Community Safety Survey
Findings & Report
Brantford, Ontario

Dr. Tarah Hodgkinson

Muhammad Ali

2025

LAURIER
Inspiring Lives.

Acknowledgements

Table of Contents

Figures and Tables

Executive Summary

Overview

Like many mid-sized Canadian cities, Brantford is facing a crisis in the downtown as concerns about crime and safety are on the rise. Researchers at the Centre for Research on Security Practices (CRSP) have been examining safety concerns across Brantford for several years. While residents of Brantford have indicated that they perceive the downtown area as unsafe, recent analysis of crime data indicates that these concerns may relate less to serious and violent crime and more to indicators of social and physical disorder, such as homelessness, mental health crises, public drug use, and abandoned buildings.

While perceptions of crime and safety may not reflect the realities of risk, these perceptions play an important role in a community's overall well-being. Criminological research indicates that fear of crime can result in people retreating into their homes, and out of the public sphere, creating more opportunities for crime and generating more fear (Bursik & Grasmick, 1993; Sabine & Hodgkinson, 2022). Furthermore, police-reported crime data is often unreliable for crime types like violence, because these crime types are often unreported (Sabine & Hodgkinson, 2022), suggesting that a fulsome picture of crime and risk is not yet available in downtown Brantford or the city more broadly.

Our study sought to address the gaps in knowledge around perceptions of crime and incidents of victimization (both reported and unreported) across the city of Brantford by conducting a representative survey of Brantford residents. Our research team conducted the survey between mid-November 2023 to April of 2024 and received over 300 complete responses. We detail those findings in this report.

Key Objectives

The primary objectives of this survey were to:

- Gain a better understanding of perceptions of crime and safety in Brantford,
- identify perceived safe and unsafe areas across the city,
- identify experiences of victimization, including the reporting of these incidents to the police,
- and identify the perceptions of the police.

In the short term, results from this survey should be used to inform community safety initiatives in Brantford by identifying important areas for improvement. In the long term, this survey should be replicated to allow for comparison and evaluation of community safety initiatives across the City.

Key findings

The survey collected responses from 306 Brantford residents. The average age of participants was 50.3 years, which is higher than the City's average age of 41, according to the 2021 census. However, this discrepancy likely reflects the age requirement of 18 to complete the survey suggesting the age of respondents remains representative. Just over half identified as female (56.7%), followed by male (41.3%), 1.3% identified as non-binary 0.6% as transgender or other. The majority of respondents indicated they were White (84.9%), more than half of participants were married (51.3%), and 66.1% owned their homes, consistent with the most recent Canadian census. The most common household income was between $20,001 and $50,000 (27.3%), and 43.6% had lived in their current residence for 10 years or more.

Perceptions of Crime and Safety in Brantford

Overall, perceptions of safety were generally positive: 93.8% of respondents said it was safe to go outside during the day, 78.4% felt safe walking at night, and 85.3% believed it was safe for children to play outside. However, worries about victimization persisted, with 38.2% worried about home break-ins. Some respondents feared being attacked (21.2%) or worried about sexual assault (14.4%). Some participants also identified concerns with broken windows (26.1%), graffiti (30.1%), vacant lots (32.4%), and poor lighting in their neighbourhoods (35.6%).

Experiences of Victimization

Just over 25.2% of participants reported being victims of crime within the past two years. The most common experience was theft from property for 110 respondents. 33 respondents indicated that they had been a victim of violence. 15 respondents reported home break-ins.

Perceptions of the Police

Perceptions of police performance were mixed. A large majority agreed that police treat people with respect (80.1%), are ethnically diverse (73.5%), and represent the community (68.6%). However, residents expressed less confidence in specific areas of enforcement. Only 60.5% believed police enforce traffic laws effectively, and just 38.6% felt police control drug activity well. Overall, 70% of respondents believed the police do a good job keeping communities safe. 84.3% of respondents supported the use of special constables or alternative policing to address lower-level issues, reflecting openness to alternative and innovative community safety models.

Introduction

In 2021, the City of Brantford, Ontario created their community safety and well-being (CSWB) plan (Davis et al., 2021). Primary concerns highlighted in this plan include crime, disorder, and perceptions of safety. A preliminary study of Brantford residents found that almost half of the participants felt unsafe downtown (Popham, 2019). More recent research conducted at the Centre for Research on Security Practices (CRSP) has indicated that much of this fear appears to be driven by social disorder rather than violent crime incidents (Hodgkinson, 2023; Henderson & Hodgkinson, 2022).

While these findings can inform initial efforts to address safety concerns in downtown Brantford, a broader understanding of perceptions of safety and experiences of victimization across the city is necessary. This is important because police-recorded violence has been found to concentrate in several areas outside of downtown Brantford (Hodgkinson, 2023). Furthermore, perceptions of safety and victimization data are necessary to properly triangulate police-recorded crime data to develop a complete understanding of the distribution and extent of crime and safety issues occurring in the city, and to develop meaningful and impactful solutions to these issues (Ceccato & Lukyte, 2011).

Several crime prevention and response strategies have recently been funded in the City of Brantford. This includes significant funding from the provincial government for police-related anti-gang strategies (The Brantford Expositor, 2022) and from the federal government for community-based prevention and intervention strategies to reduce gun and gang violence (Miranda, 2022). Baseline data that captures risk and victimization, as well as perceptions of police legitimacy and procedural justice, is necessary to properly implement and evaluate these new strategies.

To meaningfully address crime and safety issues in communities like Brantford, a fulsome picture of perception and risk is needed. Research on crime and place has long indicated the need to triangulate police-reported data with other data sources, including perceptions of safety and victimization, at the local level, to better understand risk and develop effective and sustainable prevention and response strategies (Curtis et al., 2019). The findings of this survey provide important information from residents across the City of Brantford that should be used to guide residents, practitioners, and City employees in responding to community safety issues.

Background

The study of community safety and perceptions of crime in Brantford seeks to build on an extensive body of criminological research related to perceptions of crime and safety in Canada and internationally. The correlates and predictors of fear of crime have been found to be relatively consistent across contexts. Research shows that how people see and experience their neighbourhood plays an important role in how safe they feel. Visible neglect, like graffiti or broken windows, can increase fear and signal that nobody cares about the area. However, it is not

just what people see, but how they interact and support one another that matters (O'Brien et al. 2019). Strong trust and connection among residents can make communities feel safer and more united. Positive views of the police and fair treatment also help build confidence and reduce fear. Together, these factors shape how people in Brantford experience safety in their neighbourhoods.

Furthermore, understanding the protective factors that reduce fear of crime, particularly collective efficacy and social cohesion, is essential for interpreting and addressing community safety. When residents trust one another and believe they can work together, they are more likely to address issues that threaten neighbourhood safety and well-being. Strong social ties not only foster informal social control but also empower communities to respond to local challenges, from vandalism to perceptions of disorder. These protective factors offer valuable insight into why some neighbourhoods, such as those in Brantford, may feel safer or more resilient than others, even when facing similar social or environmental risks. Fear of crime is not only influenced by the demographic and neighbourhood-level factors described above, but also by perceptions of police performance. For example, research demonstrates that people who are more supportive of the law (procedural justice) and the police service (police legitimacy) are more likely to report feeling safer in their neighbourhoods (Carter & Wolfe, 2021).

As such, this study aims to establish how social connections, local environments, and participants' feelings about crime and the police operate in the context of Brantford. By examining many of the common correlates of fear of crime and social well-being this research study aims to provide an evidence base for strategies to reduce fear of crime and improve feelings of safety in Brantford.

The community of Brantford

Located on the Grand River, the city of Brantford is known for its scenic beauty and its strong community appeal. Thanks to the invention of Alexander Graham Bell, Brantford is also the birthplace of the telephone. This city is a popular choice for residents, businesses, tourists, and students, offering attractions such as the Canadian Military Heritage Museum, Wayne Gretzky Sports Centre, and Bell Homestead National Historic Site. The city also features Harmony Square, the Sanderson Centre for the Performing Arts, and Elements Casino. Brantford is home to four post-secondary schools, including Wilfrid Laurier University, Conestoga College, Six Nations Polytechnic, and Westervelt College, supporting over 3,500 full-time students. The city has a population of 104,688 as of the most recent census in 2021, with a growth rate (6.2%) higher than that of neighbouring Hamilton, Ontario (6.0%).

Brantford is located beside Six Nations, the largest First Nations reserve in Canada. 5.2 percent of residents identify as Indigenous in Brantford. Brantford is also home to a diverse newcomer population, with 15.6 percent of residents born outside of Canada, mainly from Europe, Asia, the Americas, and Africa. Most homes are single detached, with 66 percent of residents owning their homes. The population is made up of 17.2% individuals aged 0 to 14, 63.9% of individuals aged 15 to 64, and 18.9% individuals aged 65 and over. The median income in 2020 was $39,200. 15% of Brantford residents are on the low-income index, and more than 30% of those living in

the downtown core, live below the national poverty level (Statistics Canada, 2016). 58% of Brantford residents aged 25 to 64 have completed some form of postsecondary certificate, diploma, or degree (Statistics Canada 2021). The city's workforce is concentrated in trades, business, health, social sciences, and public service sectors.

Research literature

Researchers and practitioners alike have used the concept of "broken windows" to support the early intervention in social and physical signs of disorder. The broken windows theory suggests that visible signs of neglect, like graffiti or broken windows, are indicators that "no one cares" about the area or neighbourhood, and that illegitimate behaviour is acceptable because no one will intervene (Wilson & Kelling, 1982). In turn, small infractions like broken windows that are not fixed could result in more serious, and sometimes illegal behaviour by indicating to potential offenders that this is a place that tolerates crime and illegitimate behaviour.

While the relationship between physical indicators of disorder (like broken windows) and illegitimate behaviour is generally accepted in the research literature, this concept has been misappropriated in several ways across Canada and internationally to justify zero-tolerance policing and other punitive responses. This is concerning for two reasons. One, police services around the world have conflated improving informal social controls (residents caring for spaces and places) with increasing formal social controls by policing low-level crimes to prevent more serious criminal behaviour. However, this relationship is not consistently supported in the literature (Braga et al. 2015). Indeed, much of the policing efforts to address low level social and physical disorder actually contribute to increases in fear of crime (Hinkle & Weisburd, 2008). Two, much of the "zero-tolerance" approaches have led to the over-policing of marginalized and impoverished communities, acting to further criminalize these communities rather than prevent real harms (Howell, 2015; McHarris, 2024).

Recent studies have critiqued this conflation and associated policing approaches, arguing that crime and fear of crime are more complex and are influenced more by social factors within a community than by physical disorder alone. One of the main criticisms of this approach is the lack of emphasis on social relationships and informal social control within a community. O'Brien and colleagues (2019) challenge the assumption that perceived disorder automatically leads to increased fear or inappropriate behaviour. Instead, they introduce the social escalation model, which emphasizes how private forms of disorder, combined with weakened informal social control, can escalate into crime. Crucially, this underscores that it is not only about what residents observe in their neighbourhood, but how they collectively respond to one another to address concerns. In this context, the shared expectations and mutual trust among community members plays a pivotal role in shaping those responses and maintaining social order.

A key concept that supports this view is collective efficacy, which refers to the shared belief among residents in their ability to come together and act in support of common goals, such as maintaining safety and order in their community (Sampson et al., 1997). While often linked, collective efficacy is distinct from social cohesion, which describes the strength of social bonds, trust, and connectedness among neighbours. Socially cohesive communities (where residents feel

emotionally connected and trust each other) are more likely to foster collective efficacy, a key protective factor against crime (Gearhart, 2023; Wickes et al., 2013).

Research suggests that collective efficacy may vary depending on the nature of the problem that a community faces. Residents may be more inclined to act in response to visible issues than in private situations (Wickes et al., 2013). For example, communities with strong shared values on illegal drug activity in their neighbourhood may mobilize differently to stop drug activity than to advocate against vacant lots in their neighbourhoods. Community residents may organize watch groups, increase communication amongst each other, and work closely with local law enforcement to increase guardianship in the area. Residents could also advocate for community resources such as harm reduction services and safe spaces or collaborate with the city to improve lighting in areas and to repurpose abandoned properties that may attract drug use.

By combining informal social control, strategic partnerships, and supportive services, the community can tackle the problem from multiple angles, strengthening both safety and social cohesion. Lanfear (2022) also shows that communities with strong collective efficacy can make changes to their surroundings to reduce crime. However, not all communities are adequately equipped to mobilize on these issues (Wickes et al., 2013). This means that local solutions need to consider the specific needs and strengths of each community. As Tilley (2001) suggests, mitigating crime is a matter of understanding "what works for whom, in what circumstances, and how?" These frameworks are integrated in the questions for the survey so that Brantford's neighbourhoods can be examined and understood in ways that provide inroads for improving community connection and safety.

Methodology

Introduction

This study involved conducting a representative survey of Brantford residents to better understand perceptions of safety and experiences of victimization in Brantford. The first version of the survey was developed in 2018 in partnership with community health and crime researchers in the United States (Weisburd et al., 2011). The survey has been validated in other communities including North Battleford, Saskatchewan and Hamilton, Ontario in Canada, and Narrabri, New South Wales and Roma, Queensland in Australia (Hodgkinson & Lunney, 2021; Sabine & Hodgkinson, 2022; Mulrooney et al., 2024). The survey covers several themes including perceptions of safety (including place-based perceptions), experiences of victimization, community involvement/engagement, social cohesion/collective efficacy, community health, demographics, and neighbourhood location. Following consultation with the Brantford Police Service, the survey has been adjusted to include additional questions on police legitimacy, procedural justice, and support for alternative/tiered policing models that are relevant for policing and the community.

The survey was conducted using Qualtrics and took approximately 15-20 minutes to complete. For a population the size of Brantford (approximately 100,000) a sample size of 383 is necessary for a confidence level of 95% and a margin of error of 5%. The survey was conducted over 5 months (between mid-November 2023 and mid-April 2024). Despite significant recruitment efforts on behalf of the research team (as described below) a final sample size of 306 was achieved. This sample size provides a confidence level of over 90%.

Sampling Method

Recruitment occurred using a triangulation of methods. Primarily, recruitment involved randomly selecting households using a stratified sampling technique for each of the 24 census tracts (similar to neighbourhoods) of Brantford. Census tracts were used so that survey data can be matched with Statistics Canada data and to provide geographical representation. If residents were unavailable at the time of data collection, door hangers were left with a QR code leading to the online version of the survey. If residents were available, two research assistants (made up of Laurier students who reside in Brantford or Six Nations) conducted the survey using iPads connected to a Qualtrics survey link that automatically stored the results on a secure Wilfrid Laurier University (WLU) server. Alternatively, residents could opt to complete a paper version of the survey to be collected later by the research team. Together, this approach resulted in approximately 40% of survey responses.

