

# Melton Borough - Citizens' Panel Wave 8 Report

## Main Findings

- There is consensus amongst both Melton and County respondents that crime levels had remained fairly consistent over the last 12 months.
- In general the fear of future victimisation is less apparent in the borough of Melton than in the county as whole.
- In Melton fear of victimisation in 2006 still remains well above actual recorded crime figures for 2005. (Fear of car crime 18%, recorded crime figures for vehicle crime 1%).
- However, a more sophisticated fear of crime indicator suggests that only 2% of respondents in Melton had felt a little afraid more than four times a year.
- In Melton both female and male respondents tend to adopt fewer avoidance strategies than their county-wide counterparts.

## 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 both 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 residents of the Melton Borough 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)	Melton		Leicestershire	
	Rank	%	Rank	%
People driving above the speed limit	1	43	1	45
People using or dealing drugs	2	13	6	14
Rubbish or litter lying around	3	12	2	31
Teenagers hanging around on the streets	4	11	3	29
Cars being broken into or stolen	5	9	8	12
Vandalism, graffiti and other deliberate damage to property or vehicles	6	9	4	22
Homes being broken into and property stolen	7	7	5	14
People being drunk or rowdy in public places	8	7	7	13
Troublesome neighbours	9	5	9	7
People being attacked, harassed or threatened	10	2	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 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 Melton and for the County as a whole. Melton respondents remain in line with county-wide respondents by placing the perceived problem of 'people driving above the speed limit' well above all other categories (Melton 43%, County 45%). Notably the percentage of respondents who find any of the other categories a problem is to varying degrees lower than the county.

Chart 1 (page 3) shows actual number of recorded 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, three of the top four problem areas in table 1 fall within the realms of anti-social behaviour rather than criminal behaviour and

so do not figure in chart 1. Further, at present there is no available data source with which to compare perceived anti-social behaviour with actual.

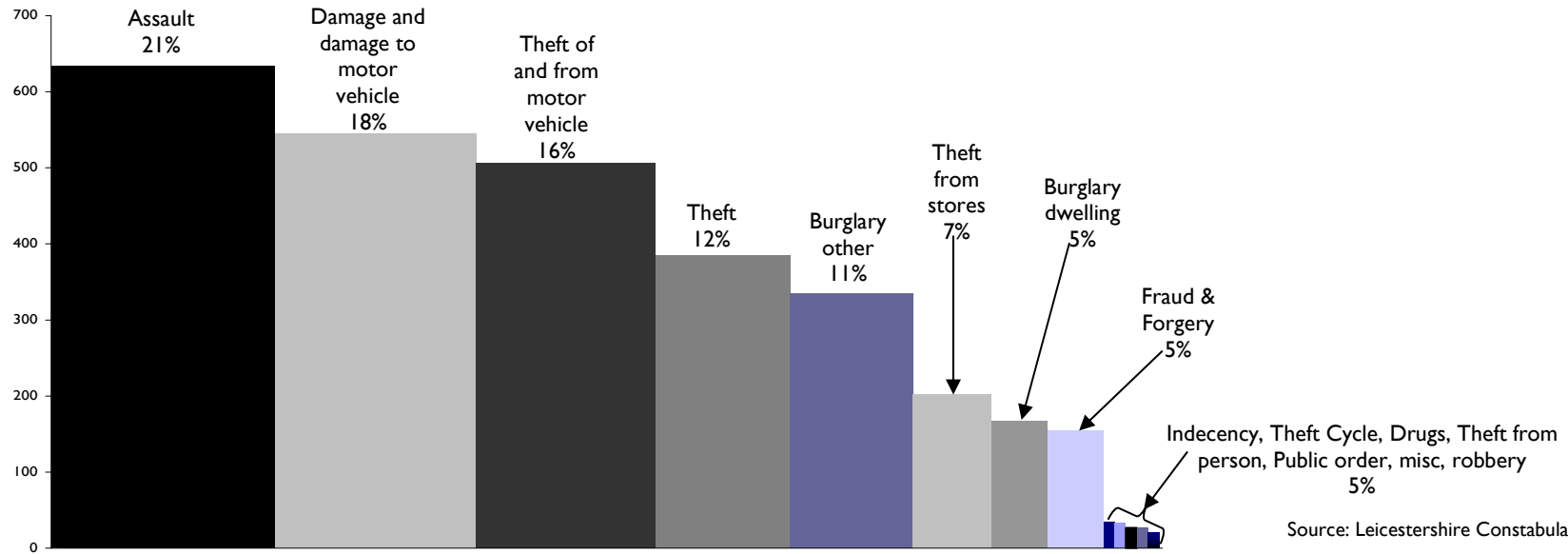
The highest perceived criminal behaviour problem in Melton is thought to be 'people using or dealing drugs', rank 2. In comparison recorded drug crime accounts for 1% of total crime in Melton and is ranked 11th in chart 1.

