

Section: Scottish Crime and Justice Survey

The preceding sections of this bulletin describe the volume and types of crime recorded and cleared up by the police in Scotland in 2013-14. As well as recorded crime figures, crime in Scotland is also measured through the [Scottish Crime and Justice Survey](#) (SCJS).

The chapter brings together police recorded crime and the SCJS to present a clearer picture of crime in Scotland, providing comprehensive data to inform and support users of the statistics¹. It presents a summary of both sources, outlines high-level trends, both overall and by crime groups, presents some of the challenges in making comparisons and details how we recommend comparisons should be made using a comparable subset of crime.

Background to the SCJS

The SCJS is a national household survey with adults (over 16) which asks respondents about their experiences of crime. The survey is based on face-to-face interviews and respondents are also asked to answer a separate self-completion module on more confidential and sensitive issues, including drug taking, partner abuse, sexual victimisation and stalking.

The main aims of the SCJS are to:

- Examine trends in the number and nature of crimes in Scotland over time, providing a complementary measure of crime compared with police recorded crime statistics;
- Examine the varying risk of crime for different groups of adults in the population;
- Provide a valid and reliable measure of adults' experience of crime, including services provided to victims of crime;
- Collect information about adults' experiences of, and attitudes to, a range of crime and justice related issues.

Respondents are selected at random from the Postal Address File and participation in the survey is entirely voluntary. The survey is based on face-to-face interviews and respondents are also asked to answer a separate self-completion module on more confidential and sensitive issues.

Recorded crime and the SCJS are complementary sources of crime that, together, provide a more comprehensive picture of crime. The estimates produced by crime

¹ Information about crime is also available from other sources. For example, data on anti-social behaviour, fear of crime and harassment and discrimination are collected as part of the [Scottish Household Survey](#).

surveys are higher than the level of crime recorded by the police, showing that, for many reasons, not all crime comes to the attention of the police. Therefore, a key strength of the SCJS is its ability to capture crimes that are not reported to, and therefore not recorded by, the police. Table 1 gives an overview of recorded crime and the SCJS, highlighting the strengths and limitations of each source as well as the additional information offered by each. Neither source alone is able to provide the full picture of crime in Scotland. Instead, they are complementary, together providing a more comprehensive representation of crime in Scotland.

Table 1: Recorded crime and SCJS compared.

	Recorded Crime	Scottish Crime and Justice Survey
Where do the data come from?	Administrative police records	Face to face interviews with residents from a nationally representative sample of the household population
Basis for inclusion	Crimes recorded to the police in Scotland, governed by the Scottish Crime Recording Standard.	Trained coders determine whether experiences of victimisation in the last 12 months constitute a crime and assign an offence code.
Frequency	Collected by financial year. Statistics released in an annual publication.	Continuous survey with results published biennially.
Strengths	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Covers the full range of crimes and offences. Provides data at a local level. A good measure of rarer, more serious crimes that are well reported. Measure of long-term trends. Good measure of crime that the police are faced with. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Good measure of trends since 2008/09. Captures information about crimes that are not reported to the police (including sensitive issues such as domestic abuse or drug abuse). Provides information on multiple and repeat victimisation (up to 5 incidents in a series). Analyses risk for different demographic groups and victim-offender relationships. Provides attitudinal data (e.g. fear of crime or attitudes towards the criminal justice system).
Limitations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Partially reliant on the public reporting crime Reporting rates may vary by the type of crime (e.g. serious crime is more likely to be reported or housebreaking if a crime number is required for insurance purposes) Trends can be affected by legislation; public reporting practices; police recording practices 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does not cover all crimes (e.g. homicide or 'victimless' crimes such as speeding). Does not cover the entire population (e.g. children, homeless people or people living in communal accommodation). Unable to produce robust estimates at lower level geographies. Difficult to measure trends between survey sweeps in rarer forms of crime (such as more serious offences). Estimates are subject to a degree of error.
What other data are collected?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Additional statistical bulletins published on homicides, racist incidents, firearm offences and domestic abuse incidents. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Public perceptions about crime. Worry about crime and the perceived likelihood of being a victim. Confidence in the police and the criminal justice system. Prevalence estimates on 'sensitive' topics (partner abuse, sexual victimisation, stalking and drug use).

