

Crime in England and Wales: Quarterly Update to June 2005

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20 October 2005 Home Office Statistical Bulletin 18/05

Main points

- The risk of being a victim of crime remains at 24 per cent, the lowest level recorded by the BCS since the survey began in 1981.
- The BCS showed statistically significant falls in domestic burglary and vehicle thefts compared with interviews in the year to June 2004.
- The number of crimes recorded by the police fell by two per cent in April to June 2005 compared with the same period in the previous year. Within this total there was a six per cent increase in violence against the person but increases in recorded violence continue to reflect the improved police recording of crime and more proactive policing of violence problems.
- The number of domestic burglaries and vehicle thefts recorded by the police fell by 11 per cent and 8 per cent respectively.
- In the year to June 2005, there were a provisional 11,160 firearm offences, an increase of five per cent compared with the previous year. This increase is mainly due to offences involving imitation weapons.
- The BCS shows the level of perceived anti-social behaviour has increased slightly compared with the previous year. The level of worry about violent crime has also increased, whereas worry about car crime has remained stable.
- Levels of confidence in aspects of the criminal justice system (CJS) have improved compared with the previous year.

This document presents the most recent figures on crime levels, from two different sources: the British Crime Survey (BCS) and police recorded crime. Both data sets represent the most up-to-date information, but they cover different time periods. The BCS results are from interviews conducted in the period July 2004 to June 2005; police recorded crime refers to the April to June 2005 quarter. See **Coverage** section for further detail.

Levels of crime

BCS interviews during the 12 months ending June 2005 found a five per cent fall in the number of crimes against adults living in private households compared with the preceding 12 months.

There was a two per cent reduction in the overall level of crime recorded by the police in April to June 2005 compared with the same period in the previous year.

The risk of being a victim of crime, at just under 24 per cent, remains the lowest recorded by the BCS since the survey began in 1981.

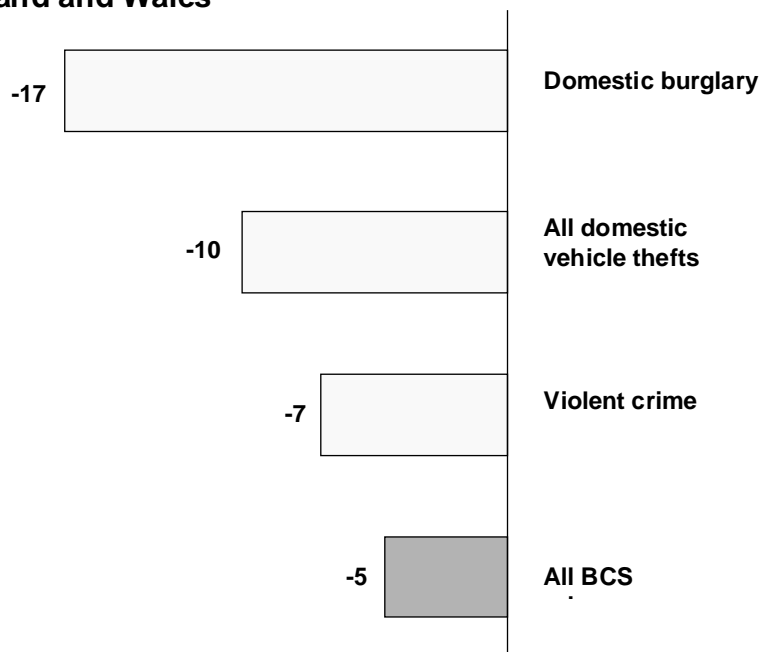
Table 1: Number of crimes and risk of being a victim based on British Crime Survey interviews in the 12 months to June 2005 compared with the previous 12 months

| | Interviews in July 2003 to June 2004 | Interviews in July 2004 to June 2005 | % change | BCS Statistically significant change?(1) |
|---|---|---|----------|---|
| Number of crimes (000s) | | | | |
| Domestic burglary | 896 | 747 | -17 | ** |
| All vehicle thefts | 2,026 | 1,823 | -10 | ** |
| All household crime | 6,994 | 6,806 | -3 | * |
| BCS violence | 2,581 | 2,400 | -7 | |
| <i>With injury</i> | 1,284 | 1,318 | 3 | |
| <i>With no injury</i> | 1,297 | 1,082 | -17 | * |
| All personal crime | 4,301 | 3,968 | -8 | * |
| All BCS crime | 11,295 | 10,774 | -5 | NA |
| Percentage risk of being a victim once or more | | | | |
| Domestic burglary | 3.1 | 2.6 | | ** |
| All vehicle thefts ⁽²⁾ | 9.2 | 8.0 | | ** |
| All household crime | 19.4 | 18.3 | | ** |
| BCS violence | 3.9 | 3.5 | | ** |
| <i>With injury</i> | 2.1 | 2.0 | | |
| <i>With no injury</i> | 2.1 | 1.7 | | ** |
| All personal crime | 7.0 | 6.3 | | ** |
| All BCS crime | 24.9 | 23.7 | | ** |

