

9 Crime

9.1 Key Data

- In 2009/10⁽¹⁾ the South West had the second lowest regional rate of recorded crime in England and Wales. The region's recorded crime rate was 66 offences per 1,000 population compared to 79 per 1,000 population in England and Wales as a whole.
- In 2009/10, 343,782 crimes were recorded by police forces in the South West.
- Recorded crime in the South West region in 2009/10 had decreased by 9% compared to the previous year and decreased by 26% since 2002/03. In comparison, recorded crime in England and Wales as a whole also decreased by 8% compared to the previous year, and decreased by 26% since 2002/03.
- Measured by the British Crime Survey (BCS)⁽²⁾, the rate of household crime and personal crime in the South West region remained stable in 2009/10 from the previous year and was not statistically significantly different from the rate for England and Wales as a whole. (See 9.2 'Introduction' below for an explanation of the differences between recorded crime and BCS methodologies).
- The Avon & Somerset police force area had the highest rate of recorded crime out of the five police force areas⁽³⁾ in the region at 79 offences per 1,000 population. This was the same rate as the England and Wales average.
- The South West overall had recorded crime rates (per 1,000 population) lower than the England and Wales average for violence against the person, burglary, offences against vehicles, other theft offences, fraud and forgery, criminal damage and drug offences.
- There are notable distinctions in crime rates between urban and rural areas of the region. Some 39% of the region's population live in local authorities classified as 'predominantly urban'⁽⁴⁾, which is where 54% of all recorded crime in 2009/10 was recorded. The recorded crime rate in 'predominantly urban' areas in 2009/10 was 91 per 1,000 population, compared to 48 per 1,000 population in 'predominantly rural' areas, and 63 per 1,000 population in the (two) areas⁽⁵⁾ classed as 'significantly rural' (a category in between 'predominantly urban' and 'predominantly rural').
- The areas with the highest rates of recorded crime in 2009/10 in the South West were Bristol with 127 offences per 1,000 population, Bournemouth with 108 offences per 1,000 population, and Gloucester with 97 offences per 1,000 population.
- The areas with the lowest rates of recorded crime in 2009/10 in the South West were Isles of Scilly and West Devon, with 17 and 26 offences per 1,000 population respectively.
- According to the BCS, the proportion of people in 2009/10 perceiving there to be high levels of anti-social behaviour⁽⁶⁾ was statistically significantly lower in the South West (10%) than the England and Wales average (14%).
- The BCS interviews for 2009/10 showed that the proportion of people perceiving drug use or dealing to be a very or fairly big problem in their area was also statistically significantly lower in the South West (19%) than the England and Wales average (26%).
- The 2009/10 BCS showed that 8% of those (aged 16-59) living in the South West reported using any illicit drug in the last year, which was in line with the England and Wales average.

1 Annual crime statistics are published in July each year. Crime statistics for the year 2010/11 will be released in July 2011. Recorded crime statistics for 2009/10 can be viewed via the [Home Office website](#).

2 Data from the BCS can be viewed via the [Home Office website](#)

3 The five force areas in the South West region are: Avon & Somerset, Devon & Cornwall, Dorset, Gloucestershire, and Wiltshire.

4 According to Defra's urban/rural classification of local authority areas

5 Bath & North East Somerset and Taunton Deane

6 See footnote in Anti-Social Behaviour section for explanation of this measure

- Confidence in the local police in the South West region overall (60% of people thinking they did an excellent or good job) was similar to the England and Wales average (56%). Confidence in the police was statistically significantly higher in Dorset (62%) and Devon & Cornwall (63%) compared with the national average.

9.2 Introduction

9.2.1 This chapter examines the state of crime in the South West by considering both crimes recorded by the police and the results of the BCS. These two datasets each have important advantages, and when they are examined in conjunction they are especially strong, but it is important to understand the differences between them. This is outlined in section 9.2.1.

9.2.1 Using Data: Recorded Crime and the British Crime Survey

9.2.1.1 Recorded crime figures⁽⁷⁾ are compiled from police returns to the Home Office and are the most readily available measures of the incidence of crime. However, they do not necessarily indicate the true extent of crime: offences that are recorded by the police are merely a subset of crimes that are reported to them and those are a subset of the crimes that actually occur (since many crimes are never reported to the police). Home Office research suggests that only around 41% of crimes are reported to the police.⁽⁸⁾

9.2.1.2 The decision to report an incident to the police depends on a number of factors, typically influenced by the victim's personal circumstances, attitude to the police and the type of crime. The BCS, by contrast, counts crimes experienced by interviewees in the 12 months prior to interview, regardless of whether they have been reported to or recorded by the police. It is a victimisation survey in which adults aged 16 years or over and living in private households in England and Wales are asked questions about offences against their household (such as theft or damage of household property) and about personal offences (such as assault). The survey also explores people's perceptions of crime and

anti-social behaviour, contact with the police and drug misuse. However, certain crimes such as murder, where the victim cannot be interviewed, and 'victimless crimes' (e.g. possession of drugs), are excluded from the BCS. Equally since the BCS is a measure of crime against private households, commercial crime is excluded. The survey was also extended in January 2009 to include 4,000 interviews with children aged 10-15, although it is currently too early for any results from these interviews to have been made available.

9.2.1.3 The BCS estimates are subject to sampling error, which means that differences between estimates from successive years of the survey or between population sub-groups may occur by chance. Tests of statistical significance are used to identify which differences are unlikely to have occurred by chance. In this chapter where significance levels are mentioned this is at the 5% level (the level at which there is a one in twenty chance of an observed difference being solely due to chance).

