
Chair of the UK Statistics Authority, Sir David Norgrove

Rt Hon Alistair Carmichael MP
Liberal Democrat Home Affairs Spokesperson
House of Commons
London SW1V 0AA
(by email)

3 February 2022

Dear Mr Carmichael,

Thank you for your letter of 1 February challenging a recent statement about crime statistics by the Home Office including commentary from the Home Secretary. A similar statement was then repeated by the Prime Minister.

I agree that Office for National Statistics (ONS) measures of crime must be used accurately, and not misrepresented. In this case, the Home Office news release presented the latest figures in a misleading way.

The Home Office news release in two places presented the statistics to give a positive picture of trends in crime in England and Wales, based on a fall in total crime excluding fraud and computer misuse of 17% between the year ending June 2019 and the year ending September 2021. The exclusion was stated. However in the title and in two other places the release refers to a fall in crime, without making clear that this is true only if fraud and computer misuse are excluded. Likewise, the Prime Minister referred to a 14% reduction in crime, which is the change between the year ending September 2019 and the year ending September 2021. This figure also excludes fraud and computer misuse, though the Prime Minister did not make that clear.

If fraud and computer misuse are counted in total crime as they should be, total crime in fact increased by 14% between the year ending September 2019 and the year ending September 2021¹.

The ONS bulletin quite properly includes fraud and computer misuse in total crime. Those offences are then separated out in part to allow comparison with the long term data series and in part to be able to show that the sharp rise in fraud and computer misuse, as measured via the Telephone-operated Crime Survey for England and Wales, “more than offset the reductions seen for other types of crime”.

¹ [Crime in England and Wales: year ending September 2021](#), Office for National Statistics

You asked about the claimed relationship between the Beating Crime Plan and trends in crime. The ONS assessment, as argued in the bulletin, is that the pandemic and associated restrictions were the main drivers of recent trends in the relevant types of crime, and it would have been helpful if the Home Office news release had acknowledged this.

We have written to the Home Office and to the offices of the Prime Minister and Home Secretary to draw their attention to this exchange.

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