

City of Eugene Community Justice Initiative
Analysis of Online Survey
and
Comparison with SRI Phase I Survey

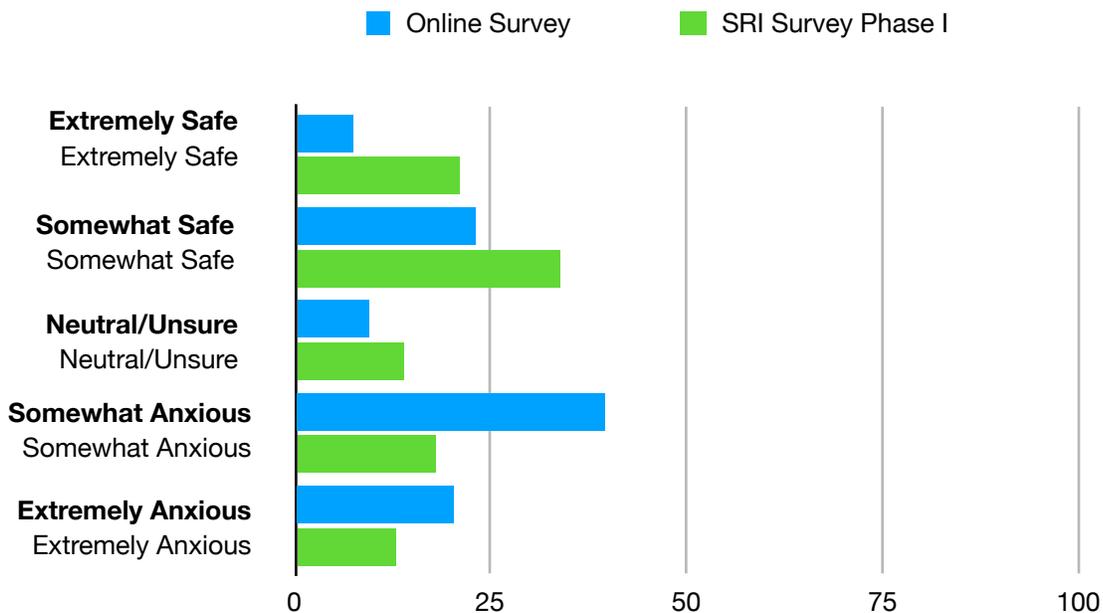
The following analysis and comparison examines 2,478 online responses from a SurveyMonkey survey included on the City of Eugene website “Community Safety and Services” (<https://www.eugene-or.gov/3946/Community-Safety-and-Services>). The survey was constructed by the City’s Community Outreach team as part of the City’s ongoing Community Justice Initiative work. The survey went “live” on 7/27/18 and closed on 9/10/18. The online survey was designed using Strategy Research Institute’s (SRI) Benchmark scientific survey as a template. SRI’s Benchmark survey was administered to high propensity voters in the City of Eugene in July 2018.

One of the primary differences with the online survey was the inclusion of three questions that asked respondents for qualitative feedback. The qualitative data in this report was analyzed using Taylor-Powell and Renner’s (2003) five step process that included a content analysis. The online survey was available in Spanish, whereas the scientific Benchmark survey was English only. There were ten responses to the Spanish survey, and half of those respondents indicated they lived outside of Eugene.

This analysis includes the English language online survey data through 9/10/18, both quantitative and qualitative. The analysis includes the Spanish language qualitative data but not the Spanish quantitative data because of the extremely small sample size. It is important to note the online survey was nonscientific—that is, respondents volunteered to participate, therefore the sample is not randomly selected and the results are not generalizable to the larger population of likely Eugene voters. That said, the online survey provided additional and important qualitative data that the scientific Benchmark survey did not. In this way, the online survey supplemented the Benchmark survey in a meaningful way.

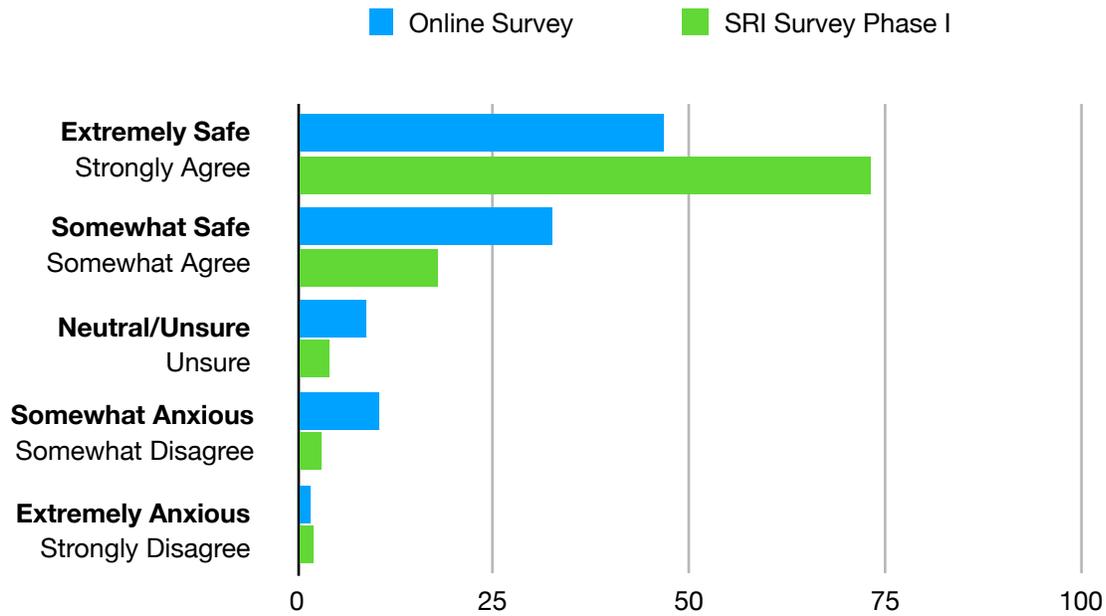
Online Q1.1: How safe do you feel visiting Downtown Eugene?

SRI Phase Q5.1: How safe do you feel when visiting Downtown Eugene?



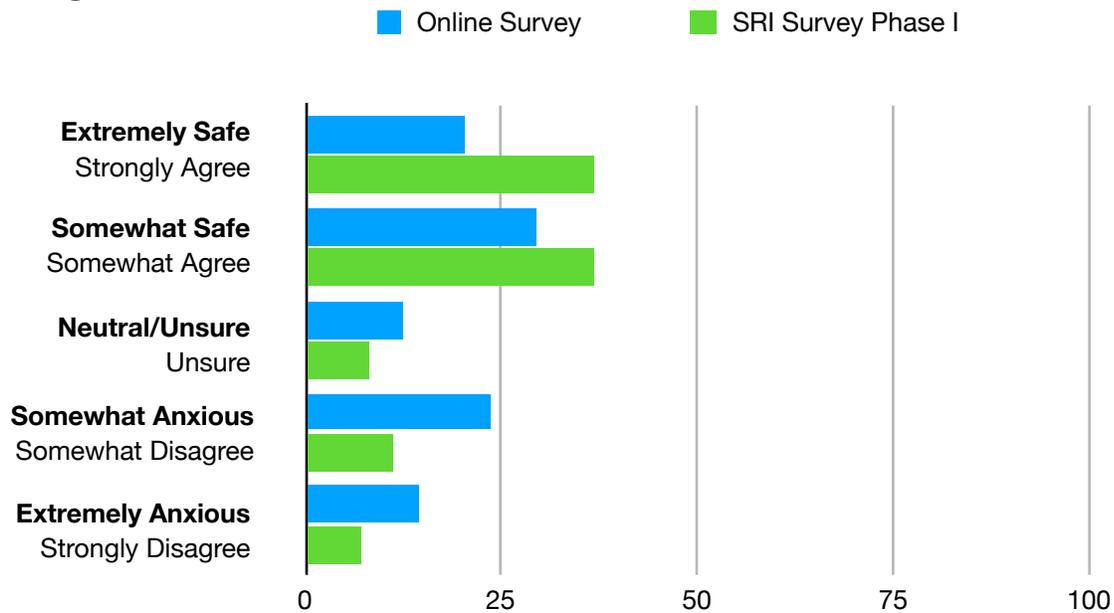
Online Q1.2: How safe do you feel walking in your neighborhood during the daytime hours?

SRI Phase 1 Q5.2: How safe do you feel when walking in your neighborhood during daytime hours?



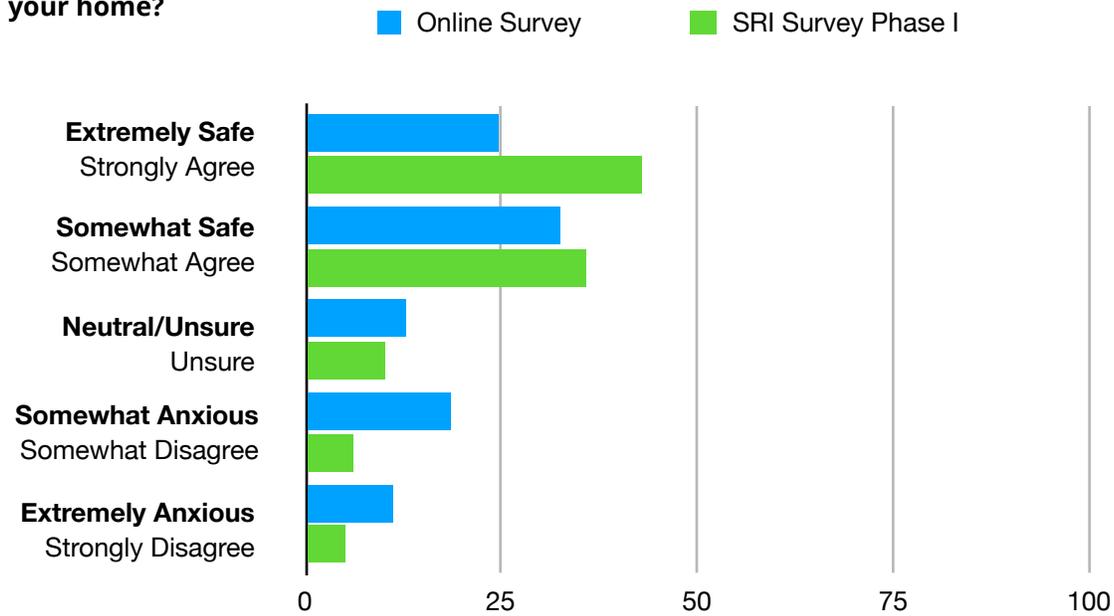
Online Q1.3: How safe do you feel walking in your neighborhood during the evening hours?

