

Perceptions of Police Professionalisation in British Columbia

Police Reform Study

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Ministry of
Public Safety and
Solicitor General



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The Crime Reduction Research Program

This project was funded through the British Columbia Crime Reduction Research Program (CRRP).

The CRRP is a research grant program administered and funded by the Province of British Columbia in collaboration with the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP). The CRRP is focused on investing in independent research to inform priority policing operations, policies, and programs related to public safety in British Columbia. In doing so, the CRRP also aims to foster greater collaboration between government, law enforcement, and academic experts in the field of policing and public safety.

Eligible research topics are identified on an annual basis by the BC Ministry of Public Safety & Solicitor General and the RCMP based on current and emerging provincial priorities. All grants are awarded on a merit basis by the CRRP Working Group.

Disclaimer

The statements, findings, and recommendations contained in this report have been reached independently by the authors of this report and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Province of British Columbia.

Acknowledgements

This study would not have been possible without the generous grant awarded under the Crime Reduction Research Program of the BC Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General. For near a decade, this first of its kind grant has provided Canadian researchers the opportunity to objectively examine contemporary criminal justice challenges facing British Columbia along with other Canadian jurisdictions. Equally, this study was only possible thanks to the participation of over a thousand British Columbians, a hundred police officers, and dozens of experts who gave their time and shared their perceptions on policing. In all regards, our Mount Royal University research team is truly thankful to all those who supported this study. Lastly, we thank the Community Safety Knowledge Alliance (CSKA) for publishing an article on the early work of our team in its *Journal of Community Safety & Well-Being*—excerpts from this article being cited in this report.

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Introduction

This study examined the perceptions of British Columbians, police officers, and criminal justice experts on whether the occupation of policing in British Columbia (BC) should evolve to become a formal profession. Important insight was gleaned through interviews with noted criminal justice experts and perceptions of policing through surveys with both the public and police officers. As discussed in this report, a significant majority of the public and police surveyed support the notion of British Columbian police officers being licenced and regulated by a government-authorised, independent, self-regulated professional college.

Professional activities requiring a high degree of academic knowledge and technical skill—*especially activities that could result in harm if performed incorrectly*—typically are considered ‘restricted activities’ requiring practitioners to be licenced and regulated by a self-governing, professional regulatory body (professional college/society/association) that is authorised by an act of a provincial legislature. Characteristic examples of regulated professions include physicians, nurses, engineers, architects, lawyers, to name a few. Common among all professional colleges/societies/associations is that they all are legally mandated to protect the public from professional malpractice and malfeasance.

It is reassuring many of the recommendations emerging from this study align with those made in the 2022 *Transforming Policing and Community Safety in British Columbia* report by the BC Legislative Assembly’s *Special Committee on Reforming the Police Act*. With the Legislature working toward a new *Police Act*, its Special Committee recommending the establishment of a new provincial police service, and the City of Surrey deciding to establish its own police service,ⁱ research specific to policing in British Columbia clearly is of critical importance -- especially considering many of the changes to policing in the province would result in the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) ceasing its over 70 years of provincial and municipal policing in the province.

Limits of Report

It is important to note this study *only* examined the perceptions of British Columbians, British Columbian police officers, and criminal justice experts in relation to the occupation of policing evolving into a formal profession—the first step in assessing the feasibility of such a transitioning. Logically, before expending significant time and expense determining the costs or specific logistics that would be related to establishing and then maintaining a professional college of policing in BC, it is important to first determine if those working in the occupation, as well as the public, in fact support the notion of police professionalisation. Knowing now that wide-ranging support exists for the professionalisation of police, should the BC Legislature decide to work toward the establishment of a professional college of policing, it is suggested additional researchers be tasked with identifying the economic, structural, policy, and legal needs of such an institution. What’s more, considering the United Kingdom (UK) provides an excellent example of a democracy where policing was (largely) professionalised, it is suggested

future research also include a close examination of the challenges and successes realised in the UK.

Rationale and Significance

The Need to Shift the Policing Paradigm

The National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (MMIWG)ⁱⁱ, Canada's racist and culturally genocidal residential school programme (including the '60s-scoop'ⁱⁱⁱ),^{iv} 'starlight tours'^v, targeting of LGBTQ2+ people and communities,^{vi} the Federal Court finding that the RCMP knowingly allowed sexist, discriminatory, and harassing behaviour to prevail for years within its ranks,^{vii} and the Ontario Superior Court finding that the Toronto Police Service breached the *Charter* rights of G20 protesters in 2010,^{viii} all stand as important examples where the culture, attitudes, and practices of police in Canada have fallen well short of public expectations. Similarly, the *Black Lives Matter* movement and ensuing *Defund the Police* campaign in the United States also have resulted in Canadians questioning how their own police treat racialised and traditionally marginalised communities.

Considering the structural aspects of policing in Canada have changed little since the 1800s,^{ix} it should be no surprise that the elitist, arrogant, misogynist, racist, and discriminatory attitudes and practices common during the colonisation of Canada, still at times form the basis of contemporary police controversies, scandals, and injustices. While Canadians clearly expect the police to share in their values and reflect the communities they serve, until the practice of policing is truly divorced from its colonial roots, these expectations will never be fully realised. Rightfully, governments at all levels are actively examining how their police services can improve and evolve. Challenges relating to the cost of policing, governance, and oversight all need modernisation and reform. Gone are the days when the public blindly accepted how the police carried out their duties. Today, when reports, images, and videos of perceived police misconduct are instantaneously and globally broadcast over social media, an event in one country can spark protests in another—the global protests following the murder of George Floyd by Minneapolis Police being one noteworthy example.

Just as the practices of medicine, law, nursing, teaching, engineering, to name a few, evolved to become highly developed, respected, and trusted professions through the establishment and growth of their respective professional colleges, this study proposes that if the practice of policing also was governed and advanced through a professional college, broad and sustained public trust, respect, and support for the police would be more aptly achieved. Moreover, this study also suggests that a legislated, self-governing, professional regulatory body (professional college) would provide a new foundation upon which policing could become more democratic, effective, and community-focused—allowing the practice of policing to finally divorce from its colonial roots.

A professional college of policing would provide a new foundation upon which policing could become more democratic, effective, and community-focused—allowing the practice of policing to finally divorce from its colonial roots.

From an Occupation to a Profession

While the concepts of '*police professionalism*' and '*professionalisation of policing*' are closely related, when explicitly defined and operationalised, they are very distinct. *Police professionalism* refers to the way police carry out their duties, whereas the *professionalisation of policing* refers to the way officers engage in the practice of policing. While the vast majority of police perform their duties professionally, the occupation of policing has yet to evolve into a formal profession.^x Professions constitute "*knowledge based*" occupations with the practitioners themselves developing and transforming "*formal knowledge*" into specific functions intended to support evidence-based, standardised, and ethical professional practices.^{xi} Sustained, comprehensive, and transferable "*professionalism*" can only be achieved once a diverse and expert base of knowledge specific to the profession is learned, applied, and advanced by those in practice.^{xii}

While all professions are occupations, not all occupations are professions.

In today's complex, interconnected, and diverse world, how best to achieve public safety and security has become a significant issue of public and political discourse. Central to this discourse is how concerns of systemic racism, toxic workplace culture, lacking transparency, and excessive or unjustified use-of-force are most aptly addressed. Because no two police services conduct public perception surveys the same way, no reliable measure exists to truly gauge how Canadians view their police.^{xiii} Nevertheless, despite the lack of a standardised tool, research suggests Canadians expect their police to not only prevent, investigate, and respond to crime, but to do so in the most transparent, approachable, inclusive, and ethical way possible.^{xiv}

This report proposes a professional college of policing would establish, support, and advance:

- a sustained and inclusive police recruitment programme for the province
- rigorous police specific research and scholarship aimed at advancing the practice of policing
- evidence-based and comprehensive police academy training standards and curriculum
- mandatory annual continuing professional (in-service) police education
- expert, objective, and community-focused oversight systems and processes
- educational and research projects, initiatives, and activities with colleges and universities
- public trust in the police, together with police legitimacy and credibility

Moreover, this report also proposes the core functions of a professional college of policing would include:

- protecting the public against professional misconduct or malpractice
- developing, promoting, and supporting a code of ethics for police practitioners
- setting the professional scope of practice for the profession of policing
- establishing the foundational educational credential required to practice policing
- registering and licencing all those authorised to practice policing
- developing, supporting, and advancing a professional body of police knowledge
- developing and delivering mandatory annual continuing professional police education
- setting the minimum competencies and education needed for advanced policing roles
- receiving, reviewing, and adjudicating complaints against police practitioners
- levying discipline against police found to have engaged in malpractice or malfeasance
- ensuring the ongoing legitimacy and credibility of the profession of policing

While discourse regarding the professionalisation of police has been ongoing for decades,^{xv} it was not until 2012 when the UK National College of Policing was established that the professionalisation of policing truly took form, resulting in policing in the United Kingdom arguably becoming more professional, democratic, transparent, responsive, efficient, and publicly accountable.^{xvi}

The (United Kingdom) National College of Policing

Efforts to professionalise policing in the United Kingdom (UK) started in the early 1800s when Sir Robert Peel, at the time serving as Chief Secretary for Ireland (1812–1818) then Home Secretary (1822–1827 and 1828–1830), together with Sir Charles Rowan and Sir Richard Mayne, the first Commissioners of London’s Metropolitan Police (1829–1850), began shifting the paradigm of policing from a traditionally military-based model where public order, law enforcement, and crime prevention were achieved largely through force, coercion, and intimidation, to one where police derive their authority through democratic processes and public approval—commonly known as “policing by consent”, “Peelian Policing”, and more recently the “London Model of Policing”.^{xvii}

Notwithstanding the debate regarding the actual origins of Peelian Policing and authorship of what commonly are known as Sir Robert Peel’s Nine Principles of Policing,^{xviii} it is broadly agreed the 1829 establishment of London’s Metropolitan Police marks one of the most significant periods in the evolution of modern policing. Though uniformed and salaried police services existed in Britain and elsewhere in Europe decades prior to London’s Metropolitan Police, none came close to emulating the core principles of policing by consent.

Beginning with London's Metropolitan Police, policing by consent fast became the underpinning philosophy for nearly all other police services across the British Empire.^{xix} Considering at its apex the British Empire constituted the largest and most powerful empire in history—*by the turn of the 20th century dominating nearly a quarter of the world's population and landmass*—it is not surprising the London model (policing by consent) became the blueprint by which police services throughout the UK, the British colonial territories, and even the former British colonies (such as the United States) used to develop and expand.^{xx} As the Industrial Revolution, globalisation, and in turn urbanisation, rapidly took hold during the 19th and 20th centuries, concerns related to public order, property, and violent crime became key issues for lawmakers in every expanding urban centre around the world.^{xxi}

As societies and countries evolved, expanded, and matured during early-1800s through to the late-1900s, so did the adoption of policing by consent. As policing around the world evolved because of World War I & II (i.e., development of police academies, military-style approaches to officer discipline, standardised training, specialised tactical operations, centralised radio dispatch, increased use of firearms, etc.),^{xxii} the notion of policing by consent became increasingly entrenched in police training, management, and leadership—especially in the latter part of the 1900s when police services around the world became more responsive to community needs, accountable and transparent (largely because of increased independent oversight of the police becoming commonplace), and diverse.^{xxiii} Up until the 9/11 terrorist attacks, when national security and intelligence became much more pronounced aspects of day-to-day policing, the practice of policing remained relatively unchanged since the early to mid-1900s.

Following 9/11 and subsequent terrorist attacks around the world in the 2000s, together with the rise of neo-globalism, the digital revolution, and sociolegal liberalism, police services and officers have been increasingly scrutinised and critiqued. In all regards, policing has become more demanding, complex, and controversial. As noted by Dr. Peter Neyroud, an Associate Professor of Evidence-Based Policing at the University of Cambridge's Institution of Criminology and 30-year police veteran and former Chief Constable of the Thames Valley Police (England), today's police leaders must be community-focused listeners and learners committed and capable of meeting the widely differing and ever-changing needs of the people and communities they police.^{xxiv}

In response to mounting public demand for more accountable, transparent, and effectual policing, Theresa May, then Home Secretary, announced several significant policing reforms including the 2012 establishment of the UK's National College of Policing—the arm's length professional college responsible for police serving in England and Wales. The college assumed responsibility for the National Police Library along with several programmes previously delivered by the National Police Improvement Agency (NPIA). It also assumed responsibility for setting police standards related to ethical conduct, recruit selection and training, specialised skill acquisition, promotion qualifications, and professional developments.

Broadly endorsed by the policing community and public at large, the underpinnings of the UK's National College of Policing are largely informed by the Home Office's 2010 report *Policing in the 21st Century: Reconnecting Police and the People*^{xxv} and Neyroud's 2011 *Review of Police Leadership and Training Report*.^{xxvi} Central to the college's mission is the ongoing development and support for an evidence-based, standardised, and national accreditation framework for all police service employees that is grounded on a shared ethical code. Though still in its organisational infancy, the college has been the subject of increasing study and criticism—primarily focused on the college being overly influenced and directed by the Home Office and politicking of the elected Home Secretary.^{xxvii}

Calls for a Canadian Professional College of Policing

In his 2017 "Report of the Independent Police Oversight Review", Ontario Justice, the Hon. Michael Tulloch, suggested a college of policing could enhance existing oversight regime in the province and help advance a "...culture of professionalism through a more regulated body that specialises in enhancing policing standards and services."^{xxviii} Since Justice Tulloch's recommendation for a professional college of policing in Ontario, other scholars have echoed his recommendation, including the 2020 establishment of the Coalition for Canadian Police Reform.^{xxix} Though dialogue and scholarship regarding the feasibility of establishing professional colleges of policing in Canada are relatively recent, there is no question this issue is one gaining increasing attention from police leaders, stakeholders, and academics alike. Considering each province assumes responsibility for its own provincial and municipal policing, any move toward the establishment of a college would need to be led by a provincial government—akin to how regulated professions in the healthcare, legal, engineering, accounting, and other professional fields are governed.

Policing in British Columbia

Overview

Per Section 91 of the *Constitution Act, 1867*, the Parliament of Canada has the exclusive power to enact (or repeal) criminal law. With this power comes the responsibility to deliver federal policing services across the country—specifically enforcing laws having a national impact such as acts of terrorism, breaches of national security, matters relating to immigration and border security, infringements of intellectual property, banking and financial services violations, along with other laws relating to Canada's food and drug supplies, transportation safety and security, etcetera. Pursuant to Section 92 of the *Constitution Act* provincial legislatures have the exclusive right and responsibility to establish and deliver provincial and municipal policing services. In essence, the federal government is responsible for enacting criminal law, whereas the provincial and territorial governments are responsible for administering and enforcing this law in their respective jurisdictions. Currently, there are 12 municipal police services (including the recently established Surrey Police Service) and one First Nation's police service (St'l'at'imx Tribal Police) regulated under the BC's *Police Act (RSBC 1996, c 367)*.^{xxx} While BC had its own

provincial police service between 1858 and 1950, apart from the metro Victoria and Vancouver regions, the RCMP has served as the primary policing service for BC since 1950. Specialised police services, such as the Canadian Forces Military Police, South Coast British Columbia Transportation Authority Police Service (Metro Vancouver Transit Police), Canadian National Railway Police, and Canadian Pacific Railway Police, also operate in the province.^{xxxix}

In total, there are nearly 9,500 police officers working in BC, of which approximately 6,800 serve with the RCMP. Although the demographics of BC's police services are becoming more reflective of the demographics of the communities they police, most police officers continue to be white males hired in their early to mid 20s. Approximately 23% of police officers identify as a visible minority (≈36% of British Columbians are visible minorities) and approximately 30% are female (≈50% of British Columbians are women). While a sizable number of police officers hold college diplomas or university degrees, the base education required for the RCMP is a high school diploma, while many municipal police services require a high school diploma plus some post-secondary education.^{xxxix}

Recruitment, Training & Education

Most police officers in BC are employed by either the RCMP or a municipal police service, with a small number serving with either the Canadian Armed Forces Military Police, Canadian National Railway Police Service, or Canadian Pacific Railway Police Service. Each police service recruits its own officers, with RCMP officers receiving their basic police training at the RCMP's "Depot Division" in Regina, Saskatchewan and municipal police officers receiving their basic training at the Justice Institute of British Columbia (JIBC) Police Academy in New Westminster.^{xxxix} The provincial *Police Act* authorises the Policing and Security Branch of the Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General to set and approve the training standards for recruits at the JIBC,^{xxxix} whereas the RCMP sets and delivers its own standards.^{xxxix} While RCMP and municipal police officers in British Columbia recruit, train, and educate their officers using comparable standards and similar methods, most experts and researchers agree the provincial standards and methods are more comprehensive, contemporary, and evidence-based when compared to those of the RCMP.^{xxxix}

The basic qualifications needed to become a RCMP officer include being at least 18 years of age, a Canadian citizen or a permanent resident who has resided in Canada three out of five years prior to being hired, proficient in English and/or French, possess an unrestricted driver's licence, is a high school graduate, and meets the RCMP's health, psychological, vision, hearing, physical ability, security screening, and character standards. BC's municipal police services have similar base qualifications to the RCMP, however require recruits to be 19 years of age and often will give preference to applicants who hold a college diploma or university degree, and/or who speak a second language.