Residents were also recruited at community events and community spaces, including the library and sports complex. This recruitment strategy enables the research team to further recruit participants who may be otherwise underrepresented using standard survey data collection

approaches (e.g., younger participants (aged 18-24), and difficult to reach populations). Businesses and other locations were also contacted to share the survey information with their staff. Together, these efforts resulted in increased engagement and accounted for approximately 50% of the respondents in the survey. Finally, the survey was posted online on the research website and online forums around Brantford. This resulted in approximately 10% of the survey responses.

This triangulated recruitment strategy reflects efforts to meaningfully engage the community and achieve a representative sample. However, we should note that recruitment for these types of surveys is most successful when actively communicated by the City. Unfortunately, we were unable to secure City communication for this survey.

Data Standardization and Analysis

Once the survey data were collected (April 2024), they were standardized to remove any non- or incomplete responses. This process resulted in the removal of approximately 70 responses. Data were then standardized by addressing missing values. Less than 5% of the data were considered missing and were determined missing at random. All missing values were addressed using multiple imputation which attempts to represent a random sample of missing values and is widely considered one of the most robust responses to missing data. The completed dataset was analysed using SPSS v.30.

The Survey

For relevant data collection, the survey was split into five sections: demographics, community involvement, perceptions of safety, victimization, and police and procedural justice.

Demographics

For demographics, the participants were asked to identify several key points of information. Initially the participants were asked to identify in which area of Brantford they reside. The collected demographic information also included age, gender, ethnicity, homeownership, marital status, education, work locale, income, time at current residence, and plans of residency in Brantford.

- For age, the participants were prompted to provide their birth year.
- The responses for gender included male, female, non-binary, transgender, and other (with a fill-in textbox).
- In ethnicity, the participants were prompted to select between Caucasian (White), Indigenous (including First Nations, Inuit, and Metis), African, Asian (including South Asian), Middle Eastern, and other (with a fill-in textbox).
- Participants were asked about their housing status and could select from the following options: own, rent, or other (with a fill-in textbox).
- Participants were prompted to select their marital status from the following options: married, de facto or common law (living with a romantic partner), divorced or separated, widowed, single (never married), or other (with a fill-in textbox).
- The participants were asked to report their highest level of education attained by choosing from the following: no schooling, less than a high school diploma, high school diploma or equivalent, some trade, technical, or vocational school, business or community college, some university, bachelor's degree, or graduate or professional degree (e.g., law or medicine).
- For work locale, the participants were asked whether they were employed in Brantford and could respond with yes or no.
- Participants were asked to indicate their annual household income by selecting from the following categories: no income, less than $20,000, $20,001 to $50,000, $50,001 to $80,000, $80,001 to $100,000, $100,001 to $120,000, $120,001 to $140,000, $140,001 to $160,000, or over $160,000.
- Participants were asked to indicate how long they had lived at their current residence by selecting from the following categories: less than 6 months, 6 months to less than 1 year, 1 year to less than 3 years, 3 years to less than 5 years, 5 years to less than 10 years, or 10 or more years.
- Participants were also asked how long they planned to stay at their current residence, with options including less than 6 months, 6 months to less than 1 year, 1 year to less

than 3 years, 3 years to less than 5 years, 5 years to less than 10 years, or 10 or more years.

Area of Residence

Based on the map below, the participants were asked to identify the area in which they reside.

Figure 1.0 - Brantford Neighbourhoods

Brantford Neighbourhoods
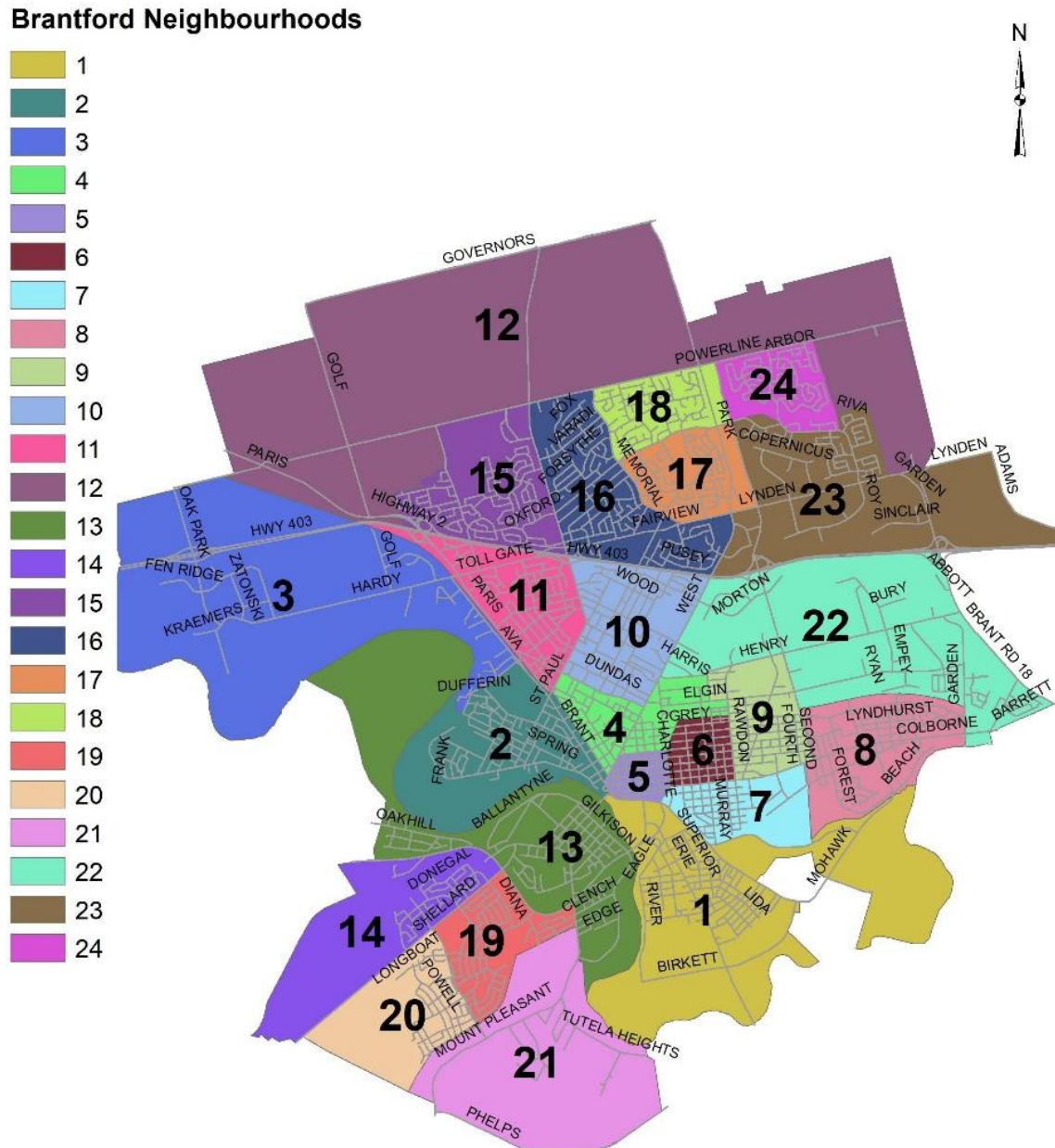
Neighbourhood Community Involvement

In this survey, the neighbourhood was defined as a 15-minute walk in any direction from the respondent's home. The participants were then asked about their neighbourhood integration, the willingness of neighbours to intervene in illicit activities, and about their relationship with their neighbours.

Neighbourhood Integration

The participants were asked given several statements regarding how well people get along in the neighbourhood. The participants were instructed to respond with either "strongly disagree", "disagree", "agree", and "strongly agree" to the following statements:

   a. People in your neighborhood are willing to help their neighbours.
   b. Neighbors DO NOT usually talk to each other.
   c. In general, people in your neighborhood can be trusted.
   d. People in your neighborhood DO NOT share the same values.
   e. Neighbors watch out for each other in your neighborhood.
   f. This area is a good area to raise children.
   g. People in my neighborhood are generally friendly.
   h. I am happy I live in this neighborhood.
   i. People around here take care of each other.
   j. This is a close-knit neighborhood.
   k. I regularly stop and talk with people in my neighborhood.
   l. I know the names of people in my neighbourhood.

For interpretive ease and cohesion, responses to "People in your neighborhood DO NOT usually talk to each other" were reverse coded to "People in your neighbourhood talk to each other" and responses to "People in your neighborhood DO NOT share the same values" were reverse coded to "People in your neighbourhood share the same values."

Time Spent Interacting with Neighbours

Participants were asked if they know their neighbours by name, and they were instructed to respond with a "yes" or a "no." They were also asked how many neighbours they would consider friends. The participants were then instructed to respond with "never", "rarely", "sometimes", and "often" to the following questions about time spent with their neighbours:

   a. How often do you chat with your neighbours?
   b. How often do you visit with your neighbours?
   c. How often do you and your neighbours help each other?

Neighbourhood Involvement

The participants were asked about the ways in which they are involved in their neighbourhood and/or community. The participants were instructed to answer with a "yes" or a "no" and were

asked if a member of their household was involved in any of the following activities in the past year:

a. Spoken to a person or group that was causing problems in your neighborhood.
b. Attended a neighbourhood or community meeting.
c. Spoken to a local religious or community leader about doing something to improve your neighbourhood.
d. Worked with neighbors to address a problem or improve the neighborhood.
e. Spoken with an elected official about a specific problem in your neighbourhood.

Willingness to Intervene

Participants were asked about the likelihood that one of their neighbours would intervene given a particular situation. They were instructed to answer with "very unlikely", "unlikely", "likely", or "very likely" to the following statements:

a. If some kids were skipping school and hanging out on your block.
b. If a group of kids were spraying graffiti on a building.
c. If a teenager was showing disrespect to an adult.
d. If a group of kids were climbing on a parked car.
e. If a group of kids were "car shopping" (trying to open car door handles).
f. If someone was trying to break into a house.
g. If someone was illegally parking on the street.
h. If suspicious people were hanging around the neighbourhood.
i. If people were having a loud argument in the street.
j. If a group of underage kids were drinking in public.
k. If someone on your street was playing loud music.
l. If someone on your street was firing a gun.
m. If drugs were being sold in your neighbourhood.
n. If a local fire station was going to be closed down because of budget cuts.
o. If there was a serious pothole on your street that needed repairs.
p. If a vacant house in the neighbourhood was being used for drug dealing.
q. If the town was planning to cut funding for a local community centre.
r. If sex workers (prostitutes) were soliciting clients in your neighbourhood.

Experiences of Victimization

In this section, the participants were asked about their experience(s) of victimization over the past 2 years. They were asked to respond with a "yes" or a "no" to the following questions:

a. Have you been a victim of crime in the last two years?
    a. If yes, how many times has this happened in your neighbourhood?
    b. If yes, did you report this incident to the police?
        i. If you did not report this incident to the police, why not?

b.   In the past two years, has anyone broken into your home?
    a.   If yes, how many times has this happened in the past two years?
    b.   If yes, the last time someone broke into your home, did you report it to the police?
        i.   If you did not report this incident to the police, why not?
c.   In the past two years, has anyone used violence against you? For example, hit you, shoved you, started a fight with you, or mugged you?
    a.   If yes, how many times did this happen in the past two years?
    b.   If yes, the last time this occurred, were you injured?
    c.   The last time this happened to you, was the person who used violence against you a: stranger, acquaintance, boyfriend or girlfriend, spouse, another relative, someone else?
    d.   The last time this happened to you, where did this incident take place? In your home, on the street, in your neighbourhood, at work, outside of Brantford, someplace else?
    e.   The last time someone used violence against you (hit, shoved, started a fight, or mugged you), did you call the police?
        i.   If you did not report this incident to the police, why not?
d.   In the past two years, has anyone stolen something from your porch, yard, driveway, or somewhere else on your property, but outside your home?
    a.   If yes, how many times has this happened in the last two years?
    b.   If yes, the last time it happened, did you report it to the police?
        i.   If you did not report this incident to the police, why not?

Perceptions of Police and Procedural Justice

In this section, the participants were asked about their perceptions of police in Brantford and how they feel about the law.

First, participants were asked "how often do you see police officers walking around your neighbourhood?" and they were instructed to respond with "never", "less than once a month", "a few times a month", "a few days a week", or "every day." They were also asked "on an average day, how many police cars do you see driving in your neighbourhood?" and could respond with a specific number.

Perceptions of Procedural Justice

The participants were asked to respond with "strongly disagree", "disagree", "agree", or "strongly agree" to the following statements regarding procedural justice:

a.   People should obey the law even if it goes against what they think is right.
b.   I always try to follow the law even if I know it is wrong.
c.   Disobeying the law is rarely justified.
d.   It is difficult to break the law and keep your self-respect.

e. There is little reason for someone like me to obey the law.
f. You can't blame a person for breaking the law if they can get away with it.
g. If a person is doing something and a police officer tells them to stop, they should stop, even if what they are doing is legal.

For ease of interpretation responses to "There is little reason for someone like me to obey the law" were reverse coded to be interpreted as "There is reason for someone like me to obey the law" and responses to "You can't blame a person for breaking the law if they can get away with it" were reverse coded to be interpreted as "you can blame a person for breaking the law if they can get away with it."

Perception of Police

The participants were asked to respond with "strongly disagree", "disagree", "agree", or "strongly agree" to the following statements regarding their perceptions of the police:

a. In general, the police do a good job preventing crime.
b. Police officers treat people fairly.
c. The police do a good job controlling drug activity.
d. In general, police care about problems in my neighbourhood.
e. The police do a good job enforcing traffic laws.
f. In general, police officers treat people with respect.
g. I would be supportive of a special constable or policing alternative response to lower-level criminal issues like vandalism and/or petty theft.
h. In general, the police service is ethnically diverse.
i. In general, the police service accurately represents the community.

The participants were asked additional questions about the police including:

a. Have you ever filed a complaint ABOUT the police? (Yes or no)
    a. If yes, were you living in the same neighbourhood you are now when you filed your last complaint? (Yes or no)
b. Do you believe the police do a good job of keeping the community safe? (Yes or no)
    a. Why or why not?

