



# Results of 2025 Hamilton Community Safety Survey

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# Executive Summary

## Overview

Like many cities across Canada, Hamilton is facing increasing concerns about crime and safety. These concerns are reflected in media reports on violence and crime and high numbers of calls for service to the police.

While perceptions of crime and safety may not reflect the realities of risk, these perceptions play an important role in a community's overall well-being. Criminological research indicates that fear of crime can result in people retreating into their homes, and out of the public sphere, creating more opportunities for crime and generating more fear (Wickes et al. 2013; Gearhart 2023). Furthermore, police-reported crime data can be unreliable for certain crime types, like violence, because these crime types often go under- or un-reported (Wickes et al. 2013), suggesting that a fulsome picture of crime and risk is not yet available for the city of Hamilton.

As a result, the research team from Wilfrid Laurier University, with funding from the Hamilton Police Service, set out to ask Hamilton residents about their perceptions of, and experiences with, crime and safety in the City of Hamilton. The survey was conducted between January and April of 2025 across the city of Hamilton and resulted in **1245 total respondents**. Findings from this report are descriptive and intended to provide an aggregate understanding of crime and perceptions of safety in the City of Hamilton that can act as a starting point for improved strategic planning for community safety.

## Key Objectives

The primary objectives of this survey were to:

- Gain a better understanding of perceptions of crime and safety in Hamilton,
- identify perceived safe and unsafe areas across the city,
- identify experiences of victimization, including reporting of these incidents to the police,
- and identify perceptions of the police.

In the short term, results from this survey should be used to inform the development of a strategic plan for the Hamilton Police Service by providing descriptive statistics to inform the preventative community safety strategies in Hamilton. In the long term, this survey should be replicated to allow for comparison and evaluation of community safety initiatives across Hamilton.

## Key Findings

### *Representation of Demographics*

According to Statistics Canada (2021), the median age in Hamilton is 40.8 years, while the median age of the survey respondents is 50 years. This is not surprising given that the survey required residents to be over the age of 18, which would skew the median age of the sample to slightly older. The population split in Hamilton is estimated around 49% male and 51% female (Statistics Canada 2021). Female respondents were overrepresented in the survey (65.46%), followed by male respondents (30.76%), non-binary respondents (0.88%), and transgender respondents (0.48%). 2.41% of respondents preferred not to answer. Respondents were also less ethnically diverse than the population of Hamilton, with 88.76% of participants identifying as White, whereas the census reports 74.87% White or not a visible minority in Hamilton. Homeownership was also slightly higher for survey respondents (72.85%) as compared to the population (69%). Survey respondents also reported higher levels of education (32.61% with a bachelor's degree and 21.53% with a graduate degree) as compared to official statistics (16.71% and 8.51% respectively).

### *Perceptions of Crime and Safety in Hamilton*

Residents expressed mixed feelings about their safety in Hamilton. 93.7% of the respondents felt it was safe to go outside during the day, and over 76% of respondents felt it was safe for children to play outside in the neighbourhood. However, when asked about specific community safety concerns, 67.8% of participants worried about vehicle theft, 55.7% worried about vandalism, and 54.9% worried about home break-ins. 50.6% of participants believed their neighbourhood is becoming more dangerous, 45.1% were worried about gun violence in their neighbourhood, and 41.6% were worried about illegal drugs in their neighbourhood.

These mixed perceptions highlight an important distinction between how safe people feel and actual crime rates or objective safety conditions. While fear of crime may not always reflect the reality, it plays a critical role in shaping community behaviour, trust, and engagement with law enforcement. Perceived safety can influence willingness to participate in community life and the strength of social cohesion and collective efficacy.

Understanding whether community members believe that police share and act according to their moral values is also crucial for building trust and legitimacy. When residents view the police as respectful, fair, and responsive, it reinforces procedural justice and encourages cooperation. However, lower levels of agreement about police attentiveness and effectiveness signal potential breakdowns in trust. Even if these concerns are based on perception rather than measurable outcomes, they can impact public willingness to report crime or work collaboratively with the police. Recognizing and addressing these gaps is essential for improving police-community relations and creating safer, more resilient neighbourhoods.

### *Perceived Safe and Unsafe Areas in Hamilton*

Respondents reported feeling the safest in area 1 for several reasons. Many noted that this area, located on the outskirts of Hamilton, has a more rural atmosphere and fewer signs of social disorder, such as drug use, homelessness, and mental health crises, compared to more urban neighbourhoods. Some participants also observed a stronger police presence and more frequent patrolling in these communities. In addition, the lower population density was seen as contributing to a quieter, more secure environment. Overall, residents perceived area 1 to have less crime than other parts of the city. In the research literature, smaller communities are often considered idyllic and associated with less crime and disorder. While these perceptions are not consistent with reality in rural parts of Canada (Hodgkinson, 2022), it is unsurprising that small communities, like those found in area 1, are defined as safest by the participants.

Respondents felt the least safe in area 6, which encompasses Hamilton's downtown core. Many participants expressed concerns about visible signs of social disorder, including drug use, homelessness, encampments, and mental health crises. Experiences of solicitation and harassment while walking through the area also contributed to feelings of discomfort. In addition to social concerns, respondents highlighted issues related to road safety, such as narrow sidewalks, limited bike lanes, and heavy traffic congestion. High levels of crime, particularly gun violence and open drug use in public spaces like parks, further contributed to a sense of insecurity. Some respondents noted that their perceptions were shaped not by direct experience, but by widespread social media coverage of downtown issues in recent years, pointing to the influence of media on public perceptions of safety.

### *Experiences of Victimization*

33.9% of respondents indicated they had been victims of crime in the past two years. The most common form of victimization was theft from property (43.2%), followed by violent victimization (19.7%) and home break and enters (9.7%). Data from the General Social Survey (GSS) show that theft of personal property made up 37% of all reported incidents, while violent victimization (sexual assault, robbery, and physical assault) accounted for 8.3%, and home break-ins represented 8% (Cotter, 2021). Notably, in our survey, most of the violent incidents involved strangers (78.19%) and happened in public spaces like streets and neighbourhoods (94.29%) rather than in homes, as expected based on the research literature.

Reporting rates varied for these crimes. Theft was the most underreported, with 26% of victims reporting to the police, followed by 35.0% of victims of violence, and 59.5% of home break-ins being reported to the police. According to the 2019 GSS, 21% of theft was reported to the police, 36% of violence, and 45% of break and enters (Cotter, 2021).

Participants did not report these victimization experiences for several reasons. These include viewing the crime as minor or unimportant, no one being harmed, or believing that stolen property would not be recovered. For violent incidents, respondents did not report because they were worried about retaliation, poor experiences with police in the past, further victimization by the police, and little faith that their reports would be taken seriously. Similar reasons are outlined in the GSS (Cotter, 2021).

### *Perceptions of the Police*

In general, the perceptions of police were positive. Over 75% of participants agreed that officers are courteous, respectful, and respected citizens' rights. In addition, trust and willingness to co-operate were high with 73.1% of participants being likely to call the police to report a crime. However, 67.6% of participants felt the police do not effectively address drug activity, and 56.4% believe the police do not enforce laws consistently. Similarly, only 52.45% of participants believe the police are doing a good job at keeping the community safe.

Respondents acknowledged that police were doing their best despite challenges such as limited funding, staffing shortages, and evolving public safety concerns. Others noted that there was a lack of visible police presence in their neighbourhoods, delayed or absent responses to their calls for service, and the presence of police discrimination based on race and class. Importantly, respondents noted a frustration with the broader criminal justice system, particularly the perceived lack of accountability for offenders. They also argued that police should not be expected to address social issues such as homelessness, substance use, and mental health crises, emphasizing the need for greater investment in social services and preventative measures.

# Introduction

## The Community of Hamilton

Located on the western end of Lake Ontario, Hamilton is known for its vibrant urban life and rich industrial heritage. Hamilton has transformed from a steel manufacturing hub to a diversified economy with strong health sciences, education, and creative sectors. The city has a variety of attractions including the Royal Botanical Gardens, Dundurn Castle, the Art Gallery of Hamilton, and a vibrant waterfront at Pier 8. It is also home to over 100 waterfalls and the scenic Bruce Trail. Hamilton has a large student population through institutions like McMaster University and Mohawk College, with over 60,000 students (McMaster 2022; Mohawk College 2025).

As of 2021, Hamilton has a population of 569,353 and has experienced a growth of 6.0% between 2016 and 2021, which is higher than the provincial (5.8%) and national (5.6%) average growth rates (Statistics Canada 2021). Indigenous peoples account for 2.23% (12,520) of Hamilton's population. The city is also located approximately 30 kilometers from the Six Nations of the Grand River territory. This is the largest First Nations reserve in Canada, home to members of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy (Iroquois Confederacy), which includes the Mohawk, Cayuga, Onondaga, Oneida, Seneca, and Tuscarora nations. Compared to similar sized cities, such as Kitchener-Cambridge-Waterloo (1.73%, 9,845), London (2.55%, 13,675), and St. Catharines-Niagara (3.07%, 13,080), Hamilton has a relatively large Indigenous population.

Hamilton also boasts a large immigrant community, with about 25.56% (145,545) of residents born outside of Canada. In household characteristics, most homes in Hamilton are single detached or row houses, and about 69% (146,410) of residents own their homes. The population is composed of 16.5% children aged 0 to 14, 65.3% adults aged 15 to 64, and 18.2% seniors aged 65 and over. The median household income after tax in 2020 was \$64,500 (which is less than the national median income of \$73,700). Over 45% of adults aged 25 to 64 have completed postsecondary education (Statistics Canada 2021). While Hamilton is a growing city, it faces challenges that include crime and safety. Hamilton ranks above the Ontario average in intimate partner violence, hate crime, and ranks among the Ontario averages for self-reported property crimes and sexual assaults (Statistics Canada 2020).

## Background

The study of community safety and perceptions of crime in Hamilton seeks to build on an extensive body of criminological literature to understand how perceptions of crime and safety (also referred to as “fear of crime”) operate in the City of Hamilton. Research on fear of crime in the academic literature has demonstrated a relationship between perceptions and experiences of crime and safety, with individual-level predictors, such as age (older people are often more afraid) and gender (women are often more afraid than men), and societal level factors, such as social cohesiveness (cohesive neighbourhoods are often less fearful). For example, social cohesion (people's connection to each other in a neighbourhood) and collective efficacy



(people's willingness to act on behalf of each other's interests) have long been shown to reduce concerns about crime and safety while acting as a protective factor against crime and victimization (Hodgkinson & Lunney, 2021; Sabine & Hodgkinson, 2023). Furthermore, indicators of social and physical disorder, such as visible homelessness and graffiti/litter (respectively), tend to be correlated with more fear of crime.

While this report will only provide descriptive analyses (non-correlational) of these factors, the community survey sought to collect this important information to allow for future analysis of how these relationships operate in the City of Hamilton. These descriptive analyses provide an important baseline understanding of the factors related to perceptions of crime and safety in the City of Hamilton. We briefly outline the academic research related to perceptions of safety below, to clarify the importance of collecting this information.

## Research Literature

Researchers and practitioners alike have used the concept of “broken windows” to support the early intervention in social and physical signs of disorder. The broken windows theory suggests that visible signs of neglect, like graffiti or broken windows, are indicators that “no one cares” about the area or neighbourhood, and that illegitimate behaviour is acceptable because no one will intervene (Wilson & Kelling 1982). In turn, small infractions like broken windows that are not fixed could result in more serious, illegal behaviour by indicating to potential offenders that this is a place that tolerates crime and illegitimate behaviour.

While the relationship between physical indicators of disorder (like broken windows) and illegitimate behaviour is generally accepted in the literature, this concept has been misappropriated in several ways across Canada and internationally to justify zero-tolerance policing. This is concerning for two reasons. First, police services around the world have conflated improving informal social controls (residents caring for spaces and places) with increasing formal social controls by policing low-level crimes to prevent more serious criminal behaviour. However, this relationship is not consistently supported in the literature (Braga et al. 2015). Indeed, much of the policing efforts to address low level social and physical disorder actually contribute to increases in fear of crime (Hinkle & Weisburd, 2008). Second, much of the “zero-tolerance” approaches have led to the over-policing of marginalized and impoverished communities, acting to further criminalize these communities rather than prevent real harms (Howell, 2015).

Recent studies have critiqued this conflation and associated policing approaches, arguing that crime and fear of crime are more complex and are influenced more by social factors within a community than by physical disorder alone. One of the main criticisms of this approach is the lack of emphasis on social relationships and informal social control within a community. O'Brien et al. (2019) challenge the assumption that perceived disorder automatically leads to increased fear or aggressive behaviour. Instead, they introduce the social escalation model, which emphasizes how private forms of disorder, combined with weakened informal social control, can escalate into crime. Crucially, this underscores that it is not only about what residents observe in their neighbourhood, but how they collectively respond to one another. In this context, the shared expectations and mutual trust among community members plays a pivotal role in shaping those responses and maintaining social order.

A key concept that supports this view is collective efficacy, which refers to the shared belief among residents in their ability to come together and act in support of common goals, such

as maintaining safety and order in their community (Sampson et al., 1997). While often linked, collective efficacy is distinct from social cohesion, which describes the strength of social bonds, trust, and connectedness among neighbours. As Gearhart (2023) and Wickes et al. (2013) highlight, socially cohesive communities (where residents feel emotionally connected and trust each other) are more likely to foster collective efficacy. That said, collective efficacy goes a step further by involving a willingness to intervene for the common good. Importantly, research suggests that collective efficacy may vary depending on the nature of the problem that a community faces. Residents may be more inclined to act in response to visible issues than in private situations (Wickes et al., 2013).

For example, communities with strong shared values on illegal drug activity in their neighbourhood may mobilize differently to stop drug activity than to advocate against vacant lots in their neighbourhoods. The community may organize watch groups, increase communication among residents, and work closely with local law enforcement to increase guardianship in the area. Residents could also advocate for community resources such as harm reduction services and safe spaces or collaborate with the city to improve lighting in areas and to repurpose abandoned properties that may attract drug use. By combining informal social control, strategic partnerships, and supportive services, the community can tackle the problem from multiple angles, strengthening both safety and social cohesion. Lanfear (2022) also shows that communities with strong collective efficacy can make changes to their surroundings to reduce crime. However, as mentioned by Wickes et al. (2013), not all communities are adequately equipped to mobilize on these issues. This means that local solutions need to consider the specific needs and strengths of each community. As Tilley (2001) suggests, mitigating crime is a matter of understanding “what works for whom, in what circumstances, and how?” These frameworks are integrated in the questions for the survey so that Hamilton’s communities can be studied, understood, and compared against literature, so that crime can be effectively mitigated.

Perceptions of police and procedural justice also contribute to the fear of crime experienced by a community. Perceptions of police and procedural justice are inversely related to fear of crime (Bolger & Bolger 2019), suggesting as perceptions of the police and of procedural justice improve, the fear of crime experienced by a community declines. As such, to address fear of crime, an important step is ensuring the public has positive perceptions of the police and associated processes (Carter & Wolfe 2021). This survey provides an opportunity to gain insights into how the public perceives the police, their operation, their values, the alignment of the values with that of the public, and perceptions of associated processes. By understanding these perceptions, a comprehensive picture of crime and safety can be established.

# Methodology

## Sampling Method

Recruitment for this survey occurred using a three-pronged approach between January and April 2025. Primarily, recruitment involved randomly selecting participants using a stratified sampling technique for each of the census tracts (similar to neighbourhoods) of Hamilton. Census tracts were used so that survey data can be matched with official Statistics Canada data and to ensure comprehensive representation of Hamilton. If residents were unavailable at the time of data collection, door hangers were left with a QR code leading to the online version of the survey. If residents were available, two research assistants conducted the survey using iPads connected to a Qualtrics survey link that automatically stored the results on a secure Wilfrid Laurier University (WLU) server. Alternatively, residents could opt to complete an online or a paper version of the survey to be collected later by members of the research team.

Residents were also recruited at community events and community spaces, including libraries, farmer's markets, recreation centres, and others. Local businesses and universities were also contacted to share the survey with their students and staff. Together, these efforts resulted in a lot of engagement and accounted for approximately 60% of the respondents in the survey. Finally, the survey was promoted online, using Facebook and Instagram posts targeted to Hamilton residents. This resulted in approximately 40% of the remaining survey responses.

## Data Standardization and Analysis

Once survey collection was completed, data were standardized to remove any non- or incomplete responses. The survey was accessed approximately 2,100 times. 855 of these responses were not included as approximately 95% of these responses completed less than 5% of the survey. Most of the removed responses only completed the first three questions of the survey. After removing the incomplete surveys, there were a total of 1245 valid responses left. In the remaining surveys, there was approximately 2% data missing across all the questions. This data was determined to be missing at random with less than 1% of data missing from each question. To fix the missing data, mode imputation was used to simulate the answers to represent a random sample of missing values as it is widely considered one of the most robust responses to missing data. The dataset was then reviewed to ensure the absence of duplicate responses. The completed dataset was analysed using SPSS v.30 and Microsoft Excel.