Governance

A central consideration for democratic policing is granting police officers independence and discretion when they maintain law and order, enforce the law, and prevent crime. Equally, democratic policing also stresses the need for police officers to be held accountable for the way they carry out their duties, utilise public funds, and interact with the public. In British Columbia, democratic policing is in large part operationalised through legislatively established police boards that are mandated to annually consult with the Chief Constable (Chief of Police) for their respective municipal police service to identify the policing priorities, goals, and objectives for their community. As described in the *Police Act*, civilian police boards are mandated to:

1. Employee sworn and civilian members of the municipal police service;
2. Provide financial oversight of the municipal police service;
3. Establish policies that set the direction for the municipal police service; and
4. Act as the authority for policy and service complaints, with the Chair being responsible for discipline matters related to the Chief Constable (Chief of Police) and Deputy Chief(s) of the police service.^{xxxvii}

With respect to communities policed by the RCMP, Part 6 of the *Police Act* authorises local police committees whose members are appointed by the Lieutenant Governor in Council in consultation with local municipal councils. Considering the RCMP is governed by the federal *Royal Canadian Mounted Police Act (R.S.C., 1985, c. R-10)* rather than the provincial *Police Act*, local police committees are limited in their duties and functions—primarily serving as the liaison between the RCMP and local community. Should a local police committee have concerns regarding the policing in their community, they have a duty to bring their concerns to the minister, along with the provincial police force (currently the RCMP), and local police leadership.

Oversight

In British Columbia there are two separate oversight systems that deal with complaints made against police officers; one for complaints made against officers regulated under the provincial *Police Act* and another for RCMP members. Though both systems receive and investigate complaints regarding officer conduct, for matters involving death or serious injury, the Independent Investigations Office of British Columbia (IIO) assumes responsibility for investigating both RCMP members and police officers regulated by the *Police Act*. Additionally, under the provincial *Police Act*, municipal police boards are empowered to investigate matters involving the Chief Constable and/or Deputy Chief of a municipal police service. Under the federal *RCMP Act*, the Civilian Review and Complaints Commission for the RCMP (CRCC) is empowered to review the activities of the RCMP (other than national security activities) and provide a report to the federal Minister of Public Safety and Commissioner of the RCMP regarding its findings and recommendations.

Civilian Review and Complaints Commission (CRCC)

Independent from the RCMP, the Civilian Review and Complaints Commission for the RCMP (CRCC) is responsible for receiving and investigating public complaints regarding the on-duty conduct of RCMP members. Of importance is noting the initial complaint against an RCMP member typically is made directly to the commander of the detachment where the police officer, special constable, or civilian staff member works, with the CRCC only becoming involved if the complainant is unsatisfied with the commander's finding and they wish for an independent review.^{xxxviii} While the CRCC has the power to conduct their own investigations and hold public inquiries regarding complaints, these powers are rarely exercised.

Office of the Police Complaints Commissioner (OPCC)

Complaints against police officers regulated by BC's *Police Act* primarily are managed by the independent Office of the Police Complaint Commissioner (OPCC).^{xxxix} Unlike the CRCC process, the OPCC is the first point of contact for members of the public to file a complaint against a police officer regulated by the *Police Act*. Like the CRCC process, complaints against police officers are investigated by their respective police service, however unlike the CRCC process, the police service ultimately will confirm or reject the service's finding, approve or reject a proposed complaint resolution, and in cases where the OPCC disagrees with the service, will appoint a retired judge to either conduct a paper review of the service's complaint report or hold a public hearing.

Independent Investigations Office (IIO)

Any incidents involving death or serious harm that potentially were the result of a police officer's actions or inactions—*whether on or off duty and irrespective of the police service they are employed by*—are investigated by the civilian-led Independent Investigations Office (IIO).^{xl} The IIO is also responsible for investigating matters of public interest that reasonably could involve a police officer being charged with a criminal offence. If the Chief Civilian Director (CCD) of the IIO has reasonable grounds to believe a police officer has committed a criminal offence, they can refer the matter to the British Columbia Prosecution Service for review and possible charges. As with other police oversight bodies, the IIO aims to bolster police legitimacy and credibility by conducting its work in the most accountable, transparent, and community-focused manner possible. Specific to this aim, the IIO can independently initiate an investigation that is in the public interest, irrespective if a formal allegation of misconduct was made by a police service, board, or other interested party.

Data and Methods

The primary aim of this study was to determine the current perceptions of British Columbians, police officers, criminal justice practitioners, government officials, professional association leaders, and other stakeholders who regularly engage with

the police, as they relate to the professionalisation of police. A mixed methods approach was taken that involved the surveying of the public and police along with structured questions posed to policing experts and stakeholders regarding their thoughts on the notion of police professionalisation in BC through the establishment of a professional college of policing. By employing both qualitative and quantitative methods, and drawing from a variety of data sources, differing vantage points were achieved that supported the objective assessment of the perceived strengths and weaknesses of policing across BC.

Data

Multiple sources of data were used to examine perception of policing and feasibility of a professional college of policing. First, a random sample of adult British Columbians were surveyed, which produced 850 respondents. This survey included questions related to demographics and individual characteristics followed by a series of questions on opinions of policing in BC, police use of force, police reform, and trust in police. To obtain representation from as many areas of BC as possible, oversampling from non-urban areas was utilised to ensure all areas of BC were represented in the sample. Weights were then applied to compensate for oversampling. The survey including primarily quantitative items, with a small number of qualitative open-ended questions for individual expression of opinion.

Second, specific questions were infused into a BC wide omnibus survey conducted by Leger360 that asked about the public's perception of a professional college of policing. Results were based on an 18-minute online study conducted August 6-11, 2021 among a sample of 845 residents across BC. The respondents came from a mix of two sample providers to minimise any biases that might result from being a part of a specific panel due to different recruiting techniques that can be used. Quotas were put in place by age and region to ensure sufficient sample size for analysis across the province. The data was weighted in analysis by age, and region according to 2016 Census figures for BC. The margin of error with the total sample—which measures sample variability—is +/- 3.4 percentage points, 19 times out of 20.

Third, a survey was created to specifically ask serving BC police officers their perceptions of policing in BC. This survey was developed with input from police administrators, with the survey link being sent out to police across the province. This survey, like the ones sent to the public, asked police officers about their perspectives of policing, their jobs, and the possibility of a college of policing. The survey was primarily quantitative but also included open-ended questions. Overall, there were 197 respondents to the survey.

Methods

Two primary methods of analysis were completed for the quantitative component of the surveys. First, frequencies were analysed and findings were produced as either bar graphs or pie charts. Second, bivariate analysis using crosstabulations was completed and produced results in table format, which included tests of significance. Comparisons for

the police and public were also completed using bar graphs and pie charts. For one section of the police survey, open-ended questions were analysed using thematic analysis and results were represented using quotes to underscore those themes.

Limitations and Future Research

The public perception survey was robust and the sample size sufficient. However, a similar survey should be completed with a larger sample and an even larger focus on attaining representation from all areas of BC. While this was completed, there are many parts of BC that were still underrepresented due to small population sizes.

The police survey was limited by a shortening of the question set, and by limiting the open-ended questions. There was an assumption that the police lacked the time to complete the survey; however, the open-ended answers in the survey and the number of individual respondents who took the time to write their opinions indicated otherwise. Future research into police opinions should include more directed questions related to some of the issues that were noted in the open-ended questions in the police survey. Other data collection methods should include interviews with police where follow-up questions could be asked.

The analysis includes basic descriptive statistics (frequency distributions and crosstabulations), but within these data there are many more possible types of analyses. The team of researchers will be using the data to publish and present in various academic and professional venues.

Findings

Comparing Perceptions of the Public and Police

Between the public survey and the police survey several questions were asked and matched for comparison. The following section summarises: 1) the public perspectives of policing in BC; 2) comparisons based only on those who either agreed or disagreed with questions focusing on education & training, police use of force; and 3) public trust in the police. Excluded from the comparison section are those who were unsure or neither agreed nor disagreed with the statements. While in some cases, the police and the public have similar perceptions, overall, there are many gaps in perception between the police and public.

General Public Perceptions of the Police in BC

Within the surveys of British Columbians, several questions were asked regarding opinions of police, justice, and crime. This section expresses the basic views of the public surveyed with respect to policing in BC.

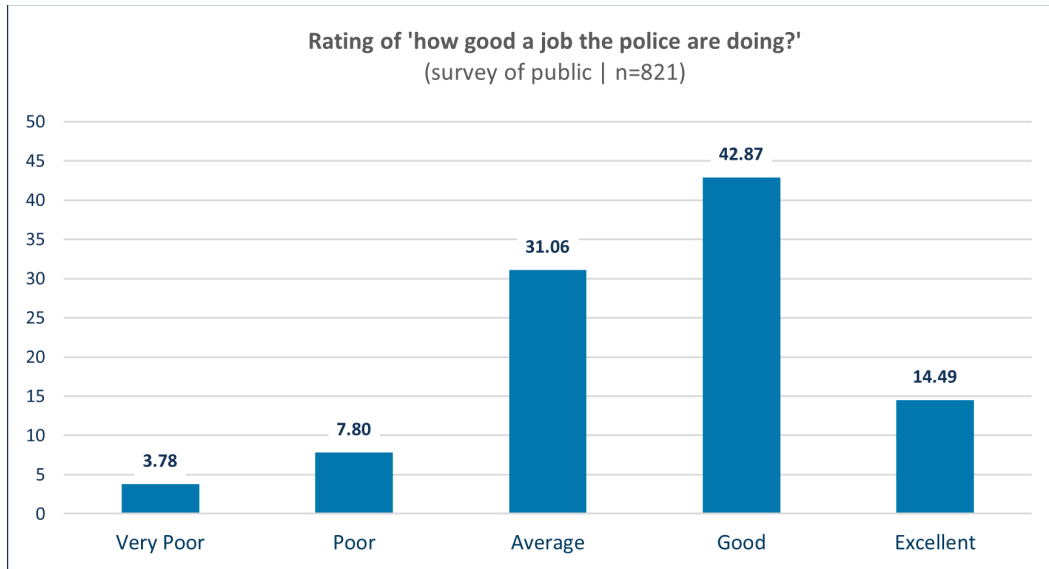


Figure 1. Survey responses for 'How good a job the police are doing?'. Of the British Columbians surveyed, the majority noted they were supportive of the police. A majority (57.36%) believed that the police were doing either a good or excellent job, with only a small number (11.58%) noting they believed they were doing a poor or very poor job.

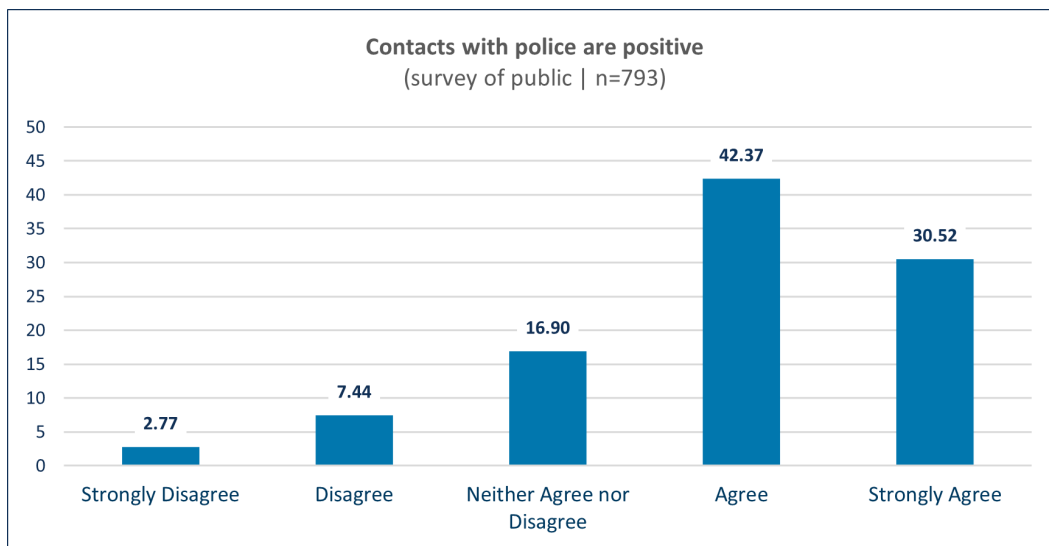


Figure 2. Survey responses for 'Contacts with police are positive'. Similarly, when asked perspectives related to public/police contact, a large majority agreed or strongly agreed (72.89%) that their contact with the police was positive.

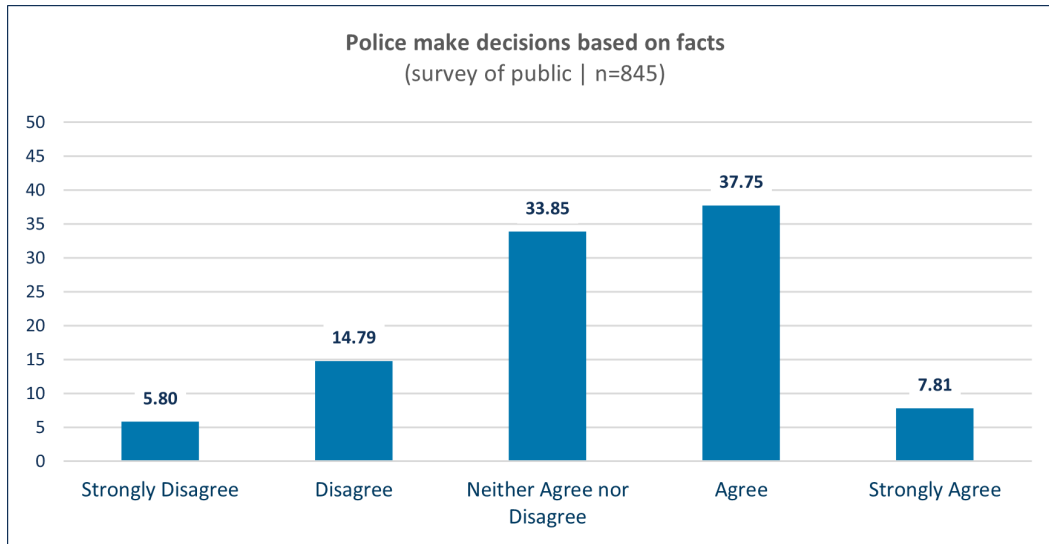


Figure 3. Survey responses for 'Police make decisions based on facts'. When asked whether police make decisions based on facts, a larger cohort of respondents either agreed or strongly agreed (45.56%) they did, yet a sizable minority disagreed or strongly disagreed (20.59%). Of importance is noting the substantial number of respondents (33.85%) who neither agreed nor disagreed on this issue.

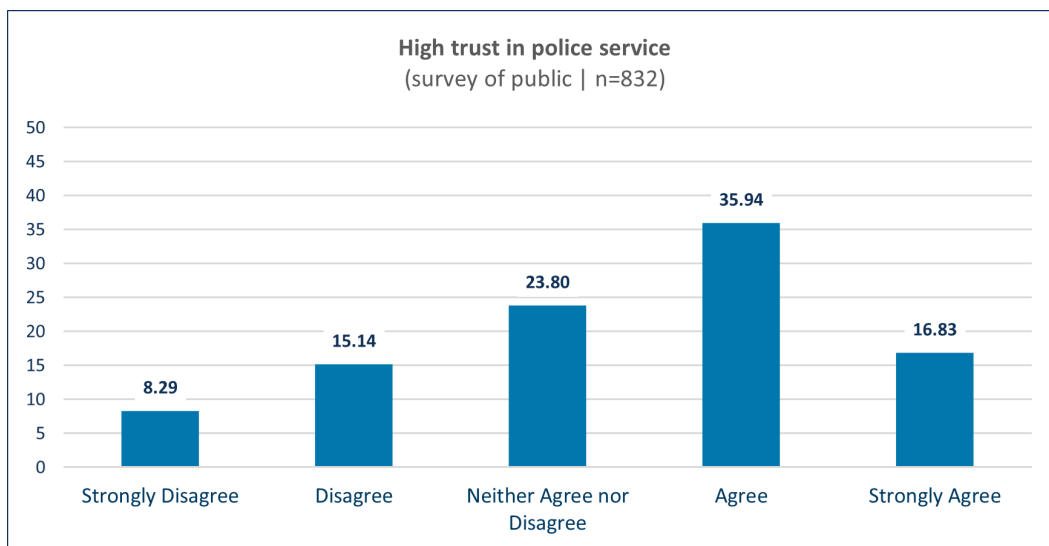


Figure 4. Survey responses for 'High trust in police service'. Most respondents (52.77%) indicated a high level of trust in the police, with only 23.43% not indicating a high level of trust. However, as with the previous question, 23.80% of respondents noted they neither agree nor disagree.

