

This report was prepared by Westat using federal funding provided by the Bureau of Justice Statistics. Michael Planty, Ph.D. (formerly of BJS), and Grace Kena were the Project Officers.

Document Title: Measuring Resident Perceptions of Police and Community Safety: Findings from the Local-Area Crime Survey

Authors*: J. Michael Brick, Westat
Pamela Giambo, Westat
Pam Broene, Westat
W. Sherman Edwards, Westat
Robin Jones, Westat
Yunhee Lim, Westat
Grace Kena, Bureau of Justice Statistics

Document No.: 300768

Publication Date: April 2021

Award No.: This project was supported by award number 2010-NV-CX-K077.

*The authors wish to thank Sharon Lohr (formerly of Westat) for her contributions to an early draft of the report.

Abstract: The Local-Area Crime Survey (LACS) was fielded in 2015 and 2016 to collect victimization data and information on perceptions of police and community safety from residents in the 40 largest metropolitan areas in the United States. The LACS was adapted from the National Crime Victimization Survey as part of BJS's efforts to build a program to estimate victimization at subnational levels. Westat, in collaboration with BJS, proposed a way to develop and evaluate a cost-effective survey of victimization and public perceptions as one piece of the subnational program. This report presents aggregate findings from 40 metropolitan areas on perceptions of police and community safety.

Disclaimer

The Bureau of Justice Statistics funded this third-party report. It is not a BJS report and does not release official government statistics. The report is released to help inform interested parties of the research or analysis contained within and to encourage discussion. BJS has performed a limited review of the report to ensure the general accuracy of information and adherence to confidentiality and disclosure standards. Any statistics included in this report are not official BJS statistics unless they have been previously published in a BJS report. Any analysis, conclusions, or opinions expressed herein are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the views, opinions, or policies of the Bureau of Justice Statistics or the U.S. Department of Justice.

This page intentionally left blank.

Measuring Resident Perceptions of Police and Community Safety: Findings from the Local-Area Crime Survey

Authors

J. Michael Brick
Pamela Giambo
Pam Broene

W. Sherman Edwards
Robin Jones
Yunhee Lim



April 2021

Prepared for:
Bureau of Justice Statistics
Washington, DC

Prepared by:
Westat
An Employee-Owned Research Corporation[®]
1600 Research Boulevard
Rockville, MD 20850-3129
(301) 251-1500

Table of Contents

<u>Section</u>	<u>Page</u>
1 Measuring Resident Perceptions of Police and Community Safety: Findings from the Local-Area Crime Survey	4
2 Measuring Attitudes about Community Safety.....	10
3 Measuring Attitudes about Police.....	36
4 Methodology.....	49

Figures

1 40 Most Populous Core-Based Metropolitan Statistical Areas	6
2 Percentage of households stating that the community where they live is “always” or “mostly” safe, by Northeast CBSA	8
3 Percentage of households stating that the community where they live is “always” or “mostly” safe, by Midwest CBSA	11
4 Percentage of households stating that the community where they live is “always” or “mostly” safe, by Southern CBSA	12
5 Percentage of households stating that the community where they live is “always” or “mostly” safe, by Western CBSA	13
6 Percentage of households reporting that there was not a place within a mile of their homes they would be afraid to walk alone at night, by Northeast CBSA	14
7 Percentage of households reporting that there was not a place within a mile of their homes they would be afraid to walk alone at night, by Midwest CBSA	16
8 Percentage of households reporting that there was not a place within a mile of their homes they would be afraid to walk alone at night, by Southern CBSA	17
9 Percentage of households reporting that there was not a place within a mile of their homes they would be afraid to walk alone at night, by Western CBSA	18
10 Percentage of households reporting that fear of crime “never” or “rarely” limited their activities, by Northeast CBSA	19
11 Percentage of households reporting that fear of crime “never” or “rarely” limited their activities, by Midwest CBSA	20
12 Percentage of households reporting that fear of crime “never” or “rarely” limited their activities, by Southern CBSA	21
13 Percentage of households reporting that fear of crime “never” or “rarely” limited their activities, by Western CBSA	22
14 Percentage of households reporting they “never” or “rarely” thought about their home being vandalized or broken into while away, by Northeast CBSA	23
15 Percentage of households reporting they “never” or “rarely” thought about their home being vandalized or broken into while away, by Midwest CBSA	24
16 Percentage of households reporting they “never” or “rarely” thought about their home being vandalized or broken into while away, by Southern CBSA	25
17 Percentage of households reporting they “never” or “rarely” thought about their home being vandalized or broken into while away, by Western CBSA	26
18 Percentage of households reporting their neighborhoods became “safer” or “stayed the same” in the prior 3 years, by Northeast CBSA	27
19 Percentage of households reporting their neighborhoods became “safer” or “stayed the same” in the prior 3 years, by Midwest CBSA	28

<u>Figures</u>	<u>Page</u>	
20	Percentage of households reporting their neighborhoods became “safer” or “stayed the same” in the prior 3 years, by Southern CBSA	29
21	Percentage of households reporting their neighborhoods became “safer” or “stayed the same” in the prior 3 years, by Western CBSA	30
22	Percentage of households reporting their workplace was “always” or “mostly” safe, by Northeast CBSA	31
23	Percentage of households reporting their workplace was “always” or “mostly” safe, by Midwest CBSA	32
24	Percentage of households reporting their workplace was “always” or “mostly” safe, by Southern CBSA	33
25	Percentage of households reporting their workplace was “always” or “mostly” safe, by Western CBSA	34
26	Percentage of households indicating that they had contacted their local police at some point while living at their current address, by Northeast CBSA	35
27	Percentage of households indicating that they had contacted their local police at some point while living at their current address, by Midwest CBSA	36
28	Percentage of households indicating that they had contacted their local police at some point while living at their current address, by Southern CBSA	37
29	Percentage of households indicating that they had contacted their local police at some point while living at their current address, by Western CBSA	38
30	Percentage of those who reported contacting their local police who were “very satisfied” or “mostly satisfied” with the police response, by Northeast CBSA	40
31	Percentage of those who reported contacting their local police who were “very satisfied” or “mostly satisfied” with the police response, by Midwest CBSA	41
32	Percentage of those who reported contacting their local police who were “very satisfied” or “mostly satisfied” with the police response, by Southern CBSA	42
33	Percentage of those who reported contacting their local police who were “very satisfied” or “mostly satisfied” with the police response, by Western CBSA	43
34	Percentage of households rating the job of the local police as “excellent” or “good,” by Northeast CBSA	44
35	Percentage of households rating the job of the local police as “excellent” or “good,” by Midwest CBSA	45
36	Percentage of households rating the job of the local police as “excellent” or “good,” by Southern CBSA	46
37	Percentage of households rating the job of the local police as “excellent” or “good,” by Western CBSA	47
38	Excerpt from an Appendix D stacked-bar chart: On the whole, how much of the time is the community where you live safe?	49
39	Excerpt from an Appendix D panel-plot chart: On the whole, how much of the time is the community where you live safe?	50

Appendixes

A	Survey Instruments
B	CBSA Maps
C	Graphs and Data Plots
D	Response Scales
E	Bivariate Data
F	Making statistical comparisons within and across CBSAs

I. Measuring Resident Perceptions of Police and Community Safety: Findings from the Local-Area Crime Survey

Residents' perceptions of their local areas and local police, including how safe they find their neighborhoods to be and how concerned they are about crime, often reflect a complex set of personal and other factors. This range of influencing factors is outside of the scope of this report. Nonetheless, these indicators are important tools local jurisdictions can use to assess the effectiveness of their services and resident satisfaction especially when combined with or considered in the context of other information directly speaking to those factors.

To expand knowledge about crime victimization and community and police perceptions at local geographical levels, the Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS), through a cooperative agreement with Westat, developed and tested a household survey about crime victimization, neighborhood safety, and police performance. The Local-Area Crime Survey (LACS) was fielded in 2015 and 2016 and is intended for use by states, municipalities, or other jurisdictions and entities to assess levels and trends in public safety.

The LACS is modeled in part after the National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS), conducted for BJS by the U.S. Census Bureau. One of the two major statistical programs on crime produced by the U.S. Department of Justice, the NCVS is the nation's primary source of information about crime victimization, whether reported or not reported to police.¹ The NCVS had a limited capacity to produce reliable estimates at the state and local levels prior to the 2016 sample redesign. The LACS is one of several initiatives BJS has undertaken to increase the availability of victimization data of interest to local jurisdictions.² Local areas generally have their own data on victimizations, but these are almost always limited to crimes reported to police. Like the NCVS, the LACS was intended to widen this scope to include all crimes of specified types. The LACS was designed to support estimating changes over time at a local level and cross-sectional comparisons within or across jurisdictions. Such comparisons are impossible with currently available data because practices and reporting procedures vary widely, even within large cities. In particular, a goal for the LACS was to be able to assess differences on these measures *within* specific geographical areas to provide additional context for variations in local crime and safety patterns.

The LACS was conducted in 2015 and 2016 in the 40 most populous U.S. metropolitan areas (*Figure 1*).³ The survey, which was mailed to representative samples of households in these 40

¹ For more information, see *The Nation's Two Crime Measures* (NCJ #246832) available at www.bjs.gov.

² For more information, see *NCVS Subnational* available at www.bjs.gov.

³ The 40 largest metropolitan areas are those with the largest population sizes as of 2015. The boundaries of the

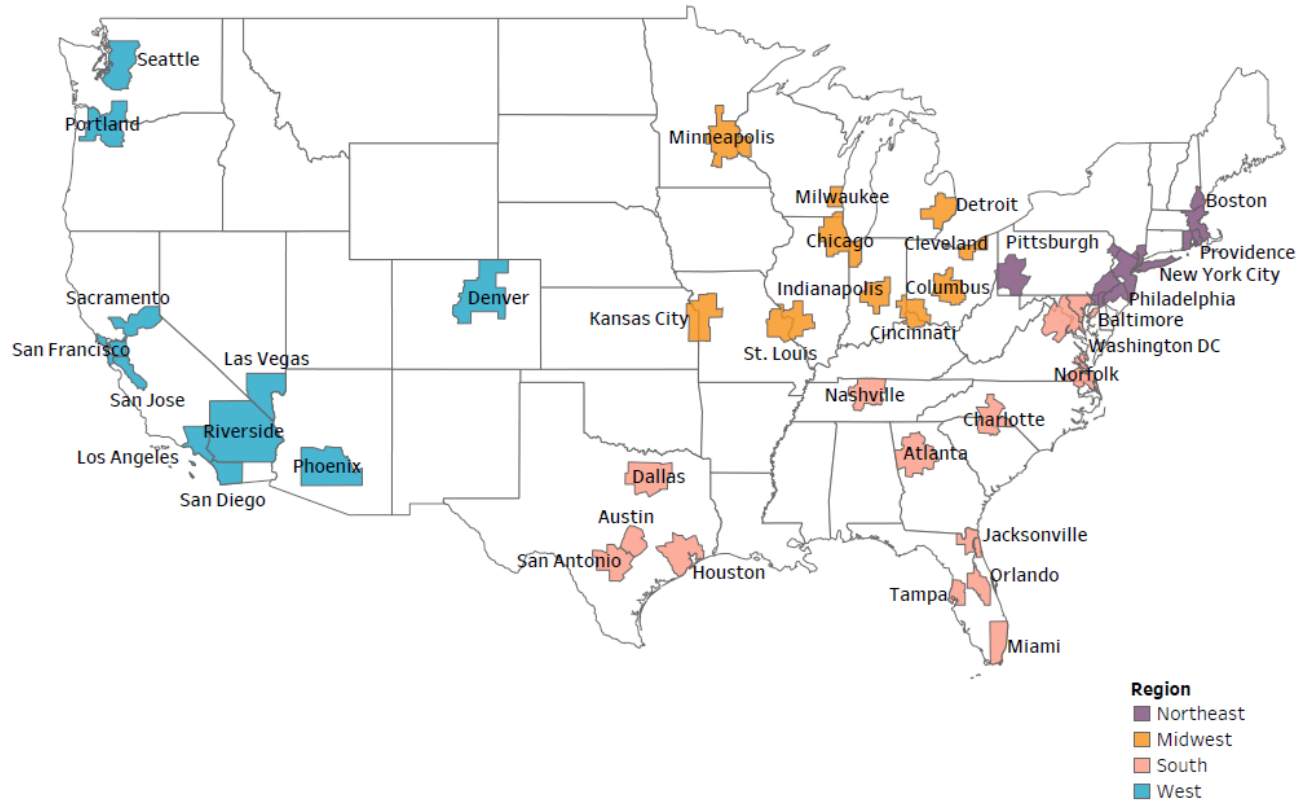
areas, was called the American Crime Survey.⁴ With reference to their local area, it asked household respondents, who answered on behalf of their households, about their perceptions of police, perceptions of community safety, and fear of crime. The survey also collected information on the percentages of households and people that were affected by crime in the prior 12 months as reported by the household respondent. BJS selected metropolitan areas as the geographical units to facilitate comparisons with CBSA-level crime rates from the NCVS and from the Uniform Crime Reports (UCR), which the FBI collects from participating law enforcement agencies. Further information about the development and implementation of the survey instrument and the methodology, as well as additional findings, are available in the report, *National Crime Victimization Survey Local-Area Crime Survey: Field Test Methodology Report* (NCJ # 252631), at www.bjs.gov.⁵

This report presents 2015 findings on the variation in resident perceptions within and across these large metropolitan areas and highlights the utility of these types of indicators for understanding local patterns of crime and reporting to the police. The focus of this report is aggregate geographical differences within particular metropolitan areas; it does not include additional breakouts of the data by demographic or other respondent characteristics.

metropolitan areas are the Core-Based Statistical Areas (CBSAs) used by the U.S. Census Bureau. A CBSA is defined by the U.S. Office of Management and Budget to be the core urban area, “plus adjacent counties having a high degree of social and economic integration with the core as measured through commuting ties with the counties associated with the core.” U.S. Census Bureau (2012). 2010 Census Summary File 1---Technical Documentation. Available from <http://www.census.gov/prod/cen2010/doc/sf1.pdf>, p. A-15.

⁴ The survey is now referred to as the Local-Area Crime Survey, or LACS.

Figure 1: 40 Most Populous Core-Based Statistical Areas (CBSAs) in the United States by Census-defined region, 2015



40 Most Populous CBSAs (Full Titles)

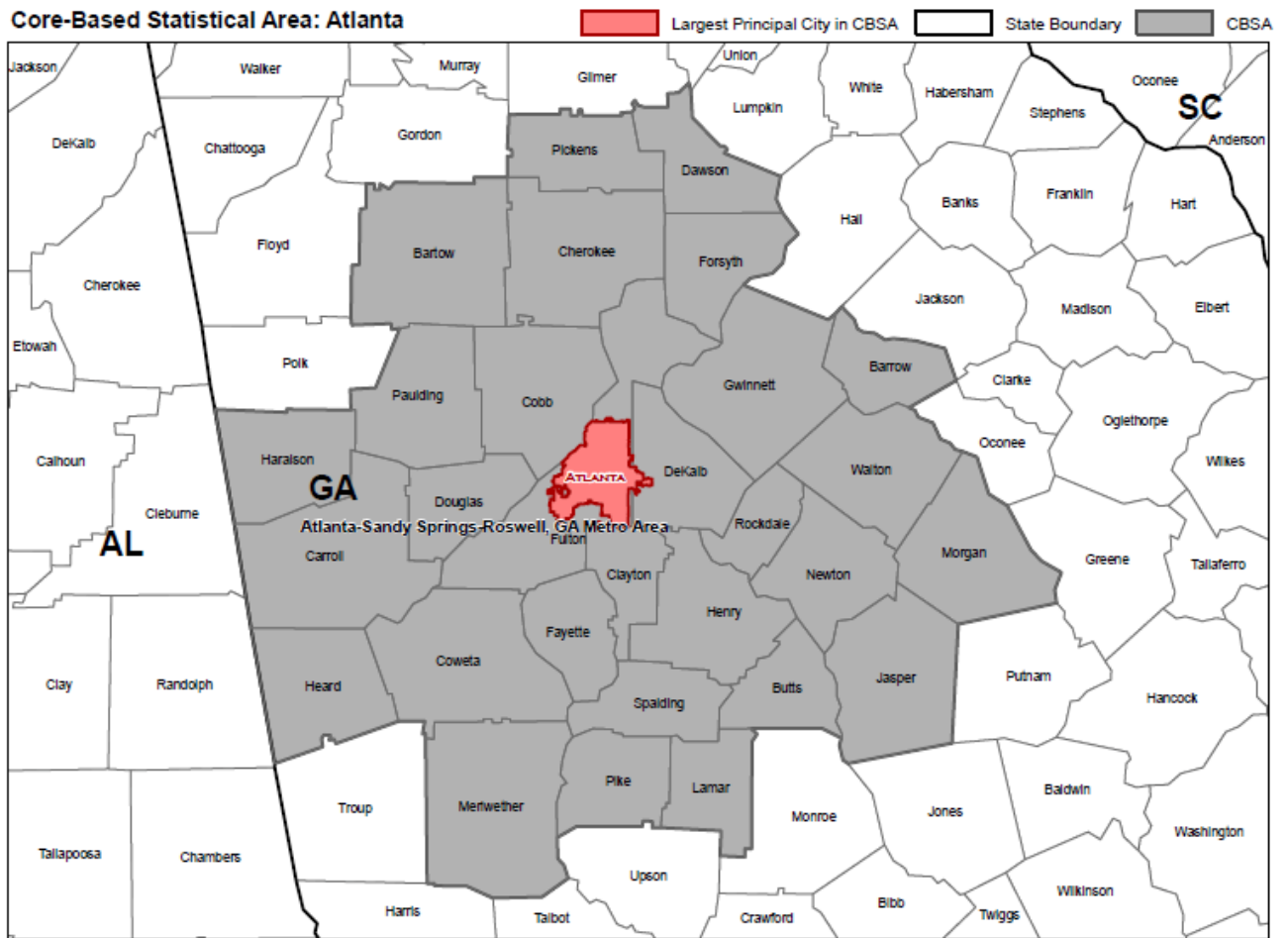
Northeast	Midwest
Boston-Cambridge-Quincy, MA	Chicago-Naperville-Joliet, IL-IN-WI
NY-Northern NJ-LI, NY-NJ-PA	Cincinnati-Middletown, OH-KY-IN
Philadelphia-Camden-Wilmington, PA-NJ-DE-MD	Cleveland-Elyria-Mentor, OH
Pittsburgh, PA	Columbus, OH
Providence-Warwick, RI-MA	Detroit-Warren-Livonia, MI
	Indianapolis-Carmel, IN
	Kansas City, MO-KS
South	Milwaukee-Waukesha-West Allis, WI
Atlanta-Sandy Springs-Marietta, GA	Minneapolis-St. Paul-Bloomington, MN-WI
Austin-Round Rock, TX	St. Louis-MO-IL
Miami-Fort Lauderdale-Pompano Beach, FL	
Nashville-Davidson--Murfreesboro--Franklin, TN	
Baltimore-Towson, MD	West
Charlotte-Gastonia-Concord, NC-SC	Denver-Aurora, CO
Dallas-Fort Worth-Arlington, TX	Las Vegas-Paradise, NV
Houston-Sugar Land-Baytown, TX	Los Angeles-Long Beach-Santa Ana, CA
Jacksonville, FL	Phoenix-Mesa-Scottsdale, AZ
Orlando-Kissimmee-Sanford, FL	Portland-Vancouver-Hillsboro, OR-WA
San Antonio, TX	Riverside-San Bernardino-Ontario, CA

<i>South continued...</i>	<i>West continued...</i>
Tampa-St. Petersburg-Clearwater, FL	Sacramento-Arden-Arcade-Roseville, CA
Virginia Beach-Norfolk-Newport News, VA-NC	San Diego-Carlsbad-San Marcos, CA
Washington-Arlington-Alexandria, DC-VA-MD-WV	San Francisco-Oakland-Fremont, CA
	San Jose-Sunnyvale-Santa Clara, CA
	Seattle-Tacoma-Bellevue, WA

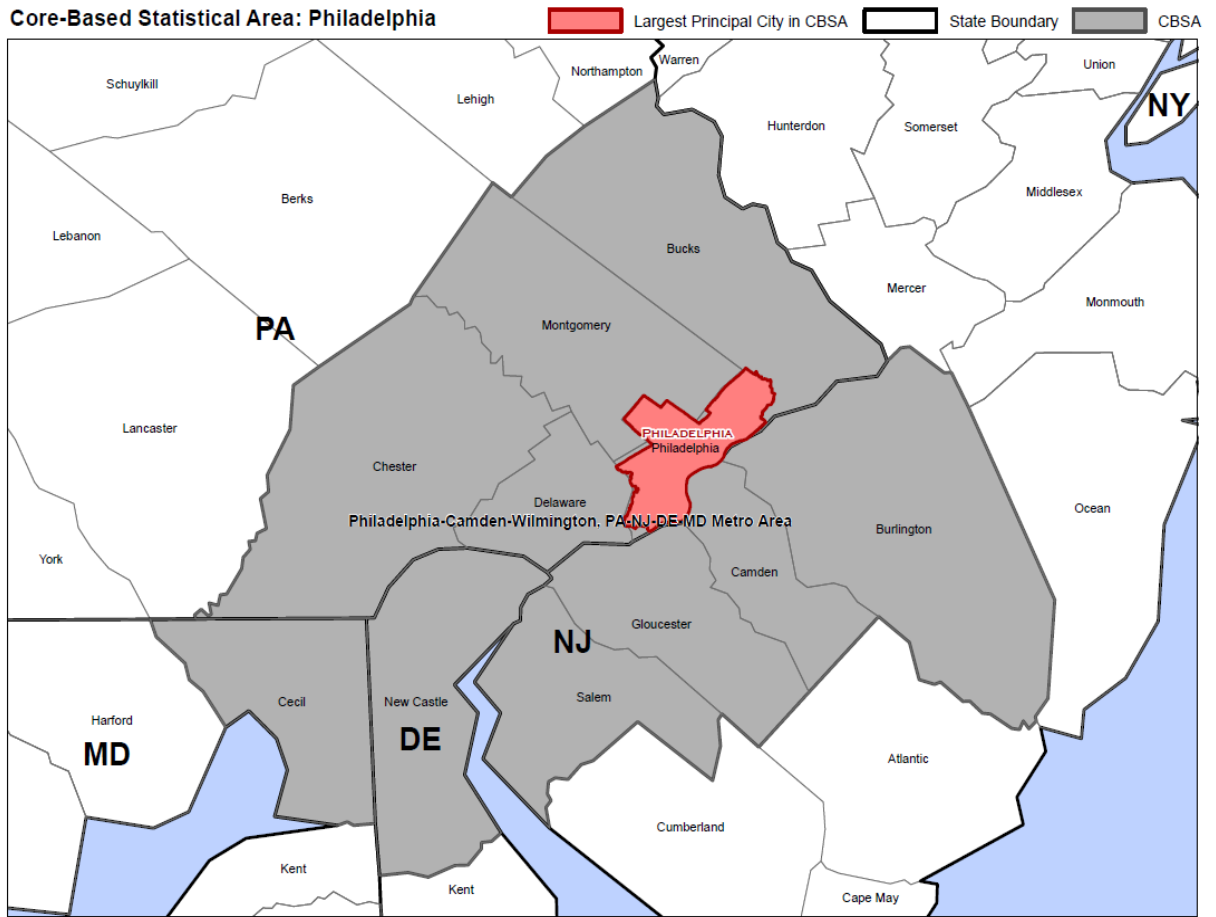
SOURCE: Bureau of Justice Statistics, Local-Area Crime Survey, 2015

Because the LACS was a sample survey, estimates are subject to error. Estimates that appear different from each other may not actually be different once sampling error is taken into account. Comparisons in this report focus on statistically significant differences, unless otherwise noted. Comparisons are also largely focused on substantively significant differences, defined here as a spread of 15 or more points across metropolitan areas, or between the main city and adjacent areas of a single metropolitan area. For ease of presentation, the 40 areas are organized according to the four major Census Bureau regions: Northeast, Midwest, South, and West. Metropolitan areas are generally referenced in this report by one city in the metropolitan area, though some areas have more than one major or central city; these terms are used for ease of reference. For example, the metropolitan area of Boston-Cambridge-Quincy, MA is called Boston in the report text. Illustrations of the Atlanta and Philadelphia metropolitan areas are included in *figure 2*.

