

# Charnwood Borough - Citizens' Panel Report - Perceptions of crime and disorder

## Main Findings

- There is consensus amongst both Charnwood and County respondents that crime levels had remained fairly consistent over the last 12 months.
- In 2005 more people in Charnwood thought that crime levels had stayed the same rather than got worse than they did in the previous year.
- Over a quarter (28%) of Charnwood respondents believe it is likely they will be a victim of vandalism in the next 12 months. Yet in 2005, only 1.8% of Charnwood respondents were affected.
- 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.
- Only 2% of Charnwood respondents had reported feeling very afraid more than once or twice in the year.

## Background

Law enforcement agencies gain their legitimacy from a community that is confident and secure; the greater the public confidence, the more legitimacy it lends the agency and thus in turn the more legitimate the law enforcement agency, the more effective it is. Thus public confidence is a central principle of establishing safer and stronger communities. For this reason the need to reduce the fear of crime and so increase public confidence has been incorporated in to the Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland Neighbourhood Policing Strategy and Leicestershire's Local Area Agreement, Safer Communities block (2006-2009).

However the relationship between public confidence, fear of crime levels and recorded crime rates is not a simple one because the public tends to over-estimate the actual crime problem which in turn reduces public confidence levels (Hough & Roberts, 1998; Mattison & Mirrlees - Black, 2000). One possible explanation for this over-estimation 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 Borough of Charnwood and uses County-wide responses as a comparison.

## Perceptions of crime

**Table I: 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)	Charnwood		Leicestershire	
	Rank	%	Rank	%
People driving above the speed limit	1	45	1	45
Rubbish or litter lying around	2	30	2	31
Teenagers hanging around on the streets	3	28	3	29
Vandalism, graffiti and other deliberate damage to property or vehicles	4	20	4	22
People using or dealing drugs	5	16	6	14
Cars being broken into or stolen	5	16	8	12
Homes being broken into and property stolen	7	14	5	14
People being drunk or rowdy in public places	8	12	7	13
Troublesome neighbours	9	9	9	7
People being attacked, harassed or threatened	10	4	11	3
People being robbed or mugged	11	2	10	3
People being attacked, harassed or threatened because of their skin colour, ethnic origin or religion	12	1	12	2

Source: Citizens' Panel wave 8, LCC

so do not figure in this chart. Further, at present there is no available data source with which to compare perceived anti-social behaviour with actual.

Charnwood respondents position 'vandalism, graffiti and other deliberate damage to property and vehicles' as the highest perceived crime problem in Charnwood (rank 4). This aligns with a recorded criminal damage figure of 22%.

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 23% of total crime in Charnwood and thus presents as the most prolific crime type.

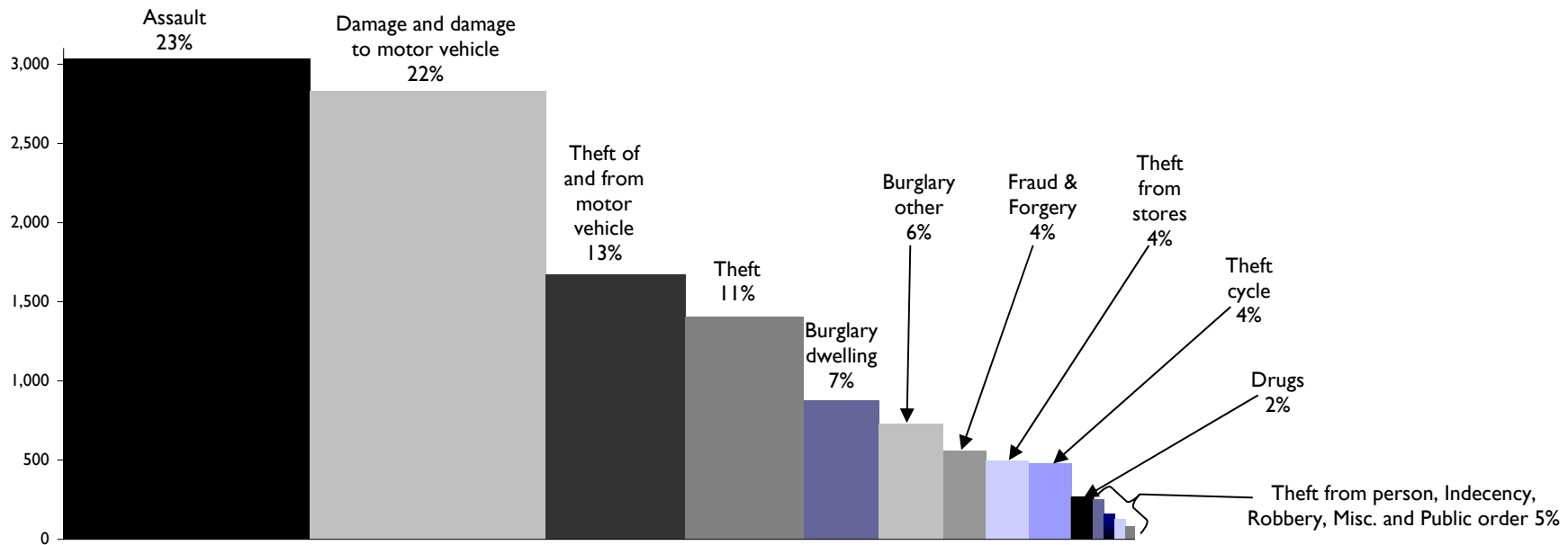
As mentioned Charnwood respondents rank 'cars being broken into or stolen' above the county rank (Charnwood rank 5, county rank 8). This perception is supported by recorded vehicle crime which accounts for 13% of total crime in Charnwood and ranks 3rd in chart I.

