

## WASHINGTON STATE POPULATION SURVEY

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## Perceptions of Neighborhood Crime: 2004

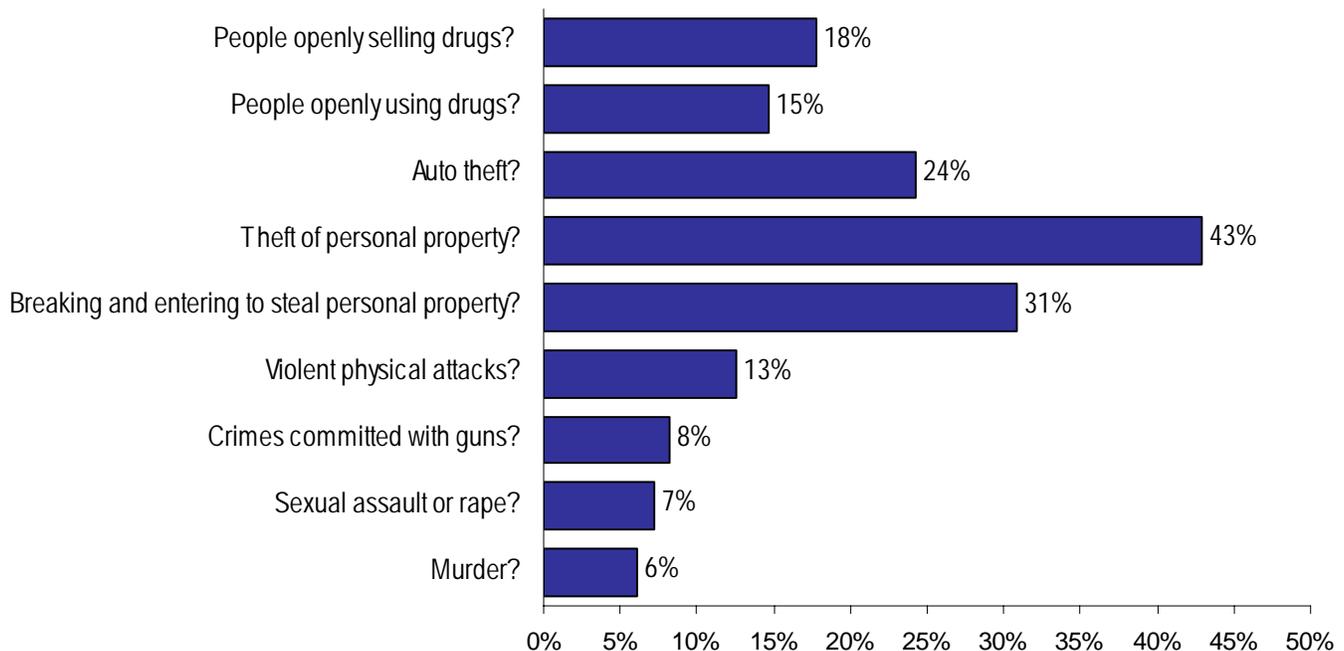
By Erica Gardner

Beginning in 2004 the Washington State Population (2004 WSPS) survey 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. These questions were originally part of the 1998 Criminal Victimization and Perceptions of Community Safety in 12 Cities Survey<sup>1</sup>. The types of crimes that were asked about ranged from knowledge of drug crimes and theft to knowledge of violent crimes.

The 2004 WSPS results are shown in Figure 1.<sup>2</sup>

- In the prior year, 18 percent of respondents said people in their neighborhood were openly selling drugs and 15 percent of respondents said people in their neighborhood had openly used drugs.
- Twenty-four percent of the respondents said they were aware of auto theft in their neighborhood, 43 percent were aware of theft of personal property, and 31 percent were aware of breaking and entering to steal personal property.
- Thirteen percent of respondents reported violent physical attacks had occurred in their neighborhood in the prior year, eight percent reported crimes committed with guns, seven percent reported sexual assault or rape, and six percent reported murder.

**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 2004 to provide social, demographic, and economic information about Washington. Responses were obtained from telephone interviews of 7,097 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. More information about the state survey is available at: <http://www.ofm.wa.gov/sps/index.htm>. Data version 2004v3 is used in this analysis.

## Awareness of Crime in Neighborhood by Region

The 2004 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)
- Tri Cities (Benton, Franklin, Yakima)

There were some 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.<sup>3</sup>

- West Balance region residents were more likely to report people were openly selling drugs in their neighborhoods<sup>4</sup>, and West and East Balance residents were more likely to report people openly using drugs in their neighborhoods<sup>5</sup> compared to residents in most other regions.
- King County residents were more likely to report auto theft crime in their neighborhood compared to residents in any other region.
- Clark County and East Balance residents were less likely to report theft of personal property in their neighborhoods than residents of the North Puget, King County, and Spokane County regions.
- Clark County residents were also less likely to report breaking and entering to steal personal property than the residents of North Puget, King County, and Spokane County regions.
- Seventeen percent of East Balance residents reported that a violent physical attack had occurred in their neighborhood compared to 10 percent of North Puget residents.<sup>6</sup>
- Eleven percent of King County residents and thirteen percent of Yakima-Tri Cities residents reported crimes with guns in their neighborhoods compared to five percent of residents in Puget Metro.<sup>7</sup>

**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?	15%	25%	17%	19%	17%	20%	16%	14%	18%
People openly using drugs?	13%	21%	13%	15%	14%	20%	11%	12%	15%
Auto theft?	15%	20%	32%	25%	21%	13%	20%	18%	24%
Theft of personal property?	46%	42%	45%	42%	38%	38%	48%	42%	43%
Breaking and entering to steal personal property?	36%	31%	34%	28%	25%	28%	33%	29%	31%
Violent physical attacks?	10%	11%	14%	12%	12%	17%	12%	11%	12%
Crimes committed with guns?	7%	8%	11%	5%	8%	8%	6%	13%	8%
Sexual assault or rape?	8%	6%	8%	6%	5%	9%	8%	7%	7%
Murder?	5%	7%	8%	4%	4%	6%	6%	10%	6%

- Between five and nine 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.
- The percentage of residents that reported murder in their neighborhoods ranged from four percent in Puget Metro and Clark County to 10 percent in the Yakima-Tri Cities region.<sup>8</sup>

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**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 3,370 to 3,444 due to missing values.
3. Logistic regression was used to test whether the regional responses were significantly different from each other. Not all significant differences are noted in the text.
4. West Balance residents were significantly more likely to report people openly selling compared to residents in North Puget, King County, Clark County, Spokane County, and Yakima-Tri Cities regions.
5. West Balance and East Balance residents were significantly more likely to report people openly using drugs compared to the other regions with one exception. East Balance residents were not significantly more likely to report that people were openly using drugs compared to Puget Metro residents.
6. Residents of the East Balance region were more likely to report violent physical attacks had occurred in their neighborhood than those residents in the North Puget Region, West Balance, Clark County, and Yakima-Tri Cities regions.
7. Compared to King County and Yakima-Tri Cities residents, residents in the North Puget, Puget Metro, and Spokane County regions were less likely to report crimes committed with guns in their neighborhood. Residents from the Yakima-Tri Cities region were also more likely to report crimes committed with guns in their neighborhood than Clark County residents.
8. Compared to North Puget, Puget Metro, Clark County, East Balance, and Spokane County regions, a higher percentage of residents in the Yakima-Tri Cities region said that a murder had occurred in their neighborhood in the past 12 months. King county region residents also were more likely to report murder having occurred in their neighborhood than residents in Clark and Puget Metro regions.

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