

Oadby and Wigston Borough - Citizens' Panel Report - Perceptions of crime and disorder

Main Findings

- There is consensus amongst both Oadby and Wigston 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.
- 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.
- Over a quarter (27%) of Oadby and Wigston respondents and 25% of County respondents believe it is likely they will be a victim of vandalism in the next 12 months. Yet in 2005, only 1.3% of the Oadby and Wigston population were affected by criminal damage.
- 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 Oadby and Wigston 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)	O&W		Leicestershire	
	Rank	%	Rank	%
People driving above the speed limit	1	42	1	45
Rubbish or litter lying around	2	41	2	31
Teenagers hanging around on the streets	3	35	3	29
Vandalism, graffiti and other deliberate damage to property or vehicles	4	25	4	22
People being drunk or rowdy in public places	5	17	7	13
People using or dealing drugs	6	14	6	14
Homes being broken into and property stolen	7	13	5	14
Troublesome neighbours	8	12	9	7
Cars being broken into or stolen	9	6	8	12
People being attacked, harassed or threatened because of their skin colour, ethnic origin or religion	10	6	12	2
People being robbed or mugged	11	5	10	3
People being attacked, harassed or threatened	12	5	11	3

Source: Citizens' Panel wave 8, LCC

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.

Oadby and Wigston respondents position 'vandalism, graffiti and other deliberate damage to property and vehicles' as the highest perceived crime problem in Blaby (rank 4). This aligns with a recorded criminal damage figure of 24%.

However, they tend to position 'people being attacked...' towards the bottom of the list; rank 10 and 12 whereas the actual recorded crime accounts for 25% of total crime in Oadby and Wigston and thus presents as the most prolific crime type.

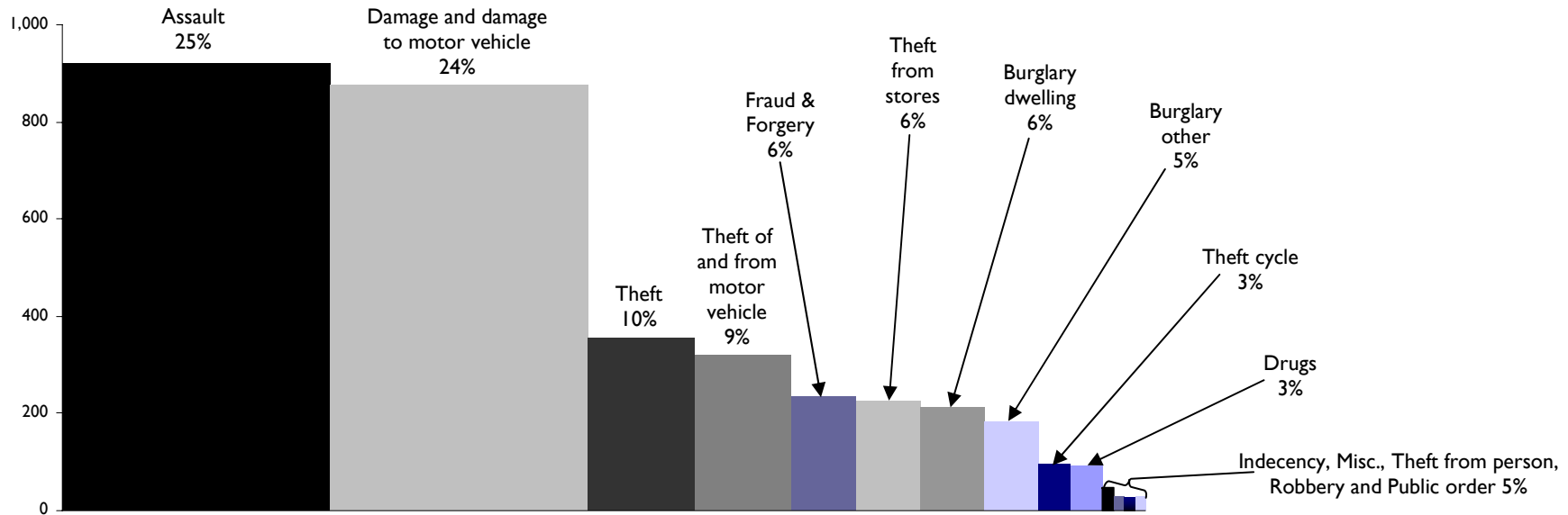
Further Oadby and Wigston respondents rank highly the problem of 'people being drunk or rowdy in public places' (rank 5) whereas recorded public order offences account 0.7% of all crime in Oadby and Wigston and thus sits in 15th place in chart I.

Table I shows the current rank order of perceived crime /anti-social behaviour problems and the percentage of respondents who consider each of them to be a 'fairly or very big problem' in their area. Responses are shown for Oadby and Wigston and for the County as a whole. In general the percentage of Oadby and Wigston respondents and County respondents who suggest the varying crime categories are a problem in their area are the same (vandalism, dealing drugs, burglary dwelling). Whereas a much larger percentage of Oadby and Wigston respondents than County respondents raise the varying asb categories as a problem (rubbish, people being drunk, troublesome

neighbours). However, Oadby and Wigston respondents raise the perceived problem of 'people being attacked ,,,due to their skin colour...' above the county as a whole (Oadby and Wigston 6%, County 2%). Conversely, they report 'cars being broken in to or stolen' as less as a problem than in the County (Oadby and Wigston 6%, County 12%).

