

Children's Crime Survey for England and Wales guide

Children's Crime Survey for England and Wales design and implementation, including collection methods, sample design, response rates and coverage. Includes survey changes and quality information.

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1 . Overview

The Children's Crime Survey for England and Wales (CCSEW), operationally known as the Young Person's Safety Survey (YPSS), is an online survey of children aged 10 to 15 years in England and Wales. The survey has replaced the previous face-to-face, interviewer-led approach, providing a more flexible, inclusive and sustainable method of data collection.

The online CCSEW is being introduced in phases. Initial data collection and reporting focus on children's online activity and exposure, their perceptions of safety and their personal well-being. Further modules of questions covering victimisation and bullying are set to be added to the live survey in the next phase of development. Once fully established, the survey will move to a regular quarterly collection cycle, supporting annual publications and interim data table releases.

The sample is designed to be nationally representative of children aged 10 to 15 years resident in households in England and Wales. Linked education and health administrative data are used to support coverage of the target population and reflect the main demographic characteristics such as:

- age
- sex
- ethnicity
- special educational needs (SEN)
- eligibility for free school meals (FSM)

An important implication of the redesign is that results are not directly comparable with historical CCSEW estimates. Changes to the mode, questionnaire structure and sampling approach mean that the online survey should be treated as a new time series. The strengths and limitations of both survey and administrative data have been actively considered and managed through the survey design and methodology.

Quality assurance is embedded throughout the survey process, from questionnaire development and sample selection through to data collection, processing, weighting and analysis.

We use data from this survey to publish our regular [Children's perceptions of crime and online safety in England and Wales bulletin](#).

2 . Latest changes to the survey

We first published this guide on 2 September 2026. There were no important changes to the survey itself.

For more information on these latest changes, as well as any past and upcoming changes, go to [Section 5: Changes and their effects on comparability over time](#).

3 . Survey design and implementation

Data collection method

The Children's Crime Survey for England and Wales (CCSEW) is delivered primarily as an online survey. Children aged 10 to 15 years complete the questionnaire independently through a secure online platform, replacing the previous face-to-face interviewer-led approach.

The online CCSEW is designed as a self-completion survey, allowing respondents to log on to the questionnaire at a time and place of their choosing, using a suitable device such as a computer, tablet or smartphone. This mode is beneficial for maximising privacy and supporting disclosure of potentially sensitive experiences.

Fieldwork is conducted over defined collection periods. Initial publications are based on data collected over a condensed period before moving to a regular quarterly collection cycle as the survey becomes established. For each collection period, a sample of eligible participants is selected and invited to take part using contact details obtained from the sampling frame (see the following Sample design section).

For the results reported in our [Children's perceptions of crime and online safety in England and Wales: year ending February 2026 bulletin](#), a full year's worth of data were collected across two collection periods only, throughout the months of December 2025 and March 2026.

Survey invitations include clear information about the purpose of the survey, content and confidentiality assurances. Accessibility considerations are built into the design, including simple language, adaptive routing and compatibility with assistive technologies where possible. The survey includes appropriate parental or guardian awareness and permission arrangements, together with safeguarding protocols that provide respondents with clear routes to exit the survey and access support services where needed.

Questionnaire content

The questionnaire contains a core set of questions asked of all eligible respondents about their online activity and security, perceptions of safety in their local area and personal well-being.

Additional questions on more sensitive topics are asked only of older children aged 13 to 15 years. These include questions on exposure to harmful content online, and sending and receiving sexual messages. Eligibility for these questions is determined by calculating the respondent's age at the start of the data collection period. This approach ensures that question content is appropriate to respondents' age, while enabling the collection of information on topics that may be more relevant to older children.

Sample design

The Children's Crime Survey for England and Wales (CCSEW) uses a sampling approach designed to be representative of the target population of children and young people aged 10 to 15 years living in households in England and Wales. The sampling frame is derived from linked administrative data sources, ensuring broad coverage of the eligible population. The primary administrative data sources used include:

- English School Census— held by the Department for Education (DfE)
- Alternative Provision Census— held by the DfE
- Personal Demographic Service— held by NHS England

The Welsh School Census and Educated Other Than at School data (both held by the Welsh Government) are used to support quality assurance activities and improve the representativeness of the selected sample.

An implicit stratified sampling approach is used to improve the representativeness and precision of survey estimates. The sampling frame of eligible individuals is ordered by the main demographic and geographic characteristics, including:

- ethnicity
- country
- special educational needs (SEN)
- age
- sex
- eligibility for free school meal (FSM)
- local authority

A systematic random sample is then selected from the ordered frame using a random start point.

