

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 30th August 2020 and are compared with the equivalent 4-week period in 2019.

Calls for Service

In contrast with previous releases, the latest period has seen calls for service returning to similar levels seen in the same period in 2019. There was no change in the volume of 999 calls and those to 101 were down 3%. The latter was a much smaller reduction than seen in previous months with last month's figures being down 12% 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 30th August 2020 compared with the equivalent 4-week period in 2019

	% change
999 calls	0%
101 calls	-3%

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 8% (lower than the 24% reported last month) and there were continuing increases in other types of incidents. There was a rise of 5% in incidents related to mental health – the third consecutive monthly increase (following a 2% rise last month and a 5% increase the one before) and contrasts with previous reductions.

There was an increase of 7% in recorded domestic abuse incidents. 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 30th August 2020 compared with the equivalent 4-week period in 2019

	% change
Domestic abuse related	+7%
Missing person related	-8%
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 (Table 3). However, the latest figures show a similar picture to that reported last month with a lower rate of reduction in most crime types and increases in others.

There was the second monthly rise in rape since we have been reporting on these figures (a rise of 4% followed by 2% last month). 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 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 though generally at lower rates than previously reported. This is to be expected given the reduction of opportunities for criminals to commit acquisitive crime but as restrictions were eased there were signs that these may be returning to levels seen prior to “lockdown”.

Table 3: Trends in crime recorded by police forces in England and Wales, 4 weeks ending 30th August 2020 compared with the equivalent 4-week period in 2019

	% change
All notifiable crime	-3%
Rape	+5%
Assaults and personal robbery	-4%
Assaults on emergency workers	+29%
Residential burglary	-18%
Theft from and of a vehicle	-23%
Shoplifting	-30%

One exception to the general trend in violent crime is the continuing rise in assaults on emergency workers (up 29% compared with the same 4-week period in 2019). This was a similar rise to that reported last month (31%). 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 19,016 Covid-19 related incidents in the 4 weeks to the 30th August a small increase compared with last month’s report (15,951). Previously, there had been a downward trend seen in recent months (35,637 reported in the month before last and 102,304 the one before). The latest rise may be an indication of an upturn in reports from the members of the public about breaches of the regulation by others which had fallen when restrictions were being eased.

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.