

Police Service of Northern Ireland

# Trends in Domestic Abuse Incidents and Crimes Recorded by the Police in Northern Ireland 2004/05 to 2019/20

Annual Bulletin published 20 November 2020



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# 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 police recorded domestic abuse incidents and crimes. As these figures only relate to those domestic abuse incidents reported to the police, they only provide an indication of the true extent of domestic abuse. The statistics are collated and produced by statisticians seconded to the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) from the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA). Collation of this data started in 2004/05.

This release presents statistics relating to domestic abuse incidents and crimes recorded by the police between 2004/05 and 2019/20. Supplementary data are available from the PSNI website in the [accompanying spreadsheet](#).

This publication is largely unaffected by the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic as it mainly relates to the period prior to the introduction of lockdown measures in Northern Ireland on 23<sup>rd</sup> March 2020.

## 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.

## What is a domestic abuse incident or domestic abuse crime as recorded by the police?

Police recorded crime data is a victim oriented approach to crime recording. A crime will be recorded as having a domestic abuse motivation where it meets the relevant definition provided above. Not all domestic abuse incidents will result in the recording of a crime, as what has occurred in the incident may not be of the level of severity that would result in a crime being recorded. Where crimes with a domestic abuse motivation are recorded, they are classified according to the Home Office Counting Rules and form a subset of the overall police recorded crime statistics.

Further details of the background and recording practice in relation to police recorded crime statistics are available in the [User Guide to Police Recorded Crime Statistics](#). An explanation of what constitutes an incident and a crime is provided in Section 2.1 of this guide, while reference to domestic abuse incidents and crimes is available in Section 5. These recording practices, methods of counting outcomes and allocation of crime types apply equally to crimes with a domestic abuse motivation.

## Points to note in this bulletin

**Incidents and Crimes:** Domestic abuse crimes and domestic abuse incidents should not be added together as domestic abuse crimes are included in the domestic abuse incident count.

**Gender unknown:** Where reference is made to gender unknown, this may include persons who have not identified as either male or female.

**Offences where a police officer becomes a crime victim whilst attending a domestic incident in the course of carrying out their duty** are not included in the domestic abuse crime figures; however the incident that was attended by police will be recorded as domestic abuse incident.

**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 2021. Further guidance on crime cancellation can be found in the Home Office Counting Rules for Recorded Crime.

**Harassment and Malicious Communications:** the recording of malicious communications offences commenced for the first time in Northern Ireland from 1st April 2017 and are classified to Harassment which sits within Violence Against the Person. Also included within malicious communications offences are those relating to 'revenge porn'; new legislation on disclosing private sexual photographs and film with intent to cause distress was introduced in June 2016. A Home Office change introduced in April 2018 requires harassment to be recorded in addition to the most serious additional victim based offence. Both of these changes in recording practice should be considered in relation to any changes in levels recorded in the overall harassment classification.

## Conventions used in figures and tables

While the outcome rates are rounded to one decimal place, the outcome rate change in % pts is calculated on the unrounded outcome rates and then rounded to one decimal place.

'-' indicates that for offences recorded a percentage change is not reported because the base number of offences is less than 50, and that for offences detected an outcome rate cannot be calculated as there were no offences recorded.

'..' indicates that data are not available.

The charts in this release are not all shown to same scale.

## Contact Details

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 below.

For further information about the domestic abuse incidents and crimes recorded by the police in Northern Ireland, or to contact the PSNI Crime and Incident Statistician please:

Email: [statistics@psni.police.uk](mailto:statistics@psni.police.uk);

Write to: Statistics Branch, Lisnasharragh, 42 Montgomery Road, Belfast, BT6 9LD; or

Telephone: 028 9065 0222 ext 24135

## Key Points

- There were 31,817 domestic abuse incidents recorded in 2019/20, the highest level recorded since the data series began in 2004/05. This latest figure is 52 per cent higher than the level of 20,959 recorded at the start of the data series in 2004/05. (Section 1 Overview)
- There were 18,640 domestic abuse crimes recorded in 2019/20 which is also the highest level recorded since the series began in 2004/05. This figure is 93 per cent higher than 2004/05 and represents 17 per cent of all crimes recorded in this financial year. (Section 1 Overview)
- There were 17 domestic abuse incidents per 1,000 population and 10 domestic abuse crimes per 1,000 population recorded by the police in 2019/20. (Section 1 Overview)
- Of the 31,817 incidents recorded in 2019/20 where there was a domestic abuse motivation, there were 16,448 which did not contain a crime (i.e. incidents where the circumstances did not amount to an offence being committed). The remaining 15,369 incidents contained one or more crimes (amounting to 18,640 recorded crimes in total). Just over half of incidents recorded in 2019/20 did not result in a crime being recorded. (Section 1 Overview)
- The number of domestic abuse violence against the person and criminal damage offences recorded in 2019/20 were the highest to date (Section 2 Trends by Crime Type)
- During 2019/20, 69 per cent of all domestic abuse crime victims were female and 30 per cent were male, compared with 75 per cent female and 25 per cent male in 2004/05. (Section 3 Victims)
- In 2004/05 three quarters of victims (75 per cent) were between the ages of 20 and 49; by 2019/20 this had fallen to 64 per cent. Over the same time period increasing proportions were seen in both the younger and older age groups, but particularly in relation to victims under the age of 15. (Section 3 Victims)
- During 2019/20 nearly nine in ten domestic abuse victims were of white ethnicity (87 per cent) and within this category the vast majority held UK and Ireland nationality. (Section 3 Victims)
- Of all offenders dealt with by police during 2019/20 in connection with domestic abuse crimes that resulted in a sanction outcome, 86 per cent were male and 12 per cent were female. The majority (94 per cent) of offenders were aged 18 and over, and just over four in five offenders were of White ethnicity and held UK and Ireland nationality. (Section 4 Offenders)
- During 2019/20 almost three in five relationships between the domestic abuse victim and offender were categorised as current or ex spouse / partner / girlfriend / boyfriend etc. Just under a quarter were parent and child relationships. The victim offender relationship was unknown for 6 per cent of all cases. (Section 4 Offenders)
- The outcome rate for domestic abuse crimes has been falling over the last number of years, from 46.6% in 2010/11 to 26.1% in 2019/20. This fall is mainly seen in relation to crimes dealt with by means of charge/summons, which account for around 90 per cent of all domestic abuse sanction outcomes. Charge/summons outcomes currently account for around three quarters of sanction outcomes in respect of all crimes recorded (Section 5 Outcomes)

# 1 Overview of Trends in Domestic Abuse Incidents and Crimes

Incidents and crimes with a domestic abuse motivation have been collated by PSNI in their current format since 2004/05.

There are a range of factors that can have an impact on the recorded crime data series, including those crimes with a domestic abuse motivation. For example changes to existing legislation, the introduction of new legislation and clarifications or changes to the Home Office Counting Rules can all cause discontinuities to the data series. As far as possible these factors will be identified in the commentary or table footnotes within this bulletin. These are also highlighted in [Appendix 1](#).

**Domestic abuse incidents:** Domestic abuse incidents have tended to increase each year since 2004/05, reaching their highest level in 2019/20. The 2019/20 figure is 52 per cent higher than the level recorded in 2004/05. [Table 1.1]

**Population rates:** The number of domestic abuse incidents per 1,000 population has increased from 12 in 2004/05 to 17 in 2019/20. [[accompanying spreadsheet](#) Table 6.4]

**Domestic abuse crimes:** Domestic abuse crimes have also shown an increasing trend since 2004/05. The latest figure of 18,640 is highest since the data series began and is 93 per cent higher than the level recorded in 2004/05. [Table 1.1]

**Population rates:** Between 2004/05 and 2019/20 the number of domestic abuse crimes per 1,000 population has ranged between 5 and 10, with the figure of 10 being recorded in 2019/20. [[accompanying spreadsheet](#) Table 6.5]

Crimes with a domestic abuse motivation represented 17.5 per cent of all crimes recorded by the police in 2019/20, compared with 8.3 per cent in 2004/05. [[accompanying spreadsheet](#) Table 2.2].

**Table 1.1 Domestic abuse motivations: incidents, crimes<sup>1</sup> and outcomes<sup>2</sup>, 2004/05 to 2019/20**

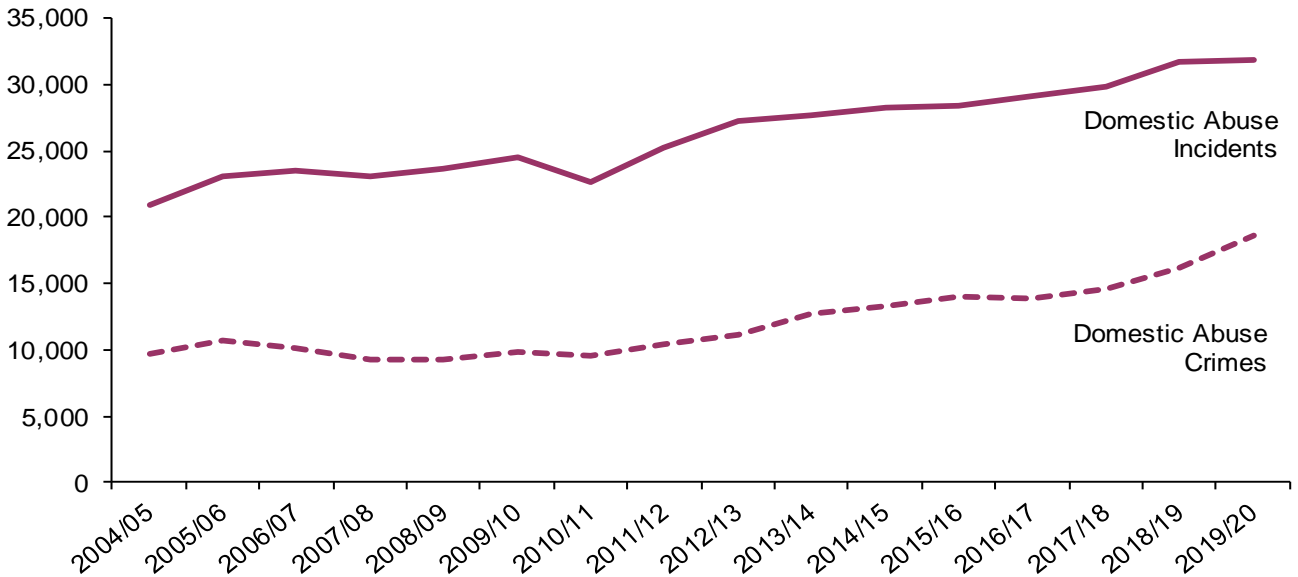
	Domestic abuse motivation			
	Incidents <sup>1</sup>	Crimes <sup>1</sup>	Outcomes, numbers <sup>2</sup>	Outcomes (rates, %) <sup>2</sup>
2004/05	20,959	9,647	-	-
2005/06	23,059	10,759	-	-
2006/07	23,456	10,099	-	-
2007/08	23,076	9,275	3,146	33.9
2008/09	23,591	9,197	3,480	37.8
2009/10	24,482	9,879	4,282	43.3
2010/11	22,685	9,523	4,433	46.6
2011/12	25,196	10,356	4,449	43.0
2012/13	27,190	11,108	4,081	36.7
2013/14	27,628	12,656	4,026	31.8
2014/15	28,288	13,357	4,186	31.3
2015/16	28,392	14,061	4,420	31.4
2016/17	29,166	13,927	4,054	29.1
2017/18	29,913	14,530	4,082	28.1
2018/19	31,682	16,164	4,337	26.8
2019/20	31,817	18,640	4,873	26.1

<sup>1</sup>Please note that crimes are included in the incident count and the two should not be added together.

<sup>2</sup>An explanation of the crime outcomes data series can be found in [Appendix 1](#), page 22.

