Policing in the 21st Century

Preliminary Survey Results

April 2011

OVERVIEW

As part of President Mark A. Marshall's Policing in the 21st Century Initiative, the Division of State Association of Chiefs of Police, the Division of State and Provincial Police, the Indian Country Section and the Mid-Size Cities Section, in conjunction with the IACP Research Center, conducted a series of surveys and held facilitated roundtable discussions at their March mid-year meetings. Over 400 law enforcement leaders took part in these conversations about the impact the new economy is having on the field.

A few key findings:

- Over 55 percent of respondents said that the new economy presented a serious or severe problem to their agency.
- Over 85 percent of agencies reported that they were forced to reduce their budget over the last year with nearly half of agencies surveyed reported that they had to lay-off or furlough staff in the past 12 months
- More than half of respondents reported that they had to reduce their budgets in the prior year by five percent or more; a quarter had to reduce their budgets by more than 10 percent.
- These reductions were on top of the cuts that agencies already had to endure over the past several years.
- Most did not anticipate the reductions or the seriousness of the problem to end soon.
- Over 40 percent said the coming year presented a serious or severe problem to their agency, with over one-third saying that they would have to further reduce their budgets by 10 percent of more in the coming year.

The consequences of these cuts have been the laying off or furloughing of staff; the reduction of police services, such as responding to certain citizen calls for service; the forgoing of equipment replacement and upgrades; and, the elimination of special programs and units. More than half of the law enforcement leaders, for example, reported that they had to lay-off staff in the previous year, with the majority of those being civilian personnel. The sworn workforce, however, is shrinking with attrition. Over 36 percent responded that they had not been able to graduate an academy class in over two years. Beyond the statistics, respondents reported that across the board they had to reduce everything: If their agency was able to put through an academy class, it was smaller than usual; if their agency was able to purchase new equipment, such as patrol vehicles, their orders did not keep pace with agency needs.

While police leaders are being asked to reduce their budgets, many are also being asked to take on additional responsibilities. Seventy-seven percent of the law enforcement leaders who participated in the survey and roundtable discussions reported that they were asked to increase their support of other agencies and asked to shoulder additional duties last year. They indicated that they were asked to provide tactical support units, take over criminal investigations and general patrol responsibilities, respond to 9-1-1 calls for service, and increase their crime lab support to augment the service demands that could not be met by other agencies.

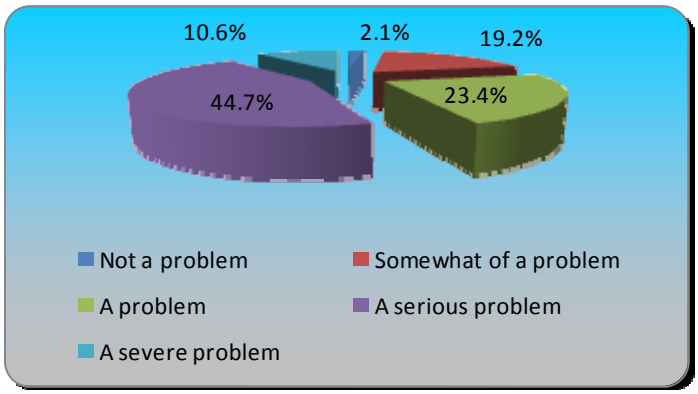
Considering the current economic and political environment and the fundamental changes that these reductions are causing, from the elimination of important functions within departments to the consolidation of agencies and the regionalization of shared services, **94 percent of respondents said that we are seeing a "new reality" in American policing developing.**

HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE SURVEYS

Q: How did the economy impact your agency last year?

