

Scots feel safer

People are feeling safer from crime in Scotland in 2010 according to the largest survey of perceptions and experiences of crime carried out in Scotland.

The survey of 16,000 people across the country found that the public are more positive about crime rates in their local area in 09/10 compared to 08/09.

The survey also found that the risk of being a victim of crime is lower in Scotland than in England and Wales, and the number of crimes carried out in Scotland has fallen by 10 per cent in 2009/10 compared to 2008/09.

The news follows official statistics released only weeks ago showing that recorded crime in Scotland is at its lowest level in 32 years and there are an all time record number of police officers – over 1,000 extra since March 2007 – protecting the public and making communities safer.

The results are contained in this year's Scottish Crime and Justice Survey. It shows:

* The public are more positive about the crime rate in their local area in 2009/10 compared to 2008/09, with 71 per cent saying local crime had stayed the same or improved in 09/10, compared to 69 per cent in 08/09

* The risk of being a victim of crime in Scotland is lower in 09/10 than in 08/09, with the risk falling to 19.3 per cent in 09/10, compared to 20.4 per cent in 08/09

* The risk of being a victim is also lower in Scotland than in England and Wales – 21.5 per cent in England and Wales compared with 19.3 per cent in Scotland

* The number of crimes has fallen by 10 per cent in Scotland between 08/09 and 09/10, with 945,000 crimes carried out in 09/10, compared to 1,040,000 crimes in 08/09

* The number of violent crimes fell 16 per cent between 08/09

and 09/10 from 371,000 incidents to 266,000 incidents

* Alcohol remains a major factor in violent crime in Scotland with the offender under the influence of alcohol in 62 per cent of violent crime. 30 per cent of victims said that they themselves had consumed alcohol immediately prior to the incident. Violent crime was also most likely to occur at the weekend and particularly between 6pm and 6 am.

Commenting on the survey results, Justice Secretary Kenny MacAskill said:

“These are welcome trends which show that we are making progress in our fight against crime in Scotland’s communities.

“Recorded crime in Scotland is at its lowest level in 32 years, there is an all time record number of police officers – over 1,000 extra since March 2007 – on Scotland’s streets making our communities safer, and now today’s survey shows Scots are also feeling safer in their communities.

“What we are seeing here is a downward trajectory right across the board – crime is down, your risk of being a victim is down, communities are becoming safer and Scots are feeling more positive in 2010 as a result. That is to be welcomed.

“This survey shows the story behind the official statistics and it is encouraging to see that people’s experiences and perceptions of crime are mirroring those found in recorded statistics.

“However, we will not be complacent and there will be no let up in this Government’s efforts to drive down crime even further.

“Alcohol is still a major factor in crimes and this survey paints an all too familiar picture of alcohol related violence in Scotland. It is no coincidence that a majority of violent offenders were under the influence of alcohol when they committed their crimes or that most violent crimes take place

at weekends after 6 pm, just when the crowds are gathering on street corners, parks or pubs to get tanked up on booze.

“We are making good progress on tackling the blade culture, on bringing down the Mr Bigs of serious and organised crime, and on punishing the drug dealers who peddle misery and despair in our communities, but we must do more to tackle the booze culture which continues to blight Scotland. This survey presents further evidence that Parliament should be backing our proposals to tackle alcohol misuse and the measures we have put forward to loosen the tight grip alcohol holds over far too many Scots.

“This Government will continue doing everything it can to tackle the underlying causes of crime and disorder, such as drink, drugs and deprivation. The fight will continue and we are united with Scotland’s police forces and law enforcement agencies in doing all we can to deliver a safer and stronger Scotland.”