

Public Safety, Victimization, and Perceptions of the Police in 8 RCMP Jurisdictions in British Columbia

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Executive Summary

This report presents the results of a public safety survey conducted by the School of Criminology and Criminal Justice at the University College of the Fraser Valley in eight RCMP Detachment jurisdictions. The purpose of the survey was to describe residents' feelings about their own personal safety and the nature and extent of victimization in the past 12 months. The survey, which was conducted in October of 2006, also sought to determine residents' level of satisfaction with their local RCMP. The survey involved mailing a questionnaire randomly selected residents in the designated jurisdictions. In total, the survey had a 47% response rate. Some highlights of the survey findings are:

The vast majority of respondents felt safe in their homes, neighbourhood, and community during the day. As expected, after dark, respondents' feelings of safety decreased somewhat as they travel further away from their homes.

The vast majority of respondents reported that there was no change in their personal feelings of safety in either their neighborhood or the area surrounding their neighbourhood from one year ago. However, when asked to consider their feelings today as compared to five years ago, only a slight majority (53 per cent) felt that their personal sense of safety in their neighbourhood had not changed. Among those in both time periods who felt that their personal level of safety had changed, the majority felt that they were less safe. Nonetheless, over the same time period, very few respondents felt that their neighbourhood or community overall was less safe than neighbourhoods or municipalities elsewhere in British Columbia.

Of the entire sample, approximately one quarter indicated that they were victims of at least one crime in the community in the past 12 months. Very few respondents identified a violent offence, and for those who did, the violence was most commonly threats or harassment, stalking, or intimidation. Similarly, for those who indicated a property offence, the majority of the least serious nature. For the most part, even those who were victims, were generally satisfied with their local police.

Nearly two thirds of victims reported their victimization to the police. Again, those who reported were generally satisfied by the police response to their victimization. Of interest, males who were victims of violence were the least satisfied with the police's response compared to other groups. Among those who did not report their victimizations, the most common reasons included a concern that the incident was either too minor or not important enough or because they considered the incident a personal matter.

Satisfaction with the RCMP is high. The overwhelming majority of respondents reported being satisfied overall, and the vast majority of respondents still report being satisfied when specific aspects of police activity are considered.

While the majority of respondents rated local RCMP officers highly on each of nine qualities considered, a significant percentage rated local officers as being "neither high or low".

Respondents identified a number of problems in their neighbourhoods that they felt police should devote more resources and attention to. Of primary concern was traffic-related issues (49 per cent) followed by drug related activities (39 per cent) and public drinking (23 per cent).

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	1
LITERATURE REVIEW.....	1
FEAR OF CRIME.....	1
EXPERIENCES OF VICTIMIZATION.....	4
PUBLIC SATISFACTION WITH POLICE	7
METHODOLOGY.....	11
RESEARCH RESULTS	11
GENERAL DEMOGRAPHICS	11
PERCEPTIONS OF PERSONAL SAFETY.....	13
VICTIMIZATION	16
ATTITUDES TOWARDS THE LOCAL POLICE	24
<i>Satisfaction with Local Police.....</i>	<i>25</i>
<i>Neighbour Problems and Social Disorganization.....</i>	<i>30</i>
CONCLUSION	30
REFERENCES	32

Introduction

Research in Canada has consistently found a high level of public satisfaction with the police. Although general satisfaction is high, there are a number of factors that can mitigate or aggravate the public's perception of the police. Two critical factors are fear of crime and victimization experiences. In other words, the hypothesis is that the higher the fear of crime or the more an individual is victimized, the lower their level of satisfaction with the police. Moreover, the constructs of fear of crime and victimization are interrelated in that one tends to effect the other. Given this, this report examines fear of crime, perceptions of safety, victimization, and satisfaction with the police in a sample of British Columbians in eight RCMP detachment jurisdictions.

Literature Review

Fear of Crime

The concept of fear of crime has been defined in many ways. It has been interpreted as a feeling of anxiety regarding the security of the person or of one's property (Amerio and Roccato, 2007), the interpretation of the intangible and tangible consequences of future victimization (e.g. Dolan and Peasgood, 2007), and the emotional response to the potential experience of future victimization (Adams and Serpe, 2000). Fear of crime has also been identified as distinct from general concern about crime. In other words, while fear of crime refers to the anticipation of personal victimization, concern about crime reflects more upon the perception of crime as a social problem (Amerio and Roccato, 2007). Despite the fact that crime rates have recently decreased, a large percentage of the Canadian population continues to perceive themselves as being at risk of future victimization which manifest in high rates of fear of crime (Adams and Serpe, 2000).

Regardless of its definition, it is generally agreed upon in the research literature that fear of crime has a detrimental effect on an individual's psychological health and quality of life. Fear of crime leads directly to increased worry and anxiety, increased levels of distrust and disempowerment, and perceptions of alienation and feelings of distress and depression (Amerio and Roccato, 2007; Adams and Serpe, 2000). Fear of crime can also indirectly lead to a decrease in subjective and objective physical health due to reductions in one's participation in routine physical activities, such as walking in one's neighbourhood (Dolan and Peasgood, 1997; Adams and Serpe, 2000). As a result, poorer health can be linked to fear of crime's impact on social activities as research suggests that increases in one's level of fear of crime may lead to corresponding decreases in willingness to leave the house or even leave the city in order to live in what may be considered a safer area (Dolan and Peasgood, 2007; Amerio and Roccato, 2007).

There is also a growing body of research indicating that fear of crime contributes towards a poorer quality of life. In a 2001 survey in the United Kingdom, nearly one quarter of respondents (24 per cent) identified fear of crime as an important factor affecting their quality of life. In fact, fear of crime was the third most frequently identified factor affecting quality of life, only following money and health (Dolan and Peasgood, 2007). In effect, fear of crime produces a chronic stress that not only affects psychological health, but can also

exhaust physical resources, such as energy and finances, in an attempt to protect against real or potential future victimization (Adams and Serpe, 2000).

The insecurity that fear of crime produces contributes towards a negative social atmosphere. In many cases, fear of crime can negatively affect one's social life by reducing one's feelings of community/social cohesion and, in some instances, produce feelings of xenophobia or racism (Amerio and Roccato, 2007).

Community conditions appear to have a strong effect on levels of fear of crime, and several studies have suggested that the impact of social factors can exert a stronger influence on fear of crime than actual crime rates (Adams and Serpe, 2000). Indications of physical disorder, such as graffiti and property damage, or of social disorder, such as perceptions of vandalism, loitering by youth, the presence of homeless persons, prostitution, and verbal violence, have all been identified as important determinants of fear of crime (Amerio and Roccato, 2007). The extent to which a person feels as though they belong to their neighbourhood and their level of social integration dictates, to a large degree, the extent to which one feels physically safe in their neighbourhood. Essentially, attachment to one's neighbourhood increases one's perception of safety (Adams and Serpe, 2000).

There does appear to be empirical support for the role that social integration plays in victimization experiences. In the 2004 Canadian General Social Survey (GSS), results indicated that those who had lived in their residence for under a year had the highest rate of household victimization, while those living in their residence for at least ten years had the lowest reported victimization rates. Respondents indicated that living in a neighbourhood for a shorter period of time resulted in a decreased ability to recognize neighbours, feel connected to their neighbours, or feel comfortable trusting their neighbours. Furthermore, those who had lived in their residence for only a short period of time were less likely feel that their neighbours would help each other out. The impact of social integration on victimization is reflected in the 55% greater likelihood for household victimization seen in areas where neighbours were not perceived as helping each other out (Gannon and Mihorean, 2005).

Overall, the 2004 GSS found that a majority (60 per cent) of Canadians believed that crime was lower in their own neighbourhood compared to elsewhere in Canada, while nearly one third (30 per cent) believed their neighbourhood's crime rate equalled other neighbourhoods. Very few respondents (9 per cent) believed their own neighbourhood had higher crime rates than others (Gannon, 2004). In other words, nearly all respondents felt that their neighbourhood was either as safe or safer than other neighbourhoods in Canada.

On the GSS, fear of crime was measured as feelings of satisfaction towards one's own safety and anticipated fear of becoming a victim of crime (Gannon, 2004). This survey found that, for the overwhelming majority (94 per cent), Canadians were not fearful of crime in that they were satisfied with their level of personal safety from being a victim of crime. The most common scenario that increased one's fear of being victimized, cited by nearly half of the sample (42 per cent), was while waiting for transit at night (Gannon, 2004).

There is a wide range of additional factors that contribute towards fear of crime. For instance, research suggests that gender is a consistent predictor of fear of crime with women exhibiting higher levels than males. The 2004 GSS found a slight gender difference in this regard as feelings of personal safety were a little higher in men (95 per cent) than women (93 per cent). These fears, however, appeared to be related to specific incidences, such as women being significantly more fearful than males while waiting for transit at night (58 per cent and 29 per cent respectively), being at home alone at night (27 per cent and 12 per cent respectively), and walking home alone in the dark (16 per cent and 6 per cent respectively) (Gannon, 2004).

Additional research suggests that fear of crime is also higher among people of lower socioeconomic status, those who live in urban areas, those who have been victimized in the past, minorities, and, alternatively, for young adults and/or senior citizens (Amerio and Roccato, 2007; Adams and Serpe, 2000). However, research evaluating the predictors of fear of crime have provided inconsistent results concerning the effect of age. Although official crime statistics generally suggest that the elderly are among the least likely to be victimized and young males are at greatest risk of victimization, various studies have shown that the elderly typically have the most fear of crime, while the young are relatively fearless (Moore and Shepherd, 2007; Crank, Giacomazzi, & Heck, 2003). This finding is referred to as the fear-victimization paradox, in which the elderly have comparatively low levels of victimization yet report relatively high levels of fear of crime (McCoy, Wooldredge, Cullen, Dubeck, & Browning, 1996). However, additional studies have suggested inconsistent results, finding that the elderly are not in fact more likely to have higher levels of fear of crime (McCoy et al., 1996). Such inconsistent results are due, in part, to the manner in which information on age has been collected. While some research has collected a single number of age, other research has categorized age into groups (e.g. 18 to 24; 25 to 40; or older than 66 years of age). Collecting information in such an aggregated form prohibits sophisticated analyses from being performed and limits accurate understanding on the role that age actually plays in determining fear of crime (Moore and Shepherd, 2007).

