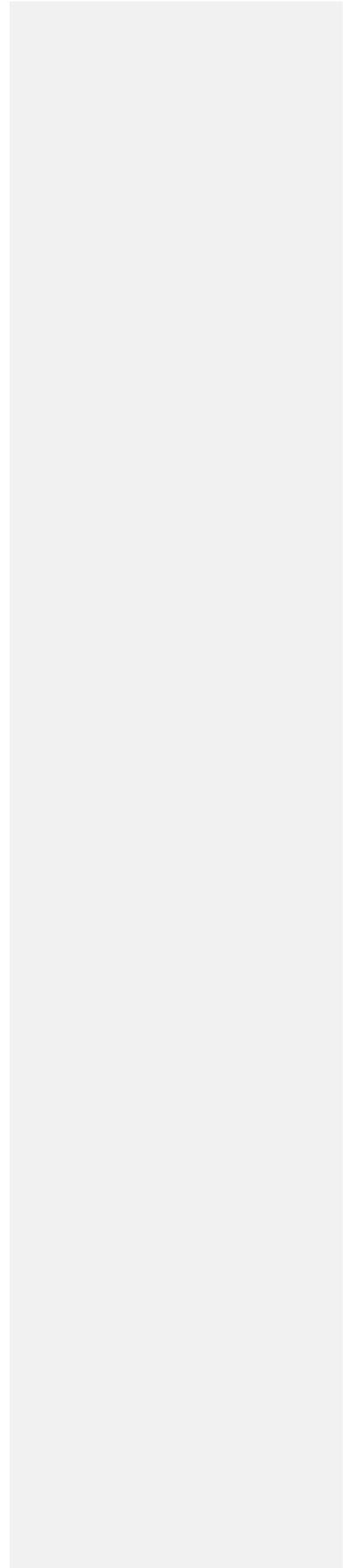


Bringing Together Scotland's Crime Statistics

**Justice Analytical Services, Scottish Government
September, 2014**



Executive Summary

[Police recorded crime](#) and the [Scottish Crime and Justice Survey \(SCJS\)](#) are essential complementary sources of data that, together, present a fuller picture of crime in Scotland. Each features relative strengths and weaknesses, making them more appropriate in different contexts and for different purposes.

Police recorded crime provides frequent data, covering a wider range of crimes than the SCJS, and can provide statistics for low level geographies. It is largely dependent on the public reporting crimes to the police and as a result, provides a good measure of crimes that are well reported to the police.

As a victimisation survey of adults resident in private households in Scotland, the SCJS does not capture data on all crimes, for example those against victims who are under 16 years of age; those living in group residences; institutions or those without a fixed address; crimes without a single identifiable victim; or crimes against commercial or public sector bodies. In addition, estimates produced by the SCJS are subject to a level of quantifiable and non-quantifiable error.

A key strength of the SCJS, however, is its ability to capture crimes that are not reported to, and therefore not recorded by, the police. The SCJS also provides information on the characteristics of victims and offenders, such as their age and gender, and provides views and attitudes on policing and the wider criminal justice system. Latest figures from the SCJS show that there were an estimated 815,000 incidents of crime against adults in Scotland in 2012/13, 22% lower since the 2008/09 survey. In 2012/13, the Scottish police recorded 273,053 crimes.

However, differences between the two data sources create challenges in making direct comparisons, particularly when assessing trends over time. For example, due to changes in the survey methodology, consistent data is currently only available for the four survey sweeps since 2008/09. In addition the SCJS gathers information from a sample rather than from the whole population and, although the sample is designed carefully to make allowances for this, survey results 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 some of the numbers should be interpreted, especially in the short-term, in particular where sample sizes are relatively small for some of the SCJS crime sub-groups.

Comparisons between recorded crime and SCJS data are 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 the comparable group, recorded crime figures and SCJS estimates both show downward trends in the extent of crime since 2008/09 (-33% and -28% respectively).

Initially, from 2008/09 to 2010/11, SCJS crimes fell at a faster rate than recorded crimes, however this changed in the most recent survey year (2012/13) when police recorded crime fell at a faster rate than SCJS crime. While this could be an indication that the relationship between the datasets is changing, it may also be the result of a short term fluctuation.

This report also examines the relationship between the SCJS crimes estimated to have been reported to police and those captured in police recorded crime statistics. Figures from the 2012/13 SCJS show that that around 232,000 incidents (44%) of crime in the comparable category were reported to police. From this, it can be estimated that 62% of crime that the SCJS estimates were reported to the police were actually captured in police recorded crime figures in 2012/13. Undertaking this analysis across the four recent sweeps of the SCJS shows that since 2008/09, this proportion has been falling, indicating that more crimes that have been estimated to have been reported to police have not been captured in police recorded crime data.

However, while some of the short term changes highlighted in this report may be indicative of a change in the relationship between recorded crime figures and SCJS estimates, consistent comparable crime data are only available for a relatively short time scale, and it is notable that the change in crime at the overall level between the most recent surveys is not statistically significant. Therefore, analysis over future years will help to further assess this and more closely examine the relationship between SCJS estimates and police recorded crime figures.

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1. Introduction

National Statistics on crime in Scotland come from two main sources: police recorded crime data and the Scottish Crime and Justice Survey (SCJS). The SCJS is a national survey that measures victimisation amongst adults living in private households¹, whereas the police recorded crime data measures crime that is recorded by the police. The two sources are intended to be complementary as they measure crime in Scotland in different ways, and can be used for different purposes.

Crimes recorded by the police provide a measure of the volume of crime with which the police are faced. Recorded crime statistics are important because they allow central and local government to evaluate measures in place to reduce crime, and to assess the performance of policing and criminal justice organisations in Scotland. Publishing recorded crime figures also allow the public to make assessments on the risk of crime that they face and allows police and justice agencies to use evidence to adequately target resources.

However, recorded crime statistics alone do not provide a comprehensive picture of crime in Scotland. Estimates produced by crime surveys are consistently higher than the volume recorded by the police, emphasising that, for many reasons, not all crimes come to the attention of the police. Moreover, recorded crimes are sensitive to any changes in public reporting practices, police recording practices and, in part, police deployment and activity. The impact of these, and other effects, contribute to a difference between police recorded crime statistics and crime survey estimates.

One of the key motivations in collecting crime survey data is to assess the scale of the difference between crimes recorded by the police, and those experienced by the population resident in private households. Taken together, recorded crime and SCJS data present a fuller picture of the extent and nature of crime in Scotland than either source could do alone. In particular, crime survey estimates can provide an independent check of recorded crime statistics, so bringing together crime survey estimates and police recorded crime figures can help to develop a clearer understanding of the absolute number of crimes as well as national trends in crime, whilst providing information on the characteristics and attributes of crime, victims and offenders.

¹ “private households” also includes households living in private rental or social housing – the sampling frame used for the survey Royal Mail’s small user Postcode Address File (PAF). As a result, the sample excludes business addresses, and communal establishments.

1.1 Recorded Crime

[Police recorded crime](#) figures are published annually. The annual bulletin presents statistics on crimes and offences recorded and cleared up² by the police in Scotland, disaggregated by crime/offence group and by local authority. In addition to the annual Recorded Crime in Scotland bulletin a number of companion bulletins based on police recorded crime data are published by the Scottish Government on:

- [Recorded Crime in Scotland](#)
- [Domestic Abuse Recorded by the Police in Scotland](#)
- [Homicide in Scotland](#)
- [Racist Incidents Recorded by the Police in Scotland](#)
- [Recorded Crimes and Offences Involving Firearms](#)

Furthermore bulletins on drug seizures, firearm certificates and police officer numbers are published by the Scottish Government on data collected from Police Scotland.

Police recorded crime data are recorded into operational IT systems which are in place to comprehensively log incidents reported to the police and resulting crimes and offences. All reports of incidents, whether crime-related or not, result in the creation of a report, which is auditable. Following this initial registration, an incident is recorded as a crime in all cases if the circumstances amount to a crime as defined by Scots Law, and there is no credible evidence to the contrary. Once recorded, a crime remains recorded unless there is sufficient evidence to disprove that a crime has occurred.

At present, the legacy (pre-Police Scotland) police force systems are still in operation while a Scotland-wide recording system is being developed. Prior to the establishment of Police Scotland, the eight legacy forces extracted the data from these operational systems and submitted it the Scottish Government³. The data was then subject to a quality assurance process before being considered final. Annex A (DN – insert hyperlink) provides an overview of how quality is maintained in police recorded crime statistics.

1.2 SCJS

The Scottish Crime and Justice Survey (SCJS) is a large-scale continuous survey measuring adults' experience and perceptions of crime in Scotland. The survey is

² A crime or offence is regarded as cleared up where there exists a sufficiency of evidence under Scots law, to justify consideration of criminal proceedings. A full definition is available in the [Recorded Crime User Guide – DN – insert hyperlink](#).

³ However, the police have developed a performance reporting system which allows data to be uploaded from the many legacy force systems for the purposes of producing management information from 1 April 2013. It is from this data source that the Scottish Government will receive data for 2013-14 onwards.

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based on around 12,000 face-to-face interviews with adults (aged 16 or over) living in private households in Scotland. The survey also includes a self-completion component on sexual victimisation and stalking, partner abuse and drug use. 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.

The results of the SCJS are published biennially. The Scottish Government publish the results of the main questionnaire, as well as three thematic reports on the results of the self-completion questionnaire:

- [SCJS Main Findings report](#)
- [SCJS Drug Use report](#)
- [SCJS Partner Abuse report](#)
- [SCJS Sexual Victimisation & Stalking report](#)

1.3 Two Sources of Crime Statistics in Scotland

Having two sources of crime statistics is important in providing a fuller picture of crime in Scotland, however, having two sources of crime statistics can create confusion or reduce clarity, particularly if the series follow diverging trends. In recent years, several reviews of crime statistics⁴ in England and Wales have detailed low levels of public trust in crime statistics, pointing to the use of different sources of crime statistics for different purposes as a key factor in creating confusion and mistrust. In 2010, the UK Statistics Authority published a report, [Overcoming Barriers to Trust in Crime Statistics: England and Wales](#), which pointed to the existence of two main sources of crime data in generating confusion and outlined a series of recommendations to improve confidence in national statistics.

Although to date much of the discussion around trust in crime statistics has focused on England and Wales, there is much that can be taken from this work to enhance confidence in crime reporting in Scotland⁵. In July 2014, the UK Statistics Authority published an Assessment of the compliance of Recoded Crime statistics with the

⁴ See the [Simmons Review](#), [Smith Review](#) and [Casey Review](#).

