



The Research Bureau

Benchmarking Public Safety in Worcester: 2009

Report 09-02
May 2009


Dear Citizen,

This is the sixth annual report on the status of public safety in Worcester prepared by The Research Bureau. The indicators in this report describe the performance of Worcester's police, fire, and ambulance/emergency medical services. We continue to monitor the same five indicators discussed in previous reports: crime rates, perceptions of crime and neighborhood safety, allegations of police misconduct, fire suppression and first responder services, and advanced life support/ambulance services. We measure performance by asking "What has changed since last year, what have we accomplished, and what challenges remain?"

*It is important to bear in mind that no single indicator presented here should be considered in isolation. In other words, context is important, and the indicators included in this report are interrelated. For example, increased interaction and information sharing between residents and police officers (see **Indicator 2**) may lead to reductions in certain types of crime measured in **Indicator 1**.*

Thank you for taking the time to read this report. We hope that it will encourage widespread discussion of public safety issues, serve as a basis for sound priority-setting and decision-making, and further the adoption of performance measurement practices at the municipal level. Finally, we wish to thank the Greater Worcester Community Foundation for its sponsorship of this report.

Sincerely,



Brian J. Buckley, Esq. – Chairman of the Board



Roberta R. Schaefer, PhD – President & CEO



Laura M. Swanson – Research Associate

WORCESTER POLICE DEPARTMENT: DEPARTMENT OVERVIEW AND INPUT INDICATORS

The mission of the Worcester Police Department is to promote the highest level of public safety and quality of life in the City of Worcester through exceptional police services to the City's residents, businesses, and visitors.¹

The Worcester Police Department's FY09 budget of \$59.7 million (including fringe benefits and excluding capital expenditures) comprised 11.8% of the City's annual operating budget. As shown in the table below, the WPD's expenditures have increased by a third over the past five years, from \$31.8 million in FY05 (actual) to \$42.3 million (budgeted) in FY09, due primarily to contractually-obligated salary increases.² In FY09, the department budget authorized funding for 45 civilian personnel positions, 3 (6%) fewer than it did in FY05. The number of budgeted uniformed officer positions decreased slightly from 475 in FY05 to 458 in FY09. In sum, over five years, expenditures increased by more than \$10 million (32.7%) while the number of employees decreased by 3.8%.

In 2007, the average number of police department employees (uniformed and civilian) in Northeast cities with populations of 100,000 to 249,999 was 3.5 per 1,000 residents, compared to 2.9 per 1,000 in Worcester. Uniformed officers averaged 2.9 per 1,000 residents in these same Northeast cities, while the City of Worcester averaged 2.6 per 1,000.³

Worcester Police Department						
	FY05	FY06	FY07	FY08	FY09	% Change FY05-FY09
Expenditures*	\$31,884,406	\$36,133,284	\$41,143,952	\$40,125,197	\$42,323,838	32.7%
Expenditures per capita	\$181.27	\$205.42	\$234.41	\$228.61	\$241.13	33.0%
Uniformed Positions	475	475	473	471	458	-3.6%
Officers per 1,000 Population	2.7	2.7	2.7	2.7	2.6	
Civilian Positions	48	51	52	48	45	-6.3%
Civilians per 1,000 population	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.3	
Total Positions	523	526	525	519	503	-3.8%
Total Law Enforcement positions per 1,000 population	3.0	3.0	3.0	3.0	2.9	
<small>*Excluding capital expenditures and fringe benefits Data Sources: <i>Comprehensive Annual Financial Reports</i>, Office of the City Auditor (Actual expenditures for fiscal years 2005 through 2007) and <i>City of Worcester Annual Budget</i> (Approved Budget for FY08 and Recommended Appropriation for FY09). Uniformed and civilian positions reflect budgeted positions in the <i>City of Worcester Annual Budgets</i> for the years FY05 - FY09.</small>						

¹ *City of Worcester Fiscal 2009 Annual Budget*.

² These figures exclude fringe benefits and capital expenditures.

³ Comparison data are reported in the FBI's annual *Crime in the United States* statistical summary; Worcester data reflect budgeted positions per 1,000 population.

INDICATOR 1: CRIME RATES AND ARRESTS

Why are they important?

Crime rates are basic indicators of public safety. Crime not only affects the quality of life of those who directly experience or witness it, but may also impact the lives of others in the community who feel threatened by it, undermining their sense of personal security. Low crime rates promote neighborhood stability and increase a community's attractiveness as a place to live, work, and conduct business. Accurate and timely crime data are a tool that allow the police to identify trends in both types of crimes and geographic areas in which they occur. These data enable the police to deploy resources most effectively.

How does Worcester perform?

In 2008, the WPD responded to 108,121 incidents.⁴ As shown in **Table 1.1**, eight out of ten of these incidents (81%) were reported by citizens (primarily 9-1-1 emergency calls), while 19% were officer-initiated. The number of total incidents police respond to annually had been decreasing from 2004 to 2006, but reached a 5-year high in 2008, or almost an 11% increase from 2004. From 2004 to 2007, the number of arrests made by WPD officers steadily increased, but it then dropped by 9% from 2007 to 2008. However, the number of arrests in 2008 still represented a 17% increase over the 2004 figure. The arrest numbers included in **Table 1.1** show the number of incidents with at least one arrest upon initial police response (some incidents involve the arrest of more than one person).⁵ Arrest data are examined in further detail later in this section (see **Table 1.4**).

