

The crime survey for england and wales criminology essay



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The National Statistician in 2011 acknowledged that ‘ the exclusion of crimes against children from the BCS estimates has been considered a major gap’. As a result, in 2009 the survey was extended to include children aged between 10 and 15 (Home Office Statistical Bulletin 2010/11, p. 20). This may help in gaining further knowledge of the full extent of crime in Britain, although this process also comes with its own limitations. The children may not be entirely accurate in their accounts, or fear what may happen to them after responding.

The Crime Survey for England and Wales measures the extent of crime in England and Wales by asking people whether they have experienced any crime in the past year. The survey has measured crime in this way since 1982 and is an important source of information for the government about the extent and nature of crime in England and Wales. It also aims to enquire information regarding the location and timing of crimes, the offender’s characteristics and the relationship between victims and offenders (Office for National Statistics, 2012).

A separate survey (the Scottish Crime and Justice survey) measures the extent of crime in Scotland. The survey is conducted by TNS-BMRB on behalf of the Office for National Statistics.

Evidence in support of this argument comes from The Home Office (2011) which stated:

‘ the BCS offers a more dependable measure of trends in crime as it has a consistent methodology and is unaffected by changes in levels of reporting to the police, recording practice or police activity...However, the BCS does

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not aim to provide an absolute count of crime in England and Wales, but to produce estimates of crimes experienced by adults aged 16 and over resident in households.’ (Home Office Statistical News Release: Crime in England and Wales, 2010/11).

Therefore, the survey is not representative of the whole population of Britain and cannot be used to give an overview picture of crime, due to the nature of its sample. Moreover, the survey does not cover all offences such as homicide, fraud and drug offences.

On the other hand, police recorded figures have a greater coverage of offences compared to those of the BCS. For example, homicide is not covered by the surveys. Sexual victimisation questions are asked in a separate form, and results are not included in the main total of crime collected by the BCS, due to their delicate nature (Home Office, 2011).

Office for National Statistics, 2012): Latest figures from the Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW) for the year ending June 2012 show a 6 per cent decrease in overall crime against adults compared with the previous year’s survey. This continues the downward trend in recorded crime, seen since 2004/05.

(Ref 6, the Guardian) There were 9. 1m reported crimes in 2011/12, according to the Crime Survey for England and Wales, but less than half as many – 3. 9m – were recorded by the police.

(Ref 13 Home Office, 2010/11, p. 15-16) Police recorded crime has been subject to major changes in recording practice over time, making

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interpretation of long-term trends for this series is difficult. The BCS and recorded crime provide generally good coverage of crime committed against the public, particularly for offences involving physical harm, loss or damage to property. Recorded crime is limited to those offences which come to the attention of the police, and is affected by changes to reporting rates, recording practice and police activity. Thus for the crime types and population it covers, the BCS is the best long-term measure of crime trends. However, the BCS is limited in its coverage to crimes against those residents in households and so cannot cover all crime types (for example, homicide, crimes against businesses and other organisations and drug possession). Crime is recorded according to the victim's account of events, rather than requiring criminal intent to be proven. The BCS asks about individuals' experience of crime, irrespective of what action was subsequently taken. For police recorded crime, the victim-focused approach is enshrined in the National Crime Recording Standard (NCRS). The NCRS states that all incidents reported by a victim to the police should be recorded, if the events described amount to a crime in law and unless there is credible evidence to the contrary. The drop in crime since the mid-1990s is because of improved property and vehicle security, economic influences, social change, use of CCTV and other local crime reduction initiatives and changes in policing and the wider criminal justice system. Pg. 22: A range of non-notifiable crimes may be dealt with by the issuing of a Penalty Notice for Disorder, a Fixed Penalty Notice or prosecution at a magistrates' court. Along with non-notifiable offences dealt with by the police (such as speeding), these include many offences that may be dealt with by other agencies – for example, prosecutions by TV Licensing or by the DVLA for vehicle registration

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offences. These counts only relate to offences where action has been brought against an offender and guilt has either been ascertained in court, or the offender has admitted culpability through acceptance of a penalty notice. These crimes generally only come to light through the relevant authorities actively looking to identify offending behaviour. However, they do illustrate that, taking the broadest definition of crime, the main BCS and Recorded Crime statistics only cover a fraction of total criminal behaviour.

