Keep People Safe

Objective:

Keep people safe in their homes and communities

What is happening in King County?

The major violent crime rate in King County remained relatively unchanged between 2009 and 2011 (no statistically significant trends even though there has been a slight decline overall), but residents' feelings of safety have not improved since 2009. Traffic fatalities show variability over time throughout King County, but may be decreasing based on most recent data. Motor vehicle injury collision and fatality rates on unincorporated King County roadways have been dropping over the last decade. The number of pedestrian and bike collisions have remained low and relatively steady.

Overall, most residents in King County report feeling safe in their neighborhood during the day and while walking in their neighborhood and local business district. Fewer residents, but still more than half, feel safe in their neighborhood at night and feel safe taking public transit. There is higher variability based on income, race and location for feelings of safety, especially at night.

Residents in urban unincorporated areas in the south part of King County gave lower ratings for feeling safe than those in the unincorporated northeast areas.

What role does King County play?

King County provides services, infrastructure, and enforcement to keep residents safe and secure.

- King County provides law enforcement services, emergency response services, and services for victims exposed to violence.

- In addition, the County maintains a regional role as a collaborator and partner, providing law enforcement, court services, detention and animal control services at the request of local jurisdictions.

- King County maintains infrastructure, including roads, bridges, buses and transit facilities, parks, and buildings such as courts.

- King County enforces building codes to prevent injuries and fatalities in public and private structures.

What else influences these indicators?

Crime, traffic injuries and fatalities, and perceptions of safety are influenced by several overlapping factors at the neighborhood, city and regional level. These include:

- Economic conditions like employment and the tax base

- Social conditions like social networks

- Built or physical environment, including building quality and maintenance, community features, transportation alternatives, and the quality of the environment

- Service environment including schools, healthcare, and other services

Vehicle safety equipment improvements such as airbags and anti-lock brakes have contributed to a reduction in injuries and fatalities. So have Washington state traffic safety programs implemented in the past decade, including child safety seat law (2001), "Click it or Ticket" campaign and booster seat requirement (2002), booster seat law expanded and Strategic Highway safety plan (Target Zero) implemented (2007), and driver texting and hand-held cell phone use laws passed (2010). Annexations and incorporations have also affected our data regarding collisions on King County roads. With fewer unincorporated King County road miles in the system, fewer collisions are attributed to County roads.

What can you do?

Impaired driving and speed are the top two factors in fatal traffic crashes. To make the roads safer for everyone, drive the speed limit and only sober. Drive below the speed limit if weather or road conditions make it difficult to see or stop quickly. Seatbelts, car seats, and booster seats provide drivers and passengers protection during crashes. Washington law requires all drivers and passengers to use a seatbelt, car seat, or booster seat. In 2010, Washington passed a law outlawing handheld cell-phone use or texting while driving.

In King County, pedestrian fatalities happen most often during rush hours or times of darkness and many involved unsafe crossing practices. When walking, cross only at intersections, preferably ones with signals, and make sure all cars have stopped before stepping into the road. At night, make yourself visible to drivers - use flashlights, reflectors, or wear reflective clothing.

When bicycling, wear a helmet and follow all traffic laws.

Related Links

King County Sheriff's Office

Public Health Seattle-King County Community Health Indicators

King County Roads Traffic Safety Reports

**Safety tips from the King County Sheriff's Office**

Collapse technical notesTechnical Notes

Technical Notes

1. Crime data from the King County Sheriff's Office. Violent crime is Part 1 crime, comprised of violent crimes or serious felonies. 2009 crime data was matched with 2010 census data. As a result, there may be a slight undercount of the crime rate as annexations increased population in 2010 for Burien, Maple Valley, North Bend, and Sammamish.