⁵ See **ANNEX C** for an overview of crime statistics in the rest of the UK

Code of Practice for Official Statistics⁶. The assessment found that publishing recorded crime data and the results of the SCJS separately, potentially presenting diverging results, could lead to confusion and public concern on the trustworthiness of the data. Furthermore, the UKSA suggested that releasing two separate publications increases the risk of the misinterpretation of the data, requiring users to have the ability to distinguish between recorded crime and crime experienced by the population.

We recognise the vital importance of ensuring that how we compile and communicate information from the two main sources of crime statistics in Scotland is clear, open and impartial. This report brings together SCJS and police recorded crime data.

The report is structured in three main parts. Firstly, chapter 2 provides an overview of the findings of the [SCJS 2012/13: Main Findings](#) and [Recorded Crime in Scotland 2012-13](#), the latest year with data available for both sources. Chapter 3 then considers the need for two main sources of national-level statistics of crime in Scotland and how comparisons can be made between them. This section outlines the strengths and weaknesses of each source, as well as the challenges in making direct comparisons. This section then outlines how comparisons can be made between the two sources using the comparable crime subset. Finally, chapter 4 uses the comparable subset to present an analysis of the relationship between recorded crime and the SCJS.

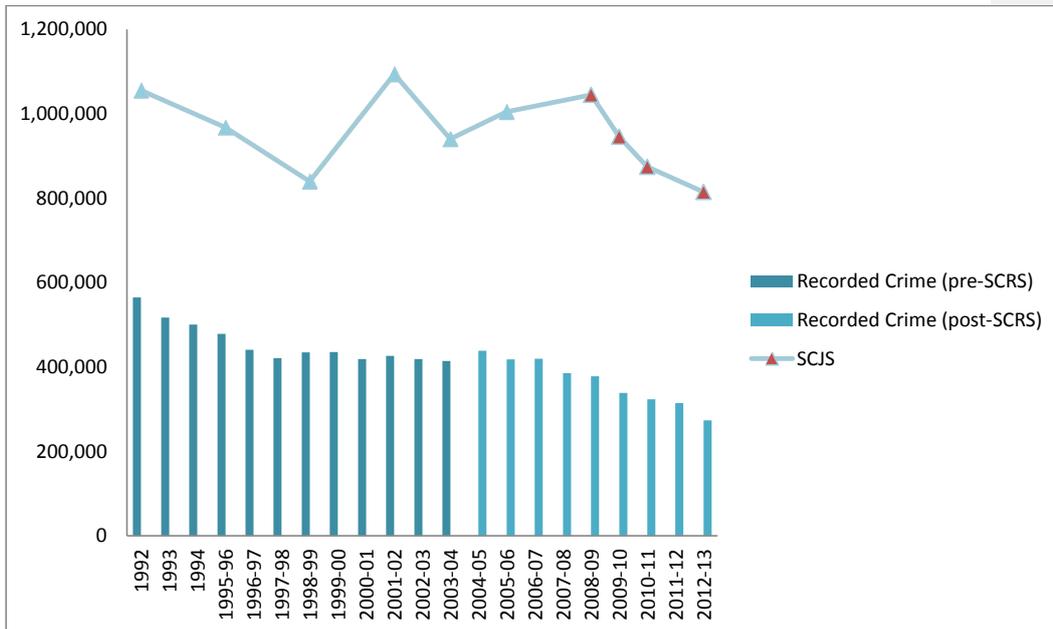
⁶ Access the full assessment [here](#).

2. An overview of crime in Scotland

2.1 Overall Level and Trends- SCJS and Recorded Crime

This section presents recent results and trends in crime statistics from recorded crime figures and the Scottish Crime and Justice Survey⁷. Data is presented up to 2012/13, the latest year that data is available for both sources.

Figure 2.1 Police recorded crime and SCJS, 1992 to 2012/13



Sources: SCS, SCVS. SCJS, Police recorded crime.

Note: The recording period moved from calendar year to financial year after 1994.

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, reflected in the fluctuations in the overall crime series prior to 2008-09. 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 the sort of reductions seen in recorded crime.

⁷ Previously known as the Scottish Crime Survey (SCS) and the Scottish Crime and Victimization Survey (SCVS).

The latest figures from the SCJS show that there were an estimated 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.

In 2012/13, the Scottish police recorded 273,053 crimes, 13% fewer crimes than in 2011/12 and 28% fewer than in 2008-09. All eight legacy police forces showed a decrease in the number of crimes recorded in 2012/13, compared to 2011-12. The scale of the decrease ranged from 6% for Tayside, to 16% for Northern.

Figure 1 highlights the difference in number of the overall crimes estimated by the SCJS and those recorded by the police. The SCJS captures crimes that are not reported to the police, and therefore not included in recorded crime figures. The differences between crime survey data and recorded crime figures that lead to such differences are explored further in Chapter 3 of this report.

2.2 Recorded Crime level and trends by crime and offence groups

The annual recorded crime bulletin presents statistics on crimes and offences recorded and cleared up by the eight legacy Scottish police forces. Box 1 below presents the seven crime and offence categories used to present recorded crime data⁸. The term "crime" is generally used for the more serious criminal acts; the less serious are termed "offences". The distinction is made for statistical reporting purposes and the "seriousness" of the offence is generally related to the maximum sentence that can be imposed. This distinction has been consistently used since the publication of these statistics began.

Box 1: Main recorded crime and offence groupings

| Crime Groups | Offence Groups |
|--|---------------------------------|
| Group 1: Non-sexual crimes of violence | |
| Group 2: Sexual offences | Group 6: Miscellaneous offences |
| Group 3: Crimes of dishonesty | Group 7: Motor vehicle offences |
| Group 4: Fire-raising, vandalism etc. | |
| Group 5: Crimes against public justice | |

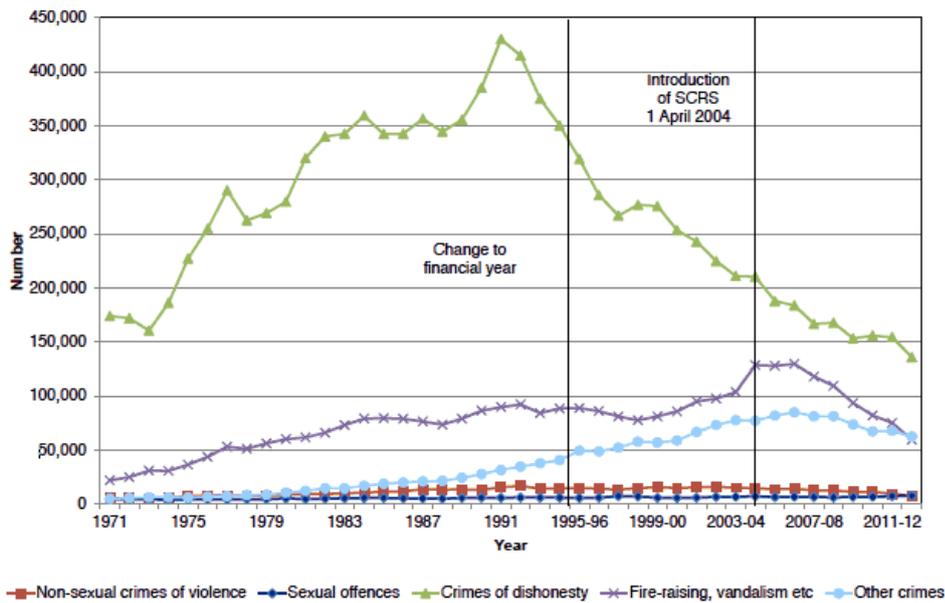
Crimes relate to Groups 1 to 5; Non-sexual crimes of violence, Sexual offences, Crimes of dishonesty, Fire-raising, vandalism etc. and Other crimes. Note that

⁸ For a full overview of the crimes and offences covered by each group, see [Chapter 8](#) of the Recorded Crime in Scotland annual publication.

crimes within Group 2 are termed Sexual offences as this corresponds to the name of the legislation covering these crimes. Offences relate to Groups 6 and 7, namely, Miscellaneous offences and Motor vehicle offences.

[Recorded crime](#) figures are published annually. The annual bulletin presents statistics on crimes and offences recorded and cleared up by the police in Scotland, disaggregated by crime/offence group and by local authority.

Figure 2.2 Crimes recorded by the police by crime group, 1971 to 1994 then 1995-96 to 2012-13



Sources: Police recorded crime.

The total number of crimes recorded by the police in 2012-13 was 273,053, 13% lower than in 2011-12 (Figure 2.2 and Table 2.1). The total remains well below the 2004-05 figure of 438,123 and is the lowest number recorded since 1974.

Between 2011/12 and 2012/13, police recorded crime shows a decrease in four of the five crime groups:

- The number of Non-sexual crimes of violence recorded by the police decreased by 21% between 2011-12 and 2012-13, to a total of 7,530.
- The number of Crimes of dishonesty decreased by 12% to stand at 135,899 crimes in 2012-13.
- Recorded crimes of Fire-raising, vandalism etc. decreased by 21% to total 59,479 in 2012-13.
- The number of Other crimes decreased by 8% between 2011-12 and 2012-13 to total 62,452.

- The number of Sexual offences increased by 5% from 7,361 in 2011-12 to 7,693 in 2012-13.

There was a 3% decrease in the number of Miscellaneous offences recorded in 2012/13, largely due to a substantial decrease in the number of recorded common assaults. This decrease was offset by a 3% increase in the number of motor vehicle offences.

Table 2.1 Number of recorded crimes and offences, by crime and offence group, 2002/03-2012/13

| | 2002-03 | 2003-04 | 2004-05 | 2005-06 | 2006-07 | 2007-08 | 2008-09 | 2009-10 | 2010-11 | 2011-12 | 2012-13 | % Change 2011-12 - 2012-13 | % Change 2002-03 - 2012-13 |
|--|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|--|--|
| Crimes recorded by the police | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Non-sexual crimes of violence | 16,074 | 15,187 | 14,728 | 13,726 | 14,099 | 12,874 | 12,612 | 11,228 | 11,438 | 9,533 | 7,530 | -21% | -53% |
| Sexual crimes | 6,623 | 6,785 | 7,325 | 6,558 | 6,726 | 6,552 | 6,331 | 6,527 | 6,696 | 7,361 | 7,693 | 5% | 16% |
| Crimes of dishonesty | 224,785 | 211,004 | 210,365 | 187,798 | 183,760 | 166,718 | 167,812 | 153,256 | 155,870 | 154,337 | 135,899 | -12% | -40% |
| Fire-raising/vandalism | 97,598 | 103,732 | 128,566 | 127,889 | 129,734 | 118,025 | 109,430 | 93,443 | 82,020 | 75,201 | 59,479 | -21% | -39% |
| Other Crimes | 73,201 | 77,506 | 77,139 | 81,814 | 84,938 | 81,340 | 81,248 | 73,670 | 67,223 | 67,756 | 62,452 | -8% | -15% |
| Total Crimes | 418,281 | 414,214 | 438,123 | 417,785 | 419,257 | 385,509 | 377,433 | 338,124 | 323,247 | 314,188 | 273,053 | -13% | -35% |
| Offences recorded by the police | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Misc Offences | 169,563 | 180,963 | 214,302 | 219,491 | 232,373 | 224,256 | 226,821 | 230,971 | 209,967 | 210,401 | 203,421 | | 20% |
| Motoring offences | 354,559 | 434,873 | 424,236 | 380,367 | 373,094 | 345,915 | 331,301 | 330,738 | 318,368 | 331,914 | 340,347 | 3% | -4% |
| Total Offences | 524,122 | 615,836 | 638,538 | 599,858 | 605,467 | 570,171 | 558,122 | 561,709 | 528,335 | 542,315 | 543,768 | 0.27% | 4% |

Comment [ng1]: DN - % change 11/12 to 12/13 for misc offences is missing.