A:

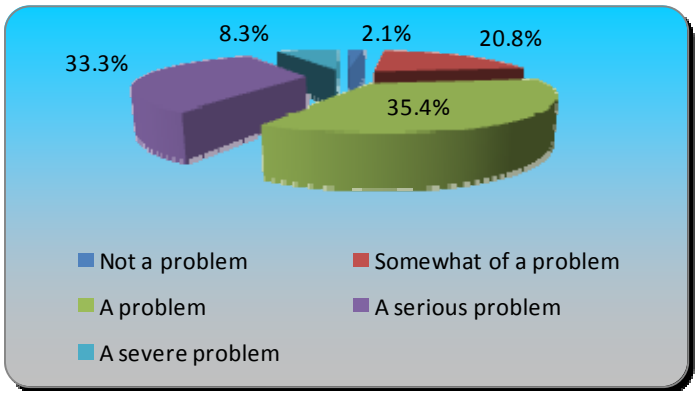
❑ Not a problem	2.13%
❑ Somewhat of a problem	19.15%
❑ A problem	23.40%
❑ A serious problem	44.68%
❑ A severe problem	10.64%



Q: How do you anticipate the economy will impact your agency in the coming year?

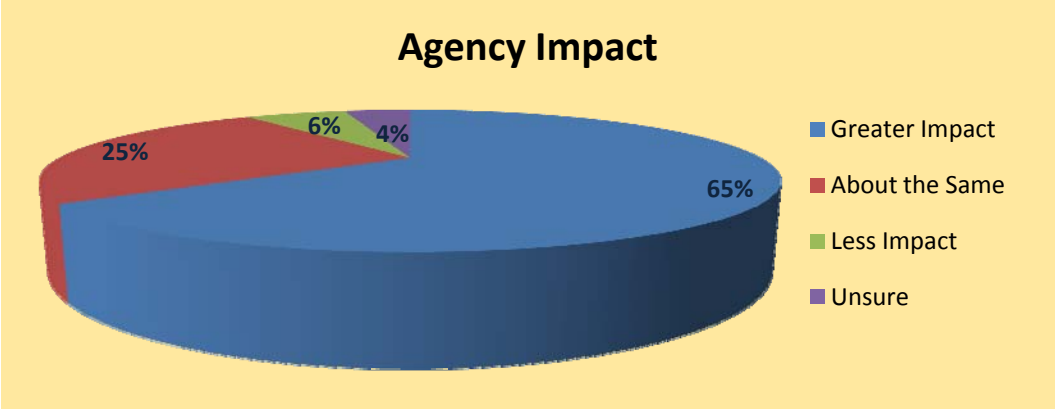
A:

❑ Not a problem	2.08%
❑ Somewhat of a problem	20.83%
❑ A problem	35.42%
❑ A serious problem	33.33%
❑ A severe problem	8.33%



Q: **Compared to past economic downturns, how would you rate this one in terms of its impact on your agency?**

