

COMMUNITY SAFETY AUDIT SUMMARY

APRIL 2001 TO MARCH 2004
COUNTY OF LANCASHIRE



December 2004

FOREWORD

I am pleased to present Lancashire's first countywide audit of community safety. The information in this document has also been used by each Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership to inform their district audits. The Community Safety Audits provide valuable evidence from all partners to help to determine the issues for each area and to develop the programme of action for the 2005-08 Crime and Disorder Reduction Strategies.

Community Safety is a responsibility which lies with us all and is a focus of energy for those of us who serve the public. Every survey and questionnaire of public opinion identifies that it is this issue which most determines a person's satisfaction with the place in which they live. The problems and issues across Lancashire affect us all and the only way we can truly resolve them is by working together in partnership. Solutions often require public services to deliver a joint initiative, but quite often the solutions can be found within the community itself with a measure of support from public or voluntary services.

Many of the actions over the past three years have proved to be popular and effective in helping to keep the people of Lancashire safe and to make them feel safer. This good work will continue and we will continue to work together to develop more initiatives in co-operation with the communities we serve to deliver on our promise of a Safer Lancashire.

Anne Brown

*Cllr Anne Brown
Member for Community and Partnerships, LCC*

CONTENTS

1	Introduction	4
2	All Crime	4
2.1	Victims	5
2.2	Offenders.....	6
2.3	Fear of Crime.....	6
3	Safe and Secure Homes.....	7
4	Safe and Secure Streets.....	8
5	Anti-Social Behaviour	9
6	Substance Misuse	10
7	Safe and Secure Transport.....	10
8	Protecting Diversity	11
9	Young People	11
10	Businesses.....	12
11	Contact Details.....	12

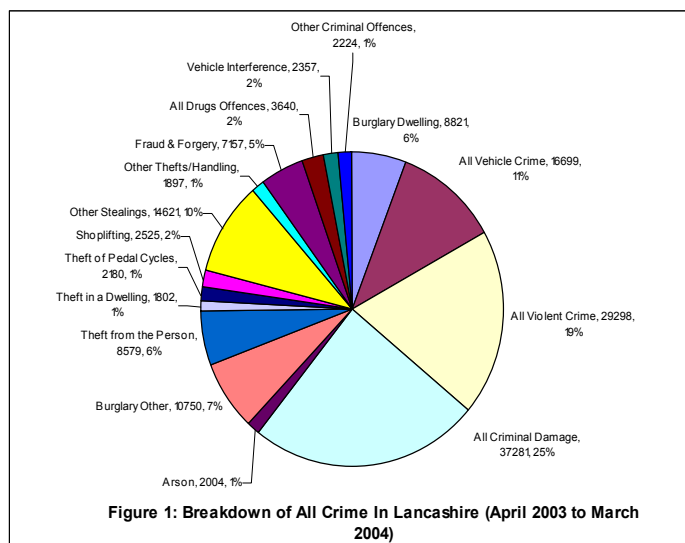
1 Introduction

A comprehensive audit of crime and disorder across the whole of Lancashire has been undertaken in order to get a broad picture of the problems which exist in the County. This document contains a summary of the Audit. For the full picture please refer to the main audit document which is available to download from the www.saferlancashire.co.uk website. This Audit complements the Audits which have been completed by the fourteen Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships in Lancashire.

