STATE of POLICY

Law Enforcement

2018

PowerDMS

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"The State of Policy provides important research on policy and training trends that are impacting the future of law enforcement. Agencies can benefit from taking this information and benchmarking their current processes against other agencies throughout the country."

Richard Beary

Chief of Police Emeritus, University of Central Florida
Past President, International Association of Chiefs of Police

Introduction

In 2015, after several highly-publicized incidents involving law enforcement, PowerDMS published the first-ever State of Policy in Law Enforcement report. It was the right time to start a conversation about what is expected from police agencies when it comes to policies and training, and how they respond to the pressures placed on them by the media and the communities they serve.

Fast forward three years, and the conversation and research is just as, if not more, important today. Law enforcement is still under intense scrutiny and forced to do more with less. Agencies are looking to each other to help find resources and solutions for the challenges they face.

To best serve their communities, and to prioritize their focus, it is imperative agencies remain aware of changing leadership approaches and the implications of industry-wide leadership changes.

The intent of this report is to provide a tool for agencies across the country to benchmark their operations and see what new trends might affect policing today.

We've surveyed 246 law enforcement professionals from across the country and presented the results in this report, establishing a baseline for how agencies update crucial policies, how they ensure employees see and understand those policies, and how they conduct life-saving training.

The survey was taken by 246 individuals, representing:
- All regions of the United States
- Small town and large metropolitan agencies
- Sheriffs' offices, university/campus police, state highway patrol, airport police, corrections

Thank you to all the participants who took the time to fill out the survey and provide thoughtful insights and honest feedback. This report would not be possible without you. We hope it is helpful as you examine your department's operations and find new ways to equip your team with the tools they need to do what is expected of them.

Survey Participants

The State of Policy in Law Enforcement survey is promoted and conducted online. The survey consists of multiple choice, rank in order, and open-ended questions. To validate respondents' identities, the only questions required of participants are name, email, and agency name. We received completed surveys from 250 law enforcement professionals resulting in a diverse representation. The final sample represents a variety of U.S. states, as well as agency sizes and types.

Agency Size   (number of sworn officers/deputies)   241 Responding

500+ **11%**

251-500 **8%**

1-50 **41%**

101-250 **22%**

51-100 **18%**
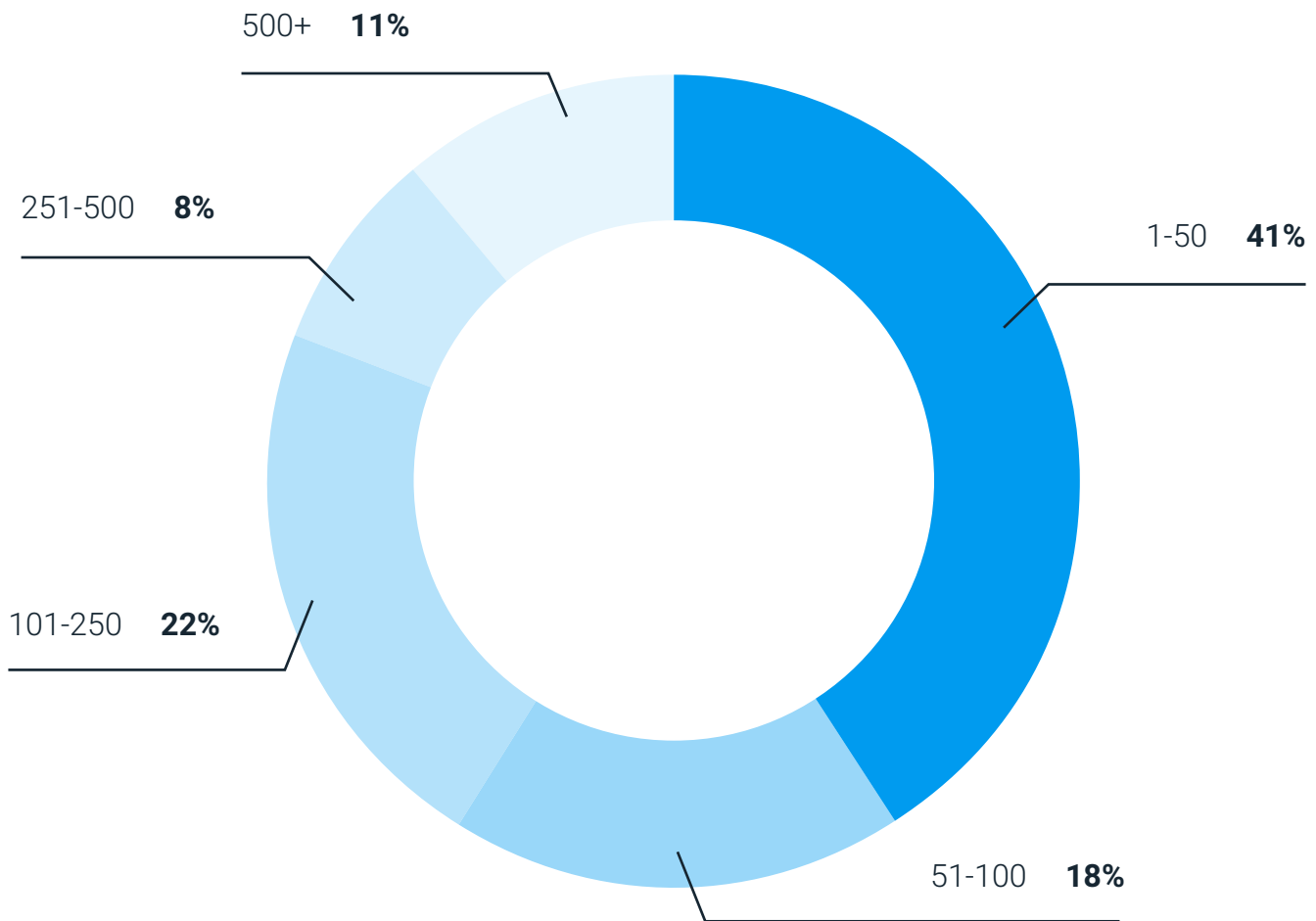
Accreditation standards are often the impetus that drives agencies' decisions on managing their policies and training. They provide helpful structures for policy content, and recommended timelines for policy revisions. With this in mind, it is important to note that of the 246 survey participants who answered, 73% are accreditated, and of those accredited agencies, 28% are accredited at the state level, 30% at the national level, and 15% follow both state and national standards.

Accreditation Status

246 Responding

No   **27%**

Yes   **73%**
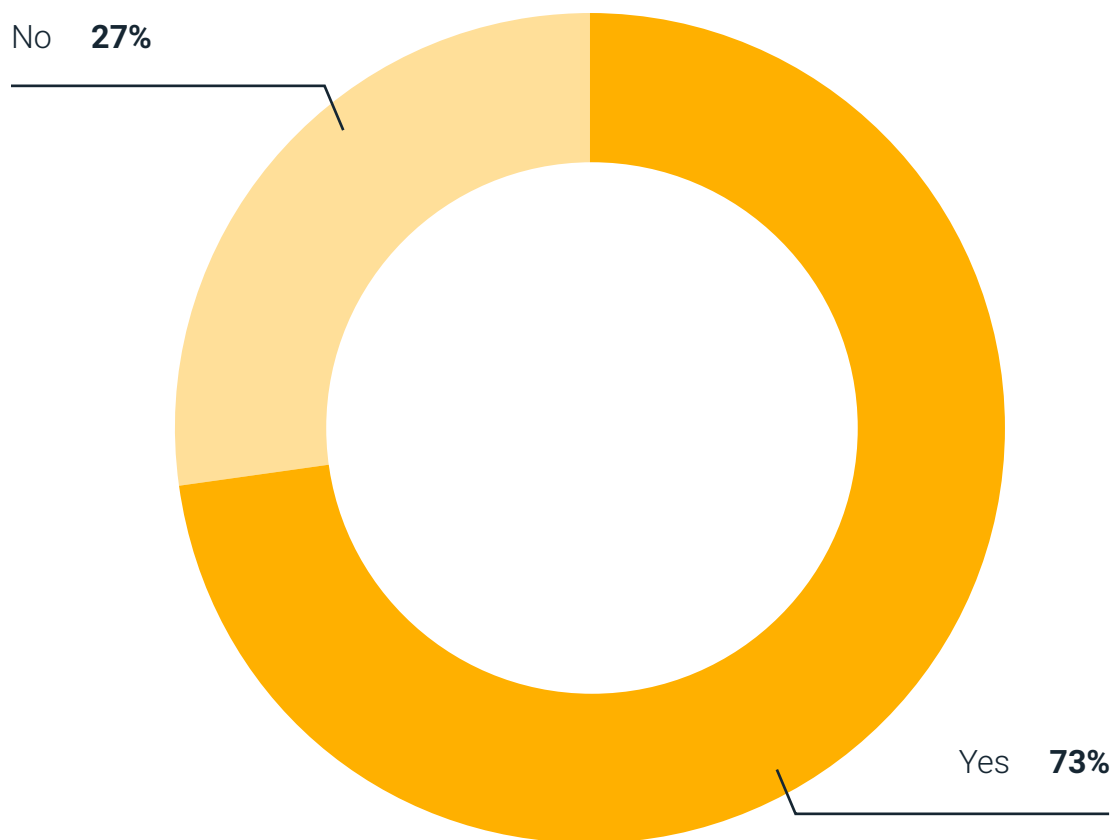
Policy Management

Policies should be reviewed and updated constantly.

