

Data Sharing Between the Police and the Public:

**Citizens' Needs for Information
on Neighborhood Crime,
Terrorism, and
Public Emergency Planning and Response**

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Public Emergency Planning and Response**

Prepared for
the Glendale Police Department and
WISE Information Sharing Committee

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June 2006



CENTER *for*
VIOLENCE PREVENTION
and COMMUNITY SAFETY
ARIZONA STATE UNIVERSITY

About the Center for Violence Prevention and Community Safety

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Acknowledgements

The authors thank Bryan Hill and members of the WISE information-sharing committee for all of their hard work on this project.

This project was funded by the Arizona Department of Homeland Security through the Glendale Police Department. Opinions contained herein are those of the authors and do not represent the position of the Glendale Police Department nor of the Arizona Department of Homeland Security.

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Background

In August 2005, the West Valley Information Sharing Enterprise (WISE) and Arizona State University received funding from the Department of Homeland Security to conduct a needs assessment pertaining to information and data sharing within the western region of the Phoenix metropolitan area (hereafter West Valley). This also included a request to solicit feedback from a representative sample of the general population on information and data sharing questions. The general goal of the survey that is the subject of this report was to collect data on West Valley citizens' needs for information about neighborhood crime patterns and trends, terrorism, and public emergency planning and response. There was particular interest in obtaining citizen feedback on data-sharing questions related to terrorism prevention.

In discussions with the West Valley Information Sharing Enterprise (WISE) subcommittee and chairperson, we developed a strategy for accomplishing this goal. To accommodate time constraints and resources associated with this project component, we constructed and conducted a telephone survey of households in the West Valley. In all, 801 individual interviews were conducted within the West Valley in the spring of 2006. The purpose of this report is to present the findings from that telephone survey. There is also a brief discussion of the methods and sampling strategies used and an overview of the measures included in the survey.

Sample

The survey was administered to persons aged 18 years and older residing in households in the West Valley cities of Avondale, Buckeye, El Mirage, Glendale, Goodyear, Peoria, Surprise, Tolleson, Wickenburg and Youngtown. Using stratified sampling methods, telephone numbers of West Valley households were randomly selected from a directory of all currently listed numbers.

From this sample, 801 telephone interviews were completed between April and May 2006. A sample of this size results in a sampling error of plus or minus 4.7%. The survey's response rate of 70.10% compares favorably with surveys using similar methodologies. One limitation of a telephone survey of this type is that it is comprised of only those individuals who have a telephone and who are at home and willing to complete a telephone survey. For the present study, as many as three callbacks were attempted for each number resulting in no answer before that number was excluded from the sample. A summary of the demographic characteristics of the sample is found in Appendix 1. A breakdown of the sample by city of residence is found in Appendix 2.

Measures

Respondents were asked first to report whether they had attempted to learn about levels and patterns of crime in their neighborhoods. They were then asked either why they had not made such attempts, or how they had attempted to gather such information. A similar set of questions regarding their attempts to learn about public emergency planning and response followed, including an item asking each respondent whether he or she was familiar with their city's public emergency preparedness plan. The next series of questions asked respondents to

report their perceptions of neighborhood crime, their concern with the general problem of crime in their communities, and their concern regarding a variety of ways that terrorists could choose to attack the greater Phoenix metropolitan area.

In the next stage of the interview, respondents were presented with a series of items aimed at assessing their willingness to share information on crime and terrorism with local law enforcement officials. First, respondents were asked how likely they would be to report suspected terrorist activity to a variety of law enforcement and security officials. Respondents then were asked for their views regarding the relationship between the public availability of terrorism-related information and the extent to which citizens could effectively assist in the prevention of terrorist attacks. Next, they were asked to report on how likely they would be to notify the police, were they to witness suspicious or criminal activity occurring in their neighborhoods.

These questions were followed by a series of items asking respondents to state their support for a wide array of methods by which local police agencies could make publicly available information on community crime and terrorism. Respondents also were asked how much they would be willing to pay for information on neighborhood crime patterns and trends.

The survey concluded with items capturing respondents' demographic and personal information. These measures included sex, race/ethnicity, marital status, household income, educational level, residential status and tenure, whether or not the respondent had been a victim of crime within the past three years, household size, access to the Internet, and city of residence. A copy of the survey instrument used can be obtained from the authors.

Citizens' Access to Information on Neighborhood Crime and Public Emergency Planning and Response

Respondents were asked to report whether within the past three years they had attempted to collect information on either local crime trends or the appropriate steps to take in the event of a public emergency. Respondents who had made no such attempts were asked *why* they had not, while those who had solicited such information were asked *how* they had done so. In general, the survey results provide indicators of the extent to which information on local crime and public emergency response is valued by West Valley citizens. Additionally, the results provide some insight into how local police agencies can facilitate public access to and consumption of such information.

Key Findings

- More citizens had attempted to learn about patterns and levels of crime in their neighborhoods than had tried to learn about public emergency planning and response.
- West Valley citizens' failure to learn about neighborhood crime and public emergency response is not explained by a general lack of interest in such information.
- The primary reason that citizens gave for not soliciting information on crime and public emergency response was that they did not know whom to contact.
- Citizens who had attempted to obtain information on neighborhood crime and public emergency preparedness and response commonly had contacted local police officials either in person or by telephone, regular mail or e-mail.
- With respect to attempts to obtain local crime data, West Valley citizens were more likely to have relied upon mass media (TV, radio, newspapers) than to have attempted to get such information from their local police department's Web site.
- Approximately 8 of 10 West Valley residents were unfamiliar with their city's preparedness plan for a public emergency such as a natural disaster or terrorist attack.

Learning about Neighborhood Crime

A majority of those surveyed reported having made no attempt to learn about patterns or levels of crime in their neighborhoods. Among those who had attempted to learn about crime in their neighborhoods, the most common methods used included contacting local police officials in person and by telephone, regular mail and e-mail. Respondents commonly drew from the media, as well. Citizens were more likely to turn to TV, newspapers and radio for facts and figures on neighborhood crime than they were to seek such information from the Web sites of their local police departments.

