



Business Crime Survey

Summary Report

January 2021

Background and methodology

For the first time, Kent's elected Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) Matthew Scott created a survey specifically to understand business crime in the county.

The questions asked of respondents included:

- How safe do you feel the area is where the business is based?
- Which crimes has the business experienced in the past year?
- How satisfied were you with the response from Kent Police?
- What, if anything, dissuaded you from reporting business crime in the past?

The survey also requested information about the first half of the postcode where the business was based, the type of business and any recent investment to help prevent or deter criminal activity.

While the survey was intended mainly for business owners/directors and store managers, employees were also welcome to participate and offer their views.

Kent Police data shows shoplifting increased by 10% last year, while reports of criminal damage against businesses fell by 10%. However, previous national research by the Federation of Small Businesses (FSB) found 21% of small businesses did not report crimes against them, so it is likely that recorded crime figures only show part of the problem.

A key aim of the survey was to better understand exactly how much crime is being committed against businesses in the county, and why some of it is not reported to the police. This of course includes traditional crimes like theft and robbery and also growing challenges like cyber-enabled crime and fraud. The PCC also wanted to better understand the impact of the additional dedicated Town Centre PCs who were introduced last year with the support of local council taxpayers and, whose presence he has heard anecdotally has been well-received.

The PCC is grateful to Kent Police's Crime Reduction Project Manager, and also the FSB for their help in developing the survey. There was a need to ensure the questions reflected all the relevant issues facing businesses - including fraud, assaults on staff, Covid-19, and rural crime.

The decision was taken to host the survey online via Smart Survey; in addition to minimising costs and impact on staff workload, Covid-19 restrictions prevented attendance at, or the hosting of physical engagement events for businesses. To ensure due diligence and compliance with GDPR legislation, advice was sought from Kent Police's Information Security Department.

Publicising the survey

Kent Police's Crime Reduction Project Manager was integral to promoting the survey amongst local Kent businesses. The survey was shared widely with:

- members of the Business Crime Reduction Partnership (a list is attached as an Appendix);
- managers from shopping centres such as County Square, Ashford and Westwood Cross, Thanet;
- regional security officers representing supermarkets such as Waitrose, Tesco and Sainsbury's and whom the PCC has built a good working relationship with as a result of public engagement events;
- the National Farmers' Union;
- the Association of Convenience Stores;
- the Road Haulage Association; and
- Heritage businesses in Kent (approximately 100 members).

Furthermore, it was promoted in the 'One Maidstone' magazine which is delivered to all businesses and homes across Maidstone (the advert is attached as an Appendix). A separate email was also sent from One Maidstone to all Business Improvement District levy businesses in Maidstone.

A link to the survey was posted on the Office of the PCC (OPCC) website and shared widely on social media, making use of the OPCC's Twitter account, Facebook, and Instagram feeds. The survey was also posted on a relatively new platform called 'Nextdoor'. The OPCC posted the link and a short explanation on community-run Facebook pages, and also to local councillors who were encouraged to share it amongst their own public contacts. Throughout the survey period, regular reminders were sent out across all social media channels.

Details of the survey were also included in the OPCC's quarterly e-newsletter which at that time was distributed to approximately 1,600 subscribers.

The survey remained open between 21 September 2020 and 3 January 2021, with **247** completed responses received from Kent businesses. Whilst a relatively small number, it was actually a good level of engagement in terms of the number of staff those businesses represented. Just over 25% of the businesses employed at least 30 staff, and of this, over half employed more than 100 staff.

Results of the Business Crime Survey

Part One: Your details

Q1 asked respondents for their email address so a copy of this report could be sent to them.


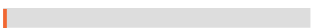







Q2 asked whether those respondents who provided an email address would also like to be added to the OPCC e-newsletter distribution list.

This resulted in an extra 122 email addresses being added, increasing the overall number on the mailing list to 3,435. This will enable the OPCC to send important updates to a wider network across Kent and Medway.

Part Two: About the business

Q3) Which category best describes where the business is based?

This question was included to better understand which types of business were completing the survey and used for subsequent analysis to gauge the issues faced by different sectors.

