

Appendix 1

2026 Community Safety Survey: Community Safety, Trust, Visibility and Service Experience in Niagara

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Executive Summary

The 2026 Community Safety Survey was undertaken by the Niagara Regional Police Service (NRPS) as part of the implementation of the Niagara Regional Police Service Board's 2026–2029 Strategic Plan. The initiative was designed not only as a survey, but as a broader community engagement exercise intended to listen to people across Niagara, strengthen dialogue with communities, provide community safety information, and establish baseline measures related to safety, police visibility, trust, confidence and service experience.

The survey was available in English and French and was open to people who live, work, attend school, or regularly spend time in Niagara. **Data collection took place from June 27 until August 7, 2026**, using a combination of online promotion, community-partner distribution, QR-code access, district front desks and direct in-person engagement. In-person outreach included a Travelling Open House approach at community events such as Canada Day activities, the Summer Safety Giveaway, Pelham Summerfest and Canal Days in Port Colborne. These events also provided opportunities to share information on community safety topics such as fraud prevention, break-and-enter prevention and human trafficking awareness.

The combined English and French dataset contains 2,313 responses. Response counts vary by question because respondents were able to skip questions.

Six overarching findings emerge from the results:

- **Most respondents report feeling safe in their own neighbourhoods.** Approximately **69%** feel safe or very safe in their neighbourhood. When considering Niagara overall, **45%** feel safe or very safe, while 27% are neutral and 27% feel unsafe or very unsafe.
- **Recent interactions with NRPS are generally rated positively on interpersonal measures.** Approximately **75%** of recent service users report being treated professionally, **73%** report being treated with respect, and **66%** report feeling listened to. Ratings are lower for understanding what would happen next, receiving the support needed, and response time.
- **Overall confidence in NRPS is concentrated in the moderate-to-positive range.** Approximately **46%** report moderate confidence, while **28%** report high or very high confidence. About **26%** report low or no confidence. In separate measures, **47%** agree or strongly agree that NRPS responds when needed and **44%** agree or strongly agree that NRPS treats people fairly.
- **Police visibility provides an important baseline for future monitoring.** Approximately **44%** report that police visibility has remained about the same over the past year, **22%** report that police have become more visible, and **30%** report

that police have become less visible. In a separate measure, approximately **41%** agree or strongly agree that NRPS is visible in their community.

- **Perceptions of safety vary considerably by location.** Respondents report the highest levels of safety in their own neighbourhoods and shopping areas. Higher levels of concern are reported in downtown areas, parks and trails, transit environments, and roads and intersections. Downtown areas have the highest proportion of respondents reporting that they feel unsafe or very unsafe.
- **Many respondents perceive that community safety has declined during the past year.** Approximately **64%** report that community safety in Niagara has become somewhat or much worse, **22%** report that it has remained about the same, and **6%** report that it has improved.

The qualitative responses provide additional context to these findings. Positive descriptions of police contact frequently reference professionalism, assistance, community engagement, and collaboration with community partners. Other comments describe concerns related to response time, follow-ups, perceived resolution, and clarity regarding what happens after an incident is reported.

Open-ended responses also show that perceptions of safety are often connected to specific places and surrounding conditions. Respondents reference downtown areas, visible disorder, drug activity, homelessness, traffic concerns, and conditions in public spaces when describing where or when they feel less safe. Other respondents indicate that they generally feel safe throughout the day and night or that their sense of safety depends more on location than time of day.

The results also show that community safety is experienced through a range of issues. Among respondents who reported being a victim, witness, or both, drug, disorder, or public-safety concerns were the most frequently identified incident type, followed by property crime, traffic or road-safety incidents, and violence, threats, harassment, or intimidation. Among respondents who answered whether an incident was reported, approximately **61%** indicated that it had been reported to police.

Overall, the results show variation across different dimensions of community safety and policing. Respondents generally report positive perceptions of their own neighbourhood safety and interpersonal treatment during recent NRPS interactions, while the survey also identifies differences in perceptions related to broader changes in community safety, specific public environments, police visibility, service delivery, and community priorities.

The survey establishes a 2026 baseline for future monitoring of community safety, trust, visibility, service experience, and confidence under the 2026–2029 Strategic Plan. These measures can be considered alongside operational and other performance information in future Strategic Plan reporting and community safety planning.

Introduction

Community safety cannot be understood through police-reported crime statistics or operational indicators alone. Calls for service, crime rates, response times, enforcement activity and workload provide important information about what is occurring operationally, but they do not fully explain how people experience their communities or how they perceive policing.

Community perceptions represent another important form of evidence, i.e., how people experience their neighbourhoods, downtown areas, roads, public spaces, social disorder and interactions with police can affect their sense of safety, their willingness to report incidents, their trust in institutions and their expectations regarding policing.

The 2026 Community Safety Survey was developed to provide this community perspective and to support implementation of the [Niagara Regional Police Service Board 2026–2029 Strategic Plan](#).

The survey provided people who live, work, attend school or regularly spend time in Niagara with an opportunity to share their perspectives regarding:

- community safety;
- safety in different locations;
- community belonging;
- crime, disorder and public-safety concerns;
- victimization and witnessing incidents;
- reporting behaviour;
- experiences with NRPS;
- professionalism, fairness and procedural justice;
- police visibility;
- service responsiveness;
- confidence in NRPS; and
- expectations regarding policing and community safety.

The initiative was also designed to create baseline measures that can be monitored over the life of the Strategic Plan. Repeating similar measures in future years can help determine whether community perceptions are changing and whether strategic initiatives are producing the intended effect.

Importantly, the initiative went beyond the administration of an online questionnaire. Survey data collection was embedded in a broader engagement process that included community events, partner outreach, direct conversations with residents and distribution of community safety information.

The approach reflects the principle that:

Building a safer Niagara starts with listening.

It also recognizes that community engagement should be two-way: communities provide information about their experiences, expectations and priorities, while NRPS provides information, prevention resources and greater awareness of available services and initiatives.

Strategic Context

The Community Safety Survey was developed to support implementation of the Niagara Regional Police Service Board's 2026–2029 Strategic Plan, approved by the Board in October 2025. The survey and broader engagement approach were guided by principles of inclusion, accessibility, trauma-informed practice, cultural responsiveness, transparency, evidence-informed decision-making, respect, and ethical engagement.

The survey is particularly aligned with:

Strategic Priority: Community Safety

Objective: Enhance authentic, consistent presence in communities

Action Plan: Neighbourhood Presence Initiative

Deliverable: Launch a Community Safety Survey to establish baseline measures related to trust, visibility and perceptions of safety.

The survey also supports the Police Service Board's governance responsibilities by providing structured community feedback to inform strategic priorities and monitor implementation of the 2026–2029 Strategic Plan. For NRPS, the findings can be considered alongside operational and performance data to support evidence-informed planning, implementation of the Neighbourhood Presence Initiative, community engagement and communication strategies, service improvements, identification of emerging concerns, future resource discussions, recognition of effective practices, and ongoing Strategic Plan performance reporting.

Survey Objectives

The 2026 Community Safety Survey was designed to establish baseline measures of community safety, trust, confidence, police visibility, and service experience, while identifying local concerns and priorities across Niagara. It also examined how safety is experienced in different environments, recent interactions with NRPS, perceptions of procedural justice, responsiveness, fairness, and value, as well as barriers to reporting crime and safety incidents. Open-ended questions were included to provide additional context on community experiences and expectations, and results were examined by municipality and population group where sample sizes permitted. Together, these

measures provide a baseline that can be monitored over the life of the 2026–2029 Strategic Plan.

Community Engagement and Data Collection

Data Collection Period

The Community Safety Survey was launched on June 27 2026 and remained open until August 7, 2026. The engagement strategy combined **online, community-partner and in-person methods** to improve accessibility and extend participation beyond people who routinely interact with NRPS through digital channels.

Online and Partner-Based Engagement

The survey could be completed online using a computer, tablet, or mobile device, providing community members with a flexible and accessible way to participate. Promotion was supported through multiple channels, including the NRPS website and social media platforms, dedicated survey communications, traditional media outreach, QR-code materials, district front desks, community organizations, municipal and organizational networks, and community partner distribution.

Community partners were encouraged to share the survey through their existing networks, helping extend awareness across Niagara. NRPS acknowledges the support of Niagara Region, municipalities across Niagara, and the Greater Niagara Chamber of Commerce, which helped promote the survey and broaden its reach. The questionnaire was available in both English and French to further support accessibility and participation.

In-Person Engagement

To complement online and partner-based promotion, the Police Service Board and NRPS used an inclusive in-person engagement approach designed to reach a broad range of communities and create opportunities for direct conversation.

NRPS worked with community partners, local organizations, the Chief's Inclusion Council, and the Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Unit to support outreach to communities that may experience safety and policing differently or face barriers to participation. This included, where possible, Indigenous communities and organizations; Black and racialized communities; newcomer and immigrant-serving organizations; seniors' and youth-serving groups; 2SLGBTQQIA+ communities; faith communities; business organizations; agricultural and seasonal worker communities; victim services organizations; disability-serving organizations; and community safety and social service partners.

NRPS members also engaged directly with community members in a range of settings, including community events, meetings, neighbourhood locations, partner organizations, and places of worship. These interactions provided opportunities to explain the purpose of the survey, answer questions, listen to community concerns, encourage participation, and strengthen relationships with diverse groups across Niagara.

In-Person Engagement

To support broad and meaningful participation, the Police Service Board and NRPS used an inclusive community engagement approach that went beyond general public promotion. This included working with community partners, local organizations, the Chief's Inclusion Council, and the Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Unit to leverage existing relationships, mobilize networks, and help share the survey with communities that may experience safety and policing differently or may face barriers to participation.

Outreach included, where possible, Indigenous communities and organizations; Black and racialized communities; newcomer and immigrant-serving organizations; seniors' groups; youth-serving organizations; 2SLGBTQQIA+ communities; faith communities; business organizations; agricultural and seasonal worker communities; victim services organizations; disability-serving organizations; and community safety and social service partners. These efforts helped broaden awareness of the survey, reduce barriers to participation, and invite perspectives from a wide cross-section of Niagara's communities.

NRPS members also engaged directly with community groups in a variety of settings and through different forms of outreach. Members attended community events, meetings, partner locations, neighbourhood settings, and places of worship, creating opportunities for direct conversations with community members from diverse backgrounds. These interactions allowed members to explain the purpose of the survey, answer questions, listen to community concerns, encourage participation, and strengthen relationships with groups that may not always engage with police through traditional channels.

