



# Vancouver Police Community Policing Assessment Report

## *Business Survey Results for 2009*

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1/5/2010





## Executive Summary – Survey of Businesses

### Overall Satisfaction with the Vancouver Police Department

In line with prior years in which this survey has been conducted, the 2009 results showed that businesses continue to be satisfied with the services provided by the VPD. Overall, 85% of businesses were satisfied with the job the VPD is doing, and overall satisfaction with the VPD has been increasing steadily since 2004. Satisfaction was driven most strongly by quick response times from the police and feelings that the police have a presence in the business' neighbourhood.

### Responsiveness, Meeting Safety Needs, Addressing Street Disorder

Businesses generally saw the VPD as being effective in responding to emergency situations quickly, in meeting the safety needs of the business community and in addressing street disorder. The ratings for 2009 have improved significantly since 2008 on all of these measures. These improvements were driven largely by businesses in District 1, which saw the most substantial increases in all areas.

### Time Devoted to Addressing Crime Problems

Businesses were asked for their views about the amount of time the VPD spends addressing 12 crime concerns. The majority of business managers thought the VPD spent enough time addressing thefts from businesses, thefts from vehicles, and theft of vehicles. These results illustrate that the crime areas where businesses are most likely to be directly impacted are seen as problems that the VPD is working hard to address.

A strong majority of businesses (67%) said that the VPD should spend more time addressing gang-related crime. A substantial proportion of participants also said that more time should be spent addressing drug use (60%), violent crime (59%), youth violence (58%), and crimes targeting seniors (50%).

It should be noted that while businesses recommended more effort be devoted to gang-related crimes, and they cited gang-related crime as an important problem city-wide, none of the Districts had many businesses that expressed major concerns about gang activity in their neighbourhood. In short, businesses in all Districts perceive gangs as a significant challenge for the city, but not in *their own* District.

### Impressions of the VPD on Key Reputation Dimensions

The VPD continues to be highly regarded throughout the business community for being professional, respectful, knowledgeable, and trustworthy. Impressions of the VPD's visibility, fairness, and accountability are somewhat less positive. These ratings did not change from 2008 to 2009.

### Contact with the VPD

Forty percent of business managers in Vancouver said that they had contact with the VPD to discuss a matter related to their business. Those who did contact the VPD tended to be highly satisfied with the service they received (83% satisfied).

In 2009, businesses in District 1 (90%) gave significantly higher service satisfaction scores compared to those in District 2 (74%) and District 3 (74%). The primary driver of satisfaction was quick, responsive service; the primary driver of dissatisfaction was slow response times.

### Perceptions of Safety

Perceptions of business neighbourhood safety have been increasing steadily since 2004, with 58% currently saying their business' neighbourhood is safe. Business managers in District 4 were most likely to say that their community was 'very safe' (72%).

District 2 is, and always has been, seen as significantly less safe compared to the other three Districts (32% 'safe'). However, compared to previous years, there has been a significant improvement in District 2 business managers' perceptions of safety in 2009, however.

### Perceptions of Violent Crime and Property Crime in the Business Neighbourhood

While a small percentage of businesses said that violent crime increased in their neighbourhood in the year preceding the survey (14%), an equally small percentage said it decreased (8%). Most businesses believe that the level of violent crime in their neighbourhood has remained unchanged (70%). These perceptions have not changed since 2008.

Business managers in all of the Districts were more likely to believe that property crime had increased (19%) rather than decreased (7%) in the 12 months preceding the survey, but more than half of business managers (62%) said that the level of property crime had remained the same. The most frequently suggested area to improve in all neighbourhoods was break and enter crime (25%); this was particularly evident in District 4 (36%).

### Perceptions of Violent Crime and Property Crime in the City

As has been the case in prior years, business managers' perceptions of crime in their neighbourhoods do not match their perceptions of crime city-wide. In each District, the proportion of business managers who said violent crime has increased in their District is significantly lower than the proportion who said that violent crime has increased in the city as a whole. Overall, 56% of businesses assume violent crime is increasing in the city, but just 14% think it is increasing in their neighbourhoods. This pattern of results does not emerge to the same extent with perceptions of property crime.

Gang activity was most frequently mentioned as the most important crime-related problem in the city (39% overall). This was followed by drugs (22%), and drug dealing in public places (18%).

### Experiences with Crime at the Business

Across Districts, 19% of businesses said that their business was victimized by a crime in the 12 months preceding the survey. Just under half (49%) of these incidents were crimes against the business and 44% were crimes against a staff member.

Among business managers who witnessed a crime against themselves, their staff or the business in the 12 months preceding the survey (19% of all participants), 67% reported it to the police.

### Importance of Crime Reduction Programs and Services

Businesses rated the importance of 10 different crime-reduction programs and services. No programs or services were rated as unimportant, but several were deemed to be highly important – the Downtown Eastside foot patrols, School Liaison Officers, Block Watch, the Bait Car Program, and Community Policing Centres. The Citizen's Crime Watch, Conair Program, Granville Entertainment District Street closures were rated lower, but businesses were also likely be less aware of these programs.

### Keeping the Public Informed

Compared to 2008, the VPD's performance on generating news stories in all areas has improved significantly. The proportion of business managers who gave 'good to excellent' (4 and 5 out of 5) increased significantly. Major arrests, at 57% 'good to excellent,' continued to be the most highly rated, followed by crime reduction (55%), drug crackdowns (44%), and crime prevention (40%). The ranking of news story types remained the same as last years.

### Portrayal of VPD in the Media

While 44% of businesses believe that the media generally portrays the VPD positively, very few businesses said that the portrayal was *Very positive* (8%).

### Most Common Recommendation from Businesses

The most common recommendation to the VPD was that they have a greater presence and visibility throughout the city of Vancouver.