

Rockford Community Perceptions of Crime Survey

A COMPARISON OF SURVEY RESPONSES FROM 2017 TO 2019

RESEARCH BRIEF

Center for Criminal Justice Research, Policy, and Practice
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About the Report:

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INTRODUCTION

Over the past three years, the Rockford, Illinois Police Department, along with Winnebago County, state criminal justice agencies, community groups and organizations have engaged in the planning, design, and implementation of a focused deterrence project, facilitated by the Region 1 Planning Council (R1PC) and Loyola University Chicago. Because of the importance of the community, part of the planning process also involved gauging citizens' perceptions of crime and disorder in Rockford, what they see as appropriate responses to violent crime and those who commit violent crime, as well as their perceptions of the Rockford Police Department and the Winnebago County Court system. To accomplish this, an initial survey was administered electronically (i.e. internet-based) between September 25, 2017 and November 30, 2017, with more than 1,300 Rockford residents completing this initial survey. Following a full year of the focused deterrence initiative being implemented, a second round of the community survey was administered between June 6, 2019 and June 25, 2019, and more than 1,200 Rockford residents completed this second survey.

This Research Brief provides a comparison of the responses between the 2017 and 2019 surveys to determine how perceptions of specific crime issues and justice agency performance have changed.

Findings

- Based on survey respondent levels of concern for specific crime problems in their neighborhoods, improvements were seen across a number of crime issues, including burglary, drug sales, robbery/mugging, shootings, disorderly youth, and gang activity;
- A smaller percent of respondents indicated they were impacted by crime in 2019;
- A smaller percent of respondents felt that crime in general, and violent crime in particular, had increased in their neighborhood in 2019;
- While the majority of respondents were satisfied with the police in their neighborhood and how they were treated by the police during their latest encounter, these percentages decreased slightly;
- A larger percent of respondents indicated that the Rockford police were good at fighting crime and being visible on the street in 2019;
- Improvements were seen in the percent of respondents indicating Rockford had become a less safe place to live/work in the past year in 2019.

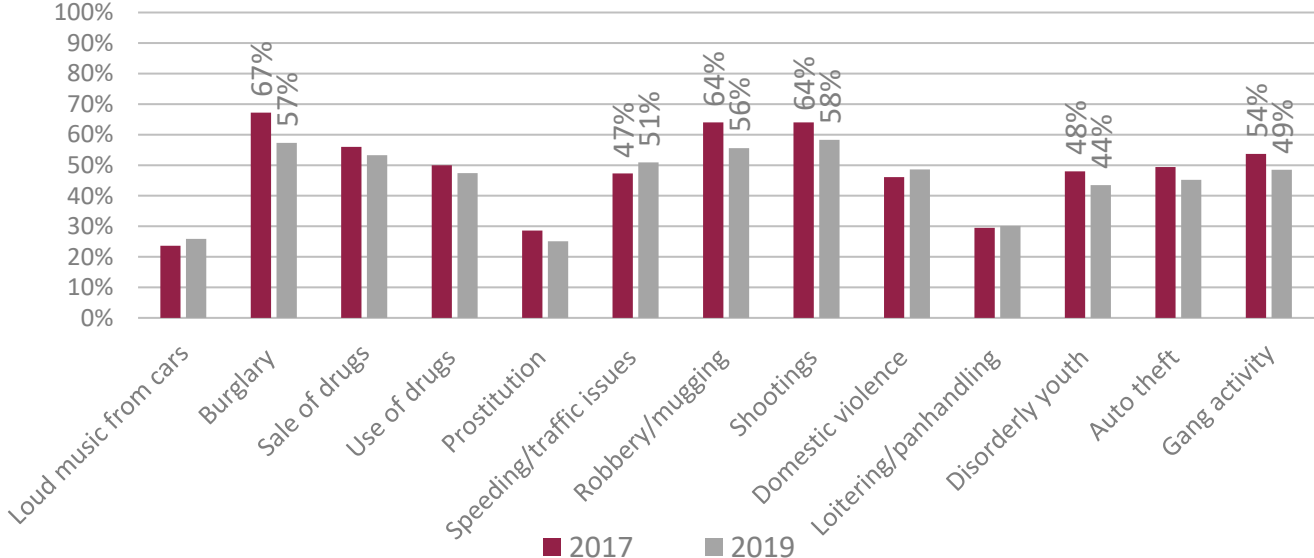


PERCEPTIONS OF NEIGHBORHOOD CRIME PROBLEMS

The percent of Rockford residents indicating they were concerned about a range of neighborhood crime problems decreased between 2017 and 2019.