Table I 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 Charnwood and for the County as a whole. Charnwood respondents, in line with county respondents perceive the problem of 'people driving above the speed limit' as their highest concern. However, they raise the perceived problem of 'cars being broken into and property stolen' above the county as a whole (Charnwood 16% County 12%).

Chart I (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 I) as it allows a comparison of rank order.

Notably, the top three problem areas in table I fall within the realms of anti-social behaviour rather than criminal behaviour and

**Chart 1: Recorded offences in the Borough of Charnwood 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 there is a disparity between recorded assault and peoples perceptions of how problematic assault is in their area in comparison to other crime types.

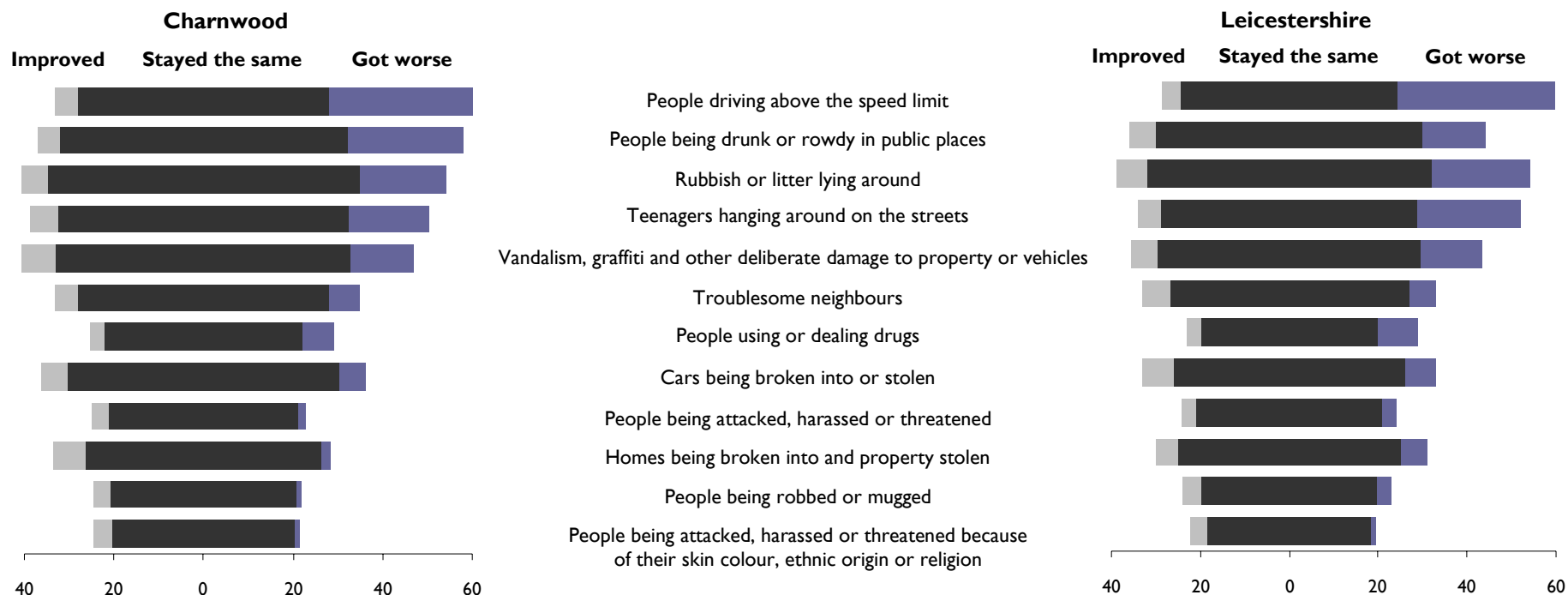
**Table 2: Rank of problems in local area for November 2004 (Wave 6 citizens panel)**

rank order of problems in local area	Charnwood	Leicestershire
Vandalism	1st	2nd
Vehicle crime	2nd	3rd
Motoring offences	3rd	1st
Burglary	4th	4th
Rowdiness / Disorderly behaviour	5th	5th
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

