

North West Leicestershire District - Citizens' Panel Wave 8 Report

Main Findings

- There is consensus amongst both NWL 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
- Initial comparison shows that fear of victimisation in 2004 was in general far higher than the latest results in 2005.
- Only 2% of respondents had reported feeling very afraid more than once or twice in the year.

Background

Confident and secure neighbourhoods lend legitimacy and thus empower the establishments that seek to protect them. Therefore public confidence is a central principle of effective crime prevention. For that reason the need to reduce the fear of crime has been incorporated in to both the Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland's Neighbourhood policing strategy and Leicestershire's Local Area Agreement, Safer Communities block (2006-2009).

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). Furthermore, one possible explanation for this tendency 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 district of NWL 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)	NWL		Leicestershire	
	Rank	%	Rank	%
People driving above the speed limit	1	47	1	45
Rubbish or litter lying around	2	42	2	31
Vandalism, graffiti and other deliberate damage to property or vehicles	3	30	4	22
Teenagers hanging around on the streets	4	27	3	29
People using or dealing drugs	5	20	6	14
People being drunk or rowdy in public places	6	17	7	13
Homes being broken into and property stolen	7	14	5	14
Cars being broken into or stolen	8	13	8	12
Troublesome neighbours	9	7	9	7
People being robbed or mugged	10	4	10	3
People being attacked, harassed or threatened	11	3	11	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

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 in both NWL and the County as a whole. NWL respondents raise the perceived problem of 'rubbish or litter lying around' well above the county as a whole (NWL 42%, County 31%). Along with 'vandalism...' (NWL 30%, County 22%) and 'people using or dealing drugs' (NWL 20%, County 14%).

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

Notably, the top two problem areas in table one fall within the realms of anti-social behaviour rather than criminal behaviour and so do not figure in chart one. Further, at present there is no available data source with which to compare perceived anti-social

behaviour with actual.

NWL respondents position 'vandalism, graffiti and other deliberate damage to property and vehicles' as a comparably major problem in NWL (rank 3). This aligns with a recorded criminal damage figure of 19%.

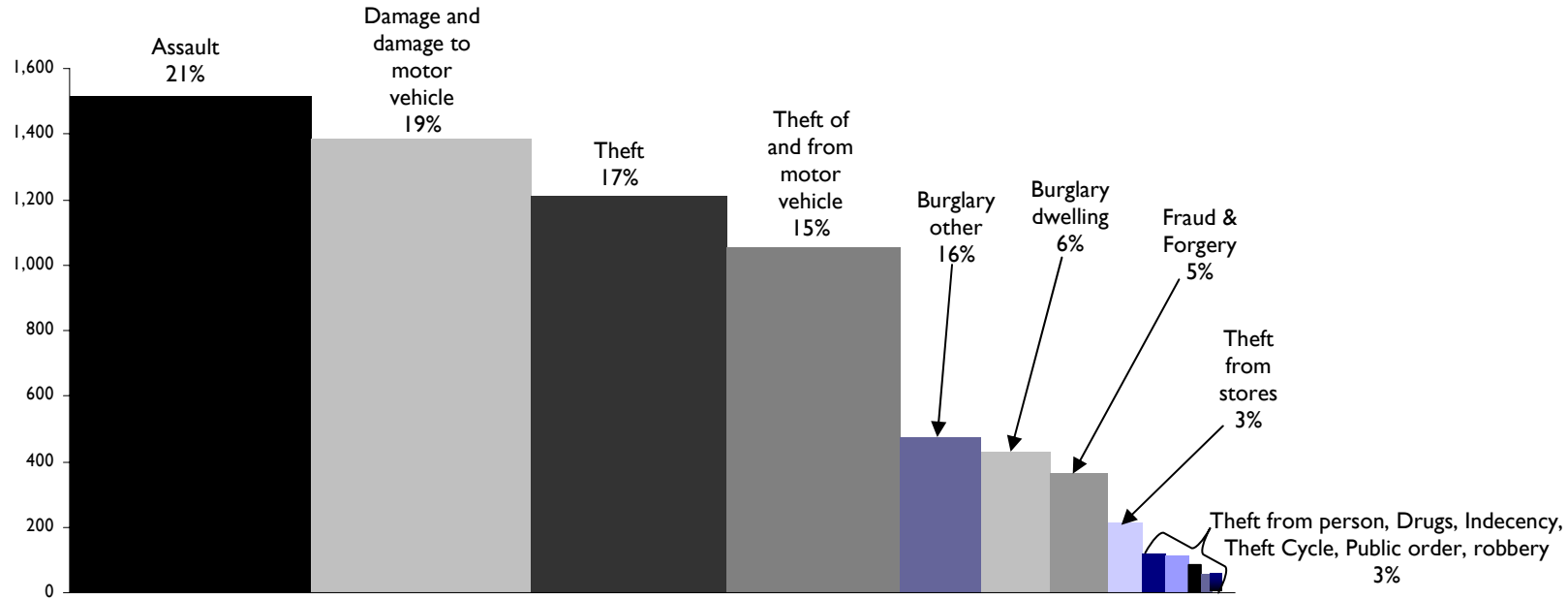
However, they tend to position 'people being attacked...' as a comparably small problem; rank 11 and 12 when actual reported assault accounts for 21% of total crime in NWL and so presents as the most prolific crime type.

