Crime in England and Wales QMI

Quality and Methodology Information for crime levels and trends in England and Wales, detailing the strengths and limitations of the data, methods used, and data uses and users.

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1 . Output information

- Statistical designation: accredited official statistics or official statistics
- Survey name: Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW)
- Data collection: the CSEW is a face-to-face survey of around 31,000 people aged 16 years or over in England and Wales; police recorded crime is a full count of notifiable crimes reported to and recorded by the police
- Frequency: quarterly
- How compiled: combination of survey data and administrative data
- Geographic coverage: England and Wales

2 . About this Quality and Methodology Information report

This quality and methodology report contains information on the quality characteristics of the data (including the five European Statistical System dimensions of quality) as well as the methods used to create it.

The information in this report will help you to:

- understand the strengths and limitations of the data
- learn about existing uses and users of the data
- understand the methods used to create the data
- help you to decide suitable uses for the data
- reduce the risk of misusing data

3 . Important points

- The Crime in England and Wales statistical bulletin provides detailed information on different types of crime on a quarterly basis using two main sources of crime data: Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW) and police recorded crime.

- The CSEW is a face-to-face victimisation survey asking residents of households about their experiences of a range of crimes in the 12 months before the interview.

- The main aim of the CSEW is to provide estimates for the types of crime and the population it covers; it does not cover crimes against businesses or those not resident in households, and excludes homicide and crimes often termed as "victimless" (for example, possession of drugs).

- CSEW estimates are accredited official statistics and were independently reviewed by the Office for Statistics Regulation in October 2024; they comply with the standards of trustworthiness, quality and value in the Code of Practice for Statistics.

- The response rate for the year ending (YE) March 2026 was 48% (provisional); it is acknowledged that this is much lower than the historical CSEW response rate; our data quality review showed that this has had little impact on the reliability of CSEW crime estimates.

- CSEW estimates continue to provide important information in relation to longer-term trends in crime from YE December 1981 to YE March 2026.

- Police recorded crime figures are supplied to us via the Home Office, from the 43 territorial police forces of England and Wales, plus the British Transport Police.

- The coverage of police recorded crime figures is defined by the Notifiable Offence List; they do not include "non-notifiable" offences, such as anti-social behaviour and parking offences.

- Because of concerns over the quality and consistency of crime recording practice, police recorded crime data were assessed against the Code of Practice for Statistics and found not to meet the required standard for designation as accredited official statistics; however, the accredited official status of statistics about unlawful deaths based on the Homicide Index (PDF, 163KB) was restored in December 2016.

- For offences that are well recorded by the police, police figures provide a useful supplement to CSEW estimates and provide insight into areas that the survey does not cover well, such as some of the more harmful crimes that occur in relatively low volumes.

4 . Quality summary

Overview

Crime in England and Wales has two main data sources: the Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW) and Police recorded crime.

Together they provide a more comprehensive picture than could be obtained from either series alone. However, neither the survey data nor police recorded crime provide complete counts of crime, and there are exclusions from both series. The bulletin also uses a range of supplementary sources to provide a more complete picture of crime, such as fraud statistics from Report Fraud, anti-social behaviour incidents recorded by the police and recorded non-notifiable offences (such as motoring offences, or prosecutions by TV licensing).

Uses and users

We publish statistics on crime levels and trends in England and Wales on a quarterly basis. There is significant interest in crime statistics from a range of users. These include elected national and local representatives (such as Members of Parliament (MPs), police and crime commissioners and local councillors), Home Office and other government agencies, police forces, those delivering support or services to victims of crime, lobby groups, journalists, academic researchers, teachers and students, as well as the general public.

For example, crime statistics produced from survey data are used for a variety of purposes, including the development and monitoring of crime and justice policy, public safety campaigns, raising awareness of particular forms of crime, and academic research. They also help to ensure that information on trends in different crime types in England and Wales are available to help inform the choices and decisions of the general public. Further breakdowns, such as offence type and victim characteristics, offer a greater depth of understanding about crime.

We continue to make improvements to the way we present crime statistics, including how we present the CSEW headline crime measure. These improvements are explained in our Crime statistics presentation and communication review, current and upcoming work: October 2024 article.

Main user groups and uses of crime statistics data

The classes of use are those identified by the UK Statistics Authority in their monitoring brief, The Use Made of Official Statistics. The description provides more detail on how crime statistics fit that class of use.

Class

Informing the general public's choices.

Description

Level of crime in England and Wales:

The measures published provide insight into the overall levels and trends of crime, as well as the number of crimes recorded by the police, in England and Wales. Further breakdowns, such as by offence, region, and characteristics of victims, allow a greater depth of understanding about crime.

Level of crime recorded by the police and other agencies:

The number of crimes recorded by the police is another important measure of crime. This information can help the public in holding elected representatives to account and in making choices about who they will vote for.

Keeping safe:

Survey data can also help to inform the public about lifestyle choices, such as what items are likely to be most vulnerable to theft.

Class

Decision making about policies, programmes and projects.

Description

Policy-making:

Crime statistics are important in informing government policy making - for example, the number and location of police and identifying and managing new and emerging crime problems.