- Respondents were asked “How concerned are you about the following problems occurring in your neighborhood?” and were given response options of “Not at all concerned,” “Not very concerned,” “Somewhat concerned,” “Concerned,” and “Very Concerned.” The combined percent indicating they were “Concerned” or “Very Concerned” decreased for many crime problems, remained unchanged for some, and increased only for speeding/traffic issues.ⁱ
- Between 2017 and 2019, a smaller percent of respondents were concerned about burglary, robbery/mugging, shootings, disorderly youth, and gang activity (Figure 1).
- Between 2017 and 2019, there were no statistically significant changes in the percent of respondents concerned about loud music from automobiles, drug sales or drug use, prostitution in public places, domestic violence, loitering/panhandling, and auto theft.

Figure 1: Changes of the Perceptions of Neighborhood Crime in Rockford: Percent Indicating a Combined "Concerned" + "Very Concerned" *



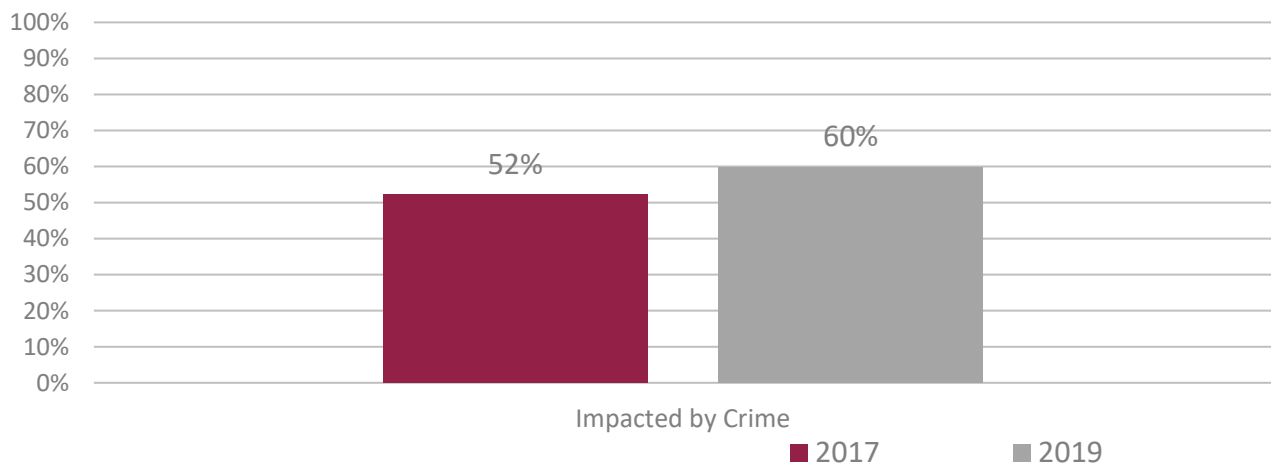
Source: 2017 and 2019 Rockford Community Resident Surveys performed by Loyola; * percentages included only where there were statistically significant differences after applying statistical controls



The percent of Rockford residents indicating crime has impacted them, or that crime had increased in their neighborhoods, went down between 2017 and 2019.

- Respondents were asked, “In the last year, how much has crime impacted you?” and were given the response options of, “Not at all,” “A little,” “Moderately,” and “A lot.”ⁱⁱ Between 2017 and 2019, there was a statistically significant improvement in the combined percent of respondents who felt that crime had impacted them “Not at all,” or “A little”(Figure 2).
- Respondents were asked two questions regarding crime in their neighborhoods: “How have levels of *crime in general* changed in your *neighborhood* over the PAST YEAR?” and “How have levels of *violent crime* changed in your *neighborhood* over the PAST YEAR?” Respondents were given the response options of, “Decreased a lot,” “Decreased some,” “Stayed about the same,” “Increased some,” and “Increased a lot.”ⁱⁱⁱ 2019 respondents were statistically less likely to respond, “Increased some,” or “Increased a lot,” for both questions regarding levels of crime in their neighborhoods than 2017 respondents (Figure 3).