Crime and society in Britain, Hazel Croall, 2011, p. 40: The role of victims and the public varies with the offence. Some maybe relatively invisible or the victim is totally unaware of any harm or actions regarded abnormal. For example the sexual abuse of children takes place in a private and children are often unaware that something is wrong. Some incidents such as theft at work may result in dismissal only and not involve criminal proceeding. Such incidents are therefore missed out in total crime accounted for by the police records and CSEW. Croall, 2011, Pg. 51: victim surveys use standard classifications of crime missing out white collar and financial crimes, the CSEW is based on households omitting organisations such as businesses, hospitals, schools and care homes, omitting young teenagers and kids, respondents definitions of crime are limited by their memory and restricted to crimes which they are aware of and miss out those they cannot detect themselves, the surveys capture single incidents and underestimate the full extent of repeat victimisation. Pg. 52: self-report surveys that find out how many times the population have participated in criminal activity, provide more detail about the class, age sex or race of those that have admitted to offending. They are often used with young people and therefore provide

extremely valuable information about participation in crime. However respondents, particularly children, may be afraid to answer properly as they fear parents might see their answers, or others may exaggerate, hence affecting the accuracy of responses given. These surveys have been restricted to young people making it harder to question other groups of people such as senior executive about embezzlement. Pg. 60: Muir 2010 found that crime has always been and remains higher in England and Wales than in Scotland and Northern Ireland having much lower levels of crime, using a comparison of crime surveys across the UK for 2008/9 figures. Pg. 61: Moreover, Higgins and Millard 2009 argue that Wales which is generally combined with England has lower rates for most types than England.

Tierney, 2006, Pg. 34: before 1992, the BCS used to survey households randomly chosen from electoral registers, however thereafter, the Postcode Address File was used. Pg. 35: Although the BCS provides large numbers of crime incidents not present in police recorded crime figures, this only applies to certain offence categories, rather than crime in general. Pg. 38-39: victim surveys just like police recorded crimes; do not pick up all criminal offences, such as for those under 16 years. Including corporate and organised plus occupational crimes; theft from businesses (shoplifting, insurance fraud), criminal damage, or crimes without victims, plus taxation and social security fraud. Victims may be scared, embarrassed or unaware they are victims. Pg. 41: according to class conflict theories, statistics provide an insight into the class based nature of the criminal justice system, as well as being manipulated to suit the interests of the powerful plus provide indicators of the inequalities and biases inherent in the system itself and in a capitalist

society in general. Also one must consider the links between criminal activity, police clear up rates and various community-based initiatives.

Tierney, 2006, Pg. 44: changes to counting rules in 1998 mainly affected violent crime and led to some previously less serious, non-notifiable assaults being categorised as notifiable. In 2002, police had to take victims account at face value, until proven otherwise, resulting in increasing the number of offences recorded. This is a further illustration of the socially constructed nature of criminal statistics. Pg. 20: Maguire 1994 suggests crime itself is a social construct and statistics that relate to it are socially constructed.

Croall, 2011, p. 42: the higher rates of reporting property crimes, especially car thefts, result from the requirements of insurance policies. Potential crimes come to the attention of police and other law enforcement agencies by being directly encountered or reported, with the majority being reported to the police by the public (Maguire 2007). Law enforcement decisions affect all subsequent stages when a crime is encountered or reported. Not all complaints are recorded, creating a distinction between offences reported to and recorded by the police. Offences may not be recorded because they are not regarded as sufficiently serious or defined as involving 'no crime' (Coleman and Moynihan, 1996). Croall, 2011: Changes were made in police recording procedures following the introduction of the national crime recording standards (NCRS) in 2002. These have a major impact on the reliability of official statistics, especially as recording practices in different areas and jurisdictions may vary, complicating any comparisons. They also affect overall increases and decreases and changes can create apparent crime waves. Recorded crime series were affected by new counting rules

from 1998 onwards and by the NCRS from 2002 onwards. Pg. 44:. most police forces are encouraged to be cost effective and as a result successive governments have introduced ' diversionary' schemes where offences are dealt with out of court such as on-the-spot fines. This underlines the existence of an unknowable dark figure of crime which is never recorded in the official statistics. Therefore officially recorded crimes and convicted offenders are those that have survived the process of attrition and are not representative of all who break the criminal law. Pg. 45: crimes which are more visible and take place in public are more likely to be processed than those taking place in private. For example ' street crimes' of young people are more likely to be counted than crimes of white collar offenders which take place in the offices or crimes which take place in the home, further distorting the relationships between age, gender or social class and offending. Variations in the proportions of crimes counted means that it can rarely be said with any certainty that any particular kind of crime is rising or falling, as any apparent increases or decreases could merely represent a change in the proportion of crimes reported to or recorded by the agencies. Changes in police recording practices can create crime waves or alternatively reductions in crime. On the other hand, more policing can increase crime rates, by catching more and recording more crime.

