

DOCUMENT 4: Community Needs Survey

The Ottawa Police Service (OPS) and the Ottawa Police Service Board (Board) launched a Community Needs Survey to gather input from community members to help inform strategic planning. This survey gathered input from stakeholders, residents, and community groups.

The survey was available from July 1 to July 27 on the OPS website and was offered in multiple languages: English, French, Spanish, Arabic, Chinese, Somali, and Farsi. The survey was promoted widely through multiple channels and direct outreach to marginalized groups. The survey included a combination of quantitative and qualitative. In total, over 3,100 residents completed the survey.

It is important to note that the survey was not randomized nor scientific. However, the survey provided an opportunity for broad public input. The results complement other inputs and market research by completed by firms retained by the OPS. Those who took the time to complete the survey provided valuable input that to help guide strategic planning and service delivery.

Analysis of this 2023 survey includes some comparisons to the 2020 Community Survey, which was similarly distributed by the OPS and the Board to inform the 2021 OPS Budget.

The survey included questions on personal safety and community safety priorities. The survey helps gauge the level of trust and satisfaction with the police service.

Highlights

The results highlight that nearly half of the respondents were satisfied with their personal safety. More than two-thirds (69%) indicated that they trust the police, which is an increase of 20 percent compared to the last OPS Community Survey in 2020.

When asked to rate the performance of the OPS, almost half of respondents (46%) indicated that the police are doing a good job ensuring public safety and security at public events. More than a third said police were good at responding to emergency calls, providing services in English and French, and enforcing the law.

The OPS was evaluated most positively in terms of making a positive contribution toward community safety and well-being and treating people with respect.

When asked what investments the OPS should prioritize, an alternative model for mental health response was a top priority, followed by community policing and traffic

safety. When asked what type of interactions people most appreciate, the most frequently identified areas related to partnership and community engagement.

Regarding community safety, the top three areas of concern identified by respondents were child exploitation, drug overdoses, addictions and mental health, and gun/gang violence.

When asked what issues the OPS and Board should prioritize, gun/gang violence and traffic were the top priorities. Just over one-third of respondents (34%) reported satisfaction with the OPS service delivery by the OPS.

Increasing staffing and police visibility was the most frequent recommendation in response to several questions, including how to improve quality of service, how to continue building trust.

People living in rural and suburban areas indicated a need for an increased police presence compared to those in urban communities. Fostering and demonstrating accountability were also key themes regarding trust and addressing social disorder, especially in downtown.

Respondents

Approximately one-quarter (26%) of respondents indicated they had been victims of crime in the past two years.

Most survey respondents (67%) had contact with police in the past two years.

- 30 percent had spoken with an officer on patrol,
- 26 percent had contact with the OPS at a community or special event,
- 25 percent were involved with the OPS when a crime was committed,
- 24 percent know an OPS member personally,
- 9 percent spoke with an officer at an OPS building,
- 9 percent indicate they network with OPS members.

Respondent demographics

Community Survey Respondents	Survey Sample % (n=3,122)
Age group 18-34/15-34	14%

35-54	38%
55 and older	43%
Prefer not to answer	6%
Gender	
Male	39%
Female	52%
Two-spirited, Transgender, or Other	3%
Prefer not to answer	6%
Income	
Less than \$60K	14%
\$60K - \$100K	22%
\$100K - \$200K	33%
\$200K+	13%
Prefer not to answer	19%
Ethnicity	
White	77%
Indigenous	2%
Middle Eastern	2%
Black	2%
East Asian / Southeast Asian	2%
Latin/Hispanic	1%
Other	5%
Prefer not to answer	10%
Immigrated in past 5 yrs	2%
Prefer not to answer	4%
Person with a disability	17%
Prefer not to answer	7%

Community	
Urban	43%
Suburban	46%
Rural	11%

Observations

The following observations include quantitative and qualitative data analysis and some comparisons with responses from the 2020 Community Needs Survey.

Perceptions of Safety and Community Safety Concerns

Almost half of community survey respondents (46%) were satisfied with their person safely; 26 percent were not. A common perception is that community safety has decreased in the past three years. Over 60 percent (64%) of respondents said community safety has decreased in Ottawa.

Respondents were asked how concerned they were about various community safety topics. The table below shows issues that were very or extremely concerning for more than half of the respondents.

