

Community Perceptions of PEI Police Services: Report on Survey Results

Department of Justice and Public Safety
Government of Prince Edward Island

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Content

1	Introduction	3
2	Key Takeaways	6
3	Detailed Findings	
	3.1 Policing Services in your Community	10
	3.2 Crime in your Community	19
	3.3 Police response to addiction and mental health issues	23
	3.4 Policing Services on Prince Edward Island	27
	3.5 Police Contact and Victim of Crime	33
4	Additional Considerations	40
5	Respondent Profile	42

1

Introduction

Context and Goals

In March 2024, the Government of Prince Edward Island's Department of Justice and Public Safety partnered with Leger to conduct a community perceptions survey among PEI's residents.

More specifically, the research aims to understand:

- Levels of satisfaction with the police
- Experience with local police
- Understanding the difference in opinions about local community police and policing on PEI as a whole
- Concern about crime
- Levels of crime and if it is being reported



Methodology



Methodology

Online survey distributed by the PEI Department of Justice and Public Safety with 926 respondents from Prince Edward Island aged 18 years or older (referred to as 'residents' throughout the report)



When

Data was collected from June 20 to July 18, 2024.



Weighting

Results were not weighted due to the data collected by an open online link to the survey. The collected data shows higher proportions of women and those 55+ than the 2021 census.



Significant Differences

Results with statistically significant variances across demographic groups are denoted in the report.

2

Key Takeaways

Policing Services within communities

The majority **trusts (62%) the police and views them as professional (61%)**. This indicates a solid foundation of respect and credibility for the police force in the respective communities.

Lower proportions of residents believe the police effectively engage with youth (29%), people from diverse backgrounds (26%), and seniors (25%). This could be driven by the high levels of "Don't Know" responses in these areas, indicating lower awareness or visibility of potential police efforts.

There are **mixed levels of satisfaction with police services in residents' respective communities with 49% satisfied overall and 33% dissatisfied**. Traffic safety enforcement and visible police presence are major concerns, with 28% and 25% dissatisfaction, respectively. Top reasons for satisfaction with police services include helpful service and quick response times.

There is a **higher level of dissatisfaction than satisfaction with police handling of impaired and dangerous driving (45% dissatisfied), drug trafficking (41% dissatisfied), and theft and crimes affecting property (37% dissatisfied)** in the community. These areas require targeted strategies to improve police effectiveness and public confidence.

High levels of neutral or "Don't Know" responses on issues like hate-motivated crimes and gender-based violence indicate the potential need for better communication and visibility of police efforts in these areas.

Over **four in ten residents believe the police in their community are doing a good job**, with roughly two in ten rating police performance as poor or very poor.

Crime within communities

Nearly **six in ten residents are concerned about crime in their community**.

Nearly **half of residents feel that crime has worsened** over the past year with the top concerns being impaired and dangerous driving (79%), theft from home or vehicle (73%), and property crimes (67%), with additional concerns about personal safety, such as feeling safe walking at night (38%) and alone (33%).

In general, **females and those who have been victims of crime are more likely to show concern**.

Police response to addiction and mental health issues

Overall **satisfaction with police handling of substance use, addiction, and mental health issues is relatively low**, with only 26% of residents satisfied and 34% dissatisfied. **A noteworthy 36% remain neutral.**

Satisfaction stems from perceptions of police doing a good job (17%) and quick response times (10%). Conversely, **dissatisfaction arises from concerns about insufficient efforts to stop public drug use (26%) and lack of enforcement and accountability (16%).**

The mixed satisfaction levels and high percentage of neutral responses highlight a **potential need for improved police training and resource allocation, particularly in handling substance use and mental health issues.** This also suggests a lack of awareness and engagement with the community on these issues, which could be addressed to effectively mitigate public concerns.

Policing Services on Prince Edward Island

Cooperation among PEI police services in a number of different areas is highly valued, with eight in ten considering them very important and over nine in ten overall considering this important when also including those who feel this is somewhat important.

Over eight in ten residents are concerned about crime on Prince Edward Island, which is a **higher proportion than those concerned about crime in their community (63%).** Concern is particularly high among females (87%) and those aged 55 and older.

Over **seven in ten (72%) feel that crime on Prince Edward Island has gotten worse in the past year**, which is a higher percentage than the perception of crime change within individuals' communities (49%). This perception is more pronounced among individuals aged 18-34 (82%) and females (78%).

In the past 12 months, **45% of respondents had contact with police services in PEI.** Of this, 45% was with the RCMP, 41% with the Charlottetown Police Service, 10% with the Summerside Police Service, and 3% with the Kensington Police Service. Notably, half of residents overall did not have any contact with police services during this period.

About **four in ten residents believe the police on PEI overall are doing a good job.**

Police Contact and Victim of Crime

Over **half (56%)** of those who had contact with the police in the last 12 months are **satisfied** with the services they received.

Quick response times and efficient service are the primary reasons for satisfaction, noted by 26% of residents, with helpfulness and issue resolution by the police also significant (23%). Dissatisfaction stems from slow response times (17%), need for better response to traffic violations (15%), inability to resolve issues (15%), and lack of communication/follow-up (15%).

In the past 12 months, **one in ten respondents have been a victim of a crime**. Of those who have been victims, **over three-quarters reported the crime**. Among those who did not report, the main reason was the belief that the police could not resolve the issue.

Key Insights and Considerations

Community Engagement: Only 34% of residents agree that the police do a good job developing and maintaining relationships with the community. Engagement efforts should focus on building trust with youth (29% satisfaction), diverse populations (26% satisfaction), and seniors (25% satisfaction). It is important to note that a low agreement here does not necessarily equal high disagreement. This result is largely driven by the high levels of "Don't Know" responses in these areas, indicating lower awareness or visibility of potential police efforts. This lack of awareness is a common theme throughout many areas in this study, highlighting the critical need for enhanced community engagement and communication. By increasing visibility and improving transparency, the police can build greater trust and improve public perception of their efforts.

Cooperation Among Police Services: Cooperation among PEI police services is highly valued, with 95% of residents considering efforts to combat crime through the coordination and sharing of resources across jurisdictions to be important. Additionally, 94% of residents see improving communication between police services as important. Consistency in community policing and advanced training development, seen as essential by 93% and 92% of residents respectively, will further enhance police effectiveness across the island.

Visibility and Responsiveness: 25% of residents are dissatisfied with the visible police presence and 28% with traffic safety enforcement. Increasing police visibility and improving response times in these areas should be a strategic priority. Additionally, formulating a comprehensive communications strategy could significantly help in increasing visibility and awareness. This strategy could involve regularly communicating new initiatives, highlighting accomplishments, and providing positive comparisons of PEI police performance, such as response times, relative to other regions. By showcasing these achievements and keeping the public informed, the police can enhance community trust and demonstrate their ongoing commitment to improving public safety.

Specialized Training: 34% are dissatisfied with the police handling of addiction and mental health issues--the primary reasons for this involve concerns about insufficient efforts to stop drug use and public drug use (26%) and a lack of police enforcement and accountability (16%). A significant investment in training officers to better respond to these situations is essential.

Detailed Findings

3.1 Policing Services in your Community

3.2 Crime in your Community

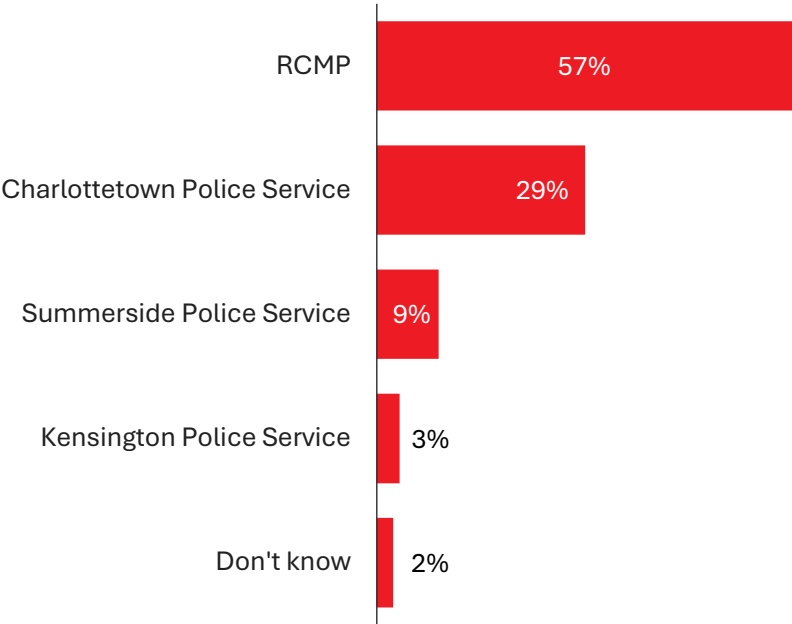
3.3 Police response to addiction and
mental health issues