The majority of respondents agree that policies should be reviewed and updated constantly to ensure the content serves an agency's needs and protects officers and the community. On the other hand, 27% think that once you have a policy in place, it should serve as the basis for behavior for a few years so staff can become accustomed to it. Only 3% said you should take a look at policies as needed or when there is evidence that they are not working as they should.

Percent of agencies reporting policies should be reviewed and updated:

246 Responding

As Needed **3%**

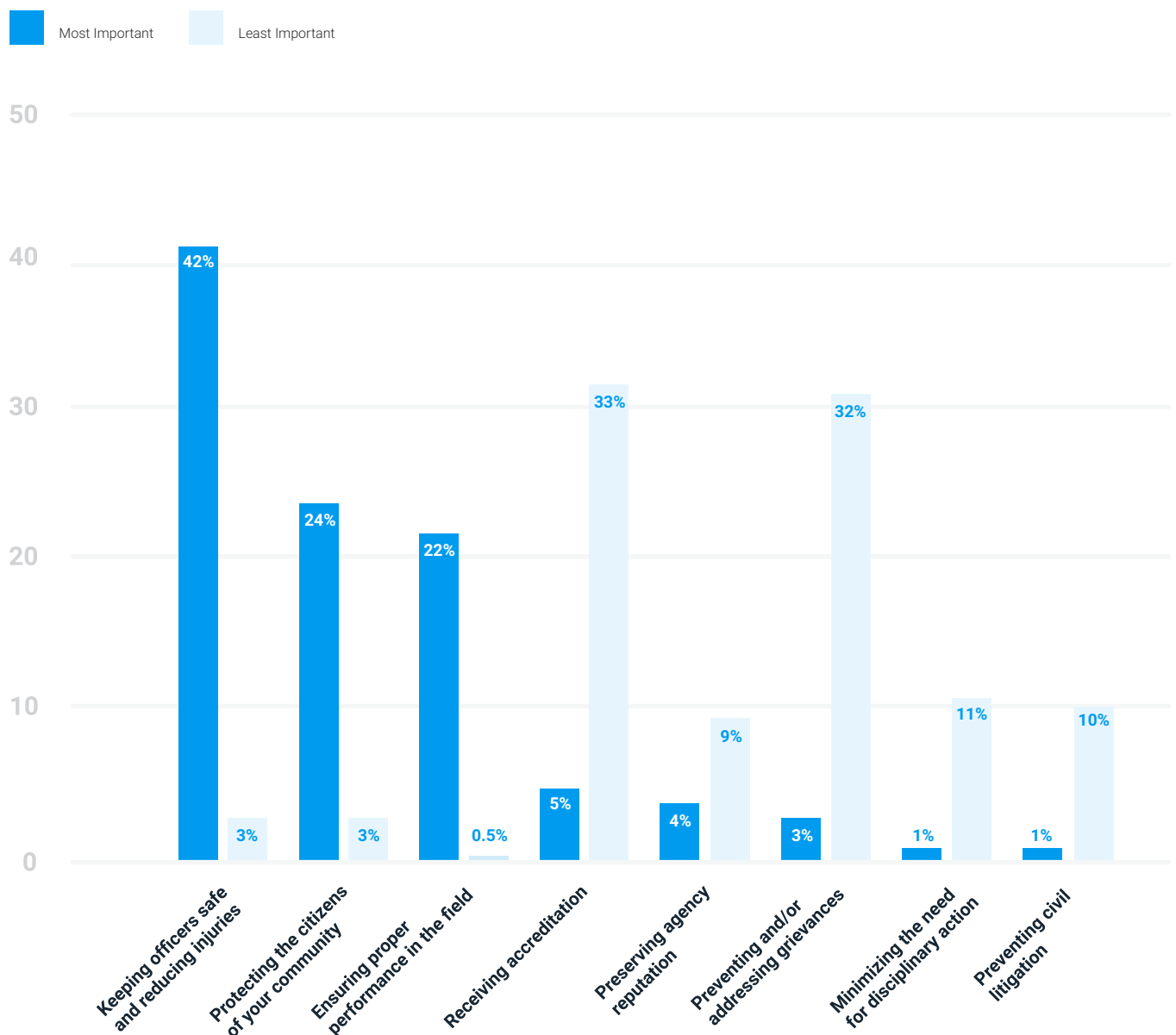Annually **27%**
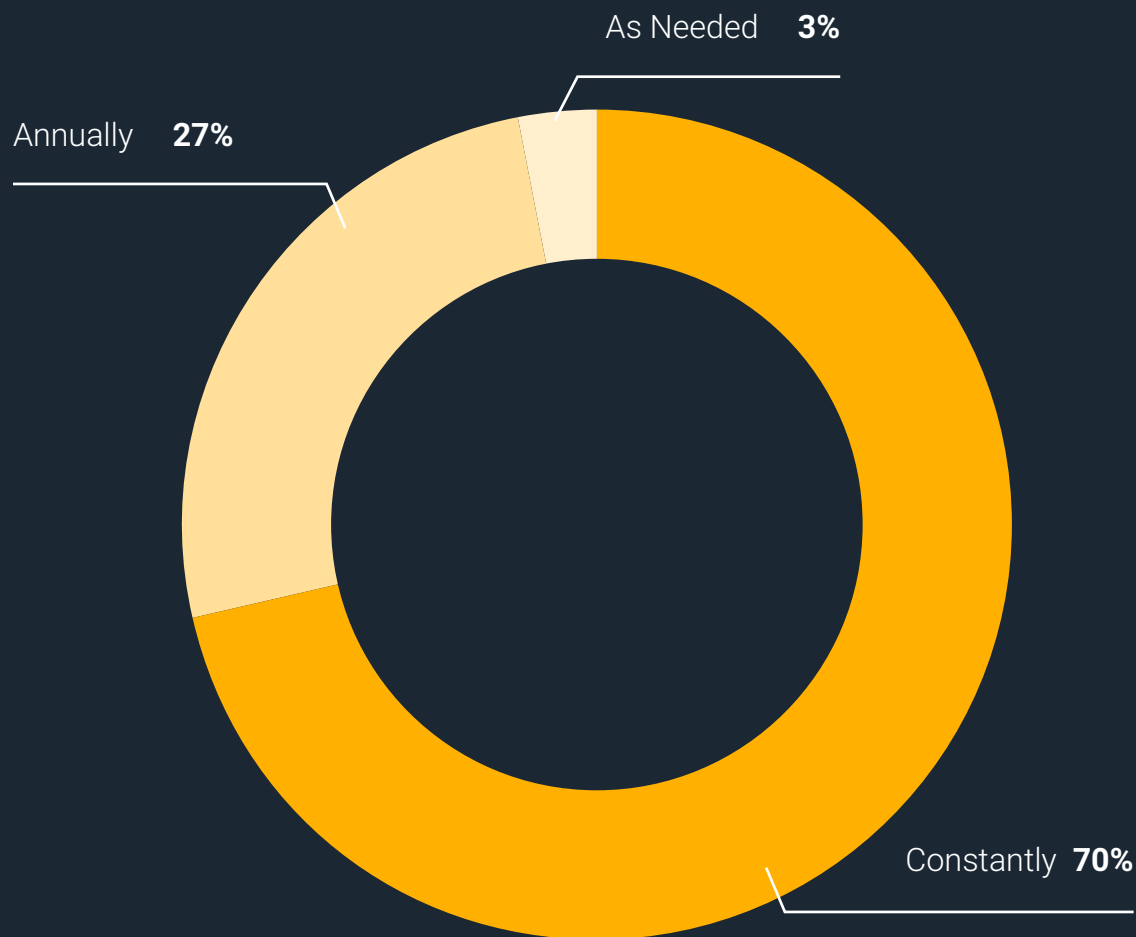
Constantly **70%**

Policies are most important for keeping officers safe.

