

RESULTS FROM OPINION WAVE 8 (FEBRUARY/MARCH 2005)

The Authority maintains a representative panel of 4,000 individuals for the whole of Lancashire. Panel members are consulted 3 times a year on various policing issues. The report below details the results from the consultation that took place in February and March 2005

Topics we consulted on:

- Confidence
- The underlying causes of crime
- Violent crime
- Criminal damage and anti-social behaviour

Confidence in Lancashire Constabulary

Levels of confidence in Lancashire Constabulary are tracked over time to see if it increases or decreases. Results show that confidence in Lancashire Constabulary is now at its' highest since the monitoring of confidence levels began in December 2002 when confidence was at 73%. Now 88% are very/fairly confident.

- The main reasons for confidence increasing are related to 'active' service and response – such as receiving a good, efficient service, seeing positive media coverage, seeing or hearing about drugs raids being carried out and receiving a quick response.
- Poor response is again the main reason for a decrease in confidence. Other reasons include: experiencing or witnessing anti-social behaviour, seeing negative media coverage and experiencing or witnessing what you consider to be unfair treatment by the police.

Action/outcome:

The main reasons given for both increases and decreases in confidence are down to our service and response, with us either exceeding or not meeting your expectations. Initiatives such as PASS, our non-emergency call handling and PACT, the Police and Communities Together allow us to check how we are performing in these areas and see how effective our initiatives really are. The Constabulary is also about to launch a programme called Quality Counts which will make sure that high quality customer care standards are built into everyday working practices with training being given to people across the organisation.

Response is once again the main reason for a decrease in confidence. Although this is a negative aspect it is becoming more positive in that it continues a trend identified in the last wave. In March 2004 28% cited response as a reason for decrease in confidence, in June 2004 this dropped to 21%, in November 2004 this dropped further to 17% and this wave it is down to 14%. We will continue to monitor this and aim to continue the downward trend by providing you with the best service we can.

The Underlying Causes of Crime

- The majority (58%) agreed with the statement "People generally commit crimes because of certain factors or circumstances rather than because of personal choice".
- (67%) believe that people of a certain age are more likely to commit crimes, with those aged 13-25 years being the most likely.
- The top 5 factors that you think influence peoples' likelihood to commit a crime are:
 - The use of illegal drugs
 - Drug dealing
 - Lack of parental control
 - Alcohol abuse

- Deterrents not strong enough

Action/outcome:

The Constabulary already undertake a number of activities aimed at tackling some of these issues. Current activities include:

- Alcohol initiatives:
 - Test purchasing by underage youngsters (in association with Trading Standards)
 - The use of ID schemes with outlets licensed to sell alcohol
 - Ongoing work with licensees' regarding drinks promotions (such as happy hours and buy one get one free promotions)
 - An alcohol education DVD for young people
- Operation Nimrod - an ongoing operation targeting dealers of Class A drugs and involves working with local communities to gather the intelligence needed to carry out successful raids and consequently, result in arrests. Since it began in 2002 it has had great successes across the county including:
 - Over 4000 warrants being executed across Lancashire
 - Drug seizures with a street value of over £500,000
 - Over 400 people have faced trial, totalling over 1,000 years in prison
 - Thousands of pounds worth of assets have been seized

The Constabulary and the Police Authority, along with other partners, will continue to use initiatives such as those mentioned above and strive to develop new initiatives to tackle these problems. As always, early intervention, prevention, treatment and enforcement remain the key aims in the approach to tackling crime.

Anti-social and Criminal Behaviour

- Over a third feel that their quality of life is affected by anti-social behaviour, with the main effect being that of youths' general behaviour (abuse, vandalism, swearing, disturbance etc.)
- 81% also believe that certain age groups are more likely to engage in anti-social behaviour – those aged 13-20 years.
- Youths congregating and anti-social behaviour have caused the biggest increases in levels of concern over the past 12 months compared with other crimes such as drug dealing, vehicle crime and burglary. These two areas of crime are also considered to have increased more than other areas in the past 12 months. However, they are least likely of all of the crimes to be reported.
- A quarter claim to experience or witness some type of criminal or anti-social behaviour at least once a week.
- Anti-social behaviour makes respondents feel annoyed, angry and frustrated.
- Nearly two thirds (57%) are frustrated with the local authorities in general in their response to anti-social behaviour.
- Only a third are satisfied with how the police handle anti-social behaviour in their area, however only a third believe the police have the resources to deal with it
- The majority of crimes classed by the police as 'criminal behaviour' were considered to be anti-social rather than criminal behaviour.

Action/outcome:

- Anti-social behaviour is a big issue for the Constabulary and the public alike and a number of initiatives are in place to tackle this type of behaviour:
 - Anti-social Behaviour Orders (ASBO's) - are being used increasingly across the county to address the problem of yobbish behaviour, at the start of 2005 there were 180 ASBO's in force in Lancashire.
 - Acceptable behaviour contracts - voluntary agreements between people involved in anti-social behaviour and the local police, housing department or the perpetrator's school.

- Dispersal orders – these are introduced in areas where residents are concerned about people gathering in large groups and causing a public nuisance and have so far proved very effective, with a 25% reduction in complaints about youth nuisance in an area in Burnley where one was recently introduced.
- Closure orders – these give the police the power, along with local authorities, to tackle ‘crack houses’ and other locations which cause disorder or serious nuisance to local communities through association with Class A drugs.
- The information will also be used:
 - By the Police Headquarters Media & Marketing Services to help develop informative campaigns about crime statistics, e.g. explaining what is ‘counted’ as anti-social behaviour
 - By the Police Headquarters Media & Marketing Services to develop a specific marketing campaign to raise public awareness of how the Constabulary tackle anti-social behaviour
- The introduction of the NSIR (National Standard for Incident Recording) is a new government system to be used across the country for recording ALL incidents, both crime and non-crime. This will have an effect on the recording of anti-social behaviour in terms of providing quality performance information on non-crime police work and aims to support the Government’s anti-social behaviour agenda. This means that in future we will be able to monitor anti-social behaviour more closely than ever before, getting a more accurate picture of the impact it has on policing and local communities.

Violent Crime

- 13% consider violent crime to be a ‘very/fairly’ big problem in your area.
- 7% have had something happen to make them feel that violent crime has increased in their area.
- 7% believe the use of knives in violent crime has increased in their area and 3% think the same of guns.
- Persistent harassment, common assault, one-off harassment and verbal abuse (either due to race/religion or general verbal abuse) are not considered by most respondents to be ‘violent crimes’. However, the majority would report them all to the police.
- The following crimes are expected to receive a prison sentence by the majority of respondents : murder, indecent/sexual assault of a child, rape, causing death by dangerous driving, child abuse, indecent/sexual assault of an adult, attempted murder, manslaughter, wounding putting life in danger, physical assault resulting in major injury.

Action/outcome:

- The violent crime information will be used by the relevant departments of the Constabulary to provide a more in-depth understanding of perceptions of the issues in order for effective actions to be taken, aimed at reducing the levels of these types of crime in line with government and Constabulary targets. The information will also be used:
 - To address the wider issues of this problem and the impact it has on the residents of Lancashire.
 - By the Police Headquarters Media & Marketing Services to help develop informative campaigns about crime statistics, e.g. explaining what is ‘counted’ as violent crime