

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

Main Findings

- There is consensus amongst both Harborough and County respondents that crime levels had remained fairly consistent over the last 12 months.
- In 2005 more people in Harborough thought that crime levels had stayed the same than they did in the previous year.
- A quarter (25%) of Harborough respondents and 23% of County respondents believe it is likely they will be a victim of domestic burglary in the next 12 months. Yet in 2005, only 0.8% of Harborough households 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 3.4% of Harborough respondents said they had felt very fearful more than once or twice in a 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 to 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 Harborough District 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)	Harborough		Leicestershire	
	Rank	%	Rank	%
People driving above the speed limit	1	43	1	45
Rubbish or litter lying around	2	28	2	31
Teenagers hanging around on the streets	3	22	3	29
Vandalism, graffiti and other deliberate damage to property or vehicles	4	17	4	22
Homes being broken into and property stolen	5	13	5	14
People using or dealing drugs	6	13	6	14
People being drunk or rowdy in public places	7	12	7	13
Troublesome neighbours	8	9	9	7
Cars being broken into or stolen	9	7	8	12
People being attacked, harassed or threatened	10	1	11	3
People being attacked, harassed or threatened because of their skin colour, ethnic origin or religion	11	0	12	2
People being robbed or mugged	12	0	10	3

Source: Citizens' Panel wave 8, LCC

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 Harborough and for the County as a whole. In general Harborough respondents rank each category in line with the county as a whole but at a consistently lower rate. Only the perceived problem of 'troublesome neighbours' ranks higher than the county-wide response (Harborough 9% County 7%).

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 so do not figure in this chart. Further, at

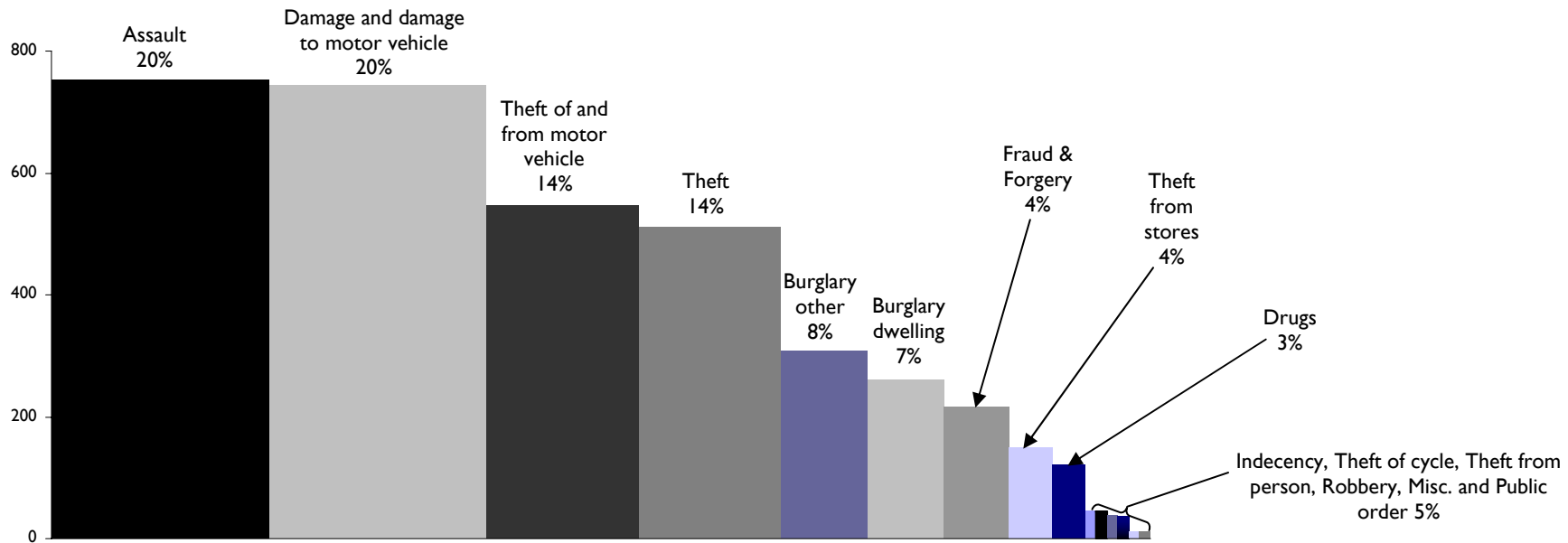
present there is no available data source with which to compare perceived anti-social behaviour with actual.

Harborough respondents tend to position 'people being attacked...' towards the bottom of the list; rank 10 and 11 whereas the actual recorded crime accounts for 20% of total crime in Harborough and thus presents as the most prolific crime type.

Conversely, they position 'vandalism, graffiti and other deliberate damage to property and vehicles' as the highest perceived crime problem in Harborough (rank 4) and this aligns with a recorded criminal damage figure of 20%.

For Harborough respondents 'cars being broken into or stolen' ranks quite lowly in 9th place whereas recorded vehicle crime accounts for 14% of total crime in Harborough and so presents as the third most prolific crime type.

Chart 1: Recorded offences in Harborough 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 there is a disparity between recorded assaults and peoples perceptions of how problematic assault is in their local area compared to other crime types.

