



Police Recorded Crime in Northern Ireland

Update to 31st December 2023

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In the 12 months from 1st January 2023 to 31st December 2023:

- There were 107,095 crimes recorded in Northern Ireland, a decrease of 2,809 (-2.6%) when compared with the previous 12 months.
- Crime levels in each of the months January 2023 to April 2023 were higher than the same months in January 2022 to April 2022. The largest increase was in February (+14.3 per cent) with the smallest increase in March (+2.4 per cent).
- Each month May 2023 to December 2023 recorded lower levels than the same months in the previous year, with November showing the largest decrease (-12.3 per cent). The level in December 2023 was 8.7 per cent lower than December 2022.
- All policing districts, with the exceptions of Ards & North Down, Armagh, Banbridge and Craigavon and Fermanagh & Omagh experienced a lower level of crime.
- Higher crime levels were seen in robbery, theft offences, drug offences, possession of weapons and miscellaneous crimes against society.
- Lower crime levels were seen in violence against the person, criminal damage and public order offences.
- Sexual offences and burglary showed a similar level to the previous 12 months.



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We welcome comment and feedback on these statistics. If you would like to forward your views, receive notification of new publications or be kept informed of developments relating to PSNI statistics, please email your contact details using the email address provided on the cover page.

1. Things you need to know about this release

Coverage

Statistics on police recorded crime in Northern Ireland are collated and produced by statisticians seconded to the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) from the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA). They are recorded in compliance with the Home Office Counting Rules and further details of recording practices are available in the [User Guide to Police Recorded Crime Statistics PDF \(opens in a new window\)](#).

This release presents statistics relating to police recorded crime to 31 December 2023. Figures were compiled on 22 January 2024; as of that date 99.8% of records for April 2023 to December 2023 have been validated and 0.2% have not yet been given a crime classification.

Changes can be expected to in-year figures each time they are published, as all records from 1st April 2023 are subject to ongoing validation and quality assurance processes until publication in May 2024.

All tables and charts in the bulletin, along with additional supplementary data, are available from the PSNI website in the [Monthly crime spreadsheet for December 2023 \(opens in new window\)](#).

The next update covering the 12 months to 31 January 2024 will be published on 29 February 2024. The PSNI website has a full [publication schedule \(opens in a new window\)](#).

National Statistics Status

National Statistics status means that these statistics are accredited official statistics¹ that meet the highest standards of trustworthiness, quality and public value, and as producers, it is our responsibility to maintain compliance with these standards.

These accredited official statistics (Police recorded crime in Northern Ireland) were independently reviewed by the Office for Statistics Regulation in February 2016. They comply with the standards of trustworthiness, quality and value in the Code of Practice for Statistics and should be labelled 'accredited official statistics'.

Our statistical practice is regulated by the Office for Statistics Regulation (OSR). OSR sets the standards of trustworthiness, quality and value in the [Code of Practice for Statistics \(opens in a new window\)](#) that all producers of official statistics should adhere to. You are welcome to contact us directly with any comments about how we meet these standards by emailing statistics@psni.police.uk. Alternatively, you can contact OSR by emailing regulation@statistics.gov.uk or via the [Office for Statistics Regulation website \(opens in a new window\)](#).

¹ Accredited official statistics are called National Statistics in the Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007. The Office for Statistics Regulation website provides further information on [Accredited official statistics](#).

Strengths and Limitations of Police Recorded Crime Statistics and Alternative Measures of Crime

While this update presents the level of crime recorded by the police, there is an alternative but complementary measure of crime, the Northern Ireland Safe Community Survey (NISCS) previously known as the Northern Ireland Crime Survey, which is published by the Department of Justice for Northern Ireland. Each source of crime information has different strengths and limitations but can be looked at together to provide a more comprehensive picture of crime than could be obtained from either series alone.

Details around the need for both recorded crime figures and the NISCS can be found in the [Northern Ireland Crime Survey User Guide \(opens in a new window\)](#). Both of these measures of crime inform public debate about crime and support the development and monitoring of policy.

[Findings from the Northern Ireland Safe Community Survey \(opens in a new window\)](#) are available on the Department of Justice website

Unlike the NISCS, police recorded crime figures do not include crimes that have not been reported to the police; they also exclude those crimes that are not recorded in order to comply with the Home Office Counting Rules (HOOCR). They do cover crimes against those aged under 16, organisations such as businesses, and crimes 'against the state' i.e. with no immediate victim (e.g. possession of drugs). It was estimated in 2019/20 (the latest year available) that around 46 per cent of NISCS comparable crime was reported to the police in Northern Ireland although this varied for individual offence types.

Like any administrative data, police recorded crime statistics are affected by the rules governing the recording of data, systems in place and operational decisions in respect of the allocation of resources. More proactive policing in a given area could lead to an increase in crimes recorded without any real change in underlying crime trends. These issues need to be taken into account when using these data.

Points to note in this bulletin

Revisions: Revisions to figures for previous financial years are applied on an annual basis. For further details see Section 8. Background and Data Quality.

Stalking and Harassment (including malicious communications)

1st April 2017: recording of malicious communications started.

1st April 2018: the Home Office introduced a change requiring harassment to be recorded in addition to the most serious additional victim-based offence. The changes in recording practice introduced in April 2017 and April 2018, along with increasing awareness of the application of these rules in the recording process, contributed to increased levels recorded in the overall Stalking and Harassment classification, particularly since 2018/19.

1st May 2023: the Home Office introduced a further change in respect of these 'behavioural crimes' by reversing the requirement to record the most serious additional victim-based offence. This latest change will have the greatest impact on malicious communications offences, with fewer such offences required to be recorded.

Controlling or coercive behaviour: The Domestic Abuse and Civil Proceedings Act (Northern Ireland) 2021 created a new Domestic Abuse offence which criminalises a course of abusive behaviour. Recording of this offence started on 21st February 2022, and is included within the Stalking and Harassment classification.

Stalking: The Protection from Stalking Act (Northern Ireland) 2022 created offences to provide protection from stalking and threatening or abusive behaviour. Recording of these offences started on 26th April 2022 and is included within the Stalking and Harassment classification.

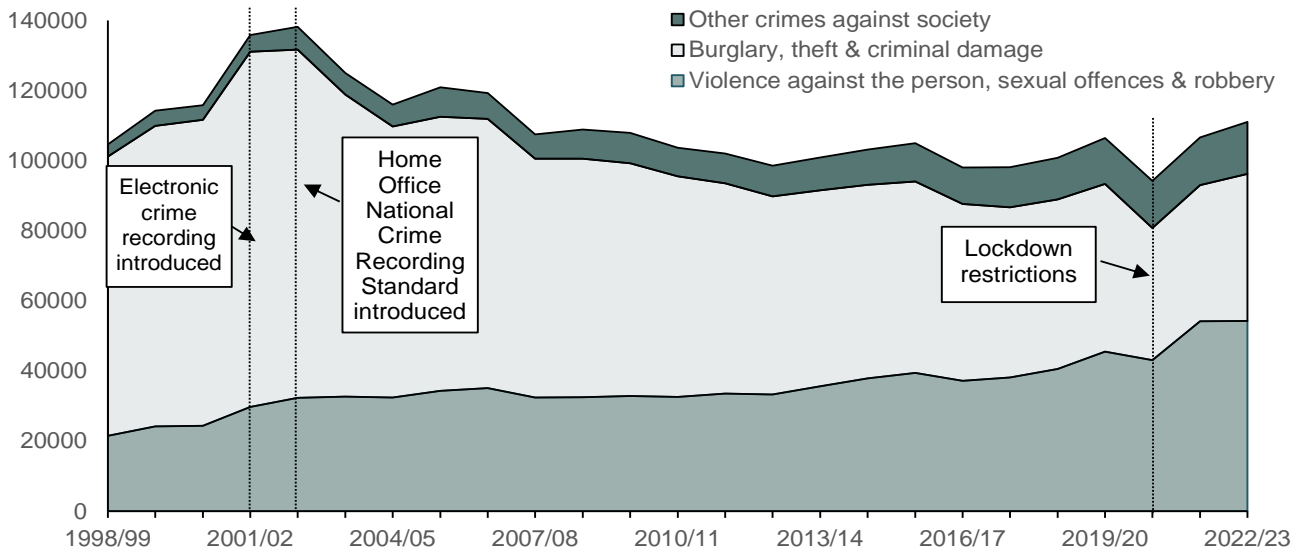
Action Fraud: Figures relating to fraud and cyber crime occurring in Northern Ireland and provided to PSNI are available in the [Monthly crime spreadsheet for December 2023 \(opens in new window\)](#).

