



Agriculture and Rural Crime in Northern Ireland

Update to 31st December 2023

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PSNI Statistics Branch
Lisnasharragh
42 Montgomery Road
Belfast
BT6 9LD

✉ statistics@psni.police.uk

☎ 028 9065 0222 Ext. 24135

Web [PSNI Statistics](#)

Agricultural crime has shown an overall downwards trend since the start of the data series in 2010/11.

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

- There were 228 agricultural crimes recorded in Northern Ireland, an increase of 2 on the previous 12 months. Despite this increase, this remains one of the lowest twelve month figures for agricultural crimes since the data series began in 2010/11.
- 96 per cent of agricultural crime was identified as occurring in rural settlement areas.
- Agricultural crime represented less than one per cent of all burglary, robbery and theft offences.
- Six policing districts experienced an increase in levels of agriculture crime.

Contents

Contents.....	2
1. Things you need to know about this release	3
2. What is happening to levels of agricultural crime over the longer term?.....	4
3. What has been happening to levels of agricultural crime more recently?	5
4. What is happening to levels of urban and rural crime over the longer term?	7
5. What has been happening to levels of urban and rural crime more recently?	8
6. Background notes.....	9

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

This bulletin is an Official Statistics publication meaning it complies with the [Code of Practice for Official Statistics](#) as follows:

- Trustworthiness: the statistics are impartial, independent and released in an open and transparent manner in accordance with a pre-announced publication schedule
- Quality: the statistics are produced using robust and relevant data sources which undergo continuous quality improvement and assurance checks
- Value: the statistics strive to meet user needs informed by ongoing feedback, providing sufficient detail which is widely accessible.

The Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) publishes figures on the levels and trends in agricultural and rural crime in Northern Ireland. These figures are based on police recorded crime data and details of the definitions and methodology used are provided below. The statistics are collated and produced by statisticians seconded to PSNI from the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA).

This bulletin presents agricultural and urban/rural crime for the latest twelve months 1st January 2023 to 31st December 2023 and the previous 12 months 1st January 2022 to 31st December 2022.

Figures were compiled on 17th January 2024, using data extracted from the police administrative system on that date. All tables and charts in the bulletin, along with figures for financial years dating back to 2010/11 and for calendar years dating back to 2011 are available from the PSNI website in the [Agriculture and Rural Crime spreadsheet for December 2023 \(opens in a new window\)](#).

The next update covering the 12 months to 31st March 2024 will be published in May 2024. A full publication schedule is available on the [PSNI website \(opens in a new window\)](#).

Definitions

Agricultural Crime – the agricultural crime figures in this bulletin represent offences of burglary, robbery and theft where the victim is involved in an agricultural-based activity. Agricultural crime covers burglary, robbery and theft offences where the property or vehicles stolen have an agricultural link (e.g. farm equipment, agricultural vehicles, livestock) or where the location was agricultural (e.g. farm, farmhouse). This information is identified from both drop down pick lists and free text searches using key agricultural-related words.

Urban/Rural crime – this covers all burglary, robbery and theft offences, split into these two geographical areas based on an aggregation of settlement bands. Please note that not all agricultural crime will occur in a rural settlement.

The urban/rural crime split is based on classification boundaries that are available for Northern Ireland as defined by the Planning Service, these areas being defined from Settlement Development Limits. Further details are available from the [NISRA website \(opens in a new window\)](#). Crimes are allocated to urban or rural by linking the available postcode information for the crime location to the Central Postcode Directory.

