

## **Trails and Crime**

Although trails are not immune from crime, numerous studies indicate that trails themselves do not result in an increase in crime and that crime rates are usually less than that of the surrounding community. Studies also suggest that trails may actually reduce crime and nuisance problems because trail users discourage bad behavior simply by their presence.

### ***Buncombe County Greenways & Trails Master Plan (2012)***

<http://www.buncombecounty.org/common/parks/MasterPlan/7-Safety.pdf>

- “The incidence of crime along the Mallard Creek Greenway and adjacent properties was nearly half that of the surrounding police district and only 12.7% of the countywide crime rate (1997 study). An extended study explored recent crime rates along all 14 greenways in Mecklenberg County between 2011 and 2003. The data suggest that greenway-adjacent properties do not incur greater risk of crime than other properties within the same neighborhood statistical area. On the contrary greenway-adjacent properties had lower crimes rates 75% of the time.”

### ***Perkiomen Trail: 2008 User Survey and Economic Impact Analysis (2008)***

Rails to Trails Conservancy

<http://www.railstotrails.org/resource-library/resources/perkiomen-trail-2008-user-survey-and-economic-impact-analysis/?collection=Trail+Management>

- Over 85% of Perkiomen Trail users rated safety and security along the trail as being good to excellent.

### ***Heritage Rail Trail County Park - 2007 User Survey and Economic Impact Analysis (2007)***

York County Department of Parks and Recreation

[http://www.dcnr.state.pa.us/cs/groups/public/documents/document/dcnr\\_009471.pdf](http://www.dcnr.state.pa.us/cs/groups/public/documents/document/dcnr_009471.pdf)

- Almost 92% of users rated trail safety and security as being good to excellent.

### ***Pinellas Trail Community Impact Study (2001)***

Pinellas County Metropolitan Planning Organization

[http://www.brucefreemanrailtrail.org/pdf/Pinellas\\_exec.pdf](http://www.brucefreemanrailtrail.org/pdf/Pinellas_exec.pdf)

- “Crime data for 1993, 1995 and 1999 indicate that crime rates along the trail are no different than elsewhere in the county or city. In 1993 and 1995, crime rates along the trail were lower than county-wide rates, and in 1999 the rates were still lower, but closer to the countywide average.”

### ***Omaha Recreational Trails: Their Effect on Property Values and Public Safety (2000)***

Donald L. Greer, Ph.D., Project Director, University of Nebraska at Omaha

Recreation and Leisure Studies Program - School of Health, Physical Education and Recreation

<http://atfiles.org/files/pdf/omahastudy.pdf>

- “Experiences with trail-related theft (4.0%) and property damage (4.7%) were reported infrequently by respondent and most of these incidents were of relatively minor nature.”
- “Property owners do not appear to have a widespread concern for their safety. Trespassing, theft and vandalism by trail users were relatively infrequent events.”

### ***The Effect of Greenways on Property Values and Public Safety (1995)***

The Conservation Fund and Colorado State Parks, State Trails Program

<http://www.americantrails.org/resources/adjacent/sumadjacent.html>

“No public safety issues could be directly linked to the trail. Only one resident was concerned with this issue, and none of the officers interviewed said trails had any effect on public safety...”

## Trails and Crime

### ***Rail-Trails and Safe Communities – The Experience on 372 Trails (1998)***

Rails to Trails Conservancy

[http://www.railstotrails.org/resource-library/resources/rail-trails-and-safe-communities-the-experience-on-372-trails/?q=The Experience on 372 Trails &a=All&t=All&s=All&q=All](http://www.railstotrails.org/resource-library/resources/rail-trails-and-safe-communities-the-experience-on-372-trails/?q=The+Experience+on+372+Trails+%a=All&t=All&s=All&q=All)

This survey of crime on 372 rail trails in urban, suburban, and rural settings, covering 7,000 miles of trails with 45 million users revealed the following (Suburban rail trails accounted for 82 of the rail trails with 14 million users and 1,100 miles):

- “Only 3% of these trails reported any crimes against persons (assaults, muggings, rape, and murder); of the 3% of trails that reported a crime against a person, urban trails had a higher rate of crime than suburban ones.”
- “Burglary near trails was extremely rate, more so than other crimes. Only 4 burglaries were reported in homes adjacent to 7,000 miles of rail trails in 1996 and 3 of these 4 were reported in rural areas. There’s no evidence that these 4 crimes were a result of the nearby trail.”

Specific to suburban rail trails and crimes, the survey revealed the following:

- “In 1996, the national rate of muggings in urban areas was 335 for each 100,000 inhabitants. Only one of 36 urban trails reported muggings, giving trails a rate of 15 muggings per 5 million users. In the suburbs, muggings occurred at a rate of 102 per 100,000 people. Only one mugging was reported among the 14 million people who used suburban trails in 1996.”
- “The national rate of suburban aggravated assaults is 293 per 100,000 inhabitants; three assaults occurred on three suburban rail trails in 1995 and only two assaults occurred on suburban rail trails in 1996.”
- “The national rate of suburban rape is 29 per 100,000 persons; none of the suburban rail trails reported a rape in 1995 or 1996.”
- “Nationally, four murders per 100,000 inhabitants occur in suburban areas; there were no reports of murder on suburban rail trails in 1995 or 1996.”

Survey findings for rural rail trails revealed the following:

- “In 1996, the national rate of muggings in rural areas was 19 for each 100,000 inhabitants; none of the rural rail-trails reported muggings in 1995 and only one reported an incident in 1996.”
- “The national rural rate of aggravated assault is 203 incidents per 100,000 persons; only three rural rail trails reported three assaults in 1995 and the same number in 1996.”
- “Nationally, there were 26 forcible rapes per 100,000 rural inhabitants; two rural rail trails reported rapes in 1995 and one trail reported a rape in 1996.”
- “The national murder rate for rural areas is 5 per 100,000; none of the rural rail trails reported a murder over the two year period.”

### ***The Impact of the Brush Creek Trail on Property Values and Crime (1992)***

Michelle Miller Murphy, Sonoma State University

<http://www.americantrails.org/resources/adjacent/sumadjacent.html>

- “The study shows neither increased crime nor decreased property values due to trails. “The survey of cities showed only a small number of infractions such as illegal motorized vehicles, litter, and unleashed pets.”