Figure 1. Attempted to Learn about Neighborhood Crime (N=801)

Responses of Don't Know (1%) not shown

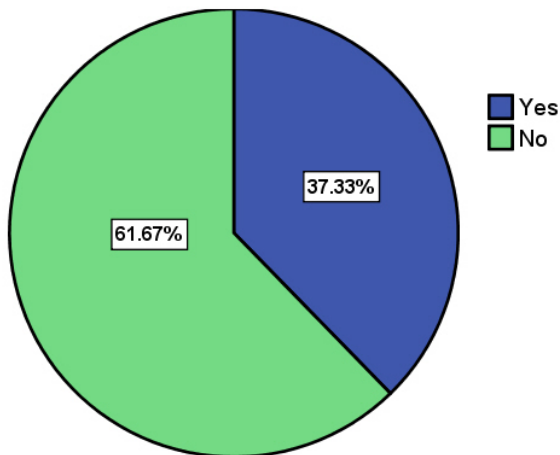
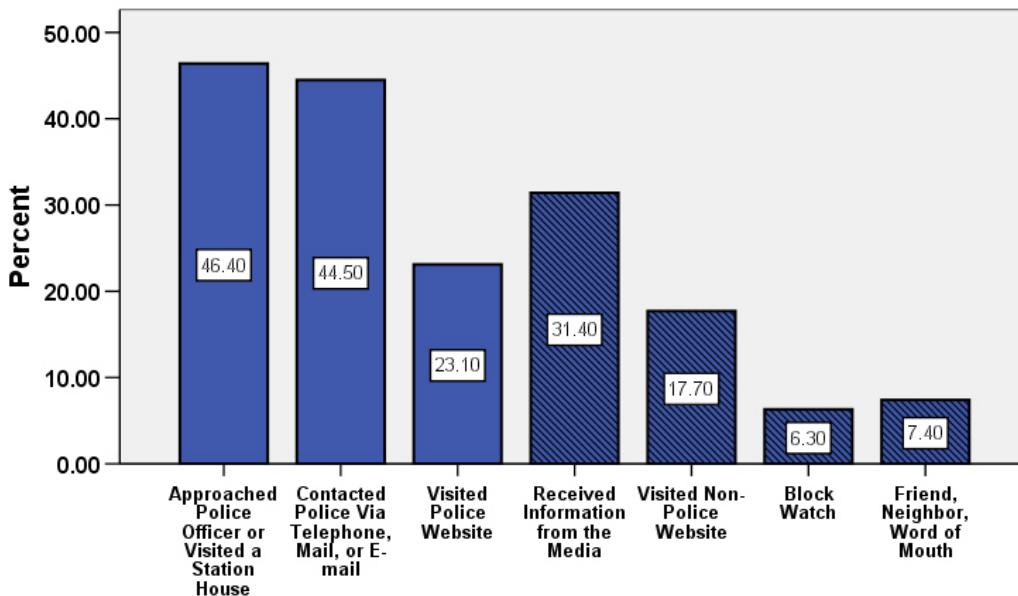


Figure 2. How Citizens Attempted to Learn about Patterns of Levels of Crime in Their Neighborhoods (N=299)

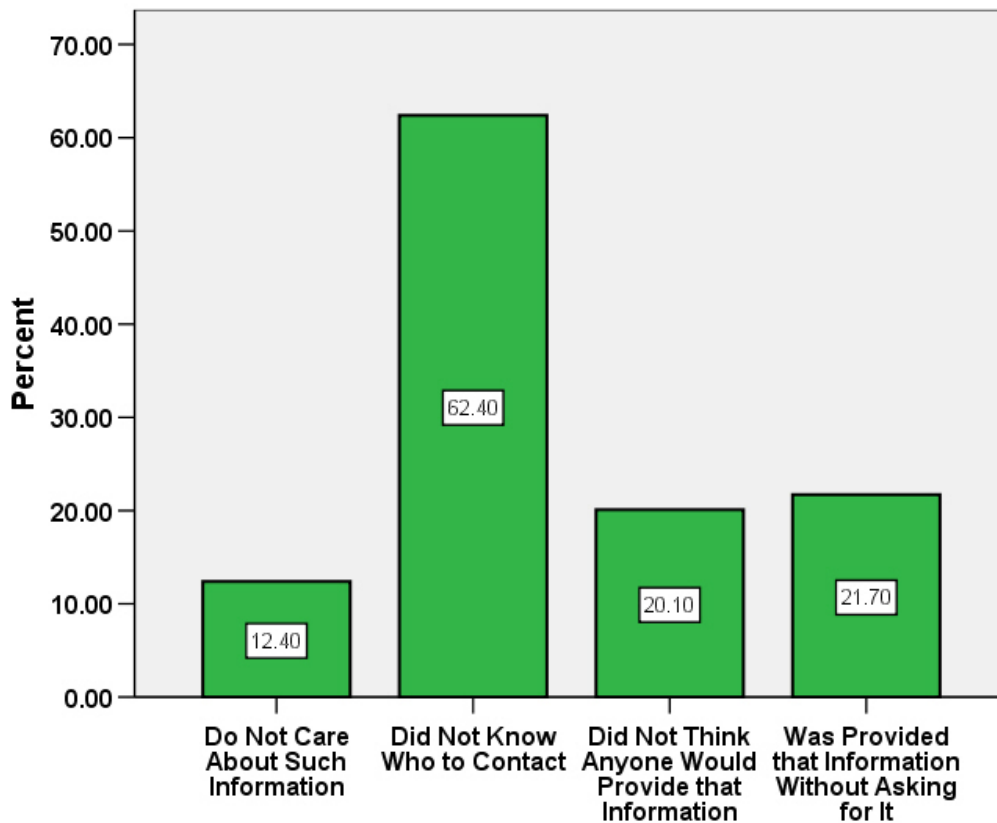
(Multiple responses possible)



Reasons for Not Learning about Neighborhood Crime

Of those surveyed who had made no attempt to obtain information on patterns and levels of crime in their neighborhoods, very few reported that their reason for not doing so was that they did not care about such information. The reason most commonly given for not soliciting information on neighborhood crime was that respondents did not know whom to contact to obtain the information. About one-fifth of respondents stated that they had not attempted to learn about neighborhood crime because they were provided such information without seeking it. Although not shown in tabular format, the most common source of unsolicited information on neighborhood crime was mass media (TV, newspapers, radio). Other reported sources of information on neighborhood crime included neighborhood and block watch groups, homeowners' associations, realtors, city council members, and family and friends.

