

Police Service of Northern Ireland

Home Office Consultation on proposed changes to recorded crime classifications and presentation of crime statistics: Impact on Police Recorded Crime in Northern Ireland

Personal, Professional, Protective Policing



Background

The Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) has for many years recorded crime in line with national guidance from the Home Office for police forces in England & Wales. This national guidance is based on the National Crime Recording Standard and the Home Office Counting Rules (HOCR) and both are instrumental in getting a consistent measure of crimes reported to the police across all forces.

In April 2011 the outcome of a review to bring crime classifications used within PSNI more into line with those used within England & Wales was introduced, meaning that any changes introduced by the Home Office now have a direct read across to PSNI classifications.

Official Statistics: User Consultation

In accordance with the Code of Practice for Official Statistics, the PSNI is required to consult key users about any proposed changes to our processes or outputs that could affect existing statistics.

Summary of Main Changes

The Home Office is currently considering introducing further changes to some of the crime classifications and has recently launched a consultation on this. If introduced in England & Wales, the PSNI would intend adopting the same changes (pending the outcome of consultation) to maintain comparability. However, it should be stressed at this stage that if the Home Office doesn't progress this change then PSNI would not introduce it. The Home Office Consultation paper is available on the consultations page of their internet site and is titled *Proposed changes to recorded crime classifications and presentation of recorded crime statistics* (<http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/science-research/about-home-office-science/consultations/>)

There are two main changes proposed:

1. Changes to police recorded crime classifications used for data collection
2. Changes to the presentation of police recorded crime statistics

The key point to bear in mind is that none of the proposed changes will result in any change to the overall numbers of recorded crimes and detections.

Impact on PSNI recorded crime statistics of changes to police recorded crime classifications used for data collection

The aim of this proposed change is to reduce the overall number of crime classifications reported to the Home Office by police forces in England & Wales. Implementing this change would have an impact on existing time series data for England & Wales, for those classifications affected. Details of this are provided in the Home Office consultation documents.

In PSNI each crime is classified according to the specific type of offence that has occurred, which makes it possible for PSNI to be more flexible in how it groups offences together into higher level classifications. This is where the PSNI data collection process differs from the Home Office as police forces in England & Wales submit data returns to the Home Office with figures already aggregated to higher level classifications.

Where the Home Office propose merging existing classifications together into a new classification, PSNI has the option of continuing to present the level of detail currently available.

Where the Home Office propose splitting a classification, PSNI would need to incorporate this change in order to keep in step with the Home Office classifications. However PSNI's method of data collection described above means that the time series dating back to 1998/99 can be amended so as not to cause a break in the data series.

Impact on PSNI recorded crime statistics of changes to the presentation of police recorded crime statistics

The aim of this proposed change is to introduce a clearer split between 'victim-based' and 'state-based' offences through the crime classifications. This will be achieved by moving lower level classifications to different crime categories. Again this may create a break in the time series for England & Wales crime statistics.

Where the Home Office propose to move classifications to different categories, PSNI would need to incorporate this change in order to retain comparability with England & Wales crime figures. Again, PSNI's method of data collection described above means that the time series data can be amended so that data from 1998/99 to the latest figures available remain comparable, ie this would not cause a break in the data series.

The net impact of implementing both changes on the crime categories is shown below (figures based on 2010/11):

	Total recorded 2010/11	2010/11 figure with proposed changes implemented	Impact of proposed changes
Violence against the person	29,794	29,234	-560
<i>Violence with injury</i>	15,156	15,117	-39
<i>Violence without injury</i>	14,638	14,117	-521
Sexual offences	1,933	1,928	-5
<i>Most serious sexual crime</i>	1,605	1,605	0
<i>Other sexual offences</i>	328	323	-5
Robbery	1,306	1,306	0
Burglary	11,849	11,849	0
Theft	25,438	25,267	-171
<i>Offences against vehicles</i>	6,933	6,933	0
<i>Other theft offences</i>	18,505	18,334	-171
Fraud & forgery	3,023	3,023	0
Criminal damage	24,996	24,483	-513
Drug offences	3,485	3,485	0
Other miscellaneous offences	3,216	4,465	+1,249
Total Recorded Crime – all offences	105,040	105,040	0

Annex 1 provides a detailed explanation of the impact of each proposed change on the existing crime categories and classifications.

Conclusion

The implementation of these changes will be subject to the outcome of the Home Office consultation. At the end of their consultation document, the Home Office have listed questions for data users.

Do you support these proposals either in whole or in part?

