



BEHAVIORAL INSIGHTS: POLICE HIRING

The Tacoma Police Department (TPD) is constantly looks for ways to be more inclusive without lowering the standards of the department. In 2017, TPD began addressing how they recruit officers, diverse officers, including women and people of color. The Behavioral Insights Team (BIT) worked with TPD to send behaviorally informed postcards emphasizing different aspects of the job to encourage individuals to (1) visit the job posting online and (2) submit an online application. These postcards were sent out around May 3rd.

Rationale

All postcards incorporated a number of common behavioral insights. The postcards were personalized to come from a named officer whose signature appeared on the back of the postcard and whose photo appeared on the front of the postcard. The postcards also had a female messenger speaking about her personal experience on the force. All postcards also included 1 simple and clear instructions and deadlines to make it easy for recipients to respond.

Results

The sample included 56,981 residential addresses in Tacoma. The postcard was effective; those who received this message were nearly four times more likely to apply than if they had received no postcard. Use of the postcard was significantly more effective at recruiting women or people of color, based on the reported demographics of applicants.

Effectiveness

There's a lot at stake for police departments working to rebuild trust with their communities following incidents like officer-involved shootings. Many forces are committing to recruiting more diverse forces that are reflective of the communities they serve. What Works Cities partner the Behavioral Insights Team (BIT) is supporting more than 10 cities across the country to use randomized control trials to determine what recruitment messaging is most effective in getting more people of color and women to apply.

**Are you
ready to
serve your
community?**

