

PUBLIC PERCEPTIONS

of the
Queensland
Police Service

Findings from the
2010 Public Attitudes Survey

Public Perceptions Series

August 2011



CMC vision:

That the CMC make a unique contribution to protecting Queenslanders from major crime, and promote a trustworthy public sector.

CMC mission:

To combat crime and improve public sector integrity.

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Crime and Misconduct Commission
Level 2, North Tower Green Square
515 St Pauls Terrace, Fortitude Valley, Australia 4006

GPO Box 3123
Brisbane Qld 4001

Tel: (07) 3360 6060
Fax: (07) 3360 6333
Email: mailbox@cmc.qld.gov.au

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Foreword

This report presents the results of the latest instalment in the *CMC's Public Perceptions* series. In this series, the CMC periodically surveys a representative sample of the Queensland public to gauge its perceptions of the Queensland Police Service (QPS), public service agencies and local government. These surveys are conducted as part of the CMC's monitoring function. They measure the extent to which public sector agencies and employees are meeting the Queensland public's expectations of service delivery.

We have conducted eight surveys of Queensland residents since 1991. This report summarises the public's responses to the 2010 survey's items about the QPS and identifies some trends over time.

The results from the 2010 survey indicate that the public's perceptions of the QPS are mixed. Whereas the public believes that police are honest and generally behave well — and this perception has remained steady over time — confidence in the QPS complaints handling processes has declined since the 2008 survey. The respondents indicated increased confidence in the CMC's complaints processes even though the tendency was to actually lodge complaints with the QPS.

The public's perspectives on complaints processing is particularly relevant in the current policy environment. Recently, substantial work has been conducted in this area, including the *CMC's Setting the Standard* report and the subsequent independent review *Simple, Effective, Transparent, Strong* — both of which assessed the current QPS complaints, discipline and misconduct system. At the time of publishing *Public Perceptions of the Queensland Police Service*, the government is considering the suitability of the recommendations of the independent review, and we look forward to ongoing monitoring and improvement in this area.

Martin Moynihan AO QC

Chairperson

Acknowledgments

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The Communications Unit of the CMC prepared the report for publication.

We are grateful to Colmar Brunton for administering the survey.

Finally, we would like to thank the people who responded to the survey. Without their support, this survey would not have been possible.

List of abbreviations

CATI	Computer Assisted Telephone Interviewing
CJC	Criminal Justice Commission
CM Act	<i>Crime and Misconduct Act 2001 (Qld)</i>
CMC	Crime and Misconduct Commission
ESC	Ethical Standards Command (of the Queensland Police Service)
QCC	Queensland Crime Commission
QPS	Queensland Police Service

Summary

The Public Perceptions series

The Crime and Misconduct Commission (CMC) (and its predecessor, the Criminal Justice Commission) has a long-standing interest in measuring the public's perceptions of police officers, public servants and local government staff. We have now conducted eight surveys of Queensland residents: in July 1991, July 1993, June 1995, June 1999, June 2002, July 2005, June–July 2008 and June–July 2010.

Since the first Public Attitudes Survey was conducted, there have been considerable changes within the public sector. There have also been changes in the way the CMC handles complaints about public service and local government employees, and how it monitors other integrity issues. The *Public Perceptions* series helps the CMC to assess changes in public opinion about the behaviour and integrity of people in these public sector roles, and the willingness to use complaints services. In performing its monitoring function, the CMC can recommend corrective action to the agency involved.

This year, the CMC will publish three separate Public Perceptions reports. These can be accessed on the CMC's website, www.cmc.qld.gov.au:

- *Public perceptions of the Queensland Police Service: findings from the 2010 public attitudes survey*
- *Public perceptions of the public service: findings from the 2010 public attitudes survey*
- *Public perceptions of local government: findings from the 2010 public attitudes survey.*

We also use the survey to gather general information about public awareness of the CMC's role and functions. Some of these results will be reported in our 2010–11 Annual Report.

THE IMPORTANCE OF CONTEXT

Each time the Public Attitudes Survey is conducted, a different social environment exists. Two events are relevant to the 2010 survey.

Palm Island Review

One month before the data collection commenced (14 May 2010), the Queensland Coroner handed down the findings of his inquiry into Cameron Doomadgee's death in police custody. Then, during the survey's data collection process, the CMC released its Palm Island review. Both these reports attracted substantial media coverage. When the Palm Island report was released, the vast majority of surveys had been conducted. However, one cohort (people aged 55 years and over) of the respondents was still being surveyed. This allowed us to examine the impact of the report's release on some participants' responses.

Even though our analysis was limited to one age cohort, our results show that the release of the CMC's Palm Island review had little impact on responses. There were, however, two exceptions:

- the proportion of respondents aged 55 years and over who agreed that 'the chances of getting caught doing something corrupt in the police service are slim' increased from 37 per cent ($n = 28$) to 52 per cent ($n = 230$) after the report's release ($\chi^2 = 8.09, p < .05$)
- the proportion of respondents aged 55 years and over who believed police behaved generally or mostly well increased from 86 per cent ($n = 70$) to 94 per cent ($n = 453$) after the report's release ($\chi^2 = 7.25, p < .05$).

Police Discipline Review

This *Public perceptions of the Queensland Police Service* report is released at a time when there is a spotlight on the police disciplinary process. In December 2010, the CMC released the report *Setting the standard*, which reviewed the system and associated processes for managing police discipline and police misconduct. This was followed, in June 2011, by *Simple, Effective, Transparent, Strong* — an independent review that contained 57 recommendations for improvements to the police complaints, misconduct and discipline system.

A draft of this *Public Perceptions* report was provided to government to inform its response to the independent review.

This report

This report presents the public's current perceptions of the Queensland Police Service (QPS) and examines changes in perceptions over the last 15 years. The results presented in this report are based on a random sample of 1529 people across Queensland. Where possible, the results of the 2010 survey are compared with those of previous surveys.

This report is divided into three main parts:

- Part A presents respondents' experiences with police, both satisfactory and unsatisfactory
- Part B presents the public's general perceptions of police, including police behaviour, integrity and misconduct
- Part C presents public opinion about and confidence in complaints processes.

The Appendixes of this report provide a range of background information about the Public Attitudes Survey and the CMC (see Appendix 1), the survey's data collection method (see Appendix 2), characteristics of the 2010 sample (see Appendix 3), and a list of statistical terms to assist with interpretation of the results (see Appendix 4).

Key changes in the 2010 Public Attitudes Survey

Several minor changes were made to the survey in 2010 to increase our understanding of the public's perceptions, while maintaining the capacity to examine trends over time. A number of changes were made to the order and wording of questions to minimise any potential bias. However, the most notable difference was that the 2010 survey was divided into two sections. The first section contained all items concerning the QPS. The second section contained all items concerning the public service, local government and the CMC. For any survey changes in previous years, see reports corresponding to earlier surveys.

Key findings

The key findings of the survey are:

- **Public perceptions of police are generally positive.** The public generally has a very positive view of police behaviour and honesty: 90 per cent of respondents agreed that police generally or mostly behave well. Since 2008 there has been a drop (from 65% to 55%) in the proportion of respondents who believe that police treat Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples differently from white Australians.
- **Some negative perceptions of police behaviour increased.** A small proportion of respondents (13%) said that, over time, police behaviour has changed for the worse. While this figure is small, it has almost doubled since 1999.
- **Perceptions of police corruption are unchanged.** The public generally agreed (89%) there will always be some level of corruption in the police service. This perception has not changed substantially over the last few surveys.

When asked whether 'the chances of police getting caught doing something corrupt are slim', an equal proportion of respondents agreed (43%) and disagreed (47%). While this perception fluctuates slightly over time, public opinion has been split about this item throughout the survey series.

- **Officers' manner is important in shaping public perceptions.** The main reasons respondents reported *satisfactory* experiences with police (either initiated by themselves or by the police) were that the officer:

- had a friendly, courteous or professional manner (50%)
- took the appropriate action (32%).

Whereas, the leading reasons for respondents reporting *unsatisfactory* experiences with police were that the officer:

- had an unfriendly, rude or arrogant manner (36%)
- did nothing or not enough (22%).

Few respondents reported that serious misconduct was the reason for the unsatisfactory experience.

- **Perceptions about the adequacy of police powers are mixed.** Since 2005, there has been an increase in the proportion of the public who believe ‘the police don’t have enough powers to do their job properly’ (from 56% to 61%); however, about an equal proportion agreed (48%) and disagreed (45%) that ‘sometimes police need to break the rules to get the job done’. This has remained steady since 2002.
- **Half those who make complaints to the QPS are dissatisfied with the process.** One in six people who were dissatisfied with a police encounter made or tried to make a complaint. Most complained directly to the QPS, and one half (50%) were dissatisfied with how it was handled. This is, however, an improvement on the 2008 survey results, which showed dissatisfaction at 71 per cent.
- **Public confidence in QPS complaints processes has declined.** Since 2008, public confidence in the QPS to properly investigate complaints has declined (from 62% to 57%), while confidence in the CMC increased (from 71% to 74%). Further, there was a small increase (from 28% to 33%) since 2008 in the perception that ‘there is no point in reporting corruption in the QPS because nothing useful will be done about it’.

When responding to *hypothetical* situations of misconduct, there was an increase since 2008 in the inclination to report such events to the CMC, and a decline in the proportion of respondents who would report the event to the QPS. However, this decline *contrasts strongly* with the finding that most respondents who actually made a complaint lodged it with the QPS.

Most respondents (90%) said that complaints against police should be investigated by an independent body, not the police. This is consistent with previous survey results.

Areas for improvement

The 2010 Public Attitudes Survey identified two main areas for improvement.

- Public confidence in the QPS complaints processes has deteriorated since 2008. Although the results showed a clear distinction between the agency that respondents *say* they would complain to (the CMC) and the agency that respondents *actually* complained to (the QPS), the 2010 survey nonetheless showed a notable shift away from complaining to the QPS, and an increased inclination to complain to the CMC. These results show that the QPS has an opportunity to improve the public’s knowledge of the mechanisms it has in place for dealing with misconduct.
- Police officers’ manner in interactions continues to be an important factor in shaping public perceptions. If officers consistently behave in a courteous and professional manner — particularly when the police initiate the contact — there is a greater chance that the Queensland public will have satisfactory experiences with police, and more positive general perceptions of police.

Part A: Experiences with police

Research has shown that the quality of police–citizen contact has a role in shaping community perceptions, attitudes and evaluations of the police service in general (Bartsch & Cheurprakobkit 2004; Brown & Benedict 2002; Edwards 2005; Rosenbaum et al. 2005; Weitzer & Tuch 2005). Citizens’ satisfaction with police often depends on the nature of the police–citizen contact, who initiates the contact, and whether the public’s expectations of police are met by officers’ behaviour.

People are most likely to come into contact with police during traffic incidents (i.e. traffic offences or traffic accidents), when they are a victim of or witness to a crime, or when they are involved in or being questioned as part of a police investigation. Research shows that few of these incidents are likely to result in a favourable view of police (Edwards 2005). In addition, these situations tend to be initiated by police, and evidence indicates that police-initiated encounters are more likely to result in citizen dissatisfaction than citizen-initiated encounters (Skogan 2006).

Importantly, recent studies also indicate that a person’s perception of police may not be based only on direct experiences, but also on the experiences of others — that is, ‘vicarious experiences’ (Miller & Davis 2008; Rosenbaum et al. 2005; Weitzer & Tuch 2005). While these experiences are captured by the survey, due to the small number (3%, $n = 45$) of respondents who reported recent vicarious unsatisfactory experiences in the 2010 survey, vicarious responses will not be discussed in this report.

Aside from the characteristics of the encounter itself, demographic identifiers such as a person’s age, gender or ethnicity can have an impact on a person’s experience and perceptions of police. Therefore, this section also presents the relationship between various demographic identifiers and respondents’ experiences with police.

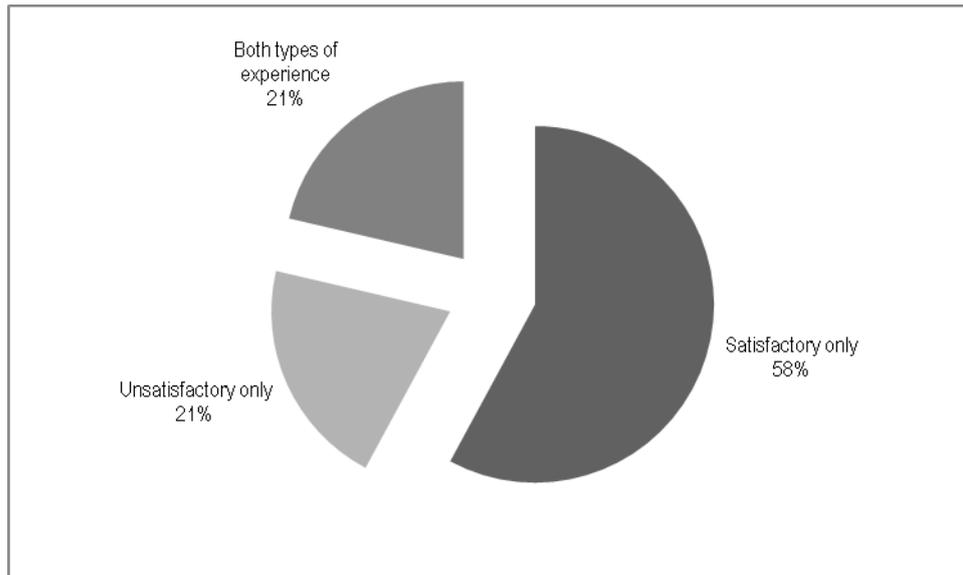
This part examines:

- the public’s experience with police
- satisfactory experiences — who initiated contact, the reasons for contact and the reasons for satisfaction
- unsatisfactory experiences — who initiated contact, the reasons for contact and the reasons for dissatisfaction.

The public's experience with police

The 2010 survey showed that over half the respondents (60%, $n = 923$) had contact with a police officer at some stage in their life. Of those who had contact, over half reported only satisfactory experiences ($n = 534$), one-fifth had only unsatisfactory experiences ($n = 192$), and one-fifth had a combination of unsatisfactory and satisfactory experiences with police ($n = 197$; see Figure 1).

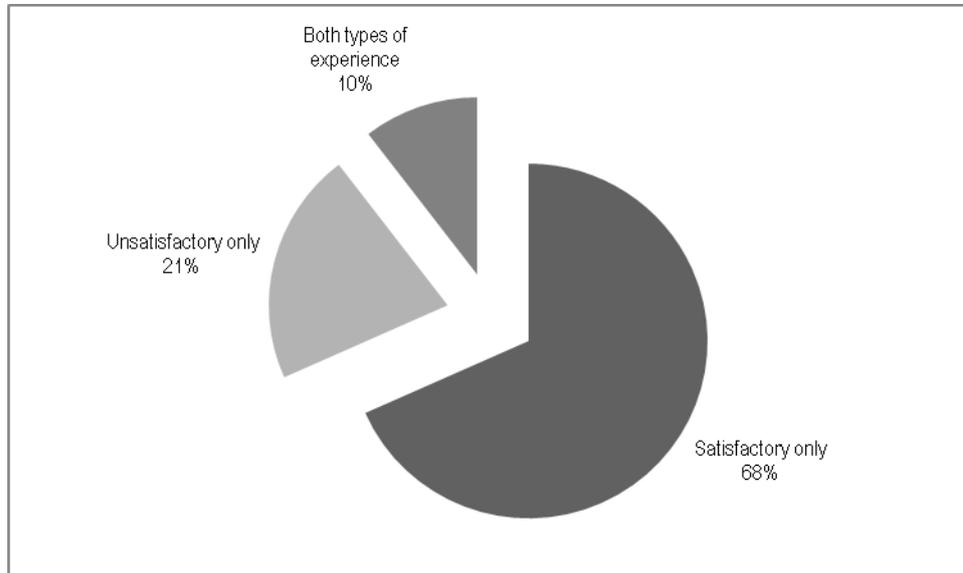
Figure 1. Experiences with police at some stage (2010)



Calculated as a proportion of all respondents, two-thirds of respondents had no recent contact with police (66%, $n = 1011$). Of those respondents who had contact with police at some stage in their life, over half (56%, $n = 518$) reported that the contact occurred in the last 12 months.

