

Crime is a problem but not a crisis



SPECIAL REPORT
By **MARTIN BYRNES**

AGGRAVATED burglaries in Limerick where firearms were used fell by exactly a third in 2000 as compared to 1999. But robberies and aggravated burglaries overall rose in Limerick by 60 per cent. The figures encompass both city and county areas. General reported burglaries were up by 13 per cent. Larcenies from shops and unattended vehicles, though high at 261 incidents, was still down 13 per cent on the year before.

Limerick is by no means the crime capital of Ireland, but it has much to be concerned about, according to latest Garda figures. The final figures for the year 2000 may be a year behind time, but

they are definitive. For the purpose of comparison, we took five areas: Dublin city and county, Limerick city and county, Cork city and outskirts, West Galway, including the city, and the Louth/Meath division. Beginning with killings, Dublin had 12 murders and five manslaughters; Limerick had four murders; Cork City had three murders and a manslaughter; West Galway had one manslaughter, and Louth/Meath had seven murders. Rapes resulted as follows: Dublin 78; Limerick, 5; Cork city, 22; West Galway, 16, and Louth/Meath 18. Armed robberies are an increasing phenomenon everywhere;

Dublin 127; Limerick, 12; Cork city, 6; West Galway, 2, Louth/Meath, 22. Burglaries: Dublin 9,213; Limerick 984; Cork city 1,069; West Galway 552 and Louth/Meath 1,526. It looks so far that Louth/Meath isn't doing too well. Larcenies from shops and unattended vehicles: Dublin 4,934; Limerick, 261; Cork city, 892; West Galway, 216, and Louth/Meath, 322. Domestic violence shows Limerick in a particularly bad position, but again miles better than Dublin: Dublin, 8,070; Limerick, 510; Cork city, 240; West Galway, 120 and Louth/Meath, 365. When we come to drugs, we have

quite a fascinating set of differences across the country; almost different fashions, in fact. The most striking in the whole thing is that, in 2000, the heroin and cocaine plague was still largely a Dublin city phenomenon. Limerick had a liking for ecstasy, while Galway appeared to be a devotee of cannabis. Cannabis, including resin and plant: Dublin, 1,277; Limerick, 183; Cork city, 615; West Galway, 315; Louth/Meath, 272. Heroin: Dublin, 692; Limerick, 3; Cork city, 1; Galway, 0; Louth/Meath, 0. Cocaine: Dublin, 120; Limerick, 1; Cork city, 15; Galway 5; Louth/Meath 4. And, finally, tabs: Dublin, 277; Limerick, 102.

Cork city, 271; West Galway, 89, and Louth/Meath, 281. But the word in Limerick is not all gloomy. Across Limerick there are pockets in the city and in the towns and parishes where wrongdoing is common, and other areas where crime is rare. But these individual districts cannot be isolated from official figures, which give details only in units of whole chief superintendencies. In summary, therefore, Limerick's official crime rate - city and county - was 16.75 offences per head of population. The highest in the country is Dublin North Central with 124; Dublin South Central is on 97.49 with the other four Dublin areas also ahead of

Limerick per head of population, Carlow/Kildare, 18.23; Waterford/Kilkenny, 20.05, and Cork city on 20.93 were also all ahead of Limerick. Roscommon/Galway East, with 8.27, was the lowest recorded in the country. Commenting on the national figures overall, the Cork office of Victim Support said that the rate of increase in murder had added a considerable pressure to ensure that there was a full complement of trained members, not only in Dublin, but in every county in Ireland. There was also extra pressure on the service which accompanied such as rape victims to court.



*Limerick crime: figures show that crime in Limerick is behind Dublin, Waterford/Kilkenny, Carlow/Kildare and Cork city (LL)