Chart I (page 3) shows the actual number of reported criminal offences for calendar year 2005. The height of the bar represents the number of offences recorded. The width of the bar represents the percentage of all crime made up by each crime category. It

Chart 1: Recorded offences in Oadby and Wigston Borough in rank order January 2005 to December



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 respondents in Oadby and Wigston tend to overestimate the proportion of rowdy and disorderly public order offences in their area.

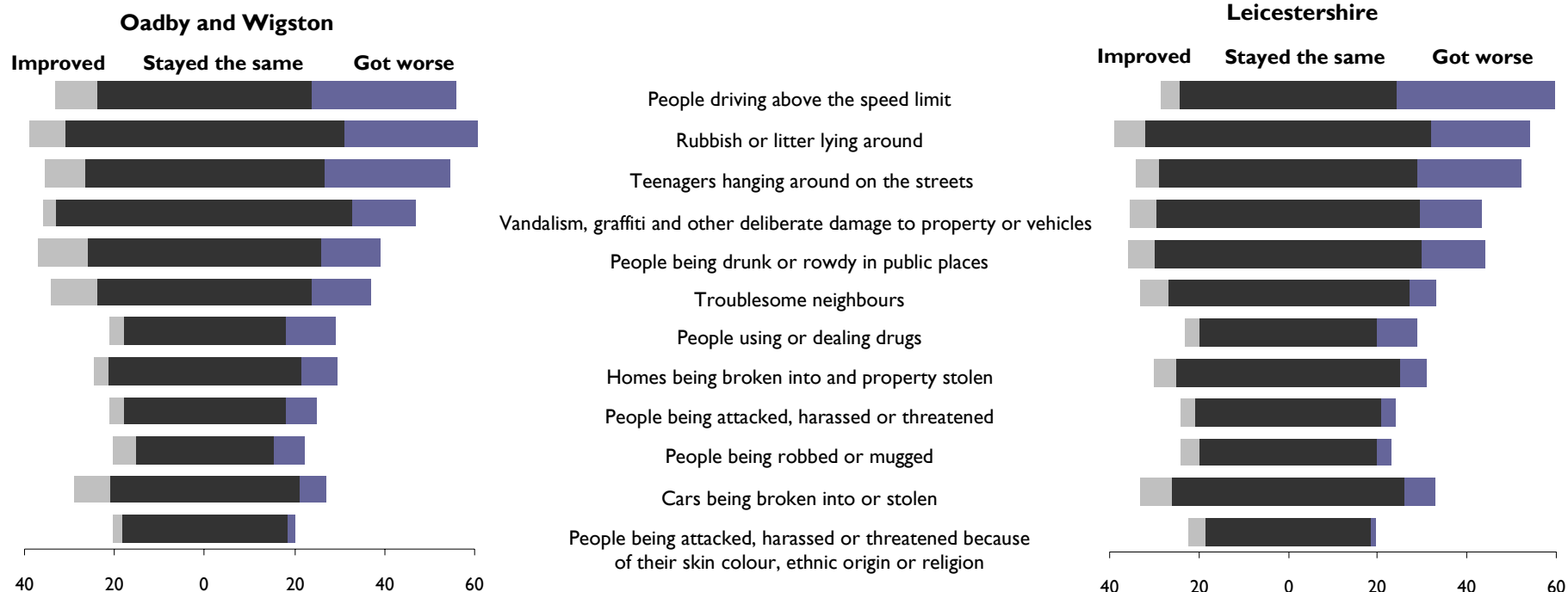
Table 2: Rank of problems in local area for November 2004 (Wave 6 citizens panel)

