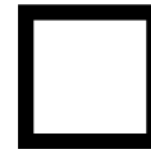


# **Crime Survey Users Conference 2024**

## **The Regrettable Prevalence of Incidence in Crime Counts, and how it Misleads.**

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Stockton – University of  
Huddersfield**

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Jenny on the left has suffered five victimisations. Kelly on the right is comparatively lucky and was victimised just once.

# The Problem

## Three basic metrics:

Prevalence - victims/population

Incidence - victimisations/population

Concentration - victimisations/victims

A population of 100, experiencing a total of 50 victimisations spread across 25 victims, has prevalence  $25/100$  (0.25), incidence  $50/100$  (0.5), and concentration  $50/25$  (2).

# The Conundrum...

**Is high incidence 'good' or 'bad'?**

*"police are good at finding crime"*

VS

*"there is so much crime"*

**Is high prevalence 'good' or 'bad'?**

*"people are willing to reach out"*

VS

*"everyone is suffering"*

## Hot-dots and hot-spots...

**The practice of hot-spots ignores the difference between areas with high prevalence (hard to police, resource intensive) and high concentration of crime (easy to spot, resource efficient).**

# Crime in England and Wales: year ending June 2023

Crime against households and people aged 16 years and over, using data from police recorded crime and the Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW).

This is not the latest release. [View latest release](#)

**Contact:**  
[Nick Stripe](#)

**Release date:**  
19 October 2023

**Next release:**  
January 2024

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**Most figures on incidence, one on prevalence, none on concentration.**

# CSEW allows to measure it all...

- **Uncapped screener questions**
- **Capped victim forms**
- **Series or not**

but also...

- Reports/non-reports
- Reasons for non-reports
- Crime seriousness
- Emotions after victimisation
- Time lags

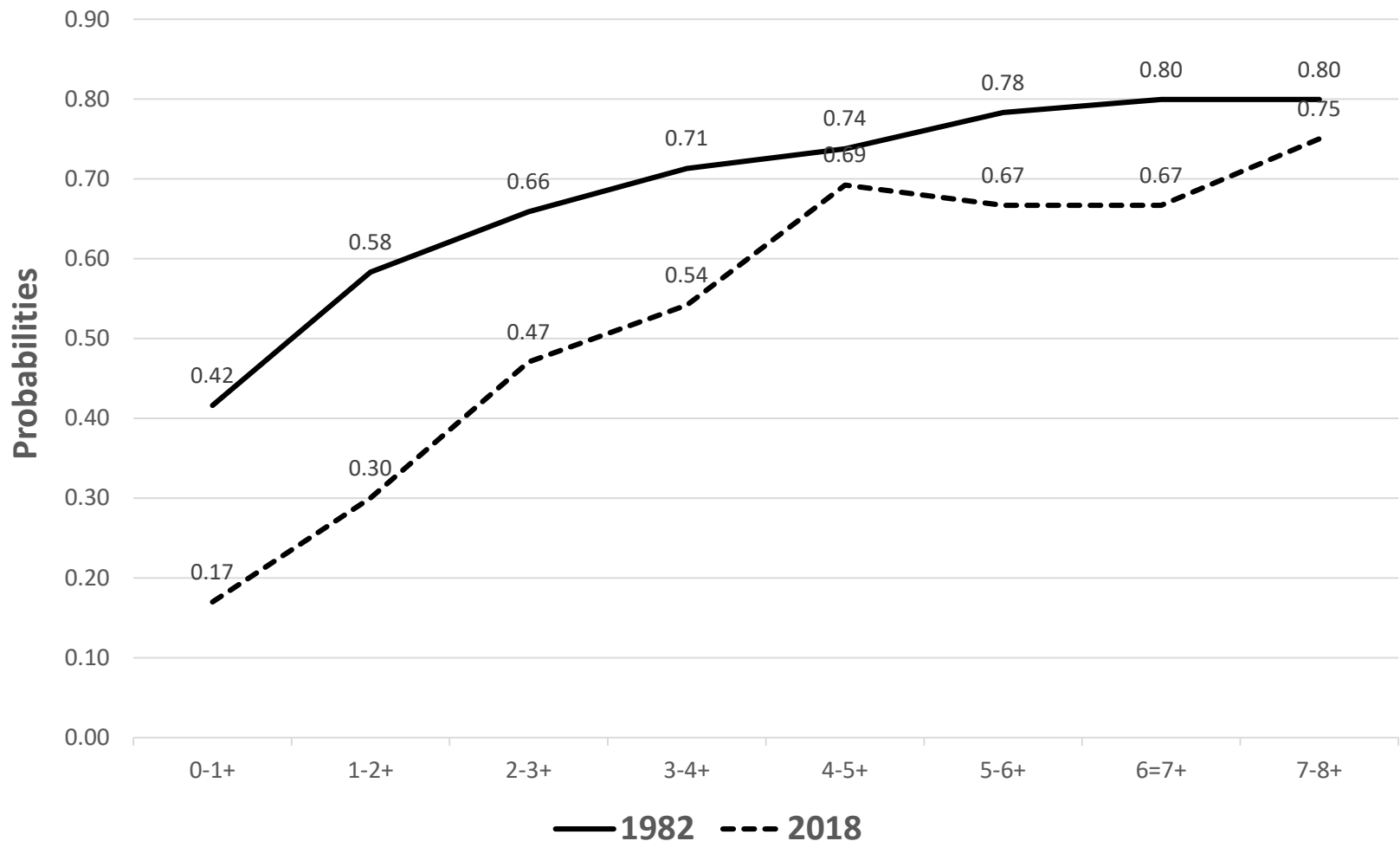
**Has the contribution of multiple victimisation to total crime changed over time relative to statistical expectation?**

