



SASKATOON _____
POLICE SERVICE

TO: Jo Custead, Chairperson
Board of Police Commissioners

FROM: Troy Cooper
Office of the Chief

DATE: 2021 December 03

SUBJECT: Community Satisfaction and Policing Priority Survey

FILE #: 9,005

ISSUE:

Since 2002, the Saskatoon Police Service has contracted an independent company to conduct a community satisfaction survey to measure the levels of satisfaction with the Police Service as well as community perceptions about crime and safety issues. This survey has typically been completed every three years and this report summarizes the results of the 2021 Community Satisfaction and Policing Priority Survey.

RECOMMENDATION:

That this report be received as information.

STRATEGIC PRIORITY:

This report supports our strategic theme of Crime & Safety by measuring and addressing community concerns that affect public safety and our strategic theme of Communication by enhancing our communications with the public to maintain transparency and trust.

BACKGROUND:

In 2002, the Saskatoon Police Service (SPS) contracted an independent company to conduct a community satisfaction survey to measure the levels of satisfaction with the SPS as well as community perceptions about crime and safety issues. Every three years moving forward the survey has been conducted.

“PUBLIC AGENDA”

In August 2020, an adjustment was made to the timeline in which the community satisfaction survey was conducted to more closely align with the 2020-2024 SPS Strategic Plan. This realignment allows for the feedback received from the community satisfaction survey to be used when updating the Strategic Plan at its mid-point and end point. Rather than conducting the community satisfaction survey every three years, the timeline was reduced to every two-and-a-half years to correspond with future five-year Strategic Plans.

Insightrix has performed the community satisfaction survey for the SPS in 2008, 2011, 2014, 2017 as well as this most recent version in 2021. Thanks to this consistency, the survey allows for a comparison of results over time. Despite slight modifications to the questions for the 2021 survey, comparisons over time could still be made. The 2021 survey was made via telephone to a sample of 526 respondents between October 7 and November 9, 2021. All respondents were Saskatoon residents and over the age of 18 and results were weighted by age, gender, Indigenous ancestry, and minority status to match the 2016 Statistics Canada Census.

DISCUSSION:

Key Takeaways:

- Overall, Saskatoon residents remain satisfied with the SPS. 87% of respondents reported feeling satisfied with overall service. However, a reduction in satisfaction in some areas have caused overall satisfaction to soften slightly when compared to previous years.
- Respondents of Indigenous ancestry typically hold less favourable perceptions of the SPS. This has been a similar finding in previous versions of this survey.
- Residents have increasing concern over homelessness, mental health, addictions, organized crime and fraud.
- Saskatoon residents strongly support body-worn cameras as well as alternative policing measures, such as the Alternative Service Delivery pilot and the partnering of mental health professionals with SPS officers (i.e. Police and Crisis Team – PACT)
- Traditional news sources are becoming less common for receiving information related to SPS news.

Perceptions of the SPS

- **More than 84% percent of respondents perceive SPS officers to be hardworking, courteous, honest and fair.** This is mostly unchanged from previous surveys (expect for Fair, which dropped from 91% in 2017 to 84% in 2021).
- 52% and 66% of respondents disagree that SPS officers are intimidating and arrogant.
- The most notable decline in perceptions of SPS come in the categories of responding fairly (66% agree in 2021 compared to 78% in 2017) and public trust (71% in 2021, 83%

“PUBLIC AGENDA”

in 2017). To a lesser extent, declines were also observed in responding to quality of life issues (69% in 2021, 76% in 2017) and using appropriate use of force (77% in 2021, 83% in 2017).

- **Overall service satisfaction was 87% in 2021.** This is down from 93% in 2017, 92% in 2014, 92% in 2011 and 90% in 2008.
- The reasons given for the perceived reduction of service satisfaction have to do with service issues such as slow response, needing more police officers and insufficient investigations. Respondents also pointed to SPS officers needing to be more visible, police being ineffective, and a discriminatory/racist attitude of personnel as being other reasons contributing to a drop in overall satisfaction with service.

Perceptions of Safety

- **86% of respondents felt safe in their neighbourhoods.**
- Residents in Central Division were less likely to feel safe in their neighbourhoods (54%) compared to East Division (93%) and Northwest Division (85%).
- Most common reasons cited for feeling unsafe in their neighbourhoods included suspicious people, general feelings of unease, fear of physical assault, lack of police in the area, and recent incidents in the area.
- **37% of respondents believed crime in their neighbourhood has increased in the last five years.** This is up compared to past years (30% in 2017, 27% in 2014, 28% in 2011 and 27% in 2008).
- Residents in Central Division were more likely to perceive that crime in their neighbourhood has increased a lot.