3.4 Policing Services on Prince Edward
Island

3.5 Police Contact and Victim of Crime

The Police Service Responsible for Your Community

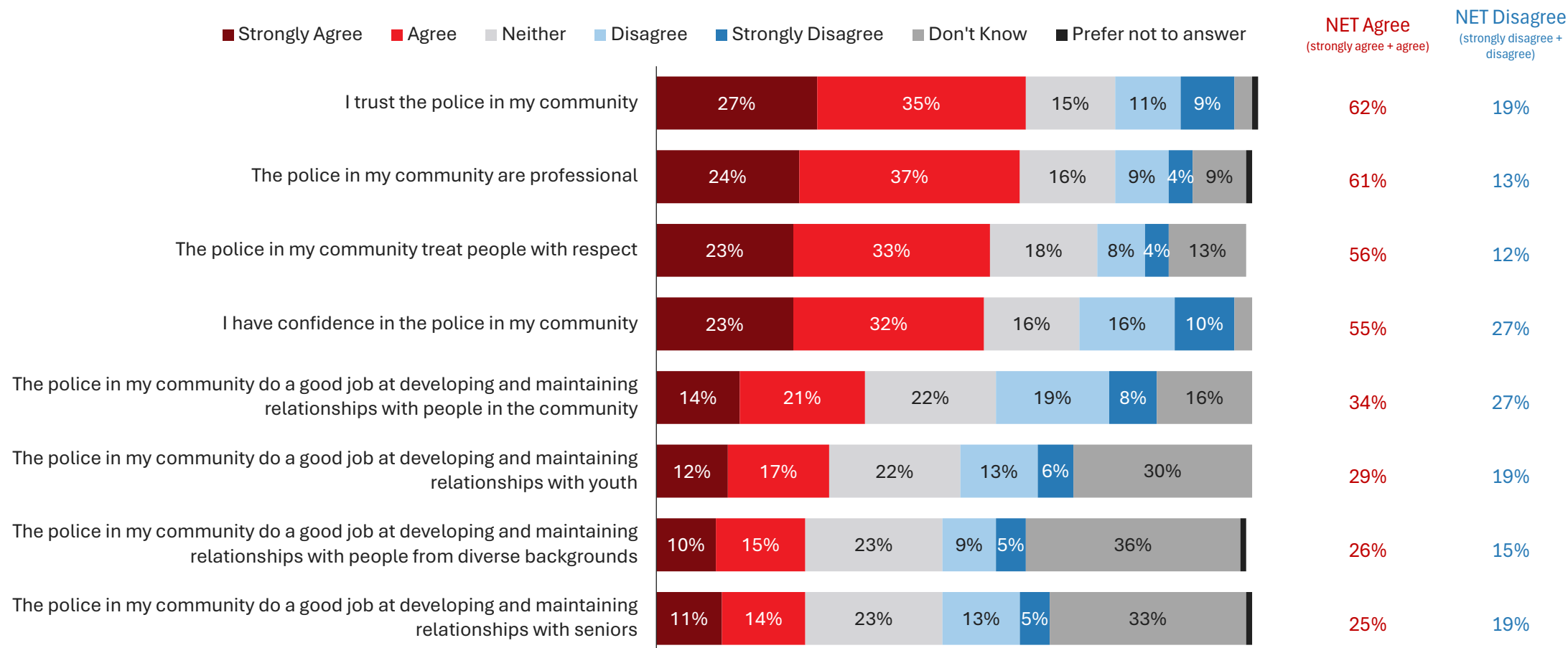
The RCMP is identified as the primary police service by nearly six in ten, indicating its large role in community policing. This is followed by the Charlottetown Police Service, which is responsible for policing for three in ten residents.



Q2. Which of the following police services is responsible for policing in your community? n=926.

Perceptions of Local Police Services

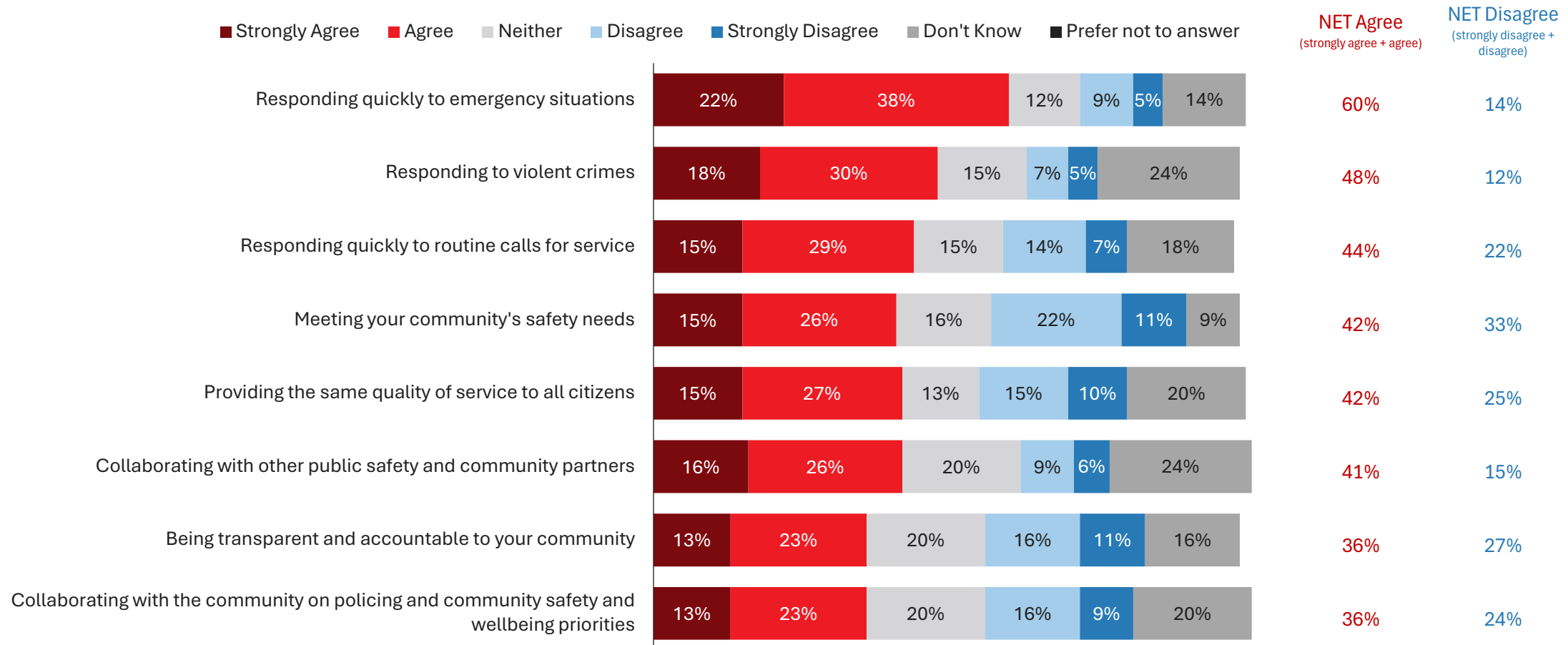
The majority trust the police in their community (62%), view them as professional (61%), believe they treat people with respect (56%) and have confidence in them (55%). This reflects a generally positive outlook on the local police services. In contrast, fewer respondents agree that the police do a good job at developing relationships with the community (34%), youth (29%), people from diverse backgrounds (26%), and seniors (25%). There are also high levels of "Don't Know" responses in these latter areas, indicating a lack of awareness or visibility of police efforts.



Q3. When you think about the policing services in your community, to what extent do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements? n=926. Items below 5% not labelled.

Effectiveness of Local Police

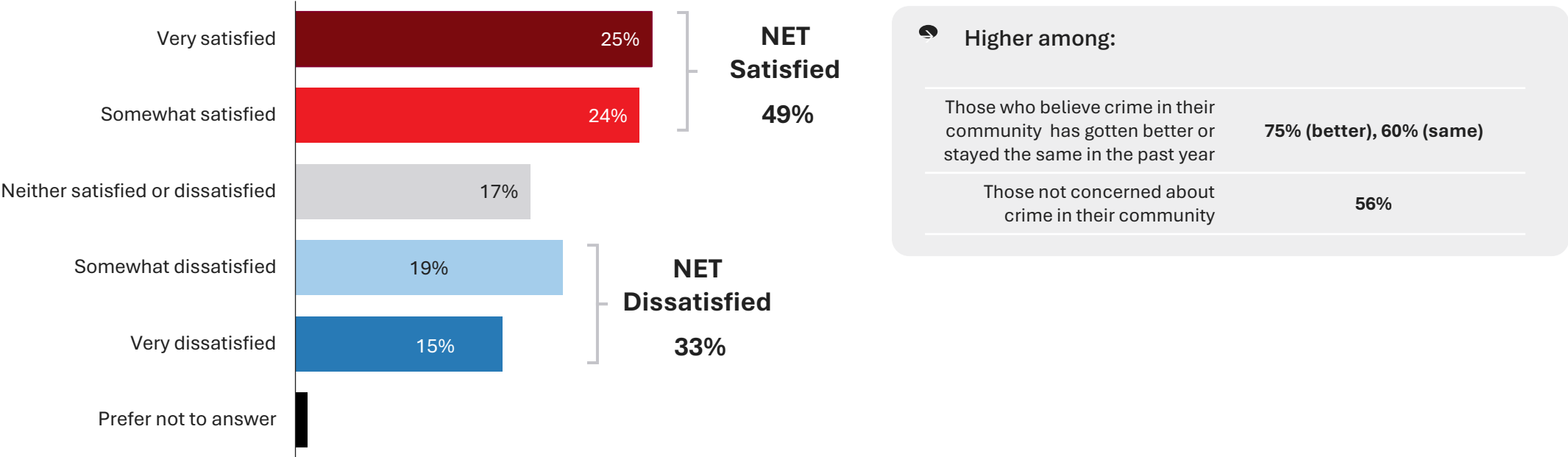
Six in ten agree that the police is effective at responding quickly to emergency situations, indicating strong confidence in this area. However, less than half (48%) believe the police respond effectively to violent crimes, and even fewer, 44%, think they handle routine calls for service promptly. Please note, the lower levels of agreement do not necessarily mean high levels of disagreement. Instead, many people are indifferent or simply responded with "Don't Know" in these areas, again indicating lower awareness among the public. Local police's effectiveness at *meeting your community's safety needs* has the highest level of disagreement (33%).



Q4. In general, to what extent do you agree that the police in your community are effective at...? n=926. Items below 5% not labelled.