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

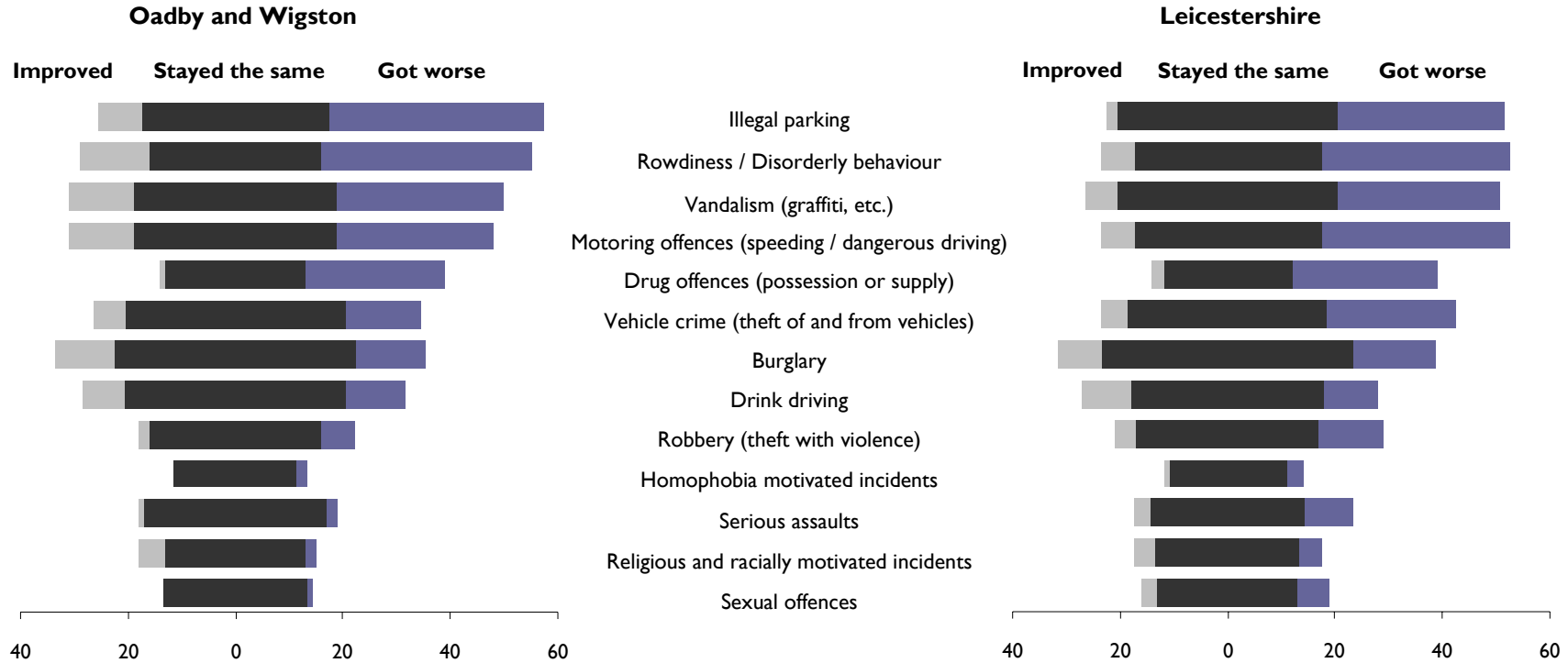
Chart 2 shows the percentage of respondents who thought crime / anti-social behaviour problems had either got better, worse or stayed the same over the 12 month period between January 2005 to December 2005. The size of the bar gives an indication of the overall number of responses to each category ('improved', '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 Oadby and Wigston 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.

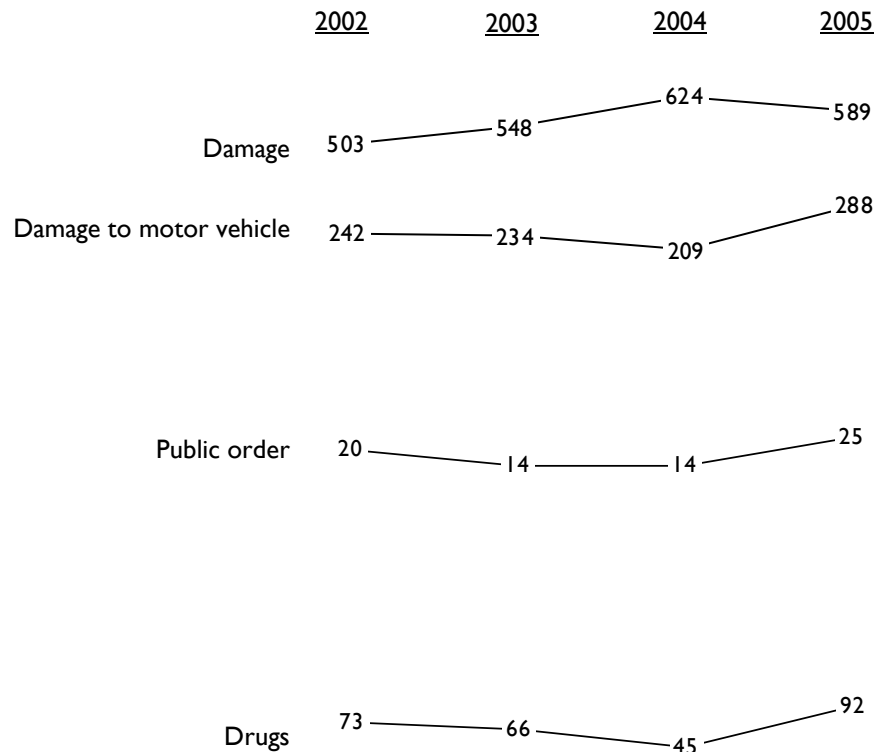
In 2005 more people thought that crime levels had stayed the same than they did in the previous year. In 2004 a higher number of people state that either a number of crimes had got worse in the three year period or that they did not know. Given the theoretical link between appropriate, accurate information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

this could suggest that the Oadby and Wigston public was more informed in 2005 and so better reassured.