9.2.1.4 Volume of crime is related to, amongst other things, the size of an area's population, as the more people that live in an area, the more potential victims and/or offenders there could be. Police recorded crime statistics record where an offence takes place and to standardise the data for differences in population size, crime data is expressed as a rate per 1,000 resident population. However, rates that are based on resident populations can overestimate levels of crime in areas where a large number of people visit from outside (e.g. seaside towns such as Bournemouth during the summer months).

7 Recorded crime data from 2002/03 onwards is used in this chapter, as data from before this date is not comparable to later data due to changes in crime recording. The National Crime Recording Standard was introduced in April 2002. Its aims were to take a more victim-oriented approach to crime recording and to provide a greater consistency between police forces in crime recording. The result of this was that there was an increase in the recording of crime overall and it means that data before and after the introduction of the Standard are not directly comparable.

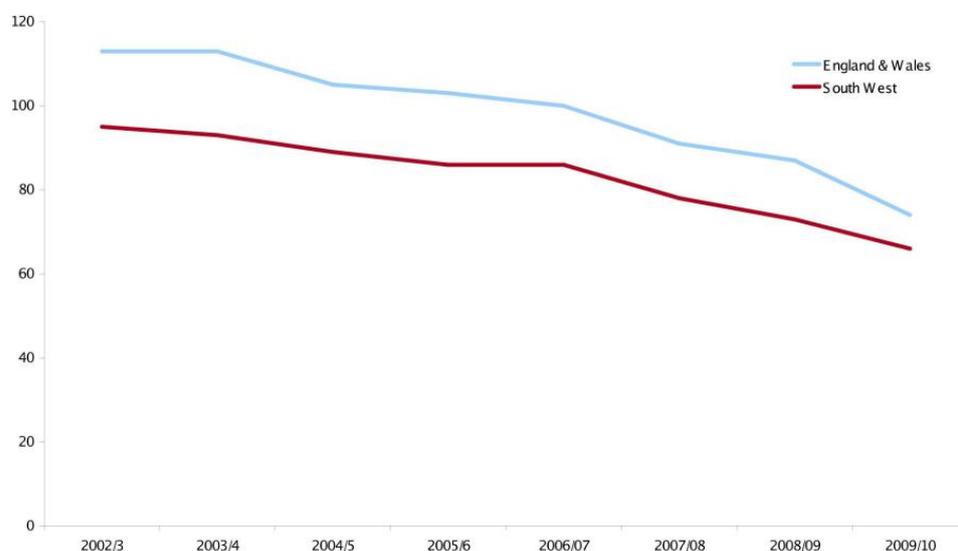
8 Walker et al, *Crime in England and Wales 2008/09*, July 2009, Home Office.

9.3 Trends in Recorded Crime

9.3.1 Levels of recorded crime in 2009/10 were lower in the South West region than in England and Wales as a whole: the region recorded the second lowest rate of crime per 1,000 head of population in England and Wales (at 66 recorded

offences compared to 79 for England and Wales). Some 343,782 crimes were recorded by the police forces in the South West in 2009/10, 26% fewer than 2002/03 and 9% fewer than 2008/09. For detailed data regarding recorded crime figures see the Home Office publication [Crime in England and Wales 2009/10](#).

Figure 9.3.1 Recorded crime per 1,000 population 2002/03 to 2009/10



Source: Crime in England & Wales 2009/10 (and previous years), Home Office

9.3.2 South West recorded crime rates in 2009/10 were lower than or equal to the overall England and Wales rates for all offence groups.

Table 9.3.1 Recorded Crime Rates per 1,000 Population in 2009/10

	South West	England & Wales
Violence against the person	14	16
Sexual offences	1	1
Robbery	1	1
Burglary	8	10
Offences against vehicles	7	9
Other theft offences	16	19
Fraud and forgery	2	3

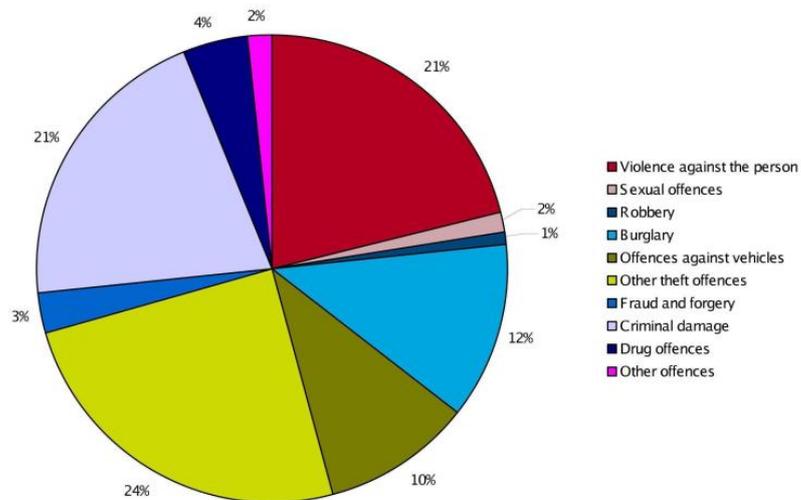
	South West	England & Wales
Criminal damage	14	15
Drug offences	3	4
Other offences	1	1
ALL RECORDED CRIME	66	74

Source: Crime in England & Wales 2009/10, Home Office

9.3.3 Despite the South West having a rate lower than in England (see Table 9.3.1), in 2009/10 criminal damage accounted for 21% of the total of all recorded crime in the region. The

largest offence group – at 24% of all recorded offences in the South West – was ‘other theft offences’.

