



Perceptions of Crime

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1 Executive Summary

This wave of the Life in Lancashire panel investigated panel members' perceptions of personal and vehicle safety, as well as looking at perceptions of crime and their priorities for the criminal justice system. The survey was sent to all 3097 members of the panel on 25 February and the fieldwork ended on 3 April 2009. In total 2560 questionnaires were returned, giving an overall response rate of 83%.

1.1 Key findings

1.1.1 Perceptions of safety

- About nine in ten panel members feel safe when at home during the day and after dark, though there are significant falls in the proportions feeling very safe, compared with the same question in 2006. While only a minority feel safe when in their nearest town centre after dark (29%), the proportion feeling very unsafe has fallen significantly compared with 2006 (33% falling to 25%).
- When asked about any feelings of harassment or intimidation, panel members are most likely to be concerned about harassment or intimidation due to their age, (7% very or fairly worried with 21% slightly worried). The overall proportions concerned about being harassed due to each factor have stayed almost exactly the same compared with the same questions asked in 2004.
- A third of respondents from a black or ethnic minority background answered that they were very worried about being harassed or intimidated because of their ethnic origin (35%), while a quarter of BME respondents were very worried due to their skin colour (26%) and religion (24%).
- One in six people consider that burglary is a very or fairly big problem in their local area (17%, and 20% excluding don't know answers). Only eight per cent consider street robbery or mugging to be a problem in their neighbourhood, (similar to that found on the same question asked in 2004). Panel members from east Lancashire are more likely to say that burglary is a problem than those from the west of the county (24% and 17% respectively).

1.1.2 Vehicle and transport safety

- Damage to vehicles and theft from vehicles are seen as the biggest vehicle crime problems (18% and 14% answering these are very or fairly big problems respectively). Joy-riding and vehicle theft are considered very or fairly big problems by one in eight and one in ten people respectively.
- Demographically, panel members living in council or housing association accommodation are about twice as likely as owner occupiers to say that damage to vehicles, (36% and 18%) and theft from vehicles, (25% and 13%), are a very or fairly big problem.
- Anti-social behaviour is the biggest cause of people feeling unsafe on public transport, with almost half of all respondents answering that it makes them a great deal or quite a lot unsafe (45%).

1.1.3 Criminal Justice

- The most common first priorities for the criminal justice system as a whole are bringing people who commit crimes to justice followed by reducing crime. The most frequently named second priorities are meeting the needs of victims of crime, followed by respecting the rights of people accused of crimes and treating them fairly.
- The most important priorities panel members have to improve their confidence in the criminal justice system are for tougher sentences, tackling anti-social behaviour and bringing more offenders to justice.
- Most panel members are not confident that the sentencing of offenders was appropriate, (83% answering not very or not at all appropriate).
- One respondent in three answered that they had heard of their district community safety partnership (33%) and only about one person in seven felt informed about it (13%).
- While most panel members think that crime levels nationally have increased (63% answer that crime has increased a little or a lot), most panel members think that locally crime levels are about the same (60%), though three in ten think it has increased (29%).
- The most important crime and anti-social behaviour priorities for panel members' local areas are seen to be reducing anti-social behaviour (43%), reducing drug taking and dealing (27%) followed by improving road safety and reducing theft and burglaries (both 18%).

2 Conclusions

Three in ten panel members think that crime has increased locally in the last two years, three times as many as think it has fallen. This matches the findings of the recent Place survey 2008 which was taken across the county. Both these sources of perceptions compares with the number of recorded crimes actually falling by 15%¹ between 2006/7 and 2008/9 across Lancashire. Also by comparing the Place survey results with the BVPI surveys, the perception of anti-social behaviour has decreased significantly in all areas of the council, and in most districts has fallen significantly compared with 2003. There are likely to be many reasons for these discrepancies between actual figures and perceptions, (eg media coverage, the types of crimes that have reduced – are the crimes that have fallen less 'newsworthy' crimes?)

It may well be worth considering how the perceptions relate to actual crime figures at smaller areas, (eg district or below). Where perceptions are worse than the recorded figures, it may be worth highlighting this, and where actual figures match figures, communicating what is being done to tackle crime and anti-social behaviour.

When considering communications is important to consider what methods would be best to communicate with an increasingly time-pressured population. Ipsos-MORI, on their recent event for their Place survey analysis highlighted a London Borough, which had the highest increase in council satisfaction compared with the BVPI 2006 survey, at a time when most councils recorded a fall. One of the key drivers of this was considered to be this council's direct communication style, which used advertisements on buses and in tube stations highlighting council tax reductions, as well as signs on lampposts that said the council had provided more police/community safety wardens in the local area. It may be that this direct style could be the most effective way of reducing concerns about crime and anti-social behaviour. It is likely that any communications should highlight what is being done to tackle the key local crime and anti-social behaviour priorities found in the report.

¹ Source: Multi Agency Data Exchange (MADE, www.saferlancashire.co.uk/made)

3 Introduction

Lancashire County Council has used Living in Lancashire regularly since August 2001, (formerly Life in Lancashire). A panel of willing participants is recruited and is approached on a regular basis to seek their views on a range of topics and themes. Panel members are voluntary participants in the research they complete and no incentives are given for completion.

The panel has been designed to be a representative cross-section of the county's population. The results for each survey are weighted in order to reflect the demographic profile of the county's population.

The panel provides access to a sufficiently large sample of the population so that reliable results can be reported at a county wide level. It also provides data at a number of sub-area and sub-group levels.

Each wave of Living in Lancashire is themed. Firstly, it enables sufficient coverage on a particular topic to be able to provide insight into that topic. And secondly, it comes across better to the residents completing the questionnaires if there is a clear theme (or 2-3 clear themes) within each survey.

