- When comparing to official statistics, can see how effective the police and state are at controlling certain types of crime.
- Doesn’t just tell us the amount of crime but shows us about the impact of crime.
  - follow up questions eg whether reported to police and impact.

**CRITICISMS OF CRIME STATISTICS IN GENERAL**

- Only tell us of criminal activity, not of crime. Since crime is a social construct and depends on how people perceive it.
  - Social construct theorists like Becker and labelling theory. Only crimes because they have been labelled that way so we should not take them seriously.
- Do not show the true extent of crime or ‘dark figure of crime’. This is the tip of the iceberg theory.
- Marxists argue that not all crime is treated in the same way. For example, because white collar crime is victimless, it is harder to detect. Hence under-reported.
  - Also argue that not all sections of society treated equally. Eg middle class people treated with more leniency by police because the types of crime they engage in are seen to be of less of a threat to society. The media and politicians also help to promote this agenda.
    - Richer people tend to be able to pull strings to get away with prosecution, eg Henderson 2011 uses example of Peter Mandelson not convicted when making false declaration of earnings to obtain a mortgage. Classic example of discretion afforded by police.
- Prejudice from police can skew activity in certain communities. Eg stop and searches used particularly on black people, leaves crime only detected in certain communities.
- More detection rates such as DNA and technology mean that comparing crime across the years is inaccurate.
- Hard to compare because eg set includes different category of crime. Kershaw 2001 estimates can only compare about three quarters, leaving a big gap in offences.
- Growing mistrust. Many crimes not included. Eg Anti-social behaviour is what affects many people and they see this as crime. Hence the falling statistics make little sense to public.

**SUMMARY**

- Can help us understand the extent of crime and compare it over short times. But comparing say now to 70s not really helpful because of massive social changes.
- Important to remember that crime is socially constructed so should be treated with caution.
- Although can be said to over emphasise some crimes and under emphasise others eg white-collar, allow us to understand certain crimes and the way people perceive them.
- Also allow governments and criminologists to see which areas are more affected and gain a better understanding of the sorts of crimes in different communities.
- When comparing different stats, tells us a lot of things.
  - Eg which crimes are under-reported.
  - Which crimes police are better at dealing with.
  - The increases of certain types of crimes.
- Must still be treated with caution.
  - Eg not all reported.
  - Changing standards in recording.
  - Do they capture reality? Growing mistrust. Conservatives recently said crime down 14% (BCS). Try telling that to some people!