

4.2 Deputy J.M. Maçon of St. Saviour of the Minister for Home Affairs regarding measures to deal with potential increases in thefts and burglaries in the Island:

Given the current economic climate, what measures, if any, are being taken to deal with the potential for increases in theft and burglaries?

Senator B.I. Le Marquand (The Minister for Home Affairs):

The police and the courts always treat very seriously burglary, which in Jersey is known as breaking and entering or illegal entry because of the fear and shock experienced by people whose homes and private space have been invaded by the burglar. Although there appears to be evidence in the U.K. (United Kingdom) for an increase in such crimes during an economic downturn, in Jersey there is no such evidence. That is because half the burglaries since March 2008 were committed by people aged 18 or under with 37 per cent by youths aged 15 or under. These are opportunist crimes and very often are committed by people who are not currently in work or not normally in work. There is another significant group of offenders who are drug addicts who steal to feed their habit, but most of them also are not normally in work and, therefore, no such increase is anticipated.

4.2.1 Deputy J.M. Maçon:

A supplementary, thank you. The figures the Minister stated were from 2008. I think we can all agree that that was in an economic boom time and thus, with the recession looming and with the potential of people losing their jobs, does the Minister not feel that we should be taking actions, even if it is only simple precautionary ones to encourage people to look after their security? Thank you.

Senator B.I. Le Marquand:

I think the police are always encouraging people to look after their security, particularly in the summer time where a number of opportunist crimes are committed because windows are left open in the hot weather. I remember last summer there was such a warning going out. In addition to that, the police have in place systems for responding to any major increase in crime in any particular area. They gather information and then they target particular offences. They also have in place a policy for targeting particular active offenders because 10 per cent of offenders are responsible for 50 per cent of crime, and it is part of the strategy of the police - part of their 3 operational objectives for 2009 - to target key offenders.

4.2.2 Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier of St. Saviour:

Could I ask the Minister, how is the breaking and entering crime divided between those who are opportunistic and those who are part of more larger, orchestrated gangs, for want of a better term?

Senator B.I. Le Marquand:

I do not have any figures in relation to that but, of course, can speak from my own experience on this matter. I think we are very fortunate in Jersey; we do not generally have organised gangs. Most of the offences are opportunist. We also do not have professional dealers in the same way as in the U.K. and for that reason burglary is nothing like the sort of problem it is elsewhere. The police are not complacent about this; I said at the start that this is a serious matter and people are very upset about it, but we do not generally experience professional people doing this, professional criminals.