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 June 2005 compared with a year earlier, England and Wales



BCS interviews in the 12 months to June 2005 showed there were seven per cent fewer violent crimes compared with the previous year. However, violent crimes involving an injury rose by three per cent. Neither of these changes were statistically significant at the 95 per cent level, but the fall in violence was statistically significant at the 95 per cent level compared to the 2002/03 BCS.

The level of violence against the person¹ recorded by the police rose by six per cent in April to June 2005 compared with the same period in the previous year. Within this category, more serious violence against the person (which includes homicide, threats or conspiracy to murder and serious wounding) fell by eight per cent. A clarification in the rules for recording threats to kills from April 2005, aimed at preventing over-recording, is thought to have contributed to this fall. Other offences against the person with injury (which comprises 'other wounding') rose by 12 per cent and other offences against the person with no injury (which includes common assault, harassment and possession of weapons) was unchanged.

Nearly half of all violent offences did not involve an injury to the victim (45%² of BCS violence and 47%³ of police recorded violence against the person involved no injury).

¹ This definition does not cover sexual offences or robbery.

² From July 2004 to June 2005.

³ 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.

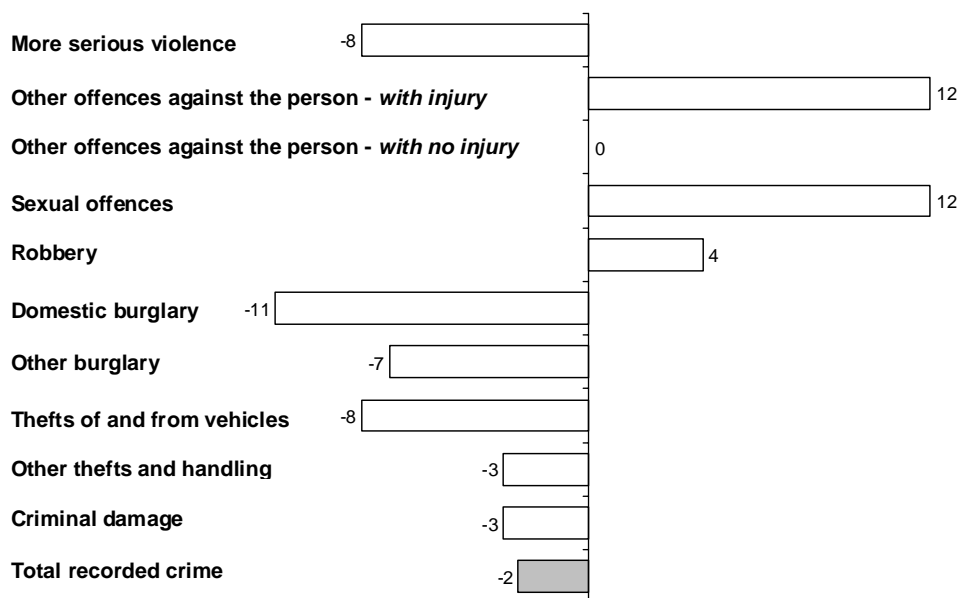
In 2004, the Audit Commission published their assessment of crime recording⁴ and concluded that the quality of recording by the police has improved considerably. Their report also showed that, while most forces are improving and making progress and the majority are compliant or close to full compliance with the National Crime Recording Standard (NCRS), a few still have some further way to go to meet the standards. The report also showed that recording compliance was weakest for violent crime, and therefore the impact of full compliance in crime recording would impact most strongly on this crime type. Implementation of the NCRS initially had the most marked impact on violent crime, and the evidence from the BCS on reporting and recording changes suggests that the continuing increases in the recorded violence figures is largely due to these changes in recording practices (although offset to an extent by the fall in threats to kill explained above).

