

# Public Attitudes Towards the QPS

**Research and Prevention Division**

June 2000

**The CJC's mission is to promote integrity in the Queensland Public Sector and an effective, fair and accessible criminal justice system.**

## **Acknowledgments**

This report was prepared primarily by Kelly Maddren of the CJC's Research and Prevention Division with assistance from other divisional staff, particularly Mark Lynch.

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## Key points drawn from the 1999 survey

In line with previous surveys conducted by the CJC, the 1999 survey found that most Queenslanders had a positive view of police.

Around 90 per cent of respondents agreed with the proposition that police ‘generally’ or ‘mostly’ behave well and most thought that the QPS had ‘changed for the better’ or ‘stayed about the same’ over the last few years. There was no increase between 1995 and 1999 in the proportion of respondents reporting dissatisfaction with police behaviour. In both years, very few respondents claimed to be aware of serious misconduct by police.

Although the survey findings paint a generally favourable picture, the research has raised some issues that warrant attention by the QPS and CJC.

### Police and young people

Respondents in the 18–24 year age bracket were considerably more likely than older respondents to express negative views of police and to report dissatisfaction with their treatment by police.

It is possible that their views will moderate as they get older. However, there is also a risk that public support for police might weaken over the longer term unless definite steps are taken to improve the relations between police and young people.

### The complaints process

The survey data indicate that there has been some drop in public confidence in the complaints process

since 1995, although it remains fairly high in absolute terms. Specifically:

- between 1995 and 1999 the proportion of respondents who expressed confidence that, if they made a complaint, it would be properly investigated, fell from 80 to 60 per cent
- young people were substantially less likely than the rest of the sample to express confidence in the complaints process
- respondents who reported being dissatisfied with police behaviour were less likely to make an official complaint in 1999 than in 1995
- respondents in the 1999 sample who actually made an official complaint were somewhat more likely than those in 1995 to express dissatisfaction with how the complaint was handled.

These findings indicate that it would be timely to review current complaints-handling processes to ensure that public confidence in them is maintained. Project Resolve, which is a current joint CJC–QPS initiative to trial new complaints procedures in two police regions, will assist in addressing this issue.

### Satisfaction with police

When people expressed dissatisfaction with police it was mostly because they perceived that a police officer had been unfriendly, rude or arrogant, or had acted unreasonably or unfairly. A greater emphasis on ‘customer service’ and improved training in communications skills could help to reduce the incidence of such complaints.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See: Assistant Commissioner John McDonnell, ‘Reductions of Complaints Against Police – Incivility’ in *Police Bulletin*, No. 187, 1 June 2000.

## Background

In July 1999, AC Nielsen Market Research conducted a telephone survey of 1502 Queensland residents on behalf of the CJC. The survey was primarily concerned with measuring attitudes towards the QPS, and public confidence, knowledge and satisfaction regarding making complaints about the police, public servants and local government employees. Also included in the survey were questions about the CJC.

In early 2000, the CJC produced two reports on the survey findings, the first about public attitudes to the CJC and the second about attitudes to the public service and local government.<sup>2</sup>

This document presents the findings relating to the QPS. Some of these questions were also asked in the 1995, 1993 and 1991 public attitude surveys. Where possible, comparisons with results from the earlier surveys are presented.

### Methodology

The previous three surveys consisted of samples of about 900 respondents. The sample size for the 1999

survey was increased to enable more detailed demographic comparisons to be made. Responses for all four surveys were weighted for age, gender and location to provide the most accurate possible representation of Queensland attitudes. However, initial analyses showed that these weighted responses did not differ significantly from the actual responses and so the unweighted responses are provided in this report.

### Structure of the report

Part A examines general public perceptions of police behaviour and the complaints process. It deals with the public's general perceptions of police behaviour and changes in the police 'image' in Queensland in recent years, and then with issues relating to dissatisfaction with the QPS and respondents' perceptions of, and experiences with, the complaints process. Part B explores the differences in the way particular demographic groups responded to the questions concerning police behaviour and police 'image'. The demographic factors reported on are age, gender and education.<sup>3</sup>

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2 *Public Attitudes Towards the CJC*, January 2000 and *What the Public Thinks about Employee Behaviour in the Queensland Public Service and Local Council*, February 2000.