Online engagement was further complemented by a Travelling Open House approach, with NRPS members attending selected community events across Niagara to promote participation, provide QR-code access, discuss local safety issues, listen to concerns, and share crime-prevention and public-safety information.

Overall, the approach was intended to support broader and more inclusive participation and provide the Board with feedback reflecting a wider range of community experiences across Niagara.

Table 1. Selected Community Engagement Opportunities

Engagement Opportunity	Date
Canada Day outreach (St. Catharines)	July 1, 2026
Summer Safety Giveaway (Welland)	July 2, 2026
Pelham Summerfest (Pelham)	July 18–19, 2026
Canal Days (Port Colborne)	July 31–August 3, 2026

These events provided additional opportunities to reach residents who may not otherwise have encountered the survey digitally.

Community Engagement as Public Education

A distinctive feature of the 2026 approach was the integration of survey participation with community safety education. In-person engagement provided community members with opportunities not only to complete the survey, but also to discuss safety concerns, ask questions, and receive practical information on topics such as fraud prevention, break-and-enter prevention, human trafficking awareness, personal and community safety, and available police and community resources.

This created a two-way engagement process in which community members could share their experiences, concerns, expectations, and priorities, while NRPS could provide prevention information, service awareness, and direct engagement. The value of the initiative therefore extended beyond the number of survey responses by also supporting relationship building, dialogue, public education, identification of emerging concerns, greater understanding of NRPS services, and an authentic police presence in community settings.

Inclusive Engagement Approach

The survey was open to anyone who lives, works, attends school, or regularly spends time in Niagara. Outreach was designed to reach a broad cross-section of the community, including residents, businesses, community organizations, municipalities, school boards, youth-serving organizations, Neighbourhood Watch groups, cultural and faith-based organizations, community safety partners, and social service providers.

Where possible, additional efforts were made to encourage participation from communities whose experiences of safety and policing may differ, including Indigenous, Black and racialized, newcomer and immigrant, youth, older adult, 2SLGBTQIA+, disability, agricultural and seasonal worker, victim-service, health, and social-service communities. The intent was to reduce barriers to participation and capture a broader range of community experiences across Niagara.

Survey Design

The Community Safety Survey contained **22 items** and was designed to take approximately six minutes to complete.

Table 2. Survey Measurement Framework

Dimension	Measures
Community connection	Community belonging; time connected to Niagara
Overall safety	General feelings of safety in Niagara
Place-based safety	Neighbourhoods, downtowns, parks, transit, shopping areas, roads and online spaces
Change in safety	Whether community safety improved or worsened
Exposure to incidents	Victimization and witnessing crime/safety incidents
Reporting	Whether incidents were reported and reasons for non-reporting
Police contact	Recent interaction with NRPS
Procedural justice	Respect, professionalism and listening
Service delivery	Response time, support and understanding next steps
Police visibility	Change in police presence and perceived community visibility
Institutional perceptions	Responsiveness, fairness, community priorities and value
Confidence	Overall confidence in NRPS
Demographics	Municipality, age, gender, identity and time in Niagara
Qualitative experience	Open-text responses explaining experiences or concerns

The use of both structured and open-ended questions was intentional. Structured questions support consistent measurement and comparison across respondents, while open-ended responses provide additional context by helping explain why respondents hold particular views and capturing experiences that may not fit within predefined response categories.

Participation in the survey was voluntary, and respondents were informed of its purpose and intended use. Participants could skip questions, select “prefer not to say” where available, or stop participating at any time. Recognizing that topics such as victimization, domestic violence, hate incidents, harassment, and previous police experiences may be sensitive, the survey incorporated trauma-informed elements, including participant choice, limited requirements for narrative disclosure, emergency

information, Victim Services Niagara information, and multiple “prefer not to say” options. Results are reported in aggregate, and small-group findings are interpreted cautiously to protect privacy and reduce the risk of misleading conclusions.

Analytical Approach

The analysis uses the combined English and French dataset.

Table 3. Survey Dataset

Language	Survey Starts
English	2,303
French	10
Combined	2,313

Because respondents were able to skip questions, valid response counts vary by measure.

Four analytical approaches are used:

- **Descriptive analysis:** Frequencies and percentages summarize the overall distribution of responses.
- **Place-based analysis:** Safety is examined separately across different community environments.
- **Subgroup analysis:** Where sample sizes permit, responses are examined by municipality and other characteristics.
- **Qualitative thematic analysis:** Open-ended responses are reviewed to identify recurring themes that help explain the quantitative results.

This report emphasizes descriptive findings. Associations identified within the data should not automatically be interpreted as causal.

Participation and Respondent Profile

Geographic Participation

Participation was strongest in St. Catharines, Niagara Falls and Welland.

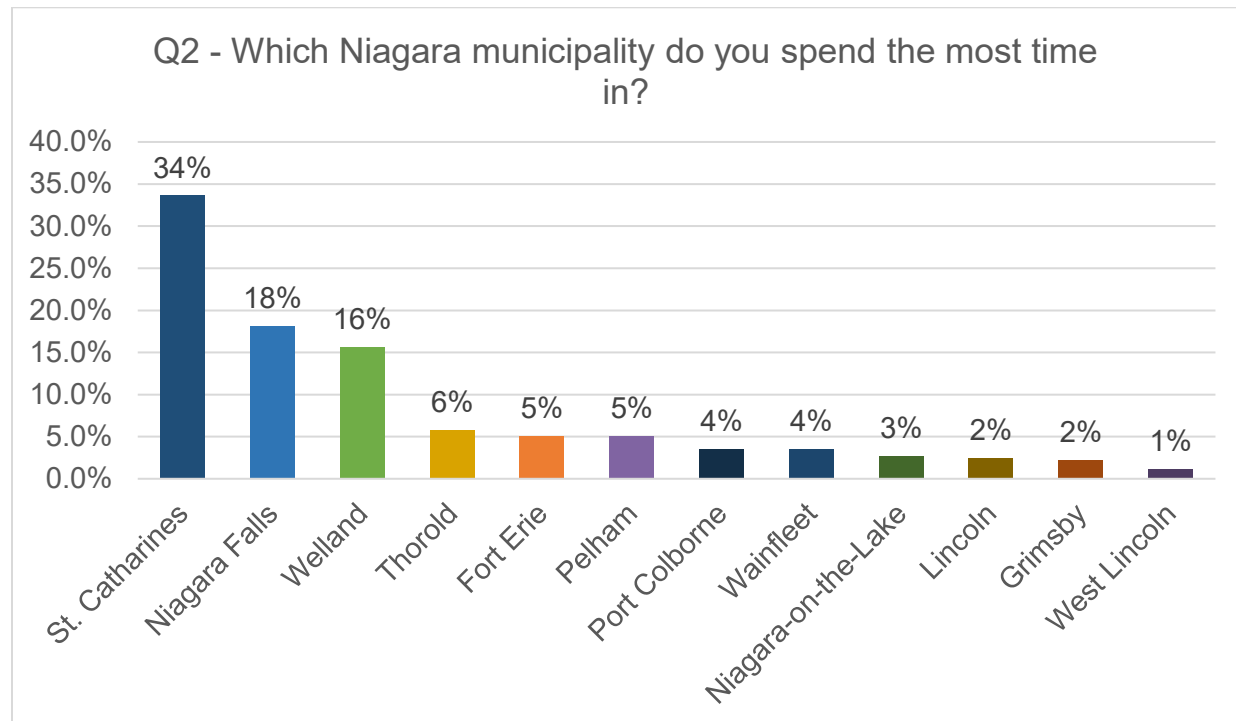


Table 5. Respondents by Municipality

Response	Count	Percent	Population %, Census 2021 ¹
St. Catharines	757	33.6%	28.6%
Niagara Falls	408	18.1%	19.8%
Welland	353	15.7%	11.7%
Thorold	130	5.8%	5.0%
Fort Erie	115	5.1%	6.9%
Pelham	115	5.1%	3.8%
Port Colborne	80	3.6%	4.2%
Wainfleet	79	3.5%	1.4%
Niagara-on-the-Lake	60	2.7%	4.0%
Lincoln	54	2.4%	5.4%
Grimsby	49	2.2%	6.0%
West Lincoln	25	1.1%	3.2%
Other (please specify)	18	0.8%	
Prefer not to say	7	0.3%	

¹ Statistics Canada. 2023. (table). Census Profile. 2021 Census of Population. Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 98-316-X2021001. Ottawa. Released November 15, 2023.

<https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2021/dp-pd/prof/index.cfm?Lang=E>.

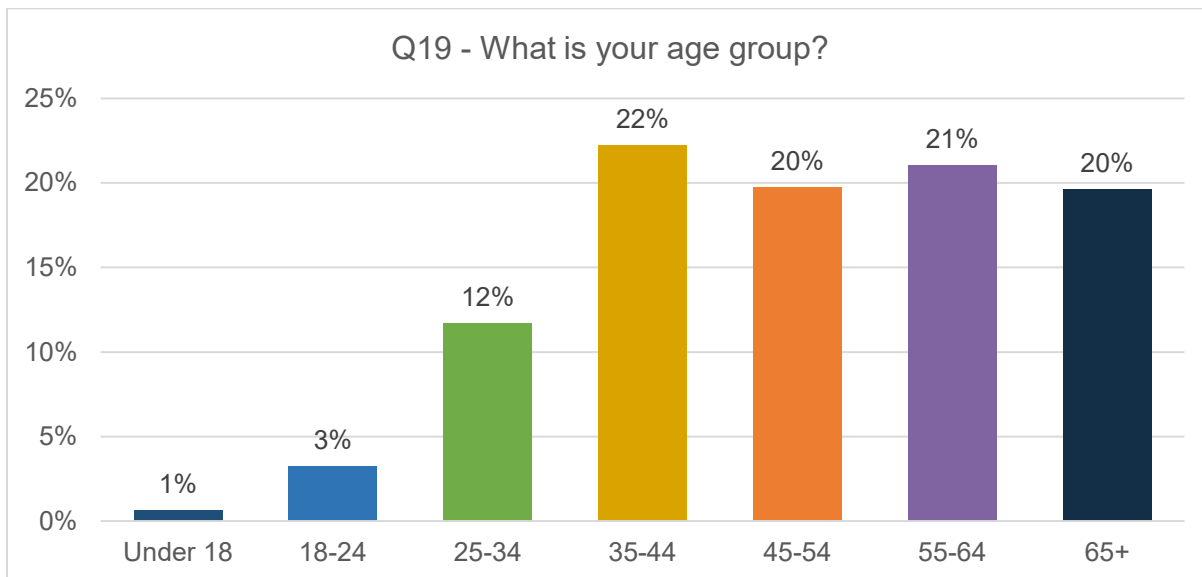
None of the above	1	0.0%	
I am not sure	1	0.0%	

Connection to Niagara

Respondents generally had long-standing connections to the region. Approximately 74% reported having lived, worked, attended school or regularly spent time in Niagara for 20 years or more. This means the survey contains significant feedback from people with extensive experience in the region.

