OUR CITY. OUR FUTURE.

What We Heard Report: Key Highlights

Building Safer Communities

Addressing Violence and Crime in the City of St. John's

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ST. JOHN'S

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Public Engagement Goals

To identify and understand:

- Resident, community, and organization experiences with crime and violence.

- Factors which cause conditions of crime and violence in our community.

- Best practices to address the root causes of violence and crime in the community, as well as gaps.

- Key recommendations for addressing violence and crime in the city.

Points of Engagement

Engage Project Page

- 1.7K total visits
- 115 documents / reports downloaded
- 135 submitted quick poll answers
- 160 visited, 22 contributed to Ideas

Public Meetings

- One virtual meeting with 6 residents
- Two in-person meetings with a total of 11 residents

Community Engagement Toolkits

- 6 toolkits completed with 70 individuals with lived experience

Residents' Survey

- 882 respondents
- 73% completion rate

Focus Groups

- 11 focus group discussions with 50 community-based service provider staff.

Advisory Committees / Working Groups

- 6 focus groups with 70 representatives

City Influencers' Survey

- 17 City Influencers completed a condensed version of the Residents' Survey.

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Highlights: Violence and Crime Trends

Respondents across all engagement formats generally agreed that crime and violence have **significantly increased** in the city over the past two years, and either **significantly** or **somewhat increased** in neighbourhoods.

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Compared to two years ago, or compared to your arrival in St. John's (if less than two years ago), do you feel that violence and/or crime have increased, decreased, or stayed the same in: (survey responses n=881)

City

- Significantly increased: **65%**
- Somewhat increased: **23%**
- Stayed the same: **7%**
- Significantly decreased: **2%**
- Somewhat decreased: **1%**

Neighbourhood

- Significantly increased: **32%**
- Somewhat increased: **32%**
- Stayed the same: **24%**
- Significantly decreased: **2%**
- Somewhat decreased: **3%**

Highlights: Experiences of Violence

The forms of violence most often experienced by respondents in both their current neighbourhood and elsewhere in the city were **threats**, **criminal harassment / stalking**, and **physical assault**.

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Have you or anyone in your household experienced any of the following acts of violence in the past two years? (Top three most reported acts of violence from survey responses n=636)

Current Neighbourhood

- Threats: **25%**

- Criminal harassment / stalking: **17%**

- Physical assault: **12%**

Note: 54% of respondents did not experience any acts of violence.

Elsewhere in the City

- Threats: **33%**

- Criminal harassment / stalking: **18%**

- Physical assault: **13%**

Note: 41% of respondents did not experience any acts of violence.

Highlights: Experiences of Crime

The form of crime most often experienced by respondents in their neighbourhoods and elsewhere in the city was **theft and stolen property**.

Have you or anyone in your household had any of the following crimes committed against you in the past two years? (Top three most reported crimes from survey responses n=643)

Current Neighbourhood

- Theft / stolen property: **45%**
- Destruction of property: **26%**
- Drug trafficking: **24%**

Note: 30% of respondents did not experience crime.

Elsewhere in the City

- Theft / stolen property: **19%**
- Uttering threats: **19%**
- Destruction of property: **14%**

Note: 26% of respondents did not experience crime.

Highlights: Reporting

Most respondents who experienced violence or crime reported it to the authorities – **37%.**

