



Vancouver Police Community Policing Assessment Report

Residential Survey Results

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Executive Summary – Survey of Residents

Overall Satisfaction with the Vancouver Police Department

Similar to previous years, the 2009 results indicate that four-in-five Vancouver residents are satisfied with the VPD. Four-in-five residents were ‘Somewhat satisfied’ or ‘Very satisfied’ with the service provided by the VPD.

The reasons given for less satisfactory ratings were that residents had no contact with the VPD, or that the response was slow.

Responsiveness, Meeting Safety Needs, Addressing Street Disorder

Most residents said that the VPD is effective in responding to emergency situations quickly (61%), meeting the safety needs of the community (63%), and addressing street disorder (57%). There are many residents who seem to be uncertain of the VPD’s performance in these areas, however. The proportion of residents who say they do not know how to rate the VPD has increased in recent years.

District 2 residents were significantly less likely to give positive ratings to addressing street disorder (49%) compared to those in all three other Districts (58% for Districts 1, 3, and 4 combined).

In looking at the year-over-year ratings, it is quite clear that the VPD’s performance in two of these three areas is improving. The VPD’s performance on ‘addressing street disorder’ has seen a substantial improvement since 2004. Performance on ‘meeting the community’s safety needs’ improved significantly from 2008 to 2009.

Time Devoted to Addressing Crime Problems

Residents were asked if they thought the VPD spent enough time on 12 crime problems. The majority of residents think that the police should be spending more time addressing the problem of gangs (70%), youth violence (62%), violent crime (59%), drug use (57%), and problem drivers (53%).

Compared to 2008, a significantly higher proportion of participants said the VPD is spending enough time on: Gangs, youth violence, problem drivers, crimes targeting seniors, sexual crimes, hate crimes, theft from vehicles, and theft of vehicles.

Impressions of the VPD on Key Reputation Dimensions

Residents evaluated the VPD on seven attributes that reflect key dimensions of the VPD's reputation. The results show that residents tend to describe the VPD as a professional, trustworthy, respectful, and knowledgeable organization.

Contact with the VPD

One-third of Vancouver residents had contact with the VPD in 12 months preceding the survey. Eighty percent of residents who had contact with the VPD were satisfied with the service received, largely because of the quick response, courteousness, and professionalism shown by the VPD. The proportion of residents who had contact with the VPD did not change from 2008 to 2009, nor did their satisfaction ratings.

Perceptions of Safety

Overall, residents' perceptions of neighbourhood safety have improved significantly since 2004 (to 67%, from 60%). All Districts have received improved ratings since 2004 except District 4, which is and always has been the highest.

As observed in previous years, the Districts have significant variation in residents' ratings. District 4 is clearly perceived as the safest neighbourhood, and received the highest proportion of 'safe' ratings, followed by Districts 1, 3, and 2.

Perceptions of Violent Crime and Property Crime in the Neighbourhood

Most residents think that the violent crime rate has remained the same in the year preceding the survey. Two-thirds of residents said that the violent crime rate in their neighbourhood had 'Stayed about the same.' Twenty percent of residents said that the crime rate in their neighbourhood *Increased* in the same time period – double the proportion who said it *Decreased*.

Sixty percent of residents said that the property crime in their neighbourhood had ‘Stayed about the same’ in the 12 months preceding the survey. However, in all four Districts, residents were more likely to say that property crime *Increased* in the 12 months preceding the survey than to have said it *Decreased*.

Break and enters, as well as the combination of drug dealing and gang activity, were the frequently mentioned “Most important” crime problems when residents spoke about their neighbourhoods. These issues were mentioned about equally in all Districts except for District 4. The fact that these problems are seen as equally important is significant, as in previous years gang activity was not mentioned with great frequency as a neighbourhood problem (it was only mentioned often at the city level).

Perceptions of Violent Crime and Property Crime in the City

As has been the case in prior years, District-level perceptions of crime do not match assumptions about crime city-wide. When residents were asked about the change in violent crime for the whole city of Vancouver in the 12 months preceding the survey, more than half (56%) said that it had ‘Increased somewhat’ or ‘significantly’.

In prior years of surveying, drug activity was the most frequently mentioned problem mentioned in all four Districts (at the city level). For 2009, the most frequently mentioned problem for the city has changed to gang activity (followed by drug use). The difference between perceptions of what is happening in each neighbourhood and what is happening in the city at large suggests that residents are assuming that the city is become a more unsafe place because of information they read in the media and other sources, but that few have observed changes in their neighbourhoods. Residents may also be assuming that gangs are operating outside of their neighbourhoods.

Experiences with Crime

Thirteen percent of Vancouver residents said that they were victims of crime *in Vancouver* in the 12 months preceding the survey. Of those who were victimized, more than three-quarters experienced a property crime, and two-thirds said that they reported the crime to the police. The results are consistent across Districts; there were no significant differences in victimization or reporting rates between the four Districts. These figures did not change from 2008 to 2009.

Importance of Crime Reduction Programs and Services

Residents rated the importance of 10 different VPD programs and services. No program or services were rated as unimportant but several were deemed to be highly important – The Downtown Eastside foot patrols and Victim Services were rated as the most important, followed by Block Watch, School Liaison Officers, the Bait Car Program, and Community Policing Centres.

Keeping the Public Informed

Vancouver residents' ratings of the VPD's ability to keep the public informed indicate that they think the VPD does a good job in this area. The results of all four questions have shifted significantly (and substantially) away from the negative and toward the positive from 2008 to 2009.

Vancouver residents said that the VPD keeps them most well informed about major arrests (64% were 4 and 5 ratings), and least informed about crime prevention programs (43% were 4 and 5 ratings).

Portrayal of VPD in the Media

Vancouver residents were asked about the media outlets from which they had received information about the VPD in the 12 months preceding the survey. TV was clearly the most frequently mentioned source of information (77%), followed by the radio (54%) and then newspapers.

The majority of residents thought the local media presents the VPD in a positive manner (60%).

Most Common Recommendation to Improve Service

The most frequent suggestion that residents gave for improving police service was to increase the presence and visibility of the police in the neighbourhood (31%). Also, 11% of residents suggested increasing the organization's transparency.