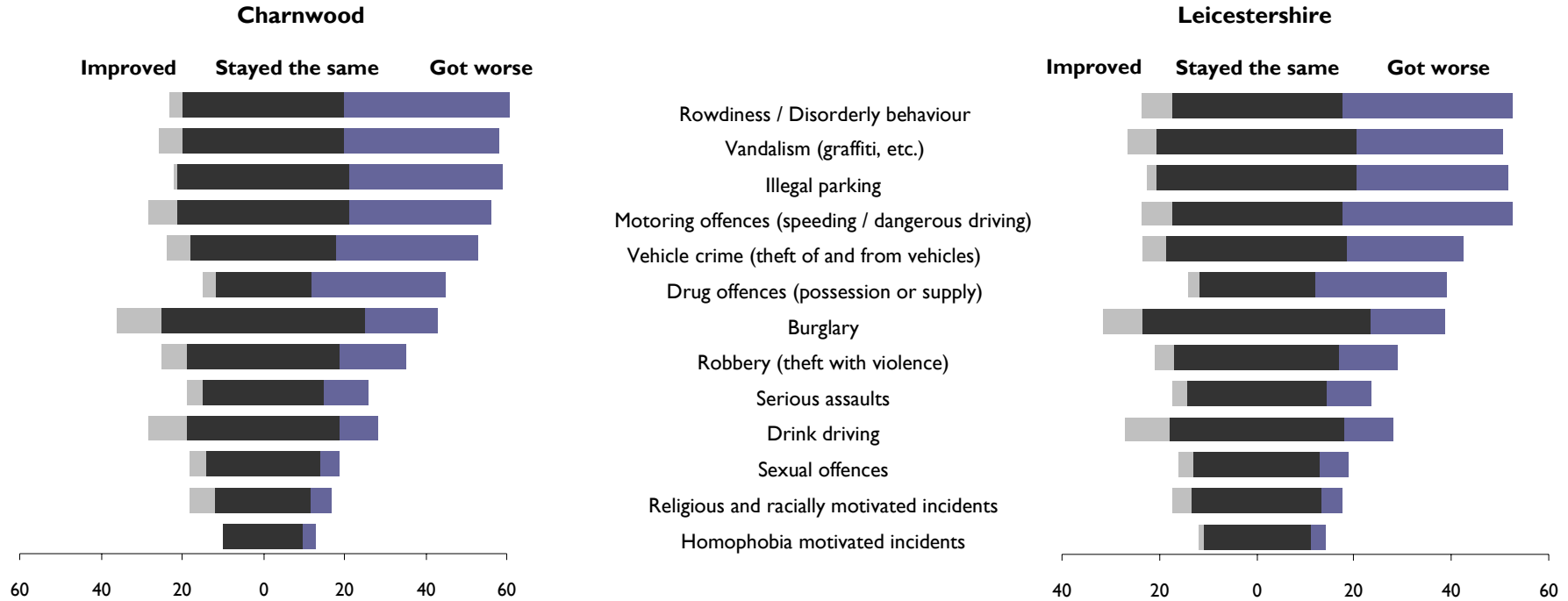
'don't know' responses. Accordingly, respondents tend to hold more knowledge and/or more opinions about low level problems of anti-social behaviour and so a higher number of responses are given for these categories. By contrast, more serious crime types have a higher proportion of 'don't know' responses.

In general, the largest considered answer

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

Notably a quarter (26%) of Charnwood respondents believe that 'people being drunk or rowdy in public places' has got worse over the last 12 months compared

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



Source: Citizens' Panel wave 6, LCC

to just over one-tenth (14%) county respondents and so suggests this category is, relatively, more of a problem in the Borough of Charnwood.

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.

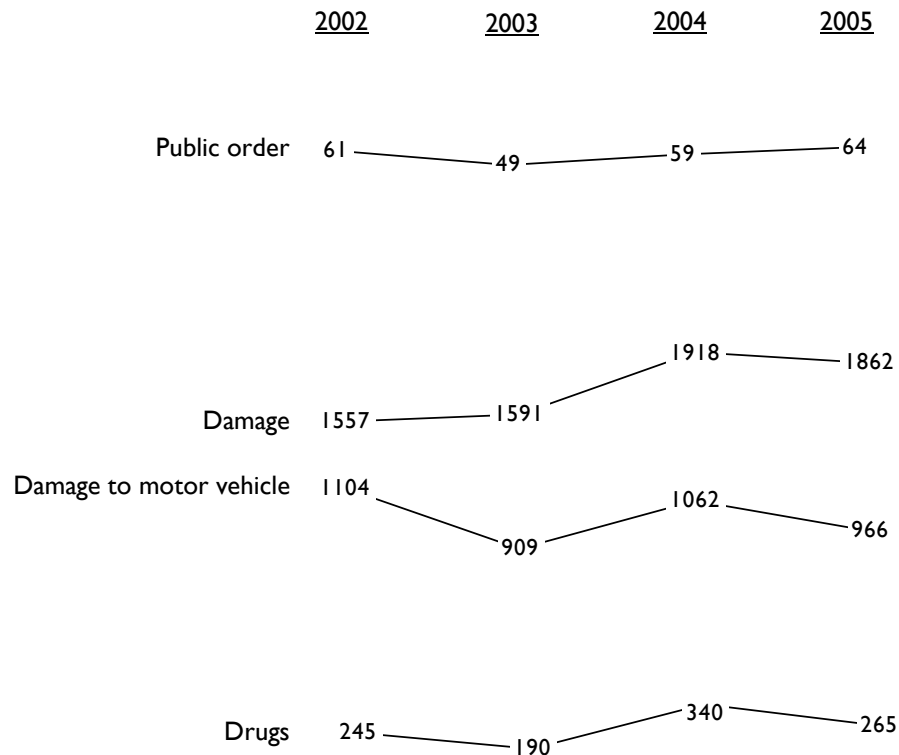
In 2005 more people thought that crime levels had stayed the same than they did in the previous year. In 2004 a higher number of people state that either a

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 could suggest that the Charnwood public was more informed in 2005 and so better reassured.