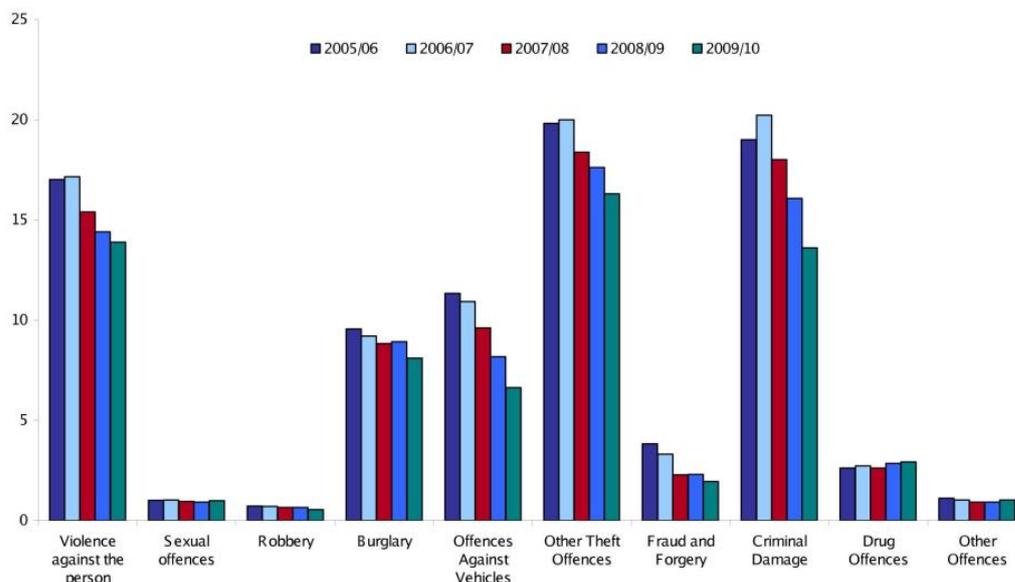
Figure 9.3.2 Recorded Crime by Offence Group 2009/10 in South West, percentage



Source: Crime in England & Wales, 2009/10, Home Office

9.3.4 While overall levels of recorded crime in the South West have fallen by 26% since 2002/03 there has been notable fluctuation within the main crime types over the last few years.

Figure 9.3.3 Changes in Recorded Crime Rates per 1,000 Population by Offence Group 2005/06 - 2009/10



Source: Home Office Recorded Crime Data

9.3.5 The figure above shows changes since 2005/06 in the South West. Rates of violence against the person, offences against vehicles, burglary, robbery, other theft offences, fraud and forgery, sexual offences, criminal damage and 'other offences' were all lower in the most recent figures (2009/10) than they were in 2005/06. In particular, the rate per 1,000 population of recorded offences against vehicles declined from 11 in 2005/06 to 7 in 2009/10, the rate of violence against the person offences declined from 17 to 14, and the rate of criminal damage offences went down from 19 to 14.

9.3.6 The only offence group for which the rate increased from 2005/06 to 2009/10 is drug offences, although even this was by a comparatively small amount. It should be noted, however, that police recorded crime figures for

drug offences tend to be more a measure of drug policing activity and changes may reflect changes in national and local policing priorities rather than changes in the incidence of drug use.⁽⁹⁾

9.4 Trends in the British Crime Survey (BCS)

9.4.1 According to BCS interviews conducted in 2009/10, the South West rates for household, personal and violent crime were not statistically significantly different to the average for England and Wales. The rates for burglary and all vehicle-related theft were statistically significantly lower in the South West than in England and

9 For example, in April 2004 formal warnings for cannabis possession were introduced, and there was a 59% increase in the number of formal warnings issued between 2004/5 and 2005/6, which coincided with a 36% increase in the recording of possession of cannabis offences across England and Wales.

Wales. The BCS found no statistically significant changes in any of these rates in the South West overall in 2009/10 compared to 2008/09⁽¹⁰⁾⁽¹¹⁾

Table 9.4.1 BCS rates of crime per 10,000 households/adults in the South West and England & Wales, 2009/10

(1)	South West	England & Wales
Household crime	2,309	2,525
Personal crime	808	817
Burglary	164	280
All vehicle related theft	398	522
Violent crime	586	467
Source: Crime in England & Wales 2009/10, Home Office		

1. Note footnotes 9 and 10

9.4.2 The Devon and Cornwall force area had statistically significantly lower rates than the national averages for household crime, burglary and vehicle related theft. The Gloucestershire and Dorset force areas had rates statistically significantly lower than the national average for burglary. The 2009/10 rate was statistically significantly higher than in 2008/09 for personal crime and violence in Gloucestershire, but lower for burglary in Devon and Cornwall and for vehicle-related theft in Avon and Somerset.

