



**INLAND EMPIRE
UNITED**

**Riverside County
District 3
Sheriff's Department &
Coroner Offices
Accountability**

Preface

In response to growing public concern over in-custody deaths in Riverside County jails, as well as the inherent conflict-of-interest that stems from a shared Sheriff/Coroner Office, Inland Empire United mobilized across District 3 to better understand how residents perceived these issues. Through phone banking, canvassing, and meeting the community where they are, we were able to gather insights into public sentiment, awareness, and attitudes toward accountability in the Sheriff's Department and Coroner's Office. The results reveal strong, widespread support for independent oversight reforms across Riverside County's Sheriff's Department.

Summary

IE United spent 5 days in District 3. We spoke to a total of **1117 constituents**, gathering both quantitative and qualitative data on awareness, concerns, and support for accountability in the Sheriff's Department as well as support for a separation of the Sheriff's Department and Coroner offices.

Why it Matters

Riverside County is experiencing a rate of in-custody deaths that exceeds counties already flagged for oversight failures.

For reference, a state audit of San Diego County jails was triggered after 185 deaths over more than a decade. **Riverside County has already seen 46 deaths from 2022-2025** — despite having a smaller population.

County	Population (approx.)	In-Custody Deaths	Deaths per 100k Residents
San Diego County	~3.3 million	185	~5.6
Riverside County	~2.5 million	46	~8.2

⚠️ *Riverside has a higher per-capita death rate than San Diego — despite San Diego already having been audited by the state.*

Hoeven, Emily. "Audit: Inmates' Lives at Risk under California Law." CalMatters, 4 Feb. 2022, calmatters.org/newsletters/whatmatters/2022/02/jail-deaths-california/.

Methodology:

- **Canvassing/Field Work:** 841 constituents reached in District 3 via Inland Empire United Education Fund Door-to-Door & Community Canvassing.
- **Phone Banking:** 276 constituents reached Via Inland Empire United phone bank, covering District 3.
- **Calls to County Supervisors Office:** 90 constituents of the 276 – or 32.6% – contacted via Phone banking **articulated** their support, showing actionable engagement and willingness to directly contact officials **immediately** after introduction of the issue.
- **Personal Stories:** Collected first-hand accounts detailing resident experiences and concerns.

Qualitative Findings

“If (Riverside County) can kill 20 people in 13 months and fail to provide any information to the families impacted, fail to report those deaths to the DOJ within the 10-day mandated reporting period, continue to lie to the public about the cause of death for all these people,” Avalon Edwards, policy associate at Starting Over Inc, on enforcing standards.

While the volume of detailed personal stories collected in District 3 was more limited than in other areas, the conversations we did have reflect important emerging trends. Constituents showed early signs of awareness, a desire for more transparency, and—in some cases—deep professional insight into the system’s shortcomings.

- Several residents told us this was their first time learning about the overlap between the Sheriff’s Department and the Coroner’s Office. This confusion often turned into concern, especially once the potential for conflict of interest was explained.
- One constituent, a practicing attorney, shared that she had worked on multiple cases involving the Sheriff’s Department and supported structural separation and oversight reforms.
- Another respondent initially expressed hesitance about engaging, but was open to learning more and requested additional materials.
- A few constituents expressed cautious support, raising practical concerns about implementation, funding, or long-term impact—but agreed in principle with the need for more accountability.
- One household offered to contribute to the cause after learning more, reflecting that even a brief moment of conversation can spark action.

Together, these responses reflect the **beginning of a public conversation** in District 3 – a conversation that is still building momentum, but clearly trending toward support for reform and transparency.

