
Chair of the UK Statistics Authority, Sir David Norgrove

Mayor Sadiq Khan
City Hall
The Queen's Walk
London SE1 2AA
(by email)

7 August 2018

Dear Mayor

My attention has recently been drawn to various statements issued by you and by your office regarding trends in crime.¹ I was asked specifically about your use of police-recorded crime statistics to describe trends in crime and violent crime.

This is a complicated area, with two main sources of data.

The Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW) is the most reliable indicator for long-term trends in crime overall. Unlike police-recorded crime, the CSEW is unaffected by changes to police recording practices.

The CSEW shows that crime generally has fallen in England and Wales in recent decades, though the trend seems now to be levelling off. It is not the case that crime has been rising nationally, as has been suggested in some of your recent statements.²

While police recorded crime has significant limitations, it is better suited than CSEW to measuring trends in some of the more harmful crimes that occur in relatively low volumes (such as knife crime). The most recent crime statistics³ find that police-recorded crime shows a likely real increase in some higher-harm, violent offences. For example, police recorded 16 per cent more offences involving knives or sharp instruments this year, compared with last year. This is supported by NHS data.⁴

The one exception to your generally accurate statements in relation to this category of crime was in a tweet of 17 July, which had wrongly referred to violent crime doubling in Hampshire, Essex, Cambridgeshire, Warwickshire and Norfolk.⁵ I am pleased your office have said they will remove this tweet.

I welcomed the Greater London Authority's announcement, last month, that it was choosing to comply voluntarily with the Authority's *Code of Practice for Statistics*.⁶ Under the Code, it is important that public communications describe statistical trends accurately, with appropriate

¹ Letter from Oliver Cooper to Sir David Norgrove, <https://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/correspondence/communication-of-crime-statistics-by-the-mayor-of-london/>.

² For example: Mayor of London (31 October 2017): [Sadiq speaks: tackling knife crime](#), Mayor of London (14 February 2018): [The Mayor's investing £60m in the Met. Here's why](#).

³ ONS (19 July 2018): [Crime in England and Wales: year ending March 2018](#).

⁴ NHS data on hospital admissions: <https://digital.nhs.uk/data-and-information/find-data-and-publications/supplementary-information/2018-supplementary-information-files/admissions-resulting-from-an-assault-from-a-sharp-object>.

⁵ Mayor of London (17 July 2018): [Tweet regarding violent crime](#).

⁶ GLA (July 2018): [Code of Practice for Statistics – voluntary application](#).

balance and caveats. The Authority would be happy to assist your team, in interpreting and communicating statistical information in the complicated area of crime.

I am copying this letter to Mr Oliver Cooper, Leader of the Opposition, London Borough of Camden.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "David Norgrove". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Sir David Norgrove