

## Technical Manual:

### Long term trajectories of crime and social and economic measures in the UK

ESRC Award: ES/K006398/1

#### Introduction to the study:

Our project sought to explore the ways in which changes in economic and social policies result in changes in patterns of crime, victimisation and anxieties about crime. We wanted to find out how shifts in social values affect national-level experiences and beliefs about crime and the appropriate responses to it (such as support for punitive punishments like the death penalty). In so doing we have sought to assess the long-term consequences of almost two decades (1979-1997) of neo-conservative and neo-liberal social and economic policies for the UK's criminal justice system and the general experience of crime amongst its citizens. The lessons the recent past can inform our understanding of the contemporary political environment, when policy announcements about cuts to public expenditure are commonplace and economic growth uncertain and faltering.

Using the Thatcher and Major governments (1979- 1997) as our case study, our aim was to explore the experiences of crime, victimisation and fear of crime at the national and regional levels, and for key socio-demographic groups, since the 1970s (and where possible earlier than this). Some of our then recent publications had demonstrated the appropriateness of the general methodology (Farrall and Jennings 2012; Jennings et al 2012) and two further theoretical papers (Hay and Farrall, 2011; Farrall and Hay 2010) had outlined our thinking with regards to the ways in which 'Thatcherite' social and economic policies in one policy domain (e.g. housing) created 'spill-over' effects in other policy domains (such as crime). The goals of our project were therefore

- a) to understand the long-term trajectory of crime rates alongside relevant political, social and economic developments and interventions (paying attention to both neo-liberal and neo-conservative strands of thinking, Hay, 1996, Hay and Farrall 2013) and
- b) to develop an approach to making long-term assessments of dramatic and sweeping policy changes which could be adopted by other researchers.

The project followed on from an earlier ESRC-funded scoping project led by Stephen Farrall (ESRC award RES-000-22-2688). The earlier grant was undertaken in order to assess the extent to which it would be possible and desirable to undertake more prolonged and in-depth investigations into the social, economic and cultural impacts of Thatcherite public policy on contemporary UK society, especially as these features relate to criminal justice policy. Since the 1970s and 1980s, the UK has been fortunate enough to invest in a number of on-going surveys, such as the *Labour Force Survey*, the *General Household Survey* and the *British Crime Survey*. In addition to this, there are other, non-governmental surveys which exist (e.g. the *British Social Attitudes Survey* and the *British Election Study*) and which provide a basis for the assessment of the direction of changes in social attitudes and experiences over time. The earlier ESRC grant reviewed over 100 data sets (mainly drawn from the UK Data Archive; <http://www.data-archive.ac.uk/>, but also from further afield, such as the German-based Zentralarchiv fur Empirische Sozialforschung (<http://zocat.gesis.org/webview/index.jsp>), the Dutch-based archive (<http://easy.dans.knaw.nl/dms>) and the Inter-University Consortium on Political and Social Research (<http://www.icpsr.umich.edu/>)). Some of these surveys were key to the analyses we wished to undertake and are discussed herein.

## Publications related to the project:

The publications based on the ESRC award ES/K006398/1 include:

- Farrall, S., Burke, N. and Hay, C. (2015) *Revisiting Margaret Thatcher's Law and Order Agenda: The Slow-Burning Fuse of Punitiveness*, **British Politics**.
- Farrall, S., Gray, E., Jennings, W. Hay, C. (2014) **Using Ideas Derived from Historical Institutionalism to Illuminate the Long-term Impacts on Crime of 'Thatcherite' Social and Economic Policies: A Working Paper**.
- Farrall, S., Gray, E., Jennings, W. and Hay, C. (2015) *Thatcherite Ideology, Housing Tenure, and Crime: The Socio-Spatial Consequences of the Right to Buy for Domestic Property Crime*, **British Journal of Criminology**.
- Gray, E., Jennings, W., Farrall, S. and Hay, C. (2015) *Small Big Data: Using multiple data-sets to explore unfolding social and economic change*, **Big Data and Society**.
- Gray, E., Farrall, S., Hay, C., Dorling, D. and Jennings, W. (2015) *Thatcher's Grandchildren: The Long Road to Inequality*, **Political Insight**, 6(1): 16-19.
- Jennings, W., Gray, E. Hay, C. and Farrall, S. (2015) *Collating Longitudinal Data on Crime, Victimization and Social Attitudes in England and Wales: A New Resource for Exploring Long-term Trends in Crime*, **British Journal of Criminology**.

