

Compendium

Violent Crime and Sexual Offences - Weapons

Findings from the 2013/14 Crime Survey for England and Wales and police recorded crime over the same period on violent crime and sexual offences.



Contact:
John Flatley
crimestatistics@ons.gsi.gov.uk

Release date:
12 February 2015

Next release:
To be announced

Table of contents

1. [Correction](#)
2. [Summary](#)
3. [Offences involving the use of firearms: Introduction](#)
4. [Prevalence and trends in firearms](#)
5. [Individual weapon types: Non air-weapons](#)
6. [How firearms were used](#)
7. [Injuries sustained in offences involving firearms](#)
8. [Types of offences where firearms are used](#)
9. [Geographical distribution of firearm offences](#)
10. [Firearm offences by victim characteristics](#)
11. [Offences involving knives or sharp instruments: Introduction](#)
12. [Prevalence and trends in knives and sharp instruments](#)
13. [Geographical distribution of offences involving knives or sharp instruments](#)
14. [Hospital admissions for assault with knives or sharp instruments](#)
15. [References](#)
16. [Background notes](#)

1 . Correction

20 February 2015 at 4:00pm

After identifying an error in published tables a minor revision has been made to this release. The error relates to numbers and rates of firearm offences for the following police force areas: Kent, Humberside, West Yorkshire, Derbyshire, Lancashire, and Devon and Cornwall.

Revisions have been made to reference tables 3.01-3.14 (within reference table 02. Appendix Tables – Focus on Violent Crime and Sexual Offences 2013/14), as well as figures 3.1, 3.2, 3.4-3.8 and table 3.2 in the statistical bulletin (also contained in reference table 01. Bulletin Tables – Focus on Violent Crime and Sexual Offences 2013 /14).

2 . Summary

This chapter presents analyses of offences involving weapons recorded by the police in 2013/14, specifically of firearms and knives or other sharp instruments. The firearms data collection covers any notifiable offence involving firearms while coverage of the knives or sharp instruments data is limited to seven of the most serious violent and sexual offences.

- In 2013/14, there were 7,709 offences in which firearms were involved, a 5% decrease compared with 2012 /13. Offences involving knives or sharp instruments also fell by 2% between 2012/13 and 2013/14 (to 25,972)
- Firearms continue to be involved in a small proportion of total police recorded crime (0.2%), while the proportion of selected violent and sexual offences involving a knife or sharp instrument was 6% in 2013/14, showing little change since 2010/11
- There were 29 fatalities resulting from offences involving firearms in 2013/14; 1 fewer than the previous year and the lowest figure since 1980 (when there were 24 fatalities)
- People aged between 15 and 34 made up a disproportionate number of those of seriously or fatally injured from offences involving firearms (77% of the total, while constituting just 26% of the population as a whole)
- Of the 25,972 offences involving a knife or sharp instrument, 11,928 (46%) were used in a robbery and 11,910 (46%) as part of assault with injury or assault with intent to cause serious harm offences
- There were 200 homicides involving a knife or sharp instrument in 2013/14, 5 more than the previous year (195)

3 . Offences involving the use of firearms: Introduction

Information is available from the police on whether a firearm is used during any recorded notifiable offence ¹. If a firearm had been used, the Home Office receive additional data about the circumstances of that offence ².

'Offences involving firearms' encompass any notifiable offence recorded by the police where a firearm has been fired, used as a blunt instrument or been used as a threat. Firearm possession offences, where the firearm has not been used in the course of another offence, are not included in this analysis ³.

The different types of firearms included in this section mirror those covered by the Firearms Act 1968 and the associated amendments to the Act. These are:

- Firearms that use a controlled explosion to fire a projectile. This category includes handguns, shotguns and rifles. These types of weapon are often used in more serious offences, and tend to account for most of the fatalities and more serious injuries that arise.
- Imitation firearms. This category includes replica weapons, as well as low-powered weapons which fire small plastic pellets, such as BB guns and soft air weapons. While injuries can occur from offences involving these weapons, they are less common and tend to be less serious.
- Air weapons. The majority of offences which involve air weapons relate to criminal damage. While air weapons can cause serious injury (and sometimes fatalities), by their nature they are less likely to do so than firearms that use a controlled explosion.

Firearms that use a controlled explosion and imitation firearms are combined for the purposes of some analyses in this section, creating two broad categories: non-air weapons and air weapons.

Although information is collected on the type of weapon used in an offence, it is not always possible to identify the firearm. For example, some imitation weapons are so realistic that they are indistinguishable from a real firearm. The police will record which type of weapon has been used in an offence given the evidence available. The categorisation of the weapon may also depend on descriptions given by victims or witnesses. If the police do not have sufficient information about the type of firearm used in the offence (for example, if the weapon was not recovered), or if the firearm was concealed during the offence, then the police will record the weapon as an "unidentified firearm".

