



**INLAND EMPIRE  
UNITED**

**Riverside County  
District 4  
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 4 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 the Riverside County's Sheriff's Department.

## Summary

IE United spent 11 days in District 4. We spoke to a total of **1,521 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/](https://calmatters.org/newsletters/whatmatters/2022/02/jail-deaths-california/).

## Methodology:

- **Canvassing/Field Work:** 1,300 constituents reached in District 4 via Inland Empire United Education Fund Door-to-Door & Community Canvassing.
- **Phone Banking:** 221 constituents reached via Inland Empire United and SBX Youth & Family Services phone bank, covering district 4.
- **Calls to County Supervisors Office:** 64 constituents of the 221 - or 28.9%, 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.*

Qualitative data collected in District 4 was limited, yet still revealing. Conversations were fewer in number but offered a window into how constituents are beginning to process the overlap between law enforcement and public accountability—and how emotional the topic remains for some.

- One resident shared deep frustration with the current system, describing feeling “glad there are organizations finally doing something about it.” Her comments reflected not only emotional fatigue, but also a readiness to support change—if not already overdue.
- Another constituent was hesitant about the pace of reform, expressing concern that separating the Sheriff’s Department and Coroner’s Office might take too long to implement. Even so, they acknowledged that such a step was likely necessary.

These individual reflections, though sparse, suggest an emerging awareness in District 4. They signal a space where public curiosity, emotional urgency, and early-stage civic engagement may take root if resourced and supported in the future.

