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CRIME DATA AND CRIMINAL STATISTICS: A CRITICAL REFLECTION

Mike Maguire and Susan McVie

INTRODUCTION

This chapter explores a number of interrelated questions about 'crime levels', 'crime patterns', and 'crime trends' and how they are measured. These range from what may sound like (but are not) straightforward empirical and methodological questions, such as 'how much crime is there?', 'how is it changing?' and 'how do we know?', to broader questions about the relationships between, on the one hand, the kinds of crime data which are collected and published and, on the other, changing perceptions of the nature of 'the crime problem' and policy demands arising from developments in the politics of crime control. The chapter considers the steep falls in crime rates that have been apparent globally over the past two decades (following a long period of increases) and questions whether it is possible to determine that there has been a real 'crime drop' given the problems inherent in measuring crime both consistently and reliably over time. It also identifies a decline in public trust in official crime statistics, and charts attempts to regain this trust through changes in how they are collated and presented.

The chapter is divided into three sections. The first provides an overview of the development of the 'official' crime statistics in England and Wales, derived originally from police records and more recently from the Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW). It also looks at what the data from each appear to tell us about the scale of crime and trends over time, and to what extent they give similar, complementary, or contradictory messages. In doing so, it highlights some of the key decisions that are made about how to present statistics to the public, such as whether to pursue comprehensiveness or to focus only on selected offences (the more serious, or those more easily measured); and how to respond to legal changes, new sources of data, and the emergence of new kinds of criminal behaviour.

The second section examines, and explores the reasons behind, a rapid growth in demand for new kinds of information about crime which has been evident since the 1970s, fuelling (and being fuelled by) a massive expansion in data collection and

analysis, and a 'pluralization' of sources, methodologies, and providers. Particular attention is paid to types of crime that are especially difficult to 'count', such as domestic violence, cybercrime, crimes within closed institutions, corporate fraud, cross-border and organized crime, and crimes by governments. While noting that the growth in information in these areas has served to highlight the limitations of the official statistics, it is argued that the overall state of knowledge about them remains patchy and contradictory, owing to the serious methodological challenges they present. The final section summarizes challenges, dilemmas, and recent debates about the future of national crime statistics, which have been prompted by continuing concerns about comprehensibility, coverage, integrity, and 'relevance'. These include questions about how to maintain public trust, and whether the aim should be to strive for 'comprehensiveness' or to provide an 'index' based on weighting crimes by seriousness or on a 'basket' of selected offences.

THE 'OFFICIAL STATISTICS'

HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

The idea of 'measuring' crime in a systematic way—for example, attempting to count the numbers of offences committed, or to determine where and when they most often occur—first came to prominence in France in the 1830s, where it was promoted by the so-called 'moral statisticians', Quetelet and Guerry, as part of a scientific vision of discovering laws and regularities in the social world akin to those that had been identified in the natural world (see, e.g., Beirne 1993). However, the idea was also highly compatible with the aims and practices of the centralized bureaucracies that were expanding across Europe. As theorists such as Foucault (1977) have argued, the compilation of detailed information about many aspects of social life was a crucial factor in the development of modernity, and closely tied up with the consolidation of central government control. It was unsurprising, therefore, that the collection and analysis of crime data soon became part of the standard work of government statisticians.

There is no overarching set of official crime statistics for the United Kingdom. Following the Act of Union in 1707, the constitutional settlement allowed Scotland and Northern Ireland to retain separate legal systems to that of England and Wales (see McVie 2017); therefore, crime data are collated separately by each government administration. This chapter will focus on England and Wales, as trends in crime have been broadly similar and developments here have largely influenced practice and policy around crime counting and statistical monitoring in the rest of the UK, although it is worth noting that there are some differences between jurisdictions (further resources to explore these are provided at the end of the chapter).

The Home Office began in 1857 to produce a regular series of national statistics for England and Wales based on annual returns from the police and the courts in local areas. This provided a new window for central administrators on what was happening in different parts of the country, and was later used to assist them in allocating police

resources. The data were presented in an annual Command Paper which continued to be published in broadly the same format until 2001, latterly under the title *Criminal Statistics England and Wales*. This was divided into two main sections, one covering offences recorded by the police and the other 'offenders cautioned or found guilty'. Most of the tables on recorded crime comprised counts of legally defined offence categories, broken down by, for example, police force area. They also showed both long- and short-term trends in these counts and in the overall total. Innovation in presentation or analysis was rare, as the statisticians attached higher priority to the accurate measurement of trends through consistency in definitions and methodology, than to collecting new kinds of data or presenting them in formats more relevant to current policy concerns. For example, as violent offences were categorized according to their legal status ('wounding' etc.) rather than their social context, domestic violence could not be distinguished from other kinds of assaults.

For much of their history, the reliability of police figures as a vehicle for measuring patterns and trends in crime was accepted without serious challenge, although periodically they became caught up in fierce political battles in which accusations were made that the police were manipulating statistical returns to bolster demands for increased pay or manpower. This occurred in the early 1920s, which saw the level of recorded crime surpass 100,000 for the first time; and again in the period following the Second World War, when protracted negotiations on pay coincided with a series of exceptionally large rises and falls, leading Radzinowicz (1977: 6) to speculate that the latter might be attributable to a 'police go-slow'. In less turbulent times, however, few questions were asked about the validity of the data or the lack of external scrutiny of how they were collected and analysed, nor was serious attention paid to the fundamental issue of how closely the picture of crime derived from police records reflects the reality of crime as experienced by the public. This remained true even in the 1980s, when 'rising crime' became a major political issue (Morgan and Smith, this volume): although the statistics received greater publicity, the 'truth' of the picture they presented was not subject to any sustained challenge.

In the 1990s things began to change with the establishment of regular 'sweeps' of the British Crime Survey (BCS)—later renamed Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW)[1]—in which respondents from randomly sampled households were asked whether they had experienced victimization within the previous year.[2] This provided a valuable alternative source of information about crime levels as it allowed estimates to be made of the incidence of selected kinds of personal and household crime, whether or not they had come to police notice. At this stage, the BCS results were generally seen as complementing and enhancing, rather than 'rivalling', police recorded crime statistics, the latter still being regarded as the 'official' figures. Nevertheless, confidence in the reliability of survey data grew rapidly and, in 2002, the decision was taken to replace the standard volumes of *Criminal Statistics* with a series of new publications

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[1] Early sweeps of the BCS included Scotland, but Scottish surveys were run independently from 1993. Northern Ireland began its own series of crime surveys in 1998. Despite the misnomer, BCS was not renamed as CSEW until 2012.

[2] The BCS was undertaken at intervals from 1982, biennially from 1991, and on a continuous basis from 2000–1. The size of the sample increased from 11,000 households in the early years to over 45,000 in 2004–5, before reducing to 35,000. For details on the methodology of the survey, see ONS (2016a).

entitled *Crime in England and Wales*, in which BCS findings were presented alongside the police figures. This resulted not only in a rapid rise in the status and prominence of survey data, but over the longer term fuelled a perception of two competing 'official' pictures of crime levels and trends: this was particularly the case in years when one set of figures suggested an overall increase in crime rates and the other a fall.

To the extent that the two data sources compete, there is little doubt that the survey results are winning the battle for credibility. The rising confidence in crime survey data has been matched by growing distrust of statistics based on police records, with concerns re-emerging about both the consistency and the integrity of police recording practices. Such concerns led to the introduction of a National Crime Recording Standard in 2002, closer auditing of recording decisions, a number of high level inquiries and eventually a decision by the UK Statistics Authority (2014) that data based on police records did not meet the required standard for designation as National Statistics. Temporarily at least, this has left the CSEW as the only 'official' source of national crime statistics, although both sets of figures continue to be published together. These developments will be discussed in more detail later.

