Crime-recording: making the victim count

The final report of an inspection of crime data integrity in police forces in England and Wales

Contents

Glossary

accuracy	in the context of HMIC's audit of crime records for this inspection, the number of crimes that are correctly recorded as a crime, as a proportion of the total that should be recorded; accuracy also refers to the correct classification of crime
accurate crime record	a crime record that has been correctly recorded according to the Home Office Counting Rules (HOCR) and the National Crime Recording Standard (NCRS); this means it must be recorded as a crime, classified according to the correct crime type for the offence, and assigned the correct category according to the counting rules
ACPO	Association of Chief Police Officers
additional verifiable information	information which can be verified by the police which determines that no notifiable crime has been committed, thereby enabling the police to cancel a notifiable crime and show it as a no-crime (HOCR, General Rules Section C, No-Crimes)
anti-social behaviour	behaviour by a person which causes or is likely to cause harassment, alarm or distress to one or more other persons not of the same household as the person (see section 101 of the Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011)
ASB	anti-social behaviour
Association of Chief Police Officers	a professional association of police officers of Assistant Chief Constable rank and above, and their police staff equivalents, in England, Wales and Northern Ireland; leads and co-ordinates operational policing nationally; a company limited by guarantee and a statutory consultee; its president is a full-time post under the Police Reform Act 2002

audit	the means of checking upon and monitoring the accuracy of recorded data in order to oversee the effectiveness and efficiency of the recording system and the accuracy of the records it contains; HMIC audits incident reports to check whether they should have been reported as crimes, crime records to check whether they have been recorded accurately in accordance with the rules and standards, and no-crime records to ensure that they have been reclassified correctly
auditable route	the route by which a crime is reported and subsequently logged into the system to create a crime record that can be checked by internal police force auditors and also by HMIC auditors. Predominantly, the auditable route in police forces is through the IT systems in force crime-recording centres and call-handling centres where crimes are initially recorded and where each record is opened and closed at the start and end of an investigation
Audit Commission	a statutory body established first under the Local Government Finance Act 1982 and latterly maintained under the consolidating Audit Commission Act 1998; responsible for auditing a range of local public bodies with the objective of ensuring that public money is spent economically, efficiently and effectively to achieve high quality local and national services for the public. Its work covers housing, health, criminal justice and fire and rescue services. Under the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014, it is to be disbanded during 2015
balance of probability	the test applied to determine whether an event occurred according to whether, on the evidence, the occurrence of the event was more likely than not; the HOCR state that: "An incident will be recorded as a crime (notifiable to the Home Secretary) for offences against an identified victim if, on the balance of probability (a) the circumstances as reported amount to a crime defined by law (the police will determine this, based on their knowledge of the law and counting

rules), and (b) there is no credible evidence to the contrary"

call-handling centre	a facility in each police force where call-handlers answer telephone calls from the public, determine the circumstances of the incident, decide what needs to be done by the police, and initiate or implement that response
Code of Practice for Victims of Crime	a code, established under the Domestic Violence, Crime and Victims Act 2004, which places obligations on organisations providing services within the criminal justice system (including the police) to provide a minimum level of service to victims of criminal conduct
community resolution	a way of dealing with an offender which is proportionate to less serious crime. It may include, for example, apologising to the victim or making good damage caused. Community resolutions can be offered when the offender admits the offence and are mainly used in cases where the victim has agreed that he does not want formal action to be taken
CPS	Crown Prosecution Service
crime categories	specific groups which bring together crimes of a similar nature; for example, there are a number of different crimes of violence which depend on the severity of the violence used; these all fall within one general crime category of violence
crime classification	categorisation of crimes by the police based on their understanding of the applicable law and of what has been reported; the Home Office Counting Rules require the police to classify the crime at the time the crime is recorded
crime record	record that must be made under the Home Office Counting Rules in the case of a report of a crime
crime-recording centre	a centralised facility, generally at a police force's headquarters, which receives crime reports directly from the public and makes a record of the crime immediately, providing the victim with a

	crime reference number
Criminal Records Bureau	a public body established under Part V of the Police Act 1997 to conduct criminal background checks of people working with children or vulnerable adults in schools, voluntary organisations or professional bodies;.
	it merged with the Independent Safeguarding Authority on 1 December 2012 to form the Disclosure and Barring Service under the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006
CRDMP	crime-recording decision-making process
crime-recording decision-making process	the process within police force crime-recording centres, or equivalent facilities, of making final decisions about the classification and correct recording of a crime
crime-related incident	a record of an incident reported to the police which would ordinarily amount to a notifiable crime, but is not recorded as a crime. This can happen for the following reasons: when the incident is reported by a third party (not on behalf of the victim) and the victim declines to confirm a crime occurred; where the victim cannot be traced; when the incident is being dealt with and recorded by another police force; or where the NCRS or HOCR direct that a crime should not be recorded (e.g. certain offences which occur in schools which are required to be dealt with by the school and not recorded by the police)
Crime Statistics Advisory Committee	a non-statutory body which functions as an advisory body providing independent advice to the Home Secretary, the Office for National Statistics and HMIC on matters relating to the measurement of crime, and the collection and presentation of crime data for England and Wales
Crime Survey for England and Wales	a quarterly independent survey of crime commissioned by the Office for National Statistics, involving the collection of information about people's experience of crime from several thousand households in England and Wales;

formerly known as the British Crime Survey

Crown Prosecution Service — the government department responsible for prosecuting criminal cases investigated by the police and other investigating bodies in England and Wales. As the principal prosecuting authority in England and Wales, the CPS is responsible for: advising the police on cases for possible prosecution; reviewing cases submitted by the police; determining any charges in more serious or complex cases; preparing cases for court and presenting cases at court

CSAC — Crime Statistics Advisory Committee

CSEW — Crime Survey for England and Wales

DBS — Disclosure and Barring Service

dip-sample — a small, non-random sample of information; as such it is not statistically robust but is used as an information-gathering tool by inspectors

directly recorded crime — a crime which is recorded straight on to the force crime system without an incident report being created and a patrol attending the scene. This means a crime record is immediately created which is then allocated for investigation

Disclosure and Barring Service — a public body established in 2012 under the Protection of Freedoms Act 2012 in the merger of the functions of the Criminal Records Bureau and the Independent Safeguarding Authority; responsible for processing requests for criminal records checks; deciding whether it is appropriate for a person to be placed on or removed from a barred list; placing or removing people from the DBS children's barred list and adults' barred list for England, Wales and Northern Ireland

evidence-gathering — in the context of this inspection, the process at the core of the work of HMIC inspectors who use templates to record specific and detailed information about crime data integrity. Inspectors work in pairs during the main interviews, asking questions and taking notes in order to complete

	the templates and assemble substantial and accurate evidence to support their findings
FCR	force crime registrar
force crime registrar	the person in a police force who is responsible for ensuring compliance with crime-recording rules. The HOCR provide that he is ultimately responsible for all decisions to record a crime or to make a no-crime decision, as the final arbiter. The force crime registrar's responsibilities include training staff in the crime-recording process and carrying out audits to check that the force is complying with all applicable rules
he/him/his/she/her	the use of the masculine gender includes the feminine, and vice versa, unless the context otherwise requires
HOCR	Home Office Counting Rules
Home Office Counting Rules	rules in accordance with which crime data – required to be submitted to the Home Secretary under section 44 of the Police Act 1996 – must be collected. They set down how the police service in England and Wales must record crime, how crimes must be classified according to crime type and categories, whether and when to record crime, how many crimes to record in respect of a single incident and the regime for the re-classification of crimes as no-crimes. The HOCR specify all crime categories for each crime type including the main ones of homicide, violence, sexual offences, robbery, burglary, vehicle offences, theft, arson and criminal damage, drug offences, possession of weapons, public order offences, miscellaneous crimes against society, and fraud; the NCRS is part of the HOCR
Home Office Statistics Unit	unit of the Home Office responsible for managing Home Office statistics
HOSU	Home Office Statistics Unit
incident-recording system	the computer on which the police record incidents

incident reports	reports of events received by the police that require police attention. Whether or not an incident report becomes a crime record is determined on the balance of probability that a notifiable offence has occurred as set out in the Home Office Counting Rules. If an incident does not turn out to be a crime, it must still be logged on the force's incident-recording system
Independent Safeguarding Authority	a public body established in 2006 under the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006 to oversee a vetting and barring scheme in England, Wales and Northern Ireland, which requires all those working with vulnerable groups to undergo an enhanced vetting procedure before being allowed to commence any relevant duties. The ISA existed until 1 December 2012, when it merged with the Criminal Records Bureau to form the Disclosure and Barring Service
National Crime Recording Standard	a standard of crime-recording introduced in 2002 and published as part of the Home Office Counting Rules; it has the twin objectives of ensuring the police focus more on victims of crime and ensuring consistency in crime-recording in all police forces
National Crime Recording Strategic Steering Group	a group of institutions and office-holders which meets regularly to review the HOCR and make recommendations for change; its members include the Home Office Statistics Unit, force crime registrars and representatives of ACPO, HMIC and the ONS; its recommendations for change are considered by the Home Secretary and CSAC; the HOCR are updated with approved changes each April; updates include changes which reflect changes in legislation and case law, and adjustments to improve clarity and consistency in recording by police forces
national policing lead	senior police officer with responsibility in England and Wales for leading the development of a particular area of policing
NCRS	National Crime Recording Standard

NCRSSG	National Crime Recording Strategic Steering Group
no-crime	refers to an incident that was initially recorded as a crime but has subsequently been found not to be a notifiable crime on the basis of additional verifiable information
ONS	Office for National Statistics
Office for National Statistics	the UK's largest independent producer of official statistics and the recognised national statistical institute for the UK; it is the executive body of the UK Statistics Authority, established by the Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007
opening and closing codes	codes or descriptions for recorded incidents reported to the police. An opening code is used so that the police can easily see the nature of the incident. A closing code may be the same as an opening code but if, once the police have attended the incident, the information changes, then the closing code will describe what the incident actually was
out-of-court disposal	one of several methods of concluding the action of the criminal justice system in respect of a crime without proceeding to a prosecution; they are administered and effected by the police, and enable them to deal quickly and proportionately with low-level, often first-time offences; they include cautions, cannabis warnings, penalty notices for disorder, and community resolutions; some have a statutory basis, and some do not; they are explained more fully on page 35 of this report
PCC	police and crime commissioner
PASC	Public Administration Select Committee
Penalty Notice for Disorder	a form of immediate financial punishment used by police to deal with low-level offending, such as being drunk and disorderly, retail theft and minor criminal damage

PND	Penalty Notice for Disorder
police and crime commissioner	elected entity for a police area, established under section 1, Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011, responsible for securing the maintenance of the police force for that area and securing that the police force is efficient and effective; holds the relevant chief constable to account for the policing of the area; establishes the budget and police and crime plan for the police force; appoints and may, after due process, remove the chief constable from office
police officer	an individual with warranted powers of arrest, search and detention who, under the direction of his chief constable, is deployed to uphold the law, protect life and property, maintain and restore the Queen's peace, and pursue and bring offenders to justice
Protecting Vulnerable People Unit	a specialist unit in a police force responsible for incidents and crimes involving vulnerable people, including children, mentally ill and infirm people; these units may also have responsibilities for dealing with victims of sexual offences, including rape, where the force does not have a dedicated rape investigation unit
Public Administration Select Committee	a select committee of the House of Commons which considers matters relating to the quality and standards of administration within the civil service
Public Protection Unit	a specialist unit in a police force which deals with the protection of vulnerable people (see also Protecting Vulnerable People Unit)
UKSA	United Kingdom Statistics Authority
UK Statistics Authority	an independent body established under the Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007, operating at arm's length from government and which has the objective of promoting and safeguarding the production and publication of official statistics that serve the public good; the Authority's main functions are the monitoring of the production and publication of official statistics,

the provision of independent scrutiny of all official statistics produced in the UK, and the oversight of the ONS, which is its executive body

Victim Support

an independent charity supporting victims and witnesses of crime committed in England and Wales; it was set up almost 40 years ago and has grown to become the oldest and largest victims' organisation in the world; Victim Support offers assistance to more than a million victims of crime each year and works closely with the police and other institutions and entities in the criminal justice system.

Foreword

1.1.   In its 2013/14 inspection programme, approved by the Home Secretary under section 54 of the Police Act 1996, HMIC committed to carry out an inspection into the way the 43 police forces in England and Wales record crime data. The inspection was carried out between December 2013 and August 2014. It has been the most extensive of its kind that HMIC has undertaken into crime data integrity. Its purpose[1] is to provide the answer to the question:

"To what extent can police-recorded crime information be trusted?"

1.2.   The integrity of police-recorded crime matters. The duty of the police is to keep the peace, prevent crime and disorder and bring offenders to justice. If reports of crime made to the police are not handled properly, in accordance with the established rules, all of these suffer.

1.3.   On 1 May 2014, we published an interim report on our inspection of the way police forces in England and Wales record crime data[2]. Our interim report discussed early findings from the inspection of 13 forces. This report, our final report of this inspection, contains the findings from our inspection of all 43 England and Wales police forces.

1.4.   The Home Office Counting Rules (HOCR) were established in their current form in 1998 and the National Crime Recording Standard (NCRS) was implemented in 2002. Together they provide a clear and simple framework and set of rules for the sound and consistent recording of crime by the police. They are not especially complicated; nor are they optional. Every police officer should be able to understand and properly apply them. Every police force should adhere to them.

1.5.   This inspection was concerned with how the HOCR and NCRS are applied. It was an inspection of the integrity of police-recorded crime data. It was not an inspection or inquiry into the integrity of the police.

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[1] The HMIC 2013/14 inspection programme (available at www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmic) provides basis for this inspection

[2] *Crime-recording: A matter of fact:* HMIC, London, May 2014 (available at www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmic)

1.6.	In this inspection, we examined and assessed the integrity of crime data in each force. We focused our examination on three broad themes: leadership and governance; systems and processes; and the people and skills involved. We looked at how each force applies the standards and rules for crime-recording laid down by the Home Office; how police culture and behaviours affect recording; how victims of crime are being served by police crime-recording practices; and, as they are covered by the HOCR, how the police use out-of-court disposals such as cautions, cannabis warnings, community resolutions and penalty notices for disorder when dealing with offenders.

1.7.	Previous and recent HMIC inspections into crime and incident recording practices – inspections which did not have as broad a scope as this one[3] – have shown that crime was under-recorded to varying extents in a sample of police forces. These inspections also revealed a lack of accuracy in crime-recording practice in areas such as rape and other sexual violence which is of particular public concern. This inspection looked specifically at performance in these areas.

1.8.	Sample sizes from each force were collected to allow them to be combined to produce a nationally robust estimate of crime-recording accuracy. Sample sizes are not designed to produce statistically significant comparisons at a force level or below the national total.[4] To have taken statistically significant samples of crime-recording data from every force would have necessitated an inspection so large as to be impractical, untimely and unaffordable. Each force sample does, however, contribute to the overall national sample from which we are now able to report a statistically robust figure for the accuracy of crime-recording within England and Wales as a whole as explained in Annex A.

1.9.	Police force crime data are reported to the Home Office and published by the Office for National Statistics along with other independent data from the Crime Survey for England and Wales to provide as clear as possible a picture of the levels of crime. For 20 years, these national data have shown what amounts to dramatic reductions in crime during a time when the rules and standards governing crime-recording practice have been tightened significantly.[5] This is of course very welcome.

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[3] See 'Previous HMIC inspections' on page 27 of this report.

[4] See Annex A for a technical description of the methodology adopted for the inspection.

[5] The introduction of the National Crime Recording Standard (NCRS) in 2002 and its place in the Home Office Counting Rules (HOCR) are detailed in the section 'How do the police record crime', on page 33 of this report.

1.10.	However, there remains appreciable public concern that real crime levels are not truly represented in the statistics, particularly those recorded by police forces.[6] A factor in public concern, and a probable cause for scepticism about national crime figures, is the culture in the police – as in other parts of the public sector – of pursuing targets and being under pressure to demonstrate good performance. One of the concerns of this inspection was to find any instances where crimes were not recorded or were classified inappropriately. It is essential that crime-recording is done honestly and within the rules. Police officers need to understand and properly apply the rules, and appropriate controls must be in place to ensure due compliance so that the users of crime statistics can rely on them with confidence.

1.11.	Alongside offences of violence, robbery and burglary, this inspection considered particularly closely allegations of rape and other sexual offences and how these are recorded. We have also examined how the police are recording crimes that cause general harm in the community, such as criminal damage and other crimes related to anti-social behaviour.

1.12.	The inspection also looked closely at the sometimes complex issue of no-criming. This occurs when a recorded crime has subsequently been found not to be a crime and is effectively cancelled. This is supposed to happen when the police have additional information which they can verify showing that in reality, no crime was committed. We considered how such decisions are made and overseen, and how far police accurately applied the criteria for making the decision that no recordable crime has been committed.

1.13.	This inspection was designed with the benefit of advice and assistance from several authoritative sources. They include the national crime registrar, the national policing lead on crime statistics, the Office for National Statistics and the Crime Statistics Advisory Committee. The inspection was conducted by means of a national audit of crime records and force inspection visits. This enabled us to build substantial evidence at a national level to establish what are the strengths in crime-recording practice, and to reveal areas of weakness.

1.14.	In this report, we explain the rules and standards that govern crime-recording practice, why the NCRS was introduced in 2002, and what this standard aims to achieve (seeAnnex E). On the issue of the police duty to record crime, we describe the principles behind such decisions, including whether or not to record an incident as a crime and when to reclassify a recorded crime as a no-crime. We explain our methodology and present our findings.

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[6] See page 26 of this report, particularly in relation to the issues raised by the Public Administration Select Committee in April 2014.

1.15.   We are grateful to the members of the public who contributed, and all police forces in England and Wales for their time and support in the inspection process.

Summary and conclusions

1.16.   Victims of crime are being let down. The police are failing to record a large proportion of the crimes reported to them. Over 800,000 crimes reported to the police have gone unrecorded each year.[7] This represents an under-recording of 19 percent. The problem is greatest for victims of violence against the person and sexual offences, where the under-recording rates are 33 percent and 26 percent respectively. This failure to record such a significant proportion of reported crime is wholly unacceptable.

1.17.   Even when crimes are correctly recorded, too many are removed or cancelled as recorded crimes for no good reason. Of the 3,246 decisions to cancel, or no-crime[8], a crime record that we reviewed, 664 were incorrect. These included over 200 rapes and more than 250 crimes of violence against the person. Offenders who should be being pursued by the police for these crimes are not being brought to justice and their victims are denied services to which they are entitled.

1.18.   In over 800 of the 3,246 decisions we reviewed, we could find no evidence that the victim was told of the decision to no-crime their report.[9] Victims may be under the impression that their crimes continue to be recorded and investigated when they are not.

1.19.   We were reassured to find little evidence of the misclassification of crime. Our audit showed that 96 percent of crime records reviewed were classified correctly, either at the time of initial recording or subsequently.

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[7] This estimate has been calculated by applying our audit finding that 81 percent of reported crime is being recorded to police-recorded crime figures for the 12-month period ending July 2014. The over 800,000 crimes represent the missing 19 percent of crimes reported to the police. Please note that the HMIC audit focused on areas where we would expect to find crimes. It is possible that other areas, such as anti-social behaviour, also contain crimes that are being missed which may mean that the number of missed crimes is even higher.

[8] 3.1 percent of crime that is recorded by the police is no-crimed. However, for recorded crimes of rape, the level of no-criming is 7.3 percent.

[9] It should be noted that while each of the no-crime decisions we reviewed had a victim, not all no-crime decisions will have an effect on the victim. For example, where a victim has admitted to lying, it would not be necessary to inform him or her of the decision. Any such examples have been excluded from the number of victims not informed of the decision.

1.20. In appropriate cases, those offenders who are brought to justice can be punished by means of an out-of-court disposal; 3,842 of these disposals were checked. To be correctly applied and recorded, the disposal must be appropriate for the offender and the views of the victim taken into consideration. We found nearly 500 cases where the offender, owing to their previous record, was not suitable for the sanction applied and should have received one which was more severe. Evidence that the victims' wishes were properly considered was only found in 1,309 cases out of the 2,144 where there was a victim.

1.21. This inspection was carried out to establish the extent to which police-recorded crime information can be trusted.

1.22. This was a national inspection, and the answer is that in too many respects police-recording of crime is at a level which is inexcusably poor[10]. However, the picture at local level is mixed. In a few forces, crime-recording is very good and shows that it can be done well and should be trusted. In some others, it is unacceptably bad, and there is no reason why significant improvements cannot and should not be made and quickly. Failure properly to record crime is indefensible, and a continuation of the present national failure rate – one in five crimes missed – would be deplorable.

1.23. The position in the case of rape and other sexual offences is a matter of especially serious concern. The inspection found 37 cases of rape which were not recorded as crimes. The national rate of under-recording of sexual offences (including rapes) as crimes was 26 per cent, and the national rate of incorrect decisions to no-crime rapes was 20 per cent. In the case of rape no-crime decisions, in 22 per cent of cases there was no evidence that the police informed the complainant of their decision. These are wholly unacceptable failings. Some forces have exemplary records in this respect, and others are very bad. It is particularly important that in cases as serious as rape, these shortcomings are put right as a matter of the greatest urgency. In some forces, action is already being taken in this respect.

1.24. Reliable crime-recording is essential if police are to be able to make sound decisions on the deployment of their resources, and to operate with the highest practicable levels of efficiency. In times of austerity, they cannot afford to do less. They need to know what are the patterns of criminal behaviour in their force areas, and the intensity and severity of that offending. Police and crime commissioners need this information too because they hold their chief constables to account, and they in turn are held

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[10] The national statistics are significant; force-level samples were not sufficiently large to provide fully reliable figures. However, they do provide strong indications of crime-recording at force level, and are assessed in the individual report for each force.

to account by the public. The public's right to know is important; none should be misled, whether through negligence or otherwise. Trust in what the police tell people about crime is part of the essential trust which the public must have in the police.

1.25.   Even more importantly, failures in accurate crime-recording can also increase the risks to victims and the community of the denial of justice, and may imperil public safety. The police therefore need to take this subject very seriously.

1.26.   No system is likely to be operated consistently with perfection, and there will always be rational and defensible differences in professional judgment about the competent classification of offences, once recorded. In fact, we found that the mis-classification of crimes was at a very low rate.

1.27.   We looked for hard evidence of improper practices (such as dishonest manipulation) in crime-recording as a result of performance pressure, and approached those who told us that it was going on, but relatively little was found. However, in and since the inspection, a number of forces accepted that undue performance pressure had adversely affected crime-recording in the past, and the culture of chasing targets as ends in themselves had distorted crime-recording decisions. Our online survey of officers and staff produced many assertions and allegations, but no-one came forward with firm evidence. Forces today are making considerable efforts to change the culture in which these practices prevailed, but changing ingrained instincts bred of a past regime takes time.

1.28.   It is essential that forces ensure that improper pressures of this kind, where they exist, are eradicated, and that crime-recording is always carried out in accordance with the rules. In future inspections, we will examine the quality of crime-recording and assess the extent to which chief officers have been successful in removing undue performance pressures in crime-recording.

1.29.   The failures we have found are attributable mainly to lapses in leadership and supervision of officers and staff, and poor knowledge of and therefore adherence to crime-recording rules. In some forces, inappropriate use is made of the rules which allow crime-recording decisions to be delayed. In some cases, the rules have simply been broken. In a few forces, crime registrars have insufficient authority, and some lack the necessary knowledge of the rules to enable them to make sound decisions.

1.30.   In too many cases, we found an unjustifiable lack of knowledge of the crime-recording regime on the part of officers and staff. The absence of any national training in the essentials of crime-recording is unsustainable. Therefore, the College of Policing should establish standard training to be provided by each force which ensures that all officers and staff who are likely

to record crimes or have supervision of crime-recording have a sound understanding of the relevant principles to be applied, and are periodically tested in that respect. The College of Policing should take the steps necessary to require candidates for the highest ranks in policing to know how to establish in their forces sound levels of competence in the proper application of the crime-recording rules by their officers and staff.

1.31. Crimes can and should be recorded at the first point of contact with the police in all but the most exceptional circumstances. The presumption that the victim should always be believed should be institutionalised. The practice of some forces of investigating first and recording later should be abandoned immediately. The present latitude of allowing up to 72 hours before a crime is recorded should be abolished.

1.32. It is clear that when police leaders realise the nature and magnitude of the crime-recording shortcomings in their forces, rapid improvements can be made. This has been done in Kent and Merseyside, and it can and should be done in all forces whose crime-recording is in need of improvement. Since the inspection, many forces have been taking significant steps to make these improvements, and full credit must be given to them for that. Their success is urgently needed, and should be commended when it has been attained.