Figure 3. Reasons for Not Learning about Patterns or Levels of Crime in Their Neighborhoods (N=502)
(Multiple responses possible)

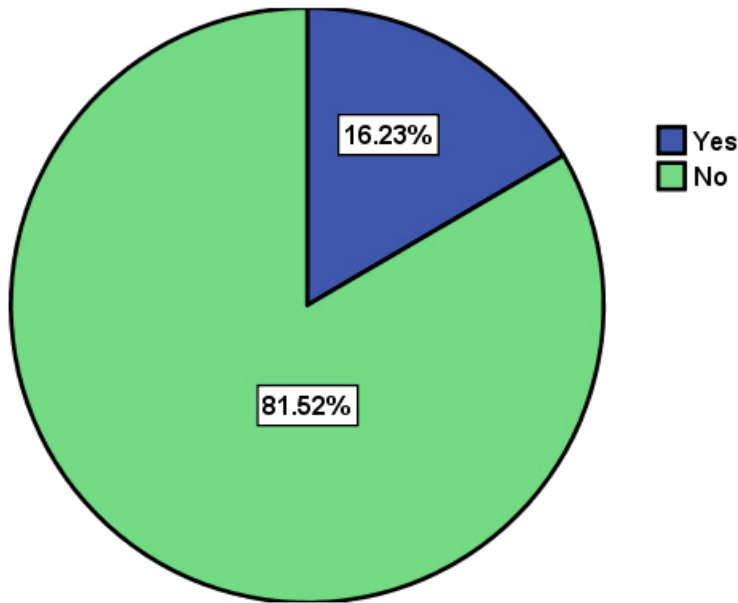


Citizens' Knowledge of Emergency Preparedness Plans

Citizens were asked whether or not they were familiar with their city's preparedness plan for a public emergency, such as a natural disaster or terrorist attack. The survey results revealed that most West Valley citizens were not familiar with their city's emergency preparedness plan.

Figure 4. Familiar with City's Plan for Public Emergency (N=801)

Responses of "Don't Know" (2.25%) not shown



Learning about Public Emergency Planning/Response

Citizens also were asked whether within the past three years they had made any attempts to learn about the appropriate steps to take in the event of a public emergency. The results revealed that fewer than one-third of respondents had done so. Among those who had attempted to learn this information, the most common methods used included contacting police officials in person and by telephone, regular mail and e-mail.

Figure 5. Attempted to Learn about Public Emergency Planning and Response (N=801)

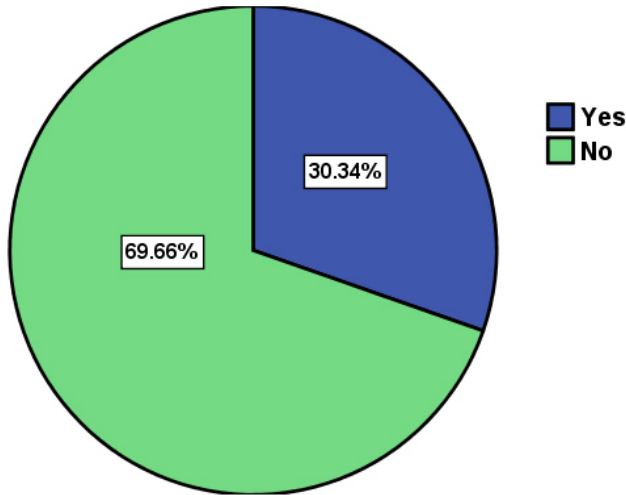
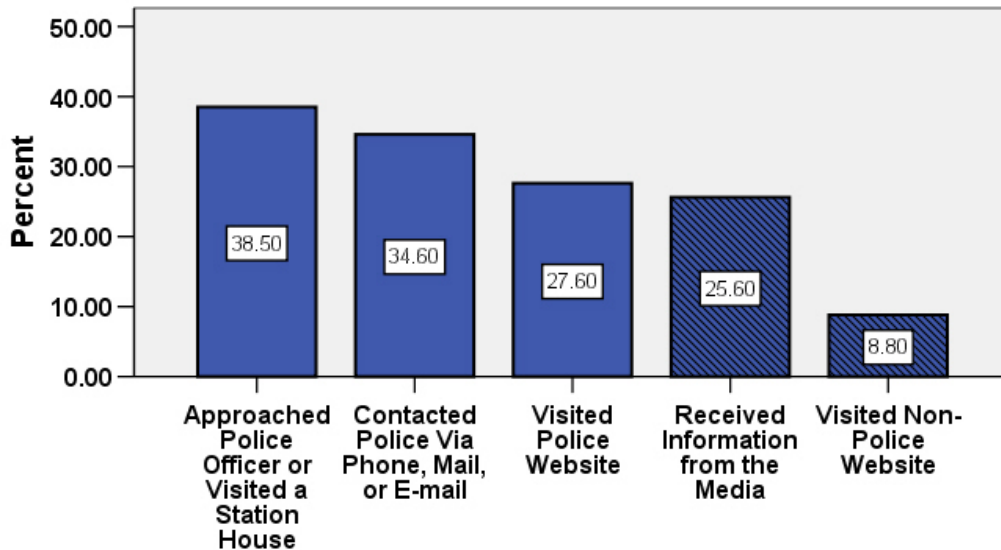


Figure 6. How Citizens Attempted to Learn about the Appropriate Steps to Take in the Event of a Public Emergency (N=243)

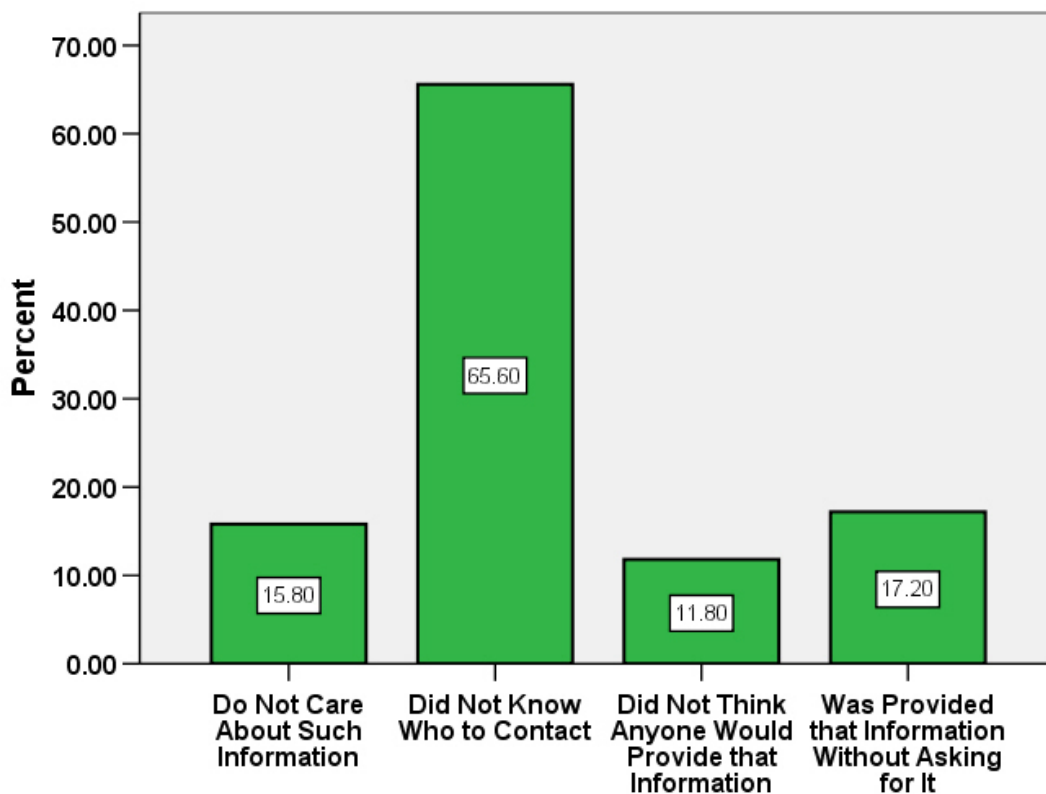
(Multiple responses possible)



Reasons for Not Learning about Public Emergency Planning/Response

Approximately 16% of respondents cited as a reason for failing to learn about public emergency planning and response that they did not care about such information. As was the case with citizens' attempts to learn about neighborhood crime, the most common reason given was that respondents were unaware of whom to contact in order to get such information. Though not shown in tabular format, the various forms of mass media (TV, newspapers, radio) were the most common sources of public emergency planning data for citizens who were provided such information without having solicited it.