Satisfaction With the Police in Your Community

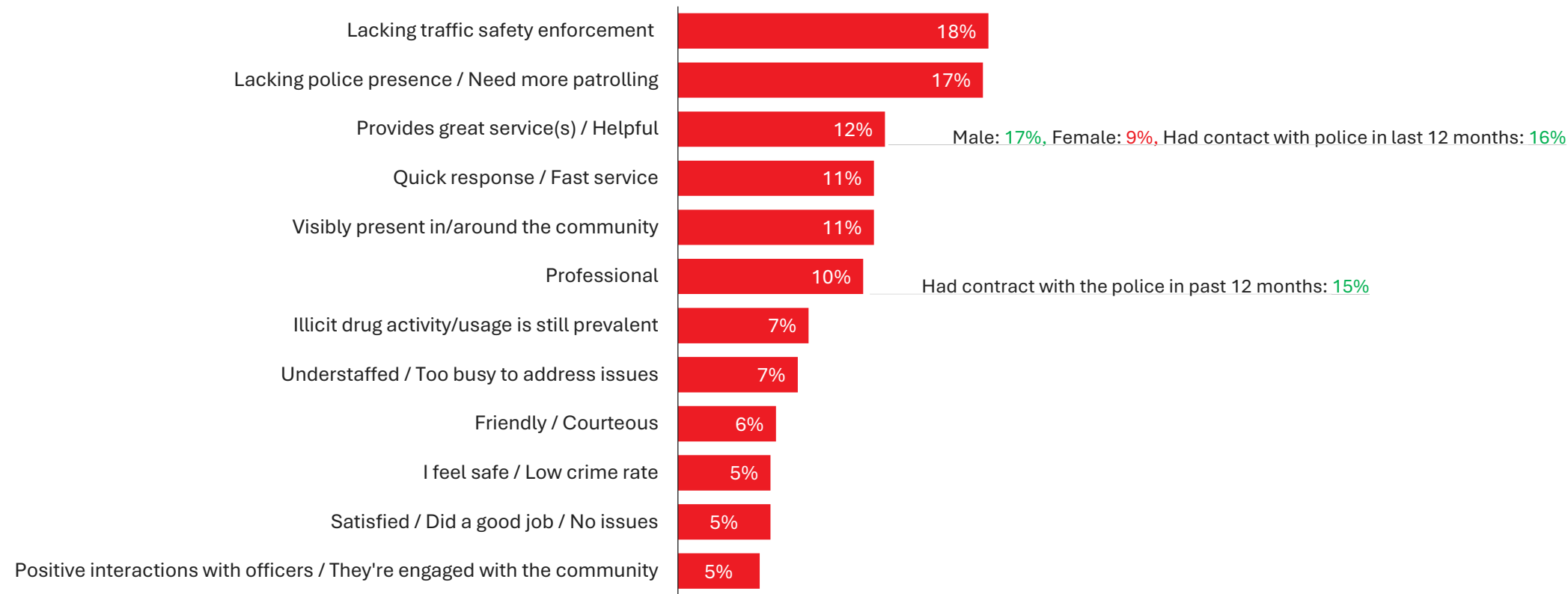
Nearly half (49%) of residents are satisfied with police services in their community, while one-third (33%) are dissatisfied, indicating mixed perceptions.



Q5. How satisfied are you with the police services provided in your community? n=926.

Reasons for Satisfaction With Police

Top reasons for satisfaction with police services include helpful service (12%) and quick response times (11%), with respondents also valuing visible police presence (11%), and professionalism (10%). However, some negative mentions come up, including concerns about lacking traffic safety enforcement (18%) and the need for more patrolling (17%).



Statistically significantly higher/lower than rest of sample. Other mentions under 5% not shown
Q5b. Can you explain the reasons for your response? Base: Those who were satisfied with the police in their community n=324. Open-ended question and responses were coded

Reasons for Dissatisfaction with Police

The top reasons for dissatisfaction with police services are lacking traffic safety enforcement (28%) and insufficient police presence (25%), indicating a need for more proactive and visible policing. Other significant concerns include prevalent illicit drug activity (19%) and inadequate resolution of issues (14%).

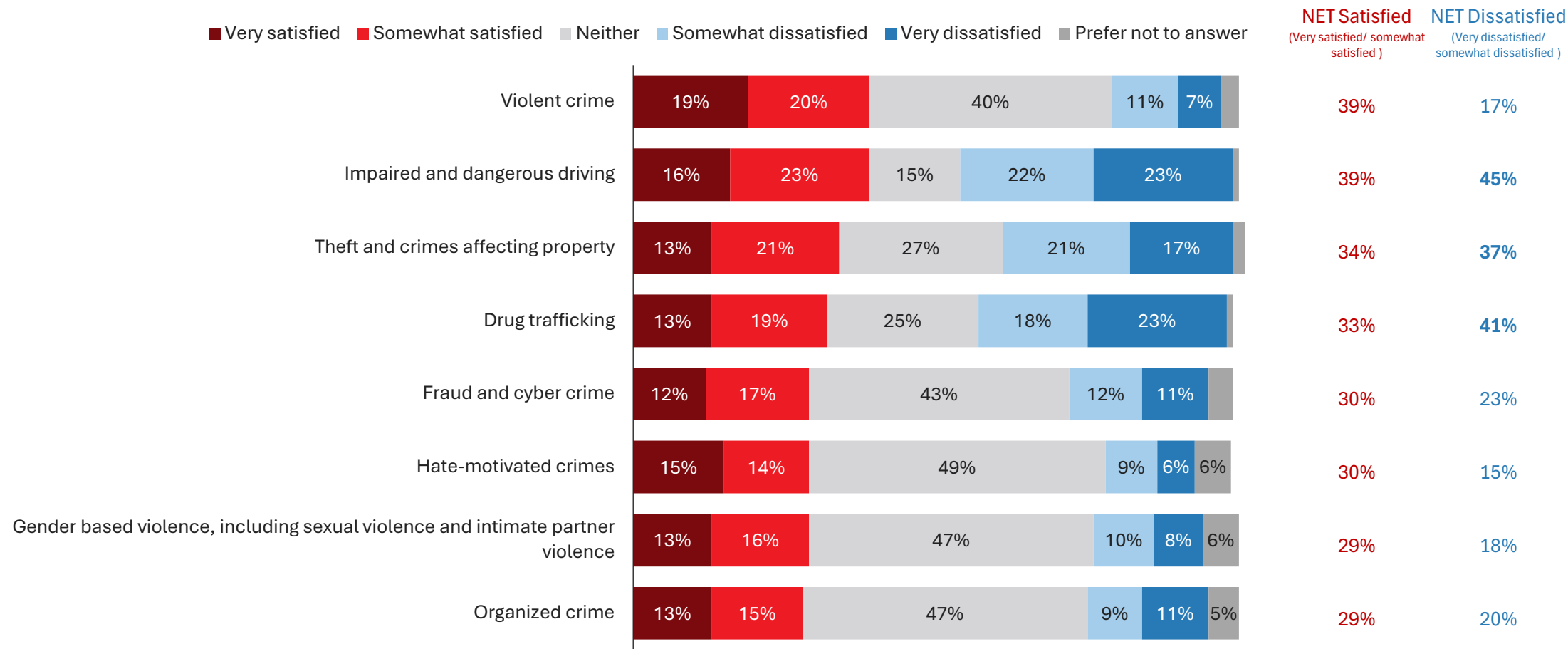


Statistically significantly **higher/lower** than rest of sample. Other mentions under 5% not shown

Q5a. Can you explain the reasons for your response?, Base: Those who were dissatisfied with the police in their community n=276. Open-ended question and responses were coded

Satisfaction with Police Services in the Community

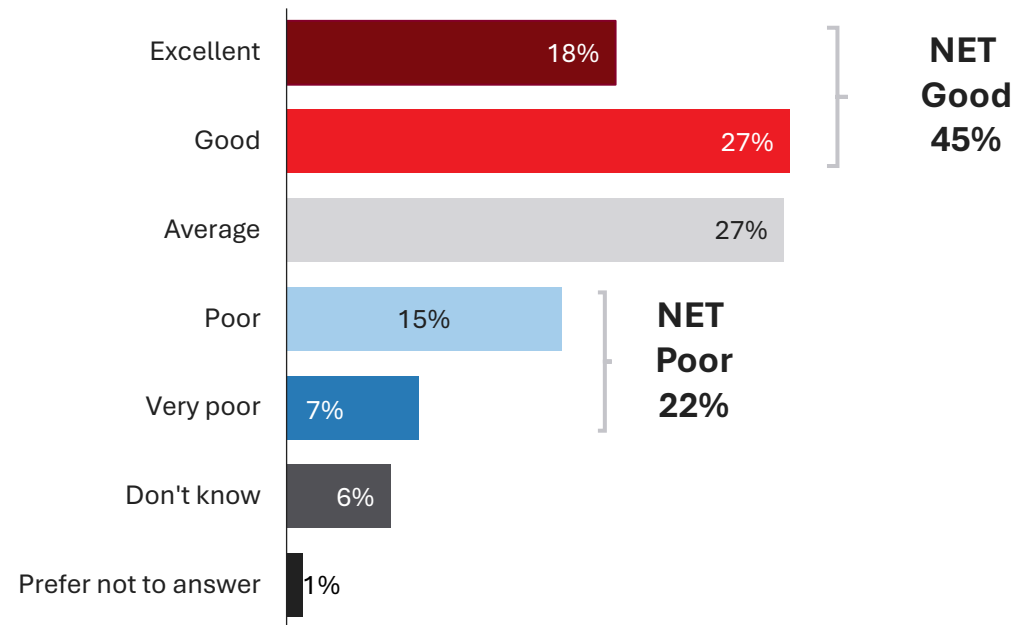
Almost four in ten are satisfied with police effectiveness in addressing violent crime and impaired and dangerous driving, but dissatisfaction (45%) is higher in the latter. For theft and property crimes, 34% are satisfied, with higher levels of dissatisfaction (37%), similar to drug trafficking where over four in ten are dissatisfied. Many residents are neutral about police performance in several areas, such as hate-motivated crimes (49%) and gender-based violence (47%).



Q9. Considering the following policing issues, how satisfied are you with the level of service provided by the police in your community? n=926. Items below 5% not labelled.

Public Perception of Police Performance in the Community

Over four in ten residents believe the police in their community are doing a good job overall, with nearly two in ten rating their performance as excellent and over one-quarter as good. Conversely, roughly two in ten rate police performance as poor or very poor.



Very poor/ poor higher among:

Those age 18-34	30%
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Q11. Taking everything into account, how good a job do you think the police in your community are doing? n=926.

Detailed Findings

3.1 Policing Services in your Community

3.2 Crime in your Community

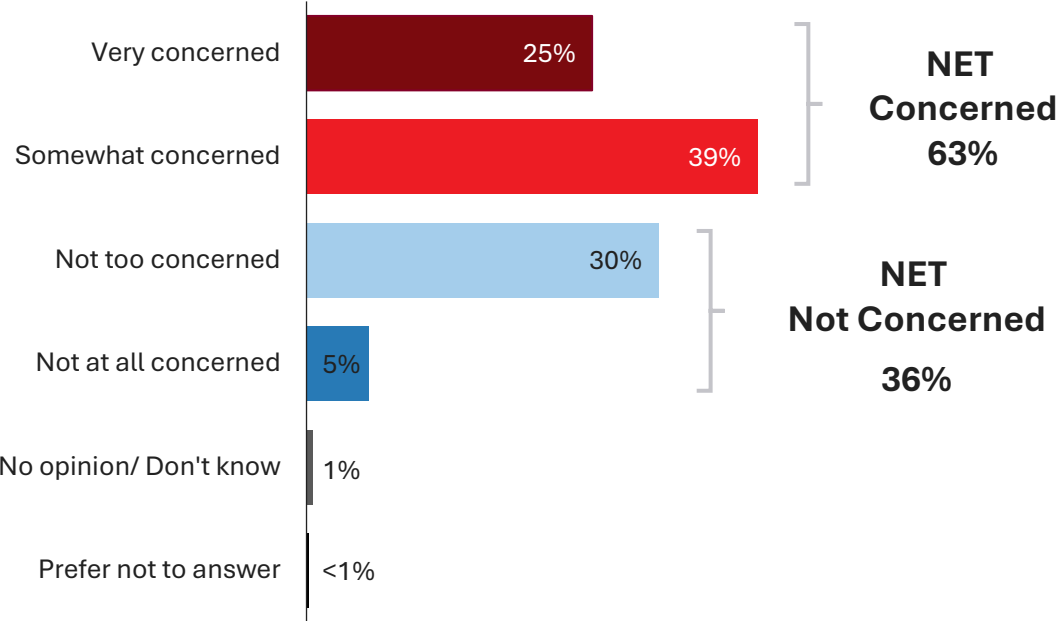
3.3 Police response to addiction and
mental health issues

3.4 Policing Services on Prince Edward
Island

3.5 Police Contact and Victim of Crime

Concerned About Crime in the Community

Nearly six in ten residents are concerned about crime in their community, with one-quarter (25%) being very concerned and nearly four in ten (39%) somewhat concerned. It is noteworthy that concern is higher among recent crime victims (74%), those who perceive crime has worsened over the past year (73%), and females (68%).



