



Royal Canadian Mounted Police Gendarmerie royale du Canada

# Canadians' Views of RCMP Policing Services 2019-20

## Executive Summary

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For more information on this report, please contact the RCMP at:  
[SurveyCentreRCMP-CentresondageGRC@rcmp-grc.gc.ca](mailto:SurveyCentreRCMP-CentresondageGRC@rcmp-grc.gc.ca)

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Canada 

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

The current research, for the 2019/20 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 1,317 telephone interviews, and 1,671 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

Canadians place a great deal of importance on the RCMP's contribution to public safety; roughly nine in ten respondents (93 per cent) assign a high degree of importance to the RCMP's role in keeping Canadians safe, and seven in ten (72 per cent) are satisfied with how the RCMP fulfills its role in maintaining public safety.

Results reveal generally positive impressions of how the RCMP adheres to its core values. Three-quarters (75 per cent) agree that the RCMP demonstrates professionalism in its work, while seven in ten say the RCMP operates with integrity (69 per cent). Six in ten believe the RCMP is an accountable organization (63 per cent) and that its personnel are honest (62 per cent), objective (61 per cent), respectful (61 per cent), and compassionate (60 per cent).

Results further reveal positive overall impressions of the RCMP. More than nine in ten (95 per cent) agree that the RCMP is a recognized symbol of Canada. Three-quarters (74 per cent) are satisfied with the RCMP's efforts to provide services in both official languages. Seven in ten agree that the RCMP prioritizes quality service (71 per cent), and express trust and confidence in the RCMP (69 per cent). However, results suggest the public perceive gaps in the RCMP's service offerings: just half (50 per cent) say the RCMP provides the same quality of service to all citizens.

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. Just 51 per cent rate the RCMP's national leaders as effective, and slightly fewer (45 per cent) offer a positive appraisal of its local leaders. Tracking suggests a modest erosion in the public's confidence in RCMP leadership.

The RCMP receives mixed reviews when it comes to issues related to innovation and transparency. Fewer than half of respondents (46 per cent) agree that the RCMP is forward-looking and innovative, while a similar proportion (44 per cent) are satisfied with the level of information that the RCMP provides about its work. Respondents are sharply divided on whether the RCMP could be considered an open and transparent organization – 36 per cent agree with this assessment, while virtually the same proportion (38 per cent) disagree (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.).

Turning to indicators related to sensitivity, more than half of respondents believe that the RCMP is representative of the diverse communities it serves (56 per cent) and that it is

sensitive to the needs of Canada's various cultures and groups (52 per cent). When the scope of the questions is narrowed to focus on specific groups, however, the RCMP elicits less favourable reviews. Fewer than half of respondents agree that the RCMP treats women fairly (47 per cent, compared to 31 per cent who disagree), that it is respectful to the cultural needs of Indigenous people (45 per cent versus 33 per cent), or that it is sensitive to the needs of the LGBTQ2 community (43 per cent versus 22 per cent).

Results suggest that the RCMP maintains a largely positive relationship with the public. The vast majority of respondents (87 per cent) say they would help the RCMP if asked, while eight in ten (79 per cent) believe they have a moral obligation to follow police orders. Seven in ten (72 per cent) say they generally support the RCMP's actions. Roughly six in ten agree that the RCMP is dealing with things that matter to their community (58 per cent) and would encourage friends and family to consider the RCMP as a career path (56 per cent).

Canadians also hold generally positive views of the RCMP's responsiveness; about six in ten agree that the RCMP keeps up with current and emerging threats (63 per cent) and that it is quick to respond to calls for assistance (58 per cent).

Results further reveal generally positive impressions of the impact of the RCMP on Canadians, although findings also suggest room for improvement in some areas, particularly when it comes to how the RCMP handles Indigenous matters. Three-quarters (76 per cent) express confidence in the RCMP's ability to respond to national security threats effectively. About seven in ten agree the RCMP effectively handles threats to passenger aircraft (69 per cent), diminishes the threat of organized crime (69 per cent), resolves crimes where violence is involved (67 per cent), and provides an adequate response to border threats (65 per cent). About six in ten believe the RCMP is effective in countering radicalization to violence (62 per cent), mitigating the impact of serious crime (62 per cent), reducing the distribution of illegal drugs (61 per cent), responding to cybercrime threats (60 per cent), and addressing youth crime (57 per cent). Slightly fewer agree that the RCMP is successfully lessening the impact of economic crime (55 per cent) and improving traffic safety (55 per cent). However, just half of respondents are satisfied with the RCMP's contribution to making Canadians more informed and resilient (50 per cent), its attempts to combat online scams (49 per cent), and its efforts in fostering safer Indigenous communities (47 per cent). Only four in ten (43 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 jurisdiction at times. Seven in ten (70 per cent) say the RCMP seldom exceeds its authority (including 45 per cent who say 'never' or 'almost never'). One in six (17 per cent), however, feel the RCMP sometimes oversteps its boundaries, and one in eight (13 per cent) believe the RCMP often or always oversteps its jurisdiction.

Finally, results suggest broad awareness of the RCMP's international undertakings. Three-quarters (73 per cent) say they are aware that the RCMP participates in international activities such as peacekeeping and training foreign police, and only one in seven (15 per cent) say they are not aware that the RCMP engages in these activities. Longer-term tracking suggests a steady rise in the public's familiarity with the RCMP's presence on the international stage.

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

Three in ten respondents (31 per cent) indicate they have had contact with the RCMP in the past year. Of those who have, one in five indicate their contact involved a traffic offence or an accident (21 per cent) or a criminal matter (19 per cent).

Of those who had had contact with the RCMP, more than eight in ten (85 per cent) agree that it was easy to get in touch with the RCMP, while similar proportions say RCMP personnel were courteous and respectful (84 per cent), treated them fairly (84 per cent), and demonstrated professionalism (83 per cent). Roughly three-quarters feel that RCMP personnel were knowledgeable and competent (78 per cent), provided all the information needed (73 per cent), and delivered the service in a timely fashion (72 per cent). However, just 56 per cent feel the RCMP went beyond minimum service requirements.

Overall, three-quarters of those who had contact with the RCMP (74 per cent) express satisfaction with their encounter.

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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 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 and integrity. The organization consistently enjoys its highest levels of support from seniors and those with high school education.

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. The RCMP also receives mixed scores in terms of the quality of its leadership, and tracking suggests a modest erosion in the public's confidence in this area.

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 LGBTQ2 community. 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 have had contact with the RCMP in the past year. A clear majority express satisfaction with the service received, and RCMP personnel score quite well across the performance indicators examined (e.g. courteousness, fairness, and professionalism).