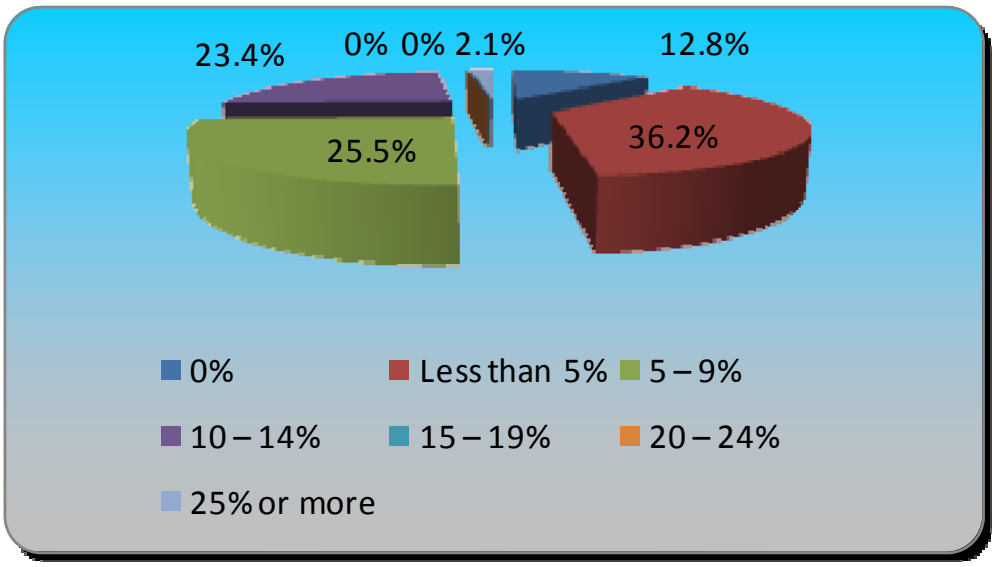
A: Greater Impact: 65%



Q: **By what percentage were you forced to reduce your budget this year?**

A:

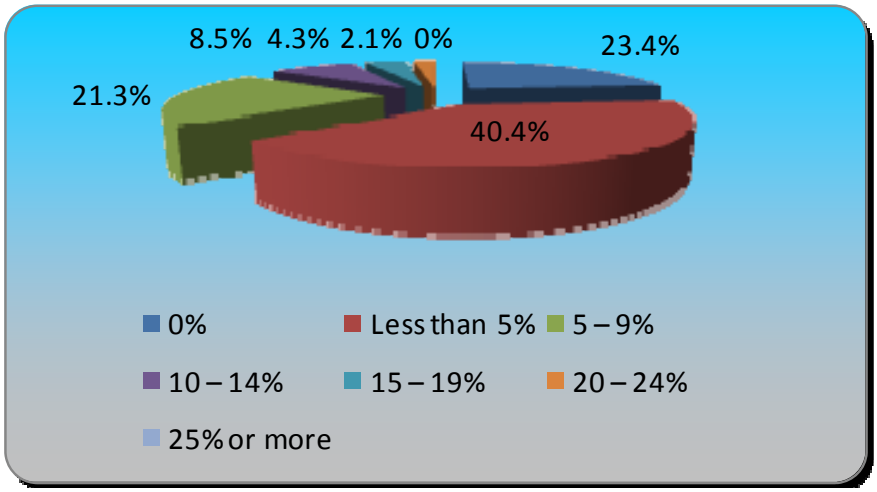
❑ 0%	12.77%
❑ Less than 5%	36.17%
❑ 5 – 9%	25.53%
❑ 10 – 14%	23.40%
❑ 15 – 19%	0%
❑ 20 – 24%	0%
❑ 25% or more	2.13%



Q: **By what percentage do you anticipate having to reduce your budget next year?**

A:

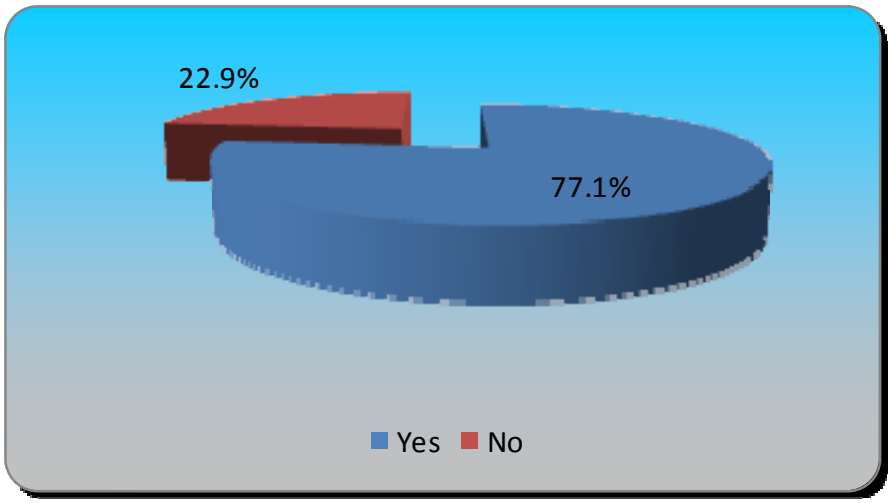
- ❑ 0% — 23.40%
- ❑ Less than 5% — 40.43%
- ❑ 5 – 9% — 21.28%
- ❑ 10 – 14% — 8.51%
- ❑ 15 – 19% — 4.26%
- ❑ 20 – 24% — 2.13%
- ❑ 25% or more — 0%



Q: **Has your agency been asked to increase its support of other agencies?**

A: Yes: 77.08%

No: 22.92%



Q: List the top three to five actions implemented to respond to the budget/economic changes.