Chain		2.83%	7
Factory		1.21%	3
Farm		31.98%	79
Home-based		6.48%	16
Hospitality venue - including cafes, entertainment, pubs, restaurants		11.74%	29
Office-based		8.10%	20
Online only		0.00%	0
Shop		19.03%	47
Other		18.62%	46

Although almost a third of respondents indicated the business was a 'Farm', the 'Other' category captured a broad and diverse range of responses, as below:

<i>Head Office</i>	<i>University</i>	<i>Transport/Haulage</i>	<i>Museum/charity</i>	<i>Beauty clinic</i>
<i>Restaurant</i>	<i>Business coaching</i>	<i>Shopping centre</i>	<i>Pub</i>	<i>Utility construction</i>
<i>Local government</i>	<i>Cricket club</i>	<i>Gallery</i>	<i>Barbers</i>	<i>Workshop</i>
<i>Photography studio</i>	<i>Hotel reception</i>	<i>Construction/rail</i>	<i>Livery stables</i>	<i>Shop/showroom</i>
<i>Place of worship</i>	<i>Tourist site</i>	<i>Industrial units</i>	<i>Micropub</i>	<i>Boatyard/moorings</i>
<i>Rural yard</i>	<i>Design/carpentry</i>	<i>Tree surgery</i>	<i>Mobile working</i>	<i>Storage barn</i>
<i>Funeral directors</i>	<i>Petrol forecourt</i>	<i>Consultant</i>	<i>McColls Retail Group</i>	<i>Garage/MOT centre</i>
<i>Fire engineering trade</i>	<i>Self-catering accommodation</i>	<i>Security systems installation</i>	<i>Highway maintenance</i>	<i>Concert / school / church halls</i>
<i>Retail hardware shop</i>				

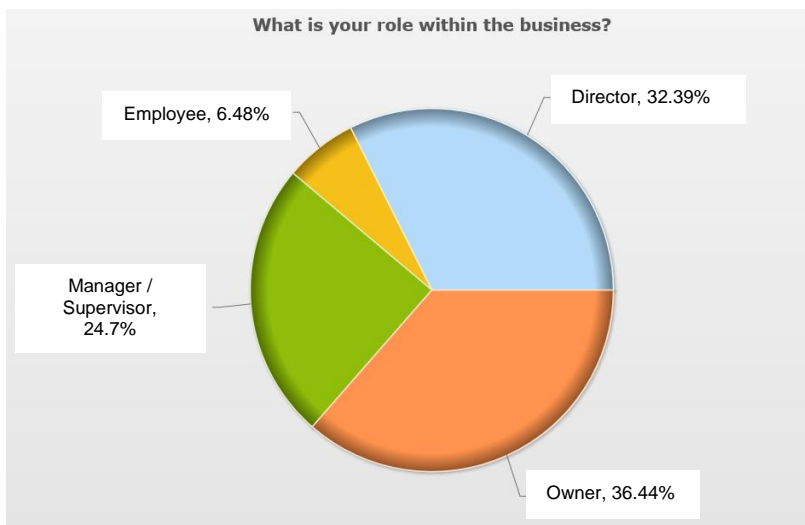
Q4) Please write the first half of the postcode for where the business is based (e.g. ME15).

Out of 75 possible postcode areas in Kent, only 10 were not selected at all. However, 9% of respondents indicated that the business was situated in multiple locations and therefore could incorporate some of those postcode areas. The data showed that the survey was completed by businesses that were geographically widespread rather than concentrated in small pockets within the county.

The following table shows the top 5 postcode areas where businesses were based:

Postcode area	Number of respondents
Multiple locations	22
TN26	12
CT20	10
TN27 and TN25	9
TN1 and DA11	8

Q5) What is your role within the business?

