
Mark Pont, Assessment Programme Lead

David Blunt
Chief Statistician and Head of Profession
Ministry of Justice
(by email)

5 May 2020

Dear David

PROVEN REOFFENDING AND CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM STATISTICS

As you are aware, we recently completed our short review of compliance with the [Code of Practice for Statistics](#) of the Ministry of Justice's (MoJ) [Proven Reoffending](#) and [Criminal Justice Statistics](#). I am pleased to confirm that these statistics should continue to be designated as National Statistics.

We chose to review these statistics because of the continued policy and media focus on the justice system and, in particular, on the relationship between prison sentence lengths and reoffending. We reviewed the statistics against the standards set out in the three pillars of the Code – trustworthiness, quality and value. Following a constructive conversation about our findings with the MoJ statisticians who produce the statistics, this letter outlines the key strengths we identified and two areas that we would like you to consider as part of your ongoing development work.

We found many positive aspects in the way that MoJ produces and presents these statistics, which enhance their value and quality, including:

- Your teams regularly engage with users of the statistics and their outputs are influenced by user needs. For example, the teams are in regular contact with several stakeholder groups, initially formed from the users with an interest in specific MoJ statistical publications, but who now feed in on a broad range of statistical topics. The teams also log all the Parliamentary Questions and Freedom of Information requests they receive and review them on a quarterly basis, with a view to proactively publishing new statistics to meet recurring or topical user needs: in February 2020, this led to statistics about assaults on emergency workers being included in the Criminal Justice statistics.
- The presentation of the statistics is clear and insightful. For example, both statistical bulletins have a concise 'Main points' section, where key messages are pulled out and changes in the most recent data are put in the context of longer-term trends. Your teams told us that they are considering including a 'Statistician's comment' at the beginning of each Criminal Justice statistics publication: we agree that clearly emphasising the 'take-home', overarching messages from the statistics helpful.
- Our 2018 review of [The Public Value of Justice Statistics](#) highlighted the need for statistics that move from counting people as they interact with specific parts of the justice system to telling stories about the journeys people take. We were really pleased and excited to hear that MoJ is involved with several collaborative and innovative projects that will allow it and others to put data together to do this:
 - MoJ teams already collaborate with the Office for National Statistics (ONS), Home Office, Her Majesty's Courts and Tribunals Service and other producers to enable the production of ONS statistical releases such as [Child abuse and the criminal justice system](#) and [Modern slavery in the UK](#). These releases bring together data sources to tell more-coherent stories about individuals' journeys through the justice

- system and provide insight into really important societal issues. We encourage the teams to publish links to these reports on the MoJ GOV.UK statistics pages.
- The Criminal Justice team is in the process of developing a dashboard with ONS that will list and link to all the data outputs available across Government and other organisations related to specific offences (for example knife crime). This will improve the accessibility of data and the evidence base available to users of the statistics.
 - Work was undertaken by MoJ and the Home Office in 2019 to expand MoJ's data extract from the Police National Computer to include additional information. This includes, for example, more detail on the method of the offence and offence location. Once the quality of these new data has been fully assessed, this upgrade will allow MoJ statisticians to broaden analysis related to topics of known user interest, such as knife crime.
 - In collaboration with Administrative Data Research UK, MoJ is undertaking an ambitious data linkage project called 'Data First'. Data First will anonymously link data from across the family, civil and criminal courts in England and Wales, enabling sustainable research on how the justice system is used and enhancing the evidence base to understand 'what works' to help tackle social and justice policy issues.
 - Our [review of MoJ Court statistics](#) in 2019 identified the need for more published information about the quality of the statistics. It is clear from speaking with your teams that learning from this review has been shared across MoJ. The user guides for the two sets of statistics considered in this review provide lots of helpful, detailed information about the quality of the statistics, including how data are collected via administrative systems, how data are processed to produce the statistics, method changes over time and limitations of the data and statistics.

We identified two areas where we consider MoJ could provide more information that would be of value to users:

- To further enhance the information about quality provided in the user guides for these statistics, we consider that the teams should include more information about how they assure themselves of the quality of the data. This should include how they communicate with data supply partners, as well as information about the quality assurance done by data providers and the MoJ teams. Your teams may find it helpful to refer to [OSR Guidance on Quality Assurance of Administrative Data \(QAAD\)](#), which provides guidance about how to assure the quality of data from administrative systems.
- We understand that MoJ is in the process of identifying resource to publish its statistical work programme for publication. We encourage this: it will keep users informed of planned changes to MoJ statistics and innovative work and give them the opportunity to shape developments and to monitor progress.

At present, the situation regarding COVID-19 is ever-changing and we understand changes to way the courts run, and new police powers will affect the production of these statistics in the future. Your teams have already coded new crimes that will fall under the Coronavirus Act 2020 in their data collection systems and are considering how they can provide an up-to-date picture of reoffending for individuals released from prison earlier than planned. We look forward to seeing how this work develops.

Thank you to you and your teams for your positive engagement during this review. Our Crime and Security team will continue to engage with your team on progress in the coming months. Please do not hesitate to get in touch if you would like to discuss any aspects of this letter further.

I am copying this letter to Damon Wingfield, Nick Mavron and David Dawson, Ministry of Justice.

Yours sincerely



Mark Pont
Assessment Programme Lead