

WASHINGTON STATE POPULATION SURVEY

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Perceptions of Neighborhood Crime: 2008

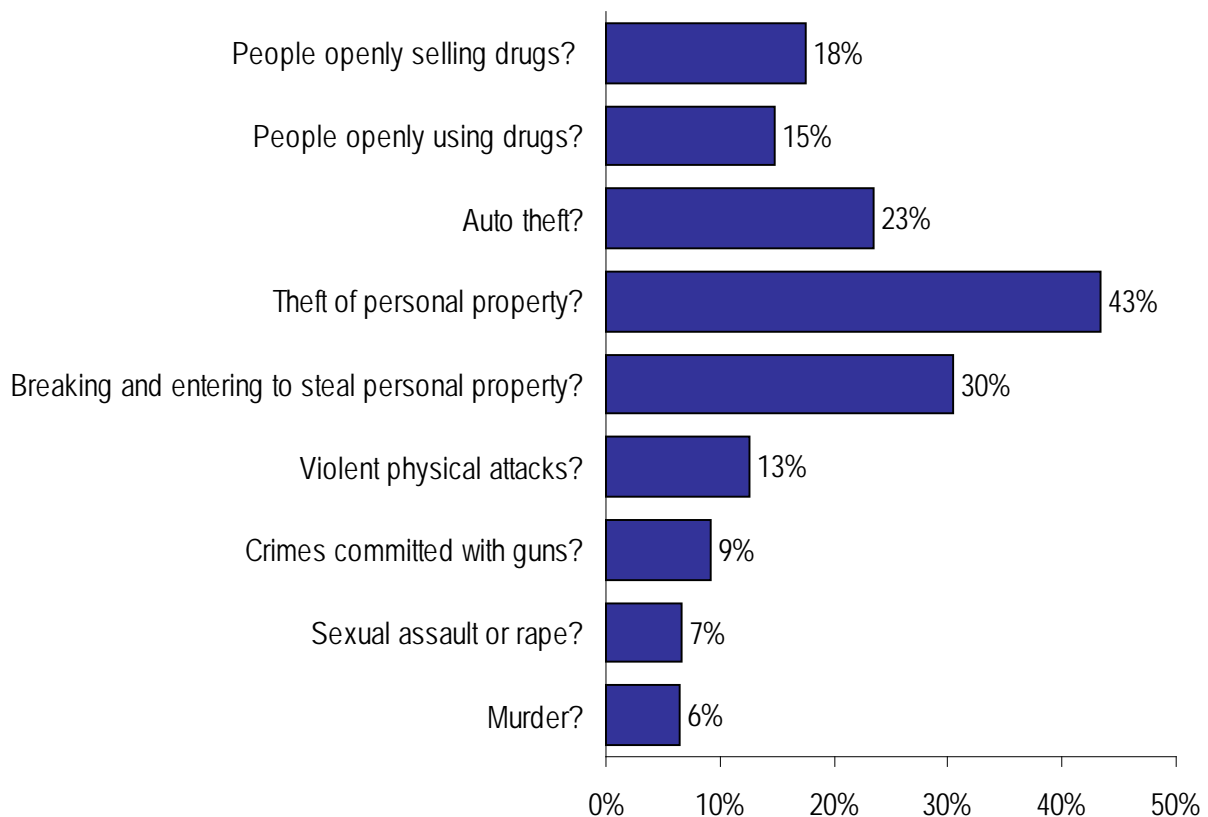
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Beginning in 2004 the Washington State Population Survey (WSPS) asked half of its respondents a new set of questions pertaining to the respondent's awareness of serious crime in their neighborhood in the past 12 months. This brief reports the 2008 findings from the third 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 about drug crimes to knowledge of violent crimes such as murder.

