

Developing National Crime Surveys on Blaise 5

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1. Background and context

The ONS Centre for Crime and Justice aims to better understand the extent and nature of crimes across England and Wales, by providing valuable data which can inform policymaking and evaluation. We are currently exploring the feasibility of key crime surveys being developed to be Blaise 5 web-based surveys.

Key to these aims has been a pilot version of the Young People's Safety Survey (YPSS). The YPSS is part of ONS's broader efforts to better understand societal issues and provide data that can inform policy and support services aimed at enhancing the safety and well-being of young people.

Another key survey for ONS's crime data is the Crime Survey of England and Wales (CSEW), which is an essential resource for understanding crime dynamics and informing effective crime prevention strategies in England and Wales.

1.1. Young People's Safety Survey (YPSS)

The Young people's Safety Survey (YPSS) aims to gather insights into young people's experiences and attitudes towards safety in both their daily lives and online. The survey covers a range of topics including perceptions of safety, sources of support, online activity, experiences of crime and bullying, and personal well-being.

Young people aged 13 and over are also asked about exposure to concerning online content, such as self-harm, eating disorders, and hate content as well as sending and receiving sexual messages.

The information collected by the survey is valuable to schools, charities and the government to understand and improve the lives of young people, especially in tackling bullying and protecting them from online harm. Participants are awarded with vouchers for their participation in the survey.

1.2. Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW)

The Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW) is a critical tool for understanding crime trends and the nature of crime across England and Wales. It has been running since 1981 and provides insights into the prevalence and types of crime experienced by individuals and households. It is primarily an interviewer administered face-to-face victimisation survey.

The survey asks respondents about their experiences of crime over the past 12 months. This approach allows the survey to capture crime that may not have been reported to the police, allowing for a more comprehensive picture of crime across England and Wales. The survey covers various crimes including theft, robbery, criminal damage, fraud, computer misuse, and various forms of violence. The survey invited around 75,000 households to participate in 2024/2025.

Data from the CSEW is used alongside police recorded data to provide a fuller picture of crime trends. This data helps the government develop and assess policies aimed at reducing crime and improving public safety.

2. YPSS Aim

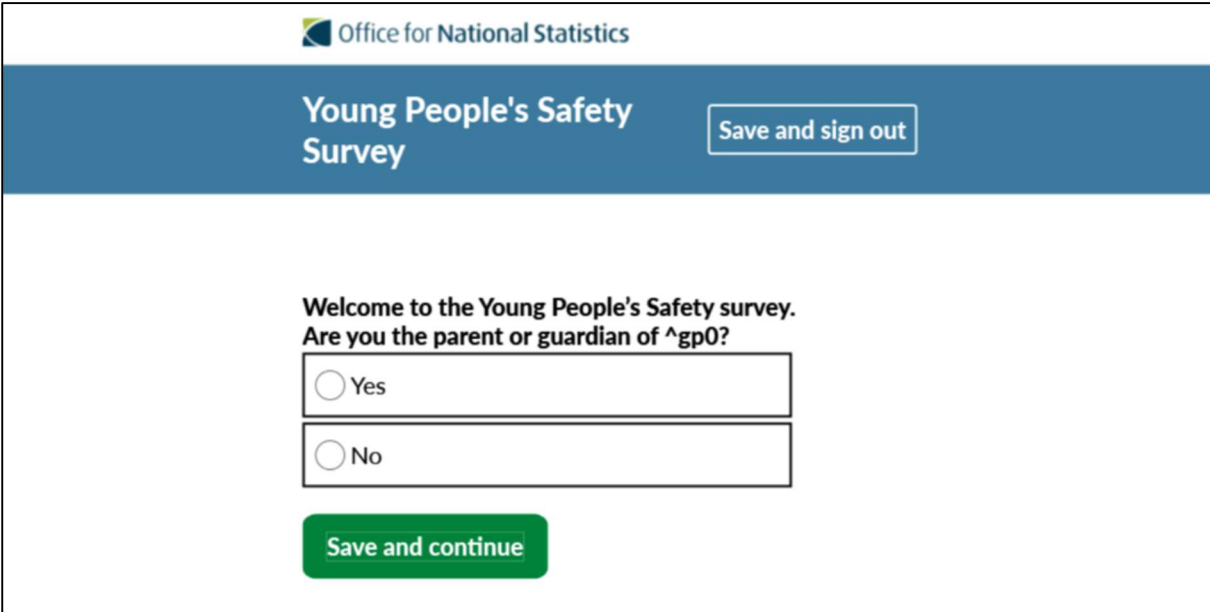
The aim was to develop the YPSS as a CAWI Blaise 5 survey that would be administered to around 7000 young people aged 10-15 years old. The questionnaire was designed to gather data on sensitive

