

**REPORT ON THE  
CORE AREA AWARENESS SURVEY  
CONDUCTED FOR THE REVIEW OF  
THE POLICE COMPLAINT PROCESS  
IN BRITISH COLUMBIA**

SUBMITTED BY:

**Strathcona Research Group  
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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

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<b>REPORT ON THE CORE AREA AWARENESS SURVEY.....</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>INTRODUCTION.....</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>1 FINDINGS FROM THE STREET SURVEY .....</b>	<b>9</b>
1.1 Police Complaint Commissioner .....	9
1.1.1 Knowledge of What to do with a Complaint .....	9
1.1.2 Awareness of the Office of the Police Complaint Commissioner.....	9
1.2 Police Complaint Process .....	10
1.2.1 Fairness of the Complaint Process.....	11
1.2.2 Experience with Treatment by Police.....	11
1.2.3 Raising and Reporting Concerns .....	12
1.2.4 Response to Raising/Reporting Concerns.....	14
1.2.5 Low Income and Outcome of Complaint.....	15
1.2.6 Level of Confidence in Police Complaint Process in BC.....	16
<b>2 VARIATION BY SITE, GENDER, ETHNOCULTURAL BACKGROUND AND DIRECT EXPERIENCE.....</b>	<b>17</b>
2.1 Site Differences .....	17
2.1.1 Participant Characteristics.....	17
2.1.2 Police Complaint Commissioner.....	18
2.1.3 Police Complaint Process.....	18
2.2 Gender and Ethnocultural Background .....	21
2.3 Direct Experience.....	22
<b>3 FINDINGS FROM THE SOCIAL AGENCY SAMPLE .....</b>	<b>24</b>
3.1 Agency Characteristics.....	24
3.1.1 Type of Agency.....	24
3.1.2 Clients Served .....	25
3.1.3 Legal Service and Referrals .....	25
3.2 Agency Personnel Interviewed .....	25
3.2.1 Positions and Experience.....	25
3.2.2 Familiarity with Complaints Process.....	26
3.3 The Police Complaint Process.....	26
3.3.1 Complaints and Type of Referral .....	26
3.3.2 Satisfaction.....	26
3.3.3 Level of Confidence in Process .....	27
3.3.4 Reporting by Marginalized People.....	27
3.3.5 Role of the Agency .....	27
3.4 Site Variation .....	27
<b>4 DISCUSSION .....</b>	<b>29</b>
<b>APPENDIX 1: STUDY METHODOLOGY .....</b>	<b>31</b>
<b>APPENDIX 2: CHARACTERISTICS OF THE STREET SAMPLE.....</b>	<b>34</b>
<b>APPENDIX 3: LIST OF AGENCIES CONTACTED FOR THE STUDY.....</b>	<b>37</b>
<b>APPENDIX 4: CORE AREA AWARENESS SURVEY .....</b>	<b>38</b>
<b>APPENDIX 5: AGENCY QUESTIONNAIRE.....</b>	<b>44</b>

# LIST OF TABLES AND CHARTS

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## TABLES

Table 1: Concerns about police conduct (personal and witnessed) .....	11
Table 2: Q. 8 Which of the following statements best describe the main reason(s) why you did not raise your concerns or complaint?.....	13
Table 3: Q. 9 To which of the following groups or individuals did you raise your concerns? .....	13
Table 4: Comparison of participant concerns and follow-up steps.....	14
Table 5: Q. 11b What is/are the main reason(s) you did not raise your concerns or file a formal written complaint? .....	14
Table 6: Q. 13a If participant was not satisfied with experience with the police complaint process, why not? .....	15
Table 7: Q. 15a In what way do you think that being a person of low income affected the outcome of your complaint? ..	16
Table 8: Q. 17 Can you explain why you feel confident or not confident in the police complaint process? .....	16
Table 9: Selected participant characteristics by site .....	17
Table 10: Participant knowledge of police complaint process, by site .....	18
Table 11: Perceptions of the fairness of complaints, by site .....	18
Table 12: Why participants do not believe police complaints are handled fairly, by site .....	18
Table 13: Participants with concerns about police conduct, by site.....	19
Table 14: Did participants raise their concerns, by site .....	19
Table 15: Groups with which participants raised their concerns, by site.....	19
Table 16: Participants received the information they needed to address their complaints, by site .....	20
Table 17: Participants' perceptions of whether their complaints were treated seriously, by site .....	20
Table 18: Participants' satisfaction with the police complaint process, by site.....	20
Table 19: Participants' perceptions of the influence of low income on the outcome of police complaints in general, by site.....	20
Table 20: Participants' perceptions of the influence of their low income status on the outcome of their own complaints, by site.....	21
Table 21: Confidence levels in the police complaint process, by site.....	21
Table 22: Selected participant characteristics by gender and ethnocultural background .....	21
Table 23: Satisfaction with outcomes of police complaints by ethnocultural background.....	22
Table 24: Confidence in the police complaint process, by gender.....	22
Table 25: Concern about police conduct by housing status .....	22
Table 26: Relationship between concern about police conduct and perception of the fairness of the complaint process.....	22
Table 27: Relationship between direct experience and the belief that low income affects the outcome of a complaint ...	23
Table 28: Level of confidence in the complaint process by experience with police conduct .....	23

## CHARTS

Chart 1: Proportion of Survey Participants by Site .....	9
Chart 2: Q. 2 Have you ever heard of the Office of the Police Complaint Commissioner before? .....	10
Chart 3: Q. 2a If yes, how did you learn about this? .....	10
Chart 4: Q. 2b How well do you think you understand what the Office of the Police Complaints Commissioner is supposed to do? .....	10
Chart 5: Q. 3 In your local police department, do you believe investigations into complaints against the police are handled fairly?.....	10
Chart 6: Q. 3a If no [to Q. 3], why not?.....	10
Chart 7: Q. 4 In the past two years, have you had any concerns about any actions or comments of a police officer that were directed towards you or involved you?.....	10
Chart 8: Q. 5 In the past two years, have you had any concerns about any actions or comments of a police officer that you witnessed but were not involved in?.....	11
Chart 9: Q. 6 How many times have you had concerns? .....	11
Chart 10: Q. 7 Did you raise these concerns with anyone? .....	12
Chart 11: Q. 10 Did the person or organization you raised your complaint with inform you of the steps you could take to address your complaint?.....	12
Chart 12: Q. 11 Did you file a formal written complaint with the police department or the Office of the Police Complaint Commissioner? .....	12
Chart 13: Q. 11a If yes, did the police department or the Office of the Police Complaint Commissioner follow up or respond to your complaints? .....	12
Chart 14: Q. 12 Do you feel your complaint was taken seriously? .....	15
Chart 15: Q. 13 Were you satisfied with your experience with the police complaint process?.....	15
Chart 16: Q. 14 Do you think that being a person with low income affects the outcome of a complaint? .....	15
Chart 17: Q. 15 If you answered yes to Q. 7, do you think that being a person with low income affected the outcome of your complaint? .....	15
Chart 18: Q. 16 What is your level of confidence in the overall process in British Columbia for handling complaints about police? .....	16

## REPORT ON THE CORE AREA AWARENESS SURVEY

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### STREET SURVEY SUMMARY

- 299 individuals who were identified as being street-involved were surveyed in Vancouver, Victoria, and New Westminster.
- 37% of survey participants had heard of the Office of the Police Complaint Commissioner (OPCC).
- 60% of participants did not believe that investigations into complaints against the police are handled fairly, compared to 26% who believed they are handled fairly.
  - These results are led by Victoria and Vancouver where a greater percentage of participants believe that investigations into complaints are not handled fairly by their local department (68% and 60%, respectively).
  - Open-ended comments revealed a perception that police are biased and likely to protect their own members.
- 60% of the survey participants reported having had concerns about the actions or comments of a police officer in the past two years.
- 45% of all participants and 75% of those with concerns reported having such concerns three or more times over the past two years.
- Only 44% of participants with concerns ever raised them with anyone.
  - Participants in Victoria were much more likely to raise their concerns compared to other locations.
  - 64% raised their concerns with the police department, 53% with a community organization or advocacy group, 16% with an MP/MLA/City Councillor, 12% with lawyers, friends, or others, and only one participant reported approaching the OPCC.
- Primary reasons cited for *not* raising those concerns included:
  - 40% cited 'fear of retaliation from police'
  - 40% believed that 'no one would do anything'
  - 31% said that it was 'my word against a police officer'
  - 25% 'didn't know who to talk to'

- 66% of those who raised their concerns believed they were taken seriously while 32% did not believe they were taken seriously.
- Only 18 people or 12% of those who raised their concerns with anyone reported filing a formal complaint.
- Of those people who raised their concerns but did not file a formal complaint:
  - 38% cited 'fear of retaliation from police'
  - 25% said it was because of 'my word against a police officer'
  - 20% believed that 'no one would do anything'.
- Only 25% of survey participants expressed confidence in the police complaint process in BC compared with 43% who reported having little or no confidence in the process.
  - More participants from New Westminster reported confidence (42%) compared to Vancouver (23%) and Victoria (20%).
  - Fewer participants with direct experience with the police reported confidence (19%) compared to those without direct experience (32%).
- 74% of all survey participants reported believing that socio-economic status affects the outcome of police complaints.
- 78% of those who raised the concerns they had about police conduct said they believe that their low income status affected the outcome of their complaint.

## AGENCY SURVEY SUMMARY

- Representatives from 44 social agencies that work with marginalized groups were also interviewed in the three study sites.
- 39% of participants were not familiar with the process available for members of the public to lay complaints against police.
  - Of those who were familiar with it (61%), 24% understood the process 'very well' and 76% only 'somewhat'.
  - Experience, word of mouth, and media reports were the most common methods for agency participants to find out about the process
- 91% of agency personnel reports that they have had clients come to them with a complaint about their treatment by the local police.
- 77% had referred a client with a complaint to a community advocate, 59% to a lawyer, 41% to the police department, 34% to an MP/MLA/City Councillor, and 11% to the OPCC.
- Overall, only 23% of the agency participants reported feeling satisfied about all the referrals they had made over time, though 56% would refer future complaints to police and 36% would refer to the OPCC.
- 23% of agency participants reported confidence in the police complaint process; 16% were neutral, and 50% were not confident.
- 70% of agency participants admitted to not having sufficient information about the process.

