



Northeast Community Survey: Final Report

Report to the
East Anchorage Weed & Seed

by

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Justice Center
University of Alaska Anchorage



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Northeast Community Survey: Final Report

Executive Summary

Northeast Anchorage Weed & Seed Catchment Area

This report summarizes findings from a questionnaire mailed to residents within the catchment area of the East Anchorage Weed & Seed site. The *Northeast Community Survey* is the primary tool used by the East Anchorage Weed & Seed for evaluating the overall initiative. The East Anchorage Weed & Seed (hereafter “Northeast”) site is located, appropriately, in the northeast section of the city, bordered by the Glenn Highway to the north and Fort Richardson military reservation to the east; the southern boundary of the East Anchorage Weed & Seed catchment area is Debarr road, extending to Bragaw street, the western boundary. Population estimates for 2001 show a residential population for the area of more than 20,000 people living in nearly 7,600 households¹. Residents of Northeast Anchorage display a wide variety of ethnic and racial backgrounds. Compared to Anchorage as a whole, Northeast is significantly more diverse in terms of ethnic composition. Whereas 2000 census figures show the city of Anchorage as a whole to have a self-reported “white” population of 72 percent, the four census tracts² that make-up the Northeast community consists of only 62 percent whites³. The minority ethnic groups with the largest representation in Northeast Anchorage are African-Americans and Alaska Natives/American Indians, each comprising about 13 percent of the total community population, according to the 2000 census. Besides demonstrating a greater degree of ethnic diversity than the rest of Anchorage, Northeast Anchorage is also markedly older. The median age for the Northeast community is 39 years, while the median age for Anchorage as a whole is only 32 years. Females are in the majority in Northeast, constituting some 52 percent of the total population.

The demographic composition of the area served by the Northeast Weed & Seed initiative is of significance here because the returned questionnaires did not result in a representative sample of the community. To summarize, the sample collected is disproportionately white, female, childless and retired in a community that has significant numbers of minority racial and/or ethnic groups, males, children and employed persons. Thus, the findings presented below must be *read with a great deal of caution*. Simply stated, the findings reported here cannot even be generalized to the Northeast Anchorage community, let alone Anchorage as a whole. The specific shortcomings of the present sample and their implications for interpretation of the data are discussed in more detail in the full report.

The Weed & Seed Initiative

Weed & Seed is intended to be a collaborative enterprise bringing together private and public agencies “to improve the quality of life in targeted high-crime areas of American cities.”⁴ Weed &

Seed was begun in 1991 and consists of a two-part strategy for improving the quality of life in local communities. First, the program seeks to “weed out” problematic individuals and groups such as violent offenders and drug dealers who, through their behavior, serve to undermine the quality of life for community residents. Weeding is accomplished primarily through coordinated activities by criminal justice officials, for example geographically-targeted patrols by police and, coordinated efforts by local, state, and federal prosecutors. Once disruptive elements have been removed, and even during the weeding-out process, the initiative acts to “seed in” positive practices, programs and institutions that contribute to a better quality of life for neighborhoods, like human services and neighborhood revitalization efforts (e.g., neighborhood clean-up). Community policing strategies, whereby police officers work to develop contextualized, community specific solutions through strategic partnerships with community residents and institutions, are intended to stand as the bridge between “weeding” and “seeding” efforts, linking law enforcement with community-level initiatives⁵.

The analysis below is based on the results of a community survey designed to measure Northeast community residents’ level of satisfaction with the Northeast neighborhood as a place to live. More specifically, residents were asked to indicate the following:

- How safe they felt in their neighborhood, both during the day and at night
- The degree to which violent, property, and drug crimes are a problem in their neighborhood
- Whether or not the respondents, or family members, had been criminally victimized in their neighborhood
- Their satisfaction with local police activity (crime control, responsiveness, community engagement)
- Their satisfaction with the availability of various social services

In addition, respondents to the survey were asked about their own participation in community organizations and/or institutions. Finally, the survey asked Northeast residents if they were aware of human service organizations such as their local Weed & Seed office.

Summary of Findings

In general, survey respondents were satisfied with the quality of life in Northeast Anchorage. When asked, “In general how satisfied are you with this neighborhood as a place to live?” over 80 percent of those responding indicated that they were either “satisfied” or “very satisfied.” Drug sales and use are seen as the most pressing concern among those returning the survey. Well over half of those responding stated that drug sales and drug use were at least somewhat problematic (56% and 58% respectively). However, only 1 in 4 respondents viewed either of these things as a “big problem,” and more than 10 percent of respondents said that there was “no problem” at all with drug sales or drug use in Northeast Anchorage.

In parallel fashion, between 50 percent and 60 percent of respondents said that property and/or violent crime is problematic in the Northeast community. However, for property crimes (including burglary), nearly 4 in 10 respondents reported either that it was “no problem” or they “didn’t know”

if it was a problem. Further, 23 percent of respondents indicated that violent crime was “no problem,” and another 20 percent told us that they “didn’t know” whether or not violent crime was a problem in the community. The pattern that emerges among the respondents with regard to crime is one of general concern, but one that is neither specific nor pressing.

When respondents were asked if they felt safe⁶ in Northeast Anchorage, fewer than 1 in 10 respondents reported that they felt at all unsafe walking alone through the neighborhood during the day; 4 in 10 reported that they felt at least “somewhat” unsafe walking alone through their neighborhood at night. While not meaning to minimize the fear felt by this group, it is important to note that this level of “fear of crime” is consistent with national statistics. Data from the 1998 General Social Survey show that when a representative sample of Americans were asked, “Is there any area right around here—that is, within a mile—where you would be afraid to walk alone at night?” 41 percent responded “yes.” Therefore, it can be reasonably inferred that those Northeast residents that respond to the survey are not *more* fearful, in general, than other Americans about criminal victimization.

When asked about criminal victimization Northeast respondents that returned the survey duplicate yet another pattern in national crime statistics: they are rarely victimized, especially by violent crimes⁷. When they were the victims of crime, respondents and/or their family members were most likely to be the victims of a property crime. Slightly more than 20 percent of respondents reported that a family member, or the respondent themselves, had suffered a property victimization within the past two years. In contrast, the percentage reporting victimization fell to around 4 percent for the violent crimes of robbery, assault and attacks with weapons.

Respondent evaluations of local police were less than clear. Respondents were asked to evaluate police performance in reference to: a) order maintenance activities, b) controlling drug markets, and c) responsiveness to community concerns. Nearly a third of respondents reported that they “didn’t know” how police were doing with regard to the control of drug markets (31.5%) and responsiveness to community concerns (28.4%). Furthermore, when respondents *did* offer an opinion on these two items, their most frequent response was either that police did a “fair” job (24.6%) or were “somewhat responsive” (37.1%). Taken together, the data may suggest somewhat of a “disconnect” between the activities of local police and the public at large. Given the focus of the Weed & Seed initiative on community policing to link “weeding” strategies with “seeding” programs, this finding may be worthy of consideration and more detailed analysis.

As a concluding comment, it is important to note that respondents did not provide negative evaluations of the various police functions, but opted instead for what may be aptly described as non-committal responses.

Respondents to the survey were not active in such community activities as citizen patrols and anti-drug rallies. More people engaged in clean-up efforts. Marginal comments indicate that, at least for those responding to the survey, there is great concern for the “ghettoizing” of the Northeast community in terms of trash, unkempt yards, broken-down automobiles and other indicators of neighborhood degradation. The lack of participation in community-level anti-drug efforts is curious, given that more than half of respondents perceived drug sales and use to be a problem.

More often than not, respondents said that they were satisfied with the availability of such things as recreational programs for children, public transportation, and drug treatment services. However, most striking was the large number of residents that reported no knowledge of these community programs. In general, respondents have a very little knowledge of efforts to expand social services. Furthermore, those returning the survey not only had little knowledge about particular *programs* such as those just mentioned, but a large percentage had not even heard of community *organizations/institutions* such as Kid’s Kitchen or the Social Services Mall.

Conclusions

Because of the biased sample that was collected it is difficult, if not impossible, to reach any firm conclusions about the attitudes and perceptions of Northeast community residents. However, certain patterns did emerge among those that did respond to the survey, and so some conclusions can be reached *for the present sample*.

Perhaps the most significant finding is that these residents appear to be satisfied with the quality of life that the Northeast neighborhood provides them. Despite the acknowledgement of drugs markets and other crime, residents on the whole feel safe in Northeast Anchorage. And, in spite of having less than full information about community services, programs and organizations, respondents report a moderate level of satisfaction with community services. However, there is little doubt that this group of residents also perceives several problems in Northeast Anchorage explaining, in part, why they expended the energy to complete and return a four-page questionnaire⁸.

As mentioned above, the data do indicate that respondents are lacking knowledge about a variety of community and social services, as well as the activities of the local police. The informational disconnect between police and the public, if it indeed exists, would constitute a serious problem for the East Anchorage Weed & Seed initiative. This community-building enterprise has been conceived as achieving its goals of community building through collaboration and partnership between community residents, local service agencies and government. The informational gaps identified suggest there is much to be done in this regard.

The next point is an extension of the second and deals with the apparent “break” between local police activities and community residents. That those community residents taking the time to return the survey appear to be “in the dark” with respect to local police activities is particularly troubling because it is the *police* that serve as the conduit between private and public agencies and community residents. Survey responses suggest that there is no significant effort on the part of police to form an active partnership with community residents. Both the quantitative data and marginal comments by respondents strongly suggest that while police are often seen in cars there is little, if any, personal interaction between the police and the public. To the extent that police are needed to help link community members with community institutions as well as larger city institutions such as the criminal justice system, the East Anchorage Weed & Seed should expect to see only limited success in its efforts to build a healthier Northeast community⁹.

Finally, the importance of caution in interpreting these preliminary findings must be reiterated, as they emerged out of a survey sample that did not achieve representativeness. Those people that

completed and returned the *Northeast Community Survey* are different in significant ways than the underlying population of Northeast Anchorage, likely making responses patterns significantly different than those that would be rendered by the Northeast community as a whole.

Northeast Community Survey: Final Report

Introduction

This report summarizes findings from a self-administered questionnaire mailed to residents within the catchment area of the East Anchorage Weed & Seed site. The *Northeast Community Survey* is the primary tool used by the East Anchorage Weed & Seed for evaluating the overall initiative. The survey represents one part¹⁰ of a multi-dimensional evaluation of the East Anchorage Weed & Seed initiative and is intended to serve two purposes: 1) allow East Anchorage Weed & Seed to assess *changes* in resident perceptions, attitudes, and experiences between 1997 and the present, and; 2) provide *baseline* data for future community surveys. Unfortunately, the present survey is not representative of the underlying population of the East Anchorage Weed & Seed service area, rendering comparisons to past studies¹¹ of Northeast Anchorage resident attitudes and/or perceptions dubious.