Figure 2: Sample Core-Based Statistical Areas, Atlanta and Philadelphia



Core-Based Statistical Area: Philadelphia



SOURCE: Bureau of Justice Statistics, Local-Area Crime Survey, 2015

I. Measuring Attitudes about Community Safety

The survey included six questions that measure aspects of community safety⁶:

1. On the whole, how much of the time is the community where you live safe?
2. Is there any place within a mile of your home where you would be afraid to walk alone at night?
3. How often does fear of crime prevent you from doing things you would like to do?
4. When you leave your home, how often do you think about it being broken into or vandalized while you're away?
5. In the past 3 years, do you believe your community has become safer, stayed the same, or become less safe?
6. Overall, how much of the time is the place where you work safe?

Community Item 1: On the whole, how much of the time is the community where you live safe?

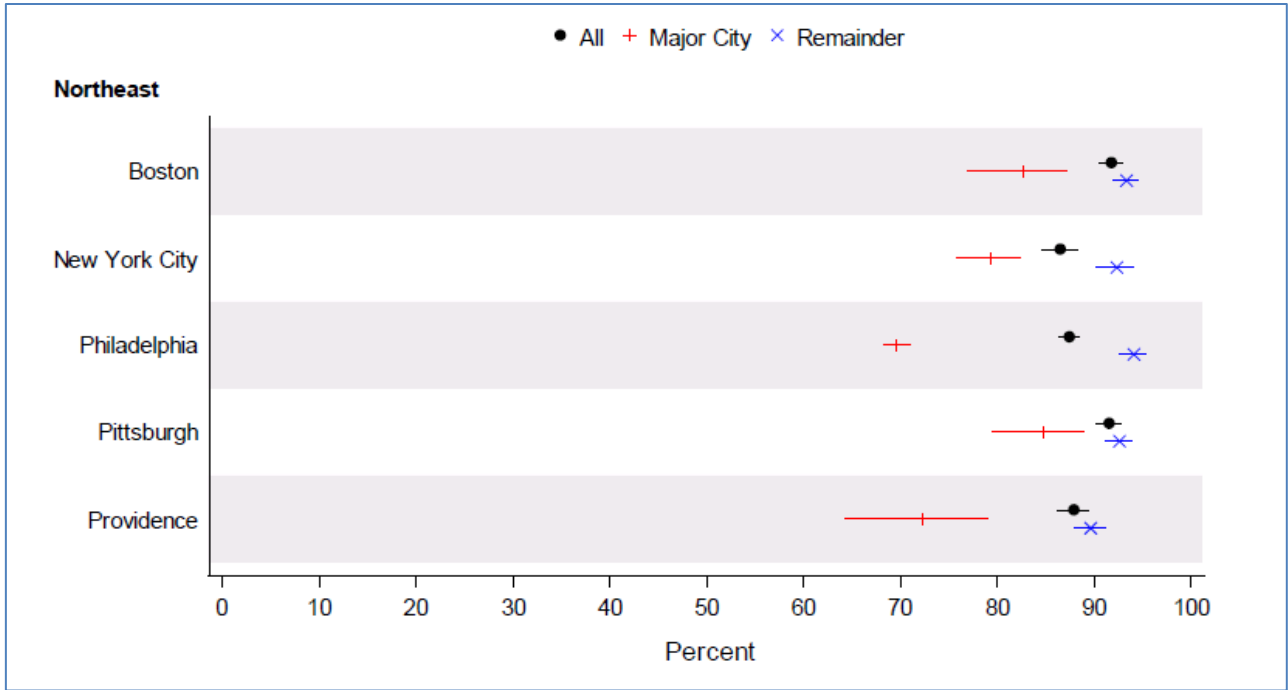
Across the 40 areas, the percentage of household respondents saying the community was “always” or “mostly” safe ranged from 85% to 95% (*Figures 3-6*).⁷ Generally, households in the major city of the CBSA were less likely to report that their communities were “always” or “mostly” safe compared to residents living outside of the major city. Virginia Beach was one exception to this pattern, with those in the city being more likely to report feeling that the community was “always” or “mostly” safe than residents in outlying areas (93% versus 87%).

Fourteen of the 40 areas had at least a 15-point difference in perceptions of safety between city dwellers and those residing outside the major city. In these areas—Atlanta, Baltimore, Chicago, Cincinnati, Cleveland, Dallas, Detroit, Indianapolis, Miami, Milwaukee, Philadelphia, Providence, Sacramento, and St. Louis—households in major cities were less likely to report that the community was “always” or “mostly” safe compared to those in outlying areas. The Detroit area had the largest difference between the major city and outlying areas with 47% of respondents from the city reporting their community as “always” or “mostly” safe compared to 94% of those in outlying areas, a difference of 47 percentage points. The Baltimore, Cleveland, and Milwaukee areas also had sizable differences between the major city and outlying area of between 30 and 36 percentage points, with lower percentages of residents in these major cities expressing that their community was always or mostly safe.

⁶ These analyses use collapsed response categories. The full distribution of responses is available in Appendix D.

⁷ The responses to each of the community and police items in this report are presented as combined categories. The full distribution of responses for these items may be found in Appendix D.

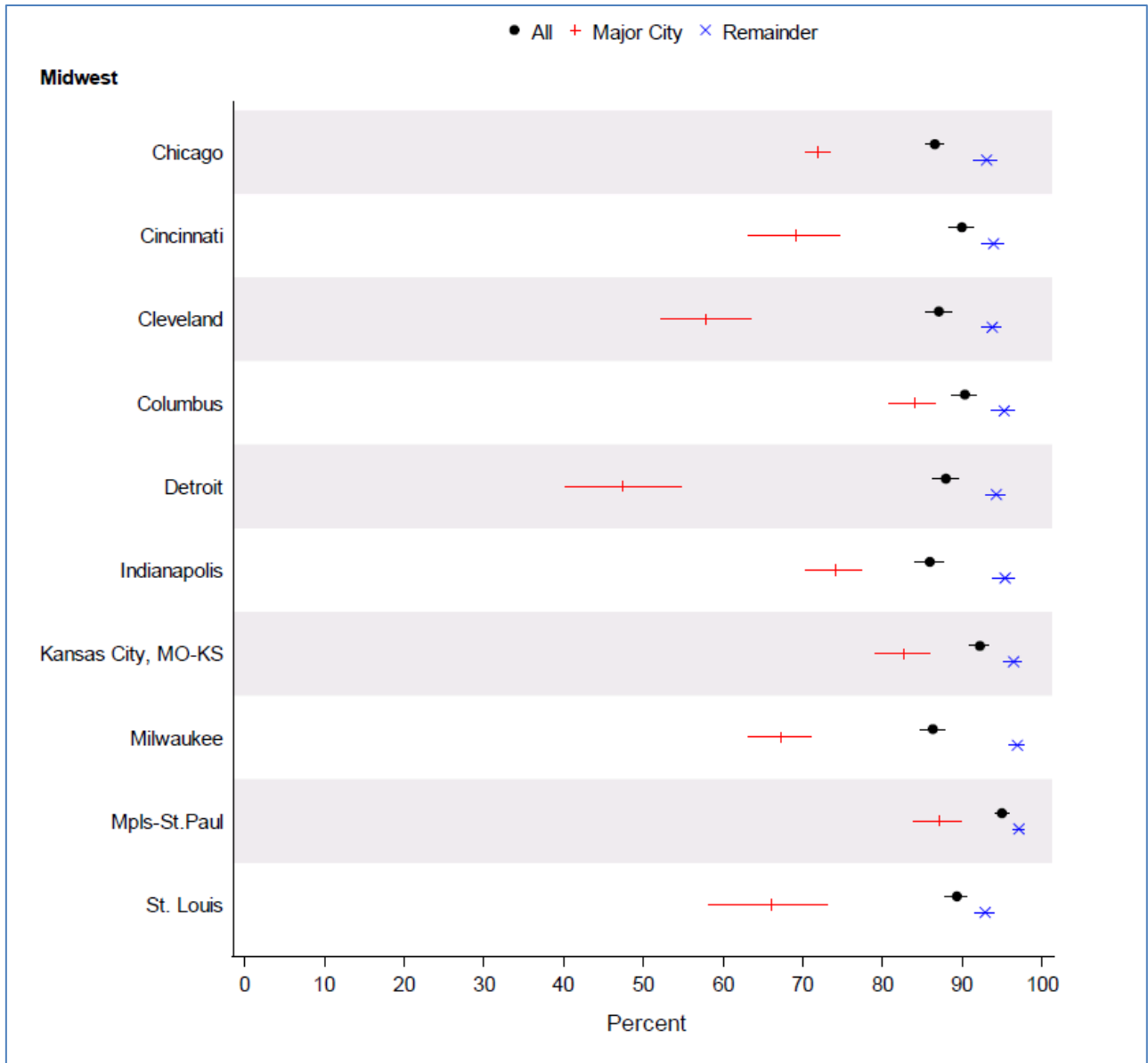
Figure 3. Percentage of household respondents stating that the community where they live is “always” or “mostly” safe, by Northeast CBSA



Note: The symbols (● + x) indicate the percentages, while the lines denote the 95% confidence intervals for the estimates. See appendix table E for estimates and standard errors.

Source: Bureau of Justice Statistics, Local-Area Crime Survey, 2015

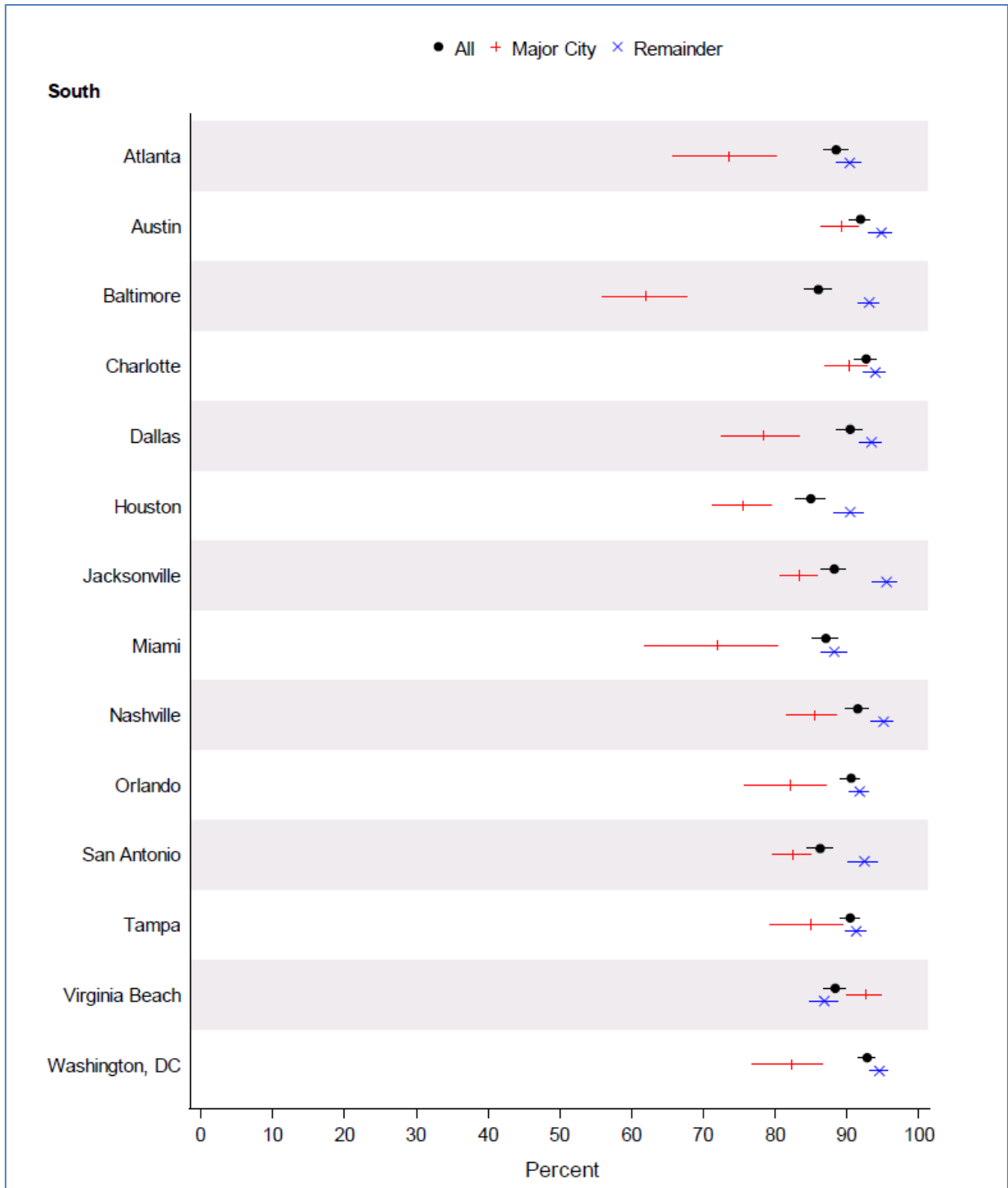
Figure 4. Percentage of households stating that the community where they live is “always” or “mostly” safe, by Midwest CBSA



Note: The symbols (● + ×) indicate the percentages, while the lines denote the 95 percent confidence intervals for the estimates. See appendix table E for estimates and standard errors.

Source: Bureau of Justice Statistics, Local-Area Crime Survey, 2015

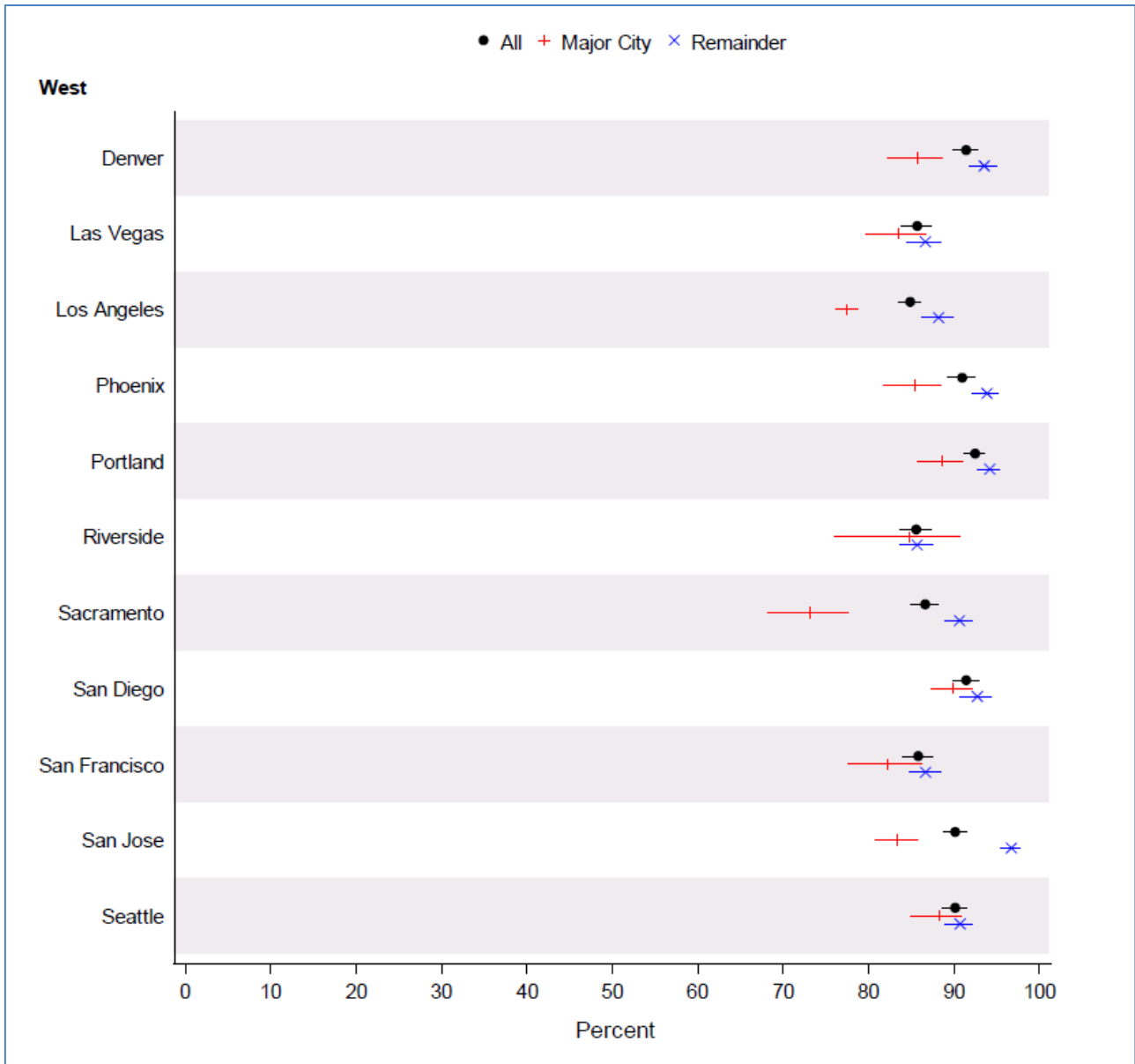
Figure 5. Percentage of household respondents stating that the community where they live is “always” or “mostly” safe, by Southern CBSA



Note: The symbols (● + ×) indicate the percentages, while the lines denote the 95% confidence intervals for the estimates. See appendix table E for estimates and standard errors.

Source: Local-Area Crime Victimization Survey, 2015

Figure 6. Percentage of household respondents stating that the community where they live is “always” or “mostly” safe, by Western CBSA



Note: The symbols (● + x) indicate the percentages, while the lines denote the 95% confidence intervals for the estimates. See appendix table E for estimates and standard errors.

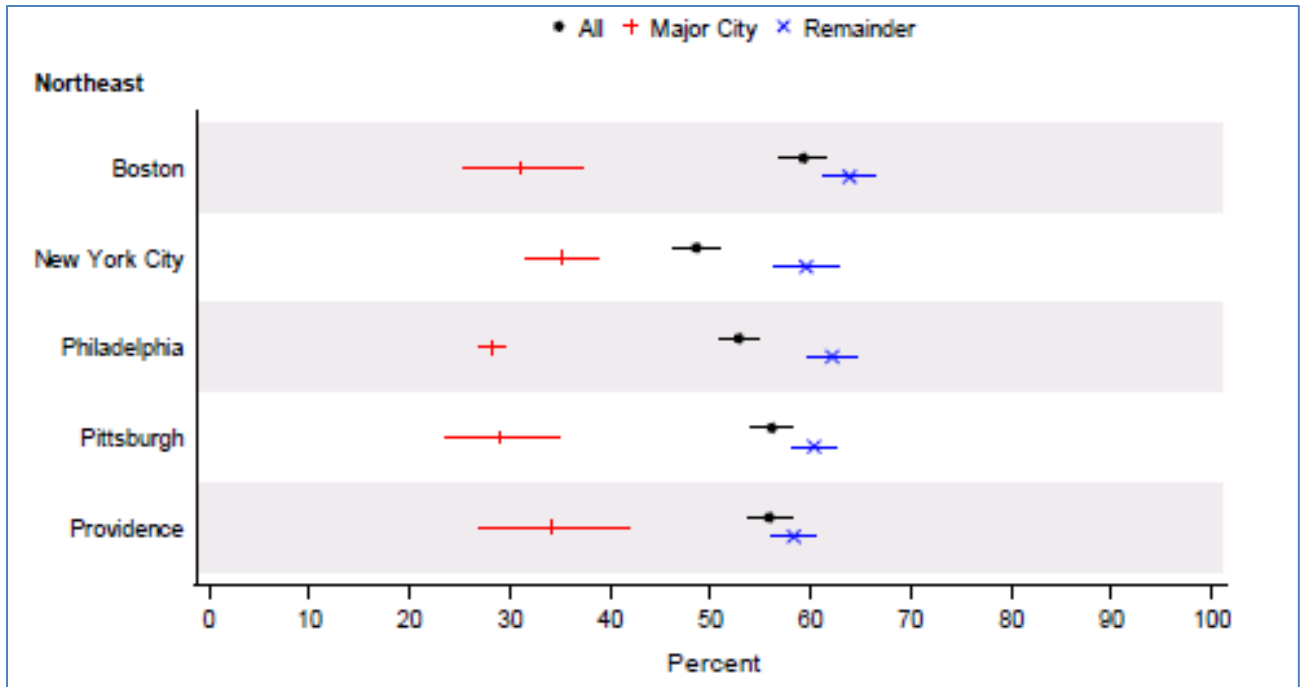
Source: Local-Area Crime Victimization Survey, 2015

Community Item 2: Is there any place within a mile of your home where you would be afraid to walk alone at night?