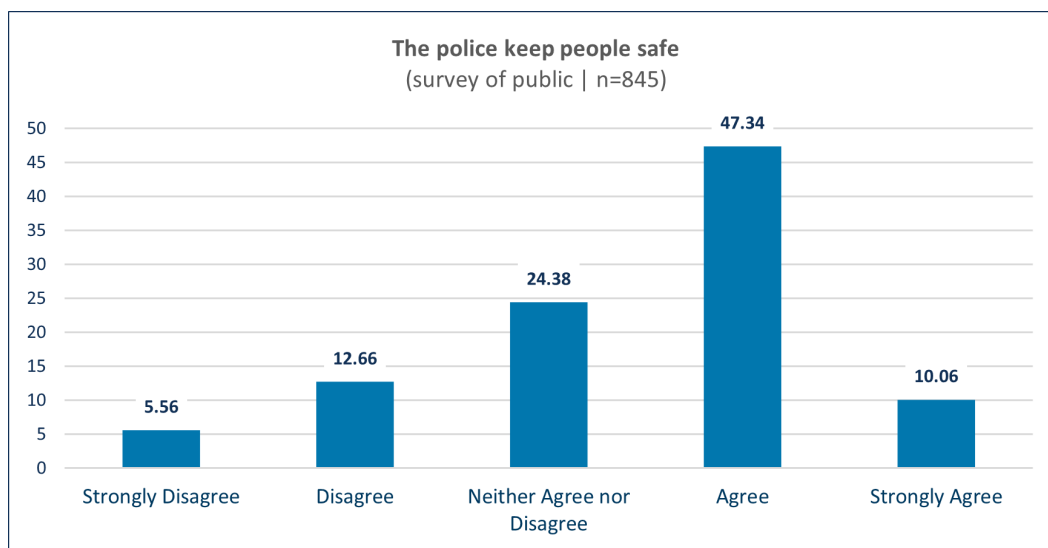


Figure 5. Survey responses for 'The police keep people safe'. The majority of respondents agreed or strongly agreed the police in BC keep people safe (57.4%), with only 18.22% noting they either disagreed or strongly disagreed.

As indicated by the above graphs, British Columbians generally have a positive view of police. It appears most police/public contact is positive and most British Columbians trust the police and think they are doing a good job. An important consideration is noting the sizable percentage of respondents who neither agree nor disagree. These people likely represent those who are uncertain, perhaps due to lack of knowledge or experience, and whose opinions likely could be positively changed if they had better awareness of the daily challenges faced by the police along with the work they do for the British Columbians.

Public Perspectives on Police Use of Force and Police Reform

Respondents were asked a series of questions related to use of force, specific changes to the police service in BC, and police reform. This section displays the results from a selection of those questions.

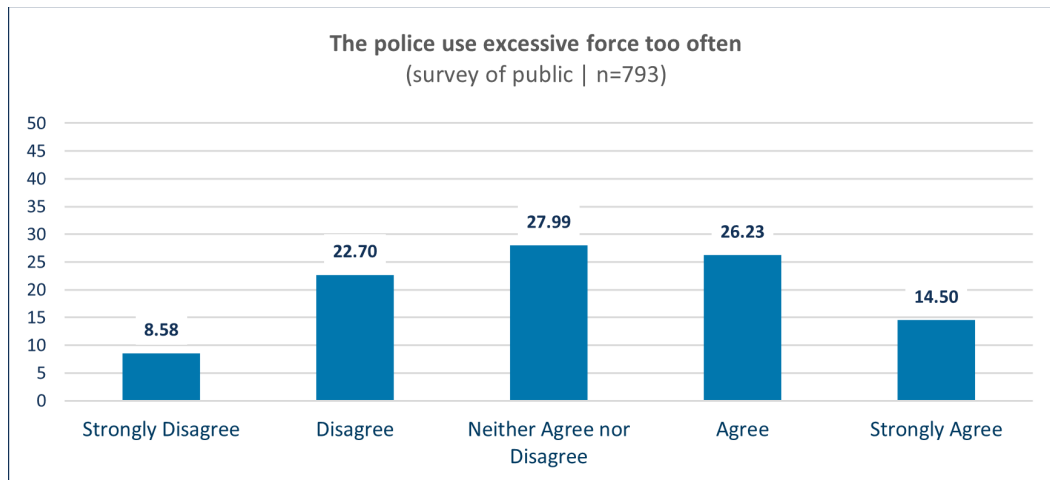


Figure 6. Survey responses for 'The police use excessive force too often'. When asked whether police in BC use excessive force too often, there was a mixed response. While more respondents either agreed or strongly agreed (40.73%) than who disagreed or strongly disagreed (31.28%), the difference was small. In addition, nearly 28% of respondents were unsure on this question.

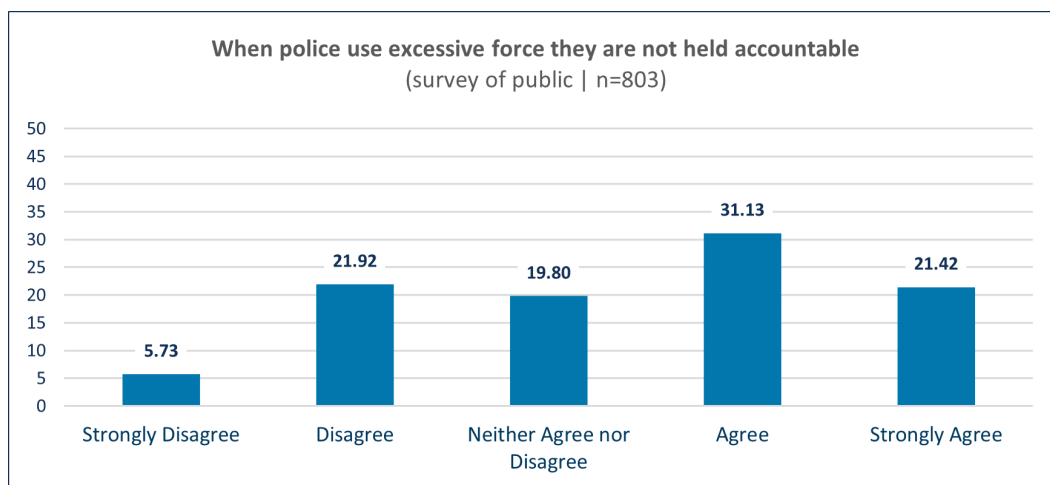


Figure 7. Survey responses for 'When police use excessive force they are not held accountable'. The majority of respondents (52.55%) believe that when police use excessive force, they are not held accountable. Almost 20% were uncertain of this question.

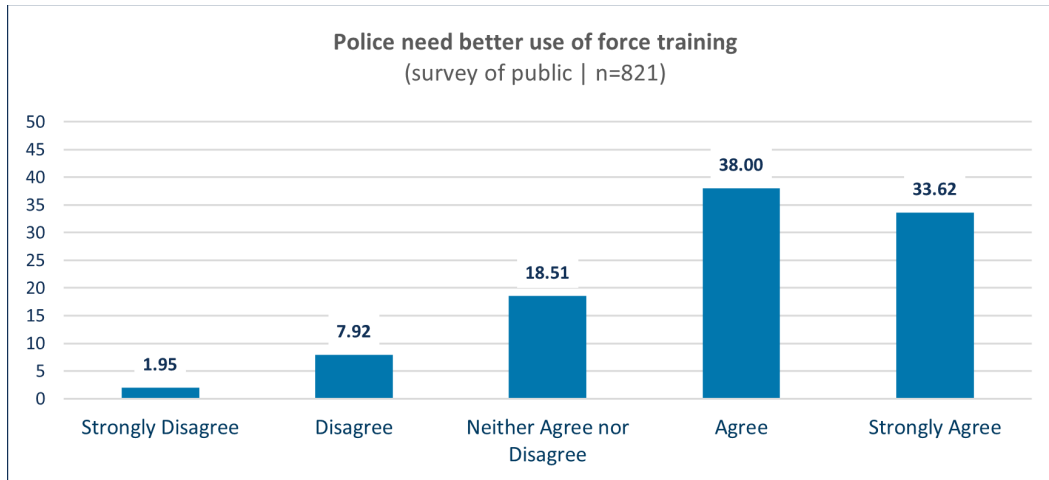


Figure 8. Survey responses for 'Police need better use of force training'. When respondents were asked whether they felt that police needed better use of force training, a large majority agreed (71.62%) they did.

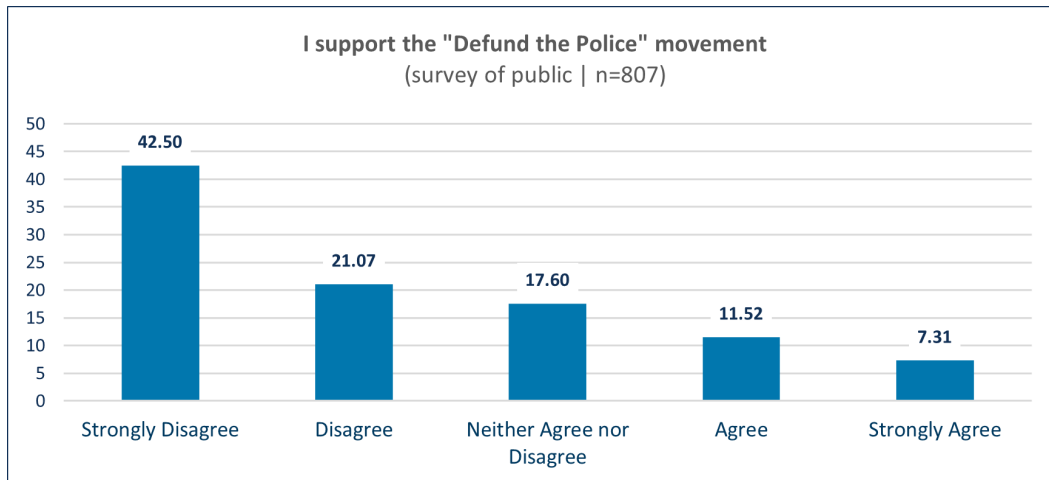


Figure 9. Survey responses for 'I support the "Defund the Police" movement'. Most respondents (63.57%) noted they did not support the defund the police movement, with less than 20% noting they did.

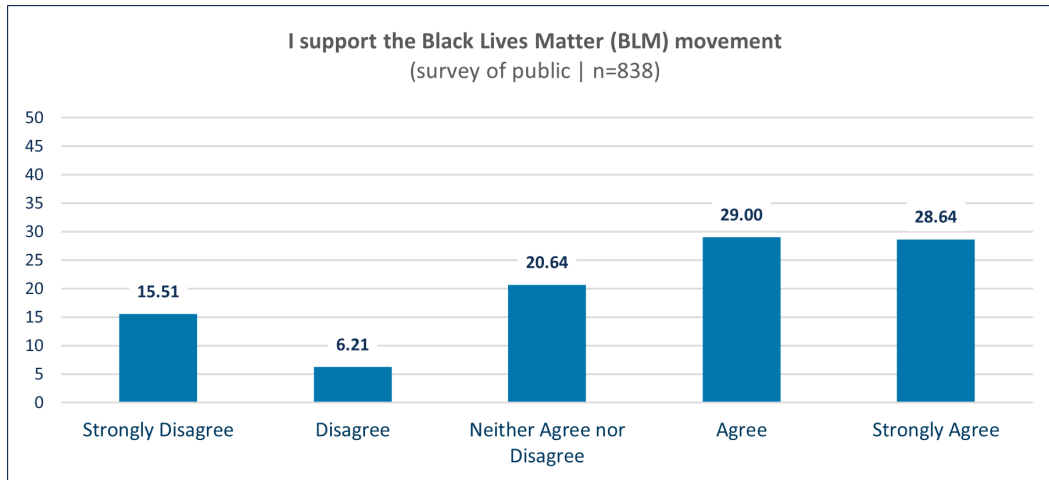


Figure 10. Survey responses for 'I support the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement'. While above there was little support for defunding the police, when asked about support for the Black Lives Matter movement, a majority (57.64%) indicated they do.

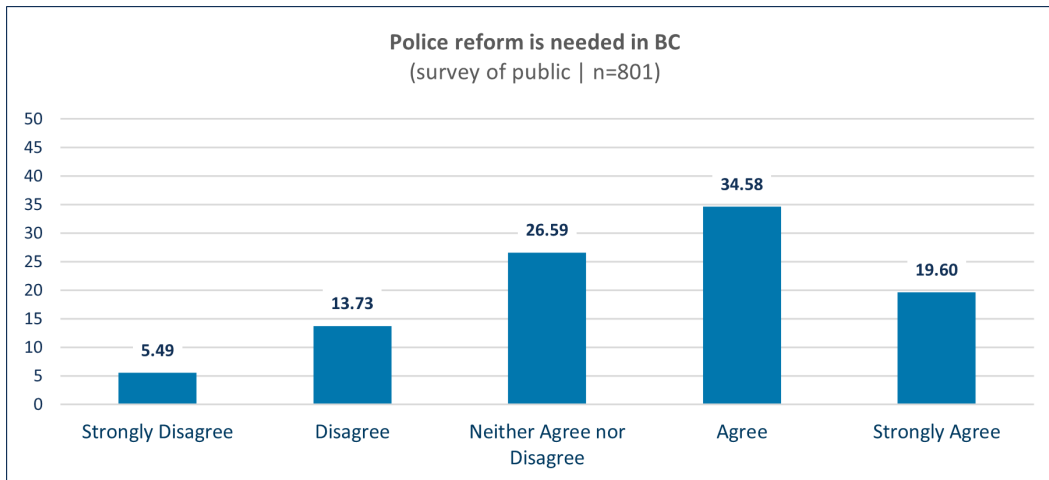


Figure 11. Survey responses for 'Police reform is needed in BC'. Most respondents (54.18%) believe police reform is needed in BC, with only 19.22% disagreeing.

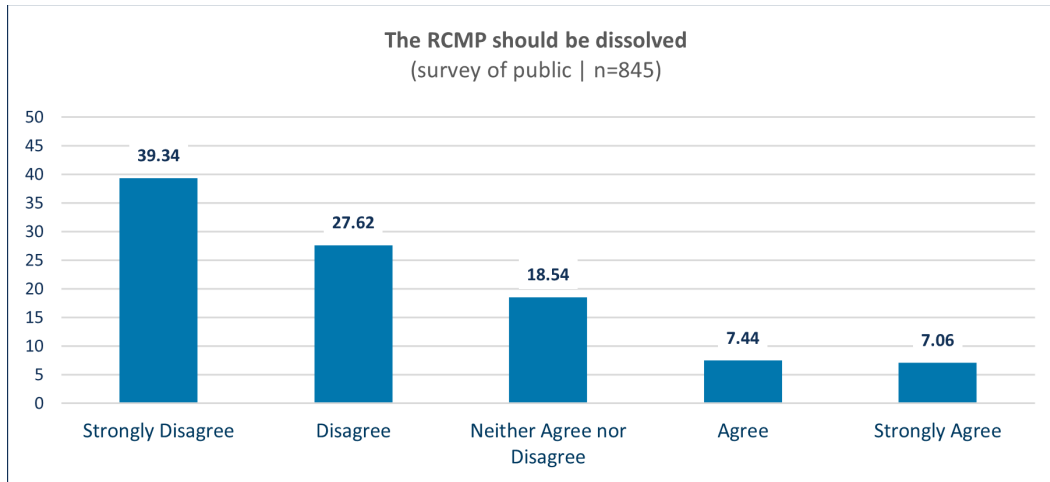


Figure 12. Survey responses for 'The RCMP should be dissolved'. When asked if they felt the RCMP should be dissolved, 66.96% of respondents noted they did not believe they should, with almost 40% strongly disagreeing with the RCMP being dissolved.

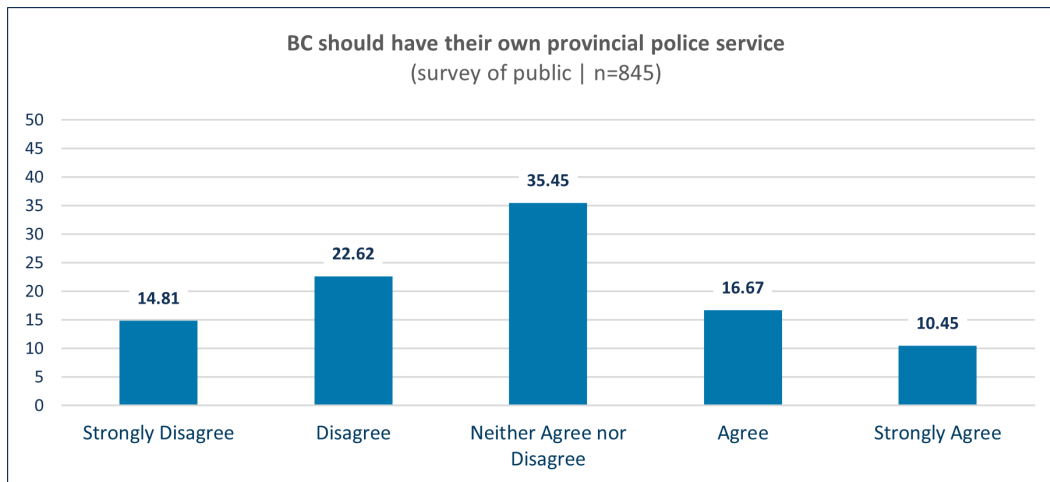


Figure 13. Survey responses for 'BC should have their own provincial police service'. When asked if BC should establish its own provincial police service, results were mixed. Several respondents (35.45%) indicating they neither agreed nor disagreed, with slightly more noting they disagreed (27.43%), and only 27.12% noting support for a new provincial police service.

