

Counting Crime

Criminal Justice

The two main sources of crime figures, and what each cannot see.

Police recorded crime

- Counts what is reported and then recorded
- Sensitive to recording rules and practice
- Covers offences with no obvious victim
- A rise can reflect better recording
- The main source for homicide and rare crime

Victimisation surveys

- Asks a population sample about experience
- Captures crime never reported to police
- Stable method, so trends are comparable
- Misses homicide; fraud is hard to capture
- Excludes people outside the sampling frame

THE DIFFERENCE THAT MATTERS

Neither source is the crime rate. Read both, and ask what each one is structurally unable to see.

Educational reference. Surveys such as the CSEW and NCVS give estimates with confidence intervals, not counts.