



Guardian of Public Trust



## Community Consultation Results

2025 Chief of Police Search

### Question 1: Generally, how safe do you feel in Edmonton?

#### Perception vs. Reality of Safety

- Many distinguish between *feeling* safe and *being* safe.
- Most respondents report feeling personally safe, but report feelings of unsafety in the populations they serve/represent.
- Social media, anecdotal stories, and visible disorder (e.g., drug use, homelessness) strongly shape public perception, even when crime data may not fully support those fears.

#### Safety is Uneven and Contextual

- Feelings of safety vary by:
  - **Location:** Downtown, LRT, and transit areas are frequently flagged as higher concern zones.
  - **Time of day:** Many people feel safe during daylight but less safe at night.
  - **Identity:** Racialized, Indigenous, 2SLGBTQIA+ and newcomer residents often report feeling less safe, both due to community violence and negative interactions with police.

#### Public Disorder and Visible Social Challenges

- Open drug use, homelessness, and street-level violence are viewed as significant threats to both actual and perceived safety. Increased threats of violent crime and gun crime were highlighted as challenges to perceived safety.
- These issues are seen as *symptoms* of broader systemic failures (e.g., lack of housing, mental health supports), yet many feel police are ill-equipped or overburdened to handle them effectively.

### Safety Concerns in Specific Populations

- **Business owners** express frustration over repeated vandalism, intimidation, and a lack of responsive enforcement.
- **Women, youth, and transit users** frequently feel unsafe, particularly at night or in areas without visible security.
- **Suburban citizens** are particularly concerned about traffic crime and feel that consequences for petty crime are no longer enforced.
- **Front-line workers**, including those in social service and city departments, report burnout and fear when working in high-need areas.
- **Marginalized communities**—including Indigenous, Muslim, 2SLGBTQIA+, and South Asian residents—express deep concerns about being both targeted and neglected.

### Role of Leadership and Police Visibility

- The **presence of beat officers** and relationship-focused policing improves perceptions of safety.
- The Chief of Police is seen as pivotal in setting a tone of **community engagement, empathy, and transparency**. There is a strong desire for a leader who acknowledges disparities in safety, rebuilds public trust, and addresses both immediate safety needs and long-term systemic reform.

## ***Question 2: How confident are you in the Edmonton Police Service?***

### **Strong Confidence in Frontline Officers**

- Many stakeholders express high confidence in individual officers, especially those working on the front lines.
- Officers are generally viewed as professional, compassionate, and committed.
- Interactions in emergencies or community settings often build trust at the individual level.

### **Mixed or Low Confidence in EPS Leadership and Systems**

- Confidence drops significantly when it comes to leadership, middle management, and institutional decision-making.
- Concerns include poor accountability, lack of transparency, and a defensive organizational culture.
- The absence of follow-through or visible consequences when things go wrong erodes trust.

### **Relationships Drive Trust**

- Sustained, visible, and relational policing (e.g., school resource officers, beat cops, community events) is critical to building trust.
- Community members value when police show up not only during crises but as regular, approachable presences in their neighborhoods.
- Many feel the decline in community policing (e.g., closures of dispatch centres, fewer beat patrols) has weakened trust.

### **Accountability and Transparency Are Lacking**

- Calls for better systems of accountability, particularly in response to misconduct or poor behavior, are widespread.
- Many feel that police leadership shields the institution from criticism rather than owning and addressing issues.
- Rebuilding trust, especially with marginalized communities, will be essential moving forward.

### **Personal Experience Greatly Shapes Perception**

- Individuals who have experienced or witnessed positive interactions with police report higher levels of trust.
- Conversely, those who've experienced racial profiling, discrimination, or dismissive treatment—especially in marginalized communities—report long-standing distrust.
- Lived experience, especially among Indigenous and racialized Edmontonians, often highlights the gap between intent and impact.
- Communities want to see themselves represented within the service to feel seen, safe, and respected.

**The Culture Within EPS Needs Reform**

- Concerns were raised about internal culture, especially in middle ranks, including issues of burnout, cynicism, and outdated attitudes.
- New recruits may start out hopeful and community-focused but become disillusioned without mentorship or cultural accountability.
- A cultural shift is needed to reinforce civility, continuous learning, and emotional intelligence.

**Collaboration and Detasking Are Key to Future Confidence**

- EPS cannot solve all social problems alone; building integrated partnerships with social services is essential.
- Community support for detasking (reallocating non-criminal responses) is growing, as long as it's accompanied by accountability.

### ***Question 3: What are the most important leadership priorities for the next Chief of Police?***

#### **Community Trust and Relationship Building**

- Rebuild trust between EPS and marginalized communities through consistent, visible engagement, with particular attention paid to truth and reconciliation.
- Prioritize community engagement, community policing, and personal interaction.
- Be a skilled communicator — both within the organization and with the public.