More detailed statistics are available through the publication [Trends in Police Recorded Crime in Northern Ireland 1998/99 to 2022/23 \(opens in a new window\)](#)

2. What is happening to police recorded crime over the longer term?

The current police recorded crime data series is available back to April 1998. Police recorded crime increased from this point to 2002/03 (the highest level recorded in the data series) before moving in a generally downwards direction between 2002/03 and 2016/17 (the second lowest level recorded since 1998/99), falling by nearly 30 per cent over this time period. This was followed by increases over the three years to 2019/20. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, lockdown measures were introduced in Northern Ireland on 23rd March 2020 which had a substantial impact on the level of police recorded crime during 2020/21. With a fall of 11.5 per cent compared with 2019/20, 2020/21 recorded the lowest level of crime since the start of the data series in 1998/99. Levels have since increased in both 2021/22 and 2022/23, with the latest financial year recording the highest crime level in sixteen years. [Figure 1]

Figure 1 Trends in police recorded crime 1998/99 to 2022/23



When considering the overall reduction in crime since 2002/03, falls in victim-based property crimes such as burglary, criminal damage and vehicle offences have contributed to this. The number of crimes which may involve an element of violence, injury or threat has shown a general increase since 1998/99 (violence against the person, sexual offences and robbery). Other crimes against society have also moved in an upwards direction, with drug offences contributing to the majority of this rise. [Figure 1]

Figure 2 Trends in violence against the person, sexual offences and robbery 1998/99 to 2022/23

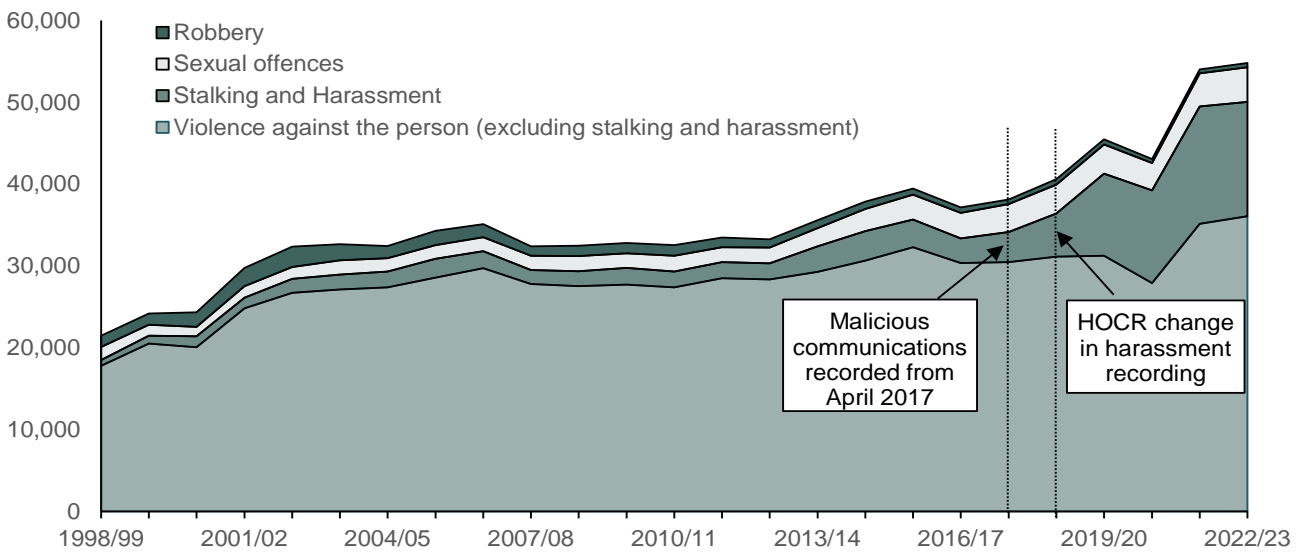


Figure 2 shows the overall increase in violence against the person offences and the more recent impact of changes in the recording of harassment. The introduction of malicious communications into the recorded crime data series from April 2017 and a Home Office change resulting in the recording of more harassment offences from April 2018

means that in 2022/23 the stalking and harassment classification represents 28% of violence against the person and 12% of overall recorded crime compared with 4% and less than 1% respectively in 1998/99 (further details on page 4). Sexual offences represented 3.8% of overall recorded crime in 2022/23 compared with 1.5% in 1998/99. Robbery shows a decreasing trend, representing 1.3% of overall recorded crime in 1998/99 and 0.5% in 2022/23.

Figure 3 Trends in burglary, theft and criminal damage offences 1998/99 to 2022/23

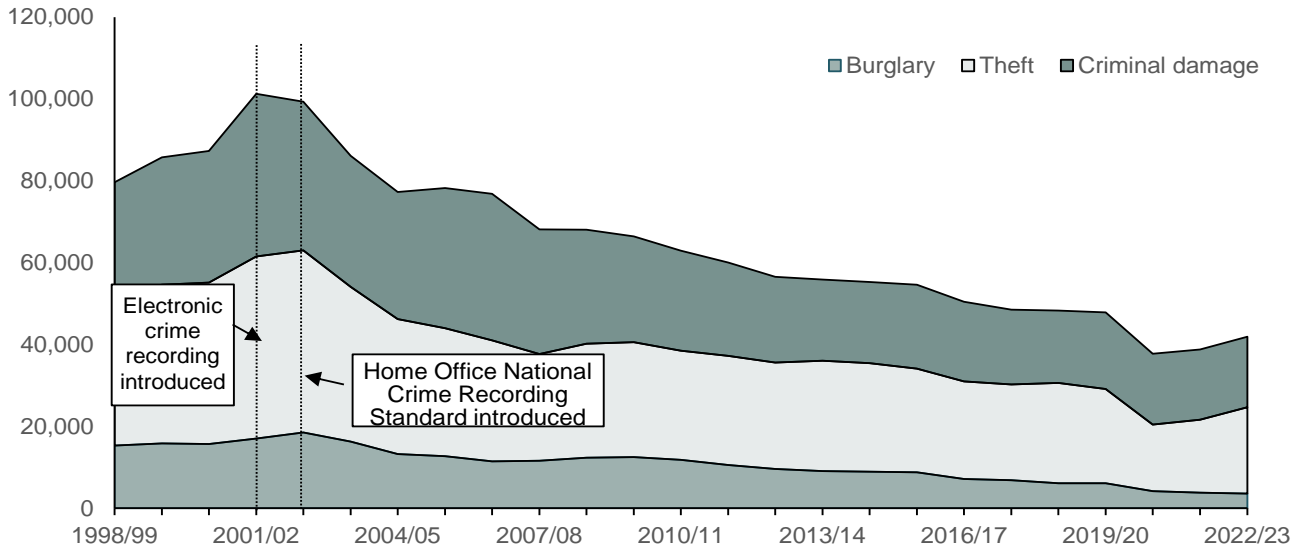


Figure 3 shows the falling trends in burglary, theft and criminal damage offences. At its highest level in 2002/03 burglary represented 13.4% of overall recorded crime; in 2022/23 it represents 3.2%. Both theft and criminal damage were at their highest levels in 2001/02 when they represented 32.8% and 29.3% of overall recorded crime respectively; in 2022/23 theft represents 18.9% of overall recorded crime and criminal damage represents 15.4% of overall recorded crime. It is worth noting that after Covid-19 lockdown measures were introduced in March 2020, falls in the number of burglary offences, theft offences and, to a lesser extent, criminal damage offences were greater and more sustained than for other crime classifications. The number of theft offences have since increased but remain lower than the levels recorded before 2020/21, criminal damage levels have remained largely unchanged and burglary levels have continued to fall.

3. What has been happening to levels of police recorded crime over the last two years?

In the 12 months from 1st January 2023 to 31st December 2023:

- There were 107,095 crimes recorded in Northern Ireland, a decrease of 2,809 (-2.6 per cent) on the previous 12 months. [Table 1]
- There were 56 police recorded crimes per 1,000 population¹ in the 12 months January 2023 to December 2023 compared with 58 in the previous 12 months.
- When compared with the previous year the level of crime was higher in each month January 2023 through to April 2023 and lower in each month May 2023 to December 2023. When comparing each month, the largest increase was February 2023 with 1,100 (14.3 per cent) more offences than February 2022. May showed the least difference between years with 104 less offences in 2023 compared with 2022 (-1.1 per cent). Looking at the latest month December 2023, there were 751 (8.7 per cent) fewer offences recorded compared with December 2022.