3 Current employment status and geographic location were also examined; however, the results of these analyses are not reported as they were so closely correlated with age and level of education of the respondent.

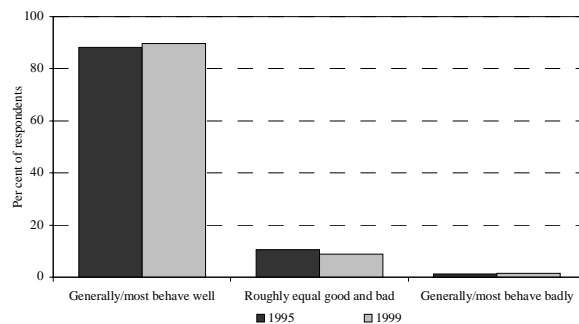
# Findings

## PART A: PERCEPTIONS OF POLICE BEHAVIOUR AND THE COMPLAINTS PROCESS

### General perceptions of police behaviour

There was very little change between 1995 and 1999 in public perceptions of police behaviour (see figure 1). In both survey groups, almost 90 per cent of respondents had a favourable view of police behaviour. Around 10 per cent of respondents in each group believed that police behaviour could be best described as 'roughly equal good and bad'; only around 2 per cent thought most police behaved badly.

**Figure 1. General perceptions of police behaviour: all respondents (1995 and 1999)**



Notes:

1. 1995, n=894; 1999, n=1485
2. Approximately 1% of respondents in each survey group answered 'don't know'.
3. This question was not asked in the 1991 and 1993 surveys.

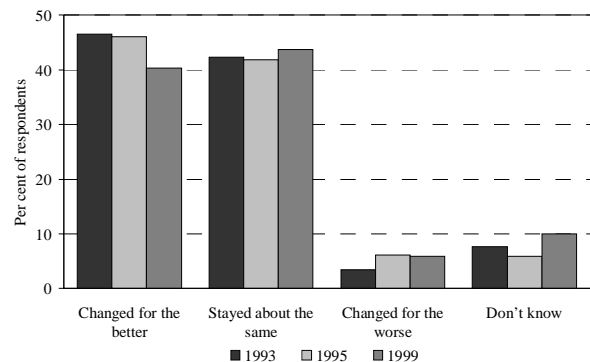
Table 1 presents two additional indicators of respondents' general perceptions of the police. The table shows that between 80 and 90 per cent of respondents in each of the four survey groups agreed with the statement 'most police are honest'. The table also shows that the proportion of respondents who believe 'the police have a bad image in Queensland' has stabilised at around 30 per cent across the last two surveys (down from almost 60% in 1991).

**Table 1. General perceptions of police behaviour: proportion of all respondents who agreed with each statement**

Statement	1991 (n=901)	1993 (n=900)	1995 (n=900)	1999 (n=1502)
Most police are honest.	84.1	87.8	87.2	80.7
The police have a bad image in Queensland.	59.3	48.1	28.7	30.3

Figure 2 illustrates the degree to which respondents believed that police behaviour had changed over time. In the three years in which this question was asked — 1993, 1995 and 1999 — the great majority of respondents believed police behaviour had either improved or stayed the same; less than 10 per cent believed it had changed for the worse.

**Figure 2. Public perceptions of change within the QPS over the past few years: all respondents (1993, 1995 and 1999)**



Notes:

1. 1993, n=870; 1995, n=900; 1999, n=1502
2. This question was not asked in the 1991 survey.

### Tolerance of police misconduct

In each survey, respondents were asked some questions designed to measure their tolerance of police misconduct. Most respondents agreed that 'you will always get some corruption in the police service', the proportion peaking at 93 per cent in 1995 before dropping slightly to around 90 per cent in 1999 (see table 2). In 1995, 63 per cent of respondents agreed that 'sometimes police need to break the rules to get the job done'; by 1999, the proportion had dropped to 53 per cent.

**Table 2. Tolerance of police misconduct: proportion of all respondents who agreed with each statement**

Statement	1991 (n=901)	1993 (n=900)	1995 (n=900)	1999 (n=1502)
You will always get some corruption in the police service.	85.0	87.6	93.2	90.0
Sometimes police need to break the rules to get the job done.	-	-	63.1	53.2

Note: '-' means this question was not asked in the survey.

