

**Report to / Rapport au:**

**OTTAWA POLICE SERVICES BOARD  
LA COMMISSION DE SERVICES POLICIERS D'OTTAWA**

**26 November 2018 / 26 novembre 2018**

**Submitted by / Soumis par:**

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**SUBJECT: PUBLIC SURVEY**

**OBJET: RECHERCHE PUBLIQUE**

**REPORT RECOMMENDATIONS**

**That the Ottawa Police Services Board receive this report for information.**

**RECOMMANDATIONS DU RAPPORT**

**Que la Commission de services policiers d'Ottawa prenne connaissance du  
présent rapport à titre d'information.**

**BACKGROUND**

The Ottawa Police Services Board (OPSB), in collaboration with the Ottawa Police Service (OPS), is in the process of developing the 2019-2021 Strategic Plan. To inform this Plan, public and stakeholder feedback is required. Specifically, the OPSB and the OPS want to better understand Ottawa residents' perceptions of:

- personal safety and security;
- neighbourhood / City crime and disorder concerns;
- ratings of OPS performance and quality of service;
- trust in the OPS and underlying drivers of trust;
- incidence of and satisfaction with contact with Ottawa police;
- personal experience with crime / victimization; and

- top issues / priorities for the OPSB/OPS to address.

Following a competitive process, Ipsos Public Affairs, a leading public opinion research firm, was engaged to conduct the public opinion research on behalf of the OPSB and OPS. This research was conducted over the summer 2018. Unlike past years, when some segments of our community were less likely to participate, concerted efforts were made to expand participation in the current planning process. Ipsos selected a variety of methods to ensure that the perceptions from a broad range of residents of Ottawa were gathered, including:

1. **Representative Survey.** The 2018 Public Survey on Policing Services in the City of Ottawa is the 8<sup>th</sup> in a series of surveys conducted every three to four years since 1995 in which residents have been invited to provide their perceptions. A random sample of 17,200 Ottawa residents were invited to participate in the survey. The sample was stratified by municipal ward and each household was mailed an invitation to complete the survey online. Smaller wards were over-sampled in order to ensure a minimum of n=100 completed surveys per ward for analysis purposes. Respondents could complete the survey in English, French, Spanish, Arabic, Cantonese, Mandarin, Somali and Farsi. Paper copies of the survey in these languages were also mailed upon request. One reminder letter was mailed during the fieldwork. The survey contained 47 questions and took residents an average of 20 minutes to complete.

A total of 3,553 residents completed the survey, reflecting an overall response rate of 21%. This response rate is strong for a mail-to-online survey, and comparable to the response rates using the same methodology in 2012 and 2015 (20% and 28%, respectively). The sample achieved a margin of error of  $\pm 1.9\%$ , 19 times out of 20. The final sample distribution closely matched the adult population of Ottawa in most key demographics, though it under-represented multi-unit dwellings and younger respondents.

2. **Public-wide Survey.** The same survey instrument was also made available to the Ottawa public at large. This open-link survey was promoted by OPSB and OPS on their websites, via social media and through outreach to community groups, and was available in the same languages as the random sample survey. A total of 1,526 residents completed the open link survey.
3. **Partnership in Action (PIA) Community Consultation sessions.** The OPSB/OPS invited community organizations and previously residents who had previously been under-represented in the survey to provide input in attending four OPSB/OPS-sponsored Partnership in Action (PIA) sessions facilitated by

independent firm Synapcity. Participants were invited to discuss and provide feedback on the following four questions:

- What are the biggest crime and disorder concerns for your community?
- What changes would most improve the quality of service provided by the Ottawa Police?
- What can the Ottawa Police Service do to continue to build the trust of your community?
- What should the top strategic priorities be for the Ottawa Police Services Board / the Ottawa Police Service over the next three years?

These sessions were held in Accora Village, Alexander, Overbrook and Heron, and attended by a total of 122 participants, including individual residents and representatives of 44 community organizations. The input gathered was summarized and submitted to Ipsos for analysis via a confidential online feedback form.

4. **Self-Directed Community Engagement Consultation Sessions.** The OPSB/OPS also invited community organizations and residents who had previously been under-represented in the survey to host their own consultation session, and provided a toolkit to support them in providing their input as a group. The same four questions used at the PIA sessions were used. The feedback gathered via these toolkits was summarized and submitted to Ipsos for analysis via a confidential online feedback form. A total of 360 participants attended the 16 community organized sessions.
5. **Social Media Scan / Dialogue.** Ipsos also conducted a social media scan to capture the volume of mentions of OSPB/OPS on social media and to understand the sentiment of those mentions. The scan included mentions made between July 30, 2017 and July 30, 2018 on public-facing social media sites, with a primary focus on Twitter. The scan found 66,017 mentions from 24,124 users. A random sample of 300 of these mentions were analyzed for sentiment.