Figure 7. Reasons for Not Learning about the Appropriate Steps to Take in the Event of a Public Emergency (N=558)
(Multiple responses possible)



Perceptions and Concerns Regarding Crime and Terrorism

This section reports the results of items that measured the respondents' views and concerns regarding crime in their communities and potential terrorist attacks in the greater Phoenix metropolitan area. Citizens first were asked to assess the levels of crime in their communities relative to most places in the West Valley. They were then asked to rate the extent to which they were concerned with the general problem of crime in their communities. Respondents were next presented with a list of methods that terrorists could employ to execute an attack in or around the Phoenix metropolitan area and asked to report their level of concern for each method of attack.

Key Findings:

- Although respondents generally perceived that levels of crime in their communities were at or below the average for the West Valley, the general problem of crime tends to be a substantial concern.
- In general, West Valley residents were concerned with the variety of methods that terrorists could use to attack the greater Phoenix metropolitan area.
- Cyberterrorism is of particular concern to West Valley residents.

Citizens' Perceptions and Concerns Regarding Crime

A majority of respondents reported perceiving levels of crime to be lower in their communities than in most places in the West Valley. Approximately one-third of citizens felt that the problem of crime in their communities was about the same as most places in the West Valley, and even fewer reported higher than average levels of crime. As Figure 9 illustrates, the general problem of crime is a significant concern for most of the West Valley citizens who were surveyed. Approximately 90% of the respondents reported being very concerned or somewhat concerned about the problem of crime in their communities.

Figure 8. Citizens' Perceptions of Levels of Crime in their Communities (N=801)

Responses of "Don't Know" (4.37%) Not Shown

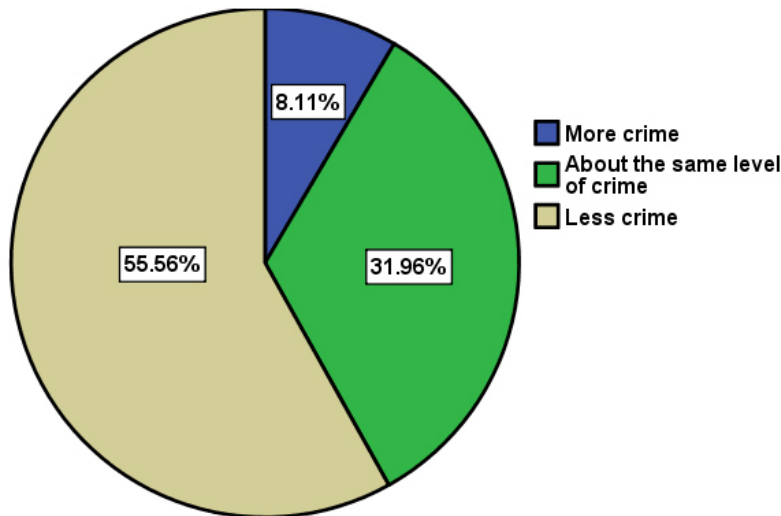
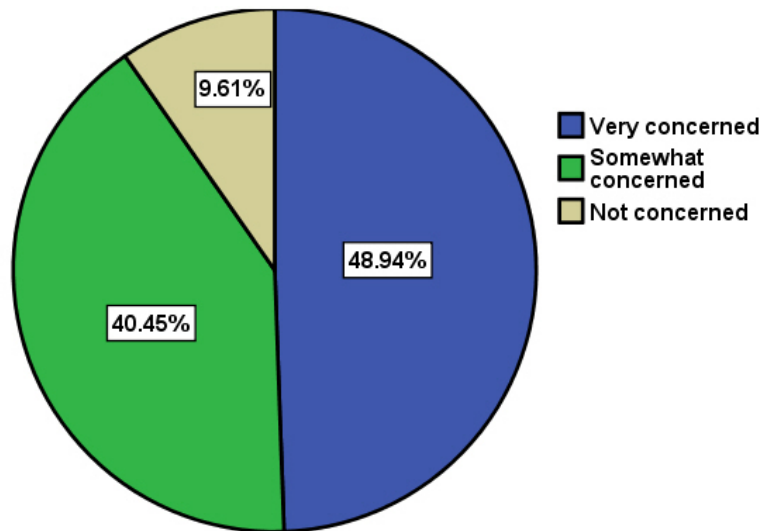


Figure 9. Levels of Concern Regarding the General Problem of Crime in their Communities (N=801)