Melton respondents position 'cars being broken into or stolen' as a comparably major problem in Melton (rank 5). This aligns with a recorded theft of and from motor vehicle figure of 16%.

However, they tend to position 'people being attacked...' as a comparably small problem; rank 10 and 11 when actual recorded assault accounts for 21% of total crime in Melton and so presents as the most prolific crime type.

Table 2 (page 3) 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

**Chart I: Recorded offences in Melton in rank order January 2005 to December 2005**



Source: Leicestershire Constabulary, CIS.

possible to assess the comparative rank of similar crime types. Accordingly, both tables suggest that there is an apparent disparity between recorded assaults and peoples perceptions of how problematic assault is in their local area.

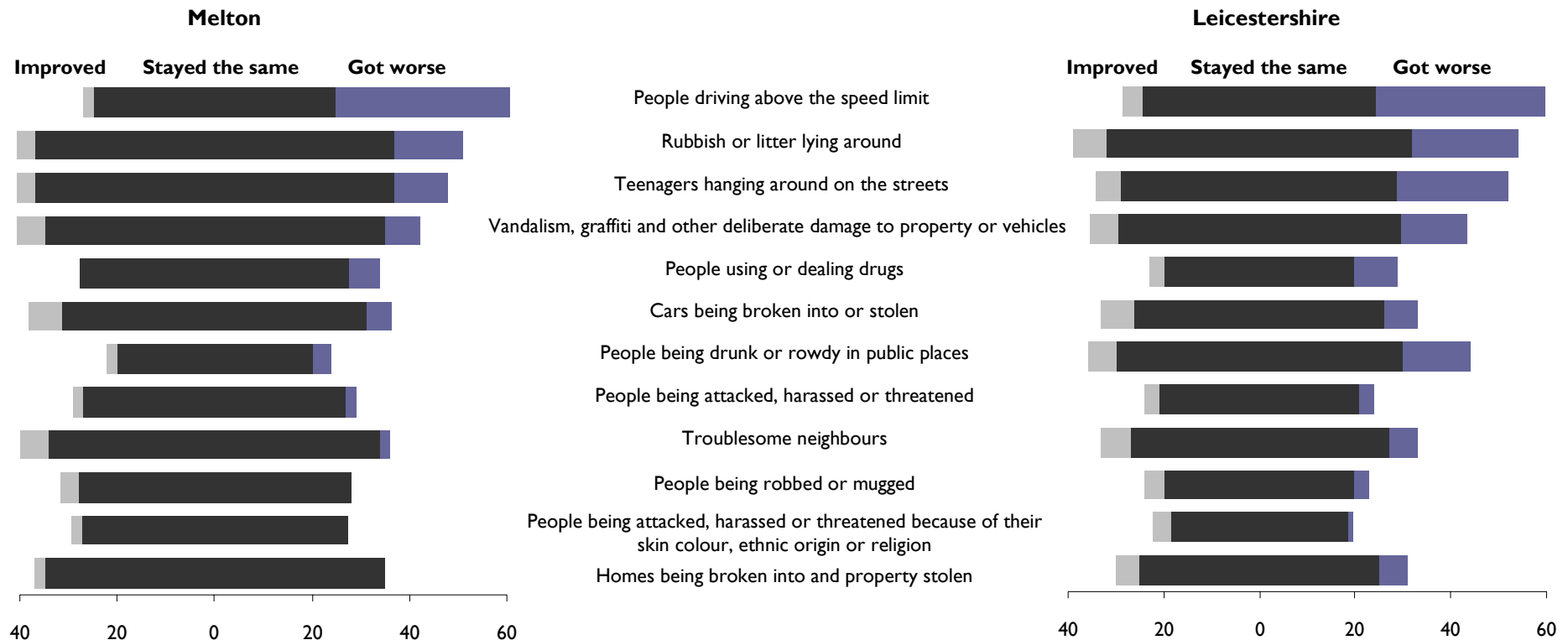
**Table 2: Rank of problems in local area for November 2004 (Wave 6 citizens panel)**