Chart 4 shows trend lines for recorded crime in Charnwood 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: Charnwood reported crime trend lines 2002 to 2005**

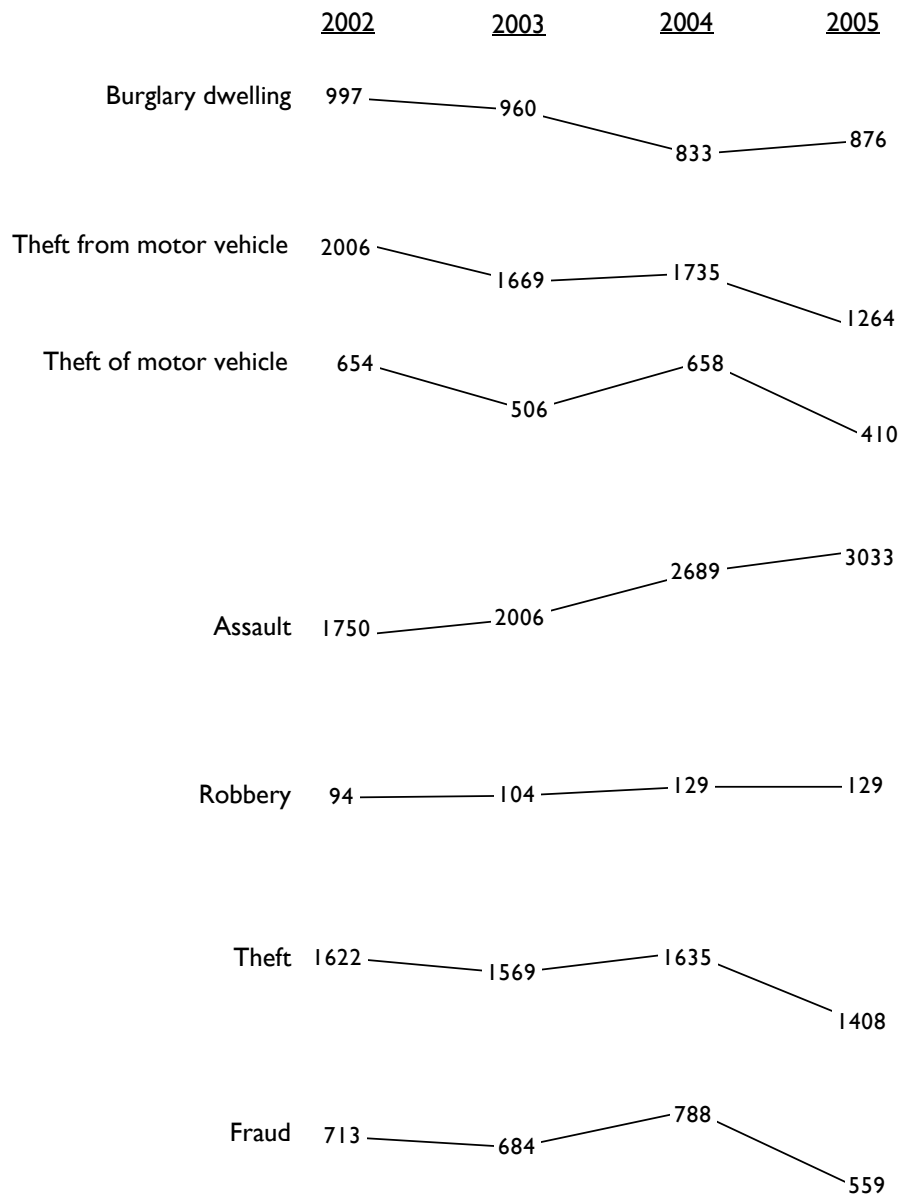


Source: Leicestershire Constabulary: CIS

In Charnwood public order offences slightly increased by 8% in 2005. 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 (5% improved, 64% stayed the same, 26% got worse).

Damage decreased very slightly by 3% in 2005, and damage to motor vehicle fell by 9% in the same period. The overall effect in the Charnwood area was a decrease of 5% 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, 66% stayed the same, 14% got worse).

Drug offences decreased by nearly a quarter (22%) in 2005 although the overall trend for the 4 year period has remained fairly stable. By contrast public perception suggests that 'people using or dealing drugs' had stayed the same / got worse in the last 12 months (3% improved, 44% stayed the same, 7% got worse).



In Charnwood burglary dwelling increased by 5% in 2005, although the 4 year trend shows a 12% decrease. Charnwood respondents on balance believed that the problem had stayed the same / got better (7% improved, 53% stayed the same, 2% got worse).

Theft from motor vehicle fell by a quarter (27%) and theft of motor vehicle fell by around a third (38%), giving a decrease of 30% for overall vehicle crime in 2005. However public perception believed it to have stayed the same (6% improved, 61% stayed the same, 6% got worse).

In Charnwood assault rose by 13% in 2005. However public perception assessed 'people being attacked...' had on balance slightly improved (4% improved, 42% stayed the same, 2% got worse).

Robbery in Charnwood remained consistent in 2005. Public perception on balance reflected an improvement (4% improved, 42% stayed the same, 1% got worse).

In Charnwood theft fell by 14% in 2005. However a comparison can not be made as this category was not included in the citizens panel questionnaire.

