

Quality
of
LIFE
S P O K A N E

PUBLIC SAFETY

SECTION 4



INSET

SPOKANE COUNTY Neighborhood Boundaries

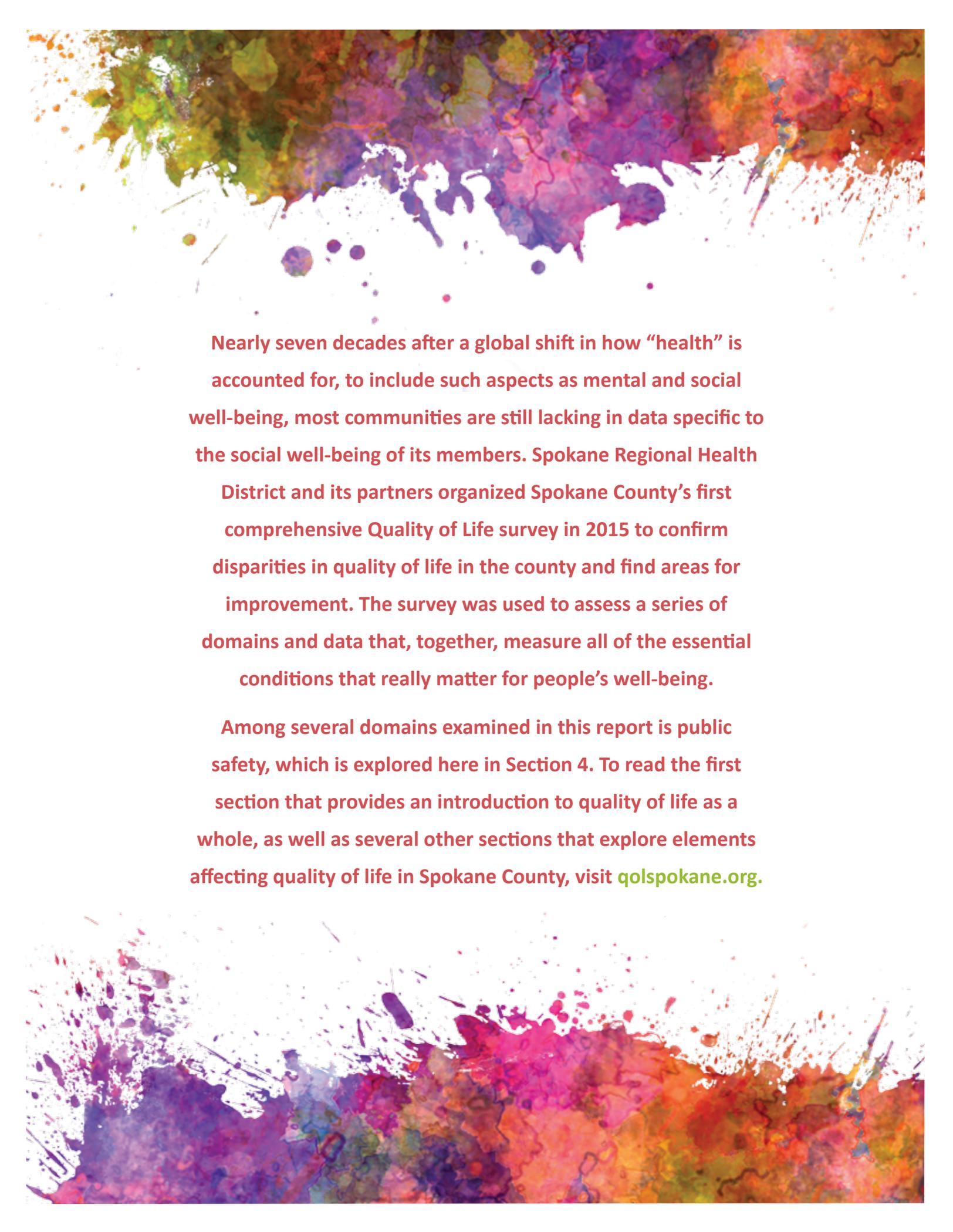


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Nearly seven decades after a global shift in how “health” is accounted for, to include such aspects as mental and social well-being, most communities are still lacking in data specific to the social well-being of its members. Spokane Regional Health District and its partners organized Spokane County’s first comprehensive Quality of Life survey in 2015 to confirm disparities in quality of life in the county and find areas for improvement. The survey was used to assess a series of domains and data that, together, measure all of the essential conditions that really matter for people’s well-being.

Among several domains examined in this report is public safety, which is explored here in Section 4. To read the first section that provides an introduction to quality of life as a whole, as well as several other sections that explore elements affecting quality of life in Spokane County, visit qolspokane.org.



