

Statistical bulletin

# Coronavirus and crime in England and Wales: August 2020

Impact of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic on crime and people's perceptions of crime during the April and May 2020 period of national lockdown.

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# 1 . New in this release

This publication explores crime in England and Wales during April and May 2020, the period when the strictest national lockdown restrictions because of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic were in place. Restrictions came into effect from 23 March 2020 and were gradually eased from 13 May 2020.

Data are presented from a new Telephone-operated Crime Survey for England and Wales (TCSEW) designed to capture trends in crime whilst normal face-to-face interviewing is suspended<sup>1</sup>. Further information on how this survey was set up is available in our accompanying [blog](#).

Data on police recorded crime have been provided in a monthly format. These data may be subject to revision in future quarterly releases.

Each data source includes additional reference periods to enable comparison with pre-lockdown months<sup>2</sup>.

## Notes for: New in this release

1. TCSEW estimates are not comparable with estimates derived from the face-to-face Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW).
2. The TCSEW uses a pre-lockdown two-month average for comparison. This was calculated using data collected via the TCSEW on crimes reported to have been experienced by respondents during the period July to December 2019. Crimes reported in Quarter 1 (Jan to Mar) 2020 were not included in this calculation due to lockdown restrictions coming into effect in March.

## 2 . Main points

- Initial findings from the Telephone-operated Crime Survey for England and Wales (TCSEW) estimated a significant 32% reduction in total crime excluding fraud and computer misuse during April and May 2020 compared with a two-month average in the pre-lockdown period.
- Underlying this reduction were significant falls in theft offences, particularly domestic burglary and other theft of personal property; this reflects the increase in time people spent at home during the lockdown period, a reduction in opportunities for theft in public spaces and the closure of the night-time economy.
- Similar to findings from the TCSEW, police recorded crime levels during the lockdown period were much lower than respective months in 2019, with 25% less crime in April 2020 and 20% less crime in May 2020.
- Reductions were seen across many types of crime; in particular, theft offences fell in April and May 2020 to almost half the level recorded in April and May 2019.
- One exception were trends in drug offences, where levels rose by 22% in April 2020 and 44% in May 2020 compared with April and May 2019; this reflects proactive police activity in pursuing these crimes during lockdown.
- Police recorded crime fell by 5% in March 2020 compared with the previous month, followed by a larger 20% decrease between March and April; in contrast, crime increased by 12% from April to May, as the easing of lockdown restrictions began.
- Other findings from the TCSEW indicated that public perceptions of the police during this time were largely positive, with 91% of adults satisfied with the way local police were responding.

## Statistician's comment

Commenting on today's figures, Billy Gazard from the Office for National Statistics Centre for Crime and Justice said:

"There was a significant fall in crime at the height of the coronavirus pandemic across England and Wales. This was driven by reductions in theft offences, particularly domestic burglary and theft of personal property. As this period coincided with the majority of people spending long periods at home during lockdown, it is not unexpected. These first findings from our new telephone-operated crime survey support police recorded data which also show lower than usual levels of offending in April and May.

"The exception was police recording of drug offences, which increased through April and May. This reflects proactive police activity as overall crime levels reduced."

## 3 . Coronavirus and measuring crime

In response to the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, lockdown restrictions came into effect from 23 March 2020 and imposed strict limits on daily life. These included significant restrictions on freedom of movement and a requirement by law for a range of businesses to close. This article reports primarily on crime during the main lockdown months of April and May 2020 using two main data sources – police recorded crime and a new Telephone-operated Crime Survey for England and Wales (TCSEW). Data presented from each source cover additional reference periods to enable comparison with pre-lockdown months.

Estimates from the TCSEW are derived from telephone interviews conducted with household residents in England and Wales aged 18 years and over between 20 May and 30 June 2020 inclusive. The sample was formed from respondents who had previously participated in the face-to-face Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW) in the last two years<sup>1</sup> and who had agreed to being re-contacted for research purposes. A total of 6,470 interviews were completed during this six-week data collection period. For more information on how we are measuring crime during the pandemic see our accompanying [blog](#).

Similar to the long-standing face-to-face operated CSEW, the TCSEW asks respondents about their experiences of crime in the 12 months prior to interview, including the lockdown period. Because of the time constraints placed on a telephone interview, we were unable to include many of the survey questions that are included in the face-to-face questionnaire or the separate questionnaire for children aged 10 to 15 years old. In addition, concerns around confidentiality and respondent safeguarding limited the types of questions asked; this included those relating to domestic abuse.

The National Police Chiefs' Council (NPCC) [May](#), [June](#) and [July](#) 2020 releases of Demands on the police forces in England and Wales during the Covid-19 pandemic indicated a rise in domestic abuse incidents during the lockdown period using provisional data from police forces<sup>2</sup>. We plan to publish an article that brings together these and other sources of domestic abuse data from victim services alongside our [annual domestic abuse publication](#) later this year.