9.4.3 Table 9.4.2 shows how the risk of being a victim⁽¹²⁾ of certain types of crime (2009/10) in each of the English regions and Wales compared with the England and Wales average:

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- 10 Rates for BCS household crime, burglary, and all vehicle theft are per 10,000 households, whilst rates for personal crime and violent crime are per 10,000 adult population. The figures for burglary and vehicle theft are also included within the household crime figure, and likewise violent crime is included within the personal crime figure.
- 11 For **personal** crimes, the respondent reports only on his/her experience to the BCS. This applies to the following offence categories: wounding, assault with minor injury, assault with no injury, sexual offences (although these are not included in total 'personal crime' reported here), robbery, theft from the person, and other personal theft. The 2008/09 BCS data does not cover personal crimes against those aged under 16 or personal or household crimes against those not living in private households. For **household** crimes reported in the BCS, all members of the household can be regarded as victims. Therefore, the respondent answers on behalf of the whole household in the offence categories of: bicycle theft, burglary, theft in a dwelling, other household theft, thefts of and from vehicles, and vandalism to household property and vehicles.
- 12 For the groupings of 'household crime' and 'personal crime', this refers to the risk of being a victim at least once, which is a different measure from the rate per household or per adult. For burglary, vehicle related theft, and violent crime, this table still refers to the rate.

Table 9.4.2 BCS victimisation by English region and Wales, 2008/09

English region and Wales	Risk of household crime	Risk of personal crime	Rate of burglary	Rate of vehicle-related theft	Rate of violent crime
<i>Compared with England and Wales</i>					
North East	-	-	-	-	-
North West	-	-	-	-	-
Yorkshire and the Humber	-	-	Higher	Lower	-
East Midlands	-	-	-	-	-
West Midlands	Lower	-	-	-	-
East of England	-	-	-	-	-
London	-	Higher	-	Higher	-
South East	-	-	Lower	-	-
South West	-	-	Lower	Lower	-
Wales	Lower	Lower	Lower	-	-
<p><i>Note: '-' denotes no statistically significant difference from the overall England and Wales figure</i> Source: Crime in England & Wales 2009/10, Home Office</p>					

9.5 Violent Crime

9.5.1 Recorded crime figures in the South West showed a 3% decrease between 2008/09 and 2009/10 in violence against the person (with the rate in 2009/10 at 14 offences per 1,000 population), which compared to a 4% reduction across England and Wales for the same time period. However, the BCS in 2009/10 found that the level of violent crime in the South West (rate of 586 per 10,000 adults) did not show a statistically significant difference from the previous year. Meanwhile, the number of recorded sexual offences increased by 9% in the South West from 2008/09 to 2009/10 (compared to a 6% increase recorded across England and Wales), although the number of recorded robbery offences increased by 2% in the South West (compared to a 5% decrease across England and Wales).⁽¹³⁾

9.5.2 Of the police force areas in the region, in 2009/10 Avon & Somerset had the highest rate of recorded violence against the person in the South West (17 per 1,000 population), compared to 16 for England and Wales as a whole. The South West overall recorded a rate of 14 offences per 1,000 population, with three of the five forces in the region showing a reduction (Devon and Cornwall 3%, Dorset 6% and Gloucestershire 14%) in recorded offences of violence against the person compared to 2008/09. Two forces showed an increase compared to 2008/09 (Avon and Somerset at 1% and Wiltshire at 2%). England and Wales showed an overall decrease of 3%.

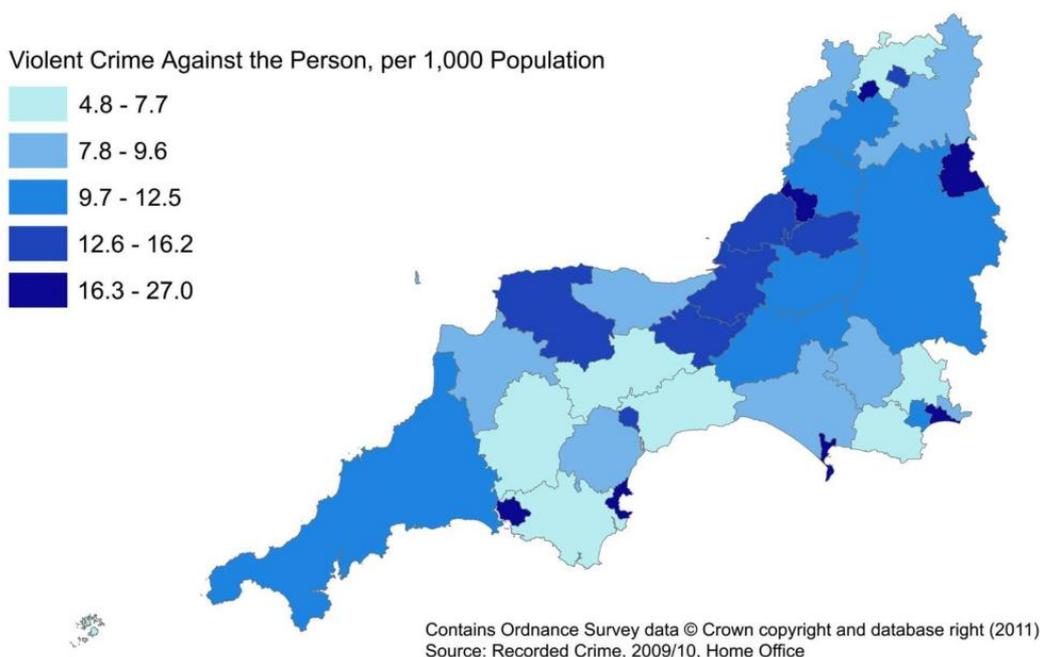
9.5.3 Research undertaken by the Home Office and a number of other organisations (see for example *Crime in England and Wales 2005/06*, Home Office 2006; *Domestic violence offenders: characteristics and offending related needs*, Home Office 2003; *Alcohol and Crime*, Institute of Alcohol Studies Fact Sheet 2007) suggests that there is a relationship between

13 It should be noted that (in the South West) robbery has the lowest recorded volume of any of the main crime groups.

violent crime and alcohol, so linked to concerns about this crime type there is interest in the levels of alcohol consumption in the South West

(for more information on which see the 8 'Public Health' chapter).

