



# WHAT WE HEARD

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## REPORT



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## A MESSAGE FROM INSPECTOR GLASSFORD



I would like to start by thanking the more than 750 Red Deerians who took time to share their thoughts and experiences with us. In listening to you, we are able to understand the community's experience and point of view as it relates to policing priorities for the Red Deer RCMP.

Local policing priorities are outlined in Red Deer's Annual Policing Plan, commonly referred to as the APP. Actually a two-year document, the policing plan outlines the top priorities to be addressed by police; these priorities are set jointly by City Council and Red Deer RCMP.

In preparation for each plan, we engage Red Deerians to gather feedback. As your local police, we can interpret local policing priorities based on our own experiences in the field and local crime data but hearing from residents and businesses help us to understand the community's perspective.

In February 2022, we reached out to the community to hear their thoughts, experiences and concerns as it related to crime and community safety. Working together with The City, we hosted targeted community discussion focus groups and asked all Red Deerians to participate in an online survey to help us shape policing priorities for the next two years. We heard from more than 750 Red Deerians and are happy to share those findings with you here today.

As noted, we will use public feedback, coupled with internal feedback and real crime data to develop local policing priorities for the 2022-2024 APP. Information about the APP will be shared on the City website at [www.reddeer.ca/APP](http://www.reddeer.ca/APP).

### **Inspector Holly Glassford**

Interim Officer in Charge  
Red Deer RCMP



## METHODOLOGY

In February 2022, The City of Red Deer and Red Deer RCMP worked together to engage the public and gather feedback about community safety and public wellbeing in order to inform policing priorities for Red Deer's upcoming Annual Policing Plan (APP).

The City and RCMP held small-group community discussion sessions and hosted an online survey to facilitate public engagement. Public engagement was designed utilizing the principles and direction of the International Association of Public Participation.

## SURVEY

An online survey was used to gather public feedback about safety, policing and wellbeing to inform policing priorities for Red Deer's 2022-2024 Annual Policing Plan. The survey was open for three weeks and received 761 unique responses.

The survey was designed together by The City and Red Deer RCMP with the intent to better understand the public's experiences, perceptions and feelings of safety in various settings, as well as their interactions and experiences with local RCMP members.

## COMMUNITY FOCUS GROUPS

More than 50 community organizations were invited to participate in small group discussions to share their experiences and offer feedback about local crime and community safety needs. 90-minute sessions were housed virtually with up to six community participants. Two RCMP officers participated in each session to listen to feedback, while three City staff attended to support facilitation and data collection.

21 community participants registered and a total of five small-group sessions were held. Each session included a facilitated discussion which saw four questions posed to participants to direct discussion and conversation. The questions, in line with what was asked in the public survey, were as follows:

1. What do you enjoy about living/working in Red Deer?  
*To understand their values and priorities relating to the community.*
2. What are some of the challenges of living/working in Red Deer?  
*To understand their experiences as residents and/or in their professional role.*
3. What in Red Deer negatively impacts your sense of well being and safety?  
*To understand causes of negative perceptions and identify areas of improvement.*
4. What are the most important safety and policing issues that you are experiencing, and what should be done about them?  
*Draws a direct connection to policing priorities and public interpretation of actions to resolve.*

Focus groups provided a broader understanding of participants safety concerns which included social and economic trends and how they are affecting residents. The structure allowed participants to respond to one another and build on one another's ideas. The dialogue offered alternative interpretations, identified assumptions, and built a stronger understanding of respondent's concerns.



## PUBLIC SURVEY RESULTS

The 2022 Annual Policing Plan Survey gathered information on safety, well-being, and policing from 761 Red Deerians. Major themes that arose were the impacts of crime on personal well-being, the issues presented by the unhoused population and those living with addiction, the need for more policing supports, and frustration with the justice system.

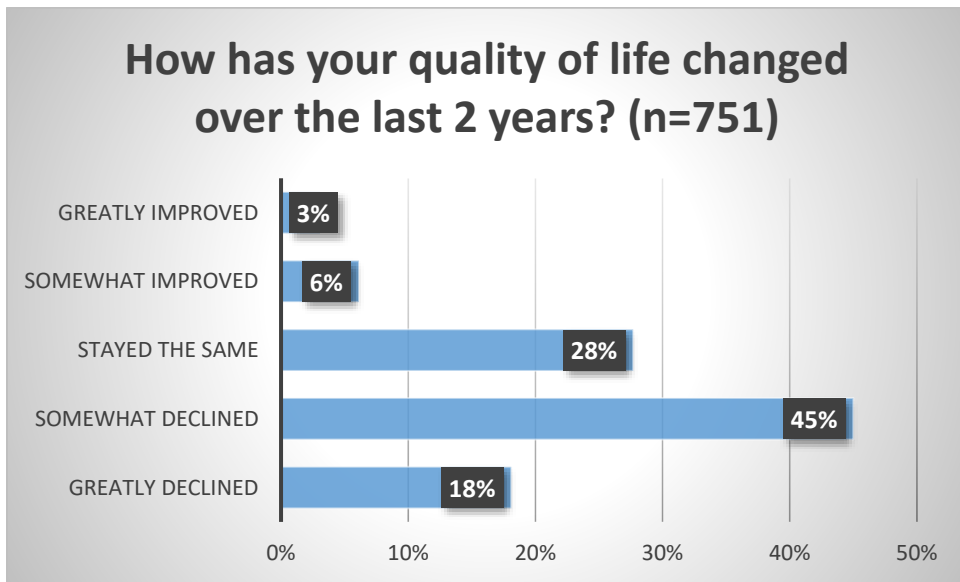
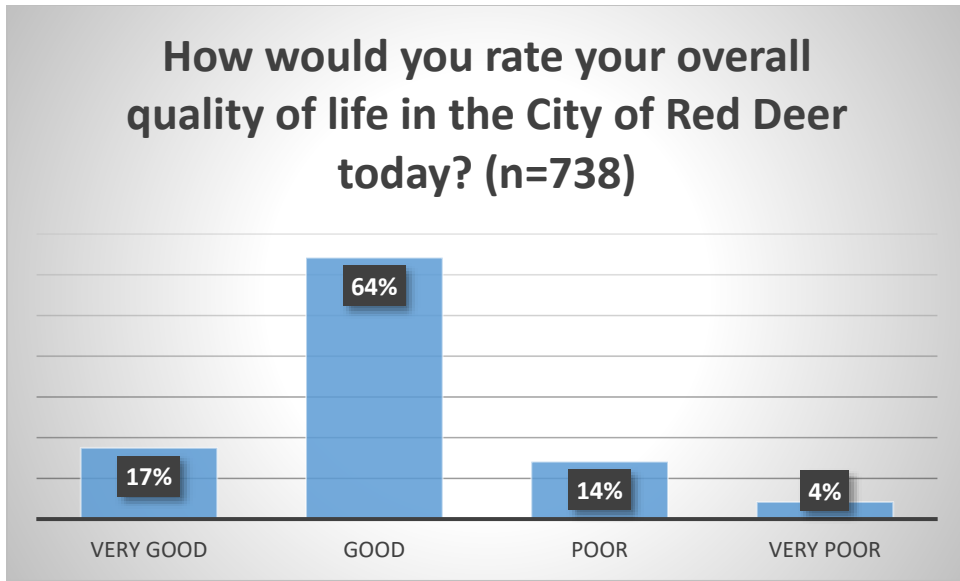
Residents identified a variety of interventions they would like, including increasing patrols and community engagement, specifically to develop stronger community relationships and trust. The public would also like to see changes in the justice system to support convictions and increased support for officers and non-policing resources to remove inappropriate case load from officers.