# The Survey

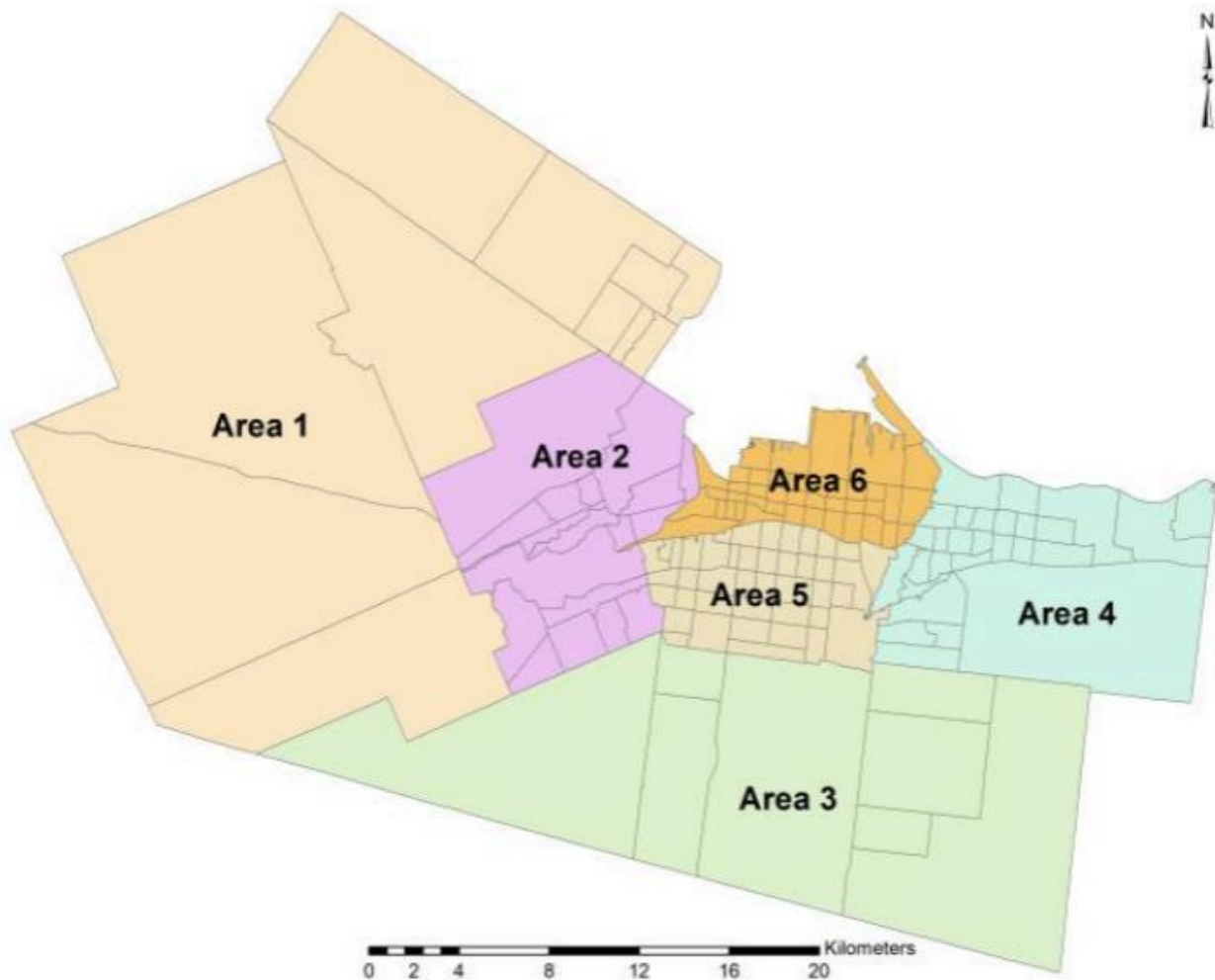
## Demographics

Participants were asked to identify several demographics to determine the representativeness of the survey for the population of Hamilton. Participants were asked to identify in which area of Hamilton they reside (to ensure geographical representation), their age, gender, ethnicity,

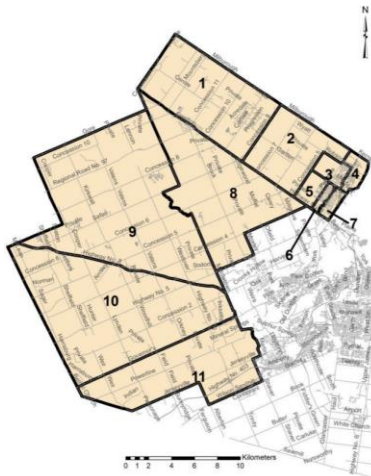
homeownership, marital status, education, work locale, income, time at current residence, and plans of residency in Hamilton.

Based on Map 1.0 below, the participants were asked to identify the area in which they reside.

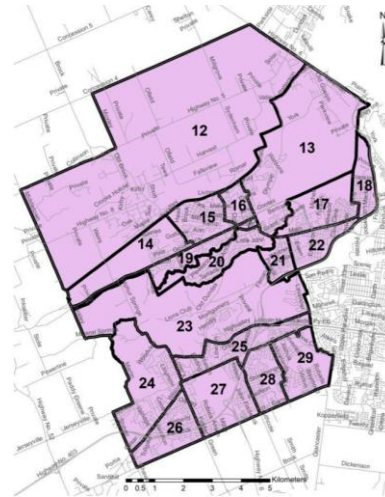
**Map 1.0 - Map of Hamilton, Ontario**



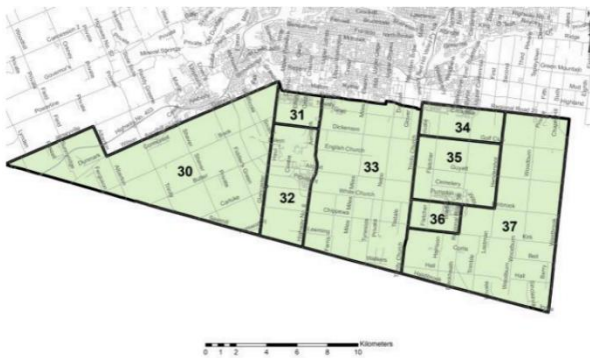
Based on the maps below, the participants were also asked to identify the census tract in which they reside.



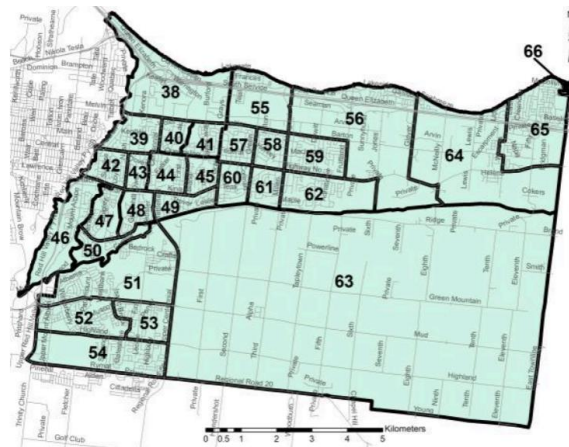
**Map 1.1- Map of Area 1**



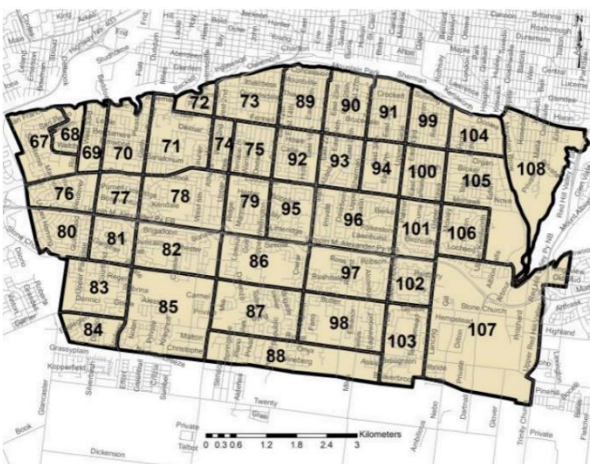
**Map 1.2 - Map of Area 2**



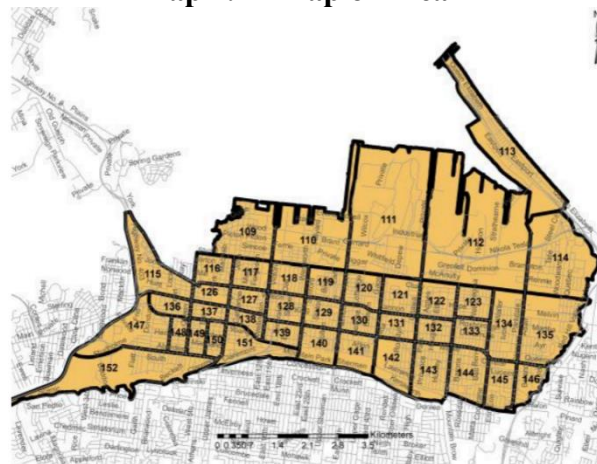
**Map 1.3 - Map of Area 3**



**Map 1.4 - Map of Area 4**



**Map 1.5 - Map of Area 5**



**Map 1.6 - Map of Area 6**

**Map 1.1 border:** Milborough Line to Concession Rd. 11 E. to Sager Rd. to Jerseyville Rd. W. to Middletown Rd. to Millgrove to Milborough Line.

**Map 1.2 border:** Highway 6 to Concession Rd. 4 to Middletown Rd. to Garner Rd. to Juliebeth Dr. to York Blvd to Highway 6.

**Map 1.3 border:** Regional Rd. 20 to Garner Rd. to Alberton Rd. to Jerseyville Rd. to Sawmill Rd. to Westbrook Rd. to Regional Rd. 20.

**Map 1.4 border:** McCollum Rd. to Confederation Dr. to Red Hill Valley Parkway to Pinehill Dr. to Regional Rd. 20 to Young St. to East Townline to McCollum Rd.

**Map 1.5 border:** Hixon Rd. to San Francisco Ave to Eagleglen Way to Upper Red Hill Valley to Hixon Rd.

**Map 1.6 border:** Queen Elizabeth to Eastport Dr. to Guise St. E. to York Blvd (at Dundurn Castle) to Scenic Dr. to Hixon Rd. to Red Hill Valley Parkway to Queen Elizabeth.



## Neighbourhood Community Involvement

The neighbourhood was defined as a 15-minute walk in any direction from their home. The participants were then asked about their neighbourhood integration, the willingness of neighbours to intervene in illicit activities, and about their relationship with their neighbours. Assessing the degree of neighbourhood integration offers valuable insight into the strength of social cohesion and the presence of informal social control. Likewise, gauging how willing residents are to intervene in local incidents helps reveal the extent of collective efficacy within the community.

### Neighbourhood Integration

The participants were given several statements regarding how well people get along in the neighbourhood. The participants were instructed to respond with either “strongly disagree”, “disagree”, “agree”, and “strongly agree” to the following statements:

- a. People in your neighbourhood are willing to help their neighbours.
- b. Neighbours DO NOT usually talk to each other.
- c. In general, people in your neighbourhood can be trusted.
- d. People in your neighbourhood DO NOT share the same values.
- e. Neighbours watch out for each other in your neighbourhood.
- f. This area is a good area to raise children.
- g. People in my neighbourhood are generally friendly.
- h. I am happy I live in this neighbourhood.
- i. People around here take care of each other.
- j. This is a close-knit neighbourhood.
- k. I regularly stop and talk with people in my neighbourhood.
- l. I know the names of people in my neighbourhood.
- m. People in this neighbourhood hardly know each other.

For interpretive ease and cohesion, “People in your neighbourhood DO NOT usually talk to each other” was reverse coded to “People in your neighbourhood talk to each other”, “People in your neighbourhood DO NOT share the same values” was reverse coded to “People in your neighbourhood share the same values”, and “People in this neighbourhood hardly know each other” was reverse coded to “People in this neighbourhood know each other.”

### Willingness to Intervene

Participants were asked about the likelihood that one of their neighbours would intervene given a particular situation. They were instructed to answer with “very unlikely”, “unlikely”, “likely”, or “very likely” to the following statements:

- a. If some kids were skipping school and hanging out on your block.
- b. If a group of kids were spraying graffiti on a building.
- c. If a teenager was showing disrespect to an adult.
- d. If a group of kids were climbing on a parked car.
- e. If a group of kids were “car shopping” (trying to open car door handles).
- f. If someone was trying to break into a house.
- g. If someone was illegally parking on the street.
- h. If suspicious people were hanging around the neighbourhood.

- i. If people were having a loud argument in the street.
- j. If a group of underage kids were drinking in public.
- k. If someone on your street was playing loud music.
- l. If someone on your street was firing a gun.
- m. If drugs were being sold in your neighbourhood.
- n. If a local fire station was going to be closed down because of budget cuts.
- b. If there was a serious pothole on your street that needed repairs.
- c. If a vacant house in the neighbourhood was being used for drug dealing.
- d. If the town was planning to cut funding for a local community centre.
- e. If prostitutes (sex workers) were soliciting clients in your neighbourhood.

## Neighbourhood Involvement

The participants were asked about the ways they are involved in their neighbourhood and/or community. Neighbourhood involvement is an important metric as it provides insight into how actively residents engage in addressing local issues, which can influence community cohesion, trust, and collective ability to prevent and respond to crime. The participants were asked if a member of their household was involved in any of the following activities in the past year and were instructed to answer with a “yes” or a “no.”

- a. Spoken to a person or group that was causing problems in your neighbourhood.
- b. Attended a neighbourhood or community meeting.
- c. Spoken to a local religious or community leader about doing something to improve your neighbourhood.
- d. Worked with neighbours to address a problem or improve the neighbourhood.
- e. Spoken with an elected official about a specific problem in your neighbourhood.

## Relationships with Neighbours

Relationships in a community can foster trust, informal social control, and mutual support, all of which contribute to a safer and more resilient community. Participants were asked if they know their neighbours by name, and they were instructed to respond with a “yes” or a “no.” They were also asked to identify how many neighbours they would consider friends. The participants were also instructed to respond with “never”, “rarely”, “sometimes”, and “often” as they were asked the following questions about time spent with their neighbours:

- a. How often do you chat with your neighbours?
- b. How often do you visit with your neighbours?
- c. How often do you and your neighbours help each other?

## Feelings of Safety

The questions in this section seek to understand the respondents’ perceptions of safety. Understanding fears and perceptions of crime helps identify specific safety concerns, inform community policing priorities, and guide local crime prevention and neighbourhood improvement efforts. In this section, they were asked to respond with “strongly disagree”, “disagree”, “agree”, or “strongly agree” to the following statements regarding their perceptions of safety:



- a. It is safe for children to play outside in your neighbourhood.
- b. In general, it is safe to walk in your neighbourhood at night.
- c. You are afraid of being attacked in your neighbourhood.
- d. You are worried that someone will break into your home.
- e. It is safe to go outside alone during the day.
- f. You are worried about illegal drugs in your neighbourhood.
- g. Most people think your neighbourhood is becoming more dangerous.
- h. If someone tried to attack you in your neighbourhood, you could easily defend yourself.
- i. You are worried that someone will damage or vandalize your property.
- j. You are worried that someone will try to sexually assault you.
- k. You are worried about gun violence increasing in your neighbourhood.
- l. You are worried about your vehicle being stolen.

For consistency of interpretation, some statements were reverse coded. “It is safe for children to play outside in your neighbourhood” was reverse coded to “It is NOT safe for children to play outside in your neighbourhood.” “In general, it is safe to walk in your neighbourhood at night” was reverse coded to “In general, it is NOT safe to walk in your neighbourhood at night.” “It is safe to go outside alone during the day” was reverse coded to “It is NOT safe to go outside alone during the day.” Finally, “If someone tried to attack you in your neighbourhood, you could easily defend yourself” was reverse coded to “If someone tried to attack you in your neighbourhood, you could NOT easily defend yourself.”

## Perceptions of Neighbourhood Safety

This section of the survey seeks to understand how much social and physical disorder the participants perceive in their neighbourhoods. As discussed, this is important because perceived disorder can indicate lack of guardianship in a neighbourhood which may signal vulnerability to criminals (Wilson & Kelling 1982).

### Social Disorder

Participants were asked how often the following occurs in their neighbourhood. Per the social escalation model proposed by O’Brien et al. (2019), frequent visible signs of social disorder can undermine residents’ sense of safety, signal weak informal social control, and highlight neighbourhood conditions that may attract or sustain crime. They were asked to respond with “never”, “less than once a month”, “a few times a month”, “a few times a week”, or “every day” to the following statements regarding their perceptions of social disorder:

- a. People arguing or fighting in public.
- b. Groups of kids hanging out and causing problems.
- c. People drinking alcohol in public.
- d. People acting drunk or high.
- e. Beggars or panhandlers asking for money.
- f. People making too much noise late at night.
- g. People selling drugs outside.
- h. Sex workers working in public.
- i. Dogs out of control/creating a mess.
- j. People driving erratically in the area.

- k. Drug-taking out in the open.
- l. People engaging in street racing.
- m. Excessive vehicle noise (e.g. loud mufflers).
- n. People engaging in gun violence.
- o. People defecating or urinating in public.
- p. People living in public spaces (e.g. parks).

## Physical Disorder

Participants were asked about the presence of indicators of physical disorder in their neighbourhood. According to the broken windows theory (Wilson & Kelling 1982) visible signs of disorder, like abandoned buildings, graffiti, and poor maintenance can signal neglect, lower community engagement, and attract more crime, helping identify areas that need revitalization and prevention efforts. Response categories included “none”, “one or two”, or “many” to the following statements

- a. Buildings with broken windows in your neighbourhood.
- b. Places in your neighbourhood where graffiti is a problem.
- c. Vacant lots in your neighbourhood.
- d. Abandoned or boarded up buildings in your neighbourhood.
- e. Places in your neighbourhood where litter and broken glass are a problem.
- f. Places in your neighbourhood that need better lighting.
- g. Places in your neighbourhood where other residents don't keep up their yards.

The participants were also asked if they have any other safety issues and what they consider to be the most important safety concern in Hamilton.

## Safe and Unsafe Areas in Hamilton

Using Map 1.0 and subsequently maps 1.1-1.6, the participants were asked to highlight where they felt most safe and most unsafe in Hamilton. The participants were then prompted to explain why they feel safe and unsafe in these areas.

## Experiences of Safety

In this section, the participants were asked if they have called the police to report a crime in their neighbourhood. This section reveals actual crime rates, reporting behaviours, and barriers to reporting, helping policymakers and police better address needs and improve trust. They were also prompted about their experience(s) of victimization over the past 2 years. They were asked to respond with a “yes” or a “no” to the following questions:

- a. Have you been a victim of crime in the last two years?
  - i. If yes, how many times?
  - ii. If yes, did you report this incident to the police?
    - 1. If you did not report this incident to the police, why not?
- b. In the past two years, has anyone broken into your home?
  - i. If yes, how many times?
  - ii. If yes, the last time someone broke into your home, did you report it to the police?
    - 1. If you did not report this incident to the police, why not?

- c. In the past two years, has anyone used violence against you? For example, hit you, shoved you, started a fight with you, or mugged you?
  - i. If yes, how many times did this happen in the past two years?
  - ii. If yes, the last time this occurred, were you injured?
  - iii. The last time this happened to you, was the person who used violence against you a: stranger, acquaintance, boyfriend or girlfriend, spouse, another relative, someone else?
  - iv. The last time this happened to you, where did this incident take place: in your home, on the street, in your neighbourhood, at work, outside of Hamilton, someplace else)
  - v. The last time someone used violence against you (hit, shoved, started a fight, or mugged you), did you call the police?
    - 1. If you did not report this incident to the police, why not?
- d. In the past two years, has anyone stolen something from your porch, yard, driveway, or somewhere else on your property, but outside your home?
  - i. If yes, how many times has this happened in the last two years?
  - ii. If yes, the last time it happened, did you report it to the police?
    - 1. If you did not report this incident to the police, why not?