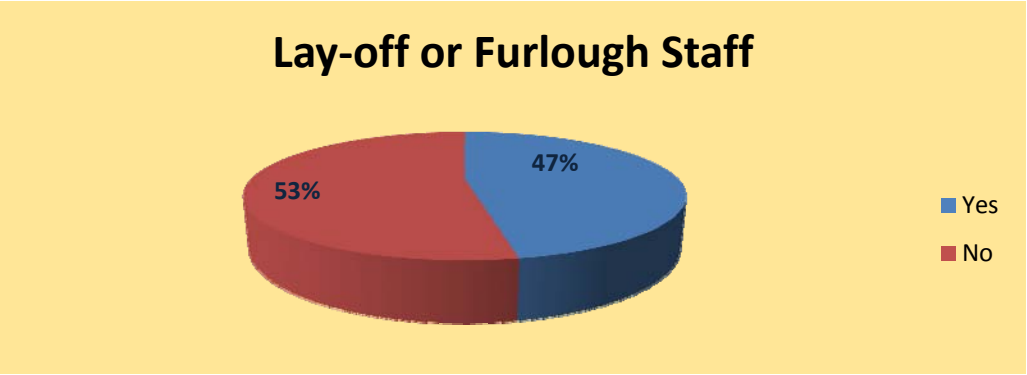
A: Most frequently cited responses to cope with resource shortfalls are:

- Layoffs and furloughs
- Hiring freezes and not filling vacancies.
- Specialty units – eliminating/reducing staffing. Training units, task forces, traffic units singled out.
- Service cuts. Community policing is singled out. (13 references)

Wage freezes, overtime reduction, civilian staff reductions were also mentioned.

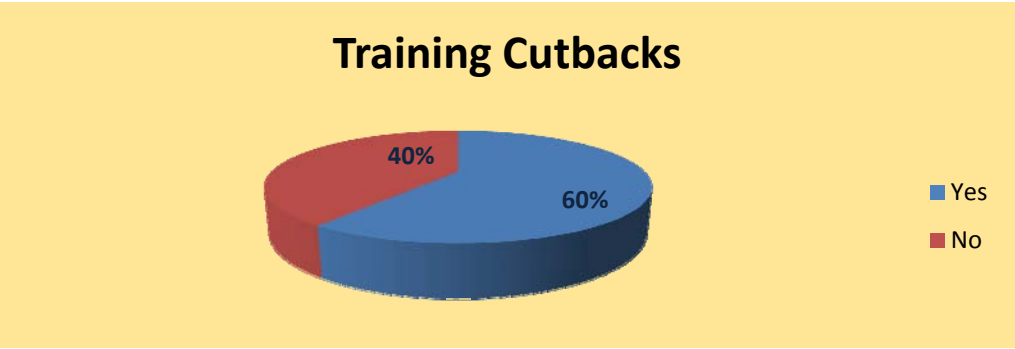
Q: Has your agency had to lay-off or furlough staff in the past year?