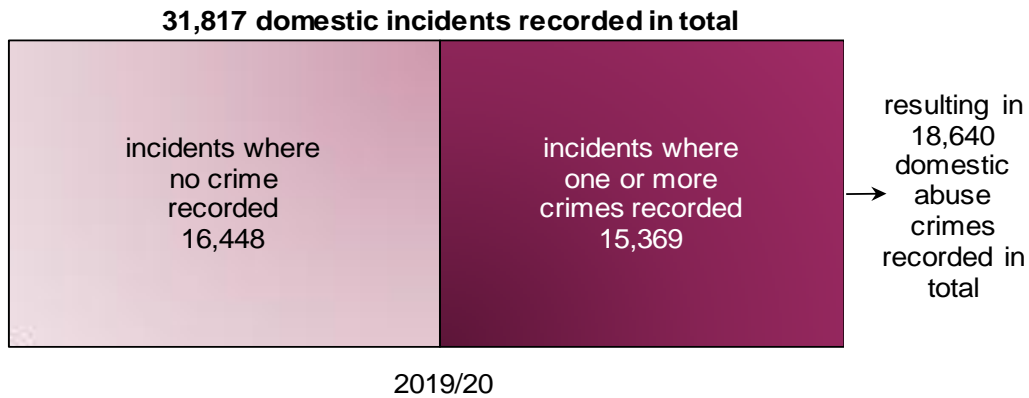


**Figure 1.1 Trends in domestic abuse incidents and crimes, 2004/05 to 2019/20**

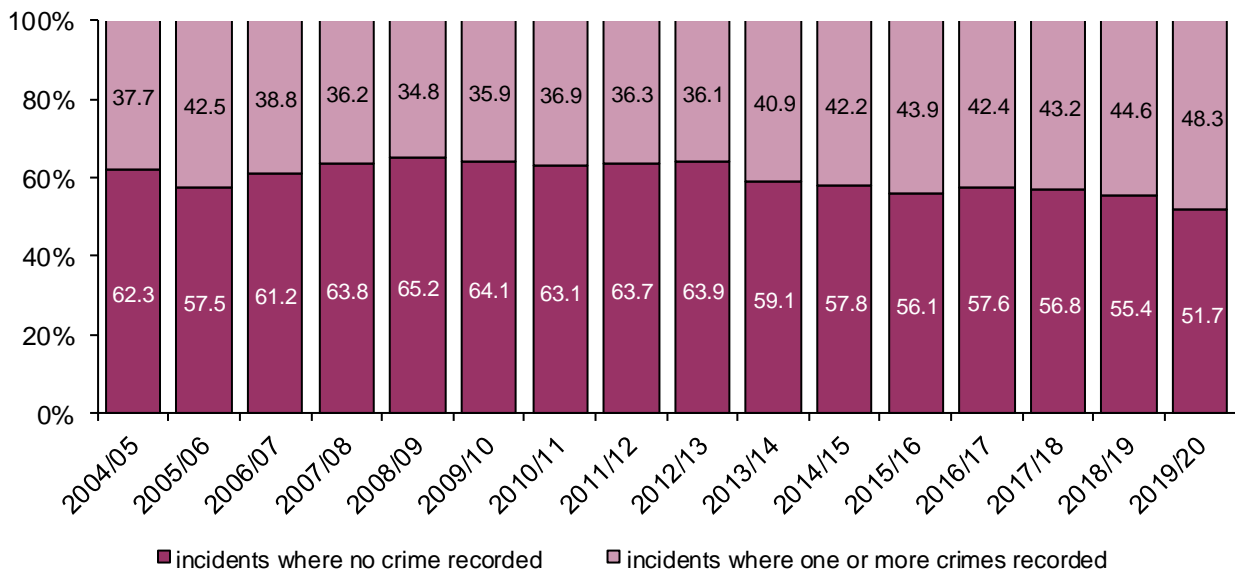


During 2019/20 there were 31,817 incidents recorded where there was a domestic abuse motivation. Of these, there were 16,448 which did not involve a crime (i.e. incidents where the circumstances did not amount to an offence being committed). The remaining 15,369 incidents contained one or more crimes (amounting to 18,640 domestic abuse crimes in total). Just over half of incidents recorded in 2019/20 did not result in a crime being recorded. Figure 1.3 shows the changing proportions since 2004/05, with the data series available in the [accompanying spreadsheet](#) Table 1.1A.

**Figure 1.2 Domestic abuse incidents and crimes, 2019/20**



**Figure 1.3 Domestic abuse incidents with and without crimes recorded, 2004/05 to 2019/20**



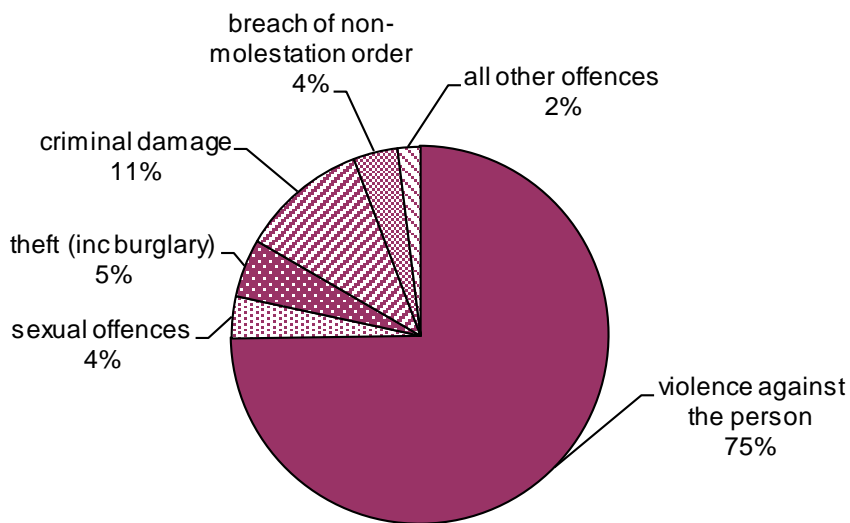
## 2 Trends in Domestic Abuse Crimes by Crime Type

A description of each main crime type is provided in section 3 of the [User Guide to Police Recorded Crime Statistics](#). Appendix 1 of the user guide contains a list of all recorded crime classifications. The classification structure implemented from April 2013 presents recorded crime on the basis of victim-based crime and other crimes against society.

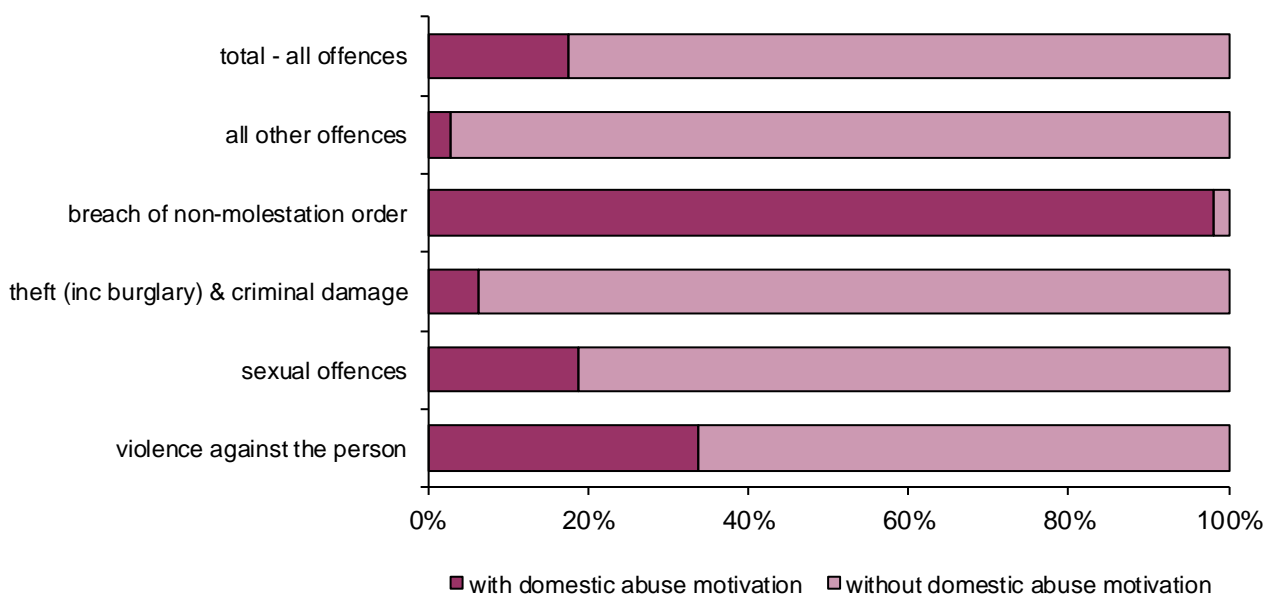
Figures 2.1 and 2.2 below provide a picture for 2019/20 of how the main crime types are distributed within domestic abuse and also how they are represented with respect to all crimes recorded by the police.

Trends within the main crime types are shown in figures 2.3 to 2.8. The full data series for recorded crime with a domestic abuse motivation is available in the [accompanying spreadsheet](#) Table 2.1. The data series for domestic abuse crimes as a percentage of all recorded crime can be found in the [accompanying spreadsheet](#) Table 2.2

**Figure 2.1 Crimes with a domestic abuse motivation by crime type, 2019/20**



**Figure 2.2 Crimes with a domestic abuse motivation as a percentage of all crimes recorded by the police, 2019/20**





## 2.1 Violence against the person with a domestic abuse motivation

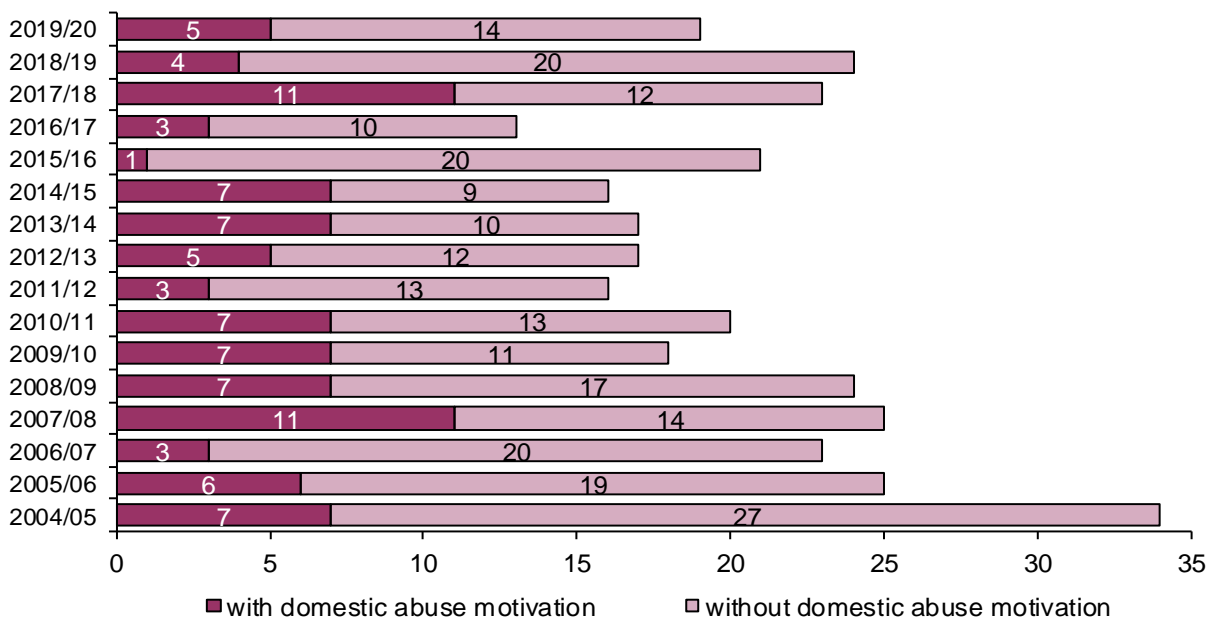
Violence against the person includes a wide range of offences from minor assaults such as pushing and shoving that result in no physical harm to murder. Even within the same classification the degree of violence used can vary considerably between incidents.

This classification is further split into homicide, violence with injury (including death or serious injury – unlawful driving), violence without injury and harassment.

**Homicide:** Homicide comprises the offences of murder, manslaughter, corporate manslaughter and infanticide. There were 5 homicides with a domestic abuse motivation recorded in 2019/20. Throughout the data series, the number of domestic abuse homicides has ranged from 1 in 2015/16 to 11 in both 2007/08 and 2017/18 (6 homicides in 2007/08 related to the same incident, while 4 homicides in 2017/18 related to the same incident).

Further details on domestic abuse homicide victims and their relationship to the offender can be found in Section 3.3 of this report. [[accompanying spreadsheet](#) Table 3.9]

**Figure 2.3 Murders with a domestic abuse motivation**



**Assaults with and without injury with a domestic abuse motivation:** Nearly a third of domestic abuse violence against the person offences recorded in 2019/20 were assaults with injury while just over a third were assaults without injury. Figure 2.4 shows the changing pattern of assaults with and without injury in more recent years.

