

Report for the
Community Satisfaction Survey
Of the
Warwick, Rhode Island Police Department

Prepared by

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Introduction

The *Citizen Satisfaction Survey* that is the subject of this report was undertaken in the period between April and May 2008 through the Justice System Training & Research Institute – School of Justice Studies at Roger Williams University at the request of Chief Stephen M. McCartney, Chief of Police, Warwick Police Department. During the period of the survey, the police department performed its role as the primary law enforcement service provider for the City of Warwick, Rhode Island with a total of 180 sworn personnel consisting of one chief, one deputy chief, two commanders, eight lieutenants, seven captains, twenty-eight sergeants, twenty-six detectives, seventy-four patrol officers, six community policing officers, two youth services officers, two PAL officers, three school resource officers, one accreditation officer, one analyst, two officers each in internal affairs and training, and three animal control officers. The Warwick Police Department also employs fifty-three civilians.

Warwick, which is the second largest city in Rhode Island, has a population of 85,808 people with a total of 37,085 occupied housing units. Within the total population, 18,791 people are under the age of 18 years and 14,587 are age 65 years or older. The total population of the City is fairly evenly distributed between female residents (44,963) and male residents (40,845). The median household income was \$46,483 (1999). Retail sales per capita were \$22,719 (2002) (U.S. Census, 2000).

The purpose of the survey, as directed by the police department's General Orders, is to document "overall department performance, overall competence of employees, attitudes and behavior toward citizens, citizen opinion of safety and security, and recommendations and suggestions for improvement" (Warwick Police Department, General Order 500.01). Community Surveys provide descriptive information that goes beyond the traditional measures of police workload, arrest activity, reported offenses, and calls for service (Weisel, 1999). Since these surveys provide a measure of police performance, they can be used to analyze the way police deliver services and possibly change the allocation of resources where needed (Weisel, 1999).

Distribution of the anonymous, survey questionnaire to a sampling of residents and business owners was accomplished through the U.S. mail. Public notification of the survey was provided through a media release to one newspaper of general circulation (Providence Journal, April 23, 2008).

The Sample

The respondents for the residential survey were selected from the City's motor vehicle registration list. It was determined that surveys would be mailed to approximately 25 percent, or 1,120 of the active, registered car owners. The 1,120 residents were randomly selected using

two separate random sampling procedures. Of the 1,120 surveys mailed to Warwick residents, 109, or 9.7 percent, were returned.

The respondents for the business survey were generated from a listing of all licensed business supplied by the Warwick City Hall. The initial list contained the addresses of 501 businesses. Of the 501 surveys mailed to Warwick business owners, 59, or 11.8 percent, were returned.

Sample Demographics

Of the 109 City residents who responded, 52 percent were female and 48 percent were male. Fifty-one percent were between the ages of 51 and 70, with 32 percent between the ages of 31 and 50. Only 3 percent were between the ages of 18 and 30 while 15 percent were 71 years of age or older. Ninety percent of the respondents were homeowners while 4 percent rent their home and 5 percent rent an apartment. Seventy-nine percent have lived in Warwick over 10 years, 14 percent have lived in Warwick between 6 and 10 years and 7 percent have lived in Warwick less than 5 years. Fourteen percent of the respondents live alone, 48 percent live in two-person households, and the remaining households have 3 or more residents.

Of the 59 business respondents 23 percent were female and 77 percent were male. Twenty-one percent were between the ages of 31 and 50, with 68 percent between the ages of 51 and 70. Only 2 percent were between the ages of 18 and 30 while 9 percent were 71 years of age or older. Ninety percent of the business respondents were the current owner or manager and 6 percent were employees. Ninety-one percent of the businesses have been open for more than 10 years, 2 percent for 1 to 5 years, 5 percent for 6 to 10 years and 2 percent have been open for less than 1 year. Sixty-nine percent of the businesses employ no more than 7 employees while the remaining businesses have 10 or more employees.

The Survey

Satisfaction with the Warwick Police Department was ascertained through the use of a written survey. The survey consisted of 35 questions. The first set of questions (Q1 -15) was designed to solicit responses regarding personal safety/quality of life, confidence in police performance and interactions with the police. These items were scored with a 5-point Likert scaling system. The second set of questions (Q16- Q26), were designed to determine which, if any, listed items respondents felt were currently a problem in Warwick. These items were scored using a 3-point Likert scaling system. Questions 27 and 28 asked specifically about the crime level in Warwick and whether or not the person responding to the survey had any contact with the Warwick Police Department within the last year. The survey culminated with basic demographic questions as

well as an open-ended question which asked the respondent to indicate any item(s) they would like to see the police department address or improve.

Due to the nature of those being surveyed, slight differences exist in the wording of Questions 1, 2, 32, 33, and 34. The residential survey can be found in Appendix A. The business survey is included in Appendix B.

Accompanying each survey was an informational/consent form. In this letter, the focus of the study was outlined and the key researchers were identified. Respondents were told that their responses would remain anonymous and that they did not have to participate in the survey. They were also provided with a contact person if they desired further information.

Results

Residential Response

In the areas of personal safety (Questions 1 “I feel safe in my home”, 2 “I feel safe walking alone in my neighborhood”, 14 “Warwick is generally a safe community”) most residents either agree or strongly agree that they feel safe in their home (98 percent), walking alone in their neighborhood (95 percent), and that Warwick is generally a safe community (97 percent). Ninety-seven percent use self protective measures, such as locking their doors, to prevent crime. Sixty-seven percent of residents believe that the Warwick police do a good job keeping Warwick residents safe. Ninety-two percent are satisfied with Warwick’s quality of life.

