

WASHINGTON STATE POPULATION SURVEY

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Perceptions of Neighborhood Crime: 2006

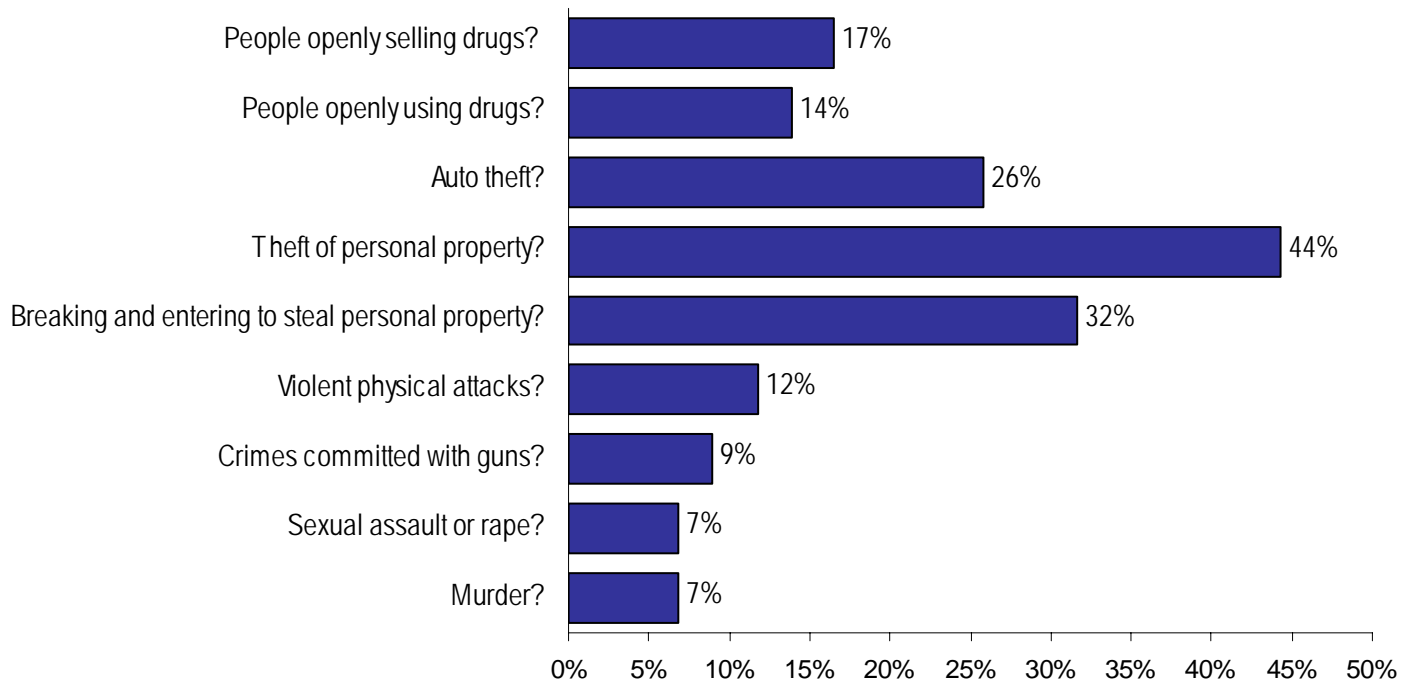
By Erica Gardner

Beginning in 2004 the Washington State Population Survey (WSPS) asked half of its respondents a new set of questions pertaining to the respondent's awareness of serious crime in their neighborhood in the past 12 months. This brief reports the 2006 findings from the second round of WSPS questions on the "perceptions of neighborhood crime." These questions were originally part of the 1998 Criminal Victimization and Perceptions of Community Safety in 12 Cities Survey.¹ The types of crimes that were asked about ranged from knowledge of drug crimes and theft to knowledge of violent crimes.

The survey results for the 2006 survey are shown in Figure 1.²

- In the prior year, 17 percent of respondents said people in their neighborhood were openly selling drugs and 14 percent of respondents said people in their neighborhood had openly used drugs.
- Twenty-six percent of the respondents said they were aware of auto theft in their neighborhood, 44 percent were aware of theft of personal property, and 32 percent were aware of breaking and entering to steal personal property.

Figure 1: Percent of Respondents Saying Yes to the Following Questions: Which of the following types of serious crimes do you know to have occurred in your neighborhood in the past 12 months.



