

RELATIONS BETWEEN MONTREAL WOMEN AND THE POLICE, PRIVATE SECURITY AND STM POLICE FORCES

A project by



WHAT AND WHY?

A better understanding of the experiences and discrimination experienced by Montreal women in relation to the police and private security forces, using an intersectional feminist approach.



MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

1 project manager (TGFM);
1 research agent (TGFM);
3 member organizations: Passages, Institut F and Femmes du monde à Côte-des-Neiges;
3 allied groups: Ligue des droits et libertés, RAPSIM and Hoodstock.

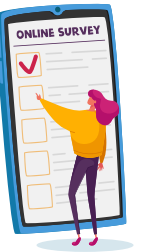


DATA COLLECTION METHODOLOGY

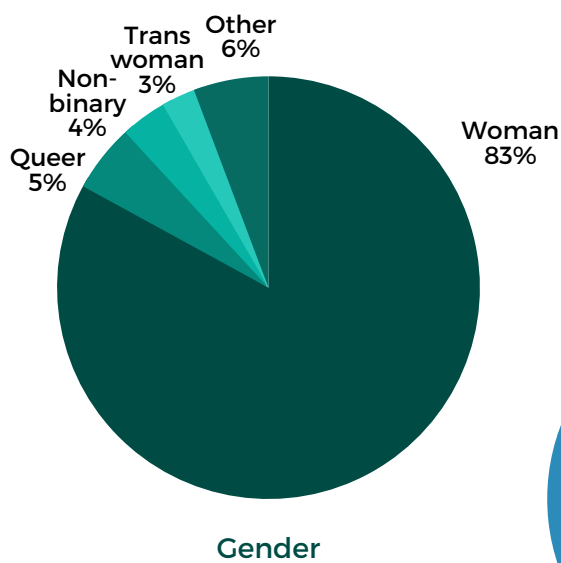
- Bibliography
- Online survey (quantitative data)
- Focus groups (qualitative data)

ONLINE SURVEY

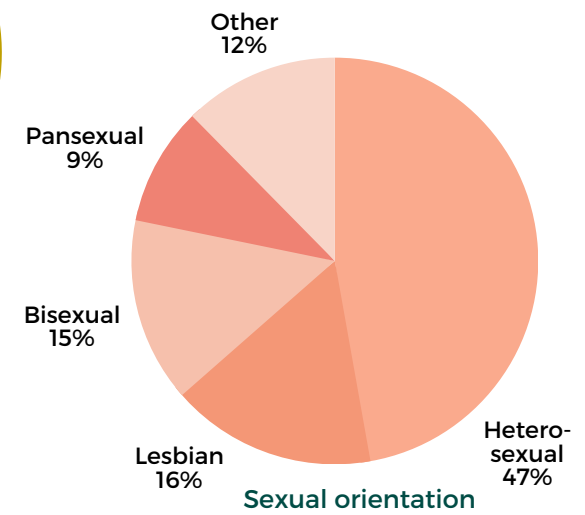
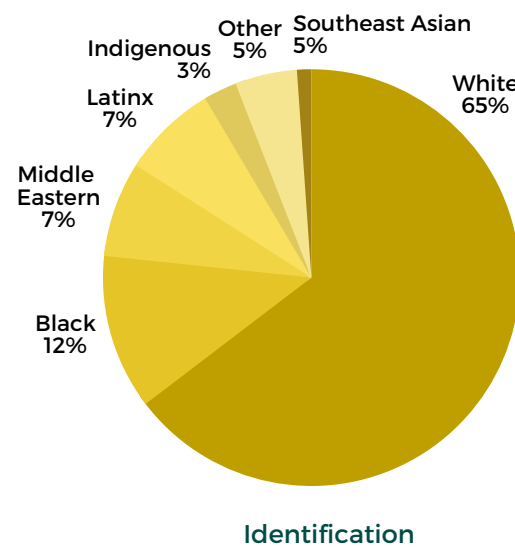
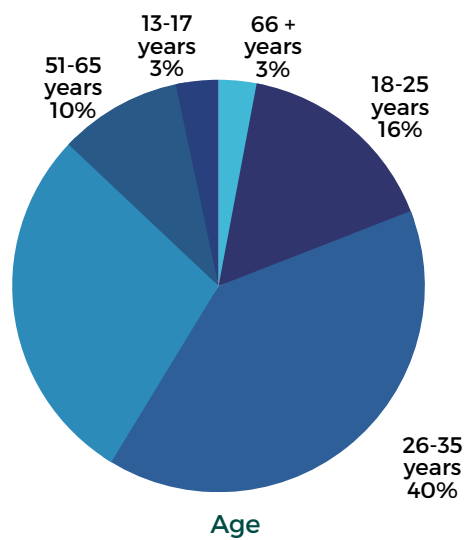
September to December 2022
540 answers!



SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE

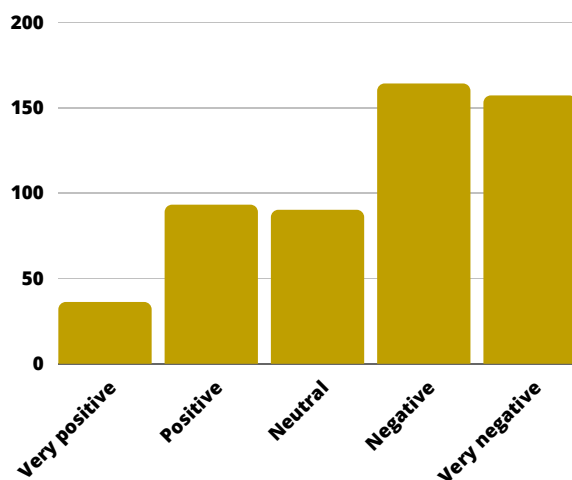


*In the survey, we have favoured the term "woman" instead of "cis woman" to make the vocabulary used more accessible



PERCEPTION OF POLICE FORCES

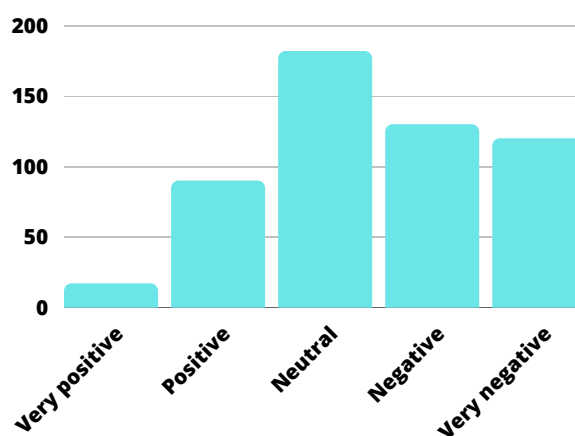
Question: Overall, when you think of Montreal's police forces, are your feelings usually.



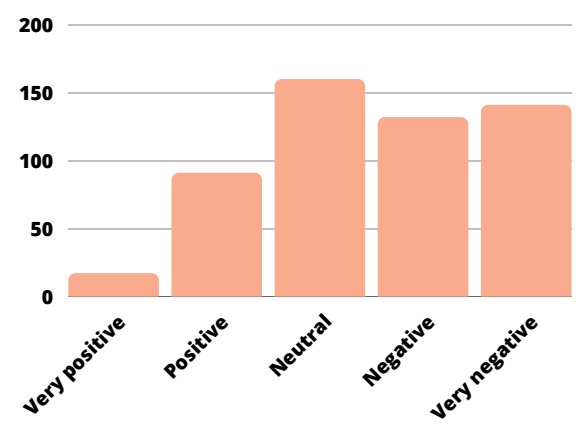
"The police rarely come to solve the problem; they contribute to the marginalization of people already criminalized and they don't listen to us. They are not there to protect us."

PERCEPTION OF THE SECURITY FORCES AND THE STM

Feelings towards private security guards are rather "neutral". A similar trend was observed for STM constables. The greatest number of responses indicated "neutral", followed by "negative" and "very negative".



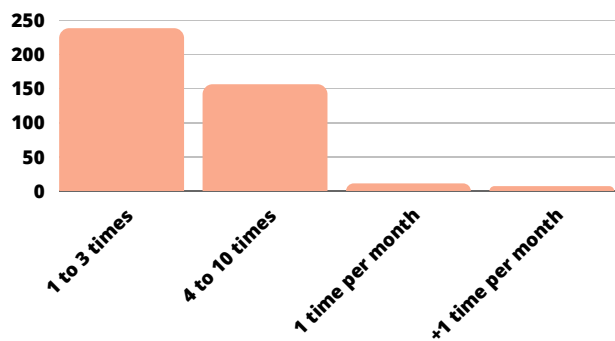
"In shops, I was followed regularly through the aisles, in the Plateau district. I was young (25 and under). I am white."



