



Making Northern Ireland Safer For Everyone Through Professional, Progressive Policing

PSNI Statistics: Annual Statistical Report

Statistical Report No. 1

RECORDED CRIME & CLEARANCES

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Data Quality: The PSNI's statistics on recorded crime and clearances are individually checked for compliance with Home Office Counting Rules by the PSNI's Central Statistics Branch. In addition, audits are conducted to ensure that crimes reported to the police are accurately recorded (i.e. to minimise the level of under or over recording of crime).

A National Statistics Publication

National Statistics are produced to high professional standards set out in the National Statistics Code of Practice. They undergo regular quality assurance reviews to ensure they meet customer needs. They are produced free from any political interference.

1. Recorded Crime

Summary

Overall Crime – Number Recorded

- A total of 108,468 offences were recorded during 2007/08 compared with 121,144 in 2006/07. This represents a decrease of 12,676 (-10.5%) and is the lowest level of recorded crime in Northern Ireland since the Home Office introduced revised counting rules for recorded crime in 1998/99.

Overall Crime - Clearance Rate

The Home Office significantly restricted the clearance types available to the police from 1st April 2007 which meant that virtually all clearances resulting in 'no further police action' (i.e. non sanction clearances) could no longer be claimed as a valid clearance. These clearance types accounted for 4 percentage points of the PSNI clearance rate in 2006/07 but only accounted for less than 0.1 of a percentage point in 2007/08 following this latest restriction. This means that the PSNI overall clearance rate and its sanction clearance rate are now virtually one and the same. This same change also applied to all police services in England and Wales from 1st April 2007.

- The overall clearance rate during 2007/08 was 20.5%, 3.1 percentage points lower than that achieved in the previous year. The sanction clearance rate rose from 19.6% to 20.5%, while the non sanction clearance rate fell from 4.0% to 0.0%.

Violent Crime (i.e. offences against the person, sexual offences & robbery)

- There was a decrease of 2,678 (-7.6%) in the number of violent crimes recorded during 2007/08. Offences against the person fell by 2,266 (-7.1%) although sexual offences rose by 19 (+1.1%).
- Robbery showed an overall decrease of 431 (-27.4%), with decreases in all categories. Ordinary robbery fell by 65 (-9.7%), armed robbery fell by 307 (-40.9%) and hijacking fell by 59 (-39.1%).
- Although the overall violent crime clearance rate fell from 33.2% to 27.1%, the sanction clearance rate increased from 25.3% to 27.0%.

Burglary

- Overall, burglary offences rose by 136 (+1.2%). Domestic burglary fell by 119 (-1.7%) while non-domestic burglary increased by 244 (+5.3%).
- The sanction clearance rate for domestic burglary fell from 10.3% to 10.0% with the sanction clearance rate for non-domestic burglary also falling from 12.2% to 10.9%.

Theft

- Theft offences fell by 3,033 (-10.9%), with decreases across all categories. The largest decrease was within the other thefts category which fell by 1,195 (-12.4%). Vehicle crime (comprising theft from motor vehicles and theft or unauthorised taking of a motor vehicle) showed a decrease of 681 (-9.2%), most of which was due to a fall of 599 (-15.0%) in theft from motor vehicles. Shoplifting fell by 488 (-8.5%).
- The sanction clearance rate for all theft offences increased slightly from 18.2% to 18.3%.
- The sanction clearance rate for vehicle crime also increased from 11.5% to 12.2%.

Criminal Damage

- Offences of criminal damage fell by 5,426 (-14.9%).
- Within this class the fall in the number of criminal damage/malicious damage offences contributed most to this decrease with 5,197 fewer offences recorded during 2007/08, a fall of 15.6%. The number of arson offences also dropped by 184 (-7.6%).
- The sanction clearance rate for all criminal damage offences rose from 9.0% to 9.7%.

Fraud and Forgery

- As a result of the Fraud Act 2006 coming into effect from 15th January 2007, the Home Office Counting Rules were amended from 1st April 2007 resulting in changes to how fraud offences are recorded. The result of this change means that fewer crimes of plastic card and cheque fraud were recorded by the police during 2007/08 when compared with previous years. A more detailed explanation of these changes is provided in the Police Recording of Crimes – Definitions section.
- Fraud and forgery offences fell by 1,699 (-37.8%). There were decreases across all fraud & forgery categories: deception fell by 847 (-46.7%), making off without payment by 433 (-22.1%), other frauds by 270 (-60.0%) and forgery & counterfeiting by 149 (-54.6%).
- The sanction clearance rate for fraud and forgery offences increased from 20.3% to 21.1%.

