

Hinckley and Bosworth Borough - Citizens' Panel Report - Perceptions of crime and disorder

Main Findings

- There is consensus amongst both Hinckley and Bosworth and County respondents that crime levels had remained fairly consistent over the last 12 months.
- In 2005 more people thought that crime levels had stayed the same than they did in the previous year.
- Nearly a third (32%) of Hinckley and Bosworth respondents believe it is likely they will be a victim of vehicle crime in the next 12 months yet in 2005 only 0.5% of Hinckley and Bosworth residents 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 1.8% of 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 Hinckley and Bosworth 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)	H&B		Leicestershire	
	Rank	%	Rank	%
People driving above the speed limit	1	51	1	45
Teenagers hanging around on the streets	2	35	3	29
Rubbish or litter lying around	3	28	2	31
Vandalism, graffiti and other deliberate damage to property or vehicles	4	27	4	22
Homes being broken into and property stolen	5	19	5	14
Cars being broken into or stolen	6	18	8	12
People being drunk or rowdy in public places	7	15	7	13
People using or dealing drugs	8	11	6	14
Troublesome neighbours	9	8	9	7
People being robbed or mugged	10	8	10	3
People being attacked, harassed or threatened	11	5	11	3
People being attacked, harassed or threatened because of their skin colour, ethnic origin or religion	12	5	12	2

Source: Citizens' Panel wave 8, LCC

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 Hinckley and Bosworth and for the County as a whole. Overall most of the categories listed tend to be more of a problem for the respondents in Hinckley and Bosworth than respondents from the County as a whole. The main exception to this trend is the category of 'people using or dealing drugs' (Hinckley and Bosworth 11%, County 14%).

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

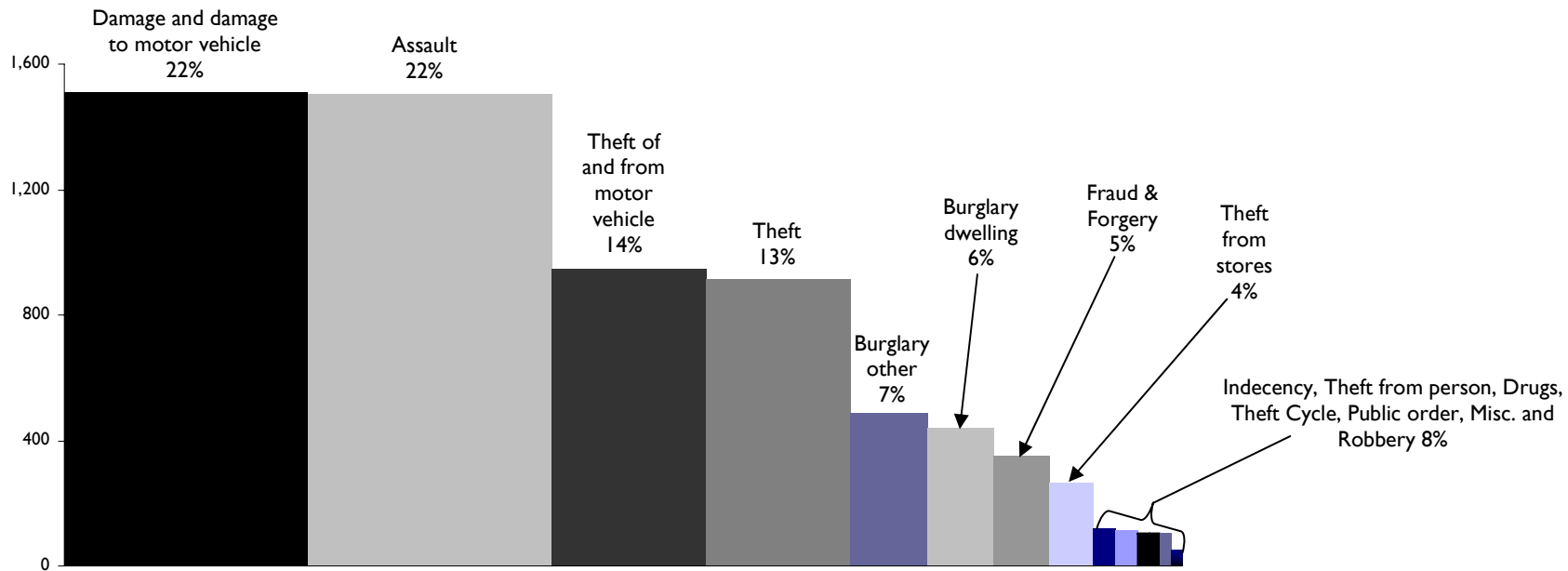
Hinckley and Bosworth respondents position 'vandalism, graffiti and other deliberate damage to property and vehicles' as the highest perceived crime problem in Hinckley Borough (rank 4). This aligns with a recorded criminal damage figure of 21.6%.

However, they tend to position 'people being attacked...' towards the bottom of the list; rank 11 and 12 whereas the actual recorded crime accounts for 21.5% of total crime in Hinckley and Bosworth and thus presents as the second most prolific crime type.

Hinckley and Bosworth respondents rank the problem of 'homes being broken into and property stolen' as the 3rd most prolific crime type (rank 5), whereas recorded burglary dwelling accounts for 6% of total crime in Hinckley and Bosworth and thus sits in 6th place in chart 1.