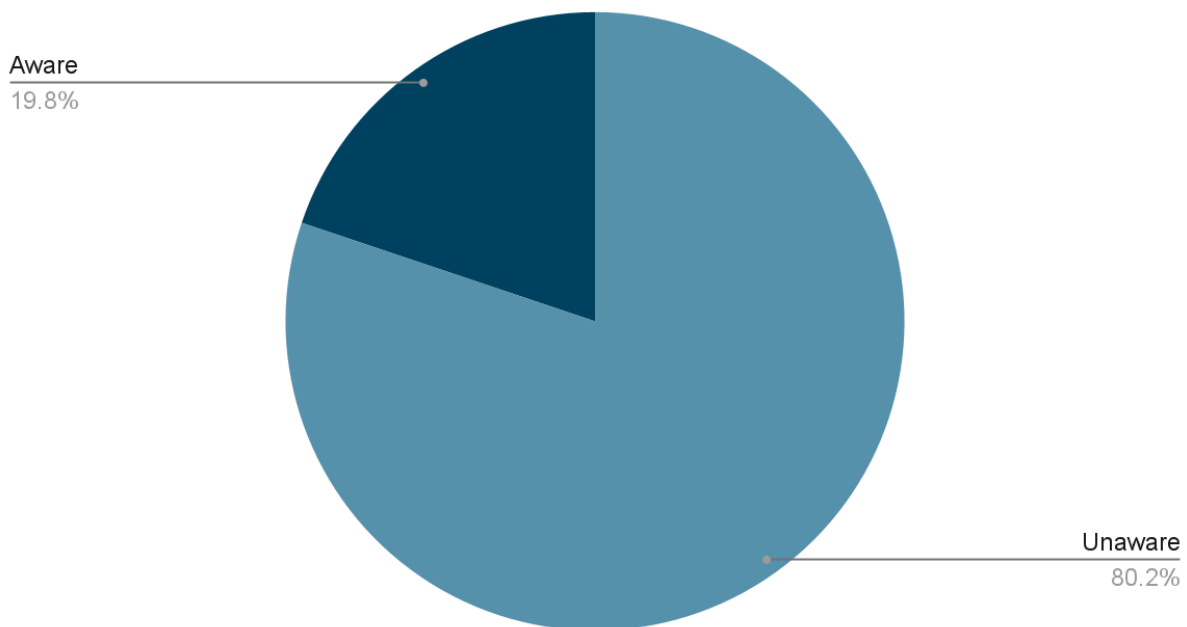
# Quantitative Findings

## Lack of awareness

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

**80.16% of the 1,517 constituents that responded were unaware of the growing number of in-custody deaths.**

Awareness in D4



## 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.

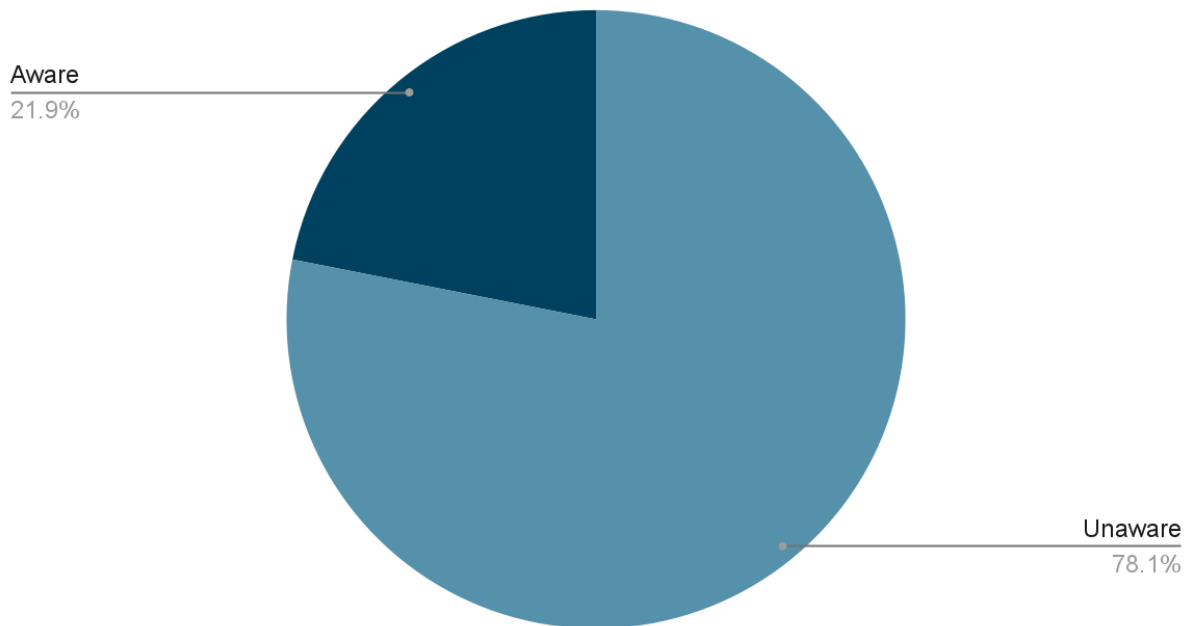
# Quantitative Findings

## 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?*

**78.1% of the 1,622 constituents that responded surveyed were unaware of the lack of accountability in the Sheriff's Department and Coroner Offices.**

Transparency in D4



## Why it matters:

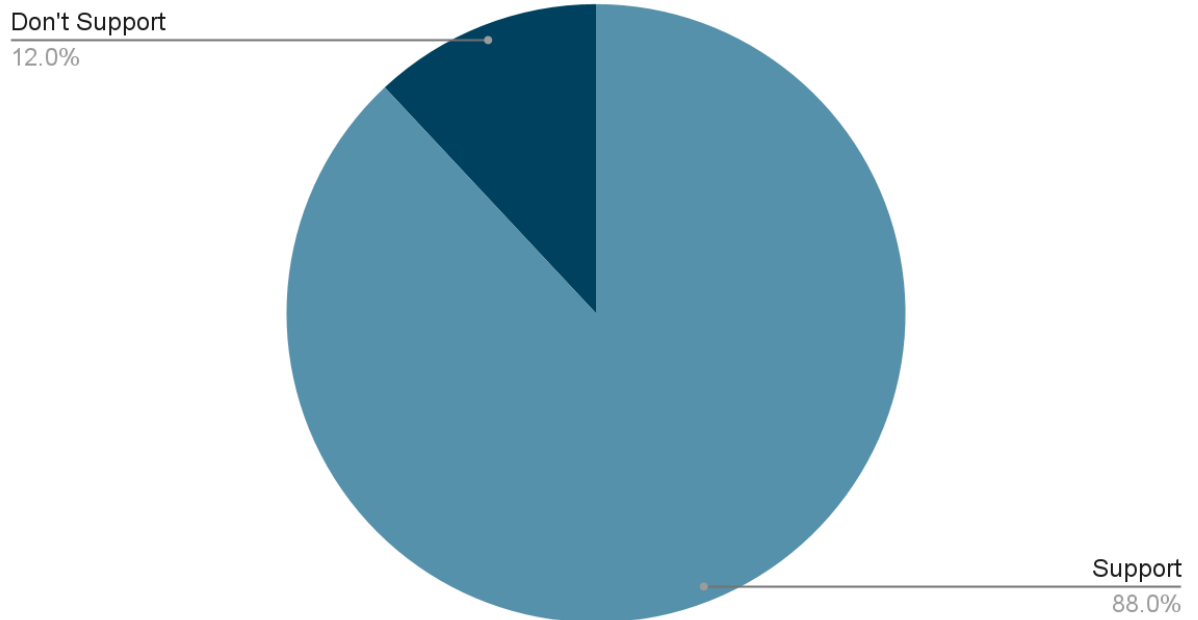
**Political Liability:** Constituents build distrust in public officials due to a lack of transparency. The more people learn, the angrier they may get if no action is taken. Acting now will restore trust and support of leadership as it demonstrates commitment to transparency.