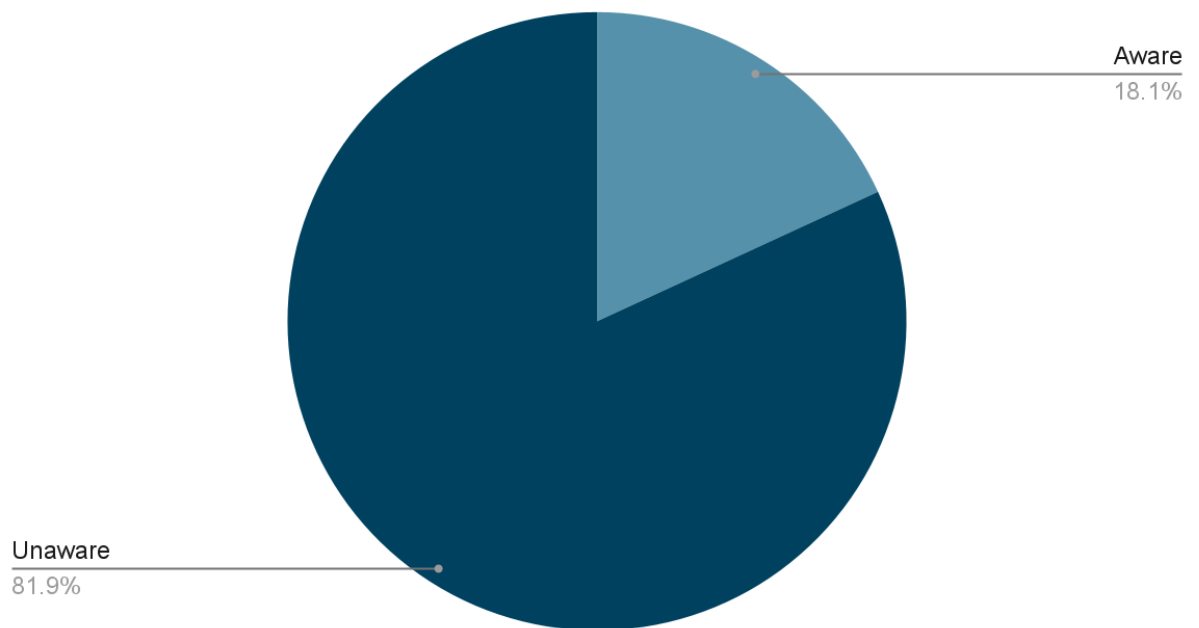
Quantitative Findings

Lack of awareness

- *Have you heard about the growing number of deaths in Riverside County jails?*

81.88% of the 1,109 constituents that **responded** were **unaware** of the growing number of in-custody deaths.

Awareness in D3



Why it matters:

Lack of Awareness = Lack of Informed Consent: Constituents deserve to know who's in power and how that power is being used, regardless of the individual's status (incarcerated, visiting, working outside, etc). Without awareness, constituents are being denied the chance to question conflicts of interest and participate in civic engagement.

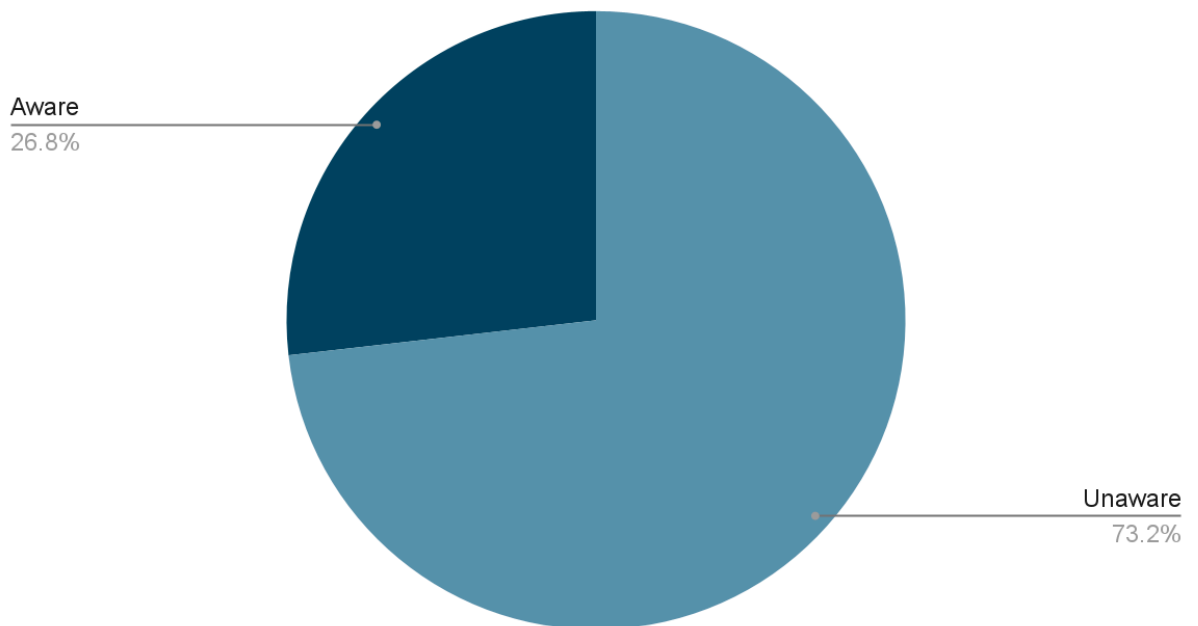
Quantitative Findings

Lack of Transparency

- *Transparency and accountability are key for public safety. Did you know that the sheriff department and the coroner office are the same?*