NWL respondents rank the problem of 'people using or dealing in drugs' at number 5. In comparison recorded drug crime accounts for 2% of total crime in NWL and is ranked 10th in chart 1.

Conversely, 'cars being broken into or stolen' is ranked at number 8 by NWL respondents whilst recorded vehicle crime accounts for 18% of total crime in NWL.

Table 2 (opposite) shows results from a similar question asked in November 2004 (Wave 6 citizens panel). The categories are not the same as table I and so preclude a direct comparison between the two.

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



Source: Leicestershire Constabulary, CIS.

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

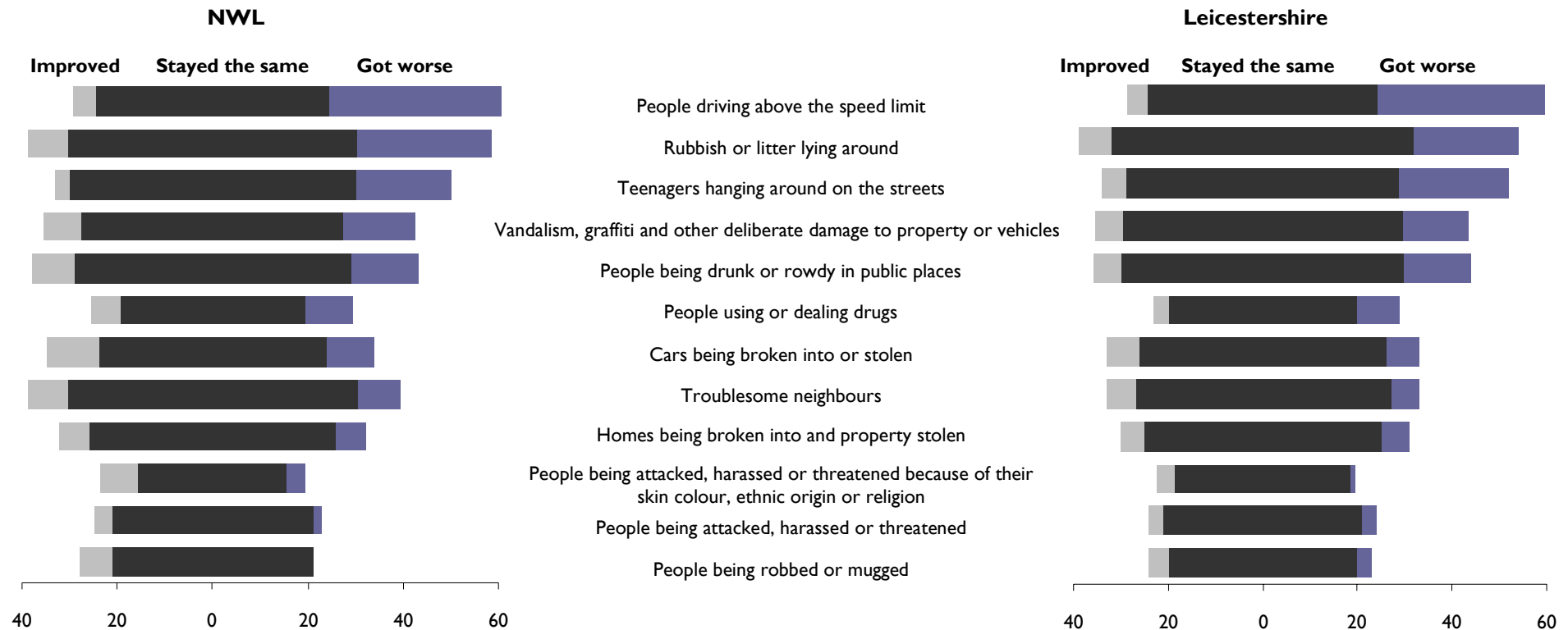
Rank of problems in local area	NWL	Leicestershire
Motoring offences	1st	1st
Burglary	2nd	4th
Vandalism	3rd	2nd
Vehicle crime	4th	3rd
Rowdiness / Disorderly behaviour	5th	5th
Drug offences	6th	7th
Illegal parking	7th	6th
Drink driving	8th	8th
Robbery (theft with violence)	9th	9th
Serious assault	10th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