As shown in Figure 2, two-thirds of these respondents said that their contact with police was satisfactory ($n = 354$), one-fifth said the contact was unsatisfactory ($n = 110$), and one in ten ($n = 54$) reported a combination of satisfactory and unsatisfactory experiences.

Figure 2. Experiences with police in the past 12 months (2010)



Explaining the variation: recent contact with police

Age Respondents aged 65 years and over (20%, $n = 65$) and 55+/55–64 years (29%, $n = 73$) were less likely to report a recent experience with police than other respondents:
 18–24 years: 46%, $n = 106$
 25–34 years: 44%, $n = 79$
 35–44 years: 42%, $n = 124$
 45–54 years: 42%, $n = 104$.
 $b = -0.09, p < .001$

Region Respondents in South-West Queensland (43%, $n = 108$) and North Queensland (41%, $n = 105$) were more likely to have recent contact with the police than respondents from:
 Brisbane: 32%, $n = 163$
 South-East Queensland: 31%, $n = 80$
 Central Queensland: 37%, $n = 97$.
 $b = -0.04, p < .05$

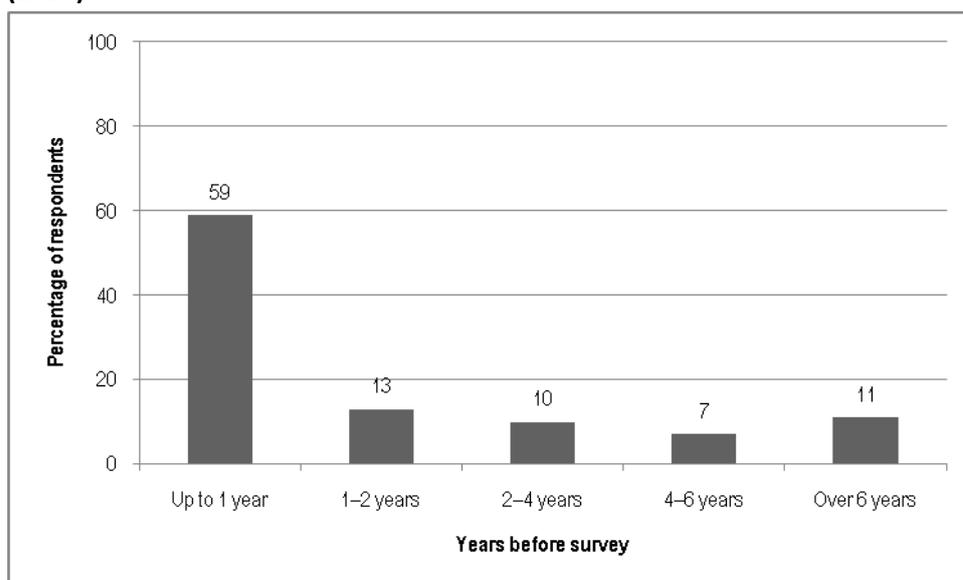
Indigenous Respondents who identified as Indigenous (52%, $n = 24$) were more likely to report recent contact with police than non-Indigenous respondents (36%, $n = 527$; $b = -0.35, p < .05$).

$R^2 = .06, SEE = 0.80, F(6, 1477) = 17.60, p < .001$

Satisfactory experiences with police

The 2010 Public Attitudes Survey indicates that 79 per cent of respondents ($n = 731$) who had contact with a police officer at some stage in their life reported that it was a satisfactory experience. Of those respondents who recalled when this contact occurred, 59 per cent ($n = 408$) reported that this contact occurred in the last 12 months (see Figure 3). When calculated as a proportion of all respondents, one in four respondents (27%) reported a satisfactory experience with a police officer in the last 12 months.

Figure 3. Number of years before the survey that the satisfactory experience occurred (2010)



No demographic factors helped to explain whether a respondent had a recent satisfactory experience with a police officer.

Initiation of contact and satisfactory experiences

In 2008, respondents were asked for the first time whether their contact with police was initiated by the police (police-initiated) or if they initiated contact themselves (self-initiated). The 2010 survey showed that of those respondents who reported recent satisfactory experiences, 48 per cent ($n = 197$) was self-initiated contact and 46 per cent ($n = 187$) was police-initiated contact.¹

The 2010 survey respondents who reported a satisfactory experience were significantly less likely to have initiated contact with police themselves (48%; $\chi^2 = 33.25$, $p < .001$) than the 2008 survey respondents (61%). There was no significant difference in the proportion of 'satisfied' respondents who reported that the contact was police-initiated from 2008 (39%) to 2010 (46%).

¹ In addition to being self- or police-initiated, 6 per cent ($n = 23$) of respondents in 2010 indicated that someone else initiated their contact with the police.

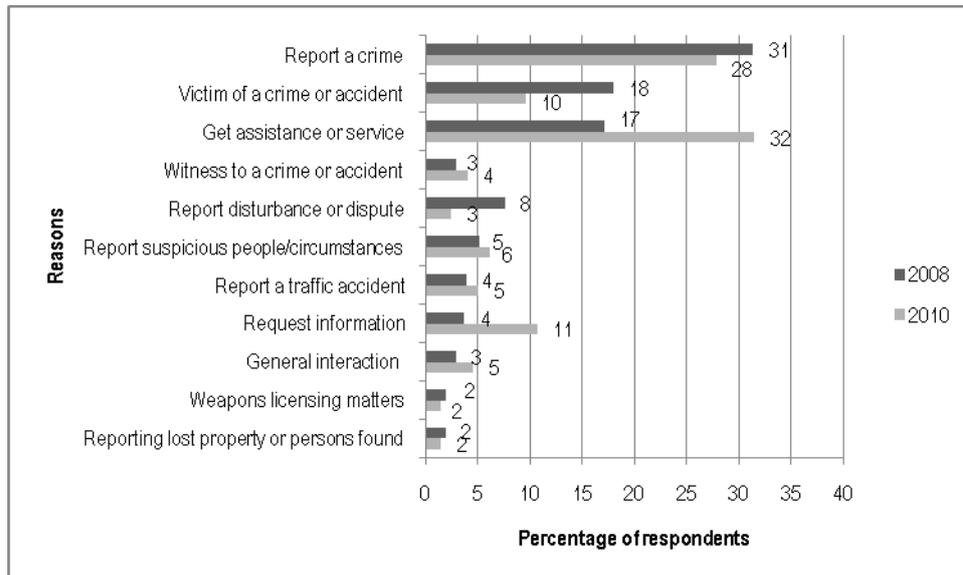
SELF-INITIATED CONTACT

Respondents who reported a satisfactory experience after self-initiated contact with police were asked the reason for initiating contact. As Figure 4 shows, the two leading reasons for self-initiated satisfactory contact were:

- to get assistance or service
- to report a crime.

In 2010, respondents were substantially more likely than in 2008 to report a satisfactory experience as a result of getting assistance or a service or requesting information from police.

Figure 4. Reasons for self-initiated contact with police (2008 and 2010)



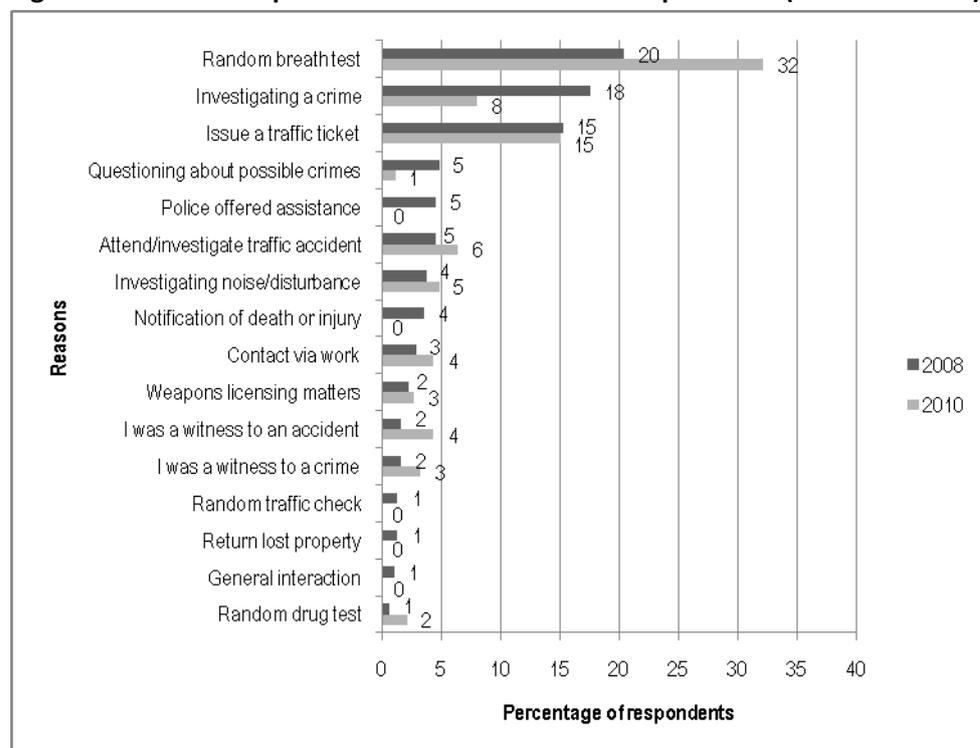
POLICE-INITIATED CONTACT

Respondents who reported a satisfactory experience after police-initiated contact were asked the reason that the police initiated contact. As Figure 5 shows, the leading reasons were:

- being stopped for a random breath test
- being issued with a traffic ticket
- as part of a police investigation ('investigating a crime').

In 2010, respondents were more likely than in 2008 to report satisfactory encounters with police due to a random breath test, but less likely to be satisfied after an encounter as part of a police investigation.

Figure 5. Reasons for police-initiated contact with respondents (2008 and 2010)



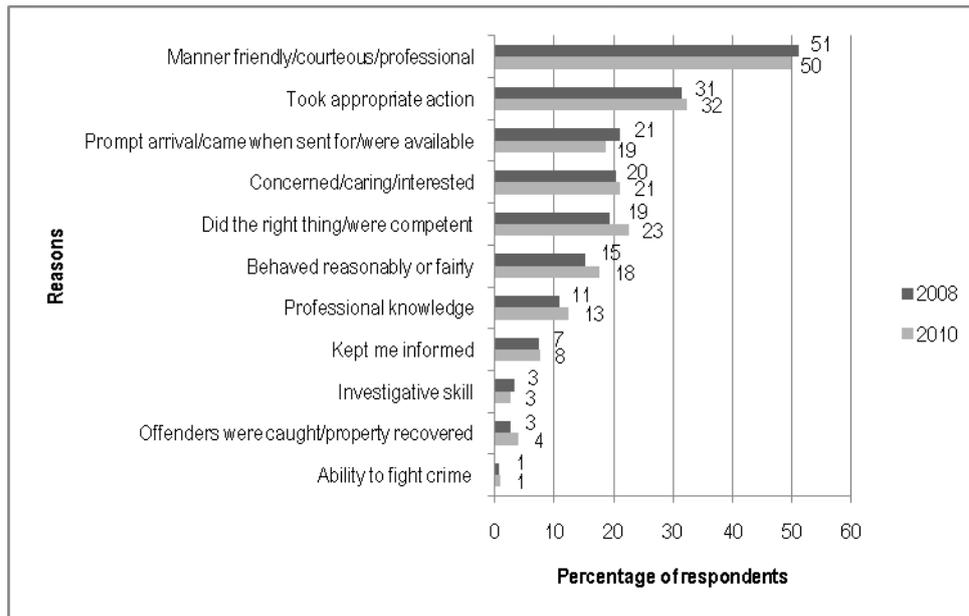
Reasons for satisfaction

Respondents who reported a recent satisfactory experience were asked to provide a reason for their satisfaction (see Figure 6). The two leading reasons were:

- the officer had a friendly, courteous or professional manner
- the officer took the appropriate action.

Overall, respondents' reasons for satisfaction did not differ substantially from the 2008 survey results.

Figure 6. Reasons for satisfaction with the police (2008 and 2010)

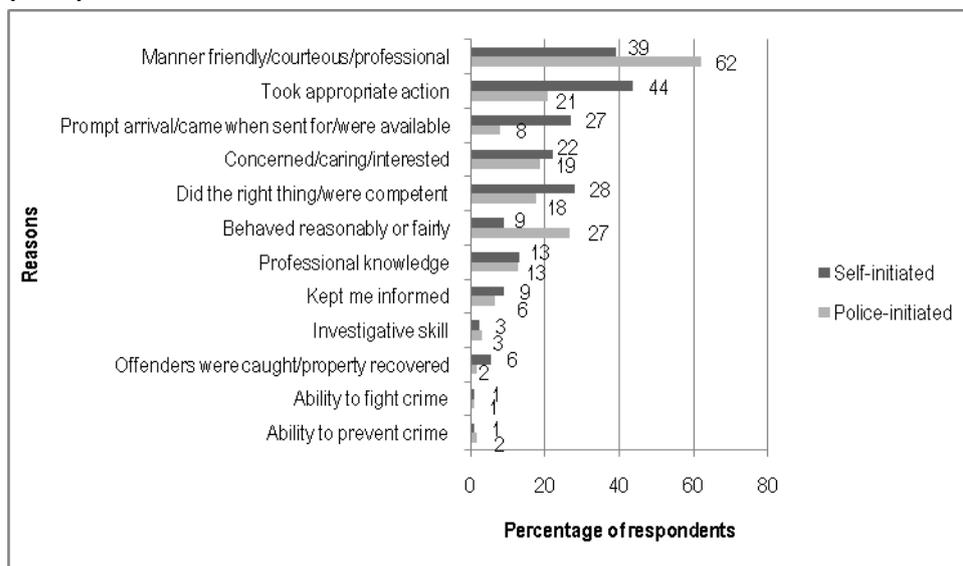


INITIATION OF CONTACT

To explore the importance of the initiation of contact within the satisfactory experiences, we compared the reasons for satisfactory self-initiated contacts to the reasons for satisfactory police-initiated contacts.

Figure 7 shows that for self-initiated satisfactory contacts, the leading reasons for satisfaction were that the officer took appropriate action or their manner was friendly, courteous or professional. For police-initiated satisfactory contact, the leading reasons for satisfaction were that the officer was friendly, courteous or professional, or behaved reasonably or fairly.

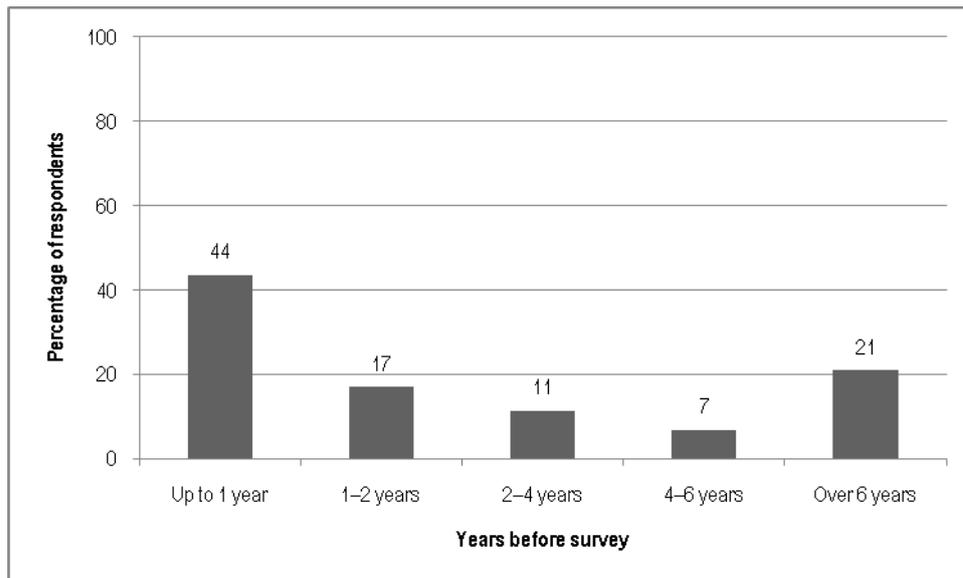
Figure 7. Reasons for satisfaction after recent contact with police, by initiation of contact (2010)



Unsatisfactory experiences with police

The 2010 Public Attitudes Survey indicates that 42 per cent of respondents ($n = 389$) who had contact with a police officer at some stage in their life reported that it was an unsatisfactory experience. Of those respondents who recalled when this contact occurred, 44 per cent ($n = 164$) reported that this contact occurred in the last 12 months (see Figure 8). When calculated as a proportion of all respondents, one in nine respondents (11%) reported a recent unsatisfactory experience.