Chart 4 shows trend lines for recorded crime in Oadby and Wigston 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: Oadby and Wigston reported crime trend lines 2002 to 2005

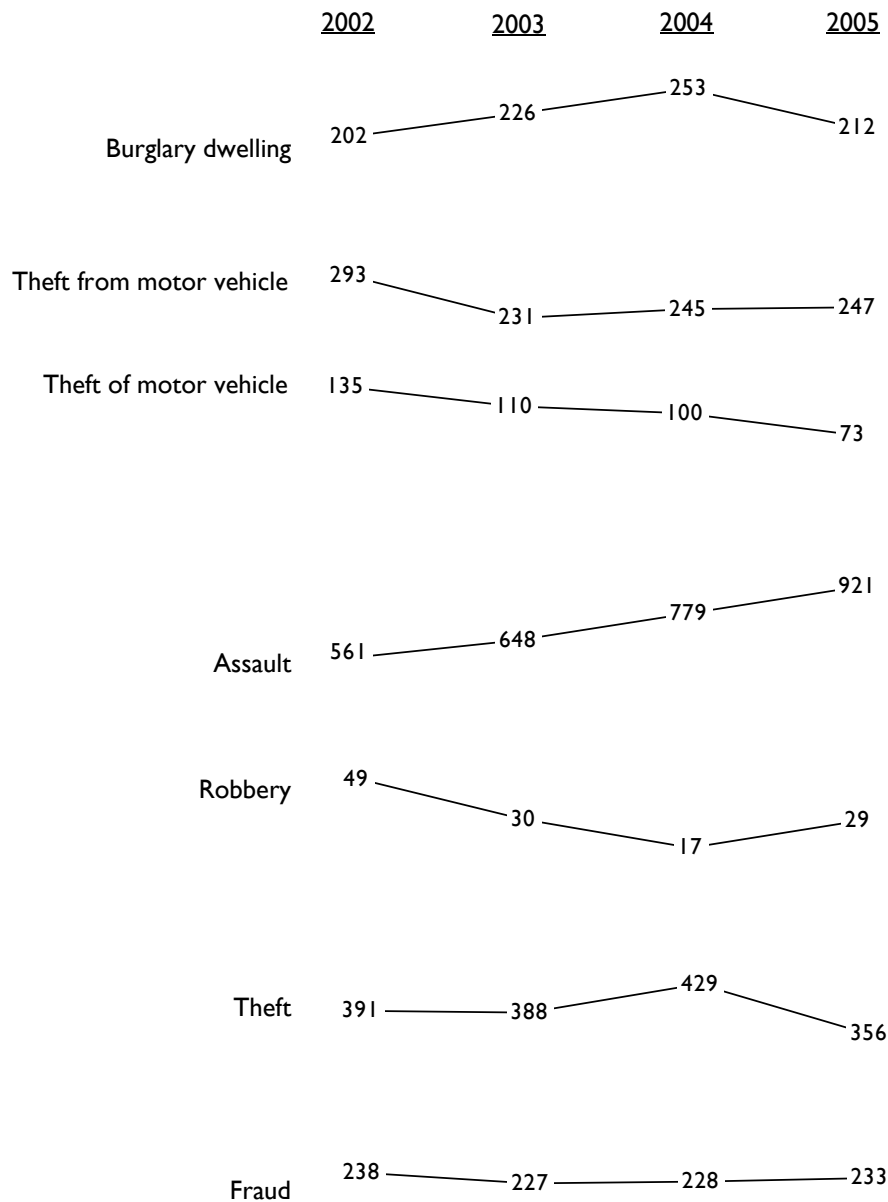


Source: Leicestershire Constabulary: CIS

In 2005 damage fell by 6% and damage to motor vehicle rose by 38% giving an overall rise in criminal damage of 5% 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 correct (3% improved, 66% stayed the same, 14% got worse).

In Oadby and Wigston public order offences rose by 76% in 2005. However, it is important to note the small incidence rate when considering these figures. Public perception is that 'people being drunk or rowdy in public places' has on balance stayed the same / got worse in the last 12 months (11% improved, 52% stayed the same, 13% got worse).

Drug offences increased by 104% in 2005 although again it is important to take in to account the small incidence rate when considering these figures. Similarly public perception assessed that 'people using or dealing drugs' had stayed the same / got worse in the last 12 months (3% improved, 36% stayed the same, 11% got worse).



In Oadby and Wigston burglary dwelling fell by 16% in 2005, partially due to a four year high in 2004. Oadby and Wigston respondents believed that ‘homes being broken in to ..’ had on balance got worse (3% improved, 43% stayed the same, 8% got worse).

Theft from motor vehicle remained stable in 2005 and theft of motor vehicle fell by around a quarter (27%), giving a decrease of 7% for overall vehicle crime in 2005. Public perception reflected this decrease with a slight improvement (8% improved, 42% stayed the same, 6% got worse).

In Oadby and Wigston assault rose by 18% in 2005. Public perception assessed ‘people being attacked...’ had on balance got worse (3% improved, 36% stayed the same, 7% got worse).

Robbery in Oadby and Wigston rose by 71% in 2005, although the incidence rate must again be taken in to account. Public perception on balance reflected a worsening of the offence (5% improved, 31% stayed the same, 7% got worse).

In Oadby and Wigston theft fell by 17% in 2005. However a comparison can not be made as this category was not included in the citizens panel questionnaire.

Fraud in Oadby and Wigston remained stable in 2005. Again this category was not included in the citizens panel questionnaire.

Source: Leicestershire Constabulary: CIS

Future Victimization

Panellists were asked how likely or unlikely they felt it was that they would be a victim of various types on crime in the next 12 months. The percentage results for 'very likely' and 'quite likely' are shown in Chart 5.