Source: Citizens' Panel wave 6, LCC

However it is 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.

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

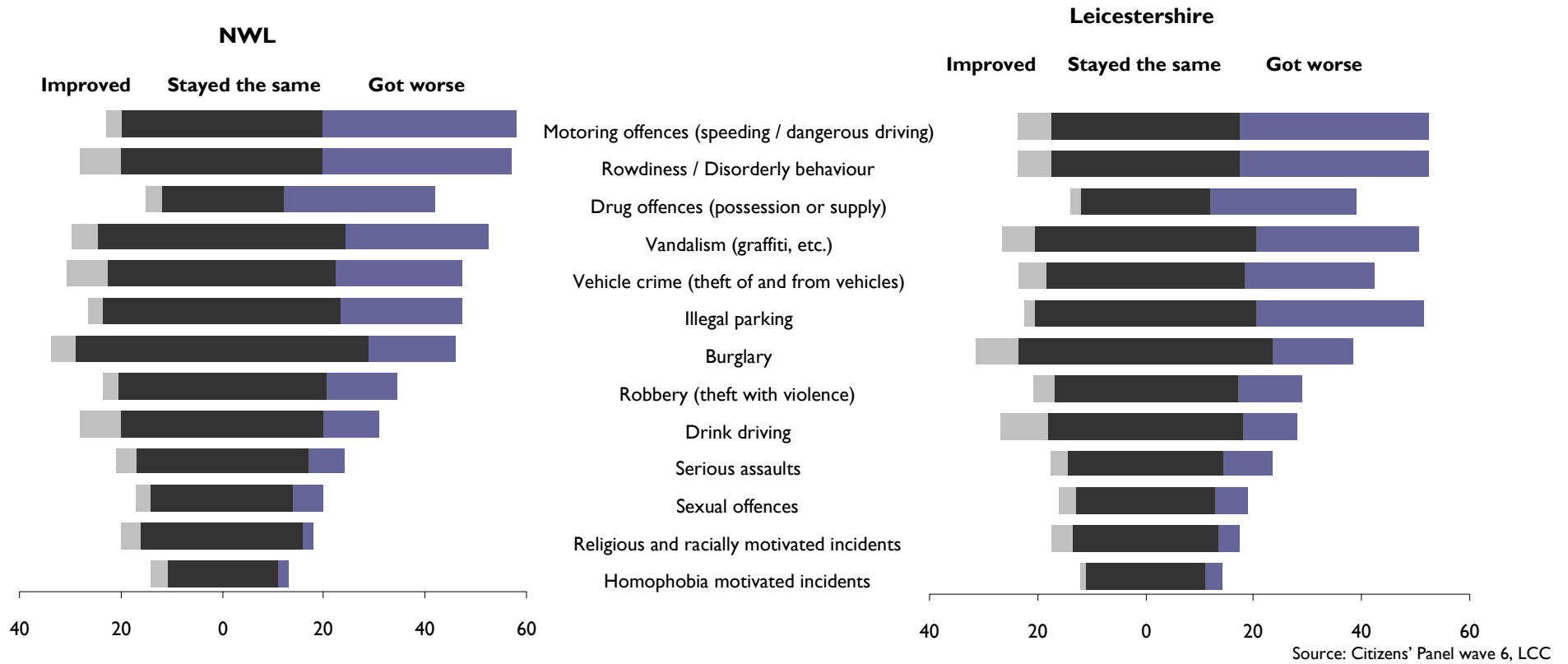
Chart 2 shows the percentage of respondents who thought crime / anti-social behaviour problems had either got better, worse or stayed the same over the 12 month period between January 2005 to December 2005. The size of the bar gives an indication of the overall number of responses to each category ('Improved',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

