

The background image shows a scene with police officers and a crowd of people. Two police officers in the foreground have their backs to the camera; their dark uniforms feature a white 'POLICE' patch on the back. They are surrounded by a group of people, some wearing high-visibility yellow vests. The scene is outdoors with trees and a street visible in the background. A semi-transparent blue overlay covers the entire image.

# Priorities for Winnipeg's New Police Chief

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# The Story

The City of Winnipeg is searching for a new police chief at a time of heightened concern among Winnipeggers about crime rates, theft and public safety as well as lingering tension over how police treat Black, Indigenous and other Racialized residents.

This fall, after a national search, the City is expected to name a replacement for Winnipeg Police Chief Danny Smyth, who is retiring.

The search for a new chief has sparked some discussion about what Winnipeggers want the next chief to work on. The results of our survey suggest that Winnipeggers most want the next police chief to get serious about improving downtown safety and reducing the kind of petty and property crime that continues to frustrate residents and make headlines.



Photo credit: CBC

# Key Findings

In addition to preventing and investigating major crimes, Winnipeggers want the next police chief to prioritize downtown safety and combat petty offences.

More than one-quarter of Winnipeggers say improving downtown safety should be the top task of the new police chief. Similarly, about seven in ten Winnipeggers rank downtown safety in their top three major priorities for the new chief. There are almost no differences among demographic subgroups, meaning Winnipeggers across the board say downtown safety should top the next chief's to-do list.

Almost as important for Winnipeggers, though, is the need to combat property and petty crime. Roughly 60 per cent say this a Top-3 priority for Chief Smyth's successor. Racialized Winnipeggers and older Winnipeggers tend to place a higher priority on this than other Winnipeggers.

Beyond those two key priorities, a modest number of Winnipeggers say the new chief should work to improve relations with BIPOC residents as well as strengthen relationships with community and social service groups. About one in five rank these two tasks as the top priority for the next chief, with younger adults are more likely to prioritize these.

Lower on the list is improving police culture and morale. Only 11 per cent of Winnipeggers rank this as a top priority.

# Methodology

Probe Research surveyed 480 adults residing in Winnipeg from August 1<sup>st</sup> to 9<sup>th</sup>, 2024.

Those who responded to the online survey are members of Probe Research's proprietary panel, as well as members of another national online panel.

Because an online panel is a non-probability sample, no margin of error can be ascribed. For the purposes of comparison, a probabilistic sample of N=480 Winnipeg adults would have a margin of error of  $\pm 4.47$  percentage points, 19 times out 20. The margin of error would be higher within each of the survey's population sub-groups.

Minor statistical weighting has been applied to this sample to ensure that age, gender and regional characteristics properly reflect known attributes of the city's population. As well, the data has been weighted to reflect voting patterns in the last provincial election. All data analysis was performed using SPSS statistical analysis software.

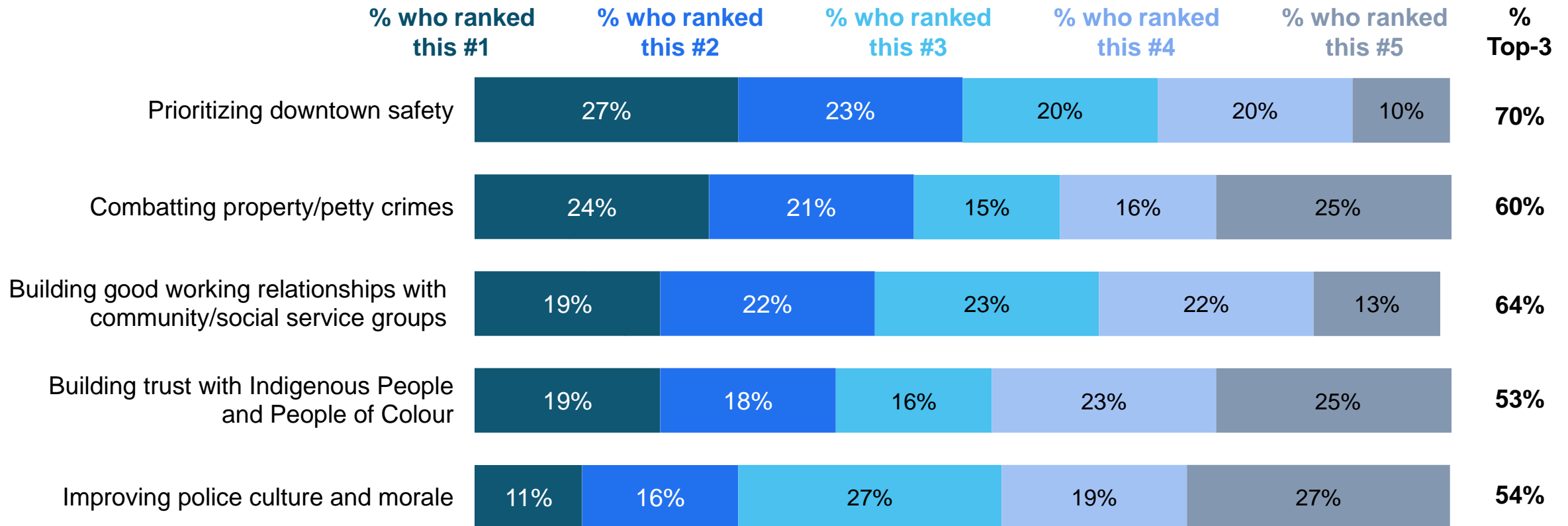
The survey questions were designed by Probe Research in close consultation with CBC Manitoba.

Results may not add up to exactly 100% due to rounding. Numbers smaller than 2% are not shown in the graphs.

# Priorities for the Next Winnipeg Police Chief

## Downtown safety and combatting petty crime are Winnipeggers' top priorities

Q. As you may know, the City of Winnipeg is hiring a new police chief following the retirement of Chief Danny Smyth. In addition to preventing and investigating major crimes and enforcing laws, you may have additional priorities for the new police chief. Please rank the following items in order of priority for the new police chief. (Base: Winnipeg adults, N=480)

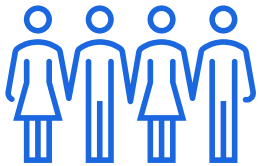


# Priorities for the Next Winnipeg Police Chief: Sub-Groups



## Prioritizing downtown safety

There are no big differences in views among demographic subgroups. For example, women are just as likely as men to rank downtown safety as the next chief's top priority, as are inner city residents versus those who live in the outer suburbs.



## Building trust with Indigenous People and People of Colour

This is a slightly higher priority for younger adults (those 18-34) and inner-city residents.

Interestingly, Winnipeggers who identify as Black, Indigenous or as a Person of Colour (BIPOC) are no more likely than average to rank this as a priority for the new chief (18% rank this as a top priority vs. 19% among non-BIPOC Winnipeggers).



**Combatting petty and property crime** is a bigger priority for:

- Older adults, those aged 55+, who are twice as likely as younger adults to rank this as the top priority for the new chief (29% vs. 15% among those 18-34).
- Winnipeggers who identify as BIPOC (31% rank this as a top priority).

## Other Priorities for the New Chief

Winnipeggers were also asked what other priorities they might have for Winnipeg's next chief. Most – 73% – said they had no other priorities beyond the list provided. But:

- Five per cent mentioned decreasing the police budget and limiting wage increases.
- Another 5% said the next chief should improve relations with the public and be more transparent.
- The same proportion want the next chief to get tougher on violent crime, repeat offenders and bail conditions that are too lenient.
- And 4% want the next chief to make sure crisis workers and mental health experts are responding to more calls instead of police.