We learned that 70% of agencies agree policies and procedures should be reviewed and updated constantly. But why do they take the time to focus on the development and management of these guiding documents? When asked to rank the reasons for proper policies and procedures in order of importance, keeping officers safe came out on top.

Percent of agencies reporting the importance of policies for:

233 Responding

Most Important | **Least Important**

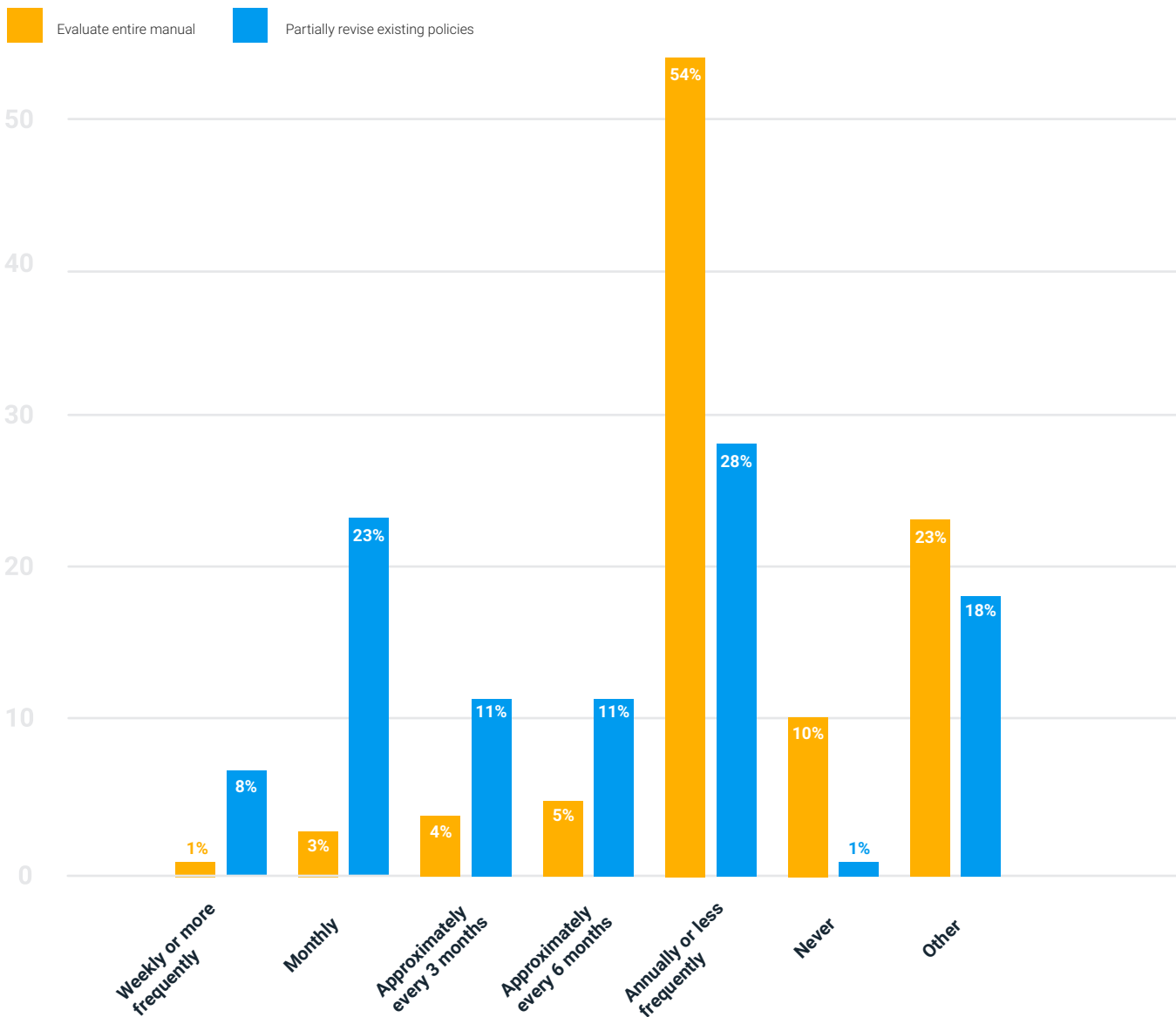| Category	Most Important	Least Important
Keeping officers safe and reducing injuries	42%	3%
Protecting the citizens of your community	24%	3%
Ensuring proper performance in the field	22%	0.5%
Receiving accreditation	5%	33%
Preserving agency reputation	4%	9%
Preventing and/or addressing grievances	3%	32%
Minimizing the need for disciplinary action	1%	11%
Preventing civil litigation	1%	10%

Most agencies evaluate their entire policy manual annually or less frequently.

When asked how often their agency evaluates their entire policy manual, 54% answered this only happens annually or less frequently. Of those agencies who regularly review specific policies, a significant number commented that these updates occur only when policies may be affected by a legislative change, or if an incident occurs. One agency said they haven't looked at their manual as a whole since the 1980s.

Percent of agencies evaluating and revising policies:

246 Responding

■ Evaluate entire manual   **■ Partially revise existing policies**

Category	Evaluate entire manual	Partially revise existing policies
Weekly or more frequently	1%	8%
Monthly	3%	23%
Approximately every 3 months	4%	11%
Approximately every 6 months	5%	11%
Annually or less frequently	54%	28%
Never	10%	1%
Other	23%	18%

An understanding at all levels is most important to ensuring policies are put into practice.

A thorough understanding at all levels came in on top when agencies were asked to rank what factors are most important for ensuring policies are put into practice. Buy in from command staff, which was ranked highest last year, was a close second. Buy in from detectives remains the least important factor among the eight choices provided, but it can be assumed that detectives are covered when "all levels have a thorough understanding."

Note: *Buy in from command staff was ranked most important in 2017.*

Percent of agencies reporting the importance of these factors for ensuring policies are put into practice:

237 Responding

■ Most Important ■ Least Important

Factor	Most Important	Least Important
Thorough understanding at all levels	27%	7%
Buy-in from command staff	21%	12%
Training on the new policy	15%	6%
Buy-in from line personnel	13%	3%
Personnel acknowledge being aware of changes	10%	16%
Personnel acknowledge their understanding of the policies	8%	10%
Buy-in from supervisors	5%	2%
Buy-in from detectives	1%	44%

"We communicate policy changes electronically using PowerDMS. The software ensures officers have read the policy, and by attaching a simple test we can gauge their understanding. This way we always have a record of receipt, and comfort knowing everyone has seen the same policy."