According to the 2004/05 BCS the rate of victims' reporting of crimes to the police has remained broadly stable since 1997, whereas the rate of recording of crimes by the police has been increasing, especially in the last three years, largely as a result of the national introduction of the National Crime Recording Standard (NCRS). However, the pattern is slightly different for violent crime, there is evidence that reporting and recording of violent incidents has increased since 2001/02 (See Nicholas *et al.* 2005, Crime in England and Wales 2004/05: Chapter 3).

Local policing activity and priorities also affect the levels of recorded violent crime. Where the police are proactive in addressing low-level violence, anti-social behaviour and certain other types of crimes, this can lead to more of these crimes being brought to their attention and therefore included in the recorded crime number. The British Crime Survey suggests that only a quarter of violent crimes end up in the police figures, very often because victims themselves feel the crime is too trivial or they prefer to deal with the matter themselves (Nicholas *et al.*, 2005). The more serious violence, and in particular serious woundings, will tend to provide a more reliable measure of trends in violence from the police statistics.

⁴ Audit Commission, Crime Recording – Improving the Quality of Crime Records in Police Authorities and Forces in England and Wales, December 2004.

Figure 2: Percentage change in recorded crime, April to June 2005 compared with the same quarter a year earlier, England and Wales



Both BCS and recorded crime show continued substantial falls in domestic burglary. The BCS interviews showed that there were 17 per cent fewer crimes in the 12 months to June 2005 compared with a year earlier. This decrease is statistically significant at the 95 per cent level. Recorded crime figures show a fall of 11 per cent for April to June 2005 compared with the same quarter in 2004.

Vehicle thefts have also continued to fall. Police recorded eight per cent fewer crimes, and the BCS fall of 10 per cent is statistically significant at the 95 per cent level.

In contrast, recorded crime figures showed a four per cent rise in robbery in April to June 2005 compared with a year earlier, the first quarterly increase for three years. There was also a 12 per cent increase in recorded sexual offences, but this can to some extent be accounted for by the change in recording of exposure following the implementation of the Sexual Offences Act 2003⁵.

⁵ The Sexual Offences Act 2003 was implemented on 1st May 2004 and this legislation has substantially changed the way many types of sexual offences are recorded. The net effect of this has been to expand the coverage and increase the number of offences recorded. One such offence, exposure, was previously included as indecent exposure in 'other offences'. Further details are contained in Nicholas *et al.* (2005). The number of sexual offences remains low compared with other crimes.

Longer-term crime trends

Police recorded crime and the British Crime Survey (BCS) are complementary series, which together provide a better picture of long-term trends in crime than could be obtained from either series alone. Such comparisons are only available since 1981 and are calculated for each financial year. Consequently, figures 3 and 4 show trends up until the year ending March 2005.

- BCS crimes rose steadily in the decade from 1981 and continued to rise during the early 1990s, peaking in 1995. BCS crime has fallen in each BCS survey since 1995 (Figure 3).
- Recorded crime increased during most of the 1980s and reached a peak in 1992 (Figure 4). Recorded crime then fell each year until 1998/99 when there was a change in Home Office Counting Rules. Since then there has been a general increase to another peak in 2003/04, although trends in recorded crime should be interpreted with caution due to the introduction of NCRS (see Simmons *et al.* (2003), available at <http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/onlinepubs1.html>).

For more information on longer-term BCS crime and recorded crime trends please see Nicholas *et al.* (2005), available at <http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/crimeew0405.html>.