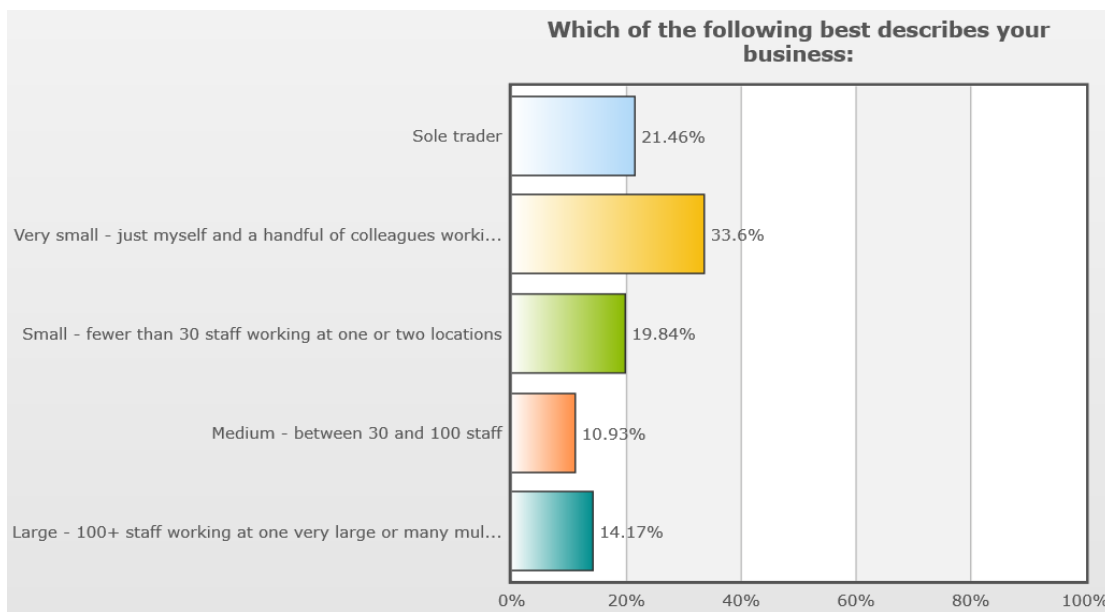


Just over two thirds of responses came from either the owner or Director of a business and almost a quarter from a manager/supervisor; over 90% of the surveys were completed by a representative of management in some form.

Q6) Which of the following best describes the business?

Respondents were asked to describe the business in terms of the number of staff. A third of respondents described the business as very small, involving just them and a handful of colleagues.

A quarter of the businesses had at least 30 staff, but the majority, approximately 75% had less than 30 staff.



Part Three: How you feel about crime in the area

Q7) How safe do you feel the area is where the business is based, on a scale of 1 to 10? (1 = very unsafe / 10 = very safe)

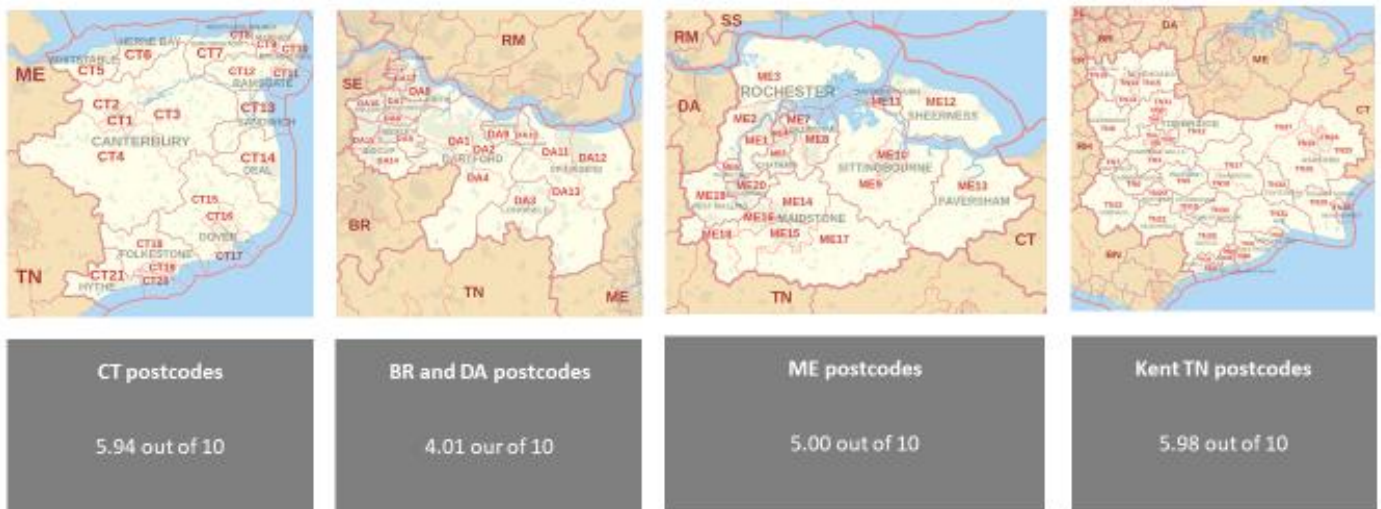
The average score based on the 247 responses was **5.44** out of 10.

