

# **Scottish Crime and Justice Survey: Questionnaire Development Update**

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**Scottish Government**  
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## **Introduction**

This paper provides an update on the latest developments in relation to the Scottish Crime and Justice Survey questionnaire content. It provides links to key materials and information to enable you to have your say and help shape the survey for the future.

This paper was last updated and published in November 2019.

## **Contents**

1. [Summary of current activity and key proposals](#)
2. [Background: our approach to questionnaire updates and developments](#)
3. [Questionnaire developments and changes for 2020/21, including final call for minor and technical tweaks](#)
4. [Questionnaire developments for future years](#)
5. [Contact details for finding out more about the SCJS](#)

## **1. Current activity and key proposals**

The Scottish Crime and Justice Survey questionnaire content is developed and updated as evidence needs emerge and evolve. This helps to ensure the survey provides impactful data on a number of topics for a wide-range of stakeholders.

Further information on each element of questionnaire-related activity, including details on how to get involved and have your say, is provided in the sections which follow. You can also navigate directly to specific topics by clicking relevant links in the summary list below.

A working version of the SCJS questionnaire for 2018/19 and 2019/20 (currently in the field) is available [here](#).

Current questionnaire developments and updates relate to:

### For the 2020/21 SCJS:

- Reviewing and updating our questions on [confidence in and perceptions of the police](#);
- Rotating out the questions capturing [self-reported drug use](#), with a view to supporting a transition towards them being included in the Scottish Health Survey rather than the SCJS into the future;
- Rotating out the questions on [awareness of and interactions with the Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service](#) included in 2018/19 and 2019/20;
- Making small tweaks but continuing with the recently developed module of questions exploring [experiences of cyber-crime](#) for 2020/21;
- Identifying and exploring opportunities to [add new content/topics to the questionnaire](#) in the future;
- Considering and implementing required [technical or minor tweaks](#) to the questionnaire ahead of the 2020/21 survey.

### For the 2021/22 SCJS and into the future:

- Continuing our work with stakeholders to review and potentially update the questions on [partner abuse](#) – including a workshop to discuss options, priorities and next steps on 10<sup>th</sup> December;
- Considering the appetite for and steps required to identify, test and implement questions on [adults' experiences of abuse during childhood](#).

Please note, whilst we welcome user feedback at any time, the questionnaire for 2020/21 survey must be finalised by the end of 2019. As such, in addition to the substantial development work being progressed in relation to the policing questions, **any additional comments on proposals or suggestions for the 2020/21 SCJS must be received by 13th December 2019** to enable consideration before the questionnaire is finalised. This includes any further minor or technical changes users would like to suggest. Thereafter, comments and suggestions will be considered for future years, as part of our on-going planning.

## **2. Background: Our approach to developing and updating questionnaire content**

It is important that the SCJS provides relevant and impactful evidence which continues to meet user needs as understandings, policies and evidence priorities change over time. This often means balancing competing demands for existing content to be continued, content to be expanded or developed, and new content to be added to a questionnaire with finite capacity.

In addition, the SCJS reporting structure, designed with users, sees many survey results released annually, with findings from the self-completion sections and wider survey results at Police Division level available biennially. As such, substantial questionnaire changes should ideally only be introduced at the beginning of each two-sweep cycle, to enable data from two sweeps to be suitably combined (e.g. 2018/19-2019/20; 2020/21-2021/22, and so on). That said, on occasion the case for making change will outweigh the benefits from combining data so proposals and options are considered on a case-by-case basis.

### **2.1 Questionnaire changes in the past and in future**

Between 2008/09 and 2017/18 the content of the SCJS remained largely consistent, except from minor changes to reflect developments in terminology and policy, despite wide-ranging questionnaire review consultations being undertaken most years. This means that robust time-series data has been collected on a range of topics over the last decade, enabling trends to be identified.

However, more recently we have identified opportunities to undertake more fundamental reviews of specific sections of the survey to assess whether the evidence collected on particular topics continues to meet user needs or should be updated. At present we are undertaking reviews of our [policing](#) and [partner abuse](#) questions – further information is provided below.

