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REPORT FROM THE WEST VIRGINIA QUALITY OF LIFE SURVEY 2017-2018

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INTRODUCTION

Phase Two of the West Virginia Community Quality of Life Survey (WVCQL) was launched in May of 2017. It is a telephone survey sponsored by the West Virginia Division of Justice and Community Services (WVDJCS) and designed and implemented by researchers at the Research Center on Violence (RCV) at West Virginia University (WVU).¹ The WVCQLS is the state's second attempt to assess rates of crime victimization outside of official police statistics. The WVCQLS was developed in collaboration with other stakeholders and now includes a broad array of items related to crime, fear of crime, and the overall quality of life in West Virginia communities. The second wave of the WVCQL survey was distributed to a random sample of West Virginians over the age of 18 via cell and landline telephones.

The sampling frame includes individual residents of West Virginia over the age of 18 who have access to a telephone, $N = 1,403,035$.² Our random sample includes 9,885 cell phone numbers and 2,932 landline numbers.³ From May 2017 – April 2018, researchers from WVU RCV, called a total of 12,817 phone numbers.⁴ Only about 19% of the calls resulted in someone answering the phone ($n=1,820$). Of those that answered, about 16% responded to the survey

¹ Dr. Stephen Haas was director of the WVDJCS at the beginning of this project and instrumental in the development of this methodology and instrumentation. The phase 2 version of the survey was shortened in hopes of improving response rates.

² Our estimated population of WV residents (over 18 years of age who have access to a phone) was calculated using population estimates from the Bureau of Census (2017 estimate). The population of WV residents 18 years and older is 1,459,974 <https://data.census.gov/cedsci/table?id=ACS%205-Year%20Estimates%20Data%20Profiles&table=DP05&tid=ACSDP5Y2017.DP05&g=0400000US54&lastDisplaye&dRow=31>. The National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS) estimates that 3.9% of West Virginians 18 and older have no phone, neither landline nor cell https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/nhis/earlyrelease/wireless_state_201608.pdf. Therefore, the total number of West Virginia residents 18 years or older with a phone is estimated to be 1,403,035.

³ The random sample of landline and cell phone numbers was provided by Marketing Systems Group <http://www.m-s-g.com/Web/Index.aspx>

⁴ Although 12,817 numbers were called, 3,535 were found to be either inactive, business lines, or belonged to individuals either younger than 18 years of age or no longer living in the state. Researchers subtracted this figure from the total number of phone numbers received from Marketing Systems Group resulting in a total random sample of 9,282 total useful numbers.

(n=290). Table 1 compares the demographics of WVQL survey respondents to the 2016 Bureau of Census demographic estimates of West Virginia residents. See Table 1.

Table 1. Demographics of Quality of Life Survey 2017 Compared to 2016 Census

Demographics for West Virginia (n = 291)

	WVCQL (%)	2017 Census (%)
Sex		
Male	44.8	48.9*
Female	55.2	51.1*
Education		
No High School Degree	3.8	14.1
High School or GED	26.3	40.6
Trade School/ Some College or Associates	30.4	25.4**
Bachelor's Degree or higher	39.4	19.9
Race		
White	92.7	93.3
Non-White	7.3	6.7
Age		
Average	50.8	49.6***

*Percent of male and female over the age of 18.

**Does not include trade school.

*** The average age of West Virginia residents over the age of 18 years was calculated by using single-age categories for 2017 obtained at https://factfinder.census.gov/faces/tableservices/jsf/pages/productview.xhtml?pid=PEP_2018_PEPSYASEX&prodType=table. The ages from 18 to 90 were multiplied by the total number of people in each category then divided by the total number of residents in these age groups. The population in group 85 and above was distributed equally from 85 to 90 (8,062 x 5 groups [85, 86, 87, 88, 89, 90] =40,310).