Trends from Recorded Crime and the SCJS

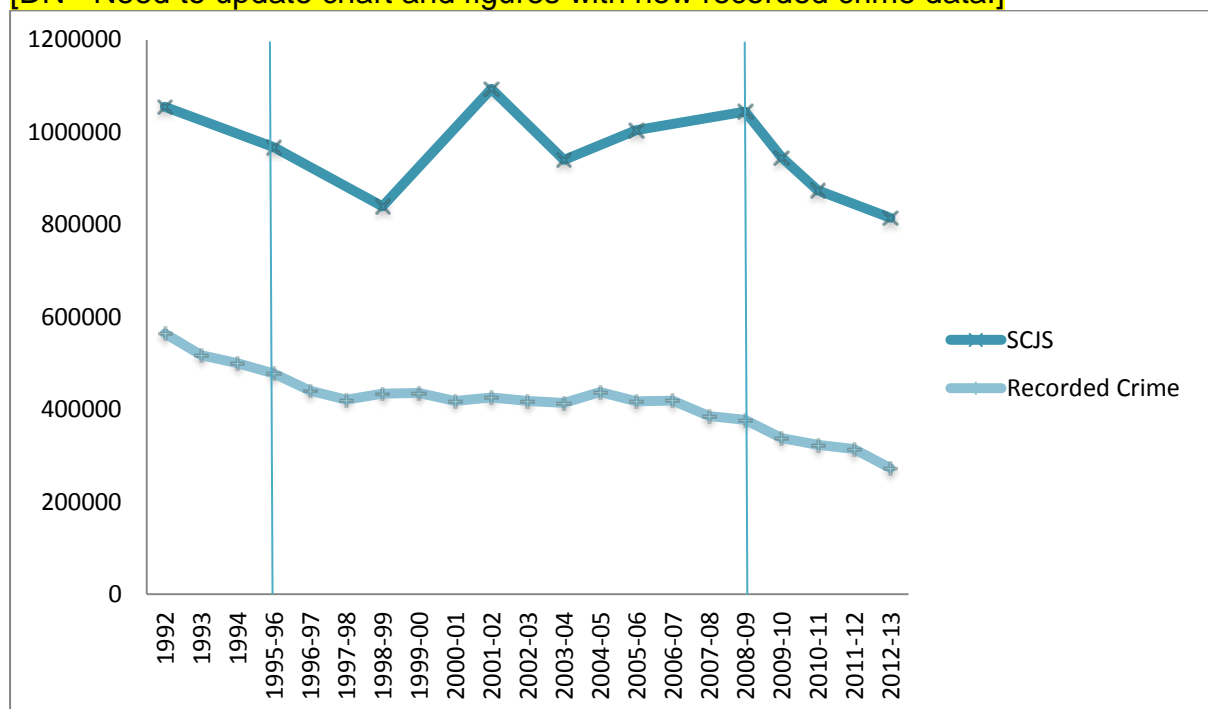
While this section presents high-level trends from the SCJS and recorded crime, it should be noted that there are several key differences between the sources that create challenges in making direct comparisons between them. These are clarified and further explored later in this chapter.

Figure 1 highlights the scale of the difference between the number of crimes estimated by the SCJS, and the level recorded by the police. The main reason for this difference is that SCJS captures crimes that are not reported to the police, and therefore not included in recorded crime figures. However, as Table 1 indicates, the sources cover different time periods, populations and crime and offence types. With its focus on victimisation among the adult household population, the SCJS does not cover all of the crimes and offences that the police record and does not cover the entire population.

It should also be noted that the SCJS is a continuous survey, with results being published biennially. The latest SCJS statistics are available for 2012/13, while recorded crime figures are released annually and figures are available for 2013/14.

Figure 1: Overall trends from recorded crime and the SCJS (1992-2013/14)

[DN - Need to update chart and figures with new recorded crime data.]