A: Yes 47%
No 53%



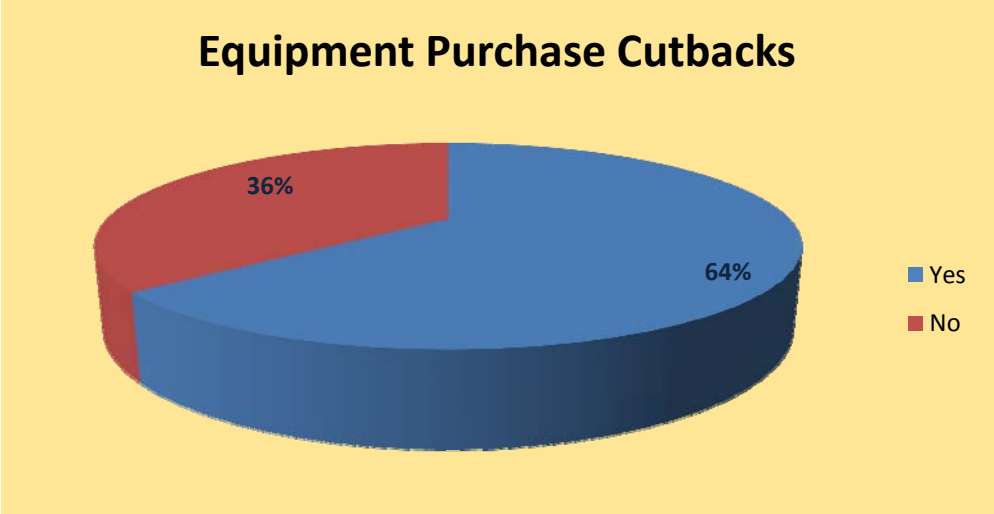
Q: **Has your agency had to cut back on training?**

A: Yes: 60%
No: 40%



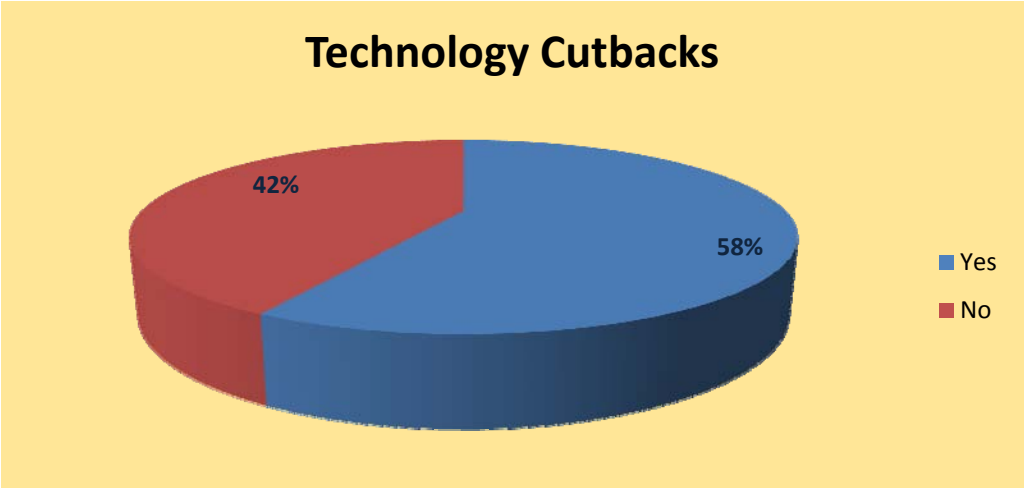
Q: **Has your agency had to cut back on buying or upgrading major equipment, such as vehicles, in the past year?**

A: Yes: 64%
No: 36%



Q: **Has your agency cut back on buying or upgrading major technology such as In-Car Cameras or LPRs in the past year?**

A: Yes: 58%
No: 42%



Q: Limited resources may promote innovation in cost-effective service delivery. Can you provide an example of innovative actions taken by your department/members?