Figure 9.5.1 Violent Crime Against the Person Rates per 1,000 Population by Local Authority, 2009/10



9.6 Burglary

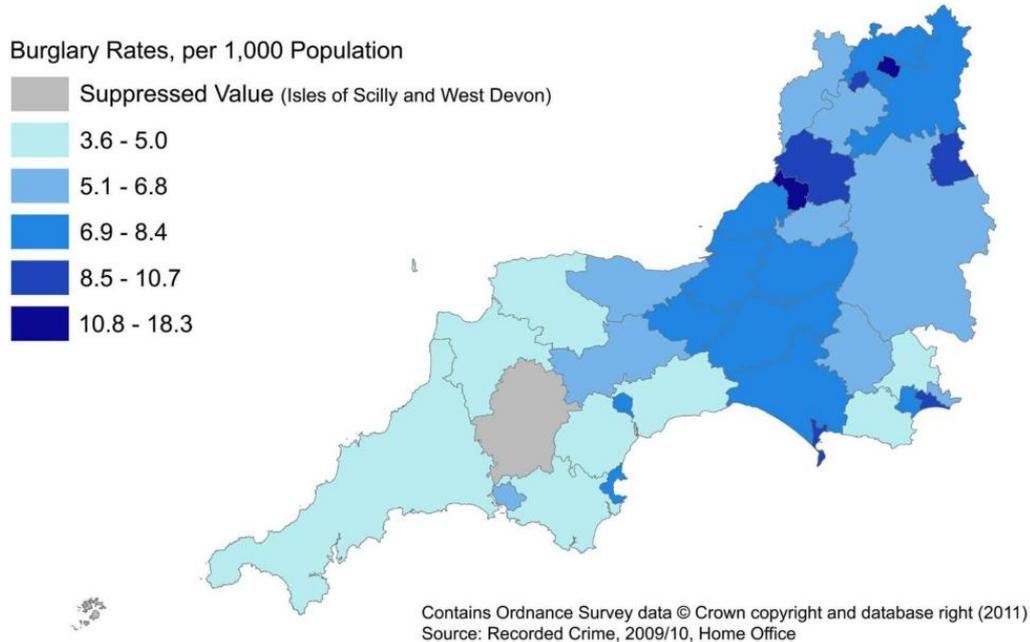
9.6.1 In 2009/10 recorded rates of burglary in the South West stood at 8 offences per 1,000 population. This compared to a national average of 10 offences per 1,000 population and was the joint lowest rate across all the English regions (and also joint with Wales).

9.6.2 In terms of numbers of recorded offences of burglary, there was an 8% decrease in the South West in 2009/10 from the previous year.

This regional decrease was driven by four police force areas that saw decreases: Devon and Cornwall (16%), Avon & Somerset (9%), Gloucestershire (5%) and Dorset (1%). Wiltshire saw no change in the rate of burglary. There was a decrease of 7% on the previous year across England and Wales as a whole.

9.6.3 The BCS interviews for 2009/10 estimated that 164 incidents of burglary per 10,000 households occurred in the South West, but there had been no statistically significant change since 2008/09.

