

Scottish Crime
and Justice
Survey

*Scottish
Government*

Scottish Crime and Justice Survey

September 2009

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About the UK Statistics Authority

The UK Statistics Authority is an independent body operating at arm's length from government as a non-ministerial department, directly accountable to Parliament. It was established on 1 April 2008 by the *Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007*.

The Authority's overall objective is to promote and safeguard the production and publication of official statistics that serve the public good. It is also required to promote and safeguard the quality and comprehensiveness of official statistics, and good practice in relation to official statistics.

The Statistics Authority has two main functions:

1. oversight of the Office for National Statistics (ONS) – the executive office of the Authority;
2. independent scrutiny (monitoring and assessment) of all official statistics produced in the UK.

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ASSESSMENT AND DESIGNATION

Under the provisions of the Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007, the UK Statistics Authority has a statutory function to assess sets of statistics against the Code of Practice for Official Statistics, with a view to determining whether it is appropriate for the statistics to be designated, or to retain their designation, as National Statistics.

Designation as National Statistics means that the statistics are deemed to be compliant with the Code of Practice. Whilst the Code is wide-ranging, designation may be broadly interpreted to mean that the statistics meet identified user needs; are produced, managed and disseminated to high standards; and are well explained.

Assessment reports will not normally comment further, for example on the validity of the statistics as a social or economic measure; though reports may point to such questions if the Authority believes that further research would be desirable.

Designation as National Statistics will sometimes be granted in cases where some changes still need to be made to meet fully the requirements of the Code, on condition that steps are taken by the producer body, within a stated timeframe, to address the weaknesses. This is to avoid public confusion and does not reduce the obligation to comply with the Code.

Designation is granted on the basis of the information provided to the Statistics Authority, primarily by the organisation that produces the statistics. The information includes a range of factual evidence and also assurances by senior statisticians in the producer organisation. The views of users are also sought. Should further information come to light subsequently which changes the Authority's analysis, the Assessment report may be withdrawn and revised as necessary.

Once designated as National Statistics, it is a statutory requirement on the producer organisation to ensure that the set of statistics continues to be produced in compliance with the Code of Practice.

1 Introduction

- 1.1 This is one of a series of reports to be prepared under the provisions of the *Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007*.¹ The Act requires all statistics currently designated as National Statistics to be assessed against the Code of Practice for Official Statistics.² The Act also allows Ministers or the National Statistician to request an assessment of other official statistics in order for them to gain National Statistics status. This report is in response to such a request. The report covers the *Scottish Crime and Justice Survey*, produced by the Scottish Government.
- 1.2 The assessment of the *Scottish Crime and Justice Survey* was carried out alongside assessments of two other major Scottish surveys, the *Scottish Health Survey* and the *Scottish House Condition Survey*. An assessment of a fourth major Scottish survey, the *Scottish Household Survey*, was due to be carried out shortly afterwards. Cross-cutting issues arising from the four assessments will be covered in a separate Monitoring and Assessment note.
- 1.3 The Statistics Authority will be inviting comments on both the process for assessment and the presentation of Assessment reports, with a view to further development of the arrangements in the coming months. The forward programme of Assessments can be found on the Authority's website³ along with further information on the principles and procedures for assessment⁴.

¹ http://www.opsi.gov.uk/Acts/acts2007/pga/ukpga_20070018_en.pdf

² <http://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/assessment/code-of-practice/code-of-practice-for-official-statistics.pdf>.

³ <http://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/assessment/programme-of-assessment/index.html>

⁴ <http://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/assessment/principles---procedures/index.html>

1.4 The remainder of this report is structured as follows:

Section 2 Summary of findings, highlighting the main strengths and weaknesses in relation to the Code of Practice. This summary includes the UK Statistics Authority's decision in relation to designation as National Statistics.

Section 3 Subject of the assessment, an overview of the statistics and their history.

Section 4 The Assessment team's detailed assessment, providing more details about the assessment of compliance against each principle and protocol of the Code of Practice.

Annex 1 Suggestions for improvement

Annex 2 Summary of the assessment process and users' views.

1.5 This report was prepared by the Authority's Assessment team, and approved by the Board of the Statistics Authority on the advice of the Head of Assessment.

