

# Anti-Social Behaviour Incidents Recorded by the Police in Northern Ireland

## Update to 31 December 2020

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The number of anti-social behaviour incidents had been trending downwards since the start of the data series in 2006/07, with levels falling to around three fifths of the initial total by the end of 2019/20. Covid-19 lockdown measures were introduced on 23<sup>rd</sup> March 2020 and have led to a substantial increase in levels of anti-social behaviour.

In 12 months from 1<sup>st</sup> January 2020 to 31<sup>st</sup> December 2020:

- There were 71,329 anti-social behaviour incidents in Northern Ireland, an increase of 15,599 (28.0%) on the previous 12 months. This is the highest rolling 12 month figure since the period August 2010 to July 2011.
- January and February 2020 were lower when compared with the same months in the previous year.
- Since the introduction of Covid-19 restrictions, levels have remained high compared with the same months in the previous year, particularly in April and May.
- All eleven policing districts showed higher levels of anti-social behaviour.
- Six policing districts showed a decrease in levels between November 2020 and December 2020.



Northern Ireland  
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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

This release is produced in accordance with the pillars and principles set out in the Code of Practice for Statistics.

The Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) publishes figures on the levels and trends in anti-social behaviour in Northern Ireland. As these figures only relate to those anti-social behaviour incidents reported to the police (and may exclude those incidents reported to other agencies, such as local councils), they only provide an indication of the true extent of reported anti-social behaviour. The statistics are collated and produced by statisticians seconded to PSNI from the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA).

An anti-social behaviour incident may include circumstances that would be an offence in law, but where the offence is not of the level of severity that would result in a crime being recorded by the police. Therefore anti-social behaviour incidents are a separate data series that are not included in the police recorded crime data. Collation of data on anti-social behaviour started in 2006/07.

This release presents statistics relating to anti-social behaviour incidents recorded by the police to 31 December 2020. Figures were compiled on 25 January 2021, using data extracted from the police administrative system on that date. All tables and charts in the bulletin, along with additional supplementary data, are available from the PSNI website in the accompanying [spreadsheet](#).

The next update covering the 12 months to 31 January 2021 will be published on 25 February 2021. A full [publication schedule](#) is available on the PSNI website.

### Definition of Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB)

**ASB: PERSONAL** - 'Personal' is designed to identify ASB incidents that the caller, call-handler or anyone else perceives as either deliberately targeted at an individual or group or having an impact on an individual or group rather than the community at large. It includes incidents that cause concern, stress, disquiet and/or irritation through to incidents which have a serious adverse impact on people's quality of life. At one extreme of the spectrum it includes minor annoyance; at the other end it could result in risk of harm, deterioration of health and disruption of mental or emotional well-being, resulting in an inability to carry out normal day to day activities through fear and intimidation.

**ASB: NUISANCE** - 'Nuisance' captures those incidents where an act, condition, thing or person causes trouble, annoyance, inconvenience, offence or suffering to the local community in general rather than to individual victims. It includes incidents where behaviour goes beyond the conventional bounds of acceptability and interferes with public interests including health, safety and quality of life. Just as individuals will have differing expectations and levels of tolerance so will communities have different ideas about what goes beyond tolerable or acceptable behaviour.

**ASB: ENVIRONMENTAL** - 'Environmental' deals with the interface between people and places. It includes incidents where individuals and groups have an impact on their surroundings including natural, built and social environments. This category is about encouraging reasonable behaviour whilst managing and protecting the various environments so that people can enjoy their own private spaces as well as shared or public spaces. People's physical settings and surroundings are known to impact positively or negatively on mood and sense of well-being and a perception that nobody cares about the quality of a particular environment can cause those effected by that environment to feel undervalued or ignored. Public spaces change over time as a result of physical effects caused, for example, by building but the environment can also change as a result of the people using or misusing that space.

