

Assessment of compliance with the Code of
Practice for Statistics

Statistics on fraud and computer misuse from the Scottish Crime and Justice Survey

Statistics producer: The Scottish Government
Report by: Office for Statistics Regulation

The Office for Statistics Regulation

Statistics should serve everyone, helping enhance knowledge about every section of society and the economy, and people's place within them.

The Office for Statistics Regulation (OSR) provides independent regulation of official statistics produced in the UK. Official statistics are statistics produced by Crown bodies and other organisations listed within an [Official Statistics Order](#), on behalf of the UK Government or the devolved governments.

We aim to enhance public confidence in statistics produced by government by setting the standards that they must meet in [the Code of Practice for Statistics](#). We ensure that producers uphold these standards by conducting reviews of statistics against the Code. We also report publicly on system-wide issues and on the way statistics are being used, celebrating when the standards are upheld and challenging publicly when they are not.

Assessments

An assessment is a type of compliance review conducted to determine whether a set of official statistics can be accredited.

Under legislation, assessment is the only tool that allows OSR to grant accredited official statistics status (called National Statistics in the Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007). Accredited official statistics are official statistics that we have independently reviewed and confirmed to comply with the standards of Trustworthiness, Quality and Value in the Code of Practice for Statistics.

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Overview

At the time of this report, the fraud and computer misuse estimates from the Scottish Crime and Justice Survey are published as official statistics in development.

The statistics present information on the prevalence and volume of fraud and computer misuse crimes experienced by individuals in Scotland, as well as the characteristics of victims and fraud crimes. The statistics are used to understand and research trends in crime, and to monitor progress against Scottish Government's [Cyber Resilient Scotland strategic framework](#).

This report presents the findings of our assessment. It evaluates whether Scottish Government's statistics meet the standards of Trustworthiness, Quality and Value of the [Code of Practice for Statistics](#) (the Code) required for accreditation.

Why we did this review

In 2025, the Scottish Government published the first estimates from the Scottish Crime and Justice Survey (SCJS) on the prevalence and volume of fraud and computer misuse crimes experienced in Scotland. The new survey questions were developed over a period of several years and largely replicate the fraud and computer misuse questions in the Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW) managed by the Office for National Statistics (ONS).

To determine whether the new SCJS fraud and computer misuse estimates could be published as accredited official statistics, we carried out an assessment of whether the statistics meet the standards of the Code. In doing so, we drew on our assessment of the CSEW fraud and computer misuse statistics, which [confirmed](#) the accredited official statistics status in 2018.

Highlighted findings

- The fraud and computer misuse estimates fill a significant knowledge gap on crimes experienced by the Scottish population. In 2024/25, almost half of all crimes captured by the survey were fraud and computer misuse crimes, highlighting the importance of measuring these crime types.
- The development of the fraud and computer misuse statistics involved close collaboration between the Scottish Government, Ipsos and ScotCen, and ONS. The Scottish Government adapted the well-established CSEW questions for Scotland and refined them through piloting and user feedback to strengthen the design and implementation of the questions, although limited information has been published on the development, testing and evaluation of the questions.

- The fraud and computer misuse statistics are based on a nationally representative survey of people aged 16 and over, use sound sampling and weighting methods, and involve robust validation and quality assurance of data and incident coding. The accompanying quality information is transparent about the strengths and limitations of the statistics, while the main findings report prominently communicates uncertainty around the estimates.
- The SCJS fraud and computer misuse questions and offence coding are aligned with the CSEW questions, which ensures the comparability and coherence of estimates across Scotland and England and Wales.
- The main findings report explains the statistics clearly and provides advice to users on appropriate interpretation. The Scottish Government made several changes to the presentation of the statistics to ensure that the new estimates would be interpreted correctly; for example, it adopted ONS's 'headline crime' terminology to differentiate the overall estimate (with fraud and computer misuse crimes) from the property and violent crime estimates.
- Microdata from the 2023/24 and 2024/25 data collections are not yet available in the UK Data Service due to delays in the deposit process. As a result, researchers do not currently have access to data from the new fraud and computer misuse questions, which hinders reuse of the data and limits their value for research and analysis.