The Washington State Population Survey was conducted in the spring of 2006 to provide social, demographic, and economic information about Washington. Responses were obtained from telephone interviews of 7,082 households that represented the state as a whole. The survey was designed by the Office of Financial Management (OFM) and conducted by the Gilmore Research Institute. Data are subject to sampling variability and other sources of error. More information about the state survey is available at: <http://www.ofm.wa.gov/sps/default.asp>. Data version 2006v2 is used in this analysis.

- Twelve percent of respondents reported violent physical attacks had occurred in their neighborhood in the prior year, nine percent reported crimes committed with guns, seven percent reported sexual assault or rape, and seven percent reported murder.

Awareness of Crime in Neighborhood by Region

The 2006 WSPS allows analysis by eight regions. The names used for each of those regions and the names of the counties included in each region are as follows:

- North Puget (Island, San Juan, Skagit, Whatcom)
- West Balance (Clallam, Cowlitz, Grays Harbor, Jefferson, Klickitat, Lewis, Mason, Pacific Skamania, Wahkiakum)
- King County (King)
- Puget Metro (Kitsap, Pierce, Snohomish, Thurston)
- Clark County (Clark)
- East Balance (Adams, Asotin, Chelan, Columbia, Douglas, Ferry, Garfield, Grant, Kittitas, Lincoln, Okanogan, Pend Oreille, Stevens, Walla Walla, Whitman)
- Spokane County (Spokane)
- Yakima-Tri Cities (Benton, Franklin, Yakima)

There were some statistically significant regional differences in the percentage of respondents saying that specific crimes have occurred in their neighborhood (see Table 1). Differences mentioned are statistically different at the five percent level unless mentioned otherwise.³

- West Balance and Yakima-Tri Cities residents were more likely to report people were openly selling drugs in their neighborhoods⁴, and West Balance residents were more likely to report people openly using drugs in their neighborhoods compared to residents in most other regions.⁵ Yakima-Tri Cities residents were also more likely to report people were openly using drugs than North Puget residents.

Table 1: Percent of Respondents Saying the Following Crimes Have Occurred In Their Neighborhood By Region

Region	North Puget	West Balance	King County	Puget Metro	Clark County	East Balance	Spokane	Yakima-Tri Cities	Total
People openly selling drugs?	14%	24%	14%	15%	16%	18%	16%	24%	16%
People openly using drugs?	12%	21%	13%	12%	16%	15%	12%	18%	14%
Auto theft?	15%	21%	35%	26%	25%	11%	17%	26%	26%
Theft of personal property?	43%	45%	48%	42%	44%	37%	44%	46%	44%
Breaking and entering to steal personal property?	31%	31%	35%	30%	29%	28%	29%	35%	32%
Violent physical attacks?	12%	12%	11%	11%	13%	11%	13%	15%	12%
Crimes committed with guns?	7%	9%	9%	9%	9%	9%	8%	12%	9%
Sexual assault or rape?	6%	6%	7%	7%	10%	9%	6%	7%	7%
Murder?	5%	9%	7%	6%	9%	5%	6%	9%	7%

- King County residents were more likely to report auto theft crime in their neighborhood compared to residents in any other region. East Balance and North Puget residents were less likely to report auto theft crime in their neighborhood compared to any other region with one exception. North Puget residents were not significantly less likely to report auto theft in their neighborhoods compared to Spokane County residents. Spokane County residents reported higher rates of auto theft in their neighborhoods than residents in the East Balance and lower rates of auto theft than King County, Puget Metro, Clark County, and Yakima-Tri Cities residents.
- East Balance residents were less likely to report theft of personal property in their neighborhoods than West Balance, King County, and Yakima-Tri Cities residents.
- East Balance and Spokane residents were also less likely to report breaking and entering to steal personal property than the residents of King County.
- Between 11 percent and 15 percent of residents in each region reported violent physical attacks had occurred in their region. There were no significant differences by region of residents' reports of crimes committed with guns.
- Residents who reported crimes committed with guns ranged from seven percent to 12 percent depending on the region. There were no significant differences by region of residents' reports of crimes committed with guns.
- Between six percent and 10 percent of residents in all of the regions reported that sexual assault crimes had occurred in their neighborhood. There were no significant differences by region of residents' reports of sexual assault or rape.
- Between five percent and nine percent of all residents in all regions reported that murder had occurred in their neighborhood. There were no significant differences by region of residents' reports of murder.

Change Between 2004 WSPS and 2006 WSPS in Perceptions of Crime

Drugs and Auto Theft in Yakima-Tri Cities Region

While no changes were detected in the overall perceptions of crime at the state level, a few changes occurred at the regional level between the 2004 and 2006 Washington State Population Surveys. Over the two year period there were three changes in the perceptions of crime among Yakima-Tri Cities region residents. More Yakima-Tri Cities residents reported that people were “openly selling drugs” and “openly using drugs” in 2006 compared to 2004 (see Table 2).

