

Halton Regional Police Service 2012 Community Survey - Summary of Results

Introduction:

In November 2012, the Halton Regional Police Service distributed a survey aimed at gauging the opinions of Halton residents relating to policing matters. Survey recipients were asked questions relative to their experience with the Service, perceptions of crime in the community, feelings of safety and police priorities. The questions asked were intended to provide comparative results for similar surveys conducted in 2009, 2008, 2007, 2005, 2002, 1997 and 1995. In addition to the questions used in prior surveys, a number of new questions were included to delve deeper into the policing and crime issues that Halton residents consider to be most important.

A random sample of households was taken from the current address listings for Halton Region provided by Info Canada. A survey package was mailed out to 2,205 households, including a survey form and a postage paid addressed return envelope. Name and location identifiers were stripped out, ensuring that the returned survey forms were completely anonymous. Overall, 503 responses were received and incorporated into the survey database for summary and analysis. This represents a response rate of 22.8%. Region-wide, at this level of response, we can expect response results within +/- 4% of the survey results 19 times out of 20.

Overall, results from the 2012 Survey were consistent with those produced in the previous surveys. The new questions included in the 2012 Survey will be repeated in future surveys to provide additional analysis over time.

Data collected through the Survey are intended to assist police and the public in the development of strategies to address various problems and issues, and as an input to the Corporate Business Planning process.

Survey Highlights

- 64% of respondents to the Survey had some form of contact with the HRPS over the last five years. In the 2009 and 2008 Surveys, the value was 65% (Question 1)
- Of those people having contact over the last five years, the contact has been with either a uniformed officer (83%) or a communication/station duty staff member (36%). In 2009, these values were 78% and 31% respectively. (Question 1a)
- 18% of respondents who had contact with the police identified themselves as having been the victim of a crime over the last five years (Question 1c). The breakdown of the form of contact was as follows:

Contact Type	Percentage
Victim of a crime	18% (-1%)
A witness to an accident	19% (+1%)
At a RIDE or seatbelt program	10% (+1%)
At a public presentation	2% (-2%)
Stopped for a traffic violation	13% (--)
Other	20% (+20%)
Charged with criminal offence	0% (-1%)
Fire or medical emergency	5% (+2%)
Attended community event	7% (+1%)
Asking for information	13% (-5%)
Casual talk with patrol	9% (--)

The values in parenthesis indicate the change from the 2009 Survey

- Respondents with some contact with Halton Police over the last five years were polled about their experience in dealing with the HRPS over the telephone where applicable (Question 1d). For respondents expressing an opinion, the responses are provided in the table below:

"The Last Time You Telephoned the HRPS" ...	Percentage responding "Yes"
The police telephone number was easy to find	83% (+2%)
The switchboard operator was helpful and efficient	97% (+4%)
The person I spoke to <u>after</u> the switchboard operator was helpful and efficient	91% (+1%)
I was told how long it would take for the police to respond to my problem	63% (+2%)
I was satisfied with the amount of time it took for the police to respond to my problem	83% (-1%)
I was satisfied with the level of concern of HRPS members regarding my problem	85% (+3%)
I was satisfied with the investigation conducted	81% (+2%)

The values in parenthesis indicate the change from the 2009 Survey

- Of respondents expressing an opinion, 96% believe the Halton Police are honest and fair, 96% believe members are courteous and polite, 92% think members have a caring attitude and 96% believe HRPS members respect human rights. These are consistent with the 2009 and 2008 results (Question 2). The following table provides the full set of responses received:

Members of Halton Regional Police Service are:	Percentage Agreeing
Honest/fair	96% (+1%)
Courteous/polite	96% (+1%)
Have a caring attitude	92% (-1%)
Respect human rights	96% (-1%)
Are approachable	96% (+1%)
Are committed to their job	97% (-1%)
Inspire confidence	92% (-1%)
Look professional	98% (--)
Are proud of their community	97% (--)
Are proud of their work	97% (--)
Represent their community	96% (+2%)
Are visible	92% (+4%)
Are well trained	96% (--)

The values in parenthesis indicate the change from the 2009 Survey

- When asked to select the top five problems in their community area, respondents identified the following as their top concerns: aggressive or careless driving, vandalism, residential break-ins, theft from vehicles and drugs in schools. This list is similar to the top five from 2009 except that drugs in schools has replaced drinking and driving, which is number six concern in 2012 and aggressive and careless driving has replaced vandalism as the number one concern. The full list of responses received is as follows:

How do you perceive the following problems in your community?	Percentage selecting response as one of the top five most serious
Aggressive or careless driving	59% (+3%)
Vandalism	56% (-1%)
Residential break-in	50% (--)
Thefts from cars	43% (+2%)
Drugs in schools	33% (--)
Drinking and driving	31% (-2%)
Drug-related crime	20% (+8%)
Motor vehicle collisions	20% (+5%)
Youth loitering	19% (-6%)
Fraud	14% (+6%)
Theft of cars	13% (-4%)
School violence	12% (-3%)
Business break-in	11% (-1%)
Noisy parties	11% (+1%)
Youth gang activity	10% (-6%)
Family violence	10% (+1%)
Assault	8% (+2%)
Armed robberies	8% (-1%)
Lack of crime prevention	5% (-3%)
Prostitution	0% (-1%)
Hate crime (new for 2012)	0% (N/A)

The values in parenthesis indicate the change from the 2009 Survey

- Building on the identification of traffic issues as being a major concern of Halton's residents in prior surveys, the 2012 Survey asked respondents to identify the three most serious traffic problems they encounter (Question 4). The results obtained were as follows:

What are the most serious traffic problems in your community?	Percentage selecting response as one of the top three most serious
Aggressive driving	76% (--)
Speeding	65% (+3%)
Disobey signs and signals	60% (+7%)
School zones	23% (-3%)
Impaired driving	19% (-5%)
Heavy truck safety	19% (+1%)
Unsafe vehicles	8% (+2%)
Seatbelts, child restraint violations	4% (--)

The values in parenthesis indicate the change from the 2009 Survey

- When questioned about their feelings of personal safety during daylight hours, respondents generally felt safe - in their own homes (98%), in shopping centres (98%), driving (92%), walking in their neighbourhood (96%) or in public parks (97%). This is consistent with 2009 and 2008 survey results (Question 5).

How Safe Do You Feel During Daylight Hours?	Very Safe	Somewhat Safe	Somewhat Unsafe	Very Unsafe
At shopping centres	86% (--)	12% (--)	1% (--)	1% (--)
In your residence	88% (+2%)	10% (-2%)	1% (--)	1% (--)
In your place of work*	85% (-2%)	12% (+1%)	1% (--)	1% (--)
In public parks	66% (+4%)	31% (-4%)	1% (-2%)	1% (+1%)
While driving	56% (--)	35% (-3%)	6% (+1%)	2% (+1%)
Walking in neighbourhood	68% (--)	29% (+1%)	2% (-1%)	1% (--)
Using public transit*	71% (+5%)	24% (-5%)	3% (-1%)	2% (+1%)

* - If Applicable

The values in parenthesis indicate the change from the 2009 Survey

- After dark, only 67% of respondents felt safe in public parks, but 85% felt safe using public transit – (Question 6).

How Safe Do You Feel After Dark?	Very Safe	Somewhat Safe	Somewhat Unsafe	Very Unsafe
At shopping centres	61% (+3%)	32% (-2%)	6% (-1%)	1% (--)
In your residence	74% (--)	22% (-1%)	2% (--)	1% (--)
In your place of work*	67% (-3%)	24% (+1%)	7% (+1%)	2% (+1%)
In public parks	24% (+1%)	43% (+1%)	26% (-3%)	7% (+1%)
While driving	49% (+5%)	38% (-8%)	11% (+2%)	2% (+1%)
Walking in neighbourhood	32% (+3%)	45% (-2%)	18% (-3%)	5% (+2%)
Using public transit*	47% (+8%)	39% (-6%)	11% (-2%)	3% (--)

* - If Applicable

The values in parenthesis indicate the change from the 2009 Survey

- When asked the survey Question 7 - "On a scale of one to four, with one (1) being not at all fearful and four (4) being very fearful, how much would you say you fear" various criminal scenarios, the following responses were received.

How fearful are you of:	Not At All Fearful (1)	(2)	(3)	Very Fearful (4)
Being assaulted	52% (+3%)	35% (-4%)	7% (--)	6% (--)
Being sexually assaulted	64% (--)	25% (+1%)	5% (-1%)	6% (--)
Being robbed or mugged	43% (+11%)	39% (-12%)	11% (-1%)	7% (+2%)
Having your car stolen	38% (+8%)	45% (-5%)	13% (-1%)	3% (-3%)
Having someone break in while at home	39% (+7%)	37% (-2%)	14% (-5%)	10% (+1%)
Having someone break in while out	19% (+4%)	46% (+1%)	27% (-1%)	9% (-2%)
Being a victim of a drunk driving accident	18% (+7%)	45% (-1%)	21% (-4%)	16% (-2%)

The values in parenthesis indicate the change from the 2009 Survey

- Question 8 on the survey asked "In general, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with your personal safety from crime"? The responses provided suggest that Halton residents consider themselves generally safe from crime.

