Divergent Perspectives

Race, Trust, and Human Rights Concerns in Public Perceptions Towards AI Policing Technologies in Canada

DR. KANIKA SAMUELS-WORTLEY (ONTARIO TECH UNIVERSITY)
DR. SCOT WORTLEY, (UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO)
SARA BLAIR, MA (ONTARIO TECH UNIVERSITY)

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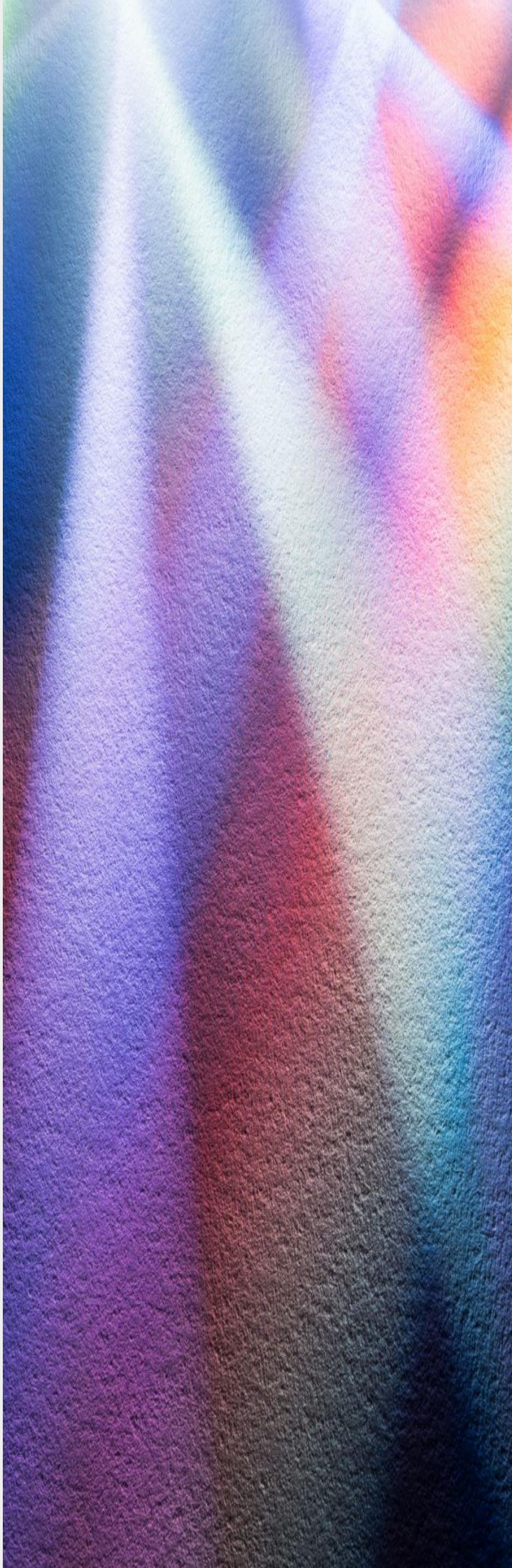


Executive Summary:

This report examines public perceptions of artificial intelligence (AI) in law enforcement, with a particular focus on the perspectives of Black and Indigenous people in Canada. Drawing on national survey data (N = 2,014), the findings reveal substantial racial differences in awareness, support, perceived risks, and trust in police use of AI technologies in Canada.

Black and Indigenous respondents differ in their level of support for AI in policing, yet both consistently express greater concern than other groups about surveillance, racial bias, predictive policing, and misuse of personal data.

While respondents across all groups acknowledge potential efficiency and safety benefits, **Indigenous respondents report the lowest confidence that AI will be used transparently, ethically, or in ways that genuinely improve public safety**, concerns that may be rooted in historical and contemporary experiences of colonial policing.

The findings suggest that AI adoption in policing may reinforce existing structural inequalities *unless* accompanied by strong regulation, transparency, community oversight, and the meaningful inclusion of Black and Indigenous communities in decision-making processes. These findings provide critical guidance for policymakers, police agencies, and community leaders responsible for governing emerging policing technologies.

Key Findings:

The survey reveals consistent and statistically significant racial differences in perceptions of AI in policing.

KEY STATISTICS AT A GLANCE

Black respondents are the most likely to report "hearing" about AI in policing (23.8%), compared to only 4.9% of Indigenous and 5.1% of White respondents.

Two-thirds of all respondents expressed concern about AI systems designed to predict individual criminal risk — the highest concern of any application tested.

Over 70% of all respondents rated government regulation of police AI as important or very important reflecting near-universal demand for governance across all racial groups.

Almost 30% of all respondents lack confidence that police agencies are acting transparently and ethically in their use of AI with Indigenous respondents reporting the lowest confidence of any group.

Black and South Asian respondents report the highest levels of support for AI-enabled policing technologies.

Among all groups, Indigenous respondents report the lowest confidence in both AI's claimed public safety benefits and police ethical governance.

Yet, Black and South Asian respondents report the greatest concern about AI-enabled surveillance and predictive policing tools.

White, Black, and Indigenous, respondents express the strongest expectations for government regulation, transparency, and community input.

Why This Matters?

AI technologies are often promoted as objective and evidence based. However, the evidence presented here reveals that for many Canadians, the legitimacy of AI tools depends far more on governance than on technical performance. Communities most affected by policing are the least convinced that AI will deliver safety or fairness without strong accountability mechanisms.

Failure to address these concerns risks:

Deepening mistrust between the police and Indigenous, Black, and racialized communities.	Automating existing racial and colonial biases.	Undermining police legitimacy to the public.	Exposing governments to legal, ethical, and reputational risks.

AI adoption in law enforcement is therefore not simply a technical decision, but a policy choice with profound *social consequences*.

Core Policy Message

AI in policing cannot be governed as a neutral technology. It must be governed as a matter of racial justice, human rights, and democratic accountability. While important to most Canadians, Black and Indigenous perspectives show that legitimacy is conditional on transparency, regulation, and community authority.

Priority Policy Actions

Based on the survey evidence, police leadership and policymakers should prioritize:

- Mandatory racial and Indigenous impact assessments for all police AI systems.
- The development of governance frameworks that reflect diverse racialized community perspectives
- Consistent public disclosure of all AI systems in use, including purposes, data sources, and operational logic.
- Investment in accessible public education about AI in policing
- Annual public reporting on AI performance, bias, and complaints.
- Mandatory ethics, anti-racism, and data justice training
- Transparent legal remedies for individuals harmed by AI-driven policing decisions.

Strategic Implication

Public acceptance of AI in law enforcement will not be achieved through improved algorithms alone. Instead, governance reforms must enhance accountability and centre the voices of those most affected by policing. Without such an approach, AI risks modernizing surveillance rather than improving justice in Canada.

Conclusion

Across all racial groups there is near-universal agreement that transparency and government regulation are essential conditions for acceptable AI use in policing.

The perspectives of Black and Indigenous participants demonstrate that individuals within these communities are not outright rejecting the adoption of AI technology within Canadian policing, instead they are rejecting ungoverned technology. Their perspectives provide a roadmap for ethical governance, where transparency, accountability, and community collaboration can set the foundation for responsible innovation.

AI in policing will only contribute to public safety if it is governed in a way that respects human rights, racial justice, and public consent.

Background

The rapid expansion of artificial intelligence (AI) technologies in law enforcement represents one of the most significant transformations in contemporary policing (Chan 2021). From predictive crime analytics and facial recognition to automated reporting systems and large-scale surveillance platforms, AI is increasingly positioned as a solution to longstanding challenges of efficiency, objectivity, and public safety (Law Commission of Ontario, 2025; Perrin, Liew, and Sweeney, 2026). However, such narratives do not interrogate the social, historical, and political contexts in which these technologies are deployed (Lavorgna and Ugwudike, 2021).

For Black and Indigenous communities in Canada, policing has never been experienced as neutral. Police are the primary gateway into the criminal justice system, deciding who is surveilled, investigated, charged, and ultimately brought before the courts (Samuels-Wortley,2022). Research consistently shows that Black and Indigenous peoples experience this gateway differently. Recent research suggests that Black and Indigenous peoples report far lower levels of trust and more negative evaluations of police fairness and approachability than White Canadians (Cotter, 2022), with some studies citing racial discrimination as a serious issue in policing (Mensah, Firang, Williams, and Afrifah, 2021; Saini, 2021; Yankey, 2025; Wortley and Owusu-Bempah, 2022). Further, longitudinal studies demonstrate that perceptions of anti-Black bias within policing have grown over decades, reflecting not only increased awareness but also persistent patterns of disproportionate surveillance (Wortley and Owusu-Bempah, 2022).

Further, data from traffic stops and street checks in cities across Canada such as Toronto, Ottawa, Edmonton, and Halifax show that Black, Indigenous, and Middle Eastern drivers are stopped at rates far exceeding their share of the population, even after accounting for neighbourhood crime levels or other legally relevant factors. These findings demonstrate the existence of racial profiling within Canadian police services (Foster and Jacobs, 2019; Wortley, 2019).

For Indigenous peoples in Canada, their experiences reflect a distinct and deeply troubled relationship with policing rooted in the colonial origins of law enforcement itself Historically, police were instruments of colonial control, enforcing policies such as the criminalization of cultural practices and the forcible removal of children to residential schools (Monchalin, 2016). Today, that legacy persists in documented patterns of over-policing and use of force, which continues to disproportionately affect Indigenous peoples (Cauduro and Marques, 2025).

Further, commissioned reports demonstrate Indigenous women and girls are particularly vulnerable, reflected in decades of inadequate police responses to missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls (National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, 2019).These practices carry real consequences, from psychological harm and the erosion of police legitimacy (Monchalin, 2016) to higher arrest and charge rates that contribute to the overrepresentation of Indigenous peoples in the justice system (Wortley and Samuels-Wortley, 2025).

The result is a cycle in which disproportionate surveillance fuels distrust, reduced cooperation with law enforcement, and deeper inequalities (Wortley and Samuels-Wortley, 2025). Thus, these histories are not background context, they are the lens through which Black and Indigenous peoples evaluate any expansion of police powers, including the introduction of AI.

Thus, technological innovations in policing cannot be simply evaluated as a technical improvement, but as a continuation, or intensification, of existing systems of surveillance and control (Eubanks, 2017). In this context, understanding Black and Indigenous perspectives on AI in law enforcement is essential. First, as noted, these communities have been most directly affected by discriminatory policing practices and therefore possess critical knowledge about how new technologies may be misused. Second, police legitimacy depends on the trust of those most impacted by State power (Bottoms and Tankebe, 2017), thus ignoring marginalized voices risks reproducing technological policies that deepen inequality while claiming neutrality. Finally, specific to Indigenous communities in Canada, they are entitled to distinct rights to sovereignty, self-determination, and governance, making their perspectives not only ethically important but legally and politically fundamental (Government of Canada, 2021).

Existing research on AI in policing has focused on technical accuracy, algorithmic bias, or legal compliance (Almasoud and Idowu, 2025) and while important, ***these approaches often fail to capture how AI is perceived by the very people that live with its consequences—the public.*** Public perception, trust, and legitimacy are central dimensions of AI governance that necessitate empirical examination, yet little scholarship has examined public perceptions of artificial intelligence (AI) in law enforcement and the criminal justice system (Fine & Marsh, 2024). This is particularly true within the Canadian context. Research consistently states that the success of these technologies is largely contingent on the public's acceptance of them (Sartori & Bocca, 2023; Yigitcanlar, Degirmenci, & Inkinen, 2024). Ignoring public perceptions of AI can incur significant costs, including people's trust and/or perceived legitimacy of the criminal justice system (Sartori & Bocca, 2023; Yigitcanlar, Degirmenci, & Inkinen, 2024).

Therefore, understanding public perspectives is critical to appropriately develop, deploy, and regulate these tools in a way that strengthens citizens' support for their use.

This study responds to this knowledge gap in understanding public perceptions within the Canadian context, by centring Black and Indigenous perspectives in a national survey examining awareness, support, concern, trust, and governance expectations regarding AI in law enforcement. Rather than treating these communities as marginal subgroups within a general population, the analysis positions their experiences as analytically central to understanding the ethical and political future of policing technology in Canada. Given the well-documented racial disparities in policing experiences, particularly for Black and Indigenous communities Wortley and Samuels-Wortley, 2025), centring race provides an analytically justified and policy relevant lens for examining public perceptions of AI in policing

Addressing racial inequity is therefore not a narrow approach, but a foundational step toward understanding broader patterns of fairness and legitimacy in law enforcement technology.

By foregrounding Black and Indigenous voices, this analysis challenges dominant technological narratives and reframes AI in policing as a social, racial, and colonial issue as much as a technical one. The findings contribute to ongoing debates about algorithmic governance, data justice, and democratic accountability, while offering practical guidance for policymakers seeking to navigate the ethical challenges of policing innovation. Ultimately, the study argues that AI in law enforcement cannot be meaningfully evaluated without understanding the lived realities of those most affected by policing institutions.

A note on scope: This report does not aim to reject the use of AI in policing, nor does it assume that all uses of AI are equivalent in their risks or impacts. The findings are grounded in quantitative survey data from a nationally representative sample and reflect what citizens in Canada, but Black and Indigenous people in particular, believe, not what advocates on any side of the debate claim they believe. The study's central argument is not that AI should be prohibited, but that its legitimacy depends on meaningful governance that does not yet exist in Canada.

The Research

This study is based on a national survey of 2,014 respondents representing diverse racial backgrounds in Canada, including Black, Indigenous, Asian, South Asian, other racialized, and White participants. In consultation with **Environics Institute for Survey Research**, the survey was designed by Dr. Kanika Samuels-Wortley to capture public perceptions of artificial intelligence in law enforcement, including awareness, support for or opposition to AI as a public safety mechanism, the perceived risks and benefits of AI in law enforcement, trust in police governance of AI, and expectations for regulation and accountability.