Background

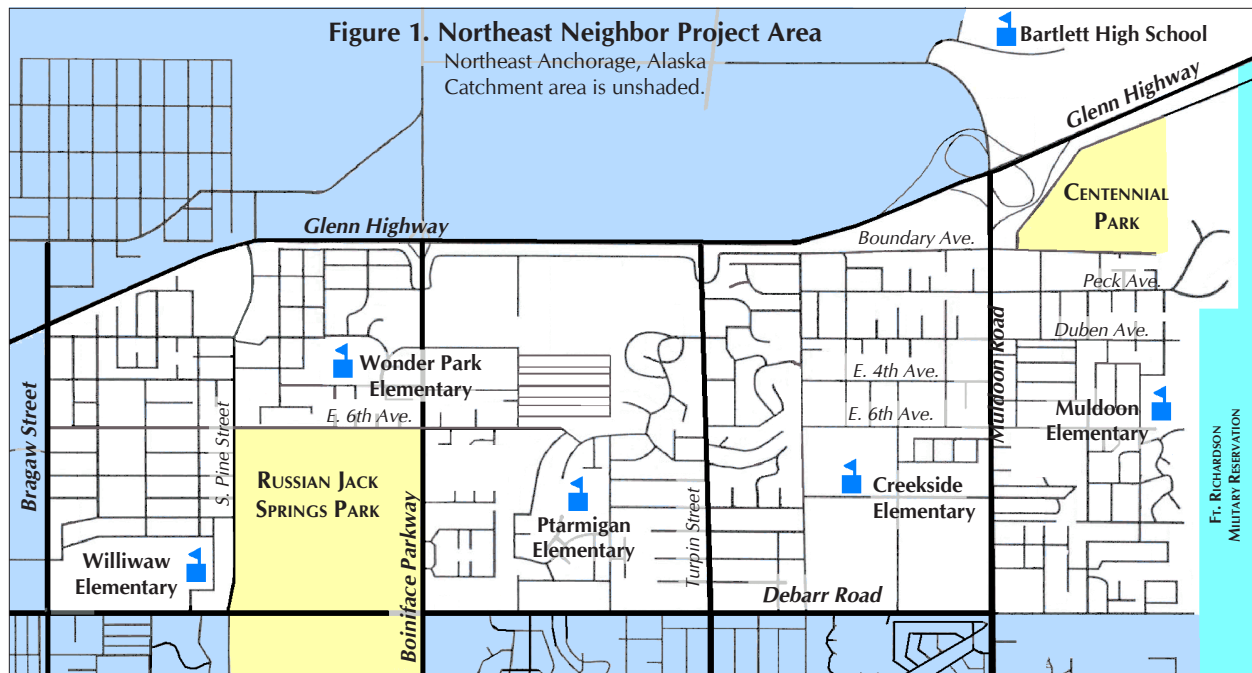
In autumn of 2001 the Justice Center at the University of Alaska-Anchorage was approached by the staff of East Anchorage Weed & Seed to conduct a community survey designed to measure Northeast community residents' level of satisfaction with the Northeast neighborhood as a place to live. More specifically, residents were asked to indicate the following:

- How safe they felt in their neighborhood, both during the day and at night
- The degree to which violent, property, and drug crimes are a problem in their neighborhood
- Whether or not the respondents, or family members, had been criminally victimized in their neighborhood
- Their satisfaction with local police activity (crime control, responsiveness, community engagement)
- Their satisfaction with the availability of various social services

In addition, respondents to the survey were asked about their own participation in community organizations and/or institutions. Finally, the survey asked Northeast residents if they were aware of human service organizations such as their local Weed & Seed office.

Northeast Anchorage Weed & Seed Catchment Area

The East Anchorage Weed & Seed site (hereafter "Northeast") is bordered by the Glenn Highway, a major east-west throughway, to the north and by Fort Richardson military reservation and Chugach Mountains to the east; the southern boundary of the Northeast community is Debarr Road, another major east-west traffic artery, extending to Bragaw Street to the west (see Figure 1).



The Northeast community is situated such that it is the first community area that visitors to the city encounter when entering from the west. Neighborhood zoning is predominantly residential but includes a number of dilapidated strip malls and other unsightly commercial buildings. Housing stock is dominated by multi-family structures; 58 percent of all housing units in the Northeast community are classified as such. Of the remaining stock that is classified as single-family housing, over half (54%) consists of mobile homes¹².

Population estimates for 2001 show a residential population for the area of more than 20,000 people living in nearly 7,600 households¹³. Residents of Northeast Anchorage display a wide variety of ethnic and racial backgrounds. Compared to Anchorage as a whole, Northeast is significantly more diverse in terms of ethnic composition. Whereas 2000 census figures show the city of Anchorage as a whole to have a self-reported non-white population of 28 percent, the four census tracts¹⁴ that make up the Northeast community consists of some 38 percent non-white residents¹⁵. The minority ethnic groups with the largest representation in Northeast Anchorage are African-Americans and Alaska Natives/American Indians, each comprising about 13 percent of the total community population, according to the 2000 census. The diversity of other minority groups is striking even if not represented by large constituencies and includes Korean, Japanese, Chinese, Vietnamese, Thai, Filipino, Laotian, Cambodian, Russian, Samoan, Latino, and Eastern European populations.

Besides demonstrating a greater degree of ethnic diversity than the rest of Anchorage, Northeast Anchorage is also markedly older. Data from the 2000 census show the median age for the Northeast community to be 39 years, while the median age for Anchorage as a whole is only 32 years. Despite having a higher median age, nearly one-third of Northeast's population (30% females; 32% males) is composed of people under the age of 18. Furthermore, fully 60 percent of those under 18 are children under the age of ten. Given the large number of children in Northeast Anchorage, it is not

surprising to learn that two-thirds of all households in the catchment area are family households¹⁶. In terms of gender, females are in the majority in Northeast, constituting some 52 percent of the total population.

The residents of Northeast Anchorage are at a distinct economic disadvantage compared to the rest of the city. The median household income for the Northeast neighborhood is \$32,445 compared to that of Anchorage as a whole which has a median household income of \$43,946.

This detailed description of Northeast Anchorage's demographic composition is provided at the outset because, as mentioned, the returned questionnaires did not result in a representative sample of the community, rendering the survey sample sharply biased. To summarize, the sample collected is disproportionately white, female, childless and retired in a community that has significant numbers of minority racial and/or ethnic groups, males, children and employed persons. Thus, the findings presented below must be *read with a great deal of caution*. Simply stated, the findings reported here cannot even be generalized to the Northeast Anchorage community, let alone Anchorage as a whole. The specific shortcomings of the present sample and their implications for interpretation of the data are discussed in more detail below.

Methodology

Instrumentation

The first goal of the *Northeast Community Survey* was to assess changes in attitudes and/or perceptions of residents. It was to accomplish this goal by producing information that could be compared to a local survey conducted in 1997¹⁷. This earlier study surveyed 800 residents and 200 businesses in an area that included the East Anchorage Weed & Seed catchment area (hereafter called the *COMPASS*¹⁸ *Survey*). This made the *COMPASS Survey* well suited for empirical comparisons of citizen attitudes and experiences. To facilitate direct comparison, the *Northeast Community Survey* incorporated several measures directly from the *COMPASS Survey*. The bulk of items included in the *Northeast Community Survey*, however, were borrowed from the 1997 national evaluation survey instrument used by the National Institute of Justice¹⁹. Inclusion of these items would allow researchers to situate the Anchorage results in a larger national context by affording the opportunity for direct comparison across a large number of items. Finally, a number of questions were included in the survey that tapped community issues such as municipal services and community organizations unique to Anchorage and the Northeast community. Because so much of the instrument consisted of survey items that had already been pre-tested and used in prior studies, the *Northeast Community Survey* did not undergo any pre-tests or trials prior to its fielding. The final product consisted of a four-page, forty-six item self-administered survey.

Sampling & Administration

A random sample of 1,500 addresses was selected from two years' worth of publicly available Permanent Fund Dividend (PFD) lists. The list is maintained by the PFD Division of the Alaska

Department of Revenue and is available via the internet²⁰. The PFD database is made available on the web in early May of each year and is updated quarterly. Addresses in the PFD list that fell within the East Anchorage Weed & Seed catchment area were included in the sampling frame. Because PFD payments are offered to every individual resident of the state of Alaska, that is, for every member of a household, the sampling frame was checked for duplicate addresses. When discovered, duplicates were deleted so that each address represented one unique record.

The questionnaires were prepared and mailed to an initial sample of 1,500 Northeast community *addresses* by East Anchorage Weed & Seed staff in envelopes that had the UAA Justice Center address printed on them as the return address. Of the 1,500 instruments mailed, 11 were returned because they did not have a delivery address affixed, reducing the size of the pool of eligible addresses to 1,489. Over the course of the data collection period, 151 questionnaires were returned because of insufficient or incorrect address, further reducing the pool of eligibles to 1,338.

A total of 275 residents completed and returned the questionnaire within the specified data collection period (June 10—July 26, 2002). Since that time an additional 22 questionnaires have been completed and returned, but not included in the summary and analysis below. Due to resource constraints, follow-up procedures such as post card reminders and/or door-to-door interviews were not implemented. The final response rate for the survey, excluding questionnaires received outside

the data collection period, is $\left(\left(\frac{275}{1,338}\right)\times 100\right) = 20.6\%$; if the 22 excluded questionnaires are subtracted from the total number of eligible addresses, the response rate increases to

$\left(\left(\frac{275}{1,316}\right)\times 100\right) = 20.9\%$ —an insignificant change not likely to alter the findings described below.

There is no hard rule for determining “adequate” response rate, but survey researchers generally agree that the bottom threshold is 50 percent. A response rate of 75 percent is considered quite good and 90 percent is excellent (but *very* difficult to achieve). As a point of comparison, the decennial “census” conducted by the federal government achieves a response rate of about 95 percent²¹.

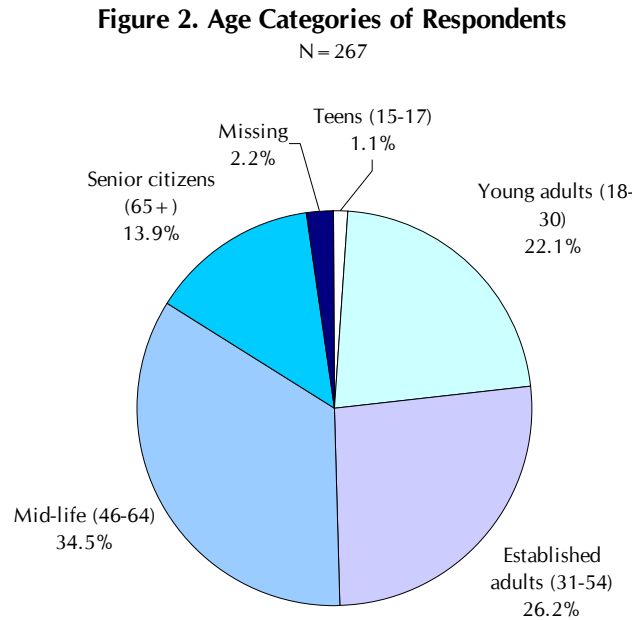
A low response rate has several adverse effects, the most serious of which is that survey results can be very different from those that would be obtained if everyone in the community responded. When researchers fail to achieve an adequate response rate they must take great caution in generalizing the results. Because the response rate for the present survey is so low (between 20% and 21%), the findings presented below cannot be generalized to the Northeast community, thus rendering comparisons between the *Northeast Community Survey* and prior studies suspect, as well as hindering the survey’s utility as a baseline for future research. That noted this report presents a description of respondents and results of the survey with appropriate cautions.

The Present Sample

The *Northeast Community Survey* asked respondents a limited set of questions tapping demographic variables. Specifically, respondents were asked to report on personal identity characteristics (age, gender, and race/ethnicity), tenure of residence in the Northeast community (years of residence; months of residence if under 1 year), household composition (number of adults and juveniles in residence at time of survey) and current work status. A summary of the demographic composition of the sample based on each of these factors is provided below.

