓

36. Victim specialists who work to raise awareness or advocate on behalf of victims often conflict with officers and the work they do.

The results for this item revealed that 81.0% (n = 17) of the officers strongly disagreed or disagreed with the statement, 14.3% (n = 3) were neutral, and 4.8% (n = 1) agreed (no one strongly) with this statement. Myth Awareness Rating: ✓

37. I think that police and victim services can work well together in responding to crime victims and their justice needs.

The results for this item revealed that 90.5% (n = 19) agreed or strongly agreed with the statement and about 9.5% (n = 2) were neutral. No one disagreed or strongly disagreed. Myth Awareness Rating: ✓

38. I have a working relationship and/or direct line of communication with victim services staff.

The results for this item revealed that 85.7% (n = 18) agreed or strongly agreed with the statement, 14.3% (n = 3) were neutral. No one disagreed or strongly disagreed. Myth Awareness Rating: ✓

4.1.4 Other

Additional findings include:

-About half the officers in our sample reported receiving specific training on responding to crime victims other than what they learned while on the job (50.0%, n = 10) while the other half did not (50.0%, n = 10).

-In the past month, slightly more than one-third of the officers made no referrals to victim services for crime victims (40.0%, n = 8) while about two-thirds (60.0%, n = 12) made referrals. Of those who engaged in the referral process, about one-quarter made 1-3 referrals in the past month (25.0%, n = 5), about one quarter made a referral about once a week (25.0%, n = 5), and about 10% made referrals several times a week (n = 2). In the past year, all officers (100%, n = 20) made at least one referral.
About 40.0% did so 16+ times (n = 8). This was the most common and followed by 1-3 referrals (25.0%, n = 5), then 4-6 and 7-10 referrals (each at 15.0%, n = 3), followed by 11-15 referrals (5.0%, n = 1).

-Referral determinations were grouped into the following themes:

  - *Type of call/crime severity (5x)*
  - *Officer sees someone in need, “family or housing concerns”, “mental health”, etc. (4x)*
  - *Signs/symptoms (e.g. victims’ emotional state, mannerisms, distress, injuries, etc.) (3x)*
  - *Crime victims’ desire/willingness to be connected to a specialist/request for help (3x)*
  - *Officer determines there is applicable resource (1x)*
  - *Services outside what police have time or ability to do (1x)*
  - *Availability/access to services (1x)*

The findings revealed the majority of officers take the time to process the situation and connect crime victims with services, yet a few officers may rely on crime victims to express their needs before connecting them to services. *Standard, routine practices whereby officers explain services to crime victims they encounter, regardless of personal perceptions or of victim request, are strongly recommended and encouraged.* Most officers noted that they were comfortable making service referrals. Some shared referrals were standard practice and “mandatory” for certain crimes like domestic abuse. The few who noted issues shared that it was due to timing and being “after business hours” and one officer said, “if the victim is adamant that they do not desire assistance, I notify the advocate of same and leave it to their discretion. If the crime is prosecuted, there is a secondary advocate through the DA’s Office as a catch-fall.” Only one respondent reported being deterred from making referrals “dishonesty or embellishment” was detected, which is worth further discussion (determinations of truth/honesty may be subjective and therefore should not preclude connections to support services).

Last, when officers were asked for additional comments, the majority expressed appreciation/gratitude for victim services, as revealed by a sample comments:

- “*Our county has a great working relationship between law enforcement and our various local providers to include mental health and the various victim services in the area. *”
- “*Victims advocates are needed. Additional resources like this are also needed. Hopefully 24/7 one day as well. *”
- “*Thank you for doing this important work. *”

A few officers shared some of their concerns (see 7.5 Other in the Appendix), but these were outside the scope of this report. Nevertheless, we highly recommend conversations about these issues to address realities, responsibilities, justice processes, and more in line with the research.

In all, **officer perceptions of victim services were positive, although a few officers expressed challenges with offender-related issues in the community that may impact crime victims.**

4.2 Interviews

To further understand these perceptions, in-person interviews were conducted with a sample of officers using a semi-structured questionnaire (see Appendix). The questionnaire asked a variety of
questions relating to the three primary areas of interest (i.e., crime victims, officer roles/responsibilities in victim response, and victim services). Of those who agreed to participate (n = 6), 50% were male officers and 50% were female; 33.3% were patrol officers, 16.6% were detectives, while 50% held administrative positions such as sergeants, captains, or chiefs. A sample of the questions officers were asked are found in the sections that follow, along with officers’ respective responses.

4.2.1 Common Crime Victims Encountered by Officers

Who are some of the most common crime victims you encounter?

Of the two officers, the most common crime victims encountered included domestic violence victims, theft victims, elders, and children. Both officers found common ground in domestic violence victims being their most common crime victims encountered (100%, n=2). One officer said: “So personally, I’m dealing more with children and domestic-related stuff.” The other officer stated: “For us, I think we see a number of domestic violence victims.” Both officers agreed, however, that the crime victims they encounter can change with specific positions.

What kinds of issues or challenges do you think these crime victims have?

Of the two officers interviewed, one officer commented that housing, financial instability, transportation, and those struggling with mental health are just a few of the many issues these crime victims face. The officer stated: “Depending on domestic violence, housing is very challenging for domestic violence victims to find if they are moving and don’t have a family or support to help them. I think for some it depends on their financial situation such as type of crime. I’ve seen identity theft situations where people have lost their life savings” (50.0%, n =1). The other officer responded that many issues crime victims face are due to them not knowing about available resources in the community or who to contact in a time of crisis. The officer said: “A lot of times I guess it’s trying to navigate who they need to contact. Sometimes people don’t want to bother the police but they do not know what route that they need to take to get themselves help” (16.6%, n=1).

What issues or challenges do you have in responding to these victims?

