Royal Canadian Gendarmerie royale
Mounted Police du Canada

Public Opinion Research Study:
Canadians' Perceptions of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police.

Final Report

Prepared for the Royal Canadian Mounted Police

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Mike Colledge, President
Ipsos Public Affairs

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Executive Summary

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Recent RCMP-led and other surveys of the public have shown that trust with the organization has fluctuated. For example, the percentage of Canadians who agree that they have trust and confidence in the RCMP's contribution to public safety declined from 74% in 2018-19 to 53% in 2021-22 and then rose to 58% in 2022-23. While the surveys provided insight into overall public views, they did not provide in-depth information on the reasons behind the fluctuation.

This report presents the findings from qualitative research designed to gauge opinions and elicit an understanding of the reasons behind the Canadian public's decreasing level of trust in the RCMP. Specifically, the research dove into top-of-mind associations with the RCMP; levels of trust and confidence of the organization and the factors that underpin these perceptions; and recommendations for improving and enhancing public trust of the RCMP.

A total of 26 online focus group discussions were conducted, with 174 participants taking part. This qualitative research was comprehensive in terms of its national reach, including Canadians who live within and outside of local RCMP policing jurisdictions, and engaging Canadians who belong to equity-seeking groups. Focus groups were conducted in both official languages. Most groups had between 5 and 9 participants, and there were between 3 and 10 participants in groups with members of Indigenous communities. On average, every group was approximately 90 minutes long. Participants who took part in the study were offered an honorarium as a 'thank you' for their time. Harder-to-reach research audiences were offered $150 (Indigenous, 2SLGBTQI+, and persons living with a disability) and the remaining audiences were offered $125.

The focus groups elicited rich and detailed information that helps us understand the reasons behind the Canadian public's decreasing level of trust in the RCMP. Primary concerns among specific communities, as well as Canadians overall, were identified. The results of the focus groups provide insight into Canadians' perceptions of (1) overall impressions of the RCMP, (2) reasons why evaluations of the organization have declined, and (3) recommendations for improving the RCMP, and enhancing public trust.

It should be noted that qualitative findings presented in this report are intended to reveal a rich range of opinions and interpretations. Qualitative findings are not statistically projectable in nature, and thus, should not be extrapolated to the broader population.

Summary of Key Findings

Top-of-Mind Associations with the RCMP

Across the focus group discussions, there was a mix of positive, neutral, and negative top-of-mind associations with the RCMP:

- "Safety", "protection", and "security" were the recurring positive associations held by participants.

- The image of a Mountie on horseback with the symbolic red serge and Stetson uniform surfaced in almost all group discussions. Sentiment towards this imagery, however, varied. On the one hand, it was perceived as the quintessential image of Canada, which fostered a sense of national pride in a few cases of older participants. On the other hand, the image had negative connotations of colonialism and Indigenous oppression, as well as being outdated, among certain participants.

- There was a tendency to personify the RCMP as a "middle-aged white male" across the board and 2SLGBTQI+ participants added "cis" and "straight" in their personifications. This was complemented by negative associations of "racism", "trouble", "fear", and "abuse of authority", especially among participants from equity-seeking groups.

Impressions were partly shaped by personal experiences or witnessing first-hand interactions with RCMP officers, or the lack thereof for those living outside of RCMP local policing jurisdictions. Moreover, it was evident that the broader current discourse on the RCMP and policing in general, driven by media and education, shaped participants' attitudes towards the organization.

Trust and Confidence in the RCMP

The research captured the full spectrum of trust and confidence levels and four main groupings emerged from how participants expressed their views on the RCMP.

1) **A few participants were very vocal in their distrust and lack of confidence of the RCMP.**

   - Lack of trust in many instances was a result of participants, or those close to them, being victims of racial profiling or biases at play when interacting with RCMP officers or municipal force officers, which had a spillover effect in views of the RCMP. Several participants shared their personal stories in this regard. These participants identified systemic issues affecting the RCMP institution which resulted in low levels of trust and confidence. This was not a recent shift in attitudes for many of these participants. The make-up of this distrustful group tended to skew towards racialized, Indigenous, and 2SLGBTQI+ participants.

2) **Several participants were somewhat conflicted in their views of the RCMP, which in turn affected their levels of trust.** The following distinct positionings emerged:

   - Some were more inclined to trust individual RCMP officers but were generally distrustful of the RCMP as an institution. These participants had positive experiences in their interactions with RCMP officers that were contrary to their pre-existing negative views of the RCMP or the negative stories about the RCMP in the media.

   - Some perceived a disconnect between their own experiences in dealing with the RCMP versus those who belong to equity-seeking groups. Participants in these cases were highly cognizant that their "white, middle-class privilege" would likely result in positive outcomes, whereas this would not be the case for the majority of those belonging to equity-seeking groups. Decline in trust and confidence with the RCMP appeared to be most prevalent among this group of participants who had developed an increased awareness of issues such as racial profiling in policing. Increased awareness was partly a function of media coverage on the RCMP specifically, as well as policing in general.

- Operational response times and effectiveness in resolving crimes were found to affect levels of trust and confidence in the RCMP. This was especially the case for rural participants who had low levels of confidence in their local RCMP detachment's ability to respond to calls in a timely manner. At the same time, there was a belief that local detachments were doing "the best they could" and thus more inclined to shift blame onto the institutional RCMP "bureaucracy" and "management".

- The 2020 mass shooting in Portapique (Township in Nova Scotia) emerged in the discussions in Atlantic Canada as a factor in eroding trust and confidence in the RCMP to an extent. Some participants felt that the RCMP's handling of the aftermath lacked transparency and accountability. Yet, for a subset of these participants, they continue to have an underlying level of trust in individual local RCMP officers given the complexity and difficulty of the circumstances.

- A small number of female participants had general confidence and trust in the RCMP to protect them in most scenarios. The exception to this was the RCMP's ability to handle cases of sexual harassment or domestic violence.

3) **Many participants did not hold a strong position but were inclined to trust the RCMP.**

- Often this positioning was based on a direct lack of experiences with the RCMP and thus, participants had no reason not to trust that officers would fulfil their "serve and protect" mandate. This was true for both those who live outside of local RCMP policing jurisdictions as well as those within. Or, in the latter case, participants had largely positive interactions with officers in the past. There was a tendency to view negative incidents involving police officers (e.g., racial profiling) to a few "bad apples".

4) **A few participants displayed high levels of trust towards the RCMP.**

- This final grouping of participants came across as more emphatic than the previous group in their level of trust and confidence in the RCMP. They tended to skew older and had been taught growing up to show respect for RCMP officers. Some have extended family who are/were RCMP officers and therefore had a positive perception and trust in the institution.

An Inclusive Organization

There was broad agreement that the RCMP has a lot of work to do in terms of being a diverse and inclusive organization. Beyond the perceived lack of racialized RCMP officers, the internal RCMP organizational culture was highlighted as problematic by several participants who placed less trust in the RCMP as an institution. Participants' impressions were shaped by accounts of friends in the force as well as negative media coverage.

Asked whether they would personally consider a career with the RCMP, participants tended to immediately reply with a negative. General public attitudes towards policing emerged as a potential barrier to a career with the RCMP on two levels:

- A few participants were put off by what they perceived as a hostile environment whereby police officers are no longer respected by the public. This coupled with the increased scrutiny of officers by the public, the media, and on social media were cited as barriers.

- Racialized participants concurred that as RCMP officers, they would be operating in a challenging public environment as they felt that many white members of the public are not ready to see People of Colour in positions of power.

Improving Trust and Confidence in the RCMP

There was a high degree of consistency across regions and audiences on how public trust and confidence in the RCMP could be enhanced in the future. Participants honed in on the following themes:

- **Outreach and Community Engagement** – increasing the number of RCMP officer encounters with the public in friendly and less intimidating settings.

- **Accountability** – swift, decisive, and strong action regarding internal problem employees was called for to help dispel the perceived RCMP culture of protecting one's own.

- **Proactive Communication and Transparency** – proactive communication on the RCMP's positive impact on communities in the media and social media to counterbalance the dominant negative discourse.

- **Diversity and Inclusion** – a need to go beyond the perception of "token hires" and instill an inclusive culture that is led from the top of the organization with the appropriate training, supports, and accountability measures in place.

- **Taking Action on Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls** – increased level of urgency and RCMP action.

- **Handling of Mental Health Issues** – training, especially on how to de-escalate a situation involving a mental health crisis, and collaboration with other professions.

- **Mental Health Supports for Officers** – help officers cope with the toll of the profession.

- **Recruitment Practices** – showcasing a variety of roles, targeting university fairs, setting the bar higher for entry.

- **Continuing Professional Development** – ongoing training for officers to reduce poor handling of situations due to desensitization or bad habits formed over time.

- **Visibility, Response Times, and Operational Efficiencies** – more visibility of officers, more resources, and increased operational efficiencies.

1. Introduction

1.1 Introduction and Research Purpose

The Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) has been Canada's national police service since 1873. The RCMP operates at the community, provincial, territorial, and federal levels in over 700 detachments, provides policing services to 600 Indigenous communities as well as 150 other communities across the country.

Since 2003, the RCMP has grown and evolved with and for Canadians and has conducted surveys of Canadian residents on a regular basis. Recent RCMP-led and other surveys of the public have shown that trust with the organization has fluctuated. For example, the percentage of Canadians who agree that they have trust and confidence in the RCMP's contribution to public safety declined from 74% in 2018-19 to 53% in 2021-22 and then rose to 58% in 2022-23.. Moreover, the RCMP receives low scorings on indicators related to sensitivity to the needs of different cultures and groups (45% in 2022-23) and fair treatment of Indigenous peoples (35% in 2022-23). While the surveys provide insight into overall public views, they do not provide in-depth qualitative information on the reasons behind these perceptions.

This report presents the findings from qualitative research conducted with Canadian residents across the country, including those belonging to equity-seeking groups. The research findings are intended to contribute to the knowledge base on where the RCMP faces challenges and how those challenges can be addressed. The research was designed to gather the opinions and recommendations from a broad range of Canadians and yield rich information that was subjected to thematic analysis, including through a Gender-based Analysis Plus lens. The results shed light on initiatives to improve and modernize the RCMP, as well as build stronger relationships with the communities it serves.

1.2 Research Objectives

The overarching aim of the research was to gauge opinions and elicit an understanding of the reasons behind the Canadian public's relatively low level of trust in the RCMP. Specifically, the research dove into top-of-mind associations with the RCMP; levels of trust and confidence of the organization and the factors that underpin these perceptions; and recommendations for improving and enhancing public trust of the RCMP.

1.3 Methodology

A total of 26 online focus group discussions were conducted, with 174 participants taking part. As shown in the following table, the research was comprehensive in terms of its national reach, inclusive of Canadians that live within and outside of RCMP local policing jurisdictions, and engaged Canadians who belong to equity-seeking groups. Focus groups were conducted in both official languages. Most groups had between 5 to 9 participants, and between 3 to 10 participants for focus groups with members of Indigenous communities. Every group was approximately 90 minutes long. Three moderators facilitated the groups: one for Indigenous groups, one for Francophone participants, and one for all other English audiences.