Feelings of Safety

The questions in this section sought to understand the respondents' perceptions of safety. Participants were asked to respond with "strongly disagree", "disagree", "agree", or "strongly agree" to the following statements regarding their perceptions of safety:

a. It is safe for children to play outside in your neighbourhood.
b. In general, it is safe to walk in your neighbourhood at night.
c. You are afraid of being attacked in your neighbourhood.
d. You are worried that someone will break into your home.

e. It is safe to go outside alone during the day.
f. You are worried about illegal drugs in your neighbourhood.
g. Most people think your neighbourhood is becoming more dangerous.
h. If someone tried to attack you in your neighbourhood, you could easily defend yourself.
i. You are worried that someone will damage or vandalize your property.

To ensure responses were interpreted consistently some statements were reverse coded. Responses to "You are afraid of being attacked in your neighbourhood" were reverse coded to "You are not afraid of being attacked in your neighbourhood." Responses to "You are worried that someone will break into your home" were reverse coded to "You are not worried that someone will break into your home." Responses to "You are worried about illegal drugs in your neighbourhood." were reverse coded to "You are not worried about illegal drugs in your neighbourhood." Responses to "Most people think your neighbourhood is becoming more dangerous." were reverse coded to "Most people think your neighbourhood is not becoming more dangerous." Finally, responses to "You are worried that someone will damage or vandalize your property" were reverse coded to "You are worried that someone will damage or vandalize your property."

Perceptions of Neighbourhood Disorder

This section of the survey seeks to understand how much social and physical disorder the participants perceive in their neighbourhoods.

Social Disorder

The participants were asked to respond with "never", "less than once a month", "a few times a month", "a few times a week", or "every day" to the following statements regarding their perceptions of social disorder:

a. People arguing or fighting in public.
b. Groups of kids hanging out and causing problems.
c. People drinking alcohol in public.
d. People acting drunk or high.
e. Beggars or panhandlers asking for money.
f. People making too much noise late at night.
g. People selling drugs outside.
h. Sex workers (prostitutes) working in public.
i. Dogs out of control/creating a mess.
j. People driving erratically in the area.
k. Drug-taking out in the open.

Physical Disorder

The participants were asked to respond with "none", "one or two", or "many" to the following statements regarding their perceptions of physical disorder:

a. Buildings with broken windows in your neighbourhood.
b. Places in your neighbourhood where graffiti is a problem.
c. Vacant lots in your neighbourhood.
d. Abandoned or boarded up buildings in your neighbourhood.
e. Places in your neighbourhood where litter and broken glass are a problem.
f. Places in your neighbourhood that need better lighting.

Results

Demographics

The following results outline the demographic information of the 306 Brantford residents who completed the survey.

Age: The age of respondents ranged between 19 and 83 years old. The average age of participants was 50.32, with a median age of 51 and a standard deviation of 16.96.

Gender: Among the respondents, 56.5% (173) identified as female, 41.2% (126) identified as male, 1.3% (4) identified as non-binary, 0.3% (1) identified as transgender, and 0.3% (1) identified as other.

Ethnicity: Out of the respondents, 84.9% (259), identified as Caucasian (White). Additionally, 4.9% (15) identified as Indigenous, 3.0% (9) as African, 5.9% (18) as Asian (including South Asian), 0.3% (1) as Middle Eastern, and 1.0% (3) as other.

Marital Status: 51.3% (156) of the respondents were married, while 14.1% (43) were in a de facto or common law relationship. Additionally, 11.5% (35) were divorced or separated, 5.9% (18) were widowed, and 16.8% (51) were single and had never been married. 0.3% (1) of respondents identified their marital status as "other."

Employment: 56.1% (171) of respondents were employed in the Brantford area, while 43.9% (134) were not employed in the Brantford area.

Homeownership: Among the respondents, 66.1% (201) reported that they owned their homes, while 27.3% (83) rented. An additional 6.6% (20) indicated other housing arrangements.

Table 1.0 – Annual Income.

Income (per year)	Count	Percentage (%)
No income	9	2.96
Less than $20,000	42	13.82
$20,001 to $50,000	83	27.30
$50,001 to $80,000	66	21.71
$80,001 to $100,000	41	13.49
$100,001 to $120,000	26	8.55
$120,001 to $140,000	6	1.97
$140,001 to $160,000	11	3.62
Over $160,000	20	6.58
Total		100.00

Table 1.0 demonstrates that the largest proportion of respondents reported an annual income between $20,001 and $50,000, accounting for 27.3% (83) of participants. This was followed by 21.7% (66) earning between $50,001 and $80,000, and 13.8% (42) earning less than $20,000. Additionally, 13.5% (41) of respondents reported an income between $80,001 and $100,000, while 8.6% (26) earned $100,001 to $120,000. Smaller proportions of respondents fell into higher income brackets, with 6.6% (20) earning over $160,000, 3.6% (11) earning $140,001 to $160,000, and 2.0% (6) earning $120,001 to $140,000. Finally, 3.0% (9) of respondents reported no income.

Table 2.0 - Highest level of educational attainment.

Education Attained	Count	Percentage (%)
No schooling	1	0.33
Less than high school diploma	11	3.62
High school diploma or equivalent	51	16.78
Some trade, technical, or vocational school	35	11.51
Business or community college	67	22.04
Some university	28	9.21
Bachelor's degree	57	18.75
Graduate or professional degree (ex. law or medicine)	54	17.76
Total		100.00

Table 2.0 shows that the most common level of education among respondents is business or community college, reported by 22.0% (67) of participants. This is followed by bachelor's degrees at 18.8% (57) and graduate or professional degrees at 17.8% (54). Additionally, 16.8% (51) reported earning a high school diploma or equivalent, while 11.5% (35) completed some trade, technical, or vocational training. Smaller proportions of respondents reported having some university education at 9.2% (28), less than a high school diploma at 3.6% (11), and no schooling at 0.3% (1).

Table 3.0 - Time at current residence.

Time	Count	Percentage (%)
Less than 6 months	16	5.25
6 months to less than 1 year	13	4.26
1 year to less than 3 years	46	15.08
3 years to less than 5 years	41	13.44
5 years to less than 10 years	56	18.36
10 or more years	133	43.61
Total		100.00

Table 3.0 shows that the largest proportion of respondents, 43.6% (133), had lived at their current residence for 10 or more years. This was followed by 18.4% (56) who had lived there for 5 to less than 10 years, and 15.1% (46) who had lived there for 1 to less than 3 years. Additionally, 13.4% (41) reported living at their current residence for 3 to less than 5 years, while 5.2% (16) had lived there for less than 6 months, and 4.3% (13) for 6 months to less than 1 year.

Table 4.0 - Plan to live in Brantford.

Time	Count	Percentage (%)
Less than 6 months	7	2.30
6 months to less than 1 year	17	5.59
1 year to less than 3 years	22	7.24
3 years to less than 5 years	29	9.54
5 years to less than 10 years	36	11.84
10 or more years	193	63.49
Total		100.00

Table 4.0 shows that the majority of respondents, 63.5% (193), planned to remain in Brantford for 10 or more years. This was followed by 11.8% (36) who planned to stay for 5 to less than 10 years, and 9.5% (29) who intended to stay for 3 to less than 5 years. Additionally, 7.2% (22) planned to stay for 1 to less than 3 years, while 5.6% (17) expected to stay for 6 months to less than 1 year, and 2.3% (7) planned to stay for less than 6 months.

Based on the Figure 1.0 – Brantford Neighbourhoods, the sample comprised of participants from the following regions.

Table 5.0 - Area of Residence

Area	Count	Percent	Area	Count	Percent	Area	Count	Percent
1	24	7.8	9	6	2.0	17	12	3.9
2	18	5.9	10	10	3.3	18	10	3.3
3	11	3.6	11	19	6.2	19	12	3.9
4	17	5.6	12	2	0.7	20	10	3.3
5	17	5.6	13	13	4.2	21	12	3.9
6	18	5.9	14	5	1.6	22	7	2.3
7	16	5.2	15	7	2.3	23	10	3.3
8	10	3.3	16	19	6.4	24	21	6.9

Neighbourhood Community Involvement

Figure 2.0 - Neighbourhood Involvement.

Neighbourhood Involvement
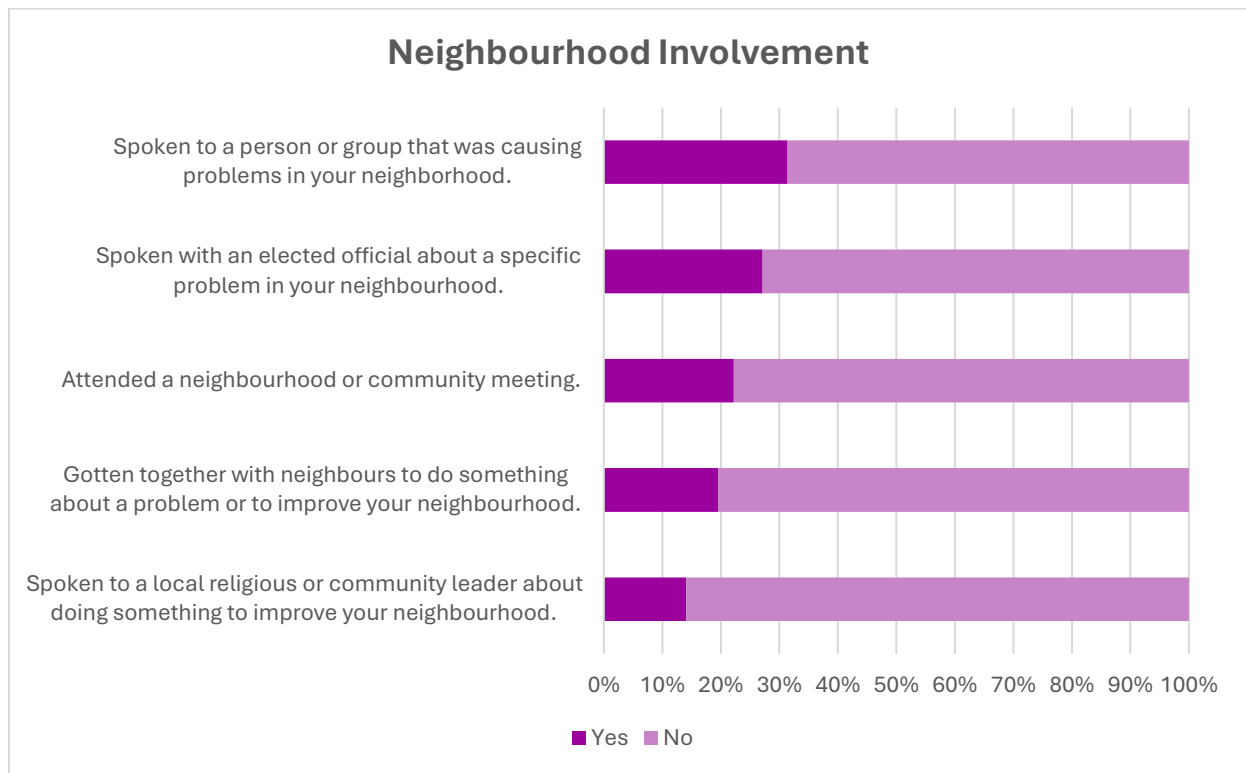
Figure 2.0 demonstrates that a significant proportion of respondents indicated that they had not been involved in neighbourhood activities. Out of 306 participants, 31.4% (96) reported speaking to an elected official about specific neighbourhood problems, 27.1% (83) of respondents said they spoke to a person causing problems in the neighbourhood, 22.2% (68) reported working with neighbors to address a neighbourhood specific problem, 19.1% (60) of respondents said they attended a neighbourhood community meeting, and only 14.1% (43) said they had spoken to a religious or community leader to address neighbourhood problems.

Neighbourhood Integration

Figure 3.0 - Neighbourhood Integration

Figure 3.0 - Neighbourhood Integration
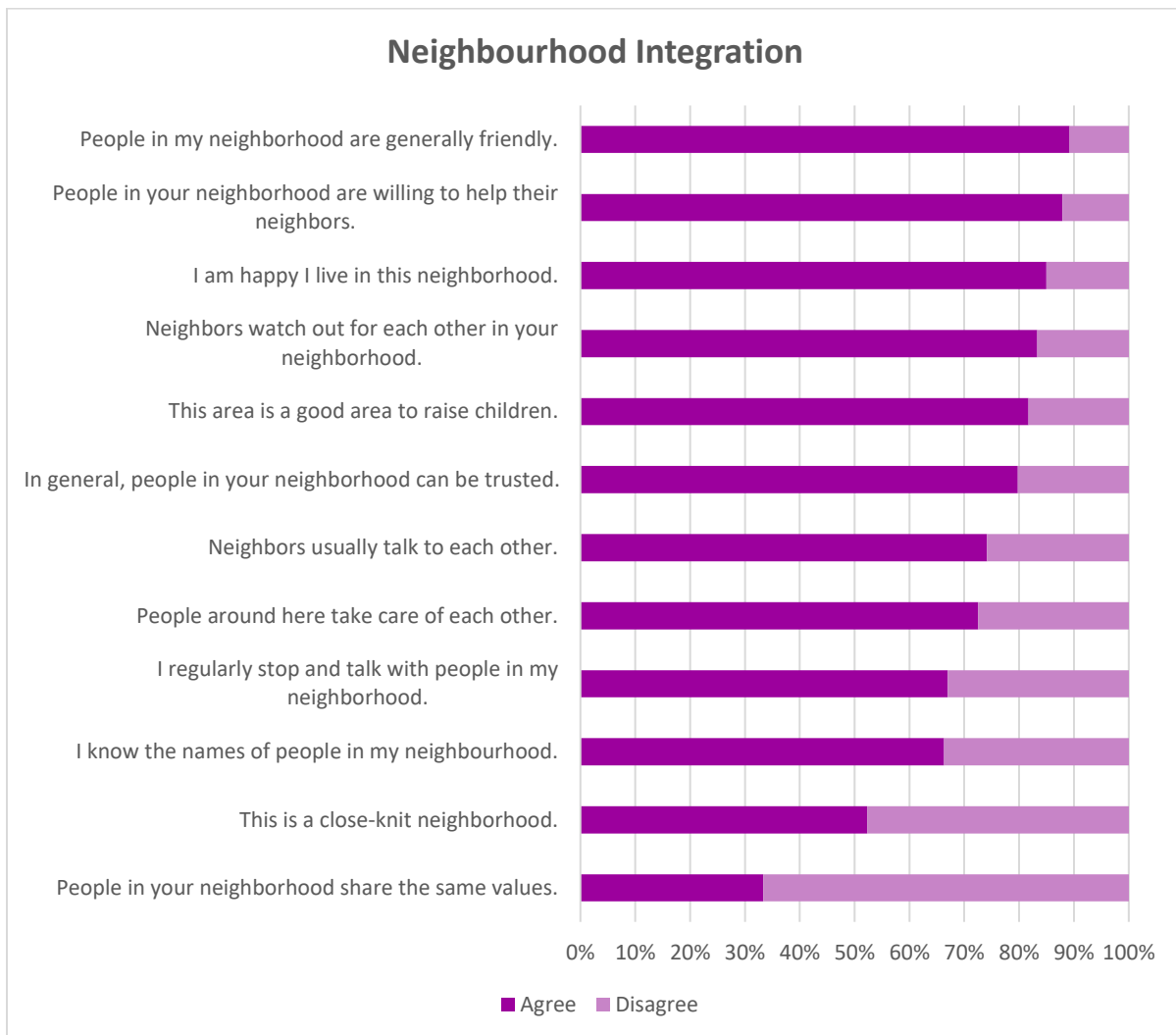
Figure 3.0 shows the participants' level of neighbourhood integration. For ease of interpretation, "Strongly Agree" and "Agree" have been combined into "Agree" and "Strongly Disagree" and "Disagree" have been combined into "Disagree". A strong majority of respondents agreed that "People in my neighborhood are generally friendly" with 273 out of 306 participants (89.2%), followed closely by "People in your neighborhood are willing to help their neighbors" with 269 participants (87.9%), and "I am happy I live in this neighborhood" with 260 participants (85.0%). Additionally, 255 participants (83.3%) agreed that "Neighbors watch out for each other in your neighborhood", and 250 participants (81.7%) agreed that "This area is a good area to raise children". Trust in the community was also notable, with 244 participants (79.7%) agreeing that "In general, people in your neighborhood can be trusted", and 227 participants (74.2%) agreeing that "Neighbors usually talk to each other". Furthermore, 222 participants (72.5%) agreed that

