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Crime in England and Wales: Quarterly Update to September 2006

01/07

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Main points

- The risk of being a victim of crime as measured by the British Crime Survey (BCS), at 24 per cent, has increased by one percentage point compared with the year to September 2005 (23%). This is still considerably lower than the peak of 40 per cent recorded by the survey in 1995.
- The number of crimes recorded by the police fell by three per cent for the period July to September 2006 compared with the same quarter a year earlier.
- There was no statistically significant change in BCS violent crime for interviews in year ending to September 2006 compared with the previous year. Recorded violent crime for July to September 2006 showed a one per cent decrease over the same period in 2005.
- BCS vehicle thefts and domestic burglary remained stable compared with interviews in the year to September 2005. In the latest quarter, recorded domestic burglary fell by three per cent, and recorded vehicle crime by four per cent.
- BCS interviews in the 12 months to September 2006 showed an 11 per cent increase in the number of incidents of vandalism. While recorded crime showed a 1 per cent rise in criminal damage.
- In the year to September 2006, there were a provisional 9,728 firearm offences, 14 per cent fewer than the previous year.
- BCS interviews showed that there was no change in the overall measure of levels of perceived anti-social behaviour, however individual strands showed some change. Levels of worry about burglary, car crime and violent crime have remained unchanged.
- Levels of confidence in aspects of the criminal justice system have remained stable compared with the previous year. Confidence in the local police has improved.

This update presents the most recent crime statistics from two different sources: the British Crime Survey (BCS) and police recorded crime. Both data sets represent the most up-to-date information, but they cover different time periods. The BCS results are from interviews conducted in the period October 2005 to September 2006; police recorded crime refers to the July to September 2006 quarter.

Levels of crime

The BCS estimates 11.1 million crimes committed against adults living in private households based on interviews during the 12 months ending September 2006. The increases in household and personal crimes, and therefore the overall 4 per cent increase in crime measured by the BCS, are not statistically significant. The overall level of crime recorded by the police in July to September 2006 decreased by three per cent compared with the same quarter in the previous year (Figure 2).

This is the third quarter that the BCS has shown non-significant increases in all BCS crime. However, this quarter does now show a significant increase in the risk of being a victim, from 23 per cent to 24 per cent.

The risk of being a victim of crime is still significantly lower than the peak of 40 per cent recorded by the BCS survey in 1995. The risks of being a victim of any household crime and of vandalism also showed statistically significant increases compared with the previous 12 months (from 18% to 19% and 7% to 8% respectively). These are still considerably lower than their peaks of 32 per cent and 10 per cent in 1995.

Table 1: Number of crimes and risk of being a victim based on BCS interviews in the 12 months to September 2006 compared with the previous 12 months

	Interviews in Oct 2004 to Sept 2005	Interviews in Oct 2005 to Sept 2006	% change ⁽¹⁾	BCS Statistically significant change ⁽²⁾
Number of crimes (000s)				
All household crime	6,660	6,955	4	
Vandalism	2,637	2,918	11	**
Domestic burglary	738	709	-4	
All vehicle thefts	1,709	1,712	0	
All household acquisitive ⁽³⁾	4,023	4,037	0	
All personal crime	4,030	4,183	4	
Theft from the person	552	626	14	
BCS violence	2,395	2,440	2	
<i>With injury</i>	1,309	1,189	-9	
<i>With no injury</i>	1,086	1,252	15	
All personal acquisitive ⁽⁴⁾	1,955	2,156	10	
All BCS crime	10,690	11,138	4	N/A
Percentage risk of being a victim once or more ⁽⁵⁾				
All household crime	18.0	18.7		**
Vandalism	7.3	7.9		**
Domestic burglary	2.6	2.4		
All vehicle thefts ⁽⁶⁾	7.5	7.5		
All personal crime	6.3	6.7		*
Theft from the person	1.2	1.3		
BCS violence	3.4	3.5		
<i>With injury</i>	1.9	1.9		
<i>With no injury</i>	1.7	1.9		
All BCS crime	23.2	24.3		**

1. A percentage change of less than 0.5% is shown as 0.

2. Statistical significance of changes is indicated by a single asterisk for significance at the 10% level, or a double asterisk at the 5% level (two tail tests). Statistical significance cannot be calculated for the change in all BCS crime. See Notes for an explanation of statistical significance.