Figure 8. Number of years before the survey that the unsatisfactory experience occurred (2010)



Explaining the variation: recent unsatisfactory experiences

Gender	Males (12%, $n = 94$) were more likely to report a recent unsatisfactory experience with police than females (9%, $n = 70$; $b = -0.10$, $p < .001$).
Age	Respondents aged 18–24 years (19%, $n = 44$) were more likely to report a recent unsatisfactory experience with police than other respondents: 25–34 years: 16%, $n = 28$ 35–44 years: 11%, $n = 33$ 45–54 years: 12%, $n = 30$ 55–64 years: 3%, $n = 8$ 65 years and over: 5%, $n = 15$. $b = -0.09$, $p < .05$
Indigenous	Indigenous participants (22%, $n = 10$) were more likely to report a recent unsatisfactory experience with police than non-Indigenous respondents (10%, $n = 153$; $b = -0.09$, $p < .001$).
Employment	Student participants (15%, $n = 6$) were most likely to report a recent unsatisfactory experience with police, and persons who were retired or on a pension were least likely to report a recent unsatisfactory experience with police (5%, $n = 21$) compared to other respondents: employed: 13%, $n = 120$ unemployed: 11%, $n = 5$ home duties: 9%, $n = 9$. $b = 0.07$, $p < .05$

$R^2 = .04$, $SEE = 0.47$, $F(6, 1477) = 9.47$, $p < .001$

These results are consistent with the results of the 2008 Public Attitudes Survey and with empirical research, which suggests that young people and Indigenous Australians are more likely to have a negative experience with police compared with older people and non-Indigenous people (Cunneen & Libesman 1995; Goldsmith, Israel & Daly 2006; Newburn 2003; White & Wyn 2004).

Initiation of contact and unsatisfactory experiences

In the 2010 survey, 164 respondents reported recent unsatisfactory experiences with police. Of these, the contact was 57 per cent ($n = 92$) police-initiated and 37 per cent ($n = 60$) self-initiated.² There was no significant difference since 2008 in the proportion that were self-initiated or police-initiated, and no demographic factors helped to explain who initiated respondents' recent unsatisfactory experiences with a police officer.

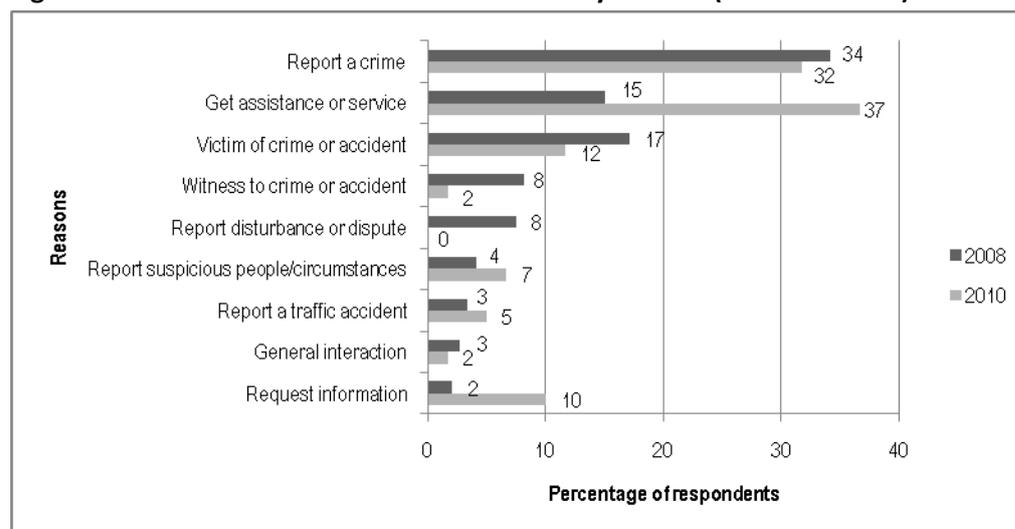
SELF-INITIATED CONTACT

Figure 9 shows that the two main reasons for self-initiated unsatisfactory contact in 2010 were to:

- get assistance or service
- report a crime.

These two were also the leading reasons for self-initiated *satisfactory* contact (see Figure 4). This demonstrates that general interactions between the public and police can not only bring benefits in terms of encouraging communication and cooperation, but also have the opposite effect.

Figure 9. Reasons for self-initiated unsatisfactory contact (2008 and 2010)



² Of the respondents who had an unsatisfactory experience in 2010, 6 per cent ($n = 10$) indicated that someone else initiated their contact with police.

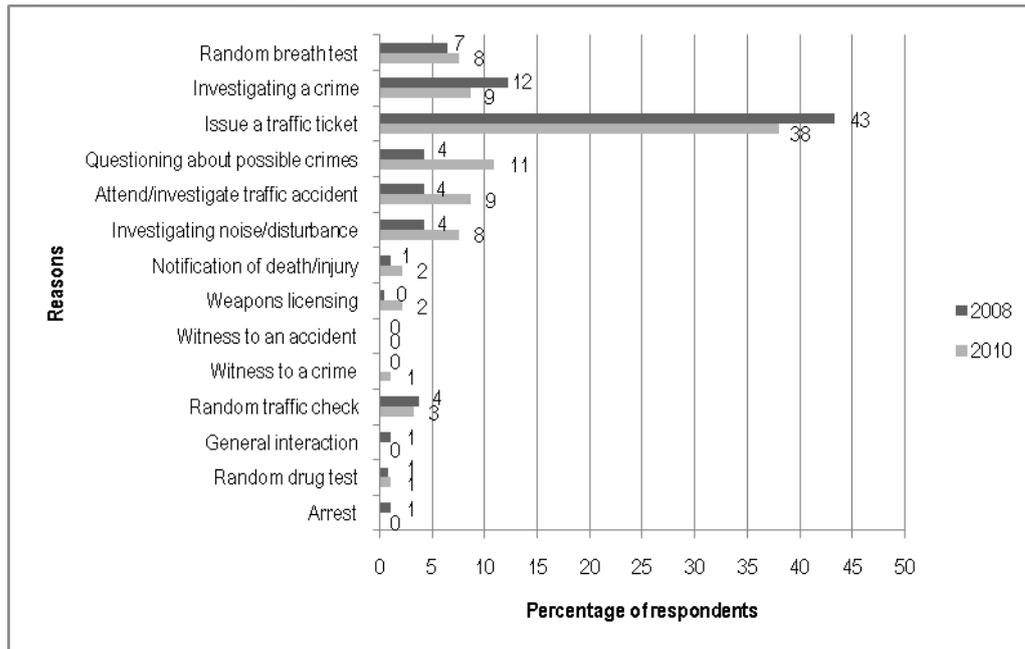
POLICE-INITIATED CONTACT

Respondents who reported an unsatisfactory experience after police-initiated contact were asked the reason for the contact. As Figure 10 shows, the leading reasons for the contact were the police:

- issued a traffic ticket
- made contact while investigating a crime.

There were no substantial differences in responses to this item since 2008.

Figure 10. Reasons for police-initiated contact (2008 and 2010)

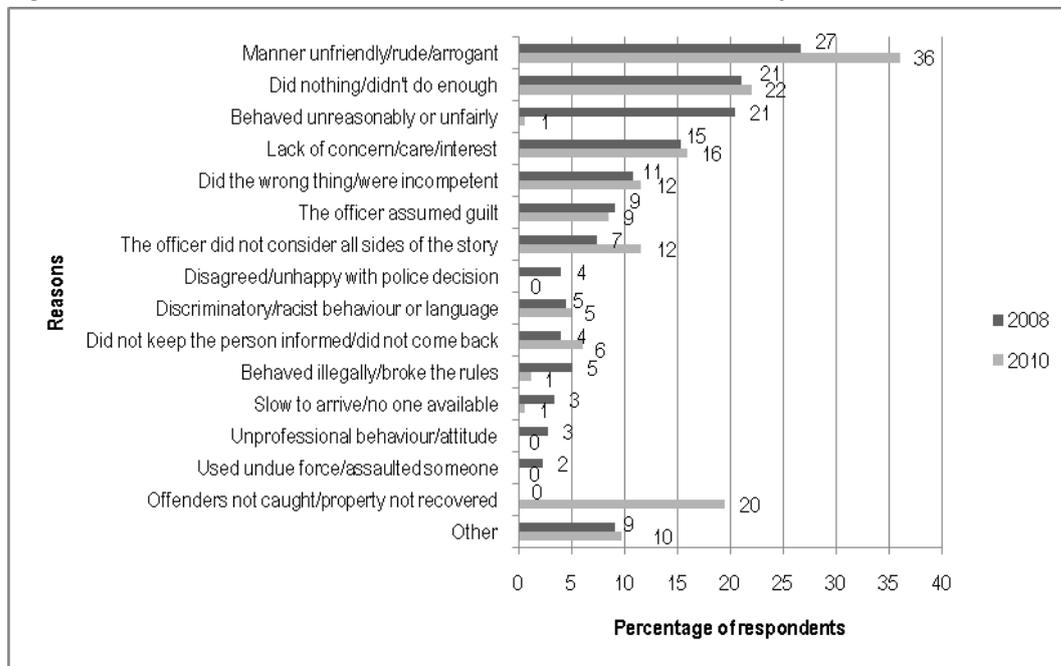


Reasons for dissatisfaction

Respondents who were dissatisfied were asked to provide the reason for their dissatisfaction. The most common reason respondents gave was that the QPS officer's manner was unfriendly, rude or arrogant (see Figure 11). Other reasons were that the officer did nothing or not enough, offenders were not caught or property was not recovered, or the officer showed a lack of concern, care or interest.

Importantly, compared with 2008 responses, there was a substantial decrease in the proportion of respondents in 2010 who reported that the dissatisfaction was because the officer behaved unreasonably or unfairly. Further, it was rare for people to report that their unsatisfactory experience related to serious misconduct such as 'behaved illegally or broke the rules', 'used undue force/assaulted someone' or 'misused public money or resources'. Taken together, these results are a positive sign for police.

Figure 11. Reasons for dissatisfaction after recent contact with police (2008 and 2010)



INITIATION OF CONTACT

To explore the importance of the initiation of contact within the unsatisfactory experiences, we compared the reasons for unsatisfactory self-initiated contacts to the reasons for unsatisfactory police-initiated contacts.

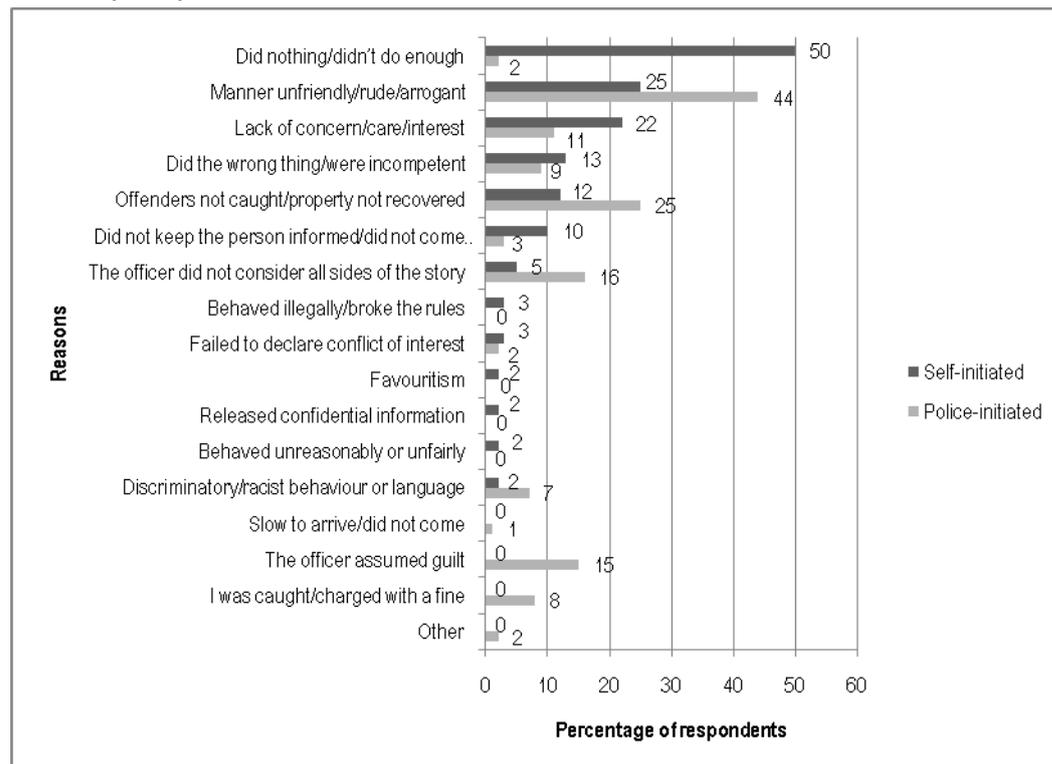
Figure 12 shows that for self-initiated unsatisfactory contact with police, the leading reasons for dissatisfaction were that the officer:

- did nothing or did not do enough
- had an unfriendly, rude or arrogant manner
- lacked concern, care or interest.

For police-initiated unsatisfactory contact, the leading reasons for dissatisfaction were:

- the officer's manner was unfriendly, rude or arrogant
- the offender(s) were not caught or property was not recovered
- the officer did not consider all sides of the story
- the officer assumed guilt.

Figure 12. Reasons for dissatisfaction after recent contact with police, by initiation of contact (2010)



MEASURING DISSATISFACTION AMONG OFFENDERS

For the first time in the 2010 survey, we examined whether respondents who had been fined, charged, arrested or taken into custody (55%, $n = 51$) during the course of a police-initiated encounter provided different reasons for their dissatisfaction when compared with other respondents. Both offenders and non-offenders indicated that the main reason for their dissatisfaction was that the police officer's manner was unfriendly, rude or arrogant.

Part B: General perceptions

There is significant authority and power given to police officers; and these characteristics of policing result in a range of circumstances and contexts in which police misconduct or 'corruption' could occur (Davids 2008; Edwards 2005). If detected, police corruption can have a devastating effect on the entire police organisation (Prenzler 2009). For instance, reports of corruption can seriously affect the public's confidence in and cooperation with police, thereby limiting police crime-prevention efforts and overall effectiveness (Brown & Benedict 2002; Frank, Smith & Novak 2005; Rosenbaum et al. 2005).

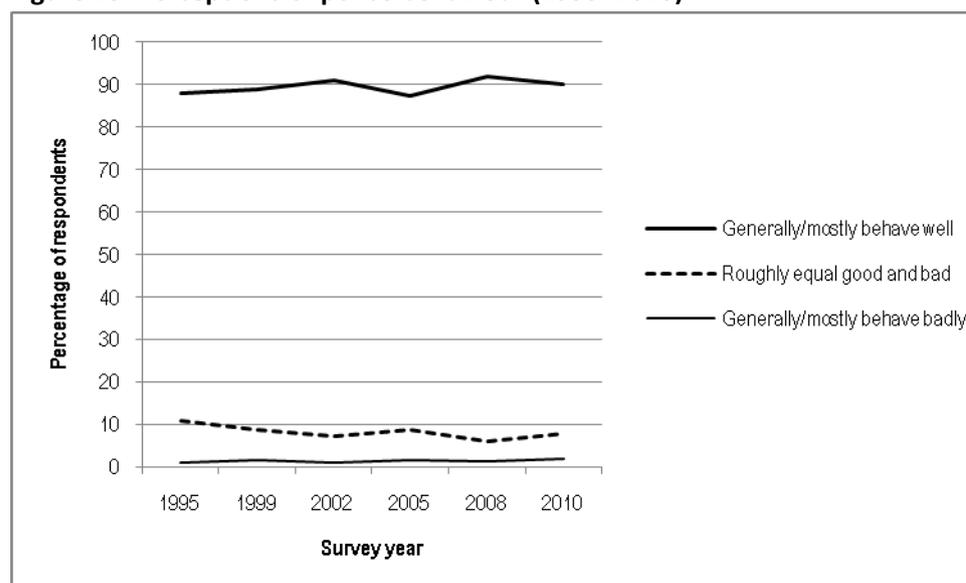
In this section, respondents were asked a range of questions about police behaviour, honesty and integrity. Specifically, this part examines public perceptions about:

- police behaviour
- changes in police behaviour over time
- police integrity
- police misconduct and police powers
- police contact with Indigenous peoples.