Police use of force and deadly force characteristically are the most prominent issues people raise when discussing their perceptions on policing. In general, the respondents tended to believe the police in BC were not being held to a satisfactory level of account when they used excessive force—indicating the need for better use of force training. Notwithstanding broad support for the police, there also appears to be strong support for police reform (without going so far as defunding the police). Overall, the findings indicated a lack of support for removing the RCMP as the provincial policing service for the province, and similarly, a lack of support for the development of a new provincial police service. As noted, there were larger numbers of respondents who noted they neither agreed nor

disagreed, suggesting a lack of awareness and knowledge regarding the nature of police work and level of service the police provide to the communities they serve.

Factors Impacting Perceptions

The following section displays the relationship between specific characteristics of respondents and their perspectives on policing. In all cases below the perception of police questions were reduced to either agree (which included both agree and strongly agree) and disagree (disagree and strongly disagree), while excluding those who fell into the neither agree nor disagree group.

Research suggests there are many characteristics and contextual factors that can impact perception of police, including:

- **Sex:** sex has been demonstrated to be an inconsistent factor for influence on views of policing, more often men have been found to be more supportive of police,^{xli} but some studies have found that women have a more positive view of police^{xlii}, with others finding no relationship between gender and views on policing.^{xliii}
- **Race/Ethnicity:** most research in this area emerges from the United States^{xliv} and usually indicates that whites are more likely to support the police than all other groups.^{xlv} There were a few cases where no relationship was found between race/ethnicity and perception of policing.^{xlvi}
- **Income:** income, as well as socioeconomic status, have been found to have a positive impact on perception of police—as income goes up, so does support for the police.^{xlvii}

Sex

The following tables summarise where females and males differed in their perspectives on police:

Table 1. Impact of sex on trust in police. Overall, 69.24% of respondents have a high level of trust in the police. Men have a higher level of trust in the police than women, with 10.45% more men than women trusting in the police.

			Sex		Total
			Female	Male	
I have a high trust in my police	Disagree	Count	96	99	195
		%	36.9%	26.5%	30.8%
	Agree	Count	164	275	439
		%	63.08%	73.53%	69.24%
Total		Count	260	374	634
		%	100.0%	100.00%	100.0%

$\chi^2 = 7.868$, $df = 1$, $p = 0.005$

Table 2. Impact of sex on views of police use of excessive force too often. Overall, 56.57% of the respondents believe that police use excessive force too often. 19.87% more women than men believe that police use excessive force too often.

			Sex		Total
			Female	Male	
Police use excessive force too often	Disagree	Count	73	175	248
		%	31.60%	51.47%	43.43%
	Agree	Count	158	165	323
		%	68.40%	48.53%	56.57%
Total		Count	231	340	571
		%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

$\chi^2 = 22.101$, $df = 1$, $p = 0.000$

Table 3. Impact of sex on police being held to account for excessive force. 65.53% of respondents believe that when police use excessive force they are not held to account. 13.28% more women than men believe that when police use excessive force they are not held to account.

			Sex		Total
			Female	Male	
When police use excessive force, they are not held to account	Disagree	Count	70	152	222
		%	26.62%	39.90%	34.47%
	Agree	Count	193	229	422
		%	73.38%	60.10%	65.53%
Total		Count	263	381	644
		%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

$\chi^2 = 22.101$, $df = 1$, $p = 0.000$

Race/Ethnicity

It was found that race/ethnicity (coded as white and non-white) did not often impact various perspectives on policing, however there was one area where they differed:

Table 4. Impact of ethnicity on police being held to account for excessive force. Non-white respondents believed when police used excessive force, they were not held to account 11.56% more than white respondents.

			Ethnicity		Total
			Non-white	White	
When police use excessive force, they are not held to account	Disagree	Count	29	180	209
		%	24.37%	35.93%	33.71%
	Agree	Count	90	321	411
		%	75.63%	64.07%	66.29%
Total		Count	119	501	620
		%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

$\chi^2 = 5.749$, $df = 1$, $p = 0.016$

Many comparison views were completed between those who identified as Indigenous Canadians and those who did not. Many were found not to be significantly different. There was one main difference and that was related to overall trust:

Table 5. Impact of Indigeneity on trust in police. 68.24% of respondents had a high level of trust in the police, with 18.7% more non-Indigenous respondents having a higher level of trust in police when compared to Indigenous respondents.

			Identify as Indigenous		Total
			Non-Indigenous	Indigenous	
I have a high trust in my police	Disagree	Count	179	16	195
		%	29.78%	48.48%	30.76%
	Agree	Count	422	17	439
		%	70.22%	51.52%	69.24%
Total		Count	601	33	634
		%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

$\chi^2 = 5.137$, $df = 1$, $p = 0.023$

Further analysis of perspectives of Indigenous Canadians are included below in the comparative section. It should be noted that due to the disparate sample sizes some aspects did not come out in these analyses. Differences between those who identify as Indigenous Canadians and those who do not would be better examined with a larger sample of Indigenous respondents. It is strongly recommended that Indigenous British Columbians be the direct focus of an opinion survey if changes are to be made to policing in BC—simply, Indigenous Canadians must be meaningfully consulted anytime changes to policing are proposed or occur. Additionally, it could be determined if the opinions of Indigenous Canadians who live in areas having their own police service (such as those

living in areas policed by the Stl'atl'imx Tribal Police Service) noticeably differ from those living in areas policed by the RCMP.

Income

Of the most used factors, income is the most consistent factor in these data. Those in the lower income category are much less favourable of police than those in the higher income category. In this analysis, the lower income was identified \$45k/year or less, and the higher income category was more than \$45k/year.

Table 6. Income impact on trust in police. 68.79% of respondents had a high level of trust in the police. 22.73% of those in the higher income category were more trusting of the police when compared to those in the lower income category.

			Income		Total
			45k & Under	Over 45k	
I have a high trust in my police	Disagree	Count	62	114	176
		%	48.81%	26.08%	31.21%
	Agree	Count	65	323	388
		%	51.18%	73.91%	68.79%
Total		Count	127	437	564
		%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

$\chi^2 = 23.686$, $df = 1$, $p < 0.001$

Table 7. Impact of income on belief that police treat people with respect. 69.9% of respondents believed the police treat people with respect. 15.16% of respondents in the higher income category believed the police treated people with respect more than those in the lower income category.

			Income		Total
			45k & Under	Over 45k	
The police treat people with respect	Disagree	Count	49	109	158
		%	41.88%	26.72%	30.10%
	Agree	Count	68	299	367
		%	58.12%	73.28%	69.90%
Total		Count	117	408	525
		%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

$\chi^2 = 9.932$, $df = 1$, $p < 0.002$

Table 8. Income impact on belief that police too often use excessive force. 56.26% of respondents believed the police use excessive force too often, with 21.68% more of those in the lower income category believing the police use excessive force too often when compared to those in the higher income category.

			Income		Total
			45k & Under	Over 45k	
Police use excessive force too often	Disagree	Count	33	187	220
		%	27.27%	48.95%	43.74%
	Agree	Count	88	195	283
		%	72.73%	51.05%	56.26%
Total		Count	121	382	503
		%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Perceptions of BC Police Officers on Policing

There is a dearth of research regarding police officer perceptions of policing. The survey of police officers completed for this report was much shorter than the survey of the public, resulting in some comparable elements not being available in the police data. Additionally, the response rate for police officers was much lower than for the public (though this was not a surprise). Future research should include more open-ended questions for police officers with greater efforts being taken to encourage their participation. As with Indigenous Canadians, police officers must too be meaningfully consulted anytime changes to policing are proposed or occur, with their front-line experiences and perceptions being carefully considered.

The following findings describe the perceptions of police officers with respect to the educational requirements needed to become an officer, along with their perceptions of the training they receive. The first series of graphs show the results from the more representative survey delivered by the Mount Royal University research team, followed by the results gleaned from the subsequent province-wide omnibus survey completed by Leger360.

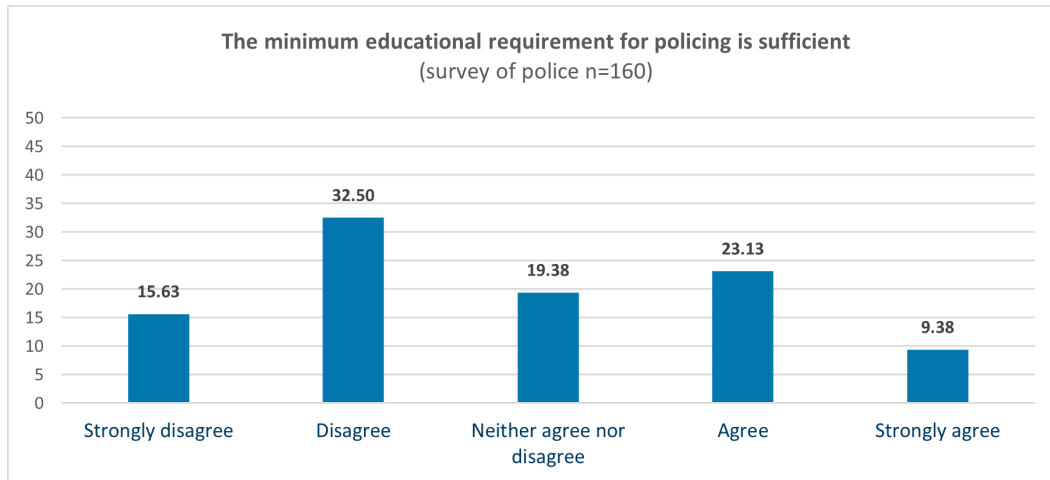


Figure 14. Police survey responses for 'The minimum educational requirement for policing is sufficient'. When police officers were asked if the current minimum educational requirement of a high school diploma for joining the police is sufficient, more respondents disagreed (48.13%) than agreed (32.51%).

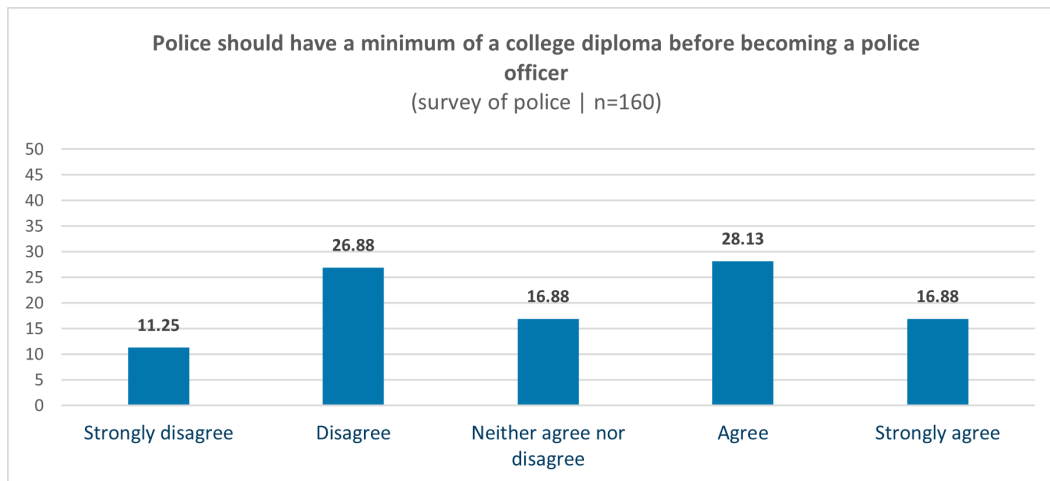


Figure 15. Police survey responses for 'Police should have a minimum of a college diploma before becoming a police officer'. When police officers were asked if the minimum educational credential needed to join the police was a college diploma, slightly more police officer respondents agreed (45.01%) than disagreed (38.13%).

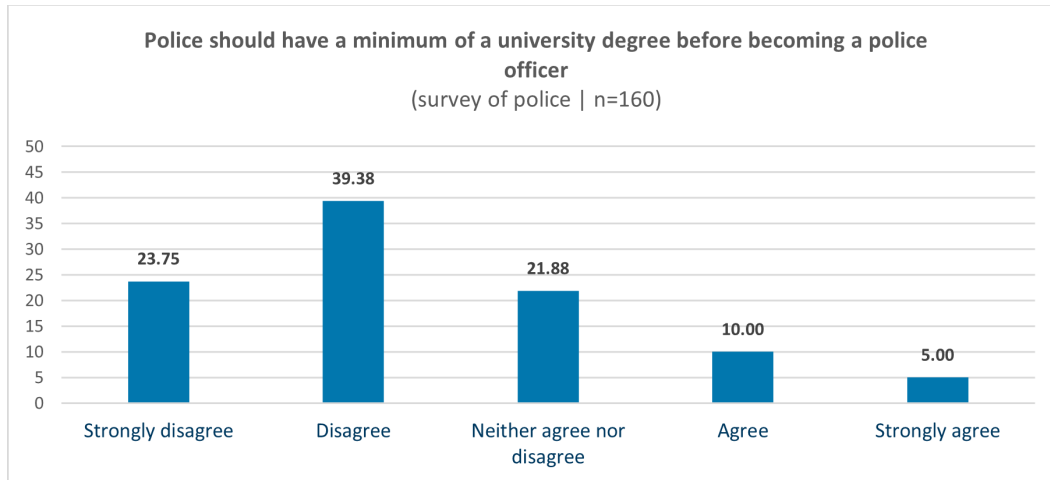


Figure 16. Police survey responses for 'Police should have a minimum of a university degree before becoming a police officer'. When police officers were asked whether police should have a minimum of a university degree before becoming a police officer, the majority (63.13%) disagreed—of importance is noting the large number (21.88%) who were unsure.

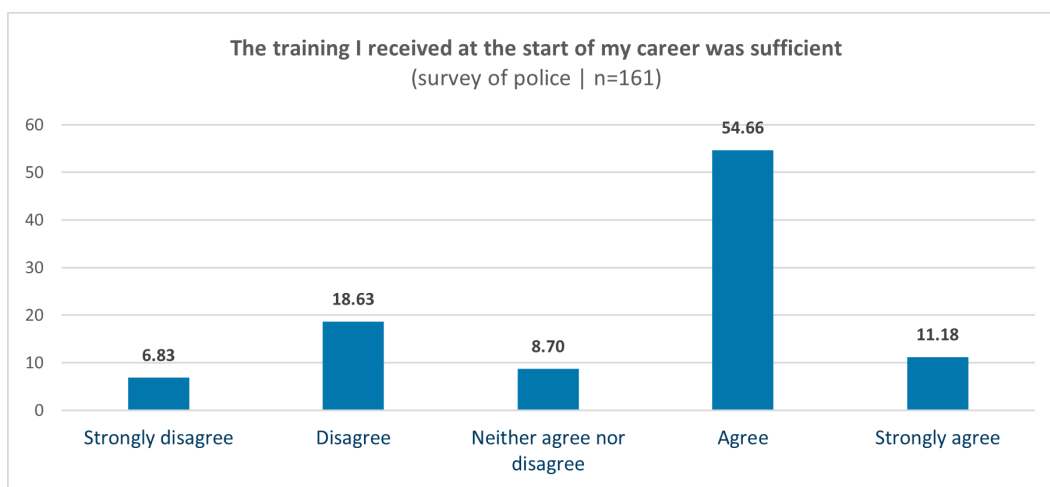


Figure 17. Police survey responses for 'The training I received at the start of my career was sufficient'. A majority of police officers surveyed (65.84%) believed they had received sufficient training at the beginning of their career.