A similar question was asked on the Wave

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



6 citizens panel questionnaire in November 2004. 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 (chart 3). 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. This suggests that the public was

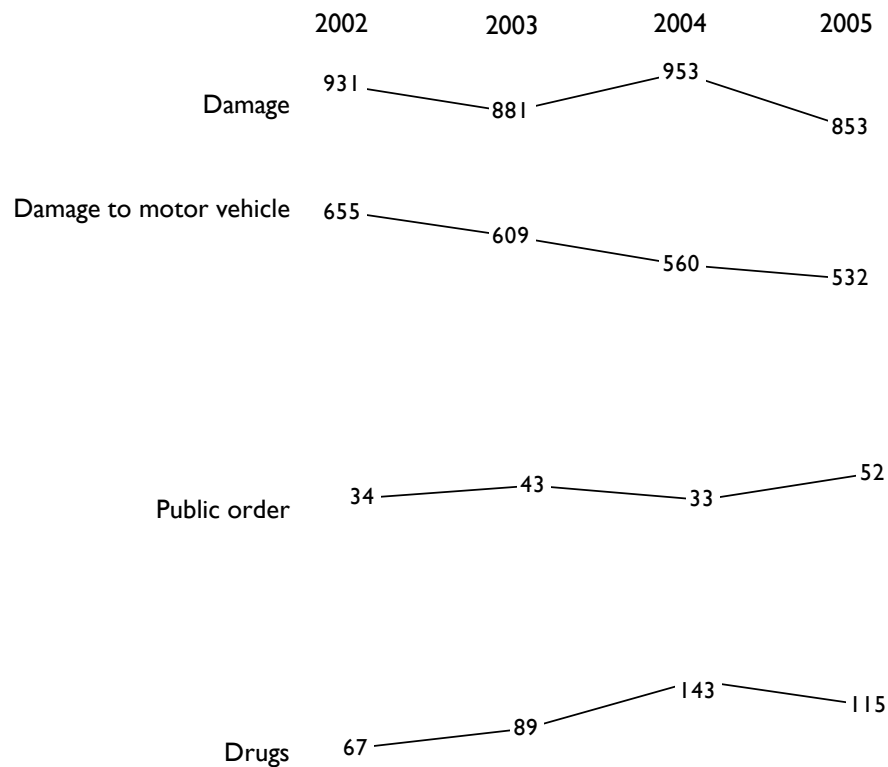
more informed in 2005 and so better reassured. Given the link between appropriate, accurate information at a local level and a more reassured public the partnership should aim to encourage this positive trend in public reassurance levels by supporting the provision of relevant, localised information to the general public.

