



# **SURREY POLICE SERVICE**

## **2021 Community Consultations Executive Summary**

— SAFER. STRONGER. TOGETHER. —



## Project Objective

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From June to October 2021, Surrey Police Service (SPS) undertook a three-part community consultation project to provide the foundation for the development of a community policing model and to inform SPS's first strategic plan.

This project consisted of a survey, interviews and focus groups, with the goal of gathering information from a broad range of stakeholders who live and work in Surrey. The three components were designed by independent research experts (Dr. Curt Griffiths and Dr. Eli Sopow) to help SPS understand the lived experience of different groups, the challenges and opportunities currently facing Surrey, and how to improve service delivery and increase safety and the quality of life for all residents in the community.

The materials gathered during this community consultation will inform the SPS strategic planning process as well as departmental policies and operational strategies. This project is a part of SPS's commitment to ensuring that interested and affected parties are an integral part of the community policing model from Day One.

## Project Method

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This consultation consisted of three inter-related components:

1. An online public opinion survey of 1,000 Surrey residents designed and analyzed by Dr. Eli Sopow and collected by InsightsWest Market Research;
2. One-on-one interviews with 106 community members;
3. Twelve focus groups with over 100 representatives from groups in the community.

## Public Opinion Survey

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In July 2021, SPS commissioned a public opinion survey of Surrey residents. The survey included 1,000 residents within the six community centres of Surrey (Whalley, Guildford, Fleetwood, Newton, Cloverdale, South Surrey), and included segmentation by community centre, age, gender, and ethnicity including Indigenous participation. The sample size is statistically accurate for the entire population of Surrey 19 times out of 20, with a margin of error of +/- 3.4%.

The survey asked residents to rate the priorities of 15 common police services, crime victimization levels, contact with police over the past year, perceived patterns of certain crimes over the past three years, and public opinion about the diversity and gender of a police officer. In addition, residents provided their level of support for police body-worn cameras, the importance of a new Surrey Police Board, and what will be the biggest impacts on Surrey policing in the coming year.

## Interviews

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The interviews were conducted with a broad range of interested and affected parties within the community. Interviewees included persons in the private sector, the provincial and municipal governments, organizations that focus on housing and assisting persons experiencing housing challenges, food security, mental health and addictions, school officials, religious leaders, Indigenous leaders, the LGBTQ2S+ community, organizations involved in crime prevention, and persons working with vulnerable and at-risk and persons and those re-entering the community following a period of incarceration.

A team of university-based researchers was led by Dr. Curt T. Griffiths from Simon Fraser University (Surrey campus) and assisted by SPS staff. The interviews were structured in three parts: 1) the background, experience, and role of the interviewee and their organization; 2) understanding current challenges with community safety and well-being in Surrey and how to address them, and perceptions of crime and safety; and, 3) how SPS should police Surrey and effectively engage the community.

## Focus Groups

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Focus group sessions were held with 12 groups in the community. The groups included a variety of stakeholder organizations, including the private sector, seniors, community associations, the differentially abled, advocacy groups, the LGBTQ2S+ community, and community organizations providing a broad range of community programs and services for (among others) at-risk youth, newcomers, vulnerable and at-risk persons, youth, and crime prevention.

The discussion topics included, but were not limited to: 1) participants' perceptions of the quality of life in Surrey and key issues of concern; 2) challenges and opportunities for improving community safety and wellbeing; 3) how their organization/agency and others and SPS can best address these; 4) how best to develop sustainable police-community partnerships; 5) how the community can be involved in setting police priorities; and, 6) strategies for creating and maintaining police-community communication and dialogue.