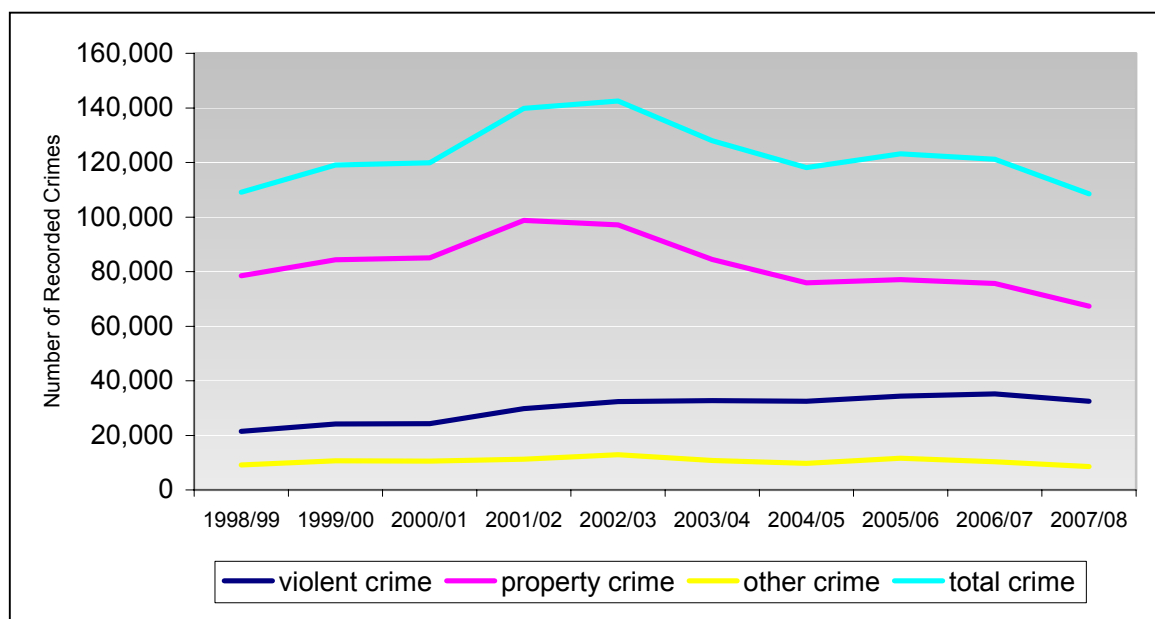
Offences Against the State

- Offences against the State fell by 155 (-12.1%).
- The sanction clearance rate for offences against the state rose from 51.2% to 53.7%.

Other Notifiable Offences

- Other notifiable offences showed an increase of 179 (+4.0%).
- Drug offences contributed most to this increase, with a rise of 253 (+13.1%) in non-trafficking offences and a rise of 56 (+11.8%) in trafficking offences.
- The sanction clearance rate for other notifiable offences fell from 81.2% to 72.5%.

Figure 1.1: Recorded Crime 1998/99¹ - 2007/08



¹ On the 1st April 1998 the Home Office introduced a number of major revisions in the counting rules under which crime is recorded. Figures prior to this date are not comparable.

