
CHAPTER 5. PUBLIC SAFETY STRATEGY

SERVICE MISSION

Enhance the safety and security of all Des Moines residents and visitors by providing a high quality of police and fire protection in all areas of the city.

There are five Public Safety Strategy goals:

1. Provide high-quality community protection that meets the needs of the entire community, establish a definition of community policing, jointly agreed upon by the neighborhood organizations and the police.
2. Enhance existing and establish new community policing partnerships that reduce crime and violence.
3. Establish new and enhance existing crime prevention programs.
4. Enhance the quality of fire and emergency services.
5. Enhance fire safety prevention and education.

RESULTS

Several questions about police, fire, and emergency medical services were asked to understand how respondents perceived their contact with staff and their level of satisfaction with service in the last year. Table 5-1 shows the percentage of respondents who had been in contact with these services over the past year. Most

respondents had no contact with either police (61%) or for fire and emergency medical services (88%).

Table 5-1. Percent of Contact with Police and Fire and Emergency Medical Services

	Contact	No contact
Police	39	61
Fire and emergency medical services	12	88

Of those who had contact with police, most requested help or assistance (71%) (Table 5-2). Fewer than 30 percent of the respondents had contact with police due to a traffic violation or a non-traffic violation.

Table 5-2. Type of Contact with Police

	Percent
Request for help or assistance	71
Traffic violation	13
Non-traffic violation	17

In general, most of those respondents who had contact with police or fire and emergency medical services were satisfied with that contact (Table 5-3).

Table 5-3. Satisfaction with Police and Fire and Emergency Medical Services

	Percent
Police	79
Fire and emergency medical	97

Seventy-nine percent of the respondents were satisfied/very satisfied with police services and 97 percent were satisfied/very satisfied with fire and emergency medical services.

Respondents also responded to a variety of neighborhood-related efforts to reduce crime and violence in the community. The results show that many respondents were satisfied with the Police Department's level of effort in working to enhance community safety, particularly in identifying neighborhood needs (52%) and developing relationships with citizens (43%) (Table 5-4). Table 5-4 also includes the percentage of respondents reporting "Don't know," indicating that there is a significant percentage of citizens who did not know, or were not aware of, the efforts the Police Department is making to ensure community safety.

Table 5-4. Percent Satisfaction with Police Department Efforts to Enhance Community Safety

	Very Satisfied or Satisfied	Dissatisfied or Very Dissatisfied	Don't Know
Identifying neighborhood needs	52	15	33
Developing relationships with citizens to provide effective service	43	20	37
Developing effective strategies to reduce/eliminate crime	39	18	43
Forming citizenship partnerships to address specific needs	36	18	46
Developing educational programs to increase awareness of lawful behavior	35	16	49

Similar information was obtained about Fire/Emergency Medical Services. Most respondents (88%) had not had direct contact with the Des Moines Fire Department in the past year. Of those who did, 97 percent were satisfied with their service.