Our judgement

We conclude that the SCJS fraud and computer misuse statistics meet the standards of Trustworthiness, Quality and Value of the Code. The statistics are of high quality, add insight on crime victimisation in Scotland, and meet user needs. The Scottish Government plans to review the survey questions to ensure that they remain fit for purpose and continue to meet user needs.

We have identified no requirements and therefore judge that the statistics can become accredited official statistics (called National Statistics in the Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007).

Based on the findings of this review, we have identified three recommendations that the Scottish Government should address to further enhance the statistics' Trustworthiness, Quality and Value. The recommendations cover transparency about the design of the new questions, availability of SCJS microdata, and producing further breakdowns.

Next steps

We expect the Scottish Government to provide a public update on progress against the recommendations by December 2026.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this review, we have identified three recommendations that the Scottish Government should address to further enhance the statistics' Trustworthiness, Quality and Value:

Recommendation 1: To provide greater transparency about the design of the new questions, the Scottish Government should publish a summary of the development, testing and evaluation work on the fraud and computer misuse questions.

Recommendation 2: To promote reuse and maximise the value of the fraud and computer misuse data, the Scottish Government should continue to engage with the UK Data Service to ensure that the SCJS microdata are made available as soon as practicable.

Recommendation 3: To enhance the insights offered by the statistics, the Scottish Government should explore the feasibility of producing further breakdowns by type of fraud and be transparent with users where this is not feasible.

Introduction

Why we did this review

- 1.1 In 2025, the Scottish Government published the first estimates from the Scottish Crime and Justice Survey (SCJS) on the prevalence and volume of fraud and computer misuse crimes experienced in Scotland. The new survey questions were developed over a period of several years and largely replicate fraud and computer misuse questions in the Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW) managed by the Office for National Statistics (ONS).
- 1.2 To determine whether the new SCJS fraud and computer misuse estimates could be published as accredited official statistics, we carried out an assessment of whether the statistics meet the standards of the Code of Practice for Statistics. We [agreed](#) to Scottish Government's [request](#) to assess these statistics in May 2026.
- 1.3 We drew on our earlier assessment of the CSEW fraud and computer misuse statistics, which [confirmed](#) the accredited official statistics status in 2018. Like the CSEW review, this review focused primarily on the development of the new questions and statistics, the methods used, user engagement, and the presentation of the statistics.
- 1.4 To inform our judgements, we gathered views from a small number of users of the statistics (two Scottish Government policy teams and two academics).

Background to the statistics

- 1.5 The Scottish Government [publishes annual statistics](#) from the SCJS. The SCJS is a household survey which asks individuals aged 16 or over in Scotland about their experiences and perceptions of crime and the justice system. The SCJS has been running since 2008/09 and provides insight into long-term trends in experiences and perceptions of crime.
- 1.6 The current fraud and computer misuse questions were first introduced to the SCJS in the 2023/24 survey. The fraud and computer misuse victim form follows the same design as the standard SCJS victim form that is used to collect details about incidents of property and violent crime.
- 1.7 Prior to the addition of the new questions, information on experiences of cyber fraud and computer misuse was collected via a separate questionnaire. Findings from these questions were not included in the SCJS headline crime estimates because they were not collected on a comparable basis. In contrast, findings from the current fraud and computer misuse questions are comparable to the property and violent crime estimates and are therefore included in the headline SCJS crime estimates.