Policy monitoring:

Crime statistics allow the effectiveness of implemented policies relating to crime to be monitored and measured over a period of time, and for the monitoring of other relevant measures, such as public confidence in the police and other agencies and public response to new policies, like the uptake of online crime maps, or use of the nonemergency number.

Class

Resource allocation.

Description

Public sector:

Crime statistics are used to help determine the allocation of government resources to several organisations. For example, police forces might get more or less funding based on the number of crimes reported in respective police force areas and grants are given to charities based on crime statistics, such as victim support groups, and to local governments to address deprivation.

Class

Informing private sector commercial choices.

Description

Information about local areas:

Crime levels at a subnational level can help commercial businesses to make important decisions. Examples include crime prevention companies looking to sell products like burglar alarms, and insurance companies setting premiums.

Class

Informing public marketing campaigns.

Description

Uptake of new police campaigns:

Crime statistics are used to measure the awareness and uptake of police campaigns, such as the introduction of the 101 non-emergency number, use of online crime maps, and participation at Neighbourhood Watch and beat meetings.

Safety and awareness campaigns:

Crime statistics are used to support campaigns that aim to raise awareness of important issues, for example, sexual assault or domestic violence. They can also be targeted towards crimes that affect children, for example, how internet and mobile phone security can be used.

Class

Supporting third sector activity.

Description

Lobbying:

A range of lobby groups use crime statistics to help raise awareness of issues, such as variations in victimisation by socio-demographic characteristics such as age, sex, or ethnicity.

Funding applications:

Organisations can use crime statistics to bid for funding for projects that aim to raise awareness of crime problems or help manage particular forms of crime. Examples of this include Sandwell Women's Aid, which aims to raise awareness and stop domestic violence.

Class

Facilitating academic research.

Description

Crime is a regular topic for academic research. Both the CSEW and police recorded crime are core sets of data on the levels and trends of crime in England and Wales. The annual CSEW dataset is also available as microdata as part of the UK Data Service. As a result, these data are widely used by academics studying topics in these areas.

The data supplied to the UK Data Service includes updated datasets for year ending (YE) March 2002 to YE March 2025. CSEW datasets for YE March 2021 and YE March 2022 are not available because of the suspension of the CSEW over the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. The Telephone-operated Crime Survey for England and Wales (TCSEW) is a telephone victimisation survey, specifically designed to allow for measuring crime to continue during the coronavirus pandemic period while face-to-face interviewing is not possible. A TCSEW dataset was supplied to the UK Data Service for YE March 2021 and YE March 2022.

Crime publications

Our other recent publications that use the CSEW and police recorded crime data are available on our crime and justice webpage.

In addition to the range of outputs using data from the CSEW, there are also publications outlining the quality and methodology of the survey. You can find out more about methodology and information reports for crime statistics in England and Wales on our crime statistics methodology page.

Assessment of user needs and perceptions

Any proposals for the future dissemination of crime statistics are made with input from those that read and use crime statistics outputs. Users are invited to share their views on the proposals with us using the consultation feedback form, and comments will help to shape the final proposals.

Examples of this include the consultation to review the methodology for addressing high-frequency repeat victimisation in 2016 and the consultation on the redesign of the Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW) (PDF, 558KB) in 2022.

Strengths and limitations

Crime Survey for England and Wales

CSEW estimates are accredited official statistics and were independently reviewed by the Office for Statistics Regulation in October 2024. They comply with the standards of trustworthiness, quality and value in the Code of Practice for Statistics and should be labelled "accredited official statistics".

The CSEW is our most reliable indicator for long-term trends, particularly for the more common types of crime experienced by the general population, as it is unaffected by changes in reporting rates or police activity, and it includes unreported crimes.

The CSEW is subject to sampling error as it is based on a sample not a census, and non-sampling error such as issues with respondents recalling past events.

The CSEW does not cover crimes against businesses or those not resident in households (for example, people living in institutions or short-term visitors), and excludes homicide and crimes often termed as "victimless" (for example, possession of drugs).

As the CSEW sample size is relatively small in terms of very low volume crimes, estimates of less frequently-occurring crime types can be subject to substantial variability (or "noise") making it difficult to detect short-term trends.

Police recorded crime

- For crimes that are well-reported and accurately recorded, police recorded crime can provide a good picture of the volume of this crime type.
- Police recorded crime data also provide an insight into the demands being made on the police, and on where policing effort is being spent.
- For many types of crime, police recorded crime statistics do not provide a reliable measure of levels or trends in crime; they only cover crimes that come to the attention of, and are recorded by, the police and can be affected by changes in policing activity and recording practice and by willingness of victims to report.
- Because of concerns over the quality and consistency of crime recording practice, police recorded crime data were assessed against the Code of Practice for Statistics and found not to meet the required standard for designation as accredited official statistics.
- The accredited official status of statistics about unlawful deaths based on the Homicide Index (PDF, 163KB) [note 1] was restored in December 2016.
- The OSR published a review of the quality of police recorded crime statistics in May 2024 and outlined a number of recommendations for improvements.

Recent improvements

Information on recent improvements to the design, coverage and presentation of crime statistics can be found in our Improving crime statistics for England and Wales progress update.

5 . Quality characteristics of the crime data

This section describes the quality characteristics of the data and identifies issues that should be considered when using the statistics.

Relevance

The degree to which the statistical product meets users' needs for both coverage and content.

