

# CRIME IN BRITISH COLUMBIA

*One-in-Three (32%) BC Households a Victim of Crime in Past Two Years; Vast Majority (86%) of Crimes Reported to Police*

*Seven-in-Ten (71%) BC Residents Thinks Courts and Justice System Too Soft on Law Breakers*

*Residents Split on How to Get Tougher; Longer Sentences (33%), Community Service (30%), Financial Compensation (30%)*

*Majority (60%) of British Columbians Willing to Pay More Taxes to Hire More Police Officers*



## THE VANCOUVER SUN

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**Vancouver, BC** – A new Vancouver Sun/Ipsos-Reid poll finds that one-in-three (32%) BC households has been a victim of a crime in the past two years and that the vast majority (86%) of these crimes have been reported to the police. Lower Mainland residents (39%) and younger residents (41%, 18-34 years) are the most likely to have been a victim of a crime.

The poll also finds that seven-in-ten (71%) BC residents think the courts and justice system in BC are too soft in dealing with people who have broken their law. There is a real split, however, in opinions about the best way to rectify this problem. One-third (33%) favours having offenders serve longer sentences. One-third (30%) favours having offenders do more community service. And, one-third (30%) favours having offenders pay more compensation to victims.

Hiring more police officers is an action supported by most British Columbians. In fact, six-in-ten (60%) residents say they would support a tax increase to hire more police officers in their community.

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*These are the findings of a BC Ipsos-Reid/Vancouver Sun poll conducted between December 2<sup>nd</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup>, 2002 among a representative cross-section of 800 British Columbian adults. These data are statistically weighted to ensure the sample's regional, age and sex composition reflects that of the actual BC population according to 2001 Census data. With a provincial sample of 800, one can say with 95 percent certainty that the overall results are within  $\pm 3.5$  percentage points of what they would have been had the entire adult BC population been polled. The margin of error will be larger for population sub-groups*

### ***One-in-Three (32%) BC Households a Victim of Crime in Past Two Years; Vast Majority (86%) of Crimes Reported to Police***

One-in-three (32%) BC residents say that they personally, or someone in their household, has been a victim of crime in the past two years. And nine-in-ten (86%) crime victims indicate they have reported at least one of these crimes to the police.

- Crime victimization is much higher in the Lower Mainland (39%) than it is on Vancouver Island (24%) or in the North/Interior (23%). Victimization is also much higher with younger BC residents (41% among 18-34 years vs. 27% among 35+ years).

### ***Seven-in-Ten (71%) BC Residents Thinks Courts and Justice System Too Soft on Law Breakers***

The majority (71%) of British Columbians thinks the courts and justice system in BC is “too soft” in dealing with people who have broken the law. Only two percent think the system in BC is “too harsh” on law breakers, while two-in-ten (21%) BC residents think the system strikes the “right balance” overall. Six percent express no opinion on this issue.

- Perceptions that the system is “too soft” are highest among upper income residents (80% vs. 64% lower/middle), middle aged/older residents (77% among 35+ years vs. 62% among 18-34 years). Some regional differences also emerge with “too soft” perceptions higher in the Interior/North (76%) and suburban Lower Mainland (74%) than in Vancouver Island (69%) or Vancouver/Burnaby (63%).



## ***Residents Split on How to Get Tougher; Longer Sentences (33%), Community Service (30%), Financial Compensation (30%)***

While there is general agreement that the system is “too soft”, there is very little agreement on what should be done about it. Asked to choose between the three options of serving longer sentences, more community service and more compensation to victims, British Columbians are split equally three ways. Thirty-three percent want to see the courts and the justice system place the most emphasis on having offenders serve longer sentences. Thirty percent want to see the most emphasis placed on having offenders do more community service. And, 30 percent want to see the most emphasis placed on having offenders pay more compensation to victims.

- A preference for longer sentences is highest among younger residents (38% vs. 26% older).
- A preference for more community service is consistent across all demographic groups.
- A preference for more compensation to victims is highest among men (34% vs. 26% women, older residents (36% vs. 25% younger) and Interior/North residents (35% vs. 27% Lower Mainland).

## ***Majority (60%) of British Columbians Willing to Pay More Taxes to Hire More Police Officers***

Six-in-ten (60%) BC residents say they would support a tax increase to hire more police officers in their community, including three-in-ten (29%) who would strongly support a tax increase. Meanwhile, four-in-ten (38%) oppose this type of tax increase, including two-in-ten (19%) who are strongly opposed.

- Support for a tax increase to hire more police officers is highest in the suburban Lower Mainland (67%). It is also higher with women (63% vs. 56% men) and middle aged/older residents (64% 35+ years vs. 52% 18-34 years).



**Ipsos Reid**

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