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Sources: Police recorded crime.

2.3 SCJS level and trends by crime groups

The SCJS Main Findings reports present information in two broad crime categories: **Property Crime** and **Violent Crime**.

Box 2: Crime groups used in the SCJS

| 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. |

Figure 2.3 provides a breakdown of the estimated 815,000 incidents of crime against adults in Scotland in 2012/13, showing the proportion of crime measured by the SCJS in aggregated crime groups.

Figure 2.3 Percentage of SCJS crime in each crime group

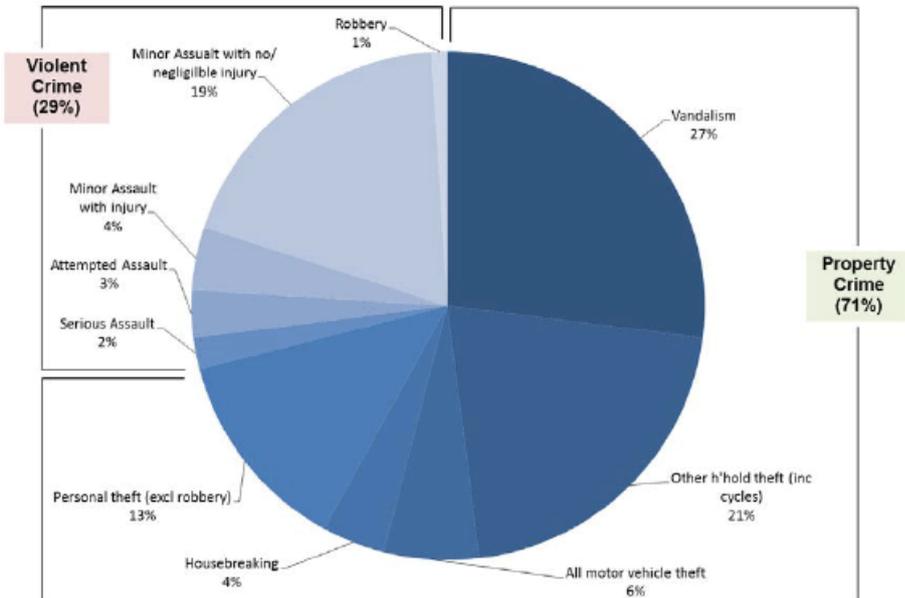


Table 2.2 percentage change in estimates of numbers of all SCJS crime, by crime group.

| | 2008/09 | 2009/10 | 2010/11 | 2012/13 | % change | |
|---|-----------|---------|---------|---------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Estimated numbers of crimes | | | | | 2008/09 to 2012/13 | 2010/11 to 2012/13 |
| ALL SCJS CRIME | 1,045,000 | 945,000 | 874,000 | 815,000 | -22% | -7% |
| PROPERTY CRIME | 728,000 | 679,000 | 654,000 | 579,000 | -21% | -12% |
| Vandalism | 350,000 | 303,000 | 275,000 | 219,000 | -37% | -20% |
| All motor vehicle theft related incidents | 70,000 | 64,000 | 58,000 | 50,000 | -29% | -14% |
| Housebreaking | 25,000 | 29,000 | 28,000 | 35,000 | 36% | 23% |
| Other h'hold theft (inc bicycles) | 173,000 | 153,000 | 169,000 | 169,000 | -2% | 0% |
| Personal theft (excl. robbery) | 110,000 | 130,000 | 124,000 | 106,000 | -3% | -14% |
| VIOLENT CRIME | 317,000 | 266,000 | 220,000 | 236,000 | -25% | 7% |
| Assault | 297,000 | 247,000 | 208,000 | 225,000 | -24% | 8% |
| Robbery | 20,000 | 19,000 | 12,000 | 11,000 | -42% | -6% |
| Base | 16,000 | 16,040 | 13,010 | 12,050 | | |

Sources: SCJS

Note: Statistically significant SCJS changes highlighted in bold.

Property Crime

Property crime measured in the SCJS involves theft or damage to personal or household property (including vehicles) (Box 2). In 2012/13, approximately 579,000 crimes (71% of all SCJS crime) fell into this category (Figure 2.3 and Table 2.2). Around 15% of adults in Scotland were estimated to have been a victim of property crime in 2012/13.

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

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%.

The findings of the SCJS 2012/13 are able to present more information on the nature and characteristics of property crime:

- The risk of being a victim of property crime was almost the same for males (15%) and females (14%).
- The risk of being a victim of property crime was similar for 16-24 year olds (18%) and 25-44 year olds (19%). Thereafter, the risk decreased with age, with 8% of those aged 60 or over being at risk of being a victim of property crime.

- The risk of property crime was higher for adults living in the 15% most deprived areas (18%) compared with those living in the rest of Scotland (14%).

Respondents perceived the likelihood of experiencing property crime to be higher than the actual risk. For example, 6 times as many adults thought that they were likely to have their home broken into than actually were a victim of housebreaking (7% compared with the actual risk of 1.2%).

Over a third (35%) of property crimes were reported to the police. Reporting rates were influenced by whether the property was insured and whether an insurance claim was made. For example, 48% of crime was reported when the property was insured, compared to 29% of crime where the property was not insured. The most common reasons⁹ for not reporting property crime was that the incident was considered to be 'too trivial' (43%) or that the victim felt that the police could have done nothing (41%).

Violent Crime

Violent crime in the SCJS includes attempted assault, serious assault, minor assault and robbery (Box 2). Of the 815,000 crimes measured by the SCJS in 2012/13, 235,937 (29%) were violent crimes. Minor assaults made up the majority of SCJS violent incidents (23%), followed by attempted assault (3%), serious assault (2%) and robbery (1%). It is estimated that 3.1% of adults in Scotland were a victim of violent crime in 2012/13.

Between the 2011/12 and the 2012/13 SCJS, there was no significant change in violent crime estimates (the 7% increase was not statistically significant). However, the cumulative effect of changes since 2008/09 is statistically significant, showing a 25% decrease in violent crimes.

The findings of the SCJS 2012/13 are able to present more information on the nature and characteristics of violent crime. The results show that age, gender and deprivation contributed to the likelihood of experiencing violent crime:

- males had a higher risk of being a victim of violent crime compared with females (4% cent and 2% respectively).
- the risk of being a victim of violent crime decreased with age, from 8% for 16-24 year olds compared with less than 0.5% of those aged 60 or over.
- the SCJS 2012/13 also showed that the risk of being a victim of violent crime was higher for adults living in Scotland's 15% most deprived areas (5%) compared with those living in the rest of Scotland (3%).

⁹ respondents were able to give multiple reasons why they chose not to report crime.

The SCJS 2012/13 showed that males aged 16-24 had the highest risk of being a victim of violent crime (11%), and were just over twice as likely to be a victim of violent crime than males aged 25-44 (5%) and females 16-24 (5%).

Respondents perceived the likelihood of experiencing violent crime to be higher than the actual risk. For example, adults were 20 times more likely to think that they were at risk of being mugged or robbed than they actually were (4% compared to the actual risk of robbery 0.2%).

The SCJS gathers information on whether incidents were reported to the police and why individuals choose to report, or not report, crime. Just under half (48%) of SCJS violent crime incidents were reported to the police in 2012/13. This is consistent with the findings of the SCJS 2010/11. Police were not informed about violent crimes for many reasons. The most common reasons¹⁰ given for not reporting violent crimes was that: the victim felt that the police could have done nothing (24%); the victims dealt with the matter themselves (23%); the incident was considered to be too trivial and not worth reporting (17%); the police would not have been interested (16%); the incident was considered a personal or family matter (14%).

¹⁰ respondents were able to give multiple reasons why they chose not to report crime.

3. Comparing the SCJS and Police Recorded Crime

While the SCJS and recorded crime each provide data on crime in Scotland, they feature relative strengths and weaknesses, making each more appropriate in different contexts and for different purposes. This chapter first outlines the relative strengths and weaknesses of each source and considers the challenges in making direct comparisons between police recorded crime and the SCJS; it then introduces the comparable subset of crimes that enables comparisons to be made between police recorded crime and the SCJS.

3.1 Police Recorded Crime

Police recorded crime data covers a wider range of crimes than the SCJS (for example, including so-called 'victimless' crimes such as drug possession). However, it largely depends on the public reporting crimes to the police. Crime survey estimates are consistently higher than recorded crime figures, indicating that only a fraction of crimes that take place come to the attention of the police. Whether a victim decides to report a crime can be influenced by many factors¹¹, for example,

- Socio-economic characteristics of the victim (such as age, sex, ethnicity, personal or household income and labour market status);
- Incident-specific factors (e.g. victim-offender relationship, the perceived severity of the crime or likelihood of an insurance claim);
- Attitudes towards the police;
- Economic or political developments (e.g. the impact of high-profile cases such as the Jimmy Savile child abuse inquiry leading to an increase in reports of sexual abuse);
- Victim's involvement in criminal activity.

In general, recorded crime data better measures crimes that are well reported to the police, such as serious but rare crimes. However, as well as being affected by changes in public reporting practices, recorded crime levels can be affected by police recording/counting practices and changes may not reflect changes in underlying crime trends. For example, the introduction of the Scottish Crime Recording Standard (SCRS) in April, 2004 impacted on trends in recorded crime between 2003/04 and 2004/05¹², leading to a 6% increase in crime. These figures reflected the shift to a more victim-oriented approach that led to increased recording of minor crimes such as vandalism and minor thefts.

Police recorded crime essentially provides a count of crime and it is not possible to analyse victimisation against other demographic variables, or collect data on public attitudes. The police recorded crime statistics collected centrally are based on an

¹¹ See [Tarling and Morris \(2010\)](#) and [MacDonald \(2001\)](#) for further discussion.

