

Streatham Focus Crime Survey

Carried out by Streatham Liberal Democrats



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Foreword

by Chris Nicholson, Parliamentary Spokesperson for Streatham

Despite the tremendous work of our police force, from speaking to local residents I still get a clear sense that there are real problems with crime in our community.

It is shocking to see that so many of the people who took part in our survey have been offered drugs on the street. I know from my own involvement in drug treatment work that the government's policies to stop these offences are failing.

We need more police on the streets to deter this sort of crime, and I'm proud to say that an increase in police numbers is central to Liberal Democrats' policy on crime prevention.

As a Liberal Democrat, I think that locking more and more people up is not the answer. As re-offending rates are rising, we need proper training and education in prisons to provide ex-offenders with a real alternative to crime. Greater attention to drug rehabilitation is also essential.

By using these measures I would hope that the increased perceptions of crime seen in this report, no doubt produced via the visibility of anti-social behaviour on our streets, would start to fall.

Yours faithfully



Introduction

This is a survey prepared by the Streatham Liberal Democrats into the perception of crime and antisocial behaviour within the parliamentary constituency of Streatham.

Although we acknowledge the tremendous work of the local police force in fighting crime, Streatham still has a number of problems which are affecting residents' perception of crime and antisocial behaviour; for instance, drugs-related offences within Lambeth increased by 40% from 2006 to 2007 and by 19.8% in the Streatham parliamentary constituency. Clearly this is a pressing problem and provides the impetus for this survey.

The survey asked residents to answer questions based on their own perception and experience of crime and antisocial behaviour within Streatham. This was compared with the official crime statistics for Lambeth and Streatham to assess what matters to constituents and what action can be taken to solve issues arising from the findings.

Key Findings

- 62.5% think levels of crime in Streatham are rising.
- 33% of residents have been approached in the street by someone trying to sell drugs.
- 59.7% of respondents believe that the local police force needs more police officers.
- Opinion on ID cards is split.
- The majority (57.9%) of residents either do not go out or do not feel safe going out at night compared with 87.7% who feel safe during the day.
- 37.9% of residents are members of - or would be interested in helping to set up - a Neighbourhood Watch.
- 49.8% of residents believe Lambeth council is not doing enough to fight crime, leaving 41% undecided and just over 9% thinking that the council is doing enough.

Method

Survey forms were delivered by hand to the homes of residents and returned by being either left in letterboxes to be collected, or sent to a freepost return address. From this, 1010 were returned with most answering the majority of questions. The results were then tabulated and compared with the official crime statistics (See Appendix B) for the 12 months to July 2006 and the 12 months to July 2007. Key findings were then identified (either where a difference in perception and official figures was identified or where a possible explanation could be found) and collated.

The results of the Key findings are shown below in chart form with other results shown in a table in Appendix A at the end of the report.

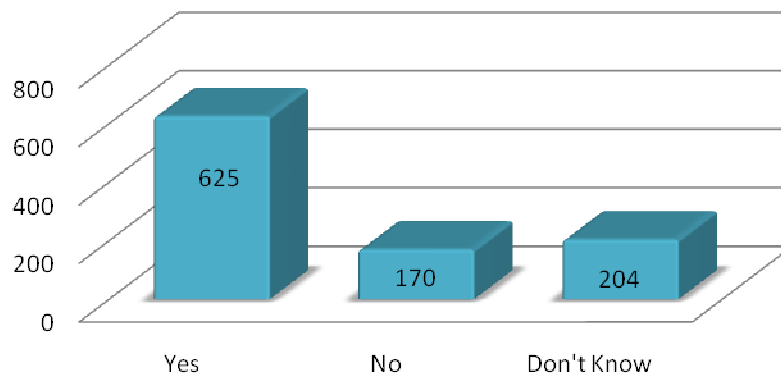
The questions asked were:

- 1: Do you personally feel more or less at risk of crime than one year ago?
- 2: Do you think levels of crime are rising in the area?**
- 3: Have you been a victim of crime?
- 4: Have you seen a crime taking place in the last year?
- 4a: *If yes did you report it?*
- 5: Do you think our local police force has enough police officers?**
- 6: Do you think the police pay enough attention to crime in our area?
- 7: Do you feel safe when you go out and about in the daytime?**
- 8: Do you feel safe when you go out and about after dark?**
- 9: Do you feel safe when using public transport in the area?
- 10: Do you feel safe in your home?
- 11: Are you a member of a Neighbourhood Watch?**
- 11a: If no, would you be interested in helping to set one up?**
- 12: Lambeth Council has a legal duty to help fight crime. Do you think the council is doing enough?**
- 13: Do you think that Lambeth Council has a good record of removing abandoned vehicles?
- 14: Are you regularly troubled by noise late at night?
- 15: Do you think graffiti is a big problem locally?
- 16: Have you been approached in the street by someone trying to sell drugs?**
- 17: Some people favour the introduction of identity cards to fight crime. Others say ID cards would be ineffective, cost too much and threaten civil liberties. Do you think ID cards are a good idea?**
- 18: Would you like to see more CCTV in our area?
- 19: Overall, do you think that the Labour Government is doing a good job in tackling crime?

