

# Improving Crime Statistics for England and Wales – progress update July 2019

Latest update on the progress being made to improve crime statistics for England and Wales.

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Release date:

18 July 2019

Next release:

To be announced

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# 1 . Introduction

The type and nature of crime is constantly evolving. One of our challenges is making sure we keep up to date with latest trends, and provide the best overview of crime from all available sources.

In the past we have implemented both user feedback and Office for National Statistics (ONS)-led improvements including:

- reweighting data to the 2011 Census estimates
- improving the crime survey to include fraud and computer misuse
- adding survey questions on abuse experienced as a child
- extending the age range for the self-completion part of the survey

In the last year we have:

- implemented an [improved methodology for repeat victimisation](#)
- introduced [new questions](#) about online behaviour to the 10- to 15-year-olds survey - we will be publishing the findings in 2020 to 2021
- published an overview of [sexual offending](#) – this was in collaboration with the Home Office, Ministry of Justice and Crown Prosecution Service
- tested [questions on controlling or coercive behaviour](#)

This article outlines some of our priorities for the next year as the ONS Centre for Crime and Justice. If you have any feedback, please email [crimestatistics@ons.gov.uk](mailto:crimestatistics@ons.gov.uk).

## 2 . Repeat victimisation research

In the crime survey, repeat victimisation is defined as the same thing, done under the same circumstances, probably by the same people, against the same victim. Previously we limited the number of repeat incidents included in survey estimates to five for any individual victim. In January, we removed this cap and replaced it with a higher limit (the 98th percentile) in the official estimates. The uncapped estimates are also published alongside confidence intervals to help interpretation.

This new methodology has not changed the long-term picture of total crime, or the number of victims of crime. For most crime types, the estimated number of incidents is unaffected. The increase is primarily seen in violent offences as repeat incidents are more common. Changing how we count repeat incidents does not change the number of victims of violent crime. As we have revised the entire series, users should not look at releases published before January 2019 for data on the number of incidents.

This change was made in response to feedback from users. We have carefully balanced including more of the crimes that respondents tell us about, with ensuring a time series which can identify changing patterns. Identifying changing trends is important for assessing any change in the longer-term trend of declining levels of violent crime. Our new methodology is the best available way of doing this while presenting the best overview of the total number of incidents.

We plan to further explore the extent of repeat victimisation. Our initial focus will be to investigate the proportion of crime experienced by repeat victims, and how this varies over time and by crime type.

## 3 . Crime against children

This year we are working towards publishing our first child abuse compendium. This is currently scheduled for early next year. The publication will draw together different data sources on child abuse, including findings from the crime survey module on abuse adults experienced as children. Alongside the compendium we will publish findings from the first stage of feasibility research into a child abuse prevalence survey.

### Child abuse compendium

There is no single source reporting the scale and nature of child abuse, and the official statistics in England and Wales are limited in their coverage of child abuse. To respond to this, we are working with other government departments and agencies to bring together different data sources. For the first release, we will be producing articles covering different types of child abuse. Child sexual abuse will have the largest focus as it is the type of child abuse with the most available data. Information available for other types of child abuse will also be provided.

### Abuse experienced as a child

We first included a self-completion module of questions on adult respondents' experience of abuse as a child for the crime survey year ending March 2016. The main results from these questions were [published in August 2016](#), with further analysis looking at the impact of child abuse on later life, [published in September 2017](#). The [questions](#) asked in this module were changed in consultation with stakeholders and used in the survey last year. We will be publishing these findings in the compendium.

### Feasibility research

It has been recommended that a national survey of child abuse should be commissioned. This would help inform the policy debate on this issue, with the goals of improving support given to victims, and reducing the prevalence of this type of crime. We are carrying out research to decide if and how such a survey could work. We will be publishing findings from the first stage of this research alongside the compendium. This will include findings from desk research, stakeholder engagement and qualitative research, exploring some of the challenges of setting up such a survey. This research will inform the decision on whether the feasibility study should continue.

## 4 . Improving publications and outputs

We continue to review all our publications and outputs to look at how we can make improvements. Our aim is to provide improved insights into the nature of crime by focusing on individual crime types. To do this, we need to carefully balance the resource required across all outputs.