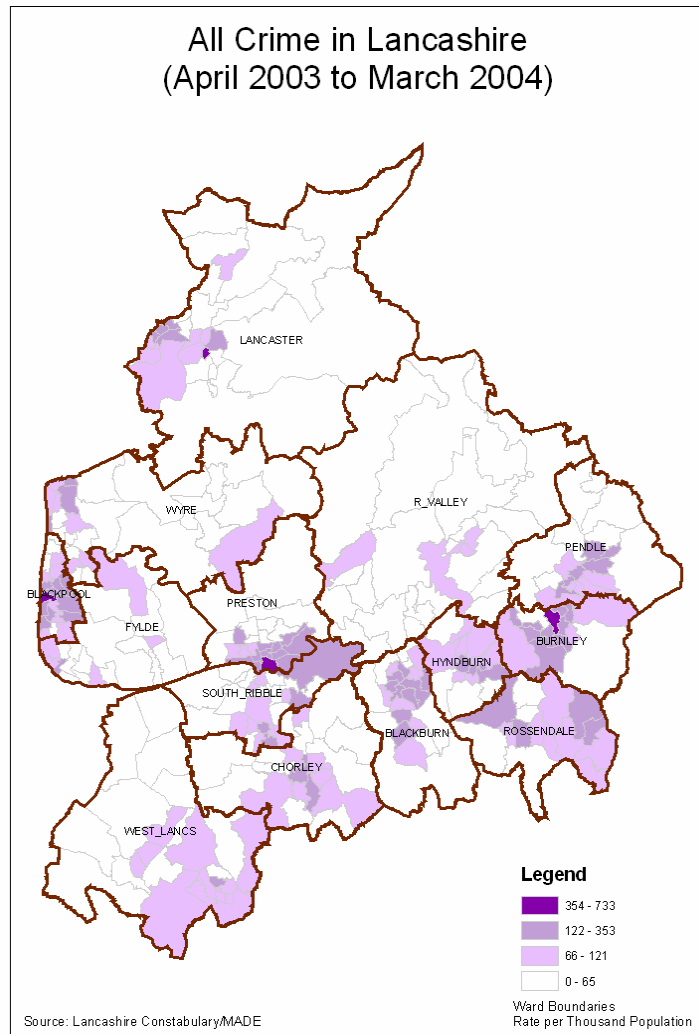
2 All Crime

- Recorded crime in Lancashire has increased over the last three years but the rate of increase is largely attributable to the implementation of the National Crime Recording Standards in 2002. The underlying trend is showing an increase of about 6%. This increase is in line with that reported by other Forces with a similar profile to Lancashire. The British Crime Survey reported a decrease in crime in the same period.

- The largest volume crimes are criminal damage (25%), Violent Crime (19%) and Vehicle Crime (11%). Violent crime is the most costly to society in terms of health care and distress to the Victims. It has been estimated that over the three years of the Audit serious violent crime cost the County at least £700 million. Fig 1 indicates the proportion of crime types.



- Comparisons have been made with the Most Similar Forces to Lancashire Constabulary, in order to gauge how Lancashire is performing in relation to their peers. Details of these forces can be found in Appendix B.2 of the main audit document. Lancashire Constabulary is performing in line with their peers for Robbery, improving for domestic burglary, and better than peers for vehicle crime. However, Lancashire is operating worse than its peers for violent crime.
- Town centre wards suffer consistently higher crime rates than other wards due to their high visitor numbers for work, shopping and leisure activities. These wards are highly accessible to both victims and offenders. The map of All Crime below shows the geography of crime in Lancashire.

