

Crime in England and Wales: Quarterly Update to September 2003

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MAIN POINTS

- Overall levels of crime have remained stable.
- There were three per cent fewer crimes of violence according to the BCS in the 12 months to September 2003, compared with a year earlier.
- Recorded violence against the person rose by 17 per cent (including an 18% increase in more serious violence). This may be due, in part, to the continuing effects of the introduction of the National Crime Recording Standard.
- BCS figures show that levels of domestic burglary are two per cent lower than a year earlier, although this fall is not statistically significant. Recorded crime figures show a fall of three per cent.
- Vehicle thefts have continued to fall steadily, decreasing by five per cent according to the BCS and by eight per cent in the police statistics.
- Levels of worry about violence and car crime 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, although there were some very small falls.
- The risk of being a victim of crime, at 27 per cent, is around the same as it was in 1981.



Overall crime has remained stable

The BCS estimated a fall of one per cent in the number of crimes against adults living in private households in England and Wales, based on interviews taking place in the 12 months ending September 2003, compared with the preceding 12 months of interviews. This consisted of non-statistically significant falls in all household crime (down 2% to 7.5 million), and all personal crime (down 1% to 4.7 million).

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

The total number of crimes recorded by the police in the latest quarter (July to September 2003) remained at the same level as in the corresponding quarter in 2002. Within this total there were falls in burglary, vehicle theft and robbery and rises in the number of violent crimes, due in part to the continuing impact of improvements in recording practices (see Simmons and Dodd, 2003).

Table 1 Latest levels and trends based on the British Crime Survey

	Interviews in year ending September 2002	Interviews in year ending September 2003	% change	Statistically significant change? ⁽¹⁾
BCS				
Percentage risk of being a victim once or more				
Domestic burglary	3.4	3.3		
All vehicle thefts ⁽²⁾	10.9	10.5		
All household crime	21.1	20.9		
BCS violence	4.0	4.1		
All personal crime	7.4	7.7		
All BCS crime	27.1	27.0		
Number of crimes (000s)				
Domestic burglary	967	943	-2	
All vehicle thefts	2,416	2,307	-5	*
All household crime	7,645	7,515	-2	
BCS violence	2,826	2,743	-3	
All personal crime	4,758	4,727	-1	
All BCS crime	12,403	12,242	-1	NA

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

Figure 1 British Crime Survey estimates, interviews in the 12 months to September 2003 compared with a year earlier, England and Wales



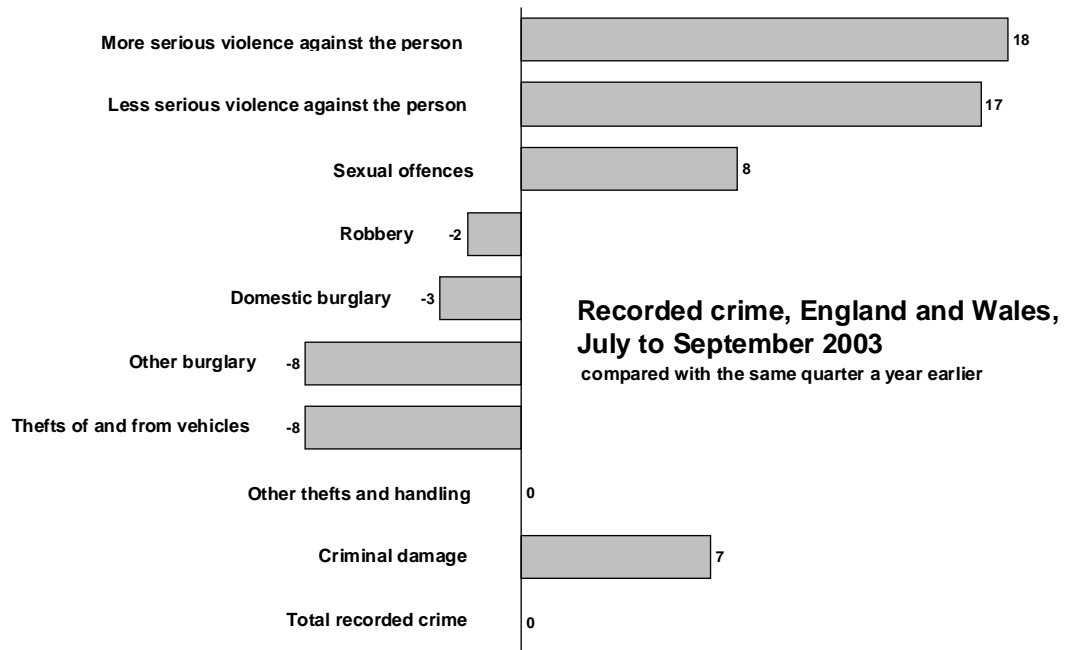
What do we mean by statistical significance?