topics whilst ensuring the safety of respondents. Therefore, there were strict requirements to ensure this including a parental consent section for those aged 13 and under, record locking and additional support links being embedded into support pages throughout the questionnaire. These additional requirements posed some additional challenges for developing the questionnaire within Blaise 5.

2.1. YPSS Challenges

One of the primary coding challenges in the YPSS was the implementation of the parental consent block at the beginning of the questionnaire. The survey requirements made it necessary for families to have multiple opportunities to provide consent, in case young people logged into the questionnaire without a parent available to give consent. However, it was also key that once consent had either been given or denied the questionnaire was accessible to the young person or locked down and not accessible if it had been denied. It was also crucial that only respondents aged 13 years and younger viewed this section as it was not necessary for older participant's parents to give consent prior to their participation. This was achieved through creating a cycle of repeating the beginning of the consent section five times, through five sets of matching fields (the following two screens were repeated) being coded into the questionnaire. This allowed for families to have ample opportunities to give consent and prevented young respondents from being locked out of the questionnaire if consent was not gained in the first log in attempt. It also allowed for strict rules to be put in place at the data model level to ensure that if consent was denied within this cycle the main questionnaire was not accessible, whilst allowing those who had given consent to proceed.

Figure 1. Parental Consent Block Page 1



The screenshot shows the 'Parental Consent Block Page 1' from the 'Young People's Safety Survey'. At the top, there is the 'Office for National Statistics' logo and the survey title 'Young People's Safety Survey'. A 'Save and sign out' button is located in the top right corner. The main content area contains a welcome message: 'Welcome to the Young People's Safety survey. Are you the parent or guardian of ^gp0?'. Below this message are two radio button options: 'Yes' and 'No'. A green 'Save and continue' button is positioned at the bottom of the form.

Figure 2. Parental Consent Block Page 2

Office for National Statistics

Young People's Safety Survey

Save and sign out

[Previous](#)

Sorry we need your parent or legal guardian to provide consent by answering a few questions before you can start the survey.
If your parent or guardian is available, please go back to the previous question and ask them to complete these questions.
If not, please click save and sign out. You can log back into the survey once they have completed the consent form using the access code on your letter.

Save and continue

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An additional requirement within the survey design was that as each questionnaire module was completed previous sections of the questionnaire were to be locked down so that the respondent and anyone around them was not able to go back and view their responses. This was a confidentiality requirement since only one UAC code was given for both a parent or guardian to give consent (if necessary) and for the young person to respond to the questionnaire. We achieved this by hard coding into each questionnaire block a 'complete flag' variable which was assigned to the value 'Yes' after a final response within that block. In the main data model level rules section, each block was then only on route if that complete flag did not yet equal Yes. This coding also included the use of keep statements to ensure that data from these sections was not lost once the block in question was no longer on the main route of the questionnaire. The code below was repeated for all subject blocks.

Figure 3. Locking Code Questionnaire Block

```
IF (Childintrol = No) OR (CSCHATT = Response OR CSCHATT = RF OR CSCHATT = DK) THEN  
  
    QPersonCompl := Yes  
  
ENDIF
```