2 Summary of findings

2.1 Decision concerning designation as National Statistics

- 2.1.1 In accordance with Section 12 of the *Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007*, this assessment report has been published before the set of statistics to which it relates has been published for the first time. Because of that, it has not been possible to assess compliance with all aspects of the Code of Practice for Official Statistics: for example, we have not been able to review final versions of the commentary and analysis which aids interpretation of the data.
- 2.1.2 However, we regard the evidence available as sufficient to conclude that the environment in which the statistics are produced is consistent with the Code, and that the *Scottish Crime and Justice Survey* statistics meet most requirements of the Code. On this basis we are content that this set of statistics should be designated as a new National Statistics product, subject to the Scottish Government implementing the enhancements listed at section 2.4 below and reporting them to the Authority by January 2010.
- 2.1.3 Designation as National Statistics means that the statistics are deemed to be compliant with the Code of Practice, and thus that they meet identified user needs; are produced, managed and disseminated to high standards; and are well explained.
- 2.1.4 Designation also signifies that, subject to any caveats in this report, the Statistics Authority judges that the statistics are readily accessible, produced according to sound methods and managed impartially and objectively in the public interest.

2.2 Summary of strengths and weaknesses

- 2.2.1 The Statistics Authority is satisfied that the *Scottish Crime and Justice Survey* complies with most aspects of the Code of Practice. User engagement involves a range of opportunities for internal and external users to provide comments. Some significant changes from the predecessor surveys have been introduced within the present survey in response to users' comments. They relate to the survey design, its sampling, and its methodology (see para 3.3).
- 2.2.2 The producers provide downloadable data files and a guidance manual to give users the opportunity to analyse the data further.
- 2.2.3 Scottish Government social researchers responsible for producing the *Scottish Crime and Justice Survey* plan to develop the survey webpages to provide more information for users of the survey.

2.3 Detailed recommendations

- 2.3.1 The Assessment team identified some areas where it felt that the Scottish Government could strengthen its compliance with the Code. Those considered essential to enable designation as National Statistics are shown in section 2.4,

below. Other suggestions, which would improve the statistics and the service provided to users but which are not central to their designation, are listed at annex 1.

2.4 Requirements for designation as National Statistics

- | | |
|----------------------|--|
| Requirement 1 | Agree to publish information on users and user views, including whether the survey meets their needs, in 2010 (para 4.5) |
| Requirement 2 | Ensure that all releases of these statistics are accessible via the National Statistics Publication Hub (para 4.6) |
| Requirement 3 | Publish a revisions policy for these statistics (para 4.7) |
| Requirement 4 | Publish the arrangements for protecting confidential <i>Scottish Crime and Justice Survey</i> data (para 4.20) |
| Requirement 5 | Draw public attention to any change to a pre-announced release date and explain fully the reason for the change at the same time (para 4.30) |

3 Subject of the assessment

- 3.1 The *Scottish Crime and Justice Survey* is a new statistical product for 2009, although the Scottish Government has assured us that the results are comparable with those from previous Scottish crime surveys in most respects. The survey involves face-to-face interviews with adults (aged 16 or over) living in private households in Scotland. It aims to provide a valid and reliable measure of adults' experience of crime, including services provided to the victims of crime. The publication presents information on people's experience and perceptions of crime in Scotland, and their attitudes to a range of crime and justice-related issues.⁵ It also presents trends in the level and nature of crime in Scotland, and information on how the risk of crime varies for different groups of people.
- 3.2 Crime rates are an area of high public interest and *Scottish Crime and Justice Survey* statistics are intended to give the public the best available information about people's experiences of crime in Scotland. The Scottish Government and police forces use the survey results to make policy decisions about crime and justice which affect all the people of Scotland. The survey results also inform the Scottish Parliament's scrutiny of the effectiveness of these policies. Criminal justice organisations, including voluntary organisations, use the information to aid their understanding of the risks of victimisation and which groups are at risk of victimisation for certain crimes. This helps to develop appropriate victim support services and aids crime prevention. Academics also use the survey results for education and research purposes.
- 3.3 One of the main purposes of the survey is to provide information on crime that can be compared with police recorded crime statistics. Crime surveys can overcome some of the limitations to police recorded crime statistics - for example, not all incidents of victimisation are reported to, or recorded by, the police. The *Scottish Crime and Justice Survey* is the primary source of information on the types of crime that are under-reported to the police, such as domestic violence. The survey results are also used to measure two of the national indicators of the National Performance Framework⁶ (crime victimisation rates and public perception of crime) and four indicators in the Scottish Policing Performance Framework.⁷
- 3.4 The survey was launched in April 2008 and replaces the *Scottish Crime and Victimisation Survey* which was carried out in 2004 and 2006. Prior to this the *Scottish Crime Survey* was carried out in 1993, 1996, 2000 and 2003. The Scottish Government has informed us that it carried out comprehensive reviews following publication of both the 2003 and 2006 surveys. A number of major changes in design, methodology and sample size were made as a result of these reviews. The Scottish Government increased the sample size (from around 5,000 to around 16,000) and moved to an annual publication instead of the previous 3-4-yearly cycle. Other changes included:
- reverting to face-to-face interviews instead of telephone interviews;

⁵ <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Research/by-topic/crime-and-justice/crime-and-justice-survey/>

⁶ <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/About/scotPerforms>

⁷ <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/Doc/217783/0058316.pdf>

- a move to continuous fieldwork;
- coverage of additional justice topics;
- removing the upper age cap of 60 for the self-completion sections to meet equality requirements; and
- re-defining certain crimes to ensure consistency with UN definitions.

