



Safe in the City?

'Idyllic' countryside life no longer viewed as Brits' safest solution

- *Almost half of Brits don't feel safe walking through a deserted country lane at night*
- *Nearly half of urban dwellers feel safe walking through city streets at night*
- *A third of city residents contemplate a move due to crime in their neighbourhood*
- *A quarter of Londoners don't feel safe in a village pub on a Friday night*

The age-old view that life in the country is safer than the city no longer holds true, with almost half of Brits (48%) feeling unsafe when walking through a deserted country lane at night, according to new research from Halifax Home Insurance.

The findings are taken from 'Home Is Where Our Hearts Are', the second of four quarterly reports from the Halifax Home Insurance Peace of Mind Campaign, and reveal the differing perceptions in terms of safety in urban and rural areas based on individuals' location.

Nearly half (47%) of residents from inner cities and the suburbs believe that walking through city streets at night is actually the SAFER option than walking through a deserted country lane. Conversely, over two-thirds (67%) living in more rural locations feel that walking through city streets would make them feel less safe.

There is also a clear indication that city centre pubs pose more of a threat than their country equivalents for all of those polled, with 86% of both city and country residents feeling that it is more dangerous to be in a city centre pub than a country pub on a Friday night.

Regionally, the majority of all people questioned in Northern Ireland (96%) would not feel safe being in a city centre pub on a Friday night. And in London, exactly a quarter of residents say they would not feel safe in a village pub on a Friday night - more than anywhere else in the UK.

Over a third (37%) of city dwellers think about moving due to crime in their neighbourhood, compared to less than one in 10 (8%) people living in villages. However, when asked where they would move to escape crime, residents of large cities or towns say they would prefer a new city centre location or a better area where they currently live instead of relocating to the country side.

Regionally, people in Northern Ireland are the most reluctant to leave. More than nine in 10 (91%) Northern Irish have never thought about moving to a different area because of crime, whereas over a third of Londoners (36%) contemplate a change of location to escape crime.

Age-wise, the results reveal some interesting contrasts. Nine in 10 (90%) 55 - 64 year-olds don't feel safe in a city centre pub on a Friday night, however over two-thirds (68%) of 16 - 19 year-olds don't feel safe walking through a deserted country lane at night, suggesting that while older people prefer the peace of solitude, the younger generation feel a sense of safety in numbers.

Martyn Foulds, Senior Claims Manager at Halifax Home Insurance comments: "The age-old dream of moving away from the big city to set up a peaceful life in the country is not unfamiliar to many urban dwellers, but our research discovered that times are changing. It appears that young urbanites feel safer among the hustle and bustle of city streets than walking through a deserted country lane at night.

"Depending on one's home surroundings, the perceptions of what is safer in regards to city versus country living differ considerably. Yet, wherever the surroundings, people need to be aware of the steps they can take to protect themselves in and about their home."

Halifax Home Insurance's top tips for protecting yourself and your home:

At home:

1. Fit secure and robust locks to all doors and windows, particularly on the ground floor
2. Don't leave keys, particularly car keys or those that are labeled with their point of access, visible from outside your home
3. Security lights can alert you to people on your property, and gravel driveways can also help as you will hear people's footsteps as they approach.

When out and about:

1. Be aware of your surroundings. Not just where you are, but who else is around you and how safe the route you are taking is.

2. Make sure you know alternative routes around your home, so that you can make an easy detour if someone is acting suspiciously. Preparation will help to avoid panic.
3. Have your keys to your home ready as you make your approach. This will avoid you having to linger outside any longer than necessary.

The research findings quoted in this release can be found in the second Halifax Peace of Mind Report: 'Home is Where our Hearts are'. The Halifax Peace of Mind Report comprises four quarterly reports throughout 2009. To see this and the previous installment of the Report, please visit www.halifax.co.uk/peaceofmind

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Editors' Notes:

Original survey research was carried out by PureProfile in October 2008, with an online sample of 2009 UK adults aged 16 and over. Nationally representative quotas were set by age, gender and region.