Introduction

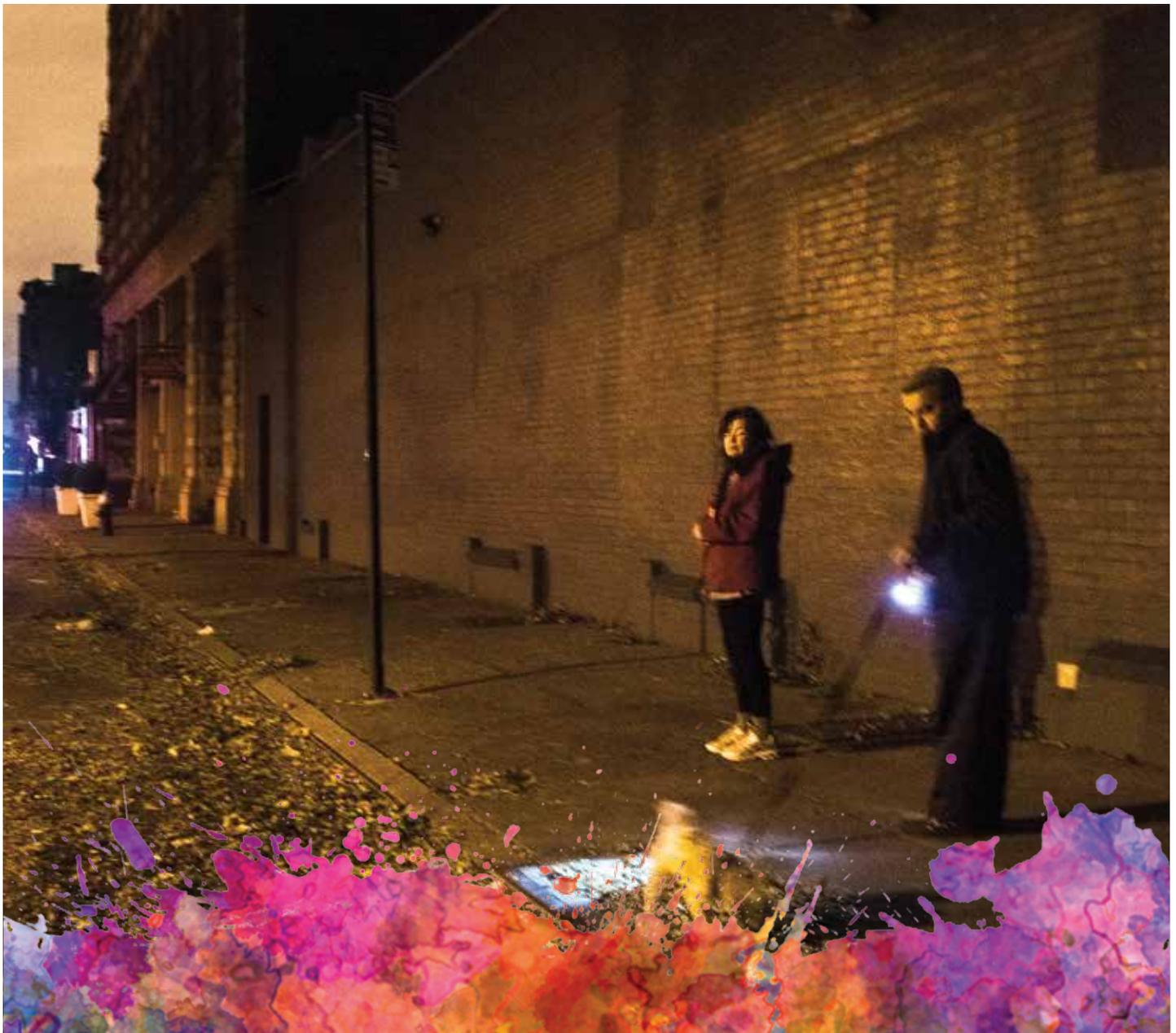
Public safety has the potential to influence quality of life and health. For example, safety concerns may prevent someone from walking in their neighborhood, thereby reducing their options for physical activity. Or, a mother may avoid using a local playground with her children because she is concerned that it is unsafe. It follows that efforts to improve quality of life and health should consider public safety. The following section details perceptions of safety and knowledge of crimes committed in Spokane County using data gathered as part of the Quality of Life survey conducted by Spokane Regional Health District in 2015.

Methods

Spokane County’s Quality of Life survey was administered following a “push-to-web” model used extensively within Washington and other states. Survey invitations were mailed to a random sample of 12,000 addresses within Spokane County. Respondents were encouraged to respond to the survey online (pushed to web) before being given the option of completing a hardcopy survey. In total, 3,833 people responded (32%) and 3,334 records (28%) were valid for analysis. The survey was weighted to account for the sampling design and differential response rates among subgroups. Weights were created using iterative proportional fitting (raking) across five margins: age, race/ethnicity, sex, education, and home ownership. Please see Section 7, Technical Appendix for detailed methodology.

Methodology for reporting crime

Survey authors asked about the type of crimes that residents knew to have occurred in their neighborhood in the last 12 months. To distinguish these crimes from crimes reported to the police or sheriff, survey authors labeled these crimes *apparent crimes*. While residents’ knowledge of local crimes is an important part of neighborhood safety and quality of life, it may not reflect the actual rate of crimes in the area. Differences between apparent (perceived) crime and actual crime could be due in part to bias based on the respondent’s general feeling of safety, or lack thereof, or lack of community knowledge of crimes involving stigmatization due to victims’ reluctance to discuss the crime openly.



Feelings of Safety Using a Local Park or Green Space during the Day

The Quality of Life survey posed the following question:

“How safe do you feel using your local park or green space alone during the day?”

- *Very safe*
- *Somewhat safe*
- *Somewhat unsafe*
- *Very unsafe*

Roughly half of Spokane County residents felt *very safe* using their local park or green space alone during the day and another 40% felt *somewhat safe*. Feelings of safety using the park during the day were associated with age, sex, race/ethnicity, education, general health, and neighborhood. Employment, marital status and home ownership were not associated with feelings of safety during daytime park use.

Differences in feeling of safety by demographic factors

Feelings of safety were lower among women, older age groups—specifically those age 40 and older; people in *poor* or *fair* general health, and residents of certain neighborhoods. There was indication that American Indian and Alaska Natives, Hispanics and blacks were more likely than whites to feel safe using the park during the day, but there were not enough data to be sure. See figure 1 for rates of feeling safe by specific demographic factors.

Accounting for other factors listed above, women were less likely (85%) to feel *somewhat* or *very safe* as men (93%) when using their neighborhood park alone during the day. Hispanics (98%) were more likely than whites (88%) to feel *somewhat* or *very safe* and people in *poor* health (75%) were less likely to feel *somewhat* or *very safe* than those in *excellent* or *very good* health (91%). Persons with a 12th grade education or less (87%) and those with some college but no degree (88%) were less likely than persons with a graduate or professional degree to feel *somewhat* or *very safe* (93%).