Crime Survey for England and Wales

The combination of the crime survey data and police recorded crime generally provides good coverage of crime committed against the public, particularly for offences involving physical harm, loss or damage to property. Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW) estimates from year ending (YE) December 1981 to YE March 2026 are available for understanding long-term crime trends.

For the crime types and population it covers, the CSEW provides a better reflection of the true extent of crime experienced by the population resident in households in England and Wales than police recorded statistics. This is because the CSEW includes crimes that are not reported to, or recorded by, the police. The survey is widely seen to operate as an independent check of the police figures. The public perception of the independence of the survey was further strengthened by the transfer of responsibility to us from the Home Office (HO) in April 2012. The CSEW also provides a better indicator of long-term trends than police recorded crime because it is unaffected by changes in counting rules and levels of reporting to the police or police recording practices.

The CSEW has necessary exclusions from its main estimate of crime (for example, homicide, crimes against businesses and other organisations, and drug possession). The survey also excludes sexual offences from its main crime estimate given the sensitivities around collecting this information in a face-to-face interview. However, at the end of the main interview, there is a self-completion element (also via a tablet computer) where people aged 16 or over are asked about their experience of domestic and sexual violence; these results are reported separately. The upper age limit for the self-completion modules was increased from 59 years to 74 years from the start of the survey year in April 2017 and removed completely in October 2021.

Early editions of the CSEW did not cover fraud. However, in October 2015, new questions on fraud and computer misuse were added to the survey and in July 2016 sufficient data had been collected to publish data based on these new questions. These estimates were incorporated into the headline CSEW estimates as official statistics in development, in the Crime in England and Wales, YE September 2016 bulletin, when a full year's interview data were available.

With two full years of estimates on fraud and computer misuse available from the CSEW since September 2017, we were able to release valid year-on-year comparisons for the first time in the Crime in England and Wales, YE September 2017 statistical bulletin. Fraud and computer misuse statistics have now been formally assessed by the OSR against the Code of Practice for Statistics and were awarded accredited official statistics status in March 2018.

The questions were previously asked of half the survey sample to test for detrimental effects on the survey as a whole and help ensure that the historical data time series was protected. From October 2017 onwards, fraud and computer misuse questions have been asked of the full survey sample.

There are acknowledged methodological limitations of the CSEW. As the survey is based on a sample not a census, there will be sampling errors in the estimates (as with any survey sample) and non-response error.

Additionally, errors in the estimates may arise from a range of causes, including:

- when respondents have recalled crimes in the reference period that occurred outside that period ("telescoping")
- crimes that did occur in the reference period may not have been mentioned at all, either because respondents failed to recall a trivial incident or, conversely, because they did not want to disclose an incident, such as a domestic violence (although the self-completion section is used for collecting answers that may be uncomfortable for a respondent to share with an interviewer)
- some respondents may have said they reported a crime to the police when they did not (a "socially desirable" response)
- some incidents reported during the interview could be miscoded ("interviewer or coder error")

Recorded crime figures are an important indicator of police workload. They can be used for local crime pattern analysis and provide a good measure of trends in well-reported and well-recorded crimes (in particular, homicide, which is not covered by the CSEW). There are some categories of crime (such as drug possession offences) where the volume of offences recorded is heavily influenced by police activities and priorities; in such cases, recorded crime figures may indicate police activity in this area rather than levels of criminality.

Unlike crime survey data, recorded crime figures do not include crimes that have not been reported to the police or incidents that the police decide not to record. It was estimated in the YE March 2026 CSEW that around 42% of CSEW comparable crimes were reported by the public to the police, although this proportion varied considerably for individual offence types.

Recorded crime statistics are affected by changes in reporting and recording practices. Police recording practice is governed by Home Office Counting Rules (HOCR) and the National Crime Recording Standard (NCRS). These rules provide a national standard for the recording and classifying of notifiable offences by police forces in England and Wales.

Ongoing consultation on the formulation and development of the policy on crime recording is provided through working groups, comprising members of the Home Office (HO), Office for National Statistics (ONS), police force regional representatives and representatives of the National Police Chiefs' Council (NPCC), His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) and the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS).

In January 2014, the UK Statistics Authority published its assessment on crime statistics in England and Wales. It found that statistics based on police recorded crime, having been assessed against the Code of Practice for Statistics, did not meet the required standard for designation as accredited official statistics. However, following a further assessment in December 2016, the Board of the Statistics Authority, on the advice of the Assessment team, restored the accredited official statistics status of statistics about unlawful deaths based on the Homicide Index. All other recorded crime statistics remain undesignated.

The OSR published a review of the quality of police recorded crime statistics in May 2024 and outlined a number of recommendations for improvements. Information on our plans to improve the quality of police recorded crime statistics can be found in our Action Plan for improving the quality of police recorded crime statistics in England and Wales.

Other sources of crime data

The quarterly statistical bulletin also draws on data from other sources to provide a fuller picture. These include incidents of anti-social behaviour recorded by the police (which fall outside the coverage of notifiable offences), other non-notifiable crimes dealt with by the courts, like littering or parking offences (again outside the coverage of recorded crime or the CSEW), and the results of the Commercial Victimisation Survey (a nationally representative sample of business premises).

