



**Public Safety Survey**

**Report of Results**

**October 22, 2019**

## **Executive Summary**

The City of Sisters conducted a public safety survey between the months of August and September in 2019. The intent of the survey was to reach residents and business owners within the City and gather direct data regarding feelings on public safety and levels of law enforcement. In order to do this, the City used utility accounts as the survey distribution list.

A total of 1,681 surveys were distributed: Hard copy surveys were mailed to 1,503 and an additional 178 surveys via door hanger. Within each delivered envelope, there was a survey and return envelope with pre-paid postage. On the survey, the City noted to return the survey by September 10. As surveys were still coming in consistently past that date, the City included surveys returned through September 24.

Through September 24, the City received 617 completed surveys equaling a 36.7% response rate. Although the City had hoped for a slightly higher return rate, this is indeed a robust response rate for a mailed survey.

The final survey that was distributed is attached as Exhibit A at the end of this report. If you would like a copy of the raw survey data, please contact Kerry Prosser, City Recorder, at [kprosser@ci.sisters.or.us](mailto:kprosser@ci.sisters.or.us) or call City Hall at 541-549-6022.

The introductory paragraph to the survey stated:

*The City of Sisters values your opinion on public safety. Your responses will inform City Council while they evaluate public safety and law enforcement options. The City currently contracts with Deschutes County Sheriff's Office (DSCO) for law enforcement. Over the next handful of months, the City will be comprehensively evaluating our levels of service and potential changes. We are asking you to take 10-15 minutes to complete this 21-question survey. You can either submit one survey on behalf of your household or indicate more than one set of responses on this survey. Please return to the City (either mail or drop off) by September 10<sup>th</sup>.*

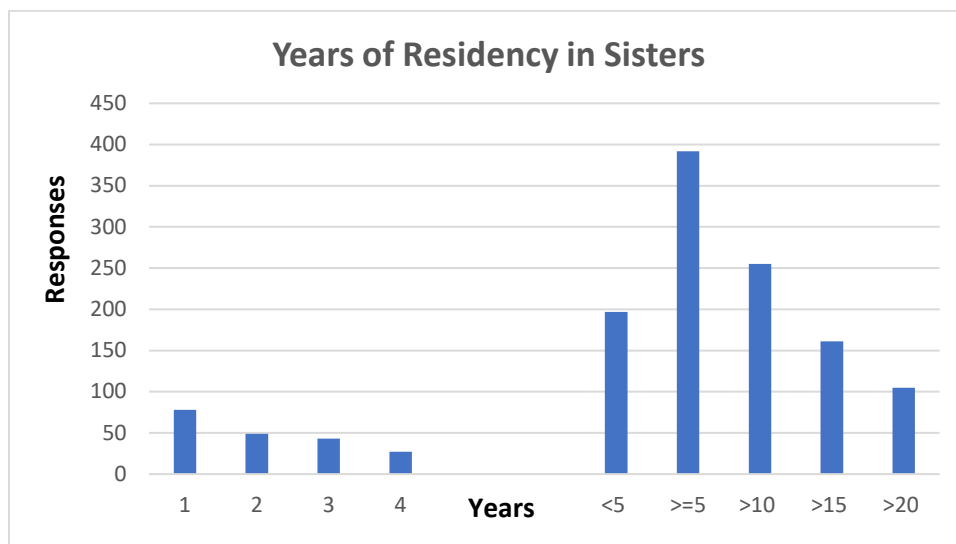
The following pages contain compilation of the results from the surveys. The presentation of this data has not been editorialized. The use of this information will be shaped through additional in-person conversations at the City Council.

We hope you find this report helpful in summarizing the outputs from the public safety survey.

## Results

### **Residency**

- Question One in the survey asked whether the City of Sisters was the primary residence of the survey taker. There were 608 responses with 512 (84.2%) responding “yes”, and 96 (15.8%) responding “no”.
- Question Sixteen in the survey asked how long had the survey taker lived in Sisters. This was a fill-in the blank question. There were 589 responses with 197 (33.4%) indicating 1, 2, 3 or 4 years. 392 responses (66.6%) indicated 5 or more years, while 255 responses (43.3%) indicated greater than 10 years.