73.18% of the 1,085 surveyed constituents who responded were unaware of the lack of accountability in the Sheriff's Department and Coroner Offices.

Transparency in D3



Why it matters:

Political Liability: Constituents lose trust in public officials due to a lack of transparency. The more people learn, the angrier they may get if no action is taken. Acting now will restore trust and support of leadership as it demonstrates a commitment to transparency.

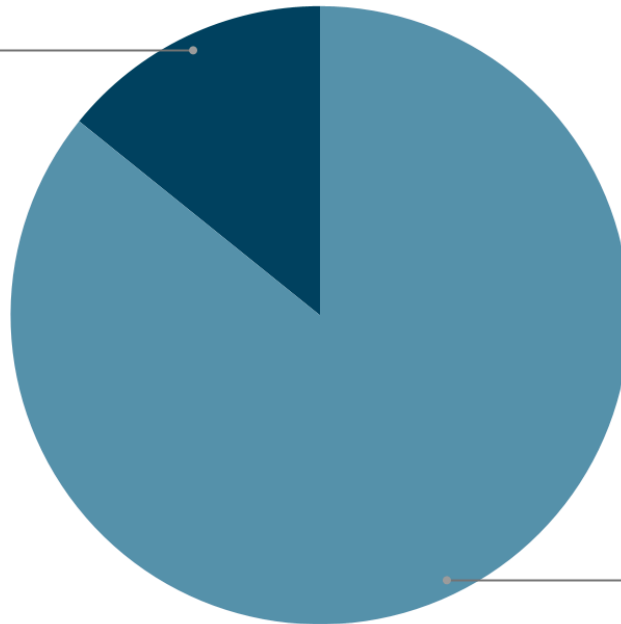
In Support of Oversight

- *Do you believe sheriff department accountability would be good for riverside county residents?*

85.8% of 1,044 constituents that **responded**, were in support of an Oversight.

Support Oversight

Don't Support
14.2%



Support
85.8%

Why it matters:

Representation: clear evidence of strong support for an oversight committee and ignoring it **risks public backlash** and erodes credibility as a representative of the people. Focusing on public safety and transparency is persuasive for voters.

Preventative: Unresolved public concern may cause public discourse.

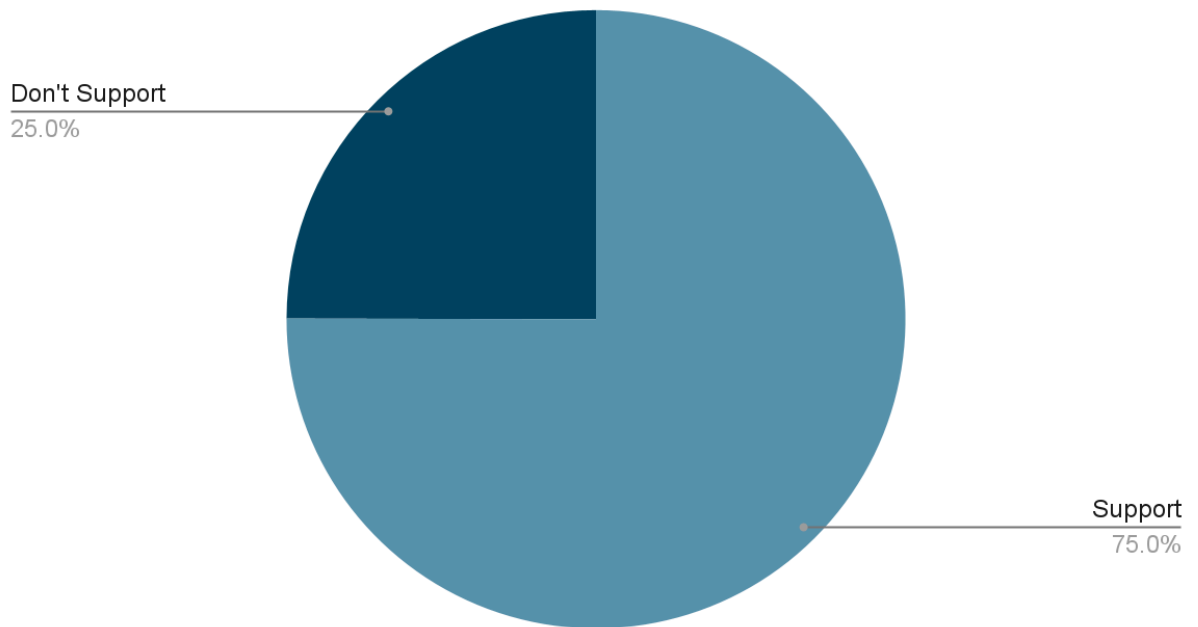
Growth: Opportunity for alignment with public opinion.

