



Report to Council

Department: Office of the CAO
Division: Communications
Date: February 3, 2025
Prepared by: Marc Tortola, Manager, Strategic Communications
Report Number: Communications-2025-01
Subject: 2024 Community Policing Survey Results
Number of Pages: 14

Recommendation(s)

That Communications-2025-01 entitled 2024 Community Policing Survey Results prepared by Marc Tortola, Manager, Strategic Communications dated February 3, 2025 be received as information.

Purpose

To provide Council a summary of the results of the Community Policing Survey conducted in November 2024.

Background and Discussion

Summary of Survey

In 2024, Council directed administration to conduct an online survey to re-evaluate citizens' perceptions of the quality of policing provided by Town's contracted policing service, the Ontario Provincial Police. An initial Community Policing Survey was conducted in May 2020 with the same format and questions.

The survey, launched in November 2024, provided citizens the opportunity to give their feedback on three categories related to their perceptions of local policing: general satisfaction, interactions with police, and community safety. The survey was advertised on the Town's website, via social media, as well as a newspaper ad in both the Essex Free Press and the Harrow News.

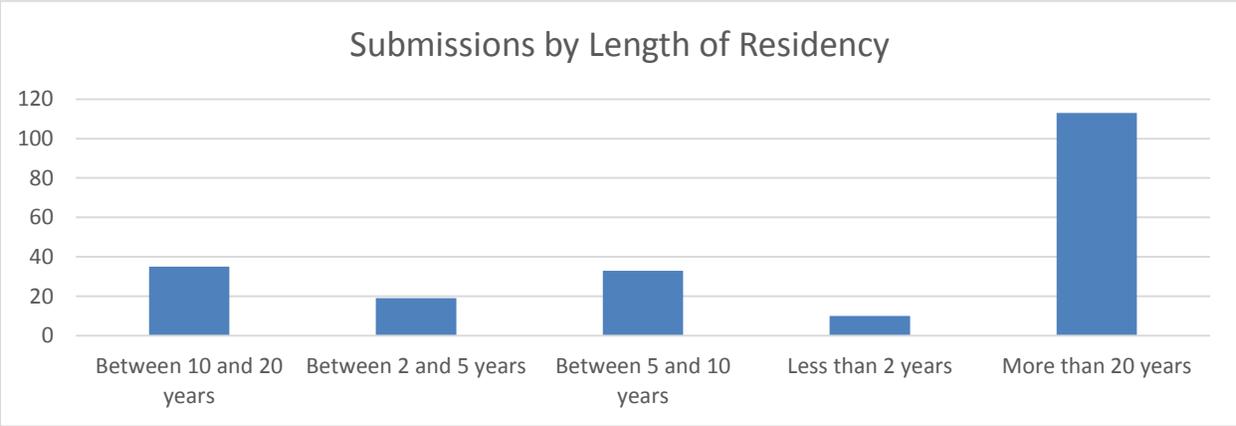
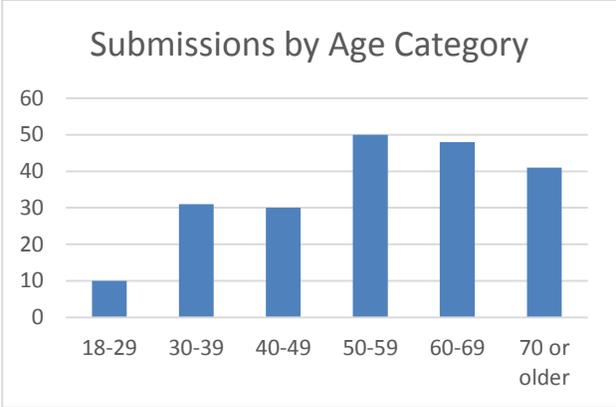
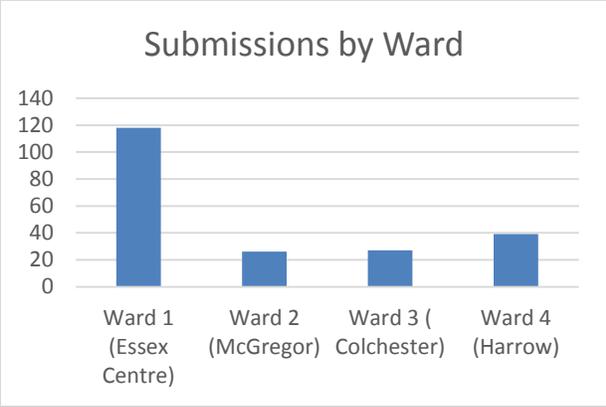
Methodology