Table 1.2: Recorded Crime: Offences Recorded and Cleared 2006/07 and 2007/08

	Total offences recorded				Sanction clearance rate (%) ¹		Non sanction clearance rate (%) ¹		Overall clearance rate (%) ¹	
	2006/07	2007/08	change	% change	2006/07	2007/08	2006/07	2007/08	2006/07	2007/08
Offences against the person (class 1)										
Murder	23	25	+2	+8.7	73.9	60.0	0.0	4.0	73.9	64.0
Manslaughter	1	5	+4	+400.0	0.0	120.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	120.0
Infanticide	0	0	0	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Causing/allowing death of vulnerable person	0	1	+1	-	-	0.0	-	0.0	-	0.0
Attempted murder	118	134	+16	+13.6	57.6	50.7	0.8	0.0	58.5	50.7
Threat or conspiracy to murder	1,728	1,828	+100	+5.8	34.4	32.3	5.8	0.0	40.3	32.3
Causing death/GBH by dangerous driving or aggravated vehicle taking	85	52	-33	-38.8	75.3	80.8	7.1	0.0	82.4	80.8
Wounding with intent/GBH with intent	480	546	+66	+13.8	39.8	42.3	3.5	0.7	43.3	43.0
Wounding/GBH	745	756	+11	+1.5	23.5	21.0	5.9	0.0	29.4	21.0
AOABH	15,507	13,439	-2,068	-13.3	20.7	23.7	9.6	0.0	30.3	23.7
Common assault / aggravated assault	8,104	7,993	-111	-1.4	14.8	18.4	12.0	0.0	26.8	18.4
Assault on police	2,727	2,827	+100	+3.7	87.0	79.7	0.9	0.0	87.9	79.7
Intimidation	782	566	-216	-27.6	5.6	7.6	1.5	0.0	7.2	7.6
Harassment	1,363	1,269	-94	-6.9	17.6	11.6	2.6	0.0	20.2	11.6
Explosives offences endangering life	13	6	-7	-53.8	15.4	33.3	0.0	0.0	15.4	33.3
Firearms offences endangering life	43	49	+6	+14.0	62.8	51.0	0.0	0.0	62.8	51.0
Other offences against the person	127	84	-43	-33.9	24.4	19.0	2.4	0.0	26.8	19.0
Totals	31,846	29,580	-2,266	-7.1	25.9	27.9	8.5	0.0	34.4	27.9
Sexual offences (class 2)										
Rape	431	382	-49	-11.4	10.9	14.1	3.5	1.6	14.4	15.7
Attempted rape	26	38	+12	+46.2	30.8	23.7	0.0	2.6	30.8	26.3
Unlawful carnal knowledge of a girl under 14 years	13	15	+2	+15.4	30.8	0.0	7.7	6.7	38.5	6.7
Unlawful carnal knowledge of a girl 14 years and under 17 years	73	106	+33	+45.2	6.8	2.8	15.1	0.0	21.9	2.8
Indecent assault on a female	296	317	+21	+7.1	23.0	18.9	4.7	0.0	27.7	18.9
Indecent assault on a female child	342	348	+6	+1.8	18.7	17.8	7.0	0.0	25.7	17.8
Indecent assault on a male	60	57	-3	-5.0	23.3	10.5	6.7	0.0	30.0	10.5
Indecent assault on a male child	99	93	-6	-6.1	19.2	8.6	7.1	0.0	26.3	8.6
Indecency between males	10	22	+12	+120.0	30.0	18.2	20.0	0.0	50.0	18.2
Indecent exposure	317	299	-18	-5.7	25.6	28.1	1.3	0.0	26.8	28.1
Indecent conduct towards a child	33	34	+1	+3.0	45.5	8.8	3.0	0.0	48.5	8.8
Other sexual offences	103	111	+8	+7.8	43.7	50.5	5.8	0.0	49.5	50.5
Totals	1,803	1,822	+19	+1.1	20.7	19.2	4.9	0.4	25.6	19.6

Table 1.2: Recorded Crime: Offences Recorded and Cleared 2006/07 and 2007/08 continued

