

CRIME RATE PLUNGES

AS POLICE

'MESSAGE' FIGURES

by

Anil Dawar

25 Jan 2013

<http://www.express.co.uk/posts/view/373023/Crime-rate-plunges-as-police-message-figures>

CMG Archives,

<http://www.campbellmgold.com>

(2013)

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HUNDREDS of thousands of crimes are going unrecorded or being downplayed by police battling to meet targets, according to an official report yesterday.



Tory MP Priti Patel said the public would be shocked

"No corners can be cut because behind every crime is a victim" - Tory MP Priti Patel said

Although crime levels are falling, forces are "overstating" the true rate at which they are dropping, the Office for National Statistics has found.

Targets "may have swayed officers into downgrading marginal incidents" and low-level crimes are being dealt with informally instead of being logged, according to the ONS.

Officers are increasingly focused on "charges and detection" leaving recording standards to slip, the statisticians added.

The report said the overstating could be because of "performance pressures associated with targets (e.g. to reduce crime or increase detection rates) acting as perverse incentives for some crimes to be downgraded into non-notifiable categories".

Tory MP Priti Patel said the public would be shocked.

She added: "No corners can be cut because behind every crime is a victim. The public will be appalled to find that ultimately criminals are getting away." Shadow Policing Minister David Hanson said: "The Home Secretary should examine urgently whether, as the ONS suggest, the cuts to police budgets mark a return to fewer crimes being recorded by the police."

The ONS crime bulletin found 400,000 fewer crimes were recorded by police in England and Wales over the past five years than were reported in the official Crime Survey. Since 2007 police recorded crime fell 33 per cent, while Crime Survey figures fell 17 per cent.

Overall, the number of crimes in the last year dropped by 800,000 – eight per cent – to 8.9 million, the lowest since the survey began more than 30 years ago.

The fall was driven by a massive drop in vandalism, burglary and vehicle thefts, the ONS said.

Violent crimes recorded by police fell five per cent year-on-year, while murders fell by 10 per cent. However, pickpocketing rose six per cent, mainly because of the growing popularity of smart phones, MP3 players and iPads.

Talking about the differences between police figures and the survey, John Flatley, head of crime statistics at the ONS, said his team were told by officers it was down to "the culture and informal pressure of having targets and expectation that police will continue to cut crime."

Officers have to record crimes reported to them but when they charge someone "they take into account what they can get through the courts and they might tend to downgrade them," he said. "There are marginal instances where someone's complaining about anti-social behaviour by neighbours. There's a grey area where that tips into harassment and becomes a notifiable offence. With the pressure of targets you can see why they might want to go one way rather than the other," he added.

Budget cuts might also lead to a "lower priority to compliance with rules and regulations," he said. "I'm not saying this is willful, it could also be a lack of awareness or understanding."

He stressed that the quality of crime recording is "amongst the best in the world".

A Home Office spokesman said: "What is clear is that crime has fallen across both measures. Crime is now at the lowest level since the measure began.

"There is no simple answer to why there has been variation between the Crime Survey and police recorded crime.

"The two were always intended to assess different things and have different strengths. We are continuing to work with forces to ensure accurate data."

The Association of Chief Police Officers said it was continuing to ensure forces meet the national standard on recording crimes.

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25012013

The Guardian
MASSAGING
THE
CRIME FIGURES

Violent crime is down. Or is it?

**Well, as statisticians and politicians know,
it all depends on how and what you're counting**

by

Marian FitzGerald

20 July 2009

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2009/jul/20/crime-figures>

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(2013)

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Long-term trends in crime broadly mirror economic and social trends. At their simplest, the main statistical models agree that property crime will rise during a recession but violence will tend to fall. Yet political parties continue to promise the electorate that their criminal justice policies uniquely hold the key to controlling crime. Heeding neither the economists nor the legend of King Canute, governments overstate claims of success when crime is falling; but this can leave them cut-off once the tide starts to turn.

The New Labour government started out by setting ambitious targets for all police forces to reduce domestic burglary and motor vehicle crime. Falls in both, as the most common types of recorded crime, would enable the government to claim that it had reduced crime overall. In addition, for just five forces, it set a target for reducing robbery.