In accordance with the Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007, statistics based on police recorded crime data have been assessed against the Code of Practice for Official Statistics and found not to meet the required standard for designation as National Statistics. The full assessment report can be found on the [UK Statistics Authority](#) website.

Notes for offences involving the use of firearms: Introduction

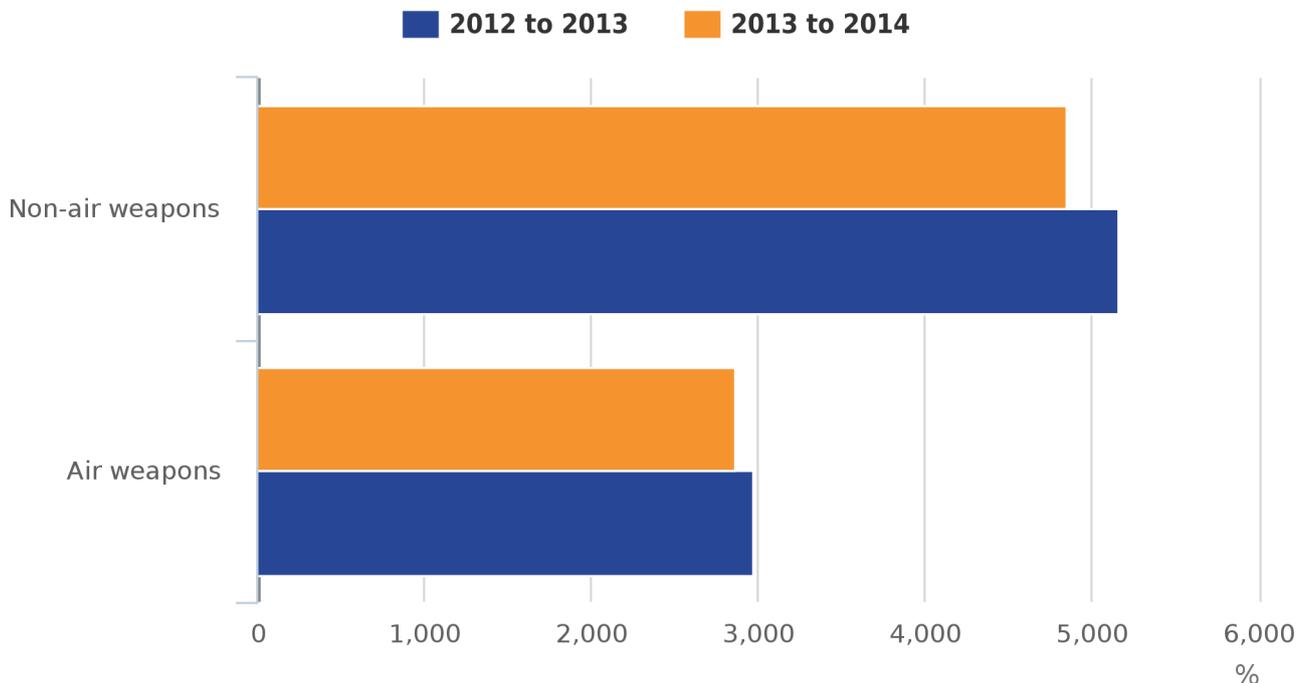
1. Notifiable offences cover those that could possibly be tried by a jury (these include some less serious offences, such as minor theft that would not usually be dealt with in this way) plus a few additional closely related offences, such as assault without injury.
2. The overall firearm offence figures reported here differ from those in the Crime in England and Wales quarterly releases for two reasons; firstly because these data contain air weapon offences, whereas the quarterly releases exclude these offences, and secondly because data in the quarterly releases are provisional.
3. Such offences are published quarterly in [Appendix table A4 \(417.5 Kb Excel sheet\)](#) in the Crime in England and Wales release for possession.

4 . Prevalence and trends in firearms

Offences involving firearms make up a small proportion of overall recorded crime. In 2013/14, they were used in approximately 0.2% of all police recorded offences ([Appendix table 3.01 \(1.42 Mb Excel sheet\)](#)). More detail on the use of firearms as a proportion of selected offence types is included later in this chapter.

In 2013/14, the police recorded 7,709 offences involving a firearm, a fall of 5% compared with the previous year (8,135 offences). There were falls in both air weapon (4%) and non-air-weapon (6%) offences (Figure 3.1; [Appendix Table 3.02 \(1.42 Mb Excel sheet\)](#)). The fall in firearm offences was greater than that seen for overall police recorded crime, which fell by less than 1% over the same period. However, the fall in firearm offences was not as great as seen in recent years, with annual falls in the previous three years (2010/11, 2011/12, 2012/13) being 13%, 16% and 15% respectively (Figure 3.2).

