

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 10th May 2020 and are compared with the equivalent 4 week period in 2019.

Calls for Service

As expected, calls for service are down compared with the same period last year: 999 calls by 23% and 101 calls by 25%. This reflects a fall in crime and other calls for service, for example such as road traffic incidents which have also fallen during the lockdown (Table 1).

Table 1: Trends in telephone calls for service to police forces in England and Wales, 4 weeks ending 10th May 2020 compared with the equivalent 4 week period in 2019

	% change
999 calls	-23%
101 calls	-25%

When calls for service are made, this generates incident recording, which can be categorised by broad themes. There has been a downward trend in most types of safeguarding incidents (Table 2), reflecting reductions in calls for service,. There appears to be a small increase in recorded domestic abuse incidents, though this pattern 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 10th May 2020 compared with the equivalent 4 week period in 2019

	% change
Domestic abuse related	+4%
Missing person related	-37%
Mental health related	-8%

Crime

As previously reported, there has been a marked fall in crime compared with the equivalent period in 2019 (Table 3).

The reductions have been seen in high volume crimes such as burglary, vehicle-related theft and shoplifting. This is to be expected given the 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 10th May 2020 compared with the equivalent 4 week period in 2019

	% change
All notifiable crime	-25%
Rape	-28%
Assaults and personal robbery	-30%
Assaults on emergency workers	+14%
Residential burglary	-36%
Theft from and of a vehicle	-41%
Shoplifting	-53%

There has also been a reduction in assaults (including both grievous bodily harm and actual bodily harm) and robbery committed against individuals. In contrast, there has been an upward trend in the number of assaults on emergency workers. This might seem counter-intuitive since traditionally much of these assaults tend to alcohol-related and, with the closure of the night-time economy, we might have expected them to fall. These offences are recorded in relatively low volumes and it is thought the 14% 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.

As previously reported, the police in England and Wales recorded a total of 154,812 Covid-19 related incidents in the 4 weeks to the 10th May. This will include incidents where officers have proactively offered advice to people, responded to reports from the members of the public about breaches of the regulation by others and offences where criminals have sought to take advantage of the pandemic to commit a crime.

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.