## INTRODUCTION

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This report documents the results of two surveys that were conducted by the Strathcona Research Group in January – February, 2006. As part of its Review of the Police Complaint Process, Police Services Division of the Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General contracted with Strathcona to conduct surveys with service providers and people who are street-involved in the core areas of the municipalities of Vancouver, Victoria, and New Westminster. The surveys are intended to augment the Review’s telephone survey of one thousand participants in the eleven jurisdictions with independent police departments that examined public perceptions of the police complaint process.

The objective of the survey of street-involved individuals (called ‘the street questionnaire’) was to assess:

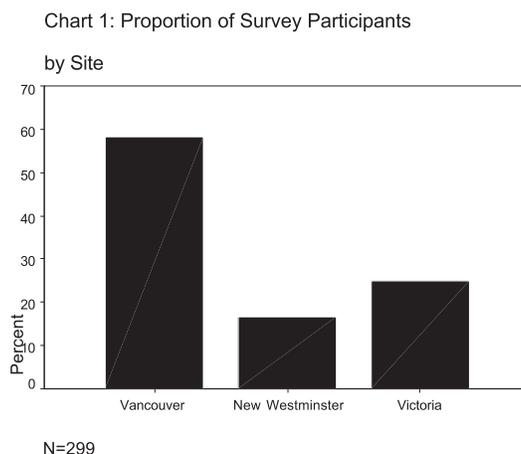
1. the degree to which people who are socio-economically marginalized have concerns about police conduct;
2. the extent to which those participants who do have concerns report them, as well as where they reported those concerns; and
3. the experiences of the participants who have pursued those concerns through the complaints process.

Given the relative importance of community service agencies in the lives of people who live or spend a lot of their time on the street and the frequency of contact between these two groups, the researchers also sought to assess:

1. the role of service providers both in receiving complaints about police conduct and their follow-up actions around such complaints;
2. responses regarding service providers’ understanding of the police complaint process.

# 1 FINDINGS FROM THE STREET SURVEY

A total of 299 interviews were conducted: 174 (58% of the total) in Vancouver, 75 (25%) in Victoria, and 50 (17%) in New Westminster (see Chart 1).



## 1.1 POLICE COMPLAINT COMMISSIONER

Participants were initially queried about what they know about the Office of the Police Complaint Commissioner (OPCC).

### 1.1.1 KNOWLEDGE OF WHAT TO DO WITH A COMPLAINT

In response to the question about knowing what to do in the event of having a complaint about police treatment, nearly as many participants claimed to know what to do (45%) as didn't (47%). Another 8% were 'not sure'.

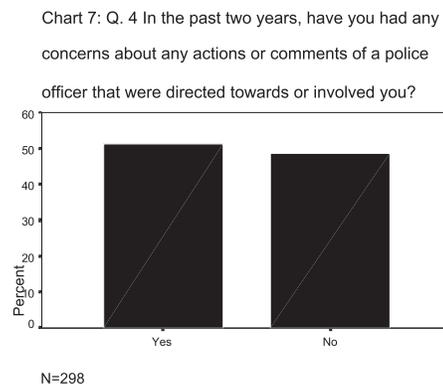
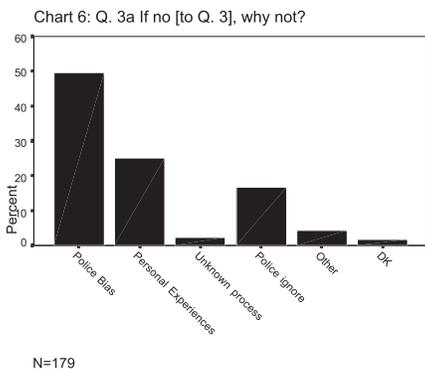
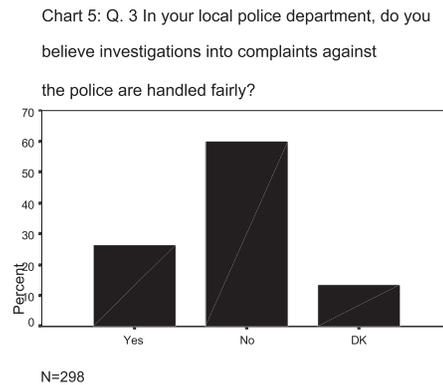
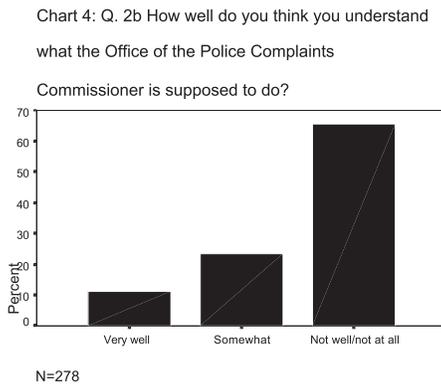
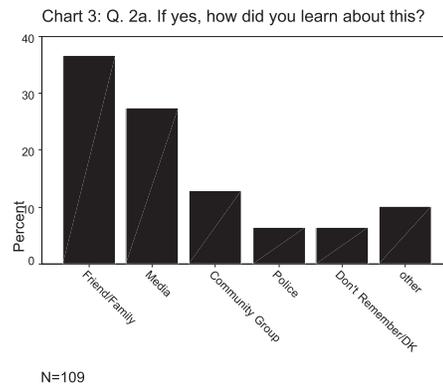
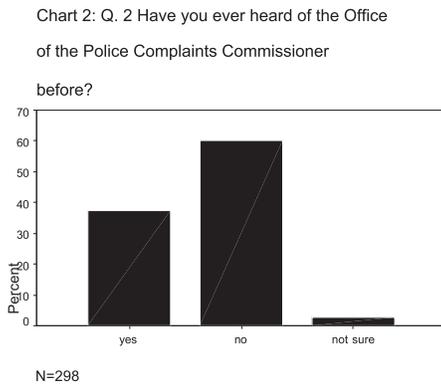
### 1.1.2 AWARENESS OF THE OFFICE OF THE POLICE COMPLAINT COMMISSIONER

Only 112 or 37% of participants had heard of the OPCC (see Chart 2). For those participants who were aware of the OPCC, 40 (36%) participants had heard of it from friends or family, 30 (27%) from the media, 14 (13%) from a community agency or an advocacy group and the remaining 25 (23%) from a variety of other sources or could not remember (see Chart 3).

When those participants who had heard of the OPCC were asked how well they understood its role (n=112), 31 (28%) said 'very well', 52 (46%) said 'somewhat', and 24 (21%) said 'not well at all' (see Chart 4).

## 1.2 POLICE COMPLAINT PROCESS

Each participant was provided with an oral description of the police complaint process. They were then asked a number of questions regarding that process.



### 1.2.1 FAIRNESS OF THE COMPLAINT PROCESS

When asked if they believed investigations into complaints against the police are handled fairly, 60% (179) of the participants said 'no', 26% (79) said 'yes' and 13% (40) didn't know (see Chart 5).

Of those who did not believe complaints were handled fairly (n=179), two thirds (67%) attributed this perceived unfairness either directly to the police (i.e., 'police are biased and protect their own' and 'police would ignore or not process the complaint') or to their own first-hand experience and/or that of friends who have experience with the process (25%). Four participants believed the process was unfair simply because people didn't know about or understand it (see Chart 6).

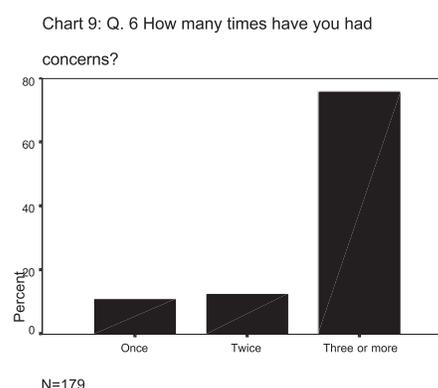
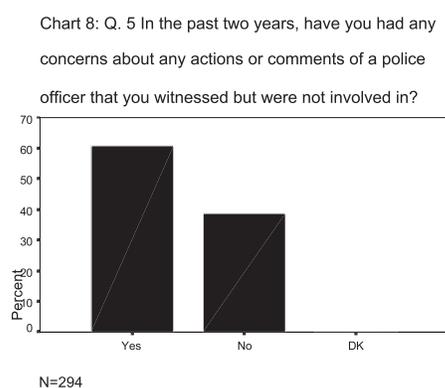
### 1.2.2 EXPERIENCE WITH TREATMENT BY POLICE

Just over one half of the people surveyed (51% or 153 participants) responded to the question about their own experiences with the police in the past two years by saying they had concerns about their treatment (see Chart 7). This proportion increased to 60% (179) when participants were asked about concerns they had regarding police conduct they had *witnessed* over the same time period (see Chart 8). As Table 1 shows, only 85 (29%) of participants reported having no concerns in either case while 123 (42%) had concerns about police conduct both toward them and which they had witnessed.

**Table 1: Concerns about police conduct (personal and witnessed)**

		Conduct witnessed						Total	
		Yes	%	No	%	DK	%	%	
Conduct towards self	Yes	123	42	29	10	1	.3	153	52
	No	56	19	85	29			141	48
Total		179	61	114	39	1	.3	294	100

Of the 179 participants who expressed concerns, over three quarters (136 or 76%) said they had concerns three or more times over the past two years, 23 or 13% had concerns twice, and 20 or 12% had concerns only once (see Chart 9).<sup>1</sup>

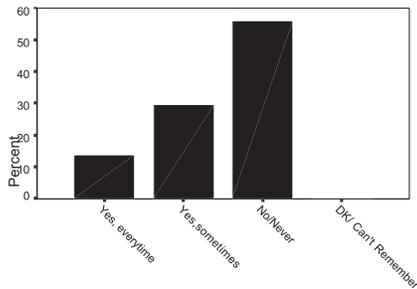


<sup>1</sup> There was an unusually high non-response rate to this question (Question 6). Of the 209 survey participants who could have answered, 30 did not offer a response. We are unsure of the reason for this.