¹² More information can be found in the Statistical Bulletin on [Recorded Crime in Scotland 2004/05](#)

aggregate return at local authority level, and consequently, do not provide information on the characteristics of victims such as age and gender or the circumstances of the crime such as the locus of the crime.

While the results of the SCJS are now published biennially, recorded crime statistics are available on an annual basis. Data on the number of crimes recorded by the police are collected in an annual return from Police Scotland's recording systems and are based on crimes recorded by the police during the financial year with the collection period taking place from 1st April to 31st March each year.

Recorded crime is also able to present information for lower geographical areas. Statistics are provided on crimes recorded by the police at [local authority](#) and national level (and at legacy police force area prior to police reform).

3.2 Scottish Crime and Justice Survey

The SCJS is a national survey, carried out using a stratified random sample¹³, in 2012/13 obtaining responses from around 12,000 adults (aged 16 and over) living in private households.

One of the main strengths of the SCJS is its ability to capture crimes that are not reported to, and therefore not recorded by, the police. SCJS data is able to provide national level estimates of crime that are not available from police recorded crime figures.

Another strength of the SCJS is its capacity to analyse victimisation against other demographic variables, such as age, gender, socio-economic group, tenure status and area deprivation. The survey is also able to capture attitudinal data, such as perceptions of crime rates, fear of crime and attitudes towards the criminal justice system.

The SCJS is a victimisation survey of the adult population resident in private households, whereas police recorded crime captures both a wider population and a wider set of offences, but only where the crime is reported and recorded. The design of the SCJS means that the survey does not capture:

- Crimes against victims who are under 16 years of age;
- Crimes against those living in group residences, institutions or those without a fixed address (e.g. care homes, halls of residence, hostels or bed and breakfasts);
- Crimes without a single, identifiable victim (e.g. speeding);
- Crimes against commercial or public sector bodies.

¹³ More details on the design of the SCJS can be found in the [Technical Report](#).

Certain groups within the population are also more likely to respond to surveys of this kind, meaning that some groups can be harder to reach. For example young men, or individuals from deprived areas, are underrepresented in the SCJS. To ensure that the sample reflects the profile of the general population, the survey is weighted to adjust for this possible non-response bias.

The SCJS gathers information from a sample rather than from the whole population and survey results are always estimates, not precise figures. This means that they are subject to a level of uncertainty. To estimate the extent of this uncertainty, confidence intervals for the statistics are calculated to define bands within which the 'true' value of survey estimates are likely to lie (i.e. that value which would be obtained if a census of the entire population was undertaken). These confidence intervals are particularly important when making comparisons of SCJS estimates over short timescales. For example, it is notable that the change in estimated SCJS comparable crime between 2010/11 and 2012/13 is not statistically significant. Table 2.3 shows that more changes over longer timescales (i.e. since 2008/09) are statistically significant than changes in estimates between adjacent survey sweeps.

SCJS estimates are also subject to a margin of non-quantifiable error, for example:

- There may be errors in the recall of participants as to when certain incidents took place, resulting in some crimes being wrongly included in, or excluded from, the survey reference period (we expect that this is less of an issue with recorded crime data);
- Some respondents may have claimed to have reported a crime to police when they had not, feeling that this was the socially acceptable response;
- Some incidents could also be inaccurately recorded by interviewers, or miscoded by the wider survey team.

Although a number of steps in the design and implementation of the survey are taken to reduce such errors, they can never be fully eliminated.

3.3 Challenges in Making Direct Comparisons

While each source features relative strengths and weaknesses, taken together, recorded crime statistics and estimates produced by the SCJS provide a more comprehensive picture of crime in Scotland. Yet the differences between the SCJS and police recorded crime, outlined in the previous section, create challenges when making direct comparisons between the two sources.

The collection of survey data on crime and victimisation in Scotland has undergone several major changes in methodology. Prior to the current SCJS design (from 2008/09 onwards), consistent, nationally representative data are not available. The SCJS represents a major departure in survey design, methodology and sample size:

2008/09 (c. 16,000 interviews), 2009/10 (c. 16,000 interviews), 2010/11 (c. 13,000 interviews), 2012/13 (c. 12,000 interviews). Prior to this, surveys were administered by interviewers using paper questionnaires on considerably smaller samples (c. 5,000 interviews), and early surveys did not cover the Highlands and Islands of Scotland.

Consistent recorded crime data is able to provide information about long term trends in the number of crimes recorded by the police. However, changing crime survey methodology in Scotland has implications for making comparisons across survey designs. As previous surveys had smaller sample sizes, estimates from earlier surveys are subject to a higher degree of uncertainty. In this regard, it should also be noted that the SCJS estimates are based on relatively small numbers of respondents who actually experience crime. For example, the risk of experiencing crime as measured by the 2012/13 SCJS was 16.9% (based upon around 2,300 incidents captured during survey interviews in 2012/13).

In comparison, crime survey data from England and Wales appears to have a greater scope for comparisons over time, with the British Crime Survey (BCS) and the Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW) being based on a larger sample, and offering ten sweeps of data for comparison since 2002/03¹⁴. Data over a longer timescale allows trends to be identified more readily and enabled the Office for National Statistics (ONS) to assess the relationship between survey data and recorded crime figures. In contrast, consistent and reliable crime survey data for Scotland is available since 2008/09, offering only four sweeps of survey data with which to attempt to complete similar analysis to examine and compare trends.

While making direct comparisons between the SCJS and police recorded crime statistics is important, it is challenging as there are key differences which affect the comparability of the sources:

- The SCJS interviews individuals over a 12 month period, with a rolling respondent recall period extending over 23 months, whereas crime is recorded by police in Scotland by financial year. As a result, SCJS data cannot be simply and directly compared to police recorded crime for a single financial year;
- The SCJS questionnaire asks respondents whether the police 'came to know about the incident', how the police came to know about the incident, why the respondent decided to report the incident to police and perceptions of how the police handled the incident. The SCJS questionnaire does not directly ask whether the incident was recorded by the police and what action was taken against the offender. Therefore, while the SCJS data can estimate the number of incidents that are 'reported' to police, it is not possible to match SCJS

¹⁴ ONS produced a methodological note entitled ['Analysis of Variation in Crime Trends'](#) which analysed the relationship between comparable categories between the CSEW (formerly BCS) and police recorded crime series between 1981 and 2011/12.

respondent microdata to recorded crime data and verify whether a crime that a respondent said that they reported to the police was actually recorded as such;

- Compared to recorded crime figures, the SCJS is unable to produce as robust data at legacy police force level and lower level geographies, therefore it is more difficult to make direct comparisons of trends in reporting crime at sub-national levels¹⁵;
- SCJS estimates on crime categories (e.g. comparable violent crime) are often based on small sample sizes, offering less confidence around estimates, particularly when considering changes between survey sweeps.
- Various adjustments are made to the recorded crime data to maximise comparability with the SCJS data. However, consistent with the practice in the CSEW, the data are not adjusted to remove crimes against victims under the age of 16 or crimes against commercial businesses and this limits the overall comparability of the two sources.

3.4 The Comparable Crime Subset

As the previous section outlined, making comparisons between police recorded crime and the SCJS is not straightforward. In order to explore the relationship between the sources, it is necessary to look at those crimes that are covered by both dataset. Comparisons between recorded crime and SCJS data are made in on-going statistics publications by examining a comparable subset of crimes¹⁶. On this basis, of the 815,000 crimes estimated by the 2012/13 SCJS, just under two-thirds (65%) can be compared with police recorded crimes.

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).

Table 3.1 gives an overview of the recorded crimes and SCJS crimes that make up each comparable crime group. To enable consistent comparisons to be made, SCJS violent crimes have been compared to a set of recorded crimes comprising a range of Group 1 non-sexual crimes of violence and Group 6 common assault offences. Information on crime groups in Annex C provides further information about these groups.

¹⁵ It should be noted that the 2012/13 SCJS pre-dates the establishment of Police Scotland on April 1 2013 and covers the final year of operation of the eight legacy police forces.

¹⁶ See [Section 2.4](#) and [Annex 5](#) of the SCJS and the [Technical Report](#) for some further information on comparable crime groups.

These crime groups can be compared because they are covered by each source and can be accurately coded in the SCJS in the same way as the police would do (i.e. there is less likely to be ambiguity in what actually happened); in contrast, it is not straightforward to compare some other crimes on a consistent basis so they are not included in the comparable subset, for example crimes of theft from a motor vehicle, personal theft and other household theft.

Various adjustments are made to the recorded crime categories by Scottish Government statisticians to maximise comparability with the SCJS. In previous crime surveys in Scotland the police recorded crime statistics were adjusted further to remove crimes against victims aged 15 or younger and crimes against businesses. However, for the SCJS the adjustments have not been made for the following reasons:

- This further adjustment came from a Strathclyde police survey from 2002 which was before the change to recorded crime practices brought about by the Scottish Recorded Crime Standard so it may not be valid any longer;
- In addition, the adjustment may still be appropriate but given that the data from the SCJS can now be provided at police force area (PFA) level it is not appropriate to use Strathclyde's adjustment across all forces. Information to undertake this adjustment using local police force sources did not exist at the time of publication.

The decision not to adjust police recorded crime statistics is consistent with established practice on the CSEW.

In light of this, however, it should be recognised that this 'comparable' series is broadly, rather than directly, comparable and the offence classification system used in the survey can only approximate that used by the police. Making comparisons between SCJS categories and police recorded offence codes are approximate and categories will not be directly equivalent in all cases.

Table 3.1 Comparable subset of crimes.

| Comparable Crime Group | SCJS category | Recorded crime offence included |
|------------------------|--|--|
| Violent Crime | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Serious assault ○ Serious assault and fire raising ○ Serious assault and housebreaking | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Serious Assault ○ Causing injury etc. by culpable & reckless conduct |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Minor assault with injury ○ Minor assault with no/negligible injury ○ Attempted assault ○ Minor assault with no/negligible injury | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Common Assault ○ Common assault of an emergency worker |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Robbery ○ Attempted robbery | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Robbery and Assault with intent to rob |
| Acquisitive Crime | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Housebreaking in a dwelling (nothing taken) ○ Housebreaking in a dwelling (Something taken) ○ Attempted housebreaking in a dwelling | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Theft by Housebreaking domestic property (dwelling) ○ Housebreaking with intent to steal domestic property (dwelling) ○ Attempted Housebreaking with intent to enter and steal domestic property (dwelling) ○ Theft of Pedal Cycle Theft by Housebreaking |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Theft of car/van ○ Theft of motorbike, motorscooter or moped ○ Theft of pedal cycle | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Theft of motor vehicle and contents incl. taking and driving |
| Vandalism | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Vandalism to a motor vehicle ○ Vandalism to the home ○ Other vandalism | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Vandalism, reckless damage + malicious mischief ○ Vandalism ○ Reckless Damage ○ Malicious Damage |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Fire raising | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Fire-raising excluding Muirburn |

4. Analysis of Trends in Comparable Crime

This chapter provides an overview of trends in the comparable crime category, since the shift to the current SCJS methodology in 2008/09. Undertaking this analysis is important in understanding the relationship between police recorded crime and the SCJS. It is useful to look at how the SCJS estimates compare with the police recorded crime statistics as this can shed light on whether crime rates are actually changing, or people are tending to report more or less crime, or police crime recording practices are changing. This chapter also uses the comparable subset to examine the relationship between the number of SCJS crimes estimated to have been reported to police and the number of crimes recorded by the police. This is important in assessing the crimes that occur and do not come to the attention of the police.

