

## **Police-public relations: Perceptions of the police among university students in a western Canadian city**

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**Henry Chow\***

### **Abstract**

Using data collected from a survey of 501 university students in a western Canadian city, this article examines the perceptions of the police among young adults and factors that contributed to the variation in their evaluations of the police. Results demonstrated that respondents held moderately positive attitudes toward the police. Multiple ordinary least-squares regression analysis demonstrated that respondents who identified themselves as Protestant or Catholic, expressed satisfaction with their personal safety, experienced no property crime victimization, reported no violent crime victimization experience, expressed satisfaction with their last contact with the police, and reported not having been harassed by the police were found to be more satisfied with police performance, whereas respondents who were younger, identified themselves as Protestant or Catholic, reported not having been victimized by a violent crime, expressed satisfaction with their last contact with the police, and indicated not having been harassed or mistreated by the police were found to express a significantly higher level of satisfaction with police treatment of minorities.

### **Introduction**

The police as a public institution rely heavily on the cooperation and support of the public to achieve success in the performance of their duties. This is due primarily to the reactive nature of police work. In fact, police agencies across Canada have adopted community policing as the basis of law enforcement policy. Community policing advocates a broad, social role for police and enhanced community responsibility and participation in policing. It allows the police and community residents to work in close partnership to enhance crime prevention, community safety, and quality of life at the neighbourhood level (Griffiths 2008; Leighton 1991; Murphy 1993). A fundamental assumption of these cooperative efforts between the police and the community is that such cooperation hinges on, and in turn shapes, the attitudes that community residents hold toward the police (Friedmann 1992). Doubtlessly, individuals who trust the police are more willing to call when they require assistance, to cooperate as a witness in court proceedings, to provide information on crime conditions, and to cooperate with police during an

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\* Dept. of Sociology & Social Studies, University of Regina, [henry.chow@uregina.ca](mailto:henry.chow@uregina.ca)

involuntary contact (Sampson, Raudenbush, and Earls 1997; Skogan and Frydl 2004; Tyler 2004).

Previous studies of police-public relations undertaken in Canada have generally revealed that the Canadian public expressed relatively positive attitudes toward the police (Brillon, Louis-Guerin, and Lamarche 1984; Courtis 1970; Griffiths and Winfree 1982; Hylton, Matonovich, Varro, Thakker, and Broad 1979; Klein, Webb, and DiSanto 1978; Koenig 1980; Moore 1985; O'Connor 2008; Tufts 2000; Yarmey and Rashid 1983). Prior literature exploring racial discrimination and equality rights issues has also investigated minorities' perceptions of the police (Chow 1996; Head 1975; Jayewardene and Talbot 1990; Spraggett and Chow, 1992). Several studies have focused exclusively on police-minority community relations (Chan and Hagan 1982; Chow 2002, 1994, 1991; Chu and Song 2008; Wortley 1996), demonstrating that minority respondents were particularly concerned about the unfair treatment of minorities by the police and the injustice and racial bias in law enforcement practices. Respondents were in favour of increasing the representation of visible minorities on police forces to resolve the issues of cultural misunderstandings and language barriers.

The examination of the relations between the police and young people is important due to the frequent and often negative contacts that young people have with the police. It has been noted that young people's active lifestyles tend to attract considerable proactive police intervention (Crawford 2009; Hopkins 1994; Loader 1996). Young people are also significantly more likely to engage in behaviour which challenges and confronts the established structures and agencies of authority (Hartless, Ditton, Nair, and Philips 1995; Radford, Hamilton, and Jarman 2005). In 2008, for example, youth aged 12 to 17 accounted for approximately one-third of all persons accused of a *Criminal Code* offence by police. Specifically, a total of 167,500 youth were accused of a police-reported *Criminal Code* offence that year, and another 27,600 youth were accused of drug and other federal statute violations (Taylor-Butts 2010). It is also worth noting that since 1991, the rate of violent crime among young people has increased about 30% (Statistics Canada 2008).

As well, the high victimization rate among young people suggests that they are more likely to come into contact with the police. Official crime statistics revealed that one in five violent crime victims were children and youth under 18 years of age. These violent crimes include physical and sexual assaults as well as other incidents involving violence or the threat of violence (e.g., robbery, extortion, and uttering threats). Although young people made up approximately 21% of the Canadian population, 60% of sexual assaults reported to police involved a child or youth. Additionally, they were victims of 21% of physical assaults and 17% of other crimes involving violence or the threat of violence reported to police in 2003 (Statistics Canada 2005). The 2004 General Social Survey further revealed the risk of violent victimization was highest among young Canadians (i.e., aged 15 to 24 years) (Gannon and Mihorean 2005). The rate of violent victimization among young people within this age range was in fact nearly twenty times higher than the rate for seniors (Statistics Canada 2007).