### 1.2.3 RAISING AND REPORTING CONCERNS

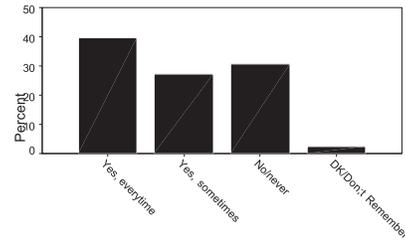
Despite the large number of participants having concerns, only 44% of those with concerns ever raised these issues with anyone (see Chart 10). Those who did not raise their concerns at all or only sometimes (in the case of those with multiple concerns) were asked to provide up to three reasons for not doing so. As Table 2 shows, the primary reasons for not pursuing a concern about police conduct relate directly to police conduct itself or to doubt about the process. Forty (40) percent of those who did not report their concerns cited ‘fear of retaliation from police’ for not reporting while 31% said they did not report because it would be ‘my word against the police’. As well, 40% thought that ‘no one would do anything’ about their complaint.

Chart 10: Q. 7 Did you raise these concerns with anyone?



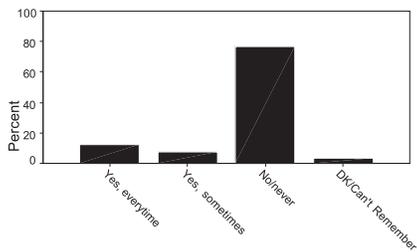
N=209

Chart 11: Q. 10 Did the person or organization you raised your complaint with inform you of the steps you could take to address your complaint?



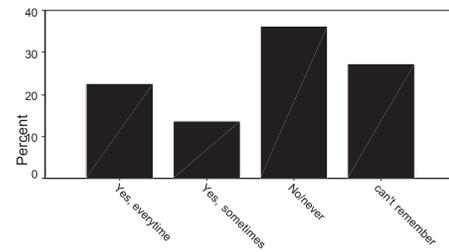
N=88

Chart 12: Q. 11 Did you file a formal written complaint with the police department or the Office of the Police Complaints Commissioner



N=90

Chart 13: Q. 11a If yes, did the police department or the Office of the Police Complaints Commissioner follow up or respond to your complaint?



N=22

**Table 2: Q. 8 Which of the following statements best describe the main reason(s) why you did not raise your concerns or complaint?**

	Frequency (n=179)	%
Fear of retaliation from police	72	40
No one would do anything	71	40
My word against police officer	56	31
Didn't know who to talk to	44	25
Incident not important enough	21	12
Process too confusing	11	6
Complained before but did no good	10	6
Dealt with in another way	10	6
Language issues	3	2
Not part of my culture	3	2
Other/Miscellaneous	35	20

Table 3 shows that the majority of participants who *did* raise their concerns went to the police (59 or 64%), to a community organization or advocacy group (48 or 53%), or to an MP/MLA/City Councillor (15 or 16%). A few (11 participants or 12%) raised their concerns with another source such as lawyers and friends. Participants also reported raising concerns with a doctor, a welfare worker, and local businesses. Only one participant reported approaching the OPCC.

**Table 3: Q. 9 To which of the following groups or individuals did you raise your concerns?**

	Concerns raised with				
	Police Dept./ Officer %	Community/ Advocacy Group %	MP/MLA/ City Councillor %	Other %	OPCC %
Participants (n=91)	65	53	16	12	1

These participants found that raising their concerns did not always move the situation forward. While 40% of this group reported 'always' being told of the steps they could take to address their complaints, 27% were only 'sometimes' given such information, and 31% reported 'never' being told of the necessary steps (see Chart 11).

The majority (78%) of those participants who raised their concerns with somebody did not file a formal, written complaint. Only 11 (12%) of participants said that they did so 'every time' while seven (8%) reported that they 'sometimes' filed a complaint (see Chart 12).

Although the number of participants who answered the question about whether the police department or OPCC followed up their complaint is quite small (n=22), 46% of those participants said yes (every time/sometimes) and 36% said no. The remaining participants could not remember (27%) (see Chart 13).

Table 4 follows the number of participants who have had concerns about police conduct through raising concerns, receiving follow-up information, filing a formal complaint, and receiving a response to that complaint.

**Table 4: Comparison of participant concerns and follow-up steps**

Had concerns	Participants who			
	Raised their concerns with someone	Were given information about the next steps to take with their complaint	Filed formal complaints	Received a response to their complaint
209	91	59	18	8

Table 5 shows that those who raised their concerns but did *not* file a written complaint (n=76) offered three main reasons for not doing so. Thirty-eight (38) percent cited ‘fear of retaliation from police’ while 25% did not file because they felt would be their ‘word against [a] police officer’. The third main reason for not filing, cited by 20% of participants, was that they believed that ‘no one would do anything’.

**Table 5: Q. 11b What is/are the main reason(s) you did not raise your concerns or file a formal written complaint?**

	Frequency (n=76)	%
Fear of retaliation from police	29	38
My word against police officer	19	25
No one would do anything	15	20
Process too confusing	11	14
Didn't know who to talk to	10	13
Complained before but did no good	10	13
Incident not important enough	8	11
Dealt with in another way	7	9
Already did part (complained)	7	9
Not part of my culture	2	3
Language issues	1	1
Other/Miscellaneous	7	9

#### 1.2.4 RESPONSE TO RAISING/REPORTING CONCERNS

Although only a small number of participants with concerns reported ever raising them with anyone in a position to help them follow up, a majority of those who did so indicated that they believe those concerns were taken seriously. Of the 85 people who responded to the question, two-thirds believed their concerns were taken seriously all of the time or some of the time (each at 33%). Another third (32%) believed their complaints were never taken seriously (see Chart 14). Similarly, when asked if they were satisfied with their experiences with the police complaint process (n=76), a larger group were ‘sometimes’ satisfied (32%) or ‘always’ satisfied (22%) compared to the 42% who said they were not satisfied (see Chart 15). Dissatisfaction was based on a number of factors, including a perceived lack of progress or a feeling of being ignored (see Table 6).

**Table 6: Q. 13a If participant was not satisfied with experience with the police complaint process, why not?**

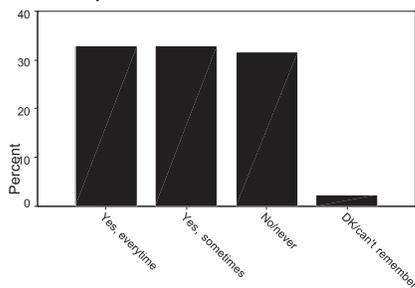
	No.	%
I was ignored/ laughed away	14	45
Complaint didn't go anywhere/did not hear back	10	32
Result was bias	1	3
Other/Miscellaneous	6	19
<b>Total</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>100</b>

### 1.2.5 LOW INCOME AND OUTCOME OF COMPLAINT

In order to assess the extent to which participants perceived their socio-economic status as a factor in their relationship to the police complaint process, the surveyors asked two questions using low income as a proxy for status. The first of these questions asked all participants whether they believed that low income affects the outcome of complaints in general. Nearly three-quarters (74%) of the sample (n=298) answered affirmatively (see Chart 16). The second question was asked only of those who had a complaint (n=85). In this case, a similar proportion (78%) believed their own low-income status had affected the outcome of their complaint (see Chart 17).

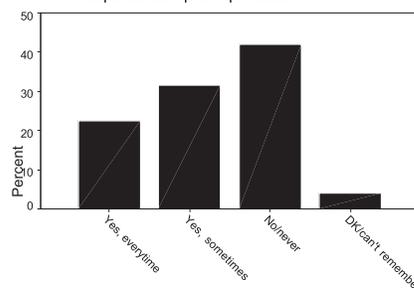
When the latter group of participants was asked to describe how they thought their low-income status affected the outcome of their complaint, the responses pointed to predominately police-related concerns (76%), involving the perception that police look down on street people and/or believe they have no rights. Not being able to hire a lawyer to pursue the complaints and not wanting to 'snitch' were some of the other responses given for this question (see Table 7).

Chart 14: Q. 12 Do you feel your complaint was taken seriously



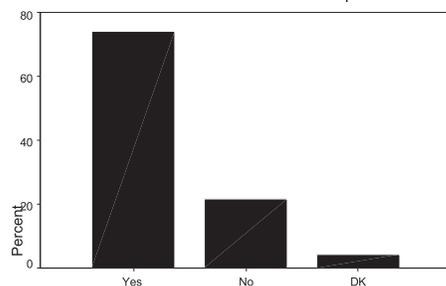
N=85

Chart 15: Q. 13 Were you satisfied with your experience with the police complaint process?



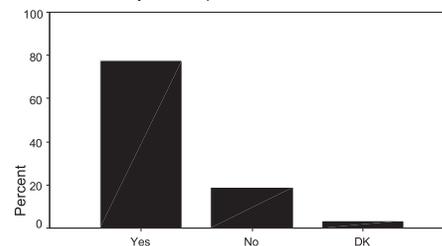
N=76

Chart 16: Q. 14 Do you think that being a person with low income affects the outcome of a complaint?



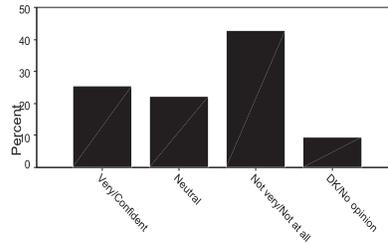
N=289

Chart 17: Q. 15 If you answered yes to Q. 7, do you think that being a person with low income affected the outcome of your complaint



N=85

Chart 18: Q. 16 What is your level of confidence in the overall process in British Columbia for handling complaints about police?



N=298

**Table 7: Q. 15a In what way do you think that being a person of low income affected the outcome of your complaint?**

	No.	%
Police look down on street people/ no rights	53	76
Can't afford to hire a lawyer/ pursue claim	4	81
Don't want to snitch	1	83
Other/Miscellaneous	12	17
<b>Total</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>100</b>

### 1.2.6 LEVEL OF CONFIDENCE IN POLICE COMPLAINT PROCESS IN BC

Given the findings above, it is not surprising that only 25% of participants had any confidence in the police complaint process, while 43% had little or no confidence in it. More than one fifth (22%) of the participants reported being neutral and another 9% reported not knowing or having no opinion (see Chart 18).

