

Highland Council
Communities and Partnerships Committee
10 December 2015

Agenda Item	3
Report No	CP 01/15

Public Performance Survey 2015: Responses to questions on Community Safety

Report by the Head of Policy and Reform

Summary

This report provides a summary of the responses from the Citizens' Panel on questions about attitudes to community safety in the 2015 Public Performance and Attitudes Survey.

1. Background

- 1.1 The Highland Council's 2015 Public Performance and Attitudes Survey (PPAS) was carried out with the Citizen's Panel in the summer of 2015. The survey included a number of attitudinal questions to gather views on:
- Community safety concerns;
 - Fear of crime;
 - Precaution against crime; and
 - Perception of safety in the local area.
- The report was analysed by the UHI Centre for Remote and Rural Studies.
- 1.2 This is the fourth year of reporting on a revised set of seven questions about community safety, although this year was the first to include questions with regard to concern about drug misuse in addition to alcohol misuse. This therefore provides a base-line to measure change in future surveys. The information from these questions will continue to form part of the evidence required for the Council to agree priorities for future local plans for police and fire services as well as the any revisions to the Single Outcome Agreement and its successor, the Local Outcomes Improvement Plan.
- 1.3 For the whole survey there were 1,021 usable responses, providing high levels of confidence that results can be generalised to the adult population in the Highlands as a whole. Confidence in the results is high and at the 95% level and within a +/- 3.1% confidence interval. In other words, if we had surveyed everyone we could be 95% confident that the results would be within a range of +/-3.1% of those reported.
- 1.4 The results of the survey support the Council's programme 'Highland First' under the themes of local emergency services, 'A Fairer Highland', as well as the Fairer Highland Plan.

2. Key findings: Perceptions of safety in the local area

- 2.1 In response to the question ‘How do you rate the safety of your area within 15 minutes’ walk of your home?’ 96.8% rated their locality as either “very” or “fairly safe”. This is comparable with the 2014 figure of 96.7%. The difference between the years is shown below.

Safety of your area within 15 minutes’ walk

	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
A very safe area	51.3%	53.3%	58.5%	61.7%	60.4%
A fairly safe area	41.6%	42.8%	39.3%	35%	36.4%
Rather unsafe area	5.5%	2.9%	1.7%	2.0%	2.2%
A very unsafe area	1.1%	0.7%	0.1%	1.2%	0.4%

3. Key findings: Community Safety Concerns

- 3.1 The top community safety concerns are:
- **Road safety**, with 33% saying it was a major concern and 45% reporting a minor concern.
 - The second highest concern was **alcohol abuse** with 30% saying this was a major concern (up from 24%) and 39% a minor concern, the same as in 2014 and 2013.
 - The newly added concern, **drug abuse** was third highest, with 24% reporting a major, and 34% a minor concern for this issue.
 - **Anti-social behaviour** ranked fourth, with 18% saying this was a major concern and 39% reporting this as a minor concern. The highest levels of concern here are found amongst people who are: unemployed (72%); council tenants (67%) and disabled people (65%) compared to 57% overall.
- 3.2 Different levels of concern were expressed by different groups in the community. For example:
- Council tenants continue to show more concern about serious and organised crime and abuse of vulnerable adults. Some 20% of council tenants regard violent crime as being a major concern to them.
 - People unable to work show more concern with crimes of dishonesty (e.g. theft/fraud).
 - Disabled people show more concern with anti-social behaviour (and in the separate option regarding fire-related anti-social behaviour), serious and organised crime and abuse of vulnerable adults.
 - Those that have lived in the Highlands for between 5 and 10 years showed less concern in relation to domestic abuse and drug misuse.

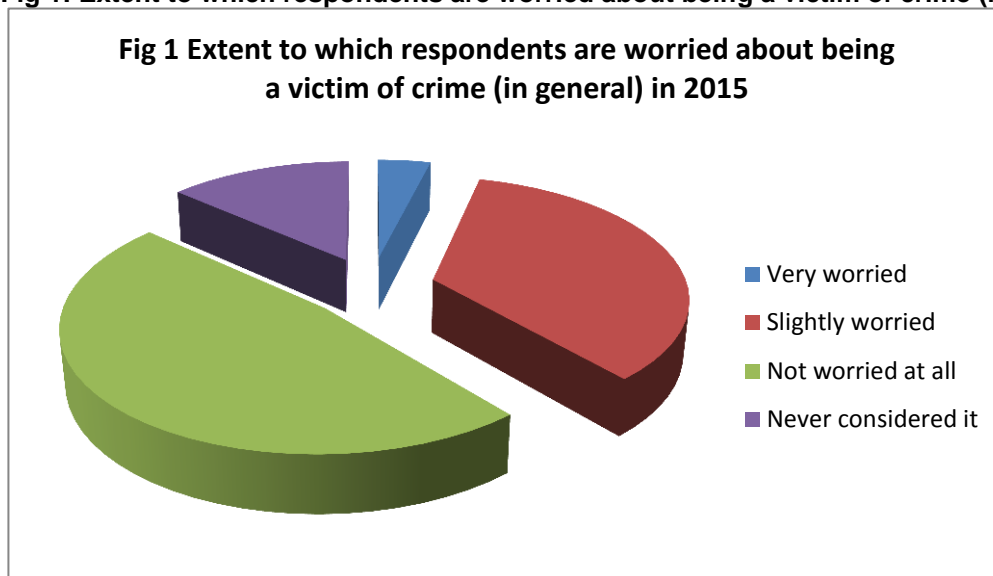
4. Key findings - Reducing Drug and Alcohol related harm in communities

- 4.1 Respondents were then asked a question that is new to the 2015 Survey: “What do you think would help most to reduce drug and alcohol related harm in your community?” The most commonly selected option (63%) was for people with problems receiving more help. This was only slightly more popular than opportunities and activities to encourage people to make healthier choices (62%) and more support for families affected by drug and alcohol problems (59%). 43% of people thought that drugs and alcohol being less available would help to reduce drug and alcohol related harm in their community. This proposal’s popularity varied with age, with 50% of those aged 65 years+ with this view, compared to 27% for those aged 16-24.