Conversely, 'cars being broken into or stolen' is the 4th most prolific crime type (rank 6) whereas recorded vehicle crime

Chart 1: Recorded offences in Hinckley and Bosworth Borough in rank order January 2005 to December 2005



Source: Leicestershire Constabulary: CIS

accounts for 14% of total crime in Hinckley and Bosworth and thus ranks 3rd in chart 1.

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 Hinckley and Bosworth tend to overestimate the proportion of disorderly behaviour in their area.

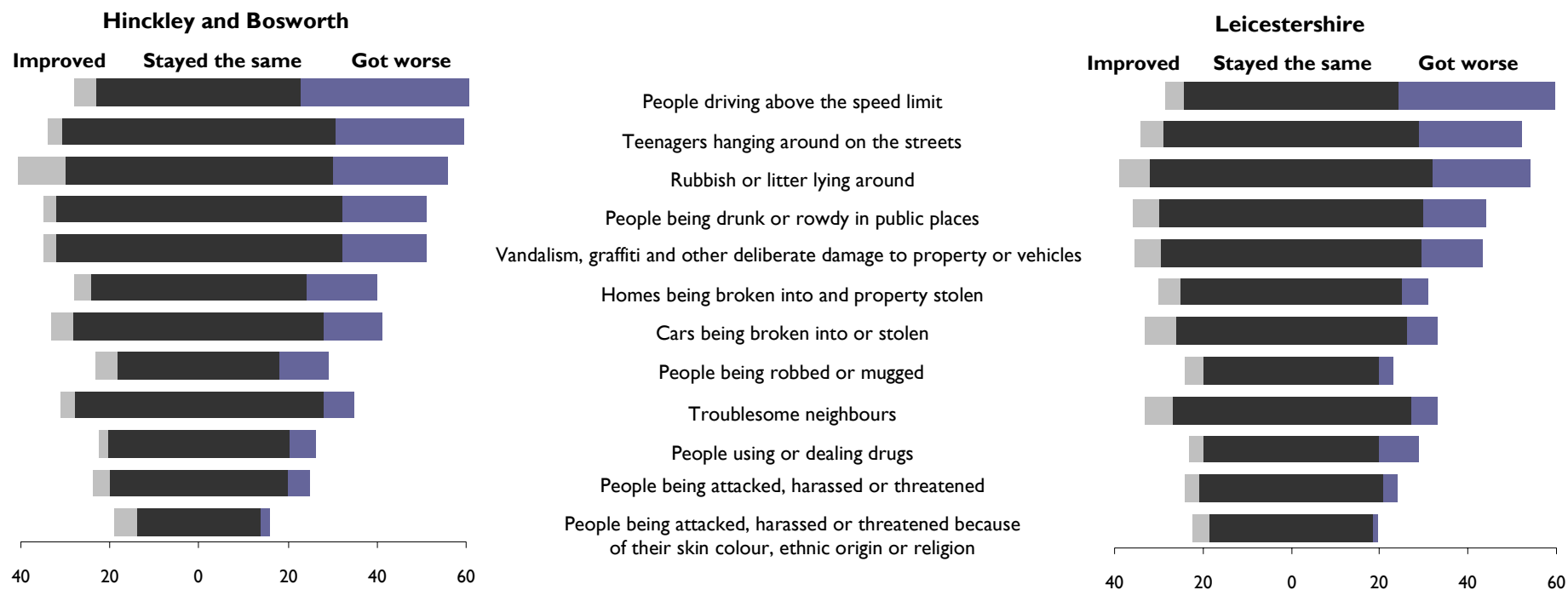
Table 2: Rank of problems in local area for November 2004 (Wave 6 citizens panel)

