



Royal Canadian Mounted Police Gendarmerie royale du Canada

2021-22 Canadians' Views of RCMP Policing Services

Executive Summary

Prepared for the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP)

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Canada

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Final Report

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Supplier name: EKOS Research Associates
April 29, 2022

This report summarizes results from a survey of 2,976 Canadians.

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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. Early 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 2021/22 fiscal year, also used an online/telephone methodology. A total of 2,976 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 online panellists), we also conducted interviews by telephone. We completed 1,316 telephone interviews, and 1,660 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. Eight in ten (85 per cent) assign a high degree of importance to the RCMP's role in keeping Canadians safe, and just ten 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 when compared to last year.

Results further reveal that almost six in ten Canadians (57 per cent) are satisfied with how the RCMP fulfills its role in maintaining public safety, while three in ten (28 per cent) are dissatisfied. However, tracking reveals a drop in satisfaction with the RCMP's contribution to public safety over the past year.

Results reveal generally positive impressions of the RCMP. Three in five (61 per cent) agree that RCMP personnel demonstrate professionalism, while half say the RCMP is an organization with integrity (52 per cent). Half also believe that RCMP personnel are honest (51 per cent), and just under half feel RCMP personnel are respectful (49 per cent), objective (48 per cent), compassionate (47 per cent), and that the organization is accountable (47 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 six-point drop in the proportion of Canadians who believe the RCMP is an organization with integrity, and a five-point drop among those who see RCMP personnel as honest.

The RCMP receives mixed reviews when it comes to issues related to innovation and transparency. One in three Canadians (34 per cent) are satisfied with the level of information that the RCMP provides about its work, while a slightly larger proportion (42 per cent) express dissatisfaction in this area. One in three Canadians (34 per cent) agree that the RCMP is a forward-looking and innovative organization, and a slightly larger proportion – 39 per cent – disagree. Findings also reveal that half of Canadians (50 per cent) disagree with the idea that the RCMP is an open and transparent organization.

Survey results reveal that the RCMP receives fairly low marks on indicators related to sensitivity. Fewer than half of Canadians agree that the RCMP is an organization that is welcoming and inclusive of people from various backgrounds, and that the RCMP treats people with a disability fairly. Four in ten agree that RCMP personnel reflect the cultural diversity in their community, and that the RCMP treats women fairly. Fewer than four in ten agree that the RCMP is sensitive to the needs of Canada's various cultures and groups, or that the RCMP treats members of LGBTQ2 communities fairly. Moreover, only one

in three Canadians agree that the RCMP treats members of visible minority groups fairly, or that it treats Indigenous people fairly.

Despite concerns about sensitivity and worsening views on the RCMP in general, results suggest that the RCMP maintains a widely positive relationship with the public. A clear majority of Canadians (74 per cent) say they would help the RCMP if asked, seven in ten believe they have a moral obligation to follow police orders, and six in ten say they generally support the RCMP's actions.

Results 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 six in ten (59 per cent) express confidence in the RCMP's ability to handle threats to Canadian passenger aircraft effectively. More than half believe the RCMP resolves crimes where violence is involved (56 per cent), responds to national security threats effectively (56 per cent), diminishes the threat of organized crime (56 per cent), provides an adequate response to border threats (54 per cent), and mitigates the impact of serious crime (53 per cent). However, fewer than four in ten are satisfied with the RCMP's contribution to making Canadians more informed and resilient (39 per cent), and its efforts in fostering safer Indigenous communities (36 per cent). Only one in three (33 per cent) say the RCMP is advancing reconciliation with Canada's Indigenous peoples. Results reveal a decrease over the past year in the proportion of Canadians expressing positive views on the impact of the RCMP. For instance, there has been a 13-point drop among those who feel the RCMP is effectively responding to threats to national security, and a ten-point drop in the proportion who believe the RCMP is reducing the threat of organized crime.

Results also reveal that 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 (61 per cent) say the RCMP seldom exceeds its authority (including 33 per cent who say 'never' or 'almost never'). Almost one in four (22 per cent), however, feel the RCMP sometimes oversteps its boundaries, and one in five (17 per cent) believe the RCMP often or always oversteps its authority.

Contact with RCMP¹

One in four Canadians (26 per cent) indicate they have had direct contact with the RCMP in the past year. Of those who have had contact with the RCMP, almost one in four (23 per cent) indicate their contact involved a traffic offence or an accident, one in six (17 per cent) indicate a public disturbance, and one in seven report being victim of a crime, or a witness to a crime (15 per cent each).

Those who indicated they had contact with the RCMP were asked for their views on RCMP performance during this contact. Results are generally positive with more than eight in ten (86 per cent) agreeing that it was easy to get in touch with the RCMP, while similar proportions say RCMP personnel demonstrated professionalism (82 per cent), were courteous and respectful (81 per cent), and treated them fairly (81 per cent). Roughly seven in ten feel that RCMP personnel were knowledgeable and competent (73 per cent), delivered the service in a timely fashion (72 per cent), and provided all the information needed (68 per cent). Results are more mixed in terms of the RCMP going beyond minimum requirements in providing good service: 51 per cent feel the RCMP went beyond minimum service requirements, and 25 per cent disagree with this idea. These results have remained largely stable over the past few years, although there has been a slight decline in the proportion who feel RCMP personnel were knowledgeable, or provided them with all the information needed.

Those who indicated they had had contact with the RCMP were also asked to rate their overall satisfaction with the service they received from the RCMP. Seven in ten (69 per cent) expressed satisfaction, and only 19 per cent were dissatisfied.

Conclusions

Overall, attitudes towards the RCMP are generally positive but have worsened over the past year. The majority of Canadians are satisfied with the RCMP's contribution to public safety, but satisfaction has declined since 2020/21. The RCMP scores reasonably well in terms of upholding many of its core principles, however, perceptions in this area have also deteriorated over the past year.

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.

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

Another area of concern is sensitivity. Fewer than half of Canadians agree that the RCMP is an organization that is welcoming and inclusive of people from various backgrounds, and that the RCMP treats people with a disability fairly. Four in ten agree that RCMP personnel reflect the cultural diversity in their community, and that the RCMP treats women fairly. Fewer than four in ten agree that the RCMP treats members of LGBTQ2 communities fairly, and only one in three agree that the RCMP treats members of visible minority groups fairly, or that it treats Indigenous people fairly. 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.

Despite concerns about sensitivity and worsening views on the RCMP in general, results suggest that the RCMP maintains a widely positive relationship with the public. The majority of Canadians say they would help the RCMP if asked, believe they have a moral obligation to follow police orders, and say they generally support the RCMP's actions.

Results also reveal that those who have had contact with the RCMP express high levels of satisfaction with the service received, with RCMP personnel scoring well across virtually all of the performance indicators examined (e.g. courteousness, fairness, professionalism).