Reports from organisations such as the [NSPCC](#) and [UNICEF \(PDF, 4.66MB\)](#) indicate a rise in calls to helplines and highlight the increased risk to children of abuse during the lockdown. We continue to work to address the gap in data on the current prevalence of child abuse in the UK. Findings from a feasibility study to determine whether a new survey could effectively measure the current scale and nature of child abuse and neglect will also be published later in 2020.

A short new module has been included in the TCSEW to provide further information on crime during the coronavirus outbreak<sup>3</sup>, such as perceptions of crime, the police and anti-social behaviour. Parents with a child aged 10 to 15 years old living in their households were also asked questions as part of this new module in order to collect information about children's online experiences.

As we are collecting data in a new survey mode, the survey estimates are presented within this release as [Experimental Statistics](#). The Office for Statistics Regulation, on behalf of the UK Statistics Authority, has [reviewed these statistics](#) against several key aspects of the Code of Practice for Statistics and regards them as consistent with the Code's pillars of Trustworthiness, Quality and Value. All survey estimates presented in this release, including crime estimates for the pre-lockdown period, are calculated using data collected in the new telephone-operated survey. These estimates are not comparable with those previously published from the face-to-face CSEW.

For the purpose of this release, monthly police recorded crime data (excluding Greater Manchester Police (GMP) ) are presented to enable more granular comparisons in the number of incidents recorded before and during the lockdown period. As individual Police Force Area (PFA) level data have not been verified with forces, only high-level offence categories are provided for England and Wales as a whole. PFA level data will be released for this period alongside the next release of our regular quarterly publication in October 2020.

Data on offences flagged as being domestic abuse related, knife or sharp instrument offences and crimes involving firearms are not included in this release as these are only returned by police forces on a quarterly basis.

For an overview of general data quality and specific quality issues to be aware of for this release, see the sections on [Measuring the data](#) and [Strengths and limitations](#).

#### **More about coronavirus**

- Find the latest on [coronavirus \(COVID-19\) in the UK](#).
- All ONS analysis, summarised in our [coronavirus roundup](#).
- View [all coronavirus data](#).
- Find out how we are [working safely in our studies and surveys](#).

#### **Notes for: Coronavirus and measuring crime**

1. Between 1 May 2018 and 29 February 2020 inclusive.
2. Not all incidents will result in a crime being identified or recorded. If it is concluded that an offence has been committed, either immediately when reported, or after being recorded as an incident, the incident will be recorded as a crime and will be identified as domestic abuse-related.
3. The reference period referred to in the module includes but is not specific to the lockdown period and is therefore open to some interpretation by respondents as to when the start of the outbreak was.
4. Data for GMP have not been included in this release because of issues with their data supply following the implementation of new force IT systems. Any total police recorded crime data refer to England and Wales excluding GMP.

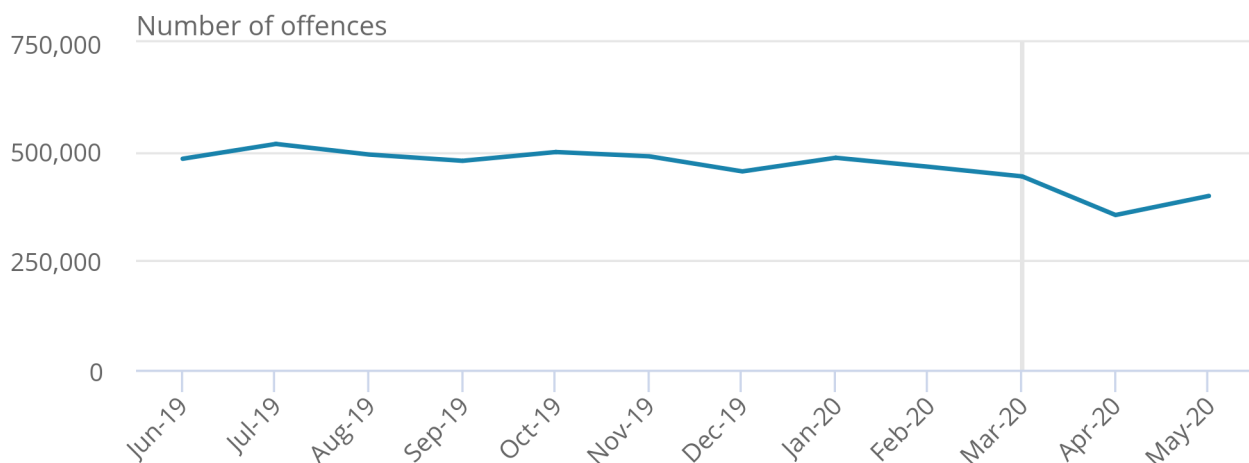
## 4 . Trends in police recorded crime

**Figure 1: Lowest monthly police recorded crime level for year ending May 2020 seen during height of lockdown**

England and Wales, June 2019 to May 2020

Figure 1: Lowest monthly police recorded crime level for year ending May 2020 seen during height of lockdown