Accuracy and reliability

The degree of closeness between an estimate and the true value.

Preliminary analysis indicates the response rate for the YE March 2026 CSEW, based on the issued sample, is 48%. The response rate refers to the percentage of interviews completed out of the total number of individuals who could be contacted in the sample. This is much lower than historical CSEW response rates. Severe disruption to face-to-face fieldwork during the pandemic resulted in a sharp fall in the survey response rates.

We have investigated the effect of lower response rates on survey estimates, as described in our Crime Survey for England and Wales data quality review: June 2024. The survey is weighted to adjust for possible non-response bias to ensure the sample reflects the profile of the general population. Further analysis of the effect of non-response bias on the survey is required to better understand variations in the response profile with a lower response rate.

Implications of CSEW survey design

A sample frame with a level of non-response built in:

The face-to-face CSEW uses the Postal Address File (PAF) as its sample frame and, before the pandemic, achieved an exceptionally high overall response rate for a survey of this nature (for example, 70% in YE March 2019). Nonetheless, even with a high response rate, there will still be a level of non-response bias in the sample. However, findings from census non-response link-studies (CNRLS) in our survey methodology bulletin (PDF, 3.23 MB) have shown the impact of non-response bias on CSEW crime estimates to be small.

Estimates based on a sample will differ from those that would have been achieved had the whole population been surveyed. This average expected difference is estimated as the sampling error, which is used to construct confidence intervals around the sample estimates. These intervals present the range of possible values that the true population would be expected to provide, with a stated degree of confidence.

Confidence intervals on the CSEW are based on standard errors around estimates, which reflect the stratified and semi-clustered design of the original CSEW survey and are calculated using the SPSS Complex Samples Module. This is in addition to the set of survey weights constructed to account for non-response as described previously. Where standard errors are calculated without the complex element, a design effect of 1.2 is applied to both the confidence interval and significance testing to allow for the fact that the survey design is not a simple random sample. More information is available in our Section 6 of our Uncertainty and how we measure it for our surveys methodology.

Statistical significance for change in CSEW estimates for overall crime cannot be calculated in the same way as other CSEW estimates. This is because there is an extra stage of sampling used in the personal crime rate (selecting the adult respondent for interview) compared with the household crime rate (where the respondent represents the whole household). Technically these are estimates from two different, though obviously highly related, surveys, one of adults and another of households. Our methodology experts have provided an approximation method to overcome this problem.

The approach involves producing population-weighted variances associated with two approximated estimates for overall crime. The first approximation is derived by apportioning household crime equally among adults within the household (in other words, converting households into adults), and second, by apportioning personal crimes to all household members (converting adults into households). The variances are calculated in the same way as for the standard household or personal crime rates (that is, considering the complex sample design). An average of the two estimates of the population-weighted variances is then taken. The resulting approximated variance is then used in the calculation of confidence intervals for the estimate of all CSEW crime and in the calculation of the sampling error.

This method incorporates the effect of any covariance between household and personal crime. By taking an average of the two approximations, it also counteracts any possible effect on the estimates of differing response rates (and therefore calibration rates) by household size.

More information can be found in Section 8 of our User guide.

Recorded crime statistics are affected by changes in recording practices. To ensure consistency, police recording practice is governed by HO Counting Rules (HOCR) and the National Crime Recording Standards (NCRS).

These rules provide a national standard for the recording and classifying of notifiable offences by police forces in England and Wales.

There have been two major changes to the recording of crimes. In April 1998, the HOCR for recorded crime were expanded to include certain additional summary offences and counts became more victim-based (the number of victims was counted rather than the number of offences). In April 2002, the NCRS was introduced across England and Wales, and although some forces adopted important elements of the standard earlier than others, compliance with the standard has continued to improve in the years following its formal introduction. The NCRS was devised by the Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO) in collaboration with HO statisticians. It was designed to ensure greater consistency between forces in recording crime and to take a more victim-oriented approach to crime recording.

Both these changes resulted in an increase in the number of crimes recorded. Certain offences, such as the more minor violent crimes, were more affected by these changes than others. All of these factors need to be considered when looking at the trends in recorded crime. For these reasons, statistical bulletins present trends following the introduction of recording changes in police recorded crime, from the YE March 2003.

Police recorded crime statistics, like any administrative data, will be affected by the rules governing the recording of data, what systems are in place and operational decisions in respect of the allocation of resources. More proactive policing in a given area could lead to an increase in crimes recorded without any real change in underlying crime trends.

The UK Statistics Authority (2010) and the National Statistician (2011) have highlighted concerns about the absence of periodic audits of police recorded crime data. A HMICFRS quality review in 2009 into the way police forces record the most serious violence (which at the time was part of a central government target) found some variation in recording. This was partly attributed to the lack of independent monitoring of crime records. In line with a recommendation by the National Statistician, HMICFRS carried out a review of police crime and incident reports in all forces in England and Wales during 2011.

In January 2014, the UK Statistics Authority published its assessment of our crime statistics. The Authority noted "accumulating evidence that suggests the underlying data on crimes recorded by the police may not be reliable". As a result, the Authority removed the accredited official statistics badge from the recorded crime data and set out a series of essential requirements to enable redesignation as accredited official statistics.