Incidents:	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	% Change 2004-2008
Total Incidents	97,829	97,163	95,313	103,019	108,121	10.5%
Citizen-Reported	77,841	74,697	75,184	82,211	87,146	12.0%
WPD-Initiated	19,988	22,466	20,229	20,808	20,975	4.9%
Arrests:						
Total arrests made by WPD	7,179	8,028	8,698	9,223	8,393	16.9%
<i>Source: Worcester Police Department, Crime Analysis Unit, Police Incident Statistics</i>						

⁴ Total incidents represent both criminal and non-criminal events to which the police respond. These figures do not represent actual crime rates, since they include calls which were not substantiated (complaints which turned out not to be criminal), calls for general assistance, and calls to which the police respond but find no one there upon arrival. A single incident may also involve more than one crime.

⁵ These arrest data do not include arrests which were made at a later date (e.g., an arrest warrant may be taken out based on the original incident and served at a later date). For this reason, and due to the fact that the total incident count above includes police responses to non-criminal events, we cannot determine from these data what proportion of criminal incidents ultimately result in an arrest.

During calendar year 2007, 1,531 violent crimes and 6,025 property crimes were reported in Worcester.⁶ Aggravated assaults comprised more than two-thirds of the reported violent crimes (69%), followed by robbery (24%), rape (6%), and murder (0.4%). Larceny constituted the greatest proportion of property crimes reported in Worcester in 2007 (63%), followed by burglary (22%) and motor vehicle theft (15%). From 2004 to 2007, the overall number of reported violent crimes in Worcester increased by 10.7%.

Table 1.2 shows trends in reported property and violent crime rates for Worcester and several other Northeastern cities since 2002. Worcester has typically experienced lower crime rates than Bridgeport, Hartford, and Springfield. Among the six cities examined, Worcester’s property crime rate has consistently been the second-lowest. Worcester’s violent crime rate has recently been similar to Lowell’s. In 2007, its rate was higher only than those of Lowell and Providence out of the six cities.

	Bridgeport, CT		Hartford, CT		Lowell, MA		Springfield, MA		Worcester, MA		Providence, RI	
	Violent	Property	Violent	Property	Violent	Property	Violent	Property	Violent	Property	Violent	Property
2002	121.4	491.0	124.3	749.4	81.3	326.3	204.1	736.2	NA	NA	74.0	713.7
2003	97.5	457.3	145.4	791.0	83.2	295.9	191.4	763.6	87.5	434.9	78.9	627.2
2004	101.4	445.9	121.3	878.6	95.4	309.8	183.7	655.7	78.6	371.4	60.7	583.9
2005	108.5	512.1	115.9	764.7	97.9	319.6	177.4	573.6	79.0	345.5	68.2	515.9
2006	108.7	503.4	128.0	710.4	88.7	323.1	148.2	572.5	84.7	319.9	55.4	489.3
2007	116.5	477.8	113.3	578.5	85.0	323.2	136.9	525.7	87.1	342.7	56.0	475.6

Source: Rates calculated by The Research Bureau using FBI Uniform Crime Reports data.

While Worcester experienced a slight increase (2.1%) in the number of reported violent crimes in 2007 compared to 2006 (1,531 in 2007 compared to 1,499 in 2006), there was a 5% drop in the number of reported violent crimes in the Northeast region during this time period, and nationwide this figure dropped by .7%. Reported property crimes in Worcester also rose from 2006 to 2007 (from 5,660 to 6,025, respectively), a 6.4% increase. Meanwhile, the Northeast region experienced a 3% decrease in property crime during this period, and nationwide property crimes were also down by 1.4%.

While the more serious crimes described above clearly threaten citizens’ overall sense of safety and well-being, nuisance and disorder in a neighborhood (e.g., loud parties, fights, and disorderly conduct) also diminish residents’ quality of life. **Table 1.3** shows the geographic distribution of violation of public-order incidents to which WPD responded in 2008. The following types of incidents are included in this category: disorderly conduct; fights; trespassing; gunshots; illegal carrying of weapons; noise-related complaints; drugs, prostitution, and other vice; and non-domestic disputes. The number of these incidents to which the police responded in 2008 is about 4% less than in 2007.

⁶ Reported crime data are from the FBI’s Uniform Crime Reporting Program. See <http://www.fbi.gov/ucr/ucr.htm> for additional information about reported crime, including the FBI’s annual publication *Crime in the United States*. The violent crime category includes murder, forcible rape, robbery, and aggravated assault. Property crimes include burglary, larceny-theft, and motor vehicle theft.

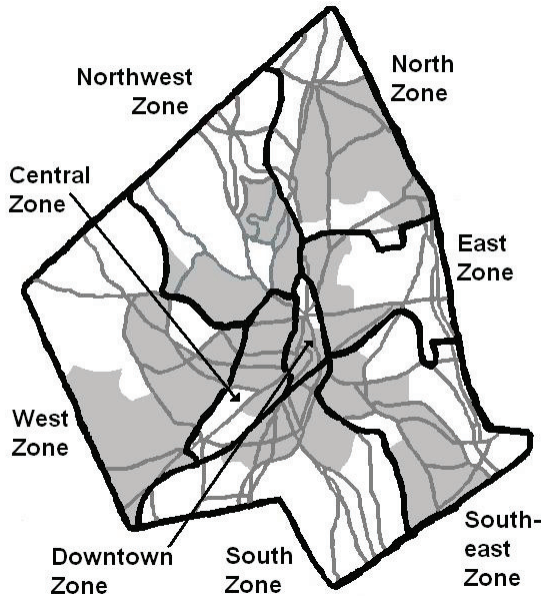


Table 1.3: Violations of Public Order, 2008

	Number	Percent of Total
Central Zone	6,380	31.95%
South Zone	3,164	15.85%
Southeast Zone	2,488	12.46%
Downtown Zone	1,975	9.89%
East Zone	1,911	9.57%
West Zone	1,814	9.08%
North Zone	1,418	7.10%
Northwest Zone	799	4.00%
Unknown	18	0.09%
Total	19,967	100.00%

Source: Worcester Police Department, Crime Analysis Unit

Arrests

In 2008, the WPD made 8,569 arrests. **Table 1.4** shows that the total number of arrests in Worcester (for all ages) increased by almost 20% from 2004 to 2008.