- 3.5 The annual cost of the survey is in the region of £1.5 million. In 2007 the contract to carry out the survey was awarded to TNS-BRMB through a competitive tender. The contract is to manage the survey from 2008 to 2010, but there is an option to extend this to 2010/11. The contractor carries out all analysis and reporting and communicates regularly with the survey team within the Scottish Government. A Project Board within the Scottish Government oversees the survey and external guidance is provided by a Technical Advisory Group.
- 3.6 The *Scottish Crime and Justice Survey* statistical release will be published in October 2009 and will include the results of interviews conducted between 1 April 2008 and 31 March 2009.
- 3.7 The Scottish Government assured us that it will publish a Technical Report along with the statistical release. This will provide details of the methods used. The Scottish Government also plans to publish thematic reports on sexual victimisation, drugs misuse and partner abuse. It has yet to set dates for these publications. The Scottish Government assured us that it will submit the full data set from the survey to the UK Data Archive in early 2010.

4 Detailed assessment

Principle 1: Meeting user needs

The production, management and dissemination of official statistics should meet the requirements of informed decision-making by government, public services, business, researchers and the public.

- 4.1 The main internal users are policy and analytical staff. External users include academics, the media and criminal justice organisations.
- 4.2 The Scottish Government carries out regular discussions with users about the content of the survey questionnaire, data analysis, and reporting and dissemination of results. There is annual consultation with academics at the Scottish Centre for Crime and Justice Research to review the criminological content of the questionnaire.
- 4.3 The Scottish Government took account of users' views when redesigning the survey. For example, the survey was extended to include questions on civil justice in response to requests from users. Also, the move to annual publications is in response to user needs. Users that we approached told us that they were satisfied with the level and format of engagement.
- 4.4 Users and stakeholders were made aware of the proposed changes to the *Scottish Crime and Justice Survey* and were involved in its development.
- 4.5 There are no data available yet on the Scottish Government website on the uses and users of the *Scottish Crime and Justice Survey*. Some information on uses and users can be found for previous Scottish crime surveys on the Economic and Social Data Service website⁸. The Scottish Government has assured us that, following a widespread consultation on the *Scottish Crime and Justice Survey* in early 2010, it plans to improve the survey website to include information on potential uses for the statistics and a statement on user engagement. As part of the designation as National Statistics, the Scottish Government should agree to publish information on users and user views, including whether the survey meets their needs, in 2010⁹ (Requirement 1).

⁸ <http://www.esds.ac.uk/government/scs/usage/>

⁹ In relation to Principle 1 Practice 5 of the Code of Practice

Principle 2: Impartiality and objectivity

Official statistics, and information about statistical processes, should be managed impartially and objectively.

- 4.6 Statistics are published via the Scottish Government website and are free-of-charge for all. They are listed on the National Statistics Publication Hub but no release date is given and no link is provided. As part of the designation as National Statistics the Scottish Government should ensure that all releases of these statistics are accessible via the National Statistics Publication Hub¹⁰ (Requirement 2).
- 4.7 As part of the designation as National Statistics the Scottish Government should publish a revisions policy for these statistics¹¹ (Requirement 3). This was being developed at the time of the assessment.
- 4.8 The intention to redesign the survey was included in the report of the previous crime survey, the *Scottish Crime and Victimization Survey*, published in 2006. The project team also gave a number of presentations to a range of internal and external stakeholders. Changes in the design and methodology of the survey will be described in the *Scottish Crime and Justice Survey* publications. The Technical Report will provide full documentation.
- 4.9 The Scottish Government publishes a set of rates that it may charge for statistical services, although the final decision on whether to apply these charges is left to individual teams. The *Scottish Crime and Justice Survey* team informed us that it has yet to charge for additional data or analyses.

¹⁰ In relation to Principle 2 Practice 1 of the Code of Practice

¹¹ In relation to Principle 2 Practice 6 of the Code of Practice

Principle 3: Integrity

At all stages in the production, management and dissemination of official statistics, the public interest should prevail over organisational, political or personal interests.