England and Wales, June 2019 to May 2020



**Source: Home Office - Police recorded crime**

**Notes:**

1. Police recorded crime data are not designated as National Statistics.
2. Data from Greater Manchester Police are not included in this chart.
3. Monthly totals for number of offences will be affected by the number of days in a month as well as the number of weekends and bank holidays.

Monthly police recorded data show a reduction in crime during the lockdown period. In March 2020, the police recorded 442,816 crimes (including fraud and computer misuse), a fall of 5% from the number of crimes recorded in February 2020 (464,837 crimes). A total of 354,334 offences were recorded by the police in April 2020, representing a substantially larger month-on-month decrease of 20%.

By contrast, May 2020 saw a 12% increase in crime from the previous month, to 398,049 offences. Importantly, from 13 May the government introduced initial easing of the lockdown restrictions. This included the reopening of some businesses and the relaxing of some restrictions on freedom of movement. April 2020 therefore represents the only month where full UK lockdown measures were applied throughout, during which time the police recorded their lowest number of crimes in England and Wales across all months in the year ending May 2020 (Figure 1). This figure also represents the lowest monthly figure for April since April 2015. However, improvements to recording practices by the police have made substantial contributions to rises in recorded crime over recent years.

Figures indicated a similar pattern for most individual offence types, showing a decrease in crime levels during the initial lockdown period, and an increase in May 2020 during which restrictions started to be relaxed. In particular, theft showed the largest volume decrease of 15% between February and March 2020 (to 124,706 offences), followed by a substantially larger 35% fall between March and April 2020 (to 80,789 offences).

The largest volume increase during May 2020 was seen for violence against the person offences which rose by 13% from the previous month (to 133,864 offences), resulting in a level similar to pre-lockdown months.

In addition, following a 9% fall in public order offences between March and April 2020 (to 30,856 offences), the number of public order offences recorded by police between April and May 2020 increased by 23% to one of its highest monthly levels in the year ending May 2020 (37,881 offences). These changes are likely to reflect the introduction and subsequent easing of lockdown restrictions across England and Wales, as well as seasonal variation within these offences.

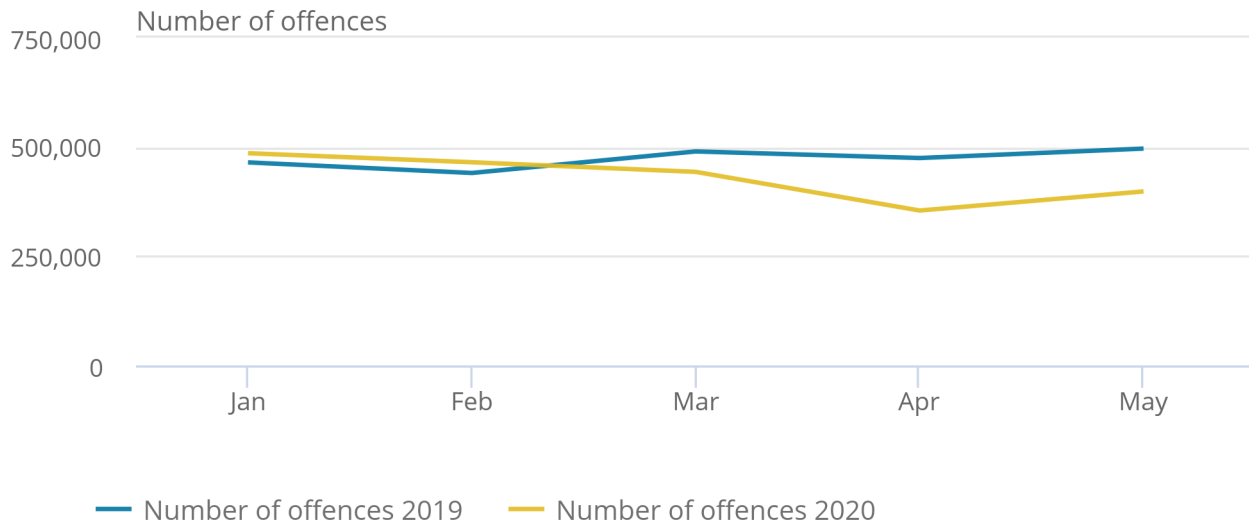
For more detailed figures relating to month-on-month changes in police recorded crime see [Appendix tables](#).