Demographic Profile

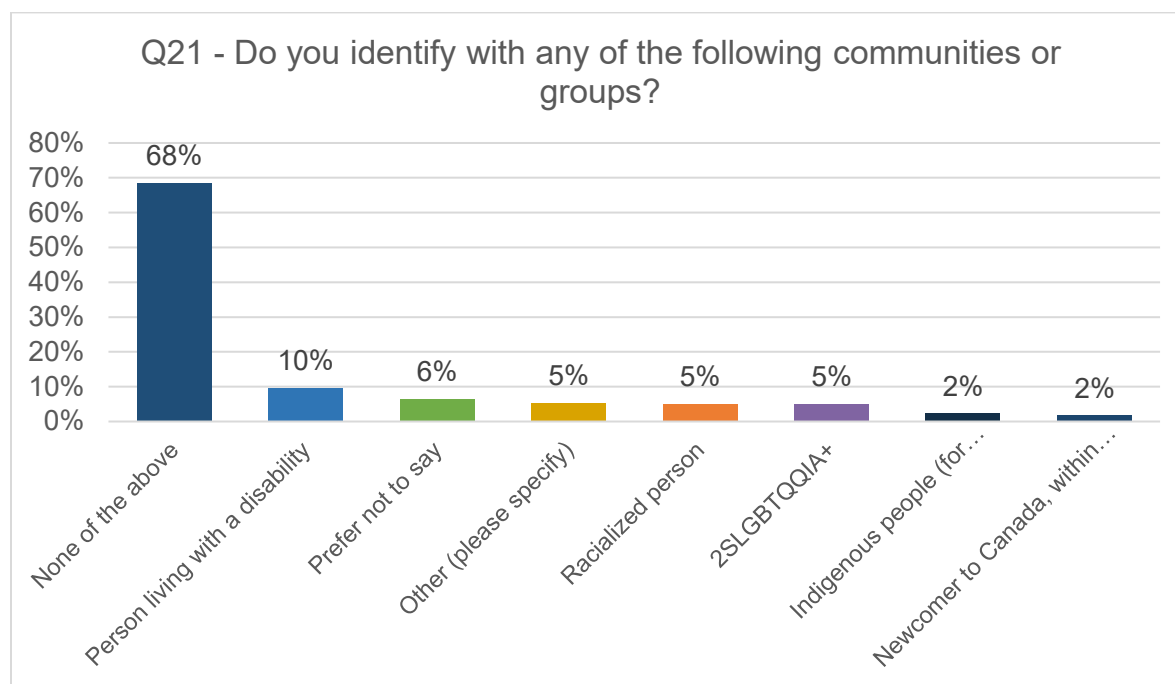
Among respondents who answered the gender question, 64.9% identified as female and 31.3% as male. Smaller proportions identified as non-binary (0.6%), Two-Spirit, or selected Other (0.7%), which included additional gender identities such as transgender men and women. A further 2.5% preferred not to say. Participation was also concentrated among adults aged 35 and older. These characteristics should be considered when interpreting the results, as the respondent profile should not be assumed to fully reflect the demographic composition of the Niagara population.



Community and identity profile

Among the 1,887 respondents who answered this question, 68.4% selected “none of the above,” while others identified with one or more communities or groups represented in the survey. This included 9.5% who identified as a person living with a disability, 5.0% as a racialized person, 5.0% as 2SLGBTQQIA+, 2.3% as Indigenous, and 1.7% as a newcomer to Canada within the previous five years. A further 6.4% preferred not to say, and 5.4% selected “Other.” Because respondents could select more than one option, percentages are not mutually exclusive and do not sum to 100%.

The open-ended “Other” responses reflected a wider range of identities and community connections not fully captured by the predefined categories, including Black, African, Hispanic, Middle Eastern, Francophone, faith-based, gender-diverse, older adult, caregiver, and socioeconomic identities, as well as descriptions related to Canadian background, ethnicity, length of residence, and other forms of community belonging.



Community Belonging

A majority of respondents reported a positive sense of connection to their local community, with 53.9% describing their sense of belonging as strong or very strong. A further 31.2% reported a neutral sense of belonging, while 13.6% described it as weak or very weak. These results provide a useful baseline for understanding community connection across Niagara and can be examined alongside other measures, such as perceptions of safety, confidence in NRPS, victimization experience, police contact, age, and municipality.

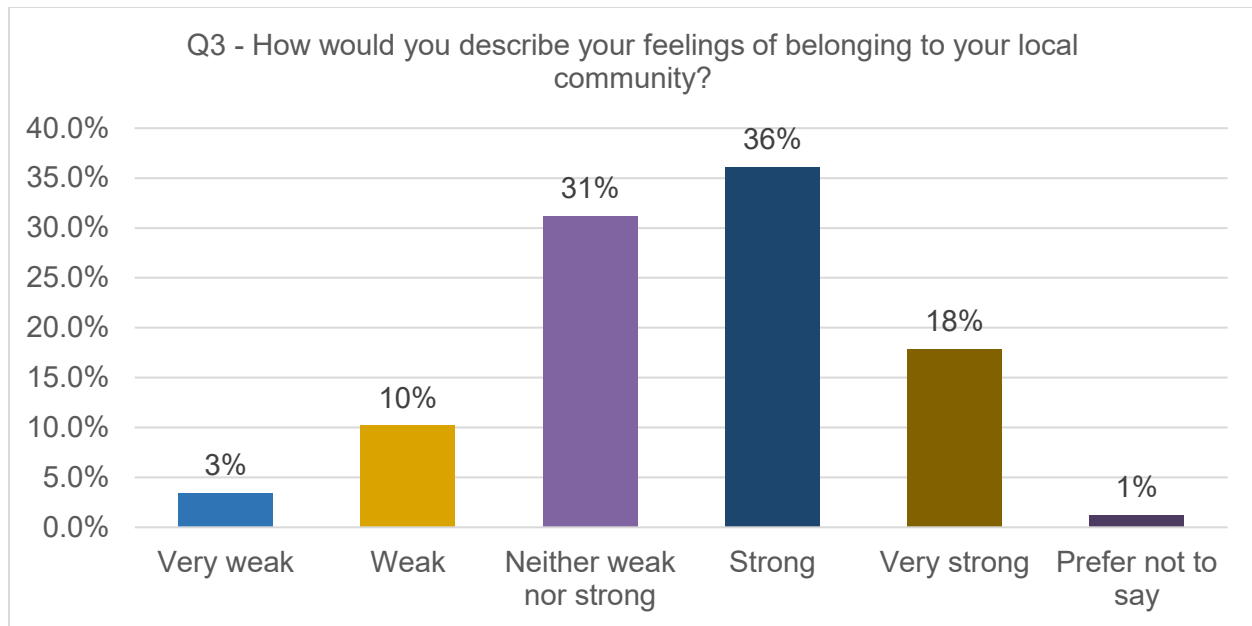


Table 5. Sense of Belonging to the Local Community

Response	Count	Percent
Very weak	77	3.4%
Weak	228	10.2%
Neither weak nor strong	698	31.2%
Strong	807	36.1%
Very strong	400	17.9%
Prefer not to say	28	1.3%

Overall Perceptions of Community Safety

Overall, 45% of respondents reported feeling safe or very safe in Niagara, while 27% reported feeling unsafe or very unsafe and a similar proportion were neutral. The results therefore show that positive perceptions of safety are more common than negative perceptions, although more than one-quarter of respondents reported feeling unsafe to some degree.

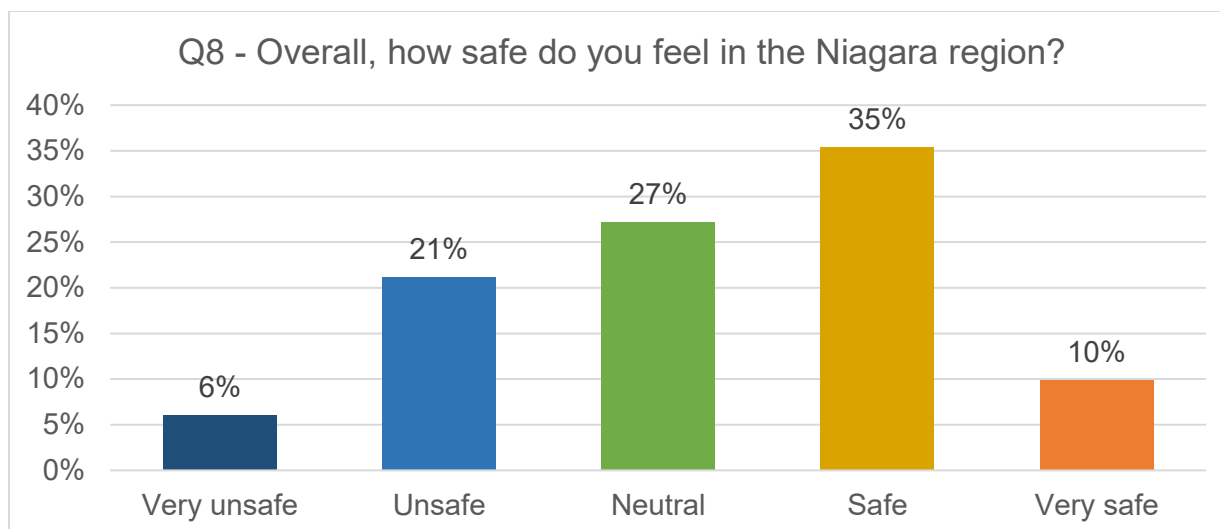


Table 7. Overall Safety in Niagara

Response	n	%
Very unsafe	127	6.0%
Unsafe	447	21.2%
Neutral	574	27.2%
Safe	748	35.5%
Very safe	208	9.9%
Prefer not to say	6	0.3%
Total	2,110	100%

Safety Varies Substantially by Place

Safety perceptions vary considerably depending on the type of environment.