There was variability across areas in the percentage of household respondents living near places where they would be afraid to walk alone at night. The percentage of respondents who said “no” to this question, or who indicated that they would not be afraid to walk alone at night, ranged from about 45 to 60% (**Figures 7-10**). Areas at the lower end of this range included San Francisco (46%), Houston (46%) and Baltimore (47%), while areas with higher ratings on this item included Kansas City, MO-KS (59%), Boston (59%), Minneapolis-St. Paul (59%), and Detroit (61%).

In addition, there were differences on this measure between respondents in major cities and the outlying areas of these cities. Most (33) of the 40 metropolitan areas had at least 15-point differences between city dwellers and those from outside the major city. The largest differences between the central city and outside were in the Midwest region, with Cincinnati, Cleveland, Detroit, Indianapolis, Milwaukee, and St. Louis each having a 40-point or larger difference. The area with the largest difference was Detroit, where 68% of those in outlying areas said there was not a place within a mile of their homes they would be afraid to walk alone at night, while only 13% of those in the city of Detroit expressed similar sentiments, a difference of 55 percentage points.

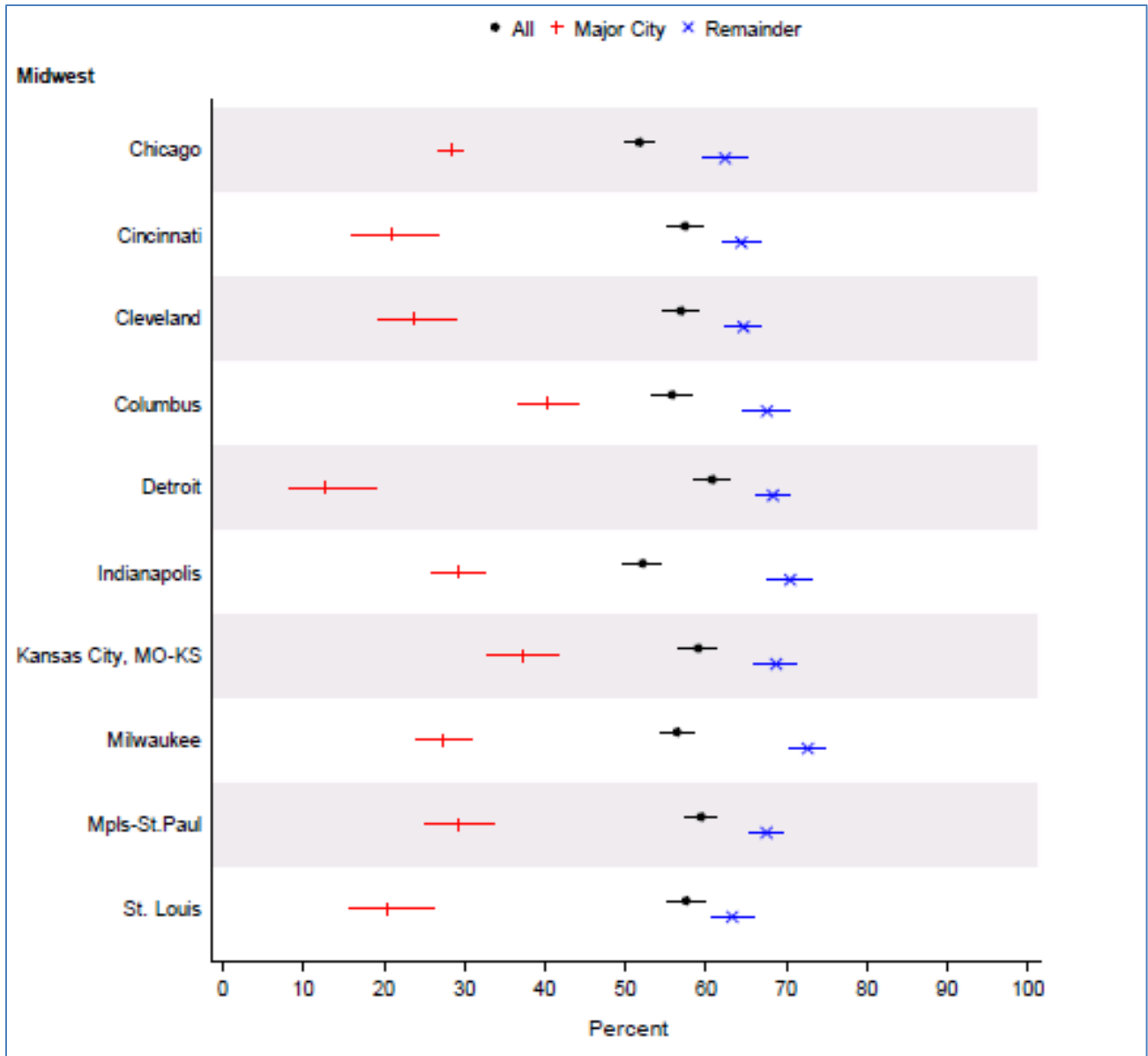
Figure 7. Percentage of household respondents reporting that there was not a place within a mile of their homes they would be afraid to walk alone at night, by Northeast CBSA



Note: The symbols (● + x) indicate the percentages, while the lines denote the 95% confidence intervals for the estimates. See appendix table E for estimates and standard errors.

Source: Local-Area Crime Victimization Survey, 2015

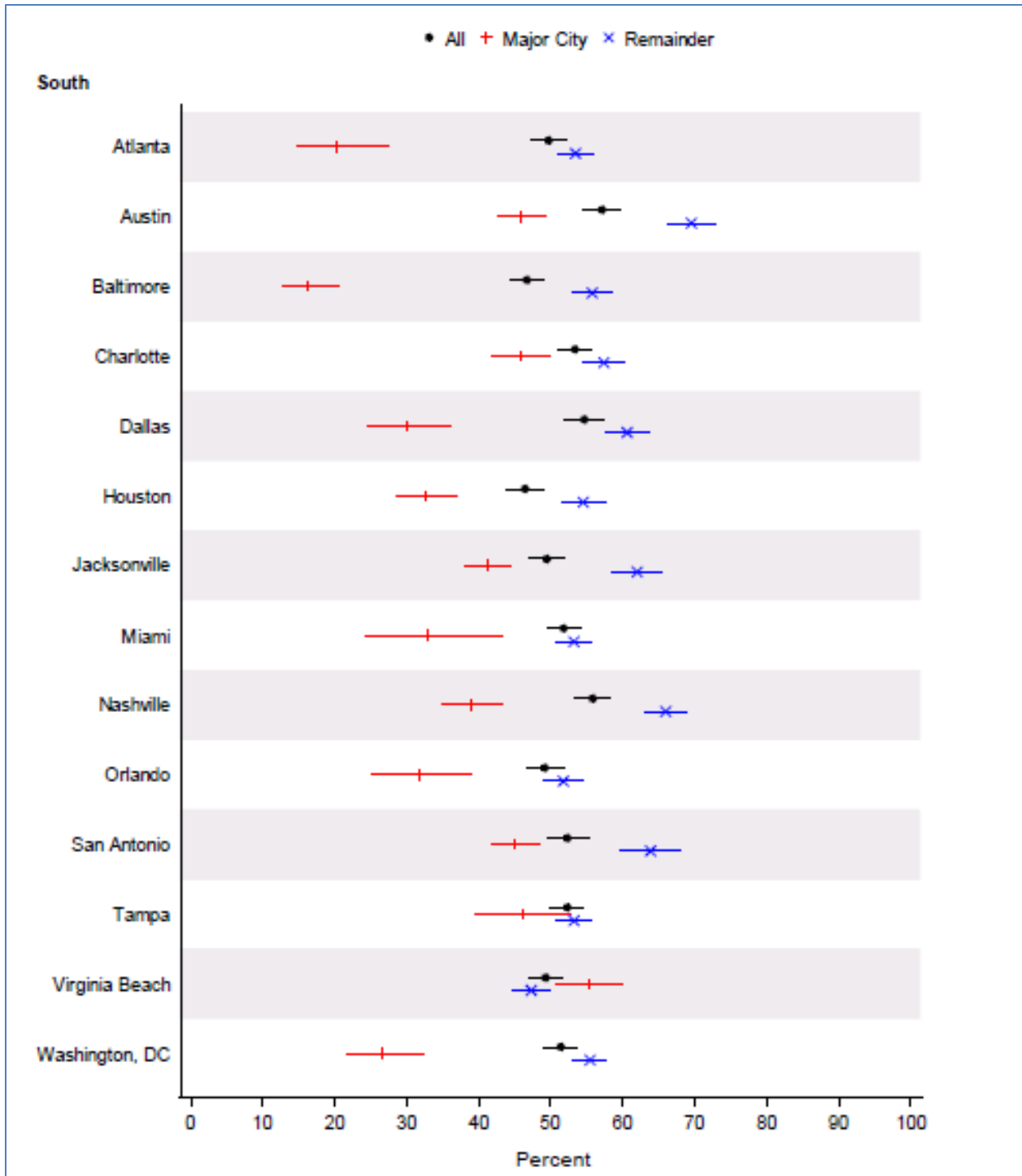
Figure 8. Percentage of household respondents reporting that there was not a place within a mile of their homes they would be afraid to walk alone at night, by Midwest CBSA



Note: The symbols (● + x) indicate the percentages, while the lines denote the 95% confidence intervals for the estimates. See appendix table E for estimates and standard errors.

Source: Local-Area Crime Victimization Survey, 2015

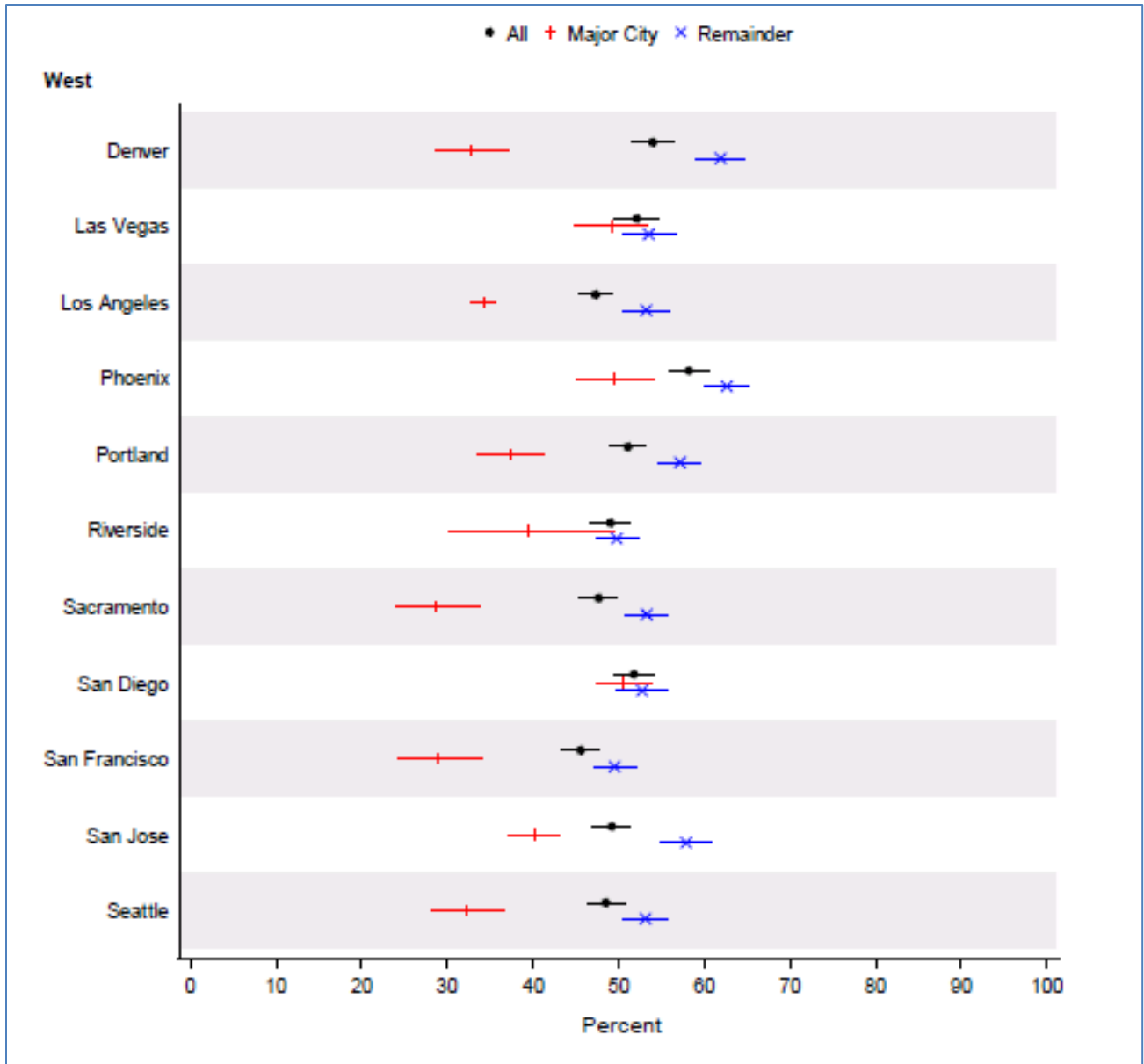
Figure 9. Percentage of household respondents reporting that there was not a place within a mile of their homes they would be afraid to walk alone at night, by Southern CBSA



Note: The symbols (● + ×) indicate the percentages, while the lines denote the 95% confidence intervals for the estimates. See appendix table E for estimates and standard errors.

Source: Local-Area Crime Victimization Survey, 2015

Figure 10. Percentage of household respondents reporting that there was not a place within a mile of their homes they would be afraid to walk alone at night, by Western CBSA



Note: The symbols (● + ×) indicate the percentages, while the lines denote the 95% confidence intervals for the estimates. See appendix table E for estimates and standard errors.

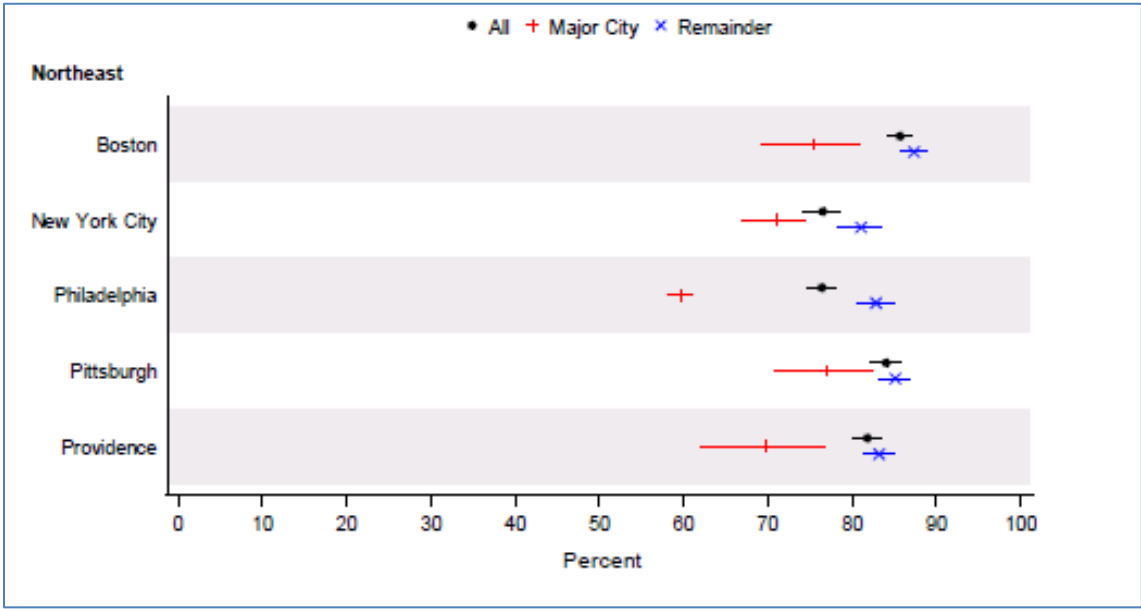
Source: Local-Area Crime Victimization Survey, 2015

Community Item 3: How often does fear of crime prevent you from doing things you would like to do?

Areas varied in the proportion of household respondents indicating that fear of crime limited their activities. Estimates of those for whom fear of crime “never” or “rarely” limited their activities ranged from a low of 71% in Houston to a high of 88% in Minneapolis-St. Paul.

There was less variability in the percentage of respondents stating that fear of crime never or rarely prevented them from doing things they would like to do (community item 3) than the percentage indicating that there was no place within a mile of their home where they would be afraid to walk alone at night (community item 2). Eleven metropolitan areas had at least a 15-percentage point difference between city dwellers and those outside the major city on this item (*Figures 11-14*). Seven of these were in the Midwest, with Detroit having the greatest difference between those in the major city (36%) and those in the remainder of the CBSA (84%) (48 percentage points). Cleveland also had a relatively large difference with 48% of those in major cities indicating that fear of crime never or rarely limited their activities, compared with 84% of those in outlying areas.

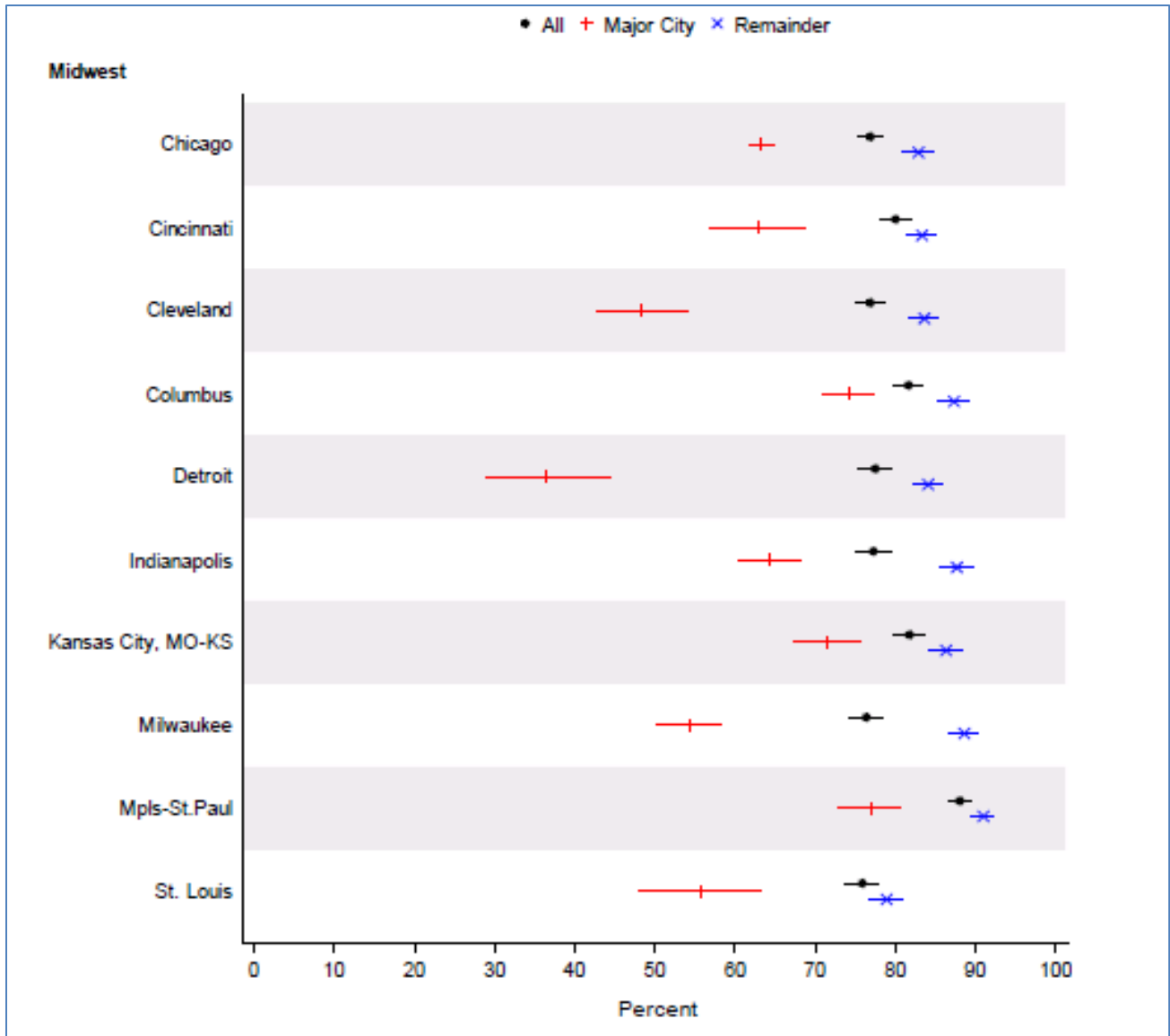
Figure 11. Percentage of household respondents reporting that fear of crime “never” or “rarely” limited their activities, by Northeast CBSA



Note: The symbols (● + ×) indicate the percentages, while the lines denote the 95% confidence intervals for the estimates. See appendix table E for estimates and standard errors.