- 4.10 No incidents of political pressures, abuses of trust or complaints relating to professional integrity, quality or standards were reported or identified by the Assessment Team.
- 4.11 The Scottish Government has assured us that all statutory obligations and international guidelines are followed.

Principle 4: Sound methods and assured quality

Statistical methods should be consistent with scientific principles and internationally recognised best practices, and be fully documented. Quality should be monitored and assured taking account of internationally agreed practices.

- 4.12 As explained in para 3.4, a number of significant changes were made to the previous crime survey in response to users' views. These changes will be documented in the survey publication.
- 4.13 The data are subjected to a number of quality assurance checks by the contractors, including coding validation procedures and data matching. Further quality assurance is carried out by the survey team within the Scottish Government and by the survey's Technical Advisory Group.
- 4.14 Although there have been significant changes to the methodology from previous Scottish crime surveys, the Scottish Government has assured us that the results from the new survey are comparable with those from previous surveys in most respects, notwithstanding some significant methodological changes.
- 4.15 The statistical release for the *Scottish Crime and Justice Survey* will cross-refer to relevant statistics from *Recorded Crime in Scotland* and provide some associated commentary. This will help to provide a more "rounded" picture of crime levels in Scotland. The Scottish Government has assured us that it plans to review this approach in 2010 to assess whether further comparisons are feasible.
- 4.16 The *Scottish Crime and Justice Survey* shares much of the same methodology for measuring victimisation with the *British Crime Survey* which covers England and Wales. The Scottish Government has positive links with the producers of the *British Crime Survey* and the *Northern Ireland Crime Survey*. The *Scottish Crime and Justice Survey* statistical release will include some comparative data from the three surveys, along with suitable commentary to discuss issues such as legislative differences. The Scottish Government has commissioned a report by an independent justice research centre on the comparability of the three UK crime surveys. This report is due to be published in late 2009.
- 4.17 The Scottish Government has a strategy for the harmonisation of the major Scottish surveys. This aims to meet information needs through a more coordinated approach to conducting surveys in Scotland.¹² The *Scottish Crime and Justice Survey* has incorporated the harmonised set of core socio-economic questions developed as part of this strategy.

¹² The harmonisation programme covers The Scottish Crime and Justice Survey, The Scottish Health Survey, The Scottish House Condition Survey and The Scottish Household Survey. See <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Statistics/About/Surveys>

Principle 5: Confidentiality

Private information about individual persons (including bodies corporate) compiled in the production of official statistics is confidential, and should be used for statistical purposes only.

- 4.18 The Scottish Government has assured us that it takes all necessary steps to protect the confidentiality of the data collected through the *Scottish Crime and Justice Survey*. Only the private contractor firm which carries out the survey has access to personal details. This information is removed from the data files provided for the survey publications and the data archive. Therefore there is little risk of a breach in confidentiality for these statistics.
- 4.19 The survey's Technical Advisory Group provides advice on confidentiality issues. In addition, the Scottish Government adopts various self-checking procedures to address ethical and confidentiality issues and carries out peer reviews on these matters.
- 4.20 The Scottish Government is currently drafting a Corporate Policy Statement on Confidentiality which covers statistical disclosure control. As part of the designation as National Statistics, the Scottish Government should publish the arrangements for protecting confidential *Scottish Crime and Justice Survey* data¹³ (Requirement 4).

¹³ In relation to Principle 5 Practice 4 of the Code of Practice

Principle 6: Proportionate burden

The cost burden on data suppliers should not be excessive and should be assessed relative to the benefits arising from the use of the statistics.

- 4.21 Participation in the survey is voluntary. The website has specific pages that contain information for potential interviewees. All respondents are provided with leaflets with sources of support for victims of crime, a freephone number to the contractor and a telephone number for the Scottish Government.

Principle 7: Resources

The resources made available for statistical activities should be sufficient to meet the requirements of this Code and should be used efficiently and effectively.

- 4.22 The Scottish Government employs two staff with responsibility for the *Scottish Crime and Justice Survey* with additional support from the survey's Project Board, Technical Advisory Group and colleagues in Justice Analytical Services in the Scottish Government. It has assured us that this is sufficient resource at present. The Scottish Government has a dedicated Training and Development intranet that includes a competence framework and provides learning and development opportunities for staff. It also has well-established procedures for recruiting staff.
- 4.23 The Scottish Government assured us that appropriate project management techniques are used internally to manage staff resources effectively.

Principle 8: Frankness and accessibility

Official statistics, accompanied by full and frank commentary, should be readily accessible to all users.