Age

Information on age was recorded by respondents on the questionnaire in response to the direct query, “How old are you?” Ninety-eight percent of the 267²² surveys returned contained an age entry. When the present results are compared to other research conducted in the Northeast community, a substantial age bias begins to emerge. Respondents for the *Northeast Community Survey* were typically just entering middle-age with a median age of 45 years. Those between the ages of 46 and 64 represent the largest age segment for those responding (see Figure 2).



According to data from the 2000 census, the median age for Anchorage as a whole is 32 years and the median age for the four census tracts contained within the Northeast community is 39 years, thus making respondents to the *Northeast Community Survey* markedly older in comparison (see Table 1).

Ethnicity/Race

Northeast community members responding to the survey overwhelmingly classified themselves as “white.” Fully seventy-five percent of respondents indicated that they were “white” and nothing else and another 3 percent of respondents reported a mixed racial background that included “white.”²³ In descending order, respondents also reported the following ethnic identities (see Figure 3 for a graphic depiction of ethnicity distribution): “Alaska Native” only 6.0 percent; “Black” only 5.2

Table 1. Data Source/Study*

	Northeast Community Survey (N = 267)	COMPASS Survey, 1997	2000 Census for Northeast Community ¹	2000 Census for Anchorage, Alaska
Age				
Median age	45 years	31-40 years	39 years ²	32 years
Race/ethnicity				
White/Caucasian	75 %	77 %	62.8 %	72 %
Alaska Native/American Indian	7	7	12.7	7
Black/African-American	5	7	13.4	6
Hispanic	5	3	8.0	6 ³
Asian/Pacific Islander	2	NR	8.0	6
Other ⁴	2	4	3.1	2
Gender/sex				
Female	65 %	57 %	51.5 % ²	49 %
Male	35	43	48.5	51
Household composition				
With person under 18 years old	38 %	NR %	NR ⁵	42 %
Single occupancy	20	7	NR ⁵	23
Length of residence				
Less than 1 year	10 %	14 %	NR	NR
5 years or less	45	41	NR	NR
Work status				
Employed full time	54 %	NR %	NR	NR
Active duty military	3	7 ⁶	NR	NR
Employed part time	6	NR	NR	NR
Unemployed	4	9	NR	NR
Retired	20	10	NR	NR

* Totals may not add to 100% due to rounding.

¹ Census tracts: 7.01, 7.02, 7.03, and 8.01.

² Household residents 18 years and older only.

³ In the Census, Hispanic origin is asked as a separate item, whereas for the *Northeast Community* and the *Assets and Aspirations of the Northeast Community* surveys included Hispanic origin *within* the one race/ethnicity item.

⁴ Includes actual “other” responses (N = 5) as well as five multiracial combinations (N = 10) and non-responses (N = 4).

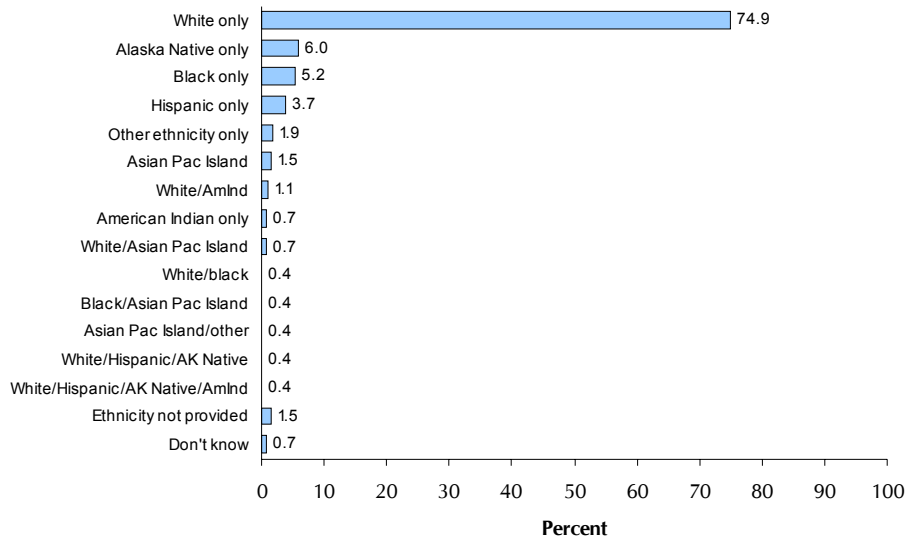
⁵ These data were not compiled or released by the Bureau of the Census at the time of this writing.

⁶ The survey asked if respondent was “a member of the military,” not if the respondent was on *active duty*, therefore those respondents who are also in the national guard or reserve are presumably included in this estimate.

percent; “Hispanic” only 3.7 percent; “Other ethnicity” only 1.9 percent; “Asian/Pacific Islander” only 1.5 percent; “American Indian” only .7 percent; “Black” and “Asian/Pacific Islander” .4 percent; “Asian/Pacific Islander” and “Other” .4 percent; and those did not report their ethnicity, or reported that they didn’t know, constituted a combined 2.2 percent.

Figure 3. Ethnicity Distribution

N = 267



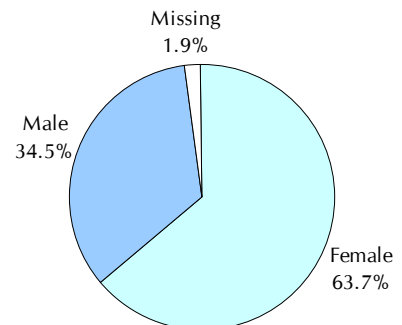
Information gathered from the 2000 census shows the race/ethnic distribution of Anchorage very similar to that gathered from the *Northeast Community Survey*. Census data for the city of Anchorage as a whole indicate that of those reporting only one race/ethnicity, 72 percent reported themselves to be “white,” 7.3 percent stated they were “American Indian or Alaska Native,” 5.8 percent reported being “Black or African American” and 5.5 percent reported being of Asian descent. However, according to the census, the Northeast community has a higher concentration of minority residents than the remainder of Anchorage (see Table 1); thus, when racial composition is examined within the specific context of the Northeast community the present sample was clearly not representative. The *Northeast Community Survey* contained an over abundance of “white” respondents and drastically undersampled Black/African-Americans, Alaska Native/American Indians, Asian/Pacific Islanders and Hispanics.

Gender

In terms of the gender distribution of responses to the *Northeast Community Survey*, women clearly dominate. At 64 percent of all respondents, the proportion of women respondents was nearly twice that of males (see Figure 4). Data gathered from the 2000 census shows a nearly equal proportion of men and women among Anchorage residents with 51 percent males and

Figure 4. Gender Distribution

N = 267



49 percent females. When these data are examined for only the Northeast community, the percentage of females increases only slightly from 49 percent to 52 percent. Thus, even though the Northeast community has a slightly higher concentration of females than the city of Anchorage as a whole, the present sample contains a disproportionate amount of female responses. The end result of this oversampling of females is a substantial gender bias.

Household Composition

A clear majority (62%) of respondents indicated that there were no juveniles living in their residence at the time of this study. Another 30.5 percent of respondents reported that one (17.2%) or two (13.1%) persons under the age of 18 years lived in the household. What these data show is that for those persons who responded to the *Northeast Community Survey*, over 90 percent were members of small families with few, if any, children.

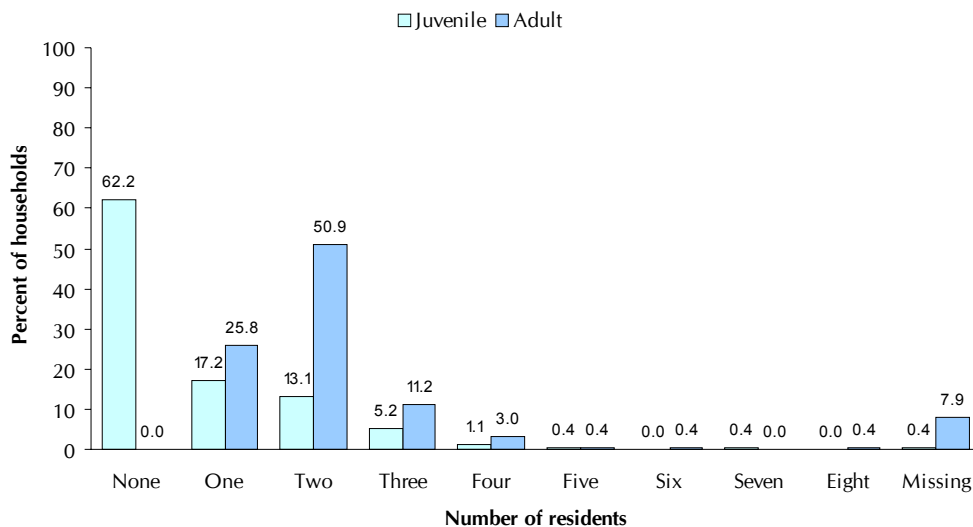
On the other hand, the number of persons above the age of 18 living in respondents' households was usually more than one and not infrequently more than two (see Figure 5).

The *Northeast Community Survey* did not ask respondents to report their current marital status, so there is no direct measure available to indicate the degree to which multi-adult households represent domestic couplings. However, it might be reasonably inferred that, to the degree multi-adult households *are* indicative of domestic couplings such households do not have children.

Both correlational and cross-tabular analyses bear this out. The zero-order correlation between the number of persons aged 18 or over in the respondents' households and the number of persons under the age of 18 in respondents' households is very weak ($r = .097, p\text{-value} = .131$). Furthermore, when both number of persons aged 18 or over and number of persons less than 18 years are dichotomized, there remains no statistically significant difference between multi-adult households

Figure 5. Number of Juvenile and Adult Residents in Respondents' Households

N = 267



and single-adult households and the likelihood of children being present (Chi-square = 3.75, p -value >.05).

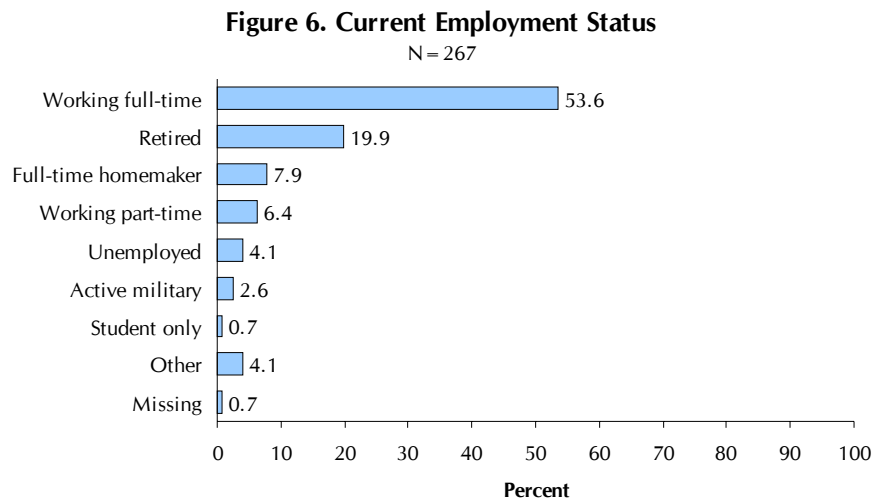
The only data with which to compare the present findings for this household composition indicator come from the 2000 Census for the entire city of Anchorage. In 2000, approximately 42 percent of Anchorage households contained residents under the age of 18, which is close to the roughly 38 percent of survey respondents who reported no minors in their household. However, data already discussed in this report shows that nearly one-third of Northeast's population is under the age of 18, and furthermore of those under 18 fully 60 percent of them are under the age of ten. Beyond this, anecdotal evidence from discussions with local residents and direct observations also suggest that there is a substantial population of young children in within the East Anchorage Weed & Seed service area. Given the age and gender biases already discussed, it is not inconceivable to think that the *Northeast Community Survey* also failed to accurately tap the proportion of households with children.