### **Public Safety Problems and Threats**

- Questions Two through Nine asked about various threats to public safety (property crime, violent crime, illegal drugs, alcohol, domestic violence, child abuse, traffic safety, and public disorder offenses) and their level as a problem (major, moderate, minor, not, don't know):

<u>Property Crimes</u>	Counts	Percentage
Major Problem	42	6.9%
Moderate Problem	120	19.8%
Minor Problem	189	31.2%
Not a problem	195	32.2%
Don't Know	60	9.9%
Verify	606	100%
n	606	100%

<u>Violent Crimes</u>	Counts	Percentage
Major Problem	3	0.5%
Moderate Problem	24	4.0%
Minor Problem	116	19.1%
Not a problem	334	55.0%
Don't Know	130	21.4%
Verify	607	100%
n	607	100%

\*In these tables, “n” is the number of respondents to the question and “Verify” is confirming that in each “Counts” column.

<u>Illegal Drugs</u>	Counts	Percentage
Major Problem	50	8.3%
Moderate Problem	139	22.9%
Minor Problem	116	19.1%
Not a problem	138	22.8%
Don't Know	163	26.9%
Verify	606	100%
n	606	100%

<u>Alcohol</u>	Counts	Percentage
Major Problem	41	6.7%
Moderate Problem	114	18.8%
Minor Problem	163	26.8%
Not a problem	143	23.5%
Don't Know	147	24.2%
Verify	608	100%
n	608	100%

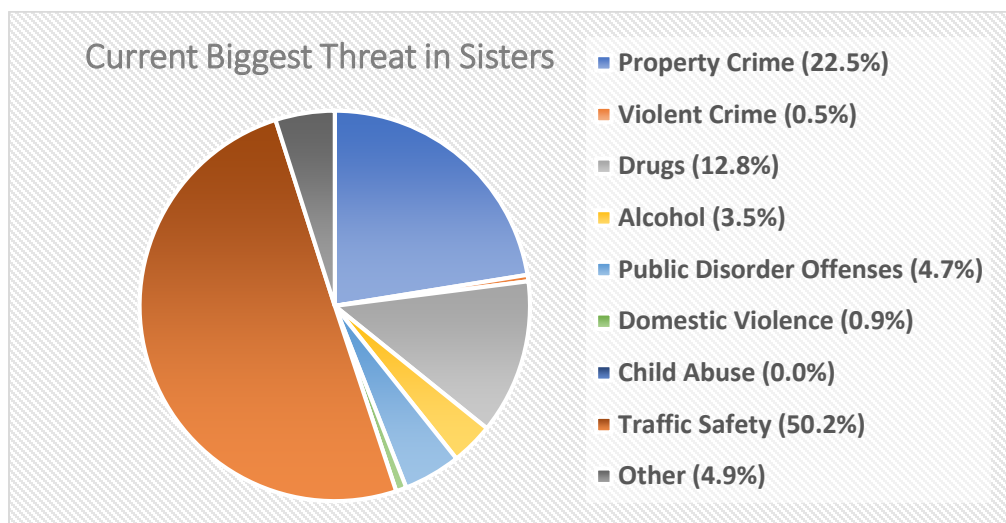
<u>Domestic Violence</u>	Counts	Percentage
Major Problem	3	0.5%
Moderate Problem	35	5.8%
Minor Problem	91	15.1%
Not a problem	177	29.3%
Don't Know	298	49.3%
Verify	604	100%
n	604	100%

<u>Child Abuse</u>	Counts	Percentage
Major Problem	5	0.8%
Moderate Problem	31	5.1%
Minor Problem	86	14.2%
Not a problem	143	23.7%
Don't Know	339	56.1%
Verify	604	100%
n	604	100%

<u>Traffic Safety</u>	Counts	Percentage
Major Problem	155	25.7%
Moderate Problem	169	28.0%
Minor Problem	168	27.8%
Not a problem	94	15.6%
Don't Know	16	2.6%
Verify	602	100%
n	602	100%

<u>Public Disorder Offenses</u>	Counts	Percentage
Major Problem	51	8.4%
Moderate Problem	120	19.9%
Minor Problem	205	33.9%
Not a problem	162	26.8%
Don't Know	66	10.9%
Verify	604	100%
n	604	100%

- Question Ten asked survey takers “which of the following do you think represents the biggest threat to public safety in Sisters? (select one item from the list below):



**Personal Safety**

- Question Twelve focused on capturing the survey taker’s general feelings of safety during the day versus the night:

<b>Walking Alone during Day</b>	Counts	Percentage
Very Safe	436	72.3%
Safe	147	24.4%
Neither Safe or Unsafe	16	2.7%
Unsafe	4	0.7%
Very Unsafe	0	0.0%
Verify	603	100%
n	603	100%

<b>Walking Alone during Night</b>	Counts	Percentage
Very Safe	152	25.4%
Safe	213	35.6%
Neither Safe or Unsafe	132	22.1%
Unsafe	90	15.1%
Very Unsafe	11	1.8%
Verify	598	100%
n	598	100%