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

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



Source: Citizens' Panel wave 8, LCC

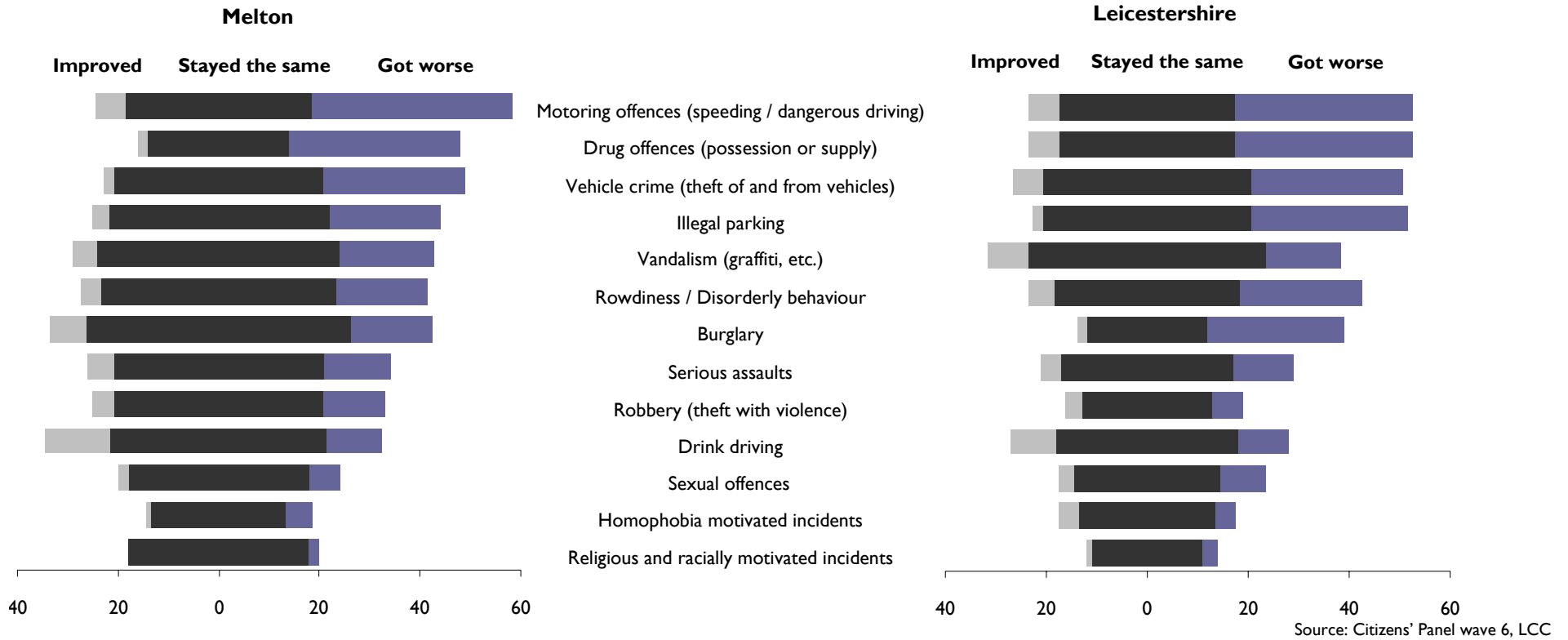
Chart 2 shows the percentage of respondents who thought crime / anti-social behaviour problems had either got better, worse or stayed the same over the 12 month period between January 2005 to December 2005. The size of the bar gives an indication of the overall number of responses to each category ('Improved', '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 Melton and County respondents that crime levels had remained fairly consistent over the last 12 months.

A similar question was asked on the Wave 6 citizens panel questionnaire in November

**Chart 3: Percentage saying how crime / asb had changed between January 2002 and December 2004 (wave 6 citizens panel)**



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 then 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

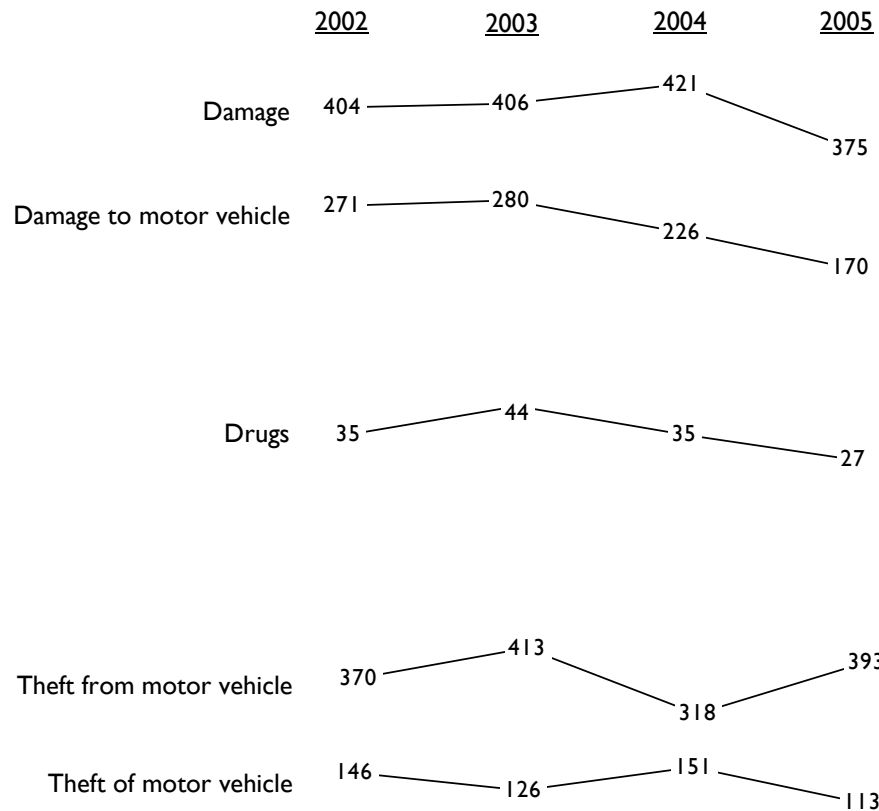
appropriate, accurate information at a local level and a more reassured public, this suggests that the Melton public was more informed in 2005 and so better reassured.