Mark Palmer
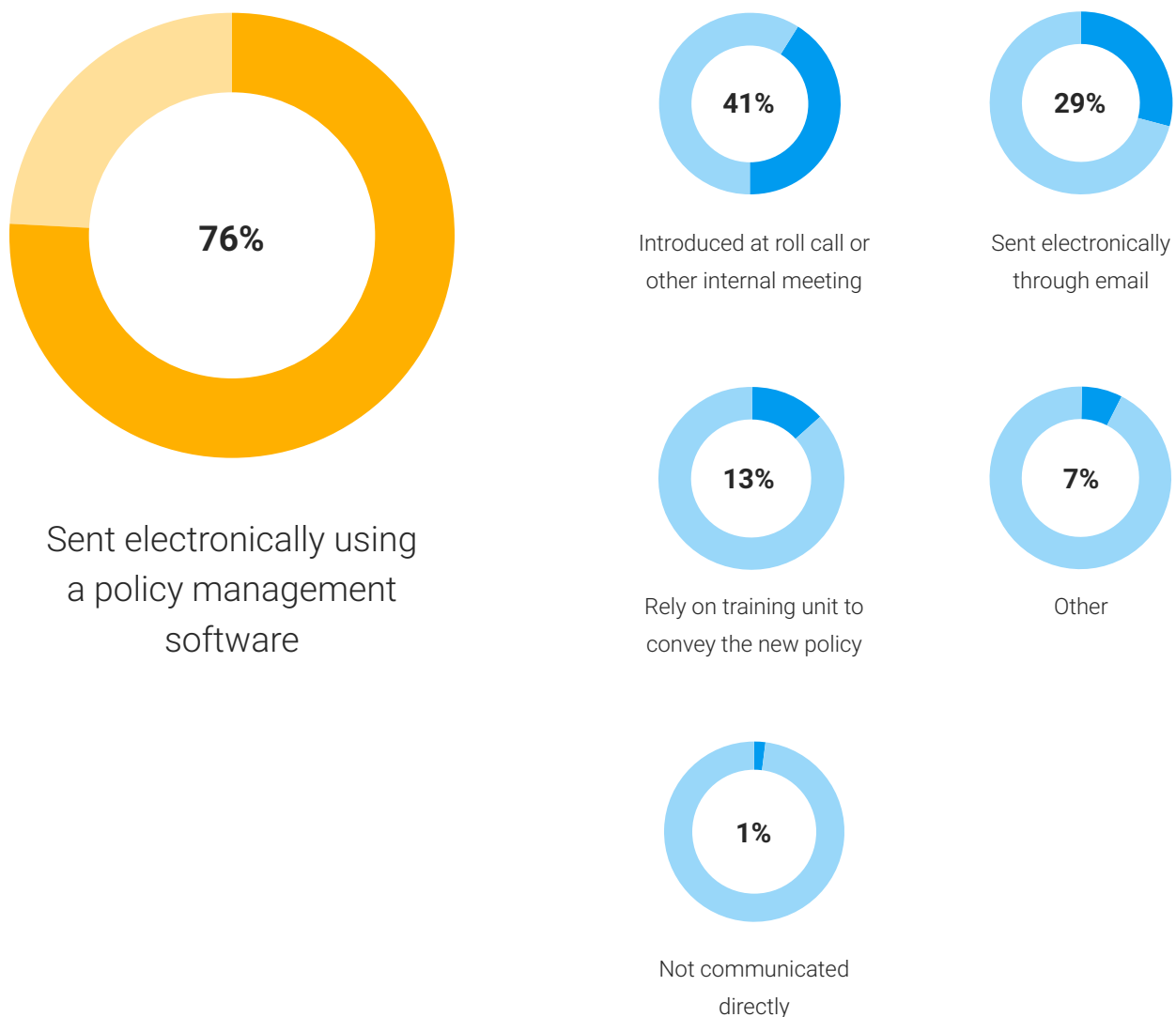
Chief of Police, Coventry (CT) Police Department

Policy changes are most often communicated electronically.

It is interesting to note that every year a larger percentage of respondents say they send policy changes electronically using a policy management software, like PowerDMS. This trend is indicative of demand from communities for accountability, and agencies see it as a way to protect themselves and their reputation. Only 7% chose "other" and noted outdated ways of sharing policies, including printing and posting, and adding to a three-ring binder.

Note: *The use of technology continues to rise—it's up from 63% in 2017.*

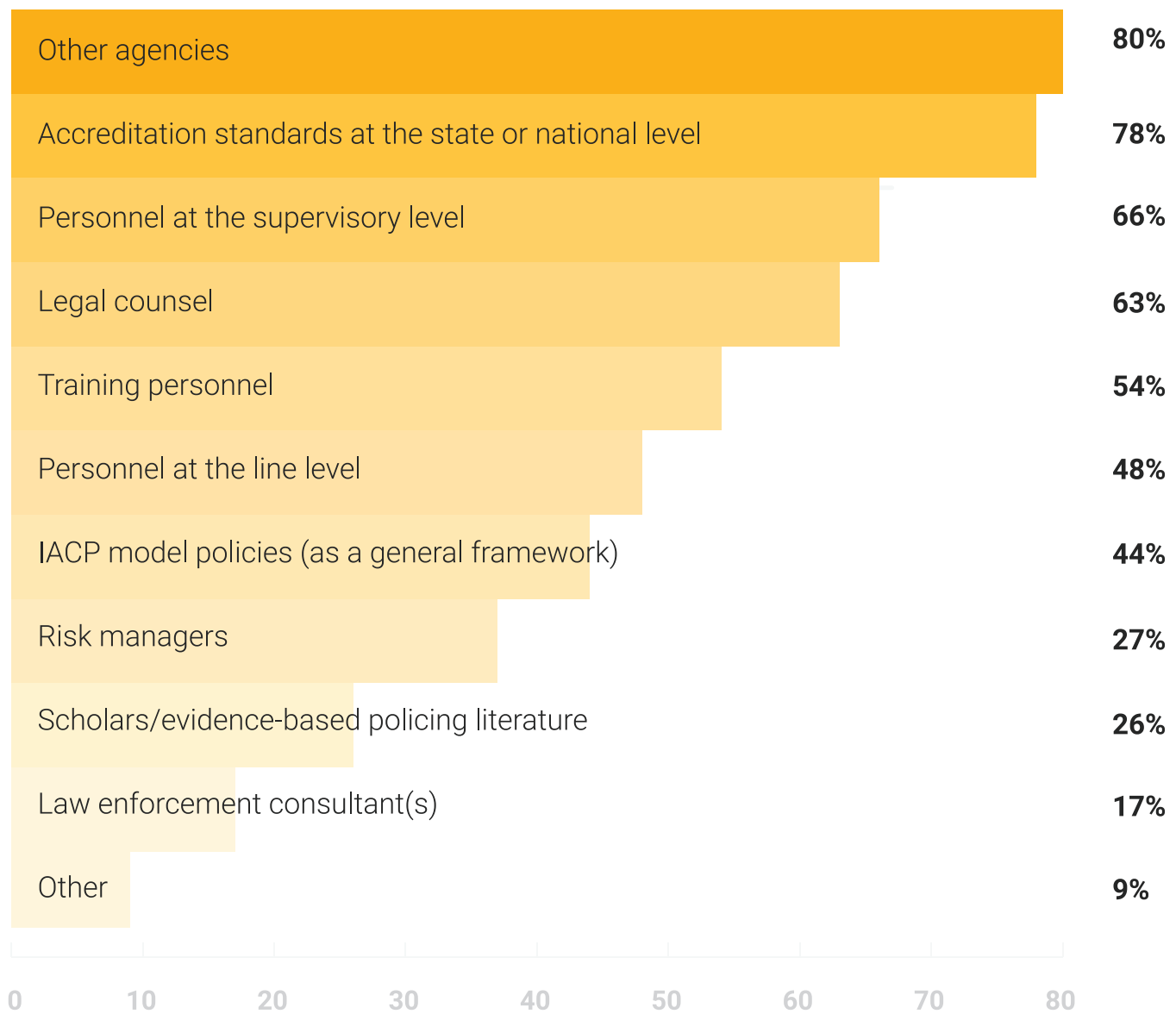**Percent of agencies reporting they convey policy changes in this way:**

237 Responding

76%

Sent electronically using a policy management software

41%

Introduced at roll call or other internal meeting

29%

Sent electronically through email

13%

Rely on training unit to convey the new policy

7%

Other

1%

Not communicated directly

Agencies continue to consult their peers when developing new policies.

When it comes to seeking advice on the development of new policies, 80% of respondents said they rely on other agencies who may have more expertise on the issue in question. Almost the same number of respondents use accreditation standards as a guide for good practice. Those who chose "other" mentioned less reliable sources such as common sense and a gut feeling.

Note: *"Other agencies" included neighboring communites and state PAC members.*

Percent of agencies who reported using these sources for policy development: 242 Responding

Source	Percent
Other agencies	**80%**
Accreditation standards at the state or national level	**78%**
Personnel at the supervisory level	**66%**
Legal counsel	**63%**
Training personnel	**54%**
Personnel at the line level	**48%**
IACP model policies (as a general framework)	**44%**
Risk managers	**27%**
Scholars/evidence-based policing literature	**26%**
Law enforcement consultant(s)	**17%**
Other	**9%**

0   10   20   30   40   50   60   70   80

Policies supporting the opioid epidemic were added the most over the past year.