**Figure 2.4 Domestic abuse motivated violence against the person, 2004/05 to 2019/20**

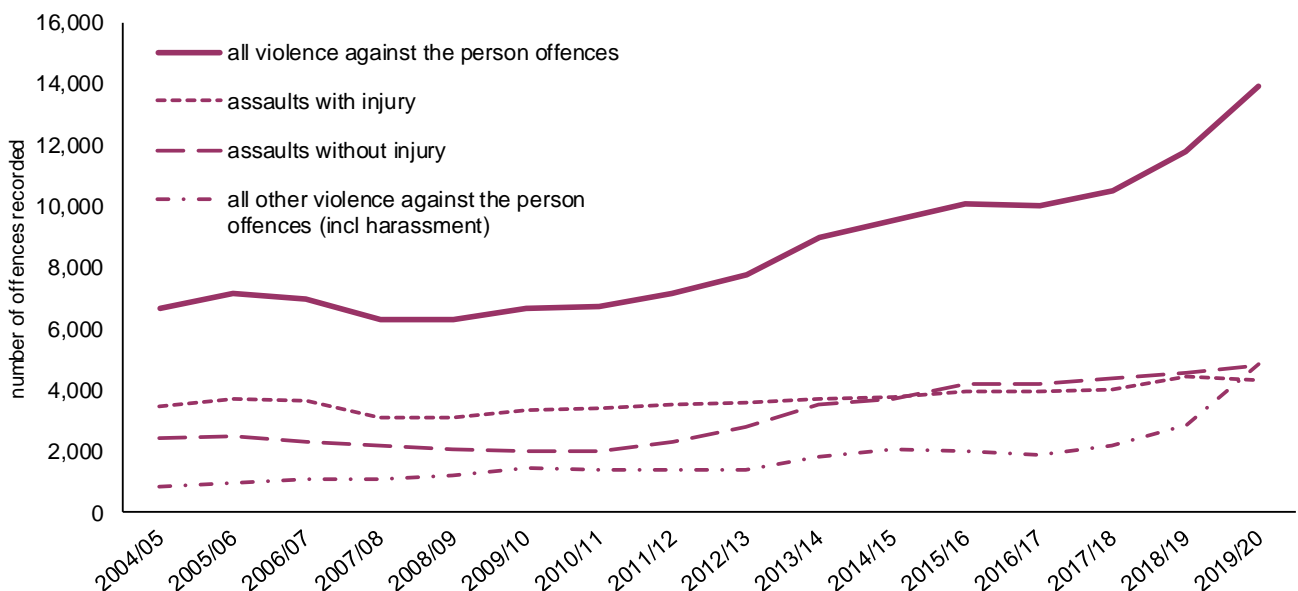
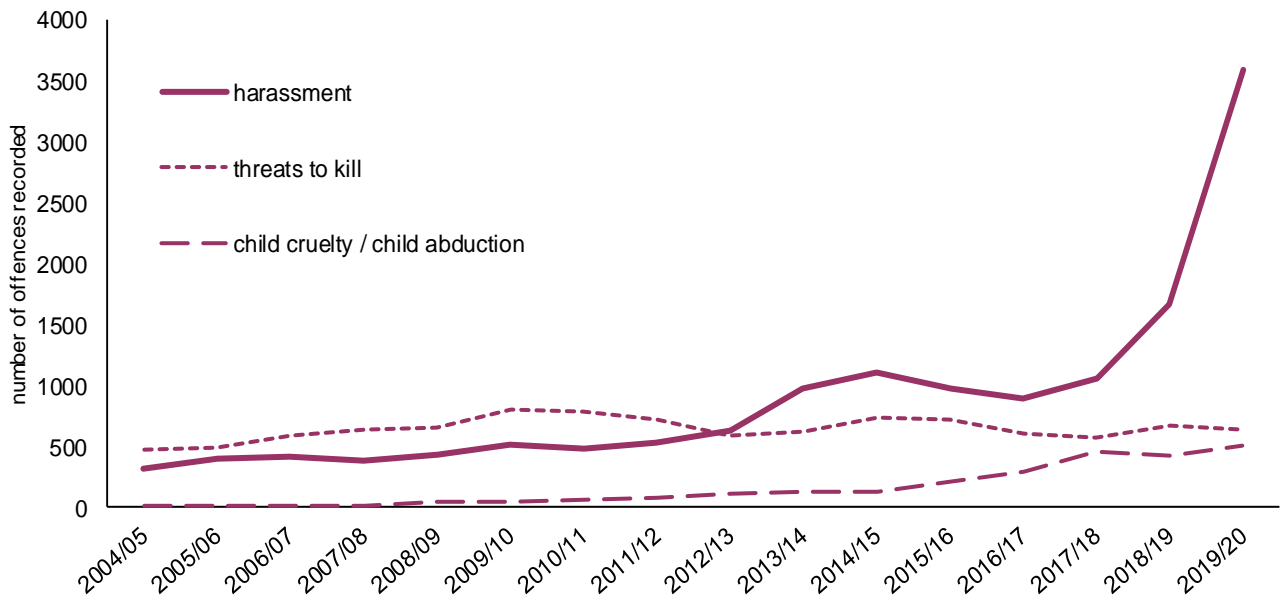


Figure 2.5 examines the trends in threats to kill, harassment and cruelty to children/young persons & child abduction. The recording of malicious communications started on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2017; this offence is classified to harassment. A Home Office change introduced in April 2018 requires harassment to be recorded in addition to the most serious additional victim based offence. Both of these changes in recording practice, along with increasing awareness of the application of these rules in the recording process, will have contributed to the increased levels recorded in the overall harassment classification as seen in Figure 2.5. In 2019/20, 52 per cent of the offences recorded in the overall harassment classification were harassment and 48 percent were malicious communications.

**Figure 2.5 Domestic abuse motivated harassment, threats to kill and child cruelty, 2004/05 to 2019/20**

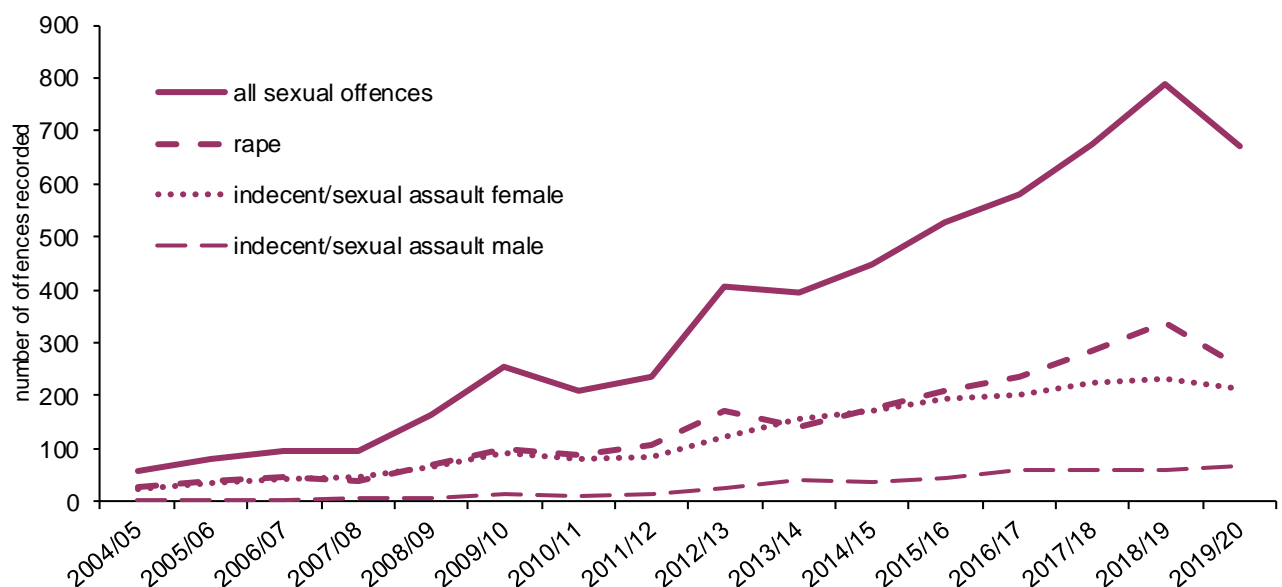


## 2.2 Sexual offences with a domestic abuse motivation

The Sexual Offences (Northern Ireland) Order 2008 was introduced in February 2009 and has altered the definition and coverage of sexual offences. While this has had an impact on the provision of comparable data series for sexual offences, the new legislation has brought the recording of sexual offences in Northern Ireland more into line with the legislation and recording of these offences in England and Wales.

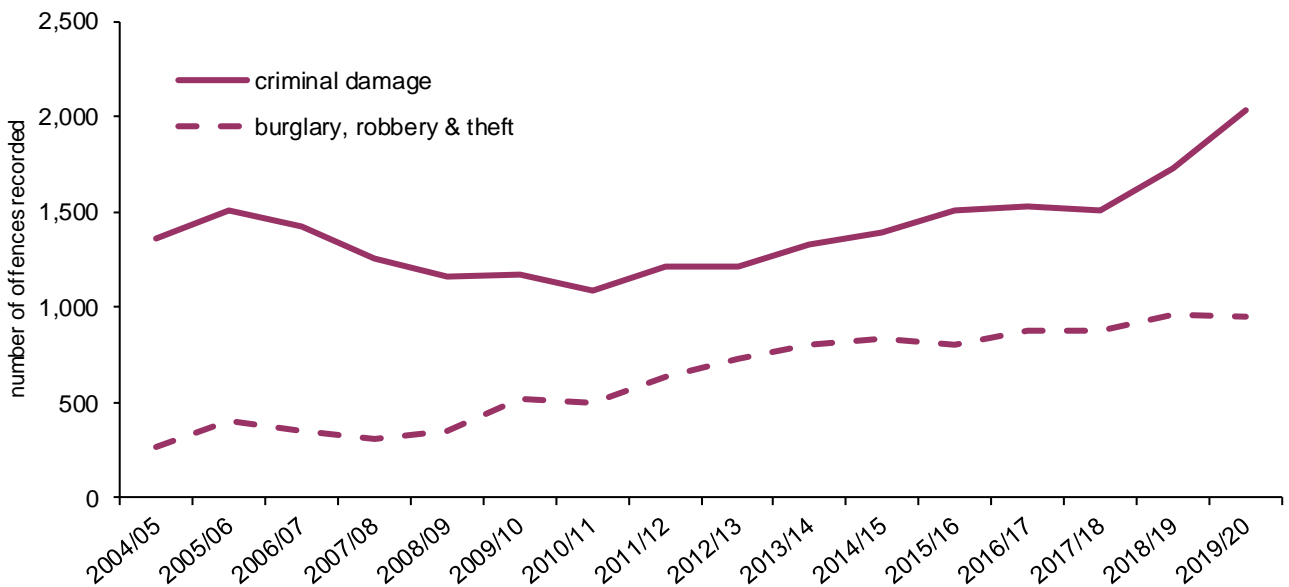
Under the Home Office Counting Rules, offences which were reported to the police between February 2009 (implementation date of the new legislation) and March 2010 but which were committed prior to February 2009 were recorded under the previous legislation wherever possible. However in April 2010 this guidance was changed so that historic allegations committed under the previous legislation should be recorded and detected as if committed today. Interpretation of the sexual offence data series should be considered in the context of these changes.

**Figure 2.6 Domestic abuse motivated sexual offences, 2004/05 to 2019/20**



### 2.3 Burglary, robbery, theft and criminal damage with a domestic abuse motivation

Figure 2.7 Domestic abuse motivated burglary, robbery, theft and criminal damage, 2004/05 to 2019/20



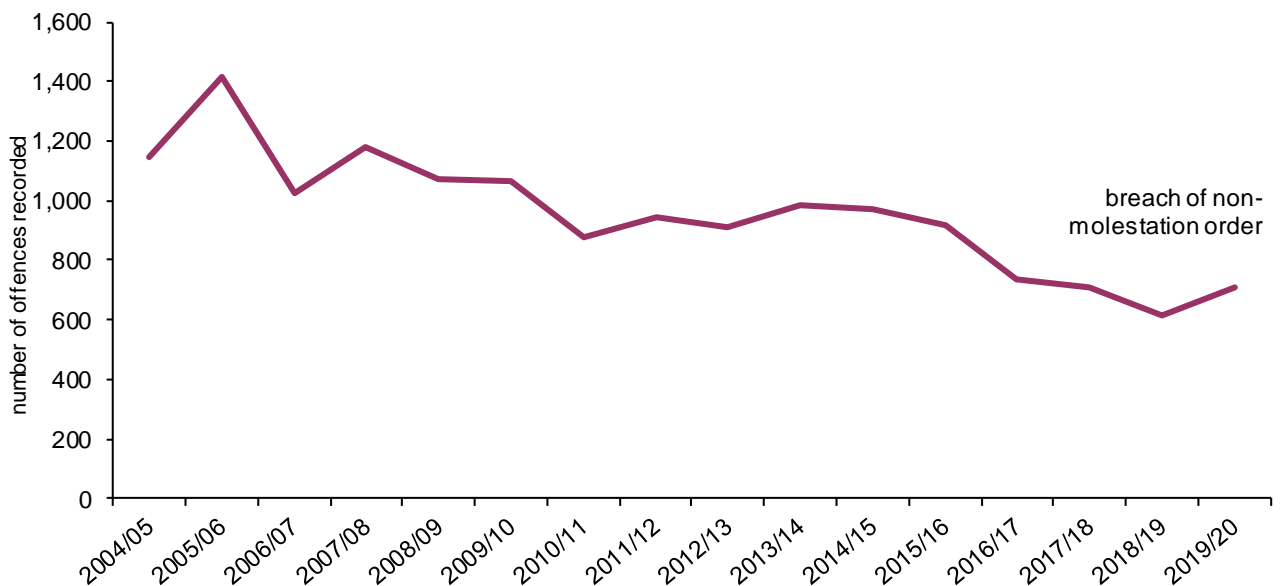
### 2.4 Other crimes against society with a domestic abuse motivation

Between 67 and 89 per cent of other crimes against society with a domestic abuse motivation are breaches of non-molestation orders. The remainder relate mostly to the offence of threat or possession with intent to commit criminal damage.

**Breach of non-molestation order (domestic abuse motivation):** The offence of breach of a non-molestation order was only introduced into the recorded crime data series in 2005/06. However the offence was in existence during 2004/05 and, during this financial year, those offences with a domestic abuse motivation were collated within PSNI.

Non-molestation orders are most commonly issued where the relationship between those involved would meet the domestic abuse definition. Generally speaking, at least 90 per cent of all breaches of non-molestation orders recorded by the police have a domestic abuse motivation.

Figure 2.8 Domestic abuse motivated breach of non-molestation order, 2004/05 to 2019/20



## 2.5 Crime with a domestic abuse and alcohol motivation

**Home Office Definition and guidance:** Alcohol crime is identified through the use of a ‘flag’ on the crime recording system. Its aim is to provide the number of crimes directly attributable to alcohol to assist in assessing the impact of alcohol on crime and policing.

The alcohol flag should be applied where it is perceived by the victim or any other person that the effects of alcohol consumption on the offender or victim was an aggravating factor.