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

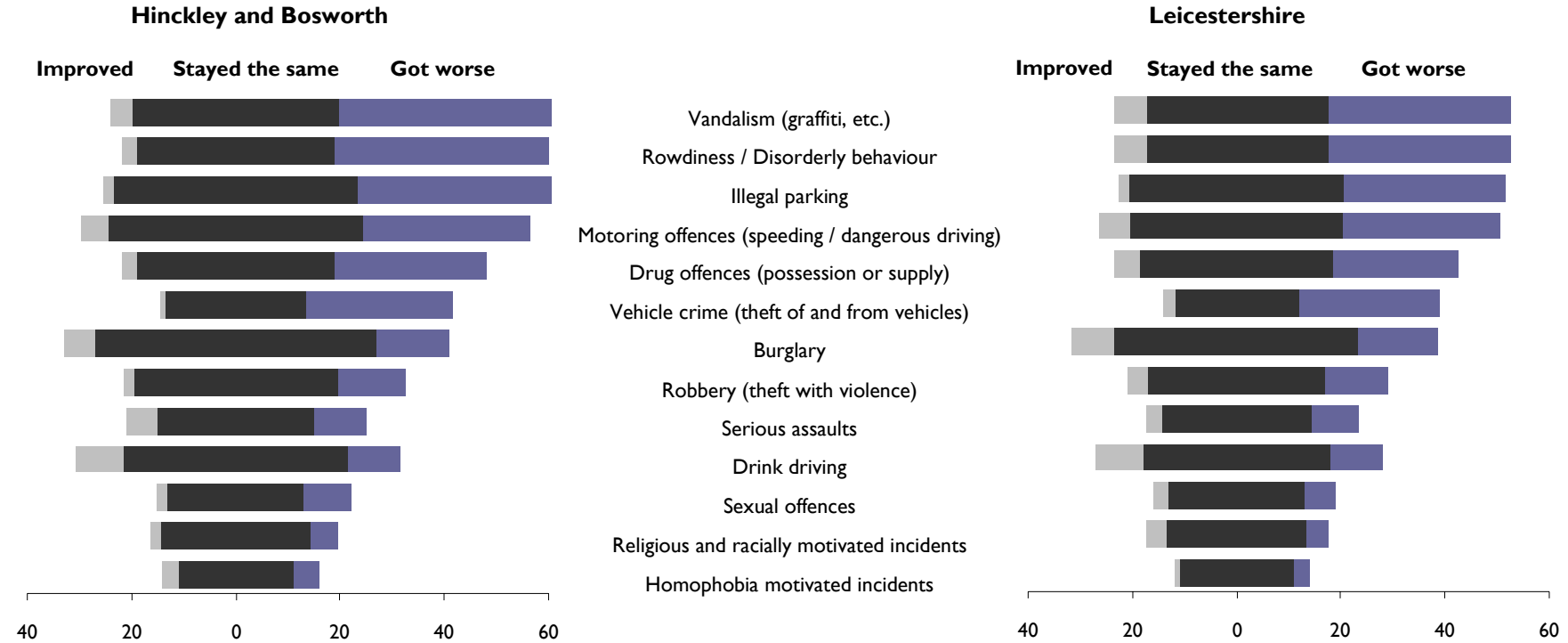
Chart 2 shows the percentage of respondents who thought crime / anti-social behaviour problems had either got better, worse or stayed the same over the 12 month period between January 2005 to December 2005. The size of the bar gives an indication of the overall number of responses to each category ('improved', '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 Hinckley and Bosworth and County respondents that crime levels had remained fairly consistent over the last 12 months. However, respondents in Hinckley and Bosworth are also more likely to suggest that each of the categories have got worse over the last 12 months compared to county respondents and so suggests that

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



Source: Citizens' Panel wave 6, LCC

levels of public confidence are slightly lower than average in Hinckley and Bosworth.

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.

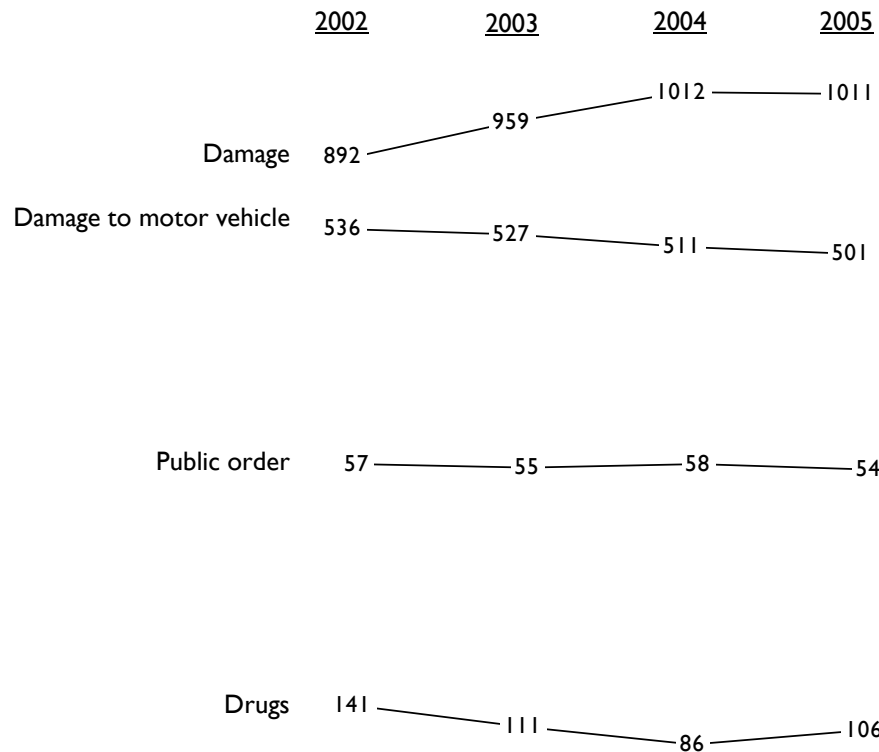
In 2005 more people thought that crime levels had stayed the same than they did in the previous year. In 2004 a higher number of people state that either a number of crimes had got worse in the

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 Hinckley and Bosworth public was more informed in 2005 and so better reassured.

Chart 4 shows trend lines for recorded crime in Hinckley and Bosworth 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: Hinckley and Bosworth reported crime trend lines 2002 to 2005

