



National Crime Prevention Council

Research and Evaluation Department

Research Brief – February 15, 2008

Cell Phones and Perceptions of Safety

Sample: Undergraduate students from Ohio State University were randomly selected to participate in two separate surveys that were conducted one year apart. The first survey had 317 participants and the second 305.

Key Findings:

- The majority of students surveyed carry a cell phone and report that they feel safer walking alone at night if it is with them.
- Most students reported that they would walk in areas with their cell phone that they would not walk in without it because of the feeling of safety.
- Females showed a statistically significant increased likelihood to feel safer with a cell phone than males, thereby engaging in riskier behavior when walking alone at night than the males in the study.
- 5.7% of respondents said they have used their cell phone to call for help in a crime situation, with males much more likely to call than females.
- An independent survey of 100 students at a separate university was conducted and the results of that study were in line with the findings of the OSU study. This suggests that the pattern can be generalized to the greater college student population.

Recommendations for Future Work:

- Replicate the study with non-students to see if the results can be generalized to the general population.
- Conduct the study in the field as observation instead of through a survey that relies on a person's recollection of behavior and events.
- Test if riskier behavior leads to more victimization.
- Expand upon whether or not students are more likely to phone in criminal activity in order to prevent crime from occurring.

Source: Nasar, Jack, Peter Hecht, & Richard Wener (2007) "Call if you have trouble': Mobile phones and safety among college students." *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 31(4):863-873.