In light of the fact that young people make up a large proportion of the population subject to police contacts and arrests, and that only scant research has been carried out to investigate the attitudes young people hold toward the police in Canada (e.g., Amorso and Ware 1983; Wright and Peglar 1981), this article contributes to the literature on police-public relations by exploring the perceptions of the local police among university students in a western Canadian city.<sup>1</sup> The relationships between respondents' perceptions of the police and their property crime victimization experience, violent crime victimization experience, contact with the police,

personal safety, police mistreatment or harassment experience, and socio-demographic variables will also be examined.

## Method

### *Sample*

Using a convenience sample, a total of 501 students attending the University of Regina participated in a self-administered questionnaire survey during the academic year 2003-2004 (Author 2008a). With the co-operation of the faculty members in the Department of Sociology and Social Studies, questionnaires were distributed to various Sociology and Social Studies classes. Students were informed both in writing and verbally that participation was voluntary and that return of their completed survey would serve as their participation consent. The survey took approximately 15 to 20 minutes to complete and no incentive was provided. Although the respondents were recruited from Sociology and Social Studies classes, it should be emphasized that these students were officially registered with quite a number of faculties and schools, including Administration, Arts, Education, Engineering, Fine Arts, Human Justice, Journalism, Kinesiology, Science, and Social Work.

### *Sample Characteristics*

The sample consisted of 147 (29.7%) male and 348 (70.3%) female students.<sup>2</sup> Respondents ranged in age from 17 to 54 years, with a mean of 21.42 years ( $SD = 4.91$ ). Caucasian students comprised an overwhelming majority of the sample ( $n = 443$ , 89.9%). Most respondents were never married or single ( $n = 426$ , 86.1%). Regarding religion, slightly more than two-thirds of the respondents indicated either Protestantism ( $n = 138$ , 30.1%) or Catholicism ( $n = 173$ , 37.8%) as their religious belief. Respondents indicated on a scale of 1 (low) to 5 (high) the socio-economic class to which they considered their families belonged. Slightly over two-fifths of the sample ( $n = 193$ , 40.6%) made use of the middle category (i.e., "3"). Categories "4" and "5" were selected by 48.2% ( $n = 229$ ) of the respondents. Over half of the sample ( $n = 257$ , 56.7%) reported an annual family income of \$ 60,001 or above. About one-fifth ( $n = 81$ , 17.8%) indicated an income between \$ 40,001 and \$ 60,000. A significant number of the students were residing with their parents ( $n = 230$ , 46.7%) or living in an apartment or a house off campus ( $n = 235$ , 47.7%).

### *Statistical Analysis*

Descriptive and inferential analyses were conducted using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences. A principal component factor analysis using varimax rotation was performed to explore the underlying factorial structure of the eight items measuring police performance. The internal consistency of all scales used was assessed by Cronbach's alpha reliability test. Two multiple ordinary least-squares (OLS) regression models were constructed to identify the major determinants of respondents' assessment of police performance and police treatment of minorities.

### Measure of Perceptions of and Satisfaction with the Police

*Perceptions of the police.* Respondents were asked to express their degree of agreement or disagreement with the following eight statements on a 5-point scale ranging from 1 (strong disagree) to 5 (strongly agree): (a) The police will only use lawful means to combat crime ( $M = 3.06$ ,  $SD = 1.050$ ); (b) The police do a good job of stopping crime ( $M = 3.17$ ,  $SD = 1.017$ ); (c) The police spend most of their time going after people who commit petty crimes and ignore most of the bad things going on ( $M = 3.13$ ,  $SD = 1.027$ ); (d) The police are more likely to use physical force against minority people than Whites ( $M = 2.90$ ,  $SD = 1.110$ ); (e) The police are more likely to use physical force against aboriginal people than Whites ( $M = 2.71$ ,  $SD = 1.135$ ); (f) Police always respond promptly when called ( $M = 2.57$ ,  $SD = 1.007$ ); (g) Officers are usually fair ( $M = 3.22$ ,  $SD = 0.944$ ); (h) Officers are usually courteous ( $M = 3.16$ ,  $SD = 0.983$ ). This 8-item scale has a Cronbach's reliability coefficient of .785.