Community and social issues, as well as technology advances, continue to be the focus of law enforcement policy development. When asked what new policies their agency has added in the past year, 206 respondents listed a total of 170 different policy topics. Policies focused on the opioid epidemic were mentioned 67 times, followed by body-worn cameras (25 times) and drones (24 times).

Note: *63% of respondents said they added these policies in response to challenging societal changes or incidents.*

Policy topics mentioned the most:

206 Responding

1 **Opioids**
2 **Body-worn Cameras**
3 **Drones**

4 **Sexual Assault**
5 **Social Media**
6 **Use of Force**
7 **Bias-based Policing**

8 **Active Shooter**
9 **De-escalation**
10 **Deaf and Hard of Hearing**
11 **Transgender**

12 **Chaplain**
13 **In-car Cameras**
14 **License Plate Readers**
15 **Peer Support**
16 **Bike Patrol**

17 **Mentally Challenged**
18 **Crisis Intervention**
19 **Juvenile**
20 **Line-of-Duty Death**

Electronic signatures are captured to ensure policies are understood and acknowledged.

Once an agency has taken the necessary steps to create a policy and get it out to the team, how do they confirm it's been read and understood? With the increase in agencies using online policy management software to distribute their policies, it only makes sense that there was also an increase in requiring personnel to sign off on the policy electronically.

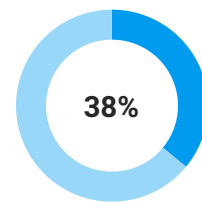### Percent of agencies reporting they ensure policies are fully understood and acknowledged in this way:
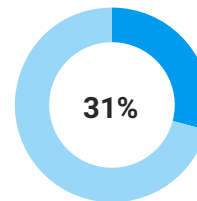
242 Responding

77%
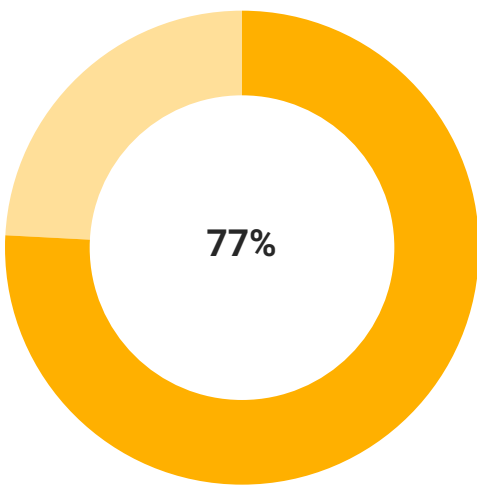
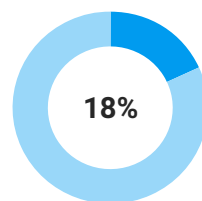Require personnel to sign off on the policy electronically (using software)

45%
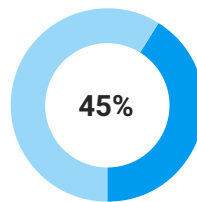
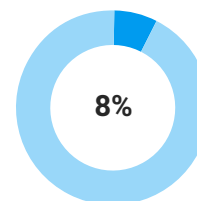Conduct training on new policy during roll call

38%

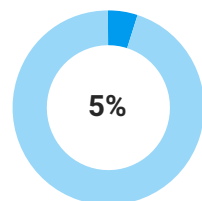Conduct training on new policy during in-service session

31%

Require personnel to take a test or quiz

18%

Require personnel to sign off on the policy itself (hard copy)
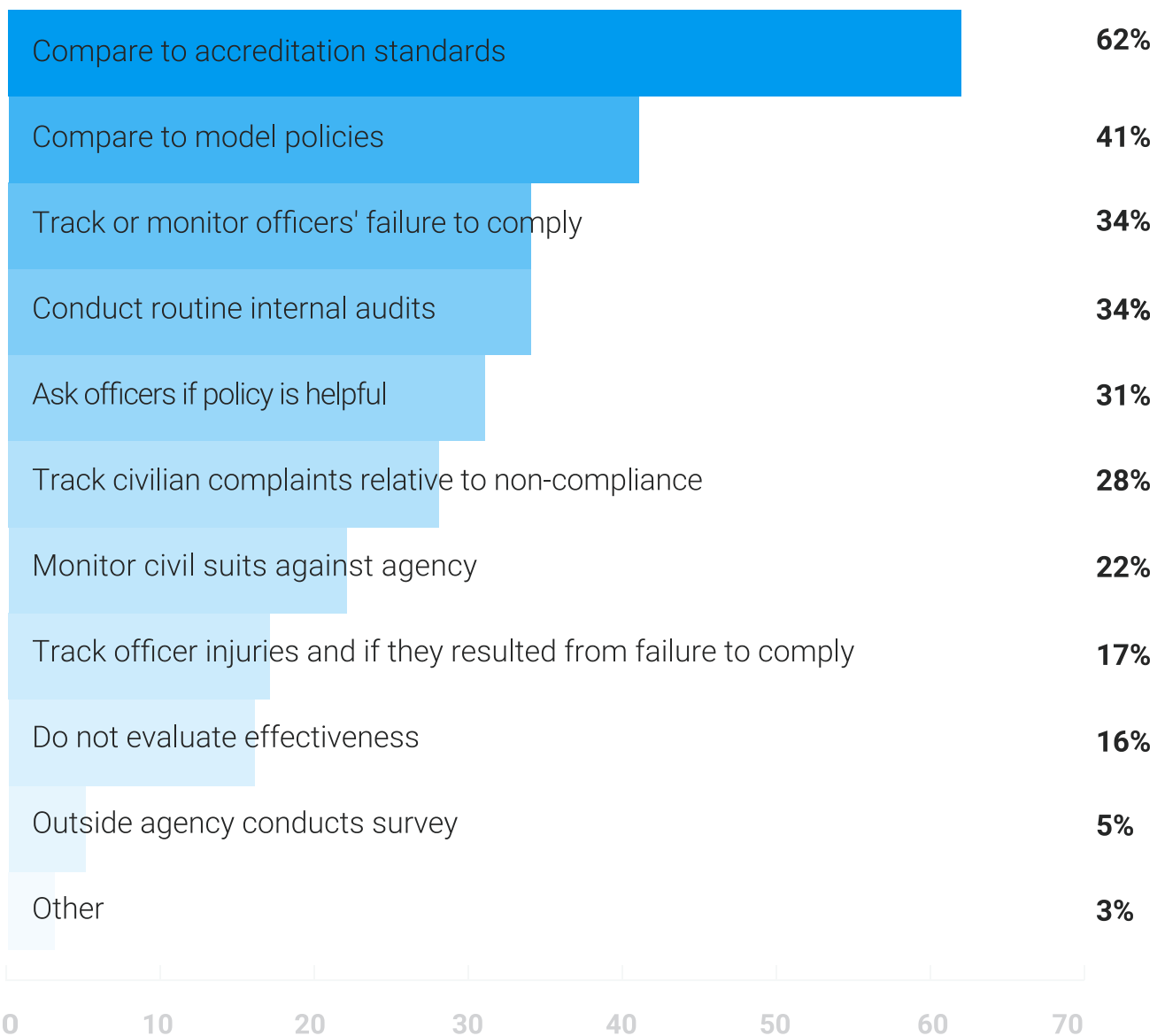
8%

Require a read receipt from email

5%

Other

Agencies turn to accreditation standards as a guide to evaluating policy effectiveness.

Agencies must evaluate whether policies are effective or not. To do this, the majority of respondents said they compare the policy to accreditation standards as a starting point. Unfortunately, 16% said they do not do anything to measure the effectiveness, and a few noted in "other" that they were unsure how this is done.