	Total offences recorded				Sanction clearance rate (%) ¹		Non sanction clearance rate (%) ¹		Overall clearance rate (%) ¹	
	2006/07	2007/08	change	% change	2006/07	2007/08	2006/07	2007/08	2006/07	2007/08
Burglary (class 3)										
Domestic Burglary (Total)	6,831	6,712	-119	-1.7	10.3	10.0	1.0	0.0	11.3	10.0
Burglary in a dwelling	6,781	6,638	-143	-2.1	10.2	9.9	0.9	0.0	11.1	9.9
Aggravated burglary in a dwelling	50	74	+24	+48.0	32.0	24.3	6.0	0.0	38.0	24.3
Non-Domestic Burglary (Total)	4,630	4,874	+244	+5.3	12.2	10.9	0.6	0.0	12.8	10.9
Burglary in a building other than a dwelling	4,627	4,866	+239	+5.2	12.0	10.8	0.6	0.0	12.7	10.8
Aggravated burglary other than in a dwelling	3	8	+5	+166.7	200.0	37.5	0.0	0.0	200.0	37.5
Going equipped	101	112	+11	+10.9	73.3	71.4	2.0	0.0	75.2	71.4
Totals	11,562	11,698	+136	+1.2	11.6	11.0	0.8	0.0	12.5	11.0
Robbery (class 4)										
Robbery	672	607	-65	-9.7	15.0	13.5	0.4	0.5	15.5	14.0
Armed robbery	751	444	-307	-40.9	20.4	21.8	0.5	0.7	20.9	22.5
Hijacking	151	92	-59	-39.1	21.2	18.5	0.0	3.3	21.2	21.7
Totals	1,574	1,143	-431	-27.4	18.2	17.1	0.4	0.8	18.6	17.9
Theft (class 5)										
Theft, one person from another	861	791	-70	-8.1	3.6	3.4	0.3	0.0	3.9	3.4
Theft in a dwelling	778	565	-213	-27.4	9.9	11.7	4.8	0.0	14.7	11.7
Theft by an employee	361	328	-33	-9.1	49.3	47.0	3.0	0.0	52.4	47.0
Theft of pedal cycles	906	861	-45	-5.0	3.1	2.7	0.8	0.0	3.9	2.7
Shoplifting	5,745	5,257	-488	-8.5	52.1	51.4	3.4	0.0	55.5	51.4
Vehicle Crime (Total)	7,412	6,731	-681	-9.2	11.5	12.2	0.4	0.0	11.9	12.2
Theft from motor vehicles	3,994	3,395	-599	-15.0	4.4	4.9	0.2	0.0	4.6	4.9
Theft or unauthorised taking of motor vehicles	3,418	3,336	-82	-2.4	19.9	19.6	0.6	0.0	20.5	19.6
Vehicle tampering/interference	1,844	1,570	-274	-14.9	10.4	10.8	0.4	0.0	10.7	10.8
Handling of stolen goods	225	191	-34	-15.1	68.9	66.5	2.7	0.0	71.6	66.5
Other thefts	9,634	8,439	-1,195	-12.4	5.6	5.3	1.1	0.0	6.7	5.3
Totals	27,766	24,733	-3,033	-10.9	18.2	18.3	1.4	0.0	19.6	18.3
Fraud and forgery (class 6)										
Deception	1,815	968	-847	-46.7	30.0	33.6	3.8	0.0	33.8	33.6
Forgery and counterfeiting	273	124	-149	-54.6	44.7	49.2	2.6	0.0	47.3	49.2
Making off without payment	1,957	1,524	-433	-22.1	3.8	5.8	11.2	0.0	15.1	5.8
Other frauds	450	180	-270	-60.0	37.8	64.4	45.6	0.0	83.3	64.4
Totals	4,495	2,796	-1,699	-37.8	20.3	21.1	11.1	0.0	31.4	21.1

Table 1.2: Recorded Crime: Offences Recorded and Cleared 2006/07 and 2007/08 continued