### How is Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) recorded?

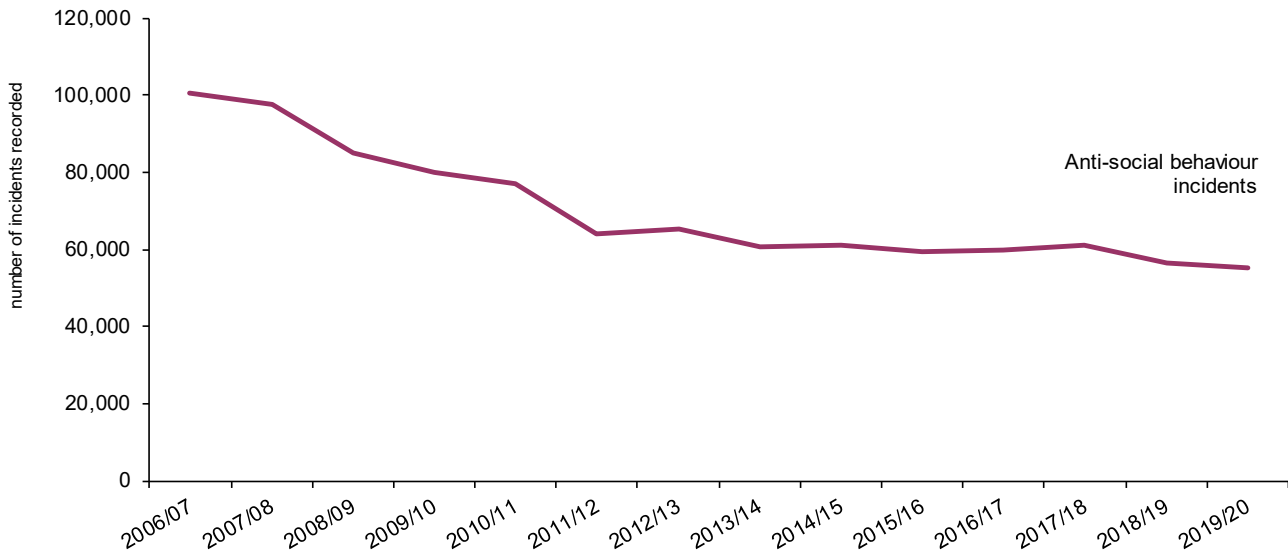
Anti-social behaviour incident data are output from a command and control system which is used to respond to calls for service from members of the public by prioritising the call and tasking the appropriate police response. Each incident is closed off using codes and definitions set out in the [National Standard for Incident Recording](#) (NSIR), designed to provide a common approach to be followed by police forces in England, Wales and Northern Ireland in classifying the broad range of calls for service received.

These figures should be interpreted as 'calls for service' rather than as figures which reflect the true level of victimisation. As they relate only to those anti-social behaviour incidents reported to the police (and may exclude incidents reported to other agencies such as local councils), they only provide an indication of the true extent of reported anti-social behaviour.

## 2. What is happening to levels of anti-social behaviour over the longer term?

Since 2006/07 there has been a general decline in the number of anti-social behaviour incidents recorded. The levels recorded in 2019/20 were around three fifths of those seen at the start of the series. [Figure 1]

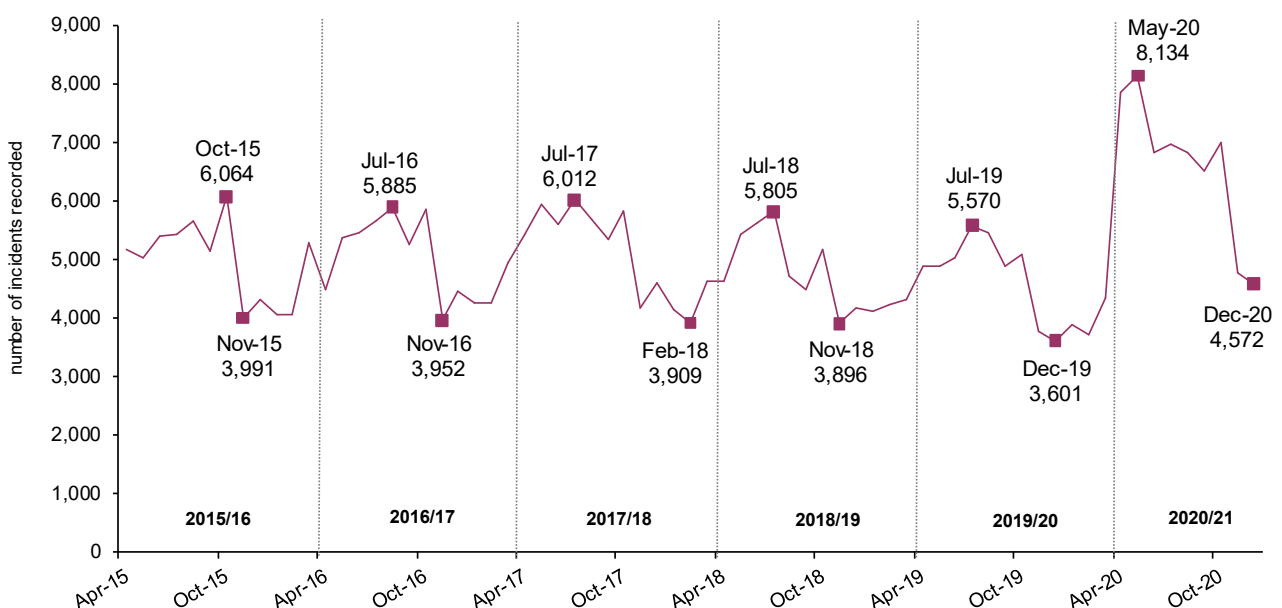
**Figure 1 Trends in anti-social behaviour incidents recorded by the police since 2006/07**