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 long-term data and in particular the small subsample sizes further 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.

4.1 Trends in the Comparable Crime Group

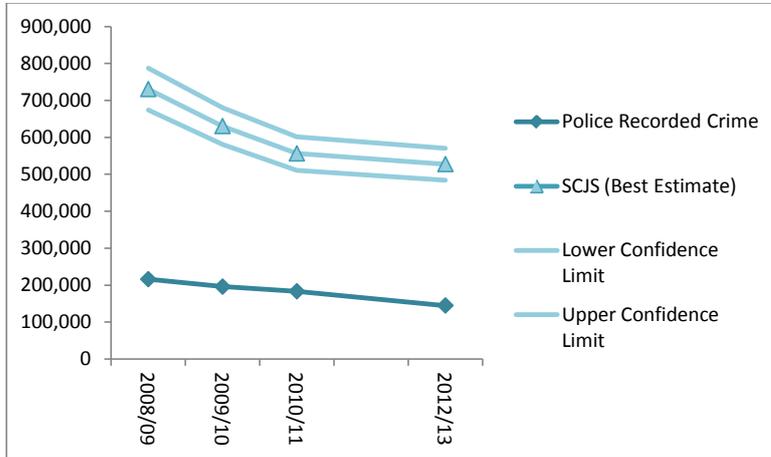
The SCJS 2012/13 estimated that there were 527,000 crimes in the comparable subset and in 2012/13, the police recorded 145,000 crimes and offences in the comparable subset. SCJS estimates are higher than recorded crime figures, even in the comparable category, because the survey is able to capture crime that does not come to the attention of the police and is therefore not captured in recorded crime statistics.

Table 4.1 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 | 216,000 | 196,000 | 183,000 | 145,000 | -9% | -6% | -21% | -33% |
| SCJS Crime | 731,000 | 630,000 | 556,000 | 527,000 | -14% | -12% | -5% | -28% |
| <i>Base</i> | <i>2,464</i> | <i>2,127</i> | <i>1,576</i> | <i>1,375</i> | | | | |

Note: Statistically significant SCJS changes highlighted in bold.

Figure 4.1 Recorded crime and SCJS estimates in the 'comparable crime' category, 2008/09 to 2012/13

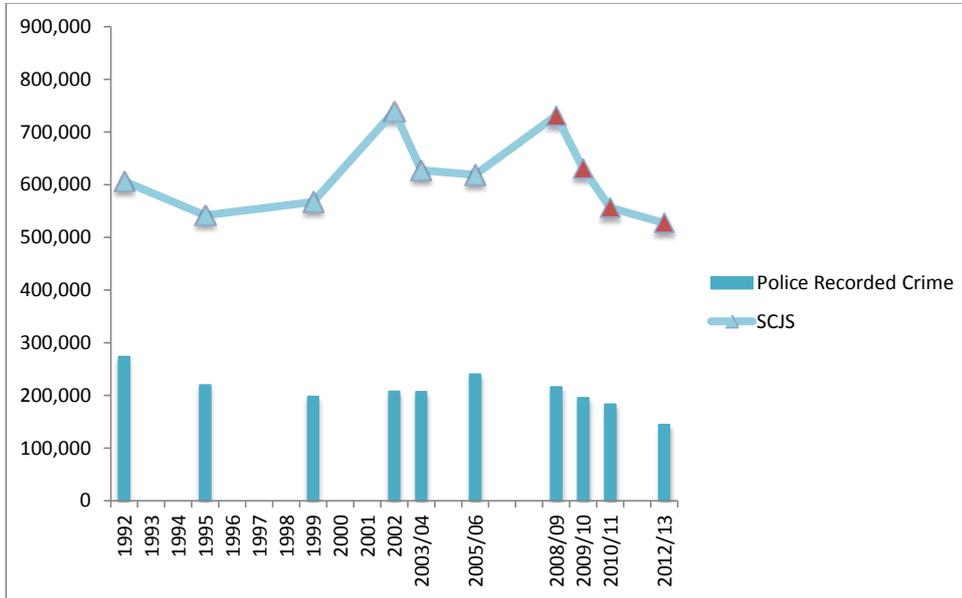


Sources: SCJS, Police recorded crime.

Both recorded crime figures and SCJS estimates show downward trends in the extent of crime since 2008/09 (-33% and -28% respectively). Table 4.1 highlights that, from 2008/09 to 2010/11, SCJS data showed larger percentage decreases between survey sweeps than recorded crime. This changed in the most recent survey year, however, where comparable police recorded crime showed a greater rate of decline than SCJS estimated comparable crime. While this could be an indication that the relationship between the datasets is changing, it could be explained by a short term fluctuation or by the uncertainty around the survey estimates.

It is important to note that the fall in SCJS comparable crime in the latest survey sweep (2010/11-2012/13) does not represent a statistically significant change (at the 95% confidence level). The fall 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. It is difficult to identify trends in the relationship between recorded crime and SCJS estimates using only four sweeps of reliable comparable data. It is likely that greater certainty in trends will emerge over longer timescales, therefore continuing this analysis over future years is crucial in assessing whether some of the short term changes reported here mark the beginning of a consistent pattern.

Figure 4.2 Recorded crime and SCJS estimates in the 'comparable crime' category, 1992 to 2012/13



Sources: SCJS, Police recorded crime.

Figure 4.2 compares crime survey data with recorded crime over a longer time scale, highlighting a higher level of fluctuation in the crime survey data prior to the break in methodology in 2008/09. Before 2008/09, crime survey estimates were derived from smaller samples which meant that there was a higher degree of uncertainty around survey results. In light of this, the analysis in this report focuses on comparing recorded crime figures and SCJS estimates since 2008/09, when the survey changed to its current design.

While examination of such overall trends are useful, they can often mask subtle differences changes by crime type. The remainder of this chapter will discuss each of the main crime groups in the comparable subset of all crime .

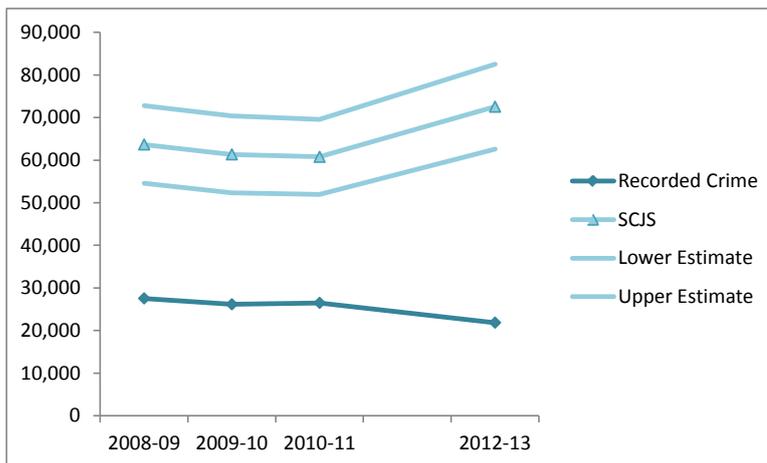
4.2 Trends in Acquisitive Crime

Table 4.2 Acquisitive crime comparable 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 | 27,527 | 26,146 | 26,478 | 21,834 | -5% | 1% | -18% | -21% |
| SCJS Crime | 64,000 | 61,000 | 61,000 | 73,000 | -4% | -1% | 19% | 16% |
| <i>Base</i> | <i>327</i> | <i>312</i> | <i>265</i> | <i>272</i> | | | | |

Note: Statistically significant SCJS changes highlighted in bold.

Figure 4.3 Recorded crime and SCJS estimates in the acquisitive crime category, 2008/09 to 2012/13



Sources: SCJS, Police recorded crime.

For acquisitive crime, survey trends were consistent with recorded crime figures until the latest sweep of the survey. The results of the 2012/13 SCJS indicate a 19% rise in acquisitive crime, while recorded crime figures have fallen by 18%. However, survey estimates on the comparable crime subgroups are based on small base sizes of respondents (as shown in Table 4.2) and as a consequence, there is less certainty around estimates (as shown by upper and lower confidence limits). The percentage change in acquisitive crime between 2010/11 and 2012/13 is not a statistically significant change. In the longer term (2008/09-2012/13) the change in acquisitive crime is also not statistically significant.

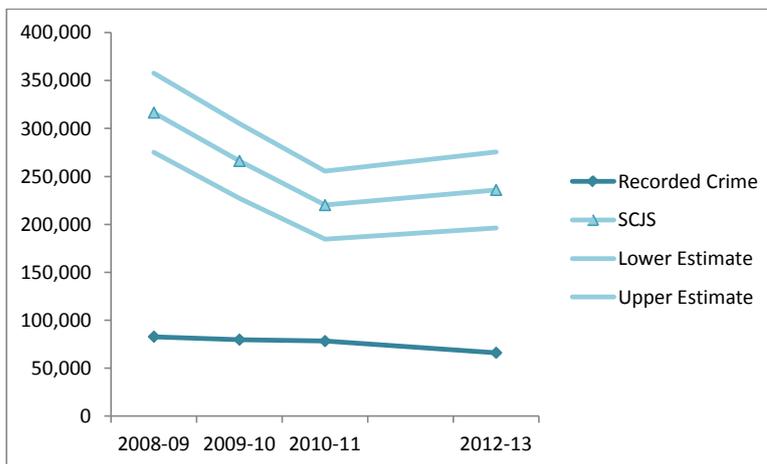
4.3 Trends in Violent Crime

Table 4.3 Violent crime comparable 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 | 82,855 | 79,769 | 78,263 | 66,076 | -4% | -2% | -16% | -20% |
| SCJS Crime | 317,000 | 266,000 | 220,000 | 236,000 | -16% | -17% | 7% | -25% |
| <i>Base</i> | 622 | 493 | 357 | 343 | | | | |

Note: Statistically significant SCJS changes highlighted in bold.

Figure 4.4 Recorded crime and SCJS estimates in the violent crime category, 2008/09 to 2012/13



Sources: SCJS, Police recorded crime.

