

The Dark Figure

Criminal Justice

Crime that never reaches the statistics, and the filters that remove it.

The dark figure is offending that is never reported, never recorded, or both.

TWO FILTERS

Reporting by victims · recording by police

THIRD SOURCE

Self-report offending studies

- Most offences are never reported to the police
- Reporting rates differ sharply by offence type
- Vehicle theft is reported often; insurance requires it
- Sexual offences and fraud are heavily under-reported
- Recording decisions remove more before any count

LOOK FOR IT

A rise in recorded sexual offences may show more reporting, not more offending.

Educational reference. Under-reporting differs by country, offence and year; always cite the specific survey.