## Perceptions of the Law and Police

The participants were asked several questions regarding their perceptions of police and procedural justice. These questions help understand how the public views the police and they provide insight into the willingness of the public to trust, support, and cooperate with the police.

### Police Visibility

The participants were asked about the visibility of police in their communities which helps assess satisfaction with local policing, desired level of police presence, and community expectations. This information can guide improvements in policing strategies and build trust between the police and the community. The questions are outlined below with their corresponding response options.

- a. How often do you see police officers around your neighbourhood? (Every day, a few days a week, a few times a month, less than once a month, never)
- b. Are you satisfied with the police presence in your neighbourhood? (Yes, no)
- c. Would you like to see more police presence in your neighbourhood? (Yes, no)
- d. If yes, how often would you like to see police in your neighbourhood? (Every day, a few days a week, a few times a month, less than once a month, never)
- e. If yes, what would you like the police to be doing? (Open-ended answer)

### Perceptions of Procedural Justice

Participants were provided several statements regarding their perceptions of the law and justice. Understanding attitudes toward laws and authority can reveal underlying norms and beliefs that influence compliance, trust in justice, and overall community order. The participants were asked to indicate if they “strongly disagree”, “disagree”, “agree”, or “strongly agree” with the following statements:

- a. People should obey the law even if it goes against what they think is right.
- b. I always try to follow the law even if I know it is wrong.
- c. Disobeying the law is rarely justified.
- d. Some laws are made to be broken.
- e. It is difficult to break the law and keep your self-respect.
- f. People should do what the law says.
- g. There is little reason for someone like me to obey the law.
- h. You can't blame a person for breaking the law if they can get away with it.
- i. If a person is doing something and a police officer tells them to stop, they should stop, even if what they are doing is legal.
- j. A person who disobeys the laws is a danger to others in the community.
- k. Obeying the law ultimately benefits everyone in the community.
- l. Sometimes doing the right thing means breaking the law.
- m. There are times when it is okay to ignore the law.
- n. Sometimes you have to bend the law for things to come out right.

For ease of interpretation and cohesion “There is little reason for someone like me to obey the law” was reverse coded to be interpreted as “There is reason for someone like me to obey the law” and “You can't blame a person for breaking the law if they can get away with it” was reverse coded to be interpreted as “you can blame a person for breaking the law if they can get away with it.”

### Perceptions of the Police

Participants were asked about their perceptions of the police as it helps identify strengths and gaps in community-police relationships, guiding improvements in policing practices and community engagement. Participants were asked to respond with “strongly disagree”, “disagree”, “agree”, or “strongly agree” to the following statements:

- a. In general, the police do a good job preventing crime.
- b. Police officers treat people fairly.
- c. The police do a good job controlling drug activity.
- d. In general, police care about problems in my neighbourhood.
- e. The police do a good job enforcing traffic laws.
- f. In general, police officers treat people with respect.
- g. The police take time to listen to people.
- h. In general, the police respect citizens' rights.
- i. In general, the police are courteous to citizens they come into contact with.
- j. In general, the police treat everyone with dignity.
- k. The police make decisions based on the facts.
- l. Crime levels in my neighbourhood have changed for the better in the last year.
- m. The police provide the same quality of service to all citizens.
- n. The police enforce the law consistently when dealing with people.
- o. When the police deal with people, they always behave according to the law.
- p. There are not many instances of crime in my neighbourhood.
- q. The police act in ways that are consistent with my own moral values.
- r. If I were to talk to police officers in my community, I would find their values to be similar to my own.

The participants were also asked about their level of cooperation with the police. Response options provided to the participants included “very unlikely”, “unlikely”, “likely”, and “very likely”. They were asked if they would:

- a. Call the police to report a crime?
- b. Report suspicious activity near your home to police?
- c. Provide information to help the police find a suspected criminal?

Finally, the participants were asked if they believe the police are doing a good job of keeping the community safe, and to explain why or why not.

# Results

## Demographics

### *Gender*

Most respondents identified as female, making up 65.46% of the sample (815), followed by male respondents at 30.76% (383). 0.88% (11) identified as non-binary, 0.48% (6) as transgender, 0.24% (3) selected "not listed", while 2.17% (27) preferred not to answer.

### **Gender by area:**

In area 1, the majority of respondents identified as female, making up 53.4% of the sample (39), followed by male respondents at 45.2% (33) and 1.4% (1) identified as non-binary.

In area 2, the majority of respondents identified as female, making up 62.6% of the sample (102), followed by male respondents at 33.1% (54). 0.61% (1) identified as non-binary, 0.61% (1) as transgender, while 3.07% (5) preferred not to answer.

In area 3, the majority of respondents identified as female, making up 77.4% of the sample (48), followed by male respondents at 20.97% (13), while 1.61% (1) preferred not to answer.

In area 4, the majority of respondents identified as female, making up 71.0% of the sample (93), followed by male respondents at 26.7% (35), while 2.3% (3) preferred not to answer.

In area 5, the majority of respondents identified as female, making up 65.71% of the sample (207), followed by male respondents at 29.84% (94). 0.63% (2) identified as non-binary, 0.63% (2) as transgender, 0.32% (1) selected "not listed", while 2.86% (9) preferred not to answer.

In area 6, the majority of respondents identified as female, making up 65.07% of the sample (326), followed by male respondents at 30.74% (154). 1.40% (7) identified as non-binary, 0.60% (3) as transgender, 0.40% (2) selected "not listed", while 1.80% (9) preferred not to answer.

### *Age*

Respondents ranged in age from 20 to 89 years, with an average age of 50.46, a median of 50, and a standard deviation of 14.79.

### *Own/Rent*

Most respondents reported owning their homes, accounting for 72.85% (907), while 24.50% (305) rented. 1.85% (23) lived with family, and 0.80% (10) selected "other" living arrangements.

### *Ethnicity*

Most respondents identified as White, representing 88.76% of the sample (1,105). Smaller proportions identified as East/Southeast Asian (2.49%, 31), Indigenous (1.93%, 24), South Asian (1.77%, 22), and Black (1.61%, 20). Additionally, 1.69% (21) selected "not listed," 1.12% (14) identified as Middle Eastern, and 0.64% (8) identified as Latinx.

### *Ethnicity by area:*

In area 1, most respondents identified as White, representing 84.93% of the sample (62). 5.48% (4) identified as Middle Eastern, 2.74% (2) as Black, 2.74% (2) as South Asian, 1.37% (1) as East/Southeast Asian, 1.37% (1) as Indigenous, and 1.37% (1) selected “not listed.” No respondents identified as Latinx.

In area 2, most respondents identified as White, representing 88.34% of the sample (144). 2.45% (4) identified as Latinx, 1.84% (3) as Indigenous, 1.84% (3) selected “not listed,” 1.23% (2) as East/Southeast Asian, 1.23% (2) as South Asian, and 1.23% (2) as Middle Eastern. No respondents identified as Black.

In area 3, most respondents identified as White, representing 91.94% of the sample (57). 3.23% (2) identified as Black, 1.61% (1) as South Asian, 1.61% (1) as Indigenous, and 1.61% (1) as Middle Eastern. No respondents identified as East/Southeast Asian or Latinx, and none selected “not listed.”

In area 4, most respondents identified as White, representing 89.31% of the sample (117). 3.05% (4) identified as South Asian, 2.29% (3) as East/Southeast Asian, and 2.29% (3) as Indigenous. Additionally, 0.76% (1) identified as Black, 0.76% (1) as Middle Eastern, 0.76% (1) as Latinx, and 0.76% (1) selected “not listed.”

In area 5, most respondents identified as White, representing 85.71% of the sample (270). 4.13% (13) identified as East/Southeast Asian, 2.54% (8) as Black, 2.22% (7) as South Asian, 2.22% (7) selected “not listed,” 1.59% (5) as Indigenous, 0.95% (3) as Middle Eastern, and 0.63% (2) as Latinx.

In area 6, most respondents identified as White, representing 90.82% of the sample (455). 2.20% (11) identified as Indigenous, 1.80% (9) as East/Southeast Asian, 1.80% (9) selected “not listed,” 1.40% (7) as Black, 1.20% (6) as South Asian, 0.60% (3) as Middle Eastern, and 0.20% (1) as Latinx.

### *Marital Status*

Over half of the respondents reported being married, comprising 53.73% of the sample (669), followed by 19.36% (241) who were single and never married. 11.73% (146) were in a common-law relationship, 10.76% (134) were divorced or separated, 3.78% (47) were widowed, and 0.64% (8) selected “other.”

### *Employed in Hamilton*

Most respondents indicated they were employed in Hamilton, accounting for 60.08% (748), while 35.10% (437) were not employed in the city. 4.82% (60) did not provide a response.

### *Responses by Area*

Most participants were from Area 6, representing 40.25% of the sample (501). This was followed by Area 5 at 25.30% (315), Area 2 at 13.09% (163), Area 4 at 10.52% (131), Area 1 at 5.86% (73), and Area 3 at 4.98% (62).

### *Income*

**Table 1.0 – Annual Income.**

<b>Income (per year)</b>	<b>Count</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
No income	29	2.33
Less than \$20,000	61	4.90
\$20,001 to \$50,000	196	15.74
\$50,001 to \$80,000	211	16.95
\$80,001 to \$100,000	172	13.82
\$100,001 to \$120,000	123	9.88
\$120,001 to \$140,000	90	7.23
\$140,001 to \$160,000	83	6.67
\$160,001 to \$180,000	73	5.86
\$180,001 to \$200,000	56	4.50
Over \$200,000	151	12.13
Total		100

Table 1.0 demonstrates that the largest proportion of respondents reported an income between \$50,001 and \$80,000, making up 16.95% (211), followed by 15.74% (196) earning \$20,001 to \$50,000, and 13.82% (172) earning \$80,001 to \$100,000. 12.13% (151) reported earning over \$200,000, 9.88% (123) earned \$100,001 to \$120,000, 7.23% (90) earned \$120,001 to \$140,000, 6.67% (83) earned \$140,001 to \$160,000, 5.86% (73) earned \$160,001 to \$180,000, and 4.50% (56) earned \$180,001 to \$200,000. 4.90% (61) earned less than \$20,000, and 2.33% (29) reported no income.

### *Education*

**Table 2.0 – Highest level of educational attainment.**

<b>Education Attained</b>	<b>Count</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
No schooling	2	0.16
Less than high school diploma	18	1.45
High school diploma or equivalent	94	7.55
Some trade, technical, or vocational school	61	4.90
Business or community college	304	24.42
Some university	92	7.39
Bachelor's degree	406	32.61
Graduate or professional degree (ex. law or medicine)	268	21.53
Total		100

Table 2.0 shows the most common level of education is a bachelor's degree, reported by 32.61% (406), followed by business or community college at 24.42% (304), and graduate or professional degrees at 21.53% (268). 7.55% (94) reported a high school diploma, 7.39% (92) had some university education, 4.90% (61) completed some trade, technical, or vocational training, 1.45% (18) had less than a high school diploma, and 0.16% (2) reported no schooling.



*Residential stability***Table 3.0 – Time at current residence.**

<b>Time</b>	<b>Count</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
Less than 6 months	34	2.73
6 months to less than 1 year	49	3.94
1 year to less than 3 years	121	9.72
3 years to less than 5 years	140	11.24
5 years to less than 10 years	243	19.52
10 or more years	658	52.85
<b>Total</b>		<b>100</b>

Table 3.0 shows over half of the respondents had lived at their current residence for 10 or more years, making up 52.85% (658). 19.52% (243) had lived there for 5 to less than 10 years, 11.24% (140) for 3 to less than 5 years, 9.72% (121) for 1 to less than 3 years, 3.94% (49) for 6 months to less than 1 year, and 2.73% (34) for less than 6 months.

*Future residential stability***Table 4.0 – Plan to live in Hamilton.**

<b>Time</b>	<b>Count</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
Less than 6 months	19	1.53
6 months to less than 1 year	42	3.37
1 year to less than 3 years	145	11.65
3 years to less than 5 years	112	9.00
5 years to less than 10 years	156	12.53
10 or more years	771	61.93
<b>Total</b>		<b>100</b>

Table 4.0 shows most respondents planned to stay in their current residence for 10 or more years, representing 61.93% (771). 12.53% (156) planned to stay for 5 to less than 10 years, 11.65% (145) for 1 to less than 3 years, 9.00% (112) for 3 to less than 5 years, 3.37% (42) for 6 months to less than 1 year, and 1.53% (19) planned to stay for less than 6 months.

When asked why they planned to move, respondents cited several reasons for considering a move away from Hamilton. The most common was the **rising cost of living**, including housing prices and higher taxes. Other frequently mentioned concerns included **feeling unsafe, increasing crime, homelessness, and drug use**. Some also pointed to **poor municipal infrastructure, such as issues with city council, buildings, and road safety**. A lack of **employment and educational opportunities** was another common reason for leaving. Finally, some wanted to **downsize as they approached retirement**, and others wanted to **re-locate closer to family**.

*Area of Residence***Table 5.0 – Area of Residence.**

<b>Area</b>	<b>Count</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
1	73	5.86
2	163	13.09
3	62	4.98
4	131	10.52
5	315	25.30
6	501	40.24
Total		100

As per table 5.0, most respondents lived in area 6, (or the “downtown” area) representing 40.24% (501), followed by area 5, (commonly referred to as “the mountain”) at 25.30% (315), followed by area 2 at 13.09% (163), and area 4 at 10.52% (131), area 1 (5.86%, 73) and area 3 (4.98%, 62).

*Census Tract of Residence by Area***Table 6.1 - Area 1**

<b>Tract</b>	<b>Count</b>	<b>Tract</b>	<b>Count</b>	<b>Tract</b>	<b>Count</b>
1	10	5	4	9	5
2	3	6	12	10	7
3	12	7	5	11	4
4	5	8	6		

**Table 6.2 - Area 2**

<b>Tract</b>	<b>Count</b>	<b>Tract</b>	<b>Count</b>	<b>Tract</b>	<b>Count</b>
12	16	18	7	24	8
13	7	19	3	25	7
14	8	20	11	26	15
15	11	21	8	27	9
16	4	22	11	28	11
17	9	23	8	29	11

**Table 6.3 - Area 3**

<b>Tract</b>	<b>Count</b>	<b>Tract</b>	<b>Count</b>	<b>Tract</b>	<b>Count</b>
30	8	33	9	36	5
31	8	34	8	37	6
32	6	35	12		

**Table 6.4 - Area 4**

Tract	Count	Tract	Count	Tract	Count
38	3	48	2	59	7
39	5	49	3	60	3
40	5	51	13	61	3
41	4	52	5	62	2
42	4	53	5	63	6
43	2	54	11	64	7
44	5	55	3	65	8
45	1	56	7	66	1
46	3	57	5		
47	7	58	1		

**Table 6.5 - Area 5**

Tract	Count	Tract	Count	Tract	Count
67	8	82	8	96	12
68	1	83	7	97	10
69	4	84	3	98	13
70	5	85	7	99	8
71	3	86	11	100	8
73	12	87	10	101	9
74	3	88	7	102	8
75	7	89	12	103	12
76	7	90	8	104	5
77	6	91	12	105	10
78	10	92	9	106	7
79	5	93	5	107	6
80	6	94	6	108	6
81	8	95	11		

**Table 6.6 - Area 6**

Tract	Count	Tract	Count	Tract	Count
109	22	123	8	139	14
110	11	126	10	140	12
111	5	127	11	141	12
112	5	128	17	142	9
113	2	129	16	143	12
114	8	130	18	144	11
115	23	131	15	145	8

116	<b>11</b>	132	<b>13</b>	146	<b>5</b>
117	<b>12</b>	133	<b>6</b>	147	<b>13</b>
118	<b>13</b>	134	<b>10</b>	148	<b>10</b>
119	<b>10</b>	135	<b>13</b>	149	<b>14</b>
120	<b>18</b>	136	<b>16</b>	150	<b>8</b>
121	<b>9</b>	137	<b>15</b>	151	<b>19</b>
122	<b>9</b>	138	<b>16</b>	152	<b>11</b>

## Neighbourhood Community Involvement

The neighbourhood was defined as a 15-minute walk in any direction from their home. The participants were asked about their neighbourhood integration, the willingness of neighbours to intervene in illicit activities, and about their relationship with their neighbours.

### Neighbourhood Involvement

The participants were asked about the ways they are involved in their neighbourhood and/or community. Neighbourhood involvement is an important metric as it provides insight into how actively residents engage in addressing local issues, which can influence community cohesion, trust, and collective ability to prevent and respond to crime.