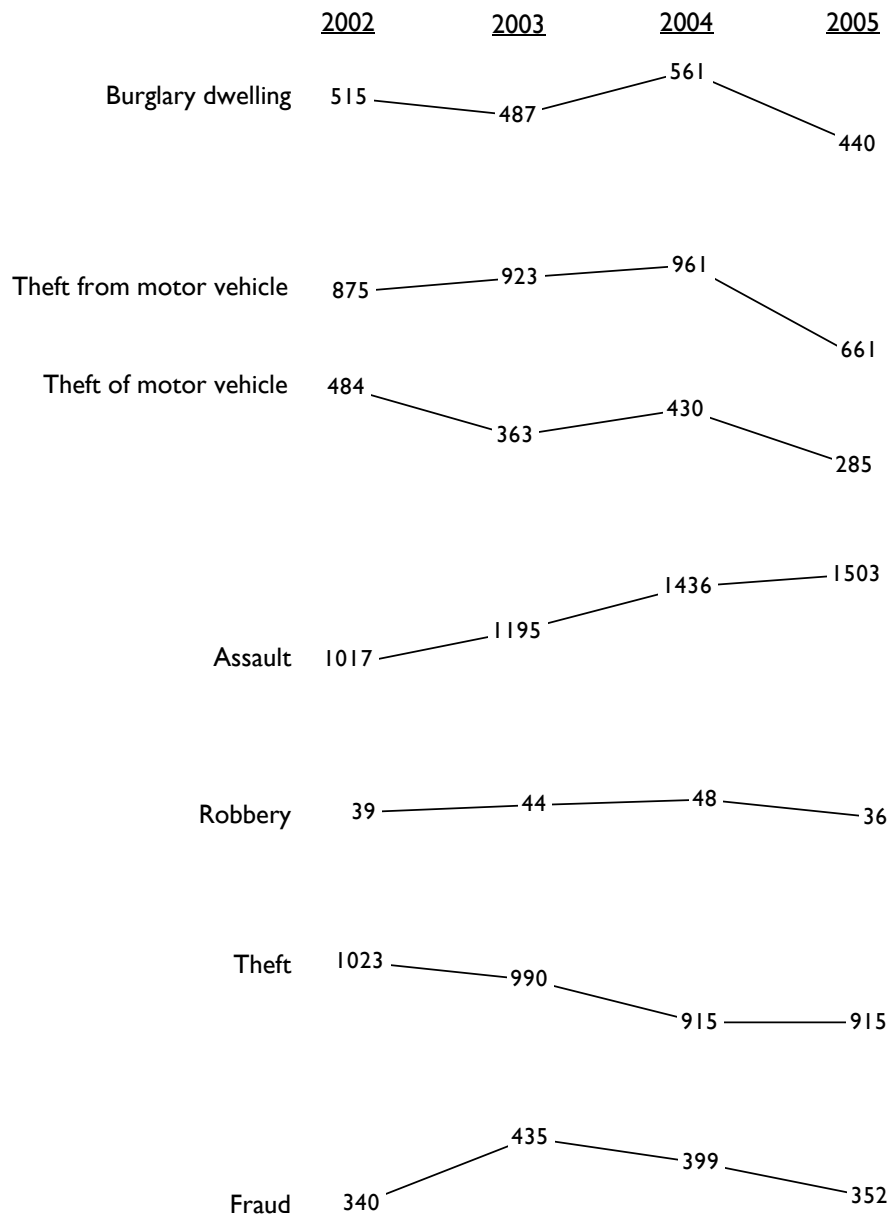


Both damage and damage to motor vehicle remained stable in 2005. Thus public perception that 'vandalism, graffiti and other deliberate damage to property and vehicles' had on balance stayed the same / got worse is unsupported (3% improved, 64% stayed the same, 19% got worse).

In Hinckley and Bosworth public order offences also remained stable in 2005. 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 (3% improved, 64% stayed the same, 19% got worse).

Drug offences increased by over one-fifth (23%) in 2005. By contrast public perception that 'people using or dealing drugs' had stayed the same / got worse in the last 12 months (2% improved, 43% stayed the same, 6% got worse).

Source: Leicestershire Constabulary: CIS



Source: Leicestershire Constabulary: CIS

In Hinckley and Bosworth burglary dwelling fell by one-fifth (21%) in 2005 yet Hinckley and Bosworth respondents on balance believed that the problem had on balance got worse (4% improved, 48% stayed the same, 16% got worse).

Theft from motor vehicle fell by nearly a third (31%) and theft of motor vehicle fell by just over a third (34%), giving a decrease of 32% for overall vehicle crime in 2005. Public perception incorrectly assessed that 'cars being broken in to or stolen' had on balance got worse (5% improved, 56% stayed the same, 13% got worse).

In Hinckley and Bosworth assault rose by 5% in 2005. Public perception correctly assessed 'people being attacked...' had stayed the same/got worse (4% improved, 40% stayed the same, 5% got worse).

Robbery in Hinckley and Bosworth remained consistently low over this four-year period. Public perception on balance reflected a worsening of the crime type (5% improved, 36% stayed the same, 11% got worse).

In Hinckley and Bosworth theft remained stable in 2005. However a comparison can not be made as this category was not included in the citizens panel questionnaire.

Fraud in Hinckley and Bosworth decreased by 12% 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 of crime in the next 12 months. The percentage results for 'very likely' and 'quite likely' are shown in Chart 5.