Table 8 shows that when the answers to this open-ended question were standardized and coded for database entry, the reasons that participants expressed for having little or no confidence in the process were generally related to perceptions of the police or experience(s) with the process. In the latter case, these were experiences of either the participants themselves or their friends. Interestingly, however, many of those participants who expressed confidence in the system also mentioned similar issues.

**Table 8: Q. 17 Can you explain why you feel confident or not confident in the police complaint process?**

	Not confident	%	Confident	%
Police look down on street people/no rights	46	37	1	1
Bias/ Police investigating police	42	33		
Personal Experience/experience of friends	19	15	15	20
Other/Miscellaneous	11	9	12	16
Don't know enough about it	4	3	4	6
DK	4	3	7	9
Confident in system	1	0	36	48
<b>Total</b>	<b>127</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>75</b>	<b>100</b>

## 2 VARIATION BY SITE, GENDER, ETHNOCULTURAL BACKGROUND AND DIRECT EXPERIENCE

This section presents cross-tabulated survey findings for those participants with direct experience of police conduct about which they were concerned. This data is cross-tabulated by study site, gender, and ethnocultural background. Only those findings that showed significance ( $p > .05$ ) or near significance ( $p > .06-.08$ ) are reported. See Appendix 2 for further information regarding the characteristics of the Street Sample.

### 2.1 SITE DIFFERENCES

#### 2.1.1 PARTICIPANT CHARACTERISTICS

Table 9 shows a selection of survey participant characteristics categorized by study site. Men were the overwhelming number of participants, which is consistent with general observations of the street-involved population, but their proportion varied somewhat by site. More males were interviewed in Vancouver (77%) compared with the 70% in New Westminster and 69% in Victoria.

**Table 9: Selected participant characteristics by site**

	Male %	Female %	Aboriginal %	Unemployed %	Mainly/often homeless	Never homeless
Vancouver	77	25	29	87	37	25
Victoria	69	24	32	77	60	8
New Westminster	70	30	48	64	36	26

More aboriginal people were interviewed in New Westminster (40% as compared to 32% in Victoria and 29% in Vancouver). Non-white or non-Aboriginal survey participants were too small in number (10 participants or 3%) for any meaningful comparison.

More New Westminster participants were employed or in school as compared to the other sites, and more of the Vancouver participants were unemployed (88% in Vancouver as compared to 80% in Victoria and 64% in New Westminster).

More of the Victoria participants were 'mainly' or 'often' homeless (60% as compared to 38% in Vancouver and 25% in New Westminster) and fewer Victoria participants were 'never homeless' (8% compared to 26% in New Westminster, and 25% in Vancouver).

### 2.1.2 POLICE COMPLAINT COMMISSIONER

Only 39% of participants in Vancouver said they knew what to do in the event of having a complaint about their treatment by police, compared to 48% in New Westminster and 56% in Victoria (see Table 10). More Vancouver participants had *not* heard of the OPCC – 65% as compared to 58% in New Westminster, and 49% in Victoria.

**Table 10: Participant knowledge of police complaint process, by site**

	Participants					
	Know how to make a complaint about treatment received from a local police officer			Have heard of the Office of the Police Complaint Commissioner		
	Yes %	No %	Not Sure %	Yes %	No %	Not Sure %
Vancouver	39	52	8	34	65	
Victoria	56	31	13	40	49	11
New Westminster	48	52		42	58	

### 2.1.3 POLICE COMPLAINT PROCESS

Table 11 shows that more participants in New Westminster thought investigations into complaints against the police are handled fairly in their local police departments – 44% as compared to 24% in Vancouver and 20% in Victoria (n=298).

**Table 11: Perceptions of the fairness of complaints, by site**

	Complaints are handled fairly		
	Yes %	No %	DK %
Vancouver	24	60	15
Victoria	20	68	12
New Westminster	44	46	10

When asked why they did not believe complaints were handled fairly by their local department, 70% of participants in New Westminster and Vancouver attributed this feeling to their perceptions of the police – bias, protecting their own, ignoring complaints, etc. – or to their own or their friend’s experiences (36% and 23%, respectively), compared to 60% and 13%, respectively, for participants in Victoria (see Table 12).

**Table 12: Why participants do not believe police complaints are handled fairly, by site**

	Police bias %	Personal/ friends’ experiences %	Unknown process %	Police ignore complaints %	Other %	DK %
Vancouver (n=106)	49	23	1	20	6	2
Victoria (n=50)	42	36	4	18		
New Westminster (n=23)	70	13	4		9	4

More participants in Victoria said they had personally experienced actions or comments of a police officer in the past two years about which they had concerns – 60% as compared to 51% in Vancouver, and 40% in New Westminster. More participants in Vancouver and Victoria than in New Westminster had also *witnessed* actions or behaviours that concerned them – 63%, 66% and 46%, respectively (see Table 13).

**Table 13: Participants with concerns about police conduct, by site**

	Involving themselves %	They have witnessed %
Vancouver (n=173/171)	50.8	63.1
Victoria (n=75/73)	60	65.7
New Westminster (n=50)	40	46

Participants in Victoria were much more likely to raise their concerns ‘every time or sometimes’ as compared to those in Vancouver or New Westminster – 71% compared to 30% and 48%, respectively. Only 28% of Victoria participants ‘never’ raised their concerns compared to 70% in Vancouver and 52% in New Westminster (see Table 14). Reasons given for not raising concerns were more police-related in New Westminster and more process-related in Vancouver and Victoria.

**Table 14: Did participants raise their concerns, by site**

	Every time %	Sometimes %	Never %	DK %
Vancouver (n=124)	10	19	70	
Victoria (n=58)	22	48	28	2
New Westminster (27)	11	37	52	

Of those participants who did raise their concerns, a large proportion in each site raised them with the police (see Table 15). This figure is much higher in Victoria (76%) than in either New Westminster (62%) or Vancouver (54%). Participants in Victoria were also more likely than their counterparts in the other two cities to also raise their concerns with a community or advocacy group (78% compared to 41% in Vancouver and only 8% in New Westminster). Participants in Victoria were also more likely to take their concerns regarding police conduct to an MP, MLA, and/or City Councillor. In contrast, Vancouver and New Westminster participants who raised their concerns were more likely to do that with other people ranging from lawyers to a doctor, a welfare worker, local businesses, and friends. It is also evident that many, if not most, survey participants who raised concerns in Victoria raised those concerns with more than one party.

**Table 15: Groups with which participants raised their concerns, by site**

	Concerns raised with				
	Police Dept./ Officer %	OPCC %	MP/MLA/ City Councillor %	Community/ Advocacy Group %	Other %
Vancouver (n=37)	54		3	41	19
Victoria (=41)	76	2	34	78	
New Westminster (n=13)	62			8	31

Among the participants who did raise their concerns, those in Vancouver were less likely to report being informed of the steps available to address their complaints (see Table 16). Fifty one percent (51%) said they were never informed compared to 31% in New Westminster and only 12% in Victoria (n=88).

**Table 16: Participants received the information they needed to address their complaints, by site**

	Every time %	Sometimes %	Never %	DK %
Vancouver (n=35)	43	6	51	
Victoria (n=40)	33	50	13	5
New Westminster (13)	54	15	40	

The sites also showed important differences between participants' perceptions of the seriousness with which their complaints were treated (see Table 17). In Vancouver, 47% of those who answered the question did not believe they were taken seriously. This compares to 33% in New Westminster, and only 18% in Victoria. Conversely, the proportion of Vancouver participants who reported their complaints being treated seriously 'every time' was also 47%. Almost 80% of Victoria participants said their complaints were treated seriously at least 'sometimes' while half of those reporting in New Westminster said their complaints taken seriously 'every time'.

**Table 17: Participants' perceptions of whether their complaints were treated seriously, by site**

	Every time %	Sometimes %	Never %	DK %
Vancouver (n=34)	47	3	47	3
Victoria (n=29)	15	64	18	3
New Westminster (12)	50	17	33	

Similarly, more Victoria participants expressed satisfaction with their experience with the complaints process than did those in other sites (see Table 18). Nearly 66% of participants in Victoria were satisfied 'every time' or 'sometimes' compared to 50% in New Westminster, and only 34% in Vancouver.

**Table 18: Participants' satisfaction with the police complaint process, by site**

	Every time %	Sometimes %	Never %	DK %
Vancouver (n=26)	31	4	62	4
Victoria (n=40)	13	55	30	3
New Westminster (10)	40	10	40	10

Compared to the other two sites, more Victoria survey participants believed that their complaints are taken seriously and expressed satisfaction with their experience of the complaints process; however, Victoria participants are also much more likely to believe that low income status affects the outcome of a complaint about police conduct (see Table 19).

**Table 19: Participants' perceptions of the influence of low income on the outcome of police complaints in general, by site**

	Yes %	No %	DK %
Vancouver (n=169)	70	27	4
Victoria (n=50)	84	10	6
New Westminster (70)	74	22	4

Victoria participants were also much more likely to believe that being a person of low-income affected the outcome of their *own* complaint compared to those in Vancouver and New Westminster (see Table 20).

**Table 20: Participants’ perceptions of the influence of their low income status on the outcome of their own complaints, by site**

	Yes %	No %	DK %
Vancouver (n=34)	68	24	9
Victoria (n=38)	92	8	
New Westminster (n=13)	62	39	

Finally, there were some site differences in participants’ level of confidence with the overall process in BC for handling complaints against the police (see Table 21). More participants in New Westminster said they were ‘very confident’ or ‘confident’ (42%), than were those in Vancouver (23%) or Victoria (20%). Indeed, in Victoria, a majority were ‘not very confident’ or ‘not confident at all’ in the process.

**Table 21: Confidence levels in the police complaint process, by site**

	Confident/ Very confident %	Neutral %	Not very confident/ Not confident at all %	DK %
Vancouver (n=173)	23	22	44	11
Victoria (n=75)	20	16	53	11
New Westminster (50)	42	32	24	2

## 2.2 GENDER AND ETHNOCULTURAL BACKGROUND

The data show some ethnocultural and gender differences among participants; primarily involving housing and employment status (see Table 22). A slightly higher proportion of white males reported a disability than did the Aboriginal participants or those from other groups. Both groups of aboriginal participants and female participants were slightly younger – both around 37 years of age – than white males, with a mean of 40 years.