- 4.24 The statistics are published on the Scottish Government website.
- 4.25 The Assessment team had not seen the final version of the 2009 statistical release at the time of the assessment. On the basis of draft text, the publication will include:
- frank discussion of the survey's limitations;
 - details of methods and definitions; and
 - commentary which aids understanding of the data.
- 4.26 The survey results are used to measure two of the national indicators of the National Performance Framework and four indicators in the Scottish Policing Performance Framework. The survey team explained that they plan to refer to these targets in the main publication and to provide signposting, for example weblinks, to where these targets are reported on.
- 4.27 Additional commentary on potential uses of the statistics may encourage wider use of the data.
- 4.28 The Scottish Government has assured the Assessment team that it intends to encourage and enable analysis and re-use of the survey results by making data available in downloadable files. It will also publish a user manual to aid analysis and re-use of data.

Protocol 1: User engagement

Effective user engagement is fundamental both to trust in statistics and securing maximum public value. This Protocol draws together the relevant practices set out elsewhere in the Code and expands on the requirements in relation to consultation.

4.29 See Principle 1.

Protocol 2: Release practices

Statistical reports should be released into the public domain in an orderly manner that promotes public confidence and gives equal access to all, subject to relevant legislation.

- 4.30 The original publication date for the 2008 survey was September 2009. However, the Scottish Government website states that the statistical bulletin will be published in October 2009 and does not provide an explanation for the delay. As part of the designation as National Statistics the Scottish Government should draw public attention to any change to a pre-announced release date and explain fully the reason for the change at the same time¹⁴ (Requirement 5).
- 4.31 The Scottish Government stores the correspondence relating to pre-release access to these statistics in its records management system. A list of individuals with pre-release access to the statistics in their final form, together with information on how long these individuals have pre-release access and the reasons for granting access, is available on request. This is in accordance with section 8 of the Pre-release Access to Official Statistics (Scotland) Order 2008. We suggest that the Scottish Government publishes records of those granted pre-release access to these statistics in their final form.

¹⁴ In relation to Protocol 2 Practice 5 of the Code of Practice

Protocol 3: The use of administrative sources for statistical purposes

Administrative sources should be fully exploited for statistical purposes, subject to adherence to appropriate safeguards.

4.32 *Scottish Crime and Justice Survey* statistics are not compiled from administrative sources.

Annex 1: Suggestions for improvement

A1.1 This annex includes some suggestions for improvement to the Scottish Government's statistical outputs, in the interest of the public good. These are not formally required for designation, but the Assessment team considers that their implementation will improve public confidence in the production, management and dissemination of official statistics.

Suggestion 1 Publish information about the potential uses of the statistics to encourage wider use of the data (paras 4.5 and 4.27)

Suggestion 2 Strengthen the commentary about statistics from both the *Scottish Crime and Justice Survey* and *Recorded Crime in Scotland* and consider their coherence when viewed together (para 4.15)

Suggestion 3 Publish records of those granted pre-release access to these statistics in their final form (para 4.31)

Annex 2: Summary of assessment process and users' views

A2.1 This assessment was conducted from June to August 2009.

A2.2 The Assessment team met representatives of the Scottish Government at an initial meeting in June 2009. Some background information was provided by the Scottish Government during July 2009, and Written Evidence for Assessment was provided on 31 July 2009. The Assessment team subsequently met with the Scottish Government during August 2009 to confirm and clarify the written evidence provided.

Summary of users and stakeholders contacted, and issues raised

A2.4 The Assessment team received 6 responses from the user consultation. The respondents were grouped as follows:

Internal Scottish Government	4
Academic	1
Criminal justice organisation	1

A2.5 In general, users were satisfied with the survey statistics and with the producers in the Scottish Government. They mentioned the various ways in which they use the statistics and the substantial efforts made by the producers to involve users in the development and dissemination of the survey. Some issues were raised about the timeliness of data, the level of detail available, and the types of issue covered by previous versions of the survey. The producers addressed these and other issues in the subsequent *Scottish Crime and Justice Survey*.

A2.6 In August 2009 the assessment team met with the contractors who carry out the data collection, analysis and reporting writing for the *Scottish Crime and Justice Survey*.

Key documents/links provided

Written Evidence for Assessment document

<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/About/scotPerforms>

<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/Doc/217783/0058316.pdf>

<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Research/by-topic/crime-and-justice/crime-and-justice-survey>

<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Research/by-topic/crime-and-justice/crime-and-justice-survey/background>

<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Research/by-topic/crime-and-justice/crime-and-justice-survey/interviewee-information>

<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Research/by-topic/crime-and-justice/crime-and-justice-survey/interviewee-information/faqs>