1.33. The police service has a choice. It can shore up the existing processes which are often flawed, and possibly review some of the more serious errors which attract the most public concern. Alternatively, it can design a better process that will make a long-lasting and more permanent difference. It is not the force which pays the highest price of crime-recording failures, but those victims and the wider community to whom justice may be denied. This can be especially true for the vulnerable, and those who suffer more serious crimes. Failure properly to record crime today may not only fail today's victims; it places others at risk of becoming victims tomorrow.

Introduction

2.1. The duty of Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary is to inspect and report on the efficiency and effectiveness of police forces in England and Wales.[11]

2.2. This is the final report of an HMIC inspection into the accuracy and integrity of crime-recording in all 43 Home Office-funded police forces in England and Wales. We published our interim findings on 1 May 2014.

2.3. This inspection provided for the audit of a sample of reports of crime to check whether they were correctly recorded as a crime. Taken together, the samples from each force produced a nationally representative sample of 6,880 reported crimes. From these data, this report includes an assessment of the accuracy of crime-recording by the police in England and Wales. (Annex A sets out the statistical method in more detail.)

2.4. Good quality crime-recording is materially reliant upon sound management. Our experience shows that the proper management of crime-recording critically depends on three interlocking factors: leadership and governance; systems and processes; and the knowledge and skills of the people involved. Our inspection has tested these areas.

2.5. This is the most thorough inspection into crime-recording integrity that HMIC has carried out to date. In this report, we explain our overall findings, conclusions and recommendations. We also explain why such a review is needed to protect the public and serve the victims of crime, what are the main rules and standards that govern police-recorded crime and how we carried out the inspection. We provide examples to illustrate some of the important characteristics of crime-recording as a day-to-day policing function and as a highly-regulated process that is influenced by different systems and procedures.

2.6. Each force inspection makes a material contribution to the assembly of a full and clear picture. It is the means of building a substantial and valid base of evidence about the accuracy of crime-recording across England and Wales. This evidence is measured against standards laid down by the Home Office for crime-recording, and is gathered by HMIC to fulfil particular aims which we explain in the next section.

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[11] Section 54(2), Police Act 1996

2.7.   Our in-force audit and inspection work was carried out between February and August 2014 and covered all 43 Home Office-funded police forces.

2.8.   We have published individual force reports[12] with our inspection findings and made specific recommendations where appropriate. These reports are intended to underpin and, where necessary, assist each force in the discharge of its duty to record crime accurately and consistently.

Terms of reference

2.9.   HMIC's 2013/14 inspection programme, approved by the Home Secretary under section 54 of the Police Act 1996, provides for HMIC to carry out inspections in all Home Office police forces to answer the question:

> *"To what extent can police-recorded crime information be trusted?"*

Scope

2.10.   The inspection has been designed to assess:

- how well each force applies the standards for crime-recording laid down by the Home Office and known as the Home Office Counting Rules;

- the culture and behaviours surrounding crime-recording, and the service the police provide to victims;

- the accuracy of police recording of reported crimes which cause significant harm such as crimes of violence, sexual offences, robbery, burglary, criminal damage and other crimes relating to anti-social behaviour;

- police decisions about out-of-court disposals, such as police cautions, penalty notices for disorder, cannabis warnings and community resolutions; and

- police decisions to no-crime (not to count as a crime) a report of an incident that has already been recorded as a crime.

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[12] Individual force reports for all 43 Home Office funded forces in England and Wales are available at http://www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmic/publication/crime-data-integrity-force-reports/

Aims

2.11.   The objective of the inspection was to provide to the public, police and crime commissioners and chief constables information, assessments and recommendations which, if implemented, will be used to improve the ways in which the police record crimes, leading to increased public trust in those data.

2.12.   HMIC's inspection set out to establish:

- how confident the public can be in the accuracy of police-recorded crime data;

- how effective police leaders are in their oversight and assurance of crime data integrity in each force;

- how well victims are served by the police when crime-recording decisions are made;

- whether the results of out-of-court disposals are the right ones for victims, offenders and the wider public, and are in accordance with national guidelines; and

- whether decisions to change a recorded crime into a non-crime (commonly called a no-crime) keep to the relevant rules.

2.13.   The full terms of reference for the inspection are contained in Annex B

Public trust in crime data

2.14.   There is significant local and national interest in crime levels and the accuracy of police-recorded crime data. When there are doubts about the integrity of crime data recorded by the police, this can have an adverse effect on the public's trust and confidence in the police service.

2.15.   To see why many forces have not placed more emphasis on the need to adhere to the NCRS in the past, it is necessary to understand the reasons for its introduction and how this was viewed by senior police officers at that time.

2.16.   NCRS was introduced in 2002, during a period when central targets for crime reduction were introduced. The primary purpose was to overcome problems with consistency, by basing recording decisions on the evidence provided by the victim (assuming, on the balance of probability, that a crime had occurred) rather than the officer's opinion of that evidence. This was seen by many police officers at the time as removing their discretion, while introducing an additional and needless bureaucratic burden. Some were

keen to dismiss the principal underpinnings of NCRS by citing perceived anomalies arising from officers obeying the NCRS rules to the letter. For example, a common misconception is that the recording of a crime unnecessarily criminalises children; this continues even now, 12 years after the NCRS came into being. We discuss this issue later in the report (see paragraphs 3.5 to 3.8).

2.17.   A crime record is not an end in itself. By recording crime data accurately, victims of crime can be looked after and attended to properly. Crime problems in local force areas can be identified so the police's efficiency and effectiveness are strengthened. Further, police performance can be properly understood and, accordingly, the police can be held to account both locally and nationally.

2.18.   **Help which is available to victims of crime is dependent upon accurate crime records.** For example, when a crime is recorded, the victim is entitled to a minimum level of service as set out in the Code of Practice for Victims of Crime. In some cases, a clear and correct record of the crime also means that victims have support from other organisations such as the national charity, Victim Support.[13] The statutory provisions by virtue of which victims are granted rights to the services of Victim Support only extend to cases where a crime has been recorded properly under the NCRS (explained in Annex E).

2.19.   **Accurate crime records provide vital information.** Police forces use the data in crime records to analyse the numbers, types and locations of crimes in their areas. While the overall picture of crime is more complex, the actual recorded crime data contribute to an understanding of the risk, threat and harm that the public face. This helps the police make decisions about where to allocate police resources to counter crime effectively and to protect the public.

2.20.   **Police-recorded crime data are widely accessed and used.** Crime data are made available on a street-by-street basis on www.police.uk[14] so that members of the public can establish the levels of crime in their own neighbourhoods. Records of crime are also widely used by third parties; for example, Victim Support, local authorities and health authorities use police-recorded crime data to allocate resources. Incorrect data can therefore adversely affect the way third parties target their support, potentially reducing the availability of help for victims.

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[13] Victim Support provides free and confidential help to victims of crime, witnesses, their families, friends and anyone else affected by crime across England and Wales (www.victimsupport.org.uk).

[14] Crime data are published at street level (www.police.uk), police force-area level (www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmic) and national level (www.ons.gov.uk).

2.21. **Crime data are regularly published.** This makes it possible for the public and their elected representatives[15] to hold their forces to account for their performance in preventing and tackling crime. This can only be effective if the data are accurate.

2.22. Doubts have been intensified recently in several ways. HMIC inspections, which we describe below, have identified distinct weaknesses in crime-recording processes. In January 2014, owing to concerns about the accuracy of the data, the UK Statistics Authority (UKSA) removed the designation of police-recorded crime as a National Statistic under section 12 of the Statistics and Registration Act 2007, and set specific conditions for returning these data to their former place.[16] The Authority said that there is accumulating evidence that suggests the underlying data on crimes recorded by the police may not be reliable.

2.23. Following the UKSA removal of the designation of police-recorded crime as a national statistic, work has been commissioned at national level to improve the accuracy and consistency of the figures. Oversight of both the NCRS and HOCR rests with the National Crime Recording Strategic Steering Group (NCRSSG), a Home Office-led and chaired body. This group takes responsibility at a national level for ensuring the HOCR are regularly reviewed and updated.

2.24. In April 2014, the House of Commons Public Administration Select Committee published a report[17] of its own investigation into police-recorded crime data. PASC identified under-recording of crime by police forces as an issue of serious public concern, and made particular reference to the detrimental effects of performance targets on police crime-recording practices.

2.25. The report criticised the use of targets based on police-recorded crime data and stated that this tended to distort recording practices and created perverse incentives to misrecord crime. It said that the evidence for this is incontrovertible. We provide more detail regarding this report at Annex C.

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[15] Police and crime commissioners for police areas outside London; the Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime for the Metropolitan Police Service; and the City of London Corporation for the City of London Police.

[16] See the section on 'Assembling crime data statistics' at Annex E

[17] *Caught red-handed: Why we can't count on Police-Recorded Crime statistics,* House of Commons Public Administration Select Committee (PASC) *,* Thirteenth Report of Session 2013–14, HC 760, 9 April 2014

2.26.   In this inspection, HMIC has taken into consideration the recommendations in the PASC report. However, the findings in the PASC report are not entirely consistent with our findings. Our response to the PASC report was included with the Home Office response[18].

2.27.   The police's duty to the victims of crime may be neglected or stand un-discharged when a crime is improperly recorded, leading to a lack of investigation or poor quality service. As we emphasise in this report, this inspection has placed victims of crime, and how they are served by the police, at its heart.

2.28.   There are therefore clear links between accurate crime data, police effectiveness and public confidence in policing.

2.29.   This report contains our definitive conclusions on the strengths and weaknesses of the operation of the existing system for the recording of crime by the police, and makes recommendations for improvement. This has been a much tougher test of compliance with the HOCR than those we have previously applied.

Previous HMIC Inspections of crime data integrity

2.30.   In October 2009, we published our first report on crime data integrity since the introduction of the NCRS, *Crime Counts – A review of data quality for offences of the most serious violence*.[19] This was followed in January 2012 by our publication, *The Crime Scene – A review of police crime and incident reports.*[20]

2.31.   The first report focused on data recorded on serious violence; the second was much wider in scope. Both reports examined how effective forces were in ensuring that incident records, which included details of recordable crimes, resulted in correct crime data recording.

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[18] *The government response to the thirteenth report from the public administration select committee session 2013-14 HC 760: Caught red-handed: Why we can't count on Police Recorded Crime statistics.* Available from: www.gov.uk/government/publications/caught-red-handed-why-we-cant-count-on-police-recorded-crime-statistics

[19] *Crime Counts: A review of data quality for offences of the most serious violence*, HMIC, London, 2009. Available from www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmic

[20] *The Crime Scene – A review of police crime and incident reports*, HMIC, London, January 2012. Available from www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmic

2.32.   *The Crime Scene* considered the quality of crime and incident data, and the arrangements in place to ensure they are recorded and managed correctly (i.e. in a way that complies with HOCR). The inspection focused on whether crimes were correctly recorded from incident records, and the standards used to close a reported incident.

2.33.   The samples used in *The Crime Scene* inspection were, on their own, too small to provide a definitive assessment of the accuracy of crime-recording nationally. At force level, however, we found that the arrangements most forces had in place were sufficient to make correct crime-recording decisions from reports of incidents, given the information available within an incident record. It established that there were variations in crime-recording practices which could have a corresponding detrimental effect on the accuracy of published crime statistics.

Crime-recording in Kent in 2013

2.34.   In February 2013, the police and crime commissioner for Kent commissioned HMIC to conduct an inspection to determine whether the people of Kent could have confidence in the force's crime figures. In June 2013, HMIC published *Crime-recording in Kent – A report commissioned by the Police and Crime Commissioner for Kent*.[21]

2.35.   This inspection found that appreciably more needed to be done before the people of Kent could be confident that the crime figures published by the force were as accurate as they should be. HMIC found that the force had under-recorded approximately one in every ten crimes (+ / - 5 percent), and that it did not interpret the HOCR correctly. This meant crime was not correctly recorded. We explain the central role of the HOCR and NCRS later in this report (see Annex E).

2.36.   It is important to note that the findings for Kent cannot be extrapolated to make judgments about the accuracy of crime-recording in other forces.

2.37.   The 2013 report found that Kent Police had made improvements to the way in which it dealt with the declassification of recorded crimes (no-criming) since 2012, and had reduced the total number of occasions where this occurred. However, we found that the decision to no-crime was still incorrect in more than 25 percent of the cases we reviewed. It was of particular concern – and unacceptable – that this inaccuracy was evident in serious crimes such as rape, robbery and violence.

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[21] *Crime-recording in Kent – A report commissioned by the Police and Crime Commissioner for Kent,* HMIC, London, June 2013. Available from www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmic

2.38. In January 2014, HMIC published an interim progress report reviewing the improvements that had been made by Kent Police since publication of the 2013 report.[22] Kent Police was found to have responded positively to the concerns raised in HMIC's 2013 report. The force had developed a comprehensive action plan, against which good progress had been made, and there was substantially greater accuracy in crime-recording, including in no-crime decisions. The public of Kent therefore can have confidence in the accuracy of their crime statistics.

2.39. It is important to note that the sample for the Kent inspection was of a sufficient size that we could form statistically reliable judgments. We have not been able to replicate this sample size for each of the 43 forces, owing to the resourcing this would have required. The statistics in this current audit are only statistically reliable at a national level.

2.40. Kent Police was inspected again as part of this 43-force inspection. The report of the Kent inspection is available on the HMIC website.[23]

Other considerations

2.41. This inspection has been not only a test of national compliance with crime-recording rules; it also examined police crime-recording culture in all 43 forces. Fundamentally, our inspection examined how victims of crime are served by the police in England and Wales, focusing on the accuracy of crime-recording.

2.42. Our task has required a consistently applied and methodical approach to produce a valid picture of crime-recording in England and Wales.

2.43. Our inspectors have been particularly aware of the pressure placed on police to prevent, tackle and try to reduce crime, and to demonstrate that they are doing so. Over approximately three decades, and in common with other major public organisations, the police have been subject to a performance and target-driven culture which stems from the policies of successive governments. HMIC was itself an instrument in a government-led programme to secure improvements in police performance and was, in those times, a strong promoter of the target culture within the police service. This culture led to successes in performance terms but also had detrimental effects. In 2010, the Home Secretary made a clear statement to the police

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[22] *Crime-recording in Kent – An interim progress report, commissioned by the Police and Crime Commissioner for Kent*, HMIC, London, January 2014. Available from www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmic

[23] *Crime Data Integrity – Inspection of Kent Police,* HMIC, London, October 2014. Available from www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmic

service that she was removing nationally-established targets to reduce particular types of crime, and told police forces:

> *"I couldn't be any clearer about your mission: it isn't a thirty-point plan; it is to cut crime. No more, and no less".[24]*

2.44.   In this inspection we have taken note of any instances where we found that performance pressures appeared to have affected the accuracy of crime-recording. We have sought to identify, for example, instances where crimes may not have been accurately recorded because of pressures to downgrade a crime to a less serious classification, to reclassify a recorded crime as a no-crime to present a better picture of a force's performance or indeed not to record a crime at all.

2.45.   It should be understood that police forces can only record what is reported to them by victims, those reasonably acting on their behalf, third parties and by police officers carrying out their duties. Reporting rates vary for each crime type and may be affected by fear of retribution from offenders, particularly in high-crime areas, a point which was made to us by the citizen juries which we commissioned: see paragraphs 5.1- 5.5. There are hidden and under-reported crime types, including domestic violence, sexual offences and child abuse. New types of crime are emerging and placing added pressure on police crime-fighting resources. They include, for example, human trafficking, slavery and cybercrime.

2.46.   The focus of this inspection was therefore on the crimes that are reported and should be recorded, how this is done, and the culture that surrounds crime-recording practice.

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[24] Speech by the Home Secretary to the Association of Chief Police Officers and the Association of Police Authorities national conference, 29 June 2010, Manchester.

Literature review

2.47.   To put our inspection into a wider context, we commissioned a review of the literature on the integrity of police-recorded crime data. The review, completed by Ms Patricia Mayhew[25], formerly of the Home Office and currently a member of CSAC, assesses what literature is available, its quality and its main findings. The primary focus is on academic literature relating to England and Wales. It has, however, also drawn on some material relating to other countries, and from some writers who would not ordinarily be regarded as academics.

Ms Mayhew's report is reproduced in its entirety at: http://www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmic/publication/crime-recording-making-the-victim-count/

2.48.   In summary, it finds:

- police-recorded crime in England and Wales has recently been subjected to an unusual degree of scrutiny;

- criticisms in other countries of the shortcomings of police-recorded crime are much the same as here, with research telling much the same story about variability in police figures over time and place, and the difficulties inherent in the process of making sure that reports of crime are translated into correct and reliable crime records;

- some of the criticism (including much of that put before PASC) draws on common knowledge or anecdote but it cannot be discounted for that reason;

- since the early 1990s, performance management in policing and its effect on crime-recording has provided the main backdrop to debates about the reliability of police-recorded crime. The material reviewed was fairly strong in showing that a target culture can undermine the trustworthiness of police figures, as well as causing forces to focus on meeting numerical targets rather than the needs of the public.

- a target mentality remains on the front line, even though many police and crime commissioners reported to PASC that they were not setting targets.

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[25] Ms Patricia Mayhew has been an independent consultant criminologist since returning from New Zealand in 2008. Ms Mayhew worked mainly in the Research, Development and Statistics Directorate (RDS) of the Home Office. Ms Mayhew received an OBE in 1997 for services to criminology.

- some of the changes introduced to improve the reliability of crime statistics (such as the introduction of the NCRS, and the publication of CSEW and police-recorded crime figures together) may well have had the unintended consequence of increasing public distrust;

- the scope for discretion in whether or not to record a crime remains. This poses risks for determining the true count of crime that the police know about and record. That discretion is affected by traditions of how things are done in a particular force, and by misunderstanding what is required by NCRS and HOCR; and

- some questions remain about how meaningful police-recorded crime data are. One important question is how new forms of cybercrime are captured, and whether or not the true picture of trends in crime is being distorted by displacement from established crime categories to those which are emerging.

How do the police record crime?

3.1.   Annex E contains an explanation of how crime statistics are assembled, how police forces record crime data and the rules that govern the process. The Annex also contains case examples and other illustrations.

3.2.   The Annex describes:

- the roles of the Home Office and government statistical bodies governing crime data recording in England and Wales;

- the Home Office Counting Rules for recorded crime and the National Crime Recording Standard: rules to ensure consistent and effective crime-recording and that take a more victim-focused approach to crime-recording; and

- how the rules are interpreted: when and what is a crime and how police receive reports of crime.

3.3.   These elements are the context for understanding the complexities of crime data recording and show that there is room for error, even when police force crime-recording is internally monitored and strictly controlled. This background also underpins the requirement for applying rigour and consistency in our inspection approach, described in the next part of this report.

3.4.   Many incidents reported to the police turn out not to be crimes. For example, someone reports a man on a ladder breaking the first floor window of a house and climbing in. A police patrol immediately goes to the house and finds that the man who is inside is the owner and had forgotten his key. When there is such an incident, or when the police have clear evidence to believe that a crime has not been committed, this is not a crime and is not recorded as such.

3.5.   There are also occasions when an incident which cannot be progressed to the prosecution of an offender should be recorded as a crime, for example those involving young children. Even some senior officers are unsure of the rules as was evident from discussions at the Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO) annual conference in June 2014. It must be emphasised that the age of the offender is not a reason for not recording a crime.

3.6.   Two cases involving children under the age of ten were cited at the conference, one a public order offence and one a theft from a shop. In both cases the children had been taken home by police who informed their parents and no crimes were recorded. It was suggested at the conference

that this was the right course of action and that the police should not have been required to criminalise the children by making a crime record. This is incorrect.

3.7. Since the age of criminal responsibility in England and Wales is ten, no criminal proceedings can be taken against children under this age. This does not mean that they cannot commit crimes: they can and they do. But there is no question of a child under the age of criminal responsibility being criminalised by the administrative action of a crime being recorded.

3.8. The course of action to be taken in dealing with the offender is at the discretion of the investigating officer. This does not remove or modify the obligation on the police to record the crime according to HOCR and NCRS. Crimes committed by underage children still create victims. As we have explained above, failing to record a crime where one has been committed has consequences for the victims which cannot be justified. This may include the impression that they have not been believed, or a lack of access to victim support services.

3.9. The HOCR do not require police to record reports of crimes made by a third person (unless that person is reasonably assumed to be acting on behalf of the victim) if the victim cannot be found to verify that a crime has occurred. So, if someone witnesses an assault in the street and reports it to the police, but the victim of the assault is unknown to the witness and cannot be traced, the police are not required to record the incident as a crime. The incident itself must be recorded but, under this rule, the police are actively prevented from recording all the crimes that come to their attention.

What is a no-crime?

3.10. No-crime refers to an incident that was initially recorded as a crime, but has subsequently been found not to be a notifiable crime on the basis of additional verifiable information.

3.11. One of the following criteria must be satisfied to record a no-crime:

- the crime is outside the jurisdiction of the police force in which it was first recorded (e.g. if it happens at a railway station, then it is transferred to the British Transport Police to make the record);

- additional verifiable information is available which determines that no notifiable crime has been committed;

- the alleged crime is part of another crime already recorded;

- the crime is recorded in error (e.g. a road collision is recorded as criminal damage); or

- the recorded crime is one of less serious assault and there is clear additional verifiable information that shows that the offender acted in self-defence.

3.12.   The main requirement here is the need to show additional verifiable information – often referred to as AVI – to cancel a notifiable crime and record it as a no-crime.

3.13.   If, for example, an item which is first recorded as stolen is afterwards found and had been misplaced by the person who reported it as stolen, then it would be correct to show the crime record as a no-crime.

3.14.   However, if following an investigation of a reported crime the police are unclear as to whether an offence has taken place, then the crime record must remain open. Being unclear does not amount to additional verifiable information demonstrating that the crime did not take place.

What are out-of-court disposals?

3.15.   This inspection has also examined the police's use of out-of-court disposals.[26] These allow the police to deal quickly and proportionately with low-level, often first-time offences[27] which can be resolved satisfactorily and in the public interest without going to court.

3.16.   They include:

- **Caution:** This is a non-statutory disposal used for people when the offender's behaviour requires no more than a formal warning. A caution may be offered when the offender admits the offence and there is enough evidence for a realistic prospect of conviction, but it is not in the public interest to prosecute. The offender must also agree to accept the caution, and in doing so must understand the implications (see page 69);

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[26] Our inspection of out-of-court disposals does not form part of the national audit figure for crime-recording compliance. However, as the recording of the disposal (or outcome) of a recorded crime forms part of the NCRS, we will report on the appropriateness of their use, and therefore the validity of the data reporting their use, both at force and national level.

[27] Quick Reference Guides to Out-of-Court Disposals, Ministry of Justice, April 2013.

- **Adult cannabis warning:** This is a non-statutory disposal introduced in 2004 for people aged 18 and older. It is a formal warning given by a police officer to deal with an adult caught in possession of a small amount of cannabis consistent with personal use;

- **Penalty notice for disorder:** PNDs were established by the Criminal Justice and Police Act 2001 and are available only for offenders aged 18 and over. The PND scheme provides police with a swift punishment to deal with low-level offending. A PND can be given at a police station or on the spot, and allows the person receiving the PND 21 days either to pay a penalty or to choose to go to court. The penalty is increased if the person fails to do either – and the amount charged is registered in a magistrates' court for enforcement. PNDs are available for certain offences including being drunk and disorderly in a public place, retail theft under £100 (shoplifting), criminal damage under £300 and behaviour likely to cause harassment, alarm or distress;

- **Community resolution:** This is a way of dealing with an offender which is proportionate to lower-level crime. The resolution is dependent on the offence that has been committed; it may include, for example, simply apologising to the victim or making good damage caused. Community resolutions can be offered when the offender admits the offence and are mainly used in cases where the victim has agreed that he does not want formal action to be taken;

3.17. These disposals – or outcomes – of crime are important to crime reduction. They are intended to allow the police to deal with often first-time offenders with a view to discouraging them from committing further crime. Where they are used, the HOCR requires forces to record the fact as part of the relevant crime record. These data are then used to demonstrate the effectiveness of the force in dealing with reported crime.

3.18. This inspection is concerned to establish whether these methods of crime disposal are being used appropriately by forces and whether, when deciding to use these disposals, the views of the victim, or any threat to the wider community, are being properly considered. For example, police officers should explain their decision to use an out-of-court disposal to the victim of the crime.

3.19. The services provided to victims are of central importance. By complying with the HOCR and NCRS in recording crimes accurately, and by discussing out-of-court disposals with victims, the police are demonstrating that their work is focused on the interests of the victims of crime. Accurate crime-recording at the outset of each incident makes it possible for the police to involve and work with victims, discuss crime investigation progress and

outcomes, and ensure victims have information about victim support services.