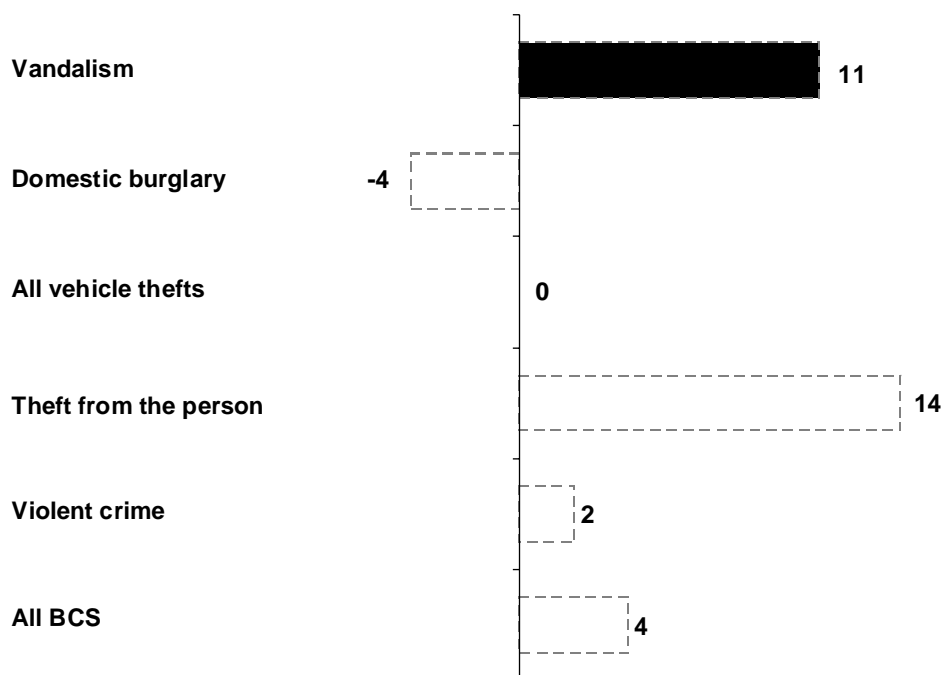
3. All household acquisitive comprises: burglary, vehicle theft, bike theft and other household theft.

4. All personal acquisitive comprises: robbery, theft from the person and other thefts of personal property.

5. A discrepancy may appear between trends in incidence rates (total numbers of offences) and prevalence rates (the proportion of the population victimised once or more) due to repeat victimisation.