**Figure 1.0 – Neighbourhood involvement**

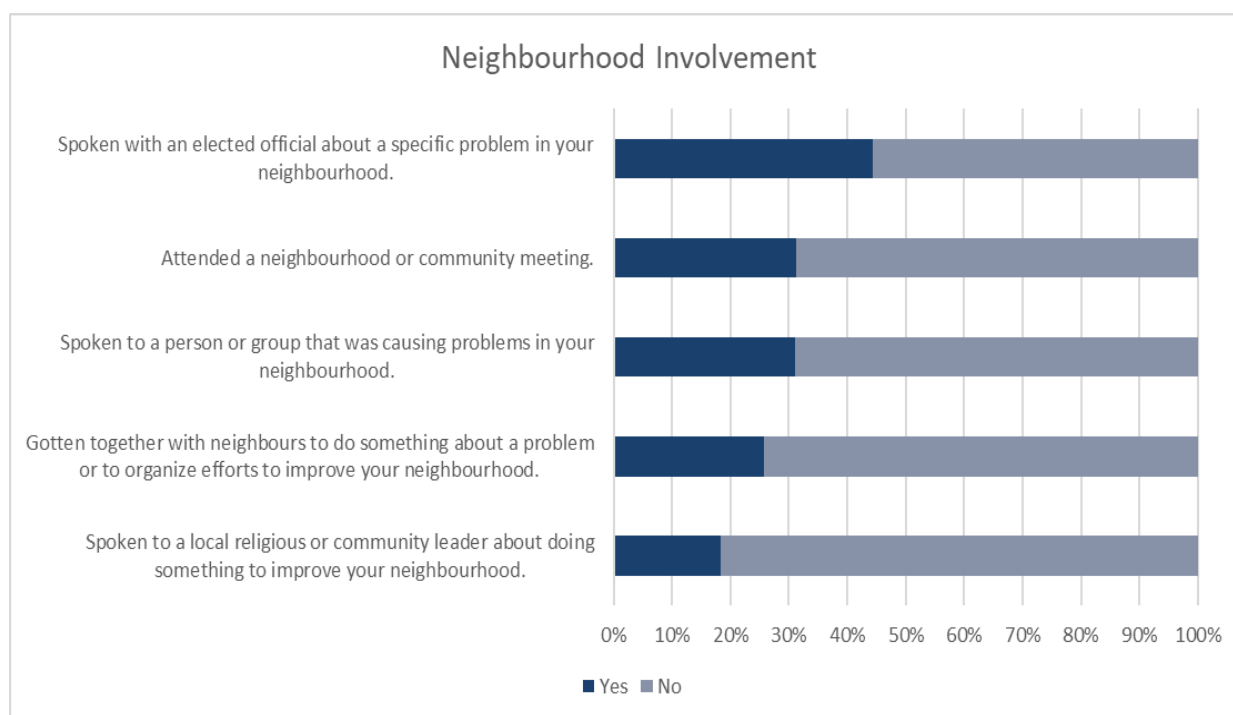


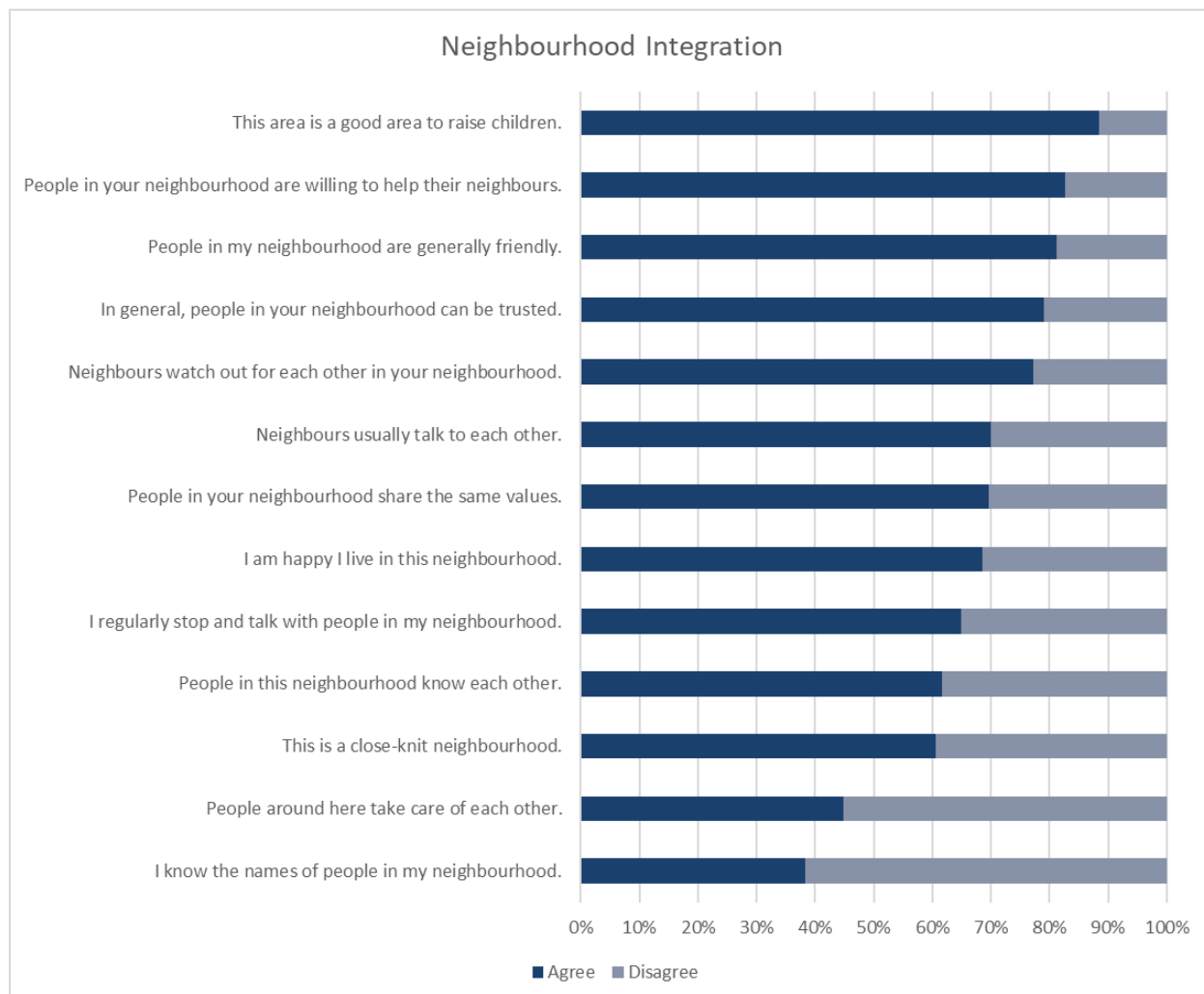
Figure 1.0 demonstrates that out of 1245 participants, 44.4% (553) reported speaking with an elected official about a specific problem in their neighbourhood. Additionally, 31.1% (387) said they spoke to a person or group that was causing problems in the neighbourhood, while 31.2% (389) attended a neighbourhood or community meeting. 25.7% (320) reported working with neighbours to address or organize efforts around a neighbourhood-specific issue, and 18.4% (229) said they had spoken to a religious or community leader to improve their neighbourhood.

### Neighbourhood Integration

Figure 2.0 shows participants' perceptions of neighbourhood integration. For ease of interpretation, “strongly agree” and “agree” have been combined into “agree” and “strongly

disagree” and “disagree” have been combined into “disagree”. Understanding the level of neighbourhood integration can give insights into the level of social cohesion and informal social control.

**Figure 2.0 – Neighbourhood Integration**



A large majority, 88.2% (1100), agreed that "This area is a good area to raise children", followed closely by 82.7% (1030) who agreed that "People in your neighbourhood are willing to help their neighbours", and 81.2% (1011) who said that "People in my neighbourhood are generally friendly". Additionally, 79.0% (984) agreed that "In general, people in your neighbourhood can be trusted", while 77.2% (961) stated that "Neighbours watch out for each other in your neighbourhood". Another 70.0% (872) of respondents agreed that "Neighbours usually talk to each other", and 69.6% (867) said "People in your neighbourhood share the same values". 68.5% (853) reported "I am happy I live in this neighbourhood", and 65.0% (809) indicated they regularly stop and talk with people in their neighbourhood. Furthermore, 61.6% (767) agreed that "People in this neighbourhood know each other", and the same proportion (767, 61.6%) said they "Know the names of people in [their] neighbourhood". 55.3% (688) agreed that "People around

here take care of each other", and the lowest level of agreement was with the statement "This is a close-knit neighbourhood", endorsed by 60.5% (754) of respondents.

### Relationship with Neighbours

Relationships in a community can foster trust, informal social control, and mutual support, all of which contribute to a safer and more resilient community.

**Figure 3.0 – Knowing Neighbours by Name**

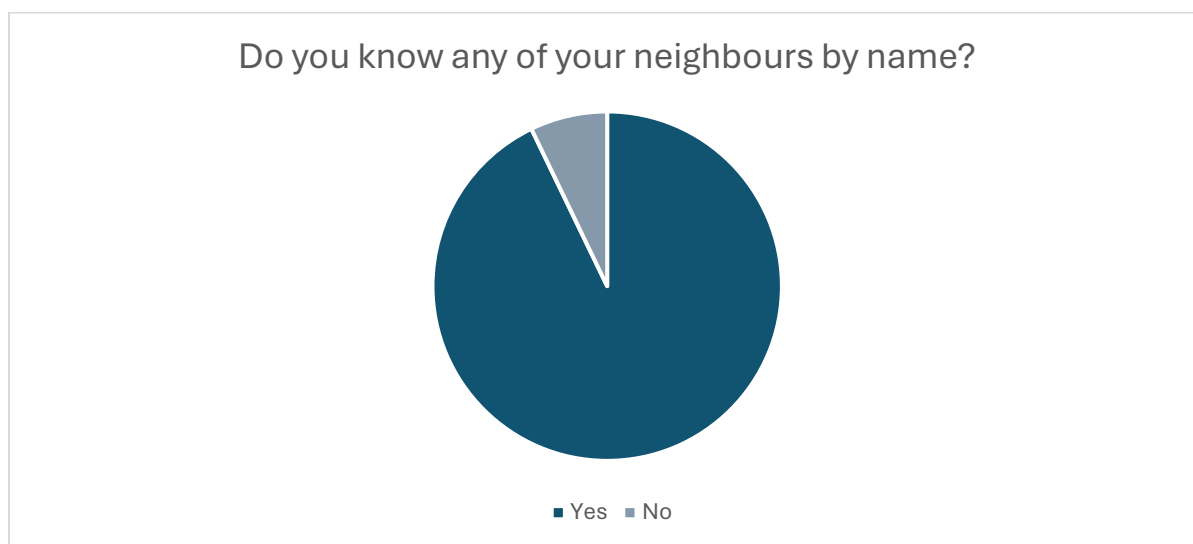
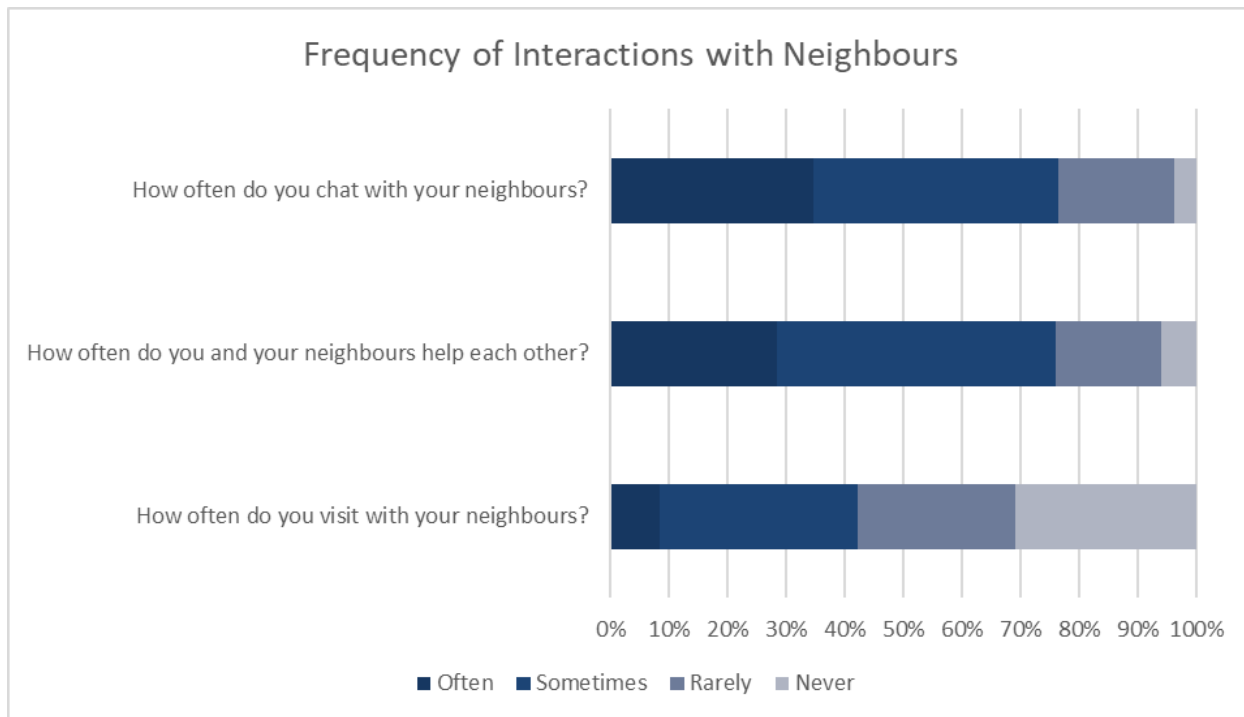


Figure 3.0 demonstrates that 93.0% (1156) of respondents reported knowing at least one of their neighbours by name, while 7.0% (89) indicated they did not know any of their neighbours by name.

Figure 3.1 illustrates how frequently individuals interact with their neighbours. Relationships in a community can foster trust, informal social control, and mutual support, all of which contribute to a safer and more resilient community.

**Figure 3.1 – Frequency of Interactions with Neighbours**



A combined 69.6% (526) of respondents reported that they often (105) or sometimes (421) chat with their neighbours, while 30.4% (719) said they rarely (333) or never (386) do so. When it came to helping neighbours, 76.0% (947) said they either often (353) or sometimes (594) help their neighbours, whereas 24.0% (298) reported helping them rarely (224) or never (74). Visiting with neighbours was less frequent overall, with 76.4% (953) stating they visit neighbours often (430) or sometimes (523). The remaining 23.6% (292) reported visiting rarely (244) or never (48).

### Willingness to Intervene

Figure 4.0 highlights participants' willingness to intervene in various neighbourhood scenarios involving potential misconduct. Understanding the perceived willingness of the community to intervene in incidents provides an insight into the collective efficacy exhibited by a community. For ease of interpretation, very likely" and "likely" have been combined into "likely" and "very unlikely" and "unlikely" have been combined into "unlikely".



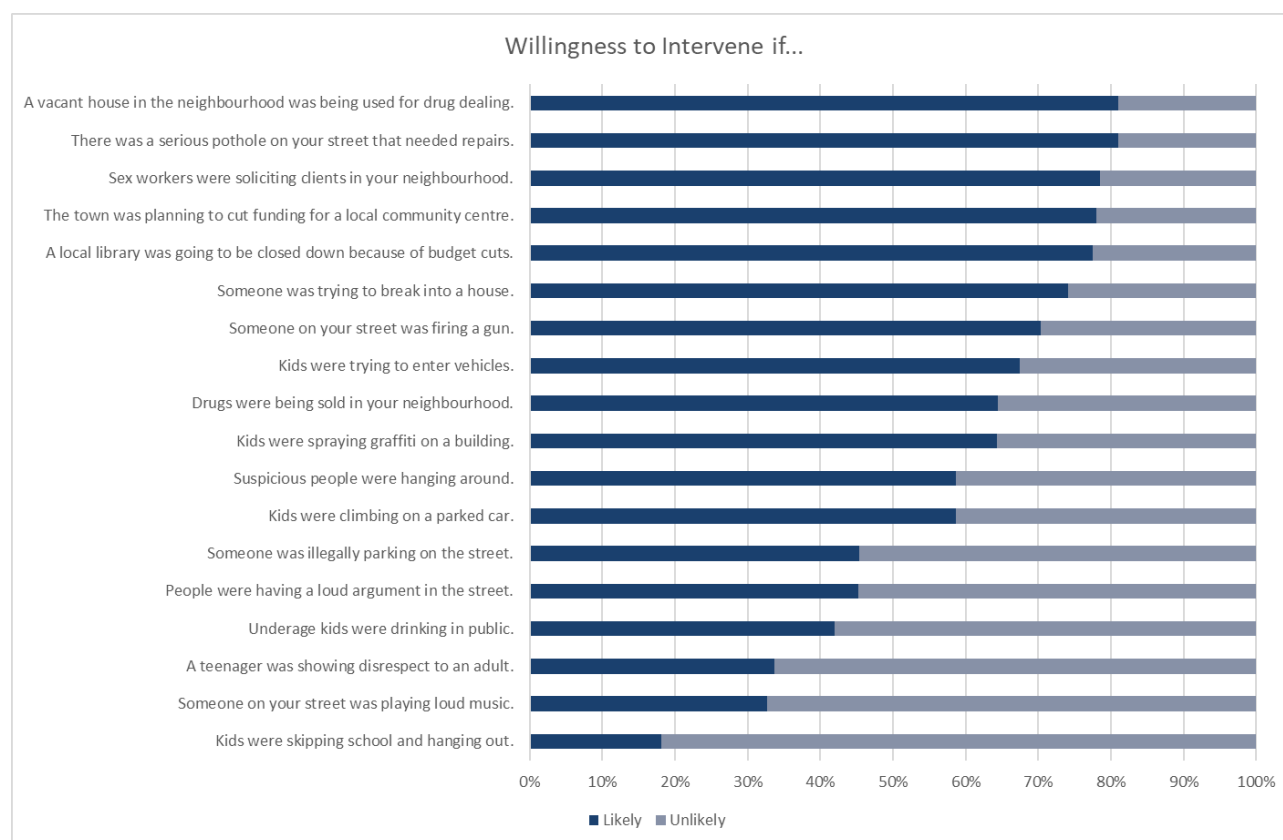
**Figure 4.0 – Willingness to Intervene**

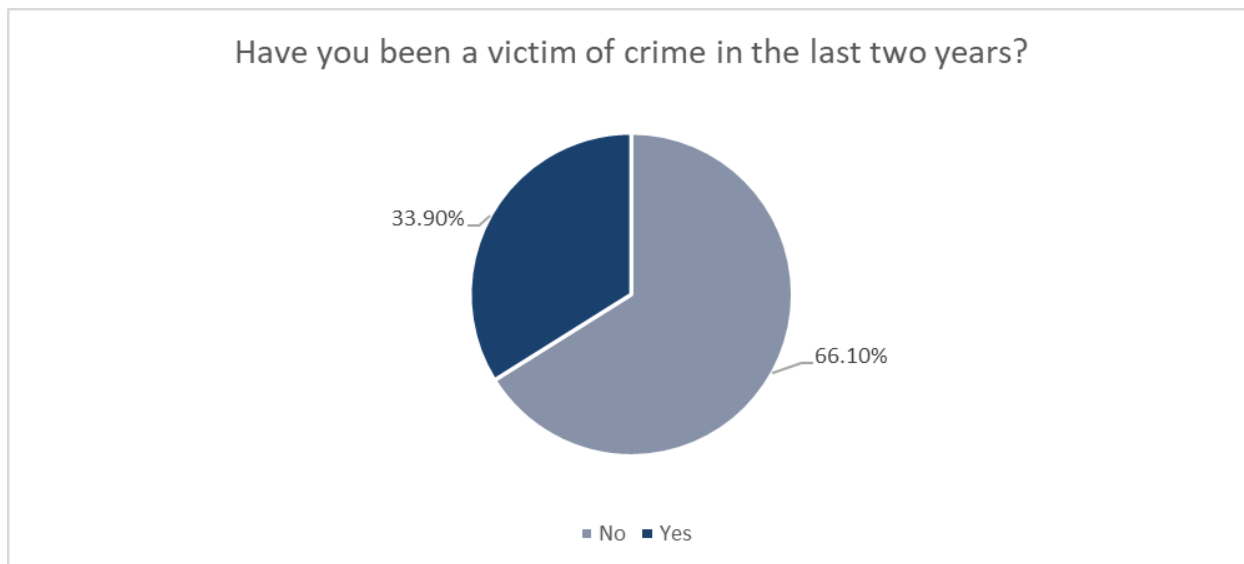
Figure 4.0 highlights participants' perceptions of neighbourhood-level intervention in response to specific local issues. The highest likelihood of intervention was reported if a serious pothole on the street needed repairs, with 81.0% (1009) indicating it was likely the neighbourhood would intervene. An identical percentage, 81.0% (1009), said intervention would be likely if a vacant house was being used for drug dealing. This was followed by 78.5% (977) who said they would intervene if someone was trying to break into a house, 77.9% (971) who would intervene if someone on their street was firing a gun, and 77.5% (965) who would intervene if kids were trying to enter vehicles. 74.1% (922) felt it was likely the neighbourhood would intervene if sex workers were soliciting clients in the area. 70.3% (875) believed the neighbourhood would intervene if the town was planning to cut funding for a local community centre, while 67.4% (839) reported they would intervene if drugs were being sold in their neighbourhood. 64.4% (802) said they would do so if kids were spraying graffiti on a building, and 64.3% (800) believed intervention was likely if a local library was going to be closed due to budget cuts. In both cases of kids climbing on a parked car and suspicious people hanging around the neighbourhood, 58.7% (731) said they would likely intervene. 45.3% (564) would intervene if someone was illegally parking on the street, and 45.2% (563) if people were having a loud argument in the street. Lower levels of intervention were reported for underage kids drinking in public, with 42.0% (523) indicating they would intervene. Only 33.6% (419) said they would intervene if a teenager was showing disrespect to an adult, and 32.6% (406) if someone on their street was playing loud music. The lowest rate of reported intervention was for kids skipping

school and hanging out on the street, with just 18.1% (225) of respondents saying they would likely intervene.