There were small variations in this figure when the total sample was divided into sub-groups¹, for example:

- Respondents from a **large organisation** (100+ staff working at one very large or many multiple locations across Kent) gave an average score of **4.60**.
- Respondents from a **medium-sized organisation** (between 30 and 100 staff) gave an average score of **5.81**.
- Respondents from a **small-sized organisation** (fewer than 30 staff working at one or two locations) gave an average score of **5.69**.
- Respondents from a **very small organisation** (just them and a handful of colleagues working from one location) gave an average score of **5.62**.
- Respondents who were **sole traders** gave an average score of **5.26**.

Based on the results, respondents from large organisations felt the least safe. With this exception, there was a correlation between size and feelings of safety, with sole traders feeling second least safe and respondents from medium-sized organisations feeling the safest.

Using the first half of the postcode to identify geographical area, the results showed respondents based in North Kent and Medway felt less safe than those in the East and West of the county.



The following is a correlation between business category and how safe the respondent felt.

Business category	Feeling of safety
Factory	7.33
Home	6.81
Office	6.05
Hospitality venue	5.62
Farm	5.33
Other (see the list at Q3)	5.00
Shop	4.91
Chain	4.43

¹ Throughout this report, answers given to questions within **Part two: About the business** have been used to divide the total sample of 247 into smaller sub-groups in order to identify any trends. Where totals across these sub-groups do not add up to the total sample size of 247 this is due to some respondents choosing not to answer the questions within **Part two: About the business**.

According to the results, those respondents where the business was based in a factory or at home felt the area was safest, whereas those that were based in a shop or chain felt the least safe. It is clear that businesses with staff who have regular contact with the public feel less safe than those where staff work in a factory or at home and rarely interact with the public.

Q8) Which of the following measures would make you feel safer?

From a pre-defined list of 8 measures, the survey asked respondents to select any that applied.

Answer Choices	Responses		
Alarms and other physical security measures at your premises		29.15%	72
Better equipment for staff		6.48%	16
Improved CCTV in the local area		53.44%	132
Improved IT security / online protection		18.62%	46
Improved sharing of information between similar businesses		35.63%	88
Improved streetlighting		13.77%	34
Improved visibility of policing		79.76%	197
Tougher sentences for offenders		74.49%	184