	Total offences recorded				Sanction clearance rate (%) ¹		Non sanction clearance rate (%) ¹		Overall clearance rate (%) ¹	
	2006/07	2007/08	change	% change	2006/07	2007/08	2006/07	2007/08	2006/07	2007/08
Criminal damage (class 7)										
Arson	2,428	2,244	-184	-7.6	5.8	6.6	0.8	0.0	6.6	6.6
Petrol bombing offences	77	63	-14	-18.2	6.5	15.9	1.3	0.0	7.8	15.9
Explosives offences	15	13	-2	-13.3	20.0	15.4	0.0	0.0	20.0	15.4
Criminal damage / Malicious damage offences	33,324	28,127	-5,197	-15.6	9.1	9.8	2.6	0.0	11.8	9.8
Other criminal damage offences	477	448	-29	-6.1	20.1	21.9	7.5	0.0	27.7	21.9
Totals	36,321	30,895	-5,426	-14.9	9.0	9.7	2.6	0.0	11.6	9.7
Offences against the state (class 8)										
Offences under anti-terrorism legislation	7	5	-2	-28.6	85.7	40.0	0.0	0.0	85.7	40.0
Firearms offences	109	100	-9	-8.3	50.5	62.0	5.5	0.0	56.0	62.0
Offences under the Public Order (NI) Order	617	695	+78	+12.6	76.5	65.8	2.4	0.0	78.9	65.8
Other offences against the public order	552	330	-222	-40.2	22.6	26.1	4.2	0.3	26.8	26.4
Totals	1,285	1,130	-155	-12.1	51.2	53.7	3.4	0.1	54.6	53.8
Other notifiable offences (class 9)										
Blackmail	58	52	-6	-10.3	15.5	19.2	1.7	0.0	17.2	19.2
Kidnapping and false imprisonment	54	69	+15	+27.8	24.1	14.5	0.0	0.0	24.1	14.5
Drug offences (Total)	2,411	2,720	+309	+12.8	86.9	75.9	1.1	0.0	88.1	75.9
Trafficking offences	473	529	+56	+11.8	83.3	81.9	0.8	0.0	84.1	81.9
Non-Trafficking offences	1,938	2,191	+253	+13.1	87.8	74.4	1.2	0.0	89.0	74.4
Dangerous driving	714	513	-201	-28.2	90.6	92.8	0.7	0.0	91.3	92.8
Breach of orders	1,181	1,241	+60	+5.1	70.1	63.6	2.5	0.0	72.7	63.6
Other notifiable offences	74	76	+2	+2.7	71.6	47.4	5.4	2.6	77.0	50.0
Totals	4,492	4,671	+179	+4.0	81.2	72.5	1.5	0.0	82.7	72.5
Violent Crime (classes 1, 2 and 4)	35,223	32,545	-2,678	-7.6	25.3	27.0	8.0	0.1	33.2	27.1
Grand Total (all classes)	121,144	108,468	-12,676	-10.5	19.6	20.5	4.0	0.0	23.6	20.5

¹ The Recorded Crime Summary page provides an explanation of the change in the non sanction and overall clearance rates when comparing 2007/08 with 2006/07.

Table 1.3: Recorded Crime: Offences Recorded and Cleared by District¹ 2006/07 and 2007/08

	Total offences recorded				Sanction clearance rate (%) ²		Non sanction clearance rate (%) ²		Overall clearance rate (%) ²	
	2006/07	2007/08	change	% change	2006/07	2007/08	2006/07	2007/08	2006/07	2007/08
A District	15,278	13,893	-1,385	-9.1	17.8	18.5	2.0	0.0	19.7	18.5
B District	18,384	16,696	-1,688	-9.2	20.3	20.2	4.1	0.0	24.3	20.2
C District	15,263	13,155	-2,108	-13.8	19.2	22.1	3.3	0.0	22.5	22.1
D District	17,854	15,521	-2,333	-13.1	16.3	19.4	5.2	0.0	21.5	19.4
E District	16,676	15,229	-1,447	-8.7	18.7	20.1	4.3	0.0	23.0	20.1
F District	10,267	9,947	-320	-3.1	28.9	24.2	4.5	0.0	33.4	24.2
G District	14,553	13,329	-1,224	-8.4	19.5	16.7	4.5	0.0	24.0	16.7
H District	12,869	10,698	-2,171	-16.9	20.1	24.8	4.0	0.0	24.1	24.8
Grand Total	121,144	108,468	-12,676	-10.5	19.6	20.5	4.0	0.0	23.6	20.5

¹ A map showing the Areas covered by each District is provided on the last page of this bulletin.

² The Recorded Crime Summary page provides an explanation of the change in the non sanction and overall clearance rates when comparing 2007/08 with 2006/07.

Table 1.4: Recorded Crime: Offences Recorded and Cleared by Area 2006/07 and 2007/08

