

Most Canadians express confidence in police, but those levels are lower among visible minorities

Canadians have more faith in their justice system than Americans have in their own

July 15, 2016 – A new public opinion poll from the Angus Reid Institute reports two-thirds of Canadians say they have confidence in their Mounted Police and in local and municipal departments.

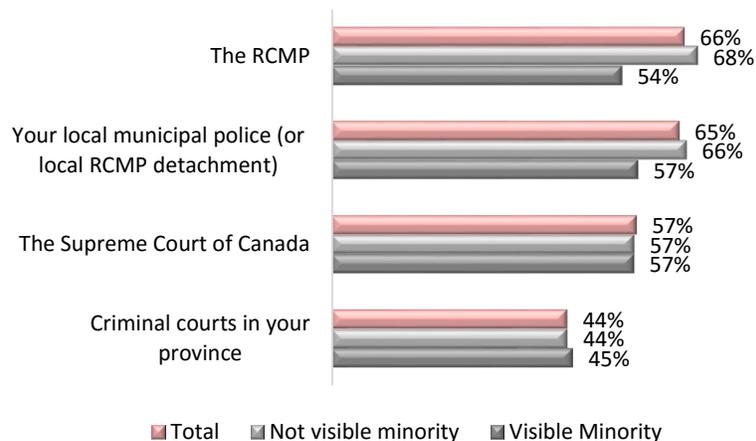
Further, nearly three-in-five express faith in the Supreme Court of Canada. Fewer than half, however, feel the same way about the criminal courts in their own provinces.

Each of these findings is a significant improvement from the lows Angus Reid recorded in 2012, and confidence in each justice system institution remains on par with, or higher than, levels reported in 2014.

At a time when confidence in policing is dominating headlines in the United States, Canadians are expressing higher amounts of confidence than Americans when asked similar questions.

This is true among the total Canadian population, and - notably among this country's visible minority population. Although the latter segment has less confidence than the non-minority population, levels are higher than those minority populations south of the border.

How much confidence do you have in each of these elements of the Canadian justice system?



METHODOLOGY:

The Angus Reid Institute conducted an online survey from May 30 – June 6, 2016, among a representative randomized sample of 1505 Canadian adults who are members of the [Angus Reid Forum](#). For comparison purposes only, a probability sample of this size would carry a margin of error of +/- 3 percentage points, 19 times out of 20. Discrepancies in or between totals are due to rounding. The survey was self-commissioned and paid for by ARI. Detailed tables are found at the end of this release.

Key Findings:

- Confidence in both local police forces and the broader RCMP have held steady since the last time [ARI asked about these institutions](#) in 2014, with British Columbians expressing least confidence (54%) in the Mounties and Saskatchewan (78%) and Quebec (77%) expressing most confidence
- Canadians tend to have more confidence in their police institutions than Americans have in their own – a finding that comes as little surprise given ongoing protests over police violence in that country
- A majority of Canadians (57%) say they have confidence in the Supreme Court of Canada, up nine percentage points from 2014. Confidence in criminal courts is also up by four points, but still below a majority at 44 per cent

Canada-US Comparisons on Policing

July began in the United States with the police shootings of [Alton Sterling](#) in Louisiana and [Philando Castile](#) in Minnesota – events that reignited the anger over police violence against African-American men that has fueled the Black Lives Matter movement in recent years.

The subsequent shootings of [several police officers](#) at the end of a protest in Dallas – by a man who said he was [explicitly targeting white officers](#) – has only further inflamed racial tensions in the country.

But even before these latest incidents, confidence in police in the United States – as measured [by Gallup in June](#) – was lower than it is in Canada, as seen in the following graph:

How much confidence would you say you have in each of the following? (Those saying they have confidence shown)



