



Estevan Police Service: Community Survey, 2019

University of Regina: Collaborative Centre for Justice and Safety

What the public thinks about their police services is important. In a national study of confidence in public institutions conducted by Statistics Canada, Cotter (2015, p. 9) observed that “perceptions of police performance can impact Canadians’ perceptions of police legitimacy, willingness to report crime, and levels of cooperation with police.” In order to better understand the public’s feelings toward the Estevan Police Service (EPS), University of Regina researchers carried out a telephone survey of 250 Estevan residents in June and July 2019. The results reveal that Estevan residents have a great deal of trust and confidence in their police service and the key findings of the survey are:

- Almost nine of ten respondents (88.4%) ranked their overall level of satisfaction with the EPS as being satisfied or very satisfied.
- Over nine in ten respondents (93.2%) somewhat or strongly agreed that the EPS officers had a visible presence in the community. Almost all respondents (95.6%) felt that police visibility was the same or had increased in the previous year.
- Over four-fifths (84%) of respondents somewhat or strongly agreed that the EPS demonstrates professionalism in its work.
- Almost nine in ten respondents (87.2%) somewhat or strongly agreed they had confidence in calling 911 in emergency situations.
- Over four-fifths (83.2%) of respondents somewhat or strongly agreed that the EPS is an organization with integrity and honesty.
- When compared against similar surveys carried out by Statistics Canada and the Regina Police Service the EPS ranks very highly in terms of enforcing the laws, officers being approachable and easy to talk to, ensuring the safety of the citizens in the community, and treating people fairly.
- Over four-fifths (82.4%) of respondents said EPS officers understand the issues that affect their community.



When it comes to contact with the public, 41.2% of respondents had some contact with EPS personnel in the previous year and most of these interactions (59.2%) were initiated by the respondent. Of the individuals who had contact with the EPS, 86.4% of them reported they were satisfied or very satisfied with that interaction.

When asked about local policing, the respondents strongly agreed or somewhat agreed that the following activities should be prioritized: Responding to gang offenders and drug trafficking (85.2%); reducing drinking and driving (78.4%), responding to property crimes such as break and enters (66%) and reducing aggressive and dangerous driving (65.2%). Slightly less than one-half of respondents felt that a greater emphasis should be placed on enforcing municipal bylaws.

Almost two-thirds of respondents (62.8%) said that the police should place a greater priority on increasing interactions with different community groups, and particularly with young people. When asked about whether they would pay an additional \$10 in funding per year to assign a community education officer to work in the Estevan schools, 60% of the respondents said “yes.” Respondents were less willing to increase their taxes by \$2 per month to improve police visibility, and less than one-third of respondents (32.4%) strongly agreed or agreed that they would pay those additional taxes.

When reporting about the public’s perceptions of the police, it can be helpful to compare a community’s results with the rest of the nation, province, or surrounding towns or cities to better understand how that community ranks with other places. The results in the table that follows compares the 2019 EPS community survey results with a national study carried out by Statistics Canada (Cotter, 2015) and the Regina Police Service (Jones & Ruddell, 2017). The questions included in the EPS survey were the same as those asked by other researchers in those studies, and asked for agreement about whether the respondent’s police service did a good job of enforcing the law, responding to calls, being approachable and easy to talk to, ensuring safety, cooperating with the public, and treating people fairly. The 2019 survey results reveal that the EPS in exceeded the national average in three categories; the EPS exceeded the provincial average in all six categories, and had higher favourable responses than the Regina Police Service in five categories.



Comparing the Estevan Police Service with the 2014 General Social Survey (Cotter, 2015) and the 2017 Regina Police Service Community Survey (Jones & Ruddell, 2017)			
Do you think that your police Service does a good job of:	Survey Year	Jurisdiction	Percentage Agreeing
(a) Enforcing the laws?	2014	Canada	65.0
	2014	Saskatchewan	55.0
	2017	Regina	68.0
	2019	Estevan	76.0
(b) Promptly responding to calls?	2014	Canada	68.0
	2014	Saskatchewan	55.0
	2017	Regina	62.8
	2019	Estevan	57.6
(c) Being approachable and easy to talk to?	2014	Canada	73.0
	2014	Saskatchewan	72.0
	2017	Regina	76.3
	2019	Estevan	76.4
(d) Supplying information to the public on ways to reduce crime?	2014	Canada	62.0
	2014	Saskatchewan	58.0
	2017	Regina	49.2
	2019	Estevan	59.2
(e) Ensuring the safety of citizens in your area?	2014	Canada	70.0
	2014	Saskatchewan	63.0
	2017	Regina	64.4
	2019	Estevan	76.8
(f) Treating people fairly?	2014	Canada	68.0
	2014	Saskatchewan	63.0
	2017	Regina	60.4
	2019	Estevan	63.2

When asked about their overall safety, over two-thirds (68.8%) of respondents indicated that they felt safe or very safe, and about the same proportion (69.6%) said that crime in their neighbourhoods had stayed the same or decreased in the previous two years. Those perceptions were correct and a review of Statistics Canada (2019) statistics reveals that the overall crime severity index (CSI) for Estevan in 2016 was 98, but had decreased to 87 in 2018 (the provincial CSI was 139 in 2018).

One indicator of fear of crime is whether a person feels safe walking alone in their neighbourhood after dark, and 14% of respondents said they did not walk alone. This is slightly more than in Regina, where 10.4% of respondents did not walk alone (Jones & Ruddell, 2017). Seventeen percent of the respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the possibility of crime keeps them from doing things they would like to do, which is significantly less than in Regina, where 22.1% of the respondents strongly agreed or somewhat agreed that fear of crime prevented them from doing things they would like to do.

Rates of self-reported victimization in Estevan are lower than the national average while 6.4% of the respondents said they had been a victim of crime in the past two years the 2014 survey on victimization—the most recent available data—shows that just under 20% of Canadians had been victimized in the previous 12 months (Perreault, 2015). In terms of the police response to these offences, of the 16 people who reported having been victimized, 11 (68.8%) rated their satisfaction with the police as very good or excellent.

Altogether, the results of this survey show that levels of satisfaction and support for the EPS are high. Both the community and police benefit when the public has higher levels of trust and confidence in the police. Nair, Luqman, Vadeveloo, Shanmuggam and Iskandar (2013, p. 59) observed that “A more positive opinion of the police would result in a greater level of cooperation thus resulting in more effective policing.” The results presented in the EPS community survey reveal that the police enjoy very positive public perceptions about their service.

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