Chart 4 shows trend lines for recorded crime in Melton 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

trends and public perceptions of crime rate trends.

**Chart 4: Melton recorded crime trend lines 2002 to 2005**



Damage fell by 11% in 2005. By comparison damage to motor vehicle fell by 25% in the same period. The overall effect in the Melton area was a decrease of 16% in total criminal damage. Public perception that 'vandalism, graffiti and other deliberate damage to property and vehicles' had on balance stayed the same / improved supports this fact (9% improved, 70% stayed the same, 7% got worse).

Drug offences decreased by 23% in 2005 and this also reflected the overall trend for the 4 year period. Public perception believed that 'people using or dealing drugs' had stayed the same / got worse in the last 12 months (0% improved, 70% stayed the same, 6% got worse). But it is worth noting that the public could be measuring the problem of drug using or dealing in a wider social context than just crime.

Theft from motor vehicle rose by 24% and theft of motor vehicle fell by 25%, giving a increase of 1% for overall vehicle crime in 2005. Public perception estimated that crime levels had stayed the same / slightly improved in this period. 7% improved, 63% stayed the same, 5% got worse).



In Melton public order offences remained the same as last year in 2005. However, it is important to note the small incidence rate when considering these figures. Public perception reported that ‘people being drunk or rowdy in public places had on balance stayed the same / got worse in the last 12 months (2% improved, 40% stayed the same, 4% got worse).

In Melton assault increased by 9% in 2005. Public perception incorrectly assessed ‘people being attacked...’ had on balance stayed the same (2% improved, 54% stayed the same, 2% got worse).

Robbery in Melton decreased by 30% in 2005. Again such a small incidence rate needs to be considered. Public perception on balance reflected an improvement. (4% improved, 56% stayed the same, 0% got worse).

In Melton burglary dwelling fell by 23% in 2005 and accordingly Melton respondents on balance believed that the problem had stayed the same / slightly improved (2% improved, 70% stayed the same, 0% got worse).

In Melton theft decreased by 19% in 2005. However a comparison can not be made as this category was not included in the citizens panel questionnaire.

Fraud in Melton fell by 19% 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 results are shown in chart 5.

In general the fear of future victimisation is less apparent in the borough of Melton than in the county as whole. Only the likelihood of being a victim of car crime was comparable with around a fifth (18%) of Melton respondents and (21%) County