Additionally, as part of an inquiry by the Public Administration Select Committee (PASC) in 2014 (PDF, 741KB) into crime statistics, allegations of under-recording of crime by the police have been made. As part of this PASC inquiry the Chief Inspector of Constabulary, Tom Winsor, outlined how HMICFRS would be undertaking an inspection of the integrity of police recorded crime during 2014.

HMICFRS published an inspection report, Crime-recording: making the victim count (PDF, 1.1MB), on 18 November 2014 based on inspections in all 43 territorial police forces.

The report highlighted that at the national level an estimated four in five (81%) offences that were brought to the attention of the police and should have been recorded as crimes, were actually recorded, with compliance for specific offence types as follows:

- burglary - 89%
- robbery - 86%
- criminal damage and arson - 86%
- other offences (excluding fraud) - 83%
- sexual offences - 74%
- violence with or without injury - 67%

Compliance varied by police force and separate crime inspection reports for each of the 43 police forces in England and Wales were published on 27 November 2014.

In November 2015, HMICFRS wrote to all Chief Constables advising that they would be commencing an unannounced programme of rolling inspections of crime recording on an ongoing basis. Reports on these inspections are published on a rolling basis and can be found on the HMICFRS website. Whilst the reports released so far show some improvements have been made, there is still evidence of variation between police forces and need for further improvement in compliance with recording standards.

In June 2023, HMICFRS have published their annual report, State of Policing: The Annual Assessment of Policing in England and Wales 2022. This summarises the progress of police forces to improve their recording practices, based on the ongoing Crime Data Integrity programme.

In May 2024, the OSR published The quality of police recorded crime statistics for England and Wales review. The review considers the quality of police recorded crime (PRC) statistics and the reaccreditation of these statistics as accredited official statistics. The OSR also published theirReview of fraud and computer misuse statistics for England and Walesin April 2025. The review outlined recommendations for improvements.

Police recorded crime

We will continue to publish and provide commentary on police recorded crime data. Responses to a user engagement survey indicate that there remains substantial demand for published data on police recorded crime. There is a summary of findings from the user engagement exercise available: Response to survey of users of police recorded crime statistics (PDF, 159KB).

In addition to the audits described previously, the HO carries out regular internal quality assurance of the recorded crime data. Automated monthly variation checks are carried out with error reports being returned to forces for correction, if appropriate. Prior to the publication of any crime statistics bulletin, a verification exercise is carried out with all forces. The data held on the HO database are returned to individual forces asking for confirmation that the data is in-line with what is held on their own systems. Again, forces resubmit data if required.

There is more information on the collection and collation of police recorded crime in Section 3 of the User guide.

Revisions

The general principle applied to the CSEW will be that when data are found to be in error, both the data and any associated analysis that we have published will be revised in line with our revisions and corrections policy.

The police recorded crime figures are a by-product of a live administrative system that is continually updated with incidents that are logged as crimes and subsequently investigated. Some incidents initially recorded as crime may, on further investigation, be found not to be a crime (described as "transferred or cancelled records"). Some offences may change category, for example, from theft to robbery. The police return provisional figures to the HO on a monthly basis with any revised totals for months that have previously been supplied. The HO Statistics Unit undertake a series of validation checks of the data and query outliers with forces, who may then resubmit data.

Every three months the HO Statistics Unit takes a "snapshot" of the database, covering all crimes recorded by the police. Individual forces are sent their crime counts for the last eight quarters to quality assure. During this process, forces can update historical counts, which are sent back to the HO, who then supply final data to us for inclusion in the quarterly publication.

As a result of this quality assurance, figures for a specific period in the current publication may differ slightly from those figures corresponding to the same period reported in earlier publications, reflecting the revisions that have subsequently been made by the forces. Figures are always correct at the time of publication and any revisions tend to be small. A table of the differences in data published between the current and preceding publications can be found within the quarterly data tables alongside each quarterly publication.

Timeliness and punctuality

(Timeliness refers to the lapse of time between publication and the period to which the data refer. Punctuality refers to the gap between planned and actual publication dates.)

Crime in England and Wales is published on a quarterly basis. Publication date is approximately 14 weeks after the quarter ends.

For more details on related releases, the official statistics release calendar is available online and provides 12 months' advance notice of release dates. In the unlikely event of a change to the pre-announced release schedule, public attention will be drawn to the change and the reasons for the change will be explained fully at the same time, as set out in the Code of Practice for Statistics.

Coherence and comparability

Coherence is the degree to which data derived from different sources or methods, but referring to the same topic, are similar. Comparability is the degree to which data can be compared over time and domain, for example, geographic level.

Between crime survey data and police recorded crime

The Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW) provides a measure of the level of crime committed against a population resident in households in England and Wales, while police recorded crime is a measure of crimes recorded by the police. The CSEW includes crimes that are not reported to or recorded by the police, but is limited to crimes against people resident in households and does not cover all crime types.

The face-to-face Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW) is a better indicator of long-term trends to YE March 2026, for the crime types and population it covers, than police recorded crime. This is because it is unaffected by changes in levels of reporting to the police or police recording practices. The victimisation methodology and the crime types included in the main count of crime have remained comparable since the CSEW began in 1981.

