

Agricultural and Rural Crime in Northern Ireland

Update to 31st December 2020


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

In 12 months from 1st January 2020 to 31st December 2020:

- There were 328 agricultural crimes recorded in Northern Ireland, a fall of 14.1% on the previous 12 months and continuing the downward trend seen since 2010/11.
- 99 per cent of agriculture crime was identified as occurring in rural settlement areas.
- Agriculture crime represented 1.4 per cent of all burglary, robbery and theft offences.
- Seven policing districts showed a fall in levels of agricultural crime, with four policing districts showing increases.



Northern Ireland
Statistics and Research Agency

Keeping People Safe



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

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

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

This bulletin presents agricultural and urban/rural crime for the following time periods:

- Latest 12 months 1st January 2020 to 31st December 2020 and previous 12 months 1st January 2019 to 31st December 2019.
- Current financial year to date 1st April 2020 to 31st December 2020 and previous financial year to date 1st April 2019 to 31st December 2019.

Figures were compiled on 22nd January 2021, using data extracted from the police administrative system on that date. All tables and charts in the bulletin, along with figures for financial years dating back to 2010/11 and for calendar years dating back to 2011 are available from the PSNI website in the accompanying [spreadsheet](#).

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

Definitions

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

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

The urban/rural crime split is based on classification boundaries that are available for Northern Ireland as defined by the Planning Service, these areas being defined from Settlement Development Limits. Further details are available from the NISRA website (<http://www.nisra.gov.uk/support/geography/urban-rural-classification>). Crimes are allocated to urban or rural by linking the available postcode information for the crime location to the Central Postcode Directory.

Data Revisions

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

Urban/Rural tables: Revisions to previously published data are applied on an annual basis to financial year crime figures from 2015/16 onwards, as a result of the introduction of the wider outcomes framework in April 2015. These revisions take account of crime cancellations and sanction outcomes identified since the previous annual publication. Revisions of this nature will next be applied in May 2021. Further guidance on crime cancellation can be found in the [Home Office Counting Rules for Recorded Crime](#).

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

The number of burglary, robbery and theft offences relating to agricultural-based activity has shown an overall downwards trend from 937 offences recorded in 2010/11 to 385 recorded in 2019/20. The figures for 2019/20 show a decrease of 17 when compared with 2018/19 and are less than half of the level recorded in 2010/11. [Figure 1 and Table 1, [accompanying spreadsheet](#)]