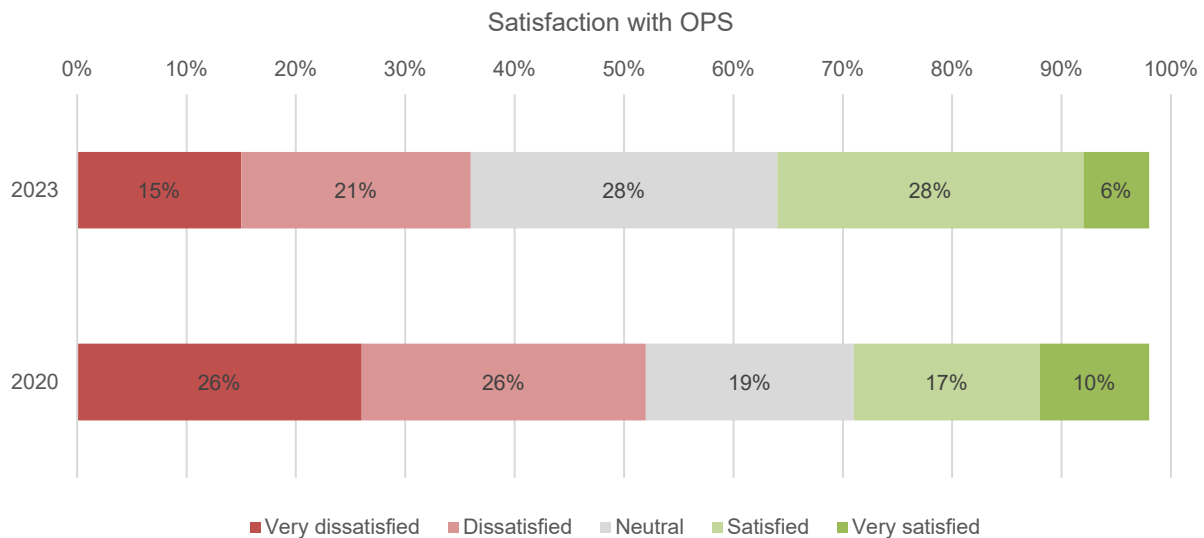
Community safety issues	% respondents (n=3.9K)
Overdoses / Addictions / Mental health	67%
Child safety	65%
Gun, Gang and Drug violence	63%
Violence against Women/Intimate Partner Violence	59%
Sexual assault	59%
Internet/cybercrime	54%
Hate incidents/hate crime	54%
Auto thefts	54%

Traffic safety	53%
Youth crime	52%

Almost three-quarters of respondents indicated concern about ‘other’ issues, particularly social disorder (such as homelessness and disorder in the Byward Market), road safety, and police conduct.

Perceptions of the Ottawa Police Service

Just over one-third of respondents (34%) were satisfied with the level of service. This is higher than results from the 2020 Community Needs Survey (27%).



In addition to rating their levels of satisfaction with the police, participants were asked to rate several aspects of policing. Almost half of the respondents (46%) indicated that the police are good at ensuring public safety and security at public events.

More specifically, the following table shows the percentage of respondents who rated the OPS as good or very good to the provided list of indicators.

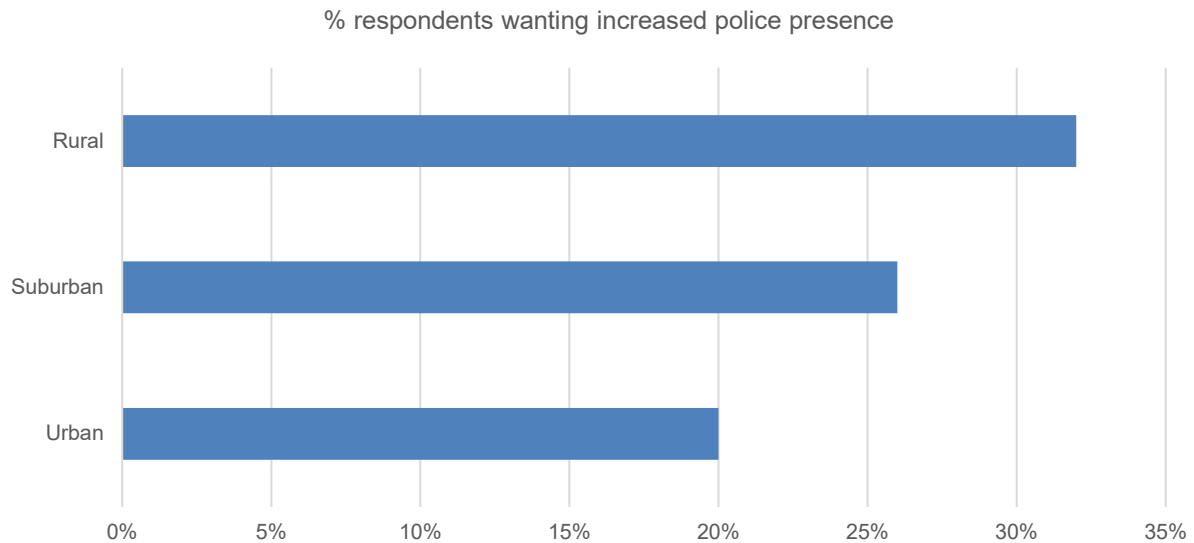
Performance indicator	% respondents, good or very good
Ensuring public safety and security at public events	47%

