READING: THE RISE IN CRIME

THE RISE IN CRIME?

Jack Morse tries to discover the reality behind crime statistics.

Just one look at most newspapers today is enough to convince you that the world is one big crime scene. From shoplifting to smuggling, blackmail to burglary, it seems that there are more and more crimes every day. But is this really true, or is it just a perception?

According to Professor Jane Tennison, the way we feel about certain events, for example crime, is an important factor in how we react to news about them. 'People see crime as headline news and reading about it has an emotional impact.' Prof Tennison says. 'The more they read about it, the more it seems like crime is getting worse.'

She says that this sense that crime rates are increasing is amplified by unreliable news websites which give more space to 'shocking' crime stories than other stories. 'They do this to get your attention so that you click on their links', the Professor adds. 'Website owners know this and do it to increase their profits. But reading about a shocking event, such as a mugging, has a about a shocking event, such as a mugging, has a consequence. It stays in your memory for longer than a less shocking story, so it impacts perception.'

'A further complication is the expansion of social media. People post about crime all the time, but some of these crimes have never really happened. It's then hard to decide between truth and fiction, so it probably looks worse than it really is,' the professor adds.

Official crime figures support this idea. 'A survey on the perception of crime in the USA in 2016 showed that 57% of people thought that crime was getting worse, but the real statistics showed a 22% decrease in crime, so we need to pay attention to the numbers, not how we 'feel' about the situation.'

'We just have to recognise that there are two factors – there's our perception of the crime rate, and then there's the actual crime statistics. And it's that second one that we should pay more attention to.'

1. What does the writer say that people think about crime?

a) It's getting worse.

b) It's getting better.

c) It's the same as it always was.

2. What does Tennison say about some unreliable news websites?

a) They always report muggings.

b) They are more interested in getting clicks than anything else.

c) They only talk about crime stories.

3. What does Tennison say about social media?

a) People can get reliable crime statistics.

b) People can see the difference between truth and fiction.

c) People can report on things that are not true.

4. What does Tennison say about the crime survey in the USA?

a) It showed the crime rate went down in 2016.

b) It showed people thought the crime rate went up in 2016.

c) It showed people thought that the crime rate went down in 2016.

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