

# Perceptions of Crime and Policing, Feelings of Safety, and Experiences of Victimization Among Aboriginal Persons in Saskatchewan: Results from a Saskatchewan-Wide Survey

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## Introduction

Research has indicated that rates of victimization are higher for Aboriginal persons than non-Aboriginal persons. In the 2009 General Social Survey, 37% of Aboriginal respondents reported that, within the preceding 12 months, they had been a victim of at least one of the eight offences listed, compared to 26% of non-Aboriginal respondents (Perreault, 2011). Aboriginal persons also encountered violent victimization at a much higher rate (198 per 1,000 persons) than non-Aboriginal persons (94 per 1,000 persons; Perreault, 2011). Further, a previous Saskatchewan-wide survey, *Taking the Pulse*, found that Aboriginal respondents felt less safe and were more likely to perceive that crime rates had increased within their communities (McDowell et al., 2012).

Additional research (Cao, 2014) has found that Aboriginal persons tend to distrust the police, which may lead to decreased reporting of crime and possibly continued victimization. While prior research indicates that the experience of crime and victimization is particularly high among Aboriginal peoples, little research has been conducted that specifically examines Aboriginals' perceptions of crime and experiences of victimization in Saskatchewan, where 15.6% of the population is Aboriginal (Bureau of Statistics, 2013). The current research project seeks to address this gap in knowledge.

## Methods

Two nearly identical telephone surveys were conducted on a province-wide sample (combined  $N=2,012$ ) of Saskatchewan residents to explore residents' fear of crime, perceptions of safety, and experiences of victimization over the preceding year. Respondents aged 18 years of age and older were eligible to participate. All interviews were conducted by the University of Saskatchewan's Social Sciences Research Laboratories (SSRL) and took, on average, 13 minutes to complete. A package of phone numbers, including both mobile and landline, were purchased to facilitate the random digit dialing procedure necessary to obtain a random sample. The survey was comprised of a series of questions intended to identify respondents' perceptions of crime, feelings of safety, and experiences of victimization. Questions were answered using a 4- or 5-point Likert-type scale.

## Survey Sample and Generalizability

The first survey ( $n=715$ ) was conducted in November 2013. Areas surveyed were those where the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) was solely responsible for policing services. A response rate of 26% was achieved, with results generalizable to the Saskatchewan population living in RCMP-policed jurisdictions  $\pm 3.7\%$  at the 95% confidence interval. The second survey ( $n=1,297$ ) was conducted in late January 2014. This survey sampled respondents from across the province, including areas policed by municipal police forces (i.e., Prince Albert, Saskatoon, Regina, Weyburn, Estevan, and Moose Jaw). A response rate of 28% was achieved, with results generalizable to the Saskatchewan population  $\pm 2.7\%$  at the 95% confidence interval.

