



FEAR OF CRIME

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Definition

Fear of Crime is the perception or anxiety of becoming a victim of crime. This has the effect of disempowering individuals and communities.

What do our statistics tell us?

Unlike other chapters in this audit, Fear of Crime is not measured through the data that we have collected from our partners. This chapter is based solely on what you have told us through our surveys and focus groups.

The Pan London Audit highlighted findings from the FY2002-3 British Crime Survey, which indicated that Londoners believe crime to be rising, whilst it is actually falling.

What did you tell us?

Residents Survey

The surveys commissioned have questioned peoples present views in relation to the last 12 months. A survey in relation to the Fear of Crime was carried out in March 2003 where 80% of respondents said that they feel safe in the borough compared to 83% in the 2004 face-to-face survey.

A representational sample of just under 800 Lambeth residents were interviewed during June/ July 04 to ascertain their views about how safe they felt in Lambeth.

When asked, two-thirds of respondents of the face-to-face survey felt about as safe as they did a year ago; the remaining third felt less safe.

The 1998 – 2001 Audit of Crime and Disorder was unable to comment upon issues regarding the Fear of Crime, although we did ask you what you considered the key issues within Lambeth to be. To this extent we are unable to make any comparisons with the previous two audits.

Where do you feel unsafe?

Results from both surveys showed that most of the people asked felt most unsafe in the Brixton Town centre area. This accounted for 80% of the responses. The second and third highest areas of concern were Stockwell and Streatham respectively.

What makes you feel unsafe?

When asked what makes you feel unsafe, the respondents highlighted the following:

What makes you feel unsafe?			
2004 Audit		1998-2001 Audit	
Gangs in the area	55%	Street Crime	57%
Reputation of the area	50%	Dark Street	42%
Drug dealers in the area	42%	Burglary	35%
Drug users in the area	38%	Dangerous traffic	24%
Guns, knives and other weapons	24%	Drug dealing	19%
Street Drinking	21%	Drug use in public	10%

Gangs in the area

Findings from the surveys are supported through the focus groups where gangs were identified as a major concern and linked with serious crimes but also groups of young people (both boys and girls). There was much more day to day concern about groups of young people hanging around together, especially after school.

Fear of Crime – where does it come from

- Media/ word-of-mouth
- Location – Brixton, or town centre, large social housing estates and parks
- Transport – tube and rail stations, tube carriages, buses, bus stops. Both Brixton and Stockwell underground stations were mentioned but when asked about over ground it was Streatham that caused most concern

The Pan London Audit indicated that worries about crime tend to be found more commonly amongst women, older people, the disabled, the poor, the victimised, residents of high physical disorder and those in communities with little social cohesion.

When are the key times?

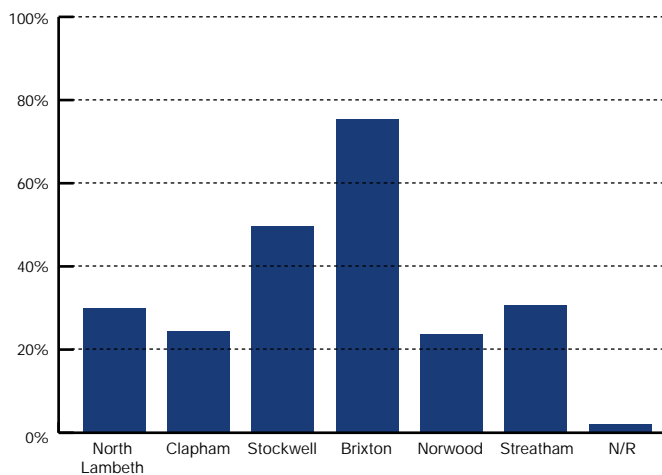
- Fear of crime is increased during the hours of darkness. With over half (54%) claiming they felt unsafe in Lambeth
- During the day however 83% felt safe in Lambeth, with 93% feeling safe in their local area
- 98% felt safe in their homes during the day and 90% felt safe at night
- In the 1998 audit dark streets were a concern

What would make you feel safer?			
2004 Audit		1998-2001 Audit	
Increase in policing	58%	Increase in policing	57%
CCTV	36%	Better Lighting	38%
Police Community Safety Officers	30%	More things to do	25%
Improved lighting	25%	CCTV/Cleaner streets	17%
Neighbourhood	16%		

What would make you feel safer?

- The residents survey reflected the above priorities. However, cleaner environments (29%) and better information (15%) were also prioritised
- The introduction of Police Community Support Officers (PCSO's) and Neighbourhood Wardens has clearly made people feel safer in Brixton (47%) and Streatham (40%) and was also a high priority for local residents.

Table 36
In which area(s) of Lambeth do you feel unsafe?



