

Crime in England and Wales: Quarterly Update to December 2003

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Main points

- Overall levels of crime have remained stable.
- The risk of being a victim of crime, at 27 per cent, is approximately the same as it was in 1981.
- The British Crime Survey (BCS) showed no significant change in any of the main crime types in the 12 months to December 2003 compared with the previous 12 months.
- Police statistics showed a 13 per cent increase in violence against the person in October to December 2003 compared with the same period in the previous year. This will partly be due to the continuing effects of the introduction of the National Crime Recording Standard.
- Approximately half of all violent crimes recorded by BCS and violence against the person recorded by the police did not involve injury to the victim.
- The number of burglaries and vehicle thefts recorded by the police fell by 11 per cent and ten per cent respectively.
- According to BCS interviews, levels of worry about the main crime types have fallen compared with the previous year, as has the overall level of perceived antisocial behaviour.
- Levels of confidence in the criminal justice system (CJS) generally remained stable, with small improvements in several areas.

Levels of crime

Overall levels of crime have remained stable.

BCS interviews during the 12 months ending December 2003 found a one per cent fall in the number of crimes against adults living in private households compared with the preceding 12 months of interviews.

There was no change in the overall level of crime recorded by the police in October to December 2003 compared with the same period in the previous year.

The risk of being a victim of crime, at 27 per cent, is approximately the same as it was in 1981.

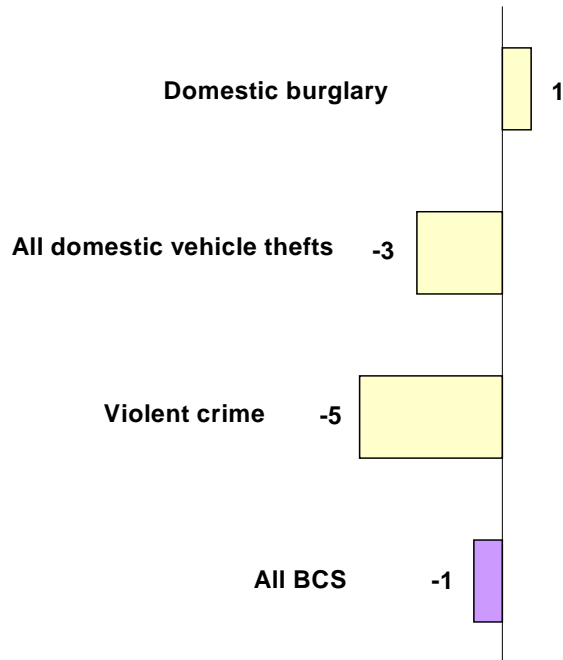
Table 1 Number of crimes and risk of being a victim based on British Crime Survey interviews in the 12 months to December 2003 compared with the previous 12 months

	Interviews in Jan to Dec 2002	Interviews in Jan to Dec 2003	% change	BCS Statistically significant change? ⁽¹⁾
Number of crimes (000s)				
Domestic burglary	940	949	1	
All vehicle thefts	2,334	2,263	-3	
All household crime	7,442	7,483	1	
BCS violence	2,845	2,715	-5	
<i>With injury</i>	1,487	1,399	-6	
<i>With no injury</i>	1,358	1,316	-3	
All personal crime	4,754	4,596	-3	
All BCS crime	12,196	12,079	-1	NA
Percentage risk of being a victim once or more				
Domestic burglary	3.3	3.4		
All vehicle thefts ⁽²⁾	10.8	10.3		*
All household crime	20.8	20.9		
BCS violence	4.1	4.1		
<i>With injury</i>	2.3	2.3		
<i>With no injury</i>	2.2	2.1		
All personal crime	7.5	7.4		
All BCS crime	26.8	26.7		

1. Statistical significance of changes is indicated by a single asterisk for significance at 10% level, or a double at the 5% level (two tail tests). Statistical significance cannot be calculated for the change in all BCS crime. See Notes for an explanation of statistical significance.

2. Results for 'all vehicle thefts' are based only on households owning, or with regular use of, a vehicle.

Figure 1 Percentage change in the main crime types according to BCS interviews in the 12 months to December 2003 compared with a year earlier, England and Wales



According to the BCS, there were five per cent fewer violent crimes in the 12 months to December 2003 compared with the previous year. Violent crimes involving an injury fell by six per cent. These falls were not statistically significant.

