



College of Liberal Arts

Center for Public Safety Initiatives

Community Concerns and Desires: Analysis of Jones Square Park Neighborhood TIPS Initiative 2023

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Introduction

On Thursday July 27, 2023, Project TIPS (Trust, Information, Programs, and Services) was held in Jones Square Park in Rochester, New York. These events are designed to show support for the neighborhood; investigate community members' concerns and desires for their neighborhood, and to build community police relationships. The objective of this report is to analyze the collected surveys and discuss what individuals living in the surrounding neighborhoods are concerned about, their overall assessment of their community, and their feelings towards police.

Methodology

One component of Project TIPS is neighborhood surveys of residents. The survey asked residents of the community questions about their perceptions of their community, crime, and the police. Starting a little after 2:00 pm, groups of two or three volunteers, accompanied by law enforcement¹, were sent out to administer the survey. At this particular event there were some challenges matching volunteers with law enforcement, and so 5 of 8 pre-selected street segments were surveyed. Groups were given a clipboard with 8 copies of the survey along with a map that indicated which street they would be surveying. Only adult residents were able to take the survey. While this sampling method is limited in that any findings cannot be generalized to the broader population, it still offers insight as to how some members of the neighborhood are feeling.

¹ At this particular event State Troopers, and members of the Monroe County Sheriff's Department accompanied volunteers.

Key Findings

The survey that was administered included a list of 17 questions that, in addition to questions on demographics, collected data regarding community perceptions of the police, satisfaction with the police, collective efficacy, and community concerns of crime. A total of 26 surveys were collected from the Jones Square Park neighborhood from a total of 5 streets. It is possible that this low response rate was due to the fact that the survey was administered between 2-4 pm on a traditional workday.

Demographics

Of the 26 respondents who took the survey, most were Black (58%). 19% were White, 11% were Hispanic, and the categories of Other, American Indian/Alaskan Native and Asian each consisted of (4%) of respondents. Respondents ranged in age, with the youngest being 21 and the oldest being 76. The average age of all respondents was 48 years old. Most survey respondents identified as being male (62%). For a complete list of sample demographics see Table 1, Figure 1, and Figure 2.

Table 1. Sample Demographics of the 2023 Jones Square Park Neighborhood TIPS respondents

Race & Ethnicity (n=26)	Percentage
Black	58%
White	19%
Hispanic	11%
American Indian/Alaska Native	4%
Asian	4%
Other	4%

Figure 1. Breakdown of respondents gender

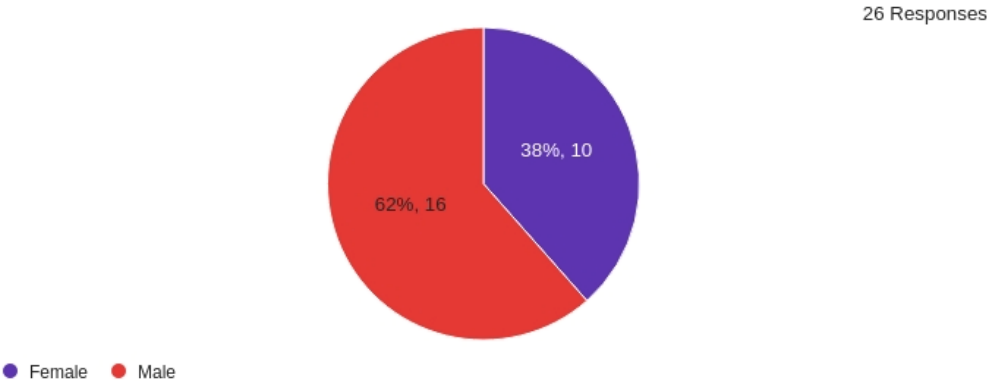
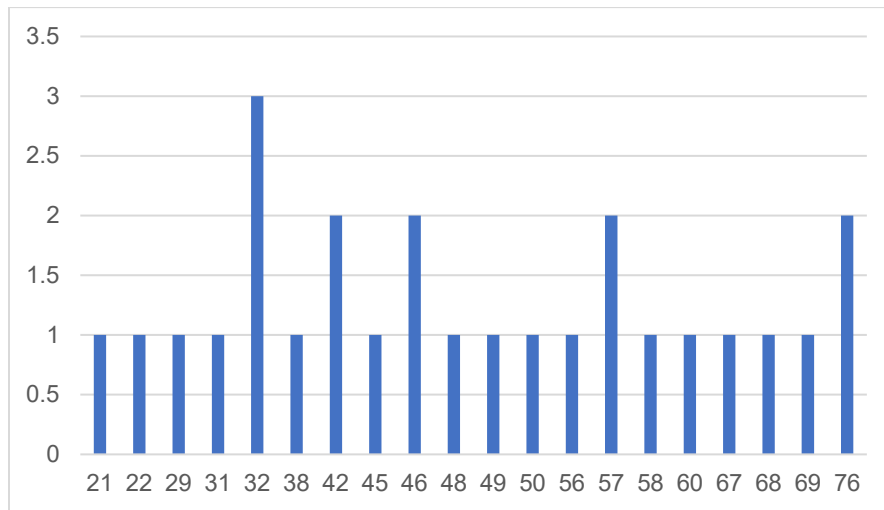