Reporting Crime

The Residents Survey indicated that in cases of violent crime only half reported it to the Police and levels of reporting were significantly lower for black victims. Of those that did not report the crime to the Police the main reason given was 'that the Police would not be able to do anything.'

Young people's views (See Youth Crime chapter)

Focus Group Quotes:

'These guys make Brixton as well as breaking it.'

'Officially crime rates have actually gone down, we have noticed that there are not as many Police notices. Even though we get more Police around, the prostitution and drugs problems have not gone down. They seem not to have changed. There also seem to be more gangs in the area.'

'I was taken once by a mini cab driver in Wembley. I said go to Brixton, he said ok, but close all the windows. Then we talked and he said that if he would want to do something wrong, he can always disappear here, like everybody else because it's Brixton.'

'Waterloo is a high crime area because of the station, but because there are so many people around and because it is highly Policed it feels safe, although in reality loads of crime occurs there. In comparison West Norwood has far fewer crimes but if you walk through there you feel unsafe.'

'When they mugged me three times, it wasn't night, it was daytime, twice in the afternoon and I was fighting with the guy and people were just walking and nobody cared. I was screaming help me!' – social responsibility

'Going to Brixton tube station used to feel like running the gauntlet but now the place has been cleaned up and more Police are present.'

'I honestly don't know if it is because people cannot tell who are the good and who are the bad or if you are not prepared to try and see really what differences are there.'

Lambeth Staff Consultation Survey

Fear of Crime

When asked if they felt safer working for Lambeth now than they did a year ago, 66% replied they felt about the same.

The majority of staff felt fairly or very safe travelling within the borough between 06.00 hours and 18.00 hours. Staff also felt less safe after dark.

What made you feel unsafe? (see Appendix charts)

The main concerns were around drug dealers; guns, knives and other weapons; drug users in the area; aggressive begging; reputation in the area and gangs in the area.

Ways in which staff safety could be improved included: training and guidance on personal safety, better support for those who are physically and verbally abused, CCTV, increased/ improved security, awareness of an officers movements and mobile phones.

Other Issues

- The focus groups acknowledged Lambeth's diversity. Some people welcomed this but some saw this as a cause for concern
- Respondents felt vulnerable because of their gender (45%), age (24%), colour, race or religion (16%) and sexuality (6%)
- The focus groups felt that the following could lead to victimisation:
 - being young
 - being old
 - having learning or physical disabilities
 - having mental health problems

What have we done so far?

- Introduced five warden schemes, with more planned
- PCSOs focusing on town centres within the borough
- CCTV schemes in town centres across the borough
- Extension of mobile CCTV scheme
- Agreed private finance initiative to improve lighting throughout the borough, with lighting improvements having taken place in crime hotspots
- Significant investment in security and environmental improvement on social housing estates
- Improved security on sheltered housing schemes for repeat victims of Burglary, particularly the elderly
- Young People's community safety forums have been set up in each town centre to give them a opportunity to raise their concerns and suggest ways that services can be improved
- Specific robbery and burglary squads have been set up
- Expanded activities for young people during school holidays and programmes targeted at vulnerable young people throughout the year
- Operation REFRESH targeting Anti Social Behaviour and Environmental Crime in Brixton Town Centre
- Multi-agency work at Stockwell underground to improve safety and environmental improvements implemented at a number of over ground stations, including improved lighting and CCTV

- 75% reduction of crack houses operating within the borough
- Expanded treatment services, with faster access for drug misusers
- Initiative to tackle prolific offenders who cause most harm to communities
- Development and implementation of ASB strategy. As a result of the impact ASB has on communities. (See ASB and Environmental Crime chapter)
- Safer Neighbourhoods initiative in Vassall, Coldharbour and Clapham Town wards, bringing increased uniformed presence to local communities, responding to their concerns. With commitment to extend in coming years
- Safer Estates Task Force established to work on high crime estates to tackle priority community concerns and build confidence in local communities
- Third party reporting sites established to improve reporting of Hate Crimes
- CPP has developed personal safety/ self-defence workshops provided for residents and workers in the area to provide reassurance and basic self-defence techniques against potential attacks

Emerging priorities

- Improve communication, understanding and appreciation between different communities, especially between young and older residents, religious groups, Police and our communities
- Encourage active citizenship and communities playing a central role in finding and delivering solutions to local crime issues in partnership e.g third party reporting and Neighbourhood Watch schemes
- Robust media strategy – focusing on geographic issues and solutions and criminal justice success
- Realign policing and other community reassurance initiatives to times when communities feel vulnerable particularly around transport hubs, evening and night times
- Build on improved cleaning and environmental enforcement services
- Significantly expand the provision of facilities for young people and support to families and carers
- Improve services for victims and witnesses including Hate Crime