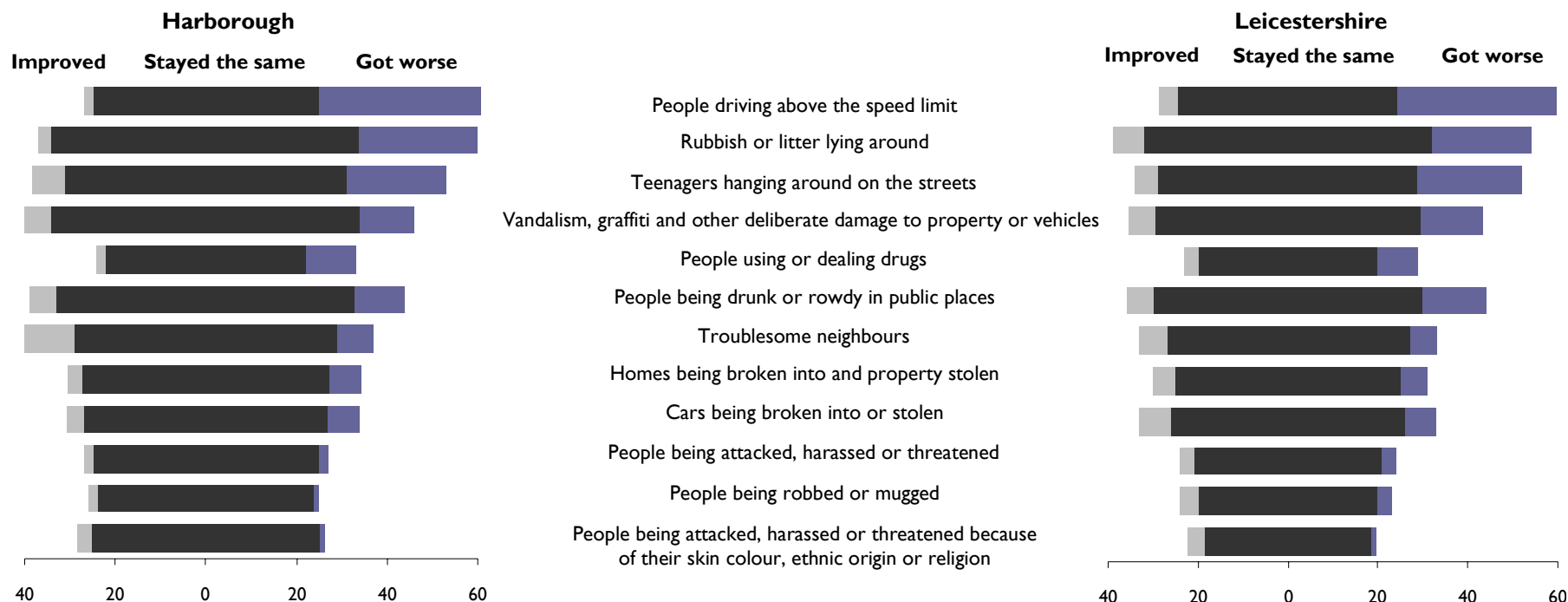
Table 2: Rank of problems in local area for November 2004 (Wave 6 citizens panel)

rank order of problems in local area	Harborough	Leicestershire
Motoring offences	1st	1st
Vehicle crime	2nd	3rd
Burglary	3rd	4th
Vandalism	4th	2nd
Drug offences	5th	7th
Rowdiness / Disorderly behaviour	6th	5th
Illegal parking	7th	6th
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)