Perceptions of police behaviour

The overwhelming majority of Queenslanders surveyed in 2010 had a positive view of how members of the QPS behave (see Figure 13). In 2010, 90 per cent ($n = 1343$) of respondents agreed that police generally or mostly behave well, 8 per cent ($n = 122$) believed 'roughly equal numbers of good and bad', while 2 per cent ($n = 31$) considered that police generally or mostly behave badly. The proportion of respondents who considered that police generally or mostly behave well has remained steady over time.

Figure 13. Perceptions of police behaviour (1995–2010)



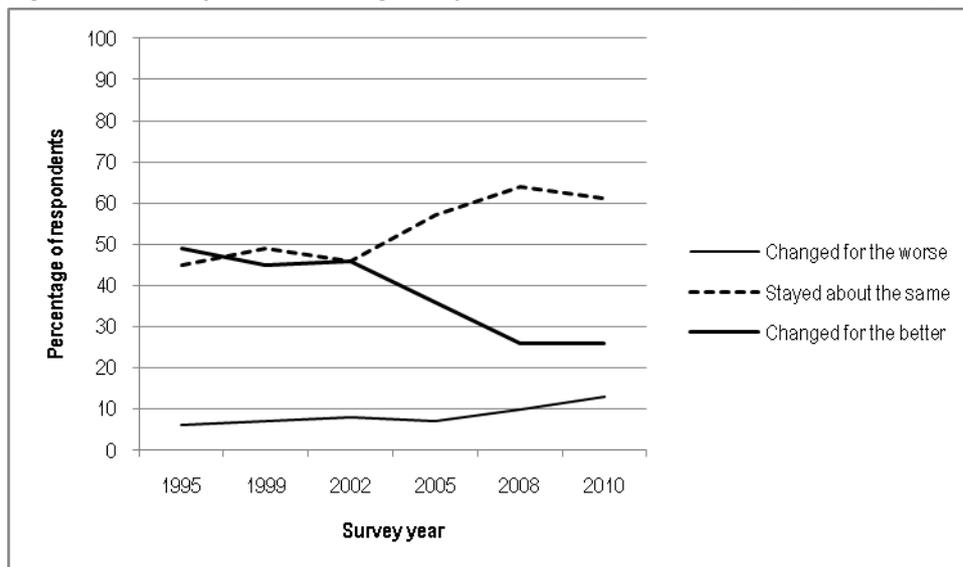
Perceptions of changes in police behaviour over time

To gauge the public's perceptions of recent police behaviour, the Public Attitudes Survey asked whether police behaviour in Queensland has become better, worse or stayed about the same 'over the last few years'. Over half of the respondents (61%, $n = 861$) believed that police behaviour has stayed about the same, one quarter (26%, $n = 363$) believed that police behaviour has improved, and 13 per cent believed that police behaviour has become worse ($n = 184$).

As Figure 14 shows, respondents' perceptions of changes in police behaviour were steady from 1995 to 2002. From 2002, however, there was a shift: people were significantly less likely to believe that police behaviour had changed for the better, and more likely to believe that police behaviour had stayed the same ($\chi^2 = 124.05, p < .001$).

During this period, the proportion of respondents who believed police behaviour has recently become worse has doubled from 6 per cent in 1995 to 13 per cent in 2010.

Figure 14. Perceptions of changes in police behaviour over time (1995–2010)



Perceptions of police integrity

To examine the public's perception of police integrity, respondents were asked to what extent they agreed or disagreed with the following statements:

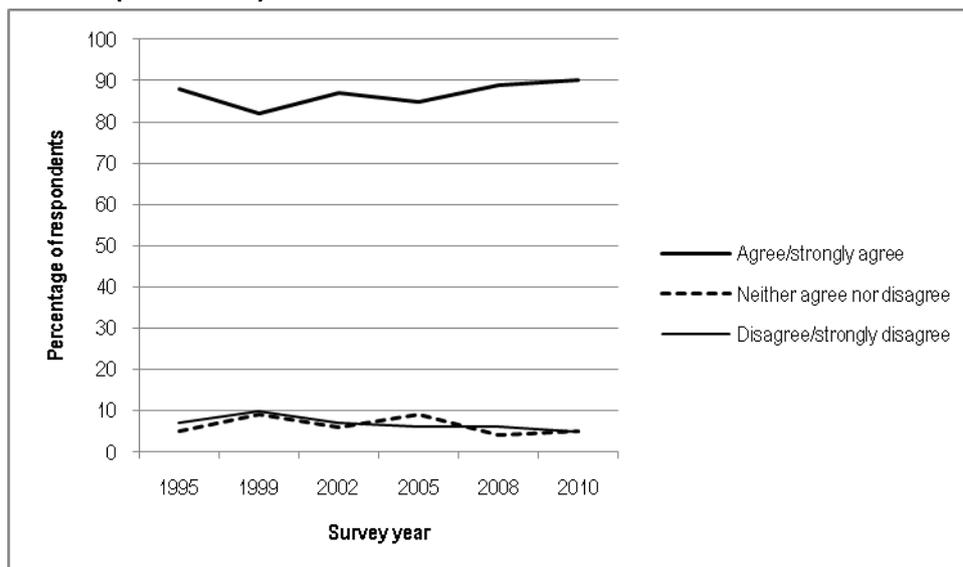
- *Most police are honest.*
- *Police have a bad image in Queensland.*

Since 1995, the majority of respondents have consistently agreed that most police are honest (see Figure 15). The 2010 results show the highest level of agreement since the survey was first conducted, with 90 per cent of respondents ($n = 1357$) agreeing that most police are honest. Five per cent ($n = 82$) disagreed with this statement, and another 5 per cent ($n = 68$) neither agreed nor disagreed.

Public perceptions of officer honesty are more positive than the national average, and are higher than other surveys of the Queensland public. In the *National Survey of Community Satisfaction with Policing* survey in 2009–10, 77 per cent of all Queensland respondents ($n = 6263$) and 78 per cent of all Australian respondents ($n = 36\,365$) agreed or strongly agreed with the statement 'Most police are honest.' (Steering Committee for the Review of Government Service Provision 2011)

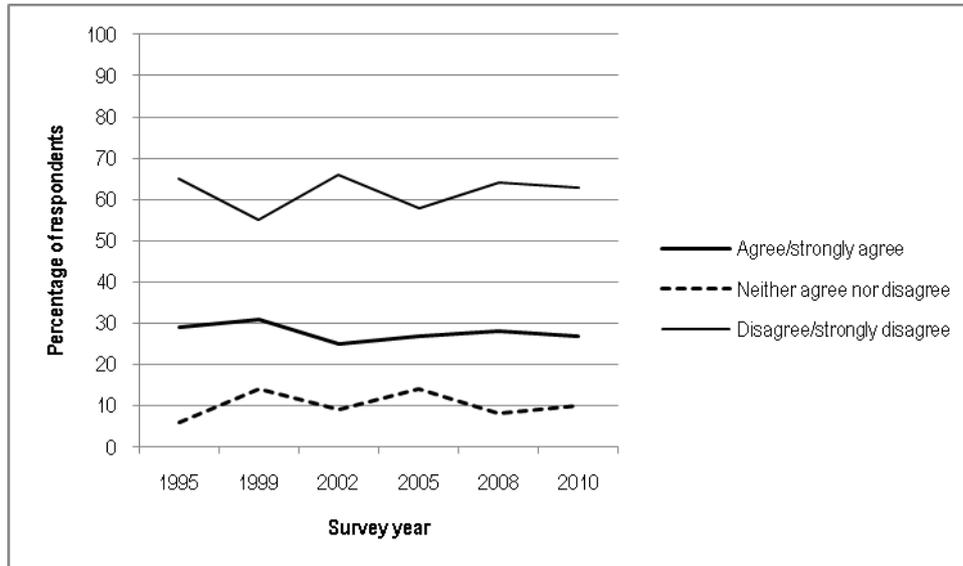
While there was no significant change in public perceptions of police honesty since the 2008 survey, respondents in 2010 had more positive perceptions of police than respondents in the 1999 survey ($\chi^2 = 42.42, p < .001$). However, as Figure 15 shows, public perceptions of police integrity have not changed substantially over the survey series.

Figure 15. Attitudes to police integrity: responses to the statement 'Most police are honest.' (1995–2010)



The majority of respondents in 2010 disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement 'Police have a bad image in Queensland.' (63%, $n = 970$) Over one-quarter of respondents (27%, $n = 409$) agreed with this statement, while 10 per cent ($n = 144$) neither agreed nor disagreed. As Figure 16 shows, public perceptions about the image of QPS officers have varied modestly throughout the survey series.

Figure 16. Attitudes to police integrity: responses to the statement 'Police have a bad image in Queensland.' (1995–2010)



Explaining the variation: police image

Indigenous Indigenous participants (43%, $n = 18$) were more likely to believe that police in Queensland have a bad image than non-Indigenous respondents (27%, $n = 389$; $b = -0.07$, $p < .05$).

Experience Respondents with a recent satisfactory experience were more likely to report that police in Queensland do not have a bad image (67%, $n = 272$) compared with those who did not report a recent satisfactory experience (61%, $n = 663$; $b = -0.07$, $p < .05$).

$R^2 = .01$, $SEE = 15.12$, $F(8, 1475) = 2.43$, $p < .05$

Perceptions of police misconduct and police powers

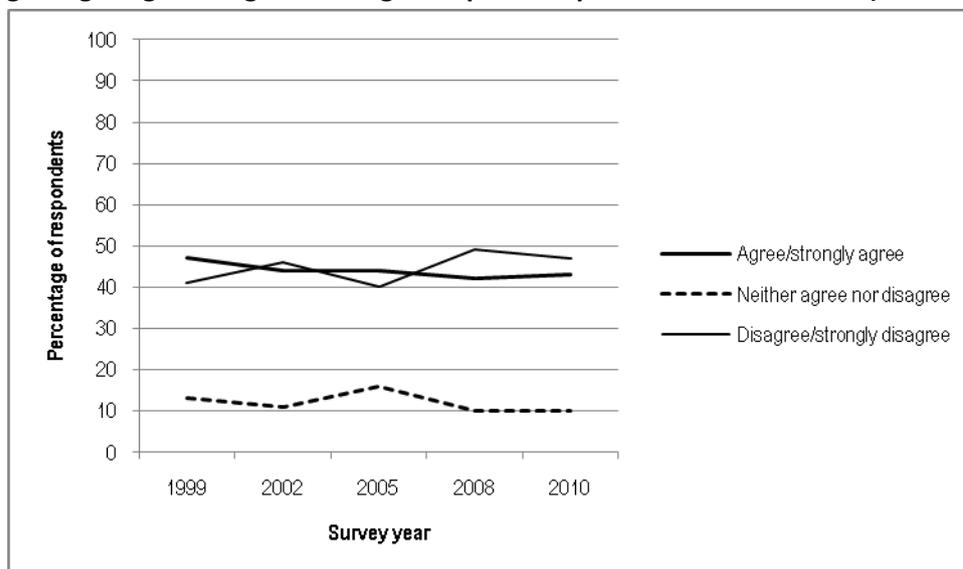
The survey asked respondents their perceptions of police misconduct by asking whether or not they agreed with the following statements:

- *The chances of getting caught doing something corrupt in the police service are slim.*
- *You will always get some corruption in the police service.*

In 2010, about an equal proportion of respondents agreed (43%, $n = 608$) and disagreed (47%, $n = 655$) with the statement 'The chances of getting caught doing something corrupt in the police service are slim.' Ten per cent ($n = 142$) neither agreed nor disagreed.

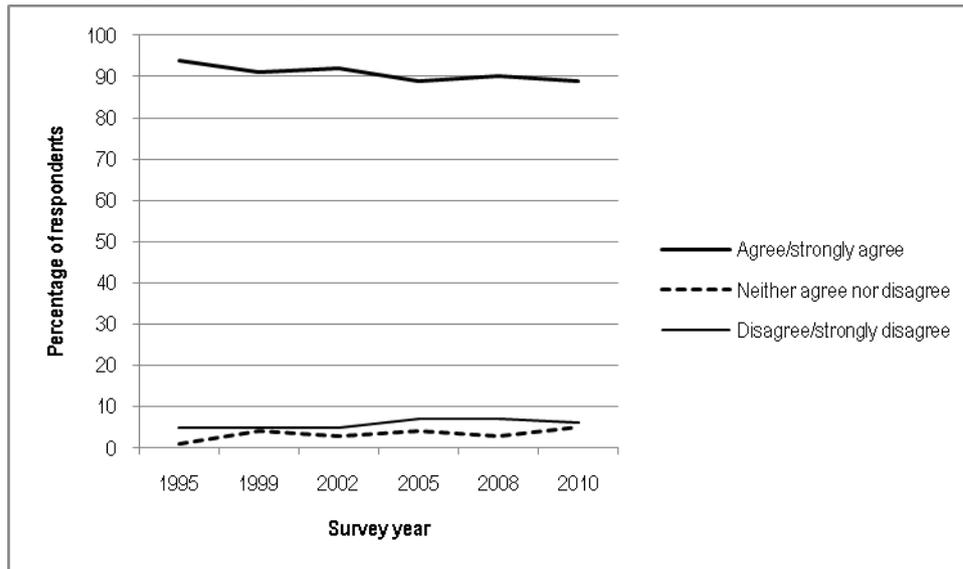
As Figure 17 shows, responses to this item have varied modestly over the survey series.

Figure 17. Attitudes of police misconduct: responses to the statement 'The chances of getting caught doing something corrupt in the police service are slim.' (1999–2010)



The majority of respondents agreed with the statement ‘You will always get some corruption in the police service.’ (89%, $n = 1335$) Six per cent ($n = 94$) disagreed and 5 per cent ($n = 74$) neither agreed nor disagreed with this statement. Over time, however, the proportion who agreed with this statement has gradually but consistently declined (see Figure 18). Statistically, while agreement to this statement has not changed significantly since 2008, agreement with this statement has decreased significantly since 1995 ($\chi^2 = 27.13, p < .001$).

Figure 18. Attitudes of police misconduct: responses to the statement ‘You will always get some corruption in the police service.’ (1995–2010)

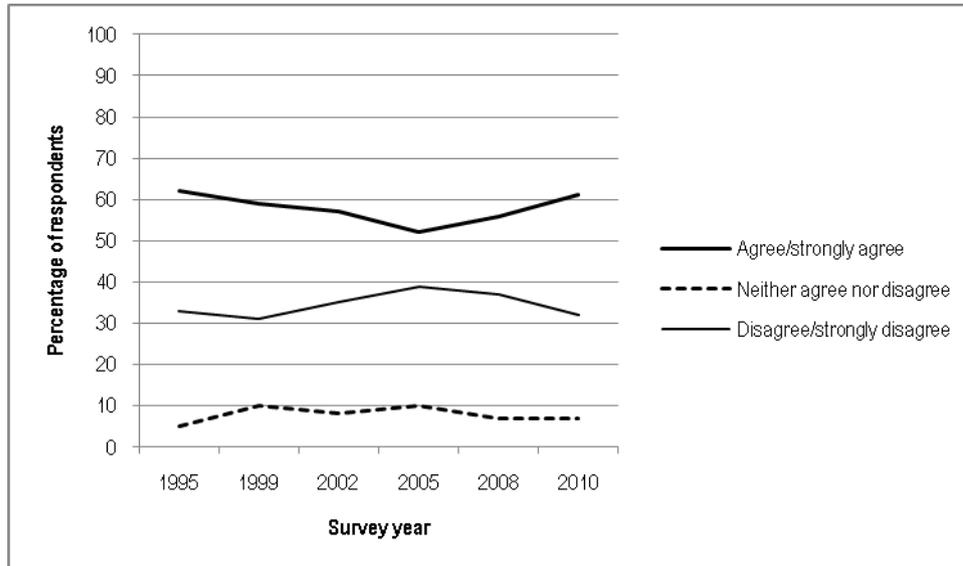


The survey asked respondents their perceptions of police powers by asking whether or not they agreed with the following statements:

- *The police don't have enough powers to do their job properly.*
- *Sometimes police need to break the rules to get the job done.*

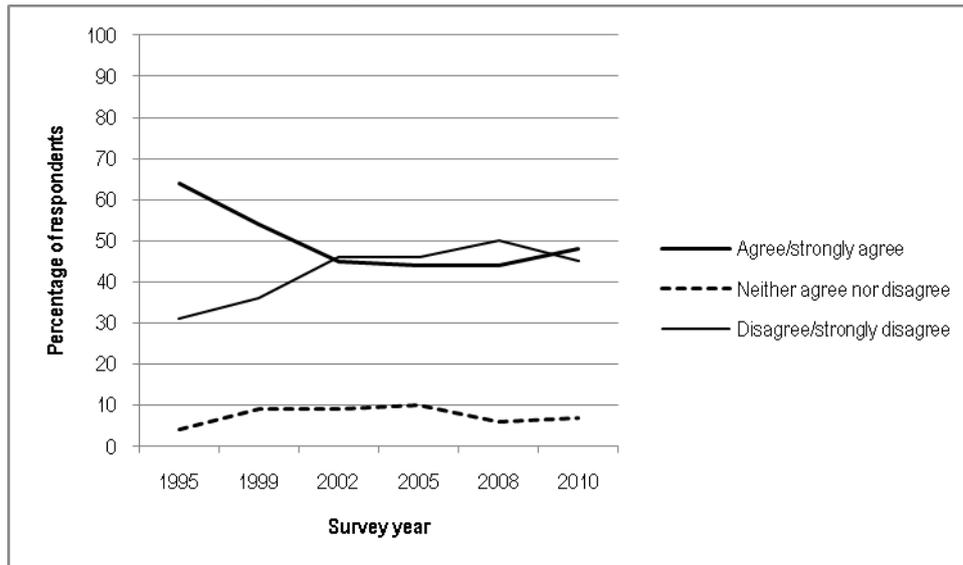
In 2010 people were significantly more likely to agree that the police don't have enough powers to do their job properly (61%, $n = 898$; $\chi^2 = 6.18$, $p < .05$) compared with the 2008 responses (56%) (see Figure 19). However, there was no significant change in responses since 1995. In addition, 32 per cent ($n = 478$) of respondents in 2010 disagreed with this statement, while 7 per cent ($n = 101$) neither agreed nor disagreed.