Figure 9.6.1 Burglary Rates, per 1,000 Population

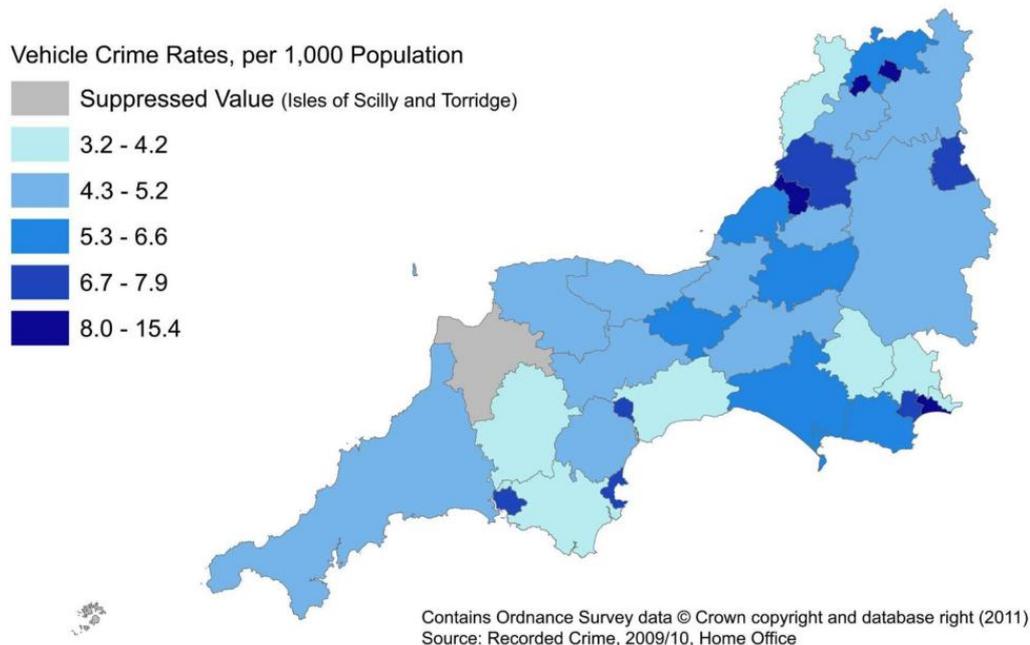


9.7 Vehicle Crime

9.7.1 Recorded levels of offences against vehicles (incorporating theft of a motor vehicle, theft from a vehicle, aggravated vehicle taking and interfering with a motor vehicle) decreased by 18% in the South West between 2008/09 and 2009/10, and at a rate of 7 per 1,000 population the region was the joint lowest in England and Wales (average 9 per 1,000 population). Recorded offences against vehicles decreased in all five of the force areas in the region compared to the previous year, the greatest decreases being in Avon and Somerset (22%) and Wiltshire (21%).

9.7.2 According to the BCS, the rate of all vehicle-related theft (either actual or attempted theft of or from a vehicle) in 2009/10 (398 per 10,000 households) did not represent a statistically significant change on the level in 2008/09 (499 per 10,000 households). Avon and Somerset was the only police force area to experience a statistically significant decrease in their rate of vehicle-related theft compared to their level in the previous year. The rate of vehicle-related theft in the South West was statistically significantly lower compared to the England and Wales average (522 per 10,000 households). The Devon and Cornwall force area also had a rate which were statistically significantly lower than the England and Wales rate.

Figure 9.7.1 Vehicle Crimes Rates, per 1,000 Population



9.8 Drug Misuse

9.8.1 The illicit nature of drug use makes obtaining accurate estimates of the levels of usage challenging. The recorded figures for both drug possession and trafficking can be seen to significantly understate the true extent of offending in those areas.⁽¹⁴⁾ Police recorded crime figures tend to be more a measure of drug policing activity and changes may reflect changes in national and local policing priorities rather than changes in the incidence of drug use.

9.8.2 The BCS is used to monitor trends in drug use (for more information see 'Drug Misuse Declared: Findings from the 2009/10 British Crime Survey'). Analysis of the 2009/10 BCS revealed that in the South West some 7.6% of those aged 16-59 reported having used illicit drugs in the last year, compared to the England and Wales average of 8.6%. The figure for the South West was significantly lower than the previous year (10.4% in 2008/09). The figure for

Class A drug usage in the South West was 2.7% of 16-59 year olds reporting use in the last year (the England and Wales average was 3.1%).⁽¹⁵⁾

9.8.3 The results of the 2009/10 BCS showed that the proportion of people perceiving there to be high levels of drug use or dealing in their area was statistically significantly lower in the South West (19%) than in England and Wales as a whole (2%). The figure for the South West was also statistically significantly lower than for 2008/09 (23%). All force areas in the region were statistically significantly lower than the average for England and Wales. The police force areas of Dorset (16%) and Gloucestershire (18%) had percentages statistically significantly lower compared to the previous year.

9.8.4 See the 8 'Public Health' chapter for further information about drug misuse in the South West.

14 Walker et al, *Crime in England and Wales 2008/09*, July 2009, Home Office.

15 These figures should be treated with some caution since the small number of respondents in each region make these figures subject to fluctuation. Figures taken from: Hoare, *Drug Misuse Declared: Findings from the 2008/09 British Crime Survey*, 2009, Home Office.

9.9 Anti-Social Behaviour

9.9.1 In addition to measuring actual crime levels the BCS also explores attitudinal measures such as public perceptions of changing crime levels, perceptions of anti-social behaviour, confidence in the criminal justice system and victim and witness satisfaction with the police.

9.9.2 In the South West region in 2009/10 the proportion of people (10%) perceiving there to be high levels of anti-social behaviour⁽¹⁶⁾ (ASB) was statistically significantly lower than the average for England and Wales (14%). Perceptions of high levels of ASB were also statistically significantly lower than the England and Wales average in Dorset (10%), Devon and Cornwall (9%), Gloucestershire (8%) and Wiltshire (8%). The proportion in Avon & Somerset (12%) was not statistically significantly different from the England and Wales average.

9.9.3 One of the components of these scores of perceived ASB is the perception of 'drunk or rowdy behaviour'.⁽¹⁷⁾ In the South West, 20% of people perceived this to be a very or fairly big problem in 2009/10 BCS interviews. This was statistically significantly lower than England and

Wales overall (24%). The force areas of Avon and Somerset (20%), Gloucestershire (16%) and Wiltshire (18%) were all statistically significantly lower than England and Wales as a whole. The Dorset (22%) and Devon & Cornwall (20%) force areas were not statistically significantly different from the England and Wales average.