An additional source of inconsistency concerns two specific points regarding the nature of the relationship between fear of crime and age. The first of these concerns reflects the non-linear relationship between fear of crime and age. Research suggests that the relationship between these two factors is of a curvilinear relationship in that fear of crime does increase with age, however, it appears to peak at a certain age and then begins to decline. For instance, research has shown that young adults between the ages of 18 and 24 years old exhibit the lowest rates of fear of crime, as do those over 65 years of age. However, higher rates of fear of crime were exhibited by those between the ages of 25 to 64 year old (Moore and Shepherd, 2007). Thus, the relationship between age and fear of crime is not as straightforward as research has traditionally suggested. In effect, fear of crime appears to peak some time in middle age after which it begins to decrease.

The second of these relationships concerns the definition of fear of crime. Traditionally, fear of crime has been assessed as a single construct, i.e. "how safe do you feel walking in your neighbourhood at night?" (e.g. Moore and Shepherd, 2007). More recently, research

has recognized that fear of crime is a much more complex construct, and that relative levels of fear of crime may differ depending on different types of crime. Research findings further suggest that fear of crime can be broken into two main constructs: (1) fear of personal victimization and (2) fear of property victimization (Moore and Shepherd, 2007). Various studies have suggested that each of these two fears of crime have unique determinants, and that the relationship between, for example, age and fear of crime, is affected by which form of crime is being considered (e.g. Moore and Shepherd, 2007).

Specifically, fear of personal victimization appears to be related to being younger. According to Moore and Shepherd (2007), fear of personal victimization is highest among those 16 to 25 years of age with a peak at 23 years old. In contrast, fear of property victimization is associated with the middle-age years as it is highest among those between 40 and 60 years old with a peak at 45 years old. Moore and Shepherd interpret these findings with the suggestion that middle aged people are those most likely to have accumulated a sufficient amount of property to be concerned with its potential loss.

Moore and Shepherd (2007) encourage the direction of policy towards these issues emphasizing that as fear of crime can essentially be reduced into the two primary categories of personal victimization and property loss, policy efforts to reduce fear of crime need not be directed elsewhere. However, additional relevant determinants of fear of crime identified by their study were the presence of a mental disorder and self-health. Fear of personal harm was additionally determined by one's level of income and some household characteristics, such as living in a "run-down" home.

In contrast, fear of property loss was affected by indicators of social disorder, such as graffiti and property damage. Gender also played an important role as females indicated greater levels of fear of personal victimization, while males expressed a greater concern regarding fear of property loss. Furthermore, poorer health, previous victimization, and environmental litter were associated with both fear of personal victimization and property loss (Moore and Shepherd, 2007). Therefore, it appears that while age plays an important role in the relative degree of fear, alternative determinants of fear of crime must be addressed, a primary example of which is prior experience of victimization.

Experiences of Victimization

Prior victimization has received much support as a major determinant of fear of crime. Victimization models suggest the presence of a direct link between being a victim of crime and subsequent fear of crime (Crank, Giacomazzi, and Heck, 2003). In 2004, the General Social Survey (GSS) was conducted with 24,000 residents in all Canadian provinces. The results indicated that those most at risk of violent victimization were young Canadians between the ages of 15 to 24 years old. The results also suggested that lifestyle was an important determinant of risk of victimization in that being single, living in an urban residence, and having a household income of less than \$15,000 increased the risk for violent victimization, while a higher income, living in semi-detached, row or duplex homes, and renting increased the risk of household victimization (Gannon and Mihorean, 2005). Overall, in the 12 months previous to the survey, slightly more than one quarter (28 per cent) of Canadians reported being victimized one or more times. Moreover, nearly half of

the victims (40 per cent) reported being victimized multiple times in the 12 months preceding the survey. Considering all of the victimizations, approximately one third (34 per cent) were reported to the police.

Those who self-identified as Aboriginal on the GSS survey were three times more likely to be a victim of violence. In effect, nearly half (40 per cent) of Aboriginal respondents reported experiencing victimization within the past year (Brzozowski, Taylor-Butts, & Johnson, 2006). Aboriginals between the ages of 15 to 34 years old were nearly two and a half times more likely than Aboriginals over the age of 35 years old to be violently victimized. Compared to non-Aboriginal respondents, Aboriginal respondents were much more likely to be victimized violently by someone they knew (56 per cent and 41 per cent respectively). In contrast, non-Aboriginal respondents had a much higher rate (45 per cent) of stranger violent victimization than did Aboriginal respondents (25 per cent). Many of the violent victimizations experienced by Aboriginal respondents consisted of episodes of spousal abuse. In the five years prior to the survey, slightly more than one fifth (21 per cent) of Aboriginal respondents reported being the victim of some form of physical or sexual spousal violence as compared to only 6% of non-Aboriginals. These findings are very similar to those found by Cohen, Corrado, and Beavon (2004) who explored the victimization experiences of Aboriginal people in Vancouver. The rates of homicide were also much higher for the Aboriginal population, with a rate of 8.8 per 100,000 compared to the non-Aboriginal rate of 1.3 per 100,000 (Brzozowski, Taylor-Butts, & Johnson, 2006).

Neighbourhood characteristics may play an important role in this relationship as the on-reserve violent crime rate was eight times higher than for the rest of the country (Brzozowski, Taylor-Butts, & Johnson, 2006). In fact, the study did find that Aboriginal respondents were much more likely than non-Aboriginals to agree that socially disruptive conditions (i.e. noisy neighbours, loud parties, loitering, people sleeping on the streets, garbage, vandalism, harassment, hate-motivated attacks, drugs, public drunkenness, and prostitution) were very or fairly significant neighbourhood problems. Research has consistently suggested that indicators of social disorder are an important determinant in judgments regarding fear of crime and risk of victimization. However, the survey also found that, despite the generally high levels of victimization, offending, and indicators of social disorder, Aboriginal people were no more likely to fear crime than non-Aboriginals. Overall, 92% of Aboriginal respondents indicated they were either somewhat satisfied or very satisfied with their level of personal safety – a finding very similar to non-Aboriginal respondents (94 per cent)(Brzozowski, Taylor-Butts, & Johnson, 2006).

There are a number of reasons why the rates of Aboriginal victimization, as well as Aboriginal offending, are so much higher than that of the non-Aboriginal population. As important predictors of both victimization and offending are young age, low educational attainment, unemployment, low level of income, living in a single-parent family, living in crowded conditions, and high residential mobility; all of these are common in Aboriginal populations (Brzozowski, Taylor-Butts, & Johnson, 2006). For instance, data from the 2001 Census indicated that, on average, the Aboriginal population is younger than the non-Aboriginal population with a median age of 24.7 years old compared to 37.7 years old for

the non-Aboriginal population. This is an important factor as age is consistently one of the strongest predictors of victimization and offending.

In addition, Aboriginal people tend to have lower rates of educational attainment. The 2001 Census indicated that nearly half (48 per cent) of the Aboriginal population did not have a high school diploma compared to slightly less than one third (31 per cent) of the non-Aboriginal population. Similarly, Aboriginal populations tend to have higher rates of unemployment (19 per cent) in 2001 compared to the non-Aboriginal population (7 per cent). Subsequently, Aboriginal persons also had lower levels of income than non-Aboriginals with a median income of \$13,500.00 compared to \$22,400.00 for the non-Aboriginal population. Aboriginal people also tend to have higher rates of living in a lone-parent family (46 per cent), living in crowded conditions (17 per cent), and residential mobility (22 per cent) as compared to the non-Aboriginal population (17 per cent; 7 per cent, and 14 per cent, respectively) (Brzozowski, Taylor-Butts, & Johnson, 2006).

The nature of victimization may have a particular affect on fear of crime. For instance, the Canadian 2004 GSS survey identified that in one quarter of all incidences of violent victimization over the past year, victims reported having trouble carrying out their main activity (e.g. work, being a student). For more than one third of victims (37 per cent), these problems only lasted for one day, however, an additional one third of victims (39 per cent) had trouble for two to seven days, while 16% experienced problems that lasted over two weeks. Being a victim of violence also has an emotional toll with the potential to increase fear of crime. Common emotional responses from victims of violence in the GSS survey included fearfulness (18 per cent), anger (32 per cent), and feeling upset, confused, or frustrated (20 per cent). For a small minority of victims of violence (9 per cent), their experience led to a greater level of cautiousness and awareness (Gannon and Mihorean, 2005). In terms of household victimization, those who experienced a break and enter were much more likely to express fearfulness (19 per cent) than those who had experienced household thefts (5 per cent), vandalism (6 per cent), or motor vehicle theft (6 per cent). Break and enter experiences also had the effect of making victims feel more cautious (13 per cent) and more victimized (11 per cent) (Gannon and Mihorean, 2005).

Research also suggests the possibility of an indirect victimization model in that those who perceive themselves as vulnerable (e.g. the elderly) also display the most fear. Empirically, however, this is not always the case as statistics typically indicate that those who exhibit the most fear (the elderly and women) are also the least likely to be victimized by crime, while those who are most likely to be victimized (young males) typically manifest the lowest levels of fear of crime (Crank, Giacomazzi, & Heck, 2003). The causal force behind high levels of fear of crime in those least likely to be victims is often explained by the frequent media portrayals of crime and violence, particularly those that are relatively infrequent, but exponentially terrifying, such as rape and murder, that subsequently increase the levels of fear in those who perceive themselves to be the most vulnerable (Crank, Giacomazzi, & Heck, 2003).

In contrast, other studies suggest that people tend not to rely on the media, but rather estimate their level of risk of victimization based on their own experiences and the experiences of their friends and neighbours (Ditton and Chadee, 2006). In fact, there is

consistent empirical support for the presumption that people tend to overestimate their risk of victimization (Ditton and Chadee, 2006). The indirect victimization model, therefore, suggests that fear of crime can be present without any actual experience of direct victimization.

Public Satisfaction with Police

Research indicates that fear of crime and previous victimization can also have a strong effect on public levels of satisfaction with the police (Ren, Cao, Lovrich, & Gaffney, 2005; Cao, Frank, & Cullen, 1996). Public confidence in the police can be defined as the extent to which members of the public have trust in or rely upon the police in a variety of situations (Ren et al., 2005). This definition encompasses both satisfaction with the police and attitudes towards the police. Public confidence in the police is an important concept to assess as the public is a consumer of police services and the police cannot do their job effectively without a positive image held of them by the community (Ren et al., 2005). While the police may do their jobs effectively, they may still find themselves without the support of the community. As such, it is important to focus on more than just the actual quality of police performance. It is also necessary to assess levels of public confidence (Ren et al., 2005).