Very concerned/ somewhat concerned higher among:

Those who believe crime in their community to have gotten worse in the past year 87%

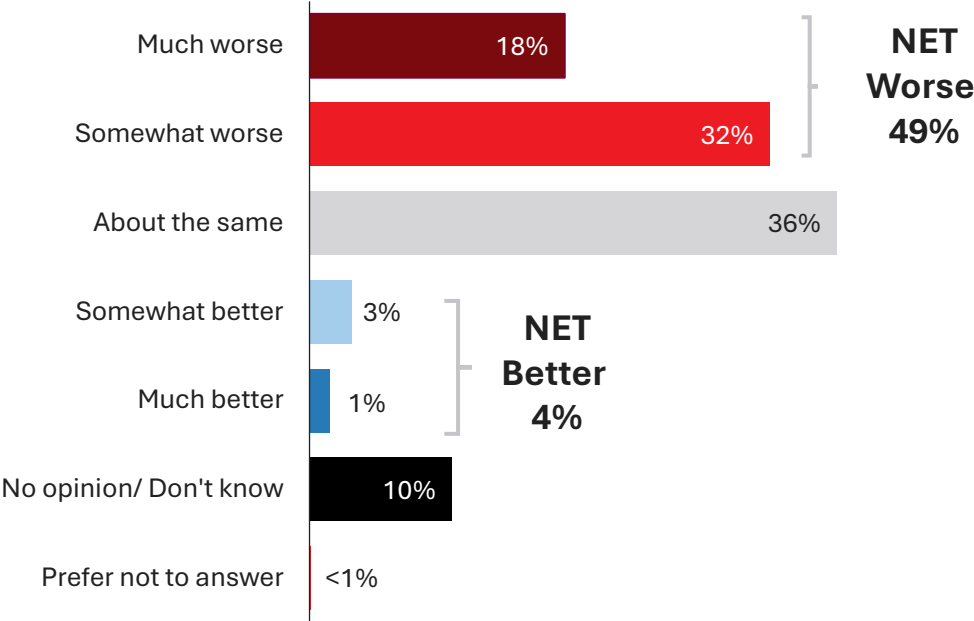
Those who have been a victim of a crime in the past year 74%

Female 68%

Q6. Overall, how concerned are you about crime in your community? n=926.

Changes in Community Crime in Past Year

In the past year, nearly half (49%) of residents feel that crime in their community has gotten worse, with 18% believing it has become much worse and 32% somewhat worse. This perception is more pronounced among those concerned about crime in their community (68%), individuals aged 35-54 (54%), and females (53%).



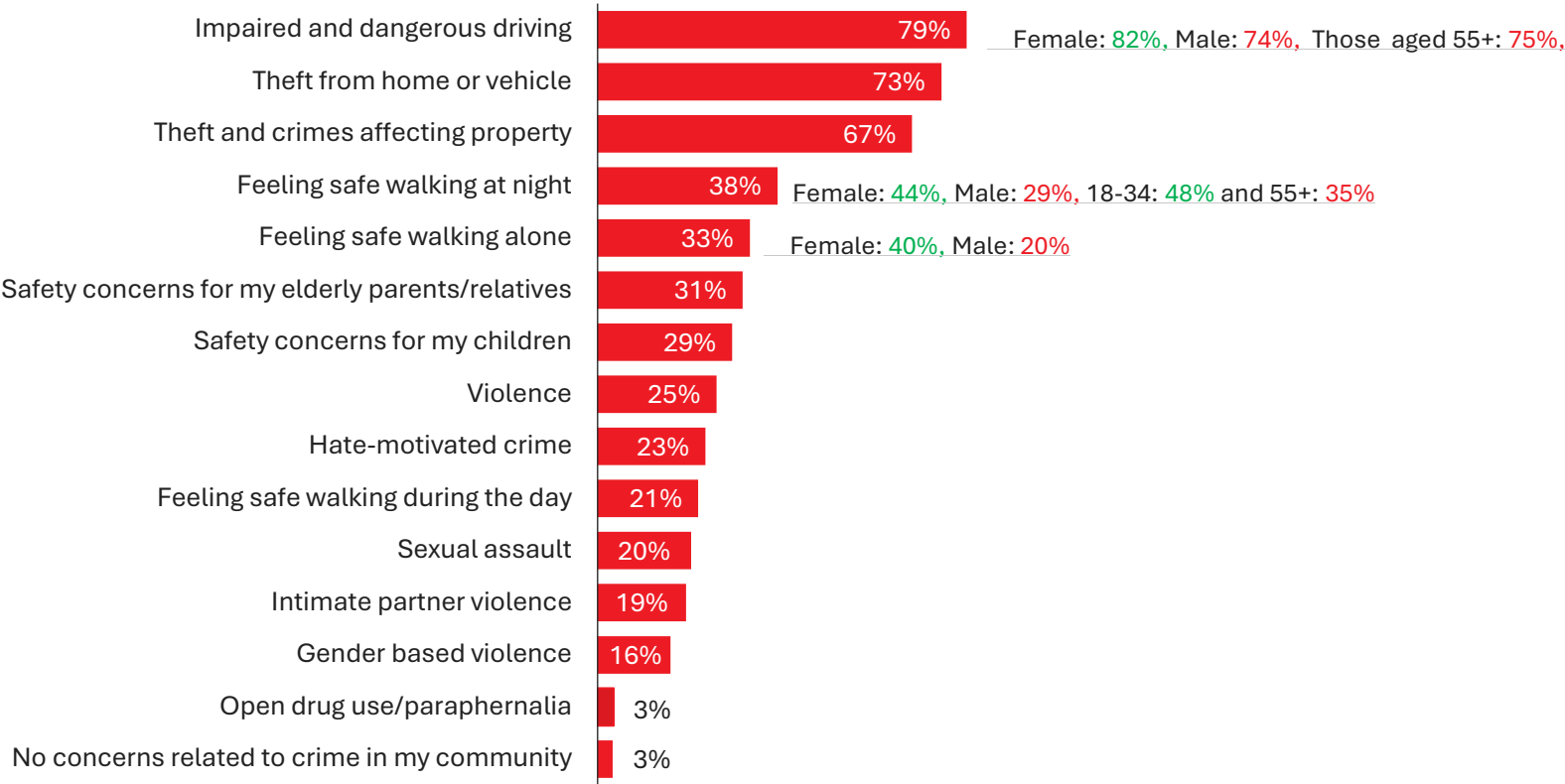
Much worse/ somewhat worse higher among:

Those concerned about crime in their community	68%
Those aged 35-54	54%
Female	53%

Q7. In your opinion, how has the amount of crime in your community changed in the past year? Would you say the amount of crime is...?n=926.

Main Crime Concerns in the Community

Impaired and dangerous driving is the top concern for eight in ten (79%) residents. Following closely are concerns about theft from home or vehicle (73%) and theft and crimes affecting property (67%). Other notable concerns include feeling safe walking at night (38%), feeling safe walking alone (33%), and safety concerns for elderly parents/relatives (31%), and children (29%). In general, females and those who have been a victim of a crime are more likely to show concern.



Statistically significantly higher/lower than rest of sample. Other mentions under 3% not shown
Q8. What are your main concerns when it comes to crime in your community? n=926.

Detailed Findings

3.1 Policing Services in your Community

3.2 Crime in your Community

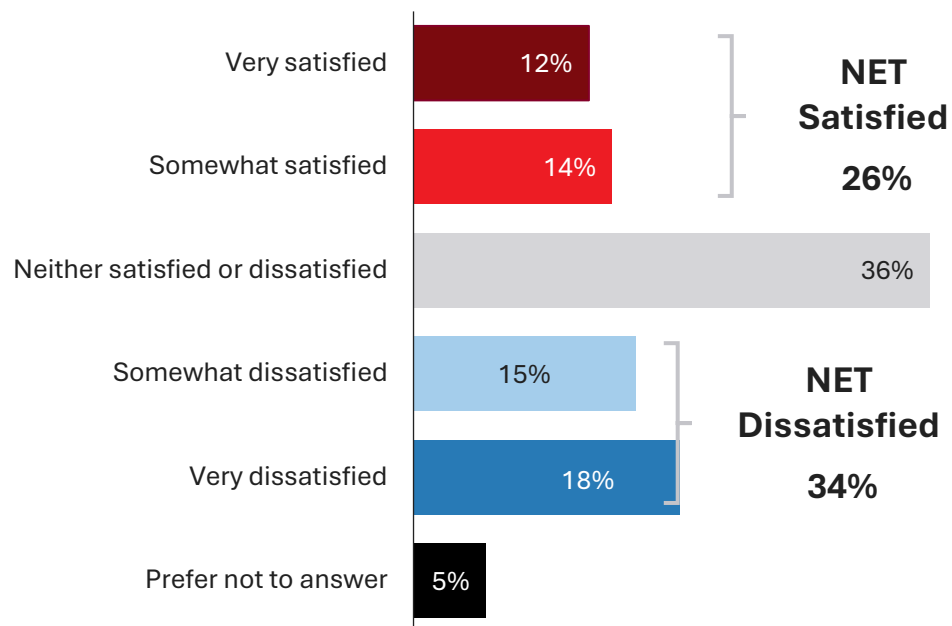
3.3 Police response to addiction and
mental health issues

3.4 Policing Services on Prince Edward
Island

3.5 Police Contact and Victim of Crime

Satisfaction with the Police Response to Calls on Substance Use, Addiction, and Mental Health Issues

Overall satisfaction with the police response to **calls involving substance use, addiction and mental health issues** is relatively low, with only 26% net satisfied. In contrast, dissatisfaction is higher at 34%. A significant portion of respondents, 36%, remain neutral.