People who were likely to feel safe using the park in the day were:

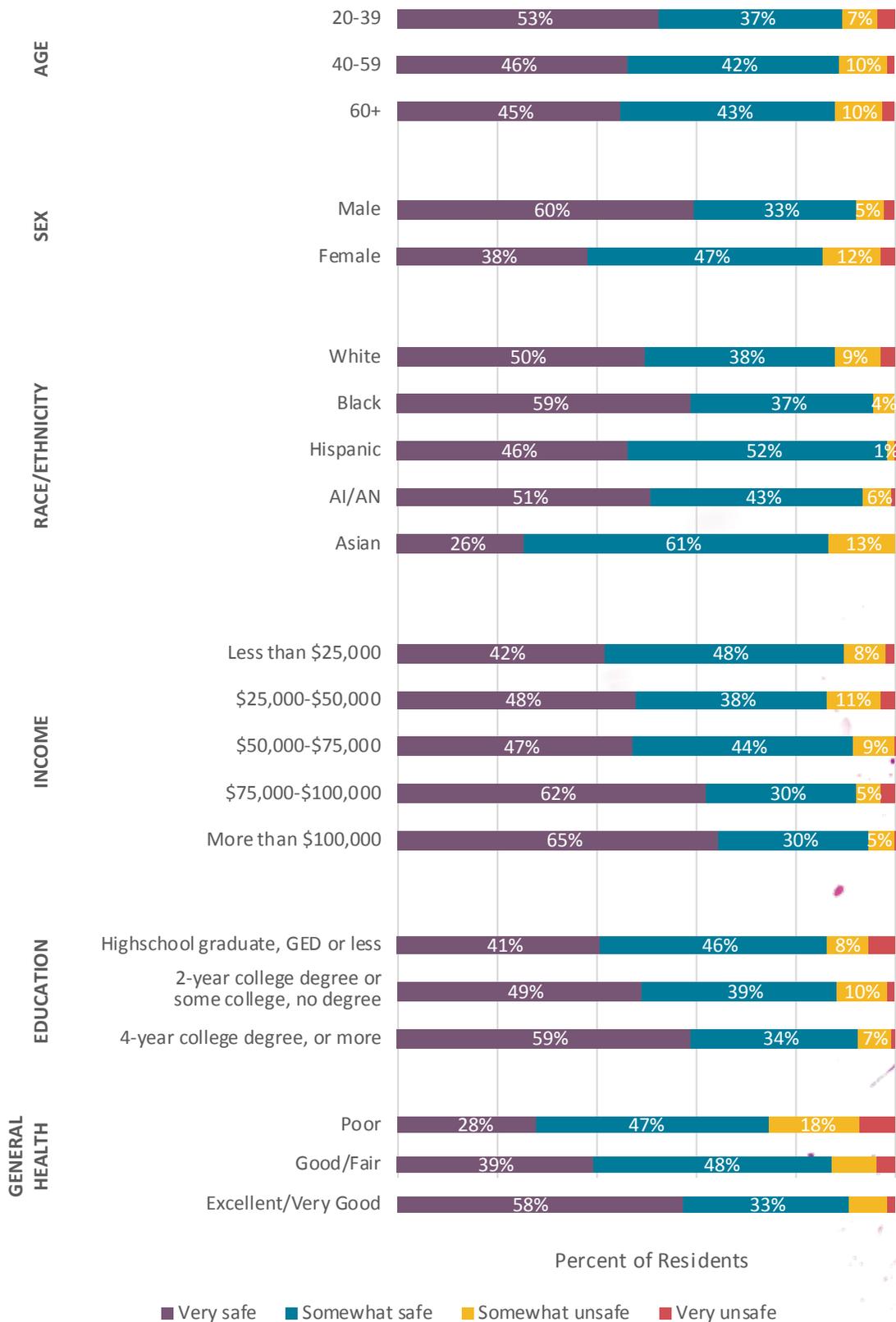
- *Under 40 years old*
- *Men*
- *Hispanic, black or American Indian /Alaska Native*
- *More educated*
- *Healthier by self-report*
- *Residents of specific neighborhoods or communities*

By knowledge of apparent crime

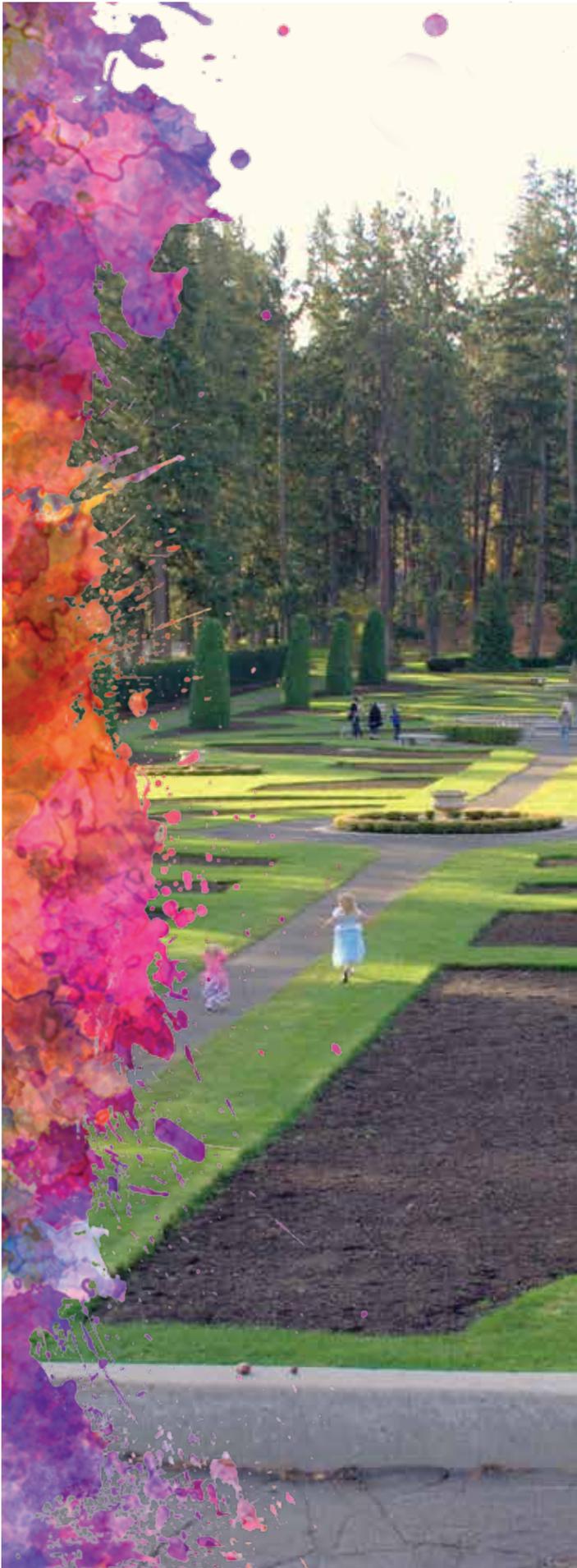
While it may seem obvious that knowledge of crimes in one’s neighborhood would affect one’s feeling of safety, for the purposes of this survey, it was less clear how much these apparent crimes affected feelings of safety. Apparent crimes were defined as crimes that residents knew to have occurred in their neighborhood in the last 12 months, whether they were reported to the police or not. Accounting for factors previously discussed, people with knowledge of violent physical attacks were five times less likely to feel safe using their local park or green space alone during the day. Those with knowledge of sexual assault or rape were more than eight times less likely to feel safe.