Figure 3.1: Offences recorded by the police in which firearms were reported to have been used, 2012/13 and 2013/14



Source: Police recorded crime, Home Office

Notes:

1. Police recorded crime data are not designated as National Statistics.

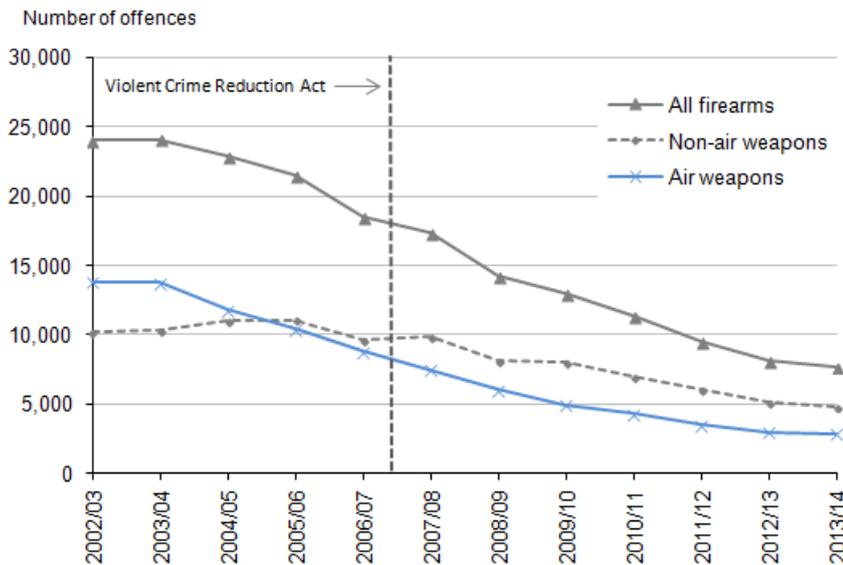
The smaller percentage fall in offences involving firearms this year compared with falls in the previous three years is likely in part to be due to improvements in the police recording of crime. This follows the inspections of forces by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMIC), the [Public Administration Select Committee](#) (PASC) inquiry into crime statistics, and the UK Statistics Authority's decision to remove the National Statistics designation from recorded crime. This renewed focus is likely to have led to improved compliance with the NCRS, contributing to the increase in overall police recorded violence. However, offences involving firearms are likely to have been less affected by these changes in recording practices than overall police recorded crime. For more information on these recording changes see the Overview chapter.

This effect of these recording changes is particularly apparent in violence against the person offences. The overall level of violence against the person recorded by the police in the year ending March 2014 showed a 6% increase compared with the previous year. In contrast, violence against the person offences involving firearms has continued to fall, by 9% over the same time period ([Appendix Table 3.08 \(1.42 Mb Excel sheet\)](#)). However, this fall in violence against the person offences was less than the 18% fall seen in the previous year.

The number of offences involving firearms has been falling year-on-year since its peak in 2003/04 (when 24,094 offences were recorded) and the latest figure of 7,709 offences represents a fall of more than two-thirds (68%) since then (Figure 3.2).

- The number of offences involving air weapons has fallen by 10,955 offences (79%) since 2002/03, when the NCRS was introduced. However, the 4% fall between 2012/13 and 2013/14 was the lowest annual decline for nine years.
- Non-air weapon offences have fallen by more than half since 2002/03 (a decrease of 5,406 offences). Non-air weapon offences peaked later (at 11,088 offences in 2005/06) than those involving air weapons. The latest 6% decrease in non-air weapons follows three years of annual falls in the range of 13% to 14%.

Figure 3.2: Offences recorded by the police in which firearms were reported to have been used, 2002/03 to 2013/14