In Support of Separation

- *Would you support the separation of the sheriff department and coroner office?*

75.04% of **1,046** constituents that **responded** supported separation of the Sheriff's Department and Coroner Offices.

Support Separation



Why it matters:

Weight: Constituents want a **real fix** that ensures **objective investigations of in-custody deaths**, not oversight by the very department under question.

Equality: Shows fairness towards both the public and law enforcement.

District 3 accounted for 14 of the 46 in-custody deaths reported countywide between 2022 and 2025.

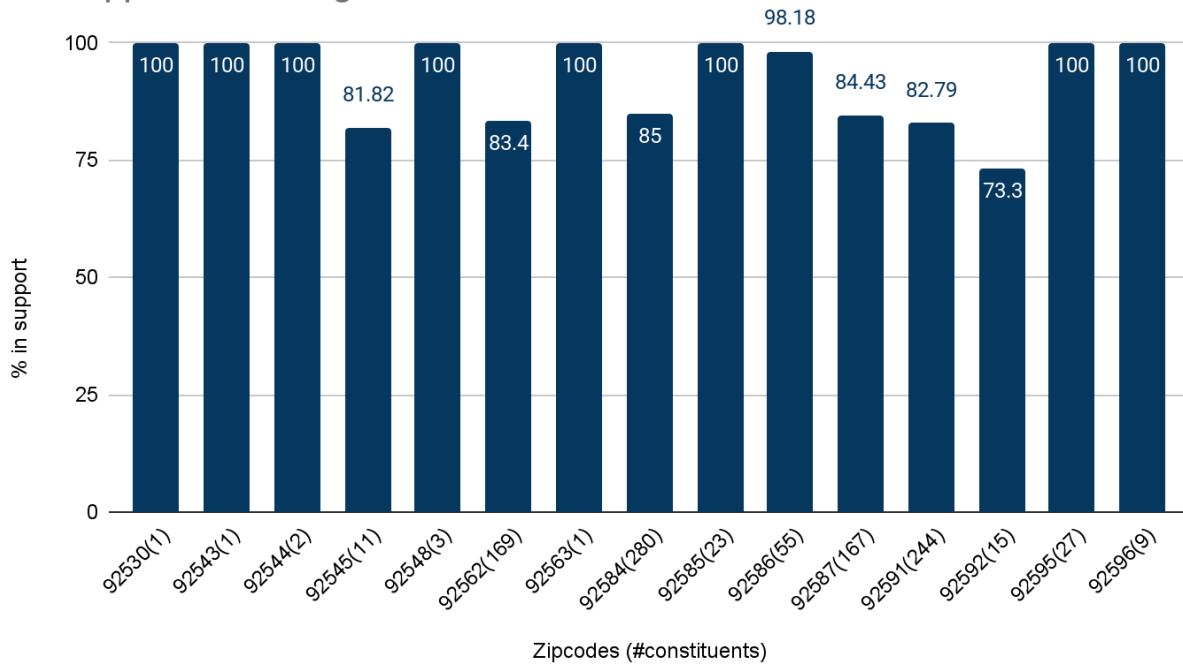
District 3 In-Custody Deaths

Name	Custody Status	DOD	Manner	Means
Justin Kail	Booked-Awaiting Trial	05/17/2022	Accidental	Drug Overdose
Michael Vasquez	Booked-Awaiting Trial	05/26/2022	Accidental	Drug Overdose
Richard Matus	Booked-Awaiting Trial	08/11/2022	Accidental	Drug Overdose
Abel Chacon	Awaiting Trial	08/25/2022	Accidental	Drug Overdose
Mario Solis	Booked - Awaiting Trial	09/03/2022	Accidental	Other
Kaushal Niroula	Sentenced	09/06/2022	Homicide Willful (other inmate)	Hanging, Strangulation
Ulyses Ayala	Booked - Awaiting Trial	09/29/2022	Pending Investigation	Pending Investigation
Mark Spratt	Awaiting Trial	01/12/2023	Homicide Willful(Other Inmate)	Hands, Feet, Fists
Asher Saunders	No charges filed	03/11/2023	Accidental	Drug Overdose
Jesse Rodriguez Flores	Awaiting Trial	09/18/2023	Pending Investigation	Pending Investigation
Shaundale Darshaur Booker	Awaiting Trial	12/15/2023	Pending Investigation	Pending Investigation
