

Shedding more Light on the Dark Figure

Paul Richards, University College
London (UCL)

Crime surveys user meeting
Tuesday 7 December 2010

Presentation outline

Background

My Three Questions

Conclusion – My suggestions

Your Questions

Background

“Real time geodemographics for reassurance policing and crime prevention”

A 3 year PhD studentship at UCL funded by the Economic and Social Research Council and the Metropolitan Police Service (MPS) in London, using MPS data.

Supervisors: Professor Paul Longley & Dr Alex Singleton

Background

The Public's

Confidence in the Police

Trust in Crime Statistics

Perceptions and Actions

Questions

My British Crime Survey questions:

- Do the BCS 2009/10 reports* present calculations of the dark figure?
- Should the questions address why people report crime to the police not why they do not?
- Is the dark figure a measure of the level of confidence individuals, groups, communities has in the police and the criminal justice system?

*** Crime in England and Wales 2009/10, User Guide and two technical reports**

Does the BCS 2009/10 reports present calculations of the dark figure?

Measuring crime for 25 years

Origins of the BCS

The first victimisation surveys were carried out in the 60s and 70s, designed to examine the “dark figure” of crime i.e. crimes that are not reported to or recorded by the police.

**British Crime Survey –
Measuring crime for 25 years**

Krista Jansson

"dark figure" of crime—that is, about occurrences that by some criteria are called crime yet that are not registered in the statistics of whatever agency was the source of the data being used. Biderman, A., & Reiss, A., (1967) *On Exploring the "Dark Figure" of Crime*. The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science November 1967 vol. 374 no. 1 1-15

The “dark figure” of crime

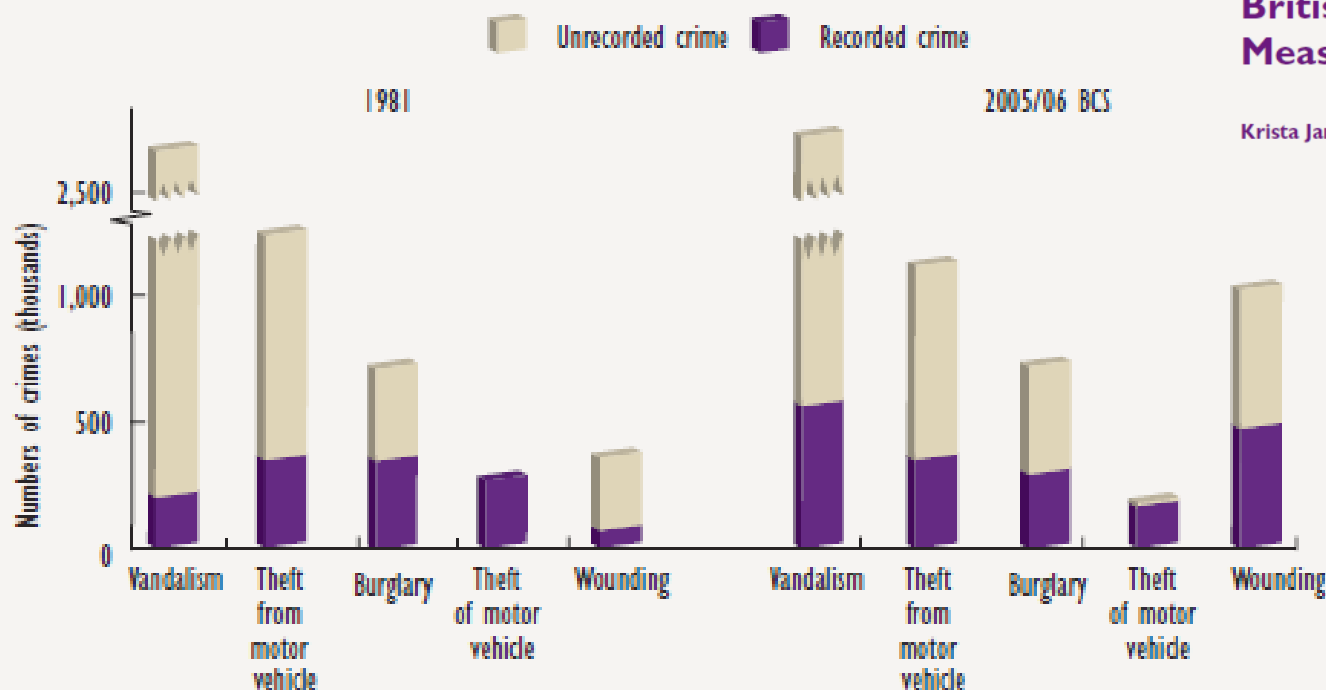
The first BCS estimated that there were 11 million crimes in England and Wales in 1981. However, there were less than three million crimes recorded by the police in 1981. This gap was called the “dark figure” of crime.

