

Survey encapsulates nat'l fears over crime

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Even though Minister of State for National Security Keith Bell declared that The Bahamas is “pretty much crime-free”, nearly 40 percent of Bahamians who participated in an Inter-American Development Bank-financed survey said crime is the most serious problem facing the country.

Crime topped unemployment, which stood at 15.7 percent, according to the latest Labour Force Survey, which references November 2014.

The Bahamas was part of the AmericasBarometer survey for the first time in 2014. The survey was carried out between June 17 and October 7, 2014.

Respondents were asked what the country’s most serious problem is.

The results show that 39.4 percent said crime; 10.6 percent said unemployment; 8.9 percent said bad government; eight percent said corruption; 5.3 percent said migration, 4.9 percent said the economy, 3.4 said violence, three percent said politicians and the remaining respondents listed issues ranging from poverty to gangs.

The results of the survey reveal what Bahamians think about a wide variety of issues including crime, politics, governance and the economy.

When asked about crime last week, Bell said the issue is often sensationalized.

“The major concern of course remains New Providence and to a much lesser extent Grand Bahama,” Bell said.

“But for the most part, our Family Islands are peaceful and I think that is part of the message that we need to get out. We’re having a challenge in New Providence and to a lesser extent Grand Bahama but...The Bahamas is still pretty much crime-free.”

Bell said the only categories of crime that have increased this year are murders and shooting.

“As it stands right now, and I just want to put this in proper perspective, our crime rate is going down, the overall crime rate is going down,” he said.

“...Overall crimes against the property is significantly down. The overall crime rate is significantly down. Crimes against the person is down. The challenge that we have in the country is the shootings and homicides.”

Perceptions

Asked if they think the current level of violence in their neighborhoods is higher than it was 12 months ago, 47.8 percent of respondents said it is either higher or the same and 52.2 percent said crime is lower.

The survey also addressed the perception of safety in The Bahamas.

Just under 30 percent of the respondents said they feel unsafe walking alone after dark in areas outside of their neighborhood.

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Another 25.7 percent said they neither feel safe nor unsafe and 44.5 percent said they either feel very safe or safe.

The perception of safety increased for those walking alone in their neighborhood at night.

Sixty-two percent of respondents said they either feel very safe or safe; 21.2 said they neither feel safe nor unsafe and 16.7 percent said they either feel unsafe or very unsafe.

The respondents said they feel more safe during the day.

Asked if they were victims of crime in the past 12 months, 9.9 percent of the respondents said yes and 90.1 said no.

Of those who were victims of crime, 63.6 percent were targeted once over 12 months and 26 percent were victims of crime on multiple occasions.

Most of the respondents reported that they were victims of robbery, assault and burglary.

In the section that deals generally with police performance, 12 percent were very satisfied, 73.7 percent were satisfied, 11.1 percent were dissatisfied and 3.2 percent were very dissatisfied.

Asked how the respondents think the police in their neighborhood are doing in controlling crime, 30.4 percent said the police did a very good job, 45.2 percent said police did a fairly good job, 15.7 percent said they neither did a good nor poor job, 5.6 percent said they did a fairly poor job and three percent said they did a very poor job.

Even with those high satisfaction rates, nearly 70 percent of respondents strongly agree or somewhat agree that the defense force should participate in the crime fight.

The survey is a part of the Latin American Public Opinion Project (LAPOP).

Each year it publishes dozens of high quality academic studies and policy-relevant papers.

According to the technical information that accompanies the results, the 2014 survey was conducted by Vanderbilt University, with field work carried out by Public Domain, a local market research and public opinion firm.

The project used a national probability sample design of voting-age adults, with a total of 3,429 people involved in face-to-face interviews.

The sample size is considered more than respectable for our population size.