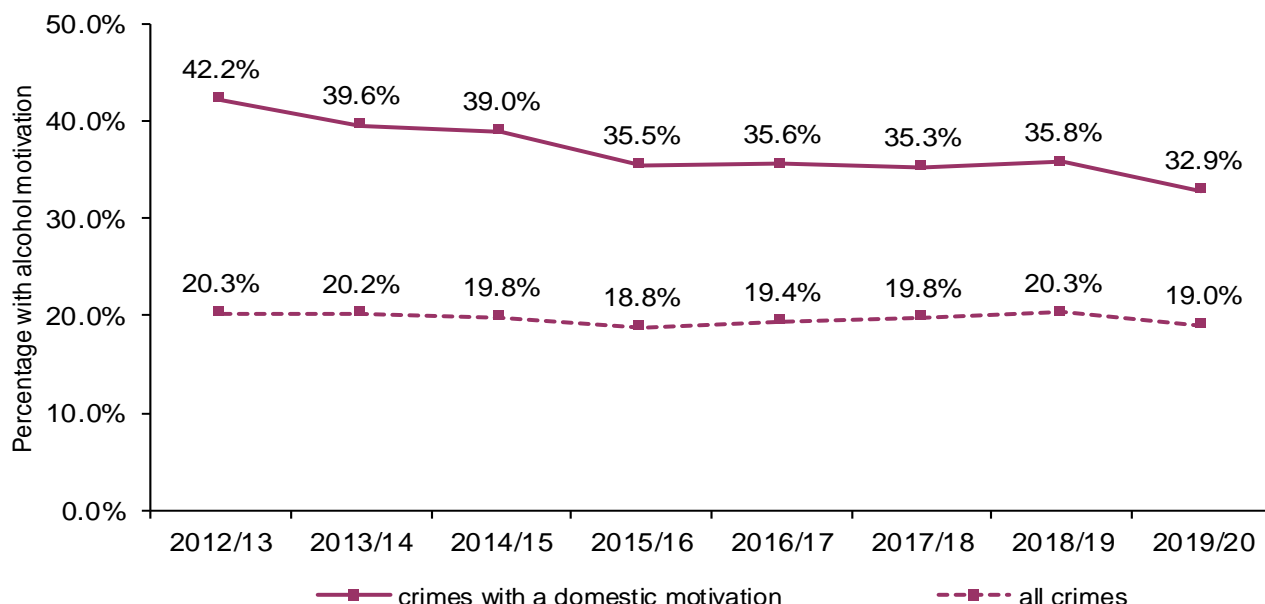
During 2012/13 a baseline was established for those crimes where alcohol was a contributory factor. This section outlines figures recorded since 2012/13 for crimes with a domestic abuse motivation. Figures for all crimes with an alcohol motivation are included for comparison and context.

**Data quality:** While crimes included within the police recorded crime statistics for Northern Ireland are individually checked for compliance with the Home Office Counting Rules, the identification of an alcohol crime is derived from a motivation ‘tick box’ on the system used by PSNI to record crime. The motivation is identified and completed by a police officer or member of police staff for each such reported incident or crime. While the correct application of an alcohol motivation for all such incidents/crimes is not quality assured by the PSNI’s Statistics Branch, audits and data quality checks are routinely conducted in an attempt to ensure that any under or over-recording is corrected.

**Alcohol involvement:** Figures 2.9 to 2.11 present crimes with both a domestic abuse and an alcohol motivation. Details on all alcohol motivated crime have also been included for comparison and context. The data series behind these charts are available in the [accompanying spreadsheet](#) Table 2.3.

Figure 2.9 examines crimes recorded between 2012/13 and 2019/20 which had an alcohol motivation applied, comparing those crimes with a domestic abuse motivation and all crimes recorded. The figures indicate that at least one third of crimes with a domestic abuse motivation also involved alcohol, while for all crimes with an alcohol motivation the percentage was around one in five. The dip in 2019/20 comes as harassment makes up an increasing share of offences recorded; harassment offences are less likely to have an alcohol involvement than other offences [Figures 2.10 and 2.11].

**Figure 2.9 Percentage of crimes with alcohol involvement; those with domestic abuse motivation compared with all crimes recorded, 2012/13 to 2019/20**

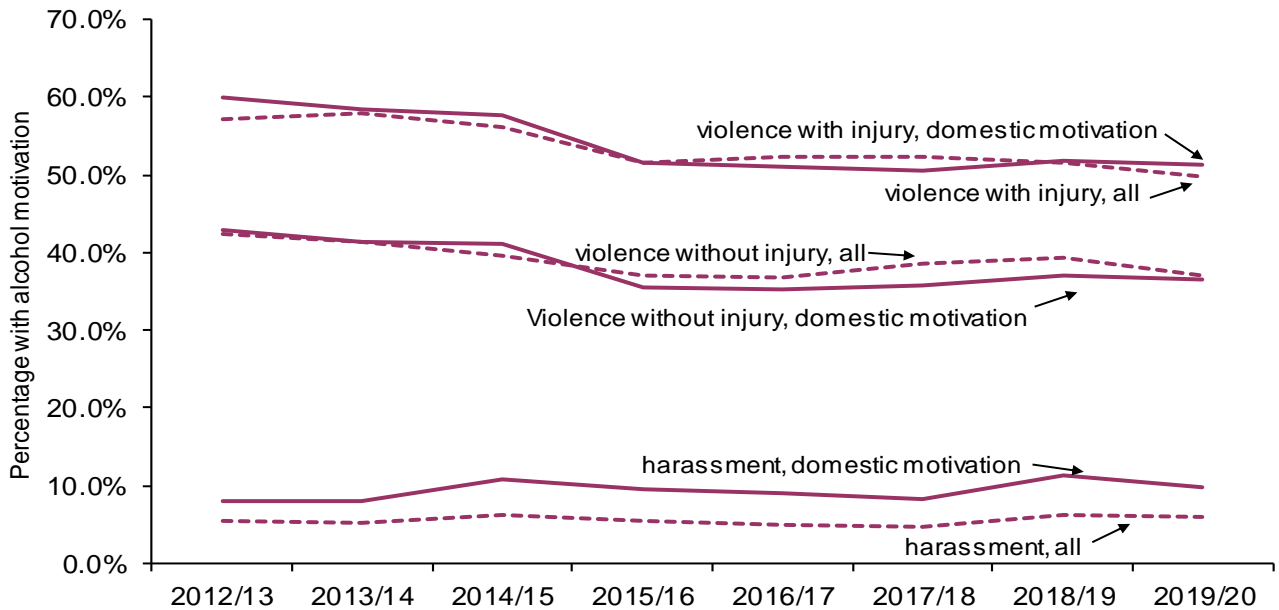


**Alcohol involvement, violence against the person:** The vast majority of crimes with an alcohol involvement are classified to violence against the person, just under 80 per cent of crimes with a domestic abuse motivation and around 70 per cent of all crimes recorded.

Figure 2.10 shows the decreasing trend between 2012/13 and 2015/16 in the proportion of violence with and without injury offences with alcohol involvement for crimes with a domestic abuse motivation and for all crimes

recorded within these classifications. Both sets of proportions have remained fairly constant between 2015/16 and 2019/20.

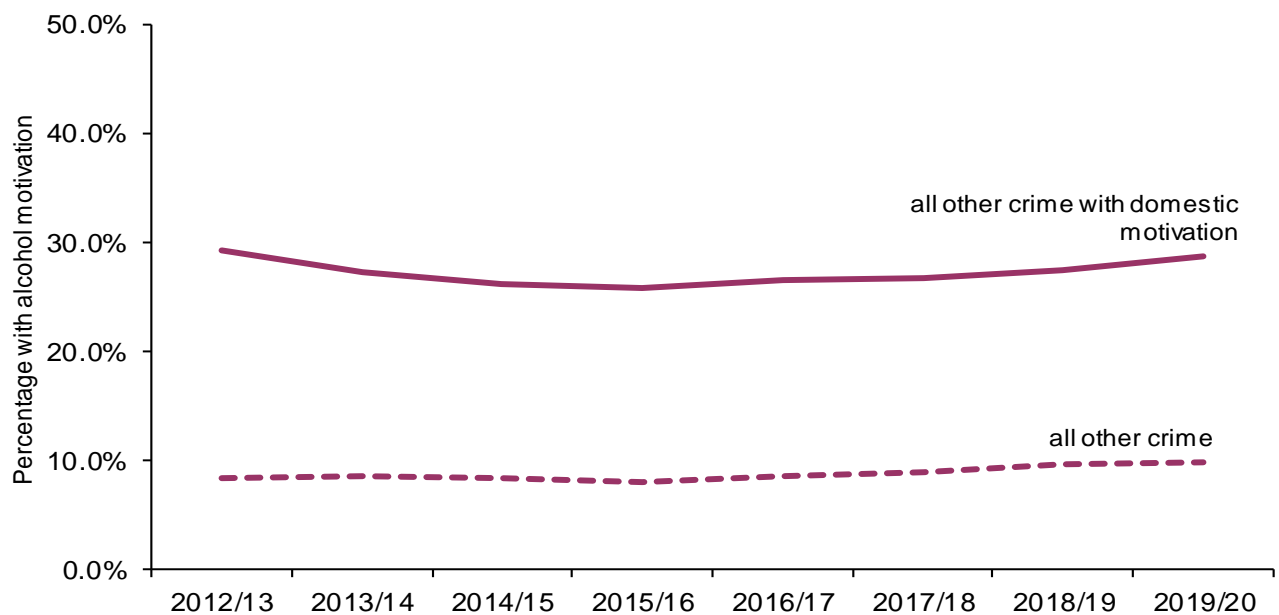
**Figure 2.10 Proportion of violence against the person (VAP) offences with alcohol involvement, 2012/13 to 2019/20**



**Alcohol involvement, all other crimes:** around 20 per cent of crimes with a domestic abuse motivation and around 30 per cent of all crimes recorded fall within classifications other than violence against the person.

Figure 2.11 shows that, in relation to alcohol involvement, the proportion of all other crimes with a domestic abuse motivation is higher than for all other crimes recorded (more than a quarter compared with less than one in ten).

**Figure 2.11 Proportion of all other crime classifications with alcohol involvement, 2012/13 to 2019/20**



### 3 Victims of Domestic Abuse Crime

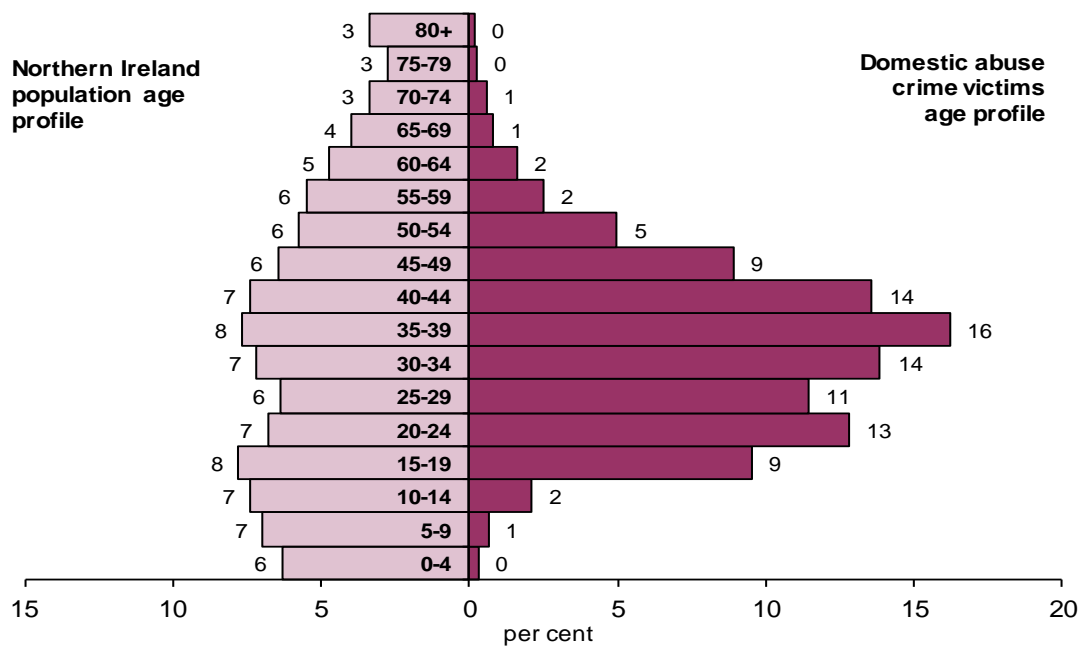
A person can be the victim of more than one crime on more than one occasion during each time period presented. The figures in this section therefore relate to the victim characteristics of each crime recorded rather than to the number of discrete victims.

Please note: figures on victim characteristics provided in this bulletin may differ slightly from those previously published. These details are extracted from a live operational system and, where possible, are updated to improve the level of coverage available.

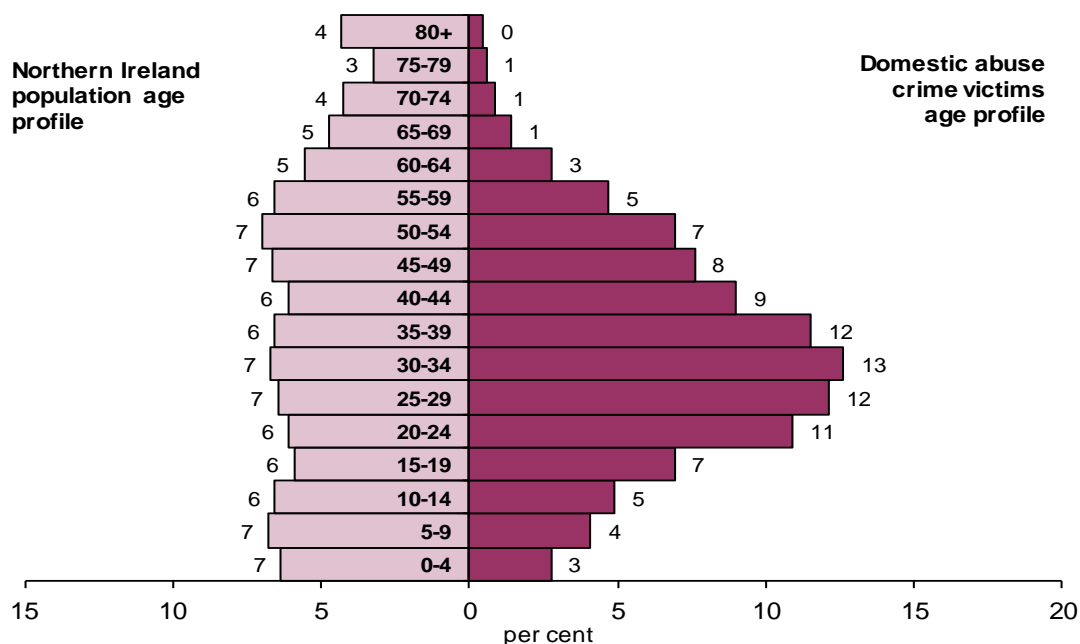
#### 3.1 Victim characteristics

**Age and gender profile:** Figures 3.1 to 3.4 demonstrate the changing profile of the age and gender of domestic abuse crime victims and also how these age and gender profiles compare to that of the Northern Ireland population (based on 2004 and 2019 mid-year population estimates). Data for the full time series is available in the [accompanying spreadsheet](#) Tables 3.2 and 3.3.

