



Quality of Life Survey

Public Safety & Law Enforcement

Spokane County, 2019

Why is public safety important for quality of life?

Feeling safe and secure is a fundamental human need.¹ **Public safety**—the protection of the general public’s physical welfare through various approaches, including providing law enforcement and medical emergency responders and keeping local parks clean—is associated with quality of life and health. It may impact people’s ability to engage in healthy behaviors or access resources for preventing disease.² For example:

- Safety concerns may prevent people from walking in their neighborhood, reducing their options for physical activity.
- A parent may avoid using a local playground with their children because they are concerned that it is unsafe.

Law enforcement is a critical component of public safety as it is one of the main approaches used to make communities feel safe. Law enforcement and crime impact emotional well-being.³ For example:

- A crime victim can experience trauma from the event that lasts for years and impacts their well-being and daily functioning (e.g., job performance).
- A community member who does not trust local law enforcement officers to protect them and their family will be less likely to report a crime.

Efforts to improve quality of life should therefore consider community members’ public safety needs and concerns.

How is Public Safety Assessed?

The QoL Survey assessed various aspects of public safety, including residents’ feelings of personal safety, experiences with crime in their neighborhoods, and their satisfaction, trust in and beliefs regarding local law enforcement.

Key Findings

- 86% of residents felt safe using local parks during the day.
- 68% of residents felt safe walking alone at night.
- Feelings of safety differed by sociodemographic factors and by neighborhood.
- 66% of residents felt that property crime was a problem in their neighborhood.
- Nearly 22% of residents indicated being the victim of a crime in 2019.
- 74% of residents trusted law enforcement to protect them and their family.

Produced by



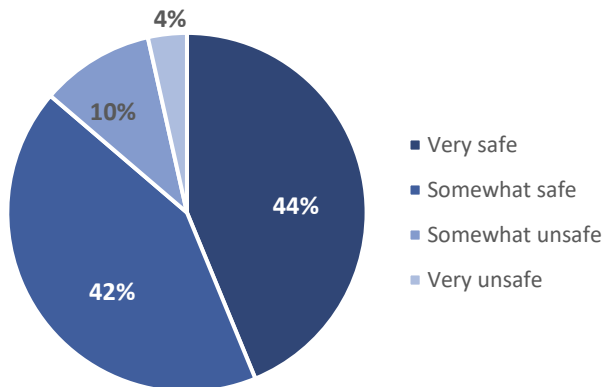
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2019 Public Safety Results

Feelings of Safety Using a Local Park or Green Space Alone During the Day

Figure 1. Feelings of Safety Using a Local Park Alone During the Day, Spokane County, 2019



In 2019, 86% of Spokane County residents felt “very” or “somewhat” safe using their local park or green space alone during the day (Figure 1). The proportion of residents who felt safe has slightly decreased over the past five years, down from 89% in 2015 (Figure 2).

Summary of Sociodemographic Factors Related to Feeling Unsafe Using a Local Park or Green Space, Spokane County, 2019