**Table 22: Selected participant characteristics by gender and ethnocultural background**

	Mainly/Often homeless %	Never homeless %	Unemployed %	Disability %	Mean Age
Male (n=220)	46	21	80	61	40
Female (n=73)	33	22	88	63	37
White (n=193)	44	21	82	63	41
Aboriginal (=95)	40	20	82	60	37

The proportion of males (41%) who had heard of the OPCC is much higher than that of females (26%). However, there were no statistically significant ethnocultural or gender differences with regard to knowledge of how to make a police complaint, knowledge of the role of the OPCC, opinions regarding the fairness of local police departments, nor experiences with police treatment (by number of incidents or number of incidents causing concern).

Ethnocultural or gender differences had no significance for concerns about police conduct, reasons for not reporting, filing formal complaints, and perceptions of whether the complaint was taken seriously. However, expressions of satisfaction were statistically relevant. Fewer Aboriginal than white participants were ‘always

satisfied' with the outcome of their complaints (11% compared to 32%) but more Aboriginal participants were 'sometimes' satisfied (41% compared to 23% of white participants; see Table 23).

**Table 23: Satisfaction with outcomes of police complaints by ethnocultural background**

	Every time %	Sometimes %	Never %	DK %
White(n=44)	32	23	41	5
Aboriginal (n=27)	11	41	48	

More females than males were *not* confident about the process in place to handle police complaints (49% as compared to 41% of males), but more males were neutral – 25% as compared to 16% for females (see Table 24).

**Table 24: Confidence in the police complaint process, by gender**

	Very confident/ Confident %	Neutral %	Not very/ Not at all confident %	DK %
Male (n=220)	26	25	41	8
Female (n=73)	26	16	49	8

## 2.3 DIRECT EXPERIENCE

Participants who were never homeless were less likely to have direct experience with treatment by police about which they were concerned compared to those in some state of homelessness (see Table 25). Only 33% of the 'never homeless' had direct experience as compared to 52% of the 'mainly' homeless, 60% of the 'often' homeless and 57% of the 'occasionally' homeless.

**Table 25: Concern about police conduct by housing status**

	Concerns about police conduct experience directly by participants	
	Yes %	No %
Mainly homeless (n=84)	52	48
Often homeless (n=43)	60	40
Occasionally homeless (n=108)	57	73
Never homeless (n=63)	33	67

Participants with direct experience were much less likely to believe that investigations into complaints against the police are handled fairly in their local police departments (see Table 26). Only 16% of this group said complaints were handled fairly compared to 38% of those without direct experience.

**Table 26: Relationship between concern about police conduct and perception of the fairness of the complaint process**

Complaints handled fairly	Concerns about police conduct experienced directly by participants (n=153) %	
	Yes %	No %
Yes	16	40
No	72	15
DK	12	14

There is also an important intersection between participants' direct experience with police conduct compared to witnessing police conduct about which they were concerned (see Table 1). Eighty percent (80%) of those who reported having concerns about police conduct directed toward or involving them also witnessed conduct about which they had concerns. These participants constitute nearly 67% of those who had witnessed police conduct about which they were concerned.

Those who had concern about their direct experience with the police were also more likely to believe that low-income status affects the outcome of a complaint compared to those without direct experience (Table 27). Eight-five percent (85%) of the former group of participants believed that low income status is relevant to the outcome of a complaint, compared to only 63% of those who had not experienced police conduct causing concern.

**Table 27: Relationship between direct experience and the belief that low income affects the outcome of a complaint**

		Low income affects the outcome of a complaint			
		Yes	No	DK	Total
Concerns about police conduct experienced directly by participants	Yes	125	19	3	148
	No	89	44	9	142
	<b>Total</b>	<b>214</b>	<b>63</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>289</b>

Those with direct experience were much less confident about the overall process for handling police complaints in BC than were those without such experience (Table 28). Only 19% of the former were 'very confident' or 'confident' with the process compared to 32% of the latter. Moreover, fewer of those participants with direct experience were neutral (17%), compared to those without such experience (28%).

**Table 28: Level of confidence in the complaint process by experience with police conduct**

		Very confident/ confident %	Neutral %	Not very/Not at all confident %	DK %
Concerns about police conduct experienced directly by participants	Yes (n=153)	19	17	55	9
	No (n=145)	32	28	30	10

## 3 FINDINGS FROM THE SOCIAL AGENCY SAMPLE

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A total of 44 social agencies that provide services to marginalized people were sampled in the three study sites. In Vancouver, personnel from 21 agencies in the Downtown Eastside, the West End and Grandview/Woodlands were interviewed. All three of these neighbourhoods have active 'street scenes'. In New Westminster, personnel from nine agencies were interviewed. Personnel from 14 agencies were interviewed in Victoria. The list of agencies surveyed is included in Appendix 3.

The interview data were entered into an SPSS database. Because of the small number of agencies and the open-ended structure of some of the survey questions, values were recoded for certain variables (e.g., type of agency; services offered; referrals) before the frequencies were run. Although numbers are too small for any meaningful statistical analysis, cross tabulations were conducted by site to look at the frequencies and to see whether differences occurred. Guides for exploring site differences included actual and expected counts and chi-square tests.

Analysis of the interview data revealed the following about the agencies, the personnel interviewed and their experience and knowledge of the police complaint process and the OPCC.

### 3.1 AGENCY CHARACTERISTICS

#### 3.1.1 TYPE OF AGENCY

The agency personnel that were interviewed work in organizations that provide a wide range of services and programs:

- One half (50%) of the participating agencies provided shelter services;
- 42% provided counselling or referrals;
- Slightly over a third (34%) of agencies provided drop-in, emergency shelter or food services;
- 27% provided various aspects of health programs and services related to, for example, AIDS, mental illness, drug use;
- 16% comprised church-related multi-service (i.e., offering a range of different programs and services);
- 11% were community centers that provide a variety of services; and
- 7% focused on education and employment services;

- 5% each provided language and interpretation services, employment and recreation programs, and child care services.

Personnel at these agencies work with a broad range of people:

- 59% of the agencies served street-involved and homeless people;
- 14% served any community people;
- 7% worked with people with mental health problems;
- 7% worked with Aboriginal clients;
- 7% worked with sex trade workers;
- 5% served immigrants and refugees; and
- 2% provided programs for people with addictions.

### **3.1.2 CLIENTS SERVED**

In terms of clients mainly served by the various agencies, 43% served adult males, 20% adult females; 18% all adults equally; 11% adults and youth and 7% all youth.

### **3.1.3 LEGAL SERVICE AND REFERRALS**

Fifty-five percent (55%) of the agencies did not offer legal services to clients while 45% did.

Nearly two-thirds (64%) of agency personnel claimed that clients used their agency to report police-related problems.

When asked about to whom they would hypothetically refer clients in the case of a police complaint, agency participants gave three the common answers:

- to a legal advocate (legal aid, Native Courtworker) or lawyer (36%);
- to a community advocacy group (36%); or
- to a locally known and trusted police officer or community police office, or, more rarely, to a police department (20% inclusive).

In only 7% of cases did participants say they would refer another group and in only one instance did a participant cite the OPCC. Responses to this general question differ from the figures for actual referrals below.

## **3.2 AGENCY PERSONNEL INTERVIEWED**

### **3.2.1 POSITIONS AND EXPERIENCE**

Slightly over one-half of the agency participants were executive directors or program managers; 34% were front-line workers; and 14% identified themselves as social workers or counsellors.

The majority (57%) had been with their agency six years or more; 23% had worked three to five years and only one-fifth (20%) had been employed at their agency two years or less. This suggests that participants brought considerable experience and knowledge to the interviews.

### 3.2.2 FAMILIARITY WITH COMPLAINTS PROCESS

Despite their level of experience, 39% of participants were not familiar with the process available for members of the public to lay complaints against police. Of the 61% who were familiar with it:

- Barely one quarter (24%) understood the process 'very well' and
- 76 % only 'somewhat'.

Those who knew about the process found out:

- Through actual experience (57%);
- By word of mouth (27%); and
- Through the media (10%).

## 3.3 THE POLICE COMPLAINT PROCESS

### 3.3.1 COMPLAINTS AND TYPE OF REFERRAL

When asked if they had had clients report a complaint to them about treatment by local police, 91% of agency personnel said 'yes', but only 20% said it occurred 'often'; 48% said 'sometimes'; and 25% said 'rarely'.

In the case of these actual police complaints:

- 77% percent of participants had referred a complaint to a community advocate;
- 59% referred clients to a lawyer;
- 41% to police;
- 34% to an MP/MLA/City Councillor; and
- 11% to the OPCC.

### 3.3.2 SATISFACTION

Referrals to lawyers received the highest ratings of satisfaction from agency participants, at 57%; followed by referrals to police, at 55%. However, it is important to note in this context that many cases of reporting an incident or situation to police, especially in Vancouver and New Westminster, involved talking with an officer who is well known in the community or to a community policing office where a level of confidence had already been established. Forty seven percent (47%) of agency participants said they were satisfied with referrals to community advocates while 20% reported satisfaction with referrals to an MP/MLA/City Councillor. Two of the five referrals to the OPCC were considered satisfactory. Overall, only 23% of the agency participants reported feeling satisfied about all the referrals they had made over time, though 56% would refer future complaints to police and 36% would refer to the OPCC.

The primary reason for lack of satisfaction with referrals was that 'nothing happened' (64%). Other reasons included:

- 14% reported that police behaviour didn't change as a result,
- 13% said the process was too long and complicated, and
- 9% don't understand the system or reported being too passive in pursuing the complaint.

### 3.3.3 LEVEL OF CONFIDENCE IN PROCESS

The level of confidence in the police complaint process among agency participants is not very high:

- 23% of participants were 'very confident' or 'confident',
- 16% were 'neutral', and
- 50% were 'not very confident' or 'not confident at all',
- 2% said they 'didn't know'.

### 3.3.4 REPORTING BY MARGINALIZED PEOPLE

Not surprisingly, when asked whether they thought marginalized people are likely to make a complaint directly to police, 86% of the agency participants said 'no'; 9% weren't sure; and 4% said 'yes' and 'don't know' (2% each).