## **1982 vs 2018**

- Crime drop of 1994-ish...
- Much lower incidence in 2018
- Better policing? (it's been 40 years!)
- More resources?
- Better educated public/police?
- Better developed criminology?
- Better relationship between public/police?
- Repeat victimisation research?
- Technology, social changes, immigration...



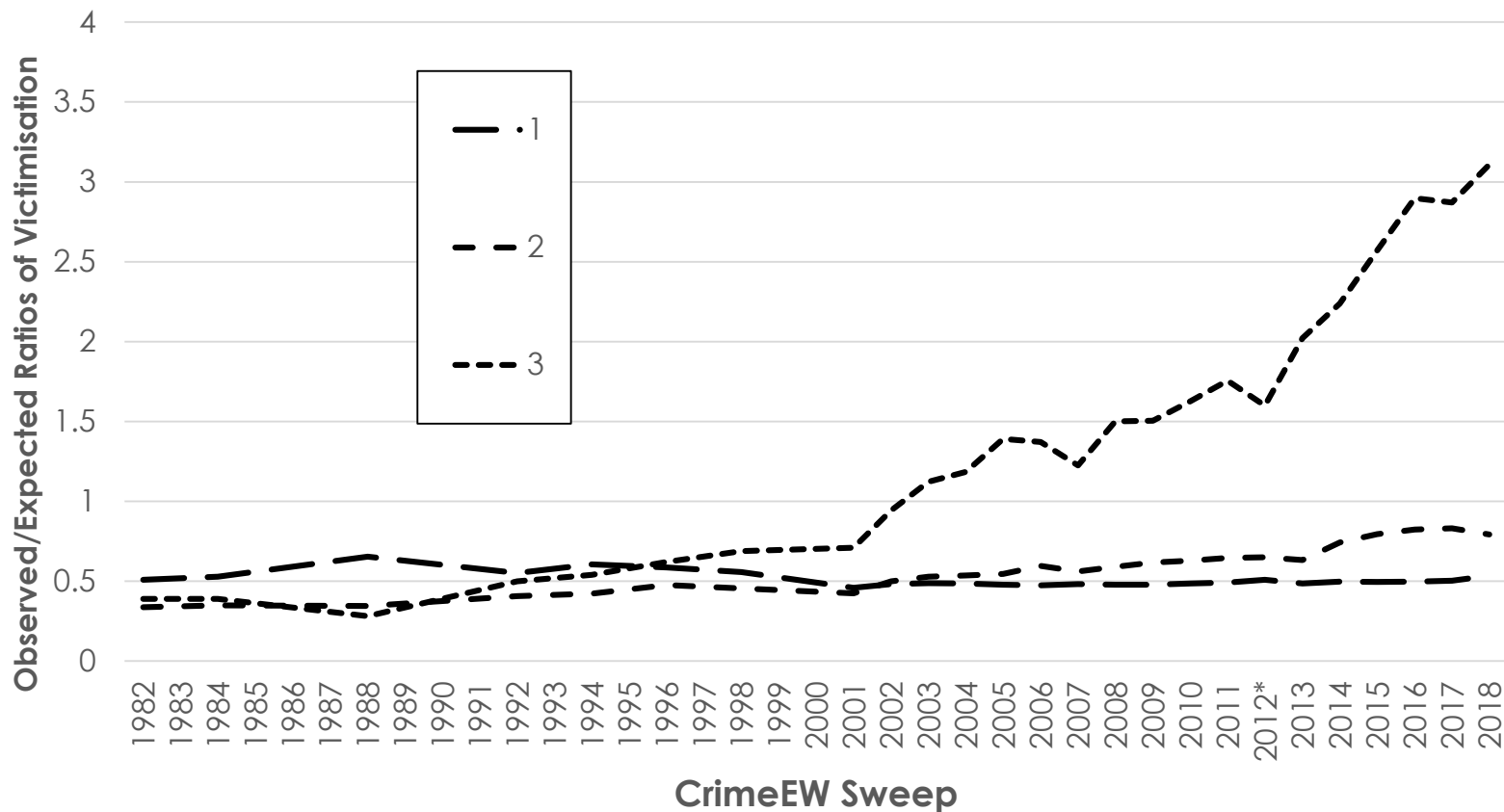
# Figure 1. Transition Probabilities Between Levels of Prior Victimisation





**The lower the incidence, the more important repeat/multiple victimisation and concentration of crime becomes.**

## Figure 2. Observed/Expected Ratios of Victimization Frequencies Over Time



**‘Observed’ relative to ‘Poisson expected’ distributions.**



**The ratio increases with the number of victimisations and as time passes by.**

**Concentration of victimisation is less and less “as expected” statistically in more recent years and for repeat victims.**

# Self-Critique...

1. *CSEW has changed over time in ways which make results from different sweeps non-comparable.* In fact, survey content has remained substantially the same over time, given the intention to enable legitimate trend analysis.
2. *The tendency of victims to telescope reports has increased markedly over time.* There is no obvious reason why the extent of telescoping should change over time, but re-interviews of the highest rate victims would prove a valuable addition to the survey.
3. *One cannot trust the reports of high-rate victims because their answers cluster around ten, twenty and thirty events.* The reader is invited to say how many times they have bought pizza in the last year.

# Discussion...

1. **ONS should revise its presentation of crime data** to give prominence to measures of crime concentration, with a commentary spelling out their implications for crime reduction strategy.
2. **Practitioners who have conducted crime reduction studies** where the data remain available should **consider reanalysis** separating out the extent to which any success lay in the reduction in prevalence or concentration of victimisation.
3. **Approaching crime reduction with a concentration focus offers opportunities** for more sophisticated but practically relevant analyses, especially on event sequences.
4. **The aspiration to prevent all repeats is ludicrous.** One issue is the diversity of repeat types. If the victimisation type of the first event in a sequence is the same as the second, i.e. if victimisation experience is homogeneous, with burglary always following burglary, the issue is easy because interventions would concentrate on burglary. If burglaries were followed by burglary or vehicle theft, repeat prevention measures would cover both types. The more diverse the sequences, the wider the range of intervention types, to the point where intervention may be unfeasible.

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