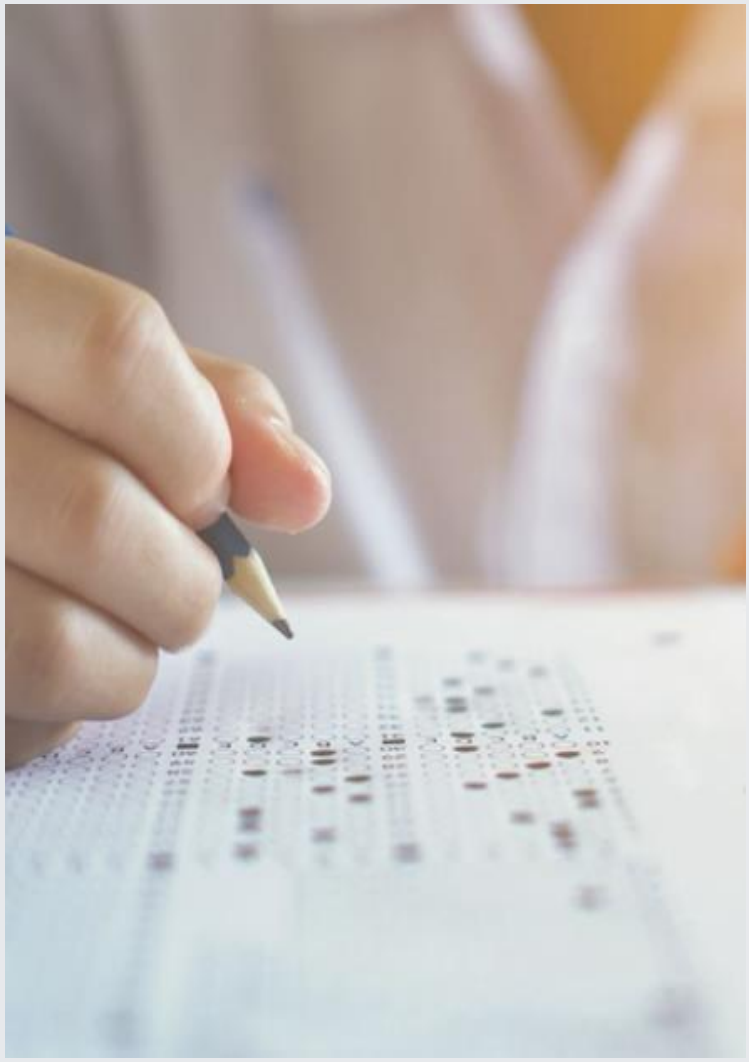
Survey questions were designed to move from broader experiences with policing to more specific views on AI. The survey first asked participants to evaluate policing in their local communities, including prior experiences with police, perceptions of community safety and crime, levels of trust and confidence in police, beliefs about the role of police in society, and opinions on police funding structures. This contextual information was collected to situate attitudes toward AI within respondents' existing relationships with and perceptions of law enforcement.

The questionnaire then measured general attitudes toward the use of AI, followed by more detailed questions about AI in policing. Respondents were asked about specific applications, including surveillance of public spaces, predictive crime mapping, automated pattern detection, and systems designed to predict individual criminal risk. Additional items assessed perceptions of AI's impact on public safety and police budgets, police transparency and ethical conduct when using AI, and views on the importance of regulatory safeguards and public participation in decisions about AI.

Race and ethnicity are treated as central analytical variables rather than as background controls. Although the survey was national in scope, Black and Indigenous respondents were intentionally oversampled so their perspectives could be examined in comparison with other racialized groups and White respondents.

This approach reflects the study's theoretical position that experiences of policing are shaped by racial and colonial histories (Wortley and Samuels-Wortley, 2025), and particular attention was therefore given to patterns of trust, concern, and expectations regarding governance.

The study received ethics approval through Ontario Tech University's Ethics Board prior the survey entering the field.
The online survey used to capture public perceptions was disseminated from May 5 to May 21, 2025. The final sample includes 2,014 Canadian residents aged 18 and over.



The sample was stratified by province, age, and gender to reflect current population statistics. However, as previously mentioned peoples identifying as *Black or Indigenous (First Nations, Métis, or Inuit) were oversampled to ensure sufficient representation for meaningful analysis*. Participants completed the survey in English or French, based on preference.

About the current analysis for this report

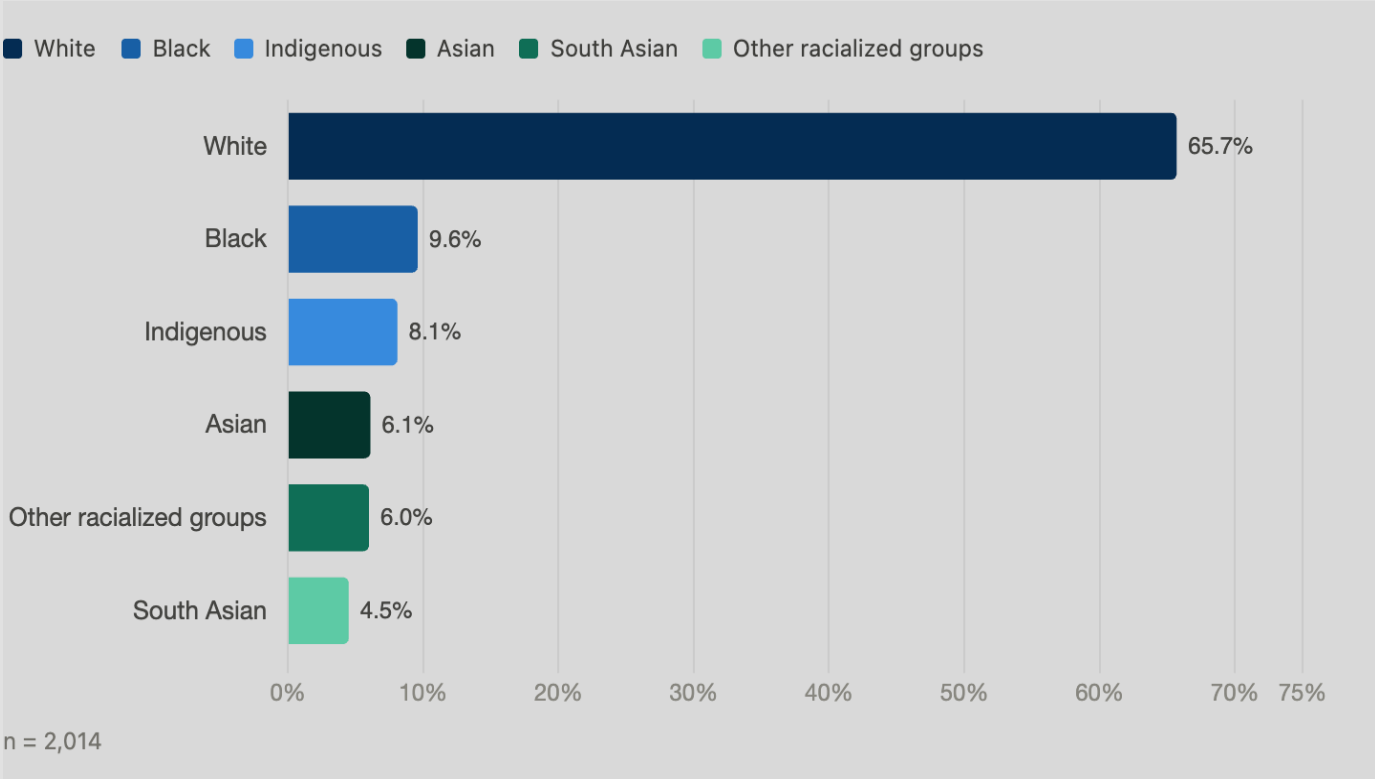
Definitions of AI in policing were provided to respondents prior to attitudinal questions to establish a shared conceptual baseline (See Textbox 1, on the following page). The current analysis primarily relies on cross-tabulations and chi-square tests to assess whether observed differences across racial groups were statistically significant. Most comparisons demonstrated statistically significant associations, indicating that racial identity is a meaningful predictor of perceptions of AI in law enforcement. While the current analysis does not permit causal inference by exploring other relevant factors such as age, gender, geographic location, prior contact with the police, or qualitative narratives that could further illuminate lived experiences (**note these results and findings will be released in a later report**), the current analysis provides robust descriptive and comparative insight into how AI is differently interpreted across racial communities. Further, the large sample size provides a strong empirical foundation for examining how Black and Indigenous communities understand and evaluate emerging policing technologies.

Operational Definition of Artificial Intelligence in Law Enforcement

Textbox 1: For this survey, Artificial Intelligence (AI) in law enforcement means using smart computer programs to help solve problems, make predictions, and find patterns in data. AI may help police prevent and investigate crimes. Examples include facial recognition, predicting where crimes might happen, reading license plates automatically, and mapping crime locations.

Sample Characteristics, by Race

Race	Frequency	Percent
White	1323	65.7%
Black	193	9.6%
Indigenous	164	8.1%
Asian	122	6.1%
South Asian	90	4.5%
Other racialized groups (Arab, East Asian, Latin American, Other)	122	6%
TOTAL	2014	100%



RESULTS

Awareness of Artificial Intelligence in Policing

Awareness is deeply unequal and not in the direction one might expect. While a significant proportion of the overall population reports knowing "nothing at all" about AI in policing, **Black respondents reported significantly higher awareness of AI in policing than Indigenous and White respondents.** While 23.8% of Black respondents indicated they had heard "a lot" about AI in policing, only 4.9% of Indigenous respondents and 5.1% of White respondents reported the same. Nearly half of White respondents (48.0%) reported knowing nothing at all. A simple explanation might point to differences in access to information. But the divergence between Black and Indigenous respondents, two communities that share histories of over-policing suggests something more nuanced is at play. For Black respondents, heightened awareness may reflect direct and ongoing encounters with police, generating both personal familiarity with policing practices and a heightened interest in how those practices are evolving. But that explanation does not travel to Indigenous respondents, whose awareness levels are closer to the White population despite similarly documented experiences of discriminatory policing. For Indigenous peoples, lower awareness may instead reflect systemic exclusion from institutional communication, and limited transparency about what AI tools are being used in or near their communities. It may also reflect the geographic realities of many Indigenous communities, where the nature of police presence and technology deployment may look different in their jurisdiction. **What this pattern makes clear is that Black and Indigenous experiences cannot be collapsed into a single narrative. They are distinct, shaped by different colonial histories, relationships with state institutions, and forms of exposure to surveillance.** Therefore, they require and deserve separate analysis.

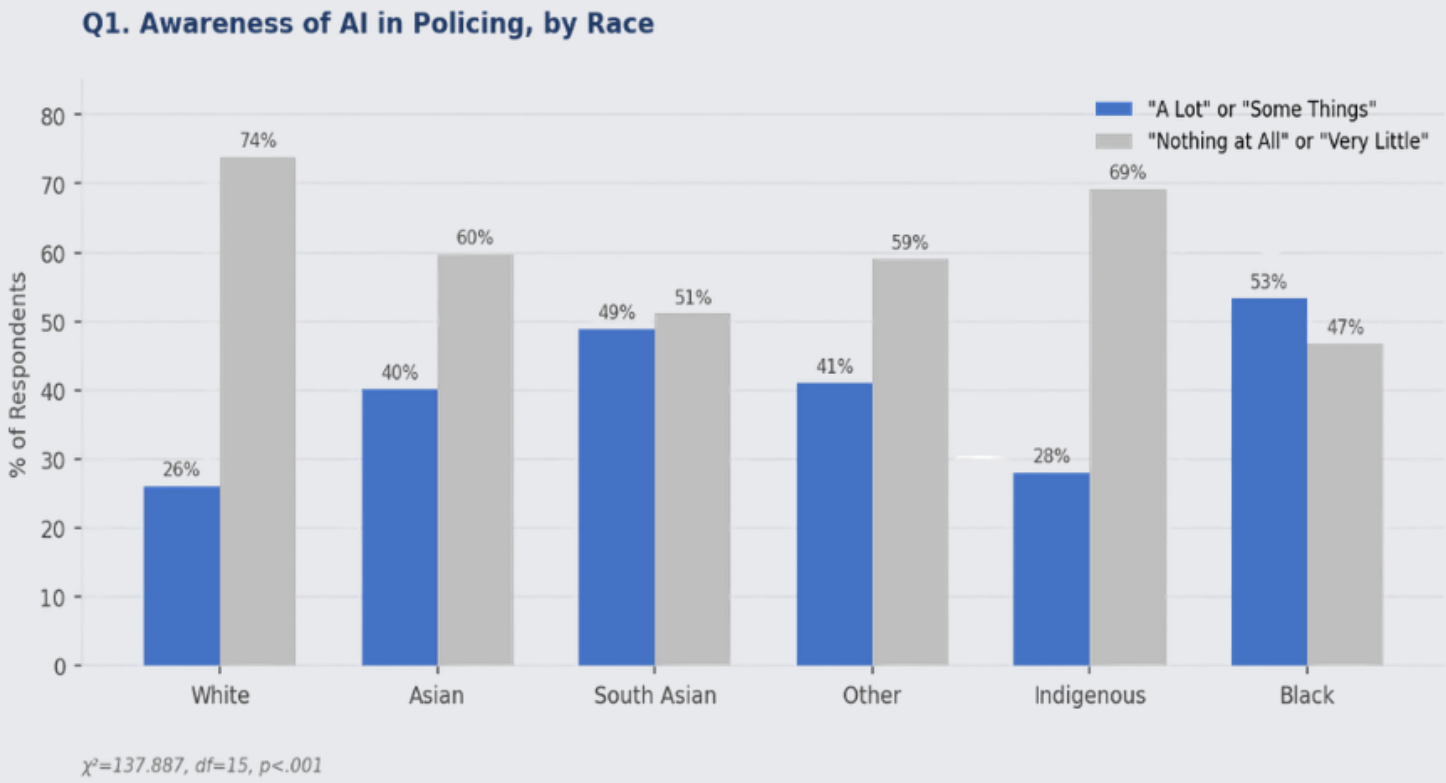
QUESTION 1. How much have you heard about the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in policing and law enforcement?