The two officer responses varied here due each officer’s position. One officer remarked, “I would say that probably knowing how best to know who they need to be connected with. Some of them are pretty obvious and some of them are not.” The other commented, “I certainly would love to have more road patrol deputies to respond to these types of calls. I would love to have additional resources for specialized training. And in a perfect world, I’d love to have the ability to have additional advocates available to have that actually be out there in the field more often to respond directly to these calls for service”.

4.2.2 Officer Perceptions of Crime Victims (More Broadly)

How do crime victims vary in reactions to victimization, interactions/exchanges with police, and needs?

Both officers agreed that victims of gender-based violence are more reluctant to talk to law enforcement about the crimes that have occurred than victims of other kinds of nonviolent crime (100.0%, n=2). One officer said: “With domestic violence, sexual assault victims, it’s kind of a gamut. Some of them are very reluctant to talk to us…whether it just be police involvement or embarrassment or whatever may be the case”. The other officer stated: “They are difficult for us to work with because they may have had a negative experience in the past with law enforcement, or think that we don’t care or don’t want to help them. There can be embarrassment or shame depending on the type of crime.”

4.2.3 Officer Challenges Relating to Crime Victims
Are there certain calls you are tired of responding to or get frustrated with? What do you think can be done in these circumstances/cases?

Both officers responded that they were frustrated by repeat offenders and responding to mental health issues that they are not equipped to deal with (100.0%, n=2). One officer communicated: “We are often tasked with responding to calls as law enforcement officers because there’s nobody else out there to do it”. This specific officer voiced that there needs to be more of a “proactive mental health response to mental health incidents.” The other officer added: “So a lot of the time we will have repeat offenders who have mental health issues, and part of the reason why they’re doing the things that they’re doing is part of their mental health issues.”

4.2.4 Perceptions of Counseling & Familiarity with Victim Services

What are your perceptions on counseling and related social services?

Both officers displayed positive perceptions of counseling and related social services (100.0%, n=2). One officer said: “I think that counseling could be very beneficial for both [victims and offenders]. I think social services is certainly something that is important to provide for our community for people that need additional resources that don’t have the means to meet the basic needs for food or housing or those types of things.” The other added that counseling should be for everyone, not just offenders and victims. This officer stated, “I think that I am of the opinion that everyone is going to need to see a counselor at some point in their life, and there are a lot of people out there that should, but don’t”. Both officers believed there should be readily available resources within the community to aid persons with mental health-related concerns. Further, when asked whether officers should be offered or use these services, officers seemed open yet reluctant. One responded, “I feel like as a police officer, somebody might not go to counseling unless they trust the person, or maybe the person has been vetted by other police officers, and I feel like in any other profession it would be that way as well”.

Have you connected crime victims with victim advocates (a referral)?; if so, tell us about that

Both officers shared that they have made referrals to crime victims for victim advocate or victim services (100.0%, n=2). Although not all officers hold patrol positions, referrals had been made in the past to the victim advocate on site. One officer stated, “I have connected our advocate with individuals and organizations that we partner with and I choose to make that referral any time that I think the advocate can assist somebody that we encounter or somebody that we work with.” The other officer noted, “We actually connect our crime victims quite a bit.” Both officers appeared to have great experiences with the acts of making several referrals to the victim advocate, and they shared that they referred crime victims directly to the victim advocate since the advocate is knowledgeable of available resources in the community.

From your perspective, what are advantages to working with victim specialists/victim services?

Both officers saw advantages to working with victim services. One officer described a positive relationship between the agency and the victim advocate that could improve justice outcomes (50.0%, n=1). This officer said, “I think that the advocate again has the ability to help you work with a victim of crime and get information you need for prosecution that may have been more difficult or maybe impossible to get if you didn’t have that partnership.” The other officer commented that an advantage of a victim advocate is the time dedicated to them (50.0%, n=1). The officer said, “Whereas somebody following up with them, and having the time to follow up with them, or taking that time to follow up with them makes a huge difference.”
4.2.5 Other (see 7.5 in the Appendix)

4.3 Patterns from the Mixed-Method Approach

Culture plays an important role in the everyday functioning of officers. When examining the response distributions for each statement/item, the results point overall to positive processes in play in CCSO. For example, when items were desired to more heavily fall left on attitudinal responses (meaning, that the group would largely fall towards the strongly disagree/disagree options), we found that most officers responded accordingly, with only a few straying from the ideal areas. Likewise, when responses should have fallen right on the distribution (towards agree/strongly agree), we found most officers responded accordingly. **These patterns (marked in green when appropriate) reflect group social norms that are in line with realities/expectations, which may facilitate positive encounters with crime victims.** There were only a few instances where this was not the case for groups (marked in red when applicable or with notes):

- For Officer Perceptions of Crime Victims, Question #12 (on homeless individuals being crime victims more than crime offenders), #13 (alcohol as the main culprit of violence), #14 (those with mental health issues experience victimization more than those without), #15 (perpetrators having histories of victimization), and #17 (crime victims receive ample support).
- For Officers’ Roles/Responsibilities, #32 (having adequate time to follow up with victims).
- No such items existed for the section on Officers’ Perceptions of Victim Services.

In each of the three sections, there were also questions where a notable portion may have responded in a way that diverged from the sought-after or desired response (marked in orange when relevant). These items should be revisited. They may point to a set of group norms or individual perceptions that reflect myths, misunderstanding, bias, etc. They may point to a lesser extent, to another set of group norms or it may be indicative of individual perceptions that reflect myths, misunderstanding, bias, etc. For instance, results for Questions #1 (relating to crime victims’ reluctance to report details to police), #2 (crime victims’ inability to recall details), #5 (person injured during an attempt to buy drugs is a victim), #6 (victims of financial crime face limited consequences), and #7 (victims of intimate partner abuse provoke their partners’ violence) showed the largest percentage had an awareness of these issues and how crime victims may react to trauma, but there were still a number of officers (over 10%) who selected undesirable responses. Relating to officers’ duties, Question #20 (disagreeing that too many social problems are hefted onto police), #21 (adequate training in the academy on providing support to crime victims on/off scene), #22 (adequate training within the academy to understand/address diverse needs of crime victims), #23 (continuation of formal training relevant/useful to serving crime victims since graduating from the academy), #32 (adequate time for calls/investigations to follow up with victims), #33 (encouraged to follow up with victims). Please see Appendix for tables and charts containing full response options. Other analyses were conducted to see if perceptions varied among respondents based on one’s background (e.g., by gender, racial/ethnic group, etc.), albeit those are not included in this report.