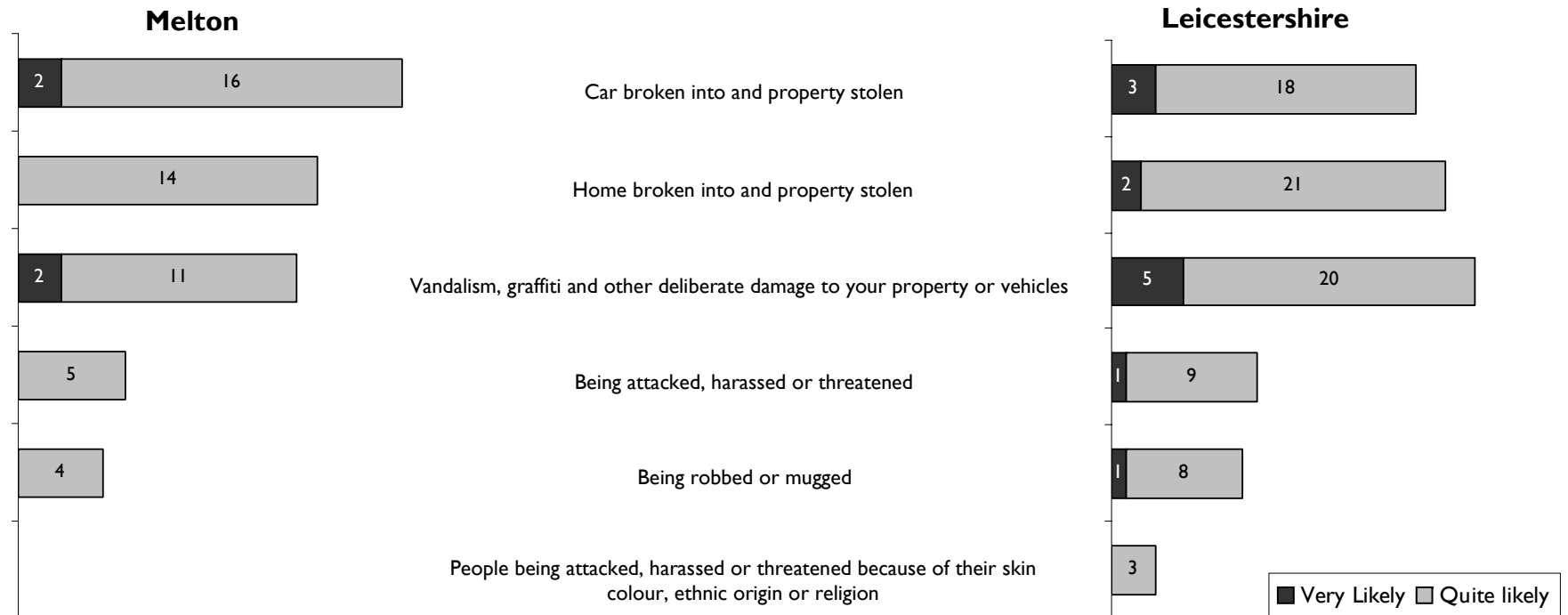
respondents believing they could be a victim of car crime in the next 12 months. If we then consider the Melton figure in context of recorded crime figures for vehicle crime in 2005 we can see that fear of victimisation exceeds reality as only 1% of people in Melton were actually affected.

Melton respondents consider the likelihood of becoming a victim in all other categories as considerably less than respondents from

the county as a whole. Even given this the disparity between fear of future victimisation and actual recorded crime figures for 2005 within Melton remain significant. Whereas 14% of Melton respondents believe they may be a victim of domestic burglary in 2006, recorded crime figures for 2005 suggest that only 0.8% of Melton households were affected.

Likewise, 13% of Melton respondents

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



believe they may be a victim of criminal damage in 2006 but in 2005 only 1.1% of the population (as recorded by Leicestershire constabulary) actually were a victim. Further 5% of Melton respondents believe it is likely they may be a victim of assault in 2006 yet in 2005 only 1.3% of the population actually were a victim.

The same question was also asked in the 2004 citizens panel (Chart 6) and although

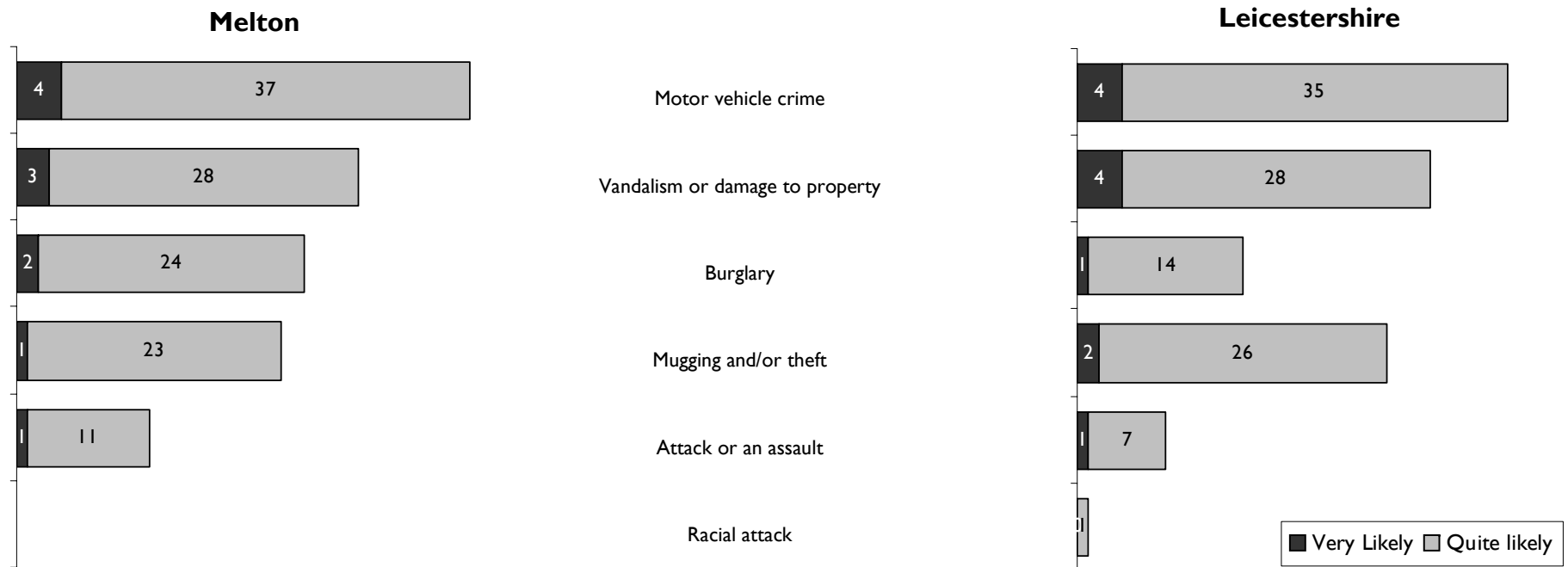
some of the categories were slightly changed in the 2005 version, a number still remain consistent and so allow for comparison.