Comparable recorded violent crime figures have fallen consistently between 2008/09 and 2012/13. SCJS estimates fell at a faster rate than recorded crime from 2008/09 until 2010/11, before rising by 7% in the latest survey sweep. The apparent 7% rise in violent crime in 2012/13 is not statistically significant. As table 4.3 shows, violent crime estimates are based on a small number of respondents. Across survey sweeps between 2008/09 and 2012/13, the 25% decrease in violent crime is statistically significant, and more in line with the 20% decrease in recorded violent crime for the equivalent time period.

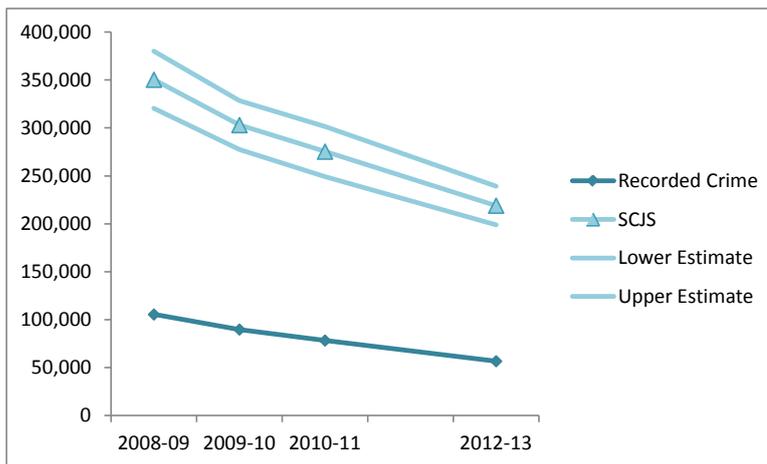
4.4 Trends in Vandalism

Table 4.4 Vandalism crime comparable 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 | 105,519 | 89,813 | 78,376 | 56,752 | -15% | -13% | -28% | -46% |
| SCJS Crime | 350,000 | 303,000 | 275,000 | 219,000 | -14% | -9% | -20% | -37% |
| Base | 1,515 | 1,322 | 954 | 760 | | | | |

Note: Statistically significant SCJS changes highlighted in bold.

Figure 4.5 Recorded crime and SCJS estimates in the vandalism category, 2008/09 to 2012/13



Sources: SCJS, Police recorded crime.

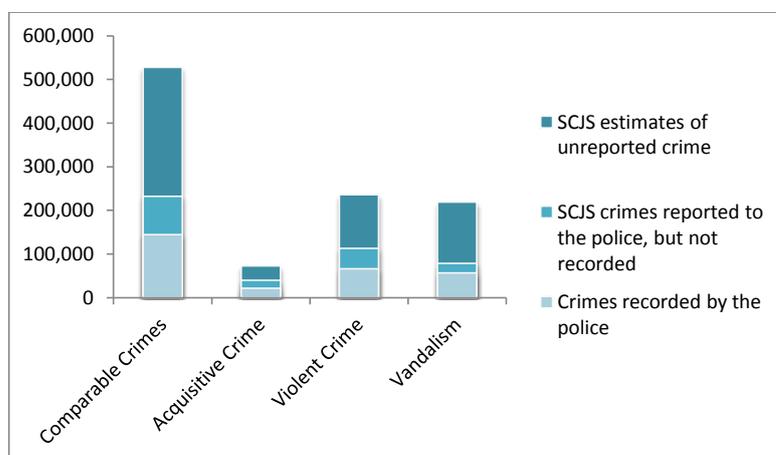
In the vandalism group, both recorded crime figures and SCJS estimates have been on a downward trend since 2008/09. Both the percentage change in comparable SCJS vandalism crimes, from 2010/11 and 2012/13 and between 2008/09 to 2012/13 is statistically significant at the 95% level. Compared to the violent crime and acquisitive crime groups, vandalism estimates are based on larger samples of respondents. The data on vandalism shows recorded crime falling at a faster rate than SCJS data across the survey sweeps. Between 2010/11 and 2012/13, recorded crime and SCJS data show vandalism incidents decreasing more rapidly than in previous years.

4.5 Reporting to the Police

Police recorded crime statistics are known to be sensitive to changes in both public reporting practice and police recording practices. This is because not all crimes are reported to the police and, of those that are, not all reported crimes are subsequently recorded by them. This results in a gap between police recorded crime statistics and SCJS estimates.

SCJS respondents are asked whether the police 'came to know about' the crime, either by them or somebody else. This allows comparisons to be made between crime estimated to have been reported to the police in the SCJS, and police recorded crime data. Although it is not possible to determine on an individual basis whether a crime that the police 'came to know about' was captured in police recorded crime data, this type of analysis can give an indication of the level of crime that goes unreported, and the broad relationship between police recorded crime figures and SCJS estimates. Making this comparison is a fundamental way of assessing the relationship between the SCJS and police recorded crime data. The following analysis considers this relationship in the comparable crime subset.

Figure 4.6 Levels of unreported and recorded crime 2012/13



Sources: SCJS, Police recorded crime.

Figure 4.6 indicates the level of unreported crime in the comparable crime category, and broken down by the main comparable crime groups. Figures from the 2012/13 SCJS indicate that around 232,000 incidents (44%), of crime in the comparable category were reported to police. In 2012/13, the police recorded 144,662 crimes in the comparable category. By comparing these crimes reported to the police with the number of recorded in police figures, it can be estimated that around 62% of crime

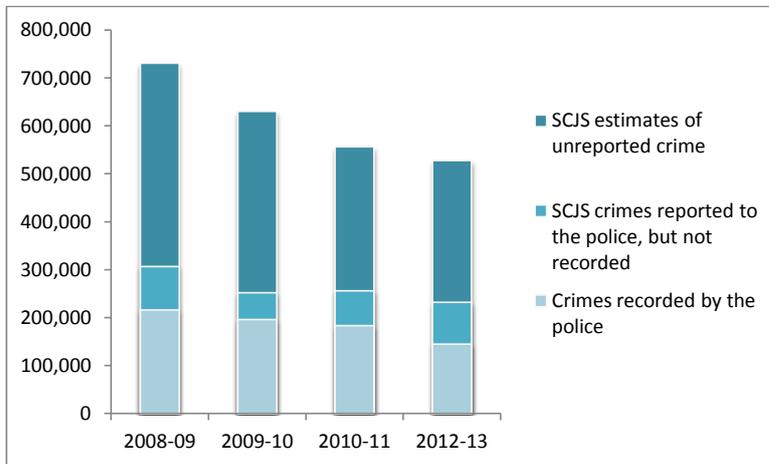
which the SCJS estimates to have been reported to the police, were actually captured in police recorded crime figures in 2012/13. As a result, it can also be estimated that around 383,000 (27%) comparable crimes (that is reported and non-reported crime) were recorded by police in 2012/13.

Comment [ng3]: need to check figures and increase clarity in this section.

Figure 4.6 compares the number of comparable crimes in the SCJS that were estimated to be reported to the police and police recorded crime figures by comparable crime group. The variation across the crime groups includes:

- Around 40,000 (55%) **acquisitive crimes** are estimated to have be reported to the police in 2012/13. As the police recorded 21,834 acquisitive incidents in 2012/13, it can be estimated that 55% of the crime estimated to be reported to the police by the SCJS, were formally recorded in police statistics.
- Around 113,000 (48%) of **violent crimes** are estimated to have be reported to the police in 2012/13. The police recorded 66,076 violent incidents in 2012/13, therefore, it can be estimated that 58% of the crime estimated to be reported to the police by the SCJS, were formally recorded in police statistics.
- Around 79,000 (36%) of **vandalism** incidents are estimated to have be reported to the police in 2012/13. As the police recorded 56,752 vandalism incidents in 2012/13, it can be estimated that 72% of the crime estimated to be reported to the police by the SCJS, were formally recorded in police statistics.

Figure 4.7 Levels of unrecorded and recorded crime 2012/13



Sources: SCJS, Police recorded crime.

It is also important to consider this relationship over time. Figure 4.7 shows that there has been some variation in the proportion of crimes that were estimated to have been reported by the SCJS and those that were actually recorded by police.

The difference between the level of comparable crime that was estimated to be reported and equivalent recorded crime figures is lowest in 2009/10. In 2009/10, the SCJS estimated that 252,000 (40%) comparable crimes were reported to the police and the police recorded 195,728. From this, it can be estimated that around 78% of the crime estimated to be reported to the police by the SCJS, was captured by police statistics. However, the most recent sweep of the survey estimated that 232,000 (44%) comparable crimes were reported to the police, while the police recorded 144,662 incidents. From this, it can be estimated that 62% of the crime estimated to be reported to the police by the SCJS, was formally recorded in police statistics. Since 2009/10, therefore, this proportion has been in decline, meaning that more crimes that have been estimated to have been reported to police, have not been captured in police recorded crime data.

While this may be indicative of a change in the relationship between recorded crime figures and the SCJS estimates, or a growing gap between the two sources, consistent comparable crime data are only available for a relatively short time scale. Furthermore, the changes in crime at the overall level of comparable crime between the most recent surveys are not statistically significant (Table 4.1) and therefore, at this stage this conclusion cannot confidently be drawn. Further analysis over future years is therefore needed to determine whether the relationship between SCJS estimates and police recorded crime figures is in fact changing.

4.6 Analysis across the SCJS recall period

In light of the challenges in making direct comparisons outlined in Chapter 3, to extend and test these conclusions, further analysis was conducted to consider the effects of comparing the 23 month SCJS respondent recall period against crime recorded by police measured by financial year. For example, the 2008-09 survey year collates respondents' recollection of crimes over the 2007-08 and 2008-09 financial years. The results of this work, while generally consistent with the results outlined above, also highlighted a *lag effect* and that the difference between recorded crime and SCJS reported crime numbers is likely to be less than that outlined in the analysis above.

Conducting analysis with this averaging of relevant recorded crime data across financial years finds that while SCJS crime is estimated to have fallen by 28% between 2008/09 and 2012/13, averaged recorded crime decreased by 26% (compared to 33% in the original analysis above).

In addition, using this adjusted calculation approach during a period of time when overall crime is reducing, the proportion of comparable recorded crimes is estimated to have fluctuated between 71% and 82% of the total SCJS comparable crime (as compared to 62% and 78% respectively in the analysis above). Furthermore, within this group, the proportion of SCJS comparable crimes estimated to have been

reported to the police and not recorded by the police has varied from 7% (2009/10) to 13% (2012/13) of all SCJS comparable crime (as compared to 9% and 17% respectively within the approach to analysis outlined in the preceding section.

5. Conclusions and Ways Forward

Comment [ng4]: Quite similar to the Exec Summary – need to assess whether need both.