Additionally, our team discussions resulted in a desire to know more about themes emerging from items in various distinct areas, we considered patterns observed for questions relating to **gender-based violence, financial and technology crimes, and other crime victimizations.** In terms of **gender-based violence,** findings showed that around 60% of officers did not think victims of intimate partner violence provoked their partners’ violence, 91% did not blame women for staying in abusive relationships, 70% did not think being the bigger/stronger person in a same-sex relationship determined the abuser, 87% did not think women lie about rape or misinterpret what happened. The data shows understanding, but also points to a small and notable percentage of officers who were neutral or subscribed to problematic myths, which should be addressed. For **financial and technology crimes,** almost 50% disagreed that these victims
face limited consequences other than money loss compared to other crimes (they often do face many different kinds of consequences), and close to 80% agreed that cyber violence is real and should be addressed.

Items that should be discussed due to officers subscribing to myths/misconceptions include questions relating to persons who are homeless, have mental health/behavioral issues, and have perpetrated violence (i.e., over one-third responded that unhoused persons were more likely to be victims than offenders, slightly more than one-quarter responded that persons who have mental health issues are more likely to be victims than offenders, and around one-fifth agreed that perpetrators commonly have histories of prior victimization). Also, less than 10% disagreed with the statement that alcohol causes crime (it is a facilitator, but not a causal agent). Additionally, while over half of the officers recognized that crime victims do not exaggerate the extent they have been harmed, over 40% were neutral and around 5% agreed. About one-quarter believed crime victims received ample support in the aftermath of crime, but over 50% were neutral and about 20% thought they did - although research notes that most crime victims do not receive the support they need (Campbell, 2001).

As for the results of the interviews, they show that officers frequently encounter vulnerable persons, such as victims/survivors of domestic violence, sexual assault, etc. and recognize some of the many obstacles such crime victims have. Given the common encounters, it is also important for officers to recognize why being connecting to services, although beneficial, may not resolve one’s situation (as there may be issues with access, availability, engagement, etc.). More specialized training relating to these - and other - crime victims can also help increase empathy/reduce frustrations experienced by officers and increase support for crime victims.

5. Discussion

This study sought to address the following research questions:

- **RQ1**: “Do officers subscribe to victim-related myths/misconceptions?”
- **RQ2**: “Do officers believe they have a role/responsibility in victim response?”
- **RQ3**: “What are officers’ thoughts on collaborating with victim services?”

Overall, the results paint a positive picture relating to officers’ perceptions of crime victims, officer roles/responsibilities, and victim services, with some areas for improvement. Still, there were times when group norms or individual responses deviated from desirable responses. As such, these warrant attention. It appears that CCSO has group norms that reflect general understandings of crime victim realities, roles/responsibilities relating to victim response, and victim services, yet some myths/misconceptions were present and officers felt there could be more preparation/training relating to serving crime victims and processing their cases. The findings point, generally, to informed understandings, which seems to correlate with officers’ high use of referrals to crime victims for victim services - about 83.7% of the officers engaged in service referrals for crime victims in the past year and around 67.4% made a referral in the past month. This is consistent with other high estimates in the research (e.g. Goodsen et al., 2022), and such referral connections have increased crime victims’ engagement with programs as well as justice processes according to agency data. Officers seemed open to working with victim services and recognized the value for crime victims.

5.1 Implications for Practice
The findings suggest that collaborative processes appear to be working well in CCSO and show promise in helping to better meet crime victims’ justice needs. However, there is room for improvement. To maintain inclusive and collaborative community partnerships, we recommend addressing the concerns previously highlighted while also underscoring departmental philosophies and practices that place high priority on crime victims and allow officers to spend more time on their investigations, follow-ups, etc. As recommended by IACP, the department’s mission should (and it does - see 7.6 in the Appendix) contain information inclusive of crime victims to assist in promoting a culture where this victim response is as important as offender-related pursuits.

Other recommendations include: Training for officers relating to crime victims, especially those belonging to at-risk, vulnerable, and special populations (e.g. persons who are unhoused, have mental health issues, intergenerational trauma/cycle of violence, domestic violence, etc.), and victim-offender dynamics are recommended. Additionally, since a small yet notable percentages of officers subscribed to myths relating to trauma (i.e., how it may impact one’s willingness to move forward, memory, etc.) and violence (e.g. domestic violence, sexual assault, financial, and other crimes; also, some causes of crime), we recommend continued education and ongoing discussions relating to these issues. This includes training/education inside and outside of the academy that is inclusive of community members (e.g. researchers, practitioners, educators, etc.) who serve crime victims and/or specialize in aspects of victimology. Increasing such opportunities for officers could allow them to feel better supported and prepared for work with crime victims and recognize benefits of multi-agency collaboration.

Additionally, we encourage CCSO to promote information on community services/resources in a way that is easily accessed by officers who can share applicable service information to crime victims who they encounter – and we recommend that officers also ask these crime victims about accessibility to such services (e.g. does the crime victim have a cell phone? transportation? concerns?). To this end, it is strongly recommended that CCSO create, make widely accessible, and promote a community resource sheet for officers so they can disseminate appropriate and timely information to those they come into contact with. Another recommendation for the agency is to includes an orientation for new officers relating to local services/support (e.g. mental health, substance abuse, etc.) and invite representatives from these places to connect with officers so they not only know who to connect with when on calls but also so they can build meaningful relationships with these practitioners. Additionally, we recommend that the academy integrates information relating to community policing through collaborative processes and understanding myths/realties relating to victimization and offending. We also encourage using lethality and other risk assessments for common crimes like domestic violence.