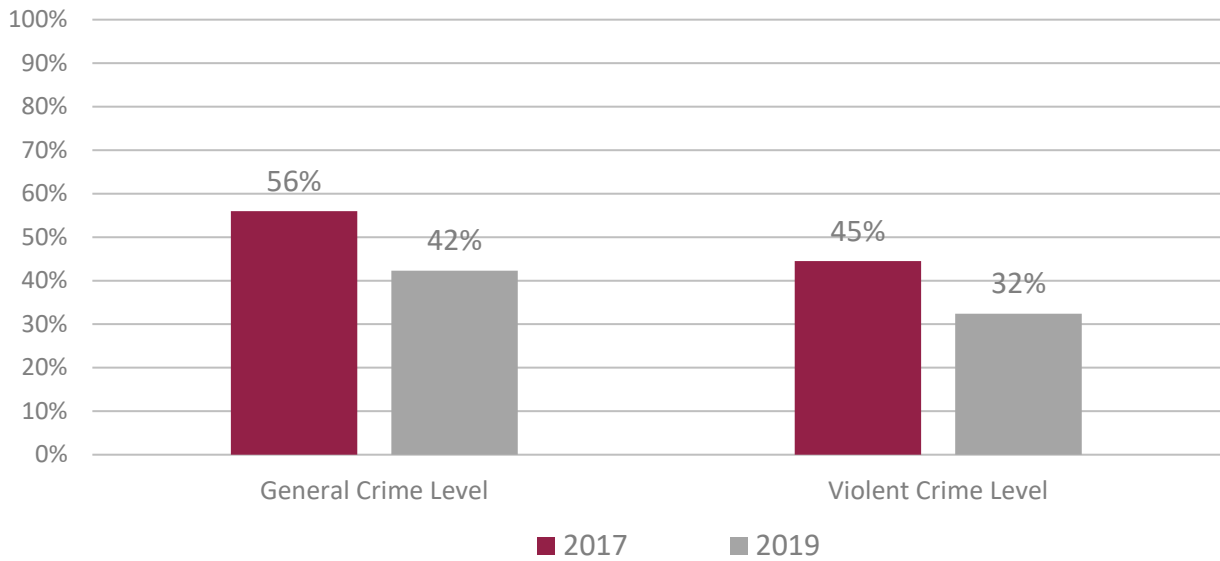
Figure 2: Change in being Impacted by Crime:
Percent Indicating a Combined "Not at all" + "A little" *



Source: 2017 and 2019 Rockford Community Resident Surveys performed by Loyola; * percentages included only where there were statistically significant differences after applying statistical controls



Figure 3: Changes in Perception of Changing Crime Levels:
Percent Indicating a combined "Increased some," + "Increased a lot" *



Source: 2017 and 2019 Rockford Community Resident Surveys performed by Loyola; * percentages included only where there were statistically significant differences after applying statistical controls