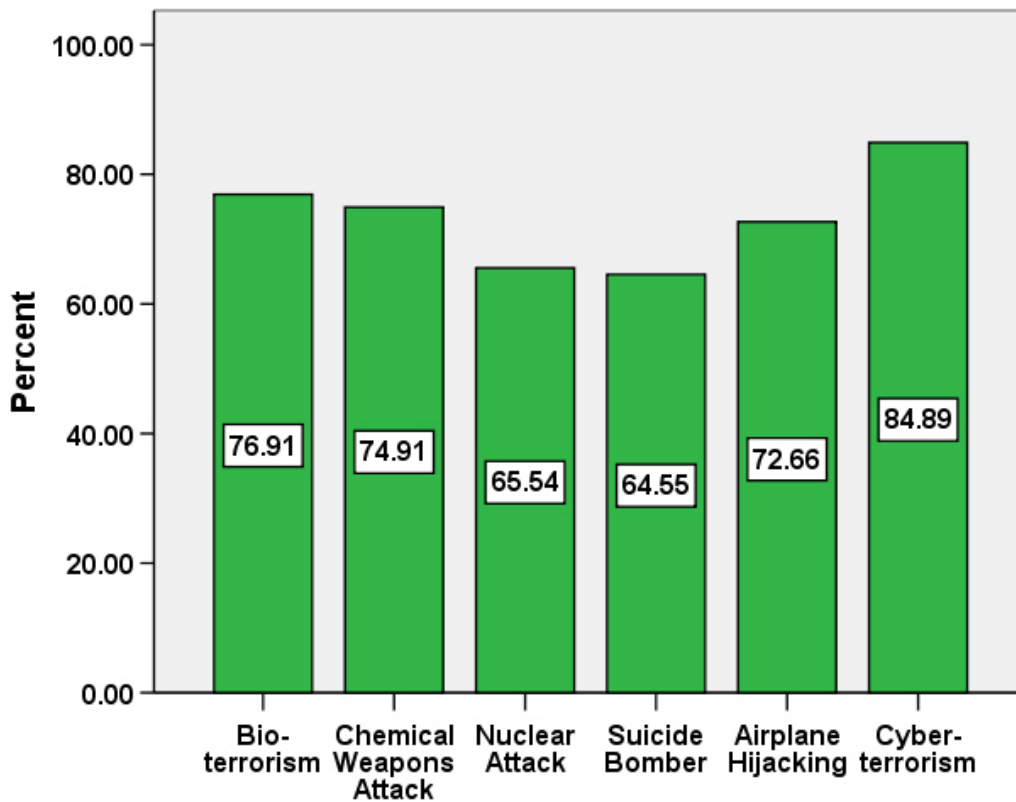
Responses of "Don't Know" (1%) not shown



Citizens' Concerns Regarding Potential Terrorist Attacks

On average, two-thirds of those surveyed were either somewhat concerned or very concerned with each of the methods of terrorism presented. West Valley residents were most concerned with cyberterrorism (e.g., attacks against Internet sites such those related to banking, public utilities and national defense), and least concerned with nuclear attacks and suicide bombers.

Figure 10. Percentage of Citizens Somewhat or Very Concerned about Potential Terrorist Attacks (N=801)



Citizens' Willingness to Share Information on Crime and Terrorism

This section reports results from survey items that asked citizens how they would respond to suspected terrorist activity and neighborhood crime, as well as how they viewed the relationship between access to terrorism-related information and the extent to which citizens can effectively fight terrorism. Respondents first were asked to imagine that they had seen a person or persons acting suspiciously outside a potential terrorist target, such as a water treatment facility, power plant or chemical plant. Then they were asked to report how likely they would be to report this activity to local police officials, federal law enforcement officials and security guards stationed at the facilities. Next, respondents were asked to rate their level of agreement or disagreement with the following statement: *If citizens were given more information on terrorism and terrorist threats, they could do a better job helping prevent future terrorist attacks.* Finally, they were asked to imagine that they had witnessed suspicious or criminal activity occurring within their neighborhoods and asked to report how likely they would be to notify local police officials of such activity.

Key Findings:

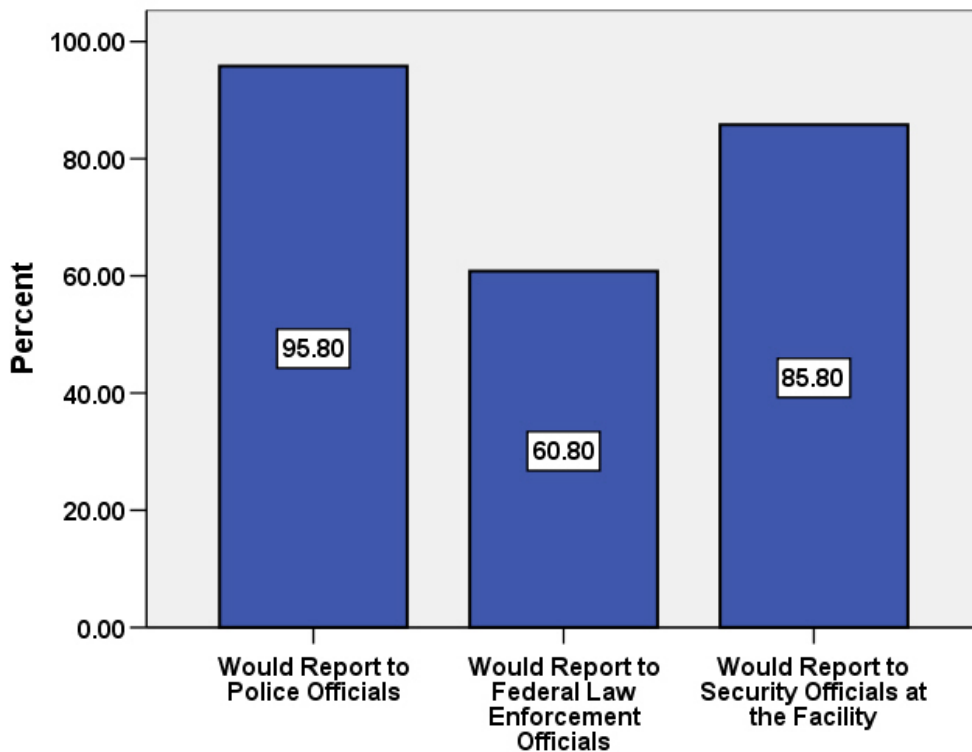
- West Valley residents were willing to share information about potential terrorist threats with local police officials. In fact, respondents were more willing to report potential terrorist activity to local police officials than either to federal law enforcement officials or to security officials working at those facilities.
- West Valley residents typically believed that if they were provided with more information on terrorism and terrorist threats, they would be more effective at preventing future terrorist attacks.
- West Valley residents also were willing to share information on neighborhood crime with local police officials. As evidence of this, those surveyed typically believed that they would be very likely to notify the police if they witnessed suspicious or criminal activity occurring in their neighborhoods.

Reporting Suspicious Activity near Potential Terrorist Targets

The survey results revealed that citizens were most likely to report potential or suspected terrorist activity to local police officials, followed by security officials employed by those facilities, and then by federal law enforcement agencies. This suggests that West Valley citizens view local law enforcement officials as their primary point of contact for suspected or potential terrorist activity.