The survey results for the 2008 survey are shown in Figure 1.²

- Eighteen 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 in the prior year.
- Twenty-three percent of the respondents said they were aware of auto theft in their neighborhood, 43 percent were aware of theft of personal property, and 30 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 2008 to provide social, demographic, and economic information about Washington. Responses were obtained from telephone interviews of 8,162 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 2008v2 is used in this analysis.

- Thirteen 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 six percent reported murder.

Awareness of Crime in Neighborhood by Region

The 2008 WSPS allows analysis by ten 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, 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)
- Snohomish County (Snohomish)
- Pierce County (Pierce)

Some regions differed from the state 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

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

Region	People openly selling drugs?	People openly using drugs?	Auto theft?	Theft of personal property?	Breaking and entering to steal personal property?	Violent physical attacks?	Crimes committed with guns?	Sexual assault or rape?	Murder?
North Puget	18%	17%	16%	36%	23%	9%	5%	7%	2%
West Balance	22%	18%	15%	37%	27%	9%	4%	5%	4%
King County	16%	14%	31%	47%	35%	15%	11%	7%	8%
Puget Metro	15%	12%	12%	36%	26%	10%	3%	6%	4%
Clark County	15%	10%	17%	38%	22%	8%	5%	6%	3%
East Balance	21%	17%	14%	40%	28%	17%	8%	8%	5%
Spokane County	14%	13%	21%	44%	24%	13%	9%	6%	6%
Yakima-Tri Cities	18%	18%	21%	40%	32%	11%	9%	8%	8%
Snohomish County	19%	16%	32%	50%	39%	11%	10%	7%	6%
Pierce County	18%	16%	27%	47%	29%	14%	15%	5%	9%
State	18%	15%	23%	43%	30%	13%	9%	7%	6%

- There was no statistically significant variation between the state and each of the 10 regions in the perception of people openly selling or using drugs in their neighborhood.
- Variation in the perception of auto theft in the neighborhood roughly corresponded with the actual rate of motor vehicle theft in each region according to the 2007 Uniform Crime Reports (UCR)⁴ (See Table 1 and Appendix A). Puget Metro, East Balance, West Balance, North Puget and Clark County were the least likely to report auto theft in their neighborhood and had the lowest rates of auto theft (per 1,000 population). These five regions' reports of auto theft in their neighborhood were significantly lower than the state report of auto theft. Residents of both King and Snohomish counties were significantly more likely to report auto theft in their neighborhood than residents of the state overall.
- Puget Metro residents were less likely to report personal property theft in their neighborhoods than Washington State residents overall, and King and Snohomish counties were more likely to report personal property theft in their neighborhoods.
- North Puget, Clark County and Spokane County residents were less likely and King County and Snohomish County residents were more likely than Washington State residents overall to report breaking and entering to steal personal property had occurred in their neighborhoods.
- There were no statistically significant differences between the state and each of the 10 regions in respondent reports of violent physical attacks in their neighborhoods.
- Residents of West Balance, Puget Metro and Clark County were less likely to report crimes committed with guns in their neighborhoods compared to Washington State residents overall. King County and Pierce County residents were more likely to report crimes committed with guns in their neighborhoods compared to Washington State residents overall.
- There were no statistical differences between the state and each of the 10 regions in respondent reports of sexual assault or rape.
- A higher percentage of King County residents reported murder in their neighborhoods compared to the state overall. (It appears that Pierce County and Yakima-Tri Cities also reported murder in their neighborhoods at a higher rate, but these results were not statistically different from the Washington State overall estimate).

Trends in the Perceptions of Crime⁵

Selling Drugs in Yakima-Tri Cities Region

Over the past six years there have been some changes in the Yakima-Tri Cities region in the perception of people openly selling drugs. Compared to the 2004 WSPS results, the 2008 results show that a significantly higher percentage of respondents reported people openly selling drugs in their neighborhood. But the two year change shows a decline in the reports of people openly selling drugs. The percentage of respondents who reported people were openly selling drugs in their neighborhoods significantly declined from 26 percent in 2006 to 18 percent in 2008.