Table 1.4: Summary of WPD Arrests, 2004-2008

	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	% Change 2004-2008
Total Arrests (All Ages)	7,179	8,028	8,698	9,288	8,569	19.4%
Individuals Arrested	5,465	6,027	6,762	7,082	6,584	20.5%
Total Arrests with this Charge:						
Drug Violations	1,115	1,310	1,248	1,362	1,341	20.3%
Assault and Battery/Aggravated Assault	511	530	600	679	690	35.0%
Disorderly Conduct, Disturbing Peace	1,079	1,115	1,253	1,291	1,186	9.9%
Prostitution and Related	267	232	178	214	222	-16.9%
Sexual Assault, Including Rape	19	33	29	41	36	89.5%
Armed Robbery	55	57	67	70	39	-29.1%
Murder, Manslaughter, Attempted Murder	11	8	14	6	12	9.1%

Source: Worcester Police Department, Crime Analysis Unit

In 2008, 5.5% of all arrests made by the WPD involved youth under the age of 17. The number of youth arrests in 2008 (469) represented a five-year low, or a 20% decrease from 2004 (583 arrests). The 469 arrests in 2008 led to 656 charges being filed (a single arrest may result in multiple charges). As shown in **Table 1.5**, the majority of charges against juveniles arrested in Worcester were for disorderly conduct, aggravated assault, drug violations, and shoplifting. All of the charges displayed in **Table 1.5** saw a decrease in the number of arrests from 2007 to 2008.

The number of disorderly conduct and vandalism arrests in 2008 was the same as in 2004. Assault and battery, motor vehicle theft, and drug violations all saw significant decreases during the five-year period from 2004 to 2008. Breaking and entering and liquor law violations have continued to increase since 2004.

Table 1.5: Summary of WPD Juvenile Arrests, 2004-2008

	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	% Change 2004-2008
Total Arrests: Youth under 17 years of age	583	528	496	647	469	-19.55%
Total Youth Arrests with this Charge:						
<i>Disorderly Conduct, Disturbing Peace</i>	74	95	93	117	74	0.00%
<i>Assault and Battery/Aggravated Assault</i>	52	53	46	66	31	-40.38%
<i>Shoplifting</i>	52	34	33	60	43	-17.31%
<i>Drug Violations</i>	36	38	25	57	20	-44.44%
<i>Vandalism</i>	27	22	41	49	27	0.00%
<i>Breaking & Entering</i>	12	21	24	33	23	91.67%
<i>Larceny (except motor vehicle)</i>	21	29	20	35	24	14.29%
<i>Liquor Law Violations</i>	6	18	20	28	22	266.67%
<i>Firearms (discharge and other related violations)</i>	3	2	2	6	1	-66.67%
<i>Motor Vehicle Theft & related</i>	44	42	12	24	12	-72.73%

Source: Worcester Police Department, Crime Analysis Unit

What does this mean for Worcester?

Annual data for the five-year period from 2004 to 2008 show that the number of incidents (criminal and non-criminal) entailing police response increased by more than 10,000 (11%). The number of incidents which resulted in an arrest in the City has increased by almost 17% since 2004.⁷ Reports of violent crime in Worcester, which had dropped in 2004 and 2005, returned to 2003 levels in 2007, an increase of almost 11% over 2004.

Following national trends, aggravated assault has been the most frequently reported violent offense in Worcester since 2003 (on average, almost two-thirds of violent offenses reported to the WPD). According to Worcester’s Police Chief Gemme, there has been an increase in the number of robberies in the City, with many of these occurring late at night or in the early morning, as well as an increase in non-domestic aggravated assault, possibly due to the recent increases in stabbings. Also, the department has made gun violence its top priority since 2004, which has resulted in a decrease in the number of shootings in the City. Possibly due to the downturn in the economy, some property crimes have been on the rise, including residential break-ins, thefts from vacant or foreclosed properties, and motor-vehicle break-ins.

Since his appointment in late 2004, Police Chief Gemme has implemented a department restructuring designed to meet one of the primary goals of the WPD: to work more closely with

⁷ See Worcester Police Department’s *Annual Report* for details, www.ci.worcester.ma.us/wpd.

City residents to address both crime and quality-of-life issues. The expansion of the Department's Crime Analysis Unit ensures that officers have timely and accurate data to aid in solving crime and quality-of-life issues. WPD is sharing its data with the community, and with the reorganization of its community policing efforts, is working systematically with neighborhood groups to combat identified problems and to develop tactics that anticipate problems rather than simply reacting to them. The community-policing approach also includes efforts to better coordinate WPD's activities with those of other municipal departments and community services, such as Code Enforcement and Public Works.

The Department is facing difficult times as the result of a tightening fiscal situation in the City and in the nation as a whole. The recently-graduated class of police recruits was immediately laid off, resulting in a loss of 32 officers.⁸ The Central District office located downtown, which was staffed with officers who patrolled on foot in designated areas of the City, including around City Hall, was recently closed.⁹ Chief Gemme has had to develop a budget with \$5.5 million in cuts, which would further reduce other programs, divisions, and positions within the department.¹⁰ It will be important in the coming years to track the results of these types of cuts and reductions.

⁸ Scott Croteau, "Careers Placed on Hold." *Telegram & Gazette*, February 26, 2009.