"They give the impression of being intimidators rather than protectors. Every time that they are present in the metro, I have the impression that they have an arrogant, unpleasant and power trip attitude."

INTERACTIONS WITH THE POLICE

412 out of 540 people had interactions with the Montreal police department



"2021, Saint-Laurent. I had a fight with my then boyfriend (ex). He threatened to kill me, and I shouted so loud that the neighbours called the police... the officers arrived two days later, I could have been dead if I hadn't managed to escape."

"I was stopped in the car (2018) because the car was in my (female) name and according to them, I didn't look like a woman. This happened to at least two other people I know who are sexually or gender diverse (a cisgender woman who does not respond to the codes of femininity and a non-binary person)."

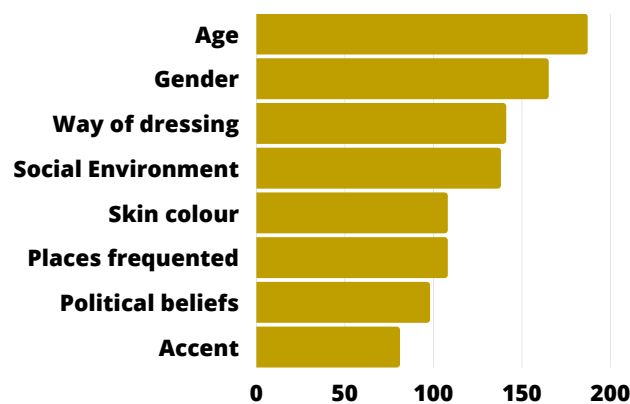
POLITICAL PROFILING

Out of 413 people who had interactions with police, 98 (i.e., 1/4) felt that their beliefs had an influence. About thirty testimonies of the survey describe situations of political profiling or repression.



Different types of profiling in Quebec: "The most vocal demonstrators, adopting confrontational attitudes, were verbally abused as to their gender identity, in addition to being physically assaulted, while women with peaceful behaviour were treated with paternalism." (Pérusse-Roy and Mulone, 2020)

SOME OF THE FACTORS THAT HAVE INFLUENCED INTERACTIONS WITH POLICE FORCES



MORE THAN 200 PEOPLE NEEDED TO CALL THE SPVM BUT DID NOT DO SO

Multiple reasons for not calling the police:

- Avoiding additional violence;
- Useless police;
- No trust;
- Political or ideological;
- Not to be believed, listened to;
- Lengthy procedures.

"An agent was extremely dehumanizing and verbally violent with me and humiliated me this summer when I was in psychological distress. This resulted in more trauma. I now dread interacting with them because I was the one who contacted them in the first place."

FOCUS GROUPS

- 4 focus groups
- 32 people met

YOUNG WOMEN IN SITUATION OF HOMELESSNESS

- At the crossroads of several forms of vulnerability;
- Police intervention in cases of psychological distress due to lack of resources or services;
- Police uselessness when needed;
- Unpleasant experiences also with private security guards.

SEX WORKERS AT STELLA

- Issues specific to sex work;
- Ambivalence: may need to turn to the police but are highly critical;
- Collective demands and discourse;
- Denunciation of the STM constables.

EXPRESSED NEEDS & PROPOSED SOLUTIONS

The women who participated in the focus groups or survey expressed mostly having unmet or partially met needs. These needs are numerous: being listened to, empathy, validation and recognition, security, access to information, access to health care, more social workers, psychological support, community ties, individual and collective empowerment, justice and reparation, among others!

INDIGENOUS WOMEN IN SITUATION OF HOMELESSNESS

- Police practices that reduce their trust, such as discriminatory, rude and violent treatment, as well as acts of intimidation and excessive force.
- Mostly negative interactions with the police and they prefer to manage conflicts in their community themselves.
- Victims of negative stereotypes in public places, are often considered as dangerous or undesirable people by private security guards and STM constables.

"In Canada, the terms and conditions of surveillance, repression and incarceration were largely defined by colonization" (Policing Black Lives, Robyn Maynard, 2017)



RESPONDENTS TO THE ONLINE SURVEY

- Traumatic experiences with the police, particularly
- Women police officers;
- Lesbophobia: refusal to take a complaint because of domestic violence in a lesbian couple;
- Need of protection.

"We've always been told to call the police and do nothing; I think that's a bad reflex that doesn't work. Some police officers themselves have already suggested to a friend that she ask guys to teach her stalker a lesson; it's not a popular opinion, in fact, but at least it would produce results. We need to have more power over the situations we live." (Flavie, consulted participant)