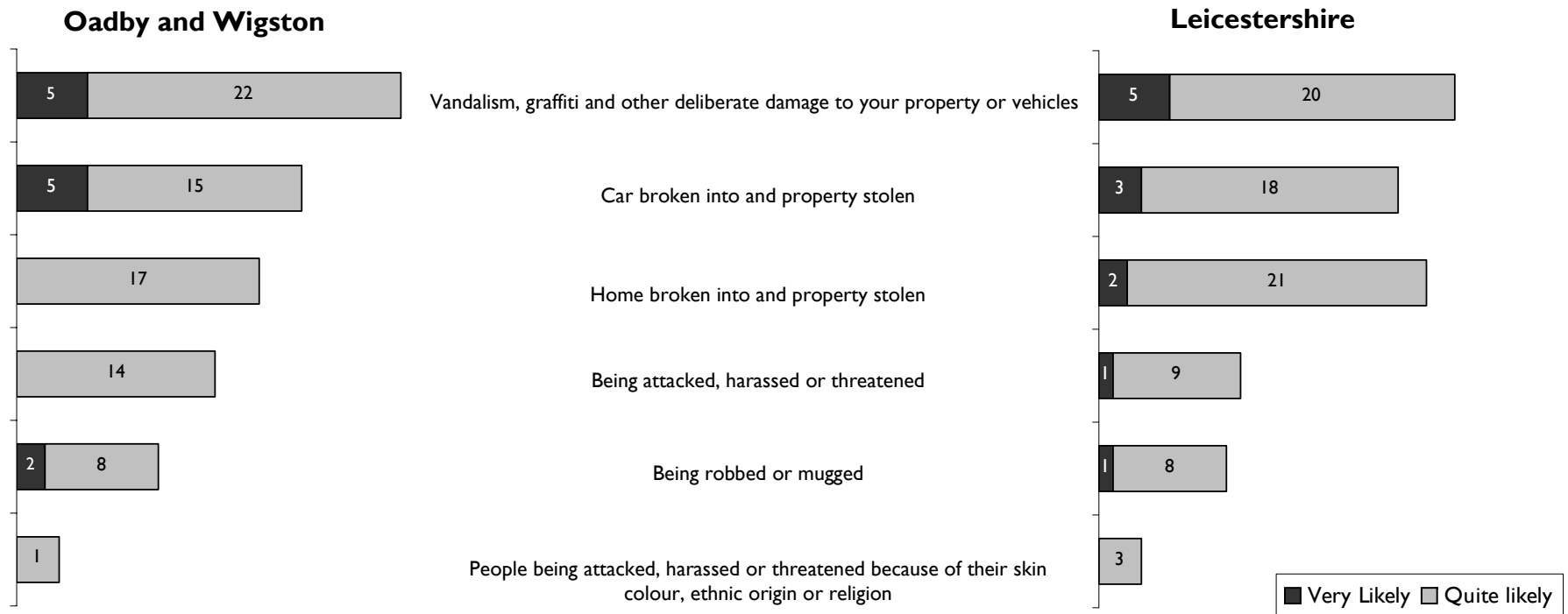
Over a quarter (27%) of Oadby and Wigston respondents and 25% of County respondents believe it is likely they will be a victim of vandalism in the next 12 months. The extent to which this level of

fear is heightened becomes apparent when considering police recorded crime figures for criminal damage. In 2005, only 1.3% of the Oadby and Wigston population were affected by criminal damage.

One-fifth (20%) of Oadby and Wigston respondents and 21% of 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 1.0% of the Oadby and Wigston population suffered such a crime in 2005. The same pattern of disparity is evident with other comparable crime types. Whereas 17% of Oadby and Wigston 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 1.2% of Oadby and Wigston households. Likewise, 14% of Oadby and Wigston respondents believe they may be a victim of assault in 2006 but

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



in 2005 only 1.3% 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.