"People around here take care of each other", and 160 participants (52.3%) agreed that "This is a close-knit neighborhood." The lowest level of agreement was for "People in your neighborhood share the same values," with 204 participants (66.7%) agreeing to the statement.

Relationships with Neighbours

Figure 4.0 - Knowing Neighbours by Name

Do you know any of your neighbours by name?

■ Yes ■ No
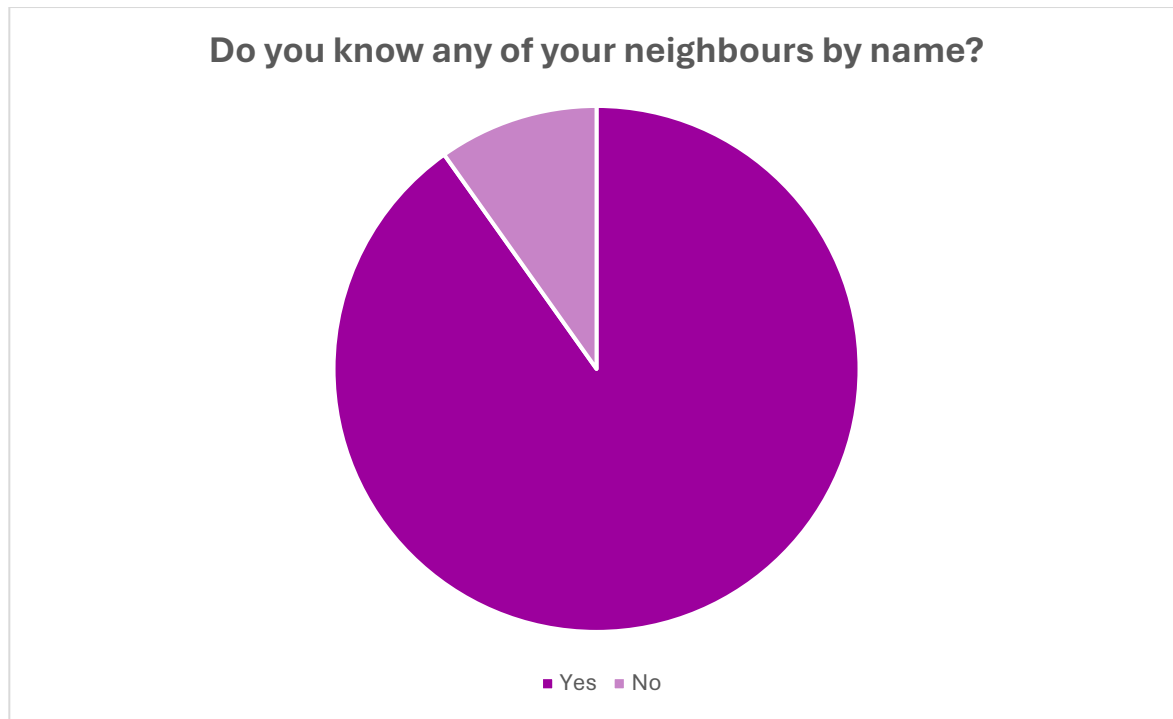
Figure 4.0 demonstrates that 90.2% (275) of respondents know their neighbours by name and 9.8% (30) respondents do not know their neighbours by name.

Table 6.0 - Friends with Neighbours

The participants were asked to give as count of how many neighbours they would consider to be their friends. The answers have been put into ranges for ease of interpretation.

Friendship Range	Count	Percent
No neighbours	38	17.35%
1-2 neighbours	36	16.44%
3-5 neighbours	58	26.48%
6-10 neighbours	59	26.94%
More than 10 neighbours	28	12.79%
Total	219	100%

Table 6.0 demonstrates, of those who answered the question, 38 participants (17.35%) do not consider any of their neighbours to be their friends, 36 participants (16.44%) consider 1-2 of their neighbours to be their friends, 58 participants (26.48%) consider 3-5 of their neighbours as friends, 59 participants (26.94%) consider between 6-10 of their neighbours as friends, and 28 participants (12.79%) consider more than 10 of their neighbours as friends. The mean of all responses was 4.99, while the median was 4.00, and a mode of 8.00, and a standard deviation of 3.92. On average, participants considered about 5 neighbours to be friends, with the median being 4 neighbours. The most common response range was 6–10 friends.

Figure 5.0 - Time Spent Interacting with Neighbours
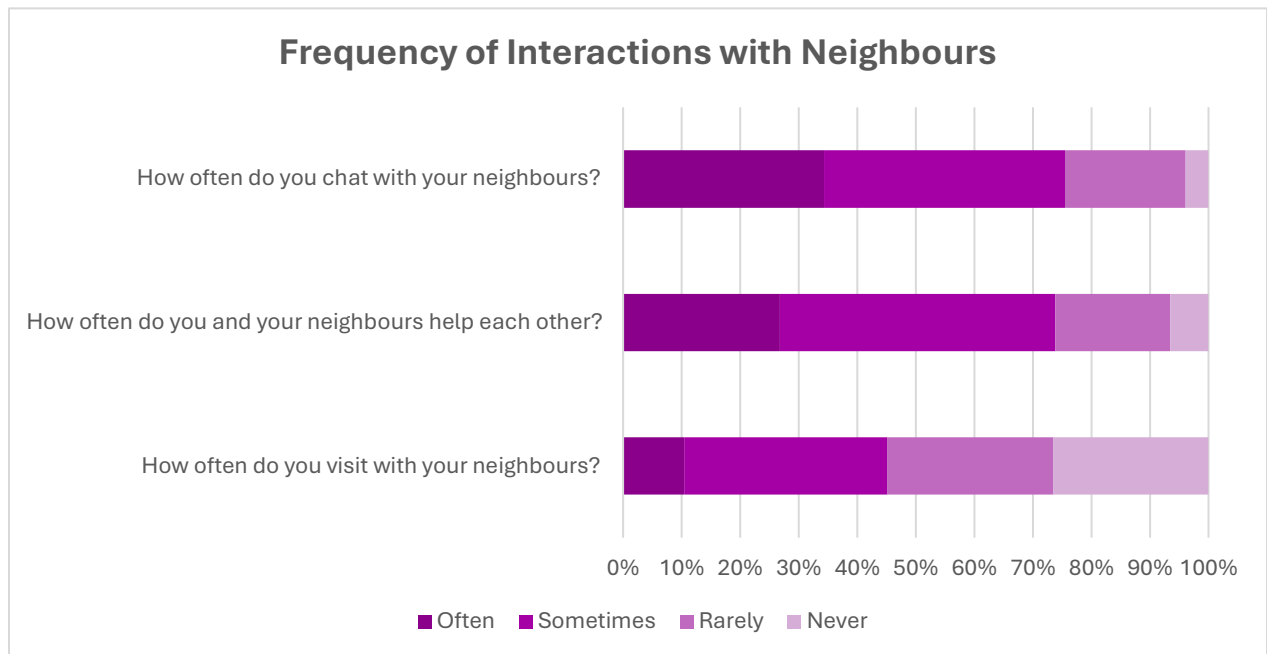
Figure 5.0 demonstrates, in count, the frequency at which individuals interact with their neighbours. 34.3% of respondents reported that they chat with their neighbours often (105), while 41.2% (126) reported sometimes, 20.6% (63) reported rarely, and 3.9% (12) reported they never chat with their neighbours. Visiting neighbours was less common, with 10.5% (32) stating they visit their neighbours often (32), 34.6% (106) visit their neighbours sometimes, 28.4% (87) reported visiting rarely, while 26.5% (81) reported never visiting their neighbours. 26.8% (82) of respondents stated that they help their neighbours often, 47.1% (144) help their neighbours sometimes, 19.6% (60) respondents rarely help their neighbours, and 6.5% (20) reported they never help their neighbours.

Willingness to Intervene

Figure 6.0 - Willingness to Intervene

Willingness to Intervene if...

(Horizontal stacked bar chart with categories from top to bottom)

- A vacant house in the neighbourhood was being used for drug dealing.
- There was a serious pothole on your street that needed repairs.
- Prostitutes (sex workers) were soliciting clients in your neighbourhood.
- A group of kids were "car shopping" (trying to open car door handles).
- Someone was trying to break into a house.
- Drugs were being sold in your neighbourhood.
- Someone on your street was firing a gun.
- Suspicious people were hanging around the neighbourhood.
- A group of kids were spraying graffiti on a building.
- A group of kids were climbing on a parked car.
- The town was planning to cut funding for a local community centre.
- A teenager was showing disrespect to an adult.
- A local fire station was going to be closed down because of budget cuts.
- People were having a loud argument in the street.
- A group of underage kids were drinking in public.
- Someone was illegally parking on the street.
- Someone on your street was playing loud music.
- Some kids were skipping school and hanging out on your street.

X-axis: 0% 10% 20% 30% 40% 50% 60% 70% 80% 90% 100%

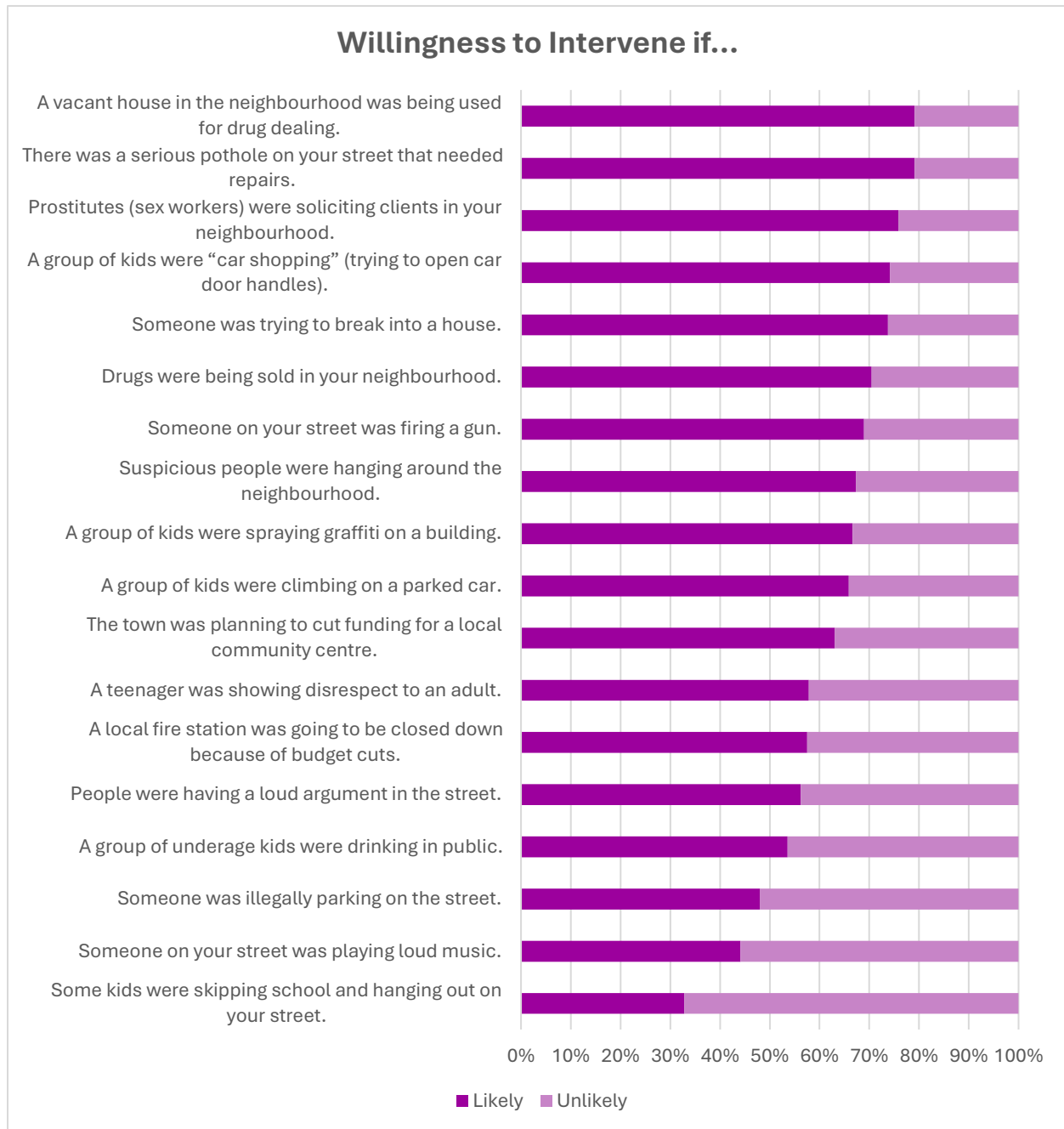Legend: ■ Likely ■ Unlikely

Figure 6.0 includes several statements that represent the willingness of neighbourhood residents to intervene in stopping illegitimate activities in their neighbourhoods. For ease of interpretation, "Very Likely" and "Likely" have been combined into "Likely" and "Very Unlikely" and "Unlikely" have been combined into "Unlikely." 79.1% (242) of respondents felt that it was

likely for the neighbourhood to intervene if a vacant house was being used for drug dealing. Similarly, 79.1% (242) of respondents felt it was likely that the neighbourhood would intervene if there was a serious pothole on their street that needed repairs. 75.8% (232) of respondents indicated it was likely that the neighbourhood would intervene if sex workers were soliciting clients in the neighbourhood. Followed by intervention if kids were trying to open car door handles, 227 (74.2%) reported they were likely to intervene. This was followed closely by likely intervention if someone was trying to break into a house (225 participants, 73.5%), if drugs were being sold in their neighbourhood (215 participants, 70.3%), if someone on their street was firing a gun (211 participants, 69.0%), and if suspicious people were hanging around the neighbourhood (206 participants, 67.3%). Respondents also indicated they would likely intervene if kids were spraying graffiti on a building (204 participants, 66.7%) and if kids were climbing on a parked car (201 participants, 65.7%). 63.1% (193) of respondents felt it was likely that the neighbourhood would intervene if the town was planning to cut funding for a local community centre, 57% (177) were likely to intervene if a teenager was showing disrespect to an adult. 57.5% (176) believed intervention was likely if a local fire station was going to be closed because of budget cuts, followed by 56.2% (172) for if people were having a loud argument in the street, 53.4% (164) for if a group of underage kids were drinking in public. This was followed by 48.0% (147) of respondents for illegal parking, 44.1% (135) for loud music, and 32.7% (100) for kids skipping school and hanging out on the street.