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

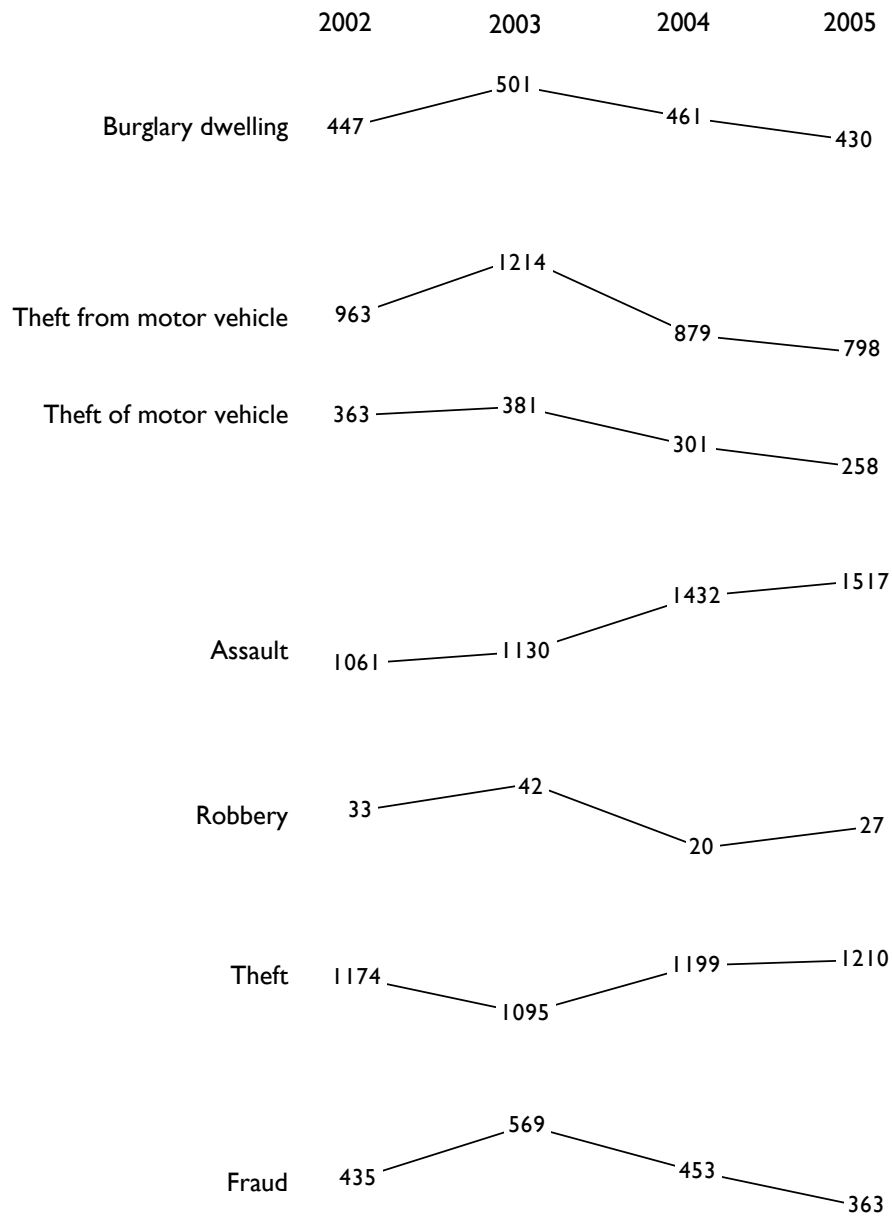


Source: Leicestershire Constabulary, CIS.

Damage fell by 10% in 2005. By comparison damage to motor vehicle fell by 5% in the same period. The overall effect in the NWL area was a decrease of 8% 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 (8% improved, 55% stayed the same, 15% got worse).

In NWL public order offences increased by 58% in 2005. However, it is important to note the small incidence rate when considering these figures. Thus public perception that 'people being drunk or rowdy in public places has on balance stayed the same / got worse in the last 12 months is correct (9% improved, 58% stayed the same, 14% got worse).

Drug offences decreased by 20% in 2005 although the overall trend for the 4 year period has increased slightly. Public perception believed that 'people using or dealing drugs' had stayed the same / got worse in the last 12 months (6% improved, 39% stayed the same, 10% 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.



In NWL burglary dwelling fell by 7% in 2005 and accordingly NWL respondents on balance believed that the problem had stayed the same (6% improved, 52% stayed the same, 5% got worse).

Theft from motor vehicle fell by 9% and theft of motor vehicle fell by 14%, giving a decrease of 10% for overall vehicle crime in 2005. Public perception estimated that crime levels had stayed the same in this period. (11% improved, 48% stayed the same, 10% got worse).

In NWL Assault increased by 6% in 2005. Public perception incorrectly assessed 'people being attacked...' had on balance improved (4% improved, 42% stayed the same, 2% got worse).

Robbery in NWL increased by 35% in 2005. Again such a small incidence rate needs to be considered. Public perception on balance reflected an improvement. (7% improved, 42% stayed the same, 0% got worse).

In NWL theft increased by 1% in 2005. However a comparison can not be made as this category was not included in the citizens panel questionnaire.

Fraud in NWL fell by 20% 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.