1. The recording period moved from calendar year to financial year after 1994.
2. The shift to the current survey design in 2008/09 led to greater certainty in estimates.
3. Latest SCJS figures are available for 2012/13 while the latest recorded crime statistics cover 2013/14.

Figure 1 demonstrates a steady decline in recorded crime over recent years. Although the introduction of the Scottish Crime Recording Standard (SCRS) in April, 2004 led to an increase in the number of crimes recorded by the police. Since 2005/06, recorded crime figures have been on a relatively steady downward trend.

Before moving to the current SCJS methodology in 2008/09, crime survey estimates in Scotland were derived from smaller sample surveys and, in general, subject to a higher level of uncertainty. This is reflected in the fluctuations in the overall crime series prior to 2008-09. Since 2008/09 there has been greater levels of certainty around survey estimates.

The latest figures from the SCJS estimate that there were 815,000 incidents of crime against adults in Scotland in 2012/13, 22% lower since the 2008/09 survey. The survey estimates that, in 2012/13, around one in six (16.9%) adults aged 16 or over were the victim of at least one crime. Since the shift to the current survey design and increased sample sizes in 2008/09, survey estimates of the overall level of crime have fallen in line with similar reductions in overall recorded crime over the same period.

[NB// To complete, this section requires 2013/14 recorded crime.]

In 2013/14, the Scottish police recorded # crimes, #% fewer than in 2012/13.

Trends by Crime Group in the SCJS

While recorded crime figures presented earlier in this report [\[insert hyperlink\]](#) are grouped into five crime groups (Non-sexual crimes of violence, Sexual crimes, Crimes of dishonesty, Fire-raising, vandalism etc, Crimes against public justice) and two offence categories (Miscellaneous offences and Motor vehicle offences), the SCJS Main Findings report presents information in two broad crime categories: **Property Crime** and **Violent Crime**. This section provides an overview of the main findings from SCJS 2012/13 in the property crime and violent crime categories, however comparisons to recorded crime results are not made until the following sections on the comparable crime subset.

Property crime	Violent crime
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Vandalism (including motor vehicle and property vandalism); ○ All motor vehicle theft related incidents (including theft and attempted theft of and from a motor vehicle); ○ Housebreaking (termed burglary in England and Wales); ○ Other household thefts (including bicycle theft); ○ Personal theft (excluding robbery). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Assault (includes serious assault, attempted assault, minor assault with no/negligible and minor injury); ○ Robbery.

Property crime measured in the SCJS involves theft or damage to personal or household property (including vehicles). In 2012/13, approximately 579,000 crimes (71% of all SCJS crime) fell into this category. It is estimated that around 15% of adults in Scotland were a victim of property crime in 2012/13.

Between 2010/11 and 2012/13, there was a statistically significant decrease of 12% in property crime captured by the SCJS. Since 2008/09, SCJS estimates of property crime have decreased significantly by 21%.

In 2012/13, vandalism accounted for 27% of property crime, followed by other household theft (including bicycle theft, 21%), personal theft (excluding robbery, 13%), all motor vehicle theft related incidents (6%) and housebreaking (4%).

Violent crime in the SCJS includes attempted assault, serious assault, minor assault and robbery. Of the 815,000 crimes measured by the SCJS in 2012/13, 236,000 (29%) were violent crimes. It is estimated that around 3% of adults in Scotland were a victim of violent crime in 2012/13.

Between the 2011/12 and the 2012/13 SCJS, the change in estimated violent crime was not statistically significant. However, the cumulative effect of changes since 2008/09 is statistically significant, showing a 25% decrease in violent crimes.

In 2012/13, minor assaults made up the majority of SCJS violent crime (23%), followed by attempted assault (3%), serious assault (2%) and robbery (1%).

Comparing Recorded Crime Statistics with SCJS Estimates

As the previous sections have discussed, the SCJS and police recorded crime each feature relative strengths and limitations, which means that comparing recorded crime figures and the SCJS is not straightforward. In summary, key differences between the two data sources create challenges when making direct comparisons, for example, the two sources cover different time periods, populations, crimes and offences. It is not possible to 'match' data from the SCJS to police records to confirm whether an incident that a survey respondent claim that they reported was actually recorded by police. For example, respondents may have said that they reported a crime to police when they did not, considering this to be a 'socially desirable' response.