Warwick residents also report favorable interactions with their local police agency (Questions 5 “Warwick Police Officers are courteous”, 7 “Warwick Police Officers treat Warwick residents fairly and justly”, 9 “Warwick Police Officers are professional in their conduct”, 12 “Warwick Police officers are professional in their appearance”). Residents either agree or strongly agree that Warwick officers are courteous (87 percent), are professional in their conduct (86 percent), and are professional in their appearance (98 percent).

The Warwick Police Department is also well regarded in terms of job performance. Residents either agree or strongly agree that the Warwick police officers perform their duties to the best of their ability (83 percent), performs its job well (92 percent), and respond promptly when called (80 percent). Forty-five percent of the residents believe that residents are treated justly and fairly while 38% believe that they are kept informed about crime levels. Finally, ninety-three percent have confidence in the Warwick police.

There were no major areas of dissatisfaction with the Warwick Police Department.

Overall, 78 percent of Warwick residents believe that in the past 12 months, crime in Warwick has stayed the same. Twelve percent believe that crime actually increased while 11 percent felt the Town experienced a decrease in crime. Respondents were also asked to identify whether a particular crime or nuisance was currently ‘not a problem at all’, ‘somewhat a problem’, or ‘very much a problem’ in Warwick. These items were ranked 1, 2, and 3 respectively in order to calculate a mean rating. A mean rating of ‘1’ indicates the crime or nuisance is not at all a problem while a mean rating closer to a score of ‘3’ indicates a crime or nuisance as being very problematic. As one can tell from Table 1, parking/traffic/speeding cars, illegal dumping/littering, and theft or burglary are perceived as most problematic.

All residential responses, including the two open-ended questions (Q 28b and 35) can be found in Appendix C.

Table 1: Residential Rank Ordering of Crimes-Nuisances by Mean

<u>Crime/Nuisance</u>	<u>Mean</u>
Parking/Traffic/Speeding car	2.18
Illegal dumping/Littering	1.93
Theft or Burglary	1.85
Drug Use/Drug Dealing	1.79
Domestic Violence	1.74
Vandalism of Cars or Property	1.68
Juvenile Crime (excluding loitering)	1.67
Violent Crime (e.g. robbery)	1.47
Loitering	1.45
Noisy Neighbors	1.44
Public Drunkenness	1.34

Business Response

In the areas of personal safety (Questions 1 “I feel safe in my business”, 2 “I feel safe walking alone in my businesses’ neighborhood”, 14 “Warwick is generally a safe community”) business respondents either agree or strongly agree that they feel safe in their business (97 percent), walking alone in the business’ neighborhood (90 percent), and that Warwick is generally a safe community (90 percent). Ninety-seven percent use self protective measures, such as locking their doors, to prevent crime. Fifty-two percent of business respondents believe that the Warwick police do a good job keeping Warwick residents safe (note: 35 percent had “no opinion”). Seventy-eight percent are satisfied with Warwick’s quality of life.

Warwick business owners/employees also report favorable interactions with their local police agency (Questions 5 “Warwick Police Officers are courteous”, 7 “Warwick Police Officers treat Warwick residents fairly and justly”, 9 “Warwick Police Officers are professional in their conduct”, 12 “Warwick Police officers are professional in their appearance”). They either agree or strongly agree that Warwick officers are courteous (88 percent), treat Warwick residents fairly and justly (46 percent; 44 percent had ‘no opinion), are professional in their conduct (88 percent), and are professional in their appearance (95 percent).

The Warwick Police Department is also well regarded in terms of job performance by the business community. They either agree or strongly agree that the Warwick police officers perform their duties to the best of their ability (80 percent), performs its job well (88 percent), and respond promptly when called (87 percent). Eighty-nine percent have confidence in the Warwick police.

Overall, 75 percent of Warwick business owners/employees believe that in the past 12 months, crime in Warwick has stayed the same. Fifteen percent believe that crime actually decreased while 11 percent felt the Town experienced an increase in crime. Like residents, these respondents were also asked to identify whether a particular crime or nuisance was currently ‘not a problem at all’, ‘somewhat a problem’, or ‘very much a problem’ in Warwick. As previously stated, these items were ranked 1, 2, and 3 respectively in order to calculate a mean rating. A mean rating closer to a score of ‘1’ indicates the crime or nuisance is not at all a problem while a mean closer to a score of ‘3’ indicates a crime or nuisance as being very problematic. As one can tell from Table 2, parking/traffic/speeding cars, illegal dumping/littering, and juvenile crime were perceived as most problematic.

All business responses, including the three open-ended questions (Q 28a, 28b and 35) can be found in Appendix D.

Table 2: Business Owner/Employee Rank Ordering of Crimes-Nuisances by Mean

<u>Crime/Nuisance</u>	<u>Mean</u>
Parking/Traffic/Speeding Car	2.07
Illegal Dumping/Littering	1.91
Juvenile Crime	1.89
Theft or Burglary	1.87
Domestic Violence	1.85
Drug Use/Drug Dealing	1.85
Vandalism of Cars or Property	1.66

Violent Crime (e.g. robbery)	1.52
Public Drunkenness	1.43
Noisy Neighbors	1.39
Loitering	1.38

Conclusion

Warwick residents, as well as business owners/employees, tend to have favorable opinions towards the Warwick police. Warwick police officers are perceived to be doing a good job keeping residents safe, as well as being courteous and professional in their conduct and. The respondents also report a high level of confidence and favorable interactions with their local police agency