

## ***CONFIDENCE IN POLICE BUT GROWING CRACKS IN PUBLIC TRUST***

[Ottawa – December 16, 2010] – This week, we looked at several indicators to measure public perceptions of Canada's local police forces. The story which emerges is overall positive but with some clear areas of concern.

Overall, confidence in police remains high, but there are some significant areas of concern. First, our tracking data shows that confidence in police has eroded somewhat over the last year, and is considerably lower than it was six years ago. Also, these results vary heavily across the different regions of the country and there is a clear age gap, with youth exhibiting the lowest levels of confidence.

Overall, performance is seen as stable with a lean towards a sense that things are getting better. Indeed, by a margin of 2:1, those who have an opinion that things have changed feel that things are improving.

Somewhat paradoxically, however, trust is mildly eroding, largely over concerns with human rights and civil liberties. Older, more economically vulnerable respondents are more positively oriented to the police. Younger respondents and Green Party supporters, however, are more concerned about human rights and their trust is actually declining. Toronto shows some mixed results but an overall decline in trust linked to human rights (and probably the G20 aftermath). Ottawa is the hot spot with the most severely negative numbers for police (undoubtedly related to the recent controversy about police handling of detainees).

It is interesting to note that trust is actually higher among those born outside Canada. This suggest that while the police may be distrusted by certain segments of the population, they appear to be having no major problems with the visible minority population.

So all in all, local police remain largely trusted, but less so over the past several years. There are mildly contradictory expectations in different segments of the public, with older citizens stressing

### **HIGHLIGHTS**

- **Confidence in local police:**
  - ▣ **23% high confidence**
  - ▣ **62% moderate confidence**
  - ▣ **11% low confidence**
  - ▣ **4% DK/NR**
- **Performance of local police compared to one year ago:**
  - ▣ **40% better**
  - ▣ **40% unchanged**
  - ▣ **19% worse**
- **Perceived respect of local police for citizens' rights:**
  - ▣ **22% strongly agree**
  - ▣ **42% somewhat agree**
  - ▣ **18% somewhat disagree**
  - ▣ **10% strongly disagree**
  - ▣ **8% DK/NR**
- **Trust in local police compared to one year ago:**
  - ▣ **23% decreased**
  - ▣ **62% unchanged**
  - ▣ **12% increased**
  - ▣ **4% DK/NR**

*Please note that the methodology is provided at the end of this document.*



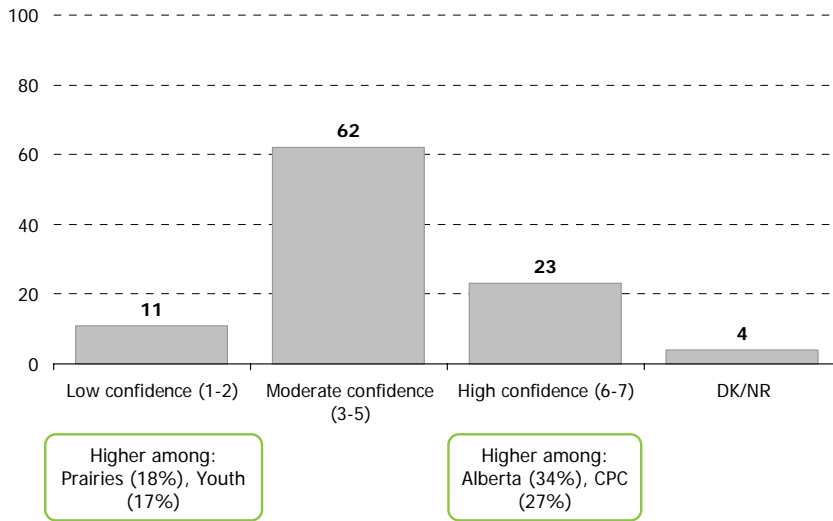
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security and performance, which they see as stable and leaning to improving. Outside of seniors and aging boomer cohorts, the picture is seen as more mixed and leaning to decline, largely led with rising concerns that the police are not as mindful of civil rights as they should be. The net impact of these contradictory forces is a mildly eroding sense of trust in local police.