SRI Phase 1 Q5.3: How safe do you feel when walking in your neighborhood during evening hours or night?



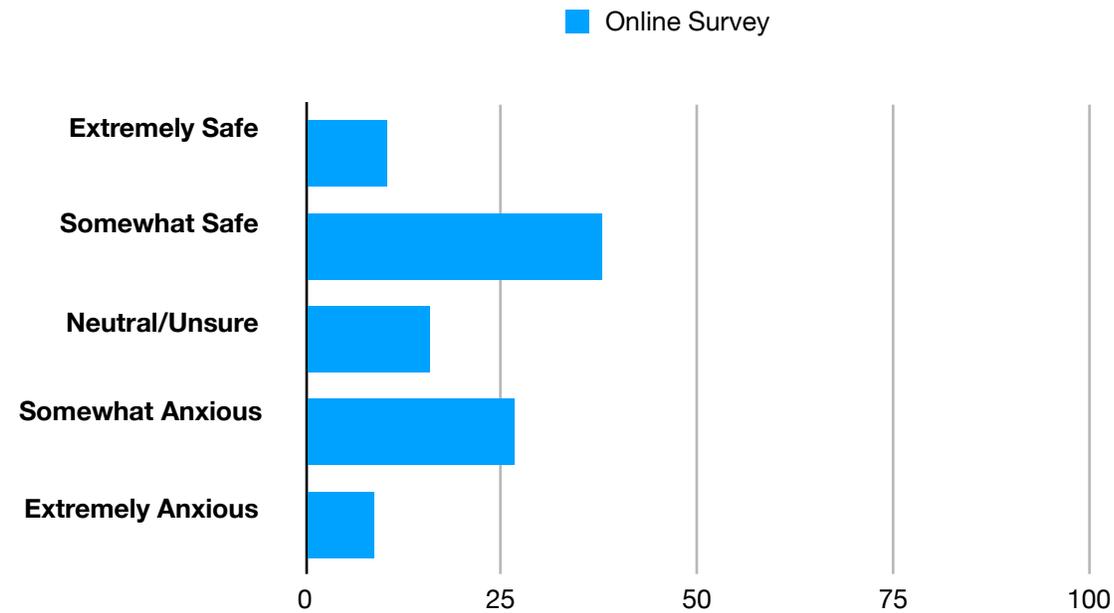
Online Q1.4: How safe do you feel listing the community park or neighborhood park nearest your home?

SRI Phase 1 Q5.4: How safe do you feel listing the community park or neighborhood park nearest your home?



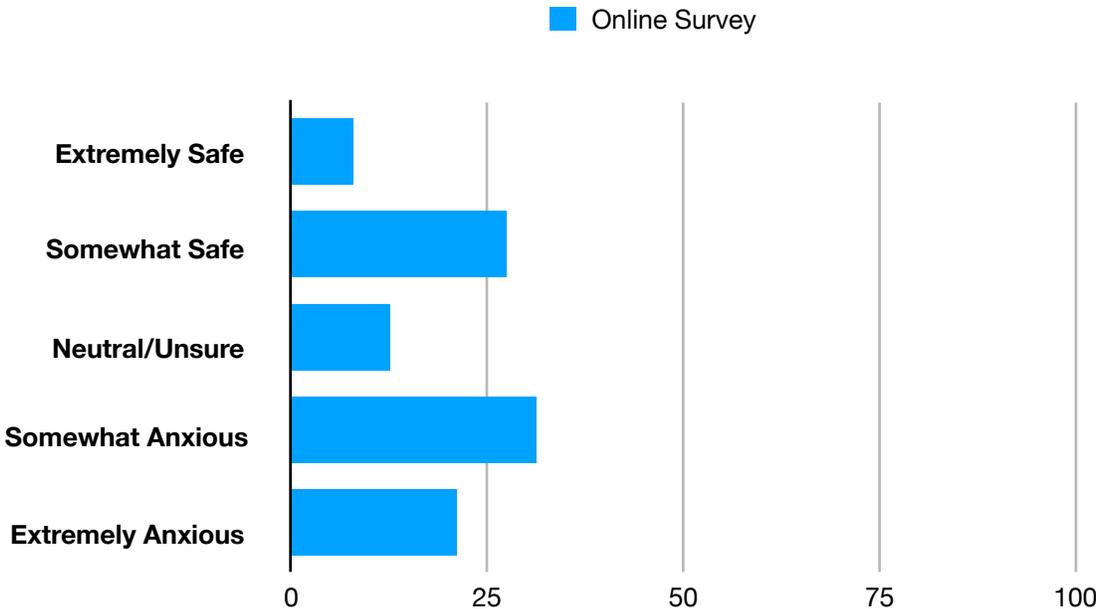
Online Q1.5: How safe do you feel driving, biking or walking on City roads and sidewalks?

SRI Phase 1: No similar question



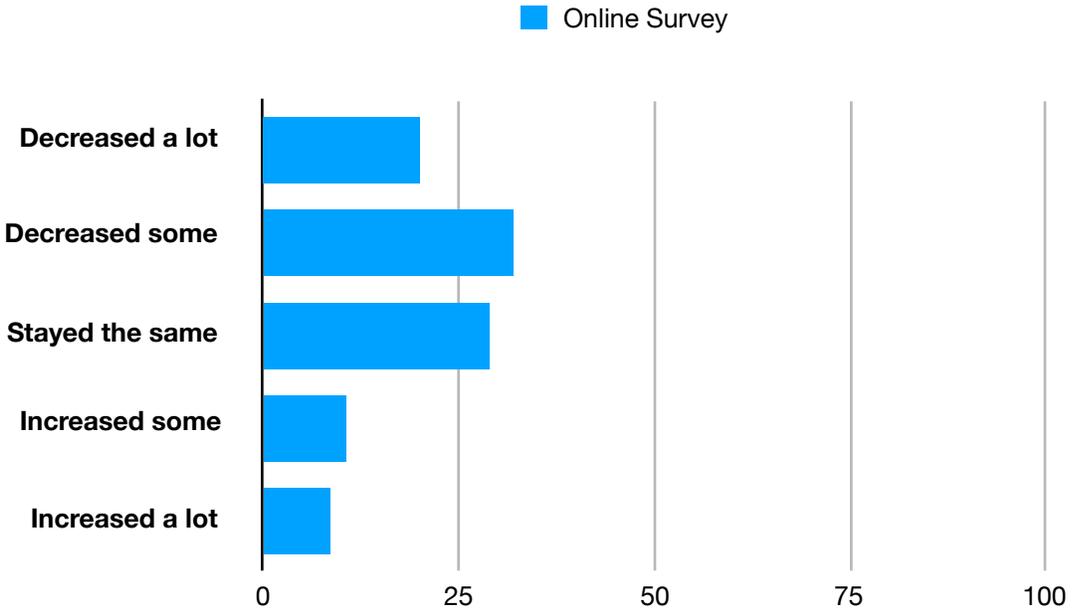
Online Q1.5: How safe do you feel about the security of your personal property?

SRI Phase 1: No similar question



Online Q2: Over the last 12 months, to what extent have your feelings of safety in our community increased, decreased, or stayed the same?

SRI Phase 1: No similar question



Online Q3: Please share any other thoughts about your feelings of safety in Eugene SRI Phase 1: No similar question

There were 1,706 individual responses (136 pages of text) to this question. The content analysis of the data revealed these dominant themes: concerns about homelessness, concerns about Downtown Eugene, concerns about property crimes, concerns about the safety of bike paths and parks, and concerns about police response. Within each category of concern, there were multiple related subcategories. Less dominant themes in the data revealed concerns about traffic safety in Eugene, the increase in bias and hate crimes, increased white supremacy activities, and concerns about attracting more homeless people if additional services were offered. While there were generally supportive comments about police and the need to increase the number of police, there were a small number of negative comments that described the respondents' fear and distrust of police.

Homelessness

By far the most common theme was about homelessness and associated issues (subcategories) that respondents perceived to be directly related to homelessness. The subcategories included drug use, public health issues (sanitation, discarded needles), perceptions of decreased safety due to the presence of homeless people, and a desire for people perceived to be homeless to "move on," or have them forcibly removed. There were strong connections made between homelessness, drug use, mental illness, aggressive panhandling/harassment, and crime. Many respondents expressed frustration stemming from their perception that the City was paying more attention to the homeless population downtown than to residents and businesses, and there was a prominent cry to "do something."