Nearly a third (32%) of Hinckley and Bosworth respondents compared to 21% of County respondents believe it is likely they will be a victim of vehicle crime in the next 12 months. The extent to which this

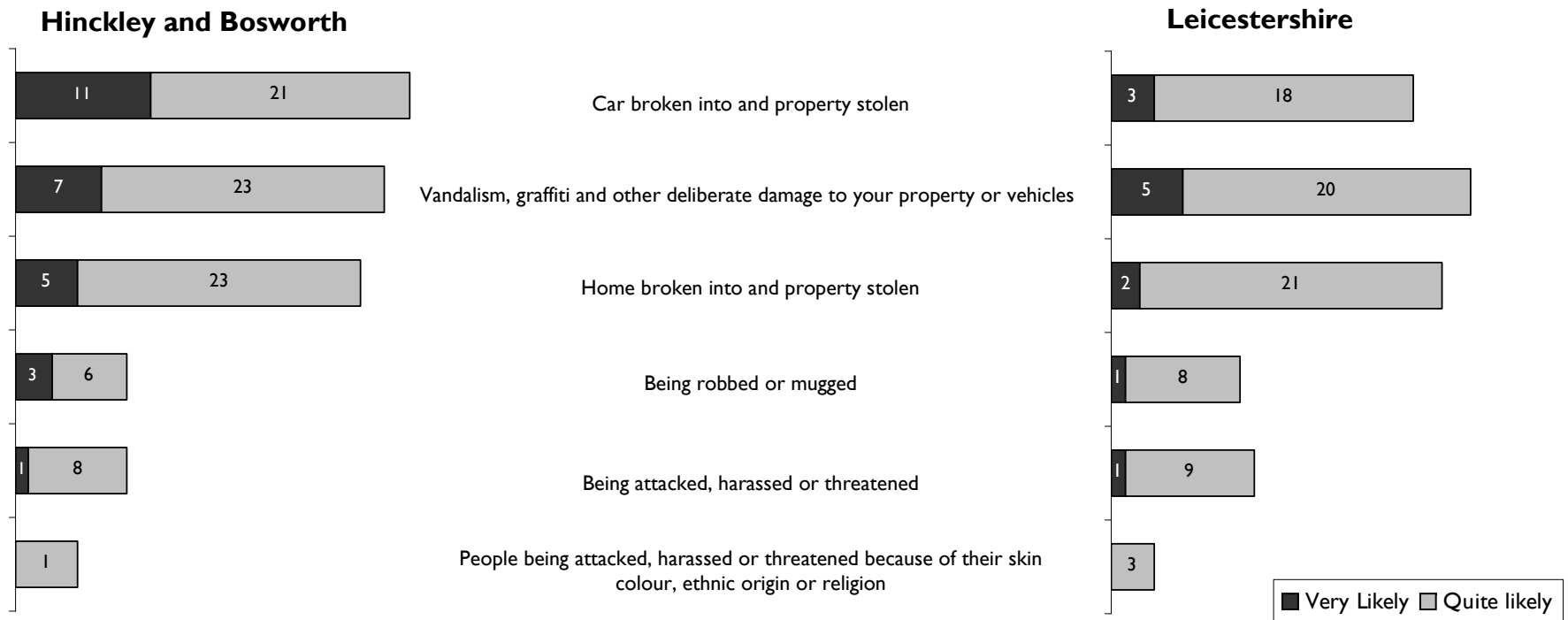
level of fear is heightened becomes apparent when considering the police recorded crime figures for vehicle crime. In 2005, only 0.5% of Hinckley and Bosworth residents were affected.

Nearly a third (30%) of Hinckley and Bosworth respondents compared to 25% of County respondents felt it was likely that they would be a victim of criminal damage during 2006. Again the disparity with actual crime figures is marked;

recorded crime figures show only 0.7% of the Hinckley and Bosworth population suffered such a crime in 2005.

The same pattern of disparity is evident with other comparable crime types. Whereas a quarter (28%) of Hinckley and Bosworth respondents believe it is likely that they will be a victim of domestic burglary in the next 12 months, the actual recorded figure for 2005 concerned only 0.6% of the Hinckley and Bosworth

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



population. Likewise, 9% of Hinckley and Bosworth respondents believe they may be a victim of assault in 2006 but in 2005 only 0.8% 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

