

Crime in England and Wales: Quarterly Update to September 2005

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Main points

- The risk of being a victim of crime, at 23 per cent, is the lowest level recorded by the BCS since the survey began in 1981.
- The number of crimes recorded by the police fell by one per cent in July to September 2005 compared with the same period a year earlier.
- BCS interviews in the 12 months to September 2005 showed violent crime to be stable compared with the previous year.
- The BCS showed a statistically significant fall in domestic burglary, and the number of domestic burglaries recorded by the police fell by seven per cent.
- There was a significant fall in BCS vehicle thefts and the number of vehicle thefts recorded by the police fell by seven per cent.
- In the year to September 2005, there were a provisional 11,110 firearm offences, an increase of one 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 levels of worry about violent crime and burglary have also increased, while worry about car crime has remained stable.
- Levels of confidence in three aspects of the criminal justice system (CJS) have improved compared with the previous year.
- The proportion of people confident in their local police increased from 48 per cent to 49 per cent compared with the previous year.

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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 October 2004 to September 2005; police recorded crime refers to the July to September 2005 quarter. See **Coverage** section for further detail.

Levels of crime

BCS interviews during the 12 months ending September 2005 found that there was a two per cent fall in the number of all BCS crimes against adults living in private households compared with the preceding 12 months.

There was a one per cent reduction in the overall level of crime recorded by the police in July to September 2005 compared with the same period in the previous year (Figure 2).

The risk of being a victim of crime, with just over 23 per cent of the population being victims in the year to September 2005, is 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 September 2005 compared with the previous 12 months

	Interviews in Oct 2003 to Sept 2004	Interviews in Oct 2004 to Sept 2005	% change	BCS Statistically significant change? ⁽¹⁾
Number of crimes (000s)				
All household crime	6,823	6,660	-2	*
Domestic burglary	850	738	-13	**
All vehicle thefts	1,984	1,709	-14	**
All personal crime	4,118	4,030	-2	
BCS violence	2,515	2,395	-5	
<i>With injury</i>	<i>1,256</i>	<i>1,309</i>	<i>4</i>	
<i>With no injury</i>	<i>1,259</i>	<i>1,086</i>	<i>-14</i>	
All BCS crime	10,941	10,690	-2	NA
Percentage risk of being a victim once or more				
All household crime	19.0	18.0		**
Domestic burglary	3.0	2.6		**
All vehicle thefts ⁽²⁾	9.0	7.5		**
All personal crime	6.7	6.3		*
BCS violence	3.8	3.4		**
<i>With injury</i>	<i>2.1</i>	<i>1.9</i>		
<i>With no injury</i>	<i>2.0</i>	<i>1.7</i>		**
All BCS crime	24.6	23.2		**

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 due to the way the figure is estimated. 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.

3. The crime sub-categories shown here do not sum to the total as not all crime types covered by the BCS are presented individually only the key crime types are shown here.

Figure 1: Percentage change in the main crime types according to BCS interviews in the 12 months to September 2005 compared with a year earlier, England and Wales

