

Restoring public trust in crime statistics

We propose two radical reforms of crime statistics:

- **We will remove responsibility for compiling and publishing recorded crime statistics and the British Crime Survey from the Home Office and place it with the Office for National Statistics.**
- **We will abolish pre-release access that Ministers, officials and special advisors have to crime statistics, so that they will no longer get more advance notice of the contents of statistical publications than the public, the press or Opposition MPs.**

The lack of trust in government statistics

Crime statistics are not trusted by the public. A recent Cabinet Office review found that out of 1,502 people polled, only three people used official crime statistics for understanding what was happening with crime¹. Similarly, the 2007 Ipsos MORI document ‘Closing the Gap’ said:

“The public is sceptical about the use of data to ‘spin’ the government’s message and believe that government simply pick and choose statistics to fit their aims or story.

¹ Cabinet Office, ‘Engaging Communities in Fighting Crime’, Louise Casey, June 2008

Politicians are one of the least trusted groups and so this scepticism is heightened if it is a politician that is using statistics to make a point.²”

In a survey conducted by Ipsos MORI in 2003, only 20 percent of those surveyed could be convinced that crime was falling by looking at crime statistics³. Two recent examples demonstrate why the public has such a lack of trust in government statistics.

Knife crime statistics released prematurely. On 11 December 2008 the Home Office published figures intended to show the success of the knife crime action programme launched in June. The Home Office claimed that the number of teenagers admitted to hospital with knife wounds had fallen by 27 per cent in nine of the participating police force areas⁴. However the decision by the Government to release the statistics, against the advice of statisticians, was criticised by Sir Michael Scholar, Chair of the UK Statistics Authority. He said that the figures had not been through the ‘regular process of checking and quality assurance’ and as a result, their release was ‘premature, irregular and selective’.⁵ Home Secretary Jacqui Smith apologised in Parliament for the release of the statistics.⁶

Serious violent crime miscounted. In October 2008, the Home Secretary admitted that there had been undercounting of some of the most serious violent crimes in eighteen police forces. The error was discovered when at least 18 out of 43 forces in England and Wales were asked to re-examine their figures, following the realisation that around 1,000 offences of ‘grievous bodily harm with intent’ had been recorded as ‘other violence against the person’ – an offence not

² Ipsos MORI, ‘Closing the Gap’ December 2007.

³ Ipsos MORI, Public Confidence in the CJS survey 2003.

⁴ Home Office, Tackling Knives Action Programme Fact Sheet, 11 December 2008.

⁵ Letter from Sir Michael Scholar KCB to Jeremy Heywood, Permanent Secretary at Number Ten, 12 December 2008

⁶ *Hansard*, 15 December 2008, Col. 796

counted within the category of serious violent crime. When the figures were recounted using the correct classification, the official total showed an increase in serious violent crime of 22 per cent⁷.

Crime statistics published by the Home Office

At present the Home Office publishes the annual report on national crime statistics in July and a quarterly summary of headline crime figures. These publications draw on two main sources of crime data: police recorded crime and the British Crime Survey (“BCS”).

Police recorded crime. Police recorded crime statistics are a measure of the amount of crime which is reported to and recorded by the 43 Home Office forces and the British Transport Police. The recorded crime statistics do not include crimes that have not been reported to the police or that the police decide not to record. Police recording practice is governed by Home Office Counting Rules for Recorded Crime⁸ and the National Crime Recording Standard⁹.

Police recorded crime has the advantage that it covers a full range of crimes and is the only data that can be used to look at crime at neighbourhood level. It has the disadvantage that it largely depends on the public reporting crimes to the police. Estimates show that about 60 per cent of offences are currently not reported¹⁰. It is also influenced by the demands of performance management regimes. So, for instance, an increase in the number of police officers in an area may lead to more arrests and hence an increase in recorded crime. Conversely, an increase in police bureaucracy which keeps officers off the streets will lead to a decrease in the number of arrests and a decrease in recorded crime.

⁷ Home Office Statistical Bulletin, ‘*Crime in England and Wales Quarterly Update to June 2008*’, 23 October 2008.

