Is there a specific crime index that you put the most stock in?

To answer this question, we have to consider what the numbers represent. The FBI's Uniform Crime Reports (UCR) captures eight crime categories: murder, rape, robbery, aggravated assault/battery, burglary, theft, motor vehicle theft, and arson. The total in each category for a jurisdiction in a particular year is divided by the estimated population resulting in a "crime index". These indices do not include all the crimes that were reported in a particular jurisdiction, just the ones meeting a UCR category. For example, a jurisdiction's drunk driving offenses would not be reflected in any one of these categories, unless the occurrence was charged as an aggravated battery due to a severe injury to an individual. So it's not a complete picture of all the crime occurring; just the ones fitting the categories being tracked.

Accuracy depends on two things: accurate crime reporting and an accurate population estimate. Accurate crime reporting is subject to how well the citizenry reports crime (care enough to report, trust in doing so, accessibility to law enforcement), and how accurately the law enforcement agencies classify the reported crimes. An examination into why changes in the crime index occur from year to year will need to take into consideration any initiatives to more accurately report or discover crime. An accurate population estimate is necessary because the crime index is dependent on it. A lower crime index does not necessarily mean less crime is being committed, it means less per population. A jurisdiction could have an increase in the actual number of robberies, for example, but may be able to show a crime index decrease if the population substantially grew as well.

I think the indices are meaningful and I would put stock in them, but only after due consideration of the aforementioned caveats.

What do these numbers tell you about crime in Lawrence compared to similar communities our size or other university towns? Is our rate high or low?

The KBI recently released the 2009 indexes for Kansas. Figuring out which jurisdictions to compare ourselves with is difficult because each town can have different crime index drivers depending on demographics, population growth, economics, and population activity levels. It is notable that Lawrence's 2009 violent crime index (4.8 per 1000) and property crime index (48.3 per 1000) were the highest when compared to Olathe (2.2 and 21.5 per 1000), Overland Park (1.8 and 11.7 per 1000), and Lenexa (2.0 and 22.7 per 1000) which are often utilized as Kansas comparables for Lawrence in terms of economic development and quality of life. Lawrence's crime indices are closer to the more urbanized cites of Topeka (5.8 and 54.9 per 1000) and Wichita (9.0 and 54.3 per 1000).

Demographics can be somewhat factored out by comparing Lawrence (53.1 per 1000 combined) to similar sized university towns such as: Norman, Oklahoma (36.5 per

1000 combined index); Columbia, Missouri (43.0 per 1000 combined index); and Boulder, Colorado (30.2 combined index). In those instances, Lawrence's 2009 crime indices were higher, but by a smaller gap than when compared to the Johnson County agencies.

Are there specific types of crimes where Lawrence might be higher or lower than other communities?

Lawrence is major university town and is a very open and progressive community with a population that is active, involved, and constantly milling about. We are a center for sporting, cultural, and entertainment events. This activity extends into all hours of the night and draws individuals from other communities as well.

How does the police department use these types of numbers?

These types of global numbers provide some insight into general criminality within the city from year to year and as a base for comparison to other communities. If we see our numbers being significantly higher than in other communities, we look at these other communities and examine the reasons for this. What are other cities with lower crime rates doing that we are not. Is it a function of demographics? Certain programs or initiatives? Funding?

How do you see the PD and community's role in reducing some of these numbers? Are there any new programs or initiatives you are working on or would like to see implemented in the near future as far as reducing crime?

Successful crime reduction has always hinged on a partnership between the community and the police. We can't do it alone. Sir Robert Peel, often referred to as the father of modern community policing said it best in 1829 when he stated, "the police are the people and the people are the police". Citizens need to be aware of crime and what they can do to minimize the chance of being a crime victim. Part of this is the responsibility of the police department to provide through interaction and education. Individuals also have a responsibility to be involved by adopting behaviors that increase their own safety and security as well as watching out for their fellow citizen. A realistic expectation has to be developed in regards to crime reduction and an informed community should be able to make a commitment of its resources towards that end if so desired.

The things we are working on to increase the level of information and interaction between the police department and the community focuses on refining the way we communicate with the public. In the past we have probably relied too heavily on the media as the vehicle to communicate. The official public point of contact was the Public Information Officer (PIO). This model was relatively reactive and the PIO had other assigned duties which impacted their availability. This effected relations with the media

as well because sometimes we were not able to be as responsive. From a resource perspective, we are also challenged to move from a reactive mode and into a more proactive one. Specific initiatives being undertaken include:

- Stripping any additional duties from the PIO and changing the role into one that is more proactively communicating rather than simply waiting for an inquiry. We moved this position into close proximity with the office of the Chief of Police to better coordinate efforts. We even changed the name to reflect this new role: Public Affairs Officer (PAO).
- We are working on a complete restructure of the department website to be able to provide more timely and interactive information. We hope to eventually include: crime mapping to provide citizens with information about crime in Lawrence, videos and information about the department , its functions, and personnel, news releases, a "how to" section on accessing services, information about the complaint process, and crime prevention information.
- We are on Facebook. This is serving as the testing ground for how we are going to proceed with social media.
- We are continuing to put into motion plans to stabilize department staffing levels in an effort to better able to address crime. The more time officers have to engage in self-initiated activities, the more likely they can address crime trends and high crime areas. This, of course, has to be coupled with detailed crime analysis efforts pointing to where police activity will most likely result in the apprehension of a criminal or the prevention of a crime. This "intelligence led" or "predictive policing" is where we should move given additional resources.

A police department should interact with the community to seek information about what is of concern to them as well as to convey information they need to know about crime and other issues. This interaction would result in a partnership wherein an informed public provides direction concerning desired services and what resources are available for that service provision. In turn, the public is educated as to what their role is in reducing crime. There are three ways to ultimately reduce crime:

- Public education and awareness to minimize the chance of being a crime victim.
- Environmental design to reduce the atmosphere conducive to a crime occurring
- Police resources targeting crime areas and criminals.

The plan has to consider and involve all three elements.