

THE 1996 BRITISH CRIME SURVEY

The British Crime Survey (BCS) asks a large representative sample of the general public about their experience as victims of household and personal crime in the previous year. It's main aim is to provide a count of crime that includes incidents not reported to the police and is not affected by changes in the way police record crime. For the offences it covers, it provides a more complete picture of the *extent* of crime than police figures. It also gives a better measure of the *trends* in crime, as willingness to report crimes to the police varies over crime.

Besides counting crimes, the survey can also show which types of people are most at risk of which types of crime and describe the nature of crime: where, when and how it happened. It is also used to ask people about other crime-related issues, such as fear of crime and attitudes towards the police. The Home Office has now conducted six sweeps of the survey (1982, 1984, 1988, 1992, 1994 and 1996). In 1996 more than 16,500 people aged 16 and over were interviewed.

The findings from the 1996 BCS were published in Home Office Statistical Bulletin 19/96 in September 1996 (see below). The main points are:

The extent of crime

□ Overall, the BCS estimated there were 19.1 million crimes against individuals and their property in England and Wales during 1995. Most were against property. Of the total, 9% were burglaries (inc. attempts). Vehicles also emerge as a common target; a third of all incidents involved theft of, theft from, or damage to a vehicle. Serious violent crime accounted for 6% see chart.

Trends in crime

- Between 1981 and 1995, for those crimes that can be compared, the number recorded by the police rose by 91%, while the BCS shows a lower rise of 83% see chart.
- Between 1993 and 1995, recorded crime figures fell by 8%, whereas the BCS figure rose by 2% see chart. The rise in the BCS - the smallest ever - is equivalent to an annual increase of 1.1% for 1993 to 1995. This compares with an annual increase of 5.2 % during 1981 to 1993.

Reporting to the police

□ Under half of BCS offences were reported to the police in 1995. Reporting rates varied by offence. Car thefts, burglaries and bicycle thefts were usually reported, while vandalism, thefts of property and thefts from the home were often not.

Burglary

□ The BCS recorded falls in burglary for the first time. Since 1993, Burglary with loss has decreased 5% in the BCS and 12 % in recorded crime figures.

Car crime

- ☐ Falls in car crime between 1993 and 1995 were also detected for the first time. Theft of vehicles and thefts from vehicles fell by 8% and 2% respectively in the BCS, with larger drops recorded in the police figures.

Violence

- ☐ Violence, in contrast, continued to rise between 1993 and 1995. Robbery increased by 32% in the BCS and 18% in police figures. Woundingt was also up on both measures but to a lesser degree (13% and 3% respectively).

Fear of crime

- ☐ There has been a small drop in worry about the main categories of property crime since 1994. People are also less likely to feel unsafe when on the street after dark.

The findings of the 1996 BCS are published in *The 1996 British Crime Survey*, Home Office Statistical Bulletin Issue 19/96, by Catriona Mirrlees-Black, Pat Mayhew and Andrew Percy.

Copies are available from the Information and Publications Group, Home Office Research & Statistics Directorate, Room 1308 Apollo House 36 Wellesley RD, Croydon, CR9 3RR. Tel:0181 760 8340. [email](#).

 [Return to main page](#)