Subsequent falls in domestic burglary and motor vehicle crime, though, were not mainly due to increased police efficiency or to a buoyant economy. Both were already in decline when New Labour took office, due in part to improvements in security. At the same time, new, alternative opportunities for property crime were being created by developments in communication and technology. Identity theft, especially using plastic cards, was starting to take off on a large scale; but, as victims mainly reported these offences to their card issuers rather than the police, they hardly affected the recorded crime statistics. Ironically, though, developments in technology – in particular, the sudden widespread ownership of mobile phones by young people – also started to drive the figure for recorded robberies way off-target.

Meanwhile, Home Office ministers added to the public's growing mistrust and confusion over government statistics by introducing major changes to the rules for police crime recording so that – as one officer put it to me – "looking for trends in the police figures is now a bit like trying to read tea leaves." This enabled them to persuade sections of the media that the Home Office's British Crime Survey (BCS) was the only definitive measure of crime. Yet the BCS also had limitations – especially

with regard to crime among young people in the most deprived inner-city areas; and it was completely ignored by Tony Blair when, in 2002, he made it his personal mission to get street crime down in the light of soaring police figures but at a time when the BCS was showing no increase in the problem.

By the government's second term in office, ministers were becoming increasingly frustrated by the public's refusal to believe them when they said crime was going down and they launched new measures to counter this, setting the police targets for increasing detections, pressing for an increase in asbos and enhancing the police presence on the streets to "reassure" the public. What they failed to recognise was that public fears are not related to property crime so much as to crimes of violence, especially serious violence, which had been showing an unexpectedly steep increase since the early 90s. Yet, because serious violence is relatively rare, it did not affect the overall fall in the crime figures; so the government effectively ignored the problem until it had been in power for nearly 10 years and this long-run trend started to claim the lives of young people.

Last week's publication of the annual crime statistics suggests that the recession is starting to have its predicted impact. Both the BCS and the police statistics show a slight increase in burglaries; the BCS says acquisitive crime overall is up by 11%; and the police have recorded a 10% increase in cases of shoplifting. In addition, figures provided separately by the UK Cards Association confirm that the ongoing rise in card fraud makes this now by far the most common type of property crime in the UK. Overall violent crime, though, which is closely associated with the night-time economy has, predictably, begun to fall.

What, though, of the most serious forms of violence?

Statisticians responsible for the published crime statistics for 2008-09 have taken the unprecedented step of omitting the "most serious violence against the person" category, now they have seen the impact of further government changes to the counting rules. For, had this category been included, it would have given the impression that serious violence had increased by nearly 150% on the previous year.

The new home secretary has conceded that "People are entitled to doubt the statistics," but still claims that "reductions in crime are being maintained and the risk of being a victim is still historically low." Meanwhile, the Conservatives, predictably, are depicting the rise in acquisitive crime as an indictment of New Labour's criminal justice policies. Yet, if the recession continues and they are in office two years from now, they will be no more able to turn the tide. But they will no doubt be sure to claim – however spuriously – that they have succeeded in reducing violence.

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2009/jul/20/crime-figures>

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The Mirror

LIES, DAMNED LIES AND STATISTICS:

CRIME HITS HISTORIC LOW

BUT AT LEAST 400,000 OFFENCES WERE NOT RECORDED

by

James Lyons

24 Jan 2013

<http://www.mirror.co.uk/news/uk-news/crime-statistics-400000-offences-reported-1553885>

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The revelation overshadowed new figures showing crime at a historic low after another big drop in the 12 months to last September



Police figures showing that crime has plummeted by a third are wrong because officers failed to record hundreds of thousands of offences, statistics chiefs revealed today.

Cops did not log at least 400,000 crimes that were reported to them by victims over the last five years and the true number is likely to be far higher, the Office for National Statistics said.

Falling numbers of officers caused by Government cuts could be fuelling the problem at a time when forces are under pressure to produce results, according to ONS numbers man John Flately.

“There is obviously tension between having a high quality crime recoding system that requires a large back office function and providing a good service to victims in terms of the police service,” he said.

“And at a time when resources are tighter one might think that balance shifts slightly to giving a lower priority to compliance with rules and regulations and more to making sure you provide a service to victims.”