'COUNTS' AND 'TRENDS': POLICE RECORDED CRIME AND THE CSEW

Figures produced by both police records and CSEW interviews are designed to provide two key types of information: 'counts' of and 'trends' in criminal offences. We discuss each in turn.

Counting offences

Table 7.1 shows (a) counts of crimes recorded by the police in England and Wales in the financial year April 2015 to March 2016;[3] and (b) estimates of incidents experienced by victims over the same period from CSEW interview responses. For both, the figures are broken down by broad offence type and an overall total is given.

The first important point to make about these tables is that, although there are overlaps, the two sets of figures relate to considerably different groups of offences. The CSEW covers only selected kinds of 'personal' and 'household' crimes: it does not include, for example, crimes against organizations, drug-related offences, sexual offences, or fraud (although some information on the latter two categories is gathered and presented separately, as discussed later in the chapter). The police figures are much more comprehensive in scope, encompassing all types of crime that appear on the Home Office 'notifiable offences list'[4], but they still omit many minor motoring, public order, and other kinds of summary offences.[5] They also include only those incidents that come to the notice of, and are recorded as crimes by, the police.

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[3] For most of their history, annual crime statistics were presented on a calendar year basis (January to December), but since 1998 they have been aligned with the financial year (April to March).

[4] This includes all 'indictable' and 'triable either way' offences (i.e. those which must or may be tried in a Crown Court), as well as some of the more serious summary offences (i.e. offences triable only in magistrates' courts).

[5] This is mainly to avoid excessive bureaucratic burdens on the police and to provide a picture of crime above a certain level of seriousness, rather than one dominated by a multitude of minor infractions.

These differences mean that one cannot simply look at the two overall totals (6.3 million estimated CSEW crimes and 4.5 million police recorded crimes) and conclude that the CSEW shows that about 40 per cent of crime goes unrecorded by the police: this would not be comparing like with like. Plainly, neither set of figures can be regarded as providing a measure of 'all crime'. Rather, they each offer their own limited picture through a different kind of lens. The main strength of the police recorded data is their breadth of coverage of crime types. However, the CSEW captures incidents not reported to, or recorded by, the police, which not only tells us something about the extent of 'hidden' crime (albeit within limited categories), but helps to make the CSEW

Table 7.1 Offences recorded by the police and CSEW estimates, England and Wales, 2015–16

(a) Offences recorded by the police

Offence group	N to nearest 1,000	Per cent
Theft	1,360,000	31
(Theft from the person	83,000)	(2)
(Vehicle related	367,000)	(8)
(Bicycle theft	87,000)	(2)
(Shoplifting	337,000)	(8)
(All other theft	487,000)	(11)
Burglary	400,000	9
(Domestic	194,000)	(4)
(Non-domestic	206,000)	(5)
Criminal damage/arson	540,000	12
Fraud and forgery	621,000	14
Violence against the person	994,000	22
Robbery	51,000	1
Sexual offences	106,000	2
Drug offences	147,000	3
Public order	205,000	5
Other	89,000	2
Total	**4,514,000**	**100**

(*continued*)

Table 7.1 Continued

(b) Estimated totals of CSEW incidents ('main crime count')

Offence group	N to nearest 1,000	Per cent
Theft	3,004,000	47
(Theft from the person	363,000)	(6)
(Other theft of personal property	764,000)	(12)
(Other household theft	672,000)	(11)
(Vehicle-related theft	878,000)	(14)
(Bicycle theft	327,000)	(5)
Domestic burglary	701,000	11
Criminal damage	1,209,000	19
Violence	1,268,000	20
(With injury	575,000)	(9)
(Without injury	693,000)	(11)
Robbery	154,000	2
Total	**6,334,000**	**100**

Source: Adapted from ONS (2016b) *Crime in England and Wales, Year Ending March 2016.*

figures more reliable measures both of the relative frequency of individual crime types and of trends over time.

Relative frequency of offence types

Police figures are not a good indicator of the relative frequency of different kinds of offences. Crime surveys consistently demonstrate that the propensity of the public to report crime to the police varies by crime type: serious forms of crime and those which typically trigger insurance claims are more likely to be reported than crimes perceived as trivial or causing little harm. Therefore, police figures tend to distort the frequency of certain types of crime compared to others. This distortion is exacerbated by subsequent differences in police recording behaviour, particularly in relation to violent and sexual offences (see HMIC 2009).

   CSEW results are not subject to these problems, so we can place more confidence in the relative frequencies shown by the CSEW figures in Table 7.1(b) than in those indicated by the police figures in Table 7.1(a). However, this does not mean that the CSEW figures are invulnerable to distortions. For example, while they indicate that property related offences are much more common than violent offences, it is possible that the scale of this difference is exaggerated by the survey's failure to capture large numbers of incidents of domestic violence. It has been known for many years that

respondents are reluctant to mention such assaults in an interview situation (see Walby and Allen 2004).

The 'comparable subset'

Although direct comparisons cannot be made between the overall totals derived from police records and the CSEW, the survey is designed to enable meaningful comparisons for some specific offence categories. Known collectively as the *comparable subset* of crime (ONS 2016a), this allows fair comparisons to be made between around three-quarters of the estimated CSEW crimes and equivalent offences recorded by the police.[6] The results consistently indicate that victims experience between three to four times more offences of these particular kinds than appear in the police recorded statistics. This ratio contrasts starkly with the estimate by Sparks *et al.* (1977) from their pioneering victim survey in London, where the volume of unrecorded crime (the so-called 'dark figure') was *eleven* times higher than the police figure. The discrepancy seems to be explained by differences both in the nature of the areas surveyed and in the methodologies used. The London survey, carried out mainly in deprived areas, uncovered large volumes of relatively minor thefts and assaults which residents were not inclined to report to the police (and the police often did not record even if they were reported); and comparisons with police figures were not made on the basis of a carefully constructed 'comparable dataset'. As will be discussed below, other local surveys carried out in inner city areas in the 1980s also found much larger proportions of unrecorded crime (including 'harassment' and sexual and domestic assault) than the national surveys.

Trends in crime and the 'crime drop'

Both datasets also provide indications of trends in crime, as shown in Figure 7.1. The headline message of both is that crime in England and Wales has declined strikingly since the mid-1990s, although police figures show a more fluctuating pattern than those derived from the CSEW. This pattern is very much in line with that observed in many other countries over the same period—a phenomenon commonly referred to as the 'crime drop'. Comparative analysis by van Dijk and Tseloni (2012) of both crime surveys and recorded crime figures led to the conclusion that there had been a dramatic and continued fall since the early to mid-1990s across Europe, the US, and beyond. Their analysis indicates, however, that there has been far greater consistency across jurisdictions in falling rates of household crime, such as burglary and vehicle theft, than personal crimes, such as violence. While there is a burgeoning literature on this apparently global crime drop and its causes (see Zimring 2007; van Dijk *et al.* 2012; Rosenfeld and Weisburd 2016), there is no consensus as to its 'true' shape and scale, how consistent it has been across countries, or what the main drivers behind it might have been (Aebi and Linde 2010; McVie 2017). Moreover, claims of a global effect have largely been made at the expense of ignoring significant local differences. The question of how methods of, and changes in, crime counting and trend measurement within