Source: Local-Area Crime Victimization Survey, 2015

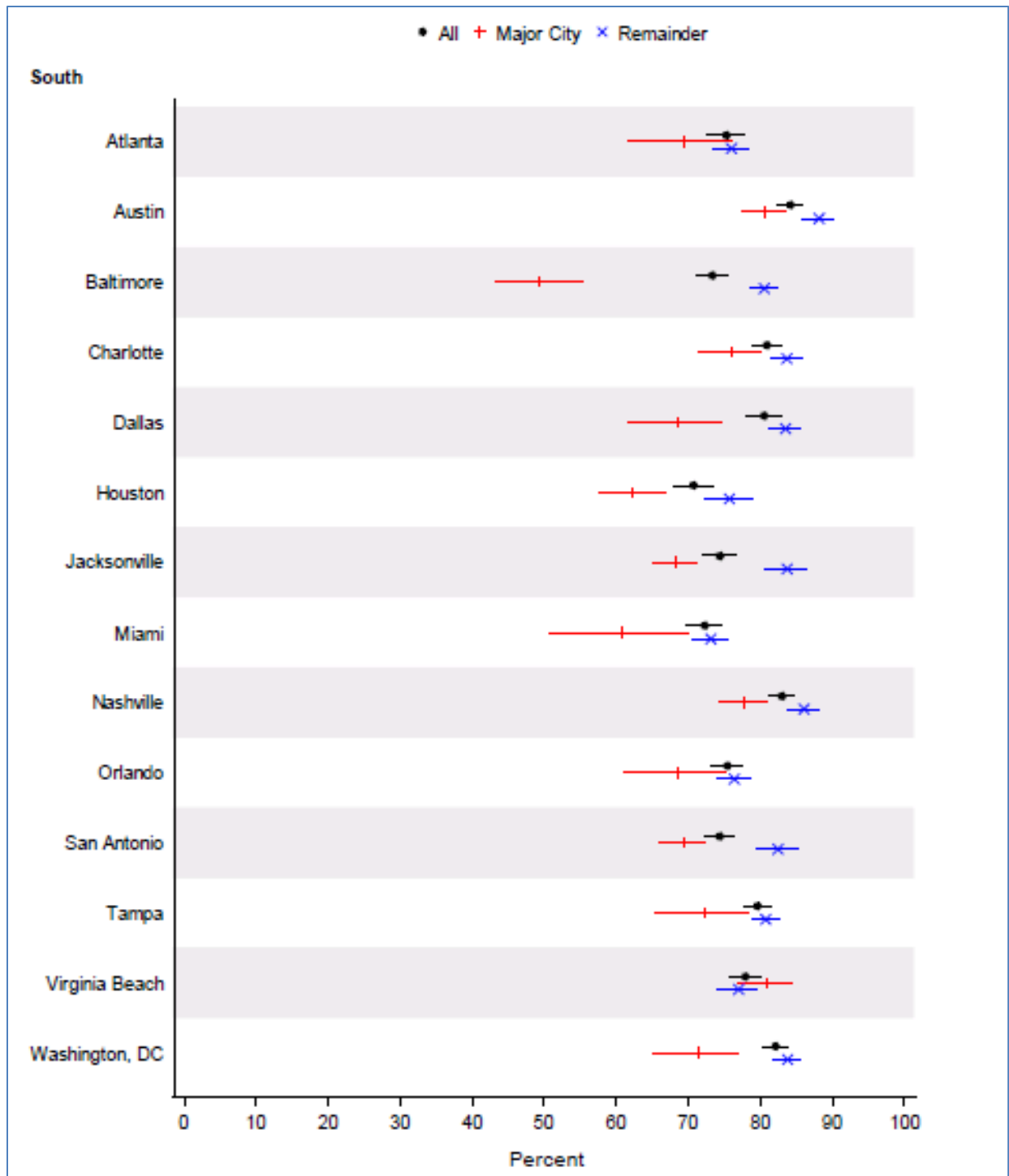
Figure 12. Percentage of household respondents reporting that fear of crime “never” or “rarely” limited their activities, by Midwest CBSA



Note: The symbols (● + x) indicate the percentages, while the lines denote the 95% confidence intervals for the estimates. See appendix table E for estimates and standard errors.

Source: Local-Area Crime Victimization Survey, 2015

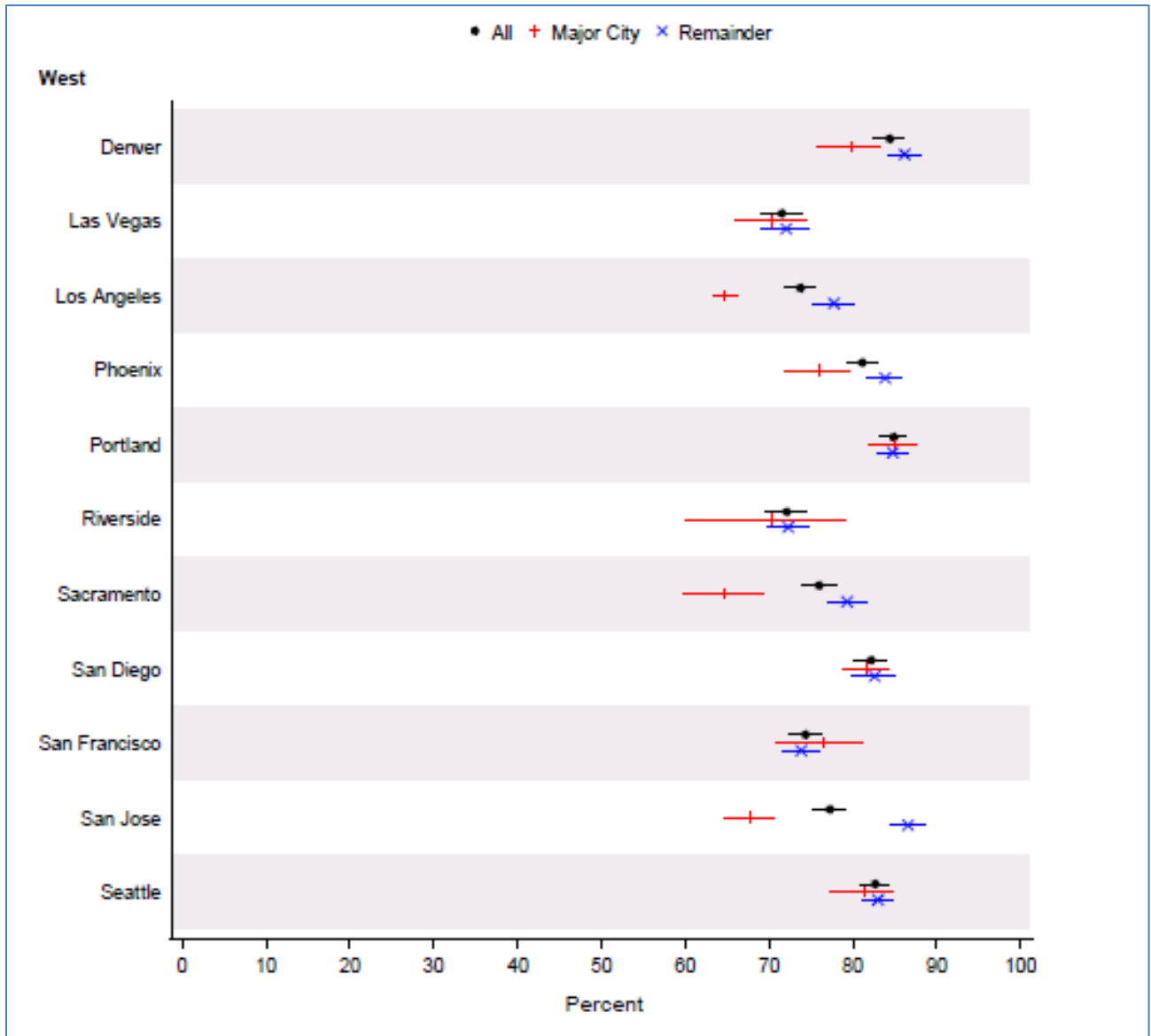
Figure 13. Percentage of household respondents reporting that fear of crime “never” or “rarely” limited their activities, by Southern CBSA



Note: The symbols (● + x) indicate the percentages, while the lines denote the 95% confidence intervals for the estimates. See appendix table E for estimates and standard errors.

Source: Local-Area Crime Victimization Survey, 2015

Figure 14. Percentage of household respondents reporting that fear of crime “never” or “rarely” limited their activities, by Western CBSA



Note: The symbols (● + x) indicate the percentages, while the lines denote the 95% confidence intervals for the estimates. See appendix table E for estimates and standard errors.

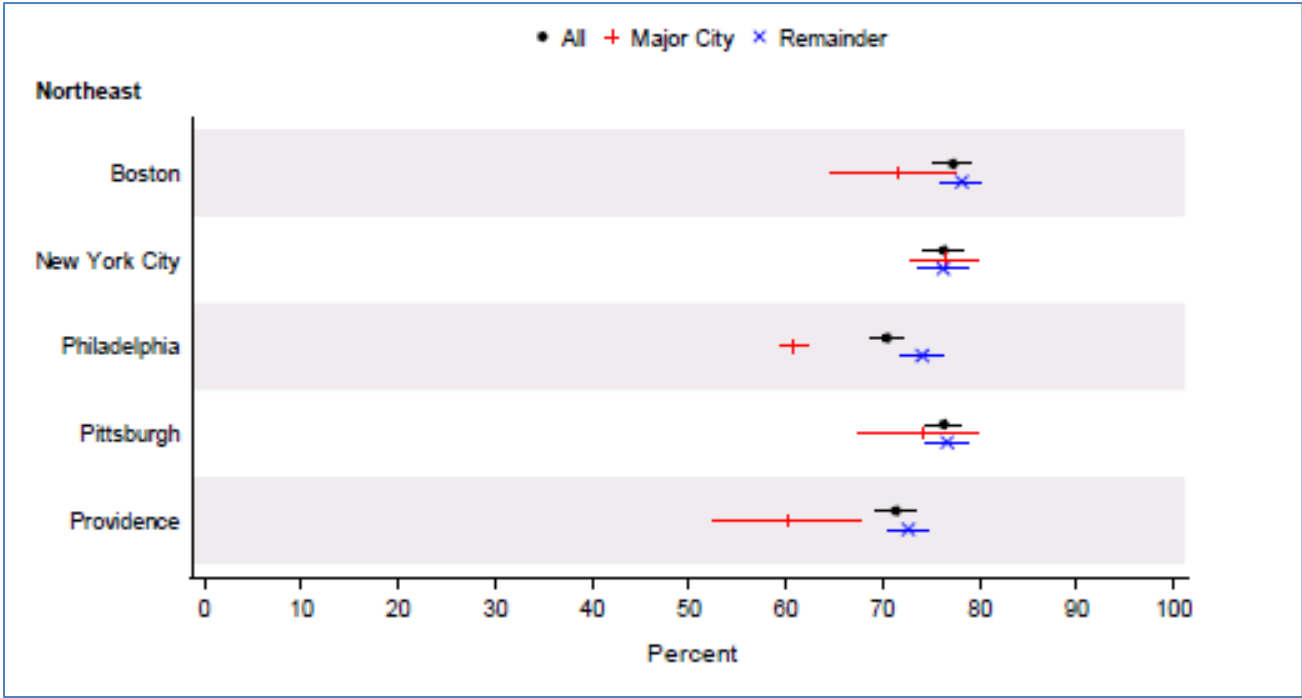
Source: Local-Area Crime Victimization Survey, 2015

Community Item 4: When you leave your home, how often do you think about it being broken into or vandalized while you're away?

There was considerable variability across areas in the percentage of household respondents who said they “never” or “rarely” thought about their homes being broken into or vandalized while they were away (*Figures 15-18*). Estimates ranged from a low of 59% of respondents in the Las Vegas area reporting that they “never” or “rarely” think about their homes being broken into or vandalized to a high of 80% in the Washington, D.C., area.

Seven areas had a 15 percentage point or greater difference between major city dwellers and those residing outside the major city. The Detroit area had the largest difference: 42 percent of those in the city of Detroit reported that they “never” or “rarely” worried about their home being broken into or vandalized compared with 78 percent of those in the remainder of the area. The Cleveland area also had a relatively large difference on this measure (49% versus 76%).

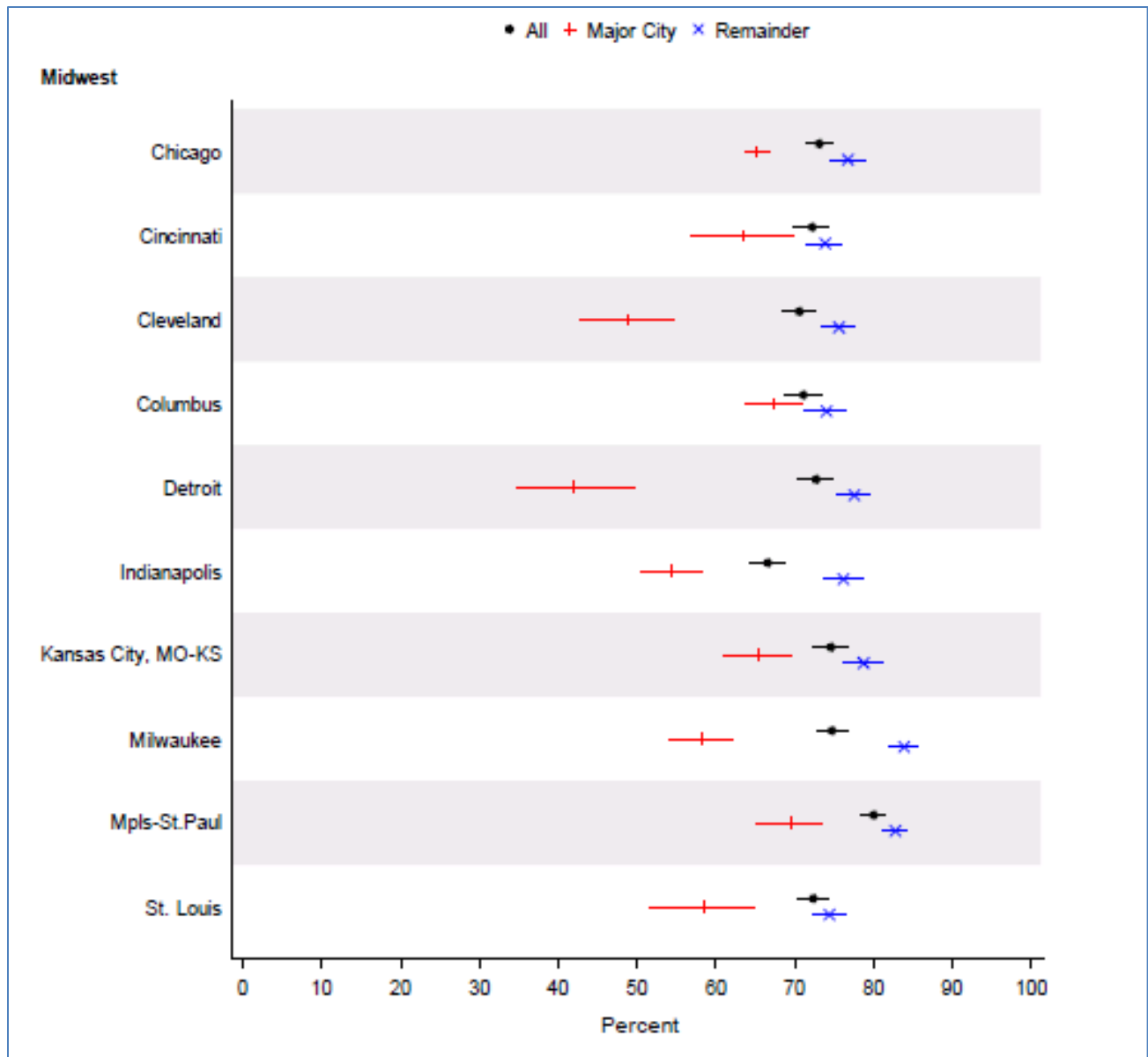
Figure 15. Percentage of household respondents reporting they “never” or “rarely” thought about their home being vandalized or broken into while away, by Northeast CBSA



Note: The symbols (● + x) indicate the percentages, while the lines denote the 95% confidence intervals for the estimates. See appendix table E for estimates and standard errors.

Source: Local-Area Crime Victimization Survey, 2015

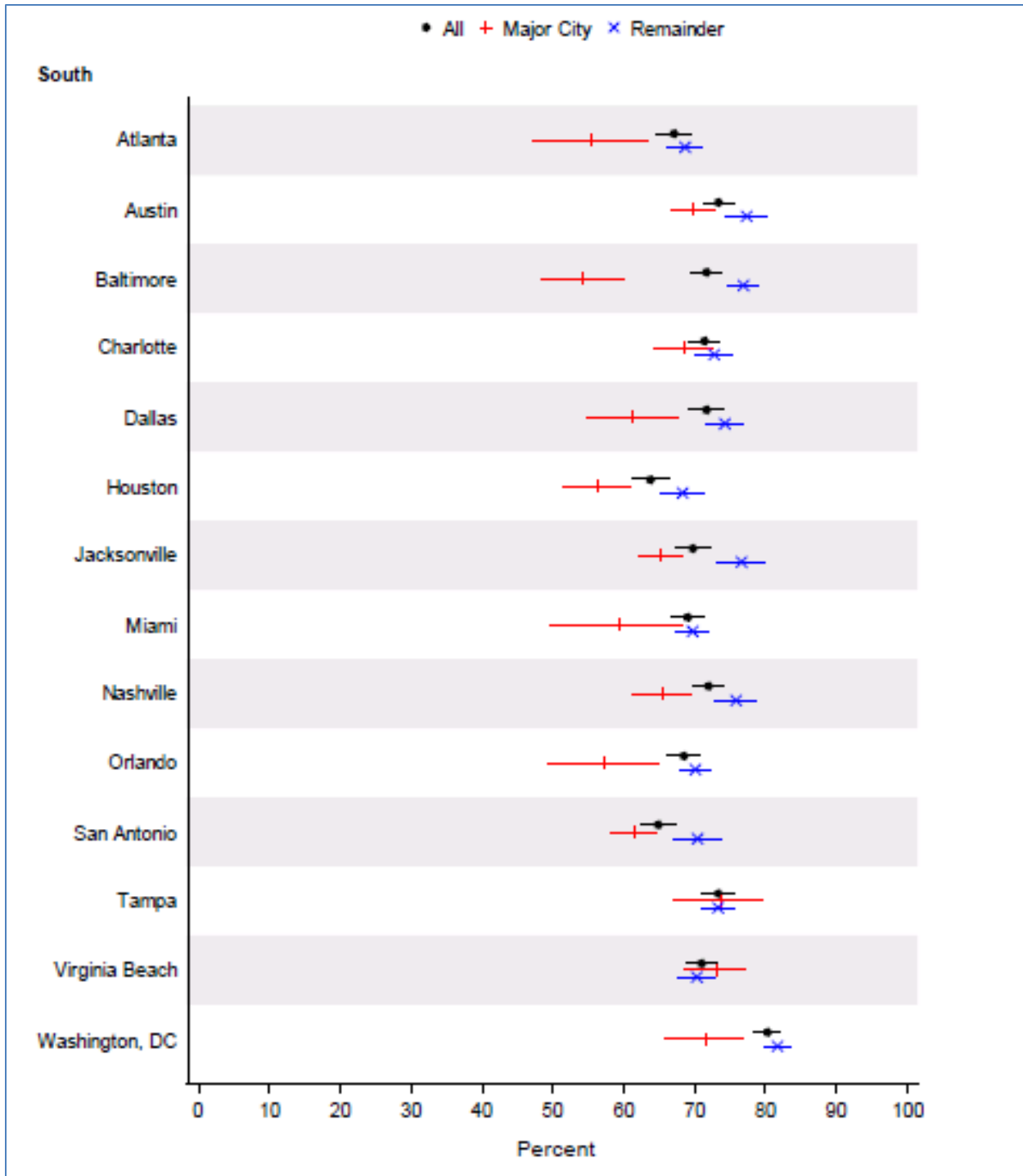
Figure 16. Percentage of household respondents reporting they “never” or “rarely” thought about their home being vandalized or broken into while away, by Midwest CBSA



Note: The symbols (● + x) indicate the percentages, while the lines denote the 95% confidence intervals for the estimates. See appendix table E for estimates and standard errors.

Source: Local-Area Crime Victimization Survey, 2015

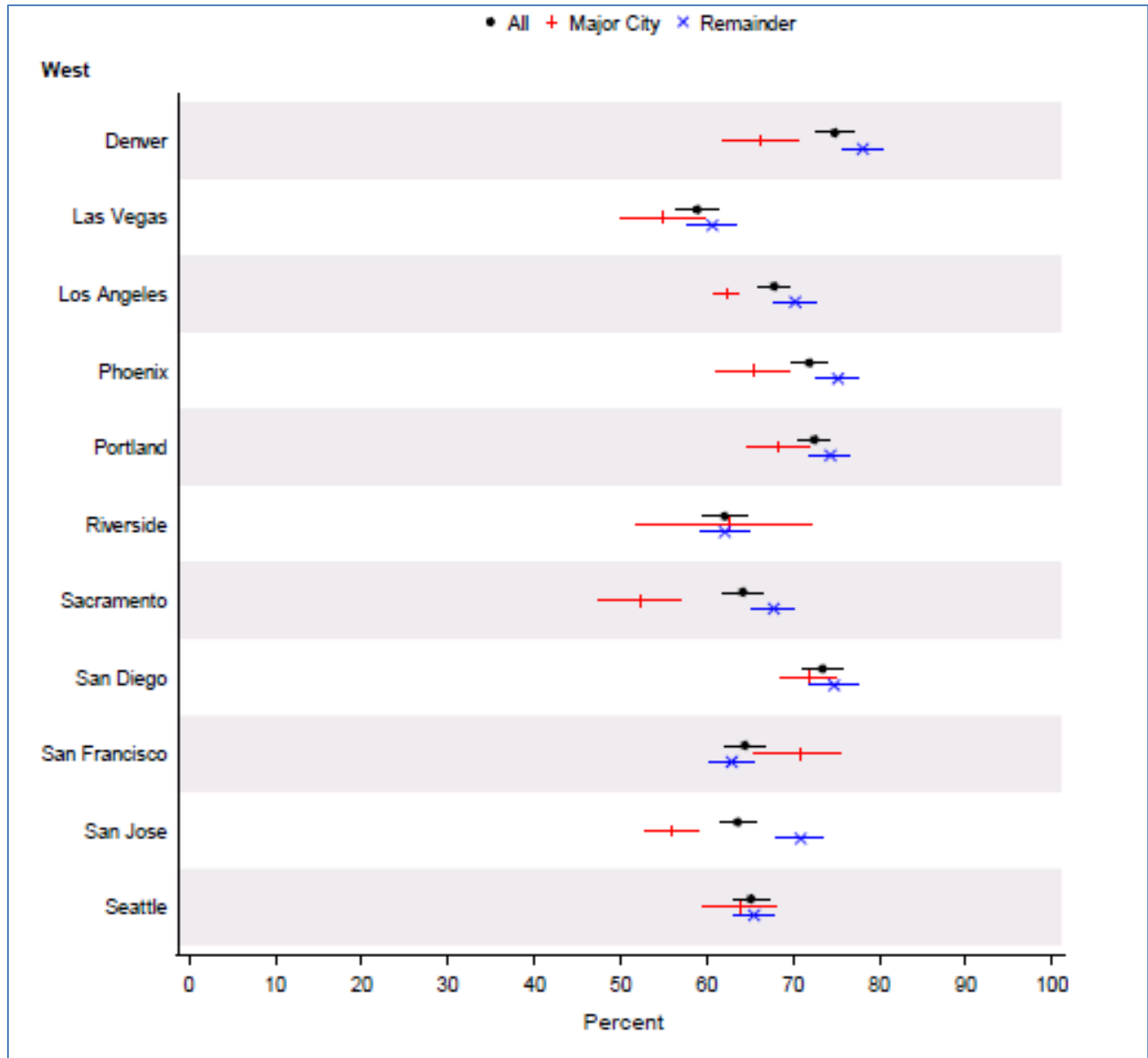
Figure 17. Percentage of household respondents reporting they “never” or “rarely” thought about their home being vandalized or broken into while away, by Southern CBSA



Note: The symbols (● + x) indicate the percentages, while the lines denote the 95% confidence intervals for the estimates. See appendix table E for estimates and standard errors.

