



## Teaching Idea: Examining Confidence in the Police using the Crime Survey for England and Wales

**Key idea:** This teaching idea explores how an individual's perceptions of neighbourhood disorder, victimization and fear of crime impact their confidence in the police, when controlling for socio-demographic characteristics.



**Keywords:** Crime, Attitudes, Correlations, Bivariate Association, Data Visualisation, Regression

### Background

Research shows that confidence in the police is important for promoting social order (Tyler & Fagan, 2008) but levels of confidence differ between communities. Cao, Frank and Cullen (1996), using data from the USA, show that confidence in the police is most determined by community context rather than individual characteristics such as race. In particular, perceptions of neighbourhood disorder, victimization and fear of crime are shown to impact levels of confidence even when other socio-demographic characteristics are held constant. Data from the Crime Survey for England and Wales enables us to test these associations for England Wales.

**Research question:** Do perceptions of neighbourhood disorder, victimization and fear of crime decrease confidence in the police?

### Data: SN 7911 Crime Survey for England and Wales, 2013-2014: Teaching Dataset

The Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW) is a face-to-face survey that asks people about their experiences of crime during the 12 months prior to interview. Respondents are also asked about their perceptions of crime and their attitudes towards crime related issues, such as the police and criminal justice system. The teaching data set includes all 35,371 cases and 127 variables from the survey. It contains derived scalar variables for teaching and learning. These each measure key concepts and have been derived (using principal components analysis) from CSEW variables. For example, 'worryx' measures worry about crime with a higher score indicating a higher level of worry. It was derived using five variables measuring worry about specific types of crimes. All variables created for the teaching dataset are suffixed with an x.

### Variables of Interest

The dependent variable 'confx' measures respondents confidence in the police in their neighbourhood. To answer the research question, the useful explanatory variables are 'antisocx', 'worryx' and 'bcsvictim', descriptions of which are given in the table below. The dataset also contains many individual socio-demographic measures. These may also be used to investigate predictors of confidence in the police.

| Variable   | Name in dataset                       | Categories and codes   |
|--|---------------------------------------|--|
| Confidence in the police in the neighbourhood        | confx                                 | Scale variable: high score = high level of confidence  |
| Perception of anti-social behaviour in neighbourhood | antisocx                              | Scale variable: high score = perceives high levels of anti-social behaviour  |
| Worry about being a victim of crime                  | worryx                                | Scale variable: high score = high level of worry   |
| Experience of any crime in the previous 12 months    | bcsvictim                             | Not a victim of crime (0)<br>Victim of crime (1)   |
| Age  | age                                   | Ranges from 16 to 99   |
| Sex  | sex                                   | Male (1); Female (2)   |
| Ethnic group   | ethgrp2a                              | White (1); Mixed (2); Asian or Asian British (3); Black or Black British (4); Chinese or other (5)   |
| Socio-economic class                                 | H10sec6a<br>(could also use rnssec8a) | Managerial and professional occs (1); Intermediate occs (2); Small employers and own account workers (3); Lower supervisory and technical occupations (4); Semi-routine and routine occupations (5); Never worked and long term unemployed (6); Full-time students (7); Not classified (8) |

## Data Analysis

1. Measure the strength of the association between the dependent/outcome variable (confx) and the explanatory variables (antisocx, worryx, bcsvictim, age, sex, ethgrp2a, h10sec6a)
  - a. Use Pearson's correlation and appropriate graphic (e.g. scatter plots) to investigate strength of association between confx and scalar variables (antisocx, worryx, age)
  - b. Compare mean scores of confx between each group of the categorical variables (bcsvictim, sex, ethgrp2a, h10sec6a); Using an appropriate test (e.g. t-test, ANOVA) measure whether these differences are statistically significant.
2. Use multiple linear regressions to assess how worry about crime (worryx) and having been a victim of crime (bcsvictim) affect confidence in the police (confx) when controlling for other socio-demographic characteristics of the respondent (age, sex, ethgrp2a, h10sec6a).
  - a. Transform measures of ethnic group (ethgrp2a), sex (sex), and class (h10sec6a) into dummy variables in order to include them in the regression model.

Access the SPSS syntax commands for each of these exercises:

<https://ukdataservice.ac.uk/media/622454/syntaxexaminingconfidenceinpolice.pdf>

## Example Results

**Table 1: Correlation between confidence in the police (confx) and antisocx, worryx and age**

|  | Person's correlation | P-value |
|--|----------------------|---------|
| Anti-social behaviour in their neighbourhood | 0.227**              | < 0.001 |
| Worry about being a victim of crime          | 0.011                | 0.344   |
| Age  | 0.041**              | <0.001  |

**Table 2: Mean confidence level in the police by whether respondent has been a victim of crime in previous 12 months**

|                       | Mean confidence in the police |
|-----------------------|-------------------------------|
| Not a victim of crime | 0.03                          |
| Victim of crime       | -0.19                         |

## Further Ideas

The dataset also contains an ordinal variable measuring confidence in the police to catch criminals (cjspolb). Transform this variable into a binary variable and include in the regression model predicting overall confidence in the police.

Access the data: [SN 7911 Crime Survey for England and Wales, 2013-2014: Teaching Dataset](#)

## References:

Tyler, T.R. & Fagan, J. (2008) Legitimacy and Cooperation: Why Do People Help the Police Fight Crime in their Communities? *Ohio State Journal of Criminal Law*, 6: 231-275.

Cao, L., Frank, J. & Cullen, F.T. (1996) Race, community context and confidence in the police. *American Journal of Police*, 15 (1): 3-22.

