

Comparable Crimes Analysis Overview

National statistics on crime in Scotland are derived from two different sources: the Scottish Crime and Justice Survey (SCJS) and police recorded crime data. Comparisons are made between police recorded crime and SCJS data via a comparable subset of crimes. Of the 815,000 crimes measured by the SCJS 2012/13, just under two-thirds (65%) are part of the comparable subset and consequently can be compared with police recorded crimes. Comparisons between SCJS estimates and recorded crime figures are made using three main 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).

The relationship between SCJS and police recorded crime is a key area of interest to the Scottish Government. High-level information on comparability has been included in SCJS reports in recent years and further work is currently progressing to monitor and analyse the trends in the comparable crime category in more detail.

This analysis will examine and compare overall recorded crime data and SCJS estimates, mainly since 2008/09. It will also consider the longer time period, since 1992. There is, however, a higher level of fluctuation in the crime survey data prior to the break in methodology in 2008/09, before which smaller sample sizes and differences in survey methodology meant a higher degree of uncertainty around survey estimates. Since the move to a more consistent methodology and a larger sample size in 2008/09, SCJS estimates are, in general, subject to less uncertainty. As a consequence however, consistent, nationally representative data is only available since 2008/09, providing four sweeps of recent survey data for trend analysis.

This work will also break down the comparable crime category, exploring the relationship between SCJS estimates and recorded crime figures for the three main comparable crime groups: vandalism, acquisitive crime and violent crime. Trends for each group will be examined mainly since 2008/09, but also over the longer term. Work will also be undertaken to assess the relationship between crimes estimated to be reported to police by the SCJS and those recorded by the police. Assessing these series over time is a fundamental way of evaluating the relationship between the two data sources.

Along with the analysis of the comparable subset of crimes, this work will examine key differences between recorded crime and the SCJS that affect the comparability of the sources, including the degree of confidence around SCJS estimates.