2. Contract Cities noted in the Violent Crime Rate include Burien, Covington, Kenmore, Maple Valley, Newcastle, North Bend, Sammamish, SeaTac, Shoreline, and Woodinville

3. The 2012 King County Resident Survey was conducted in April and May of 2012. Surveys were administered in English, Spanish, and Mandarin. Of the 3,000 households that were selected to receive the survey, 266 completed the survey by mail and 759 completed the survey by phone for a total of 1,025 completed surveys (King County's population is about 1.9 million people). There were at least 250 respondents from Seattle and 125 surveys from each of six other areas. The overall results of the survey were weighted to reflect the actual population of each of the seven geographic areas of the County. The overall results of the survey have a precision of at least +/-3.0% at the 95% level of confidence. The results for the City of Seattle have a precision of at least +/- 6.2% at the 95% level of confidence and the results for each of the other six areas have a precision of at least of at least +/- 8.7% at the 95% level of confidence. The precision of estimates for some income and ethnicity categories is lower than the precision of countywide and regional estimates due to small sample sizes. Categories with fewer than 20 responses are either dropped or combined. All resident survey results reported in AIMS High include "Don't Know" responses in calculations.

Charts and Maps

Violent Crime Rate per 100,000
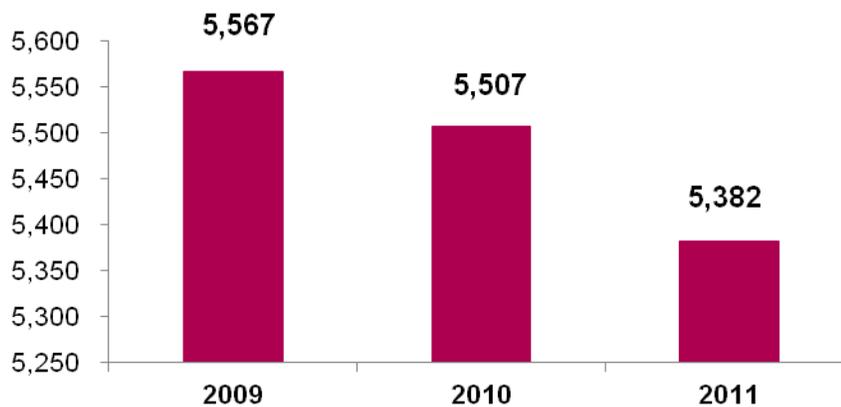
Data from King County Sheriff's Office Part 1 crimes and 2010 Census