Respondents reported the highest levels of safety in their own neighbourhoods, where 69% felt safe or very safe, followed by shopping areas at 58%. By comparison, 52% described downtown areas as unsafe or very unsafe, while higher levels of concern were also reported for parks and trails, transit locations, and roads and intersections.

These results indicate that perceptions of safety are not uniform across Niagara and are more strongly associated with particular places and settings. Transit findings should be interpreted with caution because a comparatively large proportion of respondents selected not applicable or prefer not to say.

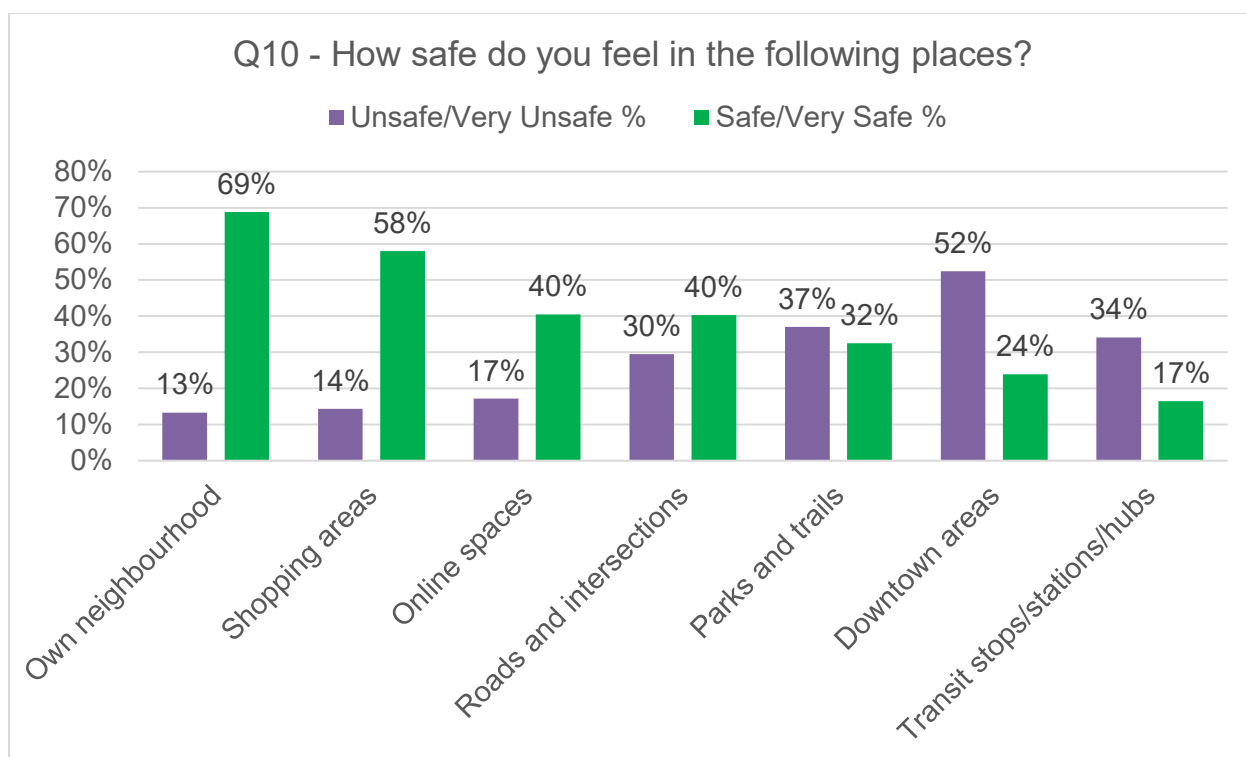


Table 8. Perceived Safety by Location

Location	Unsafe / Very Unsafe	Safe / Very Safe
Downtown areas	52.5%	23.9%
Parks and trails	37.1%	32.5%
Transit stops/stations/hubs*	34.1%	16.5%
Roads and intersections	29.5%	40.3%
Online spaces	17.1%	40.5%
Shopping areas	14.4%	58.0%
Own neighbourhood	13.3%	68.8%

Note: Transit results include a comparatively large proportion of respondents selecting not applicable or prefer not to say and should therefore be interpreted cautiously.

When Residents Feel Safest

When asked when they feel safest, 74% of respondents selected daytime. The 274 open-ended responses provide additional context. Among those comments, approximately 42% indicated that they feel safe all or most of the time, including responses such as “always,” “24/7,” or “both day and night.” About 26% indicated that they never or rarely feel safe, while 14% described safety as dependent on location or surrounding circumstances. A further 10% specifically identified their home or another private space as the place where they feel safest, and 7% identified daytime or another specific period. Overall, the qualitative responses indicate that perceptions of safety are

influenced not only by time of day, but also by location, familiarity, social conditions, and the immediate environment.

Response	n	%
During the day	1,555	74.4%
During the evening or night	67	3.2%
Unsure / I don't know	196	9.4%
Other – written response, see table below	273	13.1%
Total	2,091	100%

Table 8.1. Themes Identified in “Other” Responses

Theme	n	% of Open-Text Responses
Feels safe all or most of the time	116	42.3%
Never or rarely feels safe	70	25.5%
Safety depends on location or context	37	13.5%
Feels safest at home/private space	27	9.9%
Daytime or another specific period	19	6.9%
Other / unclear	5	1.8%
Total	274	100%

Perceived Change in Community Safety

When asked whether community safety in Niagara had changed over the past year, 64.3% of respondents indicated that it had become somewhat or much worse, while 21.5% reported that it had stayed about the same and 6.0% indicated that it had improved. A further 8.2% were unsure or preferred not to answer.

These findings provide a broader regional perspective and can be considered alongside the place-based results: although 68.8% of respondents reported feeling safe or very safe in their own neighbourhood, a substantial proportion simultaneously perceived that community safety across Niagara had declined. This indicates that respondents' assessments of their immediate neighbourhood and their perceptions of broader regional trends represent distinct dimensions of community safety.

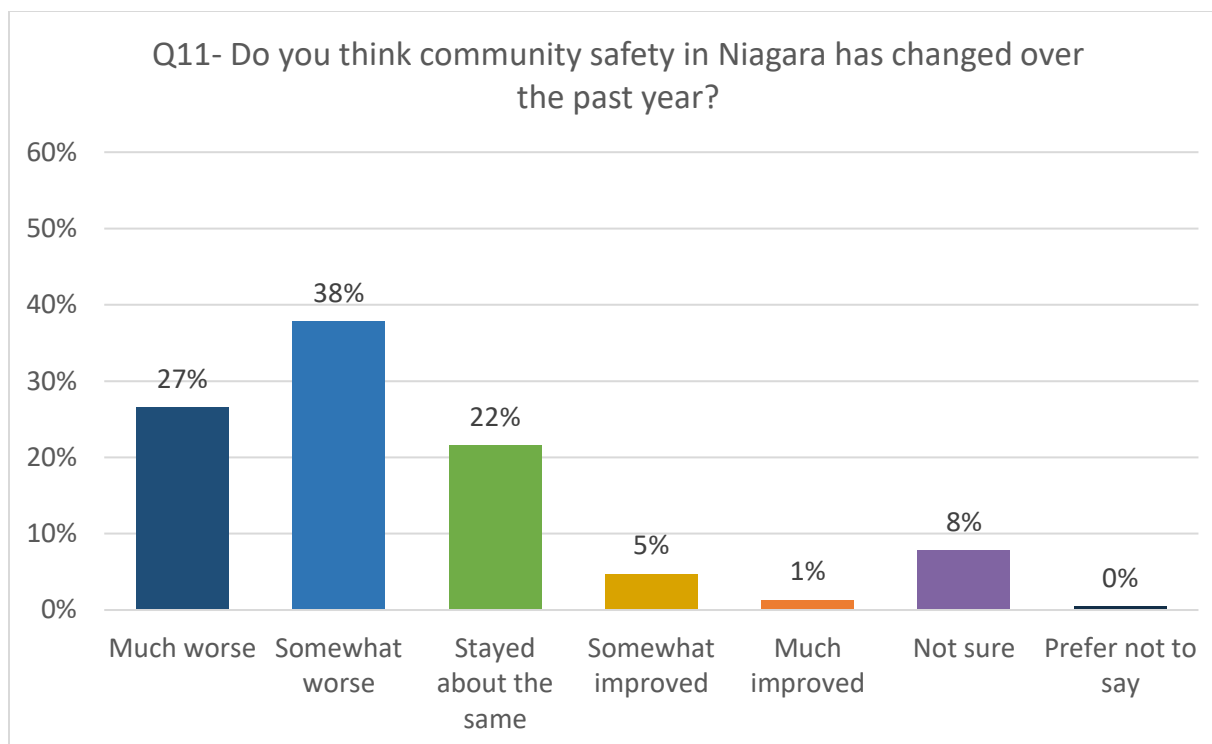


Table 9. Perceived Change in Community Safety

Response	n	%
Much worse	559	26.5%
Somewhat worse	795	37.7%
Stayed about the same	453	21.5%
Somewhat improved	99	4.7%
Much improved	27	1.3%
Not sure / prefer not to say	173	8.2%
Total	2,106	100%

Experience with Crime, Disorder and Public-Safety Incidents

Among the 2,099 respondents who answered this question, 37.2% reported having been a victim, a witness, or both a victim and witness of a crime or safety-related incident in Niagara during the previous 12 months. More specifically, 8.2% reported being a victim, 22.4% a witness, and 6.6% both, while 56.6% reported no such experience. Among respondents who reported an incident, the most frequently identified categories were drug, disorder, or public-safety concerns (51.3%), followed by property crime (46.5%), traffic or road-safety incidents (44.7%), and violence, threats, harassment, or intimidation (41.5%). Fraud, domestic or intimate partner violence, hate or bias-related incidents, and other concerns were reported less frequently. As

respondents could select more than one category, the results show that community safety experiences span a broad range of issues, including visible disorder, road safety, harassment, and conditions in public spaces, in addition to more conventional property and violent crime.