Fraud in Charnwood decreased by 29% 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 percentage results for 'very likely' and 'quite likely' are shown in Chart 5.

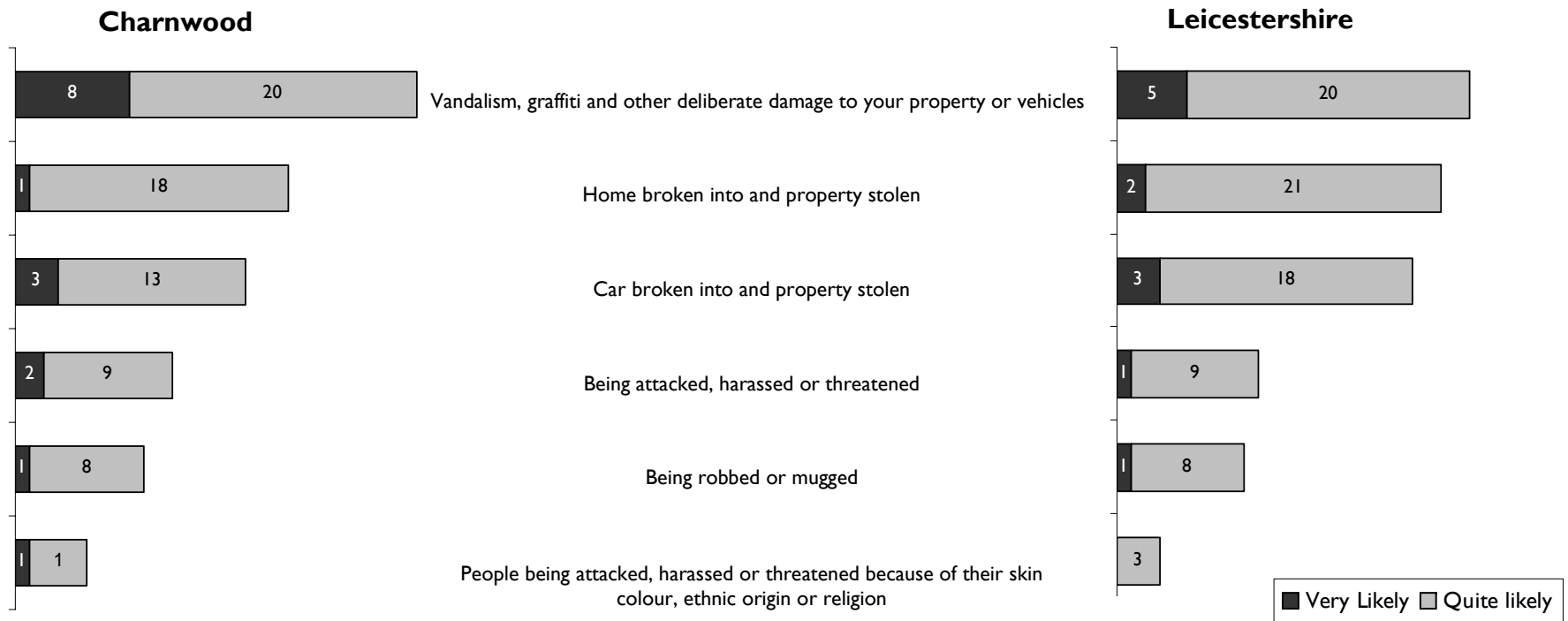
Over a quarter (28%) of Charnwood respondents believe it is likely they will be a victim of vandalism in the next 12 months. The extent to which this level of fear is heightened becomes apparent when

considering the recorded crime figures for criminal damage. In 2005, only 1.8% of Charnwood respondents were affected.

One-fifth (19%) of Charnwood respondents compared to 23% of County respondents felt it was likely that they would be a victim of domestic burglary during 2006. Again the disparity with actual crime figures is marked; recorded crime figures show only 1.4% of the Charnwood population suffered such a crime in 2005.

The same pattern of disparity is evident with other comparable crime types. Whereas 16% of Charnwood respondents believe it is likely that they will be a victim of vehicle crime in the next 12 months, the actual recorded figure for 2005 concerned only 1.1% of the Charnwood population. Likewise, 11% of Charnwood respondents believe they may be a victim of assault in 2006 but in 2005 only 2% of the population (as recorded by Leicestershire constabulary) actually were a victim.