## Figure 2: Lockdown months show falls in police recorded crime compared with 2019

England and Wales, January to May 2019 and January to May 2020

### Figure 2: Lockdown months show falls in police recorded crime compared with 2019

England and Wales, January to May 2019 and January to May 2020



Source: Home Office – Police recorded crime

#### Notes:

1. Police recorded crime data are not designated as National Statistics.
2. Data from Greater Manchester Police are not included in this chart.

Despite the upturn in recorded crime during May 2020, levels of overall crime recorded by the police during the lockdown period were substantially lower than the previous year (Figure 2). Comparison with 2019 data showed that the number of crimes recorded in March 2020 was 10% lower than that recorded in March 2019 (a fall of 46,812 offences). Subsequent months saw larger reductions in recorded crime levels, with a 25% fall in April 2020 compared with April 2019 (equivalent to 120,179 fewer offences), and a 20% fall in May 2020 compared with May 2019 (equivalent to 98,055 fewer offences). This was a reversal of the pre-lockdown trends where there was a 5% rise in January and a 6% rise in February compared with their respective months in 2019.

## Figure 3: Falls in police recorded theft offences and rises in drug offences during lockdown compared with 2019 average

England and Wales, January to May 2019 and January to May 2020: scale indexed where 100 = 2019 monthly average level

#### Notes:

1. Police recorded crime data are not designated as National Statistics.
2. Data from Greater Manchester Police are not included in this chart.
3. The index was calculated by dividing the number of police recorded incidents for each crime type and month by the average number of incidents for that crime type for the period January to December 2019. An index value of 100 is equivalent to the 2019 monthly average number of incidents; a value above 100 indicates an increase from the average while a value below 100 indicates a decrease.

[Download the data](#)

Underlying these falls were substantial decreases in theft offences, which fell to almost half the volume recorded in the corresponding months in 2019. Specifically, theft decreased by 47% in April 2020 (equivalent to 72,874 fewer offences) and by 45% in May 2020 (equivalent to 70,801 fewer offences), compared with April and May 2019 respectively. This reflects the increase in time people spent at home during the lockdown period, a reduction in opportunities for theft in public spaces and the closure of the night-time economy.

Compared with the previous year, monthly police data for April 2020 also showed large volume decreases in criminal damage and arson, which fell by 31% (equivalent to 13,902 fewer offences), fraud and computer misuse which fell by 16% (equivalent to 10,188 fewer offences), and violence against the person offences which fell by 10% (equivalent to 13,698 fewer offences). However, there was a smaller decrease in violence against the person offences for May 2020 compared with the previous year (4% fall, equivalent to 5,462 fewer offences).

By contrast, increases in recorded drug offences during lockdown resulted in a 22% rise in April 2020 compared with April 2019 (an increase of 3,035 offences) and a 44% increase in May 2020 compared with May 2019 (an additional 6,344 offences). These rises were driven largely by offences involving possession of drugs. Early indications suggest that this is particularly evident in London, and reflect increases in [proactive police activity in crime hotspots](#). Data from the [Metropolitan Police Service](#) indicated steep rises in April and May 2020 in the number of stop and searches conducted by police relating to drugs.

For more detailed figures relating to monthly police recorded crime including time series data see [Appendix tables](#).

## 5 . Crime estimates from the Telephone-operated Crime Survey for England and Wales

Based on interviews conducted during May and June 2020, the Telephone-operated Crime Survey for England and Wales (TCSEW) estimated that 1.8 million offences, including fraud and computer misuse, were experienced by adults aged 18 years and over in the lockdown months of April and May. Based on the available sample size this was not found to be a significant reduction from the pre-lockdown two-month average<sup>1</sup>. However, the estimated total volume of crime excluding fraud and computer misuse experienced during this two-month period showed a significant decrease of 32% to 715,000 offences compared with the pre-lockdown average (1.1 million offences) (Figure 4). This supports the findings from monthly police recorded crime data showing reductions in crime during lockdown months.