Those related to ESRC award RES-000-222-2688 are:

- Farrall, S. and Jennings, W. (2012) *Policy Feedback and the Criminal Justice Agenda: an analysis of the economy, crime rates, politics and public opinion in post-war Britain*, **Contemporary British History**, 26(4):467-488.
- Jennings, W., Farrall, S. and Bevan, S. (2012) *The Economy, Crime and Time: an analysis of recorded property crime in England and Wales 1961-2006*, **International Journal of Law, Crime and Justice**, 40(3):192-210.
- Hay, C. and Farrall, S. (2011) *Establishing the ontological status of Thatcherism by gauging its periodisability: towards a 'cascade theory' of public policy radicalism*, **British Journal of Politics and International Relations**, 13(4): 439-58.
- Farrall, S. and Hay, C. (2010) *Not So Tough on Crime? Why Weren't the Thatcher Governments More Radical In Reforming the Criminal Justice System?* *British Journal of Criminology*, 50(3):550-69. Reproduced in Bale, T. (2014) (ed) **Margaret Thatcher** (Critical Evaluations of Key Political Leaders), Routledge, London.

We also published an edited collection following an British Academy-funded seminar:

- Farrall, S. and Hay, C. (2014) **The Legacy of Thatcherism: Assessing and Exploring Thatcherite Social and Economic Policies**, Oxford University Press, Oxford.

This contained, amongst other chapters, the following chapters which we authored:

- Hay, C. and Farrall, S. (2014) *Interrogating and Conceptualising the Legacy of Thatcherism*, in Farrall S., and Hay, C. **Thatcher's Legacy: Exploring and Theorising the Long-term Consequences of Thatcherite Social and Economic Policies**, Oxford University Press, Oxford, pp 3-30.
- Farrall, S. and Jennings, W. (2014) *Thatcherism and Crime: The Beast that Never Roared?*, in Farrall S., and Hay, C. **Thatcher's Legacy: Exploring and Theorising the Long-term Consequences of Thatcherite Social and Economic Policies**, Oxford University Press, Oxford, pp 207-233.
- Farrall, S. and Hay, C. (2014) *Locating 'Thatcherism' In The 'Here and Now'*, in Farrall S., and Hay, C. **Thatcher's Legacy: Exploring and Theorising the Long-term**

### **Introduction to the data and surveys:**

In collating the data upon which we relied, we eventually focused on three surveys, The British Crime Survey (now Crime Survey for England and Wales), The British Social Attitudes Survey and the British Election Survey. These provided us with our core data sets and covered victimisation, fear of crime, trust in the criminal justice system, and various variables which dealt with social attitudes and political beliefs.

The datasets are available as three different files (one for each survey), and are available for download in SPSS and Stata formats.

### **British Crime Survey/ Crime Survey for England and Wales**

First conducted in 1982, the BCS/ CSEW was commissioned by the UK government to measure the 'dark figure' of unreported crime incidents. The survey moved to an annual basis from 2001, and in 2012 its name was changed to the 'Crime Survey for England and Wales'. As well as collecting information on victimisation and fear of crime, it collects information on a range of attitudes towards the criminal justice system, causes of crime, and demographic information about respondents. See de Castelbajac (2014) for an outline of its origins.

