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**Mark Pont, Assessment Programme Lead**

Amy Baxter  
Acting Head of Profession for Statistics  
Home Office  
(By email)

19 May 2022

Dear Amy

**Hate crime in England and Wales statistics**

We recently reviewed Home Office's [hate crime in England and Wales statistics](#) against the [Code of Practice for Statistics](#).

Hate crime is a sensitive and high-profile topic that has received increased public attention in recent years. Hate crime statistics are valuable because they tell us how common behaviour motivated by hostility or prejudice is – an indication of how tolerant of diversity our society is. As such, we decided to review the relevant statistics across the UK against the Code. We also reviewed the Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service's (COPFS) [statistics on hate crime in Scotland](#), and Police Service Northern Ireland's [statistics on hate motivation in Northern Ireland](#). We spoke to several users of the statistics, to hear their views on trustworthiness, quality and value.

Measuring hate crime is challenging because it is a low-volume crime, and many victims do not report their hate victimisation to the police or other organisations. Home Office's hate crime statistics contain information from two sources – police recorded crime and the Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW), which is run by the Office for National Statistics (ONS). Both data sources have their limitations: the CSEW estimates (produced by ONS) are reliable but not timely, whereas police recorded crime figures are timely but less reliable, because not all hate crimes come to the attention of the police and the police recording of hate crimes has improved in recent years. This means that the statistics do not give a complete picture of hate crime. However, when both data sources are used alongside each other they provide the best available information.

We found a range of positive features that demonstrate the value and quality of the statistics:

- Your team is aware of and responsive to user needs. For example, an annex was added to the 2019/20 bulletin to meet user demand for timely information on police recorded hate crime during the first months of the Covid-19 pandemic. The release of the statistics is timed to coincide with [National Hate Crime Awareness Week](#).
- The bulletin explains the impact of the pandemic on the availability of hate crime data from the Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW). Due to the pandemic,

CSEW face-to-face interviewing was suspended in March 2020 and has not yet resumed. ONS set up a Telephone CSEW to continue to collect information on people's experiences of crime, but the TCSEW questionnaire did not include questions on hate crime. The decision to bring forward publication of latest estimates (due to data for the year ending March 2021 not being available) was sensible. The bulletin is clear about delays to future CSEW estimates.

- We are pleased that ONS is planning to increase the CSEW sample size this year. This will enable it to produce more robust and disaggregated estimates of hate crime, allowing users to make comparisons between sub-groups.
- The lack of information on the personal characteristics of victims is a well-known gap in the hate crime statistics and was highlighted by the users we spoke to. These data are important because they add insight on the disparity in outcomes for victims from different backgrounds. It is good that Home Office begun collecting information on the ethnicity of victims of racial hate crimes recorded by the police in April 2021, which is expected to meet this user need. The first statistics from the ethnicity data collection are expected to be published in October 2022. We encourage your team to be transparent about the quality of these new data.
- The bulletin explains the nature of the data sources and their limitations. This includes the caveat about the problems with the accuracy of police recorded hate crime data, which is clear and prominent. The description has improved since the 2019/20 bulletin, which addresses two of the recommendations for Home Office in our [recent letter to a member of the public](#) about hate crime statistics.
- The bulletin and [ONS crime statistics user guide](#) provide clear guidance for users on the differences between the police recorded crime figures and the CSEW estimates, which supports coherence and interpretation of the statistics. This is important because, currently, the two data sources show a very different picture of trends in hate crime, which continues to create confusion for users.
- We welcome that your team is looking at applying the [National Data Quality Improvement Service \(NDQIS\) tool](#) to police recorded hate crimes. This tool has already delivered improvements to the quality of police recorded knife crime data by standardising how knife crime is recorded and categorised across police forces. We look forward to seeing the results for hate crime. As highlighted in our recent [compliance check of the knife crime statistics](#), published by ONS, we encourage your team to be transparent about the progress in rolling out the tool and the impacts on the statistics.
- It is good that your team intends to roll out a reproducible analytical pipeline for the hate crime statistics within the next year. Automating production of the statistics will create a more efficient process and improve quality.

We also identified several ways in which the value, quality and trustworthiness of the statistics could be enhanced:

- The lack of CSEW estimates leaves a big data gap, one that cannot be resolved by police recorded crime figures. CSEW is seen as the most reliable indicator of long-term hate crime trends whereas the police recorded crime figures do not currently provide reliable trends. Because face-to-face interviewing is only expected to resume in 2022, and three annual CSEW datasets are combined to produce more robust estimates, the next CSEW estimates will not be available until 2025 at the earliest. As we heard from users, this potentially creates a “perception problem”: the public is likely to see police recorded crime as the main data source, despite ongoing concerns about data quality, as CSEW estimates become less prominent. Given this gap, the bulletin should be as clear as possible about the limitations of the police recorded crime data (see below).

- Due to the issues with the accuracy of police recorded hate crime data, it is difficult to determine whether police recorded hate crime is increasing. The explanation given in the bulletin is that increases are driven by improvements to crime recording practices and greater awareness of what constitutes a hate crime, but the bulletin provides no evidence to support this statement. It should explain the specific improvements police forces have made to their recording practices in recent years. It should also be clearer that multiple factors – including increased offending – may be influencing the rise in hate crime. This will help users better understand changes to the quality of police recorded hate crime data.
- The lack of information about the scale of online hate crime is a key data gap, particularly considering the ongoing public debate about, and development of legislation on, online safety. The 2017/18 bulletin contained new experimental statistics on police recorded online hate crime, but this analysis has not been repeated due to the uncertainty around the quality of the data. Your team should explore options for collecting, analysing and publishing data on online hate crime on a regular basis. It is good that ONS is looking at introducing additional questions to the CSEW to capture information on crime with an online element, including hate crime.

Thank you to your team for their positive engagement during this review. We look forward to continuing to engage with your team, and we hope our findings inform the ongoing development of the hate crime statistics. Please get in touch if you would like to discuss any aspects of this letter further or if we can offer further assistance as these statistics continue to develop.

I am copying this letter to Kevin Smith, lead statistician on violent crime at Home Office; John Flatley, Programme Director of Crime Statistics Production and Analysis at Home Office; Billy Gazard, lead statistician on the CSEW at ONS; and Nick Stripe and Meghan Elkin, heads of the Centre for Crime and Justice at ONS.

Yours sincerely



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