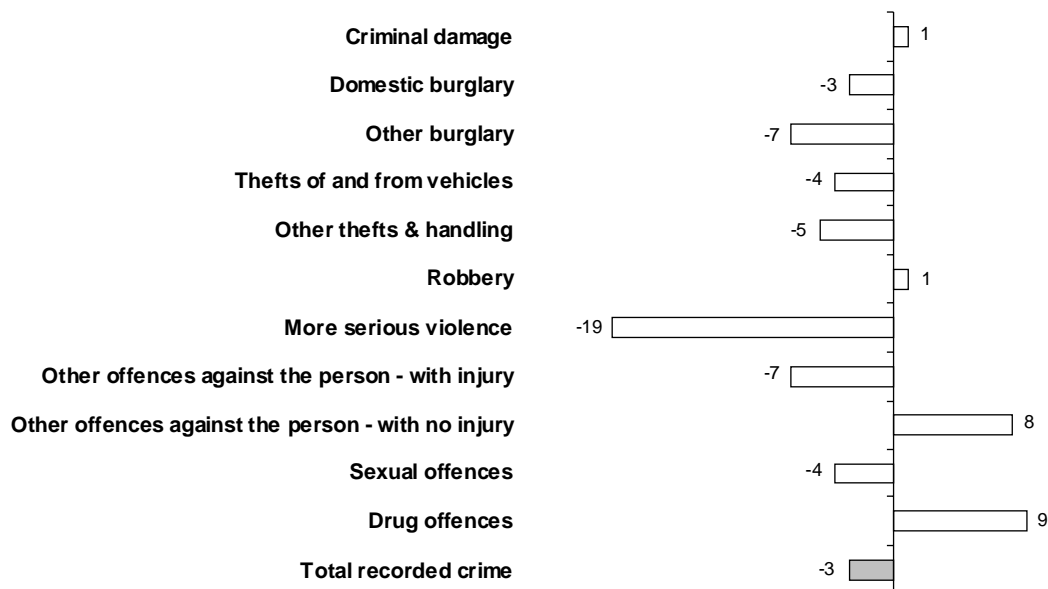
6. Results for 'all vehicle thefts' are based only on households owning, or with regular use of, a vehicle. It includes thefts of vehicles, thefts from vehicles and attempts of and from vehicles.

Figure 1: Percentage change in BCS crime based on interviews in the 12 months to September 2006, compared with the previous 12 months



Changes which are statistically significant at the 5% level (two tail tests) are indicated by a shaded box. Other apparent changes, denoted by dotted lines, are not statistically significant at the 5% level.

Figure 2: Percentage change in recorded crime, July to September 2006 compared with the same quarter a year earlier



Levels of BCS violent crime were stable. The apparent two per cent increase in violent crime and 15 per cent increase in overall violent crimes involving no injury were not statistically significant; neither was the nine per cent apparent decrease in violent crimes with injury. Around half of all violent offences do not involve any injury to the victim.

Overall, the level of violence against the person¹ recorded by the police also showed no change in July to September 2006. Within this category, other violence against the person offences with injury fell by seven per cent and those with no injury² rose by eight per cent over this period (Table A). The increase in those offences with no injury reflects where the police are pro-active in addressing low-level violence and also reflects, in part, the increasing use of fixed penalty notices for harassment.

More serious violence against the person recorded by the police from July to September 2006 fell by 19 per cent compared with the same period in 2005, with threats to kill accounting for three quarters of this overall reduction. A clarification in the rules for recording threats to kill from April 2005 will have contributed significantly to this fall. The remainder of the overall reduction in serious violence is largely accounted for by a six per cent fall in serious wounding (data not shown).

The number of burglaries estimated from BCS interviews in the 12 months to September 2006 remained similar to those in the previous 12 months; (the apparent four per cent decrease was not statistically significant). Recorded crime figures showed continuing falls in domestic burglary, with a decrease of three per cent recorded in July to September 2006 compared with the same quarter in 2005.

The number of vehicle thefts estimated from BCS interviews in the 12 months to September 2006 showed no change compared with the previous 12 months. Police recorded crime showed a four per cent decrease in thefts of or from a vehicle for July to September 2006 compared with the same period in 2005.

The apparent 14 per cent increase in theft from the person measured by the BCS in the interviews to June 2006 is not statistically significant. Recorded crime figures for other thefts and handling decreased by five per cent in July to September 2006 compared with the previous year.

Recorded robbery figures showed a one per cent rise in July to September 2006 compared with a year earlier. This represents a much smaller increase than the previous three quarters; which showed increases of five per cent, 12 per cent and seven per cent in the quarters ending June 2006, March 2006 and December 2005 respectively.

There was a four per cent fall in recorded sexual offences in July to September 2006 compared with a year earlier. The number of robberies and sexual offences identified by the BCS are too small to provide reliable estimates of trends.

¹ This definition does not cover sexual offences or robbery.