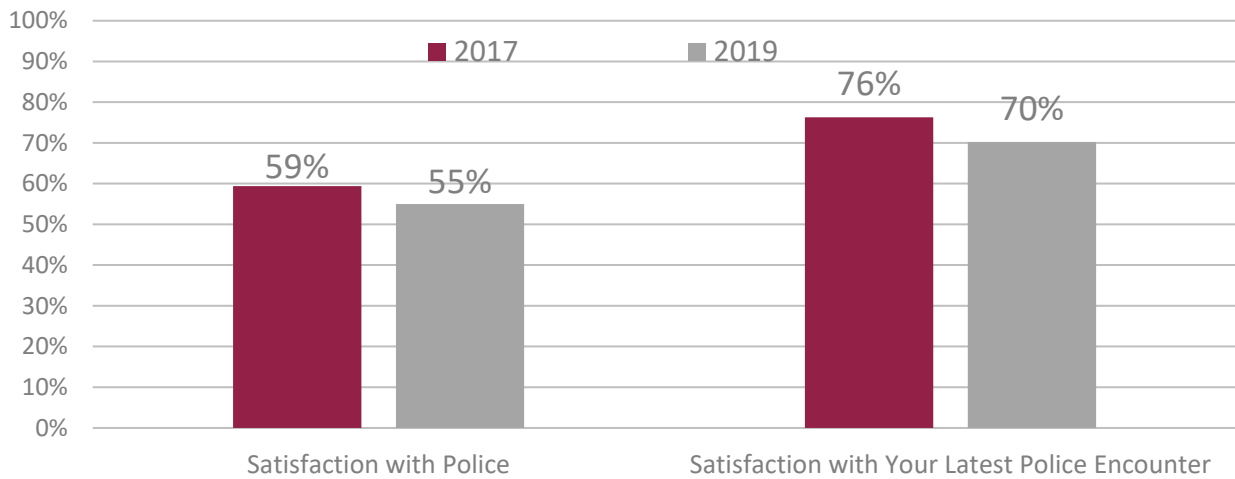
POLICE EFFECTIVENESS, VISIBILITY AND CRIME IN ROCKFORD

The percent of Rockford residents indicating they were satisfied with police in their neighborhood, and satisfied with how police treated them during their latest encounter, decreased between 2017 and 2019.

- Respondents were asked, “How satisfied are you with policing in your neighborhood?” and were given the response options of “Very dissatisfied,” “Somewhat dissatisfied,” “Somewhat satisfied,” and “Very satisfied.” The percent of respondents indicating a combined “Somewhat satisfied” or “Very satisfied” decreased from 59% in 2017 to 55% in 2019 (Figure 4).^{iv}
- Respondents were asked, “Thinking of your latest experience with police, and taking the whole experience into account, how satisfied are you with the way you were treated by the officer during your encounter?” The percent of respondents indicating they were a combined “Somewhat satisfied” or “Very satisfied” decreased from 76% in 2017 to 70% in 2019 (Figure 4).^v



Figure 4: Changes in Satisfaction with the Rockford Police:
Percent Indicating a Combined "Somewhat satisfied" + "Very satisfied" *

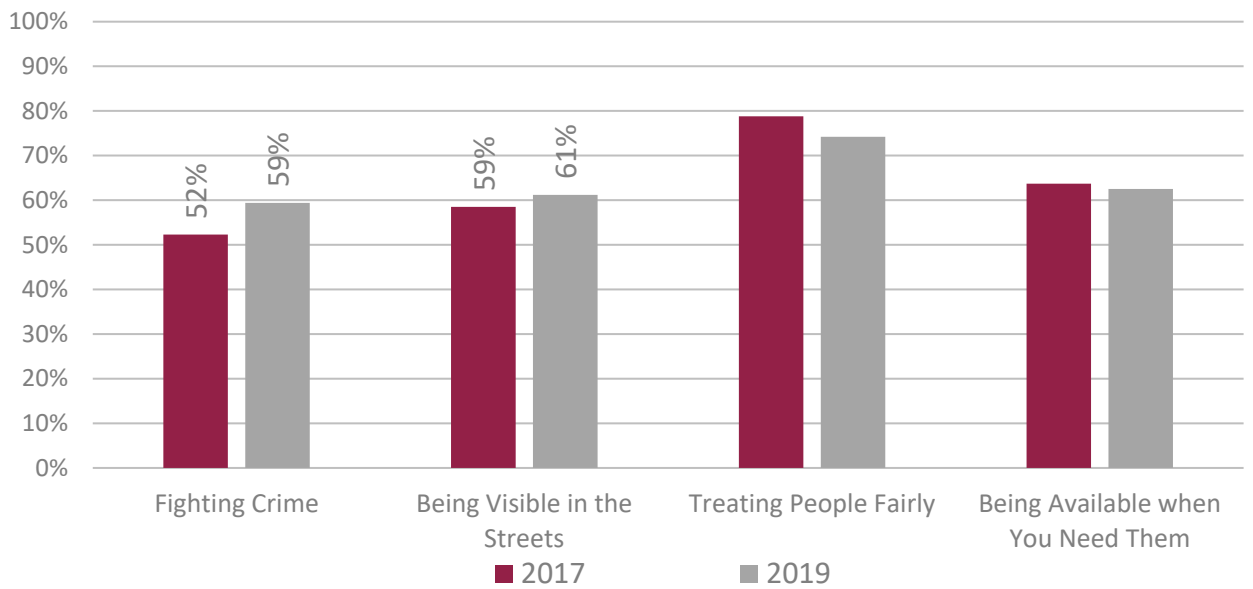


Source: 2017 and 2019 Rockford Community Resident Surveys performed by Loyola; * percentages included only where there were statistically significant differences after applying statistical controls

The percent of Rockford residents indicating the Rockford Police were good at fighting crime and being visible on the streets increased between 2017 and 2019.