In the tables below we sometimes include population estimates that were calculated by multiplying the sample percentage by the estimated population of West Virginia residents with phones. Although they are not reported here, the confidence intervals for these estimates were calculated according to Equation 1:

$$(Eq. 1). \quad 1.96 \sqrt{\frac{N-n}{N} \frac{P*(1-P)}{n-1}},$$

where N is the estimated population of residents in WV age 18 and older who have access to a phone (1,403,035), n is the sample size (the number of completed responses in each category), and P is the percentage of affirmative responses.

CRIME VICTIMIZATION

In order to obtain a valid annual estimate of crime, the WVCQL survey first asked whether a particular incident EVER happened to you and then if it happened in the past 12 months. For example, for the crime category “break in” the survey asks, 1) Did anyone EVER break into your home, car, or garage? and 2) Did this happen in the past 12 months? In Tables 2 and 3, we present estimates of the number of WV residents over the age of 18, who have a cell phone or a landline, who ever experienced particular property and violent crimes and an estimate of people who experienced these crimes in the past 12 months.

Table 2. West Virginian’s Experience with Property and Violent Crime Ever

	n	# Sample	% Sample	Estimated Number
Property Crime				
Break-in ^a	289	123	42.56	597,132
Objects Stolen Outside Home ^b	290	85	29.31	411,230
Pocket Picked ^c	289	19	6.57	92,179
Car, Truck, Motor Vehicle Stolen ^d	290	12	4.14	58,086
Violent Crime				
Robbery ^e	290	14	4.83	67,767
Assault ^f	290	60	20.69	290,288
Assault with a Weapon ^g	290	25	8.62	120,942

*See footnote 1 for method for estimating the population of West Virginians 18 or older who have a telephone as 1,403,035.

^a Break-in is defined as an incident where someone illegally breaks in to your home, car, or garage whether something is stolen or not.

^b Objects stolen outside the home include anything stolen on your property but outside the home.

^c Pocket picked or purse snatched refers to thefts from your person—inside your pockets or purse—but not with force as in a robbery.

^d Car, truck, or motor vehicle stolen includes the thefts of all forms of these conveyances.

^e Robbery is defined as mugging or robbing via stick up or threatening to hurt the respondent.

^f Assault is defined as being beaten up, attacked, or hit with something.

^g Assault with a weapon is defined as being knifed at, shoot at, or attacked with a weapon.

Table 3. 2017 West Virginian’s Experience with Property and Violent Crime Past 12 Months

	n	# Sample	% Sample	Estimated Number
Property Crime				
Break-in ^a	289	18	6.22	87,269
Objects Stolen Outside Home ^b	290	25	8.62	120,942
Pocket Picked ^c	289	5	1.73	24,273
Car, Truck, or Motor Vehicle Stolen ^d	290	1	0.34	4,770
Violent Crime				
Robbery ^e	290	2	0.69	9,681
Assault ^f	290	8	2.76	38,724
Assault with a weapon ^g	290	3	1.03	14,451
Sexual Assault Composite ^h	286	7	2.45	34,374

* See footnote 1 for method for estimating the population of West Virginians 18 or older who have a telephone as 1,403,035.

^a Break-in is defined as an incident where someone illegally breaks in to your home, car, or garage whether something is stolen or not.

^b Objects stolen outside the home include anything stolen on your property but outside the home.

^c Pocket picked or purse snatched refers to thefts from your person—inside your pockets or purse—but not with force as in a robbery.

^d Car, truck, or motor vehicle stolen includes the thefts of all forms of these conveyances.

^e Robbery is defined as mugging or robbing via stick up or threatening to hurt the respondent.

^f Assault is defined as being beaten up, attacked, or hit with something.

^g Assault with a weapon is defined as being knifed at, shoot at, or attacked with a weapon.

^h Sexual assault is defined as forced sexual intercourse when the respondent did not want to engage. This includes unwanted sex under conditions described in Table 5 that occurred in the previous 12 months.

INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE

Intimate partner violence (IPV) refers to violence by a current or former spouse or partner in an intimate relationship. It involves physical and emotional violence and sexual violence. In this section we report on both types of IPV beginning with physical violence by an intimate partner.

Physical Violence

With regard to physical violence, the WVCQL survey asked respondents to report how many times in the past 12 months had someone they were dating-- or a spouse/partner done the following things to you that were NOT done in a joking or playful manner? The survey included a dating relationship which referred to "... anyone with whom you have or have had a romantic or sexual relationship, whether short- or long-term." Table 4 provides estimates of the number of West Virginia residents over 18 who have had at least one incident of IPV in the past 12 months. Respondents were given the following introductory prompt for this section:

Now we would like to learn about some problems that may have occurred in your intimate or romantic relationships. In the past 12 months, did someone you were dating, or a spouse/partner do the following things to you that were NOT done in a joking or playful manner? When thinking about the word "date", please think of anyone whom you have or have had a romantic or sexual relationship – short-term or long-term.

Table 4. 2017 West Virginian’s Experience with Intimate Partner Physical Assault Past 12 Months

	n	# Sample	% Sample	Estimated Number
Shoved, shook, pinched, or scratched you, or pulled your hair.	288	13	4.51	63,277
Slapped you	289	11	3.81	53,456
Threw something at you that could hurt you.	289	9	3.11	43,634
Bent your fingers or twisted your arms.	288	4	1.39	19,502
Hit, punched, kicked or bit you.	289	10	3.46	48,545
Dragged you by your hair, threw you down stairs or out of a car, or threw you around.	287	4	1.39	19,502
Beat you up.	287	5	1.74	24,413
Burned you, choked you, or tried to strangle or suffocate you.	287	1	0.35	4,911
Used or threatened to use a weapon against you.	287	3	1.04	14,592
Composite IPV Physical Assault ^a	287	20	6.97	97,792

* See footnote 1 for method for estimating the population of West Virginians 18 or older who have a telephone as 1,403,035.

^a Intimate Partner Physical Assault is defined as any of the following incidents within the context of an intimate or romantic relationship: shoved, shook, pinched, scratched, hair pulled, slapped, object thrown at the respondent, fingers bent back, arm twisted, hit, punched, kicked, bit, dragged by hair, thrown down stairs, thrown out of car, thrown around, beat up, burned, choked, strangled, suffocated, or had a weapon used or threatened to be used against the respondent.

Sexual Violence

The WVCQL survey asked respondents about unwanted sexual experiences. The survey asked the number of times respondents were pressured or forced to engage in sexual relations and under the following circumstances.

- You were pressured. For example, your dating or spouse partner showed anger, made promises, or threatened to end the relationship.
- You were slipped drugs and/or alcohol and couldn’t physically say no.
- You were threatened with physical harm if you did not give in.

- You were being physically forced to have sex, but you were able to escape.
- You were physically forced to have sex.

Table 5 provides estimates for the number of West Virginia residents over the age of 18 who have been pressured or forced to have unwanted sex.

Table 5. 2017 West Virginian’s Experience with Sexual Assault Past 12 Months

<i>The next set of questions are about unwanted sexual experiences. Sex is defined in this study as intercourse, oral sex, or anal sex (including penetration with an object). In the last 12 months, did you have unwanted sex with someone because...</i>		# Sample	% Sample	Estimated Number
you were pressured	286	3	1.05	14,732
you were slipped drugs and/or alcohol and couldn’t physically say no	286	2	0.70	9,821
he/she took advantage of you when you were physically unable to say no because you had too much to drink and/or used drugs	286	4	1.40	19,642
he/she threatened you with physical harm if you did not give in	286	1	0.35	4,911
he/she tried to physically force you, but you were able to escape it	286	1	0.35	4,911
he/she physically forced you to have sex	287	2	0.70	9,822
Sexual Assault Composite	286	7	2.45	34,374

BIAS MOTIVATED INCIDENTS

In order to assess incidents that reflect intergroup tensions, the WVQCL survey asked respondents if they were subjected to a variety of negative behaviors that were motivated at least in part by real or perceived race, ethnicity, national origin, religion, sexual orientation, physical or mental disability, or political orientation. Table 6 provides estimates of the frequency of these incidents having occurred in the preceding 12 months. See Table 6.

