

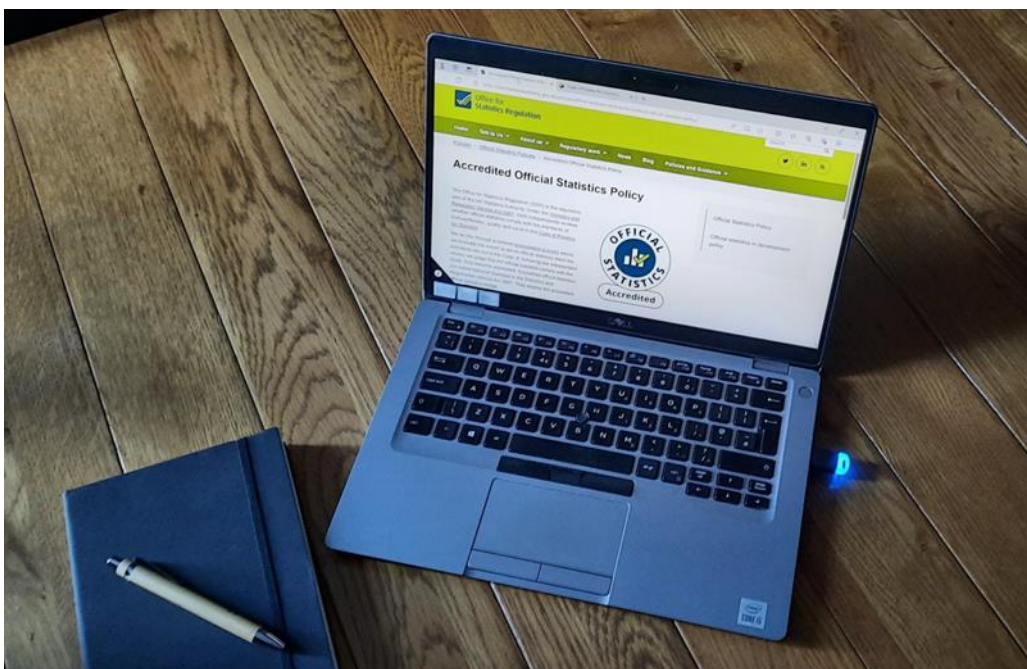


Recorded Crime and Official Statistics Accreditation in the UK – Public Briefing

Briefing No. 20



December 2024



Summary

This briefing outlines what is meant by official statistics in the UK. It provides details of the different levels available and how this relates to crime figures in Scotland, England and Wales, and Northern Ireland.

Official Statistics in the UK

Public sector organisations produce [official statistics](#) on behalf of the UK and Scottish Government. They provide a factual basis for assessment and decisions.

[Accredited official statistics](#) are official statistics where the Office for Statistics Regulation (OSR) has confirmed they meet the standards set out in the UK Statistics Authority's [Code of Practice](#). The overall Code is supported by a range of guidance documents, covering such areas as [transparency](#) and [quality](#).

The OSR keeps a [List of Accredited Official Statistics](#). This is a full list of all statistics the OSR has reviewed and accredited.

Crime Statistics in Scotland

The OSR classes the Scottish Government's [Recorded Crime bulletins](#) as accredited official statistics. This accreditation applies to the information published by the Scottish Government about the crimes and offences recorded, split by crime type and local authority. It does not extend to information about the people (including their demographic characteristics) and objects involved in the crimes.

Police Scotland provide data to the Scottish Government for their bulletins. Scottish Government staff then conduct detailed quality checks. They discuss any queries with Police Scotland, and both organisations make any necessary changes. Statisticians who have not been involved in the process then complete a second round of checking.

Police Scotland's own [performance publications](#) are classed as management information only.

HM Inspectorate of Constabulary in Scotland also conduct 'crime audits' to assess crime recording by Police Scotland. They check that recording is in line with the [Scottish Crime Recording Standard and Counting Rules](#). The [most recent audit](#) was in 2020. The next will be in 2025-26.

As well as police recorded crime figures, the Scottish Government publishes the [Scottish Crime and Justice Survey](#). This asks people about their experiences and feelings relating to crime in Scotland. The OSR classes these figures as accredited official statistics.

England and Wales

The Office for National Statistics (ONS) publishes [crime figures in England and Wales](#). These are based on police recorded crime and the Crime Survey for England & Wales.

The Home Office provides the ONS with [police recorded crime figures](#). The Home Office collates this data from all 43 police forces in England and Wales, plus British Transport Police. The Recorded Crime publications are official statistics, but not accredited official statistics. The OSR removed accreditation in 2014 following a decision that the data may not be reliable. Since that time significant improvements have been made in crime recording and data quality, but the OSR have confirmed in their [latest review](#) that further improvements are needed before they can consider reassessing the statistics.

The [Crime Survey for England & Wales](#) (CSEW) gathers information from a representative sample of people aged over 16 about their experience of crime. The figures from this survey are accredited official statistics.

Northern Ireland

Statistics on [police recorded crime in Northern Ireland](#) are collated and produced by statisticians seconded to the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) from the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA). They are accredited official statistics and are published monthly.

The [Northern Ireland Safe Community Survey](#) (NISCS) is a representative, continuous, personal interview survey of the experiences and perceptions of crime throughout Northern Ireland. Information from the survey is currently classed as '[official statistics in development](#)'. This type of official statistics is going through a process of development and evaluation in line with the Code of Practice.

Conclusion and Next Steps

As outlined above, there are a range of crime related figures published in the UK, some of which have OSR accreditation. This includes the Recorded Crime bulletins published by the Scottish Government.

A current focus in crime recording is the collection and reporting of data relating to sex and gender. As the Scottish Government's current accreditation relates to the numbers and types of crimes recorded, and not the demographics of individuals involved, any developments in this area are not expected to affect accreditation. Standards around accuracy and transparency will continue to be met when making any changes to current practice.

Purpose of these Public Briefings

The Strategic Police Plan commits to the provision of Policing for a safe, protected and resilient Scotland. This requires designing and maintaining services which meet rising and evolving demands in a constantly changing environment. To meet these demands, now and in the future, Scotland's police service must adapt and proportionately adopt the necessary technologies which will enable them to protect the safety and wellbeing of our communities (as outlined in the Policing Principles - Section 32 of Police and Fire Reform Act 2012).

This series of public focused and user-friendly public briefings has been developed to provide an overview of the benefits of emerging technology and upcoming developments within policing, the policies that will govern them, and the ethical, privacy and human rights implications.

Keeping up to date

To keep up to date with our work, please keep an eye on the Scottish Police Authority's [website](#) where you can find papers and watch livestream committee discussions, and follow us on Twitter/X:

@ScotPolAuth @policescotland

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