

# Apartment dwellers more likely to fear crime in their neighbourhood but feel safer at home than those in detached homes

July 24 2014, by Suelan Toye

---



Do you feel safe at home by yourself at night? Depends where you live. According to a new study by Professor Heather Rollwagen, apartment dwellers are three times more likely to feel safe inside their home if they are alone, compared to those living in single detached houses.

A new study by Ryerson University suggests people living in high-rise buildings are more fearful of crime when walking around their

neighbourhood, but once they're at home, they feel safer than those living in single detached homes.

"Fear of crime affects everyone," said Heather Rollwagen, author of the study and sociology professor. "We arrange so much of our routine on being safe and minimizing risks to our family even though actual crime rates in Canada have been decreasing for some time."

Professor Rollwagen studies how people's [social environment](#) impacts their perception of crime, especially how a person's housing affects their perception of safety both at home and in their neighbourhood—an area of research that has received little attention in Canada.

Rollwagen analysed Statistics Canada data on [crime](#) and victimization involving over 15,000 respondents who were asked a number of safety-related questions, such as: how afraid they were to walk around their neighbourhood alone after dark; how fearful they were to stay at home alone at night; and how many neighbours they know.

## **Apartments feel safer**

People who live in high-rise buildings are less likely to know their neighbours, therefore tend to be more fearful of walking around their neighbourhoods at night than those living in single detached homes. However, once apartment dwellers are at home alone at night, they are almost three times more likely to feel safe compared to people in their single detached houses.

Rollwagen attributes this perception to the 'fortress effect.' "People don't feel as safe outside when they're walking around because they haven't built up those social networks with their neighbours. But when they come inside their apartment, they feel safer having that added layer of security." Rollwagen cautions that this can have a negative impact on an

individual's surrounding social environment as "they may start to become 'islands' in their own communities."

To encourage more social interaction among people living in apartment buildings, Rollwagen encourages developers to create more public spaces, especially play areas for families, to build a stronger sense of community. Tenant boards can also plan more social events for people to mingle.

The study, *The Relationship between Dwelling Type and Fear of Crime*, was published online in the July issue of the journal, *Environment and Behaviour*.

Provided by Ryerson University

Citation: Apartment dwellers more likely to fear crime in their neighbourhood but feel safer at home than those in detached homes (2014, July 24) retrieved 17 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2014-07-apartment-dwellers-crime-neighbourhood-safer.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.