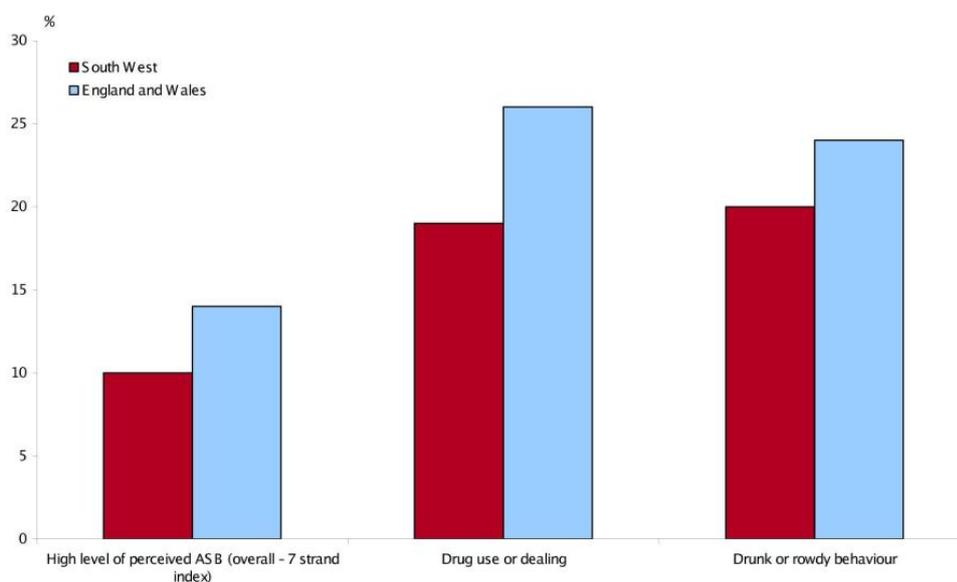
9.9.4 Analysis of national trends reveals that perceptions of anti-social behaviour are related to a variety of household and area characteristics. For example, according to the 2009/10 BCS, in England and Wales as a whole only 6% of respondents from the least deprived areas perceived there to be high levels of anti-social behaviour compared to 28% of those in the most deprived areas. Although the South West has a much smaller proportion of people living in deprived areas than the England average, with only around 3.5% of the 'Lower Super Output Areas' in the region being among the 10% most deprived in England, there are still around 179,000 people living in these areas.⁽¹⁸⁾ Many of the areas of greatest deprivation are concentrated in some of the South West's major urban centres (for example Bristol) which also represent the areas with the highest crime levels in the region.

16 The BCS measure of perceptions of high levels of anti-social behaviour (ASB) is a composite measure based on seven individual ASB questions relating to: teenagers hanging around, vandalism/graffiti/other deliberate damage, drug use or dealing, drunk or rowdy behaviour, noisy neighbours or loud parties, rubbish or litter, abandoned or burnt out cars.

17 Another of the components of the scores of perceived ASB is the perception of 'drug use and dealing', as described in the 'Drug Misuse' section of this chapter.

18 South West Observatory 'Indices of Deprivation 2007 – Deprivation in the South West'.

Figure 9.9.1 Proportion perceiving high levels of Anti-Social Behaviour overall, and proportion perceiving problem with two ASB components, in the South West and England and Wales 2009/10, percentages



Source: Crime in England & Wales, 2009/10, Home Office

9.10 Confidence

9.10.1 In BCS interviews in 2009/10, 60% of people in the South West overall considered that their local police did an excellent or good job, a statistically significantly higher level than England and Wales as a whole (56%). The proportion of people within the Dorset (62%) and the Devon & Cornwall (63%) police force areas who perceived the local police to be doing a good/excellent job was also statistically significantly higher than the England and Wales average.

9.10.2 There is another BCS question that asks whether people think that their police and local council are dealing with the anti-social behaviour and crime issues that matter in the local area. In BCS interviews in 2009/10, 50% of people in the South West agreed⁽¹⁹⁾ with this, which was not statistically significantly different from the England and Wales figure of 51%. The figure for Wiltshire (48%) was statistically significantly lower than England and Wales as a whole.

9.10.3 The percentage of people in the South West who were 'very' or 'fairly confident' that the criminal justice system was effective was 40% - which was not statistically significantly different from the England and Wales average of 41%. The figure for Wiltshire (34%) was statistically significantly lower than England and Wales overall.

9.11 Rural and Urban Dimensions

9.11.1 Some 28 of the 42 district and unitary authorities in the South West region (as of 2009/10, the time period when the data in this chapter is mostly drawn from) are classified by the Government as 'predominantly rural' (see [Defra's classification of Local Authorities](#)), encompassing 55% of the population, while another two areas are classified as 'significantly rural' (encompassing 5% of the population), leaving twelve classified as 'predominantly urban' (encompassing 39%⁽²⁰⁾ of the population). This inevitably impacts on the crime picture in the South West, with the BCS showing that crime generally tends to affect urban and rural areas differently. (For example the 2009/10 BCS found

19 Percentage saying 'strongly agree' or 'tend to agree'.

20 Percentages do not add to 100 due to rounding.

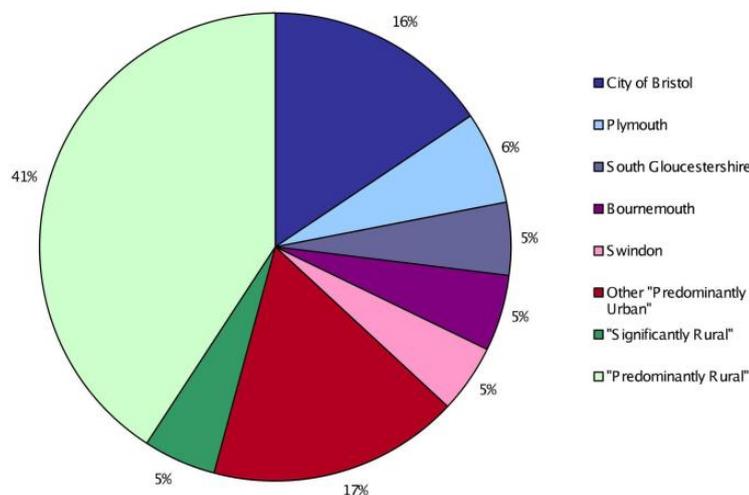
that in England and Wales overall the risk of being a victim of antisocial behaviour was 7% in rural areas compared with 16% in urban areas.⁽²¹⁾ Unsurprisingly, therefore, there are notable geographic variations in both volume and patterns of crime across the South West.