Table 1: Focus Group Breakdown by Audience and Region

Region	General Population 18-34	General Population 35+	General Population (All ages)	Rural	Racialized Groups	Identify as 2SLGBTQI+	Indigenous Peoples	Persons with a Disability (English)	Women (Urban) (English)	Women (Rural) (English)
BC Lower Mainland (excluding Vancouver, Surrey, and other non-RCMP policed areas) (English)	1	1			1 Racialized	1	1			
Alberta (English)	1	1		1						
Saskatchewan/ Manitoba (English)			1	1		1	1			
Western Canada (in RCMP jurisdictions) (English)					1 Black			2	1	1
Greater Toronto Area (English)					1 Racialized / 1 Black					
Greater Montreal (French)	1	1								
New Brunswick (English and French)			1 (French)				1			
Nova Scotia (excluding Halifax) (English)			1							
Territories (English)			1				1			
Total (26)	**3**	**3**	**4**	**2**	**4**	**2**	**4**	**2**	**1**	**1**

Participants were recruited according to the Standards for the Conduct of Government of Canada Public Opinion Research – Qualitative Research. Quotas were set to ensure inclusion of a wide range of representation on socio-economic variables – age, gender, location, education, among other variables – and attitudinal questions about their level of trust in different government and non-government services, like the police. The screener is included in the appendix of this report. Participants who took part in the study were offered an honorarium as a 'thank you' for their time. Harder-to-reach audiences were offered $150 (Indigenous, 2SLGBTQI+, and persons living with a disability) and the remaining audiences were offered $125.

When participants were screened, they were provided with the details of the technological requirements to take part in the online discussion and were asked whether they required any additional accommodations to take part. All participants were informed of their rights under the *Privacy Act* and *Access to Information Act*, and informed of the purpose of the research, the study sponsor, and Ipsos' mandate to carry out the research. All online focus groups with non-Indigenous participants were recorded and observed by at least one member of the RCMP research team, with the participants' consent. Also, participants were informed that participation in the study was voluntary and confidential and that all information they provided, and recordings, would be administered according to the requirements of the forementioned Acts.

Online focus groups with non-Indigenous audiences were conducted over Recollective, a qualitative research platform with video that elicited participants' reactions verbally and visually, as well as a chat feature for participants to type answers. The platform also provided a live observer viewing backroom, from where the RCMP research team could watch but could not be seen by the participants or interact with them. Ipsos

partnered with an Indigenous researcher to ensure that the discussions with Indigenous communities were facilitated in a culturally appropriate and safe manner. The four focus groups with participants from Indigenous communities did not have observers. Discussions were conducted over a telephone conference call line. Participants were provided with a tollfree telephone number which connected them to a conference call with the moderator and other participants. This meant that they did not need access to the internet or a device, which reduced barriers to the research. To allow for candid discussions, the groups were not recorded.

Focus groups followed a discussion guide structured around the main objectives of the research and fine-tuned in collaboration with the RCMP. The discussion guide is included in the appendix of this report.

1.4 Interpretation of Qualitative Findings

The value of qualitative research is in exploring the issues and experiences of research participants in-depth, free from the constraints of a structured quantitative questionnaire. Qualitative evidence is rich and allows researchers to hear first-hand the underlying factors shaping experiences and opinions, as well as the interplay between factors. Qualitative research is never intended to provide results that can be extrapolated to the broader population, as they are not statistically projectable. Notable nuances that emerged by equity-seeking groups have been highlighted, where relevant, and should be treated as strictly directional, i.e. not statistically significant.

2. Key Findings

2.1 Top-of-Mind Associations with the RCMP

Projective techniques – word association and personification exercises – were used at the outset of the discussions to uncover participants deeply held attitudes towards the RCMP, and to overcome potential social desirability effects. While there was a mix of positive, neutral, and negative associations found across the focus group discussions, there was a high-level of consistency in the words and descriptions participants used within each sentiment category. Impressions were partly shaped by personal experiences or witnessing first-hand interactions with RCMP officers, or the lack thereof for those living outside of local RCMP policing jurisdictions. Moreover, it was evident that the broader current discourse on the RCMP and policing in general, driven by media and education (through schooling for example), shaped participants' attitudes towards the organization.

Figure 1: Word cloud of most frequent and words associated with the RCMP

"Safety", "protection" and "security" were the recurring associations held by participants with a more positive outlook towards the RCMP. They went on to describe the RCMP in terms of someone who is "respectful", "honest", and committed to helping citizens. It is worth noting that sometimes positive descriptions of the RCMP were based on participants' ideal image of an RCMP officer.

More neutral associations that simply described the RCMP's duties – "federal police", "national police" or "rural cops" – were common in many of the groups with participants who lived outside of local RCMP policing jurisdictions. There were some instances where these participants conflated their local municipal force with the RCMP, but others delineated between the two. Several were more inclined to view the RCMP in a more favourable light than their local force based on encounters with RCMP officers in rural areas – for example, one participant personified the RCMP as someone "calm" and "outdoorsy".

Participants in Ontario, Quebec and urban centres of other provinces were generally unclear of the RCMP's role, the organization was somewhat abstract, "in the background", and in the case of Quebec, a few misidentified border guards as RCMP officers. Their sentiment towards the RCMP and their opinions towards the organization

were either neutral or coloured by media coverage of the RCMP, as well as their disposition towards their local police force or policing in general.

The image of a Mountie on horseback with the symbolic red serge and Stetson uniform surfaced in almost all group discussions. Sentiment towards this imagery however varied. On the one hand, it was perceived as the quintessential image of Canada, a "Canadian icon", which fostered a sense of national pride among a few older participants.

On the other hand, the image had negative connotations of colonialism and Indigenous oppression – "The Scream" painting by Kent Monkman depicting RCMP officers taking children away to attend residential schools was brought up in the groups with Indigenous participants. Many Indigenous participants who took part in the research were from communities that were heavily impacted by residential schools and had family members that attended. The connection of RCMP to residential schools was deeply engrained from a young age for Indigenous participants. This association was shared by other participants with knowledge of the RCMP's history.

There was a tendency to personify the RCMP as a "middle-aged white male" across the board and 2SLGBTQI+ participants added "cis" and "straight" in their personifications. This was complemented by negative associations of "racism", "trouble", "fear", and "abuse of authority", especially among participants from equity-seeking groups.

A few participants living with a disability described the RCMP as someone with a "superiority" issue that may negatively impact treatment in the hands of an officer. Similarly, several 2SLGBTQI+ participants described someone who is "arrogant" and "power-driven", someone that they would not feel safe around. A few Black participants personified the institution as someone who is "openly racist", "ignorant", and determined to "lock up Black people to keep whites safe". These strong negative associations were grounded in experiences of Black men in their family being harassed by police, including the RCMP (more details shared in the next section).

Indigenous participants used words like "shame", "terror" and "anxiety"; "violence and police brutality"; "disappointing" and "unsupportive"; "trauma" and "oppression". Many Indigenous participants shared stories about their experiences with the RCMP at a young age, most of which were very traumatic and still impact them today:

- One Indigenous participant had an abusive stepfather growing up, and in turn had many interactions with the RCMP. When this participant was fourteen years old, the police questioned them (the victim) as to why they didn't do anything to prevent the abuse.

- One Indigenous participant recalled that when they were ten years old, their mother was a victim of domestic abuse. When the RCMP officer arrived, they asked their mother, "What did you do to him?".

- Another Indigenous participant recalled an incident that occurred when they were only four years old. At this time, they were with their father at a car shop and the officers came to arrest their father. The participant was left in the backseat to watch as their father was aggressively taken into custody. The RCMP left them there.

"Unreliable", "overwhelmed", "overstretched", and "pulled in many directions" were offered by several participants residing in areas covered by local RCMP detachments.

2.2   Trust and Confidence in the RCMP

The research captured the full spectrum of trust and confidence levels, and four main groupings emerged:

1) A few participants were very vocal in their distrust and lack of confidence of the RCMP.

2) Several participants were somewhat conflicted in their views of the RCMP, which in turn affected their levels of trust.

3) Many participants did not hold a strong position but were inclined to trust the RCMP. This was sometimes positioned in terms of not having a reason to distrust the organization.

4) A few participants displayed high levels of trust towards the RCMP.

Notably, views of participants in the equity-seeking groups were not uniform in that they did not all fall neatly into the distrustful group. The views of other non-equity-seeking groups were also varied. The research found some evidence of a recent shift towards lower levels of trust due to recent events and increased focus on policing in the media and the social media landscape, but this was by no means a groundswell. Moreover, there were a handful of cases where participants' trust and confidence in the RCMP had improved over time.

Perspectives of Participants who are Highly Distrustful of and Lack Confidence in the RCMP

Reflecting the top-of-mind associations reported previously, lack of trust in many instances was a result of participants, or those close to them, being victims of racial profiling or unconscious biases at play when interacting with RCMP officers or municipal force officers. This had a spillover effect in their views of the RCMP. Some of the personal stories shared throughout the research on interactions with the RCMP specifically included:

- A racialized participant heard of a shooting incident where his parents lived. He decided to go to the area to make sure his parents were safe. He was intercepted by an RCMP officer outside of his parents' home and ended up at the back of the police car. He concluded that this was a result of being a person of colour.

"I went to that place close by to my house and I said, 'There's been a shooting. My father is here.' So, without listening to what was being said, the cop put me at the back of the cop car, made me feel like I was the person in the wrong. They let me stay there for like 10 or 15 minutes and then a senior officer came and talked to me. And I said, 'I don't understand why you've put me here.' […] I know that I have nothing to be worried about, but I do feel very anxious based on my experiences. What I read, what I see, and being my ethnic background that I am, I would be very anxious when a cop approaches me." – Racialized participant

- A couple of Black participants shared that their young adult sons or brothers had been stopped by RCMP officers countless times for no apparent reason other than being Black.

- A couple of Black participants, who themselves and others in their families, had been stopped numerous times by the RCMP when driving in "nice cars".

- A Black participant was followed home by an RCMP officer when he first moved into a rural community.

"I moved [a] couple of years ago and I remember one time when the policeman followed me all the way home. So, when I parked, I said, 'Are you okay?' And [he] said, 'Oh I was just checking, you're kind of new here.' […] I was new and also Black. So, all the red flags were there for him to follow me […] You feel [the racial profiling]. It is very hard to explain to someone who is not Black." – Racialized participant

- An Indigenous participant was pulled over by an RCMP officer after leaving a liquor store. When the participant asked if he had done something wrong, the officer insinuated that Indigenous peoples drink and drive. This incident happened just a few weeks prior to the focus group.

- A racialized participant had regular interactions with police due to her work and, when officers arrived [to her place of employment], they automatically presumed that the white staff member was the manager, and not her.

- A transgender participant shared how a local RCMP officer repeatedly and deliberately misgenders her during interactions, even though most people in the community know that she is the only transgender woman in the area.

These lived experiences were seen as by no means unique and were prevalent among equity-seeking groups. There were some participants who, although they had not personally experienced racial profiling or harmful stereotyping, had heard enough stories of others and in the media, or had read literature on the topic as part of their studies or work. A few Indigenous participants, Black participants, and 2SLGBTQI+ participants went on to share that they would prefer to deal with issues on their own and would only reach out to the RCMP "as a last resort". In sum, these participants identified systemic issues affecting the RCMP institution which resulted in low levels of trust and confidence.