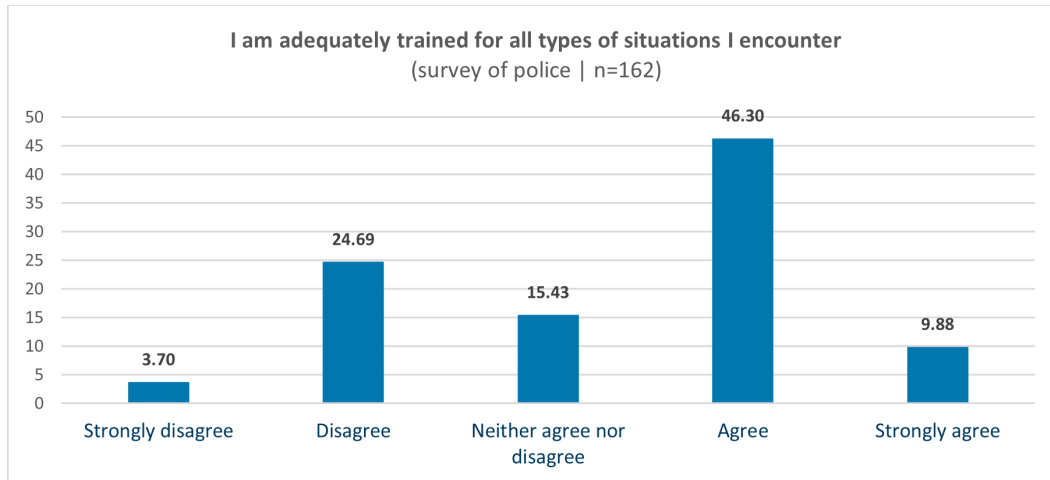


Figure 18. Police survey responses for 'I am adequately trained for all types of situations I encounter'. Most police officers believed they are adequately trained for all the types of situations they can encounter (56.18%).

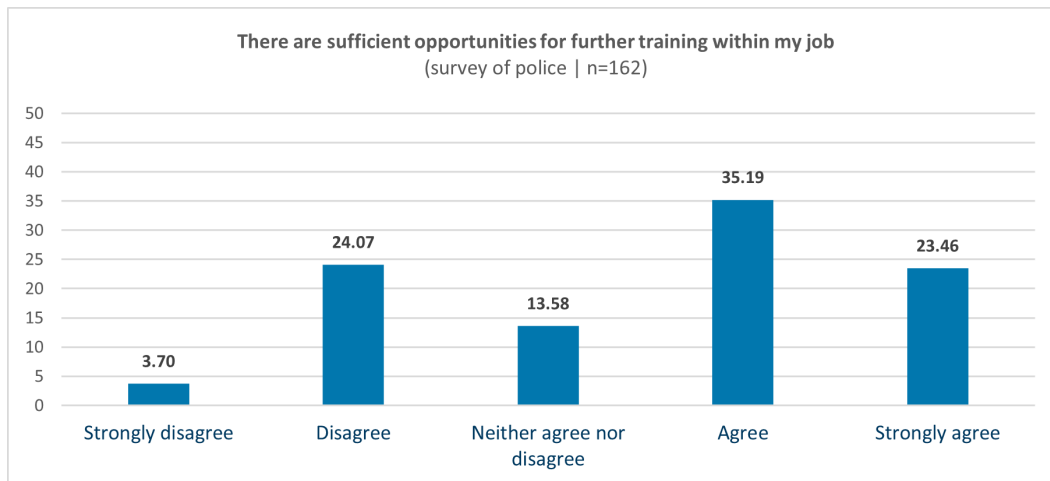


Figure 19. Police survey responses for 'There are sufficient opportunities for further training within my job'. Most of the police respondents (58.65%) believed there were sufficient opportunities for further training within their jobs.

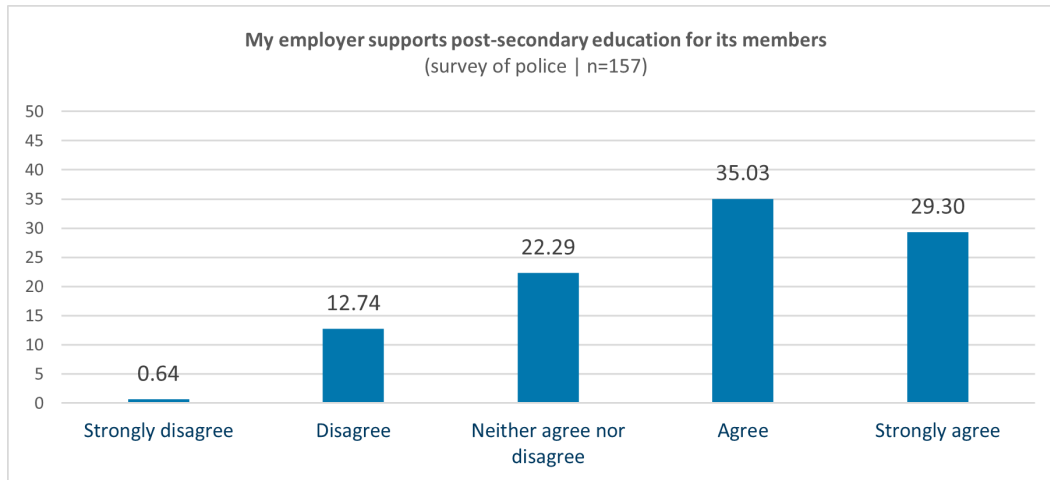


Figure 20. Police survey responses for 'My employer supports post-secondary education for its members'. The majority (64.33%) of police officers surveyed believed their employer supports post-secondary education for its members.

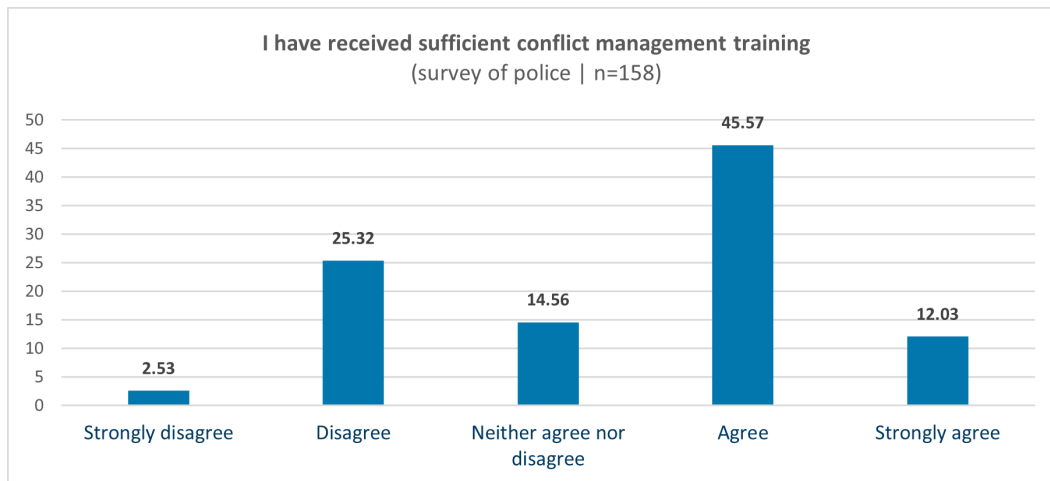


Figure 21. Police survey responses for 'I have received sufficient conflict management training'. Most police officers (57.6%) surveyed believed they received enough conflict management training.

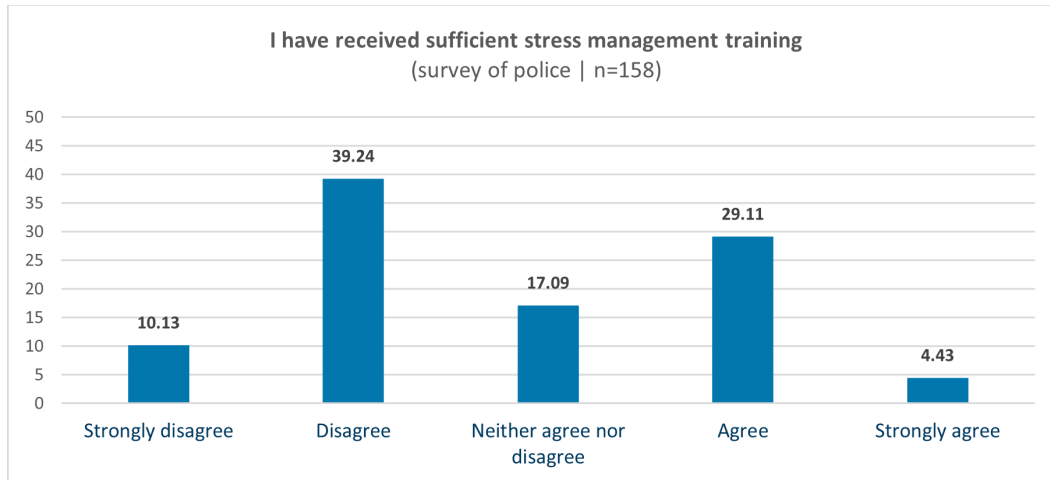


Figure 22. Police survey responses for 'I have received sufficient stress management training'. More police officers (49.37%) noted they disagreed that they have received sufficient stress management treatment than those who noted agreement (33.54%).

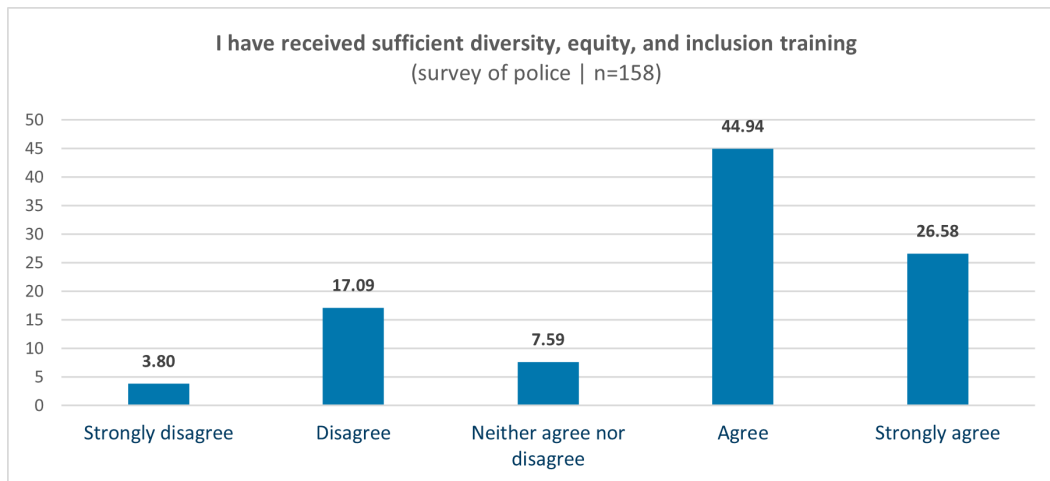


Figure 23. Police survey responses for 'I have received sufficient diversity, equity, and inclusion training'. A large majority of police respondents (71.52%) believed they had received sufficient training in diversity, equity, and inclusion.

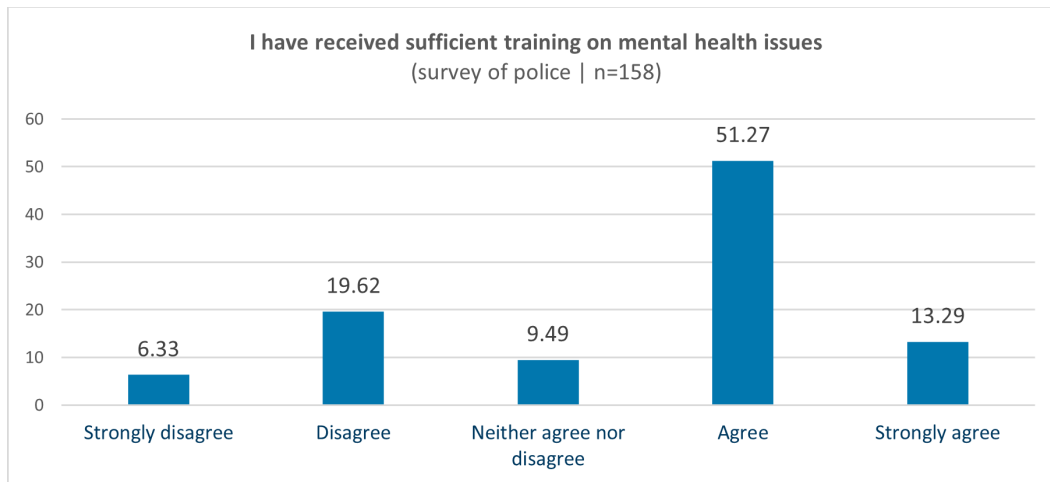


Figure 24. Police survey responses for 'I have received sufficient training on mental health issues'. Most of the police respondents (64.56%) believed they had received sufficient training on mental health issues.

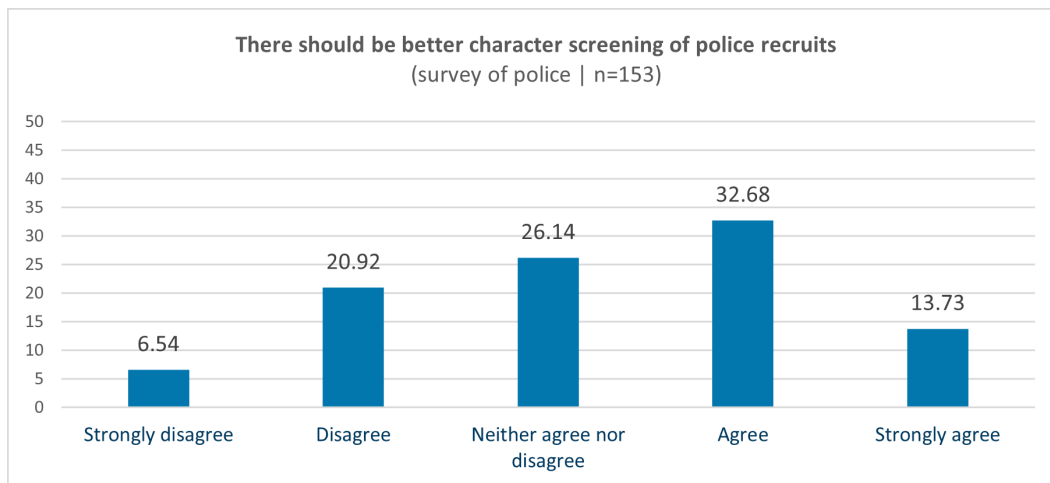


Figure 25. Police survey responses for 'There should be better character screening of police recruits'. 46.41% of police respondents believed that there should be better character screening of police recruits versus only 27.46% who do not.

Overall, the findings of this section support further research regarding what the specific minimum educational requirement should be to become a police officer, what annual continuing professional education should be mandatory for police officers, and what specialised education and training should be required for police officers performing specialised duties or working in leadership roles. Though most police officers believe they currently are receiving appropriate and quality training, it is also clear the public and police both believe more training and education would be beneficial—particularly training and education aimed at improving officer well-being, along with the ability of police officers to address violence and crime among those experiencing addiction and mental health challenges, along with extreme poverty. Lastly, there appears to be some concerns surrounding officer recruitment. Arguably, police services should want to recruit officers

who are best suited for the job, and if the current processes are not achieving this goal, then recruitment processes should be re-examined.

Qualitative Perception Results for BC Police Officers

There were two open-ended questions included in the police survey. Many respondents took the time to complete the open-ended questions with at least 50 responses to each. The questions were *"Please note any comments you would like to make on training and education in policing"* and *"Please comment in the box below on any other views on policing in your community or in BC in general"*. Below are the responses provided by police officers with respect to the four main themes that emerged from the questions:^{xlviii}

Theme 1: The media is playing a negative role in the way the police are viewed:

- *"Media creates division in communities."*
- *"Media portrays a horrible image of police and does nothing to correct itself. The media, social media, etc. have no desire to show what actual policing entails, what goes on day to day, and the actual realities of policing."*
- *"The influence of the media and irresponsible biased reporting by the media negatively affects the view on policing in this province. The lack of follow up due to it not being 'sexy' or mustering followers' interest is too prevalent."*
- *"Views on policing have been brutally skewed by media portrayal of police, as well as unfounded and fabricated social media issues."*

Theme 2: Minority groups and Indigenous People do not trust the police:

- *"I believe that there is an increased mistrust from minorities in the Police driven by what I call a mostly out-dated narrative... I do believe that the fact minorities are in contact with the Police in a higher percentage is a sign of systemic failure... The outcome is increased police contact. Dealing with the larger issues will lower police contacts and trust may then increase. No small task... Until then, I just work on making sure the individuals I deal with feel and are treated with respect. I hope the current environment can be a distant memory at my retirement."*
- *"I think the views of minority groups are in part fed by disproportionate policing of their community and in part by social momentum of incidents in both the US and Canada."*
- *"Indigenous people hate the police."*

Theme 3: Despite some of the issues with police, the public trust them:

- *"I feel that in general society trusts the police, and other than the vocal minority who want increased liberty. As such I feel that we as police spend too much time, effort, and training trying to appease these vocal minorities, and not enough time supporting the silent majority"*

-
- *"I cannot comment for all of BC, but in our community, I think there is a high level of trust in our agency."*
 - *"Our community survey continues to show we have a very high level of support in our community..."*

Theme 4: Change in policing is needed in the future:

- *"I believe that citizens in BC benefit from a very professional police force(s). The push to "improve" policing as a reaction to events in the US needs to be tempered very carefully. If you want to actually engage police in improving the profession, you need to avoid using language that coincides with the media portrayal that the police are the problem for all of societal ills."*
- *"Generally, we are not good at accessing minority groups for their opinions on policing. We are taking steps but small ones."*
- *"Police officers are rarely held accountable for their actions. Most are managed through 'Internal discipline' which is NEVER disclosed to the OPCC or judges looking over files."*
- *"BC requires one regional Police service for the lower mainland and another for the Greater Victoria area"*

The police respondents also mentioned issues of mental health, and while they noted that training was important, they also indicated that there was not enough time for training and education.

