



Royal Canadian Mounted Police Gendarmerie royale du Canada

Canadians' Views of RCMP Policing Services 2018-19

Executive Summary

Prepared for the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP)

Supplier name: EKOS Research Associates
Contract number: M7594-193713/001/CY
Contract value: \$74,947.25

Contract Award Date: November 2, 2018
Delivery date: March 25, 2019

Registration number: 064-18

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Canada 

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This report summarizes results from a survey of 3,040 Canadians.

Cette publication est aussi disponible en français sous le titre : Points de vue de Canadiens sur les services de maintien de l'ordre de la GRC.

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Catalogue number:

PS64-154/2019E-PDF

International Standard Book Number (ISBN):

978-0-660-28038-7

Related publications (registration number: POR 064-18):

Catalogue Number: PS64-154/2019F-PDF (Final Report, French)

ISBN: 978-0-660-28039-4

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 conducted the survey using an online/telephone methodology with the same representativeness used in the previous (telephone only) samples.

The current research, for the 2018-19 fiscal year, also involved an online/telephone methodology. A total of 3,040 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 1,324 telephone interviews, and 1,716 cases were collected online.

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 fully 94 per cent of Canadians assign a high degree of importance to the RCMP's contribution to keeping Canadians safe, and three-quarters express satisfaction with the RCMP's performance in this area.

Looking at more specific aspects of the RCMP, survey findings reveal that clear majorities agree that the RCMP demonstrates professionalism in its work, demonstrates respect and integrity, that RCMP personnel are honest and demonstrate compassion, and that the organization is accountable.

Survey results also reveal that fully 95 per cent of Canadians feel that the RCMP is a recognized symbol of Canada. Moreover, eight in ten are satisfied with the RCMP's efforts to provide services in both official languages, while slightly fewer agree that the RCMP prioritizes quality service, and express trust and confidence in the RCMP. Tracking reveals the proportion of Canadians who agree that the RCMP prioritizes providing services in both official languages has increased seven points over the past year.

While Canadians have a high degree of confidence in the RCMP in general, they award lower marks when it comes to the calibre of its leadership. Respondents also make little distinction between the different levels of leadership; just over half rated the RCMP's local leaders as effective while roughly the same proportion offered a positive appraisal of its national leaders. Tracking reveals that confidence in the RCMP's national leadership is up 9 points over the past year, and confidence in local leadership is up three points.

The RCMP receives mixed reviews when it comes to issues related to innovation and transparency. Fewer than half of respondents agree that the RCMP is a forward-looking and innovative organisation. About four in ten are satisfied with the level of information that the RCMP provides about its work, and one-third expressed dissatisfaction in this area. Respondents were sharply divided on whether the RCMP could be considered an open and transparent organization – four in ten agree with this assessment, while virtually the same proportion disagree. However, tracking reveals an 11-point increase in the proportion of Canadians who see the RCMP as an open and transparent organization.

The RCMP scores moderately well on broader indicators related to sensitivity. Two-thirds of respondents agree that the RCMP is welcoming and inclusive of people from varying

backgrounds. Six in ten believe that the RCMP is representative of the diverse communities it serves, that it is helping to build a fair and inclusive Canada, and that it is sensitive to the needs of Canada's various cultures and groups. When the scope of the questions is narrowed to focus on specific groups, however, the RCMP elicits less favourable reviews. Half of respondents agree that the RCMP is respectful to the cultural needs of Indigenous people, while the same proportion believes that the RCMP treats women fairly. Slightly fewer say the RCMP is sensitive to needs of the LGBTQ2S community. Tracking reveals a six-point increase in agreement that the RCMP treats women fairly, and a four-point increase in agreement that the RCMP is helping to build an inclusive and fair Canada over the past year.

Looking at visibility and community engagement issues, a clear majority of respondents say that RCMP personnel are responsive to the needs of their communities. The other issues examined reveal more mixed views. About half believe that the RCMP maintains a social media presence, and that RCMP personnel have a visible presence in their community. About four in ten say that RCMP personnel are involved in their community's activities, and one-third disagree with this idea. It is important to note, however, that the seemingly high levels of disagreement on some of these indicators are driven by the high rates of disagreement in provinces that have their own provincial police forces. Tracking reveals a 7-point increase in agreement that the RCMP maintains a social media presence.