The panel is refreshed periodically. New members are recruited to the panel and some current members are retired on a random basis. This means that the panel remains fresh and is not subject to conditioning i.e. the views of panel members become too informed with county council services to be unrepresentative of the population as a whole.

4 Research Objectives

The objectives of this consultation are to find out how safe Lancashire residents feel, the perception of the prevalence of key crimes and the public's perception of the criminal justice system as a whole.

5 Methodology

This wave of Life in Lancashire research was sent to 3097 members of the panel on 25 February. A reminder was sent on the 18 March, and the fieldwork ended on 3 April 2009.

In total 2560 questionnaires were returned, giving an overall response rate of 83%.

All data are weighted by age, ethnicity and district to reflect the Lancashire overall population, and figures are based on all respondents unless otherwise stated. The weighted responses have been scaled to match the effective response of 2188, which is the equivalent size of the data if it had not been weighted and was a perfect random sample.

5.1 Limitations

The table below shows the sample tolerances that apply to the results in this survey. Sampling tolerances vary with the size of the sample as well as the percentage results.

Number of respondents	50/50 + / -	30/70 + / -	10/90 + / -
50	14%	13%	8%
100	10%	9%	6%
200	7%	6%	4%
500	4%	4%	3%
1000	3%	3%	2%
2000	2%	2%	1%

On a question where 50% of the people in a sample of 1000 respond with a particular answer, the chance are 95 out of 100 that the answer would be between 47% and 53% (ie +/- 3%), versus a complete coverage of the entire Lancashire population using the same procedure.

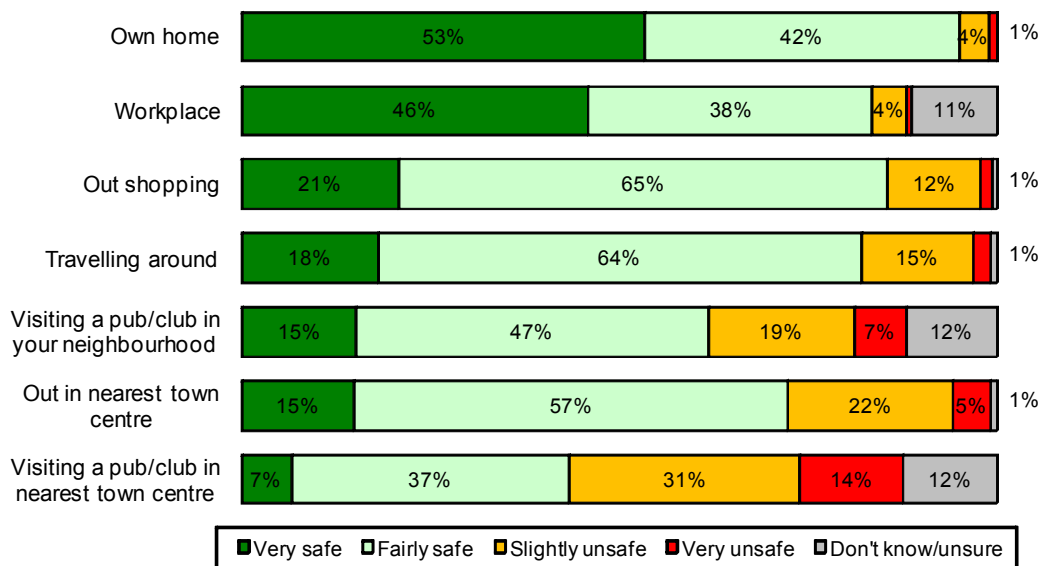
In charts or tables where responses do not add up to 100%, this is due to multiple responses or computer rounding.

6 Main Research Findings

6.1 Perceptions of safety

The first community safety questions on the questionnaire asked how safe members of Living in Lancashire felt in a variety of situations during the day and at night.

Chart 1 - Thinking about the neighbourhood you live in, how safe would you say you feel on your own in each of the following situations during the day?

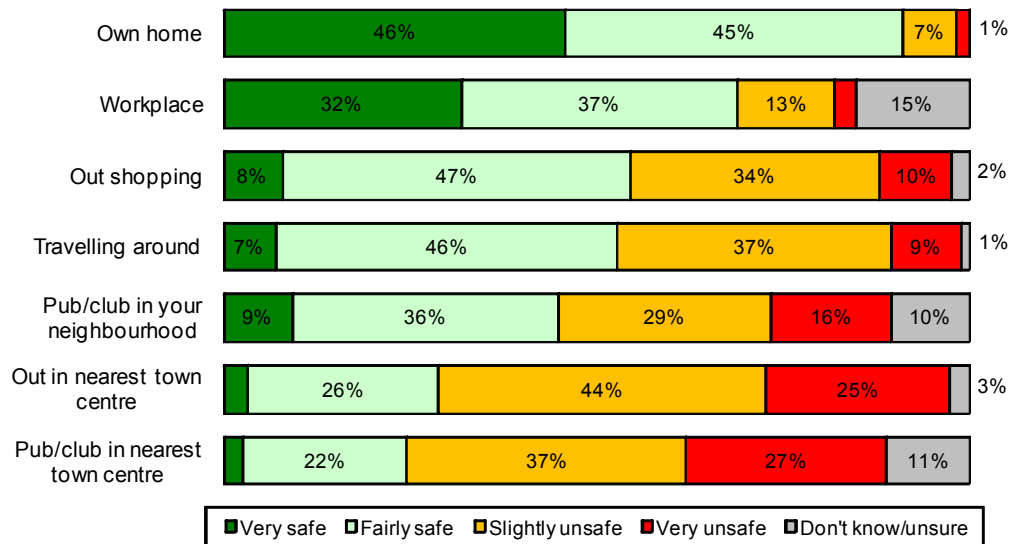


Base: All respondents (unweighted 2560, weighted 2188)

As might be expected, residents are most likely to feel safe at home and their workplace (with about half feeling very safe in both places). However about a quarter of residents feel unsafe during the day when visiting a pub or club in their neighbourhood (26% slightly or very unsafe) and out and about in the nearest town centre (27%). Close to half of respondents feel unsafe when visiting a pub or club in the nearest town centre (44% unsafe or 50% unsafe when excluding don't know answers). Residents of Burnley district are the most likely to say they would feel unsafe visiting a pub or club in the nearest town centre (37% safe, excluding don't know answers, compared with 50% across the whole county). East Lancashire residents generally are less likely to feel safe for this measure than those in the west of the county (45% and 52% feel safe respectively).