A principal component factor analysis using varimax rotation was performed on these 8-items in an attempt to confirm the underlying factorial structure of this scale. The analysis delineated two independent factors, accounting for 32.31% and 57.87% per cent of the variance respectively. These two factors have been renamed "police performance" and "police treatment of minorities"<sup>3</sup> and were used in the subsequent regression analyses.

*Overall satisfaction with the police.* Respondents were asked to express their degree of satisfaction with the overall performance of the local police using a 5-point scale ranging from 1 (very dissatisfied) to 5 (very satisfied).

## **Findings**

### Perceptions of the Police

Findings on respondents' evaluation of the various specific areas of police performance are presented in Table 1. The eight items were rated by the respondents using a 5-point scale (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree), with higher scores reflecting a more favourable attitude. The results demonstrate that the mean scores for the eight items ranged from 2.90 to 3.22, reflecting that respondents were only moderately positive in their evaluations of the police.

Concerning police integrity and demeanor, about two-fifths of the respondents ( $n = 196$ , 39.7%) stated that the police would only use lawful means to combat crime. More than two in four respondents expressed that officers were usually fair ( $n = 229$ , 45.8%) or usually courteous ( $n = 217$ , 43.4%).

With respect to the two items that were used to measure police treatment of minorities, approximately two-fifths of the respondents ( $n = 195$ , 39.3%) believed that the police would be more likely to use physical force against minority people than Whites and nearly half of the sample ( $n = 243$ , 49.0%) indicated that the police would be more likely to use physical force against aboriginal people than Whites.

Regarding the extent to which respondents considered the police were doing a good job in performing various duties, 45% ( $n = 225$ ) of the respondents stated that the police were doing a good job at stopping crime. Relatively few respondents ( $n = 91$ , 18.2%) considered the police to

be doing a good job at responding promptly when called. Almost three in ten respondents ( $n = 141$ , 28.2%) thought that the police spent most of their time going after people who had committed petty crimes and ignored most of the bad things going on.

### Overall Satisfaction with the Police

Assessment of the overall performance of the police was measured by a single item on a 5-point scale ranging from 1 (very dissatisfied) to 5 (very satisfied). The mean score for this item was 3.33 (SD = .811), indicating that the respondents were moderately positive in their overall assessment of the police. In particular, slightly more than two-fifths of the respondents expressed that they were “satisfied” ( $n = 202$ , 41.0%) or “very satisfied” ( $n = 19$ , 3.9%) with the overall performance of the local police. It should be noted that a significant number of respondents ( $n = 208$ , 42.2%) made use of the “uncertain” category.

**Table 1:** Descriptive statistics for items measuring perceptions of the police and personal safety

	1	2	3	4	5	
	n (%)	n (%)	n (%)	n (%)	n (%)	M (SD)
<i>Perceptions of the police</i>						
a. The police will only use lawful means to combat crime.	39 (7.9)	115 (23.3)	144 (29.1)	170 (34.4)	26 (5.3)	3.06 (1.050)
b. The police do a good job of stopping crime.	29 (5.8)	109 (21.8)	137 (27.4)	198 (39.6)	27 (5.4)	3.17 (1.017)
c. The police spend most of their time going after people who commit petty crimes and ignore most of the bad things going on.	34 (6.8)	166 (33.3)	158 (31.7)	111 (22.2)	30 (6.0)	2.87 (1.027)
d. The police are more likely to use physical force against minority people than Whites.	43 (8.7)	108 (21.7)	151 (30.4)	148 (29.8)	47 (9.5)	3.10 (1.110)
e. The police are more likely to use physical force against aboriginal people than Whites.	37 (7.5)	92 (18.5)	124 (25.0)	178 (35.9)	65 (13.1)	3.29 (1.135)
f. Police always respond promptly when called.	73 (14.6)	172 (34.4)	164 (32.8)	77 (15.4)	14 (2.8)	2.57 (1.007)
g. Officers are usually fair.	20 (4.0)	98 (19.6)	153 (30.6)	208 (41.6)	21 (4.2)	3.22 (.944)
h. Officers are usually courteous.	22 (4.4)	118 (23.6)	143 (28.6)	193 (38.6)	24 (4.8)	3.16 (.983)
<i>Personal safety</i>						
i. I feel safe walking <i>alone</i> in my neighbourhood after dark.	45 (9.0)	97 (19.4)	61 (12.2)	194 (38.8)	103 (20.6)	3.43 (1.260)
j. I feel safe being home <i>alone</i> in the evening or at night.	23 (4.6)	38 (7.6)	38 (7.6)	234 (46.8)	167 (33.4)	3.97 (1.063)

(1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree)

### Major Determinants of Perceptions of the Police

To identify the major determinants of respondents' evaluation of police performance and police treatment of minorities, two multiple OLS regression models were constructed using a total of eleven predictor variables, including criminal victimization, age, religion, sex, socio-economic status, police mistreatment or harassment experience, attitudes toward school, use of drugs, and engagement in unlawful activities.