Perceptions of Policing Problems and Priorities

- The COVID-19 pandemic has impacted perceptions of policing problems and priorities.
- **Survey results indicate that, within neighbourhoods, police not being visible and public safety in general have increased in perceived importance.** In terms of specific crimes, residential break and enters remain the most important perceived importance (30%) with drug law enforcement (20%) and robbery (17%) rounded out the top three.
- In terms of City-wide perceived problems and priorities, **drug law enforcement and robbery continued to have the highest perceived priority** (42% and 18% respectively). **Poverty/homelessness and public safety in general saw the largest increases compared to 2017.**

“PUBLIC AGENDA”

- Concern has increased for frauds, juvenile prostitution and presence of crowds, strikers, or protestors compared to 2017.

Crime and Crime Issues: Information Sources

- Traditional information sources (ex. television newscasts, newspapers) are becoming less common for Saskatoon residents to receive information related to the SPS. Comparatively, digital sources such as social media and websites are becoming increasingly more common sources for respondents to receive SPS-related information.
- Interactions with police in the past twelve-months have remained steady compared to 2017. On average, four in ten Saskatoon residents had an interaction with the SPS in the twelve months prior to the survey. Respondents that reported having an Indigenous ancestry were more likely to have an interaction with the SPS.

-
- **75% of respondents that had an interaction with SPS Communications reported good or excellent service.** This is down from 89% in 2017. Reasons cited for this drop in perceived service quality were dissatisfaction with results/follow up, impatience/unhelpfulness and negative comments by Communications staff.
 - **81% of respondents believed quality of service by SPS officers was good or excellent.**

Social Media

- Coverage through traditional media and social media tended to have the same effect on respondents' perceptions of the SPS. In other words, neither traditional nor social media can be pointed to as creating a more negative or more positive perception of the SPS.

Body Worn Cameras

- The public sentiment for Body-Worn Cameras is extremely supportive.
- **98% of respondents support the use of body-worn cameras by police generally.**
- **88% of respondents believe the use of body-worn cameras will increase public trust in police.**
- 57% of respondents have no concerns related to the use of Body-Worn Cameras. 23% of respondents were concerned that Body-Worn Cameras were reliant on officers turning the cameras on while 7% were concerned about invasion of privacy.

“PUBLIC AGENDA”

Downtown Safety

- 51% of respondents visit Saskatoon’s downtown on a monthly or less frequent basis.
- **71% of respondents found social disorder to be the most important issue in downtown. Specifically, respondents cited homelessness and panhandling as the most pressing issues related to social disorder in downtown.**
- 74% of respondents feel safe walking downtown.
- 36% of respondents feel downtown is less safe now than it was five years ago.
- 54% of respondents believed increased police presence would make downtown feel safer.

Redefining Role of Police

- Respondents were very supportive of initiatives focusing around redefining role of police.
- **92% of respondents would support an alternative response officer responding to their call for service if the call was non-criminal and non-threatening in nature.**
- **94% of respondents felt it was valuable to partner police with a mental health professional for the purposes of responding to calls that are non-criminal and non-threatening in nature.**

Values and Mission of the Saskatoon Board of Police Commissioners

- **Integrity** is perceived to be the most important policing value.

CONCLUSION:

Our Vision is to continually improve community safety. The results of this survey are an important indicator for the Saskatoon Police Service about important policing priorities for our community and the survey is also an important measure of citizen satisfaction.

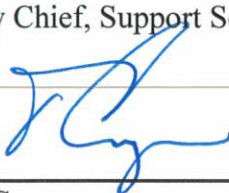
Although the survey results indicate the SPS remains on track in continuing to provide excellent service, there is still room for improvement. Through this survey and through other community engagement, any areas of improvement can be highlighted and addressed operationally.

“PUBLIC AGENDA”

Additionally, this survey touches on topics directly relating to the future role of police and how the public perceives some of the ongoing and upcoming changes related to service-delivery. It is encouraging to see the positive public sentiment surrounding some of these initiatives (eg. Body Worn Cameras, Alternative Service Delivery Model, PACT).

Written by: Mitchell Nemeth, Research Coordinator
Planning & Research Section

Mitch Yuzdepski
Deputy Chief, Support Services



Submitted by:

Troy Cooper
Chief of Police

Dated:

December 7, 2021