Most crime victims do not receive the services they need (Campbell et al., 2001). Because social reactions to crime victims’ victimization can help or conversely hinder recovery (Ullman, 1996), it is essential for officers who encounter crime victims to treat these individuals in ways that reflect understanding, empathy, and remove personal bias. Trauma-informed and victim/survivor-centered approaches can lower secondary victimization and enhance officer responses to crime victims, thereby increasing satisfaction with police services. As such, this should be part of officers’ toolkits. Officers’ service referrals can lead to crime victims’ engagement with services that help them process events and can be beneficial in the aftermath of crime. Additionally, because officers themselves can be crime victims or face negative events as part of their position, we encourage practices that destigmatize officer use of mental health support services. As noted in interviews, some officers expressed that officers could benefit from counseling and other services, yet they also noted that seeking support may come with social
costs. As such, the department may consider ways to build bridges to wellbeing in their organizational culture.

Given the number of crime victims in this community, we recommend increasing the number of victim service specialists to offer further support and, if possible, do so around the clock. Having multiple victim advocates can be advantageous as there is a strong need to serve crime victims and officers appear to value this. Last, because persons served in the community represent diverse groups, we also encourage efforts to increase diversity in the department and victim service agencies. This may encourage crime victims from underrepresented or marginalized groups to come forward and obtain culturally relevant support and care that bridges gaps between those who are crime victims and those who obtain services.

5.2 Conclusion

In all, the partnership between law enforcement and victim services shows promise in increasing justice outcomes for crime victims - and so we strongly recommend its continuation. We strongly encourage the partnership to engage in grant seeking/funding activities. This could help expand personnel serving crime victims and result in research assessing victim satisfaction with victim services or other outcomes. Further, beyond the data presented in this study, we have data from the Victim Service Specialist relating to crime victims and the services they sought, engaged with, and more, which we may analyze for patterns/trends. This data can help CCSO and CCS in knowing about who is being served by the specialist, what kinds of support they are requesting and using, what kinds of justice processes they have engaged with, and more (and, to this end, the researcher developed a workshop for CCS to learn how to collect/analyze data). Last, CCSO’s incident-based reports can help us understand whether the specialist is reaching crime victims from various backgrounds (e.g. type of crime, demographics, etc.) or whether there may be gaps in service delivery that need to be addressed.
6. Reference Page


7. Appendix
PART ONE: LAW ENFORCEMENT SURVEY

OUTLINE

PART A: OFFICER PERCEPTIONS OF CRIME VICTIMS
   Crime Victim Myths (most surveys on GV - IPV, SA)
   Victim Trauma Presentation?
   Victim Blaming?

PART B: OFFICER PERCEPTIONS OF ROLES/ RESPONSIBILITIES
   Perceptions of Roles/Responsibilities in victim response

PART C: OFFICER PERCEPTIONS OF VICTIM SERVICES
   Perceptions of Victim/Social Services

LAW ENFORCEMENT SURVEY:

Introduction: This is an anonymous 10-minute survey to help us learn more about your perceptions as an officer relating to crime victims, your roles/responsibilities with these victims, and victims services. This data here is to help us learn about your experiences, challenges, and recommendations. Any reports generated from the data will focus on reporting overall group perceptions, meaning that no one person is ever singled out for his/her/their responses, and your responses will be kept confidential. No one in your department will have access to individual responses. We ask that you respond to all questions, although you may skip any that you are not comfortable with. We hope you will participate in this survey as it will help us to understand your perspectives and we value your input.

If you agree, please click the "OK" button, then "Next" to start the survey.

General Information

Where do you work?
   County/Sheriff’s Office
   City/Local Police Department
   Other (please specify)

What is your current position title/rank? [Write in]

How many years of service do you have? [Write in]

Perceptions (of Crime Victims)
This section will ask about perceptions/beliefs about persons you encounter. For each statement, please select the item that best reflects how you feel.

1. A crime victim’s reluctance to give a detailed account of the crime to an officer is an indicator of the accuracy of their statement.

   Strongly disagree   Disagree   Neutral   Agree   Strongly Agree

2. A crime victim’s inability to recall details about the event is reason to question the accuracy of his/her statement.

   Strongly disagree   Disagree   Neutral   Agree   Strongly Agree

3. Crime victims’ reactions differ between people with different cultural backgrounds

   Strongly disagree   Disagree   Neutral   Agree   Strongly Agree

4. The type of relationship a crime victim and perpetrator have (e.g. intimate, peer, stranger) influences the victim’s emotional expressions and behavior

   Strongly disagree   Disagree   Neutral   Agree   Strongly Agree

5. A person injured during an attempt to buy drugs is a victim

   Strongly disagree   Disagree   Neutral   Agree   Strongly Agree

6. Victims of financial crimes face limited consequences compared to other crimes - mainly loss of money, but rarely other harms.

   Strongly disagree   Disagree   Neutral   Agree   Strongly Agree

7. Victims of intimate partner violence often provoke their partners’ violence.

   Strongly disagree   Disagree   Neutral   Agree   Strongly Agree

8. Women who stay in abusive relationships are to blame for their own victimization because if it really were bad, they would leave.

   Strongly disagree   Disagree   Neutral   Agree   Strongly Agree

9. When a man is accused of rape, it is more often than not due to a woman who misinterprets or lies about what happened, or seeks retaliation for some kind of relationship failure.