Ren and colleagues (2005) tested three models of public confidence in the police; the demographic model, the contextual model, and the police-citizen contact model. The demographic model included race, age, gender, socioeconomic status, and level of education as specific predictors of levels of public confidence in the police. In general, research suggested that minority populations showed less favourable attitudes towards the police. Age had a positive relationship with public confidence in the police as youth tended to feel as though their independence was restricted by police activity, while older adults exhibited more conservative attitudes that resulted in greater support for police. However, less consistent results have been found for the role of gender, education, and socioeconomic status (Ren et al., 2005).

The contextual model builds on the demographic model by including variables related to neighbourhood characteristics and victimization experiences. While community disorder, victimization experience, and fear of crime all tend to decrease the levels of support for the police, informal collective security generally has the opposite effect. This conclusion supports the proposition that confidence in one's neighbours increases confidence in the police (Ren et al., 2005; Cao, Frank, & Cullen, 1996).

Lastly, the police-citizen contact model suggests that the nature of police-citizen interactions can have an effect on public confidence in the police. Police-citizen contacts can include volunteering with the police, reporting a crime, requesting information or services, or receiving traffic tickets. The nature of the interaction as well as the number of contacts has the potential to either decrease or increase levels of support for police.

In the study conducted by Ren and colleagues (2005), these three models were tested in order to determine which variables emerged as the most significant predictors of confidence in the police. In terms of the demographic model, age was the only significant

predictor. Age and public confidence in the police were found to share a positive relationship in that as age increase so does the level of confidence in the police. Informal collective security was also shown to increase levels of confidence in the police. In addition, the number of contacts with the police effected confidence in the police as did the specific nature of the interaction. Negative police contacts, such as those involving traffic tickets, created negative attitudes towards the police, lowering the public's confidence in them. In contrast, voluntary contacts with the police, such as citizen involvement in community policing programs, tended to increase levels of confidence. Overall, the strongest predictor of confidence in the police was found to be volunteering (Ren et al., 2005). The police-citizen contact model suggests that citizen calls for service or reporting of crime to the police can impact levels of satisfaction with the police.

Both subjective (e.g. perceptions of the offence) and objective (e.g. nature of the offence) characteristics of victimization experiences may determine the likelihood of the victim reporting the crime to police. In Canada, in 2004, one third of victims reported their violent experience to the police. Reporting rates were highest for robbery and physical assault (46 per cent and 39 per cent respectively) and lowest for sexual assault (8 per cent). The 2004 Canadian GSS identified the most common reasons victim's failed to report their violent experience to the police as a desire to deal with the situation another way (66 per cent), the perception that the victimization was not important enough (53 per cent), a desire to avoid police involvement (42 per cent), the perception of the victimization as a personal matter (39 per cent), the belief that police could not do anything about it anyway (29 per cent), the perception that police would not help (13 per cent), and fear of retaliation (11 per cent) (Gannon and Mihorean, 2005).

In contrast, the most common reasons listed for reporting a violent victimization to police included the feeling that they had a duty to report it (83 per cent), a desire to see the offender arrested and punished (74 per cent), a desire for protection or to have an end put to the violence (70 per cent) to claim insurance or another form of compensation (20 per cent), or because someone else encouraged them to report it to the police (19 per cent). Younger victims were least likely to report their victimization to the police (24 per cent of those between the ages of 15 to 24 years old), and females were less likely (26 per cent) than males (38 per cent) to report being victimized, likely because of the higher rates of sexual assault they experienced compared to men (Gannon and Mihorean, 2005).

Police response to a report of victimization commonly involved visiting the scene (77 per cent), making a report or conducting an investigation (73 per cent), issuing a warning (37 per cent), or making an arrest, laying a charge, or simply removing the offender from the scene (30 per cent) (Gannon and Mihorean, 2005).

When victims of violence did report their victimization to the police, they generally found that the police were responsive and rating the officer(s) as doing a good job. Over half of those who had been victimized violently were either satisfied (36 per cent) or very satisfied (24 per cent) with the police response. Only 14 per cent were somewhat dissatisfied and an additional 24 per cent reported that they were very dissatisfied with the police response (Gannon and Mihorean, 2005). Information on the reasons behind these levels of dissatisfaction were not given.

Overall rates of reporting household victimization to the police were similar (37 per cent) to the reporting rates of violent victimization (33 per cent). The types of victimizations most commonly reported were break and enter (54 per cent) and motor vehicle/parts theft (49 per cent). Although more or less similar to violent victimization, the most common reason why victims did not report their household victimization was because they perceived that the incident was not important enough (65 per cent). Other common reasons were that the police could not do anything about the incident (60 per cent), the victim had a desire to deal with the victimization in some other way (30 per cent), the victim did not want the police involved (22 per cent), a belief that the police would not help (21 per cent), the belief that the incidence was a personal matter and not a police concern (19 per cent), the fact that nothing was taken or the stolen items were recovered (13 per cent), the belief that insurance would not cover the loss (12 per cent), and fear of retaliation by the offender (4 per cent).

Victims of household victimization were much more likely to report their victimization to the police as the significance of the financial loss increased. For instance, four fifths (80 per cent) of respondents reported the incident when the financial loss was estimated at \$1,000.00 or more. This corresponds with the finding that just over half (51 per cent) of the victims claimed to have reported their victimization in order to obtain compensation. Similar to violent victimizations, the most common reason given for reporting a property offence was a feeling of duty to do so (84 per cent), a desire to arrest or punish the offender (62 per cent), to stop the incident from happening again (41 per cent), or because others suggested that they notify the police (12 per cent).

When victims did report their household victimization experience to the police, the most common police response was to conduct an investigation (76 per cent). Slightly over half of the cases (54 per cent) involved the police visiting the location which increased to 71% when the household victimization involved a break and enter. Given the nature of household victimization (i.e. the tendency for victims to discover the victimization after the fact), the likelihood of the police dealing with the offender was lower than when responding to a violent victimization. As a result, in only 5% of the incidences involving a property victimization, victims were aware of the police taking the offender away, arresting them, or laying charges, while in less than 10% of property victimizations respondents were aware of the police issuing a warning to the offender. Still, the majority of household victims were satisfied with the manner in which police handled their case. In effect, more than one quarter (28 per cent) of victims were very satisfied while a slight minority (40 per cent) were somewhat satisfied (Gannon and Mihorean, 2005).

Knowledge regarding police activities and practices can have a positive effect by increasing the public's satisfaction with police. Approximately half of the police departments in the United States operate Citizen Police Academies which offer education to citizens regarding law enforcement activities (Becton, Meadows, Tears, Charles, & Ioimo, 2005). The citizen police academy provides citizens with an opportunity to interact with police in non-confrontational environments or encounters. This process has been found to be important because citizen encounters with police officers are often limited to incidences, such as traffic stops, which tend to engender negative feelings towards the police (Becton et al.,

2005). Research with these academies suggests that they have the potential to increase citizen support for the local police through the development of a sense of trust and cooperation. Citizens who have had experience with a citizen police academy tend to respond more positively towards their police chiefs, generally agreeing that they are somewhat understanding of local communities and the community's specific needs and issues. Additionally, participants of citizen police academies generally exhibit higher levels of trust in their police departments than those who have not participated in this program. In one survey of nearly 700 residents in Virginia, 100 per cent of those who participated in citizen police academies felt that the police were responsive to community issues and needs, and all agreed that they were satisfied with the services provided by their police departments (Becton et al., 2005).

It appears that overall, Canadian citizens are generally satisfied with the services provided by the police. For instance, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) survey Canadian citizens annually collecting information on their perceptions of the service provided by the RCMP. In 2006, a large majority (82 per cent) of 8,540 Canadian citizens surveyed indicated that they were satisfied with the service received during their RCMP contact. While still high, rates for British Columbians were slightly lower. Of the 672 B.C. citizens surveyed, slightly more than three quarters (79 per cent) reported being satisfied with the RCMP. There was also general support for the RCMP's integrity and honesty (91 per cent), and the majority of Canadian citizens agreed that the RCMP treated them fairly (90 per cent), demonstrated professionalism (90 per cent), acted courteously and respectfully (92 per cent), were knowledgeable and competent (89 per cent), delivered their services in a timely manner (83 per cent), and gave them all the information necessary for their situation (84 per cent) (RCMP website, 2007).

In conclusion, although certain demographic variables, such as age, significantly predicted confidence in and support for the police, stronger determinants of confidence in the police resulted from previous experiences with crime. Specifically, research has supported the role that fear of crime and recent previous victimization play in determining degree of confidence in the police. Those who had been a more recent victim of crime and who exhibited a greater degree of fear of crime were more likely to indicate a lack of confidence in the police (Cao, Frank, & Cullen, 1996). However, research also indicated that the relationship between prior victimization and fear of crime and confidence in the police was tempered by the degree of neighbourhood cohesion. If respondents had more confidence in their neighbours willingness to help protect them from crime, and if indications of physical and social disorder were relatively absent, fear of crime and victimization were no longer significant indicators of confidence in police.

These results suggest that while confidence in the police can be determined by certain demographic variables, prior experience with victimization, and fear of crime, the ability of these indicators to determine level of support for the police are affected by neighbourhood characteristics. It appears that confidence in one's neighbourhood encourages confidence in the police. These findings suggest that when assessing community perceptions of public and personal safety, as well as confidence in and support for the police, it is imperative to go beyond the collection of information, such as basic demographics (age, gender, race,

education, income) and previous victimization, but to consider perceptions of community context, such as indicators of social disorder.

The following section describes the results of a public safety survey that was conducted by the School of Criminology and Criminal Justice at the University College of the Fraser Valley in eight RCMP detachment jurisdictions in British Columbia. The survey was conducted in October 2006. The purpose of the survey was to assess residents' feelings about their own personal safety and the nature and extent of any victimization in the last 12 months. The survey also sought to determine residents' level of satisfaction with their local RCMP detachment. The overall aim of the survey was to provide the RCMP with information about the extent and nature of victimization in their jurisdictions and to provide data helpful to improving the quality of local police services.

Methodology

The methodology used in the survey involved mailing a self-report questionnaire to a randomly selected sample of 9,600 residents who resided in one of eight RCMP detachment jurisdictions in October 2006. The sample of residents was drawn using the telephone directories of each detachment jurisdiction and follow-up telephone calls were made shortly after the surveys were mailed out to help maximize participation rates. Some questionnaires were undeliverable for a number of reasons, such as the resident had moved or the address was incorrect, which reduced the total number of eligible respondents. Overall, the number of completed surveys returned to the principal investigators was 4,255 or nearly half (44 per cent) of all questionnaires mailed out. However, considering the total number of delivered questionnaires (n = 9,071), the response rate was 47%.