Percentage of respondents who report awareness of Artificial Intelligence in Policing, by Race

Level of Awareness	Black	Indigenous	Asian	South Asian	Other	White	*Total
Nothing at all	**28.0**	**36.9**	34.4	21.1	35.2	48.0	42.6
Very Little	**18.7**	**32.3**	25.4	30.0	23.8	25.9	25.8
Some things	**29.5**	**23.2**	27.9	33.3	29.5	20.9	23.4
A lot	**23.8**	**4.9**	12.3	15.6	11.5	5.1	8.2
Sample Size (=n)	**193**	**164**	122	90	122	1,323	2,014

X^2= 137.887; DF=15; p <.001.

*The "total" category is not disaggregated by race and represents all survey participants.

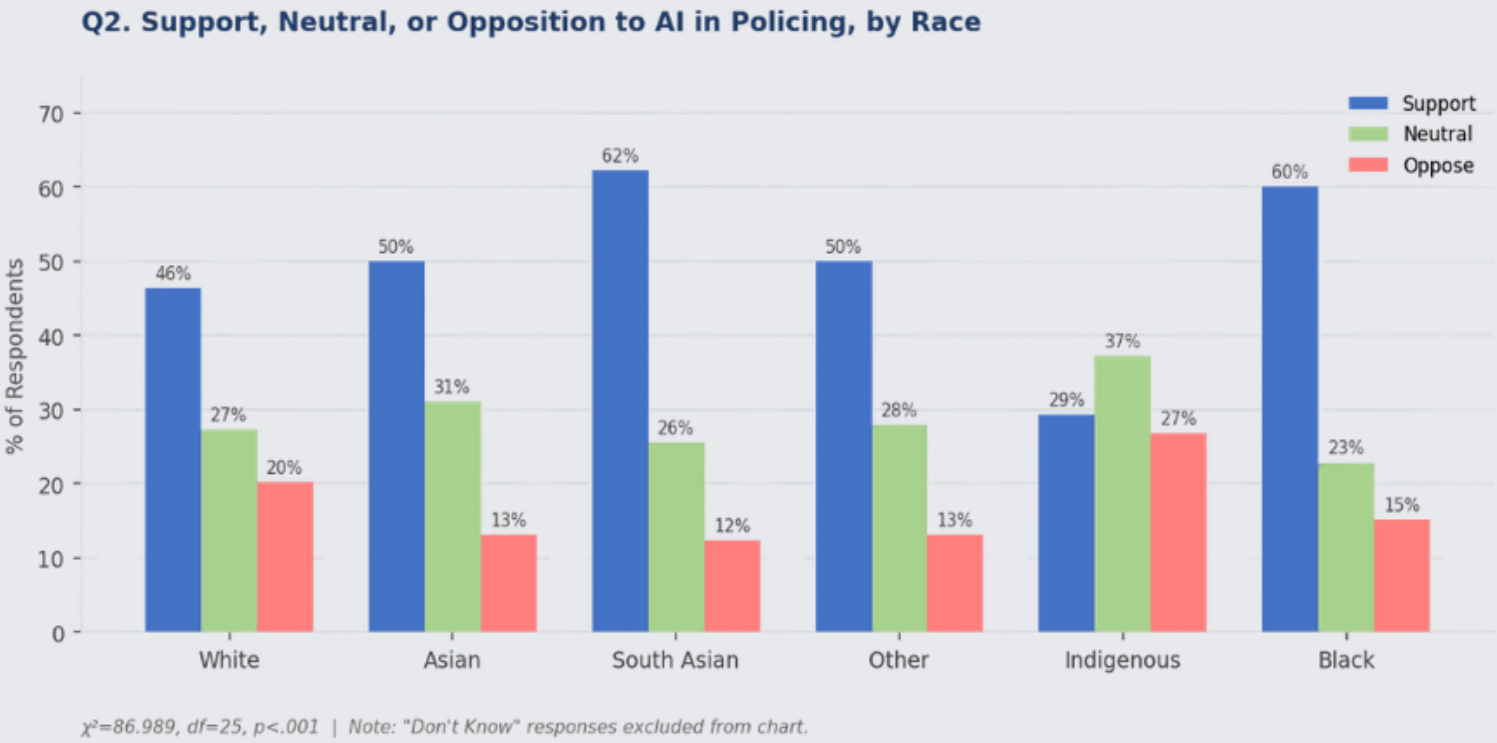


QUESTION 2. Based on this definition, to what extent do you support or oppose the use of AI in policing and law enforcement?

Percentage of Respondents Supporting or Opposing AI in Policing, by Racial Group

Level of Support	Black	Indigenous	Asian	South Asian	Other	White	Total
Don't Know	2.1	6.7	5.7	0	9	6.3	5.8
Strongly Oppose	7.3	8.5	1.6	6.7	5.7	9.9	8.6
Somewhat Oppose	7.8	18.3	11.5	5.6	7.4	10.3	10.4
Neither Support nor Oppose	22.8	37.2	31.1	25.6	27.9	27.3	27.9
Somewhat Support	33.7	17.1	38.5	41.1	33.6	33.3	32.7
Strongly Support	26.4	12.2	11.5	21.1	16.4	13.0	14.7
Sample Size (=n)	193	164	122	90	122	1,323	2,014

X^2= 86.989; DF=25; p < .001.



When examining levels of support for AI-enabled technologies in policing, the survey results reveal further complexity. **Indigenous respondents displayed the highest ambivalence, with 37% selecting neither support nor oppose**, a pattern that may reflect cautious reserve rooted in deep institutional distrust, and one consistent with **Indigenous respondents being the most likely group to actively oppose AI use in policing.**

Black respondents, by contrast, reported relatively high rates of strong support, surpassing even White respondents. Notably, Asian, South Asian, and other racialized respondents were also less likely to oppose AI use in policing than White respondents and correspondingly more likely to express support — a finding that runs counter to expectations given broader concerns about surveillance and racial bias.

While the reasons underlying these patterns warrant deeper exploration, this divergence underscores a critical point: despite shared histories of discriminatory policing, Black and Indigenous communities do not hold uniform views. Their distinct relationships with state institutions, and their differing forms of exposure to surveillance, produce meaningfully different orientations toward AI in policing. These findings challenge monolithic framings of racialized communities and point to the importance of examining relevant factors that may shape contemporary attitudes toward surveillance technologies.

Public Perceptions of Specific Uses of AI in Canadian Policing

Beyond general awareness and support, the survey explored public perceptions of five specific applications of AI currently being developed or deployed within policing contexts. These range from relatively administrative uses, such as automating routine tasks like report writing to save officer time (Q3), to more consequential and intrusive applications, including the real-time monitoring of public spaces (Q4), the rapid processing of data to detect patterns and connections that human analysts might miss (Q5), the prediction of geographic areas where crime is more likely to occur (Q6), and ultimately, the identification of specific individuals deemed at elevated risk of committing future crimes (Q7). There appears to be a meaningful escalation in the degree of concern as AI moves from supporting administrative efficiency to actively shaping decisions about people, places, and communities. As the applications become more targeted, concern rises, trust falls, and the perspectives of Black, Indigenous, and South Asian respondents become increasingly distinct from those of other groups.

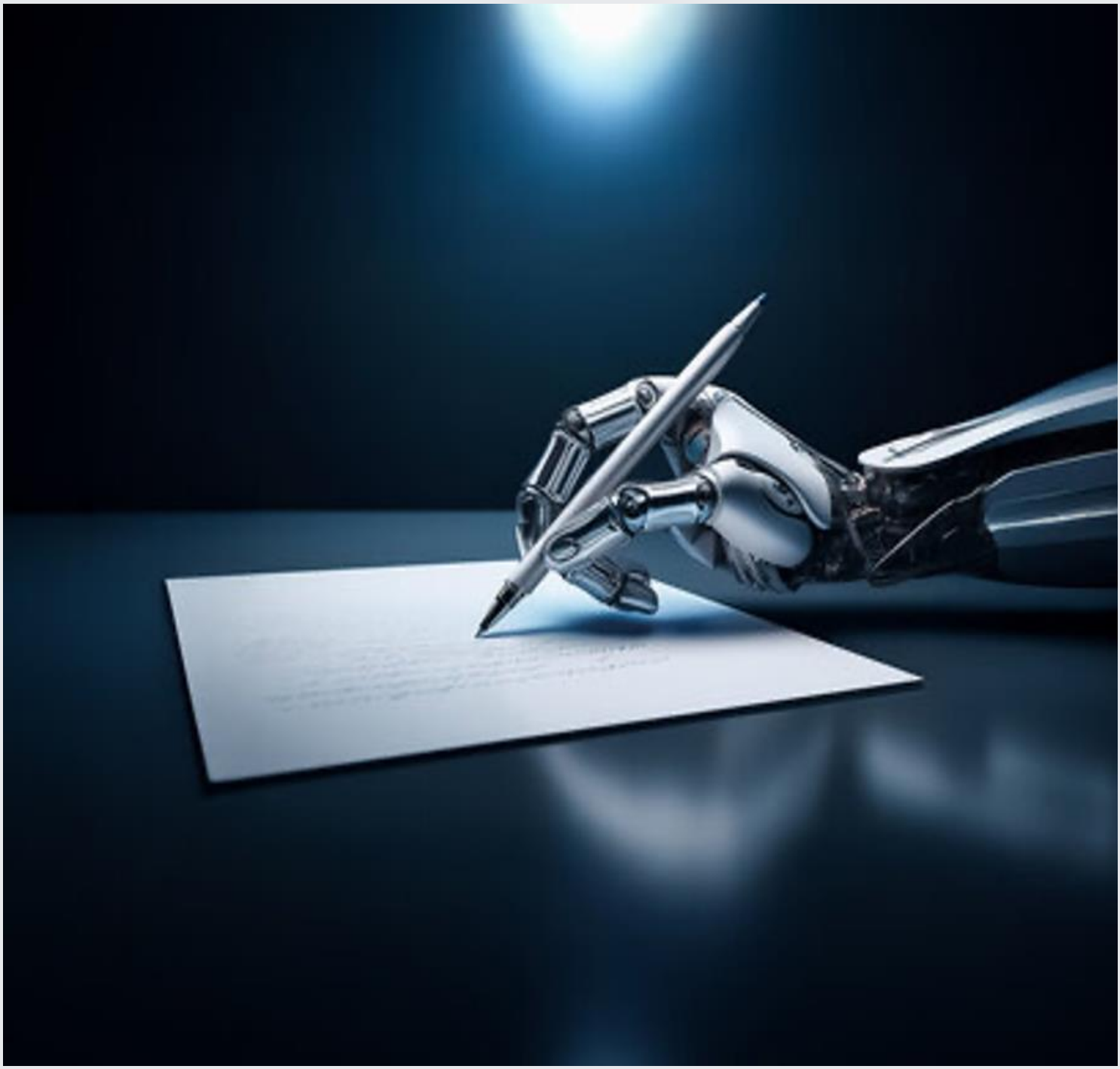
QUESTION 3. To What Extent Are You Concerned About the Police Using AI to: Save Time by Automating Routine Tasks, like Report Writing?

Percentage of Respondent's Concerned about the police using AI to save time by automating routine tasks, like report writing, by Race

Level of Concern	Black	Indigenous	Asian	South Asian	Other	White	Total
Don't Know	5.7	9.1	4.9	7.8	8.2	7.3	7.2
Very Concerned	17.1	14.0	7.4	16.7	19.7	10.0	11.7
Concerned	18.7	22.0	23.8	20.0	13.9	15.7	17.1
Somewhat Concerned	25.9	23.8	25.4	27.8	18.0	20.3	21.6
Not Very Concerned	14.5	17.7	25.4	13.3	23.8	28.4	25.1
Not at all Concerned	18.1	13.4	13.1	14.4	16.4	18.3	17.3
Sample Size (= n)	193	164	122	90	122	1,323	2,014

$X^2 = 63.615$; DF=25; $p < .001$.

While the previous finding suggests Black and South Asian respondents are supportive of the use of AI, this does not negate concerns related to specific AI applications, which seemingly escalates with perceived intrusiveness, and is consistently highest among Black, Indigenous, and South Asian respondents. Thus, even for the most seemingly benign application, such as automating routine police tasks like report writing, there was some concern about it among Black, Indigenous, and South Asian respondents compared to White respondents. This may tell us that in communities where institutional trust may be fractured, even administrative AI may be interpreted as an expansion of surveillance capacity and not as a neutral tool of efficiency.



QUESTION 4. To What Extent Are You Concerned About the Police Using AI to: Help Monitor Public Spaces in Real-Time and More Quickly Analyze Evidence and Identify Possible Subjects

Percentage of Respondent's Concern About the Police Using AI to Help Monitor Public Spaces in Real-Time and More Quickly Analyze Evidence and Identify Possible Subjects, by Race

Level of Concern	Black	Indigenous	Asian	South Asian	Other	White	Total
Don't Know	5.2	9.8	5.7	4.4	10.7	7.6	7.5
Very Concerned	17.6	15.9	9.8	16.7	12.3	11.5	12.6
Concerned	19.2	17.1	21.3	25.6	18.9	16.0	17.3
Somewhat Concerned	23.3	22.6	27.9	25.6	25.4	22.1	22.9
Not Very Concerned	20.7	19.5	22.1	16.7	18.9	28.0	25.2
Not at all Concerned	14.0	15.2	13.1	11.1	13.9	14.7	14.4
Sample Size (=n)	193	164	122	90	122	1,323	2,014

$X^2 = 36.966$; DF=25; $p < .058$.