Very satisfied/ somewhat satisfied higher among:

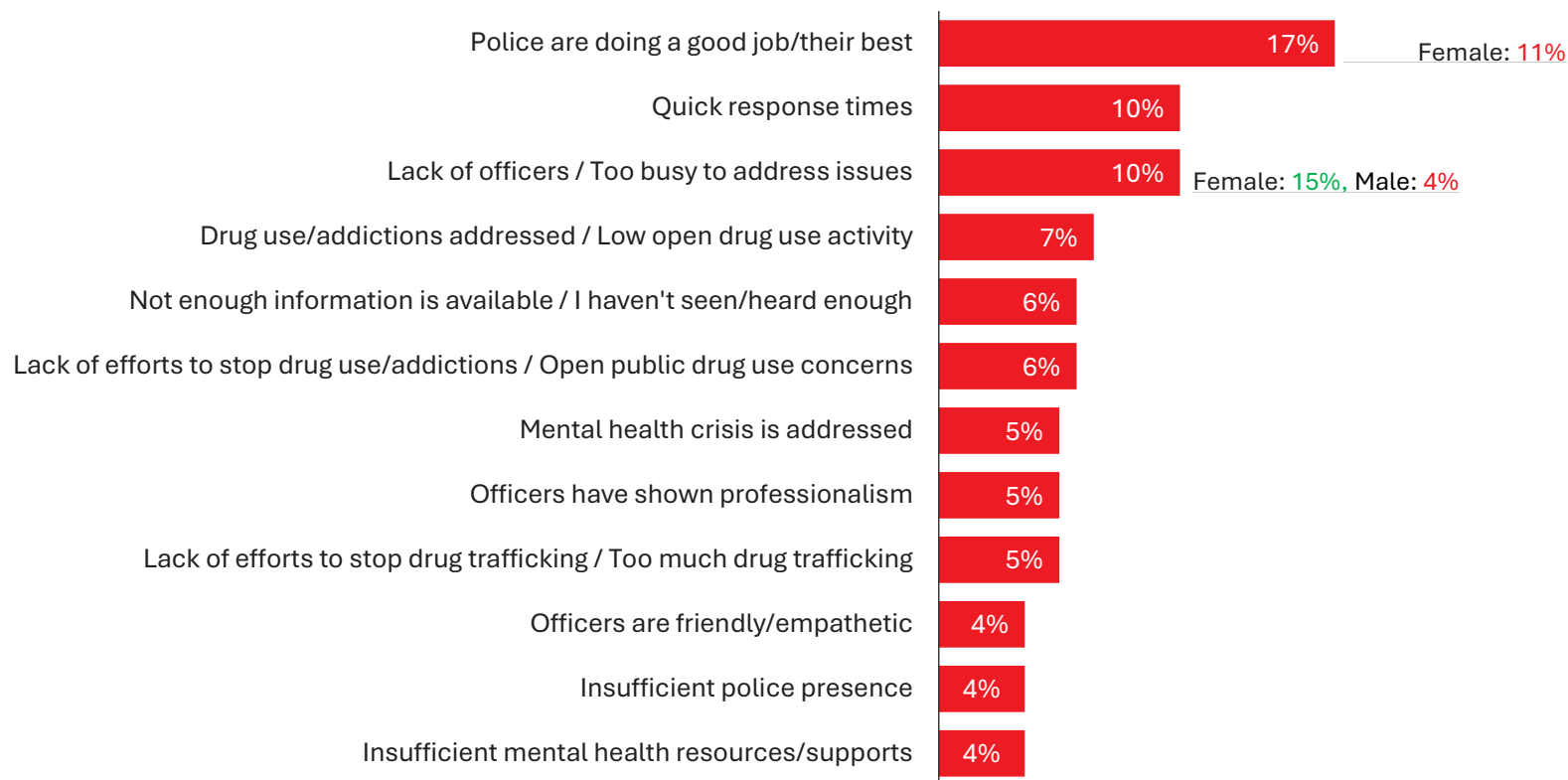
Those age 35-54 **30%**

Very dissatisfied/ somewhat dissatisfied higher among:

Those age 18-34, 35-54 **54% (18-34), 38% (35-54)**

Reasons for Satisfaction with Police Response to Calls

The primary reasons for satisfaction with police responses to calls involving substance use, addiction, and mental health issues include the perception that police are doing a good job (17%) and quick response times (10%). Additionally, those who are satisfied appreciate the police's handling of drug use/addictions (7%) and addressing mental health crises (5%). However, some negative mentions still arose, including lack of officers/too busy to address issues (10%) and those not having enough information or have not seen/ heard enough about this topic (6%).

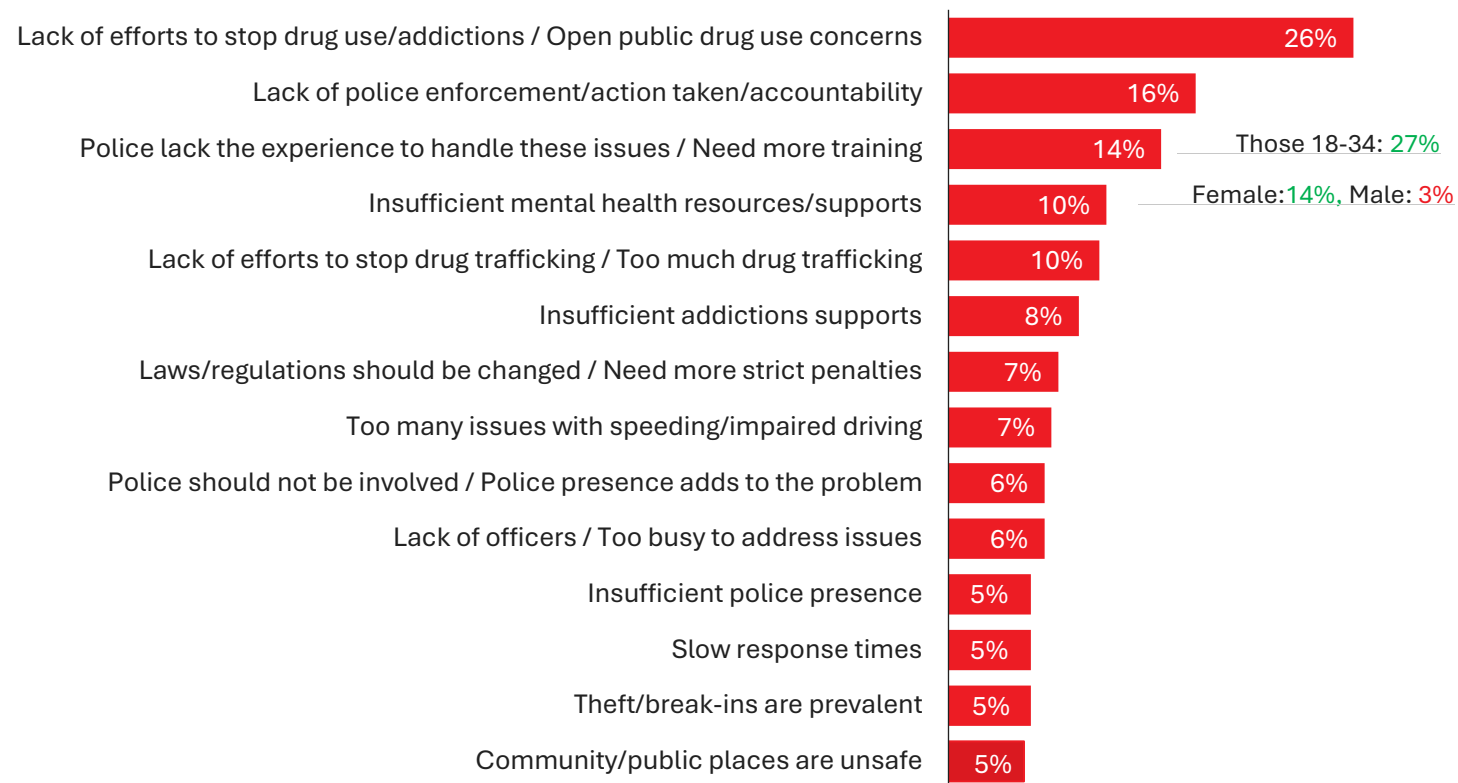


Statistically significantly **higher/lower** than rest of sample. Other mentions under 4% not shown

Q10b. Can you explain the reasons for your response?, Base: Those who were satisfied with the police response to calls involving substance use, addiction and mental health issue n=136. Open-ended question and responses were coded

Reasons for Dissatisfaction with Police Response to Calls

The primary reasons for dissatisfaction with police responses to calls involving substance use, addiction, and mental health issues involve concerns about insufficient efforts to stop drug use and public drug use (26%) and a lack of police enforcement and accountability (16%). As well, 14% of those who are dissatisfied feel that police lack the necessary experience and training, especially noted by those aged 18-34.