Figure 2. Age distribution of respondents (n=26)



Survey Results

Community Concerns

The TIPS survey asked residents whether they believed several types of crime and/or quality of life problems were either a major concern, minor concern, or not a concern at all within their neighborhood. These problems included drug use, theft and burglary, violence, gangs, drug selling, stray animals or pests, speeding and traffic issues, and property maintenance issues.

Overwhelmingly, the main concern expressed by residents was drug use with 96% of the respondents regarding it as a major concern. There was also a large amount of concern for drug sales (72%) and speeding/traffic issues (72%). For a detailed breakdown of all concerns, see Table 2.

Table 2. Concerns of the 2023 Jones Square Park Neighborhood TIPS respondents

Concerns	Not at all	Minor	Major
Drug use (n=26)	4%	0%	96%
Theft/Burglary (n=24)	13%	33%	54%
Violence (n=25)	8%	28%	64%
Gangs (n=25)	36%	32%	32%
Drug selling (n=25)	16%	12%	72%
Stray animals/pests (n=25)	28%	20%	52%
Speeding/traffic issues (n=25)	12%	16%	72%
Property maintenance issues (n=25)	36%	16%	48%

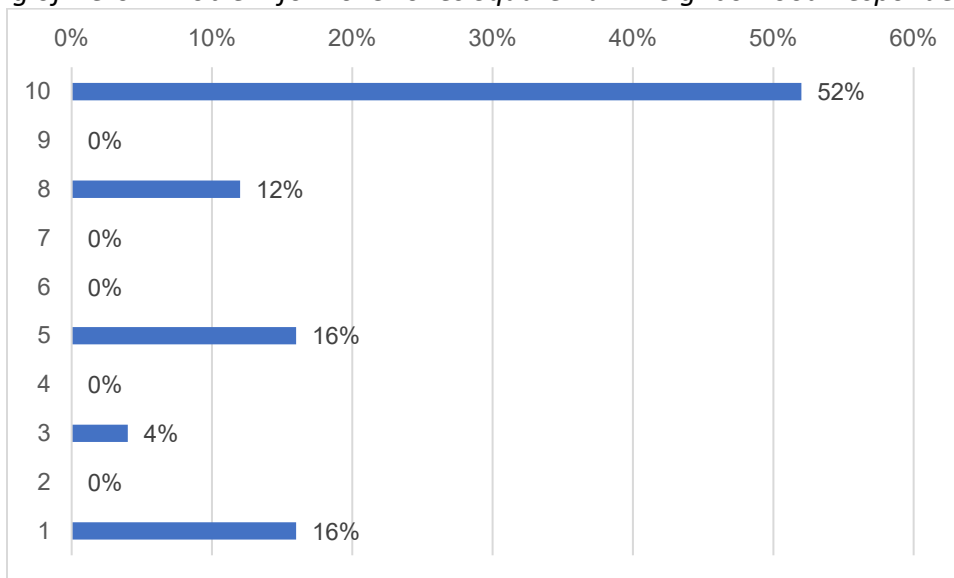
It should be noted that some surveys were missing participant responses in this section.