² Other violence against the person without injury includes common assault, harassment and possession of weapons.

BCS interviews in the 12 months to September 2006 showed the number of incidents of vandalism has increased by 11 per cent, the only statistically significant change this quarter. Recorded crime showed a one per cent rise in criminal damage in April to September 2006 compared with the same period a year earlier.

Drug offences recorded by the police rose by nine per cent in July to September 2006 compared with the same quarter in the previous year. This increase was smaller than seen in the previous three quarters (16 per cent, 27 per cent and 21 per cent for the quarters ending June 2006, March 2006 and December 2005 respectively). The rise was mainly due to an increase in the recording of possession of cannabis offences, and coincides with an increase in the number of formal warnings for cannabis possession.

Table A on page 9 provides a detailed breakdown of changes in police recorded crime compared with the same period a year earlier.

Public perceptions

BCS interviews during the 12 months to September 2006 show that the proportion of adults with a high level of worry about burglary, car crime and violent crime remained stable compared with the previous year (Table 2).

The overall measure of the proportion of people who perceived a high level of anti-social behaviour in their local area in the year ending September 2006 remained stable compared with the previous 12 month period (the apparent rise from 17% to 18% was not statistically significant). Statistically significant increases were seen for four of the seven individual measures compared whilst perceptions of problems with abandoned or burnt out cars continue to show a decrease (Table 3).

The BCS also reports on public confidence with different aspects of the criminal justice system (CJS). Interviews in the 12 months to September 2006 showed a statistically significant increase in levels of confidence in one aspect of the CJS namely treating witnesses well (Table 4). Levels of confidence in other aspects of the CJS remained stable.

BCS data for this period for victim and witness satisfaction with the police and CJS can be found at:

<http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/pdfs07/hosb0107tab.pdf>

The proportion of people who thought that the police in their area did an excellent or good job significantly increased from 49 per cent in the 12 months to September 2005 to 51 per cent in the 12 months to September 2006 (data not shown).

Table 2: Fear of crime

<i>Percentage very worried</i>			BCS
	Interviews in Oct 2004 to Sept 2005	Interviews in Oct 2005 to Sept 2006	Statistically significant change ⁽¹⁾
High level of worry about ⁽²⁾ :			
Burglary	13	13	
Car crime	14	13	
Violent crime	17	17	

1. Statistical significance of changes is indicated by a single asterisk for significance at the 10% level, or a double asterisk at the 5% level (two tail tests). See Notes for an explanation of statistical significance.

2. See Walker *et al.* (2006) for more information on the definitions of the fear of crime indicators.

Table 3: Anti-social behaviour indicators

<i>Percentage saying very/fairly big problem in their area</i>			BCS
	Interviews in Oct 2004 to Sept 2005	Interviews in Oct 2005 to Sept 2006	Statistically significant change ⁽¹⁾
High level of perceived anti-social behaviour ⁽²⁾	17	18	
Abandoned or burnt-out cars	11	9	**↓
Noisy neighbours or loud parties	9	10	**↑
People being drunk or rowdy in public places	23	25	**↑
People using or dealing drugs	26	28	**↑
Teenagers hanging around on the streets	31	33	**↑
Rubbish or litter lying around	30	31	
Vandalism, graffiti and other deliberate damage to property	29	29	

1. Statistical significance of changes is indicated by a single asterisk for significance at the 10% level, or a double asterisk at the 5% level (two tail tests). See Notes for an explanation of statistical significance.

2. This measure is derived from responses to the seven individual anti-social behaviour strands reported in the table. In bulletins prior to the April 2003 to March 2004 report, the overall anti-social behaviour measure was derived from five strands: teenagers hanging around on the streets; vandalism, graffiti and other deliberate damage to property; people being attacked/harassed because of their race/colour; people using or dealing drugs; and people being drunk or rowdy in public places.

