

# Collective Efficacy in Los Angeles

## Neighborhood Councils

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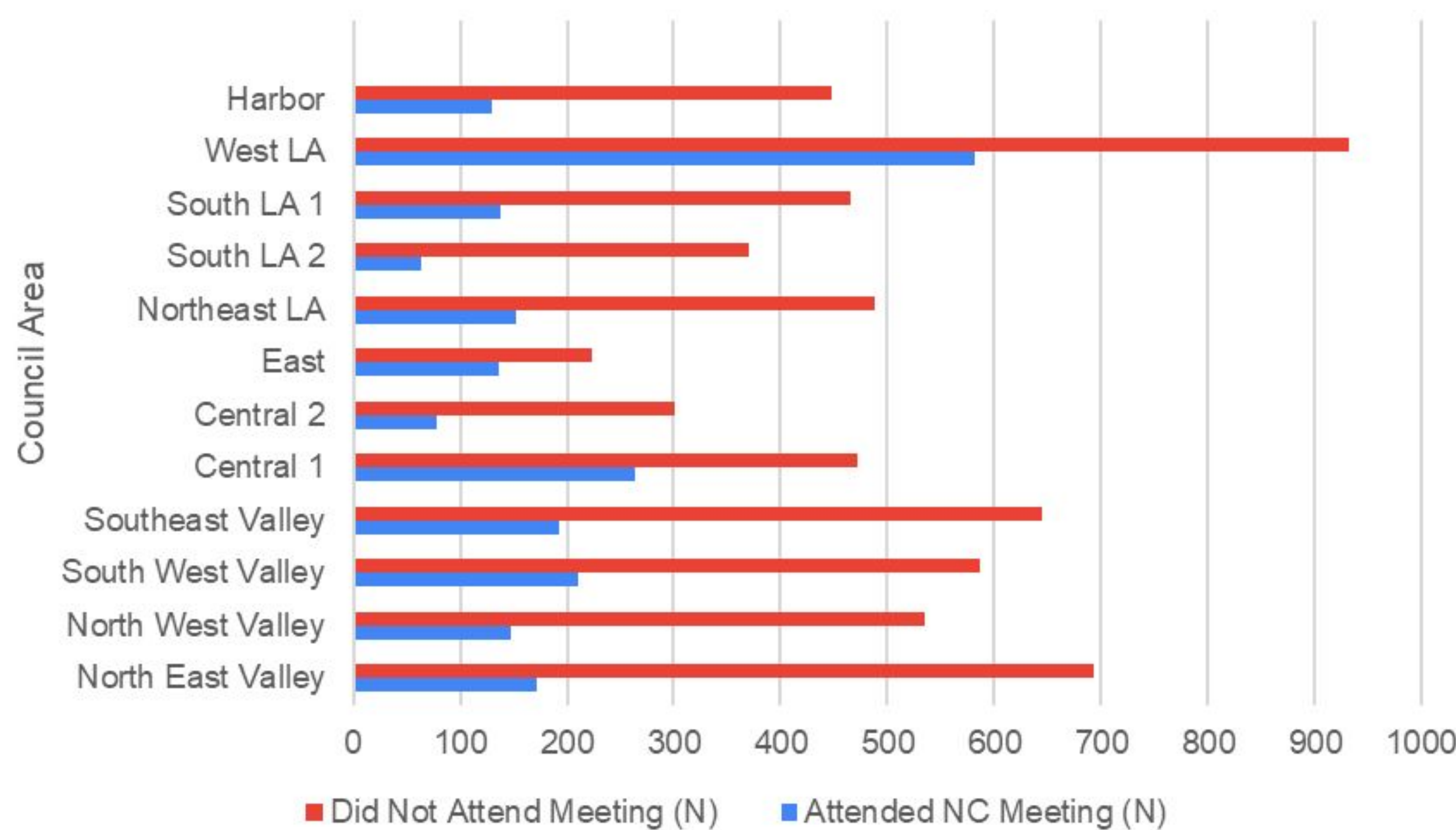
### Introduction