- Question Thirteen asked, “on a scale from 0-10, with 0 being never and 10 being all of the time, how often have you worried about the following in Sisters during the daytime?” Question Fourteen asked the same for nighttime.
  - “Somebody breaking into your home/work and stealing or damaging things”
    - Average for daytime was 2.34 while nighttime was 3.41
  - “Somebody stealing your vehicle, things from it or damaging it”
    - Average for daytime was 2.28 while nighttime was 3.12
  - “Somebody stealing from you in a public place”
    - Average for daytime was 1.12 while nighttime was 1.66
  - “You or somebody you know being sexually assaulted”
    - Average for daytime was 0.85 while nighttime was 1.40
  - “You or somebody you know being physically attacked”
    - Average for daytime was 1.06 while nighttime was 1.70
- Question Fifteen asked, “on a scale from 0-10, with 0 strongly disagree, and 10 strongly agree to what extent do you agree with the following about Sisters?”
  - “Sisters is a good area to raise children”
    - Average was 9.01
  - “I am happy to live/work here”
    - Average was 9.20
  - “People in Sisters can be trusted”
    - Average was 8.47
  - “I share responsibility for the quality of life and safety in Sisters”
    - Average was 9.30
  - “I have been active in helping to improve the quality of life and safety in Sisters”
    - Average was 7.00

- Question Eleven asked “what happened to public safety in the City of Sisters over the past 12 months? (By ‘public safety’ we mean things like property crime, violent crime, domestic violence, child abuse, public disorder, and traffic safety):

<b>Public Safety Past 12 Months</b>	<b>Counts</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Safer	8	1.3%
Stayed the Same	204	34.0%
Less Safe	267	44.5%
Don't Know	121	20.2%
	Verify	600
	n	600
		100%

**Current Law Enforcement Service and Increase of Revenue**

- Question Nineteen asked, “how would you rate our contracted law enforcement service within the City from the Deschutes County Sheriff’s Office?”:

<b>Sheriff's Office Current Service</b>	<b>Counts</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Very Effective	140	24.8%
Somewhat Effective	161	28.5%
Neutral	124	22.0%
Needs Some Improvement	99	17.6%
Needs Major Changes	40	7.1%
	Verify	564
	n	564
		100%

- Question Twenty asked, “based on your response above, what changes, if any, would you recommend in regard to our contracted service with DCSO?” This was an open-ended question that allowed survey takers to share comments. Some of the comments shared are listed below:
  - *“More deputies for better response.”*
  - *“Need more night patrol.”*
  - *“More interaction with the public.”*
  - *“Sisters needs a police force.”*
  - *“None, keep as-is.”*
  - *“Increased presence.”*
  - *“More patrols, visibility, interaction.”*
  - *“Not sure, I don’t know extent of current contract and what they do and how often.”*
  - *“Sisters is growing and needs their own law enforcement on-site.”*
  - *“More neighborhood patrols.”*
  - *“More active enforcement in town.”*

- Question Twenty-One asked, “how willing would you be to pay more per month (additional utility fee) or annually (property tax levy) for increased and enhanced law enforcement services in Sisters?”:

<b>Pay More for Increased/Enhanced Service</b>	<b>Counts</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Very Willing	130	22.0%
Somewhat Willing	180	30.5%
Neutral	141	23.9%
Somewhat Unwilling	64	10.8%
Very Unwilling	75	12.7%
Verify	590	100%
n	590	100%

### **Open-Ended Questions and Comments Section**

- Question Seventeen asked, “please provide additional information about your primary public safety concern for the City of Sisters. (Remember, this survey is asking for feedback about broad public safety issues. If you have information about a specific crime, please call 911.)” Some of the comments shared are listed below:
  - *“Stop signs being ignored on the back streets. Have witnessed children almost getting hit as well as cars.”*
  - *“Worry most about burglary/theft.”*
  - *“Traffic is a major problem and homelessness.”*
  - *“Not enough police protection.”*
  - *“Wildfire.”*
  - *“Best place I’ve lived.”*
  - *“Vandalism/break-ins.”*
  - *“Lack of police visibility.”*
  - *“Speeding on sideroad/neighborhoods.”*
- Question Eighteen asked, “how should the City respond to the problem you identified in the prior question? What strategies do you favor for reducing this threat to public safety?” Some of the comments shared are listed below:
  - *“Need to hire more deputies for Sisters, need more presence in town.”*
  - *“Better routing of traffic.”*
  - *“I feel we need our own police force again like we had when I came here. Sheriff’s Office is great but takes too long to respond.”*
  - *“Lower speed limits and increase patrols.”*
  - *“Increase visibility of law enforcement.”*
  - *“It seems as if the current process is working.”*
  - *“More night patrols, forming community watch in neighborhoods.”*
  - *“City police department or more DCSO hours.”*