Heroin and Opioids

To further explore questions about drug use and drug sales, residents were asked to rate, on a scale from 1 to 10, how much of a problem the sale and use of heroin was for them in their neighborhood.

Of the 25 respondents who were asked this question, (52%) of them rated the problem as a 10. See Figure 3 for the full data set.

Figure 3. Rating of Heroin Problem for 2023 Jones Square Park Neighborhood Respondents (n=25)



A follow-up question asked why respondents chose the number they selected. Popular responses included on the one hand, visual signs of such activity, such as needles and people using heroin², and conversely, residents stating they were unaware that such activity happened within their neighborhood or that they keep to themselves. An additional question asked residents if they knew anyone who had problems with heroin or other opioids. All 26 respondents had their response to this question recorded. 19% of respondents responded yes, while (81%) responded no.

Safety

When asked how safe they felt in their neighborhood, approximately 69% of respondents stated that they either felt somewhat safe or very safe. 30% of respondents felt somewhat or very unsafe in their neighborhood (See Figure 4).

Figure 4. Perceived Safety of the 2023 Jones Square Park Neighborhood TIPS respondents



A follow-up question asked for a specific time of day or place that the respondent felt the least safe. The most common response was “at night”.

² Many respondents reported they feel the park is a hotspot for drug use and sales.

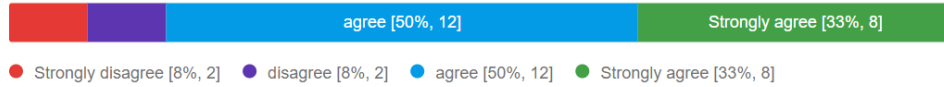
Relationship with the Police

Among other questions in the survey, the survey included a section related to residents and their feelings towards and relationship with the Rochester Police Department. Residents were asked to share how much they agreed or disagreed with statements related to this theme. Residents were asked to respond with either strongly disagree, disagree, agree, or strongly agree. Statements asked included “I trust the police to do what is best for the community” and “Body worn cameras (BWC) have improved the community’s relationship with RPD.” When asked if they trust the police to do what’s best for the community, approximately 84% of respondents answered with either agree (46%) or strongly agree (38%) while (4%) strongly disagreed. For a full list of responses from this section, see Figure 5.

Figure 5. Jones Square Park Neighborhood TIPS respondents’ feelings about RPD

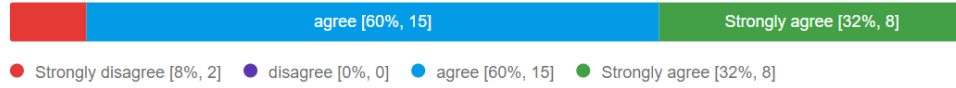
Body-worn cameras have improved my communities relationship with RPD.

24 Responses



RPD will use body-worn cameras and the footage fairly and impartially.

25 Responses



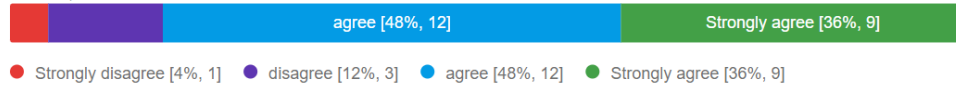
The RPD works hard to address issues of crime in my neighborhood.

25 Responses



RPD officers listen to what you have to say.

25 Responses



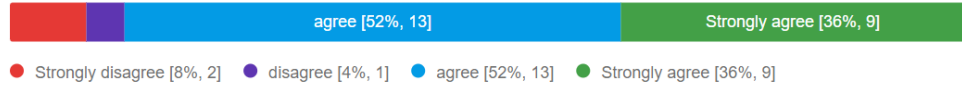
I trust the police to do what is best for the community.

26 Responses



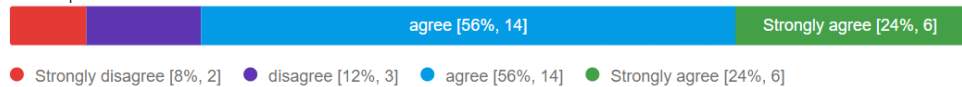
Police officers in my community are generally fair in the way they enforce the law.