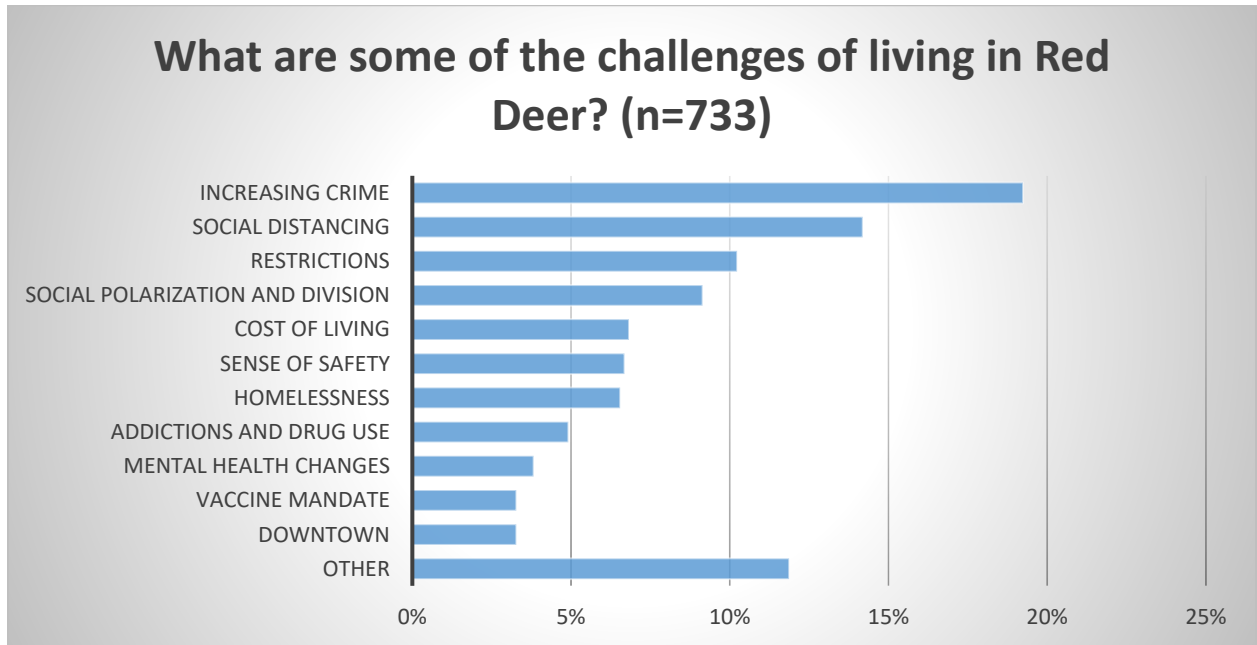
Of those who have experienced a reportable crime, there is a varied level of satisfaction in the policing response. The most common causes of dissatisfaction were a lack of response, which also led to those experiencing crime to not report it at all.

Many of the results of this survey are in alignment with the responses of an internal survey of RCMP members and CPOs. It is important to see that officers and the public are concerned about the same things, and are recommending the same solutions to arrive at the same result: increased policing resources, trusting community relationships, a responsive police force, and appropriate services for vulnerable populations being delivered by appropriate resources.



QUALITY OF LIFE





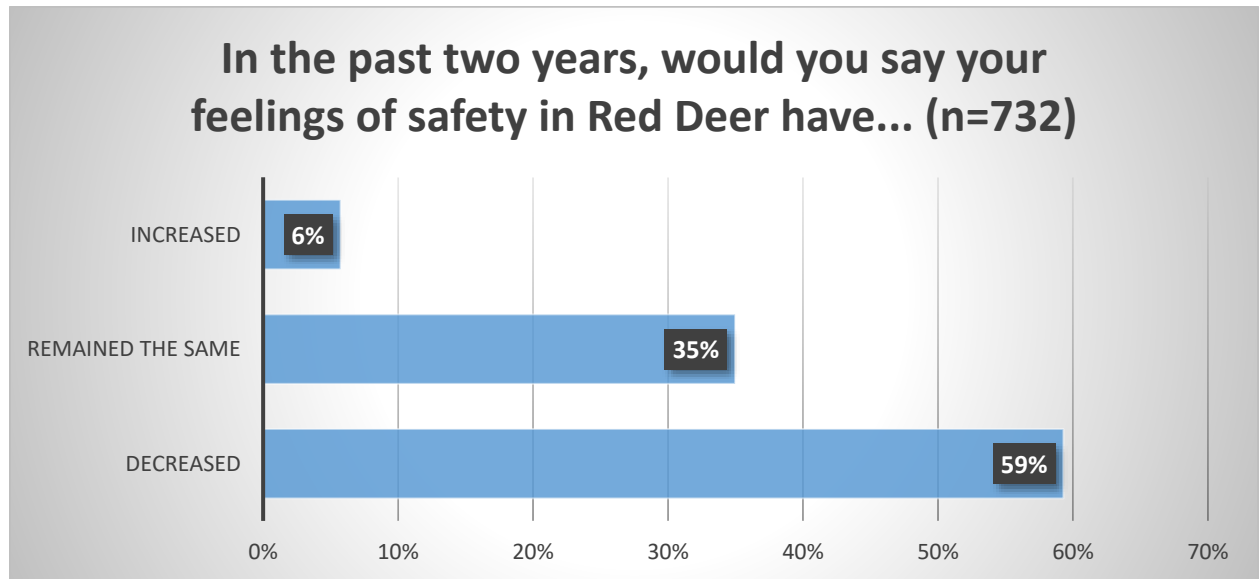
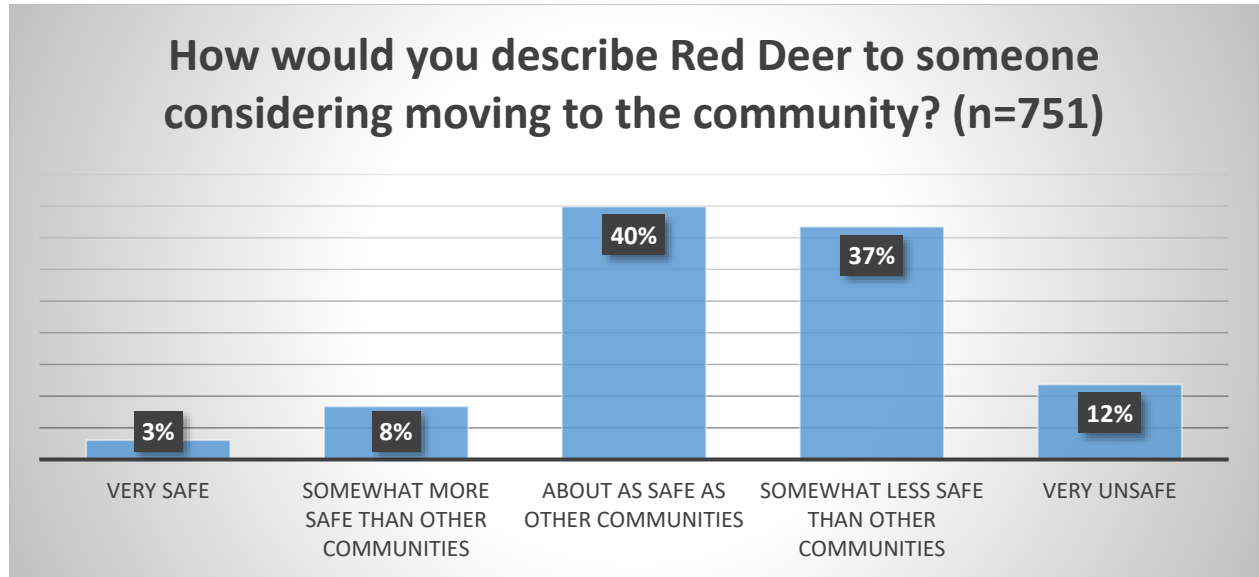
Responses to this open-ended question were analyzed and separated into categories with similar responses. Responses categorized as “other” were items that received 2% or less mentions each and included business closure, lack of Covid compliance in the community, lack of appropriate policing, healthcare shortage, unsafe driving, and racism.