The method of inspection

Gathering the evidence

4.1.   HMIC worked with a number of parties to design its methodology for this inspection. These include the national policing lead for crime statistics, Chief Constable Jeff Farrar; the Office for National Statistics; the Police Federation of England and Wales; the Police Superintendents' Association of England and Wales; the Home Office; the national crime registrar; and the Crime Statistics Advisory Committee. In addition, HMIC consulted a working group of practitioners, including performance managers and force crime registrars from several forces.

4.2.   The inspection not only tested compliance with crime-recording rules but also assessed the culture and systems surrounding crime-recording, as well as the service the police provide to victims. The interests of victims of crime and the effect of crime-recording on the community have been at the heart of this inspection. The inspection considered crimes which, when repeated, cause significant harm to the community, such as criminal damage and other crimes related to anti-social behaviour. The inspection reviewed crime outcomes, including cautions and community resolutions, from the viewpoint of a victim.

4.3.   We inspected the following in each force in relation to crime data recording:

- leadership and governance;

- systems and processes; and

- people and skills.

The three inspection stages

4.4.   The inspection has been carried out in three stages which are described in the following paragraphs.

4.5.   During the first stage, in December 2013, HMIC inspectors made one-day visits to each of the 43 forces to gain a clear understanding of the ways in which members of the public report crime to each force. All forces have call-handling centres receiving incident information and data; some have specialist crime-recording centres. Force specialist departments also receive some reports of serious crimes directly from other organisations, such as health or social services. HMIC has assessed the proportion of crimes reported by each route.

4.6.   Once HMIC inspectors had identified the various crime-reporting routes for each force – and where the various force systems allow for reports to be audited – we asked each force to provide all their incident data, and where applicable, their directly-recorded crime system data for the 12 months to 31 October 2013. A sample of these records was then selected by HMIC and audited. We explain the audit sampling approach in more detail in the methodology for the national audit at Annex A.

4.7.   Informed by the audit findings and our understanding of the crime reporting routes, HMIC inspection teams visited each police force to interview senior managers and staff directly involved with crime-recording, visited control rooms and crime-recording centres, and met a focus group of practitioners. We also carried out 'reality testing' in the form of unannounced visits to police stations to interview frontline staff who have day-to-day responsibility – as constables, sergeants and inspectors – for dealing with incidents and victims of crime. In this way, we checked how top-level decisions and policies affect the way crime is recorded at police stations. We explain the field visits in more detail below.

4.8.   HMIC also held discussion groups with members of the public, known as citizen juries, and included a number of questions in the CSEW conducted between April and June 2014. These two approaches helped to establish what the public expect from the police in respect of the recording of crime. We describe our findings later in this report (see page 44).

4.9.   As we have already explained (see paragraph 1.10), a factor in public concern and a probable cause for scepticism about national crime figures is the culture in the police of pursuing targets and being under pressure to demonstrate good performance. To understand this issue better, we sought to establish whether those who gave evidence to the PASC inquiry were able to provide us with substantive examples – where crime-recording decisions had been wrongly affected by performance pressures – as opposed to analysis of apparent trends and of police culture. We hosted on our website a confidential survey for police officers and police staff to provide an opportunity for them to describe the culture, and their personal experiences of crime-recording within their own forces. We comment on both of these approaches in our findings section (see page 82).

The approach to auditing crime records

4.10. The most efficient method of making an assessment of compliance with the HOCR is to take a representative sample of records that appear to be crimes. HMIC auditors checked this sample of records to understand:

- the proportion of reported crime that is correctly recorded as a crime;

- whether reports of crime correctly recorded as crimes are correctly classified; and

- the time taken to record a crime from the earliest point at which it should have been recorded.

4.11. The accuracy of the recording of specific crime types can differ. Therefore, it should be noted that the degree of under-recording of crime that is found may not be the same for all crime types.

4.12. The audit reports on crime-recording accuracy at a national level, and not at force level, as the sample sizes required to report with a reasonable level of precision (+/- 5 percent) at force level are beyond available resources.[28]

4.13. Sampling data for each force are only being used as indicative of the accuracy of force crime-recording; they are not of a size to be statistically robust. Each force sample does, however, contribute to the overall national sample from which we are able to report a statistically robust figure for the accuracy of crime-recording within England and Wales as a whole.

4.14. The audit results for each force have been discussed with the force crime registrar in each force, and any differences in opinion on the findings were reviewed by advisers working with HMIC. The national crime registrar also took an active part in this inspection, providing advice to the HMIC auditors when required, as well as dip-sampling their work to check for accuracy.

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[28] For example, the CSEW, which is recognised as being the gold standard in terms of survey collection does not report at force level, even though its annual sample is as large as 35,000 households.

The routes for reporting crimes

4.15.   The results of the crime route analysis, described in more detail later (see page 60), indicated that 92 percent[29] of crime that is recorded (excluding fraud) came through a route that can be audited.[30] These are crimes reported through police control rooms, directly to crime-recording centre, or both.

4.16.   Of the remainder, one percent came through specialist routes which included public protection and rape investigation units. The other seven percent came through a variety of routes, such as reports by a member of the public to an officer on foot patrol or at the front desk of a police station. As far as is practical, these other routes have been assessed during local inspection.

The field inspection visits

4.17.   Audit sampling was only one part of the evidence-gathering process. The field inspection visits which followed soon after each audit sampling period completed the picture. Each field inspection visit involved up to six HMIC inspectors spending three days with each force to gain a thorough understanding of:

4.18.   **Governance and leadership** in crime data integrity by establishing whether the force has arrangements at senior level to ensure there is confidence in recorded crime figures and all aspects of HOCR;

4.19.   **Systems and processes** in crime data integrity by establishing whether there are systems and processes in place to ensure that crime is correctly recorded according to HOCR and NCRS; and if standards are maintained and no-crime decisions are correct; and

4.20.   **People and skills** in crime data integrity by establishing whether the force has staff whose conduct and skills ensure accurate recording.

4.21.   Inspectors completed templates to record evidence gathered by each field inspection team. The evidence was built up under the direction of an inspection leader responsible for co-ordinating the inspection, as well as taking part in a range of interviews and facility visits. Interviewees included in all cases the chief officer lead for crime data integrity, the force crime registrar, the head of crime investigation, the local policing area manager,

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[29] These figures are for all recorded crime (excluding fraud). In respect of particular crime types, these figures varied from 86 percent for robbery and sexual offences, to 97 percent for burglary.

[30] This does not mean that 92 percent of crime reported to the police comes in via these routes; it is the proportion of crime that gets recorded through these routes.

the head of force IT, the crime-recording centre manager, the head of the control room and call-handling and the head of rape investigations (or the head of the unit responsible for protecting vulnerable people).

4.22. As well as the individual interviews, inspectors also ran focus groups with officers and staff who have oversight of crime-recording in different areas of the force.

4.23. Finally, they carried out reality-testing (unannounced visits to police stations) to see how strategy, vision and operational directions surrounding crime-recording affect day-to-day practice at the front line. They also visited the control room and crime-recording centre (or its equivalent) to speak to staff who receive calls from the public.

4.24. Inspectors were able to complete in-depth interviews with 30 or more officers and staff on each force visit.

Developing a clear picture

4.25. All these methods ensured HMIC built as accurate as possible a picture of crime data integrity in England and Wales. They allowed us to find answers to the following questions:

4.26. **Is there good leadership in crime data recording?** We inspected the effectiveness of leadership and governance, systems and processes and the people and skills in place to support accurate crime-recording.

4.27. **How accurately are crimes recorded?** We looked at the accuracy of the recording of the types of crimes which cause significant harm to individuals and the community. We also looked closely at out-of-court disposals and whether these are used appropriately. We reviewed the standards that forces apply when decisions are made to change a recorded crime to a no-crime.

4.28. **What investment do forces make in crime data integrity?** Police forces vary in the resources they commit to ensure crime data integrity. Maintaining high standards in crime data requires investment in systems to support efficient crime-recording, and also in people. We looked at the level of investment in the training of officers and staff to help them record crime accurately and the investment in the staff who monitor and audit standards.

4.29. **Are victims of crime being well served?** At the core of the inspection we established whether victims of crime are being served correctly by the police when it comes to recording crimes. This meant not only checking on the service received by victims who had a crime recorded, but making follow-up telephone calls to some people whose crimes were not recorded to establish whether they understood the decision.

Surveys

Public expectations

5.1.   As part of its inspection, HMIC commissioned an independent research company to host discussion groups with members of the public in different areas of the country – known as citizen juries (see Annex D). These were held to establish what the public expected from the police in respect of the recording of reports of crime, and took place during February 2014.

5.2.   HMIC convened four juries: two in London, one in Nottingham and one in Preston. The sessions were held in the evening and each lasted 90 minutes. Each meeting had a subject matter expert present to answer technical questions from the public. Those invited to participate were grouped by age. Two sessions were composed of people under the age of 30 (one in London, and the one in Nottingham), and two of people over 30 (one in London and the one in Preston).

5.3.   Our aim was to explore the following four areas with members of the public: their experience of reporting crime; their knowledge of, and perceptions of, the process of reporting crime; the degree of trust they had in police-recorded crime statistics; and their views on the importance of accuracy in police crime-recording. The principal points made in the citizen juries in each of these areas were as follows:

   - they generally thought that reporting a crime was a straightforward business, although there was little awareness and understanding of the purpose of the police non-emergency 101 telephone number;

   - they reported crime in order to: bring offenders to justice; make insurance claims; enable crime prevention by police; provide criminal intelligence for the police to use; and to help police to make decisions on deploying resources;

   - they rarely reported crime for the purpose of police statistics;

   - older groups tended to think that an officer should attend all reports of crime, whereas younger people had lower expectations;

   - they believed crime was not always reported because of an assumption that in some cases the police would do nothing about it, a fear of wasting police time on petty offences or a fear of retribution from the offender; and

   - they felt that people should be encouraged to report crime, but that the police should use their judgment to decide what action to take.

Public trust in police-recorded crime statistics

5.4.   On the issue of trust in police-recorded crime, we found that:

- the public did not trust crime statistics, not least because many crimes went unreported, particularly in high crime areas;

- the public believed numerical targets for reducing crime could affect the decision as to whether or not a crime was recorded;

- the public felt that if trust is lost, people stop reporting crimes; and

- those from minority communities in high crime areas thought that police ignored some crimes.

5.5.   There was low awareness of recent debate about the accuracy of crime statistics. Once these issues were raised with the groups, there was high level of interest in what crime statistics mean, and in understanding the reasons why they were inconsistent and of variable accuracy. The public felt that crime statistics:

- needed to be accurate because they affected insurance premiums, investment by the private sector and perceptions of local safety;

- should not be reported if unreliable; and

- were less important than ensuring the victim of crime was being cared for and the crime investigated.

Survey results

5.6.   Working with the Office for National Statistics, we also sought the views of respondents to the CSEW for the period between April and June 2014. The respondents, in excess of 7,500 adults aged 16 and over, were asked whether they agreed or disagreed with the following statements:

- I trust police to record all crimes (when they should);

- It is important that all crimes reported to the police are recorded accurately;

- It doesn't really matter if less serious crimes are not recorded, as long as the most serious are recorded; and

- It is important for the public to be able to access accurate information about the number of crimes recorded in their local area.

5.7. We also included these same four statements in a confidential survey of police officers and police staff. This was undertaken between 31 July 2014 and 31 August 2014 and received in excess of 17,000 respondents. A description of the methodology for this survey is included in Annex A.

5.8. It is important to note that the survey was not designed to be statistically robust or representative, but to gather the views of a large number of officers, staff, and special constables[31].

5.9. The charts below set out the results of the public response to these four statements, alongside those of the respondents to the police officer and police staff survey. We include further analysis of the officer and staff survey in our findings section (see page 82). It will be seen that the views of members of police forces and of the general public closely coincide[32], and the views of the public largely reflect those expressed in the citizen juries (see page 44).

What the public and police think about crime recording
The public and police broadly agree over the importance of crime recording, but neither group trusts that all crimes are recorded (n is approximately 8,000).

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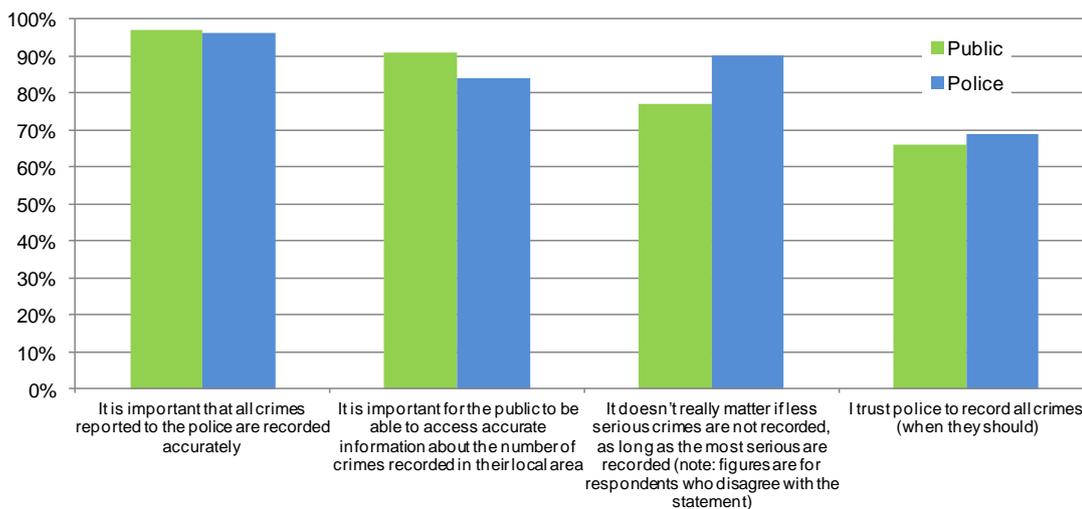
[31] The respondents were self-selecting and may not form a representative cross-section of those involved in crime-recording. Moreover, the outcome is likely to be further biased by responses from large forces; even if a large force had a small percentage response, the volume of individual responses may be large. We are also unable to guarantee the integrity of all responses; for example, some people may have completed it more than once, and some may not have been officers or staff.

[32] The views of the public were sought through the Crime Survey for England and Wales, a national survey providing statistically reliable results. The same questions were asked of the police service by HMIC through our online survey, which, while not being a representative cross-section of those involved in crime-recording, does provide indicative results. Comparisons between the two surveys should be treated as indicative**.**

5.10.   In broad terms, both police and public trust the police to record crimes when they should. The level of distrust across both groups, however, is cause for concern.

5.11.   One of the principles of modern day policing recognises that the power of the police to fulfil their functions and duties is dependent on public approval of their existence, actions and behaviour, and on their ability to maintain public respect. The public must therefore have trust in what the police do, and how they do it. Recording reports of crime accurately so as to ensure the needs and expectations of victims are met, and offenders are brought to justice, is a central part of this.

The inspection in numbers

6.1. HMIC has completed all three stages of the inspection explained above in the 43 Home Office-funded police forces in England and Wales. The inspection was carried out between December 2013 and August 2014.

6.2. Our inspectors have reviewed:

- 10,267 reports of crime; 7,264 of these came from reported incidents, 732 were directly recorded either at the point of report by the victim over the telephone or through force crime-recording centres, and 2,271 were recorded by other routes;

- 3,246 no-crime decisions; 1,077 of these related to reports of rape, 1,362 to reports of violence and 807 to reports of robbery;

- 2,915 crime records in which the offender was dealt with by way of an out-of-court disposal; these included 951 where a caution was administered, 944 where a penalty notice for disorder was issued, and 1,020 where a cannabis warning was issued; and

- 927 crime records in which the offender was dealt with by way of a community resolution.

6.3. The evidence gathered from the audit and field inspection visits – the second and third stages of the inspection approach – enables us to report our findings below. These confirm and expand upon the concerns we expressed in our interim report regarding current police crime-recording practice, and include statistically sound data from all 43 force inspections.

Inspection findings

Main points

7.1.   Victims of crime are being let down. The police are failing to record a large proportion of the crimes reported to them. Over 800,000 crimes reported to the police have gone unrecorded each year.[33] This represents an under-recording of 19 percent. The problem is greatest for victims of violence against the person and sexual offences, where the under-recording rates are 33 percent and 26 percent respectively. This failure to record such a significant proportion of reported crime is wholly unacceptable.

7.2.   Even when crimes are correctly recorded, too many are removed or cancelled as recorded crimes for no good reason. Of the 3,246 decisions to cancel, or no-crime[34], a crime record that we reviewed, 664 were incorrect. These included over 200 rapes and more than 250 crimes of violence against the person. Offenders who should be being pursued by the police for these crimes are not being brought to justice and their victims are denied services to which they are entitled.

7.3.   In over 800 of the 3,246 decisions we reviewed we could find no evidence that the victim was told of the decision to no-crime their report.[35] Victims may be under the impression that their crimes continue to be recorded and investigated when they are not.

7.4.   We were reassured to find little evidence of the misclassification of crime. Our audit showed that 96 percent of crime records reviewed were classified correctly, either at the time of initial recording or subsequently.

7.5.   In appropriate cases, those offenders who are brought to justice can be punished by means of an out-of-court disposal; 3,842 of these disposals were checked. To be correctly applied and recorded, the disposal must be

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[33] This estimate has been calculated by applying our audit finding that 81 percent of reported crime is being recorded to police-recorded crime figures for the 12-month period ending March 2014. The over 800,000 represents the missing 19 percent of crimes reported to the police. Please note that the HMIC audit focused on areas where we would expect to find crimes. It is possible that other areas, such as anti-social behaviour, also contain crimes that are being missed which may mean that the number of missed crimes is even higher.

[34] 3.1 percent of crime that is recorded by the police is no-crimed. However, for recorded crimes of rape, the level of no-criming is 7.3 percent.

[35] It should be noted that while each of the no-crime decisions we reviewed had a victim, not all no-crime decisions will have an effect on the victim. For example, where a victim has admitted to lying, it would not be necessary to inform him or her of the decision. Any such examples have been excluded from the number of victims not informed of the decision.

appropriate for the offender and the views of the victim taken into consideration. We found nearly 500 cases where the offender, owing to their previous record, was not suitable for the sanction applied and should have received one which was more severe. Evidence that the victims' wishes were properly considered was only found in 1,309 cases out of the 2,144 where there was a victim.

7.6.   This inspection was carried out to establish the extent to which police-recorded crime information can be trusted.

7.7.   This was a national inspection, and the answer is that in too many respects police-recording of crime is at a level which is inexcusably poor[36]. However, the picture at local level is mixed. In a few forces, crime-recording is very good and shows that it can be done well and should be trusted. In some others, it is unacceptably bad, and there is no reason why significant improvements cannot and should not be made and quickly. Failure properly to record crime is indefensible, and a continuation of the present national failure rate – one in five crimes missed – would be deplorable.

7.8.   The position in the case of rape and other sexual offences is a matter of especially serious concern. The inspection found 37 cases of rape which were not recorded as crimes. The national rate of under-recording of sexual offences (including rapes) as crimes was 26 per cent, and the national rate of incorrect decisions to no-crime rapes was 20 per cent. In the case of rape no-crime decisions, in 22 per cent of cases there was no evidence that the police informed the complainant of their decision. These are wholly unacceptable failings. Some forces have exemplary records in this respect, and others are very bad. It is particularly important that in cases as serious as rape, these shortcomings are put right as a matter of the greatest urgency. In some forces, action is already being taken in this respect.

7.9.   Reliable crime-recording is essential if police are to be able to make sound decisions on the deployment of their resources, and to operate with the highest practicable levels of efficiency. In times of austerity, they cannot afford to do less. They need to know what are the patterns of criminal behaviour in their force areas, and the intensity and severity of that offending. Police and crime commissioners need this information too because they hold their chief constables to account, and they in turn are held to account by the public. The public's right to know is important; none should be misled, whether through negligence or otherwise. Trust in what the police

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[36]   The national statistics are significant; force-level samples were not sufficiently large to provide fully reliable figures. However, they do provide strong indications of crime-recording at force level, and are assessed in the individual report for each force.

tell people about crime is part of the essential trust which the public must have in the police.

7.10.   Even more importantly, failures in accurate crime-recording can also increase the risks to victims and the community of the denial of justice, and may imperil public safety. The police therefore need to take this subject very seriously.

7.11.   No system is likely to be operated consistently with perfection, and there will always be rational and defensible differences in professional judgment about the competent classification of offences, once recorded. In fact, we found that the mis-classification of crimes was at a very low rate.

7.12.   We looked for hard evidence of improper practices (such as dishonest manipulation) in crime-recording as a result of performance pressure, and approached those who told us that it was going on, but relatively little was found. However, in and since the inspection, a number of forces accepted that undue performance pressure had adversely affected crime-recording in the past, and the culture of chasing targets as ends in themselves had distorted crime-recording decisions. Our online survey of officers and staff produced many assertions and allegations, but no-one came forward with firm evidence. Forces today are making considerable efforts to change the culture in which these practices prevailed, but changing ingrained instincts bred of a past regime takes time.

7.13.   It is essential that forces ensure that improper pressures of this kind, where they exist, are eradicated, and that crime-recording is always carried out in accordance with the rules. In future inspections, we will examine the quality of crime-recording and assess the extent to which chief officers have been successful in removing undue performance pressures in crime-recording.

7.14.   The failures we have found are attributable mainly to lapses in leadership and supervision of officers and staff, and poor knowledge of and therefore adherence to crime-recording rules. In some forces, inappropriate use is made of the rules which allow crime-recording decisions to be delayed. In some cases, the rules have simply been broken. In a few forces, crime registrars have insufficient authority, and some lack the necessary knowledge of the rules to enable them to make sound decisions.

7.15.   In too many cases, we found an unjustifiable lack of knowledge of the crime-recording regime on the part of officers and staff. The absence of any national train ing in the essentials of crime-recording is unsustainable. Therefore, the College of Policing should establish standard training to be provided by each force which ensures that all officers and staff who are likely to record crimes or have supervision of crime-recording have a sound understanding of the relevant principles to be applied, and are periodically

tested in that respect. The College of Policing should take the steps necessary to require candidates for the highest ranks in policing to know how to establish in their forces sound levels of competence in the proper application of the crime-recording rules by their officers and staff.

7.16.   Crimes can and should be recorded at the first point of contact with the police in all but the most exceptional circumstances. The presumption that the victim should always be believed should be institutionalised. The practice of some forces of investigating first and recording later should be abandoned immediately. The present latitude of allowing up to 72 hours before a crime is recorded should be abolished.

7.17.   It is clear that when police leaders realise the nature and magnitude of the crime-recording shortcomings in their forces, rapid improvements can be made. This has been done in Kent and Merseyside, and it can and should be done in all forces whose crime-recording is in need of improvement. Since the inspection, many forces have been taking significant steps to make these improvements, and full credit must be given to them for that. Their success is urgently needed, and should be commended when it has been attained.

7.18.   The police service has a choice. It can shore up the existing processes which are often flawed, and possibly review some of the more serious errors which attract the most public concern. Alternatively, it can design a better process that will make a long-lasting and more permanent difference. It is not the force which pays the highest price of crime-recording failures, but those victims and the wider community to whom justice may be denied. This can be especially true for the vulnerable, and those who suffer more serious crimes. Failure properly to record crime today may not only fail today's victims; it places others at risk of becoming victims tomorrow.

Why does crime-recording matter for victims of crime?

7.19.   If a victim is missed, then so is the offender and a possible opportunity to prevent further crimes. The fact is that not all crimes reported to the police are recorded in accordance with the standards set by the Home Office and required to be adopted and applied by the police service. Consequently, many victims of crime do not appear in the crime statistics and many offenders are also missed. To the average citizen, this must seem surprising.

7.20.   This is not a new problem. The quality of crime-recording has varied since the first British Crime Survey (BCS)[37] in 1981. Looking back over the last ten years, during which time the Home Office Counting Rules have remained largely unchanged, some broad trends emerge. For the first few years after the introduction of the NCRS (in 2002), crime-recording by police officers reached a high-water mark, with about 90 percent of victims' reports of crime to the BCS being recorded by police officers. The low point was reached in 2012/13, when police records showed a shortfall of around 30 percent compared with victims' reports to the crime survey.

7.21.   Poor crime-recording has played a part in recent scandals, from the Jimmy Savile case[38] to the sexual abuse of young girls in and around Rotherham[39]. Serious crimes are being missed, even when they are reported.

7.22.   The public's view in answer to our questions was unequivocal. When asked as part of the CSEW, some 97 percent of respondents said that it is important that all crimes reported to the police are recorded accurately. Only 66 percent, however, trusted the police to do so. Some 91 percent said that they should have access to accurate local information. More than 77 percent of respondents said that less serious crimes should be recorded as well as those which are more serious. We asked the same questions during our survey of police officers and police staff (see paragraphs 5.7 to 5.10) and the responses were not dissimilar.

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[37] The British Crime Survey was introduced in 1981 and was re-named the Crime Survey for England and Wales in 2012.

