

Blaby District - Citizens' Panel Report - Perceptions of crime and disorder

Main Findings

- There is consensus amongst both Blaby and County respondents that crime levels have remained fairly consistent over the last 12 months.
- In 2005 more people thought that crime levels had stayed the same than did in the previous year.
- Over a quarter (28%) of Blaby respondents believe it is likely they will be a victim of domestic burglary in 2006. Yet in 2005 only 0.8% of Blaby households were actually a victim of domestic burglary.
- Only 8% of Blaby respondents had reported feeling very afraid more than once or twice in the year.
- Blaby female respondents tend to adopt more avoidance strategies in order to reduce their risk of victimisation compared to the female county average. Conversely, Blaby male respondents tend to adopt fewer avoidance strategies compared to the male county average.

Background

Public confidence is a central principle of establishing safer and stronger communities. For that reason the need to reduce the fear of crime has been incorporated in to the Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland Neighbourhood Policing Strategy and Leicestershire's Local Area Agreement, Safer Communities block (2006-2009).

Further the Community has a role to play in crime prevention not least because the public tend to over-estimate the crime problem in England and Wales (Hough & Roberts, 1998; Mattison & Mirrlees - Black, 2000) and so undermine public confidence levels. One possible explanation for this tendency by the public is the lack of appropriate, accurate information at a very localised level (HO report 38/03).

Therefore at a local level this report aims to 1) disseminate relevant crime information and 2) further consider the fear of crime debate.

The report is based upon findings from Leicestershire's Citizens' Panel questionnaire (Wave 8). The panel consists of 1312 residents, broadly representative of Leicestershire who periodically respond to postal questionnaires about a range of different topics. The Wave 8 questionnaire was mailed to panellists in November 2005.

The questionnaire covers several themes but can provide a number of questions to inform this debate. It offers: localised opinion about crime levels in 2005 and predicted crime levels in 2006; a behavioural question about adopted avoidance tactics; a question unpacking 'fear of victimisation'; and, a question reporting upon perceptions of the neighbourhood.

This report concentrates upon responses from the Blaby District and uses County-wide responses as a comparison.

Perceptions of crime

**Table 1: Percentage saying crime /asb are currently a problem in their neighbourhood
December 2005**

% saying crime /asb are a problem in the neighbourhood (fairly or very big problem)	Blaby		Leicestershire	
	Rank	%	Rank	%
People driving above the speed limit	1	48	1	45
Teenagers hanging around on the streets	2	36	3	29
Rubbish or litter lying around	3	31	2	31
Vandalism, graffiti and other deliberate damage to property or vehicles	4	24	4	22
Homes being broken into and property stolen	5	15	5	14
People using or dealing drugs	6	13	6	14
People being drunk or rowdy in public places	7	13	7	13
Cars being broken into or stolen	8	12	8	12
People being robbed or mugged	9	4	10	3
People being attacked, harassed or threatened because of their skin colour, ethnic origin or religion	10	3	12	2
Troublesome neighbours	11	2	9	7
People being attacked, harassed or threatened	12	0	11	3

Source: Citizens' Panel wave 8, LCC

present there is no available data source with which to compare perceived anti-social behaviour with actual.

Blaby respondents position 'vandalism, graffiti and other deliberate damage to property and vehicles' as the highest perceived crime problem in Blaby (rank 4). This aligns with a recorded criminal damage figure of 21%.

However, they tend to position 'people being attacked...' towards the bottom of the list; rank 10 and 12 whereas the actual recorded crime accounts for 17% of total crime in Blaby and thus presents as the second most prolific crime type.

Further Blaby respondents rank the problem of 'homes being broken into and property stolen' (rank 5) whereas recorded burglary dwelling accounts for 6% of total crime in Blaby and thus sits in 8th place in chart 1.

Conversely, 'cars being broken into or stolen' ranks 8th whereas recorded vehicle crime which accounts for 15% of total crime in Blaby ranks 3rd in chart 1.

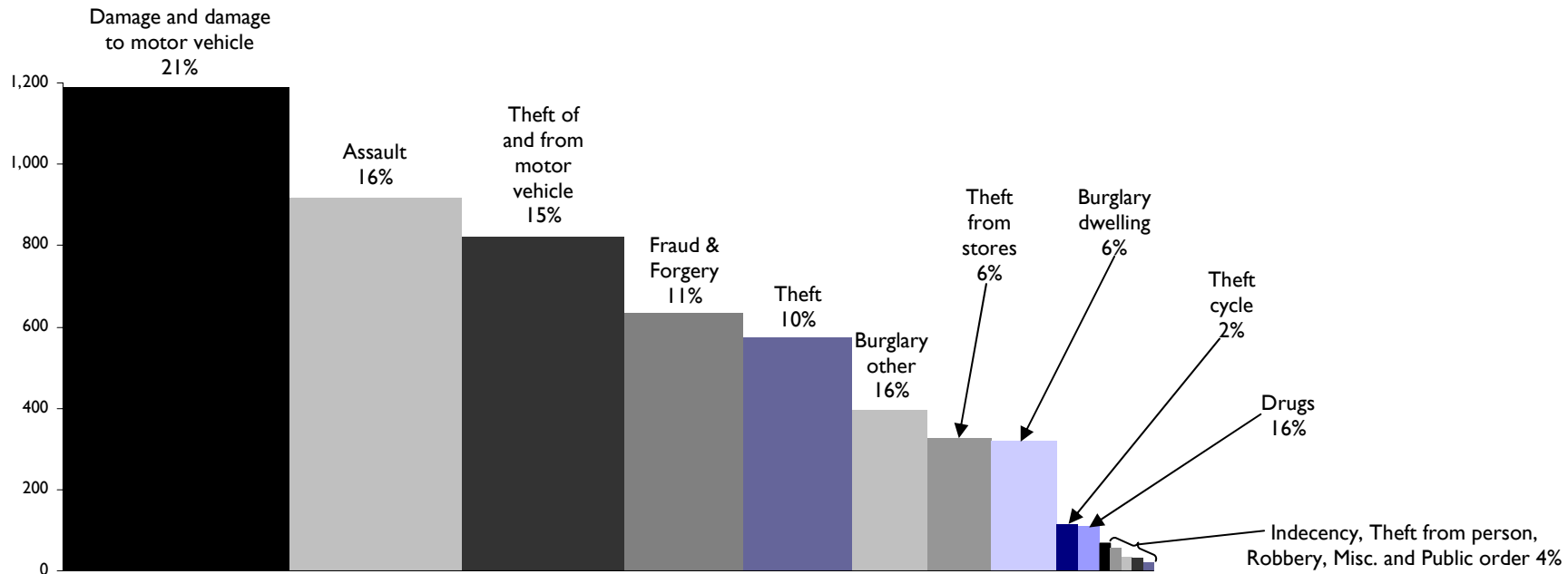
Table 1 shows the current rank order of perceived crime /anti-social behaviour problems and the percentage of respondents who consider each of them to be a 'fairly or very big problem' in their area. Responses are shown for Blaby and for the County as a whole. Blaby respondents raise the perceived problem of 'teenagers hanging around on the street' well above the county as a whole (Blaby 36%, County 29%). Conversely, they report 'troublesome neighbours' as less as a problem than in the County (Blaby 2%, County 7%).