Sociologists have always looked to see what are the specific causes of crime within communities, and what factors amplify or reduce the odds that violence and crime occur within neighborhoods. Recently, many sociologists have looked at the interpersonal connections that residents have, and how these can allow communities to exert informal social control over residents, and therefore, reduce the amount of crime that occurs within these communities. This phenomenon has come to be known as “Collective Efficacy”, and is argued by many researchers to be one of the primary reasons that urban communities have different levels of crime. (Sampson. Et al., 1997) Studies have been conducted on how collective efficacy is present within neighborhoods of major metropolitan areas such as Chicago, Malmö, Sweden, and even at the street level in cities such as Baltimore. However, the purpose of this study is to find if the decreased crime is correlated with Neighborhood Council participation within Los Angeles.

### Methods

Collective Efficacy in this case is being measured by the level of community involvement in Neighborhood Councils. This data was obtained from EmpowerLA’s, the neighborhood council system’s central website, Awareness and Engagement Survey. The survey asked respondents a variety of different questions regarding their awareness and participation within their neighborhood council, as well as what issues are important to them, while also collecting demographic information about survey respondents. The total number of respondents was 8,563 across all NCs, with surveys sent out to those who were registered voters. This data was compared to existing 2022 crime rates based on census tracts (per 10,000 persons) that are best approximated to the areas within each Neighborhood Council. The current hypothesis is that areas that have a higher rate of community involvement will also have lower crime rates.

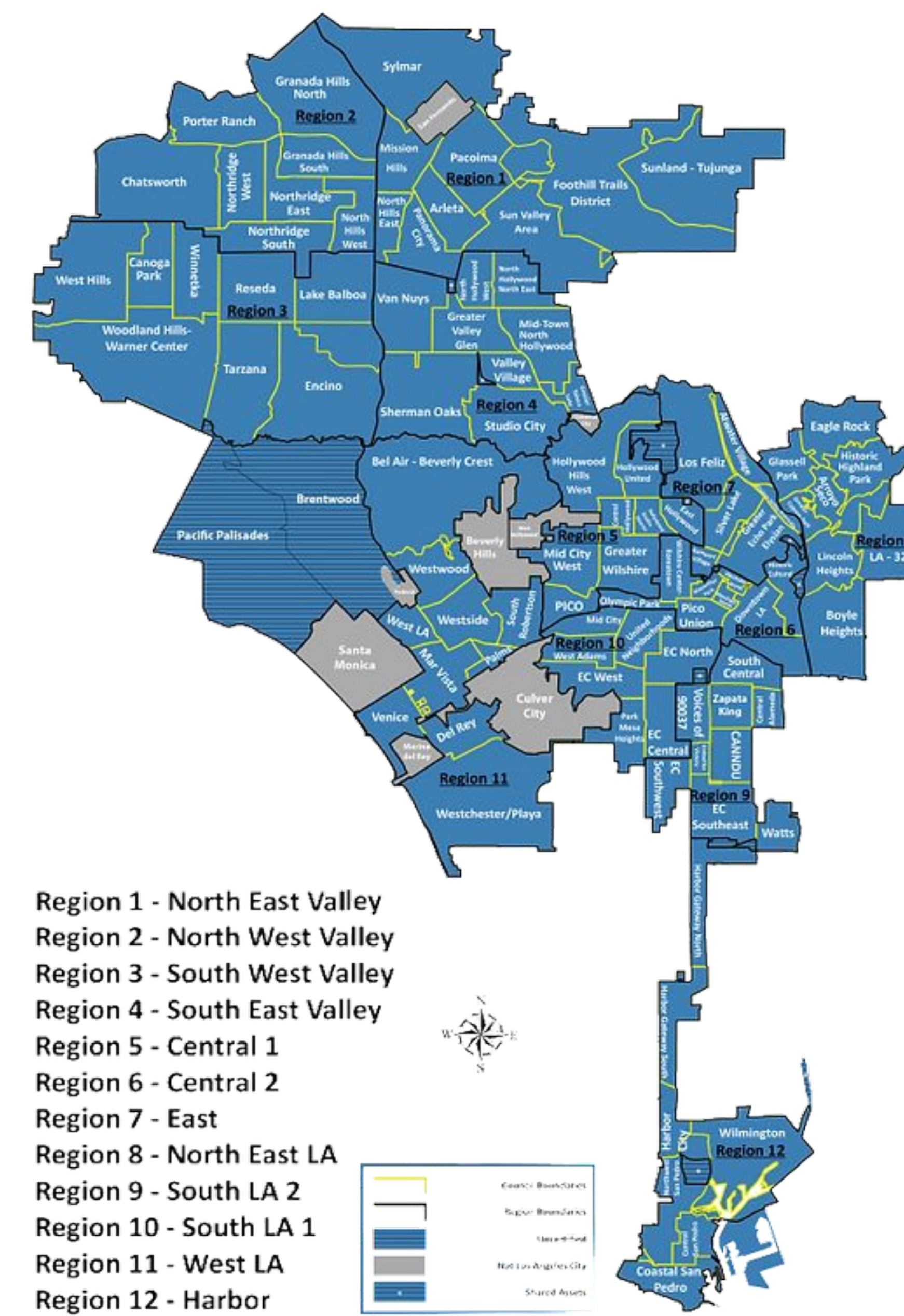
Figure 1. Number of Respondants who attended NC meetings by Council Area