Shadow minister David Hanson demanded urgent action to find out whether cuts were behind the dodgy figures, calling for the policing watchdog to be called in.

“The Home Secretary should examine urgently whether, as the ONS suggest, the cuts to police budgets mark a return to fewer crimes being recorded by the police,” Labour’s Mr Hanson said.

The revelation overshadowed new figures showing crime at a historic low after another big drop in the 12 months to last September.

Only pickpocketing and thefts from sheds and garages bucked the trend as better security forced crooks to switch from burgling homes and stealing cars to easier targets like iPods and smart phones.

Overall, crime fell by 8%, or around 800,000 offences, to 8.9 million, according to the huge Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW), the lowest level since the survey began in 1981.

Separate figures recorded by police showed a 7% fall over the year to September while murders were down 10% to 551, the lowest number since 1978.

Home Office minister Jeremy Browne hailed them as a vindication of the coalition’s decision to press ahead with swingeing police cuts.

The Lib Dem MP said: “Police reform is working. We have swept away central targets, reduced bureaucracy and these figures show forces are rising to the challenge of doing more with less.

“Many have achieved significant reductions in crime with reduced budgets.”

But Steve McCabe, a member of the Commons Home Affairs select committee, warned the Government against bragging about crime statistics when there was fresh doubt over them.

Labour’s Mr McCabe said: “There is no point Government ministers trumpeting a fall in crime when actually what we are seeing is a fall in the figures.”

Although the latest police and crime survey figures are broadly in line with each other they have differed widely in the recent past, an ONS review of comparable crime categories found.

The number of offences recorded by cops dropped from 2,881,327 to 1,922,643, a dramatic fall of 960,000 or 33%, between in 2006-7 and 2011-12.

But the crime survey, which is based on interviews with tens of thousands of people, found that the number of offences victims said they had reported to police had fallen by 560,000 or 17%.

Only around half of all crime fell into the comparable categories, suggesting that the number of unrecorded crimes could be double the missing 400,000.

ONS statistician John Flatley insisted there was no evidence that police were deliberately massaging the figures.

“The anecdotal evidence that we have got is more that the culture and the informal pressure of having targets, the expectation that informal pressure of having targets and expectations that police will continue to cut crime,” he said.

Douglas Paxton, a spokesman for the Association of Chief Police Officers, stressed that the ONS had found that crime recording by the UK police remains “amongst the best in the world”.

The deputy chief constable said: "Ensuring our data is as robust as it can be has a direct impact on public trust and confidence and we will continue to ensure forces continue to meet the national standard when it comes to recording crimes."

Javed Khan, of head of the Victim Support, said: "Victims must be confident that they'll be taken seriously if they report a crime, so justice can be done."

<http://www.mirror.co.uk/news/uk-news/crime-statistics-40000-offences-reported-1553885>

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The Huffington Post UK
'TARGET CULTURE' AND CUTS
BLAMED FOR OVERSTATING
CRIME REDUCTION FIGURES

Press Association

24 Jan 2013

http://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/2013/01/24/police-accused-of-overstating-crime-targets_n_2542988.html?utm_hp_ref=uk

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Fears have been fuelled that budget cuts and pressure to hit targets have prompted police officers to exaggerate the rate at which crime has fallen in the last five years.

Police records have appeared to "overstate the true rate at which crime has been falling" by failing to take into account 400,000 offences, a new study found.

A target culture was behind the discrepancy, the Office for National Statistics (ONS) said, as police officers come under an "informal pressure" to slash crime.



Police under pressure to reduce crime figures

Labour called for reassurance that spending cuts were not behind the fall in recorded offences - but the Coalition insisted police forces had reduced crime on lower budgets.

The level of police-recorded crime in the year to the end of September fell by 7% or 290,000 to 3.8 million offences, the ONS said, while overall crime against adults fell by 8% or 820,000 to 8.9 million incidents.

A review was launched after alarm bells were sounded over the difference in the rate at which crime was falling in the two key sources of crime figures in Britain.

Both the Crime Survey of England and Wales (CSEW), which surveys households, and the National Crime Recording Standard (NCRS), which measures police-recorded crime, showed a similar fall in offences - around 11% - between 2002/03 and 2006/07.