According to the authors:

“For those categories for which comparison was possible, the survey indicated a considerably greater number of incidents than did Criminal Statistics. Only for one category – thefts of motor vehicles – were the figures similar. For example the survey indicated twice as many burglaries as were recorded by the police.”

(Hough and Mayhew, 1983)

Levels of recorded and unrecorded crime, 1981 and 2005/06 BCS



Do the BCS 2009/10 reports present calculations of the dark figure?

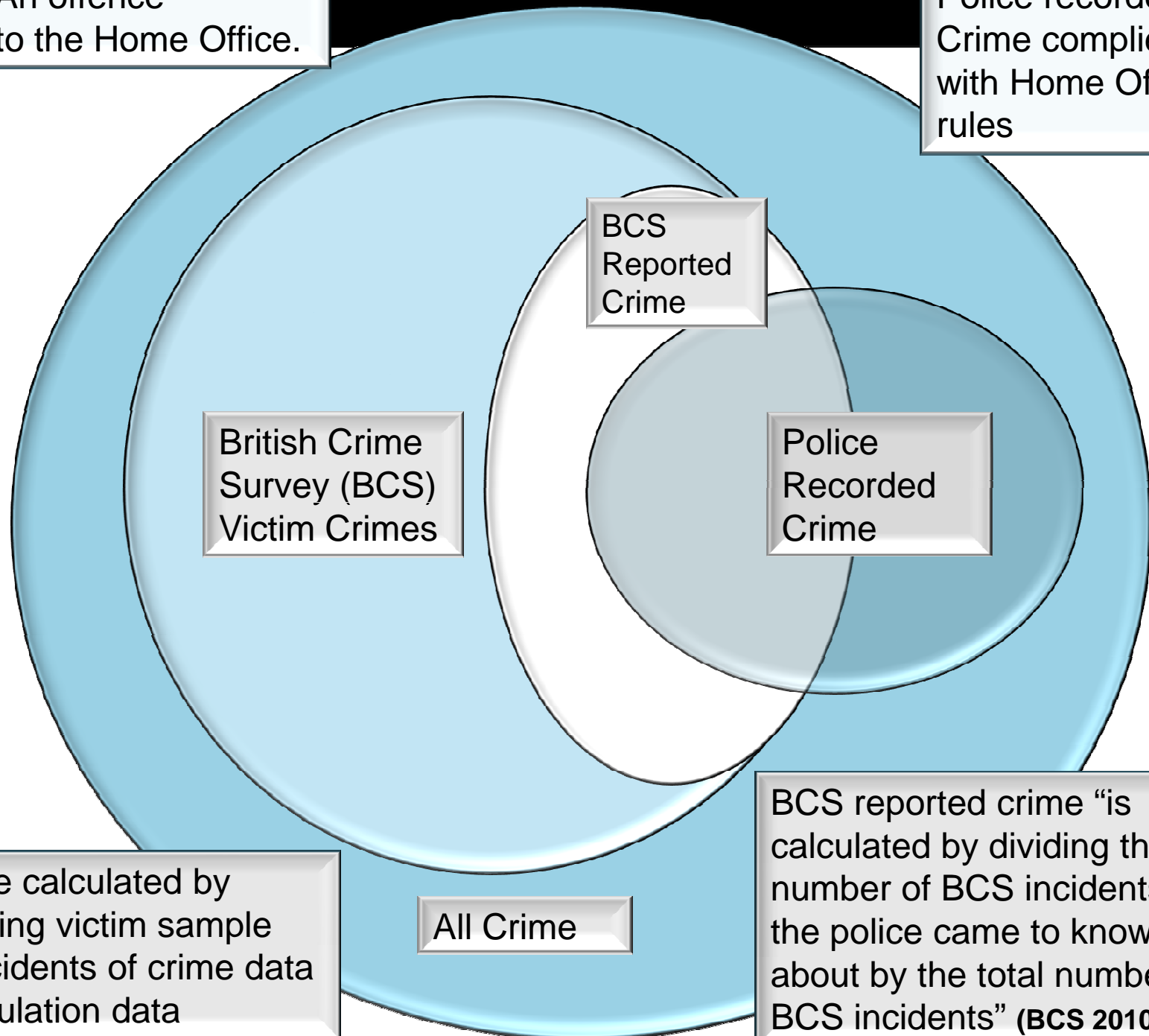
There are two portions to the dark figure;

- crime not reported to the police and
- crime reported to the police which are not counted within the police recorded crime statistics

Must remember that BCS only records victim crimes (not fraud or unlawful killing)

CRIME – An offence
notifiable to the Home Office.

