

May 2004 Citizens' Panel Survey - Feedback of Results

In May 2004 we sent you our ninth Citizens' Panel survey. It was all about Crime and Drug & Alcohol Misuse, your experiences, and what you think should be done to tackle these issues in your neighbourhood and across the County. Thank you to those of you who responded! We received 1358 completed questionnaires which represents a response rate of 64%. Here are some of the headline results. You can view the full analysis of results on our Website www.worcestershire.gov.uk/citizenspanel

PERCEPTION AND EXPERIENCE OF CRIME

Results show that 84% of you are concerned about crime in Worcestershire and 72% of you said you were concerned about crime in your neighbourhood. Your responses also tell us that there is little variation in your level of concern about crime in Worcestershire whether you live in an urban or rural area of the county.

Your level of concern about specific crimes is different depending on where you live. When comparing your responses by district, anti-social behaviour is of greatest concern to those of you living in Redditch. Concerns about car related crime are highest in Bromsgrove and lowest in Malvern Hills and Wychavon. Drug related crime is of greatest concern in Wyre Forest and lowest in Malvern Hills.

Concern about crime in your neighbourhood is greatest among older age groups. 55% of you aged 65+ years, said you were fairly or very concerned about crime in your neighbourhood compared to 35% of respondents aged 18-39 years.

You also told us that you are as concerned about crime now as you were three years ago. Exactly half of you said you there has been no change in your level of concern about crime in Worcestershire, 43% of you said you are more concerned and 5% said less concerned.

The highest proportion of you who are more concerned about crime in your neighbourhood now than you were three years live in Bromsgrove (48%). This compares to 46% in Wyre Forest, 45% in Redditch, 41% in Wychavon, 38% in Malvern Hills and 37% in Worcester City.

You told us that your main reasons for being more concerned about crime were:

- Lack of police presence
- Lack of faith that criminals will be punished for their crimes
- Gangs of youths hanging about on the street.

Most of you have not been the victim, witnessed or know of crimes occurring in your neighbourhood. For the small number of you that have been the victim of crime, most said you had been the victim of anti-social behaviour and having your property vandalised. Overall burglary and anti-social behaviour are the crimes that cause you the greatest concern.

UNDERLYING CAUSES OF CRIME

You identified the following as the top three factors which you think may influence people to commit crime:

- Not enough police presence
- Use of illegal drugs
- Unemployment/low income/poor personal circumstances

Worcestershire County Council's Principal Research and Partnership Officer says "Whilst crime rates for Worcestershire continue to be below the West Mercia and national averages, the results of this survey reinforce the message that the public's perception of crime is an issue of vital importance. Alongside implementing projects to tackle crime, community safety partnerships across the County will be using the information obtained from this Citizens' Panel together with a range of other sources, to look at measures to provide reassurance to the public in their forthcoming crime reduction strategies".

INFORMATION AND ADVICE ON DRUG & ALCOHOL MISUSE

Results show that the most popular means of finding out information and advice on illegal drug use is via your GP or Health Centre (23%). 14% of you said you would go to West Mercia Police, 12% speak to family/friend/colleague and 11% would use the Internet. In terms of finding out about illegal drug/alcohol issues in Worcestershire, many of you (24%), would prefer to find out via a newspaper or the local press.

PERCEPTION OF DRUG & ALCOHOL MISUSE

Your perceptions of the seriousness of drug and alcohol misuse in Worcestershire and in your neighbourhood are quite different. 66% of you think that the scale of drug misuse in Worcestershire is very or fairly serious compared to 6% who said it was not very or not at all serious. However, when thinking about your own neighbourhood, fewer of you said that the scale of drug misuse was very or fairly serious (38%), compared to 35% who said it was not very or not very serious at all. The perception of the seriousness of illegal drug misuse is greatest among those of you aged 18-39 years old.

Whilst the majority of you think the scale of illegal drug misuse in your neighbourhood is not very serious or not very serious at all, comparing your responses by district shows the perceived seriousness of illegal drug misuse is greatest among those of you who live in Wyre Forest, Redditch and Bromsgrove.

Many of you think that the scale of drug misuse in Worcestershire and/or your neighbourhood is very or fairly serious because of local media coverage. Other influential factors include perception of the local area and other people's perceptions.

Whilst 25% of you think the scale of illegal drug and alcohol misuse in Worcestershire has stayed the same over the last three years, results also show that 45% of you think that it has become more serious and 2% of you said less serious. In comparison 40% of you who think the scale of drug and alcohol misuse in your neighbourhood has stayed the same, 31% think it is more serious and 2% less serious.

PRIORITIES FOR TACKLING DRUG & ALCOHOL MISUSE

Your top priorities for reducing the problem of illegal drug use were:

- Increased education on drug and alcohol misuse for those aged under 19
- More activities for young people to distract them from drug and alcohol misuse
- More visible police activity.

The co-ordinator of Worcestershire Substance Misuse Action Team says "These findings are very important to us and the Community Safety Partnership's within Worcestershire. Clearly drug misuse is an issue for Worcestershire and, in spite of the increased funding to address drug misuse, the perception is that it is getting worse rather than better. The gap between 'perception of' and 'actual experience' is also something to be addressed, especially the scale of drug/alcohol problems portrayed by the local media. Worcestershire SMAT is working to improve the level of education on drug and alcohol misuse for young people aged under 19. This is a key part of our Young Persons Substance Misuse Plan.

Visible police presence is a consistent message which has been noted by Community Safety Partnerships. Over the past few years there have been increasing numbers of police officers as well as Community Support Officers deployed across the County.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone who participated in the survey. Your comments are valuable and contribute to the wider work of the crime, disorder and drug audits and strategies. Worcestershire SMAT and its partner agencies will be working to address these concerns and take forward some of your comments."