⁹ Scott Croteau, "Downtown Police Office to Close." *Telegram & Gazette*, February 25, 2009.

¹⁰ Scott Croteau, "Police Cuts Can Affect Traffic Division." *Telegram & Gazette*, March 2, 2009.

INDICATOR 2: PERCEPTIONS OF CRIME AND SAFETY (QUALITY OF POLICE SERVICES)

Why is it important?

Citizen perceptions of public safety are important to a community's vibrance and can affect the quality of life in a community or in a neighborhood. Perception that a neighborhood is unsafe can lead to decreased neighborhood investment, mistrust of the local police force, and decreases in neighborhood participation in community activities. Measuring citizens' perceptions of public safety in their neighborhood and in the larger community is important partly in order to locate gaps between perception and reality. Local police departments can then work with the community to correct misperceptions as well as tackling other problems identified by the community.

How does Worcester perform?

The Research Bureau administers an annual survey of participants in the more than 50 neighborhood associations/ Neighborhood Watch groups throughout the City. The majority of these groups meet on a monthly basis to discuss a variety of neighborhood issues, including public safety and quality-of-life concerns. Most of these groups have a police officer assigned to them through the WPD's Community Impact Division. During the winter of 2008-2009, 286 participants from 35 of the neighborhood associations responded to a survey which measures participants' perceptions of neighborhood safety, their assessment of WPD performance, and quality-of-life issues. Among respondents, two-thirds have participated in their neighborhood groups for two or more years, and more than half (52%) have lived in their neighborhoods more than ten years.

When asked how they rated the safety of their neighborhood in general, 58% of respondents said "good" or "very good," while 37% responded with "average" and 5% with "poor." The survey also asked respondents whether they thought crime in their neighborhoods had increased, decreased, or stayed the same during the past year. Over half (52%) of respondents thought that the level of crime had stayed the same, while 27% thought it had decreased, and 21% thought it had increased.

While 84% of respondents said they felt safe walking alone in their neighborhoods during the daytime, only 52% said they felt safe walking alone at nighttime. When asked to identify specific times of day when greater police presence in general is needed, over half of the responses received indicated the greatest need was "nighttime/after dark" (57%) followed by "after school/early evening" (27%).

Participants were also asked to identify the most serious problem facing their neighborhood. Twenty-four percent of responses identified drugs and alcohol as the most serious issue,

followed by traffic-related issues (speeding, poor flow, etc.) with 11% of total responses.¹¹ About 9% of responses cited break-ins, burglaries, or theft, and another 8% of responses identified youth (loitering, unsupervised, obnoxious or malicious behavior) as the most serious problem.

Table 2.1 shows respondents’ assessment of WPD performance regarding overall quality of services provided, officers’ interactions with citizens, officers’ responsiveness to quality-of-life concerns, and WPD’s responsiveness to the community’s overall policing needs over the past three years. In 2009, almost three-quarters (73%) of respondents judged that the quality of services provided in their neighborhoods was “good” or “very good” while 76% felt that WPD’s responsiveness to the community’s overall policing needs was “good” or “very good.” Officers’ attitudes and behavior towards citizens received the highest rating, with 81% of respondents giving a rating of good/very good, 17% an average rating, and 2% a poor rating (only two individuals offered a response of “very poor”).

	Year	n	Very Poor	Poor	Average	Good	Very Good
Quality of services provided by WPD in your neighborhood	2005	129	1.6%	10.1%	33.3%	41.1%	14.0%
	2006	183	1.6%	9.3%	28.4%	40.4%	20.2%
	2007	127	0.8%	3.9%	20.5%	47.2%	27.6%
	2009	266	0.4%	3.0%	23.3%	46.6%	26.7%
WPD officers' attitude and behavior toward citizens	2005	125	0.8%	7.2%	20.8%	42.4%	28.8%
	2006	182	1.1%	6.6%	20.3%	38.5%	33.5%
	2007	127	0.8%	2.4%	16.5%	35.4%	44.9%
	2009	271	0.7%	1.9%	17.0%	40.6%	39.9%
WPD's responsiveness to quality-of-life issues in the community (neighborhood disputes, loud noise concerns, graffiti, etc.)	2005	121	5.8%	10.7%	28.1%	38.0%	17.4%
	2006	179	3.4%	13.4%	30.2%	32.4%	20.7%
	2007	121	0.8%	6.6%	22.3%	41.3%	28.9%
	2009	264	0.8%	4.6%	20.1%	40.5%	34.1%
WPD's responsiveness to the community's overall policing needs	2005	126	0.8%	11.1%	27.8%	45.2%	15.1%
	2006	175	3.4%	6.3%	30.9%	39.4%	20.0%
	2007	117	0.0%	6.8%	21.4%	44.4%	27.4%
	2009	253	0.0%	2.8%	21.0%	44.7%	31.6%

Source: The Research Bureau

Eighty-eight percent of respondents reported that a police officer always attends the neighborhood meeting (9% indicated that an officer attends “most of the time” and 3% stated “sometimes”). In addition, 89% indicated that the same police officer attends each meeting. Only

¹¹ Respondents were able to identify more than one answer to this question, so percentages are based on the total number of answers provided.

6% of respondents felt they were uninformed about WPD projects, programs, activities, and services. An overwhelming majority of respondents - about 95% - thought that Neighborhood Watch groups made their neighborhood safer.

What does this mean for Worcester?

Having this information about citizens' perceptions of crime and neighborhood issues provides the WPD with an opportunity to compare perception to reality, as tracked by the Department's expanded use of neighborhood-level crime data, and respond to citizen concerns appropriately through the community policing program. However, due to the tight financial situation the City is facing, the Community Impact Division, which is responsible for community policing, is in danger of being cut entirely, depending on how much the Department will need to reduce its budget.¹² The impact of these cuts will have to be monitored carefully. However, the Department states that it has made a strong commitment to maintain services to the neighborhood associations or Neighborhood Watch groups which it currently works with.