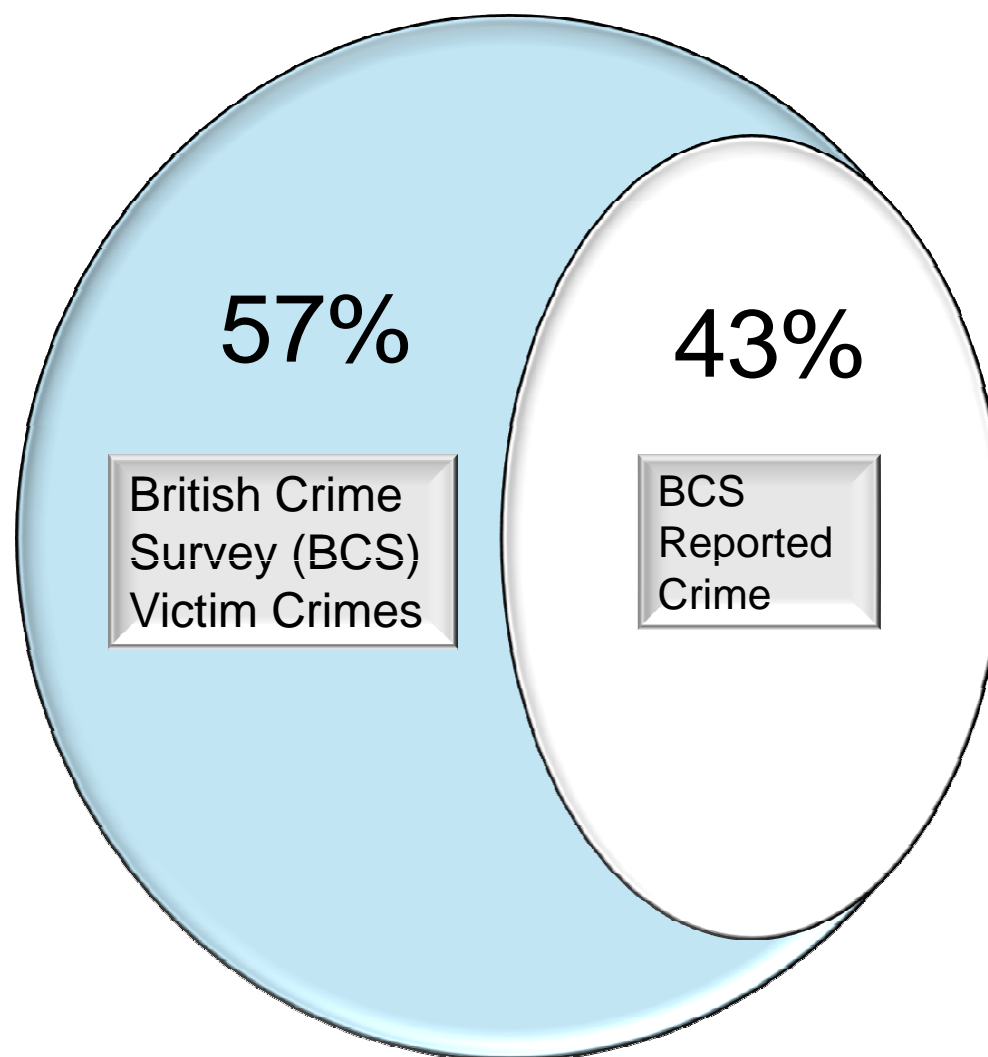
Police recorded
Crime complies
with Home Office
rules