The questions in **bold** are the **key findings** and are represented as **charts** below. The other results are tabulated at the end of the results section.

Do you think levels of crime are rising in the area?

Fig 1:



Perception of Crime

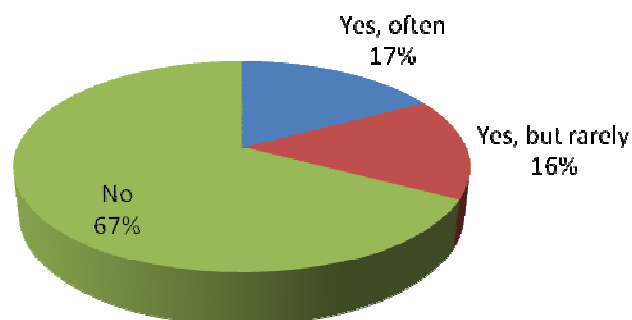
62.5% of residents in the Streatham parliamentary constituency believe that levels of crime are rising in the area (fig 1). Whilst the official figures show an overall decrease in the Streatham constituency (as calculated from the Lambeth ward figures), certain offences including Drugs Offences have indeed risen.

As we can see from the chart below (fig 2), 33% of Streatham residents have been approached by someone trying to sell drugs. This figure could be a potential cause of the heightened perception of crime levels within Streatham.

Crime levels have decreased, thanks to the hard-work of the Lambeth borough police force, but, at the same time, effective policies to fight drugs related offences in the long-term and halt re-offending have not been introduced.

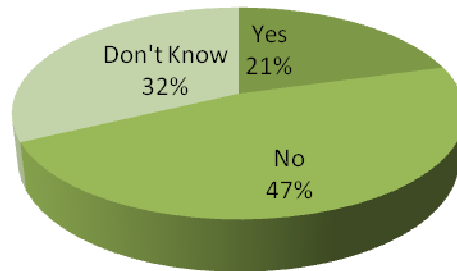
Have you been approached in the street by someone trying to sell drugs?

Fig 2:



Do you think our local police force has enough police officers?

Fig 3:



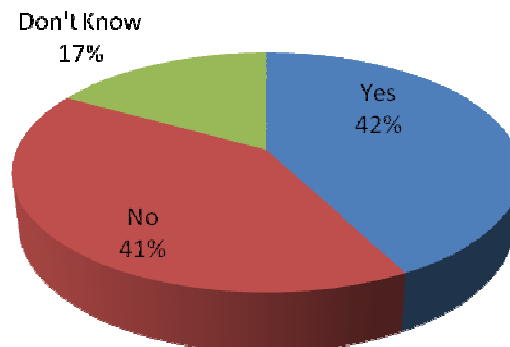
Residents' concerns over funding

As figure 3 shows, 47% of Streatham residents believing that the local police force is under-staffed, it is clear more funds are needed to put more police and PCSOs onto the streets.

Such a policy would obviously need funding. The government's plan to introduce ID cards divides the residents of Streatham almost equally between those against and those in support of such a policy (fig 4). By cancelling the ID cards scheme nationwide, Liberal Democrats would be able to increase national police numbers by 10,000.

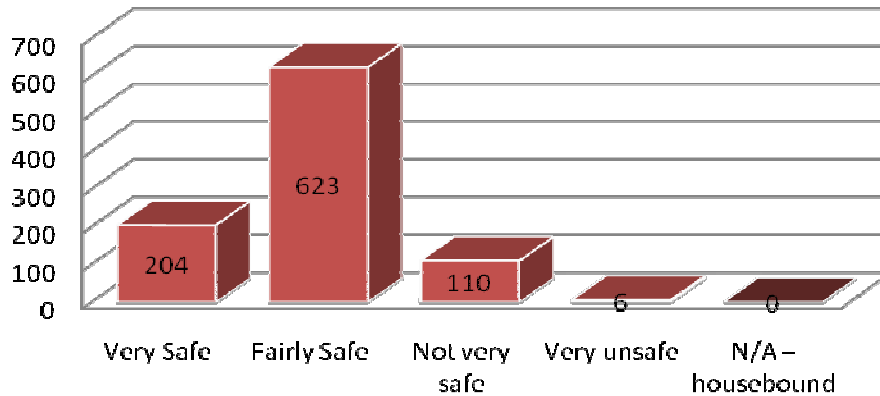
Do you think ID cards are a good idea?