- Respondents were asked, “How good are the police at fighting crime?” and were given the response options of “Very poor,” “Poor,” “Satisfactory,” “Good”, and “Very Good.” The percent of respondents indicating a combined “satisfactory,” “good,” or “very good” increased from 52% in 2017 to 59% in 2019 (Figure 5).^{vi}
- Respondents were asked “How good are the police at being visible in the streets?” and were the percent of respondents indicating a combined “satisfactory,” “good,” or “very good” increased from 59% in 2017 to 61% in 2019 (Figure 5).^{vii}
- No statistically significant changes were evident between 2017 and 2019 regarding perceptions of police “treating people fairly” or “being available when you need them” (Figure 5).

Figure 5: How good are the Rockford Police at:
Percent Indicating a combined "Satisfactory" + "Good" + "Very good" *

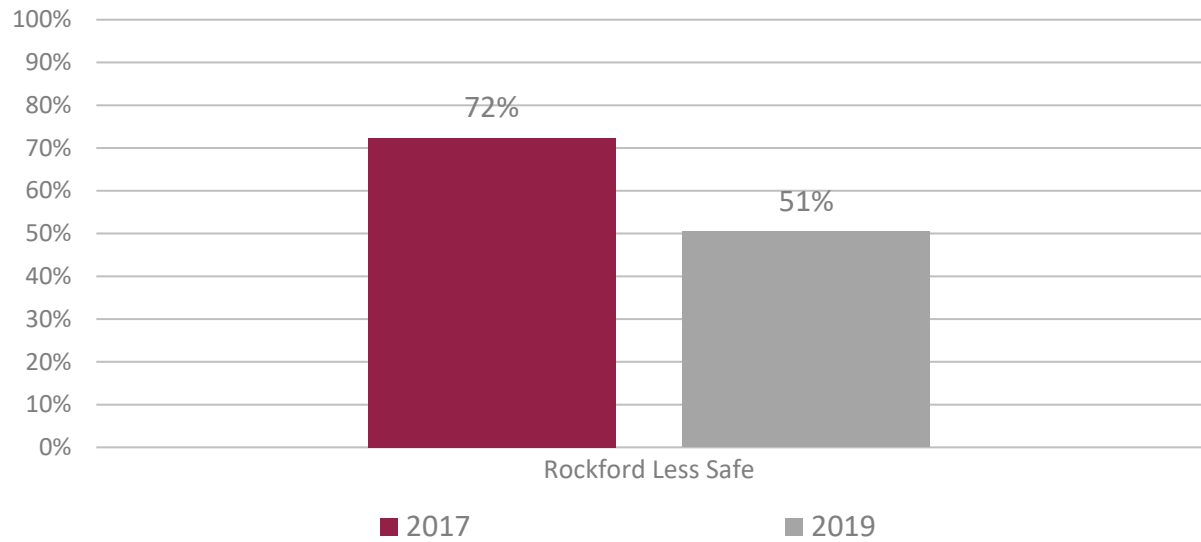


Source: 2017 and 2019 Rockford Community Resident Surveys performed by Loyola; * percentages included only where there were statistically significant differences after applying statistical controls

The percent of Rockford residents indicating Rockford has become a less safe place to live/work improved between 2017 to 2019.

- Respondents were asked, "In the past year, has Rockford become a safer place to live/work?" and were given the response options of "Much less safe," "Less safe," "About the same," "More safe", and "Much more safe." The percent of respondents indicating Rockford was a combined "Much less safe" or "Less safe" decreased from 72% in 2017 to 51% in 2019 (Figure 6).^{viii}

Figure 6: In the past year, has Rockford become a safer place to live/work:
Percent Indicating a combined "Much less safe" + "Less safe" *



Source: 2017 and 2019 Rockford Community Resident Surveys performed by Loyola; * percentages included only where there were statistically significant differences after applying statistical controls



Notes

ⁱ Analyses were performed to compare the responses between the 2017 and 2019 survey and included statistical controls to adjust for/control for the characteristics of survey respondents between the two waves of surveys. The specific variables included as control variables were age, race, gender, education level, employment status and home ownership. In addition, separate analyses were performed where the survey responses were unweighted and weighted to adjust for the differences in the racial composition of survey respondents relative to the racial composition of the city as a whole. Statistically significance differences noted here were those that were statistically significant at a level of $p < .05$ in both the unweighted and weighted analyses.

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