Do you agree that these proposals would bring greater coherence to official statistics on crimes?

Will these proposals aid public understanding of crime statistics?

What if any impact will the loss of detailed collection associated with these proposals have on you or your organisation?

Do you have any further suggestions or proposals for consideration by the Independent Advisory Committee?

Should you wish to provide your views on this consultation please send your response (by post or email) to Statistics Branch, PSNI. We will forward any responses received by 12th January to the Home Office for inclusion in the overall consultation.

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Annex 1: The impact of the proposed changes for each main crime category

Violence against the person (Home Office propose to rename this 'Violence')

Classification	Proposed change re classifications used	Proposed change re presentation of statistics	Impact on Violence against the person (gain or loss based on 2010/11 figures)
5A Inflicting grievous bodily harm (GBH) with intent	This classification would be split: - <i>GBH with intent</i> and <i>Wounding with intent</i> would become <i>5D Wounding</i> - <i>Administer poison etc with intent</i> would become <i>5E Endangering life</i>	<i>5D Wounding</i> would remain in <i>violence with injury</i> <i>5E Endangering life</i> would be included in <i>violence without injury</i>	<i>Violence with injury</i> would lose 2 offences while <i>violence without injury</i> would gain 2 offences. There would be no impact on the <i>violence against the person</i> total.
5B Use of substance or object to endanger life	These classifications would merge with others to become <i>5E Endangering life</i>	<i>5E Endangering life</i> would be included in <i>violence without injury</i>	<i>Violence with injury</i> would lose 6 offences while <i>violence without injury</i> would gain 6 offences. There would be no impact on the <i>violence against the person</i> total.
5C Possession of items to endanger life			<i>Violence with injury</i> would lose 31 offences while <i>violence without injury</i> would gain 31 offences. There would be no impact on the <i>violence against the person</i> total.
8F Inflicting grievous bodily harm (GBH) without intent	These classifications would merge to become <i>8N Assault with injury</i>	<i>8N</i> would remain in <i>violence with injury</i>	While a classification of <i>8N</i> would be created, PSNI can choose to continue to present the existing classifications as well, including the split of <i>8G</i> into <i>AOABH</i> and <i>Assault on police with injury</i> . There would be no impact on the <i>violence against the person</i> total.
8G Actual bodily harm (AOABH) and other injury			
8K Poisoning or female genital mutilation			
6 Endangering railway passengers	These classifications would merge with others to become <i>5E Endangering life</i>	<i>5E Endangering life</i> would be included in <i>violence without injury</i>	These classifications would remain in <i>violence without injury</i> . There would be no impact on <i>violence without injury</i> or on the <i>violence against the person</i> total.
7 Endangering life at sea			
10A Possession of firearms with intent		These classifications would move to <i>other miscellaneous offences</i> as they are regarded as 'State-based' offences	<i>Violence without injury</i> would lose 628 offences. <i>Violence against the person</i> would also lose 628 offences from its total.
10C Possession of other weapons			
10D Possession of article with blade or point			
11 Cruelty to and neglect of children	These classifications would merge to become <i>11A Cruelty to children</i>	<i>11A</i> would remain in <i>violence without injury</i>	There were 9 offences recorded within classification <i>12: Abandoning a child under the age of two years</i> since 1998/99. There would be no impact on <i>violence without injury</i> or on the <i>violence against the person</i> total.
12 Abandoning a child under the age of two years			
36 Kidnapping		This classification would be moved from <i>other miscellaneous offences</i> to <i>violence without injury</i> as it is regarded as a 'Victim-based' offence	<i>Violence without injury</i> would gain 68 offences. <i>Violence against the person</i> would also gain 68 offences to its total.

Sexual offences

Classification	Proposed change re classifications used	Proposed change re presentation of statistics	Impact on Sexual offences (gain or loss based on 2010/11 figures)
24 Exploitation of prostitution 27 Soliciting for the purpose of prostitution		These classifications would be moved from <i>other sexual offences</i> to <i>other miscellaneous offences</i> as they are regarded as mainly 'State-based' offences	<i>Other sexual offences</i> would lose 5 offences. <i>Sexual offences</i> would also lose 5 offences from its total.