The over-riding basis for this belief was the relationship between police and street people: primarily the latter's fear of police or fear of retaliation by police or just a belief that the police will provide no support (75%). About 20% of agency participants also believed that marginalized people have "too much else going on in their lives" to deal with these issues and/or are passive because they are generally used to poor treatment.

### 3.3.5 ROLE OF THE AGENCY

Only a third of participants felt they had a greater role to play in dealing with complaints against police. Of those:

- 53% thought they needed to focus more on the issue to provide better service to clients,
- 33% felt more information regarding the complaints process was required for their workers and/or volunteers,
- 7% thought they should work to improve relationships with police, and
- 7% thought they should get involved in greater client outreach around the issue.

With regard to available information regarding the complaints process:

- 70% of agency participants admitted to not having sufficient information about the process,
- 95% said no pamphlets were presently available at their agencies, and
- 81% thought pamphlets would be useful.

## 3.4 SITE VARIATION

There were differences between agency responses in each site. It is important to remember that these findings may reflect differences in the agency services and resources across the three sites rather than pointing to any issues regarding the complaints process.

- Victoria had fewer executive directors or program participants (29% as compared to 70% in New Westminster and 60% in Vancouver) and fewer with long experience at the agencies.
- More clients in Victoria and New Westminster were referred to lawyers but this may be an artefact of having Pivot Legal Society in Vancouver, which, along with the Downtown Eastside Residents Association, was one of the two highest sites of referral in Vancouver.

- More New Westminster participants said they had not had clients report a concern or complaint about police – 30% as compared to 5% in Vancouver, and none in Victoria.
- When complaints occurred, more of the Vancouver and New Westminster participants said this occurred ‘sometimes’ (63% and 87%, respectively), whereas in Victoria the ‘often’ and ‘rarely’ responses were most frequent (each at 43%).
- More of the Victoria participants said they made referrals to an MP/MLA/City Counsellor but, of these, nearly two-thirds were considered unsatisfactory.
- Fewer New Westminster participants were satisfied with their community advocacy referrals – only 40% compared to 80% in Vancouver and 100% in Victoria.
- Ninety two percent (92%) of Victoria participants were satisfied with referrals made to lawyers as compared to only 40% in New Westminster, and 50% in Vancouver.
- Seventy five percent (75%) of referrals made to police in Victoria were considered satisfactory compared to only 37% in Vancouver and 25% in New Westminster – referrals in the latter two sites were much less frequent.
- Victoria participants reported more satisfaction with referrals to a community advocate – 92% were satisfied compared to 25% in New Westminster and 12% in Vancouver.
- When asked about making referrals in the future, more participants in New Westminster (63%) said they would report to the OPCC, whereas 71% in Victoria and 41% in Vancouver said they would not make such a referral.

## 4 DISCUSSION

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The survey of street-involved individuals highlights six key issues with regard to the police complaint process for this population. First, based on the survey results, there is a widespread lack of understanding of both the process and knowledge of the role of the OPCC. This is particularly interesting given the second issue raised by the survey: the data show that a very large proportion of people who are involved in the street scene have had multiple concerns about police conduct over the past two years. While it is not the role of this research team to speculate about the reasons for such concerns, that fact that they exist indicates that there is a problem in the relationship between marginalized people and the police.

Third, the problematic nature of this relationship extends to perceptions of the police complaint process itself, notwithstanding the generally low levels of understanding of the process and the role of the OPCC. The people who were surveyed lacked confidence in the process, suggesting that it has minimal legitimacy among the marginalized, especially those who are directly affected by police conduct.

Fourth, the evidence shows that concerns resulting from direct experience with the police affect people's perceptions of fairness of the complaints process, as well as of the police themselves. Indeed, there was almost no belief among survey participants with direct experience that police would conduct a fair inquiry into police conduct. Given the lack of knowledge of the role of the OPCC, the relationship between the marginalized populations and the police seems to have a significant bearing on perceptions of the complaints process.

Fifth, given the vast over-representation of Aboriginal people in the sample - which likely accords with their representation in the street population - the low level of ethnocultural difference around concerns about police conduct as well as confidence and fairness in the complaints process suggests that socio-economic marginality, rather than ethnocultural background, is a determining factor in relations with the police and associated institutions.

Finally, the significant variations by study site in levels of satisfaction and perceptions of the police complaint process, as well as experiences with the police, bear further investigation. While the variations reported above were statistically significant, the small sample sizes in each locale would necessitate a more in-depth approach to understand the factors involved in such differences. For example, are these the result of different municipal police practices with regard to marginalized people or different approaches by agencies to the issue?

The survey results suggest that, at least with regard to the street population, the authorities responsible for the police complaint process at all levels need to engage in two central activities. First, the process needs to be reviewed to determine the validity of the current police complaint model.

Second, the OPCC needs to engage in outreach to marginalized groups in the population. While it would require more research to affirm, the distance of the process from 'the street' and the possible involvement of police forces are likely delegitimizing factors. An increased presence of the complaint process on 'the street' could only enhance its legitimacy. This can probably be effected through community organizations like the ones interviewed for the agency survey but may also require not only printed material but also educational workshops that would familiarize people with the process and give them an opportunity to critique it.

The survey of social agencies provided additional data, particularly with regard to the process of referral once a concern has been raised. One of the consistent responses from agency personnel was a differentiation of 'The Police' from a local officer or a community policing office with which the participants were familiar. This was particularly the case in Vancouver and New Westminster. The sense of familiarity was a key dimension of the decision to involve the police at all.

Some participants mentioned individual police officers by name and said that they would have no hesitation going directly to that person because of the positive relationship the officer had with the community and the agency. But without this sense of knowledge and familiarity, agency participants were very reluctant to go directly to the police. Agency participants expressed two reasons for such reluctance. First, like the street participants, agency participants had concerns about retaliation by police or damaging existing police/agency relations. One participant noted that, *"people [agency and clients] don't want to alienate the police by laying complaints ... they need police because of the environment in which they live [in the Downtown Eastside]"*. Second, many participants did not feel that police could monitor or investigate themselves and that by going to police it was subscribing to that conflict-of-interest scenario. As one said: *"[You] don't usually turn [for help] to [the] person who has traumatized you"*, and another said, *"Police don't have to answer to anyone."*

There were a number of inconsistencies in other responses as mentioned above. For example, while people would often state that they did not feel their agency could or should play more of a role in the area of police complaints, at the same time they would admit to not knowing much about the process, not having adequate information to provide clients and would welcome the use of pamphlets if available.

## APPENDIX 1: STUDY METHODOLOGY

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The data in this study were generated through two survey questionnaires, one directed at marginalized people living on or close to the street, the other at staff of social service agencies that work with the former group. The two questionnaires were developed in a collaborative process between the Strathcona Research Group and key research staff in Police Services Division. In the design of the questionnaires it was critical that the variables and values reflected those of the larger public telephone survey<sup>2</sup> utilized by Police Services Division. At the same time, it was also considered important to include some questions that would elicit answers reflecting the unique experience of those involved in street activities and those who work with them in social service agencies. The two surveys thus vary somewhat from the telephone survey but follow the same direction and seek to elicit answers to the same general questions.

### STREET SURVEY

Strathcona has research experience with marginalized people in the two Lower Mainland sites and the Victoria surveyor has conducted street research in that city. This experience provided the basis for identifying the areas where people who are socio-economically marginalized and street-involved were most likely to live or be accessible to surveyors.

In order to determine the sample size in each site, the researchers initially explored comparing the proportion of the population with incomes below Statistics Canada's Low-Income Cutoff (LICO) category for each of the three cities to determine. However, this meant that the samples in the two smaller cities would likely have been too small for meaningful analysis and comparison. In consultation with Police Services Division, the research team settled on an overall sample of 300 participants with local samples broken down as follows:

- 175 interviews in Vancouver;
- 75 in Victoria; and
- 50 in New Westminster.

One less than the target number was ultimately completed in Vancouver.

Interviews in Victoria were conducted throughout the downtown core, where visibly marginalized people are present in relatively large numbers. Many interviews were done in the proximity of agencies like Streetlink, Street Outreach Services, and the Open Door, as well as in popular public spaces like Centennial Square. Because

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<sup>2</sup> As part of the overall police complaint review, Police Services Division contracted the implementation of a separate survey, conducted by telephone, whereby residents from the 11 municipalities policed by independent forces within BC were contacted regarding public awareness of the complaints process.

the target population is located in a few different areas in the downtown core, the Victoria interviewer was able to move around frequently in order to avoid duplication. Victoria participants were all very helpful and very eager to be involved as they valued an outlet for sharing their experiences. In addition, the survey itself provided an opportunity for educating participants who seemed to have little knowledge of the complaints process and were interesting in learning more about it.

Interviews in Vancouver were conducted from Commercial Drive through the Downtown Eastside and into the West End/Granville Street. Because of the density of visibly marginalized people in the central Vancouver area, it was less necessary to concentrate on spaces around community agencies than it was in other parts of the sample. Once the study began, interviewers learned that it was necessary to frequently change locations because many participants were interested in both conveying their experiences and learning something about the complaints process.

Interviews in New Westminster were conducted throughout the downtown area, with an emphasis on the area around the Union Gospel Mission (at 668 Clarkson Street) and Saint Barnabas Anglican Church (at 1002 Fifth Avenue). The visibly marginalized population in the downtown core of New Westminster is less condensed than in the other study areas. As a result, obtaining the desired sample required more effort here than in the other study sites.

Surveyors with experience conducting quantitative and qualitative interviews in the street milieu were selected for each of the three sites. This included direct experience in all three of the survey sites and sub-locales. The training of the surveyors in administration of the street survey focused on developing a clear understanding of the questions and the scoring process and as well as building a common approach to the interviewing process. The questionnaire was pre-tested at the end of January and necessary changes were made. Formal field work commenced in the first week of February and was completed by the end of the month. One of surveyors, who has extensive experience using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS), was retained to enter all the street survey data into the database. Data analysis involved frequencies, means, and cross-tabulations of the variables by site, race, gender and direct experience with concerns over treatment by police.