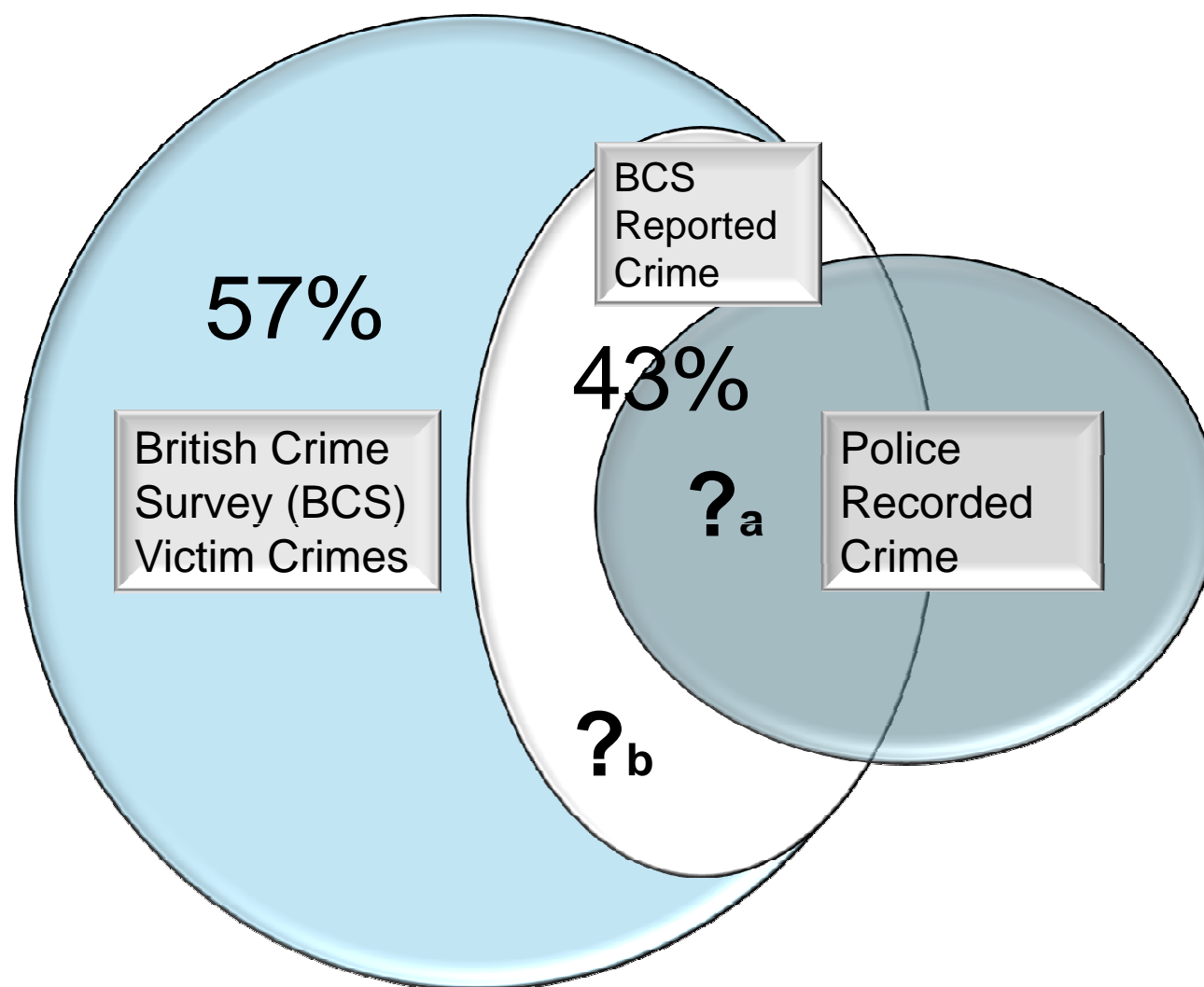
BCS crime calculated by
extrapolating victim sample
survey incidents of crime data
using population data

BCS reported crime “is
calculated by dividing the
number of BCS incidents that
the police came to know
about by the total number of
BCS incidents” (BCS 2010 2.5)

All Crime



Percentages for all “comparable crimes” (**BCS 2010 2.5**)



Percentages for all “comparable crimes” (BCS 2010 2.5)

Do the BCS 2009/10 reports present calculations of the dark figure?

Answers

Yes, but not all of it.

No, only part of it.

Should the questions address why people report crime to the police not why they do not?

Answer

The BCS questionnaire contains questions about why a victim reported a crime to police or why they did not (as relevant) but only results of the latter are presented and then only in passing.

I regard any voluntary contact with police as a sign of confidence and any avoidance of the police as an indication of possible lack of confidence.

A hypothesis that can be tested by BCS data

Victims who report crimes to police have a greater confidence in police than those who do not.

Methodology – Actions & Perceptions

Analyse answers to reporting to police questions (actions) with confidence in police questions (perceptions) to find correlations.

Could also analyse the influence of insurance policies

Is the dark figure a measure of the level of confidence individuals, groups, communities has in the police and the criminal justice system?

Answer

I do not know but there is geodemographic data within the BCS to allow this question to be answered.

Conclusion – My suggestions

- The next Crime in England & Wales publication include an overarching methodology (my Venn diagram?) so it is more accessible to and assessable by the general public.
- That calculations of both portions of the dark figure is presented.
- That more analysis of why the dark figure varies so much between crime types and possibly people by better analysis of reasons why victims do and do not report crimes to the police.
- Connected with the last, all victims should be asked whether reporting the crime to the police was a condition of an insurance policy or other contract.
- Link peoples actions of reporting/not reporting with their perceptions of the police and criminal justice system.

Your Questions

paul.richards2@ucl.ac.uk

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