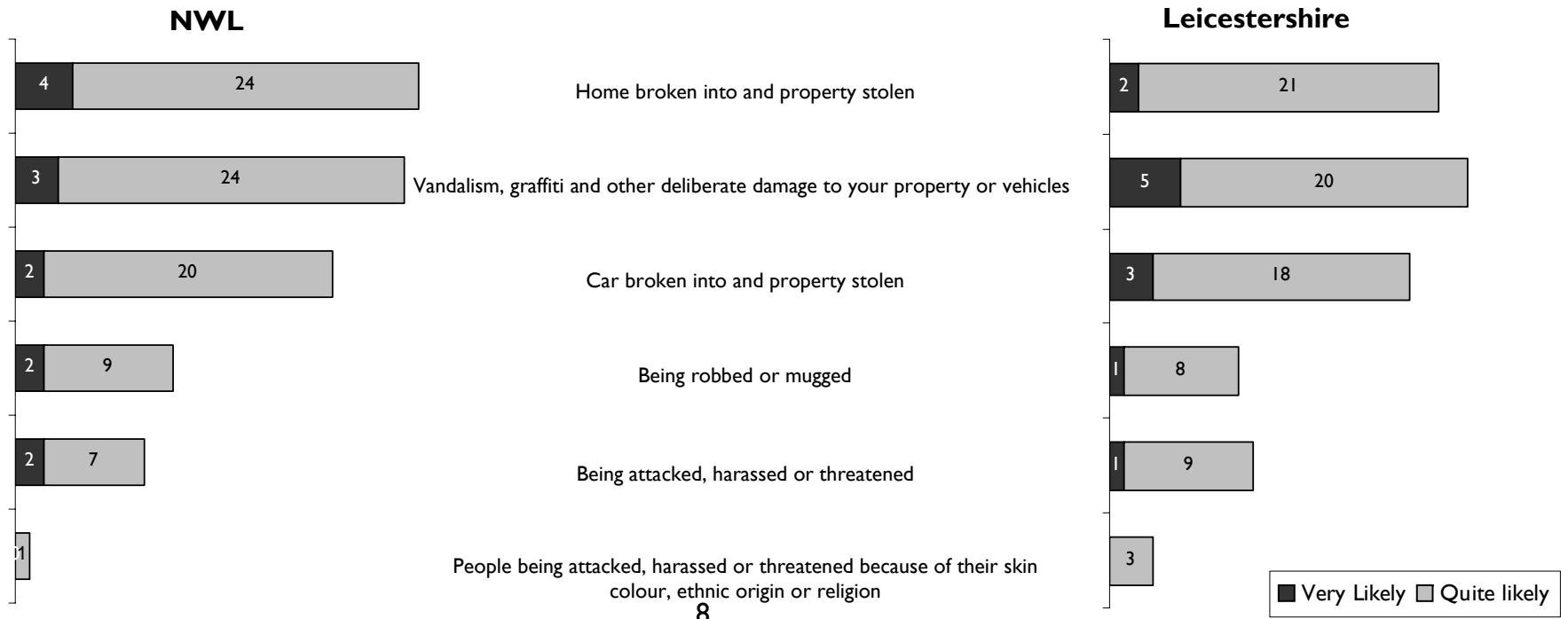
Over a quarter (28%) of NWL respondents compared to 23% of County respondents believe it is likely they will be a victim of domestic burglary in the next 12 months. The extent of this heightened fear becomes apparent when considering the recorded

crime figures for domestic burglary in 2005, only 1.2% of NWL households were affected.

A similar number of respondents in the NWL and across the county (a fifth) felt it was likely that they would be a victim of vehicle crime during 2006. Again the disparity with actual crime figures is marked; the recorded vehicle crime rate was only 1.2% of the population of NWL.

The same pattern of disparity is evident with other comparable crime types. Whereas a quarter (27%) of NWL 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 1.6% of the NWL population. Likewise, 10% of NWL respondents believe they may be a victim of assault in 2006 but in 2005 only 1.8% of the population (as recorded by

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



Leicestershire constabulary) actually were a victim.