Data Revisions

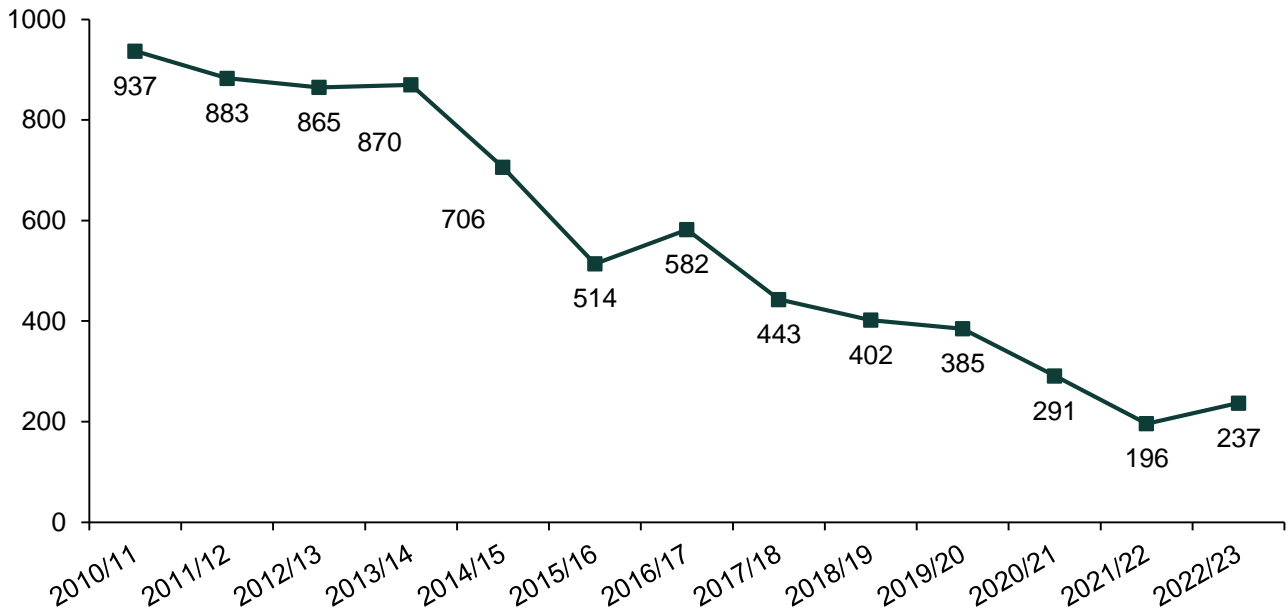
Agricultural crime tables: As the methodology used to identify agricultural crimes relies on data extracted from a live operational system, figures contained in the agricultural crime tables may be subject to revision. Further information is provided in the NOTES section on the last page of this bulletin.

Urban/Rural tables: 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 \(opens in a new window\)](#).

2. What is happening to levels of agricultural crime over the longer term?

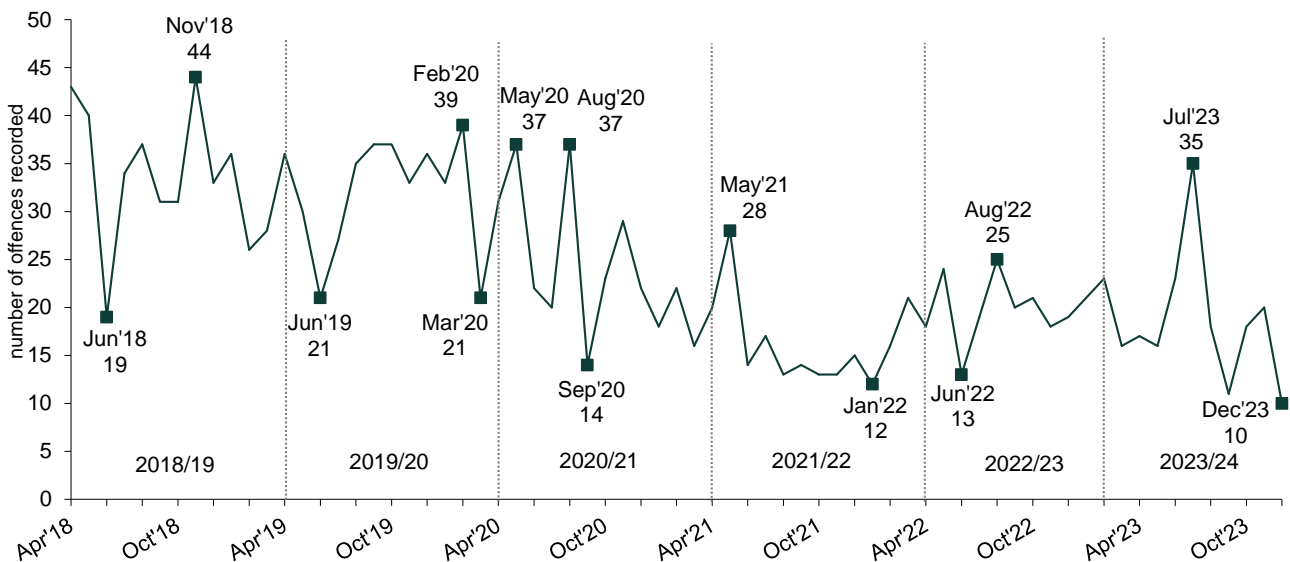
The number of burglary, robbery and theft offences relating to agricultural-based activity has shown an overall downwards trend. The highest level of 937 offences was recorded in 2010/11, with the lowest level of 196 recorded in 2021/22. The figures for 2022/23 show an increase of 41 when compared with 2021/22; despite this increase, the number of agricultural crimes in 2022/23 remains the second lowest in the data series. The level recorded in 2022/23 is a quarter of the 2010/11 figure. [Figure 1]