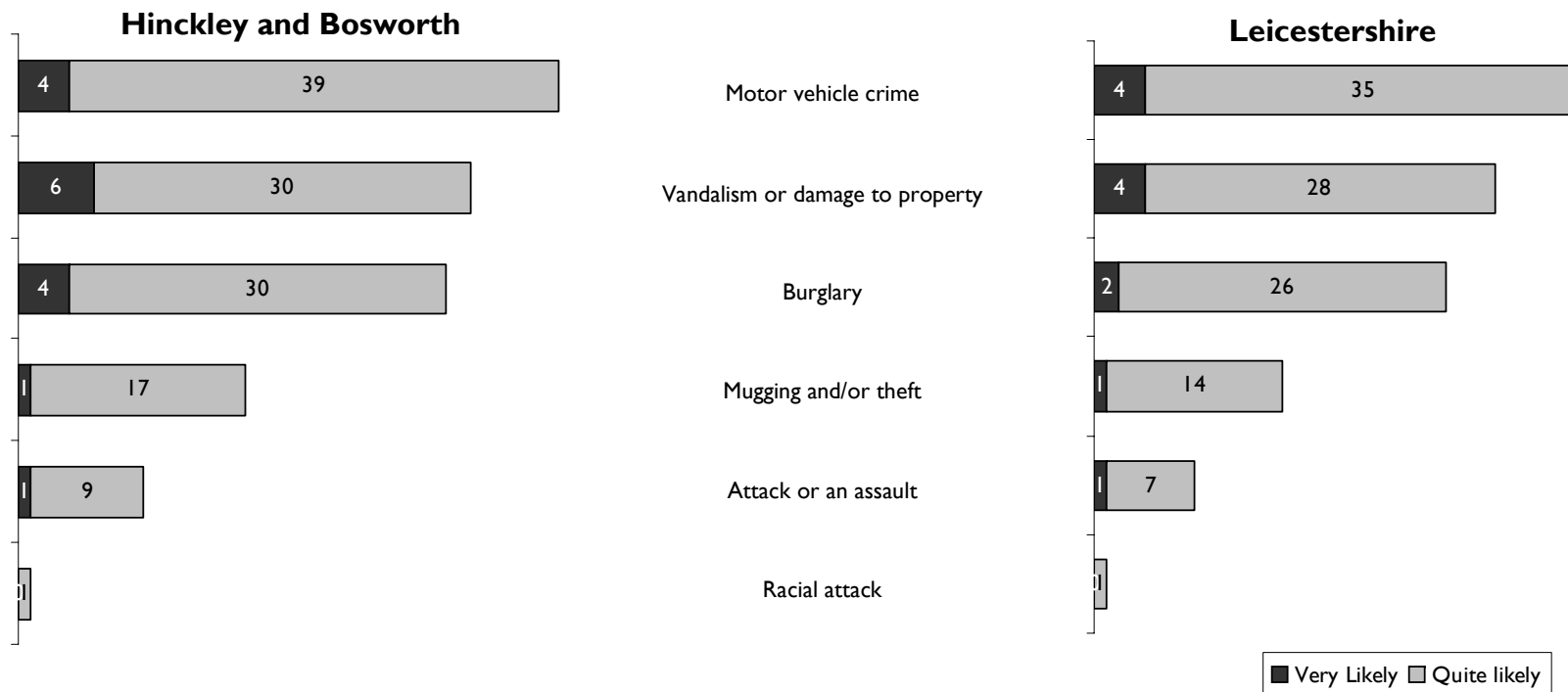
remain consistent and so allow for comparison.

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 Hinckley and Bosworth respondents believed that they might be a victim of vandalism in the wave 6 report, this fear fell

to 30% in the wave 8 report. Similarly, a third (34%) of Hinckley and Bosworth 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 Hinckley and Bosworth 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 Hinckley and Bosworth had ever felt fearful about the possibility of becoming a victim of crime in the last 12 months and it reveals that just over a quarter of respondents (27%) had.

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

	n	%
Yes	32	27
No	79	67
Can't remember	7	6
Total	118	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	8	25
once a quarter	13	41
every two months	2	6
once a month	5	16
twice a month	2	6
once a week	0	0
twice a week	0	0
once a day	1	3
twice a day	0	0
No response	1	3
	32	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 66% had experienced fear around once a quarter or less in the last 12 months and

only 3% 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	79	67
A little afraid	24	20
Very afraid	3	3
Can't remember	10	8
No Response	2	2
Total	118	100

Source: Citizens' Panel wave 8, LCC

Whilst a third of respondents said they had felt fearful (27 % 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 106.

In conclusion, around a quarter (25.5%) of Hinckley and Bosworth respondents said they had felt fearful in the last 12 months.

When the frequency of fear was examined only a fifth (18%) said they had felt fearful more than once or twice during the course of the year.

When the intensity of fear was examined only 3.8% had felt very afraid in this period.

Further, when the frequency and intensity was examined together only 1.8% of respondents had reported feeling very afraid more than once or twice in the year. Thus for residents of Hinckley and Bosworth, regular exposure to heightened levels of fear of being a victim of crime are very rare.

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	79	(74.5)	-	-	-	-	79	(74.5)
once or twice	-	-	6	(5.7)	2	(1.9)	8	(7.5)
once a quarter	-	-	12	(11.3)	1	(0.9)	13	(12.3)
every two months	-	-	-	-	1	(0.9)	1	(0.9)
once a month	-	-	2	(1.9)	-	-	2	(1.9)
twice a month	-	-	2	(1.9)	-	-	2	(1.9)
once a day	-	-	1	(0.9)	-	-	1	(0.9)
	79	(74.5)	23	(21.7)	4	(3.8)	106	(100.0)

Source: Citizens' Panel wave 8, LCC

Note: Percentage figures are rounded to one decimal place.

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.

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 Hinckley and Bosworth respondents and Leicestershire respondents as a whole.

In general respondents in Hinckley and Bosworth tend to use slightly fewer avoidance strategies in their local area than respondents from the County as a whole.

In particular, only one-fifth of respondents in Hinckley and Bosworth (21%) compared to nearly a third of County respondents (31%) 'avoid using a cash point in their neighbourhood'.

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 Hinckley and Bosworth borough 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 Hinckley and Bosworth residents than

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

% saying they use the following avoidance tactics	H & B		Leicestershire	
	Rank	%	Rank	%
I always tell somebody where I am going	1	48	1	50
I avoid groups of young people in my neighbourhood	2	44	2	48
I carry a mobile phone in my neighbourhood for safety reasons	3	37	3	40
I avoid certain areas of my neighbourhood when out	4	33	4	37
I avoid going out alone in my neighbourhood	5	32	5	31
I avoid answering the door	6	28	7	30
I avoid using a cash point in my neighbourhood	7	21	5	31
I plan my route when going out in my neighbourhood	8	21	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	15	10	20

Source: Citizens' Panel wave 8, LCC

residents in the county.

In general the graphs show that 1) most avoidance strategies are adopted by more females than males in both the district and the county and 2) respondents in Hinckley and Bosworth have very similar responses to those of the county-wide respondents.