Figure 1 Trends in agricultural crime since 2010/11

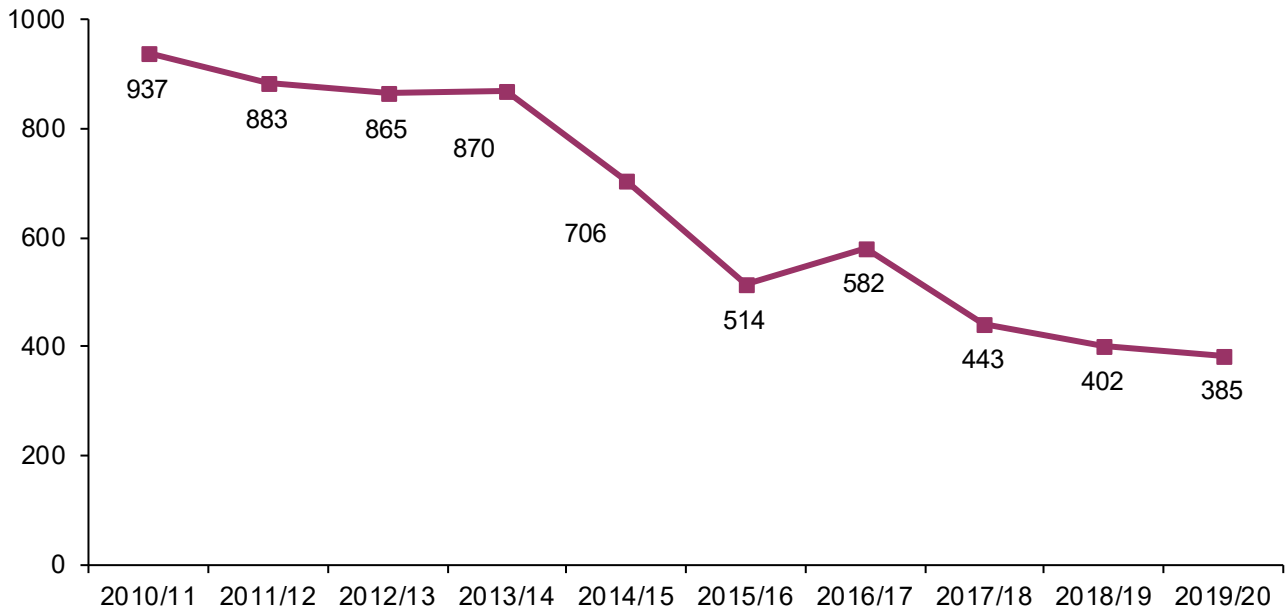
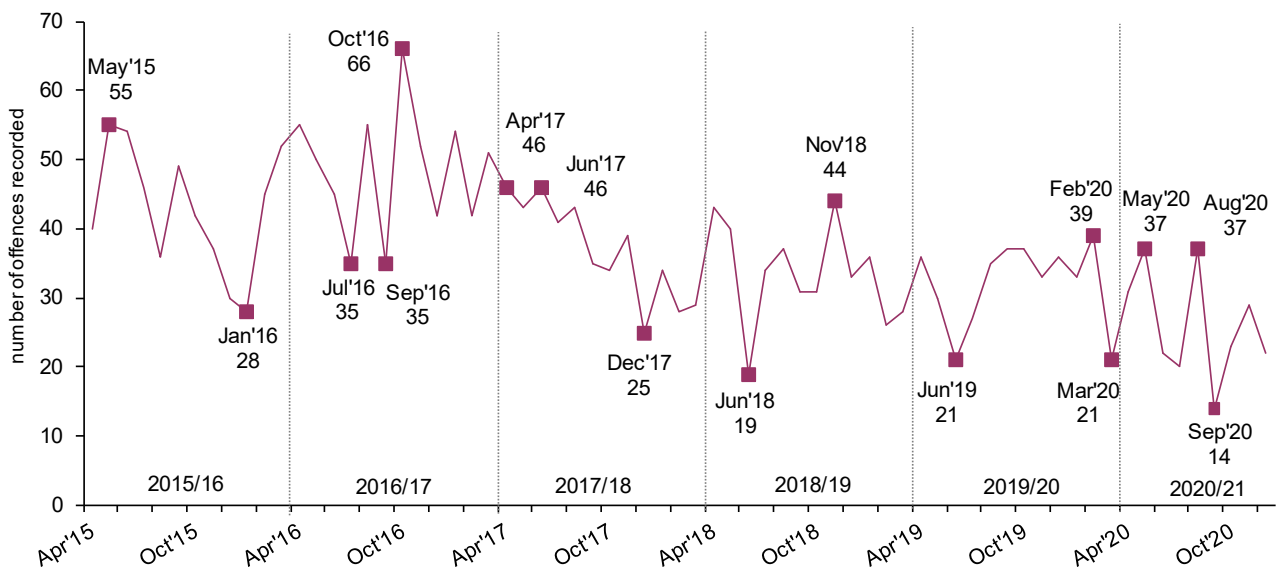


Figure 2 below shows the falling levels of agriculture crime since April 2015. Lockdown measures in relation to Covid-19 were introduced on 23rd March 2020 and have had an impact on the number of crimes recorded. [Table 4, [accompanying spreadsheet](#)]

Figure 2 Agricultural crime each month April 2015 to December 2020, showing highest and lowest levels in each financial year