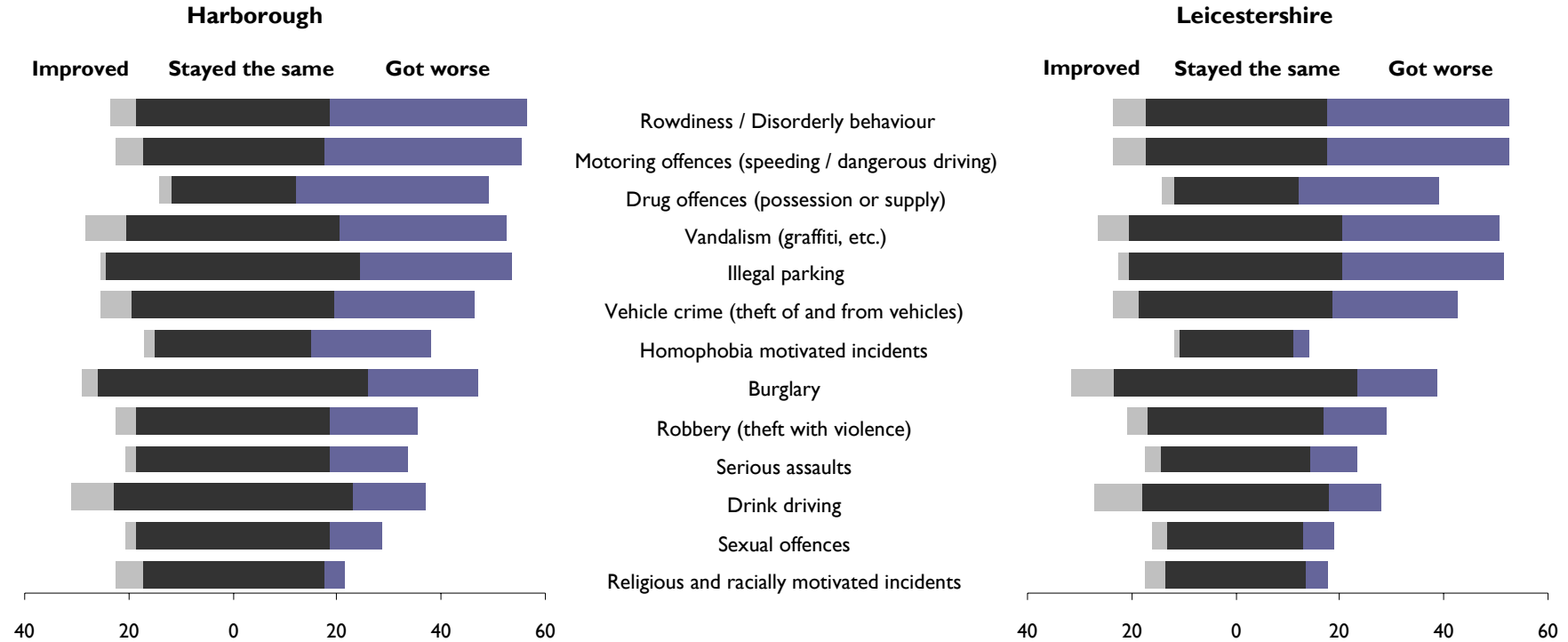
Source: Citizens' Panel wave 8, LCC

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 Harborough and County respondents that crime levels had remained fairly consistent over the last 12 months.

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



Source: Citizens' Panel wave 6, LCC

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.

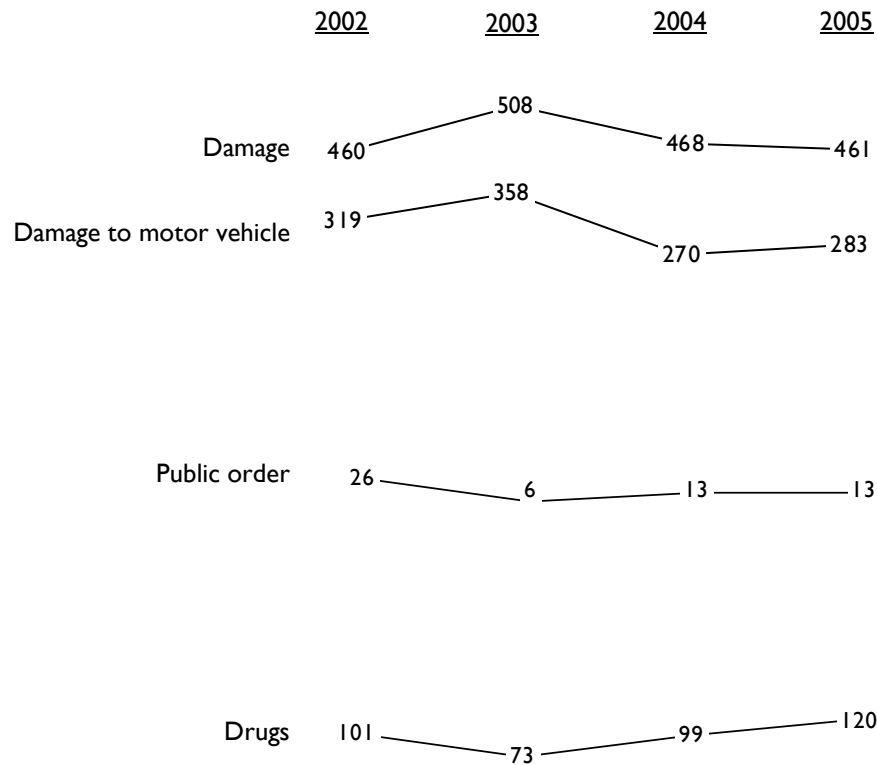
In 2005 more people thought that crime levels had stayed the same than they did in the previous year. In 2004 a higher number of people state that either a number of crimes had got worse in the three year period or that they did not know. Given the theoretical link between appropriate, accurate information at a local level and a more reassured public,

this suggests that the Harborough public was more informed in 2005 and so better reassured.