¹² Scott Croteau, "Downtown Police Office to Close," *Worcester Telegram & Gazette*, February 25, 2009.

INDICATOR 3: ALLEGATIONS OF POLICE MISCONDUCT

Why is it important?

Police departments are obligated to ensure that their personnel are performing their duties in accordance with the law, professional standards, and established internal procedures. The Worcester Police Department's complaint investigation procedure provides a venue for citizens to express concerns about police conduct. The review process holds officers accountable for improper behavior, but also protects police officers against unwarranted criticism while fulfilling their duties. Citizen trust in the fairness of police conduct is essential to effective policing. When citizen trust in a police department erodes, citizens can become hesitant to report crimes or assist in police investigations. Therefore, the quality of each of the thousands of police-citizen interactions can shape both perceptions and outcomes. "If police services are offered courteously and responsively, then those who receive the services will presumably value the police more than they would if police services were rude and/or ineffective."¹³ Continued improvement in, and strengthening of, police-community relations forms the foundation of the Worcester Police Department's community policing initiative.

The complaint investigation process begins when the complainant or his representative (such as an attorney or family member) files a complaint with the department. The type of review is determined by the nature of the complaint. More serious complaints are investigated by the Bureau of Professional Standards (BPS), while other complaints may be reviewed by the commander or supervisor of the officer involved, with the BPS remaining involved in the process. During the investigation, the department will speak with the complainant or any other witnesses. Once a decision about the complaint is made, the citizen complainant and the officer are notified by mail of the results. No matter the outcome of the complaint, the letter informs the complainant that the results of the investigation do not prevent the complainant from further pursuing the complaint with another party (this may involve an outside agency, such as the District Attorney or Attorney General). Complaints may take between a month and six months to resolve, depending on the complaint.

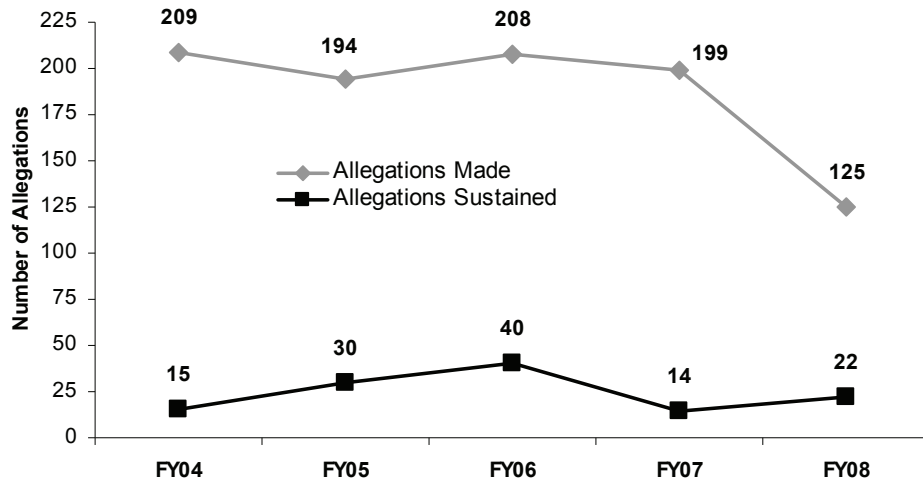
How does Worcester perform?

WPD's Bureau of Professional Standards (formerly the Internal Affairs Division) reviews and investigates all citizen complaints alleging police officer misconduct. In FY08, there were 75 complaints against the WPD, containing 125 allegations.¹⁴ As shown in **Chart 3.1**, the number of allegations of misconduct reached a five-year low in FY08. From FY07 to FY08, there was a 37% drop in the number of allegations made. However, the number of allegations sustained rose from FY07 to FY08.

¹³ Moore, Mark with Anthony Braga. 2003. *The Bottom Line of Policing: What Citizens Should Value (and Measure!) in Police Performance*. Police Executive Research Forum.

¹⁴ A single complaint may contain multiple allegations of misconduct.

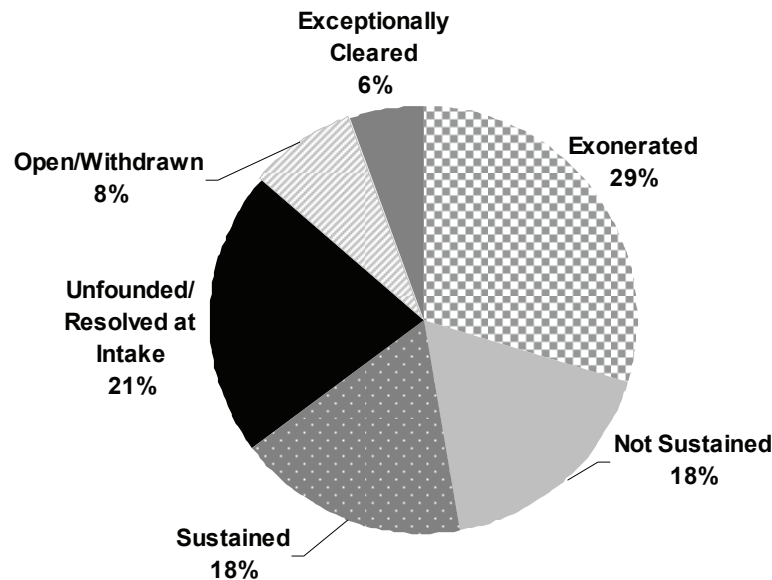
Chart 3.1: Allegations of Police Misconduct



Source: Worcester Police Department, Bureau of Professional Standards

As shown in **Chart 3.2**, about one out of five allegations in FY08 (21%) were determined to be unfounded or resolved at intake, and another 29% resulted in the officer being exonerated of any unlawful or improper conduct. In FY08, 18% of allegations were sustained, or those in which evidence supports the alleged improper conduct. Another 18% of allegations were not sustained, or there was insufficient evidence to prove or disprove the allegation.