Figure 1 Trends in agricultural crime since 2010/11



The falling levels of agriculture crime since April 2018 are shown in Figure 2 below.

Figure 2 Agricultural crime each month

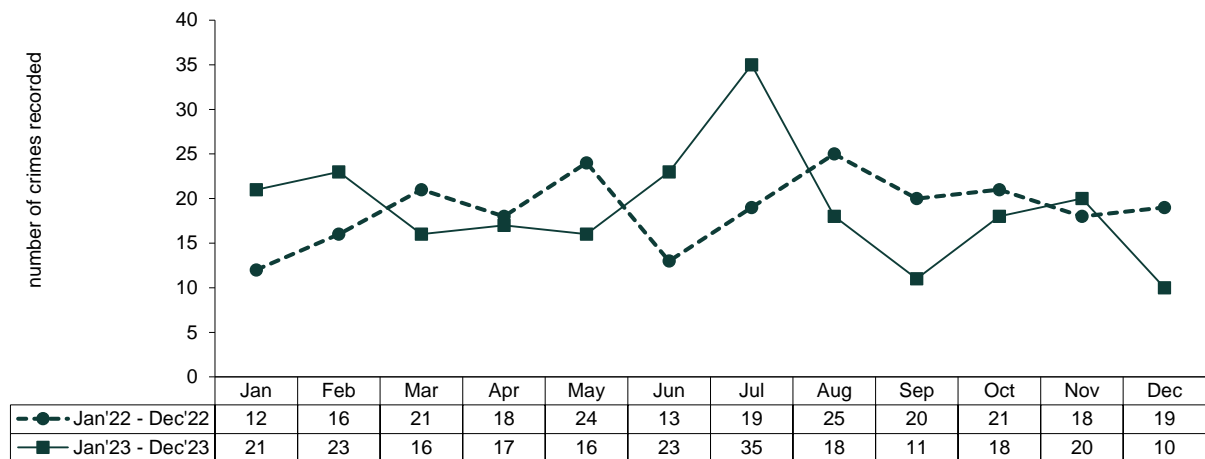


3. What has been happening to levels of agricultural crime more recently?

In the 12 months from 1st January 2022 to 31st December 2023:

- There were 228 agricultural crimes recorded in Northern Ireland, an increase of 2 on the previous 12 months.
- Despite this increase, there has been an overall downward trend since 2010/11. [Table 1 and Figure 1]
- 96 per cent of agriculture crime was identified as occurring in rural settlement areas. Since 2010/11 this proportion has ranged between 95 and 98 per cent¹. [Table 2, accompanying spreadsheet]
- Burglary and robbery represented 22 per cent of agricultural crime, while theft represented 78 per cent. Since 2010/11 burglary and robbery have represented between 22 and 36 per cent of agricultural crime while theft has represented between 64 and 78 per cent. [Table 3, accompanying spreadsheet]
- Agriculture crime represented 0.9 per cent of all burglary, robbery and theft offences, matching the proportion recorded during the previous 12 months. The highest proportion of 2.4 per cent was seen in 2010/11, 2012/13 and 2013/14. [Tables 1 and 5]
- The highest level of agriculture crime was seen in both Newry, Mourne & Down and Fermanagh & Omagh (36), followed by Armagh City, Banbridge & Craigavon (35), Mid Ulster (31), Derry City & Strabane (23), Antrim & Newtownabbey (20), and Causeway Coast & Glens (19). [Table 1]
- Six of the policing districts showed an increase in levels of agricultural crime. Derry City & Strabane had the greatest increase (13) and Mid & East Antrim had the greatest decrease (-10). [Table 1]

Figure 3 Agricultural crime January 2022 to December 2023



¹ Urban/rural settlement figures are identified through matching the postcode of the occurrence with the Central Postcode Directory.

Table 1 Agriculture Crime (burglary, robbery and theft offences for agricultural-based activity) by Policing District

Policing district	Agricultural Crimes Jan'22-Dec'22	Agricultural Crimes Jan'23-Dec'23	Change
Belfast City	0	2	2
Lisburn & Castlereagh City	8	7	-1
Ards & North Down	4	5	1
Newry, Mourne & Down	42	36	-6
Armagh City, Banbridge & Craigavon	40	34	-6
Mid Ulster	23	31	8
Fermanagh & Omagh	30	36	6
Derry City & Strabane	10	23	13
Causeway Coast & Glens	28	19	-9
Mid & East Antrim	25	15	-10
Antrim & Newtownabbey	16	20	4
No district assigned	0	0	0
Northern Ireland	226	228	2

Table 2 Agriculture Crime (burglary, robbery and theft offences for agricultural-based activity) split by Urban/Rural settlements

	Agricultural Crimes Jan'22-Dec'22	Agricultural Crimes Jan'23-Dec'23	Change
Urban	3	10	7
Rural	223	218	-5
Not known	0	0	0
Total	226	228	2

Table 3 Agriculture Crime (burglary, robbery and theft offences for agricultural-based activity) split by type of offence

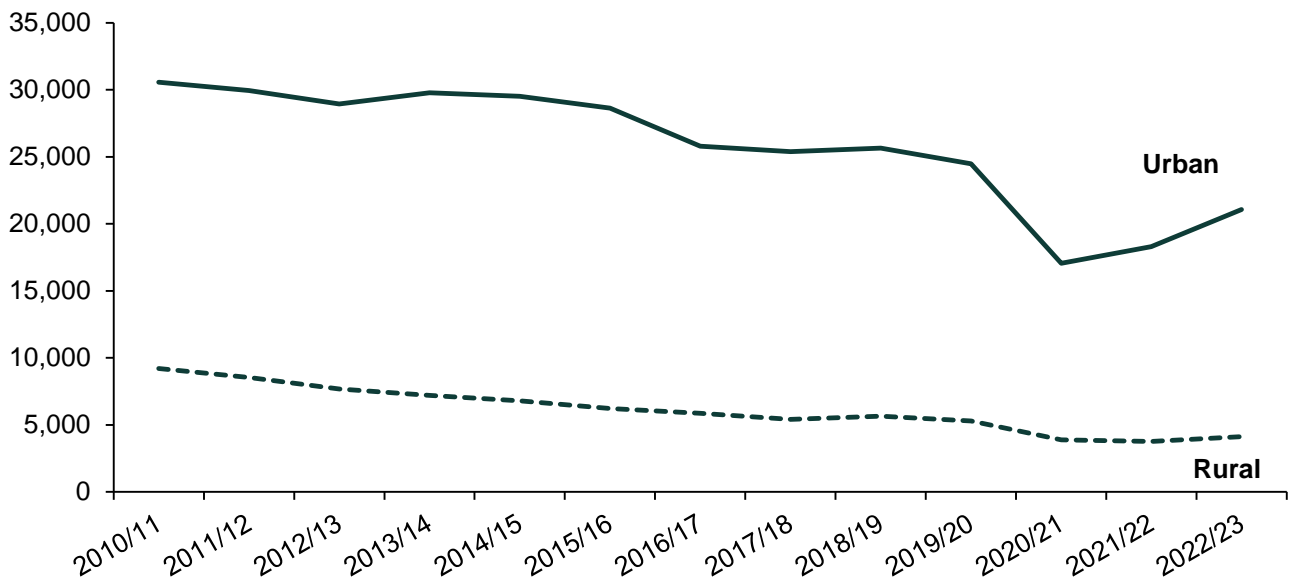
	Agricultural Crimes Jan'22-Dec'22	Agricultural Crimes Jan'23-Dec'23	Change
Burglary / Robbery	66	51	-15
Theft	160	177	17
Total	226	228	2