Chart 1 (page 3) shows the actual number of

reported criminal offences for calendar year 2005. The height of the bar represents the number of offences recorded. The width of the bar represents the percentage of all crime made up by each crime category. It serves as a useful instrument to contextualise the respondents perceptions (shown in table 1) as it allows a comparison of rank order.

Notably, the top three problem areas in table 1 fall within the realms of anti-social behaviour rather than criminal behaviour and so do not figure in this chart. Further, at

Chart 1: Recorded offences in Blaby District in rank order January 2005 to December 2005



Source: Leicestershire Constabulary: CIS

Table 2 (right) shows results from a similar question asked in November 2004 (Wave 6 citizens panel). The categories are not the same as table 1 and so preclude a direct comparison between the two. However, it is possible to assess the comparative rank of similar crime types. Accordingly, both tables suggest that respondents in Blaby tend to overestimate the proportion of burglary in their area.

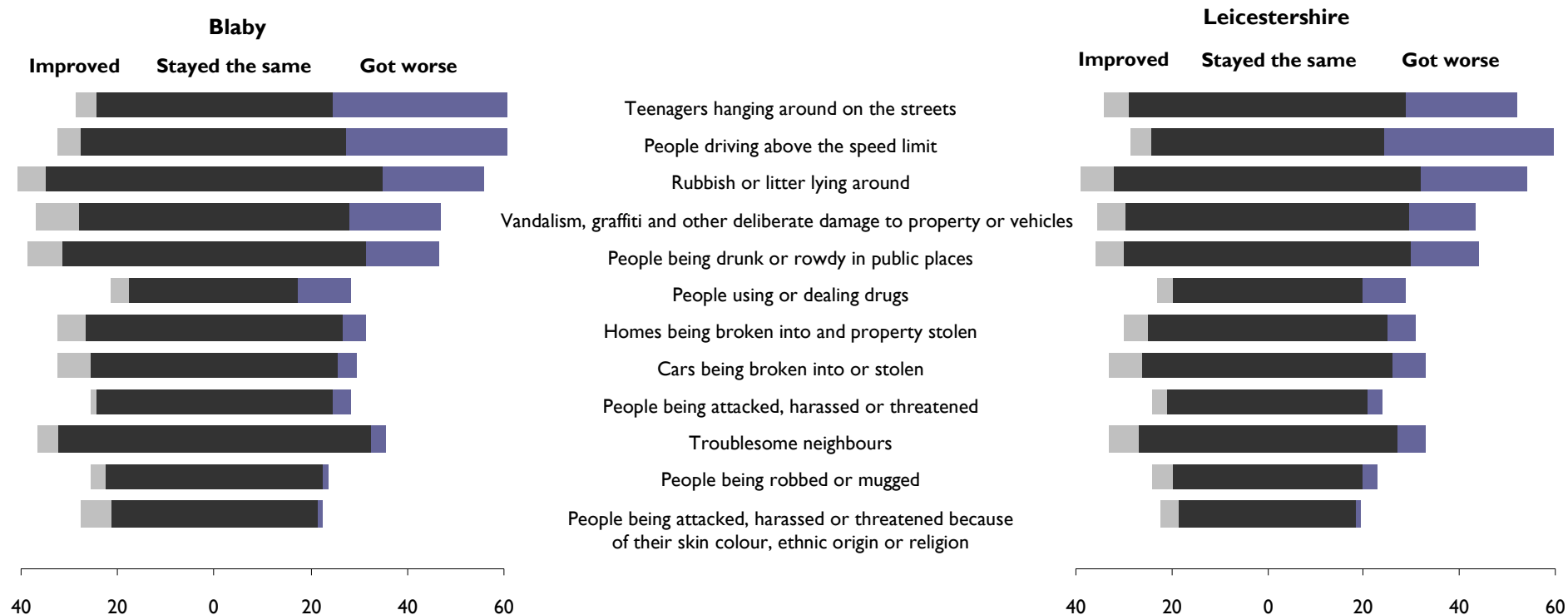
Table 2: Rank of problems in local area for November 2004 (Wave 6 citizens panel)

rank order of problems in local area	Blaby	Leicestershire
Motoring offences	1st	1st
Vandalism	2nd	2nd
Burglary	3rd	4th
Rowdiness / Disorderly behaviour	4th	5th
Vehicle crime	5th	3rd
Illegal parking	6th	6th
Drug offences	7th	7th
Drink driving	8th	8th
Robbery (theft with violence)	9th	9th
Serious assault	10th	10th

Source: Citizens' Panel wave 6, LCC

Perceptions of change in the last 12 months

Chart 2: Percentage saying how much crime / asb had changed in the last 12 months (Nov 2005 survey)