### Perceived adequacy of police powers

Table 3 shows that around 60 per cent of respondents in both 1995 and 1999 agreed that ‘the police don’t have enough powers to be able to do their job properly’. Additional data showed that respondents from central Queensland were more likely than those from any other area to hold this view while those from Brisbane were least likely to agree.

**Table 3. Perceived adequacy of police powers: proportion of all respondents who agreed that police don’t have enough powers**

Statement	1995 (n=900)	1999 (n=1502)
The police don’t have enough powers to be able to do the job properly.	60.2	56.9

Note: This question was not asked in the 1991 or 1993 surveys.

### Dissatisfaction with the QPS

Around 25 per cent of respondents in the 1999 survey reported that they had been annoyed or dissatisfied with the behaviour of a Queensland police officer or with the way in which the QPS had handled a matter relating to them.

Forty-three per cent of those respondents — or around 11 per cent of the total — reported that they had been dissatisfied within the last 12 months. These proportions were similar to those recorded in 1995.

In 1999, roughly equal proportions of respondents who said they had been dissatisfied within the last 12 months indicated that the behaviour of the police officer was directed towards themselves (44%) or someone else (45%) — see table 4. About 11 per cent said that the behaviour was directed at both themselves and another person.

**Table 4. Focus of annoying or dissatisfying police behaviour: last 12 months (1999)**

Focus	No.	%
Self	71	44.1
Someone else	73	45.3
Both	17	10.6
<b>Total</b>	<b>161</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Note: This question was not asked in previous surveys.

Of those respondents who reported dissatisfaction in the last 12 months, the largest proportion both in 1995 (36%) and in 1999 (39%) said that they were dissatisfied because the officer had acted in a rude or unfriendly manner during the encounter (see table 5). The second most common reason given was that the officer had behaved unreasonably or unfairly during the encounter. In 1999, 31 per cent of dissatisfied respondents gave this reason — up from 22 per cent in 1995.

Just under 3 per cent of respondents in 1995 reported that the officer had used undue force or violence during their encounter. By 1999 this figure had more than doubled to 7.5 per cent. On the other hand, reports of illegal behaviour by a police officer dropped from 7.3 per cent in 1995 to 3.7 per cent in 1999. At least some of the apparent changes in these categories are likely to be due to an overlap in coding definitions. When the categories are combined, the proportion has remained stable at around 10 per cent in both the 1995 and 1999 survey groups.

**Table 5. Reasons for dissatisfaction: proportion of respondents in 1995 and 1999 surveys reporting dissatisfaction with the police in the last 12 months**

Reason	1995 (n=109)	1999 (n=161)
Manner unfriendly/rude/arrogant	35.8	39.1
Behaved unreasonably or unfairly	22.0	31.1
Did nothing/didn’t do enough	22.0	23.0
Lack of interest	3.7	20.5
Slow to arrive/did not come when sent for/no-one available	13.8	16.1
Did wrong thing/were incompetent	10.1	12.4
Used undue force or violence or assaulted someone	2.8	7.5
Behaved illegally/broke the rules	7.3	3.7
Did not keep person informed/did not come back	4.6	3.7
Offenders not caught/property not recovered	2.8	3.7
Racist language or behaviour	2.8	2.5
Other	19.3	12.4

Notes:

1. Percentages add to over 100% as multiple responses were allowed for this question.
2. There is some overlap between the categories ‘used undue force or violence or assaulted someone’ and ‘behaved illegally/broke the rules’, which may account for the changes in these categories.
3. Some of the changes between the two years may be explained by the greater number of responses coded in 1999.
4. These questions were not asked in the 1991 and 1993 surveys.

## The complaints process

### Perceptions

Respondents who reported that they had been dissatisfied with the behaviour of a member of the QPS in the last 12 months were asked if they had felt like making an official complaint.

As shown in table 6, just under 5 per cent of those surveyed in 1999 stated that they felt like complaining. (This equates to 44% of all respondents dissatisfied in the last 12 months.) Only

around 2 per cent actually made or attempted to make an official complaint. (This equates to 16% of those dissatisfied in the last 12 months.)

Dissatisfied respondents in 1995 were significantly more likely than respondents in 1999 to report that they felt like making an official complaint (7% of the total or 56% of those dissatisfied in the last year). However, the number who reported actually making an official complaint in 1995 was not markedly different to the number in 1999 (3% of the total or 21% of those dissatisfied in the last year).