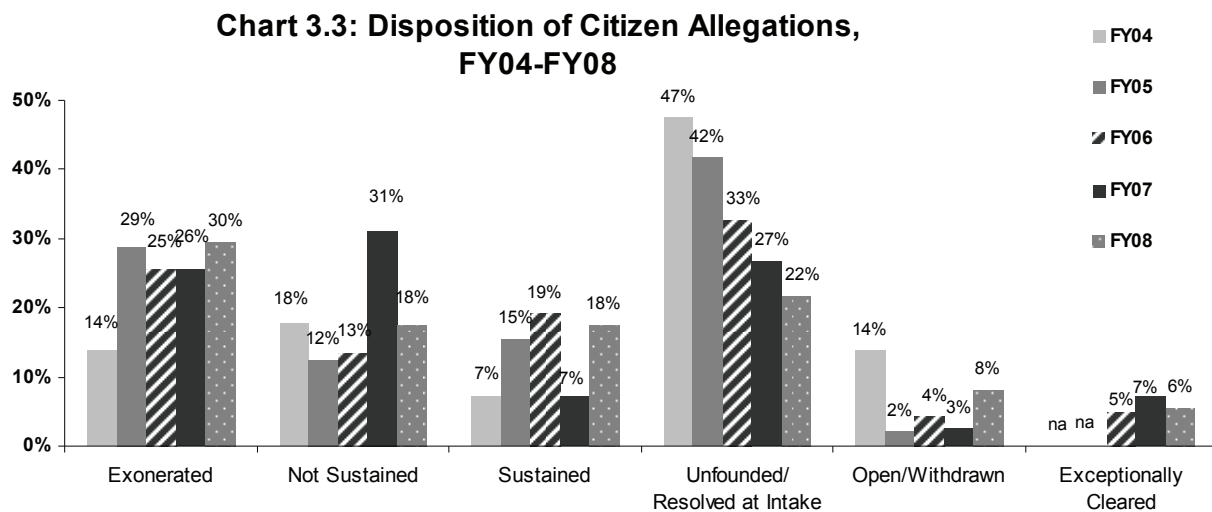
Chart 3.2: Disposition of Citizen Allegations, FY08 (N=125)



Source: Worcester Police Department, Bureau of Professional Standards

Allegations are deemed *unfounded/resolved at intake* if the investigation indicates that the act or acts complained of did not occur, or they did not involve police department personnel. Allegations are *not sustained* if there is insufficient evidence to prove or disprove the charge, while *exonerated* indicates that the actions taken by the officer were found to be justified, lawful, and proper. *Sustained* allegations are those in which the investigation discloses sufficient evidence to prove the allegations made in the complaint. *Exceptionally cleared* occurs when a factor that is external to the investigation interrupts or halts the process, such as when the individual who filed the complaint refuses to cooperate in the investigation. *Open* includes complaints or allegations that are in their concluding stages, awaiting court or other judicial dispositions, or are open due to circumstances beyond the control of the WPD.

Chart 3.3 shows the disposition of allegations from each of the past five years. From FY06 to FY08, the percentage of allegations resulting in exoneration increased slightly, from 25% to 30%. During FY08, the proportion of allegations that were withdrawn or still open at year end (8%) was higher than the three previous years'. The proportion of allegations that were determined to be unfounded or were resolved at intake has been steadily declining over the past five years, from 47% in FY04 to 22% in FY08. In FY06, “exceptionally cleared” (when a factor external to the investigation interrupts or halts the process) was added as a new category of complaints and constituted about 6% of all allegations in FY08.



What does this mean for Worcester?

During the five-year period from FY04 to FY08 the number of allegations of police misconduct contained in citizen complaints decreased by 40%, from 209 to 125 allegations. While 18% of complaints were sustained in FY08, the *number* of complaints sustained in FY08 (22) was lower than in FY05 (30) and FY06 (40), and slightly higher than FY07 (14). The data also reveal a steady decrease from FY04 in the proportion of allegations that were either unfounded or resolved at intake, i.e., complaints in which the alleged behavior was not unlawful or in violation

of departmental policy, or in which the behavior complained of was outside the scope of WPD's responsibility.

WPD's Bureau of Professional Standards and its Training Division play an important role in ensuring that the department is able to hold complaints to a minimum, and that when complaints do occur, they are dealt with promptly. The importance of ongoing training of officers and a continuous review of the Department's standards of practice have been recognized as elements critical to the success of the Chief's reorganization initiative. For example, citizen support of community policing will likely be strongest if citizens perceive a fair and timely review of complaints that are made, and feel that the process is transparent. Questions regarding citizen awareness of the Bureau of Professional Standards process and outcomes may be added to future citizen satisfaction surveys (see **Indicator 2: Police-Community Relations**). Additionally, further monitoring of the average length of time it takes to complete an investigation ought to be considered. We do not know whether these open allegations represent complaints received at year end (which may then be resolved in a timely manner early the next year), or whether they represent investigations which have not been completed in a timely manner. Again, the forthcoming cuts in the WPD will have to be carefully monitored for their impact on the professionalism and allegations of misconduct in the Department.