This was not a recent shift in attitudes for many of these participants, what some Indigenous participants pointed out had changed was the increased media and social media spotlight on these long-standing issues. While the make-up of this distrustful group tended to skew towards racialized, Indigenous, and 2SLGBTQI+ participants, there were others who belong to the same groups who were more trusting towards the RCMP.

"It [could be] some altercation between me and a group of people. And maybe I'm the only person of colour and I'm loud. [RCMP officers] may think I'm just a crazy Black chick. […] They'd assume I'm being aggressive. And I'm just stating a point of view. Or [I] go to a bar and there's people fighting. […] [An RCMP officer] would be more prone to do something based on stereotypes, even though they don't know what's going on. I'd rather just walk away even if it is something that the cop should be involved in. It's just easier for me to get away from it because it's going to cause more strife and more conflict for me in my life." – Racialized participant

"I've heard of a lot of misogyny, and I hate that goes on within the RCMP. So especially as a woman, as a queer woman, I wouldn't trust that they would have my best interest in mind." – 2SLGBTQI+ participant

"All you have to do is look in the news. There're only so many times that the RCMP can be called on things with unchecked power and have absolutely no consequence to their behaviours. […] . We can look at that with respect to

missing and murdered Aboriginal [sic] women. […] These are things that are researched, they're proven, they're shown time and time again. We can look at last year with what happened in the fisheries and the RCMP's response to the First Nations' fisheries, and how they arrested the people who were being held and threatened, and allowed the individuals who were the White fishers and French fishers to continue to attack without any provocation or consequence to that. […] There's a lack of accountability, and there's an overall problem within our province and within Canada as a whole." – Participant in Nova Scotia

"My trust is diminished because you know if I'm a kid growing up, it's like oh you know, police are good RCMP […]. [They are] painted in a very positive light. And I feel like in the last five to seven years, there's been such a shift in awareness and a reminder of the history of the RCMP and their role in really abusing First Nations communities and enforcing unfair, violent, terrible laws." – Participant in the Territories

There were a couple of references to the "politicization" of the RCMP. A small number of participants in rural areas disagreed with the "gun grab" that the RCMP had to enforce following government amendments to gun legislation, leading to a view of "too much government involvement" in the RCMP. This sentiment, coupled with lack of operational responsiveness in rural communities (see next section for more details) and perceived rising crime levels, contributed to declining trust and confidence among a handful of participants in rural Western Canada.

Perspectives of Participants who are Conflicted About the RCMP

There were several cases where participants' trust and confidence levels were mixed and context dependent. Five distinct positionings emerged.

Firstly, some were more inclined to trust individual RCMP officers but were generally distrustful of the RCMP as a whole (i.e., the institution). Often these participants had had encounters with officers who displayed helpfulness, professionalism, and were able to de-escalate or handle situations sensitively. This was in relation to incidents involving participants directly and incidents at participants' workplaces (e.g., those who worked with people experiencing homelessness). Or, they had developed personal connections to individual RCMP officers (e.g., brother in-law is an RCMP officer) and were able to better relate to them as a result. These positive experiences were contrary to their pre-existing negative views of the RCMP or the negative stories about the RCMP in the media. Some racialized and Indigenous participants held this conflicting viewpoint, though notably in some cases trust towards the RCMP improved as a result.

"You hear about the issues with women in the [RCMP] force, the institution sounds like it needs change. […] Old Guy's Club […] doing stuff and getting away with it. They just don't [come across] good in the media. But you know, my personal interactions with most [RCMP officers] have been just fine." – Rural participant

A second perceived disconnect that emerged was between participants' own experiences in dealing with the RCMP versus those who belong to equity-seeking groups. Participants in these cases were highly cognizant of their "white, middle-class privilege", and thus were comfortable with turning to the RCMP for help. They had high-levels of trust that they would be treated fairly by officers. At the same time, they were less confident that racialized and Indigenous peoples would receive the same treatment by RCMP officers, or they perceived a lack of urgency in acting on issues facing Indigenous peoples and those who belong to lower socio-economic groups.

In cases of mental health and addiction, several participants were also of the view that RCMP officers (and police

officers in general) mishandle interactions due to perceived inadequate training, which ultimately results in escalation. Participants worried that calling the RCMP in mental health cases or those involving equity-seeking groups would result in more harm than good.

Participants' perceptions were in some cases driven by witnessing interactions first-hand in their workplace (again, those who work with vulnerable populations), interactions involving their family members, or in their daily lives by function of living in communities close to or with large Indigenous populations. Media played a role in shaping impressions. Sometimes participants gave specific examples, such as missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls, and other times they spoke in broad terms of negative media coverage including events in the United States. Decline in trust and confidence with the RCMP appeared to be most prevalent among this group of participants due to increased knowledge gained on systemic issues through media coverage and education.

> *"I would say that I trust the RCMP to keep me and my family safe. I think because I'm white and so is my kid or he's white presenting. And so like, if we were in immediate danger and there was an RCMP officer around, I would go and ask them for help. But I think I wouldn't call for help in my community because I would be afraid of other people in my community being at risk, at more risk than benefit from calling them. So I wouldn't trust them around anyone else necessarily." – Participant living with a disability*

> *"I think there are huge systemic issues in all of policing worldwide, and the RCMP isn't different. […] All of my interactions [with the RCMP] were positive, I felt like I was being treated really fairly, I felt like I was listened to, and they took the time to understand. My age, maybe my appearance at first glance, socioeconomic status and my race make it easy for me to have positive interactions with the police. And I'm sure that that is not always the case and if any of those things were different […] I think I have become more aware of [these issues] lately. We do talk about these things more now than we used to. I think it's a positive thing. I hope that continues." – Older participant in BC*

Thirdly, operational response times and effectiveness in resolving crimes were found to affect levels of trust and confidence in the RCMP, and again participants tended to hold somewhat nuanced perspectives. Rural participants especially had low levels of confidence in their local RCMP detachment's ability to respond to calls in a timely manner, or at all. This was especially true among participants with a very negative opinion. Compounding this negative sentiment was the perceived lack of visibility of RCMP officers to prevent crimes and the lack of connection officers have with individual communities as they "move on" [to another detachment] every few years. Those in less rural locations had faith in the RCMP's response times to emergencies, but less so when it comes to responding to calls after an incident or resolving issues.

At the same time, there was a belief that local detachments were doing "the best they could" given limited resources, the large geographic areas covered by rural detachments and rising crime levels due to the affordability crisis, and challenges with recruiting new officers. Some were also more inclined to shift blame onto the institutional RCMP "bureaucracy" and "management" who are setting the direction for officers to follow and are ultimately out of touch from the needs and concerns of rural communities.

There was some limited debate on whether the RCMP is stretched too thin due to its responsibilities spanning from crimes at a federal level to very local traffic issues. A more "FBI-style" role was suggested by a handful of participants, who also pointed to the increasing number of municipalities considering their own municipal forces. The RCMP was thus seen to be at a "crossroads" in terms of its future in local policing.

"No confidence – my interactions when needing them is they do not show up – we are in rural Alberta […] In fairness though, they cover a very large area out here and, despite the fact we pay for two officers to be in town, they are always somewhere else." – Rural participant

"Especially further north and in smaller communities that the RCMP is just going to do everything and that they're kind of like the solver of every problem. And it's not fair in that regard. I really feel some empathy for the individuals who are wearing that uniform and people being like, well why don't you do this? Why do you do that? It's just not their capabilities. And there's only so much that an individual can do based on their training." – Participant in the Territories

Fourthly, the 2020 mass shooting in Portapique, Nova Scotia emerged in the discussions in Atlantic Canada as a factor in eroding trust and confidence in the RCMP to an extent. Some participants felt that the RCMP's handling of the aftermath lacked transparency and accountability – one participant was of the view that the RCMP has in the past failed to implement recommendations on its conduct. Yet, for a subset of these participants, they continue to have an underlying level of trust in individual local RCMP officers given the complexity and difficulty of the situation. In the rest of the country, mentions of the incident were sporadic and tended to validate a pre-existing negative perception.

"Portapique, yes, mistakes were definitely made. But they were also dealing with an unprecedented situation if we look at it like that. You're going to have RCMP members who make mistakes and who are not great with people. You're going to have that, but you have that in anything. I think that to tar them all with the same brush is not the right thing to do." – Participant in Nova Scotia

"There is a lack of transparency in management and decision-making. There are recommendations that have been made more than twice in the past, and we are not just talking about a couple of years ago, we are talking about 20-30 years ago. These recommendations have yet to take place. The day the government appoints a police officer for Westray Law, I will know that the recommendations have been implemented. This is a law that should have been in place when the three officers in Moncton died. There is a police officer that has failed their duty to implement the recommendations, and no one is talking about that." – Francophone participant in New Brunswick [translated quote]

"I think about the 2020 shooting that took place and the fact that there were multiple opportunities for them to be clear about what happened. It's just been a lot of crossover, and it's taken a lot of time to get to the bottom of that. There was not a whole lot of transparency in how everything unfolded in the aftermath of it." – Participant in Nova Scotia

Finally, a small number of female participants had low confidence and trust in the RCMP's ability to handle cases of sexual harassment or domestic violence. Participants had heard of instances where victims have taken the difficult step to come forward, only not to be taken seriously by the RCMP and not receive a helpful response at all. Yet, their trust and confidence levels were higher with respect to other scenarios.

"It also depends on what I'm approaching them for, whether or not I would feel very comfortable. For example, if I'm approaching them about a domestic violence situation, at this point, no, 100% not comfortable and do not trust. I feel like the chances of me getting a good or helpful response in a domestic violence situation are very, very low, given not only my experiences, but the experiences of my friends, co-workers, colleagues, clients across the board. You […] meet […] people who've gone through domestic violence situations and having bad experiences with the RCMP, and none of them having a good experience." – Female participant

Perspectives of Participants who are Inclined to Trust and Have Confidence in the RCMP

Many Black and other racialized participants in Ontario and participants in Quebec tended to fall in this group. They generally found it difficult to comment on their trust and confidence in the RCMP. This was due to the lack of direct experiences with the RCMP and that the role of the RCMP was not well-defined in their minds. That said, in many cases opinions were either neutral or there was an inclination to trust rather than to distrust the RCMP. There was little awareness of negative media coverage of the RCMP (mention of the RCMP's mishandling of the Portapique mass shooting was rarely brought up for example) or tensions between the RCMP and equity-seeking communities (unlike in the case of their local police forces). Instead, in Quebec, there were positive references to the RCMP's work in relation to cybersecurity, drug raids, and gun control.