[38] *Mistakes were Made*, HMIC, London (2013) www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmic

[39] *Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Exploitation in Rotherham, 1997 – 2013*, Jay. A., Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council, Rotherham, (2014), www.rotherham.gov.uk

7.23. Some forces have moved swiftly to make improvements. HMIC's interim report, published in May 2014, indicated that police crime-recording accuracy was about 80 percent,[40] a figure which is consistent with the gap between police-recorded crime and that reported in the latest CSEW. Our inspections of forces have revealed why. Several forces demonstrated good ways of working and others are making progress; we have brought together what these forces have learned so that others can do better. In this report, we explain:

- the scale of the challenge and whether the statistics can be trusted;

- what the better forces are doing, so that other forces can learn from them and incorporate their best practice locally; and

- what needs to be done and by whom to rectify the situation.

To what extent can police-recorded crime information be trusted?

7.24. When asked, only two-thirds of the public said they trusted the police to record all crime. But are they right? This question is best answered by comparing the crimes recorded by police with those reported to the CSEW. This survey, published by the ONS, is designed to be statistically reliable at the national level for crimes where there has been a victim. By comparing the percentage of victims of crimes recorded by the police with a comparable set of crimes which victims tell the crime survey they have reported to the police, it has become widely seen as an indicator of trustworthiness in police-recorded crime data.

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[40] This is an unweighted figure which is not directly comparable with the weighted national figure of 81 percent reported here.

Ratio of crimes recorded by the police to crimes reported through the Crime Survey for England and Wales
Following the introduction of NCRS during 2002/03 to 2005/06, the police recorded a greater proportion of crime as measured by CSEW. But this proportion fell in most subsequent years until 2013/14, when it improved.

1. The offences included in the comparable sub-set for the period 1981 to 1999 differ slightly from those used from 2002/03 onwards due to changes in offence coverage. [41]

7.25. The above chart illustrates the relationship from time to time of police-recorded crime and crime measured as part of the CSEW between 1981 and 2013/14. Four points stand out:

- over the 18-year period to 1999, only around 50 to 60 percent of crimes reported as part of the British Crime Survey (now the CSEW) were recorded by police forces;

- the introduction of the NCRS together with an audit regime[42] helped to increase the proportion above 90 percent by 2004;

- the removal of the audit from 2007 is likely to have contributed to the steady degradation of the quality of police recording of crime as performance targets set in. By 2012/13, only around 70 percent of crimes were being recorded; and

- recent data show a sharp rise in recording, reaching approximately 81 percent of the comparable crime reported through the CSEW by 2013/14.

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[41] With thanks to the Office for National Statistics for allowing reproduction of this chart.

[42] Four audits of police-recorded crime were undertaken by the Audit Commission between 2003 and 2007.

7.26.   These latest CSEW data reconcile with the results from HMIC's audit of the accuracy of local crime-recording. Our audit samples were designed to be representative of the national mix of crimes, with sample sizes sufficient to provide a national rate for the accuracy of police recording of 81 percent.[43] This finding is consistent with the 81 percent reported through the CSEW described above, although the audit sample is not directly comparable.[44]

7.27.   Our audit also provided the opportunity to go further. By increasing the sample sizes, we have been able to throw light on recording rates for a selection of crimes including violence against the person, sexual offences, robbery, burglary, criminal damage and other crimes (see paragraphs 7.49 - 7.52).

Are victims at the heart of crime-recording decisions?

7.28.   Our audit found that when a member of the public first makes contact with the police by telephone, the response is victim-focused and operators are normally polite, helpful and professional. This does not, however, necessarily reflect a true broader victim focus. Not all crimes are recorded, and victims may not always be provided with the service to which they are entitled.

7.29.   Once a crime has been recorded, we found that victims are provided with a better service and receive a stronger victim focus from the police service. Getting the reported crime recorded is crucial to accessing all of the victim services which are available.

7.30.   Throughout this inspection, we assessed the service provided to the victims of crime. These cover first contact with the operator through to the point when the record of the crime is closed and ensuring the victim is informed of the outcome.

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[43] With a confidence interval of (+ / - 2 percent).

[44] The CSEW includes crimes that are not reported to, or recorded by, the police but is limited to crimes against people resident in households and also does not cover all crime types. In order to compare the crime rates measured by the CSEW and police-recorded crime, a comparable subset of crimes was used to provide a better interpretation.

Auditors' views of the quality of service provided to victims of crime
While some aspects of service, such as politeness, were rated highly, there was less evidence that victims were involved in, or informed about decisions in their case.
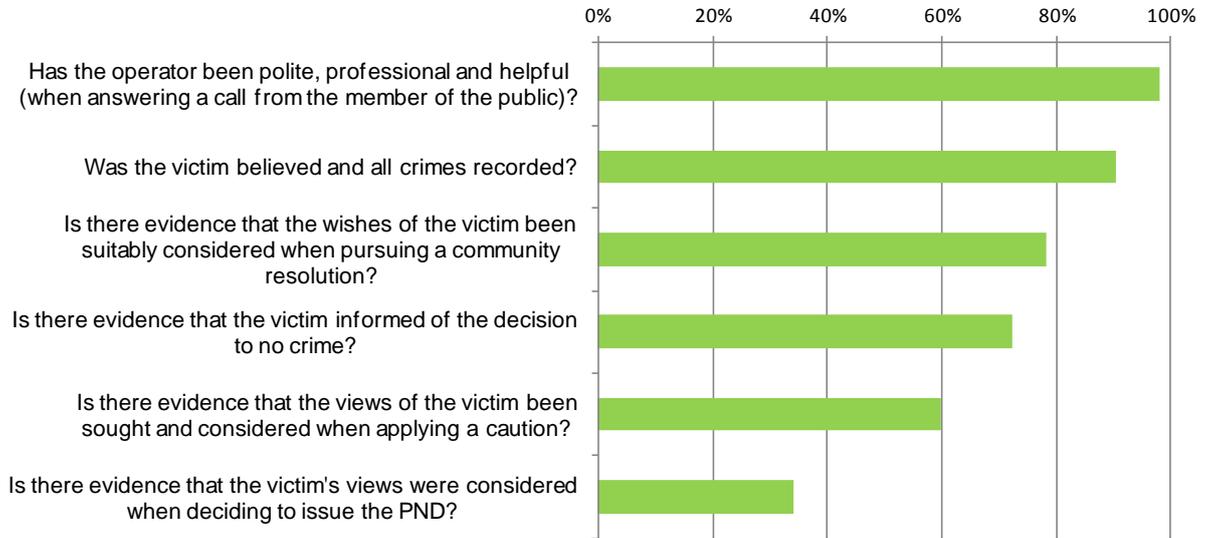
7.31. As communities become increasingly diverse, it is important that forces develop easier and more effective ways for people to report crime. Forces have responded to this requirement in a variety of ways. Some have commissioned work to understand more thoroughly the make-up of their communities and their perceptions of how easy it is to contact the police locally, while others already have such information and are working actively with other organisations to improve access. All forces have access to interpreting services and use translation services, such as Language Line, for day-to-day communication with individuals for whom English may not be their first language.

7.32. An effective way to improve access for individuals who may not otherwise have the confidence or trust to contact the police directly is through third party reporting. This occurs when a person or professional body (such as social services or a charitable organisation) acting on behalf of the victim passes the report of crime to the police. All forces, to some extent, use third party reporting, particularly for the reporting of hate crime, domestic abuse and sexual offences.

7.33. The HOCR provide that reports by third parties, who are acting on behalf of victims, should be recorded as a crimes. Forces were too frequently waiting until they had been able to obtain confirmation of the facts from the victim before doing so, often because there was confusion about how the rules should be interpreted. This is a concern as, more often than not, these victims are the most vulnerable. It is important that forces ensure that the rules are clearly understood by officers and staff making crime-recording

decisions so that they are applied consistently, and in the interests of victims.

Third party report of a crime by a person reasonably acting on a victim's behalf

The police received a report from social services to the effect that a seven-year-old boy had been hit by his father with a wooden spoon, and that he had sustained bruising. As a result of the assault, social services put in place safeguarding measures in respect of the child, but the police failed to record a crime. This was incorrect; a crime should have been recorded. The rules provide that a crime should be recorded if it is reported by the victim or a person reasonably assumed to be acting on behalf of the victim. It was plain that social services were operating on that basis, and the police should have known that, and acted accordingly.

Recommendation 1:

> **Within six months, the Home Office should revise the guidance in the NCRS and HOCR to clarify the circumstances in which a crime must be recorded when reported by a person other than the victim. In particular, the guidance should be amended to make clear that reports of crime by professionals such as doctors, teachers, health workers and social services, when acting in their professional capacities, should always be regarded as acting on behalf of the victim, and so reports of crimes made by such people should be recorded as crimes, and that this should be done irrespective of whether or not the victim confirms that a crime has been committed.**

7.34.   To ensure an appropriate victim focus within the crime-recording process, due recognition is given to the need for compliance with the Code of Practice for Victims of Crime. This provides that victims must be provided with appropriate support, either from the force itself or other organisations, kept updated with developments on their crimes, and informed or involved in decision-making about how best to conclude the case. IT systems are increasingly able to monitor compliance with the code and most forces use them to ensure that victims are updated at the specified intervals.

7.35. An increasing number of forces have also introduced agreements between police and victims on how often, and through which channels, victims wish to be updated about the progress of investigations into the crimes committed against them; these are known as victim contact contracts. Others use technology that enables victims to track the progress of their crimes electronically, and independently of police.

7.36. Forces that perform better in their victim focus do so because of four factors:

- a well-communicated message from senior officers in relation to the importance of putting the victim first;

- effective and consistent training for staff in how to deal with victims and how to include them in crime-recording and outcome processes;

- set procedures that, when followed by staff, ensure a victim-focused approach; and

- a positive approach by supervisors on testing victim focus and challenging staff when it is not found.

Victims tracking and monitoring their crime reports

A small number of forces now operate the *'TrackMyCrime'* system. This enables victims and/or witnesses to monitor the progress of the investigation of their crime and to view updates online. Victims are offered the opportunity to participate in the system at the time they report their crime, and then create a personal user account, enabling secure access, by visiting the relevant website. One force has reported that 95 percent of users have expressed satisfaction with the system.

7.37. However, there is less evidence of victims being involved at the end of the investigative process:

- in 72 percent of cases there was evidence that victims were informed that their crime had been no-crimed (2,219 of 3,062);

- in 60 percent of cases there was evidence that victims had their views considered before the police issued a caution (411 of 687);

- in 34 percent of cases there was evidence that victims had their views considered before the police issued a PND (187 of 550); and

- in 78 percent of cases there was evidence that victims had their wishes properly considered in relation to community resolutions (711 of 907).

7.38.   As part of our audit we spoke to a small number of victims whose crimes had not been recorded. While some said they were satisfied with the service even though a crime had not been recorded, the majority said that the service they received was poor because the police had not recorded or investigated their crimes.

> **The effect on a victim where police do not record or deal with a crime**
>
> The victim had her shed door and handle damaged. There was a long history of problems in the area involving damage, burglary from sheds and drug abuse. Other sheds were burgled that night. This was the third time something had happened to her shed. The police did not record a crime despite her telling the operator that someone had tried to break in. The victim has tired of problems in the area and has moved. There was nothing to justify the decision not to record a crime and provide a service to the victim.

How do members of the public report a crime?

7.39.   The reporting of a crime, recording of crime and ultimately including that crime in the published crime statistics are effected via a number of routes. Our research identifies three main routes through which crime is reported to the police and subsequently recorded. These are:

- via an incident report;

- directly by telephone to a crime-recording centre; and

- reports made in person to police officers and staff, such as on the street or at a police station, or referrals directly to specialist departments from, for example, the National Health Service or local social services.

Reporting a crime via an incident report

7.40.   The bulk of reports of crime from the public are made by telephone. Initially, callers will speak to a police call-handler who will record details of the incident and assess whether a crime has occurred. They will gather as much information as possible from the caller and create an incident report. This incident report will be given an initial classification (an opening code). However, in most forces a crime record is not created at this stage. An assessment is carried out to decide whether or not it is necessary to send an officer to deal with the incident or to record the crime by telephone.

7.41. In cases where police attend the incident, the officer will decide whether or not to record a crime. The responsibility for making the decision to record a crime in many forces depends on information from the attending officer, irrespective of whether it is the officer or a crime-recording centre who creates the crime record. This is the stage where many problems can occur that adversely affect crime-recording. We describe our audit findings for crimes reported via this route at paragraphs 7.49 to 7.51.

Crimes recorded directly without an incident report being created

7.42. One in seven crimes is recorded directly through crime-recording centres. Twenty four forces have adopted this approach to crime-recording to some degree. These crimes are either recorded during the initial telephone call from the victim by staff who can enter reports of crime on the force crime system, or the victim is called back by the bureau following the initial telephone call or electronic report of crime (for example from email).

7.43. Crimes selected by the initial call-handlers to be recorded directly are, in the main, less serious and often involve no immediate requirement for an officer to attend. The members of staff with responsibility for recording crime routinely input and classify crime, thereby gaining significant expertise. Our audit findings for directly-recorded crime are described at paragraphs 7.49 to 7.51.

Other routes for reporting crime

7.44. Crimes can also be reported directly to officers on patrol or at police stations, and some are referred directly to specialist departments. These other routes account for around seven percent of the total crime recorded by the police.

7.45. We were unable to test all reports where an incident or crime record was made through this route of reporting. However, it is possible that some crimes reported this way are not being recorded. This is best illustrated by the following example:

Reports of crime which cannot be checked

One of our inspectors was visiting the front counter in a police station. He was standing with the counter clerk when a member of the public approached. She told the counter clerk that her mobile phone had been stolen along with her handbag and £40. The clerk told her that unless the serial number of the mobile phone could be produced, then no crime would be recorded. This is incorrect practice; the HOCR do not require a serial number for stolen items to be provided for a crime to be recorded. The theft of the bag and money was completely ignored. If our inspector had not been there, HMIC would have had no means of knowing about this report. This demonstrates that it is not possible to monitor every single report of crime to the police. This makes it all the more important that force custom and practice is compliant with the NCRS and staff have a sound understanding of what is required. If this is not the case, victims are let down.

7.46. We found that 15 forces had standalone IT systems for case management where we found reports of crime. These systems were often used for referrals between specialist departments and partner organisations (such as health or social services). In 27 forces where specialist departments do not have their own standalone IT system, reports to these units are entered on a separate part of the force crime system.

7.47. We were able to check the records on these systems and found that crime-recording accuracy was particularly poor; we describe our findings at paragraphs 7.49 to 7.51. We also checked email accounts and mailboxes used by public protection units in which we found unrecorded reports of crime which had been overlooked completely. As these included sexual offences and violence committed against vulnerable adults and children, this is a cause for very significant concern.

> **Missed opportunity to intervene and protect vulnerable victims**
>
> A child told his school teacher that he had been hit by his father at home. This followed previous reports by the child and his brother about their father hitting them. The information was passed to the police who recorded it on their standalone IT system. When police checked the father's history they found he had convictions for violence. The police tried to locate the family but they had moved and the police failed to contact them. The report on the standalone IT system was closed and the case was left to social services to deal with. A crime should have been recorded but was not, which meant the information was not available if future reports were received.

How likely is it that a report of a crime will be recorded?

7.48.   Our audit found that the police in England and Wales record only 81 percent[45] of crime that is reported from incidents or directly to a police crime-recording centre[46]. This means that approximately 800,000 crimes per year are not recorded by police, and a large number of victims of those crimes do not receive the service to which they are entitled.

7.49.   The quality of recording varies according to the ways in which reports of crime are received:

- 81 percent of crimes reported to the force's call-handling centre as an incident are recorded (4,922 crimes recorded out of 6,081 that should have been);

- 98 percent of crimes reported directly to a crime-recording centre are recorded (783 crimes recorded out of 799 that should have been); and

- 55 percent of crimes contained within reports recorded on other standalone IT systems[47], including those reported directly to specialist

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[45] With a confidence interval of (+ / - 2 percent).

[46] Our sampling technique was designed in consultation with the Office for National Statistics and senior statisticians from the Home Office to provide auditors with sufficient records to test the accuracy of all crime (excluding fraud) at a national level, as well as the six selected crime types. The overall crime accuracy figure of 81 percent takes account of the variations in proportions of crime within each crime type, as well as the force size, and the route by which the crime was recorded.

[47] These unrecorded crimes were found on standalone IT systems used for case management in specialist departments, separate from the force crime and incident-recording systems.

departments, are recorded (500 crimes were recorded of the 912 that should have been).

7.50. The results of the individual force audits are summarised in the table below:

Summary of crime recording by force, and crime route[1,2] 01 November 2012 to 31 October 2013

	Incidents		Directly Recorded Crime		Other Systems	
	Crimes should have been recorded	Crimes that were recorded	Crimes should have been recorded	Crimes that were recorded	Crimes should have been recorded	Crimes that were recorded
Avon & Somerset	134	90	25	22	14	3
Bedfordshire	55	45	30	30	16	11
Cambridgeshire	58	41	13	13	18	7
Cheshire	90	62	20	18	9	6
Cleveland	85	67			15	6
Cumbria	85	71			19	8
Derbyshire	94	85	27	26	17	10
Devon & Cornwall	117	98	61	61	12	2
Dorset	87	61	20	20	14	1
Durham	104	88				
Dyfed-Powys	73	50			30	24
Essex	132	121	27	27	18	14
Gloucestershire	85	76			12	5
Greater Manchester	388	265	31	30	11	9
Gwent	67	58			24	7
Hampshire	112	67	77	76	25	15
Hertfordshire	181	130	36	36	19	10
Humberside[3]	129	94			19	13
Kent[4]	133	106			17	9
Lancashire	155	142			23	15
Leicestershire	115	100			16	6
Lincolnshire	86	84	12	12	23	20
London, City of	60	54	20	20	12	11
Merseyside	134	88			14	10
MPS	1169	948			107	80
Norfolk	79	68			30	24
Northamptonshire	82	65	23	23	28	1
Northumbria	115	83			11	2
North Wales	78	73	21	21	16	1
North Yorkshire	68	57			9	5
Nottinghamshire	122	104			20	20
South Wales	164	158			19	14
South Yorkshire	117	89	19	19	34	18
Staffordshire	117	113			43	29
Suffolk	86	74	4	4	37	14
Surrey	72	59	42	41	55	34
Sussex	133	111			14	2
Thames Valley	139	118	64	64	5	0
Warwickshire	77	63			21	13
West Mercia	100	74	11	11	18	10
West Midlands	332	328	124	121	5	0
West Yorkshire	221	150	36	34	27	3
Wiltshire	51	44	56	54	16	8

1. These figures are unweighted.

2. The auditing process involved listening to calls, which could vary in length from 2 minutes to 45 minutes. For some forces this meant that there was capacity to do additional auditing, and therefore similar sized forces may differ in the number of records examined

3. Humberside reported to HMIC that they do directly record crime but they were unable to provide records for the HMIC audit.

4. HMIC conducted two audits in Kent, the numbers reflected here are from the first audit and form Kent's contribution to the national audit. The second audit was done to reflect HMIC's previous work in Kent, the results of which can be found in Kent's force report from the HMIC website.

7.51. Police were less likely to record violent and sexual offences as crimes than they were other types of crime. Some 67 percent of violent crimes and 74 percent of sexual offences that should have been recorded were in fact

recorded. This is in contrast to 86 percent of criminal damage crimes and 89 percent of burglaries. We found little evidence to suggest that forces were over-recording crime.

Proportion of crimes recorded. This graph shows the range of crime recording accuracy by crime types. Violent crimes and sexual offences have the lowest accuracy.
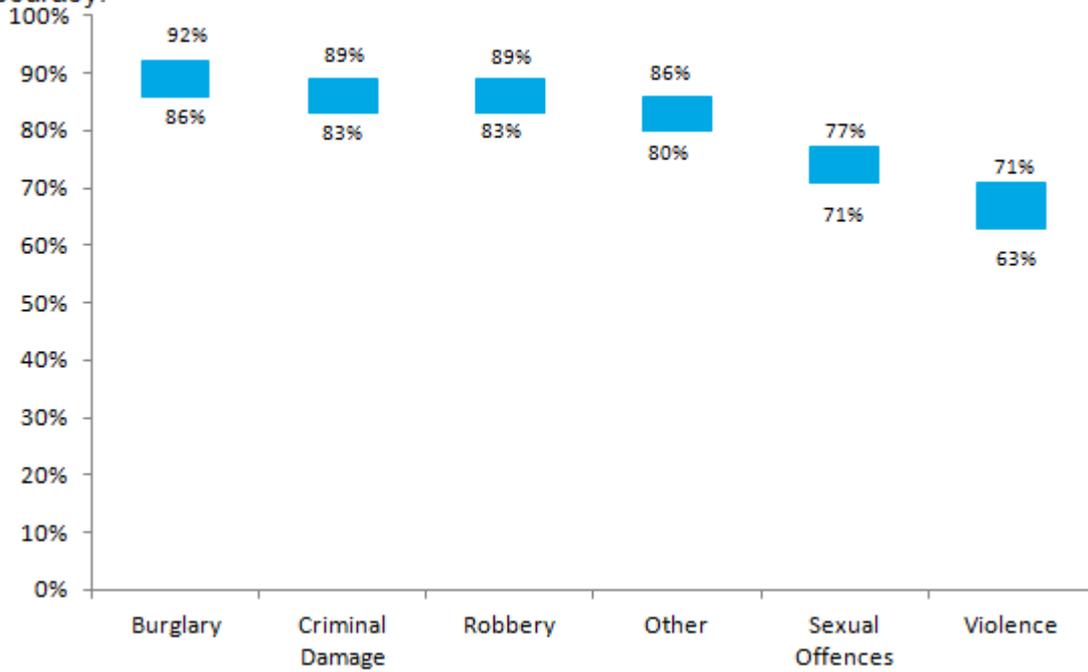
7.52.   Two points stand out from the chart above:[48]

- the national crime-recording accuracy rate for each crime type varied, from a mid-point of 67 percent for violent crimes to a mid-point of 89 percent for burglaries; and

- accuracy rates for sexual offences and violent crime are notably worse than those for robbery, burglary, criminal damage and other crimes.

7.53.   We were reassured to find little evidence of the misclassification of crime. Our audit showed that 96 percent of crime records we reviewed were classified correctly, either at the time of initial recording or subsequently.

7.54.   The timeliness of the recording of those crimes which were recorded was also found to be generally good and within the time frame of 72 hours provided by the NCRS. 330 of the 5,704 recorded crimes we reviewed were recorded outside the 72-hour limit.

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[48] Ranges are displayed to reflect the statistical robustness that our samples have for each crime type (up to + / - 4 percent).

How well are no-crimes managed?

7.55. Where a crime is recorded, further investigation may reveal no crime was in fact committed. An example of this is where a victim reports the theft of his car but then realises he has simply parked it in a different place to usual. In such circumstances, the record of the crime should be cancelled. This is known as a no-crime (see page 34). This will not therefore be counted in crime statistics.

7.56. Of the 3,246 violence, robbery and rape no-crime decisions reviewed in our audit, 80 percent (2,582) were found to have been made correctly. The performance with respect to no-crime decisions varies greatly from force to force; often this occurs because the decision to no-crime a record is being taken by a wide range of people who have different understandings of the rules. This inconsistency is stark and a significant cause for concern.