- At the end of the survey, there was an open-ended “Comments” section. Some of the comments shared are listed below:
  - *“As far as crime questions, I feel our neighborhood is safe. I know most of our neighbors. Not sure about other areas of Sisters though we do read of incidents in The Nugget.”*
  - *“Would like to see more traffic control through town.”*
  - *“It is not necessarily about MORE, it is about more effective policing.”*
  - *“We are always pleased to see “cops on bikes” and believe it puts drivers on alert.”*
  - *“Sisters is a wonderful safe community. Safety and low crime rates have as much to do with its citizens being involved as law enforcement. The community must continue coming together and not rely on City structures alone to solve our issues.”*
  - *“Nice place to live! This is the safest place I have ever lived.”*
  - *“Thank you for taking the time to ask these questions.”*
  - *“I may be interested in paying more for more DCSO but NOT a City police dept. – Sisters can’t afford it! Nor do we need it at this time.”*
  - *“I would want to understand what exactly will be covered with increases and enhanced law enforcement.”*
  - *“For a small city I think we do quite well...except for traffic congestion.”*
  - *“I would be willing to pay the extra. I am however on a fixed income so would have to be an amount I could easily budget.”*
  - *“Growth in Sisters tells me that enhanced law enforcement will be necessary to maintain our very satisfactory quality of life and safety.”*

### **Conclusion**

The Public Safety Survey asked a wide-variety of questions to better understand current residents and businesses perspectives on public safety and law enforcement. With a response rate of 36.7%, this data will help shape the conversation regarding future law enforcement services in the City of Sisters.

Based on several of the quantitative questions, people generally feel very safe in Sisters both during the day and at night, and are not worried about being a victim of crime. The biggest threat (50.2%) was reported to be *Traffic Safety*, while the next largest threats were *Property Crimes* (22.5%) and *Drugs* (12.8%). Almost half of respondents (44.5%), reported that Sisters is *Less Safe* over the past 12-months, while *Stayed the Same* (34.0%) and *Don’t Know* (20.2%) were the next largest answers – only (1.3%) chose *Safer*. Of those that responded *Less Safe* to Question Eleven, about half on Question Ten listed *Property Crime* or *Drugs* as the biggest threat, while the other half listed *Traffic Safety*.

Current DCSO services was rated by over 50% of respondents as *Very Effective* or *Somewhat Effective*, while (22.0%) indicated *Neutral* and (17.6%) *Needs Some Improvement*, and (7.1%) *Needs Major Changes*.



There was a willingness to pay more for increased and enhanced law enforcement service – over 50% of respondents were *Very Willing* or *Somewhat Willing*, while (22.0%) were *Neutral*, and (23.5%) were *Somewhat Unwilling* or *Very Unwilling*. Many of the comments expressed a need to better understand the relationship between increased and enhanced law enforcement services and the increase in amount paid by a resident or business.

Overall, the City appreciates those that took the time to fill-out the survey to help us better understand public sentiments and law enforcement needs, and ultimately provide tailored services on behalf of the community.

**EXHIBIT A**  
**City of Sisters Public Safety Survey**

(attached)

# CITY OF SISTERS PUBLIC SAFETY SURVEY

---

The City of Sisters values your opinion on public safety. Your responses will inform City Council while they evaluate public safety and law enforcement options. The City currently contracts with Deschutes County Sheriff's Office (DSCO) for law enforcement. Over the next handful of months, the City will be comprehensively evaluating our levels of service and potential changes. We are asking you to take 10-15 minutes to complete this 21-question survey. You can either submit one survey on behalf of your household or indicate more than one set of responses on this survey. Please return to the City (either mail or drop off) by September 10<sup>th</sup>.

1. Is the City of Sisters your primary residence (*Your primary residence is the dwelling where you spend the most time*)?
  - Yes
  - No
  
2. Are PROPERTY CRIMES currently a problem (theft, burglary, car break-ins, etc.)?
  - Major Problem
  - Moderate Problem
  - Minor Problem
  - Not a Problem
  - Don't Know
  
3. Are VIOLENT CRIMES currently a problem (assault, robbery, rape, etc.)?
  - Major Problem
  - Moderate Problem
  - Minor Problem
  - Not a Problem
  - Don't Know
  
4. Are ILLEGAL DRUGS currently a problem (people using, people selling, driving under the influence, etc.)?
  - Major Problem
  - Moderate Problem
  - Minor Problem
  - Not a Problem
  - Don't Know
  