#### **Sampling framework**

The survey sampling of the CSEW is structured to be representative of two groups, namely residential households in England and Wales, and adults (aged 16 years and over) living in those households (ONS, 2015). The survey does not collect information from those living in residential institutions such as prisons, detention centres, military accommodation, care homes or university accommodation. The exclusion of this section of the population is understood to have little effect on CSEW estimates (see Pickering et al., 2008).

ONS (2015) provide a useful table (2a) which provides a comprehensive history of the sample history of the CSEW.

The sampling frame initially used the Electoral Registers (ER) for the first three surveys (1982, 1984 and 1988). This provided a representative cross-section of people aged 16 and above living in private households who appear in the electoral rolls" (Wood, 1984:8). At this stage the sample size was about 10-11,000 for any year. From 1992, the ER was dropped in favour of the Postal Address File (PAF). The 1992 Technical Report (Home Office, 1992:7) noted that many other surveys had started to switch to the PAF during the 1980s. This was for a number of reasons, namely that the PAF:

- Provided better coverage of residential addresses than the ER (because of more frequent updating, but also because of under-representation and the ineligibility to vote of certain groups. (The addresses omitted from the ER were shown to be a biased sub-group, which was not the case with the PAF).
- The ER had been found to under-represent ethnic minorities, young people, recent movers and inner-city residents.

- Ironically (from our perspective), a further possible bias was due to the under-registration on the ER as a result of the introduction of the Community Charge (which was part of the story of Thatcher's eventual demise).
- Finally, it was also presumed that the PAF would be a more stable sampling frame in the future than would be the ER.

The change of sampling frame was explored and assessed prior to being implemented. (In fact, it had been considered for the 1988 BCS). The assessment suggested that an additional 700 households which were not on the ER had been reached by using the PAF. Whilst the estimated victimisation rates for these additional households were higher than those for the rest of the sample, their effect on overall estimates was felt to be "quite modest" (Home Office, 1992:7). In 1994 the sample size was increased to 15,000, rising again in 2000 to just under 20,000. The sample size increase again in 2001/02 (to almost 33,000), and continued to rise until it reached about 47,000 for the years 2006/06 to 2011/12. In 2012/13, the sample was dropped to around 35,000. Alongside these changes, there were various modifications to the precise nature of the sampling. These are summarised below:

- 1982-1998: the survey over sampled inner city areas (to record the experiences of more victims).
- 2001/02: the survey started to oversample less populous police force areas (meaning that the over-sampling of inner city areas was dropped, since the generally larger sample size meant that inner city over-sampling was no longer needed), but more rural areas needed to be covered. The minimum sample required was 600 per police force area.
- 2004/05: The minimum required was raised to 1,000 per police force area.
- In 2011 the survey moved to continuous data collection (previously data had mainly been collected in the period from January to March of each year).
- 2012/13: The minimum required was dropped to 650 minimum (due to central government imposed spending cuts).

Our on-going discussions with the CSEW team at ONS have emphasised that any shift in the sampling frame has been adequately matched by a recalibration of the weights and increases in sample size over the course of the survey.

### **CSEW weighting**

The BCS has a complex, multi-stratified sampling design, which requires statistical weighting to 're-adjust' it to representativeness, once interview data has been collected (Mayhew, 2000).

Two types of weighting are used in the CSEW sample. First, the raw data are weighted to compensate for unequal probabilities of selection involved in the sample design. These include: the over-sampling of less populous police force areas; the selection of multi-household addresses; an address non-response weight to compensate for the observed variation in response rates between different types of neighbourhood, and; the individual's chance of participation being inversely proportional to the number of adults living in the household. Further details about the unequal selection probability compensation weighting are available in Chapter 7 of the 2013/14 Crime Survey for England and Wales Technical Report: Volume One.