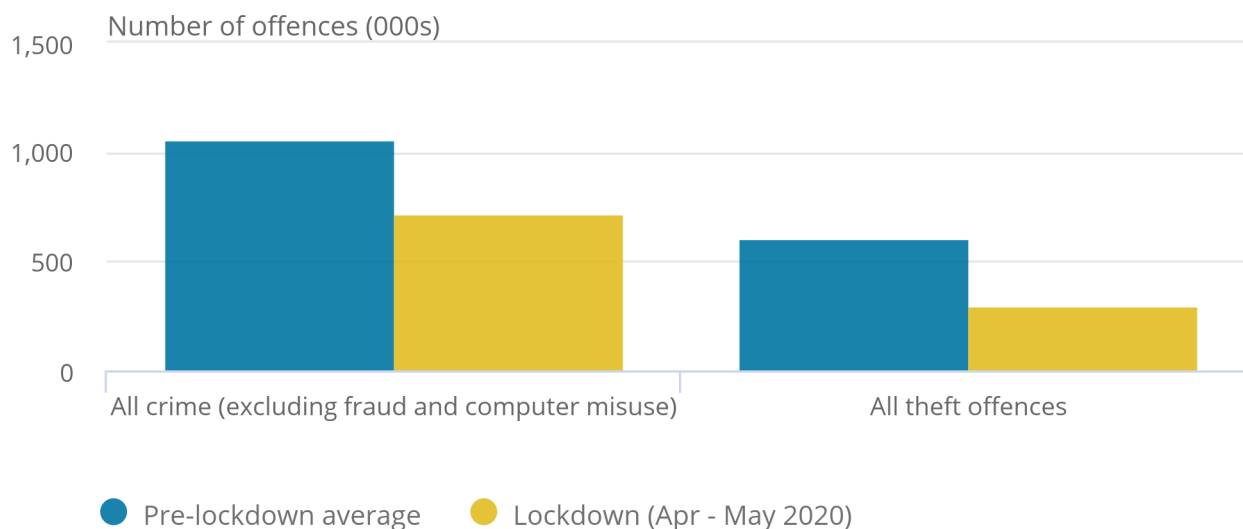


## Figure 4: Falling TCSEW crime levels during lockdown were driven by large decreases in theft offences

England and Wales, based on interviews conducted during May and June 2020

### Figure 4: Falling TCSEW crime levels during lockdown were driven by large decreases in theft offences

England and Wales, based on interviews conducted during May and June 2020



Source: Office for National Statistics - Telephone-operated Crime Survey for England and Wales

#### Notes:

1. These data are published as Experimental Statistics.
2. Lockdown refers to the months of April and May 2020.
3. Pre-lockdown refers to a two-month average calculated using data collected via the TCSEW on crimes reported to have been experienced by respondents during the period July to December 2019.

While falls were shown across the majority of crime types, this reduction was driven by significant decreases in TCSEW theft offences, which fell to half the level estimated by the pre-lockdown average (604,000 offences). This decrease included a 73% fall in “other theft of personal property” (to 34,000 offences) and a 72% fall in domestic burglary (to 33,000 offences). Although not statistically significant at the 95% confidence level, the survey indicates a rise in computer misuse offences during April and May. We will explore this further in future releases.

For more detailed figures relating to estimates from the TCSEW see [Appendix tables](#).

#### Notes for: Crime estimates from the Telephone-operated Crime Survey for England and Wales

1. The pre-lockdown two-month average was calculated using data collected via the TCSEW on crimes reported to have been experienced by respondents during the period July to December 2019. Crimes reported in Quarter 1 (Jan to Mar) 2020 were not included in this calculation because of the lockdown restrictions coming into effect in March. TCSEW estimates are not comparable with estimates derived from the face-to-face Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW).

## **6 . Perception and nature of crime during the coronavirus pandemic**

Figures presented in this section relate to findings from a new module of questions included in the Telephone-operated Crime Survey for England and Wales (TCSEW) around perceptions of crime, the police and anti-social behaviour during the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak<sup>1</sup>.

### **Crime is perceived to have fallen since the virus outbreak, while worry about crime remains the same**

Over half of adults aged 18 years and over perceived crime to have fallen in England and Wales since the coronavirus outbreak (56%). However, a lower proportion of people (40%) perceived crime to have fallen in their local area (Figure 5).

## Figure 5: Crime levels were perceived to have fallen nationally but stayed the same locally

England and Wales, based on interviews conducted during May and June 2020

### Figure 5: Crime levels were perceived to have fallen nationally but stayed the same locally

England and Wales, based on interviews conducted during May and June 2020



Source: Office for National Statistics - Telephone-operated Crime Survey for England and Wales

#### Notes:

1. These data are published as Experimental Statistics.

Despite perceiving falls in national crime, the majority of adults reported that there had been no change in their level of worry during the pandemic about either crime in general or fraud (82% and 81%, respectively). However, a higher proportion of adults reported having become more worried about fraud than about crime in general during the pandemic period (16% and 10%, respectively).

## One-fifth of adults experienced or witnessed local anti-social behaviour in the previous three months, while over half witnessed breaches in government restrictions

Around one-fifth of adults (21%) perceived anti-social behaviour (ASB) levels in their local area to have decreased during the pandemic period, while a similar proportion (20%) reported experiencing or witnessing ASB locally in the last three months.

Just over half of adults reported that they had noticed others breaching virus restrictions in their local area since the virus outbreak (51%). Of these, 7% reported the breach to the police. The main reasons for not reporting were that it was considered too trivial (36%) or the police couldn't have done anything (10%).