The survey was distributed primarily in an online format. Paper copies were also available at Town Hall for those who do not have access to the internet.

The survey was designed to provide both quantitative and qualitative data from survey respondents. Quantitative questions asked respondents to rate their opinion on 5-point Likert scales. The points on the scales were then converted to numerical values for the analysis of results. Qualitative questions provided respondents an opportunity to give general feedback and other comments not captured by the quantitative questions. These comments were reviewed by administration for categorization and identification of overarching themes. Some comments were categorized into more than one theme.

Summary of Results and Demographics

The survey garnered 210 submissions from citizens, compared to 308 submissions in 2020. This sample size represents approximately 1% of the total population of the Town of Essex. Of the respondents, 118 were from Ward 1, 26 from Ward 2, 27 from Ward 3, and 39 from Ward 4. The sex of respondents was evenly split between male and female. Similarly, the age breakdown of respondents was well distributed with the majority within the 50-69 year old range. 54 percent of respondents have lived in the Town of Essex for more than 20 years. See below for graphs summarizing the demographics of the 2024 survey respondents.

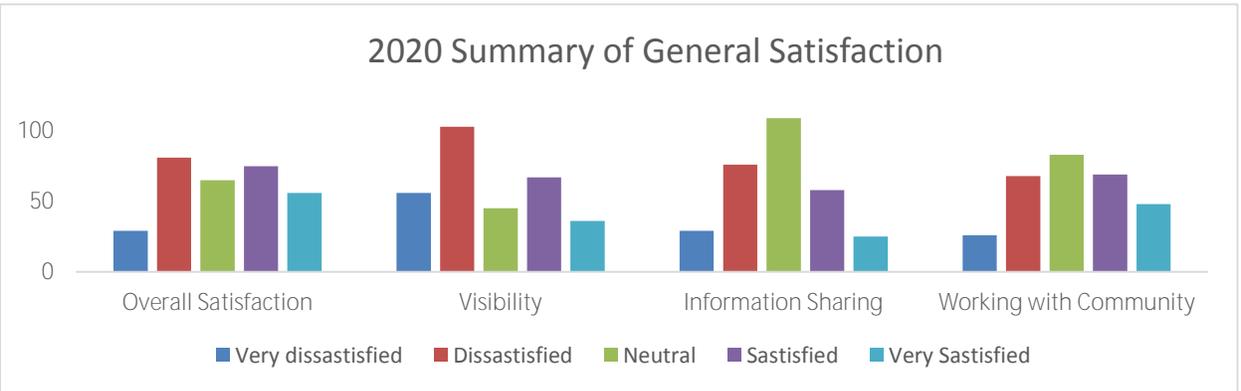
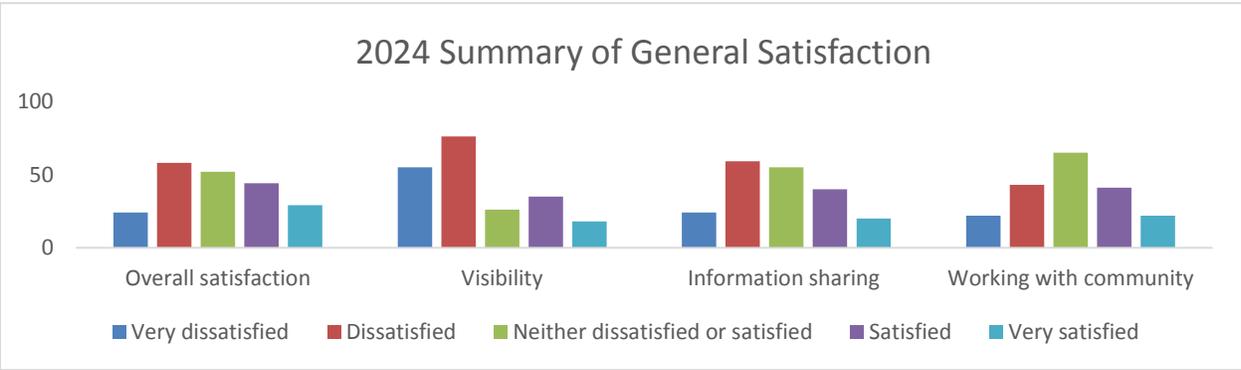


