

Demands on the police forces in England and Wales during the Covid-19 pandemic

Introduction

This release presents the latest data on the demands being placed on the 43 territorial police forces in England and Wales during the Covid-19 pandemic.

The latest figures cover the 4-week period to ending 25th October 2020 and are compared with the equivalent 4-week period in 2019.

Calls for Service

As reported last month, the impact on some parts of the country moving into tighter local restrictions has led to reduction in calls to the police. This continued in the latest month's figures with a fall of 13% in 999 calls and a 11% reduction in 101 calls (Table 1).

Table 1: Trends in telephone calls for service to police forces in England and Wales, 4 weeks ending 25th October 2020 compared with the equivalent 4-week period in 2019

	% change
999 calls	-13%
101 calls	-11%

Calls for service generate incident recording which can be categorised by broad themes (Table 2). The volume of incidents related to reports of missing persons was down 12% (similar to the 14% fall reported last month). There was a slightly larger reduction (5%) of incidents related to mental health than last month (down 1% last month).

There was a 2% rise in recorded domestic abuse incidents (similar to the increase reported last month when it was up 3%). As previously reported, however, this trend is not consistent across all forces. Domestic abuse incidents are a measure of concerns that have been brought to the attention of the police. Not all such incidents will result in a crime being identified and recorded. Nor will hidden abuse be captured in these data.

Table 2: Trends in safeguarding incidents recorded by police forces in England and Wales, 4 weeks ending 25th October 2020 compared with the equivalent 4-week period in 2019

	% change
Domestic abuse related	+2%
Missing person related	-12%
Mental health related	-5%

Crime

In the first few months of the restrictions, we reported marked falls in most crime types compared with the equivalent period in 2019. As restrictions were eased over the summer months many crime types started to return to pre-pandemic levels. However, as parts of the country have re-entered tighter restrictions, trends in crime have once again fallen compared with the same time period in 2019 (Table 3).

Following three successive small monthly increases in rape, the latest figures showed a 4% fall. Reductions continued to be seen in other contact-crimes including assaults (including both Grievous Bodily Harm and Actual Bodily Harm) and robbery committed against

individuals. For these types of crime, the partial closure of the night-time economy will be a key driver.

We also continue to see reductions in high volume crimes such as burglary, vehicle-related theft and shoplifting, and at similar rates as reported last month. The tightening of public health restrictions in many parts of the country may lead to further reduction of opportunities for criminals to commit acquisitive crime.

Table 3: Trends in crime recorded by police forces in England and Wales, 4 weeks ending 25th October 2020 compared with the equivalent 4-week period in 2019

	% change
All notifiable crime	-9%
Rape	-4%
Assaults and personal robbery	-18%
Assaults on emergency workers	+15%
Residential burglary	-23%
Theft from and of a vehicle	-18%
Shoplifting	-26%

One exception to the general trend in violent crime is the continuing rise in assaults on emergency workers albeit at a lower rate than reported in recent months. As previously reported, these offences are recorded in relatively low volumes and can fluctuate from one period to the next. It is thought the rise may be driven by increases in common assaults on police constables, including suspects spitting on officers while claiming to be infected with Covid-19.

The police in England and Wales recorded a total of 47,652 Covid-19 related incidents in the 4 weeks to the 25th October – the third consecutive monthly increase (30,202 last month and 19,016 the previous one). However, this remains below the level of such incidents seen in the first few months of lockdown. The recent rises may be an indication of an upturn in reports from the members of the public about breaches of the regulation by others as more parts of the country entered tighter restrictions.

Understanding the data

The data reported here is based on a new ad hoc NPCC collection instituted to inform Operation Talla. The purpose was to provide a mechanism for monitoring and tracking demands on the police during the Covid-19 outbreak to inform operational decisions.

A small number of key indicators have been collated from the 43 territorial forces in England and Wales by the NPCC team. We are aware that not all forces have been able to supply consistent returns across all indicators. The data should be viewed as provisional, having been gathered at speed, and as only indicative of recent trends.

In this release, we have restricted our reporting to those indicators that we have confidence are sufficiently robust to provide a reliable picture.