Current Work Status

Respondents to the *Northeast Community Survey* predominately reported being employed full-time outside the home (57%, including active military status). Figure 6 below provides a graphic representation of the various work statuses reported by survey respondents.

Male respondents were found to be slightly more likely to be employed full-time outside the home, while the women that completed the survey were much more likely to report being full-time homemakers. A relatively large segment (20%) of survey respondents reported being "retired" and a combined 10 percent of survey respondents reported being "unemployed, looking for work" or "employed part-time." Coupled with the 20 percent of respondents that report their current work status as "retired," nearly one-third of the *Northeast Community Survey* respondents do not regularly participate in the Anchorage workforce.

The gender bias discussed above is informed by work status in that male respondents were significantly more likely to report being employed full-time, and female respondents were more



likely to report being full-time homemakers. It is conceivable to interpret these findings to mean that the higher response rate of women is perhaps an artifact of *access*: assuming mail is delivered during the day to resident homes, female respondents stand a better chance of receiving the survey through the mail than their male counterparts and thus, all else equal, would be more likely to complete it.

In addition, of those that returned the *Northeast Community Survey*, fully 20 percent reported being retired. The *COMPASS Survey*, which provides the only comparative data for retirees for the Northeast community, had only 10 percent of their respondents reporting their work status as “retired.” Considering that only twelve percent of Anchorage’s population is age 55 or older, it is likely that the present study over-sampled retirees. It becomes even more plausible given the age bias of the sample discussed previously. As it did with gender, work status also provides context for understanding the higher median age of the sample as compared to 2000 census data, as well as that of the *COMPASS Survey*. Over-sampling of retirees, much like the oversampling of women, is likely also a product of *access* to respondents. Retirees are not only more likely to be at home when mail arrives, and thus be more likely to receive the survey, but they are also more likely to have the *time* to complete it by virtue of no longer participating in the workforce.

Residential Stability

Respondents to the *Northeast Community Survey* are, in general, new to the neighborhood, although the length of residence variable displayed a wide range of values. The least amount of time (in years) reported by respondents was zero; the maximum reported length of residency was 55 years. The most *frequent* response of those that answered the question asking how many YEARS they had lived in Northeast neighborhood was “0” (10%), followed closely by those answering that they had lived in the Northeast community for “1” year (9.7%). Of those that stated they had lived in the Northeast community for less than one year, more than half (57%) reported living there 6 months or less. Fully 45 percent of respondents indicated on the survey that they had lived in the neighborhood for 5 years or less. As a point of comparison, the *COMPASS Survey* that 41 percent of resident respondents had lived in the Northeast community for 5 years or less. When these findings are viewed together, the relative lack of residential stability among the Northeast community members appears to be a fairly consistent finding.

In fact, transience of the resident population seems to be a defining characteristic of Alaska in general, and Anchorage in particular. The percent of “foreign-born” residents in Alaska approaches nearly 75 percent. According to a report published by the municipal government of Anchorage, 6 percent of all Anchorage residents were born outside the United States and another 66 percent were born in the U.S., but in another state²⁴.

Northeast Anchorage demonstrates a highly cyclical pattern of residential stability and has witnessed significant population surges and declines. According to census figures from 1960, Northeast Anchorage had a resident population of 17,837; by 1996 that figure had increased to 78,146. But, the population increase cannot be described as “steady.” The largest population increase came between the 1970 census and 1980 census, where there was a 50 percent increase in population.

From 1980 to 1985 the population continued to swell, peaking at 77,565 residents, only to see a 16 percent population decrease between 1985 and 1988. Since the late 1980's Northeast Anchorage's population growth has been somewhat steady, demonstrating a consistent increase characterized by fits and starts.

Conclusion

Despite efforts to draw a sample representative of the community the *Northeast Community Survey* was unable to achieve this goal. Respondents to the *Northeast Community Survey* are in many ways different from both the underlying population of the community, as well as Anchorage as a whole.

Women are disproportionately represented in the *Northeast Community Survey*. Census data show females to comprise approximately half (49%) of the total population of Anchorage, and 52 percent of the Northeast community. However, both the *COMPASS Survey* of 1997 and the *Northeast Community Survey* report greater proportions of females. Results from the *COMPASS Survey* show that 57 percent of the respondents to that study were women, a figure substantially different from those reported by the census which suggests that study also suffered gender bias in its sample. In even more dramatic fashion, 65 percent of respondents to the *Northeast Community Survey* were female. One explanation for what appears to be a systematic sampling bias in studies conducted in Northeast is that more women responded because they are more likely to be at home during the daytime, when the mail is delivered²⁵.

As shown in Table 1, survey respondents were significantly older than Anchorage as a whole, with a median age of 45 years. Even when the older median age of the Northeast Community is taken into account, the *Northeast Community Survey* sample still demonstrates a significant age bias. The higher median age for the Northeast Community is not the result of a gender effect, as there is no appreciable difference in the median ages of men and women in the Northeast community. Data from the 2000 Census show that the median age for adult males in the Northeast community is 38 years, while that of females is 39 years. So while women were disproportionately represented in sample (65%) this did not effect the overall age distribution of the sample.

The answer to why the present sample is biased in terms of age is partially provided by an examination of respondent work status. The survey is biased not only in terms of age, but in terms of work status as well. One-fifth of respondents reported being "retired." Comparative data on Northeast Anchorage resident work status are limited to one similar study conducted in the same community five years prior to the *Northeast Community Survey*. There is a high degree of disagreement between the two studies as the *COMPASS Survey* reported only 10 percent of their respondents' work status was "retired." When one considers data from the 2000 Census showing that only 5.5 percent of Anchorage residents are aged 65 or older, and the median age for the city is 32 years, the 20 percent of Northeast Community residents responding to the survey stating that they are "retired" appears to be a clear indication of over-sampling of this group. Because retirement is directly related to age, a disproportionate number of retirees systematically inflates the age distribution of the sample.

In terms of racial and/or ethnic background, the *Northeast Community Survey*, again, is not very representative of the community. Minorities have been noticeably under-sampled. Particularly troublesome is that the *Northeast Community Survey* was not successful in its sampling of Alaska Natives and African American residents, two significant minority populations in Northeast Anchorage.

Survey results show that respondent households were largely composed of single members, or small, childless families—a finding that is problematic. Twenty percent of respondents to the *Northeast Community Survey* reported living alone and less than 40 percent indicated that they lived in a household with at least one person under the age of 18. Yet, available data show the Northeast community to be bustling with children below the age of 18. According to data from the 2000 census, almost one-third of the entire population of the Northeast community is less than eighteen years old, with 2 out of every 3 minors under the age of ten. Further, direct observation of the area and anecdotal evidence from conversations with those familiar with the community suggest that there is much higher proportion of households with children in them than what is reflected in the *Northeast Community Survey*.

Length-of-residence findings from the present study are highly consistent with those of the other available studies. Ten percent of respondents to the *Northeast Community Survey* told us that they had resided in the community for less than one year; fully forty-five percent reported that they had not lived in the neighborhood five years or more. The *COMPASS Survey* also found a significant proportion of residents (14%) having lived in Northeast Anchorage for less than one year. Additionally, both the *COMPASS Survey* and the *Demographic Profile* for Anchorage find quite a large percentage of respondents having lived in the community for 5 years or less (41% and 31% respectively). Thus, in a slight twist of irony, residential instability is one of the more stable characteristics of the Northeast Community.

Perceptions of Public Safety

In general, respondents to the *Northeast Community Survey* felt safe in their neighborhood. The *Survey* incorporated two measures of perceived safety. The first asked respondents to indicate how safe they felt when they were out alone in the neighborhood during the daytime; the second asked respondents to report how safe they felt when out alone in the neighborhood at night. A decisive majority of respondents indicated that they felt either “somewhat safe” or “very safe” across both items. That noted, it is clear that these respondents felt much safer when out alone during the *day* than when out alone at night. Less than 10 percent of the 266 respondents that answered the daytime question indicated that they felt at all unsafe. In contrast, nearly 43 percent of these same respondents indicated that they felt either “somewhat unsafe” or “very unsafe” when out alone at night in the Northeast community.

Because of the sharp gender bias in the survey, these results were disaggregated so that differences between men and women could be accounted for. When gender-specific responses are analyzed there was no appreciable difference between males and females when asked about how

safe they felt when out alone in the neighborhood during the day. But, there is a marginally significant difference in the perceived safety between men and women when it comes to being out alone in the neighborhood at *night* ($Chi\text{-square} = 7.903, p\text{-value} = .095$). Women are about half again as likely as males to report feeling “somewhat unsafe” when out alone at night, and twice as likely to say that they feel “very unsafe” when out alone at night in their neighborhood.

While there is a nominal difference in perceived vulnerability between retirees and younger respondents, there is no statistically meaningful difference in levels of perceived safety across age groups²⁶. When age is controlled, the small but significant difference in perceived safety between males and females fails to achieve statistical significance.

Finally, there is no difference in levels of perceived safety for Black/African-American, White, Alaska Native or other racial/ethnic groups, regardless of time of day that a respondent might be out alone in the neighborhood.

To summarize, in general respondents to the survey feel quite safe in the Northeast community. While there is some apprehension by respondents regarding going out alone at night, they still reported a relatively high level of perceived safety. This general sense of security was not found to differ significantly across sexes, age groups, or by ethnicity.

Perceived Problems in the Northeast Community

An interesting pattern emerged in the responses to questions that asked respondents whether or not any of a series of potentially disruptive and/or criminal activities were a “small problem,” “a big problem,” or “no problem” at all (see Table 2).

The last column of Table 2 presents the percentage of respondents that answered “don’t know” to potential community problems listed in the first column of the table. Nearly a third of respondents indicated that they “didn’t know” whether or not drug sales (30.7%), drug use (30.0%) or drug dealers in public (30.3%) were a “big problem,” a “small problem,” or “no problem at all.” Furthermore, this group of residents registered significant percentages of “don’t know” responses for burglary, violent crimes, robbery and/or street crime, gang activity and the number of alcohol-serving establishments in their neighborhood.

Table 2. Perceived Community Problems

Percent responding.

	Big problem	Small problem	No problem	Don't know
Drug sales out of homes	25.8 %	30.3 %	13.1 %	30.7 %
Drug use	25.1	32.7	12.2	30.0
Drug dealers in public places	10.6	32.6	26.5	30.3
Burglary/property crime	21.1	40.6	13.9	24.4
Violent crimes	20.0	37.4	23.0	19.6
Robbery/street crimes	14.7	29.7	26.3	29.3
Gang activity	15.1	32.1	24.2	28.7
Number of alcohol-serving establishments	14.3	25.7	41.9	18.1

On the surface, this may suggest somewhat of a “disconnect” between respondents and the surrounding community for it is one thing to rate activities as problematic or not, but to indicate *no knowledge* of an activity is entirely different. The implication of such speculation is that this group of respondents may not be ideally suited as evaluators of community programs and institutions because of their lack of knowledge about community activity. When items tapping citizen satisfaction with community services and participation in community activities are examined (see discussion below) this initial interpretation finds more support.

