

# EVALUATE METHODS OF COLLECTING STATISTICS

## The Dark Figure of Crime



## Two Main Ways of Measuring Crime

### 1) Police Statistics (AKA – Home Office or Official Statistics)

POLICE RECORDED CRIME (PRC) ARE GATHERED BY THE HOME OFFICE TO SHOW POLICE ACTIVITY EVERY YEAR. THEY ARE CATEGORISED BY LOCATION, OFFENCE TYPE AND TIME, AND ARE ALWAYS PUBLICLY ACCESSIBLE. THESE ARE LIKELY TO CHANGE EVERY YEAR, AND ARE AFFECTED BY POLICY (MEANING THAT SOME MAY NOT BE RECORDED) AND TO A MUCH LESSER EXTENT CRIME THAT IS BEING COMMITTED. WHILE IT IS A **RELIABLE** MEASURE OF CRIME IT IS NOT THOUGHT TO BE A PARTICULARLY VALID MEASURE BECAUSE IT IS ONLY MADE UP OF CRIMES WHICH HAVE BEEN REPORTED TO THE POLICE. IT HAS LOW **VALIDITY**

### 2) Victim Surveys (Crime Survey of England and Wales/British Crime Survey)

CSEW IS A LARGE SURVEY OF CRIME IN ENGLAND AND WALES. IT TAKES A REPRESENTATIVE SAMPLE OF 51,000 PEOPLE OVER THE AGE OF 16 LIVING IN ENGLAND OR WALES AND ASKS ABOUT THEORY EXPERIENCES OF CRIME. IT IS REGARDED AS A MUCH MORE **VALID** MEASURE OF CRIME THAN THE OFFICIAL STATISTICS AS IT TAPS INTO UNRECORDED OR UNREPORTED CRIME. BECAUSE IT HAS GOOD VALIDITY IT ALSO HAS GOOD RELIABILITY.

## RELIABILITY AND VALIDITY

### Reliability

RELIABILITY IS THE CONSISTENCY OF STATISTICS THAT WE COLLECT. IF THEY VARY A GREAT DEAL FROM YEAR TO YEAR OR WHEN DIFFERENT PEOPLE COLLECT THEM, WE MAY CONCLUDE THAT WE CANNOT RELY ON THEM – THEY ARE UNRELIABLE STATISTICS. THE **HOME OFFICE** AND **CSEW** ARE THOUGHT TO BE RELIABLE, THAT IS THE METHODS USED DO NOT PRODUCE MASSIVE VARIATIONS IN THE RESULTS FROM YEAR TO *year*.

### Validity

VALIDITY REFERS WHETHER STATISTICS ARE GIVING US A TRUE PICTURE OF CRIME. FOR EXAMPLE, THE **CSEW** WILL ASK THE POPULATION IF THEY HAVE BEEN A VICTIM OF CRIME. STATISTICS FROM THE POLICE MAY BE VERY **RELIABLE** BUT MOST CRIMINOLOGISTS AGREE THAT THEY RARELY GIVE A TRUE PICTURE OF CRIME AS IT IS COMMITTED.

### Ethics and Crime Statistics

THERE ARE ETHICAL ISSUES WITH COLLECTING CRIME STATISTICS, THESE INCLUDE ISSUES OF **CONFIDENTIALITY**, AND **PRIVACY**.

- THE CSEW IS ANONYMOUS, AVOIDING SUCH ISSUES WITH CONFIDENTIALITY, BUT POLICE RECORDS ARE PUBLIC.
- DATA GATHERED BY THE CSEW IS NEVER PASSED ONTO OTHER ORGANISATIONS, TO MAINTAIN THIS CONFIDENTIALITY.

### What Is the Purpose of Crime Statistics?

- ALLOWS DEVELOPMENT OF CRIME REDUCTION POLICIES.
- PROVIDES INFORMATION ON A GEOGRAPHICAL BASIS.
- ALLOWS THE PUBLIC TO VOICE THEIR OPINIONS ON CRIME ISSUES.
- SHOWS THE EMERGENCE OF "NEW" CRIMES

## OFFICIAL STATISTICS AND VICTIM SURVEYS

### POLICE STATISTICS: (AKA – Home Office or Official Statistics)

#### Advantages

- RECORDING OF CRIME NORMALLY TAKES PLACE CLOSE IN TIME TO WHEN THE OFFENCE WAS COMMITTED. THIS MEANS THAT POLICE WILL RECORD INFORMATION BEFORE IT IS FORGOTTEN.
- POLICE WILL RECORD EVEN INSIGNIFICANT EVENTS THAT OTHERS MAY NOT DEEM IMPORTANT, FOR EXAMPLE DETAILS, FOR EXAMPLE THE AGE OR ETHNICITY OF THE OFFENDER.

#### Disadvantages

- POLICE MAY CHOOSE NOT TO RECORD CRIME FOR VARIOUS REASONS, E.G., THE CRIME IS REGARDED AS TRIVIAL OR NOT REALLY A CRIME (ACCORDING TO THE POLICE)
- UNREPORTED CRIMES ARE NOT RECORDED, MANY CRIMES FOR EXAMPLE HATE CRIMES, MORAL CRIMES, OR CRIMES HIDDEN WITH A CULTURE MAY NOT BE REPORTED TO THE POLICE.

### VICTIM SURVEYS: (Crime Survey of England and Wales/British Crime Survey)

#### Advantages

- RECORDS OTHERWISE UNREPORTED CRIME WHICH GOES UP TO MAKE THE DARK FIGURE OF CRIME, THIS MEANS THAT CRIME WHICH IS OFTEN UNREPORTED SUCH AS MINOR SEXUAL AND HATE CRIMES, OR TRIVIAL CRIME IS MUCH MORE LIKELY TO BE CAPTURED BY THE SURVEY.
- RECORDS PEOPLES PERSONAL EXPERIENCES AND HOW CRIME ACTUALLY AFFECTS THEM, THIS IS MOST RECORDED BY POLICE STATISTICS.

#### Disadvantages

- FAILS TO CAPTURE "VICTIMLESS" CRIMES AS PEOPLE MAY NOT BE AWARE THEY ARE A VICTIM (E.G. WHITE-COLLAR CRIME AND MORAL CRIME)
- RELIES ON THE ACCURACY OF THE VICTIM'S MEMORY, THIS LESSENS VALIDITY
- PEOPLE MAY BE STILL AFRAID TO REPORT, EVEN ANONYMOUSLY BECAUSE THEY DO NOT TRUST THE INTERVIEWERS

## **QUESTIONS**

Answer in full sentences

1) What is meant by the 'dark figure' of crime?

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2) What are the two different ways that data is collected about crime?

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3) What is meant by the term's reliability and validity, how is this related to crime statistics?

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4) Describe in your own words why we collect crime statistics?

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5) Describe some of the ethical issues in collecting crime statistics?

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6) Explain two advantages and two disadvantages of police statistics

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7) Explain two advantages and two disadvantages of victim surveys

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