

## Most believe Toronto police treated differently in justice system: poll

Majority of respondents report diminished view of police after Sammy Yatim case

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Nearly one in three Torontonians believe police officers in this city are above the law while close to eight in 10 say the police are treated differently than ordinary citizens in the justice system, suggests a new poll conducted for CBC News.

Many still say police work hard and are brave, although the online poll suggests Torontonians have pervasive concerns around how officers are held to account and how they deal with people experiencing a mental health crisis.

- [James Forcillo guilty of attempted murder in streetcar shooting of Sammy Yatim](#)
- [4 Toronto police officers charged with perjury, obstructing justice](#)

When asked to choose from a list of words that may or may not describe the Toronto Police Service, 46 per cent said they viewed Toronto police officers as "hardworking," while a further 42 per cent described officers as "courageous". However, 30 per cent said they would describe police officers as "above the law" and 24 per cent said they would call them "corrupt." (Respondents could choose more than one response for this query.)

Forty four per cent of respondents said they strongly or somewhat disagree with the statement that police are held accountable for their actions on the job.

Overall, 57 per cent of people said they completely trust or slightly trust police, while 25 per cent said they slightly or completely distrust police.

Women were more likely than men to say they trust police, with 62 per cent saying they completely trust police or trust them a little. Fifty three per cent of men, meanwhile, said they completely trust police or trust them a little.

Seventy nine per cent of people said they strongly or somewhat agreed with the statement that police officers are treated different than ordinary citizens in the justice system. Just six per cent of people strongly or somewhat disagreed with the same statement.

Younger people (aged 18-34) reported being more distrustful of police than older Torontonians (those aged 35-plus). Thirty-three per cent of the younger demographic said they distrust them a little or don't trust them at all, compared to 21 per cent of people over 35.

CBC News conducted the study by speaking with panellists from the Angus Reid Forum between Jan. 29-31. There were 517 respondents, all of whom are Angus Reid Forum panelists over the age of 18. The results have been statistically weighted according to age and gender Census data to ensure a sample representative of the adult population of Toronto on these measures. The margin of error is +/- 4.3 per cent, 19 times out of 20.

The survey was conducted after several high-profile incidents, including four officers being charged with perjury and obstruction of justice and the attempted murder conviction of Const. James Forcillo in the

fatal shooting death of Sammy Yatim aboard an empty TTC streetcar.

## View of police worsens

A majority report their view of the police force has diminished in the wake of the Yatim case and the news of the four officers being charged.

More than half (54 per cent) of respondents said their view of the Toronto police is somewhat or much worse after those incidents. Meanwhile, 37 per cent said their view of police hadn't changed, while just eight per cent of people said their view of police had improved.

Torontonians are also concerned about how police deal with people dealing with mental health issues or who are in the middle of a crisis, the poll suggests.

Over half (56 per cent) of the respondents somewhat or strongly disagreed with the statement that Toronto police can be trusted to deal with someone who is in a state of mental health crisis. More than half (53 per cent) said they somewhat or strongly disagree with the statement that police do everything they can to de-escalate encounters with people who are mentally ill.

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