⁸ For more information see <http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/countrules.html>

⁹ For more information see <http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/recordedcrime1.html>

¹⁰ See Allen J. and Ruparel C. in Walker A., Kershaw C. and Nicholas S. (eds) (2006) ‘Crime in England and Wales 2005/06’. Home Office Statistical Bulletin 12/06 available at: www.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/crimeew0506.html

There are a number of crimes that are known to be inadequately reported to the police and therefore inadequately recorded. Some crimes, for example drug possession, are only known about if the police proactively seek to identify them. Some crime is known about but not reported to the police or to the Home Office: in particular, fraud against financial institutions is often not reported beyond the institution because the information is regarded as commercially sensitive. Similarly, crimes involving sex, race and crime within the family are often unreported. Some crimes – such as shoplifting – are largely left to the private sector to deal with and so remain underreported to the police.

The British Crime Survey (BCS). This is a national household survey that has been conducted since 1982, to measure the extent and nature of criminal victimisation against adults. The survey was conducted at various ad hoc intervals until 2001, when it became continuous. The 2007/08 BCS reports on 47,700 face-to-face interviews conducted between April 2007 and March 2008 by a market research company (currently BMRB Social Research).¹¹ The Home Office has the responsibility for compiling the survey responses and conducting the analysis. Statisticians in the Department monitor the integrity of the data from the design of the questionnaire, through the interviewing, data entry and then analysis. There are well-established methodologies for testing the integrity of survey data at various stages and checking and correcting bias introduced by non-response.

The British Crime Survey is the Labour Government's choice of crime statistics. As a press release from the Home Office in 2002 said:

¹¹ Home Office, '2007-2008 British Crime Survey Technical Report – Volume 1' July 2008

“The largest ever BCS is now widely seen as the most accurate measure of people's experience of crime. This new single publication will bring clarity to what is sometimes a confusing picture of crime statistics.”¹²”

However, even the British Crime Survey hugely underestimates the true nature of crime. It currently does not measure:

- Serious crimes of murder or manslaughter (as the victim cannot be interviewed).
- Commercial crime (such as shoplifting);
- Crime where there are no direct victims, such as possession of drugs.
- Crime against those under 16 years of age, although in May 2008, the Home Office announced that it was planning to extend the survey to include 10-15 year olds. If initial developmental and pilot work is successful, this will be incorporated in the BCS from January 2009¹³.
- Crime against individuals residing outside private households, which includes students living in university halls, elderly people living in nursing homes, the homeless, those irregularly living in hostels and those in prisons. Criminological research suggests that some of these groups are likely to have very high victimisation rates¹⁴.

¹² Home Office Press Release 12th July 2002.

¹³ ‘Home Office consultation on the British Crime Survey extension to cover under 16’s’, May 2008 (<http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/pdfs08/bcs-consultation-0508.pdf>)

¹⁴ Trickett, A., D.R. Osborn, J. Seymour, and K. Pease (1992). ‘What is different about high crime areas?’, British Journal of Criminology, 32, 81-9.

- Repeat victimisation. The survey arbitrarily caps the number of crimes a single person can have committed against them. If people are victimised in the same way by the same perpetrators more than five times in a year, the number of crimes is recorded as five. The justification for this was ‘to avoid extreme cases distorting the rates’. Analysis by Civitas on the 2005/06 BCS revealed that by removing the arbitrary five offence limit, over three million extra offences were revealed.¹⁵

It has also been reported that the BCS underestimates crime because surveyors cannot always get into high crime areas. In press coverage it has been said: “it can be difficult to get access to people in high-crime, inner-city areas, especially young people and some ethnic minorities - that is, the very people who are most likely to be victims of crime in the first place.”¹⁶

Independent reviews of crime statistics. In January 2006 the Home Office commissioned a cross-party review of crime statistics compilation and publication, in an attempt to increase public understanding of, and trust, in crime statistics. The review, chaired by Professor Adrian Smith, was carried out by an independent group of opposition party nominees, leading statisticians and media representatives. *Crime Statistics: An Independent Review*¹⁷ was published in November 2006. In addition, the Statistics Commission published a separate independent review in September 2006, *Crime Statistics: User Perspectives*¹⁸.

Both reviews recommended changes in the production and release of crime statistics aimed at restoring public trust. The reviews recommended exploring the feasibility of extending the scope of the British Crime Survey to include groups not currently covered e.g. children aged under 16 and those living in group residences and businesses.