Percent of agencies reporting they measure effectiveness of policies in this way:

239 Responding

Compare to accreditation standards	**62%**
Compare to model policies	**41%**
Track or monitor officers' failure to comply	**34%**
Conduct routine internal audits	**34%**
Ask officers if policy is helpful	**31%**
Track civilian complaints relative to non-compliance	**28%**
Monitor civil suits against agency	**22%**
Track officer injuries and if they resulted from failure to comply	**17%**
Do not evaluate effectiveness	**16%**
Outside agency conducts survey	**5%**
Other	**3%**

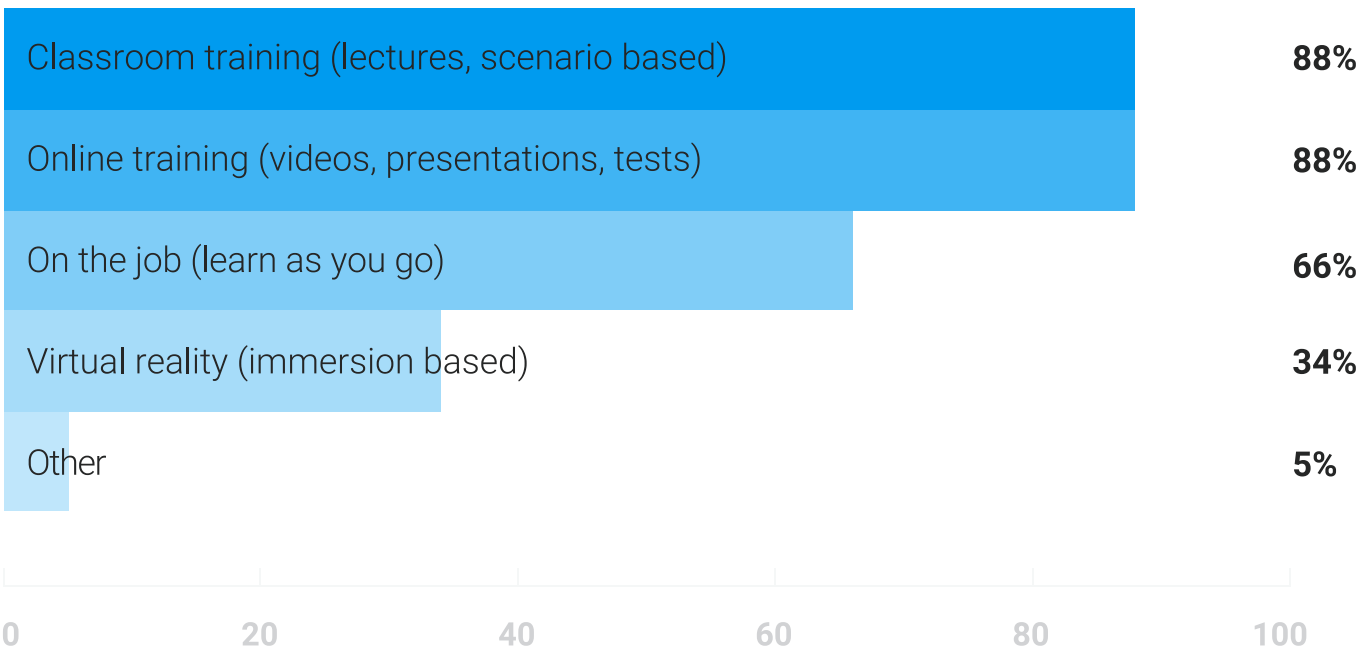| 0	10	20	30	40	50	60	70

Training Management

Agencies plan to combine classroom and online training methods.

An overwhelming percentage of agencies said they plan to continue combining classroom and online training for a more impactful program. These two methods together provide increased knowledge retention and save agencies money. Only 26% of agencies currently use some type of virtual reality training, while 34% mentioned they would like to add it to their current training program in the near future.

Percent of agencies reporting how they plan to conduct training: 237 Responding

Classroom training (lectures, scenario based)	**88%**
Online training (videos, presentations, tests)	**88%**
On the job (learn as you go)	**66%**
Virtual reality (immersion based)	**34%**
Other	**5%**

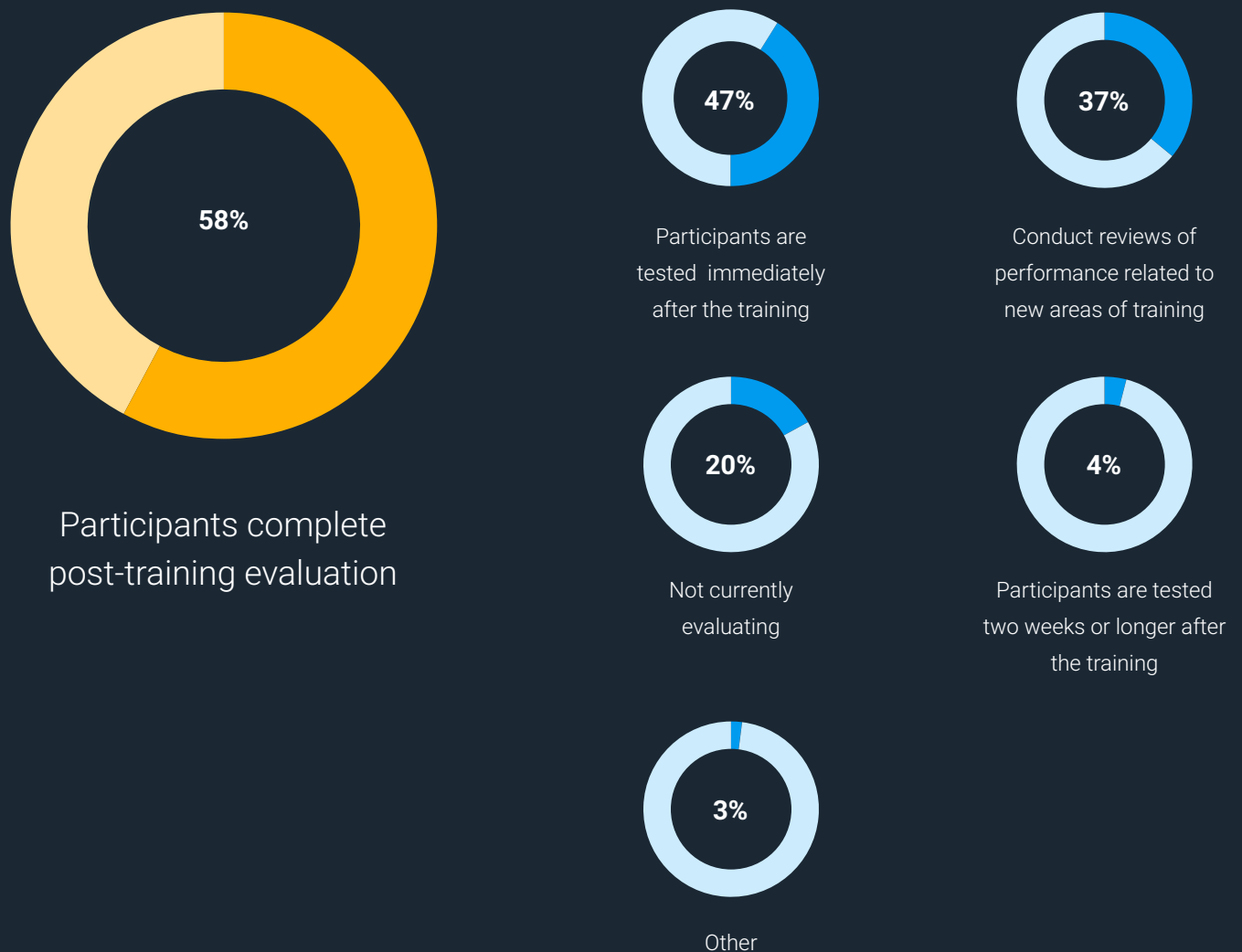0   20   40   60   80   100

Post-training evaluations are the preferred way to assess training effectiveness.

When it comes to gauging the success of a training program, over half of the respondents said participants complete a post-training evaluation. And a little less than half will test participants immediately after the training takes place. Only a small number test for retention weeks, or longer, after the training is conducted. One agency noted that if multiple officers do not comply with a new policy, then they look into the effectiveness of the training.