Very Satisfied	Somewhat Satisfied	Somewhat Dissatisfied	Very Dissatisfied
57.5% (+6%)	38.5% (-6.6%)	3.1% (+0.5%)	0.8% (+0.1%)

The values in parenthesis indicate the change from the 2009 Survey

- Question 9 and 10, new to the survey for 2012, asked whether the personal safety of seniors, or crimes against seniors, is a problem in Halton. The responses provided indicate that although the majority of Halton residents consider seniors safe and free from crime, nearly a third of residents feel otherwise:

Do you feel that personal safety is a problem for seniors in Halton?	Yes	No
	30.7%	69.3%

Do you feel that crimes against seniors are a problem in Halton?	Yes	No
	28.5%	71.5%

- Recent studies have suggested that part of the reason for falling crime rates in Canada is an increasing unwillingness for the public to report minor crime. The General Social Survey of Canada (GSS) reveals that a large proportion of Canadians never reported criminal incidents to police. In all, the GSS reports that only 31% of criminal incidents came to the attention of police in 2009, down from 34% in 2004 (and 37% in 1999). In an effort to gauge the scale of non-reported crime in Halton, 2012 Survey recipients were asked Question 11 - "Has anything happened to you or a member of your household within the past 12 months which you thought was a crime, but which you decided not to report to the police?" Nearly 8% of respondents indicated that there were crimes they had not reported to police. This number is not directly comparable to the GSS findings, as it only covers the past 12 months, but it is a number that we can track over time:

Any crime you didn't report to police within past 12 months?	Yes	No
	7.6% (-3.9%)	92.4% (+3.9%)

The values in parenthesis indicate the change from the 2009 Survey

- Question 12 probed deeper, seeking answers to the following question for those that had indicated non-reported crime in the previous question:

Why did you decide not to report that incident to the police?	% *
Assumed police could not do anything about it	63% (-1%)
Assumed that police would not take any action	53% (+1%)
I was afraid of the reaction of the people involved	18% (-2%)
It was a personal problem and I wanted to solve it myself	16% (+5%)
It would have been too time-consuming	24% (+14%)
I didn't know how to contact the police	3% (-4%)
I was afraid of getting involved with the police	13% (+11%)

* Percentage changes are greater due to small reporting numbers involved in this question
The values in parenthesis indicate the change from the 2009 Survey

- Delving deeper into the perceptions of safety experienced by Halton residents, we asked a question (13) regarding safety in schools. Elementary and middle schools were overwhelmingly considered fairly or very safe. Feelings about safety in high schools was less positive, with 18% of respondents characterizing high schools as somewhat (a bit) or very unsafe (representing an improvement over 2009 levels):

How safe are local schools in daytime?	Very Safe	Fairly Safe	A Bit Unsafe	Very Unsafe	Don't Know
Elementary schools	53% (+9%)	27% (-4%)	3% (-1%)	1% (--)	16% (-3%)
Middle schools	44% (+8%)	33% (-3%)	5% (--)	1% (--)	17% (-5%)
High schools	26% (+9%)	37% (--)	16% (-6%)	2% (--)	20% (-2%)
Colleges	27% (7%)	33% (+2%)	9% (-1%)	1% (-1%)	30% (-3%)

The values in parenthesis indicate the change from the 2009 Survey

- When asked to identify the best way to get general information to them, respondents identified flyers/newsletters, television, newspapers and email as the most effective methods of distribution (Question 14)

- When asked to identify the best ways to communicate general information to the police, most respondents favour direct approaches, including calling by telephone (57%), email (38%), via HRPS web site (26%) or meeting in person (29%). These results are similar to those provided by respondents to the 2009 Survey but with the telephone showing a 16% increase this Survey (Question 15).
- With respect to use of police time, the majority of respondents (51%, down from 52% in 2009) believe that police should spend more time controlling illegal drug use, enforcing traffic laws (43%, same as 2009) and providing educational programs at schools (42%, down 1% from 2009) (Question 16).
- Only 8% of respondents believed police should spend more time responding to calls of a minor nature (10% in 2009) (Question 16).