Joshua Frank Swart	Booked	08/18/2024	Pending Investigation	Pending Investigation
Johnnie Curtis Stevens	Awaiting Trial	10/04/2024	Pending Investigation	Pending Investigation
Michael Allen Weaver	Booked	05/01/2025		

Geographic Distribution

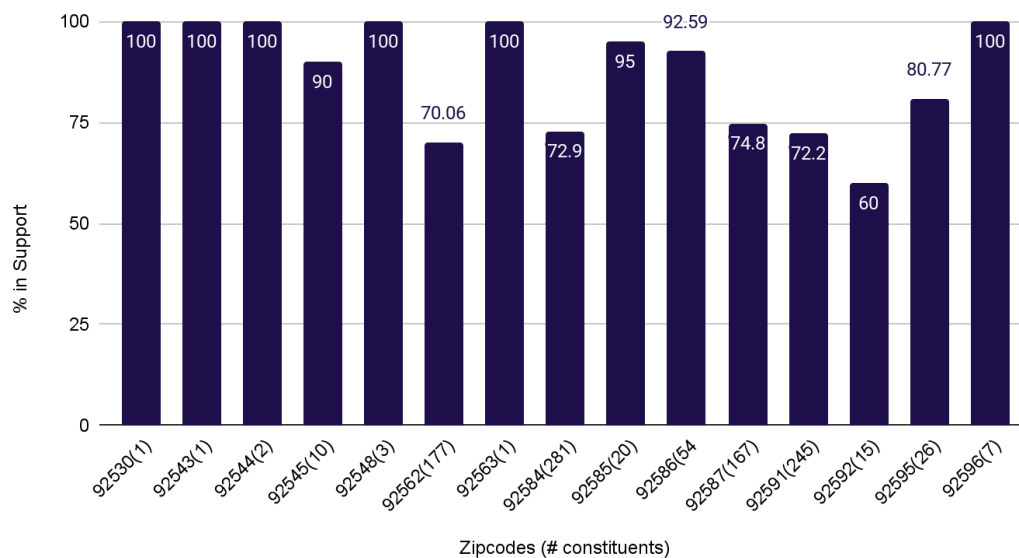
Below are graphs representing % in support based on the individual zipcodes and the # of constituents that **responded**:

D3 Support of Oversight



Important Context: The following graph shows support for the separation of the Sheriff’s Department and Coroner Offices based on a subset of zip codes. This question was introduced midway through outreach efforts and was not asked across all canvassed areas.

Support Separation in D3



Conclusion

The data shows both qualitative and quantitative evidence of widespread concern among constituents about current Sheriff's Department and Coroner office practices, as well as widespread support for oversight and accountability.

Forming an Oversight Committee would **address systemic issues** highlighted by both our data and the stories shared with us. It would represent a necessary step toward restoring **public trust** and acknowledging the dignity of every soul lost within this broken system.

*"Death in Sheriff's Custody Leads Riverside County to Pay \$7.5-Million Settlement." Los Angeles Times, Los Angeles Times, 21 May 2024,
www.latimes.com/california/story/2024-05-21/riverside-county-pays-7-5-million-settlement-death-in-custody.*

*Hoeven, Emily. "Audit: Inmates' Lives at Risk under California Law." CalMatters, 4 Feb. 2022,
calmatters.org/newsletters/whatmatters/2022/02/jail-deaths-california/.*