Comparing Perceptions of Educational Requirements and Screening of BC Police Officers

While there is very little research regarding police perception, there are hardly any studies that compare the perceptions between the public and police. This study found a substantial gap existed between the public and police when asked about accountability and police use of excessive force. In the public responses, a large majority (66%) disagree that the police are held to account when excessive force was used, whereas in the police survey, there was overwhelming agreement (with only 2% disagreeing). This gap in perception (and perhaps knowledge) should be concerning, as the assumption by the public that the police are not held to account for something so egregious as excessive use of force, if maintained, could erode the trust that does currently exist for the BC public in the police. Even the mere appearance of unpunished misconduct has real consequences for the police, the administration, the public, and the government. The following pie graphs highlight the similarities and differences between the public and police survey results:

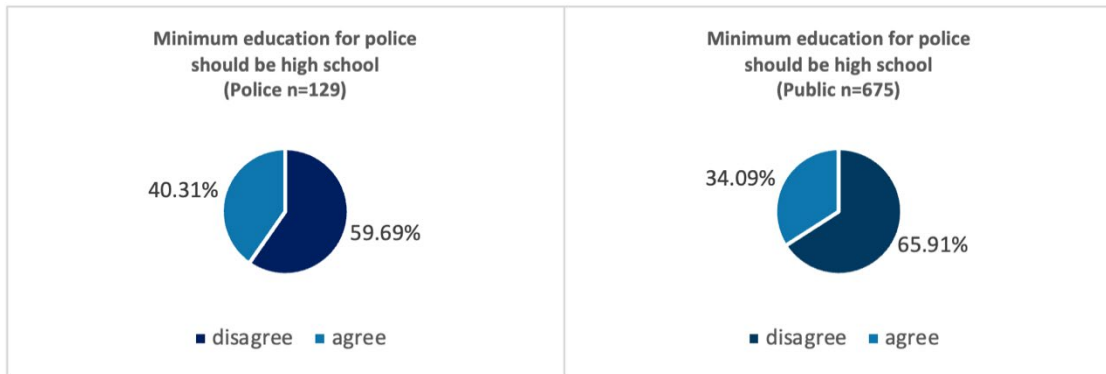


Figure 26. Police and public responses regarding a high school diploma as a minimum education requirement.

There was no significant difference between police and public respondents regarding their views on whether a high school diploma should be a sufficient minimum educational requirement for entry into policing. Only 40.31% of police and 34.09% of public respondents felt a high school education was sufficient, whereas 59.69% of police and 65.91% of public respondents disagreed.

Both police and public respondents disagreed that the minimum educational requirement for being a police officer should be a high school diploma.

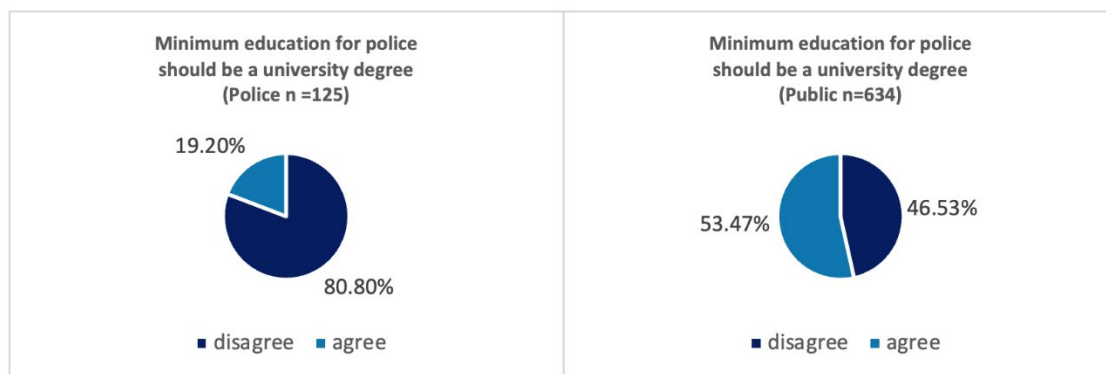


Figure 27. Police and public responses regarding a university as a minimum education requirement.

Most police respondents (80.80%) disagreed that the minimum educational requirement for police should be a university degree, whereas a slight majority of public respondents (53.47%) agreed it should.

Most police respondents disagreed a university degree should be required to join the police, whereas a slight majority of public respondents felt it should.

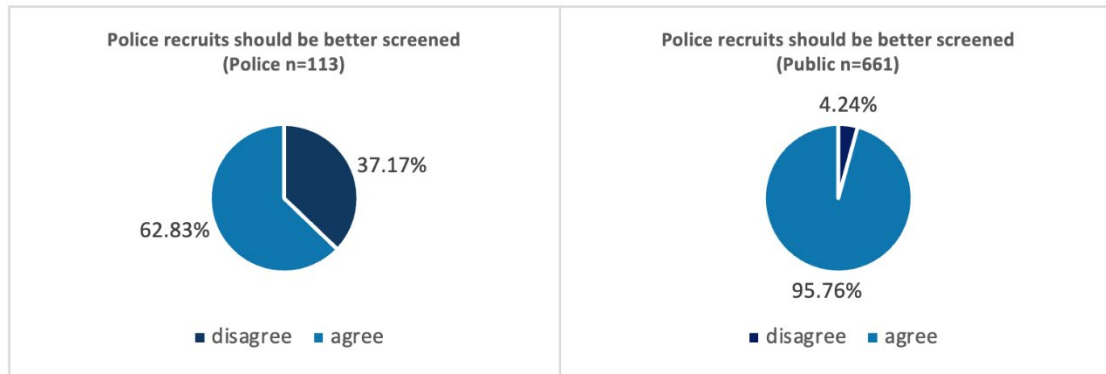


Figure 28. Police and public responses regarding a screening of police recruits.

With respect to the comparison of public and police results specific to the screening of police applicants, both the police and the public respondents believed applicants should be better screened. Of interest is noting there is a substantial gap between the groups, with 62.83% of police supporting better screening, compared to a decisive 95.76% of the public believing police applicants should be better screened—a sizable gap of 32.93%.

Both the police (62.83%) and especially the public (95.76%) believe police applicants should be better screened.

Lastly for this section, the following graphs illustrate the perceptions of the public and police with respect to the notion of police officers becoming regulated by a government authorised, independent, professional college of policing, similar in structure and function to other professional colleges in the province, such as the College of Physicians and Surgeons of BC, BC College of Nurses and Midwives, Association of Professional Engineers and Geoscientists of the Province of BC, Architectural Association of BC, The Law Society of BC, to name a few:

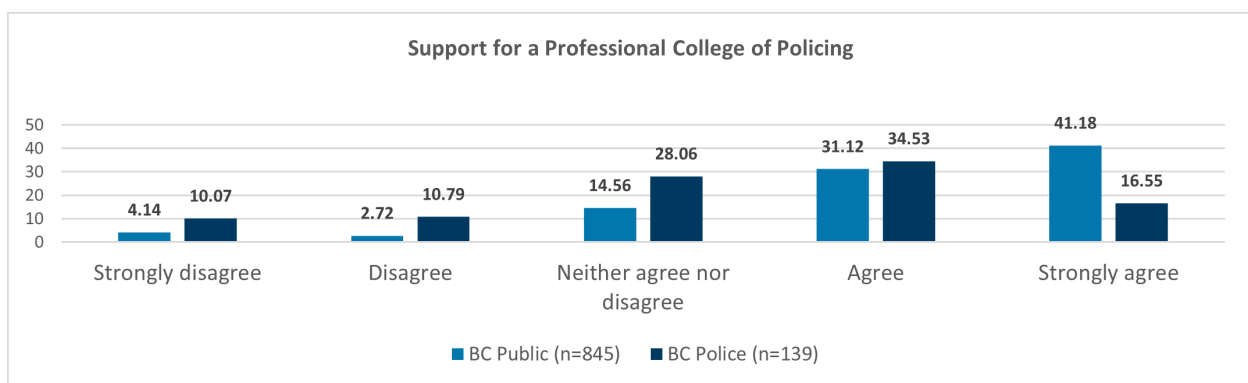


Figure 29. Police and public responses regarding support for a professional college of policing.

The above graph illustrates the public and police responses with respect to each groups level of support for a professional college of policing being established for BC police officers. Overall, the findings show more support than opposition for the notion. The public were 21.22% more supportive of a professional college when compared to the

police, with 72.3% either agreeing or strongly agreeing. It is important to note 28.06% of police respondents noted they neither agree nor disagree, possibly because they did not understand the concept in enough detail to give a definitive answer.

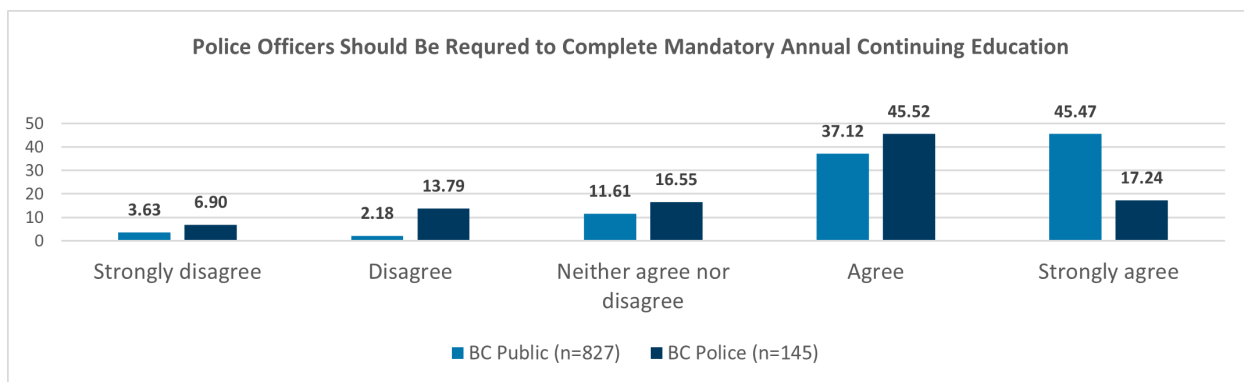


Figure 30. Police and public responses regarding annual continuing education requirements.

As noted from above graph, a large majority of the public either agreed or strongly agreed (82.59%) annual continuing education for officers should be mandatory, with a slightly smaller percentage of police also indicating they agreed or strongly agreed (62.76%).

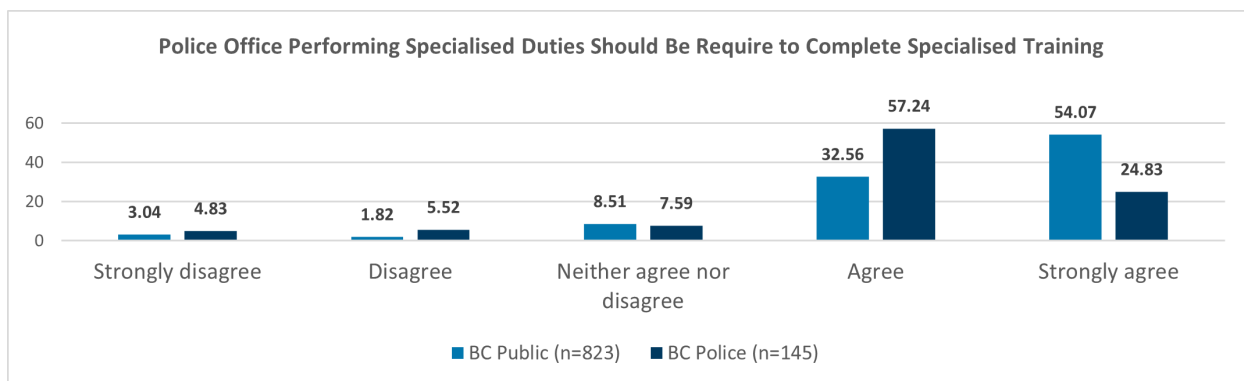


Figure 31. Police and public responses regarding specialised training.

When the police and the public were asked whether specialised police duties should require specialised training, a large majority of both groups believed that they did. For the police this was emphasised in the agree category, whereas for the public this was emphasised in the strongly agree category. Overall, 82.07% of police and 86.63% of the public either agreed or strongly agreed with the need for specialised training.

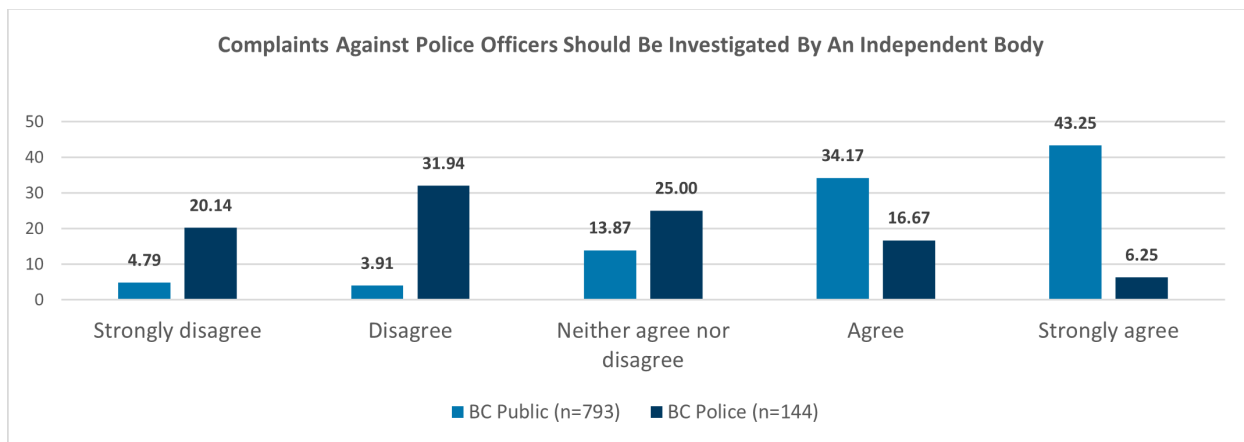


Figure 32. Police and public responses regarding complaint investigations.

Though complaints against municipal police officers and members of the RCMP are addressed differently, both models include independent civilian oversight. Nevertheless, it is understandable many are unfamiliar with the differences and nuances of police oversight in the province. For this specific question, a near inverse finding was discovered, with 77.42% of the public believing complaints should be investigated by an independent body, compared to 52.08% of police respondents who felt complaints should continue to be investigated by the police—of interest is 25.00% of police neither agreed nor disagreed.

Findings of the Leger360 Province-Wide Omnibus Survey of British Columbians

Like the previous surveys developed by the Mount Royal University research team, several questions were included in the Leger360 omnibus survey that were meant to gauge public perspectives of policing and police professionalisation. Though the omnibus survey was less representative than the survey developed by the Mount Royal University research team, the results nevertheless provided important and informed findings.

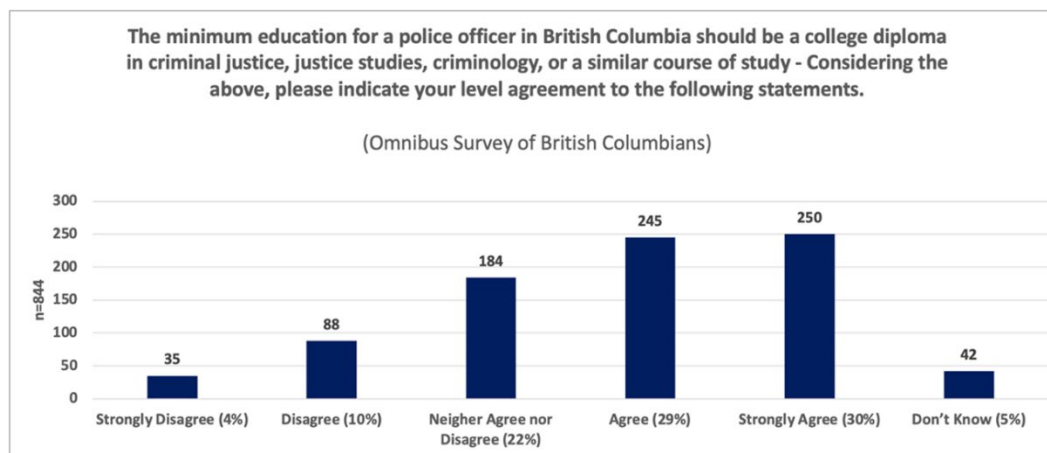


Figure 33. Omnibus survey responses regarding minimum education requirements.