Responding to emergency calls	39%
Providing services in French/English	36%
Enforcing the law	34%
Providing valuable service to the community	32%
Providing police presence at community events	32%
Having a workforce that reflects diversity	31%
Providing police presence in police vehicles	29%
Assisting victims of crime	23%
Working with neighbourhood residents, businesses, and community groups to improve community safety and well-being	20%
Improving traffic safety	20%
Proving police presence foot or bike	15%
Using financial and human resources efficiently	14%
Preventing crime	14%
Improving responses to Violence against Women (VAW) and Intimate Partner Violence (IPV)	13%
Providing services other languages	12%
Reducing gun and gang violence	10%

When asked to provide feedback on “changes to improve the quality-of-service delivery provided by the OPS?” the most common suggestion was an increase in OPS staffing and police visibility. Examples include:

- “More on foot/bike police as a presence in our community.”
- “Increase community presence.”

While a call to increase police presence was a consistent theme (24% of all respondents), respondents from rural and suburban communities more frequently wanted an increased police presence.

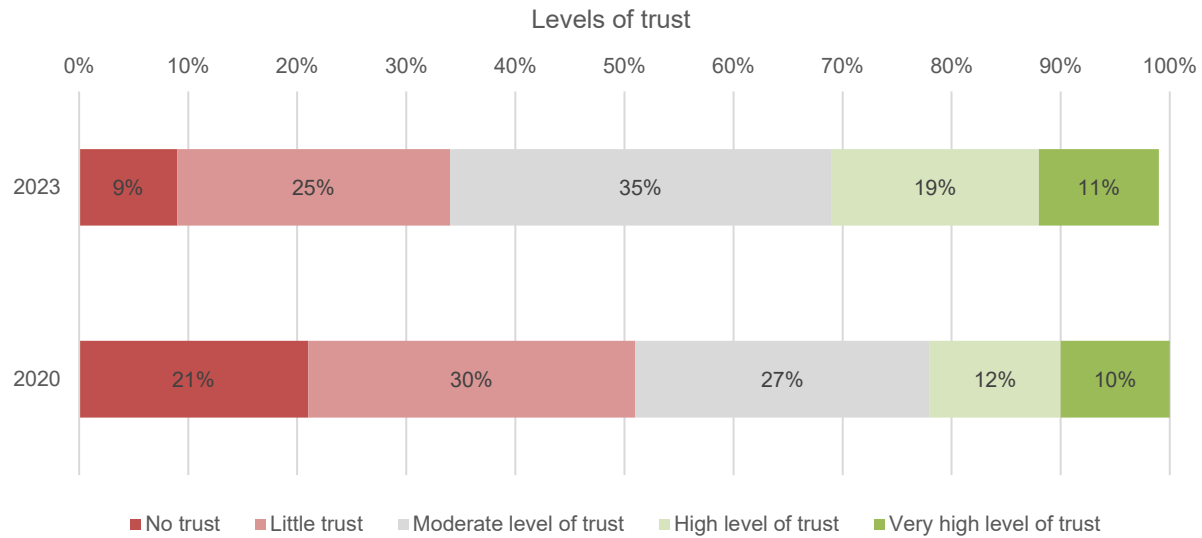


Other recommendations included improving road safety, and service efficiency through better resource management.

Trust

More than two-thirds of respondents (69%) indicated they have moderate to very high levels of trust in the police. This is an improvement from the 2020 Community Needs Survey when only 49 percent of respondents indicated trust in the police.

Approximately 40 percent of respondents agree that the OPS is committed to building public trust.



Building community trust

Respondents were asked what police could do to continue building community trust. Similar to previous questions, increases in staffing and police presence were among the top three recommendations. Other common themes were to improve accountability, transparency, and communication. Further, a need to build community policing, enhance partnerships, and foster community engagement.