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

	WSPS		
	2004	2006	2008
People openly selling drugs?	12%	26%	18%

Auto Theft

There were statistically significant declines in the percentage of WSPS respondents reporting auto theft in their neighborhoods between the 2006 and 2008. These declines occurred statewide and in three regions (see Table 3). The statewide drop in perception of auto theft in the neighborhood was just over three percentage points. The greatest percentage point drop in reports of neighborhood auto theft was in Clark county (eight percentage points), followed by West Balance (seven percentage points) and King County (five percentage points). There were no statistically significant changes between the 2004 and 2008 estimates.

Respondents' reports of auto theft in their neighborhoods roughly correspond to the trends seen in the actual number and rate of auto thefts statewide and in these three regions according to the UCR.⁴ Both the number and rate of motor vehicle thefts peaked statewide and in both the West Balance and King County regions in 2005 before declining below the 2003 rates and absolute numbers in 2007. Clark County experienced a decline in motor vehicle thefts between 2003 and 2006, before leveling off between 2006 and 2007.

Table 3: Percent of Respondents Reporting Auto Theft in their Neighborhoods, Compared to Number and Rate of Crimes Reported in the UCR

Region	WSPS			Uniform Crime Reports (UCR)									
	Percent			Number of Crimes					Rate (per 1,000)				
	2004	2006	2008	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
State	24%	27%	23%	40,351	43,070	49,151	44,967	36,932	6.7	7.0	7.9	7.1	5.7
West Balance	20%	21%	15%	1,774	1,688	2,031	1,670	1,421	4.1	3.9	4.7	3.8	3.2
King County	32%	36%	31%	19,116	19,939	21,883	18,806	13,979	10.7	11.0	12.0	10.1	7.4
Clark County	21%	25%	17%	2,010	1,981	1,908	1,612	1,640	5.4	5.2	4.9	4.0	4.0

Breaking and Entering to Steal Personal Property

Between 2004 and 2008 in both the North Puget and Spokane County regions there were statistically significant changes in respondent reports of breaking and entering to steal property in their neighborhoods (see Table 4). Thirty-six percent of North Puget respondents reported breaking and entering to steal personal property had occurred in their neighborhoods in 2004 compared to only 23 percent in 2008. A similar decline occurred in the actual rate of burglaries in the North Puget region. In North Puget, 11.2 burglaries occurred per 1,000 population in 2003 compared to 8.2 burglaries per 1,000 population in 2007. In Spokane, 33 percent of respondents reported breaking and entering to steal personal property in 2004, compared to 24 percent in 2008. A similar decline in the rate of burglaries also occurred between 2003 and 2007. In 2003, 11 burglaries occurred per 1,000 population in Spokane compared to 7.4 burglaries in 2007. (Note: While the percentage of respondents reporting breaking and entering in their neighborhoods declined between 2006 and 2008, these changes were not statistically significant).

Table 4: Percent of Respondents Reporting Breaking and Entering to Steal Personal Property in their Neighborhoods, Compared to Number and Rate of Crimes Reported in the UCR

Region	WSPS			Uniform Crime Reports (UCR)									
	Percent			Number of Crimes					Rate (per 1,000)				
	2004	2006	2008	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
North Puget	36%	31%	23%	3,563	3,281	4,069	3,624	3,250	11.2	10.1	10.6	9.3	8.2
Spokane County	33%	29%	24%	4,677	5,323	3,952	3,547	3,343	11.0	12.3	9.1	8.0	7.4

* The UCR comparison data is burglary (the unlawful entry, or attempted entry, of a structure to commit a felony or a theft).

Theft of Personal Property

North Puget respondents' reports of theft of personal property in 2008 were significantly lower than they were in 2004 (see Table 5). In 2004, 46 percent of North Puget residents reported theft of personal property in their neighborhoods, compared to only 36 percent in 2008. While the two year change was not statistically significant (i.e. between 2006 and 2008), the trend is consistent with the change registered across the four year period. The decline in theft of personal property reports corresponds to the decline in the rate of theft in the North Puget region between 2004 and 2007. In 2004 there were 41.2 thefts per 1,000 in population in the North Puget region, compared to 31.6 thefts per 1,000 in population in 2007.