WORCESTER FIRE DEPARTMENT: DEPARTMENT OVERVIEW AND INPUT INDICATORS

The mission of the Worcester Fire Department is to protect the lives and property of the visitors and citizens of Worcester from the adverse effects of fire, medical emergencies, and other hazardous conditions both man-made and natural.¹⁵

The Worcester Fire Department's (WFD) FY09 budget of \$51.2 million (including fringe benefits and excluding capital expenditure) comprised 10.1% of the City's total operating budget. The budget authorized funding for 406 firefighters and 11 civilian personnel, who are assigned to 21 fire companies located in 10 fire stations throughout Worcester. The City's land area encompasses 39 square miles, supporting densely populated residential areas containing single- and multi-family dwellings, an urban core containing high rise and office buildings, industrial and manufacturing complexes, and several hospitals and colleges, all of which are served by the WFD. The Fire Chief has management oversight of the department and its daily operations.

Firefighters respond to all fire and hazardous-materials situations occurring within the City, and they may also be dispatched as first responders in medical emergencies. All fire companies are equipped with semi-automatic external defibrillators which enable firefighters to provide early critical care to cardiac-arrest patients. The WFD provides basic life-support training (first aid and CPR) to the community and is one of the largest first aid and CPR certifying agencies in central Massachusetts. The Department also sponsors numerous fire prevention and fire safety programs, and firefighters perform inspections to ensure that commercial and retail establishments comply with fire safety standards, as well as regular inspections of warehouses and vacant buildings within the City.

As shown in the table below, the WFD's budget increased by 20% from FY05 to FY09, from \$29.1 million in FY05 to \$34.9 million in FY09.¹⁶ However, during the same period, staffing levels declined by 6.5% (from 446 to 417 positions). During FY05, there were 2.5 budgeted firefighter positions per 1,000 Worcester residents; by FY09, this ratio was 2.3 per 1,000.

¹⁵ *City of Worcester Fiscal 2009 Annual Budget.*

¹⁶ These figures exclude fringe benefits and capital expenditures.

Worcester Fire Department Overview						
	FY05	FY06	FY07	FY08	FY09	% Change FY05-FY09
Expenditures*	\$29,082,192	\$31,542,394	\$31,843,471	\$33,345,330	\$34,897,712	20.0%
Expenditures per capita	\$165.34	\$179.32	\$181.42	\$189.98	\$198.82	20.3%
Total Positions (Budgeted)	446	429	421	417	417	-6.5%
<i>Total per 1,000 population</i>	2.5	2.4	2.4	2.4	2.4	
Firefighter Positions (Budgeted)	436	418	410	406	406	-6.9%
<i>Firefighters per 1,000 population</i>	2.5	2.4	2.3	2.3	2.3	
Civilian Positions (Budgeted)	10	11	11	11	11	10.0%
<i>Civilian positions per 1,000 population</i>	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	
*Excluding capital expenditures and fringe benefits Data Sources: <i>Comprehensive Annual Financial Reports</i> , Office of the City Auditor (Actual expenditures for FY05-FY07) and <i>City of Worcester Annual Budget</i> (Approved Budget for FY08 and Recommended Appropriation for FY09). Firefighter and civilian positions reflect budgeted positions in the <i>City of Worcester Annual Budgets for the years FY05 - FY09</i> .						

INDICATOR 4: FIRE SUPPRESSION AND FIRST RESPONDER SERVICES

Why is it important?

The number of fire-suppression responses, first-responder calls, inspections, and fire safety and prevention activities are an indicator of the workload of a fire department. The ability of emergency personnel to respond quickly to a fire or other emergency situations may be the difference between minimal and total property loss, or even life and death. Therefore, fire response time is a critical measure when assessing the overall safety of a community, and it is important that fire departments be able to assess and identify factors that delay response time, including resource allocation. Additionally, tracking both the frequency and location of fires and emergency situations to which fire personnel respond enables the Chief and City officials to examine coverage to ensure that appropriate protection is provided to all areas. Finally, continued efforts to promote awareness of fire prevention and fire safety are important functions of any fire department.

How does Worcester perform?

In 2008, the Worcester Fire Department (WFD) responded to 28,953 calls for service, an increase of almost one-third (32.9%) compared to 2004. First responder/rescue calls continue to represent the largest proportion of calls to which WFD responds, comprising more than two-thirds (19,939) of all incidents in 2008.¹⁷ As shown in **Table 4.1**, in 2008, WFD responded to 831 structure fires, about double the number of structure fires that occurred in 2004 (417).¹⁸ According to the Worcester Fire Department, the increase in the number of these types of incidents year-to-year could be attributed to atypical events, such as the December 2008 ice storm. From 2007 to 2008, the number of false alarms to which WFD responded increased by about 20%, from 3,134 to 3,765. In 2008, the Worcester Fire Department's average response time from dispatch to arrival on scene for all incident calls was 4 minutes 26 seconds; while that is an increase from the three prior years, it is eighteen seconds below the 2004 figure. The average response time for fire incidents was 3 minutes 21 seconds, and 4 minutes 23 seconds for EMS incidents.¹⁹

¹⁷ Worcester firefighters are dispatched to medical emergencies as first responders to provide basic life support services (CPR, first aid, and early defibrillation). For a further discussion of Worcester's First Responder System, see The Research Bureau Report #06-03, *Dial 911: Whose Call is it, Anyway?* available at www.wrrb.org.

¹⁸ Caution is needed as these numbers are not directly comparable to prior years. Starting in 2005, many situations which were previously counted as "fire; other" are now being more accurately coded as structure fires or false alarms.

¹⁹ For fire responses, the national standard is a 1 minute turnout time and 4 minutes response, while EMS incidents has a standard of 8 minutes for turnout and response.