Figure 4. Locking Code Data Model Rules

```
IF (QPersonCompl <> Yes) THEN

  QPerson

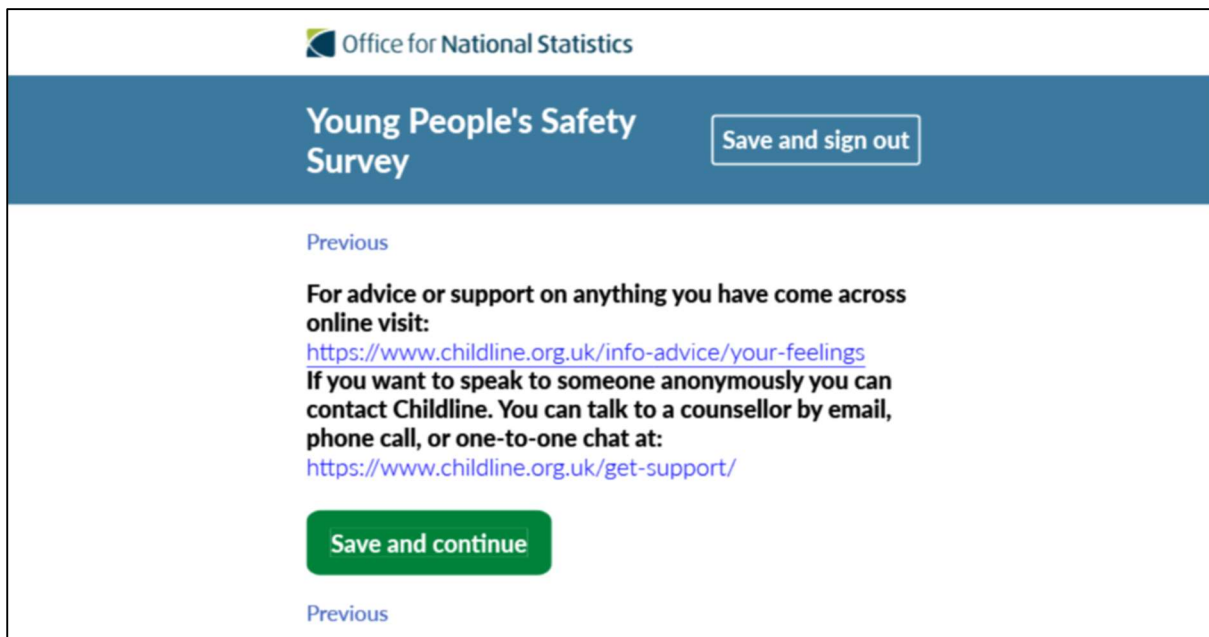
ELSEIF (QPersonCompl = Yes) THEN

  QPerson.keep

ENDIF
```

Lastly, the final requirement of this questionnaire was the inclusion of support pages at the end of subject blocks which contained challenging content for which young people may require additional support. These support pages were strategically placed throughout the questionnaire so that respondents had access to specific support based on the sensitive topic they had just encountered within the flow of the questionnaire. These pages were not overly challenging to include within the questionnaire but were a vital requirement of the survey design and are particularly important to consider in a survey aimed at younger respondents. The pages included embedded hyperlinks to ensure respondents had easy access to necessary support resources as they were routed through the questionnaire.

Figure 5. Example Support Page



3. Crime Survey Aim

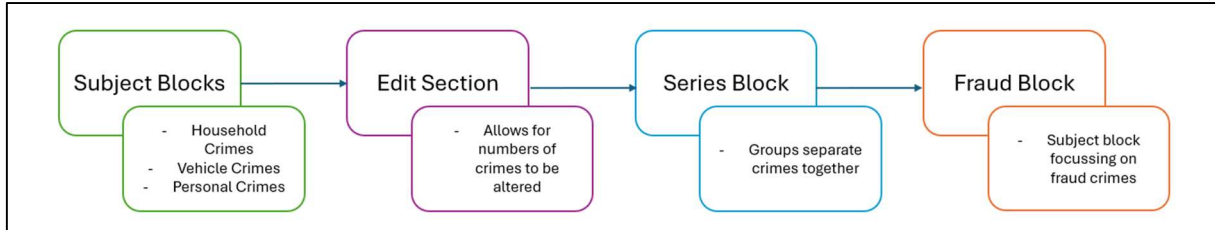
The aim was to explore the feasibility of developing the crime survey as an online Blaise 5 survey as part of a transformation program. This has been an exploratory project with highly complex routing requirements.