Source: Citizens' Panel wave 8, LCC

Chart 2 shows the percentage of respondents who thought crime / anti-social behaviour problems had either got better, worse or stayed the same over the 12 month period between January 2005 to December 2005. The size of the bar gives an indication of the overall number of responses to each category ('improved', 'stayed the same' and 'got worse'). Therefore the shorter the bar the more

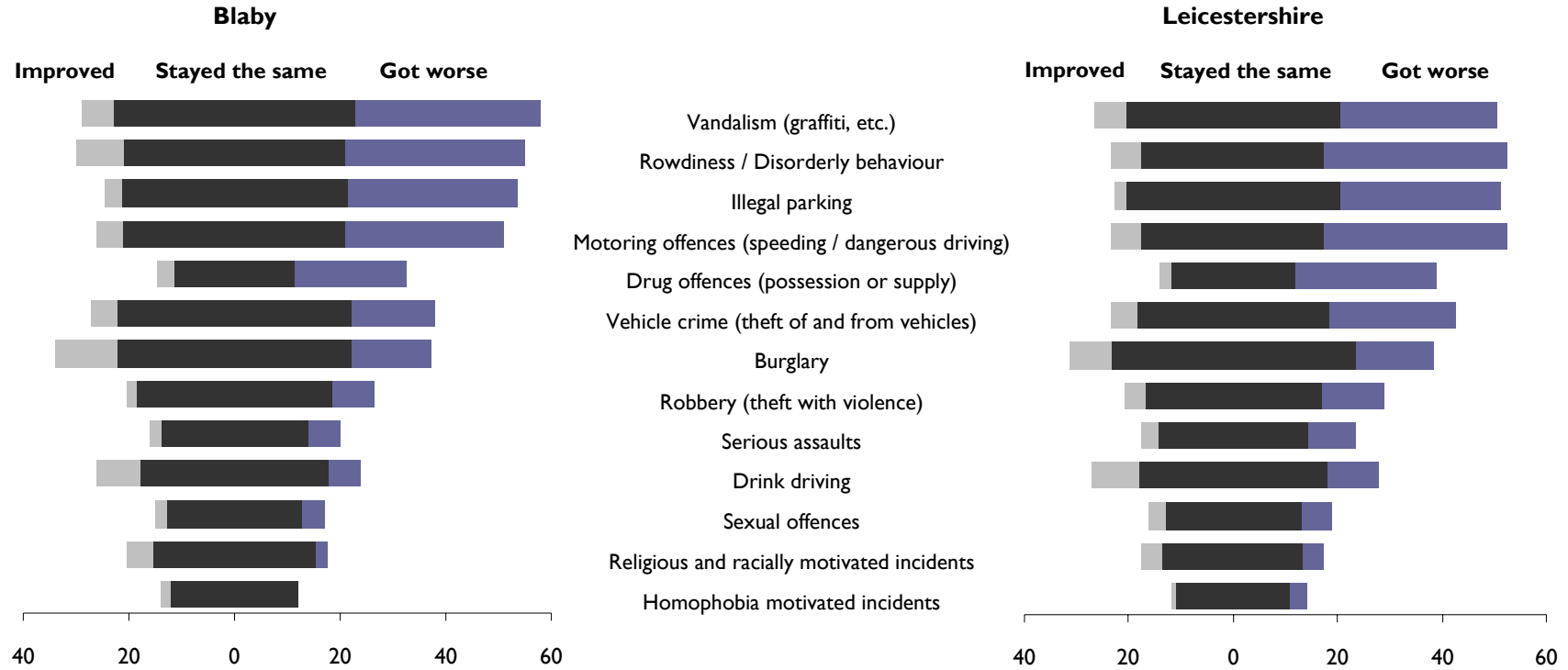
'don't know' responses. Accordingly, respondents tend to hold more knowledge and/or more opinions about low level problems of anti-social behaviour and so a higher number of responses are given for these categories. By contrast, more serious crime types have a higher proportion of 'don't know' responses.

In general, the largest considered answer

for all categories is 'stayed the same' and thus reflects consensus amongst both Blaby and County respondents that crime levels had remained fairly consistent over the last 12 months.

Notably two-fifths (40%) of Blaby respondents believe that 'teenagers hanging around on the streets' has got worse over the last 12 months compared to just over

Chart 3: Percentage saying how crime / asb had changed between January 2002 and December 2004 (Nov 2004 survey)



Source: Citizens' Panel wave 6, LCC

one-fifth (23%) county respondents and so suggests this category is, relatively, more of a problem in Blaby District.

A similar question was asked on the Wave 6 citizens panel questionnaire in November 2004 (Chart 3, above). Then respondents were asked to consider the previous three year period. Further, the crime/anti-social behaviour categories are not identical and so a direct comparison between the two

sets of responses can not be made. However Chart 3 does serve to illustrate how public perception of crime had changed in the three year period before 2005.

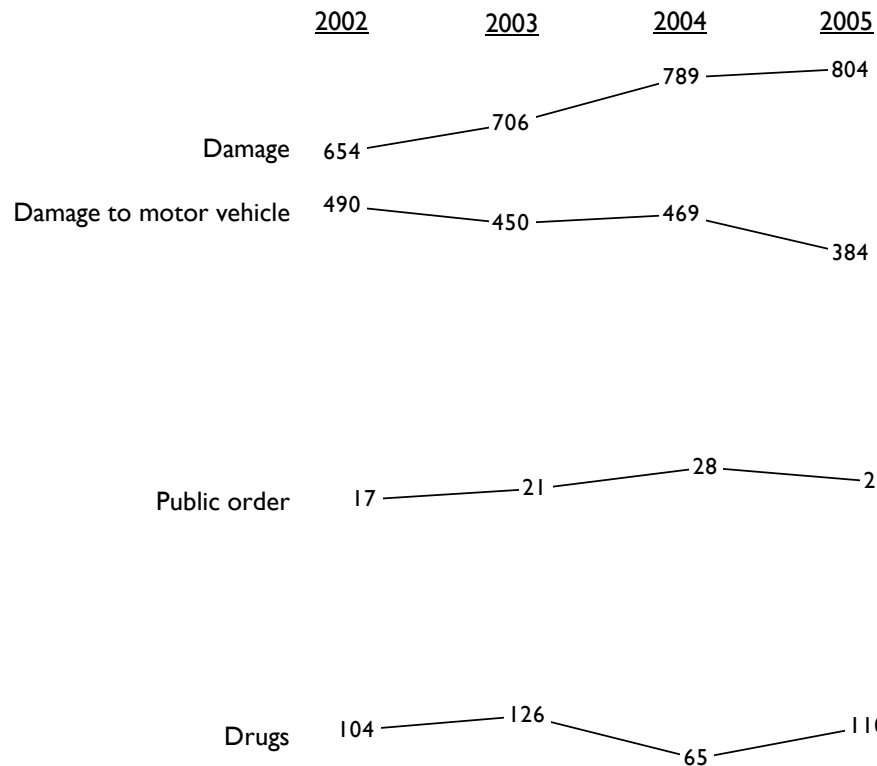
In 2005 more people thought that crime levels had stayed the same than they did in the previous year. In 2004 a higher number of people state that either a number of crimes had got worse in the

