



# National Justice Survey, 2021

## *Summary*

### **Prepared for the Department of Justice Canada**

**Supplier:** EKOS RESEARCH ASSOCIATES INC.

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For more information on this report, please contact the Research and Statistics Division, Department of Justice Canada at [rsd.drs@justice.gc.ca](mailto:rsd.drs@justice.gc.ca)

*Ce rapport est aussi disponible en français*

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This public opinion research report presents the results of an online survey and qualitative interviews conducted by EKOS Research Associates Inc. on behalf of the Department of Justice Canada. The research study was conducted with 3,211 Canadians in February and March 2021.

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Research and Statistics Division  
Department of Justice Canada  
East Memorial Building  
284 Wellington Street  
Ottawa ON K1A 0H8

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## A. BACKGROUND AND OBJECTIVES

The Department of Justice supports the Minister of Justice and the Attorney General of Canada through administering federal law, developing policies, and providing legal support to government departments and agencies. To inform policy development, public engagement and communications, and to support its mandate, the Department periodically commissions the National Justice Survey, which seeks to understand Canadians’ perceptions, understanding, and priorities on justice-related issues.

The current research gathers Canadians’ views, attitudes and opinions on several distinct topics related to the justice system, including: the state of the criminal justice system, the family justice system, impaired driving, the sex trade, access to justice, and Sustainable Development Goal 16. The 2021 National Justice Survey included a large, national survey with Canadians and follow up interviews with a subset of respondents.

## B. METHODOLOGY

### *Survey*

The final survey sample included 3,211 Canadians, 18 years of age and older. The survey sample was randomly selected from the *Probit* panel, which is assembled using a random digit dial (RDD) process for sampling from a blended land-line cell-phone frame, so provides good coverage of Canadians with telephone access. Twenty-nine percent were collected by trained, bilingual interviewers, while the majority were collected through online self-administration. This randomly recruited probability sample carries with it a margin of error of +/-1.7%. The margin of error for most sub-groups is between 2.6% and 7.0%.

In order to assess perceptions of the impact of *Criminal Code* changes on Indigenous and racialized groups<sup>1</sup>, an oversample of each of these groups was needed for the analysis. A total of 305 surveys were completed with Indigenous people, carrying a margin of error of 5.7% at a .95 confidence interval (i.e., 19 times out of 20). Where sample size is sufficient for analysis, data for

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<sup>1</sup> Segments of interest include Black Canadians, as well as Canadians of East/Southeast Asian and South/West Asian descent.

First Nations, Inuit, and Métis are presented separately. In order to isolate results for Black Canadians, and those of East and Southeast Asian descent, efforts were made to include a minimum number of completed cases with members of each of these communities, respectively, carrying a margin of error of 6.2% to 8.2% at a .95 confidence interval (i.e., 19 times out of 20).

The time to complete the survey averaged 17 minutes online and 25 minutes by telephone, and data were collected between February 1 and March 5, 2021 by telephone, in both languages, following extensive testing online. The rate of participation for the survey overall was 21% (24% online and 14% by telephone, where more efforts were made to find respondents in key target groups). Details on the rate of participation can be found in Appendix A, and the questionnaire is provided in Appendix B.

Results were weighted to population proportions for region, age, gender, education, Indigenous identity and ethnocultural group. Chi-square tests were used to compare subgroups or a population of interest to the remaining sample (e.g., Ontario vs. the rest of Canada; 65 years old and over vs. the rest of Canada; women vs. men). Because of the random nature of the sampling, along with weighting along key dimensions, the results can be reasonably extrapolated to the broader population of Canadians 18 years of age or older. Characteristics of the sample can be found in Appendix A.

### *Interviews*

Survey respondents who indicated they had experienced a traffic stop by police since December 2018 were asked about willingness to participate in a follow-up interview, conducted by phone, to further discuss the nature of this stop and their experiences at the time. Interview participants were selected based on survey responses, with a focus on the four target segments from the survey sample (Black, South/West Asian, East/Southeast Asian or Indigenous). All current or previous employees of the Government of Canada, or anyone who had participated in an interview or focus groups for Government of Canada public opinion research in the previous six months were excluded from participating.

A total of 27 interviews were conducted between March 9 and 24, 2021, each lasting 20 to 30 minutes, including six conducted in French. Specifically, interviews were conducted with seven participants self-identifying as Black, seven as Indigenous, five as White; four as East/Southeast Asian and four as South/West Asian. Participants were asked to describe their experiences with police traffic stops and general impressions of trends in this area. The recruitment script and interview guide can be found in Appendix C. Interview participants were provided with a \$50 honorarium for their time.

Results of the interviews are described in shaded text, along with anonymized, illustrative quotes. It should be noted that the results of the interviews are qualitative in nature. These results should not be used to estimate numeric proportions or number of individuals in the population who hold a particular opinion as they are not generalizable. That is, results should not be assumed to be representative of the experiences of the wider population of Canada. These data are included to illustrate some experiences and perspectives. For this reason, terms such as “a few,” “some” and “most” are used to broadly indicate views, rather than using specific percentages.

## **C. KEY FINDINGS**

### ***Awareness of Roles and Confidence in the Criminal Justice System***

Most Canadians (86%) were at least moderately aware of the role of the police in the criminal justice system, while 77% were at least moderately aware of the role of the courts. Awareness of the role of corrections was relatively low, with fewer Canadians saying they were aware (26%) of the role of corrections than not aware (33%).

Before the pandemic, about one-quarter of Canadians were confident that the criminal justice system was accessible (27%) or fair (23%) to all people. Canadians’ confidence levels were lower about one year following the declaration of a pandemic in March 2020, with fewer Canadians reporting confidence that the criminal justice system was accessible (22%) or fair (20%) to all people.