Figure 1. Feelings of Safety Using Local Park During the Day by Demographic Factors, Spokane County 2015



Note: Percentages do not sum to 100 because of rounding. While they are represented on this figure, percentages for feeling very unsafe are sometimes not displayed because of their small size.

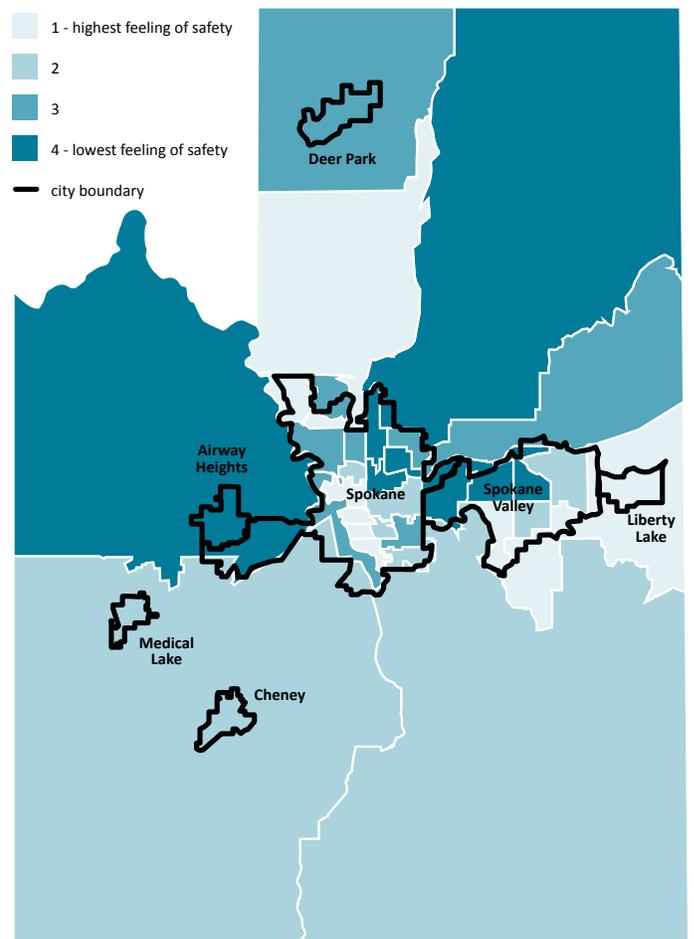


Differences by neighborhood

Accounting for the factors listed above (age, sex, race/ethnicity, education, income), there were differences in the feelings of safety by neighborhood (see figure 1). Residents of Balboa/S. Indian Trail were most likely to feel safe using their neighborhood park alone in the day. In comparison, residents of Nevada/Lidgerwood and Bemiss/Minnehaha were six and nine times less likely respectively to feel safe using their neighborhood park alone during the day than residents of Balboa/S. Indian Trail. Similarly, residents of Cheney/Medical Lake were three times less likely to feel safe, and residents of Chattaroy/Deer Park were nearly four times less likely to feel safe than residents of Balboa/S. Indian Trail.

Feelings of safety when using a local park or green space alone were higher among neighborhoods in the urban core of Spokane city, with the exception of neighborhoods in the northeast section of the city. Lower feelings of safety in the West Plains and Mt. Spokane/Green Bluff/Mead areas may be due to the fact that green space is more isolated in these areas, but more data is necessary to draw conclusions. This pattern was notably different for feelings of safety when walking alone at night (see next section).

Figure 2. Feeling of Safety, by Neighborhood, Using Local Park or Green Space Alone, Spokane County 2015



Feelings of Safety Walking Alone in One's Neighborhood at Night

The Quality of Life survey posed the following question:

“How safe do you feel walking alone in your area at night?”

- *Very safe*
- *Somewhat safe*
- *Somewhat unsafe*
- *Very unsafe*

Most residents felt *very safe* (30%) or *somewhat safe* (45%) walking alone in their neighborhood at night. Factors associated with feelings of safety when walking alone in one's neighborhood at night were: age, sex, education, income, general health, and neighborhood. Race/ethnicity, marital status, having children under 18 in the home, and home ownership were not associated with feelings of safety. Feelings of safety were lower among women, older and younger age groups, people in *fair* or *poor* general health, people with less than a 12th grade education, people with middle- to high-household incomes, and residents of certain neighborhoods.

Differences in feelings of safety by demographic factors

Accounting for the associated factors listed above, there were notable demographic differences in feelings of safety specific to walking alone at night. See figure 4 for rates of feeling safe by specific demographic factors.

By age

Unlike feelings of safety during the day, both younger and older age groups were less likely to feel safe walking alone in their neighborhood at night. Of all age groups, 40- to 59-year-olds were the most likely to feel *somewhat* or *very safe* (78%) in this activity. In comparison, 20- to 39-year-olds (72%) and people 60 years of age and older (73%) were less likely to feel *somewhat* or *very safe*.

By sex

Women were about four times less likely to feel *somewhat* or *very safe* (66%) than men (83%). In comparing daytime and nighttime feelings of safety when walking alone, women felt notably less safe walking at night in their neighborhood than when using their neighborhood park during the day.

By income

Feelings of safety in this activity were lowest among people with annual household incomes of under \$75,000 at approximately 70%. Those with annual household incomes of \$75,000 to \$100,000 were more likely to feel *somewhat* or *very safe* (85%) in this activity than those earning less. People who earned \$100,000 or more annually were most likely to feel *somewhat* or *very safe* (90%).