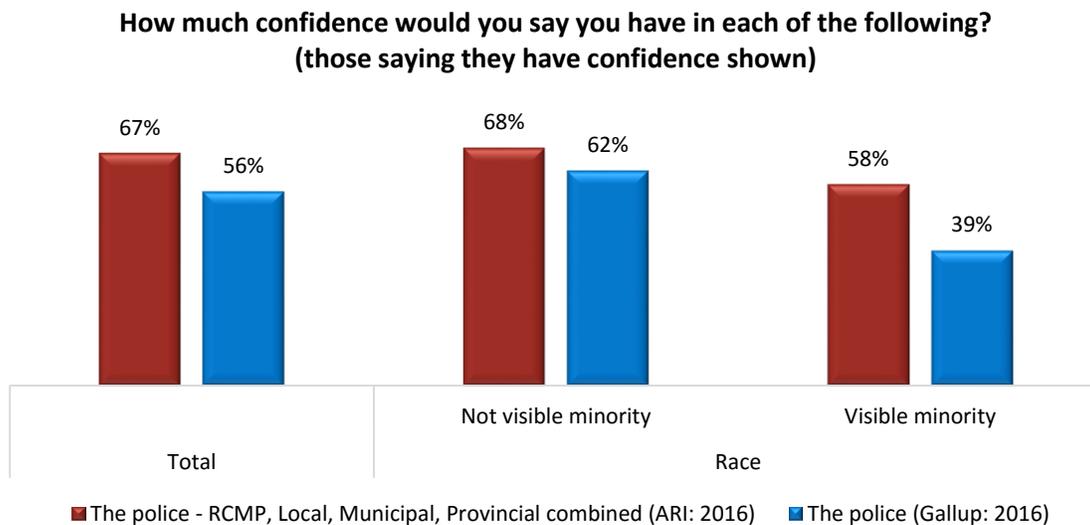
As the Black Lives Matter movement in the US has garnered [worldwide attention](#), parallel protest actions in Canada have generated considerable domestic debate. A high profile demonstration [during the Toronto Pride](#) parade drew the ire of some, while Ontario's minister in charge of province's Anti-Racism Directorate Michael Coteau [praised the group](#) for drawing attention the issue of race as it relates to societal institutions.

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Though the overall difference between how much confidence Canadians and Americans have in their respective police forces is relatively small, there are telling differences in the way visible minorities in each country see the police.

In Canada, among non-white respondents, just under six-in-ten (58%) say they have either “complete confidence” or “a lot of confidence” in the police. While this is lower than the 68 per cent of Canadians who are not visible minorities who say the same, the gap between the two groups is just 10 percentage points. Between white and non-white Americans, the gap is 23 points:



Conversations about race in both the U.S. and Canada have ranged from [productive and heartfelt](#) to [vile and hateful](#), and this is an issue that is unlikely to fade in the near term. The data appears to suggest this is necessary attention.

Consider these statistics:

- The number of black inmates in Canadian federal prisons [increased 69 per cent](#) from 2005 – 2015.
- In Toronto a startling [41 per cent](#) of youth under the care of child welfare services are black, while black people make up just eight per cent of the population.
- In Vancouver, 58 per cent of those in poverty [are racial minorities](#), and in Toronto – 62 per cent.

Minister Coteau [noted](#) that while protests have caused discomfort for some and generated a great deal of controversy, important discussions are now being held by policymakers and leaders regarding these issues.

Confidence in the justice system

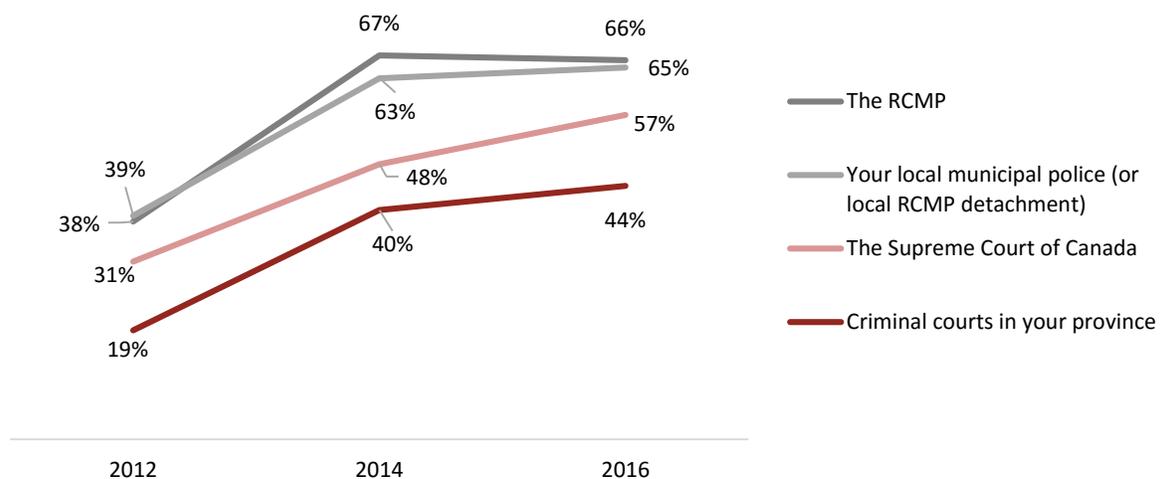
In 2012, after a litany of scandals and investigations involving the RCMP – including the [B.C. inquiry](#) into police mismanagement of the case of serial killer Robert Pickton, [allegations](#) from rank-and-file officers that RCMP leadership “covered up” pension fraud, and the [death of Robert Dziekanski](#) after being repeatedly tasered by officers at Vancouver’s airport, [among others](#) – Angus Reid polling showed [Canadians to be extremely pessimistic](#) about all facets of their country’s justice system.