There was an implicit differentiation between people feeling "unsafe" and feeling "uncomfortable." Toolis and Hammack (2015) described this difference as being related to how privileged residents (housed) perceive and define public spaces in ways that essentially exclude unhoused people and move toward an ideology of privatizing so called public spaces to prohibit sitting, standing, panhandling, and sleeping in those areas—essentially to create clear "in-groups" (housed people) and "out-groups" (unhoused people). The difference between feeling unsafe and feeling uncomfortable was present in the data and was associated with different suggested solutions to the problem. Generally, respondents who reported feeling unsafe were more likely to suggest removing homeless people from the area. Respondents who implied they were uncomfortable with seeing homeless people were more inclined to suggest increased social services. Many people mentioned their support of CAHOOTS and their desire to increase their services.

Downtown

Most of the concerns centered around the Downtown area, with most comments being related in some way to homelessness. Subcategories included the perceptions that Downtown is not family friendly, particularly unsafe for women, that the area is unsafe especially at night, and that the presence of homeless people has created a public health issue (lack of sanitation and discarded needles). Some respondents replied that they either live or work Downtown, and their comments echoed the concerns about homelessness and decreased safety. A smaller subset of respondents claimed they have lived in other large metropolitan areas and that Downtown Eugene is relatively safe in comparison. Another subcategory was a concern that increased police presence downtown (although appreciated) had pushed problems to surrounding areas including the Whitaker neighborhood and the Washington Jefferson Street area.

Property Crime

Respondents were concerned about the increase in property crime in their neighborhoods that included Downtown, West Eugene, Goodpasture Loop, Delta Ponds, River Road and Santa Clara. Many respondents reported that their homes/cars had been burglarized, property vandalized, and items stolen from their yards. There was a strong connection made between homeless people, illegal camping, and property crime. There was a general concern about the lack of/slow response from police.

Bike Paths and Parks

The safety of the area's bike paths and parks were a dominant theme in the data. Respondents believed that the presence of homeless camps near bike paths and parks decreased the safety of the areas and had changed the way in which respondents utilized the bike paths and parks. For example, many people restricted their use of bike paths and parks to daylight hours only, would only use the areas if accompanied by their dog, or carried pepper spray. A small number of people stated they obtained conceal carry permits for firearms because of their fear of being attacked.

Police Response

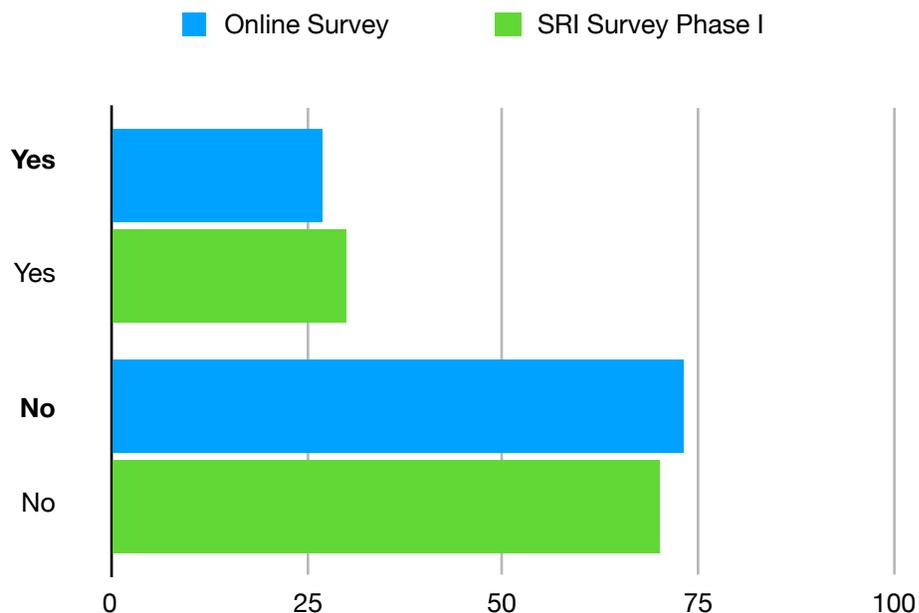
Respondents were concerned about slow police response to non life threatening calls such as burglary and other property crime. Most attributed the slow response time to an overall lack of police officers. Many people commented that they believed if police were concentrating on a specific geographic area like Downtown, that decreased the police's ability to respond quickly to other areas in the City. There was a strong nexus between increased number of police officers and faster response times.

Less Dominant Themes

There were several less dominant themes in the data that deserve mention because they were not present in the preliminary data analysis (N = 1,321, July 8, 2018), and therefore represent emergent trends. Many respondents reported they were concerned with traffic safety in Eugene, including issues of reckless driving, speeding, road rage, and red light runners. These issues have decreased the feeling of safety when utilizing Eugene's roadways either by car, bike, or walking. A small number of respondents described their concerns about increased white supremacy activities, racism, and the increase of hate/bias crimes. It is important to mention this category because research has shown that these types of activities are typically underreported because of barriers including fear of reprisal from perpetrators, concerns about deportation, and general mistrust of law enforcement and judicial systems. Finally, a number of respondents commented on their concerns that if more social services were offered to homeless people, that would attract more homeless people to the area, seeking the additional services. This is called the "Magnet Myth" and has been shown to be largely inaccurate in other metropolitan areas, such as San Francisco (Laslavik, 2015).

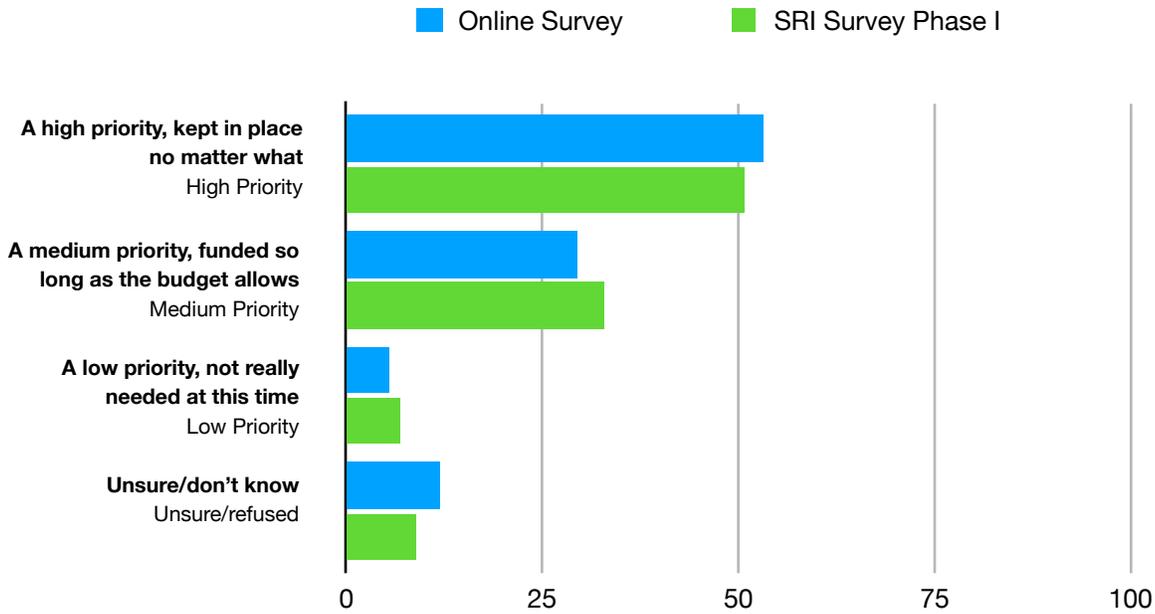
Online Q4: Prior to this survey, did you know about the City's CORT program?

SRI Phase 1 Q6.1: Prior to the present interview, did you know about the City's CORT program?



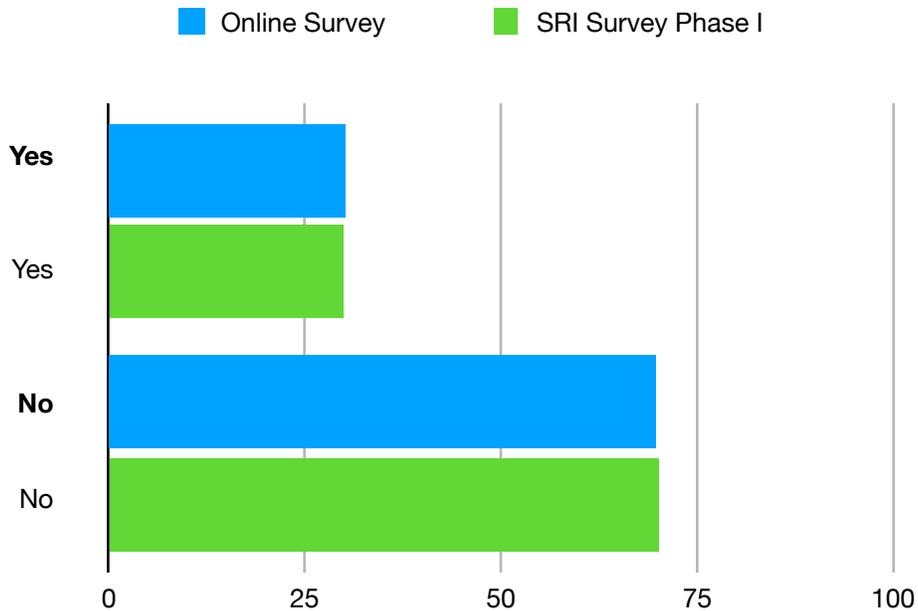
Online Q5: Based on what you know about the program, or how it was described here, what priority should City officials place in this program?

SRI Phase 1 Q6.1a: What priority should City officials place on the program?