Provisional data from the [National Police Chiefs' Council \(NPCC\)](#) present Fixed Penalty Notices issued by police in England for breaches of government regulations during the lockdown period. The data show the majority of fines were issued during the month of April and the first two weeks of May, with a reduction as lockdown restrictions have been eased.

## **Public perceptions of police and their response to the coronavirus outbreak were largely positive**

More than two-thirds of adults gave the police a positive rating for the work they were doing in their local area, with just under half saying they were doing a good job (49%) and one-fifth saying they were doing an excellent job (20%). This compared with 6% of adults who said that the police were doing a poor or very poor job.

In addition, 91% of adults were satisfied with the way local police were responding to the coronavirus outbreak (fairly satisfied, 65%; very satisfied, 25%). There was also general support for police powers that could be used to help deal with the outbreak, such as police issuing on-the-spot fines to people they find out of their homes without a good reason (72%) and police-enforced curfews during certain times of the day (67%). The most recent [Opinions and Lifestyle Survey \(OPN\)](#) results covering the period 12 to 16 August 2020 reported that approximately 7 in 10 (69%) adults thought that the police should be very strict or strict in enforcing rules to help reduce the spread of the coronavirus (COVID-19). However, the OPN also found that only 15% of adults think police are very strict or strict in enforcing these rules.

## **Around 1 in 10 children aged 10 to 15 years were reported by parents to have encountered a negative online experience within the previous month.**

Parents with children aged 10 to 15 years living in their households were asked questions on behalf of their child as part of the COVID-19-specific module, in order to collect information on online experiences.

Over half of parents reported that their 10- to 15-year-old was spending five or more hours online at the current time<sup>2</sup> (57%), with more than 1 in 10 children spending nine or more hours online (12%). Despite this, the majority of parents said their child had not had any negative online experiences in the previous month that they were aware of (90%). However, 8% reported that their child had encountered one or more negative online experiences in the last month. This included experiencing nasty messages being sent to them or posted about them online (4%) and other unspecified negative online experiences (6%).

Over one-quarter of parents thought their child was more at risk since the virus outbreak from having a negative online experience (28%), while the majority felt the level of risk had stayed the same (69%).

For more detailed figures relating to estimates from the TCSEW see [Appendix tables](#).

### **Note for: Perception and nature of crime during the coronavirus pandemic**

1. The reference period referred to in the module includes but is not specific to the lockdown period and is therefore open to some interpretation by respondents as to when the start of the outbreak was.
2. "At the current time" refers to the window in which respondents were interviewed, in this case during the months of May and June 2020.

## 7 . Crime data

[Coronavirus and Crime in England and Wales: Appendix tables](#)

Dataset | Released 26 August 2020

Monthly data from police recorded crime and data from the Telephone-operated Crime Survey for England and Wales (TCSEW) on crime experienced by adults aged 18 years and over and perceptions and nature of crime during the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.

## 8 . Glossary

### Computer misuse

Computer misuse is when fraudsters hack or use computer viruses or malware to disrupt services, obtain information illegally or extort individuals or organisations.

### Criminal damage

Criminal damage results from any person who without lawful excuse destroys or damages any property belonging to another, intending to destroy or damage any such property or being reckless as to whether any such property would be destroyed or damaged.

### Fraud

Fraud involves a person dishonestly and deliberately deceiving a victim for personal gain of property or money, or causing loss or risk of loss to another. The majority of incidents fall under the legal definition of “Fraud by false representation” – where a person makes a representation that they know to be untrue or misleading (for example, banking and payment card frauds and dating scams). Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW) estimates cover a broad range of fraud offences, including attempts, involving a loss and incidents not reported to the authorities.

### Overall theft offences

CSEW theft offences include all personal and household crime where items are stolen, including theft from the person; other theft of personal property; domestic burglary; vehicle-related theft; and bicycle theft.

### Robbery

Robbery is an offence in which force, or the threat of force, is used either during or immediately prior to a theft or attempted theft. Mugging is an informal term for robbery. In this bulletin, we use the term “robbery”.

### Violent crime

Violent crime covers a range of offence types from minor assaults, such as pushing and shoving that result in no physical harm, to murder. This includes offences where the victim was intentionally stabbed, punched, kicked, pushed or jostled, as well as offences where the victim was threatened with violence, regardless of injury.

More information and further definitions can be found in the “offence type” section of the [User guide to crime statistics for England and Wales](#).

## 9 . Measuring the data

In response to the developing coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, we are working to ensure that we continue to publish vital statistics on crime during the lockdown period. For more information, please see [COVID-19 and the production of statistics](#).