**Table 6. Summary table: dissatisfied respondents**

	1995 (n=900)		1999 (n=1502)		p
	No.	% of all resp.	No.	% of all resp.	
Dissatisfied with police behaviour at some time	262	29.1	379	25.2	*
Dissatisfied with police behaviour in the last 12 months	109	12.1	161	10.7	NS
Respondents dissatisfied with police behaviour in the last 12 months who:					
• felt like making an official complaint against the officer	61	6.8	71	4.7	*
• made or tried to make an official complaint	23	2.6	26	1.7	NS

Notes:

1. \*  $p < .05$
2. Differences between the two years were examined using the chi-square test.
3. These questions were not asked in the 1991 and 1993 surveys.
4. Respondents who made or tried to make an official complaint include those who initially indicated they did not feel like complaining.

For those respondents who felt like making an official complaint against a police officer but chose not to, the most common reason given was that it 'would not do any good' (see table 7). This reason was provided by over 35 per cent of respondents in each survey group.<sup>4</sup>

The proportion of respondents who stated that making a complaint 'would be too much trouble' or that they were 'worried about repercussions' more than doubled between 1995 and 1999. On the other hand, the proportion of respondents who believed their complaint 'was not serious enough' was more than three times higher in 1999 than in 1995.

The proportion of respondents who 'did not know how to make a complaint' dropped slightly from over 10 per cent in 1995 to 8 per cent in 1999. Similarly, the proportion of respondents who thought that they would not be believed, or that the situation was not their problem, halved over the period.

The smaller proportion of respondents actually making official complaints may also indicate some decline of confidence in the complaints process.

**Table 7. Reason for not making a complaint: proportion of respondents in 1995 and 1999 surveys reporting dissatisfaction in the last 12 months**

Reason	1995 (n=38)	1999 (n=50)
It would not do any good	39.5	36.0
It would be too much trouble	10.5	24.0
It was not serious enough	5.3	18.0
Worried about repercussions/fearful of retaliation	5.3	14.0
Did not know how to make a complaint	10.5	8.0
You would not be believed	13.2	6.0
Not my problem/situation didn't involve me	7.9	4.0
Other	21.1	8.0

Notes:

1. Percentages will not add to 100% as multiple responses were allowed for this question.
2. It is possible that some of the change between the two years is a result of coding differences.
3. This question was not asked in the 1991 and 1993 surveys.

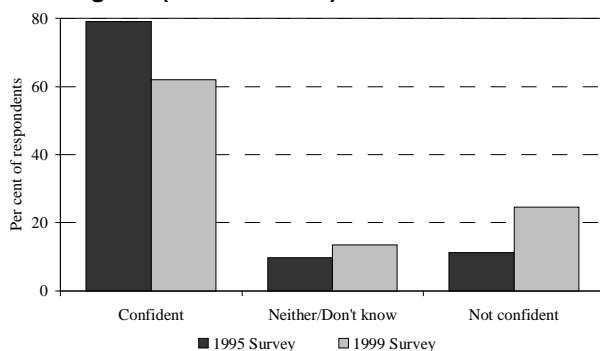
4. Caution needs to be exercised here in drawing conclusions from these findings, given the small number of people involved.



Respondents in the 1995 and 1999 surveys who had never made an official complaint against a police officer were asked: 'If you were to make a complaint, how confident would you be that your complaint would be properly investigated?'

Figure 3 shows that in 1995 almost 80 per cent of these respondents stated that they would be confident that their complaint would be properly investigated. By 1999, however, this proportion had dropped to just over 60 per cent, while the proportion who reported they would not be confident had risen from just over 10 per cent in 1995 to almost 25 per cent in 1999. It is not possible from the current survey results to draw any firm conclusions as to the reasons for this apparent decline in confidence in the complaints process.

**Figure 3. Confidence in complaint being properly investigated (1995 and 1999)**



Notes:

1. 1995, n=638; 1999, n=1433
2. Respondents to this question were those people who had never made an official complaint.
3. This question was not asked in the 1991 or 1993 surveys.