Second, calibration weighting is used to adjust for differential non-response<sup>1</sup> and calibrate to the population of England and Wales. The weights are therefore based on population estimates/projections of households and people and produce separate household and individual level weights. All CSEW percentages and rates presented in the figures and tables in the published crime statistics are based on weighted data. The effects of calibration weights are generally small for household-level crime, but are likely to be more important for estimates of personal-level crime, as for example, young respondents generally have much higher crime victimisation rates than average but also lower response rates to the survey. However, there was only a marginal impact seen in crime trends when calibration weighting was first implemented in the 1996 survey. An improvement was implemented from 2013/14 onwards regarding survey non-response, but this has had no effect on the re-weighted CSEW back-series (2001/02 to 2012/13 data).

### **Re-weighting programme 2013**

Following the 2011 Census, ONS revised population estimates back to 2001/02. As a result a new series of calibration weights based on 2011 Census populations was believed necessary on each historic datasets between 2002 and 2012/13, as well as the production of a full series of estimates for each crime type in each year. The data included in our new time-series set includes these new weights over the respective time period.

### **Measuring Crime in the CSEW**

The CSEW estimates levels of household and personal crimes. Household crimes are considered to be all vehicle and property-related crimes, while personal crimes relate to all crimes against the individual respondent.

While the CSEW provides the raw data on sexual offenses via the UK data archive, one should note that published CSEW reports and briefings exclude these offences (except for 'wounding with a sexual motive'). The number of sexual offences picked up by the survey is considered too small to provide reliable national estimates (ONS, 2015).

### **Capped data**

The data included in this collated data-set is not capped, in order to provide a more flexible and accurate resource with which to assess the incidence of crime. However, in order to provide some context, an explanation of the CSEW cap is provided below.

CSEW respondents are asked about their experiences of crime in the 12-month reference period and up to six victim forms can be completed by each respondent. The ONS states that "most incidents reported are one-off, single occurrences, but in a minority of cases respondents may have been victimised a number of times in succession" (2015:15). Respondents are asked to judge whether they consider these to be a "series" that is "the same thing, done under the same circumstances and probably by the same people" (ONS, 2015:15). Where incidents are determined to be in a series, the number of incidents is recorded, but with only one victim form being completed based on the most recent incident.

Controversially, the CSEW estimates only include the first five incidents in a 'series' of victimisations in the total count of crime. In effect, each adult respondent can have a maximum of 30 crime incidents contained in the count of crime; a maximum of six victim forms with a maximum of five incidents on each victim module. The cap restriction to the five incidents in a series has been applied since the

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<sup>1</sup> A review of the then British Crime Survey by survey methodology experts at ONS and the National Centre for Social Research recommended that the calibration weighting method be adopted (Lynn and Elliot, 2000).

CSEW began in 1982 to ensure that estimates are not adversely affected by a “small number” (2015: 15) of respondents who report an extremely high number of incidents and which are highly variable between survey years. Such fluctuations pose significant problems in time-series statistical analysis. A further reason for capping individual frequencies is that research suggests that some who are frequently victimised may have difficulties in accurately calibrating the number of offences committed against them (Hope and Norris, 2012).

Respondents may also report to the CSEW that their experience of a crime are ‘too many to recall’. Reports in this vein are not treated as missing data, but are retained and recoded to the maximum value (six). This sort of capping is in line with other surveys of crime and other topics. Prevalence rates are not affected by this procedure (see TNS-BMRB, 2012, for information on the measurement of series data).

Despite the earlier acceptability of the capping method, Walby, Towers and Francis (2015) have estimated that up to 11% of respondents in the CSEW have the number of crime incidents ‘capped’ – which they contend is *not* an insignificant proportion, however, the matter remains unsettled (see, for example <http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/guide-method/method-quality/specific/crime-statistics-methodology/methodological-notes/high-frequency-repeat-victimisation.pdf>). If one includes sexual offences in the category ‘violence against the person’ (VAP), the estimated number VAP offences might increase from 77,000 (capped estimate) to 120,000 per year using uncapped data. Such practices, Walby and colleagues stress can considerably skew the incidence of repeat victimisation, particularly in relation to severe domestic violence (Walby, Towers and Francis, 2015). Similarly, the practice of capping has been criticised further in respect of the CSEW (Farrell and Pease, 2007) and the equivalent US national survey (Planty and Strom, 2007).