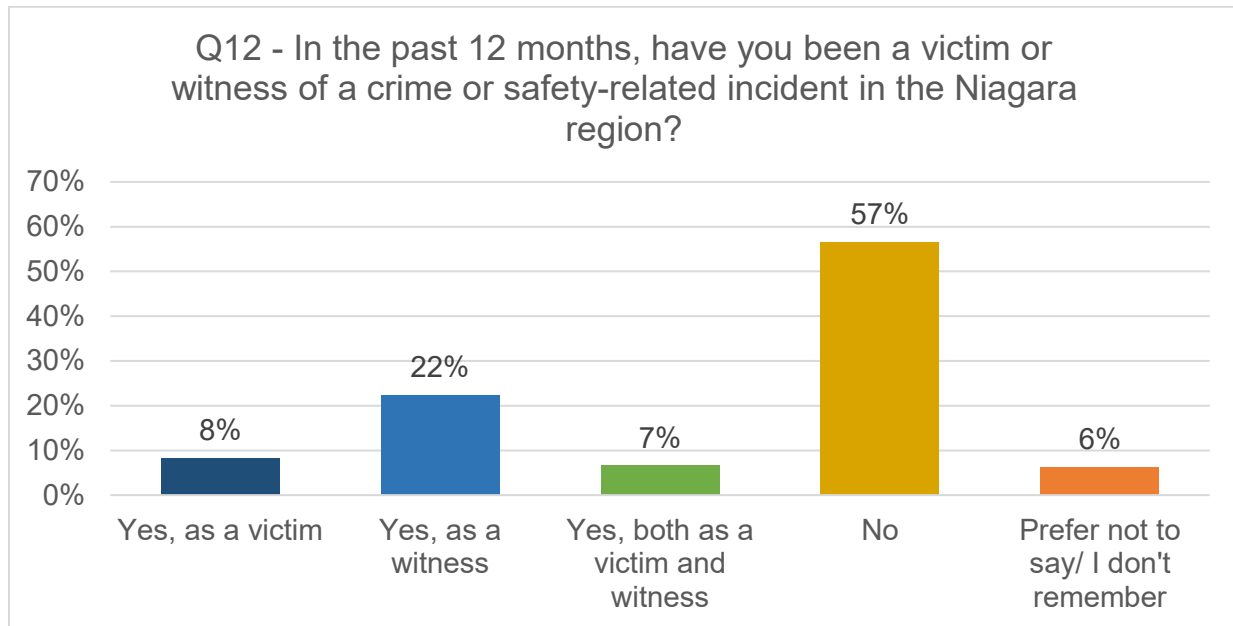


Table 10. Victim or Witness Experience in the Previous 12 Months

Experience	n	%
Victim	173	8.2%
Witness	470	22.4%
Both victim and witness	138	6.6%
No	1,187	56.6%
Prefer not to say / do not remember	131	6.2%

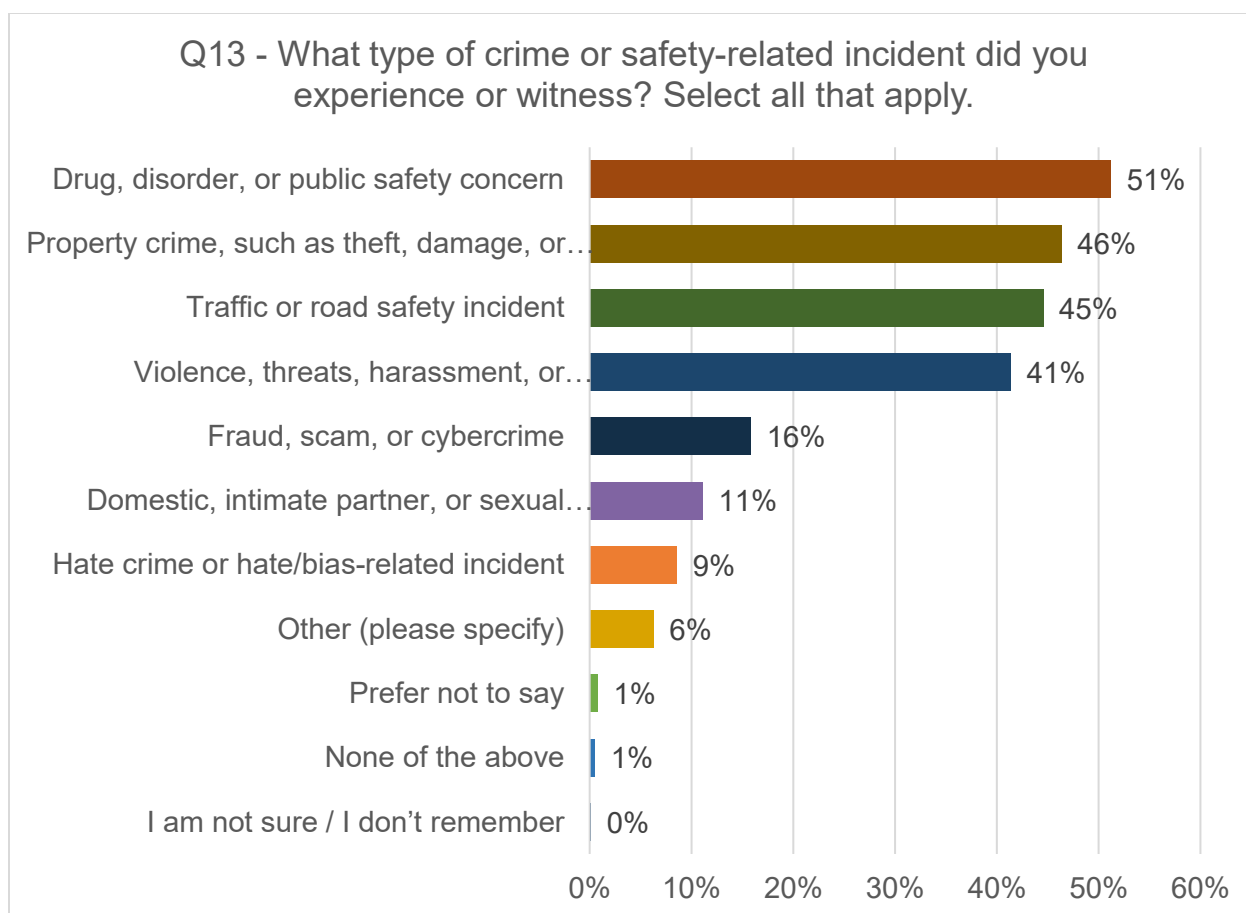


Table 11. Types of Crime or Safety-Related Incidents

Incident Type	n	% of Affected Respondents*
Drug, disorder or public-safety concern	401	51.3%
Property crime	363	46.5%
Traffic or road-safety incident	349	44.7%
Violence, threats, harassment or intimidation	324	41.5%
Fraud, scam or cybercrime	124	15.9%
Domestic/intimate partner/sexual violence	87	11.1%
Hate/bias-related incident	67	8.6%
Other	49	6.3%

Multiple selections were permitted.

The 49 open-ended “Other” responses provided additional detail on the types of incidents experienced or witnessed. Many of these comments overlapped with the predefined categories, particularly drug and disorder concerns, traffic and road safety, property crime, and violence or harassment. Other responses identified issues such as animal-related incidents, human trafficking, nuisance or by-law concerns, child and vulnerable-person safety, work-related exposure to incidents, and interactions involving

police conduct. The comments suggest that the predefined categories captured most major types of community-safety experiences, while the open-ended responses helped identify more specific or overlapping circumstances that were not always easily represented by a single response option.

Reporting Behaviour

Among respondents answering whether the incident had been reported:

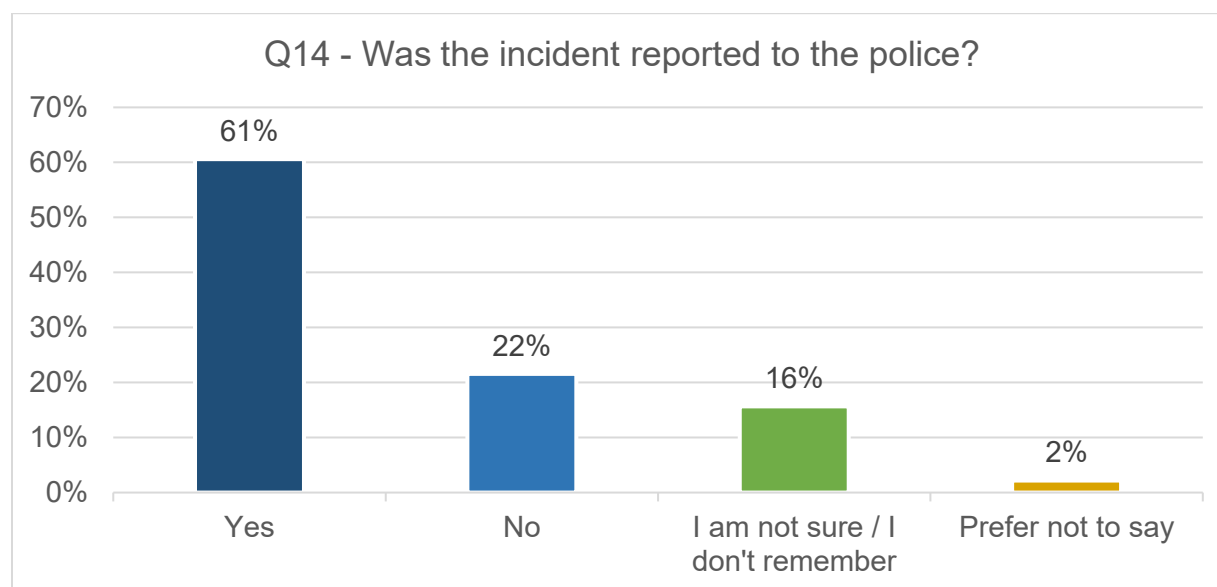


Table 12. Was the Incident Reported?

Response	n	%
Yes	472	60.6%
No	168	21.6%
Unsure / do not remember	122	15.7%
Prefer not to say	17	2.2%
Total	779	100%

Approximately one in five affected respondents indicated that the incident was not reported to police.

Reasons for Not Reporting

Respondents who indicated that an incident was not reported to police could select more than one reason. Among the 168 respondents who answered this follow-up question, the most frequently selected predefined reason was “I did not think the police could help,” identified by 42.3%. This was followed by the incident being considered not serious enough (20.8%), not wanting to become involved (11.9%), and concern about

what might happen after reporting (10.1%). Smaller proportions indicated that the matter had been handled another way (8.3%), that they had experienced a previous negative interaction with police (7.1%), or that they did not know how to report the incident (5.4%).