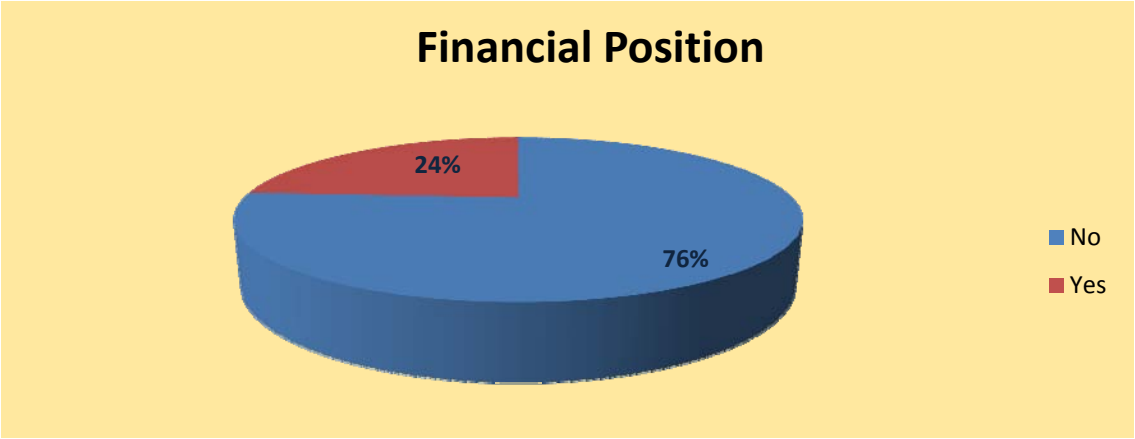
A: One-quarter of those who responded to this survey item referenced multi-jurisdictional arrangements, in several, mostly familiar forms:

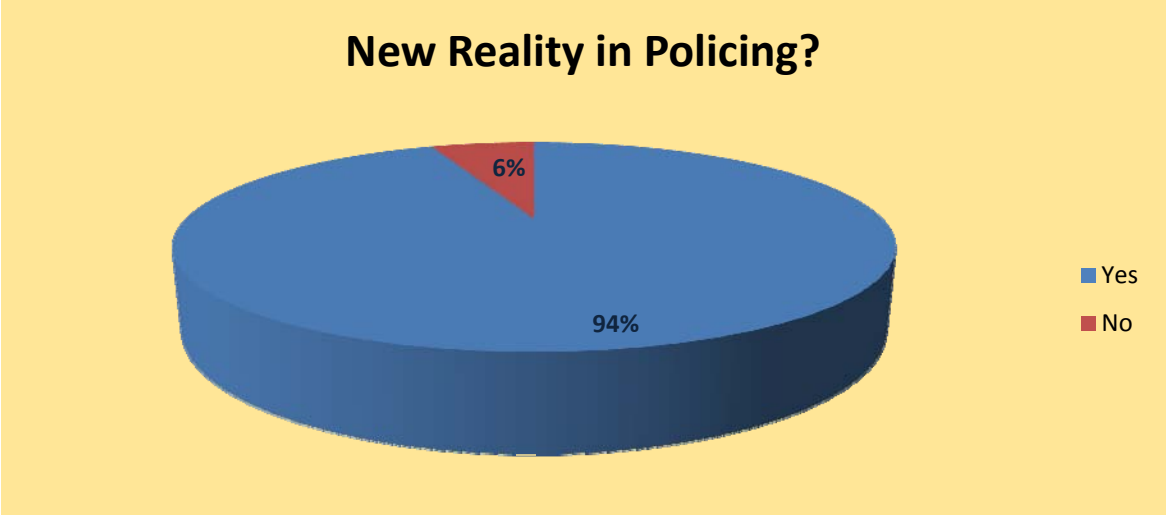
- Joint task forces, combinations that include police, sheriffs, state police, and constables.
- Local arrangements with school districts, housing authorities, and fire.
- Service/function-specific resource sharing including crime scene technicians, dispatch, SWAT, Hazmat, laboratories, and training.

Less frequently mentioned are familiar cost cutters such as use of volunteers, increased use of reserves, online citizen reporting, and elimination of mobile response for minor calls for service. Clearly inspired by budget pressures are, in several instances, return to two-officer cars, to save on fuel and equipment. Hot-spot policing, direct report and information entry, and installation of traffic enforcement cameras were noted.

Q: Is your agency in a stronger financial position today than it was in 2000?

A: No: 76%
Yes: 24%



Q: **Are we seeing a new reality in American policing developing?**

A: Yes: 94%
No: 6%