Taking into account the COVID-19 pandemic and its impact on the day to day life of residents, these responses were further categorized by their relation to the pandemic, as follows:

Factors not caused by COVID-19 that will continue to impact citizens’ quality of life	
Increasing crime	19%
Sense of safety	7%
Unhoused population	7%
Addictions and drug use	5%
Downtown atmosphere	3%
Factors that are not caused by COVID-19, but that COVID-19 has significantly intensified	
Social polarization and division	9%
Cost of living	7%
Mental health changes	4%
COVID-related factors that may significantly improve after COVID-19	
Social distancing	14%
Frustration with restrictions	10%

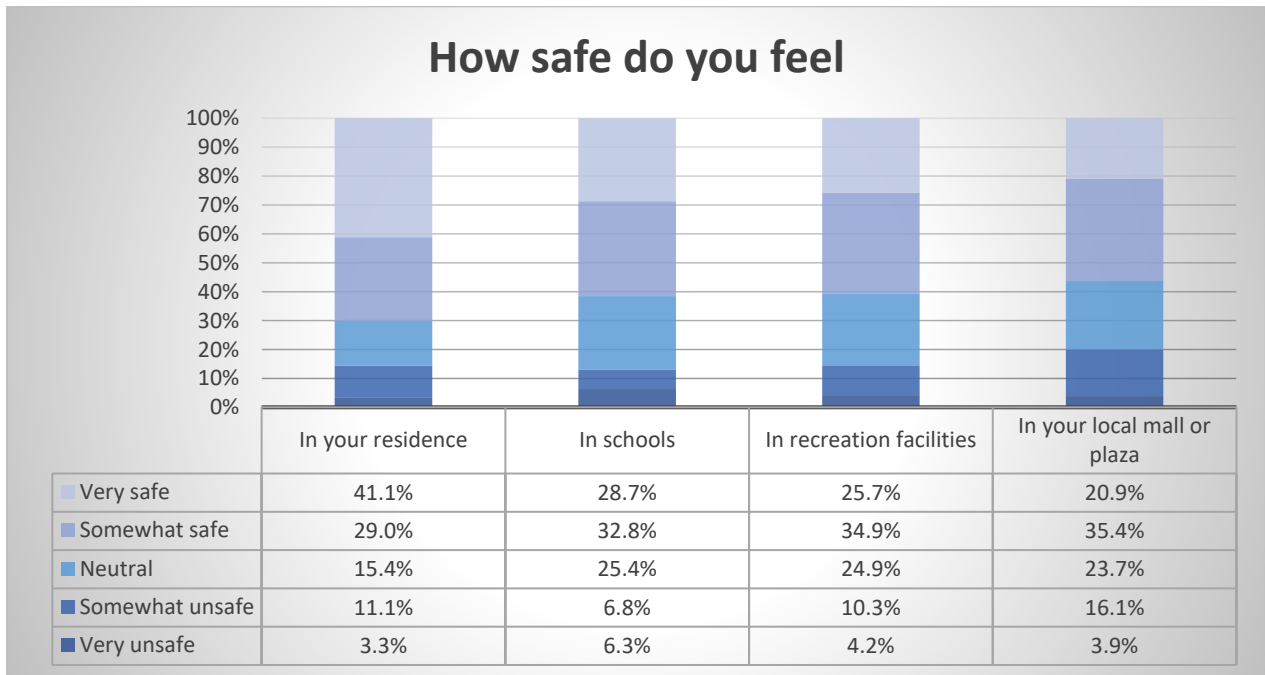


FEELINGS OF SAFETY

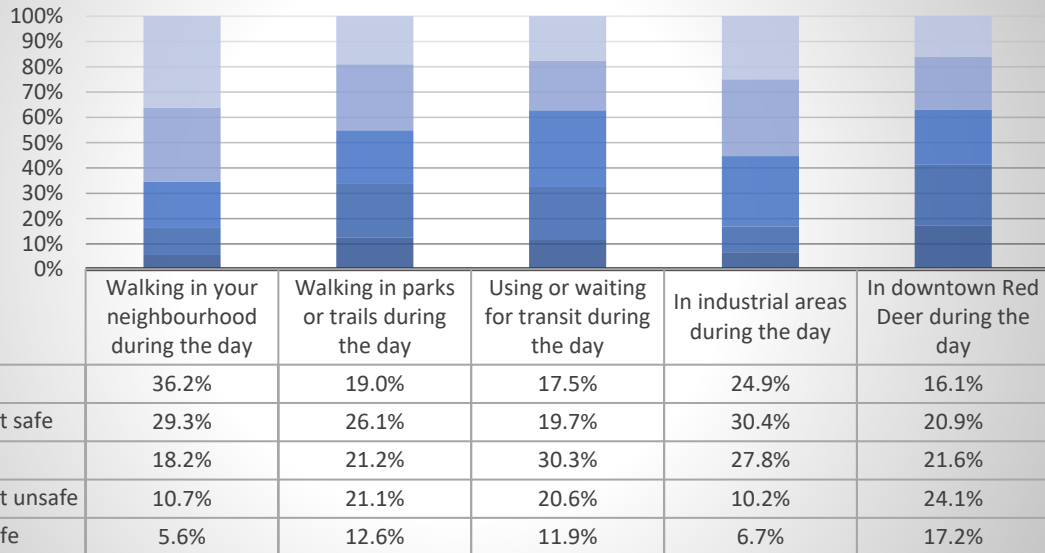




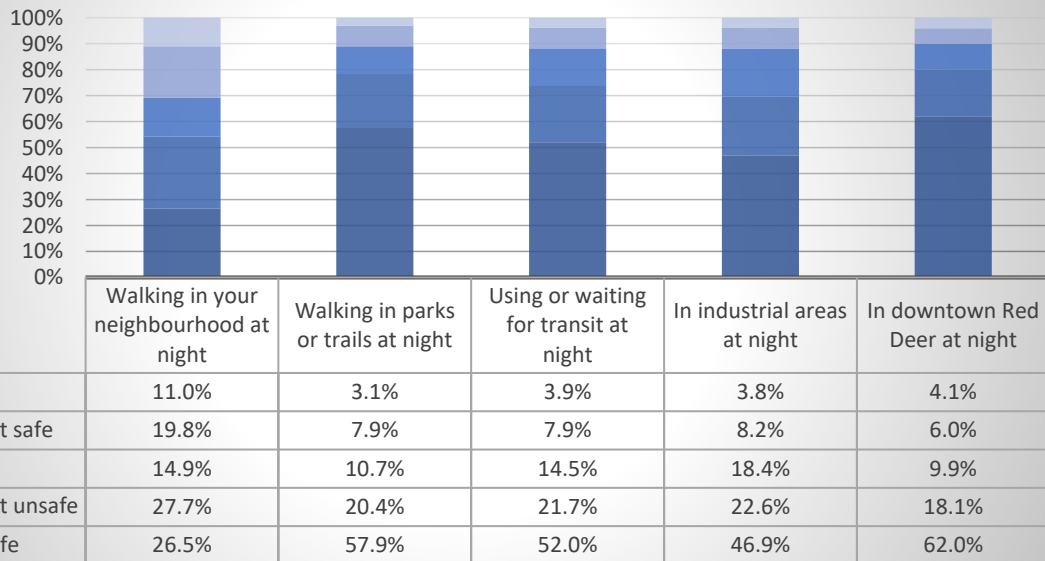
	In your residence	In schools	In recreation facilities	In your local mall or plaza	While walking in your neighbourhood in day	While walking in parks or trails during the day	Using or waiting for transit during the day	In industrial areas during the day	In downtown Red Deer during the day	While walking in your neighbourhood at night	While walking in parks or trails at night	Using or waiting for transit at night	In industrial areas at night	In downtown Red Deer at night
Very safe	41.1%	28.7%	25.7%	20.9%	36.2%	19.0%	17.5%	24.9%	16.1%	11.0%	3.1%	3.9%	3.8%	4.1%
Somewhat safe	29.0%	32.8%	34.9%	35.4%	29.3%	26.1%	19.7%	30.4%	20.9%	19.8%	7.9%	7.9%	8.2%	6.0%
Neutral	15.4%	25.4%	24.9%	23.7%	18.2%	21.2%	30.3%	27.8%	21.6%	14.9%	10.7%	14.5%	18.4%	9.9%
Somewhat unsafe	11.1%	6.8%	10.3%	16.1%	10.7%	21.1%	20.6%	10.2%	24.1%	27.7%	20.4%	21.7%	22.6%	18.1%
Very unsafe	3.3%	6.3%	4.2%	3.9%	5.6%	12.6%	11.9%	6.7%	17.2%	26.5%	57.9%	52.0%	46.9%	62.0%