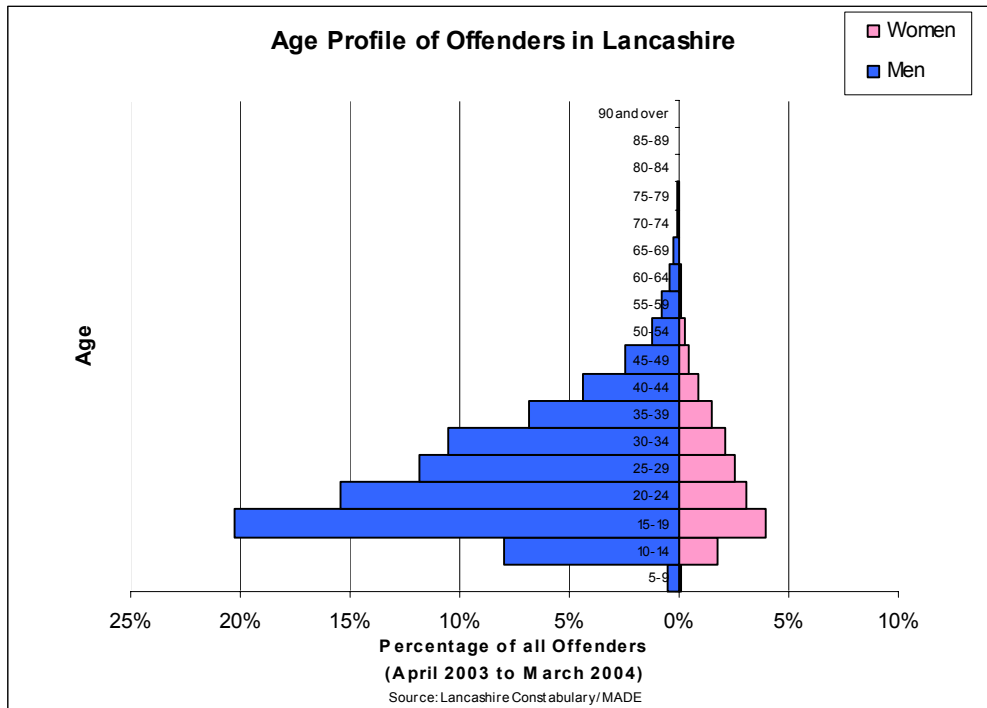


2.1 Victims

- For all crime, the demographics of victims on gender, age and sex broadly follow the demographics recorded in the 2001 Census. However, for violent crime the age profile is skewed towards the 15 to 24 age group.
- Approximately 7% of victims in Lancashire were a victim more than once in a twelve month period.

2.2 Offenders

- As the graph below depicts, detected offenders are predominantly male (83%) and aged between 15 and 24. This is particularly pronounced for offenders of violent and vehicle crime. There is no ethnic bias.

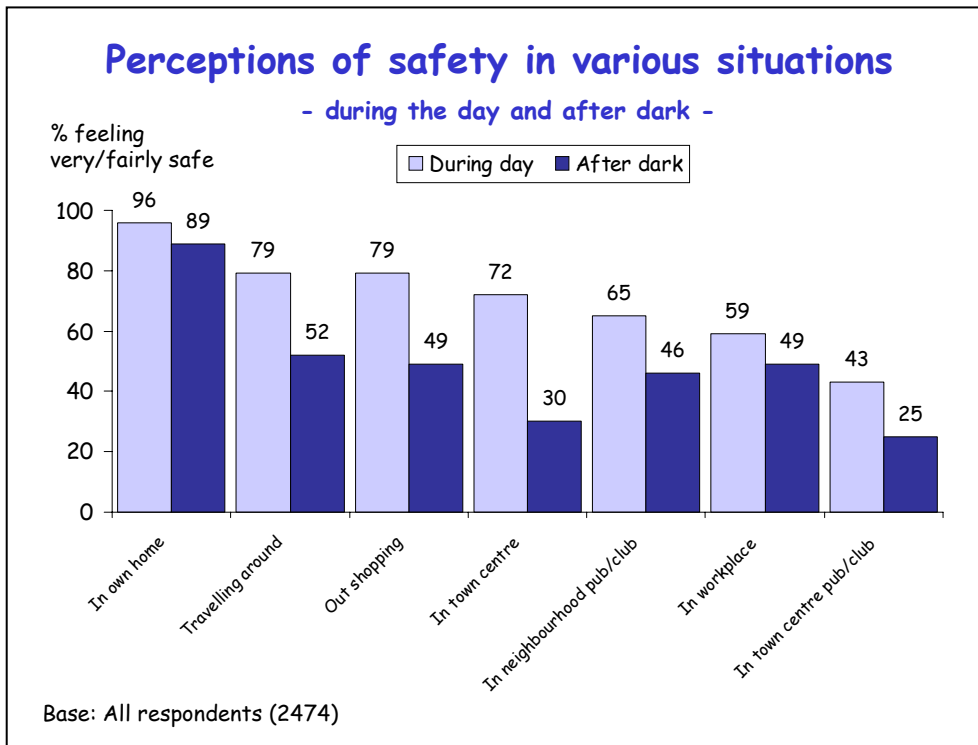


- 88% of offenders both lived and committed their crimes within Lancashire.
- The top 5% most prolific offenders accounted for 27% of crimes in the 12 months to March 2004.