We have reviewed all data published as part of our Crime in England and Wales quarterly bulletins in response to the coronavirus pandemic. As a result of the pause to face-to-face interviews, data published as part of future releases will be based on the Telephone-operated Crime Survey for England and Wales (TCSEW). This will allow us to continue to publish crime estimates and related data. This will protect the delivery and quality of our remaining outputs as well as ensuring we can respond to new demands as a direct result of the coronavirus.

An accompanying [blog](#) published alongside this bulletin details some of the challenges that we have faced in producing estimates at this time. Further information on our current plans for improving crime statistics over the next 12 months are outlined in our [Improving crime statistics for England and Wales](#) update.

### Telephone-operated Crime Survey for England and Wales (TCSEW)

Face-to-face interviews for the Crime Survey in England and Wales (CSEW) were suspended on 17 March 2020 as part of efforts to minimise social contact and stop the spread of the coronavirus (COVID-19). As a consequence, we designed a new survey to be conducted via telephone to continue measuring crime during the coronavirus pandemic period and whilst face-to-face interviews are not possible. The TCSEW was launched on 20 May 2020 and will run on a continuous basis until at least January 2021.

The TCSEW operation closely replicates that of the face-to-face CSEW, however because of restrictions on interview length<sup>1</sup> and sensitivities around the topic, the TCSEW contains a reduced number of questions. These include questions about respondents’ experiences of a broad range of offences over the previous 12 months, as well as a short module specific to the pandemic period relating to their perceptions of crime, the police and anti-social behaviour. Questions in this module are likely to be adapted over the coming months as circumstances change.

Following ethical guidelines, questions from the more sensitive self-completion modules of the face-to-face CSEW are not included in the telephone-operated survey. As a result, estimates are not available in relation to sexual assault, partner abuse, abuse during childhood, and the preferred measure of domestic abuse and domestic violence. Data collected on domestic violence in the TCSEW will likely be affected by similar limitations to the face-to-face domestic violence measure and any findings will need to be interpreted with caution. Because of the smaller sample size for the TCSEW in this release, we were unable to publish statistics on domestic violence at this time. We plan to publish an article focusing on domestic abuse during the pandemic, including data on domestic violence from the TCSEW, alongside our [annual domestic abuse publication](#) later this year.

The sample frame for the TCSEW has been formed from re-contacting CSEW respondents interviewed in the previous two years<sup>2</sup> who had agreed to be re-contacted for research purposes and had supplied a valid telephone number. Because of this time interval, all respondents are aged 18 years and over rather than aged 16 years and over.

As the number of respondents agreeing to be re-contacted is limited, we are estimating a final representative sample of around 3,000 interviews per month. Because of the nature of the sampling frame, we have designed the TCSEW as a panel survey and plan to re-interview respondents who agree to take part at three-month intervals.

The TCSEW does not collect data from children aged 10 to 15 years, as the procedure for conducting telephone interviews with more than one member of a household would be complex and add considerable time to the length of the household interview. Therefore, we are unable to provide our standard estimates of crime against children during the lockdown period. However, we have included proxy measures for parents with 10- to 15-year-olds living in their households as part of the COVID-19-specific module in order to collect information on online activities in children. Where there is more than one child aged 10 to 15 years living in the household, the respondent is asked to answer in relation to the child with the most recent birthday.

The initial estimates presented in this supplementary bulletin are based on 6,470 interviews which were conducted over a six-week period from 20 May to 30 June 2020. For this publication, we have presented estimates for the two-month lockdown period, April and May 2020, and compared these to a two-month average calculated using crime data for the pre-pandemic period of July to December 2019. Crimes reported in Quarter 1 (Jan to Mar) 2020 were not included in this calculation because of the lockdown restrictions coming into effect in March. We plan to use TCSEW data in our future quarterly bulletins, [Crime in England and Wales](#), and will aim to provide information on crimes experienced by respondents in a twelve-month reporting period as well as crime estimates for specific periods of time, such as the lockdown period. The sample size on which these quarterly estimates are produced will however be substantially lower than the standard CSEW sample, with a reduction from 35,000 cases to around 9,000 cases.

## Police recorded crime

Police recorded crime data are supplied to us by the Home Office, who are responsible for the collation of recorded crime data supplied by the 43 territorial police forces of England and Wales<sup>3</sup>, plus the British Transport Police. These data are supplied to the Home Office on a monthly basis for each crime within the [notifiable offence list](#).

For the purposes of this release, data on police recorded crime have been provided in a monthly format to enable comparisons to be made over the pandemic period. The recorded crime figures are collated via a live administrative system that are continually being updated as forces submit data. The data represents a “snapshot” of the live database taken on 5 June 2020 (for data up to the end of March 2020) and 20 July 2020 (for data relating to April and May 2020).