## How safe do you feel during the day



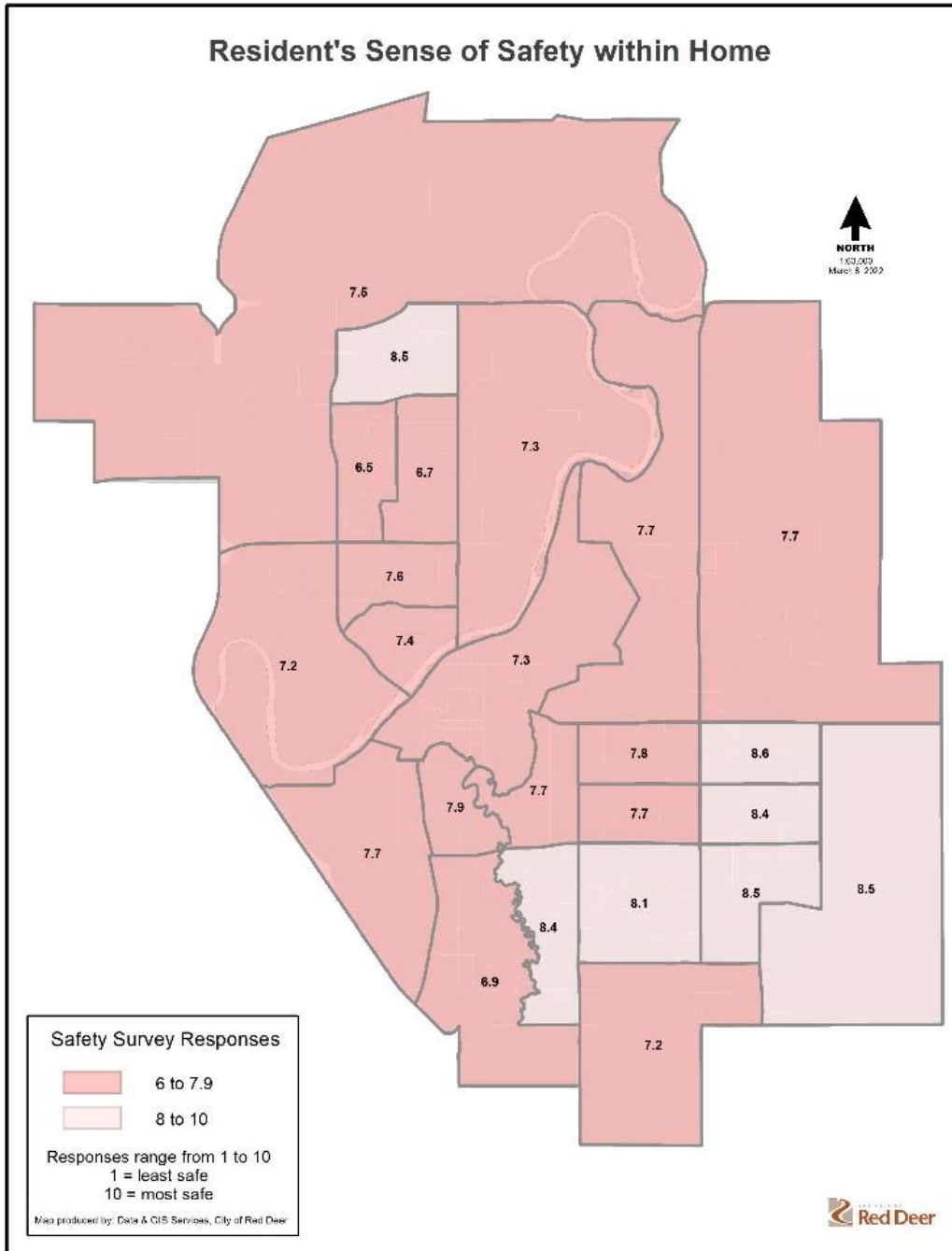
## How safe do you feel at night

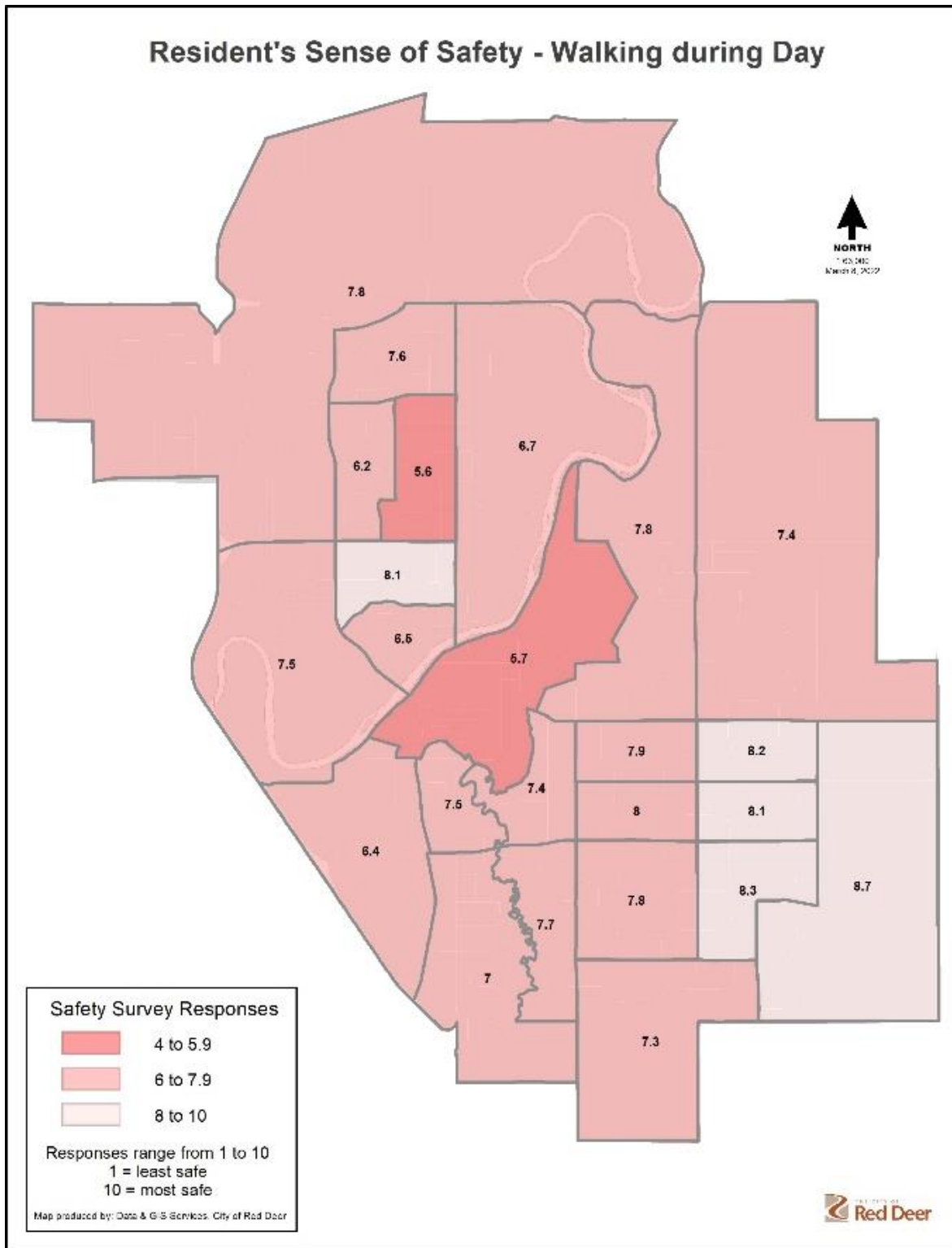


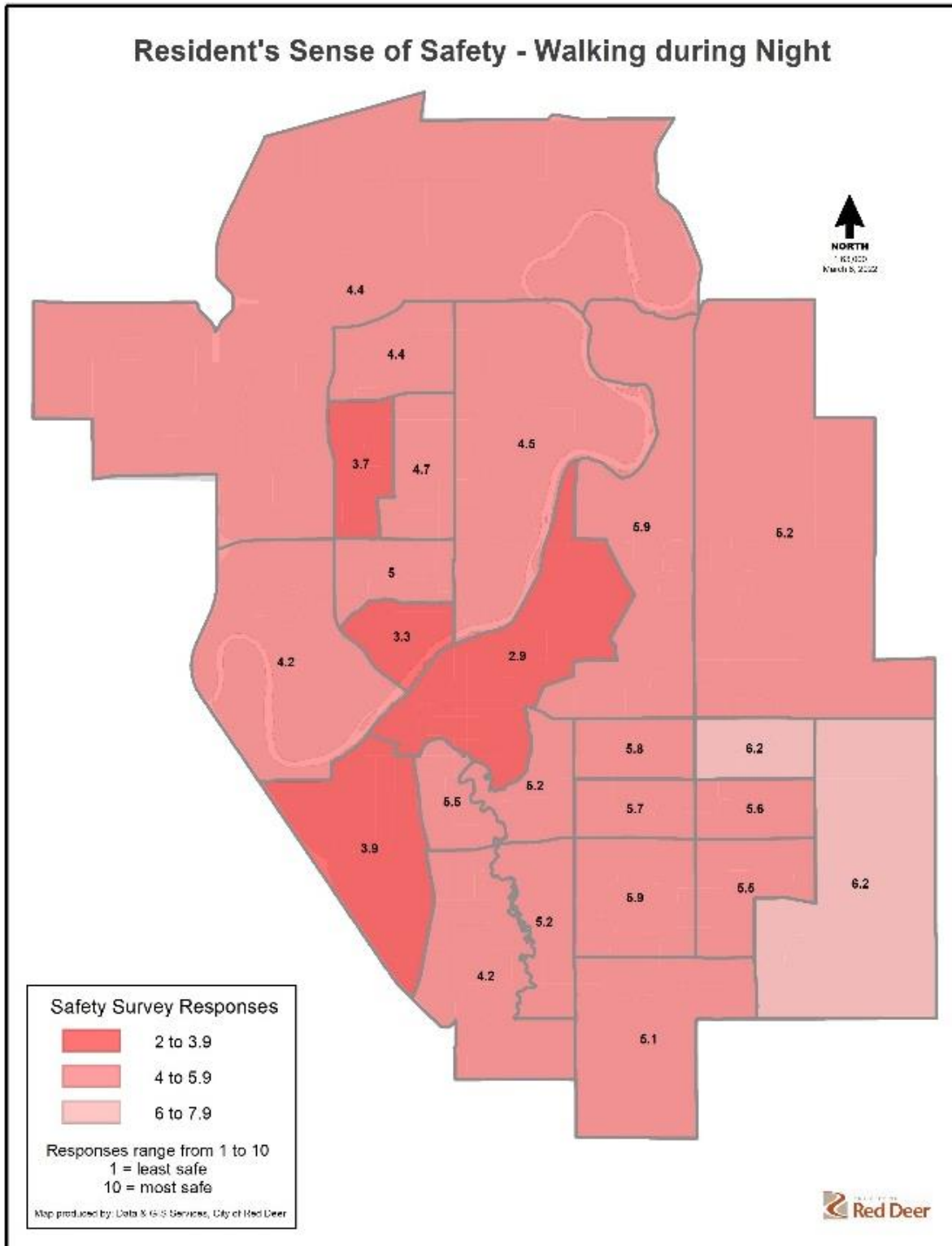
Respondents that self-identified as a visible minority felt significantly less safe in schools and while waiting for or using transit (day or night) compared to those who did not identify as a minority. Respondents who self-identified as Indigenous felt significantly less safe in their local mall or plaza, and walking in their neighbourhood during the day compared to respondents who did not identify as Indigenous, while females felt less safe than males while walking in their neighbourhood or using the trail system at night.



Using postal code information provided by respondents, responses to resident’s feeling of safety in particular areas were mapped to provide an understanding of public perception of safety based on neighbourhood location.







## POLICING INTERVENTIONS

Following questions about quality of life and perception of safety, respondents were asked what police could do to make them feel safer in Red Deer. Responses to this open-ended question varied, with some responses and suggestions falling outside the jurisdiction of police.

Feedback Within Policing	
Increase public presence (especially with foot and bike patrol, specifically downtown and on trails, and at night)	49%
Build stronger community relationships and increase trust	13%
Increased officers and non-police intervention supports	8%
Night presence	7%
Speeding, stunting, and vehicle noise enforcement	7%
Drug enforcement, improved response times, and more public information	6%
Response times	5%
Provide information to the public	5%

The primary recommendation was for an increased public presence (49%), specifically downtown (51%), on trails (22%), and in transit spaces (4%), and preferred to be on foot patrol or on bike patrol (25%). Many noted their appreciation for the foot presence downtown that currently exists and support more of this approach.