The same questions were also asked for each area after dark, as shown in the chart below.

Chart 2 - Thinking about the neighbourhood you live in, how safe would you say you feel on your own in each of the following situations after dark?



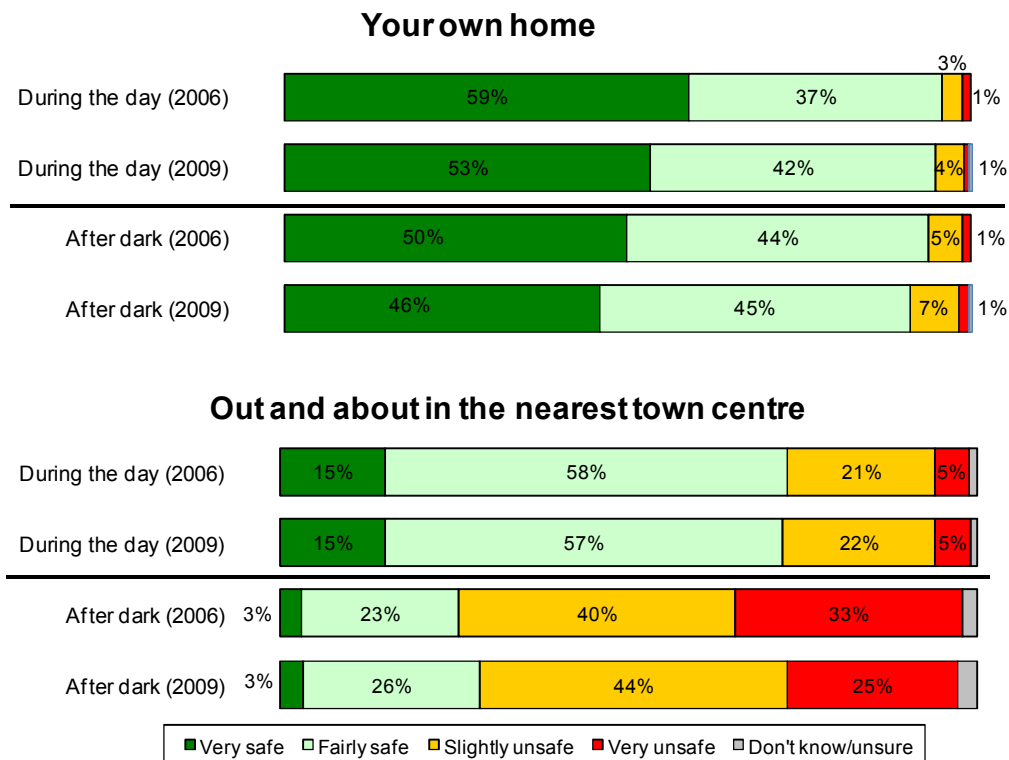
Base: All respondents (unweighted 2560, weighted 2188)

With the exception of when at home, respondents feel significantly less safe in each area at night. Close to half of the panel feel unsafe when travelling around after dark (46%) or visiting a local pub or club (45%), while two-thirds feel unsafe after dark when out and about in the nearest town centre (67%) or at a pub or club in the nearest town centre (64%).

There are demographic differences for these questions. Respondents from a black or ethnic minority (BME) background are less likely to feel safe after dark at home than white respondents (83% and 91% feel very or fairly safe respectively). Similarly, people living in council or housing association accommodation are less likely to feel safe at home after dark (83%) than owner occupiers (93%). Women are less likely to feel safe than men after dark when travelling around (47% feeling safe versus 62%), when out in the nearest town centre (25% and 35% feeling safe) and when out shopping (51% and 62% feeling safe respectively).

Two of these questions were asked on a previous wave of the Living in Lancashire panel, and these are compared in the charts below, looking at perceptions of safety at home and in the nearest town centre.

Chart 3 - Perceptions of safety (2008 vs 2006)

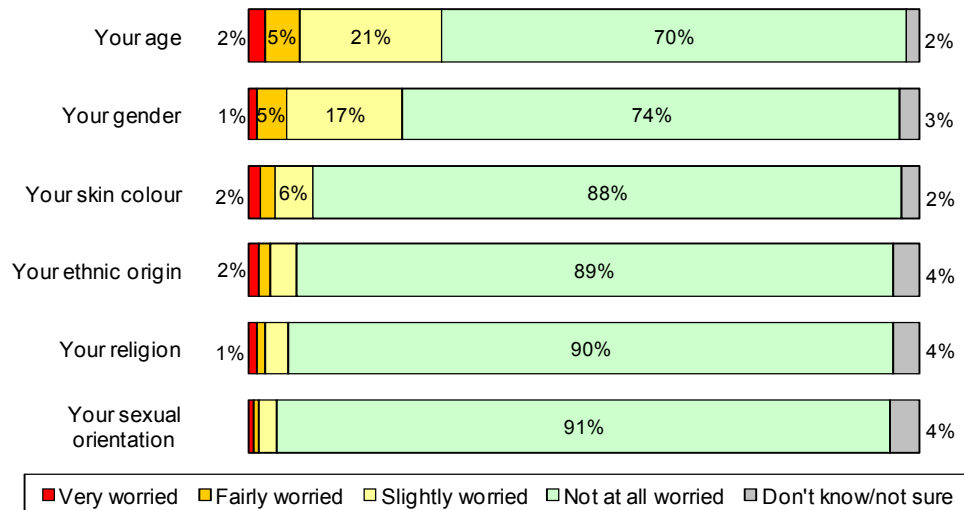


Base: All respondents (March 2009: 2,560, February 2006: 1,640)

The proportion considering themselves very safe when at home has fallen by 6% during the day and 4% after dark, compared with 2006. The proportion feeling very or fairly safe when out in the nearest town centre after dark has increased by 3% in the same period. Also the proportion feeling very unsafe when in the nearest town after dark has decreased by 8%, falling from 33% to 25%.

