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Crime in England and Wales: Quarterly Update to December 2006

07/07

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Main points

- The risk of being a victim of crime as measured by the British Crime Survey (BCS), at 24 per cent, has increased by one percentage point compared with the year to December 2005 (23%). This is the same level of risk as for the previous quarterly update to September 2006.
- The number of crimes recorded by the police fell by two per cent for the period October to December 2006 compared with the same quarter a year earlier.
- There was no statistically significant change in BCS violent crime for interviews in the year ending December 2006 compared with the previous year. Recorded violent crime for October to December 2006 showed a one per cent decrease over the same period in 2005.
- In the latest quarter, BCS vehicle thefts and domestic burglary showed no statistically significant differences compared with interviews in the year to December 2005. Recorded domestic burglary and vehicle crime each fell by three per cent.
- BCS interviews in the 12 months to December 2006 showed a statistically significant rise of 11 per cent in the number of incidents of vandalism. Recorded crime showed a two per cent rise in criminal damage.
- In the 12 months to December 2006 there were a provisional 9,513 firearm offences. This was a decrease of 1,761 offences, or 16 per cent, compared to the 12 months ending December 2005.
- The BCS showed no change in the overall levels of perceived anti-social behaviour. Levels of worry about crime also remained stable.
- Confidence in the CJS being effective in bringing offenders to justice, reducing crime, and meeting the needs of victims decreased compared to the year to December 2005, whilst confidence in the local police improved.

This update presents the most recent crime statistics 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 January 2006 to December 2006; police recorded crime refers to the October to December 2006 quarter.

Levels of crime

The BCS estimates 11.1 million crimes were committed against adults living in private households based on interviews during the 12 months ending December 2006. The apparent changes in household (5 per cent increase) and personal crime (1 per cent decrease), and therefore the overall two per cent increase in crime measured by the BCS, were not statistically significant. This is the fourth consecutive quarter that the BCS has shown non-significant increases in all BCS crime. The overall level of crime recorded by the police in October to December 2006 decreased by two per cent compared with the same quarter in the previous year (Figure 2).

The BCS shows a statistically significant increase in the risk of being a victim, from 23 per cent in the year to December 2005 to 24 per cent in the year to December 2006. This partly reflects statistically significant increases in the overall risk of household crime and of being a victim of vandalism, and is the same level as for the year to September 2006.

The risk of being a victim of crime is still significantly lower than the peak of 40 per cent recorded by the BCS in 1995.

Table 1: Number of crimes and risk of being a victim based on BCS interviews in the 12 months to December 2006 compared with the previous 12 months

	Interviews in Jan 2005 to Dec 2005	Interviews in Jan 2006 to Dec 2006	% change ⁽¹⁾	BCS Statistically significant change ⁽²⁾
Number of crimes (000s)				
All household crime	6,671	6,995	5	
Vandalism	2,643	2,944	11	**
Domestic burglary	720	702	-2	
All vehicle thefts	1,718	1,712	0	
All household acquisitive ⁽³⁾	4,028	4,051	1	
All personal crime	4,149	4,092	-1	
Theft from the person	567	579	2	
BCS violence	2,502	2,418	-3	
<i>With injury</i>	1,317	1,169	-11	
<i>With no injury</i>	1,184	1,249	5	
All personal acquisitive ⁽⁴⁾	2,017	2,067	3	
All BCS crime	10,821	11,087	2	N/A
Percentage risk of being a victim once or more ⁽⁵⁾				
All household crime	17.9	18.9		**
Vandalism	7.5	7.9		**
Domestic burglary	2.5	2.5		
All vehicle thefts ⁽⁶⁾	7.5	7.6		
All personal crime	6.4	6.6		
Theft from the person	1.2	1.2		
BCS violence	3.4	3.5		
<i>With injury</i>	1.9	1.9		
<i>With no injury</i>	1.7	1.9		
All BCS crime	23.3	24.5		**

1. A percentage change of less than 0.5% is shown as 0.

2. Statistical significance of changes is indicated by a single asterisk for significance at the 10% level, or a double asterisk 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.