Figure 4 Police recorded crime January 2022 to December 2023

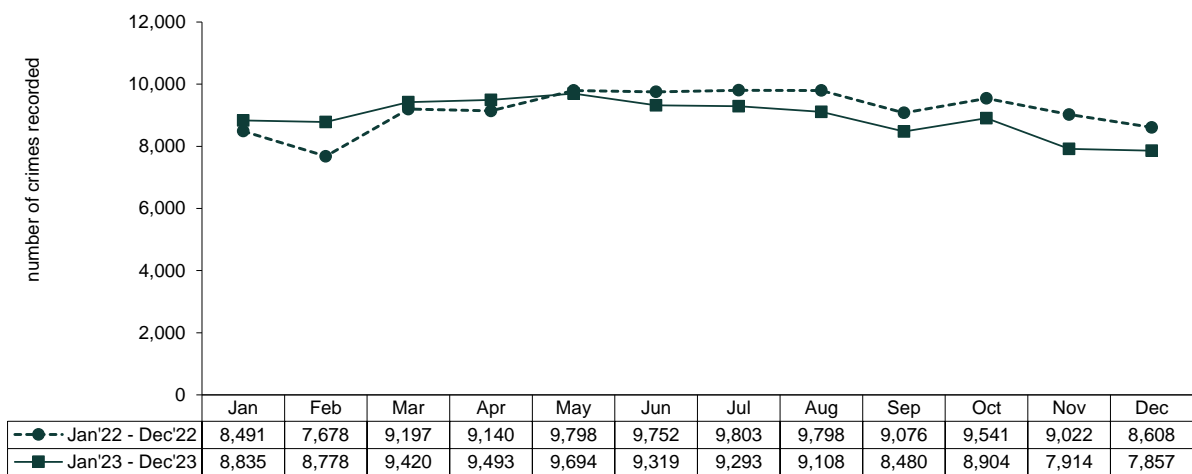
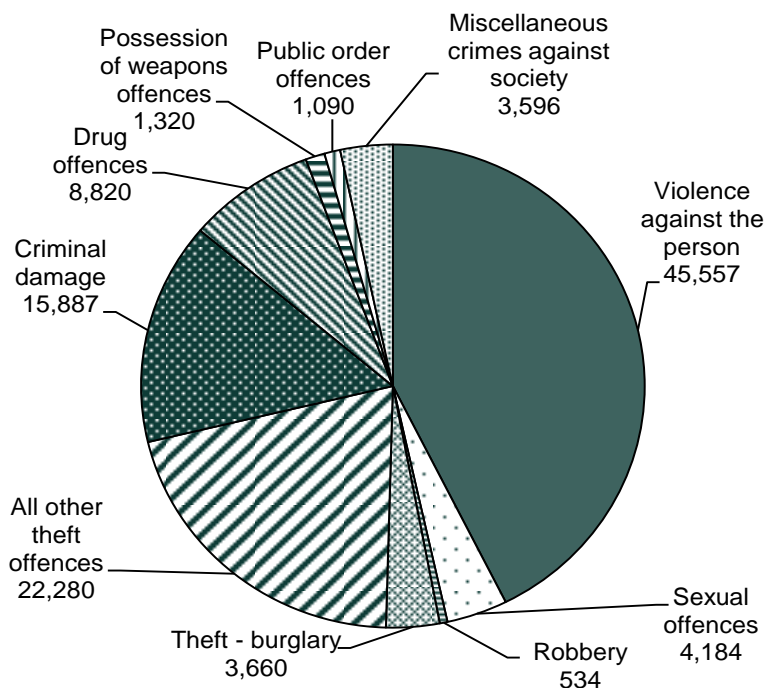


Figure 5 Police recorded crime by crime type, January 2023 to December 2023



¹ Crime per 1,000 population based on mid-year population estimate of 1,910,543 for 2022, the latest mid-year estimate available at time of compilation. [Mid-year population estimates are available from the NISRA website \(opens in a new window\).](#)

Figure 6 Percentage change in the main police recorded crime types, 12 months to December 2023 compared with the previous 12 months

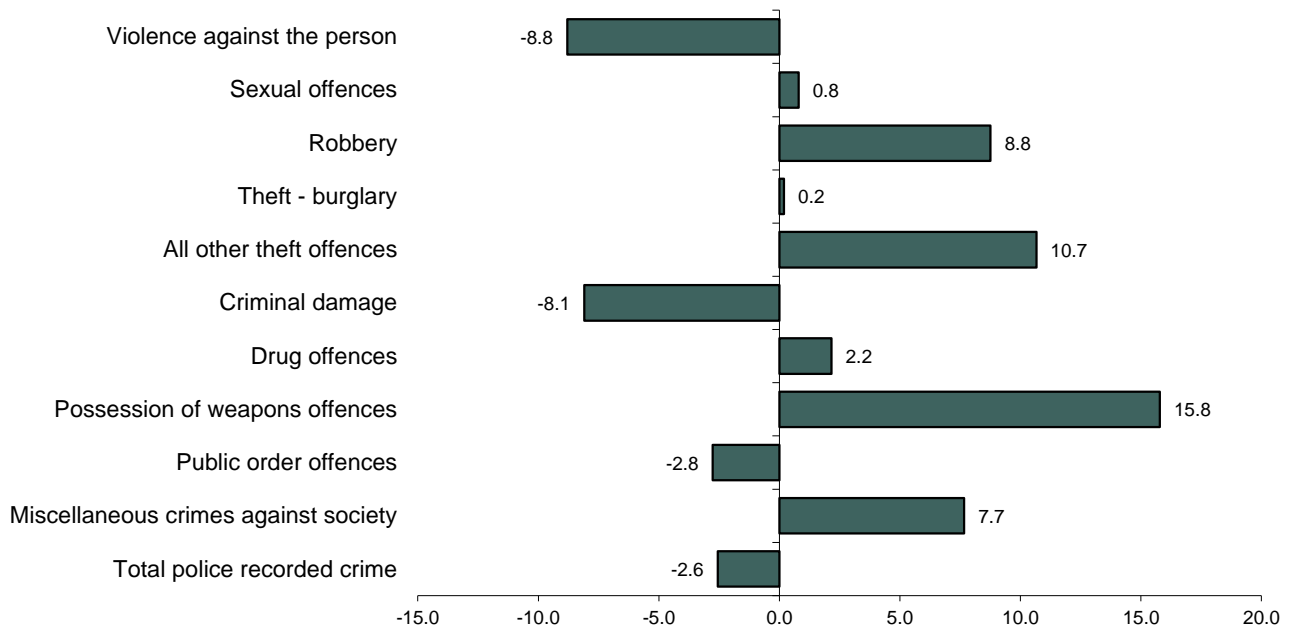


Table 1 Police recorded crime by crime type

Crime type	Recorded Crime Jan'22-Dec'22	Recorded Crime Jan'23-Dec'23 ^{1,2}	change	% change ³
VICTIM-BASED CRIME				
VIOLENCE AGAINST THE PERSON	49,955	45,557	-4,398	-8.8
<i>Homicide</i>	28	11	-17	-
<i>Death or serious injury caused by unlawful driving</i>	123	127	4	3.3
<i>Violence with injury</i>	14,889	14,667	-222	-1.5
<i>Violence without injury</i>	20,947	19,539	-1,408	-6.7
<i>Stalking and Harassment⁴</i>	13,968	11,213	-2,755	-19.7
SEXUAL OFFENCES	4,151	4,184	33	0.8
<i>Rape</i>	1,274	1,186	-88	-6.9
<i>Other sexual offences</i>	2,877	2,998	121	4.2
ROBBERY	491	534	43	8.8
<i>Robbery of personal property</i>	422	455	33	7.8
<i>Robbery of business property</i>	69	79	10	14.5
THEFT OFFENCES	23,786	25,940	2,154	9.1
<i>Burglary</i>	3,653	3,660	7	0.2
<i>Theft from the person</i>	282	287	5	1.8
<i>Vehicle offences</i>	2,636	2,647	11	0.4
<i>Bicycle theft</i>	764	673	-91	-11.9
<i>Shoplifting</i>	6,820	8,792	1,972	28.9
<i>All other theft offences</i>	9,631	9,881	250	2.6
CRIMINAL DAMAGE	17,287	15,887	-1,400	-8.1
OTHER CRIMES AGAINST SOCIETY				
DRUG OFFENCES	8,633	8,820	187	2.2
<i>Trafficking of drugs</i>	1,068	1,099	31	2.9
<i>Possession of drugs</i>	7,565	7,721	156	2.1
POSSESSION OF WEAPONS OFFENCES	1,140	1,320	180	15.8
PUBLIC ORDER OFFENCES	1,121	1,090	-31	-2.8
MISCELLANEOUS CRIMES AGAINST SOCIETY	3,340	3,596	256	7.7
TOTAL POLICE RECORDED CRIME	109,904	107,095	-2,809	-2.6

¹ Changes can be expected to in-year figures each time they are published, as records from 1st April 2023 are subject to ongoing validation and quality assurance processes until publication in May 2024

² Individual crime types may not add to Total Police Recorded Crime as there will be some crimes yet to complete the validation process and be allocated to a crime classification.

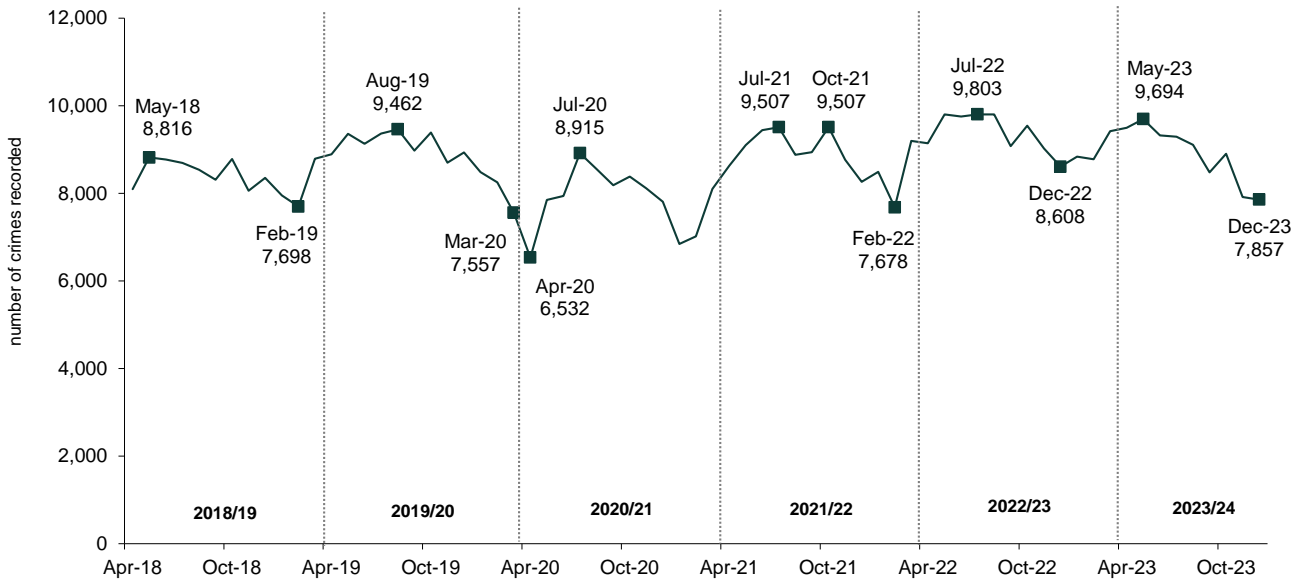
³ '-' indicates that for offences recorded a percentage change is not reported because the base number of offences is less than 50. '.' indicates that data are not available.