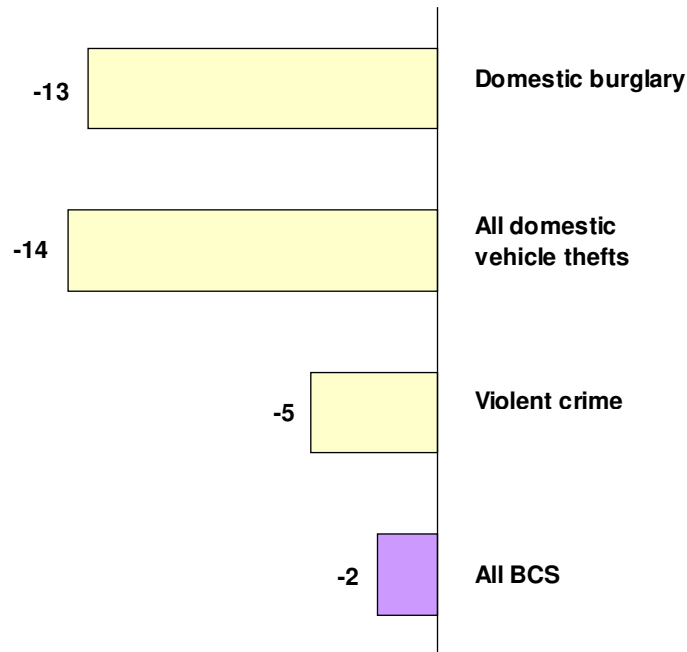
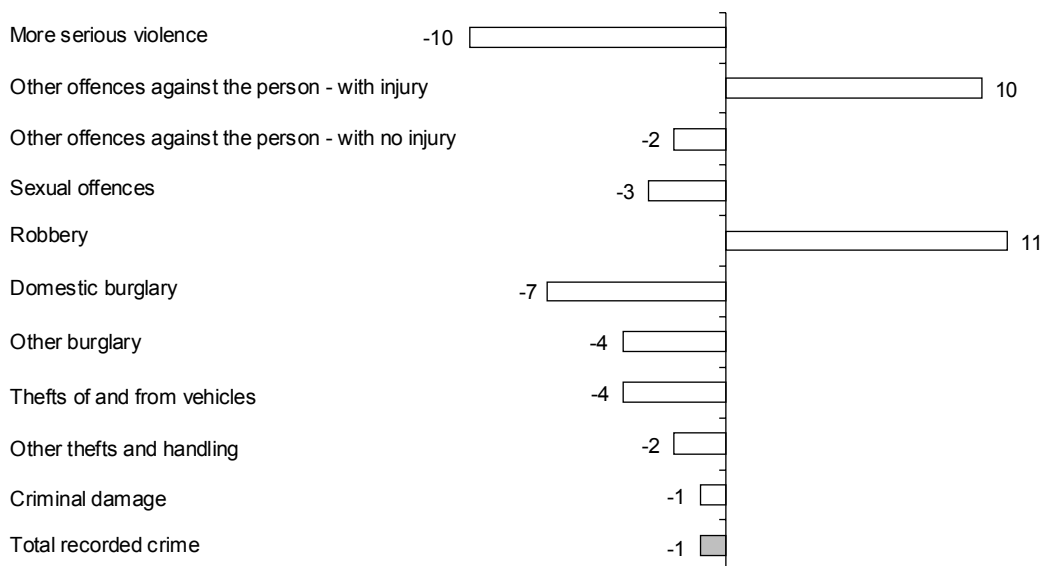


Figure 2: Percentage change in recorded crime, July to September 2005 compared with the same quarter a year earlier, England and Wales



BCS interviews in the 12 months to September 2005 showed violent crime to be stable; the five per cent decrease in violent crime compared with the previous year and the four per cent increase in violent crimes involving an injury were not statistically significant. Since the 2003/04 BCS there has been a statistically significant fall in the number of incidents of overall violence.

Nearly half of all violent offences did not involve any injury to the victim (45%¹ of BCS violence and 46%² of police recorded violence against the person involved no injury).

The level of violence against the person³ recorded by the police rose by four per cent in July to September 2005 compared with the same period in the previous year. Within this category, other violence against the person offences with injury rose by 10 per cent and those with no injury⁴ fell by two per cent over this period. More serious violence against the person⁵ fell by 10 per cent over this period; a clarification in the rules for recording threats to kill from April 2005, aimed at preventing over-recording, is thought to have contributed to this fall.

In 2004, the Audit Commission published their assessment of crime recording⁶ 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 fully compliant, with the National Crime Recording Standard (NCRS), a few still have further to go to meet the standards.

According to the 2004/05 BCS the rate of victims' reporting of crimes to the police has remained broadly stable since 1997, while the rate of recording of crimes by the police has been increasing, especially in the last three years as a result of the introduction of the NCRS. However, the pattern is slightly different for violent crime. There is evidence that reporting and recording of violent incidents has increased in recent years (See Chapter 3 in Nicholas *et al.*, 2005). This is partly due to the continuing effect of the introduction of the NCRS, changes in police priorities and changes in crime reporting levels (although offset to an extent by the fall in threats to kill explained above).