Fatalities by type on Unincorporated King County Roads

	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
■Pedestrian	2	1	0	2	2	2	2	1	0	1
■Bike	0	0	1	0	1	0	1	1	0	1
■Motor Vehicles	23	13	16	23	21	19	13	15	7	6
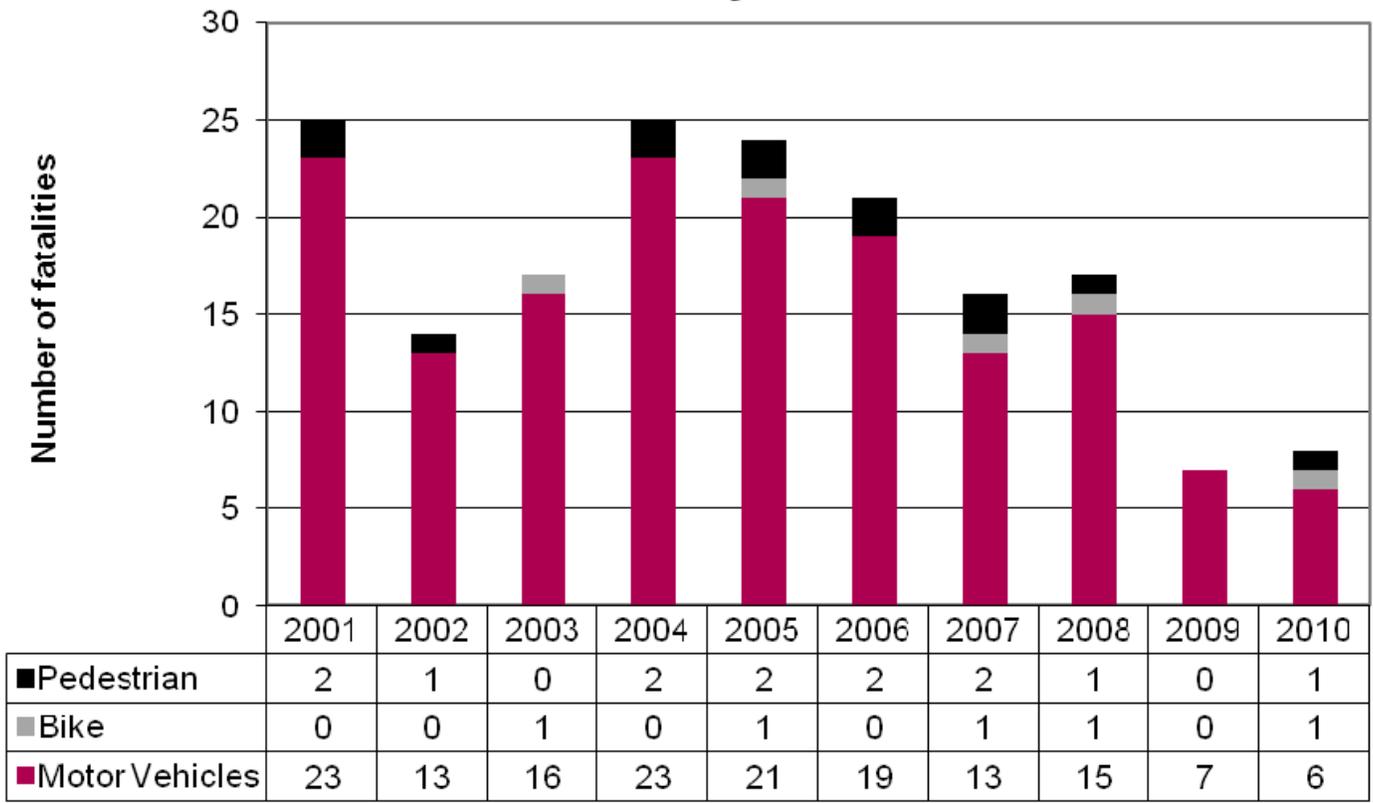
Data Source: King County Road Services Division