Figure 3: Trends in all BCS crime, 1981 to 2004/05

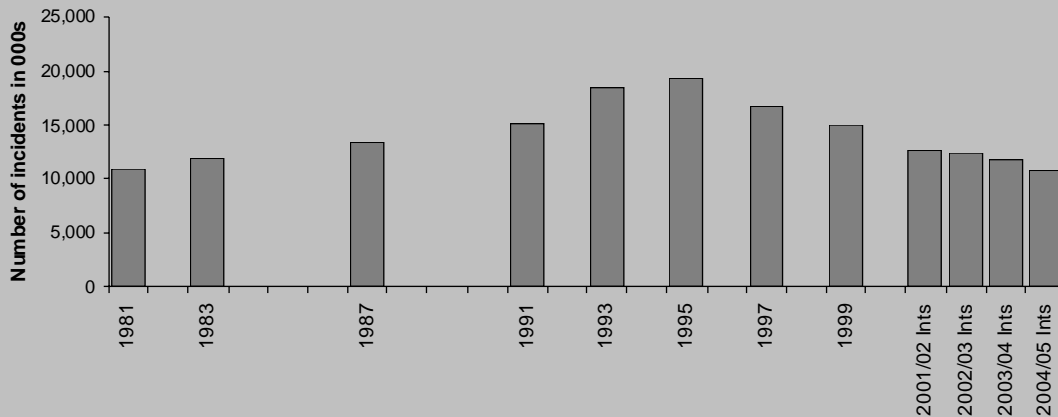
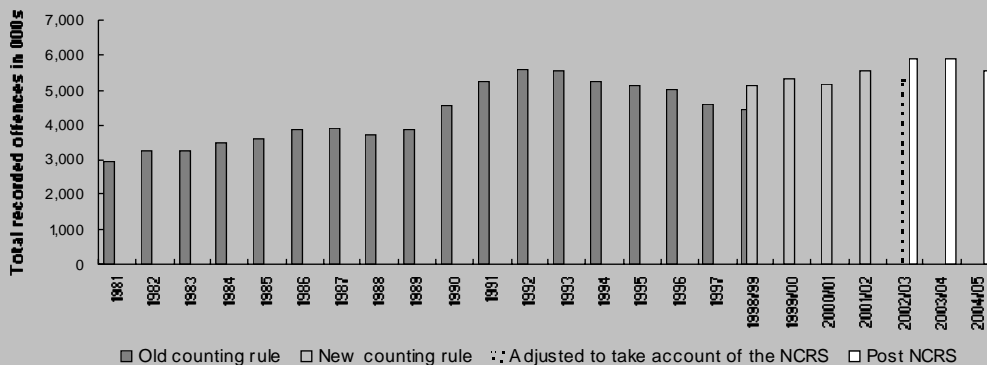


Figure 4: Trends in recorded crime, 1981 to 2004/05



Firearm offences

Provisional statistics are available for recorded crimes in 2004/05 and the first quarter of 2005/06 involving firearms other than air weapons. Firearms are taken to be involved in an offence if they are fired, used as a blunt instrument against a person, or used in a threat.

In the 12 months to June 2005 there were a provisional 11,160 firearm offences. This was an increase of 500 offences, or five per cent, compared to the 12 months ending June 2004.

Table 2. Firearms (excluding air weapons): Level of injury in England and Wales July 2003 to June 2004 and July 2004 to June 2005

| Nature of injury | Year ending Jun 04 | Year ending Jun 05 | % change |
|------------------|--------------------|--------------------|-----------|
| Fatal injuries | 70 | 60 | -14 |
| Serious injuries | 430 | 460 | +7 |
| Slight injuries | 2,190 | 3,620 | +65 |
| Threats | 6,520 | 5,380 | -18 |
| No injuries | 1,460 | 1,650 | +13 |
| Total | 10,660 | 11,160 | +5 |

1. Estimates based on 42 forces for year ending June 2005. 2005/06 data for Hampshire not yet received.
2. All figures are rounded to the nearest ten, on account of the use of estimation (see note 1).

Table 3. Firearms: type of weapon in England and Wales July 2003 to June 2004 and July 2004 to June 2005

| Weapon type | Year ending Jun 04 | Year ending Jun 05 | % change |
|----------------------|--------------------|--------------------|-----------|
| Shotgun | 690 | 600 | -13 |
| Handgun | 4,910 | 4,500 | -8 |
| Rifle | 60 | 60 | 0 |
| Imitation firearm | 2,620 | 3,340 | +28 |
| Unidentified firearm | 1,360 | 1,490 | +10 |
| Other firearm | 1,030 | 1,160 | +13 |
| Total | 10,660 | 11,160 | +5 |

1. 'Other firearms' include CS gas, disguised firearms, machine guns, pepper spray, stun guns and other specified weapons (majority are paintball guns).
2. Estimates based on 42 forces for year ending June 2005. 2005/06 data for Hampshire not yet received.
3. All figures are rounded to the nearest ten, on account of the use of estimation (see note 2).

While serious injuries were up by seven per cent to 460 offences in the year to June 2005, the number of fatalities fell from 70 to 60. The rise of 65 per cent in slight injuries is mainly due to imitation weapons. New more explicit guidelines for the classification of weapons may have increased the recording of firearm offences, particularly those committed with imitation weapons.