Figure 19. Attitudes of police powers: responses to the statement 'The police don't have enough powers to do their job properly.' (1995–2010)



In 2010, about an equal proportion of respondents agreed (48%, $n = 709$) or disagreed (45%, $n = 655$) that police sometimes need to break the rules to do their job, and 7 per cent ($n = 106$) neither agreed nor disagreed. As Figure 20 shows, the proportion who agreed with this statement has significantly declined since 1995 ($\chi^2 = 58.63, p < .001$). While responses to this item have remained steady since the 2002 survey, from 2008 to 2010 there was a small but significant increase in agreement with this statement ($\chi^2 = 10.33, p < .01$).

Figure 20. Attitudes of police powers: responses to the statement ‘Sometimes police need to break the rules to get the job done.’ (1995–2010)



Explaining the variation: sometimes police need to break the rules

Age Respondents aged 65 years and over (56%, $n = 176$) and 55–64 years (53%, $n = 126$) were more likely to agree that police need to break the rules to get the job done compared with other respondents:

18–24 years: 43%, $n = 96$

25–34 years: 49%, $n = 86$

35–44 years: 45%, $n = 130$

45–54 years: 40%, $n = 94$.

$b = -0.09, p < .05$

Employment Respondents currently studying (31%, $n = 12$) or employed (44%, $n = 392$) were significantly less likely to agree that police need to break the rules to get the job done than other respondents:

unemployed: 57%, $n = 27$

home duties: 61%, $n = 58$

retired/pension: 54%, $n = 210$

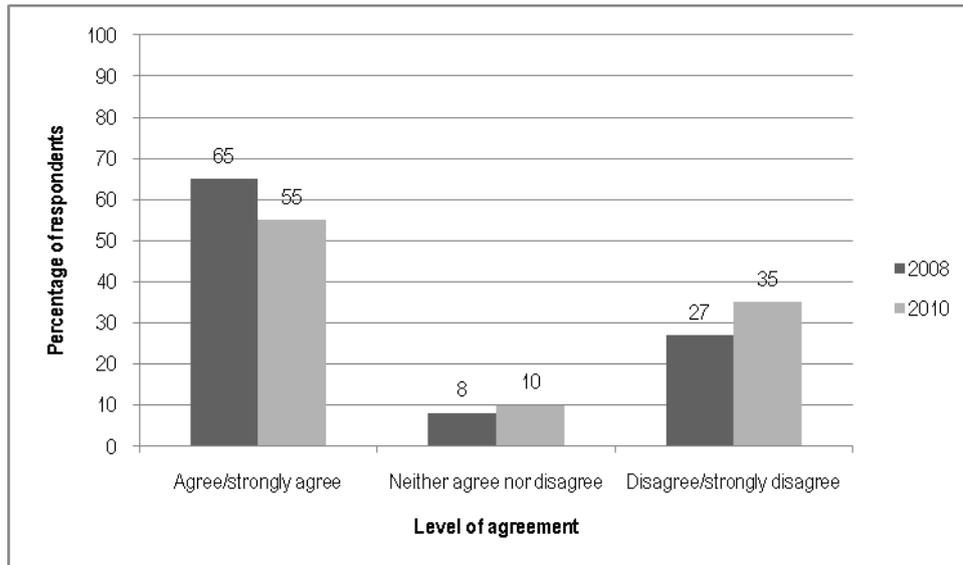
$b = -0.07, p < .05$

$R^2 = .01, SEE = 18.25, F(8, 1475) = 2.08, p < .05$

Perceptions of police contact with Indigenous peoples

In 2008, a question was added to the Public Attitudes Survey about police treatment of Indigenous peoples in comparison to non-Indigenous people. Just over half the respondents in 2010 agreed or strongly agreed that police treat Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders differently from white Australians ($n = 764$), a significant reduction on the 2008 figure ($n = 913$; $\chi^2 = 27.24$, $p < .001$) (see Figure 21).

Figure 21. Perceptions of whether the police treat Indigenous Australians differently from white Australians (2008 and 2010)



Explaining the variation: police contact with Indigenous peoples

Employment Respondents currently studying (67%, $n = 22$) were significantly more likely to agree that police treat Indigenous Australians differently to white Australians than other respondents:

- employed: 53%, $n = 457$
- unemployed: 50%, $n = 22$
- home duties: 49%, $n = 43$
- retired/pension: 62%, $n = 208$.

$b = -0.08$, $p < .05$

$R^2 = .01$, $SEE = 18.25$, $F(8, 1475) = 2.08$, $p < .05$

The Indigenous status of the respondent was not significantly associated with public perceptions about police treatment of Indigenous Australians.

Part C: Complaints processes

Complaints against police are an important measure to determine the extent that police are performing their duties in a professional manner, as intended by government (Steering Committee for the Review of Government Service Provision 2011). Therefore, the quality of complaints-handling processes is crucial to maintaining public confidence in police agencies and police oversight bodies, and encouraging integrity in policing organisations.

When the public believes that the complaints system is not independent of the subject of the complaint, evidence suggests that the public will be reluctant to make a complaint (Edwards 2005; Prenzler et al. 2010; Sarre & Tomaino 2001; Smith 2009, 2010). This is of particular concern because previous research shows public dissatisfaction with complaints procedures tends to be widespread, with many members of the public questioning the legitimacy of the complaints process (Edwards 2005; Smith 2010). Notwithstanding the findings of previous research, earlier Public Attitudes Surveys provide a positive view of complaints processes in Queensland.

This part presents a range of results relating to perceptions of complaints processes, specifically:

- whether respondents who had an unsatisfactory experience with a police officer made a complaint; and if not, why not
- confidence in the complaints process
- to which agency the public would report improper police behaviour.

Experiences of making a complaint

Respondents who indicated that they were dissatisfied after coming into contact with police over the last 12 months ($n = 164$) were asked:

- if they made a complaint³
- if they made a complaint, to which organisation the complaint was made and how satisfied they were with the outcome
- if they did not make a complaint, why not.

As shown in Table 1, 38 per cent ($n = 63$) of all respondents who were dissatisfied after coming into contact with police within the last 12 months felt like making an official complaint. This is comparable to the 2008 survey. About one in six recently dissatisfied respondents ($n = 27$) actually made or tried to make a complaint.

³ When referring to complaints in this section, we only refer to official complaints unless otherwise stated.

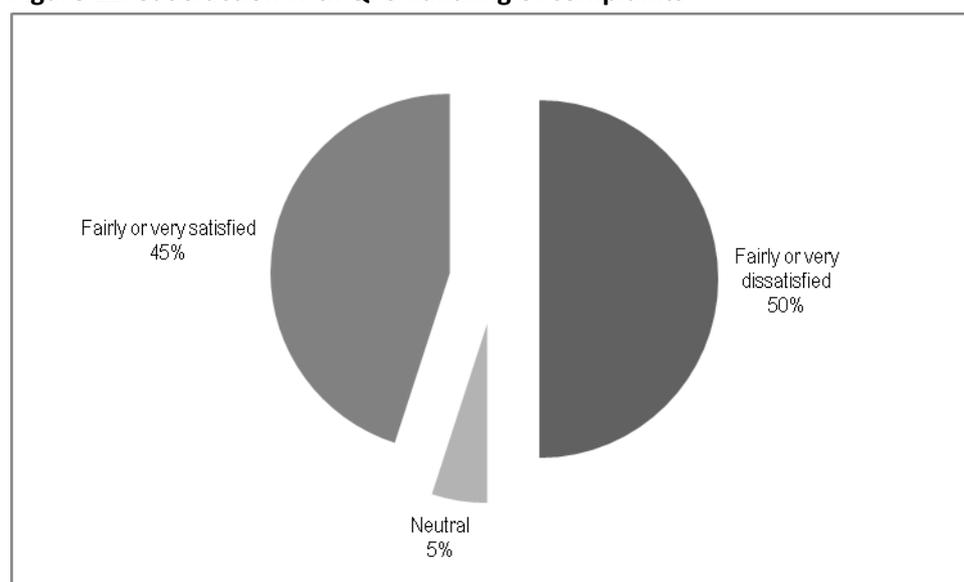
Table 1. Proportion of recently dissatisfied respondents who felt like making, made or tried to make a complaint (2008 and 2010)

Making a complaint	Percentage of respondents	
	2008 (<i>n</i> = 176)	2010 (<i>n</i> = 164)
Proportion recently dissatisfied who felt like making a complaint	34	38
Proportion recently dissatisfied who made a complaint or tried to make a complaint	11	16
Ratio of 'felt like making a complaint' to 'made or tried to make a complaint'	3:1	2:1

Respondents who had made (or tried to make) a complaint in response to a recent unsatisfactory experience were asked to which agency they complained. Most reported the matter directly to the QPS (95%, *n* = 20), and one respondent complained to the agency about which the complaint was directed (5%). No respondents indicated that they reported the matter to the CMC.⁴

Fifty per cent of the respondents who had made, or tried to make, a complaint to the QPS (*n* = 10) were fairly or very dissatisfied with the way the complaint was handled (see Figure 22). This is less than the 2008 survey, which showed that 71 per cent of people who complained to the QPS were dissatisfied with how it was handled. One respondent in 2010 indicated that they were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied with how the complaint was handled, and the remaining respondents (*n* = 9) were fairly or very satisfied with the way the complaint was handled. As the number of cases is small, however, these figures should be interpreted with caution.

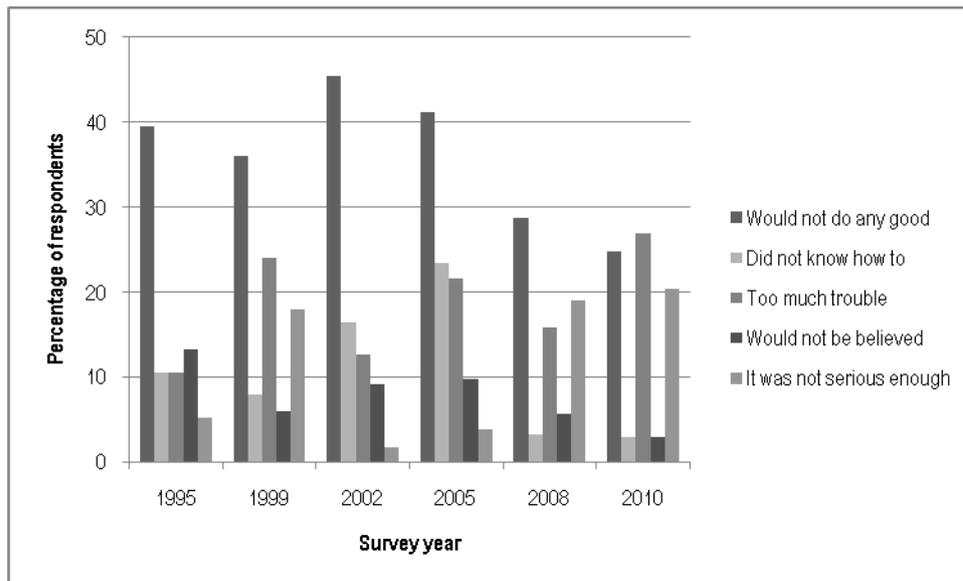
Figure 22. Satisfaction with QPS handling of complaints



⁴ Six respondents who had made (or tried to make) a complaint in response to a recent unsatisfactory experience did not provide a response to this question.

Respondents who had a recent unsatisfactory experience with a police officer but had not made an official complaint ($n = 137$) were asked why they had chosen not to complain. The reasons did not vary substantially compared to those reported in 2008 (see Figure 23). Approximately one in four respondents reported that either it would be too much trouble (27%, $n = 37$) or it would not do any good (25%, $n = 34$), while one in five (20%, $n = 28$) reported that the matter was not serious enough to make a complaint. A minority reported that they did not know how to make a complaint (3%, $n = 4$) or felt they would not be believed (3%, $n = 4$).

Figure 23. Reasons that respondents chose not to complain about police (1995 to 2010)



We asked additional questions to better understand why these respondents considered that making a complaint would not do any good ($n = 34$, 15 of whom responded), or felt that they would not be believed ($n = 4$, 3 of whom responded). The reasons included:

- 'police all stick together'
- 'it would be their word against mine'.

This is consistent with the previous research findings that show people are reluctant to complain because they believe it will not achieve anything (Smith 2009). It is also consistent with previous Public Attitudes Surveys.

Some respondents also chose not to complain because they believed the behaviour of police was not serious enough to warrant a complaint ($n = 28$). These respondents were asked what types of behaviour they would consider serious enough to justify a complaint. The types of behaviour nominated included police officers who:

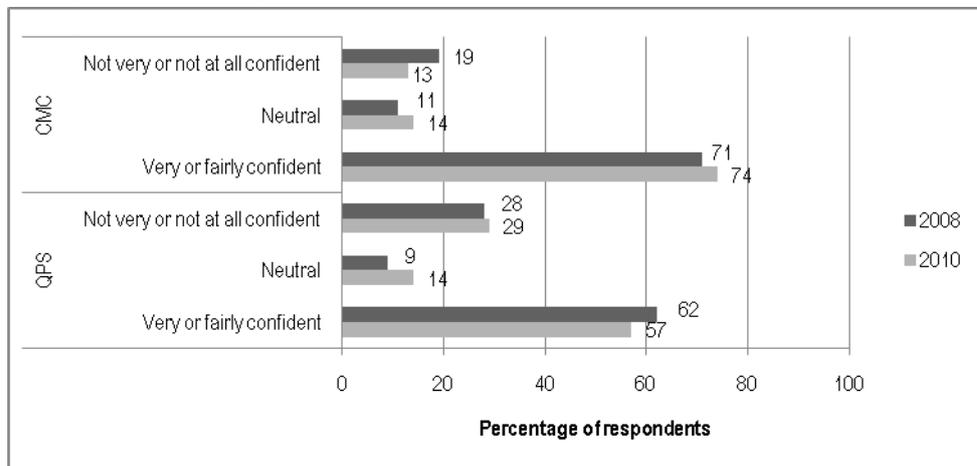
- behaved unreasonably or unfairly
- took a bribe
- behaved illegally/broke the rules.

Confidence in the complaints process

In the 2008 survey, respondents were asked to rate their confidence in the QPS and in the CMC investigating a complaint against a police officer. In 2010, the majority of respondents were very or fairly confident that their complaint would be properly investigated if made to the CMC ($n = 1053$) or the QPS ($n = 848$) (see Figure 24). The proportion of respondents who would not be confident that their complaint would be properly investigated was higher for the QPS ($n = 422$) than for the CMC ($n = 184$).

