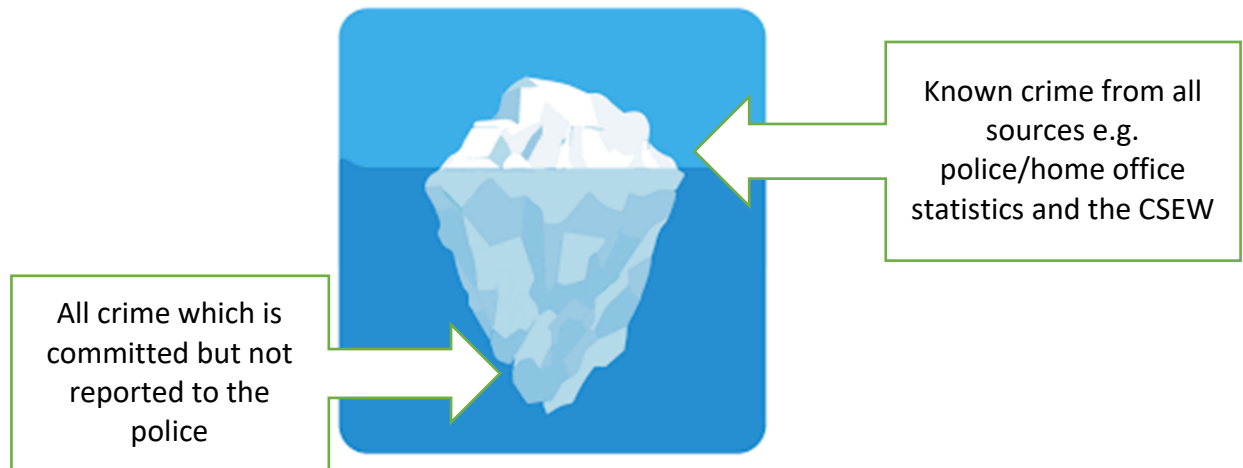


## EVALUATE METHODS OF COLLECTING STATISTICS

### The Dark Figure of Crime



### RELIABILITY AND VALIDITY

#### Reliability

Reliability is the consistency of statistics that we collect. If they vary a great deal from year to year or when different people collect them, we may conclude that we cannot rely on them – they are unreliable statistics. The **Home office** and **CSEW** are thought to be reliable, that is the methods used do not produce massive variations in the results from year to

#### Validity

Validity refers whether statistics are giving us a true picture of crime. For example, the **CSEW** will ask the population if they have been a victim of crime. Statistics from the police may be very **reliable** but most criminologists agree that they rarely give a true picture of crime as it is committed.

### Two Main Ways of Measuring Crime

#### 1) Police Statistics (AKA – Home Office or Official Statistics)

Police Recorded Crime (PRC) are gathered by the Home Office to show Police activity every year. They are categorised by location, offence type and time, and are always publicly accessible. These are likely to change every year, and are affected by policy (meaning that some may not be recorded) and to a much lesser extent crime that is being committed. While it is a **reliable** measure of crime it is not thought to be a particularly valid measure because it is only made up of crimes which have been reported to the police. It has low **validity**

#### 2) Victim Surveys (Crime Survey of England and Wales/British Crime Survey)

CSEW is a large survey of crime in England and Wales. It takes a representative sample of 51,000 people over the age of 16 living in England or Wales and asks about their experiences of crime. It is regarded as a much more **valid** measure of crime than the official statistics as it taps into unrecorded or unreported crime. Because it has good validity it also has good reliability.

## OFFICIAL STATISTICS AND VICTIM SURVEYS

### POLICE STATISTICS

(AKA – Home Office or Official Statistics)

#### **Advantages**

- Police will record information before it is forgotten
- Police will record even insignificant events that others may not deem important
- Police can immediately respond with victim support if needed

#### **Disadvantages**

- Police may choose not to record crime
- Unreported crimes are not recorded
- Different police force record differently

### VICTIM SURVEYS

(Crime Survey of England and Wales/British Crime Survey)

#### **Advantages**

- Records otherwise unreported crime
- Records peoples personal experiences and how crime actually affects them
- Has a very large (and representative) sample

#### **Disadvantages**

- Fails to capture “victimless” crimes (e.g. White-Collar Crime and Moral Crime)
- Relies on the accuracy of the victim’s memory
- People may be still afraid to report, even anonymously

#### **Ethics and Crime Statistics**

There are ethical issues with collecting crime statistics, these include issues of **confidentiality, privacy and informed consent**.

- The CSEW is anonymous, avoiding such issues with confidentiality, but Police records are public.
- People have a right to privacy and do not have to give up any information to the CSEW.
- Additionally, people must be asked for their permission to gather statistics (we cannot force anyone)
- Personal information must be kept confidential.
- Data gathered by the CSEW is never passed onto other organisations, to maintain this confidentiality.

#### **What Is the Purpose of Crime Statistics**

- Allows development of crime reduction policies.
- Informs resource management by government and police.
- Provides information on a geographical basis.
- Allows the public to voice their opinions on crime issues.
- Shows police workload.
- Shows the emergence of “new” crimes