Initial comparison shows that fear of victimisation in 2004 was in general far higher than the latest results in 2005.

More specifically, just under a third (31%) of Melton respondents believed that they

might be a victim of vandalism in the wave 6 report, this fear fell to 13% in the wave 8 report. Similarly, a quarter (26%) of Melton respondents feared the risk of burglary in the 2004 report and this level of fear reduced to 14% 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 Melton 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 Melton had ever felt fearful about the possibility of becoming a victim of crime in the last 12 months and it reveals that just over 1 in 10 respondents (13%) had.

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

	n	%
Yes	7	13
No	46	83
Can't remember	2	4
Total	55	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<sup>(1)</sup> and

presented in table 4.

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

description of category	number	%
once or twice	0	0
once a quarter	3	43
every two months	1	14
once a month	1	14
twice a month	0	0
once a week	0	0
twice a week	0	0
once a day	0	0
twice a day	0	0
No response	2	29
	7	100

Source: Citizens' Panel wave 8, LCC

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).

In general frequency of fear is quite low. Nearly half (43%) of respondents had experienced fear around once a quarter or less in the last 12 months and no one had felt fearful more than once a month.

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	46	84
A little afraid	5	9
Very afraid	1	2
Can't remember	2	4
No Response	1	2
Total	55	100

Source: Citizens' Panel wave 8, LCC

Only 2% of respondents 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 50.

In conclusion, around a tenth (8%) of Melton respondents said they had felt fearful in the last 12 months.

When the frequency of fear was examined only 2% of respondents had felt fearful more than four times during the course of the year.

When the intensity of fear was examined no respondents had felt very afraid in this period.

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 an 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	46	(92)	-	-	-	-	46	(92)
once or twice	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
once a quarter	-	-	3	(6)	-	-	3	(6)
every two months	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
once a month	-	-	1	(2)	-	-	1	(2)
twice a month	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
once a week	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
once a day	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
twice a day	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	46	(92)	4	(8)	0	0	50	(100)

Source: Citizens' Panel wave 8, LCC

## 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 Melton respondents and Leicestershire respondents as a whole.

In general the percentage of respondents who tend to adopt an avoidance strategy in Melton is lower than the county as a whole. The rank order of categories is the same as the county apart from the relative worry of leaving the house unattended; Melton 18% rank 6, county 23% rank 9.

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 Melton and the county 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 Melton residents than residents in the county.

In general both female and male respondents in Melton adopt fewer

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

% saying they use the following avoidance tactics	Melton		Leicestershire	
	Rank	%	Rank	%
I always tell somebody where I am going	1	38	1	50
I avoid groups of young people in my neighbourhood	2	26	2	48
I carry a mobile phone in my neighbourhood for safety reasons	3	26	3	40
I avoid certain areas of my neighbourhood when out	4	24	4	37
I avoid using a cash point in my neighbourhood	5	22	5	31
I avoid leaving my house unoccupied	6	18	9	23
I avoid going out alone in my neighbourhood	7	16	5	31
I avoid answering the door	8	15	7	30
I plan my route when going out in my neighbourhood	9	15	8	25
I avoid using public transport if on my own in my neighbourhood	10	10	10	20