⁴ The Domestic Abuse and Civil Proceedings Act (Northern Ireland) 2021 created a new Domestic Abuse offence which criminalises a course of abusive behaviour. The Protection from Stalking Act (Northern Ireland) 2022 created offences to provide protection from stalking and threatening or abusive behaviour. The offences are classified to Stalking and Harassment. Changes in relation to the recording of offences within Stalking and Harassment are listed in the Points to note, page 3.

4. What are the trends in police recorded crime?

Crime is generally higher in the months of March to September and lower in the November to February period. Figure 7 shows this crime pattern between 2018/19 and 2022/23. Lockdown measures in relation to Covid-19 were introduced on 23rd March 2020 and had an impact on the number of crimes recorded, mostly from this date through to February 2021, also shown in Figure 7. The level of crime was higher in each month throughout 2022/23 compared to 2021/22 with July 2022 being the highest level during the last six years as shown in Figure 7.

Figure 7 Police recorded crime each month April 2018 to December 2023, showing highest and lowest levels in each financial year

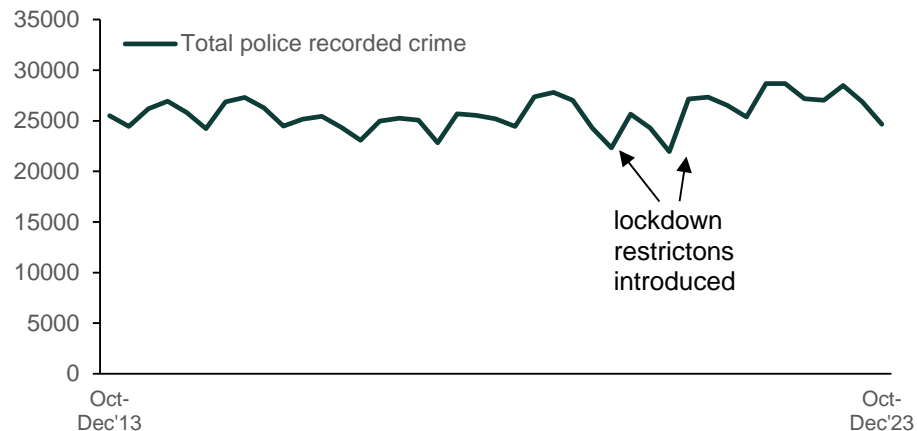


Figures 8 to 23 present crime trends over the last ten years (on a quarterly basis) along with more recent monthly trends. These charts are not all shown to the same scale. Please note that in figures 10 and 11, the Violence with Injury figures include the classifications of Homicide and Death or serious injury caused by unlawful driving.

Monthly data for the latest 24 months are available from the PSNI website in the [Monthly Crime spreadsheet for December 2023 \(opens in new window\)](#).

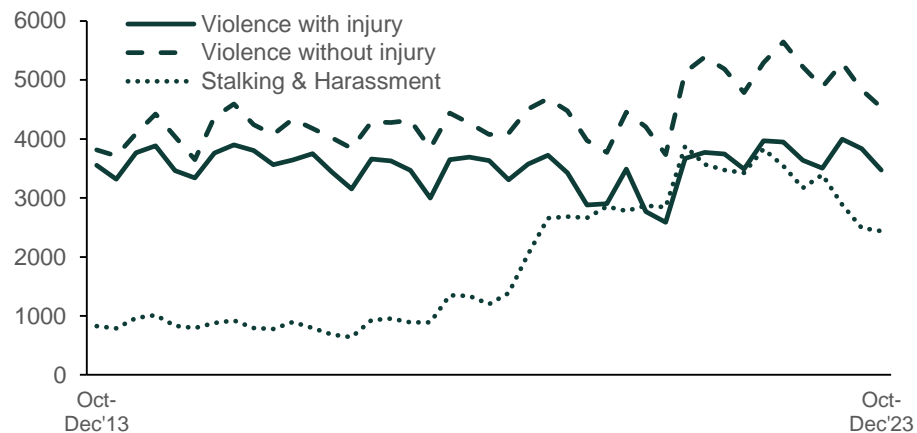
Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, lockdown measures were first introduced in Northern Ireland on 23rd March 2020, with measures re-introduced at the end of December 2020. These measures had a substantial impact on the lower levels of police recorded crime seen during 2020/21. The impact tended to be greater on victim-based crimes, with crimes against society being less affected. As of 15th February 2022, all Covid-19 legal restrictions were replaced by guidance.

Figure 8 Total police recorded crime, quarterly since October to December 2013



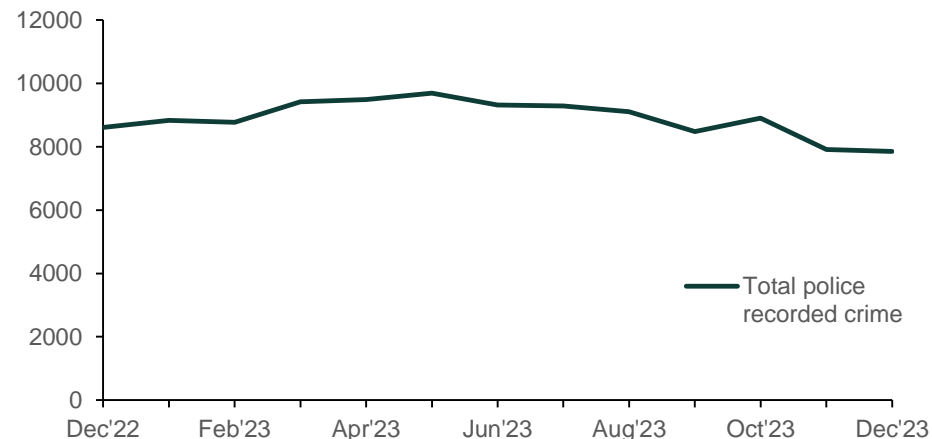
While overall police recorded crime has fluctuated over the last 10 years without showing any real trend, lower crime levels were seen following the introduction of Covid 19 pandemic lockdown measures introduced in March 2020. Three of the most recent seven quarters recorded the highest levels in the last ten years.

Figure 10 Violence against the person, quarterly since October to December 2013



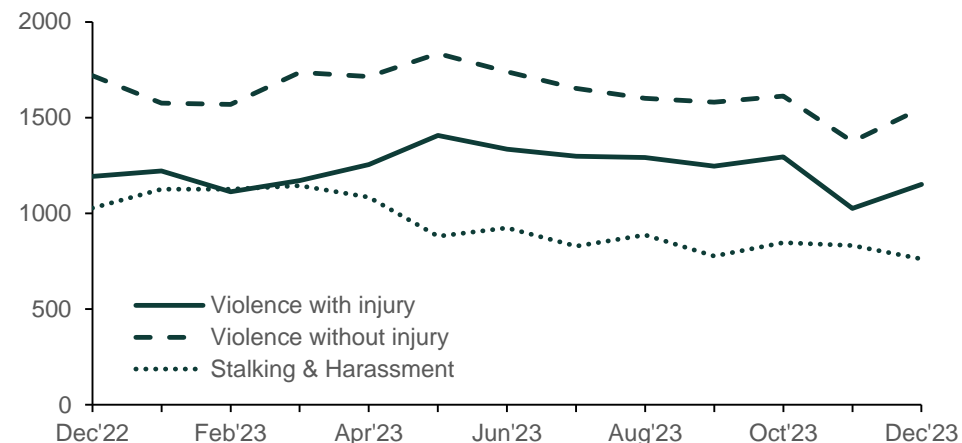
Violence with injury showed a general decline in levels through to the end of 2020/21. Apr to Jun'21 showed a sharp increase with subsequent levels remaining similar. Since the start of 2021/22 levels of violence without injury have generally been higher than those seen in the preceeding period shown in Figure 10, with the Apr to Jun'23 quarter being the highest in the last ten years. Stalking and Harassment increased following the inclusion of malicious communications in the data series from April 2017. A Home Office change to the recording of harassment from April 2018 resulted in further increases. May 2023 has seen a reversal of the previous Home Office change resulting in fewer of these offences being recorded; further details in the Points to Note on page 3.