Additionally, the now annual survey presents an opportunity to introduce a more flexible approach to questionnaire content where some modules can be rotated in and out over time. Adopting this approach enables more topics to be covered and potentially creates space for the SCJS to capture evidence on new and emerging topics for the first time. For example, in recent sweeps we have:

- Included questions on fake and smuggled goods and workplace abuse in 2016/17 and 2017/18. These were rotated out in 2018/19 but could be re-introduced in future, subject to demand/prioritisation.
- Included newly developed questions on experiences of cyber-crime since 2018/19, making use of the space created by rotating out the above two modules. The first data from the questions will be published in March 2020.
- Included questions on awareness and experience of the Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service since 2018/19, again drawing on the space created by resting the workplace abuse and fake goods modules.

The sections below provide further information on current plans and activity around questionnaire content, and we welcome your input on these matters. We also invite

you to provide suggestions at any time for topics which you feel merit review (if existing content) or potential inclusion in the survey (if new/previous topic) in future years as part of our on-going planning around questionnaire developments.

Overall, the SCJS aims to provide useful evidence for a diverse group of users so covers a wide-range of topics relating to crime and justice. However, questionnaire space is finite and it is typically the case that demand for survey space or question development work is greater than supply. As such, user input to help us assess and determine priority areas for focusing questionnaire review and development resource is crucial.

The next sections of this paper outline on-going development work and changes for [2020/21](#) and [future years](#), whilst details of how to get involved in the SCJS more generally are provided in the final section.

### **3. Questionnaire developments and changes for 2020/21**

#### **3.1 Public confidence in and perceptions of the police**

Over the last year, we have been working with users and stakeholders to review and develop the questions examining public confidence in and perceptions of the police to ensure that data collected continues to be relevant and can address ongoing and evolving evidence needs. Drawing on stakeholder feedback, we have assessed which current questions should be continued and also developed questions exploring: the police's presence on social media, wider responsibilities in addition to tackling crime, and capturing views on Police Scotland as a national organisation, in addition to the existing focus on perceptions of local policing within the questionnaire. New and amended questions are currently undergoing cognitive testing. Following testing any required refinements will be made before the questions are finalised for inclusion in the 2020/21 SCJS.

Further information on this work, including the initial background review exercise conducted, cognitive testing currently being progressed and how to have your say is available [here](#).

#### **3.2 Questions on self-reported drug use**

Since 2008/09, the SCJS has included questions in the self-completion section capturing experiences of drug use. However, in light of the increasing demand on the SCJS to cover other topics too, particularly emerging priority justice issues such as cyber-crime, we consulted users ahead of the 2018/19 survey sweep on a proposal to rotate the drug use questions out of the survey in order to create space for new/expanded content.

User feedback at that time recognised that many of the results appear to show limited change year-on-year, although there was a demand for high level questions capturing the prevalence of drug use to continue. As such, the module was substantially streamlined with effect from 2018/19 to focus on capturing data on the consumption of drugs in the 12 months prior to interview only, fulfilling users' key needs but also creating space for new survey content to be added.

It was also noted at that stage that the future of the drugs questions (their inclusion in the SCJS overall and/or regularity of inclusion) would be kept under review. Whilst the streamlined questions have been included in 2018/19 and 2019/20 (to be reported in the 2019/20 report using two sweeps of data combined), demand for the SCJS to cover wider justice content continues.

Engagement with users over the last year or so has also shown an interest in moving these questions to the Scottish Health Survey in future to sit alongside data on other forms of substance use, behaviours and health outcomes.

As such, **we are now planning to rotate the drug use questions out of the survey with effect from 2020/21 (i.e. next year's survey) as part of our wider move to [increasingly use the questionnaire more flexibly to cover more content over time](#)**, as detailed earlier.

