

Improving crime statistics for England and Wales – progress update July 2023

Latest update on the progress being made to improve crime statistics for England and Wales.

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1 . Recent updates

Measuring crime over the last few years has been challenging because of the impact of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. We are continuing to adapt both our data collection and presentation of statistics in order to meet users' needs and provide the best overview of crime from all available sources.

In the last year we have:

- re-established face-to-face interviewing at scale on the Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW)
- completed a [consultation on our plans for the transformation of the CSEW \(PDF, 558KB\)](#) aimed at making survey data collection more resilient to future events
- begun to implement a new multimodal panel design for the CSEW, with second wave telephone interviews starting in October 2022
- continued to explore the feasibility of online surveying as part of a multimodal approach to survey data collection (see our [Transformation of the Crime Survey for England and Wales methodology](#) for more information)
- continued to improve our data collection and statistics related to [violence against women and girls](#), including redeveloping [domestic abuse questions](#) and developing a new [data dashboard](#)
- continued to work on the [transformation of the Children's CSEW](#) and developed new questions on children's personal safety

This work has allowed us to continue publishing our regular crime bulletins and continue to make improvements to our statistics as the type and nature of crime evolve. In the last year we have implemented both user feedback and Office for National Statistics (ONS)-led improvements including:

- publishing CSEW estimates for the first time since year ending March 2020 in our [Crime in England and Wales quarterly bulletins](#)
- publishing our [Domestic abuse in England and Wales bulletin](#), [Sexual offences in England and Wales bulletin](#) and the [Nature of violent crime in England and Wales article](#)
- publishing articles on [Homicide in England and Wales](#), [Drug misuse in England and Wales](#) and [Fraud and computer misuse in England and Wales](#)

This update outlines our current plans for improving crime statistics over the next 12 months. However, these may be liable to change as we remain responsive to emerging priorities.

2 . Crime survey development

Survey transformation

The Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW) is a vital source of evidence in the crime debate, and it is critical that the survey continues to provide high quality statistics on crime in a cost-effective and resilient way. Our aim is to ensure that the Crime Survey continues to reflect the evolving needs of policy-makers, citizens and data users. We ran a user consultation on the redesign of the CSEW last year and received responses from across government, police bodies, the voluntary sector and academia. We were pleased to find overwhelming support for the introduction of a longitudinal panel design, which is now being piloted. You can see the full response on the [Consultation on the Redesign of the Crime Survey for England and Wales Feedback page](#).

Work to assess the feasibility of online fieldwork as part of a multimodal approach to data collection will continue this year. This work forms part of the Office for National Statistics's (ONS's) wider transformation strategy, which includes moving household and business surveys to mixed mode or online collection. As far as possible, the intended design aims to collect equivalent data from respondents in all modes and at all waves, minimising measurement error including those because of mode effects. It will also aim to provide a better survey experience for respondents and interviewers, while continuing to meet users' data requirements. Our intention is to have an online questionnaire for crime prevalence and incident estimation available for parallel running in 2025.

We are in the final year of the current CSEW fieldwork contract with Kantar, our supplier. We are tendering for the next contract now, for fieldwork commencing in April 2024. This will allow for the full establishment of a panel design and the potential inclusion of online data collection.

Last year, the government published their [Levelling Up the United Kingdom white paper. Mission 11 \(PDF, 755KB\)](#) states that "by 2030, homicide, serious violence and neighbourhood crime will have fallen, focused on the worst affected areas". We are working with the Home Office to explore how the CSEW could better track neighbourhood crime levels in higher crime areas in order to measure progress against this mission.

We are also working with both the Home Office and the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities following the publication of their [Anti-Social Behaviour Action Plan](#). We are aiming to improve CSEW estimates for people's experience and perception of anti-social behaviour, enabling more granular reporting than is currently possible.

Data quality

National Statistics status for estimates from the CSEW were [temporarily suspended](#) in July 2022 because of concerns about data quality. This stems specifically from the low response rate for face-to-face interviews on returning to data collection after the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. The drop in response rates since recommencing data collection in October 2021 is not specific to the CSEW, but reflects the experience of other social surveys since pandemic restrictions were lifted. To regain National Statistics status, efforts are being made to both improve the response rate and to assess the impact on data quality. We are comparing the characteristics of respondents in the pre-pandemic data with those found post-pandemic, and investigating whether any differences are associated with crime victimisation. This will enable us to assess, on an ongoing basis, what the level of bias may be between pre- and post-pandemic estimates. We aim to publish an initial report by December 2023 and will be liaising with the Office for Statistics Regulation as work progresses.

Trends for comparable CSEW crime and police recorded crime (PRC) have diverged over the last decade. While CSEW crime has continued to fall, PRC increased up to the year ending March 2018 and has remained relatively stable since then. We intend to investigate the continued divergence in trends between the CSEW and PRC to both better understand the impact of improved crime recording by the police and to investigate if the lower response rate for the CSEW in 2022 to 2023 may have also had an impact. This work will complement the [Police recorded crime statistics quality review](#) recently launched by the Office for Statistics Regulation.

Further work is also required to assess the impact of survey transformation on data quality. This work will be completed before data collected using different fieldwork modes is included in our regular quarterly crime estimates. A first year of wave two data (telephone collected) will be available for processing by the end of 2023. We intend to publish an initial analysis of that data and how it compares with wave one data (face-to-face collected) by March 2024. The decision to incorporate wave two data into our main crime estimates will require further analysis and an assessment of what this means for the time-series. The earliest date this could be achieved would be using year to March 2024 data, as pilot wave two data collected from October 2022 to March 2023 was based on a small sample. A final report and assessment will be prepared during the summer of 2024, enabling wave two and onwards data to potentially be included in CSEW estimates from autumn 2024 onwards.