The next set of questions asked whether respondents felt they were worried about being harassed or intimidated.

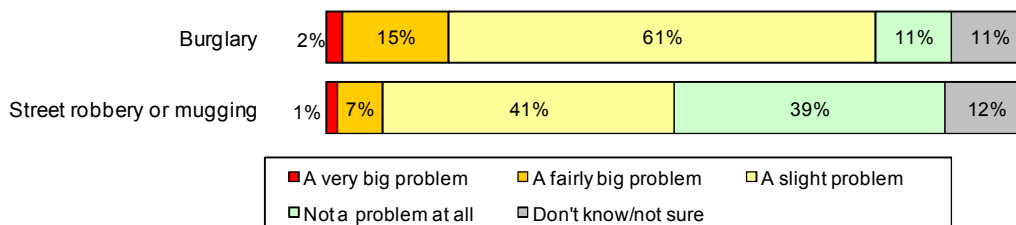
Chart 4 - Whilst out walking in your neighbourhood, how worried do you feel about being intimidated or harassed due to any of the following?



Base: All respondents (unweighted 2560, weighted 2188)

Panel members are most likely to be concerned about harassment or intimidation due to their age, (7% very or fairly worried with 21% slightly worried). A third of respondents from a black or ethnic minority background answered that they were very worried about being harassed or intimidated because of their ethnic origin (35%), while a quarter of BME respondents were very worried due to their skin colour (26%) and religion (24%). These same questions were also asked on the panel in 2004, and the overall proportions concerned about each factor have stayed almost exactly the same.

Chart 5 - How much of a problem do you think each of the following is in your neighbourhood?



Base: All respondents (unweighted 2560, weighted 2188)

The next questions on the survey asked for the perceptions of burglary and street robbery, as shown above. One in six people consider that burglary is a very or fairly big problem in their local area (17%, and 20% excluding

don't know answers). Only eight per cent consider street robbery or mugging to be a problem in their neighbourhood. This is statistically similar to the 7% who said they were concerned about street robbery or mugging on the panel in 2004. The 2004 survey did not ask for perceptions of burglary, so no comparison is possible.

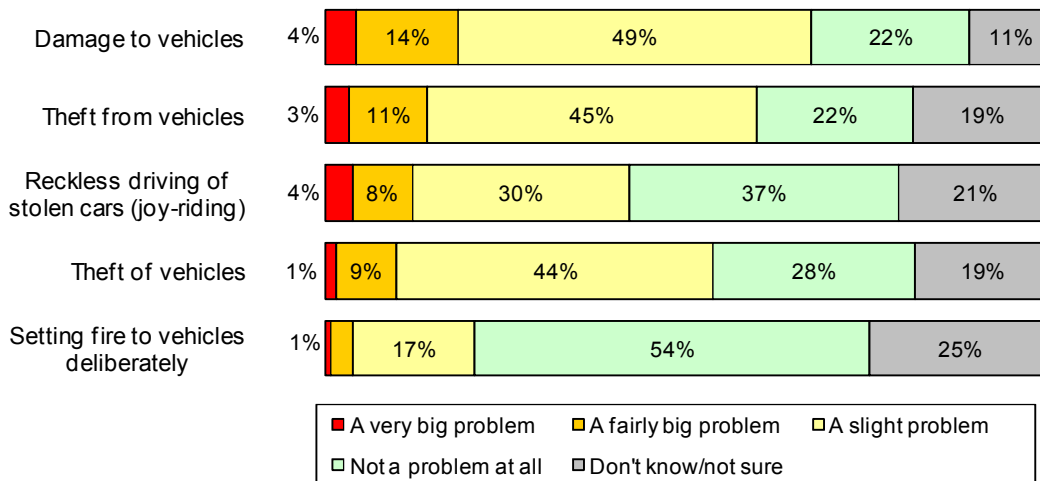
Demographically, there are significant differences. Residents of Burnley, Pendle and Preston are the most likely to say that burglary is a problem, (35%, 26% and 24%, excluding don't know answers). Panel members from east Lancashire are also more likely to say that burglary is a problem than those from the west of the county (24% and 17% respectively).

Respondents living in a rural area are significantly less likely to consider street robbery to be a problem as those living in market towns or urban areas, as might be expected, (6%, 9% and 12% answering it is a very or fairly big problem respectively, excluding don't know answers). Residents from east Lancashire are also more likely to rate this as a problem than those in west Lancashire (12% and 8% respectively).

6.2 Vehicle and transport safety

The next set of questions asked about vehicle crime. Damage to vehicles and theft from vehicles are seen as the biggest problems (18% and 14% answering these are very or fairly big problems respectively). Joy-riding and vehicle theft are considered very or fairly big problems by one in eight and one in ten people respectively. Only 4% of respondents answer that setting vehicles on fire is a problem. The same set of questions was asked on the 2004 survey, with statistically similar results for each question. This suggests that perceptions of vehicle crime have not changed in five years.

Chart 6 - In your neighbourhood, how much of a problem are the following?