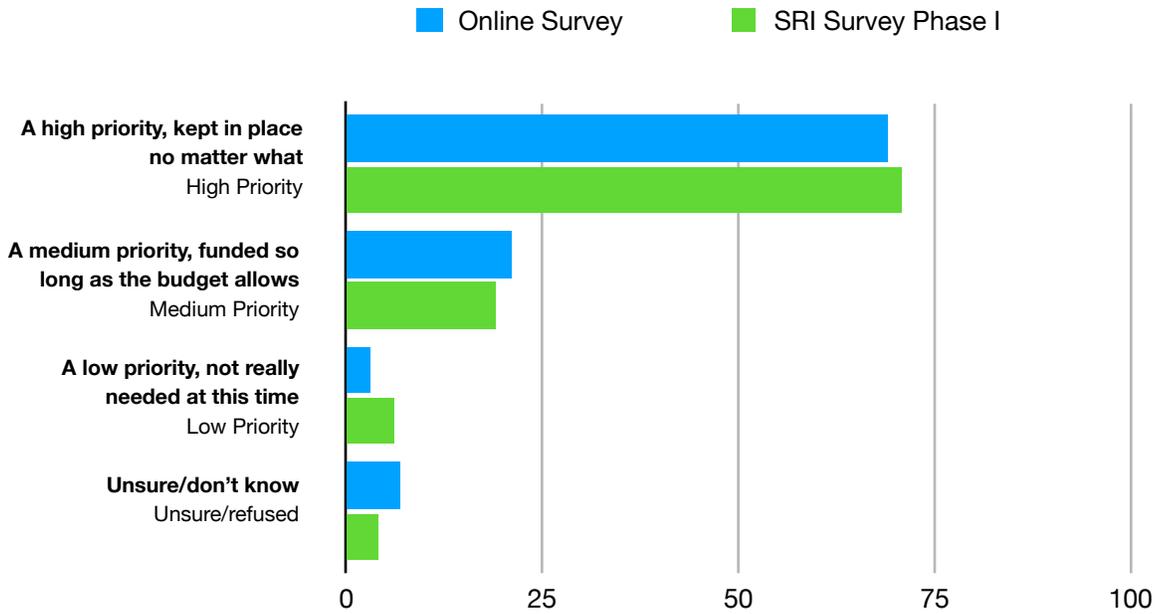
Online Q6: Prior to this survey, did you know about the City's Mental Health Court Program?

SRI Phase 1 Q6.2: Prior to the present interview, did you know about the City's Mental Health Court program?



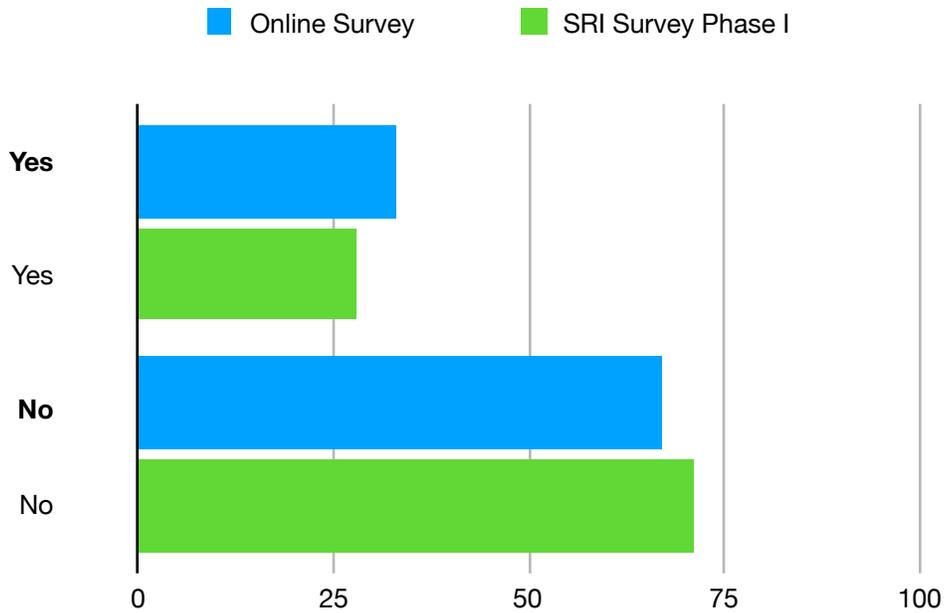
Online Q7: Based on what you know about the program, or how it was described here, what priority should City officials place in this program?

SRI Phase 1 Q6.2a: What priority should City officials place on the program?



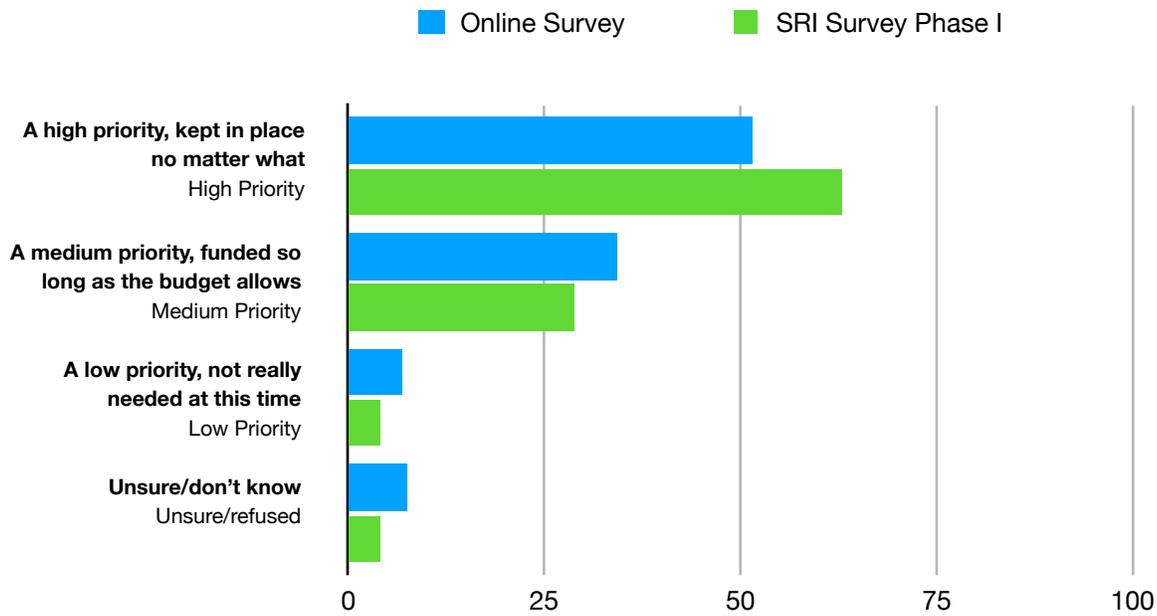
Online Q8: Prior to this survey, did you know about the City's Community Court Program?

SRI Phase 1 Q6.3: Prior to the present interview, did you know about the City's Community Court program?



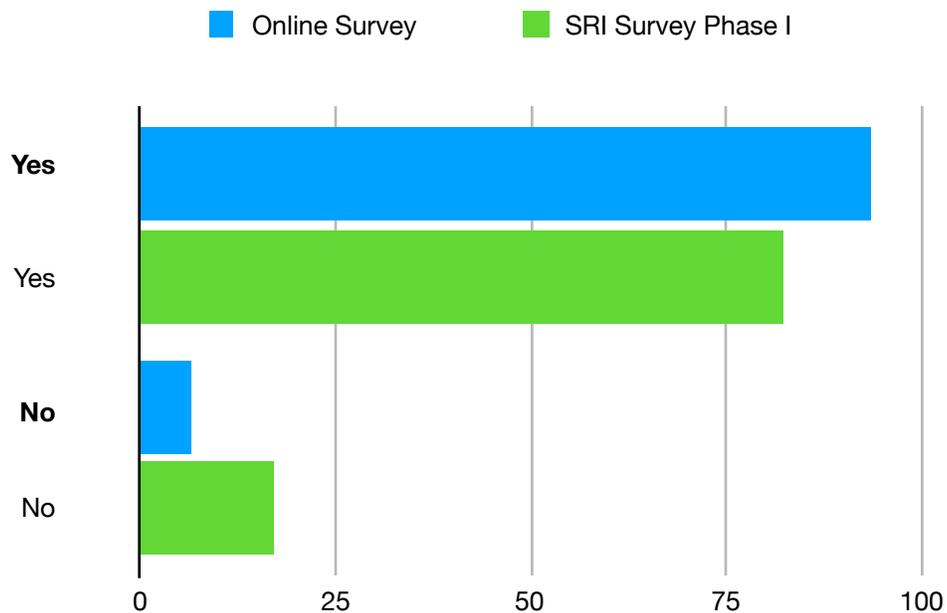
Online Q9: Based on what you know about the program, or how it was described here, what priority should City officials place in this program?

SRI Phase 1 Q6.3a: What priority should City officials place on the program?