   Strongly disagree   Disagree   Neutral   Agree   Strongly Agree
10. Technology-facilitated violence (e.g. cyberbullying, cyberstalking, etc.) is not real violence and those experiencing it should ignore it.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

11. In same-sex relationships, the more masculine, bigger and/or stronger partner is typically the abuser.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

12. Homeless individuals perpetrate crime more often than they are victims of it

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

13. Alcohol is often the culprit underlying most violence

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

14. Individuals experiencing mental or behavioral health issues are more likely to be victims compared to those who are not experiencing these issues.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

15. Perpetrators of crime also commonly have histories of victimization.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

16. Many crime victims exaggerate the extent to which they have been harmed.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

17. After a crime, victims receive ample support (e.g., therapy, counseling, shelters, etc.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**Perceptions (of Roles/Responsibilities)**

This section will ask about perceptions/beliefs relating to your position. For each statement, please select the item that best reflects how you feel.

18. As an officer, my job is to respond to calls for serving and ensure safety of the public/citizens through investigating crimes and apprehending offenders; it is not to help crime victims with the needs they may have.
19. As an officer, I believe that it is my responsibility to connect crime victims with community support/resources that can assist them.

20. Too many social problems like mental health, substance abuse, and other social service needs are often hefted onto the police

21. I feel that I received adequate training while in the Academy on providing support when interacting with victims, both on and off scene.

22. I feel that I received adequate training within the Academy to address the needs and understand the differences across a diversity of victims and crime types.

23. I have continued to receive formal training that is relevant and useful on providing support when interacting with victims, both on scene and off scene, since graduating from the Academy.

24. When responding to victims on scene, I’ve been trained to immediately ensure the safety of victims, render first aid to all harmed individuals, and to request medical assistance as needed.

25. When responding on scene, I’ve been trained to ensure emotionally distraught victims are not left alone and receive access to crisis intervention.

26. When responding on scene, I’ve been trained to be perceptive and patient to the victim’s psychological state while obtaining evidence.

27. When responding on scene, I’ve been trained to consider the method, manner, location, and timing of the victim interview to best meet the needs of the victim and gather meaningful information from him/her.
Strongly disagree  Disagree  Neutral  Agree  Strongly Agree

28. When responding on scene, I’ve been trained to document in my report that the victim was provided with information and referrals regarding relevant victim services.

Strongly disagree  Disagree  Neutral  Agree  Strongly Agree

29. I feel equipped to effectively advise victims of rights and services that might help them deal with their victimization.

Strongly disagree  Disagree  Neutral  Agree  Strongly Agree

30. I am knowledgeable about what services for victims are available in my jurisdiction to adequately inform victims.

Strongly disagree  Disagree  Neutral  Agree  Strongly Agree

31. I feel confident in my abilities to effectively respond to all types of crime victims, no matter their age, race, other characteristics, such as disability or mental health status.

Strongly disagree  Disagree  Neutral  Agree  Strongly Agree

32. I have adequate time during calls for service and ensuing investigations to follow-up with victims of crime.

Strongly disagree  Disagree  Neutral  Agree  Strongly Agree

33. I am encouraged to follow-up with victims, in the aftermath of an incident/crime, outside of specific calls for service.

Strongly disagree  Disagree  Neutral  Agree  Strongly Agree

Perceptions (of Victim Services)

This section will ask about perceptions/beliefs about victim services. For each statement, please select the item that best reflects how you feel.

34. In general, seeking mental health or other related kinds of services is a sign of weakness; if the person were stronger, they would not need to rely on others.

Strongly disagree  Disagree  Neutral  Agree  Strongly Agree
35. I believe that victim services are primarily for victims of violent interpersonal crimes (e.g. physical or sexual assault).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
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</table>

36. Victim specialists who work to raise awareness or advocate on behalf of victims often conflict with officers and the work they do.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

37. I think that police and victim services can work well together in responding to crime victims and their justice needs.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

38. I have a working relationship and/or direct line of communication with victim services staff.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**Other Questions**

In the past month, how many times have you referred crime victims to victim services/specialists in the community? [Write in number or use scale below]

- 0/ Never
- 1-3 times
- Once per week
- Several times a week
- About everyday

In the past year, how many times have you referred crime victims to victim services/specialists in the community? [Write in number or use scale below]

- 0/ Never
- 1-3 times
- 4-6 times
- 7-10 times
- 11/15 times
- 16+ times

Have you ever received specific training on responding to crime victims other than what you learned while on the job?

- No
- Yes

If you have referred crime victims to victim services, what criteria do you use to determine whether to make this connection? [WRITE IN]

Does anything deter you from making referrals to victim services?: [WRITE IN]

**Basic Demographic Information**

Are you male or female?
Male Female Rather not say

Which best describes your level of education?

High school Associates degree/some college College degree (B.A./B.S.) Graduate School

What background best describes you?

White/Caucasian (Non-Hispanic) Black/African-American (Non-Hispanic) Hispanic/Latinx Other

Additional information

Is there anything else you would like us to know?

____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________

Thank you!

Thank you for your time and participation in this survey. Your participation is valuable and helps us to learn more about overall group perceptions. You may also be contacted about participating in an in-person interview to learn more about your perceptions. Thanks again!
7.2 Interview

PART TWO: INTERVIEW

Date of Interview:
Time:

Outline for Interview

I. Introductions
II. Purpose
III. Description of Research
IV. Consent
V. Interview Questions
VI. Thank officer for their participation

INTERVIEW (START)

I. Introductions (take a moment to introduce yourself, and ask them to tell you a little bit about themselves) [write information officer shares here]

How long have you been in law enforcement? ______ years of service

What is your age?

Do you have experience elsewhere? _____ Yes _____ No

II. Purpose (the purpose of this project is to learn more about officer perceptions/experiences relating to persons you encounter, roles/responsibilities, and advantages/disadvantages of some services that might be used to respond to those who have been victimized or harmed in some way)

III. Description of Research (we are sampling officers to learn more about the three areas (i.e., perceptions/experiences of 1) persons encountered, 2) officer roles/responsibilities, and 3) crime victim services.