## Results

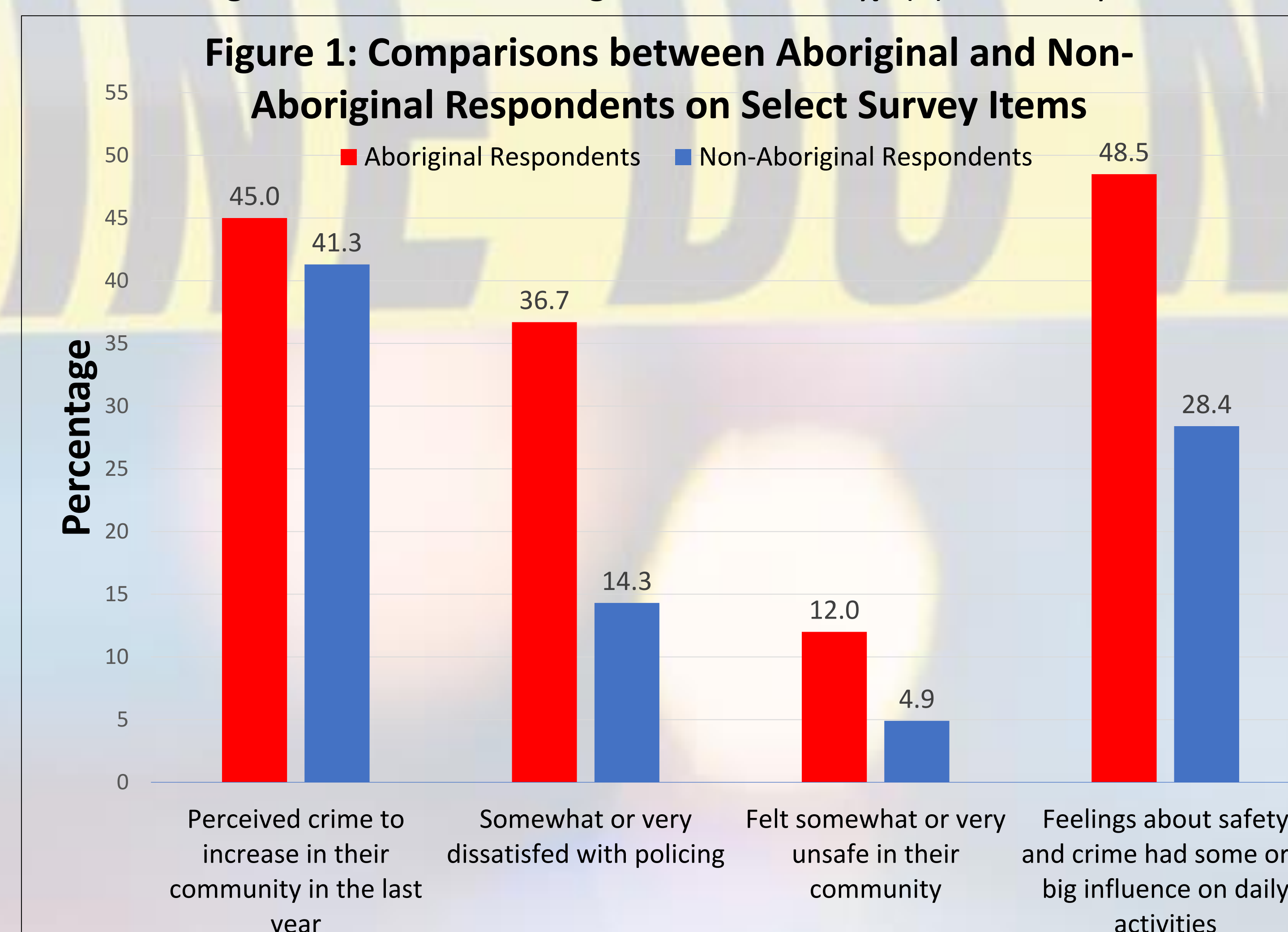
The following results reflect comparisons between survey responses of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal respondents. Key results are presented in Figure 1.

### Profile of Aboriginal Respondents

Overall, 101 respondents identified as Aboriginal representing approximately 5% of the total sample. Under half (41.6%) of Aboriginal respondents identified as male, and most were between the ages of 35 to 54 years (41.2%). The majority had completed high school (29.7%) or some post-secondary education (33.7%); 70.7% reported being in a legal marriage or common-law relationship. Respondents typically lived on reserve (22.8%) or in a city (35.6%).

### Perceptions of Crime

No significant differences in perceptions of crime were found between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal respondents. However, respondents who lived on reserve were significantly more likely to perceive that there was more crime in their own community compared to other communities than respondents who lived on a farm or acreage; in a hamlet or village; or in a town;  $\chi^2(8)=162.44, p<.001$ .



### Satisfaction with Policing

Aboriginal respondents were significantly more dissatisfied with policing than non-Aboriginal respondents,  $U=69,247.00, z=4.45, p<.001$