#### **Collaborative and Inclusive Leadership**

- Model humility, empathy, and emotional intelligence.
- Engage openly with community members, City Council, police commission, and partner agencies.
- Value shared leadership — empowering superintendents, listening members, and working in partnership across sectors.
- Reject defensiveness; instead, welcome feedback and act on it.

#### **Integrity, Transparency, and Accountability**

- Lead with honesty and courage, even in the face of public pressure or unpopular truths.
- Be transparent about operations, performance, and organizational plans to address community challenges.
- Separate politics from policing while still understanding the governance environment.

#### **Internal Culture and Member Wellness**

- Address morale issues, burnout, attrition, and post-training leadership gaps.
- Promote workforce development, inclusion, and psychological safety.
- Build relationships and collaborate with service members to restore confidence within the service.

#### **Cultural Competence and EDI**

- Demonstrate a deep understanding of the lived realities of Indigenous, 2SLGBTQIA+, racialized, and marginalized communities.
- Understand the diversity of Edmonton's population and the growing role multiculturalism will play in Edmonton's future.
- Advance equity, diversity, and inclusion in recruitment, retention, and policy development.

#### **Strategic Vision and Modernization**

- Be forward-thinking and data-informed; use evidence to drive innovation and policy.
- Take a long-term view of community safety — including social determinants such as housing, poverty, and mental health — and know how to work across systems to coordinate integrated approaches to public safety.
- Understand the media landscape and how to deliver the right story.

#### ***Question 4: What is important for the next Chief to focus on?***

##### **Rebuilding Trust and Community Relationships**

- Strong desire for renewed, authentic relationships between EPS and the community, particularly marginalized and Indigenous communities.
- Emphasis on restoring confidence in EPS through transparency, visibility, engagement, and humility.
- Calls for a community-centered approach that prioritizes partnerships, trust-building, and grassroots involvement with the entire population of Edmonton.
- Refocus on community-based policing and integrate front-line police into the communities that they serve.

##### **Accountability and Integrity**

- The next Chief must model ethical leadership, and lead by example—both internally and externally.
- Clear, consistent, and non-defensive communication is expected—especially in the face of criticism or political pressure.
- Leadership must create a culture of accountability, where both officers and command staff are held to high standards, and performance is tracked and addressed.

##### **Internal Culture, Wellness, and Workforce Management**

- EPS members are fatigued and face mounting stress from evolving public expectations and increased social service roles.
- Concerns around morale, mental health, burnout, and retention are prevalent—particularly among frontline patrol officers.
- Strong people-management and addressing resourcing, training, recruitment, and burnout among frontline officers will be essential.

##### **Strategic and Systemic Thinking**

- The next Chief must understand the role of EPS in the larger public safety and social wellbeing ecosystem. Taking action to improve citizens' perception of safety throughout the city, understanding and forming the right partnerships to adequately address non-policing safety issues, and understanding the diverse ways in which EPS serves the community today are all essential. Though all recognize there is room for improvement, many community groups do not want radical change and want the next Chief to stay the course with currently effective policing programs.

##### **Restoring Constructive Governance Relationships**

- The Chief must maintain operational independence while respecting democratic accountability and avoiding politicization of the role.
- Collaborative problem-solving with elected leaders, rather than positioning against them, is expected.

### ***Question 5: What personal qualities should the Chief have?***

#### **Humble, Compassionate, and Ethical Leadership**

- Humility, emotional intelligence, and a willingness to admit mistakes are essential.
- A strong ethical foundation: honesty, fairness, integrity, and authenticity.
- Kindness, empathy, gratitude, and respect for all people, especially marginalized communities.

#### **Relationship-Builder and Community Connector**

- Prioritize deep, two-way community engagement—especially with marginalized communities.
- Someone approachable, personable, and comfortable having honest, one-on-one conversations.
- Commitment to culturally aware leadership.

#### **Excellent and Transparent Communicator**

- Strong interpersonal and public communication skills—clear, calm, and respectful.
- Transparent in decision-making, budgeting, and outcomes; communicates with humility and clarity.
- Actively listens without defensiveness, especially during difficult conversations.

#### **Collaborative and Non-Partisan**

- Committed to genuine collaboration—with the public, within EPS, with the Commission, and with all levels of government.
- Non-political, but politically astute—understands governance structures, budgeting, and jurisdiction.
- Open-minded and accountable.