### **Methodological changes and revisions policy**

Although there have been changes to the survey over time, the wording of the questions that are asked to elicit victimisation experiences have been held constant throughout the life of the CSEW. The core sample has always been designed to be representative of the population of households in England and Wales and people living in those households.

The general principle applied to the Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW) will be that when data are found to be in error, both the data and any associated analysis that has been published by ONS will be revised in line with ONS Revisions and corrections policy. Researchers undertaking future analysis of this data would be minded to check for any possible revisions.

### **British Social Attitudes Surveys**

The British Social Attitudes Survey (BSAS) series began in 1983. It is based on an annual random probability, face-to-face survey of approximately 3,000 Britons. The series is designed to act as a counterpart to other large-scale government surveys such as the Labour Force Survey or the General Lifestyle Survey, which provide data on behavioural actions and tangible ‘facts’. It has been conducted every year since 1983, except in 1988 and 1992, when the British Election Study series ran, which included relevant attitudinal questions.

## Sampling framework

The BSAS is designed to yield a representative sample of adults aged 18 or over. Since 1993, the sampling frame for the survey has been the Postcode Address File (PAF), a list of addresses (or postal delivery points) compiled by the Post Office. For practical reasons, the sample is confined to those living in private households. People living in institutions (though not in private households at such institutions) are excluded, as are households whose addresses were not on the PAF. The sampling method involved a multi-stage design, which incorporates a selection of regional areas, households and individuals.

All datasets for surveys based on samples from the Postcode Address File must be weighted to take account of differing selection probabilities and non-response. Households are selected with equal probability, but only one person in each household is interviewed for BSAS. People in small households therefore have a higher probability of selection than people in large households and the weighting corrects for this. In addition, where information is available about both responding and non-responding addresses, this can be used in the weighting to reduce non-response bias. Information about non-responding addresses is available from two sources: Census information about the area of the address and interviewer observation. Calibration weighting is designed to adjust the sample to the regional sex and age profiles of the population.

Please note that the data must be weighted in all analysis. The file is not preweighted. Before running any analysis, please weight the data using the NatCen computed weight which can be found in all datasets and is named wtfactor.

## Weights

Selection weights are required because not all the units covered in the survey had the same probability of selection. The weighting reflects the relative selection probabilities of the individual at the three main stages of selection: address, DU and individual. At each stage the selection weights are trimmed to avoid a small number of very high or very low weights in the sample; such weights would inflate standard errors, reducing the precision of the survey estimates and causing the weighted sample to be less efficient. Less than one per cent of the selection weights were trimmed at each stage.

A non-response weight is intended to reduce bias in the sample resulting from differential response to the survey. It is also known that certain subgroups in the population are more likely to respond to surveys than others. These groups can end up over represented in the sample, which can bias the survey estimates. Where information is available about non-responding households, the response behaviour of the sample members can be modelled and the results used to generate a non-response weight.

## Online resources (BSA)

**www.britsocat.com.** provides a free, searchable text database of British Social Attitudes Survey questionnaires and allows users to conduct online analysis of the dataset, either on the entire sample or using a range of socio-demographic break variables. (n.b BritSocAt automatically makes 'Don't know' and 'Not answered' missing values; you can easily reset these).

## **British Election Studies**

The British Election Study (BES) has surveyed every general election since 1964 and is one of the world's longest-running investigations into political attitudes and voting behaviour. It is a key resource for social scientists, journalists and politicians interested in understanding how long-term changes in the country's social, political and economic circumstances affect voter attitudes and electoral outcomes.

The purposes of the BES are:

- to study long-term trends in British voting behaviour
- to explain the election outcome
- to explain party choice
- to explain turnout
- to examine the consequences of elections for the operation of democracy more generally.