However, comparisons can be made by examining a comparable subset of crimes which are covered by each source. Comparisons are made by examining a broadly comparable subset of crimes which are covered by each source and can be accurately coded in the SCJS in the same way as the police would do. Comparisons are made in three broad crime groups:

- Vandalism (including motor vehicle vandalism and property vandalism).
- Acquisitive crime (including bicycle theft, housebreaking and theft of motor vehicles).
- Violent crime (including assault and robbery).

On this basis, of the 815,000 crimes estimated by the 2012/13 SCJS, just under two-thirds (527,000) can be compared with police recorded crimes.

The remainder of this section provides an overview of the level and trends in the comparable subset which is extended further in the recent Scottish Government report, *Bringing Together Scotland's Crime Statistics*² [\[Insert Hyperlink\]](#).

However, it should be noted that surveys gather information from a sample rather than from the whole population and while the SCJS sample is designed carefully to allow for this, and to be as accurate as possible, results from sample surveys are always estimates, not precise figures. This means that they are subject to a margin of error which can have an impact on how changes in the numbers should be interpreted, especially in the short-term. Surveys produce estimates for variables for

² From 2014/15, this analysis will be included in the biennial SCJS main findings report.

different populations, and significance testing determines the likelihood that real differences exist when comparing to previous survey estimates. Further information on the sampling and uncertainty is available in the [Methodology](#) section of the SCJS Main Findings report.

Table 2 Recorded crime and SCJS comparable crime subset, 2008/09 to 2012/13

	2008/09	2009/10	2010/11	2012/13	Percentage Change			2008/09- 2012/13
					2008/09- 2009/10	2009/10- 2010/11	2010/11- 2012/13	
Recorded Crime	215,901	195,728	183,117	144,662	-9%	-6%	-21%	-33%
SCJS Crime	731,000	630,000	556,000	527,000	-14%	-12%	-5%	-28%
SCJS Base Size	2,464	2,127	1,576	1,375				

Note: Statistically significant SCJS changes highlighted in bold.

Table 2 shows that both recorded crime figures and SCJS estimates show downward trends in the extent of crime between 2008/09 and 2012/13 (-33% and -28% respectively). The reduction in estimates across all sweeps of the SCJS, from 731,000 in 2008/09 to 527,000 in 2012/13, is a statistically significant change. However, the short-term change in SCJS comparable crime between 2010/11 and 2012/13 is not a statistically significant change (at the 95% confidence level, Table 2). At this stage, we do not have enough evidence to make confident assertions about longer-term trends in SCJS estimates in the comparable crime subset.

It is difficult to identify trends in the relationship between recorded crime and SCJS estimates using only four sweeps of comparable data. It is likely that greater certainty in trends will emerge over longer timescales, therefore continuing this analysis over future years will help to assess whether some of the short term changes reported here mark the beginning of a consistent pattern.

Comparisons by Crime Group

This section considers the trends in each comparable crime group. With only four survey sweeps, and small base sizes in crime subgroups, some aspects of this analysis should be viewed with caution. These initial results are presented with the caveat that the lack of consistent comparable data, and in particular the small subsample sizes, limit the conclusions which can be drawn at this level. For example, it should be noted that the changes in overall comparable SCJS crime, and the sub-groups of, violent crime and acquisitive crime, between 2010/11 and 2012/13, are not statistically significant (Table 3).