*Personal safety* ( $M = 7.39$ ,  $SD = 2.09$ ) was an additive scale based on respondents' degree of agreement with the following statements on a five-point scale (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree): (1) I feel safe walking alone in my neighbourhood after dark ( $M = 3.43$ ,  $SD = 1.26$ ) and (2) I feel safe being home alone in the evening or at night ( $M = 3.97$ ,  $SD = 1.06$ ). The scale has a Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient of .758.

*Contact with the police* was based on respondents' experience of their most recent official contact with the police in either emergency or non-emergency situations ( $M = 3.32$ ,  $SD = 1.26$ ) measured on a 5-point scale (1 = very dissatisfied to 5 = very satisfied).

*Police mistreatment or harassment experience* was a dichotomous variable (1 = yes; 0 = no) based on whether or not the respondent had been harassed or mistreated by the police. About one-tenth of the respondents ( $n = 59$ , 11.8%) reported personal police mistreatment or harassment experience.

*Property or violent crime victimization* was based on whether or not respondents had been a victim of a property crime (i.e., theft of personal or household property, motor vehicle/parts theft, vandalism, break and enter) or violent crime (i.e., assault, sexual assault, and robbery) in the past 12 months prior to the survey. Nearly two-fifths of the respondents ( $n = 189$ , 37.8%) had been a victim of property crime and a small number of the respondents ( $n = 35$ , 7.0%) had been a victim of violent crime.

*Socio-demographic variables.* *Sex* (1 = male; 0 = female), *religion* (1 = Protestant or Catholic; 0 = other), *age* (1 = 21 or above; 0 = other), *marital status* (1 = single or divorced; 0 = other) were categorical variables, whereas *length of residence in Canada* ( $M = 20.8$ ,  $SD = 5.65$ ) was a continuous variable ranged between 1 and 54 years

The overall OLS regression model for police performance, as shown in Table 2, was found to be significant ( $F(11, 489) = 12.065$ ,  $p < .001$ ) and explained 19.6% of the variation in police performance. Six variables, including religion ( $\beta = 1.011$ ,  $p < .001$ ), personal safety ( $\beta = .130$ ,  $p < .01$ ), property crime victimization ( $\beta = -.112$ ,  $p < .01$ ), violent crime victimization ( $\beta = -.082$ ,  $p < .05$ ), contact with the police ( $\beta = .232$ ,  $p < .001$ ), and police harassment or mistreatment experience ( $\beta = -.214$ ,  $p < .001$ ). More specifically, respondents who identified themselves as Protestant or Catholic, expressed satisfaction with their personal safety, experienced no property crime victimization, reported no violent crime victimization experience, expressed satisfaction with their last contact with the police, and reported not having been harassed by the police were found to be more satisfied with police performance.

As well, the overall OLS regression model for police treatment of minorities was also found to be significant ( $F(11, 489) = 5.042, p < .001$ ) and explained 8.2% of the variation. Five variables, including age ( $\beta = -.101, p < .05$ ), religion ( $\beta = .181, p < .001$ ), violent crime victimization ( $\beta = -.090, p < .05$ ), police contacts ( $\beta = .128, p < .01$ ), and police harassment or mistreatment experience ( $\beta = -.114, p < .05$ ). In other words, respondents who were younger, identified themselves as Protestant or Catholic, reported not having been victimized by a violent crime, expressed satisfaction with their last contact with the police, and indicated not having been harassed or mistreated by the police were found to express a significantly higher level of satisfaction with police treatment of minorities.