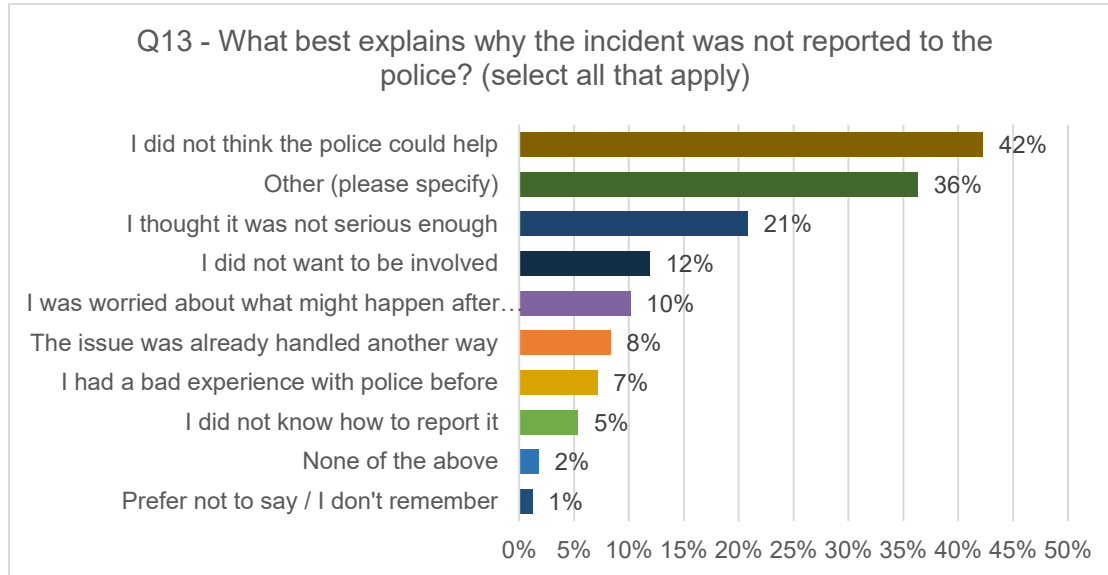


Table 13. Reasons for Not Reporting

Reason	n	% of Non-Reporters*
Did not think police could help	71	42.3%
Incident was not serious enough	35	20.8%
Did not want to become involved	20	11.9%
Worried about what might happen after reporting	17	10.1%
Issue was handled another way	14	8.3%
Previous bad experience with police	12	7.1%
Did not know how to report	9	5.4%
Other (written explanation)	61	36.3%

Multiple responses permitted.

Reasons for Not Reporting

Respondents who indicated that an incident was not reported to police could select more than one reason. Among the 168 respondents who answered this follow-up question, the most frequently selected predefined reason was “I did not think the police could help,” identified by 42.3%. This was followed by the incident being considered not serious enough (20.8%), not wanting to become involved (11.9%), and concern about what might happen after reporting (10.1%). Smaller proportions indicated that the matter had been handled another way (8.3%), that they had experienced a previous negative

interaction with police (7.1%), or that they did not know how to report the incident (5.4%).

The 61 open-ended explanations provide additional context. Several respondents described a belief that reporting would not lead to meaningful action, follow-up, enforcement, or resolution. Others referred to anticipated or previous response delays, the perception that the incident would not be considered a police priority, or that the situation would likely be over before police could attend. Some comments also reflected the normalization of recurring disorder, particularly open drug use, traffic violations, and other frequently observed behaviours that respondents viewed as impractical to report repeatedly.

Other respondents described practical barriers, such as not having sufficient identifying information, including a licence plate or suspect description, or witnessing an incident while driving or passing by. Some matters were instead addressed through building security, municipal by-law, workplaces, educational institutions, animal-welfare services, or other agencies. A smaller number of respondents expressed concern about retaliation or escalation following a report.

Taken together, the results indicate that non-reporting reflects more than knowledge of how to access police services. The most frequently identified issue was whether respondents believed police could meaningfully affect the outcome, while lack of knowledge about how to report was comparatively uncommon. The qualitative responses further show that expectations regarding response, follow-up, prioritization, recurring disorder, available information, and alternative service providers also shaped decisions about whether to report an incident.

Contact with NRPS

Among the 2,235 respondents who answered this question, 923, or 41.3%, reported having contact with NRPS during the previous 12 months. These interactions reflected a broad range of circumstances, including reporting a crime or incident, calling police for service, attending community events or public meetings, speaking directly with an officer, reporting matters online, traffic stops, and receiving victim support or follow-up.

A substantial number of respondents also selected “Other,” describing interactions related to professional or workplace contact, police record checks, community partnerships, information requests, accident-related matters, and other forms of engagement. Overall, the results show that contact between NRPS and the public extends beyond enforcement and emergency response to include administrative, community, professional, and support-related interactions.

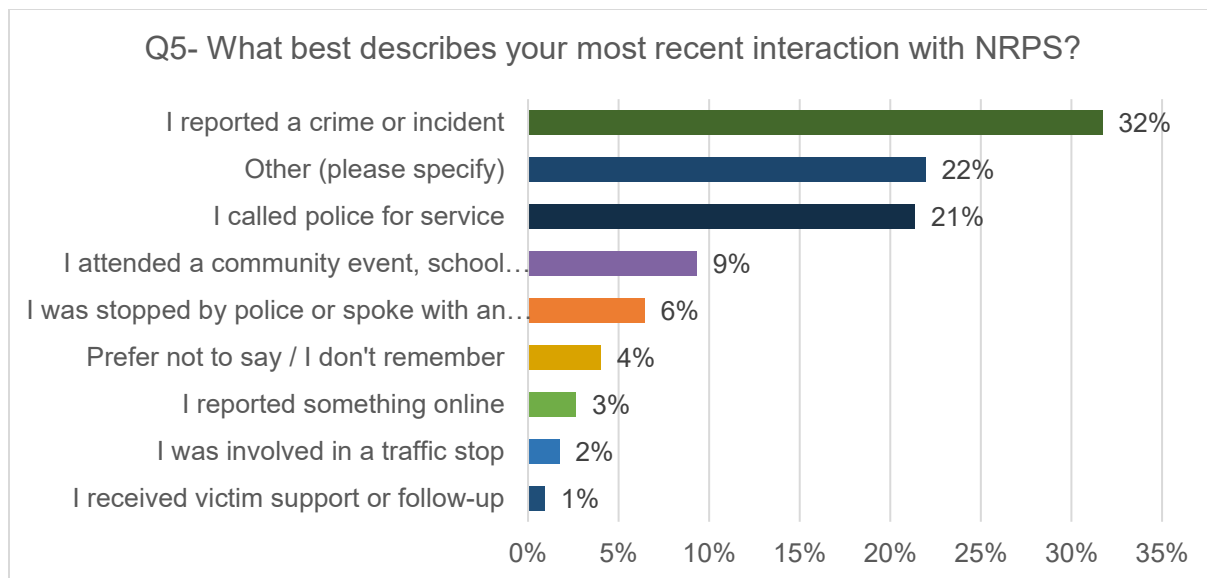


Table 14. Most Recent Interaction with NRPS

Interaction	n
Reported a crime or incident	276
Called police for service	186
Community event/school/public meeting	81
Stopped or spoke with an officer	56
Reported something online	23
Traffic stop	15
Victim support/follow-up	8
Other written interaction	191

The high number of “Other” interactions demonstrates that police-public contact extends well beyond traditional enforcement.

The 191 open-ended descriptions show that police-public contact occurs across a much broader range of circumstances than traditional calls for service or enforcement. A substantial number of respondents described professional or work-related interactions, particularly through health care, fire services, social services, homelessness and mental-health supports, community agencies, Community-Oriented Response Unit (CORE), and other community partnerships.

Administrative interactions were also common, including police record and vulnerable-sector checks, obtaining reports or documents, and general inquiries. Other comments described providing CCTV or witness information to support investigations, attending the Citizen Police Academy or community presentations, participating in road- and bicycle-safety initiatives, and informal encounters with officers in workplaces, neighbourhoods, or community settings.

Respondents also described contact arising from collisions, welfare checks, family concerns, overdoses, suspicious activity, victimization, neighbourhood incidents, and assistance during emergencies or crises. Some accounts were explicitly positive, including officers providing assistance, engaging with children, supporting community partners, or helping residents during difficult situations. Other respondents described less positive experiences involving perceived delays, difficulty obtaining information or reports, dissatisfaction with follow-up, perceived inaction, concerns about officer conduct, or frustration with the use of police resources.

Overall, the qualitative responses demonstrate that contact with NRPS encompasses service delivery, investigative support, administrative processes, community engagement, professional collaboration, emergency assistance, enforcement, and informal interaction, with experiences ranging from supportive and constructive to critical or dissatisfied.

Satisfaction with Recent NRPS Interaction

Among the 871 respondents who rated their most recent interaction with NRPS, 58% reported being satisfied or very satisfied, compared with 22% who were dissatisfied or very dissatisfied. A further 20% selected a neutral response. Overall, positive ratings were more common than negative ratings, although approximately one in five respondents who had a recent interaction reported some level of dissatisfaction.