Statistically significantly higher/lower than rest of sample. Other mentions under 5% not shown

Q10a. Can you explain the reasons for your response?, Base: Those who were dissatisfied with the police response to calls involving substance use, addiction and mental health issue n=229. Open-ended question and responses were coded

Detailed Findings

3.1 Policing Services in your Community

3.2 Crime in your Community

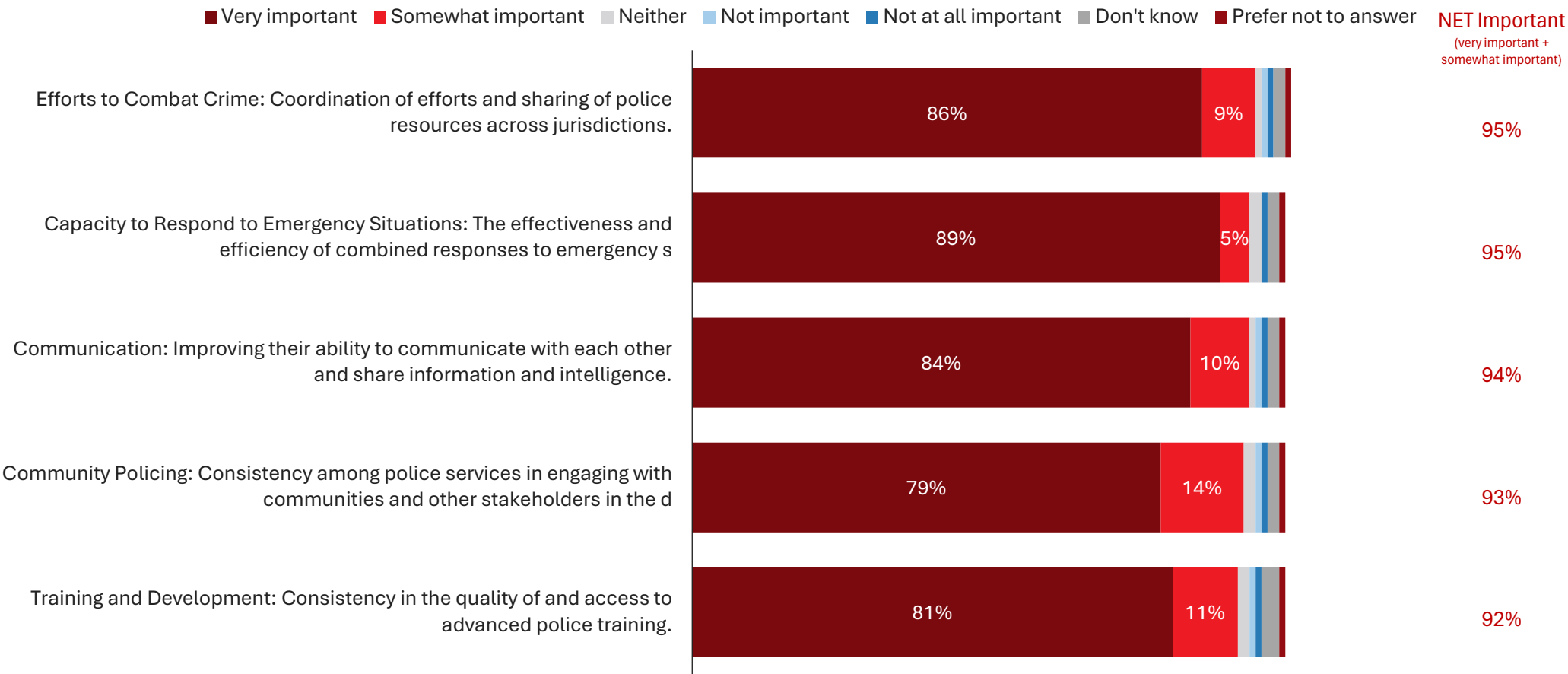
3.3 Police response to addiction and
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Island

3.5 Police Contact and Victim of Crime

Importance of PEI Police Services Cooperating and Working Together

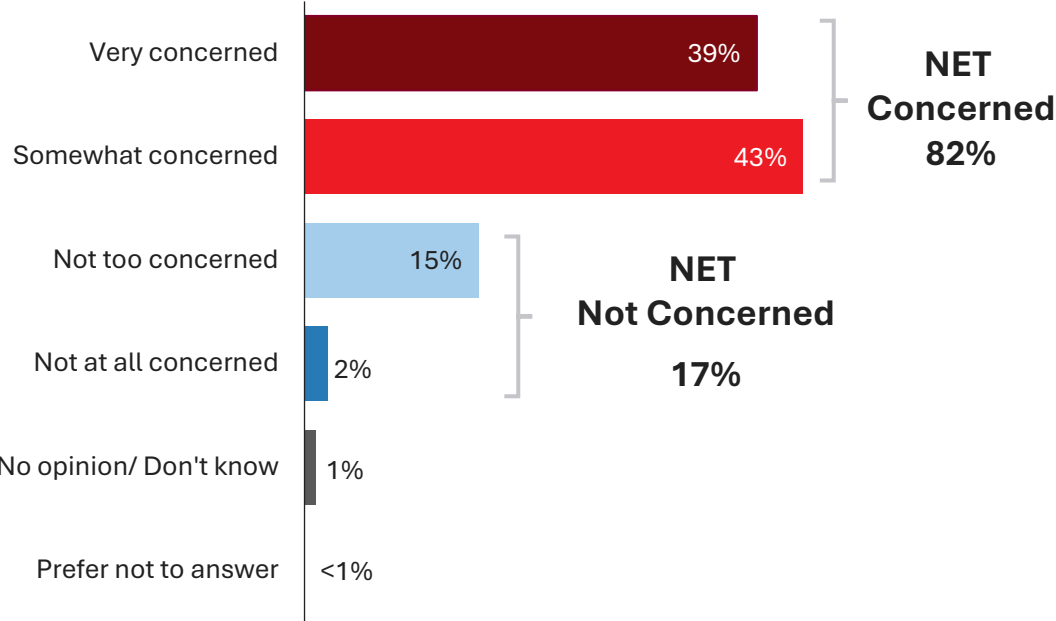
Cooperation among PEI police services in a number of different areas is highly valued, with eight in ten considering them very important and over nine in ten overall considering this important when also including those who feel this is somewhat important.



Q12. Considering the public safety issues affecting communities in PEI, how important do you think it is for the police on PEI to cooperate and work together on the following n=926. Items below 5% not labelled.

Concern about Crime on Prince Edward Island

Over eight in ten residents are concerned about crime on Prince Edward Island overall -- this is higher than those concerned about crime in their community (63%). It is noteworthy that concern is higher among those who perceive crime has worsened over the past year (94%), and females (87%) and those aged 55+.



➔ Very concerned/ somewhat concerned higher among:

Those who believe crime on PEI has gotten worse in the past year

94%

Female

87%

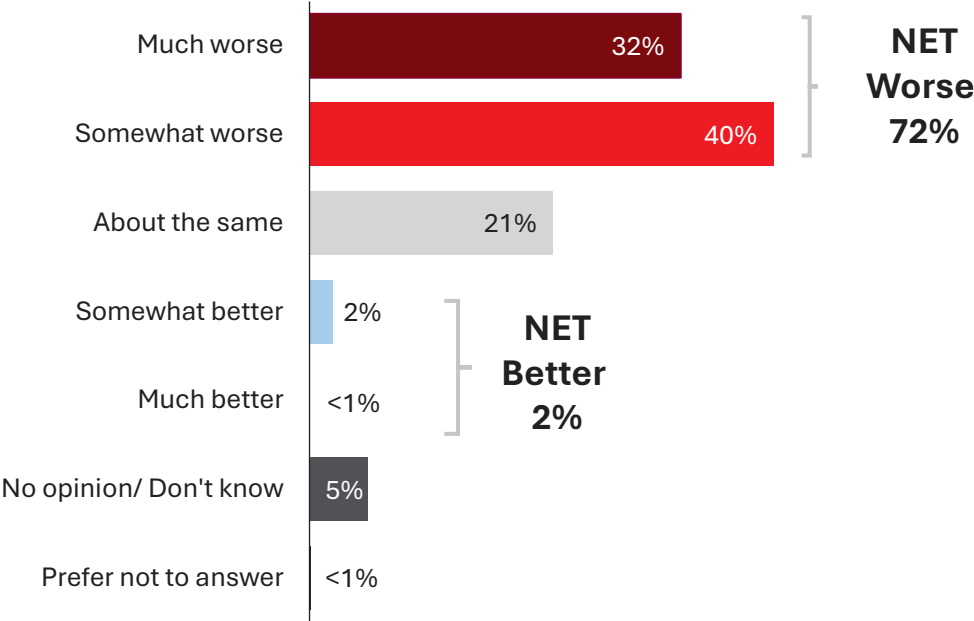
Those aged 55+

87%

Q13. Overall, how concerned are you about crime on Prince Edward Island? n=926.

Changes in Crime on Prince Edward Island in Past Year

Over seven in ten (72%) residents feel that crime on Prince Edward Island has gotten worse in the past year, higher than the perceptions in crime change within individuals' communities (49%). This perception is more pronounced among those aged 18-34 (82%), and females (78%).



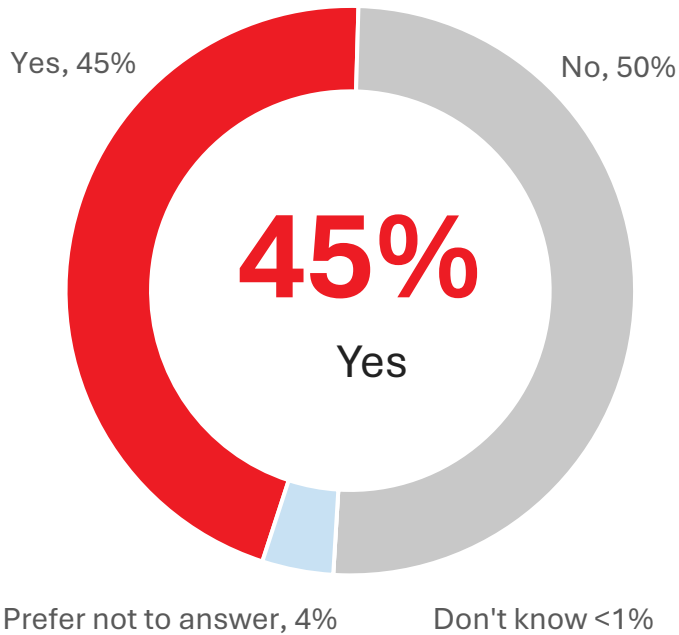
➡ Much worse/ somewhat worse higher among:	
Those aged 18-34	82%
Female	78%

Q14. In your opinion, how has the amount of crime in PEI changed in the past year? n=926.

Police Contact in Past 12 Months

In the past 12 months, 45% had contact with police services in Prince Edward Island (PEI). Of this proportion, 45% had contact with the RCMP, 41% with the Charlottetown Police Service, 10% with the Summerside Police Service, and 3% with the Kensington Police Service. Notably, half of the respondents overall did not have any contact with police services during this period.