Canadians hold generally positive views of the RCMP in terms of responsiveness. More than six in ten agree that the RCMP provides effective, co-ordinated responses to calls for service, that it keeps up with current and emerging threats, and that the organization has a motivated workforce. More than half feel that the RCMP investigates public complaints appropriately. Tracking reveals relatively consistent results in terms of satisfaction with the RCMP's responsiveness over the past few years.

Results also reveal generally positive impressions of the impact of the RCMP on Canadians, although findings also suggest room for improvement in terms of the RCMP's contributions at the community level. Eight in ten are confident that the RCMP can conduct major crime investigations, while three-quarters agree that the RCMP effectively responds to national security threats. About seven in ten say the RCMP diminishes the threat of organized crime, effectively handles threats to passenger aircraft, and provides an adequate response to border threats. About six in ten believed the RCMP is effective in mitigating the impact of serious crime, reducing the distribution of illegal drugs, countering radicalization to violence, responding to cybercrime threats, lessening the impact of economic crime, and addressing youth crime. However, just half are satisfied with the RCMP's efforts in fostering safer Indigenous communities, or its contribution to making Canadians more informed and resilient. These results have largely remained stable over the past year, although longer-term tracking reveals a steady, nine-point erosion in the perceived effectiveness of the RCMP's efforts to combat serious crime since 2012/13.

Primary Sources of Information about RCMP

Turning to communication with the RCMP, respondents were asked to what degree each of a range of sources provided them with credible information about the RCMP and its performance in their community. Forty-five per cent selected the news media as their credible source to obtain information about the RCMP, while about four in ten selected their own personal experience as a source to obtain credible information. Three in ten see their friends and family as a reliable source, while just one in five turn to social media to obtain information about the RCMP. Tracking reveals that the perceived credibility of these sources has remained stable over the past few years.

Contact with the RCMP

Respondents were asked if they have had any direct contact with the RCMP in the past year. One-third (33 per cent) indicated yes, while the majority (66 per cent) said no.

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 agreeing that RCMP personnel were courteous and respectful, demonstrated professionalism, treated them fairly, and that it was easy to get in touch with the RCMP. Similarly, more than seven in ten feel that RCMP personnel were knowledgeable and competent, provided all the information needed, and delivered the service in a timely fashion. Results are more mixed in terms of the RCMP going beyond minimum requirements in providing good service: 58 per cent feel the RCMP went beyond minimum service requirements, and 20 per cent disagreed with this idea. Tracking reveals that these results have remained largely stable over the past few years, although ease of contact with the RCMP is down 7 points since 2012/13.

Those who indicated they had contact with the RCMP in the past year were also asked to rate their overall satisfaction with the service received from the RCMP. Three in four expressed satisfaction, and only 15 per cent are dissatisfied. Tracking suggests that satisfaction has increased 6 points since 2016/17.

Conclusions

Overall, attitudes towards the RCMP are generally positive and stable. 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, integrity, respect, and honesty. The RCMP consistently enjoys its highest levels of support from seniors, those with high school education, and those who reside in Northern and Atlantic Canada.

Nevertheless, results reveal some areas for improvement. 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 are evenly split on whether the organization could be considered transparent.

Another area of potential concern is sensitivity. While the RCMP does quite well on the broader indicators surrounding inclusiveness and diversity, public attitudes worsen when the scope of the question is narrowed to focus on specific groups, namely Indigenous people, women, and the LGBTQ2S community. Of particular concern are the consistently poor ratings awarded by the LGBTQ2S community; on virtually every indicator, LGBTQ2S consistently provide significantly less favourable ratings than other Canadians.

Results also reveal that one-third of Canadians have had contact with the RCMP in the past year. A clear majority expressed satisfaction with the service received, and RCMP personnel score quite well across the performance indicators examined, e.g. courteousness, competence, timeliness.