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

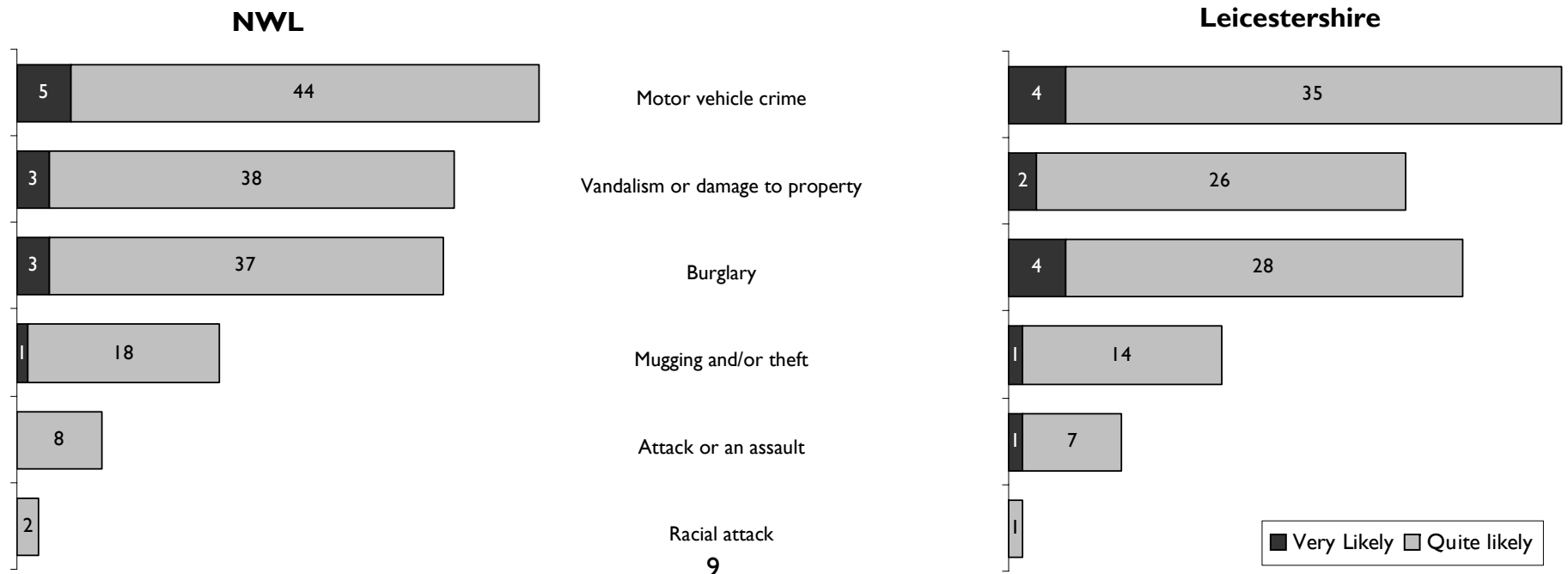
Initial comparison shows that fear of

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

More specifically, four in ten (41%) of NWL respondents believed that they might be a victim of vandalism in the wave 6 report, this fear fell to 27% in the wave 8 report. Similarly, 40% of NWL 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 NWL 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 NWL 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 5 respondents (21%) had.

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

	n	%
Yes	24	21
No	79	71
Can't remember	9	8
Total	112	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	21
once a quarter	10	42
every two months	4	17
once a month	2	8
twice a month	2	8
once a week	0	0
twice a week	0	0
once a day	1	4
twice a day	0	0
	24	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. Nearly two thirds (63%) of respondents had experienced fear around once a quarter or less in the last 12 months and only one respondent 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	77
A little afraid	19	18
Very afraid	3	3
Can't remember	1	1
No Response	1	1
Total	103	100

Source: Citizens' Panel wave 8, LCC

Of the 1 in 5 respondents who had felt fearful only 3% described the intensity as extreme.

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 101.

In conclusion, around a fifth (22%) of NWL respondents said they had felt fearful in the last 12 months. However when the frequency of fear was examined only 15% of respondents had felt fearful more than once or twice during the course of the year and when the intensity of fear was examined only 3% of respondents 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. Therefore 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	79	(78)	-	-	-	-	79	(78)
once or twice	-	-	4	(4)	1	(1)	5	(5)
once a quarter	-	-	9	(9)	-	-	9	(9)
every two months	-	-	3	(3)	1	(1)	4	(4)
once a month	-	-	1	(1)	1	(1)	2	(2)
twice a month	-	-	2	(2)	-	-	2	(2)
once a day	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	79	(78)	19	(19)	3	(3)	101	(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 NWL respondents and Leicestershire respondents as a whole.

Over half (54%) of respondents in NWL 'avoid groups of young people' when out in their neighbourhood compared to a county-wide response of 48%.

Four in ten (42%) NWL respondents also 'avoid certain areas of their neighbourhood when out' compared to 37% of county-wide respondents.

Conversely NWL respondents have less of a problem leaving their house unattended (NWL 17%, County 23%) and less of a problem using public transport on their own (NWL 13%, County 20%).

