

BC PUBLIC PROVIDES BACKUP TO POLICE ON ISSUE OF POLICE BRUTALITY

*Public Overwhelmingly (89%) Thinks Their Local Police Do a
Good Job at Performing Duties in Professional and Respectful
Manner*

*Two-in-Ten (22%) Say Incidents of Police Brutality are Common
Only One-in-Ten (13%) are Personally Worried About Being A
Victim of Police Brutality*



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Police Brutality*

Vancouver, BC – In the wake of several recent stories about alleged incidents of police brutality, especially in the City of Vancouver, a new Ipsos-Reid poll finds the vast majority (89%) of British Columbians give their local or regional police good marks for performing their duties in a professional and respectful manner. Moreover, the number of media stories about police brutality has not convinced the public that these incidents are commonplace. Only two-in-ten (22%) British Columbians think incidents of police brutality, whether reported or unreported, are common among their local or regional police. Finally, slightly more than one-in-ten (13%) residents are worried that they, or someone close to them, could become a victim of police brutality in an encounter with their local or regional police.

“These results demonstrate that police in British Columbia have not lost the trust or respect of the citizens they serve,” comments Ipsos-Reid Vice-President Kyle Braid. “While most people have probably read or heard about specific incidents of police brutality, they don’t automatically assume that these incidents are common occurrences.”

These are the findings of a BC Ipsos-Reid poll conducted between October 7th and 14th, 2003 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

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that the overall results are within ± 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.

Public Overwhelmingly (89%) Thinks Their Local Police Do a Good Job at Performing Duties in Professional and Respectful Manner

Nine-in-ten (89%) British Columbians think their local or regional police are doing a “good” job at performing their duties in a professional and respectful manner. Five-in-ten (48%) residents think police are doing a “very good” job, while four-in-ten (41%) think police are doing a “somewhat good” job in this regard. Meanwhile, about one-in-ten (10%) British Columbians think their local or regional police are doing a “poor” job (4% “very poor”, 7% “somewhat poor”) at performing their duties in a professional and respectful manner.

The overall “good” job assessment is consistently high across all regions and demographic groups. Even in the City of Vancouver, the site of several recent brutality stories, 84 percent of residents say their police are doing a “good” job. An analysis of “very good” ratings, however, reveals that some segments of the public give their police especially strong ratings.

- Regionally, “very good” ratings are much higher than average on Vancouver Island (62%) and much lower than average in the City of Vancouver (34%). Nearly half of residents of the rest of the Lower Mainland (48%) and the Interior/North (45%) give their local or regional police a rating of “very good”.
- “Very good” ratings are also higher among older residents (54% 55+ years vs. 40% 18-34 years) and higher income residents (55% \$60K+ vs. 43% <\$60K).

Two-in-Ten (22%) Say Incidents of Police Brutality are Common

Despite the number of recent stories about police brutality, most British Columbians do not appear to have concluded that police brutality is a common occurrence. Only two-in-ten (22%) residents think that incidents of police brutality, whether reported or unreported, are “common” among their local or regional police force. Even among the 22 percent of British Columbians who think incidents of police brutality are “common”, most describe the



incidents as “fairly common” (17%) rather than “very common” (5%). Three-in-four (74%) residents say that incidents of police brutality involving their local or regional police are “uncommon” (29% “very uncommon”, 45% “fairly uncommon”).

Lower Mainland residents are more likely than other British Columbians to think police brutality is “common” among their local or regional police. One-in-four (26%) residents of the Lower Mainland – the rate is identical in the City of Vancouver and the rest of the Lower Mainland – thinks incidents of police brutality are “common”. The rate is somewhat lower among Interior/North residents (20%) and much lower among Vancouver Island residents (13%).

To put these figures in perspective, Ipsos-Reid used the same question employed by the Los Angeles Times in their ongoing tracking of public perceptions of police brutality in the City of Los Angeles¹. In April 2002, 46 percent of Los Angeles residents said that incidents of police brutality are “common” (14% “very common”, 32% “somewhat common”) in their city. This is down substantially from a peak rating of 68 percent recorded in March 1991.

One-in-Ten (13%) are Personally Worried About Being A Victim of Police Brutality

The vast majority of British Columbians (87%) are not “worried” that they, or someone close to them, could become a victim of police brutality in an encounter with their local or regional police. Two-thirds (64%) are “not at all worried” and 23 percent are “not very worried” about a personal experience with police brutality.

Only slightly more than one-in-ten (13%) BC residents say they are “worried” that they could experience police brutality. Even among this group, however, the level of worry is tempered. Only 2 percent say they are “very worried” while 10 percent are “somewhat worried”.

¹ <http://a1022.g.akamai.net/f/1022/8158/5m/images.latimes.com/media/acrobat/2002-11/5624472.pdf>



- Lower and middle-income residents are more likely to be worried about becoming a victim of police brutality (16% <\$60K vs. 8% \$60K+).
- The level of worry does not vary by region of the province.

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For more information on this news release, please contact:

Kyle Braid
Vice President
Ipsos-Reid
(604) 257-3200

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