4. What is happening to levels of urban and rural crime over the longer term?

Between 2010/11 and 2022/23:

- Looking at Northern Ireland as a whole, burglary, robbery and theft offences showed an overall downwards trend from 2010/11 to the lowest level recorded in 2020/21, a fall of 47.3 per cent over this time period. Levels have since increased in both 2021/22 and 2022/23, with 2022/23 showing an increase of 20.3 per cent when compared with the lowest recorded figure. [Table 6]
- The number of burglary, robbery and theft offences in **rural settlements** fell each year between 2010/11 and 2021/22 with the exception of 2018/19. Levels rose in 2022/23, to 4,130 offences, representing a 55.1 per cent reduction on the 9,211 offences recorded in 2010/11. [Table 6]
- Levels of burglary, robbery and theft offences in **urban settlements** showed an overall downwards trend between 2010/11 and 2020/21, a fall of 44.2 per cent over this time period. While the level of 21,080 recorded in 2022/23 shows an increase of 23.5 per cent when compared with the lowest level in 2020/21, it still represents a fall of 31.0 per cent when compared with 2010/11. [Table 6]
- The *proportion* of burglary, robbery and theft offences occurring in urban settlement areas has gradually increased from 77 per cent in 2010/11 to 84 per cent in 2022/23. Correspondingly, the *proportion* of these offences occurring in rural settlements has fallen from 23 per cent in 2010/11 to 16 per cent in 2022/23. [Table 6]

Figure 4 Trends in burglary, robbery and theft offences by urban and rural split since 2010/11



5. What has been happening to levels of urban and rural crime more recently?

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

- In Northern Ireland as a whole, burglary, robbery and theft offences increased by 9.0 per cent (2,195 offences). [bulletin Table 4, spreadsheet Table 5]
- The number of burglary, robbery and theft offences in **rural settlements** increased by 8.1 per cent (323 offences). [bulletin Table 4, spreadsheet Table 5]
- Levels of burglary, robbery and theft offences in **urban settlements** increased by 9.2 per cent (1,872 offences). [bulletin Table 4, spreadsheet Table 5]
- The *proportion* of burglary, robbery and theft offences occurring in urban settlement areas was 84 per cent, with the *proportion* of these offences occurring in rural settlements sitting at 16 per cent. This matches the proportions of 84 per cent and 16 per cent recorded during the previous 12 months. [bulletin Table 4, spreadsheet Table 5]
- The percentage of burglary, robbery and theft offences occurring in rural settlement areas was 49 per cent in Mid Ulster, 46 per cent in Fermanagh & Omagh, 34 per cent in Newry, Mourne & Down, 26 per cent in Causeway Coast & Glens, 23 per cent in Armagh City, Banbridge & Craigavon, 22 per cent in Lisburn & Castlereagh City, 21 per cent in Mid & East Antrim, 20 per cent in Antrim & Newtownabbey, and 16 per cent in both Derry City & Strabane and Ards & North Down. The figure was less than 1 per cent in Belfast City. [bulletin Table 4, spreadsheet Table 5]