The implementation of both the Home Office Counting Rules (HOCR) and the National Crime Recording Standard (NCRS) mean it is not possible to compare police recorded crime earlier than the year ending March 2003. His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) inspections will provide further information on variation between individual police forces in future. HMICFRS will also publish outcomes from HMICFRC data integrity inspections of police forces.

However, by adjusting each series, comparisons can be made between the two series, which allows a better interpretation of overall crime trends. A comparable subset of crimes has been created for a set of offences that are covered by both measures. Over three-quarters of CSEW offences reported via interviews in recent years fall into categories that can be compared with crimes recorded by the police.

To aid comparability, the offence coding used in the CSEW has been designed to align as closely as possible with the definition of offences in police recorded crime.

There is more information in Section 4 of our User guide. A methodological note Analysis of variation in crime trends (PDF, 175.4KB) explored the issue of a possible divergence between the two series.

Between fraud reported directly to Report Fraud and fraud from industry bodies

From April 2011, Action Fraud started taking responsibility for recording fraud in all police force areas in England and Wales, although it was not until March 2013 that responsibility was transferred from all police forces. In successive quarterly bulletins the proportion of fraud offences recorded by individual forces gradually diminished, and the proportion recorded by Action Fraud grew. The quarterly publication covering data for the YE March 2015 (published in July 2015) was the first bulletin that includes two comparable years of recorded fraud, where all fraud was recorded by Action Fraud. Comparisons across earlier years should be made with caution, as the transition from local police forces to Action Fraud is thought to have affected trends.

The new national cybercrime and fraud reporting system, Report Fraud, was launched on 4 December 2025 by City of London Police (CoLP) to replace Action Fraud. Before 4 December 2025, only incidents reported directly by the public to Action Fraud were classified as crimes, whereas reports from the industry bodies, Cifas and UK Finance, were retained solely as information reports. In addition, Cifas and UK Finance only shared a subset of reports for intelligence purposes, meaning some reports that could amount to crimes were not passed on.

From 4 December 2025, Report Fraud continues to bring together all reports made through its public-facing service with fraud reports from Cifas and UK Finance. Under the new system, Cifas now shares all information reports that could amount to a crime. In addition, Cifas reports are now classified as crimes when they meet the Home Office Counting Rules. UK Finance reports continue to be used as information reports for the purpose of supporting investigations and law enforcement. These improvements are likely to affect statistics in future releases.

Although Report Fraud receives reports of fraud from victims across the UK, data presented in this bulletin cover fraud offences where the victim resides in England or Wales only, based on the victim's postcode. Official statistics in development, giving a police force area breakdown of crimes recorded by Action Fraud were published for the first time in July 2016.

The Home Office and the ONS have agreed that while the CoLP is fully transitioning to using this new system that they can temporarily suspend their supply of recorded cybercrime and fraud data. This is to enable the CoLP to give priority to aligning the legacy Action Fraud data against Report Fraud to ensure consistency, while also improving the experience for victims reporting cybercrime and fraud incidents and providing essential information needed for the police to manage investigations.

Concepts and definitions

(Concepts and definitions describe the legislation governing the output, and a description of the classifications used in the output).

The Crime in England and Wales quarterly bulletin uses a wide range of classifications.

Geographical

Community safety partnerships (CSPs):

In nearly all cases these have the same boundaries as (are coterminous with) local authority areas. Recorded crime figures for headline offences for each CSP are published.

Regions

Government office regions (GORs) were established in 1994, in 1996 they became the primary classification for the presentation of regional statistics. From 1 April 2011, the areas covered are referred to as "regions" for statistical purposes.

Household

Household accommodation type

The CSEW uses the definition of the household's accommodation, based on the harmonised classification, more information can be found in Section 7.2 of the User guide.

Household reference person (HRP)

The HRP is the member of the household in whose name the accommodation is owned or rented, or is otherwise responsible for the accommodation.

Household structure

The classification of households in the CSEW is based on the number and combination of adults and children living within a household.

Household income

Total household income is the combined income of all members of the household.

Tenure

Used by the CSEW and based on the National Statistics harmonised classification.

Personal

Ethnicity

CSEW respondents are asked to make a choice from a card to identify their ethnic background using a standard National Statistics harmonised classification.

Marital status

The CSEW uses a classification based on the National Statistics harmonised classification.

Employment status

The CSEW uses a classification based on the National Statistics harmonised classification, though provides further breakdowns for those in the "economically inactive" category.

Occupation (National Statistics socio-economic classification (NS-SEC)):

An occupationally based classification, but provides coverage of the whole adult population. The NS-SEC aims to differentiate positions within labour markets and production units in terms of their typical "employment relations".

Sexual orientation

The CSEW uses categories for sexual orientation, which are based on the Equality Act 2010.

Gender identity

The CSEW uses categories for gender identity that are based on the gender identity harmonised principle for data collection (interim).

Religion

The CSEW uses categories for religion that are based on the National Statistics harmonised classification.

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.

Section 7 in our User guide contains full details on the classifications used in the quarterly bulletin.

Changes to recorded crime classifications

On occasion, the structure of the classifications used to compile recorded crime may change. For example, in April 2012 the number of crime classifications reduced from 148 to 126. Our User guide has further details (Section 3).