	Total offences recorded				Sanction clearance rate (%) ¹		Non sanction clearance rate (%) ¹		Overall clearance rate (%) ¹	
	2006/07	2007/08	change	% change	2006/07	2007/08	2006/07	2007/08	2006/07	2007/08
Antrim	3,099	2,917	-182	-5.9	18.9	19.4	4.5	0.0	23.5	19.4
Ards	3,734	3,073	-661	-17.7	17.6	21.3	5.5	0.0	23.1	21.3
East Belfast	4,964	5,031	+67	+1.3	20.2	19.6	4.5	0.0	24.7	19.7
North Belfast	8,644	8,361	-283	-3.3	18.3	20.5	2.7	0.0	21.0	20.5
South Belfast	13,420	11,665	-1,755	-13.1	20.3	20.4	3.9	0.0	24.2	20.4
West Belfast	6,634	5,532	-1,102	-16.6	17.2	15.5	1.0	0.0	18.1	15.5
Carrickfergus	1,832	1,872	+40	+2.2	18.7	20.4	6.4	0.0	25.1	20.4
Castlereagh	2,562	2,112	-450	-17.6	18.1	22.1	2.1	0.1	20.3	22.2
Down	4,409	4,219	-190	-4.3	16.4	23.5	2.4	0.0	18.7	23.5
Lisburn	7,594	6,335	-1,259	-16.6	17.3	20.3	5.7	0.0	23.0	20.4
Newtownabbey	5,329	4,397	-932	-17.5	12.5	17.6	4.4	0.0	16.9	17.7
North Down	4,558	3,751	-807	-17.7	23.9	21.2	3.0	0.0	26.9	21.2
Urban Region	66,779	59,265	-7,514	-11.3	18.4	20.0	3.7	0.0	22.1	20.0
Armagh	2,815	2,364	-451	-16.0	25.5	25.7	4.3	0.0	29.9	25.7
Ballymena	4,064	3,507	-557	-13.7	19.2	23.6	2.9	0.0	22.1	23.6
Ballymoney	1,054	956	-98	-9.3	18.9	19.7	4.6	0.0	23.5	19.7
Banbridge	2,544	2,154	-390	-15.3	12.1	17.9	6.5	0.1	18.6	18.0
Coleraine	5,310	3,946	-1,364	-25.7	21.8	28.6	3.4	0.0	25.2	28.6
Cookstown	1,897	1,829	-68	-3.6	31.1	27.0	6.3	0.0	37.4	27.0
Craigavon	5,531	5,407	-124	-2.2	20.3	18.7	3.6	0.0	23.9	18.7
Dungannon & South Tyrone	2,612	2,545	-67	-2.6	28.2	21.3	4.8	0.1	33.0	21.4
Fermanagh	3,004	3,104	+100	+3.3	25.1	22.2	2.3	0.0	27.4	22.2
Foyle	8,263	7,402	-861	-10.4	16.3	14.2	3.4	0.0	19.7	14.3
Larne	1,553	1,562	+9	+0.6	17.5	24.6	8.7	0.0	26.1	24.6
Limavady	2,643	2,519	-124	-4.7	23.2	21.7	6.0	0.0	29.2	21.7
Magherafelt	1,684	1,712	+28	+1.7	19.8	16.1	6.8	0.0	26.7	16.1
Moyle	888	727	-161	-18.1	19.5	17.9	4.7	0.0	24.2	17.9
Newry & Mourne	5,786	5,304	-482	-8.3	16.8	19.8	4.0	0.0	20.9	19.8
Omagh	2,754	2,469	-285	-10.3	32.2	27.7	5.4	0.0	37.5	27.7
Strabane	1,963	1,696	-267	-13.6	27.4	20.7	5.6	0.0	33.0	20.7
Rural Region	54,365	49,203	-5,162	-9.5	21.2	21.0	4.4	0.0	25.5	21.0
Grand Total	121,144	108,468	-12,676	-10.5	19.6	20.5	4.0	0.0	23.6	20.5

¹ The Recorded Crime Summary page provides an explanation of the change in the non sanction and overall clearance rates when comparing 2007/08 with 2006/07.

Table 1.5: Recorded Crime: Offences Cleared by Method of Clearance 2006/07 and 2007/08

	Number		Rates (%)		
	2006/07	2007/08 ³	2006/07	2007/08 ³	change in % pts ⁴
Total offences recorded	121,144	108,468	-	-	-
Total offences cleared	28,628	22,225	23.6	20.5	-3.1
Sanction clearances					
Charge / summons	18,379	17,750	15.2	16.4	+1.2
Caution – adults ¹	2,578	2,303	2.1	2.1	-0.0
Caution – juveniles ²	2,553	2,022	2.1	1.9	-0.2
Taken into consideration	275	125	0.2	0.1	-0.1
Totals	23,785	22,200	19.6	20.5	+0.8
Non sanction clearances³					
Complainant declines to prosecute	3,392	0	2.8	0.0	-2.8
No prosecution directed	1,004	22	0.8	0.0	-0.8
Otherwise disposed of	447	3	0.4	0.0	-0.4
Totals	4,843	25	4.0	0.0	-4.0