Like the findings from the survey developed by the Mount Royal University research team in which 53.47% of British Columbians (n=634) noted agreement with a university degree being required to become a police officer, 58.64% of those surveyed in the Leger360 omnibus survey noted they felt the minimum education for a police officer should be a college diploma in justice studies, criminology, or a similar course of study. While the question asked in the omnibus survey specifically asked about a college diploma in justice studies or similar, it is clear from both studies that British Columbians support police officers completing a specialised post-secondary credential in the field of justice studies. Neither gender, age, household income, nor support for either the NDP or BC Liberals significantly impacted the responses given for the Leger360 survey.

Most respondents felt police officers should hold a diploma in justice studies.

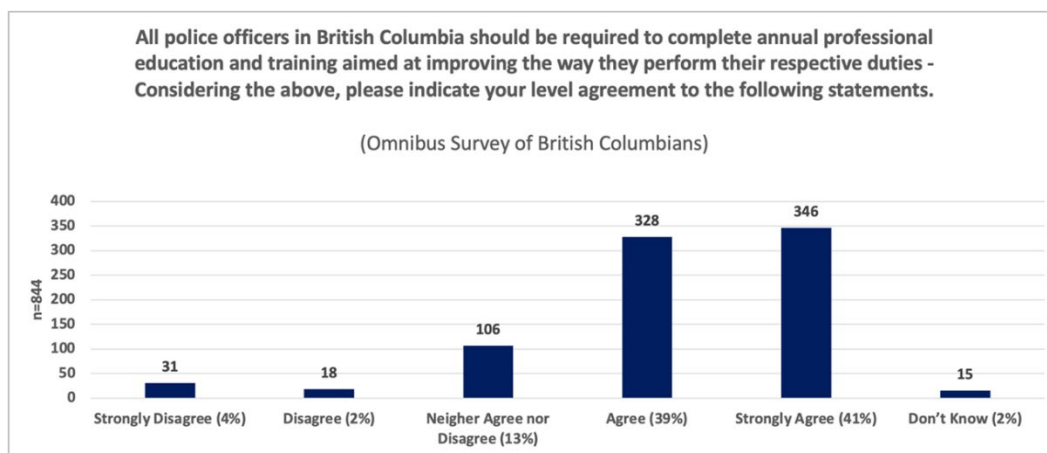


Figure 34. Omnibus survey responses regarding annual professional education and training.

When asked if police officers should complete annual professional education and training to improve the way they perform their respective duties, 79.86% of those surveyed in the omnibus survey indicated they either agreed (38.86%) or strongly agreed (40.99%) they should.

Most respondents support annual continuing professional education for police.

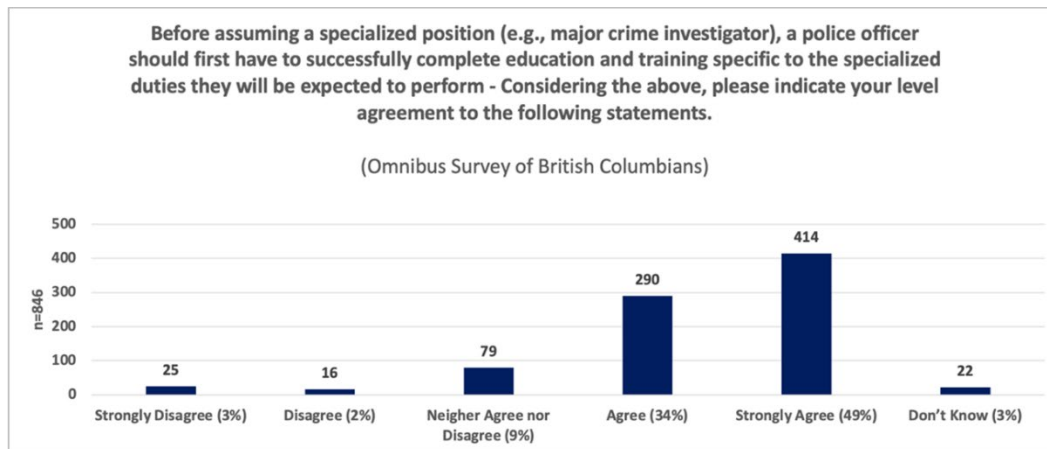


Figure 35. Omnibus survey responses regarding specialized training.

Like the previous two omnibus survey questions, 83.22% of respondents noted support for the police having to complete specialised education and training prior to assuming a specialised position such as a major crime investigator. Again, neither gender, age, household income, nor support for either the NDP or BC Liberals had a significant impact on the survey respondents' answers.

Most respondents support police officers having to complete specialised education and training before assuming specialised duties.

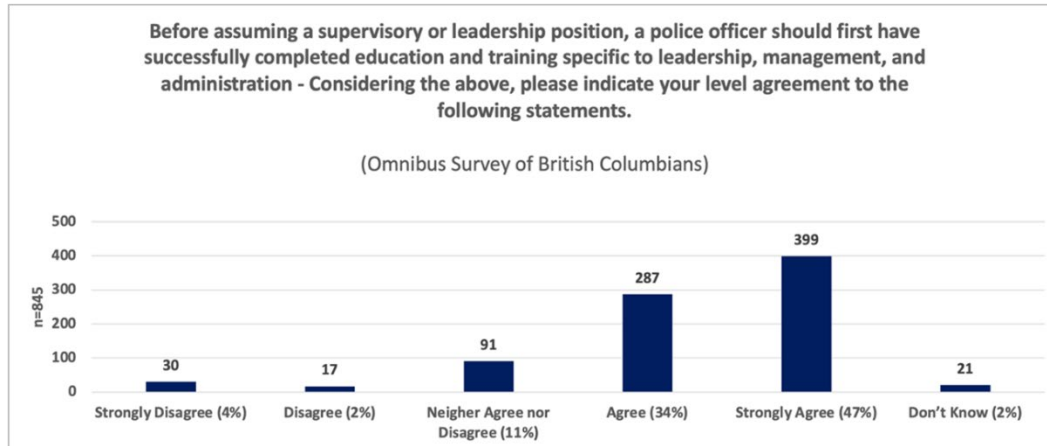


Figure 36. Omnibus survey responses regarding leadership training.

Likewise, 81.18% of the omnibus survey respondents supported police officers having to complete leadership, management, and administration education and training prior to assuming a supervisory or leadership role. Again, neither gender, age, household income, nor support for either the NDP or BC Liberals had a significant impact on the survey respondents' answers.

Most respondents support police supervisors and leaders having to complete leadership, management, and administration education and training.

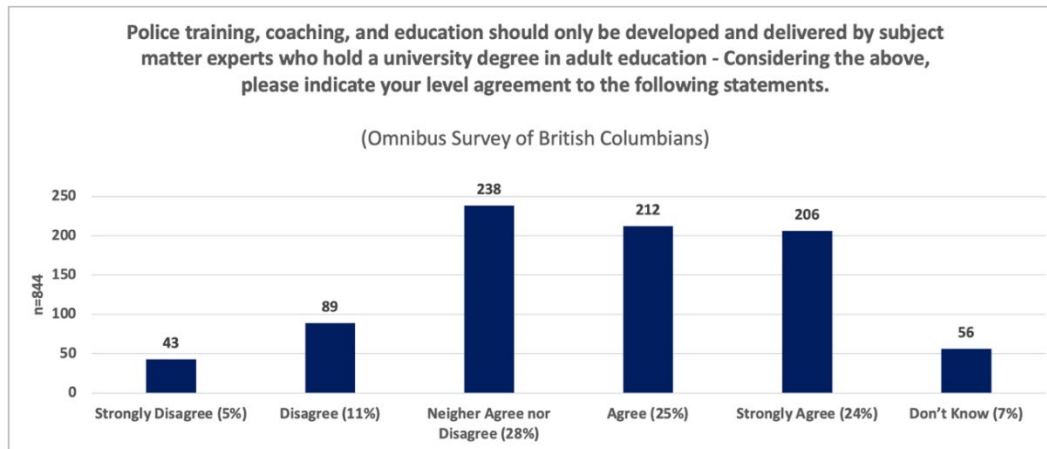


Figure 37. Omnibus survey responses regarding trainer qualifications.

When asked if police training, coaching, and education should only be developed and delivered by subject matter experts who hold a university degree in adult education, most (294 or 34.83%) of respondents either didn't know or neither agreed nor disagreed. Of the other respondents, 49.53% either agreed or strongly agreed, with only 15.67% either disagreeing or strongly disagreeing.

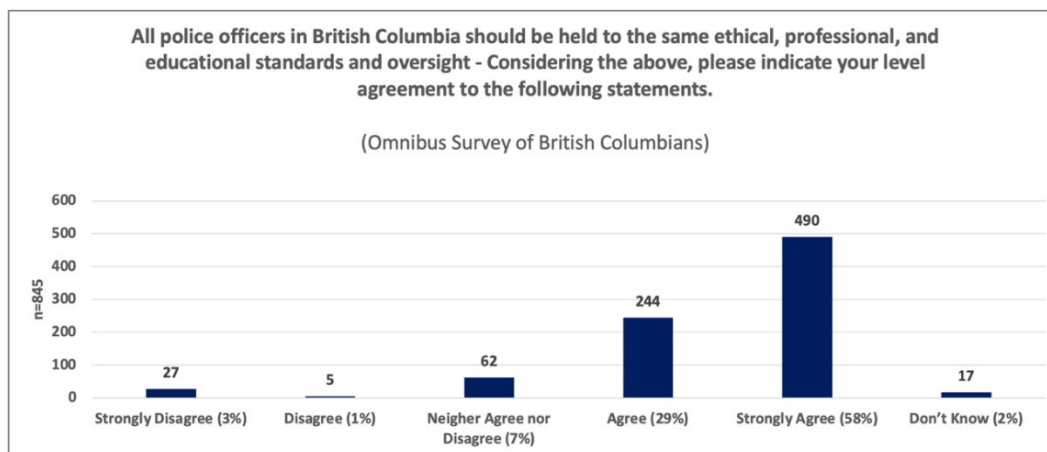


Figure 38. Omnibus survey responses regarding consistency in accountability and oversight.

Considering municipal police officers are subject to the provincial *Police Act* and members of the RCMP are subject to the federal *Royal Canadian Mounted Police Act*, the result of this specific omnibus question is an important one for consideration when examining police reform in the province. Of all the questions asked during the surveying of British Columbians, this question had the highest percentage (58%) and number (490) of respondents indicating they strongly agreed—87% indicating they either agreed or strongly agreed and only 4% either disagreeing or strongly disagreeing. Moreover, this question also had the least percentage (7%) of respondents indicating they neither agreed nor disagreed or did not know (2%).

A large majority of British Columbians agree that all police officers in the province should be held to the same ethical, professional, and educational standards and oversight.

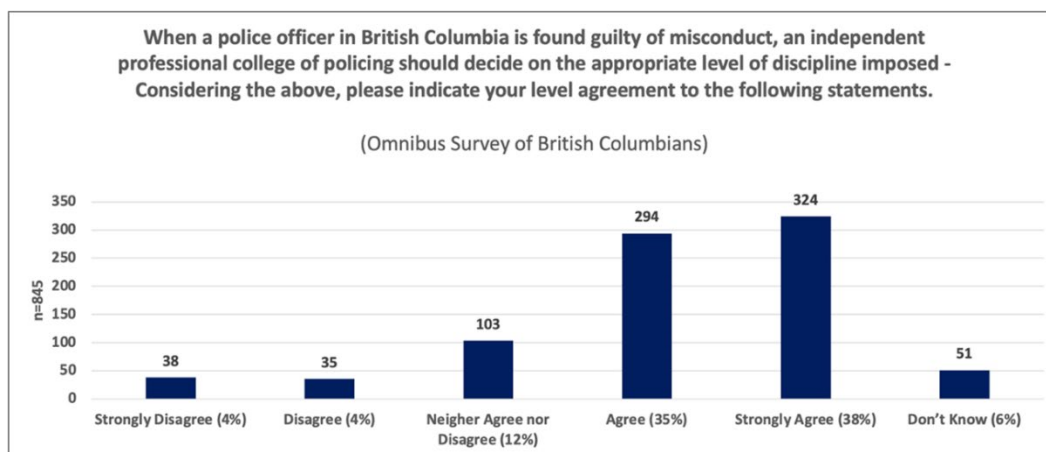


Figure 39. Omnibus survey responses regarding discipline for misconduct.

Regarding public support for police officers found guilty of misconduct being disciplined by a professional college of policing, 73% of the omnibus survey respondents agreed they should, with only 8% disagreeing—a finding that suggests the public would support a college of policing assuming responsibility for police discipline.

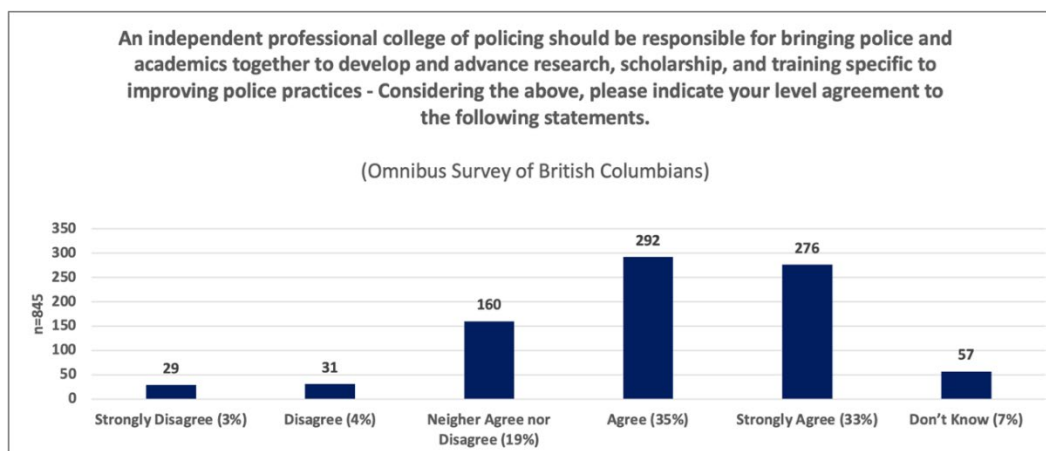


Figure 40. Omnibus survey responses regarding collaboration between police services and academics.

With respect to public support for police services and academic institutions working closely together “...to develop and advance research, scholarship, and training specific to improving police practices,” 68% of respondents indicated they supported this effort.

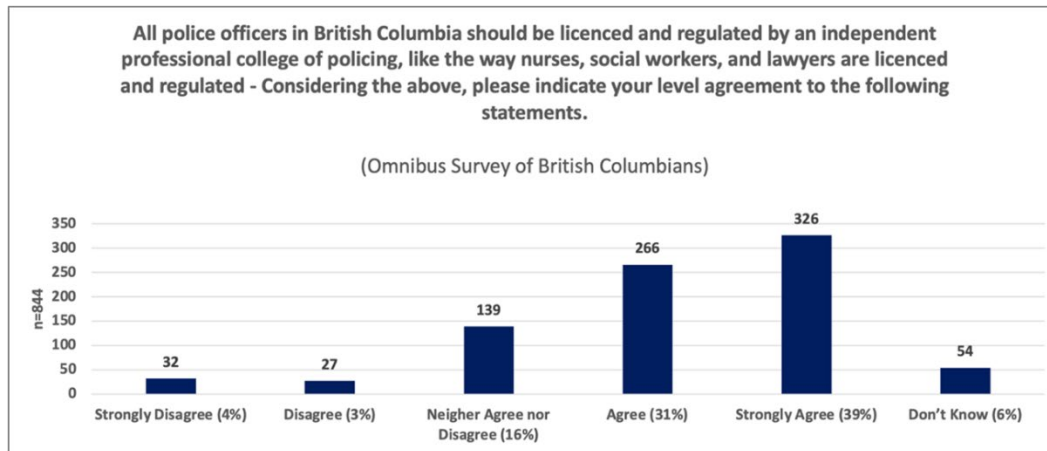


Figure 41. Omnibus survey responses regarding licensing and regulation of police officers.

Specific to the primary question of whether BC police officers should be “...licensed and regulated by an independent professional college of policing, like the way nurses, social workers, and lawyers are licenced and regulated” 70% of respondents noted they either agreed or strongly agreed, with only 7% disagreeing or strongly disagreeing and 6% not knowing.

A large majority of respondents noted they support a professional college of policing for British Columbia, with only 7% indicating disagreement.

Discussion

As stated earlier, the aim of this study was to examine the perceptions of British Columbians, police officers, and criminal justice experts on whether the occupation of policing in British Columbia should evolve to become a formal profession. Based on the results from the surveys developed by the Mount Royal University research team—which showed 51.08% of police and 72.30% of public respondents indicating support for a professional college of policing—along with the results from Leger360 omnibus survey of British Columbians—which showed 70% of respondents indicating support for a professional college of policing—it is suggested a sizable majority of British Columbians (including many police officers) likely would support the Government of British Columbia establishing a professional college of policing—a move that would advance the current occupation of policing into a formal profession. Moreover, the results of these surveys also suggest most British Columbians (also including many police officers) want the practice of policing to be more evidence-based, transparent, and responsive to societal demands.