2.3 Fear of Crime

Surveys have been carried out with the Police Citizen's panel Opinion and the Lancashire County Council citizen's panel, Life in Lancashire. Over 4,000 citizens have been surveyed through these panels. The Opinion survey (Wave 5) can be downloaded from the www.lancspa.gov.uk/publications web site. The graph below depicts respondents' perceptions of safety in various situations.

- The safest place both during the day and after dark is considered to be in the respondents' own home.
- The least safe place is considered to be in a town centre after dark.



3 Safe and Secure Homes

- Domestic Burglary has decreased from approximately 12,000 crimes in April 2001 to March 2002 to less than 9,000 crimes in the period April 2003 to March 2004 and the downward trend is continuing.
- However, theft in a dwelling and criminal damage to dwellings have increased over the same period.
- Between April 2003 and March 2004 there were 174 distraction burglaries and between April 2003 and December 2003 there were 250 complaints regarding unsolicited doorstep property repairs. In 66% of the crimes the victim was aged over 75 years.
- Domestic Violence incidents appear to have fallen over the last three years but there is still insufficient good data to corroborate whether this is a true trend. Analysis by Lancashire Constabulary's Public Protection Unit suggests that domestic violence incidents have actually increased by about 6% over the three years of this audit. An analysis of crimes of violence suggests that alcohol might be a factor in over half of the cases. Where there are hotspots for domestic violence incidents there are also hotspots for ambulance call outs due to violence.
- Accidental dwelling fires are a priority for Lancashire Fire and Rescue Service as there were 17 deaths and 468 injuries in Lancashire between April 2003 and March 2004. Blackpool, Lancaster, Blackburn with Darwen and Preston all have above average rates of accidental dwelling fires.

- The Opinion Survey found that those aged 18-24 are more likely to feel unsafe in their own home than any other age group.
- 53% of respondents said that media/news reports influenced their feelings of safety at home. This figure was higher than the influence of having previously experienced a crime at home (48%).
- In the Opinion Survey, 12% of respondents said that something had happened in the last 12 months to make them feel less safe in their own homes. The main reason for this being witnessing anti-social behaviour in their neighbourhood.
- Vandalism to property and unwanted callers were the two main factors which influenced people's feelings of safety in the home.

