

The Galway Healthy Cities Project, which is part of a World Health Organization (WHO) initiative, aims to promote the health and wellbeing of all in Galway City through everyone working together. As part of the WHO project, the Galway City Health and Wellbeing Survey was conducted by NUIG Health Promotion Research Centre during October and November 2007. The aim of the survey was to get the views of people living in Galway City on the issues affecting them and what they think would make Galway a better place to live. General health and lifestyle factors were also documented. A representative random sample of over 1,000 people in the City aged 18+ were selected to complete the questionnaire in their own homes, with 587 respondents.

### Crime & safety

Crime, as well as the fear of crime, and the more general perception of safety, are major public health and safety concerns (Austin *et al.*, 2002). The World Health Organization (WHO) (2004) states that although feeling unsafe and fearing crime are not ‘illnesses’, they are “negative mental states which influence quality of life and overall well-being”.

### Experience of crime and feelings of safety among Galway City residents

Participants identified safety and crime as the second most important factor in making Galway a better place to live. The three main issues identified (with numbers of participants in brackets) are:

- Increase Gardai presence (113)
- Improve Safety (53)
- Reduce crime (29)

### Feeling safe in local area

- The majority of participants (82%, n=450) stated that they agree with the statement ‘I feel safe living here’
- Feeling safe was less commonly reported among the oldest and youngest age groups, less educated, unemployed, those renting accommodation and general medical scheme (GMS) card holders

### Quality of local Garda services

Participants were asked, thinking generally about what they would expect of local services in their area, how they would rate these services (Factsheet 11 – Quality of Services).

- Nearly two thirds (59% n=331) of participants rated the local Garda services as very good, good or average.
- It was found that there was more dissatisfaction with local Garda services among: less educated individuals, those renting accommodation and GMS card holders.

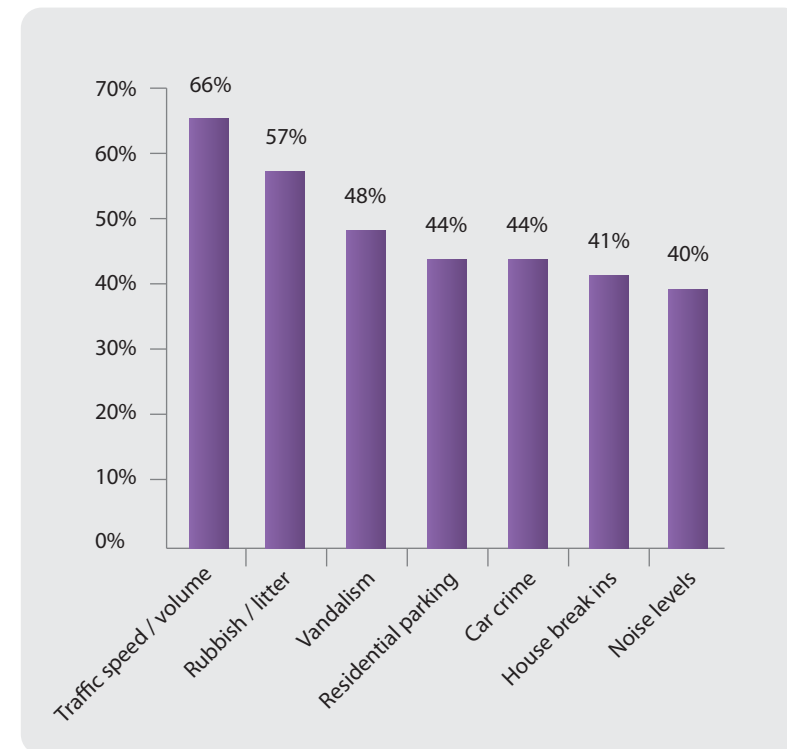


Figure 9.1 - Level of problem reported on specific issues

### Specific Issues

Specific issues were examined with people living in Galway City asked what they believed the level of problem was. These included the following:

### Speed or volume of road traffic

- The most commonly reported problem was the speed or volume of road traffic, with two thirds (66%, n=386) of participants reporting it to be a problem (see Figure 9.1)
- The groups that reported this more commonly as a problem were 35-44 year olds, Irish, more educated, employed, owner occupiers and GMS card holders



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## Rubbish or litter lying around

- Over half (57%, n=331) of participants reported that rubbish or litter lying around was a problem (see Figure 9.1)
- The groups that reported this more commonly as a problem were: men, non nationals, those renting accommodation and GMS card holders

## Vandalism and deliberate damage to property

- Almost half (48%, n=280) of participants reported that vandalism and deliberate damage to property was a problem
- The groups who reported this more commonly as a problem were 35-44 year olds and GMS card holders

## Parking in residential areas

- Almost half (44%, n=251) of participants reported parking in residential areas a problem.
- This problem was reported more commonly by men

## Car crime (damage, theft, joyriding)

- Almost half (44%, n=256) of participants reported car crime being a problem
- This was reported more commonly by men, 35-44 year olds, more educated, owner occupiers and GMS card holders

## House break ins

- Just over two fifths (41%, n=238) of participants reported that house break ins were a problem

## Levels of noise

- Two fifths (40%, n=235) of participants reported levels of noise being a problem. This was reported more commonly by unemployed, those renting accommodation and GMS card holders

## Implications for Galway City

One in two participants identified reduced crime and improved safety as a priority to make Galway City a better place to live. Not only is reducing crime and increasing safety important for making Galway City an attractive place to live, but also for promoting the physical, mental and social health and well-being of its inhabitants.

The majority of participants report feeling safe in their local area. However, there is significant scope for improvement, as only just over one quarter (26%, n=146) scored the maximum ten out of ten (with ten being strongly agree with the statement 'I feel safe living here'). Feeling safe was the second priority identified to make Galway a better place, with an increased Garda presence being mentioned most commonly.

On average, half the respondents reported that the various crimes identified were a problem. Even 'non-violent' crimes, such as rubbish or graffiti, can make people feel unsafe in their environment, and can indicate a low community spirit and low social control. (WHO, 2004). The frequency of which these problems are reported and the impact they can have on feeling safe in one's own community, and the subsequent impact on health, mean targeting each of these crimes is essential for the promotion of Galway as a Healthy City.

The most commonly reported problem was speed or volume of road traffic accidents. Traffic or transport has been identified as a major issue in a number of other areas in this research, and is a clear priority for the health of the residents of Galway City.

Many of the problems were more commonly reported by disadvantaged groups, such as the unemployed, less educated and GMS card holders. Thus, it is necessary to particularly support these groups in the elimination of these crimes and ultimately the promotion of feelings of safety in their locality.

## References

Austin, D., Furr, L., & Spine, M. (2002) The effects of neighbourhood conditions on perceptions of safety *Journal of Criminal Justice* 30 (5): 417-427

World Health Organization (2004) *Review of Evidence on Housing and Health* Geneva: World Health Organization