three year period or that they did not know. Given the theoretical link between appropriate, accurate information at a local level and a more reassured public, this suggests that the Blaby public was more informed in 2005 and so better reassured. Further this positive trend in public reassurance levels should continue given the publication of the Blaby Community Safety Newsletter in spring 2006.

Chart 4 shows trend lines for recorded crime in Blaby for the last four years. They allow comparison between each relevant crime type and public perception of whether each had got better, stayed the

same or got worse in the last 12 months (chart 2) and thus fully explore the discrepancy between actual crime rate and public perceptions of crime rates.

Chart 4: Blaby reported crime trend lines 2002 to 2005

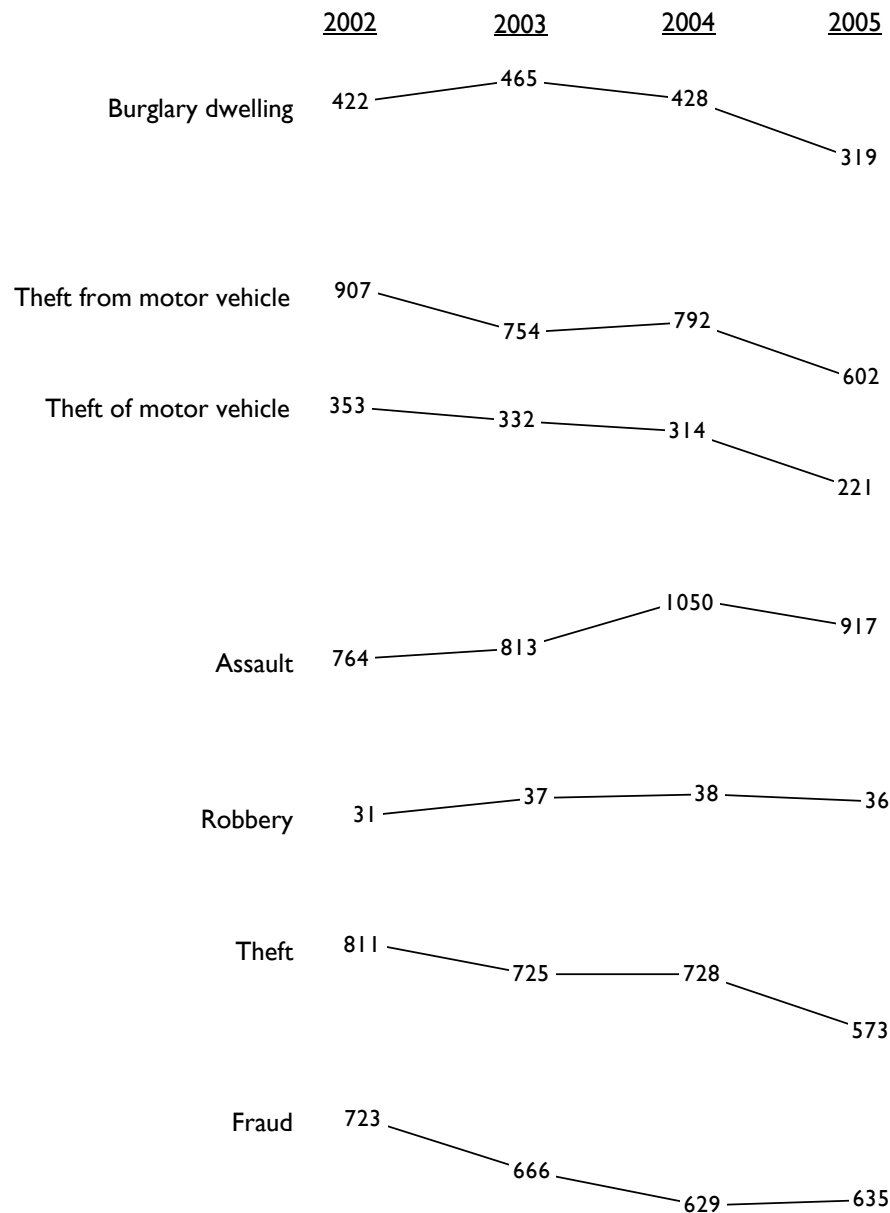


Source: Leicestershire Constabulary: CIS

Damage increased very slightly by 2% in 2005, by comparison damage to motor vehicle fell by 18% in the same period. The overall effect in the Blaby area was a decrease of 6% in total criminal damage. Thus public perception that 'vandalism, graffiti and other deliberate damage to property and vehicles' had on balance stayed the same / got worse is unsupported (9% improved, 56% stayed the same, 19% got worse).

In Blaby public order offences fell in 2005, although the 4 year trend shows an overall increase. However, it is important to note the small incidence rate when considering these figures. Public perception is that 'people being drunk or rowdy in public places' has on balance stayed the same/got worse in the last 12 months (7% improved, 63% stayed the same, 15% got worse).