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[6] The main exclusions are 'other household thefts' and 'other thefts of personal property', many of which are very minor and do not map sufficiently well on to police definitions of crime for direct comparisons to be made.
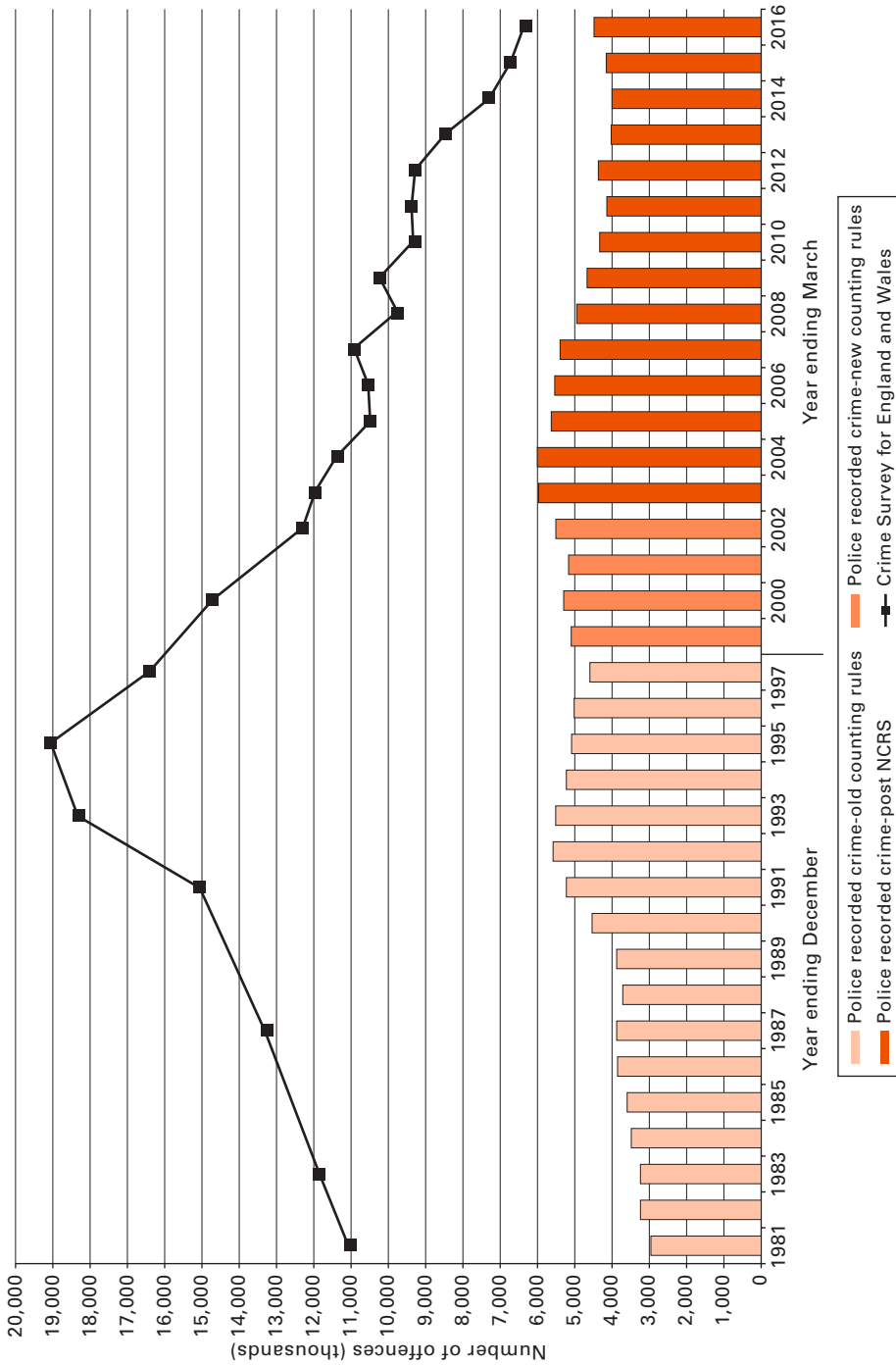
Figure 7.1 Trends in Crime Survey for England and Wales and police recorded crime, year ending December 1981 to year ending March 2016

Source: Crime Survey for England and Wales, Office for National Statistics/Police recorded crime, Home Office

particular jurisdictions have impacted on conceptions of the crime drop is, therefore, an important one.

Attempts to measure trends in crime over time face a fundamental dilemma. It is important to maintain *comparability* of what is being measured year to year (i.e. as far as possible to collect and present data on the same phenomena in the same way), in order to maintain a robust 'statistical series'. However, laws change and new kinds of criminal behaviour (and new sources of information about them) emerge, so that if one sticks rigidly to the same approach every year, the statistical series will lose both *comprehensiveness* and *relevance to current crime problems*.

These issues have bedevilled the compilation of police recorded crime figures for over 20 years, and the trend data in Figure 7.1 have to be interpreted in the light of consequent changes in policy and practice. As noted earlier, for much of their history police recorded data were presented every year in the same way, and (despite occasional statutory or practice changes which interrupted the series[7]) the measurement of trends was relatively straightforward. Since the late 1990s, however, the pursuit of year-on-year comparability has been overridden by demands to increase the integrity, comprehensiveness, and relevance of crime statistics (which will be discussed later). This has led to a series of changes that have rendered the identification of trends highly problematic. In 1998–9, on the grounds of producing a 'more accurate and comprehensive' picture of violent crime, it was decided to promote the summary offences of common assault, harassment, and assault on a constable to the status of notifiable offences, and hence include them in the recorded crime figures. This added at a stroke over 250,000 extra offences of 'violence against the person' to the official recorded crime count. In 2002, in response to concerns that a high proportion of reports initially logged by the police as 'crime incidents' failed to end up as recorded offences, a new National Crime Recording Standard (NCRS) was introduced. Based on the so-called *prima facie* principle (Simmons 2000), this stipulated that any incident log containing a report of a crime should be taken at face value and *automatically* recorded as an offence; thereafter, it could be removed from the crime records, with a supervisor's agreement (and subject to later audit), only if there was clear evidence that no offence had actually taken place.[8]

Calculations from BCS data indicate that the NCRS had a significant effect on police recording behaviour, as the percentage of crimes reported to the police that were recorded rose from 62 per cent in 2000–1 to 75 per cent in 2003–4 (Simmons *et al.* 2003). The effects of both the above policies can be seen in Figure 7.1 in the rises in raw totals of recorded crime (and the narrowing of the gap between these and BCS totals) between 1999 and 2005. Clearly, these rises were artificial, making it difficult to identify 'real' trends through year-on-year comparisons. Similar problems have persisted as compliance with the NCRS appears to have declined between 2008 and

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[7] For example, under the 1968 Theft Act the definition of burglary, which had previously been restricted to 'breaking and entering' at night, was extended to include 'entering as a trespasser with intent' at any time, while offences such as 'housebreaking' and 'shopbreaking' disappeared (Maguire and Bennett 1982: 8–9).

[8] This can be contrasted with the traditional 'evidential' approach, whereby reports of crimes were added to the official records only if officers decided that there was clear evidence that an offence had actually been committed (Simmons 2000).

2013, then risen again as new pressures were put on the police by HM Inspectorate of Constabulary and others to improve the quality of crime recording (HMIC 2014; ONS 2016a: 38).

By contrast, the CSEW has so far avoided such problems, great care having been taken to ensure that the estimated totals are directly comparable year to year. Indeed, the Office for National Statistics makes it clear that '*the key aim of the CSEW is to provide robust trends for the crime types and population it covers*; the survey does not aim to provide an absolute count of crime and has notable exclusions' (ONS 2016a: 5, emphasis added). It is for this reason that the CSEW's 'headline' crime count—on which the figures reproduced in Table 7.1 and Figure 7.1 are based—still includes only those offences that are captured in the 'core victimization module', which has remained unchanged since the survey began. As the survey has matured, information on other offences has become available: it has developed supplementary and experimental modules to gather data on sexual crime, stalking, fraud, and cybercrime, and crimes against victims aged 10 to 15. However, owing to the overriding importance attached to maintaining a consistent statistical series, figures for these other offences are published separately from the main count.[9]

Omitting other—especially 'new'—kinds of criminal behaviour from the headline count may create a misleading impression of patterns and trends in *crime as a whole*. For example, responses to an experimental module in the most recent CSEW estimated that there were *5.8 million* 'fraud and computer misuse' offences committed during 2015–16 (ONS 2016a: 38). This is not far short of the estimated total of all other CSEW offences combined! If these offences were included in the main count, a very different overall picture of crime would be produced. What their inclusion would do to crime trends (beyond creating a huge artificial 'spike' initially) is unclear, as there are as yet no long-term data. However, given that cybercrime is a relatively new kind of offence that is thought to be growing in frequency, it is quite possible that if such data had been available and included in the main count over the past few years, the 'overall trend in crime' would have appeared as upward rather than downward, calling into question the widely accepted view that we have been experiencing a 'crime drop'.