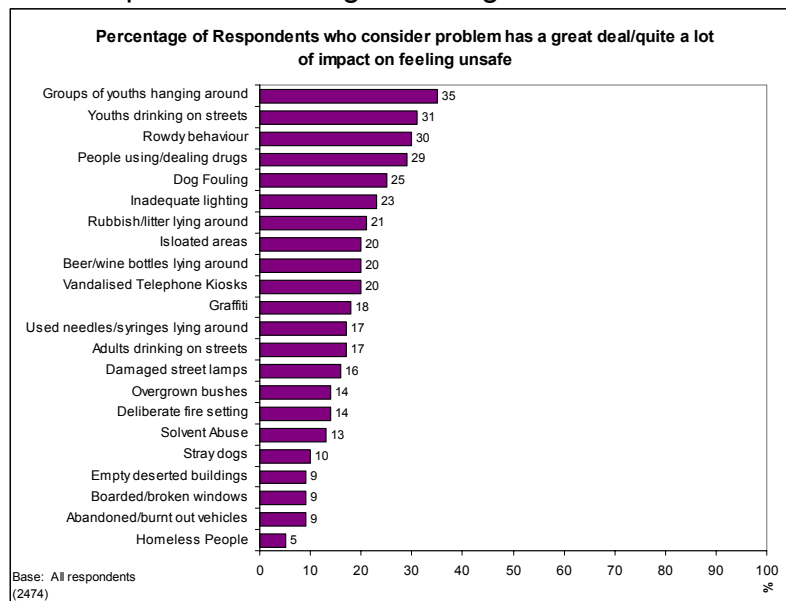
4 Safe and Secure Streets

- Violent crime is increasing but the rate of increase is masked by the changes to the counting rules. An analysis of ambulance call outs suggests that a more indicative rate of increase is between 4 and 6% for serious woundings.
- Other wounding (48%), common assault (19%) and harassment (13%) were the main violent crimes reported between April 2003 and March 2004. Sexual offences represented 5% of all violent crime and crimes where the victim was seriously injured or killed represent another 5%.
- In 36% of violent crimes in Lancashire, the offender was a stranger to the victim.
- Town centres are the main hotspots for violent crime, particularly in Preston, Blackpool, Lancaster and Burnley. This is backed up by the Opinion Survey which found that 58% of respondents felt very or fairly unsafe in the Town Centre after dark.
- The geography of violent crime is evidence of the strong link between violent crime and alcohol misuse. 40% of offenders of violent crime in Lancashire committed the offence whilst under the influence of drugs or alcohol.
- 49% of serious violent crimes occur between 8pm and 2am, a period intuitively associated with drinking. Over half (54%) of violent crime takes place on a weekend (Friday – Sunday). If you remove the crimes involving alcohol from the data then the trend is flat across the week, indicating that the weekend increase in violence is entirely attributable to the misuse of alcohol.

- Arson and Deliberate Fires have been increasing slightly over the last three years. 76% of deliberate fires are secondary fires, i.e. those which do not involve any loss of property.
- Vehicle crime in general has fallen the last three years with only criminal damage to vehicles showing a slight increase. Deliberate vehicle fires have also remained at a constant rate over the last three years.
- Hotspots for vehicle crime still appear to be public car parks. This is mirrored by public perception which considers public car parks to be the least safe place to park a car.

5 Anti-Social Behaviour

- The one day count of Anti-Social Behaviour on 10 September 2003 in Lancashire resulted in 506 reports, with general nuisance and rowdy behaviour accounting for the largest number.
- Deliberate secondary fires have been increasing in Lancashire over the last three years by about 8% per annum. Fires in a refuse bin or container account for 60% of these fires. The majority of these fires are considered to have been set by a youth.
- The graph below shows the results of the Opinion Survey on factors which contribute to respondents feelings of being unsafe.



- The Survey discovered that when compared with the scale of the problem, anti-social behaviour by youths is considered to have a disproportionate impact on general feelings of safety on a community.

- Environmental factors which contribute to feelings of being unsafe nearly all relate to visibility issues such as inadequate lighting, isolated areas and damaged street lamps, though dog fouling appears high both in terms of scale of the problem and impact on feelings of safety.
- 95 Anti-Social Behaviour Orders (ASBOs) have been handed out by Lancashire Courts between 1 April 1999 and 31 March 2004. In addition 219 Acceptable Behaviour Contracts (ABCs) have been made across the County in the period April 2003 to March 2004.

6 Substance Misuse

- Offences for Possession of Drugs have remained stable over the last three years at around 1.8 crimes per thousand population. However, 13% of the people surveyed by Opinion thought that substance misuse had increased in the previous twelve months.
- The amount of drugs seized and the number of crimes of drugs trafficking and supply have increased. This trend might be more representative of police activity rather than an increase in the underlying volume of drugs supply.
- Heroin is the most prevalent drug, although crack cocaine is becoming more the drug of choice in Lancashire.
- Numbers into treatment have increased slightly over the last three years and waiting times to get into treatment have decreased.
- Drug misuse in Prisons is greater than in the population as a whole. 25% of inmates at prisons in Lancashire sought help from the CARAT scheme for drug misuse in November 2002.
- Binge drinking is more common in the North West than the national average and is linked with deprivation. Also repeat offending is less strong a feature of violent crime compared to other forms of criminal activity which is consistent with binge drinking as a causal factor.
- The strongest predictor of levels of violence is the density of licensed premises in a neighbourhood.