Anti-social behaviour incidents tend to show higher levels in July, August and October of each year. There is usually a sharp fall in incidents between October and November, followed by lower levels between November and February/March. Figure 2 shows this pattern over the last five financial years and the emerging pattern in the current financial year 2020/21.

Lockdown measures in relation to Covid-19, which were introduced on 23<sup>rd</sup> March 2020, have had a substantial impact on the number of anti-social behaviour incidents. The level recorded in the latest 12 months is similar to those seen during 2011/12 and 2012/13. For further information please refer to section 5 of this bulletin.

**Figure 2 Anti-social behaviour incidents recorded by the police each month April 2015 to December 2020, showing highest and lowest levels in each financial year**

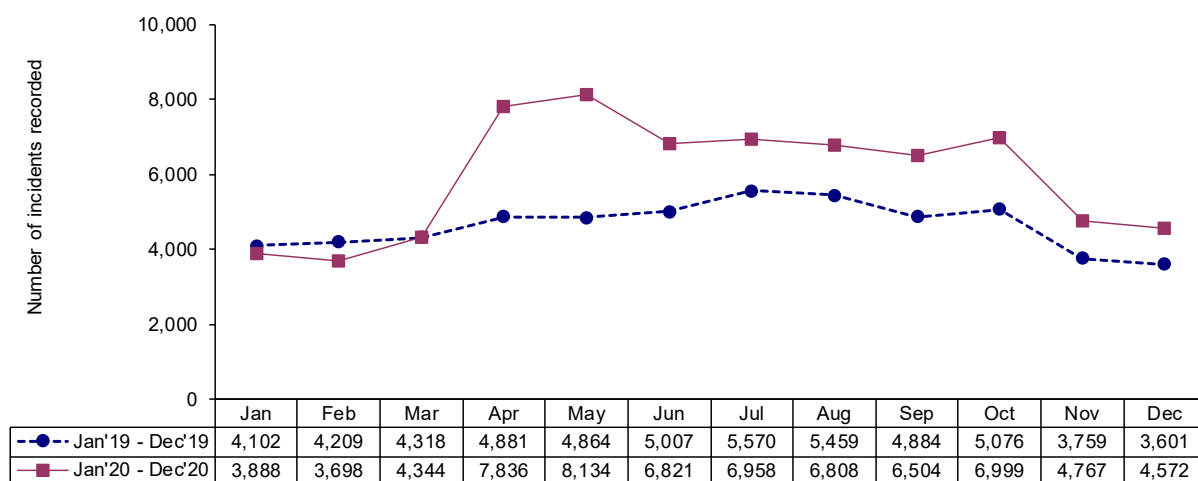


### 3. What has been happening to levels of anti-social behaviour more recently?

In 12 months from 1<sup>st</sup> January 2020 to 31<sup>st</sup> December 2020:

- There were 71,329 anti-social behaviour incidents in Northern Ireland, an increase of 15,599 (28.0 per cent) on the previous 12 months. [Table 1 and Figure 1]
- In January 2020 and February 2020 the number of anti-social behaviour incidents fell below levels seen in the same months in 2019. Lockdown measures in relation to Covid-19 were first introduced on March 23<sup>rd</sup> 2020. Restrictions were eased during the summer months, before further measures were reintroduced on 16<sup>th</sup> October and 26<sup>th</sup> December 2020. [Figure 3]
- The introduction of lockdown measures resulted in substantially higher levels of anti-social behaviour incidents, most notably in April and May 2020. When compared to the same months in 2019, figures for April to December 2020 were higher by 2,955, 3,270, 1,814, 1,388, 1,349, 1,620, 1,923, 1,008 and 971 respectively.
- The latest month (December 2020) was 195 incidents lower than November 2020. December levels have typically been higher than those for November in recent years; this is the second time since 2014 where levels for December have been lower.
- For more information on levels of anti-social behaviour between April and December 2020, please see section 5 of this bulletin. [[Accompanying spreadsheet](#) Pivot Table and [OpenDataNI website, Anti-Social Behaviour Monthly Data](#)]

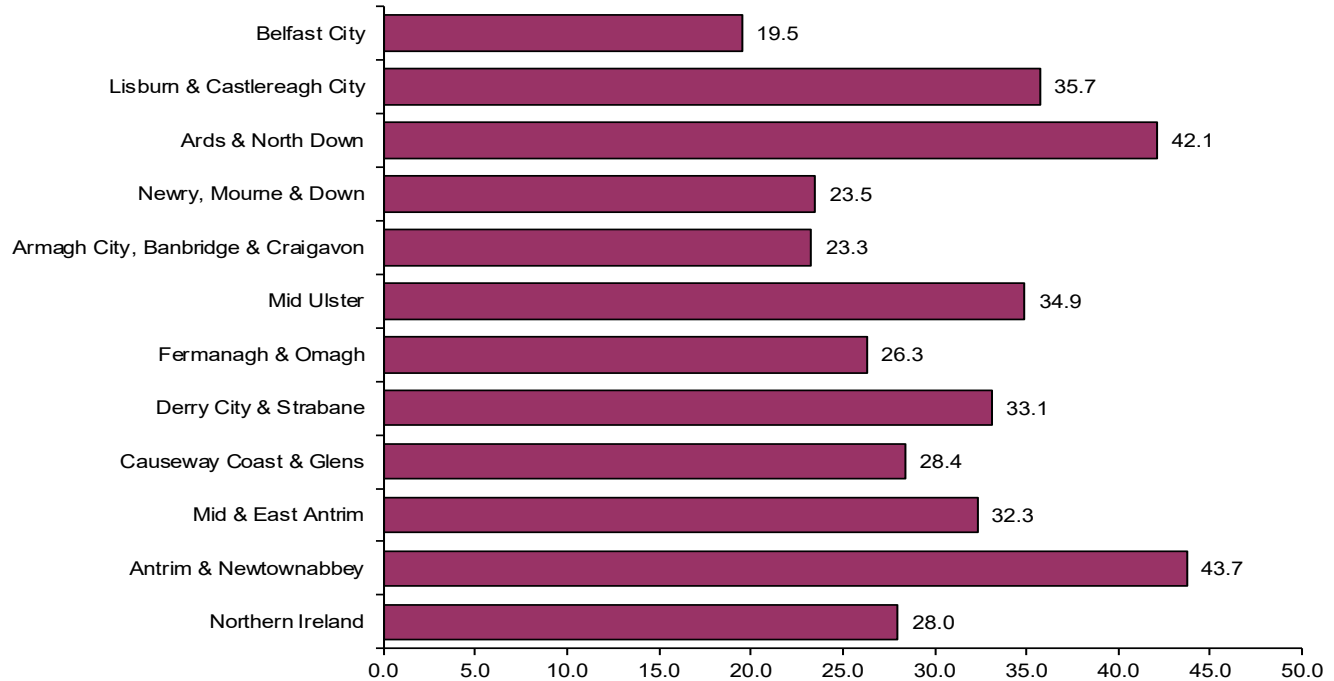
**Figure 3 Anti-social behaviour incidents recorded by the police, January 2019 to December 2020**