Percent of agencies reporting using these evaluation methods for training:

236 Responding

58%

Participants complete
post-training evaluation

47%

Participants are
tested immediately
after the training

37%

Conduct reviews of
performance related to
new areas of training

20%

Not currently
evaluating

4%

Participants are tested
two weeks or longer after
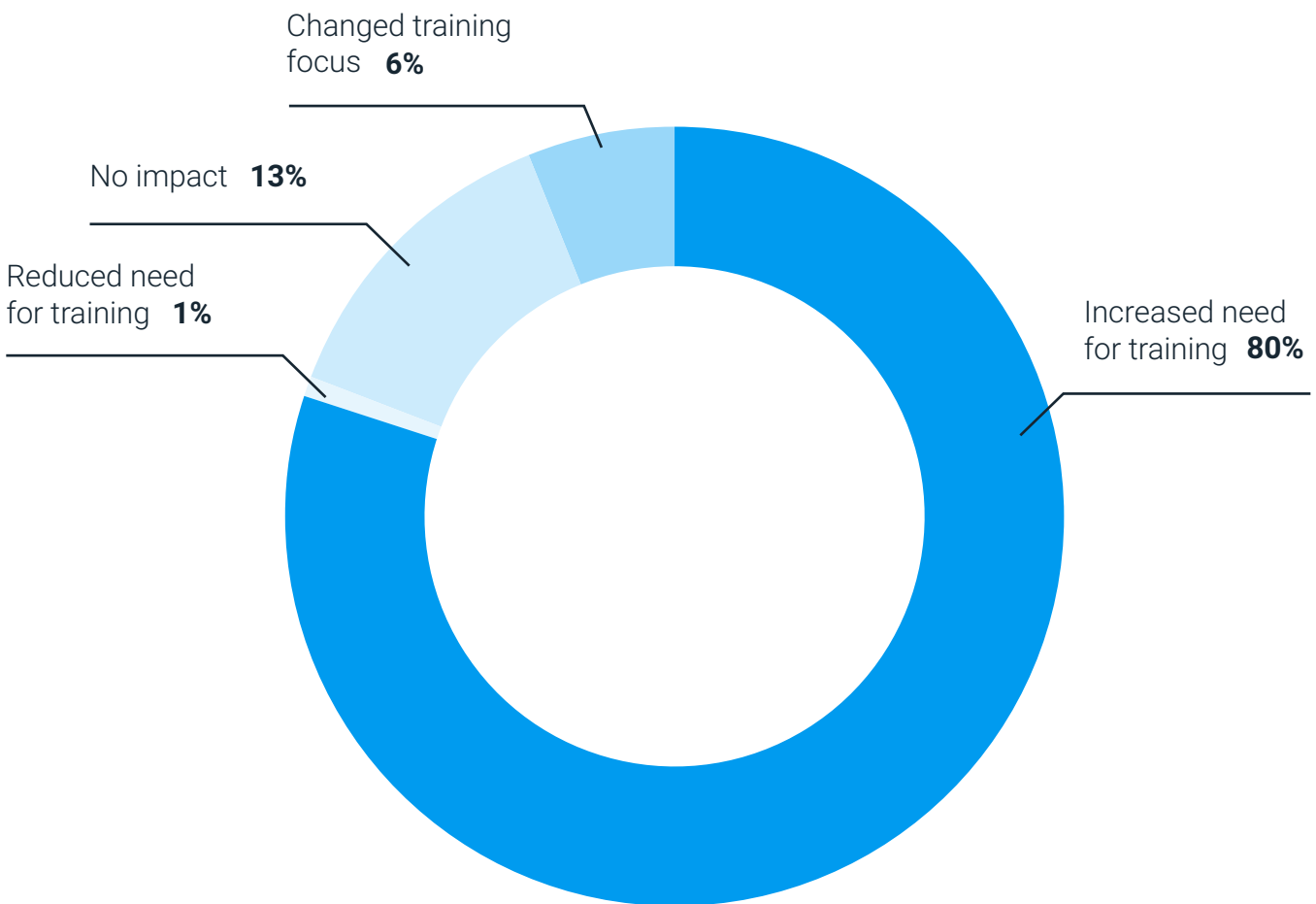the training

3%

Other

Agencies have an increased need for training.

As agencies respond to constant changes in policing, it's no surprise that 80% said they have an increased need for training. A large number of agencies mentioned they must increase training to keep up with societal changes and are heavily focused on use of force and de-escalation.

Percent of agencies reporting changes in training:

234 Responding

Changed training
focus **6%**

No impact **13%**

Reduced need
for training **1%**

Increased need
for training **80%**

"Societal changes are impacting our agency's training needs now more than ever. We are more focused on crisis intervention, de-escalation, and procedural justice. By continuously monitoring issues and evolving to keep up with changing times, we're increasing trust with our officers and the community we serve. "

Tim Hayden

Chief of Police, Addison (IL) Police Department

More training dollars are required to meet agencies' needs.

We learned earlier 80% of agencies have an increased need for training, but unfortunately, it was reported that training budgets continue to get cut and agencies are forced to do more with less. 66% of respondents said that their budgets are not being adjusted to meet what is required of them.

Percent of agencies reporting they have the budget needed to afford as much training as necessary:

238 Responding

Yes **34%**

No **66%**
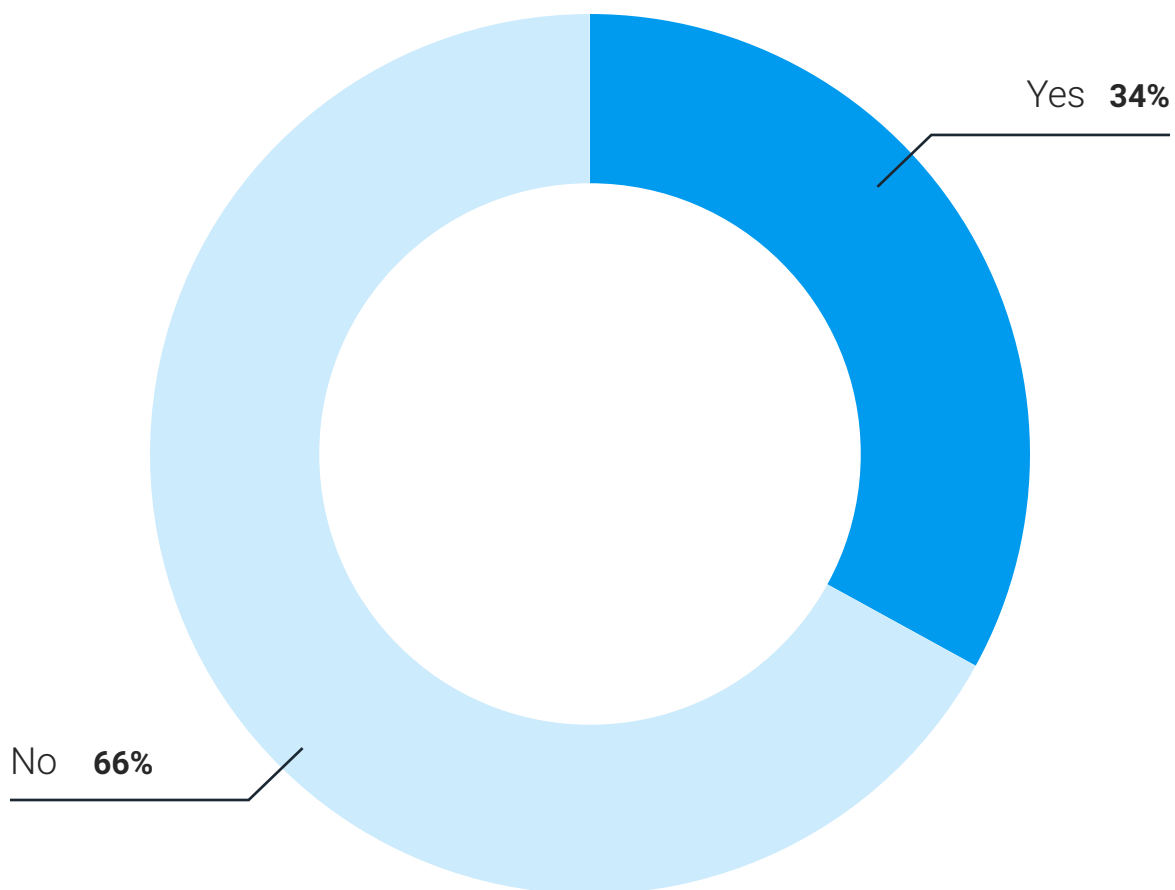
Agencies are seeking new ways to extend training dollars.

Although respondents reported they have been able to extend their training dollars by applying for grants, and by sharing training sessions with neighboring agencies, 64% are still looking to increase their budgets. Several mentioned they are "implementing" technology solutions to make redundant training less expensive and more available. It will be interesting to see if this number decreases next year as these online training programs become more popular.