As Figure 24 shows, the level of public confidence in the QPS properly investigating complaints has significantly declined from 2008 to 2010 ($\chi^2 = 16.67, p < .001$), while the level of confidence in the CMC has significantly increased ($\chi^2 = 21.20, p < .001$).

Figure 24. Level of confidence in complaints being properly investigated by the QPS or CMC (2008 and 2010)



Explaining the variation: confidence in complaints investigations

Gender	Females (62%, $n = 456$) were more confident than males (53%, $n = 392$) that a complaint made to the QPS would be properly investigated ($b = 0.10$, $p < .001$).								
Age	<p>Respondents aged 18–24 years (78%, $n = 166$) were more likely to be confident that a complaint made to the CMC would be investigated properly compared with other respondents:</p> <p>25–34 years: 71%, $n = 121$ 35–44 years: 73%, $n = 202$ 45–54 years: 74%, $n = 169$ 55–64 years: 73%, $n = 170$ 65 years and over: 73%, $n = 223$.</p> <p>$b = 0.08$, $p < .05$</p>								
Indigenous	Non-Indigenous respondents were more likely to be confident (58%, $n = 824$) than Indigenous respondents (42%, $n = 19$) that a complaint made to the QPS would be properly investigated ($b = 0.06$, $p < .05$).								
Region	<p>Respondents from Central Queensland (65%, $n = 162$) and South-West Queensland (62%, $n = 150$) were more likely to be confident in the QPS properly investigating complaints than respondents from:</p> <p>Brisbane: 53%, $n = 257$ South-East Queensland: 54%, $n = 135$ Far North Queensland: 58%, $n = 144$.</p> <p>$b = -0.07$, $p < .01$</p>								
Experience	<p>Respondents who reported a recent satisfactory experience (64%, $n = 250$) were more likely to be confident in a proper QPS investigation than respondents who did not report a recent satisfactory experience (55%, $n = 598$; $b = -0.07$, $p < .05$).</p> <p>Respondents who reported a recent unsatisfactory experience were less likely to be confident in a proper investigation by the QPS and the CMC than respondents who did not report an unsatisfactory experience:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • QPS <table border="0" style="margin-left: 20px;"> <tr> <td>Unsatisfactory: 33%, $n = 66$</td> <td>No unsatisfactory: 61%, $n = 782$.</td> </tr> <tr> <td>$b = 0.24$, $p < .001$</td> <td></td> </tr> </table> • CMC <table border="0" style="margin-left: 20px;"> <tr> <td>Unsatisfactory: 59%, $n = 114$</td> <td>No unsatisfactory: 76%, $n = 939$.</td> </tr> <tr> <td>$b = 0.14$, $p < .001$</td> <td></td> </tr> </table> 	Unsatisfactory: 33%, $n = 66$	No unsatisfactory: 61%, $n = 782$.	$b = 0.24$, $p < .001$		Unsatisfactory: 59%, $n = 114$	No unsatisfactory: 76%, $n = 939$.	$b = 0.14$, $p < .001$	
Unsatisfactory: 33%, $n = 66$	No unsatisfactory: 61%, $n = 782$.								
$b = 0.24$, $p < .001$									
Unsatisfactory: 59%, $n = 114$	No unsatisfactory: 76%, $n = 939$.								
$b = 0.14$, $p < .001$									

CMC $R^2 = .03$, $SEE = 0.69$, $F(8, 1382) = 2.65$, $p < .05$ QPS $R^2 = .08$, $SEE = 0.85$, $F(8, 1426) = 15.97$, $p < .001$

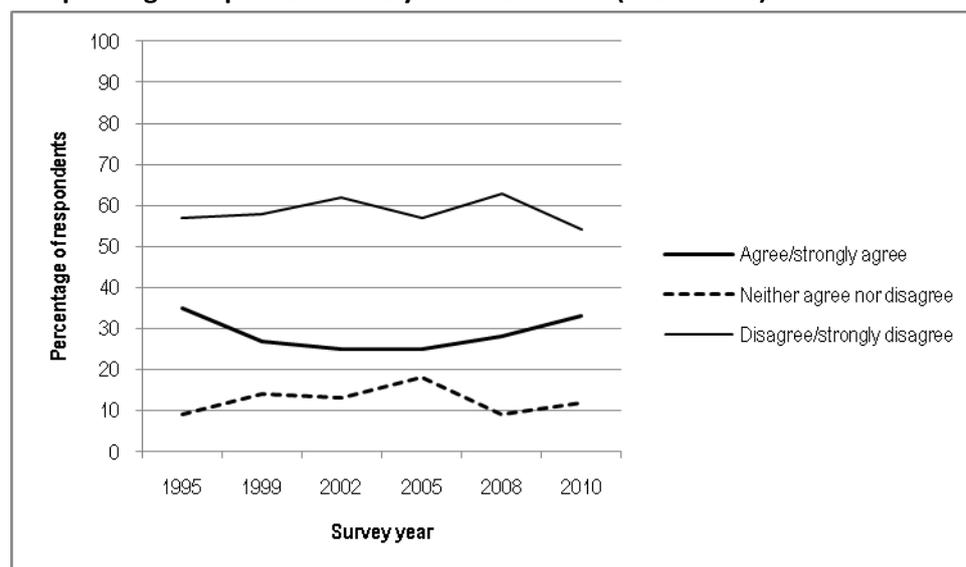
General perceptions of complaints against police

To explore general perceptions of the complaints process and the reasons for a lack of confidence in complaints processes, all respondents were asked to rate their level of agreement with the following statements:

- *People who complain against police are likely to suffer for it.*
- *Complaints against police should be investigated by an oversight body, not by the police themselves.*
- *There is no point reporting corruption in the QPS because nothing useful will be done about it.*

In 2010, 33 per cent ($n = 471$) of respondents agreed that people who complain against police are likely to suffer for it, 54 per cent ($n = 767$) disagreed, and 12 per cent ($n = 175$) were neutral. Over time, responses to this item have varied modestly (see Figure 25).

Figure 25. Perceptions about complaints: responses to the statement ‘People who complain against police are likely to suffer for it.’ (1995–2010)



Explaining the variation: agreement to the statement ‘People who complain against the police are likely to suffer for it.’

Age Respondents aged 45–54 years (28%, $n = 64$) were least likely to agree, while respondents aged 55–64 years (38%, $n = 86$) were most likely to agree that people who complain against police are likely to suffer for it:

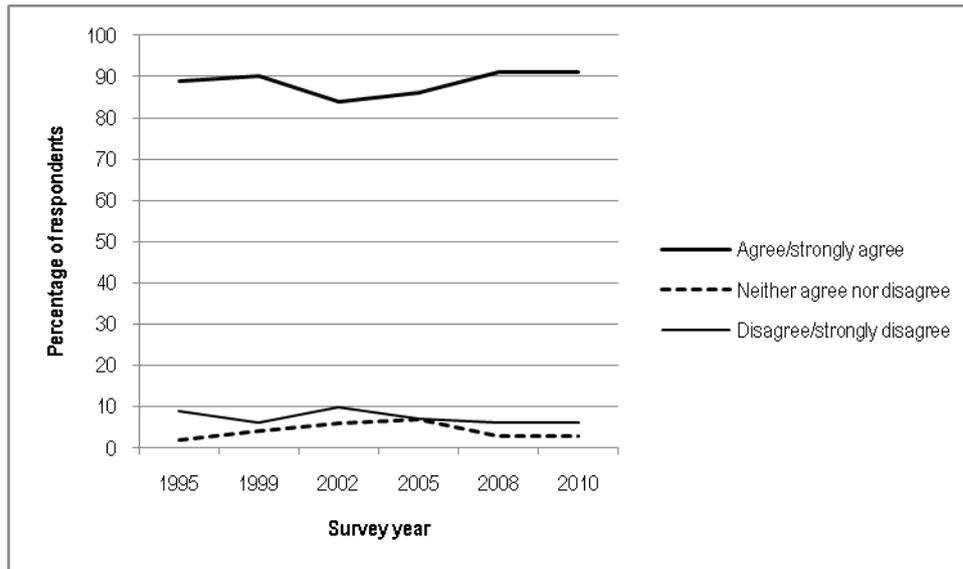
- 18–24 years: 31%, $n = 70$
- 25–34 years: 35%, $n = 59$
- 35–44 years: 35%, $n = 89$
- 65 years and over: 33%, $n = 94$.

$b = 0.15, p < .001$

$R^2 = .01, SEE = 24.79, F(8, 1475) = 3.65, p < .05$

Consistent with previous years, the majority of respondents in 2010 (91%, $n = 1371$) believed that complaints against police should be investigated by an independent body rather than the police themselves (see Figure 26). Six per cent ($n = 85$) disagreed and 3 per cent ($n = 50$) were neutral. Despite some modest variation over the survey series, in general the public were consistently more likely than not to agree with this item.

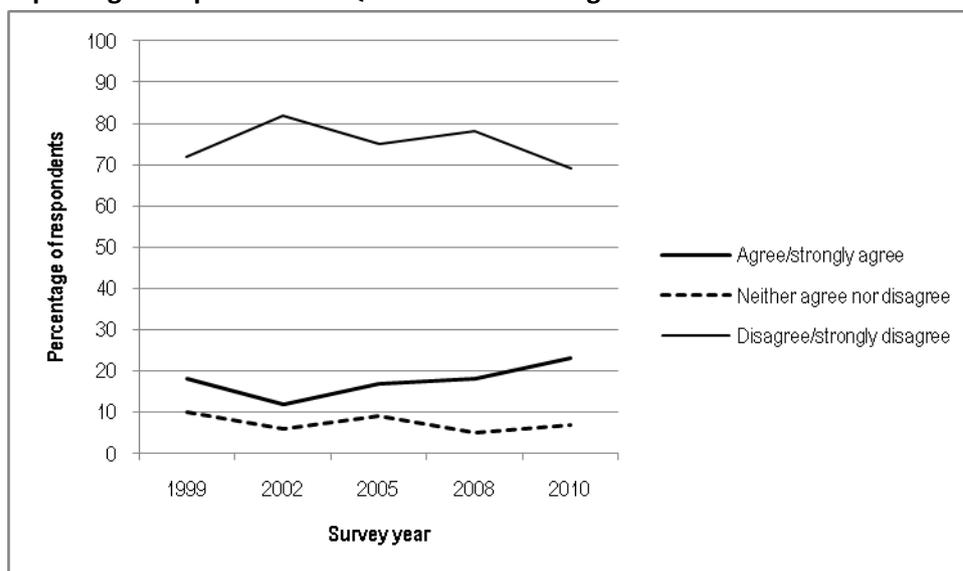
Figure 26. Perceptions about complaints: responses to the statement ‘Complaints against the police should be investigated by an oversight body, not by the police themselves.’ (1995–2010)



In 2010, 69 per cent ($n = 1001$) of respondents disagreed with the statement ‘There is no point reporting corruption in the QPS because nothing useful will be done about it.’ While the majority of respondents have consistently disagreed throughout the survey series, the proportion who disagree with this statement has significantly declined since 1999 ($\chi^2 = 14.29, p < .01$).

During that time, the proportion who agree with this statement has increased from 18 per cent ($n = 258$) in 1999 to 23 per cent ($n = 338$) in 2010 ($\chi^2 = 21.55, p < .001$). More respondents of the 2010 Public Attitudes Survey agreed with this statement than in any other survey year (see Figure 27).

Figure 27. Perceptions about complaints: responses to the statement ‘There is no point reporting corruption in the QPS because nothing useful will be done about it.’ (1999–2010)



Complaint agencies

The Public Attitudes Survey asked respondents to indicate to which agency they would report the following hypothetical scenarios:

1. a police officer had been rude to them
2. they had been assaulted by a police officer
3. they suspected a police officer had taken a bribe.

Respondents were asked to indicate either the QPS or the CMC, or to nominate an alternative agency. Overall, there has been a dramatic increase since 2008 in the inclination to report situations of misconduct to the CMC, and a decline in the proportion of respondents who would report the event to the QPS.

Scenario 1: To which agency would you report police officer rudeness?

Rudeness by a police officer is an example of a breach of discipline matter for which the QPS has exclusive responsibility.⁵ These types of matters generally relate to police conduct that contravenes police procedures, standards or directives. If the CMC receives a complaint of this nature, the matter would be referred to the QPS.

Two-thirds of the respondents in 2010 indicated that they would make a complaint to the QPS (see Table 2). However, from 2008 to 2010, the proportion of respondents who indicated that they would report the matter to the CMC tripled — a significant increase ($\chi^2 = 269.58, p < .001$). This indicates that there is a real shift in the proportion of respondents who believe the CMC is the best agency to deal with police officer rudeness.

Table 2. Agency perceived to be the best to deal with a complaint involving a police officer being rude (1999–2010)

Agency respondent would hypothetically complain to	Percentage of respondents				
	1999 (n = 1201)	2002 (n = 1388)	2005 (n = 1119)	2008 (n = 1132)	2010 (n = 1349)
CMC	24	19	4	12	39
QPS	66	78	75	67	63
Ombudsman	2	1	9	8	1
Local MP/councillor/mayor	3	1	5	4	1
Solicitor/lawyer/barrister	2	1	1	2	1
Media	0	0	0	0	0
Wouldn't complain	1	0	4	2	1
Other agency	1	1	3	4	4
Total ⁶	99	101	101	99	100

Explaining the variation:

Scenario 1: To which agency would you report police officer rudeness?

Experience Respondents who reported a recent satisfactory experience with a police officer (59%, $n = 220$) were significantly more likely to indicate that they would make a report to the QPS compared with respondents who did not report a recent satisfactory experience (50%, $n = 489$; $b = -0.07, p < .05$).

$R^2 = .01, SEE = 30.64, F(8, 1466) = 2.61, p < .05$

⁵ *Police Service Administration Act 1990* (Qld), s. 7.2.

⁶ Totals do not always sum to 100 due to rounding.

Scenario 2: To which agency would you report assault by a police officer?

Assault by a police officer may constitute either police or official misconduct, for which the QPS or CMC may be responsible for handling, depending on the nature of the matter.

In 2010, two-thirds of respondents indicated they would report an incident of assault by a police officer to the CMC, while about one-quarter indicated that they would make a complaint to the QPS (see Table 3). Compared with 2008 survey responses, the proportion of respondents who indicated that they would report the assault to the CMC tripled while the proportion who would report to the QPS halved — a significant difference ($\chi^2 = 553.71$, $p < .001$). There has also been a decline in respondents' inclination to report the assault to a solicitor, lawyer or barrister. Again, this indicates that there is a clear shift towards preferences to report complaints to the CMC compared with other agencies.

Table 3. Agency perceived to be the best to deal with a complaint involving assault by a police officer (1999–2010)

Agency respondent would hypothetically complain to	Percentage of respondents				
	1999 (n = 1234)	2002 (n = 1439)	2005 (n = 1197)	2008 (n = 1261)	2010 (n = 1417)
CMC	40	52	6	20	65
QPS	43	43	64	52	26
Ombudsman	1	0	6	4	1
Local MP/councillor/mayor	3	1	6	4	1
Solicitor/lawyer/barrister	9	4	12	13	4
Media	2	0	1	1	1
Wouldn't complain	0	0	1	1	0
Other agency	2	1	3	5	3
Total ⁷	100	101	99	100	101

⁷ Totals do not always sum to 100 due to rounding.

**Explaining the variation:
Scenario 2: To which agency would you report assault
by a police officer?**

Gender Female respondents (67%, $n = 462$) were more likely to indicate that they would make a report to the CMC than male respondents (63%, $n = 459$; $b = -0.05, p < .05$).

Age Respondents aged 18–24 years (76%, $n = 164$) were more likely to indicate that they would make a report to the CMC than other respondents:
 25–34 years: 68%, $n = 115$
 35–44 years: 68%, $n = 193$
 45–54 years: 61%, $n = 138$
 55–64 years: 61%, $n = 140$
 65 years and over: 59%, $n = 170$.

Respondents aged 65 years and over (30%, $n = 88$) were more likely to indicate that they would make a report to the QPS than other respondents:
 18–24 years: 19%, $n = 40$
 25–34 years: 24%, $n = 41$
 35–44 years: 24%, $n = 68$
 45–54 years: 27%, $n = 60$
 55–64 years: 29%, $n = 68$.
 $b = 0.09, p < .05$

Experience Respondents who reported a recent satisfactory experience were more likely to indicate that they would complain to the QPS (29%, $n = 111$) than the CMC (63%, $n = 244$). In comparison, respondents who did not report a recent satisfactory experience were more likely to indicate that they would report a complaint to the CMC (66%, $n = 677$) than the QPS (25%, $n = 255$; $b = -0.05, p < .05$).

