

Thematic guide: Crime and social control (using qualitative data)

The information age and easy global travel have brought new forms of crime



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Introduction

The study of crime and social control encompasses many academic disciplines, including sociology, psychology, law and economics.

As a theme, crime may cover topics ranging from contemporary concerns over youth gangs and anti-social behaviour, 'white collar' and corporate crime, crimes against the environment, through to serious violence.

Over the past twenty years, technological developments, the advent of the information age and easy global travel have brought new forms of crime such as cross-border money laundering and drug trafficking to the fore.

Accordingly, academic attention has shifted to crime prevention, security, the effects of tightening social controls on certain population groups, and international comparisons of law enforcement policy.

Crime-related data held in UK Data Service qualitative collections include studies into topics such as: youth justice, work in the criminal justice system, and the fear of crime.

Searching for related materials

The [UK Data Service catalogue](#) can be searched for data on crime and social control using subject terms such as:

- administration of justice
- community action
- crime prevention
- crime victims
- crime
- legal
- imprisonment
- law enforcement
- police services
- punishment
- prison.

Every data collection is accompanied by comprehensive documentation. These are open access and available to the public from the website and it is not necessary to be a registered user to access and download them.

The content of the documentation varies by collection, but usually includes information such as the initial proposal, interview schedule, description of methodology, end of award report, and so on. In some cases more details are provided, such as the coding schemes of the original researchers or examples of the consent forms used.

Other resources on crime and social control

[British Society of Criminology](#)

[Centre for Crime and Justice Studies](#)

[Centre for Criminology, University of Oxford](#)

[Department of Criminology, Keele University](#)

Summary of selected qualitative studies on crime and social control

SN 4581 Gender Difference, Anxiety and the Fear of Crime, 1995

Hollway, W. and Jefferson, T.

This research focused on crime and its relation to risk of victimisation and the suggestion that high-risk groups, in particular, young men, report lower fear than low-risk groups, in particular, older women. The notion of anxiety as a mediating influence in the relationship between risk of victimisation and fear of crime was examined. The research suggests that the relations between risk and fear of crime cannot be understood without theorising the multiple meanings attaching to a person's identity which become invested with anxiety.

Coverage

Sample: Men and women aged between 16-76, living on low and high crime estates in the North of England during 1995.

Data: 36 interviews.

Topics

- anxiety
- community life
- crime victims
- fear of crime
- gender
- psychoanalysis.

SN 5831 Doing Youth Justice: Analysing Risk and Need Assessments in Youth Justice Practice, 2004-2005

Phoenix J.

The past decade has seen a rapid expansion in the numbers of young people drawn into the criminal justice system and custody. This study investigated how youth justice practitioners

(including Youth Offending Team (YOT) workers, solicitors, police and lay magistrates) assess the risks and needs of young law-breakers, and make decisions and recommendations. The study also explored how the young offenders themselves engage in these processes.

Coverage

Sample: All those involved in the adjudication of youth justice in a small local authority in England, 2004-2005.

Data: Interviews and focus groups with: 12 magistrates; 8 police officers; 4 solicitors; 18 YOT workers; 26 young offenders.

Topics

- crime
- law
- youth
- social welfare policy.

SN 4953 Chief Probation Officers: a Criminal Justice Elite, 2000-2002

Mair, G.

This project aimed to carry out the first detailed empirical study of Chief Probation Officers (CPOs) in England and Wales. The objectives of the study were to investigate the social and educational backgrounds and career histories of CPOs; to explore their perceptions of community penalties, developments in these over the course of their careers and potential changes in the future; to examine the role of CPOs as managers and their relationships with central government, local agencies and their probation committees.

Coverage

Sample: Chief Probation Officers (CPOs) in England and Wales.

Data: 47 interviews.

Topics

- crime
- judgements
- policy making
- probation officers.

SN 4841 Neighbourhood Boundaries, Social Disorganization and Social Exclusion, 2001-2002

Atkinson, R.

The aim of the research was to investigate the underlying premise of UK neighbourhood crime policies through a comparative study of the responses to crime and disorder within both affluent and deprived neighbourhoods.

Coverage

Sample: Residents of one affluent neighbourhood and one deprived neighbourhood in each of two Scottish cities.

Data: 15 interviews; 6 focus groups; 1,207 quantitative survey responses anti-social behaviour.

Topics

- community action
- crime victims
- fear of crime.

SN 5146 Penal Communication, 2001-2002

Rex, S.

The overall aim of this mixed methods research project was to contribute to the conceptual and practical development of community penalties. Topics covered in the qualitative interviews include the meaning of punishment, the purpose of sentencing and punishment, probation, community service, prison sentences, youth justice, attitudes to criminal behaviour, reparation and restorative justice.

Coverage

Sample: Magistrates, probation officers, offenders and victims of crime in Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire, Gloucestershire, Greater London and Hertfordshire.

Data: 74 interviews; 771 survey responses.

Topics

- community service
- courts
- life styles
- probation officers
- prison
- criminal.

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