Experiences of Victimization

Figure 7.0 - Victimization

Have you been a victim of crime in the last two years?

■ Yes ■ No
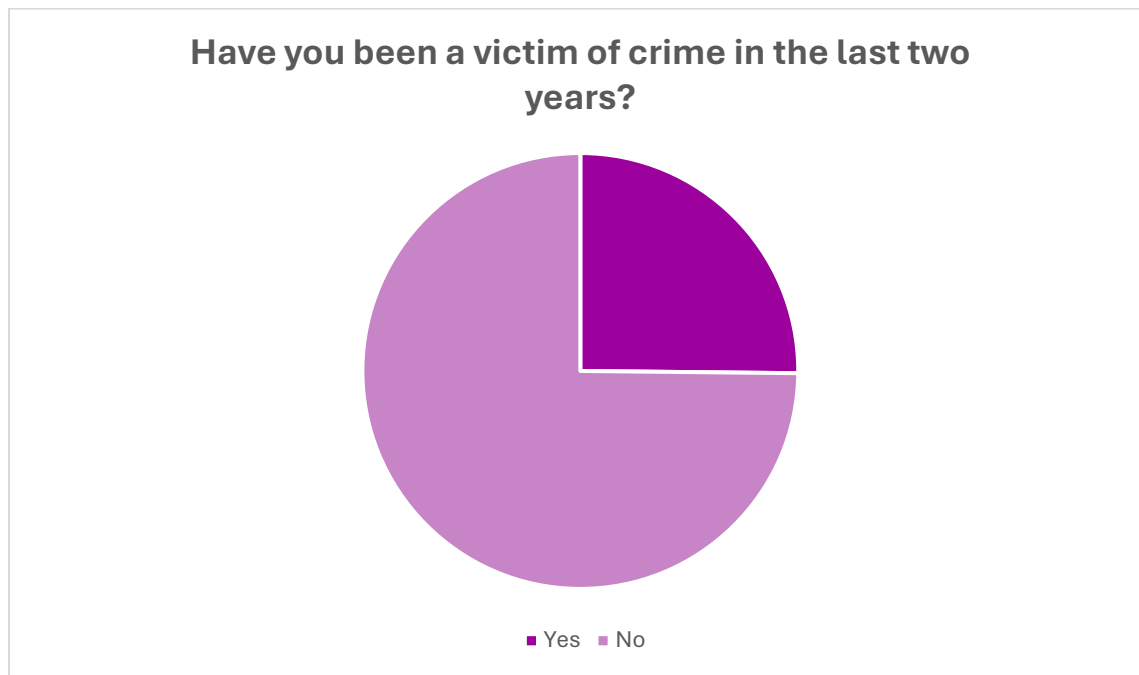
Respondents were asked about their experiences of victimization. As seen in Figure 7.0, 25.2% (77) of participants responded they had been the victim of a crime in the past two years. Of those who responded yes, 67.5% (52) of participants reported the crime to the police.

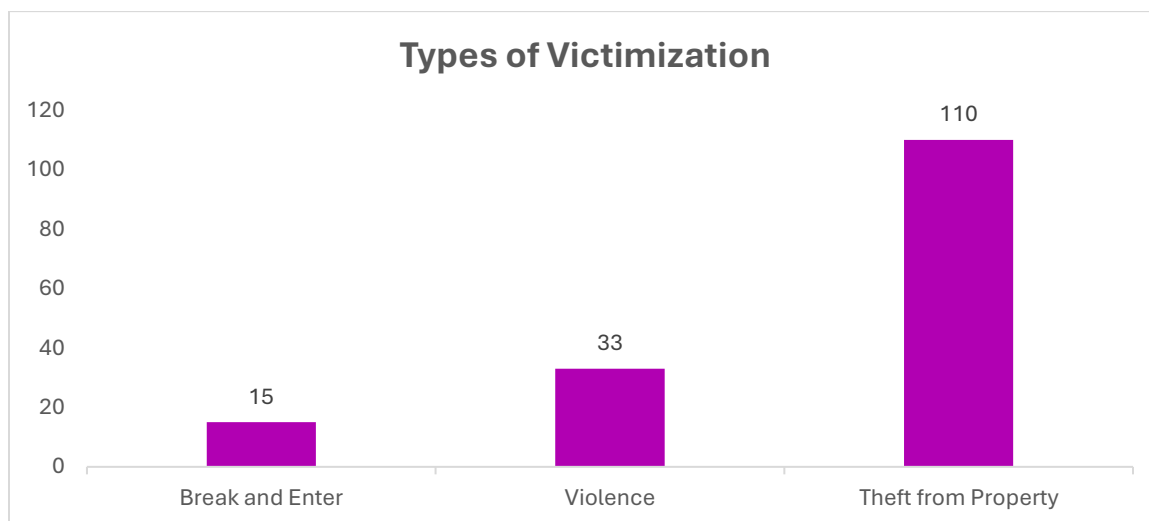Figure 8.0 - Types of victimization

Types of Victimization

Figure 8.0 demonstrates reported victimization in the past two years. 15 respondents reported being a victim of a break and enter and 9 (60%) of those participants reported these incidents to

the police. 33 participants reported use of violence against them, and 12 of those respondents reported being injured because of these incidents. Of the 33 who experience violence against them in the last 2 years, 11 (33%) reported the incident to the police. 110 participants reported thefts from their property and 34 (31%) of those participants reported the incident of theft to the police.

Table 7.0 - Relationship of the victim in the case of violent victimization

Relationship to the Perpetrator	Count	Percentage (%)
Stranger	19	59.4
Acquaintance	5	15.6
Boyfriend or Girlfriend	2	6.3
Spouse	1	3.1
Another Relative	0	0.0
Someone Else	5	15.6
Total	32	100

Table 7.0 shows the self-reported relationship of the victim to the perpetrator in their cases of victimization. 19 respondents (59.4%) indicated the perpetrator was a stranger, 5 (15.6%) said an acquaintance, 2 participants (6.3%) said a boyfriend or a girlfriend, 1 participant (3.1%) said it was a spouse, and 5 respondents (15.6%) indicated it was someone else.

Perceptions of Police and Procedural Justice

Participants were provided several questions to capture their perceptions of police and police behaviours.

Police Presence

Figure 9.0 - Visibility of Police

How often do you see police officers walking around your neighborhood?

■ Every day ■ A few days a week ■ A few times a month ■ Less than once a month ■ Never

The participants were asked to provide an estimate of how often they see police officers walking around their neighbourhood. Figure 9.0 indicates that 4.3 (13) answered every day, 5.6% (17) said a few days a week, 9.8% (30) said a few times a month, 15.7% (48) said less than once a month, and 64.7% (198) said never.

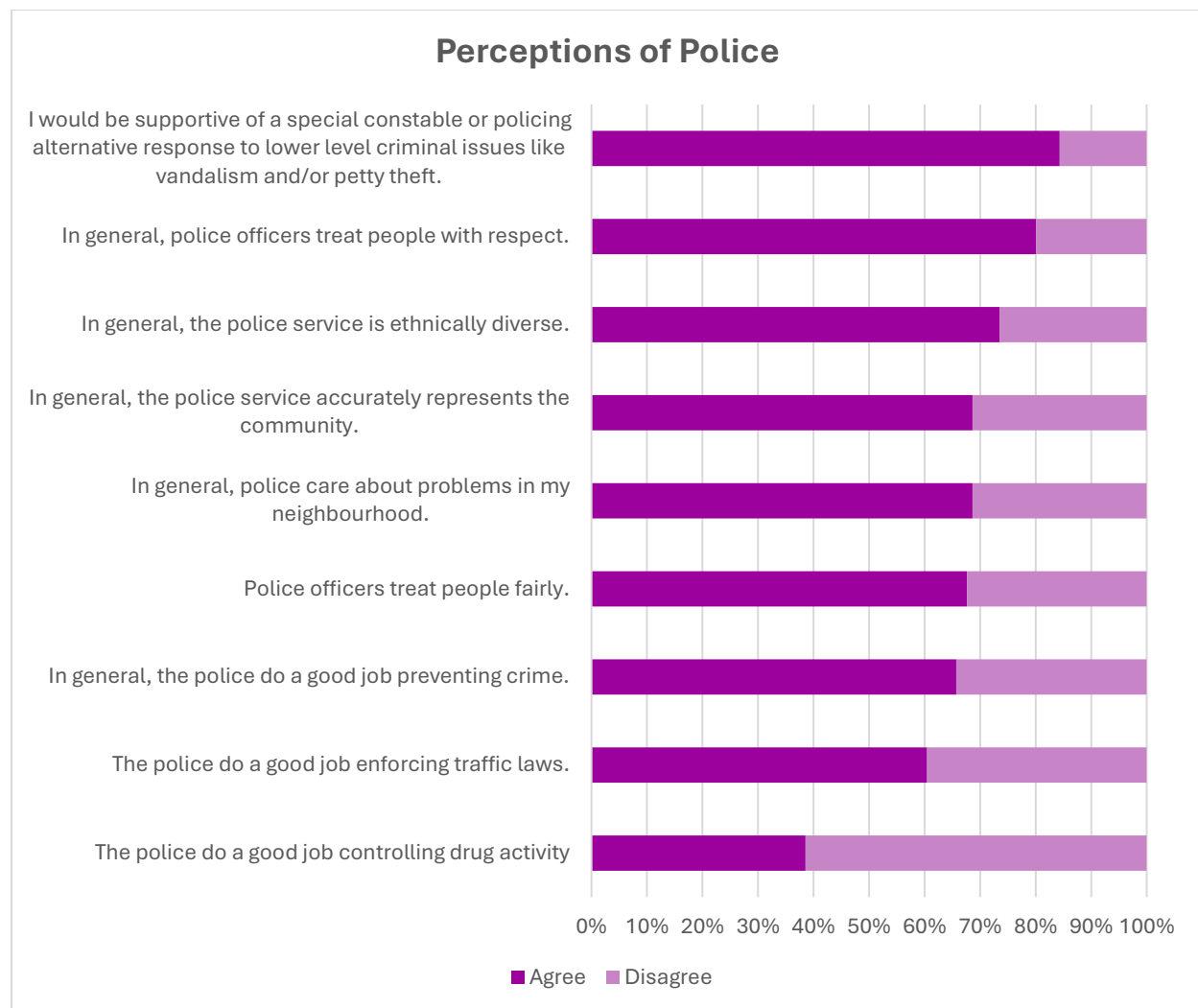## Perceptions of Police

Figure 10.0 - Perceptions of Police

Figure 10.0 demonstrates the questions asked, and the responses provided regarding perceptions of police. For ease of interpretation, "Strongly Agree" and "Agree" have been combined into "Agree" and "Strongly Disagree" and "Disagree" have been combined into "Disagree". Respondents agreed most with the statement "I would be supportive of a special constable or policing alternative response to lower-level criminal issues like vandalism and/or petty theft," with 258 out of 306 participants (84.3%) reporting an agreement. A high level of agreement was also seen for "In general, police officers treat people with respect," with 245 participants (80.1%)

agreeing, and "In general, the police service is ethnically diverse," with 225 participants (73.5%) agreeing. Additionally, 210 participants (68.6%) agreed with both "In general, the police service accurately represents the community" and "In general, police care about problems in my neighbourhood." Furthermore, 207 participants (67.6%) agreed that "Police officers treat people fairly," and 201 participants (65.7%) agreed that "In general, the police do a good job preventing crime." Conversely, respondents were less likely to agree that "The police do a good job enforcing traffic laws," with 185 participants (60.5%) in agreement, and least likely to agree that "The police do a good job controlling drug activity," with only 118 participants (38.6%) agreeing.

