

Ed Humpherson
Director General for Regulation
Office for Statistics Regulation
(by email)

14th July 2022

Dear Ed,

The ONS Centre for Crime and Justice is committed to improving insights into the impact of crime on the most vulnerable in society, including a current focus on violence against women and girls. Within this area, we know there is a key user demand for prevalence estimates for domestic abuse, sexual assault and stalking. This month we will be releasing the first estimates for these important topics since before the pandemic.

The Crime Survey for England and Wales was suspended in March 2020 as the COVID pandemic prevented face-to-face interviewing from taking place. It was replaced by the Telephone-operated Crime Survey for England and Wales (TCSEW) which excluded questions on domestic abuse, sexual assault and stalking because of concerns around confidentiality and respondent safeguarding.

Given the key user need for these estimates, we returned to face-to-face interviewing in October 2021 to re-start collecting this data. We now have 6 months of data collection which enables us to publish some early headline estimates for domestic abuse, sexual assault and stalking. These estimates will be published on the 21 July and will be for the year ending March 2022.

There are quality concerns for these estimates due to the reduced data collection period (6 instead of 12-months). In addition to this, there are also impacts on the quality of the estimates due to lower response rates. When we returned to face-to-face interviewing, we started with a significantly lower response rate than the CSEW had before the pandemic. While steady improvements have been made to the response rate, we have yet to return to pre-pandemic levels and the spread of interviews across the year is uneven.

For other crime types, we believe there will be sufficient data from the CSEW to publish headline estimates for the year ending June 2022. These estimates will be published in October and will be based on 9 months of data collection.

Given the quality concerns and to ensure a clear explanation to users, I am writing to ask you to consider a temporary suspension of the National Statistics status for the crime estimates produced from the Crime Survey for England and Wales. This will allow us to clearly highlight to users the concerns with data quality related to the reduced data collection period and lower response rates. Subject to your agreement, we propose that the badge be reinstated for the year ending March 2023 release, assuming the survey has achieved 12-months of consistent data collection.

We are confident the data will be of sufficient quality by the time of the July 2023 publication for National Statistics status to be reinstated. We will, as always, keep users and yourselves abreast of any further developments that may impact on this.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Liz McKeown', written in a cursive style.

Liz McKeown
Director, Public Policy Analysis