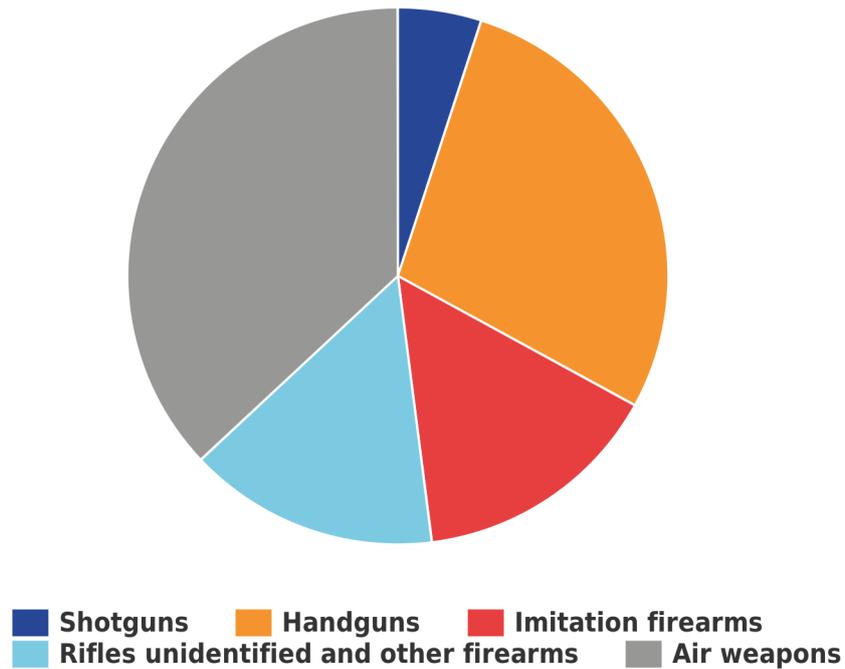
The type of weapon used in offences involving firearms has changed over the last decade. In 2003/04, non-air weapons constituted 43% of offences involving firearms while 57% were air weapons. By 2009/10, the proportion of offences involving non-air weapons increased to 62%, with a corresponding fall in air weapons to 38%. Since 2009/10, the proportions have remained similar. This reflects the relatively steeper fall in air weapon offences over this time period compared with non-air weapons ([Appendix Table 3.03 \(1.42 Mb Excel sheet\)](#)).

5. Individual weapon types: Non air-weapons

Figure 3.3 presents the proportion of different weapon types used in firearm offences in 2013/14 and Figure 3.4 shows: trends in individual categories of non-air weapons since 2002/03. The charts show:

- In 2013/14, handguns were used in 28% (2,130) of offences involving firearms, making them the most commonly used firearm after air weapons. Imitation weapons were used in 15% (1,139) of offences involving firearms, while in 9% (690) of offences the type of firearm used was unidentified.
- Over the longer term, there have been steep falls in all of these weapon types. Offences involving handguns have fallen from a peak of 5,549 in 2002/03 to 2,130 in 2013/14, a fall of 62%. The number of imitation weapon offences peaked later, at 3,373 in 2004/05, but have since fallen by two-thirds (66%) to 1,139 in 2013/14, with most of the fall occurring by 2008/09. The number of offences involving unidentified firearms also peaked in 2004/05 (1,500 offences) and have fallen by more than half (54%) since then, to 698 in 2013/14.
- In 2013/14, shotguns were used in 5% (385) of offences involving firearms recorded by police. The trend in shotgun offences differs to that for other non-air weapons, with falls not seen until recent years. Between 2004/05 and 2010/11, there were around 600 shotgun offences per year. Since 2010/11, there has been a 37% fall in these offences, to the 383 recorded in 2013/14.

Figure 3.3: Offences recorded by the police in which firearms were reported to have been used, by type of principal weapon, 2013/14

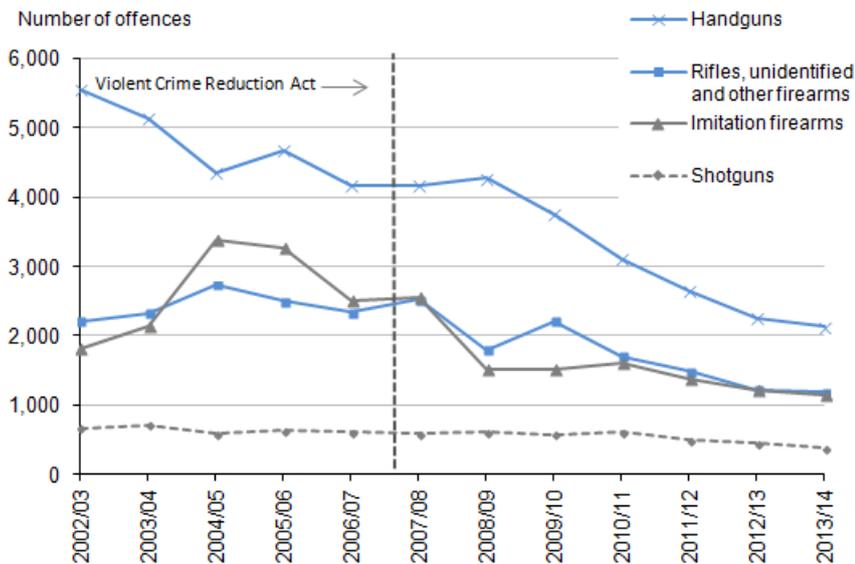


Source: Police recorded crime, Home Office

Notes:

1. Police recorded crime data are not designated as National Statistics.

Figure 3.4: Offences recorded by the police in which non-air weapons were reported to have been used, by type of principal weapon, 2002/03 to 2013/14



In contrast to the national picture, the proportion of offences involving handguns is higher in some of the major metropolitan areas. For example, handguns were used in over 50% of offences involving a firearm recorded by the Metropolitan, Merseyside and West Midlands police force areas while air weapons were used in a small minority of offences (less than 10% in each force, data not shown).