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 other types of crime, 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 figures for more serious violence, and in particular serious woundings, will tend to provide a more reliable measure of trends in violence from the police statistics.

¹ From October 2004 to September 2005.

² 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.

³ This definition does not cover sexual offences or robbery.

⁴ Other violence against the person without injury includes common assault, harassment and possession of weapons.

⁵ More serious violence against the person includes homicide, threats or conspiracy to murder and serious wounding.

⁶ Audit Commission, Crime Recording – Improving the Quality of Crime Records in Police Authorities and Forces in England and Wales, December 2004.

Both BCS and recorded crime show continued substantial falls in domestic burglary. The BCS interviews in the 12 months to September 2005 showed that there were 13 per cent fewer burglaries compared with a year earlier, a statistically significant decrease. Recorded crime figures showed a fall of seven per cent for July to September 2005 compared with the same quarter in 2004.

Vehicle thefts have also continued to fall. The police recorded four per cent fewer vehicle thefts in July to September 2005 compared with the same period in 2004, while in the BCS there were 14 per cent fewer vehicle thefts.

Recorded robbery figures showed an 11 per cent rise in July to September compared with a year earlier, continuing the upward trend seen in the April to June 2005 quarter. However, the trend in recorded sexual offences registered last quarter did not continue, with a 3 per cent fall seen in recorded sexual offences in July to September 2005 compared with a year earlier, confirming that previous increases were mainly due to the change in recording of exposure following the implementation of the Sexual Offences Act 2003⁷. The number of robberies and sexual offences picked up by the BCS are too small to provide reliable estimates of trends; therefore these figures are not presented in this publication.

⁷ 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. There was then 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).

For more information on longer-term BCS crime and recorded crime trends see Nicholas *et al.* (2005).

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

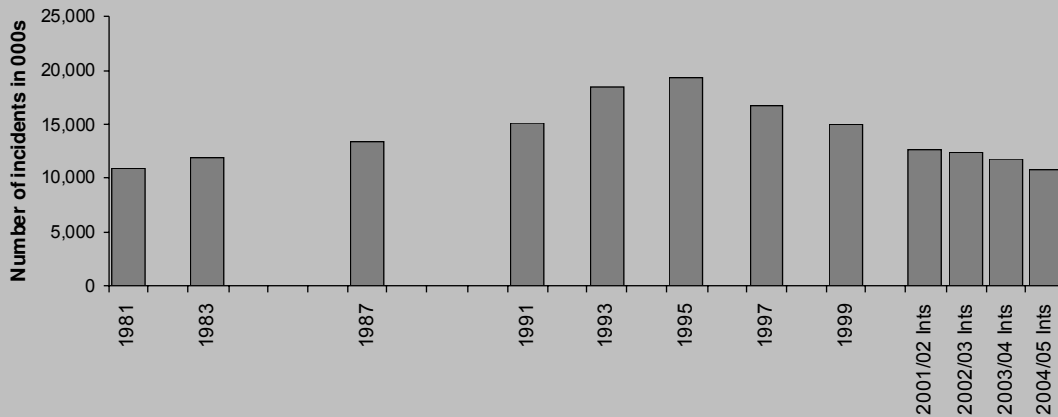
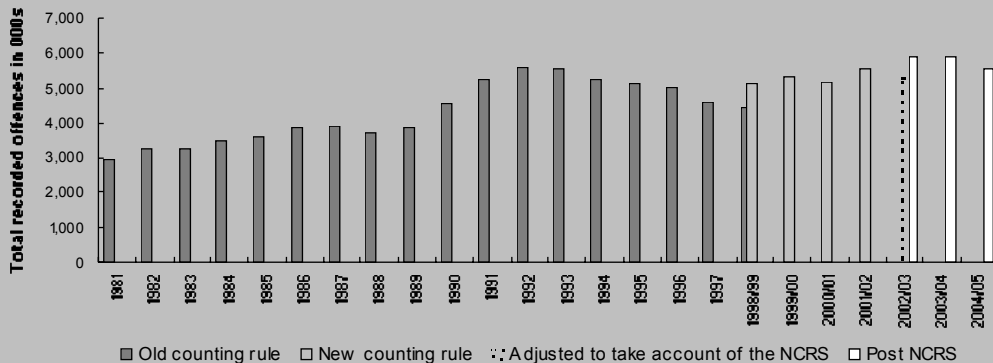