$R^2 = .01, SEE = 25.77, F(8, 1472) = 3.00, p < .05$

Scenario 3: To which agency would you report a police officer suspected of taking a bribe?

The situation of a police officer suspected of taking a bribe would qualify as official misconduct. Given the serious nature of an allegation such as this, if the CMC did refer the matter to be dealt with by the QPS, it would take an active role in overseeing the investigation. The matter may also be investigated by the CMC.

Most respondents indicated they would report this type of incident to the CMC. As Table 4 shows, the proportion of respondents who would report this to the CMC has more than doubled, and the proportion who would report this to the QPS has more than halved — a significant difference since the 2008 survey ($\chi^2 = 561.20, p < .001$).

Table 4. Agency perceived to be the best to deal with a complaint involving a police officer suspected of taking a bribe (1999–2010)

Agency respondent would hypothetically complain to	Percentage of respondents				
	1999 (n = 1502)	2002 (n = 1551)	2005 (n = 1505)	2008 (n = 1550)	2010 (n = 1529)
CMC	65	72	15	35	80
QPS	27	25	54	42	15
Ombudsman	1	0	5	4	1
Local MP/councillor/mayor	3	0	12	7	0
Solicitor/lawyer/barrister	2	0	4	3	1
Media	1	0	1	1	1
Wouldn't complain	1	0	2	1	1
Other agency	1	4	7	7	2
Total ⁸	101	101	100	100	101

⁸ Totals do not always sum to 100 due to rounding.

Explaining the variation:

Scenario 3: To which agency would you report a police officer suspected of taking a bribe?

- Age** Respondents aged 25–34 years (84%, $n = 142$) were more likely to indicate that they would make a report to the CMC than other respondents:
18–24 years: 81%, $n = 175$
35–44 years: 83%, $n = 230$
45–54 years: 77%, $n = 180$
55–64 years: 81%, $n = 180$
65 years and over: 77%, $n = 217$.
- Respondents aged 65 years and over (17%, $n = 49$) were more likely to indicate that they would make a report to the QPS than other respondents:
18–24 years: 16%, $n = 35$
25–34 years: 12%, $n = 21$
35–44 years: 13%, $n = 35$
45–54 years: 16%, $n = 38$
55–64 years: 15%, $n = 33$.
 $b = 0.09, p < .05$
- Indigenous** Non-Indigenous (80%, $n = 1095$) respondents were more likely to indicate that they would make a report to the CMC than Indigenous respondents (78%, $n = 28$). A higher proportion of Indigenous respondents (17%, $n = 6$) indicated that they would make a report to the QPS than non-Indigenous respondents (15%, $n = 204$) ($b = 0.11, p < .001$).
- Experience** Respondents who reported a recent satisfactory experience (82%, $n = 315$) were more likely to indicate that they would report to the CMC than other respondents (79%, $n = 811$). Respondents who did not report a recent satisfactory experience (15%, $n = 156$) were more likely to indicate that they would report to the QPS than those who reported a recent satisfactory experience (14%, $n = 55$) ($b = -0.05, p < .05$).

$R^2 = .02, SEE = 25.51, F(8, 1472) = 5.09, p < .001$

Conclusion

This report presents the findings of the 2010 Public Attitudes Survey in relation to public perceptions of the Queensland Police Service (QPS), as well as trends in perceptions since the first survey was conducted in 1991.

The results from the 2010 Public Attitudes Survey show that the Queensland public continues to believe that the police behave well, and that generally the public has positive perceptions about police integrity. For the most part, the public do not believe that the police have a bad image in Queensland. Since the 2008 survey, there was a drop in the proportion of respondents who believe that the police treat Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples differently from white Australians. In addition, among those who were dissatisfied with a police encounter, there was a substantial decrease in the proportion of respondents who reported this was because an officer behaved unreasonably or unfairly.

The survey also identified some negative public perceptions of police. In 2010, a minority of respondents believed that, over time, police behaviour has changed for the worse. While this figure is small (13%), it had doubled since the 1999 survey. In addition, consistent with previous surveys, the responses indicate that public confidence in complaints processes can be improved, as can officers' manner in interactions with the public. The QPS has an opportunity to improve the public's perceptions of police, which may result in better public compliance with police and improved public cooperation.

Confidence in the complaints process

Public confidence in the QPS to investigate complaints properly has significantly declined since the last Public Attitudes Survey was conducted in 2008. Further, there has been a small increase in the perception that 'there is no point in reporting corruption in the QPS because nothing useful will be done about it'. After the release of the Palm Island review, there was also an increase in the proportion of respondents aged 55 and over who agreed that the chances of getting caught doing something corrupt in the police service are slim (from 37% to 52%).

Most respondents who made (or tried to make) a complaint went directly to the QPS (95%). Half of these were dissatisfied with how the complaint was handled. (This dissatisfaction statistic has dropped from 71% in the 2008 survey to 50%.)

Public confidence in the CMC's complaints processing, however, has increased since 2008; and there has been an increase in the public's inclination to report events to the CMC rather than the QPS. Most people also believe that complaints should be dealt with by an independent body rather than the QPS. Paradoxically, despite what people said they would *hypothetically do* in the case of suspected misconduct, in *actual* terms, most people complained to the QPS rather than the CMC.

Taken together, the results show that the QPS has an opportunity to improve public perceptions by improving the public's knowledge of the mechanisms it has in place for dealing with misconduct.

The quality of officer interactions with the public

The quality of interactions with police has a significant bearing on public perceptions of police. For those members of the public who reported recent contact with police, the factor that most commonly shaped the respondent's perception was whether or not the officer was friendly, courteous or professional during the interaction. This is consistent with previous surveys, which showed that client-service oriented issues (rather than improper behaviour) most commonly led to the respondent being dissatisfied. Importantly, even after controlling for the effects of various demographic factors, respondents who had an unsatisfactory experience with an officer tended to have negative perceptions of police, while those who had a satisfactory experience tended to have positive perceptions of police.

This finding highlights an opportunity for the police to improve public perceptions. If officers consistently behave in a courteous and professional manner — particularly when the police initiate the contact — there is a greater chance that the Queensland public will have satisfactory experiences with police, and more positive general perceptions of police.

Appendix 1: Background to the survey

About the survey

The 2010 Public Attitudes Survey is the eighth in a series of telephone surveys conducted by the Crime and Misconduct Commission (CMC), beginning in 1991. This research provides a valuable source of information about changes over time in public perceptions of the Queensland Police Service (QPS), the Queensland public service and local government, and the CMC. The survey is one means by which the CMC can monitor changes and improvements in relation to perceived levels of integrity and misconduct.

The role of the CMC

The CMC (formally the Criminal Justice Commission or CJC)⁹ was established as a result of the Commission of Inquiry into Possible Illegal Activities and Associated Police Misconduct to help restore confidence in Queensland's public institutions, particularly the QPS. More commonly known as the 'Fitzgerald Inquiry', the resultant report documented the extensive police misconduct and prevalent corruption that had thrived under maladministration within the policing organisation and the government (Fitzgerald 1989). The report recommended changes that substantially reformed the QPS. It also identified the need for an independent agency to oversee the police service and other government agencies, deal with complaints of *official misconduct*, and assume a variety of other criminal justice responsibilities.

Official misconduct As defined by s. 14 and s. 15 of the *Crime and Misconduct Act 2001* (Qld) (the CM Act), it must involve at least one of the following:

- dishonesty or lack of impartiality
- a breach of the trust put in a person by virtue of their position
- a misuse of officially obtained information.

It must also be a criminal offence or serious enough to justify dismissal, if proven.

In recognition of the importance of police integrity, the CMC also has a broad jurisdiction over behaviour known as *police misconduct*.

Police misconduct Conduct that is 'disgraceful, improper or unbecoming to an officer, that shows unfitness to be an officer, or that does not meet the standard of conduct the community reasonably expects of an officer' is considered to be police misconduct (CM Act, Schedule 2). Examples might include failure to comply with policies and procedures, or serious conduct in a private capacity that reflects adversely on the QPS.

⁹ The CMC came into existence on 1 January 2002 when the Criminal Justice Commission (CJC) and the Queensland Crime Commission (QCC) merged to form the new organisation.

Further, while the terms *misconduct* and *corruption* are often used interchangeably, they have specific meaning in legislation.

Corruption Involves a breach of trust in the performance of official duties and may fall within the category of official misconduct under s. 15 of the CM Act.

Misconduct Means *official misconduct* or *police misconduct* under Schedule 2 of the CM Act.

Changes in complaints processing

Since the creation of the CJC in 1989, the QPS has implemented a number of significant accountability mechanisms, and developed considerable knowledge and expertise in assessing and dealing with misconduct complaints. For example, the QPS created the Ethical Standards Command (ESC) in 1997, to which the QPS gave responsibility for managing the internal complaints system and promoting ethical behaviour and professional practice.

When the CM Act was passed in 2001, it introduced a new regime for handling complaints against police. While the CMC retains primary responsibility for dealing with complaints of official misconduct, the CM Act requires that it refers such matters to the QPS whenever possible. This is part of the principle of *devolution*.

Devolution Where action to prevent and deal with misconduct in a public sector agency should, wherever possible, happen within the agency itself.

As part of the devolution process, the CMC has given general authority¹⁰ to the QPS to commence dealing with certain less serious complaints without getting the prior approval of the CMC.

If a complaint is more serious, the CMC must decide whether it is appropriate to refer the matter to the QPS. In making this decision, the CMC must consider the nature and seriousness of the complaint, the public interest, and the capacity of the QPS to respond effectively.¹¹ Most matters are not serious and are appropriate for the QPS to deal with; nonetheless, the CMC monitors how well the QPS is carrying out this responsibility. If it is identified that the QPS is not carrying out this responsibility, the CMC will take over the investigation.

¹⁰ Through directions under s. 40 of the CM Act.

¹¹ The CMC investigates serious matters, particularly if there is reason to believe the misconduct is prevalent or systemic, or where allegations involve serious criminal conduct that has the potential to undermine public confidence.

Measuring police integrity

The word 'integrity' is often used to describe moral excellence. It derives from the Latin *integritas* meaning 'wholeness, entireness, completeness'. In the public sector, integrity describes the integration of factors such as operational systems, control strategies and ethical standards that influence how organisations operate. It encompasses values such as honesty, transparency, accountability and respect; and requires that organisations always act in the public interest.

Perceptions of police integrity can be shaped by numerous factors, including the nature of media reporting and citizens' style of media consumption (Donlon-Cotton 2007; Edwards 2005; Weitzer & Tuch 2005). Such factors can have a substantial effect on public perceptions, but are unmeasured in the Public Attitudes Survey.

The Public Attitudes Survey uses a number of measures of integrity throughout this report. These include respondents' level of agreement with statements such as 'police are honest' or 'police have a bad image'. When combined, the responses to such questions provide a sense of the public's views about police integrity.¹²

For a broader perspective of police integrity, the reader is encouraged to access our website (www.cmc.qld.gov.au) for other CMC publications about police performance and integrity, particularly about complaints against police, levels of ethical behaviour and attitudes among recruits and police officers.

¹² This view is in line with other Australian research conducted on public perceptions of police integrity. For example, see Australian Government Productivity Commission's Report on government services series at www.pc.gov.au.

Appendix 2: Survey method

Survey administration

The CMC, and formerly the CJC, has collected Public Attitudes Survey data regularly for 19 years.¹³ This allows for comparisons of public perceptions over time, and many of these trends are presented throughout the report. In assessing these trends, it is important to remember that significant changes have occurred during this period, which therefore has a substantial impact on public perceptions.

The survey was administered using a random sample drawn from the population of all Queensland residents aged 18 years and over who were the usual residents in a private dwelling with a landline telephone. Unlike previous years, the 2010 Public Attitudes Survey used a stratified random sampling technique. Stratified sampling ensures that the representation of particular sub-groups in the sample is proportionate to their representation in the population. The sample was stratified by age, gender and region of residence. Furthermore, quota sampling was used for the 18–24 age group because this group was substantially underrepresented in the 2008 survey. Unlike previous years where responses were not weighted, the use of quotas in the 2010 survey's sampling strategy for the 18–24 age group necessitates the use of weighted data when examining changes over time.

The sample was drawn from five Queensland statistical divisions — Brisbane, South East (excluding Brisbane), South West, Central and Far North.¹⁴ Telephone numbers were randomly selected from all telephone numbers in each division. One resident aged over 18 years was randomly selected from the household to complete the survey.¹⁵

The survey was undertaken by Computer Assisted Telephone Interviewing (CATI) in June 2010. The order in which participants completed the survey sections was varied (i.e. 51 per cent of participants completed the first section first; 49 per cent of participants completed the second section first). This was done in an effort to combat fatigue due to the length of the survey.

A total of 1529 respondents participated in the 2010 survey, and the response rate was 29 per cent. This was lower than in previous years — 33 per cent in 2008, 43 per cent in 2005 and 48 per cent in 2002. The lower response rate could reflect further advancements in technology such as answering machines and caller identification, or it could simply reflect

¹³ This report only analyses trends over a 15-year period because the 1991 and 1993 survey data is not comparable due to changes in the questions.

¹⁴ The Queensland Government Office of Economic and Statistical Research and the Australian Bureau of Statistics define 13 regions. To ensure sufficient respondents from each region for statistical purposes, we combined several of these, and refer to five regions only.

¹⁵ To randomly select which member of the household would participate in the survey, the resident whose birthday was closest to the day of the survey was selected.

the wariness people have towards telephone solicitation (Calvert & Pope 2005; Kempf & Remington 2007; Vehovar, Berzelak & Manfreda 2010). The increase in the use of mobile phones poses a similar challenge for household telephone survey practitioners (Vehovar, Berzelak & Manfreda 2010) because mobile phones are gradually replacing residential landlines. Overall, the relatively poor response rate weakens our confidence in the ability to generalise the results to the Queensland public. In light of this, we will consider changing the survey method to improve the response rate in the future.

Data analysis

Chi square analysis, nominal regression and descriptive statistics were used to explore public perceptions of the QPS, to assess the relationship between demographic factors and survey responses from the 2010 Public Attitudes Survey, and to measure changes in responses over time. Appendix 4 provides a list of statistical notations and definitions to assist with an understanding of the statistical terms used within the report.

The analyses and figures presented in this report exclude a small number of respondents who refused to answer the relevant question(s) or indicated that they did not know enough about the question to provide a response. Because of this, there are some minor variations from the figures presented in previous reports.

Survey limitations

Quantitative surveys are the preferred method for gauging public opinion about a particular issue because you can draw inferences about the population from the responses of a relatively small sample (Roberts & Hough 2005). However, the results of this survey remain an estimate of the views of the population and are subject to sampling error. In particular, our method of surveying via landline telephones may lead to a sample bias.

The concepts of 'integrity' and 'confidence' are complex, and are difficult to measure using structured responses to simple questions. Further, the complex nature of public attitudes and the diversity of attitudes among community members make this measurement difficult.

Although regression analyses were used to explore the association between variables (i.e. the relationship between demographic characteristics and perceptions of police honesty), these analyses do not imply causation; and the results should be treated as indicative rather than conclusive. There may also be important factors that could explain differences in perceptions that were not measured in the Public Attitudes Survey, such as sources of media consumption.

Impact of the CMC's Palm Island report

The 2010 Public Attitudes Survey was conducted at the same time as the release of the *CMC review of the Queensland Police Service's Palm Island review* on 17 June 2010.¹⁶ An overview of the findings of this review is presented below.

The CMC's 2010 Palm Island report: An overview

In November 2004, Palm Island resident Cameron Doomadgee (known by his tribal name as Mulrunji) died in police custody. The cause of Mulrunji's death — more specifically whether it resulted from an altercation with the Officer-in-Charge, Senior Sergeant Chris Hurley, or a fall during this altercation — has been subject to a Coroner's Inquiry and will not be discussed further here.

As part of the CMC's monitoring function, the CMC conducted a review into the secondary review conducted by the QPS into the original investigation into the death of Mulrunji. The CMC found that the QPS failed to conduct a thorough, competent and impartial investigation of the initial QPS investigation. The report called into question the reputation of the QPS and noted that it damaged public confidence in the integrity of the QPS and its members. Finally, it considered that the conduct of the officers involved in both the initial QPS investigation and the QPS review team was sufficiently serious enough to warrant consideration of disciplinary proceedings.