BCS estimates are based on a sample of the population. The independent social research company BMRB interview around 40,000 respondents aged 16 or over each year. However, the 2001 Census counted 42 million adults in England and Wales. So although the BCS is large by the standards of most surveys, each year it only interviews a small proportion of the population.

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 table on the previous page.

Figure 2 Recorded crime July to September 2003 compared with the same quarter a year earlier, England and Wales



There were three per cent fewer crimes of violence according to the BCS in the 12 months to September 2003, compared with a year earlier

Recorded violence against the person rose by 17 per cent (including an 18% increase in more serious violence). This may be due, in part, to the continuing effects of the introduction of the National Crime Recording Standard

More serious violence against the person (which includes homicide, threats or conspiracy to murder, serious wounding and other acts endangering life) increased by 18 per cent, from 10,000 to 11,800. Less serious violence against the person (less serious wounding, harassment, possession of weapons, other offences against children, and common assaults) increased by 17 per cent from 203,800 to 238,000 incidents (Table A).

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 large numbers of offences are relatively minor and particularly susceptible to increased recording. Continued refinements of 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).

Robbery fell by two per cent compared with the same quarter in 2002.

BCS figures show that levels of domestic burglary are two per cent lower than a year earlier, although this fall is not statistically significant. Recorded crime figures show a fall of three per cent

Vehicle thefts have continued to fall steadily, decreasing by five per cent according to the BCS and by eight per cent in the police statistics

PUBLIC PERCEPTIONS

Levels of worry about violence and car crime have fallen compared with the previous year, as has the overall level of perceived antisocial behaviour

Of the seven individual antisocial behaviour measures, four saw statistically significant falls compared with the previous year while the other three measures stayed at the same level (Table 2). The proportion of people perceiving problems with vandalism and graffiti in their local area fell from 35 to 32 per cent, with teenagers hanging around from 33 to 31 per cent, with drug use or dealing from 32 to 29 per cent and with drunk or rowdy behaviour from 23 to 21 per cent.

Table 2 Fear of crime and antisocial behaviour indicators

<i>Percentages</i>	BCS		
	Interviews in year ending September 2002	Interviews in year ending September 2003	Statistically significant change? ⁽¹⁾
High level of worry about ⁽²⁾ :			
Burglary	15	14	
Car crime	17	16	**
Violent crime	21	19	**
High level of perceived disorder ⁽³⁾	21	20	**
People being attacked/harassed because of their race/colour	8	8	
Noisy neighbours or loud parties	10	10	
People being drunk or rowdy in public places	23	21	**
People using or dealing drugs	32	29	**
Teenagers hanging around on the streets	33	31	**
Rubbish or litter lying around	32	32	
Vandalism, graffiti and other deliberate damage to property	35	32	**

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

The BCS reports on public confidence in six different aspects of the CJS. In the year to September 2003, three quarters of the public (77%) were confident that the CJS respected the rights of people accused of committing crimes and treated them fairly. A third thought it was effective in reducing crime (33%) and under a quarter (22%) felt it was effective in dealing with young people accused of crime (Figure 3).

There were small statistically significant falls in the public's confidence that the CJS was effective in bringing offenders to justice and that it met the needs of victims of crime.

In 58 per cent of incidents the police came to know about, victims were very or fairly satisfied with the way the police handled the matter (down from 60% in the year to September 2002).

