
Ed Humpherson, Director General for Regulation

Iain Bell
ONS Deputy National Statistician
Director General, Population and Public Policy

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Dear Iain

NATIONAL STATISTICS STATUS: FRAUD AND COMPUTER MISUSE STATISTICS

Fraud and computer misuse statistics fill a big gap in our knowledge about crimes that the general population experiences. An indication of the size of that gap is that the estimated number of those crimes is around 45% of the estimate of all the crimes measured by the Crime Survey for England and Wales.

On behalf of the Board of the Statistics Authority, I am pleased to confirm the designation of ONS's statistics on fraud and computer misuse as National Statistics. The continuing National Statistics status of all other statistics derived from the Crime Survey for England and Wales was confirmed in December 2016. At that time ONS were developing statistics on fraud and computer misuse from that survey and classed them as experimental.

The way the team developed these statistics was thorough, proportionate to the nature of the statistics and transparent. They planned the introduction well and collaborated with a variety of experts. Throughout the process, the team remained mindful of possible effects on existing crime statistics and their use.

We saw evidence of how the team received feedback from various users during the experimental phase and responded well to specific needs arising through this feedback. They also worked with the media to increase that group's understanding and guide their interpretation. Having established fraud and computer misuse statistics, we would encourage the team to extend engagement about them even further.

The team have worked hard to tell the story of fraud and computer misuse experienced by the general population. They collaborated with providers of other data sources to interpret results and give greater insight into how this fits into the wider story of fraud and computer misuse, including that experienced by commercial organisations. They published helpful explanatory information in various publications. The complexity of the topic and the patchwork of data sources makes it hard to tell the story clearly to a lay audience.

You have said previously you are looking to overhaul the way that you present crime statistics, and I support you in that. For these statistics, the team should continue to find simpler and clearer ways

to present the statistics and explanatory information to lead to even greater understanding of fraud and computer misuse and bring it to a wider audience.

The annex to this letter includes a fuller description of the improvements your team have made to the statistics.

Thank you and to your team for the way you have improved the relevance of statistics on crimes experienced by the general population by adding statistics on fraud and computer misuse to the estimates, and for your ongoing commitment to improve crime statistics.

I am copying this letter to John Pullinger, National Statistician; Debra Prestwood, Head of Profession for Statistics, ONS; and Mark Bangs, Crime Statistics and Analysis, ONS.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ed Humpherson', with a stylized, cursive script.

Ed Humpherson
Director General for Regulation

Annex: Review of statistics on fraud and computer misuse (a subset of statistics from the Crime Survey for England and Wales)

<i>Value: Innovation and improvement – Statistics producers should be creative and motivated to improve statistics and data, recognising the potential to harness technological advances for the development of all parts of the production and dissemination process</i>	
Actions taken by ONS	Office for Statistics Regulation’s evaluation of evidence
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Responded to a gap in statistics on crime as recognised in the National Statistician’s Review of Crime Statistics for England and Wales Commissioned the development of these statistics and published them as experimental statistics from October 2015 Involved users in their development 	<p>Introducing fraud and computer misuse statistics fills a big gap in knowledge about that crime and its size relative to other crimes that the general population experiences.</p> <p>Introducing the statistics as experimental statistics has allowed ONS to involve users, potential users and stakeholders in their development and to build in quality at an early stage.</p>
<i>Value: Clarity and insight – Statistics and data should be presented clearly, explained meaningfully and provide authoritative insights that serve the public good</i>	
Actions taken by ONS	Office for Statistics Regulation’s evaluation of evidence
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Published estimates of fraud and computer misuse alongside estimates of all crime experienced by the general population and published information on the characteristics of victims of fraud Gave guidance to the media on how to interpret the statistics on fraud and computer misuse following initial misinterpretation of the results Published explanatory information in the main crime statistics report; in a longer report dedicated to fraud and computer misuse statistics and in the accompanying user guide Brought estimates from the survey together with other industry and national police data sources to present a rounder picture of fraud and computer misuse, consulting with data providers to better understand and interpret the data Gave guidance on which source of statistics on fraud and computer misuse to use in which circumstances 	<p>To judge the clarity and insight of these statistics and data we considered:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The complexity of the subject matter, the statistics and other data sources How well the statistics were reported and explained in the latest publication (y/end September 2017) given this context <p>Positive factors we saw include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The team’s close links with providers of related data to aid interpretation, and their knowledge of the subject built up over the period of the development and experimental phase The way they set the estimates of fraud and computer misuse in the context of all crime experienced measured by the Crime Survey for England and Wales and of other sources of data on fraud The explanatory information, especially the guidance and summary chart about different data sources and how to use them, and their work with the media <p><u>Looking to the future</u></p> <p>The team should explore ways to make information easier to find; rationalise and simplify it to reach a wider audience and to use data visualisations and other ways of presenting the story more simply</p>

Value: <i>Relevance to users – Users of statistics and data should be at the centre of statistical production; their needs should be understood, their views sought and acted on, and their use of statistics supported</i>	
Actions taken by ONS	Office for Statistics Regulation’s evaluation of evidence
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Received feedback and queries from different types of users during the experimental phase. These include FCA, Which?, NCA, Trading Standards, Statistics Netherlands, and the Home Office. Investigated necessary changes to data collection to meet needs identified through the feedback 	<p>The team responded well to input from various bodies with an interest in the statistics, including taking advice from the Payment Systems Regulator about push and pull payment fraud.</p> <p><u>Looking to the future</u></p> <p>The team should look to engage even more widely now that the experimental phase is complete</p>
Quality: <i>Sound Methods – Producers of statistics and data should use the best available methods and recognised standards and be open about their decisions</i>	
Actions taken by ONS	Office for Statistics Regulation’s evaluation of evidence
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Took advice from the National Statistician’s Crime Statistics Advisory panel and worked closely with industry experts and providers of other data to develop these statistics Explained the changes in advance and during the development process and experimental phase Commissioned work to develop test and pilot questions on fraud and cybercrime; carried out a large-scale field trial of 2000 interviews Introduced questions to half of the survey sample to test for effects on other results Used established methods and Home Office Counting Rules to develop the statistics Published reports giving details of works and results of trials Published detailed information on the limitations of the methods and what that means for the data; published uncertainty measures Showed analysis over time, with and without new statistics included in the last two years 	<p>To judge the soundness of the methods used to develop these statistics we considered</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The context that the questions were added to an established, high quality, complex social survey What this means for the way the statistics were developed and explained <p>Positive factors we saw include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The thoroughness of the development and testing process The way the team drew on experts in social survey development and in the subject of fraud, on producers of related statistics and on the advice and support of the National Statistician’s Crime Statistics Advisory Committee The transparency and openness of the development process that kept those with an interest up to date throughout The team’s mindfulness of the effect of introducing new measures of fraud and computer misuse on existing statistics and their use.