6 . How firearms were used

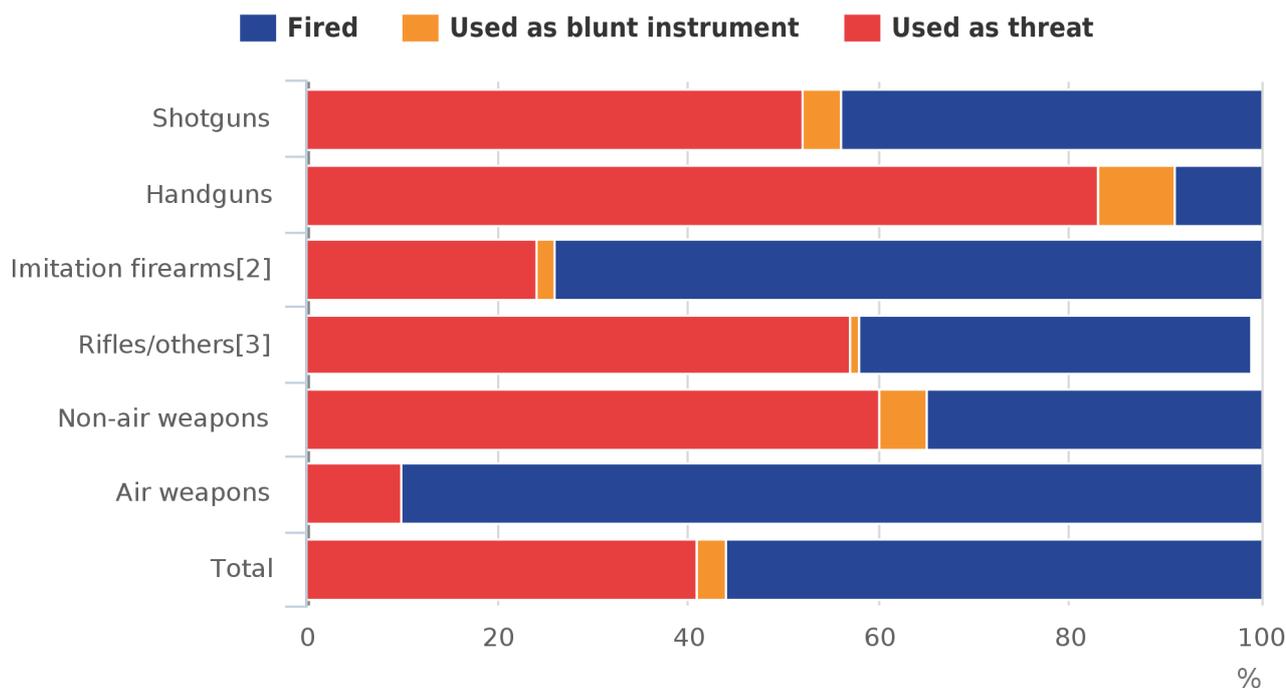
The data collection on offences involving firearms includes information on how the weapon was used; either being fired, used as a threat or as a blunt instrument. In 2013/14, of the 7,709 offences recorded by the police, the firearm was ([Appendix Table 3.03 \(1.42 Mb Excel sheet\)](#)):

- Fired in 56% of cases (4,297 offences).
- Used as a threat in 41% of cases (3,182 offences).
- Used as a blunt instrument in 3% of cases (230 offences).

The likelihood of a weapon being fired varied considerably by weapon type (Figure 3.5; [Appendix Table 3.03 \(1.42 Mb Excel sheet\)](#)):

- Air weapons were fired in 90% of the 2,867 offences in which they were involved (2,588 offences) and were therefore the most likely weapon to be fired of the main firearm categories. This may reflect that air weapon offences largely do not come to the attention of police unless the weapon is fired and that air weapons are less likely to be used in more serious offences compared with some other weapon types.
- In contrast, handguns were fired in 9% of the 2,130 offences in which they were used (197 offences). In 83% of offences they were used a threat and in 8% as a blunt instrument.
- Shotguns were used in 385 recorded offences and, of these, were fired and used to threaten in similar proportions (44% and 52% respectively).
- Overall, in 3% of offences where a firearm was used it was used as a blunt instrument (230 offences).

