



Royal Canadian Mounted Police Gendarmerie royale du Canada

# Canadians' Views of RCMP Policing Services 2020-21 Executive Summary

**Prepared for the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP)**

Supplier name: EKOS Research Associates

Contract number: M7594-213797/001/CY

Contract value: \$79,328.20

Contract Award Date: January 11, 2021

Delivery date: April 7, 2021

Registration number: POR 100-20

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This report summarizes results from a survey of 2,988 Canadians.

Cette publication est aussi disponible en français sous le titre : Sondage d'opinion des Canadiens sur les services de police de la GRC.

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**Catalogue number:**  
[PS64-154/2021E-PDF](#)

**International Standard Book Number (ISBN):**  
978-0-660-37594-6

**Related publications (registration number: POR 100-20):**

**Catalogue Number:** [PS64-154/2021F-PDF](#) (Final Report, French)

ISBN: 978-0-660-37595-3

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## Background and Methodology

The RCMP has been conducting surveys of the Canadian public since 2003 to assess Canadians' opinions on quality of service, professionalism, sensitivity, community involvement, visibility, value of partnerships, and communication. Most of the previous editions of the survey were conducted by telephone. However, due to the challenges and costs associated with telephone surveys, in the 2017/18 fiscal year, the RCMP started to conduct the survey using an online/telephone methodology with the same representativeness used in the previous (telephone only) samples.

The current research, for the 2020/21 fiscal year, also involved an online/telephone methodology. A total of 2,988 Canadians were surveyed. As in previous surveys, the sample was drawn from across Canada and was weighted more heavily toward areas policed by the RCMP. The sample was stratified to ensure roughly equal representation from five regions (North, British Columbia, Prairies, Central, and Atlantic). We surveyed roughly 500 residents in the North, and about 600 in each of the other four regions.

As mentioned, the current survey was conducted primarily online (using our probability based online panel, *Probit*); however, to help with tracking previous survey results (which were conducted by telephone), and to ensure we could collect information from the North (which has a very limited number of panellists), we also conducted interviews by telephone. We completed 1,313 telephone interviews, and 1,675 cases were collected online. Results were weighted by region, gender and age to ensure that the sample is representative of the Canadian population 18 years of age and older.

## Survey Findings

Outlined below are key findings from this study. The remainder of this report describes survey results in more detail.

### Attitudes to the RCMP

Survey findings reveal that Canadians place a great deal of importance on the RCMP's contribution to public safety. Nine in ten respondents (90 per cent) assign a high degree of importance to the RCMP's role in keeping Canadians safe, and just six per cent say the RCMP's efforts to ensure public safety are of little or no importance. However, tracking suggests that the perceived importance of the RCMP's contribution to public safety is down somewhat over the past year.

Results also reveal that six in ten Canadians (62 per cent) are satisfied with how the RCMP fulfills its role in maintaining public safety, and only one in four (24 per cent) are dissatisfied. However, tracking again reveals a drop in satisfaction with the RCMP's contribution to public safety over the past year.

Results reveal generally positive overall impressions of the RCMP. Seven in ten Canadians (71 per cent) are satisfied with the RCMP's efforts to provide services in both official languages. Six in ten agree that the RCMP prioritizes quality service (62 per cent), and express trust and confidence in the RCMP (60 per cent). However, results also suggest the public perceive gaps in the RCMP's service offerings. Only about four in ten (39 per cent) say the RCMP provides the same quality of service to all citizens, and more than four in ten (44 per cent) disagree with this statement.

Results reveal generally positive views on how the RCMP adheres to its core values. Almost seven in ten (65 per cent) agree that the RCMP demonstrates professionalism in its work, while six in ten say the RCMP operates with integrity (58 per cent). Half believe the RCMP personnel are honest (56 per cent), compassionate (51 per cent), respectful (50 per cent) and that it is an accountable organization (50 per cent). In addition to its core values, slightly more than half believe the RCMP is objective (55 per cent). However, as with other results, tracking reveals a decrease in the proportion of Canadians with positive impressions of the RCMP. There is a 13-point drop in the proportion of Canadians who perceive the RCMP as an accountable organization, and an eleven-point drop in the proportion of Canadians who believe the RCMP is an organization with integrity.

The RCMP receives mixed reviews when it comes to issues related to innovation and transparency. Fewer than four in ten respondents (38 per cent) are satisfied with the level of

information that the RCMP provides about its work. A similar proportion (36 per cent) agree that the RCMP is a forward-looking and innovative organization. Findings also reveal that almost half of Canadians (47 per cent) disagree with the idea that the RCMP is an open and transparent organization (although it is possible that Canadians may see the RCMP as appropriately not transparent, given the type of information they hold – e.g., criminal records, witness addresses, information before the courts, investigative techniques, etc.).

The RCMP also receives fairly low, and worsening marks on indicators related to sensitivity. Fewer than half of respondents believe that the RCMP is representative of the diverse communities it serves, and that RCMP personnel reflect the cultural diversity in their community. When the scope of the questions is narrowed to focus on specific groups, the RCMP elicits even less favourable reviews. Fewer than four in ten agree that the RCMP is sensitive to the needs of Canada's various cultures and groups, that the RCMP treats women fairly, that it is sensitive to the needs of the LGBTQ2 community, or that it is respectful to the cultural needs of Indigenous people. Tracking reveals a decrease in agreement over the past year across all of these issues.