Police Contact in Past 12 Months

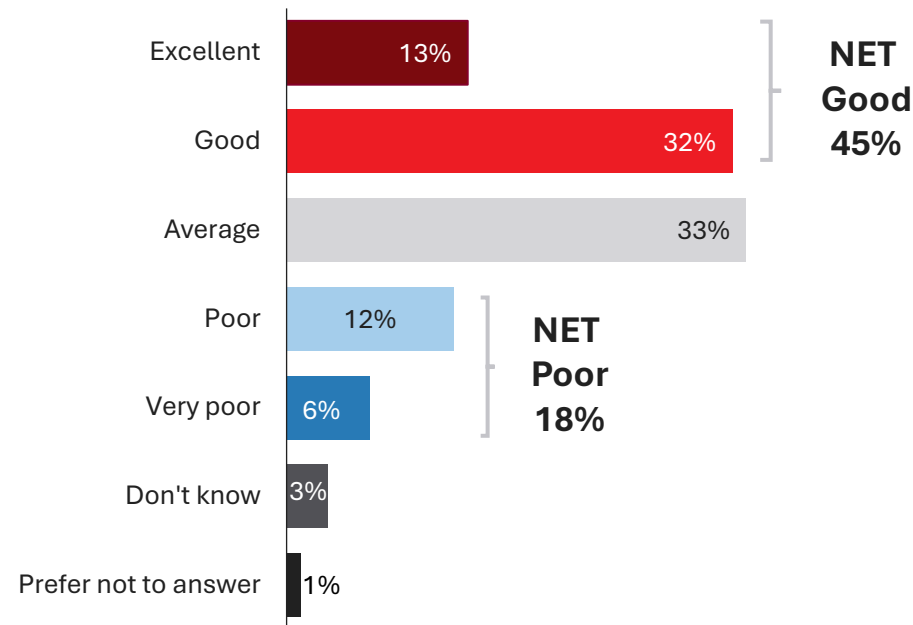


Police Services you had contact with	n=421
RCMP	45%
Charlottetown Police Service	41%
Summerside Police Service	10%
Kensington Police Service	3%
Don't know	1%

Q15. During the past 12 months, have you had contact with any police service in PEI? n=926
Q15a - Which of the following police services did you have contact with? If you have had more than one interaction with? n=421

Public Perception of Police Performance on PEI

Over four in ten residents believe the police on PEI are doing a good or excellent job, of which just over one in ten rate their performance as excellent and three in ten rate it as good. Conversely, roughly two in ten rate police performance as poor or very poor.



Good/ excellent higher among:

Those 55+ 49%

Very poor/ poor higher among:

Those age 18-34 29%

Q20. Taking everything into account, how good of a job do you think the police on PEI are doing overall? n=926.

Detailed Findings

3.1 Policing Services in your Community

3.2 Crime in your Community

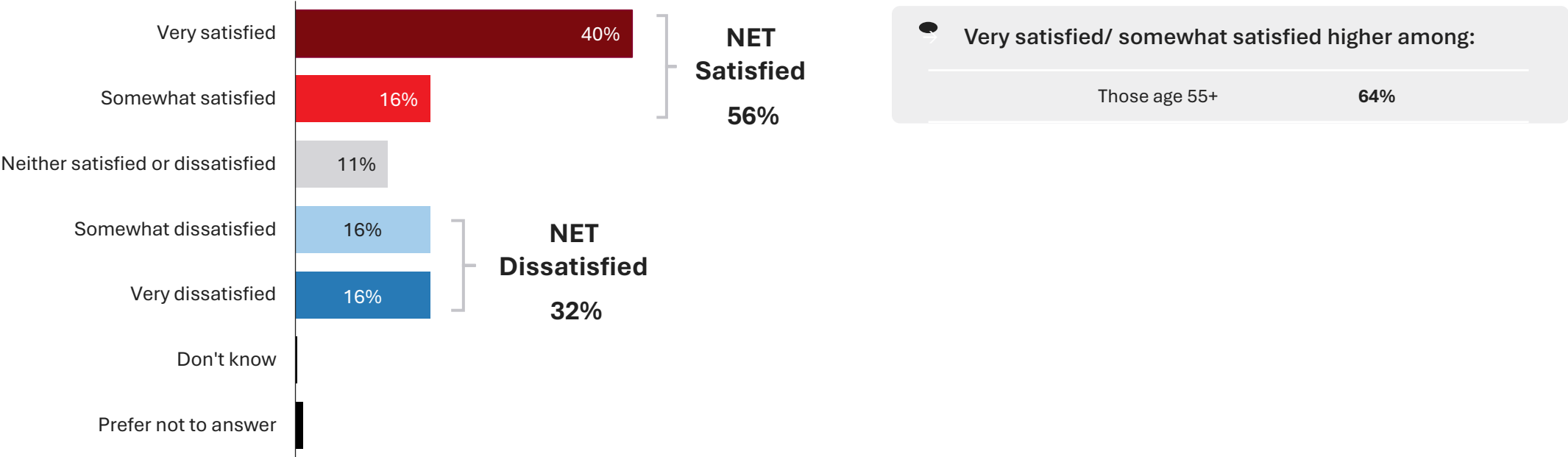
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Island

3.5 Police Contact and Victim of Crime

Satisfaction with Police Contact

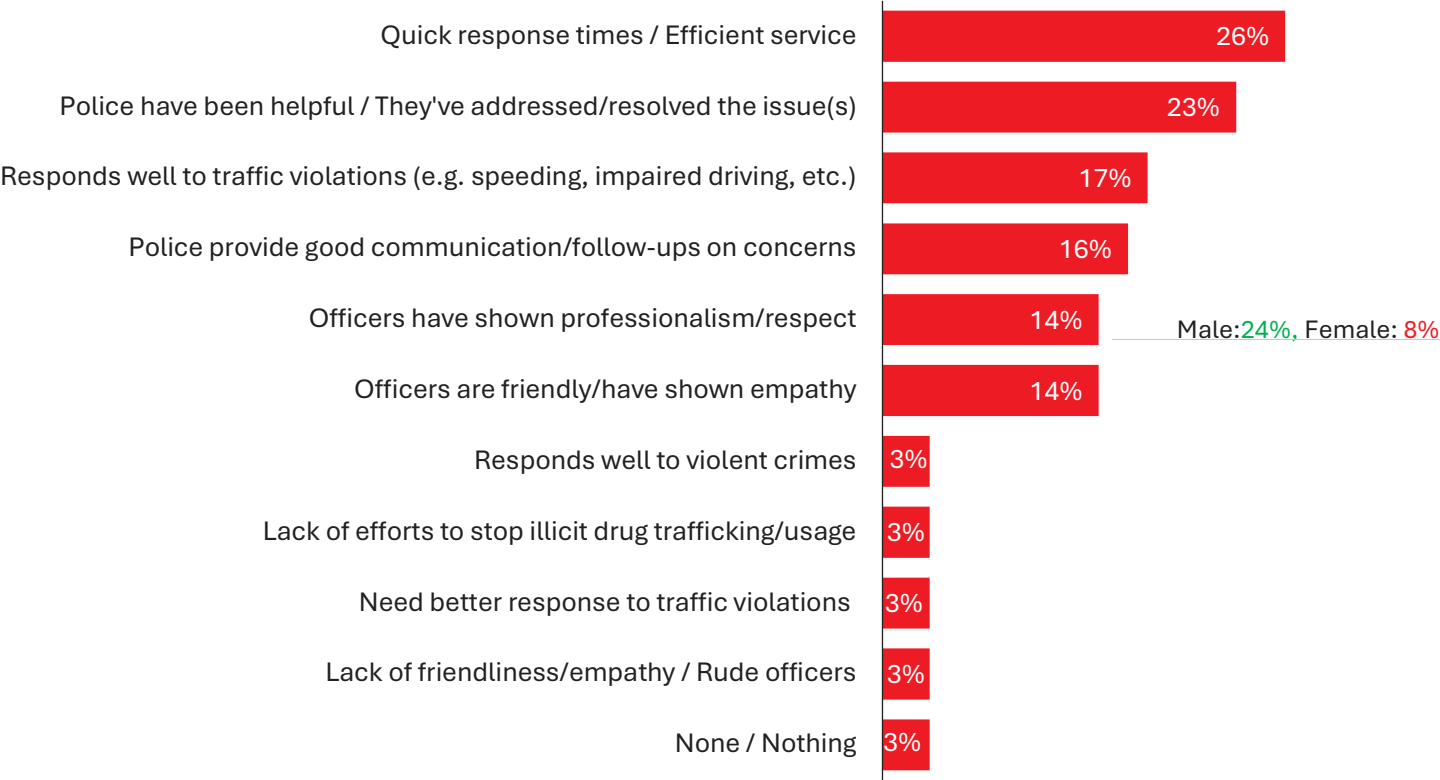
Of those who had contact with police in the past 12 months, over half (56%) are somewhat or very satisfied with the services they received.



Q16. How satisfied are you with the service you received from the [insert from Q15a]? Base: Those who had contact in the past 12 months n=421.

Reasons for Satisfaction with Police Contact

Quick response times and efficient service are the primary reasons for those who are satisfied with police contact, noted by 26%. Helpfulness and issues resolution by the police are also top factors, with 23% of those satisfied citing this as a reason for their satisfaction.



Statistically significantly higher/lower than rest of sample. Other mentions under 3% not shown
Q16a. Can you explain the reasons for your response?, Base: Those who had police contact in the past year and who were satisfied with the service, n= 160. Open-ended question and responses were coded

Reasons for Dissatisfaction with Police Contact

The primary reasons for dissatisfaction with police contact are slow response times (17%), need for better response to traffic violations (15%), police were not able to help/resolve the issue (15%), lack of communications/follow-up (15%), and lack of efforts to stop illicit drug trafficking/usage (13%).