Research Results

General Demographics

The eight participating RCMP jurisdictions were: (1) Coquitlam; (2) Chilliwack; (3) Prince George; (4) Terrace; (5) Kamloops; (6) Penticton; (7) Courtenay-Comox Valley; and (8) North Cowichan/Duncan. As indicated by Table 1, there was a very even distribution of participation from these jurisdictions (see Table 1).

Table 1: Distribution of Participants by RCMP Detachment

RCMP Detachment	% of Total Sample	Response Rate
Coquitlam	11.0%	51%
Chilliwack	13.0%	40%
Prince George	12.7%	48%
Terrance	10.4%	47%
Kamloops	13.2%	48%
Penticton	13.7%	53%
Courtenay-Comox Valley	13.6%	50%
North Cowichan/Duncan	12.4%	40%

In addition to an even distribution of respondents from each of the participating jurisdictions, the response rate from all eight jurisdictions is also evenly distributed with a mean of 47% and a range of 40% to 53%.¹

The general characteristics of the sample are not fully representative of British Columbia. Specifically, more than half of the sample (56 per cent) were male, however, in 2006, approximately half of British Columbians (49.6 per cent) were male (BC Stats, 2006).

In this sample, the mean age was 57.3 years old with more than three quarters (78.6 per cent) of the sample over the age of 45 years old and only 1.1% between the ages of 18 and 24 years old. This represents a somewhat older sample as BC Stats (2006) reported the mean age of British Columbians as 39.1 years old.

Given this age distribution, it was not surprising that nearly half of the sample (40 per cent) was retired. Moreover, slightly more than one third (35.8 per cent) were employed. Compared to the December 2006 unemployment rate in British Columbia of 5.2%, only 1.6% of the sample identified themselves as unemployed.

Due to the fact that a high proportion of the sample was retired or older, it was not unexpected that nearly two thirds of the sample (60.3 per cent) reported an annual income of \$50,000.00 or less. However, one tenth of the sample reported a yearly income in excess of \$80,000.00. The median income level for the sample was between \$40,000.00 and \$50,000.00. This result is slightly higher than for the general population of British Columbia which had a reported income per capita in 2005 of \$30,000.00 (BC Stats, 2006).

Again, primarily due to the age distribution of the sample, it was not unexpected that more than two thirds of respondents (69.1 per cent) would report being married or in a common law relationship. Slightly more than one tenth of the sample reported being divorced or separated (12.8 per cent) or widowed (11.6 per cent). A small proportion (6.5 per cent) indicated that they were single or never married.

¹ All data in this report is aggregated for all eight jurisdictions. For individual reports for each specific participating RCMP jurisdiction, please contact either Dr. Darryl Plecas or Dr. Irwin Cohen at the School of Criminology and Criminal Justice at the University-College of the Fraser Valley, Abbotsford, British Columbia, Canada.

In terms of education, slightly less than three quarters of the sample (73.6 per cent) had either a high school diploma (26.2 per cent), some college or university (24.7 per cent), or a college or university degree (22.7 per cent). However, 14.5% of the sample indicated that they did not have a high school degree, while, at the other end of the spectrum, 11.8% of the sample reported having a graduate or some form of a professional degree.

This sample was also characterised by a high level of residential stability. On average, respondents reported living in their current neighbourhood for 13.7 years and nearly three quarters of the sample (74.7 per cent) live in a house. In fact, only 5.2% reported that their primary residence was something other than a house, an apartment, a condominium, a townhouse, or a duplex.

Finally, the overwhelming majority of the sample (91.2 per cent) identified themselves as Caucasians with only 1.8% of respondents self-identifying as Aboriginal. This is a slight underrepresentation as, according to BC Stats (2006), Aboriginal people make up approximately 4% of the population in British Columbia.

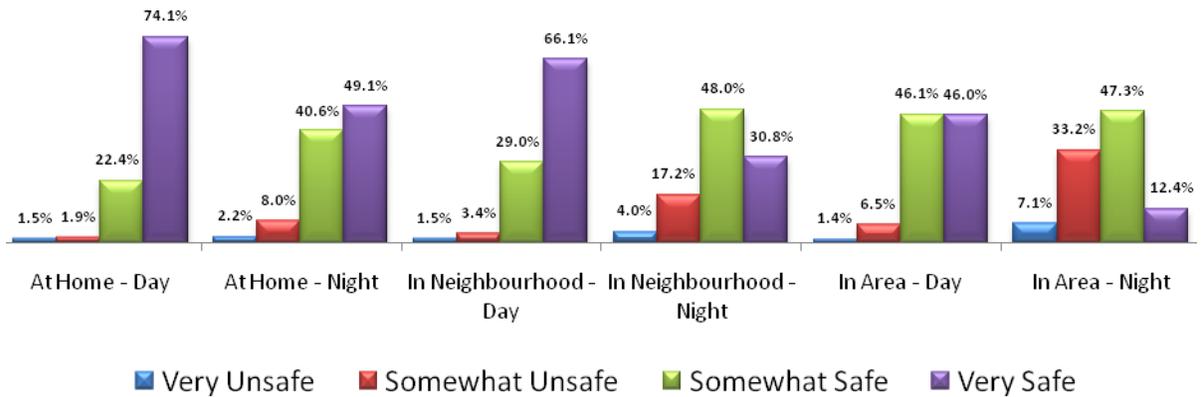
In sum, therefore, the sample presented in this report is more male, somewhat older, in a higher income bracket, and less Aboriginal than the general population of British Columbia. Based on the manner in which the sample was derived, however, this was to be expected. Moreover, while the nature of the sample may place into question the generalizability of the results to all of British Columbia, this does not limit the validity of the results for the jurisdictions sampled.

Perceptions of Personal Safety

As suggested by the literature review discussed above, perceptions of personal safety were measured in several different ways in this survey. Respondents were asked to consider their level of personal safety during the day and evening while at home, in their neighbourhood, and in the area around their neighbourhood. As indicated by Figure 1, nearly all respondents (96.5 per cent) felt either safe or very safe in their residence during the day. While the proportion of those who felt very safe declined when assessing their level of personal safety at home during the evening from 74.1% to 49.1%, a similarly high proportion of the sample (89.7 per cent) still indicated that they felt either safe or very safe in their homes at night. There were no differences in the levels of personal safety reported by males compared to females who felt safe in their homes during the day (96.9 per cent of males and 96.0 per cent of females) and there were also no significant differences in the reported levels of safety between the genders at night as 90.5% of males and 87.7% of females indicated feeling safe or very safe.²

² The authors of this report will only make reference to gender differences where a significant difference is found.

Figure 1: Levels of Personal Safety

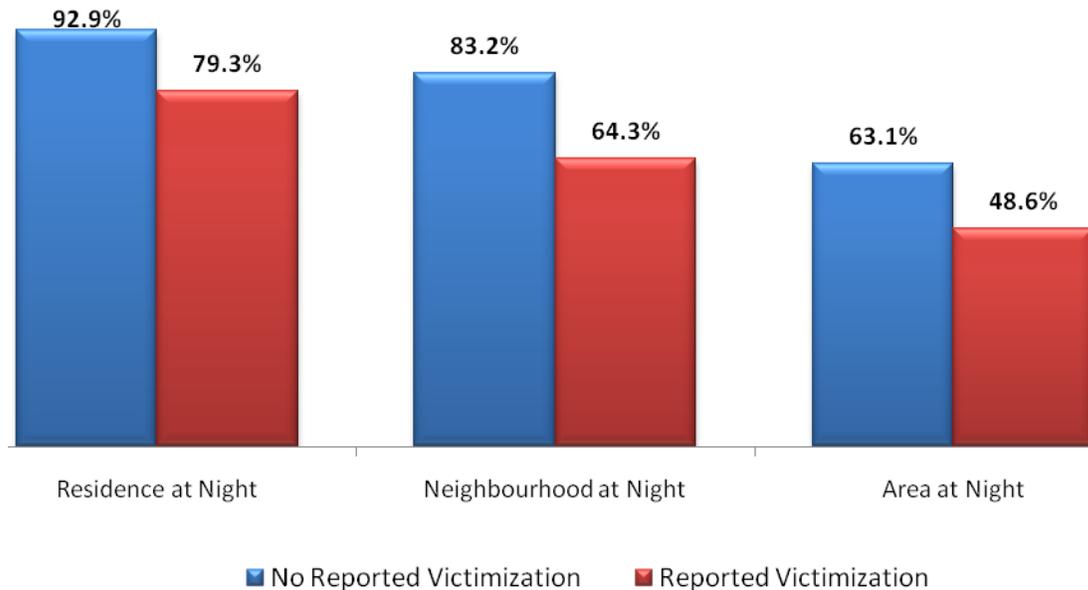


In considering the level of personal safety in their neighbourhoods, the sample reported a general sense of safety. Nearly the entire sample (95.1 per cent) reported feeling either safe or very safe in their neighbourhoods during the day. While a lower proportion of the sample (78.8 per cent) indicated that they felt safe or very safe in their neighbourhoods at night, this still represents over three quarters of the sample. In fact, only 4% reported feeling very unsafe in their neighbourhoods at night. It is interesting to note that while more than four fifths (84.3 per cent) of males reported feeling safe or very safe in their neighbourhoods at night, slightly less than three quarters of females (72.3 per cent) agreed. In effect, while still feeling generally safe at night in their neighbourhoods, females felt less safe than their male counterparts.

It appears that feeling of personal safety begin to decrease as one moves out of one’s neighbourhood, particularly at night. While nearly all respondents (92.1 per cent) reported feeling safe or very safe in the areas outside their neighbourhoods during the day, less than two thirds (59.7 per cent) indicated that they felt personally safe at night in an area outside their neighbourhood. This decrease in feeling of safety at night is more pronounced among females as only 50.2% reported feeling safe or very safe at night outside their neighbourhood compared to 66.7% of males.

While a much more detailed analysis of victimization can be found below, considering the entire sample, slightly less than one quarter (23.4 per cent) reported being the victim of at least one crime in the past 12 months. While being the victim of a crime did not substantially effect one’s perception of safety during the day, there were substantial differences in feelings of personal safety at night (see Figure 2).