¹⁵ Farrell, G & Pease, K (2007) ‘*Crime in England and Wales: More Violence and More chronic victims*’, CIVITAS Review, Vol. 4, Issue 2, June 2007

¹⁶ The Independent, ‘*Marian Fitzgerald: The Government says crime has fallen. Why doesn't it feel like that?*’, 20th July 2003.

¹⁷ <http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/pdfs06/crime-statistics-independent-review-06.pdf>

There were also recommendations relating to the recorded crime series, including the redefinition of major crime categories. An issue highlighted was that some offences classified as violent crime¹⁹ did not necessarily accord with the public's understanding of what was meant by 'violence'.

We welcome the Home Office's decision to extend the BCS to under 16s. However this change is long overdue, given the growing evidence of youth violence on our streets. You cannot adequately tackle crime if you do not count it.

Recent changes in the production of official statistics

The UK Statistics Authority. On 1st April 2008, the UK Statistics Authority was established to safeguard the quality and comprehensiveness of all official statistics. This includes the Home Office's crime statistics, including both recorded crime and the British Crime Survey.

The UK Statistics Authority is an independent body operating at arm's length from government as a non-ministerial department, directly accountable to Parliament. It was established by the 'Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007' and has three main functions:

- oversight of the Office for National Statistics (ONS) which is its executive office
- monitoring and reporting on UK official statistics, wherever produced, and
- independent assessment of official statistics.

¹⁸ http://www.statscom.org.uk/uploads/files/reports/Crime_Statistics_Review-final.pdf

¹⁹ For example, bigamy, possession of offensive weapons, illegal abortion and death by dangerous driving

Membership of the Authority's Board comprises the Chair of the Authority, seven other non-executive members, and three executive members. The current Chair is Sir Michael Scholar KCB. The Authority also includes executive members from the Office for National Statistics, including its chief executive, Karen Dunnell, who is the National Statistician and head of the Government Statistical Service, along with two other senior officials, one of whom is responsible for finance and another responsible for the assessment of non-ONS statistics.

The UK Statistics Authority is funded from general taxation. To ensure that the funding arrangements reinforce the Authority's statutory independence, the budget has been set outside the normal Spending Review process. Funding is subject to a periodic review - with subsequent increases determined by formula²⁰.

The Office for National Statistics. The Office for National Statistics is the executive office of the UK Statistics Authority. The ONS was formed on 1 April 1996 by the merger of the Central Statistical Office and the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys²¹.

It is charged with the collection and publication of statistics related to the economy, population and society of the United Kingdom at national and local levels. It functions as:

- the office of the National Statistician, who is also the UK Statistics Authority's Chief Executive and principal statistical adviser
- the UK's National Statistics Institute (or NSI - to use European terminology), and
- the 'Head Office' of the Government Statistical Service (GSS)

²⁰ Statistics Authority website <http://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/about-the-authority/index.html>

The ONS operates under two levels of governance: strategic oversight is provided by the Statistics Authority and day-to-day management is the responsibility of the Executive Management Group.

In 2008/09 the total ONS budget amounted to £237 million. The ONS employs 3,900 staff (of whom 1,300 are field staff who collect information for social surveys). This total includes 250 members of the 'Statistician Group' within the GSS, as well as more than 200 members of the Government Social Research Service.²²

The system for producing crime statistics

Currently, all Home Office statistical publications, including the annual crime reports, are produced and compiled by statisticians working in the Research Development and Statistics (“RDS”) unit within the Home Office. These statisticians are part of the Government Statistical Service and report to the National Statistician.

Each police force has a crime force registrar and statistical staff responsible for compiling their own force level recorded crime statistics. They put together data listing information on notifiable offences down to BCU level. This information is compiled and sent to the Data Collection Group in the Home Office on a monthly basis who pull together the statistics from the different police forces.

Information for the British Crime Survey is collected over a fourteen month period each year by a survey company. Each individual response is stored in a database which is sent on a quarterly basis to the Home Office.

²¹ John Pullinger (1997) ‘*The Creation of the Office for National Statistics*’, International Statistical Review, Vol. 65, No. 3, pp. 291-308

The databases of both recorded crime and BCS data are then passed on to statisticians and criminologists working in the Research Development and Statistics Unit (“RDS”), in the Home Office. They are then responsible for compiling the data and providing the quantitative and qualitative analysis that sits with the raw data in the final publication.