Analysis

General Satisfaction

The first category of questions focused on respondents’ general satisfaction with local policing. It asked respondents to rate their satisfaction on a 5-point Likert scale on the following metrics: overall satisfaction, visibility, information sharing, and working with the community. Each scale, from “very dissatisfied” to “very satisfied,” was converted to a five point scale (1 being very dissatisfied and 5 being very satisfied). The numerical scales were then analyzed to provide the average score listed below:

Category	2020 Average Score	2024 Average Score
Overall Satisfaction	3.15	2.94
Visibility	2.75	2.45
Information Sharing	2.91	2.70
Working with the Community	3.15	2.75



The general satisfaction portion of the survey also garnered the most comments compared to the other two. These comments were reviewed by administration to identify themes as well as

to assess if the comment was positive, negative or neutral. Administration identified five themes from the 87 comments received in this section. Note that some comments may be categorized under multiple key themes:

Visibility: This was the most prominent theme and garnered 29 comments. These comments remarked generally on a perceived lack of police visibility in neighborhoods, public areas, and residential streets, as well as general frustrations over not seeing patrols or officers in public spaces. Of those 29 comments, 26 were negative, 2 were neutral and 1 was positive.

Traffic Enforcement and Road Safety: This theme garnered 19 comments reflecting concerns about speeding, reckless driving, and insufficient law enforcement. Of the 19 comments, 17 were negative, 2 were neutral.

Response Time: This theme garnered 7 comments expressing frustration over slow or delayed police responses, especially in urgent situations. Of those comments, all were negative.

Community Engagement: This theme garnered 8 comments discussing the general satisfaction with community engagement. Youth engagement and additional resources for mental health and addiction were highlighted as areas of improvement. Of the comments, 7 were positive and 1 was neutral.