The current level of confidence in the complaints process may be affected by the large proportion of respondents in 1999 (47%) who agreed that the chance of getting caught doing something corrupt in the police service was slim. On the other hand, 72 per cent disagreed with the statement 'there is no point in reporting corruption in the Queensland Police Service because nothing useful will be done about it'. As these questions were not asked in previous surveys, they can only be understood at this point as 'benchmark' data.

Table 8 shows a drop from over 30 to 25 per cent in the proportion of respondents who believed that people who complain against the police are likely to suffer for it. Future surveys might seek to clarify whether this is data volatility or a sign of a more deep-seated trend.

**Table 8. Perceptions of the complaints process: proportion of all respondents who agreed that people who complain are likely to suffer for it**

Statement	1995 (n=900)	1999 (n=502)
People who complain about police are likely to suffer for it.	31.9	25.0

Note: This question was not asked in the 1991 and 1993 surveys.

Almost 90 per cent of respondents to the 1995 and 1999 surveys agreed that complaints against police officers should be investigated by an independent body rather than by the police themselves.

### Experiences with the complaints process

This section examines the responses of those who said they had been dissatisfied in the last 12 months, and who then actually made or attempted to make an official complaint.<sup>5</sup> As the sample sizes are too small to allow for any meaningful discussion of changes in behaviour between the two surveys, the following section simply compares general trends across the two groups.

Table 9 shows that the majority of respondents (around three-quarters) reported their complaints directly to the QPS. The next most common avenue of complaint was an MP or Local Member. Only one respondent in each survey indicated that they had complained directly to the CJC.

**Table 9. To whom was the complaint directed?**

	1995 (n=23)	1999 (n=26)
Police	78.3	73.1
MP/Local Member	13.0	7.7
CJC	4.3	3.8
Other	8.7	11.5

Notes:

1. The table excludes one respondent in 1999 who answered 'can't remember'.
2. 'Other' does not include the media as this was a separate category. No respondents reported their complaint to the media.

<sup>5</sup> Of those respondents who made an official complaint following their dissatisfaction with a member of the QPS in the last 12 months, five had initially indicated that they had not felt like making a complaint. These respondents have been included in the following analyses as they did in fact make an official complaint.

Given the small number of people (only 26) who said they had made an official complaint, the following findings need to be treated with caution:

- Almost 40 per cent of the group said they were either not told the outcome of their complaint (19%) or their complaint was not accepted by the police (19%).
- Around 15 per cent said they were given an explanation by the police which they did not accept, but that they decided the complaint was not worth pursuing.
- Around 15 per cent indicated that a senior officer was going to deal with the matter (8% said they would inquire further and 8% said they would talk to the officer involved).
- Few respondents stated that their complaint was proved (4%) or that they accepted the explanation they received from the police (4%).
- A majority (65%) per cent indicated that they were dissatisfied with the way in which their complaint was handled (up from 57% in 1995).

## PART B: DEMOGRAPHIC DIFFERENCES

The following section explores some differences in the way three demographic groups (based on age, gender and level of education) responded to the 1999 survey questions concerning police behaviour and image.<sup>6</sup> Given the small number of respondents in the 1999 survey who actually made a complaint against a police officer — and particularly those who had complained within the last 12 months — it was not possible to conduct reliable comparisons on questions relating to *experiences* with the complaints process. The following discussion is therefore restricted to comparisons of public *perceptions* of the complaints process and the QPS in general.<sup>7</sup>

### Age

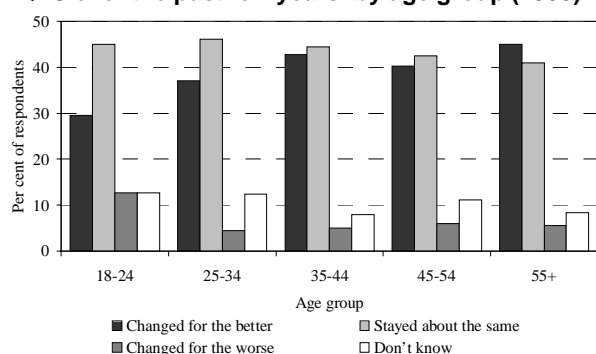
#### General perceptions of police behaviour

The age of the respondent was found to be the most significant factor in determining public attitudes both to police behaviour and to the complaints process. In general, younger respondents (aged 18–24) had a more negative view of the police than did respondents aged 25 years and over.