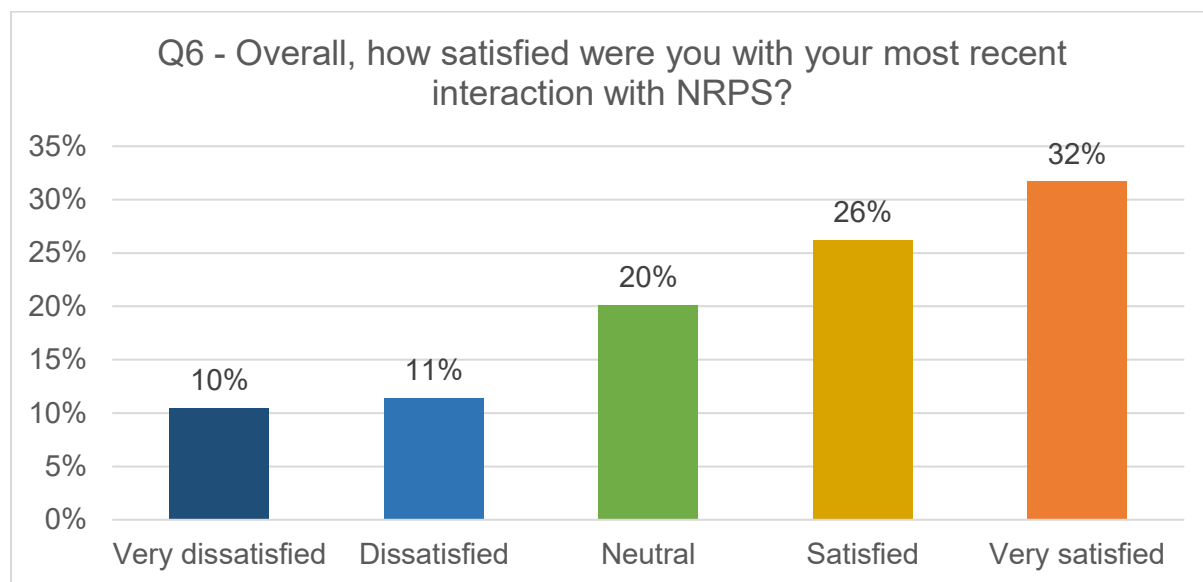


Table 15. Overall Satisfaction

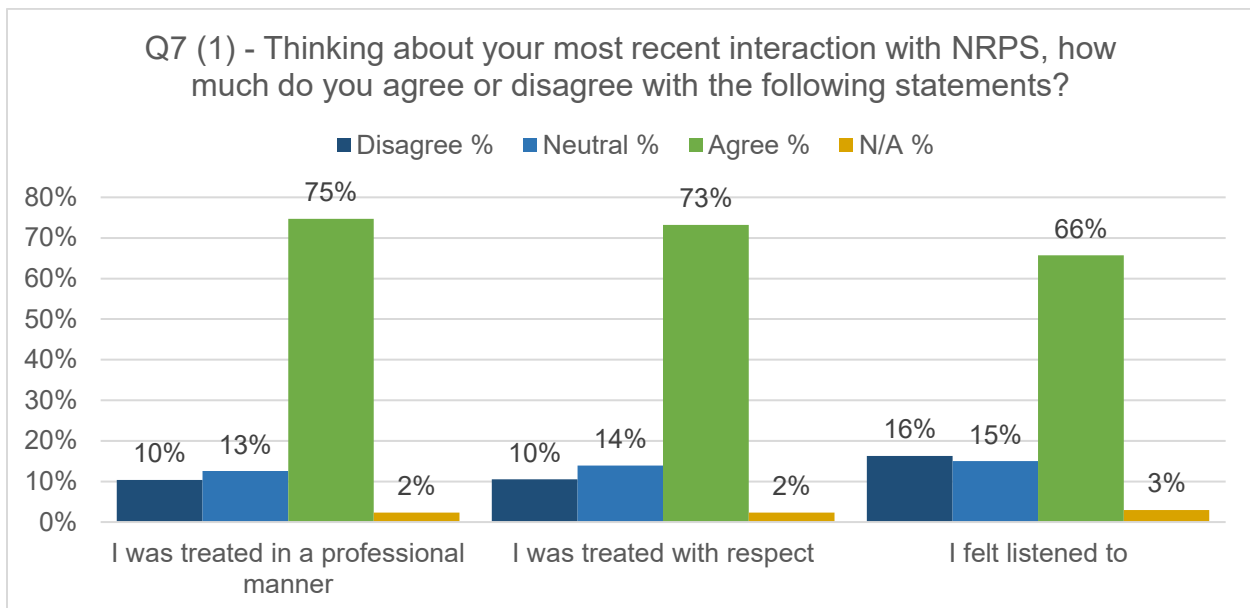
Response	Approx. %
Very dissatisfied	10.4%
Dissatisfied	11.4%
Neutral	20.1%
Satisfied	26.2%
Very satisfied	31.7%

Procedural Justice and Service Delivery

Breaking the recent interaction experience into individual dimensions provides a clearer picture of how respondents assessed their contact with NRPS. The strongest ratings were associated with interpersonal treatment: 75% agreed or strongly agreed that they were treated professionally, 73% that they were treated with respect, and 66% that they felt listened to.

Ratings were lower for service-execution dimensions, including understanding what would happen next (53%), receiving the support needed (48%), and experiencing a reasonable response time (47%).

Overall, the results show a distinction between the quality of the interpersonal interaction and the broader service-delivery experience, suggesting that professionalism and respect were rated more positively than response time, follow-up clarity, and perceived support.



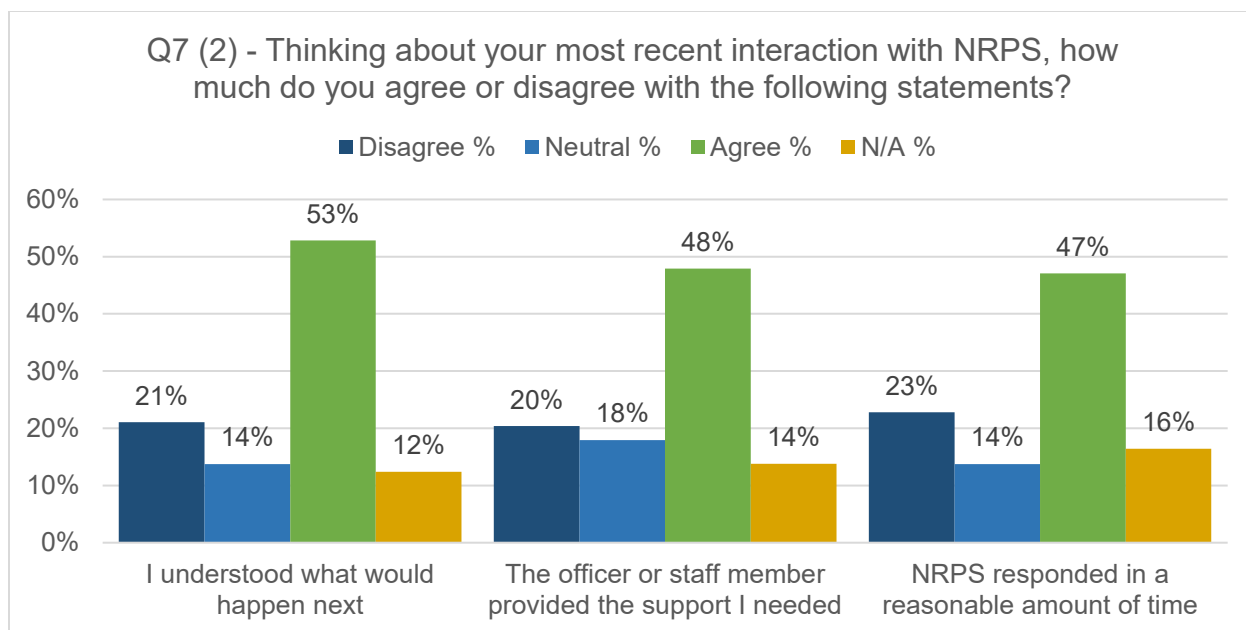


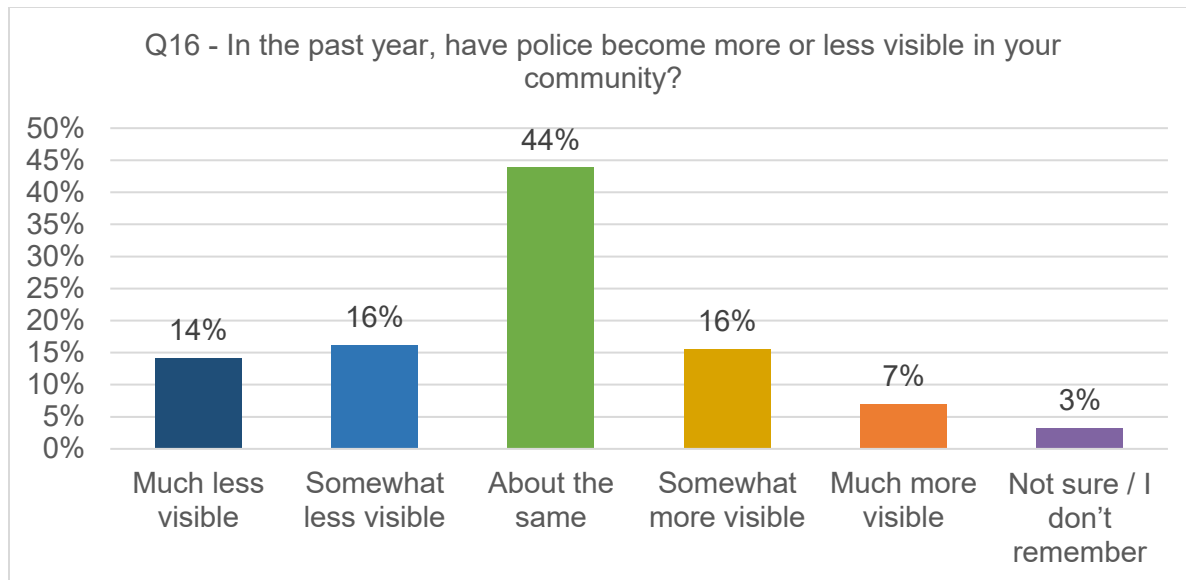
Table 16. Recent NRPS Interaction Experience

Statement	Agree / Strongly Agree
Treated professionally	74.7%
Treated with respect	73.2%
Felt listened to	65.7%
Understood what would happen next	52.8%
Support needed was provided	47.9%
Reasonable response time	47.1%

Police Visibility

Among the 2,051 respondents who answered this question, approximately 44% reported that police visibility had remained about the same over the previous year, while 30.3% believed police had become less visible and approximately 22% believed they had become more visible.

Overall, perceptions of decreased visibility were more common than perceptions of increased visibility. This finding is consistent with the separate institutional-perception measure, where 40.7% agreed or strongly agreed that NRPS is visible in their community, while 31.0% disagreed or strongly disagreed.



Perceptions of NRPS

Institutional perceptions of NRPS varied across the five measures examined. The highest levels of agreement were associated with NRPS responding when needed (47%) and treating people fairly (44%), followed by visibility in the community (41%). Lower levels of agreement were recorded for providing good value for public funds (30%) and focusing on the issues that matter most to the community (27%).