**Table 2:** Unstandardized and standardized multiple ordinary least-squares regression coefficients for effects of socio-demographic & contextual variables on perceptions of police performance and police treatment of minorities

	Police performance		Police treatment of minorities	
	b	$\beta$	b	$\beta$
01. Sex	.228	.030	.311	.066
02. Age	-.563	-.080	-.433	-.101*
03. Marital status	-.081	-.008	-.210	-.033
04. Socio-economic status	.107	.059	-.052	-.048
05. Length of residence in Canada	-1.423	-.069	.878	.070
06. Religion	1.011	.140***	.796	.181***
07. Personal safety	.218	.130**	.024	.038
08. Property crime victimization	-.808	-.112**	-.037	-.008
09. Violent crime victimization	-1.123	-.082*	-.749	-.090*
10. Contact with the police	.476	.232***	.159	.128**
11. Police harassment/mistreatment	-2.327	-.214***	-.756	-.114*
F	12.065***		5.042***	
R <sup>2</sup>	.213		.102	
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	.196		.082	
N	501		501	

\*  $p < .05$ ; \*\*  $p < .01$ ; \*\*\*  $p < .001$

## Discussion

Using data collected from a survey of university students in a western Canadian city, this article examines the perceptions of the police among young adults and factors that contributed to the variation in their evaluations of the police. The investigation incorporated a broad range of explanatory variables to explain students' perceptions, including personal safety, victimization experience, contact with the police, and police harassment or mistreatment experience. This study has shown that university students held moderately positive attitudes toward the police. A number of socio-demographic and contextual variables were significantly related to university students' perceptions of police performance and police treatment of visible minorities.

With respect to socio-demographic variables, age was found to be a significant predictor. In fact, this variable has been consistently found to be an important determinant of attitudes toward the police in the literature. In particular, younger people have been shown to be more critical of the police than older groups of people (Bridenball and Jesilow 2008; Cao 2001; Gannon 2005; Friedman, Lurigio, Greenleaf, and Albertson 2004; Hurst and Frank 2000; Hurst et al., 2000; Jesilow, Meyer, and Namazzi 1995; Kusow, Wilson, and Martin 1997; Leiber, Nalla, and Farnsworth 1998; Murdo 1997; Murphy and Worrall 1999; Taylor, Turner, Esbensen, and Winfree 2001; Nofziger and Williams 2005; Schafer, Huebner, and Bynum 2003; Weitzer and Tuch 2002; Zalaf and Wood 2005). The finding that younger respondents were less critical of police treatment of minorities would require additional research to clarify this relationship.

Concerning length of residence, the more positive attitudes expressed by those who had resided in Canada for a shorter period of time might be attributed to their lack of interaction with the police and their need for police protection in a new social milieu (Chow 2002). In terms of religion, respondents who reported a religious affiliation were found to hold more favourable attitudes toward the police, indicating a greater propensity for these individuals not to disrespect or resist authority.

In addition to socio-demographic variables, this study has ascertained the importance of various contextual factors, including personal safety, violent crime victimization, property crime victimization, police-citizen contacts, and police harassment or mistreatment experience in determining respondents' attitudes toward the police.

With respect to personal safety,<sup>4</sup> research has shown that public attitudes toward the police are connected to how safe they feel in their community (Sims, Hooper, and Peterson 2002; Smith, Steadman, Minton, and Townsend 1999; Williams and Nofziger 2003). This study provides evidence that respondents who were more satisfied with their personal safety held more positive attitudes toward the police. This is unsurprising as previous studies have shown that individuals who perceived higher levels of safety or lower levels of fear of crime viewed the police more favourably (Sprott and Doob 2009, 1997). It is worth noting that there is recent evidence demonstrating that individuals' fear of crime does not drive public confidence in policing (Jackson, Bradford, Hohl, and Farrall 2009). The argument that has been put forward is that both fear and confidence are rooted in public assessment of non-criminal aspects of their neighbourhood. Community residents actually look to the police to defend community norms and values, particularly when those norms and values are considered to be declining (Jackson, Bradford, Hohl, and Farrall 2009; Jackson and Sunshine 2007).

Congruent with prior studies official contact with the police emerged as another significant predictor of respondents' evaluation of the police. Respondents who expressed satisfaction with their most recent contact with the police in either emergency or non-emergence

situation tended to view police performance and police treatment of minorities more favourably (Borrero 2001; Brandl, Frank, Worden, and Bynum 1994; Brandt and Markus 2000; Cheurprakobkit 2000; Correia, Reisig, and Lovrich 1996; Hinds 2007; Hurst and Frank 2000; Jesilow, Meyer, and Namazzi 1995; Murty, Roebuck, and Smith 1990; Reisig and Parks 2000; Ren, Cao, Lovrich, and Gaffney 2005; Schafer, Huebner, and Bynum 2003; Skogan 2005, 2006).