Overall, the findings of this study show the majority of British Columbians support the police who serve and protect their community, though several concerns were expressed: British Columbians seem to be specifically concerned about police use of force, police not being held to account, and the transparency of the police. While perceptions of policing by outsiders are not always reflective of the reality of policing (as indicated in some questions by the gap between police and the public), the opinion of the public is reflective of their

experiences, and if not given the full picture, will fill in the gaps with their own perceptions. This indicates the need for better communication and more transparency on behalf of police with respect to their work and what steps they are taking to ensure accountability, transparency, and unbiased professionalism.

Not all groups have the same level of trust in the police. The most predominant were those of women, who had less trust in the police than men, and those in the lower income category, who had less favourable views of police when compared to those in the higher income category. The gendered outcome is not surprising considering the volumes of research demonstrated that women are more likely to support police reform and are more likely to believe that injustices need to be rectified. A major noted reason for women having less trust in the police has to do with a perceived failure with respect to sexual violence cases and domestic violence cases—an area likely needing further focused research attention.^{xlix}

Indigenous Canadians must have much more focus for both research and policy in the future. In this study there was not enough representation from this group due to the sample drawing from the entirety of the province. A future goal for researchers building on this study should be to determine the perspectives of Indigenous Canadians and their communities. Moving forward, if changes are to be made to policing in BC, surveying and consulting with Indigenous Canadians directly needs to be a priority—their perspectives being included in any future inquiry regarding the establishment of a professional college of policing.

Lastly, with respect to the comparison component of this analysis, a substantial gap in the perceptions of the public and police was evident. The police think they are doing a better job than the public think they are doing, especially with respect to use of force. In addition, the public are much more supportive of the college of policing than the police are, which is likely related to feelings that the police are not held to account and should be overseen by an independent group.

The Enduring Need for Change

Police services in BC and across Canada continue to emulate the historic London and Irish models of policing that emerged during the early 1800s, with municipal police services mostly emulating the London model and the RCMP the Irish model. Considering Sir Robert Peel led the 1814 establishment of the Irish Peace Preservation Force (which in 1822 became the Royal Irish Constabulary) and the 1829 establishment of London's Metropolitan Police, it is no surprise both the Irish and London models of policing include "policing by consent" as core attributes. Nonetheless, despite their similarities, it is important to recognise that the London model was developed to support the "community policing" needs of the developing urban centres of the time, whereas the Irish model was developed to support the "colonial policing" efforts being undertaken by the British Crown in lands it was exerting social, economic, political, and legal control over.ⁱ While "policing by consent" conceivably remains as relevant today as it did in the early 1800s, it is of

critical importance to understand the societal norms of the time included imperial elitism, arrogance, along with misogyny, racism, and discrimination.ⁱⁱ

Specific to the diversity of Canadian police services, aside from a handful of historic examples when females were hired to perform limited police duties—*such as Klondike Kate (Katherine Ryan) who was hired as a special constable by the North-West Mounted Police in 1900 or Annie May Jackson who became Canada's first female police officer with the Edmonton Police Service in 1912*—it was not until the 1960s that Canadian police services started to hire female officers to perform general police duties.ⁱⁱⁱ Other examples of lacking diversity within Canadian police services include: Baltej Dhillon who in 1990 became the first Sikh RCMP officer to wear a turban, Lenna Bradburn who in 1994 became Canada's first female chief of police with the Guelph Police Service, Jim Chu who in 2007 became Canada's first Asian chief of police with the Vancouver Police Department, and Devon Clunis who in 2012 became Canada's first Black chief of police with the Winnipeg Police Service.^{liii} As observed by Lesley Bikos, a former Canadian police officer turned academic, despite decades of police services across Canada pledging to become more equitable, inclusive, and diverse, little has actually been achieved over the past several decades.^{liv}

Reflective of Bikos' observation, in their 2022 report *"Police Relationships with Visible Minorities: A Review of the Impact of the 20-Year Effort by Police in British Columbia and Canada to Improve Visible Minorities' Assessments of Police Services"*,^{iv} the International Centre for Criminal Law Reform (ICCLR) noted:

Beyond training, improved communication strategies, better relationship with the media, or consultations with visible minority leaders, or even new technologies, police organizations need to be looking for new approaches to improve their relationships with visible minorities. Improved police governance, transparency, and accountability, with greater participation of members of visible minorities, are likely to be key to the implementation of a broader vision of procedural justice. – Yvon Dandurand, Paul Maxim, and Darryl Plecas ICCLR

Lastly, as stated in the BC Legislative Assembly's *Special Committee on Reforming the Police Act* 2022 report, *"...diversity should be accompanied by changes in organisational culture that fosters increased accountability, inclusion and belonging."* In short, police services in BC and across Canada continue to fall short of public demand for police to become more diverse and inclusive—arguably because little has been done to divorce the police from their deeply rooted colonial traditions and culture.

Insight from Policing Professionals, Experts, and Scholars

Several noted policing professionals, experts, and scholars were asked to provide their thoughts and insights on the feasibility of establishing a professional college of policing for BC. One of those asked to provide comments was the Hon. Mary Collins, who currently serves as an executive board member of the BC Association of Police Boards and member of the Saanich Police Board, and who used to serve as a Member of Parliament and member of the Privy Council (among other noteworthy public service). Collins noted she believed a professional college of policing would *"...raise the status of policing both in the*

eyes of the policing community, but also in the general community.” Another noted expert asked to provide comment was the Hon. Wally Oppal, KC, who currently works as a lawyer in Vancouver and regularly serves as an adjudicator for the OPCC—previously serving as the Attorney General of BC and Commissioner of the *Missing Women Commission of Inquiry* (among other noteworthy public service). Like Collins, Oppal noted that he too believed a professional college of policing would “...result in the police [in British Columbia] being more accountable to the public”, underlining that all professional regulatory bodies in the province are mandated by law to safeguard the public against professional malpractice and malfeasance.

Other notable provincial police leaders, such as Chief Constable Ray Bernoties of the Oak Bay Police Department, Chief Constable Neil Dubord of the Delta Police Department, Deputy Chief Constable Colin Watson of the Victoria Police Department, and Dr. Peter German, KC, President of the ICCLR and former Director General Financial Crime and Deputy Commissioner (West) for the RCMP and Deputy Commissioner (Pacific) for the Correctional Service of Canada, all expressed that they too supported the establishment of a professional college of policing. Although supportive of the general notion of a professional college of policing, the Hon. Darryl Plecas, PhD, one of Canada’s most noted criminologists, former Speaker of the BC Legislature, and today serving as a Professor Emeritus at the University of the Fraser Valley, candidly noted that he believed any effort to establish a professional college would likely take years, would face significant resistance from a broad range of internal and external critics, and that significantly more research and much broader stakeholder consultation and engagement would be needed before any significant progress toward the establishment of a professional college could be achieved.

Notwithstanding their strong support for significant police reform in the province, the British Columbia Civil Liberties Association (BCCLA) noted their clear opposition to the establishment of a professional college of policing in their statement:

A Professional College of Policing will further entrench police power and exacerbate the real or perceived impunity that police enjoy for abuses of power. It is our strong opinion that establishing a professional college will not mitigate systematic and reinforced misconduct within the police force. Current models of police oversight need enhancement—including centralization and standardization, complete civilian oversight, and funding that will allow them to complete comprehensive investigations in a timely and transparent manner. A professional college of policing, however, is not the appropriate solution and would exacerbate the public distrust in policing. – Meghan McDermott, Policy Director for the BCCLA

If a professional college of policing were established in British Columbia, policing would undoubtedly look and operate significantly different than today. By transitioning the practice of policing from being an occupation to a profession, policing would largely depart from its current top-down, paramilitary, and reactive model, and become more diverse, accountable, transparent, and responsive to community needs and expectations.

Notwithstanding the opinion of the BCCLA, the overall findings of this study, together with the insight of noted experts such as Hon. Michael H. Tulloch, Chief Justice of Ontario and President of the Court of Appeal for Ontario, much evidence suggest that the professionalisation of the police through the establishment of a professional college of policing would go far to improve and advance the practice of policing in British Columbia.

What a Professional College of Policing for British Columbia Could Look Like

Considering this study *only* examined the perceptions of British Columbians, police officers, and criminal justice experts in relation to the occupation of policing evolving into a formal profession, a detailed account of the likely cost and logistical needs for such a college were not analysed. Nevertheless, by reviewing the proposed core functions of a professional college of policing as outlined in the *Rational and Significance* section of this report, the structures of existing professional regulatory bodies, along with the *Professional Governance Act* (SBC 2018, c 47) and similar legislation, the following example of a college of policing structure is provided:



Figure 42. Example structure of a college of policing.

The above example reflects many of the structural components of the UK's National College of Policing along with the *Professional Governance Act*. Like the UK's National College of Policing, it is suggested that all police service employees be members of the college—a structure that could reduce incidents of discrimination and harassment: ^{lvi}

Executive Council

Considering the Council structure detailed under “Division 2” of the *Professional Governance Act*, the above example suggests that an Executive Council for a BC College of Policing be comprised of eleven members, of which seven would be registered police professionals (including the president and vice president for the College) and four would be lay members having specialised education and training relevant to the general practice of policing.

For the seven registered police professionals, it is suggested the composition would include a balance of executive police leaders (i.e., chief constables and/or deputy chief constables), mid-level police leaders (i.e., superintendents and/or inspectors), frontline officers (i.e., sergeants and/or constables), investigators, and specialised police professionals (e.g., crime analysts, forensic psychologists, criminologists, etc.). For the four lay council members, it is also suggested the composition would include a mix of professionals from outside policing organisations, such as senior members of the Justice Institute of British Columbia, Office of the Police Complaints Commissioner of BC, Independent Investigations Office of BC, BC Coroners Service, Law Society of BC, or similar, as well as a position held for the BC First Nations Justice Council. It is also suggested that the council include members who are formally trained and licenced as lawyers, accountants, psychologists, or similar.

It is suggested the Executive Council for the professional college of policing be structured in a way that supports councillors having diverse educational backgrounds, along with experience working within or with policing organisations. Moreover, it is critical that the structure and composition of the Executive Council reflects the general demographics of the province.

Chief Executive Officer (CEO)

It is suggested that the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) for a BC College of Policing be responsible for leading and managing the overall operations of the professional college. As an ex-officio member of the Executive Council, the CEO would provide expert insight and feedback to the executive councillors, and ensure the direction and instruction provided by the Executive Council be carried out in the most ethical, professional, effective, and economical means possible. The CEO would also be responsible for leading and supporting the various college directors in their fulfilment of their respective responsibilities.

Specific to the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) for the professional college of policing, the role should be held by a person having experience working for a law enforcement agency and has higher education within the fields of justice studies, criminology, law, or similar. Ideally, this person would also hold a graduate level degree in business administration.

Director of Police Guidance, Support, and Wellness	This director would be responsible for: • establishing, maintaining, and advancing equity, diversity, and inclusion among policing professionals • establishing and administrating the selection and screening process of police professionals • supporting the professional, psychological, and physical wellness of police professionals
Director of Police Education, Training, and Professional Standards	This director would be responsible for: • establishing and developing education, training, and professional standards for police professionals • the teaching and learning needs of police professionals • liaising and collaborating with post-secondary institutions and educators to support the continued professional development needs of police professionals
Director of Police Research, Scholarship, and Innovation	This director would be responsible for: • liaising and collaborating with post-secondary institutions, researchers, and related professional associations • liaising and collaborating with public and private sector organisations to advance police practices and technologies • initiating, supporting, and promoting research and scholarship aimed at advancing the practice of policing
Director of Police Ethics, Integrity, and Public Accountability	This director would be responsible for: • establishing, maintaining, and developing relations with the community and other police stakeholders • developing and supporting the code of conduct for policing professionals • addressing complaints against policing professionals

The executive leadership team, employees, and members of a BC College of Policing would together actively develop, support, and advance the professional practice of policing by establishing, supporting, and advancing:

- a sustained and inclusive police recruitment programme for the province
- rigorous police-specific research and scholarship aimed at advancing the practice of policing
- evidence-based and comprehensive police academy training standards and curriculum
- mandatory annual continuing professional (in-service) police education
- expert, objective, and community-focused oversight systems and processes

-
- educational and research projects, initiatives, and activities with colleges and universities
 - public trust in the police, together with police legitimacy and credibility

Because the BC College of Policing would be a legislated, self-governing, professional regulatory body (professional college), it ideally would have the following responsibilities as its core functions:

- protecting the public against professional misconduct or malpractice
- developing, promoting, and supporting a code of ethics for police practitioners
- setting the professional scope of practice for the profession of policing
- establishing the foundational educational credentials required to practice policing
- registering and licencing all those authorised to practice policing
- developing, supporting, and advancing a professional body of police knowledge
- developing and delivering mandatory annual continuing professional police education
- setting the minimum competencies and education needed for advanced policing roles
- receiving, reviewing, and adjudicating complaints against police practitioners
- levying discipline against police found to have engaged in malpractice or malfeasance
- ensuring the ongoing legitimacy and credibility of the profession of policing

Lastly, in reviewing the recommendations of the BC Legislative Assembly's *Special Committee on Reforming the Police Act*, it is evident the proposed BC College of Policing would closely complement eight of the committee's eleven recommendations, namely:

- A new *Community Safety and Policing Act* that is aimed at governing the policing and public safety services of BC based on the values of decolonisation, anti-racism, community, and accountability (*recommendation No.1*).
- BC transitioning to a new provincial police service that is governed by the recommended *Community Safety and Policing Act* (*recommendation No.2*).
- Indigenous communities having direct input into their police service structure and governance, including self-administered services which could provide policing to neighbouring non-Indigenous communities (*recommendation No.3*).
- A continuum of response to mental health, addictions, and other complex social issues with a focus on prevention and community-led responses and ensuring appropriate first response (*recommendation No.4*).
- Equitable access to high quality police and public safety services across the province (*recommendation No.5*).

-
- Enhanced and standardised initial and ongoing police education and training that reflects the key values and competencies for policing in order to shift police culture throughout the province (*recommendation No.7*).
 - The collection and public reporting of disaggregated race-based and other demographic data to support policies and procedures aimed at addressing systemic racism in policing (*recommendation No.8*).
 - A single, independent, civilian-led oversight agency responsible for overseeing conduct, complaints, investigations, and disciplinary matters for all police and public safety personnel with powers or authority under the proposed new *Community Safety and Policing Act* (*recommendation No.9*).

Conclusion and Recommendation

Considering the sum of the findings from this exploratory study, it is clear further investigation into developing a professional college of policing is both warranted and wanted. Mirroring the recommendation of the Hon. Michael H. Tulloch in his 2017 *Report of the Independent Police Oversight Review* for the Province of Ontario, a college of policing in BC could complement and improve the existing police training and education developed and delivered by the Justice Institute of British Columbia, as well as the existing police oversight bodies in the province. If a professional college of policing were established in BC, it arguably would be most effective if it served as a vehicle to align and coordinate existing police institutions, and most importantly, to enrich and advance policing standards and services across the province.

This conclusion in many ways complements the April 2022 *“Transforming Policing and Community Safety in British Columbia”* report by the *Special Committee on Reforming the Police Act*, in that a BC college of policing could stand as an effective means to reduce the *“...inefficiencies, gaps, and duplication”* that have resulted from having *“...different agencies with different mandates, authorities, and processes responsible for police oversight...”*^{xvii}

Likewise, because a professional college of policing would have the principal mandate of protecting the public against policing malpractice and malfeasance, public confidence in, trust of, and support for the police would undoubtably increase. Moreover, by having all police officers in the province being mandated to become members of the professional college of policing (including members of the RCMP), standards would be elevated, and a healthier, more community-focused policing culture would likely emerge. Lastly, a professional college of policing would ultimately provide a much-needed opportunity and foundation upon which policing could become more democratic, effective, and community-focused—*supporting the practice of policing finally being divorced from its colonial roots*.

Recommendation

Based on the findings of this initial study, it is recommended that the Government of British Columbia (ideally the “...all-party select standing committee on policing and community safety” proposed by the BC Legislative Assembly’s Special Committee on Reforming the Police Act in their 2022 “Transforming Policing and Community Safety in British Columbia” report) sponsor and support a more comprehensive study to assess the potential social, economic, and governmental benefits that a professional college of policing for BC could provide. It is recommended that if the Government of British Columbia decides to sponsor and support a future study, this study should be conducted by a multidisciplinary team of researchers with backgrounds in such fields as criminology, economics, sociology, political science, law, and business (with a focus on organisational development and human resource development).

Endnotes

- ⁱ On November 15th, 2022, the City of Surrey's newly elected mayor (Brenda Locke) and council voted to reverse the decision of the previous council and retain the RCMP as their municipal police.
- ⁱⁱ Palmater, P. (2016). Shining light on the dark places: Addressing police racism and sexualized violence against Indigenous women and girls in the national inquiry. *Canadian Journal of Women and the Law*, 28(2), 253–284.
- ⁱⁱⁱ The 60s scoop refers to the RCMP forcibly taking Indigenous children from their families and placing them in residential schools.
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