"I feel like the RCMP is there to protect us. I heard that they do a lot to prevent cyberattacks. They are also the ones who make the headlines when there are big drug raids. They are necessary because their work is to keep us safe." – Older participant in Quebec [translated quote]

"I mean I've never really had any experiences with them […] I see men and women are putting their lives on the line every day to protect people, to protect us." – Female participant in an urban area

A substantial number of participants who lived within local RCMP policing jurisdictions also expressed trust and confidence in the RCMP. Similar to residents in Ontario and Quebec, some had little prior interaction with RCMP officers and had no reason not to trust that officers would fulfil their "serve and protect" mandate. Or they had largely positive interactions with officers in the past. These participants felt comfortable in seeking help from RCMP officers and expected to be treated fairly. Participants in this group were also less inclined to highlight issues regarding the RCMP's treatment of equity-seeking groups. Some took a neutral stance on this due to lack of experiences of witnessing such interactions. Some went on to point out that they had seen little media coverage about the RCMP specifically, and that most news stories of police brutality were of incidents south of the border. Others were more likely to attribute incidents of racial profiling and police brutality to a few "bad apples" yet recognizing how "one bad apple spoils the bunch" in shaping broader public opinion of the RCMP.

"Not that every officer is perfect, like there are bad officers and bad things happen. But we are very, very influenced by not just American media, but American culture in general, and I think Canadians paid a little too much attention to America and think that […] all the same and we're not, it's a very different culture up here." – Rural participant

Also, of note, was that newcomers in one racialized group were of the belief that the RCMP was less corrupt than police forces in the countries from which they migrated. Their trust and confidence in the RCMP were thus based on this comparison.

"If I compare to my home country, I feel much safer here. Here I feel like the police can help me if needed, even though I wasn't born in Canada. At home, I don't trust the police at all." – Younger participant in Quebec [translated quote]

Perspectives of Participants who are Highly Trustful and Have Confidence in the RCMP

This final grouping of participants came across as more emphatic than the previous group in their level of trust

and confidence in the RCMP. They tended to skew older and had been taught growing up to show respect for RCMP officers, and other professions in uniform, who act in "selfless" and "brave" ways for the greater good. They also empathized with the increasingly challenging context in which officers operate – referring to the perceived flawed "catch and release" justice system and the increasing levels of disrespect members of the public have towards officers. This group also included those who have RCMP officers in their extended family which instilled a stronger level of trust and confidence in the organization.

"I could just see dedication there, the kind of person that would take to want to do that for a living. […] I have admiration for these men and women that are so selfless and brave." – Older participant in Alberta

"Their job is to maintain the law […] And a lot of time the police end up being blamed because they didn't do it right, or they didn't do this and didn't do that. The courts are the ones with the final decisions. […] RCMP members, who [do] their darndest, to get something before the judges and the guy walks the next day. So that's not their fault, and they seem to get blamed for it. And that's not a fair assessment." – Another older participant in Alberta

2.3   An Inclusive Organization

There was broad agreement that the RCMP has a considerable way to go in terms of being a diverse and inclusive organization. There were some exceptions to this view – a few participants, including racialized participants, in BC's Lower Mainland and in Alberta felt that local RCMP detachments included numerous officers from a variety of racial backgrounds as well as female officers.

"Regarding ethnicity, I mean, especially in my area, the RCMP are so diverse. I think it's been a while since I saw a white RCMP [officer]. So, my comfort level is high. If they questioned me, I'm clean. I'm good." – Older participant in BC

Beyond the perceived lack of racialized RCMP officers, the internal RCMP organizational culture was believed, by several participants, to be problematic. These participants placed less trust in the RCMP as an institution. Participants pointed to workplace sexual harassment cases covered in the media and, for those in Nova Scotia, the inadequate response from the RCMP in the aftermath of the Portapique mass shooting came to mind. Some had also heard directly from female friends in the force about the internal "chauvinistic" culture, or from racialized friends in the force who were marginalized. The perception was that an "old boy's club" and "protecting one's own" culture dominates within the RCMP. Culture was seen to matter – "bad apples" were a product of a problematic organizational culture that reinforces pre-existing harmful stereotypes, while also having a negative effect on those entering the force with good intentions.

"My sister actually just retired from the RCMP not too long ago. And being South Asian and female, it was obviously very tough for her. […] It's like if you work for somebody and maybe your core values don't necessarily align with like your direct leader or their direct leader but you're there." – Racialized participant

"I know a lot of people who are police officers, […] I trained with a bunch of them […] like out of a cohort of like 25 people, a lot of those 25 people were majority of people of colour. People who actually had a lot of the same views as us like, really good people personally and then, during the entire [RCMP] process, they [became] more cynical, more fear ridden. […] they're not trained to be culturally competent and as well. Every single one of these people going into the force have biases and that the whole training process integrates and even affirms those biases." – 2SLGBTQI+ participant

Asked whether they would personally consider a career with the RCMP, participants tended to immediately reply with a negative response. Their reasons for this revealed that participants had a limited conception of available opportunities. They were mostly thinking of the police officer role, and they felt they could not meet the physical and mental demands of the job nor were they comfortable with the inherent dangers and risks that come with the role.

> *"I've had a few conversations with people who used to be RCMP officers and pretty much all the reviews I've heard are that it's a terrible job. Not many people go into detail about it, but I like to assume that it might just be from how brutal being a police officer can be and what you have to see." – Younger participant in BC*

General public attitudes towards policing emerged as a further barrier to a career with the RCMP. Interestingly, this was discussed on several levels. A few participants were put off by what they perceived as a hostile environment whereby police officers are no longer respected by the public, along with the increased scrutiny of officers by the public, the media, and on social media. Participants felt that the current environment made an already difficult job even harder.

Racialized participants concurred that as RCMP officers they would be operating in a hostile public environment but for a different reason. Their concerns related to being victims of racism when performing their duties. They felt that many white members of the public are not ready to see People of Colour in positions of power. Compounding this was the perceived lack of diversity and inclusivity in the RCMP's internal culture discussed above. They would risk being marginalized externally and internally.

> *"[Police officers] bear the brunt of everything. […] this wave of [rising] crime and then you have movements like Black Lives Matter, and politicians go out there and say [to them] 'yeah, you're absolutely right.' And I'm not saying all cops are perfect. […] Why would you want to be a part of that when you're going to get blamed for everything? And you know, they face a lot of really ugly stuff right on the street. So yeah, I don't think it's a mystery why recruitment is down." – Rural participant*

> *"I have a friend who is a police [officer] in one of the cities and the stuff he tells me […] The racial insults and stuff you get from people just arresting them. It tells you how even the public is not ready for that. […] When a white person sees a Black man in power position, it's not something they are friendly towards. So, it makes the work really hard, […] I [would] rather look for something that will be more accommodating." – Racialized participant*

> *"The camaraderie might not be there, especially if you don't have another Black cop to talk to or someone who understands exactly what issues you went through. They wouldn't understand what I'm going through internally. They'd be like 'you could have handled this differently', but they wouldn't understand what I'm going through internally. It would make it hard to go to work every day, then go home and not [being able] to let that stuff out." – Racialized participant*

Several participants stressed the importance of outreach among youth to address the fact that young people are less likely to have a favourable view of the police let alone consider a career in the force. In other words, policing is no longer seen as an "honourable profession" by younger people. Rural participants again brought up the issue of officers having to move between communities every few years, which could be off-putting to attracting new officers.

2.4 Collaboration with Other Agencies

Participants generally had little to offer in terms of how well the RCMP collaborates with other levels of government or other organizations with an interest in RCMP activities. The most a small number could offer was the perceived coordination of the RCMP with other emergency services when responding to accidents, or the assumption of sharing of resources or collaboration (e.g., highway patrolling) between the RCMP and local municipal forces. A few also added that cross-organizational collaboration was difficult. Notably, there was little interest in learning more about the RCMP's activities in this regard.

2.5 Improving Trust and Confidence in the RCMP

This final section of the report provides actions the RCMP could take to enhance trust and confidence towards the organization. It begins by outlining suggestions made by participants who took part in the research and concludes with reflections from the study's researchers.

2.5.1 Participants' Suggestions

There was a high degree of consistency across regions and audiences on how public trust and confidence in the RCMP could be enhanced in the future. Participants honed in on the following themes:
- Outreach and Community Engagement
- Accountability
- Proactive Communication and Transparency
- Diversity and Inclusion
- Taking Action on Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls
- Handling of Mental Health Issues
- Mental Health Supports for Officers
- Recruitment Practices
- Continuing Professional Development
- Visibility, Response Times, and Operational Efficiencies

Outreach and Community Engagement

There was broad agreement that the RCMP could do more in terms of outreach to local communities, youth, and equity-seeking groups. The underlying belief was that increased encounters with RCMP officers in friendly and less intimidating settings would foster impressions that officers are relatable, personable, and approachable – ultimately driving trust towards the RCMP as a whole. Some participants tended to suggest that RCMP officers should be off-duty or take part as active participants in events, or at least on-duty but interact with event participants in a "fun way" (e.g., taking photos). Plain-clothes officers conducting outreach would result in officers coming across as more approachable.

Suggestions included:

- Active participation at events hosted by equity-seeking groups (e.g., presence at Pride parades) and celebrating the diversity of RCMP officers and non-frontline staff. Obtaining prior consent from groups would be important given historical tensions and injustices between the RCMP and equity-seeking groups.

- Volunteering by officers and other non-frontline RCMP staff at local community events.

- Pop-up events to help the community (e.g., handing out cold drinks on a hot day, a BBQ in an Indigenous community).

- Outreach in schools (e.g., ride-alongs, having an RCMP liaison officer that focuses on building trust with young people).

- Proactive outreach to vulnerable members of society (e.g., people experiencing homelessness).

- Outreach to smaller grassroot organizations that work with vulnerable groups which could lead to discussions on collaboration.

"I see the Toronto Police in certain things like Toronto Pride Parade or represented in Caribana with different parts of their own force representing diversity. And I don't really recall seeing RCMP in the same sort of celebrations and celebrating their diversity in the same way. And I also see Toronto Police having fun with the people. Not necessarily [be] your friend but [being] relatable and be someone that you can approach." – Racialized participant

"The RCMP [can] go into schools and interact with kids. Kids are very susceptible and if kids see from a young age, hey, I can trust these people. I know when I was younger, we got to go in the fire station and learn more about what the fire department did and things like that. Just kind of introducing that at a younger age so kids grow up trusting these people instead of being against them. Making themselves out there." – Female participant in an urban area

Indigenous participants called for the establishment of advisory councils or community liaisons to foster open lines of communication and support relationship-building between the RCMP and individual Indigenous communities. The advisory council could help to ensure training opportunities for RCMP officers (see the Diversity and Inclusion section following for more details) are reflective of community contexts and needs – and could be engaged in the hiring of key positions within the local RCMP detachment.

"I really like the idea of being involved in the community. Certain [RCMP] members who have really immersed themselves in our culture and our ways are a community way of life. […] Having worked in the justice system for my First Nation, I've been involved with providing an orientation for new [RCMP] members that have come to the community. I think it's important to be able to be part of the recruitment and selection of, maybe not all positions, but maybe key positions, like the person who would be, say, the commander or the person in charge. That would go a long way to helping the community feel that sense of trust." – Participant in the Territories

Similarly, participants in rural communities would welcome more engagement opportunities with their local detachment. They recommended that RCMP officers should be allowed to stay within their own community or posted within communities for longer to allow for community trust building.

