

Letter of Invitation to Participate in Research

The Medicine Hat *Urban Social Issues Survey*

Letter of Invitation/Consent

What is this study about?

You are invited to participate in an anonymous survey of people who **live** or **run a business** in or near the downtown and city centre of Medicine Hat. This is a research study of your experiences living or working in an area that can have **social issues**. Through your participation, the researchers hope to better understand the amount of **crime, drug debris and litter, open drug use, and threats to safety you experience** in this area. This invitation to participate is being extended to people who live or work in the area in the map below.



The research team hopes that by finding out where the problem areas are, and what kinds of social issues are happening in the area, that as a community we can find ways to fix those problems.

What is expected of you?

The survey will take about 20 minutes to complete. You will be asked to respond to statements asking you how often something happens or how much you agree with them. You may choose to skip any question you prefer not to answer. If you choose to participate in future surveys, a digital link to a survey will be sent to you every three months over a one-year period, so that the researchers can see how issues change over time.

What are the anticipated uses of the data collected?

This study is being conducted by an independent researcher. The responses to the survey will be aggregated and presented in a report to people who live or work in the city centre (all study participants) and the City of Medicine Hat. The aggregated findings may also be published in scholarly presentations and publications.

What are the risks and benefits of participating?

There are no anticipated risks to taking part in this survey and you can stop at any time. It is not possible to know all of the risks that may happen in a study, but the researchers have taken all reasonable safeguards to minimize any known risks to a study participant. As well, while we want to find ways to mitigate the social issues in your area, you may not get any benefit from being in this research study.

There is a slight chance that given the sensitivity of the topic, you may experience psychological distress if you have been a victim of vandalism, robbery, or property crime in the

past. You can seek help from the **Medicine Hat Police Service's Victim Assistance Unit at 403-529-8480**. You can express your concerns about social issues in the downtown area by contacting the **City of Medicine Hat's** Community Development Department at **403-529-8316**.

There are no direct benefits from participating, although your information will help the City of Medicine Hat find ways to help you with the issues you are facing as this city experiences social change.

How will your confidentiality and anonymity be protected?

Participation is voluntary and confidential. You will not be asked to provide any personal identifying information. Although you will be asked to identify the postal code or approximate location of your home or business, exact locations will not be identified or revealed.

We will do everything we can to make sure that this data is kept private. No data relating to this study that includes your name will be released outside of the researcher's office or published by the researchers. The research assistants in this study have all signed confidentiality agreements. There is a slight risk of online surveys being vulnerable to hackers; however, the survey does not ask for personal identifying information. Qualtrics' privacy statement can be found here: <https://www.qualtrics.com/privacy-statement/>. The responses to this survey will be kept on a password-protected computer with restricted access, and will be deleted five years after data analysis has been completed.

How can a participant withdraw?

You do not need to answer any questions you are not comfortable with. If you decide to quit the survey, simply close your browser or tell the research assistant you want to quit. Or, you can contact the research team (information below) about what you want done with your data. If we can identify your responses, and the data has not yet been analyzed, there is a chance we can remove your data. Similarly, once the data from paper surveys is entered into statistical analysis software, it will not be possible to withdraw your responses because they will not have identifying information linked to them. Paper survey responses can only be withdrawn prior to the start of data analysis.

Who is conducting this research?

For more information on this study or for a summary of the findings (available after August 2020), you may contact me at em.pijl@uleth.ca or 403-332-5232. The study is funded by the City of Medicine Hat's Planning and Development Services department. The University of Lethbridge and Principal Investigator are getting money from the study sponsor to cover the costs of doing this study. You can request details concerning this compensation from the Principal Investigator. Questions regarding your rights as a participant in this research may be addressed to the Office of Research Ethics, University of Lethbridge (Phone: 403-329-2747 or Email: research.services@uleth.ca).

This research study has been reviewed for ethical acceptability and approved by the University of Lethbridge Human Subject Research Committee.

You must be 18 years or older to participate in this survey.

If you wish to participate in the survey, please:

1. **In person:** Answer the questions the research assistant is asking; or,
2. **Online:** Go to the survey at <http://tinyurl.com/USIS-MedicineHat>; or,
3. **Smartphone:** Aim your smartphone's code reader to the image on the right to capture it and you will be taken to the survey; or,
4. **Paper:** To complete a paper copy, please sign the consent form below, complete the survey, and mail it in the provided postage-paid envelope to:



Dr. Em Pijl
Faculty of Health Sciences
University of Lethbridge
4401 University Drive
Lethbridge, AB T1K 3M4

Submission of your responses will be accepted as implied consent to participate.

The last question on the survey will ask you, if you are interested and willing, to **send us your email address so that we can send you the link to future surveys asking the same questions** about the social issues around your home or business in Medicine Hat's city centre. **We would like you to continue to participate, so we can see how social developments and changes in your area impact social problems in your area.**

You can retain a copy of this consent form for your records. You will be asked to sign a separate but identical one for the research assistant to retain on file, in a locked filing cabinet in the locked office of the principal investigator at the University of Lethbridge. Retaining a signed consent form is a requirement of the Human Subject Research Committee at the University of Lethbridge.

Thank you in advance for your participation.

Principal Investigator: Em Pijl, PhD, Assistant Professor
Faculty of Health Sciences, University of Lethbridge

I have read (or have been read) the above information for the research study titled "Urban Social Issues Study", and consent to participate in this study.

_____ (Printed Name of Participant)

_____ (Signature)

_____ (Date)

EMAIL ADDRESS: _____

Would you like to participate in 4 more surveys over the next year so we can see how things get better or worse with time? If so, please provide your email address. Your email address will be kept private and will only be used to send you links to the survey.