This report 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, complimentary measure of crime. Estimates produced by the SCJS are consistently 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. On the other hand, the SCJS is able to capture crimes that are not reported to the police. Of the 815,00 incidents of crime captured by the survey, 39% were reported to the police. This difference emphasises the important need for the two sources of crime statistics to capture a fuller picture of crime in Scotland.

Having two sources, while necessary to present a comprehensive representation of crime in Scotland, can create confusion, especially if they each show a different trend. The SCJS is published biennially, whereas recorded crime data is released annually. Several reviews of crime statistics, as well as reports by the UK Statistics Authority, have pointed to the existence of two sources allowing figures to be picked to fulfil differing agendas, creating a culture of confusion and mistrust around statistics. This report has sought to address this issue by bringing together the SCJS and recorded crime statistics, and explaining the key strengths and weaknesses of each source, as well as the differences between them.

The SCJS and police recorded crime each feature relative strengths and weaknesses. Police recorded crime is able to capture both a wider population and a wider set of offences, but only where the crime is reported and recorded. Furthermore, recorded crime figures can provide data for low level geographies. However, recorded crime figures are sensitive to changes in public reporting and police recording practices. The SCJS has the capacity to analyse victimisation against demographic variables (e.g. age and gender), as well as collecting data on public attitudes and perceptions (such as fear of crime, views on the criminal justice system). As SCJS estimates are survey measures they are subject to a degree of uncertainty.

Such differences between the two sources create challenges when making direct comparisons. Particularly as they each cover slightly 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

(65%) of the 815,000 crimes measured by the SCJS can be compared with police recorded crime statistics.

Using the comparable subset, this report has investigated the trends in the SCJS and police recorded crime comparable category. From 2008/09 until 2012/13, recorded crime figures and SCJS estimates both show downward trends in the extent of crime (-33% and -28% respectively). Initially, from 2008/09 to 2010/11, SCJS crimes fell at a faster rate than recorded crimes, however this changed in the most recent survey year (2012/13) when police recorded crime fell at a faster rate than SCJS crime.

This report also examines the relationship between the SCJS crimes estimated to have been reported to police and those captured in police recorded crime statistics. Figures from the 2012/13 SCJS show that that around 232,000 incidents (44%) of crime in the comparable category was reported to police. From this, it can be estimated that 62% of crime that the SCJS estimates were reported to the police were actually captured in police recorded crime figures in 2012/13. Undertaking this analysis across all sweeps of the SCJS showed that since 2008/09, this proportion has been in decline, indicating that more crimes that have been estimated to have been reported to police, have not been captured in police recorded crime data.

While some of the short term changes highlighted in this report may be indicative of a change in the relationship between recorded crime figures and SCJS estimates, consistent comparable crime data are only available for a relatively short time scale. The changes in crime at the overall level between the most recent surveys are not statistically significant, meaning that apparent changes in the relationship with the most recent survey sweep should be viewed with caution. What this report does highlight is the need to continue an analysis of the comparable crime subset over the coming years to enable us to determine whether the relationship between SCJS estimates and police recorded crime figures is really changing.

6. ANNEX A: Ensuring Quality in Crime Statistics

Comment [ng5]: Need to provide hyperlink to the Quality Assurance Framework and ensure this summary is consistent with it.

National Statistics are produced to high professional standards set out in the [Code of Practice for Official Statistics](#). They undergo regular quality assurance reviews to ensure that they meet customer needs and are produced free from any political interference. This section outlines the external scrutiny that national crime data is subject to in Scotland to ensure the quality of each data source.

6.1 Police Recorded

Crime recording is governed by the Scottish Crime Recording Standard (SCRS) and the Counting Rules¹⁷. These provide a framework for deciding when an incident should be recorded as a crime, what type of crime should be recorded and how many crimes should be counted.

The SCRS was introduced in April, 2004 to respond to issues in police recording practices identified by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary in Scotland (HMICS), Audit Scotland and in the Scottish Crime Survey, including a lack of consistency between Scottish forces, unreliability of data and the potential under-recording of crime¹⁸. The SCRS was updated in 2007 to take account of recommendations made in a HMICS review, and was incorporated into Police Scotland standard operating procedure for crime recording in April, 2013.

The aim of the SCRS is to provide a more victim-orientated approach by removing the need for a victim to provide corroborative evidence of a crime having been committed before it is formally recorded. The SCRS was established to develop greater uniformity in the process, which, in turn, enhances public confidence in the police service.

Compliance with the SCRS lies with the Chief Constable and is discharged on a daily basis by crime registrars. Crime registrars advise police officers on day-to-day crime recording issues, as well as carrying out regular audits of crime records. The crime registrar has the overall authority on whether or not to record a matter as a crime, and which classification should be applied. Crime registrars do not have responsibility for reducing crime levels and are not answerable to a line manager who has responsibility for crime reduction. The independence of the crime registrar is important in ensuring transparency in the process.

Inevitably, however, there will be a degree of subjective interpretation when making crime recording decisions. To support consistency in implementing the SCRS and the Counting Rules, a national forum for crime registrars, the Scottish Crime

¹⁷ Read the full Scottish Crime Recording Standard and Scottish Government Counting Rules [here](#).

¹⁸ HMICS (2005) [Meeting the Standard: A Thematic Inspection of the Scottish Crime Recording Standard](#)

Registrars' Group (SCRG), was established. This group allows crime registrars from across Scotland and Scottish Government representatives to discuss matters arising from the application of the SCRS and the Counting Rules, as well as maintaining and updating the Counting Rules. This approach helps to maintain consistency in the way that the SCRS is applied across Scotland. Until 2013, Scotland's eight police forces each had its own crime registrar. With the creation of a single police service, Police Scotland, the registrars have continued to perform their role, pending a plan to reduce their number and have them operate on a regional rather than legacy force basis.

To ensure that the standards set by the SCRS are being maintained in practice, incident and crime recording is also subject to audit and assurance reviews by HMICS. Regular audits of crime recording are required by the SCRS to verify that incidents are properly recorded and that recorded crimes are counted and classified correctly. These reviews are published and, as well as providing the public and key stakeholders with information about the validity of crime statistics, highlight areas for improvement. The latest review of this kind was carried out between July and August, 2013 and published in December, 2013¹⁹, shortly after the establishment of Police Scotland. This review involved a desk-top analysis of relevant documents (e.g. policies, procedures, audit schedules etc.), qualitative research with a range of individuals involved in the crime recording process, and the examination of a sample of 1,501 records²⁰. The inspection found that:

- Of the 1,501 records examined, 93% complied with the SCRS. This is below the 95% level for overall compliance.
- Compliance rates varied according to crime type, ranging from 99% for domestic abuse to 89% for sexual offences.
- Adherence to the SCRS across Scotland was considered to be generally good and officers and staff displayed a knowledge and commitment to upholding the standard.
- A majority of staff felt that compliance could be improved by a better incident and crime recording system²¹.

Several areas were identified in which Police Scotland could improve its approach to crime recording and maintain the progress that has already been made since the introduction of the SCRS in 2004.

Plans for future audit and assurance reviews of crime recording are discussed in the HMICS annual Scrutiny Plan 2014-15²². The next review is scheduled to take place between October and December, 2014.

¹⁹ Prior to this, a [Crime Audit](#) was conducted in 2011.

²⁰ The number of records sampled was not sufficiently high to be statistically significant, nor was the sample representative of the incidents recorded by each division.

²¹ Police Scotland plan to roll out a national incident recording system and a national crime recording system by 2015.

²² <http://www.hmics.org/publications/hmics-scrutiny-plan-2014-2015>

Recorded crime statistics (and the Scottish Crime and Justice Survey) are also subject to assessment by the UK Statistics Authority (UKSA), to ensure that the statistics meet the professional standards set out in the [Code of Practice for Official Statistics](#). The code of practice covers a range of criteria, one field being the quality of statistics. The UKSA is an independent body operating at arm's length from government, as a non-ministerial department. As such, the UKSA provides independent scrutiny of recorded crime and SCJS statistics through monitoring and assessment.

6.2 Scottish Crime and Justice Survey

The quality of the SCJS is recognised by its designation as 'National Statistics' by the UKSA. Designation can be broadly interpreted to mean that the statistics:

- meet identified user needs;
- are well explained and readily accessible;
- are produced according to sound methods; and
- are managed impartially and objectively in the public interest.

Once statistics have been designated as National Statistics it is a statutory requirement that the Code of Practice shall continue to be observed. A UKSA assessment carried out in 2009 concluded that the statistics produced are consistent with the code of practice for official statistics²³.

The SCJS is commissioned by the Scottish Government and conducted by an independent social research organisation using skilled interviewers to collect data from a sample of respondents. The interviewers have no vested interest in the results of the survey. Therefore, in comparison to recorded crime data which are, for example, susceptible to changes in public reporting practices, SCJS data represents an independent and complementary source of national crime data.

The SCJS uses a random probability sample method, designed to be representative of the population of households in Scotland and adults aged 16 or over living in those households. The Royal Mail's small user Postcode Address File (PAF) is used as the sample frame for the address selection. The PAF is currently by far the most comprehensive and reliable sample frame available in the UK for surveys of this kind. Interviews are conducted across the whole of Scotland, excluding only some of the smallest inhabited islands.

Only one adult is interviewed in each household. As the majority of households contained more than one adult (aged 16 or more), details of all eligible adults are first collected by the interviewer before randomly selected one adult for interview to avoid any bias in selection, and once a selection was made, no substitutions were permitted under any circumstances.

²³ Read the full assessment [here](#).

Fieldwork assignments by area across Scotland were spread out across the 12 month fieldwork period, with a target to conduct equal numbers of interviews across each of the 12 months. This avoided particular concentrations of interviews in a given area within a short period of time, or a concentration of interviews within a particular period of time.

Interviews are conducted face-to-face in the respondents' homes and administered by specially trained professional interviewers using Computer Assisted Personal Interviewing (CAPI). The majority of respondents to the self-completion section completed it using Computer Assisted Self-Interviewing (CASI), entering their answers directly on to the interviewer's tablet PC themselves. This ensured greater confidentiality when answering sensitive questions or those on illicit behaviour.