Broader critiques of national crime statistics: hidden and 'serial' crimes

There is broader criticism of both police and survey based methods of producing national crime statistics, based around the argument that, while one or both may be quite good at 'counting' particular types of offence, there are other types of crime whose incidence is not meaningfully captured by either method. Particular doubts have been raised about the capacity of both sources to capture adequate data on crimes that tend to be hidden from public view: for example, domestic violence, sexual abuse, and drug dealing. Such crimes are less likely to be reported to the police, and victims are more reluctant to mention them to survey interviewers. This helps to explain why both police and CSEW statistics are dominated by offences committed by *strangers*: for

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[9] It should also be noted that the results from some of these extra modules are considered less reliable than those from the core module, but the reluctance to include any of them in the main count derives principally from the desire to maintain a consistent statistical series to measure trends.

example, both contain many fewer cases of domestic violence than of stranger or acquaintance violence.[10]

These concerns date back to the 1980s, when criminologists writing from a left realist and/or a feminist perspective argued that the BCS did not sufficiently reflect the lived experiences of women or the very poor (Matthews and Young 1986; Stanko 1988; Genn 1988; Dobash and Dobash 1992). In particular, they observed that a large proportion of assaults on women were committed by people known to them, including their partners, but they were unlikely to report these to an interviewer on the doorstep. A series of local surveys were developed in which emphasis was placed on gaining respondents' confidence through careful selection and training of interviewers and sensitively worded questions (Kinsey 1984; Jones *et al.* 1986, 1987; Crawford *et al.* 1990).

The results of the local surveys contrasted starkly with the BCS findings. For example, the Islington survey (Jones *et al.* 1986) found significantly higher levels of sexual assault, and higher proportions of reported violent assaults were classified as 'domestic'.[11] Questions were also asked about incidents which would not necessarily be classified by the police as 'crime', but may be experienced as serious by victims, namely sexual and racial 'harassment'; it was found that over two-thirds of women under the age of 24 had been 'upset by harassment' in the previous 12 months. More generally, such surveys (unlike the BCS) indicated that crime was heavily concentrated in areas blighted by poverty and disproportionately experienced by certain social groups and individuals within such areas. Thus, the Islington survey not only found that as many as a third of local households had been touched by burglary, robbery, or assault within the previous 12 months, but that young, black females in the area were 29 times more likely to be assaulted than white females over 45. Using this methodology, some people's risk of victimization was found to be many times higher than that of the notional 'statistically average' person referred to in a reassuring tone in the first BCS (see Hough and Mayhew 1983).

Related debates have surrounded the issue of multiple or '*serial*' offences against the same victim. Most incidents reported to the CSEW are discrete events that occur suddenly and unexpectedly—an almost random event that could strike anyone at any time. However, for some people, victimization occurs on a frequent, almost continuous, basis. Genn (1988) revisited female respondents to the first large-scale

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[10] The Office for National Statistic regularly advises that domestic violence is significantly undercounted by the CSEW and that findings on this kind of offence should be treated with caution (ONS 2016a: 42). Police statistical returns do not routinely distinguish between domestic and other assaults, but since April 2015 the Home Office has been collecting information from the police on the proportion of offences which are flagged as 'domestic abuse related': only around one third of 'violence against the person' offences are flagged in this way (ONSb 2016: 26).

[11] Similarly, a survey by Hanmer and Saunders (1984) focused on domestic violence found that 59 per cent of 129 women surveyed in Leeds had suffered some form of threat, violence, or sexual harassment within the previous year; while Painter (1991) found in a survey of married women that 14 per cent had been raped by their husbands at some time during their marriage. Such findings are starkly different to BCS/CSEW findings, even those from the supplementary self-completion modules introduced in the late 1990s, which allow interviewees to enter sensitive data directly into a computer without it being seen by the interviewer (Percy and Mayhew 1997; Mirrlees-Black 1999). For example, the latter indicated in 2013–14 that only 8.5 per cent of women and 4.4 per cent of men had experienced domestic abuse in the past year (ONS 2015a:110).

victim survey in London (Sparks *et al.* 1977) who claimed to have been victimized many times, and found that their lives were blighted by frequent sexual and phys-ical assaults, thefts, burglaries, and other forms of mistreatment, often by people with whom they had a continuing relationship. Yet the frequency of this kind of crime is not captured in national surveys, partly because they limit the number of crimes that are counted for any one victim. In the CSEW, the number of offences of any one kind that is recorded per victim is 'capped' at five; otherwise, it is argued, a small number of victims could seriously 'skew' the estimated totals. The ONS User Guide (ONS 2016a: 15) quotes an example of an American survey of violence against women, in which one victim reported having been raped 24 times; when weighted to the population, this victim accounted for 34 per cent of the total num-ber of rapes estimated to have occurred. Nevertheless, capping has been criticized for systematically under-representing the number of violent crimes, especially those committed repeatedly against women by partners and acquaintances, by 60 per cent on average (Walby *et al.* 2014). Of course, this raises fundamental questions about how meaningful it is to conceptualize certain types of crime as a set of discrete inci-dents that can simply be counted. As Genn (1988: 91) notes: 'It is clear that violent victimization may often be better conceptualized as a process rather than as a series of discrete events'.

Finally, examination of the differential risks of victimization between social groups should be complemented with an understanding of the differential *impact* of crime on these groups. A debate about this arose when the first BCS reported that younger males, and people who frequently went out drinking, faced the highest risks of being assaulted. The Home Office authors concluded that the fears of street violence expressed by both women and the elderly (which were greater than those of young men) were to some extent 'irrational' (Hough and Mayhew 1983). Young (1988: 173–5) responded robustly that such a conclusion, like their argument that fears are exaggerated because much crime is 'trivial' in terms of loss or injury, obscures the fact that what are 'objec-tively' similar events can have enormously different meanings and consequences for different people: 'The relatively powerless situation of women—economically, socially and physically—makes them more unequal victims than men'.

THE EXPANSION AND 'PLURALIZATION' OF CRIME DATA

Despite the critiques outlined above, the BCS/CSEW has played a major part over the last 30 years in the move away from over-reliance on police recorded statistics and the opening up of new windows on crime. Although they have not changed their 'main count', the designers of the CSEW have responded in a variety of ways to calls for atten-tion to previously unexplored areas of crime and victimization. For example, 'booster' samples have been used to explore victimization amongst ethnic minorities (Clancy *et al.* 2001); separate analysis has been undertaken of crimes against older people

(Chivite-Matthews and Maggs 2002); computer aided self-interviewing has produced better data on the prevalence of sexual assault, domestic violence, and 'stalking' (Percy and Mayhew 1997; Mirrlees-Black 1999; Budd and Mattinson 2000; Walby and Allen 2004); and, more recently, the survey has collected new data on fraud and cybercrime and included samples of 10 to 15 year olds (ONS 2016b).

Many other new sources of data about crime have played an equally important part, however. In this section we outline a much broader process of expansion and 'pluralization' that has taken place over this period in the production of knowledge about crime levels, patterns, and trends. This includes a wide range of innovative and creative efforts, by a variety of individuals and organizations for a variety of purposes, to find out more about the nature and scale of previously under-explored forms of criminal activity, especially those which were largely hidden from external scrutiny.