Figure 4: Trends in recorded crime, 1981 to 2004/05



Firearm offences

Provisional statistics are available for recorded crime involving firearms other than air weapons in 2004/05 and the first half of 2005/06. 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 September 2005 there were a provisional 11,110 firearm offences. This was an increase of 160 offences, or one per cent, compared to the 12 months to September 2004.

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

Nature of injury	Year ending Sep 04	Year ending Sep 05	% change
Fatal injuries	80	50	-38
Serious injuries	400	470	+18
Slight injuries	2,660	3,600	+35
Threats	6,270	5,280	-16
No injuries	1,550	1,700	+10
Total	10,950	11,110	+1

1. Estimates based on 42 forces for year ending September 2005. 2005/06 data for Hampshire not yet received.
2. All figures are rounded to the nearest ten.

Serious injuries were up by 18 per cent in the year to September 2005 when compared with the year to September 2004. Slight injuries increased by 940 offences or 35 per cent; this is mainly due to a rise in injuries caused by 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.

Table 3: Firearms: type of weapon in England and Wales October 2003 to September 2004 and October 2004 to September 2005

Weapon type	Year ending Sep 04	Year ending Sep 05	% change
Shotgun	670	590	-12
Handgun	4,640	4,650	0
Rifle	50	70	+40
Imitation firearm	3,090	3,210	+4
Unidentified firearm	1,410	1,460	+4
Other firearm	1,100	1,120	+2
Total	10,950	11,110	+1

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

There were 4,650 offences where handguns were used, an increase of 10 offences (less than one per cent) compared with the year ending September 2004. Imitation weapons were used in 3,210 offences⁸, an increase of 120 offences or four per cent. Imitation handguns, which are converted to fire bullets like handguns, are counted as handguns.

⁸ 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

Whilst the BCS shows the level of crime to be falling there are indications that levels of worry about crime and perceptions of anti-social behaviour are increasing.

Table 4: Fear of crime

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

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 Nicholas et al (eds) 2005 for more information on the definitions of the fear of crime indicators.

BCS interviews during the 12 months to September 2005 show that worry about violent crime and burglary 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, with fear of burglary increasing from 12 per cent to 13 per cent. Fear of car crime has remained stable with 14 per cent of adults having high levels of worry.

Table 5: Anti-social behaviour indicators

<i>Percentage saying very/fairly big problem in their area</i>			BCS
	Interviews in Oct 2003 to Sept 2004	Interviews in Oct 2004 to Sept 2005	Statistically significant change? ⁽¹⁾
High level of perceived anti-social behaviour ⁽²⁾	16	17	**↑
Abandoned or burnt-out cars	13	11	**↓
Noisy neighbours or loud parties	9	9	**↑
People being drunk or rowdy in public places	21	23	**↑
People using or dealing drugs	25	26	**↑
Teenagers hanging around on the streets	28	31	**↑
Rubbish or litter lying around	29	30	**↑
Vandalism, graffiti and other deliberate damage to property	27	29	**↑

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 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.

The proportion of people who perceived 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)⁹. The proportion of people perceiving abandoned or

⁹ 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.

burnt-out cars to be a very or fairly big problem fell from 13 per cent to 11 per cent.

The BCS reports on public confidence in six different aspects of the Criminal Justice System (CJS). Interviews in the 12 months to September 2005 showed statistically significant (at the 95 per cent level) increases in levels of confidence in three aspects of the CJS; respecting the rights of those accused of committing crimes, effectively reducing crime, and dealing with cases promptly and efficiently (Table 6). Levels of confidence in the other aspects remained stable.