Disagreement was comparatively lower for responsiveness and fairness, but closer to the level of agreement for visibility, value, and alignment with community priorities. The results therefore show stronger perceptions around responsiveness and fair treatment, while views related to visibility, value, and community-priority alignment were more mixed. A substantial proportion of respondents were also neutral or unsure on several of these measures, indicating that some responses may reflect uncertainty as well as disagreement.

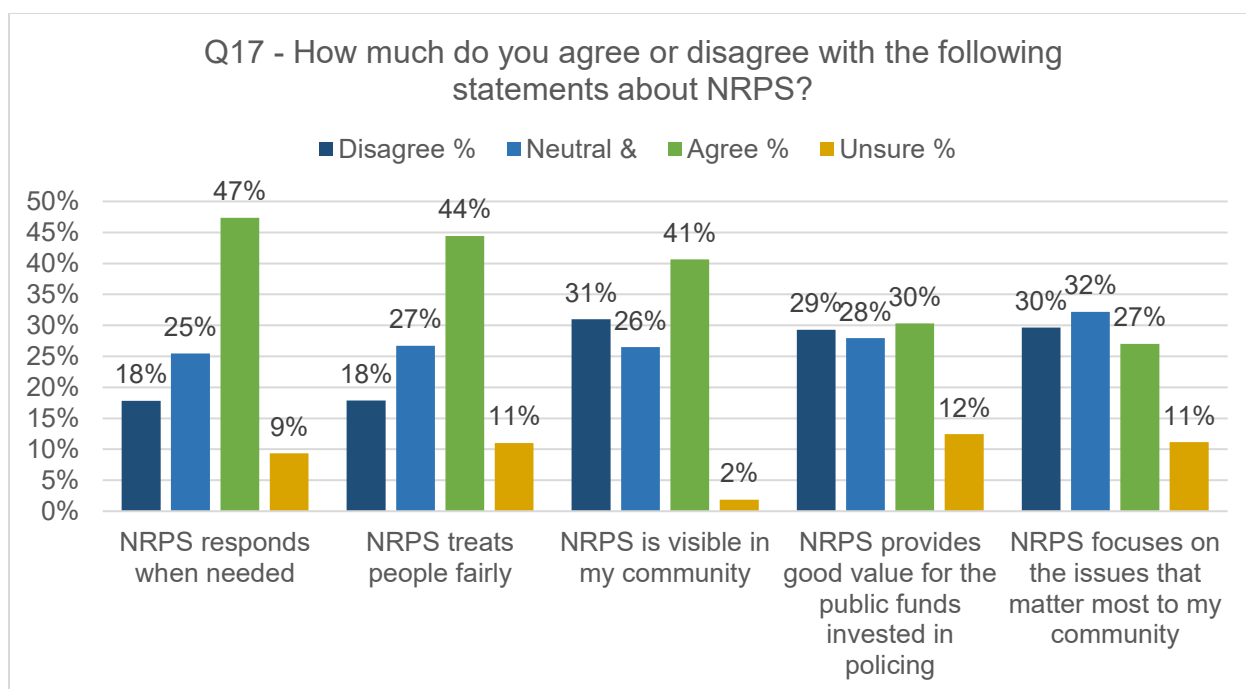


Table 17. Institutional Perceptions of NRPS

Statement	Agree / Strongly Agree	Disagree / Strongly Disagree
NRPS responds when needed	47.4%	17.8%
NRPS treats people fairly	44.4%	17.9%
NRPS is visible in my community	40.7%	31.0%
NRPS provides good value for public funds	30.3%	29.3%
NRPS focuses on issues that matter most to my community	27.0%	29.6%

Confidence in NRPS

Among the 2,049 respondents who rated their overall confidence in NRPS, 29% reported high or very high confidence, while 25% reported low or no confidence. The largest group, representing 46% of respondents, reported moderate confidence.

Overall, the distribution is concentrated in the middle rather than at either end of the scale, with similar proportions reporting high and low levels of confidence and nearly half selecting the moderate category. This provides an important baseline for future monitoring of how confidence may change over time alongside community experience, police visibility, service delivery, and other Strategic Plan measures.

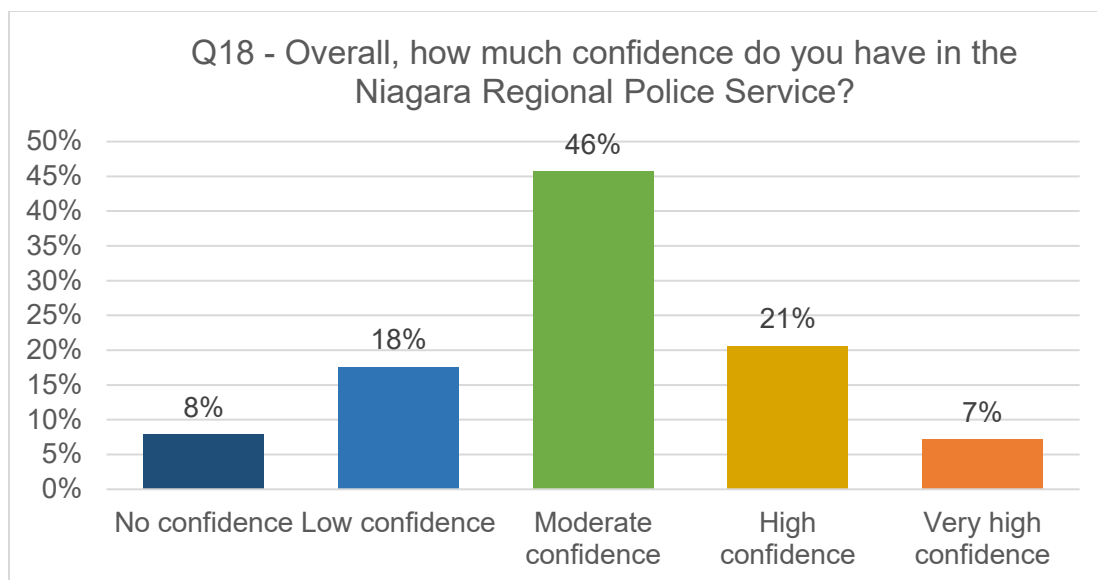


Table 18. Overall Confidence in NRPS

Confidence	n	%
No confidence	161	7.9%
Low confidence	361	17.6%
Moderate confidence	936	45.7%
High confidence	422	20.6%
Very high confidence	147	7.2%
Prefer not to say	22	1.1%
Total	2,049	100%

Key Findings and Strategic Considerations

1. **Safety is strongly place-specific:** Respondents generally report substantially greater safety in their own neighbourhoods than in some public environments, particularly downtown areas. At the same time, almost two-thirds perceive that community safety across Niagara has worsened. Together, these findings indicate that perceptions of immediate neighbourhood safety and broader regional conditions are related but distinct dimensions of community experience.
2. **Community safety extends beyond conventional crime:** Drug and disorder concerns, road safety, harassment, public-space conditions and visible social disorder feature prominently alongside property and violent crime. The findings therefore support understanding community safety as broader than police-reported crime alone and reinforce the value of place-based and multi-agency responses.
3. **Interpersonal police contact is rated more positively than some aspects of service execution:** Professionalism, respect and listening receive comparatively strong ratings among respondents with recent NRPS contact. Ratings are lower for response time, receiving needed support and understanding what happens next. The distinction suggests that interpersonal service quality and operational service delivery should be monitored as related but separate aspects of community experience.
4. **Reporting decisions are influenced by expected outcomes:** Among respondents who did not report an incident, the most frequently selected predefined reason was a belief that police could not help. Open-ended responses further referenced expectations regarding response, follow-up, prioritization and resolution. Lack of knowledge about how to report was comparatively uncommon.
5. **Visibility, community priorities and confidence provide important baselines:** Perceptions of NRPS responsiveness and fair treatment are more positive than perceptions related to visibility, value for public funds and whether NRPS focuses on the issues that matter most to the community. Overall confidence is concentrated in the moderate category, providing a useful baseline for monitoring change throughout the 2026–2029 Strategic Plan.

Limitations

Participation in the survey was voluntary and was supported through online promotion, community partners, municipal and organizational networks, and in-person engagement rather than probability-based random sampling. The results should therefore be interpreted as a large community consultation and baseline of respondent perceptions rather than as a statistically representative public-opinion poll.

Respondent characteristics do not fully reflect the demographic composition of Niagara. Women, adults aged 35 and older, and people with long-standing connections to the region were comparatively well represented, and participation varied by municipality. Municipal findings should therefore be interpreted cautiously, particularly where sample sizes are small.

Response counts vary by question because respondents could skip questions, select “prefer not to say,” or receive follow-up questions based on earlier responses. Percentages are calculated using the valid responses to each question.

Open-ended responses provide additional context but should not be interpreted as estimates of how common a particular view is across the broader population. The survey measures perceptions and reported experiences and should be considered alongside other evidence such as crime, calls for service, response times, workload, police activity, and other Strategic Plan measures.

Conclusion

The 2026 Community Safety Survey provides NRPS and the Niagara Regional Police Service Board with an important baseline of community feedback on safety, visibility, service experience, reporting behaviour, and confidence in policing. With 2,313 English and French responses, the survey also reflects a broader community-engagement effort supporting implementation of the 2026–2029 Strategic Plan.

The findings identify several positive foundations. Approximately 69% of respondents feel safe or very safe in their own neighbourhood, and among those with recent NRPS contact, 75% reported being treated professionally, 73% with respect, and 66% felt listened to. At the same time, the results identify areas requiring continued attention, including perceptions that community safety has worsened, concerns in certain public environments, police visibility, response time, follow-up, and alignment with community priorities.

These findings support continued implementation of the Strategic Plan's community-safety initiatives, including the Neighbourhood Presence Initiative, safer public spaces, hotspot and evidence-based policing initiatives, targeted visibility, and community partnerships. They also reinforce the importance of continued investment in frontline capacity, people, technology, and partnerships so that NRPS can sustain high standards of professional, timely, proactive, and community-focused service.

NRPS acknowledges the staff members who supported the survey through community events and direct engagement, as well as the municipalities, community organizations, partners, and networks that helped distribute and promote the survey across Niagara. Their participation helped broaden the reach of the initiative and strengthen the community voice reflected in the results.

The work does not stop with this report. The survey establishes a baseline for an ongoing commitment to engage, listen, respond, measure progress, and report back to the community as NRPS and the Board continue implementing the 2026–2029 Strategic Plan.

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