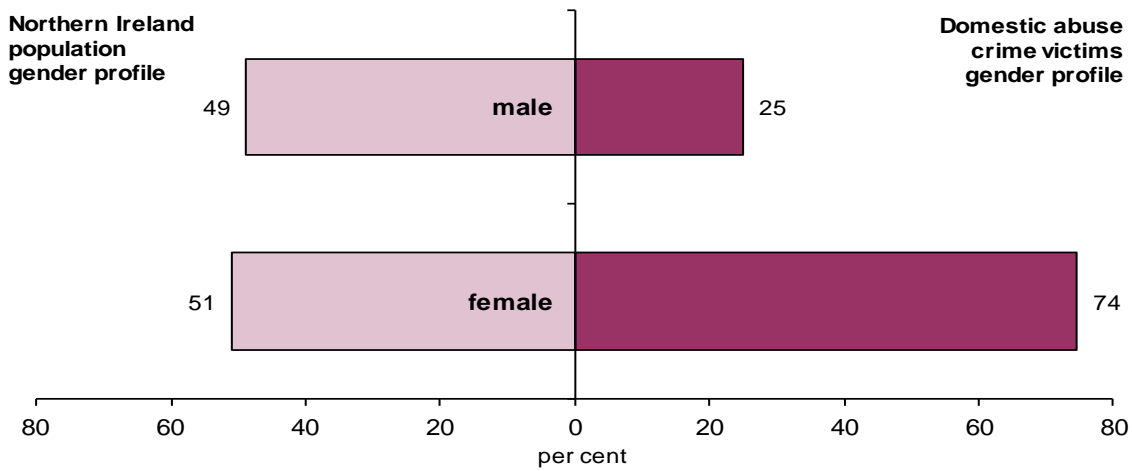
**Figure 3.1 Age profile of victims of domestic abuse crimes compared with Northern Ireland population profile, 2004/05**



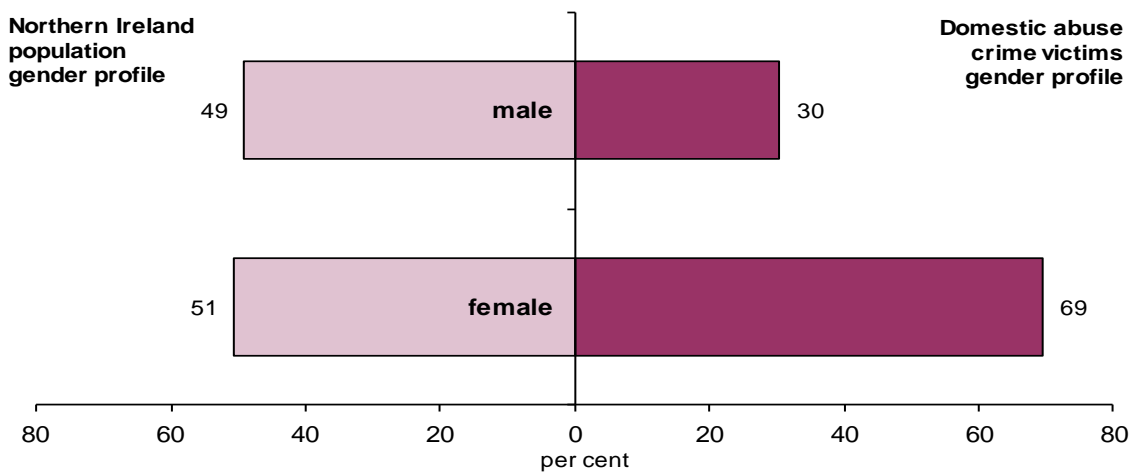
**Figure 3.2 Age profile of victims of domestic abuse crimes compared with Northern Ireland population profile, 2019/20**



**Figure 3.3 Gender profile of victims of domestic abuse crimes compared with Northern Ireland population profile, 2004/05**



**Figure 3.4 Gender profile of victims of domestic abuse crimes compared with Northern Ireland population profile, 2019/20**

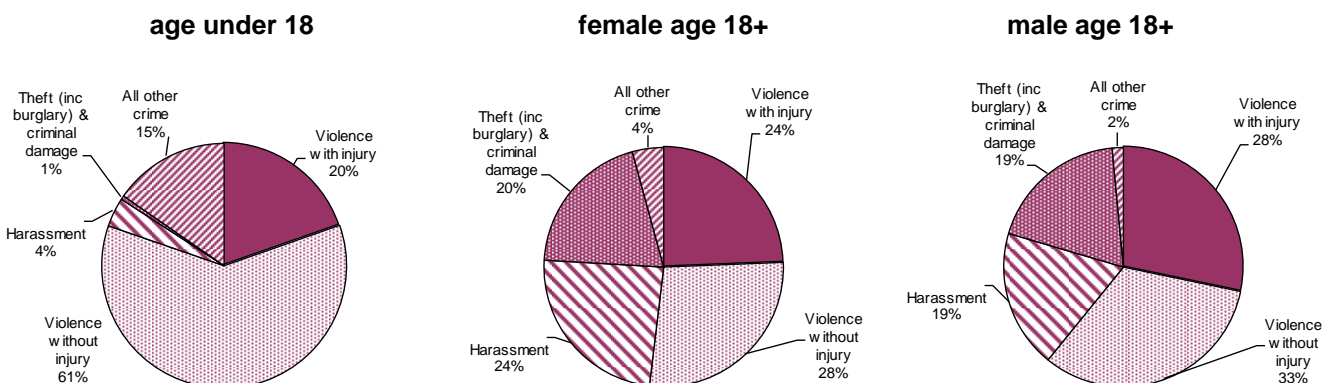


**Victim ethnicity and nationality:** Table 3.8 in the [accompanying spreadsheet](#) provides information on the ethnicity and nationality of victims of domestic abuse crimes. In 2019/10 nearly nine in ten victims were of white ethnicity and two per cent of victims were classified to Asian, Black or Mixed/Other ethnicity. More than three quarters of victims (76 per cent) were of white ethnicity with UK and Ireland nationality. Ethnicity details were not available for just over one in ten victims.

### 3.2 Victim characteristics by crime classification

The Home Office has identified offences as being victim-based, state-based or victim and state-based. State-based offences are those for which no member of the public or business/organisation is a victim. The majority of state-based offences with a domestic abuse motivation relate to breach of non-molestation orders (see section 2.4 for further details).

**Figure 3.5 Victims of domestic abuse by age and gender: percentage in each main crime type 2019/20**





### Crime rates 2019/20

**Victim aged under 18:** There were 6 victims of domestic abuse crimes under the age of 18 per 1,000 of the population under 18.

**Female victims aged 18+:** There were 14 female victims of domestic abuse crimes aged 18+ per 1,000 of the female population aged 18+.

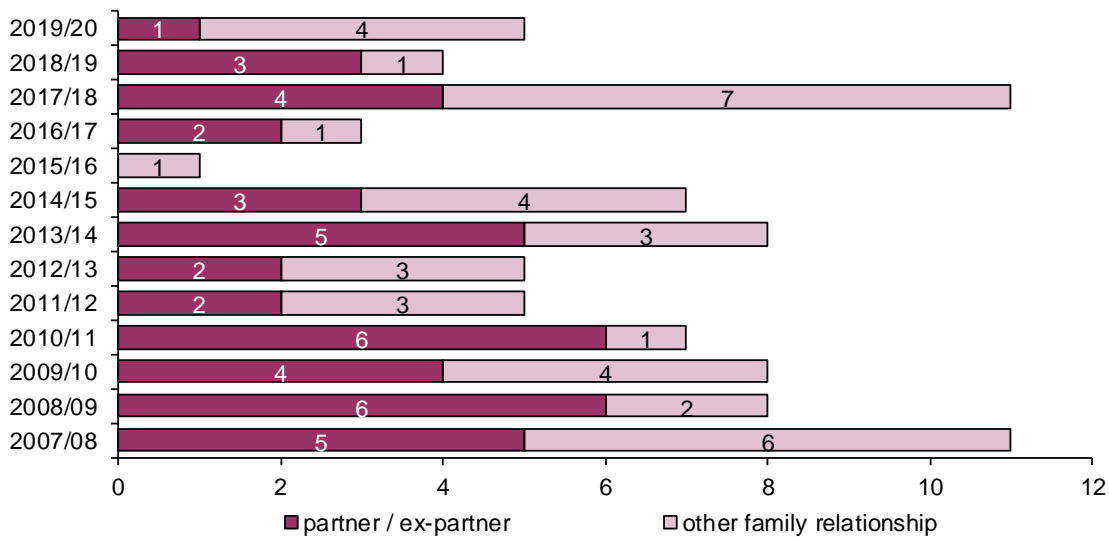
**Male victims aged 18+:** There were 6 male victims of domestic abuse crimes aged 18+ per 1,000 of the male population aged 18+.

### 3.3 Domestic abuse homicides

Figure 3.6 shows the number of homicides since 2007/08 with a domestic abuse motivation and the relationship between the victim and the offender. Additional information on the relationship between victims and offenders is provided in Section 4, with the limitations to this data explained at the start of the section. Figure 3.7 gives a breakdown of domestic abuse homicides by victim gender. [[accompanying spreadsheet](#) Table 3.9]

As indicated in Section 2.1 of this report, 6 homicides in 2007/08 related to the same incident, while 4 homicides in 2017/18 related to the same incident.

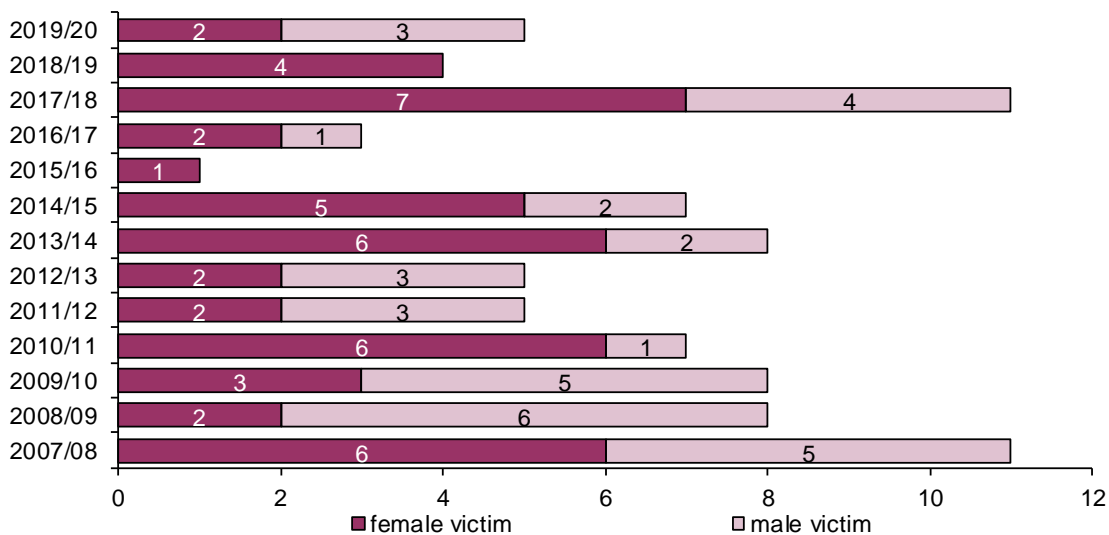
**Figure 3.6 Domestic abuse homicides<sup>1,2</sup> and victim relationship to offender, 2007/08 to 2019/20**



<sup>1</sup> There were 3 female victims of homicide involving partner/ex-partner which were established as murder during 2013/14 but where the deaths occurred in previous years.

<sup>2</sup> There was 1 female victim of homicide involving partner/ex-partner which were established as murder during 2014/15 but where the death occurred in a previous year.