**However, in this case, we are also planning to support a transition towards collecting this data in the Scottish Health Survey in future, if space can be made for the questions, rather than them necessarily returning to the SCJS.**

We welcome user comments on the plan to (i) rest the questions and (ii) move them to the Health Survey in future, and have provided further information on the rationale for this proposal below.

Please send any comments to [scjs@gov.scot](mailto:scjs@gov.scot). As noted in the [summary section](#) and at [section 3.6](#) below, **the deadline for comments on the 2020/21 SCJS content is Friday 13<sup>th</sup> December 2019**. Feedback received after this date will be considered for future years as part of on-going planning.

### **Further information on transitioning questions on drug use to the Scottish Health Survey**

Whilst questions on drug use could be potentially reintroduced in the SCJS in future (subject to demand and prioritisation of survey content generally), over the last year or so Scottish Government analysts have engaged with key users of the data to gather views on how this data can be best collected, what level of information is required and how often.

This engagement indicated an appetite for the drug use questions to be included in the Scottish Health Survey (SHeS) instead of the SCJS. Such a move would reflect that much of the Scottish Government's (SG) policy and analysis relating to drug use is overseen within the SG's Health portfolio. However, arguably more importantly, this would also recognise the fact that the link between drug use and victimisation/crime is now well-established (through the SCJS over the years), but that inclusion in the Health Survey would uniquely enable analysis alongside other behavioural data collected in SHeS (for instance, on smoking and alcohol consumption). In other words, inclusion in SHeS would enable understandings in this area to improve and develop, thus potentially increasing the value and impact from collecting this data in one of the national population surveys.

The first opportunity to include such questions in SHeS would now be 2021<sup>1</sup>, but does rely on space being freed up elsewhere in SHeS. The SHeS team will continue exploring whether that is likely to be possible in the coming months.

However, whilst the long-term future of the questions may lie outwith the SCJS, the SCJS team are also committed to supporting a transition towards SHeS which can help us to understand any potential topic effect of moving the questions from a crime to a health survey (i.e. if prevalence is affected). Therefore, there is scope to include some key questions (e.g. prevalence of use in the last 12 months) in the SCJS to coincide with their first inclusion in SHeS to allow such effects to be examined. This may be the 2021/22 SCJS if the questions are picked up in SHeS 2021. The intention here would not be to report extensively on the SCJS findings, but instead to use them to contextualise the first round of SHeS findings.

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<sup>1</sup> Unlike the SCJS which runs on financial years, SHeS is conducted over calendar years.

Users may also wish to note that moving these questions to SHeS would likely represent the beginning of a new time-series around this data (which the transition plan may help to understand). However, the gains around further analytical possibilities should also be kept in mind as well as the *relative* stability of the time-series around this data detected by the SCJS over the years.

In addition, there would be potential to reintroduce the drugs questions on a less regular basis to the SCJS in future to fulfil user demand, which could offer a snapshot update on the time-series first started in 2008/09. Such a move, if progressed, could be in addition to them being collected in SHeS or if SHeS is unable to facilitate the inclusion of the questions. As with other content in the SCJS, this would be subject to assessing demand and prioritisation of questionnaire space overall at any given time.

**We will keep users updated on plans for the Scottish Health Survey to introduce questions on drug use. This work will be primarily led by SG drugs analysts and the SHeS Project Team who will also keep key stakeholders and users informed as considerations progress over the next 12 months.** Content for SHeS 2021 will be finalised in late summer/early autumn 2020. For further information about this work, beyond comments on the SCJS, please contact [Maggie.Page@gov.scot](mailto:Maggie.Page@gov.scot) or [Scottish Health Survey@gov.scot](mailto:Scottish_Health_Survey@gov.scot).

### **3.3 Questions on Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service**

Since 2018/19 the survey has included a small module asked of one-quarter of respondents about their awareness and experience of the Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service (COPFS). The first data from this set of questions will be available in March 2020 (as part of the 2018/19 report) with data from 2019/20 to follow.