#### **Strategic, Visionary, and Action-Oriented**

- Has a clear vision for the future, has the ability to bring people along on that vision, and will take concrete action towards that vision.
- Capable of leading change—adapts to evolving public expectations and societal challenges.
- Balances long-term strategic thinking with short-term, visible wins.

#### **Operational and Organizational Acumen**

- Deep experience in modern policing and complex leadership environment.
- Understands EPS as both a law enforcement body and a large, complex public organization.
- Capable of driving internal culture change, supporting member wellness, and managing large teams effectively.

**Commitment to Equity, Inclusion, and Cultural Competence**

- Demonstrated respect for cultural diversity and commitment to EDI practices.
- Willingness to learn from lived experience.

## ***Question 6: What type of experience is most important for the new Chief to have?***

### **Extensive Policing Experience**

- A career police officer with 15–20+ years of progressively senior experience is preferred.
- Frontline and strategic leadership roles are both seen as essential to establish credibility and legitimacy with the membership.
- Recent and relevant operational experience, particularly through recent societal challenges (e.g., COVID, defund movement), is valued.

### **Proven Leadership in Organizational Change**

- Strong background in change management is crucial—stakeholders are looking for thoughtful, steady evolution, not radical overhaul.
- Must be capable of shifting organizational culture and improving morale while maintaining operational excellence.

### **Deep Community Engagement and Cultural Awareness**

- A demonstrated history of meaningful engagement with diverse, racialized, Indigenous, and marginalized communities is non-negotiable.
- The Chief should be seen as part of the community—not just a leader within the service.

### **Local Knowledge vs. Fresh Perspective**

- There is strong interest in a candidate who understands Edmonton’s unique challenges, but recognition that external candidates can bring needed innovation.
- Internal candidates offer faster adaptation and trust among members; external candidates bring a new lens, but risk clashing with culture or requiring long ramp-up.

### **Relationship-Building and Emotional Intelligence**

- The Chief must be approachable, emotionally intelligent, and capable of building trust with both staff and community partners.
- Strong interpersonal skills and a team-player mindset are essential.

### **Political Acumen and External Relations**

- Ability to navigate relationships with city council, provincial leadership, and national policing partners is key.
- The Chief must balance being apolitical with engaging in necessary advocacy and governance.

### **Modern Understanding of Policing**

- Familiarity with trauma-informed approaches, data-driven policing, and cultural safety is expected.
- There’s interest in leaders who embrace innovation, technology, and collaboration beyond enforcement alone.

**Experience with Large, Complex Organizations**

- Proven ability to manage large teams, complex systems, and constrained budgets is essential.
- EPS scale and complexity requires senior executive capability, not just operational skill.
- Experience working with unions and within a paramilitary or unionized structure is strongly preferred.

**Track Record of Building Trust**

- Both internally and externally, the Chief must repair, rebuild, or strengthen fractured relationships.
- Trust-building is a prerequisite before launching any major initiatives or structural reforms.

**Educational Background**

- While not universally prioritized, many support a Chief with formal education in criminology, justice, sociology, or related fields.

## Question 7: What can be done to improve community safety?

### Community-Centered Safety

- Safety must be grounded in relationships, visibility, and trust.
- Police should be present *before* there is trouble, fostering familiarity and comfort across all neighborhoods.
- Community safety is not just about the absence of crime, but the presence of connection and belonging.
- Residents want a model that encourages shared responsibility, not one solely reliant on EPS.

### Focus on Root Causes

- Addressing poverty, housing insecurity, substance use, trauma, and mental health is essential.
- Police alone cannot resolve these issues—partnerships with social agencies, governments, and communities are needed.
- Stakeholders strongly support prevention.

### Enhanced Community Engagement

- Past negative interactions with police continue to erode trust, especially in racialized and vulnerable communities.
- Calls for more consistent, authentic, and empathetic engagement across diverse communities, including newcomers, Indigenous peoples, and 2SLGBTQIA+ residents.
- Engagement must be followed by *action*—community trust depends on meaningful follow-up.
- Sentiment that increased confidence in and trust of EPS will increase real and perceived safety.

### Balanced, Visible Policing

- A visible police presence in neighborhoods, on transit, and in high-traffic areas increases both actual and perceived safety.
- Increasing community-based policing and beat patrols is of high interest to consulted parties.
- Presence alone is not enough; *how* police show up matters.

### Equity Across Communities

- There's a sense that downtown and high-profile areas receive disproportionate attention. Stakeholders emphasized the importance of understanding and addressing the *unique needs* of all communities, including those in the north and outlying neighborhoods.
- Approaches to policing must take into consideration the experiences of marginalized groups. Reconciliation and anti-racism should be prioritized. In collaboration with other service organizations, new, nuanced approaches need to be developed to appropriately address policing houselessness and encampments.