Table 5: Percent of Respondents Reporting Theft of Personal Property in their Neighborhoods, Compared to Number and Rate of Crimes Reported in the UCR

Region	WSPS			Uniform Crime Reports (UCR)									
	Percent			Number of Crimes					Rate (per 1,000)				
	2004	2006	2008	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
North Puget	46%	42%	36%	12,102	13,384	14,963	12,977	12,560	38.0	41.2	39.0	33.2	31.6

* The UCR comparison data is theft (the unlawful taking, carrying, leading, or riding away of property from the possession or constructive possession of another).

Crimes Committed with Guns

The percentage reporting crimes committed with guns in Clark County was 10 percent in 2006 (see Table 6). The percent reporting crimes committed with guns dropped five percentage points from 10 percent in 2006 to five percent in 2008. The change in the percent of respondents reporting crimes with guns in their neighborhoods in 2004 and in 2008 was not statistically significant. Unfortunately the UCR data does not have a similar crime category to compare these findings to actual crime statistics.

Table 6: Percent of Respondents Reporting Crimes Committed with Guns in their Neighborhoods

Region	WSPS		
	Percent		
	2004	2006	2008
Clark County	8%	10%	5%

Murder

Murder is a relatively rare event. North Puget and Clark County regions each had fewer than 13 murders each year between 2003 and 2007 (see Table 7). According to the UCR for both regions the murder rate peaked in 2004 and 2005. Respondent reports of murder in their neighborhoods also peaked in 2004 and 2006 for the North Puget region and in 2006 for the Clark County region. There was a significant decline in the percentage of North Puget residents reporting murder in their neighborhoods between 2004 and 2008 (although reflecting almost the same change in estimates, the decline between 2006 and 2008 was not significant). There was also a significant decline in the percentage of respondents in Clark County who reported murder in their neighborhoods between 2006 and 2008. It appears that the perception of murder in the neighborhood may have returned to 2004 levels even though in 2007 murders had increased by four from the prior year.

Table 7: Percent of Respondents Reporting Murder in their Neighborhoods, Compared to the Number and Rate of Murder Reported in the UCR

Region	WSPS			Uniform Crime Reports (UCR)									
	Percent			Number of Crimes					Rate (per 100,000)				
	2004	2006	2008	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
North Puget	5%	5%	2%	4	7	9	3	4	1.3	2.2	2.3	0.8	1.0
Clark County	4%	10%	3%	4	12	12	5	9	1.1	3.1	3.1	1.2	2.2

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 3,737 to 3,918 due to missing values.
3. The Rao-Scott Chi-Squared test was used to test whether regional results were significantly different from the state results.
4. Uniform Crime Report data was obtained from <http://www.ofm.wa.gov/criminaljustice/default.asp> on March 3, 2009. The data was summarized into the WSPS regions for comparison.
5. The Rao-Scott Chi-Squared test was used to test whether one survey year was significantly different from another.

Appendix

**Table A: 2007 Uniform Crime Reports
Thefts or Attempted Thefts in Washington State by Region**

Region	2007 Uniform Crime Reports	
	Number of Thefts or Attempted Thefts of a Motor Vehicle	Motor Vehicle Theft Rate (Per 1,000 Population)
North Puget	1,028	2.6
West Balance	1,421	3.2
King County	13,979	7.4
Puget Metro	1,127	2.3
Clark County	1,640	4.0
East Balance	1,023	2.1
SpokaneCounty	2,742	6.1
Yakima-Tri Cities	2,457	5.3
Snohomish County	4,973	7.4
Pierce County	6,542	8.3
State	36,932	5.7

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