The analysis and data for both the BCS and recorded crime are pulled together and written into a single document. 24 hours before the data is due to be released to the public an embargoed final version of the paper is made available to Ministers, the Prime Minister, special advisors and key civil service officials (an example of a pre-release list is supplied in Annex A). On the day of release, the information is published on the UK Statistics Authority website as well as the Home Office’s own Research Development and Statistics Unit website.

Since the 1st April 2008, the UK Statistics Authority has taken on the responsibility of ensuring the quality and comprehensiveness of all official statistics. This includes the Home Office’s crime statistics, including both recorded crime and the British Crime Survey. It is in effect the independent regulator for most Government produced statistics.

Within the Home Office, all statisticians are employed by the Home Office and report to the Head of Profession for Statistics at the Home Office, a level six statistician responsible for the professional quality of all statistics produced by the Home Office. The Head of Profession for Statistics is accountable to the permanent secretary and to the National Statistician. These governance arrangements were meant to instil confidence in the generation of statistical output and remove the common criticism that Ministers were interfering with the production of statistics.

²² Office of National Statistics website <http://www.ons.gov.uk/about/who-we-are/index.html>

Many of the key statistical Home Office documents are designated ‘National Statistics’ and bear the National Statistics kitemark. The kitemark is given to any official statistics produced in accordance with the arrangements set out in the Framework for National Statistics document and are compliant with the professional standards set out in the ‘Code of Practice for Official Statistics’²³. Official statistics which met these quality criteria can then be branded with the ‘National Statistics’ logo.

Currently the following statistics produced by the Home Office bear the ‘National Statistics’ kitemark²⁴:

Title of Publication	Frequency
Crime in England and Wales (Full annual report)	Annual
Crime in England and Wales (quarterly update)	Quarterly(three times a year around annual volume)
Crime in England and Wales: Supplementary Volume 1, Serious Crime including homicides, and gun crime	Annual
Crime in England and Wales: Supplementary Volume 2	Annual
Crime in England and Wales: Supplementary Volume 3	Annual
Police Service Strength	Biannual

²³ This can be found here: <http://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/assessment/code-of-practice/code-of-practice-for-official-statistics.pdf>

²⁴ Statistics Authority, List of National Statistics Web: <http://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/uk-statistical-system/statistics/statistics-types/index.html>

Firearms Certificates, England and Wales	Annual
Drug Seizure Statistics, England and Wales	Annual
Asylum Statistics United Kingdom	Quarterly and Annual
Control of Immigration Statistics: United Kingdom	Annual
Persons Granted British Citizenship, United Kingdom	Annual
Statistics on Scientific Procedures on Living Animals	Annual
Drug Misuse declared: Findings from the British Crime Survey (Annual)	Annual

The timing of release of national statistics

Release dates for all the Home Office’s National Statistics outputs are pre- announced by ONS in their National Statistics Updates²⁵. The month of publication is pre-announced at least six months in advance with the exact date announced in the month preceding publication. The timing of National Statistics releases is the responsibility of the Head of Profession for Statistics, in consultation with the Home Office Chief Scientific Advisor and the National Statistician.

Our proposals for reform

²⁵ These are available at <http://www.statistics.gov.uk/pdfdir/updates.pdf>

1. The Conservatives will remove formal responsibility for compiling and publishing crime statistics from the Home Office and place it with the Office for National Statistics

Ipsos MORI provided different focus groups with the same information on crime rates which they were told came from a number of different sources: an independent think tank; a junior government minister; and David Blunkett (who was Home Secretary at the time). The Labour Home Secretary was the least trusted. One person surveyed said²⁶:

‘Because... if you look at it, it can mean nothing. A quarter of something has gone down, you don’t know what the parameters were on the previous thing. He’s a politician ... and say it actually has done ... I’m not going to base any faith or any knowledge on that statement.’

A number of surveys have suggested that it would be more effective for communications on crime figures to come from independent sources. For example, a survey conducted for Prospect magazine told people some positive facts about crime (crime being down and police numbers being up). One half of the sample was told it came from an independent source while the other half of the sample was told it was government information²⁷. The half of the sample who were told the facts were independent were significantly more likely to change their minds on whether the government’s handling of crime was improving. This was a very simple experiment, but it does point to the potential impact of making more information independent.