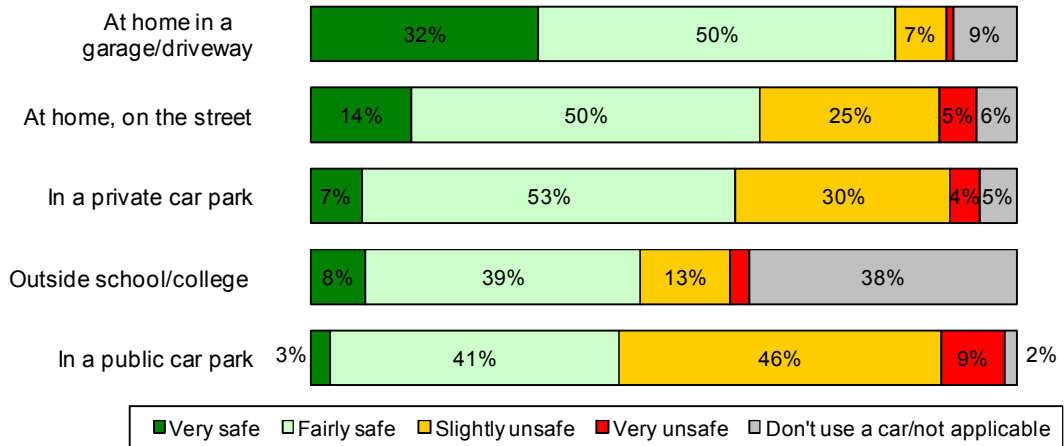


Base: All respondents (unweighted 2560, weighted 2188)

Demographically, panel members living in council or housing association accommodation are about twice as likely as owner occupiers to say that damage to vehicles, (36% and 18%) and theft from vehicles, (25% and 13%), are a very or fairly big problem. Panel members who live in a rural area are significantly less likely to answer that damage to vehicles and theft from vehicles are a problem (10% and 9% respectively).

The five in six respondents who own a car or light van (83%) were then asked about the safety of their vehicle. Most people feel that their car is safe at home in a garage or on a driveway (82% very or fairly safe), at home on the street (64%) and in a private car park (60%). When parked outside a school or college, three-quarters of panel members expressing an opinion felt it was safe, (74%). In a public car park, more respondents felt their car was unsafe than safe (55% very or slightly unsafe and 44% very or fairly safe). Interestingly, at no point did more than a third of respondents feel very safe, even when at home in a garage or on a driveway.

Chart 7 - How safe do you think your vehicle is when parked in the following locations?

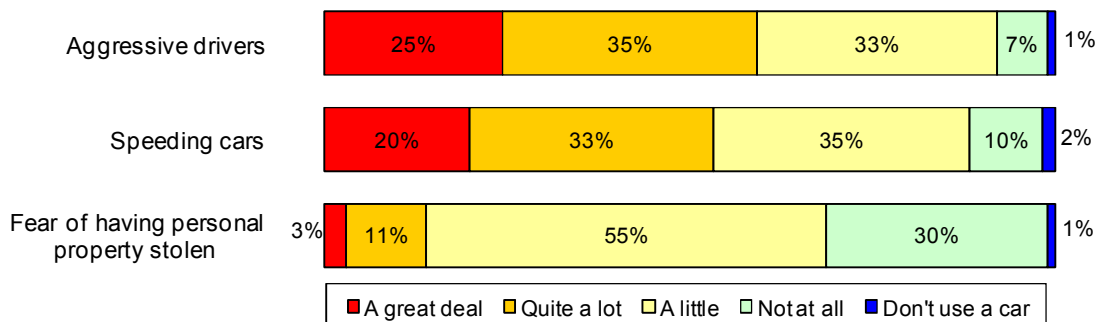


Base: All respondents with a car or light van (unweighted 1899, weighted 1636)

Burnley residents are the least likely to think that their vehicle is safe at home in a garage or driveway, (68% feel it is safe, against 84% across the county). Similarly, respondents in Burnley are least likely to consider their vehicle safe at home, on the street (49% safe versus 64% for Lancashire).

Vehicle owners were next asked how three different factors influence how safe they feel. Three in five respondents feel that aggressive drivers influence how unsafe they feel a great deal or quite a lot (60%). Speeding cars influence about half of panel members a great deal or quite a lot (53%), while fear of personal property being stolen influences only one person in seven a great deal or quite a lot (14%).

Chart 8 - Thinking about when you are out driving in the car, how much do the following influence how unsafe you feel?