Recommendation 2:

> **Within six months, the Home Office should revise the guidance in the HOCR in relation to the accountability and responsibility for the making of all no-crime decisions, so as to require that the authority to make a no-crime decision is vested in and confined to persons who are independent of investigations, properly trained for the role, and subject to direct oversight by the force crime registrar. In the case of rape, the HOCR should be amended to provide that only the FCR has the authority to make a no-crime decision.**

7.57. The proportion of correct no-crime decisions made was found to be similar across the three crime types we examined: for violence, 81 percent (1,106 out of 1,362); for robbery, 77 percent (619 out of 807) and for rape, 80 percent (857 out of 1,077). We deal with the recording and no-criming of rape in more detail below (see page 74). The following table sets out the accuracy of no-crime decisions by force:

Percentage of no crime decisions assessed as correct

Around two in ten of the no-crime decisions reviewed were wrong, with little variation between the audited crime types. Note: Data are indicative. These percentages are based on unweighted force averages.
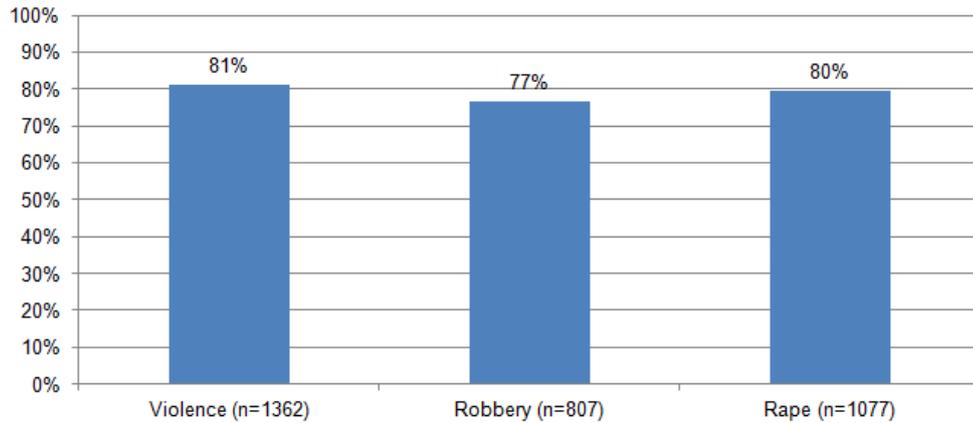
	No Crime Decisions Reviewed	Correct No Crime Decisions	Incorrect No Crime Decisions
Avon & Somerset	90	61	29
Bedfordshire	74	55	19
Cambridgeshire	58	50	8
Cheshire	71	42	29
Cleveland	84	46	38
Cumbria	46	38	8
Derbyshire	77	74	3
Devon & Cornwall	104	94	10
Dorset	68	61	7
Durham	41	29	12
Dyfed-Powys	47	44	3
Essex	73	68	5
Gloucestershire	53	46	7
Greater Manchester	91	65	26
Gwent	63	63	0
Hampshire	88	39	49
Hertfordshire	75	71	4
Humberside	74	61	13
Kent	62	57	5
Lancashire	142	136	6
Leicestershire	83	74	9
Lincolnshire	89	71	18
London, City of	41	34	7
Merseyside	72	38	34
MPS	90	69	21
Norfolk	64	58	6
Northamptonshire	90	55	35
Northumbria	73	49	24
North Wales	76	60	16
North Yorkshire	105	71	34
Nottinghamshire	91	84	7
South Wales	44	43	1
South Yorkshire	66	55	11
Staffordshire	88	88	0
Suffolk	74	64	10
Surrey	66	44	22
Sussex	72	59	13
Thames Valley	88	79	9
Warwickshire	61	37	24
West Mercia	77	66	11
West Midlands	92	70	22
West Yorkshire	105	65	40
Wiltshire	58	49	9
England and Wales	3246	2582	664

1. These figures are unweighted.
2. The volume of decisions reviewed as part of this inspection allows the data to be used as indicative evidence though it should not be considered to be representative.

7.58.   In too many cases, there was no record that the victims had been informed of the decision to no-crime their reported crime. The proportion of victims who were informed of this decision varied between police forces and by crime type. These variances can be seen in the following graph[49]:

Percentage of no crime decisions where there was evidence that the complainant was informed
Many complainants are not told when a report of a crime is 'no-crimed', ranging from 2 in 10 (for complainants of rape) to 4 in 10 (for complainants of violence). Note: this data is indicative as percentages based on unweighted force averages.
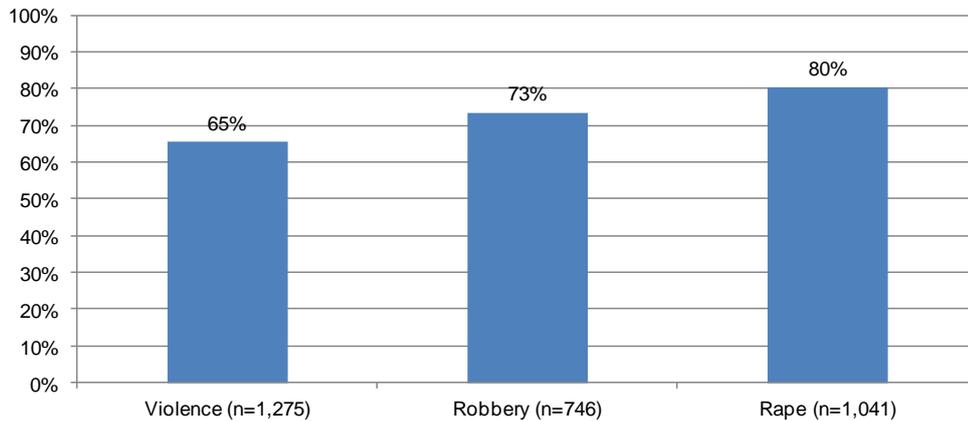
7.59.   In over a quarter of the cases which are no-crimed where there is a victim, there is no record of the victim being informed. This risks leaving them with the mistaken impression that the police are still pursuing an offender. A victim should always know the status of his reported crime, and in the case of a decision to no-crime, the very least he should expect is an explanation of the reason for this decision.

Recommendation 3:

Within three months, the Home Office should amend the HOCR guidance to require that in cases where a no-crime decision has been made, the victim must always be informed in a timely manner and a record to that effect should be made.

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[49] These data are indicative evidence only.

Are out-of-court disposals used correctly?

7.60. Following successful investigation, some crimes may be suitable for an out-of-court disposal. These include cautions, Penalty Notices for Disorder[50], cannabis warnings[51] and community resolutions[52]. The HOCR (section H) state that national guidance must be followed in order for the disposal to be counted for statistical purposes[53].

7.61. Our findings in relation to the use of out-of-court disposals are as follows:

- **Cautions** – Out of the 951 cautions that we dip-sampled, we found that in 873 cases the offender's previous history made him suitable to receive a caution. In 827 cases we found evidence that the offender was made aware of the nature and future implications of accepting the caution. Out of the 687 cases where there was a victim to consult, 411 cases showed that the victims' views had been considered;

- **Penalty Notices for Disorder** – We dip-sampled 944 PNDs and found that the offender was suitable to receive a penalty notice in 793 cases. In 593 cases we found evidence that the offender had been made aware of the nature and future implications of accepting the penalty notice. Out of the 550 cases where there was a victim to consult, we found that 187 victims had their views considered when the police decided to issue a penalty notice;

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[50] A form of immediate financial punishment used by police to deal with low-level offending such as being drunk and disorderly, retail theft and minor criminal damage.

[51] A cannabis warning is a non-statutory disposal for cases of possession of cannabis for personal use. It constitutes a warning to the offender and involves confiscation of the cannabis.

[52] Resolution of a minor offence or anti-social behaviour incident through informal agreement between the parties involved, such as the offender agreeing to make good the loss or damage caused.

[53] National guidance for the use of out-of-court disposals is detailed in a number of documents:
• *Home Office Circular 016/2008: Simple Cautioning – Adult Offenders*. Available from www.xact.org.uk/information/downloads/pace/hoc_16-2008.pdf
• *Simple Cautions For Adult Offenders*, 14 November 2013. Available from www.justice.gov.uk
• *Code of Practice for Adult Conditional Cautions*, 8 April 2000. Available from www.justice.gov.uk
• *Home Office Police Operational Guidance for penalty Notices for Disorder*, March 2005. Available from www.justice.gov.uk
• *ACPO Guidance on Cannabis Possession for Personal Use*, 28 January 2009. Available from www.acpo.police.uk

- **Cannabis warnings** – We dip-sampled 1,020 cannabis warnings and found that the offender was suitable to receive a warning in 875 cases. In 495 cases we found evidence that that the offender had been made aware of the nature and implications of accepting the warning; and

- **Community resolutions** – We dip-sampled 927 community resolutions and found that in 803 cases, the offender either had no previous offending history or that the offender's past history still justified the use of the community resolution. Out of the 907 resolutions where there was a victim to consult, 711 cases showed that the wishes and personal circumstances of the victim had been properly considered. 696 cases showed that the agreed outcome was meaningful and appropriate[54].

7.62.   These disposals were introduced to deal with less serious offences and to reduce bureaucracy. They are subject to basic rules and are simple to administer. Compliance with these rules should be good, yet the results above show that this is not the case.

Was the offender suitable for the outcome type?

7.63.   The punishment must be suitable for the offender. In 445 of the 3,789 out-of-court disposals we examined, the offender should not have been given the sanction because he had a previous criminal history. He should have been charged and sent to court or been given a different and more severe out-of-court disposal. Over a fifth of offenders who should have received a more severe sanction for their crimes did not. The victim and the wider public were denied the justice they deserved and this is unacceptable.

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[54] National guidance for community resolution directs that at the point the community resolution is administered an officer will need to confirm the offender admits the offence and explain the process to the offender, including how the offender will make good the harm caused. The implications of receiving a community resolution also need to be explained to the offender. It does not form part of a criminal record but may be disclosed as part of an enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service check. The community resolution must be recorded appropriately in accordance with the NCRS and HOCR.

Were the victims' views considered when applying the outcome?

7.64.　　Of the PNDs and cautions we examined, 1,237 related to offences involving a victim. Fewer than half of these victims were consulted to establish their views on the suitability of the disposal. Of the community resolutions we examined, we found 196 out of the 907 cases showed no evidence of proper consultation with the victim. As the resolution is intended to bring satisfactory closure for the victim, it is important that victims' wishes are fully documented. This will give the force confidence that victims are being listened to and that they are at the centre of decisions made by the police to resolve the crime.

Percentage of applicable reviews where there was evidence that the victim's wishes were considered in applying the outcome.
The views of victims are often not taken into account. Note: these data are indicative

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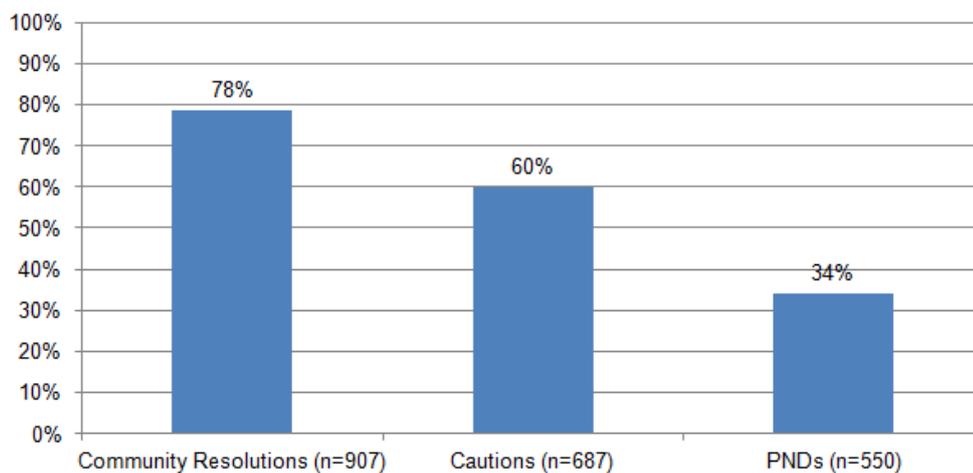
Police not consulting the victim

A man was arrested for attacking and punching his ex-partner. He had also threatened to kill her. The man had been arrested previously for assaulting her, but on that occasion the CPS had advised that no prosecution should be brought against him. This time, the victim was prepared to go to court. However, the police decided to caution the offender.

We could find no evidence of any discussions the police had had with the victim to understand how she wanted them to deal with the attack. She was given no reason why the offender had been cautioned and not charged.

> **Community resolution – no victim involvement**
>
> The victim lost his wallet. A short time later, two teenagers were seen taking money from the wallet and were arrested. They were given a community resolution even though they showed no signs of remorse. The victim did not get all of his money back and was not consulted on the decision to use a community resolution.

Was the offender made aware of the implications of accepting the outcome?

7.65.   A third of offenders did not have the implications of accepting the punishment explained to them. This was particularly the case for offenders accepting community resolutions and cannabis warnings, as can be seen from the following graph:

Percentage of reviews where there was evidence that the offender was made aware of the implications of accepting the out-of-court disposal.
Offenders are not always made aware of the implications. Note: data are indicative.
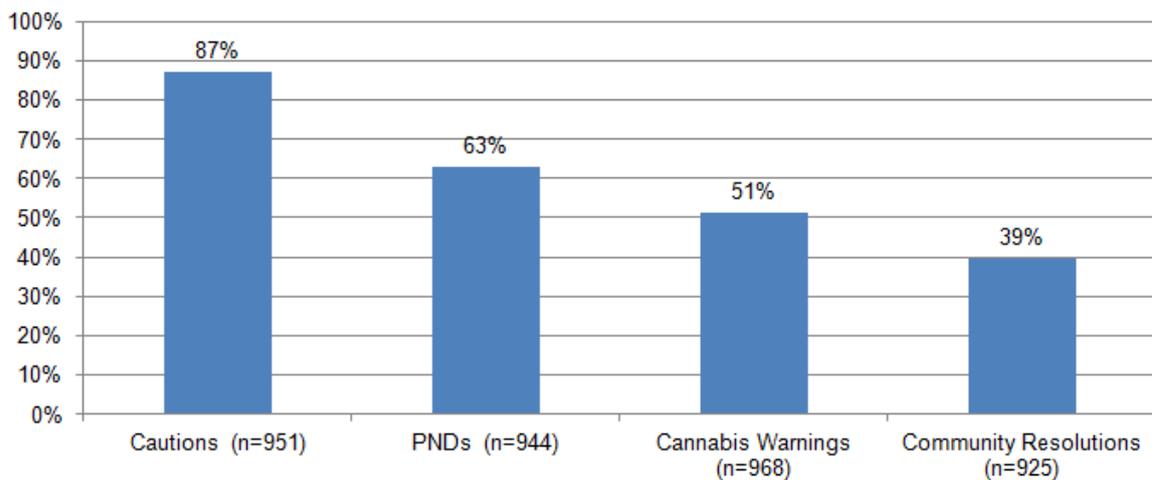
7.66.   Having such implications explained is important as it helps safeguard the offender's rights. For instance, the offender may feel pressured into accepting the out-of-court disposal without understanding what this decision means because it is an easier option than going to court.

7.67.   It is important that the offender is informed that accepting the disposal may have implications for future employment when criminal records checks are carried out by prospective employers.

> **What happens when the implications are not explained to an offender when accepting an out-of-court disposal?**
>
> R (on the application of Stratton) v Chief Constable of Thames Valley Police 2013 EWHC 1561 (Admin). A young woman was cautioned by police for her part in a fight. The woman later sought judicial review and the quashing of the caution. The court granted her application to quash the caution. Part of the reason was that she had not been told at the time that accepting the caution might have implications for her future employment. Because guidance for administering cautions had not been followed, the caution was not valid.

7.68.   The out-of-court disposals framework is currently the subject of a review led by the Ministry of Justice and involving the ACPO lead for out-of-court disposals. This review is seeking to simplify the current system to make it easier for victims and the wider public to understand, and for practitioners to operate. Included is a thorough review of the HOCR and guidance for all types of out-of-court disposals with the intention of ensuring that they are consistent and compatible with each other. A new framework for the use of out-of-court disposals is being piloted in three police forces for one year beginning in November 2014.

Recommendation 4:

   Within three months, all forces should ensure that:

- **in cases of out-of-court disposals where there is a victim, they consult the victim before making the decision to issue or effect the disposal, and make a record that they have done so; and**

- **on every occasion when the making of an out-of-court disposal is under consideration, the previous offending history of the offender is checked to ensure the offender is eligible for the disposal in question, and make a record that this has been done.**

How well are reports of rape recorded?

7.69.   The inspection looked closely at the crime-recording decisions involving reports of rape; in particular, whether reports of rape were recorded and whether the correct decisions were taken to no-crime.

7.70.   Of the 316 reports of rape we examined, 37 were not recorded as crimes. Rapes reported via incident-recording systems are more likely to be recorded sooner and more accurately than those referred to police and recorded in other ways, such as the case management systems used by public protection units. The failure to record reports of rape is of serious and material concern, and must be addressed as a matter of urgency.

Percentage of rapes which were recorded by reporting system.
Reported rapes are not being recorded via the incident system and other force systems.
Note: these data are indicative due to the small samples of cases reviewed.
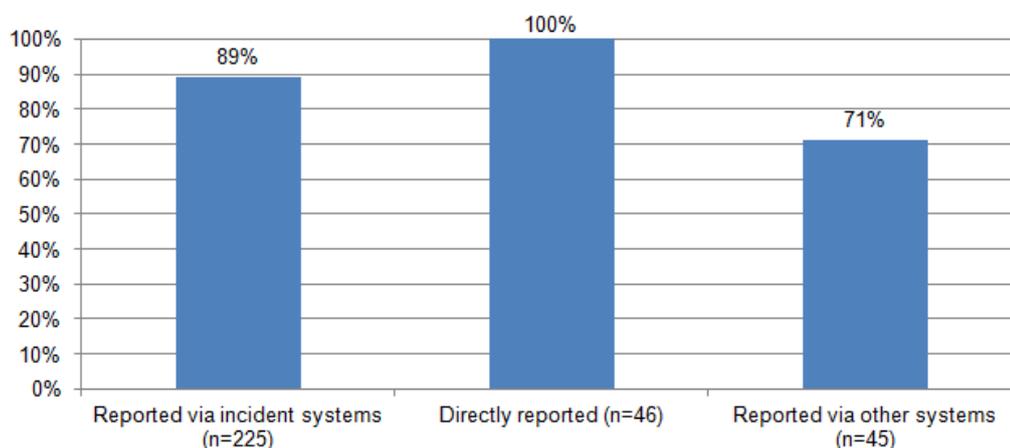
Recommendation 5:

> **Immediately, all forces should ensure their auditing procedures in respect of reports of serious sexual offences, including rapes, are sound.**

7.71.   Of the 1,077 reviewed decisions to no-crime a recorded rape, 220 were incorrect. Some victims had their investigations halted prematurely; other crimes were well investigated but should have been left on file in case any further evidence came to light.

7.72.   The best forces made a correct decision on every occasion. In the worst forces, more than two-fifths of rape no-crime decisions were wrong and worryingly, some of these incorrect decisions were supported by the force crime registrar.

7.73. Forces which achieve the best compliance for no-crime decisions, particularly for decisions in respect of less frequent serious offences such as rape, allocated this responsibility to a small group of independent experts. By contrast, the forces that made the most seriously incorrect decisions did the opposite – no-crime decisions were made by individuals who were not independent of investigations and lacked the relevant knowledge.

Incorrect rape no-crime decision

A 13-year-old reported that she had been raped by an 18-year-old boy. The victim was unclear about some of the details of the crime. A full investigation was carried out. There were no witnesses, and no evidence was found to prove that the rape had happened. From the investigation notes it appeared the officers did not believe the victim and had for that reason no-crimed the report. Even though the crime had been well investigated, it should have remained recorded in the absence of information which established that it did not happen. To do otherwise implies that the victim is not believed.

> **FCR wrongly supporting a no-crime decision**
>
> A woman made a complaint of rape. She knew her attacker, and had had intimate relations (but not sexual intercourse) with him on at least one occasion in the past, when she had asked him to stop. On the day of the rape, she had been drunk and had been taken by her attacker for a walk to sober up. He took her into a wood and told her to take off some of her clothing, which she did. He then had sexual intercourse with her. She had told her attacker that she did not want to be there. There was some evidence that she was intimidated by her attacker.
>
> The police investigated both incidents, and failed to consider the effect of intoxication in impairing her ability to consent. Whilst they had initially recorded the incident as a rape, they no-crimed it on the basis that because she had taken some of her clothes off , she must be presumed to have consented to sexual intercourse, despite her insistence that she did not.
>
> Despite this, the force crime registrar agreed with the decision of the investigating officer that consent must be presumed. This is incorrect. Consent may not be presumed, particularly when the victim says she was unwilling. The fact that she took off some clothing when asked to do so is irrelevant.
>
> Investigators believed that because the victim had herself removed some of her clothing before sexual intercourse, she must have consented. This does not amount to additional verifiable information to determine, in accordance with the HOCR, that the reported offence did not happen. The incident should therefore have remained as a recorded crime.

7.74. Rape is one of the most serious offences that a victim can experience and that the police investigate. Failure to record these crimes, or to no-crime them incorrectly, badly lets down these victims and is of serious and material concern. In these cases, justice for both the victims and the community is denied.

Why is crime-recording going wrong?

7.75. We reviewed the 1,159 decisions where we thought a crime should have been recorded from an incident record. Our analysis of errors focused on those crimes reported by victims and first logged as incidents rather than crimes. We focused on this system for two reasons – first, because it accounts for the bulk of reports, and second, because the samples we took are statistically representative. This means that we can draw more reliable conclusions. Those drawn from other systems are less reliable for the reasons set out in our statistical methodology section in Annex A.

Reasons for crimes not correctly recorded (1,159 missed crimes reviewed)
Inadequate supervision is the main cause for crimes not being correctly recorded

Category	%	Sub-categories
Insufficient knowledge	21%	Another agency dealing / Misunderstanding of special aspects of HOCR / Multiple crimes not recorded
Inadequate supervision	51%	Supervisor's decision / No reason given for not recording / Unwarranted failure to record a crime
Victim disengages	16%	Victim disengages
Police disengage	12%	Police do not adequately follow up the victim's report / Police do not believe the victim

7.76. The majority of reasons for not recording a crime fell into three groups:

- **Inadequate supervision:** This accounts for about half the errors, with the main reason being unwarranted failures to record a crime. This is when a crime appears, from the incident record, to have occurred but an inadequate explanation to justify not recording is given. In these cases the police effectively decide that a crime did not occur. This accounts for almost a quarter of under-recorded crime. These errors are skewed toward burglary and criminal damage offences.

- **Insufficient knowledge:** Failures in the understanding of staff of specific aspects of the Home Office Counting Rules; these account for 21 percent of errors.

- **Disengagement by the police or the victim**: This accounts for over a quarter of the under-recorded crime. Seven percent of failures to record were due to the police disbelieving the victim when they should have recorded a crime. Our audit does not suggest any other obvious cause for disengagement. It could result either from victims or police officers not returning calls. Missed appointments can result in either party giving up. The data suggest that victims are more likely to be disbelieved in relation to particular types of crime – for instance sexual offences, robberies and burglaries.

7.77. In addition, there were too many instances where no reasons were recorded for decisions made; these account for 19 percent of errors. Similar error rates occur for each crime type.

Multiple crimes not recorded (ten percent of errors)

A group of four people assaulted the victim by beating and setting their dogs on him. A crime of assault was correctly recorded. During the incident, there were other calls from residents and passers-by, one of whom reported damage to his car. This second crime was not recorded but should have been as it involved a separate victim.

Victim not believed (six percent of errors)

The police received a call from a 90-year old woman reporting that her handbag had been stolen from her house. Her front door was broken and not closing properly. The police officer went to the house and described the lady as a bit confused. The handbag was not found and there was no credible evidence to say that it had not been stolen. There was no reason to disbelieve the victim and a crime of burglary should have been recorded, but was not.

> **No reason given for not recording (19 percent of errors)**
>
> A woman rang the police to say that a man on a motorbike had driven onto the pavement and tried to snatch the phone she was using out of her hand. He did not get the phone but had hit the victim's head quite hard. The police did not record a crime of attempted robbery. The record of the incident was closed with no explanation showing why a crime had not been recorded.

7.78.   Of the 37 reports of rape that were not recorded as crimes, the bulk of the causes of error, accounting for 22 of the reports, were due to poor supervision. Our analysis of these reports established that a supervisory officer, without adequate explanation, had wrongly decided that no crime should be recorded. This demonstrated that he did not comply with, or understand, the requirement to record the rape in accordance with the HOCR.

7.79.   Any failure to record adversely affects the accuracy of a force's understanding of crime, the intelligence held by the force and its ability to establish any offending pattern. Furthermore, a failure by police to record a rape denies justice and protection to the victim and the community as well as preventing the victim from accessing appropriate support and claiming compensation to which he or she is entitled.

Inadequate supervision

7.80.   The most striking aspect of our analysis is that most, if not all, of the errors in crime-recording could have been rectified by effective supervision. However, supervisors themselves do not always understand when a crime should be recorded. Where supervisors fail to identify errors at an early stage, these problems will only be identified by an audit process, by which time opportunites to provide the victim with justice and an effective service will have been lost.

7.81.   One test of the quality of supervision concerns incidents where a crime has been reported by a victim and the crime-recording rules require that a good reason is given not to record a crime. In many cases, there was no reason given for not recording a crime. Effective supervision should have identified and remedied this. The fact that a further quarter of the errors identified were due to unwarranted decisions not to record a crime underlines the weakness of the supervision of these decisions.

7.82. Day-to-day supervision of crime-recording is essential. These clear failings in the supervision of those who are making routine crime-recording decisions is unacceptable and must be put right if forces are to improve the service they provide to the public.

Recommendation 6:

Within six months, all forces should ensure that they have in place effective supervisory oversight of the making of crime-recording decisions to ensure compliance with the HOCR, whether those decisions are made by personnel in force control rooms and call-handling centres, or by members of specialist teams or officers or staff with routine contact with the public.