Figure 2: Proportion of Respondents who Felt Safe at Night



While a large majority of those who had been victimized (79.3 per cent) and those who had not been a victim of crime in the past 12 months (92.9 per cent) felt safe in their residences at night, this proportion decreased when respondents considered being in their neighbourhoods at night. Specifically, slightly less than two thirds (64.3 per cent) of victims felt safe in their neighbourhoods after dark and slightly less than half of victims (48.6 per cent) felt safe in the areas around their neighbourhoods at night. As expected, it appears that being the recent victim of a crime negatively affects one's feelings of safety, especially at night.

Considering all the data on feelings of safety, the general conclusion is that, for the most part, respondents felt safe in their homes, in their neighbourhoods, and in the areas surrounding their neighbourhoods, however, this feeling of safety decreases at night and is effected by gender and whether one had recently experienced being a victim of crime.

Respondents were also asked to consider the degree to which their perceived levels of safety may have changed over time. Specifically, respondents were asked how their current perceptions of personal safety in their neighbourhoods compared to how they felt one year ago and five years ago in the same neighbourhoods.

Nearly three quarters of the sample (72.5 per cent) reported that there had been no change in their feelings of personal safety over the past year. However, 16.2% reported that they felt less safe now than one year ago and only 8.7% reported feeling more safe today when compared to one year ago. If one only considers those respondents who indicated a change, however, nearly two thirds (64 per cent) reported feeling less safe. It is also interesting to note that a greater proportion of females felt less safe (20.2 per cent) one year ago than their male counterparts (12.8 per cent).

As expected, being a victim of at least one crime in the past 12 months had a significant impact on one's feelings of safety one year ago. For those who had not been the victim of a crime, slightly more than three quarters (76.5 per cent) reported no change in their feelings of safety. Interestingly, for those who had been victimized, more than half (59.5 per cent) still felt no change in their personal level of safety. More importantly, however, nearly one third (31 per cent) of victims felt either somewhat less safe or much less safe than one year ago compared to only 11.7% of non-victims.

Of those who lived in the same neighbourhood for the past five years (n = 2953), slightly more than half (53.6 per cent) reported no change in their levels of personal safety in their neighbourhood over this time frame. However, for those who did report a change in their level of personal safety, approximately three quarters (74.7 per cent) reported feeling less safe.

When asked to compare their current neighbourhood with other neighbourhoods in their area, the majority of respondents either felt that there was no difference (38.1 per cent) or that their neighbourhood was safer (43.8 per cent) than other places in their area. There were no substantial differences by gender or whether one was a victim with the past 12 months. Similarly, the majority of respondents felt that their area was either no different (29.1 per cent) or more safe (46.9 per cent) than other municipalities in British Columbia.

The overall results seem to indicate that most respondents have a low fear of crime, did not perceive a change in their level of personal safety over time, and felt that their current neighbourhoods or areas were safer than other places. However, it is important to recognize that among those who did feel a change in their level of personal safety over time, the majority of these individuals felt somewhat less safe.

Victimization

As indicated above, nearly one quarter of the entire sample (23.4 per cent) reported being the victim of at least one crime in the past 12 months. This finding is slightly lower than the findings of the Canadian General Social Survey discussed above. Using Statistics Canada's General Social Survey categories of crime types to identify victimization, respondents were asked to report all of the different types of crimes that they were a direct victim of in the past 12 months. Given that more than three quarters of the sample did not report any victimization over this time frame, it is not surprising that the proportions are very low for all crime types (see Table 2). As demonstrated by Table 2, there were very low levels of personal victimization and the victimizations that were identified, for the most part, were of a less serious nature.

Table 2: Victimization in the Past 12 Months

Types of Crime	% of Respondents
Vandalism	11.4%
Theft or Attempted Theft of Household Property	10.6%
Theft or Attempted Theft of Personal Property	4.0%
Attempted Motor Vehicle Theft	4.9%
Motor Vehicle Theft	2.2%
Break and Enter or Attempted Break and Enter	4.1%
Threats or Intimidation	4.3%
Stalking or Harassment	2.3%
Assault without a Weapon	1.2%
Assault with a Weapon	0.3%
Robbery or Attempted Robbery	0.2%
Attempted Sexual Assault, Molestation, or Attempted Molestation	0.2%
Sexual Assault with Intercourse	0.1%

Table 3 presents the proportion of victims who identified each specific crime type.³ Nearly half of all victims indicated that they had been vandalized (48.6 per cent) or been the victim of a theft or an attempted theft (45.4 per cent). While nearly one fifth of victims (18.4 per cent) reported being threatened or intimidated, all other personal offences were somewhat infrequent. In fact, the rates for the most serious of personal victimizations were extremely low.

Table 3: Victimization in the Past 12 Months Considering Only Those who Reported Being a Victimization

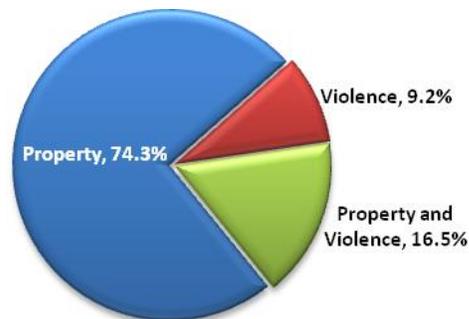
Types of Crime	% of Respondents
Vandalism	48.6%
Theft or Attempted Theft of Household Property	45.4%
Theft or Attempted Theft of Personal Property	16.9%
Attempted Motor Vehicle Theft	21.0%
Motor Vehicle Theft	9.5%
Break and Enter or Attempted Break and Enter	17.6%
Threats or Intimidation	18.4%
Stalking or Harassment	9.8%
Assault without a Weapon	5.0%
Assault with a Weapon	1.3%
Robbery or Attempted Robbery	1.0%
Attempted Sexual Assault, Molestation, or Attempted Molestation	0.9%
Sexual Assault with Intercourse	0.4%

The fact that this sample is characterized by less serious types of victimizations is demonstrated in Figure 3. Approximately three quarters of victims (74.3 per cent) were exclusively the victim of a property crime, while nearly one tenth (9.2 per cent) were

³ As respondents could have been the victim of more than one crime type, the total exceeds 100%

exclusively the victim of a violent offence. The remaining 16.5% of victims reported being the victims of both at least one property and one violent offence in the past 12 months.

Figure 3: Classification of Victimization



It is important to keep in mind that of those who experienced a property offence, the least serious offences, such as vandalism and theft or attempted theft of household property, were most common. This finding was similar for violent offences where the less serious personal offences, such as threats or intimidation or stalking or harassment, were the most common.

As discussed in the previous section, there is a large body of research into the rates at which victims contact the police and the reasons why people do or do not notify the police after being victimized. In this sample, of people who reported being victimized at least once in the past 12 months, nearly two thirds (61.4 per cent) notified the police.

When comparing reporting rates by crime type groups, however, those who were exclusively victimized by violence were slightly less likely (54.7 per cent) to notify the police compared to those who were exclusively victimized by at least one property offence (60.3 per cent) or who were the victim of both a violent and a property offence (69.9 per cent). In other words, while a slight majority of those who were exclusively violently victimized did contact the police, those who were the victim of a property offence alone or a property offence and a violent offence were more likely to notify the police.

For those who did contact the police, respondents were asked about their general level of satisfaction with the police's response.⁴ Nearly three quarters of victims who contacted the police (72.9 per cent) reported that they were satisfied with the police response. It is interesting to note that the proportion of those who were exclusively the victim of a property offence and victims of exclusively violent offences were virtually identical (76.0 per cent and 76.1 per cent respectively) in their level of satisfaction with the police. However, satisfaction decreased substantially for those who reported being the victim of both personal and property offences (59.6 per cent). Because the rates for exclusive crime

⁴ This analysis did not examine differential responses to individual victimization events, but rather a general level of satisfaction with the police in response to all of the victimizations experienced over the past 12 months.

groups were the same, it is unclear why satisfaction rates were lower for those who experienced both crime groups. However, it should be kept in mind that the survey did not ask respondents for the number of times they have been the victim of crime in the past 12 months.

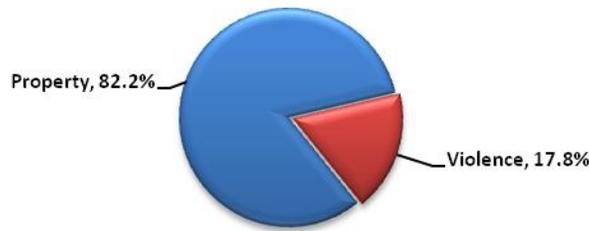
Those who identified at least one victimization over the past 12 months were asked to report the one victimization that had the greatest negative impact on them. Table 4 provides the results. It is important to keep in mind that the victimization reported may not necessarily refer to the most serious victimization suffered over the time frame, but rather a personal assessment on the part of the victim about which victimization had the greatest negative effect on them over the past 12 months.

Table 4: Most Negative Victimization in the Past 12 Months

Types of Crime	% of Respondents
Vandalism	22.9%
Theft or Attempted Theft of Household Property	25.4%
Theft or Attempted Theft of Personal Property	10.3%
Attempted Motor Vehicle Theft	7.9%
Motor Vehicle Theft	6.6%
Break and Enter or Attempted Break and Enter	9.1%
Threats or Intimidation	9.3%
Stalking or Harassment	5.1%
Assault without a Weapon	1.6%
Assault with a Weapon	0.9%
Robbery or Attempted Robbery	0.2%
Attempted Sexual Assault, Molestation, or Attempted Molestation	0.2%
Sexual Assault with Intercourse	0.4%

As indicated by Table 4, serious personal victimization was not common in this sample. Only 3.3% of victims identified one of the five most serious forms of personal victimization as having the most negative impact on them in the past 12 months. By contrast, nearly half of the victims (48.3 per cent) reported either vandalism (22.9 per cent) or theft or attempted theft of household property (25.4 per cent) as the victimization that had the most negative effect. In fact, as indicated by Figure 4, slightly more than four fifths of victims (82.2 per cent) indicated a property crime, rather than a violent crime, as the victimization that had the most negative effect on them in the past 12 month.

Figure 4: Classification of Most Serious Victimization in the Past 12 Months



Among those who identified themselves as victims, nearly two thirds (62.1 per cent) reported that the police were notified of the incident. This rate does not vary at all by the nature of the victimization.

Victims were asked to identify the way in which the police were notified of their victimization. The majority of victims (60.2 per cent) indicated that they telephoned the non-emergency number. Given the nature of the victimizations reported, this was not unexpected. Slightly less than one quarter (21.6 per cent) telephoned 9-11. Very few victims visited the police headquarters station (8.8 per cent), visited a community police station (2.5 per cent), stopped a patrol vehicle (0.2 per cent), approached a police officer in person (0.7), had the police initiate the contact (2.1 per cent) or notified the police in some other way (4.0 per cent).