IV. Consent (do you agree to participate in the study? Verbal affirmation is needed - “Yes”).

V. Interview Questions (see below for semi-structured interview questions)

Tell us about an average day on the job - number calls for service, interactions, etc.?
As an officer, what do you view to be your main responsibilities/priorities?

What are some common calls for service you see/respond to? (e.g., accidents, mental health, substance abuse, domestic violence, etc.)

When you respond to crime victims (broadly speaking, persons who have been harmed), what does this look like? Who are you with, what do you do, and does your approach differ from crime to crime?

Who are some of the most common crime victims you encounter? Are there some kinds of crime victims you see more frequently than others? (Is this due to a high prevalence/number of these crime victimizations among different people or repeat victimizations from the same people?).

Do you refer these victims to victim/social services on scene? Why? Why not?

What kinds of issues or challenges do you think these crime victims have?

What issues or challenges do you have in responding to these victims?

Why do you think these victimizations occur?
In your opinion, could anything be done to reduce or prevent these victimizations?

Are there certain calls that you are tired of responding to or get frustrated with? What do you think can be done in these circumstances/cases?

Do you believe that certain crime victims are a priority, and do you have enough time to investigate these cases? Explain

Based on your experience, how do crime victims you encounter vary in reactions to their victimization, interactions/exchanges with police, and needs based on the victimization type? For example, could you share insights relating to how victims of domestic violence or sexual assault differ from those who are victims of larceny/theft in terms of reactions, interactions with police, and/or needs/requests (what they want help with)?

Policing is hard work and there may be times when responding to crime/crime victims is especially challenging – for instance, it can be traumatic to respond to the scene and see the aftermath of a crime but not know what happens following. How do you process this?

Are officers in your department recognized or rewarded for making arrests in Domestic Violence, Sexual Assault, Stalking, or other kinds of cases?
What are your perceptions on counseling and related social services?

What do you think a victim advocate does? What might you expect from them if you were to call them?

Do you think victims advocates and/or victim services might integrate into the work you are doing, and how?

From your perspective, what are some advantages to working with victim specialists/victim services?

From your perspective, what are some disadvantages to working with victim specialists/victim services?

Have you connected crime victims with victim advocates (e.g. a referral)?; if so, can you tell us about that - How do you decide whether or not to connect with a victim advocate? Under what circumstances would you call an advocate to help a victim? Do you only refer them if they ask for a victim advocate/services or do you inform them of the availability of victim advocates/services? Do you do this more often for victims of certain crimes?

Are you comfortable talking to sexual and family violence victims about social services in the community (and do you know of local resources)? Do you view this as part of your job?
Do you think victim services work best when they are separate/independent from law enforcement or when they work collaboratively? (If separately, why? If collaboratively, what does the ideal look like - respond together at the scene, during referral, or …?)

Might victim services alleviate some of the challenges you encounter with crime victims or help with work law enforcement has to do (e.g. informing victims of rights, death notifications, etc.)?

Are there some crime victims that victim advocates might be better for than others? Explain

Is there anything else you’d like to tell us?

Did you complete the online survey? Why/why not?

VI. Thank officer for their participation

THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME AND PARTICIPATION.
### 7.3 Tables

#### Table 1. Officer Perceptions of Crime Victims

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Perceptions of Crime Victims</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A crime victim’s reluctance to give a detailed account of the crime to an officer is an indicator of the accuracy of their statement.</td>
<td>4.35%</td>
<td>34.78%</td>
<td>39.13%</td>
<td>21.74%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A crime victim’s inability to recall details about the event is reason to question the accuracy of his/her statement.</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>56.52%</td>
<td>26.09%</td>
<td>17.39%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crime victims’ reactions differ between people with different cultural backgrounds.</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>4.35%</td>
<td>13.04%</td>
<td>65.22%</td>
<td>17.39%</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The type of relationship a crime victim and perpetrator have (e.g. intimate, peer, stranger) influences the victim’s emotional expressions and behavior.</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>17.39%</td>
<td>69.57%</td>
<td>13.04%</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A person injured during an attempt to buy drugs is a victim.</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>26.09%</td>
<td>26.09%</td>
<td>43.48%</td>
<td>4.35%</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victims of financial crimes face limited consequences compared to other crimes - mainly loss of money, but rarely other harms.</td>
<td>4.35%</td>
<td>47.83%</td>
<td>21.74%</td>
<td>26.09%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victims of intimate partner violence, regardless of their background, often provoke their partners’ violence.</td>
<td>21.74%</td>
<td>39.13%</td>
<td>26.09%</td>
<td>13.04%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women who stay in abusive relationships are to blame for their own victimization because if it really were bad, they would leave.</td>
<td>39.13%</td>
<td>52.17%</td>
<td>8.70%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When a man is accused of rape, it is more often than not due to a woman who misinterprets or lies about what happened, or seeks retaliation for some kind of relationship failure.</td>
<td>26.09%</td>
<td>60.87%</td>
<td>13.04%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technology-facilitated violence (e.g. cyberbullying, cyberstalking, etc.) is not real violence and those experiencing it should ignore it.</td>
<td>34.78%</td>
<td>43.48%</td>
<td>17.39%</td>
<td>4.35%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In same-sex relationships, the more masculine, bigger and/or stronger partner is typically the abuser.</td>
<td>17.39%</td>
<td>56.52%</td>
<td>26.09%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homeless individuals perpetrate crime more often than they are victims of it.</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>34.78%</td>
<td>43.48%</td>
<td>21.74%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alcohol is often the culprit underlying most violence.</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>8.70%</td>
<td>60.87%</td>
<td>26.09%</td>
<td>4.35%</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Individuals experiencing mental or behavioral health issues are more likely to be victims compared to those without these issues.  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>0.00%</th>
<th>39.13</th>
<th>34.78</th>
<th>26.09</th>
<th>0.00%</th>
<th>23</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Perpetrators of crime also commonly have histories of victimization.</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>21.74</td>
<td>43.48</td>
<td>34.78</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Many crime victims exaggerate the extent to which they have been harmed.</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>52.17</td>
<td>43.48</td>
<td>4.35%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>After a crime, victims receive ample support (e.g., therapy, counseling, shelters, etc.).</td>
<td>4.35%</td>
<td>21.74</td>
<td>52.17</td>
<td>17.39</td>
<td>4.35%</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 2. Officer Perceptions of Officer Roles/Responsibilities in Victim Response