## Top Line Results:

### Confidence in local police

Q. How much confidence do you have in your local police?

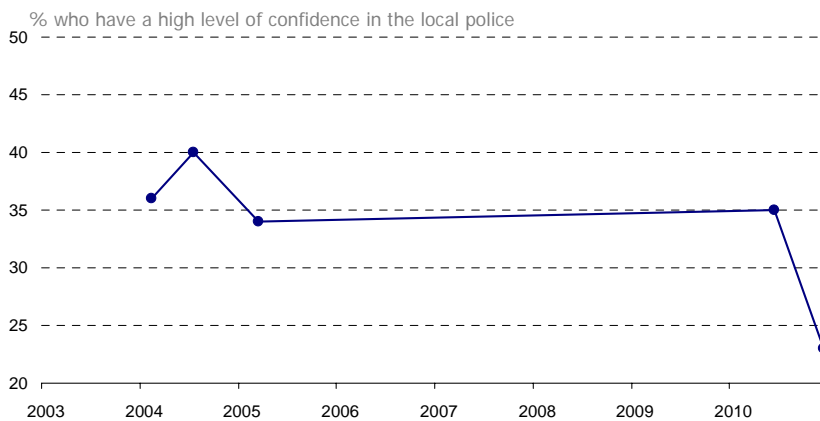


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BASE: Canadians; December 10-14, 2010 (n=1,740)

### Tracking confidence in local police

Q. How much confidence do you have in your local police?

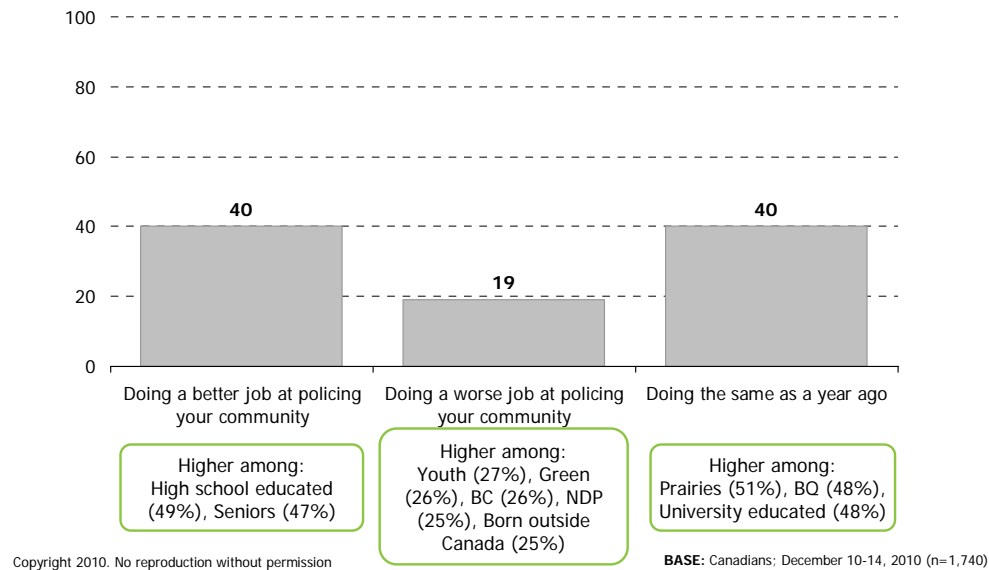


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BASE: Canadians; most recent data point December 10-14, 2010 (n=1,740)