Table 3: Comparable crime group estimates (2008/09 to 2012/13)

	2008/09	2009/10	2010/11	2012/13	Percentage Change	
					2008/09-2012/13	2010/11-2012/13
Recorded Acquisitive Crime	27,527	26,146	26,478	21,834	-21%	-18%
SCJS Acquisitive Crime	64,000	61,000	61,000	73,000	16%	19%
Recorded Violent Crime	82,855	79,769	78,263	66,076	-20%	-16%
SCJS Violent Crime	317,000	266,000	220,000	236,000	-25%	7%
Recorded Vandalism	105,519	89,813	78,376	56,752	-46%	-28%
SCJS Vandalism	350,000	303,000	275,000	219,000	-37%	-20%

1. Statistically significant changes are shown in bold

Between 2010/11 and 2012/13, recorded **acquisitive crime** has decreased by 18%. However, as shown in Table 3, the change in SCJS acquisitive crime estimates between 2010/11 and 2012/13 is not statistically significant. In the medium term (2008/09 to 2012/13) the cumulative effect of these changes are also not statistically significant. Survey estimates on the comparable crime subgroups are based on small base sizes of respondents (272 for acquisitive crime in 2012/13) and as a consequence, there is less certainty around estimates. The uncertainty around the changes in this subgroup, both in the short and medium term, limit the conclusions that can be drawn when comparing the SCJS and recorded crime in the acquisitive crime subgroup.

Between 2010/11 and 2012/13, recorded **violent crime** figures in the comparable category have fallen by 16%. There is no significant change in SCJS violent crime estimates between 2010/11 and 2012/13 (Table 3). Violent crime estimates are based on a small number of respondents (343 in the 2012/13 survey) who had disclosed experiences of violent crime in the survey. The SCJS is often better able to detect changes in trends over longer timescales. Table 3 shows that there is greater certainty around cumulative changes in violent crime estimates in the medium-term (2008/09 to 2012/13). Therefore, we are able to compare those sort of changes in SCJS estimates and recorded crime figures with more confidence. Between 2008/09 and 2012/13, the 25% decrease in violent crime is a statistically significant change, and consistent with the 20% decrease in recorded violent crime for the equivalent time period.

Between 2010/11 and 2012/13, recorded **vandalism** decreased by 28% and SCJS estimates have fallen by 20%, a statistically significant change. In the medium-term

(2008/09 to 2012/13), both recorded crime figures and SCJS estimates have been on a downward trend (a decrease of 46% and 37% respectively). This change in survey estimates over the medium-term is also statistically significant at the 95% level. Compared to the violent crime and acquisitive crime groups, vandalism estimates are based on larger samples of respondents (760 in the 2012/13 survey). Greater certainty around changes in the vandalism subgroup mean that there is greater evidence to make such comparisons between trends in recorded crime figures and SCJS estimates.

Conclusion

This chapter has brought together the two main sources of crime statistics in Scotland: the Scottish Crime and Justice Survey and police recorded crime statistics. Each source provides an essential, complementary measure of crime. Estimates produced by the SCJS are higher than the number recorded by the police. For example, the latest figures from the SCJS show that there were an estimated 815,000 incidents of crime against adults in Scotland in 2012/13, while the Scottish police recorded 273,053 crimes. This difference shows that, for many reasons, not all crime comes to the attention of the police.

Relative strengths and limitations in each source create challenges when making direct comparisons, particularly as they each cover different time series, populations and crime types. However, comparisons can be made by examining a comparable subset of crimes which are covered by each source. Comparisons are made in three broad crime groups: vandalism, acquisitive crime and violent crime. In 2012/13, the latest year that data is available for both sources, around two thirds (527,000) of the 815,000 crimes measured by the SCJS can be compared with police recorded crime statistics.

This chapter has presented the results of analysis undertaken using in the comparable crime subset. There is uncertainty around changes in the short-term, particularly around changes between adjacent SCJS sweeps that limit the conclusions that we can draw from this analysis at this stage. For example, the change in crime at the overall level of comparable crime between 2010/11 and 2012/13 is not statistically significant (Table 3). This means that there is not sufficient evidence to make confident statements about trends at this stage. This issue is heightened when breaking the comparable crime group down into its constituent comparable crime groups. The violent and acquisitive crime estimates, in particular, are drawn from relatively small sample sizes. As a result, there is less certainty around changes between adjacent sweeps in these groups. Furthermore, consistent comparable crime data are only available for a relatively short time scale. With only four sweeps of the SCJS providing a consistent comparable subset, and uncertainty in changes between adjacent survey sweeps, it is difficult to make confident assertions about trends.