As expected, for a violent victimization, respondents were more likely to telephone 9-11 (28.7 per cent) or visit the police headquarters station (12.9 per cent) when compared to property victimizations (20.0 per cent and 7.9 per cent respectively). Similarly, victims of a property crime were more likely to contact the police by telephoning the non-emergency number (62.9 per cent) than those who experienced a violent victimization (47.5 per cent).

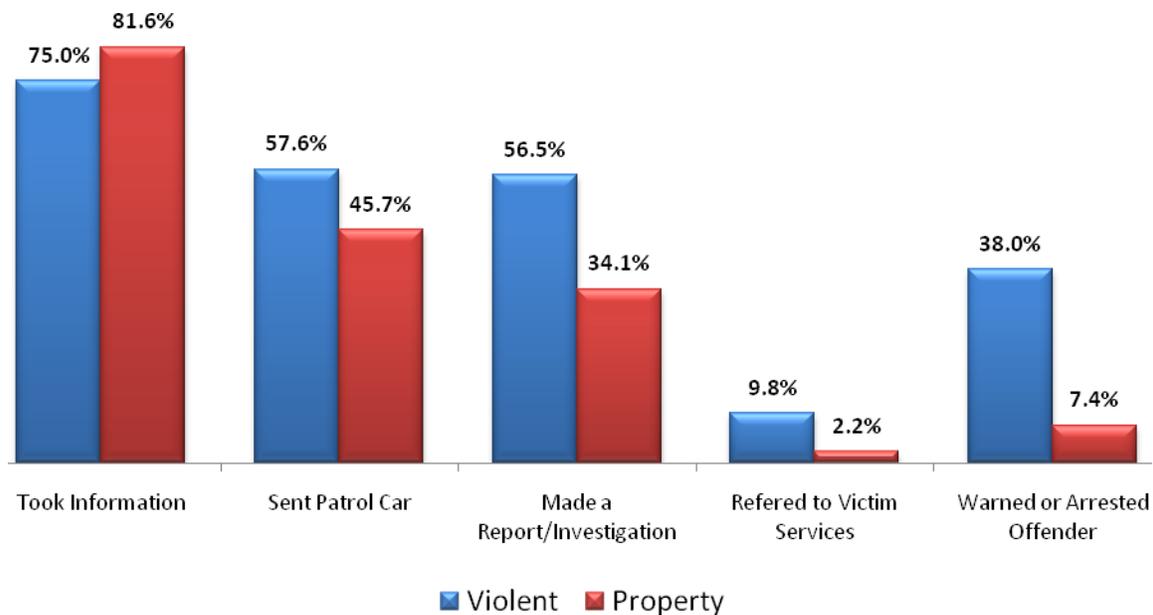
Victims who contacted the police were asked to identify all the ways in which the police responded to their incident. Of the ten options provided, the five most common responses were: took information (80.5 per cent), sent a patrol car (47.8 per cent), made a report or conducted an investigation (37.9 per cent), gave a warning or arrested the offender (12.6 per cent), and provided the information requested by the victim (10.6 per cent). In very few cases did the police request that the victim visit a police station or refer the victim to a community service, a victim service, or some other agency.

In general, therefore, when the police were notified of a victimization, they overwhelmingly took information about the incident. However, in slightly less than half of incidents, a patrol car was sent to the scene. As demonstrated by Figure 5 and other information presented in this report, this finding can be accounted for by the disproportionate amount of property victimizations in this sample and the proportion of violent offences that could be characterised as less serious.

As indicated above, there were some important differences when considering the nature of the victimization (see Figure 5). While police were likely to take information for both violent and property victimizations, they were much more likely to issue either a warning

or make an arrest when the victimization involved violence (38 per cent) compared to a property offence (7.4 per cent).

Figure 5: Local Police Response(s) to calls for Assistance



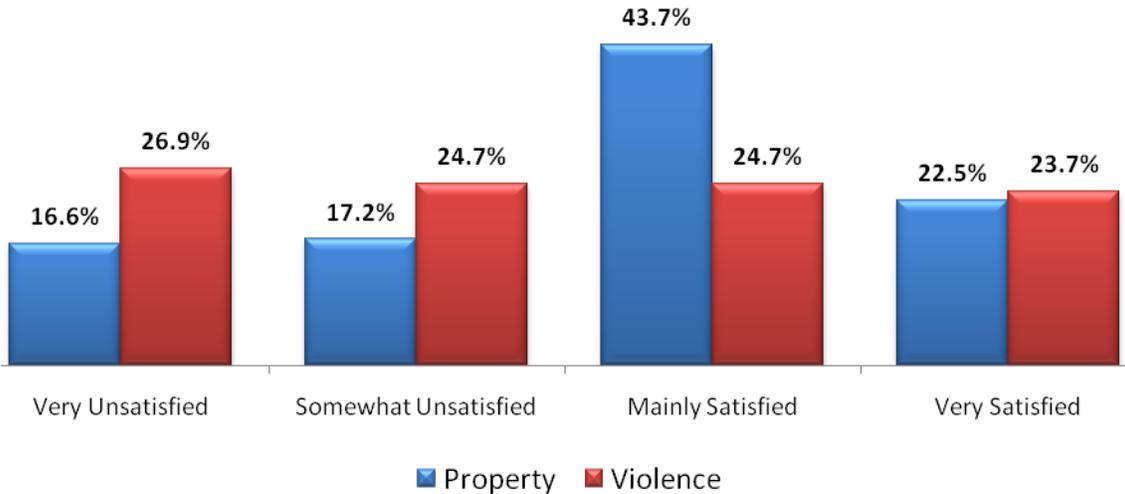
In addition, there was a slight difference in the likelihood of police sending a patrol car when the victimization was violent (57.6 per cent) compared to a property offence (45.7 per cent). From the perspective of victims, police were much more likely to made a report or conduct an investigation when the offence was violent (56.5 per cent) compared to a property offence (34.1 per cent).

Regardless of the actions taken by the police, nearly two thirds of victims (63.2 per cent) reported being either mainly satisfied (40.5 per cent) or very satisfied (22.7 per cent) with the response of the police. However, satisfaction with the police’s response varied by the nature of the victimization.

Victims who identified a violent offence had lower levels of satisfaction with the police’s response (48.4 per cent) compared to victims of a property offence (66.2 per cent). Of concern may the finding that slightly more than one quarter of victims of a violent crime

(26.9 per cent) reported being very unsatisfied with the police’s response compared to just 16.6% of victims of a property offence (see Figure 6).

Figure 6: Satisfaction with Police Response based on the Nature of Victimization



It is also important to note that while there was virtually no difference in the reported level of being very satisfied by the nature of the victimization, there was a substantial difference in feeling mainly satisfied by the nature of the victimization. Specifically, nearly half (43.7 per cent) of victims of a property offence felt mainly satisfied, however, slightly less than one quarter (24.7 per cent) of victims of violence were satisfied with the police’s response.

Interestingly, there were gender differences in the level of satisfaction with police when considering violent victimizations. While more than half (54.7 per cent) of females were either somewhat or very satisfied with the police’s response to their violent victimization experience, only 41% of males felt similarly. However, a slightly greater proportion of females (29.5 per cent) compared to males (21.2 per cent) felt very unsatisfied with the police’s response to their experiences with being the victim of a violent offence. In other words, while male victims of violence were more likely than their female counterparts to feel somewhat unsatisfied with the police response, female victims of violence were more likely to feel very unsatisfied.

Those respondents who did not contact the police as a result of their most negative victimization in the past 12 months (n = 598) were asked to identify the reasons why they chose to not notify the police. Of the 12 options provided, there were only four reasons that were somewhat commonly reported. The most commonly cited reason was a belief that the police could not do anything about the incident (64.8 per cent). This reason was followed by a view that the incident was too minor (57.3 per cent) and/or was dealt with in another way (11.5 per cent). Positively, only 3.5% of victims reported that they believed the police would not help or did not want the police to get involved (2 per cent).

There were some substantial differences in the reasons why people did not contact the police by the nature of the victimization (see Table 5). While the large proportion of property victims who believed that the police could not do anything about the incident (66.8 per cent) may have been expected, it is important to note that more than half (55.7 per cent) of victims of a violent offence felt the same way. However, the fact that nearly half (42.6 per cent) of those who were violently victimized did not contact the police because they felt that the incident was too minor or not important enough helps explain the previous finding. In addition, given the specific types of violent victimization reported, it is not unexpected that these victims might regard the incident as too minor, even given the fact that this was the victimization in the past 12 months which had the most negative impact on them.

This conclusion is further supported by the quarter of victims of violence (27.9 per cent) who reported that they dealt with the victimization in some way other than contacting the police. The one area of concern with these results may be the slightly more than one fourth of victims of violent (26.2 per cent) who reported not contacting the police because of being afraid of an act of revenge on the part of the offender.

Table 5: Reasons why Victims did not Contact the Police by Nature of Victimization

	Property Victimization % Yes	Violent Victimization % Yes
Did not want to get Involved with the Police or the Courts	2.1%	11.5%
Did not think the Police could do anything about the Incident	66.8%	55.7%
Fear of Revenge by the Offender	5.9%	26.2%
Incident was Too Minor or it was not Important Enough	60.5%	42.6%
Incident was a Personal Matter and did not Concern the Police	1.0%	8.2%
Nothing was Taken or the Items were Recovered	11.5%	4.9%
Incident was Dealt with in Another Way	8.0%	27.9%
Did not want Anyone to Find out about the Incident	0.3%	0
Family Member(s) put Pressure to not Contact the Police	0.3%	3.3%
Belief that the Police would not Help	6.6%	3.3%
Fear of Publicity or Media Coverage	0	1.6%
Did not want a Child or Children to be Arrested or Jailed	1.7%	1.6%

There were no substantial differences by gender or by the nature of the victimization on why respondents chose to not contact the police, however, males who experienced a violent victimization were somewhat more likely than their female counterparts to indicate that they did not contact the police because the matter was dealt with in some other way (33.3 per cent for males compared to 22.6 per cent for females). Moreover, while no males who were the victim of violence reported that they did not contact the police because they felt the police would not help, 6.5% of females indicated this as a reason.