The findings of the CMC's Palm Island review received nationwide media coverage. Previous research shows that negative events portrayed in the media can substantially affect the public's perception of police integrity (Brown & Evans 2009; Lasley 1994); and in instances where trust and confidence in police is reduced, public perceptions of the organisation's effectiveness is also undermined (Brown & Evans 2009; Goldsmith, Israel & Daly 2006; Jang, Joo & Zhao 2010). Consequently, given that the Palm Island report highlighted issues directly relevant to public confidence in the integrity of the QPS, it is possible that the survey results have been affected by this event.

In order to test this, responses obtained before and after the report's release were compared.¹⁷ Our ability to do this was limited because only participants aged 55 years and over were surveyed after the release of the report. And given that we were not able to assess the impact of the release of the Palm Island report on respondents in other age groups, caution must be taken when interpreting these results.

¹⁶ The *CMC review of the Queensland Police Service's Palm Island review* (CMC 2010) is available on our website at www.cmc.qld.gov.au.

¹⁷ The first timeframe refers to the data collected from 4 June 2010 to 16 June 2010. The second timeframe refers to the data collected on 17 June 2010 to 23 June 2010.

The responses of two survey items differed significantly from the period before the report to the period after the report:

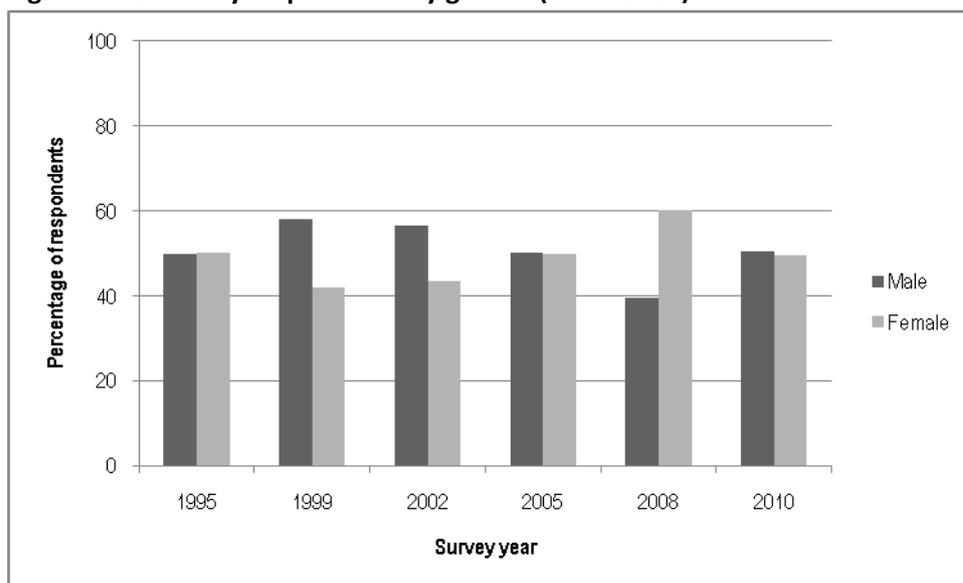
- Before the report's release, 86 per cent ($n = 70$) of respondents aged 55 years and over agreed that police behaved generally or mostly well; after the report's release, 94 per cent ($n = 453$) of respondents agreed with this statement ($\chi^2 = 7.25, p < .05$).
- Before the report's release, 37 per cent ($n = 28$) of respondents aged 55 years and over agreed that the chances of getting caught doing something corrupt in the police service are slim; after the report's release, 52 per cent ($n = 230$) of respondents agreed with this statement ($\chi^2 = 8.09, p < .05$).

Appendix 3: Respondent demographics

Gender

Figure A3.1 shows the proportion of male and female respondents to each survey. Given that the 2010 Public Attitudes Survey used stratified random sampling, the proportion of male (50%, $n = 770$) and female (50% $n = 759$) respondents is significantly different to a number of past years. The significantly higher proportion of females in 2008 and males in 2002 and in 1999 ($\chi^2 = 129.50, p < .001$) is a result of random sampling.

Figure A3.1. Survey respondents by gender (1995–2010)



Age

The data presented in Figure A3.2 show a significant difference in the age of respondents over time ($\chi^2 = 372.00, p < .001$). The proportion of respondents aged 18–24 years was three times larger in 2010 ($n = 229$; see Table A3.1) than in 2008 (5%, $n = 70$). This increase reflects the quota sampling strategy for the 18–24 years age group adopted in 2010. Consequently, from 2008 to 2010 there was a decrease in respondents aged 45–55 years ($n = 247$) and those aged 55–64 years ($n = 248$).

Figure A3.2. Survey respondents by age (1995–2010)

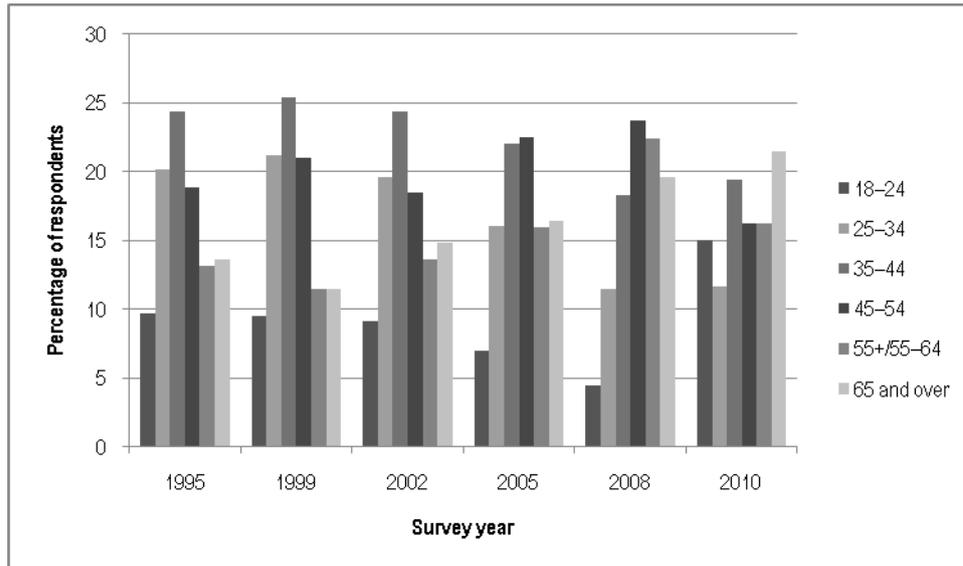


Table A3.1. Breakdown of respondents by age (2010)

18–24 years	25–34 years	35–44 years	45–54 years	55+/55–64 years	65 years and over
15%	12%	19%	16%	16%	21%

Employment status

Figure A3.3 shows that the majority of respondents for each year were employed. There were only small differences in the employment status of respondents from 2008 to 2010.

Figure A3.3. Survey respondents by employment status (1995–2010)

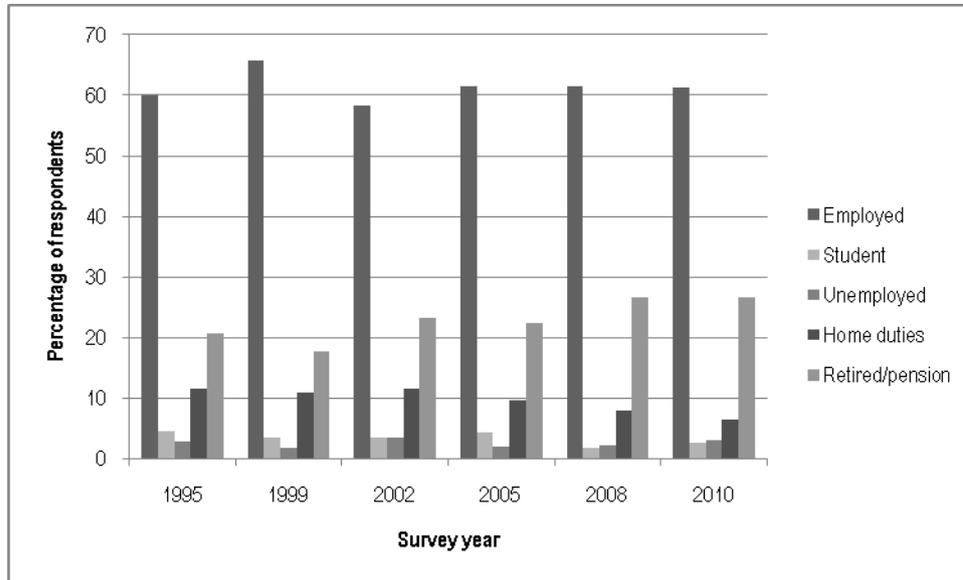


Table A3.2. Breakdown of respondents by employment status (2010)

Employed	Student	Unemployed	Home Duties	Retired/pension
61%	3%	3%	6%	27%

Education

Respondents were asked to state their highest level of educational achievement. In 2010 there was a decrease in the proportion of respondents who completed tertiary education ($\chi^2 = 891.50, p < .001$; see Figure A3.4).

Figure A3.4. Survey respondents by highest level of education (1995–2010)

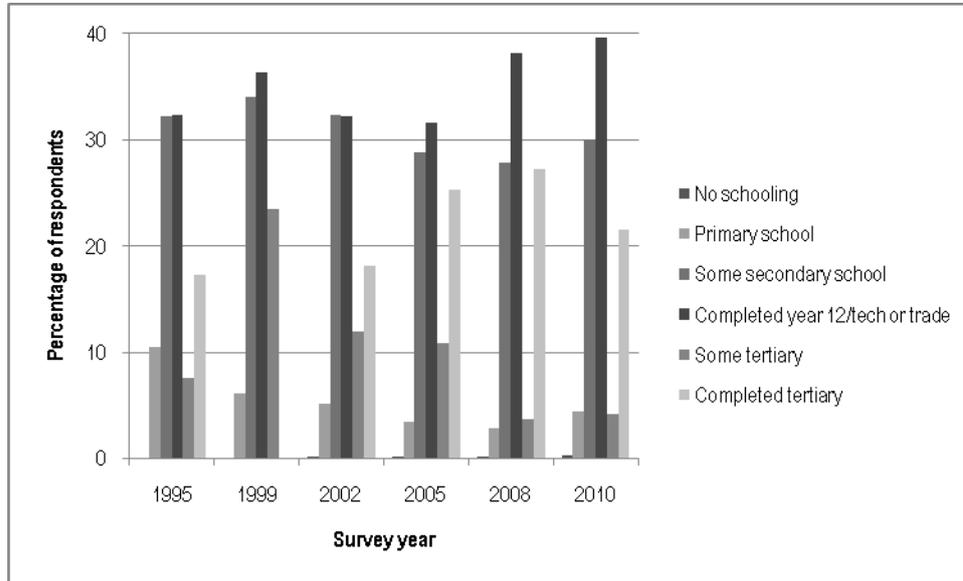


Table A3.3. Breakdown of respondents by education level (2010)

No schooling	Primary school	Some secondary school	Completed year 12/tech or trade	Some tertiary	Completed tertiary
0%	4%	30%	40%	4%	21%

Ethnicity

Respondents were asked if they identified with a particular ethnic or cultural group. Of the 1437 participants who responded to this question in 2010, the majority identified themselves as Australian (89%, $n = 1286$), while 11 per cent ($n = 151$) identified themselves as belonging to a culture other than 'Australian' or as 'mixed ethnicity'.¹⁸ The most common ethnic or cultural groups that the respondents identified with were British (4%, $n = 52$), New Zealander (2%, $n = 32$) and Southern European (1%, $n = 14$). There was no significant difference in the ethnicity or culture of 2008 and 2010 respondents.

Of respondents who reported their Indigenous status, the sample was twice as likely to identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander in 2010 (3%, $n = 46$) compared with 2008 (1%, $n = 22$). In 2010:

- 35 respondents identified as Aboriginal
- 6 identified as Torres Strait Islander
- 5 identified as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander.

The proportion of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander respondents was slightly less than the estimated Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander population in Queensland (4%).¹⁹

¹⁸ A small number did not identify with an ethnic or cultural group.

¹⁹ The estimated proportion of resident population of Indigenous persons in Australia is 2.5 per cent. More than one quarter (28%) of the national Indigenous population live in Queensland (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2008).

Region

The data presented in Figure A3.5 displays the breakdown of respondents by region. There has been no significant change in the proportion of respondents from each region since 1999. The data from 1995 differs significantly from other years because the sampling frame in that year was based on police regions rather than statistical divisions ($\chi^2 = 193.80$, $p < .001$).²⁰

Figure A3.5. Survey respondents by region (1995–2010)

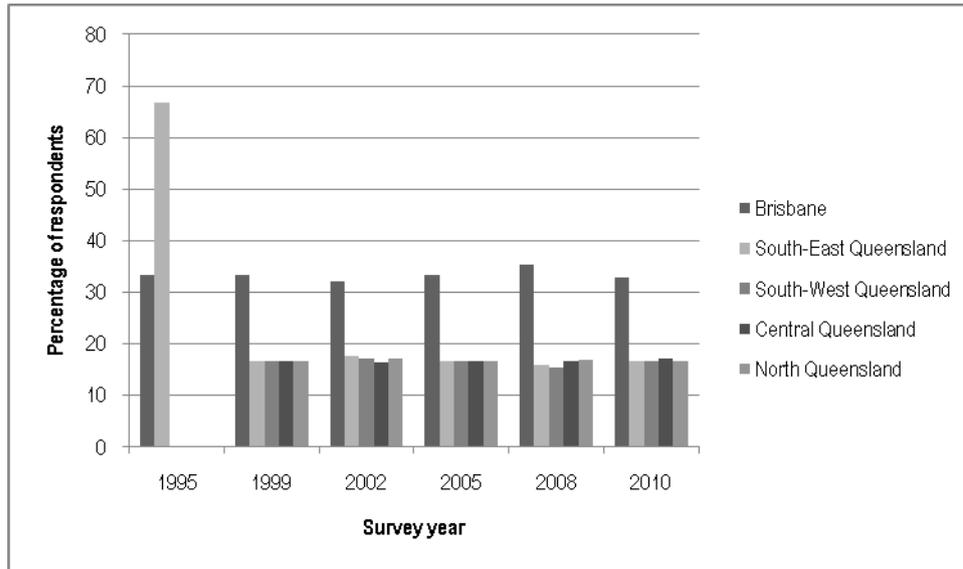


Table A3.4. Breakdown of respondents by region (2010)

Brisbane	South-East Queensland	South-West Queensland	Central Queensland	North Queensland
33%	17%	17%	17%	17%

²⁰ For comparisons, the 1995 data have been coded to approximate the Australian Bureau of Statistics statistical regions used in subsequent survey rounds.

Appendix 4: List of statistical terms, symbols and descriptions

Statistical term or symbol	Description
χ^2	Chi-square is a statistical technique used to test the independence of two categorical variables. It compares the frequency of responses found in the various categories of one variable across the different categories of another variable (e.g. the proportion of respondents with a satisfactory experience in 2010 compared with 2008).
n	Number of participants in a sub-sample
Nominal regression	Nominal logistic regression is the extension of the statistical technique <i>logistic regression</i> , where the categorical outcome variable has more than two levels. This means that while it is still used to predict the probability of an occurrence (like logistic regression), it allows for multiple outcomes (e.g. instead of predicting only dissatisfied or satisfied in logistic regression, there may be several groups — namely: strongly agree or agree; neither agree nor disagree; and strongly disagree or disagree).
p	p is the <i>probability</i> of obtaining the given result when the null hypothesis is true and any difference between groups or relationship between variables is due to chance alone. p values of less than .05 are described as statistically significant because there is a less than 5 per cent likelihood that the result occurred by chance.
R^2	<i>R squared</i> is a descriptive measure between zero and one, indicating how good a variable is (or a set of variables are) at predicting another variable.
SEE	The standard error of the estimate (<i>SEE</i>) is the difference between the actual values of the outcome variable and the values that are predicted by the regression model.
F	The <i>F</i> -ratio is used to test the overall differences between three or more group means.
b	b indicates the strength of a relationship between an outcome variable and a predictor variable; for example, the relationship that gender (predictor variable) has on respondents' satisfactory experience with police (outcome variable).

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