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

% saying they use the following avoidance tactics	NWL		Leicestershire	
	Rank	%	Rank	%
I avoid groups of young people in my neighbourhood	1	54	2	48
I always tell somebody where I am going	2	53	1	50
I carry a mobile phone in my neighbourhood for safety reasons	3	42	3	40
I avoid certain areas of my neighbourhood when out	4	42	4	37
I avoid answering the door	5	34	7	30
I avoid going out alone in my neighbourhood	6	31	5	31
I avoid using a cash point in my neighbourhood	7	29	5	31
I plan my route when going out in my neighbourhood	8	25	8	25
I avoid leaving my house unoccupied	9	17	9	23
I avoid using public transport if on my own in my neighbourhood	10	13	10	20

Source: Citizens' Panel wave 8, LCC

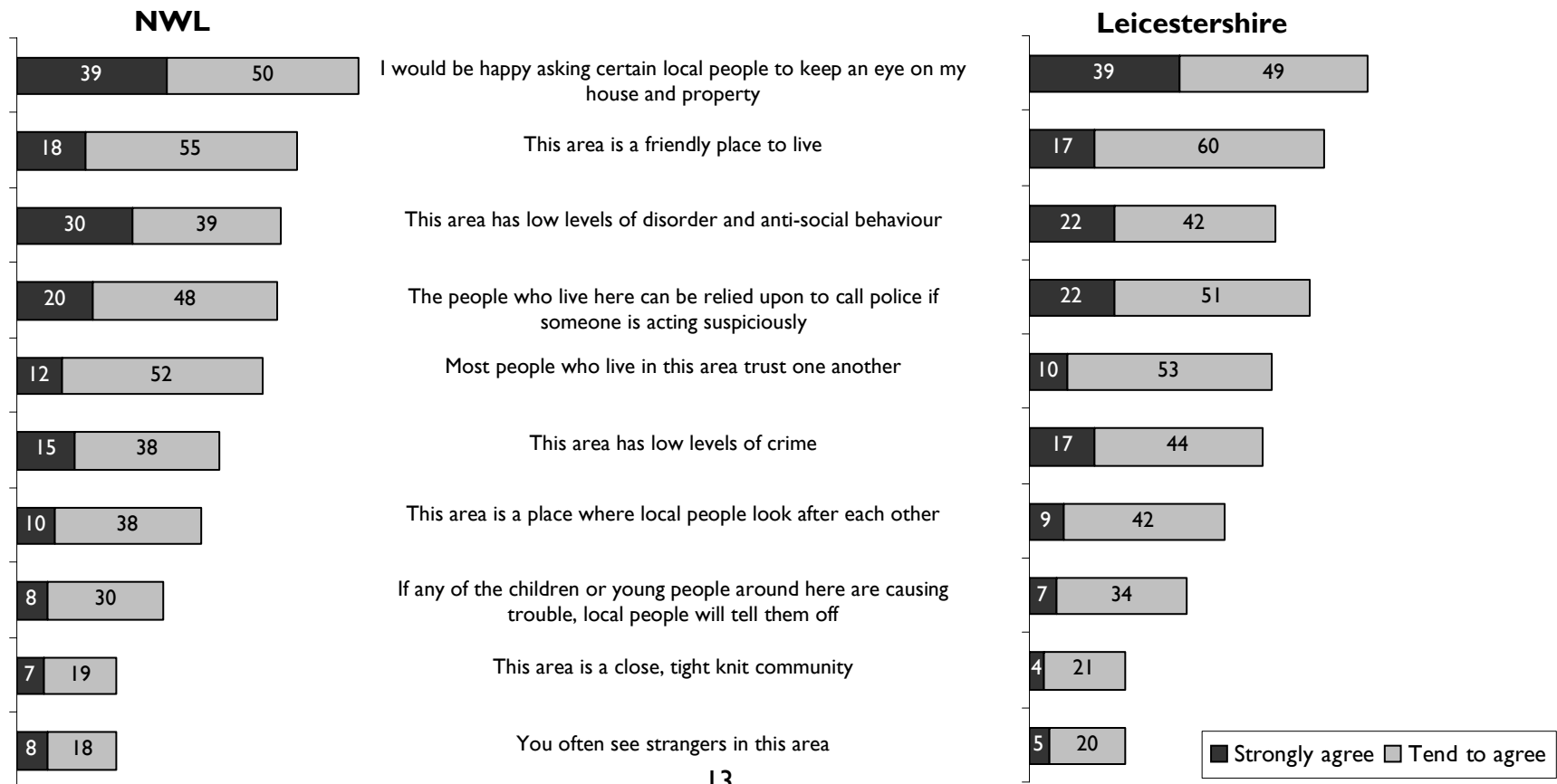
Perceptions of neighbourhood

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 7.

Findings for these questions around 'stronger' communities are broadly the same in NWL 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 7: Percentage response saying they agree with the following statements in their area December 2005



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