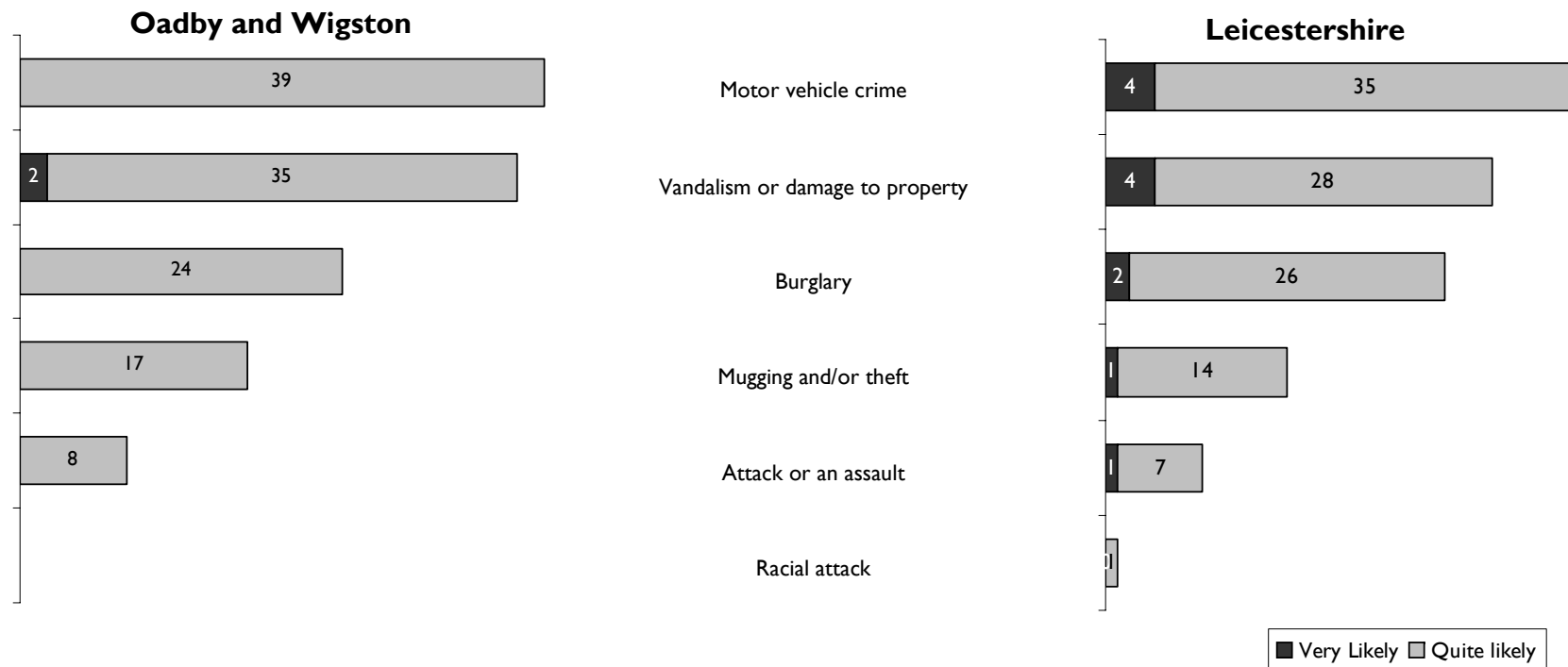
Initial comparison shows that fear of victimisation in 2004 was in general far higher than the latest results in 2005.

More specifically, two-fifths (39%) of Oadby and Wigston respondents believed that they might be a victim of motor vehicle crime in the wave 6 report, this fear fell to 20% in the wave 8 report. Similarly, 37% of Oadby and Wigston respondents feared the risk of criminal damage in the 2004

report and this level of fear reduced to 27% 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 Oadby and Wigston 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 Oadby and Wigston had ever felt fearful about the possibility of becoming a victim of crime in the last 12 months and it reveals that 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	18	27
No	44	67
Can't remember	4	6
Total	66	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	28
once a quarter	5	28
every two months	0	0
once a month	1	6
twice a month	1	6
once a week	1	6
twice a week	1	6
once a day	0	0
twice a day	0	0
No response	4	22
	18	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. Of those respondents who had felt fearful 56% had experienced fear around once a quarter or less in the last 12 months and only 12% of respondents had felt fearful very often; once a week and twice a week.

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	44	67
A little afraid	11	17
Very afraid	5	8
Can't remember	4	6
No Response	2	3
Total	66	100

Source: Citizens' Panel wave 8, LCC

Whilst a third of respondents said they had felt fearful (27% table 3) only 8% 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 56.

In conclusion, around a quarter (21.4%) of Oadby and Wigston respondents said they had felt fearful in the last 12 months.

When the frequency of fear was examined just over a tenth (12.5%) said they had felt fearful more than once or twice during the course of the year.

When the intensity of fear was examined only 3.6% of respondents 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 Oadby and Wigston, 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	44	(78.6)	-	-	-	-	44	(78.6)
once or twice	-	-	4	(7.1)	1	(1.8)	5	(8.9)
once a quarter	-	-	4	(7.1)	1	(1.8)	5	(8.9)
twice a month	-	-	1	(1.8)	-	-	1	(1.8)
once a week	-	-	1	(1.8)	-	-	1	(1.8)
	44	(78.6)	10	(17.9)	2	(3.6)	56	(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 Oadby and Wigston respondents and Leicestershire respondents as a whole.

In general respondents in Oadby and Wigston tend to adopt more avoidance strategies when out in their local area than respondents from the county at large.

Two-thirds (66%) of respondents in Oadby and Wigston 'always tell somebody where they are going' when out in their neighbourhood compared to a county-wide response of 50%.

Three-fifths (60%) of Oadby and Wigston respondents 'avoid groups of young people when out in their neighbourhood' compared to 48% of 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 Oadby and

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

% saying they use the following avoidance tactics	O & W		Leicestershire	
	Rank	%	Rank	%
I always tell somebody where I am going	1	66	1	50
I avoid groups of young people in my neighbourhood	2	60	2	48
I avoid certain areas of my neighbourhood when out	3	55	4	37
I carry a mobile phone in my neighbourhood for safety reasons	4	49	3	40
I avoid going out alone in my neighbourhood	5	46	5	31
I avoid using a cash point in my neighbourhood	6	45	5	31
I avoid answering the door	7	42	7	30
I avoid leaving my house unoccupied	8	35	9	23
I plan my route when going out in my neighbourhood	9	35	8	25
I avoid using public transport if on my own in my neighbourhood	10	27	10	20

Source: Citizens' Panel wave 8, LCC

Wigston 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 Oadby and Wigston residents than residents in the county.

