

National Rural Crime Network – Rural Crime Survey 2015

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Background to the NRCN

- Supported by 30 PCCs and Forces across England and Wales
- Plus many major rural organisations including:- CLA, NFU, Farmers Union of Wales, NFU Mutual, Countryside Alliance, National Community Safety Network, Historic England/English Heritage, National Gamekeepers Organisation, the FSB* (*on specific issues) and others
- NRCN wants to see greater recognition and understanding of crime in rural areas
- And ensure that the response from the police/other agencies is better honed to the needs of rural populations and their expectations
- Home Office funding secured in 2014 until March 2016 – self funding thereafter through membership subscriptions

Survey rationale

- Rural crime/ASB in the UK is very under researched
- Aware that the withdrawal of police presence in many rural communities was causing concern
- Experience of crime in rural communities is different to that in urban areas
- Impact often much more significant on the victim as well as community at large
- Fear of crime - a major consideration for rural populations, particularly the elderly

Survey summary

- Launched in May 2015
- Wanted to find out how rural crime/ASB affects communities - financially and emotionally
- How we can all work together more effectively,
- How we can better serve our rural communities
- How the public might better support the police and others in tackling the causes of crime
- Overall objective is to help build a better response and assist rural communities to feel and be safe

Constraints

- Very limited budget for a major national survey of this sort - <£15K
- Had to be online only – aware that this disadvantages some – (Information Divide)
- Self selecting sample of respondents - (means conclusions must be carefully caveated)
- Publicised through standard media publicity, BBC Countryfile twice and an extensive use of social media.

Initial Findings

- Over 17,200 responses received from England, Wales and Northern Ireland
- We hoped for 10,000 so this was above expectation
- 12,369 from bona fide rural residents or businesses - identified for detailed analysis

KEY FINDING

- 1 in 3 of respondents had been a victim of some sort of rural crime in the last 3 years – 13% in the last year

Key Survey Results 1

- **Low satisfaction rates of police performance in rural areas**
 - 38% rural people rate the police as good (32%) or excellent (6%)
 - Rural businesses rated this at 32%
 - Satisfaction levels drop further to 23% in relation to the perceptions of an ability to solve crime.
 - 39% agreed in our survey that the police can be relied to be there when required – compared to 61% nationally
 - Only 33% of respondents agreed that their local police deal with things that matter to them – compared to 62% nationally.

Key Survey Results 2

- **Crime is under reported in rural areas**
 - 27% did not report the last crime in which they were a victim
 - Home Office figures suggest there were 294,000 rural crimes between April 2014 and May 2015 – actual numbers could therefore be over 403,000
 - Reasons given included – “waste of time” and “police not able to do anything”
 - Crimes/civil offences that are under reported incld. – fly tipping (56% under reported), theft from outbuildings/agricultural materials (50%), theft of fuel (32%)
 - Crimes that are perceived to go un-tackled are speeding, dangerous driving (63%) and fly tipping (61%).

Key Survey Results 3

- **Financial impact on crime on the rural economy is significant**
 - Cost of rural crime is indicated to be circa £800M, equivalent to £200 for every household in the countryside
 - Average cost of crime to households who are victims is £2,500 and £4,100 to rural businesses.
 - Only 26% of households made an insurance claim – 32% of rural businesses claimed
 - Average claims made reflect less than half of the true losses incurred – (e.g. property repairs, increased security, loss of earnings, legal fees and higher premiums)

Key Survey Results 4

- **Emotional cost of crime can have a greater impact on victims**
 - Fear of crime and incidence of crime go hand in hand
 - Corrosive nature of this fear is significant in the most isolated parts of the countryside
 - Emotions such as anger, frustration were cited but the increased fear and concern arising from being a victim of crime raises the pervasive fear of crime still further.
 - Amongst rural communities farmers suffer this most acutely followed by hard pressed rural young families – (voices that are often not heard)

Key Results 5

- **Rural communities are resilient**
 - 4 out of 5 respondents felt strongly linked in with their community
 - 27% felt that this had strengthened over the last 5 years despite many negative pressures over the period
 - Survey suggests good rural stoicism, with folk coping with the impacts of crime the best they can

Key Results 6

- **Lessons for Local Authorities and other partners**
 - Two issues of greatest concern to our respondents were not solely police matters
 - Road safety (63%) in which the police play a crucial role but one shared with others
 - Fly tipping (61%) - essentially a primary role for LAs, Environment Agency, National Parks, private landowners etc

Conclusions

- **Under reporting and fear of rural crime** - true levels and costs are not reflected in our national official data sets
- **Impacts of rural crime** - different and equally impactful or worse, due to challenges of physical and social isolation, lack of support services in rural areas etc
- **Emotional impacts** – *Anger* and *Frustration* featured prominently, alongside a rising fear of crime.
- **Poor perceptions of police performance** – only 38% rating the work done as good or excellent. Risk of this getting worse going forward.
- **Financial Impacts** – more significant than the official data has suggested - >£800M?

NRCN Recommendations

- Fair funding campaign for Rural Policing
- Rural communities encouraged to report crime/ASB on every occasion
- Better collaborative working by the police, local authorities and agencies working with engaged rural communities
- Policing must be better targeted towards those who need it most
- Innovation in tackling crime in rural areas needs to be better encouraged, supported and shared
- Businesses need specific and better tailored interventions and prevention strategies to make them more resilient

Home Office consultation

- Police Funding Formula consultation launched in July 2015
- Significant emphasis being given to “simplifying” the formula
- Critics suggest that the proposed adjustments build in an urban bias
- Rural police forces are concerned that this will add significant additional burden to cuts already in the pipeline
- Risk of more resources drawn away from rural policing towards urban based demands
- Respond to the consultation go to:-
www.nationalruralcrimenetwork.net and click on the Rural Policing Matters button - (ends 15 September 2015)

Questions and Discussion

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