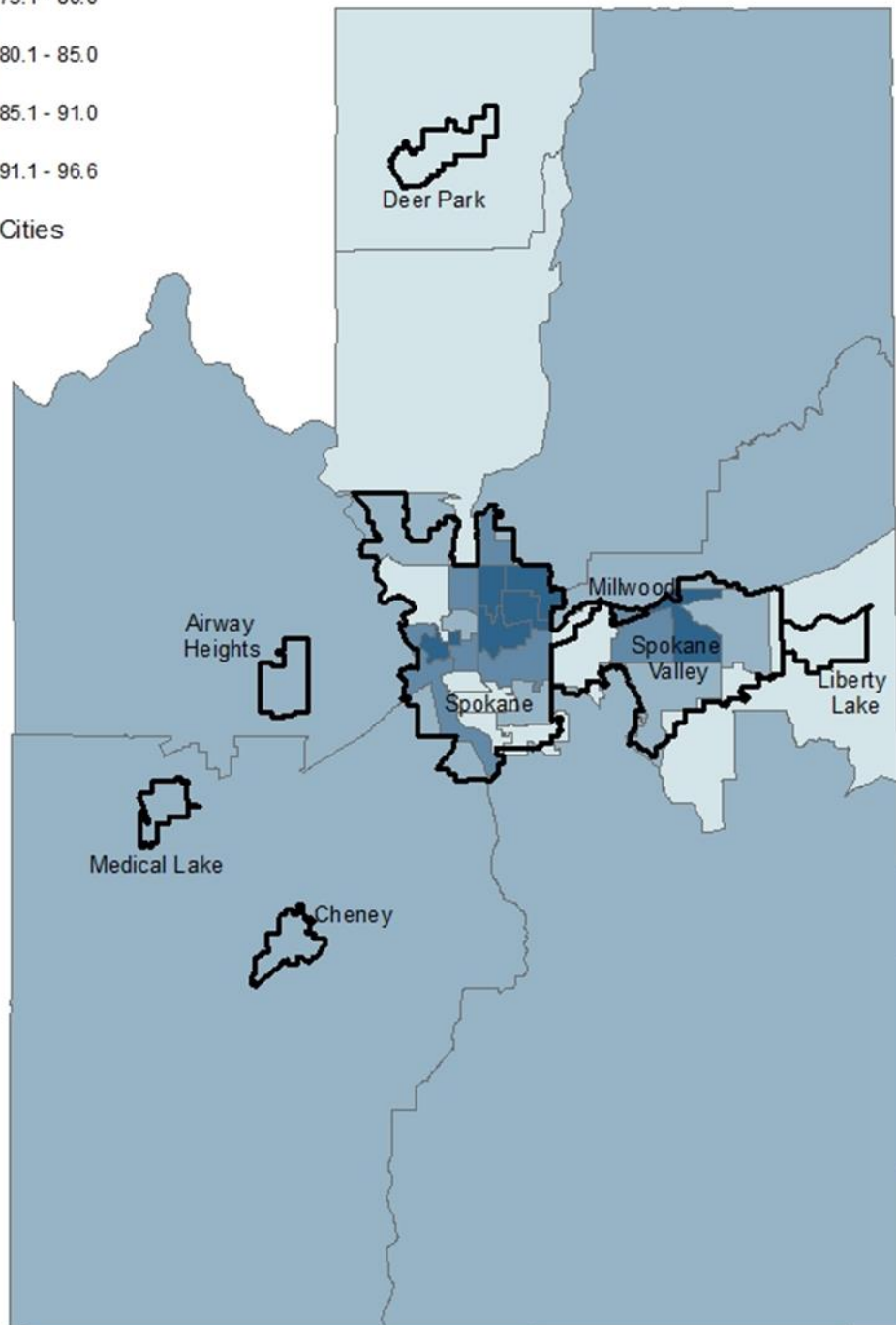
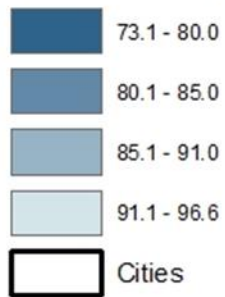
Residents who were more likely to feel unsafe using their local park or green space alone during the day were:

- Female
- Less educated (high school diploma/GED or less)
- In lower-income households
- In “fair” or “poor” physical health
- In unstable housing
- Dissatisfied with their neighborhood or community
- Residents of specific neighborhoods (e.g., West Central, West Valley, Hillyard/Whitman) (Figure 3)

Figure 3. Feelings of Safety Using a Local Park or Green Space Alone During the Day, by Neighborhood, Spokane County, 2019

Legend

% Feel safe during day



Feelings of Safety Walking Alone in One's Neighborhood at Night

Figure 4. Feelings of Safety Walking Alone in One's Neighborhood at Night, Spokane County, 2019