Motor Vehicle Accident Deaths, King County, 1998 - 2007
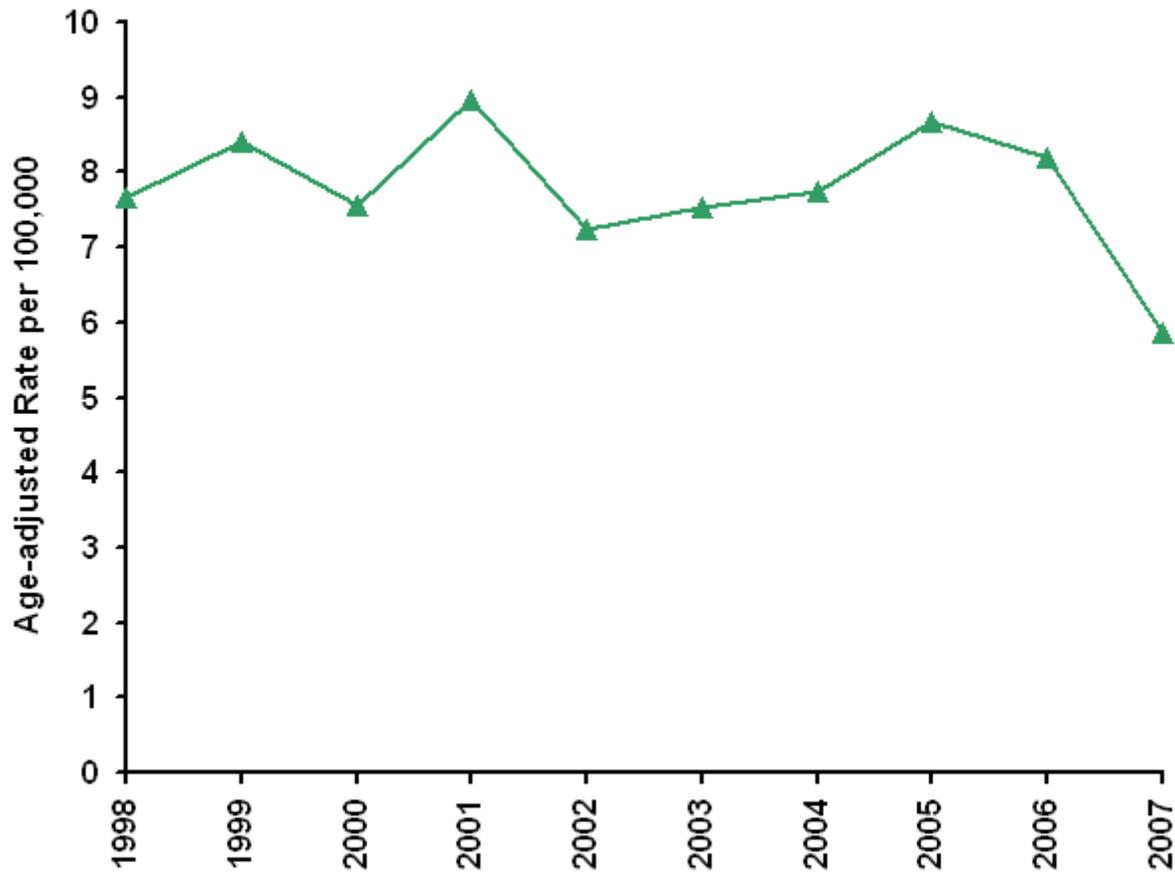
Data Source: WA State Department of Health, Center for Health Statistics, Death Certificates
Produced By: Public Health - Seattle & King County, Assessment, Policy Development & Evaluation, 5/09