# In Support of an Oversight Committee

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

**88.04% of 1,447** constituents that **responded**, were in support of an Oversight Committee.

## D4 Support Accountability



## Why it matters:

**Representation:** clear evidence of strong support for an oversight committee and ignoring it **risks 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.

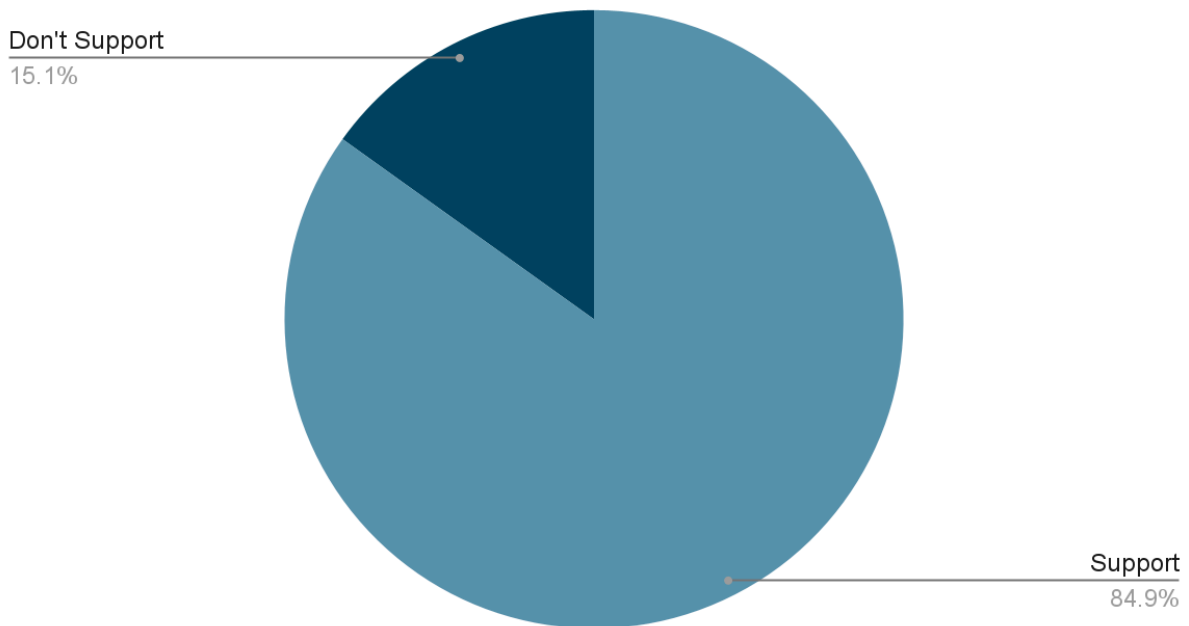
**Growth:** Opportunity for alignment with public opinion.

# In Support of Separation

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

**84.9% of 1,440** constituents that **responded** supported separation of the Sheriff's Department and Coroner Offices.

## D4 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 4** accounted for **3 of the 46 in-custody deaths** reported countywide between 2022 and 2025.