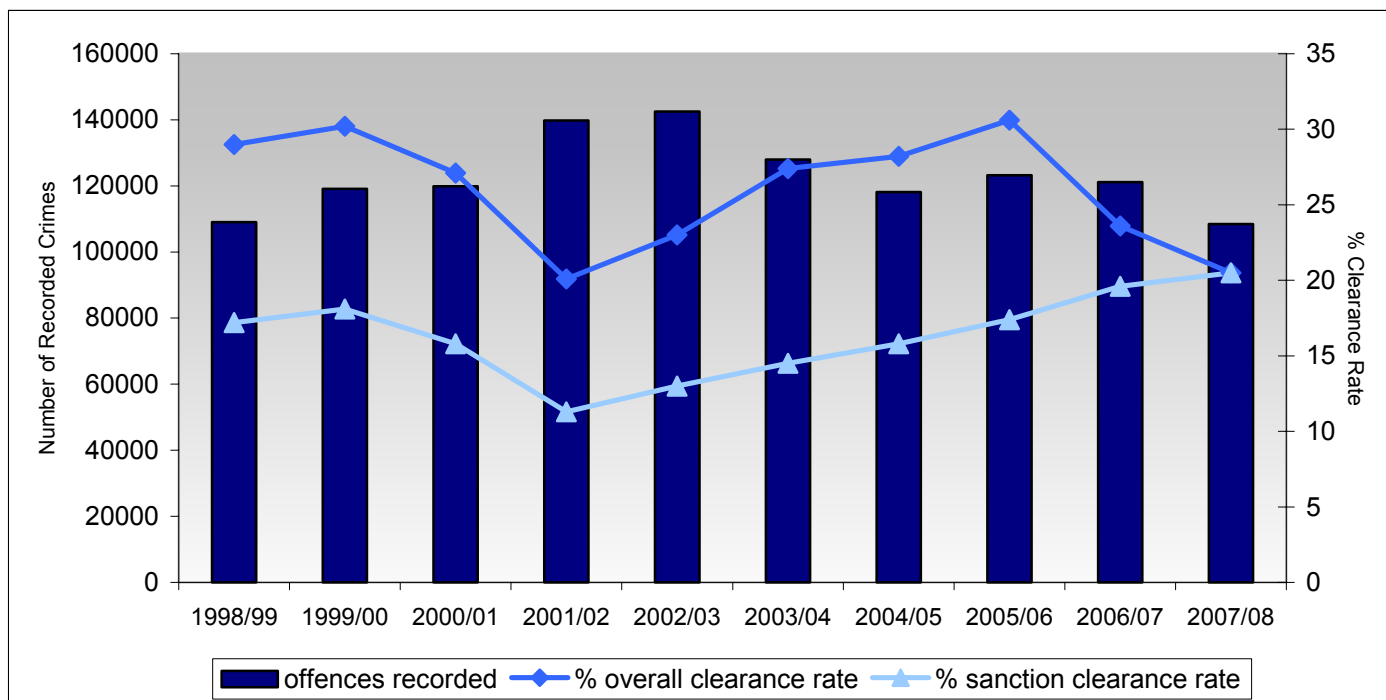
¹ Adult cautions include adult cautions and adult informed warnings.

² Juvenile cautions include juvenile restorative cautions, juvenile informed warnings and juvenile prosecutorial diversions.

³ The Recorded Crime Summary page provides an explanation of the change in the non sanction and overall clearance rates when comparing 2007/08 with 2006/07.

⁴ While the clearance rates are rounded to one decimal place, the clearance rate change in % pts is calculated on the unrounded clearance rates and then rounded to one decimal place.

Figure 1.6: Recorded Crime and Clearance Rate¹ 1998/99² - 2007/08



¹ The Recorded Crime Summary page provides an explanation of the change in the non sanction and overall clearance rates when comparing 2007/08 with 2006/07. An explanation of the change in clearance rates when comparing 2006/07 onwards with previous years is provided in the Police Recording of Crime – Definitions page.

² On the 1st April 1998 the Home Office introduced a number of major revisions in the counting rules under which crime is recorded. Figures prior to this date are not comparable.