Injury Collisions on Unincorporated King County Roads

	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
■Pedestrian	28	42	39	32	39	34	41	37	35	27
▪Bike	20	34	22	27	25	24	21	25	16	23
■Motor Vehicles	923	1,021	998	955	1,010	1,045	875	758	687	550
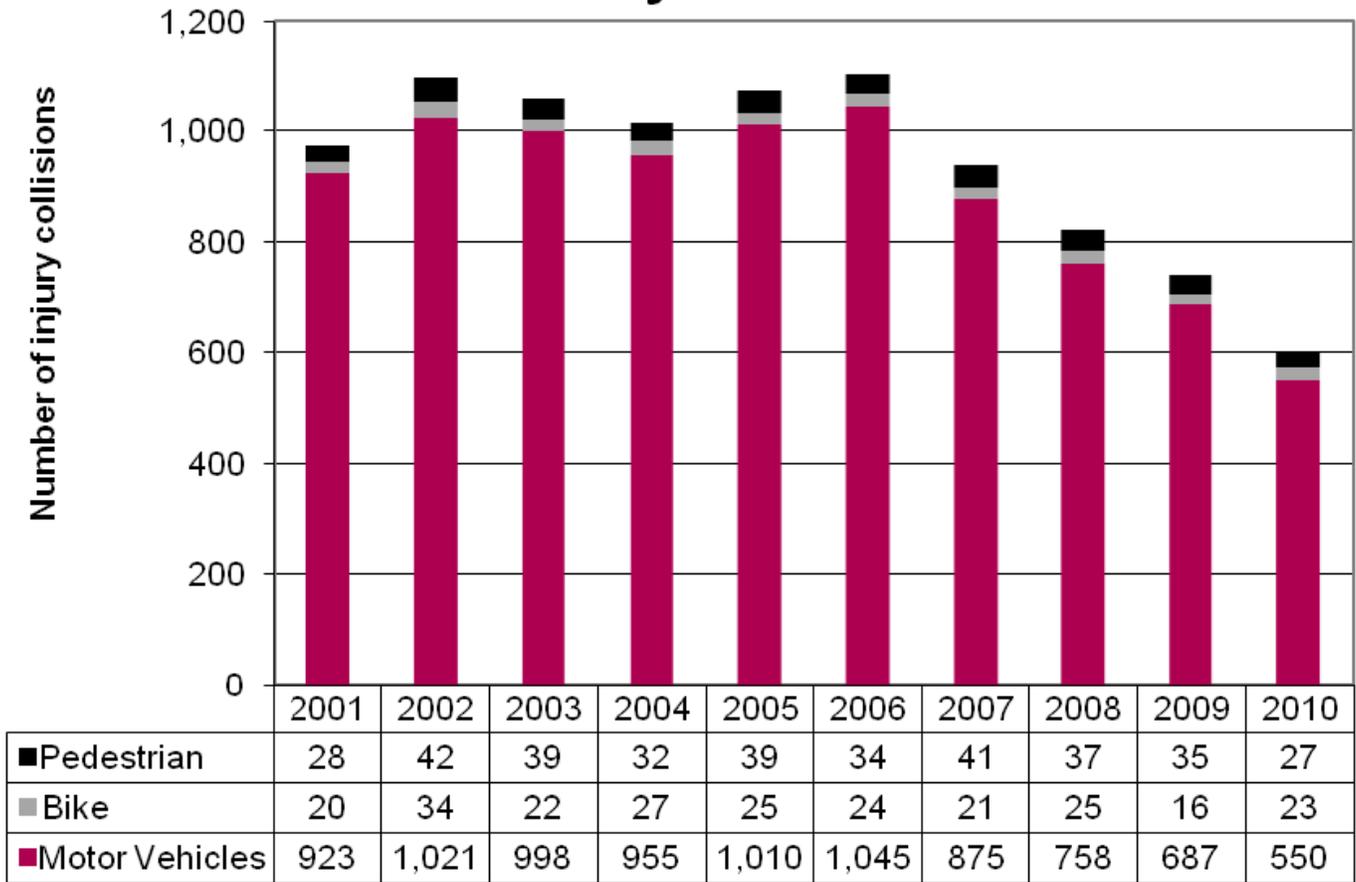
Data Source: King County Road Services Division