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

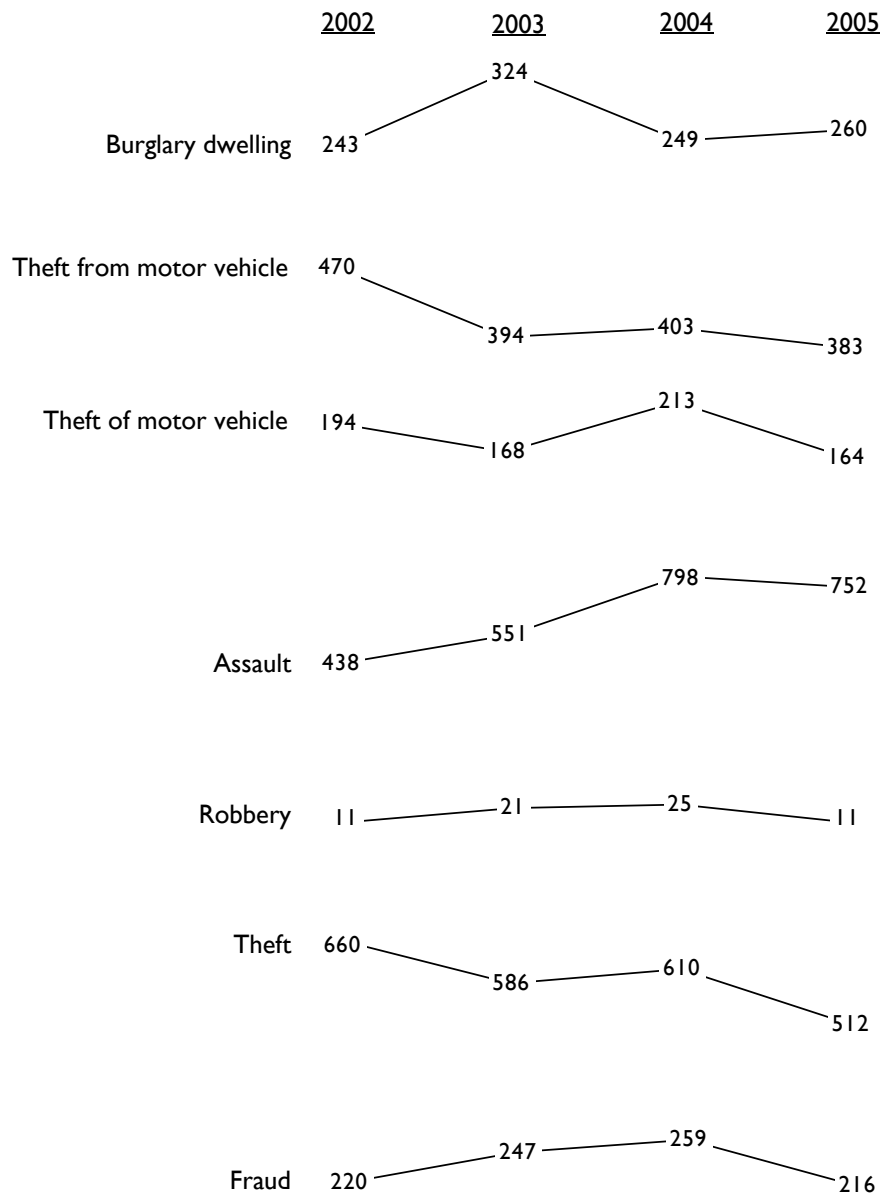


Both damage and damage to motor vehicle have remained stable between 2004 and 2005, giving an overall increase of just 1% in total criminal damage in this period. Thus public perception that 'vandalism, graffiti and other deliberate damage to property and vehicles' had on balance stayed the same/got worse is unsupported (6% improved, 68% stayed the same, 12% got worse).

In Harborough public order remained stable in 2005. Note, 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 (6% improved, 63% stayed the same, 11% got worse).

Drug offences increased by 21% in 2005, a continuing trend from a relatively low number in 2003. Public perception is that 'people using or dealing drugs' had stayed the same / got worse in the last 12 months (2% improved, 44% stayed the same, 11% got worse).

Source: Leicestershire Constabulary: CIS



Source: Leicestershire Constabulary: CIS

In Harborough burglary remained fairly stable in 2005 and Harborough respondents on balance believed that the problem had stayed the same / got worse (3% improved, 54% stayed the same, 7% got worse).

Theft from motor vehicle remained fairly stable and theft of motor vehicle fell by around a quarter (23%), giving a decrease of 11% for overall vehicle crime in 2005. Public perception on balance suggested car crime had got worse during this period. (4% improved, 54% stayed the same, 7% got worse).

In Harborough assault fell by 6% in 2005. This is the first decline in a generally upward trend line. Public perception assessed 'people being attacked...' had on balance stayed the same (2% improved, 50% stayed the same, 2% got worse).

Robbery in Harborough remained consistently low over this four-year period. Public perception on balance reflected a slight improvement. (2% improved, 48% stayed the same, 1% got worse).

In Harborough theft fell by 16% in 2005. However a comparison can not be made as this category was not included in the citizens panel questionnaire.

Fraud in Harborough increased by 17% in 2005. Again this category was not included in the citizens panel questionnaire.

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.