Drug offences increased by over two-thirds (69%) in 2005 although the overall trend for the 4 year period has remained fairly stable with a low number in 2004. By contrast public perception that 'people using or dealing drugs' had stayed the same / got worse in the last 12 months (6% improved, 35% stayed the same, 11% got worse).



In Blaby burglary dwelling fell by a quarter (25%) in 2005 and Blaby respondents on balance believed that the problem had stayed the same / got slightly better (6% improved, 53% stayed the same, 5% got worse), however this perception did not correctly reflect such a high decrease.

Theft from motor vehicle fell by a quarter (24%) and theft of motor vehicle fell by around a third (30%), giving a decrease of 26% for overall vehicle crime in 2005. Public perception under estimated but still reflected this decrease with a slight improvement (7% improved, 51% stayed the same, 4% got worse).

In Blaby assault fell by 13% in 2005. This is the first decline in a generally upward trend line. Public perception correctly assessed 'people being attacked...' had on balance improved (9% improved, 49% stayed the same, 4% got worse).

Robbery in Blaby remained consistently low over this four-year period. Public perception on balance reflected an improvement. (5% improved, 45% stayed the same, 1% got worse).

In Blaby theft fell by 21% in 2005. However a comparison can not be made as this category was not included in the citizens panel questionnaire.

Fraud in Blaby increased by 1% in 2005. Again this category was not included in the citizens panel questionnaire.

Source: Leicestershire Constabulary: CIS

Future Victimization

Panellists were asked how likely or unlikely they felt it was that they would be a victim of various types on crime in the next 12 months. The results are shown in Chart 5.

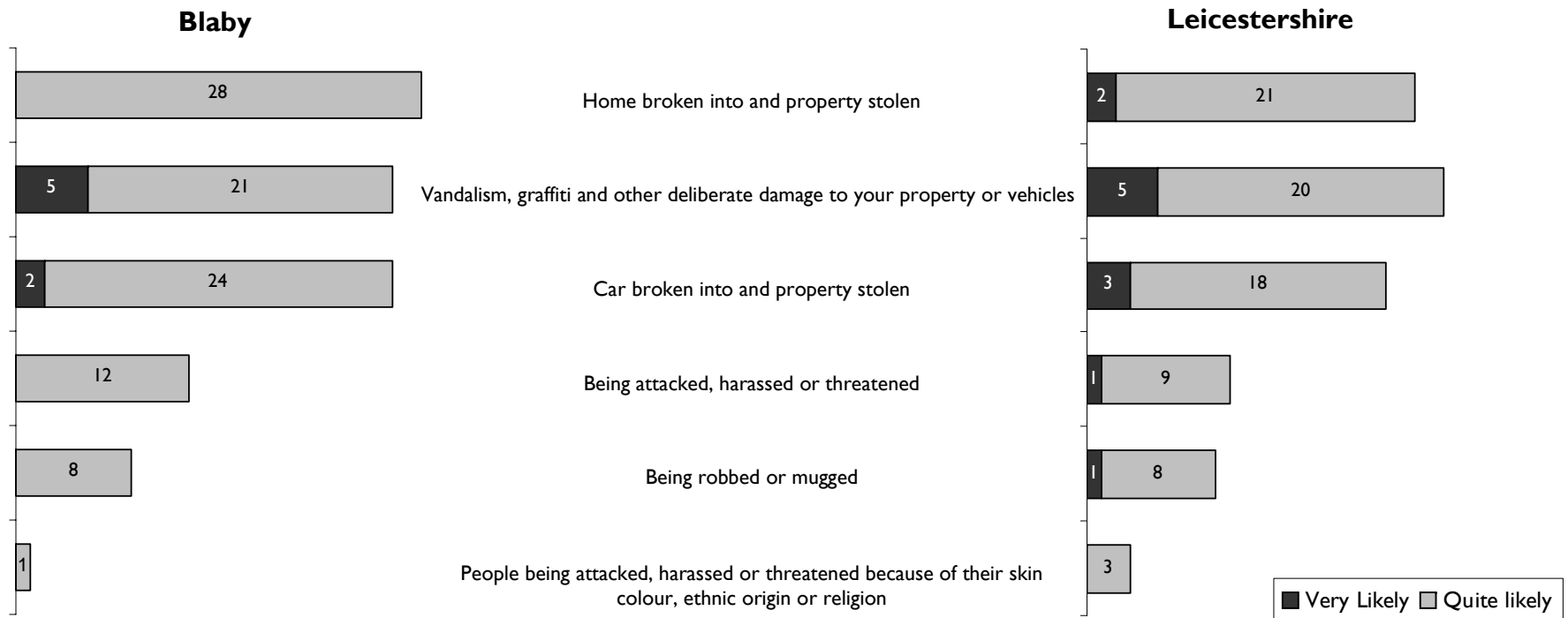
Over a quarter (28%) of Blaby respondents compared to 23% of County respondents believe it is likely they will be a victim of domestic burglary in the next 12 months. The extent of this heightened fear becomes apparent when considering the recorded

crime figures for domestic burglary. In 2005, only 0.8% of Blaby households were affected.

A quarter (26%) of Blaby respondents compared to 21% of County respondents felt it was likely that they would be a victim of vehicle crime during 2006. Again the disparity with actual crime figures is marked; recorded crime figures show only 1.3% of the Blaby population suffered such a crime in 2005.

The same pattern of disparity is evident with other comparable crime types. Whereas a quarter (26%) of Blaby respondents believe it is likely that they will be a victim of criminal damage in the next 12 months, the actual recorded figure for 2005 concerned only 1.3% of the Blaby population. Likewise, 13% of Blaby respondents believe they may be a victim of assault in 2006 but in 2005 only 1% of the population (as recorded by

Chart 5: Percentage response to the likelihood of being a victim of a specific crime in the next 12 months December 2005



Leicestershire constabulary) actually were a victim.

The same question was also asked in the 2004 citizens panel (chart 6) and although some of the categories were slightly changed in the 2005 version, a number still remain consistent and so allow for comparison.