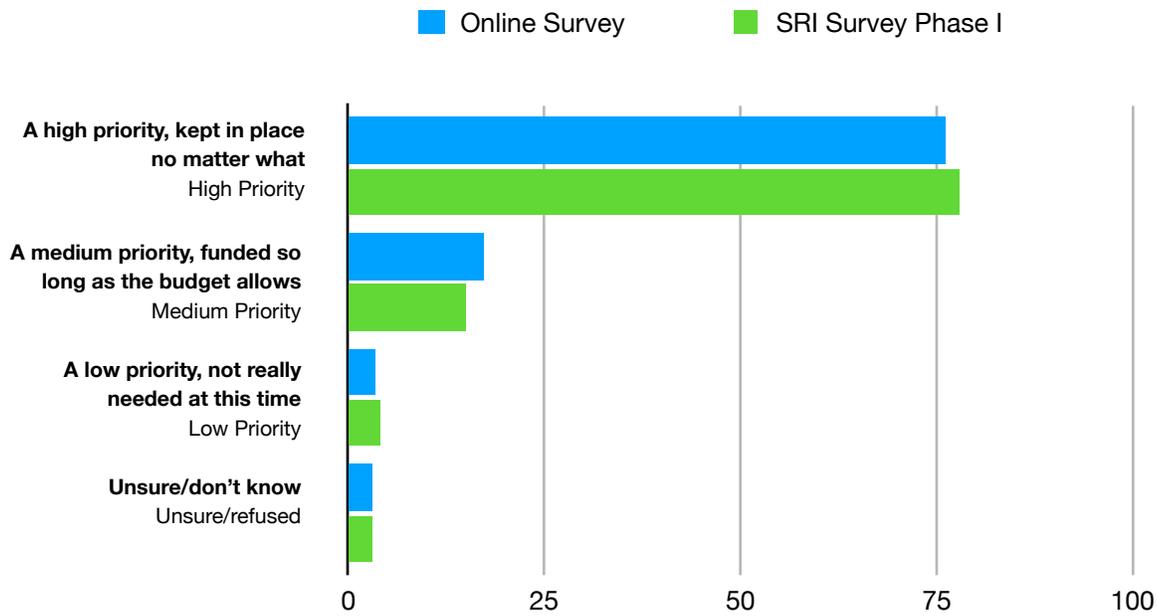
Online Q10: Prior to this survey, did you know about CAHOOTS?

SRI Phase 1 Q6.4: Prior to the present interview, did you know about the CAHOOTS?



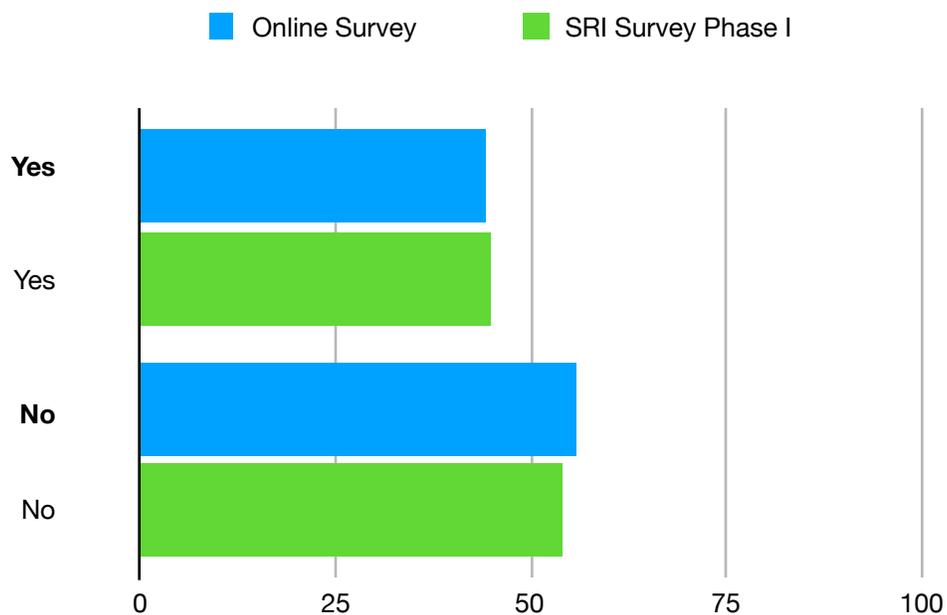
Online Q11: Based on what you know about the program, or how it was described here, what priority should City officials place in this program?

SRI Phase 1 Q6.4a: What priority should City officials place on the program?



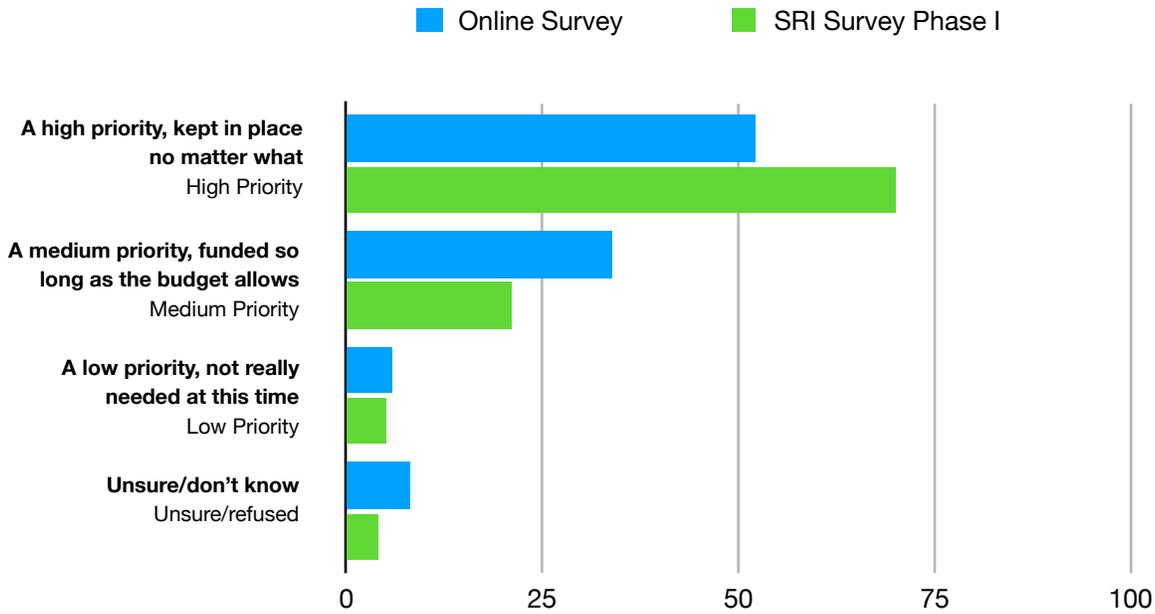
Online Q12: Prior to this survey, did you know about the City's Teen Court?

SRI Phase 1 Q6.5: Prior to the present interview, did you know about the City's Teen Court Program?



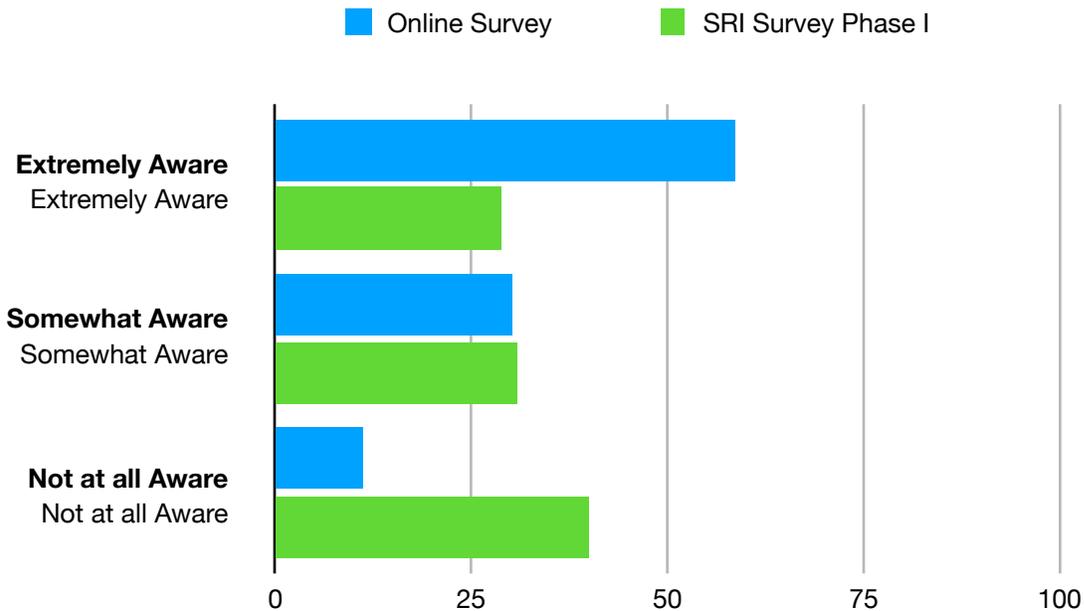
Online Q13: Based on what you know about the program, or how it was described here, what priority should City officials place in this program?

SRI Phase 1 Q6.5a: What priority should City officials place on the program?