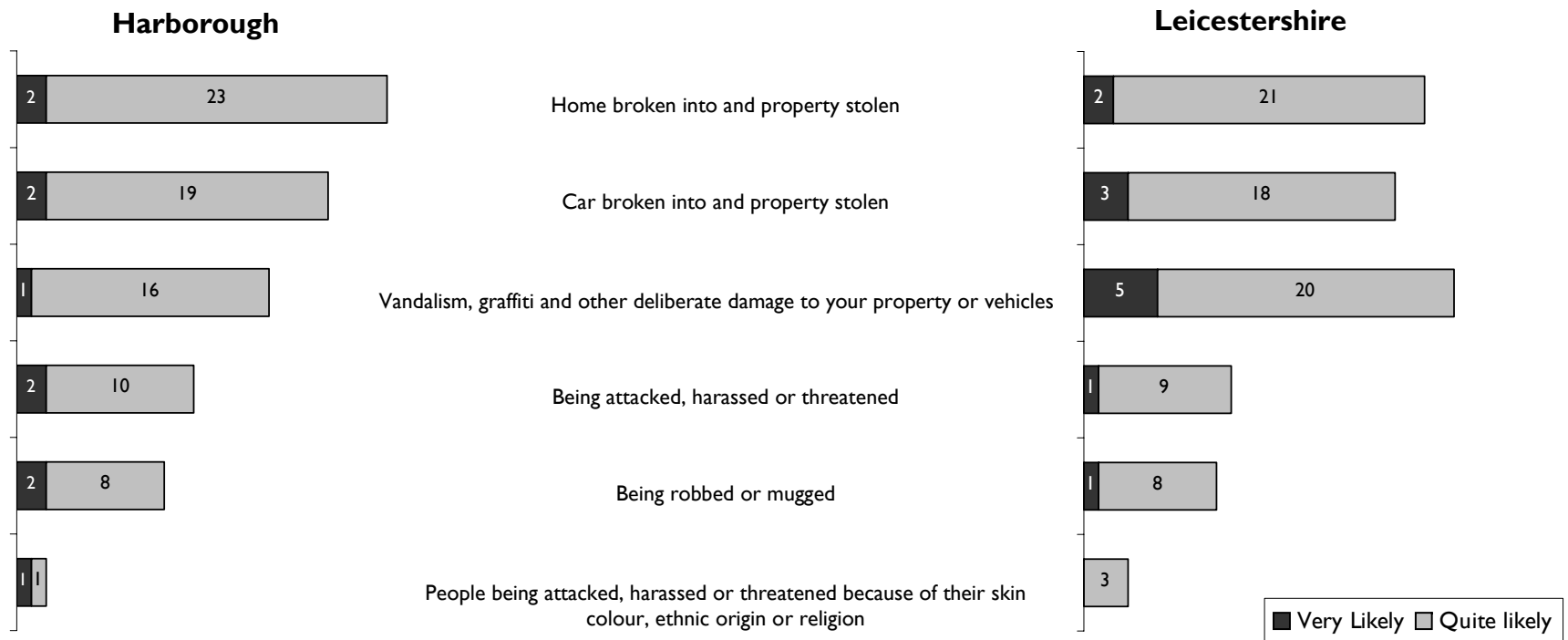
A quarter (25%) of Harbourough respondents and 23% of County respondents believe it is likely they will be a victim of domestic burglary in the next 12

months. The extent to which this level of fear is heightened becomes apparent when considering police recorded crime figures for domestic burglary. In 2005, only 0.8% of Harbourough households were affected.

Just over one-fifth (21%) of Harbourough and 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 0.7% of the Harbourough population suffered such a crime in 2005. The same pattern of disparity is evident with other comparable crime types. Whereas 17% of Harbourough 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 1.0% of the Harbourough population. Likewise, 12% of Harbourough respondents believe they may be a victim

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



of assault in 2006 but in 2005 only 1% of the population (as recorded by Leicestershire constabulary) actually were a victim.

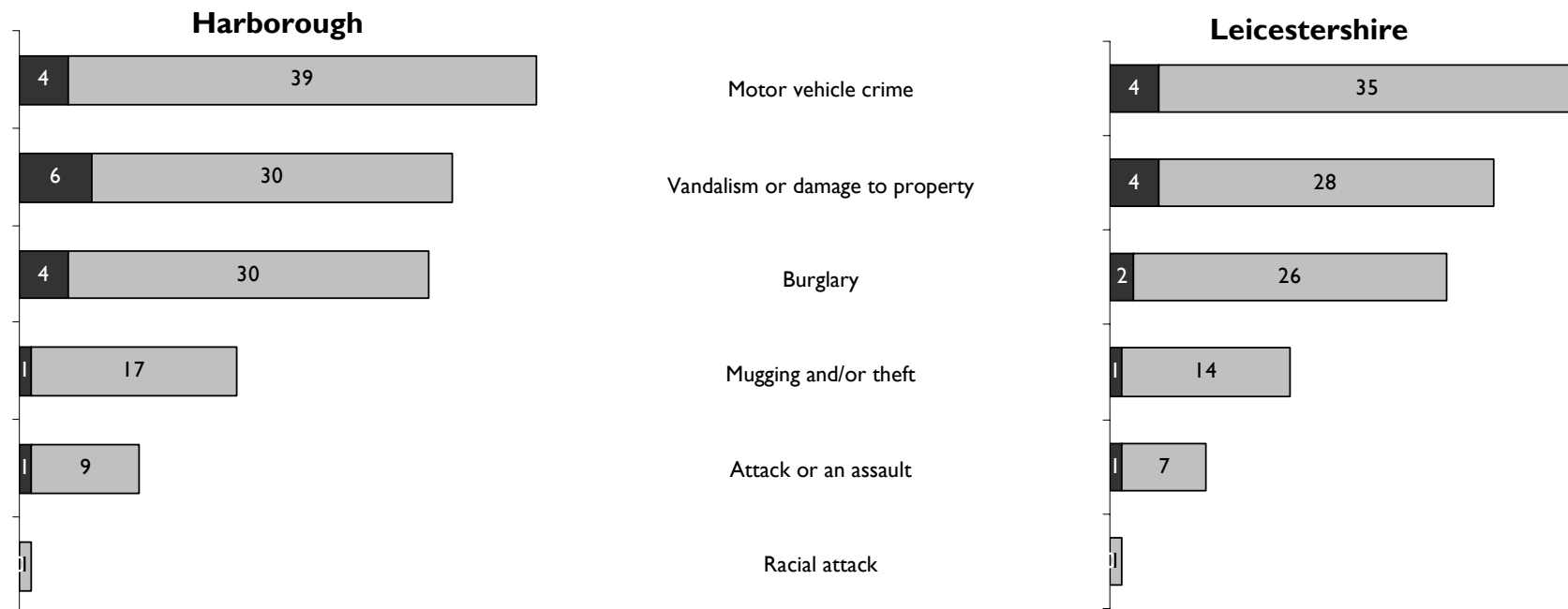
The same question was also asked in the 2004 citizens panel (chart 6) and although some of the categories were slightly changed in the 2005 version, a number still remain consistent and so allow for comparison.