## Key Findings

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1. There is vast expertise and experience among community members that can be mobilized to create integrated holistic, innovative responses to the challenges facing the community.
2. There is broad support for a community policing model and a desire to play an active role in its implementation and operation.
3. There is strong support for SPS to partner in multi-sector initiatives to respond to the needs of vulnerable/marginal/at-risk persons and groups.
4. There is strong support for:
  - a. The City of Surrey developing a Community Safety and Wellbeing Plan that would provide a framework for multi-sector collaboration in addressing the current and future needs of the community;
  - b. SPS officers being equipped with body-worn cameras;
  - c. The development of a youth strategy for at-risk youth, and a SPS School Resource Officer program informed by best practice programs in other jurisdictions and tailored to the needs of Surrey schools and students;

- d. The deployment of Neighbourhood Partnership Officers attached to police offices in the districts;
  - e. A meaningful SPS Diversity Advisory Committee;
  - f. The deployment of a Gang Crime Unit; and,
  - g. The creation of an SPS Diversity Relations Unit and, potentially, other specialized liaison units.
5. Overall, Surrey residents rated the following as the top policing priorities: violent crimes (91%), organized crime gangs (88%), having urgent police services delivered in a timely fashion (86%), and domestic violence (78%).
  6. While all residents in all communities rated violent crimes, timely police services, and organized crime as high priorities, age, gender, ethnicity, and/or town centre location significantly impacted the rankings of other policing priorities such as homelessness, mental health issues, and feelings of safety when walking alone.
  7. The strongest public criteria for a Surrey police officer were having Surrey's culture and diversity represented in the profile of a police officer (64%) and being fluent in another language than English (63%.)
  8. There was very strong support (79%) for a Surrey Police Board with the expectation that the Board would provide clear accountability and communication, and ensure local input into how SPS policies the community.
  9. Survey respondents forecast the following will have the biggest impact on public safety in the year ahead: organized crime/gangs (67%), illegal drug sales (57%), and a growing population (50%).

## Recommendations

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1. The SPS workforce should reflect the diversity of Surrey while ensuring that all officers have the requisite competencies to be effective in a community policing service delivery model.
2. SPS can gain the trust of the community by being present, visible, proactive, and a good partner.
3. SPS should develop a holistic, multi-faceted communication strategy to facilitate and sustain partnerships with interested and affected groups, to ensure transparency and to keep the community informed of its priorities, activities and outcomes.
4. SPS should create a Community Safety Officer program or Special Municipal Constable program.
5. SPS officers must have the requisite skill sets and competencies to effectively interact with community residents, including diverse communities, Indigenous persons, and newcomers.
6. SPS should strive to put the right officers in the right positions.
7. All SPS officers should be trained in the principles and application of trauma-informed policing and procedural justice policing and have cultural competencies.
8. SPS should build on existing relationships/partnerships/initiatives that community groups have with the RCMP, ensuring that these are evidence-based and grounded in best practices.
9. Police services will most effectively be delivered in a de-centralized, localized model.
10. Both qualitative and quantitative metrics should be used to assess the performance of SPS.
11. SPS should have a leading-edge research and analytics section with highly trained analysts to ensure that its policies and operations are best practice and evidence based.
12. Community stakeholders should have input into SPS strategic planning process.
13. The Surrey Police Board should develop a robust communication strategy to inform the community of its mandate and activities.
14. The findings from this consultation should be made available to all SPS staff and widely disseminated in many languages through a variety of media platforms.

## Next Steps

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The Surrey Police Board and the SPS leadership team will use the results from this consultation process to inform the organization's first strategic plan. The plan will be developed in the fall of 2021 and released in early 2022.

The extensive input provided during this consultation project will also be used to develop a community policing service delivery model for SPS, which will be operationalized when SPS becomes the official police agency of jurisdiction for Surrey.

SPS is committed to continued community engagement. As the Community Policing Bureau grows, they will seek to build long-term relationships with the community and introduce innovative ways for citizens to have their voices heard. Citizens can expect community engagement in various forms to be an integral part of SPS's approach.

## Full Reports

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The full community consultation reports from Dr. Curt Griffiths and Dr. Eli Sopow are available on the SPS website: [www.surreypolice.ca](http://www.surreypolice.ca).