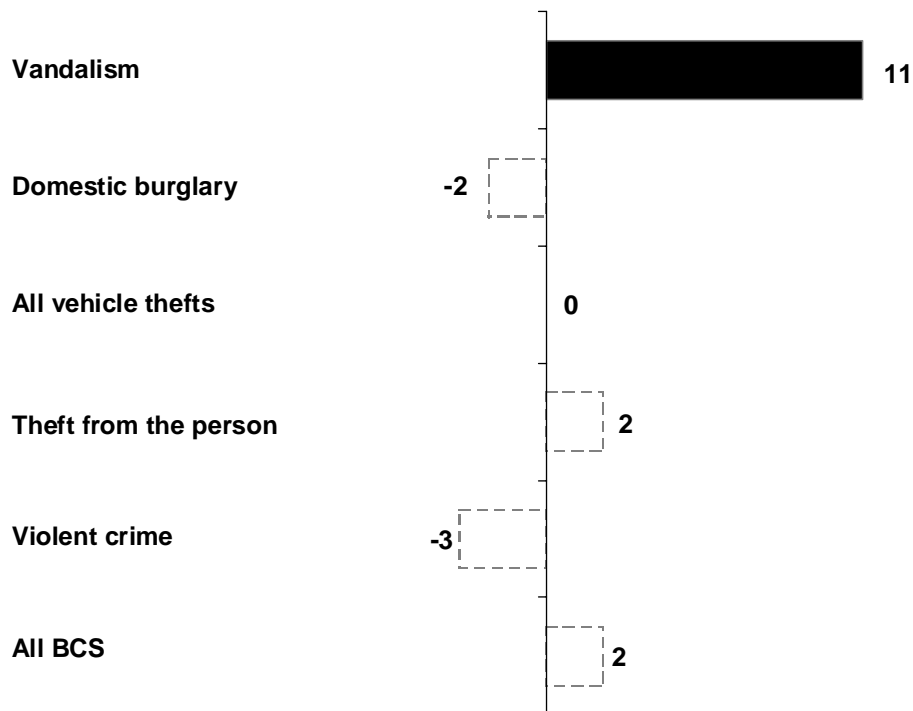
3. All household acquisitive comprises: burglary, vehicle theft, bike theft and other household theft.

4. All personal acquisitive comprises: robbery, theft from the person and other thefts of personal property.

5. A discrepancy may appear between trends in incidence rates (total numbers of offences) and prevalence rates (the proportion of the population victimised once or more) due to repeat victimisation.

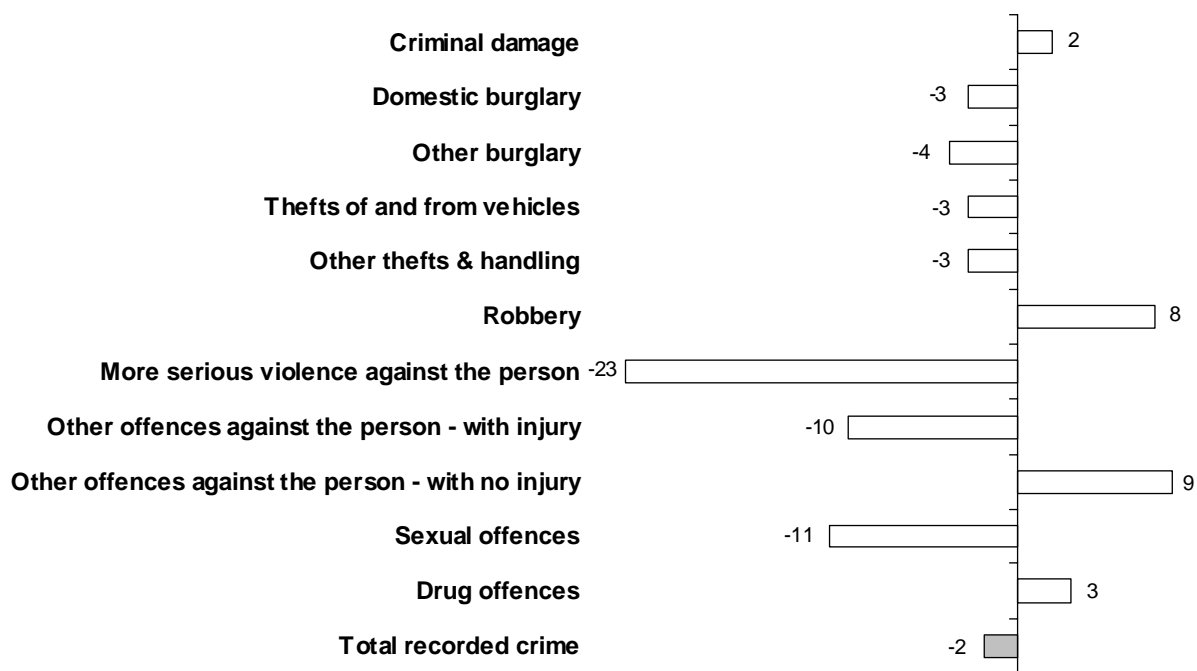
6. Results for 'all vehicle thefts' are based only on households owning, or with regular use of, a vehicle. It includes thefts of vehicles, thefts from vehicles and attempts of and from vehicles.

