
Chair of the UK Statistics Authority, Sir Andrew Dilnot CBE

Mr James Cleverly MP
House of Commons
LONDON
SW1A 0AA

18 February 2016

Dear Mr Cleverly,

COMMUNICATION OF CRIME STATISTICS

Thank you for your letter asking us to comment on the recent press release¹ that was issued by the Labour Party on 21 January following the Office for National Statistics' (ONS) publication of the latest crime statistics for England and Wales².

The Authority has reviewed the Labour Party press release and concluded that it quoted the numbers accurately. However, by focusing on police recorded crime without appropriate caveats, and omitting evidence from the more complete and reliable source (for most violent crimes) of the Crime Survey for England and Wales, it may have given, in parts, a misleading impression.

In January 2014 the UK Statistics Authority removed National Statistics status from police recorded crime statistics, following an assessment³ which found that the administrative data on which they are based did not meet our expected standards of trustworthiness and quality. Our particular concern was that they reflected recording practices rather than actual crime. If the police improve recording practices as we required, an increase in police recorded crime would be expected.

I have written to Mr Dromey, setting out the appropriate caveats about the increase in the number of violent crimes recorded by the police. If included, these would have given a more balanced interpretation of the statistics.

I have restated my view that all statements made on the basis of official statistics should summarise statistical trends accurately and with appropriate balance and caveats, particularly in relation to crime statistics as we approach the Police and Crime Commissioner elections in May of this year.

A copy of this correspondence will be published on our website⁴.

¹ <http://press.labour.org.uk/post/137742705989/recorded-crime-up-6-per-cent-the-biggest-increase>

² <http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/rel/crime-stats/crime-statistics/crime-in-england-and-wales---year-ending-september-2015/stb-crime-sept-2015.html>

³ <https://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/publications-list/?keyword=&type=assessment-report&theme=crime-and-justice&producer=office-for-national-statistics&date=2014>

⁴ <https://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/correspondence-list/>

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Andrew Dilnot". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Sir Andrew Dilnot CBE