Accessibility and clarity

(Accessibility is the ease with which users are able to access the data, also reflecting the format in which the data are available and the availability of supporting information. Clarity refers to the quality and sufficiency of the release details, illustrations and accompanying advice.)

Our recommended format for accessible content is a combination of HTML web pages for narrative, charts and graphs, with data being provided in usable formats such as CSV and Excel. Our website also offers users the option to download the narrative in PDF format. In some instances, other software may be used, or may be available on request. Available formats for content published on our website, but not produced by us, or referenced on our website but stored elsewhere, may vary. For further information, contact the ONS Centre for Crime and Justice via email at crimestatistics@ons.gov.uk.

For information regarding conditions of access to data:

- terms and conditions (for data on the website) accessibility

In addition to this, quality information relevant to each release is available in the Measuring the data and Strengths and limitations sections of the relevant statistical bulletin.

Why you can trust our data

The Office for National Statistics (ONS) is the UK's national statistical institute and the largest producer of official statistics in the UK. It is the executive office of the UK Statistics Authority and is independent of ministers, reporting through the Authority to the UK Parliament and the devolved legislatures.

ONS statistics are crucial for effective debate and decision-making in government, industry, academia or by private individuals. In line with the Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007 and the supporting Code of Practice for Statistics, the statistics we produce are designed to meet the wider public good as well as the needs of government.

The Code of Practice for Statistics requires us to continuously improve our engagement with customers on statistical quality by ensuring customers understand the quality of our statistics and by establishing how far the quality meets their needs. Additional government security requirements and the continued concern about data assurance requires us to ensure our confidentiality commitments are met and that the security of our statistics is maintained. Establishing a climate of continuous quality improvement will also reduce cost and enhance value.

The Crime in England and Wales quarterly releases are produced in partnership with the Home Office (HO) who collate and quality assure the police recorded crime data presented in the bulletins. HO colleagues also quality assure the overall content of the bulletin.

Statistics based on police recorded crime data have been assessed against the Code of Practice for Statistics and found not to meet the required standard for designation as accredited official statistics. The full assessment report can be found on the Authority website. However, the accredited official status of statistics about unlawful deaths based on the Homicide Index (PDF, 163KB) was restored in December 2016.

6 . Methods used to produce the crime data

Roles and responsibilities

We work with the Home Office (HO) to produce crime statistics.

We are responsible for the contract management and processing of the Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW), as well as the compilation of results from the police recorded crime statistics. The HO Statistics Unit has responsibility for the collection and validation of the police recorded data from forces and supply the data to us for compilation and publication as official statistics.

At the time of supplying the police recorded crime data, the HO provides a document (using an agreed template) detailing all checks and quality assurance procedures that have been carried out as part of quarterly data delivery to us. The HO ensures that any corrections to the police recorded crime data made after delivery of the information are communicated as soon as possible, regardless of how minor the correction.

Once a draft bulletin has been compiled, we invite a small number of HO analyst colleagues, with expertise in the data, to quality assure the draft. This is to make sure that we have not made any mistakes in compiling the data or errors of interpretation. HO comments are considered by our production team, but final editorial responsibility lies with the Office for National Statistics (ONS). Our responsible statistician will sign off the final draft before publication.

How we collect, process and analyse the data

The CSEW is a face-to-face survey in which people resident in households in England and Wales are asked about their experiences of crime in the 12 months prior to the interview.

The face-to-face CSEW was first conducted in 1982 (covering crime in 1981) and ran at mostly two-year intervals until 2001, when it became a continuous survey. Although there have been changes to the survey over time, the wording of the questions used to derive headline estimates have remained unchanged. The core sample is designed to be representative of the population of households in England and Wales and people living in those households. The sample of the population is drawn from the small users' Postcode Address File (PAF), which is widely accepted as the best general population sampling frame in England and Wales.

The target sample size for the 2025 to 2026 CSEW was 31,000 interviews per year. The sample is designed to yield a minimum of 585 interviews in each police force area (PFA).

Overall, 31,532 interviews in total were achieved for the 2024 to 2025 CSEW.

The sample design was revised between 2022 and 2023 to enable more flexibility in the target interviews achieved. The previous sample design, introduced in YE March 2013, is outlined in our Survey methodology bulletin, number 71: September 2012.

Details of experiences of crime are recorded in a series of victim modules. The first three victim modules include detailed questions relating to each incident; the last three victim modules are shorter modules, designed to be much quicker to complete to avoid respondent fatigue during the interview.

Most incidents reported are one-off, single occurrences, but in a minority of cases respondents may have been victimised a number of times. In these cases, respondents are asked whether they consider these incidents to be a "series", that is, "the same thing, done under the same circumstances and probably by the same people".

Where incidents are determined to be in a series, the number of incidents is recorded, but with only one victim module being completed, based on the most recent incident.

Since the face-to-face CSEW began in 1981 only the first five incidents of a series were included within estimates. This was to make sure that estimates were not affected by a small number of respondents who report an extremely high number of incidents, which are highly variable between survey years. The inclusion of such victims could undermine the ability to measure trends consistently. However, where victimisation is prone to be in a series rather than an isolated incident, such as with domestic violence, this method did not adequately manage the very real occurrence of repeat victimisation.