Figure 1: Percentage change in BCS crime based on interviews in the 12 months to December 2006, compared with the previous 12 months



The above survey changes which are statistically significant at the 5% level (two tail tests) are indicated by a fully shaded bar. Other apparent changes, denoted by dotted lines, are not statistically significant at the 5% level.

Figure 2: Percentage change in numbers of recorded crimes, October to December 2006 compared with the same quarter a year earlier



The BCS interviews for the year to December 2006 showed no statistically significant changes in victimisation of violent crime compared to the year to December 2005.

The level of overall violence against the person¹ recorded by the police showed a two per cent fall in October to December 2006. Within this category, other violence against the person offences with injury fell by ten per cent and those with no injury² rose by nine per cent over this period. The increase in those offences with no injury reflects where the police are pro-active in addressing low-level violence and also reflects, in part, the increasing use of fixed penalty notices for harassment.

More serious violence against the person recorded by the police from October to December 2006 fell by 23 per cent compared with the same period in 2005, with threats to kill accounting for three quarters of this overall reduction. A clarification in the rules for recording threats to kill from April 2005 will have contributed significantly to this fall. The remainder of the overall reduction in serious violence is largely accounted for by a ten per cent fall in serious wounding (data not shown).

The BCS showed no statistically significant changes for burglary, theft from the person, or theft of or from vehicles. Police recorded crime figures showed continuing falls in recorded domestic burglaries, with a decrease of three per cent recorded in October to December 2006 compared with the same quarter in 2005. There were also three per cent decreases in thefts of or from a vehicle, and other thefts and handling in October to December 2006 compared with the same period in 2005.

The only statistically significant change in the BCS figures for the year to December 2006 was an 11 per cent increase in vandalism compared to the previous year. This is the same level of increase as for the previous quarterly update to September 2006. Police recorded crime showed a two per cent rise in criminal damage in October to December 2006 compared with the same period a year earlier.

Recorded robbery figures showed an eight per cent rise in October to December 2006 compared with the same quarter in 2005, this being higher than the increase for the previous two quarters, but lower than that for the first quarter of 2006. There was an 11 per cent fall in recorded sexual offences in October to December 2006 compared with the same quarter in 2005. The number of robberies and sexual offences identified by the BCS are too small to provide reliable estimates of trends.

Drug offences recorded by the police rose by three per cent in October to December 2006 compared with the same quarter in the previous year. This increase was smaller than seen in the previous three quarters (9 per cent, 16 per cent and 27 per cent for the quarters ending September 2006, June 2006 and March 2006 respectively). The large increases in previous quarters coincided with increases in the police use of powers to issue formal warnings for cannabis possession.

¹ This definition does not cover sexual offences or robbery.

² Other violence against the person without injury includes common assault, harassment and possession of weapons.

Public perceptions

BCS interviews during the 12 months to December 2006 show that the proportion of adults with a high level of worry about burglary, car crime and violent crime remained stable compared with the previous year (Table 2).

The overall proportion of people who perceived a high level of anti-social behaviour (ASB) in their local area remained stable in the year ending December 2006 compared with the previous 12 month period (the apparent rise from 17% to 18% was not statistically significant). For the individual measures of anti-social behaviours there were statistically significant increases for perceived problems with noisy neighbours or loud parties, people being drunk or rowdy, and people using or dealing drugs. The proportion of people perceiving problems with abandoned or burnt out cars continued to show a decrease (Table 3).