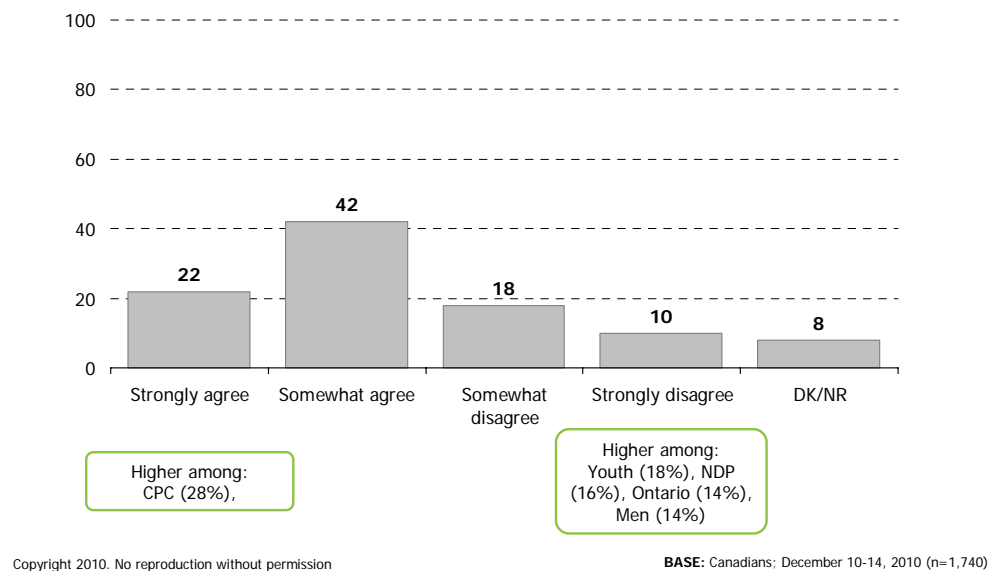
## Performance of local police forces

Q. Thinking about your local police force, compared to a year ago, how do you feel they are doing?



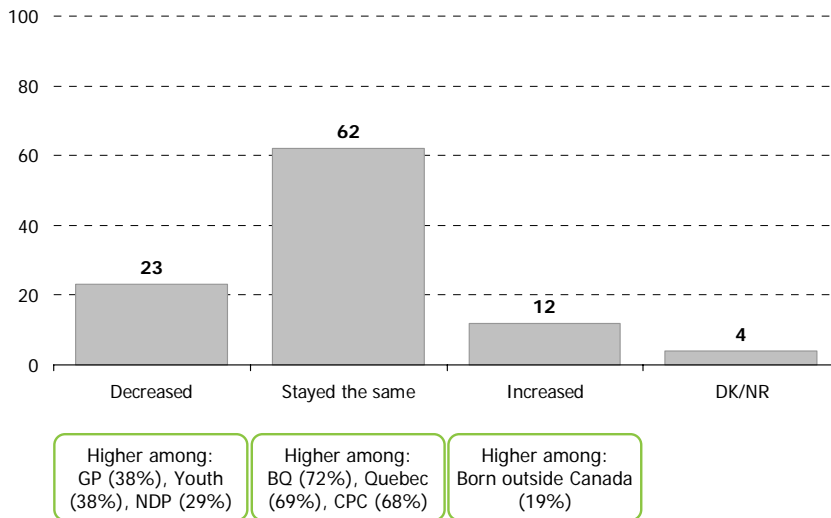
## Perceived respect for citizens' rights

Q. To what extent do you agree or disagree that your local police force respects citizen rights?



## Trust in local police

*Q. Thinking about your local police force, in the last year, would you say that your trust in them has decreased, increased, or stayed the same?*



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## Methodology:

EKOS' weekly tracking polls are conducted using Interactive Voice Recognition (IVR) technology, which allows respondents to enter their preferences by punching the keypad on their phone, rather than telling them to an operator.

In an effort to reduce the coverage bias of landline only RDD, we created a dual landline/cell phone RDD sampling frame for this research. As a result, we are able to reach those with both a landline and cell phone, as well as cell phone only households and landline only households. This dual frame yields a near perfect unweighted distribution on age group and gender, something almost never seen with traditional landline RDD sample or interviewer-administered surveys.

The field dates for this survey are December 10-14, 2010<sup>1</sup>. In total, a random sample of 1,740 Canadians aged 18 and over responded to the survey. The margin of error associated with the total sample is +/-2.4 percentage points, 19 times out of 20.

Please note that the margin of error increases when the results are sub-divided (i.e., error margins for sub-groups such as region, sex, age, education). All the data have been statistically weighted to ensure the samples composition reflects that of the actual population of Canada according to Census data.

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<sup>1</sup> Please note that these dates are not inclusive of weekends, as we do not survey on Saturday or Sunday.