Fig 4:



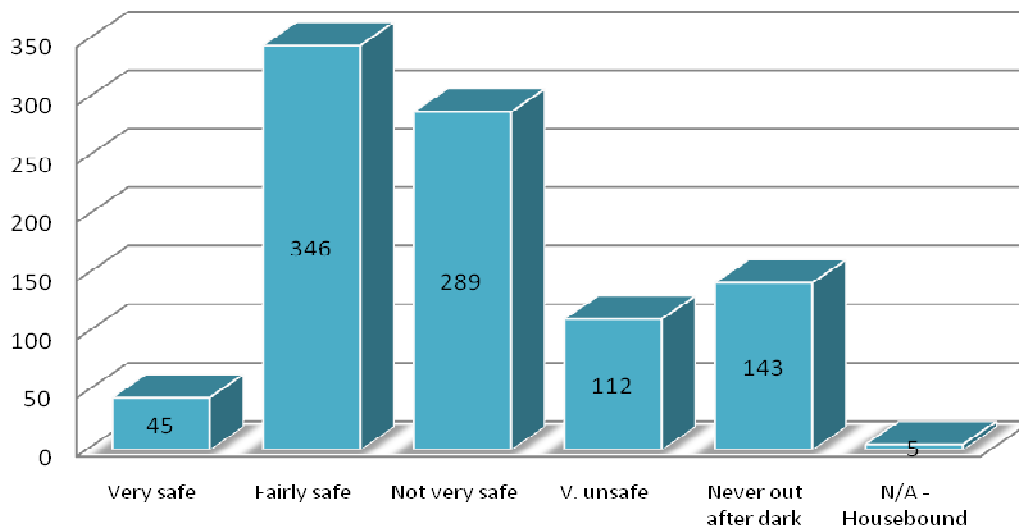
Do you feel safe when you go out and about in the area in the daytime?

Fig 5:



Do you feel safe when you go out and about in the area after dark?

Fig 6:



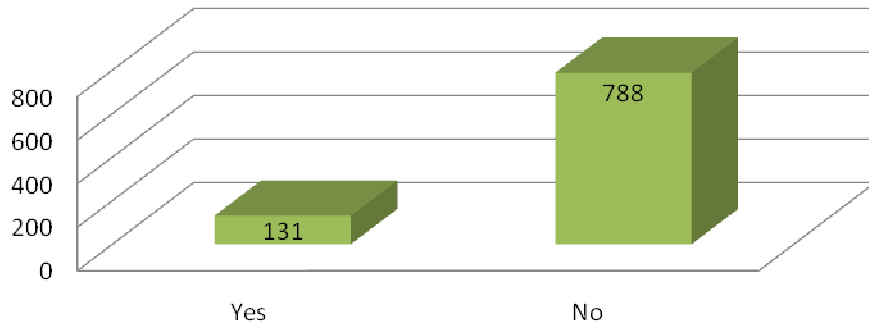
Residents' Safety

Whilst the vast majority of residents feel safe during the day, most do not feel safe or never go out after dark. Adjustments to licensing laws and an increase in community involvement, coupled with a campaign to increase street lighting are all important ways to increase residents' safety and these options were often expressed in the returned surveys.

The Liberal Democrats believe in reclaiming our streets at night by having a responsible, resident centred attitude towards licensing laws. This would make policing easier and Friday and Saturday nights less troublesome by enabling residents to have an impact on irresponsible licensed premises.

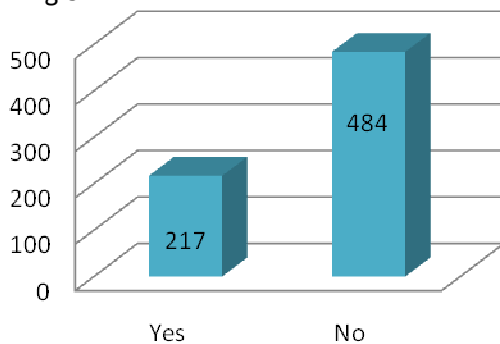
Are you a member of a Neighbourhood Watch?

Fig 7:



If no, would you be interested in setting one up?

Fig 8:



Neighbourhood Watch:

The vast majority of constituents are not a member of neighbourhood watch. However, 31% of those not members are interested in setting one up. This is obviously of particular interest to the police force as effective reporting of crime (see table, question 4a) is not always achievable.

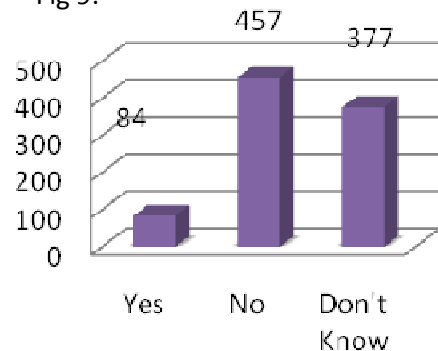
Furthermore, greater personal involvement on the part of residents can increase their sense of safety and community cohesion (figures 5 & 6).