Initial comparison shows that fear of

victimisation in 2004 was in general far higher than the latest results in 2005.

More specifically, over a third (36%) of Blaby respondents believed that they might be a victim of vandalism in the wave 6 report, this fear fell to 26% in the wave 8 report. Similarly, a third (34%) of Blaby respondents feared the risk of burglary in the 2004 report and this level of fear reduced to 28% in the 2005 report.

Therefore, although fear of victimisation levels in 2005/2006 are far higher than the actual risk of crime, they are in fact lower than the previous year.

Chart 6: Percentage response to being a victim of a specific crime in the next 12 months November 2004



Fear of victimisation

Fear of victimisation is key to the analysis of fear of crime and thus Blaby respondents were asked a series of questions designed to determine both the frequency and intensity of fear they may have experienced in the last 12 months.

Table 3 shows results of whether respondents in Blaby had ever felt fearful about the possibility of becoming a victim of crime in the last 12 months and it reveals that nearly a third of respondents (29%) had.

Table 3: Number and percentage of respondents who had felt fearful in the last 12 months

	n	%
Yes	35	29
No	79	66
Can't remember	6	5
Total	120	100

Source: Citizens' Panel wave 8, LCC

Respondents who answered positively were then asked how many times they had felt fearful in the last 12 months. The responses have been coded (1) and presented in table 4.

Table 4: Coded responses to 'How many times have you felt fearful?'

description of category	number	%
once or twice	7	20
once a quarter	8	23
every two months	2	6
once a month	8	23
twice a month	0	0
once a week	1	3
twice a week	0	0
once a day	1	3
twice a day	0	0
No response	8	23
	35	100

1: The coding framework Table 5 is as follows: once or twice (1 or 2); once a quarter (3, 4 or 5); every two months (6, 7 or 8); once a month (9 to 15); twice a month (20, 24 or 30); once a week (50 or 52); twice a week (100); once a day (300, 360 or 365); twice a day (600).

Source: Citizens' Panel wave 8, LCC

In general frequency of fear is quite low. Of those respondents who had felt fearful 43% had experienced fear around once a quarter or less in the last 12 months and only two respondents (6%) had felt fearful very often; once a week and once a day.

The same respondents were asked to categorise the last time they felt fearful as being either: not afraid, a little afraid, very afraid or can't remember. The results of this question are combined with the initial question of who felt fearful and presented in table 5.

Table 5: Thinking about the last time you felt fearful, how fearful did you feel?

	n	%
Not afraid	79	69
A little afraid	23	20
Very afraid	11	10
Can't remember	0	0
No Response	1	1
Total	114	100

Source: Citizens' Panel wave 8, LCC

Whilst a third of respondents said they had felt fearful only 10% described the intensity as extreme ('very afraid').

Finally the results of all three questions are combined to give a full analysis of both the intensity and frequency of fear experienced by the respondents. The results are shown in table 6. Note the total number of respondents who gave a response to all three questions is 107.

In conclusion, around a quarter (26.1%) of Blaby respondents said they had felt fearful in the last 12 months.

When the frequency of fear was examined only a fifth (19.6%) said they had felt fearful more than once or twice during the course of the year.

When the intensity of fear was examined only one-in-ten respondents (9%) had felt very afraid in this period.

Further, when the frequency and intensity was examined together only 8% of respondents had reported feeling very afraid more than once or twice in the year. Thus for residents of Blaby, regular exposure to heightened levels of fear of being a victim of crime are very rare.

When considering the need to reduce the fear of crime levels it is important to understand that fear of crime is not a uniform measure but rather a relatively infrequent emotion of varying intensity.

Table 6: Number and percentage of respondents who had felt fearful in the last 12 months revealing both frequency and intensity.

	intensity						Total	
	Not afraid		A little afraid		Very afraid			
frequency	n	(%)	n	(%)	n	(%)	n	(%)
Never	79	(73.8)	-	-	-	-	79	(73.8)
once or twice	-	-	5	(4.7)	2	(1.9)	7	(6.5)
once a quarter	-	-	4	(3.7)	5	(4.7)	9	(8.4)
every two months	-	-	1	(0.9)	1	(0.9)	2	(1.9)
once a month	-	-	6	(5.6)	2	(1.9)	8	(7.5)
once a week	-	-	1	(0.9)	-	-	1	(0.9)
once a day	-	-	1	(0.9)	-	-	1	(0.9)
	79	(73.8)	18	(16.8)	10	(9.3)	107	(100)

Source: Citizens' Panel wave 8, LCC

Note: Percentage figures are rounded to one decimal place.

Changes in behaviour due to crime

Respondents were asked what avoidance tactics they would adopt, if any, in order to reduce their risk of victimisation. Table 7 reveals the percentage and rank order of behavioural responses for both Blaby respondents and Leicestershire respondents as a whole.

Over half of respondents in Blaby (56%) 'always tell somebody where they are going' when out in their neighbourhood compared to a county-wide response of 50%.

Again, over half of Blaby respondents (54%) 'avoid groups of young people when out in their neighbourhood' compared to 48% of county-wide respondents.

Further, a higher percentage of Blaby respondents avoid answering their door because of fear of victimisation (Blaby 37%, County 30%).