The survey interviews in both sites were conducted using a 'cold call' approach in which interviews took place with people who were generally strangers to the surveyors. Each participant was offered \$5 for participating. When a potential participant who appeared to be marginalized was seen on the streets that person would be approached to ask about his or her interest in participating in the study. Initially, participants were often suspicious that the interviewers were agents of the police department, but once the nature of the impartial research was explained and the promises of anonymity and confidentiality, people generally felt comfortable with their participation in the data-collection process. Participants were then interviewed in a locale close to this initial encounter, with the interviewers taking measures to find a place that accommodated the need for privacy while balancing the comfort of the participant with the safety of the interviewer. Despite the efforts to design a short survey, interviews ranged from twenty to forty minutes in length.

It is important to note that the street survey does have some limitations due to the environment in which the data was collected. Because the surveyors were approaching people 'cold' - that is approaching people to whom they were complete strangers - they were able to establish only minimal, if any, rapport with the participant. As a result, the situation could be difficult and participants were not always responsive to all questions. As noted above, some participants were initially suspicious that the study was being conducted by the police. In situations like this, the imperative for the surveyor is to complete the survey to the greatest extent possible. However, it also means that some questions are not answered by all participants. As the

charts show, some questions have a lower response rate than would be expected given the overall numbers. Once they realized that the study was not being carried out by the police, most participants were actually quite keen to participate and have their opinions noted.

## **SOCIAL AGENCY INTERVIEWS**

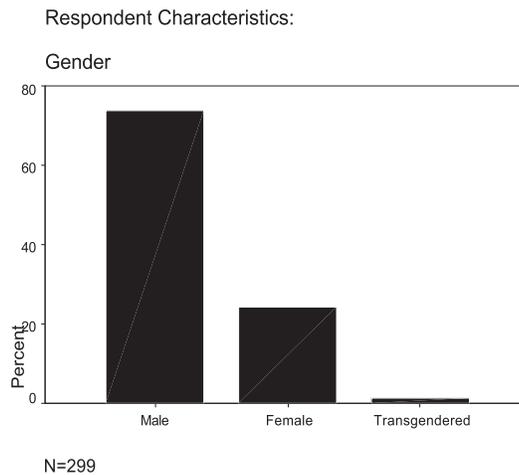
Service provider participants were selected on the basis of geography and type of service in the three research sites. They were identified by people who worked with marginalized or street populations and/or in agencies such as the United Way of the Lower Mainland. Lists were compiled for each site with the names of Executive Directors, where available. Originally an agency sample of fifteen was proposed for each site. However, this was altered for Vancouver and New Westminster because of the disparities in overall population, the relative population of the socio-economically marginalized target group, and the number of agencies. Ultimately, twenty-one interviews were conducted in Vancouver, nine in New Westminster, and fourteen in Victoria.

The Social Agency interview process involved a three-step process. A member of the research team contacted each agency and asked to speak to the Executive Director or another staff person with broad experience in the organization. After making this connection, the researcher described the purpose of the interview and then asked the contact to either participate, if he or she was the appropriate person, or to refer someone else who would be able to knowledgeably respond. The interviews were arranged and conducted by telephone during January and February and each took approximately fifteen minutes to complete.

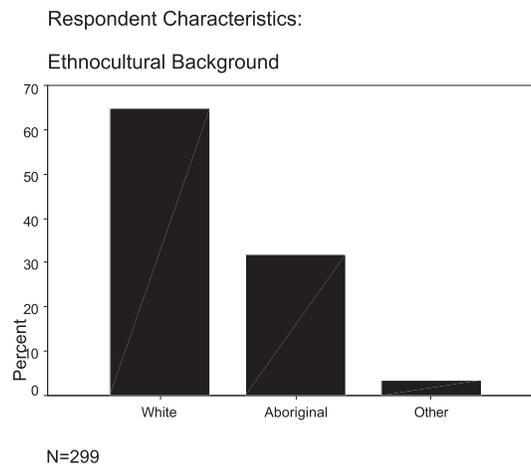
## APPENDIX 2: CHARACTERISTICS OF THE STREET SAMPLE

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**Gender:** Males comprised 221 or 74%, females 73 or 24%. Trans-gendered people made up four or 1.3% of the street sample.

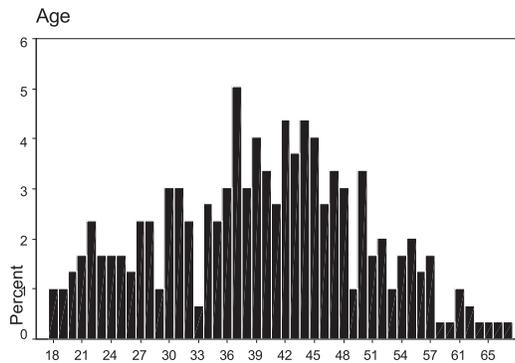


**Ethnocultural Background:** Nearly three-quarters or 194 or 65% of the street sample was white, 95 or 32% was Aboriginal, and 10 or 3% belonged to other minority groups.



**Age:** The mean age of the street sample was 39.5 years – the New Westminster group was the oldest at 40.7 and the youngest groups was in Victoria at 37.7 years.

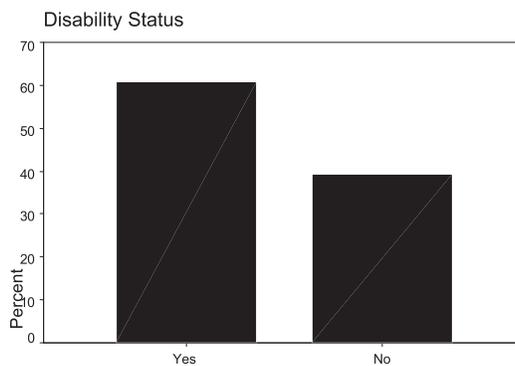
Respondent Characteristics:



N=297

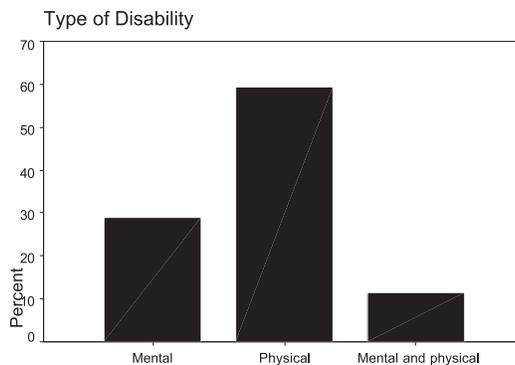
**Disability Status:** Over one-half of participants (53%) identified themselves as having a disability and, of those, 59% had a physical disability, 29% had a mental disability, and 11% had both a physical and a mental disability.

Respondent Characteristics:



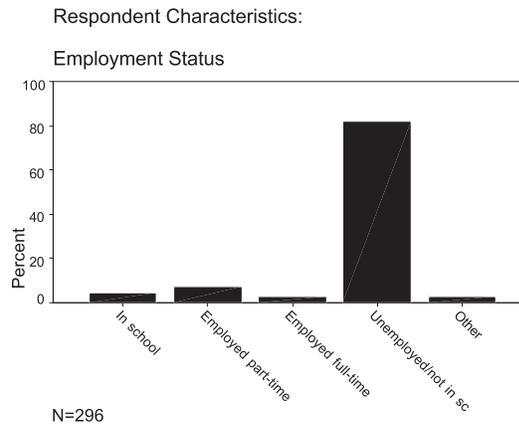
N=298

Respondent Characteristics:

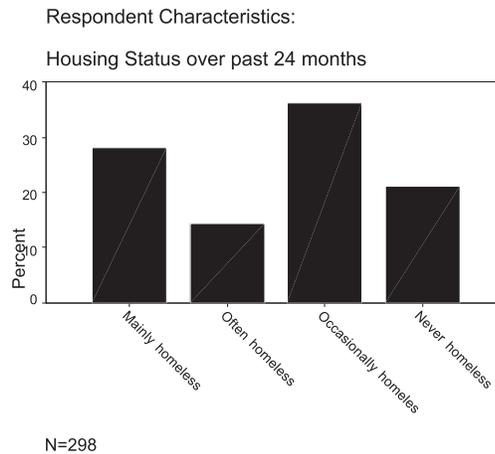


N=158

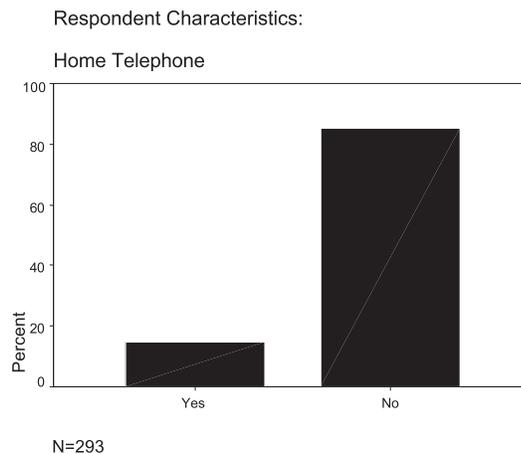
**Employment Status:** Only nine individuals or 3% of the sample was fully employed while 82% (n=243) was unemployed or not in school. Twenty-two people (7%) were employed part time, 13 (4%) were in school, and nine (3%) had another status such as on pensions or receiving disability payments.



**Homeless and Phone Status:** When asked about their living circumstances over the past 24 months, 63 people or 21% were 'never homeless', 36% (108) were 'occasionally homeless', 43 or 14% were 'often homeless' and 84 or 28% were 'mainly homeless'.



Information about a home telephone was collected for 293 of the participants and, of those, 85% had no telephone.