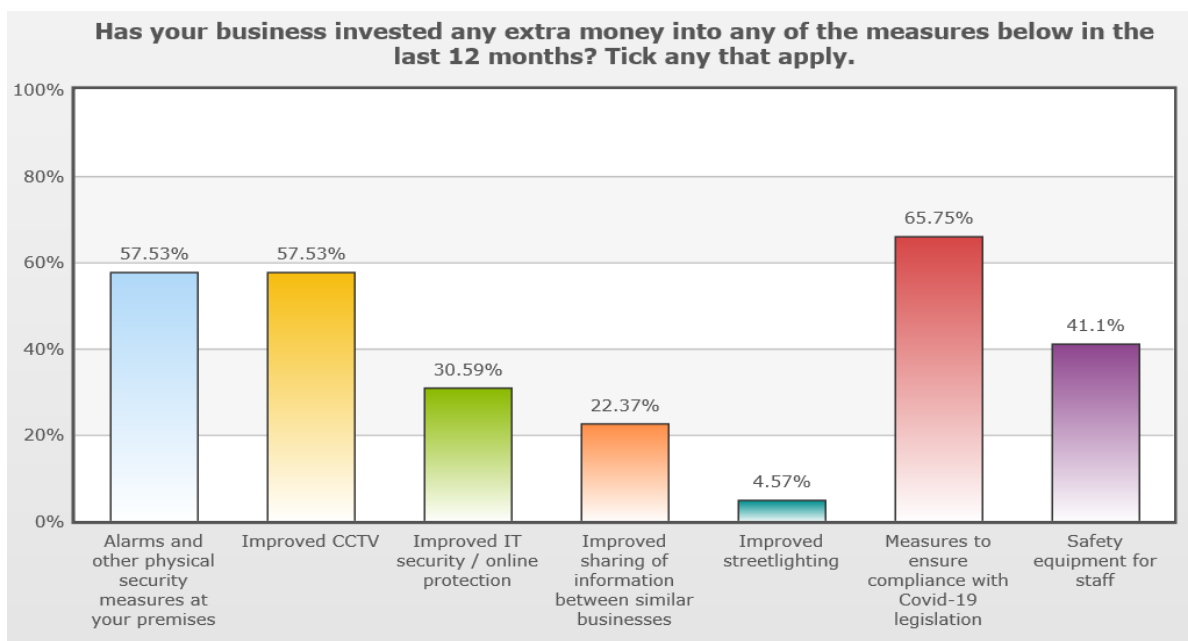
It is noticeable that the top three measures respondents felt would make them feel safer were those which are effectively out of the businesses control and the responsibility of the local council, police or criminal justice system as a whole, namely: *Improved CCTV in the local area*, *Increased visibility of policing* and *Tougher sentences for offenders*.

Q9) Has the business invested any extra money into any of the following measures in the last 12 months?

Respondents were asked to select any that applied from a pre-defined list of 7 measures.

In light of the pandemic, it is no surprise that over 65% of respondents indicated that the business had invested extra money on measures to ensure compliance with Covid-19 legislation.

However, almost 60% also indicated that the business had invested extra money on measures that were within their control to improve feelings of safety, such as *Alarms and other physical security measures* and *Improved CCTV*.

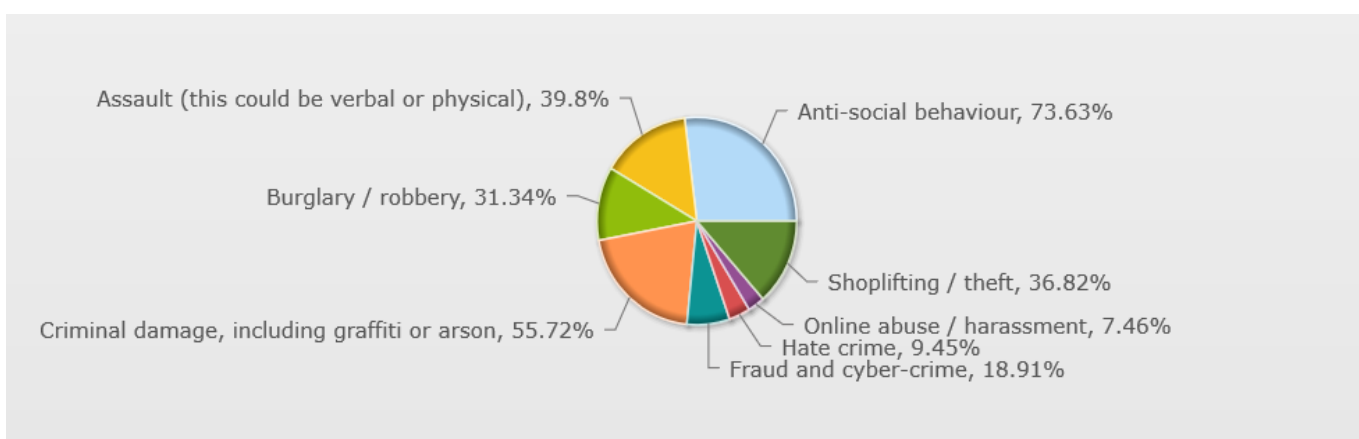


Part Four: Policing

Q10) Which of the following crimes have you, or your colleagues, experienced in the last year?