The data for the months of April and May 2020 have not undergone the same revisions and reconciliation processes that would normally have been undertaken by police forces and the Home Office prior to publication of our standard quarterly bulletins. Only high-level crime categories are presented for England and Wales as a whole. Figures may differ slightly from those published in subsequent bulletins for the same period, although this does not mean that the figures previously published were inaccurate at the time that they were reported.

In addition, although reductions in crime are likely to have been influenced by the lockdown, some differences may be the result of normal monthly variation within the crime types. Changes in police recording and police activity in response to the lockdown are also likely to have contributed, along with changes in the reporting of crime to the police. Police recorded crime data are not designated as [National Statistics](#). Details of concerns over the quality of these data are in the UK Statistics Authority [most recent assessment report](#).

More information on both these sources can be found in the [User guide to crime statistics for England and Wales](#).

## Notes for: Measuring the data

1. On average the face-to-face survey lasted around 45 minutes whereas the industry standard for telephone surveys is a maximum of 30 minutes in length.
2. Between 1 May 2018 and 29 February 2020 inclusive.
3. Police recorded crime data for Greater Manchester Police are not included in this release because of issues with their data supply following the implementation of new IT systems.

# 10 . Strengths and limitations

## Police recorded crime

Police recorded crime has wider offence coverage and population coverage than the Telephone-operated Crime Survey for England and Wales (TCSEW). It is the primary source of local crime statistics and is a good measure of offences that are well-reported to and well-recorded by the police, as well as lower volume crimes (for example, homicide). In addition, the time lag between occurrence of crime and reporting results tends to be short, providing an indication of emerging trends.

On the other hand, police recorded crime excludes offences that are not reported to, or not recorded by, the police and does not include less serious offences dealt with by magistrates' courts (for example, motoring offences). Trends can be influenced by changes in recording practices or police activity as well as public reporting of crime, making it difficult to make long-term comparisons. There are also concerns about the quality of recording and that crime is not recorded consistently across police forces.

Following the implementation of a new IT system in July 2019, Greater Manchester Police (GMP) have been unable to provide police recorded crime data since that time, and data for GMP have been excluded from all police recorded crime data and tables presented in this bulletin.

Data on police recorded crime have been provided in a monthly format. These data may be subject to revision in future quarterly releases.

## Telephone-operated Crime Survey for England and Wales (TCSEW)

The TCSEW sample interviewed each month has been designed to be as representative and accurate as possible given practical limitations such as time and cost constraints. The survey covers crimes not reported to the police and is not affected by changes in police recording practice; therefore, it is a reliable measure of long-term trends. It is also important to note that because of the change in survey mode, from face-to-face to telephone interviews, it is not possible to compare estimates in this publication with previous findings from the CSEW.

The TCSEW does not cover crimes against businesses and those not resident in households (for example, residents of institutions and visitors). Headline estimates exclude offences that are difficult to estimate robustly (such as sexual offences) or that have no victim who can be interviewed (for example, homicides and drug offences). In addition, the survey is subject to error associated with sampling and respondents recalling past events. Potential time lag between occurrence of the crime and survey data collection means that the survey is not a good measure of emerging trends.

It is also important to consider differing translation by respondents of the reference period referred to in the TCSEW questions. Respondents are asked to consider experiences and perceptions "since the start of the virus outbreak". This includes but is not specific to the lockdown period and respondents' interpretation of the starting point of the pandemic may differ. Furthermore, throughout the developing coronavirus pandemic, government restrictions and regulations have been continually changing, and this will affect, and impact interpretation of, responses over time.

Results from sample surveys are always estimates, not precise figures. This can have an impact on how changes in the estimates should be interpreted, especially for short-term comparisons. As the number of people available in the sample gets smaller, the variability of the estimates that we can make from that sample size gets larger. Because of the relatively small sample size for the TCSEW, estimates for less frequently occurring crime types will be less reliable and prone to more volatility than for larger aggregated crime totals, making it difficult to detect short-term trends.



In general, changes in the numbers (and especially the rates) reported in this bulletin between two-month periods are small and are not usually greater than the level that can be explained by sampling variability. Short-term movements in reported rates should be considered alongside longer-term patterns in the series and corresponding movements in other sources to give a fuller picture.

Following a methodological change to the handling of repeat victimisation in the CSEW, victim incident counts for each crime type have been capped at the 98th percentile. For more information see [Improving victimisation estimates derived from the Crime Survey for England and Wales](#).

## 11 . Related links

### [Guide to finding crime statistics](#)

Methodology | Released 17 July 2020

A guide that directs you on where best to find different crime statistics.

### [Crime in England and Wales: year ending March 2020](#)

Bulletin | Released 17 July 2020

Crime against households and adults, also including data on crime experienced by children, and crimes against businesses and society.