By 2014, perceptions of the system [had largely recovered](#), with roughly two-thirds expressing confidence in both the RCMP and their local municipal police force (or RCMP detachment).

Likewise, confidence in provincial criminal courts more than doubled, from 19 per cent in 2012 to 40 per cent in 2014.

As seen in the following graph, the results of this 2016 survey have continued the trend of improving confidence in courts, while confidence in police is roughly unchanged:

How much confidence would you say you have in each of the following elements of the justice system?

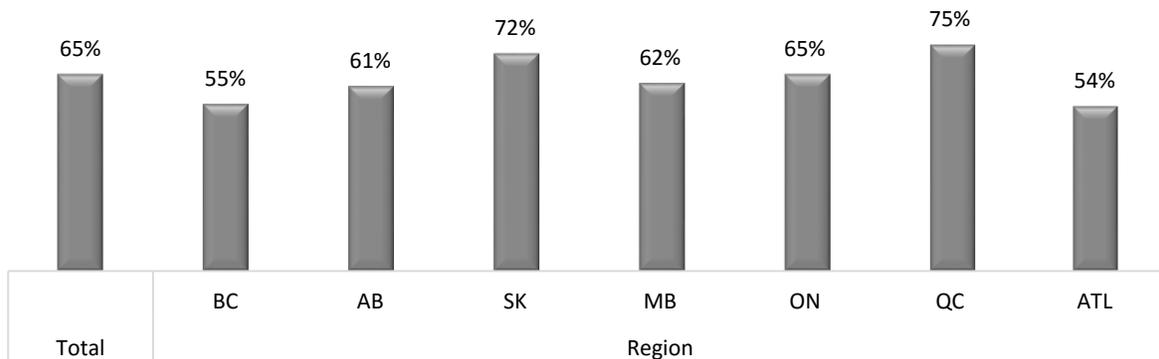


Regionally, British Columbia tends to have a lower opinion of each element of the justice system canvassed than other parts of the country, a fact that may be related to lingering unease after so many of the scandals already mentioned originated in that province, or to more recent issues – including [ongoing criticism](#) over safety on the so-called “Highway of Tears” and allegations of [sexual harassment](#) of female officers and civilian RCMP employees.

In B.C., 54 per cent say they have confidence in the RCMP. No other region is below 60 per cent.

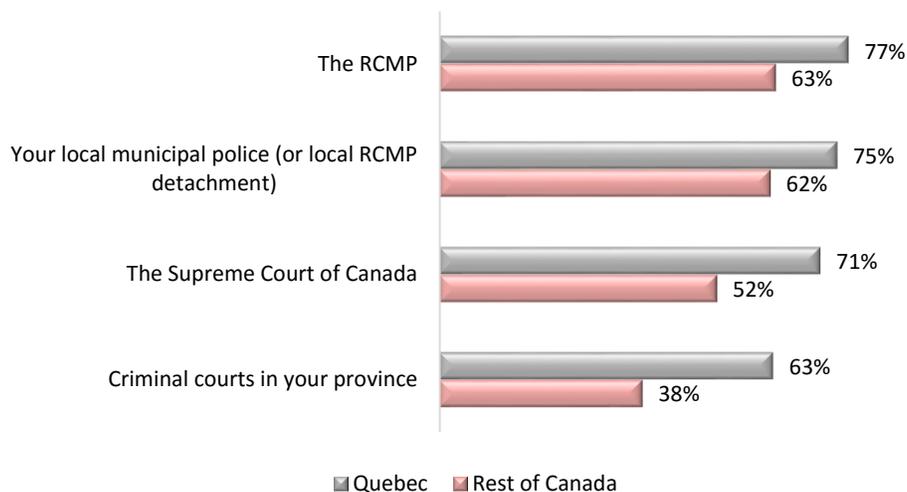
Likewise, 55 per cent of British Columbians are confident in their local police force, fewer than any region except Atlantic Canada (54%), which has seen its own confidence shaken after [a 2014 shooting spree](#) that killed three officers in Moncton, N.B. The New Brunswick RCMP [was charged](#) with four violations of the Canadian Labour Code related to officer equipment, training, and supervision after the shooting:

Confidence in local municipal police (or local RCMP detachment) by province:



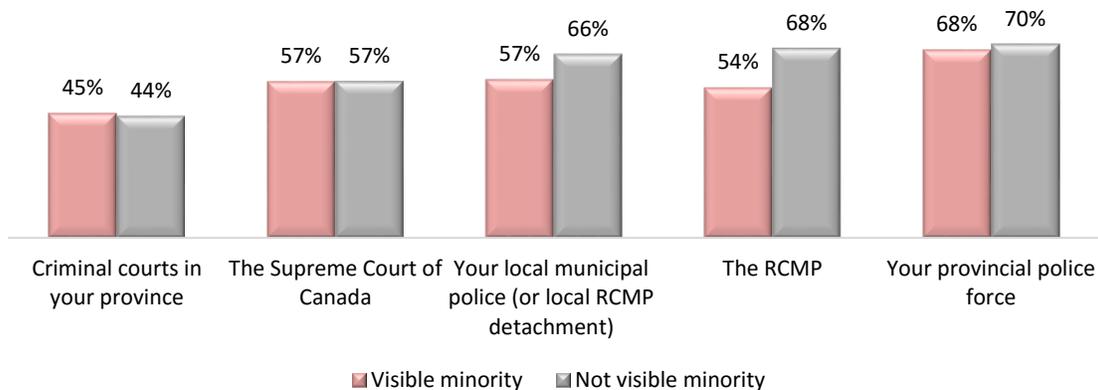
On the opposite end of the confidence spectrum, Quebecers are considerably more likely than residents of other provinces to express confidence in each element of the justice system, as seen in the following graph:

How much confidence do you have in each of these elements of the Canadian justice system? (Those saying "Complete" or "A lot" of confidence shown)



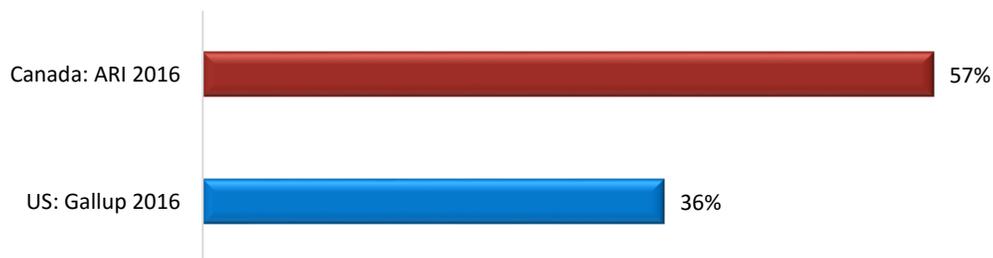
Though racial minorities in Canada are more likely to express less confidence in the police - they do for each police force canvassed, whether local, provincial or RCMP – their confidence in the court system in Canada are nearly identical to other Canadians, as seen in the following graph:

How much confidence do you have in each of these elements of the Canadian justice system?



Just as Canadian opinions of police officers are more favourable than their American counterparts, so too are opinions of each nation's Supreme Courts. Asked whether they have confidence in their country's most powerful judicial institution, a solid majority (57%) of Canadians say they do. Comparatively, just over one-third (36%) of American respondents say the same.

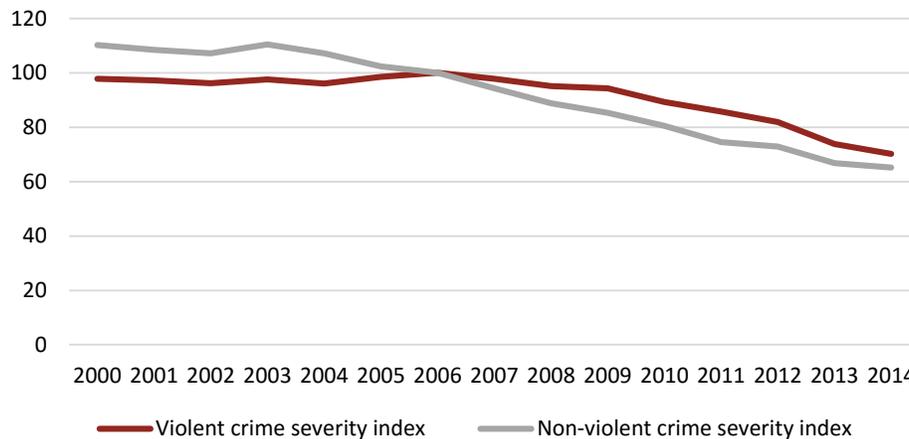
How much confidence do you have in each of these elements of the justice system? (Supreme Court)