An equally interesting finding involved respondents’ views of local alcohol-serving establishments. Bars and other business establishments that serve alcohol are seen as the *least* problematic of the eight potential community problems presented to respondents. Most striking are the nearly 42 percent of respondents that indicate alcohol-serving establishments are no problem at all.

The activity most consistently perceived as problematic by respondents who *did* register an opinion was drug sales out of private residences, with actual drug *use* not far behind. This finding is somewhat curious, given that happenings within the confines of a private residence are closed to prying eyes, and thus not directly observable by outsiders. If drug sales are not directly observed, how do drug sales come to be perceived by a preponderance of respondents as a “big problem?” The perceptual dynamics involved are not clear from the data. But, when the large percentage of respondents that reported they “didn’t know” whether or not drug offenses were a problem in their neighborhood is considered, the veracity of respondent perceptions of drug sales behind closed doors becomes somewhat dubious.

One explanation for widespread concern is one or more neighborhood “drug houses” which each respondent consciously or subconsciously referred to when they indicated that drug sales in homes were a problem. One Northeast neighbor commented,

We have a drug house for the last 12 years at 4526 E 4th Ave. Police know it’s there but don’t do anything about it. (Northeast Neighbor #245)

Yet, public drug sales by dealers which *can* be directly observed are seen as a “big problem” by only 10 percent of respondents and a “small problem” by another 32 percent. One respondent stated in marginal comments that drug dealers on the streets used to be a problem, but “patrols” had “cleaned them up.” This may partially explain why the data show a lower level of concern for such behavior. Drug use, another behavior that can be directly observed in public and semi-public spaces, is seen by one quarter of those responding as a “big problem,” with another 32 percent reporting that it is a “small problem.” These findings stand on firmer ground as they are, at least in theory, directly observable by respondents. When viewed together, “drugs” are perceived to be a problem by survey respondents, but the specifics of this concern remain to be explored.

Violent crimes are seen as much less problematic by *Northeast Community Survey* respondents. Street crimes such as robbery are not perceived to be much of a problem, with only 15 percent reporting that they felt such crime was a “big problem” and another 30 percent indicating that such

street crime is a “small problem.” In comparison, violent crimes such as “shootings, assaults, and so forth” are seen as a big problem by a fifth of respondents and a small problem by another 37 percent. One individual wrote on their survey that they use a police scanner to track the goings-on in the community. Most troubling to this resident was the large number of incidents in which guns were involved. He stated in part,

I am very upset about the gang activity (4 shootings on mother’s day) and the police/mayor not informing WE the people. I listen to the police scanner to educate myself and there is a minimum of one a day gun activity. (Northeast Neighbor #151)

A larger perceived problem in the Northeast community is property crime, including burglary. In terms of crime, property crimes are a much greater concern than drug or violent crime. Nearly two-thirds of respondents told us that they perceived property crimes in the neighborhood to be problematic, with some 21 percent stating that property crimes were a big problem.

Finally, the perception of gangs in the Northeast community can be described as one of irritation. More than twice as many respondents reported gangs to be a small problem (32.1%) than a big problem (15.2%). Comments written in the margins of several questionnaires tell a story of concern for unsupervised youth that, as respondent #48 stated, are a “big problem [in] summertime.” Those that provided written comments on the survey repeatedly noted a struggle to keep teens from speeding through Northeast and playing loud music. One respondent was quite distressed about the noise.

This survey does not address the biggest factor in the quality of our lives in the neighborhood, that is the noise. We are plagued by car/stereo noise from gangs—punks & others—eliminate this noise & we can deal with the other problems. (Northeast Neighbor #127)

Another resident actually pleaded for help:

One problem, too much loud music in neighborhood at night (boom boxes, etc.), not good, please help. (Northeast Neighbor #174)

While impassioned pleas for help dealing with noise may sound somewhat trivial, this was a consistent concern for those that responded to the survey. For others, it is not noise *per se* that is the problem, but speeders showing no regard for the safety of community residents—particularly children.

Our biggest concern are the speeders on our streets. They drag race from Bragaw to Pine and have been clocked doing 63 MPH with several small children in the area. This could be fatal. (Northeast Neighbor #147)

Muldoon Rd. is a high-speed raceway at nite. (Northeast Neighbor #214)

The safety issue I see in my neighborhood is speeding on Turpin Road and the housing areas. (Northeast Neighbor #121)

The traffic is nonstop through our residential...feel it is a through street when in fact it is not... Speeding/don't obey speed limits. (Northeast Neighbor #151)

There does not seem to be a connection for respondents between gang activity and their most pressing crime issue—property crime.

Criminal Victimization

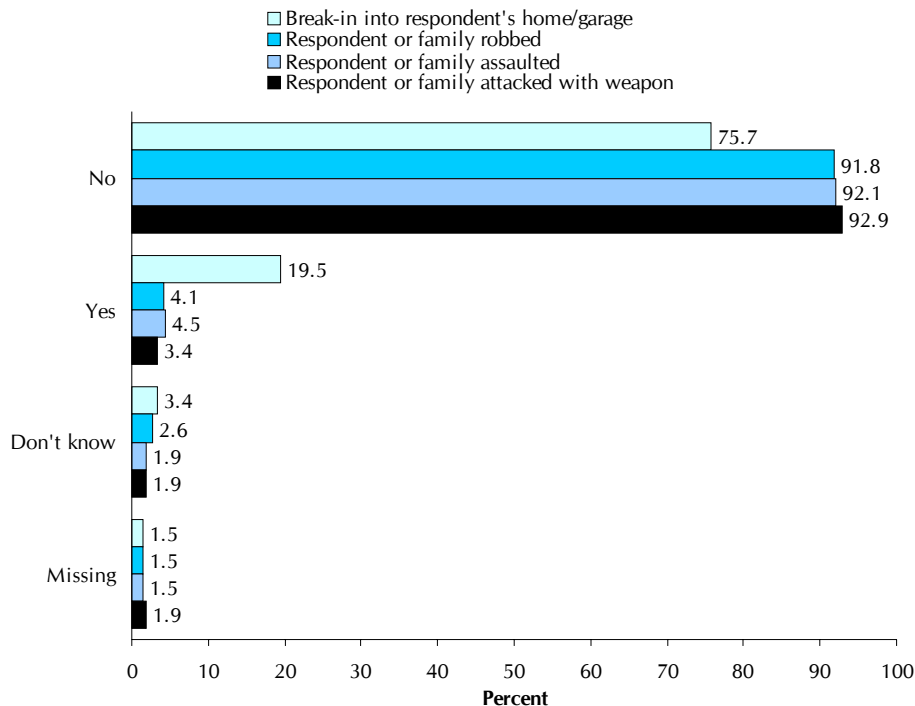
The *Northeast Community Survey* asked respondents global questions about their own personal victimization experiences as well as those for their family members²⁷. The following analysis is based on the responses of those that both lived in the Northeast community at the time of the survey and lived there for at least the last two years²⁸.

Consistent with national data, the residents of the Northeast neighborhood that responded to the survey report very little personal experience with criminal victimization (see Figure 7).

In line with levels of perceived safety, respondents were more likely to suffer a property victimization (i.e., burglary) than a violent crime such as robbery, assault or aggravated assault.

Figure 7. Victimization within Past Two Years

Includes only those respondents who had lived in Northeast Anchorage for at least two years.
N = 230

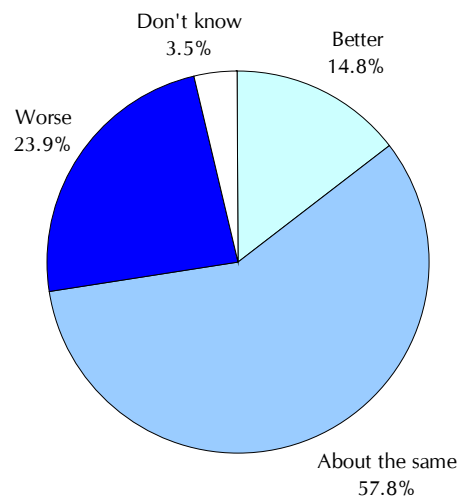


This suggests, at least on the surface, that there is a link between direct experience with criminal victimization and perceptions of safety in one's neighborhood. However, the present sample is not large enough, and criminal victimization too rare an event to allow for a more detailed analysis of this hypothesis. Overall, there is evidence that there simply isn't a great deal of crime in the Northeast community, or at least that crime levels are low enough to be seen as relatively unproblematic by residents. As one person put it, "Drugs and crimes are low in our neighborhood, I am happy to say."

Respondents were also asked to rate the overall quality of life in the Northeast community over this same two-year time period (see Figure 8). Nearly three quarters of the 230 respondents answering the question indicated that they did not think the quality of life had declined in the last two years. However, only 14 percent stated that they felt the quality of life had *improved* in the last two years. By and large, respondents to the *Northeast Community Survey* felt little had changed in the community in regard to general quality of life.

Figure 8. Perception of Change in Quality of Life over Past Two Years

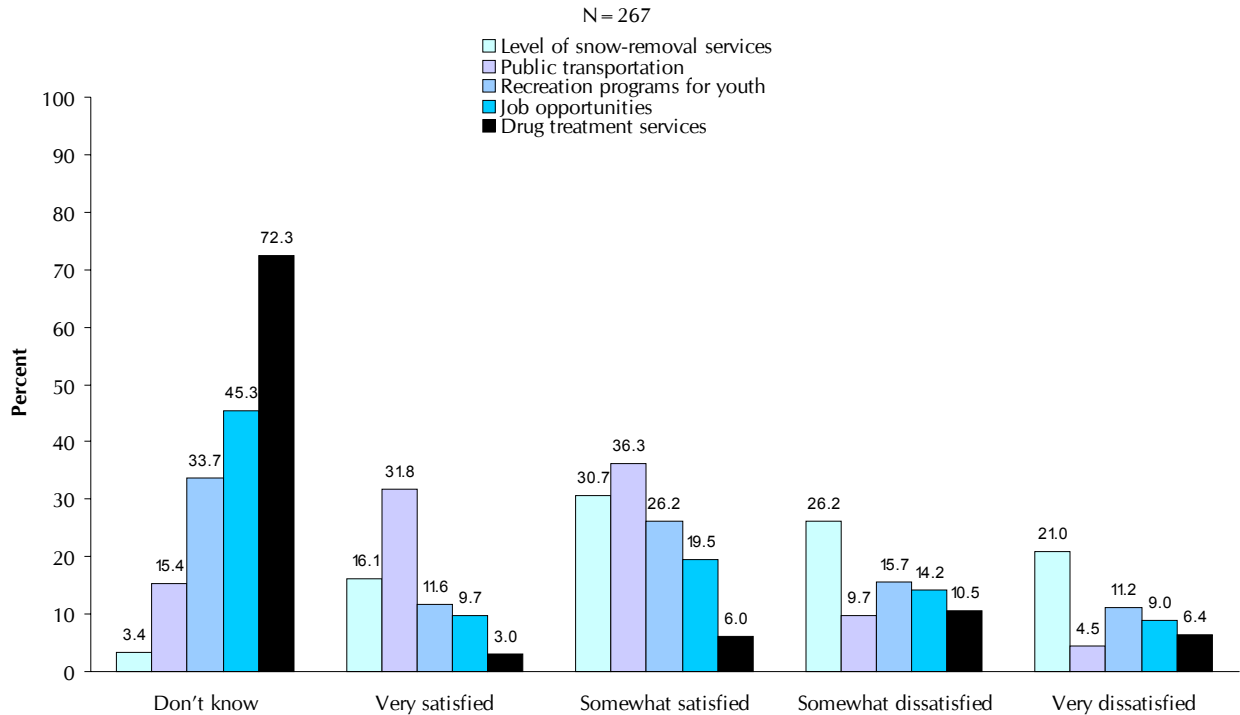
Includes only those respondents who had lived in Northeast Anchorage for at least two years.
(N = 230)



Neighborhood Satisfaction

In parallel fashion to results previously discussed concerning community problems, respondents to the *Northeast Community Survey* demonstrated very little knowledge about several neighborhood programs, which are believed to contribute to the overall health of the community (see Figure 9).