Theft offences

Classification	Proposed change re classifications used	Proposed change re presentation of statistics	Impact on Theft offences (gain or loss based on 2010/11 figures)
35 Blackmail		This classification would be moved from <i>other miscellaneous offences</i> to <i>other theft</i> as it is regarded as a 'Victim-based' offence	<i>Other theft</i> would gain 44 offences. <i>Theft offences</i> would also gain 44 offences to its total.
38 Profiting from or concealing knowledge of the proceeds of crime 54 Handling stolen goods		These classifications would be moved from <i>other theft</i> to <i>other miscellaneous offences</i> as they are regarded as mainly 'State-based' offences	<i>Other theft</i> would lose 215 offences. <i>Theft offences</i> would also lose 215 offences from its total.

Criminal damage offences

Classification	Proposed change re classifications used	Proposed change re presentation of statistics	Impact on Criminal damage offences (gain or loss based on 2010/11 figures)
59 Threat or possession with intent to commit criminal damage		This classification would be moved from <i>criminal damage</i> to <i>other miscellaneous offences</i> as it is regarded as a mainly 'State-based' offence classification	<i>Criminal damage</i> would lose 513 offences from its total.

Other miscellaneous offences – proposed changes re presentation of statistics

Classification	Proposed change re classifications used	Proposed change re presentation of statistics	Impact on Other miscellaneous offences (gain or loss based on 2010/11 figures)
10A Possession of firearms with intent		These classifications would move from <i>violence without injury</i> to <i>other miscellaneous offences</i> as they are regarded as 'State-based' offences	<i>Other miscellaneous offences</i> would gain 628 offences.
10C Possession of other weapons			
10D Possession of article with blade or point			
24 Exploitation of prostitution		These classifications would move from <i>other sexual offences</i> to <i>other miscellaneous offences</i> as they are regarded as mainly 'State-based' offences	<i>Other miscellaneous offences</i> would gain 5 offences.
27 Soliciting for the purpose of prostitution			
38 Profiting from or concealing knowledge of the proceeds of crime		These classifications would move from <i>other theft</i> to <i>other miscellaneous offences</i> as they are regarded as mainly 'State-based' offences	<i>Other miscellaneous offences</i> would gain 215 offences.
54 Handling stolen goods			
59 Threat or possession with intent to commit criminal damage		This classification would be moved from <i>criminal damage</i> to <i>other miscellaneous offences</i> as it is regarded as a mainly 'State-based' offence classification	<i>Other miscellaneous offences</i> would gain 513 offences.
35 Blackmail		This classification would be moved from <i>other miscellaneous offences</i> to <i>other theft</i> as it is regarded as a 'Victim-based' offence	<i>Other miscellaneous offences</i> would lose 44 offences.
36 Kidnapping		This classification would be moved from <i>other miscellaneous offences</i> to <i>violence without injury</i> as it is regarded as a 'Victim-based' offence	<i>Other miscellaneous offences</i> would lose 68 offences.

Other miscellaneous offences – proposed changes re classifications used

Classification	Proposed change re classifications used	Proposed change re presentation of statistics	Impact on Other miscellaneous offences (gain or loss based on 2010/11 figures)
62 Treason	These classifications would merge to become <i>62A Other offences against the State or public order</i>		While a classification of <i>62A</i> would be created, PSNI can choose to continue to present the existing classifications as well, including the split of <i>66</i> into <i>bomb hoax related offences, breach of non-molestation order, offences under anti-terrorist legislation</i> etc There would be no impact on the <i>Other miscellaneous offences</i> total.
64 Riot			
65 Violent disorder			
66 Other offences against the State and public order			
68 Libel	These classifications would merge to become <i>99 Other offences</i> While classification <i>99</i> would be widened in scope, PSNI could choose to present the existing classifications as well. However for some of these classifications there has never been an offence recorded, while for others, the number recorded has been small. There would be no impact on the <i>Other miscellaneous offences</i> total.		No offences recorded
75 Betting, gaming and lotteries			4 offences recorded in 2010/11 108 offences recorded since 1998/99
76 Aiding suicide			2 offences recorded since 1998/99
78 Immigration acts			9 offences recorded in 2010/11 36 offences recorded since 1998/99
82 Customs and Revenue offences			9 offences recorded since 1998/99
84 Trade descriptions etc			35 offences recorded in 2010/11 1,405 offences recorded since 1998/99
85 Health and Safety offences			No offences recorded
87 Protection from eviction			No offences recorded
89 Adulteration of food			No offences recorded
91 Public health offences			2 offences recorded since 1998/99
94 Planning laws			No offences recorded
99 Other indictable or triable-either-way offences			48 offences recorded in 2010/11 2,255 offences recorded since 1998/99 This classification is an amalgamation of those offences that could not be classified elsewhere.