	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	% Change 2004-2008
Total Incidents/Dispatched Calls	21,778	22,070	23,427	24,735	28,953	32.9%
First Responder/Rescue Calls	15,383	14,558	15,663	16,873	19,939	29.6%
Structure Fires	417	749	678	725	831	99.3%
Incendiary (Arson)	31	29	28	32	37	19.4%
Vehicle Fires	287	184	139	132	123	-57.1%
Hazardous Conditions without a Fire (e.g., chemical spills, natural gas leaks, electrical equipment)	804	726	825	690	1,152	43.3%
Good Intent	1,149	1,322	1,109	1,452	1,580	37.5%
False Alarms	1,705	3,102	2,971	3,134	3,765	120.8%
Average Response Time (All Incidents)	4:48	3:59	3:59	4:11	4:26	-18 seconds

Source: Worcester Fire Department

In addition to responding to the emergency calls for fire and emergency medical services described above, the WFD personnel perform a range of education, enforcement, and engineering functions. In FY08, firefighters in the fire prevention division conducted 9,414 fire safety inspections (a 25% increase from FY04), reviewed 863 building plans, issued 5,800 permits, and conducted fire safety education programs at 159 locations (excluding schools). Additionally, 3,205 students (almost double the amount from FY07) attended the Department’s S.A.F.E. (Student Awareness of Fire Education) program which is presented in schools.

What does this mean for Worcester?

As noted earlier, two-thirds of all WFD responses in 2008 were first responder/rescue incidents. Over the last two years, the Department’s average response time has increased slightly to 4 minutes and 26 seconds in FY08. This increase could be due possibly to the increase in dispatched calls and incidents as well as slight decreases in the number of firefighters. Many of the types of incidents that the Fire Department responds to are on the rise, such as structure fires and hazardous conditions, such as chemical spills.

In February 2007, the Worcester Fire Chief released a Redeployment Plan for the Fire Department proposing the closing of two engine companies to “provide an equal or improved service at a reduced cost [to the City].”²⁰ The 24 firefighters of these closed companies have now been transferred to other fire stations. Also, the Brown Square station has been closed, and both fire trucks at the Providence Street station have been replaced with an ambulance.²¹ This redeployment coupled with an 11% reduction in staff over eight years has resulted in approximately \$3.8 million in savings each year to the City.

²⁰ “Fire Department Redeployment Plan,” <http://www.ci.worcester.ma.us/reports/RedeploymentPlan.pdf>.

²¹ Engine 12 went to the new Franklin Street Station and Ladder 5 went to the McKeon Road station.

INDICATOR 5: ADVANCED LIFE SUPPORT/ AMBULANCE SERVICES

Why is it important?

An ambulance is dispatched to respond to each 911 call for medical assistance. In Worcester, ambulance services are provided by UMass Memorial EMS. The all-paramedic, hospital-based service operates a fleet of six ambulances staffed by 50 full-time and 25 part-time paramedics. Since 1991, UMass Memorial has operated the ambulance service at no cost to the City.²²

Speed of response in treating those who are seriously ill or critically injured can improve the patient's odds of survival. Therefore, the average response time from the receipt of a call to an emergency medical provider arriving on the scene is a key industry standard by which EMS performance is measured.

How does Worcester perform?

As shown in **Table 5.1**, the number of 911 emergency calls to which UMass Memorial EMS responded steadily increased from 24,671 in 2004 to 29,477 in 2008 (a 19.5 % increase). During this period, the number of calls resulting in the transport of a patient to a hospital increased by 30%, from 17,040 (about 74% of all calls) to 22,223 (about 75% of all calls).

During 2008, UMass Memorial EMS's response time for all calls decreased by two seconds from 2007, but was six seconds more than in 2004. Average response times for life-threatening injuries or illnesses (Priority 1 responses) have consistently been shorter than the average response time for all calls, and from 2004 to 2008, Priority 1 response time decreased by seven seconds. Worcester has consistently demonstrated response times that are better (lower) than the industry standard of 90% of paramedic responses arriving on scene within 8 minutes.

	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	% Change 2004-2008
Responses	24,671	26,498	27,769	28,181	29,477	19.5%
Transports	17,040	19,687	20,154	20,982	22,223	30.4%
Average Overall Response Time	5:56	5:56	5:57	6:04	6:02	+0:06
Average Priority One Response Time	5:46	5:51	5:51	5:26	5:39	-0:07

Source: UMass Memorial EMS

²² In July 1977, ambulance service was transferred from the Worcester Police Department to Worcester City Hospital. With Worcester City Hospital's closing in 1991, ambulance services were taken over by UMass Medical Center, which became UMass Memorial Health Care in 1997.

What does this mean for Worcester?

Worcester's system for providing emergency medical services is not widely used elsewhere. Among 200 cities surveyed by the *Journal of Emergency Medical Services* in 2008, approximately 5.4% utilized hospital-based EMS services. As a hospital-based EMS service, UMass Memorial EMS provides those it serves with the benefits of clinical oversight provided by UMass Memorial Medical Center's Department of Emergency Medicine and ongoing training and professional development programs available to its staff. Additionally, a full-time medical director oversees UMass Memorial EMS operations, providing quality assurance and clinical oversight expertise. Highly-trained paramedics are qualified to perform advanced medical procedures in the field that could otherwise be performed only in a hospital setting.

It should be stressed that UMass Memorial EMS provides this service at no charge to the City. Under this arrangement, the City does not have to purchase or maintain ambulances, or provide advanced life support training to other City personnel. Thus, not only does the current structure perform better than industry standards, it saves Worcester's taxpayers the expense of operating a municipally-run ambulance service.

Mission Statement:

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