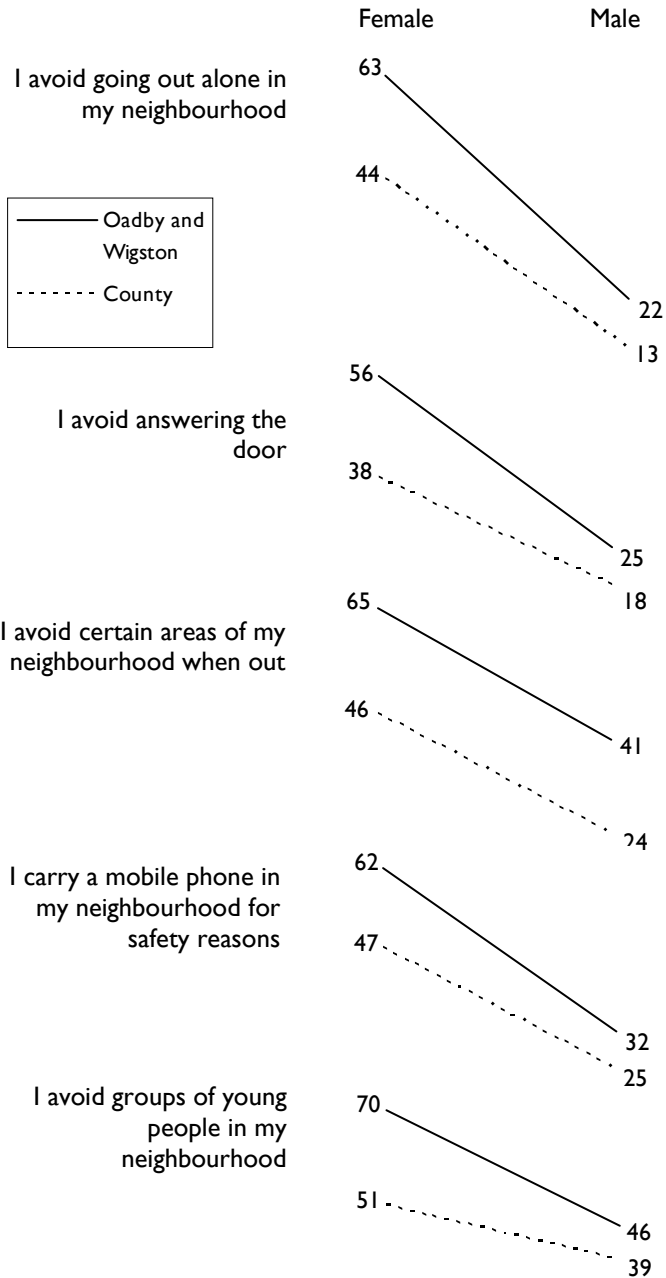
In general the graphs show that 1) most avoidance tactics are adopted by more females than males in both the district and the county and 2) Oadby and Wigston respondents, both male and female, tend to

adopt more avoidance strategies than average (as shown by the county line).

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

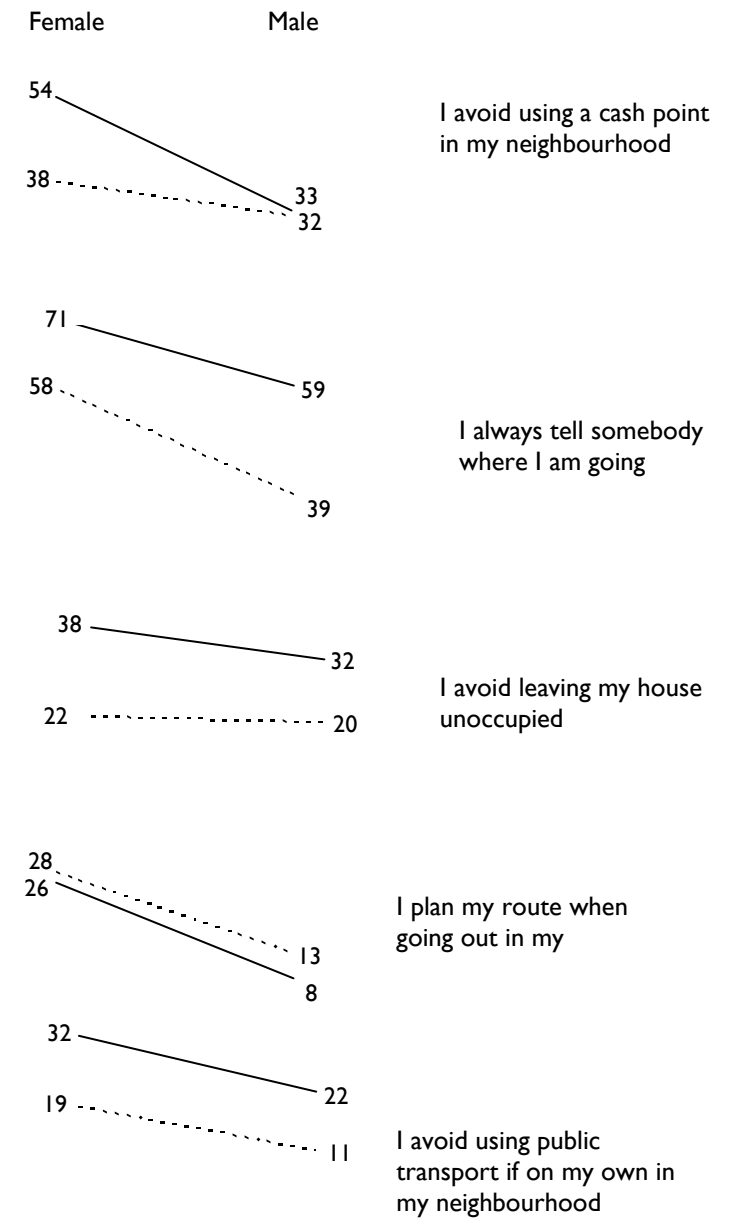
When the lines in these graphics converge

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



on one side this suggests there is both a district and gender specific issue with the category. Thus the need to 'avoid using a cash machine' is a specific issue for women in Oadby and Wigston.