Indicators of trust and integrity

Respondents were asked several statements relating to trust, integrity, and community relations. The results were most favourably in terms of making a positive contribution towards community safety and well-being. More than a third of respondents indicated that the police treat people with respect and respect their Charter rights, show care and compassion, are committed to building trust and advancing equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI), use force only when necessary and enforce the law fairly, and are an organization with integrity.

Police were rated least favourably in terms of being open and transparent – only 18 percent agreed with that statement.

The table below shows percentages of respondents who agreed or strongly agreed with each of the provided indicators.

Indicators of trust	Net agree/strongly agree
Makes a positive contribution towards community safety and well-being	47%
Treats people with respect	46%
Shows duty of care and compassion for citizens	42%
Respects people's Charter and human rights	41%
Is committed to building public trust	41%
Uses force only when necessary	39%
Is committed to advancing EDI	37%
Enforces the law fairly	37%
Is an organization with integrity	35%
Provides the same quality of service to all citizens	32%
Makes decisions based on facts	32%
Work effectively in multicultural settings	30%
Deals with the crime/social disorder/safety concerns that matter to people	30%
Is sensitive to the potential needs of individuals living with mental health concerns	27%
Works well in partnership with the community	25%
Is an open and transparent organization	18%

Policing priorities

Survey respondents were asked about their top three priorities for the organization. Below are the top five most frequent themes.

1. **Alternative model for mental health response:** Creating a process that calls for service for those suffering from mental health and addictions issues are referred to external partners/service providers rather than the OPS (57%)
2. **Community Policing:** Further expanding the Neighbourhood Resource Teams to suburban and rural communities (44%)
3. **Traffic Safety:** Developing education initiatives, enforcement measures, and new technologies to make our streets safer for all road users (38%);
4. **Violence Against Women:** Making investments in programs and initiatives to provide a more victim-centred and trauma-informed response (27%); and
5. **Youth Strategy:** Creating a plan for youth outreach to reduce victimization and criminality (27%).

Modernization of the police service, such as improving projects related to Human Resources (HR), Information Technology (IT), risk management received the lowest percentage of votes (6%).

Thirteen percent of respondents selected 'other' and specified in an open-text box. The most named priorities were addressing gang and gun crimes (19%) and drug-related crimes (9%), as well as increasing staffing (8%) and enforcement (6%).

Interactions with Police

Respondents were asked what type of interactions with OPS members they most appreciate. As with responses to other questions, a call for increased presence and visibility was the most frequent category of responses. Some respondents indicated that a need for an increased police presence in specific areas of the city, like the Byward Market and the suburbs. Others focused on a desire to see police on foot or bike patrol. Respondents also indicated they appreciate informal conversations with police.

Responses also included partnership and engagement, such as outreach at community events and collaboration with other support services, as well as opportunities for sharing of information and ideas at community forums or meetings. Examples include:

- “Show and tell / open house. Presence at community events, not just for security.”
- “Interactions/appearances at community events.”

- “More community consultation.”

Another category of responses relates to OPS engagement with youth, particularly more outreach to children and youth and more youth programming. Respondents valued informal interactions between officers and youth, and many encouraged the police to do more to seek out such opportunities. Many also called for police to be back in schools.

Yet while many comments relayed positive experiences that respondents had with police, and a desire to have more opportunities for engagement, it is important to note that seven percent of respondents indicated they wanted little to no involvement with police.

Similarly, six percent of respondents described negative impressions of OPS, either citing a generally negative impression of the police or referring to a negative encounter they’d had.

Other categories of responses include emphasis on enforcement activities, particularly relating to road safety, drugs, and social disorder, as well as being prompt when responding to emergencies but also empathetic and compassionate when dealing with victims and people in crisis.

Overall, it is clear that most respondents want police to increase their presence in the city, but to do so in approachable, respectful, and community-focused ways.

Benefits of Technology

Those who completed the survey were asked to comment on the benefits of technology in policing by indicating their level of support to the following question “To what extent do you believe technology and data-driven solutions such as body-worn cameras and community safety data platforms can improve the effectiveness and transparency of policing services in the community?” The majority of respondents seem to be in favour in using technology to improve transparency and accountability; nearly half (45%) believed it would improve effectiveness and transparency.

Conclusion

While the 2023 Community Needs Survey was not randomized or scientific, it provides valuable public feedback for the OPS and Board.

Consistent with other feedback, key priorities for the Service are developing an alternative response for those suffering from mental health or addiction issues,

improving the model of community policing by tailoring service to specific communities, and continued investments in traffic and road.