Insufficient knowledge

7.83. The need for intrusive supervision is reduced if officers and staff involved with the recording of crimes have a sound knowledge of what is required of them. We found a mixed picture. Nine forces were providing a good level of training for all staff, 26 forces were training their dedicated recording staff only, and eight were providing no training for any of their staff. As a result, frontline staff in 34 forces received no basic training whatsoever. Frontline staff, however, need to know only a few basic rules on whether, when and how a crime should be recorded. This could be achieved at a near-negligible cost.

Decision not to record a crime due to insufficient knowledge

A woman called the police during the night to report that she had heard noises. Someone was trying her patio door handle and the door lock was being scraped. She turned the light on and heard someone running away. She quite reasonably thought someone was intending to break into her house. The police arrived quickly but officers did not record a crime. They told her it was merely a suspicious act as they could not know what the offender had been intending to do. A crime of attempted burglary should have been recorded. The victim believed there had been an attempted burglary and there was no credible evidence to the contrary. Not knowing the intention of the offender is relevant only in deciding whether to charge him.

Recommendation 7:

Within six months, the College of Policing should establish standard training to be provided by each force and which will ensure that all officers and staff who are likely to record crimes or have supervision of crime-recording have a sound understanding of the relevant principles to be applied, and are periodically tested in that respect.

Recommendation 8:

Within nine months, the College of Policing should take the steps necessary to require candidates for the highest ranks in policing to know how to establish in their forces sound levels of competence in the proper application of the crime-recording rules by their officers and staff.

Monitoring and audit

7.84.   Problems in the initial stages of the process, resulting from either poor supervision or a lack of knowledge, should be picked up by effective monitoring and audit. All forces audit their crime records, but many do not prioritise which areas of crime are most likely to suffer from under-recording. Even where these local audits uncover problems, our inspection found the majority of forces did not act upon their findings.

7.85.   Good audits depend to a great extent on effective FCRs. However, our inspectors found that in some forces, the FCR had little influence and some material shortcomings in his knowledge or application of the crime-recording rules. FCRs are central to the management of crime-recording integrity within forces, yet there is no nationally agreed professional standard for this role. As a result, recruitment procedures vary and forces risk appointing the wrong people.

> **Features in forces where the FCR has little influence over crime-recording standards**
>
> Those FCRs who had little influence over crime-recording standards in forces were not involved in drafting and advising on force policies, had sporadic contact with senior commanders, did not have a process in place for dealing with referred decisions and were sometimes overruled when making crime-recording decisions. Some FCRs did not understand aspects of the HOCR. This was particularly the case when it came to understanding the level of information needed when making no-crime decisions on reports of rape. Here, we found widespread confusion and misunderstanding. Other FCRs did not have the capacity to put in place meaningful audits which would have given senior commanders accurate information on how well crime was being recorded.

Recommendation 9:

Within nine months, the College of Policing should establish a regime of training and national accreditation for force crime registrars. The national accreditation should be time-limited and force crime registrars should be required to renew it periodically. As soon as practicable thereafter, all forces should ensure that their force crime registrars have been duly trained and have acquired the national accreditation in question.

Recommendation 10:

Within six months, forces should establish and begin operation of sound arrangements for the conferment upon force crime registrars of sufficient independence and authority, so as to ensure that high standards of adherence to the HOCR and NCRS are attained and maintained. In particular, such arrangements should provide that force crime registrars:

(a) report directly to the deputy chief constable;

(b) have direct access to the chief constable; and

(c) are required periodically to report to the chief constable on crime-recording in the force.

Are the police massaging the crime figures?

7.86.   In our interim report we made the following comment:

> *"An inspection of this nature is not a criminal investigation. We cannot establish in every case what were the motives – if any – of a police officer who has wrongly failed to record a crime. However, in the light of what we have so far found – which could conceptually be contradicted by later results – it is difficult to conclude that none of these failures was the result of discreditable or unethical behaviour. The failure rate is too high. What is not possible is any measurement of this factor; that is beyond the scope of this work."*

7.87.   However, several witnesses stated to PASC that they had evidence of improper pressures leading to the misrecording of crime. We reviewed the evidence they gave to PASC and wrote to 20 of the witnesses who, from their submissions, appeared to have direct evidence of performance pressure adversely affecting crime-recording decisions. We asked them to provide us with any additional material they may have about the accuracy of crime-recording so that our inspectors could investigate the matter further. One responded and was interviewed, but failed to provide us with any substantive evidence of such improper performance pressures. A second responded by letter, but he too failed to provide any evidence to substantiate his allegations of wrongful manipulation of crime data.

7.88.   Another witness, a former officer of the Metropolitan Police, made elaborate assertions of highly improper practices in this respect; he was interviewed and asked to provide evidence to support what he said. He failed to produce any.

7.89.   As this issue has recently attracted much attention, we commissioned an online survey of police officers and staff (see page 44) to determine the extent and nature of the problem. The survey asked staff involved in the recording of a crime to provide their views on pressures to misrecord crime data. Over 17,000 responded, of whom over 8,600 said they had responsibility for making crime-recording decisions and 6,800 of these said they were police officers.

7.90.   Clearly, this is a self-selecting sample and therefore risks being biased. Consequently, the results must be treated with some caution. Officers and staff from four larger forces provided the greatest response.

Proportions of respondents who reported experiencing pressure compared with when this pressure was experienced
While most did not report experiencing performance pressures, the majority of those who did experienced it in the last year.
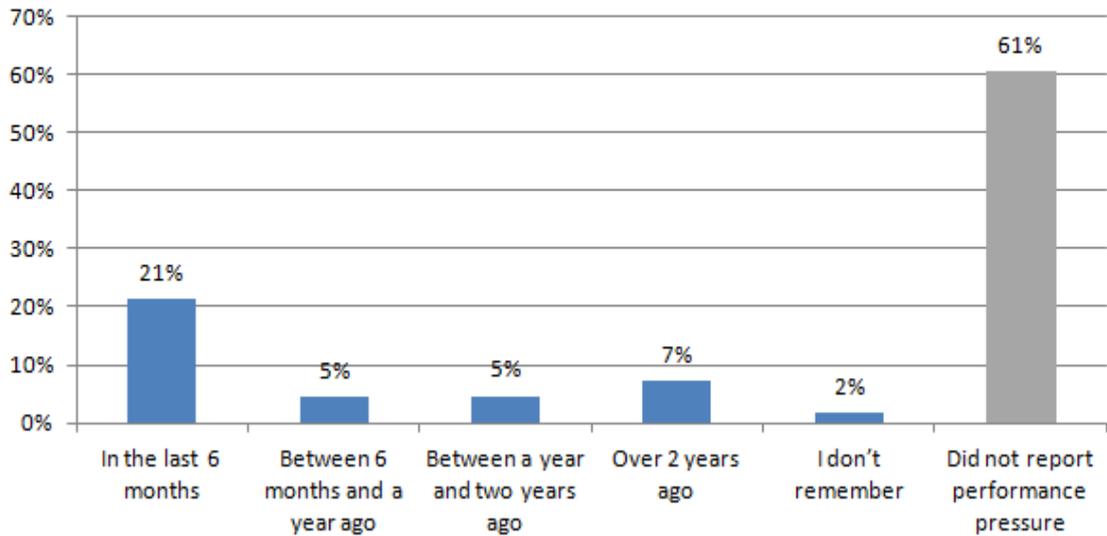
7.91.   The chart above illustrates that about a fifth of this self-selecting group reported pressures not to record a crime in the last six months. The following chart shows the main reasons to be local pressure from supervisors (such as sergeants and inspectors) not to record a crime or performance pressure from more senior managers.

Numbers of police officers and staff who said they experienced undue performance pressure in crime-recording
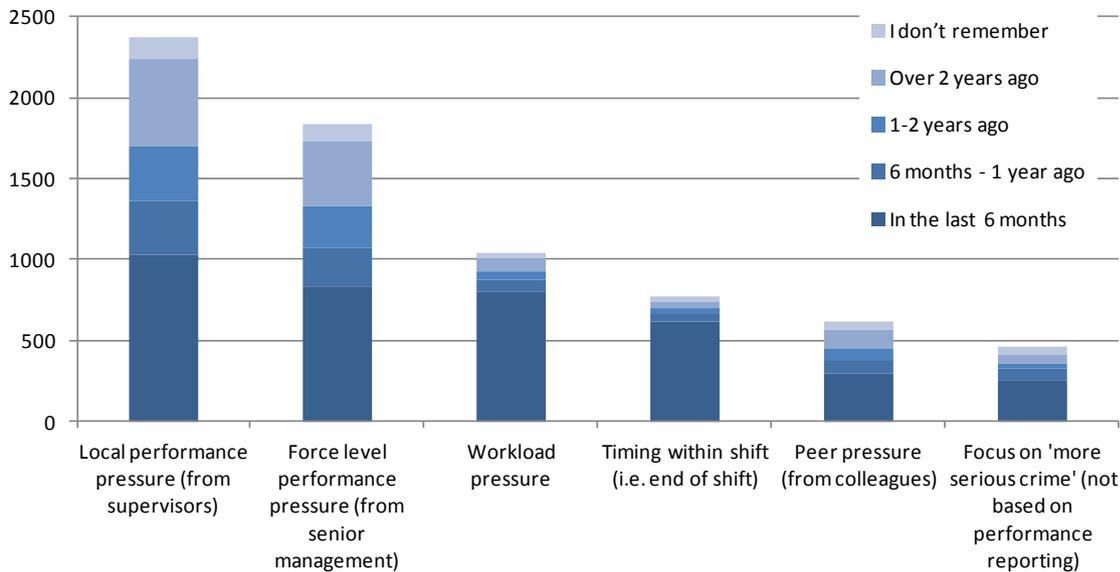
Notes:

Respondents were able to give multiple answers describing which pressures they had experienced; therefore the sum of all the data in the column chart is greater than the number of respondents.

These results cannot be taken to be representative of police officers and staff owing to the nature of the survey and the response rate from forces across England and Wales. They also reflect a subset of the full set of respondents to the survey. These results only include those who are directly involved in the recording or processing of crimes.

The survey itself risks being biased as it reflects a self-selecting sample (it may be that those with polarised views were most likely to respond).

7.92.   Even though these figures do not by any means constitute a representative sample, they do indicate that there remains an undercurrent of pressure not to record a crime across some forces. We have been told that the pressure comes from inspectors and officers of higher rank. Similar comments were made by FCRs at an HMIC workshop. These FCRs indicated that there remained a tier of middle managers whose approach to management rested mainly on targets, often self-imposed, which typically attempt to limit the number of crimes recorded.

7.93. There is a potential that increasing workload pressures will sharpen the incentives not to record a crime, especially for less serious crimes. People responding to the survey told us that this is happening. As the chart above illustrates, workload pressure is the next most likely reason for not recording a crime.

7.94. An appreciable proportion of respondents to our survey said they had experienced undue pressure being applied to their crime-recording decisions. During the fieldwork phase of the inspection we found: in one force, clear direction was given by a senior officer to investigate to record (see example below); in two forces, concern was expressed that crime-recording decisions may be driven by local performance pressure; and in two further forces, working practices, such as filtering of decisions to record a crime, suggested performance pressures were adversely affecting crime-recording accuracy. It was also widely acknowledged in many forces that performance pressures had existed in the recent past.

7.95. In contrast, many officers and staff to whom we spoke, however, told us their chief constables and line managers now continually emphasise the importance of accurate crime-recording. This was also supported by respondents to our staff survey, in which 73 percent stated that their chief officers encourage ethical activities, behaviours and professionalism.

7.96. Signs of performance pressure included:

- wrongful interference with crime-recording decisions by supervisors in investigative teams, in order to reduce the level of crime recorded;

- re-classifying: attempts to categorise crime incorrectly to meet a specific target; and

- disbelieving the victim: by attempting to disprove the victim's report or through investigating the report made by the victim before making a decision to record, commonly known as investigate-to-record. This is often used by officers as a reason not to record a crime.

Wrongful interference with crime-recording decisions

In one force, each report of rape received by the unit responsible for recording and managing crimes committed against vulnerable victims was reviewed by a detective sergeant before deciding whether it should be recorded as a rape, a different crime or no crime at all. In a recent internal audit, the force found nine rapes which were not recorded. The force has now put in place measures to ensure crime is recorded properly at the first opportunity.

Re-classifying from a serious crime to a less serious crime

A young woman was punched and kicked and her new trainers and house keys were taken from her. The crime was recorded correctly as a robbery by the initial reporting officer. Later, the investigating officer decided that her shoes had probably fallen off and had been lost so the crime was reclassified as an assault. There was no justification for this. The theft of the house keys was not addressed in this reclassification.

Investigating to record

In one force, an assistant chief constable (ACC) sent an email to all staff. The message expressed concern that the numbers of serious acquisitive crime (SAC), such as burglary and robbery, were too high. The force had prioritised SAC as a reduction target. The direction given by the ACC was that instead of recording crimes when reported, they should be investigated first and then recorded. Further, he said that victims of vehicle crime should be visited first before a decision to record a crime was made. The message was clear: by investigating to record, numbers of crimes, particularly SAC, would be reduced.

This policy had allowed staff to believe that they had latitude in what they decided to record. In some cases, the policy was interpreted as meaning that officers only needed to record what was, in their opinion, strictly necessary. It had resulted in victims not being believed when they reported crimes, and even discredited. Not all crimes that should have been recorded were recorded.

Pressure to improve performance

In one force, there was substantial evidence of performance pressure influencing decisions on whether or not to record crimes. Local performance targets were linked to crime reduction, middle managers and frontline supervisors were competing over crime performance, and officers were feeling under subtle pressure to keep within targets. These deeply entrenched behaviours led to victims not being believed and officers investigating whether to record a crime instead of recording the crime and then investigating it. Again, crimes were going unrecorded.

7.97. This section has highlighted the main problems encountered by forces in crime-recording which can at the very least adversely affect a victim's confidence in the police, and at worst can result in rapes or other serious crimes not being investigated.

7.98. The worst forces experience all of these problems and others have a mixture of each. Although reprehensible, this is not surprising. The above issues have been well documented in the past, for example, in 2005 by the Audit Commission. In its report, it said that in some forces, performance targets had focused on crime reduction and detection to the exclusion of data quality.[55]

7.99. Despite previous audit reports into police crime-recording, lasting change has not occurred. In the past, there have been short-term injections of effort as a response to external audit, sometimes pushing against a tide of targets, performance-related pay and league tables. Even in the absence of central targets, crime-recording accuracy, when compared to the CSEW, continued to deteriorate until very recently. Previous attempts to resolve issues identified in audit have clearly been unsuccessul and have not addressed the underlying weaknesses that exist, these being mainly:

- conflicting incentives for police officers;

- poor knowledge and supervision; and

- patchy monitoring and audit made worse in places by a weak FCR.

How do forces improve crime-recording integrity?

7.100. Our local inspection reports highlight areas of good ways of working (as well as bad) in each force. A handful of forces stood out from the rest. These share a number of characteristics which could contribute to a long-term and lasting solution to poor crime data integrity. No single force in this group has all the answers in place or is necessarily working properly. Changes take time, especially those which are counter-cultural.

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[55] *Crime-recording 2005 - Improving the quality of crime records in police authorities and forces in England and Wales*, Audit Commission, London, June 2006 www.archive.audit-commission.gov.uk

7.101. The general approach of these more successful forces is worth sharing for two reasons; because the solutions they are implementing convincingly address the most pressing problems highlighted in this report, and because they are not ideas from the drawing board which have not yet been put into practice. They are being implemented; mistakes are being made and lessons are being learned. Other forces will therefore be able to avoid similar pitfalls.

7.102. These forces are Kent, Staffordshire, Lincolnshire, South Wales and West Midlands. Three inter-related factors set these forces apart; they have:

- simplified their crime-recording arrangements;

- put in place effective and appropriate training for staff; and

- leadership which is supportive of the necessary change.

Simplify crime-recording arrangements

7.103. The crime-recording process starts in most cases with a report of an incident to a force's call-handling centre. In a typical force, many incidents are not recorded as crimes until an officer has visited the victim and decided whether or not a crime has occurred. But as we have shown above (paragraph 7.75), 28 percent of the causes of poor recording are due to disengagement either by the victim or the police (paragraph 7.70). This means that crimes that should, and could, have been recorded at the point the incident was first reported, in accordance with the HOCR, are going unrecorded.

7.104. Furthermore, we also show that insufficient knowledge and inadequate supervision of police officers is another major source of errors; 72 percent of errors are attributable to these reasons. Forces' own monitoring and audit arrangements should have identified these problems, but our audit revealed weaknesses among some force crime registrars, including a few whose independence as the force crime-recording expert was open to question.

7.105. An effective FCR must be independent from any responsibility for force performance and given the visible support of the chief officer responsible for crime data integrity. This will prevent any suggestion of performance pressure affecting their decisions. Their line of management must also sit outside that for crime performance. They must be, and be seen to be, independent, and work to a member of the chief officer team.

7.106. Where crime-recording is the responsibility of large number of officers and staff, forces will find it much harder to avoid errors. Within such a system, good managers who want to do the right thing will always try to find a way around loose and poorly designed controls, but they will be swimming

against the tide. Valuable time will be spent making corrections, with less time available to change individual behaviour. These avoidable errors will be further exacerbated in those forces which have a weak FCR whose independence is open to question.

7.107. A system designed to minimise errors and assign clear responsibilty for crime-recording is needed. To acheive this, forces need to decide, and to be clear about, who is best placed to record a crime. At present, the correct recording of a crime is often a task carried out jointly between police officers, who decide if a crime needs recording, and dedicated staff who have responsibility for ensuring reported incidents of crime (on an incident record) are recorded as crimes by officers.

7.108. Often the incident record will simply be updated with what the officer says – if no crime record is requested or created by the officer, then no crime is recorded. Policy documents suggest that responsibility for ensuring crimes (reported as part of an incident) are recorded rests with the staff managing the incident record, but in reality it is the investigating officer who makes the decision. This problem came to light at Kent Police; the force responded with improved training and better supervision.

7.109. There are many instances where sufficient information to create a crime record can be gathered at the outset from the victim making the call. Our inspection found that the details obtained by call-handlers were more often than not sufficient to make a crime-recording decision at that early stage. However, forces do have the option to use the 72-hour time limit made available by the HOCR before making a crime-recording decision; in most cases this is not necessary. It is accepted that some reports, either owing to their urgency or to difficulties in communicating with the victim, require officer attendance or further detail before the crime-recording decision can be made, but many do not.

Recommendation 11:

Immediately, forces should ensure that, in crime-recording:

(a) the presumption that the victim should always be believed is institutionalised;

(b) all reports of crime are recorded as crimes at the earliest possible opportunity;

(c) decisions to record crime are not subject to undue operational or performance pressures; and

(d) practices such as investigate-to-record (where the recording of a crime is delayed until after an initial investigation of the complaint) are discontinued.

Recommendation 12:

> **Within six months, the Home Office should amend the HOCR so as to abolish the latitude available to forces of not recording a crime for up to 72 hours after the initial report or complaint.**

7.110. To ensure a simplified approach to crime-recording, there needs to be:

- an integrated computer system where all force databases can automatically exchange information to facilitate effective incident and crime-recording;

- processes which enable crime-recording at the earliest possible opportunity;

- sufficient call-handling and specialist crime-recording staff with clearly defined responsibilities for crime-recording decisions, and the necessary knowledge of the crime-recording rules;

- well trained and knowledgeable officers and staff; and

- effective supervisors on hand with the right knowledge and sufficient capacity to oversee crime-recording decisions.

7.111. Such an approach would significantly reduce the sources of error, improve public trust in crime-recording, provide a better service to the victim and enable officers to concentrate on their investigative responsibilities and other duties.

7.112. In addition, the process will be more efficient due to:

- expertise focused on a few people who deal with significantly more decisions, compared to the situation where frontline police officers are required to decide whether to record a crime;

- a reduction in the investment required to rectify errors; and

- a reduction in the extent to which audit and inspection are required.

Target training on the right people and areas of risk

7.113.   Sound knowledge of the basic elements of the HOCR is still required by staff dealing with victims of crime. These include front counter staff and control room operators as well as police officers – in particular those working in specialist fields who receive reports of crime outside the central operating arrangements. However, an understanding of all 410 pages of the HOCR, including 362 pages of detailed examples and guidance, is not required. Only the information from about six pages of the HOCR is required and this could be summarised in a short, practical guide.

7.114.   Specialist staff with responsibility for ensuring crimes are correctly recorded and for managing and filing crime records should know the general rules section of the HOCR and have a basic understanding of the remaining sections. Only the FCR and his team need detailed knowledge of all aspects of the HOCR. The national policing lead for crime statistics and the College of Policing are developing nationally accredited training for crime registrars and their deputies (see recommendation at paragraph 7.85).

7.115.   One of the risks of concentrating the bulk of crime-recording decisions among a smaller group of staff in a crime-recording centre is that repeated errors occur if some knowledge of the HOCR is lacking within this group. This was the experience of South Wales Police when they introduced a crime-recording system of the kind described above (see paragraph 7.110). While call-handlers initially experienced a large increase in workload, now, several months later, the main problems are being overcome as staff become more familiar with the processes. At first, the recording of crime took too long and crime records were created when they should not have been.

7.116.   South Wales Police monitored the timeliness and accuracy of its initial crime-recording decisions during the implementation of its new approach. In the early stages of the change programme, the force established that errors were being made, leading to an over-recording of crime. This resulted in the need for more no-crime decisions after further investigation. This can be seen in the next chart which illustrates the no-crime rates for all crime reaching almost 10 percent for crimes classified between 15 and 30 minutes of reporting. The graph also indicates the main cause of the problem: the recording of violent crimes. No-crime rates for violence with injury and public order offences peaked at 28 percent and 22 percent respectively.

Percentage of crimes that were later no-crimed compared with time taken to record.
Crimes recorded more quickly were more likely to be no-crimed. The crime categories of violence without injury and public order were the most problematic.
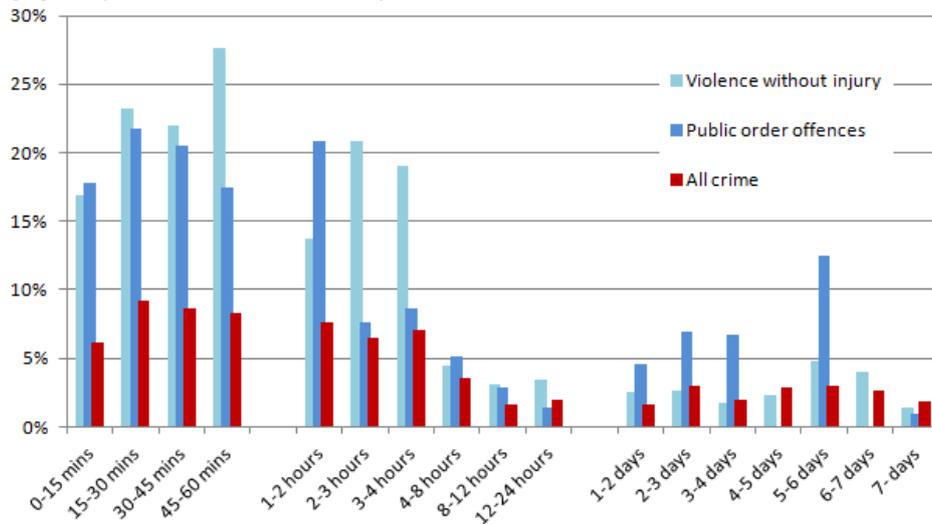
7.117. Effective monitoring and performance information has meant that South Wales Police has identified this problem and has been able to provide targeted training to improve the accuracy of initial crime-recording decisions. This smaller group of staff who make the crime-recording decisions now record 45 percent of all crimes within 30 minutes of the victim contacting police.

Lead and support the need for change

7.118. Few of the changes we have articulated will be achieved without committed leadership. Only the chief constable has the authority to redesign systems, alter structure and change responsibilities. Important as these factors are, however, their effect is blunted unless the purpose and need for change is communicated in unequivocal terms to the force by the entire leadership team. Leaders must believe it is the right thing to do to bring benefits for victims and the wider public. If there are legitimate concerns about the rules and standards they need to be resolved, not discredited.

7.119. Members of the leadership team cannot individually change the behaviour of each officer and member of staff. Most realise that policy statements issued from a force headquarters are not, on their own sufficient to enable change – that much is clear from the results of our survey of officers and staff. Any substantive change in policy will need to be underpinned by effective implementation plans and the establishment of arrangements to ensure that the change is enduring. In those forces which have already responded to our inspection, change teams have been established to co-ordinate activity. Two important considerations for leaders as part of this process are to ensure they:

- create the right working environment; and

- measure effectively whether their expectations are being met.

7.120. Effective leadership creates an environment where a positive workplace culture can flourish. From the experience of forces making the necessary changes to improve working practices, this first phase is the hardest; new expectations are challenged by others who regard the changes as a threat to their own authority. People need reassurance during times of change and this means senior managers must ensure they are visible to the workforce and give consistent messages, reinforced at every suitable opportunity, especially to those at the frontline. It also means, as Kent Police discovered, making sure that those charged with the responsibility to make crime-recording decisions at the centre properly discharge that responsibility.