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



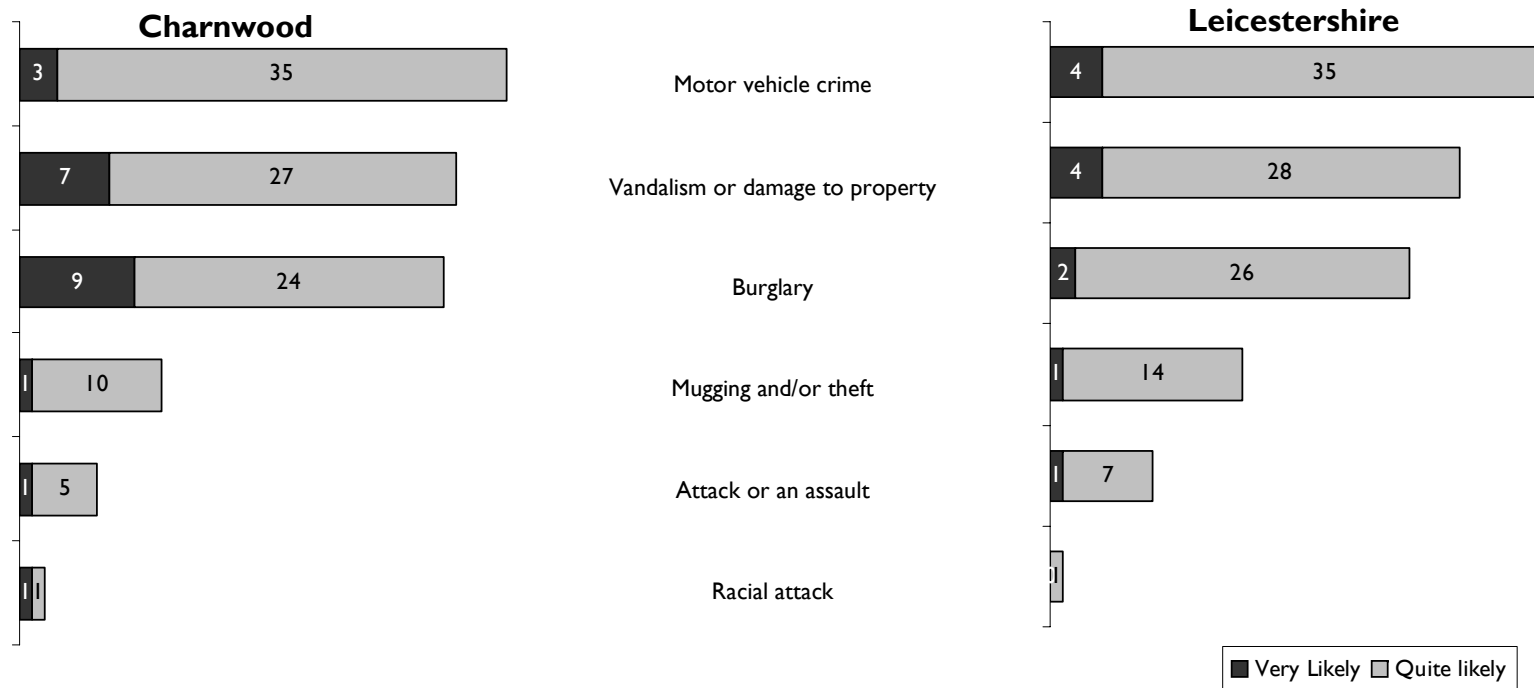
The same question was also asked in the 2004 citizens panel (chart 6) and although some of the categories were slightly changed in the 2005 version, a number still remain consistent and so allow for comparison.

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 (34%) of Charnwood respondents believed that they might be a victim of vandalism in the wave 6 report, this fear fell to 28% in the wave 8 report. Similarly, a third (31%) of Charnwood respondents feared the risk of burglary in the 2004 report and this level of fear reduced to 19% 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 Charnwood 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 Charnwood had ever felt fearful about the possibility of becoming a victim of crime in the last 12 months and it reveals that nearly a quarter of respondents (22%) had.

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

	n	%
Yes	42	22
No	142	74
Can't remember	8	4
Total	192	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	13	31
once a quarter	10	24
every two months	1	2
once a month	3	7
twice a month	2	5
once a week	4	10
twice a week	0	0
once a day	1	2
twice a day	2	5
No response	6	14
	42	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 55% had experienced fear around once a quarter or less in the last 12 months whilst 17% of respondents had felt fearful very often; once a week or more.

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	142	74
A little afraid	32	17
Very afraid	7	4
Can't remember	11	6
No Response	0	0
Total	192	100

Source: Citizens' Panel wave 8, LCC

Whilst a quarter (22%) of respondents said they had felt fearful (table 3) only 4% 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 177.

In conclusion, around a fifth (19.8%) of Charnwood respondents said they had felt fearful in the last 12 months.

When the frequency of fear was examined only a 13% said they had felt fearful more than once or twice during the course of the year.

When the intensity of fear was examined only 3% had felt very afraid in this period.

Further, when the frequency and intensity was examined together only 2% of respondents had reported feeling very afraid more than once or twice in the year. Thus for residents of Charnwood, 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.**

frequency	intensity						Total	
	Not afraid		A little afraid		Very afraid			
	n	(%)	n	(%)	n	(%)	n	(%)
Never	142	(80.2)	-	-	-	-	142	(80.2)
once or twice	-	-	10	(5.6)	2	(1.1)	12	(6.8)
once a quarter	-	-	10	(5.6)	-	-	10	(5.6)
every two months	-	-	1	(0.6)	-	-	1	(0.6)
once a month	-	-	3	(1.7)	-	-	3	(1.7)
twice a month	-	-	2	(1.1)	-	-	2	(1.1)
once a week	-	-	1	(0.6)	3	(1.7)	4	(2.3)
once a day	-	-	1	(0.6)	-	-	1	(0.6)
twice a day	-	-	2	(1.1)	-	-	2	(1.1)
	142	(80.2)	30	(16.9)	5	(2.8)	177	(100.0)

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 Charnwood respondents and Leicestershire respondents as a whole.

In general respondents in Charnwood tend to adopt fewer avoidance strategies than county-wide respondents.