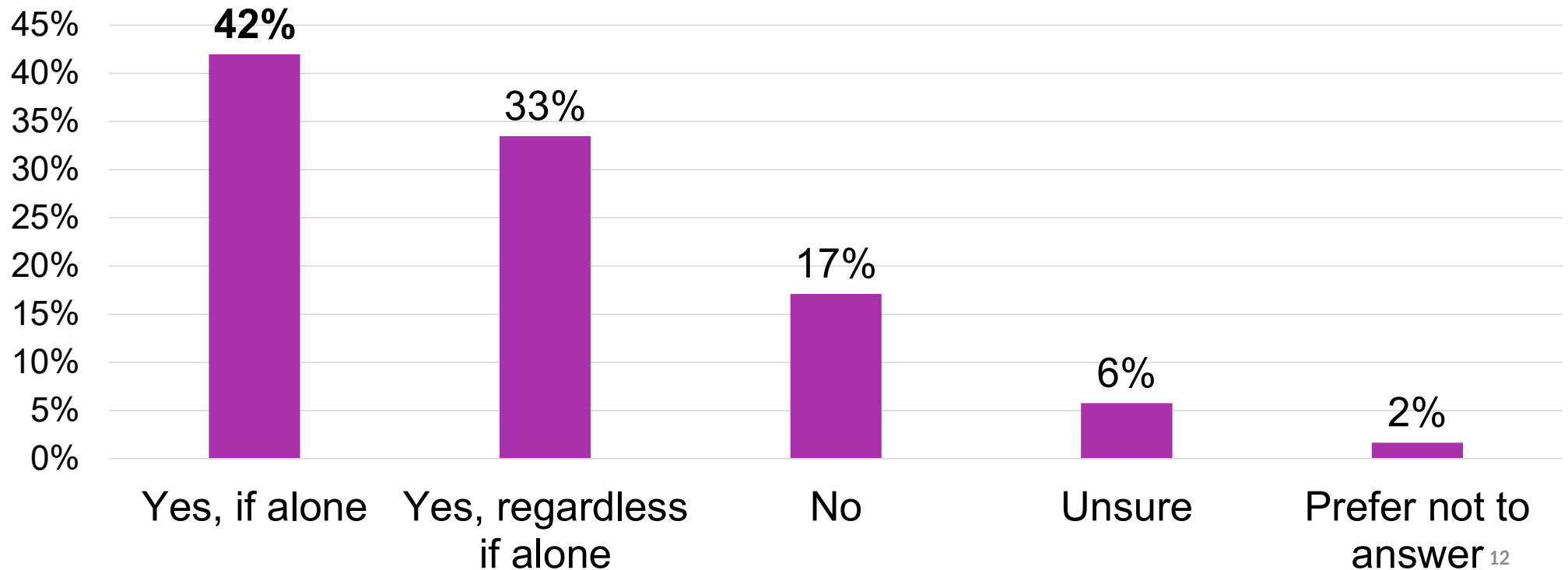➢ The majority of those who reported did so to the police – **94%.**

Highlights: Reasons for Not Reporting

Of those respondents who experienced, but did not report, violence or crime, the top reasons for not reporting were: (Top five most reported survey responses n=648)

➢ Believe nothing would change: **66%**

➢ Lack of confidence in legal system: **57%**

➢ Lack of confidence in police: **55%**

➢ Fear of retaliation: **25%**

➢ Unwilling to disclose/be further involved: **17%**

Highlights – Areas Respondents Avoid

Are there any areas of the city that you currently avoid due to fear of violence and/or crime? (survey responses n=660)

Bar chart:
- Yes, if alone: **42%**
- Yes, regardless if alone: 33%
- No: 17%
- Unsure: 6%
- Prefer not to answer: 2%

Of the respondents who said yes, they avoid areas of the city, below are the areas they avoid and the reasons (survey responses)

City-defined Neighbourhoods that Residents Avoid (Top three most reported survey responses n=437)

- Downtown: **89%**
- Central: **29%**
- Rennie's River: **13%**

Reasons Residents Avoid These Areas (Top five most reported survey responses n=414)

- Perceived fear of violence or crime/potential risk of victimization: **57%**
- Substance use/intoxicated people: **42%**
- Aggressive/unpredictable/people experiencing homelessness: **29%**
- Panhandling: **16%**
- Media reports of crime and violence: **8%**

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Highlights: Challenges to Collaboration
(Focus groups)

Lack of Awareness

- Groups highlighted the need for platforms to identify potential collaborators, share information, and seek advice more effectively.

Funding Challenges

- Unsustainable / precarious funding models and excessive time spent seeking funds leads to competition among groups.

Facilitation and Coordination

- A central coordinating role or position is needed to facilitate collaboration among organizations and address urgent issues.

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Summary of Key Recommendations
All Engagement Formats

- Address Poverty and Low Income
- Address Housing and Homelessness
- Increase Collaboration and Coordination
- Prevent Gender-Based and Intimate Partner Violence
- Increase Public Awareness and Understanding
- Enhance Education and Training
- Increase Funding, Resources and Programming
- Improve Community Programs and Services
- Expand City Programs
- Increase Supports for Mental Health, Addictions and Harm Reduction

Summary of Key Recommendations (cont'd)

- Recommendations for Schools and the Education System
- Improve the Justice System and Prevent Recidivism
- Improve Neighbourhoods and Public Spaces
- Improve Public Transportation
- Increase Policing and Security
- Enhance City Engagement and Practices
- Expand Employment and Skills Development Programs
- Advocate for the Urban Indigenous Community
- Support the Urban Indigenous Community

Note: details around all recommendations follow in the Appendix.

Next Steps

- The What We Heard Report will be published on the Engage project page.

- As many of the recommendations are not within the City's control, staff will identify relevant recommendations for the City and eligible activities for the Building Safer Communities Fund.

- Staff will work in collaboration with the Building Safer Communities Steering Committee to draft a violence and crime prevention strategy for Council's consideration.

- The strategy will be informed by research, evidence and public engagement findings.

Thank you for helping to build a safer community!