



THE SCOTTISH CONSORTIUM ON CRIME AND CRIMINAL JUSTICE
CONVENOR, BARONESS VIVIEN STERN CBE

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Scotland's crime rates are stable- despite this our imprisonment rate is fourth highest in Western Europe and rising

A report published today (Friday 29 August) shows that crime rates in Scotland over ten years have been relatively stable and for some types of crime the rates are falling. However, as the report also shows, Scotland still makes more use of imprisonment than all comparable countries in Western Europe. Scotland's rate is the fourth highest in Western Europe, more than double the rates of Denmark and Finland and nearly twice the rates of Italy, Switzerland, Norway, and Ireland.

The report, **Crime and Justice in Scotland 2006/7, A Third Review of Progress**, is published by the Scottish Consortium on Crime and Criminal Justice, an umbrella body bringing together leading organisations and academics concerned with crime and criminal justice in Scotland. This is the Consortium's third annual review of the performance of the criminal justice system in delivering a safer Scotland. It looks at criminal justice outcomes in comparison with previous years and also brings an international perspective.

The review finds that in the past ten years:

- Levels of crime have stayed steady in Scotland
- The downward trend in burglaries has continued
- Serious violence is **not** increasing and the figure for reported violent crimes in 2006/7 was the third lowest for the past ten years
- Less serious crimes such as damage to property and assaults that cause little or no injury seem to be more prevalent than in previous years
- The murder rate in Scotland is well above the EU average
- The rate at which crimes are solved has been increasing steadily and six out of ten crimes of violence were solved in 2006/7 compared with five out of ten a decade earlier.
- Services to victims are increasing and Scotland's level of support to victims ranks high in international terms
- The number of women in prison continues to rise and over the past ten years has risen by 90 per cent compared to a 16 per cent rise for men

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- Scotland's system for dealing with children in trouble deserves praise as, of all the three UK systems, it is the most in line with the requirements of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child

Speaking in Edinburgh today Baroness Stern, the Convenor of the Consortium said:

'All the evidence in our report supports the conclusion of the report of the Scottish Prisons Commission in saying that Scotland would be safer if the prison population were reduced to 5,000, if the prison service could use its resources to deal in depth with the serious offenders, and if the money and effort currently spent on processing and on imprisoning less serious offenders was used for more constructive community sentencing, for solving the underlying problems that led to the crime and for reducing the levels of violence that scar Scotland.'

Consortium member and Chief Executive of Sacro Susan Matheson said:

'Since our last report in March 2007 nine out of the nineteen West European countries have reduced their use of imprisonment. Scotland has increased its use by 5 per cent. Yet over half (55 per cent) of all prison sentences in 2006/7 were for three months or less and 8 out of ten were for six months or less. An ever increasing use of imprisonment is not inevitable. It is the result of policy decisions that can be changed. More work to deal with the problems of addiction along with more demanding community sentences would be a better deal for Scotland.'

Note for editors

Susan Matheson can be contacted anytime on Mobile 07967 028 432 or during working hours on 0131 624 7262

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More information about the Consortium can be found at www.scccj.org.uk

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