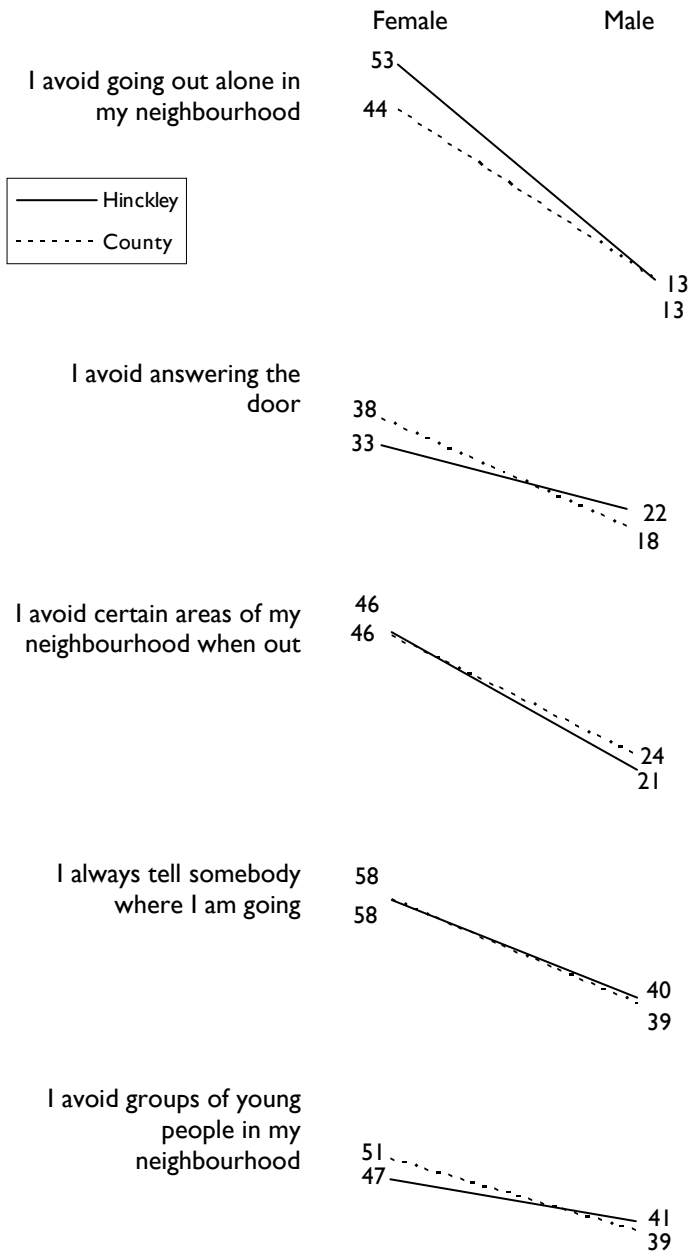
The steeper the curve the more gender specific the category. Thus the need to 'avoid going out alone' is a tactic that is predominately adopted by females both in

Hinckley and Bosworth and the county

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. Thus the need to 'avoid answering the door' and to 'avoid groups of young people' are specific issues for women in Hinckley and Bosworth. Whereas the need to 'avoid leaving the house unoccupied' is more of an issue for men in Hinckley and Bosworth.