The next most frequent recommendation was to build more and stronger community relationships through community engagement and community policing (13%). Responses suggested this would improve trust in the force and a stronger sense of safety when police are present. Foot and bike patrol were also mentioned in this area to make police more approachable and friendly. Respondents noted the relational approach would build trust and would counter the sentiment that police don't seem to care about individuals' concerns (54%) or that they are not friendly or approachable (46%). Fifteen respondents reported that they don't feel they can trust officers and officers' presence doesn't improve their sense of safety.

There was a call for increased resources and funding for policing to allow for more officers and for appropriately assigned resources (8%). Specifically, people would like to see more funding for officers, for time for investigations, and for policing supports like PACT, social diversion team, and community policing initiatives.

Speeding, stunting, and loud vehicles were listed as concerns 27 times (7%). Some responses included specific locations where police could monitor, but more emphasis was placed on overall enforcement.

Drug enforcement and a harsher approach to those under the influence was identified in 21 (6%) of comments.

Other areas of feedback included improving response times (5%) and providing more public information on geographic areas of concern and policing successes (5%).



Feedback Outside of Policing	
Problems with the justice system	43%
Increased public services	22%
Need to “clean up homelessness”	40%
Removal of services/OPS (Overdose Prevention Site)	17%
Improved lighting and use of CPTED (Crime Prevention through Environmental Design)	7%

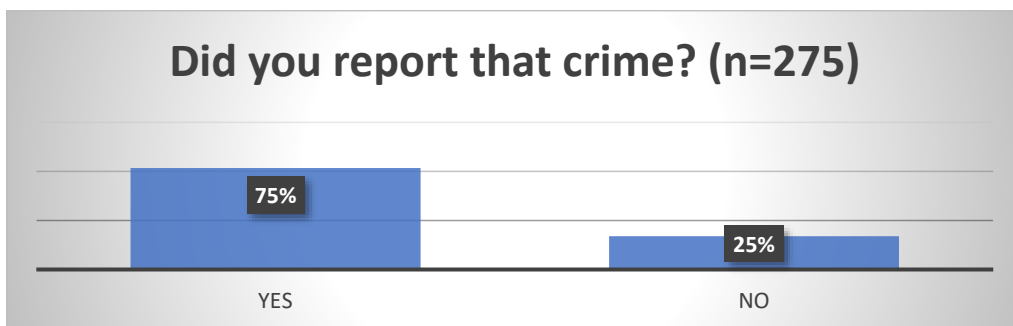
Individuals noted that their concerns with safety stem from the justice system (43%) and lack of consequence for crime. This concern was understood to not be a policing issue. Some respondents expressed their sympathy and concern for officers and their morale given the revolving door of the court system.

Forty-five responses (22%) called for improved and increased public services for individuals experiencing homelessness and addictions, while another 40 (19%) called for a general ‘clean up’ of homelessness. Seventeen respondents (8%) wanted the removal of existing services, specifically the Overdose Prevention Site.