Home office, stats bulletin, 2010/11, Pg. 24: Together they provide a more comprehensive picture than could be obtained from either series alone. However, neither the BCS nor police recorded crime aim to provide complete counts of crime. The coverage of police recorded crime statistics is defined by the Notifiable Offence List¹, which includes a broad range of offences,

from murder to minor criminal damage, theft and public order offences. However, there are some, mainly less serious offences that are excluded from the recorded crime collection. These 'non-notifiable' crimes include many incidents that might generally be considered to be 'anti-social behaviour' but that may also be crimes in law (including bye-laws) such as littering, begging and drunkenness. Other non-notifiable offences include driving under the influence of alcohol, parking offences and TV licence evasion. The survey also excludes some other offences for which it may not be possible to collect robust estimates of crime levels (such as sexual offences). However, the BCS does capture other information about such offences. The BCS is a face-to-face victimisation survey in which people resident in households in England and Wales are asked about their experiences of crime in the 12 months prior to interview. Until recently the BCS did not cover crimes against those aged under 16, but since January 2009 interviews have been carried out with children aged 10 to 15. Experimental statistics for children are shown separately. Pg. 26: For the crime types and population it covers, the BCS provides a better reflection of the extent of household and personal crime than police recorded statistics because it includes crimes that are not reported to or recorded by the police. The BCS is also a better indicator of long-term trends because it is unaffected by changes in levels of reporting to the police or by police recording practices. Although the focus of ensuring comparability over time means that the BCS does not include some relatively new crimes in its main crime count, such as plastic card fraud, these are asked about and presented. BCS estimates for 2010/11 are based on face-to-face interviews with 46,754 respondents. The BCS has a high response rate (76%) and the survey is weighted to adjust for possible non-response bias <https://assignbuster.com/the-crime-survey-for-england-and-wales-criminology-essay/>

and to ensure the sample reflects the profile of the general population. Being based on a sample survey, BCS estimates are subject to a margin of error. Police recorded crime statistics are administrative data based on notifiable crimes that are reported to and recorded by the police in England and Wales. Unlike the BCS, recorded crime includes crime against commercial and public sector bodies, and so-called victimless crimes (such as drug possession offences).

Recorded crime figures provide a good measure of trends in well-reported crimes (in particular, homicide, which is not covered by the BCS), can be used for local crime pattern analysis and are important indicators of police workload. However, there are also categories of crime whose numbers are heavily influenced by the extent to which police proactively investigate. Police recording practice is governed by the National Crime Recording Standard (NCRS). The NCRS was introduced nationally in April 2002 to ensure greater consistency and transparency of crime recording between forces, together with a victim focus where crimes reported by the public are recorded ' unless there is credible evidence to the contrary'. Crime data are collected from police forces for each crime within the Notifiable Offence List and according to Home Office Counting Rules. Police recorded crime figures should be seen as a product of an administrative system where rules can be subject to different interpretation and, for some categories of crime, can reflect police workload and activity rather than underlying levels of crime.

Pg. 27: While the coverage differs both in terms of offence types and population groups, property crime accounts for the majority of both BCS and recorded crime (77% and 70% respectively) with violence, including robbery,

accounting for most of the remainder - 23 per cent of BCS crime and 22 per cent of recorded crime. Pg. 17; the introduction of the NCRS in April 2002 considerably increased the recording of less serious violent crime by the police and figures are not directly comparable across this break in the series.

Philip Schlesinger & Howard Tumber, 1999, Pg. 7: new forms of crime have emerged: hard drug trafficking, terrorism and corporate fraud. Page 144: developments in police work such as computer use and forensic science, this allows for more crime to be detected.

Newburn, 2012, the guardian: theft has become much more difficult. Then there is surveillance. While the impact of CCTV is generally much less than one would imagine given how widespread it has become, it is effective in some areas and is an aid to the police and private security. There are now more police officers than there were 20 years ago. Add in Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs) security guards and the gradual re-emergence of other jobs with a partial safety and security focus (ticket inspectors, caretakers, park keepers and the rest) and you have a substantial expansion of the eyes and ears available for crime prevention.

Home Office Statistical Bulletin, 2010/11: Pg 29-30: BCS crime fell markedly between 1995 and the 2004/05 BCS. Since 2004/05 the underlying trend in BCS crime has continued to be downward, although at a slower rate and with some fluctuation in year-to-year estimates. Recorded crime fell each year until 1998/99 when the expanded coverage and changes in the Counting Rules resulted in an increase in recorded offences; this was followed by the introduction of the NCRS in April 2002, although some forces adopted NCRS

practices before the standard was formally introduced. The introduction of NCRS led to a rise in recording in 2002/03 and, particularly for less serious violent crime, in following years as forces continued to improve compliance with the new standard. From 2001/02 to 2003/04 there was considerable divergence in the trends for BCS and police recorded crime, mainly associated with police recording changes (which particularly influenced violence against the person). Since 2003/04, despite some fluctuations, trends have been more consistent between the two series.