Figure 11.0 - Complaint about Police

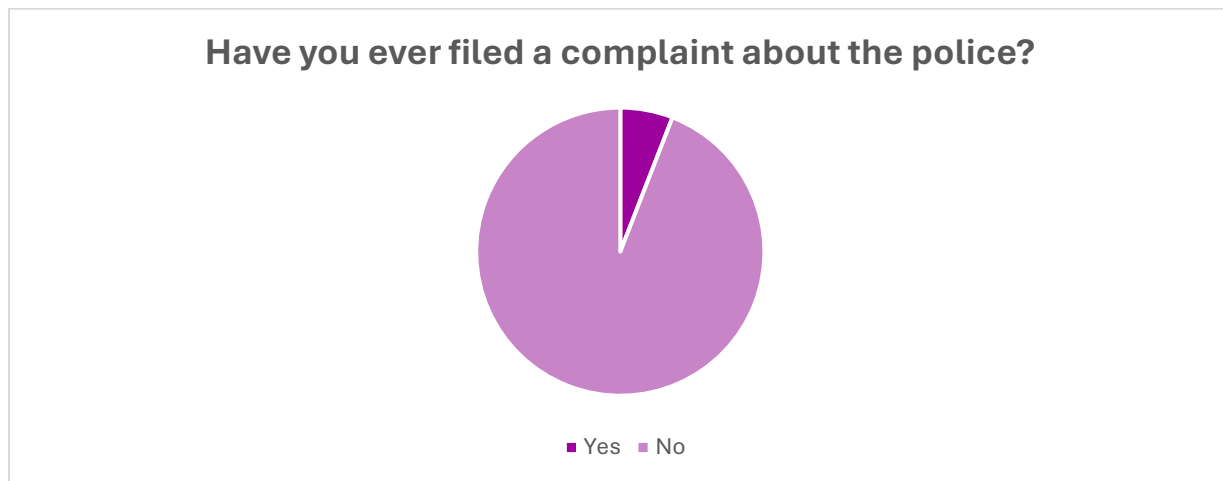**Have you ever filed a complaint about the police?**

■ Yes ■ No

Figure 11.0 shows that out of all participants, 18 (5.9%) of them have filed a complaint against the police. Of those that filed the report, 12 (3.9%) respondents indicated they still live in the same neighbourhood.

Figure 12.0 - Police Efficacy

Do you believe the police do a good job of keeping the community safe?
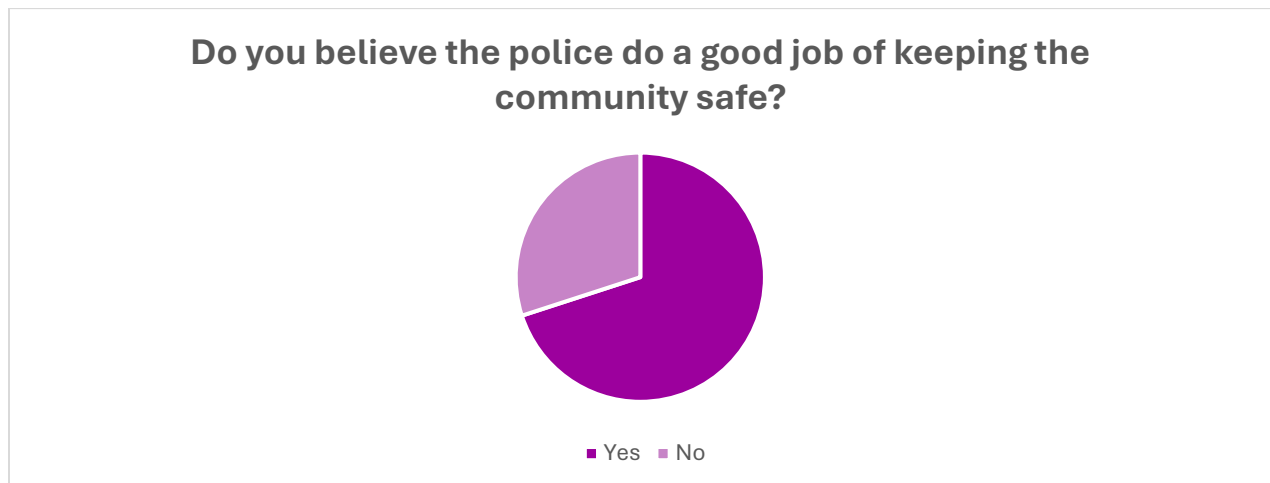
■ Yes ■ No

Figure 12.0 shows that when asked, 70% (210) of respondents felt the police are doing a good job at keeping their communities safe, while 30% (90) of respondents felt the police are not doing a good job at keeping their communities safe.

After the previous question, the participants were asked why they believe the police do a good job at keeping the community safe or why they believe the police do not do a good job at keeping the community safe.

Respondents Who Believe Police Do a Good Job - Quotations

Respondents who believe the police are doing a good job keeping the community safe express confidence, respect, or at least understanding toward the police and challenges police face. They often acknowledged shortcomings, but attribute them to limited resources, staffing shortages, or broader social issues rather than concerns about police behaviour. Many note that their communities feel safe, police are generally responsive, and crime is relatively low. Specific quotations which capture these general themes are provided below.

1. **Doing the Best They Can with Limited Resources**
2. **Quick or Appropriate Response**
3. **Community Feels Safe / Low Crime**
4. **Respect and Understanding for Police Work**
5. **Nuanced or Mixed but Generally Positive Views**

"I think they do the best they can under the circumstances."

"Fortunately, our community is relatively safe, so the police are rarely needed."

"Called a few years ago about a suspicious event, police responded."

"Police keep the majority of community safe by spreading awareness or giving warnings."

"I wish it wasn't a binary question. They do great at some things, poorly at others."

"I think the police keep the community safe to the best of their abilities with the resources they are given."

"I believe they try. Brantford has grown too fast. There are not enough police officers here to cover all the areas."

"I have respect for the police because at the end of the day they keep things orderly."

"They do what they can with the resources they have."

"Our area is fairly safe. Police do respond when needed."

"They come quickly."

37

Respondents Who Believe Police Do Not *Do a Good Job - Quotations*

Respondents who reported that they do not believe the police are doing a good job describe policing as reactive, ineffective, biased, or corrupt. These respondents feel unsafe, rarely see police in their area, or believe police ignore key issues such as drugs, homelessness, and petty crime. A subset explicitly express distrust, anger, or negative personal experiences. Specific quotations which capture these general themes are provided below.

1. **Reactive, Not Preventative**
2. **Lack of Presence / Visibility**
3. **Poor Response or Inaction**
4. **Bias, Discrimination, or Corruption**
5. **Drugs, Homelessness, and Disorder Uncontrolled**
6. **Broader Systemic or Structural Critique**
7. **Negative Personal Experiences**

"The police try to solve crime not prevent it."

"They are not around. Can't find one."

"Cops are crooks. Police are corrupt."

"Police are only in place to enforce the laws that the wealthy set-in place."

"They don't do anything about problems that have been reported even with clear evidence."

"Police are forced to be responsible for social issues then end up causing more harm."

"Drug addicts are everywhere, stealing, and they do nothing to stop them."

"The lack of enforcement against the many laws that homeless people break is tough to see."

"Lack of patrol in our neighbourhood."

"Because they pushed my stomach at 8 months pregnant, my son came out with a 2mm brain bleed."

"Increasing the police budget and or adding more officers doesn't do anything to address the underlying social issues."

"Their response always comes after the crime, unable to prevent it from happening in the first place."

"My roommates and I called the police two times about a man trying to break into our home… The police did nothing but tell him to leave."

"General lack of respect for citizens, high levels of discrimination."

"All they do is follow orders and 'enforce' the law. They are in no position to affect change."

"Our downtown is a disaster. I don't allow my teenagers to visit this area."

38

Perceptions of Procedural Justice

Figure 13.0 - Perceptions of Procedural Justice
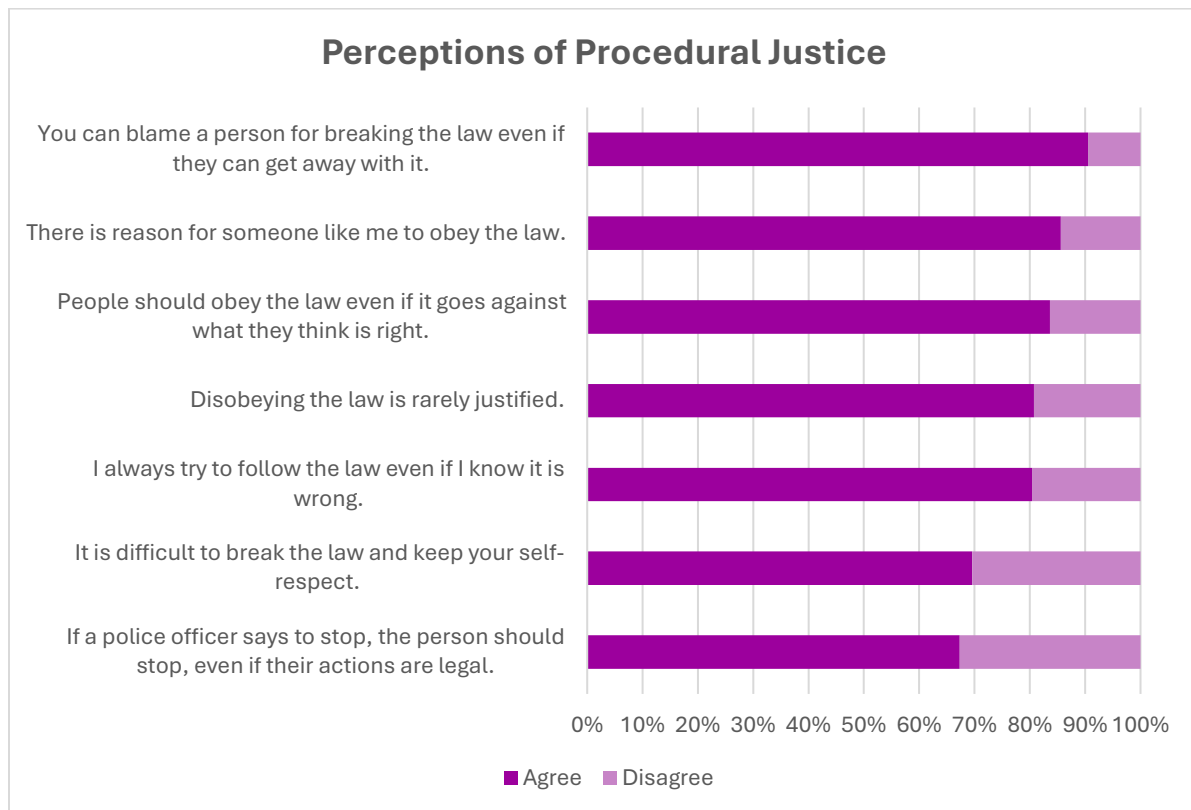
Perceptions of Procedural Justice

Figure 13.0 displays the participants' perceptions on procedural justice in Brantford. For ease of interpretation, "Strongly Agree" and "Agree" have been combined into "Agree" and "Strongly Disagree" and "Disagree" have been combined into "Disagree". 90.5% (277) of participants agree that a person can be blamed for breaking the law even if they can get away with it, and 85.6% (262) of participants agree that there is reason for them to obey the law. Additionally, 83.7% (256) of respondents agree that people should obey the law, even if it goes against their beliefs, 80.7% (247) of respondents agree that disobeying the law is rarely justified, and 80.4% (246) or respondents agree that they try to follow the law even if they know it to be wrong. A further 69.6% (213) of respondents agree that it is difficult to break the law and keep your self-respect, while 67.3% (206) of respondents agree that if a police officer tells a person to stop, they should stop even if their actions are legal.

Feelings of Safety

Figure 14.0 - Perceptions of Safety
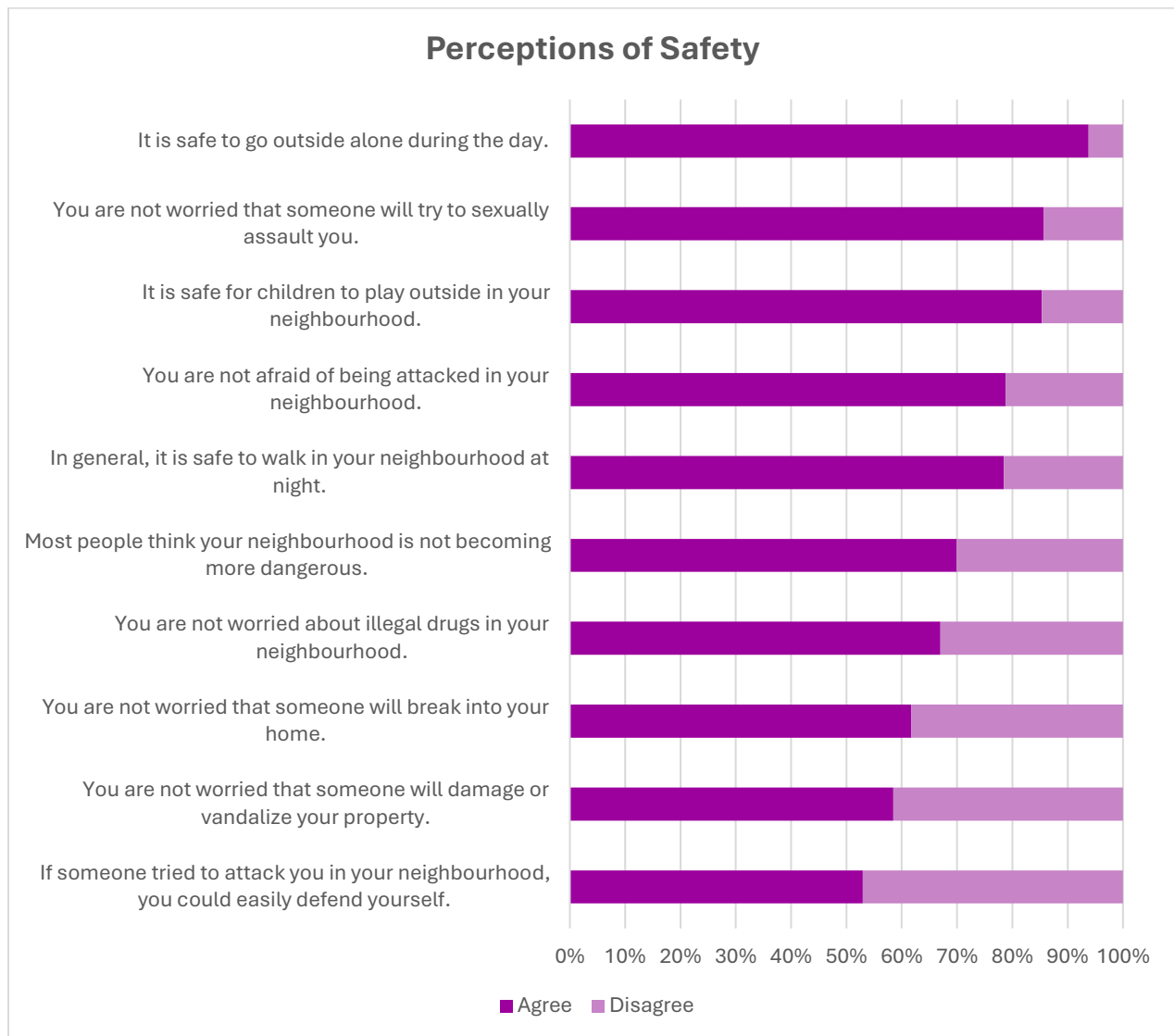
For ease of interpretation, "Strongly Agree" and "Agree" have been combined into "Agree" and "Strongly Disagree" and "Disagree" have been combined into "Disagree". Figure 14.0 demonstrates that when inquired about their perceptions of safety, 93.79% (287) participants agree that it is safe to go outside in their neighbourhood during the day. 85.62% (262) of participants agree that they are not worried that someone will try to sexually assault them, 85.29% (261) of participants agree it is safe for children to play outside in their neighbourhood. 78.76% (241) of respondents agree they are not afraid of being attacked in their neighbourhood, and 78.43% (240) respondents agree it is safe to walk in their neighbourhood at night. 69.93% of respondents agree that most people think their neighbourhood is not becoming more dangerous, and 66.99% (189) agree they are not worried about illegal drugs in their neighbourhood. 61.76%

(189) respondents agree that they are not worried about someone breaking into their home, and 61.76% (179) respondents agree they are not worried about damage or vandalism to their property. Finally, 52.94% of respondents agree that they could easily defend themselves if they were attacked in their neighbourhood.