When respondents were asked about their satisfaction with the "availability of sports, recreation, and other programs for youth" in the Northeast area more than a third (33.7%) responded "don't know." Additionally, more than four of every ten respondents (45.3%) responded "don't know" when asked about their satisfaction with job opportunities in the Northeast community. Nearly

Figure 9. Respondent Satisfaction with Services

three-quarters of respondents (74%) responded “don’t know” to an item asking them about their satisfaction with drug treatment services in the Northeast neighborhood. Because of the age and work status biases present in the sample, it makes sense that respondents do not report having knowledge of youth programs and job opportunities—this group of respondents is neither youthful nor do they regularly participate in the job market. It would be much more surprising had more people registered an opinion on these two issues. It is less clear why respondents possessed so little knowledge of drug treatment services.

But, what about those that did form an opinion on these three items? Generally speaking, respondents were satisfied with the availability of youth recreation programs (see Figure 9). In contrast, there was general *dissatisfaction* with the availability of drug treatment services in the Northeast community amongst those that provided an opinion. Nearly twice as many respondents were at least “somewhat dissatisfied” with the availability of drug treatment services than were satisfied with such services. And finally, by a margin of about 5 percent, respondents were more satisfied than dissatisfied with the availability of jobs—again, of those that had an opinion.

Supporters of the public transportation system in Anchorage can take heart in knowing that those that responded to the *Northeast Community Survey* demonstrated a high degree of approval for public transportation systems in the community. Over two-thirds of respondents felt satisfied with the level of public transportation, as compared to only 14 percent who said they were dissatisfied with the public transportation system (the remainder had no opinion or did not respond). In one case, an individual took the effort to write on the survey that there were *too many* buses and that they needed to be scaled back.

Public officials must also take the bad news with the good news. As supportive as respondents were of the public transportation system, a large percentage of respondents were generally unhappy with current levels of snow-removal services in the Northeast neighborhood. Nearly half of our respondents reported some dissatisfaction with current snow removal services. One neighborhood resident stated emphatically,

Snow removal is a JOKE!—they come down our street and practice turning around when there’s NO SNOW, but when it snows you never see them!!!
(Northeast Neighbor #81)

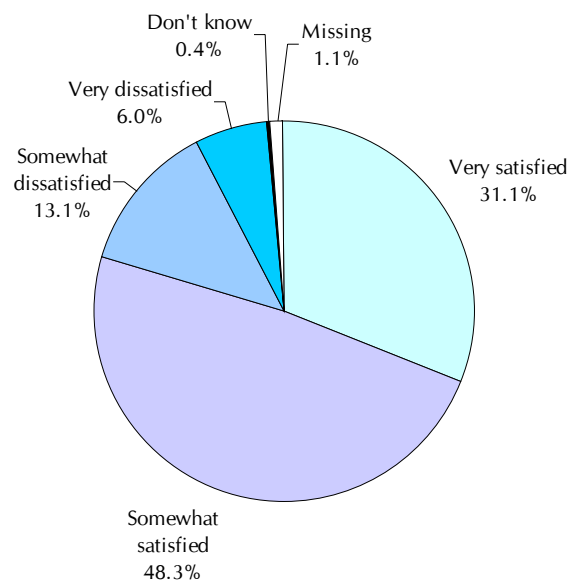
On the other hand, nearly half seemed to be happy the way things are. Importantly, only nine respondents failed to give an opinion on this issue. It seems that Northeast community residents are all intimately familiar with the issue of snow removal and willing to state that opinion when asked.

Finally, the survey asked respondents to indicate their level of satisfaction with the Northeast community “as a place to live.” There were five predefined response categories for respondents to choose from: “very satisfied,” “somewhat satisfied,” “somewhat dissatisfied,” “very dissatisfied” and “don’t know.” About 1 in 5 respondents replied that they were at least “somewhat dissatisfied” with the Northeast neighborhood as a place to live (see Figure 10).

Notably, the bulk of respondents, while expressing general satisfaction, were nevertheless ambivalent about the community as a place to live. Nearly half of all respondents stated that they were “somewhat satisfied” with the Northeast neighborhood as a place to live—certainly not glowing praise of the neighborhood, but not an indictment either.

Figure 10. Respondent Satisfaction with Neighborhood as a Place to Live

(N = 267)



Evaluation/Perception of Local Police Activity

When it comes to the performance of the local police department, response patterns seem to indicate a “disconnect” between police activities and respondents. This is not to imply that there is a lack of effort to connect with citizens on the part of the police department, or vice versa. Rather, the findings from the present study suggest that survey respondents are not aware of the activities of local police, and therefore struggle to form an evaluative opinion as to the performance of police. To illustrate—when asked what kind of job “the police [are] doing in controlling the street sale and use of drugs in this neighborhood,” nearly a third of respondents replied that they did not know how good a job the police were doing (see Figure 11). Further, when asked to evaluate police performance with regard to police response to “community concerns,” fully 28 percent of respondents stated that they did not know how responsive local police were (see Figure 12).

Figure 11. Job Performance of Police: Drug Use and Sale

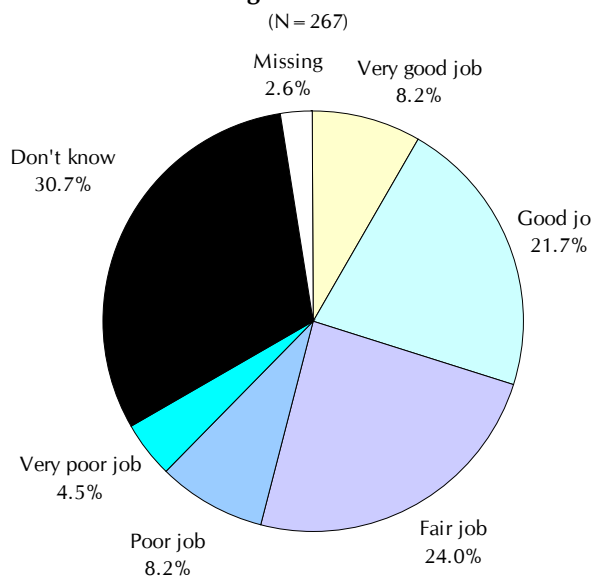
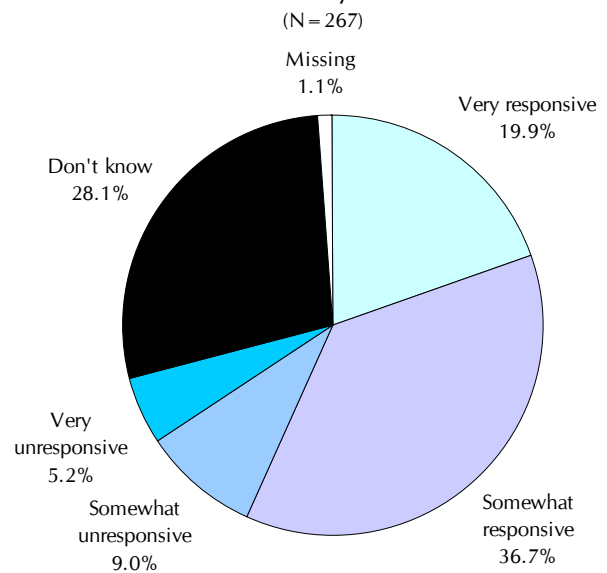


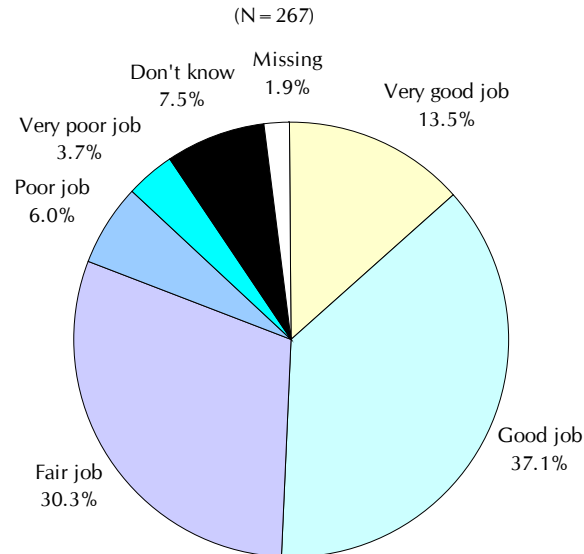
Figure 12. Police Responsiveness to Community Concerns



Both questions in combination suggest that, at least among the present sample of Northeast community residents, there is not a substantial awareness of police activity. One item asked about police operations in a law enforcement capacity (control of drug sales), and the other about police performance in a service role (general community concerns), which suggests that the lack of awareness of police activity on the part of respondents spans across a wide range of police services.

However, when a third item asked respondents how good a job local police were doing keeping order on neighborhood streets and pedestrian walkways, the pattern of responses differed from the other two police evaluation items. Only 8 percent of respondents said that they “didn’t know” how good a job police were doing (see Figure 13). Moreover, more than half of the sample (51.5%) indicated that the police were doing a “good job” or a “very good” job of keeping order in the Northeast community. Two things come to the surface here.

**Figure 13. Job Performance of Police:
Keeping Order**



First, when we see that only 7 percent of respondents indicate a lack of knowledge about police performance for order maintenance activities, as compared to 28 percent and 30 percent for law enforcement and general community concerns respectively, it suggests citizen evaluations of police performance are based on tangible actions. That is, the public evaluates the police on things they can see, touch and feel. Drug sales are not viewed as a serious problem in the Northeast community (see above), and to the extent that drug markets are seen as problematic, respondents perceive sales to take place behind closed doors in private homes, and therefore respondents cannot evaluate police efforts to control this behavior. Vague conceptions of “community concerns” are even more intangible, making citizen evaluations of police responses even more difficult resulting in large numbers of “don’t know” responses.