9.11.2 In 2009/10, 54% of all recorded crime committed in the South West occurred in local authority areas which were classified as 'predominantly urban' (despite these only containing 39% of the region's population). In the region, 16% of all recorded crime was committed in Bristol and a further 6% in Plymouth, such that these two cities together accounted for over a fifth of all recorded crime in the region. A further eight local authority areas each individually accounted for at least 3% of the region's total of recorded crime, the most

notable of which being South Gloucestershire, Bournemouth, and Swindon which each accounted for approximately 5%.

9.11.3 In contrast to the 'predominantly urban' areas, where the proportion of the region's recorded crime in 2009/10 was greater than the proportion of the region's population, the reverse was true in the areas classified as 'predominantly rural'. Just 41% of the recorded crime in the region was in these areas, despite their accounting for 56% of the region's population. The two remaining local authorities that fall between these categories (Bath and North East Somerset and Taunton Deane, which are classified as 'significantly rural') accounted for a proportion of recorded crime in line with their population (5% of the region's recorded crime in 2009/10, compared to 6% of the region's population).

Figure 9.11.1 Total Recorded Crime in the South West 2009/10, split into Urban and Rural areas, percentages



Source: Recorded Crime, 2009/10, Home Office

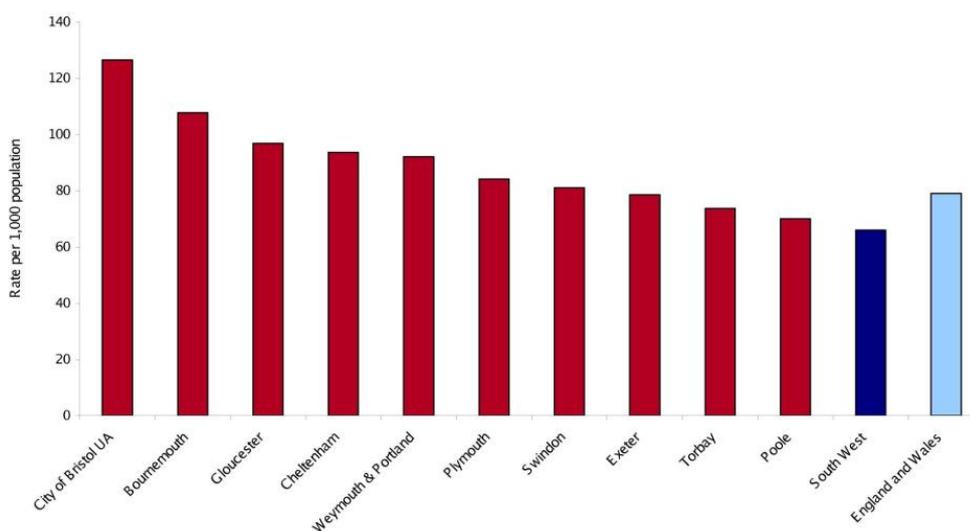
21 There are important differences in the way that crime is recorded by the police and the BCS which may have an impact in geographic terms. BCS crime relates to where a respondent lives rather than where an offence was committed, by contrast to police recorded data which relates to where an incident took place.

9.12 Crime at the Local Authority Level

9.12.1 In terms of crime rates per head of population there are notable differences between local areas across the region, with recorded crime rates in 2009/10 ranging from 127 per 1,000 population in Bristol to 17 per 1,000 population in the Isles of Scilly.

9.12.2 Seven of the 42 district and unitary authorities⁽²²⁾ in the South West had 2009/10 crime rates per 1,000 population which were in excess of the England and Wales average of 79. A further four exhibited crime rates greater than or equal to the regional average of 66. This leaves three quarters of the areas in the region that had crime rates below the regional average – which demonstrates clearly that there are a relatively small number of areas with higher crime rates, mostly the major urban centres, that elevate the crime rate for the region.

Figure 9.12.1 Total Recorded Crime by Local Authority 2009/10 - highest rates (areas greater than or equal to regional average)



Source: Recorded Crime, 2009/10, Home Office

9.13 Conclusions

9.13.1 The relatively low levels of crime in the South West are, in part, a reflection of its predominant rurality. Indeed, the highest rates of crime in the region are to be found in its large urban centres and the highest rate of crime in the region is found in Bristol, the largest city, while the rural areas have comparatively low levels of crime.

9.13.2 There are many crime-related measures by which the South West performs better than England and Wales overall. For example in 2009/10: the recorded crime rate was lower; the BCS victimisation rate of household crime was lower; more people rated the police highly; and fewer people perceived there to be high levels of anti-social behaviour.⁽²³⁾

22 As of 2009/10

23 See footnote in Anti-Social Behaviour section for explanation of this measure.

9.13.3 Lower levels of crime contribute to the attractiveness of the South West as a place to live and work. However, especially in the more urban areas, the region contains places with levels of crime well in excess of the national average. The South West has a varied landscape, and this variation is reflected in crime as it is in many policy areas, and especially in urban areas the region faces many of the same challenging crime-related issues as elsewhere in the country. The region remains though one of the safest in the country, and the crime figures suggest that the common perception of the South West as a relatively safe region is well founded.