The Conservatives want to see the public faith restored in crime statistics. In the recent review by the Cabinet Office ‘Engaging Communities in Fighting Crime’ the public were asked who they

²⁶ Ipsos Mori, *Closing the gaps*, Crime and Public Perceptions, December 2007

²⁷ 50 Duffy, B., Hall, S., & Cole, H. (Prospect April 2005). Opinions: Before and After. Ipsos MORI

would most trust as a source for national statistics. An independent watchdog was the most popular option, with 48 per cent of those polled trusting this source the most²⁸.

The premature release of knife crime statistics in December 2008 has demonstrated that the recent changes to oversight of official statistics and the creation of the UK Statistics Authority has not gone far enough to prevent the manipulation of statistics by Government. The fact is that the production and control of statistics still lies in the hands of the Home Office.

We will restore public faith in crime statistics by removing the formal responsibility for compiling and publishing crime statistics (including the British Crime Survey and recorded crime data) from the Home Office and placing it with the Office for National Statistics.

The Office for National Statistics already carries out around 97 surveys of the population and of businesses²⁹ and these attract high levels of trust. They include the four yearly census and regular surveys of business vacancies. The ONS also conducts household surveys yearly.

The review of crime statistics by the Statistics Commission in 2006 suggested that the BCS should be moved to the ONS who have the methodological expertise and are independent³⁰. The Smith review disagreed with this on the grounds that the BCS “is one of the most important research tools and sources of information for the Home Office to manage the crime problem.”³¹

We do not find this argument convincing. **There is no reason why independently compiled data cannot be readily made available to the Home Office to help its planning. This is already the case with other statistics for which the ONS have responsibility for.** For example, the ONS are

²⁸ Louise Casey, Crime and Communities Review – Engaging Communities and Fighting Crime, June 2008

²⁹ A full list can be found on the ONS website: <http://www.ons.gov.uk/about/surveys/a-z-of-surveys/index.html>

³⁰ Statistics Commission, ‘Report no.30, Crime Statistics: A user perspective’, September 2006

³¹ Home Office, ‘Crime Statistics an Independent Review’, November 2006

responsible for compiling statistics on inward/outward investment, unemployment and inflation all of which are critical to policy making in the Treasury, despite being compiled by the ONS.

Strong parallels can be drawn with how a lack of confidence in macro-economic statistics was resolved in the late 1980's. The problems with economic statistics stemmed from a series of serious failures. In December 1988 the Government published the annual report on the Gross Domestic Product which had three analyses one of which showed that output was growing, one that it was standing still and one that it was falling³². Similarly, the method of measuring unemployment caused confusion as definitions were changed fourteen times over the space of a couple of years.

To restore confidence, in July 1989, the Government brought together the responsibility for collecting business statistics (previously with the Business Statistics Office), responsibility for compilation of trade and financial statistics (previously with the Department of Trade and Industry) and responsibility for the retail prices index and family expenditure survey (previously with the Employment Department) to the Central Statistical Office (the precursor to the Office for National Statistics). Removing the potential for Ministerial interference in this way has been a beneficial change in relation to many of these economic indicators. Fiscal and budgetary statistics controlled by HM Treasury – of course – to be the subject of widespread criticism.

There will be no requirement for extra resources for this policy. Any extra resources that the ONS will require to undertake these new responsibilities will be top sliced from the Home Office Whitehall budget.

2. We will abolish the pre-release access that Ministers, civil servants and special advisors have to crime statistics

In the UK, pre-release access to statistics is currently permitted to more people, for longer and for many more statistical series than in most other advanced countries. The UK is seriously out of line with international practice. This creates mistrust in the British public's perception of the independence of official crime statistics and increases the risk of spin and manipulation of the media.

We note that the UN Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics and the EU Code of Practice for statistics both call for equal access to all at the same time³³.

The Framework for Statistics established by Labour in 2000 first made explicit Ministers' authority to determine who shall be granted pre-release access. Under this Framework, Departmental Ministers determine which individuals should have access to National Statistics produced by their Department in advance of their release, having first consulted the National Statistician. Until recently, the Home Office provided final copies of statistical publications 72 hours beforehand to a number of individuals including the Prime Minister, the Secretary of State, special advisors, the press department and Ministers.

The Pre-Release Access to Official Statistics Order 2008, which came into force on 1 December, specified new arrangements for giving Ministers and their officials advance access to official statistics and restricted pre-release access to a maximum of 24 hours. An example of who has had pre-release access to crime statistics can be found in the Annex.

