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## Serious violent crime is going up NOT down, Home Office chief admits

By [Christopher Leake](#)

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**Jacqui Smith used the British Crime Survey to claim all types of violent crime had fallen substantially since 1997**

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The head of the Home Office has admitted in a leaked document that the Government has failed to reduce serious violent crime over the past decade.

In a paper marked 'Restricted Policy', Sir David Normington, the Department's top civil servant, admits that under Labour the levels of the most violent crimes such as murder, serious assaults and rape are higher than they were in 1997.

The admission by Home Secretary Jacqui Smith's most senior Civil Service adviser appears to be at odds with claims by Ministers that levels of violent crime have fallen since Labour came to power.

The Home Office admitted last night that its own figures showed there were 14,000 serious violent offences in 1997-98 and 16,000 in 2007-08.

Sir David's 101-page document, sent to new Home Office Ministers appointed in Gordon Brown's reshuffle last month, says that because police forces were given incentives to concentrate on less serious offences in order to improve crime figures, they were less able to tackle the more violent incidents.

Sir David discloses that because the most serious violent crimes have not been reduced, the Government's long-term strategy will now concentrate on these rather than less serious ones.

In July, Jacqui Smith twice used the British Crime Survey, based on surveys of thousands of members of the public, rather

than crimes recorded by the police, to claim all types of violent crime had fallen substantially since 1997.

In response to the July 2008 crime figures, she said on the Home Office website: 'Since 1997, crime measured by the British Crime Survey has fallen by 39 per cent with violence down by 40 per cent and burglary down by over half (55 per cent).'

And on July 17 she repeated her claim that violence had dropped by 40 per cent since 1997, 'with a 12 per cent fall in the last year alone'.

But in his document Sir David writes: 'In view of the fact that more serious violence has not reduced in the way that we would have wanted in recent years, and that these offences cause the most harm to individual victims and to society as a whole, our long-term strategy on violence focuses on seriousness. This includes homicides, serious wounding and serious sexual offences such as rape.

'Recorded crime statistics do indicate that despite recent falls, the levels of the most serious violence are higher than they were ten years ago.'

The document also reveals that more than 50 per cent of people surveyed by the Home Office are still not confident that the criminal justice system is effective in bringing offenders to justice.

Shadow Home Secretary Dominic Grieve said last night: 'This document is a shocking admission that Labour's crime reduction policy has focused on chasing petty incidents in order to spin crime statistics. Jacqui Smith's claim that violent crime is down has been dealt a fatal blow.'

A Home Office spokeswoman said: 'The most recent statistics show that recorded crime has fallen by six per cent in the last year. The chance of being a victim of crime is at its lowest level ever.

'But we know there is more work to do with particular crime types, and in particular areas. Reducing serious violence will always be a priority.'

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