Figure 9 Total police recorded crime, monthly since December 2022



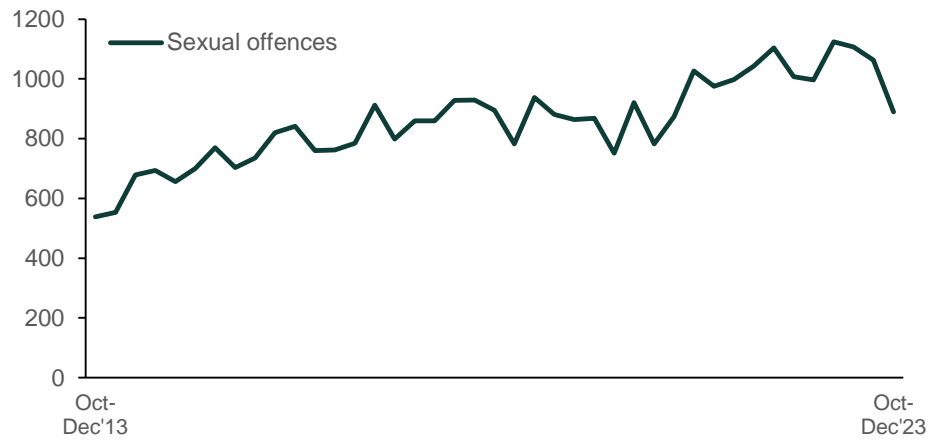
Offences recorded in latest month compared with:	previous month	same month last year	same month 10 years ago
Total recorded crime (7,857)	-0.7% (-57)	-8.7% (-751)	-2.7% (-220)

Figure 11 Violence against the person, monthly since December 2022



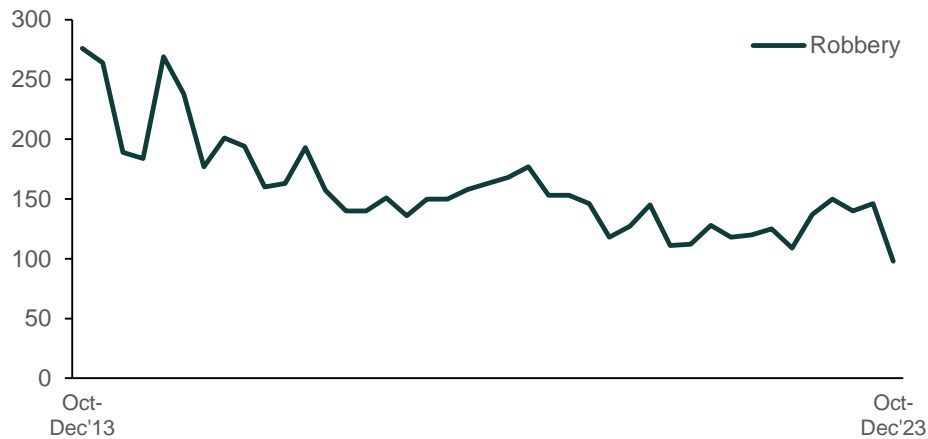
Offences recorded in latest month compared with:	previous month	same month last year	same month 10 years ago
Violence with injury (1,151)	+12.3% (+126)	-3.4% (-41)	-10.4% (-134)
Violence without injury (1,549)	+12.7% (+174)	-9.9% (-171)	+28.0% (+339)
Stalking & Harassment (761)	-8.5% (-71)	-25.9% (-266)	+210.6% (+516)

Figure 12 Sexual offences, quarterly since October to December 2013



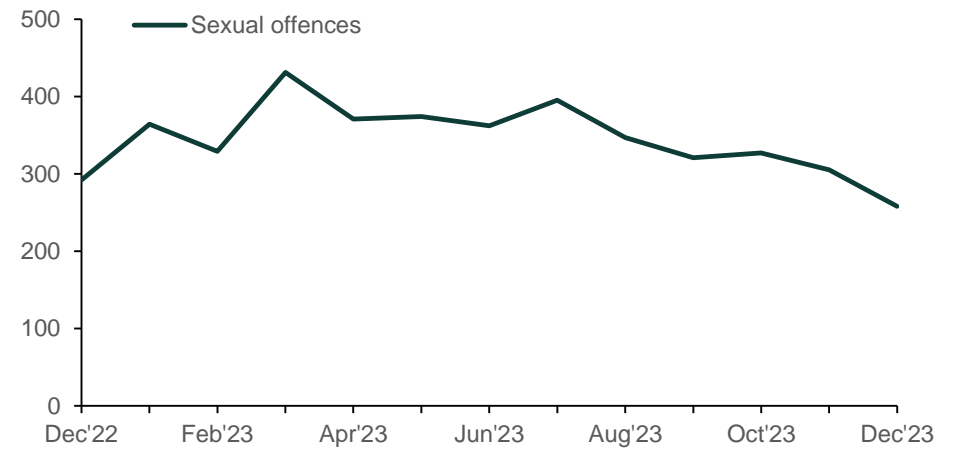
Sexual offences have shown an overall upwards trend, with the Jan-Mar'23 quarter showing the highest quarterly figure over the last ten years (and also since the start of the data series). The latest quarter (Oct'23-Dec'23) has shown a fall to levels previously seen in 2020/21.

Figure 14 Robbery offences, quarterly since October to December 2013



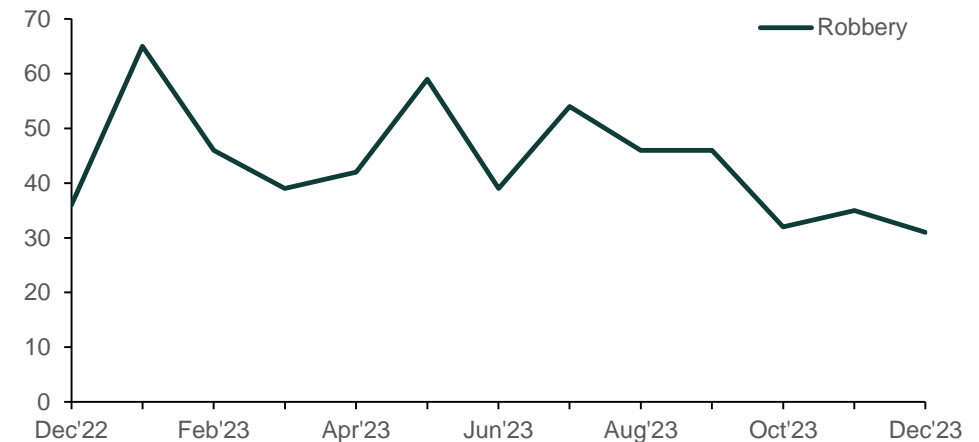
Robbery offences have declined over the last ten years and the latest quarter (Oct'23-Dec'23) shows the lowest quarterly figure during this time period (and also since the start of the data series).

Figure 13 Sexual offences, monthly since December 2022



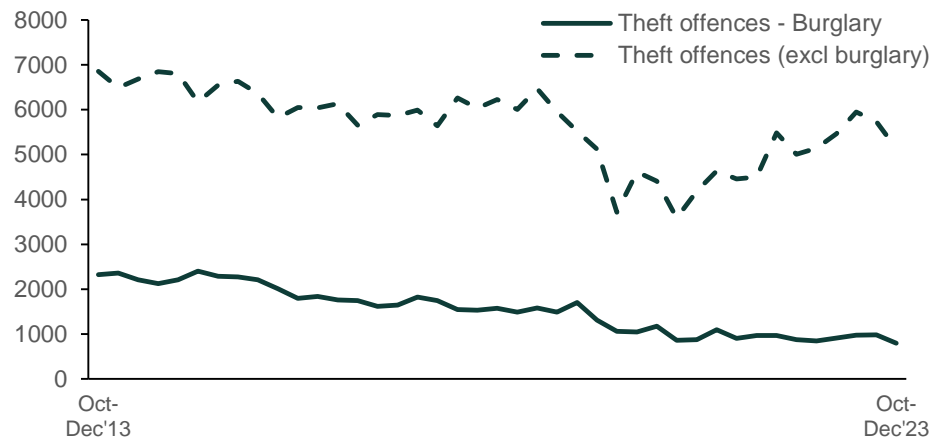
Offences recorded in latest month compared with:	previous month	same month last year	same month 10 years ago
Sexual offences (258)	-15.4% (-47)	-11.6% (-34)	+64.3% (+101)

Figure 15 Robbery offences, monthly since December 2022



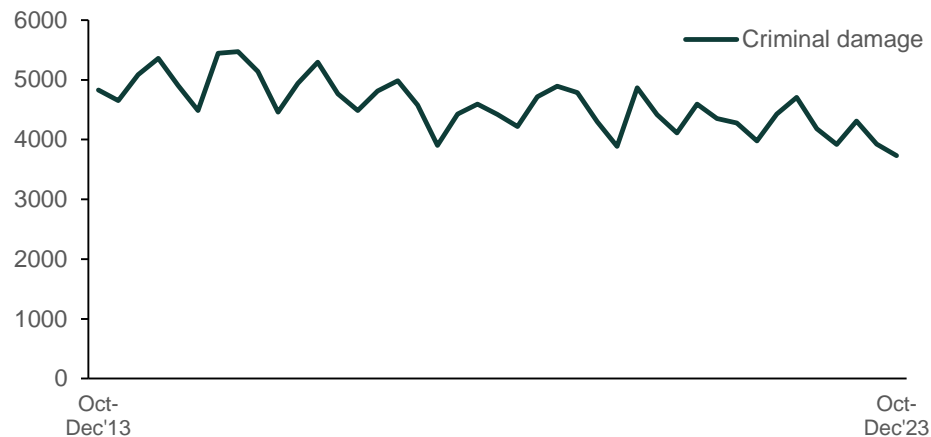
Offences recorded in latest month compared with:	previous month	same month last year	same month 10 years ago
Robbery (31)	-11.4% (-4)	-13.9% (-5)	-67.4% (-64)

