



HOUSE OF COMMONS

LONDON SW1A 0AA

Andrew Dilnot CBE
Chair of the UK Statistics Authority
1 Drummond Gate
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Dear Andrew,

I am writing with regard to reports in the Sunday Times of “figures released to The Sunday Times” by the Home Office showing “large falls in crime”.

It appears that statistics based on ones released by the Office for National Statistics in October 2012 were given to the Sunday Times by the Government and presented as new figures.

However, these figures were divorced from the Crime Survey for England and Wales data, which was released by the ONS at the same time as recorded crime in October 2012. As you know, this is crucial to the overall picture of crime as it includes crimes not reported to the police. The Home Office figures also present a comparison to data from two years ago, rather than up-to-date crime trends which present a different picture.

As you will know the October ONS release, which the Home Office have used in a new form, stated that the CSEW showed a 6% decrease in overall crime, but that it was “too early to conclude that the latest decrease, following the fairly flat trend seen in recent years, is evidence of an emerging downward trend”. The October release also said that recorded crime has fallen by 6% compared with the previous year, but had the full figures published and presented in an accessible way to inform public debate. There was no mention of a 10% reduction.

The Sunday Times report also states that “officials point out that overall crime has continued to fall since June”. This is despite the official crime figures covering the period since June not being released until 24 January 2013, and suggests the Home Office has selectively briefed a national newspaper about statistics not yet in the public domain.

As the BCS/CSEW measure shows a 4% reduction in crime since the last full year prior to the general election, which is not yet statistically significant, I am sure you will agree that crime statistics must be presented in an impartial and comprehensive manner to avoid misleading the public and giving the impression that there are “large falls in crime”.

I am sure you will agree these are serious issues warranting investigation. Particularly I think it important to establish whether it is appropriate for the Home Office to:

1. Release Government statistics to a national newspaper with an apparent spin that these are new official statistics.
2. Present previously released statistics as “large falls in crime” when the ONS has said it is “too early to conclude that the latest decrease, following the fairly flat trend seen in recent years, is evidence of an emerging downward trend”
3. Briefing a national newspaper on crime statistics that have not yet been verified or released publicly.

It is in my view unacceptable for a Government department to be ‘releasing’ apparently official statistics to a national newspaper, particularly ones apparently contradicting the caution applied to recent crime statistics by the Office for National Statistics.

It is also clearly unacceptable to selectively brief a national newspaper on statistics not yet released.

Yours sincerely,

David Hanson MP
Shadow Policing Minister