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 Harborough respondents believed that they might be a victim of vandalism in the wave 6 report, this fear fell to 17% in the wave 8 report. Similarly, a third (34%) of Harborough respondents feared the risk of

burglary in the 2004 report and this level of fear reduced to 25% 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 Harborough 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 Harborough had ever felt fearful about the possibility of becoming a victim of crime in the last 12 months and it reveals that nearly one-fifth of respondents (18%) had.

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

	n	%
Yes	17	18
No	75	79
Can't remember	4	7
Total	96	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	5	29
once a quarter	4	24
every two months	2	12
once a month	1	6
twice a month	0	0
once a week	0	0
twice a week	0	0
once a day	2	12
twice a day	0	0
No response	3	18
	17	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 53% had experienced fear around once a quarter or less in the last 12 months and only two respondents (12%) had felt fearful very often; 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	75	78
A little afraid	13	14
Very afraid	3	3
Can't remember	0	0
No Response	5	5
Total	96	100

Source: Citizens' Panel wave 8, LCC

Whilst a fifth of (18%) respondents said they had felt fearful (table 3) only 3% 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 89.

In conclusion, 15.7% of Harborough respondents said they had felt fearful in the last 12 months.

When the frequency of fear was examined only one in ten (10.0%) said they had felt fearful more than once or twice during the course of the year.

When the intensity of fear was examined only 3.4% had felt very afraid in this period.

Thus for residents of Harborough, 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	(%)	n	(%)
Never	75	(84.3)	-	-	-	-	75	(84.3)
once or twice	-	-	5	(5.6)	-	-	5	(5.6)
once a quarter	-	-	2	(2.2)	2	(2.2)	4	(4.5)
every two months	-	-	2	(2.2)	-	-	2	(2.2)
once a month	-	-	1	(1.1)	-	-	1	(1.1)
once a day	-	-	1	(1.1)	1	(1.1)	2	(2.2)
	75	(84.3)	11	(12.4)	5	(3.4)	89	(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 Harborough respondents and Leicestershire respondents as a whole.

In general Harborough respondents consistently adopt fewer avoidance strategies than county-wide respondents.

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 Harborough district 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 Harborough residents than residents in the county.

In general the lines representing the county response sit consistently above the lines representing the Harborough response suggesting that both female and male respondents in Harborough tend to adopt

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

% saying they use the following avoidance tactics	Harborough		Leicestershire	
	Rank	%	Rank	%
I always tell somebody where I am going	1	41	1	50
I avoid groups of young people in my neighbourhood	2	37	2	48
I carry a mobile phone in my neighbourhood for safety reasons	3	33	3	40
I avoid certain areas of my neighbourhood when out	4	25	4	37
I avoid answering the door	5	25	7	30
I avoid using a cash point in my neighbourhood	6	23	5	31
I avoid going out alone in my neighbourhood	7	22	5	31
I plan my route when going out in my neighbourhood	8	15	8	25
I avoid leaving my house unoccupied	9	14	9	23
I avoid using public transport if on my own in my neighbourhood	10	8	10	20

Source: Citizens' Panel wave 8, LCC

fewer avoidance strategies than female and male respondents in the county as a whole.