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PERCEPTIONS OF ROLES/RESPONSIBILITIES</th>
<th>STRONGLY DISAGREE</th>
<th>DISAGREE</th>
<th>NEUTRAL</th>
<th>AGREE</th>
<th>STRONGLY AGREE</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>As an officer, my job is to respond to calls for service and ensure safety of the public/citizens through investigating crimes and apprehending offenders; it is not to help crime victims with the needs they may have.</td>
<td>19.05% (4)</td>
<td>66.67% (14)</td>
<td>0.00% (3)</td>
<td>0.00% (0)</td>
<td>0.00% (0)</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>As an officer, I believe that it is my responsibility to connect crime victims with community support/resources that can assist them.</td>
<td>0.00% (0)</td>
<td>4.76% (1)</td>
<td>9.52% (2)</td>
<td>61.90% (13)</td>
<td>23.81% (5)</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Too many social problems like mental health, substance abuse, and other social service needs are often thrown onto the police.</td>
<td>4.76% (1)</td>
<td>9.52% (2)</td>
<td>9.52% (2)</td>
<td>42.86% (9)</td>
<td>33.33% (7)</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I received adequate training while in the Academy on providing support when interacting with victims, both on and off scene.</td>
<td>5.00% (1)</td>
<td>30.00% (6)</td>
<td>20.00% (4)</td>
<td>40.00% (8)</td>
<td>5.00% (1)</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The training I received within the Academy helped me to address needs and understand differences across a diversity of victims and crime types.</td>
<td>5.00% (1)</td>
<td>35.00% (7)</td>
<td>15.00% (3)</td>
<td>40.00% (8)</td>
<td>5.00% (1)</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have continued to receive formal training that is relevant and useful on providing support when interacting with victims, both on scene and off scene, since graduating from the Academy.</td>
<td>0.00% (0)</td>
<td>14.29% (3)</td>
<td>14.29% (3)</td>
<td>57.14% (12)</td>
<td>14.29% (3)</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When responding to victims on scene, I’ve been trained to immediately ensure the safety of victims, render first aid to all harmed individuals, and to request medical assistance as needed.</td>
<td>0.00% (0)</td>
<td>0.00% (0)</td>
<td>0.00% (0)</td>
<td>33.33% (7)</td>
<td>66.67% (14)</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When responding on scene, I’ve been trained to ensure emotionally distraught victims are not left alone and receive access to crisis intervention.</td>
<td>0.00% (0)</td>
<td>0.00% (0)</td>
<td>9.52% (2)</td>
<td>66.67% (14)</td>
<td>23.81% (5)</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When responding on scene, I’ve been trained to be perceptive and patient to the victim’s psychological state while obtaining evidence.</td>
<td>0.00% (0)</td>
<td>9.52% (2)</td>
<td>0.00% (0)</td>
<td>76.19% (16)</td>
<td>14.29% (3)</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When responding on scene, I’ve been trained to consider the method, manner, location, and timing of the victim interview to best meet the needs of the victim and gather meaningful information from him/her.</td>
<td>0.00% (0)</td>
<td>9.52% (2)</td>
<td>4.76% (1)</td>
<td>71.43% (15)</td>
<td>14.29% (3)</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When responding on scene, I’ve been trained to document in my report that the victim was provided with information and referrals relating to relevant victim services.</td>
<td>0.00% (0)</td>
<td>4.76% (1)</td>
<td>4.76% (1)</td>
<td>66.67% (14)</td>
<td>23.81% (5)</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel equipped to effectively advise victims of rights and services that might help them deal with their victimization.</td>
<td>0.00% (0)</td>
<td>9.52% (2)</td>
<td>4.76% (1)</td>
<td>76.19% (16)</td>
<td>9.52% (2)</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Statement</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>4.76%</td>
<td>23.81%</td>
<td>61.90%</td>
<td>9.52%</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------</td>
<td>-------</td>
<td>--------</td>
<td>--------</td>
<td>-------</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am knowledgeable about what services for victims are available in my jurisdiction to adequately inform victims.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am confident in my abilities to effectively respond to all types of crime victims, no matter their age, race, other characteristics, such as disability or mental health status.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have adequate time during calls for service and ensuing investigations to follow-up with victims of crime.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am encouraged to follow-up with victims, in the aftermath of an incident/crime, outside of specific calls for service.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Table 3. Officer Perceptions of Victim Services

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PERCEPTIONS OF VICTIM SERVICES</th>
<th>STRONGLY DISAGREE</th>
<th>DISAGREE</th>
<th>NEUTRAL</th>
<th>AGREE</th>
<th>STRONGLY AGREE</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>In general, seeking mental health or other related kinds of services is a sign of weakness; if the person were stronger, they would not need to rely on others.</td>
<td>47.62%</td>
<td>47.62%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>4.76%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I believe that victim services are primarily for victims of violent interpersonal crimes (e.g. physical or sexual assault).</td>
<td>23.81%</td>
<td>57.14%</td>
<td>19.05%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victim specialists who work to raise awareness or advocate on behalf of victims often conflict with officers and the work they do.</td>
<td>19.05%</td>
<td>61.90%</td>
<td>14.29%</td>
<td>4.76%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I think that police and victim services can work well together in responding to crime victims and their justice needs.</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>9.52%</td>
<td>57.14%</td>
<td>33.33%</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have a working relationship and/or direct line of communication with victim services staff.</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>14.29%</td>
<td>47.62%</td>
<td>38.10%</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
7.4 Charts
Image 1. Officer Perceptions of Crime Victims