"We had some kids come in who were a little on the rough side and he [an RCMP officer] started working with them and then they transferred him out. I think that if an officer is donating his time to a youth organization that runs for eight months of the year, they should respect that and let him stay for those eight months." – Rural participant

Accountability

The theme of accountability was prevalent in most groups, and this was discussed primarily in relation to abuse of authority, cases of workplace harassment, and mismanagement. Participants wished for the RCMP to take swift action following incidents and suspend officers involved as soon as possible. Those in Atlantic Canada valued having an independent "third party" to hold the RCMP to account. Pending the results of inquiries into incidents, the expectation was for the RCMP to apologize where appropriate and, where relevant, punish offending officers, accordingly, including dismissal without pay, or implement recommendations. Swift, decisive, and strong action was called for to dispel the perceived RCMP culture of "protecting one's own".

Younger participants and some Indigenous participants called for body-worn cameras to hold individual officers accountable.

"I think a big point was, having a third-party keeping them accountable. I think it needs to not be internal investigations for whatever things come to, conflicts come to mind. It needs to be an outside third-party investigation that keeps them accountable, because I think the public's trust in the RCMP for the most part has severely gone down. So, the only way to keep them accountable is to have someone else come in and do that job." – Participant in Nova Scotia

Proactive Communication and Transparency

The majority of participants' impressions of the RCMP were influenced by media coverage which included stories of municipal police forces and policing in the US. These participants acknowledged that coverage tends to be negative, and no one had sought information about the RCMP beyond what is covered in the media. Hearing more about the RCMP's positive impact on communities, along with steps taken to address issues and statistics on progress, traditional media or social media was suggested in almost all focus group discussions. Social media was seen as particularly important for reaching younger generations. Younger participants also felt that it was important that the RCMP's website be modern, streamlined, and easy to find information such as reports or crime statistics. The opportunity participants saw was to project a more positive image of the organization as a counterbalance to the dominant negative discourse.

"The institution as a whole has to get better media coverage. I mean that's what drives us. We as people we don't see the institution unless we're in the system and I'm not in the system. My only view of it is through the media and somehow, they have to spin a prettier picture of themselves through the media." – Rural participant

"There's not an easy resource [where you could] access some reports for certain incidents or individualized crimes ... anything that would be like a threat to more community members should be kind of easily accessible information." – Younger participant in Alberta

There was an appetite for more information about the RCMP's role and responsibilities among participants who lived outside of local RCMP policing jurisdictions. As noted in previous sections, a lack of knowledge about the RCMP meant that several of these participants held a neutral or agnostic view towards the RCMP.

"I think for me to build that trust with the RCMP, I need to be more knowledgeable on what they do and how they serve us, and I think having them have more visibility outside of just their job and spending more time to connect with people is really important." – Racialized participant

"I don't know the RCMP at all, I think it would be a good idea for them to introduce themselves to us by having kiosks at municipal festivals or other family events." – Younger participant in Quebec [translated quote]

Related to communication and information, participants valued transparency. This partly stemmed from the perceived lack of clarity offered by the RCMP following the Portapique mass shooting, and partly from transparency being intrinsically tied to the principle of accountability, which many expect from a public institution such as the RCMP. Transparency was thought to be attainable through the implementation of technology like body cameras.

Diversity and Inclusion

Participants who belong to equity-seeking groups, and those who did not belong to equity-seeking groups but shared the view that equity-seeking groups are discriminated against or treated unfairly by the RCMP (or police in general), were emphatic on the need to address the perceived lack of diversity and inclusion within the RCMP.

Calls for defunding the RCMP altogether because of the organization's problematic origins and ongoing systemic injustices were brought up, but this view was confined to a handful of participants in this research. These participants felt the resources could be better directed to organizations and services that focus on preventing the root causes of crime or mental health incidents.

The vast majority of participants tended to focus on meaningful reform. This view was shared by most Indigenous participants who expressed cautious optimism that change would happen as a result of this study. Indigenous participants did, however, highlight that the RCMP will face significant challenges in regaining the trust of Elders traumatized by the residential school experience.

Hiring officers who belong to equity-seeking groups, including women, was highlighted by many, especially Black participants in local RCMP policing jurisdictions who noted the very rare occasion of coming across a Black officer. On a personal level, some Black participants felt that encountering Black officers would result in being better understood and decrease the likelihood of being discriminated against. On a broader level, seeing more racialized and female officers would help dispel the common "white" and "male-dominated" association that many participants had of the RCMP. It would send a signal that the RCMP is a modern institution that reflects the multicultural demographic profile of the Canada of today.

In terms of nuances between groups, hiring more diverse officers appeared to be less pressing for other racialized participants in BC's Lower Mainland – as noted already, these participants were more likely to encounter officers from diverse backgrounds. Hiring Indigenous officers was not a suggestion made in groups with Indigenous participants, instead their preference was to have First Nations members provide policing services to their communities.

"They [RCMP] just graduated their first Indigenous class. I know they're working; they're trying to incorporate more women into RCMP as well. So, I think they're slowly making moves right now, but I think they still need to do more work there, there is more work to be done." – Participant in Saskatchewan

Discussion on hiring a diverse workforce evolved in many cases into identifying ways to overcome the problematic issue of "token" or "performative" hires. Participants wished to see the RCMP take tangible steps to address the perceived "old boy's club" culture, and instead create a workplace environment that is inclusive of officers from different backgrounds. Many were of the view that this could only be achieved through a top-down approach driven by leadership. This in turn led to calls for ensuring that positions of power within the RCMP are staffed by individuals from equity-seeking groups. A few Black and Indigenous participants felt that leadership acknowledgement of the RCMP's failings with respect to the communities they serve was a necessary first step. Others meanwhile emphasized the importance of having appropriate supports for officers from equity-seeking groups.

> "You have hired somebody that is Indigenous, but then, you [have to] incorporate them, listen to them. It's a culture shift that needs to happen [in the RCMP]. A lot of private organizations have gone through that change […] they [have] more females in the workforce but also make environments better for them." – Racialized participant

Training on unconscious bias and cultural sensitivity was further highlighted by numerous participants. Indigenous participants spoke at length of how RCMP officers would benefit from participating in conflict resolution and Indigenous cultural sensitivity training, as well as place-based educational opportunities. Indigenous participants would like to see officers responding in a culturally safe way, which many felt was not currently taking place. Participants felt that culturally safe practices can only be developed through officers gaining knowledge of the culture, traditions, and issues facing the local community that they serve. They saw value in both training that is specific to the areas served by officers as well as broader education on Indigenous Peoples and cultures.

Some Indigenous participants suggested providing annual training to the RCMP that is led by the Indigenous communities (e.g., advisory council) they are serving. This would further facilitate building positive relationships with Indigenous communities.

A few 2SLGBTQI+ participants were skeptical on how far training can go in an environment where biases are entrenched in the culture. They stressed the need of accountability, in general, and addressing workplace sexual harassment.

Participants were cognizant that organizational change is difficult and would take time. Ultimately, seeing more diverse officers across ranks, hearing fewer stories of racial profiling or cases of workplace sexual harassment would be proof that the RCMP is taking steps in the right direction.

Taking Action on Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls

For a few participants, what mattered the most was seeing the RCMP take concrete action to address issues affecting equity-seeking communities. They specifically called for a change in the RCMP's perceived lack of urgency and action in looking for missing Indigenous women and girls.

> "[Indigenous] women go missing all the time and nobody's looking except their families. I don't think that the RCMP even bother until the pressure is on. And we shouldn't have had to have marches in our streets for missing people. Quick action [when] people are going missing." – Older participant in BC

Handling of Mental Health Calls

The perceived shortcomings in how RCMP officers handle mental health calls led to numerous suggestions for better training and more collaboration with other professions. Participants called for more RCMP officer training on de-escalation techniques, along with correctly recognizing and interpreting the behaviours exhibited by individuals in a mental health crisis. This type of sensitivity training was also felt to be necessary by some participants with respect to neurodiverse individuals.

In many focus group discussions, participants went on to conclude that the skill set for effectively handling mental health cases lies outside of the skill set of policing in general.

Some suggested that RCMP officers could partner with social workers when responding to cases; indeed, several were aware of such models being implemented by their local police forces. Others, meanwhile, felt that RCMP officers should refer mental health cases to social workers and other professionals and instead focus on fighting crime. A few went on to suggest educating the public on the non-RCMP services that can help in mental health-related contexts.

> *"I'm not sure that police officers who have had mental health courses have really learned how to act in situations involving people who have mental health difficulties. It's not because they are RCMP that they know how to deal with mental health issues or those of others. I think they should hire specialists." – Francophone participant in New Brunswick [translated quote]*

Mental Health Supports for Officers

Building on the theme of support, several female participants wished to see officers having access to mental health services given the toll of the profession (e.g., access to supports for PTSD). Participants felt that this could result in better policing and attract more people into the profession.

> *"One thing that comes to mind would be having mandatory counselling sessions at specific intervals, like let's say every six months, every whatever, just so that the things could be caught earlier. So, if a counsellor is seeing a mindset in certain people around specific concerns, then that could be addressed. Or it gives the officers a chance to have a space where they can share thoughts that they're having and to work through some of the things that often will cause burnouts or fatigue. But as with any institution, if things are mandatory, then people learn quickly what they have to say to have it done. It wouldn't necessarily be useful then, but even if it was still useful for some, then it might be worth it." – Female participant in a rural area*

Recruitment Practices

Participants saw opportunities in both improving the reach of RCMP recruitment efforts and the quality of new recruits through:

- Showcasing the variety of roles available within the organization;
- Targeting recruitment fairs at universities; and,
- Setting a higher bar for entry requirements, including post-secondary education, and psychological fitness testing for a position of power.

Continuing Professional Development

There was a belief that the initial officer training lasts only 6 months, which a few participants felt was not comprehensive enough for the level of authority an officer holds. Thus, it was suggested that officers should receive ongoing professional development training in the same way that some healthcare professionals do to maintain their medical licences. Participants felt that this could mitigate mistakes that may happen due to desensitization or habits forming over time.

Visibility, Response Times, and Operational Efficiencies

Participants in rural areas and Atlantic Canada who identified operational concerns made several suggestions:

- More visibility of officers on the ground patrolling areas to deter crime and foster feelings of safety considering a rise in crime. There was openness to other crime prevention measures.

- More resources to support overstretched officers.

- More efficiencies through the use of technology and transparency on the RCMP budget, as a small number brought up the large share of municipal budgets devoted to policing.

A few participants suggested redefining the duties of the RCMP to overcome the problem of their local detachment being overstretched. For example, one participant in a rural area questioned whether traffic matters should be left to other authorities to free up time of RCMP officers for more serious crimes.

2.5.2 Implications for Moving Forward

This research revealed a broad range of factors that affect trust and confidence, and how the factors come together in different ways to shape opinions of the RCMP. One of the key limitations of the research due to its qualitative nature is the inability to comment on the relative influence of each factor in driving trust, and the extent to which the salience of drivers varies between segments of the Canadian population.

Advanced statistical analysis techniques of the RCMP's quantitative surveys on Canadian's perceptions is better placed to shed light in this regard. This is an important next step to consider when determining the most effective course of action in maintaining and improving public trust in the RCMP.