Figure 16 Theft offences, quarterly since October to December 2013



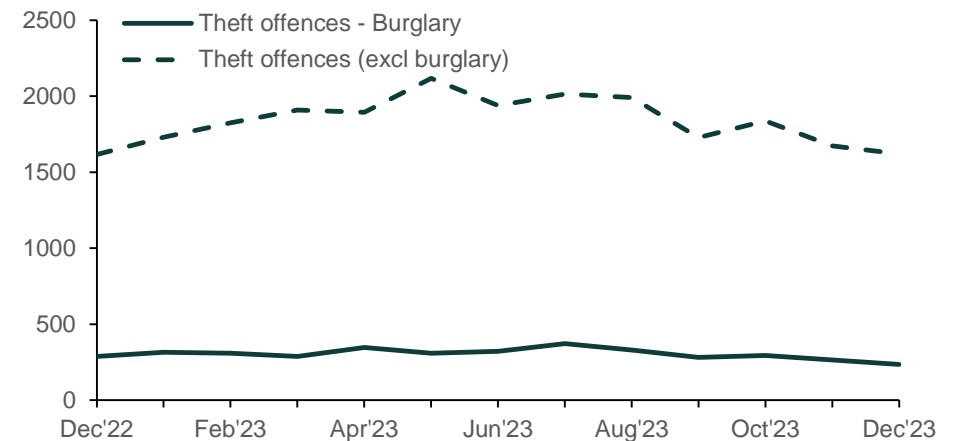
Burglary has shown a downward trend over the last ten years, with levels for the latest quarter (Oct'23-Dec'23) the lowest seen during this time period (and also since the start of the data series). Other theft offences were already showing a downwards trend before falling to their lowest level in Jan'21-Mar'21. Levels have since increased and are reaching those seen prior to the introduction of Covid 19 restrictions in March 2020.

Figure 18 Criminal damage offences, quarterly since October to December 2013



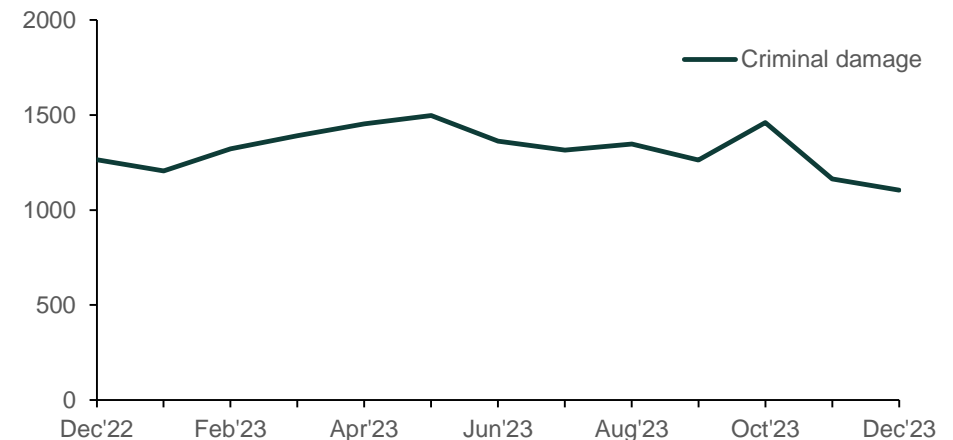
Criminal damage offences have shown a more gradual decline over the last ten years. The latest quarter (Oct'23-Dec'23) is the lowest during this time period (and since the start of the data series).

Figure 17 Theft offences, monthly since December 2022



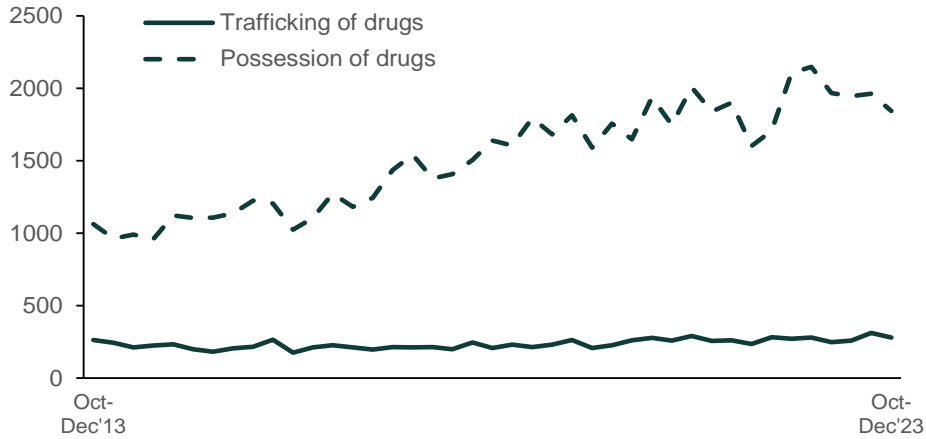
Offences recorded in latest month compared with:	previous month	same month last year	same month 10 years ago
Burglary (234)	-11.4% (-30)	-18.8% (-54)	-68.4% (-506)
Theft (1,621)	-3.1% (-52)	+0.3% (+5)	-24.6% (-530)

Figure 19 Criminal damage offences, monthly since December 2022



Offences recorded in latest month compared with:	previous month	same month last year	same month 10 years ago
Criminal damage (1,104)	-5.2% (-60)	-12.7% (-160)	-26.4% (-397)

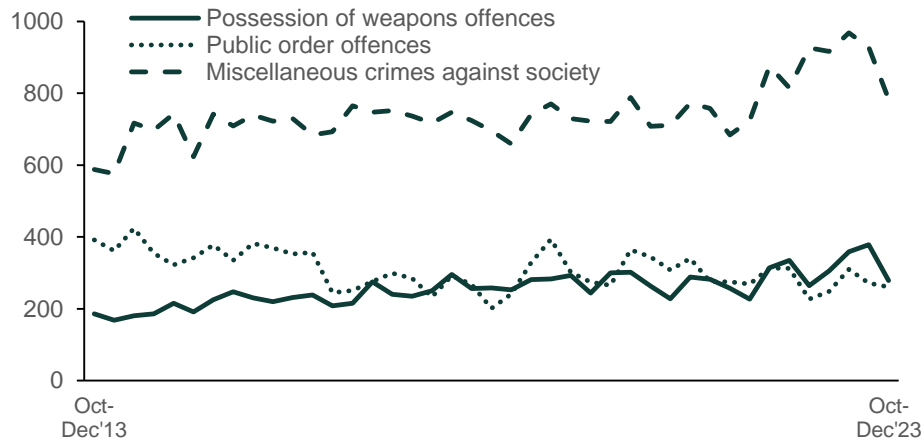
Figure 20 Drug offences, quarterly since October to December 2013



Drug possession offences have shown a steady increase over the last ten years, with the Oct'22-Dec'22 quarter being the highest recorded in that time period (and also since the start of the data series). Levels have generally declined in the latest four quarters.

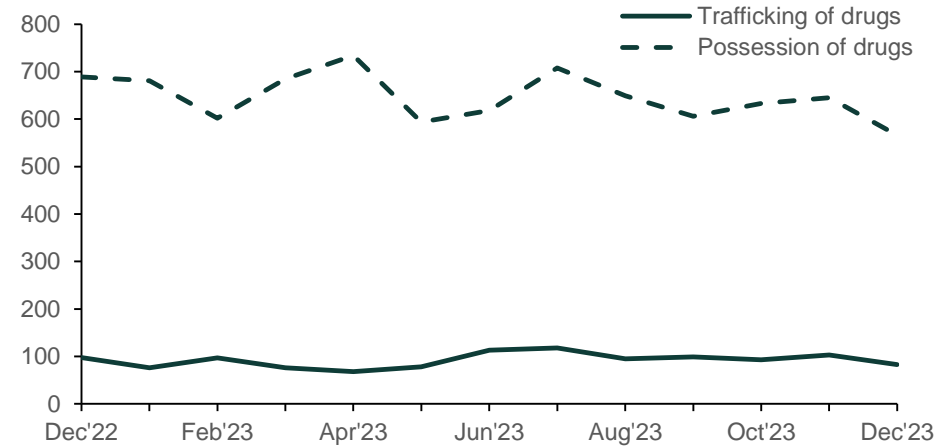
Drug trafficking offences have shown a relatively flat trend over the last ten years.

Figure 22 Other crimes against society, quarterly since October to December 2013



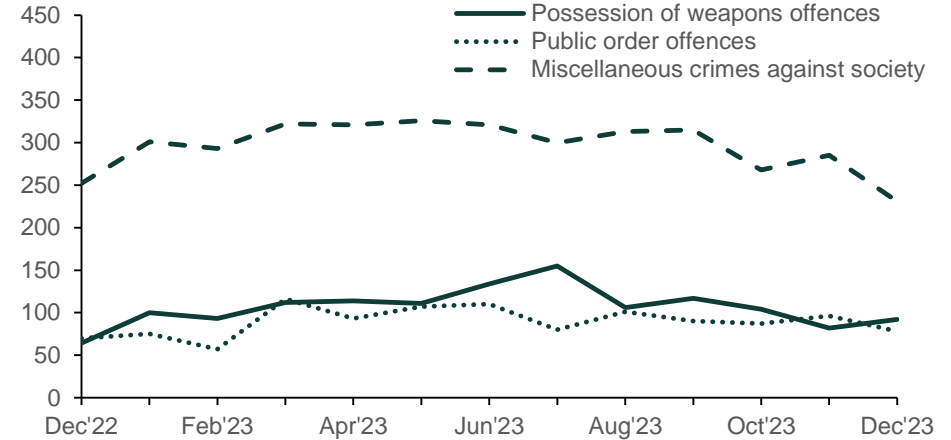
Possession of weapons offences and miscellaneous crimes against society have shown generally increasing trends over the last ten years, while Public order offences have shown a general downwards trend. Miscellaneous crimes reached the highest levels recorded over the four quarters Oct-Dec'22 to Jul-Sep'23; levels in the latest quarter (Oct'23-Dec'23) have shown a sharp fall.