Source: Local-Area Crime Victimization Survey, 2015

Figure 18. Percentage of household respondents reporting they “never” or “rarely” thought about their home being vandalized or broken into while away, by Western CBSA



Note: The symbols (● + x) indicate the percentages, while the lines denote the 95% confidence intervals for the estimates. See appendix table E for estimates and standard errors.

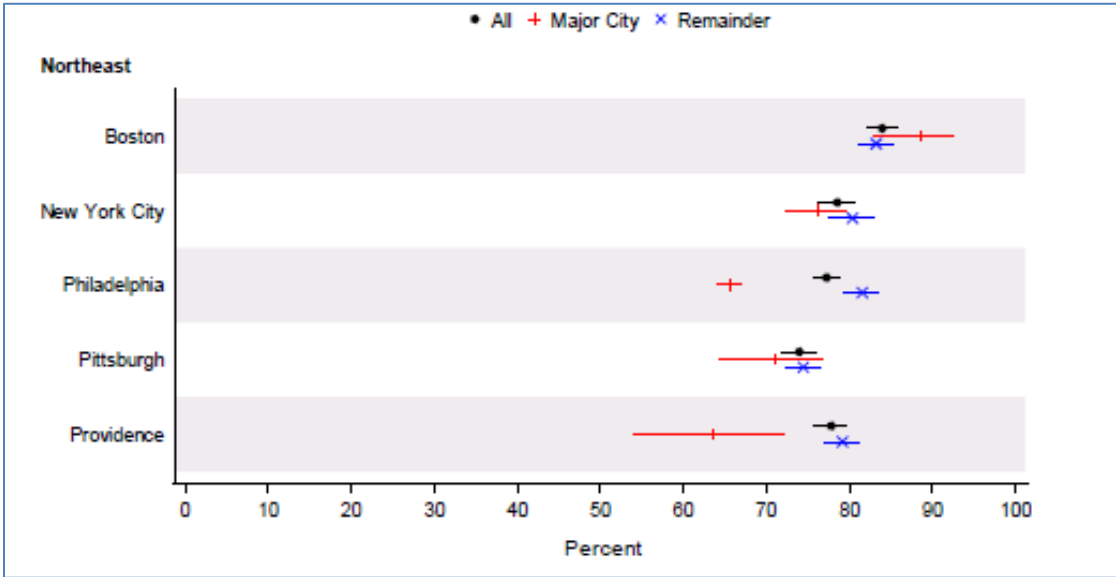
Source: Local-Area Crime Victimization Survey, 2015

Community Item 5: In the past 3 years, do you believe your community has become safer, stayed the same, become less safe, or do you not know?

Across areas, the percentage of household respondents who thought that their community was at least as safe as it was three years ago, that is, who thought it had become safer or stayed the same, ranged from a low of 66% in Indianapolis to a high of 84% in Boston and San Diego (*Figures 19-22*).⁸

On this measure of community safety, 10 of the 40 metropolitan areas had a statistically significant difference of 15 percentage points or more between respondents in the major city and those in the remainder of the area, with those in outlying areas being more likely to believe that their community was at least as safe as it was three years prior. Baltimore and Cleveland each had a percentage-point difference of 24 between major city dwellers and those in outlying areas (50% versus 74% and 52% versus 76%, respectively). Other areas with relatively large differences were in the Midwest: Milwaukee and Indianapolis (23 percentage points each), Detroit (22 percentage points) and St. Louis (21 percentage points).

Figure 19. Percentage of household respondents reporting their neighborhoods became “safer” or “stayed the same” in the prior 3 years, by Northeast CBSA

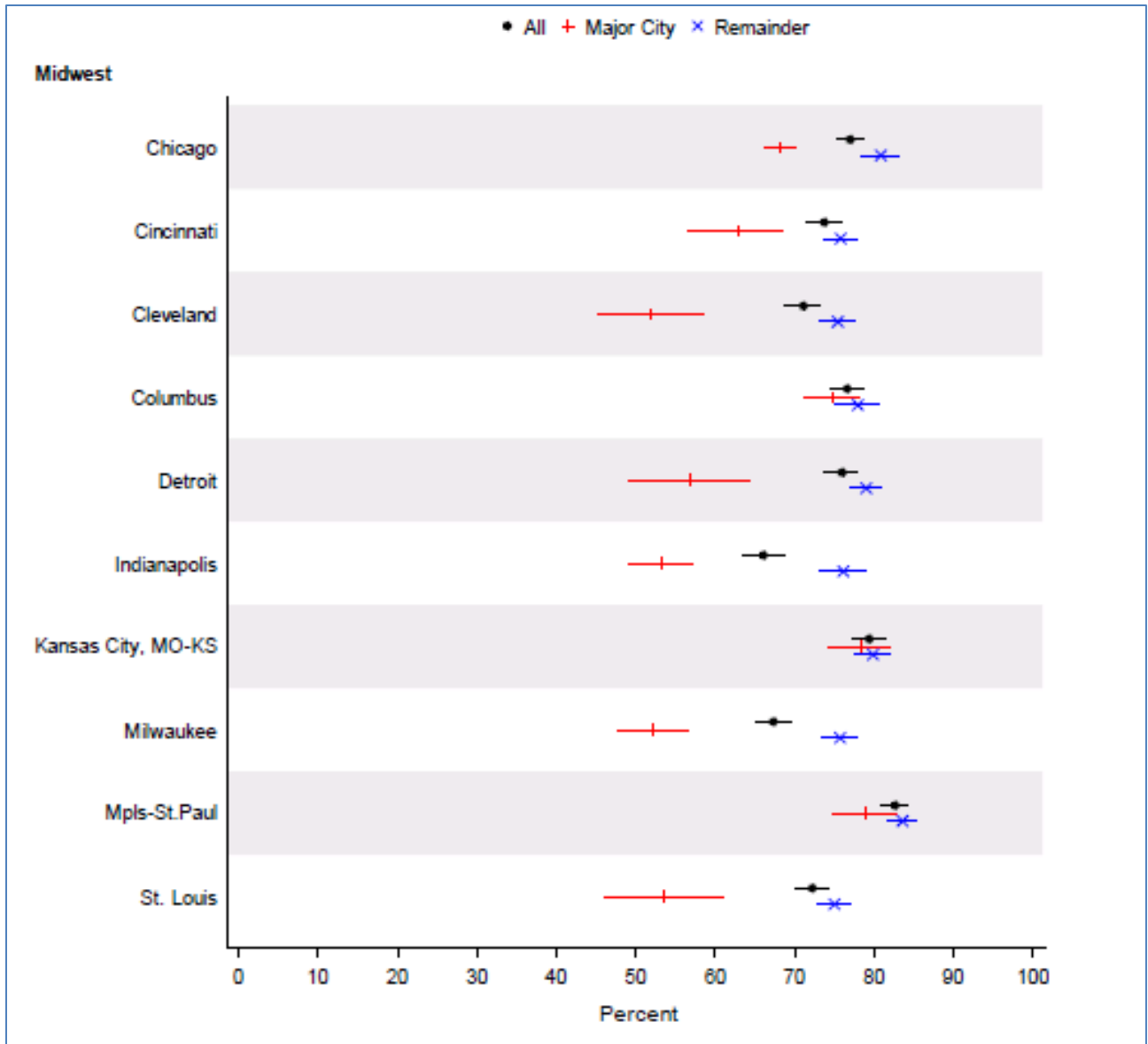


Note: The symbols (● + x) indicate the percentages, while the lines denote the 95% confidence intervals for the estimates. See appendix table E for estimates and standard errors.

Source: Local-Area Crime Victimization Survey, 2015

⁸ Respondents reporting “Don’t know” were included in the denominator.

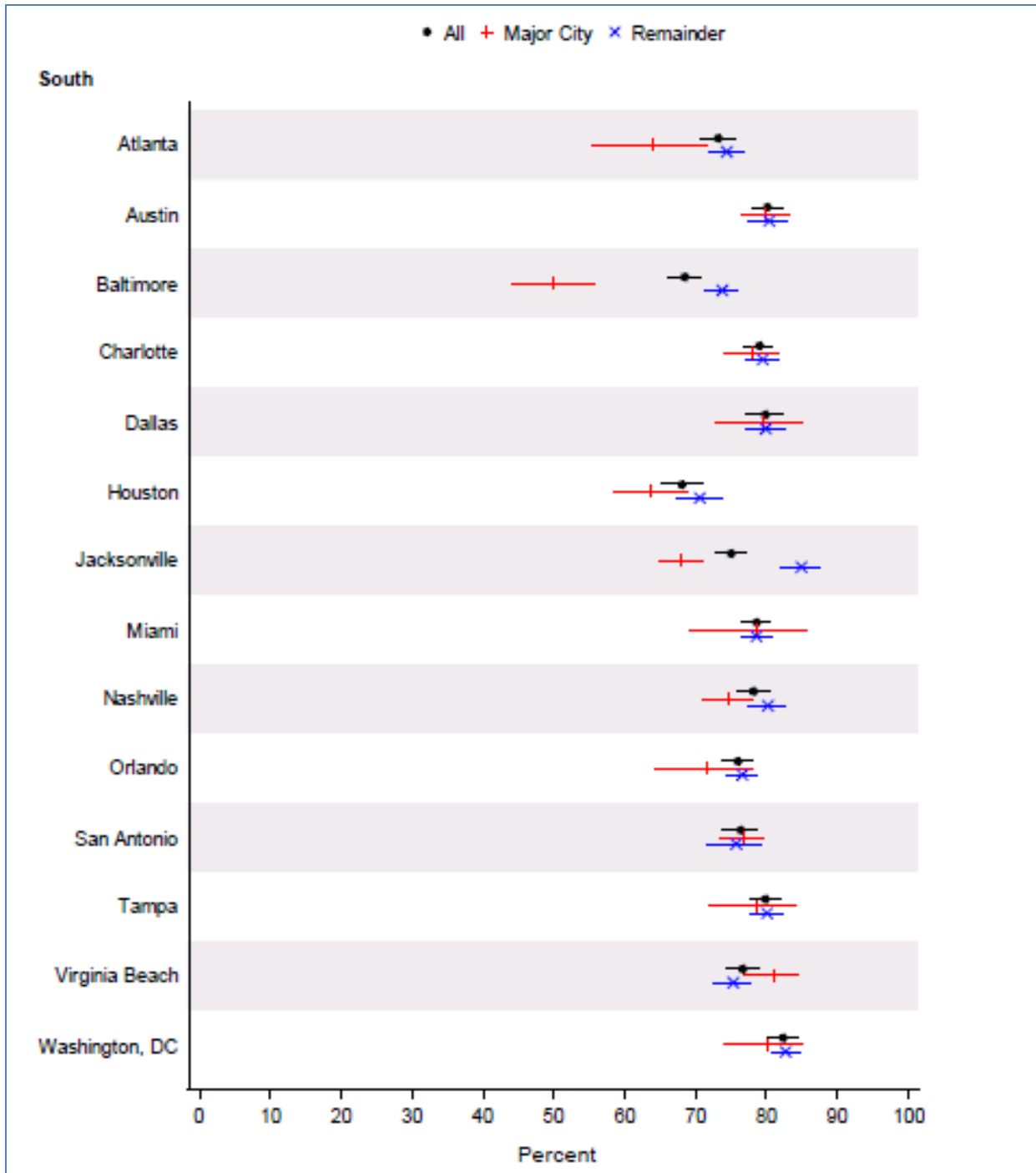
Figure 20. Percentage of household respondents reporting their neighborhoods became “safer” or “stayed the same” in the prior 3 years, by Midwest CBSA



Note: The symbols (● + x) indicate the percentages, while the lines denote the 95% confidence intervals for the estimates. See appendix table E for estimates and standard errors.

Source: Local-Area Crime Victimization Survey, 2015

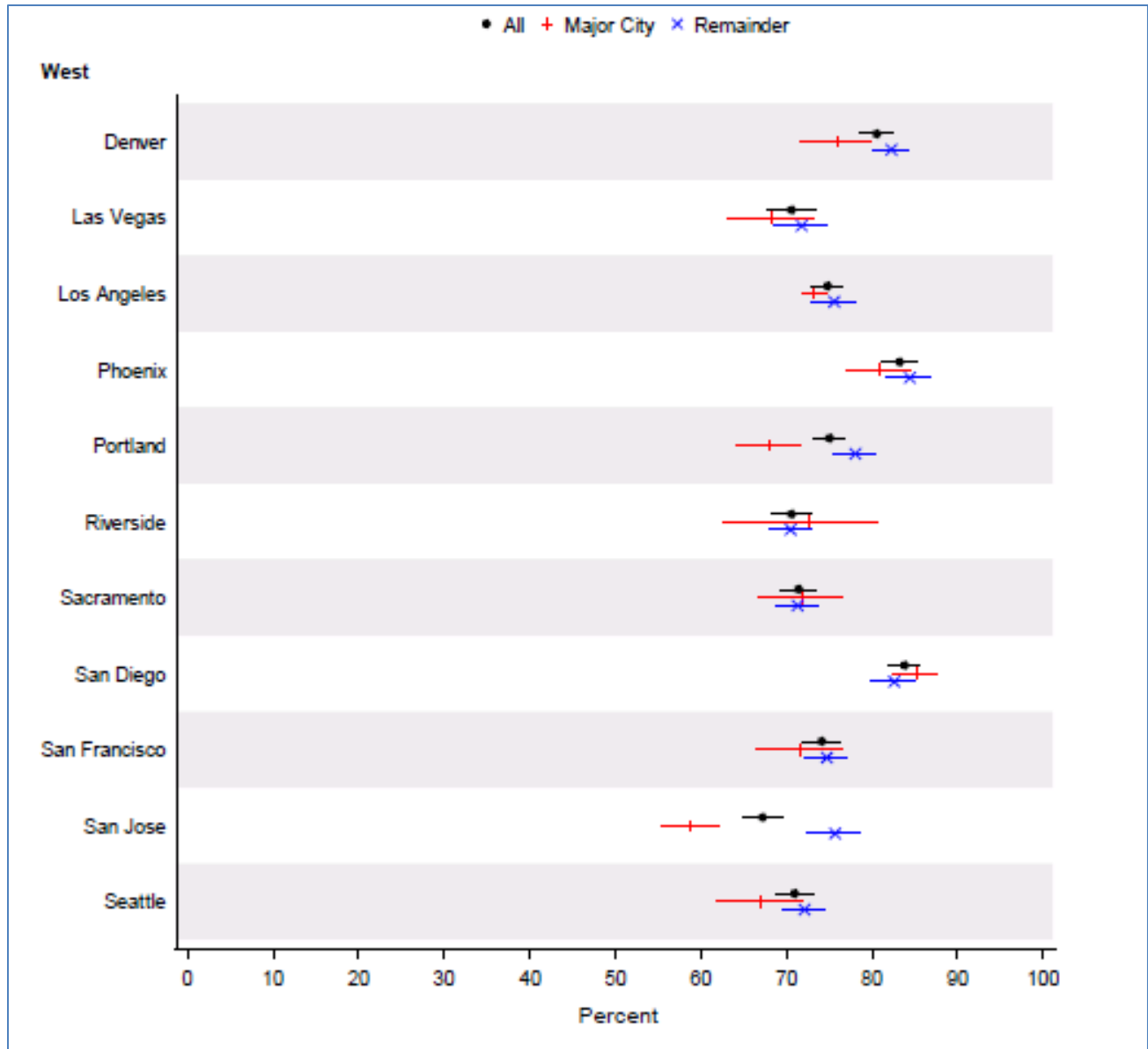
Figure 21. Percentage of household respondents reporting their neighborhoods became “safer” or “stayed the same” in the prior 3 years, by Southern CBSA



Note: The symbols (● + x) indicate the percentages, while the lines denote the 95% confidence intervals for the estimates. See appendix table E for estimates and standard errors.

Source: Local-Area Crime Victimization Survey, 2015

Figure 22. Percentage of residents reporting their household respondents became “safer” or “stayed the same” in the prior 3 years, by Western CBSA



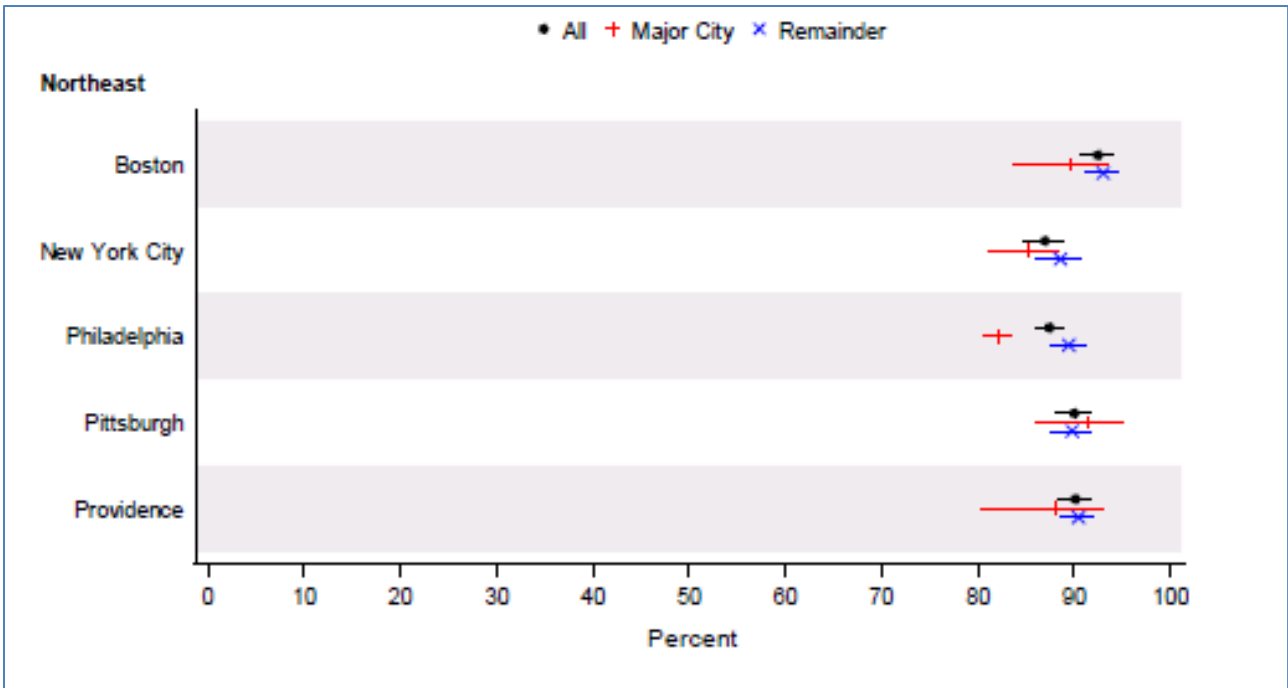
Note: The symbols (● + x) indicate the percentages, while the lines denote the 95% confidence intervals for the estimates. See appendix table E for estimates and standard errors.

Source: Local-Area Crime Victimization Survey, 2015

Community Item 6: Overall, how much of the time is the place where you work safe?

Across the 40 areas, between 84% and 93% of respondents overall reported that their place of work was “always” or “mostly” safe (*Figures 23-26*). There was relatively little difference between respondents in the major cities and those in outlying areas for this item. No metropolitan area had a difference of 15 points or greater between the major city and the outlying area. The largest difference (10 points) was in Baltimore, where 77% of city dwellers reported their workplace as “always” or “mostly” safe compared with 87% of those in outlying areas.