In addition to Ipsos' scope, the OPS also administered an online survey to gather input from the Mayor and City Councillors. A response rate of 48% was achieved.

## **DISCUSSION**

The results of the 2018 Public Opinion research suggest that the majority of respondents have a high level of satisfaction with the services provided by the OPS. However, there has been a drop in satisfaction since 2015, and the results provide

valuable information about community perceptions and priorities, as well as suggestions for service improvement.

Data summarized below are drawn primarily from the mail-to-online survey results, though results from the open link survey, community engagement consultations, social media scan, and mayor and Council survey were quite consistent.

### **Perceptions of Crime**

- Ottawa residents think crime is on the rise. Three quarters (73%) of Ottawa residents perceive an increase in crime across the city as a whole over the past three years. This marks the second wave of tracking in which perceptions of an increase in crime at the city level have spiked significantly, bringing this opinion to an all-time high (22 point jump from 2015). Boomers, non-males, citizens with disabilities, and the less educated are among the most likely to perceive Ottawa's crime rate as having increased.
- Conversely, a majority of residents (64%) continue to think that the level of crime in their own neighbourhood has held steady over the same period. Seven in ten (69%) see their neighbourhood as having less crime than other neighbourhoods in Ottawa, in line with previous years. At the neighbourhood level, different groups see a rise in crime. Millennial women, crime victims and citizens who have interacted with the OPS are among the most likely to think that the crime rate has increased in their neighbourhood.
- Consistent with past survey results, residents nearly unanimously report feeling safe in their home (97% during the day, 93% after dark) and neighbourhood (92% during the day, 82% after dark).
- Different levels of perceived crime are also visible in feelings of personal safety. While nearly all residents feel safe during the day while at home (97%) or in their neighbourhood (92%), fewer feel safe in public spaces further afield, including on public transit (70%), downtown (68%), along bike paths and walking trails (59%), or in the Byward Market/Rideau (51%). These feelings have not changed much since 2015. At night, perceived safety drops across all areas, but especially in parks and on public transit.
- As was the case in 2015, concern about traffic-related issues is noticeably lower at the neighbourhood level than for Ottawa as a whole. However, speeding cars/aggressive driving and distracted driving still dominate as leading concerns for Ottawa residents.

- Ottawans are less likely to show concern about issues such as gun violence, street gangs, or presence of drugs/dealers in their immediate surroundings, but are more concerned about these issues at the City-level. What's more, concern about gun violence in Ottawa has increased more than any other issue, up 8 points since 2015 to 81%.
- There have been some slight shifts at the neighbourhood level in terms of key concerns, with identity theft (+10%) and internet/cyber crime (+6%) replacing other crimes such as break & enter and vandalism in the top five.

<b>Top 10 Concerns in the <u>Neighbourhood</u></b>			<b>Top 10 Concerns in the <u>City</u></b>		
	<b>2018</b>	<b>Shift vs 2015</b>		<b>2018</b>	<b>Shift vs 2015</b>
1. Speeding cars/ aggressive driving	68%	+3%	1. Distracted driving	86%	-
2. Distracted driving	63%	-6%	2. Speeding cars/ aggressive driving	82%	+2%
3. Identity theft	52%	+10%	3. Gun violence	81%	+8%
4. Theft from vehicles	51%	-4%	4. Street gangs	79%	-
5. Internet/cyber crime	51%	+6%	5. Presence of drugs/dealers	78%	+2%
6. Vandalism	49%	-	6. Youth crime	75%	+1%
7. Break & enter	43%	-13%	7. Sexual assault	74%	+4%
8. Youth crime	40%	-3%	8. Violence against women	73%	+1%
9. Presence of drugs/ dealers	37%	-4%	9. Vandalism	69%	-
10. Robbery	34%	-12%	10. Internet/cybercrime	68%	-1%

## Perceptions of OPS Performance

- Respondents rated various aspects of police performance, and the aspects that received the highest and lowest ratings are summarized below. In general, Ottawa residents rate the police service most favourably on their core responsibilities and in providing services in French and English. However, half or fewer say OPS is doing a good/very good job on preventing crime, in using financial and human resources wisely and in being visible in schools, on foot/bicycle and in police vehicles. Financial and HR efficiency are among the strongest predictors of satisfaction but an area where OPS performance is rated lower. Actions that boost performance ratings on issues like hiring, use of officers in the community, and spending will have a disproportionately strong impact on improving satisfaction overall than actions in other areas.