7.121. Measurement of how behaviours have altered is essential to assess whether the environment in which people are working has changed as expected. Those measures form the basis for holding people to account, identifying problems and acting on them. Our survey of officers and staff, the discussions we have held with FCRs, and this inspection found that some middle managers could act as a barrier to change. Every force will have some middle managers of this type, but the better forces tackle these behaviours by completing regular audits. They produce regular performance information which can be monitored by senior leaders to gauge force-wide behaviour, with the best forces doing this even at team and individual levels. These audit reports cover areas such as:

- the numbers of incidents thought to be crimes compared with those which were actually classified as a crime (by crime type and business unit);

- no-crime rates by crime type;

- re-classification rates by crime type; and

- timeliness of recording decisions.

7.122. In the most effective forces, this monitoring information, alongside crime-recording audit reports, is considered and acted upon by the chief officer responsible for crime-recording. Chief officers leading change will want to ensure that they have in place the necessary arrangements to enable effective oversight of crime-recording. They need to fully understand all the routes by which crime is reported in their force and how well it is done through each. Regular meetings between the chief officer lead for crime-recording and the FCR, together with the lead for performance management and the head of the force control room, will enable effective monitoring. By

bringing together the results of audit for comparrison with performance data, issues and risks can be identified and addressed. Chief officers can then have confidence that they fully understand how well their force is performing and take steps to ensure the public get the service they deserve.

7.123. The section above has described how forces could improve the integrity of their crime-recording. We have identified the forces that have introduced a more simplified approach to crime-recording, provided relevant staff with the right skills and shown effective leadership. These forces have shown greater accuracy in their crime-recording. It is essential that other forces learn from their experience and improve the service they provide to victims of crime.

Recommendation 13:

Within three months, the national policing lead for crime statistics should draw up an action plan in respect of the findings of this report. The action plan should provide for the development of clear guidance, based on best practice, to facilitate the improvement by chief constables of the integrity of crime-recording in their forces.

Summary of recommendations

Recommendation 1

Within six months, the Home Office should revise the guidance in the NCRS and HOCR to clarify the circumstances in which a crime must be recorded when reported by a person other than the victim. In particular, the guidance should be amended to make clear that reports of crime by professionals such as doctors, teachers, health workers and social services, when acting in their professional capacities, should always be regarded as acting on behalf of the victim, and so reports of crimes made by such people should be recorded as crimes, and that this should be done irrespective of whether or not the victim confirms that a crime has been committed.

[paragraph 7.33]

Recommendation 2

Within six months, the Home Office should revise the guidance in the HOCR in relation to the accountability and responsibility for the making of all no-crime decisions, so as to require that the authority to make a no-crime decision is vested in and confined to persons who are independent of investigations, properly trained for the role, and subject to direct oversight by the force crime registrar. In the case of rape, the HOCR should be amended to provide that only the FCR has the authority to make a no-crime decision.

[paragraph 7.56]

Recommendation 3

Within three months, the Home Office should amend the HOCR guidance to require that in cases where a no-crime decision has been made, the victim must always be informed in a timely manner and a record to that effect should be made.

[paragraph 7.59]

Recommendation 4

Within three months, all forces should ensure that:

- in cases of out-of-court disposals where there is a victim, they consult the victim before making the decision to issue or effect the disposal, and make a record that they have done so; and

- on every occasion when the making of an out-of-court disposal is under consideration, the previous offending history of the offender is checked to ensure the offender is eligible for the disposal in question, and make a record that this has been done.

[paragraph 7.68]

Recommendation 5

Immediately, all forces should ensure their auditing procedures in respect of reports of serious sexual offences, including rapes, are sound.

[paragraph 7.70]

Recommendation 6

Within six months, all forces should ensure that they have in place effective supervisory oversight of the making of crime-recording decisions to ensure compliance with the HOCR, whether those decisions are made by personnel in force control rooms and call-handling centres, or by members of specialist teams or officers or staff with routine contact with the public.

[paragraph 7.82]

Recommendation 7

Within six months, the College of Policing should establish standard training to be provided by each force and which will ensure that all officers and staff who are likely to record crimes or have supervision of crime-recording have a sound understanding of the relevant principles to be applied, and are periodically tested in that respect.

[paragraph 7.83]

Recommendation 8

Within nine months, the College of Policing should take the steps necessary to require candidates for the highest ranks in policing to know how to establish in their forces sound levels of competence in the proper application of the crime-recording rules by their officers and staff.

[paragraph 7.83]

Recommendation 9

Within nine months, the College of Policing should establish a regime of training and national accreditation for force crime registrars. The national accreditation should be time-limited and force crime registrars should be required to renew it periodically. As soon as practicable thereafter, all forces should ensure that their force crime registrars have been duly trained and have acquired the national accreditation in question.

[paragraph 7.85]

Recommendation 10

Within six months, forces should establish and begin operation of sound arrangements for the conferment upon force crime registrars of sufficient independence and authority, so as to ensure that high standards of adherence to the HOCR and NCRS are attained and maintained. In particular, such arrangements should provide that force crime registrars:

   a) report directly to the deputy chief constable;

   b) have direct access to the chief constable; and

   c) are required periodically to report to the chief constable on crime-recording in the force.

[paragraph 7.85]

Recommendation 11

Immediately, forces should ensure that, in crime-recording:

   a) the presumption that the victim should always be believed is institutionalised;

   b) all reports of crime are recorded as crimes at the earliest possible opportunity;

   c) decisions to record crime are not subject to undue operational or performance pressures; and

   d) practices such as investigate-to-record (where the recording of a crime is delayed until after an initial investigation of the complaint) are discontinued.

[paragraph 7.109]

Recommendation 12

Within six months, the Home Office should amend the HOCR so as to abolish the latitude available to forces of not recording a crime for up to 72 hours after the initial report or complaint.

[paragraph 7.109]

Recommendation 13

Within three months, the national policing lead for crime statistics should draw up an action plan in respect of the findings of this report. The action plan should provide for the development of clear guidance, based on best practice, to facilitate the improvement by chief constables of the integrity of crime-recording in their forces.

[paragraph 7.123]

Next Steps

8.1.   We have made recommendations in this report which we believe will, if they are implemented, substantially improve the accuracy of police crime-recording.

8.2.   Accuracy and integrity in the recording of crime by the police is, as we have emphasised at a number of points in this report, of crucial importance in ensuring that victims of crime are properly treated; in the pursuit of offenders; in public confidence in what is said about the state of crime and disorder in this country; in the ability of police and crime commissioners to hold the police to account; and in the effective use of the substantial public resources which are spent on policing and the criminal justice system.

8.3.   Given the importance of the subject, we intend to monitor on a regular basis the extent to which our recommendations have been implemented.

8.4.   To this end we will include scrutiny of crime data integrity as part of our annual assessment of the efficiency, effectiveness and legitimacy of each police force.

Annex A

Methodology for the national audit

The Home Office provides national standards for the recording and counting of notifiable offences by police forces in England and Wales (referred to as 'police-recorded crime' or PRC). These standards are known as the Home Office Counting Rules for Recorded Crime (commonly referred to as HOCR). The rules were complemented in April 2002 by the National Crime Recording Standard (NCRS). And this additional standard received the full support of chief constables.

One of the main purposes of the NCRS is to improve the consistency of recording a crime reported by a victim or his representative. Once a report is confirmed, forces must record the crime formally by applying the NCRS balance of probability test unless there is credible evidence to the contrary. Clearly, a force's ability to record these details properly makes for a system that can be audited more easily, whether the system is audited by HMIC or the force.

Aim of the audit

The CDI audit aimed to measure the national rate of compliance of police-recorded crime against these national standards (HOCR and NCRS). Based on a representative sample of records as reported by the victim that appear to be crimes, the compliance rate was calculated as the proportion of crimes that were correctly recorded as a crime, compared with the total that should have been recorded as a crime. Crimes correctly identified as such but assigned to the wrong offence classification were also audited.

Alongside our calculation of the national average compliance rate, we also calculated the compliance rate of specific crime types at a national level.[56] These figures showed how rates vary by these crime types and helped to avoid any misinterpretation that the same compliance rate applies to different crime types.

We did not intend to make judgments about individual forces' crime-recording arrangements based on compliance rates alone because the sample sizes were too small to achieve an acceptable level of precision (within +/-5%). The cost of obtaining sufficient sample sizes to distinguish between forces was unaffordable.

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[56] Covers the 43 police forces in England and Wales, but excludes the British Transport Police.

At force level, our inspections were based on a qualitative assessment of local recording arrangements. This covered:

- leadership and governance

- systems and processes

- people and skills

- quality of service provided to the victim.

We may use the national sampling data as part of a force inspection, but only if this is supported by other qualitative assessments of the force's crime-recording arrangements.

The national audit did not examine:

- Non-crimes that were wrongly recorded as crimes. These make up a small percentage of cases.[57]

- Fraud offences. Action Fraud (a public body) has taken responsibility for recording fraud reported by victims in all police force areas, although when this transfer took place varied between forces.

- Out-of-court disposals which were examined as part of the local force inspections.

Time period the sample will cover

The sample was drawn from the same 12-month period for all forces and provided a long enough period to measure accuracy of recording. The 12 months to 31 October 2013 were chosen as this accommodated HMIC's crime record route analysis in December 2013 (described in more detail below), and to audit in a period before the inspection was announced.[58] However, the force-level inspections took account of changes in arrangements by the force since the samples were taken.

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[57] From over 300 incidents examined as part of an inspection into Kent crime-recording (2013), only 1 crime was recorded when it should not have been. This case was a technical failure, where a victim-based crime had been recorded, but there was no victim confirmation so it should have remained a crime-related incident (CRI). Further work by HMIC found that from a sample of almost 3,000 incidents from eight forces, there were no cases of over-recorded crime.

[58] To reduce the 'Hawthorne effect' - where individuals or groups change their behaviour in response to being observed.

Population to be examined

Our aim was to draw as representative a sample as possible, irrespective of the ways in which different forces record different crimes. However, the routes by which different crimes come into forces' recording systems vary. The majority enter via the incident-recording IT system, but many come by other routes such as reporting at a front desk in a police station or to specialist units (e.g. the reporting of a rape). The possibility of bias would arise if, in drawing our samples, we had failed to take sufficient account of differences in recording arrangements in individual forces.

To test for this risk, workshops were held with each force to identify the proportions of different crimes notified by different reporting routes. The results were validated by crime type against the force's recorded crime figures uploaded onto the Home Office database.[59] Validation identified that of the 43 forces, 40 provided figures which were broadly in line with those on the Home Office database. The remaining forces provided snapshots of data covering part of the 12-month period. This was mainly due to changes in these forces' IT systems which made it difficult to provide a full set of data. The figures from these forces were scaled up to estimate 12-month outputs, and were accepted as similar to those figures on the Home Office database.

The results of the crime record route analysis indicated that 92 percent[60] of crime that is recorded (excluding fraud) came from a route that can be audited across all forces. These were crimes reported through police control rooms, directly to crime-recording centres, or both. The sample population of the audit was therefore based on incidents drawn from these auditable routes.[61]

Of the remainder, one percent came from specialist routes which included public protection and rape counselling units. The other seven percent came from a variety of routes, such as reports by a member of the public to an officer on foot patrol or at the front desk of a police station. As far as is practical, these other routes were assessed through local inspection.

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[59] The Annual Data Requirement 111-114 (a statutory requirement of forces to provide this data to the Home Secretary under the Police Act 1996) covers the provisions of aggregated monthly data on police-recorded crime.

[60] These figures are for all recorded crime (excluding fraud); for the crime types these figures varied from 86 percent for robbery and sexual offences, to 97 percent for burglary.

[61] All 43 forces were asked to provide HMIC with their incident, and where applicable, their directly-recorded crime system, data for the 12 months ending 31 October 2013. Although Humberside recorded crime via an incident and directly-recorded crime system, it was unable to provide complete data from its directly-recorded crime system. An estimation process was used to account for these missing values.

Selection of crime types

To establish a comparable set of crime types to be audited, a review was conducted of each force's opening incident codes. As we expected, some forces could provide more detail than others. The Metropolitan Police Service, for instance, has 16 opening incident codes, whereas Essex has more than 200 opening codes. However, we were able to identify a number of common opening codes sharing the same crime classifications:

- violence (with or without injury)

- sexual offences (including rape)

- robbery

- burglary

- criminal damage

- other offences (excluding fraud) – this is a residual category of everything except the previous five categories and fraud.

Rape cases were separately audited via a dip-sample[62] as the numbers were too small to produce robust statistical outputs. Based on the 12 months ending 31 October 2013, rape made up less than 1 percent of all recorded crime, excluding fraud. Forces adopted different approaches to receiving reports of rape which included specialist units, and therefore the standard audit approach was not sufficient to provide a full picture of rape recording accuracy.

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[62] A dip-sample is a selection of records chosen to provide indicative rather than statistically robust evidence.

Sampling technique

Our sampling technique was designed to provide auditors with sufficient records to test the accuracy of the individual crime types (listed above) with a similar level of confidence. The most efficient way to achieve this was to take a disproportionate stratified sample.[63],[64] There were two reasons for our decision:

The six crime types (violence, sexual offences, robbery, burglary, criminal damage and other offences) varied in size. Robbery and sexual offences each account for about 2 percent of recorded crime, whereas violence accounts for about 17 percent. The smaller sub-groups were selected with a higher sampling fraction than the other sub-groups to ensure a larger number of them are in the final sample. This allowed a better statistical comparison to be made.

Part of the audit aimed to look at a dip-sample of rape records to provide indicative results. By having a disproportionate sample of sexual offences (i.e., the sample is larger than if a proportionate approach had been taken) it is more likely that these will include more rape offences.

To ensure estimates were not skewed, the samples of the six crime types were weighted to reflect the differential sampling probabilities.

Sample size and confidence interval

We applied the 95 percent confidence level as the generally accepted level of certainty used in statistical tests. Any sample may produce estimates that differ from the figures that would have been obtained if the whole population had been examined. At the 95 percent confidence level, with many repeats of an audit under the same conditions we expect the confidence interval would contain the true population value 95 times out of 100.

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[63] A sampling method in which the sample size for a particular group is not proportional to the relative size of the total.

[64] The examination of records involved listening to calls. These could range in length from 2 minutes to over 45 minutes. For each force, the minimum number of records required for stratification purposes was examined. In some cases there was time to review additional records. This provided more indicative evidence about force recording. These records were weighted accordingly.

The audit aimed to select a random sample size necessary to yield confidence intervals[65] of no more than +/- 3 percentage points for all crimes and +/- 5 percentage points for individual crime types (at the 95 percent confidence level) at the national level. To achieve the appropriate sample size of incidents requires a prior assumption of the accuracy of forces' recording.

Our prior assumption was based on HMIC's 2012 inspection of 12 forces' recorded crime figures, together with results from a similar inspection of Kent[66] in April 2013. From this evidence, we adopted a conservative assumption that 75 percent of classifications were correct and this suggests a sample of around 6,000 crimes[67] across the six crime types (at the 95 percent confidence level) will be examined.

The crime-recording figure presented from the audit inspection was based on a representative sample of records from incidents and directly-recorded crime systems. Based on work conducted by HMIC, these were found to account for about 92 percent of known police recording. Indicative evidence from a dip-sample of records taken from the other recording systems suggests that the recording of crimes is worse than the national average. Therefore, the results may overstate the actual level of compliance if these other sources could have been audited.

Sample selection

Not all incidents generate a notifiable crime. Evidence from previous HMIC crime-recording audits suggests the ratio between incidents opened with the 'all crime' crime code is 1.5 incidents to each crime. For example, if there were 300 incidents opened with a crime opening code, this may yield 200 notifiable crimes. This ratio varies by the type of crime (it may be higher or lower) and risks some under or over-sampling. To reduce this risk, a ratio of 1.5 will be applied to all crime types, with an additional 10 percent of records being chosen to guard against crime types which may have a higher ratio. However, we will review the outputs after the first group of forces has been audited and, where necessary, adjust the sampling fractions.

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[65] The confidence interval provides an estimated range of values within which the given population being examined is likely to fall. For example, if an audit found that 85 percent of crimes were correctly recorded with a confidence interval of +/- 3 percent, then we could be confident that between 82 percent and 88 percent of crimes were correctly recorded of the population for the period being examined.

[66] *Crime-recording in Kent - A report commissioned by the Police and Crime Commissioner for Kent*, HMIC, June 2013.

[67] This figure is the number of crimes that should have been recorded based on HMIC's auditors' assessment in accordance with the Home Office Counting Rules.

A sample was taken from the list of records that each force provides to HMIC for the 12-month period to 31 October 2013. These lists will contain entries such as the unique reference ID, the date the record was raised and the crime type opening and closing code. Duplicate records were removed along with other ineligible records (e.g. fraud offences).

The sample used the opening codes as they included incidents[68] which were closed incorrectly but may contain crimes. Take, for example, a call from a victim of burglary which is opened on the incident-recording system as a burglary; the incident record contains enough information to record a burglary, but is then closed incorrectly as a suspicious incident. Were we to have drawn our sample from closing crime codes (rather than opening incident codes), this burglary would have been missed because it was not closed as a crime. Of course, if the situation were reversed – opening incident code 'suspicious incident' and closing code 'burglary' – then the nature of the risk is similar, but based on previous experience, we judge that the scale of the risk is smaller.

The selected sample from each force was grouped into the month the record was raised, and a random record was selected from each month. Therefore, the first 12 records contain a randomised record from each month.

Audit quality and validation

The quality of audit decisions depends on the knowledge, experience and skills of the auditors. All auditors were required to attend a three-day Home Office Counting Rules and Crime Data Integrity course provided by HMIC's specialist staff. The training was overseen by the national crime registrar who attended some of the courses and validated the course content. We also reviewed the variation between auditors during the course of the audit.

Monitoring quality during the audit program

To ensure consistency, the results of each audit were subject to peer review by an expert outside the audit team. In addition, forces could review our decisions. We resolved any issues with the force in the first instance, but if no agreement could be reached, then the matter was passed to the HMIC's senior reporting officer for consideration in consultation with the national crime registrar. The ultimate decision on disputed cases rested with HMIC's senior reporting officer for the CDI inspection.

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[68] Assigning incidents to crime may be done on incomplete or uncertain information. Therefore the accuracy rate must be viewed as an estimate.

Gaps in knowledge

The methodology for the crime data audit was designed to provide the best evidence that could be gathered in the time and with the resources available. However, there are some gaps which are likely to account for a small proportion of crimes and which are more difficult to audit. One issue in particular attracted our attention: whether some anti-social behaviour incidents were miscoded as crime incidents.

To estimate the probability of such an occurrence, we analysed the relevant data from our 2012 audit. This rough estimate suggested that only about three percent of ASB incidents should have been recorded as crimes. While we would have preferred to review this issue in more depth this year, the larger samples involved for these apparently rare occurrences could not be accommodated. Instead, we intend to review this issue in the future.

Officer and staff survey methodology

As part of HMIC's inspections into the integrity of the service and of crime data, a survey was designed (for both inspections together) to gather the views of police officers and police staff in these areas.

HMIC hosted the online survey between 31 July 2014 and 31 August 2014 which was based on questions developed with the service and relating to the criteria for both inspections. The survey was web-based, accessible via a link sent from HMIC to all police forces in England and Wales and the Police Federation of England and Wales. These bodies then disseminated the survey to serving officers, staff, PCSO and special constables. HMIC monitored the number of respondents and where forces were not being represented, HMIC made further requests of them to encourage staff to respond to the survey.

Excluding respondents who stated that they were not working for a police force in England and Wales, HMIC received over 17,000 responses. HMIC is delighted with the uptake from the majority of police forces with 8 percent of the service offering us their views.

While not a statistically robust or representative survey, the data presented are what we have been told first-hand by people working within the police service, providing an insight on what they feel is happening now.

Given that the survey was not designed to be statistically significant, the following need to be considered when considering the results:

- the respondents self-selected their participation. There is a risk that those with biased opinions feature disproportionately.

- HMIC does not know how the survey was promoted by forces and to whom it was sent.

- Response rates varied greatly between forces (from between 0.3 percent and 36 percent of the workforce).

Annex B

Terms of reference

Background

As part of our 2013/14 inspection programme, HMIC was commissioned by the Home Secretary to undertake inspections within all Home Office police forces to answer the question:

"To what extent can police-recorded crime information be trusted?"

HM Chief Inspector of Constabulary has confirmed this commitment to the Home Affairs Select Committee.[69]

HMIC understands that forces can only record what is reported to them (although they should actively work to encourage reporting of crime) and that reporting rates vary between crime types. We also know that new crime types emerge. However, reported crime is an important part of the overall picture and sound recording ensures:

- the police can plan their work to achieve the best outcomes for victims and
  communities;

- the public, government, local policing bodies and HMIC have an accurate
  picture of crime and anti-social behaviour (ASB) in a particular area; and

- the victims of crime and ASB are provided with appropriate access to victim
  services.

Scope

The desired outcome of the inspection is an improvement in police recording of crime data, leading to increased public trust in police-recorded crime information.

This inspection examined not only how well the HOCR are applied by forces, but also the culture and behaviours around crime-recording, and the service the police provide to victims. At the heart of the inspection were the interests of victims; these were explored through follow-up telephone calls to some victims where crimes were not recorded.

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[69] Home Affairs Select Committee (HASC) meeting 14 May 2013.

The inspection looked at crimes which, when repeated, cause significant harm to the community, such as criminal damage or other crimes relating to anti-social behaviour, and also considered the appropriateness of crime outcomes, including cautions, Penalty Notices for Disorder, cannabis warnings and community resolutions. This inspection also reviewed standards concerning decisions taken to no-crime (not count) a crime that has already been recorded.

The scope of this inspection included all 43 Home Office forces. At their request, inspections were also completed of the British Transport Police and Police Service of Northern Ireland; however we only report on the 43 Home Office forces of England and Wales within this report. It does not include the National Crime Agency, any other non-Home Office forces, or forces of Crown Dependencies or UK overseas territories.

Aims and objectives

The specific objective of the inspection was to establish in each force:

- how confident the public can be in the effectiveness of police crime-recording;

- how effective the leadership and governance of crime data integrity is;

- how effectively victims are placed at the centre of crime-recording decisions;

- whether crime outcomes (detections) suit the needs of victims, offenders, the criminal justice system and the wider public interest; and

- if no-crime decisions adhere to the Home Office Counting Rules (HOCR).

Methodology

The objectives were achieved via:

- the requisition, examination and assessment of documents from forces, including (but not exclusively) policy and guidance on the forces' approach to receiving reports of crime and of crime-recording;

- an assessment of the crime reporting routes used and the proportion of crime recorded through each route;

- an audit of a representative sample of reports of crime for each of the reporting routes that can be audited;

- interviews with interested parties and senior police officers and staff;

- an in-force reality testing programme to examine, check and validate documentation, procedures and practices;

- liaison with the police professional lead, local governance bodies for policing, the Association of Police and Crime Commissioners (APCC) and Home Office reference group to ensure effective liaison with the service during the conduct of the review;

- liaison with relevant professionals and specialists in these areas;

- liaison with police and police staff associations;

- a representative survey of the public to gauge the level of trust the public have in police crime data and to understand the aspects of crime-recording which really matter to them; and

- a representative survey of police officers to identify what officers think about crime-recording, to understand what training they get, what messages they receive from senior and middle managers regarding crime-recording integrity and whether there is any pressure placed on them to record or not to record crimes.

The methodology was devised with the advice of the Crime Statistics Advisory Committee.

Annex C

Public Administration Select Committee report into police-recorded-crime data

In April 2014, the House of Commons Public Administration Select Committee (PASC) published a report[70] of its own investigation into police-recorded crime data. PASC identified under-recording of crime by police forces as an issue of serious public concern, and made particular reference to the detrimental effects of performance targets on police crime-recording practices.

The report criticised the use of targets based on police-recorded crime data and stated that this tended to distort recording practices and created perverse incentives to misrecord crime. It said that the evidence for this is incontrovertible.

The report made twelve specific recommendations for the UKSA, Home Office, ONS, College of Policing, HMIC and the Committee of Standards in Public Life to improve the quality of police-recorded crime data.