NEW THINKING AND NEW DATA DEMANDS

Before the 1970s, analysis of crime patterns was based on limited sources (mainly the regular statistical returns from criminal justice agencies) and carried out within a narrow frame of reference. Much criminological research was aimed at understanding why some individuals engage in crime and how to 'treat' them, and hence data collection focused mainly on the characteristics of offenders. By contrast, little attention was paid to the physical and social circumstances or geographical distribution of offences.

All this has since changed as the demand for information about crime has grown enormously. Crime has become a major focus of public concern and a core issue in party politics (Morgan and Smith, this volume). Governments have increasingly set out to 'manage' crime problems, and the crime prevention and control industry has responded by expanding rapidly. This has involved new theoretical and practical approaches, many of them based around detailed assessment and risk management, and around measuring and improving the effectiveness of crime reduction initiatives. Advances in information technology, including the capacity to collect, store, and analyse massive electronic datasets, have facilitated and encouraged such developments. In trying to make sense of these advances, it is important to look not just at technological change, but at changes in ways of *thinking about* and *responding to* crime. These form a dynamic relationship with the production of crime data, both driving demands for new kinds of information and, in turn, being influenced by the new knowledge they generate. Key developments of note here include:

- 'Situational crime prevention' policies focused on identifying and reducing opportunities for crime (Clarke 1980; Crawford and Evans 2012).

- 'Intelligence-led' and 'problem-oriented' forms of policing which aim to identify, analyse, and tackle existing or emerging crime problems (Bullock and Tilley 2003; Maguire 2008).

- Crime control activities developed by agencies outside the criminal justice field, particularly through their incorporation into formal partnerships (e.g. Integrated Offender Management, and Community Safety Partnerships).

- Promotion of 'evidence-based policy' using research and evaluation to identify effective interventions (e.g. Sherman *et al.* 2006).

- Managerialist attempts to improve the effectiveness of crime control agencies through performance measurement and targets (Hough 2007; Senior *et al.* 2007).

All of these factors have contributed to the continuing demand for more information about crime, including detailed analysis of patterns in specific types of offence that can directly inform policy-making and operational practice, and data that can be processed and disseminated quickly. They have also fuelled the development of increasingly sophisticated methodologies for analysing data (including mapping techniques and 'hot spot' analysis—see Bannister and Flint, this volume), as well as intelligence products such as the 'strategic assessments' and 'problem profiles' built into the National Intelligence Model (John and Maguire 2007).

Importantly, the field of interest has extended far beyond 'conventional' forms of crime (such as theft, burglary, and criminal damage) which make up the bulk of recorded offences, to many kinds of criminal behaviour that previously remained largely hidden from official view. This has been strongly influenced by campaigns to get particular forms of behaviour taken more seriously by the police and justice agencies, notably the pioneering efforts of feminist groups in the 1970s in relation to domestic violence and sexual assault, and the persistent demands of organizations such as Childline (set up in 1986) for more action in relation to child sexual abuse. Recently, more attention has been paid to new and often highly organized forms of crime with international dimensions such as internet fraud, people trafficking, and money laundering (Brookman *et al.* 2010; Levi and Lord, this volume). Again, all these developments have created major new data needs at local, national, and international level.

This continuing surge in demand for crime-related information, combined with the prominence of crime on the national political agenda, has resulted in a huge increase in data collection and research, as well as the opening up of numerous new fields of inquiry—in short, a veritable 'data explosion' in the field. This is evident within government itself, where Home Office and Ministry of Justice research teams have played major roles in the development of new ways of measuring crime and analysing reoffending. At the same time, criminology in universities has grown from a minor subsidiary subject to a flourishing specialist discipline employing several hundred academics, many of them engaged in empirical research. Many public, private, and voluntary sector organizations with a role in crime reduction or security employ researchers to analyse records or conduct surveys to produce new data about crime. Organizations outside the criminal justice system have also been persuaded to collect and share crime data—as seen, for example, in the use of records of assault victims attending Accident and Emergency departments to measure trends in violence (Maguire and Hopkins 2003; Sivarajasingam *et al.* 2009; Centre for Public Health 2014).

NEW KNOWLEDGE: ACHIEVEMENTS, AND CHALLENGES

In essence, then, we have moved from a situation in which there was only one 'official picture' of crime, to one in which not only are the official crime statistics based on more than one kind of data (CSEW and police figures), but data from many other sources provide a new set of windows on to a much broader range of criminal activity. However, some important areas of criminal activity remain relatively unexplored,

while others are characterized by conflicting findings. Brief illustrative examples are given below of attempts that have been made to produce new knowledge about the incidence and prevalence of specific types of criminal activity, together with comments on their strengths and limitations.

Child abuse

As with domestic violence against adults (discussed earlier in the chapter), child abuse often involves an ongoing series of assaults within a particular household, so it makes little sense to attempt to count the number of individual 'offences' (*incidence*). Estimates are therefore usually expressed in terms of the proportion of children experiencing it over a given period (*prevalence*). However, this too can be misleading, especially in 'lifetime prevalence' studies, if no effort is made to distinguish those who have been assaulted only once or twice from those who have been victimized repeatedly over many years. Moreover, definitions of what is being measured can make a critical difference to the results. For example, in the 1970s the first US National Incidence Study of Child Abuse and Neglect, a major survey of health service and other professionals, initially defined 'child maltreatment' as harmful parental conduct and estimated that 30 per cent of all children had been victims of maltreatment over the previous year. When the definition was restricted to conduct resulting in a specified minimum degree of harm (e.g. marks on the skin lasting at least 48 hours), the estimate dropped to one per cent (Besharov 1981).

Some evidence on the incidence of physical abuse has been gleaned from hospital data on 'non-accidental injuries', although records vary depending on whether children are injured seriously enough to go to hospital and whether hospital staff define their injuries as non-accidental. Most evidence about the prevalence of child abuse comes from asking adults to recall events from childhood, with predictably conflicting results arising from varying methodologies (see Straus *et al.* 1980; Baker and Duncan 1985; Morgan and Zedner 1992). Perhaps the most reliable results come from a UK survey of over 6,000 parents or guardians of children under 11, young people aged 11 to 17, and young adults aged 18 to 24 years (Radford *et al.* 2011). It found that between 5 and 14.5 per cent of young people had experienced 'severe maltreatment' by a parent or guardian at some point during their childhood (predominantly severe neglect or physical violence—few referred to contact sexual abuse); and that 2.5 per cent of under 11s and six per cent of 11 to 17s had experienced such mistreatment in the past year.

Crimes against businesses

Crimes against businesses—chiefly theft or fraud—pose considerable difficulties for measurement for a variety of reasons (see Hopkins 2002). Nevertheless, the Home Office has developed the *Commercial Victimisation Survey* (CVS), first piloted in 2002 and carried out annually since 2012. This estimates the prevalence and incidence of crimes against businesses in selected sectors. In 2015, it surveyed wholesale/retail, agriculture, construction, and information/communication businesses (Williams 2016) and found that the wholesale/retail sector was the most victimized, with 40 per cent of premises reporting crimes against them. The incidence rate of over 12,000 offences per 1,000 premises was dominated by shoplifting, which accounted for 71 per cent of the total. However, the overall estimated total of business crimes had fallen

from over 21 million in 2002 to about 8 million in 2015 (Williams 2016). While this echoes CSEW findings on personal and household crimes, it has to be treated with caution as its findings are very different to those of another survey, the British Retail Consortium's Retail Crime Survey, which found a 14 per cent *increase* in the incidence of shoplifting between 2008–9 and 2014–15 (BRC 2016).[12] Police recorded offences of shoplifting, meanwhile, have remained fairly stable for a long period.