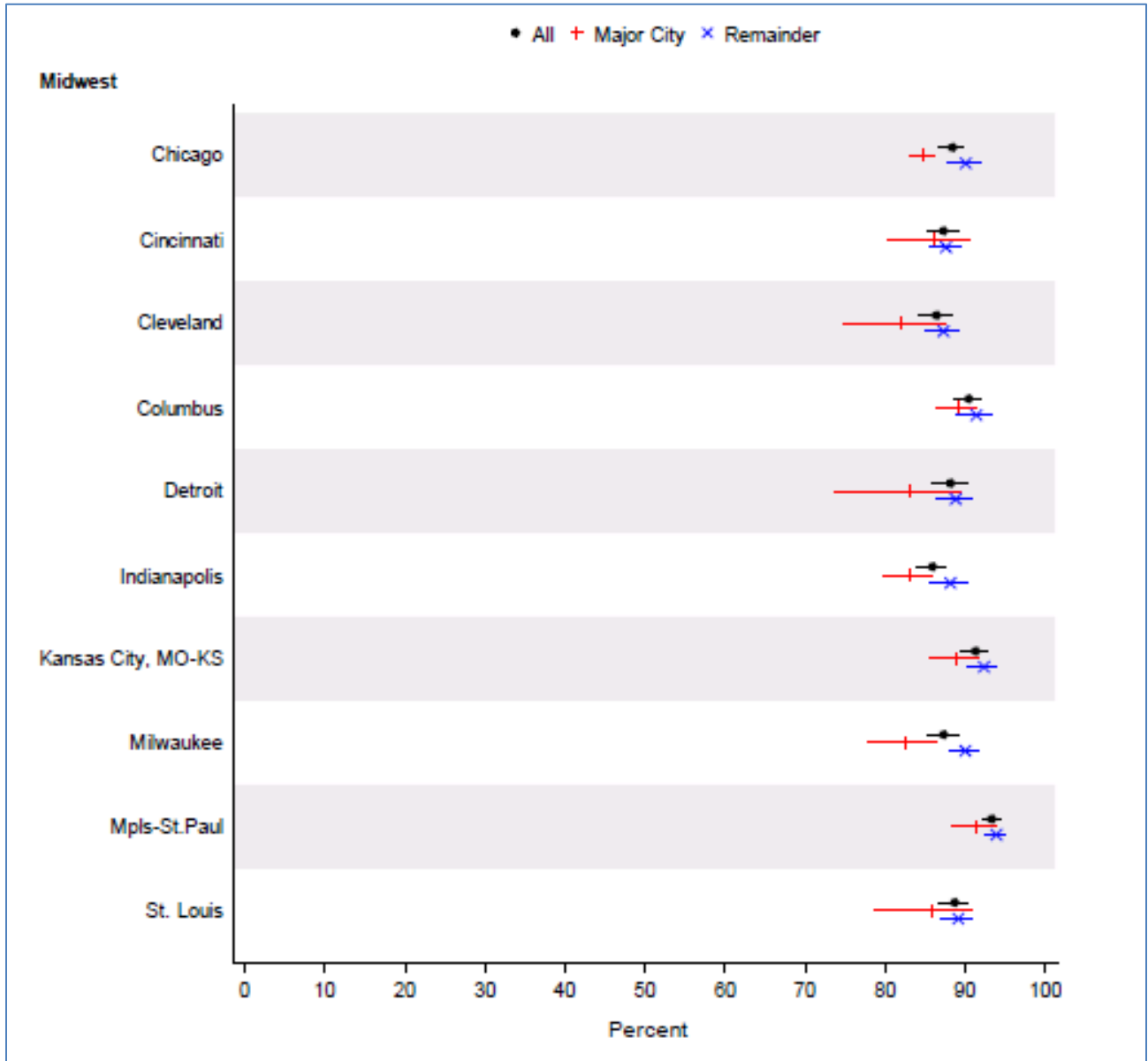
Figure 23. Percentage of household respondents reporting their workplace was “always” or “mostly” safe, by Northeast CBSA



Note: The symbols (● + ×) indicate the percentages, while the lines denote the 95% confidence intervals for the estimates. See appendix table E for estimates and standard errors.

Source: Local-Area Crime Victimization Survey, 2015

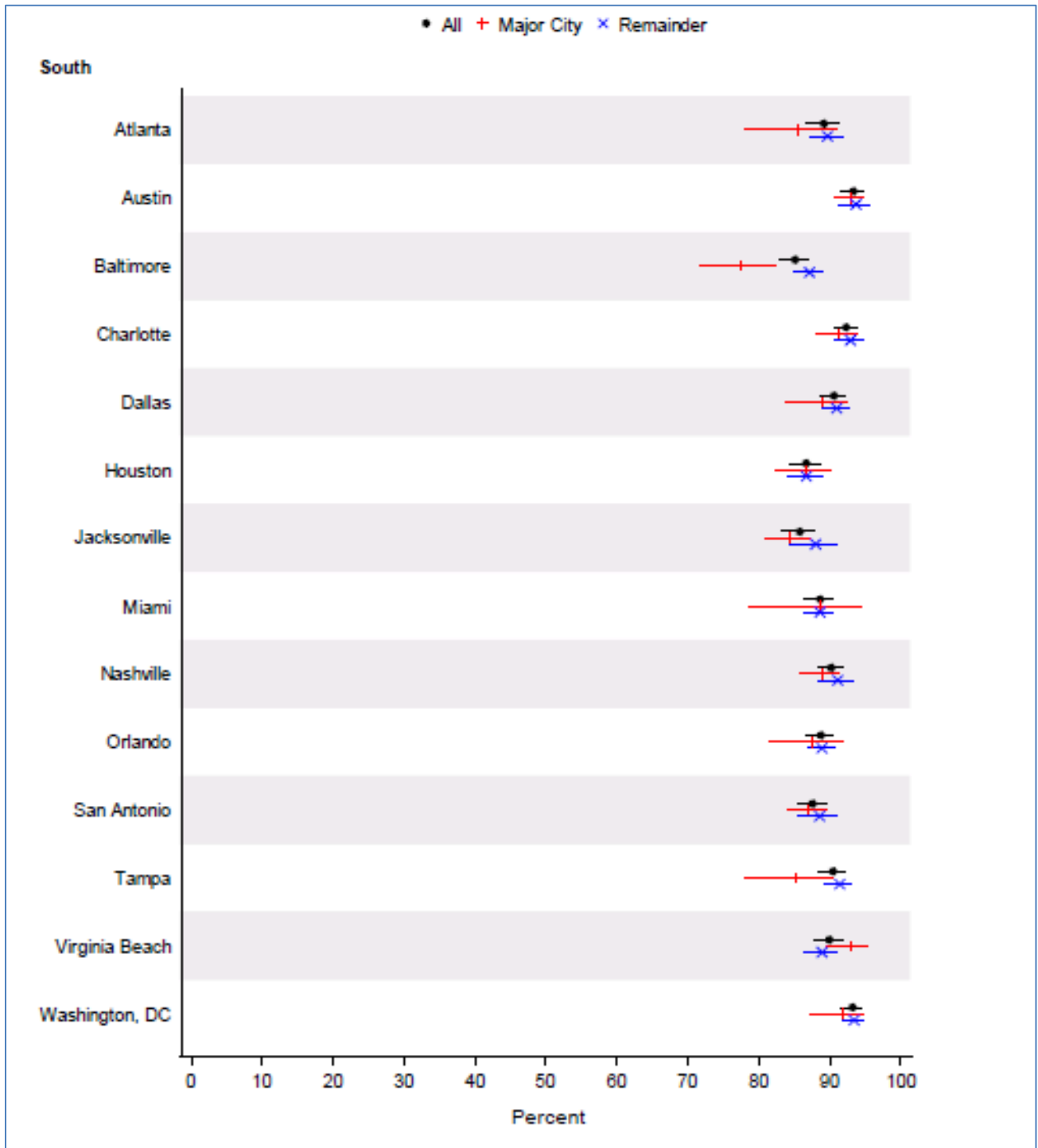
Figure 24. Percentage of household respondents reporting their workplace was “always” or “mostly” safe, by Midwest CBSA



Note: The symbols (● + x) indicate the percentages, while the lines denote the 95% confidence intervals for the estimates. See appendix table E for estimates and standard errors.

Source: Local-Area Crime Victimization Survey, 2015

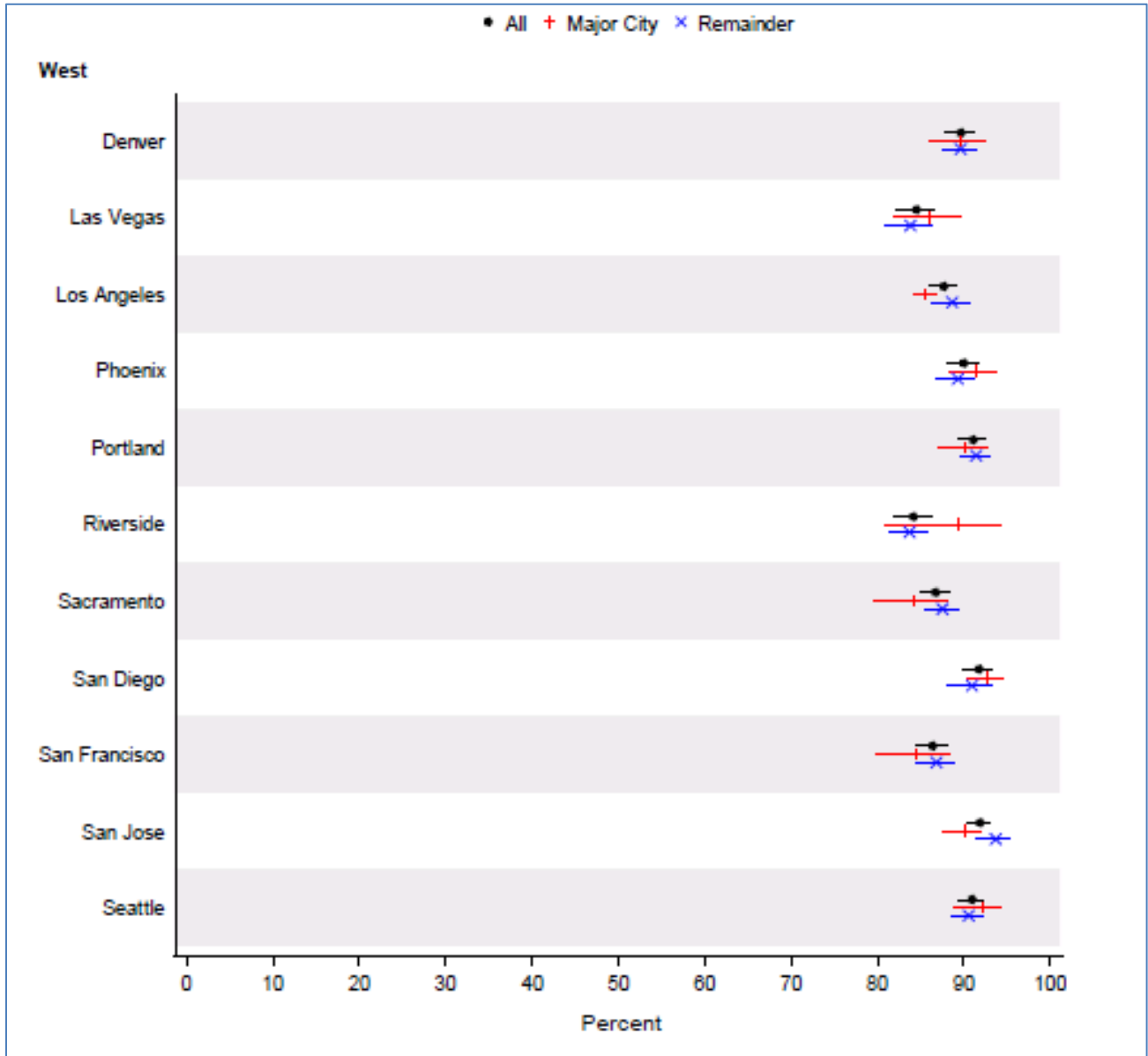
Figure 25. Percentage of household respondents reporting their workplace was “always” or “mostly” safe, by Southern CBSA



Note: The symbols (● + x) indicate the percentages, while the lines denote the 95% confidence intervals for the estimates. See appendix table E for estimates and standard errors.

Source: Local-Area Crime Victimization Survey, 2015

Figure 26. Percentage of household respondents reporting their workplace was “always” or “mostly” safe, by Western CBSA



Note: The symbols (● + x) indicate the percentages, while the lines denote the 95% confidence intervals for the estimates. See appendix table E for estimates and standard errors.

Source: Local-Area Crime Victimization Survey, 2015

III. Measuring Attitudes about Police

The LACS also asked whether respondents had ever contacted the local police while at their current address, and, if so, how satisfied they were with the police response. All respondents, whether or not they reported contact with the police, were then asked to rate the job their local police department was doing in the community. The questions were⁹:

1. While living at this address, have you ever contacted the local police department for assistance?
2. If yes, how satisfied were you with the police response?
3. How would you rate the job the local police department is doing in your community?

As with the community safety items, these comparisons focus only on statistically significant differences and primarily on large differences, defined as a spread of 15 or more percentage points in the range across areas or within subareas of a single CBSA.

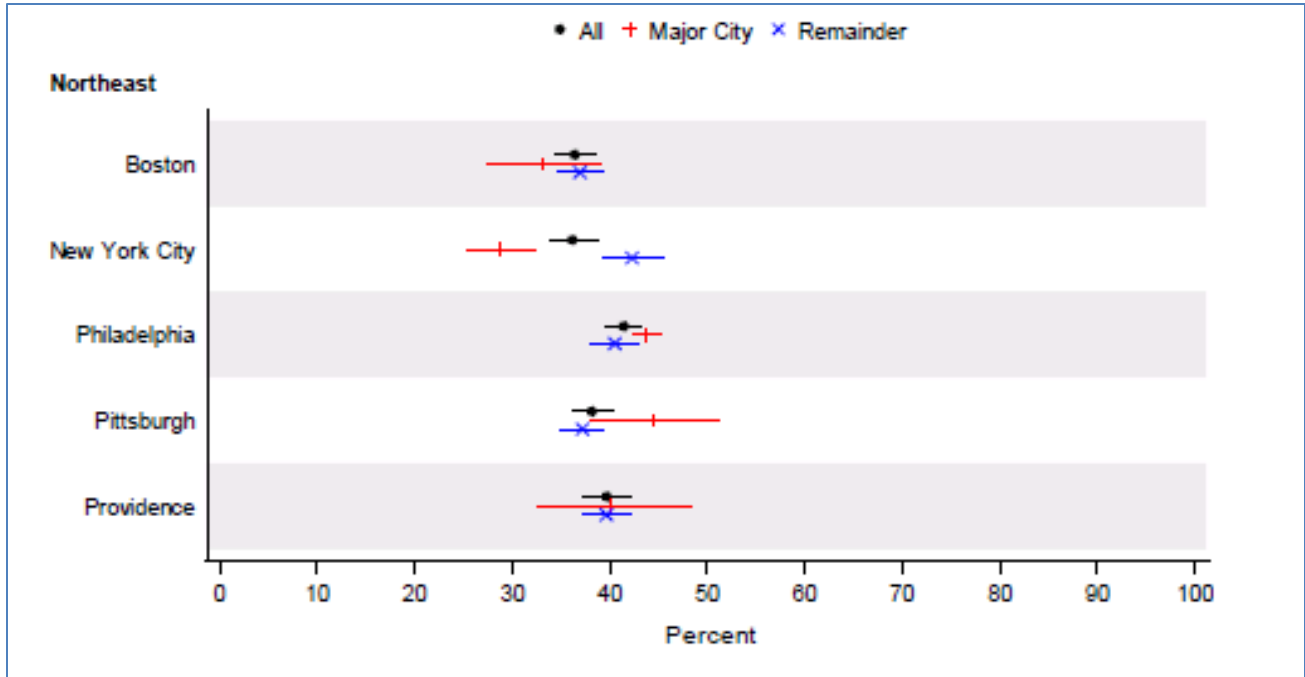
Policing Item 1: While living at this address, have you ever contacted the local police department for assistance?

Overall, less than half of respondents in the 40 areas had contacted police while living at their current address (*Figures 27-30*). Between 30 and 45% of respondents across areas indicated that they had contacted the local police at some point while residing at the sampled address. Three metropolitan areas had a statistically significant spread of 15 percentage points or more between the major city and the remaining area: Cleveland, Detroit, and Miami.

In Miami, those in the surrounding area (36%) were more likely to report contacting the police than those in the major city (20%). This pattern is reversed in Cleveland and Detroit, where higher percentages of city dwellers than those in the surrounding area had contacted local police. In Cleveland, 57% of those in the major city contacted their local police compared with 42% in the outlying area. Similarly, in Detroit, 57% of those in the major city contacted their local police compared with 38% of those residing outside the major city.

⁹ Additional items about police efficacy were added in Year 2 of the LACS field test in 2016. These items are available in Appendix A of this report.

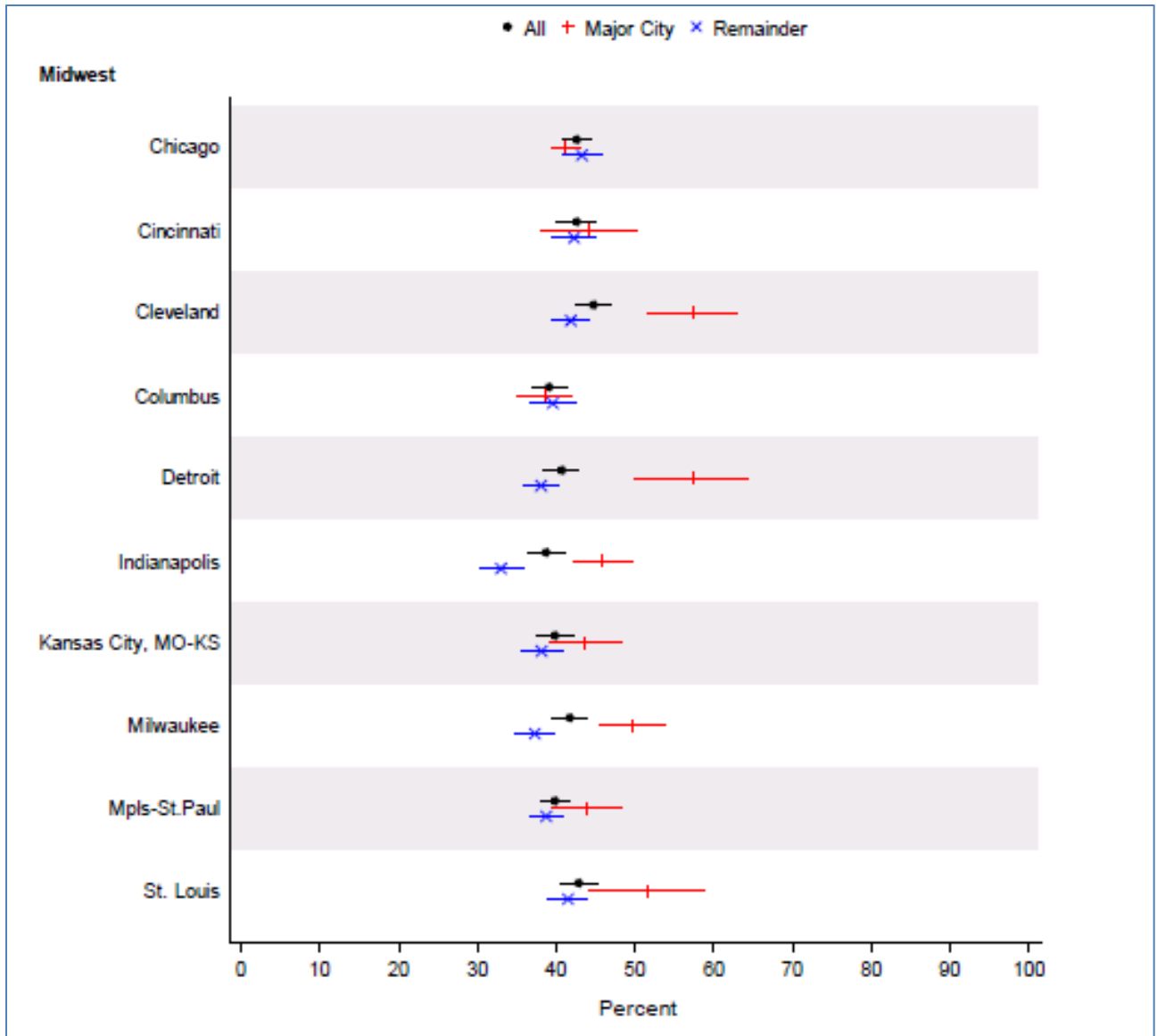
Figure 27. Percentage of household respondents indicating that they had contacted their local police at some point while living at their current address, by Northeast CBSA



Note: The symbols (● + ×) indicate the percentages, while the lines denote the 95% confidence intervals for the estimates. See appendix table E for estimates and standard errors.

Source: Local-Area Crime Victimization Survey, 2015

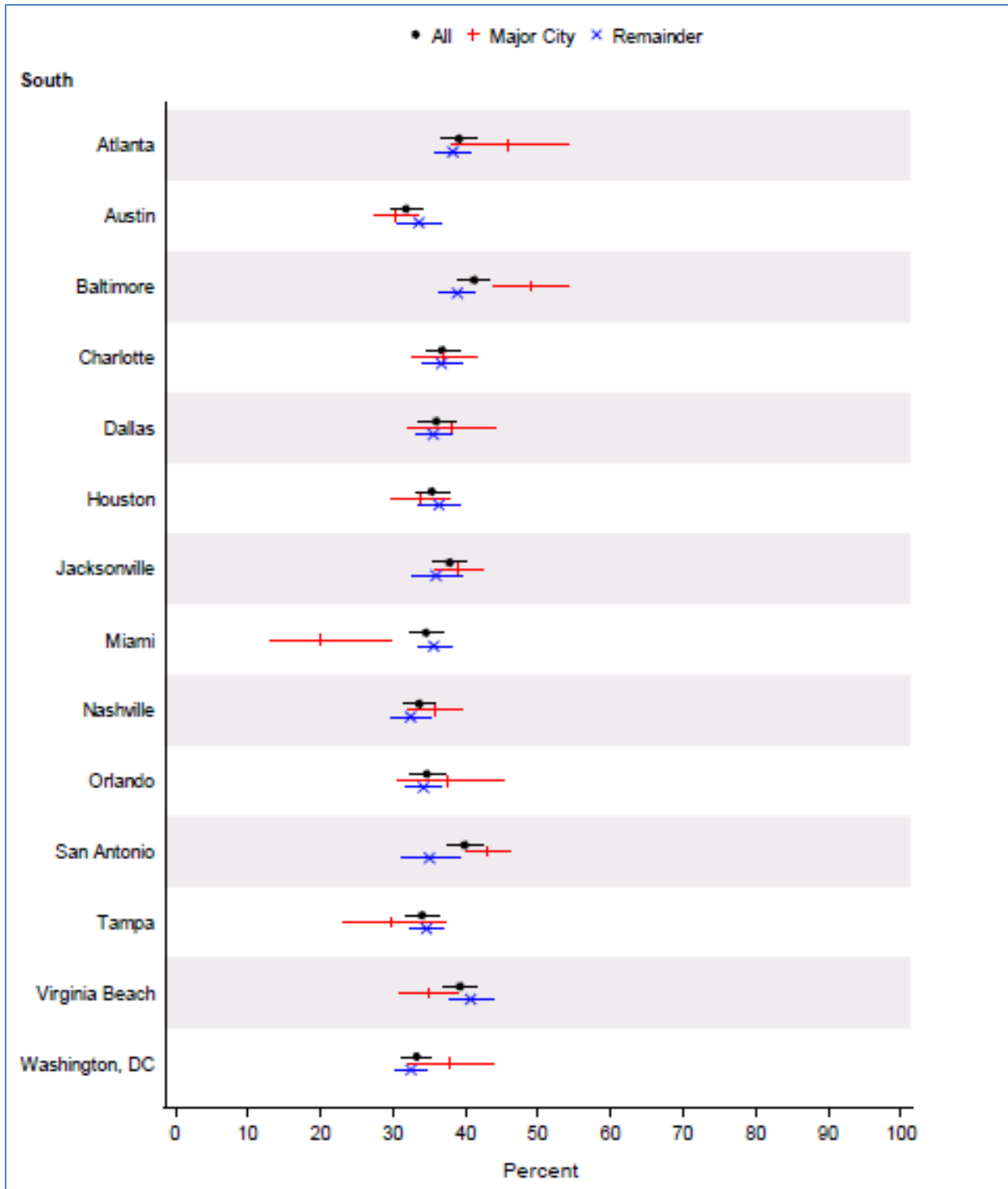
Figure 28. Percentage of household respondents indicating that they had contacted their local police at some point while living at their current address, by Midwest CBSA



Note: The symbols (● + x) indicate the percentages, while the lines denote the 95% confidence intervals for the estimates. See appendix table E for estimates and standard errors.