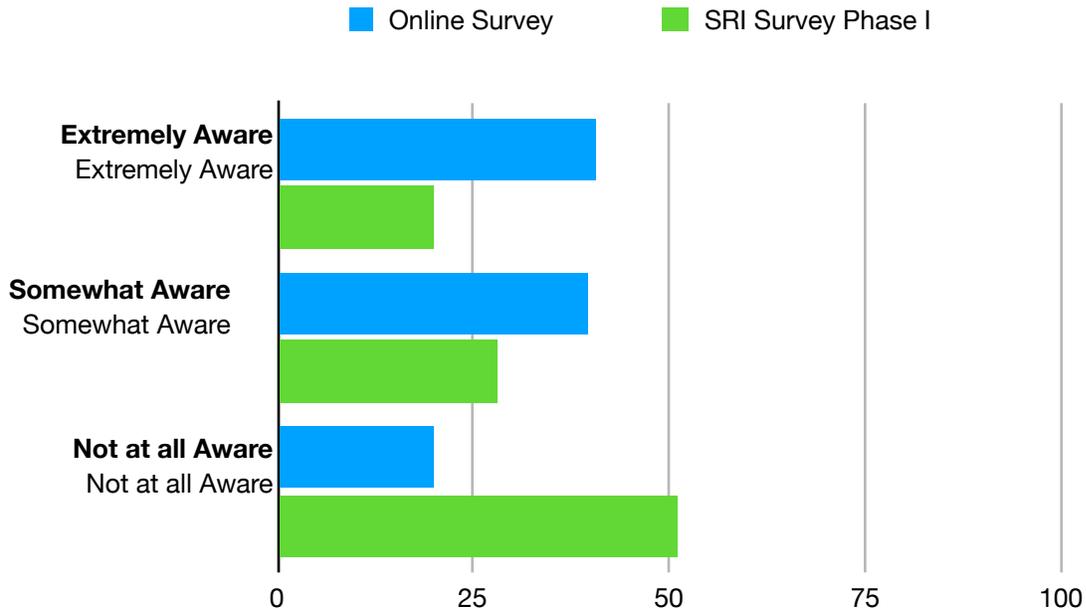
Online Q14: City officials face many challenges relating to public safety, as described below. What is your level of awareness about each of the following facts? Eugene's Police Department staffing has remained stagnant, or flat, over the past several years, while Eugene's population has continued to grow

SRI Phase 1 Q7.1: Before the present interview, were you aware of the fact that the Eugene Police Department staffing has remained stagnant, meaning flat, over the past several years, while Eugene's population has continued to grow?



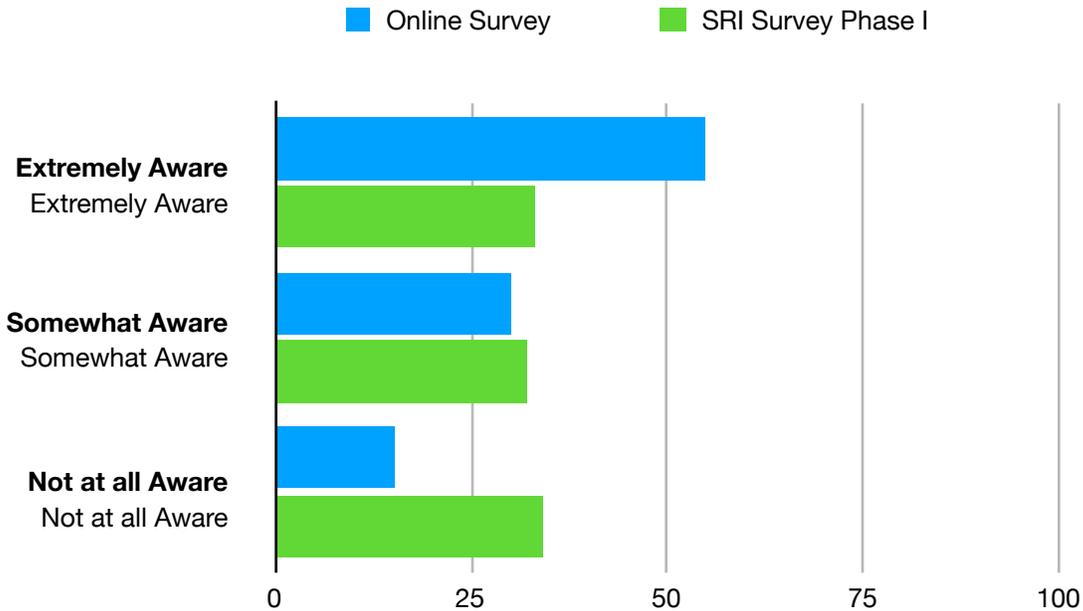
Online Q14: City officials face many challenges relating to public safety, as described below. What is your level of awareness about each of the following facts? *The daily average of public-initiated calls for Eugene Police services have increased 21% since 2014.*

SRI Phase 1 Q7.2: Before the present interview, were you aware of the fact that the daily average of public-initiated calls for Eugene Police services have increased 21% since 2014?



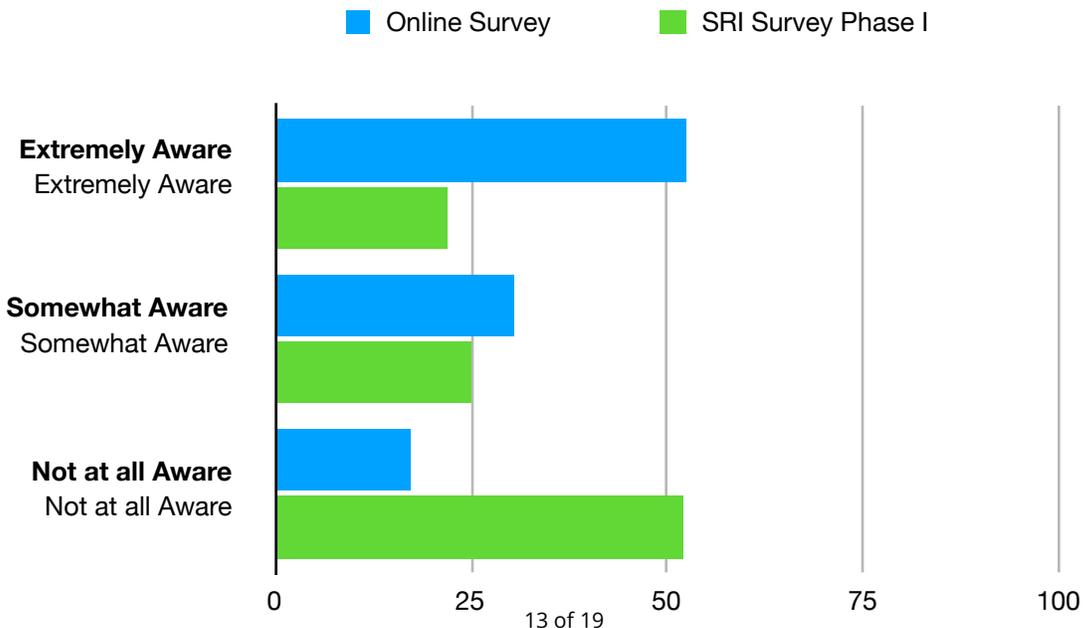
Online Q14: City officials face many challenges relating to public safety, as described below. What is your level of awareness about each of the following facts? *There has been an 18% increase in crime in Eugene in recent years, including homicide, rape robbery, assault, sex offenses, family offenses, and kidnapping*

SRI Phase 1 Q7.3: Before the present interview, were you aware of the fact that the there has been a significant increase in crimes in Eugene in recent years, including homicide, rape, robbery, assault, sex offenses, family offenses, and kidnapping; these have increased by 18% since 2014?



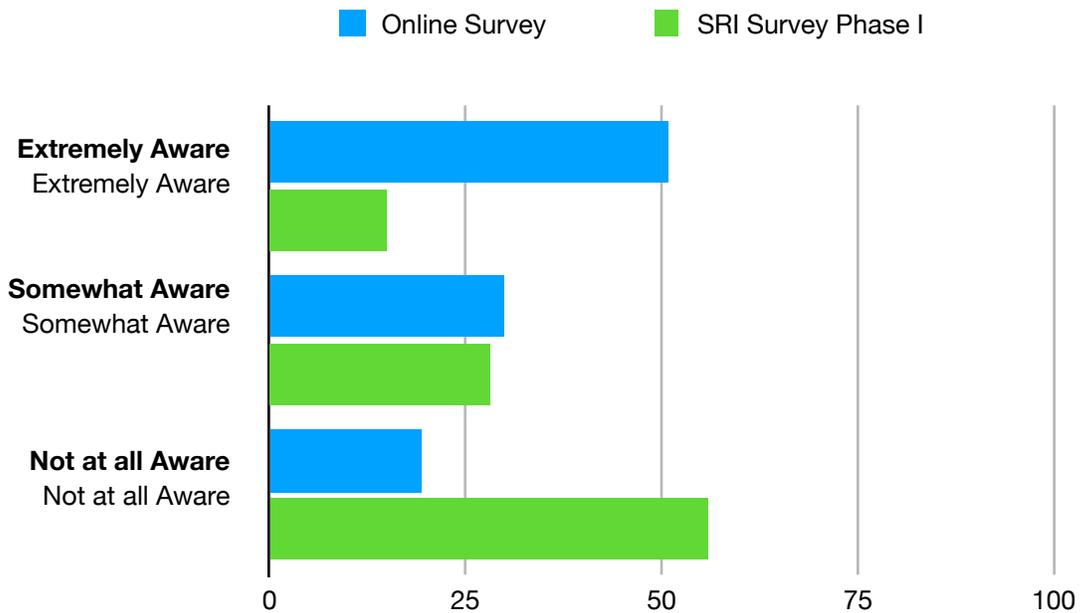
Online Q14: City officials face many challenges relating to public safety, as described below. What is your level of awareness about each of the following facts? *Increased calls for service and crime, combined with stagnant police department staffing levels, has resulted in an increase in the average response time by approximately 20 minutes since 2014*

SRI Phase 1 Q7.4: Before the present interview, were you aware of that there has been a significant increase in the City Police Department's average response time as a result of crime going up, while the Department's resources have remained stagnant? In fact, average response time has increased from 22.5 minutes in 2014 to 41.8 minutes in 2017—an increase of 86%?