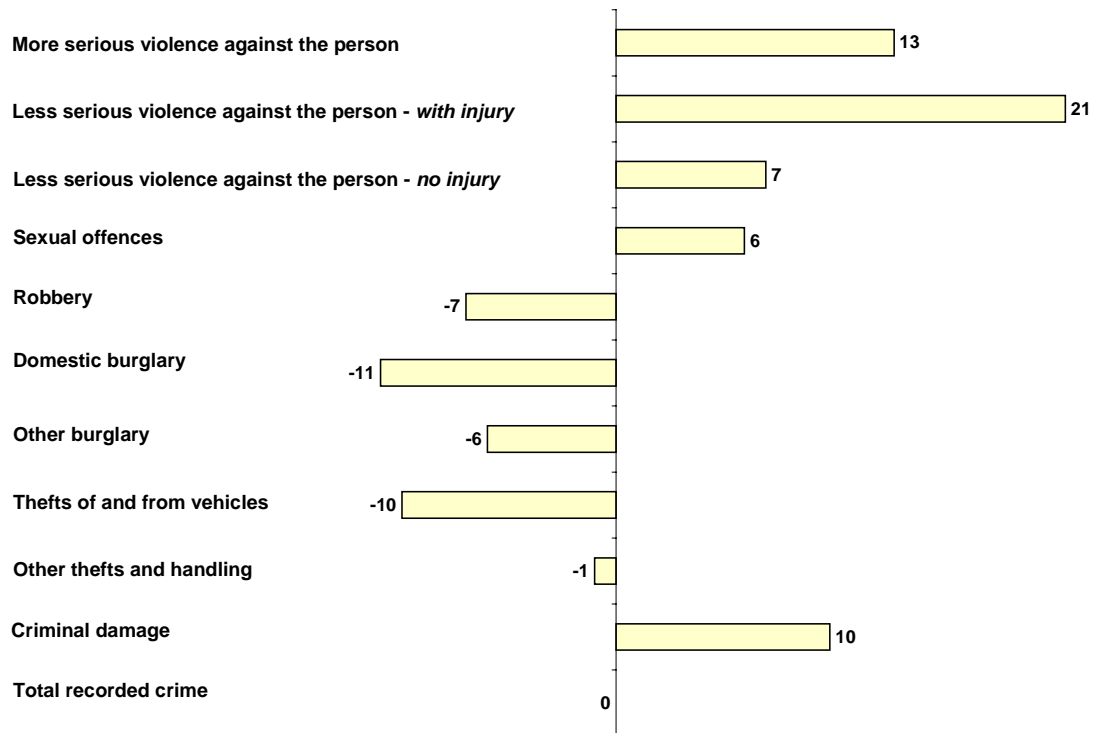
The level of violence against the person recorded by the police rose by 13 per cent in October to December 2003 compared with the same period in the previous year. Within this category, more serious violence (which includes homicide, threats or conspiracy to murder and serious wounding) rose by 13 per cent, less serious violence with injury (which comprises 'other wounding') rose by 21 per cent and less serious violence with no injury (which includes common assault, harassment and possession of weapons) rose by seven per cent.

In this quarterly update, for the first time, violent crime is grouped according to whether or not the victim sustained an injury. Approximately half of all violent offences did not involve an injury to the victim (48 per cent according to the BCS and 50 per cent¹ according to police statistics on violence against the person).

To some extent the rise in recorded violent crime may be due to the continuing effect of the National Crime Recording Standard (NCRS). The NCRS has had a particularly large impact on violent crime, as many offences are relatively minor and particularly susceptible to increased recording. Continued refinements to the new recording standards in some forces, and additional improvements resulting from ongoing crime recording audits may have led to increases in the numbers recorded in this crime category (see Simmons *et al.*, 2003).

¹ The actual percentage may be higher in practice as some offences classified under 'more serious violence against the person', such as threats or conspiracy to murder, may not involve an injury.

Figure 2 Percentage change in recorded crime in October to December 2003 compared with the same quarter a year earlier, England and Wales



BCS figures show that levels of domestic burglary are up one per cent compared with a year earlier, although this increase is not statistically significant. Recorded crime figures show a fall of 11 per cent in domestic burglary in October to December 2003 compared with the same quarter in 2002.

Vehicle thefts have continued to fall, decreasing by ten per cent according to police statistics and by three per cent according to the BCS, although the fall in BCS vehicle theft was not statistically significant.