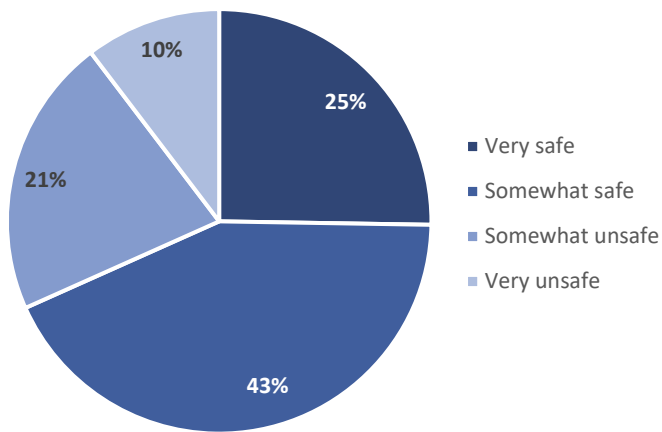
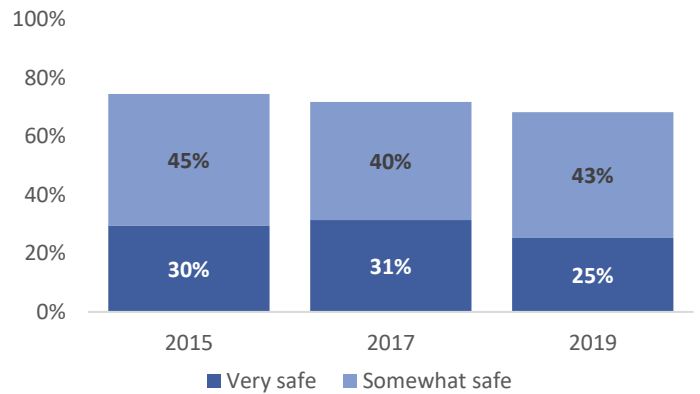


Figure 5. Percentage of Residents who Felt Very/Somewhat Safe Walking Alone in their Neighborhood at Night by Year, Spokane County, 2019



In 2019, 68% of Spokane County residents felt “very” or “somewhat” safe walking alone in their neighborhood at night (Figure 4), representing a slight decrease over the past five years, down from 75% of residents in 2015 (Figure 5).

Summary of Sociodemographic Factors Related to Feelings of Safety Walking Alone at Night, Spokane County, 2019

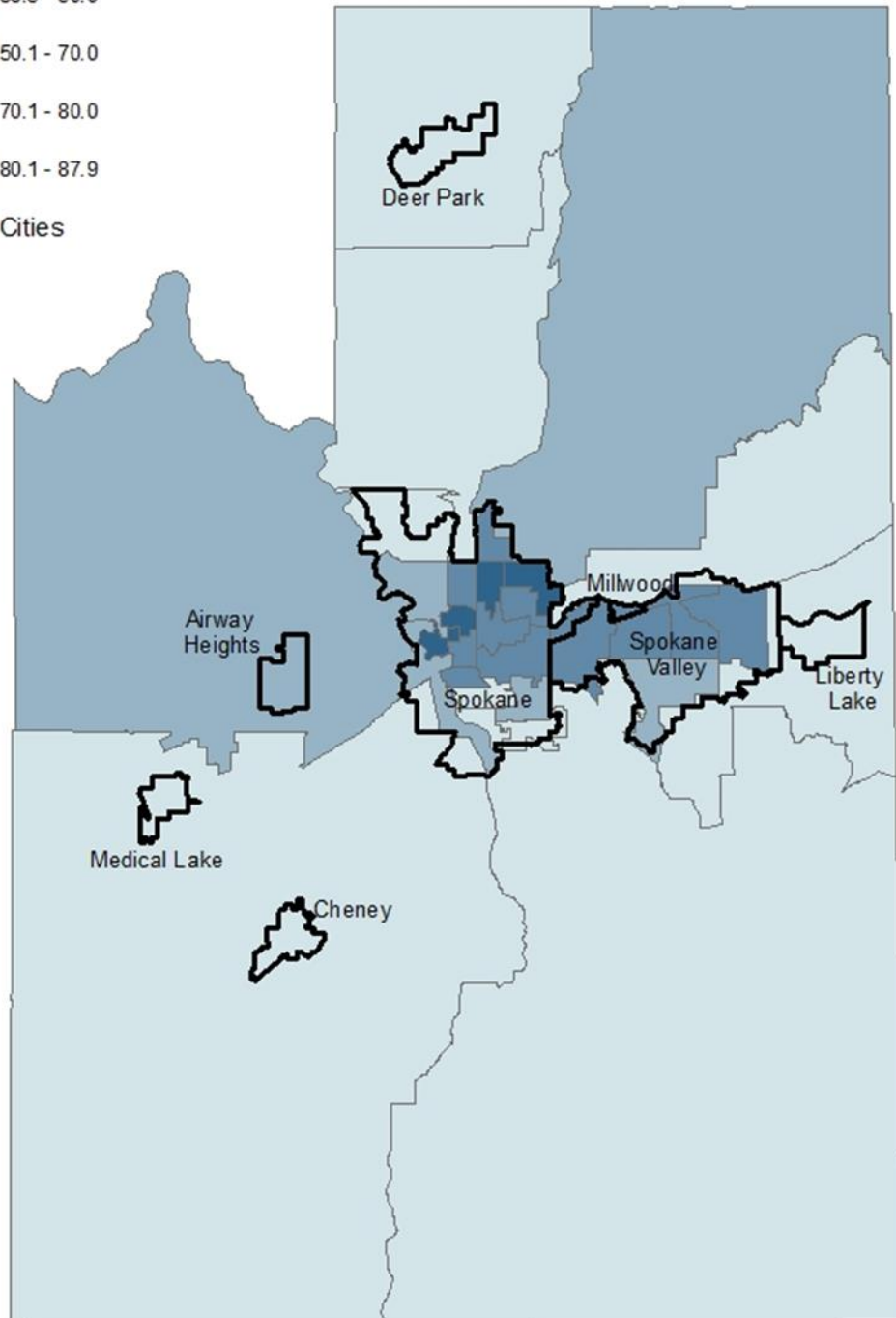
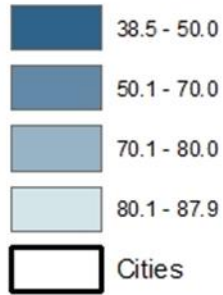
Residents who were more likely to feel unsafe walking alone in their neighborhood at night were:

- Female
- Never married or not married
- Less educated (high school diploma/GED or less)
- In lower-income households
- In “fair” or “poor” physical or mental health
- Living in Spokane < 10 years
- In unstable housing
- Dissatisfied with their neighborhood or community
- Residents of specific neighborhoods (e.g., Hillyard/Whitman, Nevada/Lidgerwood, and West Central) (Figure 6)

Figure 6. Feelings of Safety Walking Alone in One's Neighborhood at Night, by Neighborhood, Spokane County, 2019

Legend

% Feel safe at night

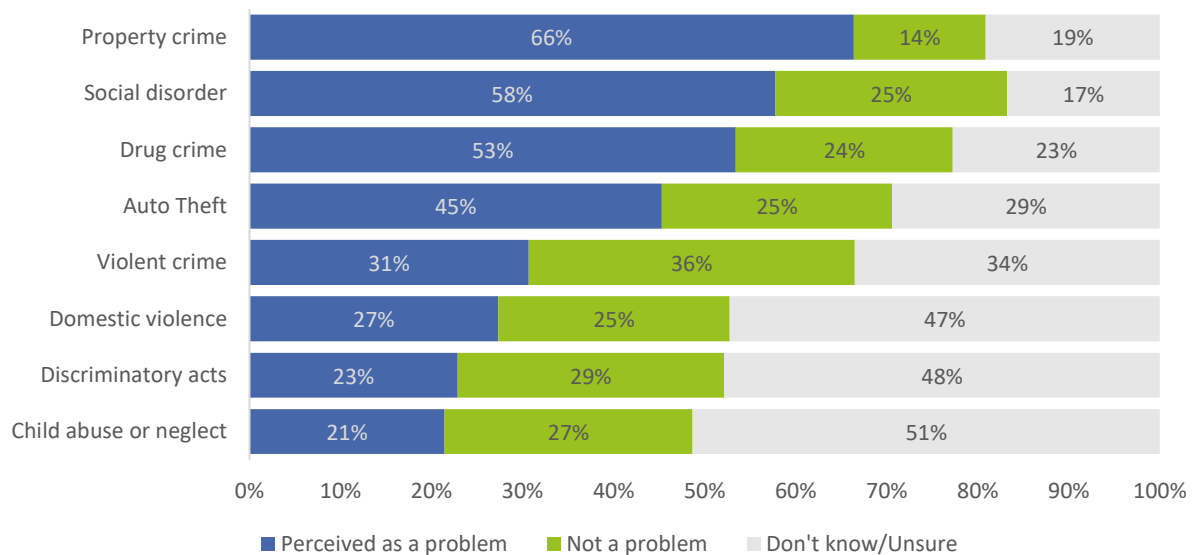


Perceptions of Crime in One’s Neighborhood

Residents were asked to indicate if they felt the following types of crime were a “serious problem,” a “moderate problem,” a “minor problem,” or “not a problem” in their neighborhoods. They could also answer “don’t know/not sure.” A crime was defined as a problem if residents indicated that it was a serious, moderate or minor problem.

- In 2019, the types of crime that were perceived as problems by the greatest number of residents in Spokane County were property crime (66% of respondents felt this was a problem), followed by social disorder (58% of respondents) and drug crime (53% of respondents) (Figure 7).
- Nearly half of residents did not know whether the following crimes were problems in their neighborhood (Figure 7): child abuse or neglect (51% of respondents were unsure if this was a problem), discriminatory acts (48% unsure) and domestic violence (47% unsure). The remaining respondents were almost evenly split on whether they considered these crimes to be problems (e.g., 27% indicated domestic violence was a problem in their neighborhood, whereas 25% indicated this was not a problem).

