

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 14th February 2021 and are compared with the equivalent 4-week period in 2020.

Calls for Service

Similar to last month, the tightening of the public health restrictions saw a continuing reduction in calls to the police. The latest month's falls (compared with the same month in 2020) showed a fall of 20% in 999 calls and a 18% reduction in 101 calls (Table 1).

Table 1: Trends in telephone calls for service to police forces in England and Wales, 4 weeks ending 14th February 2021 compared with the equivalent 4-week period in 2020

	% change
999 calls	-20%
101 calls	-18%

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 30% (larger than the 25%, 20%, 14% and 12% falls reported in the last 4 monthly reports). There was a 3% reduction of incidents related to mental health (similar to the level as reported last month when it was down 2%).

There was a 5% reduction in recorded domestic abuse incidents and follows a 4% decrease reported in the last month. 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 14th February 2021 compared with the equivalent 4-week period in 2020

	% change
Domestic abuse related	-5%
Missing person related	-30%
Mental health related	-3%

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 we have re-entered tighter restrictions, trends in crime have once again fallen compared with the same time period in 2020 (Table 3).

The falling trend in rape offences, noted in our last report, was similar this month (down 12%) to that reported last month (down 14%) than comparable 4-week periods a year earlier. 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 large reductions in high volume crimes such as burglary, vehicle-related theft and shoplifting. The tightening of public health restrictions has led to larger falls in all of these crime types than before we entered the latest national lockdown.

Table 3: Trends in crime recorded by police forces in England and Wales, 4 weeks ending 14th February 2021 compared with the equivalent 4-week period in 2020

	% change
All notifiable crime	-22%
Rape	-12%
Assaults and personal robbery	-36%
Assaults on emergency workers	+14%
Residential burglary	-36%
Theft from and of a vehicle	-36%
Shoplifting	-44%

The latest figures showed a new rise (of 14%) in assaults on emergency workers, following a small fall reported last month (when it was down 2%). This returns us to the previously seen trends. 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 99,555 Covid-19 related incidents in the 4 weeks to the 14th February 2021. This was a similar level to that reported in last month's update (100,281). These level of incidents are higher than were seen before restrictions were tightened and is likely to be driven by an increase in reports to the police of people breaching the public health regulations.

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.