## 4. What has been happening in policing districts?

When comparing the current and previous 12 months, all eleven policing districts showed higher levels of anti-social behaviour. Six policing districts showed lower levels in December 2020 compared with November 2020. [Table 1 and [Accompanying spreadsheet](#) Pivot Table]

**Figure 4 Anti-social behaviour incidents recorded by police in the 12 months to 31 December 2020 compared with the previous 12 months; percentage change by policing district**



**Table 1 Anti-social behaviour incidents recorded by police by policing district**

Numbers and percentages

Policing district	Anti-Social Behaviour Incidents			
	Jan'19-Dec'19	Jan'20-Dec'20	change	% change
Belfast City	16,983	20,296	3,313	19.5
<i>East</i> <sup>1</sup>	2,939	3,725	786	26.7
<i>North</i> <sup>1</sup>	5,099	5,987	888	17.4
<i>South</i> <sup>1</sup>	5,651	6,602	951	16.8
<i>West</i> <sup>1</sup>	3,294	3,982	688	20.9
Lisburn & Castlereagh City	3,167	4,299	1,132	35.7
Ards & North Down	3,973	5,644	1,671	42.1
Newry, Mourne & Down	4,813	5,944	1,131	23.5
Armagh City, Banbridge & Craigavon	5,944	7,327	1,383	23.3
Mid Ulster	2,779	3,749	970	34.9
Fermanagh & Omagh	2,814	3,554	740	26.3
Derry City & Strabane	4,650	6,191	1,541	33.1
Causeway Coast & Glens	3,528	4,530	1,002	28.4
Mid & East Antrim	3,657	4,838	1,181	32.3
Antrim & Newtownabbey	3,422	4,916	1,494	43.7
No district assigned	0	41	41	-
<b>Northern Ireland</b>	<b>55,730</b>	<b>71,329</b>	<b>15,599</b>	<b>28.0</b>

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

'-' indicates that a percentage change is not reported because the base number of incidents is less than 50

Please note: Policing district totals will not add to the Northern Ireland total as there will be some incidents not allocated to a policing district (e.g. incidents occurring on a motorway or those with an unrecognised address).

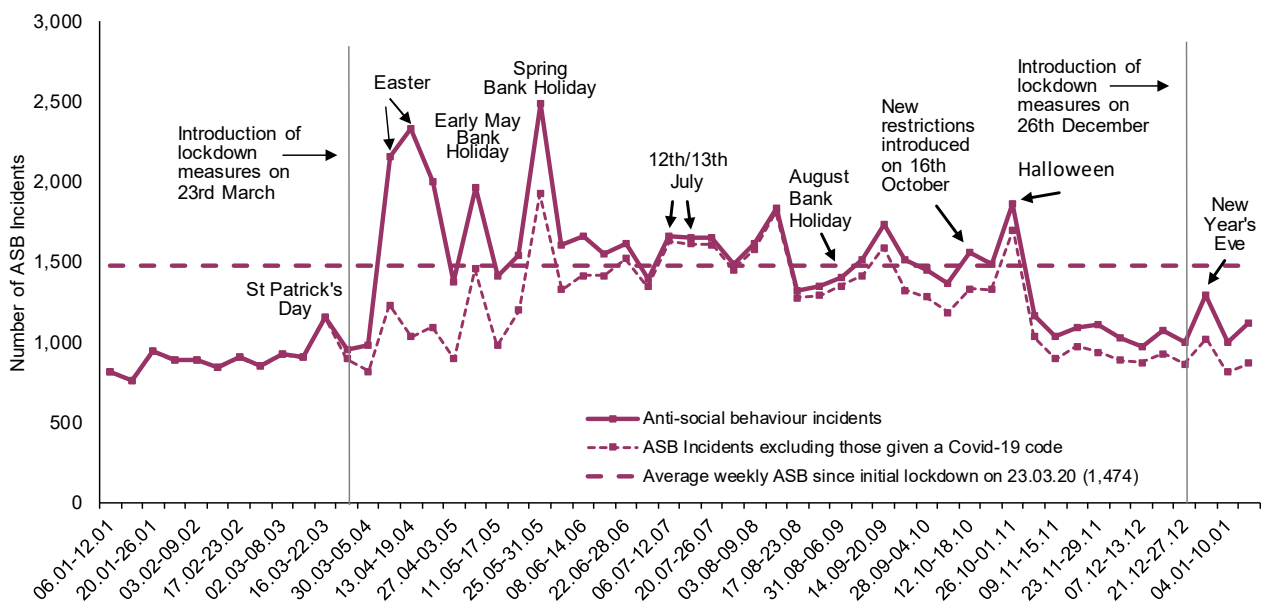
## 5. What has been happening to levels of anti-social behaviour since lockdown measures were introduced on 23rd March 2020?

Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, lockdown measures were first introduced in Northern Ireland on 23<sup>rd</sup> March and these have had a substantial impact on levels of anti-social behaviour. From 27<sup>th</sup> March 2020 calls received by the police were able to have codes applied that indicated the call was related to Covid-19. This section has been temporarily added to the monthly update to allow the monitoring of levels of anti-social behaviour since lockdown.

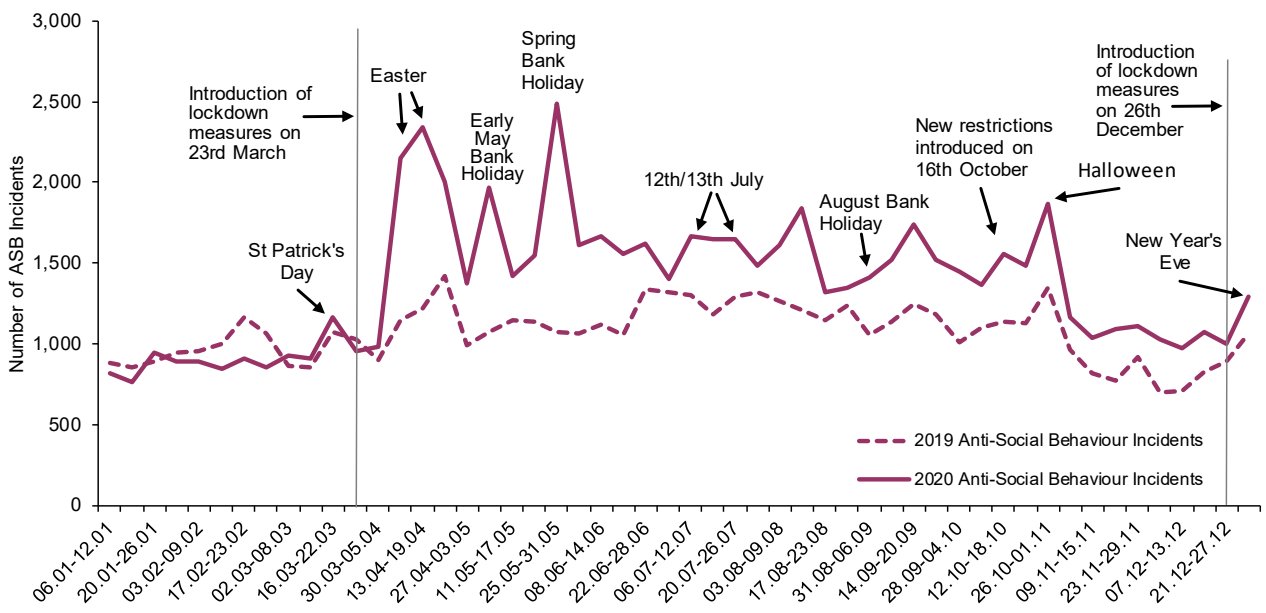
Figure 5 shows the total number of anti-social behaviour incidents each week since Monday 6<sup>th</sup> January 2020, and the number of anti-social behaviour incidents excluding those given a Covid-19 code. Both data series follow a similar pattern, except for the three week period between the 6<sup>th</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup> April. The number anti-social behaviour incidents was trending downwards from the end of October until the end of December 2020.