Fraud has received increasing attention in recent years, particularly online fraud which is widely agreed to have increased. The BRC survey found a 55 per cent increase in reported fraud between 2013–14 and 2014–15, while the CVS found that over a fifth of retailers/wholesalers had lost money to 'phishing'. Other information comes from reports to fraud prevention bodies such Action Fraud and the National Fraud Intelligence Bureau, although it is difficult to distinguish offences against businesses from those against individuals.

The overall picture of crimes against businesses remains unclear, and estimates of losses to organizations through theft and fraud—especially of the global costs to international companies (e.g. Pricewaterhouse Coopers 2005)—tend to be highly speculative. It could be argued that a clearer understanding of the problem of theft within various types of workplace might be obtained through qualitative research, such as that undertaken many years ago by Ditton (1977) and Mars (1982), who spent time with people working in warehouses and docks, and came to understand the informal cultural rules among employees about pilfering.

Corporate crime

Crime committed *by* organizations is even harder to measure in any meaningful way. It may include crimes against an organization's employees (e.g. health and safety breaches leading to death or injury), against other organizations (e.g. failures to pay for orders, and the operation of illegal cartels), or against customers or the general public (e.g. the sale of sub-standard or stolen goods, deliberate frauds, and environmental pollution). Some of the best insights into such offences—which can involve millions of pounds—have come from reconstructions of large-scale cases through analysis of investigation files, court records, or newspaper stories (see Passas and Groskin 2001 on the BCCI swindle). There have been some attempts to gather data on corporate criminal behaviour by investigative journalists or through interviews with business people or auditors, but systematic studies are rare and the overall level of knowledge in the field remains limited. (For useful overviews, see Levi and Lord, this volume; Minkes 2010; Tombs 2010).

Crime in closed institutions

Criminal activity which takes place in closed institutions (such as prisons, army barracks, mental institutions, children's homes, old people's homes, and boarding schools) rarely comes to police notice and often goes unrecorded internally. It is also not captured by the CSEW, which only interviews people in private households. Cultures of secrecy, and sometimes intimidation, make collection of reliable data in institutions

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[12] It should be noted that the surveys are not directly comparable: they cover different periods and the BRC survey focuses disproportionately on larger retailers.

very difficult. Although some surveys have been conducted, this is another area that may be better researched through qualitative methodologies such as in-depth interviews with ex-residents or participant observation. Innovative examples include studies of bullying among prisoners (Ireland 2005) and in children's homes (Barter *et al.* 2004; Evans 2010). Research on other institutions is less well developed, despite recent high profile cases involving deaths in army barracks and maltreatment of old people.

Online fraud and cybercrime

Arguably the fastest growing 'new' type of crime is online fraud, more commonly known as 'cybercrime' (see Tcherni *et al.*, 2016). Like other forms of fraud, failure to reflect its scale and growth adequately in police recorded crime statistics or the CSEW main count risks giving a false picture of current patterns of crime in the UK (a comment that applies to many other countries). As already mentioned, a supplementary module on fraud and cybercrime introduced in the CSEW estimated that 5.8 million such offences were committed in 2015–16 (ONS 2016a: 37–9). A particular example of online fraud, identity theft, has also been highlighted by Cifas (2016), which collects fraud data from over 250 organizations in the UK, as the fastest growing type of cybercrime. In 2015, nearly 170,000 cases of identity fraud were reported, making up 53 per cent of all frauds reported to Cifas and a rise of 49 per cent compared with the previous year. These are very large numbers and, given that much of the so-called 'crime drop' is thought to be attributable to falls in property crime, it could be argued that this has simply been replaced by different ways of stealing property online.

Organized and cross-border crime

A form of criminal behaviour which continues to pose daunting challenges for information gathering and research is that of 'organized' crime, especially when this involves activities that cross international borders (such as EU subsidy fraud, money laundering, smuggling, and drug or people trafficking). The rapidly changing and well-concealed nature of such crimes mean that conventional methods of gathering data are inadequate. At present, regular 'threat assessments' are made as part of a National Strategic Assessment, led by the National Crime Agency and a range of international partners, based on a wide variety of data from both closed and open sources and published in sanitized form (see NCA 2015). Otherwise, much of the available information is based on newspaper reports, court cases, investigation files, and interviews with convicted organized criminals. Generally speaking, empirical investigations have tended to focus on charting the numbers, size, and ethnic connections of organized criminal groups, rather than attempting to measure the scale of 'organized crime' in terms of offences committed. A key problem is distinguishing among recorded offences between those that have been committed by individuals and those by organized groups—with the further complication of defining 'organized' (see Levi and Lord, this volume; Levi and Maguire 2004).

Crimes by governments and in war

Green and Ward, this volume, draw attention to a plethora of horrific state-sanctioned crimes, including crimes against humanity, that have to a large extent remained off the radar of most criminological work (see also Cohen 2001; Aitchison 2010).

Unsurprisingly, figures on war crimes, torture, or killings sanctioned by governments are not usually gathered or published by state officials, but by external bodies such as Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch. Such data are occasionally used in analysis by small numbers of criminologists (see the Special Issue of the *British Journal of Criminology* edited by Green and Ward in 2005) but are still too rarely thought of as 'criminal statistics'—which, of course, they are.

International and comparative perspectives

Finally, a growing need for international comparisons in crime data has been recognized through the development of major surveys that collect information across several countries at once. Most notable is the International Crime Victims Survey (ICVS) (van Dijk 2013). This has suffered from methodological problems and shortages of resources, but offers rich datasets for comparative analysis. The ICVS has been undertaken six times since 1989, most recently in 2010. It has covered 80 countries in all, although few more than three times. The results provide valuable international comparisons in terms of levels of crime, reporting rates, and attitudes to crime and justice. It has been used extensively to examine the scale and nature of the 'crime drop' across many different countries (see van Dijk and Tseloni 2012). Importantly, too a 39-country analysis found no correlation between survey and police figures, leading van Kesteren *et al.* (2014: 53) to conclude that: 'Police figures are nothing but a source of misinformation on the levels of crime across countries'.

KEY DILEMMAS AND CHALLENGES

In recent years, national crime statistics in the UK have come under increasing scrutiny, as evidenced by a series of critical reports reflecting a growing sense of uncertainty about their legitimacy and core purpose. In this section we briefly discuss some of the recurring themes from these reports and subsequent debates: in particular, dilemmas and challenges around public mistrust; the pursuit of 'relevance' and 'comprehensiveness'; and how to deal with 'distortions' caused by large differences in seriousness between offences.

THE PROBLEM OF TRUST

Since the turn of this century, a plethora of official inquiries and reports have highlighted concern about public distrust in the production and dissemination of crime statistics (Simmons 2000; Statistics Commission 2006; UK Statistics Authority 2010; Matheson 2011; Public Administration Select Committee 2014). In a broad review of 'user perspectives', the Statistics Commission (2005) identified public trust in the crime figures as one of its top five priorities. Specifically addressing the problem of political 'spin', it concluded that the Home Office and other official bodies were exerting such a high degree of control over the publication of crime data (often in the face of a

cynical and antagonistic press) that it was severely undermining public confidence in the figures—leading to a perception that people were receiving 'a filtered, government friendly, version of the truth' (Statistics Commission 2005: 4). An independent review for the Home Office identified a set of further problems:

> Public trust in crime statistics can be undermined by any or all of the following: presentations of statistics that are perceived to be in conflict with—or of no relevance to—the direct individual experiences of members of the public; presentations of statistics using categories or definitions that do not accord with public commonsense interpretations; presentation of conflicting statistics apparently open to widely differing interpretations; lack of coverage of significant areas of criminal activity and victims; perceived potential for police or ministerial interference in the production and presentation of the statistics. (Smith 2006: iii)

Ironically, this suggests that some of the changes to systems for recording and presenting crime statistics discussed earlier (such as the inclusion of common assault in the Notifiable Offence List, introduction of the NCRS, and the publication of CSEW findings alongside police figures), which were intended to improve the reliability and 'truth' of the official statistics, had the perverse effect of *increasing* distrust. They made the statistics more difficult for casual observers to interpret and opened up more opportunities for politicians to exploit contradictions in the data and 'cherry pick' figures to their advantage, or to sow general mistrust in the integrity of the data. Media responses to the release of statistics tend to look no further than the raw figures, and show little interest in 'technical' arguments that there have 'actually' been falls, not rises.