## Experiences of Victimization

As demonstrated in figure 5.0, respondents were asked about their experiences with victimization. This section reveals actual crime rates, reporting behaviours, and barriers to reporting, helping policymakers and police better address community needs and improve trust.

**Figure 5.0 – Victimization**



Of all participants, 66.1% (823) said they had not been a victim of crime in the past two years, while 33.9% (422) reported that they had been victimized in the past 2 years. Out of the 422 participants who reported having been victimized in the past two years, 64.22% (271) reported their victimization to the police, 34.60% (146) did not call the police, and 1.18% (5) did not answer.

Respondents who were victims of crime did not report this to the police for various reasons. Most commonly, respondents did not think their victimization was serious enough to warrant a police response. These included incidents such as petty thefts and auto break ins. In these cases, respondents noted that there was minimal or no damage to their property and assumed they would not get the stolen items back, even if they made a police report. Others found the reporting process onerous for a minor incident or did not want to expend police resources for these types of incidents. Some participants had poor experiences with the police in the past and did not want to interact with them again over these victimization experiences. These experiences included poor police responses to reports in the past, or further victimization by the police. Finally, many respondents had little faith that police would take their reports seriously, and instead either ignored the incident or handled matters themselves.

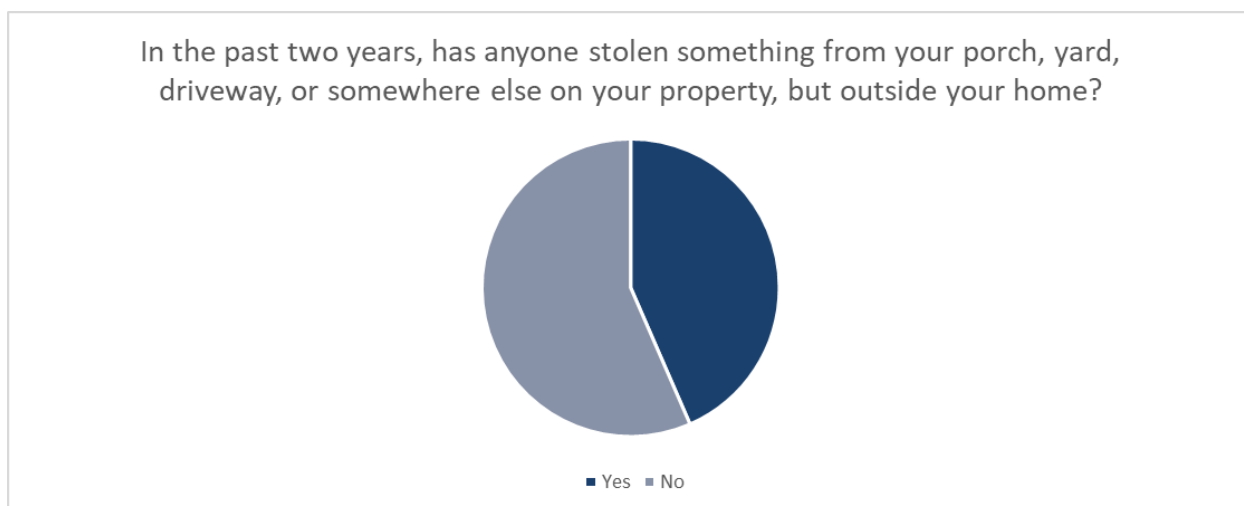
**Figure 5.1 - Theft from Property**

Figure 5.1 shows the participants who experienced theft, with 539 participants indicating that something had been stolen from their property. Of those, only 26.0% (140) reported the theft to the police, while a similar number (159) did not report it, and 44.5% (240) did not respond.

Respondents did not report theft from property for several reasons. Most respondents noted that the theft was minor, either of invaluable items (i.e., garden tools, plants) or delivery packages, and not worth the onerous reporting process. Others did not report because they assumed the police would not respond in a timely manner (if at all) or find their stolen belongings. Many respondents noted that the police do not care about these incidents and have had poor experiences with reporting in the past. Some respondents mentioned that they did not want to waste police resources for these incidents, acknowledging other calls that they considered more serious, such as violent incidents. Others acted themselves by chasing down the perpetrator or looking in the community for their stolen items.

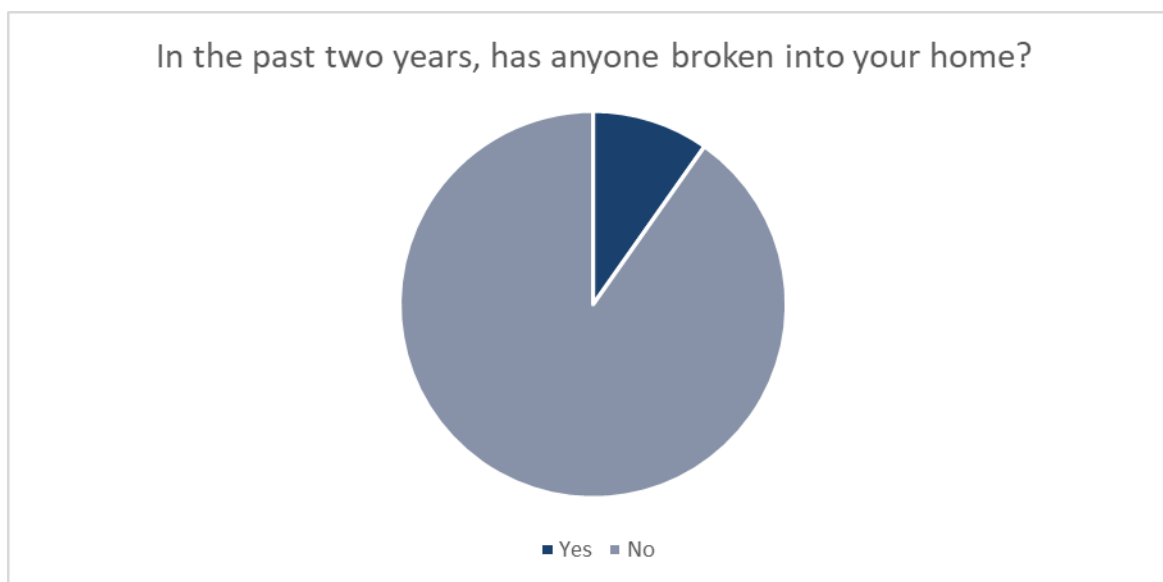
**Figure 5.2 - Break and Enter**

Figure 5.2 shows that 121 participants reported that their homes had been broken into, and 59.5% (72) of those individuals reported the incident to the police. Respondents did not report the incident to police because of an anticipated poor response or because the incident was minor, resulting in minimal or no property damage or minor theft. Participants assumed that police would not respond or take their reports seriously for these incidents.

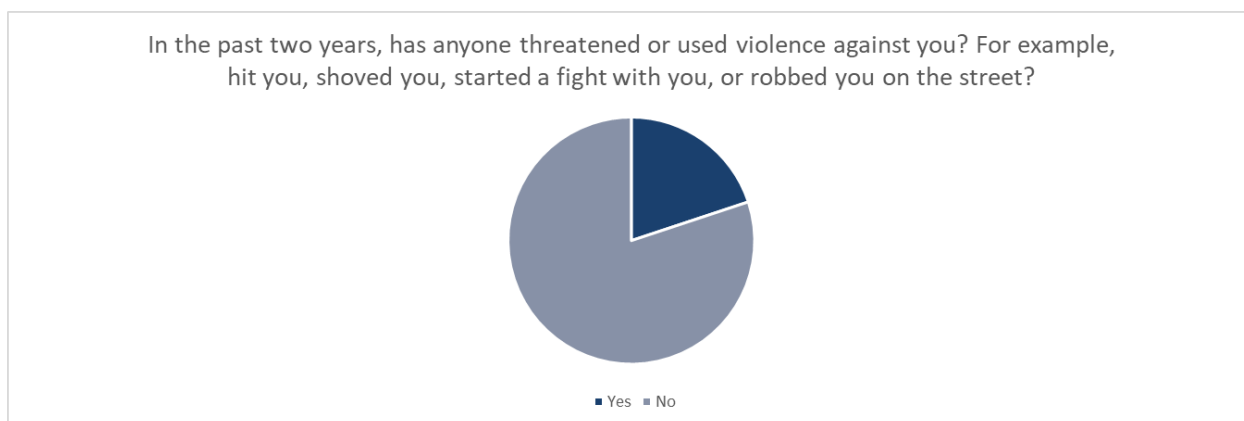
**Figure 5.3 - Violence**

Figure 5.3 shows that 246 participants indicated they were victims of violence, with 35.0% (86) stating they reported the incident to the police, while 64.6% (159), did not. Respondents did not report violence to the police for various reasons. Most commonly, respondents did not report because they did not trust that the police would respond in a timely manner, if at all. Others mentioned that they handled the situation on their own, either by de-escalating or leaving the scene. Some respondents were fearful of retaliation if they reported the violence, as they were familiar with the perpetrator. Others did not report because the violence was minor, including verbal harassment or empty threats.

**Table 5.4 – Relationship to Perpetrator**

<b>Relationship to the Perpetrator of Violence</b>	<b>Count</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
Stranger	190	78.19
Acquaintance	16	6.58
Friend	3	1.23
Intimate, romantic partner or spouse	0	0.00
Another relative	5	2.06
Someone else	29	11.93
Total	243	100

Table 5.4 shows the self-reported relationship between victims and the perpetrators in the cases of violence reported by respondents. Most respondents, 78.2% (190), said the perpetrator was a stranger. 6.6% (16) said the perpetrator was an acquaintance, 1.2% (3) identified the perpetrator as a friend, and 2.1% (5) said it was another relative. 11.9% (29) reported the perpetrator as someone else, while no respondents (0.0%) indicated the perpetrator was an intimate partner, romantic partner, or spouse.

**Table 5.5 – Location of Violent Victimization**

<b>Location</b>	<b>Count</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
On the street	104	42.45
In your neighbourhood	59	24.08
Someplace else	40	16.33
At work	27	11.02
In your home	14	5.71
Outside of Hamilton	1	0.41
Total	245	100

Table 5.5 outlines where incidents of violent victimization occurred. The most frequently reported location was on the street, with 42.5% (104) of respondents indicating this. This was followed by in your neighbourhood, reported by 24.1% (59), and someplace else, reported by 16.3% (40). Other locations included at work (11.0%, 27), in your home (5.7%, 14), and outside of Hamilton, which was the least common at 0.4% (1).

## Perceptions of Safety

**Figure 6.0 – Perceptions of Safety**

Figure 6.0 demonstrates the response of the participants on matters of safety. For ease of interpretation, “strongly agree” and “agree” have been combined into “agree” and “strongly disagree” and “disagree” have been combined into “disagree.” Understanding fears and perceptions of crime helps identify specific safety concerns, inform community policing priorities, and guide local crime prevention and neighbourhood improvement efforts.

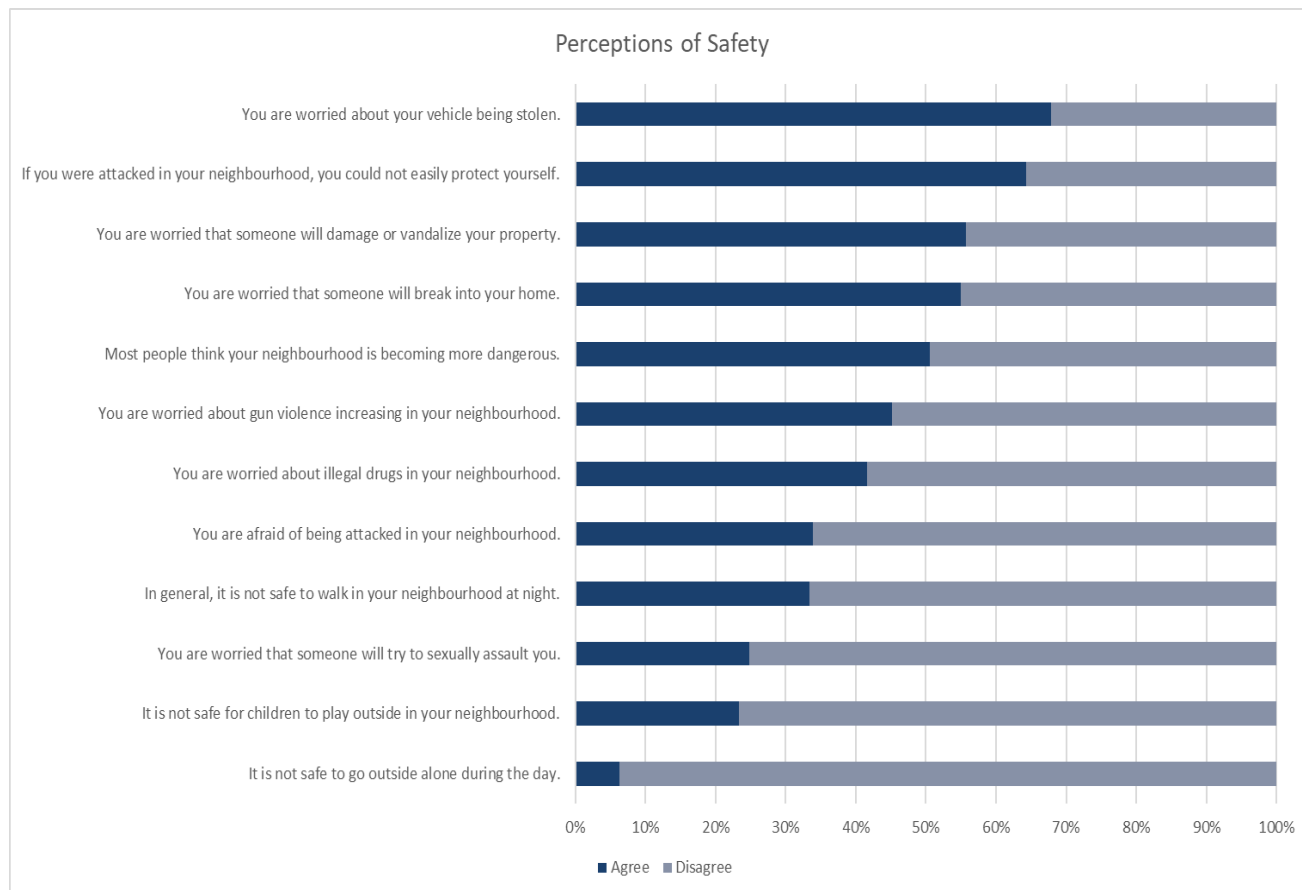


Figure 6.0 demonstrates that when asked about their perceptions of safety, 67.8% (845) of participants agreed that they are worried about their vehicle being stolen. 55.7% (693) agreed that they are worried someone will damage or vandalize their property, and 54.9% (684) agreed that they are worried someone will break into their home. Additionally, 50.6% (630) of respondents agreed that most people think their neighbourhood is becoming more dangerous, and 45.1% (562) agreed that they are worried about gun violence increasing in their neighbourhood. Concerns about illegal drugs were reported by 41.6% (518) of respondents. 35.7% (444) believed that if someone tried to attack them in their neighbourhood, they could easily protect themselves, while 33.9% (422) said they are afraid of being attacked in their neighbourhood. 33.4% (416) agreed that it is not safe to walk in their neighbourhood at night, and 24.8% (309) said they are worried someone will try to sexually assault them. Meanwhile, 23.3% (290) agreed that it is not

safe for children to play outside in their neighbourhood, and 6.3% (78) felt that it is not safe to go outside alone during the day.