### ***Family Justice System***

Few Canadians (19%) were knowledgeable of the family justice system. Prior to the pandemic, 24% of Canadians were confident that the family justice system was accessible to all people. As with perceptions of the criminal justice system, confidence in accessibility since the start of the pandemic was lower, with 18% of Canadians confident that the family justice system was accessible to all people.

The family justice system was accessed by 7% of Canadians in the past two years. Nearly one-third (31%) of respondents thought it was easy to access the system prior to the pandemic. At the time of the survey, nearly one year into the pandemic, only 16% said it was easy to access the system.

### ***Alcohol-Impaired Driving***

Following a brief description, 30% of Canadians said they were aware that mandatory alcohol screening (MAS) was introduced in December of 2018. The minority, 39%, said that MAS has had a moderate to major impact on their decision whether or not to drive after consuming alcohol.

The majority of Canadians (62%) were concerned about the dangers on the road from individuals driving while impaired by alcohol. In the past two years, 26% responded that they had driven within two hours of consuming alcohol; among them, 63% indicated that it was because they did not believe that they were impaired. About one-quarter (24%) of respondents said they were at least moderately concerned about being charged personally with an alcohol-impaired driving offence. Most often, this was because of the concern of killing or injuring someone else in an accident, being killed or injured, or having a permanent criminal record.

### ***Drug Impaired Driving***

About one-quarter of Canadians were aware of the introduction of approved roadside drug screening equipment (25%), or of prohibited limits of THC in the blood within two hours of driving (24%). Although 57% of Canadians were concerned about the dangers on the road from individuals driving while impaired by drugs, nine per cent fewer were concerned about the dangers of others driving while impaired by cannabis specifically. In the previous two years, 8% of Canadians had driven within two hours of using cannabis at least once. Half said they did not feel impaired. Among those who had driven after using cannabis, 17% had driven within two hours of consuming both cannabis and alcohol.

### ***Police Traffic Stops***

Twenty-two per cent of Canadians had been stopped by the police at least once in the past two years; 59% were stopped for a minor driving infraction while the other 41% were stopped at a roadside checkpoint. Forty per cent of those stopped were given a ticket.

Most of the qualitative interview participants were stopped by police for traffic violations, and some were aware of why they were being stopped even before speaking to police. Most interview participants indicated that the traffic stop was fairly “routine” and did not perceive they were being targeted in any way by being stopped by the police. For those few who were pulled over at a roadside check stop, they perceived that all vehicles were being pulled over in an equal manner and did not feel targeted for any reason. Overall, there were few instances of perceived profiling on traffic stops since December 2018, either through experience or discussions with friends or family. However, a few Indigenous participants said that they were

pulled over for no apparent infraction, a few South/West Asian participants perceived differential treatment, and many Black participants said they were conscious of a personal risk during traffic stops. All participants had observed news coverage of police interactions, in terms of aggressive behaviour of police officers towards racialized groups. This was particularly notable in news coverage of events taking place in the United States, according to participants, although participants perceived that this occurs in Canada with Indigenous peoples and Black Canadians.

### ***Sex Trade***

Half of Canadians correctly identified that profiting off of the sale of someone's sexual services was illegal. The minority (41%) knew it was illegal to purchase sexual services. About one-quarter knew it was illegal to advertise sexual services (25%). About one-quarter (23%) of respondents incorrectly identified that it was illegal to sell sexual services (23%).

The majority, 58%, agreed that receiving financial or material benefit from the sale of sexual services of others should be illegal. Fewer Canadians agreed that purchasing sexual services (39%) or selling sexual services (34%) should be illegal.

### ***United Nations Sustainable Development Goals***

The majority of respondents (60%) who participated in the survey were not aware of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals that aim to address today's social, economic and environmental challenges, even after reading a description. Less than one-quarter (21%) had heard specifically of the Sustainable Development Goal 16 to promote just, peaceful and inclusive societies. Half said that all aspects of Goal 16 are equally important, although 18% saw access for all as most important. Effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels were seen as most important among 12%, while 8% pointed to promotion of peaceful and inclusive societies as most important.

## D. NOTE TO READERS

Detailed findings are presented in the sections that follow. Overall results are presented in the main portion of the narrative and are typically supported by graphic or tabular presentation of results. Bulleted text is also used to point out any statistically significant and meaningful differences between sub-groups of respondents. If differences are not noted in the report, it can be assumed that they are either not statistically significant<sup>2</sup> in their variation from the overall result or that the difference was deemed to be too small to be noteworthy (e.g., less than 5% above or below the overall average) .

Results for the proportion of respondents in the sample who either said “don’t know” or did not provide a response may not be indicated in the graphic representation of the results in all cases, particularly where they are not sizable (e.g., 10% or less). These responses were, however, included in the calculations. Results may not total to 100% for this reason, and also due to rounding.

## E. CONTRACT VALUE

The contract value for the POR project is \$147,462.92 (including HST).

Supplier Name: EKOS Research Associates

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To obtain more information on this study, please e-mail: [rsd.drs@justice.gc.ca](mailto:rsd.drs@justice.gc.ca)

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<sup>2</sup> Chi-square and standard t-tests were applied as applicable. Differences noted were significant at the 95% level.

## F. POLITICAL NEUTRALITY CERTIFICATION

I hereby certify as Senior Officer of EKOS Research Associates Inc. that the deliverables fully comply with the Government of Canada political neutrality requirements outlined in the Communications Policy of the Government of Canada and Procedures for Planning and Contracting Public Opinion Research. Specifically, the deliverables do not include information on electoral voting intentions, political party preferences, standings with the electorate, or ratings of the performance of a political party or its leaders.

Signed by:



Susan Galley (Vice President)