In the year to September 2005, more than three-quarters of the public (79%) were confident that the CJS respected the rights of people accused of committing crimes and treated them fairly. 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.

Table 6: Public confidence in the criminal justice system

<i>Percentage very/fairly confident</i>	BCS		
	Interviews in Oct 2003 to Sept 2004	Interviews in Oct 2004 to Sept 2005	Statistically significant change? ⁽¹⁾
Respects the rights of people accused of committing a crime and treats them fairly	78	79	**↑
Effective in bringing people who commit crimes to justice	42	43	*
Deals with cases promptly and efficiently	39	40	**↑
Effective at reducing crime	37	38	**↑
Meets the needs of victims of crime	34	34	
Dealing with young people accused of crime	26	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.

The proportion of people who thought that the police in their area did an excellent or good job increased from 48 per cent in BCS interviews in the 12 months to September 2004 to 49 per cent in interviews in the 12 months to September 2005.

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)			
	Jul-Sept 2004	Oct-Dec 2004	Jan-Mar 2005	Apr-Jun 2005 ⁽³⁾	Jul-Sep 2005 ⁽³⁾	Oct-Dec 2004	Jan-Mar 2005	Apr-Jun 2005	Jul-Sep 2005
Violence Against the Person (VAP)	266.0	257.5	248.2	276.0	275.8	10%	4%	5%	4%
<i>More serious VAP</i> ⁽⁶⁾	12.1	11.0	10.3	11.0	10.9	3%	-6%	-7%	-10%
<i>Other offences against the person - with injury</i> ⁽⁷⁾	125.6	123.0	119.3	137.4	138.5	16%	10%	12%	10%
<i>Other offences against the person - with no injury</i> ⁽⁸⁾	128.4	123.4	118.6	127.7	126.5	5%	0%	-1%	-2%
Sexual offences ⁽⁹⁾	17.0	14.5	14.5	16.7	16.5	16%	11%	13%	-3%
Robbery	21.2	22.5	22.2	23.7	23.5	-6%	-10%	4%	11%
Total violent crime	304.3	294.5	284.9	316.5	315.8	9%	3%	5%	4%
Domestic burglary	80.6	81.6	78.0	72.4	75.3	-17%	-17%	-11%	-7%
Other burglary	89.0	85.2	88.5	89.5	85.1	-13%	-11%	-7%	-4%
Thefts of & from vehicles	183.3	181.9	180.4	177.4	176.1	-16%	-16%	-8%	-4%
Other thefts & handling	335.1	316.7	298.4	328.6	328.6	-5%	-9%	-3%	-2%
Fraud & forgery	71.1	69.5	64.7	62.0	59.2	-8%	-16%	-16%	-17%
Criminal damage	277.4	297.9	301.7	298.9	275.4	-2%	-6%	-3%	-1%
Total property crime	1,036.5	1,032.8	1,011.7	1,028.9	999.8	-8%	-11%	-6%	-4%
Drug offences	34.6	37.7	37.1	40.5	41.1	3%	6%	23%	19%
Other offences	16.5	14.9	15.4	19.0	19.5	-17%	-16%	10%	18%
Total recorded crime	1,391.9	1,379.8	1,349.1	1,404.9	1,376.2	-5%	-8%	-3%	-1%

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. Includes estimated data for Hampshire.

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. 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).

9. The Sexual Offences Act 2003 expanded the scope of these offences from its May 2004 implementation.

Notes

Coverage

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

The BCS fieldwork was carried out by BMRB Social Research. The year ending September 2005 BCS has a nationally representative sample of 45,991 adults aged 16 or over living in private households in England and Wales. The response rate was 75 per cent.¹⁰ 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.

¹⁰ Based on BCS interviews achieved during the year ending March 2005. The response rate for the year ending September 2005 cannot be calculated as finalised response figures are not yet available.

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Contacts

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