The same question was also cut according to differing female and male responses. Thus the percentage of female respondents who would adopt a specific avoidance strategy is given alongside the percentage of male respondents for both Blaby district and Leicestershire as a whole. The results

Table 7: Percentage saying they use the following avoidance tactics December 2005

% saying they use the following avoidance tactics	Blaby		Leicestershire	
	Rank	%	Rank	%
I always tell somebody where I am going	1	56	1	50
I avoid groups of young people in my neighbourhood	2	54	2	48
I avoid answering the door	3	37	7	30
I carry a mobile phone in my neighbourhood for safety reasons	4	37	3	40
I avoid certain areas of my neighbourhood when out	5	36	4	37
I avoid going out alone in my neighbourhood	6	35	5	31
I avoid using a cash point in my neighbourhood	7	29	5	31
I plan my route when going out in my neighbourhood	8	22	8	25
I avoid leaving my house unoccupied	9	20	9	23
I avoid using public transport if on my own in my neighbourhood	10	19	10	20

Source: Citizens' Panel wave 8, LCC

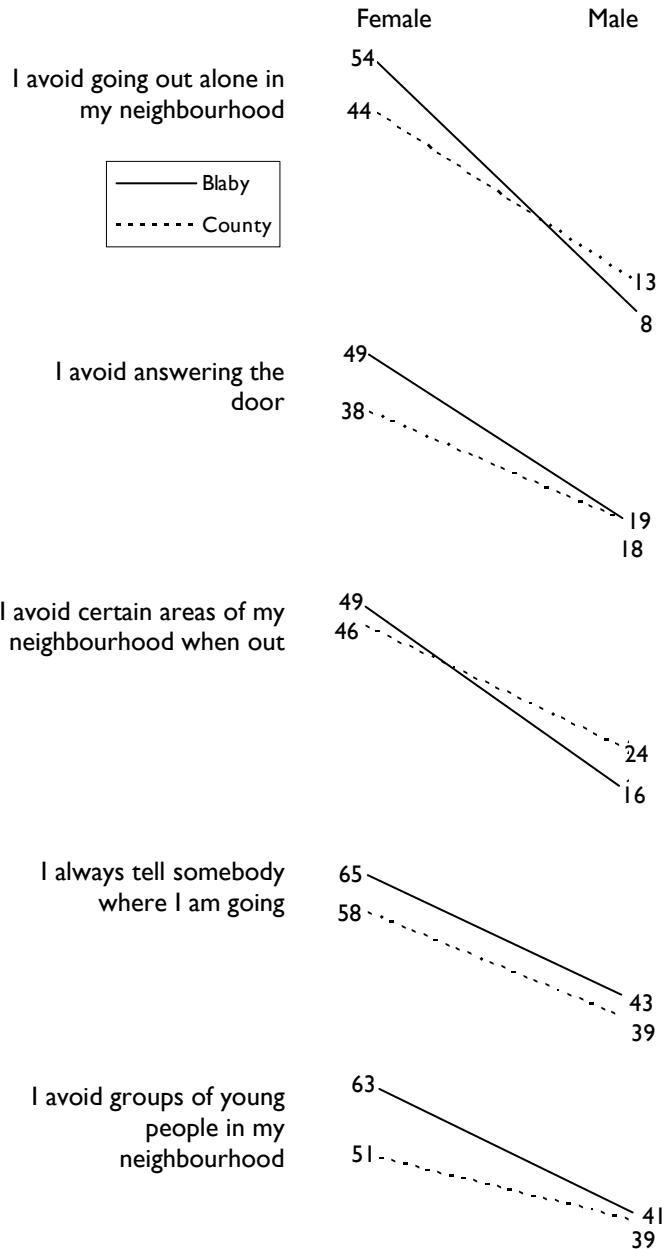
are displayed in chart 7. The chart can be used to determine which strategies are favoured by women over men and which strategies are more specific to Blaby residents than residents in the county.

The steeper the curve the more gender specific the category. Thus the need to 'avoid going out alone', to 'avoid answering the door' and to 'avoid certain areas of the neighbourhood' are all tactics that are predominately adopted by females both in Blaby and the county. In two of these

categories the Blaby and county lines intersect. Thus the need to 'avoid going out alone' and to 'avoid answering the door' are felt more by the females in Blaby than females in the county but less by the males in Blaby than the males in the county as a whole.

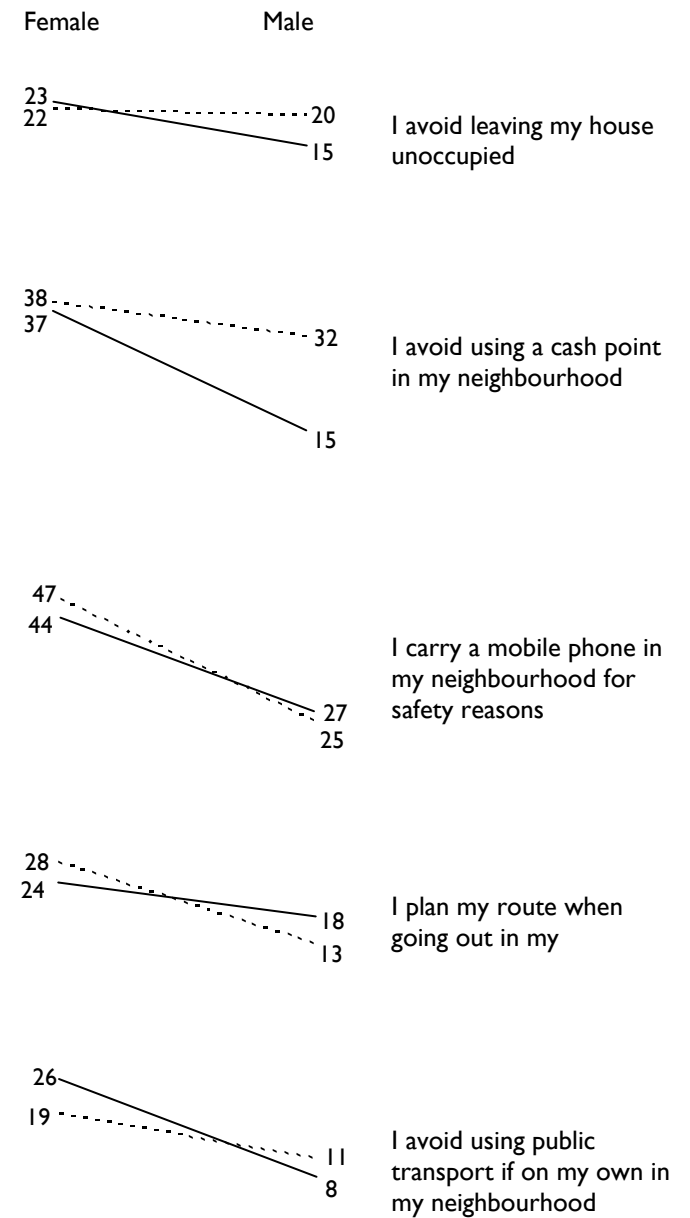
As already stated over half of Blaby respondents 'always tell somebody where they are going'. Interestingly this is the only curve where both female and male respondents in Blaby sit above the county average line.