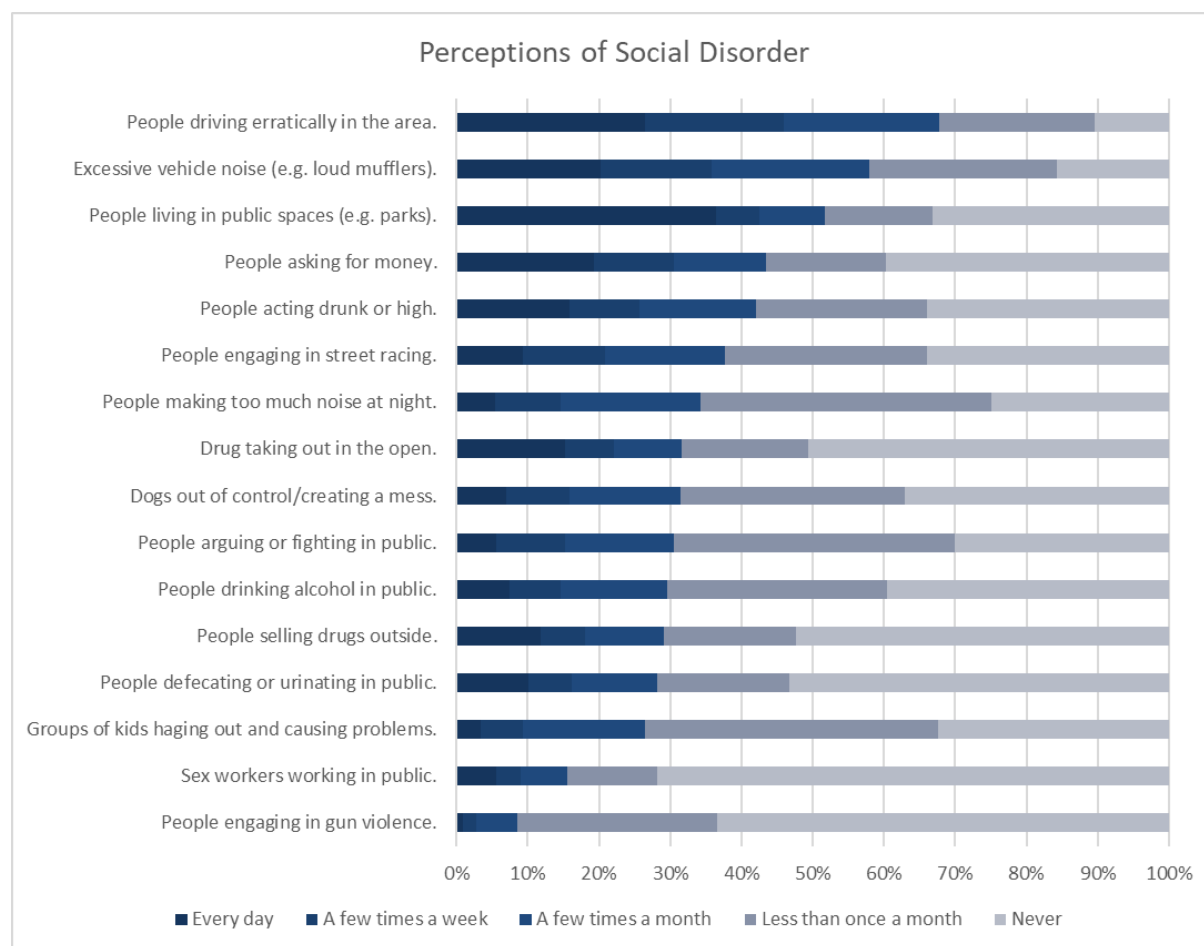
### Key Observations for perceptions of safety

Across the six areas, notable differences emerge in how residents perceive safety, with Area 6 standing out as the most concerned across nearly all categories. While worries about vehicle theft dominated Areas 1–5 (62–71%), residents in Area 6 were more concerned about broader issues such as property damage (66.9%), home break-ins (61.3%), and the belief that their neighbourhood is becoming more dangerous (69.1%), far higher than the 30–43% range seen elsewhere. Concerns about illegal drugs (61.9%) and gun violence (58.5%) were nearly double the levels reported in other areas, indicating heightened fear of serious crime. Personal safety perceptions were also starkly different: over half of Area 6 respondents felt unsafe walking at night (52.3%) or feared being attacked (51.1%), compared to only 13–32% in the other areas. Similarly, worry about sexual assault reached 32.5% in Area 6, again higher than elsewhere. Even the safety of children showed disparity, with 39.5% in Area 6 saying it is unsafe for children to play outside, compared to 6–26% in other regions. Although concerns about daytime safety were low everywhere, Area 6 still had the highest proportion (9%). Overall, Area 6 is differentiated by a consistent and significantly elevated fear of crime making it an outlier compared to the other areas.

## Social Disorder

**Figure 7.0 – Perceptions of Social Disorder**

Figure 7.0 examines perceptions of social disorder. Per the social escalation model proposed by O'Brien et al. (2019), frequent visible signs of social disorder can undermine residents' sense of safety, signal weak informal social control, and highlight neighbourhood conditions that may attract or sustain crime.



As Figure 7.0 demonstrates, the most frequently observed issue daily was people living in public spaces (e.g., parks), reported by 36.4% (453) of respondents. This was followed by erratic driving, seen daily by 26.5% (330), and excessive vehicle noise such as loud mufflers, reported by 20.2% (252). People asking for money was seen daily by 19.3% (240), and people acting drunk or high by 15.8% (197). Other frequently observed issues included drug taking in the open (15.3%, 190), people selling drugs outside (11.7%, 146), and people defecating or urinating in public (10.1%, 126). Street racing was reported daily by 9.2% (115) and drinking alcohol in public by 7.4% (92). Lower daily observation rates were found for dogs out of control or creating a mess (6.9%, 86), people arguing or fighting in public (5.6%, 70), and sex workers working in public (5.6%, 70). Daily sightings of people making too much noise at night were reported by



5.5% (68), groups of kids causing problems by 3.4% (42), and the lowest was people engaging in gun violence, reported daily by just 1.0% (12).

## Physical Disorder

**Figure 8.0 – Perceptions of Physical Disorder**

According to the broken windows theory (Wilson & Kelling 1982) visible signs like abandoned buildings, graffiti, and poor maintenance can signal neglect, lower community engagement, and attract more crime, helping identify areas that need revitalization and prevention efforts. Figure 8.0 shows respondents' perceptions of physical disorder in their neighbourhoods.

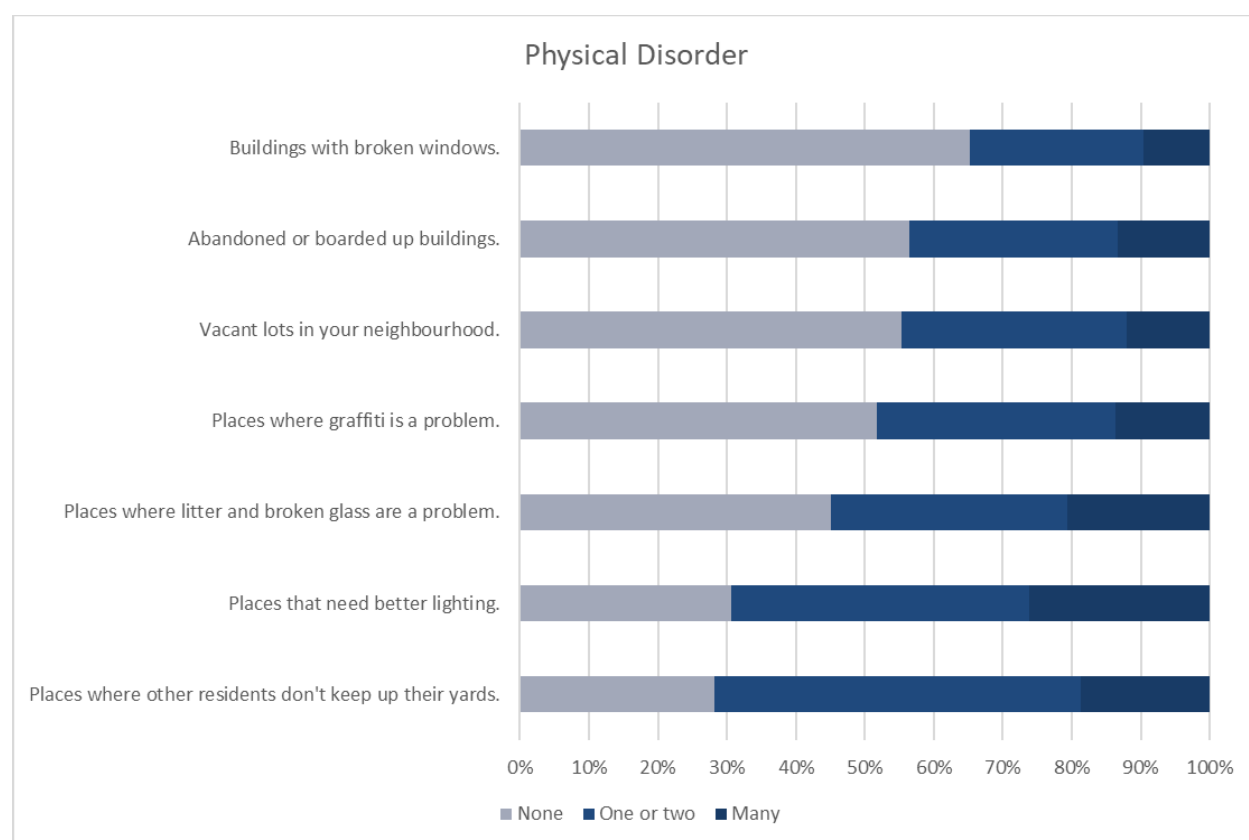


Figure 8.0 demonstrates the participants' perceptions of physical disorder in their neighbourhoods. The majority, 71.8% (894), reported having at least one place where other residents don't keep up their yards, and 69.4% (864) indicated there is at least one place needing better lighting. 55.0% (684) noted at least one place where litter and broken glass are a problem, while 48.3% (601) reported at least one place where graffiti is a problem. 44.6% (556), said there are vacant lots in their neighbourhood, and 43.5% (542) indicated abandoned or boarded up buildings exist nearby. The fewest concerns were about broken windows, with 34.7% (432) reporting at least one building with broken windows, while the majority, 65.3% (813), said there were none.

## Where do you feel the most safe? (by area)

**Table 9.1 - Area Most Safe**

Due to limitations with viewing these maps online, these responses were condensed to areas 1-6.

Area	Count	Percentage
<b>1</b>	<b>328</b>	<b>26.3</b>
2	265	21.3
3	163	13.1
4	95	7.6
5	169	13.6
6	111	8.9
Nowhere	16	1.3
Everywhere	11	1.1
Anywhere but downtown	3	0.2
Did not respond	84	6.7

Table 9.1 shows that most respondents feel safest in Area 1, with 328 people, 26.3% of the total. This is followed by Area 2, where 265 respondents, or 21.3%, reported feeling safe. Area 3 accounts for 13.1% with 163 respondents, while Area 5 has a similar proportion at 13.6% with 169 respondents. Area 4 and Area 6 were selected by 95 and 111 respondents respectively, representing 7.6% and 8.9% of the total. A small number of respondents indicated feeling safe nowhere (16 respondents, 1.3%) or everywhere (11 respondents, 1%). Only 3 respondents, making up 0.2%, said they feel safe anywhere but downtown. Additionally, 84 respondents, or 6.7%, did not provide a response. Overall, the data suggests that Areas 1 and 2 are perceived as the safest among the listed options. 474 (38.1%) of respondents felt the safest in their home area.

## Where do you feel the most unsafe? (by area)

**Table 9.2 - Area Most Unsafe**

Area	Count	Percentage
1	13	1.0
2	40	3.2
3	8	0.6
4	36	2.9
5	65	5.2
<b>6</b>	<b>969</b>	<b>77.8</b>
Nowhere	13	1.0
Everywhere	16	1.3
Did not respond	85	6.8

Table 9.2 shows that 969 respondents (77.8%) felt the most unsafe in Area 6, followed by 65 respondents (5.2%) in Area 5. 40 respondents (3.2%) felt the most unsafe in Area 2, 36 respondents (2.9%) felt the most unsafe in area 4. A further 13 respondents (1.0%) felt the most

unsafe in Area 3 and 8 respondents (0.6%) felt the most unsafe in Area 3. 16 respondents (1.3%) said they feel unsafe everywhere, while 13 (1.0%) said they felt unsafe nowhere. 85 participants (6.8%) did not answer this question. 402 respondents (32.3%) of respondents felt the most unsafe in their home area. Interestingly, 96 (7.7%) of respondents felt the safest and the most unsafe in the same area.

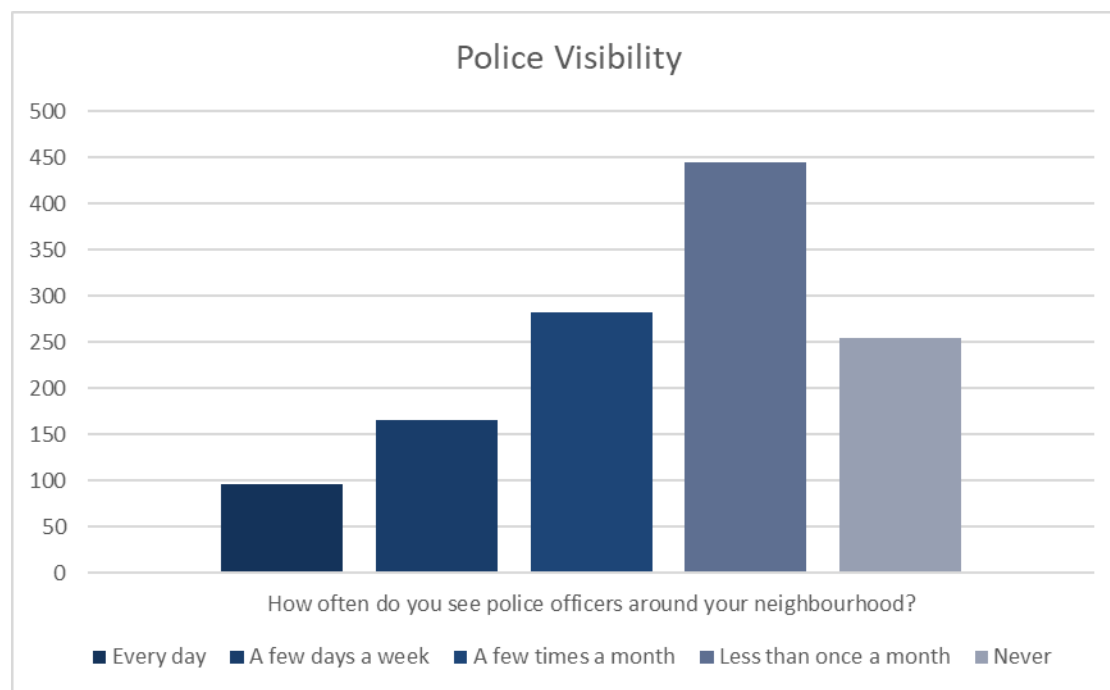
## Perceptions of the Law and Police

In this section, participants were asked several questions regarding their perceptions of police and procedural justice. These questions help understand how the public views the police and they provide insight into the willingness of the public to trust, support, and cooperate with the police.

### Perceptions of the Police

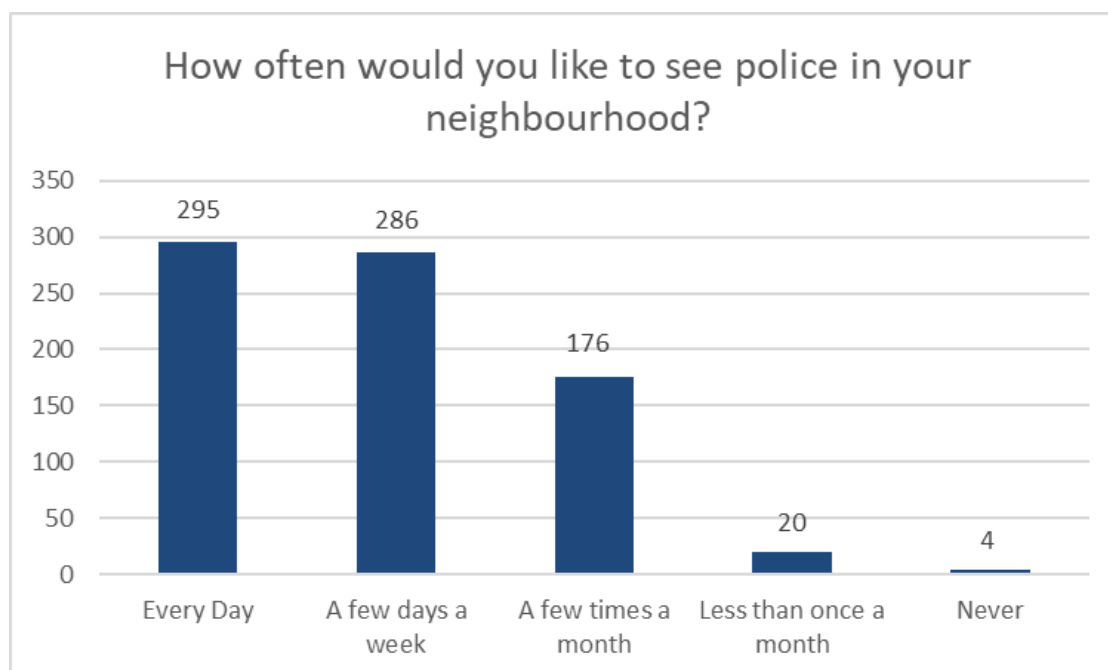
Participants were asked about the visibility, perceptions, and the behaviour and efficacy of police. This helps identify strengths and gaps in community-police relationships, guiding improvements in policing practices and community engagement.

**Figure 10.0 – Current Police Visibility**



Per figure 10.0, participants were asked how often they currently see police officers in their neighbourhood. The most common response was "less than once a month", reported by 35.7% (445) of respondents. This was followed by "a few times a month" at 22.6% (282), "never" at 20.4% (254), "a few days a week" at 13.3% (166), and "every day" at 7.7% (96). Only 0.2% (2) of participants did not answer.

**Figure 10.1 - Desired Police Visibility**



Per figure 10.1, the participants were asked how often they would like to see police in their neighbourhood. Among those who responded (781 respondents), the most desired frequency was “every day,” chosen by 37.8% (295), followed by “a few days a week” at 36.6% (286), “a few times a month” at 22.5% (176), “less than once a month” at 2.6% (20), and “never” at 0.5% (4). Additionally, 37.3% (464) did not provide an answer to this question as it was dependent on the previous question titled “Would you like to see more police presence in your neighbourhood?” The participants were instructed to skip this question if they answered “no” to the previous question.

### “Everyday” by Area

Among those who responded, the highest proportion of participants who wanted to see police in their neighbourhood every day was in Area 6, with 181 respondents (61.36%). This was followed by Area 5 with 45 respondents (15.25%), Area 2 with 26 respondents (8.81%), Area 4 with 21 respondents (7.12%), Area 3 with 13 respondents (4.41%), and Area 1 with 9 respondents (3.05%). Area 6 accounts for 40.24% of the survey sample size, and it overrepresents in the “every day” category with 61.36%.

### Answers from Area 6

In Area 6, most respondents indicated that they would like to see police in their neighbourhood every day, representing 64.2% of area 6 residents (181). This was followed by 38.0% (107) of area 6 residents who preferred a few days a week, 14.6% (41) who preferred a few times a month, 0.7% (2) who preferred less than once a month, and 0.4% (1) who preferred never.