In particular Charnwood respondents have less of a problem answering the door in their neighbourhood compared to county-wide respondents (Charnwood 23% 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 the Borough of Charnwood and Leicestershire as a whole. The results 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 Charnwood residents than residents in the county.

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

% saying they use the following avoidance tactics	Charnwood		Leicestershire	
	Rank	%	Rank	%
I avoid groups of young people in my neighbourhood	1	44	2	48
I always tell somebody where I am going	2	42	1	50
I avoid certain areas of my neighbourhood when out	3	35	4	37
I carry a mobile phone in my neighbourhood for safety reasons	4	35	3	40
I avoid going out alone in my neighbourhood	5	28	5	31
I avoid using a cash point in my neighbourhood	6	24	5	31
I avoid answering the door	7	23	7	30
I plan my route when going out in my neighbourhood	8	23	8	25
I avoid leaving my house unoccupied	9	22	9	23
I avoid using public transport if on my own in my neighbourhood	10	17	10	20

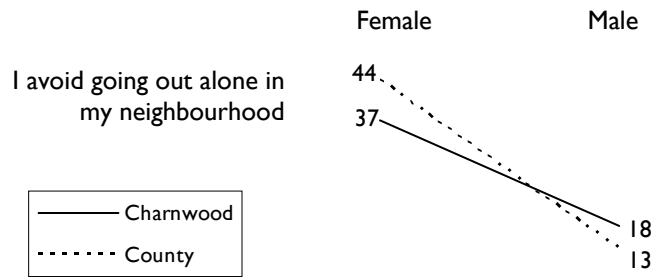
Source: Citizens' Panel wave 8, LCC

The steeper the curve the more gender specific the category. Thus the need to 'avoid going out alone', to 'avoid answering the door', to 'avoid certain areas of the neighbourhood', to 'carry a mobile phone' and to 'tell someone where they are going' are all tactics that are predominately adopted by females both in Charnwood and the county. In two of these categories the Charnwood and county lines intersect. Thus the need to 'avoid going out alone' and to 'avoid certain areas' are felt more by the males in Charnwood than males in the

county but less by the females in Charnwood than the females in the county as a whole.

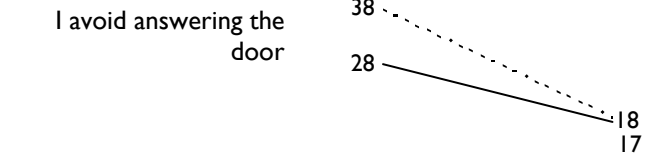
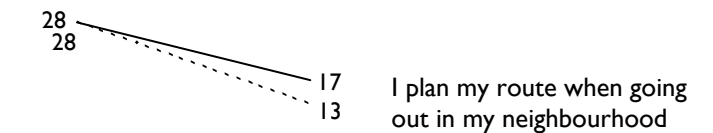
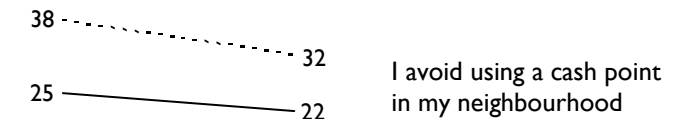
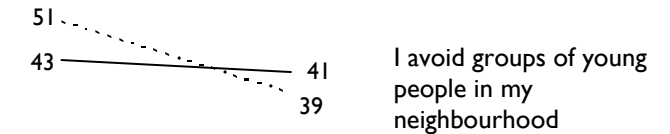
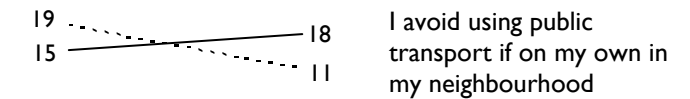
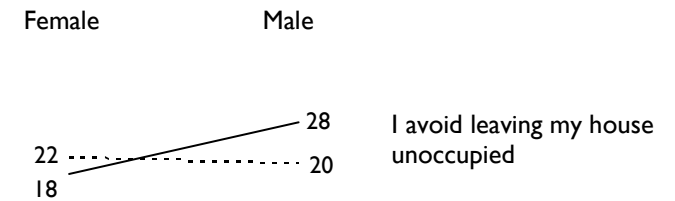
When the lines in these graphics converge on one side or intersect this suggests there is both a district and gender specific issue with the category. Interestingly the need to 'avoid leaving the house unoccupied' and to 'avoid using public transport' are specific issues for men in Charnwood. As the county average line suggests it is usual that more women than men adopt avoidance strategies within the county and therefore

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

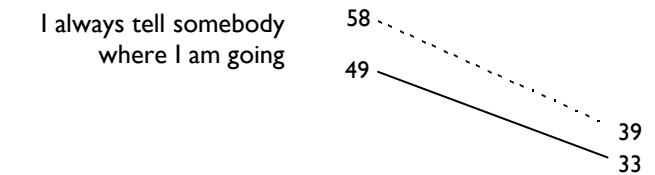
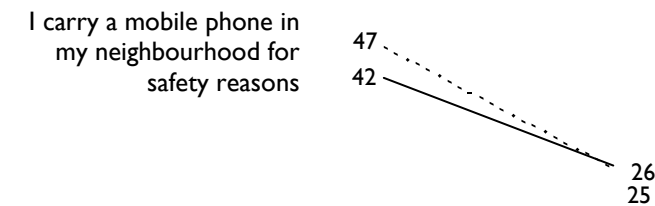
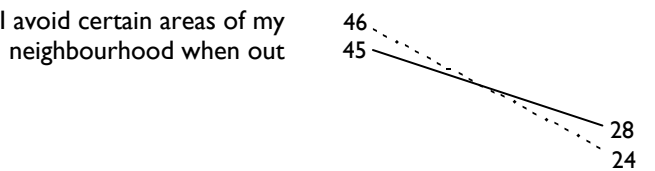


it is quite unusual for a male response to sit higher than a female response.