5. Is ALCOHOL currently a problem (use by minors, public drunkenness, driving under the influence, etc.)?
  - Major Problem
  - Moderate Problem
  - Minor Problem
  - Not a Problem
  - Don't Know

# CITY OF SISTERS PUBLIC SAFETY SURVEY

---

6. Is DOMESTIC VIOLENCE currently a problem (physical abuse, harassment, or stalking of a current/former intimate partner)?
- Major Problem
  - Moderate Problem
  - Minor Problem
  - Not a Problem
  - Don't Know
7. Is CHILD ABUSE currently a problem (physical abuse, emotional abuse, sexual abuse, etc.)?
- Major Problem
  - Moderate Problem
  - Minor Problem
  - Not a Problem
  - Don't Know
8. Is TRAFFIC SAFETY currently a problem (aggressive driving, speeding, running stop signs, etc.)?
- Major Problem
  - Moderate Problem
  - Minor Problem
  - Not a Problem
  - Don't Know
9. Are PUBLIC DISORDER OFFENSES currently a problem (noise, squatters, trespassing, panhandling, etc.)?
- Major Problem
  - Moderate Problem
  - Minor Problem
  - Not a Problem
  - Don't Know
10. Which of the following do you think currently represents the biggest threat to public safety in Sisters? *(select one item from the list below)*
- Property Crime
  - Violent Crime
  - Drugs
  - Alcohol
  - Public Disorder Offenses
  - Domestic Violence
  - Child Abuse
  - Traffic Safety
  - Other (describe): \_\_\_\_\_

# CITY OF SISTERS PUBLIC SAFETY SURVEY

---

11. What happened to public safety in the City of Sisters over the past 12 months? (By “public safety” we mean things like property crime, violent crime, domestic violence, child abuse, public disorder, and traffic safety)

- Safer
- Stayed the Same
- Less Safe
- Don't Know

12. How safe would you feel walking alone during the daytime and nighttime? Circle one from each column:

Daytime

Nighttime

Very Safe

Very Safe

Safe

Safe

Neither Safe or Unsafe

Neither Safe or Unsafe

Unsafe

Unsafe

Very Unsafe

Very Unsafe

13. On a scale from 0-10, with 0 being never and 10 being all of the time, how often have you worried about the following in Sisters during the daytime?

- Somebody breaking into your home/work and stealing or damaging things \_\_\_\_
- Somebody stealing your vehicle, things from it or damaging it \_\_\_\_
- Somebody stealing from you in a public place \_\_\_\_
- You or somebody you know being sexually assaulted \_\_\_\_
- You or somebody you know being physically attacked \_\_\_\_

14. On a scale from 0-10, with 0 being never and 10 being all of the time, how often have you worried about the following in Sisters during the nighttime?

- Somebody breaking into your home/work and stealing or damaging things \_\_\_\_
- Somebody stealing your vehicle, things from it or damaging it \_\_\_\_
- Somebody stealing from you in a public place \_\_\_\_
- You or somebody you know being sexually assaulted \_\_\_\_
- You or somebody you know being physically attacked \_\_\_\_

15. On a scale from 0-10, with 0 strongly disagree, and 10 strongly agree to what extent do you agree with the following about Sisters?

- Sisters is a good area to raise children \_\_\_\_
- I am happy to live/work here \_\_\_\_
- People in Sisters can be trusted \_\_\_\_
- I share responsibility for the quality of life and safety in Sisters \_\_\_\_
- I have been active in helping to improve the quality of life and safety in Sisters \_\_\_\_

16. How long have you lived in Sisters? \_\_\_\_\_

# CITY OF SISTERS PUBLIC SAFETY SURVEY

---

17. Please provide additional information about your primary public safety concern for the City of Sisters. (Remember, this survey is asking for feedback about broad public safety issues. If you have information about a specific crime, please call 911.)

---

---

---

18. How should the City respond to the problem you identified in the prior question? What strategies do you favor for reducing this threat to public safety?

---

---

---

19. How would you rate our contracted law enforcement service within the City from the Deschutes County Sheriff's Office?

- Very Effective
- Somewhat Effective
- Neutral
- Needs Some Improvement
- Needs Major Changes

20. Based on your response to the question above, what changes, if any, would you recommend in regard to our contracted service with DSCO?

---

---

---

21. How willing would you be to pay more per month (additional utility fee) or annually (property tax levy) for increased and enhanced law enforcement services in Sisters?

- Very Willing
- Somewhat Willing
- Neutral
- Somewhat Unwilling
- Very Unwilling

Comments: \_\_\_\_\_

---

---

---

---

---