Findings

Quality

- 2.1 The fraud and computer misuse statistics are based on a suitable data source and sound methods that are well aligned with their intended purpose. The SCJS is a large, nationally representative survey of people aged 16 and over living in private households in Scotland, making it an appropriate data source for measuring experiences of crime across the population. The survey sample is sufficient to produce robust estimates of fraud and computer misuse victimisation. The users we spoke to said that the statistics are of sufficient quality to meet their needs.
- 2.2 The SCJS uses a stratified sample and applies weighting to account for differences in selection probabilities and response, with calibration to population estimates. The fraud and computer misuse data are processed and weighted using these established methods, which means the fraud and computer misuse estimates are comparable with estimates of other crime types and can be included in the headline SCJS crime estimate.
- 2.3 The SCJS questions are similar to the well-established fraud and computer misuse questions from the Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW), which have previously undergone cognitive testing by the Office for National Statistics (ONS). The Scottish Government adapted the questionnaire to ensure its relevance to Scotland, for example, by removing questions on reporting crimes to Report Fraud, the UK's national fraud service, which is not used in Scotland. The questions were further tested and refined through a pilot exercise and feedback from previous respondents, leading to improvements in question wording, questionnaire length, interviewer guidance and the treatment of issues such as question routing and the interpretation of attempted fraud.
- 2.4 Collaboration was central to the development of the questions. The statistics team maintains constructive relationships with its survey contractors, Ipsos and ScotCen, whose experienced and knowledgeable staff support questionnaire development, fieldwork, analysis and coding. The team also worked closely with colleagues from ONS throughout the development process, drawing on their expertise of running the CSEW to inform key aspects of the work, including the victim form review. We welcome that the team is continuing to engage with ONS, as it contributes to the sharing of knowledge and best practice across the UK statistical system.
- 2.5 The fraud and computer misuse questions and offence coding are aligned with the approach used in the CSEW, ensuring the comparability and coherence of estimates across Scotland and England and Wales. An academic user highlighted the value of this consistency for comparing data across the two surveys.

- 2.6 Scottish Government's quality assurance arrangements for the fraud and computer misuse statistics are robust and proportionate. For the first year of data collection, the Scottish Government undertook enhanced quality assurance checks with ScotCen, reviewing all victim forms and drawing on ONS coding maps, flow charts and expertise to categorise crimes.
- 2.7 The published information about quality and methods is clear, detailed and accessible. The [main findings report](#) provides a good overview of the survey's purpose, coverage, methodology and reliability, including which crimes are and are not included and the impact of COVID-19 on the estimates. The [technical report](#) explains the sample design, data collection, offence coding, processing and statistical methods, and quality assurance checks.
- 2.8 The main findings report clearly caveats the statistics and prominently communicates the uncertainty around the estimates. A margin of error is provided for the headline estimate, alongside confidence intervals for each estimate, and statistically significant changes are highlighted in the report. The report also compares the strengths and limitations of SCJS estimates and police recorded crime statistics, supporting the appropriate use of each data source. Users told us that explanations of statistical significance, uncertainty, and the strengths and limitations of the statistics are helpful and easy to understand.
- 2.9 While the fraud and computer misuse chapter explains the background to the development of the new questions, including the user consultation process and introduction of a new victim form, there is limited published information on the development, testing and evaluation of these questions. Publishing a summary of this work would provide greater transparency about the methods used and the quality assurance undertaken.

Recommendation 1: To provide greater transparency about the design of the new questions, the Scottish Government should publish a summary of the development, testing and evaluation of the fraud and computer misuse questions.

- 2.10 The Scottish Government is committed to continuously improving the fraud and computer misuse questions. Now that it has three years of data, the Scottish Government plans to review the questionnaire to ensure it remains fit for purpose and continues to meet user needs. As part of this work, Scottish Government will discuss any questionnaire changes and future development plans with ONS and will use newly available record-level data from ScotCen to help identify areas for improvement. Continued review of known limitations of the data, including non-response, sample size considerations and the usefulness of the 'other fraud' category, would provide further assurance that the statistics remain suitable for their intended uses.

User engagement

- 2.11 The fraud and computer misuse questions were developed to meet user need for information on these crime types. The statistics team carried out a [user consultation exercise](#) in 2021/22 and ran a series of events and workshops as part of this exercise. Cybercrime featured prominently in the user feedback; in particular, there was demand for including cybercrime in the headline SCJS crime estimate. The published information about the consultation is clear and detailed, and the team was transparent about the [results of the consultation](#) and [user workshops](#).
- 2.12 The users we spoke to were very positive about their relationship with the statistics team. We found that the team engages openly and directly with users in a range of ways. In addition to the user consultation exercise, we heard that the team provides advice and briefings to policy colleagues, which helps them understand what the statistics do and do not show and produce lines to take for ministers. The team regularly speaks to academic researchers and has presented the fraud and computer misuse estimates to both academic users and the Scottish Police Authority.
- 2.13 The team uses the ScotStat mailing list to update users about the latest SCJS developments, including those related to fraud and computer misuse, and to encourage feedback. For both the 2023/24 and 2024/25 main findings report, users were alerted about the publication date. The team used ScotStat to share its proposal for how the questionnaire may change, following the user consultation exercise, and gave users an opportunity to share comments.

