
Mark Pont, Assessment Programme Lead

Fiona Roberts
Statistician
Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service
(By email)

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Dear Fiona

Hate Crime in Scotland statistics

We recently reviewed Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service's (COPFS) [Hate Crime in Scotland 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 give an indication of how tolerant we are as a society. As such, we decided to review the relevant statistics across the UK against the Code. We also reviewed the [Home Office's statistics on hate crime in England Wales](#), 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. Scotland has recently updated the list of protected characteristics covered by hate crime legislation in the Hate Crime and Public Order (Scotland) Act 2021.

The statistics published by COPFS present the number of charges reported rather than the number of individuals charged or the number of incidents that gave rise to such charges. Unlike the hate crime statistics for England and Wales produced by Home Office, and Northern Ireland produced by Police Service Northern Ireland, there is no regular official statistics output on police recorded hate crime in Scotland. However Scottish Government published a [research report](#) in 2021 on the characteristics of police recorded hate crime in Scotland based on the findings of a study it undertook. We understand the new Act includes provisions to ensure that information on the characteristics of both hate crime recorded by the police and hate crime convictions, such as the type of prejudice shown, will be published annually.

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

- The bulletin provides clear guidance for users on how to interpret the statistics, explaining that the figures are for the number of hate crimes charged, rather than the number of individuals charged for such crimes or the number of incidents that led to charges.
- The bulletin is transparent about limitations and lack of comparability, explaining that data cannot be directly compared to earlier years due to repeal of legislation

(Offensive Behaviour at Football and Threatening Communications (Scotland) Act 2012) creating discontinuity in the data.

- The bulletin provides insight by providing long-term trends in the number of charges for hate crimes for each hate crime strand whilst also providing the percentage change from the previous financial year.

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

- You told us unpublished data was shared with a local authority. This goes against the principle of equality of access in the Code of Practice. You should ensure that unpublished data are not shared outside of the normal publication process. We recommend that you consult our [transparency guidelines](#) for further guidance on this.
- The information on the limitations of the data and quality assurance checks performed in producing the statistics is limited. Without good explanation of the quality checks undertaken, there is a risk users may not fully understand the underlying data and processes, the limitations of these and therefore misuse the data. We recommend you publish more information about the quality assurance process and associated limitations of the data within the bulletin. You may wish to use the GSS's [Quality Statistics in Government](#) guidance and our guidance on [thinking about quality when producing statistics](#).
- User engagement is something you have identified as a weakness. To support the ongoing development of the statistics and ensure they meet the needs of all types of users, we encourage you to look for more opportunities to build a meaningful and sustained dialogue with users and other relevant stakeholders outside government. You may wish to consult our [user engagement guidance](#) to help with this.
- To enhance the accessibility of the statistics and data, you should consider removing the data tables from the bulletin unless there is a strong user need for it. The data tables could be made available separately as an Excel spreadsheet. Inserting links into the relevant places in the bulletin to help users find the data would aid the flow and readability of the bulletin.

Thank you for your positive engagement during this review. We look forward to continuing to engage with you, and we hope our findings inform the development of the Hate Crime in Scotland statistics. Please do not hesitate to 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.

Yours sincerely



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