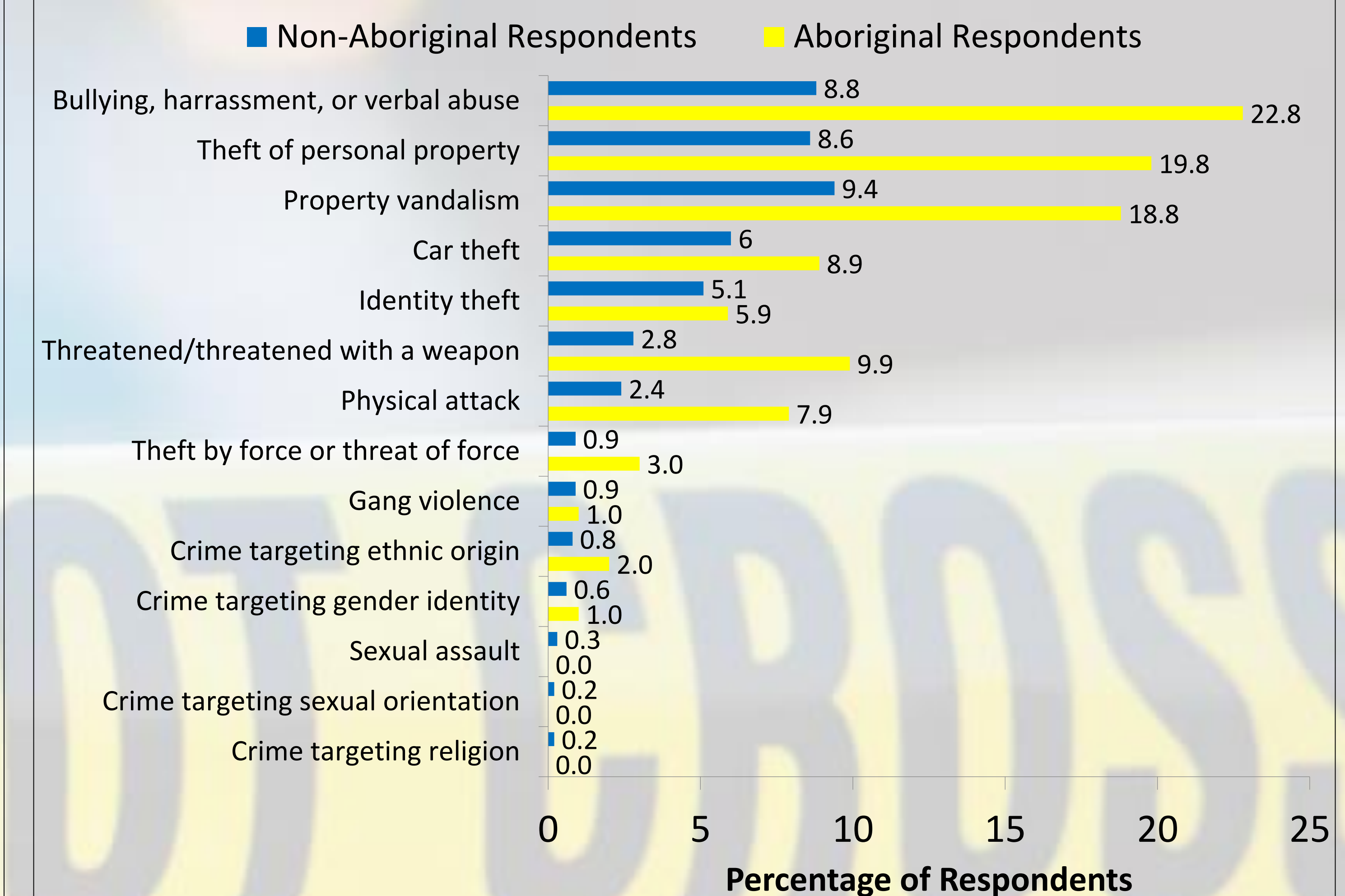
### Feelings of Safety

Overall, Aboriginal respondents felt significantly less safe: 1) in their own communities,  $U=78,039.00, z=3.41, p=.001$ ; 2) in their own homes,  $U=82,297.00, z=2.82, p=.005$ ; and 3) while walking alone at night,  $U=61,270.00, z=3.82, p<.001$ , than non-Aboriginal respondents. Furthermore, Aboriginal respondents indicated that their feelings about personal safety and crime had a significantly greater influence on their daily activities compared to non-Aboriginal respondents,  $U=119,517.50, z=4.73, p<.001$ .

## Experiences of Victimization

Overall, Aboriginal respondents reported a greater amount and variety of victimization experiences than non-Aboriginal respondents (see Figure 1).

**Figure 2. Self-Reported Victimization for Various Types of Crimes Within the Last 12 Months (N=2,012)**



## Conclusions and Future Directions

Our results indicated that Aboriginal respondents felt more dissatisfied with policing, felt less safe in their communities, and more frequently self-reported victimization. However, some limitations were apparent. Due to the nature of the study, a telephone survey, we were unable to generate a representative sample of Aboriginal respondents. This, along with the small sample of Aboriginal respondents, affects the generalizability of our results.

Future research directions should include ecologically-valid research designs that encourage Aboriginal participation in the research process. Specifically, engaging in research based on the OCAP principles (i.e., Ownership, Control, Access, and Possession; First Nations Information Governance Centre, 2013). Further, in our study, on-reserve participation in the survey was low. To increase on-reserve representation, we recommend using a similar paradigm to that of the 2008 Regional Health Survey (FNIGC, 2010), which employed culturally-sensitive survey methodology. This may lead to capturing results that may be more reflective of the actual rates of victimization, as well as reporting behaviours, of Aboriginal respondents living on reserve.

## Acknowledgements / Contact Information

The information presented in this poster is drawn from research conducted on behalf of the RCMP "F" Division and the Saskatchewan Ministry of Justice through the Centre for Forensic Behavioural Science and Justice Studies. For more information, contact Dr. Lisa Jewell at (306) 966-2707 or [lisa.jewell@usask.ca](mailto:lisa.jewell@usask.ca)