The residents of Streatham do not feel that their council is doing enough to help fight crime (fig 9). A lack of street lighting was a concern often mentioned as a criticism of current policy.

However, the Streatham Liberal Democrats do not believe this should detract from the superb work of the Lambeth borough police force and believe that more needs to be done to support them in their fight against crime, both nationally and locally.

Lambeth Council has a legal duty to help fight crime. Do you think the Council is doing enough?

Fig 9:



Conclusion:

This survey has shown that a number of problems face the police, community support officers and residents of Streatham. The amount of drug related crime and robbery cases has risen and though crime rates have decreased, residents' perception of crime is that it is increasing; this correlation is perhaps due to the greater profile of drugs offences in particular.

Liberal Democrats believe in working closely with the Police, PCSOs and residents to develop effective crime fighting strategies. This includes increasing the numbers of police officers to ensure a higher number are able to be out on the streets. Part-funded by the ending of Labour's ID cards scheme, this would alleviate residents' concerns about the shortage of police officers.

Having seen the issues facing the police and community support officers and residents in Streatham, Liberal Democrats would suggest 3 responses to current problems.

- Increase the number of Police and Community Support Officers working with residents to combat crime, as well as increasing civilian support staff to remove the burden of paperwork from police officers, funded in part by the dropping of the controversial ID cards scheme.
- Attack the criminal drug industry through a combination of tough police action against drug dealers and a more sensible legal structure for drug users: helping to break the cycle of drug-related crime by providing more drug treatment places in prisons.
- Closely watch licensing laws and increase street lighting to reduce alcohol related crime and make our streets safer.

Appendix A: Summary of All Results

Question	Answers					
1 Do you personally feel more or less at risk of crime than one year ago?	More at risk	The	Less at			
	374	563	41			
2 Do you think levels of crime than one year ago?	Yes	No	Don't			
	625	170	204			
3 Have you been a victim of crime?	Last six	Last	No, not			
	110	132	709			
4 Have you seen a crime taking place in the last year?	Yes	No				
	323	635				
4a If yes, did you report it?	No didn't	Yes, to	Yes, to	Yes (note)		
	149	125	18			
5 Do you think our local police force has enough police officers?	Yes	No	Don't			
	66	561	313			
6 Do you think the police pay enough attention to crime in our area?	Yes	No	Don't			
	190	433	296			
7 Do you feel safe when you go out and about in the area in the daytime?	Very Safe	Fairly	Not very	Very	N/A	
	204	623	110	6	0	
8 Do you feel safe when you go out and about in the area after dark?	Never go out	Very	Fairly	Not very	Very	N/A
	143	45	346	289	112	5
9 Do you feel safe when using the public transport in the area?	Very Safe	Fairly	Not very	Very	N/A	
	120	592	187	30	0	
10 Do you feel safe in your home?	Very Safe	Fairly	Not very	Very		
	337	553	44	11		
11 Are you a member of a neighbourhood watch?	Yes	No				
	131	788				
11a If no, would you be interested in setting one up?	Yes	No				
	217	484				
12 Lambeth Council has a legal duty to help fight crime. Do you think the Council is doing enough?	Yes	No	Don't			
	84	457	377			
13 Do you think that Lambeth Council has a good record removing abandoned vehicles?	Yes	No	Don't			
	366	148	441			
14 Are you regularly troubled by noise late at night?	Yes	No	Don't			
	189	748	10			
15 Do you think that graffiti is a big problem locally?	Yes	No	Don't Know			
	375	463	97			
16 Have you been approached in the street by someone trying to sell drugs?	Yes, often	Yes, but rarely	No			
	163	148	638			
17 Do you think ID cards are a good idea?	Yes	No	Don't Know			
	394	380	157			
18 Would you like to see more CCTV in our area?	Yes	No	Don't Know			
	610	246	98			
19 Overall, do you think that the Labour Government is doing a good job in tackling crime?	Yes	No	Don't Know			
	147	568	243			

Appendix B: Official Crime Statistics for Lambeth Borough and Streatham Parliamentary Constituency.

Offences Per 1000 population	Streatham current year	Lambeth current year	Streatham previous year	Lambeth previous year
Burglary	12.86	12.60	14.38	15.03
Criminal Damage	15.25	16.16	13.82	16.05
Drugs Offences	7.29	13.6	6.20	9.57
Fraud or Forgery	3.09	3.56	3.30	3.24
Other Notable Offences	1.54	2.27	1.21	1.62
Robbery	9.34	9.88	8.48	9.85
Sexual Offences	1.48	1.45	2.43	1.94
Theft and Handling	34.51	47.49	34.08	48.60
Violence against the other person	24.84	30.05	23.93	29.44