

National Statistician's Data Ethics Advisory

Committee Correspondence Minute

Papers reviewed via correspondence, July 2022.

1. Research to support the development of survey questions on gang-related crime and gang membership for the Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW). NSDEC(22)12.

1.1 Outcome – the Committee supported this work subject to assurances to points outlined in section 1.5 and materials for the interviews being provided to the Secretariat.

1.2 Detail of the project and discussion:

1.3 As part of the Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW) Transformation programme, ONS have commissioned Crest Advisory to develop survey questions which aim to measure the prevalence of CYP (Children and Young People) aged 10-29 who identify as a member of a gang, have risk factors associated with becoming involved with gangs and incidents of gang-related crime. It has been identified that the existing questions need re-development to ensure that they continue to meet user needs and fill gaps in the current data on CYPs involvement in gangs.

1.4 To re-develop these questions, there will be engagement work with stakeholders to identify the indicators the new questions should aim to measure, re-design of the questions and cognitive testing. This will include up to 18 cognitive interviews with CYP aged 10-29, including those with prior experience of gang membership or affiliation, to ensure the questions developed are robust and the statistics produced are reliable and accurate.

1.5 The NSDEC raised the following points via correspondence:

- i The NSDEC suggested that the interview and analysis teams should broadly match the ethnic mix of the participants to avoid the risk of bias.
- ii The Committee questioned how the revelation of a participant being a perpetrator of crime would be handled, and also noted that the research team should be aware that the support services may be stretched which should be considered.
- iii The Committee queried whether parents will actually not disclose the incentive amount from the child and questioned whether this would cause a sense of a less than transparent approach.
- iv It was noted that recruitment via existing connections would be sensible, but the NSDEC highlighted that this may lead to some bias.
- v The NSDEC stressed the importance of minimising the risk of disclosure of interview participation as participants may feel compromised by a former gang member disclosing their activities during the research, putting participants at heightened risk from the other gang members.

vi With regard to informed consent, the Committee noted that participants should be made aware of the kind of disclosures that might be escalated as per the safeguarding plan.

vii The Committee questioned how the interviewer will know whether a person being interviewed remotely is on their own or not.

viii The Committee requested more specific information about how the results of the research will be used.

ix The NSDEC questioned whether any experts had been or will be involved in the development of the interview questions that will be tested.

x The Committee advised that Crest should destroy all personal data once the project has been concluded.

xi The Committee requested clarity on what the default mode for the interviews would be and suggested that in-person interviews would be preferable.

xii The Committee stressed the importance of encryption for the transcription to ensure security of the participants' responses.

1.6 The NSDEC acknowledged the public good and importance of the project and requested that information sheets, and the detail of the questions that are to be tested, be shared with the Secretariat once produced.

1.7 Action – The research team to provide responses and assurances to the Secretariat and share materials for the interviews once available.

2. Cognitive Testing of Survey Questions to Estimate the Prevalence of Abuse Experienced as a Child in the Adult Population. NSDEC(22)13.

2.1 Outcome – the Committee supported this work subject to assurances to points outlined in section 2.5 being provided to the Secretariat.

2.2 Detail of the project and discussion:

2.3 Within the Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW), the questions on adults' experiences of abuse during childhood asked as part of the self-completion module within the CSEW are rotated into the survey every 3 years. Each time it's introduced, improvements are made to the content based on user needs and requirements. These questions will be asked again from April 2023. The ONS Centre for Crime and Justice will be working collaboratively with the Qualitative Data Collection Methods (QDCM) team in ONS to design new questions measuring key evidence gaps as identified through engagement with key stakeholders such as the NSPCC, the Home Office, the Children's Commissioner, the Children's Society and the CSA Centre. Changes to the module will include the age reference period, adding questions on neglect, sibling sexual abuse and whether the abuse was perpetrated by someone under the age of 18.

2.4 This project will conduct cognitive interviewing to test the questions to ensure they are interpreted correctly and therefore work well. This will consist of a control

group with adults (18+) with no known experiences of abuse as a child, as well as those with experiences of abuse as a child. These interviews will represent different victim sub-groups including age, sex and ethnicity.

2.5 The NSDEC raised the following points via correspondence:

- i The NSDEC noted that the variation within protected characteristics such as ethnicity and sex will be investigated because the prevalence of abuse in childhood differs among these groups. The NSDEC advised that religion, sexual orientation, and migration should also be considered unless there be a legitimate justification for this omission.
- ii The Committee stated ONS Research suggests that 'survivors' of child sexual abuse are more likely to suffer abuse as an adult, therefore it was stressed that an area of concern when interviewing people who have identified abuse in their past must be that they are being abused in the present. The NSDEC asked for detail as to how this will be handled.
- iii The Committee questioned how the revelation of a participant being a perpetrator of crime would be handled, and also noted that the research team should be aware that the support services may be stretched which should be considered.
- iv The Committee stressed that the targeted strategy for recruitment should be conducted with great care and queried whether this had been used by the ONS before.
- v The Committee suggested that recruiting participants via a list of volunteers from previous surveys may bias the sample.
- vi The Committee noted that the use of different data collection modes for different groups of respondents may compromise the suitability of specific data collection modes in the CSEW for different groups of respondents.
- vii Furthermore, the Committee acknowledged that the application stated that significant mode differences have varying effects on the ability to safeguard. The NSDEC stressed that it is still possible that participants in the control group may still have safeguarding issues if they are victims of types of child abuse not recognized in previous surveys.
- viii It was questioned whether it would be reasonable to expect participants to know, prior to the interview, whether they have the capacity to manage their distress.
- ix The NSDEC queried how the interviews will be structured, and how this will differ for each of the interview modes.
- x The NSDEC requested further clarity on the purpose of the observer within the interview.
- xi The Committee requested clarification on whether the interview would be terminated should the participant not consent to the recording/transcription of the interview.

2.6 The NSDEC acknowledged the public good and importance of the project and requested that assurances be provided to the Secretariat.

2.7 Action – The research team to provide responses and assurances to the Secretariat.