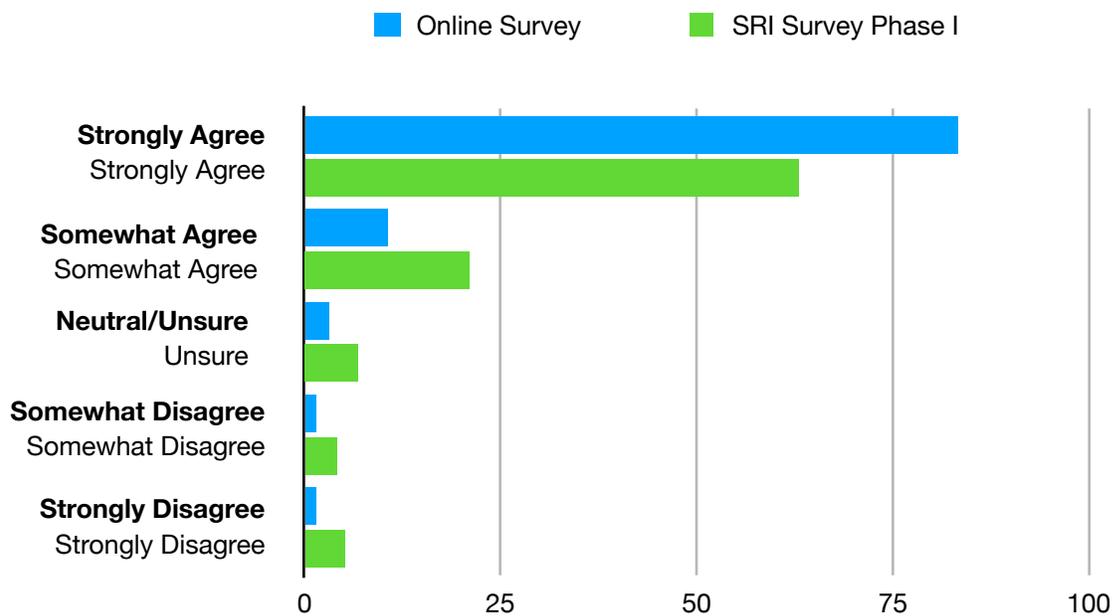
Online Q14: City officials face many challenges relating to public safety, as described below. What is your level of awareness about each of the following facts? *Due to insufficient staffing, the number of calls (about non-life threatening situations) that the police are unable to respond to have increase by more than 36%*

SRI Phase 1 Q7.5: Before the present interview, were you aware of that the number of unable-to-respond police calls, due to insufficient staffing, has increased from 59 per day in 2014 to more than 80 per day today... an increase of over 36%?



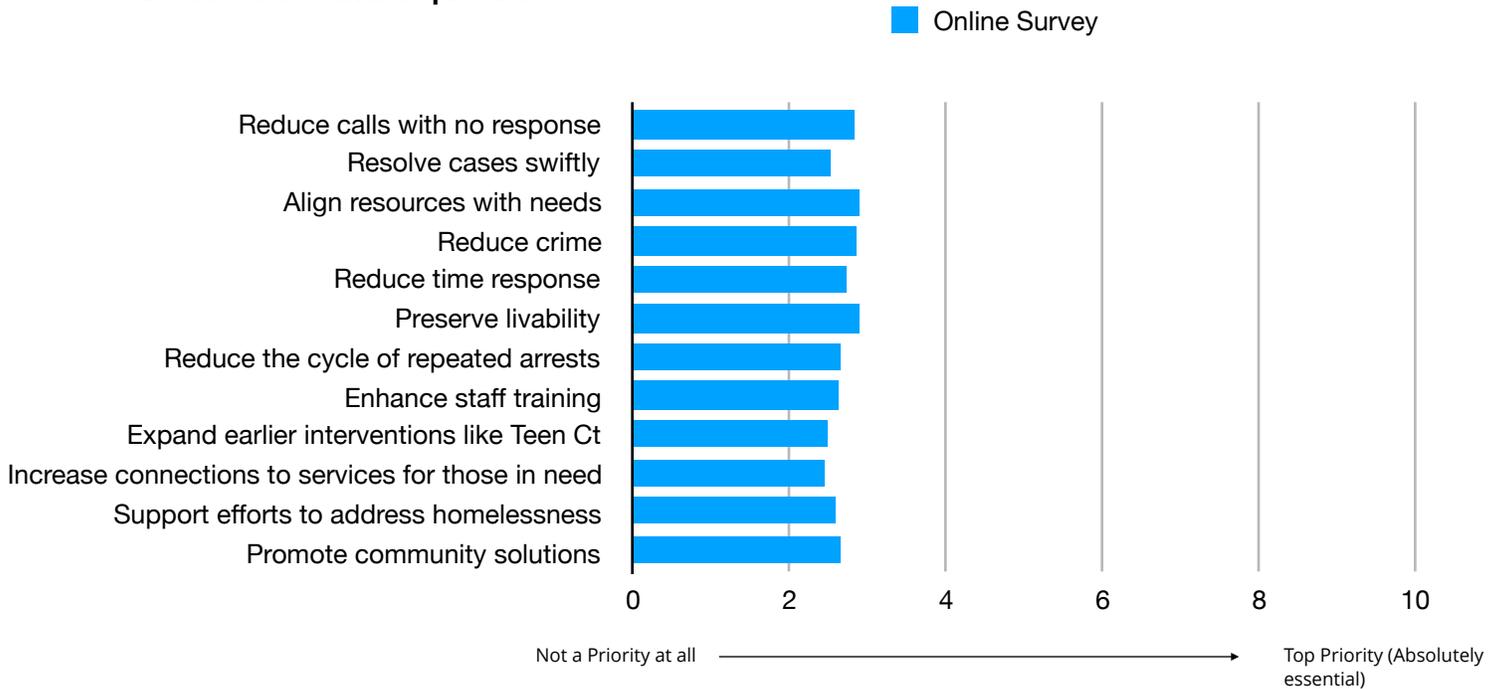
Online Q15: To what extent do you agree or disagree that City officials should take specific steps to address these challenges?

SRI Phase 1 Q9: Now that we have identified a set facts that City officials believe are negatively impacting the level of Public Safety presently being provided to Eugene residents, do you agree or disagree with the notion that City officials should take specific steps to address these challenges?



Online Q16: Eugene officials are regularly faced with making decisions regarding how best to invest the available local tax dollars for services and programs that benefit residents and make the community a more desirable place to live. If you were an advisor to the City, how would you prioritize the following outcomes?

SRI Phase 1: No similar question



Online Q17: Are there any other outcomes that you think are important for the City Council to consider?

SRI Phase 1: No similar question

There were 991 individual responses (54 pages of text) to this question. The content analysis of the data revealed one dominant theme: concerns about homelessness, with two distinct subcategories: Don't criminalize the homeless, and Be More Strict with the Homeless. There was also mention of the desire to use the EWEB office as the new City Hall.

Concerns about homelessness

Don't Criminalize the Homeless: One distinct trend in the data were comments centered on the idea of providing more services to people who are homeless, including basic needs (food, clothing, shelter), addiction services, physical and mental health services, and more trauma-informed policing efforts. The homeless population was separated into two groups: the "travelers" (not from here), and "local" (from here). There was more inclination to offer services to the "local" population than to the "travelers." Many respondents believed that the "travelers" are responsible for a good share of the undesirable behaviors that cause people to feel less safe (aggressive panhandling, verbal confrontations, drug use, dogs). The idea of a day shelter with a shower was mentioned, as was continued support for CAHOOTS (with enhanced social worker/mental health response). There was a consistent thread of support for programs designed to address the root causes of homelessness. Several respondents mentioned a program located in Fort Worth, Texas that pays homeless people an hourly wage to pick up trash in their downtown area.

Be More Strict with the Homeless: The other distinct trend in the data was the feeling that the City should be less tolerant with the homeless population, and that the presence of support services actually increased the number of homeless people in our community because they come here seeking support services (known as the “Magnet Myth”). This group of comments included ideas such as a camping ban, a panhandling ban, and a loitering ban. More aggressive police enforcement, and increased police patrols was also mentioned predominantly. Many respondents suggested looking to Springfield as a model that aggressively targets undesirable behaviors and therefore decreases the number of homeless people in their downtown area.

Online Q18: Is there anything you would like to add about community safety in Eugene?

SRI Phase 1: No similar question

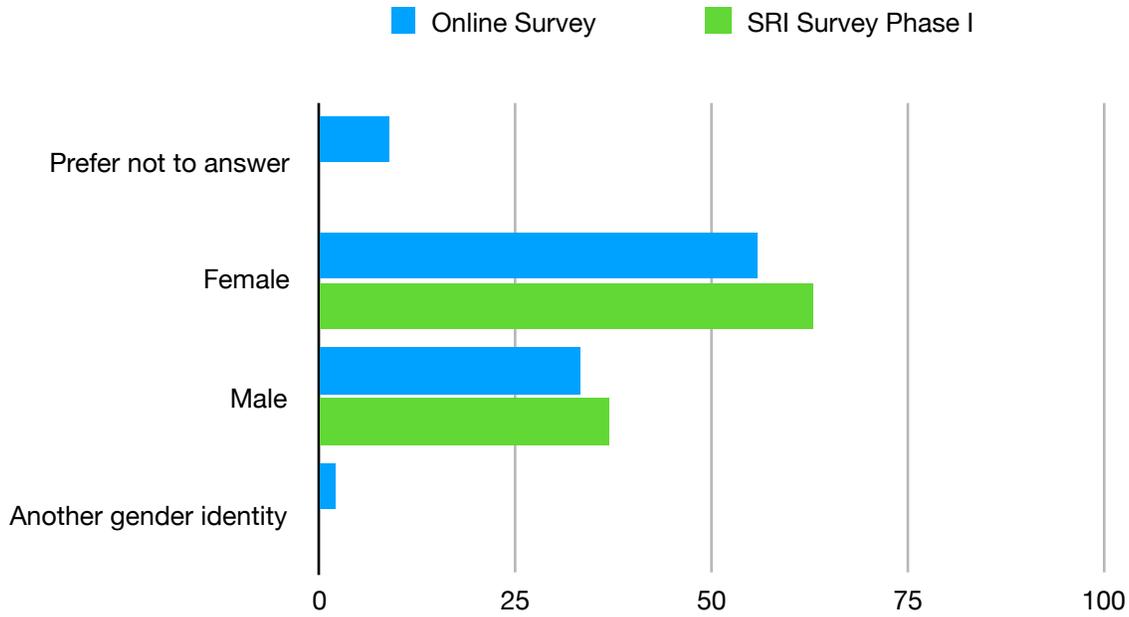
There were 1,040 individual responses to this question (57 pages of text). Again, as in the previous two qualitative questions, the central theme of the responses was homelessness, with two distinct subcategories: the need for more services, and the need for stronger enforcement. Additionally, there were a small number of respondents that mentioned concerns about systemic economic issues such as PERS (Public Employee Retirement System), and insufficient funding for public education. Concerns about bike path safety and traffic safety were also mentioned.