**Figure 3.7 Domestic abuse homicides victim gender, 2007/08 to 2019/20**



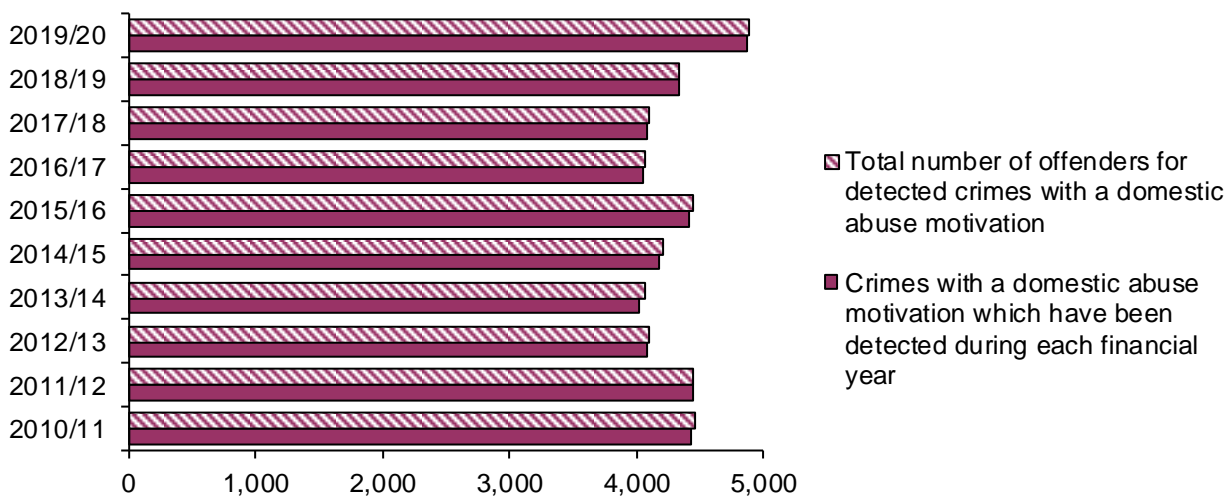
## 4 Offender Characteristics for Domestic Abuse Motivated Crimes, 2010/11 to 2018/19

This offender characteristics data has been compiled from 2010/11 onwards.

For the purposes of this section an offender is defined as someone who has been dealt with by police by means of one of the following outcomes: charge, summons, caution, discretionary disposal, penalty notice for disorder, having the offence taken into consideration at court and indictable only offences where no action was taken against the offender (died before proceedings or PPS did not prosecute). As such, this does not cover all persons coming into contact with police on the basis of potential involvement in domestic abuse.

A person may have been an offender in relation to more than one offence on more than one occasion during the time period. These figures therefore relate to the offender characteristics of each offence detected rather than number of discrete offenders. It is also important to note that more than one offender can be detected for the same offence.

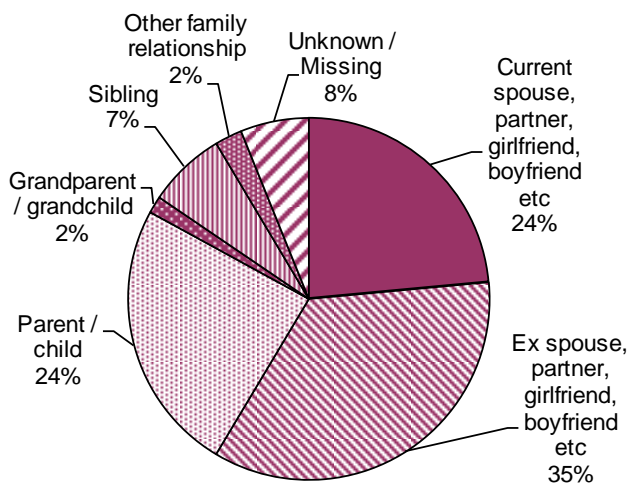
**Figure 4.1 Domestic abuse crimes detected and number of offenders detected, 2010/11 to 2019/20**



**Offender age, gender and ethnicity:** At least 85 per cent of offenders are male and up to fourteen per cent are female. Up to five per cent of offenders are under 18 and just over nine in ten are aged eighteen or over. During 2019/20, age or gender was missing or unknown in two per cent of cases. Around four in five offenders are of White ethnicity with UK & Ireland nationality. A full breakdown of offender characteristics by age, gender and ethnicity/nationality is available in the [accompanying spreadsheet](#) Tables 4.2 to 4.4.

**Victim and offender relationship:** Between 2010/11 and 2019/20 the main changes in the distribution of the nature of the relationship between the victim and the offender have been an increase in the proportion of parent and child relationships and a fall in the proportion where the relationship details are missing or unknown. [[accompanying spreadsheet](#) Tables 4.5]

**Figure 4.2 Nature of relationship between victim and offender, 2019/20**



## 5 Outcomes for Crimes with a Domestic Abuse Motivation

An explanation of the crime outcomes and crime outcome rates presented in this section can be found in [Appendix 1](#), page 22.

Figure 5.1 shows the trend in the overall outcome rate for domestic abuse crimes since 2004/05. It also shows the split between those outcomes where the offender receives a formal sanction and those where no further action is taken against the offender.

**Figure 5.1 Outcome rates for domestic abuse crimes, 2004/05 to 2019/20**

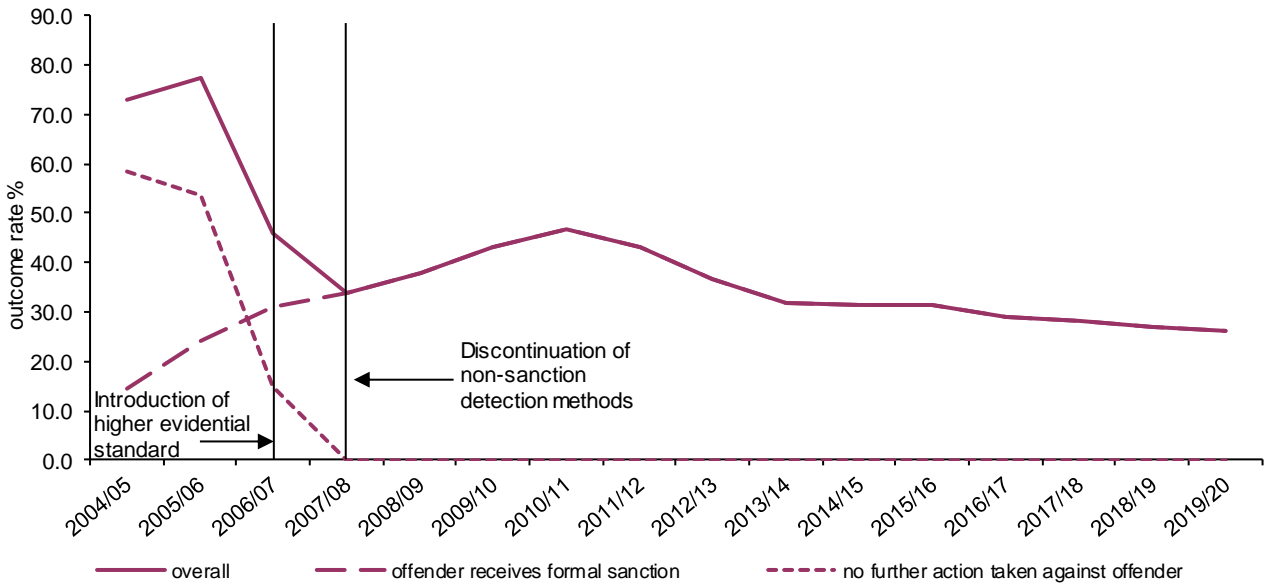
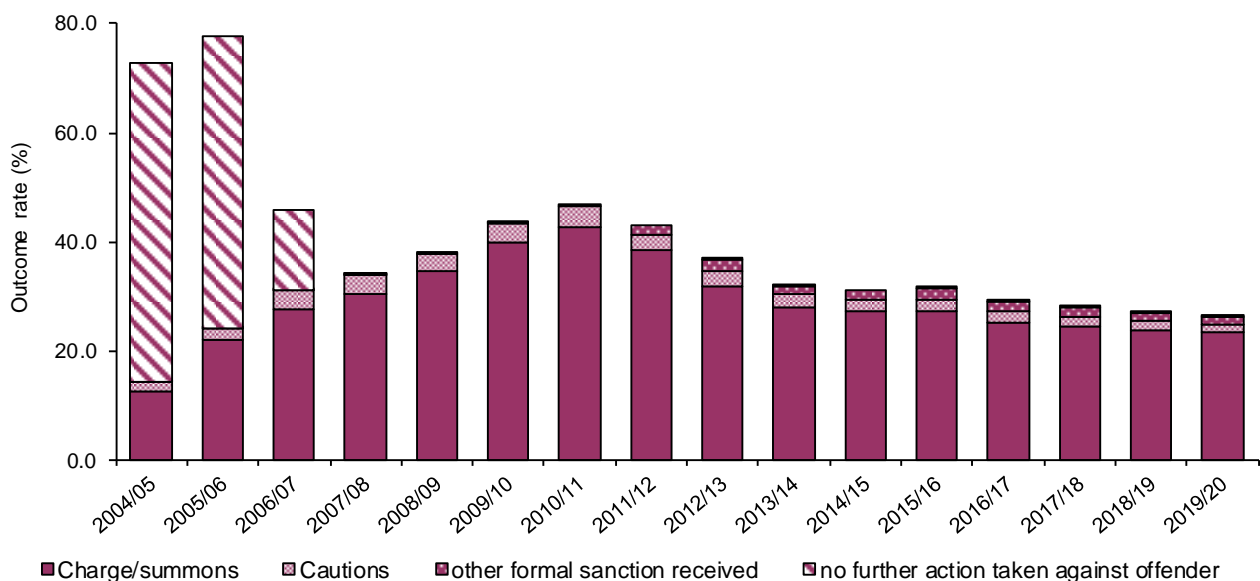


Figure 5.2 illustrates the move away from the use of those outcomes not resulting in a sanction against the offender following the introduction of the higher evidential standard in 2006/07, and the limited use of the outcome methods where no action was taken against the offender from 2007/08. In particular this clearly shows the impact that adopting the higher evidential standard and the subsequent limitation in the use of outcome methods not resulting in a sanction against the offender had on the overall outcome rate. Since 2007/08 charge/summons outcomes have accounted for around 90 per cent of all domestic abuse sanction outcomes. [\[accompanying spreadsheet Table 5.3\]](#)

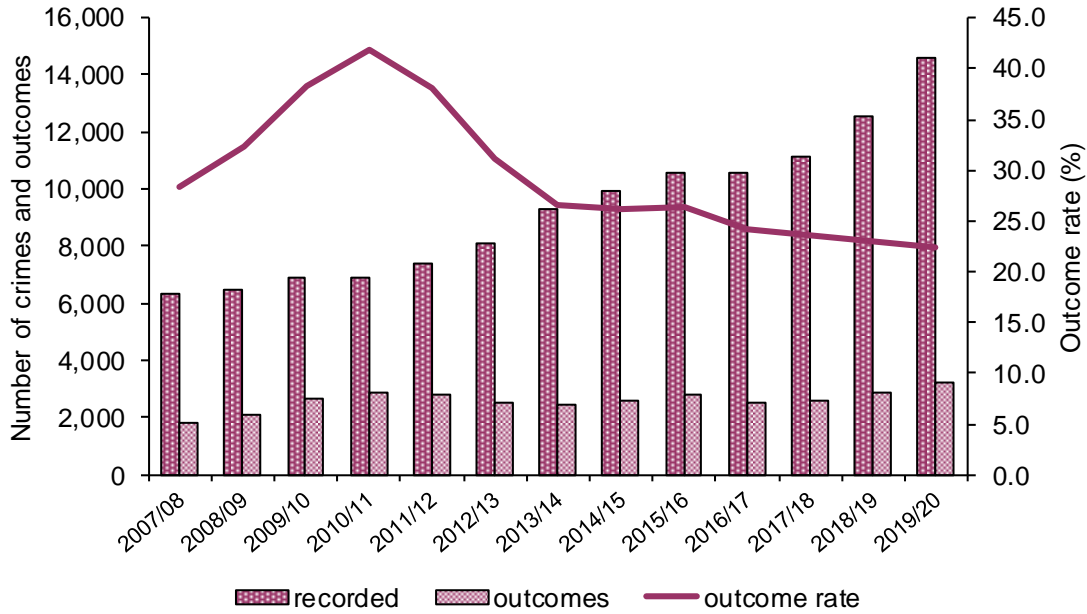
**Figure 5.2 Outcome rates for domestic abuse crimes by method of disposal, 2004/05 to 2019/20**



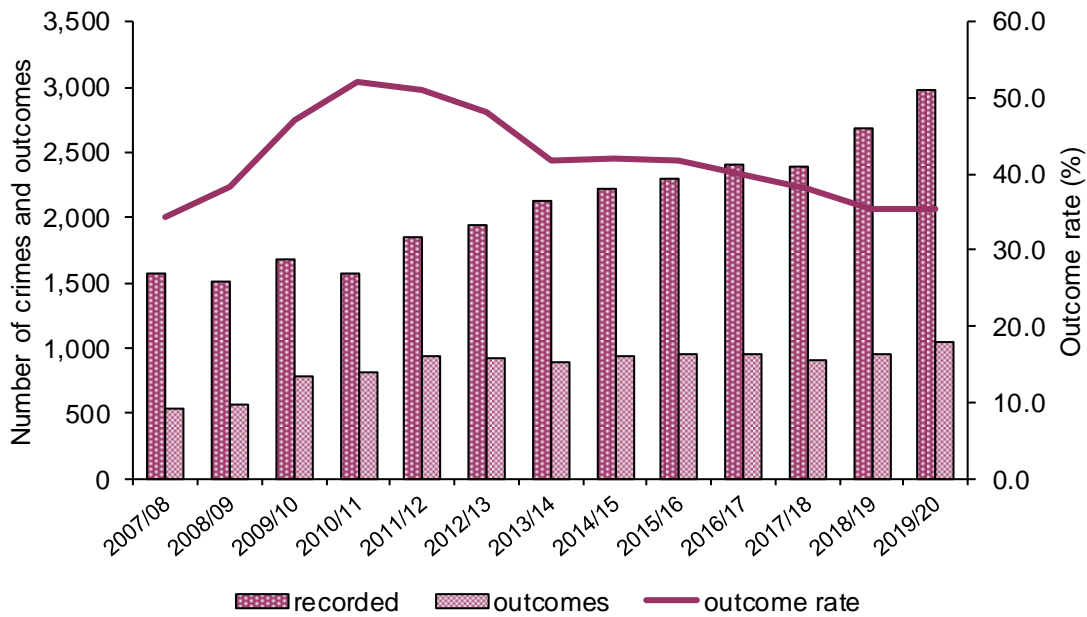
Figures 5.3 to 5.5 show the trends in crimes, outcomes and outcome rates for the following crime groupings: violence against the person & sexual offences, burglary, robbery, theft & criminal damage and other crimes against society (the majority of these offences are breach of non-molestation orders). These charts are not shown to the same scale. However they demonstrate how changing volumes of crimes and outcomes can have an impact on the outcome rate. [[accompanying spreadsheet](#) Tables 2.1, 5.2 (numbers) and 5.2 (rates)]

These charts also demonstrate the difference in outcome rates across these groupings. A potential offender can be more easily identified in relation to a domestic abuse crime than for crime in general. However due to the nature of domestic abuse crimes, a victim may not wish to support prosecution of the offender.