From a pre-defined list of 8 crimes, respondents were asked to select any that applied or leave blank if the business had not experienced one of those listed in the last year.

Nearly a quarter of respondents (46 out of 247) left this question blank.



Almost 75% of respondents who answered this question indicated that they or their colleagues had experienced *Anti-social behaviour* in the last year, and over half indicated that they had experienced *Criminal damage, including graffiti or arson*. Over a third of respondents also indicated that they or their colleagues had experienced *Shoplifting/theft* and *Assault (verbal or physical)*.

Q11) Did you report the crime(s) to police?

Yes		44.78%	90
No		15.92%	32
I reported some crime, but not all		39.30%	79
Answered: 201 Skipped: 46		Response Total:	201

Although almost half of respondents indicated that the crime(s) were reported to the police, a further 40% indicated that only some of the crimes - not all - were reported.

There were small variations when the total sample size of 201 was divided into sub-groups¹; for example:

- 60% of large organisations reported all crimes
- 50% of medium-sized organisations reported all crimes
- 38.6% of small organisations reported all crimes
- 44.4% of very small organisations reported all crimes
- 34.3% of sole traders reported all crimes

With very small organisations being the exception, the larger the business, the more likely it was that all crimes were reported, with sole traders being the least likely to do so.

Q12) Out of 10, how satisfied were you with the response from Kent Police? (1 = very unsatisfied / 10 = very satisfied)

The average score from the 170 respondents who answered this question was **5.08** out of 10.

Comparing the levels of satisfaction between the different postcode areas, there were a few differences:

- BR and DA postcodes had an average score of **6.71** out of 10
- TN postcodes had an average score of **5.08** out of 10
- CT postcodes had an average score of **5.02** out of 10
- ME postcodes had an average score of **4.65** out of 10

Those respondents from businesses situated in North Kent postcode areas were the most satisfied with the response from the police, those from TN and CT postcode areas were around the average and those from the ME postcode area were the least satisfied.

Q13) Out of 10, if a crime was committed against the business again, how likely is it that you would report it to the police? (1 = very unlikely / 10 = always)

Interestingly, the average score out of 10 was **7.45**; so overall respondents were likely to report a crime to the police in the future despite an average satisfaction score being **5.08**.

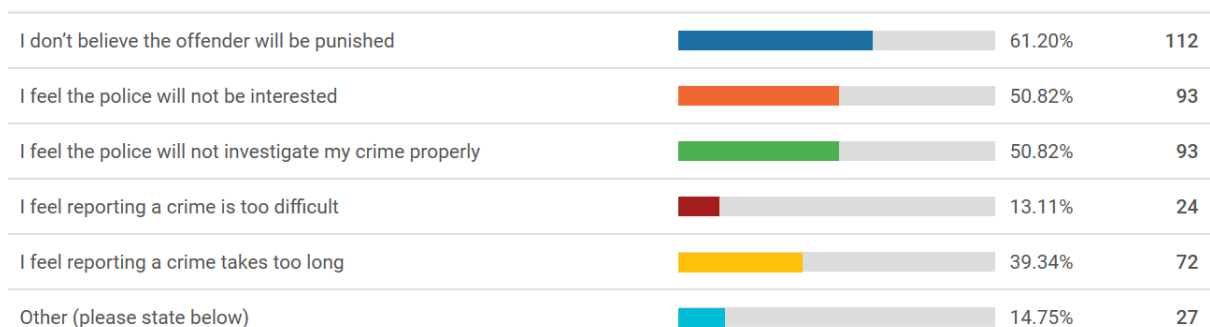
Focusing on postcode areas again, there were differences in likelihood of reporting crimes in the future:

- BR and DA postcodes had an average score of **7.41** out of 10
- CT postcodes had an average score of **7.72** out of 10
- TN postcodes had an average score of **7.56** out of 10
- ME postcodes had an average score of **6.63** out of 10

As might be expected, there was a strong correlation between satisfaction with the police response and likelihood of reporting a crime in the future. Respondents from businesses situated in North Kent postcode areas were the most satisfied with the police response and most likely to report a crime in the future. Those from businesses situated in ME postcode areas were least satisfied with the police response and therefore least likely to report a crime in the future.