Concern about the use of AI to monitor public spaces in real time was high across all racial groups, but it was most pronounced among South Asian, Black, and Indigenous respondents, who reported higher levels of strong concern than other groups. These patterns suggest heightened sensitivity to surveillance technologies within communities that have experienced disproportionate police scrutiny. However, racial differences on this question did not reach statistical significance (χ^2=36.966, p=.058).

But for Black and Indigenous participants, their concerns are consistent with well-documented experiences of street checks, carding, and other forms of community surveillance. In this context, AI-based monitoring of public spaces may be understood less as a public safety tool and more as a continuation of racialized visibility and control.

Among South Asian respondents, elevated concern may similarly reflect experiences of racial profiling, over-policing in particular neighbourhoods, or broader forms of social and state surveillance, including those associated with national security practices (Ravel, 2025).

QUESTION 5. To What Extent Are You Concerned About the Police Using AI to: Quickly Process Data and Find Patterns That Police Might Miss (i.e., Automated License Plate Readers)

Percentage of Respondent's Concern About the Police Using AI to Quickly Process Data and Find Patterns That Police Might Miss, by Race

Level of Concern	Black	Indigenous	Asian	South Asian	Other	White	Total
Don't Know	3.6	12.2	4.9	4.4	6.6	6.7	6.6
Very Concerned	17.6	19.5	8.2	13.3	15.6	10.7	12.4
Concerned	20.2	12.8	21.3	23.3	12.3	13.7	15.0
Somewhat Concerned	22.8	18.3	32.8	24.4	23.0	20.3	21.4
Not Very Concerned	21.2	18.3	18.0	22.2	23.8	29.4	26.4
Not at all Concerned	14.5	18.9	14.8	12.2	18.9	19.3	18.2
Sample Size (=n)	193	164	122	90	122	1,323	2,014

X 2 = 71.017; DF=25; p < .001.

AI systems designed to detect patterns across large datasets, including license plate readers and behavioural analytics, generated the highest concern among Black, South Asian, and Indigenous respondents. These findings may reflect anxiety about indirect profiling, not through explicit racial markers, but through proxies embedded in data patterns. This concern aligns with scholarship on algorithmic discrimination, which has demonstrated that seemingly neutral variables such as neighbourhood, mobility patterns, and social networks can serve as proxies for race, effectively encoding bias into automated decision-making (Prince and Schwarcz, 2019; Weerts, Kelly-Lyth, Binns, and Adams-Prassl, 2024; Ugwudike, 2020). Thus, Black, South Asian, and Indigenous respondents appear acutely aware that algorithmic systems can reproduce and even amplify existing inequalities without ever explicitly referencing race.

QUESTION 6: To What Extent Are You Concerned About the Police Using AI to Help Police "Predict" Areas Where Crime is More Likely to Occur, by Race

Percentage of Respondent's Concern About the Police Using AI to Help Police "Predict" Areas Where Crime is More Likely to Occur, by Race

Level of Concern	Black	Indigenous	Asian	South Asian	Other	White	Total
Don't Know	4.1	11.6	6.6	2.2	9.0	7.4	7.2
Very Concerned	20.7	14.0	9.0	22.2	13.1	12.2	13.5
Concerned	18.7	18.3	15.6	17.8	16.4	15.2	16.0
Somewhat Concerned	22.3	29.3	36.1	30.0	28.7	24.4	25.8
Not Very Concerned	22.8	17.7	19.7	21.1	18.9	28.2	25.4
Not at all Concerned	11.4	9.1	13.1	6.7	13.9	12.5	12.0
Sample Size (=n)	193	164	122	90	122	1,323	2,014

Predictive crime mapping generated substantial concern among Black, South Asian, and Indigenous respondents. These tools are perceived as reinforcing racialized geographies of suspicion, whereby historically marginalized neighborhoods become algorithmically designated as "high risk."

This reinforces feedback loops in which over-policed communities continue to receive disproportionate police attention, thereby producing more data that further justifies surveillance (Brayne, 2019; Eubanks, 2018) The findings indicate that predictive crime mapping may be understood within these communities as a mechanism for reproducing spatial inequality.

QUESTION 7: To What Extent Are You Concerned About the Police Using AI to: "Predict" Which Individuals Are More Likely to Commit Crime so They Can Focus Their Resources on These Individuals to Prevent Criminal Activity, by Race

Percentage of Respondents Concerned About Police Using AI to Predict Who Is More Likely to Commit Crime and Allocate Resources to Prevent Crime, by Race

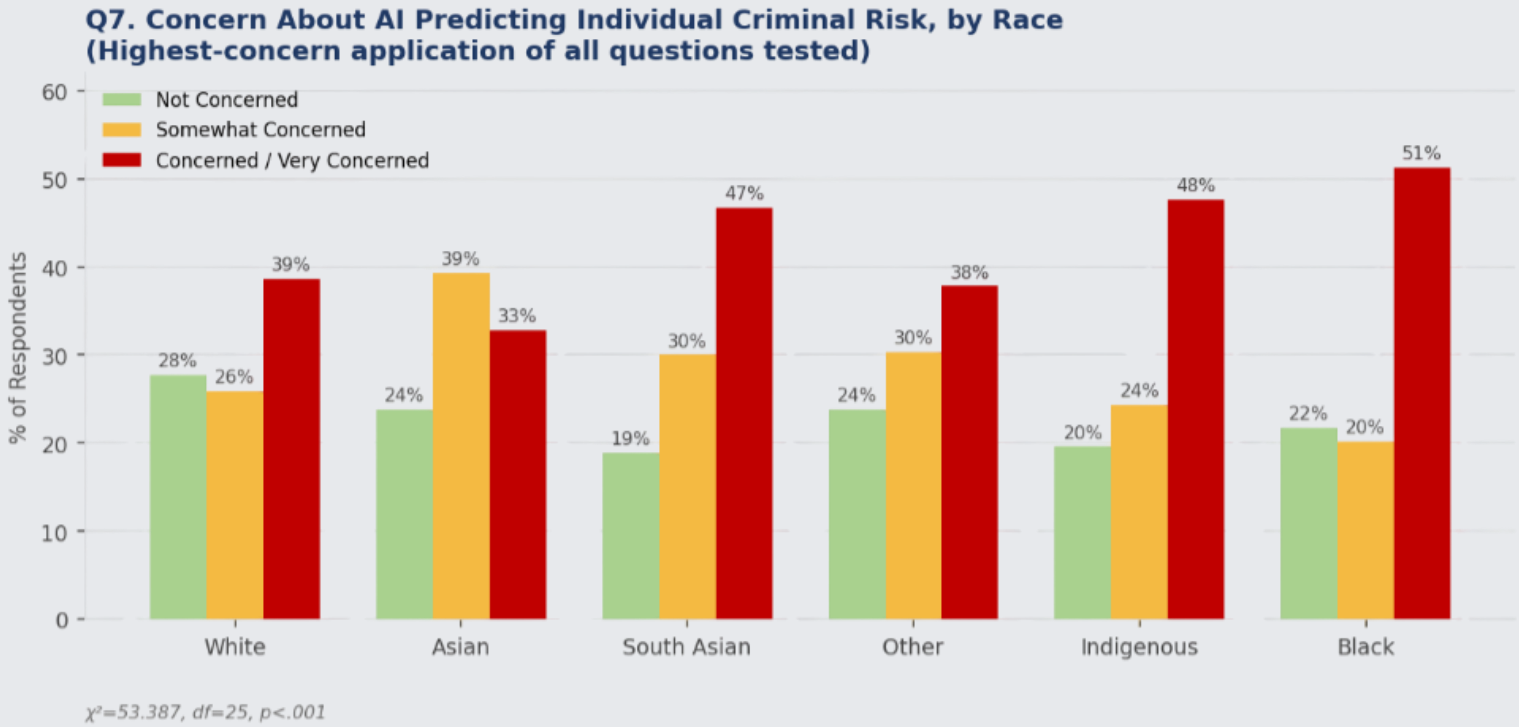
Level of Concern	Black	Indigenous	Asian	South Asian	Other	White	Total
Don't Know	6.7	8.5	4.1	4.4	8.2	7.7	7.3
Very Concerned	23.8	28.7	9.8	20.0	23.0	19.3	20.2
Concerned	27.5	18.9	23.0	26.7	14.8	19.4	20.4
Somewhat Concerned	20.2	24.4	39.3	30.0	30.3	25.9	26.5
Not Very Concerned	14.0	15.9	13.1	11.1	12.3	17.9	16.4
Not at all Concerned	7.8	3.7	10.7	7.8	11.5	9.8	9.1
Sample Size (=n)	193	164	122	90	122	1,323	2,014

X^2= 53.387; DF=25; p < .001.

The prediction of individual criminal risk generated the strongest opposition across all AI applications. **A majority of Black and Indigenous respondents expressed concern or strong concern about these systems.**

These tools are perceived as deeply stigmatizing and discriminatory, as they assign future criminality to individuals based on historical and social data rather than personal behaviour. Respondents appear to recognize that such systems transform social disadvantage into algorithmic suspicion.

This result highlights a moral boundary in public acceptance of AI: predicting individual criminality is widely viewed as illegitimate.



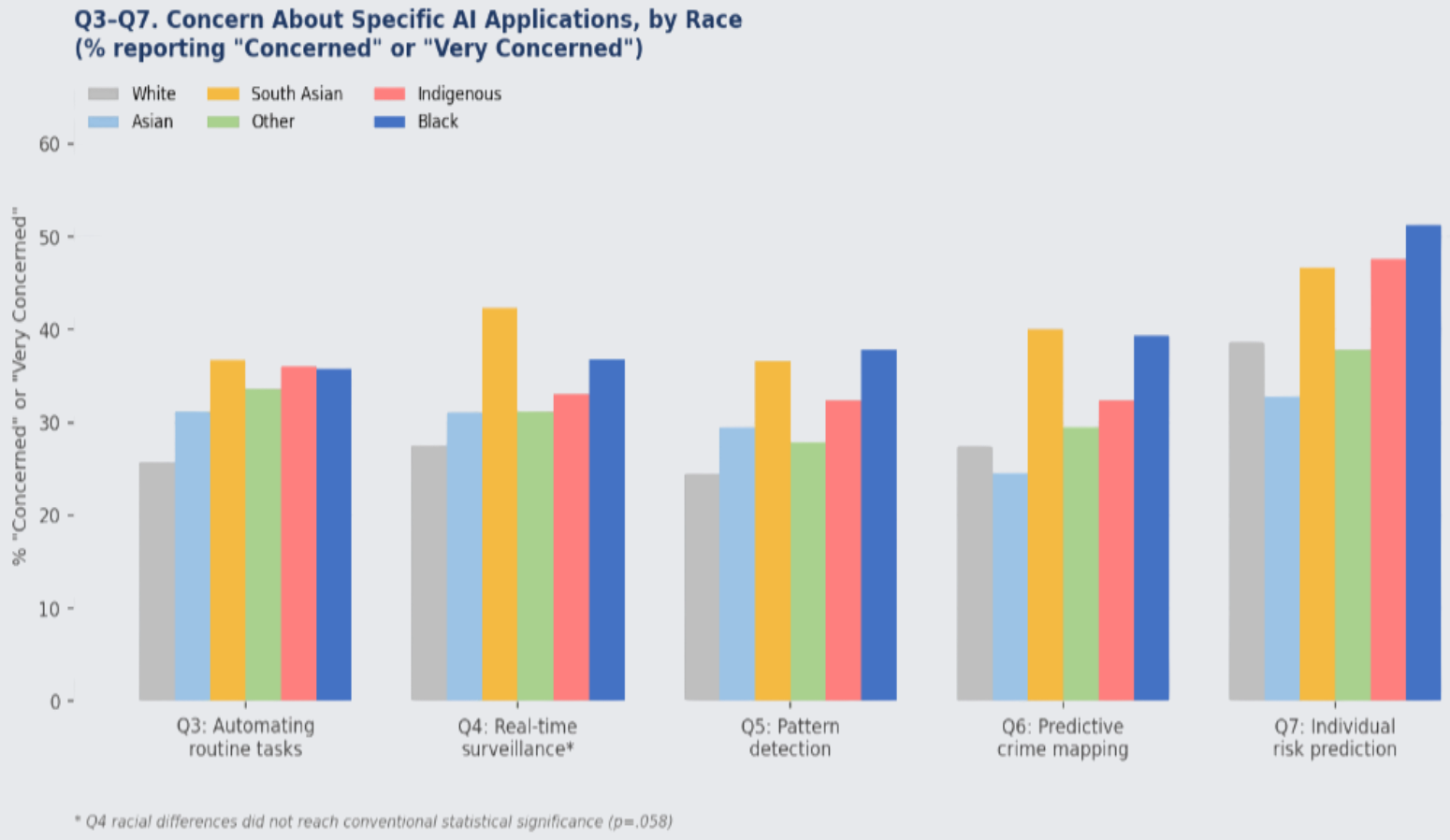
Concerns related to specific AI Applications – In visual form

The following chart shows the percentage of respondents expressing "Concerned" or "Very Concerned" across all five examined applications with all six racial groups in a single figure. Concern is highest when consider AI systems promoting "predictive" capabilities.

KEY FINDING

Concern peaks at Q7 — individual risk prediction

Over 67% of all respondents expressed concern, with Black (51%) and Indigenous (48%) respondents among the most concerned. This is the highest-concern application tested in the entire survey.



This finding suggests individual risk prediction lacks broad public acceptance across all racial groups.