By education

Persons with a 12th grade education or less were least likely to feel *somewhat* or *very safe* in this activity (73%). Feelings of safety were similar among those with a two-year college degree (74%). Those with a four-year college degree or higher were most likely to feel safe when walking alone in their neighborhood (77%).

By general health

Feelings of safety increased with better general health. Those with *poor* health were least likely to have feelings of safety (62%). People reporting *excellent* or *very good* health were more likely (80%) than those reporting *poor* or *good/fair* general health to feel *somewhat* or *very safe* in this activity (69%).

By neighborhood

Accounting for the factors listed above, there were differences by neighborhood in the feelings of safety walking at night in one's neighborhood. Residents of the North Indian Trail neighborhood were most likely to feel safe walking in their neighborhood at night; residents of Balboa/S. Indian Trail and the University neighborhood were almost as likely. Residents of Bemiss/Minnehaha were roughly 26 times less likely to feel safe walking alone in their neighborhood at night than residents of North Indian Trail. Similarly, residents of Nevada/Lidgerwood and Logan/Chief Garry were both 17 times less likely than those of North Indian Trail to feel safe in this activity. Residents of Manito and Chattaroy/Deer Park were two times less likely to feel safe in this activity than residents of North Indian Trail. The following map suggests that feelings of safety walking alone at night were lower among neighborhoods in the urban core of the city of Spokane, especially in neighborhoods north of the river (see figure 3). Higher feelings of safety were observed in areas outside the city limits of Spokane.

By knowledge of apparent crime

Knowledge of crimes in one's neighborhood are linked to feelings of safety when walking alone at night in one's neighborhood. Accounting for factors previously discussed (age, sex, race/ethnicity, and income), people with knowledge of violent physical attacks were five times less likely to feel safe walking alone at night in their neighborhood. Those with knowledge of sexual assault or rape were six times less likely to feel safe in this activity.

Figure 3. Feelings of Safety, by Neighborhood, When Walking Alone at Night, Spokane County 2015