Figure 6 shows an additional comparison with the total number of anti-social behaviour incidents for the equivalent weekly periods in 2019. The current weekly average of anti-social behaviour incident since the first lockdown was introduced on 23<sup>rd</sup> March 2020 is 1,474. This compares with the weekly average of 1,069 in 2019 and 1,365 in 2020. [Figures 5 and 6, and Tables 2 and 3 in the [accompanying spreadsheet](#)]

**Figure 5 Weekly anti-social behaviour totals from Monday 6<sup>th</sup> January 2020 compared with the average weekly anti-social behaviour level since 23<sup>rd</sup> March 2020**



**Figure 6 Weekly anti-social behaviour totals from 6<sup>th</sup> January 2020 compared with weekly anti-social behaviour totals in 2019**



For more information on how lockdown measures have affected anti-social behaviour levels by policing district, please see Table 3 in the [accompanying spreadsheet](#).



## 6. Background and Data Quality

### Data collection and data accuracy

Data on anti-social behaviour incidents reported to the police have been compiled since the NSIR was introduced in April 2006. Between April 2006 and March 2011, ASB incidents were split into fourteen different incident types, and these categories were used as the basis on which ASB incident levels were reported. Following Home Office national guidance introduced on 1 April 2011 on how police forces record ASB incidents, the existing approach was changed to focus more on the needs of the caller or risk to the caller rather than the previous approach which centred on categorising the type of ASB incident. As a result the number of ASB incident types has been reduced from fourteen to three. The focus is now on how the ASB incident being reported impacts on the caller, with emphasis placed on identifying the vulnerable individuals, communities and environments most at risk.

While the national guidance and incident types for recording anti-social behaviour changed from 1 April 2011, the overall levels before and after this change appear to be sufficiently comparable for a time series of figures recorded under both the previous and the current guidance to be produced. However it should be noted that the figures prior to 1 April 2011 exclude the incident type 'Hoax Calls to Emergency Services', which was one of the fourteen incident types in use between 2006/07 and 2010/11. Incidents of this nature were removed from the Anti-Social Behaviour category and placed in the Public Safety and Welfare category from the start of April 2011. This incident type was removed from figures prior to 1 April 2011 to maintain data comparability.

As anti-social behaviour incidents are extracted from an operational system whose primary function is to prioritise and respond to calls for service from members of the public, the data will always be subject to change. Incidents of anti-social behaviour are not individually checked for compliance with the National Standard for Incident Recording by the PSNI's Statistics Branch. However Statistics Branch conduct audits of anti-social behaviour incidents as required. Common types of errors in the application of incident closure codes identified through the audit process are fed back to relevant staff.

### How the data is used

Anti-social behaviour incident statistics have been collated by PSNI since 2006/07. They are used widely within PSNI as management information and to monitor performance against the Policing Plan. The figures are also used by government departments and other voluntary and statutory agencies to inform debate and policy development regarding anti-social behaviour in Northern Ireland.

### Additional data available to accompany this release

This release provides an overview of anti-social behaviour incidents recorded by the police in the 12 months to December 2020. Additional data is available to supplement the information contained in this bulletin. The data is available in both [excel spreadsheet](#) and [open document spreadsheet](#) formats.

A dataset providing monthly data since 2008/09 is available on the [OpenDataNI website](#) and is updated with in-year data on a quarterly basis (updates in late July, October, January and May).

### Web links to other information you may be interested in

**Police Recorded Crime Statistics:** The latest publications, along with those that have been archived, can be accessed through:

<https://www.psnipolice.uk/inside-psni/Statistics/police-recorded-crime-statistics/>

**Northern Ireland Safe Community Survey:** Results from this survey, including information on perceptions of anti-social behaviour, are available on the Department of Justice website <https://www.justice-ni.gov.uk/topics/safe-community-survey-publications>

**NINIS:** Figures are available for a range of additional geographic areas through the [Northern Ireland Neighbourhood Information System \(NINIS\)](#). These figures are updated on an annual basis.

**Crime Mapper:** 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](#). 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.

**Anti-social behaviour in England & Wales:** Anti-social behaviour figures are included within the publications on Crime in England and Wales, which are available from the Crime and justice webpage (see section on Other related figures) <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/crimeandjustice>.

Copies of other PSNI publications are available from the PSNI website:  
<https://www.psnipolice.uk/inside-psni/Statistics/>