Q14) What, if anything, has dissuaded you from reporting business crime in the past?

Respondents were asked to select those that applied from a pre-defined list of 6 options; one of the options was 'Other' which also offered a free text field.



The results were similar to Q8, with the overall sentiment from respondents being that they were dissuaded from reporting crime in the past due to perceived failures in the criminal justice process. Over 60% didn't believe the offender would be punished and over 50% believed that the police would either not be interested or fail to investigate the crime properly. The latter two may be linked to a perception by respondents that there was lack of police resources and visible policing as identified in Q16.

Almost 15% of respondents selected *Other* and completed the free-text field. Below are some unedited examples of the responses received:

- *"Reported crime will adversely affect the business when it comes to renewing licence"*
- *"I'd feel shoplifting incidents of small amounts or where the offender has left the store already aren't worth reporting as it's unlikely the police will attend"*
- *"The incident too minor to take up Police time"*
- *"never had a follow up from reported crime so what is the point reporting"*
- *"The likelihood of catching rural criminals unless caught in the act remains quite low. Due to the body of evidence required and lack of witnesses etc"*

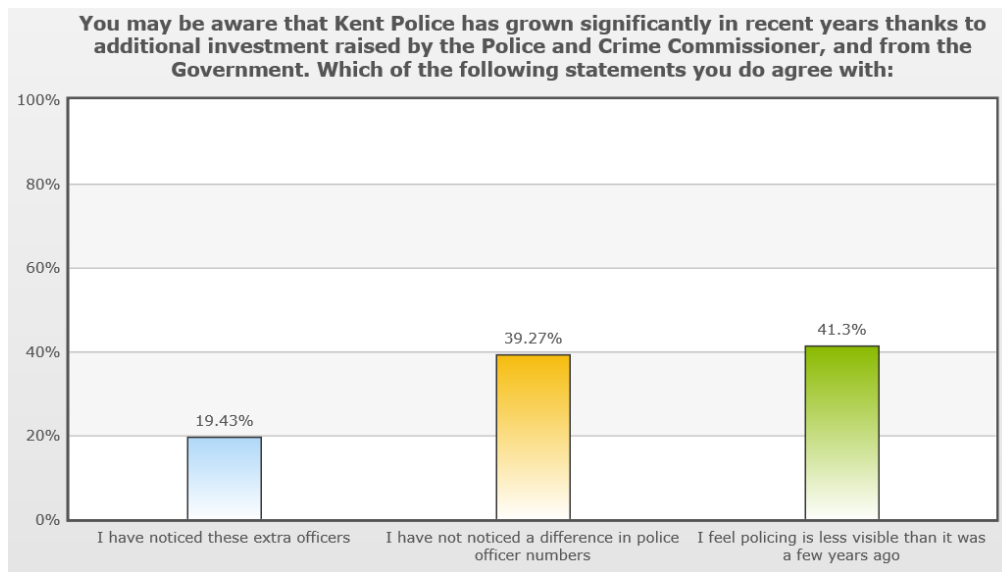
Q15) asked respondents what would make them more likely to report crime in the future.

This was a free-text field and below are the most common answers given:

- Receiving regular updates on crimes reported
- More visible and robust community policing approach
- Police changing their policy on shoplifting
- If crime worsens in the area or is more serious in nature
- Faster response times
- Police visiting shops and taking evidence
- The courts punishing more offenders/CPS lowering threshold
- Making crimes easier to report when it is not 999

Q16) You may be aware that Kent Police has grown significantly in recent years thanks to additional investment raised by the PCC and from the Government. Which of the following statements do you agree with?

Respondents were asked to select one of three statements.



Over 80% of respondents had either not noticed the increase in officer numbers or felt policing was less visible than it was a few years ago.

Further analysis showed there to be some correlation between where the business was situated and whether the increase in officers had been noticed.