Chart 7: Percentage of females and males saying they would adopt the following avoidance strategies December 2005



When the lines in these graphics converge on one side this suggests there is both a district and gender specific issue with the category. Thus the need to 'avoid groups of young people' and to 'avoid answering the door' is a specific issue for women in Blaby. Whereas the need to 'avoid leaving the house unoccupied' and to 'avoid using a cash point' is an issue for women in both Blaby and the county as a whole, but tends not to be an issue for males in Blaby.

In conclusion, Blaby females tend to adopt more avoidance strategies compared to the county female average and so demonstrate quite poor public confidence levels whereas Blaby males tend to adopt fewer avoidance strategies than the male county average and so exhibit quite good public confidence levels.



Source: Citizens' Panel wave 8, LCC

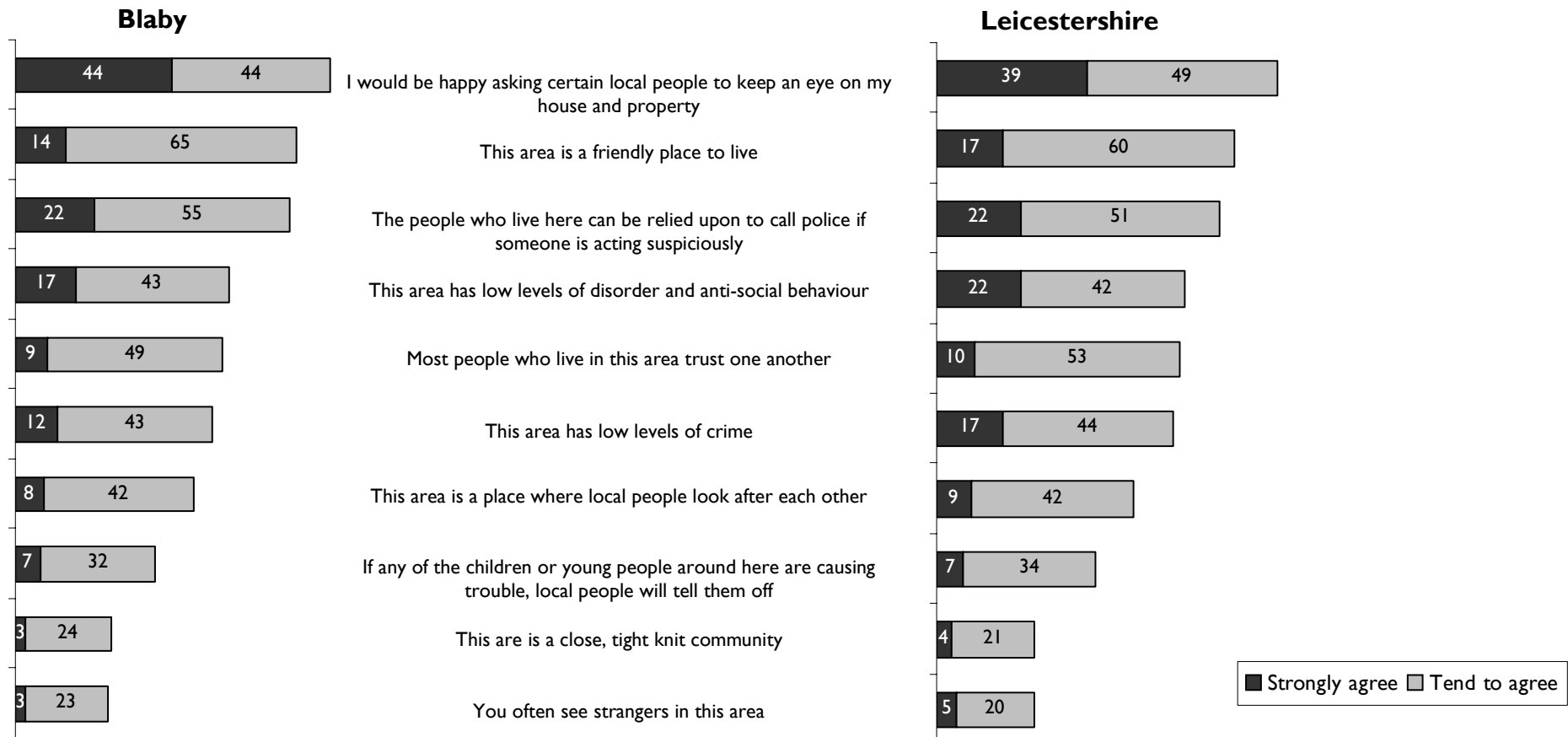
Perceptions of neighbourhood

Fear of crime is not a uniform emotion nor an exclusive indicator of perceived crime levels. Instead fear of crime is linked to external factors such as community cohesion and an individual's understanding of the social and physical make-up of their neighbourhood, their own vulnerability and

the broader social attitudes and values (Jackson 2004). Linking to this idea, respondents were asked to assess the community cohesion in their neighbourhood and the subsequent results are shown in chart 8.

Findings for these questions around 'stronger' communities are broadly the same in Blaby and the county. It would be useful if future surveys were carried out with a larger sample to identify differences at a lower neighbourhood level within the district.

Chart 8: Percentage response saying they agree with the following statements in their area December 2005



References:

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Caveat:

The findings discussed in this report are based on a relatively low number of responses for Blaby District (122). Respondents from Blaby District are also a sub-set of respondents for the whole county.

This paper provides some useful ideas of what the local trends might be but the findings discussed in this paper are indicative and not statistically significant.

Future consultation, particularly those with larger samples than the one used here, would benefit our understanding of the local issues.

Produced in February 2006 by the Research & Information Team, Leicestershire County Council.

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