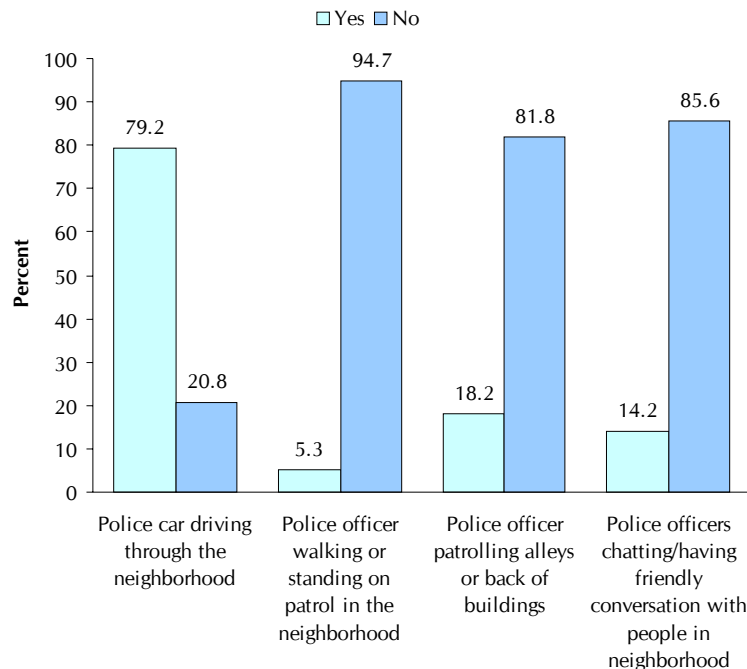
Second, when the distribution of responses for all three police performance evaluation measures were examined, a pattern emerged in which respondents tended toward ambiguous responses when asked about subjects that they had very little direct experience and thus were not likely to select a response category with a strong opinion, either positive or negative. For example, when we looked at the distribution of responses in evaluation of police response to community concerns the modal response was “somewhat responsive,” and when the measure of the type of job police are doing controlling the sale and use of drugs was examined the response category most frequently chosen was “fair job.” In contrast, for the measure of police performance most closely related to respondent personal experience, that is, “keeping order,” respondents were much more willing to offer a non-ambiguous opinion, even if they still chose the ambiguous response some 30 percent of the time. In summary, when asked about things about which they have very little direct knowledge, respondents willingly admitted that they “don’t know,” or select a “mushy” response category that does not require a firm opinion.

Police Patrol

The assertion that this sample of respondents suffered somewhat of a “disconnect” with reference to police activity is supported by survey items asked of them concerning whether or not they had witnessed police engaging in a variety of activities in the Northeast neighborhood. When asked if they had seen police walking through their neighborhood, 95 percent of respondents said that they had not seen any police walking in the neighborhood in the past month. In addition, 85 percent of respondents stated that they had not seen police talking with residents in their neighborhood; 82 percent said that they had not seen any police patrolling back alleys in the Northeast community. This pattern of police activity, where officers simply ride in cars and do not interact with community members, prompted Northeast neighbor #149 to comment when asked if they had seen a police officer walking around in their neighborhood in the past month, “This is a joke question, right?” This respondent also provided marginal comments for item #23 which asked if the respondent had seen a police officer chatting/having friendly conversation with community residents: “In Muldoon? You got to be kidding!” Another Northeast community resident chided, on three different occasions, “Never see the police,” and another commented, “Police ONLY drive through. Never walking around—too scared.” Whether or not police officers truly are concerned for their safety, the picture portrayed in the data from the *Northeast Community Survey* is one in which the police and the public are very distinct and separate from one another. As evidenced by the last comment quoted, this may be contributing to citizen resentment toward the people there to help them.

On the other hand, nearly 8 in 10 people responding to the survey (79%) indicated that they had seen police *driving* through their neighborhood in the last 30 days (see Figure 14).

Figure 14. Respondent Witnessing of Police Activity

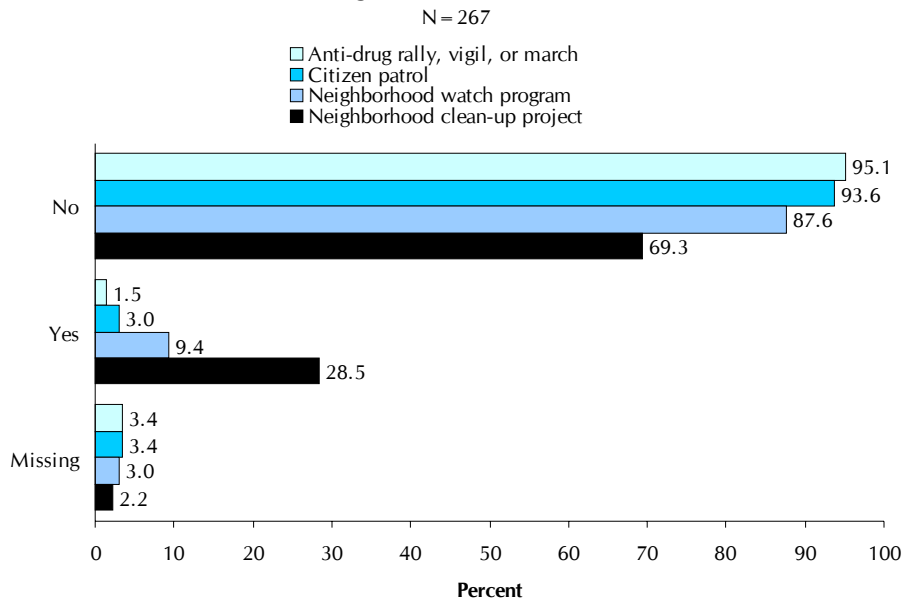


So, the picture that is painted is one in which there is a visible police presence in cars as they drive by, but very little in the way of active police engagement with community residents. In this context, respondent reluctance to offer a definitive evaluation of police performance is quite understandable—they simply do not know what the police do, and rarely, if ever, have the opportunity to personally ask them.

Resident Participation in the Northeast Community

The hypothesized “disconnect” between respondents and police evidenced so far tends to point a finger at local police. However, when we examine respondents’ own participation in community institutions and activities, we see that community residents themselves are somewhat reluctant to get involved. In fact, the level of citizen non-participation is quite remarkable. When asked if they had attended or participated in an anti-drug rally or mark, a citizen patrol, neighborhood watch or a neighborhood clean-up project in the past two years, the overwhelming response was a resounding “no” (see Figure 15).

Figure 15 Respondent Participation in Northeast Neighborhood Activities



Only four respondents said that they had participated in a drug rally, vigil or march. A mere 8 respondents stated that they had participated or attended a citizen patrol. Twenty-five residents said that they had participated in a neighborhood watch program. And finally, 76 people told us that they had participated or attended a neighborhood clean-up project in the past two years.

Certainly these four activities do not even begin to capture the range of volunteer activities present in the Northeast community. And, it would be hazardous indeed to attempt to reach any firm conclusions about citizen participation in community life by simply examining the distribution of

responses provided by a very unrepresentative sample of Northeast neighborhood residents. That being said, it is nevertheless apparent that at least for *this sample* there is a high degree of non-participation in these four community activities—activities that are more than tangentially related to the perceived community problems discussed earlier. Readers will recall that respondents to the *Northeast Community Survey* did report that drug, property and violent crimes were at perceived to be at least somewhat problematic in the Northeast community. Anti-drug rallies, citizen patrols and neighborhood watch efforts are attempts to directly impact these concerns at the grass-roots level. For whatever reason, and there are undoubtedly many reasons, this sample of respondents has not actively pursued such efforts to address several behaviors perceived to be troublesome.

Awareness of Community Programs in the Northeast Neighborhood

Community respondents were asked about their awareness of five community programs available in the Northeast community: the Muldoon Family Center; the Northeast Community Center; the Kid’s Kitchen; the Social Services Mall, and; the Weed and Seed Office. The program with the most name recognition was the Northeast Community Center with 39 percent of respondents saying they were aware of it, followed by the Muldoon Family Center (38%), Kid’s Kitchen (29%), and the Social Services Mall (26%). Only 7 percent of respondents indicated that they were aware of the Weed and Seed Office.

Of the five programs, Weed and Seed seemed to generate the most confusion among respondents. Northeast Neighbor #99, when asked to provide a brief description of what the “Weed and Seed initiative means to you” replied, “Growing plants and trees to make things more beautiful.” Yet another resident said, “Nothing. Never heard of it. Maybe in regards to more attractive lawn and garden of one’s home.” One resident, kind enough to write in some comments, said in a tone of concern, “I would say that weeds are about the least problem Muldoon has—just trivial” (#59). Still, others seemed to have a somewhat sophisticated understanding of the Weed & Seed Initiative: “Provide government support or matching funds for cleaning up or improving local neighborhoods, roads, services, etc.” (#91). While this description is not wholly accurate, it is not totally off the mark and it conveys a substantial level of the *intent* of the Weed & Seed initiative, if not the nuts and bolts of administration.

These comments make clear the limits of metaphorical language and suggest that in order for the general public to understand the Weed & Seed Initiative, an effort will need to be made toward an explicit statement of goals of the program. Several residents asked used the survey to ask what the Weed and Seed Initiative was. One individual asked, “How about some literature on what the weed seed program is all about???”

Conclusion

Because of the biased sample that was collected it is difficult, if not impossible, to reach any firm conclusions about the attitudes and perceptions of Northeast community residents. However, certain patterns did emerge among those that did respond to the survey, and so some conclusions

can be reached *for the present sample*.

Perhaps the most significant finding is that these residents appear to be satisfied with the quality of life that the Northeast neighborhood provides them. Despite the acknowledgment of drugs markets and other crime, residents on the whole feel safe in Northeast Anchorage. And, in spite of having less than full information about community services, programs and organizations, respondents report a moderate level of satisfaction with community services. However, there is little doubt that this group of residents also perceives several problems in Northeast Anchorage perhaps explaining, in part, why they expended the energy to complete and return a four-page questionnaire²⁹.

As mentioned above, the data do indicate that respondents are lacking knowledge about a variety of community and social services, as well as the activities of the local police. The informational disconnect between police and the public, if it indeed exists, would constitute a serious problem for the East Anchorage Weed & Seed initiative. This community-building enterprise has been conceived as achieving its goals of community building through collaboration and partnership between community residents, local service agencies and government. The informational gaps identified suggest there is much to be done in this regard.

The next point is an extension of the previous one and deals with the apparent “break” between local police activities and community residents. That those community residents taking the time to return the survey appear to be “in the dark” with respect to local police activities is particularly troubling because it is the *police* that serve as the conduit between private and public agencies and community residents. Survey responses suggest that there is no significant effort on the part of police to form an active partnership with community residents. Both the quantitative data and marginal comments by respondents strongly suggest that while police are often seen in cars there is little, if any, personal interaction between the police and the public.

However, responsibility for connecting police with the community is shared, and as such the willingness of community members to participate in community institutions must also be examined. Findings from this survey suggest that the residents of the Northeast community are equally culpable for the “disconnect” between the police and the public, if their participation in and knowledge of other community institutions are any indication. It is important not to place blame on either the local police force or community residents, as blame not only fails to solve the problem (in fact it might make the problem worse) but it creates a barrier to critical policy and planning implications. The chief implication is that to the extent that police are needed to help link community members with community institutions and larger city and institutions such as the criminal justice system, the East Anchorage Weed & Seed should expect to see only limited success in its efforts to build a healthier Northeast community³⁰.

Finally, the importance of caution in interpreting these preliminary findings must be reiterated, as they emerged out of a survey sample that did not achieve representativeness. Those people that completed and returned the *Northeast Community Survey* are different in significant ways than the underlying population of Northeast Anchorage, likely making responses patterns significantly different than those that would be rendered by the Northeast community as a whole.

Endnotes

¹ *Anchorage, AK Weed and Seed Demographic Trend Report*. (January, 2002). <http://www.weedandseeddatacenter.org/AK-anchorage/demographics.shtml>.

² Census tracts: 7.01, 7.02, 7.03 and 8.01.

³ 1990 census figures show a “white” population for census tracts 7.01, 7.02, 7.03 and 8.01 of 71 percent, indicating an influx of minority ethnic/racial groups between 1990 and 2000. This mirrors the trend in Anchorage as a whole, which had a 1990 “white” population of 81 percent, which was reduced to 72 percent in 2000.