Perceptions of Social Disorder

Figure 15.0 - Perceptions of Social Disorder
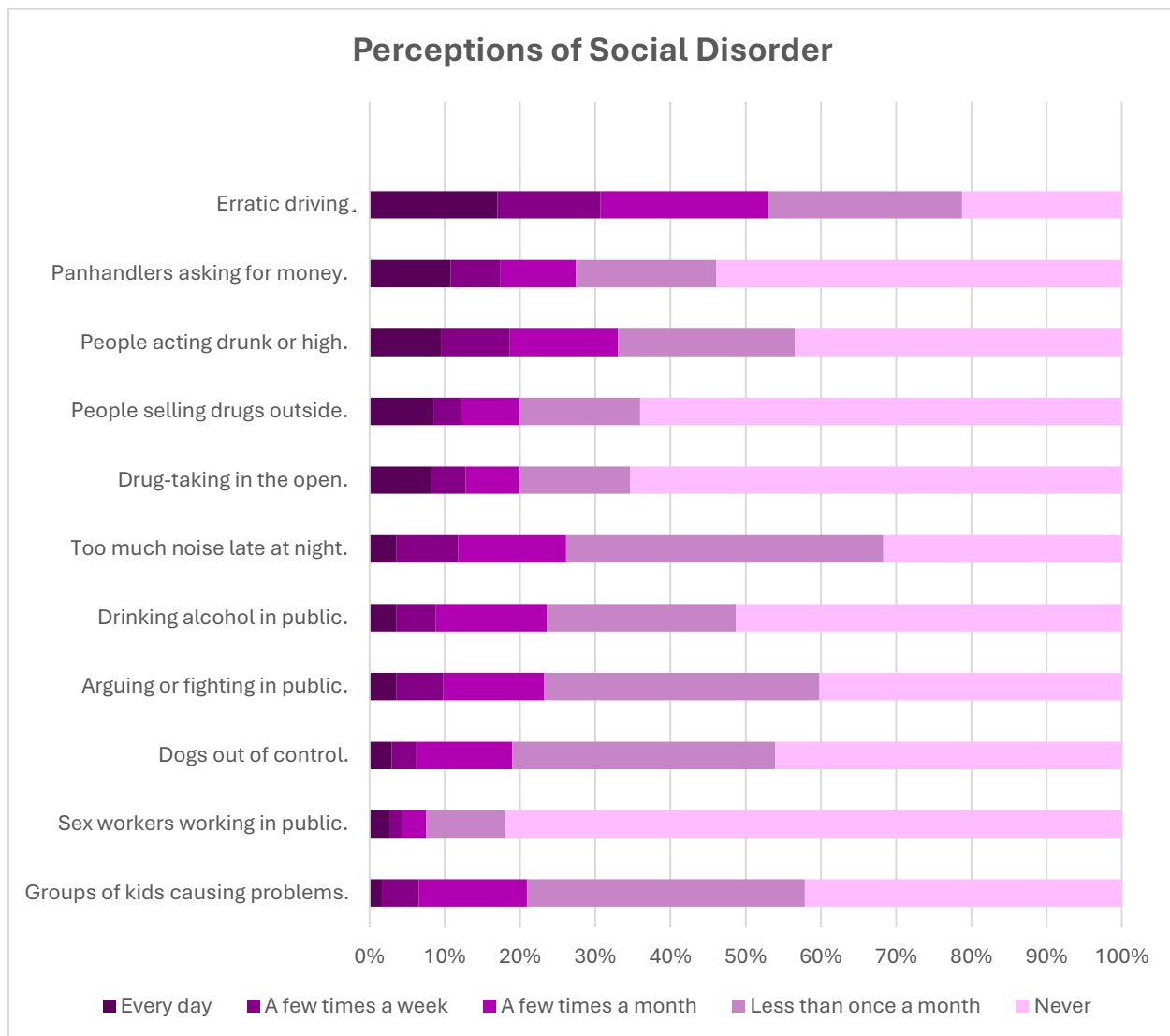
As Figure 15.0 demonstrates, the most frequently observed issue daily was erratic driving, with 52 out of 306 participants (17.0%) reporting they saw it every day. This was followed by panhandlers asking for money, with 33 participants (10.8%) witnessing this daily, and people acting drunk or high, reported by 29 participants (9.5%). Additionally, 26 participants (8.5%) reported seeing people selling drugs outside every day, while 25 participants (8.2%) said they observed drug-taking in the open daily. Drinking alcohol in public was reported as a daily

occurrence by 11 participants (3.6%) and arguing or fighting in public was reported by 11 participants (3.6%) as well. Lower daily frequencies were noted for sex workers working in public, with 8 participants (2.6%) witnessing this every day, and groups of kids causing problems, seen daily by 5 participants (1.6%). The least frequently reported daily issue was dogs out of control, with only 9 participants (2.9%) indicating they saw this every day. However, 42.2% of participants reported too much noise late at night less than once a month, and 52.9% of respondents reported seeing erratic driving at least a few times a month.

Perceptions of Physical Disorder

Figure 16.0 - Perceptions of Physical Disorder
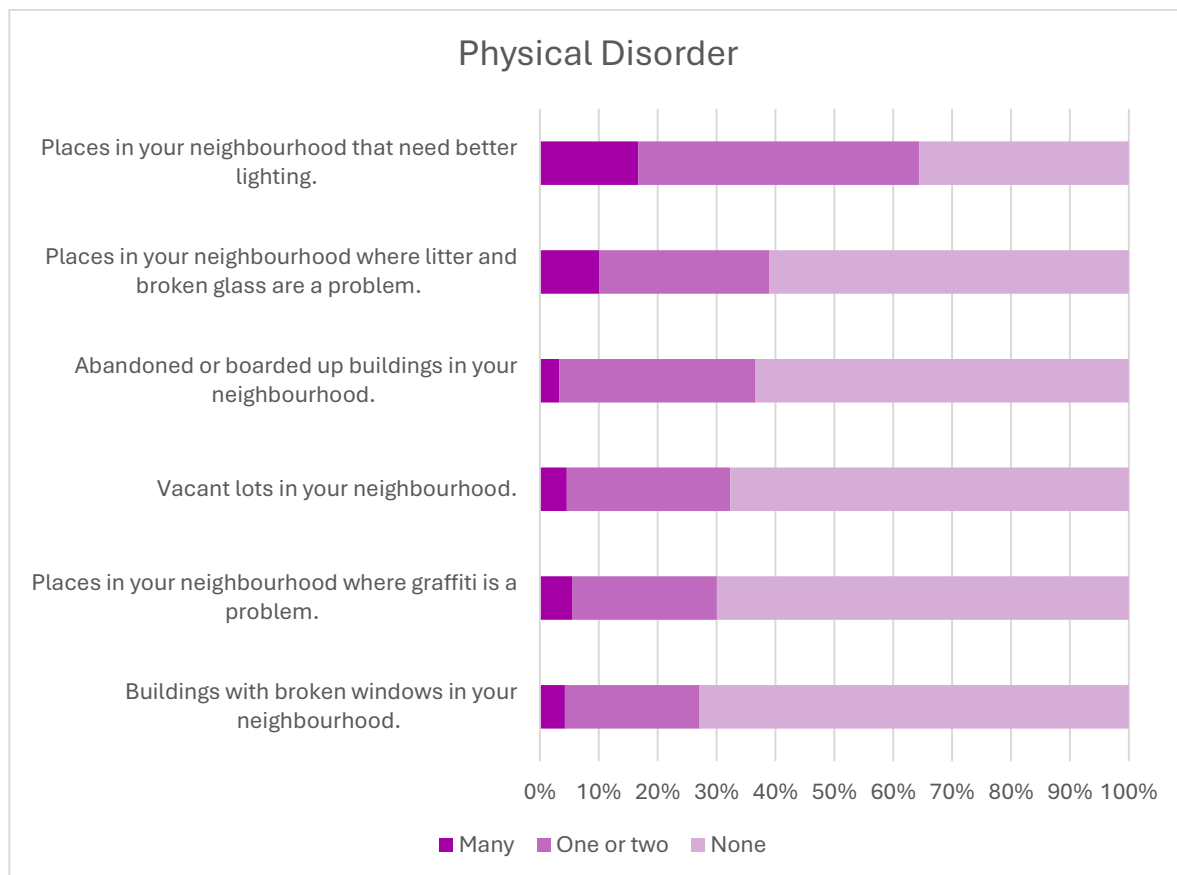
Figure 16.0 shows the respondents' perceptions of physical disorder. 64.4% (197) of respondents reported having at least one place in their neighbourhoods that need better lighting. 38.9% (119) reported having at least one place in their neighbourhood where litter and broken glass are a problem. A further 36.6% (112) reported having at least one abandoned or boarded up building in their neighbourhood, 30.1% (92) reported having at least one place in their neighbourhood where graffiti is a problem, and 27.1% (83) of respondents reported having at least one building with broken windows in their neighbourhood.

Key Findings and Implications

This section will present the key findings from each category and discuss them in relation to available literature.

Demographics

This survey was conducted in 2023-2024, and while measures were taken to ensure accurate representation based on the population of Brantford, there are some discrepancies. The average age of respondents was just over 50 years old (standard deviation of 16.96), while the average age in the Brantford census was just over 41 years old (Statistics Canada, 2021). The minimum age requirement to complete the survey was 18 years old which may have overinflated the average age. For gender, the survey representation was 56.5% female, 41.2% male, 1.3% as non-binary, 0.3% as transgender, and 0.3% as other. The Brantford census measured gender in a binary and reported as 48.9% male, and 51.1% as female (Statistics Canada, 2021). The survey is fairly representative of gender. The highest represented income category in the survey was reported as being between 20,001 and 50,000. The Brantford census reported the median income as 39,200 (StatsCan 2021), however the median income category on the survey was between $50,0001 and $80,000, indicating that respondents had slightly higher incomes than the general population according to the census. 51.3% of respondents in the survey reported as being married, and the Brantford census represented a 43.0% married population (Statistics Canada, 2021). 66.1% of the participants reported being homeowners, which is representative as the Brantford survey reported homeownership at 66% (Statistics Canada, 2021). Furthermore, 43.6% of respondents reported having lived in Brantford for 10 years or more.

Community Involvement

The response from the participants demonstrates good relationships with their neighbours. This is reflected by 90.2% of respondents knowing their neighbours by name. The measures of neighbourhood integration also presented positive results with 60-85% of participants responding positively on statements regarding their neighbourhood integration. However, almost half (47.7%) of the participants responded that their neighbourhood is not close-knit, and over 66% of the respondents felt that people in their neighbourhood do not share the same values. This was underlined by over 49% of respondents responding that people in their neighbour cannot be trusted. The generally positive response to integration reflects a key dimension of informal social control and social cohesion, both of which are strongly linked to neighbourhood safety and perceptions of crime (Hodgkinson & Lunney, 2021).

Furthermore, participants indicated that their neighbourhood had a high likelihood (between 65-79%) of intervention for several inappropriate or problematic behaviours. This willingness to intervene however, was less likely to manifest in more formal ways. As 31.4% of participants reported speaking to an elected official about specific neighbourhood problems, another 22.2% reported working with neighbors to address a neighbourhood specific problem, and only 14.1% said they had spoken to a religious or community leader to address neighbourhood problems.

The respondents showed regular interactions with their neighbours by chatting with (75.5%) and helping them (86.9%). While residents may feel connected to their neighbours and be willing to intervene about direct threats in their neighbourhood, a perception of a lack of shared values and a lack of formal neighbourhood involvement can raise concerns about whether or not social cohesion is translating into collective action that can help reduce opportunities for crime locally (Higgins & Hunt 2016).

Respondents indicated they are more likely to step in when serious crimes like drug dealing or vandalism occur, but less likely to get involved in smaller problems like loud arguments or kids skipping school. This suggests that the community is willing to work together more when the issue feels more serious. However, because there are fewer signs of people using formal ways to deal with problems (like calling the police or organizing meetings), it suggests weaker activation of formal social control mechanisms.

Experiences of Victimization

Overall, 74.8% of participants responded that they had not been a victim of a crime in the past two years. However, participants were also asked if they had experienced specific examples of crime. 110 respondents had something stolen from their property, 33 participants had violence used against them, and 15 participants had their homes broken into. When asked if the participants had experienced specific crimes, we see a higher yield in confirmations than asking if participants had been victimized in the past. This is common in victimization surveys, in which individuals often do not see themselves as being victims of crime despite experiences of victimization.

60% of participants who experienced a break and enter reported their victimization to the police. This is higher than expected when compared against the General Safety Survey, which yields a 45% reporting rate. In addition, 33% of participants who experienced violence reported their victimization to the police. This is lower than expected when compared against the General Safety Survey, which yields a 36% reporting rate. 31% of participants who experienced theft reported their victimization to the police. This is higher than expected when compared against the General Safety Survey, which yields a 21% reporting rate.

Feelings of Safety

A large proportion of respondents considered their neighbourhood to be safe, with 93.8% of participants responding that it is safe to go outside in their neighbourhood during the day and 78.4% responding that it is safe to walk in their neighbourhood during the night. 85.3% of respondents also felt it was safe for children to play outside in their neighbourhood.

On worry of victimization, 78.8% of participants did not feel worried about being attacked in their neighbourhood, and 85.6% were not worried about being sexually assaulted. However, vandalism (41.5%) and home break-ins (38.2%) were the two forms of victimization about which the respondents were most worried.