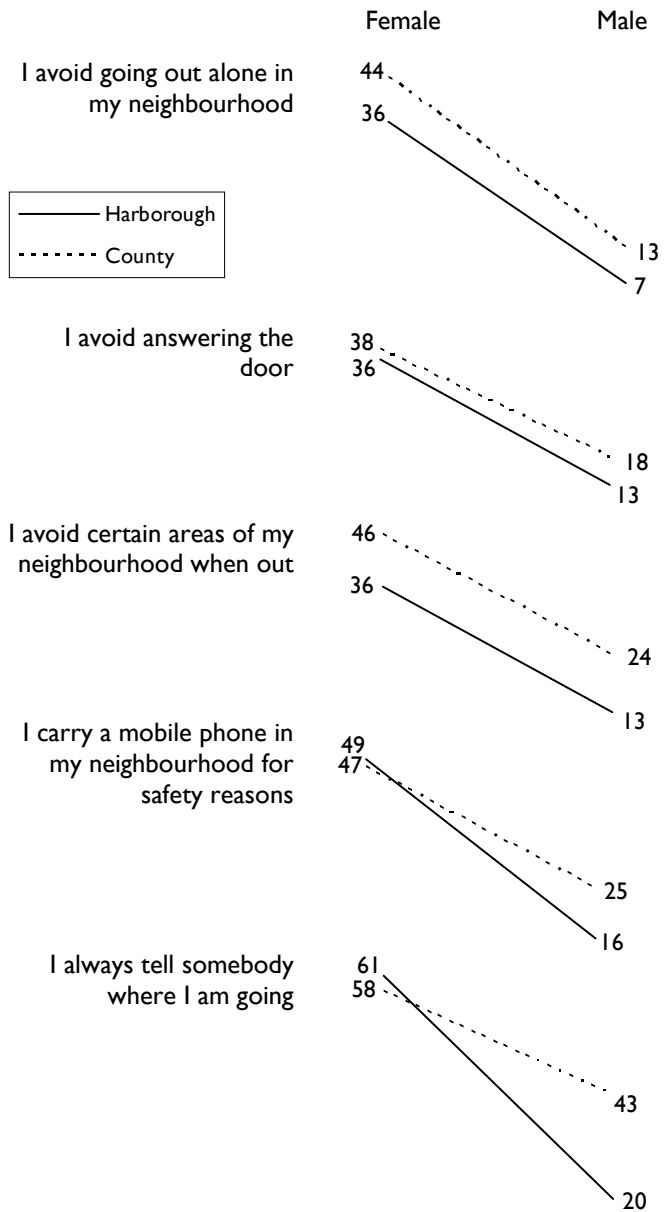
The steeper the curve the more gender specific the category. Thus the need to 'avoid going out alone', to 'avoid answering the door' and to 'avoid certain areas of the neighbourhood' are all tactics that are predominately adopted by females both in Harborough and the county.

Accordingly the less steep the line the less gender specific the issue. Thus the need to

'avoid leaving the house unattended' affects both female and male respondents in equal measure in Harborough and in the county as a whole.

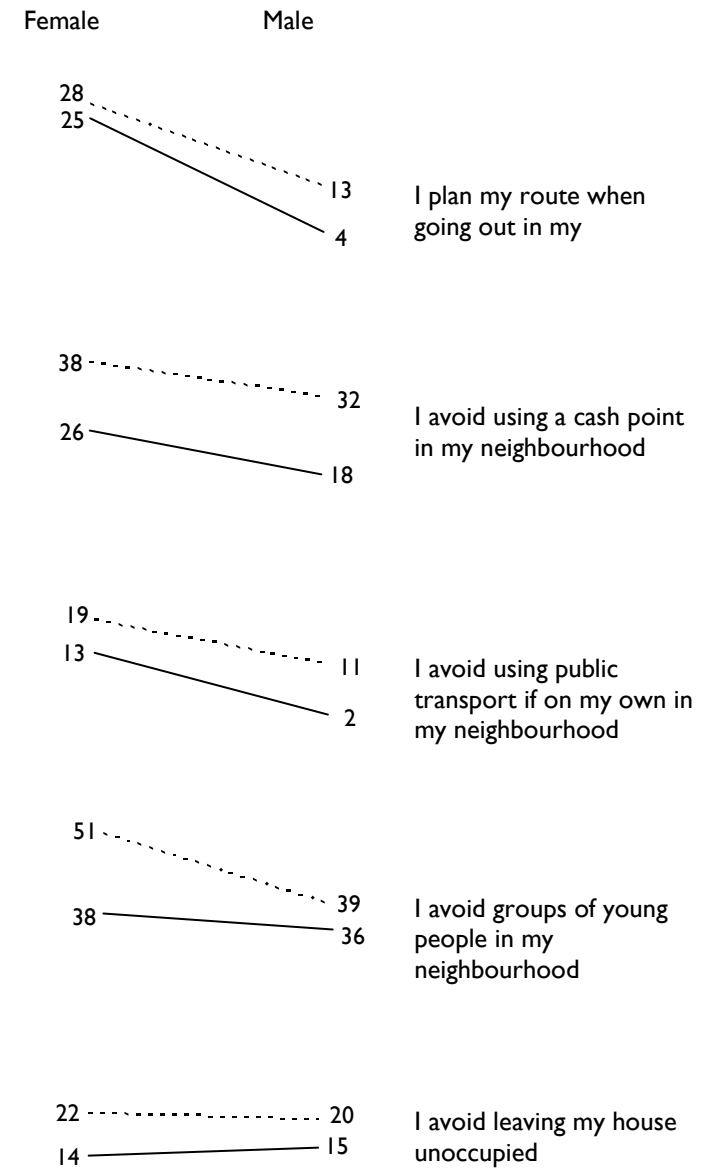
In two categories the Harborough and county lines intersect. Thus the need to 'carry a mobile phone' and to 'always tell somebody where they are going' are felt more by the females in Harborough than females in the county but less by the males in Harborough than the males in the county as a whole. This highlights both a gender and a district specific behaviour.

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 also suggests there is both a district and gender specific issue with the category. Thus the need to 'avoid groups of young people' is much less of a problem for females in Harborborough compared to females in the county.

In conclusion, both female and male Harborborough respondents tend to adopt fewer avoidance strategies compared to their county equivalents and so demonstrate quite good public confidence levels. Thus reinforcing the notion that Harborborough is perceived as a relatively safe place to live.