Figure 3 Public confidence in the criminal justice system

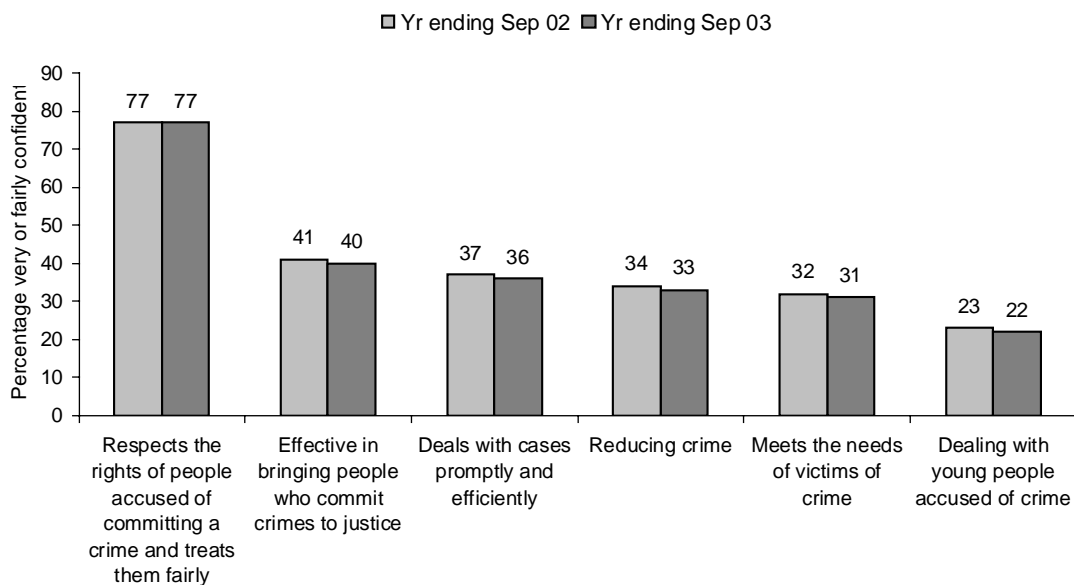


Table A

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)					
	July-Sep 2002 ⁴	Oct-Dec 2002 ⁴	Jan-Mar 2003 ⁴	Apr-Jun 2003 ⁴	July-Sep 2003	Oct-Dec 2002		Jan-Mar 2003		Apr-Jun 2003 ⁵	Jul-Sep 2003 ⁵
Violence against the person (VAP)	213.8	207.8	205.9	233.3	249.9	28%	(0%)	30%	(4%)	12%	17%
<i>More serious VAP (6)</i>	10.0	9.5	9.1	10.3	11.8	20%	*	17%	*	7%	18%
<i>Less serious VAP (7)</i>	203.8	198.3	196.8	222.9	238.0	28%	*	31%	*	12%	17%
Sexual offences	12.9	11.9	11.8	12.7	14.0	12%	*	19%	*	5%	8%
Robbery	26.2	25.7	27.3	26.8	25.6	-22%	(-23%)	-17%	(-18%)	-7%	-2%
<i>Total violent crime</i>	253.0	245.4	245.1	272.8	289.5	19%	*	22%	*	9%	14%
Domestic burglary	107.7	111.2	109.5	105.3	104.6	-2%	(-5%)	-6%	(-9%)	-4%	-3%
Other burglary	112.9	104.2	107.4	115.8	103.5	-3%	(-6%)	-8%	(-8%)	-9%	-8%
Thefts of and from vehicles	240.6	243.1	240.6	235.8	221.7	-3%	(-10%)	-5%	(-12%)	-6%	-8%
Other thefts and handling	357.3	337.0	336.0	359.9	359.0	5%	*	4%	*	0%	0%
Fraud and forgery	86.0	78.4	80.9	83.9	80.7	2%	*	3%	*	-1%	-6%
Criminal damage	259.0	276.3	289.9	300.6	278.2	1%	(-9%)	7%	(-3%)	6%	7%
<i>Total property crime</i>	1163.5	1150.3	1164.3	1201.4	1147.6	0%	*	0%	*	-1%	-1%
Drug offences	34.9	37.6	35.7	33.7	35.6	23%	*	14%	*	2%	2%
Other offences	18.3	18.3	17.9	18.8	19.4	12%	*	10%	*	3%	6%
Total recorded crime	1469.7	1451.5	1463.0	1526.7	1492.1	4%	(-7%)	4%	(-6%)	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 includes less serious wounding, 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 October 2002 and September 2003 (year ending September 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 March 2003, about six months behind the recorded crime figures reported here. BCS trends are compared with results from the interviews in the year ending September 2002.

The BCS fieldwork was carried out by BMRB Social Research. The year ending September 2003 BCS has a nationally representative sample of 36,854 adults aged 16 or over living in private households in England and Wales. The response rate was 74 per cent.¹ 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.