While respondents generally agree that most police behave well, this view was found to be less widely held among younger respondents. Expressed as an odds ratio, younger respondents were more than twice as likely as older respondents to report that they thought most police behave badly.<sup>8</sup>

Younger respondents were also almost three times more likely than older respondents to say they thought police behaviour had changed for the worse in the last few years.<sup>9</sup> This is illustrated in figure 4. The figure also shows that respondents aged over 55 years were the group most likely to believe that police behaviour had changed for the better.

**Figure 4. Public perceptions of change within the QPS over the past few years: by age group (1999)**



#### Tolerance of police misconduct

Younger respondents were found to be less tolerant of police misconduct. Expressed in terms of odds ratios, table 10 shows that:

- respondents aged 18–24 were one and a half times more likely than older respondents to disagree with the statement that police will sometimes need to break the rules in order to get their job done
- respondents aged 18–24 were over three times more likely than older respondents to disagree with the statement that there will always be some corruption in the police service.

#### Perceived adequacy of police powers

Table 11 shows that younger respondents were also more likely than older respondents to disagree with the statement that the police do not have enough powers to be able to do their job properly.

#### Dissatisfaction with the QPS and the complaints process

Figure 5 shows that almost 28 per cent of 18 to 24 year olds reported that they had been dissatisfied with a member of the QPS in the last 12 months. In contrast, less than 5 per cent of respondents aged over 55 years reported such dissatisfaction.<sup>10</sup>

Expressed as an odds ratio, younger respondents were almost three times more likely than older respondents to report that they had been dissatisfied with police behaviour in the last 12 months.<sup>11</sup> Respondents from different age groups gave quite similar reasons for being dissatisfied (refer to table 5, page 4).

Respondents who had never made an official complaint against a police officer were asked how confident would they be that a complaint of theirs

*continued page 10*

6 Current employment status and geographic location were also examined; however, the results of these analyses are not reported as they were closely related to the age and level of education of the respondent.

7 Differences between various groups were examined using the chi-square test.

8 Odds ratio (18–24 vs 25+) = 2.1

9 Odds ratio (18–24 vs 25+) = 2.8

10  $p < .001$

11 Odds ratio (18–24 vs 25+) = 3.0

<p><b>What are ‘odds ratios’?</b></p> <p>Much of this section of the report describes relationships between various groups in terms of ‘odds ratios’.</p> <p>Odds ratios provide a readily interpretable comparison of one group with another group in terms of some specified outcome (i.e. group A is this much more likely than group B to believe this, report this, do this etc.).</p> <p>When employed in multivariate structural equations as a measure of strength of association, odds ratios are mathematically related to the phi correlation (Agresti 1990: 54) and produce similar measures of the strength of association to phi correlations. When employed in bivariate calculations, odds ratios are</p>	<p>extremely close to the relative risk calculations commonly used in medical research (notably AIDS research).</p> <p>The odds ratio procedure enables the ‘teasing out’ of relationships between variables even when the apparent correlation between them is low. For example, (in a multivariate equation) an odds ratio of 2 (i.e. group A is twice as likely as group B) could in principle correspond to a correlation of .12 or an explained variance of 1.4 per cent (Loeber, Farrington, Stouthamer-Loeber &amp; Van Kammen 1998: 106).</p> <p>In both multivariate and bivariate calculations, an odds ratio will often reveal a much stronger relationship between a particular group and a particular outcome than is apparent from inspection of the ‘raw’ frequencies.</p>
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**Table 10. Tolerance of police misconduct: respondents who disagreed with each statement: by age group (1999)**

Statement	Age	Total	% disagree	Odds ratio 18-24 vs 25+	p
Sometimes police need to break the rules to get the job done.	18-24	142	44.4	1.5	*
	25+	1330	35.4		
You will always get some corruption in the police service.	18-24	139	11.5	3.2	***
	25+	1347	3.9		

Notes:

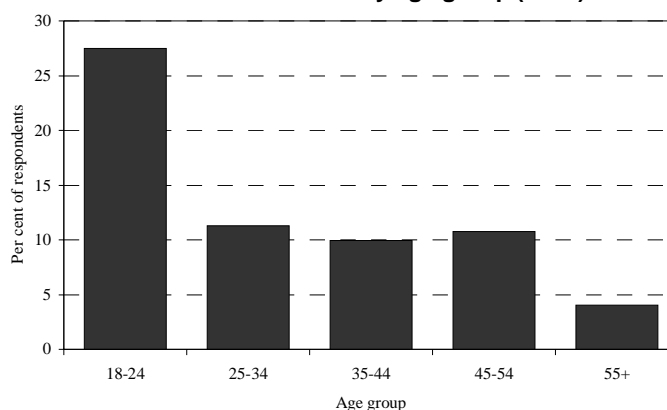
1. \*  $p < .05$
2. \*\*\*  $p < .001$

**Table 11. Perceived adequacy of police powers: respondents who disagreed that police don't have enough powers: by age group (1999)**

Statement	Age	Total	% disagree	Odd ratio 18-24 vs 25+	p
The police don't have enough powers to be able to do the job properly.	18-24	138	45.7	2.0	***
	25+	1308	29.7		

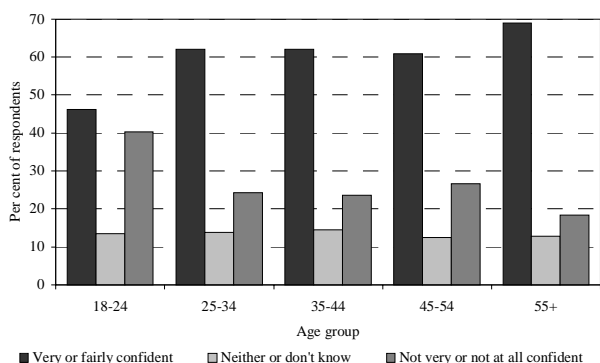
Note: \*\*\*  $p < .001$

**Figure 5. Respondents reporting dissatisfaction with the QPS in the last 12 months: by age group (1999)**



would be properly investigated. Figure 6 shows that the response given varied significantly depending on the age group of the respondent.<sup>12</sup> Expressed as an odds ratio, respondents aged 18–24 were more than twice as likely as older respondents to report that they would not be confident that their complaint would be properly investigated.<sup>13</sup> Respondents aged 55 years or over, on the other hand, were the group most likely to report confidence in the complaints process.

**Figure 6. Confidence in complaint being properly investigated: by age group (1999)**



## Gender

### General perceptions of police behaviour

Generally, all respondents believed that police behave well. However, males were more likely than females to report that they thought police behaviour had changed for the better in the last few years (see table 12).

### Tolerance of police misconduct

As shown in table 13, male respondents were more likely than female respondents to agree with the proposition that police will sometimes need to break the rules to get the job done.

### Perceived adequacy of police powers

Female respondents were more than one and a half times more likely than male respondents to agree with the proposition that the police don't have enough powers to be able to do their job properly (see table 14).

### Dissatisfaction with the QPS and the complaints process

There were no significant differences between males and females in relation to dissatisfaction with the QPS or perceptions of the complaints process.

## Level of education

### General perceptions of police behaviour

Figure 7 shows that the proportion of respondents who believed that police behaviour had changed for the better increased as the level of education of the respondent increased. Expressed as an odds ratio, the data show that respondents with tertiary education were just over one and a half times more likely than respondents without tertiary education to report that they thought police behaviour had changed for the better in the last few years.<sup>14</sup>

**Table 12. Public perceptions of change within the QPS over the past few years: by gender (1999)**

Perception	Gender	Total	%	Odds ratio M vs F	p
Changed for the better	Male	575	51.0	1.5	***
	Female	776	40.3		
Stayed about the same or changed for the worse	Male	575	49.0		
	Female	776	59.7		

Note: \*\*\* p < .001

<sup>12</sup> p < .001

<sup>13</sup> Odds ratio (18–24 vs 25+) = 2.2

<sup>14</sup> Odds ratio (Tertiary vs Other education) = 1.7

**Table 13. Respondents who agreed that the police may need to break the rules: by gender (1999)**

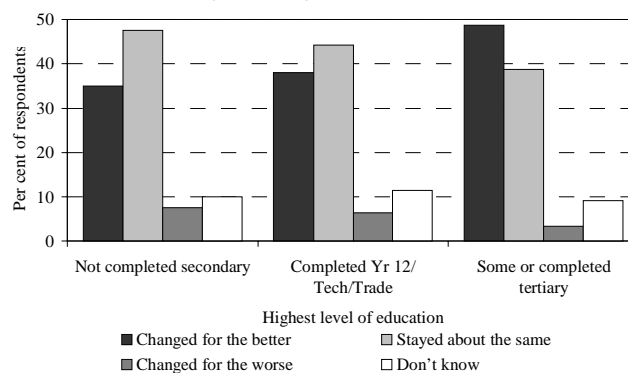
Statement	Gender	Total	%	Odds ratio M vs F	p
Sometimes police need to break the rules to get the job done.	Male	628	58.9	1.4	**
	Female	884	50.8		