**Figure 10.2 – Police Presence**

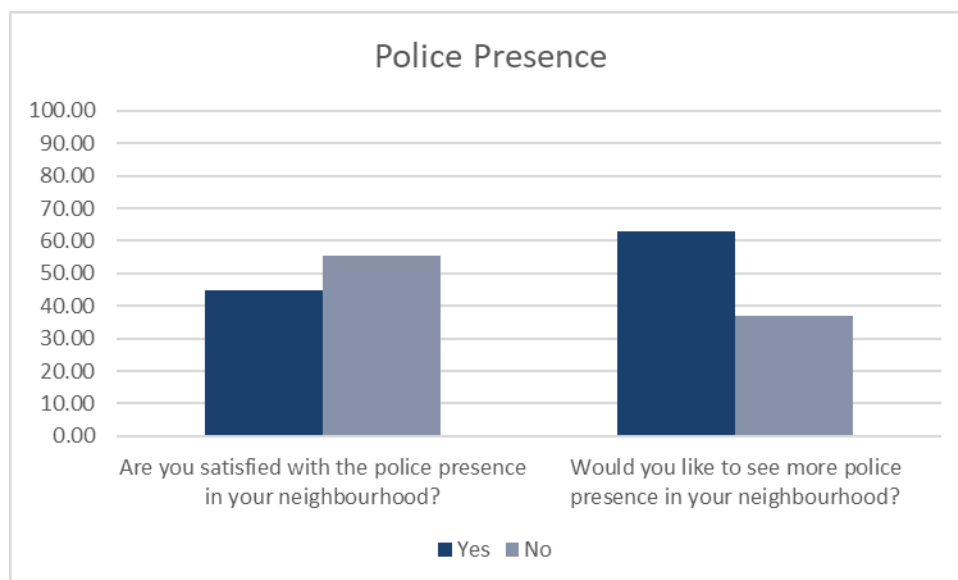


Figure 10.2 demonstrates participant responses when asked if they were satisfied with the police presence in their neighbourhood. Measuring satisfaction with police services helps assess public perceptions of fairness, effectiveness, and accountability, which are key elements that influence community trust and confidence in the justice system. 44.66% (556) of respondents said yes, while 55.34% (689) said no. In terms of whether they would like to see more police presence, 62.9% (783) said yes, whereas 37.1% (462) said no.

#### By Area

- In area 1: 63.01% (46) participants said they would like to see more police presence.
- In area 2: 53.99% (88) participants said they would like to see more police presence.
- In area 3: 74.19% (46) participants said they would like to see more police presence.
- In area 4: 62.60% (82) participants said they would like to see more police presence.
- In area 5: 60.00% (189) participants said they would like to see more police presence.
- In area 6: 66.27% (332) participants said they would like to see more police presence.

#### By Gender

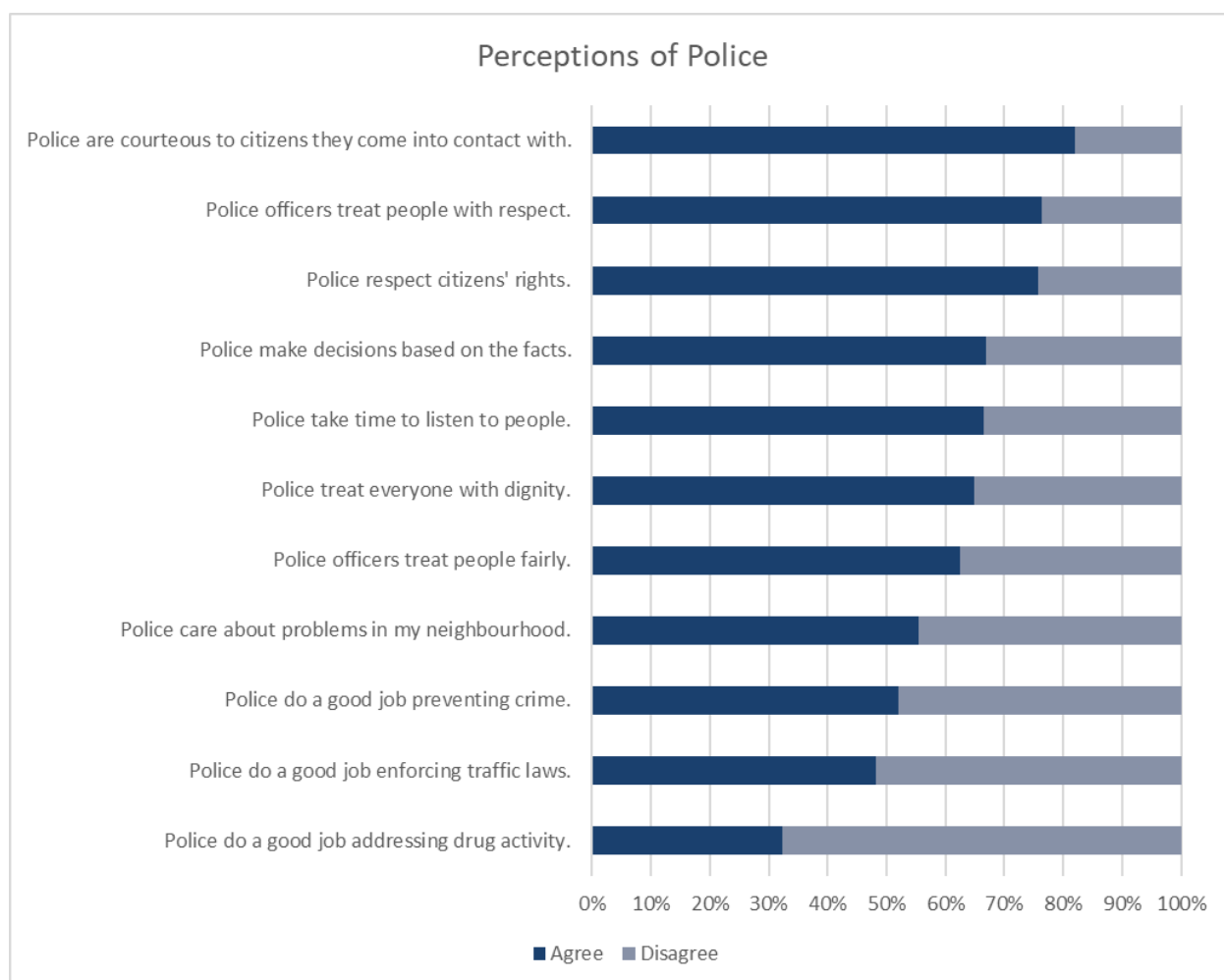
- For individuals who identified as male: 66.33% (254) participants said they would like to see more police presence.
- For individuals who identified as female: 62.34% (508) participants said they would like to see more police presence.
- For individuals who identified as non-binary: 27.27% (3) participants said they would like to see more police presence.
- For individuals who identified as transgender: 33.33% (2) participants said they would like to see more police presence.

#### By Ethnicity

- For individuals who identify as White: 64.26% (710) participants said they would like to see more police presence

- For individuals who identify as Black: 55.00% (11) participants said they would like to see more police presence,
- For individuals who identify as South Asian: 45.45% (10) participants said they would like to see more police presence
- For individuals who identify as East/Southeast Asian: 38.71% (12) participants said they would like to see more police presence.
- For individuals who identify as Indigenous: 58.33% (14) participants said they would like to see more police presence
- For individuals who identify as Latinx: 25.00% (2) participants said they would like to see more police presence
- For individuals who identify as Middle Eastern: 50.00% (7) participants said they would like to see more police presence
- For individuals who did not list their ethnicity 80.95% (17) participants said they would like to see more police presence,

Including questions about perceptions of police is important because public trust and confidence in law enforcement are key indicators of community safety, legitimacy, and the effectiveness of police-community partnerships. Per figure 10.3, respondents were asked to indicate their level of agreement with several statements about police performance and conduct. For ease of interpretation, “strongly agree” and “agree” have been combined into “agree” and “strongly disagree” and “disagree” have been combined into “disagree.”

**Figure 10.3 – Perceptions of Police**

The highest level of agreement was with the statement that “in general, the police are courteous to citizens they come into contact with,” supported by 82.0% (1021) of participants. This was followed by 76.4% (951) who agreed that police officers treat people with respect, and 75.7% (943) who said police respect citizens’ rights. 66.6% (830) agreed that the police make decisions based on facts, while 66.5% (828) said the police take time to listen to people. 64.9% (808) believed that police treat everyone with dignity, and 62.4% (777) agreed that police treat people fairly. Regarding broader police efforts, 55.3% (689) believed police care about problems in their neighbourhood, 52.0% (648) agreed that the police do a good job preventing crime, and 48.1% (599) agreed they enforce traffic laws effectively. The lowest level of agreement was found for the statement that police do a good job addressing drug activity, which was supported by only 32.4% (403) of respondents.

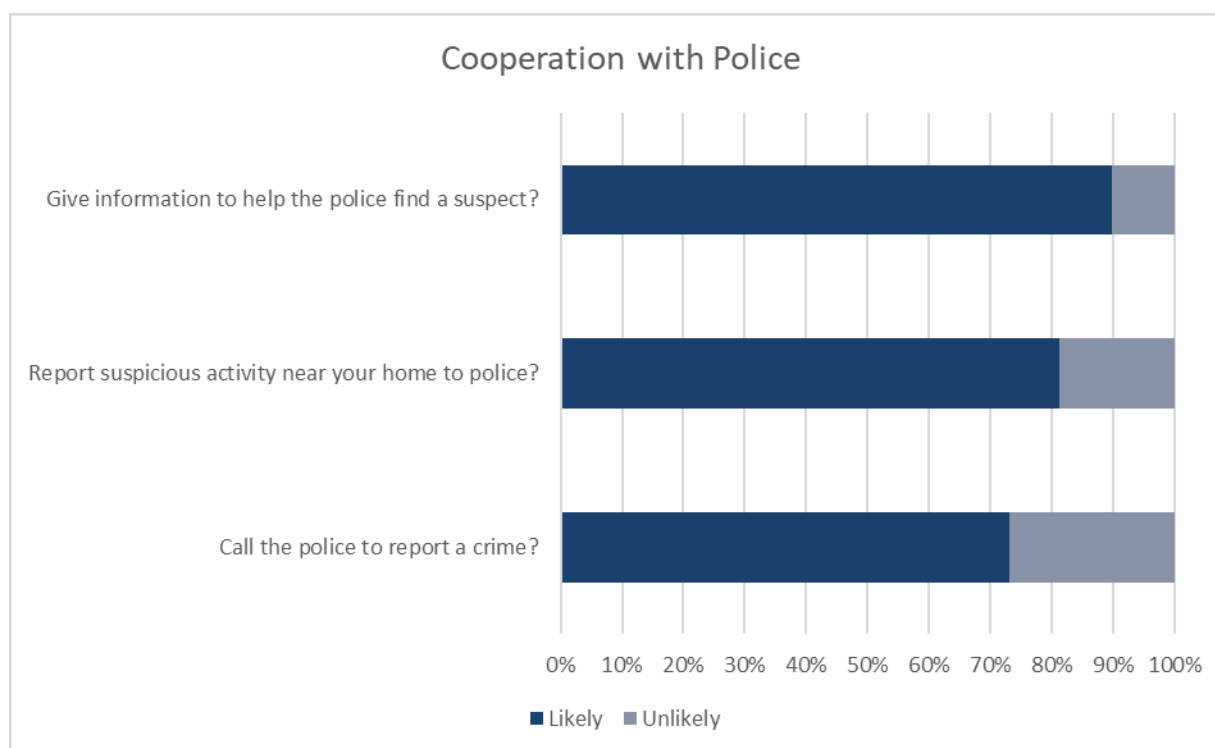
**Figure 10.4 – Cooperation with Police**

Figure 10.4 shows how likely the respondents would be to engage with police in various scenarios. This provides insights into the perceived approachability and legitimacy of law enforcement, which is crucial for fostering cooperation and ensuring responsive, community-informed policing. For ease of interpretation, “very likely” and “likely” have been combined into “likely” and “very unlikely” and “unlikely” have been combined into “unlikely.” The majority, 89.8% (1118), said they would likely provide information to help police locate a suspected criminal, while only 10.2% (127) said they would be unlikely to do so. Similarly, 81.3% (1012) said they would likely report suspicious activity near their home, compared to 18.7% (233) who would be unlikely to do so. Finally, 73.1% (910) of respondents said they would likely call the police to report a crime, while 26.9% (335) said they would be unlikely to make such a report.



**Figure 10.5 – Perceptions of Police Values and Conduct**

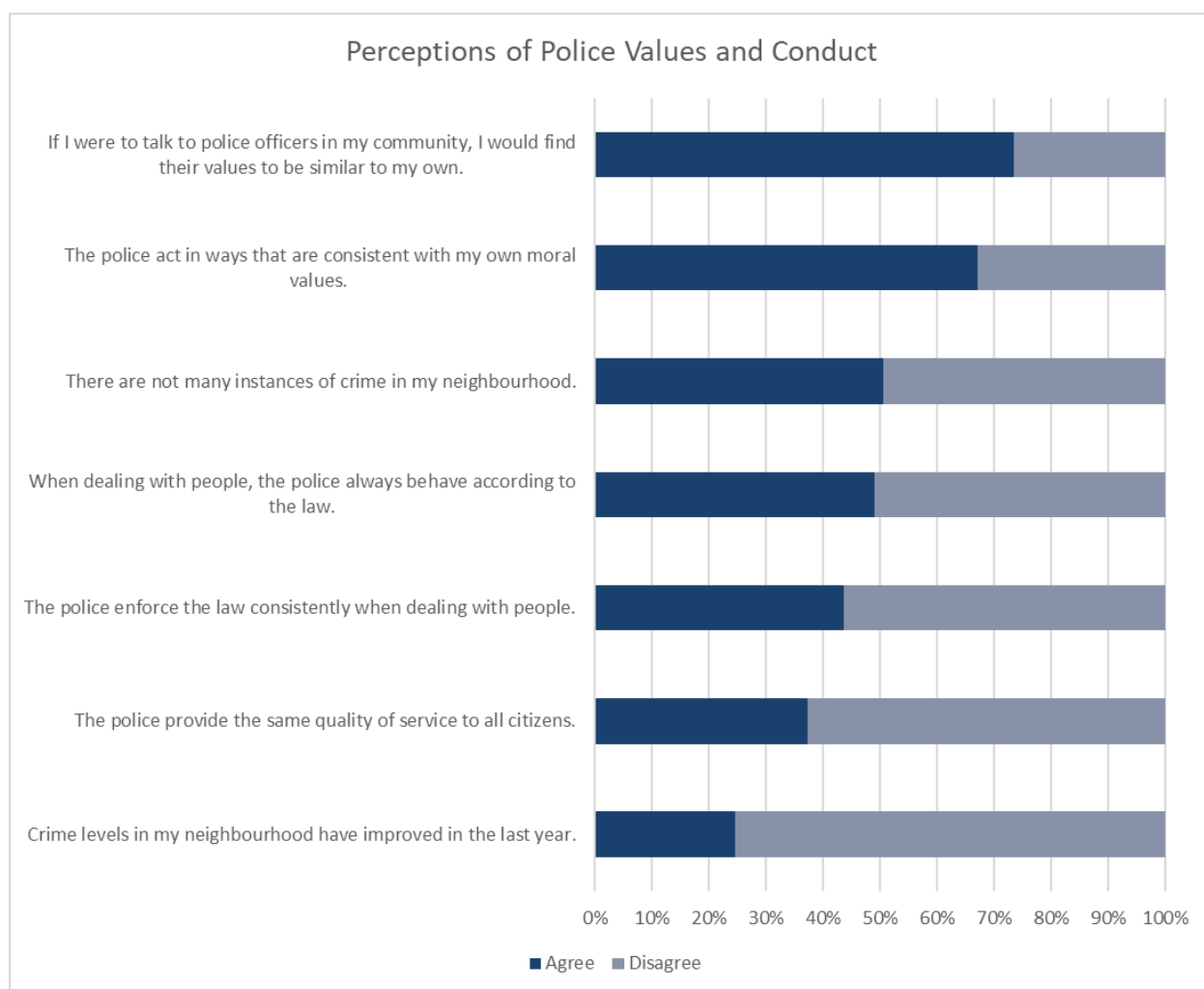


Figure 10.5 demonstrates participants' level of agreement with several statements related to perceived police values and conduct in their neighbourhood. Exploring perceptions of police values and conduct provides insights into whether community members believe law enforcement aligns with their expectations around fairness and justice. These factors can significantly shape public trust and police legitimacy.

The highest level of agreement came from 73.3% (913) of participants who said that if they were to talk to police officers in their community, they would find their values to be like their own. 67.1% (836) agreed that the police act in ways consistent with their own moral values, while 50.5% (629) said there are not many instances of crime in their neighbourhood. 48.9% (609) believed that police always behave according to the law when dealing with people, and 43.6% (543) agreed that police enforce the law consistently. Fewer participants, 37.3% (464), agreed that the police provide the same quality of service to all citizens, while the lowest agreement was with the statement that crime levels in their neighbourhood have changed for the better in the last year, which was endorsed by only 24.6% (306) of respondents.

