

Official crime statistics

[Law](#), [Crime](#)



It should be noted that the trend before the new rules were introduced was a reduction in crime. The table below shows the trend in crime in the United Kingdom up to and including the crime recording rules and its amendment.

Source: Simmons and Dodd, Home Office Statistical Bulletin, 2003, p. 27

While these figures are particular to England and Wales, Northern Ireland was also affected by the changes to crime recording rules. In 1988 The Royal Ulster Constabulary only recorded a crime if the property value was over £1000 or there was an offense against the person.

In 1998 the counting rules changed. (INSERT RUG FIGURES) In the 2005-2006 Chief Constable report, crime recording covered at least 15 categories with sub categories included. This gave a figure of 118,124 total crimes recorded in that year. This included a "new" category of recording a crime if there is a Breach of non-molestation order which amounted to 1400 "new Crimes". The Chief Constables report for the year 2010-2011 showed that there a total of 105,040 offenses were recorded during 2010/11 compared with 109,139 in 2009/10, representing a decrease of 4,099 (-3.8%).

The Police quite rightly can then claim "This is also the lowest level of crime recorded since the revised Home Office Counting Rules were introduced in April 1998". The Police Service of Northern Ireland did however clarify this claim by a statement "It should be noted that these low crime levels experienced over the last couple of years coincide with the more extreme weather conditions across Northern Ireland at tense times".. Nine statements and facts laid out above give rise to the question posed by Sock Young when he asked "how do we know the amount of crime in society? He suggests that any variation in a crime figure is simply down to the changes in crime

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recording methods introduced by the Home Office to reassure the public that crime is diminishing. Clearly this argument would hold to scrutiny given the facts above, however when one examines this statement, it is clear that statistical recording of crimes may not be as accurate as they seem. Sock Young suggests that there is a Dark Figure of crime. This is the volume of crime not registered in the criminal statistics.

There are a number of factors which would suggest that crime figures are not reliable or valid and distorted. Some suggest that crime figures are methodological flawed. Crime figures are either reported or recorded. I intend to show the difference as outline below. One criticism is that crime is not reported due to a number of factors. Fear of repercussion in society. LEA and YOUNG suggest that a lack of faith in Police is a reason not to report crime. Some individuals believe it to be too trivial to report. Some suggest that there is a victimless crime and indeed the dead cannot report the crime against them.

Recorded crime is criticized as it becomes a home office statistic that can be manipulated by regulations and variables in the crime recording structure. Crime priorities in various areas will distort the data. A bonus related scheme for Police commanders who reduce crime may be a factor. The third criticism is one of crime recording being methodological flawed. This means that figures can be exaggerated, lied about and simply made up. Indeed, in 2000, the British Crime Survey, BCC, estimated that there are 77% more crimes than actually recorded.

In conclusion, crime figures are the subject of much debate. When a crime is reported, it is not secretaries recorded. Firstly crime may never be reported at all due to the environmental factors outlined above. A reported crime may be dealt with without the need for arrests or indeed investigations which will not appear on any statistical data. Secondly, recorded crime is open to severe manipulation by agencies and the Government. Recorded crime is suggested as the litmus test for difficulties in a particular area. Home Office regulations have tried to create uniformity with limited success.

A cynic would believe that the figures can be "adjusted" according to the viewpoint of the individual actually recording it. Statistics are so inaccurate that we do not know if the recorded crime is on a rising trend or is it simply an increase in convictions. Yes, crime figures would be a useful tool in targeting crime in a particular area and the deployment of resources to combat the causes however with the flawed system and public mistrust of Policing agencies and the courts, particularly in Northern Ireland, it is totally understandable why people choose not to report or have crime recorded and therefore should be viewed with caution.