The research revealed that a "perception versus reality" gap is partly at play in declining trust levels. The belief that RCMP officers are not trained to de-escalate conflict is a case in point. As participants noted, the research shows that there is a need for a stronger communication and outreach strategy from the ground level and up to dispel the misconceptions found. The strategy should consider ways to portray the RCMP in a more personable, relatable and modern light, whilst finding ways to move away from the deeply engrained image of a Mountie or of an abstract institution out of touch with concerns of communities on the ground.

Where trust levels are lowest, there is an appetite to hear about action taken that is not performative but reflects genuine and meaningful change and impact.

Finally, several of the factors related to declining trust and a lack of interest in joining the RCMP were traced back to perceived issues within the internal culture of the RCMP. Opportunities exist in dispelling any current

misperceptions. Moreover, additional research, through engaging employees and system reviews, could be conducted to reveal the structure and systemic issues within the organization that act as barriers from a diversity and equity lens.

Appendix A: Qualitative Research Materials

A.1 Qualitative Recruitment Screener

1.0 Specification

- Groups will take place online.
- For Indigenous groups, recruit 6 per group for min. 4 to show. For rest, recruit 8 per group for min. 6 to show.
- Breakdown of groups should be as shown in the table below.
- Eligibility & quota instructions are **highlighted in red font**.

Group #	Date & Time	Target region and language	Other profile quotas
1	August 14th 5:30-7:00pm ADT	• **Nova Scotia, EXCLUDING HALIFAX** • Max of 2 per community • English	• Good mix on ages, min 1 and max 2 per age band: 18-24; 25-34; 35-44; 45-54; 55-64; and 65 and over • Even split on men/women, anyone who codes other genders do not terminate and can be included
2	August 14th 5:30-7:00pm MDT	• **Alberta** • 3 participants should be from large centres (population of 100,000 or more), 3 should be from medium centres (population of 30,000 to 99,999 people) and 2 from small/rural centres (population of 30,000 or less). • Max of 2 per community • English	• **All must be 35 or older**, 2 per age band: 35-44; 45-54; 55-64; 65 and over. • Even split on men/women, anyone who codes other genders do not terminate and can be included
3	August 15th 5:00-6:30pm MDT	• **National** • **4 participants should be from large centres (population of 100,000 or more) and 4 from medium population centres (population of 30,000 to 99,999 people)** • 1-2 max from each the following regions: Ontario and English-speakers in Quebec, Atlantic Canada, Saskatchewan and Manitoba, Alberta, BC. • English	• **All must be women** • Good mix on ages, min 1 and max 2 per age band: 18-24; 25-34; 35-44; 45-54; 55-64; and 65 and over
4	August 15th 5:45-7:15pm PDT	• **BC Lower Mainland EXCLUDING Abbotsford, Delta, New Westminster, Port Moody, Surrey, Vancouver and West Vancouver.**	• **All must be 35 or older**, min 2 per age band: 35-44; 45-54; 55-64; 65 and over.

		• English	• Even split on men/women, anyone who codes other genders do not terminate and can be included.
5	August 16th 5:30-7:00pm EST	• **GTA** • 2 from City of Toronto, 1 from Brampton, 1 from Mississauga rest should be from other GTA municipalities and a max of 2 per municipality. • English	• **All must be racialized; good mix of racialized groups** • Even split on men/women, anyone who codes other genders do not terminate and can be included. • Good mix on ages, min 1 and max 2 per age band: 18-24; 25-34; 35-44; 45-54; and 55+
6	August 16th 5:30-7:00pm MDT	• **Alberta** • 3 participants should be from large centres (population of 100,000 or more), 4 should be from medium centres (population of 30,000 to 99,999 people) and 1 from small/rural centres (population of less than 30,000). • Max of 2 per community • English	• **All must be 18-34;** min 3 per age band: 18-24 and 25-34 • Even split on men/women, anyone who codes other genders do not terminate and can be included.
7	August 17th 5:30-7:00pm CST	• **Saskatchewan and Manitoba, 4 from each province** • 5 should be from large population centres (population of 100,000 or more) and 3 should be from medium to small/rural population centres (99,999 or less) • English	• Good mix on ages, min 1 and max 2 per age band: 18-24; 25-34; 35-44; 45-54; 55-64; and 65 and over • Even split on men/women, anyone who codes other genders do not terminate and can be included.
8	August 17th 6:15-7:45pm PDT	• **BC Lower Mainland EXCLUDING Abbotsford, Delta, New Westminster, Port Moody, Surrey, Vancouver and West Vancouver.** • English	• **All must be 18-34;** min 3 per age band: 18-24 and 25-34 • Even split on men/women, anyone who codes other genders do not terminate and can be included.
9	August 21st 5:30-7:00pm EST	• **GTA** • English	• **All must be Black** • Good mix on ages, min 1 and max 2 per age band: 18-24; 25-34; 35-44; 45-54; and 55+
10	August 21st 5:15-6:45pm MDT	• **National** • **All must reside in small/rural centres (population of less than 30,000)** • 1-2 max from each the following regions: Ontario and English-speakers in Quebec, Atlantic Canada, Saskatchewan and Manitoba, Alberta, BC. • English	• **All must be women** • Good mix on ages, min 1 and max 2 per age band: 18-24; 25-34; 35-44; 45-54; 55-64; and 65 and over

11	August 22nd 5:30-7:00pm EST	• **Greater Montreal** • 2 from Montreal, 2 from Laval, 2 from South Shore, rest should be from other Greater Montreal municipalities and a max of 2 per municipality. • French	• **All must be 18-34;** min 3 per age band: 18-24 and 25-34 • Even split on men/women, anyone who codes other genders do not terminate and can be included.
12	August 22nd 7:30-9:00pm EST	• **Greater Montreal** • 2 from Montreal, 2 from Laval, 2 from South Shore, rest should be from other Greater Montreal municipalities and a max of 2 per municipality. • French	• **All must be 35 or older**, min 2 per age band: 35-44; 45-54; 55-64; 65 and over. • Even split on men/women, anyone who codes other genders do not terminate and can be included.
13	August 23rd 5:00-6:30pm MDT	• **National** • 1-2 max from each the following regions: Ontario and English-speakers in Quebec, Atlantic Canada, Saskatchewan and Manitoba, Alberta, BC. • English	• **All must be affected by a disability and good mix of disabilities** • Even split on men/women, anyone who codes other genders do not terminate and can be included.
14	August 23rd 5:45-7:15pm PDT	• **BC Lower Mainland EXCLUDING Abbotsford, Delta, New Westminster, Port Moody, Surrey, Vancouver and West Vancouver.** • English	• **All must be racialized; good mix of racialized groups** • Even split on men/women, anyone who codes other genders do not terminate and can be included. • Good mix on ages, min 1 and max 2 per age band: 18-34; 35-44; 45-54; and 55+
15	August 24th 5:00-6:30pm MDT	• **National** • 1-2 max from each the following regions: Ontario and English-speakers in Quebec, Atlantic Canada, Saskatchewan and Manitoba, Alberta, BC. • English	• **All must be affected by a disability and good mix of disabilities**
16	August 24th 5:45-7:15pm PDT	• **BC Lower Mainland EXCLUDING Abbotsford, Delta, New Westminster, Port Moody, Surrey, Vancouver and West Vancouver.** • English	• **All must identify as 2SLGBTQI+**
17	August 30th 5:30-7:00pm ADT	• **New Brunswick** • French	• Good mix on ages, min 1 and max 2 per age band: 18-24; 25-34; 35-44; 45-54; 55-64; and 65 and over • Even split on men/women, anyone who codes other genders do not terminate and can be included.

18	September 14th 6:30-8:00pm MDT 5:30-7:30PM PDT	• Western Canada, in RCMP jurisdictions • English	• All must be Black
19	August 29th 5:30-7:00pm MDT	• Alberta • All must reside in small/rural centres (population of less than 30,000) • English	• Even split on men/women, anyone who codes other genders do not terminate and can be included. • Good mix on ages, min 1 and max 3 per age band: 18-34; 35-44; 45-54; and 55+
20	August 30th 5:30-7:00pm CST	• Saskatchewan and Manitoba • English	• All must identify as 2SLGBTQI+
21	August 30th 7:15-8:45pm CST	• Saskatchewan and Manitoba, 4 from each province • All must reside in small/rural centres (population of less than 30,000) • English	• Even split on men/women, anyone who codes other genders do not terminate and can be included. • Good mix on ages, min 1 and max 3 per age band: 18-34; 35-44; 45-54; and 55+
22	September 11th 5:30-7:00pm MDT	• Northwest Territories, Yukon and Nunavut • English	• Even split on men/women, anyone who codes other genders do not terminate and can be included. • Good mix on ages, min 1 and max 3 per age band: 18-34; 35-44; 45-54; and 55+
23	September 12th 5:30-7:00pm PDT	• BC Lower Mainland EXCLUDING Abbotsford, Delta, New Westminster, Port Moody, Surrey, Vancouver and West Vancouver. • English	• All must be Indigenous • Even split on men/women, anyone who codes other genders do not terminate and can be included. • Good mix on ages, min 1 and max 3 per age band: 18-34; 35-44; 45-54; and 55+
24	September 7th 5:30-7:00pm CST	• Saskatchewan and Manitoba, 4 from each province • English	• All must be Indigenous • Even split on men/women, anyone who codes other genders do not terminate and can be included. • Good mix on ages, min 1 and max 3 per age band: 18-34; 35-44; 45-54; and 55+
25	September 13th 5:30-7:00pm ADT	• New Brunswick • English	• All must be Indigenous • Even split on men/women, anyone who codes other genders do not terminate and can be included.

			• Good mix on ages, min 1 and max 3 per age band: 18-34; 35-44; 45-54; and 55+
26	September 19th 6:00-7:30pm MDT	• **Northwest Territories, Yukon and Nunavut** • English	• **All must be Indigenous** • Even split on men/women, anyone who codes other genders do not terminate and can be included. • Good mix on ages, min 1 and max 3 per age band: 18-34; 35-44; 45-54; and 55+

2.0   Introduction

Hello (Bonjour), my name is _____. I'm calling on behalf of Ipsos, a national marketing research organization. First off, let me assure you that we are not trying to sell you anything. We are a professional public opinion research firm that gathers opinions from people. From time to time, we solicit opinions by talking with people in a group discussion setting with up to 8 participants.

We are preparing to conduct a series of these discussions on behalf of the Government of Canada about issues that are important to Canadians and would like to know if you would be willing to participate.

> Would you prefer that I continue in English or in French? Préférez-vous continuer en français ou en anglais? **[If prefers French, either switch to the French screener and continue, or say the following and then hang up and arrange French-language call-back]** Nous vous rappellerons pour mener cette entrevue de recherche en français. Merci. Au revoir.

The discussions would be an hour and a half, led by a research professional and conducted using a virtual meeting platform. A video recording of the session will be produced for research purposes. This will be used only by the research professionals to assist in preparing a final report on the research findings. We are offering $125 (18-34, 35+, women, racialized, rural) /$150 (2SLGBTQI+, Indigenous and Disability) as a 'thank you' for your time.

Would you be interested in participating in the study?