5. Key findings: Fear of Crime

5.1 Respondents were asked: “How worried are you about becoming a victim of crime?” The majority of the panel, 61.3% indicated they had never considered it or were not worried at all (up from 60.1% in 2014) compared to 38.7% that say they have some degree of worry (down from 39.9%); including only 3.9% saying they are very worried (see Figure 1 below).

Fig 1: Extent to which respondents are worried about being a victim of crime (in general)



- 5.2 There are notable differences in response according to individual characteristics; Council house tenants show most worry, with 49% worried (down from 52%) including 14% as very worried.
- 5.3 Respondents were then asked about how worried they were about specific crimes. From a list of eleven, there was only one where a majority identified some worry. This was having their home broken into, a worry for 52% (down from 55%). The second was vandalism/deliberate damage to home property or car, a worry to 47% (down from 50%).
- 5.4 A sizeable minority felt worried about having their car stolen or broken into (40%) and a minority also felt worried about being attacked by someone under the influence of alcohol (39%).
- 5.5 Respondents were asked how worried they were about being the victim of attack, assault or robbery in the street. 30% said this was a worry (down from 36%). The percentage of people worried about being a victim of these crimes is higher amongst respondents who are council tenants (44%) or disabled people (40%).
- 5.6 Levels of worry over being the victim of an attempted rape, or other serious sexual offence has remained the more or less the same with 12% of respondents slightly worried and a further 3% very worried (15% expressing some level of worry). Most of those expressing a worry are women.
- 5.7 In responding to a specific question on being a victim of domestic abuse, 2% (down from 5%) reported being worried and 1% reported being very worried.

5.8 A separate question was asked about suffering discrimination or being subject to a hate incident (based on religion or belief, race or ethnic origin, mental health, physical disability, sexual orientation, gender identity or learning disability). The most common ground for concern was mental health (31%), followed by learning disability (29%), and then race or ethnic origin (28%).

6. Key findings: Precautions against crime

6.1 Respondents were asked to select which precautions they took because of possible worries about crime. The most common precaution taken (always or sometimes) was to make sure that their home is adequately secured (89%) and to make sure their vehicle is adequately secured (88%). The percentage of respondents answering always or sometimes is shown below.

6.2

Precaution Taken	% who say they always or sometimes do this (2015)	% who say they always or sometimes do this (2014)
Make sure your home is adequately secured	89%	92%
Make sure your vehicle is adequately secured	88%	90%
Carry a mobile phone	69%	73%
Avoid certain places	60%	59%
Mark your property in case it is stolen	40%	43%
Avoid going out when it is dark	31%	31%
Avoid going out alone	31%	29%
Avoid going out at certain times	31%	28%
Take self-defence classes	6%	6%

6.2 The above and other information in this report will be shared with partners to target appropriate responses and inform the development of local plans.

7. Implications

7.1 Resources implications

There are no financial implications as a result of this survey report.

7.2 Legal and Risk implications

The Council has a legal duty to engage with the national services for police and fire. This information is shared with them to help prioritise actions in local plans.

7.3 Equalities implications

This report identifies equalities issues that highlight the requirement to consider the needs of different groups when targeting crime prevention activities and offering assurance to groups expressing higher levels of vulnerability and fear. Notable differences in responses were reported for people with disabilities, those unable to work, council house tenants and women. Without considering these needs there is a risk of failing to meet the equalities duties placed on public bodies and a failure to consider a range of evidence in agreeing the priorities and objectives for local policing and fire and rescue services. The current Single Outcome Agreement has set equalities outcomes and with the Community Planning Partnership target to reduce the gap in fear of crime amongst people with disabilities compared to others.

7.4 Climate Change

There are no climate change implications as a result of this report, however it is worth noting that nearly 1000 members of the Citizens' Panel now choose to respond to surveys electronically. This is encouraged to reduce paper and postage costs which have implications for carbon emissions as well.

7.5 Gaelic There are no Gaelic implications.

7.6 Rural

The only rural implications are that more people in rural Wards are more likely to perceive their areas as being very safe; however analysis by Ward is not possible because the sample size is too small.

8 Recommendations:

Members are asked to note that:

- (i) The survey shows 96.8% of respondents rated their area within 15 minutes' walk of their home as either "very" or "fairly safe".
- (ii) In keeping with previous years, the top two community safety concerns were road safety and alcohol abuse. The newly considered issue in the survey of drug misuse was ranked 3rd, replacing concern about anti-social behaviour which this time was ranked 4th. Partnership efforts to improve road safety and reduce anti-social behaviour are reported separately to this meeting.
- (iii) The majority of respondents (61.3%) were either not concerned about or had not considered being a victim of crime. Where crimes were a concern, those of most worry were vandalism/deliberate damage to home property or car and having their home broken into; and making sure homes and cars are adequately secured remain the top two precautions people reported taking.
- (iv) Notable differences in responses were reported for disabled people, those unable to work, council house tenants and women. This information will be shared with partners to target appropriate responses.
- (v) This feedback from the public is one source of evidence in agreeing and reviewing our community safety priorities with partners.

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