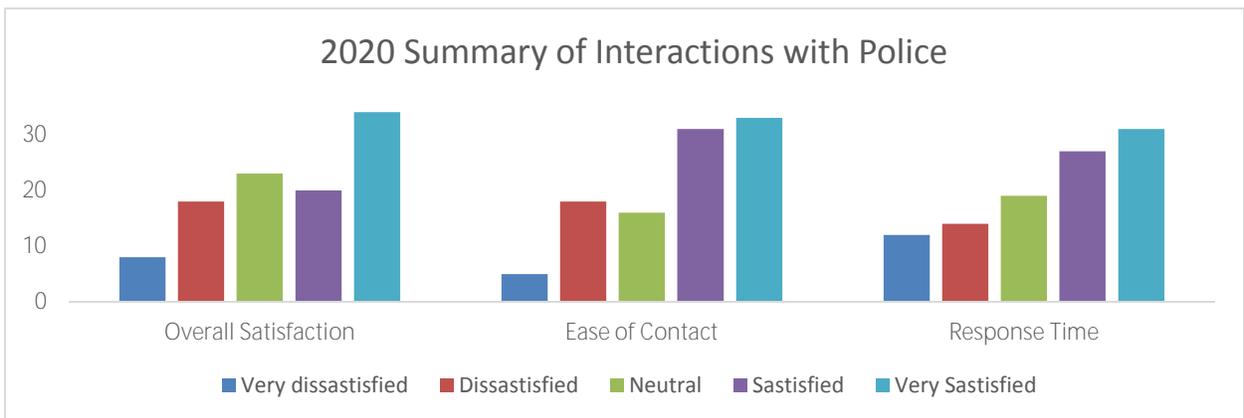
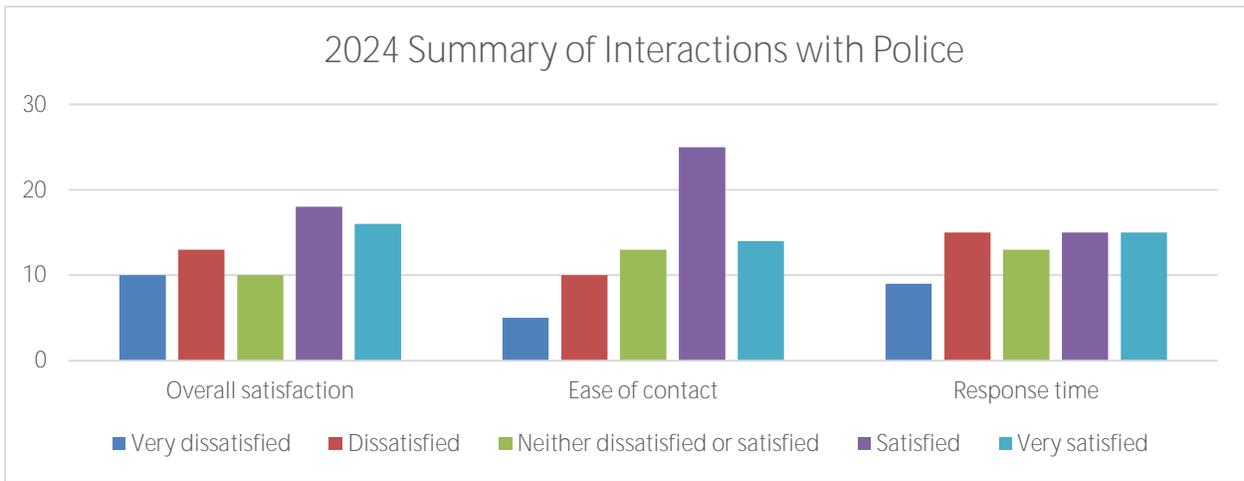
General Dissatisfaction: This theme garnered 14 comments and with concerns citing poor experiences.

Police Interactions

The second category of questions focused only on respondents who have had contact with the OPP in the last year. Of the 210 total survey respondents, 67 indicated that they had contact with the OPP. This portion of the survey asked respondents to rate their interaction(s) on a 5-point Likert scale on the following metrics: overall satisfaction, ease of contact, and response time. Each scale, from “very dissatisfied” to “very satisfied,” was converted to a five point scale

(1 being very dissatisfied and 5 being very satisfied). The numerical scales were then analyzed to provide mean (the average score) and mode (the most common score).

Category	2020 Average Score	2024 Average Score
Overall Satisfaction	3.52	3.25
Ease of Contact	3.67	3.49
Response Time	3.50	3.18



The comment portion of the police interaction section of the survey garnered 23 comments. These comments were grouped into four themes:

Overall Service Quality: This theme garnered the most comments with 18 responses. Many individuals felt that the service quality did not meet their expectations and as a result, they felt that their concerns were not taken seriously. Some noted positive experiences. Of the 18 comments, 14 were negative and 4 were positive.