These questions were developed to fill an evidence gap around the public's views, rather than a permanent addition to the survey. As they have now been included for a couple of years, there is scope to now rotate these out of the survey from 2020/21 in line with expectation that the survey should be used more flexibly in places and content should only be included for as long (and as regularly) as necessary. Subject to demand and prioritisation, they could potentially be reintroduced in future to provide an update on the baseline and assess any changes.

### **3.4 Questions on Cyber-crime**

In collaboration with key stakeholders, we developed new questions on cyber-crime/online behaviours<sup>2</sup> introduced to the questionnaire with effect from the 2018/19 SCJS. The first results derived from these questions are scheduled to be published at the same time as the 2018/19 SCJS Main Findings report in March 2020.

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<sup>2</sup> These can be seen in [2018/19 questionnaire](#) in full and in context.

These questions will not provide estimates about the extent of cyber-crime overall, but will help to build our understanding in this area and consider wider evidence needs into the future, which could be addressed by the SCJS or other sources.

It is worth noting these questions are not the extensive fraud and computer misuse questions added to the Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW) in October 2015. We are continuing to monitor the development of the CSEW questions, and part of our consideration of future evidence needs will be reviewing whether such an approach may also merit in Scotland going forward. User demand and relative prioritisation of SCJS questionnaire space will be crucial factors in determining next steps.

The longer-term inclusion of this module or other content on cyber-crime will be considered further following the release of the forthcoming results. User input on the next steps will be crucial and we will provide an update in due course.

In the meantime, we intend to continue this set of questions in the 2020/21 survey, but will make a small number of adjustments based on fieldwork experience and emerging findings in order to improve the flow of and insight available from this aspect of the questionnaire.

### **3.5 Filling any space created**

Removing content from the survey creates space for other questions to be added. Some of the space created by the changes outlined above from 2020/21 onwards will be used to facilitate a small number of additional policing questions developed as part of the work on that topic which are currently being cognitively tested.

However, whilst respondent burden and overall survey length must be kept in mind, **we also welcome user comments and suggestions on content and topics which could be updated or developed to be covered by the survey in future years**, either making use of space now created or by potentially rotating or resting other existing content in future. Any indication of questions which are no longer relevant or useful is also welcome.

Given the time required to develop new questions in a robust manner, introducing any further content for 2020/21 will rely on lifting pre-tested/established content from elsewhere or previous years of the SCJS. Suggestions requiring wider planning and development will instead be considered as we look to establish development and questionnaire content priorities for future years early in 2020.

To help with managing and prioritising demand, it is helpful if any suggestions are supported by a clear explanation of why content should be reviewed, developed or included - for example highlighting where there is a gap in evidence and why the SCJS could be an appropriate vehicle for filling that.

### **3.6 Preparing the questionnaire for 2020/21: more minor and technical adjustments**

Aside from more substantive updates and development work, as ever we welcome any feedback on the SCJS questionnaire content at any time – for example if any terminology requires an update. We also make some technical adjustments each year to improve the flow of the survey and make any minor tweaks required in light of quality assuring the data.

Generally, the assumption is that questions and terminology should not be updated unless required, as this can impact on time series analysis for limited gain. As such, we devote most of our resource allocated to questionnaire work around the more substantial reviews and updates which consider the content and inclusion of entire modules. In doing so, we aim to ensure questionnaire content on different topics is established to provide evidence over the medium or longer-term (rather than regular small tweaks), and the coverage of the survey overall reflects a wide range of user demands, competing priorities and evidence requirements over time.

Notwithstanding the above, if you have any more specific or minor suggested changes for the SCJS questionnaire, please do not hesitate to get in touch. Whilst we welcome user feedback at any time, **changes for consideration for the 2020/21 survey must be submitted by Friday 13<sup>th</sup> December 2019**. Any feedback received after this date will be considered for future years.

A working copy of the questionnaire covering 2018/19 and 2019/20 can be found [here](#).