Despite concerns about sensitivity and worsening views on the RCMP's performance in general, results suggest that the RCMP still maintains a widely positive relationship with the public. The vast majority of respondents (82 per cent) say they would help the RCMP if asked, while almost eight in ten (77 per cent) believe they have a moral obligation to follow police orders. Seven in ten (67 per cent) also say they generally support the RCMP's actions. Half agree that the RCMP is dealing with things that matter to their community (50 per cent) and would encourage friends and family to consider the RCMP as a career path (50 per cent). However, as with the other issues, tracking reveals a decline over the past year across all these issues.

In terms of responsiveness, results reveal that Canadians hold generally positive views of the RCMP in this area. More than half (54 per cent) agree that it is quick to respond to calls for assistance, and four in ten (44 per cent) agree that the RCMP rapidly adapts to new and emerging priorities. Fewer than three in ten disagree with either of these statements.

Results also reveal generally positive impressions of the impact of the RCMP on Canadians, although findings also suggest room for improvement in some areas, particularly Indigenous matters. Roughly seven in ten (69 per cent) express confidence in the RCMP's ability to respond to national security threats effectively. More than six in ten agree the RCMP effectively diminishes the threat of organized crime (66 per cent), handles threats to passenger aircraft (64 per cent), mitigates the impact of serious crime (63 per cent), resolves crimes where violence is involved (63 per cent), and provides an adequate response to border threats (63 per cent). Slightly fewer believe the RCMP is effective at reducing the production, sale and distribution of illegal drugs (60 per cent), and countering radicalization to violent extremism (57 per cent). More than half believe the RCMP is effectively responding to cybercrime threats (55 per cent), and improving traffic safety (53 per cent). Slightly fewer agree that the RCMP is successfully addressing youth

crime (51 per cent), and lessening the impact of economic crime (51 per cent). However, fewer than half are satisfied with the RCMP's attempts to combat online scams (47 per cent), its contribution to making Canadians more informed and resilient (43 per cent), and its efforts in fostering safer Indigenous communities (39 per cent). Only three in ten (34 per cent) say the RCMP is advancing reconciliation with Canada's Indigenous peoples.

Most Canadians believe the RCMP generally acts within their authority, although a significant minority believe the organization exceeds their authority at times. Six in ten (59 per cent) say the RCMP seldom exceeds its authority. Almost one in four (23 per cent), however, feel the RCMP sometimes oversteps its boundaries, and one in five (19 per cent) believe the RCMP often or always oversteps its authority. Tracking reveals an increase in the proportion of Canadians who feel the RCMP exceeds their authority at least some of the time; 42% currently feel the RCMP oversteps its authority, compared to 30% in 2019/20.

## **Contact with the RCMP<sup>1</sup>**

Three in ten respondents (29 per cent) indicate they have had contact with the RCMP in the past year. Of those who have, the plurality indicate their contact involved a traffic offence or an accident (23 per cent) or a criminal matter (19 per cent).

Those who indicated they had contact with the RCMP in the past year were then asked for their views on RCMP performance during this contact. Results are generally positive with more than eight in ten (85 per cent) agreeing that it was easy to get in touch with the RCMP, while similar proportions say RCMP personnel demonstrated professionalism (83 per cent), were courteous and respectful (83 per cent), and treated them fairly (82 per cent). Roughly three-quarters feel that RCMP personnel were knowledgeable and competent (77 per cent), delivered the service in a timely fashion (73 per cent), and provided all the information needed (73 per cent). Results are more mixed in terms of the RCMP going beyond minimum requirements in providing good service: 54 per cent feel the RCMP went beyond minimum service requirements, and 23 per cent disagree with this idea. These results have remained largely stable over the past few years.

Those who indicated they had had contact with the RCMP in the past year were also asked to rate their overall satisfaction with the service they received from the RCMP. Seven in ten (71 per cent) expressed satisfaction, and only 19 per cent were dissatisfied.

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<sup>1</sup> In order to remain consistent with past iterations of this survey, the figures reported in this section are unweighted.

## Conclusions

Overall, attitudes towards the RCMP are generally positive but have worsened over the past year. The vast majority of Canadians are satisfied with the RCMP's contribution to public safety and nearly all Canadians recognize the importance of its work. The RCMP also scores well in terms of upholding its core principles, particularly professionalism and integrity. However, across virtually all of the indicators examined, perceptions have deteriorated over the past year.

Survey results also reveal that Canadians hold mixed views when it comes to issues surrounding transparency and accountability. There are some doubts as to whether the RCMP provides Canadians with sufficient information regarding its work, and Canadians tend to disagree that the organization is transparent.

Another area of concern is sensitivity. Fewer than half of respondents believe that the RCMP is representative of the diverse communities it serves, and that RCMP personnel reflect the cultural diversity in their community. When the scope of the questions is narrowed to focus on specific groups, the RCMP elicits even less favourable reviews. Fewer than four in ten agree that the RCMP is sensitive to the needs of Canada's various cultures and groups, that the RCMP treats women fairly, that it is sensitive to the needs of the LGBTQ2 community or that it is respectful to the cultural needs of Indigenous people. Of particular concern are the consistently poor ratings awarded by the LGBTQ2 community; on virtually every indicator, those who identify as LGBTQ2 provide significantly less favourable ratings than other Canadians.

Results also reveal that one-third of Canadians say they have had contact with the RCMP in the past year. Despite concerns about sensitivity and worsening views on the RCMP's performance in general, a clear majority of those who have had contact with the RCMP express satisfaction with the service received, and RCMP personnel score quite well across the performance indicators examined (e.g. courteousness, fairness, and professionalism).