Perceived Impact of AI on Public Safety and Police Costs

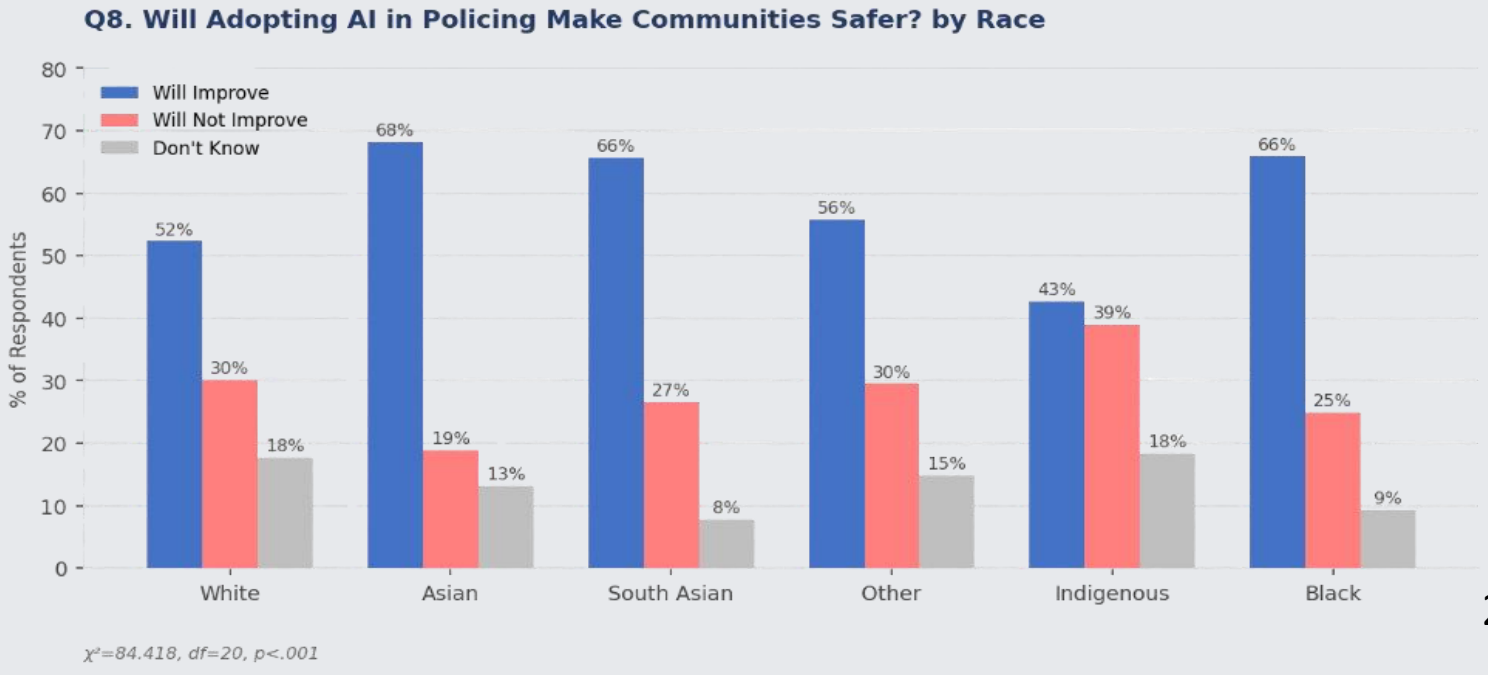
While much of the survey examines concern and opposition to AI, this section turns to a different but equally important dimension of public opinion: what do Canadians actually expect AI to deliver? Respondents were asked whether they believed the adoption of AI in policing would make communities safer and improve public safety (Q8), and what impact they anticipated it would have on police budget costs (Q9). These questions matter because proponents of AI in law enforcement frequently justify its adoption on the grounds of improved safety outcomes and long-term cost efficiency. The findings reveal a public that is cautiously divided on both counts — moderately optimistic about safety benefits, but uncertain and often skeptical about fiscal promises. Critically, those most affected by policing — Black and Indigenous respondents — are among the least convinced that AI will deliver on either front, suggesting that the case for AI adoption cannot rest on efficiency arguments alone.

QUESTION 8: To What Extent Do You Think Adopting AI in Policing Will Make Communities Safer and Increase Public Safety?

Percentage of Respondent's Belief that the Police Use of AI Will Make Communities Safer and Increase Public Safety by Race

Level of Belief That AI Will Improve Public Safety	Black	Indigenous	Asian	South Asian	Other	White	Total
Definitely Will Improve	30.1	12.8	14.8	15.6	23.0	12.7	15.2
Probably Will Improve	35.8	29.9	53.3	50.0	32.8	39.6	39.3
Probably Will Not Improve	18.7	26.8	13.9	14.4	23.8	19.5	19.7
Definitely Will Not Improve	6.2	12.2	4.9	12.2	5.7	10.6	9.7
Don't Know	9.3	18.3	13.1	7.8	14.8	17.6	16.0
Sample Size (=n)	193	164	122	90	122	1,323	2,014

AI in policing is often promoted as a transformative tool for enhancing public safety (Roming, 2018), yet perceptions of its potential impact vary considerably across racial groups. **Indigenous respondents were the least likely to believe AI would improve public safety, while Asian, Black, and South Asian respondents expressed greater confidence than White respondents, who showed more variation in their views.** The finding that Black respondents expressed greater confidence in AI's public safety potential, despite well-documented experiences of racially biased policing, suggests they may have a cautious hope that technology may introduce greater consistency and accountability into policing interactions. This finding warrants further, and careful, exploration.



QUESTION 9. What Impact Do You Think Adopting AI in Policing Will Have on Costs to the Police

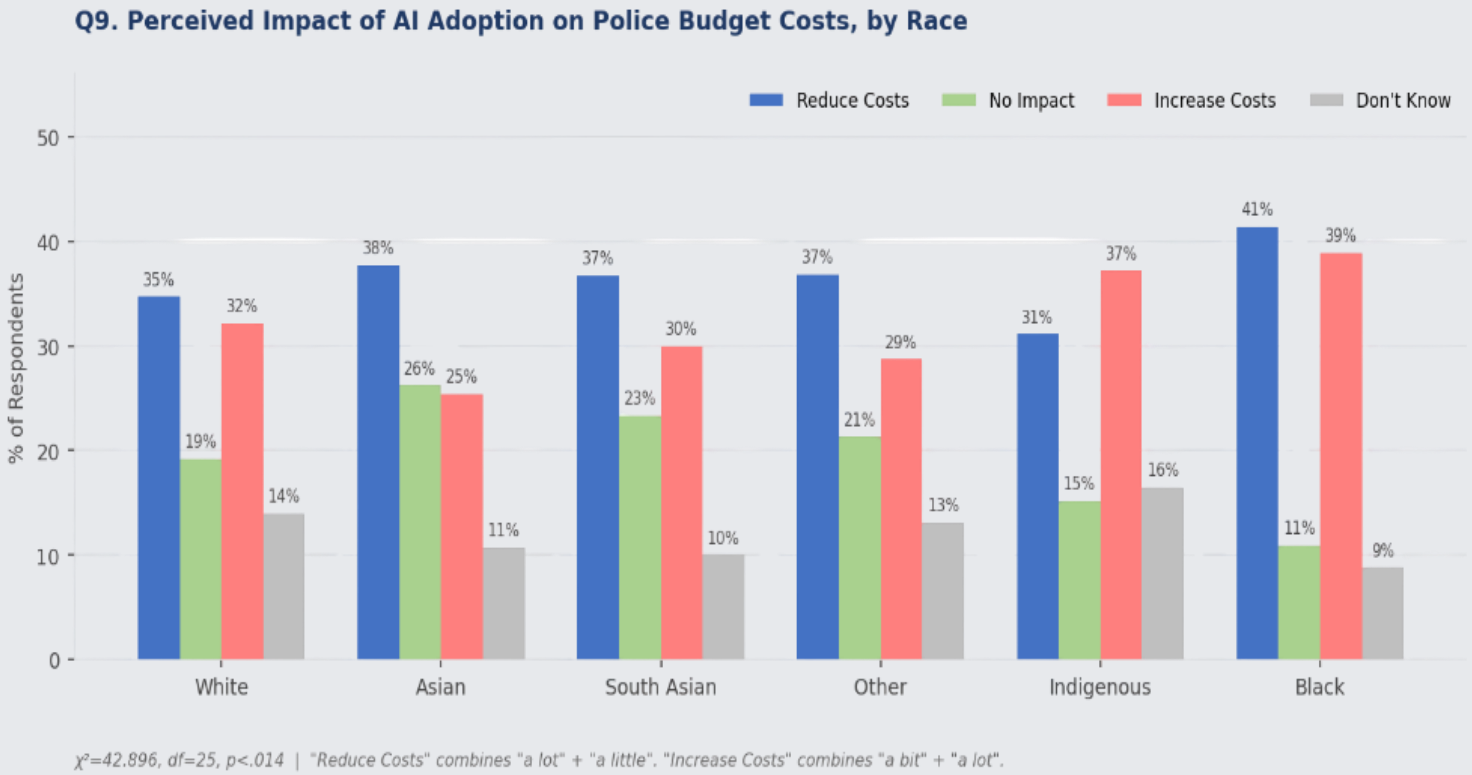
Budget? Do You Think It Will…

Percentage of Respondents' Belief that Adopting AI in Policing Will Affect Police Budget Costs, by Race

Level of Belief	Black	Indigenous	Asian	South Asian	Other	White	Total
Reduce Costs a Lot	14.5	7.9	7.4	15.6	9.8	9.1	9.7
Reduce Costs a Little	26.9	23.2	30.3	21.1	27.0	25.6	25.7
Have no Impact on Costs	10.9	15.2	26.2	23.3	21.3	19.2	18.8
Increase Costs a Bit	27.5	24.4	15.6	23.3	18.0	19.3	20.4
Increases Costs a Lot	11.4	12.8	9.8	6.7	10.7	12.8	12.1
Don't Know	8.8	16.5	10.7	10.0	13.1	14.0	13.3
Sample Size (=n)	193	164	122	90	122	1,323	2,014

$X^2 = 42.896$; DF=25; $p < .014$.

Respondents were divided on whether AI would reduce or increase police costs. **Black respondents were somewhat more optimistic that the introduction of AI would reduce costs, though divided. White and Indigenous respondents were similarly divided, but, Indigenous respondents were more likely to report a belief that the introduction of AI into policing would increase police budgets.**

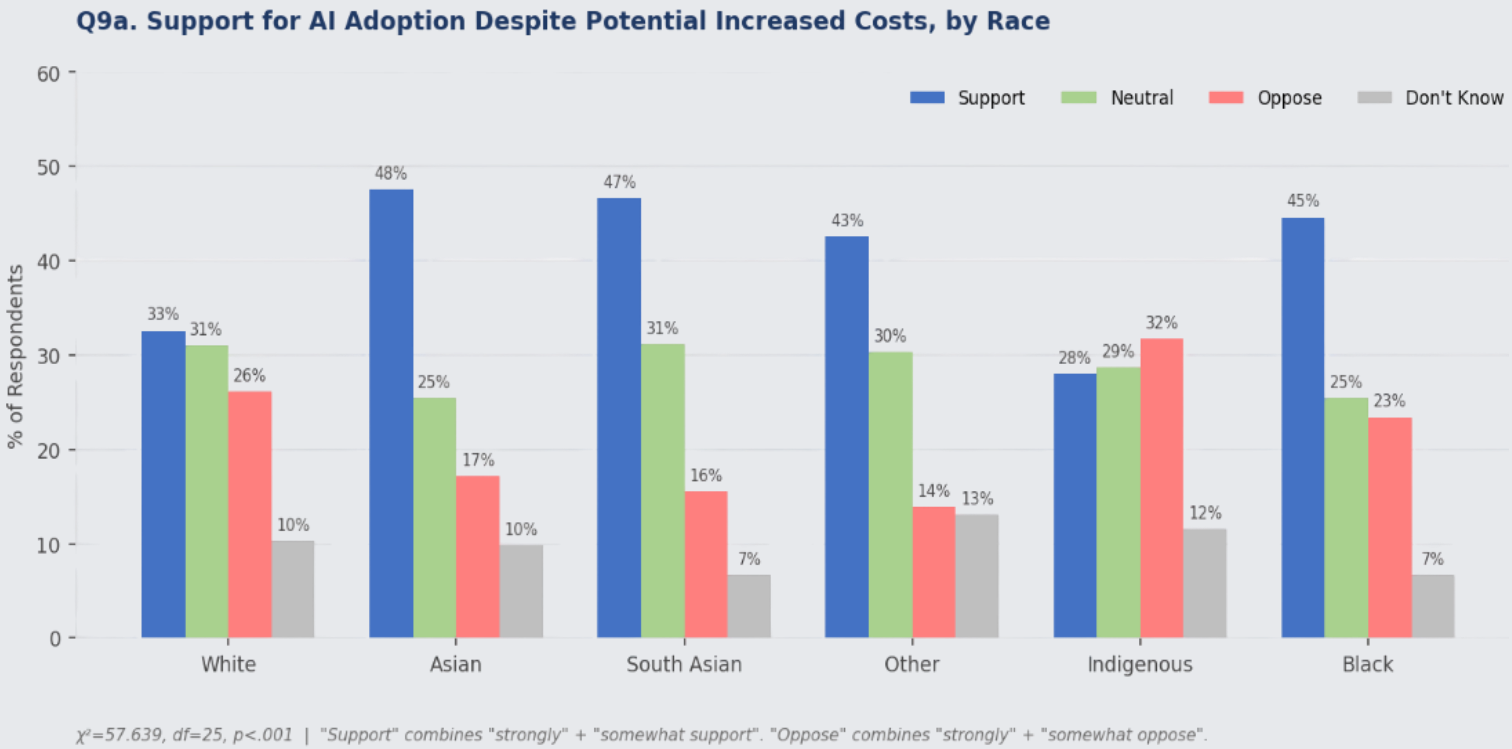


Question 9a: Some people say that in fact the adoption and maintenance of AI technologies in law enforcement will increase costs to the police by more than any cost savings from making tasks more efficient. Would you support or oppose the adoption and maintenance?