Officer Interactions: This theme garnered 14 comments. These comments generally remarked both the positive and negative experiences with officers, including their overall attitude and professionalism. Of those 14 comments, 11 were negative and 3 were positive.

Response Time: This theme garnered 8 comments expressing frustration with the slow response times and delays in getting assistance. Many felt that officers arrived too late or that the matter was not addressed. Some highlighted timely responses and efficient handling of incidents. Of the 8 comments, 7 were negative and 1 was positive.

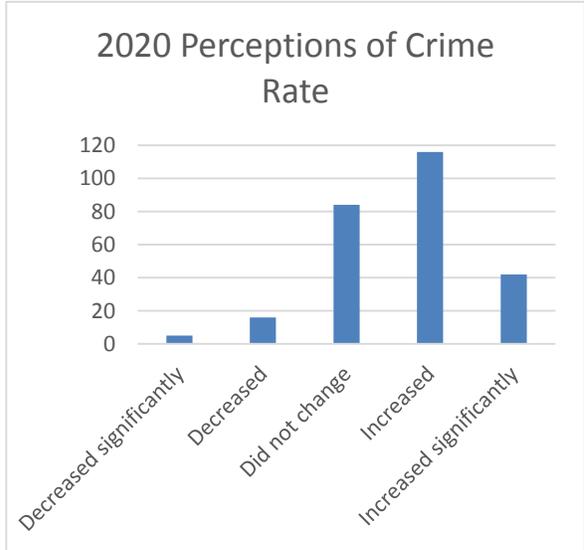
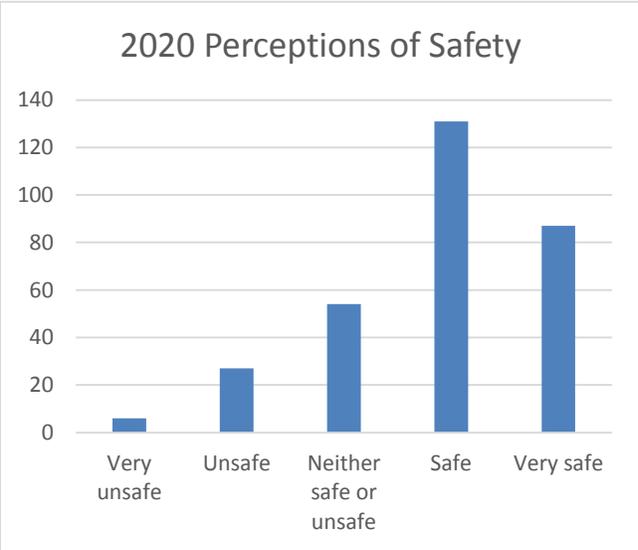
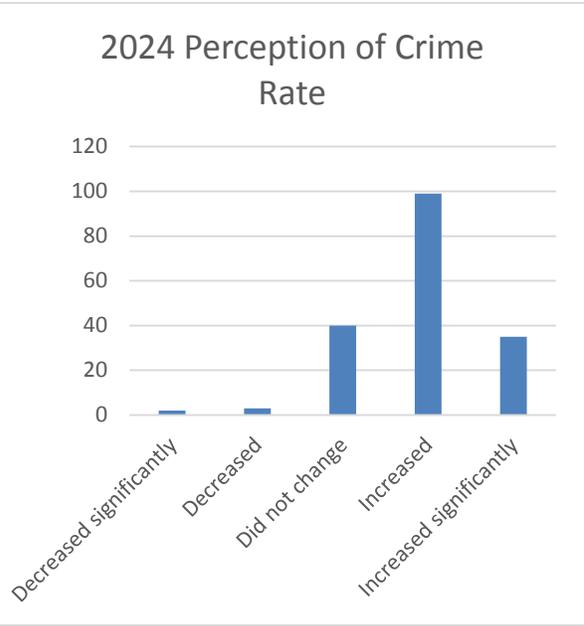
Communication: This theme garnered 7 responses. These comments expressed difficulties in contacting the OPP or receiving timely updates. Of the 7 comments, 6 were negative and 1 was neutral.