Perceptions of crime in Canadian communities

According to Statistics Canada's [Crime Severity Index](#), which measures both the volume and seriousness of violent and non-violent crimes, crime rates have been trending steadily downward in recent years, as seen in the graph that follows:

Crime severity index in Canada over time
Source: Statistics Canada

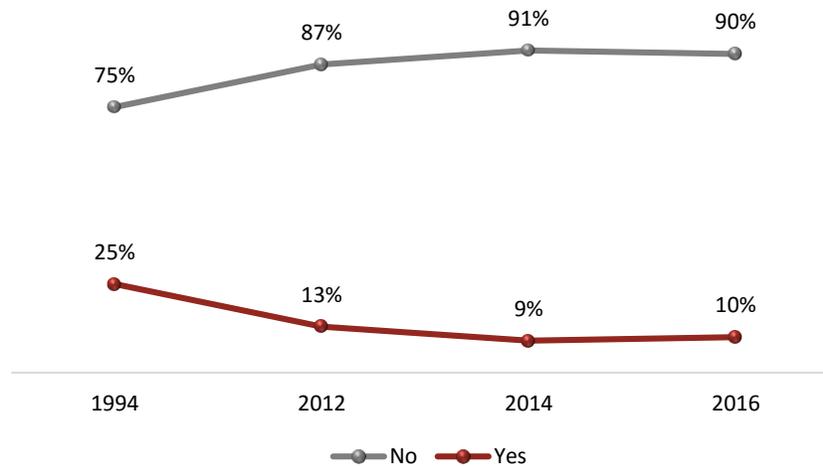


Despite the continued decrease in Canada's overall crime rate, relatively few Canadians *perceive* the amount of crime in their communities to have decreased in the last five years. Just one-in-ten (10%) believe this is the case. Nearly four times as many say crime has been on the rise in their communities in recent years (37%). The rest are either unsure (9%) or say there has been no change (45%) in their local crime rate.

But while more than one-in-three Canadians believe crime is on the rise, the number who have actually experienced a crime involving the police is considerably lower. When asked whether they have personally been the victim of a crime that led to police being called in the last two years, just one-in-ten Canadians (10%) say they have.

Responses to this question more closely follow the overall crime rate trend, as seen in the graph that follows:

In the past two years, have you yourself been a victim of a crime which involved the police?



The **Angus Reid Institute (ARI)** was founded in October 2014 by pollster and sociologist, Dr. Angus Reid. ARI is a national, not-for-profit, non-partisan public opinion research organization established to advance education by commissioning, conducting and disseminating to the public accessible and impartial statistical data, research and policy analysis on economics, political science, philanthropy, public administration, domestic and international affairs and other socio-economic issues of importance to Canada and its world.

Summary tables follow. For detailed results by age, gender, region, education, and other demographics, [click here](#).

| How much confidence do you have in each of these elements of the Canadian justice system? | | | |
|---|--------------|-----------------------------|------------------------|
| | Total (1505) | Not visible minority (1259) | Visible Minority (246) |
| The RCMP | 66% | 68% | 54% |
| Your local municipal police (or local RCMP detachment) | 65% | 66% | 57% |
| Criminal courts in your province | 44% | 44% | 45% |
| The Supreme Court of Canada | 57% | 57% | 57% |
| Smaller Sample Size | Total (933) | Not visible minority (810) | Visible Minority (123) |
| Your provincial police force Ontario and Quebec Only | 43% | 70% | 68% |

| How much confidence do you have in each of these elements of the Canadian justice system? | | |
|---|---------------------------------------|-------------------------|
| | Angus Reid Institute June 2016 (1505) | Gallup June 2016 (1027) |
| Police (In Canada, combination of local, provincial, municipal, RCMP) | 67% | 56% |
| Supreme Court | 57% | 36% |

| How much confidence do you have in each of these elements of the Canadian justice system? | | | |
|---|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| | ARI 2012 (1005) | ARI 2014 (1013) | ARI 2016 (1505) |
| The RCMP | 38% | 67% | 66% |
| Your local municipal police (or local RCMP detachment) | 39% | 63% | 65% |
| Criminal courts in your province | 19% | 40% | 44% |
| The Supreme Court of Canada | 31% | 48% | 57% |