Homelessness

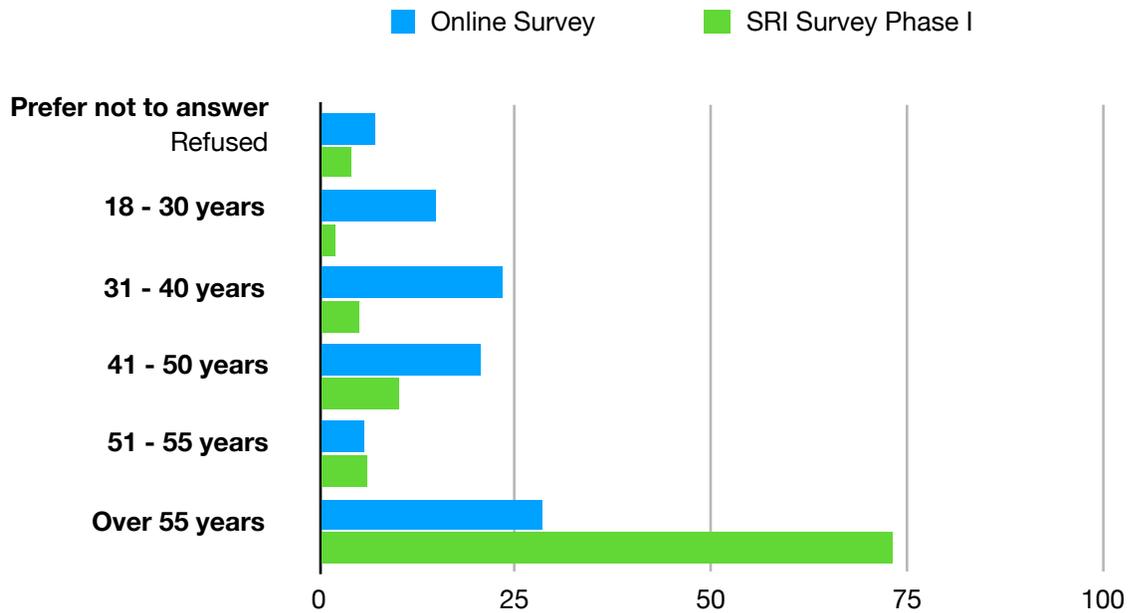
Need More Services: Many respondents recognized the complex array of issues that surround homelessness, including drug and alcohol abuse, mental health, housing, and the fact that some people identified as homeless are merely travelers—and that these folks are less “worthy” of receiving social services support. Other strong threads of agreement included concerns about public health (sanitation and discarded needles), and support for basic needs services, and CAHOOTS. While most of the comments focused on the Downtown area, many respondents were concerned about adjacent neighborhoods (i.e. Whitaker) and other areas in Eugene. There was a small number of comments that supported more police officers trained in how to interact with homeless people, especially people experiencing mental health issues.

Need More Enforcement: the predominant theme in this subcategory was the need for more police officers and stronger enforcement of existing laws that would discourage homeless people from congregating in Downtown Eugene. There were numerous emphatic suggestions to copy what other cities (i.e. Springfield, Corvallis) have done to move the homeless population out of their downtown cores. The “Magnet Myth” was also a central theme, with the feeling that providing more services attracts more homeless people, and that stricter enforcement would decrease the number of homeless people in Eugene. Many respondents who advocated for more services also pointed out their concern that increased enforcement activities in Downtown Eugene would push problems out into adjacent neighborhoods and parks.

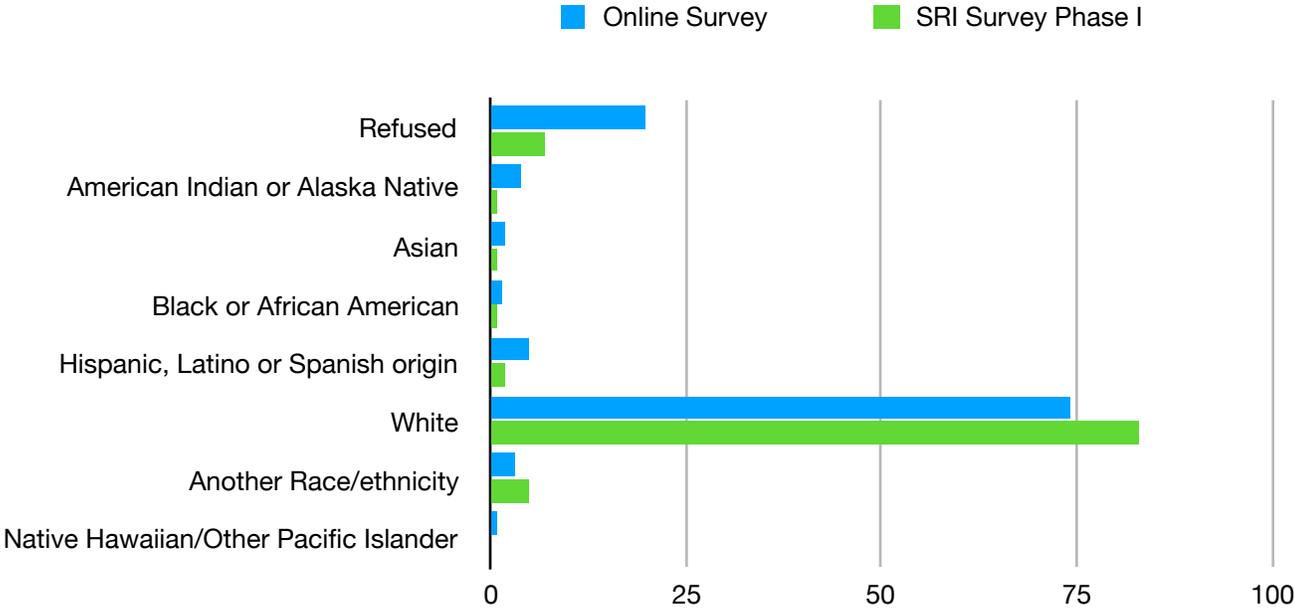
Online Q19: What is your gender?
SRI Phase 1 Q22: Gender of respondent?



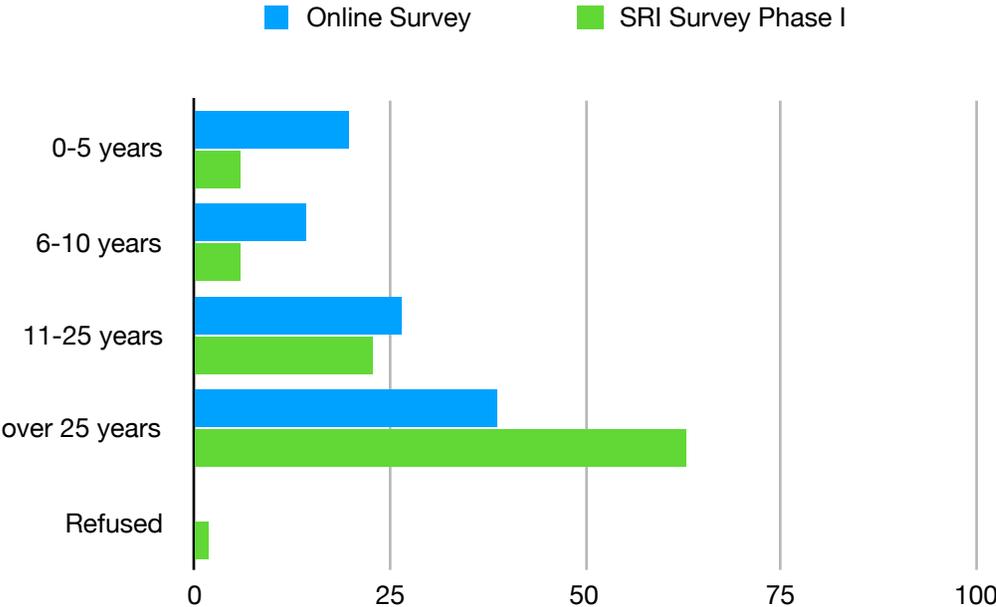
Online Q20: What is your age?
SRI Phase 1 Q19: Into which of the following age categories do you fit?



Online Q21: Select all races/ethnicities you identify with
SRI Phase 1 Q21: What is your ethnic background?



Online Q22: How long have you lived in Eugene?
SRI Phase 1 Q13: How long have you lived in Eugene?



Online Q23: Which ward do you live in?

SRI Phase 1 Q25: Which ward do you live in?