- ▪ Yes
- ▪ No **[THANK AND TERMINATE]**

Please be assured, your participation is voluntary and all comments that you share will only be used for research purposes and handled according to the Government of Canada's *Privacy Act*. No one outside of the research team will have access to your personal information and the information you provide will never be used to follow-up with you in any way.

*IF ASKED:

The personal information you provide is protected in accordance with the Privacy Act. The information you provide will not be linked with your name on any document including the consent form or the discussion form. In addition to protecting your personal information, the Privacy Act gives you the right to request access to and correction of your personal information. You also have the right to file a complaint with the Office of the Privacy Commissioner if you feel your personal information has been handled improperly. If you have additional questions about the study, you can reach the Project Manager at Ipsos: David Amazan at david.amazan@ipsos.com .

3.0   Quality Standards Screener

Now, I would like to ask you a few questions to see if you qualify to attend.

1.   Do you currently reside in Canada?
   - Yes
   - No **THANK AND TERMINATE**

2.   Where in Canada do you live? **WRITE IN COMMUNITY AND CODE PROVINCE/TERRITORY**
   - Ontario
   - Quebec
   - Nova Scotia
   - New Brunswick
   - Manitoba
   - British Columbia
   - Prince Edward Island
   - Saskatchewan
   - Alberta
   - Newfoundland and Labrador
   - Northwest Territories
   - Yukon
   - Nunavut

CHECK RECRUITMENT SPECIFICATION TABLE FOR REGIONAL BREAKS, WHETHER COMMUNITY QUALIFIED BASED ON RCMP JURISDICTION AND QUOTAS PER URBAN/MEDIUM/SMALL AND RURAL POPULATION CENTRE.

3.   We are looking to speak to Canadians who are 18 years or older. May I check that this applies to you?
   - Yes
   - No **THANK AND TERMINATE**

4.   Do you or does anyone in your household work in any of the following industries?
   - Market Research or Marketing **THANK AND TERMINATE**
   - Public Relations or Media (TV, Print, Radio, Film/video production) **THANK AND TERMINATE**
   - Advertising and communications **THANK AND TERMINATE**
   - Municipal, provincial or federal government department **THANK AND TERMINATE**
   - Policing (e.g., RCMP, municipal police force) **THANK AND TERMINATE**
   - Banking **CONTINUE**
   - Social media company **CONTINUE**

5.   Have you ever attended a consumer group discussion, taken part in an online bulletin board, completed an interview or a survey which was arranged in advance and for which you received a sum of money?
   - Yes **GO TO Q6**
   - No **GO TO Q8**

6.   How many focus groups or online bulletin boards have you attended in the past five years? **TERMINATE IF MORE THAN 4**

7.   Have you attended a focus groups or online bulletin board in the past six months?
   ▪ Yes **THANK AND TERMINATE**
   ▪ No

4.0   Demographics

It is important for us to include Canadians from different backgrounds in our study. So my next questions are about you.

8.   I am going to read you a series of age categories, please stop me when I get to the one that applies to you.
   ▪ 18-24
   ▪ 25-34
   ▪ 35-44
   ▪ 45-54
   ▪ 55-64
   ▪ 65 and over
   ▪ Prefer not to answer **THANK AND TERMINATE**

CHECK SPECIFICATION TABLE FOR AGE BREAKS AND QUOTAS FOR EACH GROUP

9.   Which gender do you identify with?
   ▪ Man
   ▪ Woman
   ▪ Non-binary
   ▪ Gender fluid
   ▪ Prefer to self-describe WRITE IN
   ▪ Prefer not to answer **THANK AND TERMINATE**

CHECK SPECIFICATION TABLE FOR GENDER BREAKS. ONLY THOSE WHO IDENTIFY AS WOMAN ARE ELIGIBLE FOR GROUPS 3 AND 10. THOSE WHO CODE NON-BINARY, GENDER FLUID OR SELF-DESCRIBE ELIGIBLE FOR ALL GROUPS EXCEPT 3 AND 10.

10.   Do you consider yourself to be a member of the 2SLGBTQI+ [IF NEEDED: 2SLGBTQI+ is the acronym used by the Government of Canada to recognise Two-Spirit people that is the 2S at the front of the acronym; L: Lesbian; G: Gay; B: Bisexual; T: Transgender; Q: Queer; I: Intersex, considers sex characteristics beyond sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression. The + is inclusive of people who identify as part of sexual and gender diverse communities, who use additional terminologies.]
   ▪ Yes
   ▪ No
   ▪ Prefer not to answer

11.   Do you identify as Indigenous? This includes First Nations, Metis, Inuit, with or without status?
- Yes – First Nations
- Yes – Métis
- Yes – Inuk
- Yes – Prefer to self-describe
- Yes – Don't know
- No
- Prefer not to answer

MUST CODE YES FOR GROUPS 23, 24, 25 AND 26

12.   Which of the following ethnic or cultural groups do you MOST identify with?
        FOR THOSE WHO IDENTIFY AS INDIGENOUS ASK INSTEAD: In addition to being Indigenous, do you
        identify with any of the following ethic or cultural groups?
- Arab (e.g. Syrian, Egyptian, Yemeni)
- Asian – East (e.g. Chinese, Korean, Japanese)
- Asian – South-East (e.g. Vietnamese, Filipino)
- Asian – South (e.g. East Indian, Pakistani, Sri Lankan)
- Asian – West (e.g. Iranian, Afghan, Turkish)
- Black – Caribbean and Latin American (e.g. Jamaican)
- Black – African (e.g. Ghanaian, Ethiopian, Nigerian)
- Black – Canadian/American
- Latin American (e.g. Brazilian, Mexican)
- White (e.g. European – English, Ukrainian, French)
- Prefer to self-describe
- I do not identify with any of the groups listed above
- Don't know
- Prefer not to answer

MUST CODE BLACK FOR GROUPS 9 AND 18. MUST CODE NON-WHITE RACES FOR GROUPS 5 AND 14.

13.   What is the total annual income for your household? This is the total income before taxes of all
        members of your household combined.
- $19,999 or less
- Between $20,000 and $39,999
- Between $40,000 and $59,999
- Between $60,000 and $79,999
- Between $80,000 and $99,999
- $100,000 and above

RECRUIT GOOD MIX

14.   What is the highest level of education you have attained? (Do not read list).
- Some high school or less

- ▪ Completed high school
- ▪ Post-secondary technical training
- ▪ Some college/university
- ▪ Completed college/university
- ▪ Post-graduate studies

RECRUIT GOOD MIX

15.   Current employment status?
- ▪ Working full-time
- ▪ Working part-time
- ▪ Self-employed
- ▪ Retired
- ▪ Unemployed
- ▪ Student
- ▪ Other

MAX OF 2 UNEMPLOYED OR STUDENT PER GROUP

16.   Do you consider yourself to have a disability, long-term condition or health-related problem that affects or limits your daily activities?
- ▪ Yes **GO TO Q17**
- ▪ No **GO TO Q18**
- ▪ Prefer not to answer

17.   I am now going to read out a list of different types of disabilities and conditions that affect daily activities. Please tell me which ones apply to you.
- ▪ Visual disability
- ▪ Hearing disability
- ▪ Mobility or dexterity disability (e.g. difficulty waking up, using stairs, using their hands or fingers or doing other physical activities)
- ▪ A condition that makes it difficult in general for you to learn. This may include learning disabilities such as dyslexia, hyperactivity, attention problems, etc.
- ▪ A developmental disability or disorder. This may include autism, Asperger's, ADD, ADHD, and other conditions or syndromes
- ▪ Any emotional, psychological or mental health condition. These may include anxiety disorder, depression, bipolar disorder, anorexia, etc.
- ▪ Any ongoing memory problems or periods of confusion. This does not include occasional forgetfulness, such as not remembering where you put your keys
- ▪ Other health or long-term condition expected to last for six months or more WRITE IN

FOR GROUPS 13 + 15 MUST SAY YES TO Q16 AND THEN RECRUIT MIX OF DIFFERENT TYPES OF DISABILITIES AT Q17. ACROSS BOTH GROUPS: MIN 3 WHO CODE VISUAL, HEARING OR MOBILITY/DEXTERITY; MIN 3 WHO CODE LEARNING OR DEVELOPMENT AND MIN 3 WHO CODE EMOTIONAL/MENTAL HEALTH OR MEMORY LOSS. ASK FOR ACCOMODATIONS REQUIRED WHEN CONFIRMING SESSION DETAILS.

5.0   Study Specific Screener

Thanks for answering all those questions. We are almost there. My next questions are about your views of different organizations and institutions.

18.   For each type of organization or institution I read out, tell me whether you think it is trustworthy or untrustworthy. Please use a scale of 1 to 5 where 1 is very untrustworthy and 5 is very trustworthy.

    a)   Banks
    b)   Social media companies
    c)   The Government
    d)   The police
    e)   Environmental NGOs
    f)   Universities

-
    - 1 very untrustworthy
    - 2
    - 3
    - 4
    - 5 very trustworthy

MIN 2 PER GROUP WHO GIVE POLICE A RATING OF 1 OR 2, FOR GROUPS TARGETING SPECIFIC INDENTITIES WE EXPECT THE NUMBER OF PARTICIPANT WHO GIVE RATING OF 1 OR 2 TO BE HIGHER AT 3-4.
MAX 2 PER GROUP WHO GIVE POLICE A RATING OF 5.
INCLUDE GOOD MIX OF 3 AND 4 RATINGS FOR POLICE PER GROUP.

6.0   Technology screening and accessibility requirements

Now some questions about the technological requirements for taking part in the study.

19.   Do you have access to a computer or laptop at home or work, which you would be able to use to participate in an online discussion group? Please note that the platform is NOT ideal with smartphones or tablets.
    - Yes
    - No   **THANK AND TERMINATE**

20.   Do you have access to reliable internet at home or work, which you would be able to participate in the online discussion group?
    - Yes
    - No   **THANK AND TERMINATE**

21.   Does your computer/laptop have a working webcam that you can use for the session?
    - Yes
    - No

22.   May I check if you require any additional accommodations in order to take part in the session?

7.0   Confirmation

23.   In order to participate, you need to be available on INSERT DATE & TIME. May I confirm that you are available?

▪   Yes
▪   No **THANK AND CLOSE**

24.   If you could invite one famous person for dinner to your house, who would you invite and why? **CHECK FOR ELOQUENCY BASED ON LANGUAGE OF THE SESSION**

25.   It is standard qualitative procedure to invite clients, in this case, Government of Canada employees, to observe the groups. They will be there simply to hear your opinions first hand although they may take their own notes and confer with the moderator on occasion to discuss whether there are any additional questions to ask the group. Do you agree to having Government of Canada employees observe the session?

    ▪   Yes
    ▪   No **THANK AND CLOSE**

[Read to Stand-by Respondents] Thank you for answering my questions. We would like to place you on our stand-by list as we have reached the number of people that we need in a similar situation to yours. This means that if there is an opening, we would then call you back and see if you are available to take part. May I please have a daytime contact number, an evening contact number, and an email address, if you have one, so that we can contact you as soon as possible if an opening become available? **[RECORD CONTACT INFO]**

[Read to Screened in Respondents] Wonderful, you qualify to participate in the research. All those who participate will receive an **$125/$150** honorarium as a thank you for their time.