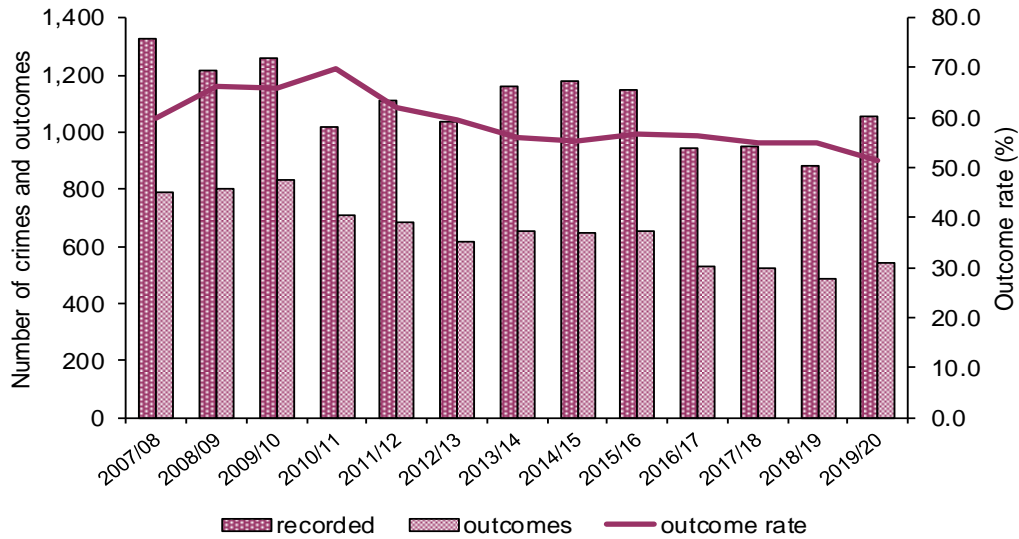
**Figure 5.3 Violence against the person & sexual offences; domestic abuse crimes recorded, outcomes and outcome rates, 2007/08 to 2019/20**



**Figure 5.4 Burglary, robbery, theft & criminal damage; domestic abuse crimes recorded, outcomes and outcome rates, 2007/08 to 2019/20**

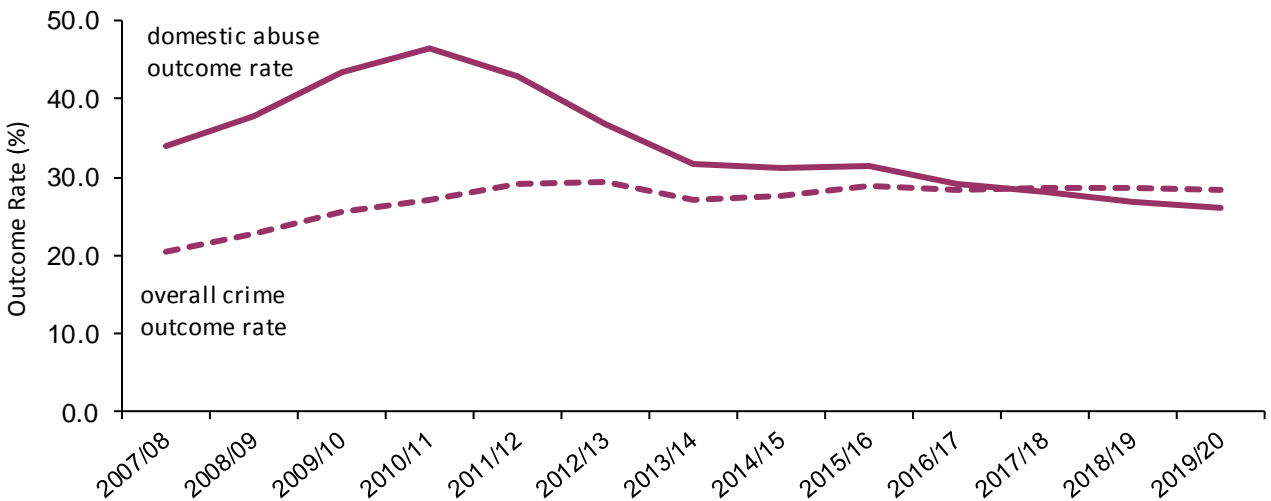


**Figure 5.5 Other crimes against society; domestic abuse crimes recorded, outcomes and outcome rates, 2007/08 to 2019/20**

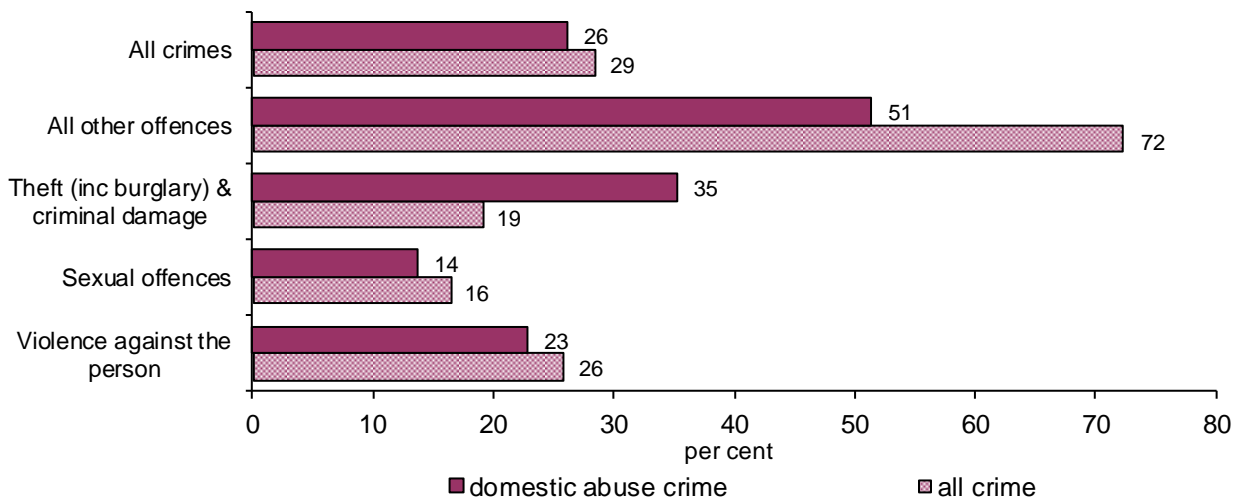


**Comparison of outcome rates for domestic abuse crimes and all crimes recorded by the police:** Until 2017/18, outcome rates for all domestic abuse crimes tended to be higher than those for all crimes recorded by the police. While this is still the case in relation to theft and criminal damage offences during 2019/20, the outcome rates for sexual offences, violence against the person and other offences with a domestic abuse motivation are lower than those for all crimes.

**Figure 5.6 Outcome rates for domestic abuse compared with overall crime, 2007/08 to 2019/20**



**Figure 5.7 Outcome rates by crime type, domestic abuse crime and all crimes recorded by the police, 2019/20**



## 6 Geographic patterns of incidents and crimes with a domestic abuse motivation

As a general rule crimes are recorded geographically by the police based on the location in which the incident occurred.

As part of the Review of Public Administration which came into effect on 1st April 2015, PSNI moved from eight to eleven policing districts, with the new policing model becoming fully operational at the end of September 2015. For domestic abuse crimes the geographic information required to allocate the breach of non-molestation order offences for 2004/05 to the new policing structure was not available, while the level of geographic information required to allocate domestic abuse motivated incident records to the new boundaries was insufficient for the financial years 2004/05 to 2006/07. For these reasons, comparison of domestic abuse motivated crimes at policing district level is only available for the financial years dating back to 2005/06 and back to 2007/08 for domestic abuse motivated incidents.

Belfast City, whilst being only one policing district, accounts for a reasonable proportion of all domestic abuse motivated incidents/crimes recorded in Northern Ireland. It includes four local policing teams based in Strandtown (East), Tennent Street (North), Lisburn Road (South), and Woodbourne (West). Figures for each of these local policing teams are made available to assist with district level comparisons.

### 6.1 Domestic abuse motivations by policing district

Detailed tables are available in the accompanying spreadsheets covering incidents, recorded crime, outcome rates and population rates for incidents and crimes. [[accompanying spreadsheet](#) Tables 6.1 to 6.6]

Pivot tables are available providing a breakdown of crime type for each of recorded crime, outcomes (numbers and rates) and population rates. They also provide a monthly breakdown by policing district for both incidents and crimes. [[accompanying spreadsheet](#) Pivot tables]

### 6.2 Additional geographic breakdowns of domestic abuse motivated incidents and crimes

The Northern Ireland Neighbourhood Information Service (NINIS) website <http://www.ninis.nisra.gov.uk/> is updated annually in relation to incidents and crimes with a racist, homophobic or sectarian motivation. The available geographies are listed below.

#### Incidents with a domestic abuse motivation

Ward 2014, District Electoral Area (DEA) 2014 and Local Government District (LGD) 2014

#### Crimes with a domestic abuse motivation

Ward 2014, District Electoral Area (DEA) 2014, Local Government District (LGD) 2014, Assembly Area (AA), Education & Library Board (ELB), Health & Social Care Trust (HSCT), Urban/Rural and Neighbourhood Renewal Area (NRA).

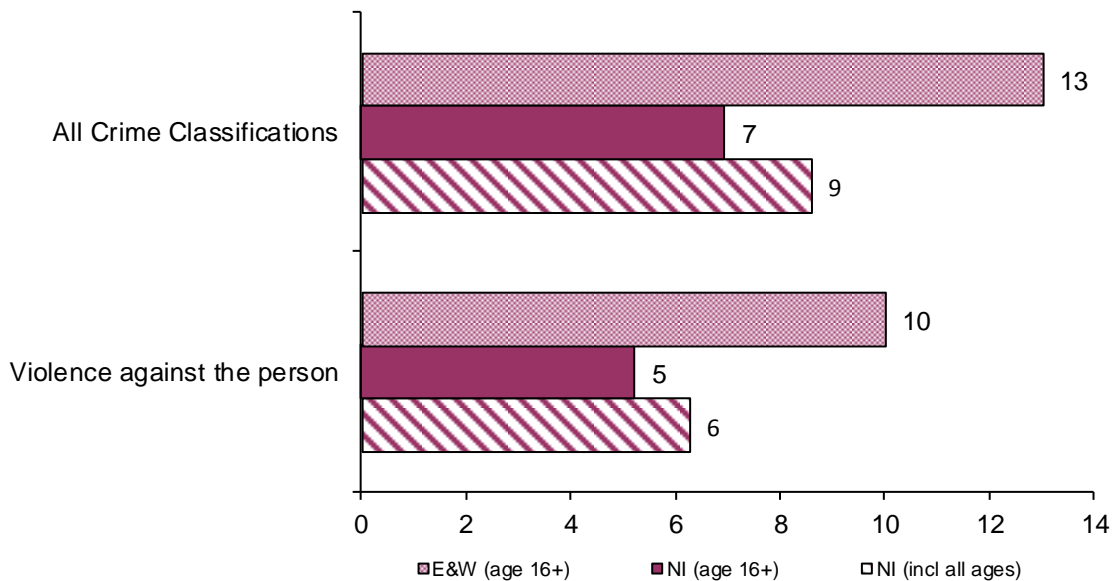
## 7 Wider Context (Comparison with England and Wales)<sup>1</sup>

A key difference in the definition of domestic abuse applied within England & Wales compared with Northern Ireland is the exclusion of victims under the age of 16 from the England & Wales domestic abuse figures. In order to provide more comparable figures, under 16s can be excluded from the Northern Ireland domestic abuse crimes but not from the domestic abuse incident figures.