Should police spend more, less or the same amount of time dealing with the following matters?	More	Same	Less
Enforcing traffic laws	43% (--)	54% (+1%)	3% (-2%)
Organizing crime prevention activities	28% (+2%)	70% (-1%)	2% (--)
Trying to catch criminals	38% (-5%)	61% (+4%)	1% (+1%)
Controlling illegal drug use	51% (-1%)	47% (--)	2% (+1%)
Responding in person to calls of a minor nature	8% (-2%)	68% (--)	24% (+1%)
Working with the public to solve problems	29% (-3%)	69% (+3%)	2% (--)
Foot/bicycle patrol when practical	33% (-10%)	61% (+8%)	6% (+1%)
Patrolling in marked police cars	28% (-10%)	70% (+10%)	3% (+2%)
Patrolling in unmarked police cars	31% (-7%)	60% (+7%)	9% (--)
Providing educational programs at schools	42% (+1%)	56% (+1%)	2% (--)
Patrolling schools	35% (-4%)	62% (+5%)	4% (--)

The values in parenthesis indicate the change from the 2009 Survey

As in all previous surveys, the majority of respondents supported the concept of using alternative reporting procedures for some minor offences, for example reporting over the telephone or attending the station. Respondents were more inclined to support this in the areas of by-law control (77%, down from 78% in 2009) and motor vehicle collisions (73%, down from 75% in 2009). Somewhat less support was given to calls involving criminal occurrences such as fraud/theft (61%, 2009 - 61%) and vandalism (58%, 2009 - 62%) (Question 17):

Would you be willing to report the following MINOR offences to the police in a manner other than sending a patrol car? Your report would still be dealt with.	Yes	No
Minor motor vehicle collision	73% (-2%)	27% (+2%)
Fraud/theft	61% (--)	39% (--)
Municipal by-laws (noise or animal complaints)	77% (-1%)	23% (+1%)
Vandalism/mischief to property	58% (-4%)	42% (+4%)

The values in parenthesis indicate the change from the 2009 Survey

- When asked about their perception of appropriate response times to various call for service scenarios, 66% of respondents believe that police should respond to alarm calls in under 30 minutes and 74% feel the same for motor vehicle collisions (Question 19):

Appropriate response time	<30 mins	30-90 mins	>90 mins
Residential break and enter	49% (-8%)	44% (+7%)	7% (+2%)
Motor Vehicle Collisions	74% (-2%)	23% (--)	2% (--)
Thefts	38% (-2%)	48% (+1%)	14% (+2%)
Parking complaints	7% (--)	33% (-5%)	59% (+4%)
Alarms	66% (-4%)	26% (+5%)	8% (-1%)
Vandalism	29% (-1%)	43% (--)	28% (+1%)
Municipal by-laws	6% (-1%)	30% (-3%)	64% (+4%)

The values in parenthesis indicate the change from the 2009 Survey

- The final opinion-based question of the 2012 Survey (Question 20) measured the satisfaction of Halton residents in the work of the Halton Regional Police Service. 93% of respondents indicated that they were very satisfied or reasonably satisfied with the work of the Halton Regional Police Service (up from 92% in 2009), 5% offered no opinion and 2% were either reasonably dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with the work of the Service (down from 3% in 2009).

From an overall perspective, how satisfied are you with the work of the Halton Regional Police Service in your city/town/rural area?	Percentage
Very Satisfied	53% (+11%)
Reasonably Satisfied	40% (-10%)
Don't Have an Opinion	5% (--)
Reasonably Dissatisfied	2% (--)
Very Dissatisfied	0% (-1%)

The values in parenthesis indicate the change from the 2009 Survey

- Returned survey forms closely matched the proportional household counts outlined in the Region of Halton's 2012 estimates, with 37% of returns coming from Burlington (38% of 2012 households), 13% from Halton Hills (11%), 13% from Milton (17%) and 37% from Oakville (34%) (Question 21)
- Most of the respondents to the Survey had resided in their communities for over 10 years (71%), while an additional 25% had lived in the community for between 3 and 10 years (Question 22)
- 49% of the respondents were female, 51% male (Question 23)
- Respondents represented all age groups over age 18; although an under-representation in the 18-30 year age group was encountered (Question 24). Specifically:
 - 1% were 18-30 years old (4% in 2009)
 - 15% were 31-44 years old (21% in 2009)
 - 49% were 45-64 years old (48% in 2009)
 - 35% were over age 65 (27% in 2009)
- The 2012 Survey is attached to this summary document

Conclusion

The data collected through the 2012 Halton Regional Police Service Community Survey provide police management with feedback on the public perception relating to police operations in Halton. The results of the Survey should be considered in the business planning process, assigning priorities, developing or fine-tuning existing community programs, crime prevention and education activities, and enforcement.

Overall, the 2012 results were consistent with survey findings produced in 2009, 2008, 2007, 2005, 2002, 1997 and 1995. The new questions included in the 2012 survey will be repeated in future surveys to provide additional analysis over time.

Prepared by: Planning and Research Bureau – March 2013