Figure 21 Drug offences, monthly since December 2022



Offences recorded in latest month compared with:	previous month	same month last year	same month 10 years ago
Drug trafficking (83)	-19.4% (-20)	-15.3% (-15)	+29.7% (+19)
Drug possession (566)	-12.2% (-79)	-17.9% (-123)	+86.2% (+262)

Figure 23 Other crimes against society, monthly since December 2022



Offences recorded in latest month compared with:	previous month	same month last year	same month 10 years ago
Possession of weapons (92)	+12.2% (+10)	+43.8% (+28)	+70.4% (+38)
Public order (78)	-18.8% (-18)	+11.4% (+8)	-37.1% (-46)
Miscellaneous crimes (231)	-18.9% (-54)	-8.3% (-21)	+57.1% (+84)

5. What has been happening in policing districts?

When comparing the current and previous 12 months, all of the policing districts with the exception of Armagh, Banbridge and Craigavon, Ards & North Down and Fermanagh & Omagh, showed a decrease in the number of crimes recorded. [Table 2 and [Monthly crime spreadsheet for December 2023 \(opens in new window\)](#)].

Figure 24 Percentage change in police recorded crime by policing district, 12 months to December 2023 compared with the previous 12 months

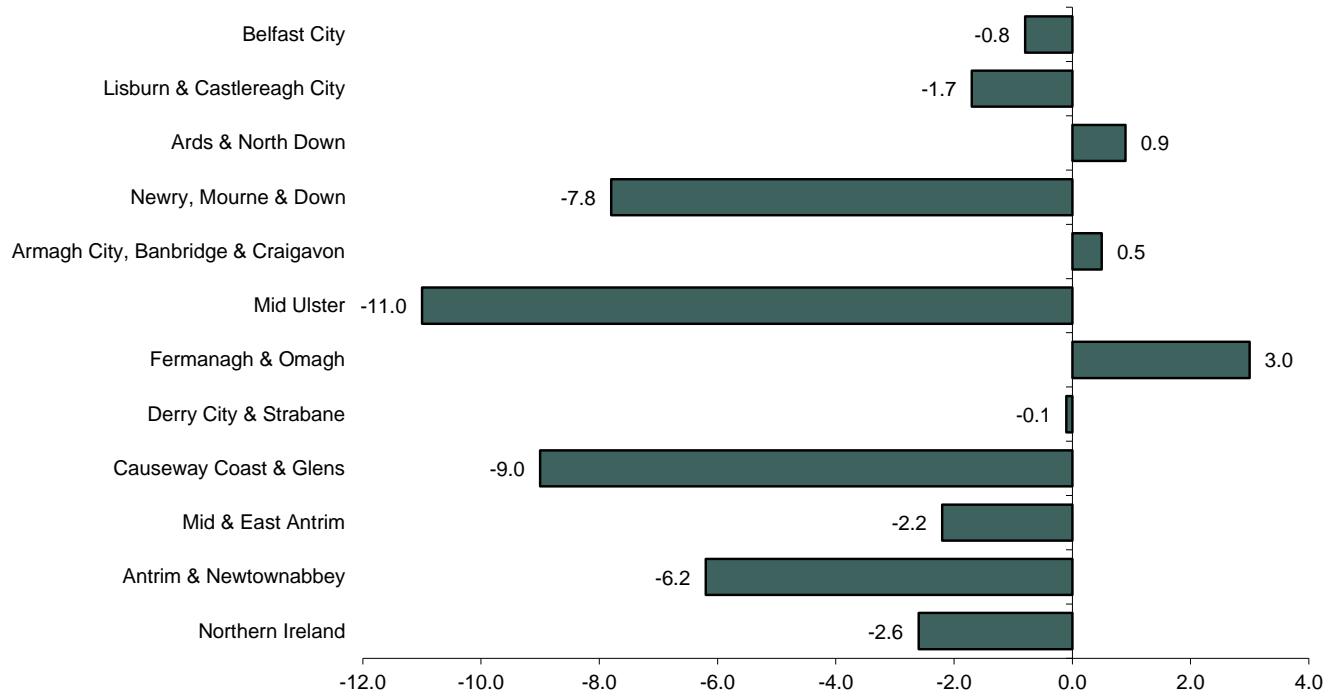


Table 2 Police recorded crime by policing district

Policing district	Recorded crime Jan'22- Dec'22	Recorded crime Jan'23- Dec'23	change	% change
Belfast City	34,410	34,121	-289	-0.8
<i>East</i> ¹	6,026	5,903	-123	-2.0
<i>North</i> ¹	10,084	10,160	76	0.8
<i>South</i> ¹	11,906	11,461	-445	-3.7
<i>West</i> ¹	6,394	6,597	203	3.2
Lisburn & Castlereagh City	6,250	6,141	-109	-1.7
Ards & North Down	6,575	6,632	57	0.9
Newry, Mourne & Down	10,025	9,239	-786	-7.8
Armagh City, Banbridge & Craigavon	10,268	10,318	50	0.5
Mid Ulster	5,700	5,071	-629	-11.0
Fermanagh & Omagh	4,368	4,497	129	3.0
Derry City & Strabane	11,244	11,228	-16	-0.1
Causeway Coast & Glens	6,780	6,169	-611	-9.0
Mid & East Antrim	6,647	6,501	-146	-2.2
Antrim & Newtownabbey	7,637	7,163	-474	-6.2
Northern Ireland	109,904	107,095	-2,809	-2.6

¹ Belfast City policing district has four local policing teams based in Lisburn Road (South), Tennent Street (North), Strandtown (East) and Woodbourne (West).

6. Homicide in Northern Ireland

Table 3 Homicides recorded by the Police in Northern Ireland in the 12 months January 2023 to December 2023 compared with the previous 12 months

	Jan'22 to Dec'22	Jan'23 to Dec'23
Murder	20	8
Manslaughter	7	2
Corporate Manslaughter	1	1
Infanticide	0	0
Homicide	28	11

Table 4 Homicide by age and gender

	Jan'22 to Dec'22	Jan'23 to Dec'23
Female < 18	1	0
Female 18 +	5	2
Male <18	0	1
Male 18 +	22	8
All Homicides	28	11

Table 5 Homicides with a domestic abuse motivation by age and gender

	Jan'22 to Dec'22	Jan'23 to Dec'23
Female < 18	0	0
Female 18 +	4	1
Male <18	0	1
Male 18 +	5	1
All Homicides with a domestic abuse motivation¹	9	3

¹ All domestic homicides in the period were murder offences.

Further Domestic Abuse statistics are available in the [Further Domestic Abuse statistics are available at Domestic Abuse Incidents and Crimes Quarterly Update period ending 30 September 2023](#)

Homicide statistics from 2007/08 are available in the [Monthly Crime spreadsheet for December 2023 \(opens in new window\)](#).

Domestic Abuse Definition

The PSNI has adopted the definition of domestic violence and abuse as outlined in the 2016 Northern Ireland Government Strategy 'Stopping Domestic and Sexual Violence and Abuse in Northern Ireland' as:

'threatening, controlling, coercive behaviour, violence or abuse (psychological, virtual, physical, verbal, sexual, financial or emotional) inflicted on anyone (irrespective of age, ethnicity, religion, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation or any form of disability) by a current or former intimate partner or family member'.

The following will assist in the application of this definition:

- (a) 'Incident' means an incident anywhere and not confined to the home of one of the partners/family members;
- (b) 'Family members' include mother, father, son, daughter, brother, sister, grandparents, whether directly or indirectly related, in-laws or stepfamily.
- (c) 'Intimate partners' means there must have been a relationship with a degree of continuity and stability. The relationship must also have had (or reasonably supposed to have had) a sexual aspect, such as in the relationship between husband and wife or between others generally recognised as a couple including same sex couples.

7. Knife and sharp instrument crime recorded by the police in Northern Ireland

Since April 2007 the Home Office has collected additional data from police forces on offences involving knives and sharp instruments, where a sharp instrument is any object that pierces the skin (or in the case of a threat is capable of piercing the skin), e.g. a broken bottle. Knives and sharp instruments are taken to be involved in an incident if they are used to stab or cut, or as a threat. Offence coverage is for a group of selected offences, as detailed in tables 6 and 7 below.

Please note: the records used to provide the figures in tables 6 and 7 are identified from an operational crime recording system and, as such, may be subject to change where more up-to-date weapon information becomes available.

Knife and sharp instrument crime figures are updated on a quarterly basis, with the latest figures published in July, October, January and May of each year. Comparable figures for England & Wales, are available in the [Crime bulletins for England & Wales \(opens in a new window\)](#). A breakdown by policing district is available in Table 8 in the [monthly crime spreadsheet for December 2023 \(opens in a new window\)](#).