King County Resident Perceptions of Safety

	2012	2009
I feel safe in my neighborhood during the day	90%	91%
I feel safe in my neighborhood at night	67%	76%
I feel safe taking public transit	52%	51%
I feel safe biking in my neighborhood	55%	61%
I feel safe walking in my neighborhood	80%	82%
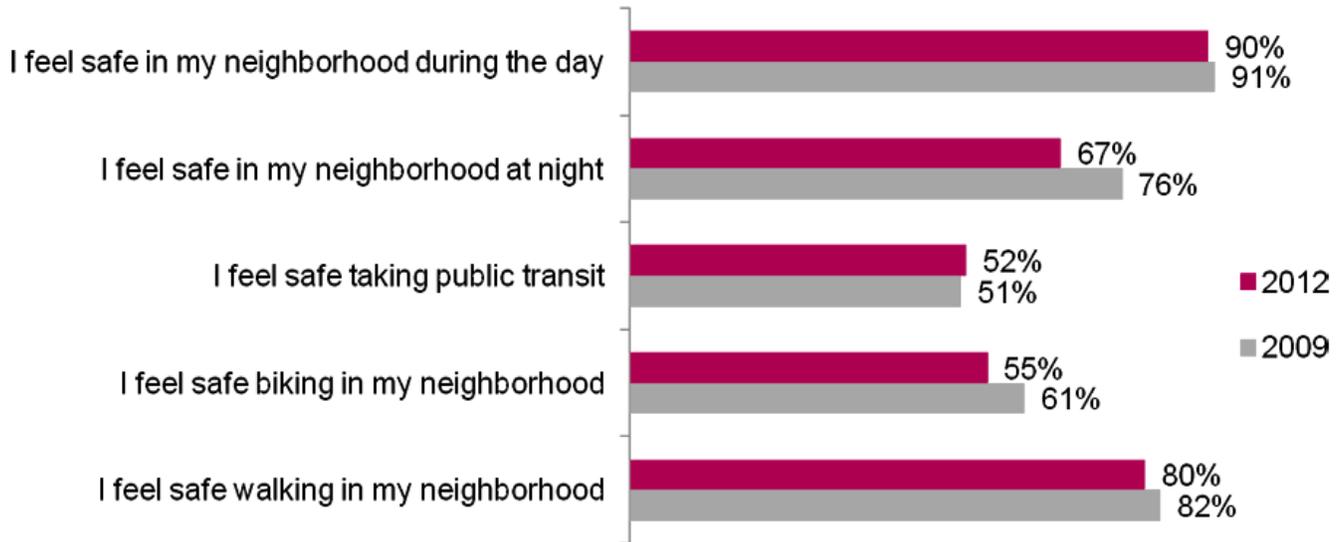
Percent of Resident Survey respondents selecting agree or strongly agree.
Data Source: 2012 and 2009 King County Resident Surveys

Percent of Residents Who Feel Safe in Their Neighborhood (by ethnicity)

|	During the day	At night
Two or more races	90%	74%
Other	90%	65%
COUNTWIDE AVERAGE	90%	67%
Non-Hispanic White	90%	70%
Non-Hispanic Black/African-American	89%	61%
Hispanic/Latino	86%	66%
Asian or Pacific Islander	84%	67%
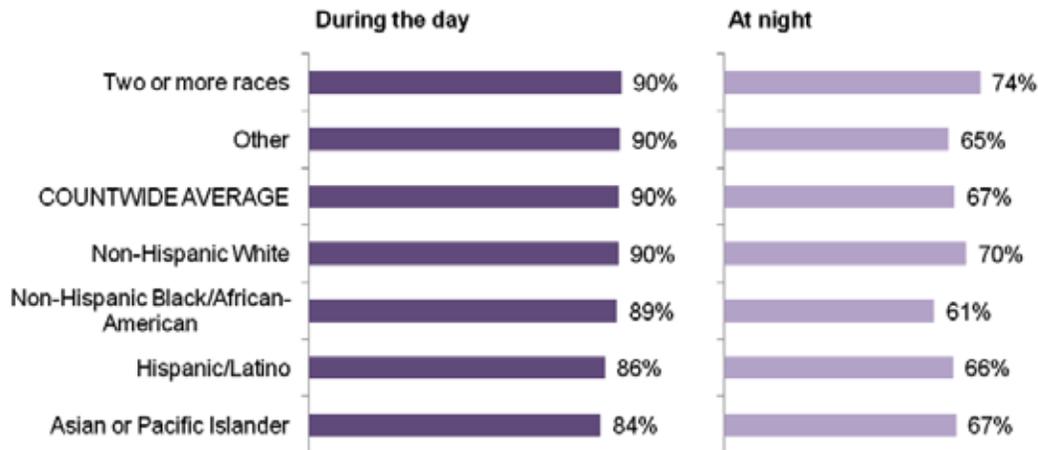
Percent of Residents Who Feel Safe in Their Neighborhood (by income)