Table 4: Public confidence in the criminal justice system

<i>Percentage very/fairly confident</i>			BCS
	Interviews in Oct 2004 to Sept 2005	Interviews in Oct 2005 to Sept 2006	Statistically significant change ⁽¹⁾
Respects the rights of people accused of committing a crime and treats them fairly	79	80	*
Effective in bringing people who commit crimes to justice	43	43	
Deals with cases promptly and efficiently	40	40	
Effective at reducing crime	38	38	
Meets the needs of victims of crime	34	34	
Dealing with young people accused of crime	26	26	
Treats people who come forward as witnesses well	66	68	**↑

1. Statistical significance of changes is indicated by a single asterisk for significance at the 10% level, or a double asterisk at the 5% level (two tail tests). See Notes for an explanation of statistical significance.

Firearm offences

Provisional statistics are available for recorded crimes involving firearms other than air weapons for the 12 months ending September 2006. Firearms are taken to be involved in an offence if they are fired, used as a blunt instrument against a person, or used in a threat.

In the 12 months to September 2006 there were a provisional 9,728 firearm offences. This was a decrease of 1,643 offences, or 14 per cent, compared with the 12 months ending September 2005.

Table 5 Firearms (excluding air weapons): level of injury in England and Wales October 2004 to September 2005 and October 2005 to September 2006

Nature of injury	Year ending Sept 05	Year ending Sept 06	% change
Fatal injuries	57	57	0
Serious injuries	481	440	-9
Slight injuries	3,653	2,601	-29
Threats	5,347	5,069	-5
No injuries	1,833	1,561	-15
Total	11,371	9,728	-14

There was no change in the number of offences with fatal injuries in the year to September 2006 compared with the year ending September 2005, but there were decreases in numbers of offences causing other injuries. Serious injuries were down by nine per cent, and slight injuries were down by 29 per cent.

Table 6 Firearms (excluding air weapons): type of weapon in England and Wales October 2004 to September 2005 and October 2005 to September 2006

Weapon type	Year ending Sept 05	Year ending Sept 06	% change
Shotgun	592	589	-1
Handgun	4,745	4,251	-10
Rifle ⁽¹⁾	68	74	+9
Imitation firearm ⁽²⁾	3,350	2,561	-24
Unidentified firearm	1,473	1,287	-13
Other firearm ⁽³⁾	1,143	966	-16
Total	11,371	9,728	-14

1. Because of the small number of offences involving rifles the percentage change should be treated with caution.

2. Imitation handguns, which are converted to fire bullets like handguns, are counted as handguns.

3. Other firearms include CS gas, disguised firearms, machine guns, pepper spray, stun guns and other specified weapons (majority are paintball guns).

There were 4,251 offences where handguns were used in the year to September 2006, a decrease of 494 offences (down 10 per cent) compared with the year ending September 2005. Imitation weapons were used in 2,561 offences, a decrease of 789 offences (down 23 per cent).

Seasonality

The latest available quarterly recorded crime data presented in this bulletin is compared with the data for the quarter 12 months earlier. This comparison is made to avoid the figures for percentage change being influenced by short term seasonal effects associated with the time of year. Each crime type follows a different pattern and some show no significant seasonal effects at all. Many types of violent crime, for example, peak in the summer months and drop in the winter, whereas theft of motor vehicles typically falls in the summer months.

Pedal cycle theft has the strongest and clearest seasonal pattern; peaks that begin in May and increase in size until September (Figure 3). This pattern is likely to be due to an increase in bike usage in the summer which increases the opportunity for theft.