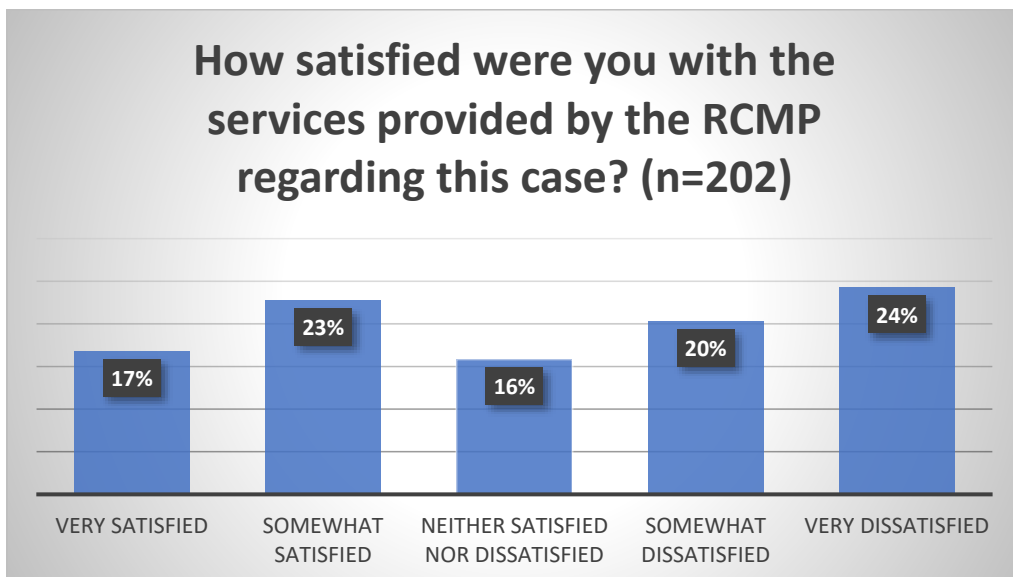
Respondents called for improvements to lighting and other CPTED measures (7%) as a measure that would make them feel safer.



## EXPERIENCE OF VICTIMS OF CRIME



Those respondents who confirmed they had reported a crime were asked further questions to better understand their experience with police in Red Deer.





What could the RCMP have done to better serve you? (open-ended)	
Showing up upon report	21%
Following-up with victim after report	21%
Increased/improved enforcement following report	19%
Further investigation following report	15%
Courts won't do anything about the crime	11%
Increased presence in neighbourhood following report	5%
Improved officer behavior/concerns with unprofessional or unacceptable behavior	5%

Showing up (21%) and following up (21%) after a report were among two main concerns of those citizens who interacted with RCMP.

A large group of respondents wanted RCMP to do more when they encountered the incident. Some (19%) want RCMP to enforce the law (e.g., arrest offender) and others (15%) believe RCMP should investigate the case further.

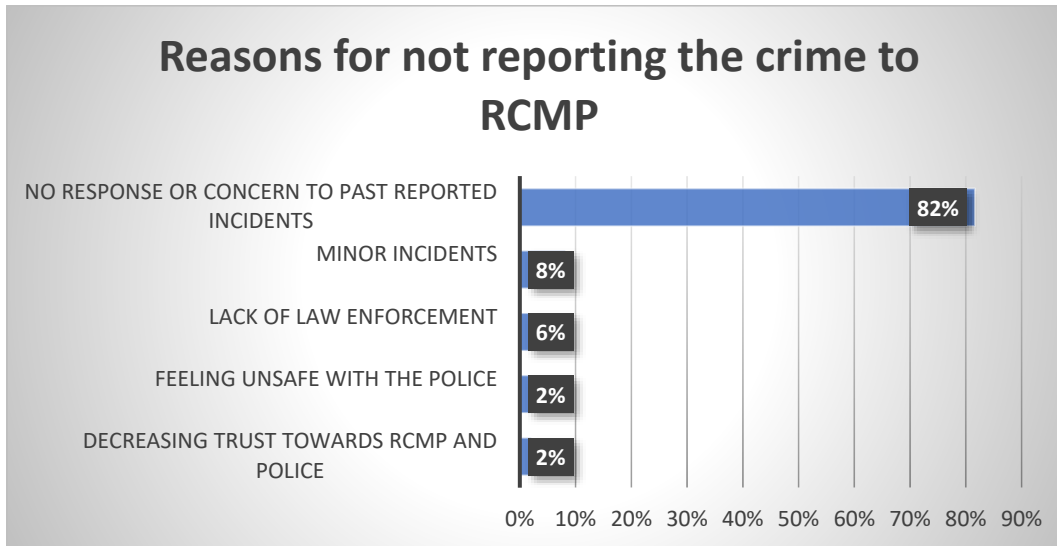
Eleven per cent of respondents pointed out they are more concerned about the court and justice system than RCMP. Some of them mentioned RCMP's hands are tied to do much as the court will release the offenders anyway.

Some respondents (5%) expressed want for more efforts to prevent the crime from happening by active police presence in different neighbourhoods. Further, five per cent of respondents complained about RCMP's unprofessional behavior with regards to their race or accusations that they were at fault for being victimized.



## REASONS FOR NOT REPORTING CRIME

Respondents that confirmed they did not report a crime they had experienced within the past twelve months were asked for further explanation as to why they chose not to report.

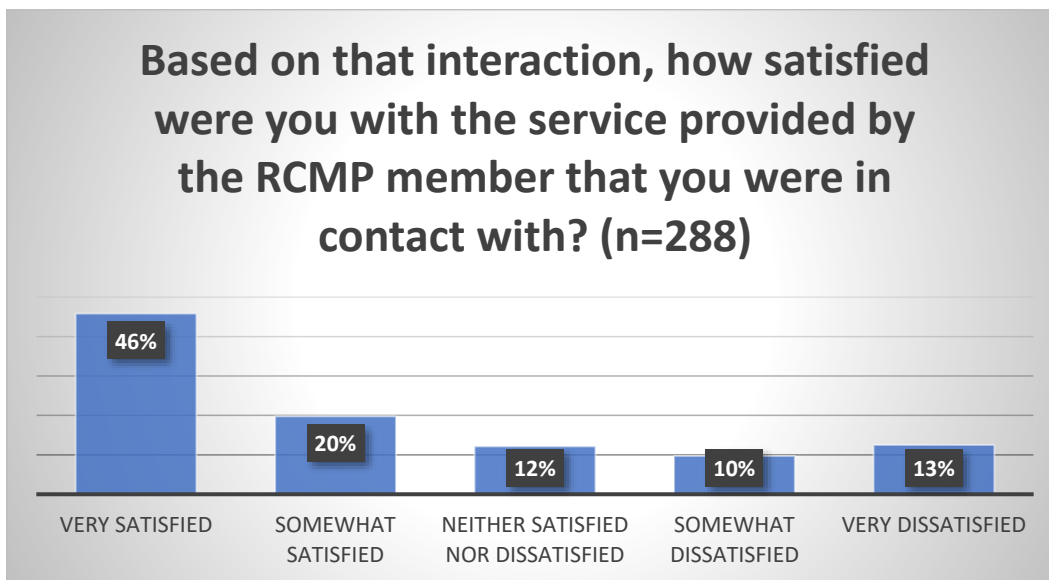


When asked about the reasons for not reporting the crime to the RCMP, the majority of respondents (82%) shared they did not report because of past experiences of not receiving a response to a crime reported previously. They termed it as ‘a waste of time’ or ‘worthless’ as they felt their previous concerns were not addressed at all.

However, some respondents (8%) noted the incident was minor and they did not feel a need to report it. Lack of law enforcement (6%) was another highlighted reason, followed by not feeling safe with the RCMP and police (2%), which relates to a decreasing level of trust towards the police and justice system (2%).



## GENERAL INTERACTIONS WITH RCMP



The majority of those who selected positive ratings reported having a positive experience with the RCMP (171/47%). Positive experiences were described as those which made them feel safe, validated, and heard, and included casual check-ins and conversations with the officers. Another frequent response for positive ratings was their issues and concerns being well responded to and addressed (15%).