Figure 11. Percentage of Citizens Somewhat or Very Likely to Report Suspected Terrorist Activity (N=801)

(Multiple responses possible)

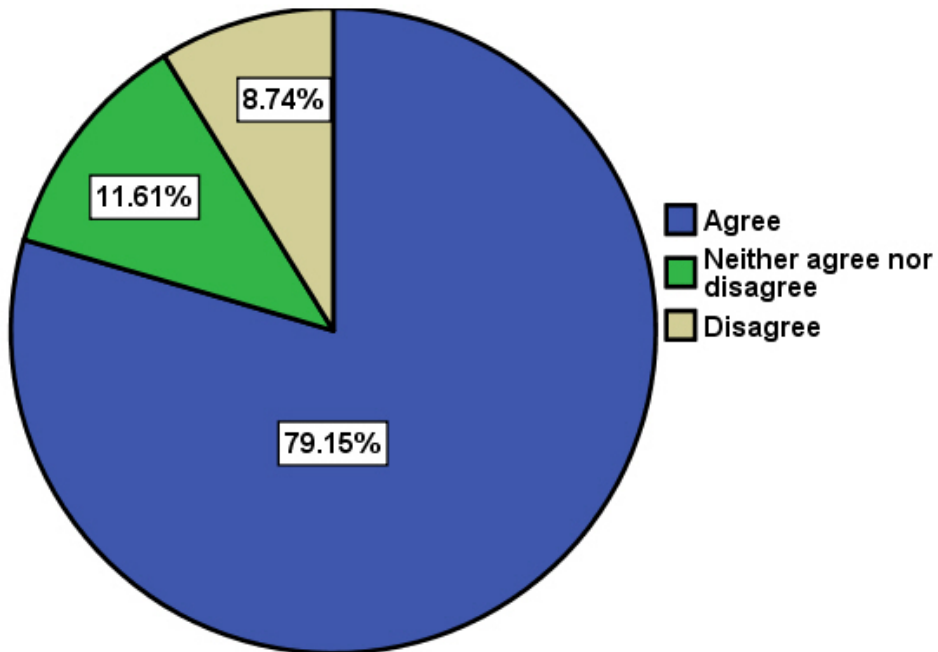


Information and the Role of Citizens in Preventing Terrorism

Nearly 80% of those surveyed either agreed or strongly agreed that if given more information, citizens could do a better job at preventing terrorism. Less than 10% of the sample disagreed with this statement, while approximately 12% of respondents neither agreed nor disagreed.

Figure 12. If Citizens Were Given More Information on Terrorism, They Would be More Effective at Preventing Future Attacks (N=801)

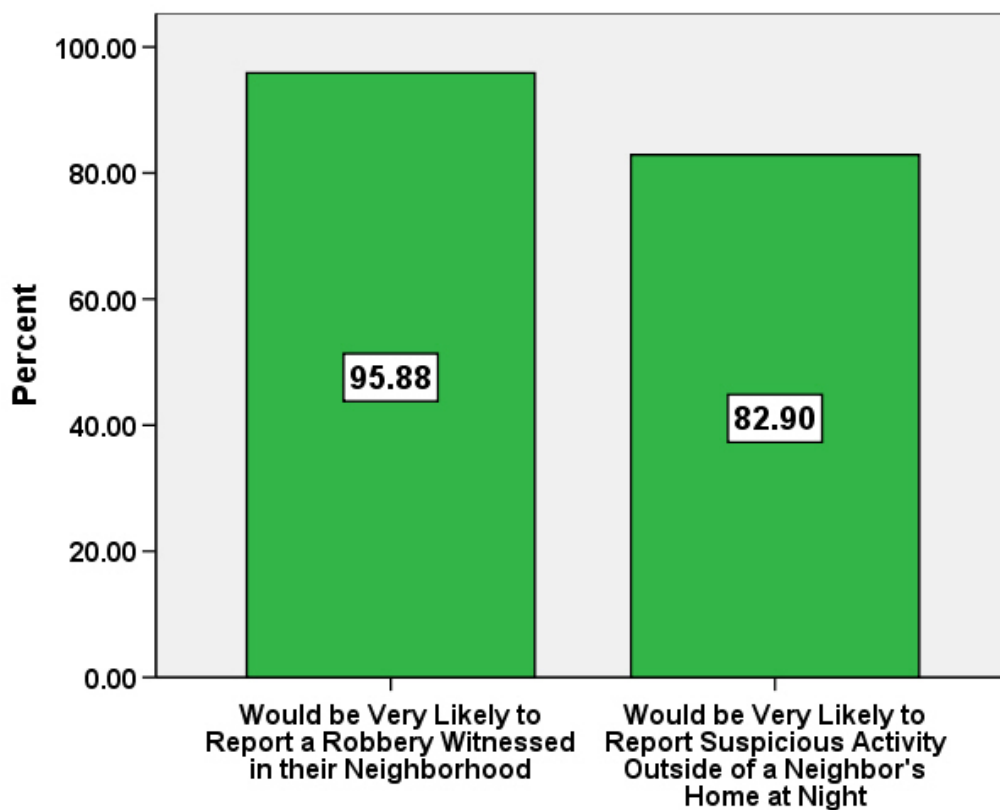
Responses of "Don't Know" (0.50%) not shown



Reporting Neighborhood Crime to the Police

Respondents typically displayed a strong willingness to report crime witnessed in their neighborhoods to local police officials. Although those surveyed were more likely to report the crime of robbery than they were to report suspicious activity occurring outside a neighbor's home at night, very few respondents stated that they would be unlikely or very unlikely to report to the police in either scenario.

Figure 13. Percentage of Citizens that would Notify the Police of Crime and Suspicious Activity Witnessed in their Neighborhoods (N= 801)



Sharing Information Related to Crime and Terrorism with Citizens

This section reports citizens' views on how they would like to receive information related both to neighborhood crime and to terrorism. Respondents were presented with a series of ways that local police officials could make such information publicly available and asked whether or not they would like to see each method used. Additionally, respondents were asked how much they would be willing to pay for information on neighborhood crime, if it were made available by police officials in the forms introduced to respondents in the prior questions.

Key Findings:

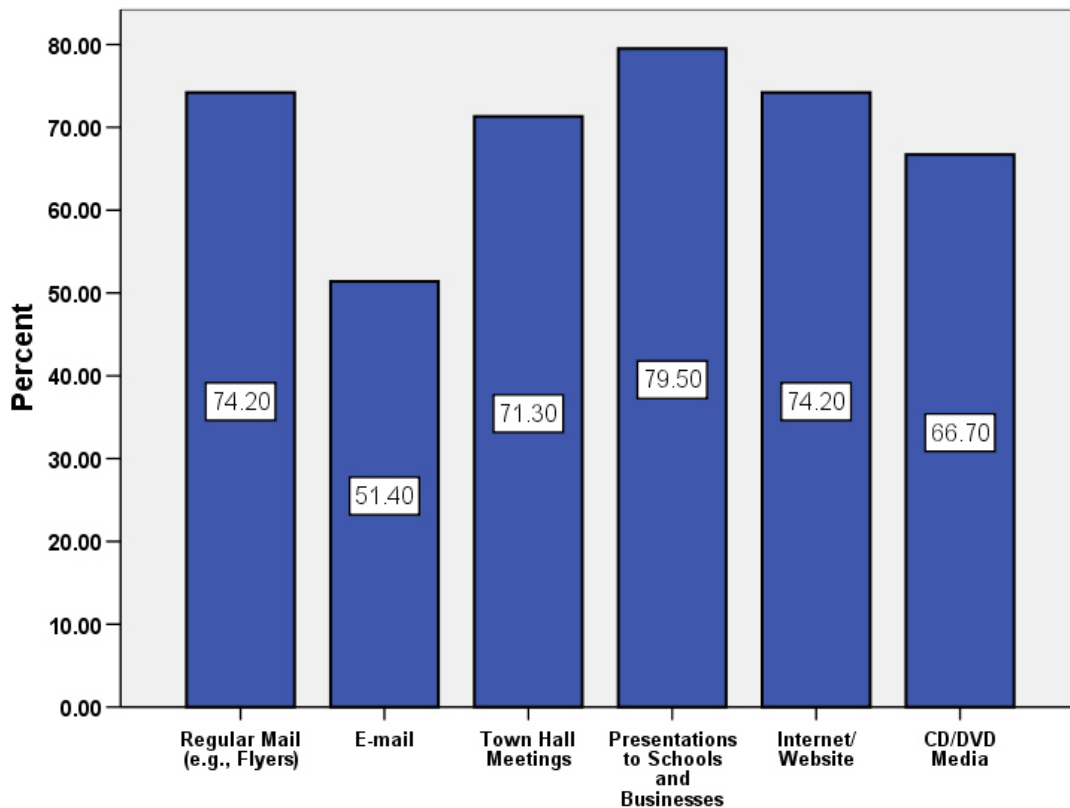
- West Valley residents are most interested in receiving information on neighborhood crime through the mail, on the Internet, and by presentations made by local law enforcement officials to businesses and schools.
- West Valley residents are least interested in the use of e-mail or CD/DVD media as avenues for disseminating information on local crime patterns and trends.
- Most West Valley residents expect local police officials to provide citizens with information related to patterns and levels of neighborhood crime at no charge. However, some citizens are willing to pay a small fee for such information.
- West Valley residents expressed the most interest in receiving information related to terrorism by regular mail, the Internet, and presentations made by local law enforcement to businesses and schools.
- West Valley residents are least interested in the use of e-mail as a method of disseminating information related to terrorism.

Ways that Citizens Want Information on Crime Made Available

A majority of respondents wanted information related to neighborhood crime made publicly available in each of the six ways that were presented. The most desired methods of data dissemination were presentations to schools and businesses, regular mail and the Internet. Citizens were least interested in receiving information related to neighborhood crime using e-mail or CD/DVD media.

Figure 14. Ways that Citizens Want Information on Neighborhood Crime Made Publicly Available (N=801)

(Multiple responses possible)

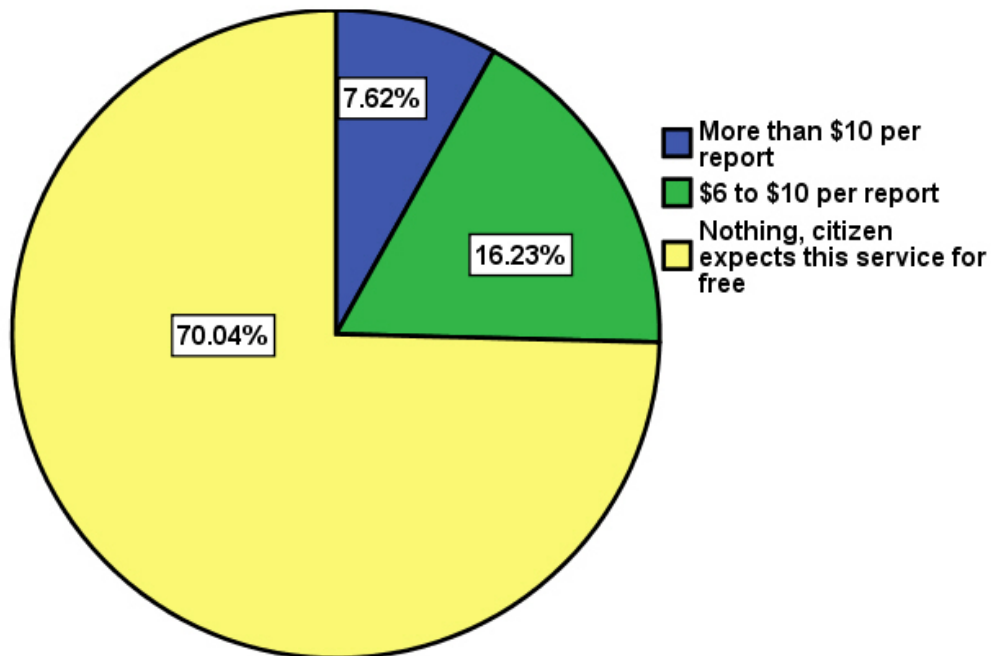


Citizens' Willingness to Pay for Information on Crime

Respondents were asked how much they would be willing to pay for information on neighborhood crime. As displayed below, most citizens expected police officials to provide such information at no charge. Of those who were willing to pay for information on neighborhood crime, respondents were most willing to pay between \$6 and \$10 dollars per report. Few citizens were willing to pay more than \$10 for this kind of information.

Figure 15. Prices that Citizens are Willing to Pay for Information on Neighborhood Crime (N=801)