It is because of these seasonal fluctuations that the latest crime data is only ever compared with the same period for a previous year, so that like for like comparisons are made. For more detail on seasonal patterns in recorded crime statistics see:

<http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/pdfs07/rdsolr0207.pdf>

Figure 3: Theft of a pedal cycle: average seasonal factors, 2000 to 2005

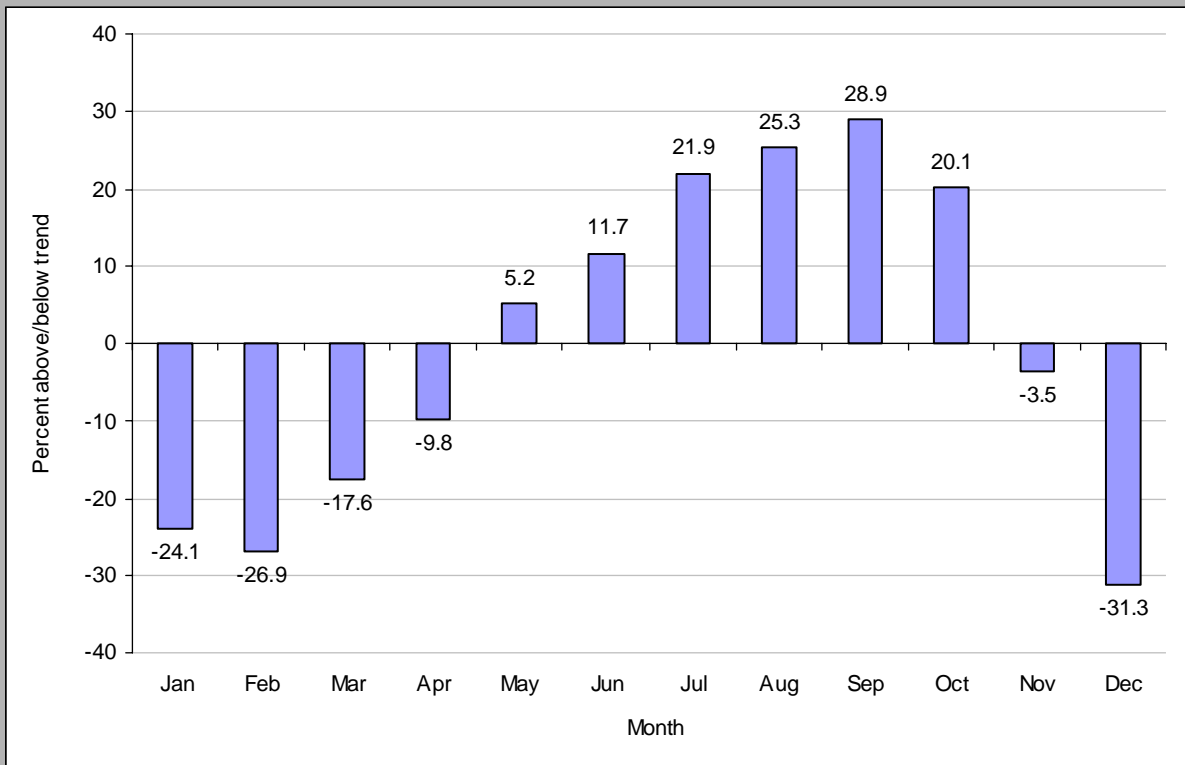


Table A Number of recorded crimes and percentage change compared with the same quarter in the previous year