Highest Rated Aspects of Performance		Lowest Rated Aspects of Performance	
Ensuring public safety and security at public events	83%	Police presence in police vehicles	50%
Providing services in both French and English	80%	Police presence in local schools	48%
Responding promptly to emergency calls	79%	Preventing crime	46%
Enforcing the law	71%	Using financial and human resources efficiently/wisely	44%
Assisting victims of crime	66%	Police presence on foot or bicycle	32%

- Ottawa residents rated the OPS less favourably on their performance in the Chief's three Operational Priorities, Guns and Gangs, Violence Against Women, and Traffic Safety. The most significant downturn is seen in ratings for reducing crime related to guns and gangs; an area where just 21% say the OPS is doing well – a 25-point drop since 2015. However, many admit they're not sure how the OPS is doing in addressing these areas (particularly in reducing violence against women).

## Perceptions of the Quality of OPS Service

- A significant majority of Ottawa residents – seven in ten (72%) – continue to be satisfied overall with the quality of service provided by the Ottawa Police. Satisfaction has declined somewhat, by 6 points, since 2015. Very few (7%) are dissatisfied with the quality of service provided; however, dissatisfaction has increased 4 points since 2015. Ottawa citizens who do not identify as either male or female are nearly four times more likely to indicate that they are very dissatisfied with the quality of services provided by the Ottawa Police. As well, while most indicated that the quality of service has remained the same (43%) or increased (21%) in the past three years, the proportion of residents who thought the quality of service has declined has increased to 11% (up 7 points from 2015). This 11% are most likely to cite a perceived increase in crime or issues related to OPS service or conduct as the reasons for the deterioration in quality of service.

## Perceptions of Trust and Cooperation

- Nearly two in three residents (64%) have a good level of trust in the Ottawa Police, rating it as high or very high. This is in line with previous years (+3 pts), despite a wording change in the question to “trust” from the previous “confidence.” A further three in ten (30%) have a moderate level of trust, while only 5% say they have little to no trust in the OPS. A majority (79%) say their trust in the OPS hasn’t changed in the past three years.
- Millennials, crime victims, citizens with disabilities, and those who contacted the police within the past three years rate the OPS lower on trust and are more likely to think that the quality of police services has deteriorated.
- New in 2018, residents rated the OPS in terms of procedural justice, distributive justice and community engagement. The table below summarizes the areas in which OPS received the highest and lowest agreement ratings. Though the majority agreed that police are respectful, show care and concern, can be relied upon, respect peoples’ rights and make decisions based on facts, less than half agreed that OPS avoid the use of unnecessary force, treat everyone fairly or equally, and are sensitive to the needs of those suffering from mental health issues.

Highest Rated Perceptions of OPS		Lowest Rated Perceptions of OPS	
The OPS addresses citizens in a respectful manner	77%	The OPS avoids the use of unnecessary force	50%
The OPS shows care and concern for the welfare of the citizens they deal with	74%	The OPS treats everyone fairly, regardless of who they are	48%
The OPS can be relied on to be there when you need them	73%	The OPS treats everyone equally	46%
The OPS respects peoples' rights	71%	The OPS is sensitive to the needs of individuals suffering from mental health issues	43%
The OPS makes decisions based on facts	70%	The OPS is an open and transparent organization	38%

- Openness and transparency and treating people equally are among the strongest predictors of trust in OPS, yet fewer residents agree OPS is doing well in these areas. While overall trust in the police is at 64%, significantly more Ottawa residents – nine in ten – say they'd be willing to cooperate or communicate with the police if the need arose.
- Two in three (65%) “strongly agree” they would cooperate with the police and provide information if they witnessed a crime. By contrast, under half (47%) say the same about reporting suspicious activities to the police.

### Contact with Police and Satisfaction with Contact

- About half of Ottawa residents (51%) claim to have had contact with the Ottawa Police over the past three years.
- The most typical forms of interaction with Ottawa Police include casual conversation (31%) or receiving assistance or information from a police officer (30%). Both of these are up considerably since 2015.
- Two in ten used police services such as the website (21%) or the non-emergency number, while more than one in ten visited the front desk of a police station (14%), called 911 (13%), or visited a police station to request a background check (12%).



- Regardless of the type of contact or interaction with Ottawa Police, a majority of residents claim to be satisfied or even very satisfied with the experience.
- Satisfaction is highest with regards to casual contact (89%) and receiving assistance/information (88%). It is lowest with regards to online reports to OPS to report crime and to speaking with an officer as a crime victim.