Recorded crime figures showed a seven per cent decline in robbery and a six per cent increase in sexual offences in October to December 2003 compared with a year earlier.

Related publications

Two related statistical publications are being published at the same time as this Quarterly Update:

- ***Violent crime in England and Wales***
<http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/pdfs04/rdsolr1804.pdf>
- ***Crime in England and Wales 2002/03, Supplementary Tables: Nature of burglary, vehicle and violent crime***
http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/crimeew0203_tables_bvv.html

Public perceptions

According to BCS interviews, fear of crime has fallen compared with the previous year. The overall level of perceived antisocial behaviour has also fallen.

There were statistically significant falls in levels of worry about violent crime, burglary and car crime in the year ending December 2003 compared with the previous year. The proportion of adults who have a high level of worry about violent crime fell from 21 per cent to 18 per cent.

Table 2 Fear of crime

<i>Percentage very worried</i>	BCS		
	Interviews in Jan to Dec 2002	Interviews in Jan to Dec 2003	Statistically significant change? ⁽¹⁾
High level of worry about ⁽²⁾ :			
Burglary	15	13	**
Car crime	17	16	**
Violent crime	21	18	**

Notes:

1. Statistical significance of changes is indicated by a single asterisk for significance at 10% level, or a double at the 5% level (two tail tests). See Notes for an explanation of statistical significance.

2. See Simmons and Dodd (eds) 2003 for more information on the definitions of the fear of crime indicators.

All of the seven individual antisocial behaviour measures show falls compared with the previous year; in six cases these falls were statistically significant. The proportion of people estimated to perceive a high level of disorder fell from 21 per cent to 18 per cent.

Table 3 Antisocial behaviour indicators

<i>Percentage saying very/fairly big problem in their area</i>	BCS		
	Interviews in Jan to Dec 2002	Interviews in Jan to Dec 2003	Statistically significant change? ⁽¹⁾
High level of perceived disorder ⁽²⁾	21	18	**
People being attacked/harassed because of their race/colour	8	7	**
Noisy neighbours or loud parties	10	9	
People being drunk or rowdy in public places	23	20	**
People using or dealing drugs	32	27	**
Teenagers hanging around on the streets	33	29	**
Rubbish or litter lying around	33	31	**
Vandalism, graffiti and other deliberate damage to property	35	30	**

Notes:

1. Statistical significance of changes is indicated by a single asterisk for significance at the 10% level, or a double at the 5% level (two tail tests). See Notes for an explanation of statistical significance.

2. This measure is derived from responses to five strands: teenagers hanging around on the streets; vandalism, graffiti and other deliberate damage to property; people being attacked/harassed because of their race/colour; people using or dealing drugs; and people being drunk or rowdy in public places.

Levels of confidence in the criminal justice system (CJS) generally remained stable, although there were small improvements in some areas.

The BCS reports on public confidence in six different aspects of the CJS. In the year to December 2003, three-quarters of the public (76 per cent) were confident that the CJS respected the rights of people accused of committing crimes and treated them fairly. One-third thought it was effective in reducing crime (34 per cent) and under a quarter (23 per cent) felt it was effective in dealing with young people accused of crime (Table 4).

There were small statistically significant increases in the public's confidence that the CJS was effective at reducing crime and at dealing with young people accused of crime.

In 57 per cent of the incidents that the police came to know about, victims were very or fairly satisfied with the way the police handled the matter (down from 60 per cent in the year to December 2002).

Table 4 Public confidence in the criminal justice system

<i>Percentage very/fairly confident</i>			BCS
	Interviews in Jan to Dec 2002	Interviews in Jan to Dec 2003	Statistically significant change? ⁽¹⁾
Respects the rights of people accused of committing a crime and treats them fairly	77	76	
Effective in bringing people who commit crimes to justice	40	40	
Deals with cases promptly and efficiently	36	37	
Effective at reducing crime	32	34	**
Meets the needs of victims of crime	31	31	
Dealing with young people accused of crime	21	23	**

1. Statistical significance of changes is indicated by a single asterisk for significance at 10% level, or a double at the 5% level (two tail tests). See Notes for an explanation of statistical significance.