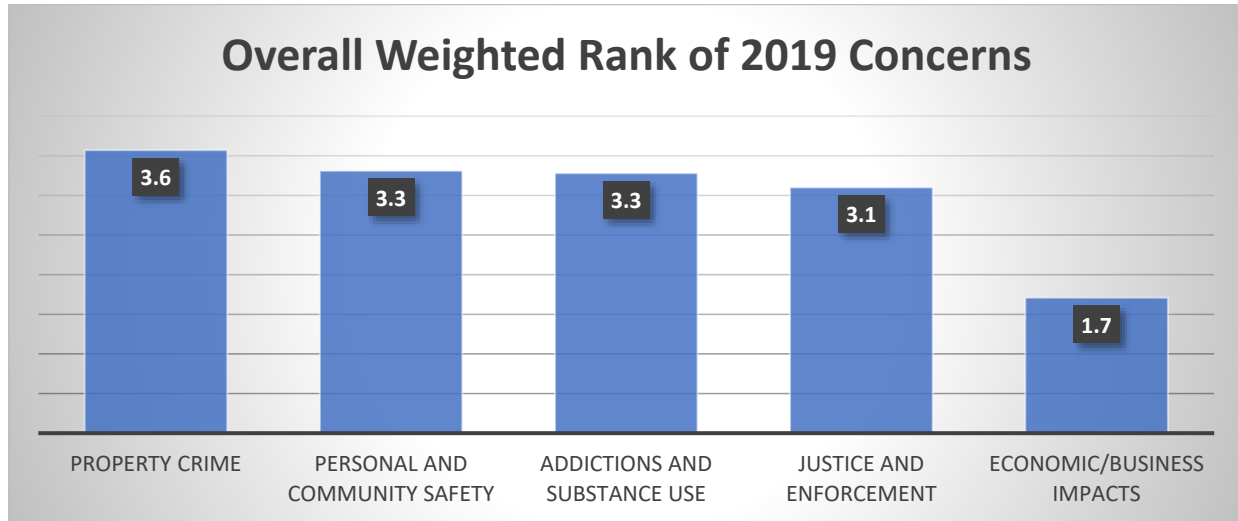
Those who selected either neutral or negative ratings highlighted that their issues were not addressed or given as much concern as they had hoped for (16%). In some cases where they were responded to, there was a delayed arrival of the officers or an unpleasant interaction with them (16%). Unpleasant and negative experiences were described as including a biased attitude, feeling unsafe, racist behaviour, invalidating the victim etc.

A few respondents shared that there was a lack of justice and law enforcement (2%) and that the police force was overworked and exhausted (3%).



## COMMUNITY CONCERNS

Public engagement in late 2019 and early 2020 identified five areas of concern among residents and businesses. To understand how the weight of these concerns may have shifted, respondents were asked to rank these concerns in order of how concerning they were today.



In addition to top concerns noted in 2019, respondents were asked to identify any additional concerns.

Additional concerns	
Personal and community safety	36%
Road safety	19%
Address vulnerable population issues	12%
More police on patrol	11%
Biased attitude of RCMP and decreasing trust	10%
Transparency and public engagement	7%
Access to training and resources	6%

The most frequently reported additional concerns were general personal and community safety (36%), followed by road safety and traffic enforcement (19%). Twelve per cent noted vulnerable population issues had a significant impact on safety and noted that addressing these issues would address safety issues, either directly or indirectly.

Respondents indicated having more visible officers on the road (11%) would increase the feeling of safety, noting patrol teams should be more active at night and in specific locations where there are more crimes and social issues. Some respondents reported RCMP members have biased attitudes towards people (10%), and that this led to feeling unsafe and decreased trust in the RCMP.

Respondents also noted the desire for increasing transparency and public engagement (7%). They highlighted that having more direct communication with the public and informing them about the progress and current situations would help build back trust and relationships. Some respondents noted



the change in reporting that has taken place in the last few years and would like to see regular public updates resume. A few respondents (6%) also noted a need for increased access to supporting resources and training for officers to improve service based on increasing community need, noting training for officers, or providing non-officer supports with more appropriate skill set for some situations.

### ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

In an open-ended question, respondents were given an opportunity to share any additional feedback they did not feel was captured in their response to previous questions.

Additional Comments	
Address vulnerable populations' needs and issues	29%
Increase resources and support for policing	15%
Frustration with the justice system	14%
Gratitude for RCMP/want to retain RCMP in Red Deer	14%
Increase public presence and patrol	11%
Transparency and accountability	8%
Connect and engage with the community	5%
Expand coordination and collaboration	4%

As demonstrated in the chart above, twenty-nine per cent of respondents emphasized issues faced by vulnerable populations should be given a higher priority, as most respondents felt safety concerns were related to consequences of their housing and addiction status. Some respondents also shared the locations for support facilities such as the shelter and safe injection site should be re-considered.

Many respondents (15%) highlighted a need to increase resources, funding, support and training for policing efforts, with focus on mental health and wellbeing of officers who constantly have to deal with challenging situations.

Respondents expressed being grateful to have the RCMP for their safety and protection and for the work they have been doing for the community. Fourteen per cent of comments conveyed this gratitude and a want to maintain the RCMP as our community's primary enforcement authority.

Some respondents (14%) highlighted that the RCMP are not well supported by higher authorities, especially the justice system. This was identified as a major concern for both the public and for members, as respondents expressed concerns that this may contribute to low morale for members.

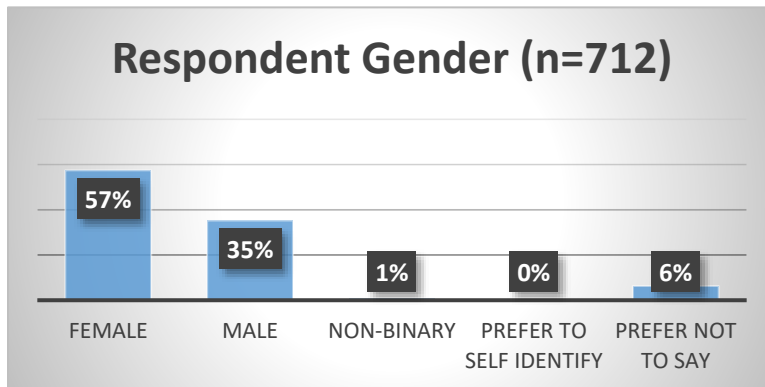
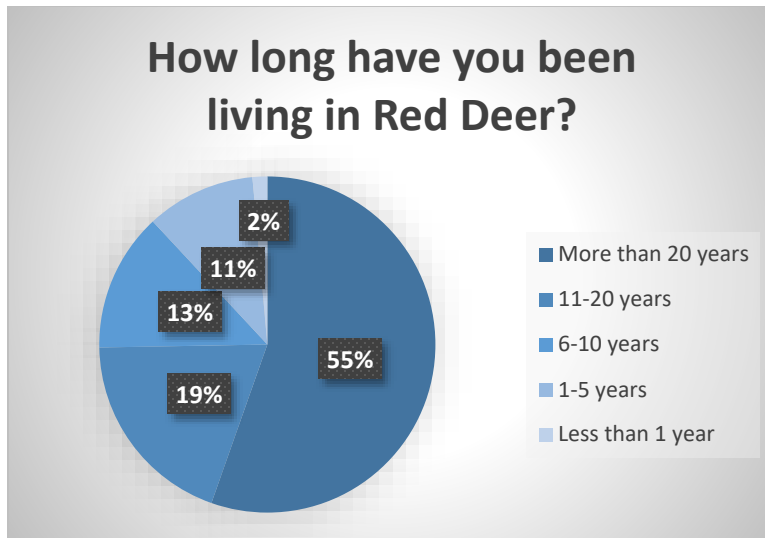
There was also a general theme of concerns for nighttime safety in Red Deer. Respondents recommended an increase of police patrol on the road (11%), especially at night and in particular locations.

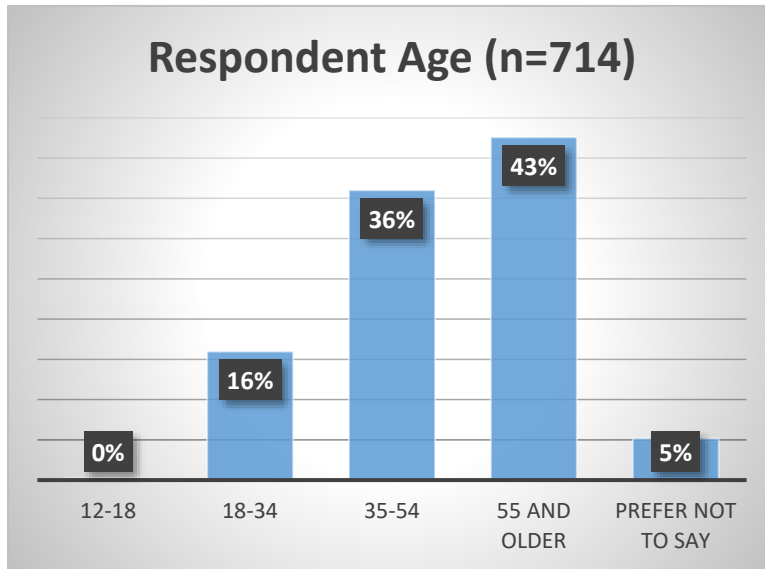
Eight per cent of respondents noted a need for increased transparency and community engagement from police. Some respondents (4%) also shared the benefits of coordinating and collaborating with other agencies and organizations, such as health care and social work, based on the type of case they encounter.



