

Pharmacies left vulnerable to crime by lockdown



Almost two thirds of pharmacies have been the victim of crime in the last year

Significant increase in levels of violence

26 July 2021: Pharmacies across the country were left more vulnerable to crime as the result of lockdowns, a new study by the Irish Pharmacy Union (IPU) has revealed. Released today (Monday), the 2021 Pharmacy Crime Survey, has shown that while overall crime against pharmacies fell slightly there was a concerning increase in the levels of violence being encountered by pharmacy staff.

Key findings of the IPU Pharmacy Crime Survey reveal:

- 65% of all pharmacies were victims of crime over the past 12 months
- This is down slightly from 72% in the previous year
- 14% of pharmacies were also the victim of a raid and 15% have had controlled drugs taken
- 64% of pharmacists believed that remaining open during the lockdown made their business more vulnerable

Commenting on the findings Dermot Twomey, President of the IPU said “It is deeply concerning that pharmacies, which provide an essential healthcare service to their communities, are being

targeted in this way. At a time when crime rates nationally fell significantly, burglaries alone have fallen by 35%, it is concerning that pharmacies only saw a very slight drop in overall crime rates.”

Shoplifting remains the most common offence, impacting 87% of pharmacies which reported experiencing crime.

However, according to Twomey the increase in violence is deeply concerning “The number of pharmacists experiencing violence increased dramatically over the past year. 40% of crime victims suffered at least one violent incident, up over a third in just one year. The use of weapons is very common and too many pharmacy workers have encountered knives and even guns. “The theft of cosmetics (84%), fake tan (48%) and supplements (33%) is all too common” according to Twomey.

“While this is upsetting and costly there is a more sinister problem emerging with the theft of medicines. Of pharmacies who have experienced crime, 8% suffered the theft of prescription medicines and 15% had controlled drugs stolen. These medications are controlled for a reason and, if taken without appropriate clinical guidance, they are potentially extremely dangerous.”

Citing the impact of the COVID 19 pandemic on crime in pharmacies Twomey said “There is a definite feeling that pharmacies suffered as a result of their dedication in staying open through each lockdown. 64% felt this made pharmacies more vulnerable as a result of being one of the few businesses remaining open, combined with there being fewer people on the streets, and a lack of Garda presence.”

Concluding, Twomey said “In the vast majority of cases pharmacies welcome the support they receive from the Gardaí. It is clear that providing the Gardaí with the resources to increase visibility within our communities would have a beneficial effect, reducing crime rates not just in pharmacies but throughout the community.”

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