Highest Rated Types of Contact with OPS		Lowest Rated Types of Contact with OPS	
Casual contact with police officer	89%	Questioned by officer/asked for ID unrelated to a crime	71%
Police officer provided assistance/information	88%	Questioned by officer related to a crime/charged with a crime	70%
Used online form to request background check	84%	Pulled over by a police officer for a traffic stop	67%
Called 911 for emergency police services	84%	Spoke in person to officer when victim of a crime	63%
Visited a police station to request background check	82%	Submitted online report to report a crime	55%

### Crime and Victimization

- Just under two in ten Ottawa residents (18%) say that they or a member of their immediate family have been a victim of crime in the past three years. This is up five points from 2015, but in line with the 17% seen in 2012. Most of the victims of crime were victims of a property crime (theft under \$5,000, mischief/vandalism, and break & enter were most common) versus a crime against the person (primarily threats or intimidation, robbery or assault). A weapon was involved in only 5% of crimes.
- A majority (71%) continue to notify OPS when a crime occurs, but this still leaves three in ten who do not alert the police. In many cases, those who did not notify OPS say the crime was too small to report (24%) or that nothing of real value was stolen or damaged (11%). Yet nearly one in ten say they chose not to report the crime because they felt the police would not be effective (8%) or wouldn't consider the incident important (7%).

- Respondents who were the victim of a crime were asked to rate the actions the OPS took after being notified of the crime as well as their treatment of the victim. Only half (50%) of those who do notify OPS are satisfied with the actions taken by police (27% are dissatisfied, 17% are neutral). Two in three (64%) are satisfied with how well they were treated by OPS (16% are dissatisfied, 14% are neutral). Satisfaction on both measures has declined compared to 2015 (down 10% for actions taken and 13% for treatment by police).

### **Awareness and Perceptions of OPSB**

- Consistent with previous years, about four in ten (42%) claim to be aware of OPSB's role and responsibilities.
- Only two in ten (20%) think the OPSB has enough interaction with the public to understand public needs and perceptions.

### **Top Priorities for OPSB/OPS**

Given the opportunity to suggest top priorities for the OPSB and/or the OPS over the next three years, those who participated in the surveys as well as those who participated via community engagement consultations identified a wide range of priorities. The following is a summary of the range of priorities that were offered:

- continued focus on reducing crime – especially as it relates to guns, knives, gangs, drugs, and violence against specific groups (including women, youth, seniors, ethnic minorities, the LGBTQ2 community, and more);
- continued focus on road safety – particularly distracted driving and cycling, but also transportation law enforcement, aggressive driving/cycling, speeding and other issues;
- greater policing presence – on the streets and in rural communities, whether it be through foot patrols and bike patrols or patrolling in police cars;
- more emphasis on community policing – officers working with the community, community groups and leaders, schools and youth to build relationships and solve problems that support the community and its members;
- enhance partnership activities – work more with community partners to help rebuild community policing with a particular focus on developing relationships with youth in schools;
- broader recruitment – aim for greater diversity among frontline officers and executive levels, and consider hiring people with more diverse skill sets including

counsellors, therapists, and social workers to help police communicate with the communities they serve;

- more education and training for officers – particularly on issues like cultural diversity, mental health, and the root causes of crime;
- improved interactions and communication – treating people equally, being less dismissive, better listening and approachability, improved communications to result in positive police interactions; and
- greater openness, transparency and accountability – in terms of police practices, data collected by the police and how that data is used.

## **CONSULTATION**

A broader range of public consultation methods were employed in 2018 as outlined above, in order to collect input from neighbourhoods and hard to reach groups. Additionally, the in-person public consultation sessions were held at the data collection / research phase versus asking the public to react to a draft Plan later in the process.

## **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

The cost of conducting the public opinion research was included in the OPS' operating budget.

## **SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION**

Document 1 – Executive Summary OPSB/OPS Public Opinion Research, 2018, Ipsos Public Opinion

Document 2 – Summary Presentation OPSB/OPS Public Opinion Research, 2018, Ipsos Public Opinion

[\(Both documents were issued at the Policy & Governance Committee meeting on 21 November 2018.\)](#)

## **CONCLUSION**

The 2018 Public Opinion research has provided an opportunity for Ottawa residents to share their perceptions of safety and security, satisfaction and trust with the police service, and suggest priorities for OPSB/OPS for the coming three years. Further analysis of results by Ward will be undertaken and shared internally to support operational planning.

The results of this research will be used as a key input to the development of the 2019-2021 Strategic Plan for the Ottawa Police; and to help the OPS continually improve the services it provides to the communities.