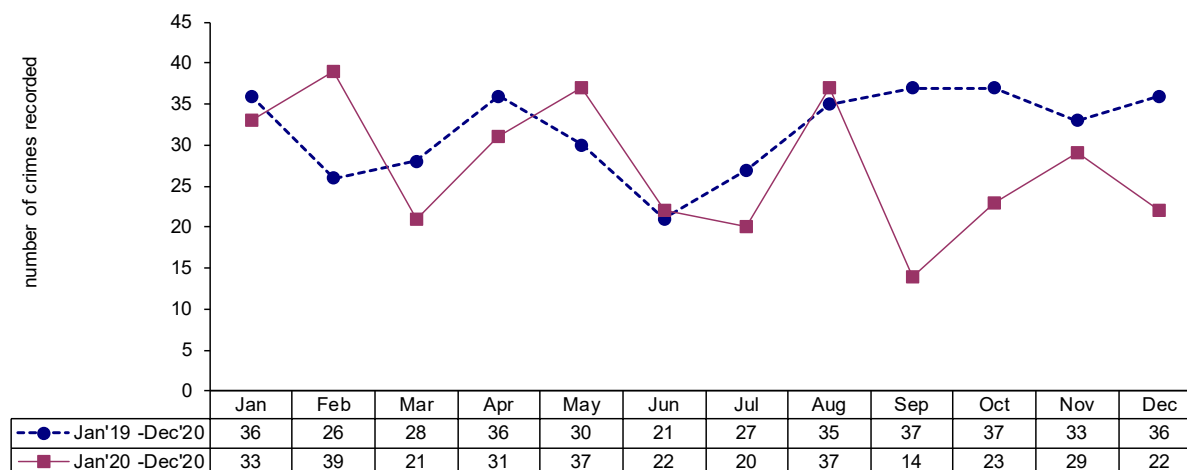


3. What has been happening to levels of agricultural crime more recently?

In 12 months from 1st January 2020 to 31st December 2020:

- There were 328 agricultural crimes recorded in Northern Ireland, a fall of 54 on the previous 12 months and continuing the downward trend seen since 2010/11. [Table 1 and Figure 1]
- 99 per cent of agriculture crime was identified as occurring in rural settlement areas. Since 2010/11 this proportion has ranged between 95 and 99 per cent¹. [Table 2, [accompanying spreadsheet](#)]
- Burglary and robbery represented 31 per cent of agricultural crime, while theft represented 69 per cent. Since 2010/11 burglary and robbery have represented between 27 and 36 per cent of agricultural crime while theft has represented between 64 and 73 per cent. [Table 3, [accompanying spreadsheet](#)]
- Agriculture crime represented 1.4 per cent of all burglary, robbery and theft offences. This compares with 1.2 per cent during the previous 12 months. [Tables 1 and 5]
- The highest level of agriculture crime was seen in Armagh City, Banbridge & Craigavon (53 offences), followed by Newry, Mourne & Down (49), Fermanagh & Omagh (46), Causeway Coast & Glens (42), Mid Ulster (37), Derry & Strabane (24) and Antrim & Newtownabbey (24). [Table 1]
- Seven of the policing districts showed a decrease in levels of agricultural crime, while four showed an increase. Mid & East Antrim had the greatest decrease (25) and Armagh City, Banbridge & Craigavon had the greatest increase (7). [Table 1]
- Lockdown measures in relation to Covid-19 were introduced on 23rd March 2020 and have had an impact on the number of burglary, robbery and theft offences recorded in Northern Ireland. A new set of restrictions were introduced in November 2020. The number of agricultural crimes for each month from March to December 2020 has tended to be lower than the equivalent months in 2019; however, figures for May, June and August 2020 were higher. The 14 agricultural crimes recorded in September is the lowest monthly figure since the data series began in 2010/11. [Table 4, [accompanying spreadsheet](#)]