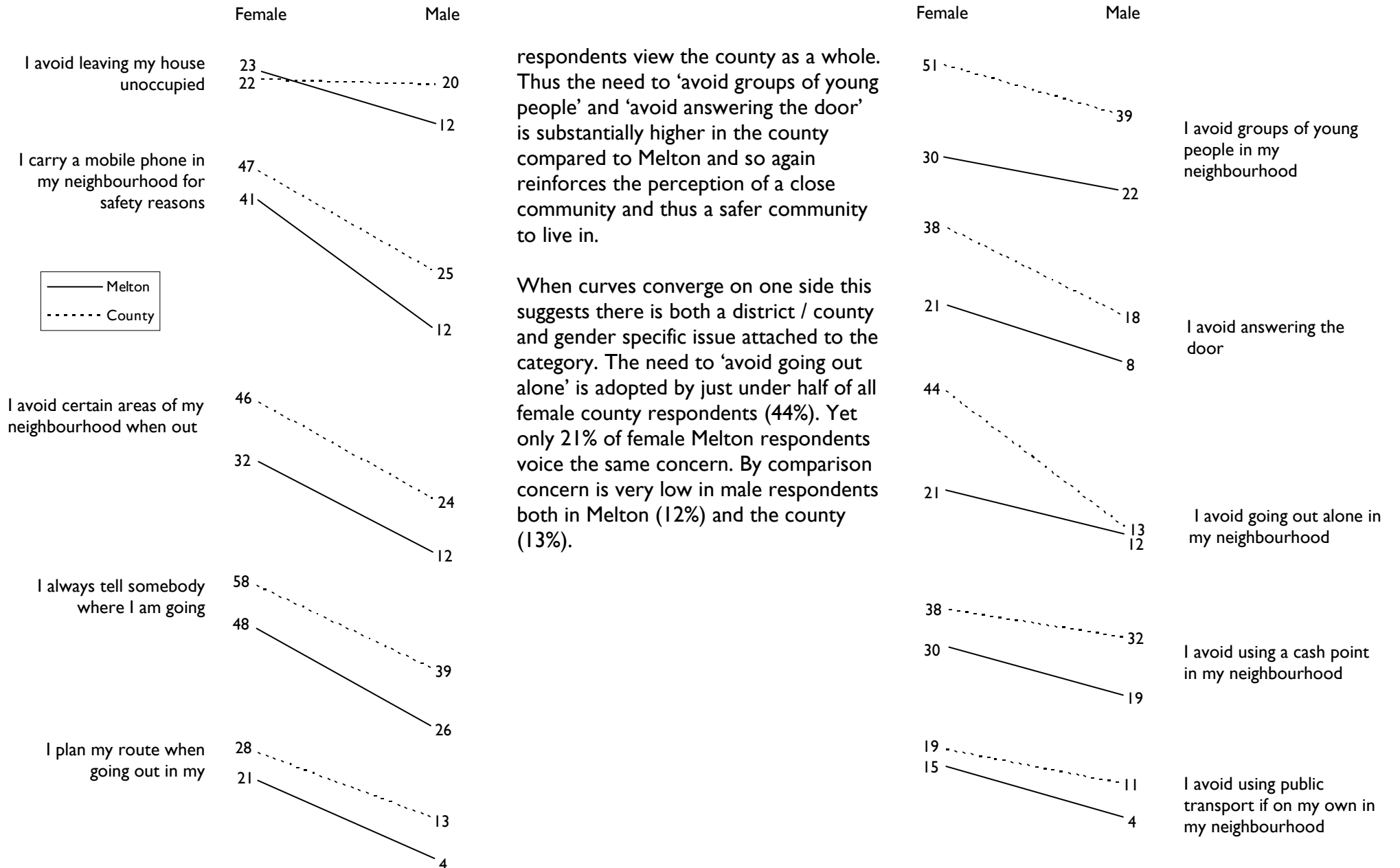
Source: Citizens' Panel wave 8, LCC

avoidance strategies than county-wide respondents thus reinforcing the perception that Melton is a comparably safe place to live. The main exception is the worry of 'leaving the house unoccupied'. In this category the Melton female response (23%) is actually higher than the county-wide female response (22%) and thus further explains the high rank it received in table 7. This highlights a particular target group and subject matter that may benefit from a publicity campaign.

The steeper the curve the more gender specific the category. Thus the need to 'carry a mobile phone', 'tell someone where they are going' and 'avoid certain areas of the neighbourhood' are all tactics that are predominantly adopted by females both in Melton and the county as a whole.

Curves that show wide differences between Melton and the county reveal a disparity between how Melton respondents view Melton and how Leicestershire

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



respondents view the county as a whole. Thus the need to 'avoid groups of young people' and 'avoid answering the door' is substantially higher in the county compared to Melton and so again reinforces the perception of a close community and thus a safer community to live in.

When curves converge on one side this suggests there is both a district / county and gender specific issue attached to the category. The need to 'avoid going out alone' is adopted by just under half of all female county respondents (44%). Yet only 21% of female Melton respondents voice the same concern. By comparison concern is very low in male respondents both in Melton (12%) and the county (13%).