The BCS also reports on public confidence in different aspects of the criminal justice system (CJS). Interviews in the 12 months to December 2006 showed a statistically significant decrease in levels of confidence in the CJS being effective in bringing offenders to justice, reducing crime, and meeting the needs of victims (Table 4). Levels of confidence in other aspects of the CJS remained stable.

BCS data for this period for victim and witness satisfaction with the police and CJS can be found at:

<http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/pdfs07/hosb0707tab.pdf>

The proportion of people who thought that the police in their area did an excellent or good job showed a statistically significant increase from 50 per cent in the 12 months to December 2005 to 51 per cent in the 12 months to December 2006 (data not shown).

Table 2: Fear of crime

<i>Percentage very worried</i>			BCS
	Interviews in Jan 2005 to Dec 2005	Interviews in Jan 2006 to Dec 2006	Statistically significant change ⁽¹⁾
High level of worry about ⁽²⁾ :			
Burglary	13	13	
Car crime	14	13	
Violent crime	17	17	

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

2. See Walker *et al.* (2006) for more information on the definitions of the fear of crime indicators.

Table 3: Anti-social behaviour indicators

<i>Percentage saying very/fairly big problem in their area</i>			BCS
	Interviews in Jan 2005 to Dec 2005	Interviews in Jan 2006 to Dec 2006	Statistically significant change ⁽¹⁾
High level of perceived anti-social behaviour ⁽²⁾	17	18	
Abandoned or burnt-out cars	10	9	**↓
Noisy neighbours or loud parties	10	10	**↑ ⁽³⁾
People being drunk or rowdy in public places	24	25	**↑
People using or dealing drugs	26	28	**↑
Teenagers hanging around on the streets	32	33	
Rubbish or litter lying around	30	31	
Vandalism, graffiti and other deliberate damage to property	29	28	

1. Statistical significance of changes is indicated by a single asterisk for significance at the 10% level, or a double asterisk 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 report, 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.

3. The rounded figures for Noisy neighbours or loud parties disguise a change from 9.6% to 10.3%, which is statistically significant.

Table 4: Public confidence in the criminal justice system

<i>Percentage very/fairly confident</i>			BCS
	Interviews in Jan 2005 to Dec 2005	Interviews in Jan 2006 to Dec 2006	Statistically significant change ⁽¹⁾
Respects the rights of people accused of committing a crime and treats them fairly	80	79	
Effective in bringing people who commit crimes to justice	44	42	**↓
Deals with cases promptly and efficiently	41	40	
Effective at reducing crime	38	37	**↓
Meets the needs of victims of crime	35	34	**↓
Dealing with young people accused of crime	26	26	
Treats people who come forward as witnesses well	67	68	

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

Firearm offences

Provisional statistics are available for recorded crimes involving firearms other than air weapons for the 12 months ending December 2006. 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 December 2006 there were provisionally 9,513 firearm offences. This was a decrease of 1,761 offences, or 16 per cent, compared to the 12 months ending December 2005.

Table 5 Firearms offences (excluding air weapons): Level of injury in England and Wales

Nature of injury	Year ending Dec 05	Year ending Dec 06	% change
Fatal injuries	53	57	+8
Serious injuries	483	424	-12
Slight injuries	3,482	2,491	-28
Threats	5,355	5,020	-6
No injuries	1,901	1,521	-20
Total	11,274	9,513	-16

The number of offences involving firearms resulting in fatal injuries increased from 53 in the year to December 2005, to 57 in the year to December 2006. Serious and slight injuries both decreased, by 12 and 28 per cent respectively in the year to December 2006 compared to the year to December 2005. There was a 26 per cent decrease in the total number of offences involving firearms resulting in injury in the 12 months to December 2006 (2,972 offences) compared to the previous 12 months (4,018 offences).

Table 6 Firearms offences (excluding air weapons): Type of weapon in England and Wales

Weapon type	Year ending Dec 05	Year ending Dec 06	% change
Shotgun	622	590	-5
Handgun	4,727	4,191	-11
Rifle ⁽¹⁾	74	61	-18
Imitation firearm ⁽²⁾	3,317	2,448	-26
Unidentified firearm	1,404	1,269	-10
Other firearm ⁽³⁾	1,130	954	-16
Total	11,274	9,513	-16

1. Because of the small number of offences involving rifles, the percentage change should be treated with caution.
2. Imitation handguns, which are converted to fire bullets like handguns, are counted as handguns.
3. Other firearms include CS gas, disguised firearms, machine guns, pepper spray, stun guns and other specified weapons (majority are paintball guns).