Figure 7. Crimes Perceived as Problems in Residents' Neighborhoods, Spokane County, 2019



NOTE: The following definitions were used for each crime category: Property crime (burglary, theft, property damage, arson, etc.); Social disorder (loitering, panhandling, graffiti, etc.); Drug crime (dealing, drug use in public areas, etc.); Violent crime (assault, sexual assault, homicide, etc.). Participants were asked whether they perceived the problem as severe, moderate, or minor, but these were collapsed into the single category of “perceived as a problem.”

Crime Victimization

In 2019, nearly 22% of Spokane County residents indicated that they were a victim of a crime in the past year, but only slightly more than half (58%) of these individuals reported the crime to local authorities (Figure 8).

Summary of Sociodemographic Factors Related to Crime Victimization, 2019

Residents who were more likely to indicate being the victim of a crime in 2019 were:

- Younger (< 45 years old)
- Married
- Unable to work or out of work
- In unstable housing
- Dissatisfied with their neighborhood or community

Figure 8. Percentage of Residents Victimized by a Crime in the Past Year, Spokane County, 2019

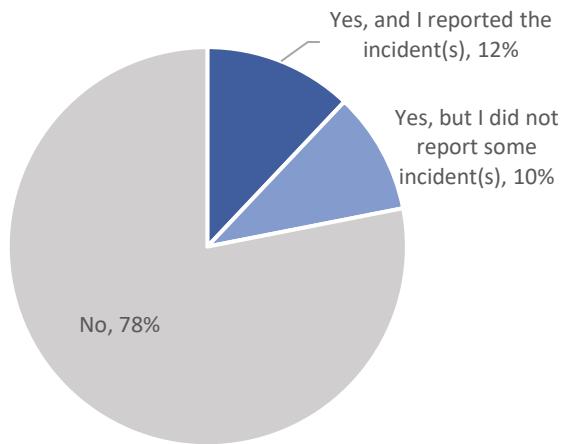
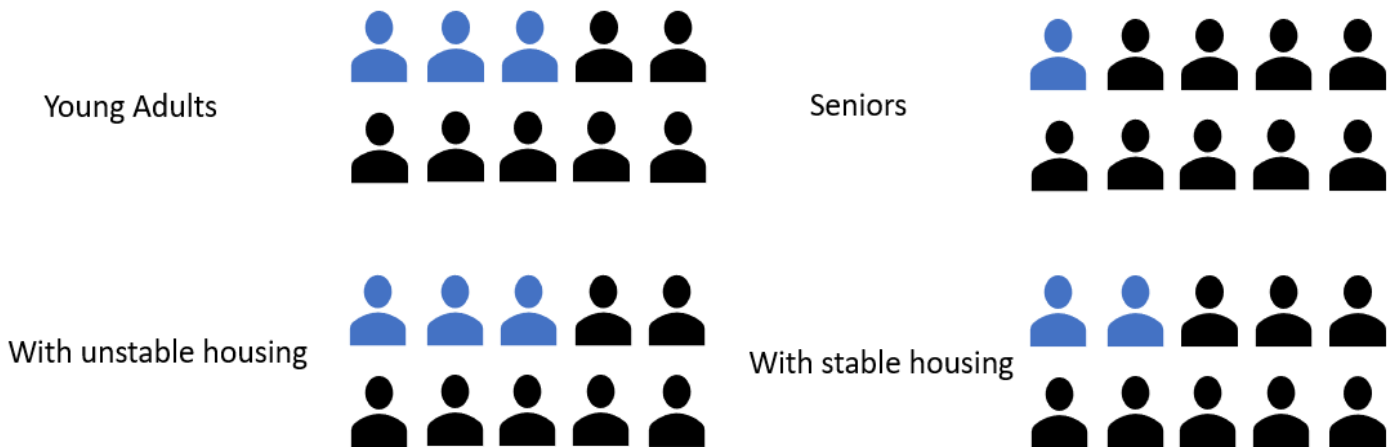