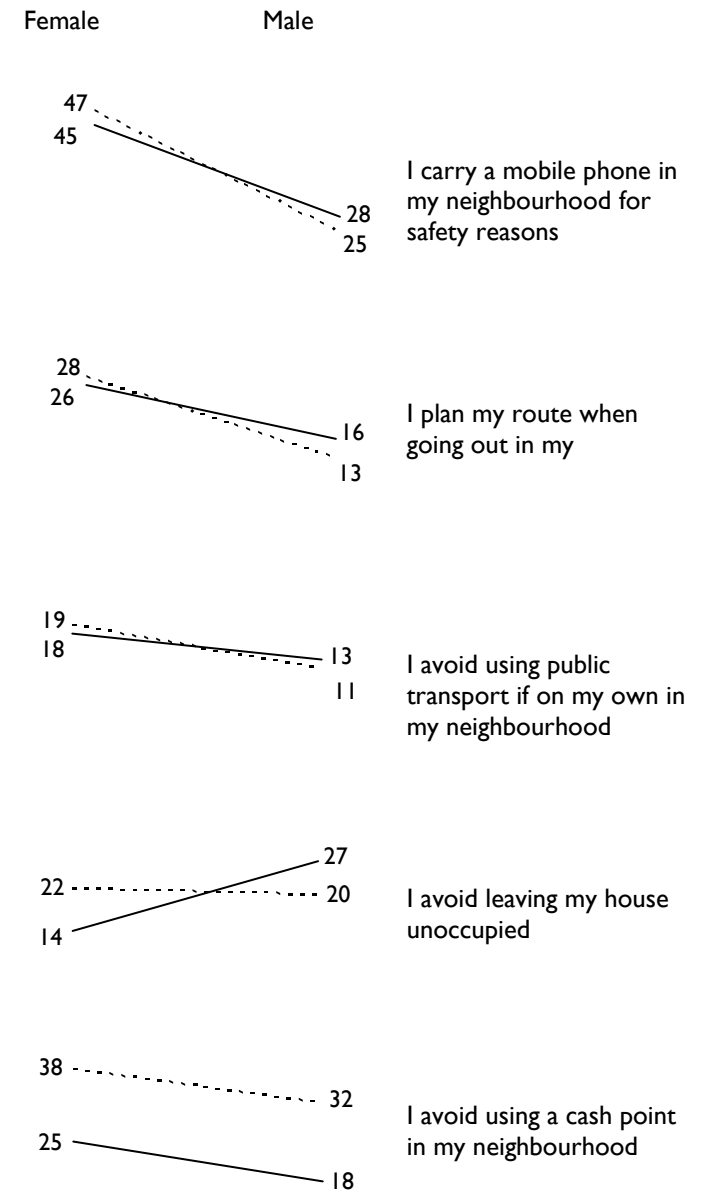
Notably the need to 'avoid using a cash

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



point' in Hinckley and Bosworth is a lot less of an issue for both its female and male respondents when compared to the county.

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 Hinckley and Bosworth females tend to adopt fewer avoidance strategies compared to the county female average and so demonstrate quite good public confidence levels whereas Hinckley and Bosworth males tend to adopt similar or more avoidance strategies than the male county average and so exhibit quite poor public confidence levels.



Source: Citizens' Panel wave 8, LCC

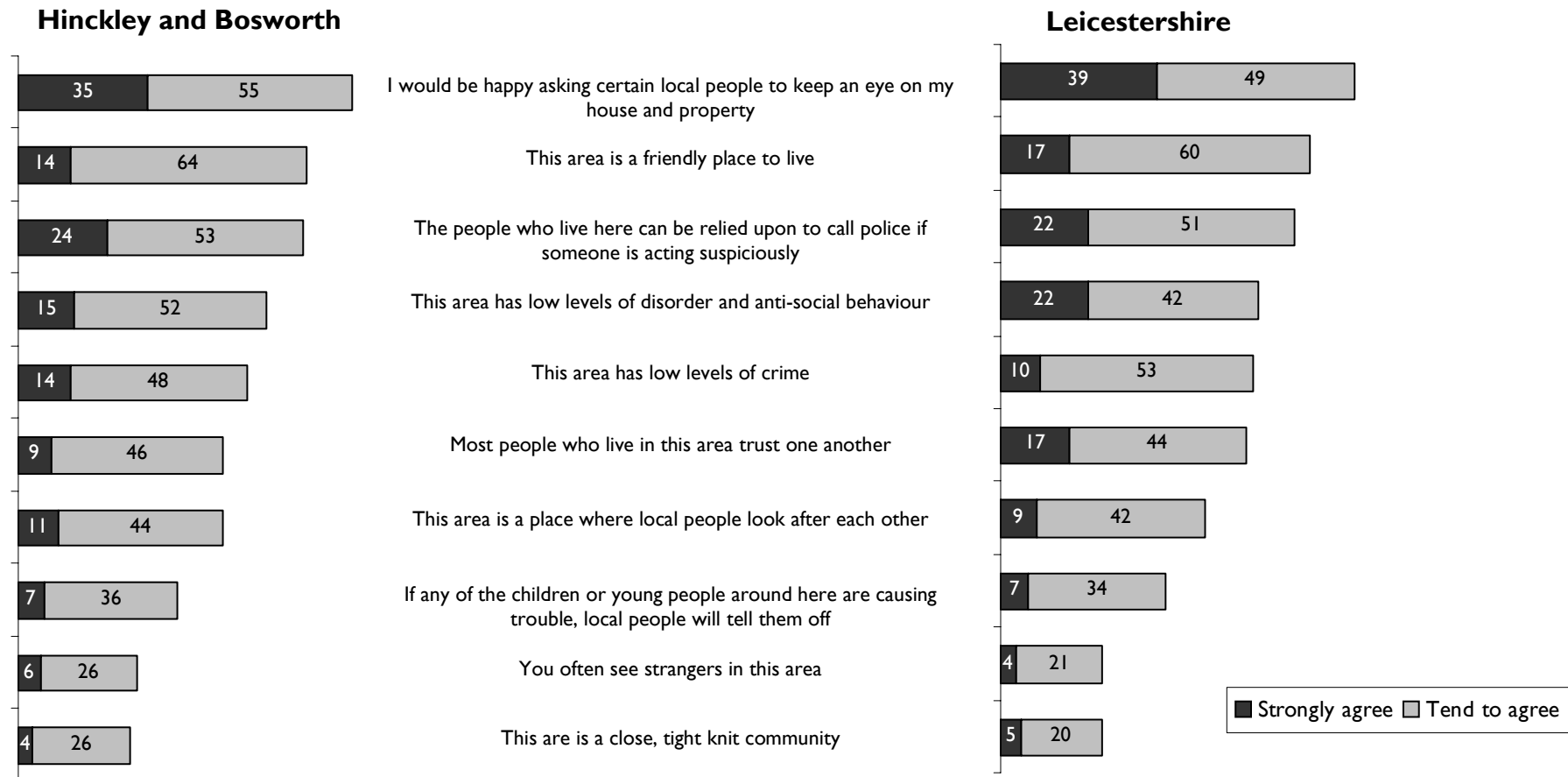
Perceptions of neighbourhood

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 Hinckley and Bosworth 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



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Caveat:

The findings discussed in this report are based on a relatively low number of responses for Hinckley and Bosworth Borough (128). Respondents from Hinckley and Bosworth Borough 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.

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