Such distrust is further fuelled by a mismatch between the picture of falling crime offered by the official crime statistics and a perception among large sections of the public that it has continued to rise. In every sweep of the BCS/CSEW since 1996—a period in which both survey-derived and police recorded crime totals have fallen sharply—between 58 and 75 per cent of respondents have been found to believe that crime is rising (see Chaplin *et al.* 2011; ONS 2015b). While often attributed to the publication of mistruths in the popular media (e.g. Gash 2016), this perception is also partly formed by people's own observations and experiences, discussions with friends and neighbours, and so on. An important factor may be the fact that people tend to make little distinction between 'crime' and 'anti-social behaviour'. There is a widespread impression (which may or may not be correct) that levels of, for example, 'loutish' behaviour in the street, late night drunkenness in town centres, and littering, have increased significantly (Wikstrom 2009; Mackenzie *et al.* 2010). Whilst this contributes to a general belief that 'crime is rising', most such acts do not constitute notifiable criminal offences and consequently their existence is not reflected in the recorded crime statistics. Almost unanimously, the various reviews of crime statistics recommended that overcoming the problem of public mistrust required greater transparency and more independent oversight and control of the process of collecting, analysing, and presenting data. Therefore, in 2010 the Home Secretary decided that, while responsibility for the collection and validation of recorded crime data would remain with the Home Office, responsibility for analysis, interpretation, and publication of the results would transfer to an independent body, the Office for National Statistics (ONS). Nevertheless,

concerns around the consistency and integrity of police-recording practices persisted and in 2014 the UK Statistics Authority decided that crime statistics based on police data did not meet the required standard for designation as National Statistics and it stripped them of this official label.

It is too early to conclude whether these changes have reduced levels of public mistrust. A recent survey (Simpson *et al*. 2015) found that the ONS as an organization was accorded high levels of trust and a majority of respondents (66 per cent) thought that the publication of crime statistics was 'free of government interference'; however, only 28 per cent agreed that 'the government presents official figures honestly when talking about its policies'. Therefore, the question of whether or not public trust in UK crime statistics is likely to increase rests not only on the independence, robustness, and validity of the data collection and analysis, but also on the way in which the results are used and presented by politicians.

'MODERNIZATION', 'RELEVANCE', AND THE SEARCH FOR THE 'FULL JIGSAW'

Another key set of challenges facing those responsible for national statistics concerns the problem of how to balance competing demands for 'relevance', 'comprehensiveness', and robust measurement of trends. The case for relevance and comprehensiveness was made forcefully in 2000 in a radical report which advocated a fundamental shift away from the outmoded practices and philosophies underpinning the production of crime statistics, towards:

> a more flexible view of information—one where we first define the problems requiring solution and then develop the information needed to better understand those problems . . . rather than rely on the routine statistics supplied in summary form by the police. (Simmons 2000: ii).

Simmons recommended replacing the traditional *Criminal Statistics* with an annual 'Picture of Crime in England and Wales' which incorporated information from a range of sources, including the BCS, police incident data, research studies, other kinds of surveys, and administrative data from other agencies and institutions. If information was to be useful, he argued, it had to be as comprehensive, timely, reliable, and context-rich as possible. Accordingly, he maintained that police officers should be encouraged or compelled to formally record *every* incident of crime or disorder, even if merely alleged, in order to provide a victim-centred approach to crime recording. The subsequent changes which took place fell well short of Simmons' ambitions, but the decision to publish survey results alongside police data in the annual publication *Crime in England and Wale*s was clearly in line with his thinking.

Decisions about how to collect and present crime data have not occurred in a vacuum: they have responded to the changing demands of 'consumers' and the dominant preoccupations of the day. Moreover, modern government needs malleable and contextualized forms of information with which to assess and respond quickly to the highly specific and fast-changing 'crime problems' which have emerged at frequent intervals to preoccupy the public, politicians, and media. The Smith review recognized

the need for reliable data of relevance to the needs of policy-makers and practitioners, and identified 'serious and growing gaps in the national figures', accepting the need to 'extend the coverage of national statistics' (Smith 2006: 7-11). Similarly, the National Statistician used the analogy of a 'jigsaw puzzle' with missing pieces to make the case for the gradual incorporation of a much wider range of data sources into the published national crime statistics (Matheson 2011). Describing victim survey and police data as major pieces in the jigsaw, she advocated the publication of additional contextual data on crime (such as counts of non-notifiable summary offences, police records of incidents of 'antisocial behaviour', and estimates of the extent of cybercrime) in order to improve transparency and public understanding.

Many of these recommendations have been followed and ONS Statistical Bulletins now regularly present survey data on a range of crime-related topics (such as business crime and internet fraud)—although it is important to emphasize that these additional data have not yet been included in the main ('headline') crime count. Moves in this direction raise the fundamental question of whether it is a sensible ambition to work towards the production of an 'overall' or 'total' measure of crime—to use Matheson's analogy, to try to complete the full jigsaw. Clearly, if this was understood in terms of adding together every 'crime' known to have been committed in a given year (through any reliable source available), and coming up with a total figure, the task would be made almost impossibly difficult by problems of definition, double counting, serial victimization, and so on. More importantly, one would have to question whether the resulting figure would have any real meaning, having been arrived at by adding together a range of very different types of behaviour, (the proverbial 'apples and pears'), some of them inherently more 'countable' than others. They would inevitably be dominated, too, by a vast number of minor offences, many of them on the fuzzy borderline between criminal and antisocial (but non-criminal) behaviour.

TAKING ACCOUNT OF DIFFERENCES IN SERIOUSNESS AND HARM

Inevitably some kinds of offence are significantly more serious than others, and the most serious and damaging are vastly outnumbered by the relatively minor. The problem of minor offences 'counting' the same as major offences was recognized many years ago by Sellin and Wolfgang (1964), who devised a weighted index for measuring crime levels, based on the notional gravity of each recorded offence. They argued that weighting would allow more realistic comparisons of the seriousness of the crime problem, either over time or in different cities, states, or countries. They attached a score to each crime category, based upon ratings of seriousness derived from interviews with random samples of the population: the range of the index was very wide, the gravest offences being given over 300 times more weight than the least serious. Various comparisons were carried out in the USA between trends in officially recorded crime rates and annual scores on the Sellin–Wolfgang index. Some interesting results emerged—for example, Normandeau (1969) found that in Philadelphia the index indicated a contrary trend to that shown by the official Uniform Crime Rates—but eventually most criminologists and statisticians of the time abandoned it as of both dubious validity and utility.