## APPENDIX 3: LIST OF AGENCIES CONTACTED FOR THE STUDY

Vancouver	New Westminister	Victoria
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Carnegie Centre</li> <li>• Evelyn Seller Centre</li> <li>• Ray-Cam Co-operative Centre</li> <li>• The Living Room (Lookout Outreach)</li> <li>• The Dug-Out</li> <li>• DEYAS</li> <li>• VANDU</li> <li>• PACE</li> <li>• The Gathering Place</li> <li>• First Baptist Church</li> <li>• Three Bridges Clinic</li> <li>• Coast Foundation Drop-in</li> <li>• Healing Spirit</li> <li>• Portland Hotel</li> <li>• First United Church</li> <li>• Kettle Friendship Society</li> <li>• United Native Youth Association</li> <li>• MOSAIC</li> <li>• Hey Way N'oq</li> <li>• Bridge Emergency Shelter</li> <li>• The Door-is-Open Drop-In.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Union Gospel Mission</li> <li>• Royal Columbian Hospital Admission Diversion Program</li> <li>• Fraserside Emergency Shelter</li> <li>• Salvation Army</li> <li>• Shilo-Sixth Ave. United Church</li> <li>• St. Barnabas Anglican Church</li> <li>• Cliff Block (Lookout Emergency Aid Society)</li> <li>• Garfield Hotel (Salvation Army)</li> <li>• New Westminister Community Development Society.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Streetlink</li> <li>• 9/10 Club (St. Andrews Cathedral)</li> <li>• Victoria Native Friendship Centre</li> <li>• AIDS Vancouver Island</li> <li>• The Needle Exchange</li> <li>• The Open Door</li> <li>• Mustard Seed</li> <li>• Salvation Army</li> <li>• Alliance Club Outreach Services</li> <li>• TAPS</li> <li>• PEERS</li> <li>• Victoria Status of Women Action Group</li> <li>• YM-YWCA</li> <li>• Victoria Agency, Justice Institute of BC.</li> </ul>

## APPENDIX 4: STRATHCONA RESEARCH POLICE COMPLAINTS PROCESS REVIEW CORE AREA AWARENESS SURVEY

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Site: \_\_\_\_\_ Interviewer \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Interview No.: \_\_\_\_\_

### OPENING SCRIPT:

Hi, I'm a researcher with Strathcona Research Group and I'm wondering if I can take a few minutes of your time. It will be worth \$5. We're collecting some information for the provincial government on people's experience with the police and the police complaints process. Everything you tell me will be anonymous and confidential. This information is important because it will give the province some idea of issues that people on the street face with police. The interview will take about 20 minutes

### DEMOGRAPHICS:

**Gender:** Male  Female  Transgendered

**Age:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Ethnocultural:**

- White (e.g., French, German, Scottish, Irish)
- Aboriginal/First Nations/Indian/Metis
- Chinese
- South Asian (e.g., East Indian, Pakistani, Punjabi, Sri Lankan)
- Black (e.g., African, Haitian, Jamaican, Somali)
- Arab/West Asian (e.g., Armenian, Egyptian, Iranian, Lebanese, Moroccan)
- Filipino
- South East Asian (e.g., Cambodian, Indonesian, Laotian, Vietnamese)
- Latin American
- Japanese
- Korean
- Other, please specify \_\_\_\_\_

**Do you have any disabilities?**

- Yes  No

**Are you:**

- In school
- Employed Part-time
- Employed Full-time
- Unemployed and not in school
- Other

**Do you have a home telephone (i.e., not a cell phone)?**

- Yes  No

**In the past 24 months have you been:**

- Mainly homeless (16+ months)
- Often homeless (8 to 16 months)
- Occasionally homeless (<8 months)
- Never homeless

**POLICE COMPLAINTS COMMISSIONER:**

1. **If you had a complaint to make about treatment you received from a local police officer would you know what to do?**

Yes  No  Not Sure

2. **Have you ever heard of the Office of the Police Complaints Commissioner before?**

Yes  No  Not Sure

a. *If yes*, How did you learn/hear about this?

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b. How well do you think you understand what the Office of the Police Complaints Commissioner is supposed to do?

Very Well  Somewhat  Not At All

**POLICE COMPLAINTS PROCESS:**

*Description of the Police Complaints Process:* If you have concerns about the actions or comments of a local police officer, you can either complain to the local police department, or to the Office of the Police Complaints Commissioner. Staff at either location should help you understand the complaints process and your rights, and assist you in making sure you have all the information you would need to file a complaint. In most cases, the police do the actual investigation, but the Office of the Police Complaints Commissioner’s job is to make sure that complaints are handled fairly.

3. **In your local police department, do you believe investigations into complaints against the police are handled fairly?**

Yes  No  DK

a. *If no*, Why not?

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**Now I’d like to ask you some questions about the past two years**

4. **In the past two years, have you had concerns about any actions or comments of a police officer that were directed towards you or that involved you?**

Yes  No   
DK

5. **In the past two years, have you had concerns about any actions or comments of a police officer that you witnessed, but were not involved in?**

Yes  No   
DK

**IF NO TO BOTH  
PROCEED  
TO Q. 14**

**6. How many times have you had concerns?**

- Once   **proceed to Q. 7 but answer only YES, NO, or DK**
- Twice
- Three or more times

**7. Did you raise these concerns with anyone:**

- Yes (everytime)   **skip to Q. 9**
- Yes, but only sometimes   **proceed to Q. 8**
- No (Never)   **proceed to Q. 8, then skip to Q. 14**
- DK/Can't remember   **skip to Q. 14**

**8. Which of the following statements best describe the main reason(s) why you did not raise your concerns or complaint? (if multiple, score first three identified by participant)**

- Incident not important enough
- Didn't know who to talk to
- Language issues
- The process was too confusing
- Dealt with it another way
- It's not part of my culture
- No one could/would do anything about it
- It's my word against a police officer's
- Fear of retaliation from the police
- I already did my part (i.e., gave verbal complaint)
- I have complained before, and it didn't do any good
- Other, please specify \_\_\_\_\_

**9. To which of the following groups or individuals did you raise your concerns? (can score more than one value)**

- Police Department/ A police officer
- The Office of the Police Complaints Commissioner
- MP/MLA/ City Councillor
- Community Organization or Advocacy Group
- Other, please specify \_\_\_\_\_
- Can't remember

**10. Did the person or organization you raised your complaint with inform you of the steps you could take to address your complaint?**

- Yes/every time
- Yes, but only sometimes
- No/Never
- DK/Can't remember

**11. Did you file a *formal written complaint* with the police department or the Office of the Police Complaints Commissioner?**

- Yes/every time
  - Yes, but only sometimes
  - No/Never
  - DK/Can't remember
- a. *If yes*, Did the police department or Office of the Police Complaints Commissioner follow up or respond to your complaint(s)?
- Yes/every time
  - Yes, but only sometimes
  - No/Never
  - DK/Can't remember
- b. *If Never or Sometimes*, what is the main reason(s) you did not raise your concerns/ file a formal written complaint in this instance? (if multiple, score first three identified by participant)
- Incident not important enough
  - Didn't know who to talk to
  - Language issues
  - The process was too confusing
  - Dealt with it another way
  - It's not part of my culture
  - No one could/would do anything about it
  - It's my word against a police officers
  - Fear of retaliation from the police
  - I already did my part (i.e., gave verbal complaint)
  - I have complained before, and it didn't do any good
  - Other, please specify \_\_\_\_\_

**12. Do you feel that your complaint was taken seriously?**

- Yes/every time
- Yes, but only sometimes
- No/Never
- DK/Can't remember

**13. Were you satisfied with your experience with the police complaint process?**

- Yes/every time
- Yes, but only sometimes
- No/Never
- DK/Can't remember

a. If no, why not? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**14. Do you think that being a person with low income affects the outcome of a complaint?**

- Yes
- No
- DK

**15. If you answered yes to Q. 7, do you think that being a person with low income affected the outcome of your complaint?**

- Yes
- No
- DK

a. If yes, in what way?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**16. What is your level of confidence in the overall process in British Columbia for handling complaints about police?**

- Very confident
- Confident
- Neutral
- Not very confident
- Not confident at all
- DK/no opinion

**17. Can you explain why?**

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**END OF INTERVIEW**

**APPENDIX 5: STRATHCONA RESEARCH  
POLICE COMPLAINTS PROCESS REVIEW  
AGENCY QUESTIONNAIRE**

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1. **Site:** \_\_\_\_\_
2. **Type of Agency/Agency name:** \_\_\_\_\_
3. **Position of Participant in Agency:** \_\_\_\_\_
4. **Length of Time at Agency:** \_\_\_\_\_

**OPENING SCRIPT:**

**General:**

5. **What population(s) or group(s) in the city does your agency serve?**

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6. **Are your clients mainly adults/ youth? Male? Female?**

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**7. Briefly, what are the main services you offer?**

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**7 (a): Do you offer any legal or advocacy services?**

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**8. In your opinion, do the people you serve use your agency to report police-related problems?**

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**POLICE COMPLAINTS PROCESS:**

**9. Are you familiar with the process available for members of the public to lay complaints against police?**

a. Yes  No

b. How well do you understand the process?

- Very Well
- Somewhat
- Not At All

**10. How did you find out about the process?**

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**11. If someone comes to you with a police-related problem, who would you refer them to?**

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**CLIENTS COMPLAINTS/REFERRALS:**

**12. Have you had clients come to you with a complaint about their treatment by the local police?**

**If yes, does this occur:**

- Often
- Sometimes
- Rarely

**13. Have you ever referred a client to the any of the following with regard to a complaint against the police?**

	Referral			Satisfied	
	Yes	No	DK	Yes	No
Police Department					
Office of the Police Complaints Commissioner					
MP / MLA / City Counsellor					
Community Organization or Advocacy Group					
Lawyer					
Other, please specify _____					
Have never referred a client to any of the above		-----	-----		

a) If not satisfied with referral to any of the above, can you explain why not?

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b) Would you refer clients to Police Department again?

Yes  No

c) Would you refer clients to the Office of the Police Complaints Commissioner again?

Yes  No

d) *If never referred a client, If you have received a complaint from a client but did not make a referral, why not?*

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**14. What is your level of confidence about the *overall* process for handling complaints about police?**

- Very confident
- Confident
- Neutral
- Not very confident
- Not confident at all
- DK/no opinion

**15. Do you think street/homeless/marginalized people are likely to make a complaint directly to police? If no why not?**

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**17. Do you have any pamphlets in your agency that provide information on the Office of the PCC? Would these be useful?**

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**18. Do you think your agency has a greater role to play in this area? If so what more should it be doing?**

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**18. Do you feel that your agency has sufficient information to provide for your clients in relation to the Police Complaints Process?**

- Yes  No

