

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 2nd August 2020 and are compared with the equivalent 4-week period in 2019.

Calls for Service

As last reported, calls for service remain lower compared with the same period last year. The level of reduction is less than that reported last month: with 999 calls down by 10% and 101 calls by 12% (compared with 14% and 15% respectively) and follows much larger falls in the early months of the public health restrictions (Table 1).

Table 1: Trends in telephone calls for service to police forces in England and Wales, 4 weeks ending 2nd August 2020 compared with the equivalent 4-week period in 2019

	% change
999 calls	-10%
101 calls	-12%

Calls for service generate incident recording which can be categorised by broad themes. While there has been a general reduction in calls for service, this masks some variation when considering different types of incidents (Table 2). The volume of incidents related to reports of missing persons was down 24% (slightly lower than the 27% reported last month). There was a small rise of 2% in incidents related to mental health. This was the second consecutive monthly increase (following a 5% rise last month) and contrasts with previous reductions (down 2% and 8% in the prior two reporting periods).

There was small reduction of 1% in recorded domestic abuse incidents and follows previous months where the trend was upward (up 6% last month and 8% the previous one). 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 2nd August 2020 compared with the equivalent 4-week period in 2019

	% change
Domestic abuse related	+1%
Missing person related	-24%
Mental health related	+2%

Crime

We have reported marked falls in most crime types compared with the equivalent period in 2019 (Table 3). However, the latest figures show a continuation of the slowing rate of reduction in most crime types reported last month which points towards a return towards “pre-lockdown” levels of crime.

There was the first monthly rise in rape since we have been reporting on these figures (a rise of 2%). There continues to be a reduction 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 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 though at slowing rates. This is to be expected given the reduction of opportunities for criminals to commit acquisitive crime but as restrictions are eased there is a risk that these may return to levels seen prior to “lockdown”.

Table 3: Trends in crime recorded by police forces in England and Wales, 4 weeks ending 2nd August 2020 compared with the equivalent 4-week period in 2019

	% change
All notifiable crime	-7%
Rape	+2%
Assaults and personal robbery	-16%
Assaults on emergency workers	+31%
Residential burglary	-23%
Theft from and of a vehicle	-24%
Shoplifting	-30%

One exception to the general trend in violent crime is the continuing rise in assaults on emergency workers (up 31% compared with the same 4-week period in 2019). This was a higher lower rise than reported last month (19%) but these offences are recorded in relatively low volumes so percentage changes can fluctuate. As previously reported, 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 15,951 Covid-19 related incidents in the 4 weeks to the 2nd August. This continues the downward trend seen in recent months (35,637 reported last month and 102,304 the previous one) and is likely to reflect in part the easing of the restrictions and reduced reports of reports from the members of the public about breaches of the regulation by others.

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.