Responses of "Don't Know" (6.11%) not shown

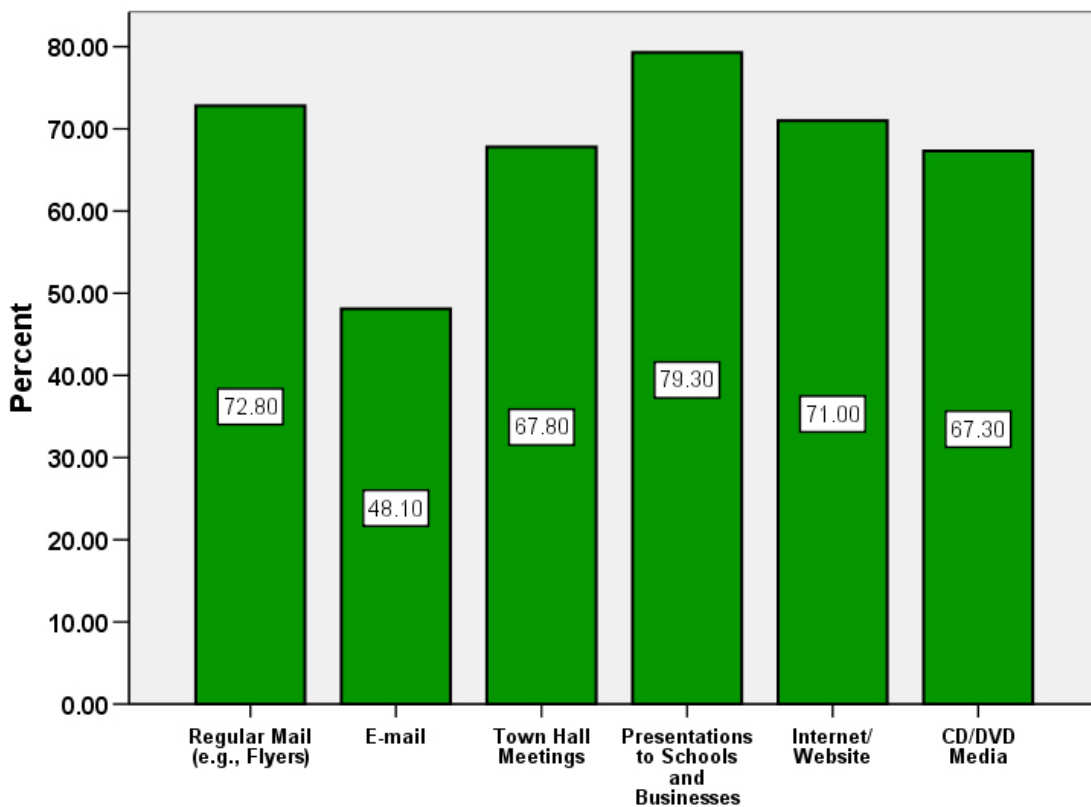


Ways that Citizens Want Information on Terrorism Made Available

Citizens were asked for their preferences regarding a variety of ways in which local police agencies might make available public information related to terrorism and terrorism prevention. A majority of citizens wanted the information made available in five of the six ways presented. The most desired methods were presentations to schools and businesses and regular mail. Citizens were least interested the use of e-mail as a tool for disseminating terrorism-related information.

Figure 16. Ways that Citizens Want Information on Terrorism Made Publicly Available (N=801)

(Multiple responses possible)



Recommendations

Based on the data generated with this survey, we have developed the following recommendations for agencies participating in the West Valley Information Sharing Enterprise (WISE):

- 1. Increase efforts to notify West Valley citizens how and where to obtain information on crime and public emergency planning and response.** A majority of West Valley citizens surveyed had made no attempts to learn about neighborhood crime or public emergency planning and response. However, this was not due to lack of interest. The most common reason given for not seeking such information: They did not know whom to contact.
- 2. Establish a committee to develop strategies for disseminating information about crime and homeland security to West Valley citizens.** This committee could be a subcommittee of the West Valley Chiefs Association and could include representatives from the community.
- 3. Consider developing an annual survey to assess improvements in information dissemination, citizen awareness, and citizen satisfaction.** Increased interaction and cooperation between the police and the public provides police officials greater access to information provided by the community, which in turn will lead to the police being more responsive to community needs. Periodic evaluation of citizen perceptions will provide a means to assess changes in public opinion; it also provides an opportunity to engage the community in discussions about developing effective community policing strategies. Information dissemination, citizen awareness, and citizen satisfaction are key elements in establishing the role of the community in assisting police with crime fighting efforts.
- 4. Dedicate monies to disseminating information and soliciting feedback from the community.** This assures that the resources are available for achieving these goals.
- 5. Use the Internet (e.g., department Web sites) to make information on crime and public emergency planning and response available to citizens.** Not only did a relatively large number of citizens report an interest in receiving information in this manner, more than 80% of citizens surveyed reported having access to the Internet either at home or at work. Other law enforcement agencies in Maricopa County have used Web sites; these could be a resource for further development in this area.
- 6. Continue to provide information on neighborhood crime at no charge.** More than 70% of citizens surveyed stated that they expected local officials to provide such information for free. Additionally, criminal justice research has demonstrated consistently that those facing the greatest risk of criminal victimization are those at the lowest end of the socioeconomic continuum. Thus, although such individuals arguably would benefit the most from access to information on neighborhood crime, they also would be the least capable of paying for it.

Appendix I. Sample Demographics

	<u>N</u>	<u>%</u>
<u>Sex</u>		
Male	300	37.5
Female	501	62.5
<u>Race/Ethnicity</u>		
White	653	81.5
African American	19	2.4
Hispanic	66	8.2
Asian	11	1.4
Native American	9	1.1
Other	7	0.9
Refused	36	4.5
<u>Age</u>		
18-30	105	13.1
31-40	126	15.7
41-50	158	19.7
51-60	153	19.1
>60	219	27.3
Refused	40	5.0
<u>Marital Status</u>		
Single	170	21.2
Married	471	58.8
Divorced/Separated	66	8.2
Widowed	65	8.1
Refused	29	3.6
<u>Residential Status</u>		
Renter	143	17.9
Owner	639	79.8
Don't Know	19	2.4
<u>Years at Address</u>		
Less than 1 year	57	7.1
1-5 years	329	41.1
6-10 years	198	24.7
11-15 years	94	11.7
>15 years	109	13.6
Refused	14	1.7

Appendix I (Cont'd)

	<u>N</u>	<u>%</u>
<u>Education Level</u>		
Below H.S.	26	3.2
H.S. Graduate	252	31.5
2 Year College Degree	229	28.6
4 Year College Degree	176	22.0
Post Graduate Degree	91	11.4
Refused	27	3.4
<u>Registered Voter</u>		
Yes	639	79.8
No	142	17.7
Don't Know	6	0.7
Refused	14	1.7
<u>Persons in Household</u>		
1	117	14.6
2	284	35.5
3	139	17.4
4	127	15.9
5 or more	102	12.6
Refused	32	4.0
<u>Household Income</u>		
Less than \$15,000	34	4.2
\$15,000-\$34,999	102	12.7
\$35,000-\$74,999	267	33.3
\$75,000-\$99,999	130	16.2
>\$100,000	94	11.7
Don't Know	31	3.9
Refused	143	17.9
<u>Victimized in Past 3 Years</u>		
Yes	178	22.2
No	615	76.8
Refused	8	1.0
<u>Access to Internet</u>		
Yes	658	82.1
No	132	16.5
Don't Know	1	0.1
Refused	10	1.2

Appendix 2. Breakdown of Sample by City of Residence

<u>City of Residence</u>	SAMPLE		WEST VALLEY	
	<u>N</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>Population</u>	<u>% of West Valley Population</u>
Goodyear	34	4.2	18,911	4.3
Peoria	197	24.6	108,364	24.6
Surprise	56	7.0	30,848	7.0
Tolleson	9	1.1	4,974	1.1
Avondale	66	8.2	35,883	8.2
Glendale	398	49.7	218,812	49.7
Buckeye	12	1.5	6,537	1.5
El Mirage	14	1.7	7,609	1.7
Wickenburg	9	1.1	5,082	1.2
Youngtown	6	0.7	3,010	0.7