



## **Understanding the crime fall – examining changes in crime in the Core Cities since 2007**

This research was conducted by University College London Jill Dando Institute of Security and Crime Science and the Community Safety Partnerships from the eight Core Cities in England and Wales, and supported by the Local Government Association. Any enquiries should be directed to Spencer Chainey, UCL Department of Security and Crime Science  
E: [s.chainey@ucl.ac.uk](mailto:s.chainey@ucl.ac.uk) M: 07717 342708 W: [www.ucl.ac.uk/scs](http://www.ucl.ac.uk/scs)

Since 2007 (and for a long time prior), crime has continued to fall. But why? Reasons that have been offered for the crime fall include the legalisation of abortion, lead-free petrol, reductions in drug use, effective policing and community safety strategies (e.g. problem solving, zero-tolerance policing), the security hypothesis, the movement of crime from the street to the internet, social media use, the reduction in prolific offending, and specific to recorded crime - crime code changes, incidents not being 'crimed', a fall in reporting, and fewer police officers observing crimes.

Most attempts to explain the crime fall typically involve commentators speculating on their preferred single posited reason. We argue that it is not appropriate to attempt to identify one single reason for the crime fall. For example, the reason for explaining why theft of vehicles has fallen is likely to be different to why violent crime has fallen, and different to why criminal damage has also fallen.

This research project was inspired by the desire of the Community Safety Partnerships (CSPs) from England and Wales' Core Cities (the eight largest cities outside of London) to better understand (and evidence) why crime had fallen, and how this knowledge could inform future Partnership work. CSPs have been at the heart of improving community safety and reducing crime since 1998, with local Councils, the Police, Probation, Fire and Rescue, Health services, the Courts and many other local public and voluntary agencies coordinating operational and strategic crime reduction activities.

The research project has involved UCL's Jill Dando Institute working with each of the CSPs from the Core Cities to begin to unpick changes in crime and understand why these changes have occurred. Part 1 of the research has examined crime trends. We report on these findings here. Part 2 involves a detailed analysis of certain types of crime to determine why they have changed. The research is novel because it takes a very empirical, crime-specific approach. That is, rather than looking at all crime and speculating on reasons for the fall, we have examined each of the main crime types in turn to see how they have changed over the last few years. By unpicking the crime trends in this way helps us to identify specific changes and place us in a better position to suggest, and then test why these changes have occurred. The research used a combination of recorded crime data and data from the Crime Survey of England and Wales (CSEW).

### **Consistency**

Since 2007 the changes in crime, by type, in the Core Cities have (in general) been consistent; both in terms of the direction of these changes and the timings of these trends. For example, each city saw a reduction in the theft of vehicles since 2007 of over 50%, however in recent years these reductions began to slow.

### **Main contributors to the crime fall**

Each of the Core Cities experienced a reduction in all recorded crime since 2007 of greater than 28%. Of note was that just three recorded crime types - theft from vehicles, criminal damage to vehicles, and criminal damage to dwellings were responsible for almost a half of the *overall* fall in crime in the Core Cities since 2007.

### **What has increased?**

Theft from the person is the main type of recorded crime that has increased in each of the Core Cities since 2007. This is supported by the CSEW. There have also been increases in shoplifting in some of the Core Cities. Bike theft was on the increase until 2011, but reduced in the Core Cities in 2012. Other theft, which

is a rather broad category, was on the increase but fell in 2012. It is likely that this fall is more due to reductions in metal theft rather than the theft of personal items.

**What may happen next – what are the reasons for these crime changes?**

Criminal damage continues to fall at a pace and we anticipate it will continue to be a key contributor to the *overall* crime falls in the next few years. In the last six years and for many years prior, the reductions in vehicle crime have contributed significantly to the *overall* fall in crime. Our research suggests that these falls have abated, and indeed have begun to increase in some areas. This is likely to result in curbing future *overall* falls in crime.

We anticipate that it is likely that theft from the person will continue to increase. This is most likely due to the increased targeting of smartphones by thieves and because ownership of these high-valued items continues to increase, particularly in the under-25 age group. Because of this, the Community Safety Partnerships in the Core Cities are currently focusing part 2 of the research on this particular crime type to help better understand why these changes are occurring and identify how they can tackle this problem at the local level.

At present the number of offences for the types of crime that are on the increase is not enough to fully halt the crime fall in the very near future. However, there are warning signs that the fall in *overall* crime may soon come to a halt if these anticipated increases remain unchecked and falls in some of the previous big contributors abate as is being indicated.

Core Cities Community Safety Partnerships (listed with their heads of service)

Birmingham: Jan Kimber

Bristol: Pete Anderson

Leeds: Liz Jarmin

Liverpool: Alison Doherty

Manchester: Vicky Charles

Newcastle: Robyn Thomas

Nottingham: Tom Spink

Sheffield: Jo Sykes/Sarah Banks

Local Government Association: Chris Williams