The names and addresses of selected children are used to issue invitations to take part in the survey. The Office for National Statistics has been given permission by the relevant data owners to use these details for this research purpose.

Quality and eligibility checks are carried out before the sample is issued, including the removal of ineligible cases and unsuitable addresses. A reserve (mirror) sample is also drawn alongside the main sample and may be used to replace cases removed during these checks, helping to maintain the required sample size. Where more than one sampled child is associated with the same address, only one child is selected at random to receive an invite letter to take part.

The target sample size per year is 15,000 children aged 10 to 15 years. In the 2025 to 2026 collection year, the final issued sample (those invited to take part) comprised 14,950 children in total across the December 2025 and March 2026 collection periods.

Coverage

The target population for the Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW) is children and young people aged 10 to 15 years living in private households in England and Wales. The sampling frame is designed to achieve broad coverage of this population, including children:

- attending state-funded schools
- attending independent schools
- educated at home

Although the sampling frame provides broad coverage of the target population, it does not fully align with it. Children excluded from coverage are those:

- living in communal establishments
- not captured in the underlying administrative data sources

Consequently, some groups within the target population may be underrepresented in the survey estimates.

The use of person-based administrative data improves coverage compared with traditional household address-based sampling approaches by directly identifying eligible children and young people, improving sampling efficiency and reducing the potential for selection bias.

Data cleaning, validation and deduplication processes are used to improve the quality of the sampling frame and minimise potential coverage errors arising from missing, duplicate or ineligible records. Any remaining coverage limitations are considered when interpreting results and, where appropriate, mitigated through weighting adjustments.

Response rates

Response rates for the Children's Crime Survey for England and Wales (CCSEW) are monitored throughout the data collection period and assessed across the main characteristics to identify and mitigate potential non-response bias.

Response rates may be influenced by a range of factors, including:

- survey length and design
- parental permission requirements
- levels of internet access and digital engagement
- variations in response propensity across population groups

Non-response is addressed as far as possible through use of engaging survey materials and clear survey design, optimised for mobile devices to improve accessibility and intended to minimise respondent burden. Up to two reminder letters are sent to parents and children to encourage participation among those who have not logged in to the survey, and respondents receive a voucher on completion of the survey as a token of appreciation for their time.

Following the end of data collection, responses are subject to validation and quality assurance checks. The final response rate is calculated as the proportion of issued sample members who provide a usable in-scope survey response. Responses that do not meet predefined quality or eligibility criteria are excluded from the final responding sample.

For the 2025 to 2026 collection year, of the 14,950 issued children, a total of 6,226 children submitted a survey response, including partial responses. Following data validation and quality assurance checks, 6,031 responses were retained as usable for analysis, representing a final response rate of 40%.

To account for differential response, survey weights are developed (see the following Deriving weights section) to adjust for varying response propensities. These adjustments help ensure that final survey estimates are representative of the target population.

Processing survey responses

Validation

Following data collection, survey responses are assessed against predefined usability criteria to determine whether they are suitable for inclusion in the final dataset. Responses are considered usable where appropriate parental permission has been met and sufficient information has been provided by the child for analysis. Responses that do not meet these criteria are classified as unusable and excluded from the final dataset.

Deriving variables

Some survey variables are derived from one or more questionnaire responses to support analysis and reporting. The rules used to derive these variables are documented to ensure consistency and reproducibility.

Deriving weights

Survey weights are produced to adjust for differential response patterns and improve the representativeness of survey estimates. The weighting process includes non-response adjustments and calibration to known child population totals to ensure final estimates more accurately reflect the target population.

4 . Quality of the survey

Statistical designation

The online Children's Crime Survey for England and Wales statistics (CCSEW) are published as [official statistics in development](#) and will be tested with users to ensure they continue to meet user needs, in line with the standards of trustworthiness, quality, and value set out in the [Code of Practice for Statistics](#).

How we quality assure the survey

Survey design

Quality assurance is embedded at the design stage through an iterative respondent-centred approach that aims to maximise data quality while minimising respondent burden. The questionnaire is developed using best practice in survey methodology, including cognitive testing with children and young people to ensure questions are understood as intended, particularly for sensitive topics. Survey instruments are piloted to test routing, timing and respondent burden, and refinements are made before the main fieldwork.

Sample design

Quality assurance checks are applied during the creation of the sampling frame and sample selection to ensure coverage, eligibility criteria and sample design are implemented as intended. This includes review of source data, clerical checks of linked records, assessment of frame completeness, and independent verification of sample selection procedures.