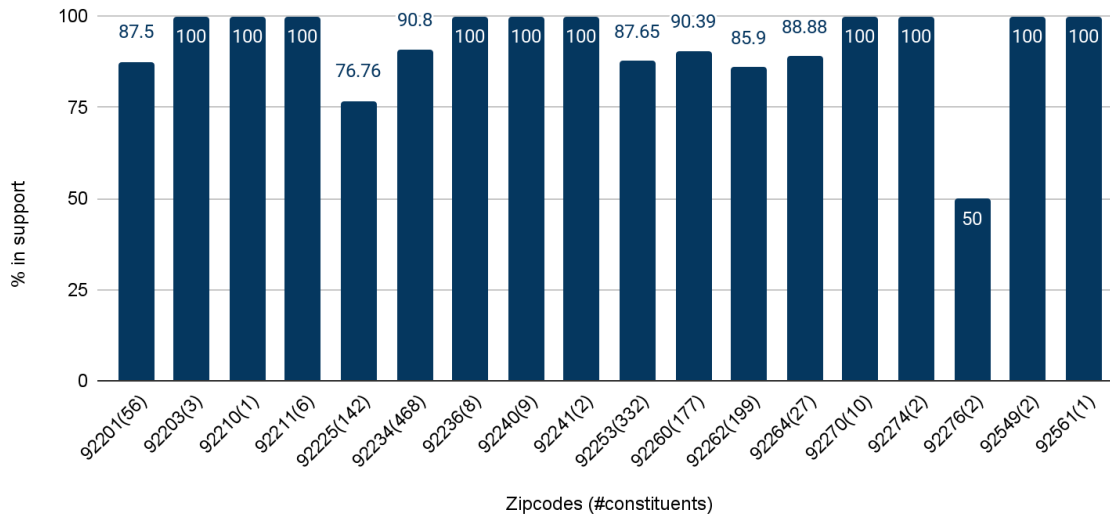
## **District 4 In-Custody Deaths**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Custody Status</b>	<b>DOD</b>	<b>Manner</b>	<b>Means</b>
<b>Brawn Hampton</b>	<b>Booked-Awaiting Trial</b>	<b>05/26/2022</b>	<b>Natural</b>	<b>Not Applicable</b>
<b>Ruben Ochoa Guzman</b>	<b>Booked-Awaiting Trial</b>	<b>05/26/2023</b>	<b>Accidental</b>	<b>Drug Overdose</b>
<b>Steven Rocky Crawford</b>	<b>Booked- No Charges Filed</b>	<b>08/14/2023</b>	<b>Pending Investigation</b>	<b>Pending Investigation</b>

# Geographic Distribution

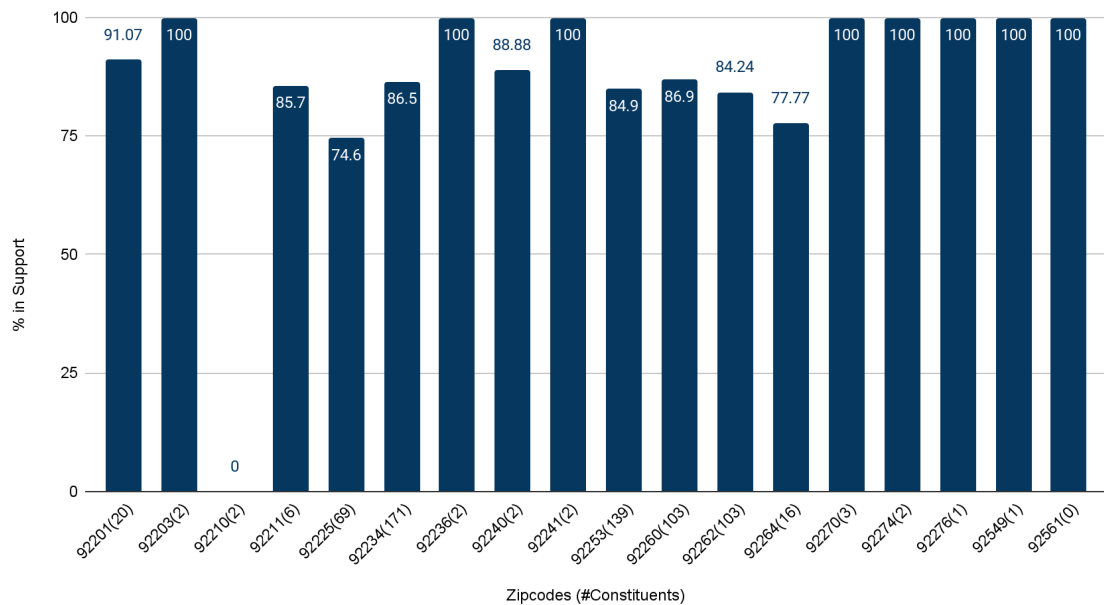
Below are graphs representing % in support based on the individual zipcodes and the # of constituents that **responded**:

D4 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 canvass

D4 Support Separation



Conc

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 stories. 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](http://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/](http://calmatters.org/newsletters/whatmatters/2022/02/jail-deaths-california/).*