Q: For each statement, please select the response that best reflects how you feel.
Image 2. *Officer Perceptions of Officer Roles/Responsibilities*

*Q: For each statement, please select the response that best reflects how you feel.*
Image 3. Officer Perceptions of Victim Services

Q8 For each statement, please select the response that best reflects how you feel.
7.5 Other (Additional Findings)

Additional findings from the online survey included:

Referral determinations - Officers noted determinations for service referrals were made by: “type and severity of the crime”; “victim of a physical crime or property crime”; “If a crime has been committed, if a victim is distraught or having mental health issues, potential alcohol or drug abuse, or family and housing concerns”; “Emotional state of the victim. I try to deescalate before information”; “based on needs of victim”; “need and willingness”, “if assistance is requested by individual”; “I ask them if they would like to talk to a victim specialist”; “the mannerisms, type of call and communication skills present on scene”; “emotional state, stress levels”; “Services that go above and beyond what the police have time or are allowed to do. Ie: assist victims of domestic violence with an order of protection or assistance in becoming independent”, “if it will assist in resolving a situation”; “If there is a resource that I feel would be applicable, I refer them to our advocate or visa versa”; and “primarily based on the available services/resources in our community.”

Concerns - One officer stated, “I don't believe some mentally ill patients are adequately treated before being released back into the community” and the other remarked “As victim advocates you need to become more openly vocal and critical of a lot of these new laws. Bail reform has set victim rights back probably 10 years. There have been so many cases especially with domestic violence where the abuser has been re-arrested over and over again for the same crimes and then released only to be free to continue terrorizing victims. Majority of these incidents are due to bail reform, but some are due to incompetence by judges not knowing when bail can be set and simply allowing a defense attorney to run an arraignment and get their client released. This also is not just the case for domestic abuse but also property crimes and drug offenses as well. Majority of all property crimes such as theft and burglary can be tied back to narcotics. People steal in order to support a drug habit. Drug abusers no longer can be remanded to jail where they would have no choice to get sober and obtain substance abuse counseling. Instead they are charged and allowed to go free only to continue substance abuse and other crimes to fuel their habit. This causes everyone in a community to become victims not knowing when their house, car, garage or other property is going to be burglarized and their items stolen that they have worked hard to have. Drug dealers also have no fear of arrest because they know that they will be released as well. Incarceration rates may be down and that is a statistic that officials love to brag about but, crime rates are much higher. Especially violent crimes. This also ties into the new rules with parole. Parole officers hands are so tied when it comes to people that have been already convicted of crimes and then released from prison. We have dangerous people in our community that have been release that continuously violate the terms of their parole and yet the rules set forth from the state will not allow parole officers to effectively due their jobs and keep these dangerous people off the street. Victim advocates need to seriously become vocal about these dangerous laws and reforms.” There is much to unpack from these comments, and we strongly recommend discussions that address misconceptions/realities and more.
Additional findings from the in-person interviews:

Relating to Victim Services –

*Do you think victim services work best when they are separate/independent from law enforcement or when they work collaboratively?*

Of the two officers, both agreed that victim services work best when they are working collaboratively with law enforcement (100%, n=2). One officer stated: “I think a lot of the time having somebody to speak to that person right away or within a day or two makes a huge difference as to whether or not a person accepts service”. Additionally, the other officer stated: “I think collaboratively, definitely, so working together as I’ve said. If I have the ability to send an advocate directly with a deputy to go respond to these calls I would do that”. Both officers find that having a victim advocate on site is highly beneficial and more convenient than trying to contact victim services outside the agency. Findings show that there is a need for immediate access to victim advocates when law enforcement is on the scene with a victim.

Relating to Officer Perceptions –

*As an officer, what do you view to be your main responsibilities/priorities?*

It is important to highlight that one of the officers found that working on the victim aspect of resolution was highly important to them (50.0%, n=1). This officer stated, “I tend to focus more on the victim aspect of it rather than where some or the others view more of the criminal aspect of it, like: “Our job is to put the bad guys away”. The other officer focuses on improving budgeting and overseeing the agency from an administrative perspective (50.0%, n=1). This officer mentioned: “Improving policing procedures and just improving everyday operations with the agency”. It is important to note that those in the agency are highlighting victims’ rights as their responsibilities and priorities as well as improving the agency as a whole.

*Other questions/responses from the interview transcripts may be available upon request.*
7.6 Organizational Mission

Cayuga County Sheriff’s Office

The mission of the Cayuga County Sheriff’s Office is to secure and maintain a safe community and enhance the quality of life of all citizens by providing responsive, caring, unbiased and professional Law Enforcement, Custody, Correctional, Security and Civil Enforcement services. The Sheriff’s Office is committed to utilizing community partnerships to accomplish the mission and to maintain the trust and respect of those they serve.

The CCSO and CCS have shared a successful collaborative relationship for over 50 on a wide range of projects including services for adult and child sexual assault and domestic violence survivors, children victimized by substance abuse, adult and juvenile offenders, the homeless population, and those who suffer from behavioral health issues. In 1988, the agencies were founding members of the MDT and worked to eliminate barriers, develop programming and foster collaboration in the areas of child sexual/physical assault culminating in the opening of the Child Advocacy Center in 2009. In 2018, the agencies leveraged their partnership and resources to secure funding to develop the County’s first Child Fatality Review Team as well as OVC funding to develop and implement a MDT response to and services for children victimized by substance abuse.

The Victim Specialist Program began in March 2021 and has been providing direct services to victims of all crimes since that time. The Victim Specialist has been invited to train with officers in the field and go to scenes to provide services directly.