There were 4,500 offences where handguns were used, a decrease of 410 offences or eight per cent compared to the year ending June 2004. Imitation weapons were used in 3,340 offences⁶, an increase of 720 offences or 28 per cent. In the financial year 2004/05 a large majority of imitation weapons were BB guns. Imitation handguns, which are converted to fire bullets like handguns, are counted as handguns.

⁶ The rise in the use of imitation weapons is mainly in the less serious violence against the person category and has little impact on serious injuries.

Public perceptions

BCS interviews show fear of violent crime has increased compared with the previous year (Table 4). The proportion of adults who have a high level of worry about violent crime increased from 16 per cent to 17 per cent. Fear of car crime has remained stable with 14 per cent of adults having high level of worry. The increase in proportion of adults with high level of worry about burglary, from 12 per cent to 13 per cent, was not statistically significant at the ninety-five per cent level.

Table 4: Fear of crime

| <i>Percentage very worried</i> | | | BCS |
|--|---|---|--|
| | Interviews in July 2003 to June 2004 | Interviews in July 2004 to June 2005 | Statistically significant change? ⁽¹⁾ |
| High level of worry about ⁽²⁾ : | | | |
| Burglary | 12 | 13 | * |
| Car crime | 14 | 14 | |
| Violent crime | 16 | 17 | ** |

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 Dodd et al (eds) 2004 for more information on the definitions of the fear of crime indicators.

The proportion of people who perceive a high level of anti-social behaviour in their local area has increased from 16 to 17 per cent. Statistically significant increases were seen for six of the seven individual measures compared with the previous year (Table 5)⁷. The proportion of people perceiving abandoned or burnt-out cars to be a very or fairly big problem fell from 14 per cent to 11 per cent.

Table 5: Anti-social behaviour indicators

| <i>Percentage saying very/fairly big problem in their area</i> | | | BCS |
|--|---|---|--|
| | Interviews in July 2003 to June 2004 | Interviews in July 2004 to June 2005 | Statistically significant change? ⁽¹⁾ |
| High level of perceived anti-social behaviour ⁽²⁾ | 16 | 17 | ** |
| Abandoned or burnt-out cars | 14 | 11 | ** |
| Noisy neighbours or loud parties | 9 | 9 | ** |
| People being drunk or rowdy in public places | 20 | 23 | ** |
| People using or dealing drugs | 25 | 26 | ** |
| Teenagers hanging around on the streets | 27 | 31 | ** |
| Rubbish or litter lying around | 29 | 30 | ** |
| Vandalism, graffiti and other deliberate damage to property | 27 | 29 | ** |

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 the seven individual anti-social behaviour strands reported in the table. In bulletins prior to the April 2003 to March 2004, the overall anti-social behaviour measure was derived from 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.

⁷ The proportion of respondents saying noisy neighbours or loud parties are a very/fairly big problem has increased although the rounded figures remain the same.

The BCS reports on public confidence in six different aspects of the criminal justice system (CJS). Levels of confidence had increased in three aspects at the five per cent confidence level.

In the year to June 2005, more than three-quarters of the public (78%) were confident that the CJS respected the rights of people accused of committing crimes and treated them fairly (Table 6). The levels of confidence in other aspects of the CJS still remain relatively low, with just over a quarter (26%) of the public being confident that the CJS is effective in dealing with young people accused of crime.

In 58 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. This compares with 59 per cent for the year to June 2004, a fall that is not statistically significant.

Table 6: Public confidence in the criminal justice system

| <i>Percentage very/fairly confident</i> | BCS | | Statistically significant change? ⁽¹⁾ |
|--|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|--|
| | Interviews in July 2003 to June 2004 | Interviews in July 2004 to June 2005 | |
| Respects the rights of people accused of committing a crime and treats them fairly | 77 | 78 | ** |
| Effective in bringing people who commit crimes to justice | 42 | 43 | * |
| Deals with cases promptly and efficiently | 38 | 39 | * |
| Effective at reducing crime | 36 | 38 | ** |
| Meets the needs of victims of crime | 33 | 34 | |
| Dealing with young people accused of crime | 25 | 26 | ** |