³² The Independent, '*Wide support for impartial checks on official statistics*', 10 October 1989.

³³ See <http://unstats.un.org/unsd/methods/statorg/FP-English.htm> and http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/pls/portal/docs/PAGE/PGP_DS_QUALITY/TAB47141301/VERSIONE_INGLESE_WEB.PDF

Despite this small change, the length of pre-release of statistics in the United Kingdom is still far greater than in many other developed countries³⁴:

Australia³⁵. It is Australian Bureau of Statistics (“ABS”) policy and practice to make all statistical releases available on the website to government, commercial and public users, simultaneously from 11.30 am on the day of their release. Prior to 11.30 am, all ABS statistics are treated as confidential and regarded as being 'under embargo.' On 1 February 2008 new pre-embargo access arrangements, known as 'lock ups', were put in place for market sensitive statistical and some crime statistics releases, to give government officials and Ministerial staff time to analyse the releases and to develop a briefing to be provided to relevant Ministers after lifting of the embargo. A lock up will only be provided to authorised government officials and Ministerial staff. A lock up begins on the morning of the day of release. Authorised persons attending a lockup are required to remain in a secure room managed by ABS staff, and are prohibited from communicating any information from the statistical release to any one outside the room, until the embargo is lifted at 11.30 am. Attendees at the lockups have to sign security undertakings which include provision for prosecution for anyone who breaches the conditions for attending the lockup.

Denmark: There is no internal government access to data before release.³⁶

Finland: There is no internal government access to data before release.³⁷

³⁴ This information is taken from the IMF “Special Data Dissemination Standard” website at <http://dsbb.imf.org>. This website acts as a hub for statistics from all member countries. With the statistics it also includes full information on the structure of the statistical bodies in each country.

³⁵ Australian Bureau of Statistics website at <http://www.abs.gov.au/websitedbs/D3310114.NSF/4a256353001af3ed4b2562bb00121564/e4c5f2f722533b9eca2573b7001b56ce!OpenDocument>

³⁶ IMF, Dissemination Standards Bulletin Board, Denmark, <http://dsbb.imf.org/Applications/web/sddsctycatbaselist/?strcode=DNK>

France: Important economic statistics (inflation, unemployment and GDP) are given to Ministers at 6pm the day before release. For other statistics there is no other internal government access before release³⁸.

Ireland: Pre-release access varies depending on the nature of the statistics. Annual National Accounts data is available to a limited number of individuals one day before general release. Inflation statistics can be seen just one hour before their release. Headline Crime Statistics are released at 3.00pm the previous day, although this is an interim measure.³⁹

Netherlands: Except for a small selection of key economic indicators, there is no internal government access to data before release.⁴⁰ On the Central Bureau of Statistics (“CBS”) website, any pre-release access (along with the name of the person and the time they received the information) is published.

Norway: No government officials outside Statistics Norway have access to the data before their release to the public.⁴¹

Poland: No government officials have access to the data before their release to the public.⁴²

Sweden: There is no government access to the data before their release to the public.⁴³

³⁷ IMF, Dissemination Standards Bulletin Board, Finland,
<http://dsbb.imf.org/Applications/web/sddsctycatbaselist/?strcode=FIN>

³⁸ IMF, Dissemination Standards Bulletin Board, France,
<http://dsbb.imf.org/Applications/web/sddscountrycategorylist/?strcode=FRA> 2008.

³⁹ Ireland Central Statistical Office, ‘Pre Release Practice for Certain CSO Statistics’
http://www.cso.ie/aboutus/pre_release_practice.htm

⁴⁰ IMF, Dissemination Standards Bulletin Board, Netherlands,
<http://dsbb.imf.org/Applications/web/sddsctycatbaselist/?strcode=NET>

⁴¹ IMF, Dissemination Standards Bulletin Board, Norway
<http://dsbb.imf.org/Applications/web/sddsctycatbaselist/?strcode=FIN>

⁴² IMF, Dissemination Standards Bulletin Board, Poland
<http://dsbb.imf.org/Applications/web/sddsctycatbaselist/?strcode=POL>

⁴³ IMF, Dissemination Standards Bulletin Board, Sweden
<http://dsbb.imf.org/Applications/web/sddsctycatbaselist/?strcode=SWE>

Switzerland: There is no government access to the data before its release to the public. ⁴⁴

United States: Economic statistics are pre-released to the President through the Chairman of the Council of Economic Advisors as soon as it is available. Pre-release access to other statistics does not precede the official release time by more than 30 minutes. Non-economic statistics can have secure pre-release determined by the appropriate agency head. Secure pre-release means that the information is provided within the confines of secure physical facilities with no external communications capability⁴⁵.