Note: \*\* p < .01

**Table 14. Respondents who disagreed that the police don't have enough powers: by gender (1999)**

Statement	Gender	Total	%	Odds ratio M vs F	p
The police don't have enough powers to be able to do the job properly.	Male	611	37.6	1.7	***
	Female	835	26.6		

Note: \*\*\* p < .001

**Figure 7. Public perceptions of change within the QPS over the past few years: by level of education (1999)**

### Tolerance of police misconduct

Respondents with a tertiary education were around one and a half times more likely than respondents with no tertiary education to disagree with the proposition that police will sometimes need to break the rules in order to get the job done (see table 15).

### Perceived adequacy of police powers

As shown in table 16, those respondents with some tertiary education were more than twice as likely as those with no tertiary education to disagree with the proposition that the police do not have enough powers to be able to do their job properly.

**Table 15. Respondents who disagreed that the police may need to break the rules: by level of education (1999)**

Statement	Education	Total	%	Odds ratio Tertiary vs Other	p
Sometimes police need to break the rules to get the job done.	Some/completed tertiary	486	42.8	1.5	***
	No tertiary	982	33.2		

Note: \*\*\* p < .001

**Table 16. Respondents who disagreed that the police don't have enough powers: by level of education (1999)**

Statement	Education	Total	%	Odds ratio Tertiary vs Other	p
The police don't have enough powers to be able to do the job properly.	Some/completed tertiary	476	41.6	2.0	***
	No tertiary	966	26.1		

Note: \*\*\* p < .001

### Dissatisfaction with the QPS and the complaints process

There were no significant differences between respondents of different educational backgrounds in relation to their dissatisfaction with the QPS in the last 12 months or in their perceptions of the complaints process.

There was, however, some evidence that respondents with tertiary education had greater confidence in the complaints process. Tertiary-

educated respondents were almost one and a half times more likely than respondents with no tertiary education to disagree with the proposition that there is only a slim chance of getting caught doing something corrupt in the police service.<sup>15</sup> Furthermore, respondents with some tertiary education were almost one and a half times more likely than respondents with no tertiary education to disagree with the statement that there is no point reporting corruption in the QPS as nothing useful will be done about it.<sup>16</sup>

### SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

- Most people believed the police behave well, although they also believed that some corruption in the service was inevitable. Compared to previous surveys, fewer people believed the QPS had a bad image.
- Fewer people appeared to have confidence in the complaints process (compared to the 1995 survey), although confidence remained fairly high.
- This generally favourable attitude towards the police and the complaints process was more widespread among people over 25 than young people (18 to 24). Despite being more dissatisfied with police, younger people were less likely to make an official complaint.
- Compared with previous surveys, fewer people who said they felt like making an official complaint actually did so, usually directly to the QPS.
- People without a tertiary education were more likely to believe that the chances of a police officer getting caught doing something corrupt were slim and that there was no point reporting corruption because nothing useful would be done about it.
- Overall, fewer people believed that making a complaint against a police officer was likely to result in a reprisal.
- General attitudes towards the police and the complaints process were much the same for men and women, although more men than women thought the police might need to break the rules to get the job done, and more women than men tended to think that the police did not have enough powers to do their job properly.
- Much the same number of people as in the 1995 survey said they were dissatisfied with the behaviour of a Queensland police officer within the last 12 months, and gave the same sorts of reasons: arrogance and a rude or unfriendly manner on the part of the police officer.
- Many people who did make an official complaint said they were not told the outcome of that complaint. Generally, people were disappointed with how their complaint was handled.

<sup>15</sup> Odds ratio (Tertiary vs Other education) = 1.3

<sup>16</sup> Odds ratio (Tertiary vs Other education) = 1.4

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