Figure 9. Proportions of Subpopulations who Indicated Being the Victim of a Crime in 2019, Spokane County, 2019



Note: Blue= Proportion of respondents within a group who indicated they were the victim of a crime; Black= Proportion of respondents in that group who indicated they were NOT the victim of a crime. Young adults= respondents 18-44 years of age. Seniors= respondents aged 65 years and older. Proportions are displayed out of 10 individuals for illustration purposes only. To calculate the approximate percentage for each of the subgroups shown above, multiply the number of blue icons by 10.

2019 Law Enforcement Results

Satisfaction with the Police and Sheriff

Figure 10. Residents' Satisfaction with Police, Spokane County, 2019

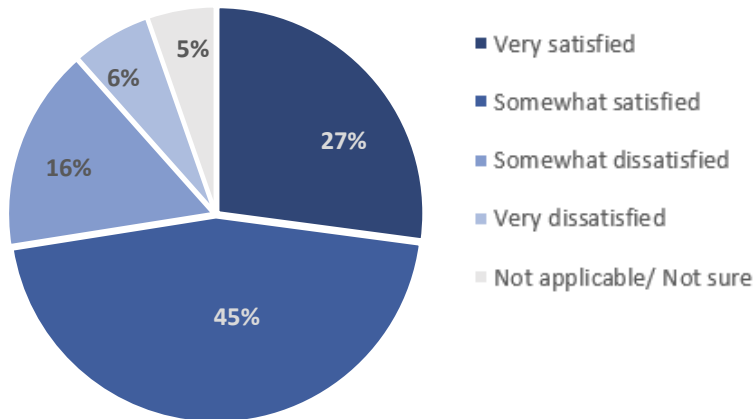
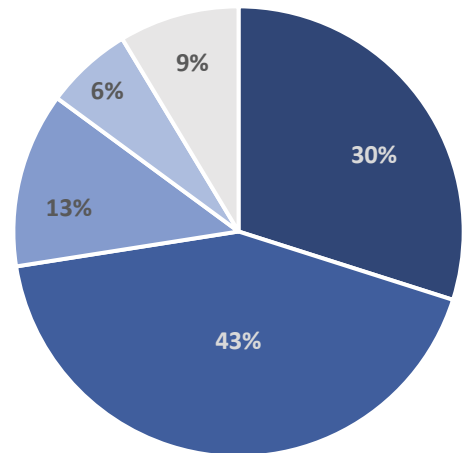


