



HOUSE OF COMMONS  
LONDON SW1A 0AA

Sir David Norgrove  
UK Statistics Authority  
1 Drummond Gate  
London  
SW1V 2QQ

1 February 2022

Dear Sir David,

I am writing to raise concerns over the misrepresentation of official crime statistics by the Prime Minister, the Home Secretary and the Home Office.

In a press release dated Thursday 27th January 2022,<sup>[1]</sup> the Home Office claimed that “ONS crime statistics out today show that crime continues to fall under this Government.” However, that is contradicted by the Office for National Statistics publication itself,<sup>[2]</sup> which states:

*“Estimates from the TCSEW [Telephone-operated Crime Survey for England and Wales] for the year ending September 2021 compared with the pre-coronavirus year ending September 2019 show: a 14% increase in total crime, driven by a 47% increase in fraud and computer misuse”.*

The Home Office’s statement is therefore clearly not an accurate representation of the ONS figures. Elsewhere, the release refers to “overall crime levels recorded by the ONS, excluding fraud and computer misuse”, but that cannot justify the broader, unqualified claim that “crime continues to fall”.

The Prime Minister repeated this falsehood in his statement to the House of Commons on the Sue Gray Report on Monday 31st January.<sup>[3]</sup> He claimed that “we [this Government] have been cutting crime by 14%”.

The Prime Minister and the Government should not be disregarding a large, serious and growing area of crime – fraud and computer misuse – to claim a reduction in overall crime. Victims of fraud have been let down and ignored for too long, and writing them out of the story only makes that worse.

In addition, the Home Secretary misattributes the fall in certain types of crime to the Government’s ‘Beating Crime Plan’. In the release, she says: “This Government continues to cut crime through our Beating Crime Plan... Our approach is working – crime including theft, burglary and knife crime are down.”

Again, this claim is contradicted by the ONS bulletin. It says:

*“Total crime excluding fraud and computer misuse decreased by 14% compared with the year ending September 2019. This was largely driven by an 18% decrease in theft offences. **These decreases were related to the coronavirus pandemic and government instructions to limit social contact.**”* [Emphasis added]

It is therefore a gross misrepresentation for the Prime Minister and the Home Secretary to claim credit for the fall without even referencing the impact of the Covid pandemic and restrictions.

Tackling crime is a vitally important issue, and Cabinet Ministers should not mislead the public about it. It is crucial for public trust and understanding that official statistics are

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used accurately and not misrepresented.

As you have said in the past in relation to crime statistics, when politicians use figures that do not reflect reality, it can lead to pressure for policies that are not supported by the data – and that would not be desirable.

I therefore ask that you investigate the Home Office's press release – including the Home Secretary's comments – and the Prime Minister's statement, and offer your guidance on whether it is misleading.

Yours sincerely,

Alistair Carmichael MP  
Liberal Democrat Home Affairs Spokesperson

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<sup>[1]</sup> Home Office, 27th January 2022, 'Crime falling as Government implements Beating Crime Plan'

<sup>[2]</sup> Office for National Statistics, 27th January 2022, *Crime in England and Wales: year ending September 2021*, available online at: <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/crimeandjustice/bulletins/crimeinenglandandwales/yearendingseptember2021>

<sup>[3]</sup> Hansard, House of Commons, Monday 31st January 2022, 'Sue Gray Report', available online at: <https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/2022-01-31/debates/6B412B49-AB7D-4FE3-9F82-B9EAE93FB6AC/SueGrayReport>