Table 6. 2017 West Virginian's Experience with Bias-Motivated Offenses

	n	# Sample	% Sample	Estimated Number
Break-in	289	2	0.69	9,681
Pocket Picked	290	1	0.34	4,770
Robbery	289	3	1.04	14,592
Assault	290	7	2.41	33,813
Assault with a Weapon	290	3	1.03	14,451
Had you EVER had verbal assaults directed at you	290	54	18.62	261,245
Were verbal assaults directed at you during the last 12 months	290	29	10.0	140,304
Have you EVER been verbally sexually harassed	290	28	9.65	135,393
Were you verbally sexually harassed in the last 12 months	290	14	4.83	67,767
Have you EVER received offensive phone calls, letters, emails	290	25	8.62	120,942
Did you receive offensive phone calls, letters, e-mails in the last 12 months	290	10	3.45	48,405
Have you EVER been unwillingly exposed to racist, sexist, or other offensive on-line images	288	22	7.64	107,192
Were you unwillingly exposed to racist, sexist, or other offensive on-line images in the last 12 months	288	18	6.25	87,690

STALKING & HARASSMENT

The West Virginia Code (Section 61-2-9a) defines stalking and harassment as willfully and repeatedly following and harassing a person ostensibly in order to begin or restore a relationship. The WVCQL survey asked respondents about their experiences with stalking and harassment type of incidents. Respondents were asked, “In the past 12 months, did someone repeatedly and maliciously follow, harass, or threaten you in a way that caused you fear?”. A total of 285 individuals answered this question with 4.56% (n=13) indicating they had experienced the above scenario. According to this data, an estimated 62,991 adult West Virginians experienced this in 2017, that is 45.6 persons per 1,000 people. Of those 13 individuals, 1 person indicated that the stalking and/or harassment took place online while the other 12 people experienced this in person.

SUMMARY

The rates uncovered by the second phase of the WVCQLS provide more accurate accounts of crime victimization than do police statistics. Nonetheless, the response rates remain consistently low. This was expected because all surveys now elicit lower response rates than those conducted in the past (Pickett et al., 2017; Tourangeau, 2017). As well, some WVCQLS findings resemble data generated by similar surveys conducted elsewhere. For example, 7% of our sample reported experiencing physical variants of IPV in the year prior to the study, which is consistent with annual rates uncovered by studies specifically crafted to capture data on this problem (DeKeseredy, 2011). Note, too, that the crime estimates in phase one and phase fits within each other’s 95% confidence level.

However, all the WVCQLS victimization data should be considered underestimates due to the ubiquitous problem of underreporting. Certainly, all types of victimization surveys suffer

from these issues that contribute to underreporting: embarrassment; fear of reprisal; memory error, reluctance to recall traumatic memories; and social desirability (DeKeseredy & Schwartz, 2013). What is more, it is difficult, if not impossible, to make precise comparisons with other major victimization surveys like the National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS) because of methodological differences, such as sampling and measurement. Still, WVCQLS data are useful for purposes of policy and practice. They provide practitioners and law makers more accurate baseline data from which to determine the nature and extent of necessary resources. Prior to the study, the information available to all West Virginia stakeholders was limited and did not tell us about crimes that may not come to the attention of criminal justice officials. Though, we strived to help fill a major research gap in the state of West Virginia, the ultimate goal of this project is to enhance all West Virginians health and well-being. Please contact the authors of this report for more information on the data included in this report.

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