Percent of agencies reporting they are looking for new ways to extend training dollars or supplemental training:

228 Responding

No **36%**

Yes **64%**
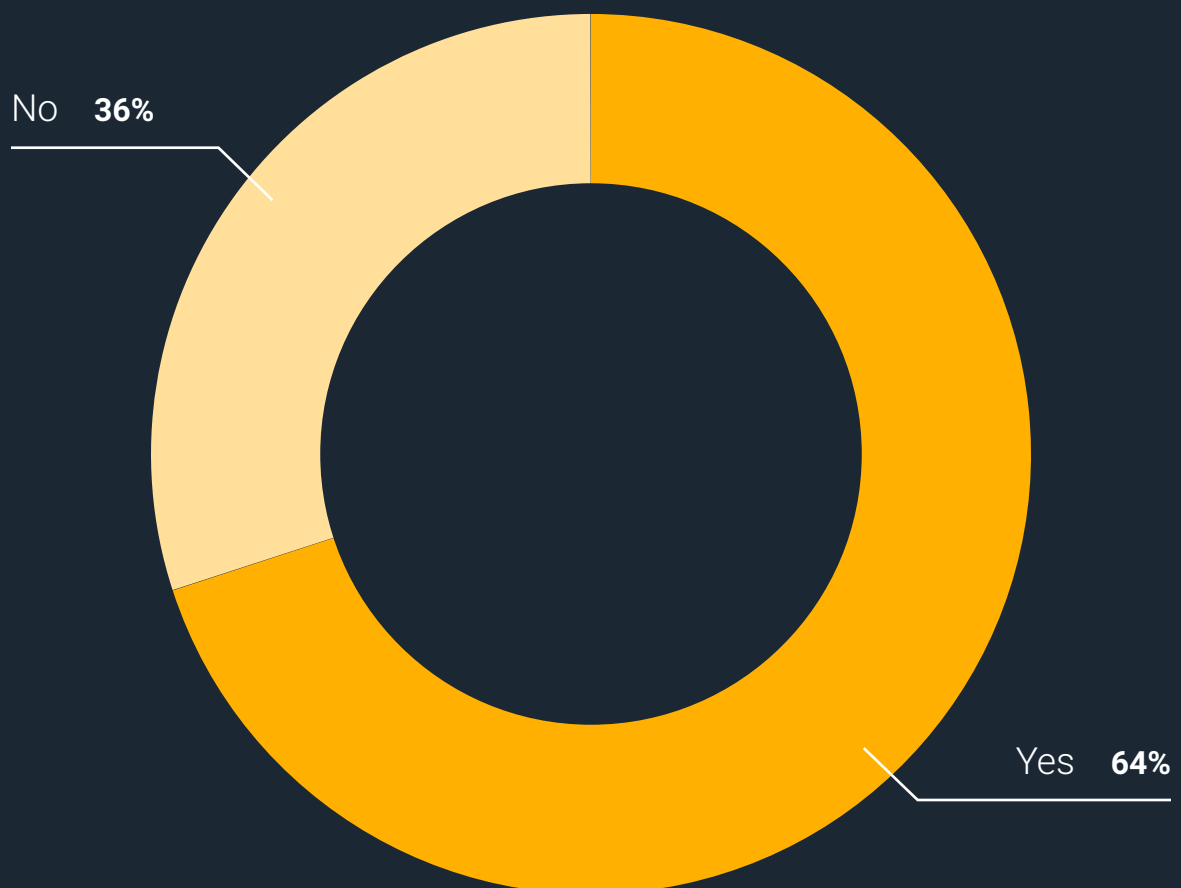
Takeaways

What We Heard

In 2018 the majority of agencies…

DO:

- agree policies should be reviewed and updated constantly

- believe policies are important for keeping officers safe and reducing injuries

- develop policies and training focused on new technology trends and social issues

- believe a thorough understanding at all levels is most important for ensuring policies are put into practice

- invest in policy management software to distribute policies and ensure they are received and understood

- consult other agencies for help with developing new policies

- use accreditation standards as a guide to determine policy effectiveness

- combine classroom and online training for more impact

- conduct post-training evaluations and test participants immediately after training

- have an increased need for training and seek new ways to extend training dollars

DO NOT:

- believe policies should only be evaluated when there is a system failure or other evidence that they are not working

- review and update every policy in their agency's manual (as a whole)

- send policies via email and require a read receipt

- think buy in from detectives is important when it comes to putting policies into practice

- rely on training units to convey new policies or policy changes

- use outside agencies to conduct surveys that determine policy effectiveness

- test participants weeks or longer after training to see what they have retained

- have a reduced need for training

- believe they have the budget needed to conduct necessary training

About P⏻werDMS

PowerDMS is a web-based software platform that ensures officers are protecting themselves, their community, and their agency's reputation by electronically delivering and tracking the policies and training they need to do their jobs. PowerDMS guarantees officers receive and understand this critical content, so supervisors can hold them accountable for their performance in the field and quickly prove compliance in the wake of an incident. PowerDMS is proud to serve over 2,500 law enforcement agencies throughout the U.S.

For more information, visit:
powerdms.com

When asked, 80% of respondents believe a software tool like PowerDMS contributes to more effective policing via updated and communicated policies.

243 Responding

Not Sure **4%**

No **16%**

Yes **80%**
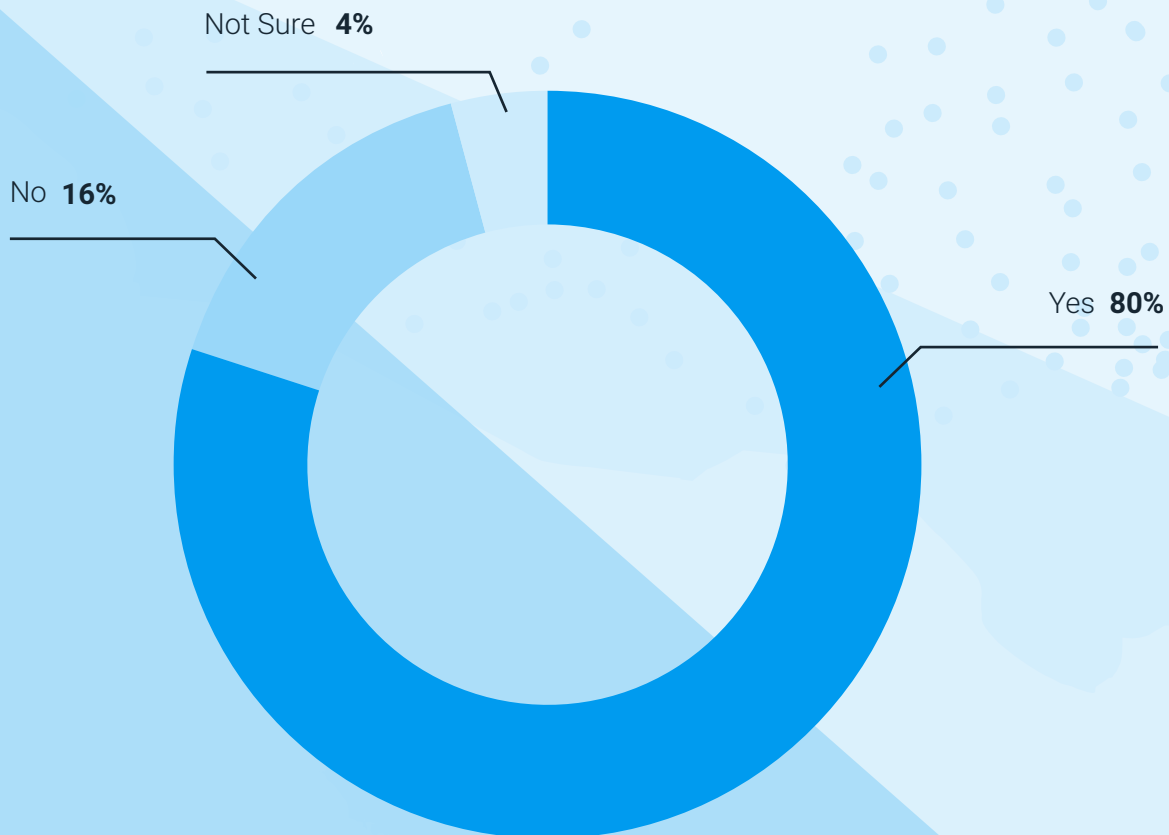
Over
3,000
customers
trust
PowerDMS.

PowerDMS