3.1. Crime Survey Structure

The structure of the survey involves:

- an initial set of three subject blocks
- a section which allows for changes to be made to the number of crimes if needed
- a series block which aims to group separate crimes if they occurred together
- a final subject block focussed on fraud crimes

Figure 6. Flowchart of Crime Survey Structure



3.2. Crime Survey Challenges

The first step in the development of the crime survey was to implement subject blocks covering household, vehicle, and personal crimes. The aim of these blocks was to gather detailed information about various types of crime and the frequency of these experiences. In most cases, this followed the pattern of asking respondents whether in the last year something had happened to them, asking exactly in what way this happened, and then how many times it happened in the last year. The aim of these blocks is always to capture crimes that a respondent has experienced in the last year. These opening blocks of the questionnaire are vital to gather basic information of what crimes and how many times these have been experienced to enable counts to be stored for more complex routing in later blocks.

Figure 7. Subject Block Page 1

The screenshot shows the 'Crime Survey for England and Wales' interface. At the top, it displays the 'Office for National Statistics' logo. Below the title, there is a 'Previous' link. The main question is: 'Since 1st ^gp0 ^gp1, has anyone got into, or tried to get into, your home WITHOUT permission?'. There are two radio button options: 'Yes' and 'No'. A green 'Save and continue' button is located below the options. At the bottom, there is another 'Previous' link.

Figure 8. Subject Block Page 2

 Office for National Statistics

Crime Survey for England and Wales

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What happened?

You can select more than one answer if these happened in separate incidents.

Someone got into my home without permission

Someone tried but failed to get into my home without permission

[Save and continue](#)

[Previous](#)

Figure 9. Subject Block Page 3

 Office for National Statistics

Crime Survey for England and Wales

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Since 1st ^gp0 ^gp1, how many times has someone got into your home without permission?

[Save and continue](#)

[Previous](#)

Since the crime survey was designed to focus on crimes in the last 12 months it was vital to create a rotating month variable. This feature allows for both text substitution within questions (see above) and for response lists to automatically display the current month of the previous year and onwards. This means that the accuracy of crimes being reported that only occurred in the last 12 months should be higher and the coding of these aspects would sustain itself across time rather than needing to be manually altered across waves if the questionnaire were to be released multiple times.

Figure 10. Rotating Month Code Fields Block

```
FIELDS

  StartDat      "Start date derived from system date"
                :
                DATETYPE

  StartDatYr    "Start date year"
                :
                1900..2100

  DMDLYear      "Last year derived from start date"
                :
                1900..2100

  StartDatMnth  "Start date month"
                :
                0..12
```

Figure 11. Rotating Month Code Data Model Rules

```
{Start date}
StartDat.KEEP
IF (StartDat = EMPTY) THEN
  StartDat := SYSDATE
ENDIF

IF StartDat.MONTH = 1 THEN
  StartDatMth := 'January'
ELSEIF StartDat.MONTH = 2 THEN
  StartDatMth := 'February'
ELSEIF StartDat.MONTH = 3 THEN
  StartDatMth := 'March'
ELSEIF StartDat.MONTH = 4 THEN
  StartDatMth := 'April'
ELSEIF StartDat.MONTH = 5 THEN
  StartDatMth := 'May'
ELSEIF StartDat.MONTH = 6 THEN
  StartDatMth := 'June'
ELSEIF StartDat.MONTH = 7 THEN
  StartDatMth := 'July'
ELSEIF StartDat.MONTH = 8 THEN
  StartDatMth := 'August'
ELSEIF StartDat.MONTH = 9 THEN
  StartDatMth := 'September'
ELSEIF StartDat.MONTH = 10 THEN
  StartDatMth := 'October'
ELSEIF StartDat.MONTH = 11 THEN
  StartDatMth := 'November'
ELSEIF StartDat.MONTH = 12 THEN
  StartDatMth := 'December'
ENDIF
```