Figure 3.5: Offences recorded by the police in which firearms were reported to have been used, by type of principal weapon and weapon usage, 2013/14



Source: Police recorded crime, Home Office

Notes:

1. Police recorded crime data are not designated as National Statistics.
2. Imitation firearms include weapons such as BB guns and soft air weapons, which can fire small plastic pellets at low velocity.
3. Rifles/others includes starting guns, supposed/type unknown, prohibited firearms (including CS gas) and other firearms.

Between 2002/03 and 2008/09, there was a steady downward trend in the proportion of incidents in which a weapon was fired. In 2004/05, firearms were fired in 70% of offences in which they were involved; by 2008/09 the proportion had fallen to 56% ([Appendix table 3.03 \(1.42 Mb Excel sheet\)](#)). This change is largely due to the fall in offences involving air weapons, which have fallen by a greater percentage than offences involving non-air weapons. Air weapons have consistently been more likely to be fired in an offence in which they were involved (in around 80-90% of offences) compared with non-air weapons.

7 . Injuries sustained in offences involving firearms

In 2013/14, around one fifth (18%) of all recorded offences involving firearms resulted in injury, a similar proportion to each year since 2002/03 ([Appendix table 3.05 \(1.42 Mb Excel sheet\)](#)). The 1,426 offences involving firearms which resulted in an injury in 2013/14 represents a fall of 15% on the previous year, a greater fall than the 5% drop in all offences involving firearms.

Severity of injuries sustained

Injuries sustained as a result of offences involving firearms are graded as being “slight”, “serious” (that is, requiring a stay in hospital or involving fractures, concussion, severe general shock, penetration by a bullet or multiple shot wounds) or “fatal”. In line with the large falls in the number of offences involving firearms recorded by the police since 2002/03, there have been substantial decreases in all types of injury sustained resulting from these offences over this period.

- There were 29 fatalities resulting from firearms offences in 2013/14, this compares with 30 recorded in 2012/13 and is less than half the number recorded in 2002/03 (81). While data on firearm offences cannot be directly compared prior to the introduction of the NCRS, the 29 fatalities in the last year represents the lowest number since 1980, when 24 fatalities were recorded. As in previous years, fatal injuries continue to constitute less than 1% of the total number of firearm offences.
- Serious and slight injuries have both fallen by approximately two-thirds between 2002/03 and 2013/14 (serious injuries from 572 to 207; slight injuries from 3,903 to 1,190). Serious injuries have remained at around 3% of total firearm offences and slight injuries have fluctuated between 14% and 21% since 2002/03.

Injuries to police officers

It is also possible to identify how many victims were on-duty or off-duty police officers. In general, the number of injuries sustained by police officers as a result of offences involving firearms has been falling since 2007/08 (with the exception of the increase between 2008/09 and 2009/10). Between 2002/03 and 2013/14, five police officers suffered fatal injuries as a result of offences involving firearms (Table 3.1).

Since 2004/05, 54% of offences where a police officer sustained a serious or slight injury were committed with CS gas or pepper spray. This reflects the fact that Police Officers in an operational role carry CS gas spray and in some offences this has been used against the officer.

Table 3.1: Offences recorded by the police in which firearms were reported to have been used, in which a police officer on duty was injured by a firearm (excluding air weapons), by type of injury, 2002/03 to 2013 /14

England and Wales

Year	Total	Fatal injury	Number of offences	
			Serious injury ²	Slight injury
2002/03	12	-	1	11
2003/04	14	1	3	10
2004/05	23	-	2	21
2005/06	23	1	6	16
2006/07	21	-	3	18
2007/08	24	1	3	20
2008/09	9	-	1	8
2009/10	17	-	1	16
2010/11	9	-	1	8
2011/12	8	-	1	7
2012/13	4	2	-	2
2013/14	5	-	1	4

Source: Police recorded crime, Home Office

Notes:

1. Police recorded crime data are not designated as National Statistics
2. A serious injury is one which necessitated a stay in hospital or involves fractures, concussion, severe general shock, penetration by a bullet or multiple shot wounds

Injuries by severity and weapon used

The seriousness of injuries sustained from offences involving firearms vary according to the type of weapon used. This is to be expected given the range of mechanisms and projectiles (e.g. air propulsion/controlled explosion; bullet/pellet) associated with individual weapons and variations in the circumstances and offences in which they are used (Table 3.2, [Appendix table 3.04 \(1.42 Mb Excel sheet\)](#)).

As expected, the use of non-air weapons was much more likely to result in injury than air weapons. Overall, around half of offences in which these weapons were fired resulted in an injury (2% were fatal, 8% were serious and 41% were slight). In contrast, air weapons were the least likely weapon to cause a fatal or serious injury; two fatalities resulted from the use of air weapons and around 2% of offences in which the weapon was fired resulted in serious injury (Table 3.2).