We will email you with confirmation, a consent form and instructions on how to log on.

As we are only inviting a small number of people, your participation is very important to us. As we have invited you to participate based on the questions we went through a moment ago, we ask that you do not send a representative on your behalf should you be unable to participate. **IF FOR SOME REASON YOU ARE UNABLE TO ATTEND, PLEASE CALL SO THAT <u>WE</u> MAY GET SOMEONE TO REPLACE YOU.** You can reach us at 1-xxx-xxx-xxxx at our office. Someone will call you the day before to remind you about the study.

▪   What email address can we reach you on?
▪   What would be a good time to reach you?
▪   And at what telephone numbers?
▪   May I please get your name?

Thank you very much for your help!

A.2 Qualitative Discussion Guide

INTRODUCTION [10 MINS]

- Welcome participants.
- Introduce moderator and Ipsos.
- Today's discussion is being conducted on behalf of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, or the RCMP.
- Describe how a discussion group functions:
    - Discussion groups are designed to stimulate an open and honest discussion. My role as a moderator is to guide the discussion and encourage everyone to participate. Another function of the moderator is to ensure that the discussion stays on topic.
    - Your role is to answer questions and voice your opinions. We are looking for minority as well as majority opinion in a focus group, so don't hold back if you have a comment even if you feel your opinion may be different from others in the group. There may or may not be others who share your point of view. Everyone's opinion is important and should be respected.
    - I would also like to stress that there are no right or wrong answers. We are simply looking for your opinions and attitudes. This is not a test of your knowledge.
- Explanations re:
    - Audio/video-taping – The session is being recorded for analysis purposes; in case we need to double-check the proceedings against our notes. These recordings remain in our possession and will not be released to anyone.
    - Confidentiality – Please note that anything you say during these groups will be held in the strictest confidence. We do not attribute comments to specific people. Our report summarizes the findings from the groups but does not mention anyone by name. The report can be accessed through the Library and Archives Canada or via the web site www.porr-rrop.gc.ca. Publication will be around April next year.
    - Client viewing – Observers from the RCMP are watching the sessions live because they are really interested in your opinions. They are researchers and part of the civilian workforce of the RCMP. They are only here to observe and will not be interacting in the discussion. Again, I want to reassure you that everything you share today is only used for the purposes of research.
- Participant(s) should introduce themselves:
    - First name only
    - Location
    - Household composition
    - What do you see as the most important issue facing your local community today? LISTEN OUT FOR UNAIDED MENTIONS OF CRIME/SAFETY/POLICING

1. TOP-OF-MIND ASSOCIATIONS WITH THE RCMP [15 MINS]

The topic for today's discussion is the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, or the RCMP.

- When you think of the RCMP, what's the first thing that comes to mind? Can I get everyone to type in their response for this? Just looking for gut reactions, don't overthink it.
    - Help me understand the words that you entered. Where does this impression come from? CLARIFY IF PERCEPTIONS ARE BASED ON PERSONAL EXPERIENCES WITH THE RCMP VERSUS WORD OF MOUTH VERSUS MEDIA

- •
- I'd like you to use the creative parts of your brain for my next question. I want you to imagine RCMP the institution as a person. You are not allowed to describe a Mountie so you will need to be more creative. Here are some questions to help with that. SHOW ON SCREEN
- If the RCMP were to magically transform itself into a real-life person…
    - o What would be their personality characteristics or traits?
    - o What words would people use to describe this person?
    - o What would they be passionate about?
    - o What would be some of their shortcomings?
    - o What would they look like?
    - o In what settings may you encounter this person?
    - o What relationship, if any, would you have with this person? Would you for example go for coffee or a beer with them? Why is that?

2. TRUST AND CONFIDENCE [10 MINS]

You are doing great. Let's move on slightly.

- To what extent, if at all, do you trust the RCMP?
    - o Can you tell me about the things that make you trust/not trust them and the source of these things? CLARIFY IF PERCEPTIONS ARE BASED ON PERSONAL EXPERIENCES WITH THE RCMP VERSUS WORD OF MOUTH VERSUS MEDIA
    - o Do others share the same perspective or have a different point of view?
- What about your confidence in the RCMP? How much confidence if any do you have in them and as before tell me about your reasons?
    - o What do others think?
    - o CLARIFY IF PERCEPTIONS ARE BASED ON PERSONAL EXPERIENCES WITH THE RCMP VERSUS WORD OF MOUTH VERSUS MEDIA
- Have your impressions of the RCMP changed in any way in recent years?
    - o Do you have a more positive or negative view of them and what's behind the change?
- FOR GROUPS WHERE RCMP IS THE POLICE OF JURISDICTION: What about your impressions of your local RCMP force versus the RCMP in general?
    - o Are your views the same or different? How so?
- FOR GROUPS WHERE MUNICIPAL POLICE DEPARTMENTS EXIST: What's your understanding of what is the RCMP's role and responsibilities?
    - o IF THERE IS CONFUSION CLARIFY: Some of you live in areas where there is a municipal police force that is responsible for local policing but for the purposes of today's discussion I'd like you to focus on the RCMP.

3. ATTITUDES TOWARDS ATTRIBUTES [25 MINS]

I want to follow-up on some of the issues that have already come up. REMINDER RE MUNICIPAL FORCES IF NEEDED.

- How confident if at all are you in the RCMP's ability to keep Canadians safe/FOR GROUPS UNDER RCMP JURISDICTION your community safe?
    - What makes you say that? What's the source of these impressions?
    - FOR GROUPS UNDER RCMP JURISDICTION LISTEN FOR UNAIDED MENTION OF OPERATIONAL ITEMS.
    - Do others agree or have a different perspective?
    - Have your impressions on this changed in any way over recent years? What prompted that change?
-
- Imagine you had to approach an RCMP officer because you needed assistance. How comfortable, if at all, would you feel in approaching them?
    - IF YES: Would you have any hesitation at all? What makes you comfortable?
    - IF NO: Why might you feel uncomfortable?
    - FOR THOSE WITH EXPERIENCES OF CONTACTING THE RCMP: Tell me more about your experiences of contacting the RCMP. What made the experience a positive/negative one?
    - Would your comfort level vary depending on the characteristics of the officer? Would the gender of the officer matter or not really? FOR INDIGENOUS/RACIALISED GROUPS: What if it was an officer who was Black/racialized/Indigenous?
    - If I had asked you these questions 5 years ago, would you have given me a different answer? How so?
    -
- Would you feel confident that you would personally be treated fairly by the RCMP…
    - …if you were a victim of a crime?

    - …if you were stopped and questioned?

    - …if you were suspected of a crime?
    - Help me understand your answers.
    - FOR THOSE WITH EXPERIENCES OF INTERACTING WITH THE RCMP IN THESE WAYS: Tell me more about your experiences. What made the experience a positive/negative one?
    - FOR THOSE LESS CONFIDENT: What factors are at play which makes you feel that you would not be treated fairly?
    - FOR THOSE WHO BELONG TO EDI GROUPS: We invited everyone to today's discussion because you are/told us that you belong to WOMEN/RACIALISED/BLACK/2SLGBTQ+ COMMUNITY/HAVE A DISABILITY. Is how you feel related to how the RCMP treats INSERT EDI GROUP in general or not really? Help me understand that.
    - TAILOR PROBE BASED ON PREVIOUS DISCUSSION: Earlier you shared with me that the type of officer matters/doesn't matter. What about in these cases? Would you feel more confident that would you be treated fairly if it was a INSERT CHARACTERISTIC officer?
    - Again, if we were having this discussion 5 years ago, would you have felt the same way or have things improved or worsened over time?
    -
- What about the RCMP's treatment of other people who belong to different cultures or equity-seeking groups? What's your perception on whether or not other groups are being treated fairly by the RCMP?
    - Are there certain groups that are treated more fairly than others?
    - Which groups are treated less fairly than others?
    - What shapes your opinion on this?

- As before, I'm curious to know if your impressions on this issue have changed over time. Do you now hold a more negative or a more positive view on how the RCMP treats Canadians who belong to different cultures?
  -
- What about in terms of whether or not the RCMP is an inclusive organization? Is it an organization that you can see yourself in?
  - Would you consider a career with them or not? Why is that?

4. IMPROVING TRUST AND CONFIDENCE [25 MINS]

So far we have focused on your current perceptions of the RCMP. My final set of questions are on what would change your impressions of them. REMINDER RE MUNICIPAL FORCES IF NEEDED.

- What would need to happen or what would you need to hear in order for you to have greater trust and confidence in the RCMP?
  - IF PARTICIPANTS GRAVITATE TO PRINCIPLES TRANSPARENCY, ACCOUNTABILITY ETC: What are some of the tangible things or actions that the RCMP can do to prove to you that they are INSERT PRINCIPLE?
  - IF RELEVANT: A lot of you shared with me that your impressions are shaped by what you see on social media and/or on the news. What would you need to hear on these platforms for you to have greater trust or confidence in the RCMP?
  -
- What would give you greater confidence in the RCMP's ability to keep Canadians/your community safe?
  - PROBE FOR TANGIBLE ACTIONS AND THE MEDIA DISCOURSE
  - FOR GROUPS UNDER RCMP JURISDICTIONS AND IF NOT MENTIONED PROBE: Would your impression improve if there was …more visibility of officers in your community? …improved response times to calls for assistance?
  -
- What about things that would specifically improve your confidence that you and Canadians of all backgrounds are treated fairly?
  - PROBE FOR TANGIBLE ACTIONS AND THE MEDIA DISCOURSE
  - Which sources or voices would you trust that the RCMP is treating Canadians of all backgrounds fairly?
  -
- FOR GROUPS THAT HOLD A LARGELY POSITIVE VIEW: What about on the flip side? What would need to happen or what would you need to hear that would decrease your trust and confidence in the RCMP?

Thanks for sharing your ideas with me. We are almost there. I want to spend a bit of time on your future expectations of the RCMP and how it might evolve.

- Thinking about the future, what role should the RCMP play?
  - Are there things that the RCMP is currently doing that it should stop doing? PROBE IF NEEDED: For example, there is a view that the RCMP should not be the only agency dealing with cases related to mental health. What's your take on this? Any other types of incidents or things that would be better taken care of primarily by other agencies?

- o Are there things that the RCMP should do more of or it is not currently doing and should start?
  - o What about things that the RCMP does well and should continue doing?
  -
- Do you have a sense of whether or not the RCMP works well with other government agencies or non-governmental organizations that have a strong interest in RCMP activities like civil liberty associations?
  - o IF YES: What have you heard and does it affect your impressions of the RCMP in any way?
  - o IF NO: What would prove to you that they are working well with other organizations?
-

6. WRAP-UP [5 MINS]

- CHECK FOR BACKROOM QUESTIONS
- That's all my questions for you tonight. We spent a lot of time discussing trust and confidence in them and expectations of them for the future. Any final advice or thoughts you would like to pass on to them?
- THANK PARTICIPANTS AND END GROUP WITH: If anyone wants to stay behind for questions about my client or the research, you are welcome to.