
Ed Humpherson, Director General for Regulation

Dr Richard Norrie
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Civitas

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Dear Richard

Hate crime statistics

Thank you for raising your concerns about the hate crime official statistics for England and Wales. You asked us to investigate the quality of the police recorded crime data and the Crime Survey for England and Wales estimates, and to consider the recommendations in your recent Civitas report, [How hate crime is undermining our law and society](#).

We would always encourage users to engage directly with producers where they have concerns about statistics.

We have nevertheless considered the points you have raised. We are aware of the limitations of both data sources in terms of measuring hate crime.

As you highlight in your Civitas report, the HM Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) [2018 inspection report](#) found problems with the accuracy of the hate crime data police forces give to the Home Office (HO), including issues with correctly flagging offences as hate crimes and inconsistencies in recording practices among police forces. Our understanding is that these issues may be more likely to lead to underreporting rather than overreporting of hate crime.

We consider that the HO [hate crime statistics bulletin](#) is transparent about the fact that recent increases in police recorded hate crime have been driven by improvements to police recording practices and a growing awareness of hate crime. However, to support user understanding of the quality of the data, we think it would helpful if the HO bulletin:

- included the caveat that “police figures do not currently provide reliable trends in hate crime” at the start.
- explained that police recorded crime statistics are more useful as an indicator of crime-related demand on the police rather than a measure of trends in crime, as the Office for National Statistics (ONS) does in its [Crime in England and Wales bulletins](#).
- explained in greater detail recent improvements to hate crime police recording practices in response to the HMICFRS report.

The Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW) estimates provide the most reliable measure of longer-term trends in hate crime. The HO hate crime statistics bulletin already presents detailed commentary about trends in the data and gives prominence to the CSEW results. However, unlike police recorded crime, CSEW trend data for incidents by monitored hate crime strand are published in the appendix data tables rather than the main data tables. HO should increase the visibility of the CSEW trend data by publishing these as part of the main data tables.

It is good that the CSEW collects data on why respondents believe a crime to have been racially motivated, and we read your analysis of these data with interest. It adds insight and is something HO and ONS may want to explore further as part of its data validation process. We consider that the bulletin is upfront with users about potential coverage issues of the CSEW in relation to hate crime, including that respondents may be responding based on their perception when they are asked whether they think a crime was committed because of a motivating factor. Any survey which measures people's experiences, in this case of crime victimisation, is based on the say-so of respondents

You may be aware that, due to the pandemic, ONS suspended face-to-face data collection for the CSEW. Instead, it established a telephone-operated Crime Survey for England and Wales. Due to the time constraints of a telephone interview, ONS was unable to include many of the questions included in the face-to-face questionnaire, including those on hate crime. This means that the next release of the HO hate crime statistics bulletin will not contain estimates from the CSEW.

We had already planned to review HO's hate crime statistics later this year. We can further consider the issues you raised as part of that review and would welcome your input.

Yours sincerely



Ed Humpherson
Director General for Regulation