Percentage of Respondents' Support for Police Adoption and Maintenance of AI, Despite Concerns About Increased Costs, by Race

Level of Support	Black	Indigenous	Asian	South Asian	Other	White	Total
Strongly Support	14.5	9.1	7.4	12.2	13.1	9.5	10.2
Somewhat Support	30.1	18.9	40.2	34.4	29.5	23.1	25.4
Neither Support nor Oppose	25.4	28.7	25.4	31.1	30.3	31.0	29.9
Somewhat Oppose	13.0	15.2	12.3	11.1	4.1	13.7	13.0
Strongly Oppose	10.4	16.5	4.9	4.4	9.8	12.4	11.6
Don't Know	6.7	11.6	9.8	6.7	13.1	10.3	10.0
Sample Size (=n)	193	164	122	90	122	1,323	2,014

Even when informed that AI could increase police costs, **Asian, South Asian, and Black respondents maintained relatively higher support, compared to Indigenous and White respondents.**



Civil Liberties Concerns

Some of the most pressing concerns around the use of AI in policing involve civil liberties, including unfair targeting of racialized and marginalized communities (Q10), violations of human rights and privacy (Q11), and the misuse of personal data (Q12). Across all three dimensions, respondents expressed substantial concern, with Indigenous, Black, and South Asian participants reporting consistently elevated levels of worry. These findings are central to the broader debate about AI in policing. For communities with lived experience of discriminatory surveillance, questions around civil liberties are legitimate realities that shape how emerging technologies are perceived, trusted, and ultimately accepted or rejected.

QUESTION 10. Thinking about the potential use of AI technologies in law enforcement in Canada, how concerned are you… That the use of AI technologies in law enforcement may unfairly target people from certain ethnic, racialized, Indigenous, or sexual minority communities

Percentage of Respondents' Concerned That the Use of AI in Law Enforcement May Unfairly Target People from Certain Communities, by Race

Level of Concern	Black	Indigenous	Asian	South Asian	Other	White	Total
Not At All Concerned	10.4	5.5	2.5	3.3	11.5	8.1	7.7
Not Very Concerned	14.0	7.9	15.6	7.8	18.0	14.4	13.9
Somewhat Concerned	20.7	16.5	34.4	30.0	27.0	25.5	25.1
Concerned	23.3	25.6	22.1	31.1	18.9	21.8	22.5
Very Concerned	27.5	34.1	18.9	22.2	18.9	23.4	24.1
Don't Know	4.1	10.4	6.6	5.6	5.7	6.7	6.7
Sample Size (=n)	193	164	122	90	122	1,323	2,014

Indigenous respondents expressed the highest concern that AI would unfairly target marginalized communities, followed closely by South Asian and Black respondents. This reflects awareness that algorithmic systems often reproduce existing institutional biases. The findings indicate that fairness concerns are not abstract but may be grounded in lived experiences of discriminatory policing.

Question 11. Thinking about the potential use of AI technologies in law enforcement in Canada, how concerned are you… The use of AI technologies in law enforcement may involve surveillance that violates people's human rights and rights to privacy.

Percentage of Respondents Concerned That the Use of AI in Law Enforcement May Violate People's Human Rights, by Race

Level of Concern	Black	Indigenous	Asian	South Asian	Other	White	Total
Not At All Concerned	6.2	4.3	3.3	5.6	8.2	5.4	5.4
Not Very Concerned	11.4	11.0	16.4	12.2	11.5	12.5	12.5
Somewhat Concerned	24.9	17.7	30.3	23.3	22.1	24.8	24.3
Concerned	23.3	27.4	29.5	30.0	26.2	22.2	23.9
Very Concerned	27.5	31.1	17.2	23.3	22.1	28.5	27.3
Don't Know	6.7	8.5	3.3	5.6	9.8	6.6	6.7
Sample Size (=n)	193	164	122	90	122	1,323	2,014

High levels of concern were expressed across all racial groups regarding potential violations of privacy and human rights. Indigenous, South Asian, and Black respondents expressed slightly higher concern, reflecting heightened sensitivity to state surveillance. Note that racial differences on this question did not reach statistical significance (χ^2=29.213, p=.255), indicating that concern about human rights and privacy violations is broadly shared across all communities rather than concentrated among racialized groups.

This demonstrates that AI is widely understood as a civil liberties issue, not merely a policing tool.

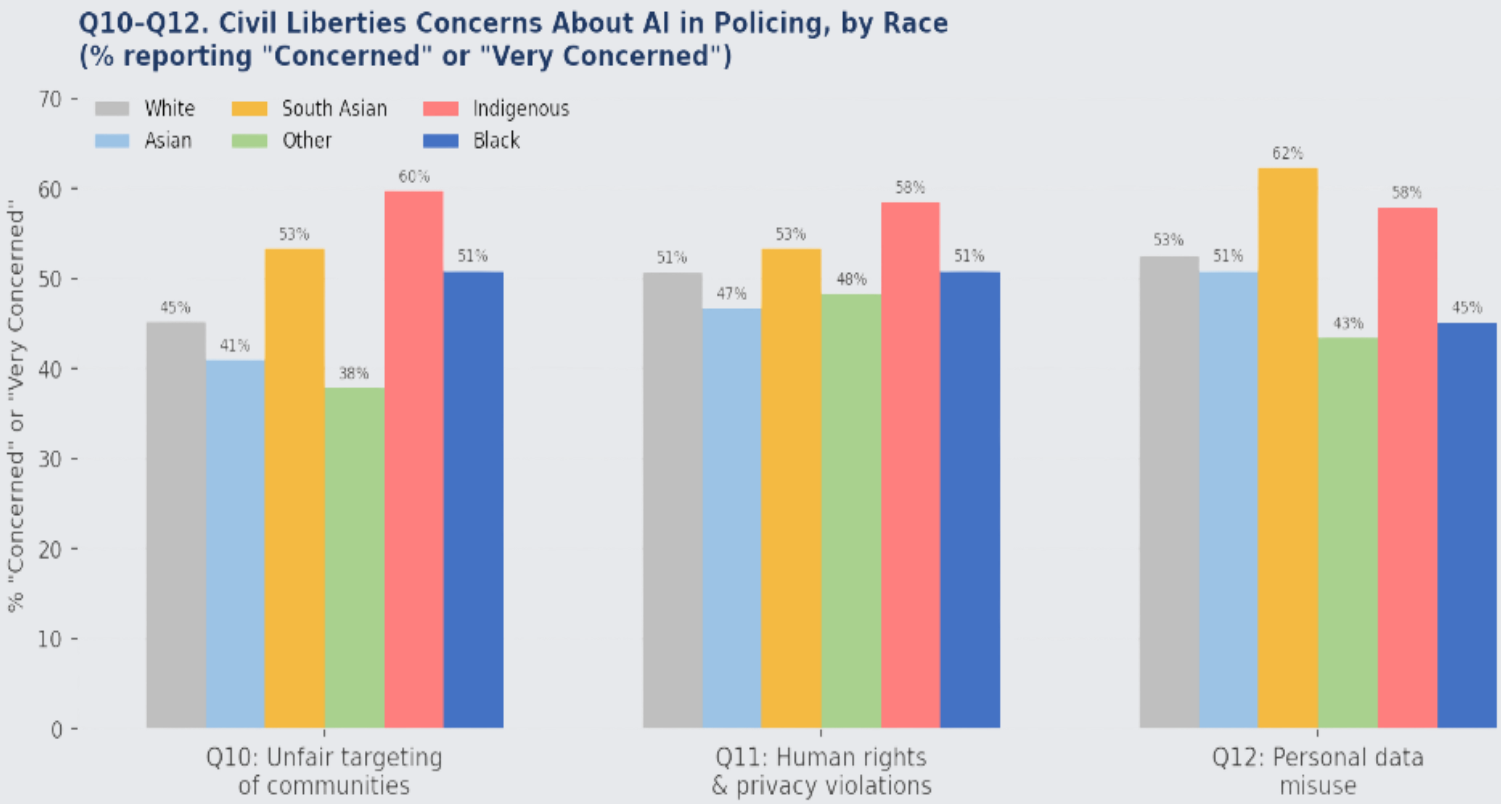
Q12. Thinking about the potential use of AI technologies in law enforcement in Canada, how concerned are you… Data may be used for purposes other than originally intended

Percentage of Respondents' Concerned That the Use of AI in Law Enforcement May Collect Personal Information and be Used for Purposes Other than Originally Intended, by Race

Level of Concern	Black	Indigenous	Asian	South Asian	Other	White	Total
Not At All Concerned	7.8	4.9	2.5	4.4	6.6	4.7	5.0
Not Very Concerned	13.5	7.3	14.8	6.7	12.3	11.9	11.6
Somewhat Concerned	28.5	19.5	27.9	21.1	30.3	24.8	25.1
Concerned	19.7	26.8	25.4	36.7	22.1	22.4	23.3
Very Concerned	25.4	31.1	25.4	25.6	21.3	30.2	28.7
Don't Know	5.2	10.4	4.1	5.6	7.4	6.0	6.3
Sample Size (=n)	193	164	122	90	122	1,323	2,014

$X^2 = 37.758$; DF=25; $p < .049$

Interestingly, South Asian and Indigenous respondents expressed the strongest concern that personal data collected by AI systems would be used for purposes other than originally intended. For Indigenous peoples, this may align with historical experiences of data extraction and repurposing within colonial governance structures. For South Asian communities, this may reflect experiences with immigration and national security screening, racial profiling in policing or border enforcement, or broader concerns about how personal information can circulate across government agencies in ways that are difficult to track or contest (Cainkar and Maira, 2005; Foster and Jacobs, 2019). It may also be shaped by transnational awareness of state surveillance practices in India and China (Ravel, 2025). These interpretations should be treated as tentative and explored more fully in future research. Note also that racial differences on this question reached only marginal statistical significance (χ^2=37.758, p=.049), and findings should be interpreted with appropriate caution.



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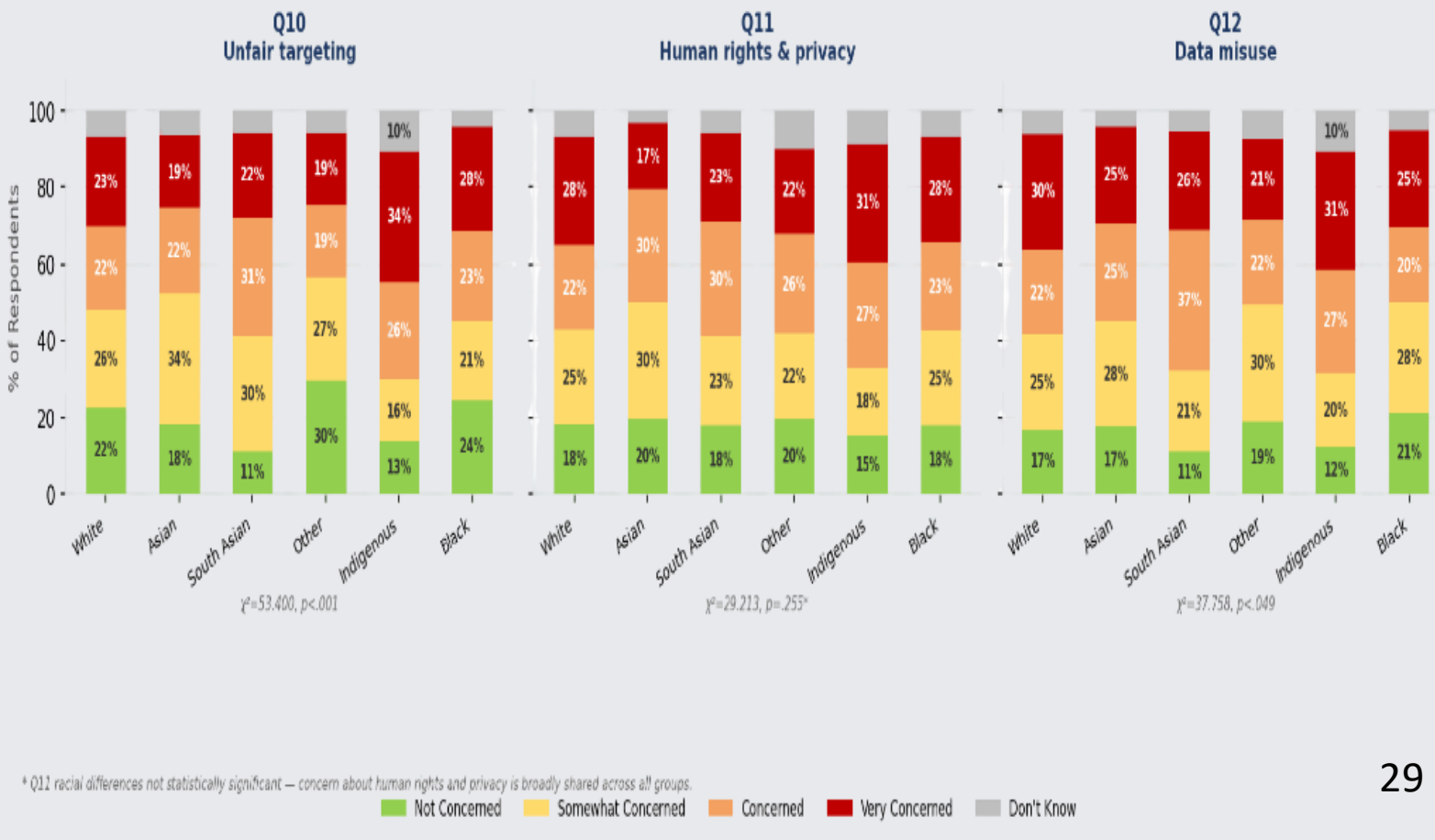


Regulation and Governance:

What the Canadian public wants to see when considering AI in policing

When exploring the pathway forward, when it comes to AI in policing, one theme emerges with particular clarity: **public acceptance of AI in policing is about trust, accountability, and meaningful governance**. Respondents were asked whether they believed police agencies in Canada were taking the necessary steps to be transparent and ethical in their use of AI (Q13), and what governance safeguards they considered essential, including police transparency, public communication about ethical standards, disclosure of rules and regulations, federal government oversight, and meaningful public input (Q14–Q18). The findings reveal both a significant trust deficit and a clear roadmap for addressing it. Across all racial groups, and particularly among White, Black, and Indigenous respondents, the demand for transparency and accountability is not a marginal concern, but a central condition under which AI in policing could ever be considered legitimate.