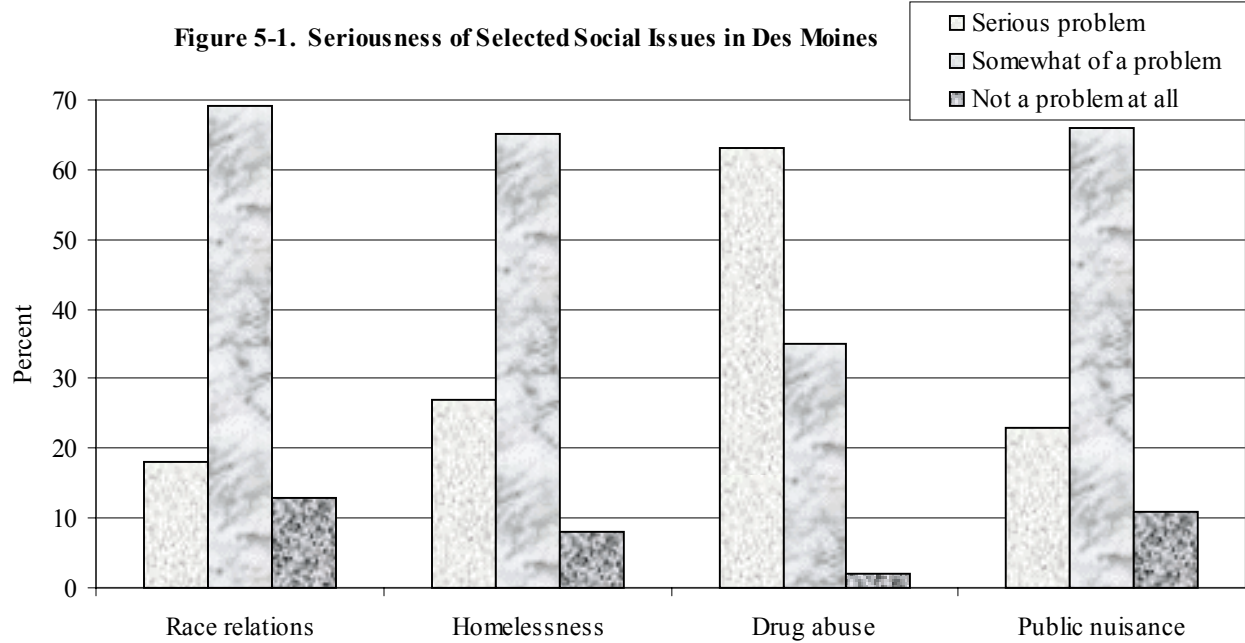
Considering Fire Department services, 35 to 46 percent of the respondents were satisfied with services related to fire safety programs (46%), working with citizens to provide effective service (44%), identifying neighborhood fire traps or other flammable materials (43%), disposal of hazardous waste (43%), providing preventative literature (39%), and working with property owners to develop effective fire prevention strategies (35%) (Table 5-5). Few respondents were dissatisfied. However, about half of them responded

that they did not know, perhaps indicating a need for more information about Fire Department Services.

Finally, this section included a set of questions about the seriousness of the following long-standing and problematic social issues: race relations, homelessness, drug abuse, and public nuisances such as junk cars, debris, rats, mosquitoes, and noise. Figure 5-1 shows the perceived seriousness for each issue. Sixty-three percent of the participants identified drug abuse as the most serious social problem facing Des Moines. Although participants did not report the other social issues as serious problems, the majority did feel that the social issues of race relations, homelessness, and public nuisance were certainly somewhat of a problem.

Table 5-5. Percent Satisfaction with Fire Department Services

	Satisfied	Dissatisfied	Don't Know
Programs about fire safety	46	8	46
Working with citizens to provide effective service	44	6	51
Disposal of hazardous waste	43	15	42
Identifying neighborhood fire traps or other flammable materials	43	6	51
Providing preventative literature	39	11	50
Working with property owners to develop effective fire prevention strategies	35	11	54



COMMENTS

Four-hundred-eighty comments related to safety were written (Tables 5-6 and 5-7). Comments specific to public safety issues included those related to eliminating nuisances, traffic, drugs, law enforcement, and crime reduction (Table 5-6).

Comments related to the police department focused on increased number of police and patrols in neighborhoods. Respondents asked for increased educational services from the fire department and emergency medical services.

NOTE
Additional comments about nuisance problems are reported in Chapter 4, Infrastructure Strategy.

Table 5-6. Public Safety Strategy Comment Categories—Public Safety Issues

	Number	Examples
Crime reduction	10	
Drugs	49	Eliminate drug traffic; remove drugs/gangs
Enforcement	18	Codes/ordinances (general)
Nuisance (eliminate, enforce)	149	Animals; graffiti; illegal dumping; junk cars; litter, garbage codes/ordinances; noise pollution; odor pollution; enforce private property codes
Traffic	111	Improve control/flow; enforce codes/ordinances; increase number of street lights; more “children playing” signage; eliminate speeding; enforce parking codes/ordinances

Table 5-7. Public Safety Strategy Comment Categories—Police and Fire Departments and Emergency Medical Services

	Number	Examples
Fire Department and Emergency Medical Services	49	Increase educational services; increase funding for services, staff
Police Department	82	Increase patrols in neighborhoods; increase number of police; improve communication with public; better response time; eliminate child abuse; increase neighborhood safety; reduce theft, robbery; eliminate racism, increase neighborhood watches, improve 911 response time, take citizens more seriously on domestic calls, increase response time on domestic calls