Please send any comments to: [scjs@gov.scot](mailto:scjs@gov.scot) and [Rebekah.Miller@gov.scot](mailto:Rebekah.Miller@gov.scot)

## **4. Questionnaire developments for future years**

### **4.1 Partner abuse module**

In light of new legislation on domestic abuse ([Domestic Abuse \(Scotland\) Act 2018](#)) and user feedback, the partner abuse questions in the self-completion section of the SCJS are currently being reviewed to ensure they provide evidence to meet user needs and remain impactful. In particular, we are exploring whether the data collected can provide better evidence on experiences of coercive control and patterns of abuse. Similar work has also recently been progressed on the Crime Survey for England and Wales, but has proved challenging.

To date, our work has involved: the publication of a review assessing the strengths and weaknesses of the current questions; a workshop with users and stakeholders to discuss the findings of the review; and the development of a proposal, outlining potential options and next steps for updating the module which we have invited feedback on.

We are now planning further engagement with users, with a view to developing any updated content over the next 12 months and implementing changes for the 2021/22 sweep of the SCJS. **We are holding a workshop for users to discuss potential changes, priorities and next steps on 10<sup>th</sup> December 2019.**

Further information on this work, including materials produced to date and how to sign-up for the workshop and get involved more generally, is available [here](#).

### **4.2 Experiences of abuse during childhood**

Over recent months we have been assessing the potential for the SCJS to capture evidence of adults' (those now over the age of 16) experiences of abuse during childhood (i.e. before they were 16 years old).

Questions on this theme have recently been added to the self-completion element of the Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW) and have been well received. There is currently a lack of data around the prevalence of such experiences in Scotland and as it is generally accepted that this issues suffers from under-reporting to the police and other authorities, there is desire to determine the scale of child abuse and issues like neglect at national level.

Initial considerations with key stakeholders and CSEW analysts have indicated that the SCJS can be a suitable vehicle for filling this evidence gap. However, this topic is clearly a very sensitive one which will require detailed ethical consideration and further engagement with SG colleagues and key partners working in this field to:

- consider the risks and potential benefits of collecting this data;
- identify priority issues to explore and the most suitable questions/approach to collect such information in a sensitive manner. The CSEW questions likely offer a good starting point here;
- develop and test any new questions which are required to fulfil evidence needs in Scotland.

Our work in this area will continue over the next 12 months or so, with the ambition of introducing such questions in the 2021/22 survey, although this is dependent on ethical approval being achieved in due course. Whilst some key partners are already engaged in the work, we would welcome input from any further stakeholders with experience or interest in this area. To find out more about this work or to get involved, please contact: [scjs@gov.scot](mailto:scjs@gov.scot).

#### **4.3 Filling space created and identifying priorities for future questionnaire developments and updates**

Removing content from the survey creates space for other questions to be added. [Section 3.5](#) above provides further information about thinking in this area and how to provide suggestions for content to be reviewed, updated or added.

## **5. Contact details for finding out more about the SCJS**

As well as following the SCJS [website](#) to see the latest publications and developments with the survey, you can also get direct updates on the SCJS by signing up to our User Group or ScotStat mailing list.

### **Scottish Crime and Justice Survey - User Engagement**

The SCJS is used in multiple ways and by multiple users across government, public services, academia and third sector. Engaging effectively with users is important in ensuring that the SCJS meets the needs of users.

If you want to find out more about work relating to the Scottish Crime and Justice Survey or any other facet of the work of the Scottish Government Statistics Group, you can through the following ways:

#### **SCJS User Group**

The SCJS team have established a user group to ensure that user engagement is an on-going part of each survey cycle. Members are drawn from government, academia, the justice system and third sector. The user group is an essential way to ensure that the survey remains relevant and able to respond to changing needs. If you would like to become involved in the user group, please [contact us](#).

#### **ScotStat**

Register with [ScotStat](#) a network for users and providers of Scottish Official statistics. It aims to improve communication amongst those interested in particular statistics and facilitate the setting up of working groups on specific statistical issues.

For wider updates on the SCJS and other crime and justice research and statistics products published by the Scottish Government, please see our [website](#) or you can follow us on Twitter: [@SGJusticeAnalys](#).