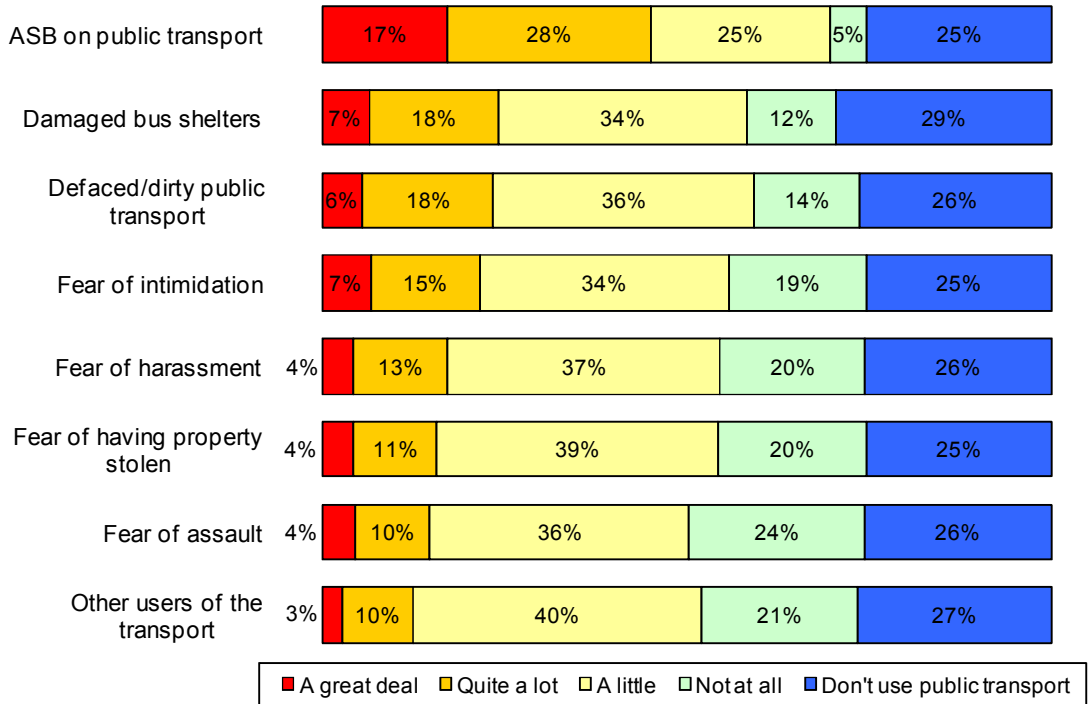


Base: All respondents with a car or light van (unweighted 1899, weighted 1636)

A similar set of questions were asked of respondents about public transport which are shown below. Anti-social behaviour on public transport is seen as the biggest influencer by far, with almost half of all respondents answering that it makes them a great deal or quite a lot unsafe (45%). Those who use

public transport are one and a half times as likely as to feel a great deal and quite a lot unsafe as a little or not at all unsafe (30%).

Chart 9 - Thinking about when you are travelling on public transport, how much do the following influence how unsafe you feel?

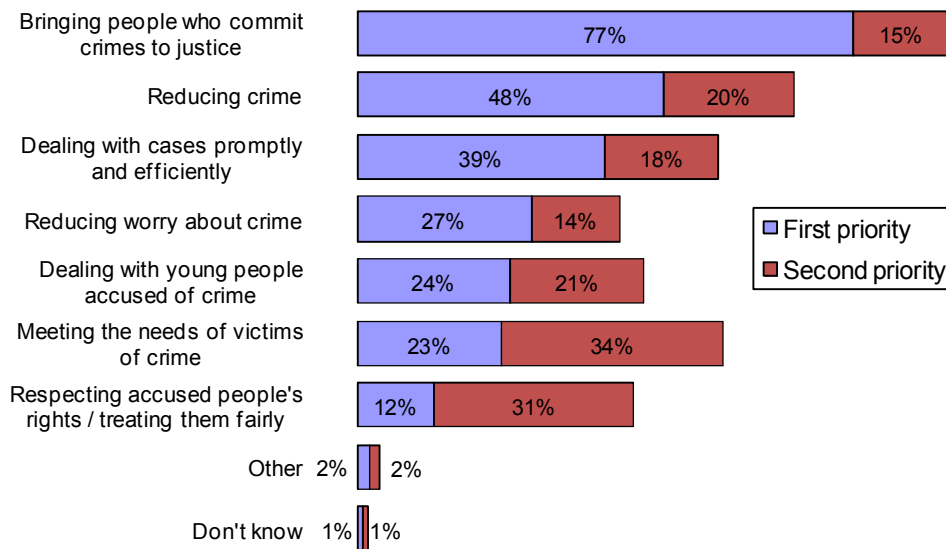


Base: All respondents (unweighted 2560, weighted 2188)

6.3 Criminal Justice

The next section of the survey asked questions about the panel members' priorities for the criminal justice system and their perceptions of it. The chart below gives the first and second priorities of the panel for the justice system². **Bringing people who commit crimes to justice** (77%) is the most common priority followed by **reducing crime** (48%). **Meeting the needs of victims of crime** is the most named second priority (34%), which is perhaps interestingly followed by **respecting the rights of people accused of crimes and treating them fairly** (31%).

Chart 10 - Which one of these do you think should be the highest and second highest priorities for the criminal justice system as a whole, that is, the police, the Crown Prosecution Service, the courts, prison and probation services?

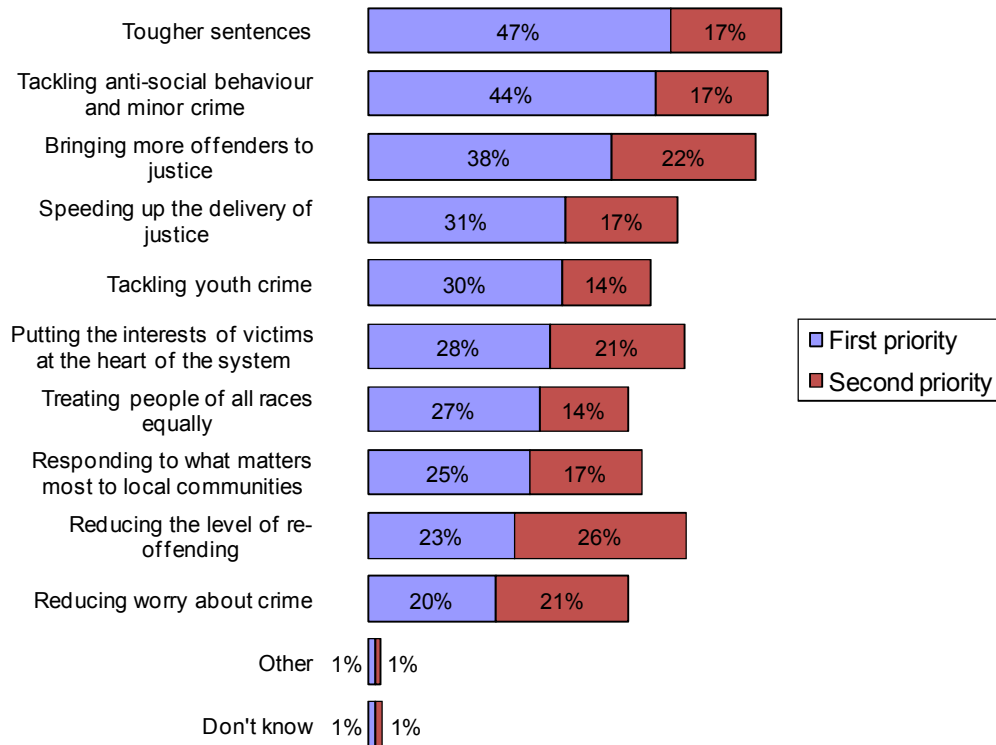


Base: All respondents (unweighted 2560, weighted 2188)