There were 4,191 offences where handguns were used in the year to December 2006, a decrease of 536 offences (down 11 per cent) compared with the year ending December 2005. Imitation weapons were used in 2,448 offences, a decrease of 869 offences (down 26 per cent).

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

Offence group	Number of crimes recorded by the police (thousands) ^(1,2)					Percentage change compared with the same quarter in the previous year ⁽³⁾			
	Oct-Dec 2005	Jan-Mar 2006	Apr-Jun 2006	Jul-Sep 2006	Oct-Dec 2006	Jan-Mar 2006	Apr-Jun 2006	Jul-Sep 2006	Oct-Dec 2006
Violence against the person	262.4	241.5	278.2	276.8	257.7	-4%	0%	0%	-2%
<i>More serious violence against the person</i> ⁽⁴⁾	9.8	8.2	9.5	9.1	7.5	-22%	-14%	-19%	-23%
<i>Other offences against the person - with injury</i> ⁽⁵⁾	131.4	114.6	132.3	129.1	117.9	-5%	-4%	-7%	-10%
<i>Other offences against the person - with no injury</i> ⁽⁶⁾	121.1	118.8	136.4	138.6	132.3	-2%	6%	8%	9%
Sexual offences	15.0	13.7	15.7	15.9	13.3	-7%	-5%	-4%	-11%
Robbery	24.6	25.4	25.3	24.2	26.6	12%	5%	1%	8%
<i>Total violent crime</i>	302.0	280.7	319.3	316.9	297.7	-3%	0%	-1%	-1%
Domestic burglary	78.9	74.2	69.4	73.2	76.4	-5%	-4%	-3%	-3%
Other burglary	85.2	84.1	84.8	79.3	81.6	-5%	-6%	-7%	-4%
Thefts of and from vehicles	182.7	183.9	177.3	169.5	178.1	1%	0%	-4%	-3%
Other thefts and handling	320.7	301.1	319.1	321.2	311.9	-2%	-6%	-5%	-3%
Fraud and forgery	55.7	53.0	53.5	52.0	47.2	-18%	-15%	-15%	-15%
Criminal damage	305.2	299.4	301.6	281.6	309.9	-2%	0%	1%	2%
<i>Total property crime</i>	1,028.4	995.7	1,005.8	976.8	1,005.1	-3%	-4%	-4%	-2%
Drug offences	46.7	48.2	48.0	45.8	48.2	27%	16%	9%	3%
Other offences	18.8	17.8	20.8	19.3	17.9	14%	8%	-3%	-5%
Total recorded crime	1,395.9	1,342.3	1,393.8	1,358.8	1,368.8	-2%	-2%	-3%	-2%

1. Police recorded crime statistics based on data from all 44 forces in England and Wales (including the British Transport Police).

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

3. 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.

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

5. Other offences against the person - with injury comprises less serious wounding.

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

Notes

The latest British Crime Survey (BCS) figures are based on interviews with adults aged 16 or over living in private households in England and Wales conducted between January and December 2006 (BCS year ending December 2006) 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 2006, about six months behind the latest recorded crime figures reported here. BCS trends are compared with results from the interviews in the year ending December 2005.

The BCS fieldwork was carried out by BMRB Social Research. In the year ending December 2006 the BCS has a nationally representative sample of 48,176 adults with a response rate of 75 per cent.³ Further information about the BCS and access to recent publications can be found at <http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/bcs1.html>.

Recorded crime figures relate to crime recorded by the police in England and Wales in the period in question. 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.

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

What do we mean by statistical significance?

BCS estimates are based on a representative sample of the population of approximately 48,000 respondents aged 16 or over each year. Any sample survey may 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 statistically significant, according to these tests, are identified by asterisks in the tables.

This bulletin has been produced according to the guidance for National Statistics.

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³ Based on BCS interviews achieved during the year ending March 2006. The response rate for the year ending December 2006 cannot be calculated as finalised response figures are not yet available.