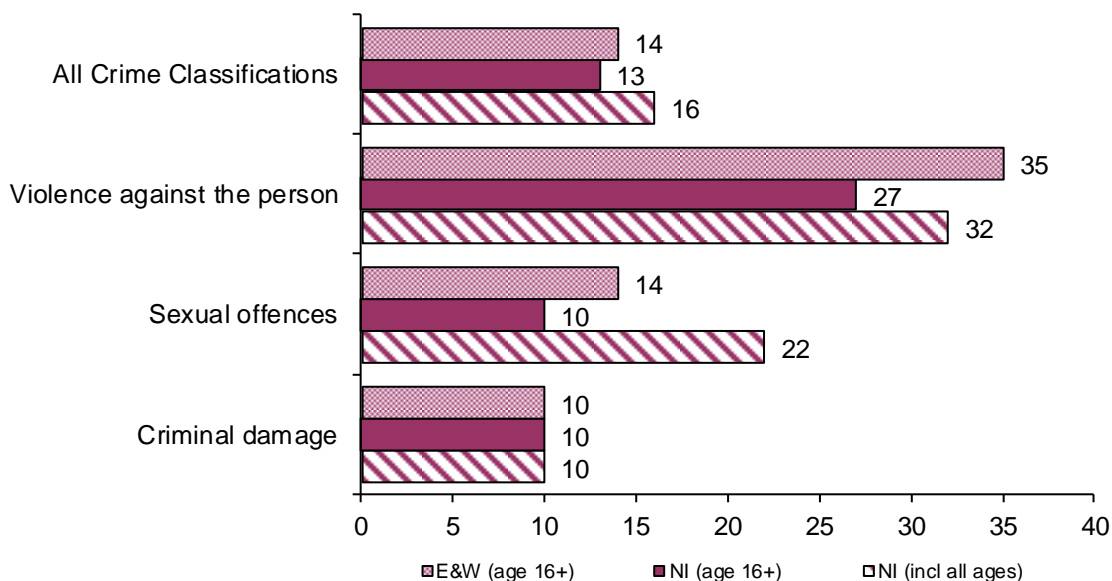
The charts below provide comparisons for 2018/19 between England & Wales and Northern Ireland in respect of rates per 1,000 population and for recorded crime with a domestic abuse motivation as a percentage of all recorded crime for violence against the person, sexual offences, criminal damage and all domestic abuse crime. The Northern Ireland figures are presented for all domestic abuse crime and for domestic abuse crime excluding victims under 16 (the closest available figures in respect of the England & Wales definition).

It should be noted that legislation in respect of coercive or controlling behaviour has not yet been enacted in Northern Ireland; it became a specific criminal offence in England and Wales in 2015.

**Figure 7.1 Domestic abuse crime rates per 1,000 population, 2018/19**



**Figure 7.2 Domestic abuse crime as a percentage of all crimes recorded, 2018/19**



<sup>1</sup> The England & Wales details have been sourced from the publication [Domestic abuse in England and Wales: year ending March 2019](#). At time of publication these were the most up-to-date figures for England & Wales.



# Appendix 1 Background and Data Quality

## 1 Methodology

### 1.1 Data Collection

PSNI's Statistics Branch started compiling statistics on domestic abuse incidents and crimes in April 2004. The system which was in use at that time for crime recording (the integrated crime information system or 'ICIS') was modified to enable incidents to be identified as having a domestic abuse motivation. Where an incident was given this marker, each crime recorded within that incident was also identified as having a domestic abuse motivation, although offences of assault of police were excluded from the domestic abuse crime figures. While PSNI compiled statistics on domestic abuse prior to 2004/05, the method of data collection and definitions of crimes and crime types was not comparable and so these figures are not included within this bulletin.

The current system which is used within PSNI to record crime is called NICHE and was introduced from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2007. This system refined the process for recording crimes with a domestic abuse motivation in that the marker identifying an incident or crime as domestic could be applied to each incident or crime separately. In other words a crime which may have been recorded within an incident identified as domestic, but which did not itself have a domestic motivation, would not have the domestic marker applied. However this did not have a great impact on the number of domestic abuse crimes recorded.

### 1.2 Data Quality

While crimes included within the police recorded crime statistics for Northern Ireland are individually checked for compliance with the Home Office Counting Rules, the identification of a domestic abuse motivation is derived from a motivation 'tick box' on the system used by PSNI to record crime. The motivation is identified and completed by a police officer or member of police staff for each such reported incident or crime. The correct application of a domestic abuse motivation for all such incidents/crimes is not quality assured by the PSNI's Statistics Branch, but audits and data quality checks are routinely conducted in an attempt to ensure that any under or over-recording is corrected.

**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 2021. Further guidance on crime cancellation can be found in the [Home Office Counting Rules for Recorded Crime](#).

### 1.3 Crime outcomes and outcome rates

Section 2.4 of the [User Guide to Police Recorded Crime Statistics](#) describes in detail what outcomes are, the recording practice in relation to outcomes and changes to this practice that have affected the recording of outcomes and outcome rates.

The outcome figures provided in this bulletin are based on the following outcome methods; charge/summons, cautions (adult and juvenile), discretionary disposals, penalty notices for disorder, offences taken into consideration and indictable only offences where no action was taken against the offender (died before proceedings or PPS did not prosecute). There have been a number of changes to the rules governing what can be counted as an outcome since 1998/99, an explanation of which can be found in the [User Guide to Police Recorded Crime Statistics](#). For this reason figures are shown dating back to 2007/08 in order to provide a data series that is as comparable as possible, bearing in mind that discretionary disposals were first introduced as an outcome method during 2011/12 (these were called discretionary disposals prior to 30 June 2016) and penalty notices for disorder were introduced in June 2012.

The outcome rate for 2004/05 will have been impacted to some extent by the fact that there were no crimes identified as having a domestic abuse motivation prior to this. As a result the outcome rates for these initial years were based solely on those offences with a domestic abuse motivation that were both recorded and detected within that financial year. Any impact of this will have been experienced to a much lesser extent in later financial years.

In April 2006, a higher evidential standard was adopted within the PSNI following the establishment of the Public Prosecution Service in Northern Ireland. This restricted the use of those disposal methods where no further action is taken against the offender, in particular the disposal method of complainant declined to prosecute which was widely used due to the nature of domestic abuse crimes where a victim did not wish to support prosecution of the offender. From April 2007 some of the methods that had been allowed for claiming outcomes that did not result in a sanction against the offender were discontinued altogether.

Outcome rates refer to the number of outcomes recorded in a given year expressed as a percentage of the total number of crimes recorded in the same period.

Volumes of outcomes recorded in a particular time period can provide a useful indication of police activity in resolving crime. However outcome rates presented in this way are described by the Home Office as illustrative rather than true rates that can be influenced by changes in crime volumes. Where crime volumes increase or decrease markedly from one year to the next, it is likely that any outcome rate will react more slowly. Please note that it is possible to show a rate of over 100 per cent against a particular outcome.

An alternative way of presenting crime outcomes is available in the publication on Police Crime Outcomes in Northern Ireland (see 3.5 for link to publication). This bulletin presents the wider outcomes framework within PSNI, summarising the outcomes that have been assigned to hate motivated crimes recorded by the police since 2015/16. It also provides a comparison of the two different approaches to crime outcomes.

## 2 Factors with an impact on the Domestic Abuse Motivation data series

### 2.1 Changes to crime classifications

On occasion, the structure of the classifications used to compile recorded crime may change.

**Alignment of PSNI classifications with England and Wales:** During 2010/11 an exercise was conducted to more closely align the crime recording classifications used in PSNI publications with those used for police recorded crime figures in England and Wales. The aim of this exercise was to improve comparability of police recorded crime figures in Northern Ireland with those for England and Wales, while taking into account legislative differences between the two jurisdictions. The realigned crime classification was introduced within PSNI in April 2011.

This exercise realigned the police recorded crime figures for each financial year dating back to 1998/99. Figures at the level of individual classifications differed slightly after reclassification to those figures published prior to reclassification. However the total recorded crime figure for each financial year 1998/99 onwards remained unchanged from the total figure originally published.

**Crime classifications consultation November 2011:** In November 2011 PSNI's Statistics Branch ran a consultation exercise about proposed changes to reduce the overall number of crime classifications. This was in line with a similar exercise conducted by the Home Office in England and Wales. This resulted in a reduction in the number of crime classifications from 148 to 126 and these changes which were introduced in April 2012.

**Crime classifications consultation December 2012:** The focus of the consultation launched in December 2012 concerned the presentation of police recorded crime under two broad categories – 'victim-based crime' and 'other crimes against society' in order to improve clarity of presentation. This consultation followed a similar exercise conducted by ONS in respect of police recorded crime in England and Wales. This resulted in a change to the previous classification system implemented from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2013. All police recorded crime figures published from June 2013 onwards are based on this revised classification, including this trends bulletin. 'Victim based crime' and 'other crimes against society' are further broken down as follows:

#### **Victim-based crimes**

- Violence against the person
- Sexual offences
- Robbery
- Theft offences (inc burglary)
- Criminal Damage

#### **Other crimes against society**

- Possession of weapon offences
- Public order offences (includes breaches of court orders e.g. non-molestation orders and ASBOs)
- Drug offences
- Miscellaneous crimes against society

Figures based on previous classifications are still available in the [Domestic Abuse Statistics Archive](#) on the PSNI website.

### 2.2 Introduction of Action Fraud within Northern Ireland

From 1st 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 1st 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 in Northern Ireland are provided to PSNI on a monthly basis. The Action Fraud figures do not separately identify those offences with a domestic abuse motivation and therefore all domestic abuse motivated crime figures in the tables in this spreadsheet exclude crimes that would be recorded by Action Fraud.

### 2.3 Change to policing boundaries as a result of implementing the Review of Public Administration

As part of the Review of Public Administration which came into effect on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2015, PSNI moved from eight to eleven policing districts, with the new policing model becoming fully operational at the end of September 2015. The level of geographic information required to allocate incident/crime records to the new boundaries was insufficient for the financial years 2004/05 to 2006/07 for domestic abuse incidents and for the financial year 2004/05 for domestic abuse crimes. For this reason, comparison at policing district level is only available for the financial years dating back to 2007/08 for incidents and 2005/06 for crimes.

Belfast City, whilst being only one policing district, accounts for between 24 and 30 per cent of all domestic abuse motivated incidents/crimes recorded in Northern Ireland. It includes four local policing teams based in Strandtown (East), Tennent Street (North), Lisburn Road (South), and Woodbourne (West). Figures for each of these local policing teams are provided for a selected number of geographical tables in the [accompanying spreadsheet](#) for this bulletin to assist with district level comparisons. While these tables provide policing district figures for domestic abuse crimes at overall crime level, figures are also available by crime type from the pivot tables within the [accompanying spreadsheet](#).

## 3 Further Information

### 3.1 Data Use

Domestic abuse statistics have been collated by PSNI in their current format since 2004/05. They are used widely within PSNI as management information and to monitor performance on domestic abuse related targets 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 domestic abuse in Northern Ireland. Furthermore it is widely accepted that there is under-reporting of domestic abuse incidents to the police.

### 3.2 Data Availability

Domestic abuse incidents and crimes in Northern Ireland are currently published as an annual bulletin providing finalised figures for the latest financial year, along with trends and commentary. Quarterly updates providing a summary of the latest domestic abuse incidents and crimes are published during the year, these statistics being provisional and subject to change.

### 3.3 Publication

Annual data are published on a financial year basis (ie 1<sup>st</sup> April to 31<sup>st</sup> March), with the annual bulletin providing finalised figures for the latest financial year along with trends and commentary. Provisional incident and recorded crime data are published each quarter on a rolling 12 month basis and financial year to date basis. Provisional figures remain subject to change until the annual data are published. Provisional figures in each quarterly bulletin supersede those published in previous quarterly updates.

A [publication schedule](#) is available on the PSNI website.

The main tables in this bulletin are also available on the PSNI website in the form of an [accompanying spreadsheet](#) in both excel format and open data format.

[PSNI publications on domestic abuse motivated incidents and crimes](#) are available from the PSNI website. This link also provides access to the latest quarterly updates and to annual reports dating back to 2004/05.

### 3.4 Crime Statistics User Guide

Further details on Police Recorded Crime statistics are available in the [User Guide to Police Recorded Crime Statistics](#), including the recording of incidents and crimes with a domestic abuse motivation which is available in Section 5. This is a reference guide with explanatory notes regarding the issues and classifications which are key to the production and presentation of police recorded crime statistics. The guide provides background information on:

- definitions relating to crimes, incidents and outcomes, including a description of the crime types included within the crime bulletins;
- recording practices, including PSNI data collection, quality and audit processes;
- data timeliness and availability; and
- the geographic areas for which crimes are available (statistics for geographies other than policing area and policing district can be accessed through the [Northern Ireland Neighbourhood Information System \(NINIS\)](#)).

### 3.5 Related information available on the PSNI website

**Police Recorded Crime Statistics:** These statistics are updated on a monthly basis, with publication dates available in the [publication schedule](#). The latest publications and those that have been archived can be accessed through:

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

**Crime Outcomes:** This bulletin presents the wider outcomes framework within PSNI and summarises the outcomes that have been assigned to crimes recorded by the police since 2015/16. The publication can be accessed through:

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

**Anti-Social Behaviour Statistics:** These statistics are updated on a monthly basis, with publication dates available in the [publication schedule](#). The latest publications and those that have been archived can be accessed through:

<https://www.psni.police.uk/inside-psni/Statistics/anti-social-behaviour-statistics/>

**Hate Motivation Statistics:** These statistics are updated on a quarterly basis (in August, November, February and May), with a more comprehensive trends publication made available annually; publication dates are available in the [publication schedule](#). The latest publications and those that have been archived can be accessed through:

<https://www.psni.police.uk/inside-psni/Statistics/hate-motivation-statistics/>

### Contact Details

For further information about domestic abuse incidents and crime recorded by the police in Northern Ireland, or to contact the PSNI Crime and Incident Statistician please:

Email: [statistics@psni.police.uk](mailto:statistics@psni.police.uk);

Write to: Statistics Branch, Lisnasharragh, 42 Montgomery Road, Belfast, BT6 9LD; or

Telephone: 028 9065 0222 ext 24135