25 Responses



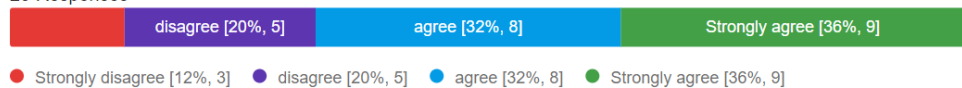
The police here generally treat people with dignity and respect.

25 Responses



The police work with the community to solve problems that *really* matter to people in my neighborhood.

25 Responses



It should be noted that not all respondents had their responses recorded for these statements.

In addition to this section, two questions were asked to gauge residents' level of comfort interacting with the police. When asked if they felt comfortable reporting issues or suspicious behavior to police, (81%) of respondents answered yes or sometimes while (19%) answered no. Residents were also asked if they knew any officers who worked in their neighborhood. More than half of those interviewed (58%) responded that they did not. Many also reported feeling the amount of police presence in the area is too little (64%).

Collective Efficacy

Collective Efficacy is defined as social cohesion between neighbors and a willingness to intervene on behalf of the common good. This has been linked to increased levels of informal social control and reductions in neighborhood violence (Sampson, Raudenbush, & Earls, 1997). Residential stability, indicated by high rates of homeownership has also been shown to help maintain social networks and informal social control as people's investment in their homes carries over into investment into the larger community.

The survey asked the following two questions in order to measure residential stability and homeownership. These questions were "How many years have you lived in this neighborhood?" and "Do you own or rent your home?" Time living in the neighborhood ranged broadly amongst respondents. One individual reported only living in the area for a month while another reported 60 years spent living in the neighborhood. Amongst the respondents, the average time spent in the neighborhood was approximately 11 years. The vast majority of respondents (77%) reported that they rented their home while (23%) reported owning their home. No respondents reported staying with a friend or family member.

Figure 6. 2023 Jones Square Park Neighborhood TIPS respondents' years in the neighborhood (n=26)

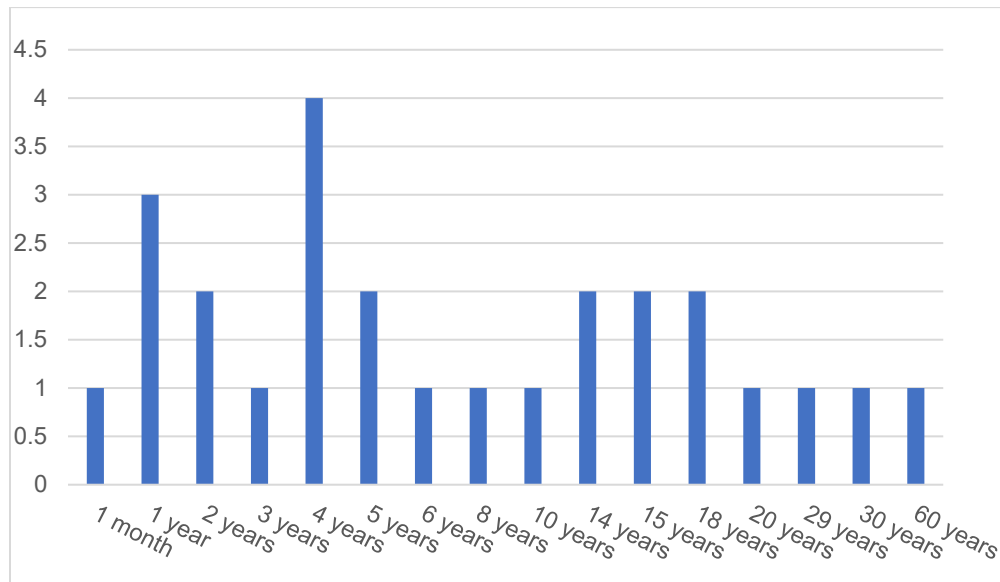
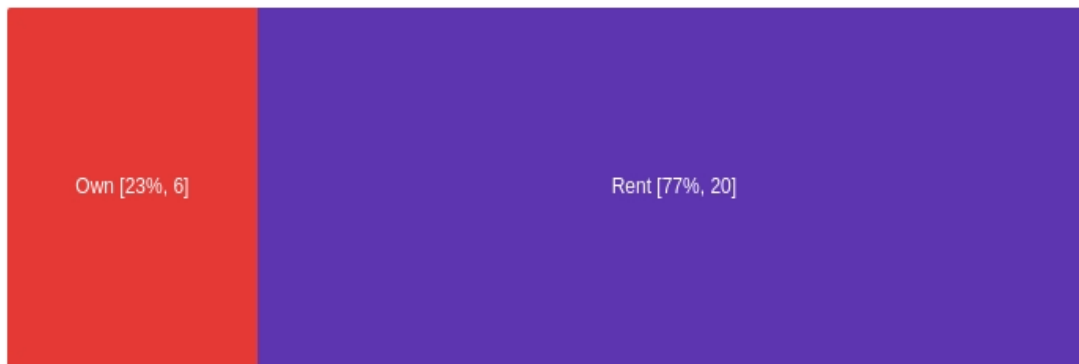