## 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,

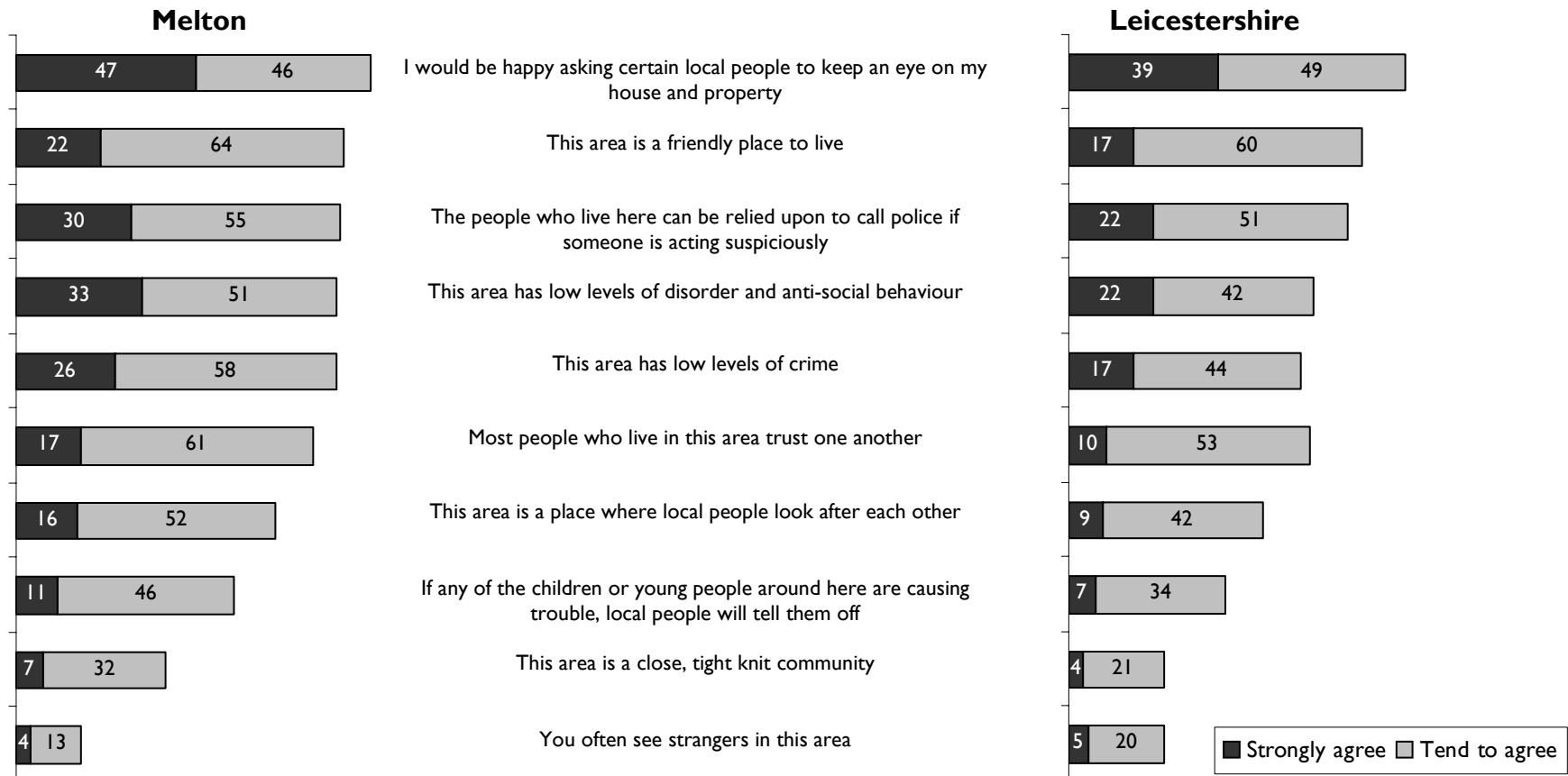
respondents were asked to assess the community cohesion in their neighbourhood and the subsequent results are shown in chart 8.

More Melton respondents tend to agree or strongly agree with each of the categories in comparison to Leicestershire respondents as a whole and hence convey

a relatively strong sense of community cohesion in Melton.

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 Melton Borough (57). Respondents from the borough of Melton 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.**

**For further information please contact:**

**Sharon Pye**

**tel. 0116 265 7413**

**email: [spye@leics.gov.uk](mailto:spye@leics.gov.uk)**

**Or view information on-line at:**

**[www.leics.gov.uk/statistics](http://www.leics.gov.uk/statistics)**