Data collection

During data collection, quality is monitored through fieldwork management processes. This includes tracking response rates, monitoring completion times, and identifying unusual response patterns that may indicate disengagement or data quality issues. Built-in validation checks and carefully designed routing within the online questionnaire help prevent invalid or inconsistent responses, while ensuring respondents are only asked relevant questions. The respondent experience is carefully designed to encourage accurate and complete reporting.

Data processing and analysis

Following collection, data undergo validation and consistency checks, and derived variables and survey weights are independently reviewed to ensure they are correctly specified and implemented. At the analysis stage, syntax and estimates are quality assured to identify errors, anomalies or unexpected results before publication. Findings are compared with external data sources where appropriate, and limitations are clearly communicated.

Continuous improvement

The survey is subject to ongoing evaluation and continuous improvement, with feedback from users, data collection outcomes, and methodological developments informing future iterations of the design. This ensures that the survey remains methodologically robust and responsive to emerging evidence needs.

Strengths and limitations

Strengths

- Sampling children directly from administrative data provides broader coverage, supporting a larger and more representative sample, more detailed breakdowns and improved statistical precision.
- Using an online mode aligns well with children's communication preferences and behaviours, supporting good response rates and engagement.
- Online self-completion enables children to respond privately and independently, helping to improve reporting of sensitive topics and reduce possible interviewer effects.
- The online design provides flexibility to adapt content over time and respond to emerging evidence needs.

Limitations

- Estimates are subject to sampling error because the survey is based on a sample rather than a full census.
- Administrative data used for sampling may be incomplete or outdated, leading to missing or incorrectly represented children.
- The survey excludes children not living in private households, such as those in institutions, residential care, or boarding settings.
- Online collection and parental permission processes may lead to under-representation and systematic non-response, particularly among digitally excluded, vulnerable or disengaged children, potentially introducing non-response bias into estimates.
- Recall error, telescoping, and lack of interviewer support may reduce accuracy, particularly for complex or sensitive questions.
- Online completion may reduce data quality through satisficing, drop-out, parental presence, and social desirability bias.
- The move to online collection introduces possible mode effects, meaning results are not directly comparable with the historical interviewer-led CCSEW time series.

Data quality dimensions

The Government Data Quality Framework recommends the use of the [Data Management Association \(DAMA UK\) data quality dimensions](#) to assess and improve data quality. These are:

- completeness
- uniqueness
- consistency
- timeliness
- validity
- accuracy

We have integrated these considerations into the guide.

5 . Changes and their effects on comparability over time changes

Latest changes

The redesign introduces a new online data collection mode and revised questionnaire structure, replacing the previous interviewer-led Children's Crime Survey for England and Wales (CCSEW). Initial questions have been launched, forming the first wave of the redesigned survey. Outputs are not directly comparable with the historical CCSEW time series because of changes in mode, design and measurement.

Upcoming changes

An additional module of questions covering victimisation and bullying is planned for future implementation. Comparability within the redesigned survey will be established gradually as more questions are added and the survey stabilises across waves.

6 . Definitions

Ethnicity

Children's Crime Survey for England and Wales (CCSEW) respondents are asked in the survey to identify their ethnic background using a standard [National Statistics harmonised classification](#); this classification is based on the 2011 Census question.

Sex

CCSEW respondents are asked in the survey to indicate their sex using the following categories:

- Male
- Female
- Don't want to answer

Religion

The CCSEW uses categories for religion that are based on the [National Statistics harmonised classification](#):

- No religion
- Christian
- Buddhist
- Hindu
- Jewish
- Muslim
- Sikh
- Any other religion

Disability

The definition of disability used is consistent with the core definition of disability under the [Equality Act 2010](#). A person is considered to have a disability if they have a long-standing illness, disability or impairment that causes difficulty with day-to-day activities.

7 . Related links

[Bullying and online experiences among children in England and Wales: year ending March 2023](#)

Bulletin | Released 7 March 2024

Estimates of the prevalence and nature of bullying and online experiences among children using data from the 10- to 15-year-olds' Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW).

[Children's online behaviour in England and Wales: year ending March 2020](#)

Bulletin | Released 9 February 2021

The prevalence and nature of online activity among children, using data from the 10- to 15-year-olds' Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW).

[Sources of support and perceptions of safety among children in England and Wales: year ending March 2024](#)

Bulletin | Released 20 February 2025

Estimates from the 10- to 15-year-olds Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW) on children's perceptions and experiences of violence and who they trust.

[Crime in England and Wales: year ending March 2025](#)

Bulletin | Released 24 July 2025

Crime against households and people aged 16 years and over, using data from the Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW) and police recorded crime (which includes crimes against businesses, society and children).

8 . Cite this page

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