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

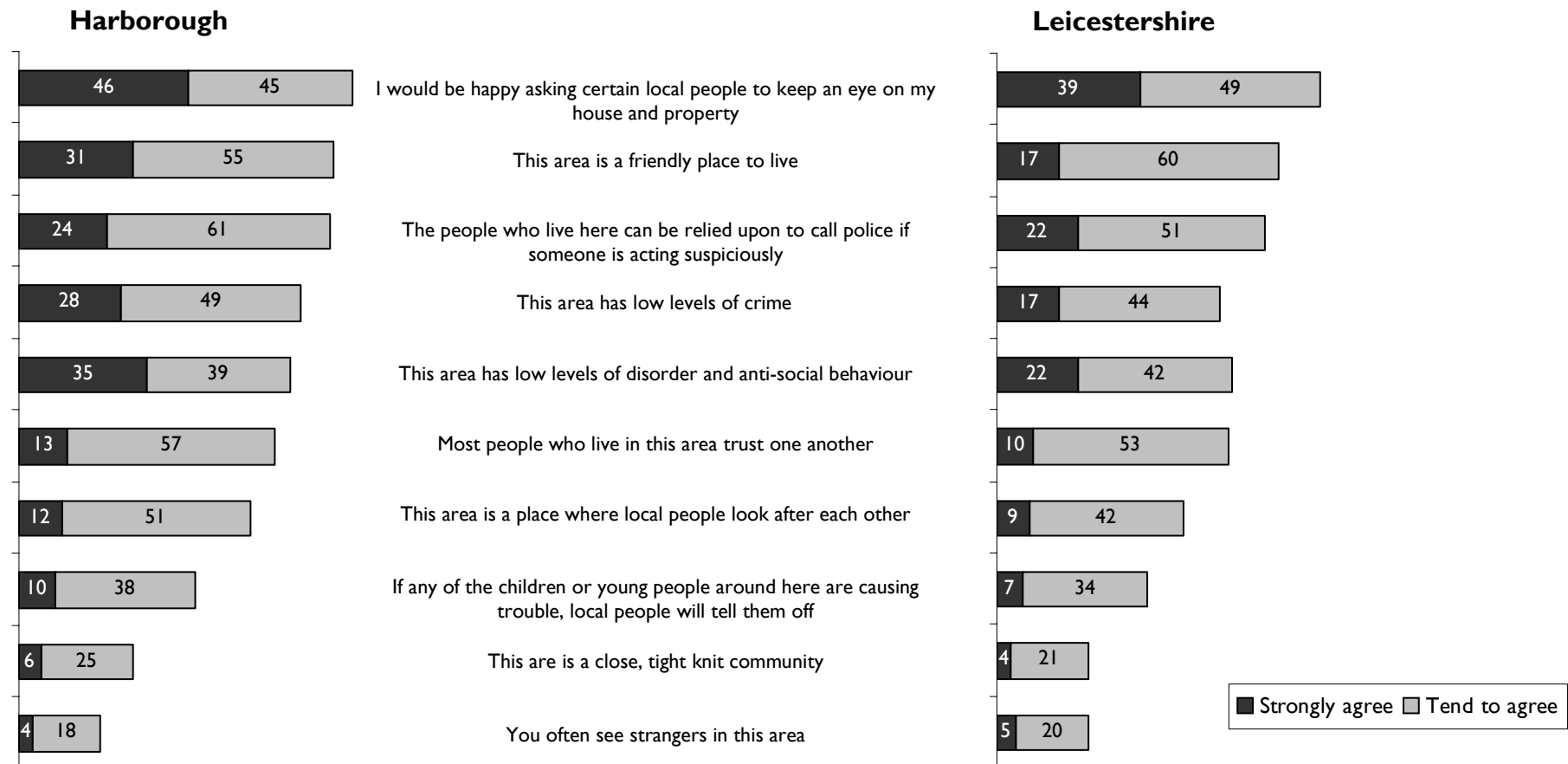
(Jackson 2004). Linking to this idea, respondents were asked to assess the community cohesion in their neighbourhood and the subsequent results are shown in chart 8.

In general Harborough residents are more positive in their response and so they

evidence more community cohesion in their responses than residents in the county at large.

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:

Docking, M. (2003) 'Public perceptions of police accountability and decisionmaking' *Home Office Publication 38/03*

Farrall, S. & Gadd, D. (2004) 'The frequency of the fear of crime' *The British Journal of Criminology*, 44: 127-132.

Hough, M. and Roberts, J (1998) 'Attitudes to punishment: Findings from the 1998 BCS' *London, HO research study no. 179*

Jackson, J. (2004) 'Experience and Expression: Social and cultural significance in the fear of crime' *The British Journal of Criminology*, 44: 946 - 966.

Leicestershire Constabulary (2005) 'Neighbourhood Policing strategy'

Mattison, J. and Mirlees-Black, C. (2000) 'Attitudes to crime and criminal justice' *London HO research no. 200*

Caveat:

The findings discussed in this report are based on a relatively low number of responses for Harborough District (135). Respondents from Harborough 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 March 2006 by the Research & Information Team, Leicestershire County Council.

For further information please contact:

Sharon Pye

tel. 0116 265 7413

email: spye@leics.gov.uk

Or view information on-line at: www.leics.gov.uk/statistics