Table A Number of recorded crimes and change compared with the same quarter in the previous year

Offence group	Number of crimes recorded by the police (thousands) ⁽¹⁾						Unadjusted change compared to the same quarter in the previous year - with adjusted figures for the NCRS impact in brackets, where available ^(2, 3)				
	Oct to Dec 2002 ⁴	Jan to Mar 2003 ⁴	Apr to Jun 2003 ⁴	Jul to Sep 2003 ⁴	Oct to Dec 2003	Jan-Mar 2003	Apr-Jun 2003 ⁵	Jul-Sep 2003 ⁵	Oct-Dec 2003 ⁵		
Violence Against the Person (VAP)	207.5	205.0	233.3	249.9	235.0	30%	(4%)	12%	17%	13%	
<i>More serious VAP</i> ⁽⁶⁾	9.5	9.1	10.3	11.8	10.7	16%	*	7%	18%	13%	
<i>Less serious VAP - with injury</i> ⁽⁷⁾	87.3	87.1	107.2	111.9	106.0	70%	*	24%	26%	21%	
<i>Less serious VAP - with no injury</i> ⁽⁸⁾	110.7	108.8	115.8	126.1	118.2	10%	*	3%	9%	7%	
Sexual offences	11.8	11.8	12.7	14.0	12.6	18%	*	5%	8%	6%	
Robbery	25.7	27.2	26.8	25.6	23.9	-17%	(-18%)	-7%	-2%	-7%	
<i>Total violent crime</i>	245.1	244.0	272.8	289.5	271.5	21%	*	10%	14%	11%	
Domestic burglary	111.2	109.3	105.3	104.6	98.4	-7%	(-9%)	-4%	-3%	-11%	
Other burglary	104.0	107.1	115.8	103.5	97.5	-8%	(-8%)	-9%	-8%	-6%	
Thefts of & from vehicles	243.1	239.8	235.8	221.7	218.1	-6%	(-12%)	-6%	-9%	-10%	
Other thefts & handling	336.6	334.6	359.9	359.0	332.2	3%	*	0%	0%	-1%	
Fraud & forgery	78.4	80.6	83.9	80.7	75.6	3%	*	0%	-6%	-4%	
Criminal damage	276.3	288.7	300.6	278.2	304.6	7%	(-3%)	6%	7%	10%	
<i>Total property crime</i>	1,149.6	1,160.1	1,201.4	1,147.6	1,126.5	0%	*	-1%	-2%	-2%	
Drug offences	37.5	35.6	33.7	35.6	36.8	18%	*	2%	2%	-2%	
Other offences	18.3	17.8	18.8	19.4	17.9	7%	*	4%	6%	-2%	
Total recorded crime	1,450.5	1,457.5	1,526.7	1,492.1	1,452.6	4%	(-6%)	1%	1%	0%	

1. Police recorded crime statistics, based on data from all 43 forces in England and Wales.

2. Comparisons are made with the same quarter in the preceding year in order to take into account seasonality. Comparisons with the previous quarter are not shown.

3. Percentage changes up until end of March 2003 have been adjusted in order to provide our best estimates of the real underlying change in recorded crime once the impact of the new National Crime Recording Standard (NCRS) has been taken into account. For certain crime categories [identified with an asterisk] adjusted estimates are unavailable. Some of these estimates may have changed from those previously published due to additional information becoming available. For further information see Simmons *et al.* (2003).

4. The figures given in the table are the latest available. Therefore they may differ slightly from figures published in previous bulletins.

5. The percentage changes shown from April 2003 have not been adjusted for the effects of new recording practices. Improvements in recording practices may have had a continued impact on these figures, particularly on the less serious categories of violent crime and criminal damage. For further information see the above reference.

6. More serious violence against the person includes homicide, threats or conspiracy to murder, serious wounding and other acts endangering life.

7. Less serious violence against the person - with injury comprises less serious wounding.

8. Less serious violence against the person - with no injury includes harassment, possession of weapons, other offences against children, and common assault (where there is no injury).

Notes

Coverage

The latest British Crime Survey (BCS) figures are based on interviews with individuals living in private households conducted between January 2003 and December 2003 (year ending December 2003) and incidents experienced by survey respondents in the 12 months prior to their interview. Averaging over the moving recall period generates estimates that are most closely comparable with police recorded crime figures for the 12 months up to the end of June 2003, about six months behind the recorded crime figures reported here. BCS trends are compared with results from the interviews in the year ending December 2002.

The BCS fieldwork was carried out by BMRB Social Research. The year ending December 2003 BCS has a nationally representative sample of 37,265 adults aged 16 or over living in private households in England and Wales. The response rate was 74 per cent.² Further details are contained in Bolling *et al.* (2002). Further information about the BCS and access to recent publications can be found at <http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds>.