In terms of the overall seriousness of victimization experienced by this sample in the past 12 months, all respondents were asked whether they had been physically injured by any crime in their municipality. Overwhelmingly, respondents indicated that they had not been physically injured by crime (83.3 per cent). A further 12.3% reported that they had been injured but no medical attention was required. In effect, only 4.3% of the sample indicated that they were physically injured by a crime in their municipality which required some medical intervention.

The results are different, however, when one considers financial losses. Less than half of the respondents (40.2 per cent) reported that they had not suffered any financial losses for any crime in their municipality in the past 12 months with a further 3% reporting that their insurance covered any losses they incurred. Moreover, a similar proportion (41.7 per cent) indicated that they suffered financial losses in which insurance companies covered none of the losses, while the remaining 15% stated that their insurance covered only a portion of the losses. In effect, a majority of victims of crime in their municipality in the past 12 months (56.7 per cent) experienced some financial loss.

The situation was somewhat worse for males than females. While nearly half of the females in the sample (44.4 per cent) reported no financial losses as a result of crime, only slightly more than one third (36 per cent) of males agreed. Moreover, nearly half of the male sample (45.5 per cent) compared to slightly more than one third of females (37.9 per cent) reported suffering losses that were not covered at all by insurance companies.

Respondents were also asked whether anyone else in their household had been the victim of a crime in their municipality in the past 12 months. Similar to the results of the sample itself, slightly less than one quarter of respondents (22.1 per cent) indicated that someone in their household had been the victim of at least one crime.⁵ It also appears that respondents in this sample were only victimized in their municipality or respondents simply do not travel very often outside of their municipality because only 2.2% reported that they had been the victim of a criminal offence outside of the municipality that they reside in over the past 12 months.

Attitudes Towards the Local Police

In order to get a general sense of the type of contact that respondents have had with their local police over the past 12 months, respondents were asked whether or not they had any

⁵ This study did not ask respondents to report on the nature or number of victimizations experienced by others in their household.

police contact in addition to the victimizations previously reported. Slightly less than one third (29.4 per cent) of the sample indicated that they had have at least one contact with the police. While the mean number of contacts was 4.7, the range was from 1 contact to 731 contacts. As 98.2% of the sample had 20 contacts or less, those few respondents who indicated more than 20 contacts with police over the past 12 months were dropped from any further analysis.

When considering just those respondents with 20 police contacts or less, the mean number of contacts was 2.4. Table 6 indicates the different reasons given for why respondents had contact with the police.

Table 6: Reasons for having Contact with the Local Police in the Past 12 Months

	%
To Report a Property Crime	16.4%
To Report a Violent Crime	4.6%
To Report a Traffic Incident	12.4%
To Report a Suspicious Person	19.2%
To be Questioned about a Possible Crime	8.6%
To Request Information	13.8%
To Complain about Police Services	2.0%
As Part of a Police Traffic Enforcement Action	21.7%
For Some Other Reason	49.8%

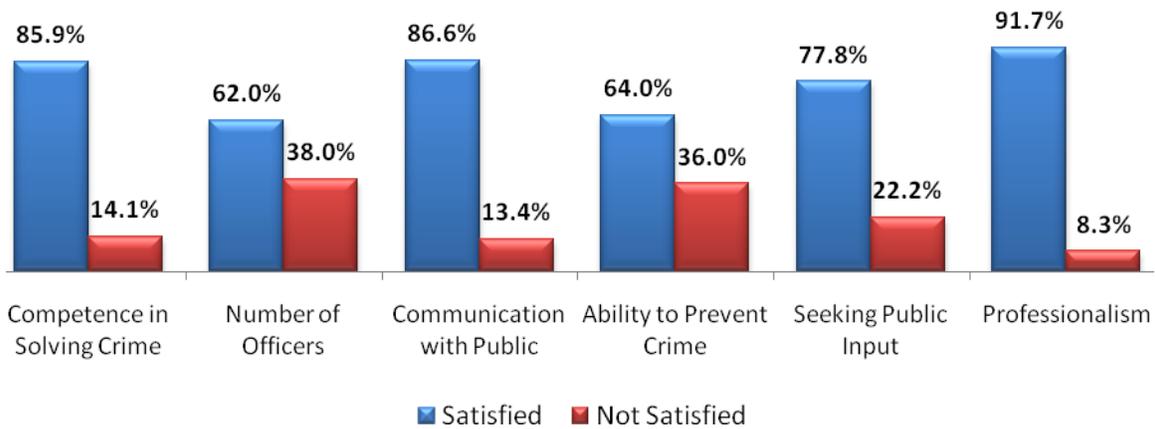
Of the reasons provided, slightly less than one quarter (21.7 per cent) of respondents indicated that they had contact with the police as a result of a traffic enforcement action, and a similar proportion (19.2 per cent) stated that their contact was in connection to reporting a suspicious person (see Table 6). Clearly, other options needed to be provided to respondents as nearly half of those who had some contact with the police (49.8 per cent) reported that it was for some other reason that the options provided in the survey.

Satisfaction with Local Police

All respondents were asked to rate their local police officers on a number of different qualities. In reference to the level of competence in solving crimes, the vast majority of respondents (85.9 per cent) were either mostly or very satisfied with the performance of their local police officers. There was also a very high level of satisfaction (86.6 per cent) with officers' abilities to communicate with the public, seeking public input (77.8 per cent), and the level of professionalism of the local police department (91.6 per cent) (see Figure 7). A substantially lower proportion of respondents (62 per cent) were satisfied with the current number of police officers on the street or the ability of the police to prevent crimes (64 per cent).

These results seem to suggest that the public is generally satisfied with the relationship between the police and community members, but less satisfied about one specific objective of policing, namely preventing crime. To not overstate the point, however, it should be kept in mind that nearly two thirds (64 per cent) of the sample were satisfied with the police’s ability to prevent crime. Nonetheless, there was a very strong positive correlation (.537) between feeling satisfied about the number of officers on the street and feeling satisfied about the police’s ability to prevent crime in this sample.⁶

Figure 7: levels of Satisfaction with Local Police



A correlation between the number of contacts with the police in the past 12 months and one’s rating of the police indicated a very small negative relationship. In other words, while the correlations were extremely weak, the greater the number of contacts with the police, the lower one’s overall ratings of the police.⁷ This finding was unexpected as one might conclude that the negative correlation between frequency of police contact and satisfaction with the police would be much stronger. There is a body of research, mainly out of the United States, suggesting that satisfaction with the police decreases with the number of police contacts, especially for minority groups. However, this was not the case in this sample. Instead, the correlation was extremely weak suggesting that a greater number of police contacts has a very minor effect on one’s level of satisfaction with the police.

⁶ The correlation was statistically significant at the .001 level.

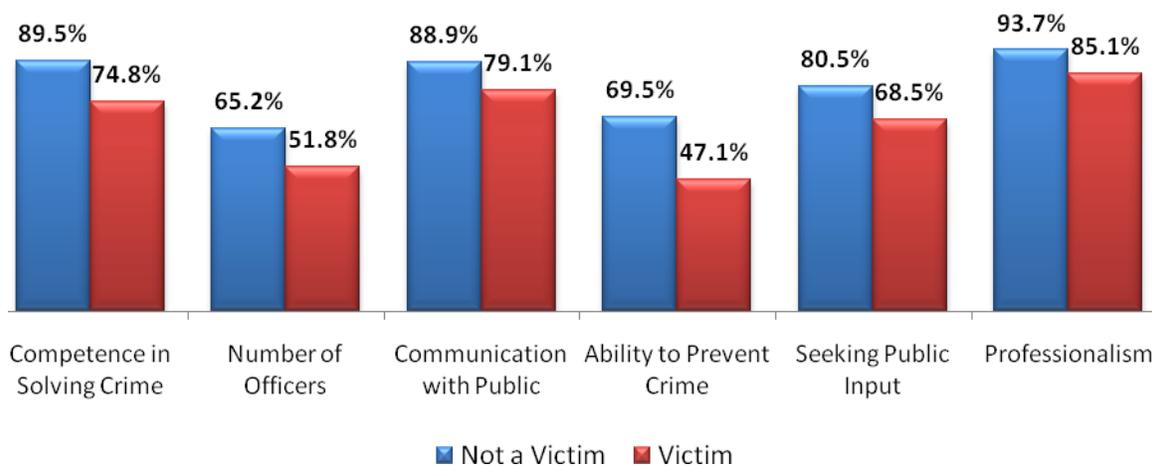
⁷ While all of the correlations, with the exception of number of officers on the street, were statistically significant to the .000 level, the correlations ranged from -.055 to -.113 indicating extremely weak correlations. Moreover, while the direction and strength of the correlations were virtually the same when comparing genders, only the correlations for males remained statistically significant, with the exception of the police’s ability to prevent crimes which was also statistically significant for female respondents.

There were substantial differences in the general attitudes that respondents had towards their local police force when considering whether or not a respondent identified themselves as victim in the past 12 months (see Figure 8). While both groups were very satisfied with the level of professionalism demonstrated by the police, less than half of victims (47.1 per cent) compared to slightly more than two thirds of non-victims (69.5 per cent) indicated that they were satisfied with the ability of their local police to prevent crime.

Again, while a large majority of both victims (74.8 per cent) and non-victims (89.5 per cent) felt satisfied with the police’s competency in solving crime, just slightly more than half of victims (51.8 per cent) and slightly less than two thirds of non-victims (65.2 per cent) were satisfied with the number of officers on the streets in their municipalities.

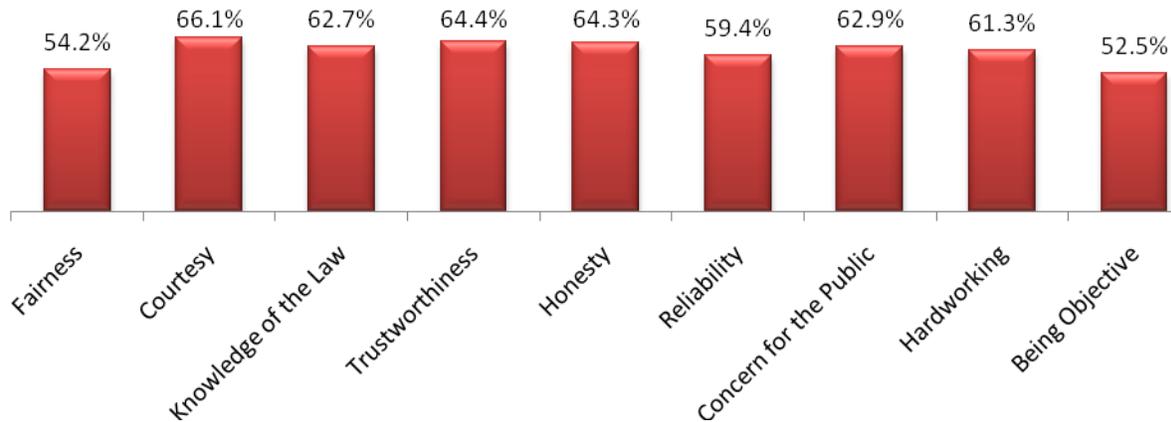
In sum, while there was a general level of satisfaction among respondents for their local police, police might want to be attentive to the public’s perception concerning the number of officers and their ability to prevent crime, primarily because these two issues seem to be related to each other. It should be noted that a majority of the written comments by respondents focused on the issue of increasing police visibility in their communities. In effect, by having a more visible police presence, police might also increase the public’s perception of their ability to prevent crime.