Overall, it was in mainly urban areas where the extra officers were noticed. The table below shows the percentage of respondents who stated they had noticed the extra officers starting with the highest:

Postcode area	Rural/Urban/Coastal	% of respondents who noticed extra officers
DA10 (Dartford)	Urban	100
DA2 (Dartford)	Urban and rural	100
CT11 (Ramsgate)	Urban	100
CT2 (Canterbury)	Urban and rural	100
DA11 (Gravesend)	Urban	75
DA12 (Gravesend)	Urban and rural	67
CT21 (Hythe)	Rural/coastal/urban	67
ME10 (Sittingbourne)	Urban	50
TN11 (Tonbridge)	Urban/rural	50
TN13 (Sevenoaks)	Urban/rural	50
BR8 (Swanley)	Urban	50

Although there were a few postcodes that bucked this overall trend. Respondents in CT1 (an urban area in Canterbury) indicated they had not noticed the extra officers/felt that policing was less visible, whereas 67% of respondents in CT21 (largely rural Hythe) indicated they had noticed the extra officers. Respondents in other coastal areas, such as Deal and Whitstable also indicated they had not noticed the extra officers or felt that policing was less visible than a few years ago.

In 33 postcode areas the respondents indicated they had not noticed the extra officers or felt that policing was less visible than a few years ago. Of the 65 postcode areas represented by businesses in the survey, **this equates to just over 50% in which either the increase in officers had not been noticed or there was a feeling that policing was less visible than a few years ago.**

In summary, business crime is a real issue in Kent and for a range of reasons some crimes are not reported to the police. It appears feelings of safety, the likelihood of reporting and satisfaction with the response from Kent Police depend on the size of the business or where it is situated in the county. However, two distinct themes come through from the survey results: a perception that policing is not visible enough or effective at dealing robustly with crimes against businesses, and that when offenders are caught the criminal justice system is ineffective at punishing them.

Questions from the survey that are not included in the main report

Q17. What organisations, or online groups, are you actively involved in? Tick all that apply.

[+ Create Chart](#)

Answer Choices	Responses		
Federation of Small Businesses		12.25%	25
Kent Chamber of Commerce		15.20%	31
Kent Police's Business Crime Advisory Group		5.39%	11
Kent Police's Crime Rural Advisory Group (CRAG)		17.65%	36
Local business crime prevention group (eg: PubWatch, ShopSafe etc)		35.78%	73
Local social media forum (eg: Facebook, NextDoor, WhatsApp group etc)		70.10%	143
Answered: 204 Skipped: 43	Response Total:		204

Q18. Please tell us where you heard about this survey

[+ Create Chart](#)

Answer Choices	Responses		
E-mail		60.00%	147
Event or meeting with the PCC or his staff		1.22%	3
Facebook		7.35%	18
Instagram		1.22%	3
NextDoor		9.39%	23
Twitter		2.04%	5
TV / radio / newspaper / magazine		0.41%	1
Word-of-mouth		4.90%	12
Other		13.47%	33
Answered: 245 Skipped: 2	Response Total:		245

Appendices

Members of the Business Crime Reduction Partnership

Kent Police Cyber Crime Unit	Kent Police Fraud Prevent Team	Kent Hotels Representative
Road Haulage Association	Road Transport Association	Security Industry Representative
Mid Kent College	Federation of Small Businesses	Chamber of Commerce
Institute of Directors	Heritage Crime Representative	Bluewater
Internet Sales Watchfinder	Canterbury Christchurch University	Night-time Economy Representative
Fast Food Representative - McDonalds	Cross Sector Safety & Communications	Banking Representative - Metro Bank
Business Crime Reduction Partnerships Representative	IT Business Representative - ITLab.com	

Promotion in 'One Maidstone' magazine

**The Kent PCC, Matthew Scott,
wants to hear your views on
business crime**

Your elected Police & Crime Commissioner
Matthew Scott has created a survey to
understand the impact of business crime in
the county.

**The survey is available online at
kent-pcc.gov.uk/haveyoursay**

While it is intended mainly for business leaders and
store managers, employees are also welcome to
complete it and offer their views.

