

Consultation on experimental statistics from the BCS extension to children: Response from Home Office Statistics

1 Introduction

Home Office Statistics launched a 12-week consultation alongside the publication of the experimental statistics from the extension of the British Crime Survey (BCS) to children aged 10 to 15. The consultation period ended on 26 August 2010 and this document provides a summary of the responses to the consultation and an outline of actions and decisions taken, or to be taken.

2 Background

An announcement was made in May 2008 that the BCS would be extended to include children aged 10 to 15. Following the subsequent period of testing, development and consultation, data collection began in January 2009. A methodological report detailing all aspects of this process was published on 21 October 2010 (see Fitzpatrick *et al.*, 2010).

Experimental statistics using the first 12 months of data (year to December 2009) were published in June 2010 and a consultation was launched simultaneously to seek users' views about the future production and presentation of these statistics.

The main aim of the consultation was for Home Office statisticians to gain input from users about which method to use to count victimisation experiences among children and how and when those figures should be published (for more details see Annex A in Millard and Flatley, 2010). However, any decisions taken will reflect the priority of the BCS adult survey in maintaining the consistent and long-running measure of crime among adults resident in households.

3 Responses to the consultation

A total of 15 responses to the consultation paper were received, from national children's charities, local government and independent research institutions.¹ The individual responses are published alongside this paper as outlined in the consultation document. A summary of responses to key questions is given below, but it should be noted that: not all respondents provided a response to all the questions raised in the consultation paper; and a wide range of comments on additional areas were received and it is not possible to respond to each of these here.

Choice of approach used to produce estimate/s of victimisation for children

Four approaches to producing estimates of levels of victimisation among children were published for users to comment upon: all in law, norms-based, all in law outside school, and victim perceived. Responses suggested there was some inherent value in all approaches, but the majority favoured the 'all in law' and 'norms-based' methods with regard to estimating levels of victimisation (least support was given for the 'victim perceived' approach).

Combining BCS adult and child estimates

The vast majority of responses were clear that it was not necessary to combine the BCS estimates for child victimisation with those for adults. Instead the figures should be reported separately, allowing continuity of the adult results as well as transparency of child victimisation. Where an answer was provided to the specific question about whether the calendar reporting period for the BCS children's survey should be changed to that of the

¹ Responses are available here: <http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/pdfs10/respondents-consult-stats-bcs-child-1110.pdf>

financial year period (bringing it in line with the adult survey), there was majority agreement that it should be.

Estimates for juveniles

In combining data from both the children's and adult's survey it may be possible to provide estimates of victimisation for juveniles, that is, those aged 10 to 17. Where responders provided an answer to this question, the majority were in support and would welcome the publication of estimates for juveniles.

One of the potential difficulties with this is that 10 to 15 year olds and 16 to 17 year olds are currently asked about their experiences of crime using different questions. Hence we also consulted over whether users thought this age group should receive the same questionnaire (that is, 16 and 17 year olds should be asked the same questions as 10 to 15 year olds); whilst there was some agreement, just over half of those responding said no. One reason given was that changes to the questions asked of 16 and 17 year olds would affect the results of the main (adult) survey.

Publication of victimisation estimates from the BCS extension to children

There was a general consensus that the victimisation figures should be presented separately within the existing BCS reports, and that there would be value in publishing supplementary volumes on specific issues such as measures of children's attitudes and perceptions of the police and anti-social behaviour, and crime prevention.

4 The way forward

Home Office Statistics will use these responses to inform decisions to be taken about the analysis and reporting of 10 to 15 year old victimisation data from the BCS extension to children. However, these decisions will also be made in the context of decisions about the future presentation of crime statistics in response to the UK Statistics Authority report 'Overcoming Barriers to Trust in Crime Statistics'.

The development of the publication strategy for the BCS children's estimates will become an integral part of a wider review of crime statistics outputs. However, Home Office Statistics can announce that the annual reporting year for the children's figures will move to a financial year basis; April to March 2011 figures will be published in summer 2011, alongside April to March 2010 figures.

With the other topics consulted about there was such a wide range of responses that further consideration will need to be taken, for example, in determining which approach to use to counting crime for children and whether to produce combined estimates for juveniles aged 10 to 17.

Other issues raised in some responses were not directly related to the consultation paper and hence are not responded to here. There were calls for the crime coverage to be extended to include sexual or domestic abuse and for estimates to be available at sub-national level. The current annual sample size is too small to obtain reliable estimates of crimes that are experienced by relatively small numbers or to provide robust estimates at sub-national level. Thus it would be difficult to provide such estimates without a large expansion of the sample and substantial cost.

Finally, Home Office Statistics would like to thank all the organisations and people who responded to the consultation for their valuable input to the presentation of statistics from the BCS extension to children.

Bibliography

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