	During the day	At night
COUNTWIDE AVERAGE	90%	67%
less than $14,999	88%	55%
$15,000 - $24,999	84%	57%
$25,000 - $49,999	90%	66%
$50,000 - $74,999	88%	61%
$75,000 - $99,999	85%	70%
$100,000 - $149,999	89%	74%
$150,000 or more	91%	80%
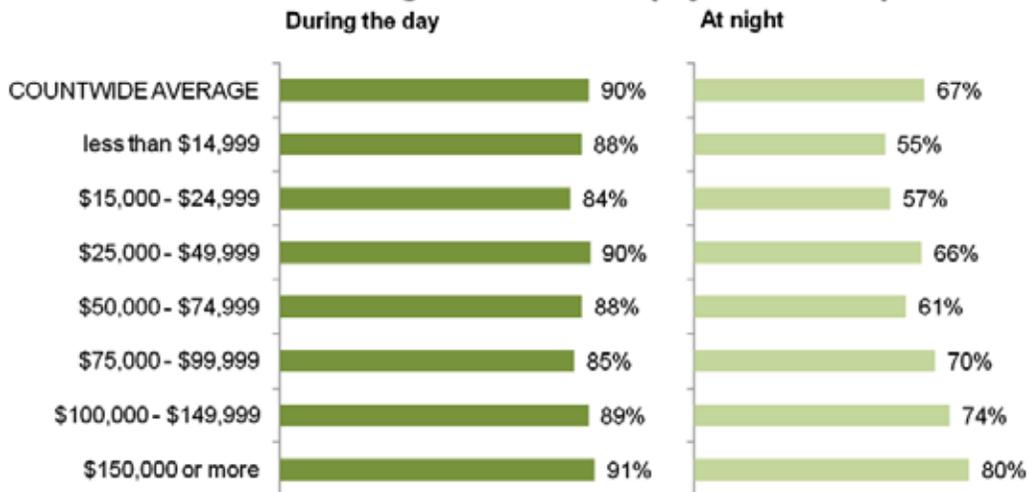
Percent of Residents Who Feel Safe in Their Neighborhood (by geography)

	During the day	At night
COUNTWIDE AVERAGE	90%	67%
Urban North and East	95%	88%
Urban South	81%	54%
Rural North and East	89%	80%
Rural South	79%	66%
Seattle	90%	61%
Incorporated North and East	95%	82%
Incorporated South	86%	57%
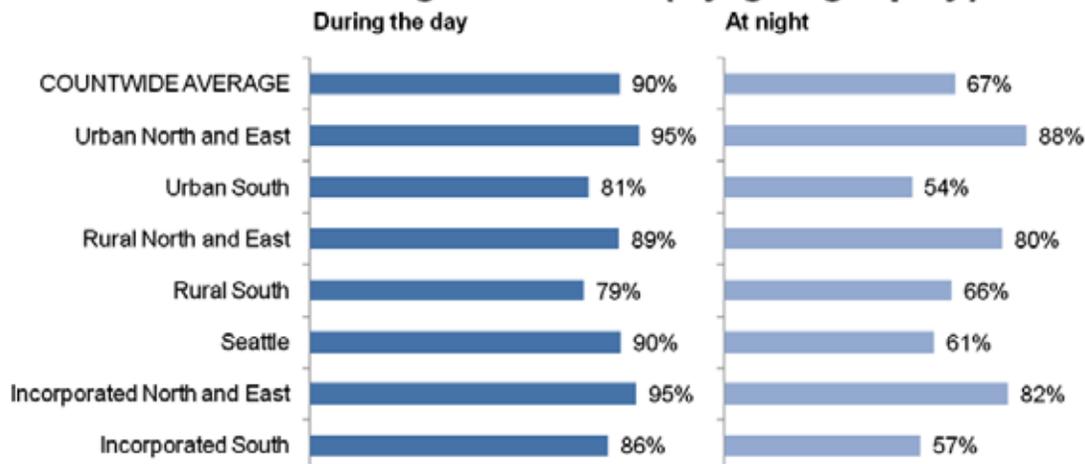
Data Source: King County Resident Survey, 2012