Recorded crime figures relate to crime recorded in England and Wales in the period in question, although a few of these crimes may have been committed in an earlier period. Unlike the BCS, it does not include crimes that have not been reported to the police, and does not include those that the police decide not to record. Police recording practice is governed by Home Office counting rules and the National Crime Recording Standard, copies of which are available at <http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/countrules.html>

BCS and recorded crime figures used in this bulletin should be treated as provisional and may be subject to revision in future Quarterly Updates.

What do we mean by statistical significance?

BCS estimates are based on a sample of the population of approximately 40,000 respondents aged 16 or over each year. Although the BCS is large by the standards of most surveys, each year only a small proportion of the population is interviewed.

The BCS sample may therefore produce estimates that differ from the figures that would have been obtained if the whole population had been interviewed. The size of this difference depends on the sample size, the size of the estimate and the design of the survey.

Because of this difference (known as sampling error) changes in estimates between sweeps of the survey may occur by chance. In other words the difference may be simply due to which adults were randomly selected for interview. We are able to measure whether this is likely to be the case using standard statistical tests; those survey results that are significant, according to these tests, are identified by asterisks in the tables.

² Based on BCS interviews achieved during the year ending March 2003.

Contacts

Copies of this and recorded crime and BCS publications are available from the Information and Publications Group, Research, Development and Statistics Directorate, Communications Development Unit, Room 201, Home Office, 50 Queen Anne's Gate, London SW1H 9AT (Tel. 020 7273 2084).

Or by e-mail: publications.rds@homeoffice.gsi.gov.uk

RDS website <http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds>

Some recent Home Office research and statistical publications on crime

Christophersen, O. and Lal, J. (2004) *Police Service Strength England and Wales, 30th September 2003*. Home Office Online Report 13/04. London: Home Office. <http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/pdfs2/rdsolr1304.pdf>

Cotton, J. (2004) *Police Complaints and Discipline England and Wales, 12 months to March 2003*. Home Office Statistical Bulletin 04/04. London: Home Office. <http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/pdfs2/hosb0404.pdf>

Finney, A. (2004) *Violence in the Night-time Economy: Key Findings from the Research*. Home Office Findings No. 214. London: Home Office. <http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/pdfs04/r214.pdf>

Finney, A. (2004) *Alcohol and sexual violence: Key Findings from the Research*. Home Office Findings No. 215. London: Home Office. <http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/pdfs04/r215.pdf>

Finney, A. (2004) *Alcohol and intimate partner violence: Key Findings from the Research*. Home Office Findings No. 216. London: Home Office. <http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/pdfs04/r216.pdf>

Home Office (2003) *Criminal Statistics: England and Wales, 2002*. Home Office Command Paper. London: TSO. <http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/crimstats02.html>

Newiss, G. and Fairbrother, L. (2004) *Child abduction: understanding police recorded crime statistics*. Home Office Findings No. 225. London: Home Office. <http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/pdfs2/r225.pdf>

Nicholas, S. and Walker, A. (eds.) (2004) *Crime in England and Wales 2002/2003: Supplementary Volume 2: Crime, Disorder and the Criminal Justice System – Public Attitudes and Perceptions*. Home Office Statistical Bulletin 02/04. London: Home Office. <http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/pdfs2/hosb0204.pdf>

Povey, D. (ed.) (2004) *Crime in England and Wales 2002/2003: Supplementary Volume 1: Homicide and Gun Crime*. Home Office Statistical Bulletin 01/04 London: Home Office. <http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/pdfs2/hosb0104.pdf>

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Simmons, J., Legg, C. and Hosking, R. (2003). *National Crime Recording Standard (NCRS): An Analysis of the Impact on Recorded Crime – Part 2: Impact on Individual Police Forces*. Home Office Online Report No. 32/03. London: Home Office. <http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/pdfs2/rdsolr3203intro.pdf>

Upson, A. (2004) *Violence at work: Findings from the 2002/2003 British Crime Survey*. Home Office Online Report No. 04/04. London: Home Office. <http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/pdfs2/rdsolr0404.pdf>

Upson, A. and Wood, M. (2004) *Crime in England and Wales: Quarterly Update to September 2003*. Home Office Statistical Bulletin Issue 03/04. London: Home Office. <http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/pdfs2/hosb0304.pdf>