Figure 11. Residents' Satisfaction with Sheriff, Spokane County, 2019

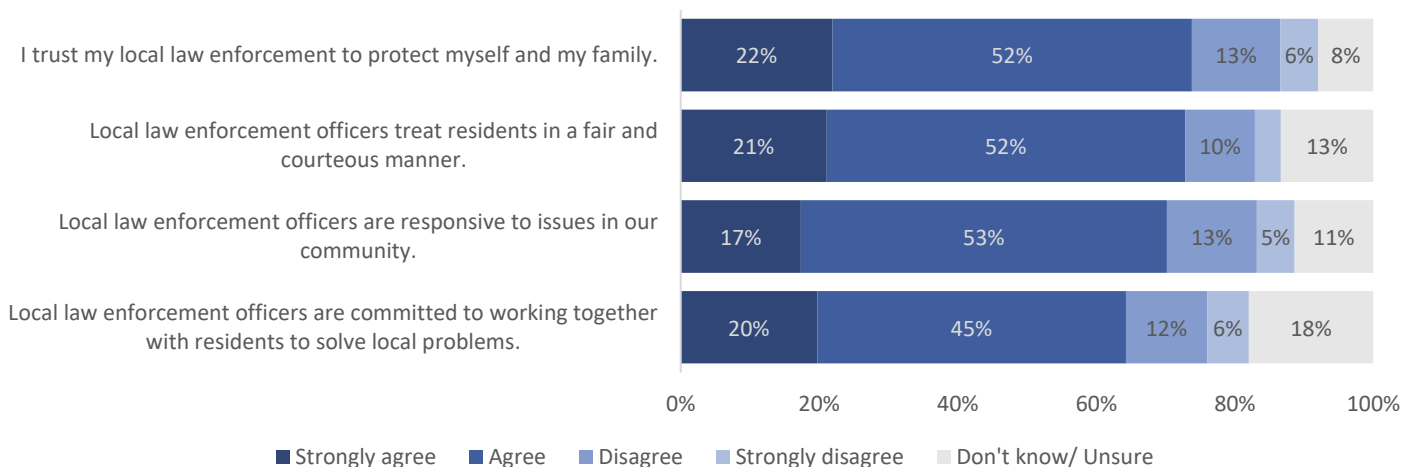


Nearly three-quarters of Spokane County residents reported they were “very” or “somewhat” satisfied with the local police (72%) and sheriff (73%), whereas approximately 20% of residents were dissatisfied (Figures 10 and 11).

Over the past five years, the proportions of Spokane County residents who were satisfied with the police and sheriff both increased. For police, the proportion of satisfied residents increased from 66% of residents satisfied in 2015 to 72% satisfied in 2019, and for sheriff, the proportion of satisfied residents increased from 69% in 2015 to 73% in 2019.

Trust in and Beliefs Regarding Local Law Enforcement

Figure 12. Beliefs about Local Law Enforcement, Spokane County, 2019



In 2019, nearly three-quarters of Spokane County residents trusted their local law enforcement (Figure 12). More than 70% of Spokane County residents also agreed with the statements, local law enforcement officers “treat residents in a fair and courteous manner” and “are responsive to issues in our community.”

Nearly one-fifth of Spokane County residents either disagreed with (18% of respondents) or were unsure (also 18% of respondents) if their local law enforcement officers were committed to working together with residents to solve local problems (Figure 12).

Conclusion

In 2019, most Spokane County residents felt safe walking in their neighborhood parks and green spaces during the day and alone at night, although the proportion that felt safe has slightly decreased over the past five years. Property crime, social disorder and drug crime were the top crimes residents perceived to be problems in their neighborhoods. Most residents were satisfied with the police and sheriff and trusted their local law enforcement to protect themselves and their families.

Sources: ¹ Maslow AH. A theory of human motivation. *Psychological Review*. 1943 Jul;50(4):370. ² Timperio A, Veitch J, Carver A. Safety in numbers: does perceived safety mediate associations between the neighborhood social environment and physical activity among women living in disadvantaged neighborhoods?. *Preventive Medicine*. 2015 May 1;74:49-54. ³ Lorenc T, Clayton S, Neary D, Whitehead M, Petticrew M, Thomson H, Cummins S, Sowden A, Renton A. Crime, fear of crime, environment, and mental health and wellbeing: mapping review of theories and causal pathways. *Health & Place*. 2012 Jul 1;18(4):757-65.

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