Relatedly, police harassment or mistreatment experience was found to be another significant variable predictive of respondents' evaluation of the police. It is not surprising that respondents who held more favourable attitudes towards both police performance and police treatment of minorities reported not having been mistreated or harassed by the police (Author, 2008b).

This analysis also lends credence to the vitality of criminal victimization experience on evaluation of the police. Previous studies have consistently shown a link between victimization and negative evaluations of the police (Besserer 2002; Kusow, Wilson, and Martin, 1997; Payne and Gainey 2007; Priest and Carter 1999; Smith, Steadman, Minton, and Townsend, 1999; Tufts 2000). This analysis has provided additional evidence that individuals who reported no property or violent crime victimization experience were more likely to express a higher level of satisfaction with police performance. As well, respondents who reported no violent crime victimization were found to be more satisfied with police treatment of minorities.

### **Conclusion**

Public attitudes toward the police is receiving increasing attention in Canada from researchers, police administrators, and policy-makers. This research makes a contribution to the literature on police-public relations, focusing on a segment of the Canadian population that has received limited prior research attention. These results have important policy and practical implications for individuals (e.g., community workers, social workers, and law enforcement officers) and agencies (e.g., educational institutions, community organizations, governmental agencies) working with young people in various capacities.

Although university students were found to hold moderately positive attitudes toward the police, continued efforts should be made to improve police activity toward this group of individuals. More specifically, it is vital to increase positive contacts and reduce adversarial interaction between younger citizens and police. Positive contacts could be cultivated through community policing programs, whereas negative contacts could be reduced by avoiding overly aggressive enforcement and by treating young people with fairness and respect.

This analysis also underscores the importance of strengthening services for crime victims, who have consistently reported higher levels of dissatisfaction with police. Earlier research has shown that victims' unfavourable evaluations of the police are due mainly to law enforcement officers' failure to prevent the crime and perception of officers' treatment with complete indifference (e.g., Payne and Gainey 2007; Van Dijk 2001). As law enforcement officers are usually a victim's first contact with the criminal justice system following the commission of a crime, they need to undergo the necessary training so that they will be more sensitive to the informational and emotional needs of crime victims. Police must recognize that victims are at the heart of the criminal justice system and supporting them should be considered a key part of their job.

Several limitations associated with this investigation should be acknowledged. As the present survey was undertaken on a non-random sample of undergraduate students at a mid-sized university in a western Canadian city, caution must be exercised in interpreting the results. This study is also limited by the reliance on self-reported data. Additional research effort should be devoted to university student populations in other geographical locations (e.g., urban vs rural areas and large vs small cities). Further exploration of variation across types of both institutions (i.e., university vs. college) and students (e.g., minority students) would be informative. It would also be worthwhile to conduct interviews or focus groups to examine factors that contribute to post-secondary students' development of attitudes toward law enforcement officers and to identify obstacles that hinder the cultivation of positive police-public relations. As well, the use of a longitudinal design to ascertain the causality of the various study variables would be fruitful.

### Endnotes

1. The city of Regina reported the highest crime severity index among the 33 Canadian metropolitan cities in both 2008 and 2009. The Police-reported Crime Severity Index (PRCSI) was officially introduced in 2009. Unlike the traditional police-reported crime rate which measures changes in the volume of crime, it tracks changes in the severity of police-reported crime. More specifically, each type of offence is assigned a weight derived from actual sentences handed down by courts in all provinces and territories. More serious crimes are assigned higher weights, less serious offences lower weights. As a result, when all crimes are included, more serious offences have a greater impact on changes in the index (Dauvergne and Turner 2010; Statistics Canada 2009).
2. Of the 501 respondents who participated in the survey, six did not respond to the question on gender/sex.
3. The factor analysis revealed that five items (items a, b, f, g, and h) were loaded on factor 1 (eigen value = 2.945) and three items (c, d, and e) were loaded on the factor two (eigen value = 1.409). As item "c" (The police spend most of their time going after people who commit petty crimes and ignores most of the bad things going on) was not directly related to police treatment of minorities, this item was removed. Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficients for the police performance and police treatment of minorities scales were .747 and .908 respectively.
4. The two questions used in this survey to measure personal safety have been frequently used by Canadian researchers to measure "formless fear of crime". The measure of "concrete fear" will ask respondents to indicate the extent to which they think they may become a victim of specific types of crimes within a certain time frame (Keane 1992).

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