Figure 8: Levels of Satisfaction with the Local Police by Whether Respondent was a Victim of Crime



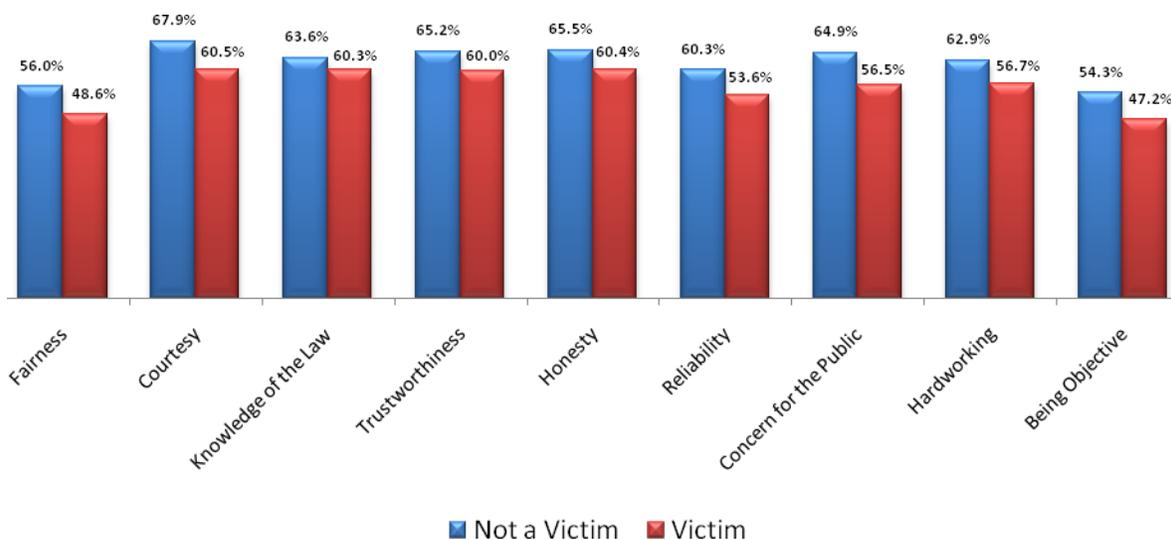
Respondents were also asked to evaluate a typical local RCMP officer on 9 qualities using a five point Likert scale anchored by very low and very high. For the most part, respondents rated officers as either high or very high. Combining these two categories suggests that for all qualities a majority of respondents rated officers as either high or very high (see Figure 9).

Figure 9: Proportion of Respondents Ratings Local RCMP Police Officers as High or Very High



While there were no substantial differences by gender, there were some differences between those who identified as being a victim of at least one crime in the past 12 months and those who were not victims (see Figure 10). Again, in all qualities, a majority of respondents rated officers as either high or very high on all qualities. However, victims had a slightly lower opinion of officers than non-victims. It is important to note that while a majority of victims gave high or very high rating to officers in most qualities, this majority was very slight for reliability (53.6 per cent), concern for the public (56.5 per cent), and hardworking (56.7 per cent). Moreover, less than a majority of victims gave high rating to officers on the qualities of fairness (48.6 per cent) and being objective (47.2 per cent).

Figure 10: Proportion of Respondents Ratings Local RCMP Police Officers as High or Very High

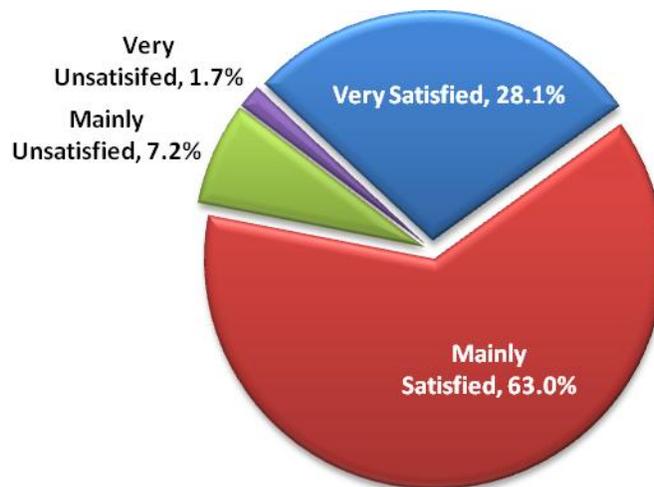


A correlation between ratings of officers and the number of contacts in the past 12 months indicated an extremely weak, yet statistically significant, negative relationship between the number of contacts respondents had with the police and ratings of officers on the above mentioned qualities. In other words, the more contact a respondent had with the police, the lower their ratings of police.⁸ As mentioned above, it was surprising that the negative correlation was so weak. Again, this suggests that respondents, even those with frequent police contact, rate officers as high on most qualities.

While still very weak, the correlations between ratings of officers and the number of contacts for females were slightly higher than for males suggesting that females ranked officers slightly lower than males when controlling for the number of contacts. In other words, females were more likely than males to rate officers lower on every quality the more contacts they had with the police. The same pattern is found when comparing victims to non-victims. Again, while the correlations are extremely weak for both groups, victims tended to rate officers slightly lower than non-victims on all qualities the more contact they had with the police.⁹

In response to a general question about police satisfaction, nearly all respondents (91.1 per cent) indicated that they were either mainly or very satisfied with their local police (see Figure 11).

Figure 11: Overall Satisfaction with Local Police



In considering levels of police satisfaction, there were no gender differences, however, there was a slight difference in the proportion of victims (82.6 per cent) compared to non-victims (93.8 per cent) who felt satisfied. Still, even accepting this difference, it is important

⁸ As mentioned above, the correlations were extremely weak ranging from $-.043$ to $-.112$. All of the correlations, with the exceptions of honesty and hardworking were statistically significant.

⁹ It is critical to keep in mind that these correlations, while statistically significant, are extremely weak.

to note that more than four fifths of all victims reported being either very satisfied (22.7 per cent) or mainly satisfied (59.9 per cent) with their local police force.

A correlation between the number of contacts with police and general levels of satisfaction indicated an extremely weak negative relationship (-.083) suggesting that those with more contacts were slightly less satisfied. This relationship existed when considering whether a respondent was a victim (-.086) and by gender (-.088 for males and -.077 for females).¹⁰

Neighbour Problems and Social Disorganization

All respondents were asked to identify, from a list of potential problems, issues they felt that their local police should devote more resources and attention to. As indicated by Table 7, there were only three problems that were identified by at least one third of the sample: (1) speeding or other traffic-related issues (49.4 per cent); (2) people selling or using drugs (39.3 per cent); and (3) groups of teenagers hanging out and causing trouble (37 per cent). While these findings may be somewhat a reflection of the age range of this sample, it appears that the large majority of respondents did not believe that there were a lot of specific issues that police need to pay more attention to. It is also interesting to note that there were no significant differences by gender. As mentioned above, these kinds of problems are closely related to fear of crime and based on these results, it would appear that the vast majority of the sample does not perceive serious neighbourhood or social disorganization problems which might contribute to both a fear of crime and a reduction in satisfaction with the police.

Table 7: Neighbourhood Problems

	Yes %
Litter, Broken Glass, or Trash on the Sidewalks and Streets	17.3%
Graffiti on Building or Walls	15.4%
Vacant or Deserted Houses or Storefronts	9.4%
Drinking in Public	22.5%
People Selling or Using Drugs	39.3%
Groups of Teenagers Hanging Out and Causing Trouble	37.0%
Groups of Adults Hanging Out and Causing Trouble	16.7%
Speeding or other Traffic-Related Issues	49.4%
Street People	15.3%
Prostitution	11.0%
Gang-Related Crime	16.5%

Conclusion

The results of this survey indicate that the vast majority of residents in these eight RCMP detachment jurisdictions felt that their communities were safe places to live. While the

¹⁰ All of these correlations were statistically significant with the exception of the finding for females. Again, it must be kept in mind that these correlations were extremely weak.

level of safety did decline somewhat in the evening and as respondents move away from their residences, the overall perception of safety remained high. Moreover, the majority of respondents did not feel that their level of safety changed significantly over the past five years. Of the minority of respondents who did report a change in their level of safety, the majority felt that safety had declined somewhat.

This perception of safety may be related to the fact that less than one quarter of the sample reported being the victim of crime in the past 12 months. Most of the reported victimizations, regardless of whether they were property or personal offences, were of a more minor nature. Even though few respondents suffered a major victimization, the majority of respondents contacted the police about their victimization and were generally satisfied with the response and service they received from their local police. It does appear, however, that male victims of violence were less likely to feel satisfied with their treatment by the police. Given this, more must be done by the police to ensure that all victims of crime are satisfied with how the police treated them and their cases.

For the most part, respondents were quite satisfied with both the overall service provided by the police to their community and the quality of officers who serve them. While ratings were somewhat lower for victims compared to non-victims, even victims were generally satisfied with their local police. In addition, very few respondents identified neighbourhood problems that required greater police attention.

In conclusion, while there is a benefit to expanding the current research project to include more RCMP detachments and a more representative sample of British Columbians, when comparing these results to the previous research discussed above, we find the results very comparable, and generally favourable to the RCMP. Like previous research, respondents have a very favourable view of their local police, their performance, and individual officers. In fact, compared to other research, it would appear that in addition to respondents in the current study experiencing lower victimization rates and less serious victimizations, respondents were characterized by a lower level of fear of crime and greater satisfaction with the police than sample in other Canadian and American research. As a testament to the role that the RCMP plays in protecting and maintaining the quality of life in Canada, respondents felt safe in their homes and communities, willing to notify the police when victimized, and generally satisfied with the professionalism of the police and their treatment by the police.

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