Figure 3 Agricultural crime January 2019 to December 2020



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

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

	Numbers		
	Jan'19 – Dec'19	Jan'20 – Dec'20	change
Belfast City	3	0	-3
Lisburn & Castlereagh City	17	20	3
Ards & North Down	6	12	6
Newry, Mourne & Down	62	49	-13
Armagh City, Banbridge & Craigavon	46	53	7
Mid Ulster	53	37	-16
Fermanagh & Omagh	40	46	6
Derry City & Strabane	29	24	-5
Causeway Coast & Glens	45	42	-3
Mid & East Antrim	46	21	-25
Antrim & Newtownabbey	35	24	-11
Northern Ireland	382	328	-54

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

	Numbers		
	Jan'19 – Dec'19	Jan'20 – Dec'20	change
Urban	17	4	-13
Rural	365	324	-41
Not known	0	0	0
Total	382	328	-54

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

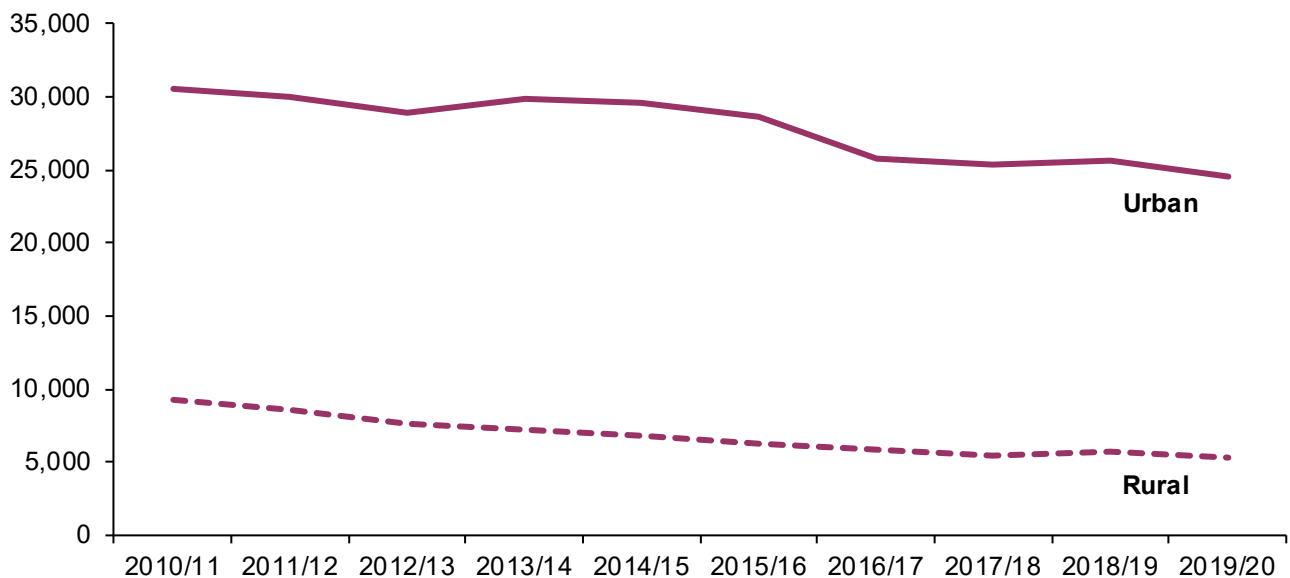
	Numbers		
	Jan'19 – Dec'19	Jan'20 – Dec'20	change
Burglary / Robbery	130	103	-27
Theft	252	225	-27
Total	382	328	-54

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

Between 2010/11 and 2019/20:

- Looking at Northern Ireland as a whole, burglary, robbery and theft offences showed an overall downwards trend between 2010/11 and 2019/20, with the level recorded in 2019/20 representing a fall of 25.1 per cent when compared with 2010/11. [Table 6, [accompanying spreadsheet](#)]
- The number of burglary, robbery and theft offences in **rural settlements** fell each year between 2010/11 and 2019/20 with the exception of 2018/19. The level of 5,302 recorded in 2019/20 is a 42.4 per cent reduction on the 9,211 offences recorded in 2010/11. [Table 6, [accompanying spreadsheet](#)]
- Levels of burglary, robbery and theft offences in **urban settlements** have shown an overall downwards trend since 2010/11. The level of 24,486 recorded in 2019/20 shows a fall of 19.9 per cent when compared with 2010/11. [Table 6, [accompanying spreadsheet](#)]
- Between 2010/11 and 2019/20 the *proportion* of burglary, robbery and theft offences occurring in urban settlement areas increased from 77 per cent to 82 per cent. Correspondingly the *proportion* of these offences occurring in rural settlements fell from 23 per cent to 18 per cent. [Table 6, [accompanying spreadsheet](#)]

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



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

In 12 months from 1st January 2020 to 31st December 2020:

- In Northern Ireland as a whole, burglary, robbery and theft offences decreased by 25.5 per cent (7,875 offences). [bulletin Table 4, [spreadsheet](#) Table 5]
- The number of burglary, robbery and theft offences in **rural settlements** decreased by 27.9 per cent (1,563 offences). [bulletin Table 4, [spreadsheet](#) Table 5]
- Levels of burglary, robbery and theft offences in **urban settlements** decreased by 25.0 per cent (6,312 offences). [bulletin Table 4, [spreadsheet](#) Table 5]
- The *proportion* of burglary, robbery and theft offences occurring in urban settlement areas was 82 per cent, with the *proportion* of these offences occurring in rural settlements sitting at 18 per cent. These same proportions were also recorded during the previous 12 months. [bulletin Table 4, spreadsheet Table 5]
- The percentage of burglary, robbery and theft offences occurring in rural settlement areas was 50 per cent in Mid Ulster, 45 per cent in Fermanagh & Omagh, 39 per cent in Newry, Mourne & Down, 34 per cent in Causeway Coast & Glens, 24 per cent in Armagh City, Banbridge & Craigavon, 23 per cent in Mid & East Antrim, 22 per cent in Lisburn & Castlereagh City, 21 per cent in Ards & North Down, 19 per cent in Antrim & Newtownabbey, and 17 per cent in Derry City & Strabane. The figure was less than 1 per cent in Belfast City. [bulletin Table 4, [spreadsheet](#) Table 5]

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

	Numbers					
	Urban		Rural		Total	
	Jan'19	Jan'20	Jan'19	Jan'20	Jan'19	Jan'20
	–	–	–	–	–	–
	Dec'19	Dec'20	Dec'19	Dec'20	Dec'19	Dec'20
Belfast City	12,100	8,613	35	19	12,135	8,632
Lisburn & Castlereagh City	1,760	1,161	444	333	2,204	1,494
Ards & North Down	1,446	873	266	226	1,712	1,099
Newry, Mourne & Down	1,278	1,146	964	727	2,242	1,873
Armagh City, Banbridge & Craigavon	1,786	1,555	637	501	2,423	2,056
Mid Ulster	640	500	647	499	1,287	999
Fermanagh & Omagh	668	496	642	409	1,310	905
Derry City & Strabane	1,610	1,521	355	315	1,965	1,836
Causeway Coast & Glens	953	786	559	405	1,512	1,191
Mid & East Antrim	1,509	1,115	577	325	2,086	1,440
Antrim & Newtownabbey	1,519	1,191	467	271	1,986	1,462
Northern Ireland	25,269	18,957	5,593	4,030	30,862	22,987

6. Background notes

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

Definitions

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

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

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

Data Accuracy and Revisions

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

Within the current financial year revisions may occur because:

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

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

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

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.

Further information

[Trends in Police Recorded Crime in Northern Ireland 1998/99 to 2019/20](#) was published on 20 November 2020 and provides detailed trend information covering this time period.

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

Copies of other PSNI publications are available from the PSNI website:

<https://www.psnipolice.uk/inside-psni/Statistics/>