

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 ending 9th May 2021 and are compared with the equivalent 4-week period in 2019 (rather than 2020). This is to allow comparisons with a more normal time-period since the national lockdown in place at the same time last year was associated with notable reductions in demands on the police.

Calls for Service

The latest figures show a fall in calls to the police compared with the same period in 2019. The latest 4-week period showed a fall of 5% in 999 calls and a 14% reduction in non-emergency (101) calls (Table 1). For non-emergency calls this is a similar trend to that reported last year when the country was in a national lockdown but the rate of reduction in 999 calls is lower than we reported in 2019¹.

Table 1: Trends in telephone calls for service to police forces in England and Wales, 4 weeks ending 9th May 2021 compared with the equivalent 4-week period in 2019

	% change
999 calls	-5%
101 calls	-14%

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 15%. In contrast, there was a 2% increase of incidents related to mental health.

There was a small reduction of 3% in recorded domestic abuse incidents. Such 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 9th May 2021 compared with the equivalent 4-week period in 2019

	% change
Domestic abuse related	-3%
Missing person related	-15%
Mental health related	+2%

Crime

In the first few months of the public health restrictions in 2020, we reported marked falls in most crime types compared with the equivalent period in 2019. We see similar trends in the latest 4-week period for the high-volume crimes such as burglary, vehicle-related theft and shoplifting. A smaller reduction was seen in assaults (including both Grievous Bodily Harm and Actual Bodily Harm) and robbery committed against individuals (Table 3).

¹ [Update: Covid-19 FPN data, and chiefs urge public to keep reporting crime \(npcc.police.uk\)](https://www.npcc.police.uk/news/2020/06/01/update-covid-19-fpn-data-and-chiefs-urge-public-to-keep-reporting-crime)

In contrast, there was a 12% rise in rape offences compared with the same 4-week period two years previously. This continues the trend reported last month and may reflect an increase in reporting of assaults and intimidation of women in the wake of the tragic death of Sarah Everard in March.

Table 3: Trends in crime recorded by police forces in England and Wales, 4 weeks ending 9th May 2021 compared with the equivalent 4-week period in 2019

	% change
All notifiable crime	-3%
Rape	+12%
Assaults and personal robbery	-20%
Assaults on emergency workers	+17%
Residential burglary	-36%
Theft from and of a vehicle	-31%
Shoplifting	-30%

The latest figures showed a rise (of 17%) in assaults on emergency workers compared with the same period in 2019. As previously reported, these offences are recorded in relatively low volumes and can fluctuate from one period to the next. The pattern is similar to that seen this time last year when there was a rise in such incidents linked to the policing of the pandemic.

The police in England and Wales recorded a total of 38,351 Covid-19 related incidents in the 4 weeks to the 9th May 2021. This is a much lower level than reported in the last three months updates (81,723, 97,968 and 99,555 respectively) and likely to reflect fewer reports to the police of people breaching the public health regulations following the first steps of the roadmap out of the latest national lockdown being reached.

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.