

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 20th December 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 18% in 999 calls and a 15% reduction in 101 calls (Table 1).

Table 1: Trends in telephone calls for service to police forces in England and Wales, 4 weeks ending 20th December 2020 compared with the equivalent 4-week period in 2019

	% change
999 calls	-18%
101 calls	-15%

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 20% (larger than the 14% and 12% falls reported in the last 2 monthly reports). There was a reduction (2%) of incidents related to mental health (similar to the 1% fall reported last month).

There was a 2% reduction in recorded domestic abuse incidents and follows a 1% decrease reported in the last month. 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 20th December 2020 compared with the equivalent 4-week period in 2019

	% change
Domestic abuse related	-2%
Missing person related	-20%
Mental health related	-2%

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).

The falling trend in rape offences, noted in our last report, continued with the latest figures showing a 3% fall compared with the same 4-week period in 2019. 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 closure of the night-time economy continues to be a key driver.

We also continue to see reductions in high volume crimes such as burglary, vehicle-related theft and shoplifting. The tightening of public health restrictions has led to slightly larger falls in most of these crime types than reported last month.

Table 3: Trends in crime recorded by police forces in England and Wales, 4 weeks ending 20th December 2020 compared with the equivalent 4-week period in 2019

	% change
All notifiable crime	-13%
Rape	-3%
Assaults and personal robbery	-26%
Assaults on emergency workers	+4%
Residential burglary	-27%
Theft from and of a vehicle	-28%
Shoplifting	-29%

A continuing exception to the general trend in violent crime was the rise in assaults on emergency workers albeit at a much lower rate (4%) 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 50,034 Covid-19 related incidents in the 4 weeks to the 20th December – and contrasted with a rising trend in preceding months (72,971 last month and 47,652, 30,202 and 19,016 the preceding ones). However, this remains below the level of such incidents seen in the first few months of lockdown.

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.