



# Redesign of the Crime Survey for England and Wales

August 2022

## Introduction

The role of the independent Older People's Commissioner for Wales is to protect and promote the rights of older people living in Wales. The Commissioner routinely scrutinises those policies and practices, with the potential to impact the rights of older people.

There is evidence that the levels of abuse and crime experienced by older people, have increased throughout the covid-19 pandemic <sup>1</sup>. At this time, many older people became more socially isolated, which then increased their risk of abuse and exploitation <sup>2</sup>.

Addressing the abuse of older people in Wales is a key priority for the Commissioner. Good data is critical to determine increases in the levels of abuse and crime perpetrated towards older people and to show where there are possible heightened risks. The Commissioner has used the data collected for previous iterations of the Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW), to monitor changes related to older people both as victims of crime and to ascertain their perceptions of crime in their local areas, which might then impact upon their feelings of subjective safety and overall emotional wellbeing. This data has been used within previous OPCW publications, such as in the Commissioner's State of the Nation report <sup>3</sup>

The Commissioner is pleased to respond to this consultation on the redesign of the Crime Survey for England and Wales.

## Module Three: Redesign of the Crime Survey for England and Wales

### 3.1. What are your thoughts on the move to a longitudinal panel design with waves for the CSEW?

The Commissioner appreciates the importance of gathering data over time (longitudinal data), to help identify patterns and trends in criminal activity.

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The Commissioner wants to ensure that the data collected for the Crime Survey for England and Wales, equitably represents the voices and perspectives of older people. For this reason, it is imperative that data collection methods do not unfairly disadvantage older people and hence minimise their participation. During a three-year period, some older people might experience changes in their living arrangements (they might move into sheltered housing or residential or nursing home care, for example). What arrangements will be put in place to ensure that these older people are 'followed up' and can continue to participate in data collection for the CSEW, if they so wish?

Also, are there plans to include older people living in residential and nursing homes in the survey from the outset? Many older people living within long-term care settings, remain in a position to give a perspective on either their experiences of abuse and crime, or to talk about their anxieties around crime within their local areas. These older people should not therefore, be automatically excluded from the sample of potential respondents.

The guidance states that 'follow-up' interviews will be undertaken by telephone. Is there also an option for 'follow-up' interviews to be undertaken face-to-face? Some older people may feel more comfortable in speaking directly with an interviewer, particularly if, for example, they have hearing loss and find it difficult to hold in-depth conversations over the telephone. We also know that many older people are very reluctant to disclose their experiences of abuse. Discussion with an interviewer for the CSEW, may provide some older people with vital opportunities to talk about their experiences of abuse and crime, and to access the support they need. It is possible that these same older people would be less likely to 'open up' and to discuss their concerns, in the absence of a face-to-face context.

### **3.3. The Development of an On-line Survey Instrument from 2024**

It must be recognised that significant numbers of older people living in Wales, do not use digital technology <sup>4</sup>. Face-to-face methods of data collection will remain important, to enable these older people to participate in the data collection process.

### **3.5. Do you foresee any problems with removing the questions on non-domestic stalking for the next few years?**

The Commissioner feels that 'non-domestic stalking' should be included in the CSEW. 'Stranger stalking' (stalking by strangers), can have significant physical and emotional impacts on the wellbeing of victims <sup>5</sup>. Some commentators have argued that the effects of such crimes, can be even more devastating for older victims <sup>6</sup>

The Commissioner is keen that the data related to crimes against older people, is as broad as possible. This is critical in evidencing that older people can be victims of all the same types of crimes, as those in younger age groups. It is sometimes felt for example, that

because of their age, older people are not at risk of sexual crimes <sup>7</sup>. It is important that such myths are dispelled through the aggregation of relevant data.

## **Module Five: Perceptions of Crime**

### **Do you use data or outputs based on questions from the Perceptions of crime module?**

The fear of crime can have catastrophic consequences for older people, resulting in some older people feeling unable to leave their own homes <sup>8</sup>. This can clearly have a significant effect on their physical and emotional wellbeing. The Commissioner uses the data produced via the 'perceptions of crime' module of the CSEW, to inform her work on enabling people to age well.

## **Module Seven: Victimisation.**

The Commissioner uses the data produced via the 'victimisation' module of the CSEW, to determine the different types of crime, predominantly affecting older people. These statistics are important to highlight areas of particular risk, and to promote thinking around potential risk reduction interventions.