In 2015, following criticism of this methodology, we commissioned an independent review of the methods for addressing high-frequency repeat victimisation, launched a public consultation and published our findings. As a result of this work, it was decided that we would drop the cap of five and move to the 98th percentile as the agreed cut-off point for repeat victimisation. This methodology was implemented from December 2018.

The 98th percentile values are calculated for each crime type using three-year rolling datasets. For most crime types, the 98th percentile value is lower than five, indicating a low level of repeat victimisation for these crimes. Where this is the case, we have not lowered the maximum number of incidents counted within a series below five (and thus, included numbers of incidents above the 98th percentile). The estimates for criminal damage and violence offences are the only categories to be noticeably affected by implementing the 98th percentile methodology.

The entire CSEW data time series going back to 1981 was revised under the new methodology and first published alongside our Crime in England and Wales: Year ending September 2018 publication in January 2019. As such, data published within that release and onwards are not comparable with data contained in previous bulletins.

Further information on the methodology for repeat victimisation can be found in Improving victimisation estimates derived from the Crime Survey for England and Wales.

Based on information collected and processed from the adult and child victim modules, specially trained coders determine whether what has been reported constitutes a crime and if so, what offence code should be assigned to the crime. The full list of CSEW offence codes is shown in Appendix 2 of the User guide to crime statistics for England and Wales. CSEW crime statistics are produced from these data and presented as incidence or prevalence rates, based on weighted counts of incidents or victims.

To make sure the CSEW sample is representative, two types of weighting are used. First, the raw data are weighted to compensate for unequal probabilities of selection. This includes the individuals' chance of participation being inversely proportional to the number of adults living in the household and the over-sampling of smaller police force areas and the selection of multi-household addresses. Second, calibration weighting to known population totals is used to adjust for differential non-response. All CSEW percentages and rates presented in figures and tables are based on weighted data.

There is more information on CSEW methodology in our User guide to crime statistics for England and Wales and Volume 1 of the CSEW technical report for 2023 to 2024 (PDF, 2.4 MB).

Police recorded crime

Police recorded crime data are supplied to us by the Home Office (HO), who are responsible for the collation of recorded crime data supplied by the 43 territorial police forces of England and Wales, plus the British Transport Police. These data, which are supplied to the HO on a monthly basis, are then aggregated and supplied to us for final preparation and publication.

How we quality assure the data

Several methods are used to ensure the quality of the data collection operation by both Verian, the survey contractor, and the ONS.

Verian, the survey contractor, has strong quality management systems in place, which are formally accredited, and are endorsed and supported at a corporate level. This is supplemented by specific working practices and protocols covering all aspects of social research practice - from scripting through to interviewing, coding of offences and data checking. More information can be found in the annual technical reports.

The ONS also has quality management systems in place to further quality assure the data when they come to us for final preparation and publication. Any errors identified through these checks are returned to Verian for validation or correction. Checks are also carried out within the team throughout the data production process before final publication.

Police recorded crime

Prior to submitting data to us, the HO Police Data Collection Section (PDCS) and HO Statistics Unit carry out internal quality assurance of the recorded crime data. Any anomalies or errors identified through these checks result in a report being returned to the relevant force for validation or correction. Prior to publication of any crime statistics, verification checks are also carried out, asking individual forces for confirmation that the data accords with that held on their own systems. For more information, see section 3 of the User guide.

How we disseminate the data

All crime statistics and analysis produced by the ONS from both the CSEW and other sources are published on the ONS website under the terms of the Open Government Licence. These are based on aggregate data only and are available to the public free of charge.

Publication dates are planned in advance and pre-announced on the statistics release calendar on both the GOV.UK and ONS websites at least six to eight weeks before the agreed date.

How we review the data

Every year we undertake a review of the CSEW questionnaire. Among other things it ensures that the questions remain relevant and allows us to remove questions no longer needed and add questions that address current issues. Relevant stakeholders are contacted for review during the process and decisions about questions are made in consultation with stakeholders. Verian undertake cognitive testing on new questions to ensure the questions are answered in the way intended. Final decisions about changes to the questions are made by the ONS.

Police recorded crime

Police recorded crime data are subject to changes in police recording practices. The Home Office inform us each quarter about changes to the recording of crimes as defined in under the Home Office Counting Rules for Recorded Crime documentation.

7 . Other information

The Crime and Justice homepage has links to our full range of publications and data relating to crime statistics.

International standards

There are currently no recognised international standards for crime recording and international comparisons are limited because of the differing legal systems, which underpin crime statistics and processes for collecting and recording crime.

A number of countries run their own national victimisation surveys, and all broadly follow a similar process to the Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW). While these surveys have a similar objective, they are not conducted using a standard methodology — sampling, reference periods and questions vary widely. Therefore, it is extremely difficult to make valid comparisons between the surveys.

The system for recording crime in England and Wales by the police is widely recognised by international standards to be one of the best in the world. Few other jurisdictions have attempted to develop such a standardised approach to crime recording and some of those that have based their approach on the England and Wales model (for example, Australia and Northern Ireland). Therefore, it is difficult to make international comparisons of levels of recorded crime because of the lack of consistency in definitions, legal systems and police or criminal justice recording practices.

8 . Cite this methodology

Office for National Statistics (ONS), updated 23 July 2026, ONS website, quality and methodology information report, Crime in England and Wales QMI