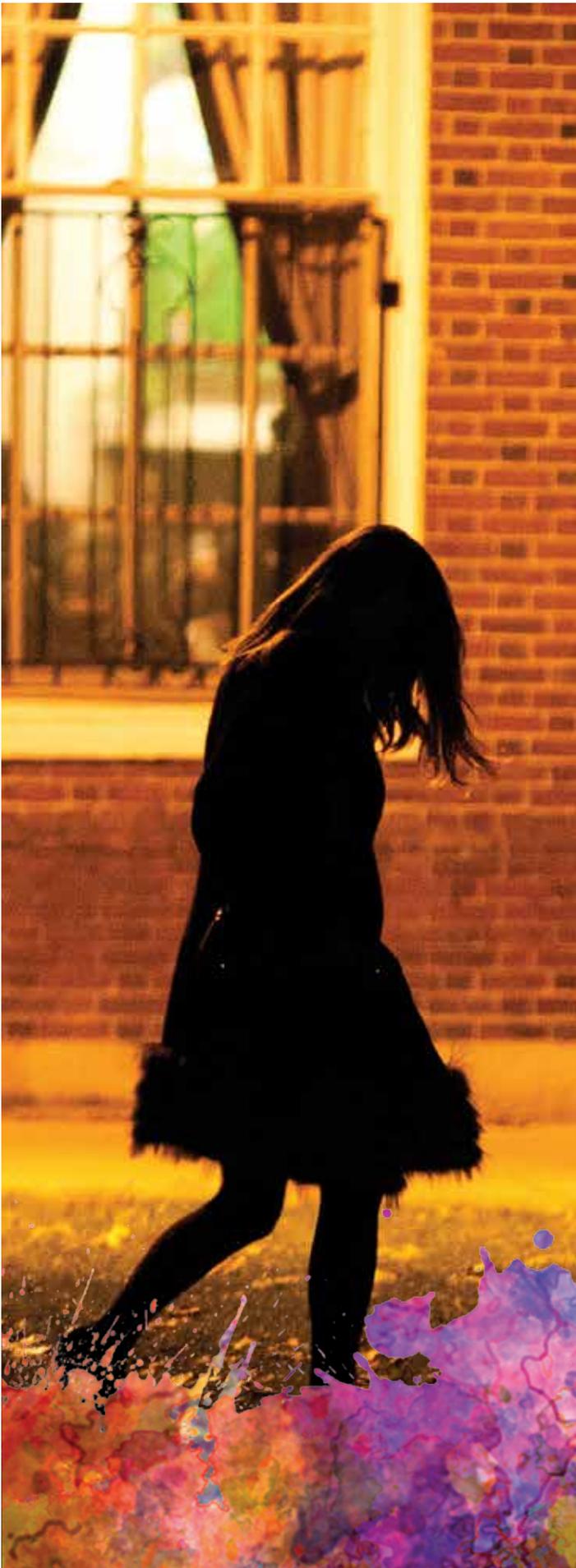
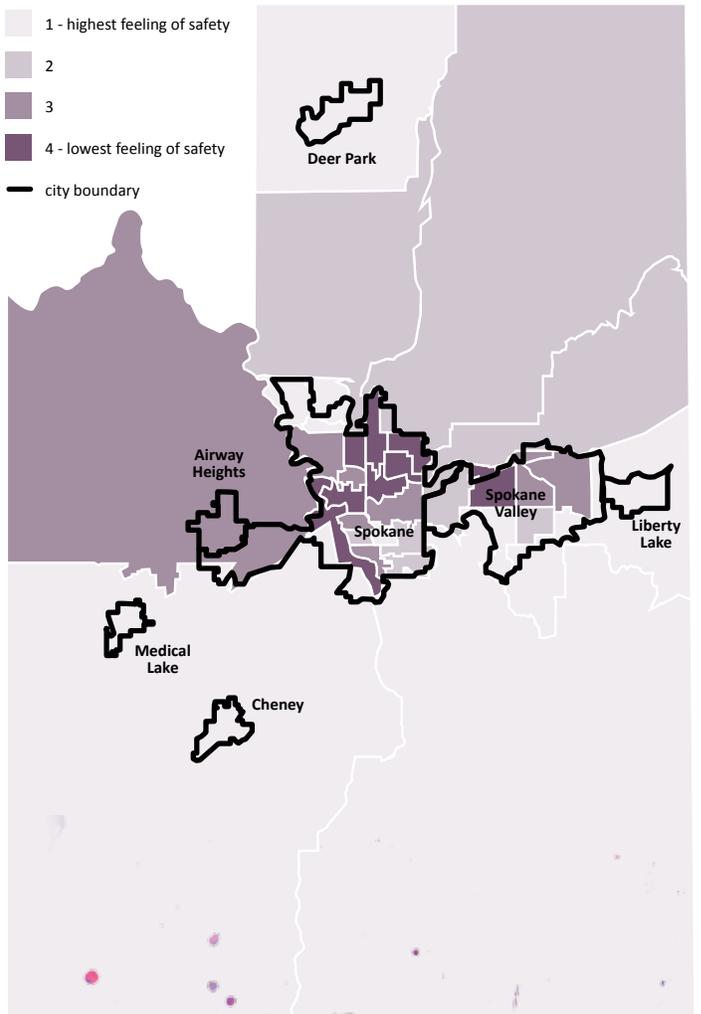
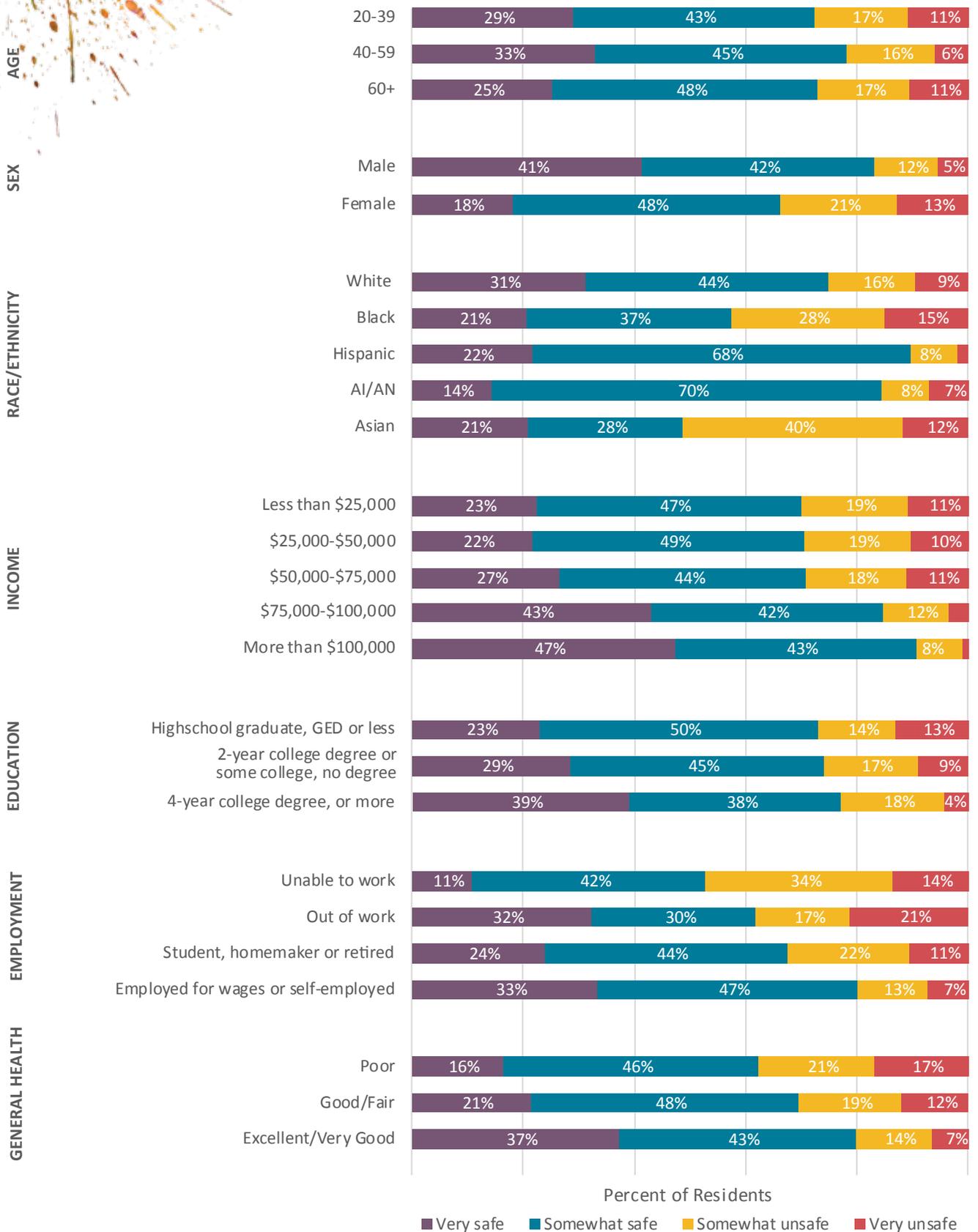




Figure 4. Feelings of Safety Walking Alone at Night in Neighborhood by Demographic Factors, Spokane County 2015



Note: Percentages do not sum to 100 because of rounding. While they are represented on this figure, percentages for feeling very unsafe are sometimes not displayed because of their small size.

Apparent Crime

The following maps show resident perceptions of certain types of apparent crimes in their neighborhood. These maps account for differences in apparent crime by age, sex, race/ethnicity, and income. While residents' knowledge of local crimes is an important part of neighborhood safety and quality of life, it may not reflect the actual rate of crimes in the area.¹

The Quality of Life survey posed the following question:

“Which of the following types of crimes occurred in your neighborhood or area in the past 12 months?”

- *People openly using drugs*
- *Breaking and entering to steal personal property*
- *Violent physical attacks*
- *Sexual assault or rape*



Differences in apparent crime by neighborhood

Apart from apparent property crime, which was universally noted throughout the county, the highest levels of apparent crime were reported in neighborhoods within Spokane city limits, predominantly north of the river. The neighborhoods of West Central/Riverside, Emerson/Garfield, North Hill, Nevada/Lidgerwood, Bemiss/Minnehaha, and Hillyard/Whitman had high rates of apparent open drug use, violent crime, and sexual assault or rape (see figures 5 through 8). Further work is necessary to compare these apparent crimes with crimes reported to the police or sheriff.