7 Safe and Secure Transport

- There were over 2,000 reported incidents of anti-social behaviour on buses in Lancashire between September 2003 and July 2004 with damage to the bus being the largest category. Anti-social behaviour on buses was highlighted as a reason for making people feel less safe using public transport.

- Crime on Lancashire's railways has decreased over the last three years. Line of route offences such as trespass and stone throwing are the largest volume crimes.
- The number of fatal or serious casualties on Lancashire's roads has decreased over the last three years.

8 Protecting Diversity

- The number of racially motivated crimes over the last three years has remained relatively stable at 0.8 crimes per thousand population. There has been a rise in incidents reported to the Local Education Authority but this is largely attributed to improvements in reporting mechanisms by schools rather than a real rise in the number of incidents.
- Reported racial crime is confined to a few small areas, mainly inner Preston and Burnley.
- The Opinion survey found that fear of crime due to age, gender, skin colour, sexual orientation, ethnic origin or religion is reasonably low in Lancashire. Those aged 65+ are most likely to fear intimidation or harassment due to their age. Those of Indian, Pakistani and Bangladeshi origin are most likely to fear intimidation or harassment due to their skin colour, religion or ethnic origin.

9 Young People

- Other wounding is the crime category most suffered by a victim aged under 18 years. Other wounding is also the crime most likely to be committed by an offender aged under 18 years.
- A pupil attitude survey held in Lancashire Schools found that nearly a quarter of all pupils in Year 6 at Primary/Year 7 at Secondary had experienced bullying in the previous year. This had dropped to just over a tenth by the end of Secondary school. Between 60 and 70% of pupils were concerned about things being stolen in school reflecting the top 10 position of Theft from a person in crimes from under 18s.
- Incidents of juvenile nuisance have been increasing over the last three years. Juvenile Nuisance is fairly widespread across the County but Hotspots occur in Wyre (Pharos ward), Preston (Larches and Ribbleton) and Lancaster (Dukes). The majority of juvenile nuisance incidents occur between 4pm and 9pm, with Friday being the peak day.

- A risk of youth offending index has been developed for the Youth Offending Team and this highlights areas in Preston (Ribbleton, Fishwick and St Matthew's), Blackpool (Claremont and Park) and Burnley (Bank Hall and Danehouse with Stoneyholme) as having a mix of factors which could contribute to an above average rate of youth offending.
- Truancy from school statistics and the pupil attitude survey show that between 12 to 13% of absences from school are unauthorised and that between 23 and 28% of children admit to having played truant at some time.

10 Businesses

- Business crime is relatively low volume and stable in Lancashire, although shoplifting, fraud and forgery have experienced a small rise over the last three years.
- The Opinion survey found that 18-24 year olds are most likely to feel unsafe in the workplace after dark. This could be due to the types of work this age group are likely to be involved in, which could involve working in town centres and working in roles in which they are exposed to more volatile situations.
- Consultation with the Business Community found that 98% of business surveyed had experienced at least one crime in the previous 12 months. The top five crimes were break-ins, vandalism, theft by outsiders, theft by employees and theft from/of company vehicles.

11 Contact Details

The Lancashire Community Safety Audit has been prepared by the Multi-Agency Data Exchange Project on behalf of the Statutory Authorities in Lancashire (Emergency Services, Local Authorities and Health Service).

Please send comments or observations to:

Melanie Greenslade, MADE Project Officer, Lancashire County Council, PO Box 78, County Hall, Preston, PR1 8XJ
Email: Melanie.greenslade@css.lancscc.gov.uk