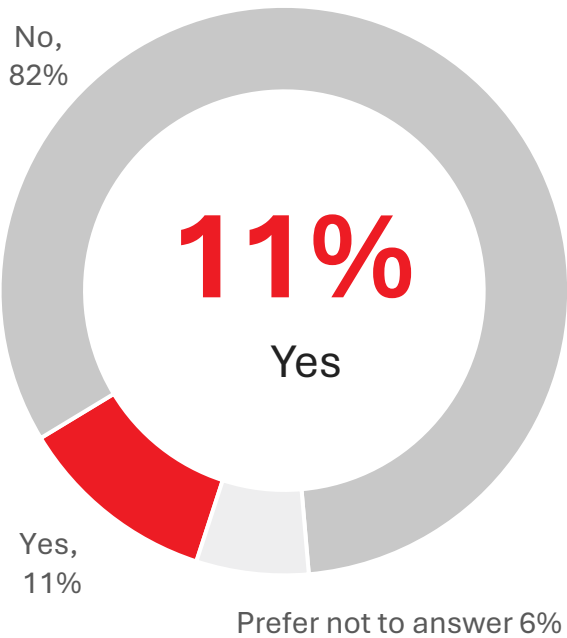
Statistically significantly higher/lower than rest of sample. Other mentions under 4% not shown

Q16b. Can you explain the reasons for your response?, Base: Those who had police contact in the past year and who were dissatisfied with the service, n= 110. Open-ended question and responses were coded

Victim of a Crime in PEI

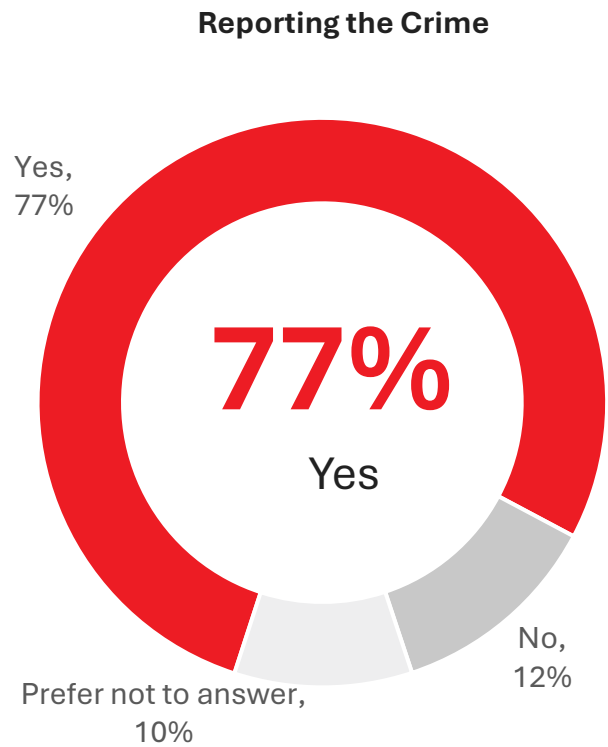
In the past 12 months, one in ten respondents have been a victim of a crime.

Victim of a Crime in Past 12 Months



Reporting a Crime

Of those who have been a victim of a crime, over three-quarters reported the crime. Of the one in ten who did not report the crime, the main reason was they did not think the police could resolve it.



Reasons for not reporting*

Did not think police could resolve it

Did not think it was worth reporting

Lack of trust in police

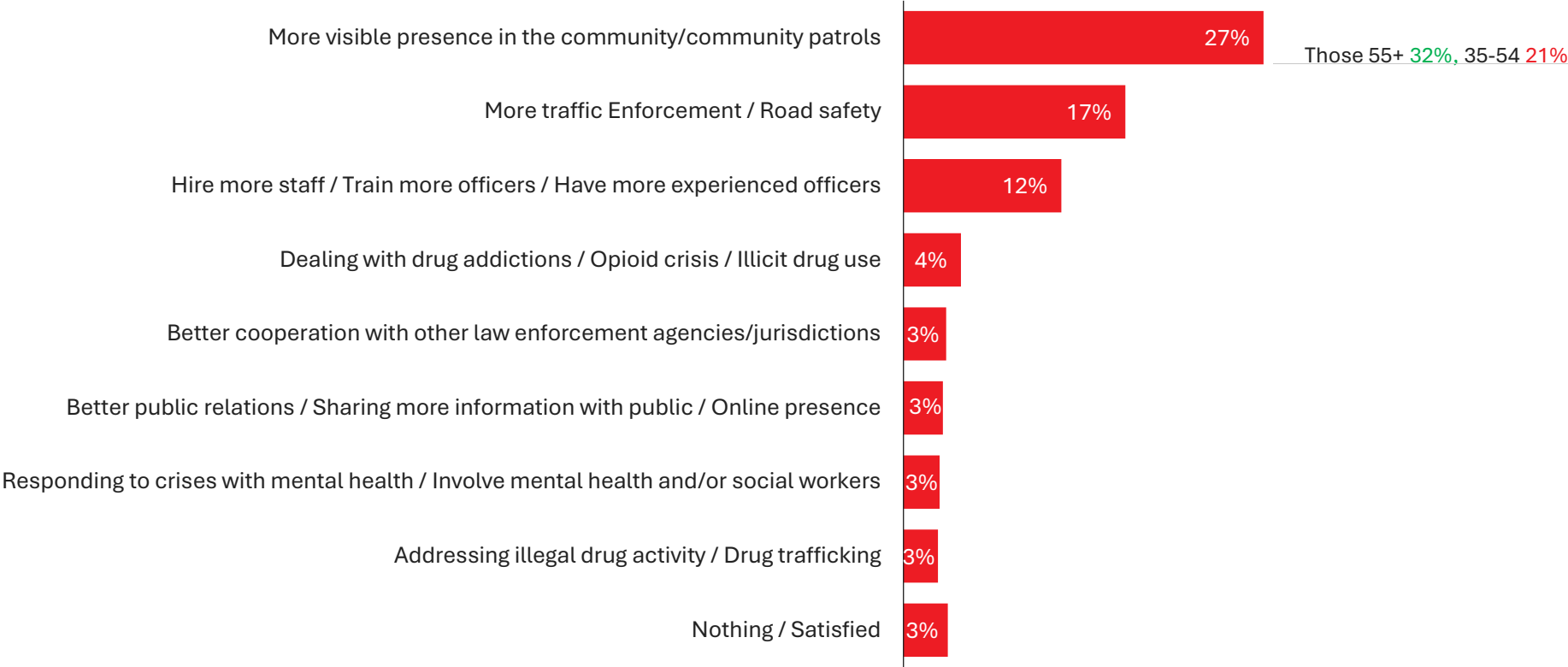
Wasn't convenient to report

Fear of consequences following reporting

Q18. Did you report this crime to the police? n=105, Q19. Why did you decide not to report this crime to the police? n=13* Base size too small to report percentages

Recommendation to Police to Improve Services in the Community

When asked open-ended what their one recommendation to police would be to improve service in their community, the most popular is to be have a more visible presence within each community.



Statistically significantly higher/lower than rest of sample. Other mentions under 3% not shown
Q21. Thinking again about the police in your community, if you could make one recommendation about how they could improve services to your community, what would it be? n= 817. Open-ended question and responses were coded

4

Additional Considerations

Additional Considerations

Below are Leger's considerations for PEI policing based on the data, but we note that these suggestions do not take into account PEI's available budgets, resources, or current plans in place. These considerations should be used as a guide for PEI, along with their own internal knowledge and insights.

Enhanced Community Policing: This consideration is based on the finding that while 45% of residents believe the police are doing a good job overall, around 22% rate their performance as poor or very poor. This suggests a need for a more community-focused approach that includes building relationships and increasing police presence to improve these perceptions. As mentioned earlier on page 9 of this report, we would suggest formulating a communications strategy to assist with improving residents' opinions.

Targeted Crime Prevention: Nearly eight in ten of residents are concerned about impaired and dangerous driving, while 73% are concerned about theft from home or vehicle and 67% about property crimes.

Training and Resource Allocation toward Mental Health/Substance Use Issues: The fact that only 26% of residents are satisfied with the police response to substance use and mental health issues underscores the need for enhanced training and resource allocation in these areas. While 34% of residents are dissatisfied, the largest proportion, 36%, fall into the neutral category, indicating a lack of strong opinions. This suggests that if efforts are currently being made by police services in these areas, they are not being communicated effectively to the public. Along with improving services, it's crucial that these efforts are clearly communicated to raise awareness and transparency, while also addressing the need for continued improvement.

Areas of top concern among residents

Impaired and Dangerous Driving: With 79% of residents identifying impaired and dangerous driving as a top concern and 45% dissatisfied with the level of service provided by the police in their community for this issue, PEI police service should consider addressing this with increased enforcement and public safety campaigns.

Drug Trafficking and Property Crimes: 41% of residents are dissatisfied with the handling of drug trafficking, and 37% with property crimes, indicating these are pressing issues that need targeted interventions.

Police engagement with communities

Building Relationships: Only 34% of residents believe the police are effective at developing and maintaining relationships within the community. This suggests a need for more proactive engagement strategies, particularly with underrepresented groups including youth, diverse populations, and seniors.

Public Perception: Although 45% of residents believe the police are doing a good/excellent job overall, there is still room for improvement, particularly in building trust and communication with the community on issues like drug use and violent crime.

Opportunities to build community connection

Increase Community Outreach: Again, continuing to build relationships and improving community outreach particularly by engaging with youths, seniors and those from diverse backgrounds.

Enhance Transparency: Provide regular public updates on police efforts, particularly in areas like drug trafficking, traffic safety, hate-motivated crimes, and gender-based violence, to better align with community expectations and raise public awareness of police efforts.

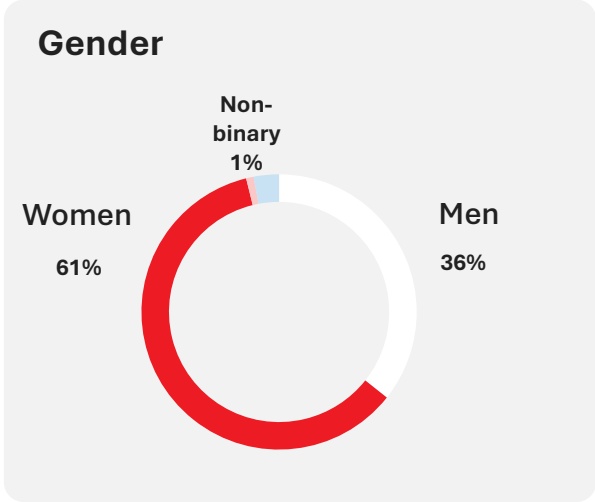
Strengthen Partnerships: Collaboration with social services and local organizations, especially on mental health and addiction (areas with 34% dissatisfaction), can help bridge gaps between police practices and community needs.

Responsive to Community Feedback: Police services should consider establishing continuous feedback mechanisms to ensure that they remain responsive to public concerns, especially in areas like traffic safety and property crimes, where dissatisfaction is significant.

5

Respondent Profile

All respondents, n=926



County

Kings County	11%
Queens County	66%
Prince County	21%
I prefer not to answer	1%

Community

A city or large town	41%
A small town	19%
A rural community	39%
A First Nation Community	<1%

Age

18-34	11%
35-54	39%
55+	50%

Ethnicity

White	89%
Indigenous (First Nations, Metis, Inuk)	3%
Prefer not to answer	9%

Police Service

Charlottetown Police Service	29%
Kensington Police Service	3%
Summerside Police Service	9%
RCMP	57%