Figure 7. 2023 Jones Square Park Neighborhood TIPS respondents housing situations (n=26)



Studies have shown that homeowners are much less likely to move from a community which leads to greater neighborhood stability (Rohe 1996). A crosstabs analysis of these two questions was run to determine if this was true in this neighborhood. Many respondents had lived in the area for either 3-5 years or 11-20 years. While only 23% of the sample reported owning their home, all these individuals had reported living in the area for more than 10 years (See Figure 8 for full chart). This suggests that,

while most residents rent their property, those that do own their homes are more likely to stay in the neighborhood for longer periods of time, thus contributing to the stability of the neighborhood.

Figure 8. 2023 Jones Square Park Neighborhood TIPS Crosstabs: Housing situation & time in neighborhood

Housing Status	Length of time living in neighborhood							Total
	< 1 year	1-2 years	3-5 years	6-10 years	11-20 years	21-30 years	> 30 years	
Own	0%	0%	0%	0%	12%	8%	4%	23%
Rent	4%	19%	27%	12%	15%	0%	0%	77%
Total	n=1	n=5	n=7	n=3	n=7	n=2	n=1	26

While there is evidence to suggest that the presence of homeowners can provide greater stability to the neighborhood, it is important to note that (54%) of renters in the Jones Square Park neighborhood have lived in the area for 3 or more years. These renters may also provide some means of stability as they have invested considerable time in their community. This serves as a limitation to Rohe’s work and suggests that there might be such things as stable renters. Social cohesion is an important part of collective efficacy in a neighborhood as it can influence the community members to intervene and assist their neighborhoods.

Many residents did not feel that people in their community are willing to help their neighbors (56%). Nor did many feel that people in the neighborhood share the same values (54%). These figures do not bode well for social cohesion within the community. While our findings cannot be generalized due to our sampling method and the time of day of the event, they should still be taken into consideration as it seems there is a disconnect between members of the neighborhood.

Figure 9. 2023 Jones Square Park Neighborhood TIPS respondents' social cohesion scores

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
People around here are willing to help their neighbors	0%	14.2%	61%	25%
People in this neighborhood share the same values	7%	21%	64%	7%
I could count on my neighbors if a fight broke out in front of my house	14%	46%	29%	11%

Conclusion

A primary concern for respondents in the Jones Square Park neighborhood was drug use. Many residents reported that it is rampant especially in the park, and many also felt drug sales were occurring all over the neighborhood. Others noted that drug paraphernalia litters their community. These sentiments were nearly unanimous, however despite this, social cohesion still appeared to be sorely lacking. It may be helpful for future community interventions to focus on bridging the gap between neighbors in order to help them realize that for the most part, they are all on the same page. Additionally, future research might consider the qualitative differences between people who own and people who rent. Encouraging homeownership and providing the support to make it a reality may also contribute to increased levels of social cohesion and subsequently collective efficacy.

References

- Rohe, W., & Stewart, L. (1996). Homeownership and neighborhood stability. *Housing Policy Debate*, 7(1), 37–81. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10511482.1996.9521213>
- Sampson, R. J., Raudenbush, S. W., & Earls, F. (1997). Neighborhoods and Violent Crime: A Multilevel Study of Collective Efficacy. *Science (American Association for the Advancement of Science)*, 277(5328), 918–924. <https://doi.org/10.1126/science.277.5328.918>

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