Source: Local-Area Crime Victimization Survey, 2015

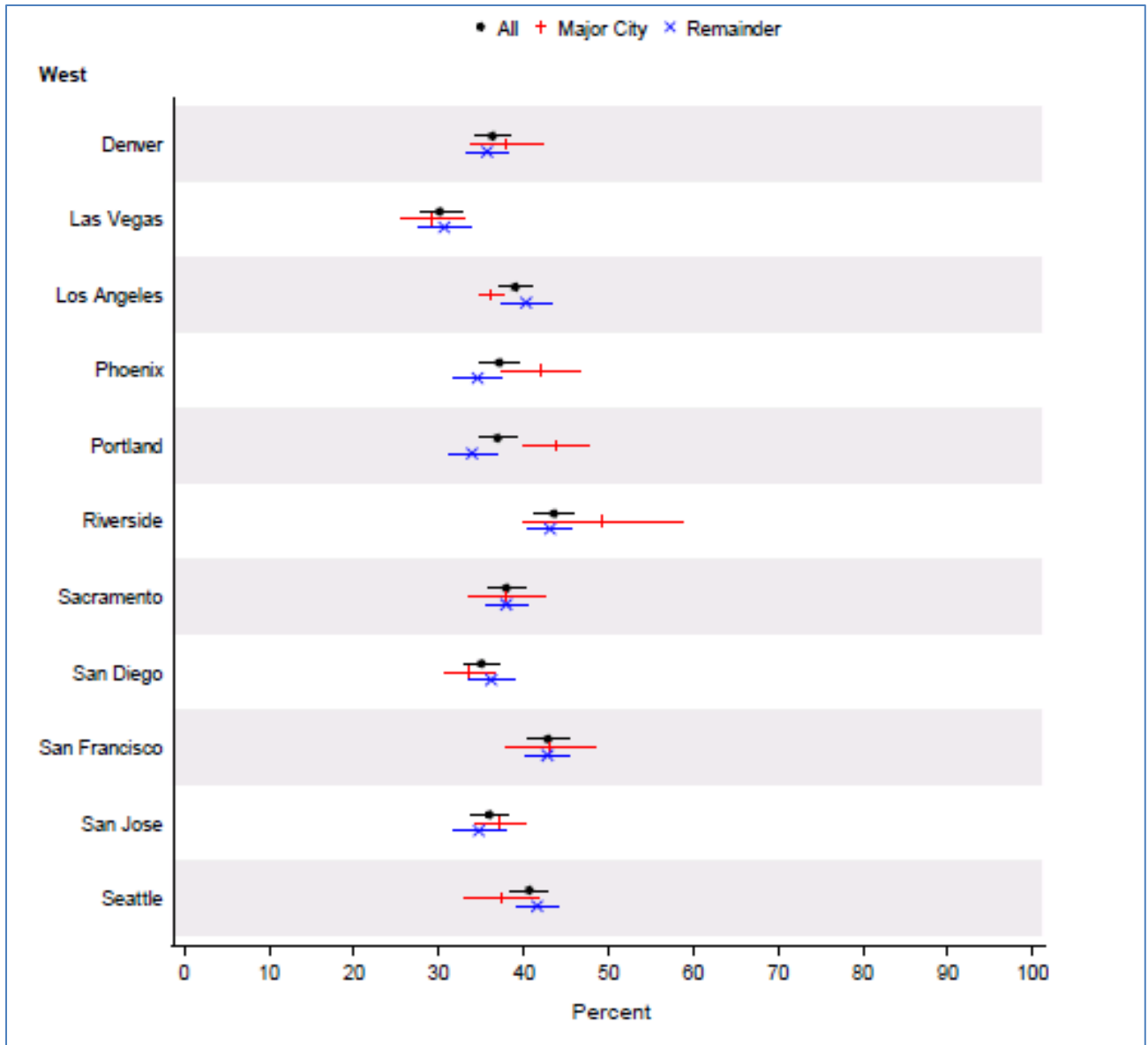
Figure 29. Percentage of household respondents indicating that they had contacted their local police at some point while living at their current address, by Southern CBSA



Note: The symbols (● + x) indicate the percentages, while the lines denote the 95% confidence intervals for the estimates. See appendix table E for estimates and standard errors.

Source: Local-Area Crime Victimization Survey, 2015

Figure 30. Percentage of household respondents indicating that they had contacted their local police at some point while living at their current address, by Western CBSA



Note: The symbols (● + x) indicate the percentages, while the lines denote the 95% confidence intervals for the estimates. See appendix table E for estimates and standard errors.

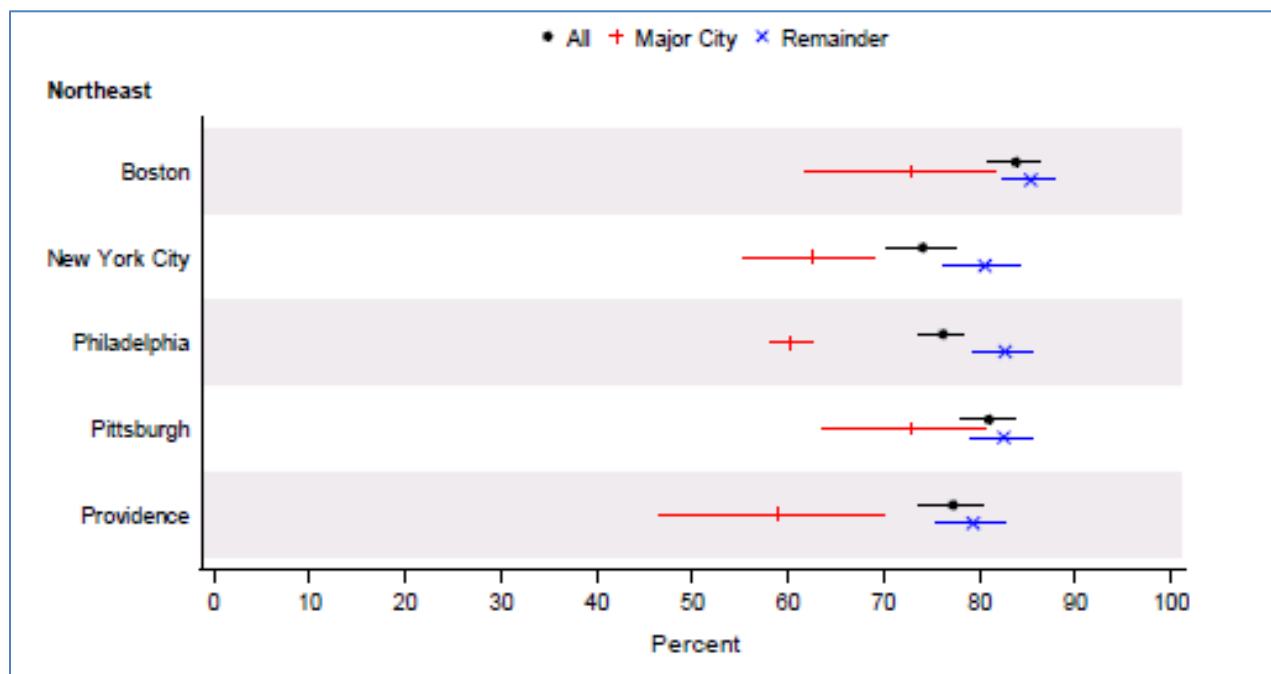
Source: Local-Area Crime Victimization Survey, 2015

Policing Item 2: If you have contacted the police while living at this address, how satisfied were you with the police response?

In each of the 40 areas, a majority of respondents who had contacted police while living at their current address indicated being “very” or “mostly” satisfied with the police response (*Figures 31-34*). The range of respondents across areas who had contacted the police and indicated that they were “very” or “mostly” satisfied with the police response was about 19 percentage points, with a low of 67% in Los Angeles and a high of 86% in Minneapolis-St. Paul.

In fifteen of the forty metropolitan areas, the difference between the major city and remaining area was greater than 15 percentage points. This difference exceeded 30 points in Milwaukee, Detroit, and Miami. In Milwaukee, 59% of those in the major city were very/mostly satisfied compared with 90 percent of those residing outside the major city. In Detroit, 50% of those in the major city reported being very/mostly satisfied with the local police response compared with 83% in the outlying area. In Miami, 42% of those in the major city were very/mostly satisfied compared with 77% of those outside the major city.

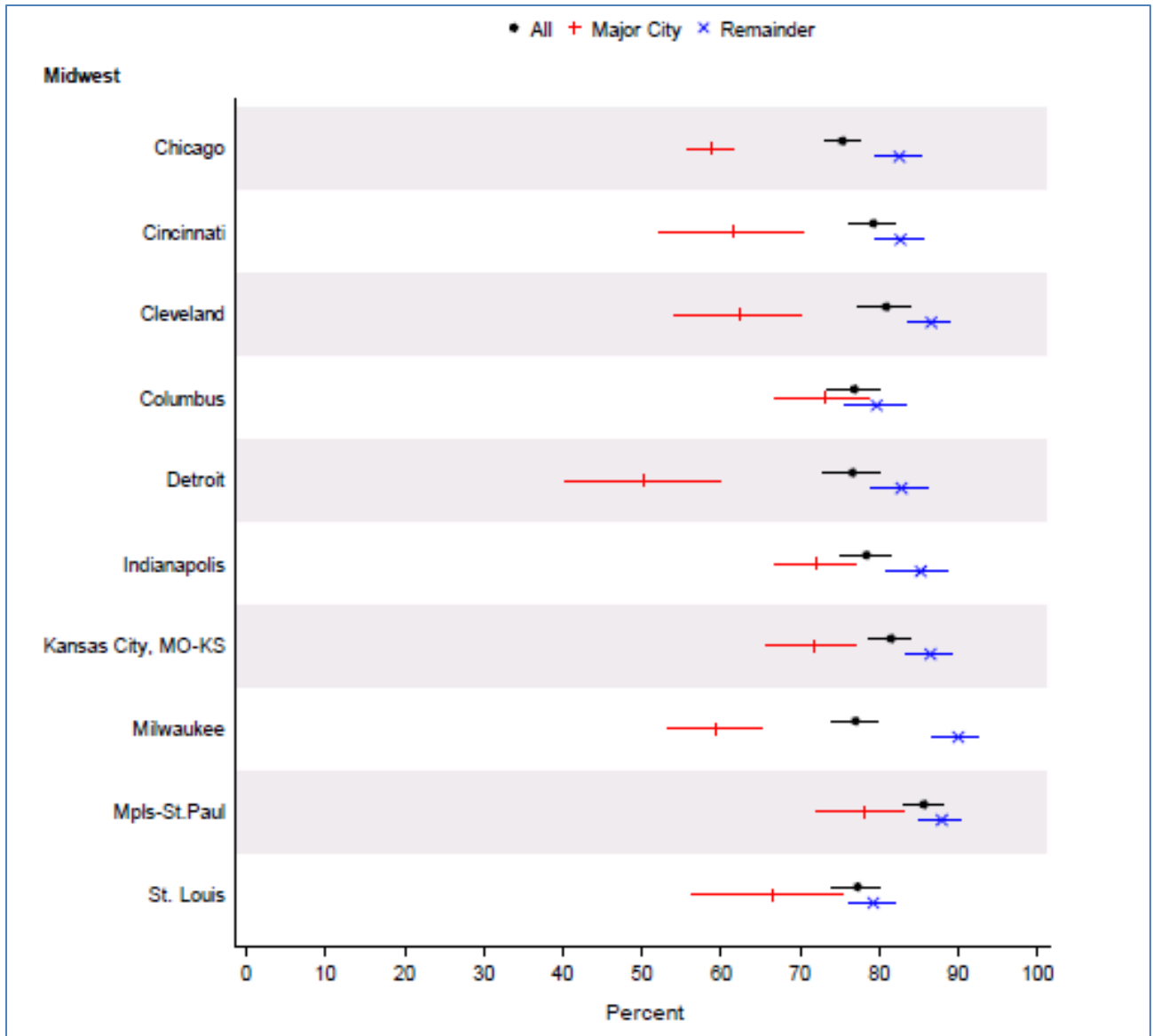
Figure 31. Percentage of those who reported contacting their local police who were “very satisfied” or “mostly satisfied” with the police response, by Northeast CBSA



Note: The symbols (● + x) indicate the percentages, while the lines denote the 95% confidence intervals for the estimates. See appendix table E for estimates and standard errors.

Source: Local-Area Crime Victimization Survey, 2015

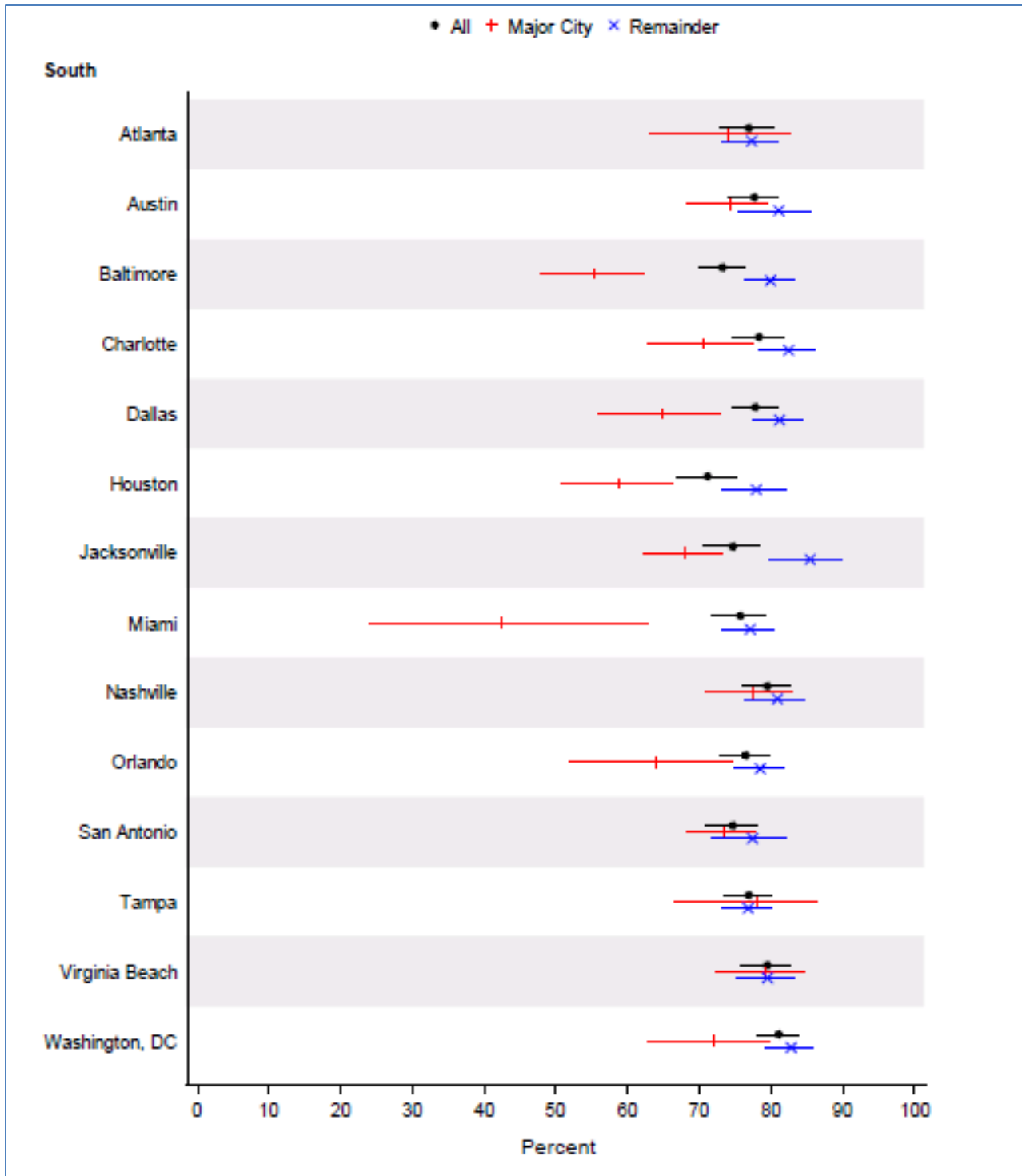
Figure 32. Percentage of those who reported contacting their local police who were “very satisfied” or “mostly satisfied” with the police response, by Midwest CBSA



Note: The symbols (● + x) indicate the percentages, while the lines denote the 95% confidence intervals for the estimates. See appendix table E for estimates and standard errors.

Source: Local-Area Crime Victimization Survey, 2015

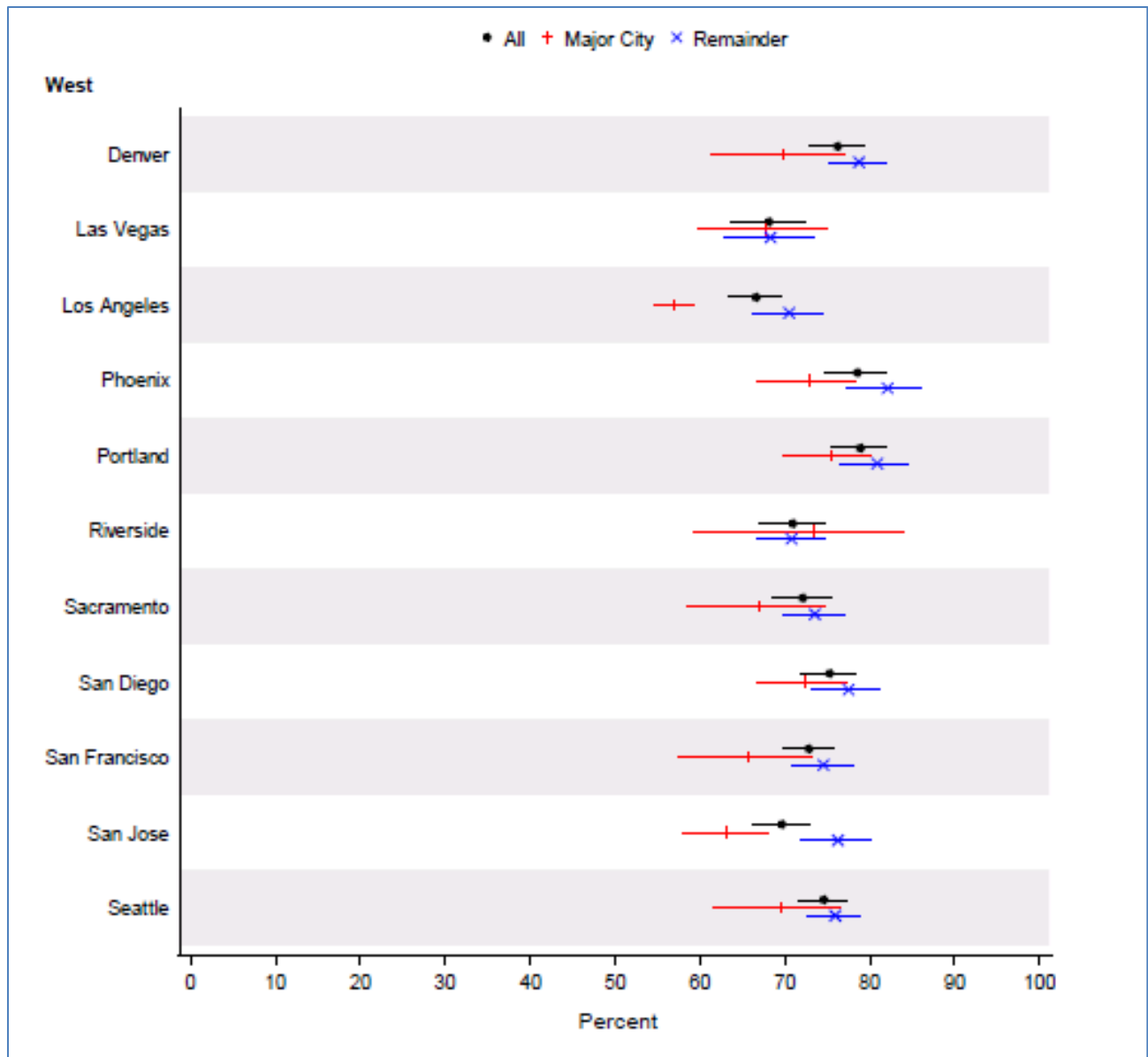
Figure 33. Percentage of those who reported contacting their local police who were “very satisfied” or “mostly satisfied” with the police response, by Southern CBSA



Note: The symbols (● + x) indicate the percentages, while the lines denote the 95% confidence intervals for the estimates. See appendix table E for estimates and standard errors.

Source: Local-Area Crime Victimization Survey, 2015

Figure 34. Percentage of those who reported contacting their local police who were “very satisfied” or “mostly satisfied” with the police response, by Western CBSA



Note: The symbols (● + x) indicate the percentages, while the lines denote the 95% confidence intervals for the estimates. See appendix table E for estimates and standard errors.