Table 2: Percent of Yakima-Tri Cities Respondents Saying the Following Crimes Have Occurred In Their Neighborhood

	WSPS	
	2004	2006
People openly selling drugs?	14%	24%
People openly using drugs?	12%	18%

Yakima-Tri Cities residents also reported an increase in auto theft in their neighborhood. This increase in the perception of auto theft also corresponded with an increase in the absolute number of auto thefts in the region (see Table 3). In 2006, 26 percent of Yakima-Tri Cities residents reported that auto theft had occurred in their neighborhood compared to 18 percent in 2004. Between 2003 and 2005 the number of auto thefts reported for the three counties (Yakima, Benton, and Franklin) in the Uniformed Crime Report (UCR)⁶ increased from 1,760 in 2003 to 2,862 in 2005. In 2005, over six cars were stolen for every 1,000 people compared to four cars stolen per 1,000 people in 2003.

Table 3: Percent of Yakima/Tri-Cities Respondents Saying the Following Crimes Have Occurred In Their Neighborhood Compared to Number and Rate of Crimes Reported In UCR

	WSPS		UCR					
	Percent		Number of Crimes			Crime Rate (per 1,000)		
	2004	2006	2003	2004	2005	2003	2004	2005
Auto theft?	18%	26%	1,760	1,995	2,862	4.1	4.6	6.4

Violent Physical Attacks in East Balance Region

There was also a significant change in the perception of violent physical attacks in the East Balance. In 2004, 17 percent of East Balance residents reported that violent physical attacks had occurred in their neighborhood, compared to 11 percent in 2006. Looking at numbers from the UCR's violent total (i.e. sum of murder, rape, robbery, and assault crimes), one finds that there has not been a corresponding decrease in the number of violent crimes in the East Balance. The rate of violent crime occurring in the East Balance has remained steady across the three year period at just over 2 violent crimes per thousand in population.

Table 4: Percent of East Balance Respondents Saying the Following Crimes Have Occurred In Their Neighborhood Compared to Number and Rate of Crimes Reported In UCR

	WSPS		UCR*					
	Percent		Number of Crimes			Crime Rate (per 1,000)		
	2004	2006	2003	2004	2005	2003	2004	2005
Violent physical attacks?	17%	11%	978	966	1,063	2.1	2.1	2.3

* Violent total (i.e. murder, rape, burglary, assault) is used for the UCR comparison.

Sexual Assault/Rape and Murder in Clark County

Finally Clark County respondents reported a significant increase in reports that sexual assault or rape and murder had occurred in their neighborhood. In 2004, five percent of Clark County respondents reported that a sexual assault or rape occurred in their neighborhood, compared to 10 percent in 2006. In addition four percent of Clark County respondents reported a murder in their neighborhood, compared to 9 percent in 2006. According to the UCR there has been a slight increase in the absolute numbers of rape and murder, but the population based rate of murder and rape remains largely unchanged.

Table 5: Percent of Clark County Respondents Saying the Following Crimes Have Occurred In Their Neighborhood Compared to Number and Rate of Crimes Reported In UCR

	WSPS		UCR*					
	Percent		Number of Crimes			Crime Rate (per 10,000)		
	2004	2006	2003	2004	2005	2003	2004	2005
Sexual assault or rape?	5%	10%	201	189	219	5.4	4.9	5.6
Murder?	4%	9%	4	12	12	0.1	0.3	0.3

* Number of reported rapes and murders are used for the UCR comparison.

Notes:

1. Source: Smith, Steven K., Steadman, Greg W., Minton, Todd D., Townsend, Meg. 1999. "Criminal Victimization and Perceptions of Community Safety in 12 Cities, 1998." NCJ 173940, United States Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics
 2. The number of respondents answering each question varies from 3,205 to 3,327 due to missing values.
 3. Logistic regression was used to test whether the regional responses were significantly different from each other.
 4. West Balance and Yakima-Tri Cities residents were significantly more likely to report people openly selling drugs compared to residents in North Puget, King County, Puget Metro, Clark County, and Spokane County regions.
 5. West Balance residents were significantly more likely to report people openly using drugs compared to North Puget, King, Puget Metro, and Spokane County regions.
 6. Uniform Crime Report data was obtained from <http://www.ofm.wa.gov/criminaljustice/default.asp> on February 22, 2007. The data was summarized into the WSPS regions for comparison.
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