Figure 12. Rotating Month Code Data Model Rules

```

StartDatYr := YEAR(StartDat)

DMDLYear := YEAR(StartDat - (1,0,0))

StartDatMnth := MONTH(StartDat)

TMPStartDate := '01/' + STR(StartDatMnth) + '/' + STR(DMDLYear)

StartDate := STRTODATE(TMPStartDate)

MnthOne := MONTH(StartDat)           {For Month Checklist}
MnthTwo := MONTH(StartDat + (0, 1, 0))
MnthThree := MONTH(StartDat + (0, 2, 0))
MnthFour := MONTH(StartDat + (0, 3, 0))
MnthFive := MONTH(StartDat + (0, 4, 0))
MnthSix := MONTH(StartDat + (0, 5, 0))
MnthSeven := MONTH(StartDat - (0, 6, 0))
MnthEight := MONTH(StartDat - (0, 5, 0))
MnthNine := MONTH(StartDat - (0, 4, 0))
MnthTen := MONTH(StartDat - (0, 3, 0))
MnthEleven := MONTH(StartDat - (0, 2, 0))
MnthTwelve := MONTH(StartDat - (0, 1, 0))
MnthThirteen := MONTH(StartDat)

```

An additional feature within this survey that we are working on development of is a section between the subject blocks and the series block which allows respondents to edit the number of times a crime they have reported has occurred if needed. This feature required careful coding to ensure that the counts changed in the subject block fields as well as the subsequent background counts that are used within the coding of the subsequent series block. To achieve this within the code we had to ensure that Blaise would re-evaluate the overall counts and the text substitutions used within the displays. This feature remains underdevelopment but is so far editing counts successfully prior to the series block.

Figure 13. Editing Crime Counts Code in Series Block

```

INCCHEK2_C1      "You have told us that ^{HMTCheckTxtDisplay[1]} How many times did this happen?
                 <newline>If you selected this by accident, please type '0'."
                 :
                 0..999,
                 SANS DK

IF (HMTCHECKA = No) THEN           {LB 21/10/24 - CheckB(INCCHECK) To be shown if there are mistakes in crime numbers}
  INCCHECK
ENDIF

IF (C1 IN INCCHECK) THEN
  INCCHEK2_C1
  IF (INCCHEK2_C1 = RESPONSE) THEN
    QHomebasedCrime.NBUNOPEA := INCCHEK2_C1
    CrimeHMT[5] := QHomebasedCrime.NBUNOPEA + QHomebasedCrime.NBUNOPEB
  ENDIF
ENDIF
ENDIF

```

Lastly, the most complex section of the questionnaire was the series block. The aim of this block was to process all the previously reported crimes into either multi-feature incidents or series crimes. Multi-feature incidents are events where different types of crime have happened at the same time as each other. Whereas series crimes occur when the same type of crime occurs multiple times. The routing for this block is highly complex. It is primarily based on a prioritised list ordering all crime types that could potentially have been reported in the subject blocks in terms of severity of the crime. As part of this, at the beginning of the series block a high-priority crime is identified as whichever crime has been reported that is highest on the list of crimes. This is then re-assigned throughout the block if the original high-priority crime is incorporated into a multi-feature incident with another crime.

The block also must account for all crime incidents that a respondent has reported. Therefore, from the initial subject blocks several count variables have been derived to allow the series block to progress through specific routing until a respondent has been asked about how all the crime incidences, they have reported are potentially related to each other. This block has also involved the addition of drop-down displays to show respondents which crimes they reported in the subject blocks as they move through the series block.

4. Conclusions

Overall, we have successfully delivered an online pilot of the Young People's Safety Survey which successfully collected data and is aiding the research team in designing the next version of the questionnaire. This survey posed several challenges often relating to the age of respondents. Therefore, in the case of surveys designed for young people it is important to allow additional development time for safeguarding features and parental consent if needed.

We have explored the possibility that the Crime Survey of England and Wales could be developed to be an online only survey using Blaise 5. The survey posed significant challenges especially within the series block routing and editing functionality for previous counts collected. The development of this survey on Blaise 5 is ongoing.

5. Sources

[Centre for Crime and Justice - Office for National Statistics](#)

[Crime trends in England and Wales and how we measure them - Office for National Statistics](#)

[Transforming children's crime statistics for England and Wales - Office for National Statistics](#)

[Young People's Safety Survey - Office for National Statistics](#)

[The nature of violent crime in England and Wales - Office for National Statistics](#)

[Crime in England and Wales - Office for National Statistics](#)

[Crime Survey for England and Wales - Office for National Statistics](#)

[Crime Survey for England & Wales](#)