¹ Differences between apparent (perceived) crime and actual crime could be due in part to bias based on the respondent's general feeling of safety, or lack thereof, or lack of community knowledge of crimes involving stigmatization due to victims' reluctance to discuss the crime openly.

Figure 5. Apparent Open Drug Use by Neighborhood, Spokane County 2015

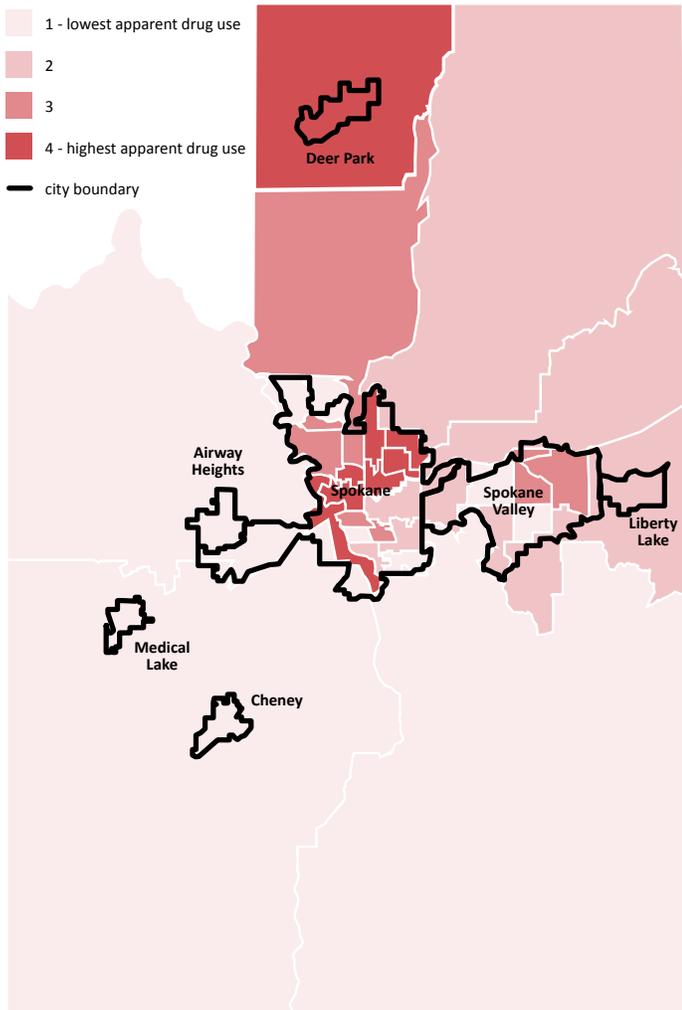


Figure 6. Apparent Property Crime by Neighborhood, Spokane County 2015

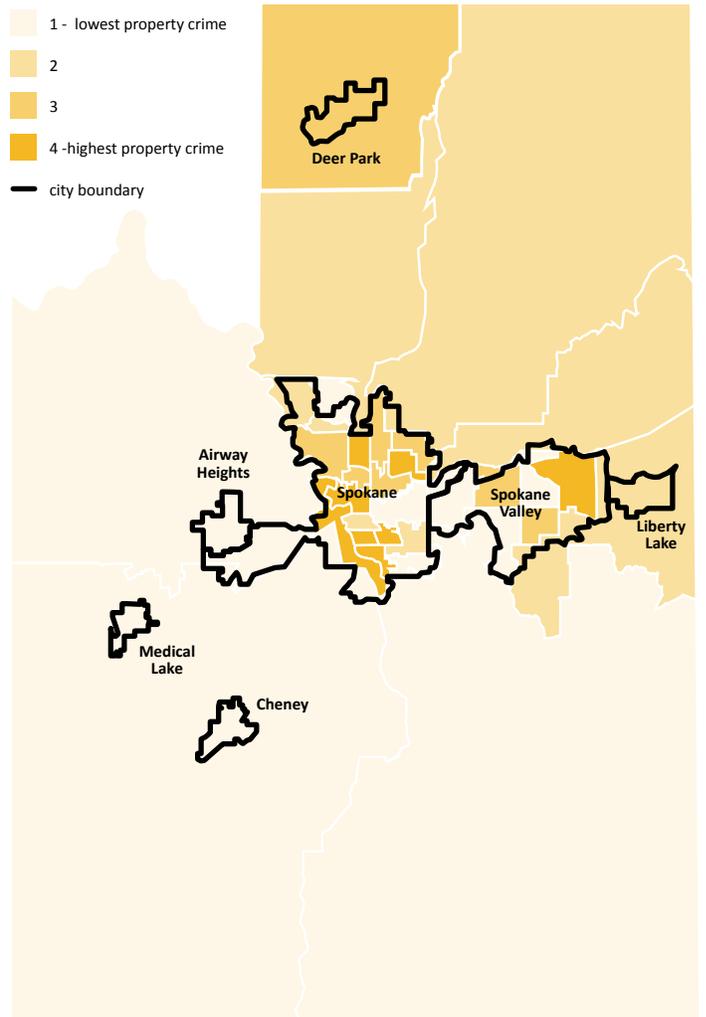


Figure 7. Apparent Violent Crime by Neighborhood, Spokane County 2015

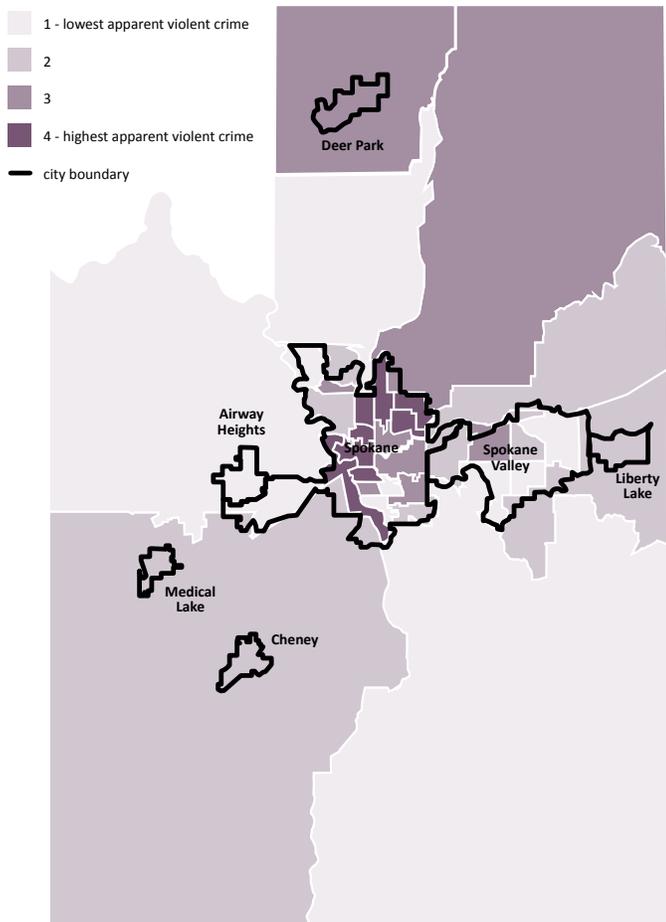
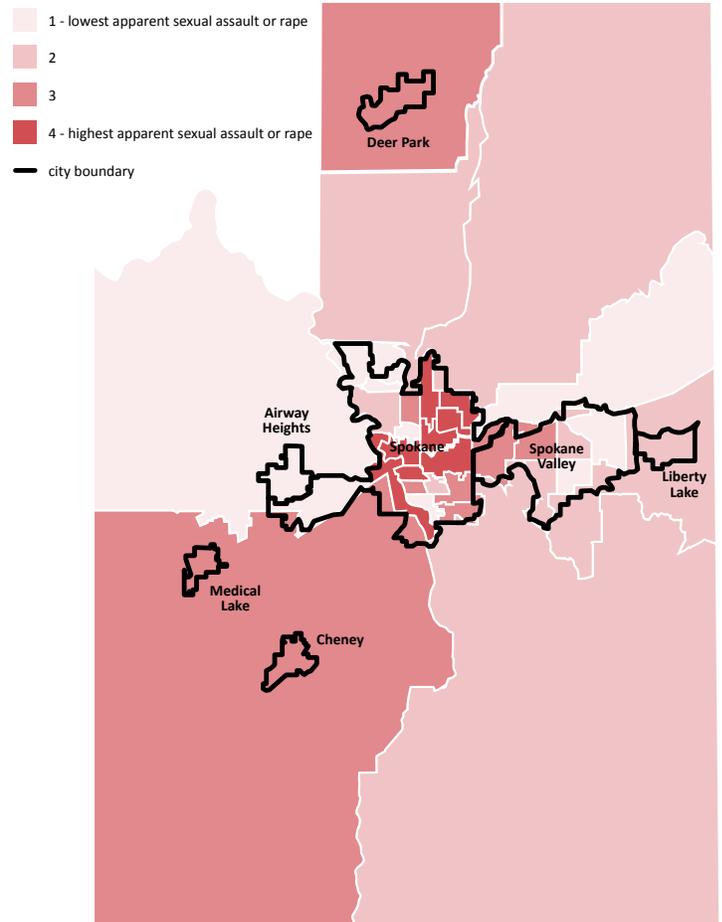


Figure 8. Apparent Sexual Assault or Rape by Neighborhood, Spokane County 2015



Conclusion

As mentioned in Section 1, Introduction to the *Quality of Life* report series, health and quality of life are both strongly influenced by social determinants, which as a reminder, are defined as “the conditions in which people are born, grow, live, work, and age.” Specific to public safety, of particular interest to public health are any disparities in these conditions between groups including age, sex, race and ethnicity, income, education, and neighborhood.

Perceived public safety, including knowledge of crime in residential neighborhoods and feelings of safety in parks and neighborhoods at day and night, were each associated with several social determinants of health in Spokane County. Given some neighborhood-based initiatives, and disparities amongst residents in different neighborhoods, differences in safety by neighborhood are particularly concerning.

Quality of Life report data shows that apparent crime rates vary dramatically by neighborhoods in Spokane County, following similar patterns related to the dispersion of social determinants. *Confronting Violence*, an assessment of violence in Spokane County, communicates that where social factors such as socioeconomic status or poverty are high, poorer outcomes follow in both health and physical safety.¹ More work is needed to understand further the relationships and interplay between perceptions of safety and actual crime rates by neighborhood.