Table 3.2: Offences recorded by the police in which firearms were reported to have been used, by type of firearm and injury sustained when weapon was fired, 2013/14[1]

England and Wales

Weapon type	Number of offences	Fired	Percentages ²			
			Fatal injury	Serious injury ³	Slight injury	No injury
Shotguns	383	44	4	22	10	63
Handguns	2,133	9	9	26	12	53
Imitation firearms ⁴	1,147	74	-	1	50	48
Rifles/others ⁵	1,182	41	0	9	48	42
Non-air weapons	4,845	35	2	8	41	49
Air weapons	2,869	90	0	2	10	88
Total	7,714	56	1	4	23	72

Source: Police recorded crime, Home Office

Notes:

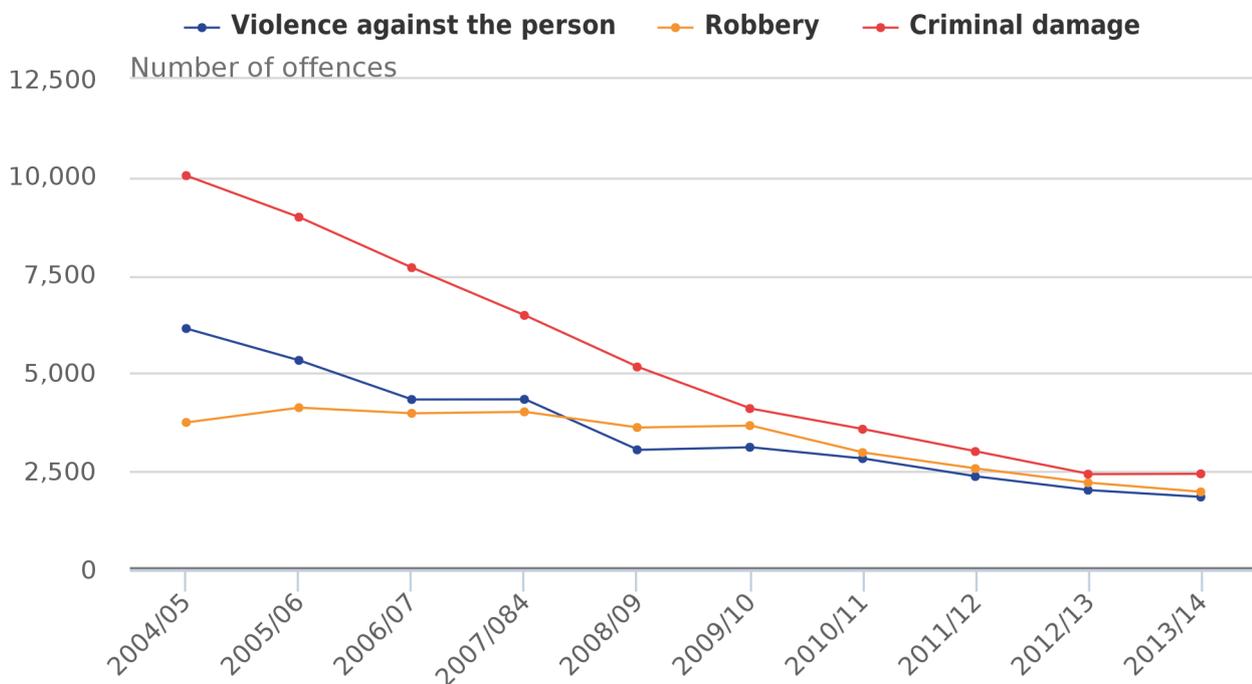
1. Police recorded crime data are not designated as National Statistics
2. Percentages may not sum due to rounding
3. A serious injury is one which necessitated a stay in hospital or involves fractures, concussion, severe general shock, penetration by a bullet or multiple shot wounds
4. Imitation firearms include weapons such as BB guns and soft air weapons, which can fire small plastic pellets at low velocity
5. Includes starting guns, supposed/type unknown, prohibited firearms (including CS gas) and other firearms

8 . Types of offences where firearms are used

The most common offence types in which firearms are used are violence against the person, robbery and criminal damage, together they consistently make up over 80% of firearm offences. Overall, the numbers of violence against the person, robbery and criminal damage offences involving firearms have decreased between 2002/03 and 2013/14 (Figure 3.6, [Appendix table 3.08 \(1.42 Mb Excel sheet\)](#)).