Table 4 Urban/Rural Crime (burglary, robbery and theft offences based on geographical location) by Policing District, current and previous 12 months

Policing district	Urban Crimes Jan'22-Dec'22	Urban Crimes Jan'23-Dec'23	Rural Crimes Jan'22-Dec'22	Rural Crimes Jan'23-Dec'23	Total Crimes Jan'22-Dec'22	Total Crimes Jan'23-Dec'23
Belfast City	9,560	9,570	19	19	9,579	9,589
Lisburn & Castlereagh City	1,116	1,295	375	363	1,491	1,658
Ards & North Down	970	1,159	189	213	1,159	1,372
Newry, Mourne & Down	1,299	1,415	663	723	1,962	2,138
Armagh City, Banbridge & Craigavon	1,443	1,827	541	548	1,984	2,375
Mid Ulster	488	507	504	493	992	1,000
Fermanagh & Omagh	535	603	436	508	971	1,111
Derry City & Strabane	1,775	1,958	342	372	2,117	2,330
Causeway Coast & Glens	863	1,014	316	351	1,179	1,365
Mid & East Antrim	1,082	1,322	309	343	1,391	1,665
Antrim & Newtownabbey	1,171	1,504	281	365	1,452	1,869
Northern Ireland	20,302	22,174	3,975	4,298	24,277	26,472

6. Background notes

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.

Definitions

Agricultural crime covers burglary, robbery and theft offences where the property or vehicles stolen have an agricultural link (e.g. farm equipment, agricultural vehicles, livestock) or where the location was agricultural (e.g. farm, farmhouse). This information is identified from both drop down pick lists and free text searches using key agricultural-related words.

Urban/Rural crime covers all burglary, robbery and theft offences, split into these two geographical areas based on an aggregation of settlement bands.

Please note that not all agricultural crime will occur in a rural settlement.

Data Accuracy and Revisions

Agricultural crime figures are based on a range of information extracted from a live crime recording system and, as such, will always be subject to revision.

Within the current financial year revisions may occur because:

- There will be incidents identified as crimes but not processed on the crime recording system by the time the figures are extracted for presentation in these tables.
- Figures may change from month to month due to crimes being reclassified from one crime type to another during the financial year. This may be because quality checks have identified the crime as incorrectly classified, or further information may indicate that the circumstances surrounding the crime were not as initially recorded.
- The Home Office Counting Rules allow crimes initially recorded to be 'no crime'd' or removed from the crime figures.

Revisions to any records within the dataset may also occur as information in relation to property stolen, vehicles stolen and location may be updated on the live system. This may be through adding additional information or updating existing information based on more up-to-date details.

The urban/rural figures are identified through matching the available postcode to the Central Postcode Directory. Postcode accuracy and availability within the current financial year will not be of the same quality or completeness as a full financial year. This is because additional quality checks are completed at the end of each financial year to improve postcode quality and completeness. Further details are available in the [User Guide to Police Recorded Crime Statistics in Northern Ireland \(opens in a new window\)](#).

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.

Web links to other information you may be interested in

[Trends in Police Recorded Crime in Northern Ireland 1998/99 to 2022/23 \(opens in a new window\)](#) was published on 24 November 2023 and provides detailed trend information covering this time period.

Further details on Police Recorded Crime statistics are available in the [User Guide to Police Recorded Crime Statistics in Northern Ireland \(opens in a new window\)](#), and in the [Police Recorded Crime Statistics Quality Report 293KB \(opens in a new window\)](#). 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.

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