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 to the same quarter in the previous year

| Offence group | Number of crimes recorded by the police (thousands) ^(1, 2) | | | | | Change compared to the same quarter in the previous year ^(4, 5) | | | |
|---|---|----------------|----------------|----------------|-----------------------------|--|--------------|--------------|--------------|
| | Apr-Jun 2004 | Jul-Sept 2004 | Oct-Dec 2004 | Jan-Mar 2005 | Apr-Jun 2005 ⁽³⁾ | Jul-Sept 2004 | Oct-Dec 2004 | Jan-Mar 2005 | Apr-Jun 2005 |
| Violence Against the Person (VAP) | 263.3 | 266.0 | 257.5 | 248.2 | 277.9 | 6% | 10% | 4% | 6% |
| More serious VAP ⁽⁶⁾ | 11.8 | 12.1 | 11.0 | 10.3 | 10.8 | 2% | 3% | -6% | -8% |
| Other offences against the person - with injury ⁽⁷⁾ | 122.6 | 125.6 | 123.0 | 119.3 | 137.8 | 12% | 16% | 10% | 12% |
| Other offences against the person - with no injury ⁽⁸⁾ | 128.9 | 128.4 | 123.4 | 118.6 | 129.3 | 2% | 5% | 0% | 0% |
| Sexual offences ⁽⁹⁾ | 14.9 | 17.0 | 14.5 | 14.5 | 16.6 | 22% | 16% | 11% | 12% |
| Robbery | 22.9 | 21.2 | 22.5 | 22.2 | 23.7 | -18% | -6% | -10% | 4% |
| Total violent crime | 301.1 | 304.3 | 294.5 | 284.9 | 318.2 | 5% | 9% | 3% | 6% |
| Domestic burglary | 81.2 | 80.6 | 81.6 | 78.0 | 72.3 | -23% | -17% | -17% | -11% |
| Other burglary | 95.8 | 89.0 | 85.2 | 88.5 | 89.4 | -14% | -13% | -11% | -7% |
| Thefts of & from vehicles | 193.0 | 183.3 | 181.9 | 180.4 | 176.8 | -17% | -16% | -16% | -8% |
| Other thefts & handling | 338.8 | 335.1 | 316.7 | 298.4 | 328.2 | -7% | -5% | -9% | -3% |
| Fraud & forgery | 73.6 | 71.1 | 69.5 | 64.7 | 62.0 | -12% | -8% | -16% | -16% |
| Criminal damage | 308.4 | 277.4 | 297.9 | 301.7 | 299.5 | 0% | -2% | -6% | -3% |
| Total property crime | 1,090.8 | 1,036.5 | 1,032.8 | 1,011.7 | 1,028.1 | -10% | -8% | -11% | -6% |
| Drug offences | 32.9 | 34.6 | 37.7 | 37.1 | 41.1 | -3% | 3% | 6% | 25% |
| Other offences | 17.2 | 16.5 | 14.9 | 15.4 | 18.7 | -15% | -17% | -16% | 9% |
| Total recorded crime | 1,442.0 | 1,391.9 | 1,379.8 | 1,349.1 | 1,406.1 | -7% | -5% | -8% | -2% |

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

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

3. Estimate based on 42 forces. Actual data for Hampshire not yet received.

4. 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.

5. The percentage changes 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 Simmons *et al.* (2003).

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

7. Other offences 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).

9. The Sexual Offences Act 2003 expanded the scope of these offences from its May 2004 implementation. This accounts for virtually all of the increases in Jul-Sept 04, Oct-Dec 04 and Jan-Mar 05, and to a lesser extent in Apr-Jun 05.

Notes

Coverage

The latest British Crime Survey (BCS) figures are based on interviews with individuals living in private households conducted between July 2004 and June 2005 (BCS year ending June 2005) 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 December 2004, about six months behind the recorded crime figures reported here. BCS trends are compared with results from the interviews in the year ending June 2004.

The BCS fieldwork was carried out by BMRB Social Research. The year ending June 2005 BCS has a nationally representative sample of 44,337 adults aged 16 or over living in private households in England and Wales. The response rate was 75 per cent.⁸ Further details are contained in Bolling *et al.* (2004). 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 45,000 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.

⁸ Based on BCS interviews achieved during the year ending March 2005.

Acknowledgements

We would like to thank Kathryn Coleman, Jude Cotton, Peter Kaiza and Paul Robb in the Home Office for their assistance in producing this bulletin.

Contacts

Copies of this and other Home Office statistical bulletins are available from the RDS (CRCSG)
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ISBN 1 84473 736 5

Some recent Home Office research and statistical publications on crime

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