Similar ideas have been revived more recently, however. The reviews by Simmons (2000), Smith (2006), the Statistics Commission (2006), and Matheson (2011) all discussed the possibility of using either a 'basket' of serious offences[13] or a weighted index of all crime to overcome the problem of crime figures being dominated by minor offences, although all noted the daunting difficulties involved in achieving either. Sherman *et al.* (2016) have recently created such a weighted index in the form of the 'Cambridge Crime Harm Index (CHI)'. Rather than treating all crimes equally and summing them into a single total, they argue that each crime type should be classified according to how *harmful* it is and weighted accordingly. Moreover, they include only crimes reported by victims or witnesses, omitting those proactively generated by the police or other organizations (e.g. drug arrests or shoplifting), whose incidence and harms they argue cannot be reliably be measured. Their suggested method for calculating the relative harm of a crime type is the number of days in prison which the Sentencing Guidelines Council recommends as the 'starting point' of punishment for that offence. The weighted data are then summed, and the total index score for any given year is expressed in terms of 'total CHI sentence days'. The authors argue that this represents a 'barometer of the total impact of harm from crimes committed by other citizens, as reported by witnesses and victims' and will potentially allow the measurement of 'national trends in public safety'. The overall picture of crime that emerges from this methodology is very different to that produced from traditional crime counts. For example, robbery (26 per cent of total 'harms'), grievous bodily harm (17 per cent), and rape (15 per cent) dominate the picture, while theft from vehicles, other theft, and criminal damage make up only 1 per cent each. Trends, too are different: for example, the reduction in the index between 2002–3 and 2011–12 emerges as 21 per cent, compared with a 37 per cent fall in the total count of police recorded offences over the same period.

Interesting as such approaches are, they come up against the obvious problem that not everyone would agree on how best to assess seriousness and harm. While the architects of sentencing guidelines take into account harm to victims, they also consider many other factors when recommending tariffs. Moreover, as Young (1988) argued, a minor crime to some may be experienced very differently by others. Some may also find unconvincing the very low proportion of total harm that the CHI attributes to 'volume crime' such as theft and criminal damage. There is an argument that although such offences may be relatively minor at the individual level, the whole is greater than the sum of the parts: in other words, harm (in the form of fear, worry, or anger) is caused as much by awareness of their overall frequency as by their impact on an individual. Finally, it should be emphasized that the index is based only on offences reported to and recorded by the police. Hence it inevitably under-represents offences such as domestic abuse that tend to remain hidden from police view but cause relatively high harm to victims.

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[13] The thinking behind this is that, rather like the Footsie index in relation to all company shares, it would act as a proxy for the overall state of crime. It should be based only on *serious offences* which can be *relatively reliably counted* and *change little in nature year to year*, allowing relatively robust measurement of trends

CONCLUDING COMMENTS

This chapter has considered a range of key issues in the development and expansion of both crime data and criminal statistics. From a historical perspective, the systematic measurement of crime is not new—police records have existed for over 150 years; however, it is only in recent years that we have come to rely upon multiple sources of data to build up a bigger picture of how crime levels, patterns, and trends are changing. CSEW data provide a valuable alternative to police recorded crime, and have rapidly risen in prominence, taking the lead in the battle for credibility. Even so, neither source can be said to present a 'true' picture of crime, in terms of either raw counts or relative frequency. The apparent 'crime drop' that has swept many western countries seems to reflect a real underlying change in crime levels; and yet, it raises important questions about the extent to which our methods of measurement, in an effort to balance consistency and accuracy, have evolved sufficiently to keep up with modern transformations in the crime phenomenon.

Over the past three decades, advances in information technology have not only opened up many new avenues for criminal behaviour, they have expanded the sources of data that can be used to 'measure' crime, and the ownership and control of systems of data collection and analysis. As a consequence, the messages about the shape of the 'crime problem' that are conveyed to the outside world have become more complex and, often, contradictory. The previously static, monochrome picture of crime provided by police records alone has given way to a kaleidoscope of new images produced by a variety of alternative ways of exploring the nature and scale of crime, undertaken by wide range of individuals and organizations. In short, neither the government nor the ONS (to which responsibility for official crime and justice data has transferred) retains anything like a 'monopoly on truth' where statements about the extent of crime are concerned.

Crime figures now occupy a contested space in which knowledge claims are often challenged and both data and data providers are under intense scrutiny. A series of inquiries and reviews into the UK crime statistics highlighted high levels of mistrust in both the production and dissemination of crime statistics. The public find the conflicting data sources about crime confusing, and attempts to increase public confidence by changing systems for recording and presenting data have been perceived as nothing more than government 'spin'. Distrust is further fuelled by apparent discrepancies in the official picture of falling crime that does not accord with a public perception that crime and antisocial behaviour continue to blight communities. Government responses, such as bringing the data together under an independent body and presenting a unified picture of crime in one single report, have tried to reinstall confidence in the figures. However, removal of the accreditation status of the official, police recorded, crime statistics as a 'national statistic' in 2014 called into serious question the legitimacy of this form of crime measurement. Alternative approaches, such as creating a weighted index based on seriousness or harm, offer a new way of conceptualizing the crime problem. But it seems unlikely that such approaches will readily replace the tried and tested mechanisms of crime measurement that have come to dominate our official statistics, however problematic these might be.

■ SELECTED FURTHER READING

There are relatively few recent textbooks on criminal statistics, especially in the UK. Although obviously out of date in some respects, Coleman and Moynihan's *Understanding Crime Data* (1996) is still one of the best British textbooks on the subject, and covers in more depth several of the main issues discussed in this chapter. It has the added advantage of accessibility and a light and humorous touch. We also recommend that you review previous chapters of Maguire, *The Oxford Handbook of Criminology* (2007, 2012) as these provide important contextual background to, and greater detail on, some of the issues contained in this chapter.

The ONS now publishes most of the 'official' data relating to crime and justice in England and Wales. This includes quarterly statistical bulletins containing the latest crime figures— the most recent at the time of writing being *Crime in England and Wales: Year Ending June 2016* (2016c). The ONS website is highly recommended as the primary resource for national statistics as it includes a wealth of downloadable reports, data, and tables (http://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/crimeandjustice). For those interested in methodological issues related to recorded crime and the Crime Survey for England and Wales, the *User Guide to Crime Statistics for England and Wales* (2016a) is informative and readily comprehensible. A rich archive of Home Office research and statistics reports published prior to 2013 (including statistical bulletins and analyses of data from police and other agency records, the BCS and other crime related surveys) can also be accessed at: http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20130128103514/http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/publications/science-research-statistics/research-statistics/crime-research/.

For those interested in reviewing crime and justice statistics from the other parts of the UK, we recommend the highly accessible and detailed pages of the Scottish government's crime and justice website (http://www.gov.scot/Topics/Statistics/Browse/Crime-Justice). This provides a 'high level summary' of statistical trends across many areas of crime and justice, and links to a wide range of published reports, statistical bulletins, and downloadable tables. For the most up-to-date information on police recorded crime you should refer to the *Recorded crime in Scotland, 2015-16* statistical bulletin; and for the most recent published data from the Scottish Crime and Justice Survey (Scotland's equivalent to the CSEW) the *2014-15 Scottish Crime and Justice Survey: Main Findings*. For details of crime and justice statistics in Northern Ireland, we refer you to the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (http://www.nisra.gov.uk/publications/default.asp4.htm). The most recently published reports of relevance here are *Trends in Police Recorded Crime in Northern Ireland 1998/99 to 2015/16*; and *Experience of Crime: Findings from the 2014/15 Northern Ireland Crime Survey*.

There are also several compilations of data and statistics providing international comparisons of crime rates and patterns. Among the most comprehensive is the *European Sourcebook of Crime and Criminal Justice Statistics* which is collated by a panel of experts from across Europe (http://www.europeansourcebook.org/). The fifth edition (HEUNI, 2014) covers the five years from 2007 to 2011 and includes police, prosecution, conviction, and correctional statistics, as well as data from the victimization surveys (http://www.heuni.fi/en/index/tiedotteet/2014/09/europeansourcebookofcrimeandcriminaljusticestatistics2014published.html). Interesting cross-national surveys include the International Crime Victim Survey (see van Dijk's *The International Crime Victims Survey 1988-2010* (2013) and Del Frate's 'International Crime Business Survey' (2004). Statistical and other kinds of research data on the nature and extent of over 40 separate types of crime (together with data on their history and social context) are presented and analysed in Brookman *et al*'s comprehensive *Handbook on Crime* (2010).

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