## DEMOGRAPHICS

Demographic information was collected to provide a clearer understanding of survey respondents.





### EXPERIENCES OF HARASSMENT OR DISCRIMINATION

Respondents were asked questions about experiences of harassment or discrimination to better understand how people experience safety differently in our community.

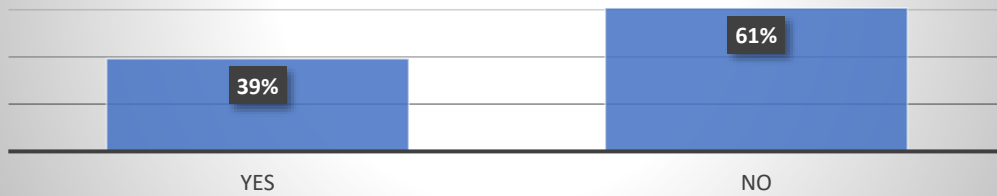
79 respondents (10%) noted they live with a disability that impacts their mobility. Of those, sixteen per cent noted having experienced discrimination or harassment based on that disability within the past twelve months.

28 respondents (4%) identified as Indigenous, and thirty-nine percent of those respondents noted they have experienced discrimination or harassment based on their Indigenous identity within the past twelve months.

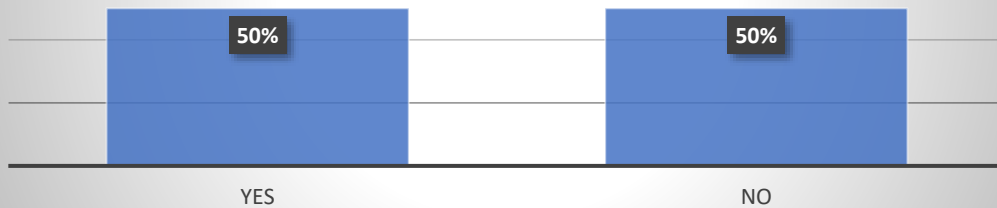
32 respondents (4%) identified as a visible minority, which was defined in the survey as someone who presents as non-white in appearance, speaks a different language or with an accent. Of those, half (50%) noted they have experienced discrimination based on their visible minority status within the past twelve months.



### Experienced discrimination or harassment in the last 12 months based on your Indigenous identity? (n=28)



### Experienced discrimination or harassment in the last 12 months based on your visible minority status? (n=32)





## COMMUNITY FOCUS GROUP RESULTS

Responses of focus group participants were recorded and grouped into themes for the purpose of this report. While themes are not vastly different from what was heard in the survey, responses captured in this report offer a broader view of safety concerns than the survey was able to. These themes can be used to better understand concerns identified in the survey, understand concerns that may be arising and therefore not covered in the survey, and understand how concerns identified in the survey may be connected or impact one another. These themes should be used to understand responses and context rather than to gauge overall community concern, which is validated quantitatively in the public survey.

### NEGATIVE IMPACTS TO SAFETY AND WELLBEING

The following themes and comments were noted by participants when asked about factors that negatively impact their personal safety and wellbeing. Comments have been amended to remove any personally identifying comments or factors.

#### Seeing homelessness and addiction, and not knowing how to respond

- People pushing carts and young people on bikes with their backpacks on, scoping places out.
- Congregations of people who are unhoused not respecting public spaces, using private dumpsters, or interfering with access to buildings or vehicles.
- Kids exposed to people who are intoxicated when walking downtown to get to an appointment.
- Not knowing how or when it is safe to engage with a homeless person.
- The visibility of homeless population in the street/trails.
- People publicly injecting drugs.
- Safety concerns for others using contaminated drug supplies.

#### Racism

- Yellow vest days and the increasing racism and hostility to people for the colour of their skin. Red Deer has developed a bit of a reputation as being extremist. Am I raising my kids in a community that is racist?
- Not feeling safe because of what I look like (non-white) ... I can't just go jogging down the street without thinking about how people/law enforcement are perceiving me. Things like this aren't brought to the front lines all the time and it affects community wellbeing. Just living here is a chore sometimes.
- The City could have a specific hate crimes coordinator.

#### How the RCMP responds or handles things

- What makes me feel not safe is when the RCMP tell me that I should not go alone on the trails and whatever. That's my life. The person saying that is not a woman or has never had an illness. I'd like to see in the RCMP grow their understanding, through training or whatever it takes, so that they can walk in our shoes or at least believe us when we say there is a safety issue here.
- Law enforcement could have a mix or better training, more people from more backgrounds. I don't feel safe when I am not represented in a cohort meant to protect me. I don't feel represented in those who are supposed to make me safe.



- I've been told by the RCMP I shouldn't run on a path. But we should be telling people not to attack or rape.
- Sometimes the way officers respond escalates a situation. It would be good to have approachability, not just of people who are in need, but towards the general public as well. I understand hypervigilance, but the perception is what the individual walks away with.

#### Response times

- Once it took 18 minutes for the RCMP to respond to an issue. Is there a resource issue with all the social issues going on? Does the RCMP feel sufficiently equipped to deal with issues / concurrent issues arising?
- I called and it took 40 minutes for a response. Other times the RCMP are around, and we don't need them. But to wait for 40 minutes while someone is yelling with a knife is too dangerous.

#### Concerns with downtown

- Space is expensive and all we can afford is downtown, and there is a lot of concern about being located downtown because we are open some evenings and nights. I have concerns with safety for our staff and clients.

#### Property crimes

- I mostly see trivial crimes of opportunity to feed habits.
- Things we hear about the most are break and enter, stolen vehicles, theft from vehicles...
- The police parking lot checks were really good and helped reduce crime, there are things that individuals have to do and have to be responsible for.
- There are underbelly crimes happening everyday.
- I live with the fear of my house or car being broken into.

### ACTIONS TO ADDRESS SAFETY CONCERNS

The following themes and comments were noted by participants when asked what can be done to address safety concerns. Comments have been amended to remove any personally identifying comments or factors.

#### Community working together and taking ownership

- Our community doesn't have a sense of ownership of the challenges we face. The RCMP are only one tool. The more collaboration we develop strengthens our ability to feel safe and weakens the ability of those who may perpetrate crime. We should have a sense of ownership over our safety and feel empowered.
- We have to be prepared to look at things differently sometimes and to make some tough choices. And so the more we collaborate and talk the more likely we are to make the best choices possible. We just need continued dialogue.

#### Improving the built environment

- There are challenges with abandoned buildings.
- There are burned-out houses, and you get rid of areas like that and maybe people squatting or loitering will relocate.



#### Resources and resource sharing for mental health and addictions

- Is the application of the criminal code being consistent to chronic behavior? That would allocate a lot of police time and resources to things that will happen the following day. We either need a bigger piece of the pie or we have to cut up the pie a little bit differently and work collaboratively together to the best that we can to maximize allocation of resources.
- Mental health is not being addressed and a lack of supports and resources in this area will lead people to wrong choices.
- There is a lack of mental health, addiction and generally wrap around supports. The PACT program is great, but they also lack resources and they have too much on their plate.
- There aren't really services for mental health after hours.
- I hope the city can see the Social Diversion Team should be 24/7.
- I wish we had more available for people experiencing homelessness. When people are watching drug use on the street it's a housing issue.

#### Community engagement

- I would like to see a bigger community engagement unit, to know that we residents are a priority to the RCMP. I hope that community policing will continue to be a priority.
- More community presence of the police in a positive way is my suggestion.
- We do 110% appreciate the work of the Red Deer detachment and the relationships with the community engagement team. Again, I would like to stress that they need more support and resources, and the City needs to step up to really support that in different ways.
- I'm concerned with community apathy demonstrated by officers. We see them in uniform in the community but I'd like to see them more involved in the community and develop relationships.

#### Public information

- The hotspot mapping that is happening is a fantastic thing. I find a lot of comfort in that.