In conclusion, Oadby and Wigston respondents, both male and female, tend to adopt more avoidance strategies compared to the county average and so demonstrate 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

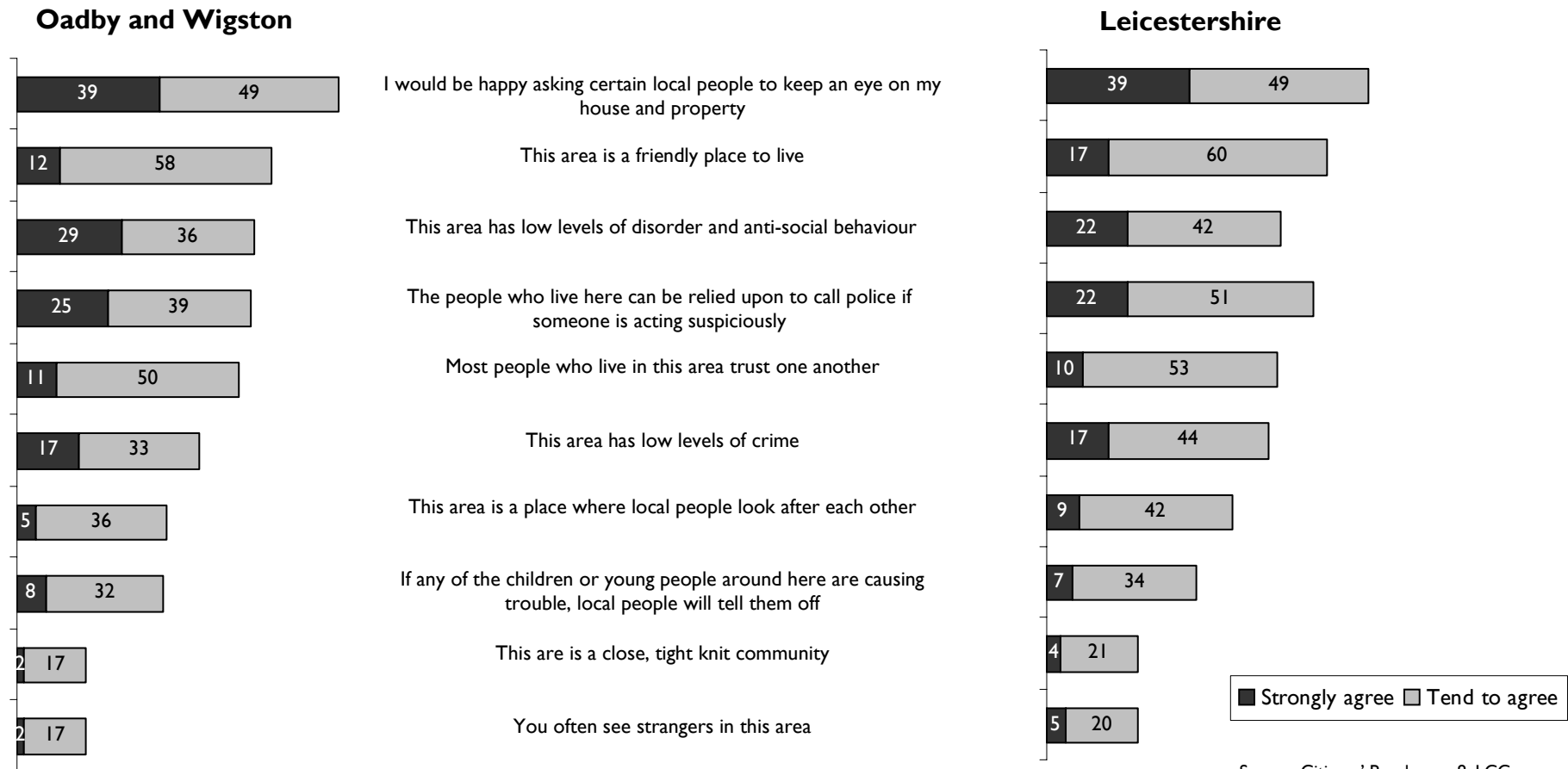
(Jackson 2004). Linking to this idea, respondents were asked to assess the community cohesion in their neighbourhood and the subsequent results are shown in chart 8.

Findings for these questions around 'stronger' communities are broadly the

same in Oadby and Wigston and the county. Although most categories score slightly less than the county.

It would be useful if future surveys were carried out with a larger sample to identify differences at a lower neighbourhood level within the district.

Chart 8: Percentage response saying they agree with the following statements in their area December 2005



References:

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 Oadby and Wigston Borough (90). Respondents from Oadby and Wigston 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.

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