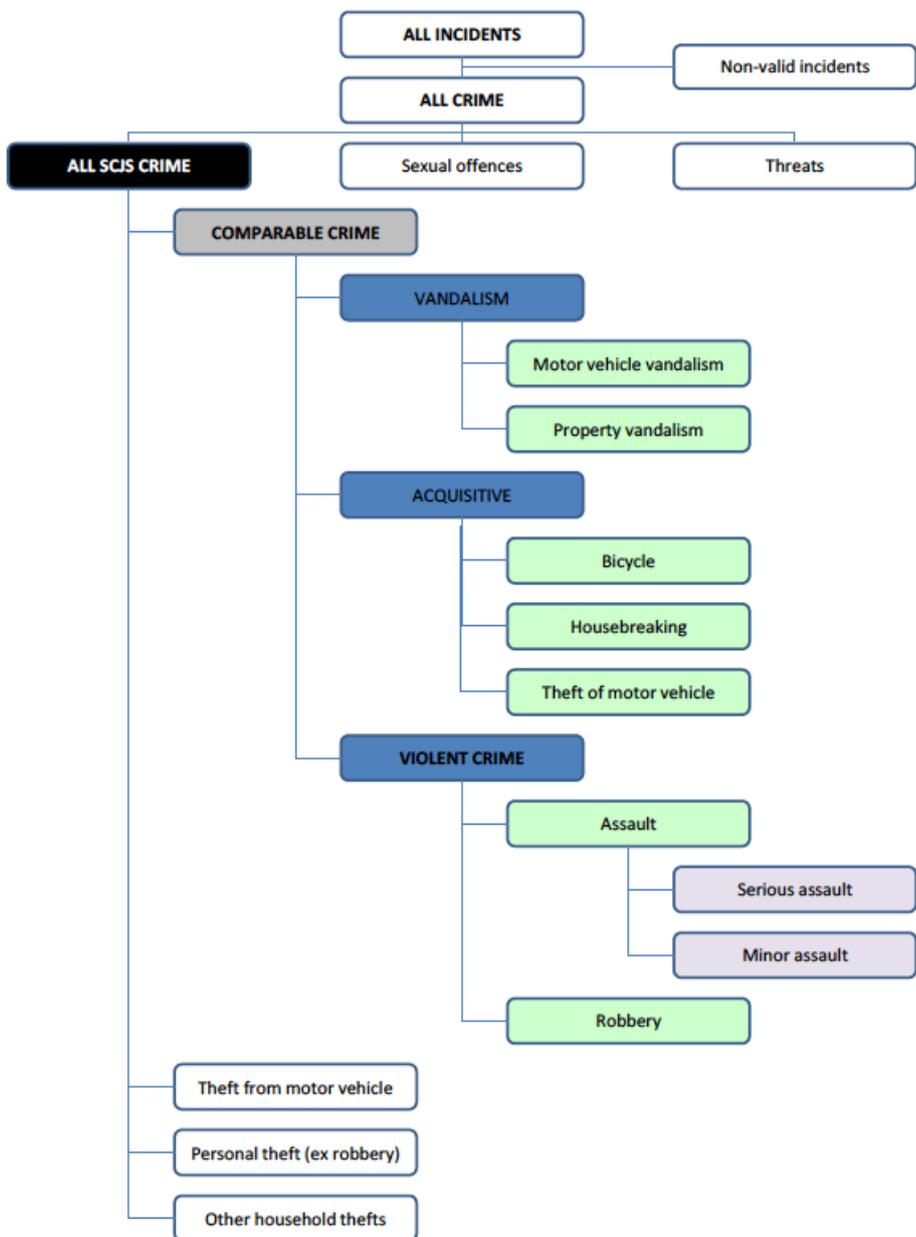
Weighting procedures for survey data are required to correct for unequal probabilities of selection and variations in response rates from different groups. The procedures for the implementation of the weighting methodology were developed by the Scottish Government working with the Methodology Advisory Service at the Office for National Statistics. The weighting procedures for the SCJS use calibration weighting to correct for non-response bias.

The SCJS gathers information from a sample rather than from the whole population and, although the sample is designed carefully to make allowances for this, survey results are always estimates, not precise figures. This means that they are subject to a level of uncertainty. More detail about the uncertainty in the statistics presented here and other information related to the quality of the SCJS data is provided in the SCJS [Technical Report](#).

The SCJS has maintained a relatively high response rate, achieving over 65% across the four sweeps of the survey. In 2012/13, the survey achieved a 67.7% response rate.

To assign crimes identified by the survey correctly (i.e. to closely match the crime code that the police would have assigned were it to have been recorded as a crime), coding is carried out at the end of each month by the social research organisation that conducts the survey and by the Scottish Government, independent of one another, with reference to a shared coding manual which specifies the nature of each type of offence covered by the survey. Any differences are reviewed closely before being finalised. A sample of the coding is also assessed by the Scottish Government supervisor to ensure consistency and robustness in coding practice.

7. ANNEX B: Comparable crime groups



8. ANNEX C: A UK Comparison of Crime Statistics

Crime Statistics in England and Wales

The Office for National Statistics (ONS) publishes quarterly figures on the level and trends in crime in England and Wales. These quarterly bulletins bring together the two main data sources of crime: police recorded crime data and the findings of the Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW)²⁴. The bulletins also draw on a range of supplementary data sources (including the commercial victimisation survey and recorded non-notifiable offences). The rationale given for drawing on multiple data sources is to present a more comprehensive picture of crime²⁵. In addition to the quarterly publications, a series of thematic 'focus' reports, that also bring together recorded crime, CSEW data and supplementary sources of crime data, are released annually, covering a range of crime and justice topics such as Violent Crime and Sexual Offences and Property Crime.

Statistics on crime in England and Wales were not always published together and previously the results of the predecessor of the CSEW, the British Crime Survey (BCS), and recorded crime statistics were released separately.

The [Simmons Review](#) of Crime Statistics²⁶, published in July 2000, suggested that there was a lack of trust in crime statistics and outlined a requirement that the Home Office publish an annual 'picture of crime' that brings together recorded crime data, the BCS and other necessary sources of information. Meeting this requirement meant that the BCS became a continuous survey, with results released on an annual basis (until 2001 the BCS had been carried out periodically). Following this review, crime survey results and recorded crime data was first brought together in a publication entitled '[Crime in England and Wales 2001/02](#)'.

The decision in England and Wales to publish police recorded crime data alongside crime survey data has continued to generate debate. The [Smith Review](#) of crime statistics, published in 2006, highlighted that some commentators have suggested that publishing both sources together creates further confusion, particularly when each source indicates a differing trend. Responding to these concerns, the authors of the review underscored the importance of acknowledging and addressing the relationship between the two data sources, suggesting that this is important in enhancing public understanding, particularly when they show different trends. The review recommended that the Home Office continue to publish recorded crime data and the BCS together.

²⁴ Previously the British Crime Survey (BCS)

²⁵ <http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/guide-method/method-quality/quality/quality-information/crime-and-justice/index.html>

²⁶ Read the full review here.

More recently, the [Casey Review](#), published in 2008, indicates that the public remain distrustful of official statistics on crime in England and Wales. The review states that,

Confusion seems to spring from the use of different statistics and also from the dismissal and undermining of the statistics by so many people, including professionals in the Criminal Justice System. It is entirely understandable, then, that the public feel concerned and confused' (Casey, 2008, pg. 61).

The use of different statistics for different purposes was identified as a key factor in causing confusion and undermining trust in crime statistics. While the Home Office have attempted to publish the statistics together, and explain the differences between them, such detailed explanations are often not used by the media or other communications.

There are important differences between the CSEW and the SCJS that create issues in straightforwardly bringing together the two sources of crime statistics in the same way in Scotland. Primarily, the CSEW is carried out annually, while the SCJS is biennial. Furthermore, the CSEW has a much larger sample size (35,000 households in 2014) than the SCJS (12,000 in 2012/13). Smaller overall sample sizes create more uncertainty around estimates on crime subgroups (e.g. violent crime) in Scotland, particularly in short-term trends between survey sweeps.

Crime Statistics in Northern Ireland

Like Scotland, the two main sources of crime statistics in Northern Ireland are published separately.

[Recorded crime](#) figures are published in a monthly bulletin. In 2014, the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) published a bulletin providing a series of police recorded crime data, by financial year, from 1998/99 to 2013/14, allowing users to monitor long-term crime trends.

The [Northern Ireland Crime Survey \(NICS\)](#) is published by the Department of Justice (DoJ) as an alternative, complementary measure of crime. The survey is representative, collecting the experiences and perceptions of crime of approximately 4,000 adults living in private households throughout Northern Ireland.

The survey was initially carried out on an ad-hoc basis, before becoming biennial in 2001. In January, 2005 fieldwork for the NICS moved to a continuous basis and the sample size was increased from 3,000 to 4,000. These changes were put in place to facilitate the monitoring of annual trends and more regular direct comparison with England and Wales. Increasing the sample size has increased the accuracy of

headline results and generated more robust analyses for various socio-demographic characteristics.

A series of bulletins are published annually, presenting statistics on the Experience of Crime; Perceptions of Crime; Perceptions of Policing, Justice and Organised Crime; Night-Time economy; Domestic Violence; and Drug Misuse.

Furthermore, [Quarterly Updates](#) are published, presenting the most recent statistics from the NICS on the level of public confidence in policing and the criminal justice system in Northern Ireland as well as public perceptions of anti-social behaviour.

Although published separately, high-level comparisons between police recorded crime and the NICS are made in the annual [Experience of Crime: Findings from the 2012/13 Northern Ireland Crime Survey](#).

Crime Statistics in Scotland

Returning to Scotland's crime data, in July 2014, The UKSA published an Assessment of the compliance of Recorded Crime statistics with the Code of Practice for Official Statistics²⁷. The assessment process involved an appraisal of the production of recorded crime statistics, including web searches and meetings with the producers of data at the Scottish Government.

Part of the assessment also involved a consideration of the views of users of recorded crime statistics. The UKSA gathered the views of 31 users of Recorded Crime²⁸. Although potentially not wholly representative of wider views, a key aim of this approach was to gain a broad insight of the extent to which users feel that the statistics meet their needs.

The results of this consultation identified a need among users for more information required to demystify crime data in Scotland, including:

- A clear explanation of how statistics are recorded and the checks in place to ensure the quality of the statistics;
- Clarity in the definitions and classifications of crime data;
- More detailed analysis of the comparisons between police recorded crime and the SCJS;
- Clear information on changes to legislation and counting rules to help users interpret trends over time;
- An improved explanation of the effect of target setting by police managers on reporting behaviours, particularly with regard to consistency in data across legacy police forces;

²⁷ Access the full assessment [here](#).

²⁸ A breakdown of respondents is available in the assessment report.

- Additional context within the commentary, particularly including links to other relevant data sources.

The UKSA assessment found that publishing recorded crime data and the results of the SCJS separately, potentially presenting diverging messages, could lead to confusion and public concern on the trustworthiness of the data. Furthermore, the UKSA suggested that releasing two separate publications increases the risk of the misinterpretation of the data, requiring users to have the ability to distinguish between recorded crime and crime experienced by the population. As a consequence, the UKSA has required that the Scottish Government *'bring the analysis and commentary of the two main sources of crime statistics together into a single published report and present a coherent summary of crime based on both data sources'* (Requirement 11, para 3.21).