Those recommendations include the following:

- the Home Office should undertake a comprehensive analysis of no-crime rates for sexual offences across all police forces within two months of the PASC report;

- the Home Office and the College of Policing should make an explicit statement of how the Code of Ethics' enforcement will impose a duty of data integrity on police officers for crime-recording practices, and that penalties will apply in the event of deliberate non-compliance;

- officers must be familiar with the victim-focused principles of the NCRS and the distinction between recording standards and charging standards;

- senior police leaders and HMIC must ensure that emphasis is placed on data integrity and accuracy, not on the direction of recorded crime trends;

- formal performance appraisals should be based on data integrity and accuracy and not on targets derived from police-recorded crime data or other administrative data on their own;

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[70] *Caught red-handed: Why we can't count on Police-Recorded Crime statistics,* Thirteenth Report of Session 2013–14, House of Commons Public Administration Select Committee (PASC), HC 760, 9 April 2014

- HMIC should confirm that a rigorous external audit of crime-recording integrity will form a permanent part of its annual audit of forces, and the current audit of data integrity by HMIC should examine the reasons for misrecording crime;

- the force crime registrar should be suitably trained and have the necessary authority, HMIC should identify a minimum rank for the role, and the force crime registrar should report directly to the force commander;

- HMIC should examine the effect of PCCs' target-setting on crime-recording practices and culture; and

- the Home Office should make it clear in its guidance to PCCs that they should not set performance targets based on police-recorded crime data.

PASC concluded that police-recorded crime data should not be used as the basis for personal performance appraisals, or decisions about remuneration or promotion. PASC regarded such a practice as a flawed leadership model, contrary to the policing Code of Ethics[71].

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[71] *Code of Ethics, A Code of Practice for the Principles and Standards of Professional Behaviour for the Policing Profession of England and Wales*; July 2014; issued and presented to Parliament by the College of Policing under section 39A(5) of the Police Act 1996 as amended by Section 124 of the Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014

Annex D

Citizen Jury Methodology

Citizen juries are a form of facilitated group discussion that provide participants with the opportunity to question experts and consider an issue in depth, challenge each other's opinions and develop their views and arguments to reach an informed position. In this research, citizen juries were used to help ensure participant engagement (your opinion matters) and work towards establishing a collective view across each group.

Conduct of each session

A market research company, TNS-BMRB, was contracted by HMIC to carry out the citizen jury work. Each jury was moderated by an experienced TNS BMRB researcher who introduced each topic and led the discussion. A crime-recording specialist gradually introduced new information to the groups and provided answers to the participants' questions. The citizen jury sessions took place in the evening running for about 90 minutes each.

Participants

Four juries of 11-12 people each were drawn from London (2 juries), Preston (1 jury) and Nottingham (1 jury). Two groups were chosen who were over 30 years old and two groups who were under 30 years of age. Further selection was made by choosing a cross section of people with little or no experience of crime and those with some experience of crime.

Objectives of each session

The participants were led through a structured series of questions and scenarios covering the following objectives:

- to gain a better understanding of the public's knowledge and feelings towards the crime-reporting and crime-recording process and the implications for police resources;

- to determine what the public know about the crime-recording process;

- to understand how the public feel about reporting crime;

- to gain a better understanding of the level of trust people have in police crime statistics and why;

- to determine how important accuracy and consistency of crime-recording is to the public and why.

Annex E

How do the police record crime?

Assembling crime data statistics

The Home Secretary requires chief constables in England and Wales to provide statistical data, and specifies the form in which they must provide these data.[72]

The Home Office collates crime statistics based on data returns submitted by police forces. It then carries out extensive checks for anomalies before supplying the data for publication by the Office for National Statistics. While the ONS will also look for obvious anomalies in the data, it accepts the data as given and they are published quarterly on behalf of the ONS's Chief Statistician.

In a separate, overseeing role is the UKSA. As an independent body operating at arm's length from government, the main objective of the UKSA is to promote and safeguard the production and publication of official statistics that serve the public good. The main functions of the authority are the provision of independent scrutiny of all official statistics produced in the UK, and the oversight of the Office for National Statistics which is its executive body.

In January 2014, the UKSA removed police-recorded crime data from official national statistics records because of its concerns about its accuracy. The authority stated it would only restore these data to their place when:

> "…the Office for National Statistics (ONS), working with the Home Office, HMIC or other appropriate bodies, is able to demonstrate that the quality of the underlying data, and the robustness of the ongoing audit and quality assurance procedures, are sufficient to support its production of statistics based on recorded crime data to a level of quality that meets users' needs."[73]

In 2012, the independent Crime Statistics Advisory Committee was established following a recommendation from the National Statistician's Review of Crime Statistics.[74] CSAC is a high-level advisory body offering advice to the Home Secretary, the ONS and HMIC on matters relating to the measurement of crime and the collection and presentation of crime data for England and Wales.

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[72] These powers are contained in section 44, Police Act 1996.

[73] *Assessment Report 268: Statistics on Crime in England and Wales,* UK Statistics Authority, London, January 2014. Available from www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk

[74] *National Statistician's Review of Crime Statistics: England and Wales,* UK Statistics Authority, London, June 2011. Available from www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk

Police-recorded crime and the Crime Survey for England and Wales

Crimes recorded by the police through the processes outlined above are not the only statistical measurement of crime in England and Wales. Alongside police data, the ONS compiles a separate report, the Crime Survey of England and Wales (CSEW). Differences in the pictures given by these two sets of statistics can be a source of concern, and it will be helpful to consider further the relationship between them. The following paragraphs are based on analysis done by the ONS and published in its current user guide to crime statistics.[75]

The CSEW is a face-to-face victimisation survey in which people resident in households in England and Wales are asked about their experiences of a selected number of offences in the 12 months prior to the interview. It is able to capture all offences experienced by those interviewed, not just those that have been reported to, and recorded by, the police.

Police-recorded crime, on the other hand, is a measure of those crimes reported to the police and subsequently recorded by them. It was estimated that in 2013-14, around 43 percent of CSEW comparable crime was reported to the police, although this proportion varied considerably for individual offence types. Comparisons can be made between CSEW and police-recorded crime by adjusting each series, and by creating a comparable sub-set of offences covered by both measures. It is to be noted that the adjustments made to recorded crime categories do not exclude commercial victims, or offences committed against people under the age of 16, neither of which is covered in the CSEW. Taking all of this into account, over three-quarters of offences reported by the CSEW in recent years fall into categories which can be compared with crimes recorded by the police. The comparability between CSEW categories and police-recorded offence codes are approximate, and categories will not be directly comparable in all cases. The table below sets out the offences included in the comparison. We are grateful to the ONS for permission to reproduce this table.

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[75] User Guide to Crime Statistics for England and Wales, ONS, July 2014: Chapter 4: Comparison of the CSEW and police-recorded crime

Comparable subset of crimes

CSEW category	Recorded crime offence included
Assault with minor injury and wounding	More serious wounding or other act endangering life (5) Inflicting grievous bodily harm (GBH) with intent (5A) Assault with intent to cause serious harm (5D) Less serious wounding (8A) Racially/religiously aggravated less serious wounding (8D) Inflicting GBH without intent (8F) Actual bodily harm (ABH) and other injury (8G) Racially/religiously aggravated inflicting of GBH without intent (8H) Racially/religiously aggravated ABH or other injury (8J) Poisoning or female genital mutilation (8K) Assault with injury (8N) Racially/religiously aggravated assault with injury (8P)
Assault without injury	Assault without injury on a constable (104) Assault without injury (105A) Racially/religiously aggravated assault without injury (105B)
Robbery	Robbery of personal property (34B)
Theft from the person	Theft from the person (39)
Domestic burglary in a dwelling	Burglary in a dwelling (28A) Attempted burglary in a dwelling (28B)

	Distraction burglary in a dwelling (28C) Attempted distraction burglary in a dwelling (28D) Aggravated burglary in a dwelling (29)
Vehicle-related theft	Aggravated vehicle taking (37.2) Theft from a vehicle (45) Theft and unauthorised taking of motor vehicle (48) Vehicle interference and tampering (126)
Bicycle theft	Theft or unauthorised taking of pedal cycle (44)
Criminal damage	Arson (56) Arson endangering life (56A) Arson not endangering life (56B) Criminal damage to a dwelling (58A) Criminal damage to a building other than a dwelling (58B) Criminal damage to a vehicle (58C) Other criminal damage (58D) Racially/religiously aggravated criminal damage to a dwelling (58E) Racially/religiously aggravated criminal damage to a building other than a dwelling (58F) Racially/religiously aggravated criminal damage to a vehicle (58G) Racially/religiously aggravated other criminal damage (58H) Racially/religiously aggravated criminal damage (58J)

A slightly different list of offences has been created to explore the issue of a potential divergence between CSEW and police-recorded crime. This list omits arson, other criminal damage and criminal damage to a building other than a dwelling because they will largely comprise offences against the non-household population which is the primary focus of CSEW.

In broad terms, CSEW and police-reported crime have shown similar trends for overall crime: rises from the early 1980s to peaks in the early to mid 1990s and falls after that. Closer analysis however shows some differences between them.

The ONS has calculated a ratio using volume measures of both CSEW and police-recorded crime using the comparable subset of crimes. In theory, if all crimes from the CSEW subset were reported to the police and subsequently recorded by the police, the ratio would be 1.

The graph below shows the ratio between CSEW reported incidents and crimes recorded by the police. We are grateful to the ONS for permission to reproduce this graph.

Ratio between CSEW reported incidents and crimes recorded by the police (in a comparable sub-set)
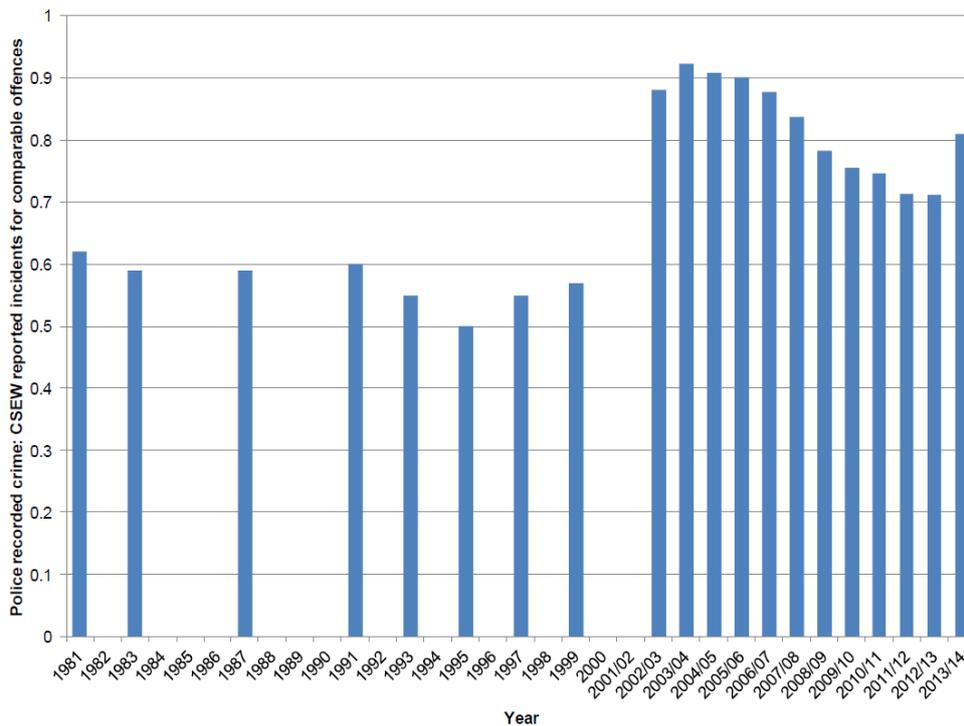
Before the introduction of the expanded HOCR in 1998 and NCRS in 2002, police recorded between 50 percent and 62 percent of the number of crimes that would have been expected to be reported to them from the comparable categories in CSEW. This suggests that a substantial number of crimes reported to the police were not being recorded by them.

The NCRS was intended to bring about a more victim-focused approach to crime-recording and, as would be expected at the point of introduction of NCRS, the ratio improved substantially: around 90 percent of the crimes which CSEW suggested should be reported to, and recorded by, the police were in fact recorded. This remained the case until approximately 2007-08. After that, there were year on year reductions in the ratio with only 71 percent of reported crimes in CSEW being recorded by the police in 2011-12 and 2012-13. In the most recent year for which we have figures, 2013-14, the gap has again narrowed substantially to 81 percent.

In terms of the volume of offences, for the first 5 years after the implementation of NCRS, CSEW and police-recorded crime showed a similar decline: 20 percent for police-recorded crime and 16 percent for CSEW crime which would have been expected to be reported to the police. From 2007-08 however, police-recorded crime dropped at a markedly faster rate than CSEW crime.

Between 2007-08 and 2012-13, police-recorded crime dropped by 32 percent, compared with a 19 percent fall in CSEW crime. However, the latest figures (for 2013/14) reflect the sharp turnaround in the ratio between the two series, with police-recorded crime dropping just 2 percent compared to the CSEW decline of 14 percent.

There is no methodological change which could account for this. ONS hypothesises that there was a gradual erosion of compliance with NCRS between 2007 and 2013 so that growing numbers of crimes reported to the police were not being recorded by them. With regard to the dramatic change in 2013-14, ONS draws attention to the increased public focus on the quality of crime-recording by the police and suggests that this had the effect of improving compliance levels.

HMIC finds these hypotheses convincing: we agree with them.

Crime-recording counting Rules and Standards

The crime data recorded by the police and submitted to the Home Office under section 44 of the Police Act 1996 must comply with the HOCR.[76] This is known as notifiable crime.

The HOCR are specific about what amounts to a notifiable crime of a particular type, including sexual violence, robbery, burglary, theft and handling of stolen goods, fraud and forgery, criminal damage and drug offences. They also specify whether an incident should be recorded as a crime, when a crime should be recorded and how many crimes should be recorded in respect of any particular single incident (which may involve the commission of a number of crimes) and then placed on record to be notified to the Home Office.

The counting rules provide a definite framework for interpreting and classifying crime, and this framework has been tightened up in recent years. As a means of governing police practice, the counting rules have evolved over more than 90 years. They standardise how, and if, crimes are recorded. For instance, they set out different ways of recording crimes when there is a specific or intended victim, or when the victim is unwilling to be identified. After the election of the Labour government in 1997, there was an attempt to tighten and standardise the existing counting rules but of course, like any rules, they remain susceptible to interpretation.

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[76] Home Office (2012) *Home Office Counting Rules*. Available from www.gov.uk

In the light of these concerns, the Home Office commissioned a research paper into crime-recording practice in ten police forces. It revealed poor recording and inappropriate practices.[77] Following this study, HMIC was commissioned to conduct a further review of crime-recording in 11 forces while taking data from all 43. The report,[78] published in 2000 alongside the Home Office Research Study, was also highly critical. It found that the forces inspected had only correctly recorded between 55 and 85 percent of the crimes that should have been recorded.

Following these reviews, the Association of Chief Police Officers, together with the Home Office, developed the NCRS which was introduced in 2002.

While the HOCR are 'what must be done' in police crime-recording, the NCRS is 'why it must be done'. The NCRS has the twin aims of ensuring proper focus on the victims of crime and consistency in crime-recording in all 43 police forces. It is based on applying legal definitions of crime to victim reports.

Who ensures compliance with the crime-recording rules?

The NCRS states that each force must appoint a force crime registrar who is responsible for ensuring compliance with the crime-recording process. As the final arbiter he is ultimately responsible for all decisions to record a crime or to make a no-crime decision. The FCR's responsibilities include training staff in the crime-recording process and carrying out audits to check that the force is complying with the rules.[79]

All forces must designate a police officer of chief officer rank who has responsibility for overseeing the force approach to crime-recording. The relationship between these two central roles is clear. The NCRS states that the FCR must be answerable to the chief officer with overall responsibility for the accuracy and integrity of crime-recording processes.

At national level, the national crime registrar manages the counting rules on behalf of the Home Office. He is the source of expertise on the rules but has no authority to change crime-recording decisions made at force level.

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[77] *Review of police forces' crime-recording practices*, Home Office Research Study 204, 2000.

[78] *On the Record,* HMIC, July 2000. Available from www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmic

[79] HOCR Annex A, National Crime Recording Standard, paragraph 4.2.

Since the introduction of the NCRS, the National Crime Recording Steering Group has met regularly to review the counting rules. The steering group includes members of the Home Office Statistics Unit, FCRs, the national policing lead for crime statistics, HMIC and the ONS. Recommendations for change are considered by the Home Secretary and CSAC, and the HOCR are updated each April. Updates include amendments to reflect changes in legislation and adjustments to improve clarity and consistency in recording by police forces.

When is an incident a crime?

The first principle the police must follow is that all reports of incidents, whether from victims, witnesses or third parties, and whether crime-related or not, must result in the registration of an incident report by the police. It is important to note that an incident report can take any form as long as it is auditable and accessible. For example, a report made directly to an officer on the street may be recorded in his pocketbook.

From the moment a victim of crime calls the police, the requirement to record a crime is based on the victim's statement to the police. The allegations about a crime are recorded on the basis of the victim's own account. The correct approach by staff receiving reports of crime is to ask some initial questions to establish the facts, but they do not conduct an investigation.

To determine whether an incident is a crime, the HOCR state that:

> *"An incident will be recorded as a crime (notifiable to the Home Secretary) for offences against an identified victim if, on the balance of probability:*
>
> - *the circumstances as reported amount to a crime defined by law (the police will determine this, based on their knowledge of the law and counting rules); and*
>
> - *there is no credible evidence to the contrary."*[80]

This is followed by rule 2:

> *"For offences against the state, the points to prove to evidence the offence must clearly be made out before a crime is recorded."*

So there are two primary types of crime: the first aimed at identified victims, the second against the state, for example, the possession of drugs, carrying a weapon, and public order offences that have no victim.

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[80] HOCR, General Rules Section A.

Because these rules place an obligation on the police to accept what the victim says unless there is 'credible evidence to the contrary', a crime should still be recorded where:

- the victim declines to provide personal details;

- the victim does not want to take the matter further; and

- the allegation cannot be proved.

The balance of probability test is detailed in the NCRS. It provides that:

"In most cases, a belief by the victim (or person reasonably assumed to be acting on behalf of the victim) that a crime has occurred is sufficient to justify its recording as a crime, although this will not be the case in all circumstances. Effectively, a more victim-orientated approach is advocated."[81]

"An allegation should be considered as made at the first point of contact, i.e. the stage at which the victim or a person reasonably assumed to be acting on behalf of the victim first makes contact with the police, be that by phone, etc. or in person. If an alleged or possible victim cannot be contacted or later refuses to provide further detail, the Crime Recording Decision Making Process (CRDMP) should be based on all available first contact information."

The HOCR describe when a crime need not be recorded; if a victim does not confirm a crime, then it is not recorded. For instance, if someone other than the victim reports an apparent street robbery, but police cannot find the victim, then a crime is not recorded, but the incident must be recorded.

Also, the HOCR do not require a force to record a crime if it happens in another force area, or in another country but is reported in England or Wales.

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[81] HOCR, General Rules, Annex A.

> **One or more crimes?**
>
> Once the police have decided to record a crime, they then need to determine how many crimes to record, as well as which offences have been committed. This is sometimes where the police make errors.
>
> Consider, for example, a burglary where car keys are taken from a house and the car has been stolen.
>
> This may involve two offences: a burglary (entering the house and stealing the keys) and the theft of a motor vehicle.
>
> If there is only one victim and one offender (or group of offenders acting together), then only one crime should be recorded, although the offender(s) may be charged and convicted of both offences.
>
> If there are two or more victims in the same incident (such as two people assaulted by a gang), a crime should be recorded in relation to each victim.

How soon should police record a crime?

The HOCR state that:

> *"…a crime should be recorded as soon as the reporting officer is satisfied that it is more likely than not that a crime has been committed".*

The police must record the crime at the earliest opportunity that the system allows. This is traditionally three 24-hour periods (72 hours) from the time the incident is first logged. However, a maximum of seven days is allowed to cater for situations outside the control of the police, such as where victims cannot be contacted or are not available despite police efforts to make contact with them.

It is important that crimes are recorded in a timely way. This is for a number of reasons. Officers use crime information when responding to incidents and events to help them assess risks to officers and the public, and the information is disseminated on the Police National Database (PND). Police forces use this in the investigation of serious crimes and when checking the backgrounds of individuals so any delays can affect the quality of the information available.

In the case of reports of sexual violence, the findings from The Crime Scene,[82] published in 2012, indicated that almost one fifth of forces did not report some sexual offences in a timely way. These forces delayed the classification of such crimes until the primary investigation was complete and then decided, sometimes weeks later, what classification to apply in the crime record. This is a clear breach of the HOCR.

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[82] *The Crime Scene,* HMIC, January 2012.

The current inspection is revisiting this issue and, in particular, is looking closely at how allegations of rape are recorded.

How do forces receive reports of crime?

Police forces receive reports of crime from the public through a number of routes. The two main routes are by telephone:

- directly to a force control room where an incident record is created and, when it is considered appropriate – sometimes some time later – a crime record is made;

- directly from a victim of a crime to a call-handler where a crime record is made immediately and the victim receives a crime reference number.

Most other crime is reported to the police through a specialist department, such as through referrals from other statutory bodies and charities, or to officers on patrol or at the front counters of police stations.

Police forces use opening and closing codes to log and classify reported incidents and to check on the investigation and outcomes of each reported incident or crime. The number of opening and closing codes varies in different police forces depending on each force's incident-recording systems and processes. But the purpose of these codes – to identify and record each incident or crime – remains the same.

Importantly, reports of crime received through the two main routes (as described above) are recorded on force IT systems. This means there are records that can be checked for accuracy. Checking (auditing or dip-sampling) is an essential part of both the internal and external review of police procedures. Forces use a variety of IT systems for recording incidents and crimes, while specialist departments including those investigating rape and other serious sexual offences, and dealing with the protection of vulnerable people, often have their own separate IT systems. There are, in fact, numerous different IT systems used in specialist departments in the 43 police forces. On these, the police record referrals concerning rape and other crimes from organisations such as health and social services. There are also instances where police officers in specialist departments make records on separate areas of the force's standard crime-recording system; however, these are not recorded crimes until they are recorded in the main crime-recording database.

The other, non-direct routes for reporting crime (such as those recorded in the minutes of meetings with external organisations, on separate IT systems in a specialist department, or in officers' pocket notebooks) are inherently difficult to audit because they do not automatically result in an easily auditable record on force IT systems.

The national crime-recording process

The flow-chart below illustrates the various routes for recording crime and the process required by the counting rules.

```
                                    ┌─────────────────────────────┐
                                    │ Incident reported to police  │
                                    │ (any source)                 │
                                    └─────────────────────────────┘
                                                  │
                                                  ▼
┌──────────────────────────┐        ┌─────────────────────────────┐
│ Incident is dealt with    │◄───No──│ Does the incident concern a │
│ and closed as required.   │        │ report of a crime?          │
└──────────────────────────┘        └─────────────────────────────┘
       ▲                                          │ Yes
       │              No                          ▼
       │◄──────────────────────────   ┌─────────────────────────────┐
       │                              │ On the balance of            │
       │                              │ probabilities has a          │
       │                              │ notifiable crime been        │
       │                              │ committed?                   │
       │                              └─────────────────────────────┘
       │                                          │ Yes
       │              Yes                         ▼
       │◄──────────────────────────   ┌─────────────────────────────┐
                                      │ Is there any credible        │
                                      │ evidence to the contrary?    │
                                      └─────────────────────────────┘
                                                  │ No
                                                  ▼
                                      ┌─────────────────────────────┐
                    No                │ Can a victim or              │
       ◄──────────────────────────    │ representative be traced?    │
       │                              └─────────────────────────────┘
       │                                          │ Yes
       ▼                                          ▼
┌──────────────────────────┐         ┌─────────────────────────────┐
│ A crime is not recorded   │◄──No──  │ Does victim or               │
│ but the incident has to be │        │ representative confirm as a │
│ classified and closed as a │        │ crime?                       │
│ Crime Related Incident     │        └─────────────────────────────┘
│ (CRI)                      │                    │ Yes
│                            │◄──Yes── ┌─────────────────────────────┐
│                            │         │ Is another force recording  │
│                            │         │ the crime?                   │
│                            │         └─────────────────────────────┘
│                            │                    │ No
│                            │◄──Yes── ┌─────────────────────────────┐
└──────────────────────────┘         │ Does NCRS/HOCR guidance      │
                                      │ direct that a crime should   │
                                      │ not be recorded?             │
                                      └─────────────────────────────┘
                                                  │ No
                                                  ▼
                                      ┌─────────────────────────────┐
                                      │ Record as a crime            │
                                      └─────────────────────────────┘
                                                  │
                                                  ▼
┌──────────────────────────┐   Yes   ┌─────────────────────────────┐
│ Re-classify or no-crime   │◄─────── │ Is there any additional      │
│ in accordance with        │         │ verifiable information that  │
│ NCRS/HOCR                 │         │ determines a crime did not   │
└──────────────────────────┘         │ happen?                      │
                                      └─────────────────────────────┘
                                                  │ No
                                                  ▼
                                      ┌─────────────────────────────┐
                                      │ Remains as a recorded crime  │
                                      └─────────────────────────────┘
```

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