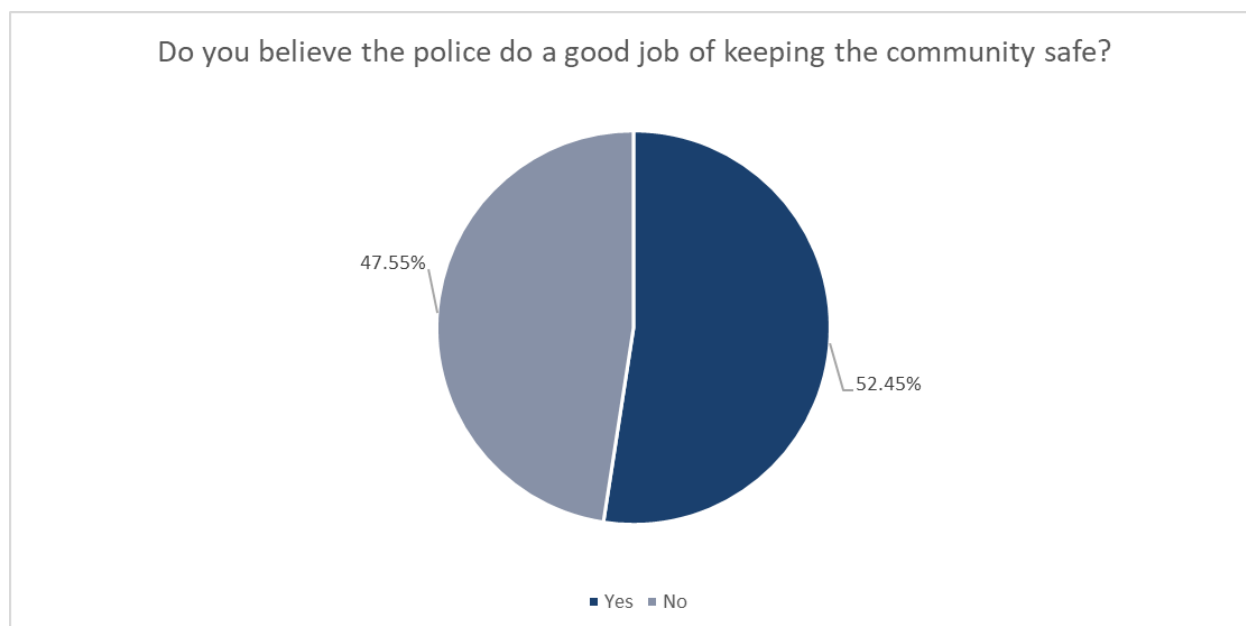
**Figure 10.6 – Police Efficacy**

Figure 10.6 demonstrates participants' perceptions of police efficacy. Assessing the belief that the police keep the community safe is critical, as it reflects public confidence in law enforcement's role in crime prevention and contributes to feelings of security within the community. This figure shows that 52.45% (653) of participants believe the police are doing a good job at keeping the community safe, while 47.55 % (592) of respondents do not believe the police are doing a good job at keeping the community safe.

When asked why, qualitative data indicated that respondents generally felt that the police are doing a good job of keeping the community safe, citing several key reasons. Many reported feeling secure in their neighbourhoods, often attributing this to the absence of visible crime or disturbances. When incidents do occur, respondents noted that the police typically respond promptly and conduct thorough investigations. Some also acknowledged that officers are doing their best despite challenges such as limited funding, staffing shortages, and evolving public safety concerns. A notable police presence in certain neighbourhoods was also associated with an increased sense of safety.

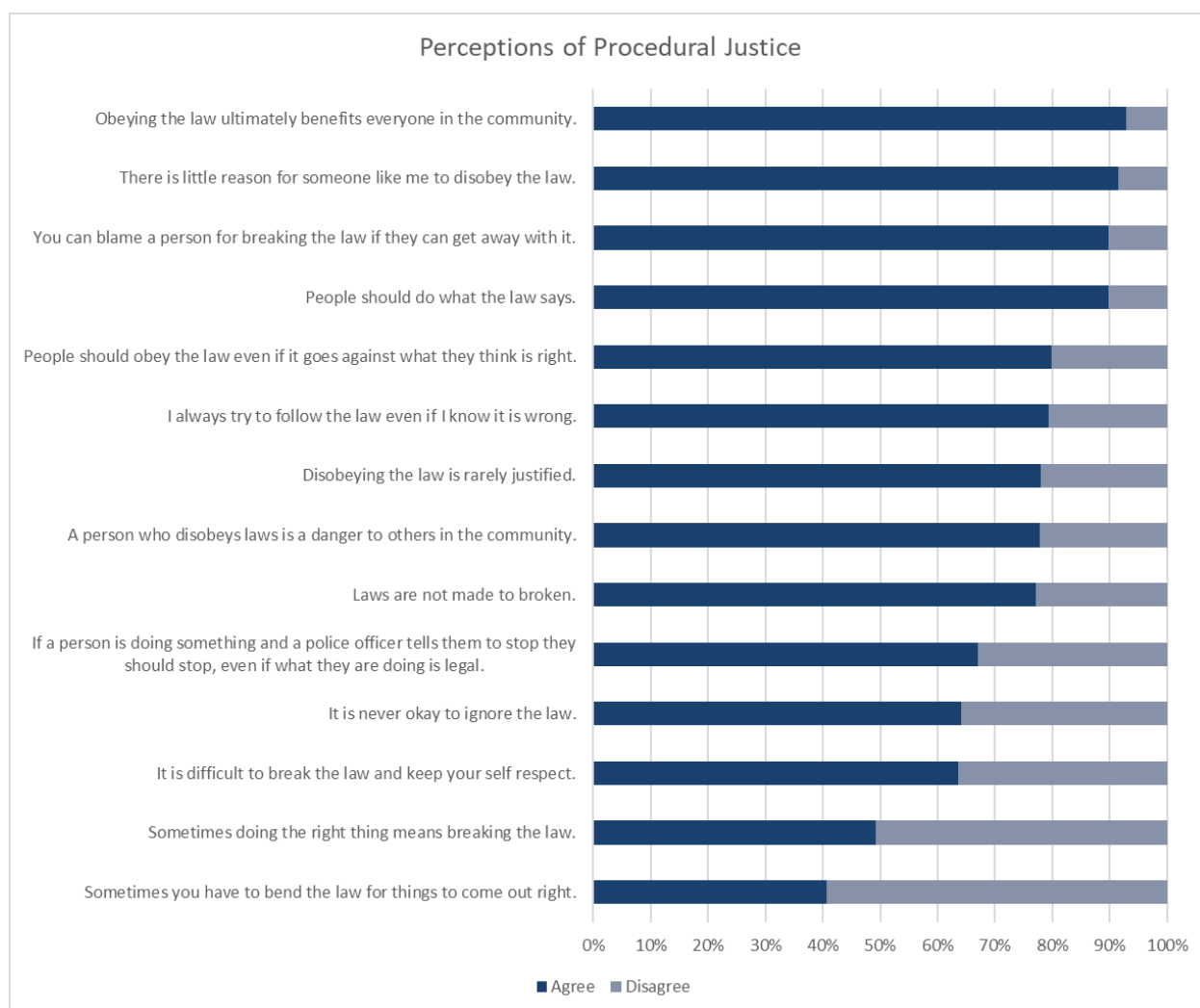
At the same time, qualitative responses indicated that many respondents felt the police were not performing effectively. These concerns were often rooted in a lack of visible police presence or delayed or absent responses to calls for service. Although serious crimes were generally addressed, many noted that lower-level offences, such as petty theft, go uninvestigated and unenforced. This has led to a perception among some that crime is increasing in their neighbourhoods. Respondents also noted the presence of police discrimination based on race and class, which has further eroded trust in law enforcement for certain communities. A few respondents emphasized that community members themselves, not the police, are the primary contributors to maintaining safety.

Overall, while there was support for police efforts, many respondents expressed **frustration with the broader criminal justice system**, particularly the perceived **lack of accountability for offenders**. In addition, several respondents argued that **police should not be expected to address social issues such as homelessness, substance use, and mental health crises**. Instead, they emphasized the need for greater investment in social services and preventative measures to address these complex challenges more effectively.

## Perceptions of Procedural Justice

**Figure 11.0 – Perceptions of Procedural Justice**

Perceptions of procedural justice are important because understanding attitudes toward laws and authority can reveal underlying norms and beliefs that influence compliance, trust in justice, and overall community order. Figure 11.0 displays participants' perceptions of procedural justice in Hamilton. For ease of interpretation, “strongly agree” and “agree” have been combined into “agree,” and “strongly disagree” and “disagree” have been combined into “disagree.”



90.5% (1127) of participants agreed that a person can be blamed for breaking the law even if they can get away with it, and the same percentage (90.5%, 1127) agreed that people should do what the law says. Additionally, 92.6% (1156) agreed that obeying the law ultimately benefits everyone in the community, and 91.6% (1140) agreed that there is little reason for someone like them to disobey the law. 79.8% (994) of respondents agreed that people should obey the law even if it goes against what they think is right, and 79.3% (988) said they always try to follow the law even if they know it is wrong. 77.9% (971) agreed that disobeying the law is rarely justified, while 77.8% (969) believed that a person who disobeys laws is a danger to others in the community. 67.0% (835) of participants agreed that if a person is doing something and a police officer tells them to stop, they should stop even if their actions are legal, and 63.5% (791) agreed that it is difficult to break the law and keep your self-respect. Lower agreement levels were seen for more morally ambiguous statements. 49.1% (612) agreed that sometimes doing the right thing means breaking the law, and 40.7% (507) agreed that sometimes you must bend the law for things to come out right.

## Key Findings and Implications

This section presents the key findings from each category and discusses them in relation to research literature and objectives of the survey, including understanding perceptions of crime and safety in Hamilton and in particular areas, identifying experiences of victimization and reporting to police, and identifying perceptions of police.

### Demographics

As discussed, different demographic characteristics, such as gender, race, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status, shape unique experiences and perceptions of safety, helping to identify issues that may disproportionately affect certain groups. For example, understanding the fear of sexual assault and its stronger correlation with women highlights the need for gender-sensitive approaches in community safety planning.

While there are some populations that are over or underrepresented, the survey is generally representative of the population of Hamilton. The median age in Hamilton is just over 40 years old (Statistics Canada 2021), and the median age in the survey was reported as 50 years old. This discrepancy may be attributed to the minimum age required to complete the survey (18 years old). The population split in Hamilton is estimated around 49% male and 51% female (Statistics Canada 2021). Female respondents were overrepresented in the survey (65.46%), followed by male respondents (30.76%), non-binary respondents (0.88%), and transgender respondents (0.48%). 2.41% of respondents preferred not to answer. Respondents were also less ethnically diverse than the population of Hamilton, with 88.76% of participants identifying as White, whereas the census reports 74.87% White or not a visible minority in Hamilton. Homeownership was also slightly higher for survey respondents (72.85%) as compared to the population (69%). Survey respondents also reported higher levels of education (32.61% with a bachelor's degree and 21.53% with a graduate degree) as compared to official statistics (16.71% and 8.51% respectively). Having an accurate demographic representation ensures that the survey results reflect the diversity of Hamilton's population.

### Community Involvement

The survey population demonstrates good relationships with their neighbours. 93% of the respondents reported knowing the names of their neighbours, and most of the respondents talked with their neighbours, and helped their neighbours with some level of frequency (76.55%, 76.06% respectively). 60-88% of respondents agree with most of the statements about neighbourhood integration, demonstrating good integration within their communities. The generally positive response to integration reflects a key dimension of informal social control and social cohesion, both of which are strongly linked to neighbourhood safety and perceptions of crime (Hodgkinson & Lunney 2021).

When asked about their willingness to intervene on violations of the laws and social norms, the respondents showed general willingness to intervene (58-74%) when laws were being broken except for underage drinking in public (42.01%), and illegal parking (45.30%). Generally, the respondents stated they would be unlikely to intervene when social norms were

being violated (18-45%). In addition, most respondents were likely to intervene if local community resources were at risk of being taken away (77-78%), if sex workers were soliciting in their neighbourhood (78%), and if there were signs of disrepair in the neighbourhood (81%). Willingness to intervene offers valuable insight into the collective efficacy demonstrated by a community, reflecting residents' shared confidence in their ability to maintain social order and address problems together. Collective efficacy is closely linked to the fear of crime, as communities with stronger mutual trust and readiness to act tend to experience lower levels of fear and greater feelings of safety (Wickes et al., 2013). When people believe that their neighbours will step in during problematic situations, it reinforces a sense of control and cohesion, which can deter crime and foster a more secure environment.

That said, only 44.82% of respondents agrees that people in their neighbourhood take care of each other. While the general agreement with neighbourhood integration is high, the low agreement with neighbours caring for each other is also reflected in formal forms of action taken to improve the community. When asked on formal steps taken to improve the neighbourhood, most respondents stated they had not taken any of the listed formal actions (55-81%). This is important because it reveals a gap between neighbourhood integration and the deeper bonds needed for strong social cohesion and collective efficacy. While many respondents feel connected to their neighbourhood generally, less than half believe that people actively care for one another. This weaker sense of mutual care can undermine trust and reduce the likelihood that residents will come together to address shared concerns. The low levels of formal community action further suggest that without strong interpersonal ties and a sense of collective responsibility, residents may be less motivated or empowered to take organized steps to improve their neighbourhood. Together, these factors can limit the community's capacity to exercise informal social control and collective efficacy, both of which are critical for preventing crime and fostering a safe, supportive environment.

## Feelings of Safety

In general, the respondents felt their neighbourhood was safe to go out in, and safe from gun and drug violence (54-93%). However, 51% of respondents felt their neighbourhood was becoming more dangerous. Respondents were also worried about particular crimes, including being attacked and unable to protect themselves (64%), having their homes broken into (55%), damage or vandalism to their property (56%), and having their vehicle stolen (68%). Asking about perceptions of safety specifically within respondents' own neighbourhoods is important to capture accurate and meaningful insights. Focusing on a familiar area helps avoid bias that can arise when people judge the safety of unfamiliar places, ensuring that concerns reflect lived experiences rather than assumptions or stereotypes about other communities, such as downtown areas.

## Perceptions of the Police and Procedural Justice

Most of the respondents felt that the police behave and act in ways consistent with their moral values (67-73%). Generally, the respondents reflected favourably on the law and procedural justice. Most participants agreed that the police were courteous, treat people with

respect, make decisions based on facts, take time to listen to people, and treat people with dignity and fairly. Fewer respondents agreed that the police care about problems in their neighbourhood, do a good job of preventing crime, and enforce laws effectively. Even less agreement was found with the statement that police do a good job of addressing drug activity.

In the qualitative analyses, participants expressed concern that police adopt a largely reactive, rather than preventative, approach to crime management. Respondents highlighted issues such as theft, vandalism, speeding, and reckless driving, noting that law enforcement tends to focus on punitive actions instead of addressing the underlying causes of these problems. Many participants felt these types of crimes are treated as low priority by the police, which discourages community members from reporting incidents. As a result, some choose not to involve law enforcement, believing that responses will be delayed, ineffective, or entirely absent. One participant remarked that the “police seem to have no mandate to really effectively investigate or prevent crime,” while another recounted being told by a police officer to “drag [a thief] into the basement and teach them a lesson,” reflecting a perceived abdication of responsibility by the police. Overall, the data suggest a lack of trust in the police’s commitment or ability to prevent everyday crimes and ensure public safety.

Participants also commented that after an arrest, police have an opportunity to engage in prevention efforts to ensure that the same crimes are not committed again. This can be done through relationship building and community engagement. Further, participants note that police are unable to prevent complex and long-term issues. Some respondents assume that this is the result of limited resources. This suggests a need for greater investments in prevention, such as teams that specialize in complex social issues, so these needs do not fall on the police.

Understanding whether community members believe that police share and act according to their moral values is crucial for building trust and legitimacy in law enforcement. When residents perceive the police as courteous, respectful, fair, and attentive, it strengthens the sense of procedural justice, encouraging cooperation and positive engagement. That said, the lower levels of agreement highlight important challenges in community trust and confidence in police effectiveness. While some concerns may stem from perceptions rather than objective reality, they nonetheless impact how residents engage with law enforcement. When residents feel that police are not sufficiently attentive to local problems, are ineffective at preventing crimes, or fail to address specific issues like drug activity, it can undermine support for the police and reduce public willingness to cooperate with law enforcement. Addressing these concerns is vital for improving police-community relations and enhancing overall community safety.

Respondents were less supportive of police behaviour and efficacy. Only 52.45% of participants believe that police are doing a good job at keeping the community safe. While respondents generally felt that the police are doing a good job, they cited concerns such as a lack of visible police presence, delayed or absent responses to calls for service, and police discrimination based on race and class. This is important because community confidence in police effectiveness is fundamental to public safety and cooperation. When only about half of participants believe the police are effectively keeping the community safe, it signals potential gaps in trust and satisfaction. The concerns outlined above can erode legitimacy and discourage

residents from reporting crimes or working with law enforcement. Addressing these issues is essential to building stronger police-community relationships and fostering a safer, more inclusive environment.

In terms of procedural justice, most participants expressed strong support for obeying the law, believing that following legal rules benefits the whole community and that lawbreaking is rarely justified. However, there was notable lower agreement with statements reflecting moral ambiguity around the law, such as situations where breaking or bending the law might be justified. These results highlight a strong normative commitment to legal obedience within the community, which is a key foundation for social order and collective efficacy. When most residents respect the law and believe in its importance, it supports informal social control and cooperation with law enforcement. At the same time, the nuanced views on morally ambiguous situations suggest the need for ongoing dialogue about the fairness and flexibility of laws, which can impact trust and perceptions of legitimacy.



## Limitations and Future Directions

The data collection for this survey was done between January and April. These are some of the coldest months in Hamilton, and as such it is difficult to get door-to-door participation. It is also challenging to have sustained door-to-door efforts during these months due to the cold weather. However, the participation during the summer months may also be difficult due to families being away for summer vacations. The length of the survey may have discouraged some participation as well. The survey was comprehensive and required 15 to 20 minutes to complete. As such, many participants were unwilling to complete the survey. This length, however, allows for more meaningful analysis as it provides rich and detailed data. Data standardization also required removing respondents who did not complete the majority of the survey. Doing so may have removed important information. However, removing surveys that were largely incomplete was important as holistic analysis requires the majority of questions to have been answered.

There are also limitations in specific questions. For example, when asking the participants how often they would like to see the police in their neighbourhood, this question was dependent on the question of whether participants indicated they would like to see more police presence in their neighbourhood. If the participants answer “no” they are directed to skip this question. This may lead to a biased answer as it is just the participants who say they would like to see more police presence who are prompted to say how often they would like to see the police. However, including participants who would not like to see increased police presence would provide an unbiased collection of answers that more accurately reflects how often the participants wish to see police in their neighbourhoods. Furthermore, when asking about areas where people felt the safest and the most unsafe, difficulty in interpreting the maps required aggregating data to 6 large areas, rather than by census tract. However, the qualitative responses for why people feel safest or unsafe in these areas provides important inroads for community safety initiatives moving forward.

## Conclusion

This report has summarised the results of a community safety survey administered in Hamilton, Ontario. This baseline survey is intended to identify issues that are prevalent within Hamilton and offer important data that can benefit future community safety programs or policing initiatives. Overall, people feel safe but are concerned about visible behaviours, including homelessness and drug use. Respondents particularly feel safe in their own neighbourhoods, and smaller areas like Area 1, but feel unsafe downtown due to visible social and physical disorder. Victimization and reporting rates are generally as expected, and mostly in line with statistics from the General Social Survey. Nonetheless, several negative experiences related to visible social and physical disorder are frustrating residents. Finally, participants are generally supportive of the police but are concerned about their efficacy preventing and responding to crime.

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