Both males and females in Charnwood have much less of a problem using a cash point in their area than respondents from the county as a whole.



In conclusion, as usual more female than male respondents tend to adopt avoidance strategies in order to reduce their risk of victimisation. However within this context Charnwood females tend to adopt fewer avoidance strategies compared to the county female average and so demonstrate quite good public confidence levels whereas Charnwood males tend to adopt more avoidance strategies than the male county average and so exhibit quite poor public confidence levels.



Source: Citizens' Panel wave 8, LCC

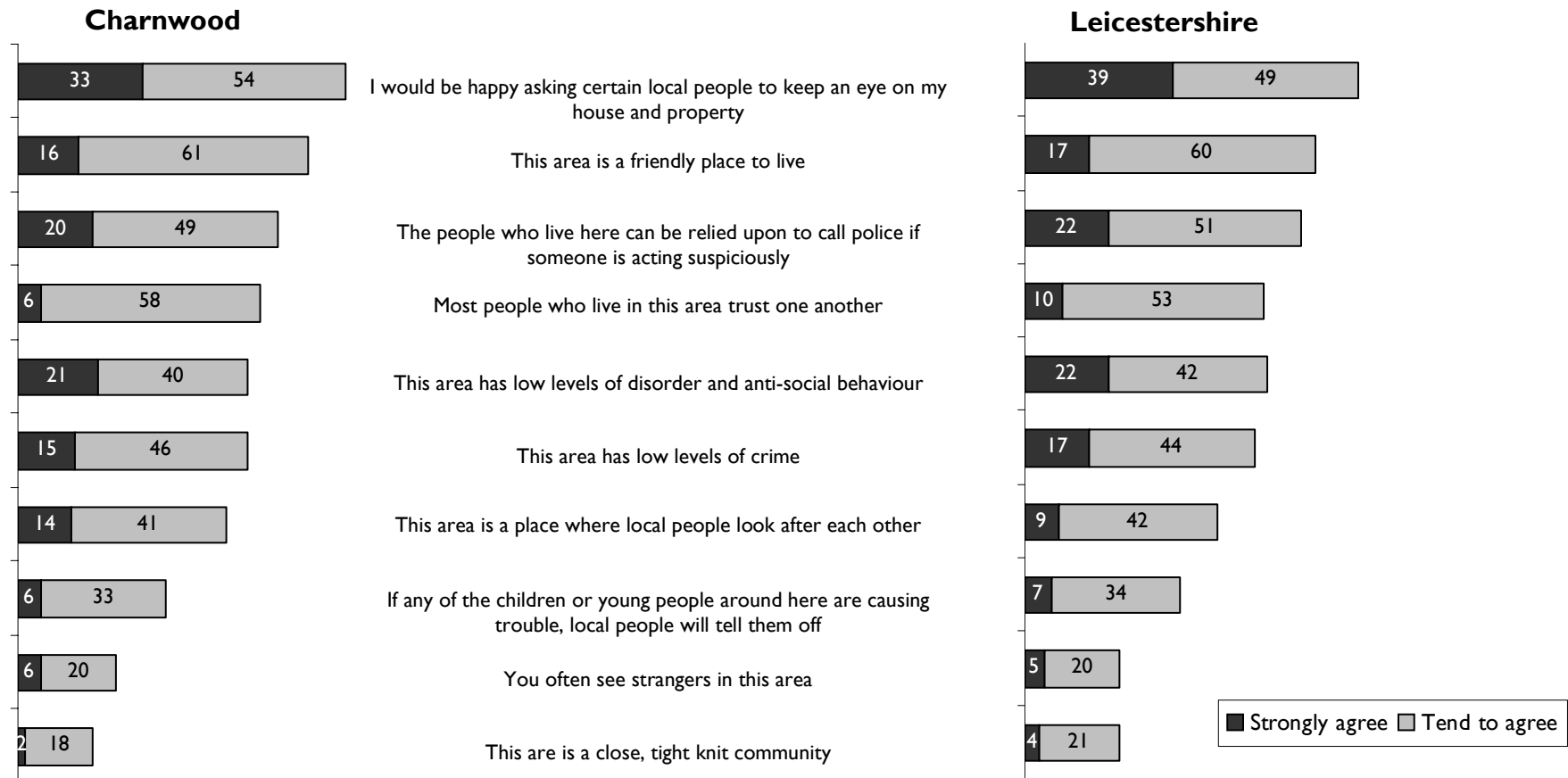
## Perceptions of neighbourhood

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 Charnwood 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 the borough of Charnwood (160). Respondents from Charnwood 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 March 2006 by the Research & Information Team, Leicestershire County Council.**

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