Offence group	Number of crimes recorded by the police (thousands) ^(1,2)					Percentage change compared with the same quarter in the previous year ⁽³⁾				
	Jul-Sep 2005	Oct-Dec 2005	Jan-Mar 2006	Apr-Jun 2006	Jul-Sep 2006	Oct-Dec 2005	Jan-Mar 2006	Apr-Jun 2006	Jul-Sep 2006	
Violence against the person	278.2	262.4	241.5	278.4	276.9	1%	-4%	0%	0%	
More serious violence against the person ⁽⁴⁾	11.2	9.8	8.2	9.6	9.1	-13%	-22%	-14%	-19%	
Other offences against the person - with injury ⁽⁵⁾	138.9	131.4	114.6	132.3	129.1	6%	-5%	-4%	-7%	
Other offences against the person - with no injury ⁽⁶⁾	128.0	121.1	118.8	136.5	138.7	-4%	-2%	6%	8%	
Sexual offences	16.6	15.0	13.7	15.8	15.9	2%	-7%	-5%	-4%	
Robbery	24.0	24.6	25.4	25.3	24.2	7%	12%	5%	1%	
Total violent crime	318.8	302.0	280.7	319.5	317.1	1%	-3%	0%	-1%	
Domestic burglary	75.3	78.9	74.2	69.5	73.2	-3%	-5%	-4%	-3%	
Other burglary	85.4	85.2	84.1	84.9	79.3	0%	-5%	-5%	-7%	
Thefts of and from vehicles	176.9	182.7	183.9	177.3	169.5	0%	1%	0%	-4%	
Other thefts and handling	337.6	320.7	301.1	319.2	321.3	-2%	-2%	-6%	-5%	
Fraud and forgery	60.9	55.7	53.0	53.6	52.1	-20%	-18%	-15%	-15%	
Criminal damage	277.7	305.2	299.4	301.7	281.7	1%	-2%	0%	1%	
Total property crime	1,013.8	1,028.4	985.7	1,006.3	977.1	-2%	-3%	-4%	-4%	
Drug offences	42.0	46.7	48.2	48.0	45.8	21%	27%	16%	9%	
Other offences	19.8	18.8	17.8	20.8	19.4	25%	14%	8%	-2%	
Total recorded crime	1,394.5	1,395.9	1,342.3	1,394.5	1,359.3	0%	-2%	-2%	-3%	

1. Police recorded crime statistics, based on data from all 44 forces in England and Wales (including the British Transport Police).
2. The figures given in the table are the latest available. They may therefore differ slightly from figures published in previous bulletins.
3. Comparisons are made with the same quarter in the preceding year in order to take into account seasonality. Comparisons with the previous quarter are not shown.
4. More serious violence against the person includes homicide, threats or conspiracy to murder, serious wounding and other acts endangering life.
5. Other offences against the person - with injury comprises less serious wounding.
6. Other offences against the person - with no injury includes harassment, possession of weapons, other offences against children and common assault (where there is no injury).

Notes

The latest British Crime Survey (BCS) figures are based on interviews with adults aged 16 or over living in private households in England and Wales conducted between October 2005 and September 2006 (BCS year ending September 2006) and incidents experienced by survey respondents in the 12 months prior to their interview. Averaging over the moving recall period generates estimates that are most closely comparable with police recorded crime figures for the 12 months up to the end of March 2005, about six months behind the latest recorded crime figures reported here. BCS trends are compared with results from the interviews in the year ending September 2005.

The BCS fieldwork was carried out by BMRB Social Research. In the year ending September 2006 the BCS has a nationally representative sample of 48,265 adults with a response rate of 75 per cent.³ Further information about the BCS and access to recent publications can be found at <http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/bcs1.html>.

Recorded crime figures relate to crime recorded by the police in England and Wales in the period in question. Unlike the BCS, it does not include crimes that have not been reported to the police, and does not include those that the police decide not to record.

BCS and recorded crime figures used in this bulletin should be treated as provisional and are subject to revision in future Quarterly Updates.

What do we mean by statistical significance?

BCS estimates are based on a representative sample of the population of approximately 45,000 respondents aged 16 or over each year. Any sample survey may produce estimates that differ from the figures that would have been obtained if the whole population had been interviewed. The size of this difference depends on the sample size, the size of the estimate and the design of the survey.

Because of this difference (known as sampling error), changes in estimates between sweeps of the survey may occur by chance. In other words, the difference may be simply due to which adults were randomly selected for interview. We are able to measure whether this is likely to be the case using standard statistical tests; those survey results that are significant, according to these tests, are identified by asterisks in the tables.

This bulletin has been produced according to the guidance for National Statistics.

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³ Based on BCS interviews achieved during the year ending March 2006. The response rate for the year ending September 2006 cannot be calculated as finalised response figures are not yet available.