Perceptions of Community Safety and Crime

The third category of questions asked respondents' to rate their feelings of safety and perceptions of changes to local crime rates on 5-point Likert scales. Each scale was converted to a numerical point scale then analyzed to provide mean (the average score) and mode (the most common score).

A majority of respondents indicated they feel safe or very in the Town of Essex, however, many respondents indicated that they believe crime has either increased or increased significantly.

Category	2020 Average Score	2024 Average Score
Perception of Safety	3.87	3.62
Perception of Crime Rate	3.66	3.33



The comment section for the community safety and crime portion of the survey garnered 65 comments broken down into five themes:

Increased crime: This was the most prominent theme garnering 17 comments which focused generally on the perceived rising crime rate or individual instances of crime. Of these comments, 16 were negative and 1 was neutral.

Visibility: This theme was also common in this section, with 11 comments noting the perceived lack of visible police presence. Of the comments, 7 were negative, 2 were neutral, and 2 were positive.

Traffic and Road Safety: This theme garnered 7 comments related to speeding, drunk driving, and pedestrian safety. Of the comments, 6 were negative and 1 was neutral.

Substance Abuse: This theme garnered 5 comments which focused on concerns about the influence of addiction and drug use on crime rates. Of these comments, 4 were negative and 1 was neutral.

Other: 12 comments noted concerns about youth, who should be responsible for the Town's safety, and additional comments unrelated to the survey.

Final comment section

The final comment section of the survey provided respondents the opportunity to add any additional comments which had not been covered by the previous questions. This section garnered 61 comments.

The general comments were centred around a desire for more police presence, concerns about traffic violations, concerns about response time, and police costs and budget concerns.

Despite the concerns raised, some residents acknowledge the professionalism of individual OPP officers and the range of services they provide. There is a recognition that the officers

themselves are doing a good job, but the concern is more about the management of the service and the adequacy of staffing and resources.

Summary of Results

The perceived visibility of police officers was identified as problematic for many survey respondents, particularly in the areas of traffic enforcement and response times. The visibility question on the survey garnered the most negative feedback of any of the questions, with a large majority of respondents indicating they are dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with the visibility of police in the community. These findings were also reflected in the number of comments about the perceived visibility made in the optional comment sections.

Overall, most respondents indicated that they feel safe or very safe in the Town of Essex even though a majority believe that crime had increased or increased significantly.

In general, the survey findings are in-line with the 2020 Community Policing Survey results. For respondents who indicated they had recently interacted with police, there has been a slight increase in those that were dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with the overall interaction in comparison to the 2020 survey findings.

Financial Impact

N/A

Consultations

This survey was created in consultation with Members of Council and the Chief Administrative Officer.

Link to Strategic Priorities

- Embrace asset management best practices to build, maintain, and continuously improve our municipally owned infrastructure.
- Leverage our Town's competitive advantages to promote jobs and economic investment.
- Take care of our natural environment and strengthen the sense of belonging to everyone who makes Essex "home".
- Deliver friendly customer service in an efficient, effective, and transparent manner while providing an exceptional working environment for our employees.
- Build corporate-level and community-level climate resilience through community engagement and partnership and corporate objectives.

Report Approval Details

Document Title:	2024 Community Policing Survey Results - Communications-2025-01.docx
Attachments:	- 2024 Essex Community Policing Satisfaction Survey.pdf
Final Approval Date:	Jan 15, 2025

This report and all of its attachments were approved and signed as outlined below:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Doug Sweet". The signature is stylized with a large "D" and "S".

Doug Sweet, Chief Administrative Officer - Jan 15, 2025 - 9:17 AM