Table 6 Number of selected violent and sexual offences involving knives or sharp instruments¹ by crime type, 2018/19 to 12 months to 31 December 2023

Selected offence type	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	12 months to Dec '23
Homicide	7	7	6	9	8	3
Attempted murder	23	32	23	29	24	11
Threats to kill	65	45	58	47	42	27
Actual bodily harm & grievous bodily harm ²	515	495	485	542	510	510
Robbery	155	133	118	115	110	120
Rape / sexual assault ³	2	7	3	4	7	4
Total selected offences	767	719	693	746	711	675

Table 7 Proportion of selected violent and sexual offences recorded by the police involving knives or sharp instruments^{1,4} by offence type in Northern Ireland, 2018/19 to 12 months to 31 December 2023 (i.e. 27 per cent of all homicides in the 12 months to 31 December 2023 involved knives or sharp instruments)

Selected offence type	2018/19 (%)	2019/20 (%)	2020/21 (%)	2021/22 (%)	2022/23 (%)	12 months to Dec '23
Homicide	24	35	27	38	33	27
Attempted murder	36	35	35	50	43	27
Threats to kill	4	3	4	4	4	3
Actual bodily harm & grievous bodily harm ²	4	4	4	4	3	4
Robbery	24	21	24	24	23	22
Rape / sexual assaults ³	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total selected offences	4	4	4	4	4	4

¹ A sharp instrument is any object that pierces the skin (or in the case of a threat, is capable of piercing the skin), eg a broken bottle. The knife and sharp instrument figures presented here are based on weapon details taken from a live operational system and are therefore subject to change.

² Includes 5D Assault with intent to cause serious harm, 8N Assault with injury and 8S Assault with injury on a Constable.

³ Includes indecent assault on a male/female (classifications 17/20) and sexual assault on a male/female (classifications 17A/17B/20A/20B), as well as 19A-19H Rape.

⁴ The proportion of offences involving a knife or sharp instrument shown may differ from previously published figures as the total number of offences used for calculating the proportion may have been revised.

8. Background and Data Quality

Data collection and data accuracy

Police recorded crime figures in Northern Ireland are recorded in compliance with the Home Office Counting Rules. A comprehensive validation and quality assurance process has been set in place to ensure that the numbers and types of crimes being recorded meet the standards set down in these rules. Details of the data quality checks and processes that PSNI has in place are available in section 4 of the [User Guide to Police Recorded Crime Statistics PDF \(opens in a new window\)](#).

Completeness of in-year data: Within year, police recorded crime figures are subject to a validation and quality assurance process.

Validation – a crime has been recorded and allocated a crime classification.

Quality assurance – ongoing data quality checks to improve accuracy and completeness of records in respect of crime classification, victim details, dates, location, sanction outcomes.

The total police recorded crime figure at the Northern Ireland and Policing District levels cover all records identified as crimes, including those that have not yet been allocated a crime classification. However individual crime types may not add to the total police recorded crime figure because of those crimes yet to be allocated a crime classification. 2

For the financial year to date (April – December 2023) 99.8% of records have been validated and 0.2% have not yet been given a crime classification. For the latest complete month (December 2023) 99.0% of records have been validated and 1.0% have not yet been given a crime classification.

Changes can be expected to in-year figures each time they are published, as all records from 1st April 2023 are subject to ongoing validation and quality assurance processes until publication in May 2024.

Extent of in-year changes to the police recorded crime figures in the update to 30 November 2023, which was first published 19 December 2023

	Numbers & Percentages						
	As published 19 Dec 2023	As published 25 Jan 2024	Scale of change		% change between years		
			Number	%	As published 19 Dec 2023	As published 25 Jan 2024	
Financial Year to date: April - November '23	71,998	72,205	+207	+0.3%	-5.2%	-4.9%	
12 Months – December 2022 to November 2023	107,639	107,846	+207	+0.2%	-1.8%	-1.6%	

Annual Revisions: Revisions to previously published data are applied on an annual basis to financial year crime figures from 2015/16 onwards, as a result of the introduction of the wider outcomes framework in April 2015. These revisions take account of crime cancellations and sanction outcomes identified since the previous annual publication. Revisions of this nature will next be applied in May 2024. Further guidance on crime cancellation can be found in the [Home Office Counting Rules for Recorded Crime \(opens in a new window\)](#).

Variations in crime trends: crime survey data and police recorded crime figures in England & Wales and Northern Ireland. An analysis of variation in crime trends looking at comparable crime categories between the Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW) and the police recorded crime series for England and Wales was conducted by the Office for National Statistics. This was initially published in January 2013, with updated analysis available in the User Guide to Crime Statistics for England and Wales Chapter which can be accessed through the ONS website in [Crime and justice methodology - User guides \(opens in a new window\)](#). This work identified a divergence in the trends between the two sets of figures, with the police recorded crime figures showing larger falls in crime. This raised questions about the quality of the police recorded crime figures and was one of the issues that led to the UK Statistics Authority removing the National Statistics designation from the police recorded crime figures in England and Wales.

The trends identified by ONS were not reflected in Northern Ireland; the Northern Ireland Crime Survey (now called the Northern Ireland Safe Community Survey) showed crime falling at a greater rate than the police recorded crime statistics. Further details of the Northern Ireland analysis can be found on page 6 of the [User Guide to Police Recorded Crime Statistics PDF \(opens in a new window\)](#).

Data audit and assessment of police recorded crime in Northern Ireland: In light of the crime recording issues in England & Wales and Scotland, Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMIC) were invited to conduct a crime data integrity audit within PSNI during September 2014, similar to those they conducted in England & Wales

during 2014. The outcome of the audit was published on 19 March 2015 in the report [Crime data integrity – inspection of the Police Service of Northern Ireland \(opens in a new window\)](#). The main findings in relation to data quality were:

- a crime-recording accuracy rate of 97 percent with a confidence interval of +/-2 percent;
- 98 percent of crimes correctly classified; and
- 84 percent recorded within the 72-hour limit allowed under HOCR.

The UK Statistics Authority (UKSA) assessment was concluded after the publication of the HMIC report; [the UKSA assessment report Number 301 Statistics on Police Recorded Crime in Northern Ireland \(Police Service of Northern Ireland\) \(opens in a new window\)](#) was published on 28 May 2015. This report judged that the police recorded crime statistics in Northern Ireland can be designated as National Statistics. A letter of confirmation as National Statistics was published in February 2016.

Internal Audit 2022: Results from the 2022 Internal Audit showed that the crime recording accuracy had changed from 95 per cent in 2021 to 91 per cent in 2022. Crime recording accuracy in previous years was 90% in 2018, 97% in 2019 and 92% in 2020. The 2022 audit indicated that 93 per cent of crimes were correctly classified. The Home Office Counting Rules (HOCR), which govern crime recording, state that crimes should be recorded within 24 hours; the audit showed that 72% had a crime created within 24 hours of reporting and 41 per cent were HOCR compliant within 24 hours. Failures in crime recording accuracy were primarily due to the under recording of minor assaults, harassment and criminal damage offences.

Changes to crime classifications

Introduction of Action Fraud within Northern Ireland: From 1 April 2015 Action Fraud became responsible for the central recording of fraud and cyber crime previously recorded by PSNI; Action Fraud became responsible for all such reports in England & Wales by 1 April 2014. Action Fraud is the UK's National Reporting Centre for fraud and cyber crime reported directly to them from the public and other organisations. While this means that these fraud and cyber offences are no longer recorded by PSNI, Action Fraud figures relating to fraud and cyber crime occurring in Northern Ireland are provided to PSNI on a monthly basis. As a result, this release contains a short section on the recording of fraud which presents Action Fraud figures covering the last two years. All other sections within the bulletin present figures on a comparable basis that exclude crimes recorded by Action Fraud, unless otherwise specified.

Additional data available to accompany this release

This release provides an overview of police recorded crime in the 12 months to December 2023. A range of additional tables are available on the PSNI website to supplement the information contained in this bulletin. This data is available in [excel spreadsheet and open data format \(opens in a new window\)](#)

Web links to other information you may be interested in

[Police Recorded Crime Statistics Annual Trends \(opens in a new window\)](#) The latest publication covering financial years 1998/99 to 2022/23 was published on 24 November 2023.

[Crime Outcomes \(opens in a new window\)](#) The latest publication presenting the wider outcomes framework within PSNI and summarising the outcomes that have been assigned to crimes recorded by the police between 2015/16 and 2022/23 was published on 24 November 2023.

Further details on Police Recorded Crime statistics are available in the [User Guide to Police Recorded Crime Statistics PDF \(opens in a new window\)](#), and in the [Police Recorded Crime Statistics Quality Report PDF \(opens in a new window\)](#). These are reference guides with explanatory notes regarding the issues and classifications which are key to the production and presentation of police recorded crime statistics.

[Northern Ireland Safe Community Survey \(opens in a new window\)](#), with survey results available on the Department of Justice website

Figures are available for a range of additional geographic areas through the [NISRA Data Portal \(opens in a new window\)](#). These figures are updated on an annual basis.

Provisional management information drawn from police anti-social behaviour and crime figures, published at street level each month, is available through the [police crime mapping website \(opens in a new window\)](#). The figures on the crime mapping website will differ from those provided in this release as they have been extracted from the police administrative system on different dates, and also require a grid reference in order to be mapped.

[Police Recorded Crime in England & Wales \(opens in a new window\)](#) are included within the publications on Crime in England and Wales, which are available from the Crime and justice webpage.

Copies of other PSNI publications are available from the [PSNI website \(opens in a new window\)](#).