QUESTION 13. How confident are you that police agencies in Canada are taking the necessary steps to be transparent and ethical about their use of AI technologies. Are you…?

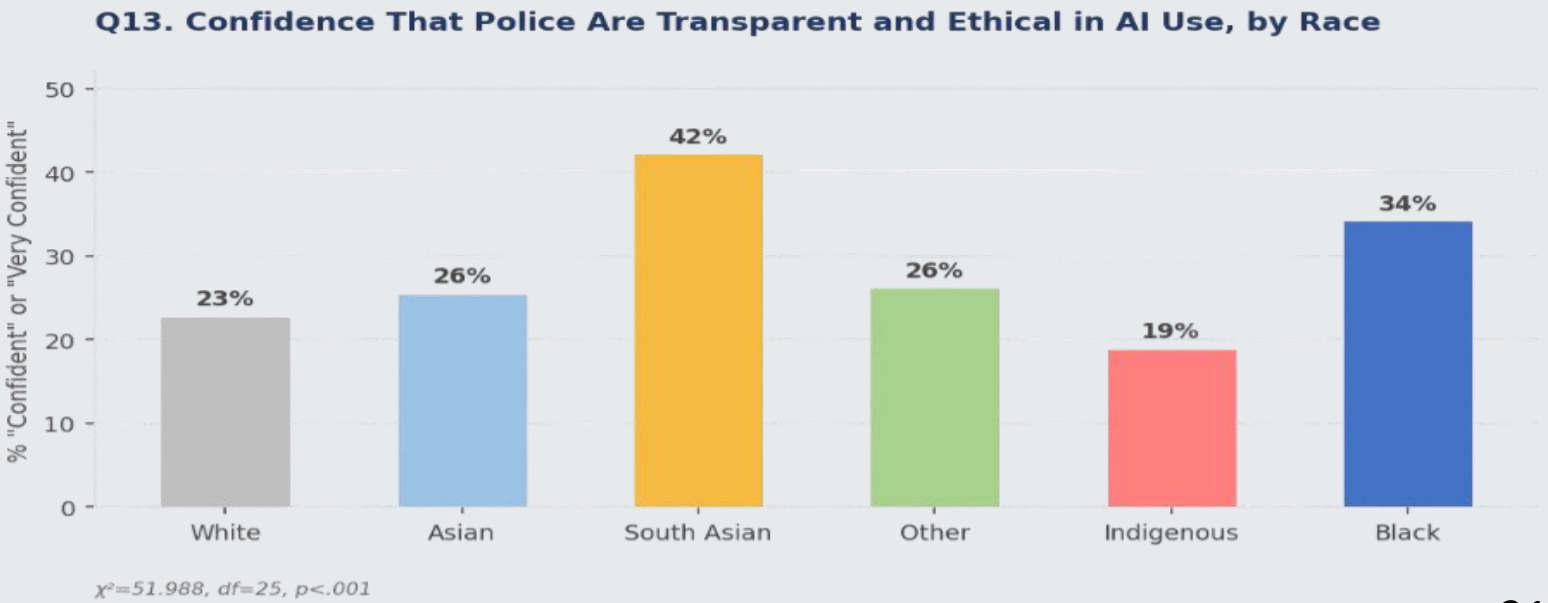
Percentage of Respondents' Confidence that Police Agencies in Canada are Taking the Necessary Steps to be Transparent and Ethical About Their Use of AI Technologies, by Race

Level of Confidence	Black	Indigenous	Asian	South Asian	Other	White	Total
Not at all Confident	9.3	13.4	5.7	5.6	8.2	11.3	10.5
Not Very Confident	16.1	19.5	18.0	7.8	13.9	19.7	18.4
Somewhat Confident	32.6	33.5	41.0	34.4	36.9	34.5	34.8
Confident	19.7	15.2	14.8	27.8	18.0	14.9	16.1
Very Confident	14.5	3.7	10.7	14.4	8.2	7.9	8.6
Don't Know	7.8	14.6	9.8	10.0	14.8	11.8	11.6
Sample Size (=n)	193	164	122	90	122	1,323	2,014

$X^2 = 51.988$; DF=25; $p < .001$.

While most respondents expressed some confidence that police agencies are acting transparently and ethically in their use of AI, almost 30% do not share that view. This is significant. **Indigenous respondents reported the lowest confidence at 19%, followed by White respondents. South Asian respondents, on the other hand reported the highest confidence at 42%.**

The reported level of skepticism carries important implications for police agencies. Trust in AI-assisted policing depends on genuine openness and ongoing communication with the communities being served. Without confidence in how AI is governed, even well-intentioned innovations risk being met with resistance, regardless of their effectiveness.



Bars show combined "Confident" and "Very Confident" responses only

What the Canadian public wants to see when considering governance safeguards

Somewhat counterintuitively, **White respondents were more likely than Black and Indigenous respondents to rate transparency, ethical safeguards, regulation, and public input as important or very important.** Rather than reflecting indifference among racialized communities, this pattern may speak to fundamentally different relationships with policing institutions. For White respondents, transparency and ethical conduct may be understood as baseline expectations, standards they have generally experienced as the norm. For Black and Indigenous respondents, these same principles represent conditions that have historically been absent, making their endorsement conditional on demonstrated rather than assumed institutional commitment.

Overall, governance safeguards were rated as important across all racial groups, with all differences remaining statistically significant (χ^2). This convergence suggests that communities are not opposed to AI in policing, but demand meaningful accountability as a precondition for acceptance. Trust in these systems emerges as the central variable shaping public legitimacy. **For police agencies, this represents both a challenge and an opportunity — the data indicate that confidence can be built, but only through sustained, demonstrable action. For Black and Indigenous communities in particular, this means that words and policies alone are insufficient; legitimacy must be earned through consistent, accountable, and equitable practice.**

Percentage of Respondents Who Believe Police Transparency and Ethical Use of AI Is Important, by Race.

Level of Importance	Black	Indigenous	Asian	South Asian	Other	White	Total
Not at all important	1.6	1.8	2.5	2.2	5.7	1.1	1.6
Not very important	2.1	4.9	4.1	2.2	9.0	3.0	3.5
Somewhat important	20.2	14.6	20.5	24.4	22.1	12.6	15.1
Important	26.9	25.0	36.9	20.0	20.5	25.1	25.5
Very Important	45.1	46.3	34.4	44.4	36.1	52.8	49.1
Don't Know	4.1	7.3	1.6	6.7	6.6	5.4	5.3
Sample Size (=n)	193	164	122	90	122	1,323	2,014

Percentage of Respondents Who Believe It Is Important for Police to Inform the Public About Measures Ensuring Ethical Use of AI, by Race

Level of Importance	Black	Indigenous	Asian	South Asian	Other	White	Total
Not at all important	3.1	1.8	0.8	3.3	4.1	1.0	1.5
Not very important	2.1	5.5	1.6	1.1	7.4	2.9	3.1
Somewhat important	20.2	15.9	25.4	20.0	19.7	15.6	17.1
Important	25.9	28.0	36.1	33.3	31.1	27.4	28.3
Very Important	44.0	40.2	34.4	36.7	32.8	47.5	44.4
Don't Know	4.7	8.5	1.6	5.6	4.9	5.7	5.5

Percentage of Respondents Who Believe It Is Important for the Government of Canada to Establish Clear Rules and Regulations that Address the Use of AI in Policing, by Race

Level of Importance	Black	Indigenous	Asian	South Asian	Other	White	Total
Not at all important	2.1	3.0	2.5	1.1	4.9	1.0	1.6
Not very important	3.1	4.9	2.5	3.3	6.6	2.4	3.0
Somewhat important	20.2	16.5	26.2	26.7	21.3	15.3	17.4
Important	27.5	28.7	36.1	31.1	28.7	28.3	28.9
Very Important	42.5	39.0	31.1	31.1	32.0	46.6	43.1
Don't Know	4.7	7.9	1.6	6.7	6.6	6.3	6.1
Sample Size (=n)	193	164	122	90	122	1,323	2,014

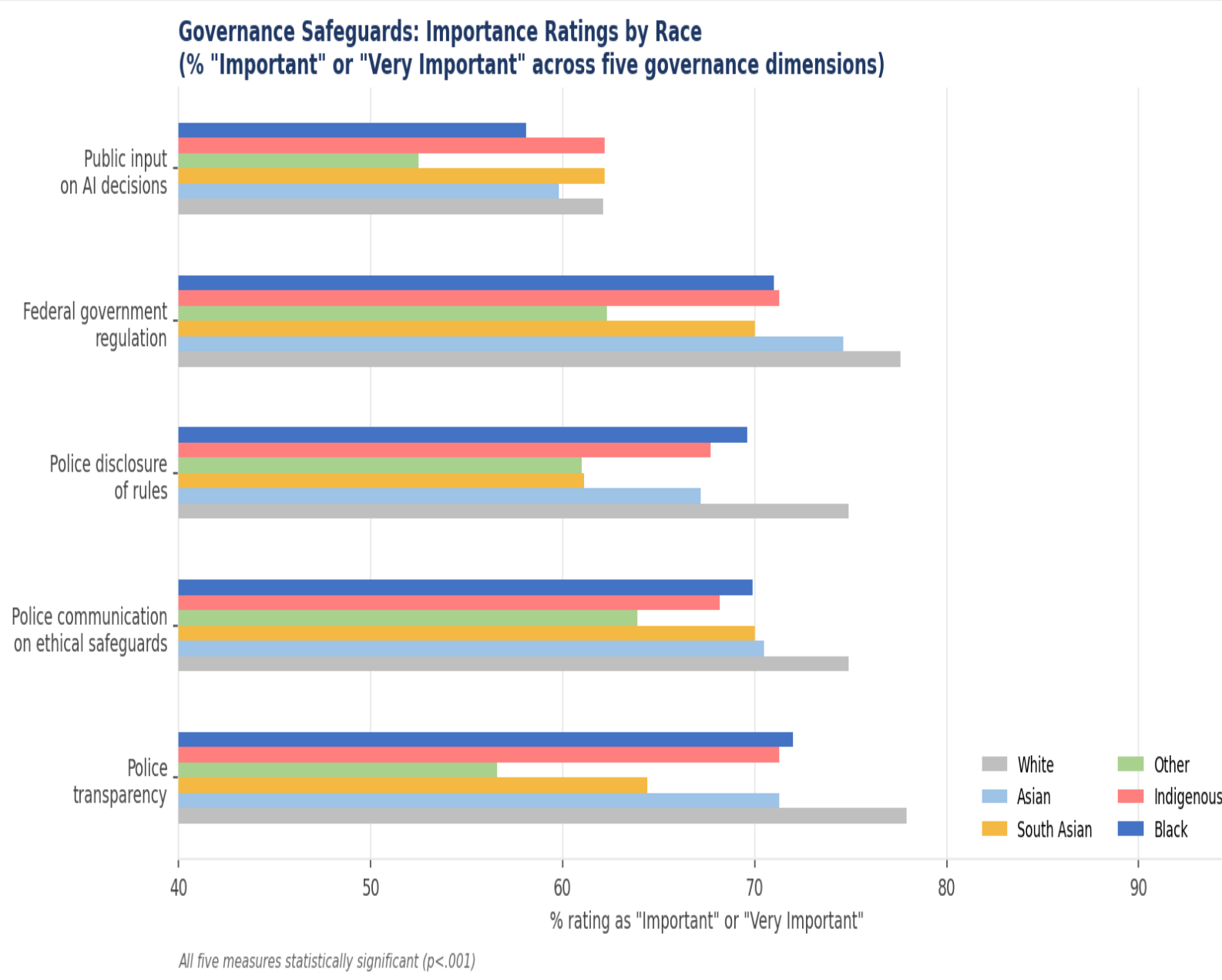
Percentage of Respondents Who Believe It Is Important for the Government of Canada to Establish Clear Rules and Regulations that Address the Use of AI in Policing, by Race

Level of Importance	Black	Indigenous	Asian	South Asian	Other	White	Total
Not at all important	2.1	1.8	1.6	1.1	2.5	0.9	1.2
Not very important	3.1	3.7	2.5	7.8	6.6	2.6	3.2
Somewhat important	19.2	12.8	20.5	16.7	19.7	13.2	14.7
Important	23.8	25.6	36.9	30.0	32.0	24.1	25.7
Very Important	47.2	45.7	37.7	40.0	30.3	53.5	49.3
Don't Know	4.7	10.4	0.8	4.4	9.0	5.7	5.8

Percentage of Respondents Who Believe Public Input on Police AI Use Is Important, by Race.

Level of Importance	Black	Indigenous	Asian	South Asian	Other	White	Total
Not at all important	4.1	3.0	0.8	1.1	6.6	2.6	2.8
Not very important	6.7	6.1	4.9	3.3	9.8	7.3	7.0
Somewhat important	25.9	18.9	30.3	28.9	23.0	20.4	21.9
Important	30.1	26.8	33.6	32.2	27.9	28.0	28.6
Very Important	28.0	35.4	26.2	30.0	24.6	34.1	32.4
Don't Know	5.2	9.8	4.1	4.4	8.2	7.6	7.2
Sample Size (=n)	193	164	122	90	122	1,323	2,014

KEY FINDING	Near-universal demand for governance across all racial groups Over 72% of all respondents rated federal regulation, to assist in the provincial legislation of AI in policing, as important or very important. This level of consensus across a nationally diverse sample is striking and should anchor the report's policy recommendations.