The Conservatives believe that the UK should follow the best practice of a number of advanced countries by abolishing pre-release access that Ministers, officials and special advisors have to crime statistics altogether. Ministers would only see the figures at the same time as everybody else - typically at 9.30 am on the day of release. They could then issue any statement themselves, if necessary after that time.

Sir Michael Scholar, the Chair of the UK Statistics Authority has said that pre-release access to statistics should be reformed. In an interview with the BBC he said that the UK should "move to a system in which everybody gets the figures at the same time", objectively produced by professional statisticians and "handed over at the same time to all sides of the political debate".⁴⁶

Annex: Advance access to crime statistics

⁴⁴ IMF, Dissemination Standards Bulletin Board, Switzerland

<http://dsbb.imf.org/Applications/web/sddsctycatbaselist/?strcode=SWI>

⁴⁵ Office of Budget and Management, *Statistical Policy Directive No. 4: Release and Dissemination of Statistical Products Produced by Federal Statistical Agencies Notice*, March 7 2008.

⁴⁶ BBC News, World at One, 2nd January 2009

Below is the list of people who received pre-release access to the Crime in England and Wales Quarterly Update to June 2008⁴⁷. This was prior to the Pre-Release Access to Official Statistics Order 2008 that came into effect on 1st December 2008. This demonstrates how many people have had access to crime statistics prior to their release.

Home Secretary;

Minister of State for Security, Counter-Terrorism, Crime and Policing;

Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Crime Reduction;

Lord Chancellor and Secretary of State, Ministry of Justice;

Permanent secretary;

Special Advisors;

Prime Minister's advisors;

Principal Analyst, Prime Minister's Delivery Unit;

Director General (CRCSG);

Press Office, Community Safety Desk, SIO, IO;

Crime and Drugs Strategy Directorate, Director;

Strategic Support Directorate, Director;

Police and Crime Standards Directorate, Director;

Crime Strategy Unit, Head of Unit, Grade 6, SEO;

Violent Crime Unit, Head of Unit, Grade 6;

Alcohol Strategy Unit, Head of Unit;

Drug Strategy Unit, G7;

ASB and Crime Prevention Unit, Head of Unit;

Police and Crime Performance Unit, Head of Unit, G7;

Police and Partnership Standards Unit, Head of Unit, G7;

⁴⁷ Home Office, Pre-release access to the 'Crime in England and Wales: Quarterly update to June 2008': National statistics published on 23 October 2008

Police Reform Unit, Head of Unit;

Organised and Financial Crime Unit, SEO;

RDS (CRCSG), Head of Unit;

Race, Confidence and Justice Unit (OCJR), Head of Unit;

ACPO Headquarters representative;

ACPO lead for crime statistics;

ACPO crime business area representative;

ACPO performance management business area representative;

ACPO violent crime lead;

Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Constabulary (HMCIC);

HMCIC, Strategic Performance and Planning Unit, Head of Unit;

National Policing Improvement Agency representative;

Association of Police Authorities representative.

The Pre-Release Access to Official Statistics Order 2008 exercised powers under the Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007, to set out principles relating to the advance release of official statistics. The Order reduced the number of those 'eligible persons' who may have pre-release access to statistics. The Order stated that the following could have pre-release access:

- A Minister;
- A head of a government department
- A member of the Scottish Executive
- A junior Scottish Minister
- A member of the Welsh Assembly Government
- A member of the Northern Ireland Assembly appointed as a junior Minister under section 19 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998

- A person who, in the opinion of the Head of Profession, is otherwise accountable to the public for the formulation or development of government policy or for the delivery of public services to which the statistic has direct relevance.
- A person who is accountable to the public for the formation of development of government policy or for the delivery of public services to which the statistic has direct relevance
- An adviser to anyone listed above..

Since the Order came into force on the 1st December 2008, there have been no crime statistics publications released.