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MEDIA RELEASE

Public perceptions of neighbourhood crime in NSW

Residents of NSW are more concerned about dangerous/noisy driving than about virtually any other crime and/or public nuisance problem in their neighbourhood, according to new research findings released today by the NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research.

The Bureau consolidated the results of more than 20,000 interviews with residents of NSW conducted on its behalf by the Australian Bureau of Statistics as part of the annual NSW Crime and Safety Survey.

The study is the largest ever undertaken in Australia into public perceptions of crime. It examined public perceptions of housebreaking, car theft, louts/youth gangs, prowlers/loiterers, vandalism/graffiti, dangerous/noisy driving, illegal drugs, sexual and non-sexual assault.

The results show wide regional variation in the proportion of residents who perceive a crime or public nuisance problem in their neighbourhood. In the urban areas of Sydney, the percentage who perceive a problem ranges from 67 per cent in Inner Sydney to 46 per cent on the Northern Beaches.

In regional areas the percentage who see a problem ranges from 58 per cent in the Illawarra to 31 per cent in South Eastern NSW.

Break and enter was by far the most common problem identified in all areas; with residents of Inner Western Sydney and the Far West evincing the greatest level of concern about this problem.

The second biggest problem, however, was dangerous/noisy driving. Concern about this problem in urban areas ranged from 25 per cent in the St George Sutherland area to 14 per cent in the Eastern Suburbs, Inner Sydney, Inner Western Sydney and Lower Northern Sydney Areas.

In regional NSW concern about this problem was highest in the South Eastern NSW (at 22%) and lowest in North Western NSW (at 10%).

Louts/youth gangs are another area of neighbourhood concern shared by both urban and regional NSW.

In urban areas concern about this problem ranged from 20 per cent in the Northern Beaches to eight per cent in Lower North Sydney and Hornsby Ku-ring-gai. In regional NSW concern ranged from 16 per cent in North Western NSW to three per cent in the Far West of NSW.

Urban and regional NSW differed in their assessments of the relative importance of vandalism/graffiti and illegal drugs, with urban NSW being generally more concerned about the former and regional NSW being generally more concerned about the latter.

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Concern about vandalism/graffiti in urban NSW ranged from 13 per cent in the Eastern Suburbs to three per cent in Canterbury-Bankstown. Concern about illegal drugs in regional NSW ranged from 17 per cent in the Central West to eight per cent in the Far West.

The stand out exception to the pattern of greater regional concern about illegal drugs was the urban area of Fairfield-Liverpool (which encompasses Cabramatta). Eighteen per cent of residents cited this as their main problem (behind 31% who cited break and enter and 25% who cited dangerous/noisy driving).

The Bureau also examined the factors which make people more concerned about crime or public nuisance problems in their neighbourhood.

Not surprisingly, victims of personal or household crime are much more likely to see a problem in their neighbourhood than residents of the neighbourhood who have not experienced a personal or household crime. Residents of high crime regions are also more likely to see a problem than residents who do not live in high crime regions.

Surprisingly, however, residents who have recently migrated from a non-English speaking country and residents who are aged 65 years and over, are much less likely to see a crime/public nuisance problem in their neighbourhood than non migrants and younger people.

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