Governance Safeguards: Importance Ratings by Race
(% "Important" or "Very Important" across five governance dimensions)
Public input on AI decisions
Federal government regulation
Police disclosure of rules
Police communication on ethical safeguards
Police transparency
White
Other
Asian
Indigenous
South Asian
Black
40
50
60
70
80
90
% rating as "Important" or "Very Important"
All five measures statistically significant (p<.001)

Overall Findings

Overall, the 13 survey questions paint a consistent picture: awareness of AI in policing is uneven, conditional support is common across all groups, and concern grows sharply as AI applications move from administrative efficiency to individual risk prediction. The data from the full sample (N = 2,014) reveal several overarching patterns, though these general trends mask meaningful and sometimes surprising differences across racial groups that are central to understanding public perceptions of AI in Canadian policing.

Awareness Awareness of AI in policing remains limited across the general population. Over 42% of total respondents reported knowing "nothing at all" about the use of AI in law enforcement, and a further 26% reported "very little" awareness meaning nearly seven in ten Canadians surveyed entered this conversation with minimal familiarity. This context underscores both the early stage of public discourse and the critical importance of proactive, accessible communication from police agencies and governments. Awareness gaps were not uniform across groups, however, with racialized communities, particularly Indigenous respondents, reporting disproportionately lower familiarity, suggesting that public engagement efforts have yet to reach the communities most directly affected by policing practices.

Support Support for AI in policing across the full sample is cautious rather than enthusiastic. Approximately 47% of all respondents expressed some level of support, while 28% took a neutral position and roughly 19% expressed opposition. Yet this general picture obscures a striking divergence across racial groups. Indigenous respondents displayed the highest ambivalence, with 37% selecting neither support nor oppose, a pattern consistent with deep institutional distrust and were the most likely group to actively oppose AI use in policing. Black and South Asian respondents, by contrast, report the highest levels of support among all groups, surpassing even White respondents. This divergence resists simple explanation and challenges assumptions that racialized communities hold uniformly oppositional views toward AI in policing. Despite shared histories of discriminatory policing, Black and Indigenous communities do not hold uniform views, and their distinct relationships with state institutions produce meaningfully different orientations toward these technologies.

Concern about specific applications Concern about specific AI applications increases as the technology moves closer to decisions about individual people. Automation of routine tasks generated the lowest levels of concern overall (49%), while concern climbed for surveillance of public spaces (53%) and peaked for individual criminal risk prediction, where over 67% of all respondents expressed some degree of concern, the highest of any application tested. This graduated pattern suggests that the public draws a meaningful moral distinction between AI as an administrative tool and AI as a mechanism for targeting individuals. These concerns were not evenly distributed across groups.

Black and South Asian respondents expressed particular concern about AI applications used for spatial surveillance and crime prediction, reflecting awareness that algorithmic systems can reproduce and amplify racial bias without explicitly referencing race. Indigenous respondents similarly expressed strong concern across surveillance-based and predictive applications, consistent with experiences of over-policing and territorial surveillance rooted in colonial governance.

Perceived impact on public safety Respondents were moderately optimistic that AI would improve public safety, with approximately 55% believing it probably or definitely would. However, nearly 30% were skeptical and 16% reported not knowing. Here again, racial group differences are pronounced. Indigenous respondents were the least likely to believe AI would improve public safety which is consistent with broader patterns of institutional distrust documented throughout this report. Black and South Asian respondents expressed optimism, while Asian respondents reported the highest levels of confidence across all groups. These differences suggest that public safety is not a uniformly understood concept, and that its relationship to AI-assisted policing is shaped by distinct community histories and experiences that warrant deeper analysis.

Rights, fairness, and data governance Concerns about rights, fairness, and data governance were broadly shared across the full sample. Approximately 72% of all respondents expressed concern that AI may unfairly target marginalized communities, a similar proportion expressed concern about human rights and privacy violations, and nearly 77% indicated concern about data misuse. These are concerning views that represent mainstream Canadian public opinion. Within this broadly shared concern, however, Indigenous respondents consistently expressed greater concern than Black, White, Asian, and other racialized respondents about surveillance, racial bias, predictive policing, and the misuse of personal data. Indigenous respondents reported the lowest confidence that police are acting transparently and ethically in their use of AI, with only 19% expressing confidence, compared to a high of 42% among South Asian respondents. Trust in AI-assisted policing, these findings suggest, depends not only on technical performance but on genuine openness and ongoing communication with the communities being served.

Governance safeguards Finally, there is near-universal agreement across all racial groups on the importance of governance safeguards. Over 74% of all respondents rated police transparency as important or very important, over 73% rated public communication about ethical standards as important or very important, and over 72% believed federal government regulation of police AI was important or very important. These levels of consensus are significant in a nationally diverse sample and signal that governance is not a peripheral demand but a foundational precondition for public acceptance and carries particular urgency for Indigenous, Black, and South Asian communities.

Discussion

Governance as the central determinant of acceptance. Perhaps the most consequential finding across the entire dataset is the near-unanimous demand for governance safeguards, not merely among racialized communities, but across all groups surveyed. Over 70% of respondents across racial groups rated transparency, ethical communication, and federal regulation as important or very important. This suggests that improving algorithms or demonstrating technical accuracy will not, by itself, build public trust. Legitimacy must be earned through structural accountability: transparent disclosure, independent oversight, enforceable regulation, and meaningful community participation. This demand is particularly relevant to Indigenous respondents, who reported the lowest confidence in police transparency and ethical governance, with only 19% expressing confidence compared to 42% among South Asian respondents. Police agencies and governments that invest only in technological performance while neglecting strong governance structures risk deepening public skepticism, even among those, such as Black and South Asian respondents, who express relatively higher support for AI adoption.

The complexity of racialized support. One of the most significant and unexpected findings of this study is that racialized communities do not hold uniform views toward AI in policing. Black and South Asian respondents reported the highest levels of support among all groups, surpassing even White respondents, while Indigenous respondents were the most likely to oppose its use. This divergence challenges monolithic framings of racialized resistance to surveillance technologies and points to the importance of examining how distinct colonial and structural histories shape contemporary attitudes. For Black respondents, measured optimism about AI may reflect a calculated hope that technology could introduce greater consistency and accountability into policing interactions historically marked by discretionary bias. For South Asian and Asian respondents, higher confidence in AI's public safety benefits may reflect different historical relationships with Canadian policing institutions. These patterns resist easy generalization and underscore the necessity of disaggregated, community-specific analysis in both research and policy development.

The moral boundary around individual risk prediction. The data reveal a clear moral threshold in public acceptance of AI: the prediction of individual criminal risk stands apart from all other applications tested, with over 67% of all respondents expressing concern which is the highest of any application. Concern was notably higher among Black, Indigenous, and South Asian respondents, for whom surveillance-based and predictive applications carry the most immediate personal and community relevance. This widespread opposition suggests that the issue transcends racialized policing experiences and touches on foundational principles of justice, specifically the presumption of innocence and the rejection of pre-emptive judgment based on social characteristics or historical data.

Policymakers should treat this finding as a clear signal: regardless of technical claims about predictive accuracy, AI systems that assign future criminality to individuals lack the social acceptance required for deployment in Canada.

Overall, these findings reveal not only what Canadians think about AI in policing, but whose concerns have been historically overlooked and why that matters for future governance. The divergence across racial groups, particularly the unexpected patterns of support among Black and South Asian respondents, alongside deep skepticism among Indigenous respondents suggests that the path toward legitimate AI-assisted policing is neither uniform nor straightforward. It requires engagement with the specific histories, relationships, and expectations of each community, rather than governance frameworks designed for an undifferentiated public.

Policy Recommendations

The findings of this study demonstrate an urgent need for meaningful governance of artificial intelligence in policing. Effective policy must recognize that regulating technology alone is insufficient. AI governance must also confront historical inequality, institutional mistrust, and the need for genuine community engagement in decisions about policing technologies.

- AI systems used in policing should be subject to mandatory racial and Indigenous impact assessments prior to deployment. These assessments must be conducted by independent bodies with the authority to halt implementation where risks of discrimination or harm are identified, and their results should be made publicly available.

- Police agencies must disclose the existence, purpose, training data sources, and operational logic of all AI systems in use. Algorithmic secrecy undermines accountability and prevents meaningful public evaluation of potential risks. Transparency is a precondition for trust, not an afterthought.

- Independent oversight bodies should be empowered to audit, suspend, or prohibit AI systems. Oversight mechanisms without enforcement authority cannot adequately protect communities from harm.

- Meaningful public and community engagement must be central to AI governance. Communities must have opportunities not only to share their experiences and concerns, but to influence decisions about whether and how AI technologies are deployed in their neighborhoods. Consultation without decision-making power produces symbolic participation rather than genuine accountability.

- **AI systems designed to predict individual criminal risk should be prohibited.** Survey results indicate that such systems generate the highest levels of concern across all racial groups and carry significant risks of discriminatory profiling that cannot be mitigated through technical adjustment alone.

- Governance frameworks must be responsive to the full range of community perspectives, including those of Black and South Asian communities who expressed measured support for AI in policing. This support is not unconditional. Support is accompanied by serious concerns about surveillance and racial bias, therefore governance structures should engage these communities as active stakeholders in shaping how AI is used, not only as subjects of its potential harms.

- Given that nearly seven in ten survey respondents reported minimal awareness of AI use in policing, police agencies and governments have a responsibility to invest in accessible, proactive public education. Informed public opinion is a prerequisite for meaningful participation in AI governance decisions.

- Police agencies should publish annual public reports detailing AI system performance, bias testing outcomes, community complaints, and corrective actions taken. Transparency must be continuous and proactive rather than reactive.

- All officers and police practitioners who use AI systems must receive mandatory training in ethics, anti-racism, and data justice. Technical competence alone is insufficient without a substantive understanding of the social and historical implications of these tools.

- Legal accountability frameworks must be strengthened so that individuals and communities can seek civil remedies for harm caused by AI-driven policing decisions. Without meaningful legal consequences, ethical commitments remain largely symbolic

These recommendations reflect a central conclusion of this study: AI in policing cannot be governed solely as a technical issue. It must be addressed as a matter of racial justice, human rights, and legitimacy. AI technologies do not operate in a social vacuum -- they are embedded within institutions shaped by historical power relations. For Black and Indigenous communities in particular, policing has long been intertwined with racial and colonial governance. The introduction of AI does not erase this legacy; without fundamentally enforced governance frameworks, it risks automating and entrenching it.

Limitations

The findings reported here capture public perceptions at an early stage in the adoption of AI technologies within Canadian policing. Because these systems remain in their infancy, public attitudes may evolve as AI tools become more visible and more routinely used in policing practices. Nevertheless, documenting perceptions at this formative moment is both necessary and valuable, as early public trust, concern, and awareness can shape governance choices and institutional accountability before practices become entrenched.

This study does not yet incorporate multivariate analysis including additional demographic variables such as gender, age, or geographic location, as well as contextual factors such as previous police contact, perceptions of safety and current policing practices. Forthcoming analysis will expand the analytical framework to include these dimensions, along with qualitative data that capture lived experiences with the police and emerging AI systems. Such work will build on the present study's focus by situating race within a more comprehensive understanding of how different communities experience AI-driven policing.

Conclusion

The survey data reveal that public perceptions of artificial intelligence in law enforcement are deeply shaped by racial history, colonial experience, and institutional trust. For Black and Indigenous communities in Canada, AI is not viewed as a neutral or purely technical innovation, but as a potential extension of long-standing systems of surveillance, control, and inequality. Yet the findings also reveal a more complex picture than simple opposition. Black and South Asian respondents expressed unexpectedly high levels of support for AI in policing, surpassing even White respondents in some measures, while Indigenous respondents reported the deepest skepticism and the lowest confidence in police transparency and ethical governance. These divergent patterns demand that both researchers and policymakers move beyond monolithic framings of racialized communities.

The results challenge dominant narratives that frame AI as an objective solution to policing inefficiencies. Instead, they reveal that technological legitimacy is inseparable from social legitimacy. Where trust in policing institutions is already fragile, as it is most acutely among Indigenous communities, the introduction of opaque and powerful AI systems risks deepening alienation rather than fostering confidence.

At the same time, the measured optimism expressed by Black and South Asian respondents should not be misread as unconditional endorsement. It is accompanied by serious and consistent concern about surveillance, racial bias, predictive policing, and data misuse, concerns that signal conditional acceptance rather than passive approval. Thus, institutional credibility is contingent on accountable, transparent, and equitable engagement with the communities most affected.

Importantly, the findings demonstrate that no racialized community is opposed to innovation itself. Across groups, perspectives articulate a conditional acceptance grounded in justice. AI is seen as potentially acceptable only when governed through democratic oversight, community engagement, enforceable accountability. The near-universal demand for governance safeguards, spanning all racial groups and cutting across varying levels of support, is perhaps the study's most consequential finding. It signals that the question Canadians are asking is not whether AI should exist in policing, but under what conditions, with what constraints, and with whose participation.

The implications of these findings extend beyond policing technology. They speak to broader questions about how emerging technologies are governed in societies marked by deep and persistent inequality. AI systems inherit the values, biases, and power relations of the institutions that deploy them. The finding that concern peaks sharply around individual criminal risk prediction across all groups reflects a widely shared intuition that some uses of AI cross a fundamental democratic threshold, regardless of their technical sophistication. Without intentional and enforceable intervention, AI risks reproducing and legitimizing the structural injustices it is often claimed to correct.

Ultimately, this study suggests that the future of AI in law enforcement cannot be decided solely by technical experts, police agencies, or private vendors. It must be shaped by the communities most affected by policing and those communities, and as this study demonstrates -- are neither uniform in their fears nor uniform in their hopes. Centring Black, Indigenous, and other racialized voices is not only a matter of inclusion, but a requirement for ethical legitimacy. Only through transparency, accountability, and community collaborations, can AI move from being a technology of surveillance to one that meaningfully serves justice.

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