Clarity and accessibility

- 2.14 The fraud and computer misuse estimates fill a significant knowledge gap on crimes experienced by the Scottish population. In 2024/25, almost half of all crimes captured by the survey were fraud and computer misuse crimes, highlighting the importance of measuring these crime types. The estimates are particularly valuable for understanding crime victimisation because only a small proportion of fraud and computer misuse incidents are reported to the police.
- 2.15 Given the impact of adding fraud and computer misuse crimes to the SCJS crime estimates, and the potential risks of misinterpreting the statistics, it is essential that the Scottish Government communicates the statistics clearly and provides advice to users to support appropriate interpretation. The statistics team told us it spent a lot of time considering how the statistics would be understood and made several changes to the presentation to ensure that the new estimates would be interpreted correctly. For example, it adopted ONS's 'headline crime' terminology to differentiate the overall estimate (with fraud and computer misuse crimes) from the property and violent crime estimate. The main findings report warns users about short-term trends in fraud and computer misuse, emphasising that they are not indicative of

long-term trends and that more data points are needed to understand how these crimes are changing over time.

- 2.16 The fraud and computer misuse chapter of the main findings report is informative and engaging, with detailed, impartial commentary and a good balance of text, charts and tables. In general, the visualisations are effective and aid user interpretation, such as the donut chart that illustrates the proportion of crimes that each crime type makes up of the total. We provided some feedback to the statistics team to further improve the presentation of the statistics, such as making it clearer in the crime victimisation rate chart that the headline SCJS estimate includes fraud and computer misuse crimes.
- 2.17 The main findings report compares fraud and computer misuse estimates from the SCJS and CSEW, adding valuable insight into differences in victimisation rates between Scotland and England and Wales.
- 2.18 In general, the SCJS statistics, data and supporting information are easy to access. SCJS microdata are made available to researchers through the UK Data Service (UKDS), which promotes reuse and maximises the value of the data. However, data from the 2023/24 and 2024/25 collections have not yet been deposited in the UKDS. As a result, researchers do not currently have access to data from the new fraud and computer misuse questions. The statistics team told us that the process for depositing data involves both the Scottish Government and UKDS, meaning that some aspects of the delay are outside its direct control. While we recognise these constraints, we recommend that the team continues to engage with the UKDS to resolve the delay.

Recommendation 2: To promote reuse and maximise the value of the fraud and computer misuse data, the Scottish Government should continue to engage with the UK Data Service to ensure that the SCJS microdata are made available as soon as practicable.

- 2.19 The users that we spoke to told us they would like to see further breakdowns of the statistics, including by type of fraud, and to separate out cyber-enabled and cyber-dependent crimes where possible.

Recommendation 3: To enhance the insights offered by the statistics, the Scottish Government should explore the feasibility of producing further breakdowns by type of fraud and be transparent with users where this is not feasible.

- 2.20 Due to the small number of computer misuse incidents captured by the survey, there is limited scope for further disaggregating computer misuse data. It is good that the team is exploring pooling data across multiple years of the survey to allow for more detailed analysis and insight.

Required policies and statements

- 2.21 The Scottish Government recently published a range of policies and statements required by the Standards for Official Statistics, including a [statement of compliance](#), [quality management approach](#) and [release practice policy](#). These policies cover all Scottish Government statistics.
- 2.22 Due to the number and breadth of Scottish Government's official statistics, the Chief Statistician asked divisions within the Scottish Government, including Justice Analytical Services, to produce their own annual statistical work programmes and public involvement and engagement strategies. Justice Analytical Services has now published these [documents](#), which provide a helpful overview of its recent and planned activities.