High perceptions of safety are an important indicator of neighbourhood well-being and can contribute to community safety more broadly. Research consistently shows that when residents feel safe, they are more likely to engage in community activities, use public spaces, and build stronger social ties (Sampson et al., 1997; Wickes et al., 2013). Feelings of safety are also closely tied to collective efficacy, which is the shared belief that neighbours can work together to maintain order and address local problems. In communities where residents trust one another and believe their area is safe, there tends to be higher informal social control, greater civic participation, and lower crime rates.

In general, the respondents reported having lower levels of physical disorder in their communities. Between 61% and 72% reported having no broken windows, graffiti problems, vacant lots, boarded up buildings, and litter problems in their neighbourhoods. However, over 64% of participants stated there is at least one place in their neighbourhood that requires better lighting. Similarly, perceived social disorder was low, however, it was higher than perceived physical disorder. Among categories of social disorder, loud noises late at night (68.3%) and erratic driving (78.8%) ranked as the highest perceived social disorders.

Perceptions of disorder are suggested to have a direct correlation with fear of crime, as perceived disorder increases, so does fear of crime (Carter & Wolfe 2021; Kuen et al. 2022). Therefore, these findings are consistent with those on worry of victimization as the survey reports lower rates of perceived disorder and lower rates of fear of crime.

Perceptions of Police and Procedural Justice

The perception of police and procedural justice provide insights that are important for understanding the public's perception of police performance. Largely, the participants agree the police service represents the community (65.7%), treats people fairly (67.6%), cares about problems in the neighbourhood (68.6%), treats people with respect (80.0%), is ethnically diverse (73.5%), and accurately represents the community (68.6%). Furthermore, 84.3% of the participants would be supportive of a special constable or policing alternative for lower-level criminal issues. 60% of the participants agree that the police do a good job enforcing traffic laws, while 61.5% of the participants believe the police do not do a good job controlling drug activity. Overall, when asked, 70% of participants believed that the police do a good job at keeping their communities safe.

On perceptions of procedural justice, the Brantford community demonstrates a high amount of trust in the laws and procedures. 90.5% of participants agreed that a person can be blamed for breaking the law even if they can get away with it, 85.6% agreed there is reason for them to obey the law, 80.7% believe disobeying the law is rarely justified, with 83.7% agreeing that people should obey the law even if it goes against their beliefs.

The high levels of support for special constables and alternative response models for lower-level offences suggest fertile ground for pilot programs. Future research should evaluate the

effectiveness of these models in improving perceptions of police, procedural justice, and overall community safety.

These perceptions on police and procedural justice align with the findings in feelings of safety. Research suggests that fear of crime and perceived police performance are inversely related (Carter & Wolfe 2021), so as perceived police performance increases, fear of crime should decrease. However, perceptions of police performance should not be considered a proxy measure of police performance. This is best measured by identifying key goals and objectives for the police service (through the strategic plan) and directly measuring progress towards those goals (Hodgkinson et al. 2020).

Limitations and Future Directions

While efforts were made to recruit a representative sample, the final dataset consisted of 306 respondents. This falls short of the ideal sample size of 383. A smaller sample can reduce statistical power and generalizability of the results. All measures rely on self-reporting, which is subject to recall bias, underreporting, and social desirability bias (Arnold & Feldman, 1981). This is especially relevant for sensitive topics such as victimization, drug activity, or perceptions of police. For instance, the survey found discrepancies between general questions on victimization and specific prompts, suggesting that participants may not always self-identify as victims of crime even when they have been victimized. The survey provides a snapshot of perceptions and experiences between November 2023 and April 2024. Without longitudinal tracking, it is difficult to determine whether observed patterns (e.g., willingness to intervene, perceptions of disorder) represent stable trends or temporary fluctuations influenced by current events, media coverage, or policing initiatives. As such, the next steps include conducting this survey at regular intervals which would allow for comparisons over time and provide insight into whether community safety initiatives, policing strategies, and broader socio-economic shifts are influencing perceptions of safety and victimization.

Conclusion

This report summarised the result of the community safety survey as it was administered in Brantford. This survey highlights, and the report presents the issues that were found to be prevalent in Brantford. The collected data and the report can and should be used to assess future avenues of improvement in communities and neighbourhoods. While the participants reported being friendly with their neighbours and reported high willingness of the neighbourhood to intervene in illicit activities, they also reported low willingness to engage in formal measures. The largest form of victimization was theft from property, and the biggest fear of crime was vandalism and break-ins to their property. On perceptions of police and procedural justice, the participants felt the police had fair treatment, and the participants were largely supportive of special constables or alternative policing methods for lower-level crimes.

References

Ali, M. M., Shepherd, S., & Ahmed, B. M. (2023). Promoting trust and police legitimacy in African Australian communities: A crucial reflection on community engagement strategies and practical recommendations for police. *International Journal of Police Science & Management, 25*(1), 116-130.

Arnold, H. J., & Feldman, D. C. (1981). Social desirability response bias in self-report choice situations. *The Academy of Management Journal*, *24*(2), 377-385.

Braga, A. A., Welsh, B. C., & Schnell, C. (2015). Can policing disorder reduce crime? A systematic review and meta-analysis. *Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency*, *52*(4), 567-588.

Bolger, M. A., & Bolger, P. C. (2019). Predicting fear of crime: Results from a community survey of a small city. *American Journal of Criminal Justice*, *44*(2), 334-351

Brantford Expositor (2022, April 12). Brantford police get $3.66 million in provincial funding. Brantfordexpositor; *Brantford Expositor*. https://www.brantfordexpositor.ca/news/local-news/brantford-police-get-3-66-million-in-provincial-funding

Bursik, R. J., & Grasmick, H. G. (1993). Neighborhoods and crime: The dimensions of effective community control. New York, NY: Lexington Books.

Carter, T. M., & Wolfe, S. E. (2021). Explaining the relationship between neighbourhood disorder and crime fear: The perceptual role of neighbours and the police. *Journal of Criminal Justice*, *77*, Article 101867.

Ceccato, V., & Lukyte, N. (2011). Safety and sustainability in a city in transition: The case of Vilnius, Lithuania. *Cities*, *28*(1), 83-94.

City of Brantford. (2022, July 5). Building Safer Communities Fund – Staffing Resources - Report No. 2022-414. https://pub-rantford.escribemeetings.com/filestream.ashx?DocumentId=13943

Cotter, A. (2021). *Criminal victimization in Canada, 2019*. Ottawa, ON: Statistics Canada. https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/85-002-x/2021001/article/00014-eng.htm

Curtis, A., Curtis, J. W., Ajayakumar, J., Jefferis, E., & Mitchell, S. (2019). Same space - different perspectives: Comparative analysis of geographic context through sketch maps

and spatial video geonarratives. *International Journal of Geographical Information Science*, *33*(6), 1224-1250.

D'Andrea, A. (2024, July 26). Court in Ontario city struggling with gun crime closes over safety fears. *Global News*. https://globalnews.ca/news/10640642/tax-court-of-canada-hamilton/

Eck, J. E., & Guerette, R. T. (2012). Place-based crime prevention: Theory, evidence, and policy. In Welsh, B. C., & Farrington, D. P. (Eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Crime Prevention* (pp. 354-383). New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

Gearhart, M. (2023). Empowerment and collective efficacy: Insights for community-based crime prevention. *Journal of Human Behavior in the Social Environment*, *33*(5), 698-710.

Government of Canada, Statistics Canada. (2022, February 9). Profile table, Census Profile, 2021 Census of Population - Canada [Country]. Www12.Statcan.gc.ca. https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2021/dp-pd/prof/details/page.cfm?Lang=E&SearchText=Brantford&GENDERlist=1

Government of Canada, Statistics Canada. (2022, March 30). Quality of life indicator: Household income. Www160.Statcan.gc.ca. https://www160.statcan.gc.ca/prosperity-prosperite/household-income-revenu-menage-eng.htm

Government of Canada, Statistics Canada. (2020, May 15). Safe Cities profile series: Key indicators by census metropolitan area - Hamilton, Ontario. Www150.Statcan.gc.ca. https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/85-002-x/2020001/article/00001/hamilton-eng.htm

Government of Canada, Statistics Canada. (2022a, February 9). Profile table, Census Profile, 2021 Census of Population - Canada. https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2021/dp-pd/prof/details/page.cfm?Lang=E&SearchText=Brantford&GENDERlist=1

Higgins, B. R., & Hunt, J. (2016). Collective efficacy: Taking action to improve neighborhoods. *NIJ Journal*, 277, 18-21.

Hinkle, J. C., & Weisburd, D. (2008). The irony of broken windows policing: A micro-place study of the relationship between disorder, focused police crackdowns and fear of crime. *Journal of Criminal Justice*, *36*(6), 503-512

Hodgkinson, T. (2018). Social ecology. In G. Saville, (Ed.), *SafeGrowth: Innovative, livable and safe neighborhoods* (pp. 141 – 150). Denver, CO: CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform.

Hodgkinson, T., & Farrell, G. (2017) Situational crime prevention and Public Safety Canada's crime-prevention programme. *Security Journal*, *31*(1), 325-342.

Hodgkinson, T., & Saville, G. (2018). Principle 1: Action-based practice. In G. Saville (Ed.), *SafeGrowth: Innovative, livable and safe neighborhoods* (pp. 131 – 140). Denver, CO: CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform.

Hodgkinson, T., & Lunney, K. (2021). Across the wide prairie: Exploring fear of crime in a small Canadian municipality. *Journal of Criminology*, *54*(2), 109-125.

Howell, K. B. (2015). The costs of broken windows policing: Twenty years and counting. *Cardozo Law Review*, *37*, 1059 - 1073.

Jannetta, J., Esthappan, S., Fontaine, J., Lynch, M., & La Vigne, N. (2019). *Learning to build police-community trust: Implementation assessment findings from the evaluation of the national initiative for building community trust and justice.* Washington, DC: Urban Institute.

Kuen, K., Weisburd, D., White, C., & Hinkle, J. C. (2022). Examining impacts of street characteristics on residents' fear of crime: Evidence from a longitudinal study of crime hot spots. *Journal of Criminal Justice*, *82*, Article 101984.

Lanfear, C. C. (2022). Collective efficacy and the built environment. *Criminology*, 60(2), 370-396.

Lockey, S., Graham, L., Redman, T., Zheng, Y., Routledge, G., & Purves, L. (2019). The impact of a local community engagement intervention on residents' fear of crime and perceptions of the police. *International Journal of Police Science & Management, 21*(3), 168-180.

McHarris, P. V. (2024). *Beyond policing: Building abolitionist futures*. Hachette, UK: Legacy Lit.

McMaster University. (2022). McMaster Quick Facts 2021-2022. https://ira.mcmaster.ca/app/uploads/2022/04/McMaster-Quick-Facts-2021-22-1.pdf

McPhail, I. V., Olver, M. E., & Brooks, C. (2017). Taking the pulse: Perceptions of crime trends and community safety and support for crime control methods in the Canadian Prairies. *Journal of Community Safety and Well-Being*, *2*(2), 43-50.

Miranda, M. (2022). Building Safer Communities Fund – Staffing resources (Report No. 2022-414).

Mulrooney, K., Hodgkinson, T., & Harkness, A. (2024). Narrabri Shire Crime Prevention Plan: 2024–2028. Narrabri Shire Council.

National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute. (2022, June 15). *Sleep Deprivation and Deficiency - How Sleep Affects Your Health | NHLBI, NIH*. www.nhlbi.nih.gov; National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute. https://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/sleep-deprivation/health-effects

O'Brien, D. T., Farrell, C., & Welsh, B. C. (2019). Looking through broken windows: The impact of neighborhood disorder on aggression and fear of crime is an artifact of research design. *Annual Review of Criminology*, *2*(1), 53–71.

Sabine, C., & Hodgkinson, T. (2023). Night after night, my heartbeat shows the fear: Examining predictors of fear of crime in the nonurban Australian context. *International Criminal Justice Review*, *33*(4), 367-383.

Sampson, R. J., Raudenbush, S. W., & Earls, F. (1997). Neighbourhoods and violent crime: A multilevel study of collective efficacy. *Science*, 277(5328), 918-924.

Saville, G. (2009). SafeGrowth: Moving forward in neighbourhood development. *Built Environment*, *35*(3), 386-402.

Stafford, M., Chandola, T., & Marmot, M. (2007). Association between fear of crime and mental health and physical functioning. *American Journal of Public Health*, 97(11), 2076-2081.

Statistics Canada. (2022, February 9). Profile table, Census Profile, 2021 Census of Population - Kitchener - Cambridge - Waterloo [Census metropolitan area], Ontario.

Statistics Canada. 2023. (table). *Census Profile*. 2021 Census of Population. Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 98-316-X2021001. Ottawa. Released November 15, 2023. https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2021/dp-pd/prof/index.cfm?Lang=E

Statistics Canada. 2023. (table). Census Profile. 2021 Census of Population. Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 98-316-X2021001. Ottawa. Released November 15, 2023. https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2021/dp-pd/prof/index.cfm?Lang=E

Statistics Canada. 2023. (table). Census Profile. 2021 Census of Population. Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 98-316-X2021001. Ottawa. Released November 15, 2023.

Sytsma, V. A., & Piza, E. L. (2018). The influence of job assignment on community engagement: Bicycle patrol and community-oriented policing. *Police Practice and Research, 19*(4), 347-364.

Pawson, R., & Tilley, N. (2001). Realistic evaluation bloodlines. *American Journal of Evaluation*, *22*(3), 317–326.

Weisburd, D. (2015). The law of crime concentration and the criminology of place. *Criminology*, 53(2), 133-157.

Weisburd, D., Lawton, B., Ready, J., Haviland, A., White, C., Nelson, M., & Rudes, D. (2011). *Longitudinal study of community health and anti-social behavior at drug hot spots*. Washington, DC: National Institute on Drug Abuse, National Institutes of Health

Wickes, R., Hipp, J. R., Sargeant, E., & Homel, R. (2013). Collective efficacy as a task specific process: Examining the relationship between social ties, neighbourhood cohesion and the capacity to respond to violence, delinquency and civic problems. *American Journal of Community Psychology*, 52, 115-127.

Wilson, J. Q., & Kelling, G. L. (1982). Broken windows: The police and neighborhood safety. *The Atlantic Monthly*, *249*(3), 29-38.

Young, J. (2007). *The exclusive society: Social exclusion, crime and difference in late modernity*. London: Sage Publications.