Knowledge of crime and perceptions of safety are indicators of a larger pressing issue, community violence, which is of growing concern for Spokane Regional Health District.² The information provided in this Section 4, Public Safety of the *Quality of Life* report, can be used to inform work addressing public safety in Spokane County. It particularly draws attention to neighborhoods showing the most disparate outcomes. As outlined in *Confronting Violence*, further work to identify and catalogue neighborhood-based risk and protective factors should be conducted and used to strategically prioritize specific factors and target interventions for individual communities.

Additionally, there is a wealth of resources to support the reduction of crime and support public safety in communities. Many of these strategies rely on modifications to the built environment and include:

- Thoughtful planning for lighting and landscape.
- Directing the flow of people through communities, thereby reducing opportunities where crimes are committed.
- Ensuring that properties are maintained, as neglected property is known to encourage crime.

These are tangible strategies for public health and the community to partner with city and county officials in addressing public safety in general and targeting specific neighborhoods for improvement.

Endnotes

1. Spokane Regional Health District. *Confronting Violence: Spokane County*. 2016.
2. Spokane Regional Health District. *Confronting Violence: Spokane County*. 2016.
3. Faricy A, Minnesota Department of Health. *Understanding Policy, Systems, and Environmental Change to Improve Health* [online]. 2012. [cited 2016 Jul 21]. Available from URL: <http://www.health.state.mn.us/healthreform/ship/techassis-tance/pse02222012.pdf>. 4 The Health Trust. *Policy, Systems and Environmental Change* [online]. 2012. [cited 2016 Jul 21]. Available from URL: http://healthtrust.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/11/2012-12-28-Policy_Systems_and_Environmental_Change.pdf.

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