The most important priorities panel members have to improve their confidence in the criminal justice system are for **tougher sentences**, **tackling anti-social behaviour** and **bringing more offenders to justice**.

² However some panel members gave more than one first priority. These have been left in the chart since it is not possible to determine which was the most important.

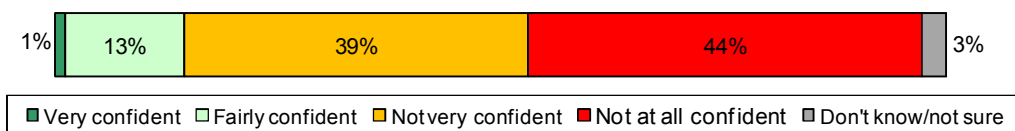
Chart 11 - Thinking about the Criminal Justice System, which of the following would be the most and second most important things it could do to improve your confidence in it?



Base: All respondents (unweighted 2560, weighted 2188)

When asked about the sentencing of offenders, most respondents were not confident that sentences were appropriate, (83% answering not very or not at all confident). A majority are not very or at all confident in all demographic groups, though the proportion is significantly lower amongst those aged 18 to 24 years and from a BME background (62% and 52% not very or at all confident respectively).

Chart 12 - How confident are you that the penalties or punishments given to offenders are appropriate? Would you say that you are...

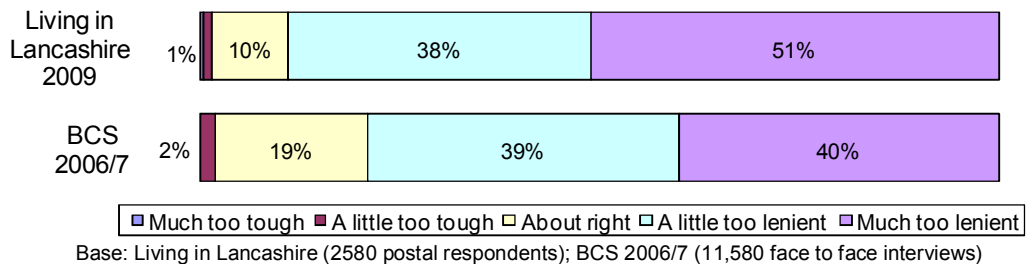


Base: All respondents (unweighted 2560, weighted 2188)

Following the top priority for the courts being tougher sentences, the vast majority of respondents consider that sentences are either much or a little too lenient (89%), with half considering them much too lenient (51%). The same question was asked on the British Crime Survey in 2006/7 and the results are displayed alongside results for the panel in the chart below.

While the results of the surveys are not strictly comparable as Living in Lancashire uses a postal survey and the British Crime Survey uses a face-to-face methodology, the indication is that results are broadly similar to those nationally.

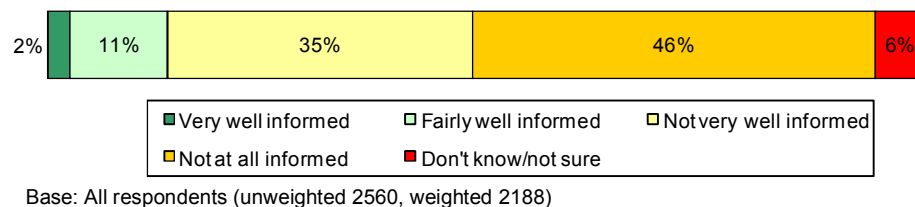
Chart 13 - In general, would you say that sentences handed down by the courts, which is both the Crown Court and magistrates' courts, are too tough, about right, or too lenient?



Demographically there are differences in this measure by socio-economic grade³, with respondents from group C2 (skilled manual) the most likely to say that sentences are too lenient (92%). Respondents from the highest social grades (AB) are the least likely group to say that sentences are too lenient, but there are still three-quarters of the group who answer that they are much or a little too lenient (77%). Panel members from an ethnic minority are the least likely group to answer that sentences are too lenient (56%).

The next set of questions asked about district community safety partnerships. When given a brief description of the partnership, one respondent in three answered that they had heard of their local CSP (33%). Only about one person in seven felt informed about their district community safety partnership (13%). People aged 60 years and over were the most informed, with one person in five very or fairly well informed (19%).

Chart 14 - How well informed would you say you are about your district community safety partnership?