⁴ Terence Dunworth, Gregory Mills, Gary Cordner and Jack Green (1999). *National Evaluation of Weed & Seed: Cross-site Analysis*. Washington, D.C.: National Institute of Justice (NCJ 176358), p. iii.

⁵ Terence Dunworth, Gregory Mills, Gary Cordner and Jack Green (1999). *National Evaluation of Weed & Seed: Cross-site Analysis*. Washington, D.C.: National Institute of Justice (NCJ 176358).

⁶ Question 4/5 text: “In general, how safe do you feel out alone in this neighborhood during [the day/after dark]?”

⁷ It is significant to note the *Northeast Community Survey* did not ask respondents about violent victimization by intimates and/or family members.

⁸ To the extent that people are more likely to report dissatisfaction than satisfaction, then, the present sample is likely skewed toward unfavorable evaluations of Northeast Anchorage. This may serve as encouragement to those concerned about the well-being of the Northeast community.

⁹ It should also be noted that crime data were not analyzed for this report nor is there data on police organization and deployment. Therefore, the data provided here are very limited as a tool for evaluation of the local police.

¹⁰ In addition to resident attitudes and perceptions future research will address the effectiveness of criminal justice interventions in Northeast Anchorage.

¹¹ The sharply biased sample in this study also severely limits this study’s utility as a baseline for future work.

¹² Fison, Susan R (2000). *Anchorage Indicators, 2000: Housing and Construction Indicators*. Anchorage, Alaska: Municipality of Anchorage, p. 24.

¹³ *Anchorage, AK Weed and Seed Demographic Trend Report*. (January 2002). <http://www.weedandseeddatacenter.org/AK-anchorage/demographics.shtml>.

¹⁴ Census tracts: 7.01, 7.02, 7.03 and 8.01.

¹⁵ 1990 census figures show a “white” population for census tracts 7.01, 7.02, 7.03 and 8.01 of 71 percent, indicating an influx of minority ethnic/racial groups between 1990 and 2000. This mirrors the trend in Anchorage as a whole, which had a 1990 “white” population of 81 percent, which was reduced to 72 percent in 2000.

¹⁶ *Anchorage Indicators, 2000*. <http://www.muni.org/Planning/anciindcivr.cfm>. A “family household” is a household maintained by a householder who is in a family (as defined above), and includes any unrelated people (unrelated subfamily members and/or secondary individuals) who may be residing there. The number of family households is equal to the number of families. The count of family household members differs from the count of family members, however, in that the family household members include all people living in the household, whereas family members include only the householder and his/her relatives. See the definition of family (<http://www.census.gov/population/www/cps/cpsdef.html>).

¹⁷ Thea Agnew (1997). *The Assets and Aspirations of the Northeast Community*. The Research Group, Inc.

¹⁸ Community Partnerships for Access, Solutions, and Success (COMPASS): one of 13 Alaska community groups to focus on improving the health, safety, and educational well-being of Alaska's children.

¹⁹ Terence Dunworth, Gregory Mills, Gary Cordner and Jack Green (1999). *National Evaluation of Weed & Seed: Cross-site Analysis*. Washington, D.C.: National Institute of Justice (NCJ 176358), pp. 81-84.

²⁰ *Alaska's Permanent Fund Dividend Program Website*. <http://www.pfd.state.ak.us//index.htm>.

²¹ Neuman, W. Lawrence (2000). *Social Research Methods: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches* (4th ed.). Boston, Massachusetts: Allyn and Bacon.

²² Of the original 275 surveys returned, 267 reported living within the East Anchorage Weed & Seed catchment area. Only those 267 surveys are analyzed.

²³ Respondents were provided a listing of seven (7) pre-defined racial categories: Black, White, Hispanic, Asian/Pacific Islander, Alaska Native, American Indian, and Other. Respondents were asked to select categories which reflected the ethnicity that they, the respondents, considered themselves. Respondents could select ALL CATEGORIES THAT APPLIED.

²⁴ Fison, Susan R (2000). *Anchorage Indicators, 2000: Housing and Construction Indicators*. Anchorage, Alaska: Municipality of Anchorage.

²⁵ The COMPASS Survey was conducted using face-to-face interviews. While it is not clear what time of day these interviews were conducted, to the extent that they were conducted during the daytime, the "access" hypothesis still holds.

²⁶ Age groups: "Teens" (15-17); "Young Adults" (18-30); "Established Adults" (31-45); "Mid-life" (46-64); "Senior" (65+).

²⁷ Question text: "In the past 2 years, has anyone [done X] to you or a member of your family?"

²⁹ $n = 212$.

²⁹ To the extent that people are more likely to report dissatisfaction than satisfaction, then, the present sample is likely skewed toward *unfavorable* evaluations of Northeast Anchorage. This may serve as encouragement to those concerned about the well-being of the Northeast community.

³⁰ It should also be noted that crime data were not analyzed for this report nor is there data on police organization and deployment. Therefore, the data provided here are very limited as a tool for evaluation of the local police.

Appendix A

Survey Instrument

NORTHEAST COMMUNITY SURVEY

Instructions: For each of the following questions, please circle your chosen response. Please circle only one choice unless the question indicates otherwise.

1. Is your residence located within the target neighborhood (see map on page 4)?

- Yes.....2
- No1

If YES, please proceed to question 2. If NO, please skip to and complete the prize drawing information and return survey.

In the questions below, whenever we refer to this neighborhood, we are talking about the area within the boundaries depicted on page 4.

2. How long have you lived in this neighborhood

Enter the total number of years _____
 If less than 1 year, enter total number of months _____

3. In general, how satisfied are you with this neighborhood as a place to live? Are you...

- Very satisfied..... 4
- Somewhat satisfied 3
- Somewhat dissatisfied 2
- Very dissatisfied 1
- Don't know 9

	Very safe	Somewhat safe	Somewhat unsafe	Very unsafe	Don't know
4. In general, how safe do you feel out alone in this neighborhood during the day? Do you feel...	4	3	2	1	9
5. In general, how safe do you feel out alone in this neighborhood after dark? Do you feel...	4	3	2	1	9

6. In general, in the past 2 years, would you say this neighborhood has become a better place to live, a worse place to live, or stayed the same?

- Better3
- Worse1
- About the same.....2
- Did not live here 2 years ago8
- Don't know9

Here is a list of things that may be current problems in this neighborhood. Please indicate whether you think it is a big problem, small problem, or no problem.

	Big Problem	Small Problem	No Problem	Don't Know
7. Drug dealers on the streets, street corners, or in other public places	1	2	3	9
8. Drug sales out of homes or apartments	1	2	3	9
9. Burglary and other property crime	1	2	3	9
10. Robbery and other street crime	1	2	3	9
11. Violent crime such as shootings, assault, and so forth	1	2	3	9
12. Gang activity	1	2	3	9
13. Drug use	1	2	3	9

The next several questions ask about some things that may have happened to you or your family in the past 2 years (since March 2000) in this neighborhood.

	Yes	No	Don't Know
14. In the past 2 years, has anyone broken into your home(s), garage, or another building on your property, <u>in this neighborhood</u> , to steal something?	1	2	9
15. In the past two years, has anyone stolen something from you or a member of your family by force or by threat <u>in this neighborhood</u> ?	1	2	9
16. Other than incidents already mentioned, in the past 2 years, has anyone beaten you (or a member of your family), attacked you, or hit you with something such as a rock or bottle, <u>in this neighborhood</u> ?	1	2	9
17. Other than incidents already mentioned, in the past 2 years, have you or anyone in your family been knifed, shot or shot at, or attacked with some other weapon <u>in this neighborhood</u> by anyone at all?	1	2	9
18. In general, how good a job are the police doing to keep order on the streets and sidewalks in this neighborhood these days? Would you say they are doing...			
A very good job.....	5		
A good job.....	4		
A fair job.....	3		
A poor job.....	2		
A very poor job.....	1		
Don't know	9		
19. How good a job are the police doing in controlling the street sale and use of illegal drugs in this neighborhood. Would you say they are doing...			
A very good job.....		5	
A good job.....		4	
A fair job.....		3	
A poor job.....		2	
A very poor job.....		1	
Don't know		9	

Here are a few specific situations in which you might have seen the police. During the **PAST MONTH**, have you seen...

	Yes	No
20. A police car driving through your neighborhood?	1	2
21. A police officer walking around or standing on patrol in the neighborhood?	1	2
22. A police officer patrolling the alleys or back of buildings?	1	2
23. A police officer chatting/having friendly conversation with people in the neighborhood?	1	2
24. In general, how responsive are the police in this neighborhood to community concerns? Are they...		
Very responsive	4	
Somewhat responsive.....	3	
Somewhat unresponsive.....	2	
Very unresponsive	1	
Don't know	9	
25. In your opinion, are the number of alcohol-serving establishments in this neighborhood a big problem, small problem, or no problem at all?		
Very responsive	4	
Somewhat responsive.....	3	
Somewhat unresponsive.....	2	
Very unresponsive	1	
Don't know	9	

During the past 2 years, have you attended or participated in any of the following events in this neighborhood?

	Yes	No
26. Anti-drug rally, vigil, or march?	1	2
27. Citizen patrol?	1	2
28. Neighborhood watch program?	1	2
29. Neighborhood clean-up project?	1	2

In general, how satisfied are you with the following in this neighborhood?

	Very satisfied	Somewhat Satisfied	Somewhat Dissatisfied	Very Dissatisfied	Don't Know
30. The availability of sports, recreation, and other programs for youth?	4	3	2	1	9
31. The availability of drug treatment services?	4	3	2	1	9
32. The availability of public transportation?	4	3	2	1	9
33. Job opportunities?	4	3	2	1	9
34. The level of snow removal service?	4	3	2	1	9

35. Have you heard of the Weed and Seed initiative?

Yes.....1
No2

36. Please provide a brief description of what the Weed and Seed initiative means to you. Attach an additional sheet if necessary.

Are you aware that the following programs are available in this neighborhood?

	Yes	No
37. Muldoon Family Center	1	2
38. Northeast Community Center	1	2
39. Kid's Kitchen	1	2
40. Social Services Mall	1	2
41. Weed and Seed Office	1	2

RESPONDENT INFORMATION

42. How old are you? _____

43. How many people under age 18 years old (including yourself) live in your household? _____

44. How many people age 18 or older (including yourself) live in your household? _____

45. What is your gender? Female Male

46. What is your ethnic identity? Do you consider yourself to be...(circle all that apply)?

- Black1
- White2
- Hispanic3
- Asian/Pacific Islander4
- Alaska Native5
- American Indian6
- Some other ethnicity7
- Don't know9

47. Which of the following best describes your current employment status (circle only one)?

- Working full-time 1
- Working part-time 2
- Currently on active military status 3
- Unemployed, looking for work 4
- Unemployed, not looking for work..... 5
- Retired 6
- Full-time homemaker 7
- Student only..... 8
- Other..... 9
- Don't know 99

The survey is complete. Thank you very much for your help.

Enter me in the prize drawing:

Address _____

Phone Number _____
Name (Optional) _____

IMPORTANT: All responses will remain completely confidential. The Justice Center will only tabulate survey responses. Address, phone, and name are only relevant to the prize drawing. All surveys and identifying information will be destroyed upon data entry.

Mail to:

**Justice Center (East Anchorage Community Survey)
 University of Alaska Anchorage
 3211 Providence Drive
 Anchorage, AK 99508**