The BES survey-based methodology has enabled researchers to test a variety of explanations for why people make electoral decisions. The use of the random sampling affords conclusions about the population in general. Each sweep covers England, Wales and Scotland. Weighting is used to ensure survey respondents are representative of the population to which they are generalising, certain areas are over-sampled (i.e. rural areas in Scotland and Wales) and weights for non-response and cross-sectional and panel non-response are also included. Since this first study, several changes have been made to the BES, including refinement of political and economic attitude measurement and the introduction of multi-level models. It has also employed various data-collection methods over its life-span.

### **Weights**

There are a variety of weighting variables included in each of the BES datasets. These offer the possibility of weighting by region, by gender or by age within gender. The recommended option – to account for the way the survey generates a sample and the over-sampling of Scottish respondents, for example, is to use the overall weighting variables, thereby weighting by region, gender and age within gender simultaneously. See the technical manuals of each survey for further information.

### **National aggregate data (by year)**

- **Acts of Parliament & Queens speeches (UK Policy Agenda Project)**
- **Parliamentary questions (Hansard prototype)**
- **Economic optimism Index (Ipsos-Mori)**
- **Government approval (Ipsos-Mori)**
- **Leader satisfaction (Ipsos-Mori)**
- **National economic expectations (Gallup/ Yougov)**
- **Personal economic expectations (Gallup/ Yougov)**
- **Incarceration rate (Home Office, Ministry of Justice)**
- **Probation supervision & probation staff (Home Office, Ministry of Justice)**
- **Police force strength (Home Office, Ministry of Justice)**
- **Conviction rate (Home Office, Ministry of Justice)**
- **Recorded crime (Home Office, Ministry of Justice)**
- **Self-reported victimisation (British Crime Survey/ Crime Survey for England and Wales)**



- House repossession rate (CML Research)
- Council house sales (Local authority sales - DCLG's Local Authority Housing Statistics (LAHS) and DCLG LOGASNet Return – via communities.gov.uk)
- Police Notified Addicts (Addicts Index, Home Office).
- Unemployment Rate (Datastream)
- Child poverty (Institute for Fiscal Studies)
- Income Inequality – Gini coefficient (Institute for Fiscal Studies)
- Abortion Rate (Department of Health)
- Children in Care (Department of Children, Schools and Families)
- Public spending as % of GDP (www.ukpublicspending.co.uk)
- Gross Domestic Product (Office of National Statistics)
- Benefits expenditure (Office of National Statistics)
- Historic average weekly income (Office for National Statistics)
- Population – England and Wales (Office for National Statistics)
- Divorce rate (Office for National Statistics)
- Suicide rate (Office for National Statistics)
- Drug Mortality (20<sup>th</sup> Century Mortality Files, Office for National Statistics)

*If you wish to have copies of the original data files included in the aggregate data-set please contact a member of the research team.*

## **Future possibilities**

A number of possible extensions to the dataset we have produced can be imagined. These include:

- Extending the dataset by appending future years to the existing data.
- Including additional variables which we did not collect (there were some variables on social attitudes which we did not collate, for example).
- Adding other aggregate levels data from other datasets by year (NHS data on wounding, for example)
- Creating new variables by collapsing/combining existing variables (for example, one could create a variable for single people who own or have access to a car).
- We have not included any of the booster samples (such as those for ethnic minorities, but one could include these).

## **Contacts**

[www.besis.org](http://www.besis.org)

(Search engine and portal for data downloads for the British Election Studies Information System)

[www.britisocat.com](http://www.britisocat.com)

(Search engine to explore the British Social Attitudes Survey)

[www.bsa.natcen.ac.uk](http://www.bsa.natcen.ac.uk)

(details on the British Social Attitudes Survey)

[www.data-archive.ac.uk](http://www.data-archive.ac.uk)

(The UK's largest collection of digital research data in the social sciences)

[www.ons.gov.uk](http://www.ons.gov.uk)

(The Office for National Statistics is the executive office of the UK Statistics Authority)

## References

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