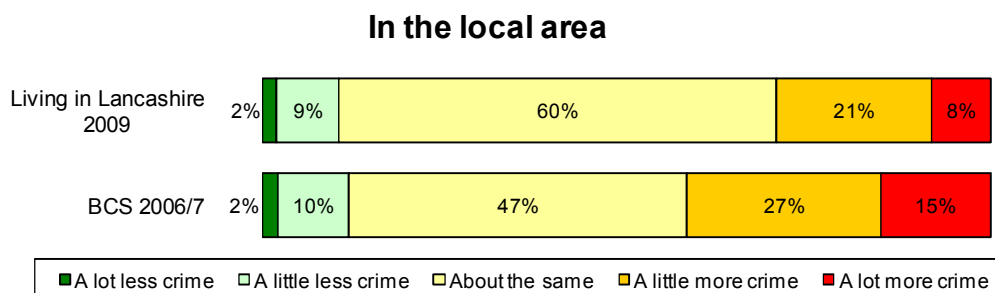
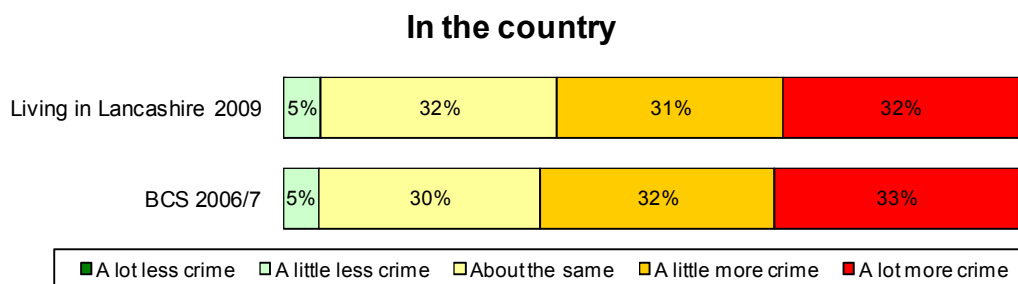


The next two questions on the questionnaire asked whether the level of crime had changed in the last two years, both locally and nationally. These questions were also asked on the British Crime Survey 2006/7 and the

³ See Section 7 Appendix for definitions

results are compared in the charts below. While most panel members think that crime levels **nationally** have increased (63% answer that crime has increased a little or a lot), most panel members think that **locally** crime levels are about the same (60%). The perceptions on the panel of crime levels in the country are almost identical to those on the BCS 2006/7, whilst locally, panel members are less likely to think that crime levels have increased.

Chart 15 - Would you say that the level of crime in the country as a whole has changed over the past two years? Would you say there is more crime, less crime or about the same amount (since two years ago)?



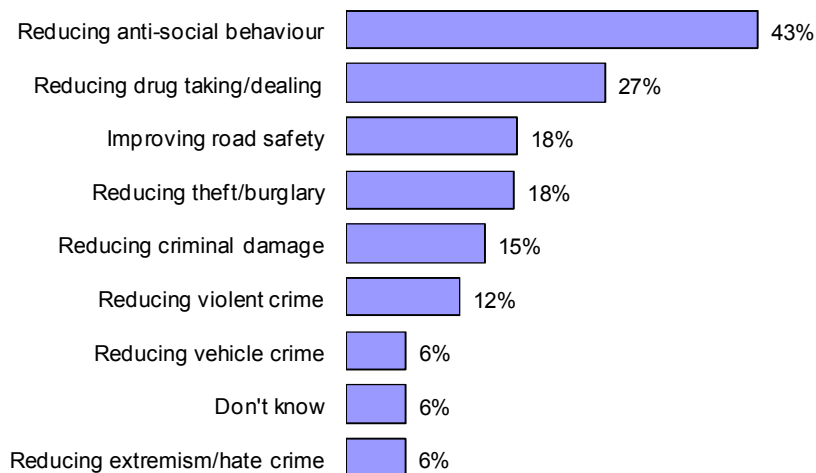
Base: Living in Lancashire (2580 postal respondents); BCS 2006/7 (11,580 face to face interviews)

Residents of east Lancashire are more likely to answer that there is more crime locally compared with two years ago than those in the west of the county (35% and 26% rating a lot or little more crime respectively). The proportion considering there to be more local crime is particularly high in the districts of Burnley (47%), Hyndburn (37%) and Pendle (35%). Perhaps surprisingly, there are no significant differences by socio-economic grade for the change in local crime, while there is a difference in perceptions of crime nationally. Respondents from socio-economic groups AB are significantly less likely than average to say there is more crime nationally (52%), while those from groups C2 (71%) and DE (69%) are more likely.

The final question on the questionnaire asked panel members what was the most important crime and anti-social behaviour priority for their local area. **Reducing anti-social behaviour** is seen as the highest priority, with more than two people in five mentioning it (43%). The next highest rated priority

is **reducing drug taking and dealing** (27%) followed by **improving road safety** and **reducing theft and burglaries** (both 18%). Reducing anti-social behaviour is most likely to be mentioned by respondents who work full-time (51%). Reducing drug taking and dealing is the most mentioned priority for panel members from an ethnic minority (44%) and Pendle residents (46%).

Chart 16 - And thinking about your local area, which one of the following would you say is the most important crime and ASB priority for your local area?



Base: All respondents (unweighted 2560, weighted 2188)

7 Appendix

7.1 Socio-Economic-Group Definitions

These groups are based on Market Research Society definitions and on the respondent. They are graded as A, B, C1, C2, D and E.

Group A

- Professional people, very senior managers in business or commerce or top-level civil servants.
- Retired people, previously grade A, and their widows

Group B

- Middle management executives in large organisations, with appropriate qualifications
- Principle officers in local government and civil service
- Top management or owners of small business concerns, educational and service establishments
- Retired people previously grade B, and their widows

Group C1

- Junior management, owners of small establishments, and all others in non-manual positions
- Jobs in this group have very varied responsibilities and educational requirements
- Retired people, previously grade C1, and their widows

Group C2

- All skilled manual workers, and those manual workers for responsibility for other people
- Retired people, previously grade C2, with pensions from their job
- Widows, if receiving pensions from their late partner's job

Group D

- All semi skilled and unskilled manual workers, and apprentices and trainees to skilled workers
- Retired people, previously grade D, with pensions from their late job
- Widows, if receiving pensions from their late partner's job

Group E

- All those entirely dependant on the state long term, through sickness, unemployment, old age or other reasons
- Those unemployed for a period exceeding six months (otherwise classified on previous occupation)
- Casual workers and those without a regular income