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 264, 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>

¹ Based on BCS interviews achieved during the year ending March 2003.

CRIME IN ENGLAND AND WALES 2002/2003: SUPPLEMENTARY VOLUMES

Two volumes that supplement *Crime in England and Wales 2002/2003* published in July 2003 are being published at the same time as this Quarterly Update.

***Supplementary Volume 1: Homicide and Gun Crime* reports that:**

- There were 1,045 deaths initially recorded as homicides in England and Wales in 2002/03. This includes 172 victims of Dr Harold Shipman, all of which relate to offences committed in previous years. Overall the risk of being a victim of homicide was 19 per million population.
- Firearms, other than air weapons, were reported to have been used in 10,248 recorded crimes in 2002/03. This was a two per cent increase over the previous year.
- About two per cent of firearm crime resulted in a serious injury.

***Supplementary Volume 2: Crime, disorder and the Criminal Justice System - public attitudes and perceptions* reports that:**

- Around a half (48%) of people believed that the police do a good or excellent job.
- Victims who had face-to-face contact with the police were more likely to be satisfied with the way the police handled the matter than those who did not have face-to-face contact.
- People from an Asian background (closely followed by Black respondents) were more likely than White people to have high levels of worry about burglary, car crime and violent crime.
- When asked what was the 'biggest problem' in their local area, people most frequently mentioned teenagers hanging around on streets (25%).

Both of these reports are available at: <http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/hosbpubs1.html>

SOME RECENT HOME OFFICE RESEARCH AND STATISTICAL PUBLICATIONS ON CRIME

Allen, J. and Wood, M. (2003). *Crime in England and Wales: Quarterly Update to June 2003*. Home Office Statistical Bulletin Issue 13/03. London: Home Office. <http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/pdfs2/hosb1303.pdf>

Aust, R., Sharp, C. and Goulden, C. (2002). *Prevalence of drug use: key findings from the 2001/2002 British Crime Survey*. Home Office Research Findings No. 182. London: Home Office. <http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/pdfs2/r182.pdf>

Barclay, G. and Taveres, C. (2003). *International comparisons of criminal justice statistics 2001*. London: Home Office. <http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/pdfs2/hosb1203.pdf>

Bolling, K., Clemens, S., Phelps, A. and Smith, P. (2002). *2001 British Crime Survey (England and Wales) Technical Report*. London: BMRB.

Braun, G. (2003). *The extent of motorcycle theft*. Home Office Research Findings No. 193. London: Home Office. <http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/pdfs2/r193.pdf>

Budd, T. (2003). *Alcohol-related assault: findings from the British Crime Survey*. Home Office Online Report No. 35/03. London: Home Office. <http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/pdfs2/rdsolr3503.pdf>

Cotton, J. and Smith, C. (2003). *Police service strength, England and Wales*. Home Office Statistical Bulletin Issue 11/03. London: Home Office. <http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/pdfs2/hosb1103.pdf>

Council, R. (2003). *The prison population in 2002: a statistical review*. Home Office Research Findings No. 228. London: Home Office. <http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/pdfs2/r228.pdf>

Dagleish, D., Docking, M., Myhill, A., Sindall, O. and Yarrow, S. (2003). *Involving the public: the role of police authorities*. Home Office Development and Practice Report No. 13. London: Home Office. <http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/pdfs2/dpr13.pdf>

Richardson, A., Budd, T., Engineer, R., Phillips, A., Thompson, J. and Nicholls, J. (2003). *Drinking, crime and disorder*. Home Office Research Findings No. 185. London: Home Office. <http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/pdfs2/r185.pdf>

Simmons, J. and Dodd, T. (eds.) (2003). *Crime in England and Wales 2002/2003*. Home Office Statistical Bulletin Issue 07/03. London: Home Office. <http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/pdfs2/hosb703.pdf>

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>

Smith, J. (2003). *The nature of personal robbery*. Home Office Research Study No. 254. London: Home Office. <http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/pdfs2/hors254.pdf>

Thornton, A., Hatton, C., Malone, C., Fryer, T., Walker, D., Cunningham, J. and Durrani, N. (2003). *Distraction Burglary amongst older adults and ethnic minority communities*. Home Office Research Study No. 269. London: Home Office. <http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/pdfs2/hors269.pdf>