

## **British Crime Survey - Frequently Asked Questions**

This page contains information for people who have been asked to take part in the British Crime Survey (BCS).

### **What is the British Crime Survey?**

The British Crime Survey is a victimisation survey. It measures the amount of crime in England and Wales by asking people, such as yourself, about whether you or your household has experienced any crimes in the past year.

The BCS provides a better reflection of the extent of crime than police recorded figures as the survey asks about crimes that are not reported to or recorded by the police.

The survey also asks for your opinion of different crime-related issues such as the police and criminal justice system and perceptions of crime and anti-social behaviour.

### **Who is responsible for the survey?**

The Home Office is responsible for the BCS.

The results from the BCS are designated as National Statistics. This means they are overseen by a strict code of practice drawn up by the independent National Statistician.

### **Why have I been chosen to take part?**

We cannot include everyone in the country in every survey as this would be too expensive and take too much of everyone's time, so we select a sample to represent the country as a whole.

Your address has been randomly selected from the Royal Mail's list of addresses in England and Wales. Once an address has been selected in this way we cannot replace it with another address.

Letters are sent out in advance to these sampled addresses with a leaflet to notify households that they have been selected and to give an overview of the survey.

Random sampling such as this ensures that all groups of people are properly represented and everyone has an equal chance of being able to help with our survey.

It is important that the survey represents everyone in the country so we need to talk to men and women of all ages and all backgrounds. In this way the results from the BCS reflect the experiences and attitudes of the whole population.

We are interested in everyone's attitudes and concerns about crime, whether or not they have been a victim of crime.

### **Who will interview me?**

BCS interviews are carried out for the Home Office by an independent research company called TNS-BMRB, an experienced survey organisation who carry out lots of government research. Find out more about TNS-BMRB and the work they do on their website:

<http://www.tns-bmrb.co.uk/>

An interviewer from TNS-BMRB/Kantar Operations will call at your address. The interviewer will carry a Market Research Society Interviewer identification card, which includes their photograph and interviewer identification number.

If you would like to check the identity of an interviewer please call the BCS Survey Information Line on 0800 051 0882.

### **A child in my home has also been asked to take part in the survey. Why is this?**

Since January 2009, the BCS has been extended to children aged 10 to 15 to gain a more complete picture of crime in England and Wales. If a child in your household is selected to take part in the survey the interviewer will outline what topics will be covered and seek the written consent of a parent/guardian.

We rely on the voluntary participation of children to build a more complete picture of the extent of crime experienced by the general population and also to find out what they think about issues such as the police and personal safety.

### **Is the survey confidential?**

Yes, information given to the interviewer is treated in the strictest confidence. The names and addresses of people who take part in the survey are stored separately from the information they give and are not passed on to the Home Office or any other organisation.

The information collected is used solely for research purposes. No individual will be identifiable from the results.

You will not receive any 'junk mail' as a result of taking part in this survey.

### **Is the survey compulsory?**

No, no-one has to take part if they do not want to, but we hope that if people understand the importance of our work, they will choose to help us and make our survey successful.

We rely on people's voluntary co-operation to produce official statistics to help everyone understand what is happening in our society.

### **Who uses the research?**

Information collected by the BCS is used to help develop a range of policies aimed at reducing crime. It can be used to identify those most at risk of crime, which is useful in the design and targeting of crime prevention programmes.

Data from the BCS provides an independent measure for police forces across England and Wales as well as helping the probation service and the courts to do their jobs as effectively as possible.

BCS data are reported annually in the crime statistics publication 'Crime in England and Wales'. They are also included in both Social Trends and Regional Trends, which are state-of-the-nation publications produced by the Office for National Statistics. More generally, BCS data are used in briefings to ministers, in answer to parliamentary questions, in evidence to select committees and so on.

### **Why surveys are done**

Social surveys are a bridge between the people and the government. A good survey can provide accurate information about people's experiences and situation, which can help to make sure that government policies and services take account of everyone's needs.

The BCS is a particularly important survey because it provides a more complete picture of crime than police recorded crime statistics alone. The BCS includes crimes which are not reported to, or recorded by, the police and is therefore unaffected by changes in recording practices. For the crimes it covers, the BCS is the best guide to long-term trends in crime.

### **More information**

If you have been asked to take part in the BCS and have any questions or concerns, please contact Irene Ogunbor on 020 7035 0306 or email:

[Crimestats@homeoffice.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:Crimestats@homeoffice.gsi.gov.uk)