### Results

Table 1 displays the data obtained from both the Awareness and Engagement Survey, as well as the Crime Rates based on the Public Safety: Community-Level Analytics and Census Data from 2022. On average, about 26% of respondents ever attended a Neighborhood Council Meeting whether in-person or online when surveyed in 2023. Furthermore, Community Participation and Crime Rate were found to be weakly positively correlated,  $r(10) = .1148$ ,  $p = .72$ . In essence, the higher the community participation, there was a small association with higher crime rates. This information can be tied into the limitations of this study, as the sample may not be fully representative of the total population of Los Angeles. These obtained results do answer the overall research question, in that areas with higher community involvement do not appear to have lower crime rates.

### “TOGETHER, WE’RE LA”



### References

Sampson, Robert J., Stephen W. Raudennbush & Felton Earls (1997). “Neighborhoods and Violent Crime: A Multilevel Study of Collective Efficacy.” *Science* 15(277): pp 918-24

Awareness and Engagement Survey - Analysis Tool. ArcGIS dashboards. (2022). <https://lahub.maps.arcgis.com/apps/dashboards/09ec24ddea684c68aefd5d2f1cf9bc36>

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### What is a Neighborhood Council?

First established in 1999, the Neighborhood Council acts as an advisory council to local city halls, representing residents on various topics such as development, business, and emergency preparedness. Neighborhood Councils are official parts of the LA city government, are funded by taxpayer money, and hold elections to decide the board members who represent the individual neighborhoods. Currently, 99 Neighborhood Councils that are grouped together into 12 regions across Los Angeles.

Table 1. Cross-table of Neighborhood Council Survey Results and Crime Rate

Region Name	Participation (N)	Did Not Participate (N)	Total Surveyed	Participation (%)	Average Crime Rate (10,000)
NE Valley	171	693	864	20.02%	514
NW Valley	148	534	682	21.70%	591
SW Valley	210	586	796	26.38%	442
SE Valley	193	644	837	23.05%	694
Central 1	264	472	736	35.86%	572
Central 2	78	301	379	25.91%	922
East	137	224	361	37.95%	664
NE L.A.	152	488	640	23.75%	694
South L.A. 2	64	370	434	14.74%	488
South L.A. 1	138	466	604	22.84%	640
West L.A.	582	931	1513	38.46%	573
Harbor	130	447	577	22.53%	620

### Discussion

Paradoxically, the results from this study seem to indicate that more community involvement within Neighborhood Councils are indicative of high crime. A possible explanation for this is that high crime within communities spurs people to get involved into politics, in order to do something about high crime. However, it is also possible that participants only involved themselves in NCs a few times, and therefore NCs may not be a reliable measure of collective efficacy. Future studies should seek to survey more residents through varied means, such as in-person questioning or mailed in surveys to include respondents that are not registered to vote or do not have an email associated with them, a critical limitation of this study. Paired with these questions could also be a form of neighborhood trust, in a vein like those commonly found in collective efficacy studies done across the globe, and first created by Sampson.