Police Recording of Crime - Definitions

Recorded Crime

Recorded crime figures (sometimes referred to as notifiable offences) detail those crimes and offences (including attempts) recorded by the police which are deemed to be indictable or triable-either-way. Certain closely associated summary offences are also counted in the recorded crime figures.

- **Indictable offences** are those more serious crimes which are tried on indictment in the Crown Court by a judge and jury;
- **Triable-either-way offences** are those offences which, under certain circumstances, are triable either summarily in a magistrates court or on indictment in the Crown Court;
- **Summary offences** are less serious and are tried in a Magistrates Court before a resident magistrate with no jury.

The number of crimes recorded by the police is dependent on two factors:

- Whether the victim or a representative of the victim brings that crime to the attention of the police or on the crime coming to the attention of the police through some other means (such as the police officer being present at the time);
- Whether that incident is determined as being a recordable offence within the categories laid down by the Home Office in the official counting rules.

Clearances

Clearances (or detections as they may alternatively be known) are, broadly speaking, those crimes that have been 'cleared up' by the police. Crimes are counted as 'cleared or detected' in accordance with strict counting rules issued by the Home Office. They are counted on the basis of crimes rather than offenders. For example, if six offenders are involved in a robbery and are all arrested and charged, then this counts as one clearance. Alternatively if only one of the six is identified and charged while the other five remain unidentified and go free, this also counts as one clearance. In this respect clearance data differs from conviction data as conviction data counts offenders while clearance data counts crimes.

In April 2006 PSNI adopted a higher evidential standard in respect of non sanction clearances (those where no further action is taken by the police, mainly due to the victim not wanting formal action taken by the police or due to no prosecution being directed). This change was introduced in order to bring these clearance types more closely into line with police services in England and Wales where they have been applying the Crown Prosecution Service evidential test since 2002. In Northern Ireland the equivalent standard only became relevant to PSNI clearances with the establishment of the Public Prosecution Service (PPS) in June 2005. Sanction clearances remained unaffected by this change.

The following methods of clearance involve a formal sanction:

- Charging or issuing a summons to an offender;
- Issuing a caution to the offender;
- Having the offence accepted for consideration in court;
- The offender is a juvenile who is dealt with by means of an informed warning or restorative caution.

Up to 1st April 2007, offences not involving a formal sanction but still regarded as 'cleared up' were those where the police took no further action for the following reasons:

- Offender, victim or essential witness is dead or too ill;
- Victim refuses or is unable to give evidence;
- Offender is under the age of criminal responsibility;
- Police or PPS decides that no useful purpose would be served by proceeding;
- Time limit of six months for commencing prosecution has been exceeded.

The Home Office significantly restricted the clearance types available to the police from 1st April 2007 which meant that virtually all clearances resulting in 'no further police action' (i.e. non sanction clearances) could no longer be claimed as a valid clearance. These clearance types accounted for 4 percentage points of the PSNI clearance rate in 2006/07 but only accounted for less than 0.1 of a percentage point in 2007/08 following this latest restriction. This means that the PSNI overall clearance rate and its sanction clearance rate are now virtually one and the same. This same change also applied to all police services in England and Wales from 1st April 2007.

Violent Crime

Violent crime comprises three main offence groupings: offences against the person, sexual offences and robbery. What violent crime offences have in common is that they involve actual violence or the threat of violence. The degree of violence varies considerably, even between incidents in the same classification. The large majority of incidents categorised as violent crime do not actually involve any significant injury to the victim, although some of the crimes not resulting in injury may still be traumatic for their victims eg threats to kill.

Fraud and Forgery

As a result of the introduction of Fraud Act 2006 there have been substantial changes to how offences of plastic card and cheque fraud are recorded by the police. From 1st April 2007 the onus is on financial institutions to report incidences of such fraud to the police rather than individual account holders.

In addition, the way that these offences are counted by the police has also changed and is now based on the number of separate accounts defrauded rather than the number of individual transactions on each account. Previously if a person had their credit card stolen and it was subsequently used on 10 separate occasions to buy goods fraudulently from 10 different shops there would be a requirement for 1 crime record for theft and 10 for deception. Under the 'economic crime' category there is only a requirement for 1 theft and 1 fraud by false representation

The result of this change means that fewer crimes of plastic card and cheque fraud were recorded by the police during 2007/08 when compared with previous years.

PSNI POLICING DISTRICTS FROM 1ST APRIL 2007