## **Module Eight: Fraud Offences.**

There have been significant reported increases in the levels of fraud and financial abuse experienced by older people, throughout the covid-19 pandemic <sup>9</sup>. It is therefore very important that the collection of age-related data on fraud offences, forms a part of the CSEW. The Commissioner works with several partner agencies, who undertake specific work in helping to protect older people from the risk of frauds and scams. To facilitate this work, it is important to identify patterns and trends in fraud-related criminal activity.

## **Module Nine: Performance of the Criminal Justice System**

Many of the acts of abuse perpetrated against older people are not considered to be crimes <sup>10 11</sup>. The Commissioner is keen to address this issue and to ensure that the rights of older people are upheld, through securing their equitable access to criminal justice. It is therefore very important that the CSEW gathers data on the experiences of older people, related to the criminal justice system.

## **Module Sixteen: Demographics Module**

The Commissioner is pleased that the upper age limit within the CSEW, has now been removed and that 'all age' data will be available from 2023. The Commissioner urges however, that the data collected related to 'older people's experiences of and perceptions of

crime' is further disaggregated (broken down into specific 'age ranges' for those aged 60 years and over). It is important to recognise that older people are not a homogenous group, and that there may well be differences in the experiences and perceptions of crime amongst those in their 60s for example, when compared with an older person in their 80s or 90s. It is also important that this data is also disaggregated based on other protected characteristics like gender and sexuality, so that those at particular risk of crime are identified.

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- <sup>1</sup> Older People's Commissioner for Wales. 2021. Support Services for Older People Experiencing Abuse in Wales. Available at: [Support Services for Older People Experiencing Abuse in Wales.pdf \(olderpeople.wales\)](#)
  - <sup>2</sup> Older People's Commissioner for Wales. 2021. Support Services for Older People Experiencing Abuse in Wales. Available at: [Support Services for Older People Experiencing Abuse in Wales.pdf \(olderpeople.wales\)](#)
  - <sup>3</sup> Older People's Commissioner for Wales. 2021. State of the Nation Report. Available at: [State-of-the-Nation-2021-Report.pdf \(olderpeople.wales\)](#)
  - <sup>4</sup> Older People's Commissioner for Wales. 2021. State of the Nation Report. Available at: [State-of-the-Nation-2021-Report.pdf \(olderpeople.wales\)](#)
  - <sup>5</sup> Sheridan, L., Scott, A.J. and North, A.C. 2015. Stalking and age. *Journal of Threat Assessment and Management* 1(4), pp. 262-273.
  - <sup>6</sup> McGarry, J., Simpson, C. and Hinchiff-Smith, K. 2011. The impact of domestic abuse for older women: A review of the literature. *Health and Social Care in the Community* (19), pp. 3-14.
  - <sup>7</sup> Bows, H. and Westmarland, N. 2017. Rape of older people in the United Kingdom: Challenging the 'real-rape' stereotype. *British Journal of Criminology* (57), pp. 1-17.
  - <sup>8</sup> Burnett, A. 2022. Understanding and tackling fear of crime among older people. *British Journal of Community Nursing* 11(9), pp. 387-390.
  - <sup>9</sup> Older People's Commissioner for Wales. 2021. Support Services for Older People Experiencing Abuse in Wales. Available at: [Support Services for Older People Experiencing Abuse in Wales.pdf \(olderpeople.wales\)](#)
  - <sup>10</sup> Payne, B.K. 2011. *Crimes and Elder Abuse: An Integrated Perspective*. Illinois: Springfield.
  - <sup>11</sup> Yorston, G. 2013. 'Crime, mental illness and older people'. In; Denning, T. and Thomas, A. *Oxford Textbook of Old Age Psychiatry*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

# The Older People's Commissioner for Wales

The Older People's Commissioner for Wales protects and promotes the rights of older people throughout Wales, scrutinising and influencing a wide range of policy and practice to improve their lives. She provides help and support directly to older people through her casework team and works to empower older people and ensure that their voices are heard and acted upon. The Commissioner's role is underpinned by a set of unique legal powers to support her in reviewing the work of public bodies and holding them to account when necessary.

The Commissioner is taking action to end ageism and age discrimination, stop the abuse of older people and enable everyone to age well.

**The Commissioner wants a Wales where older people are valued, rights are upheld and no-one is left behind.**

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