### Quarterly bulletin

We are investigating a new approach to publishing the quarterly crime bulletin. We will continue to have an in-depth annual release in July, but are looking to introduce a new style shorter bulletin for the other quarters. This would still include "main points" to summarise the narrative and commentary of the changes seen in the last year. We plan to publish a prototype in the autumn and seek feedback to support further development. Changing our approach will allow us to provide more in-depth analysis of important and emerging topics.

If you would like to give feedback on our bulletin, to support this development work, please complete our [survey](#).

## Nature of crime tables

We are considering making changes to future releases of the “nature of crime” tables. These tables are currently based on Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW) interviews carried out over the course of one year. We are exploring using a three-year survey period to produce these tables in the future. This would improve the reliability of estimates as they would capture information from a greater number of crime incidents.

Nature of crime data based on a single year of interviews often show little change from year-to-year. The real value of these data tables is the insight they provide into changes over the medium- and long-term. As with any sample survey, estimates can be difficult to interpret as short-term changes may occur because of variability in the sample.

If we make this change, we will also need to review the frequency with which we release these tables. If we use a three-year dataset, we propose that these would be published every three years to avoid presenting overlapping time periods. If you have any feedback on this, please email [crimestatistics@ons.gov.uk](mailto:crimestatistics@ons.gov.uk).

## Lower geography estimates

We are aware of demand for crime survey estimates for Wales. However, we have an insufficient sample in a single year of the crime survey to produce robust estimates at geography below England and Wales level.

We are investigating how we might be able to meet the need for lower geography estimates. As a test of feasibility, we are working on a separate publication on crime in Wales. This will include estimates based on the CSEW, combining three years of the survey together, as well as figures on crimes recorded by the police.

## Crime severity score

We will be seeking feedback on how the Crime Severity Score (CSS) is being used, to decide if we should continue to include this in our quarterly crime statistics. If there is a demand for these data, we plan to update the weights used in deriving the CSS based on the latest sentencing data. If you have any feedback on the CSS and how it is being used, please contact us at [crimestatistics@ons.gov.uk](mailto:crimestatistics@ons.gov.uk).

## Fraud and computer misuse

Since CSEW fraud and computer misuse estimates have been badged as National Statistics, we have moved data tables that previously published separately (as Experimental Statistics) to sit with other related CSEW estimates. Most of these tables will continue to be published on an annual basis, forming part of the [Annual trend and demographic tables](#). We have also included additional tables on worry about becoming a victim of fraud in the [Annual supplementary tables](#).

We are planning to produce a new set of tables on the nature of fraud and computer misuse offences, like those already produced for other types of property crime. This will include some tables that were previously published elsewhere, such as level of financial loss, and a range of new tables covering the nature and circumstances of fraud.

## Domestic abuse publication

Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary made a recommendation in their report [Increasingly everyone's business: A progress report on the police response to domestic abuse \(PDF, 1.5MB\)](#) regarding the availability of data to enable more thorough analysis of how domestic abuse is dealt with in local areas.

In response, we published the domestic abuse compendium in collaboration with a range of other government departments and agencies. To inform improvements for this year's release, we are reviewing the content, how it's presented and how it's used.

## Modern slavery

The UK is currently unable to provide data to measure [indicator 16.2.2](#) of the UN's Sustainable Development Goals. We are working closely with the Home Office and other stakeholders to investigate potential ways to fill this gap and provide a measure for modern slavery and human trafficking.

## 5 . Survey development

Each year we review the content of the Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW) to consider any updates that should be applied. We carefully balance user requirements and new information needs against respondent burden, which limits the length of the survey.

We are investigating how to transform the crime survey to make more space for new questions and topics. This could be by taking a biennial approach to many of the questions. We are developing a plan which would include asking users about the usefulness of the current set of questions, and their needs for new information. We plan to engage with users later in 2019.

## Controlling or coercive behaviour

Our [research](#) to test survey questions on controlling or coercive behaviour highlighted some unexpected results. Given these findings, we can't be confident that the questions were accurately measuring victims of the offence as outlined in the statutory guidance.

Changes to the offence indicated by the draft Domestic Abuse Bill, and discussions with stakeholders will inform the next stage of question development. If you have any comments on the report, please email us at [crimestatistics@ons.gov.uk](mailto:crimestatistics@ons.gov.uk).