3 . Changes to existing publications

Quarterly bulletin

Because of the pandemic, the crime estimates in our [Crime in England and Wales quarterly bulletins](#) from the year ending June 2020 to the year ending March 2022 were based on the telephone-operated Crime Survey for England and Wales (TCSEW). The year ending June 2022 publication was the first bulletin to start using CSEW data again and comparisons were made with the year ending March 2020 to understand how levels of crime had changed over time. We have continued to compare our latest estimates from the CSEW with the year ending March 2020, and this will continue until we have two full years of data collection for the year ending September 2023, due to be published in January 2024. At this point, we will be able to start comparing back to the previous year (for instance, with the year ending September 2022).

Other regular publications

Now that we have a full year of CSEW data, we plan to publish all of our regular publications and datasets for the year ending March 2023. These include:

- domestic abuse
- drug misuse in England and Wales
- annual trend and demographic tables
- nature of crime tables
- property crime tables
- nature of violent crime appendix tables
- nature of fraud and computer misuse appendix tables

4 . Research and development work

Violence against women and girls (VAWG)

Our VAWG programme contains several research strands, including work on domestic abuse, harassment and crimes against children. In November 2022, we published our [Violence against women and girls: research update November 2022 article](#), covering our work to date. This included an update on our work with the Department for Health and Social Care to investigate insights available from administrative healthcare data and next steps needed.

We released a prototype VAWG data dashboard in September 2022 bringing together relevant data from a variety of sources enabling the evidence base to be visualised in a single, easy to access location. We received feedback from National and Local Government, charities, the police and other users and published an [updated prototype of the dashboard](#) in March 2023. We aim to fully launch the dashboard in November 2023.

Domestic abuse

To improve the collection of data on domestic abuse, we have been undertaking a user engagement, research and testing programme to redevelop the domestic abuse questions within the self-completion section of the Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW). Initial work is now complete and from April 2023 a new set of questions have been included in the survey on a split-sample basis. An overview of work undertaken to date, the new questions and next steps is available in our [Developing a new measure of domestic abuse methodology](#).

Over the next two years, we will analyse the data received and assess it against our evaluation criteria. We will publish regular updates of our findings including trial outputs based on the new questions. Our next update will be published in late 2023 alongside our [Domestic abuse in England and Wales statistical bulletin](#).

Harassment

New questions measuring harassment were added to the CSEW from April 2022. These questions were reviewed based on analysis of the first six months of data collected and further refined. A first set of statistics, based on six months of data collection, were published in our year ending September 2022 [CSEW data tables](#). We intend to publish harassment estimates based on year-ending March 2023 data in November 2023.

Crimes against children

New questions on gang-related personal safety for children aged 10 to 15 years taking part in the CSEW have been developed with input from stakeholders and topic experts. These were cognitively tested with children and young people prior to being added to the CSEW in April 2023, replacing previous questions on gangs. We aim to publish the first estimates from these questions in spring 2025.

Questions relating to the experience of abuse during childhood are rotated into the CSEW every few years and were last included in the 2018 to 2019 survey year. Previously, adults aged 18 years and over were asked about abuse experienced before they were 16 years old. We have included this module of questions again in this year's survey, but now ask about abuse experienced before the age of 18 years. We aim to publish the data collected from this module along with administrative data in a child abuse compendium in winter 2024.

As part of our Crime Survey Transformation Project, we have also started research into redesigning the 10 to 15-year-olds' survey for online self-completion. This has included a review of questions to be included in the survey with our users and an assessment of the ethical and safeguarding considerations for moving the survey online. Our expectation is that a future online survey will achieve larger sample sizes, allowing us to produce more detailed statistics to meet users' needs. We published a progress update, [Transforming children's crime statistics for England and Wales](#), in March 2023.

In October 2022, we commissioned Kantar Public to undertake an initial pilot to better understand the willingness of parents and children to take part in an online survey. This has provided both quantitative and qualitative insights, the findings from which we will publish as part of our next transformation update. We are currently planning a second larger scale pilot to take place over the coming winter. For this test, we will be rebranding the Children's Crime Survey as the Young Person's Safety Survey (YPSS) and will be testing both operational processes and several aspects of statistical quality, including:

- our sampling approach using administrative data
- response rates and the characteristics of responders and non-responders
- question completion rates and the quality of data collected
- materials and correspondence for engagement with participants

Our feasibility study, to determine whether a national survey could provide an effective source of data on the current scale and nature of child abuse, remains ongoing. Since our [Exploring the feasibility of a survey measuring child abuse in the UK article](#) in April 2022, we have commissioned [Edinburgh Innovations](#) in collaboration with the [University of Greenwich](#) to develop a suitable child abuse questionnaire and safeguarding process. This work is due to be completed in early 2024. We have also made significant progress in designing survey operations and an approach to sampling. We aim to publish a progress update in May 2024 with an ambition to pilot the survey and safeguarding process in 2024 and 2025.

Crimes against non-household populations

As part of our plans to make crime and justice statistics more inclusive, we are reviewing how we can improve crime statistics on non-household populations that are not captured by the CSEW. We are currently exploring how we can make better use of other available data sources to complement CSEW and police recorded crime data. These data will be incorporated into a new publication on inequalities in victimisation that will be published before the end of March 2024.

5 . Cite this methodology

Office for National Statistics (ONS), released 20 July 2023, ONS website, methodology, [Improving crime statistics for England and Wales – progress update: July 2023](#)