But after this time, police-recorded crimes started falling at almost twice the rate than in the CSEW.

John Flatley, head of the ONS crime statistics and analysis division, said: "We're not saying police recorded crime data is incorrect to show that crime is falling.

"We are right in saying that it looks like from this analysis that the police data is showing a faster fall than is evidenced by the survey of household experience."

Mr Flatley said anecdotal evidence showed this was down to "the culture and informal pressure of having targets and expectation that police will continue to cut crime".

He went on: "Some lower level crimes, there is a judgment call to be made as to whether the incident attended to by the officer is actually a crime in law or a low level incident that would not get into the crime figures.

"It's possible in an era of targets to cut crime and pressure on officers to see a reduction in crime that their judgment will sway more to including that in the lower level category."

The additional analysis showed that police-recorded crime had fallen by 41% since 2002/03, compared to a 26% fall in crimes in the CSEW.

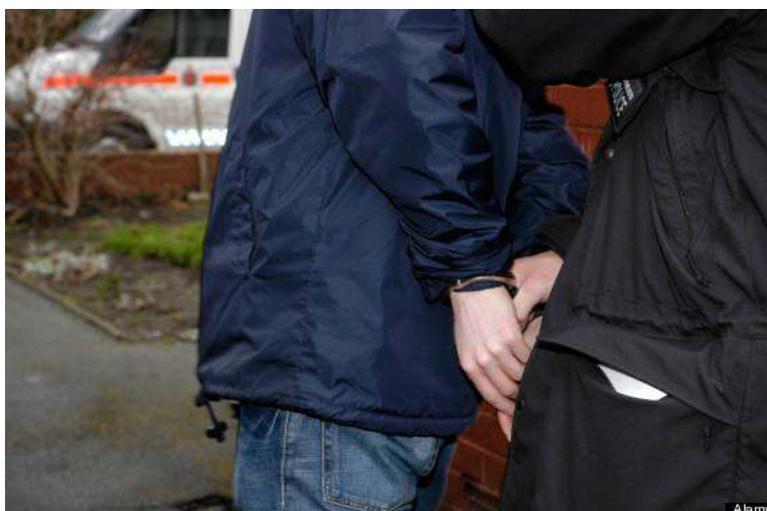
And in the last five years, the number of recorded crimes fell by 960,000, while the crime survey showed a fall of 560,000 offences.

This suggests that some 400,000 crimes were not recorded.

Shadow policing minister David Hanson called for Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Home Office to look at the difference in police-recorded crimes.

He said: "The continued reductions in crime, which have been going on for well over a decade now, emphasise the good work police have been doing for a number of years now."

He added: "The Home Secretary should examine urgently whether, as the ONS suggests, the cuts to police budgets mark a return to fewer crimes being recorded by the police."



Overall crime is at its lowest level since the CSEW began in 1981, while police-recorded offences dropped to the smallest number since 2002/03.

Crime fell across all headline offences recorded by police in the year to September, the ONS said, with vandalism, burglary and vehicle thefts driving the decline.

Violence against the person offences recorded by police showed a 5% year-on-year decrease, while homicide and attempted murder fell by 10% and 2% respectively.

And anti-social behaviour incidents continued to fall in the period, with 2.4 million cases recorded by the police.

There were some increases in sub-categories, with theft from the person - or pickpocketing - rising 6%, which anecdotal evidence suggested was down to the rise in popularity of hand-held gadgets such as iPhones, mp3 players and tablets.

Staffordshire Police deputy chief constable Douglas Paxton, the Association of Chief Police Officers' (Acpo) lead on statistics, said the additional study had noted that the quality of crime recording by the UK police remains "amongst the best in the world".

He said: "Ensuring our data is as robust as it can be has a direct impact on public trust and confidence and we will continue to ensure forces continue to meet the national standard when it comes to recording crimes."

Crime prevention minister Jeremy Browne said: "Police reform is working.

"We have swept away central targets, reduced bureaucracy and these figures show forces are rising to the challenge of doing more with less.

"Many have achieved significant reductions in crime with reduced budgets."

http://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/2013/01/24/police-accused-of-overstating-crime-targets_n_2542988.html?utm_hp_ref=uk

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