

U of R profs study economic, crime trends

BY NATASCIA LYPNY, LEADER-POST MARCH 21, 2015



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"We're interested in how the changes in economy (and) how changes in population are being influenced by, and are influencing, crime," he later said.

Along with economics faculty colleague Ken Sagynbekov, Wilson is examining the socioeconomic determinants of crime, how Saskatchewan's economy and population changes are affecting crime rates, which regions are most affected, and what future crime trends might look like.

To help answer some of the questions, Wilson is conducting a survey of business owners, community groups, elected officials and first responders in major Saskatchewan centres.

“We want to know what they’ve seen out in the field,” he said.

The survey covers perceived economic trends over the past 20 years and predictions for the next five, and perspectives on community safety and demographic trends.

The results of this survey will be compared with data to see how perceptions match or contrast with quantitative trends. Perceptions from the different centres also will be compared.

“This is a really interesting time to ask these questions because we’d had that major energy price shock, so it’s going to take a while for the data to come in and tell us what’s happening now,” said Wilson.

At the same time, Sagynbekov is examining crime hot spots in Saskatchewan and how neighbouring communities are affected, in addition to regional crime trends.

The researchers have already published the first phase of the project, which is an overview of demographic, economic and crime trends.

It illustrates that after two decades of slow population and economic growth and rising crime rates, Saskatchewan’s tides began to turn around 2006. Poverty rates dropped while median family incomes grew. Violent crime and property crime decreased.

Still, Saskatchewan’s crime rates remain high in major urban centres, and drug-related offences have surged.

Phase 2 of the project, to be published soon, will consist of a literature review. Then the researchers will tackle a quantitative model for the demographic and economic effects on crime, changes to policing, and hot spots findings in Phase 3. The final part will consist of the survey results and major forecasts.

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