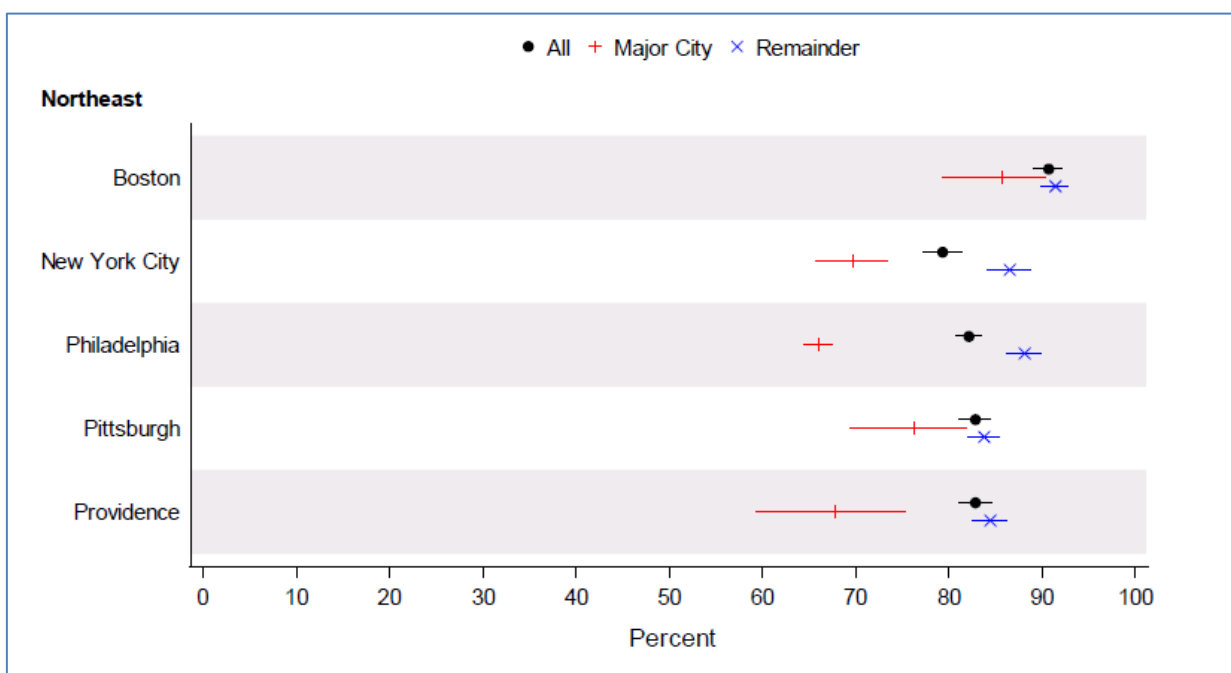
Source: Local-Area Crime Victimization Survey, 2015

Policing Item 3: How would you rate the job the local police department is doing in your community?

Across areas overall, most household respondents rated their police department as “excellent” or “good”; this includes both respondents who had contacted police while at their current residence and those who had not. These percentages ranged from 75% in San Jose to 92% in Minneapolis-St. Paul (*Figures 35-38*).

When looking at ratings within specific areas, there was notable variation between respondents in the central cities and the outlying areas. Sixteen of the 40 CBSAs had a spread of at least 15 percentage points between city dwellers compared with those in outlying areas. In each of these areas, the percentages of those rating the job of the local police as “excellent” or “good” were lower for those in the major city than those in surrounding areas. In addition, four metropolitan areas had a difference between the major city and outlying area that was larger than 25 percentage points: St. Louis (59% versus 85%), Cleveland (52 vs. 90%), Baltimore (47 vs. 88%) and Detroit (42 vs. 92%).

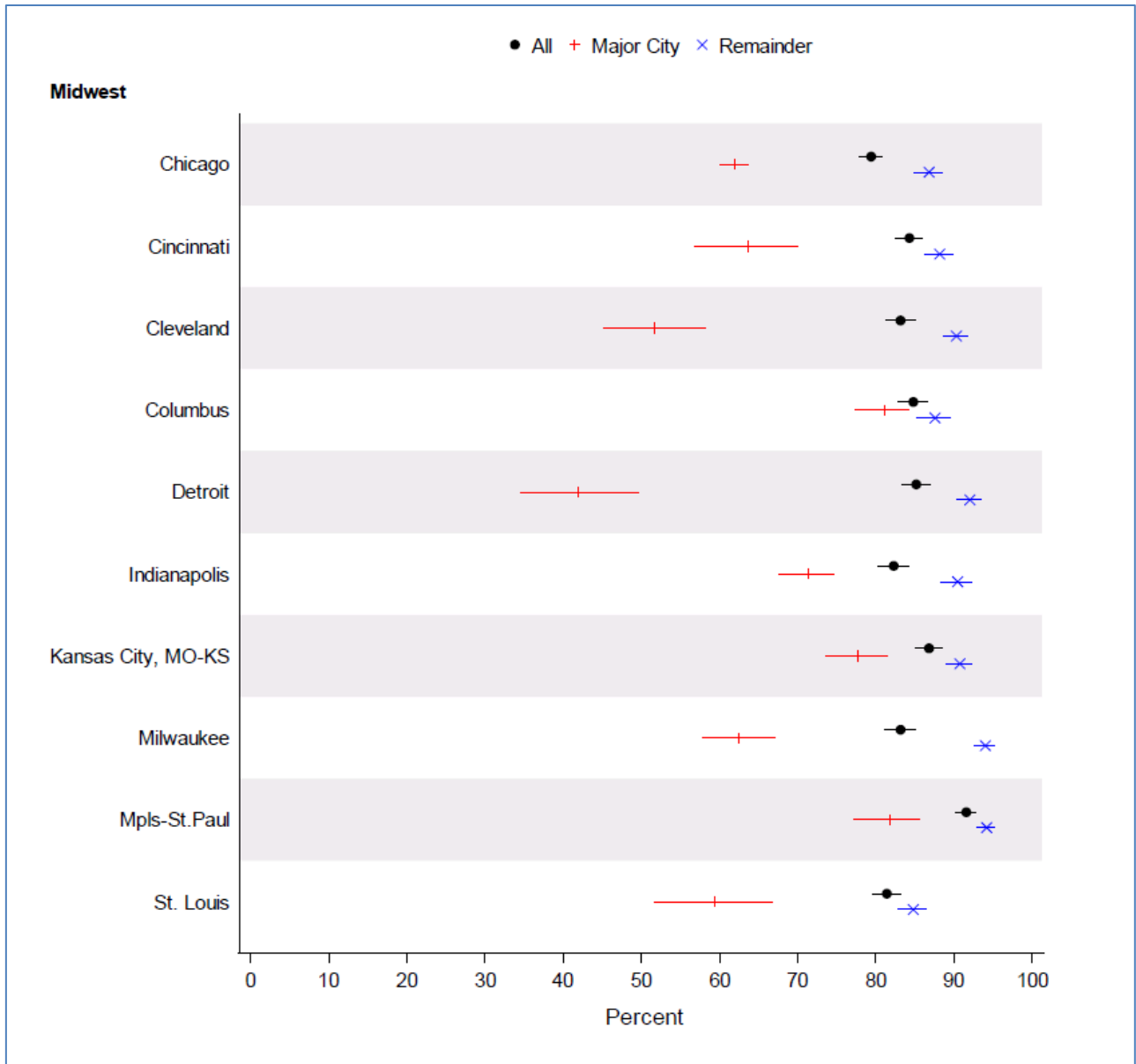
Figure 35. Percentage of household respondents rating the job of the local police as “excellent” or “good,” by Northeast CBSA



Note: The symbols (● + x) indicate the percentages, while the lines denote the 95% confidence intervals for the estimates. See appendix table E for estimates and standard errors.

Source: Local-Area Crime Victimization Survey, 2015

Figure 36. Percentage of household respondents rating the job of the local police as “excellent” or “good,” by Midwest CBSA



Note: The symbols (● + x) indicate the percentages, while the lines denote the 95% confidence intervals for the estimates. See appendix table E for estimates and standard errors.

Source: Local-Area Crime Victimization Survey, 2015

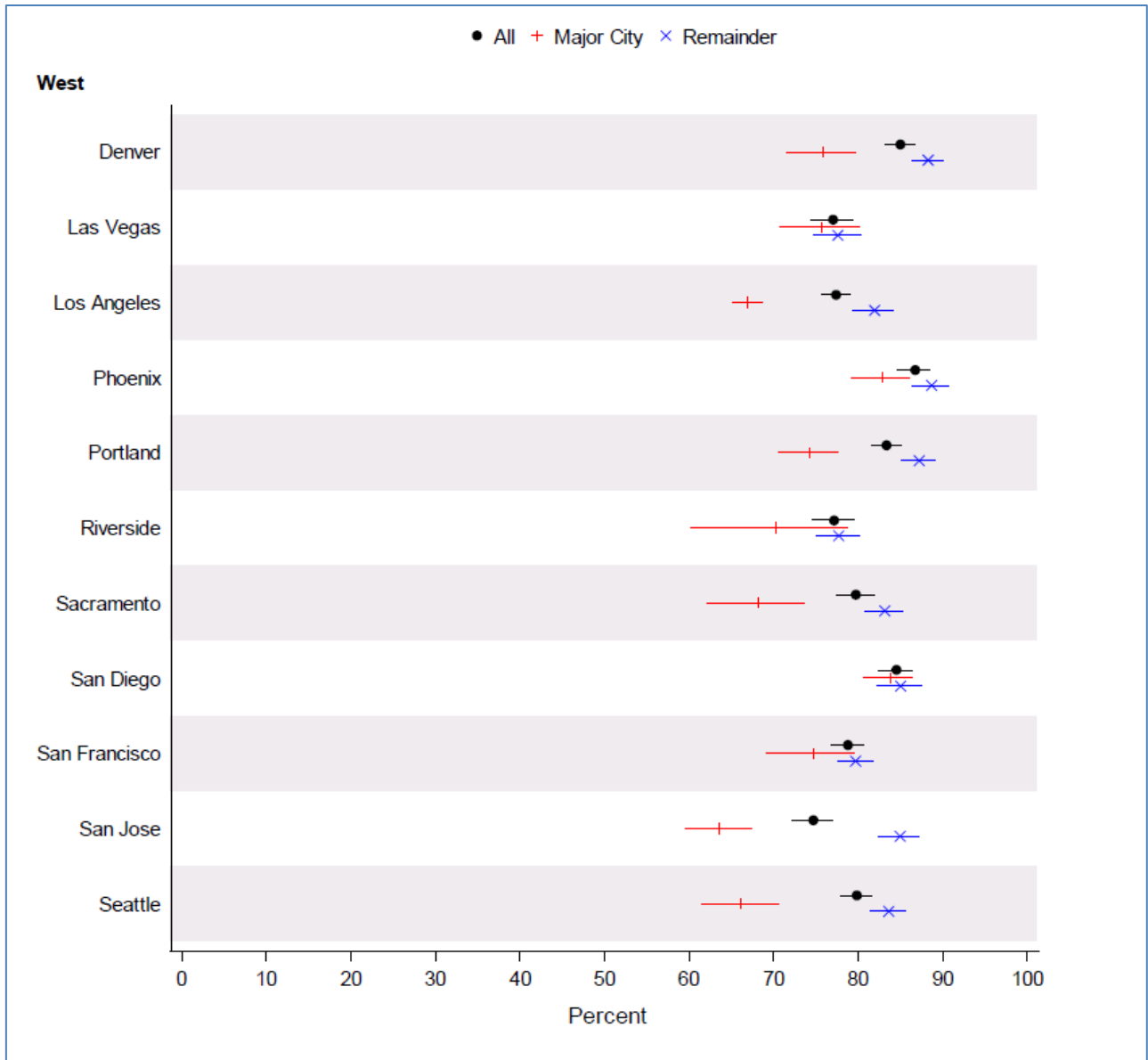
Figure 37. Percentage of household respondents rating the job of the local police as “excellent” or “good,” by Southern CBSA



Note: The symbols (● + x) indicate the percentages, while the lines denote the 95% confidence intervals for the estimates. See appendix table E for estimates and standard errors.

Source: Local-Area Crime Victimization Survey, 2015

Figure 38. Percentage of household respondents rating the job of the local police as “excellent” or “good,” by Western CBSA



Note: The symbols (● + x) indicate the percentages, while the lines denote the 95% confidence intervals for the estimates. See appendix table E for estimates and standard errors.

Source: Local-Area Crime Victimization Survey, 2015

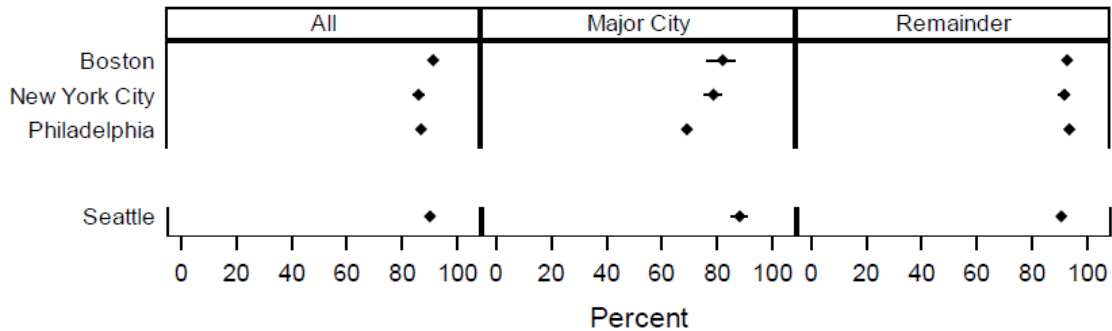
IV. Methodology

The findings in the body of this report feature confidence interval plots that show comparisons both across and within CBSAs. For these purposes, it was necessary to focus on one part of the response continuum for the community and policing items (e.g., “rarely” or “never” or “always” or “mostly”). Another data presentation using panel plots (*Figure 39*) showcases the same data, but in a different format. The confidence interval plots in the body of the report are useful for comparing sub-areas *within* metropolitan areas while the panel plots are useful for comparing sub-areas *across* metropolitan areas.

Figure 39. Excerpt from an Appendix D panel-plot chart: On the whole, how much of the time is the community where you live safe?

***On the whole, how much of the time is the community where you live safe?
Percentage of households reporting 'always' or 'mostly'***

The symbols are the percentages and the lines denote the 95 percent confidence intervals for the estimates

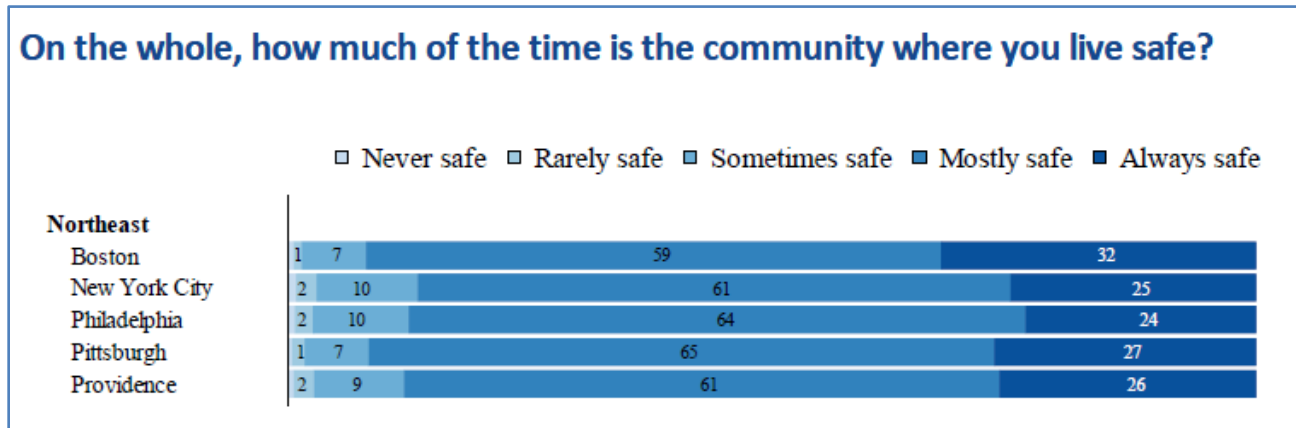


Note: “Boston” represents the Boston-Cambridge-Quincy, MA CBSA, “New York City” represents the “NY-Northern NJ-LI, NY NJ-PA CBSA, “Philadelphia” represents the Philadelphia-Camden-Wilmington, PA-NJ-DE-MD CBSA, and “Seattle” represents the Seattle-Tacoma-Bellevue, WA.

Source: Local-Area Crime Victimization Survey, 2015

As noted above, the comparisons in this report focused on one end of the response distribution for ease of comparison within and across areas. The distributions for the 40 metropolitan areas across the full range of response options are presented for each community and police perception measure in Appendix D. As an example, *figure 40* presents weighted survey estimates as stacked-bar charts, displaying all response categories for the community safety question.

Figure 40. Excerpt from an Appendix D stacked-bar chart: On the whole, how much of the time is the community where you live safe?



Note: “Boston” represents the Boston-Cambridge-Quincy, MA CBSA, “New York City” represents the “NY-Northern NJ-LI, NY NJ-PA CBSA, “Philadelphia” represents the Philadelphia-Camden-Wilmington, PA-NJ-DE-MD CBSA, “Pittsburgh” represents the Pittsburgh, PA, and “Providence” represents the Providence-Warwick, RI-MA CBSA.

Source: Local-Area Crime Victimization Survey, 2015

Appendix D and Appendix E include Excel files with the point estimates used in these charts. The Excel files include estimated percentages, sample sizes, standard errors, and confidence intervals for each survey item. Data in these spreadsheets allow for fuller comparisons across and within metropolitan areas. The spreadsheets contain hundreds of estimates for different geographic areas and questions. Appendix F provides guidance in making appropriate statistical comparisons across estimates using *multiple comparison* methods.¹⁰

BJS and Westat, the data collection agent, used a variety of state and local crime surveys to inform the development of the LACS community safety and policing questions.^{11,12,13} These questions were then revised based on cognitive testing and input from policing researchers. The study team adapted the LACS crime questions from the basic components of the NCVS victimization screener

¹⁰ Tukey, J.W. (1953). “The Problem of Multiple Comparisons,” in *The Collected Works of John W. Tukey VIII. Multiple Comparisons: 1948-1983*. New York: Chapman and Hall, pp. 1-300. Tukey, J. W. (1991). “The Philosophy of Multiple Comparisons.” *Statistical Science*, 6, 100-116. Statistical theory for various procedures is described in Hochberg, Y. and Tamhane, A.C. (2009). *Multiple Comparison Procedures*. Hoboken, NJ: Wiley.

¹¹ The 2002 Minnesota Crime Survey: <https://dps.mn.gov/divisions/ojp/forms-documents/Documents/Safe%20at%20Home.pdf>

¹² The Utah Crime Survey, 2010: <https://justice.utah.gov/Documents/Research/Crime/Utah%20Crime%20Survey%202010%20Report.pdf>

¹³ Questionnaire on Crime and the Oswego Police Department (2012): <https://www.oswegopoliceil.org/crime-survey.html>

and the NCVS Crime Incident Report (CIR).¹⁴ The questions were then adapted for self-administration and formatted for a mail questionnaire.

The LACS used an address-based sample (ABS) drawn from a U.S. Postal Service (USPS) list of addresses. In Year 1, the three largest CBSAs—Chicago, Los Angeles and Philadelphia—were sampled at a higher rate than the remaining 37 and were stratified based on local police reporting areas. The target number of completed surveys for each of the 37 non-oversampled CBSAs was 2,100 completed surveys; the target sample sizes for the three oversampled CBSAs were 7,500 completed surveys for Los Angeles, 7,500 for Chicago, and 9,363 for Philadelphia.

The median response rate¹⁵ across the 40 CBSAs was 45%, with a range of 37% to 59%. The addresses in each CBSA were classified as belonging either to its core area (major city or cities) or to the areas adjacent to the CBSA core, which could include suburbs and smaller cities or towns. Response rates in the major cities were somewhat lower than those overall, with a range of 33% to 55%. Response rates in the adjacent areas ranged from 38% to 61%.

The achieved samples in the 37 non-oversampled CBSAs ranged from 1,641 to 2,640 households; in the three oversampled CBSAs, the achieved sample size ranged from 6,065 to 10,025. In each of these CBSAs (and within sub-areas in the 3 oversampled CBSAs) random samples of addresses were selected so that each address had the same chance of being sampled within the CBSA. Responding households were weighted within each CBSA to represent all households in the CBSA, and these weights were then used to construct a weight for each adult in the responding household. The weights reflect each household's (and each adult's) probability of selection, adjusted first for nonresponse and then to control totals so that estimates of household and adult characteristics for each CBSA correspond to Census Bureau estimates. For more information on the sample sizes and response rates, see Appendix D.

Though the LACS was designed to capture basic elements of the NCVS to provide a reliable crime victimization survey for local areas, it differs from the NCVS in several key ways. The LACS—

- Was conducted via a self-administered mail instrument, while the NCVS is conducted primarily in person by U.S. Census Bureau field representatives for BJS;
- Used a 12-month reference period, whereas the NCVS reference period is 6 months;
- Used a single household informant to report on violent and property victimization for all

¹⁴ The NCVS screener and CIR are available at <https://www.bjs.gov/index.cfm?ty=dcdetail&iid=245>.

¹⁵ Response rate here is defined as completed surveys divided by total surveys minus ineligible, such as vacant housing units.

adult household members, while the NCVS uses interviews of each person age 12 or older in a household to generate victimization estimates;

- Excluded youth age 12-17, which the NCVS includes; and
- Included questions about community safety and perceptions of the local police, which the NCVS currently does not include.

Because the LACS was a sample survey, estimates are subject to error. Estimates that appear different from each other may not actually be different once sampling error is taken into account. For guidance on making statistical comparisons across areas and other caveats about using LACS data, see Appendix F.) The larger the sample size for a CBSA, the lower the sampling error. Thus, the samples in the three oversampled jurisdictions better support analysis across and within those CBSAs than the other CBSA samples. However, the sample sizes in all CBSAs are large enough to provide adequate precision for the estimates presented in this report.

In addition to the high-level indicators of community safety and perceptions of police shown in this report, surveys like the LACS could further be used to:

- compare rates of violent victimization by precinct or by victim demographics, such as age, gender, or race/ethnicity;
- compare attitudes towards the police by precinct, by household income, and by whether the household had experienced victimization in the past year; or
- track trends in victimization rates and attitudes about public safety for the jurisdiction as a whole, and for subareas and subpopulations (as the sample size allows).

For more information on using the LACS, see the *Local-Area Crime Survey Kit* (NCJ # 252632) available at www.bjs.gov. For more information on the LACS methodology, see *National Crime Victimization Survey Local-Area Crime Survey: Field Test Methodology Report* (NCJ # 252631), at www.bjs.gov.