- Violence against the person offences involving firearms have decreased by over two thirds (70%) between 2004/05 (when they peaked) and 2013/14 (from 6,139 to 1,850 offences). The continued decrease is in contrast to overall police recorded violence against the person which increased by 6% between 2012/13 and 2013/14¹.
- The number of robberies involving a firearm remained steady between 2003/04 and 2007/08 at around 4,000 offences a year, before beginning to decline. Since 2009/10, the rate of decline has increased and between 2009/10 and 2013/14 there was a 46% fall in the number of robberies involving a firearm (from 3,663 offences to 1,971). Between 2012/13 and 2013/14 there was a 11% fall in robbery offences involving firearms, mirroring the 11% fall in overall police recorded robbery².
- Criminal damage offences involving firearms have shown the greatest fall over the last decade. Between 2002/03 and 2012/13 the number of recorded offences fell by 78%. However, in the last year there was a very small increase in the number of offences (13) recorded due to an increase in criminal damage offences involving air weapons. This is the first time the number of criminal damage offences has not decreased since the introduction of the NCRS and contrasts with the continued falls in overall criminal damage recorded by police over the same period³.

Figure 3.6: Offences recorded by the police in which firearms were reported to have been used by selected offence type, 2004/05 to 2013/14



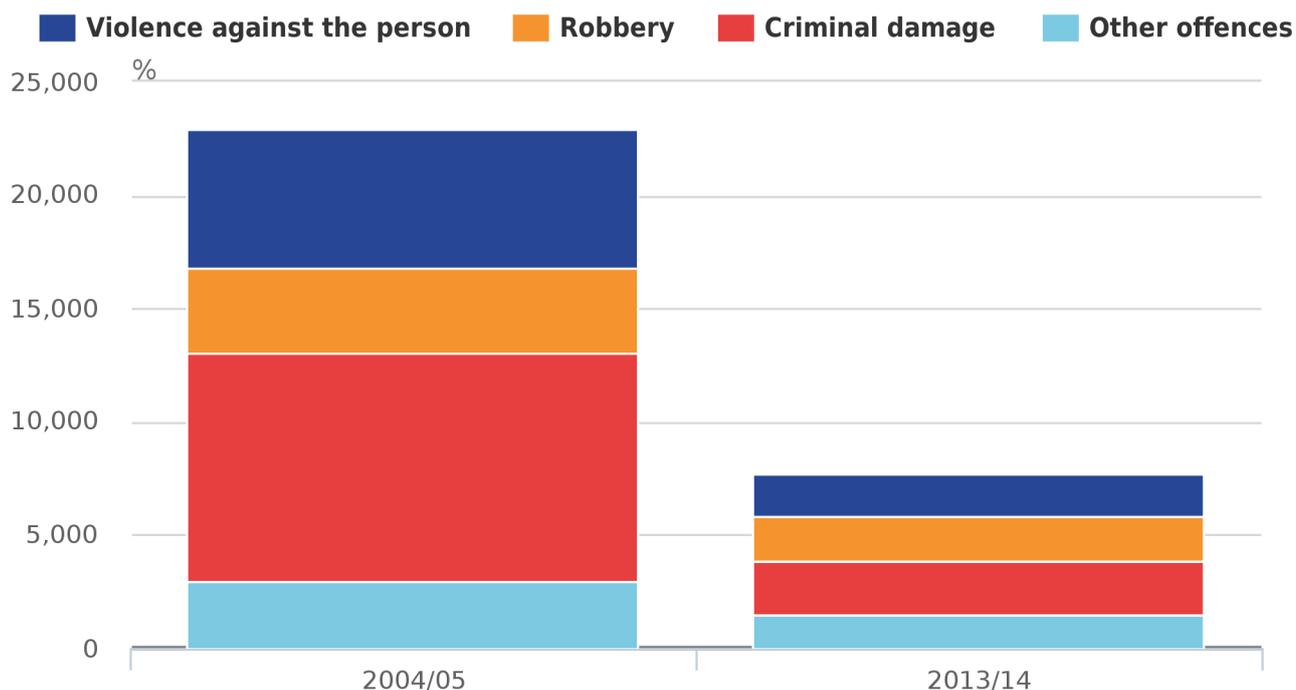
Source: Police recorded crime - Home Office

Notes:

1. Police recorded crime data are not designated as National Statistics
2. Data in chart shown since 2004/05 as air weapon offences for violence against the person prior to this date include public fear alarm or distress and possession of weapon offences

There has also been a change in the types of offences that have involved a firearm over the last decade. While there have been falls in firearm offences for all crime types, Figure 3.7 shows that there has been an increase in the proportion of offences which were robberies (from 16% to 26%) and a corresponding decrease in criminal damage offences (from 44% to 32%, Figure 3.7). [Appendix Table 3.09 \(1.42 Mb Excel sheet\)](#) shows the number of offences involving a firearm by offence type.

Figure 3.7: Offences recorded by the police in which firearms were reported to have been used by selected offence type, 2004/05 and 2013/14



Source: Police recorded crime - Home Office

Notes:

1. Police recorded crime data are not designated as National Statistics.
2. Numbers may not sum to 100 due to rounding.

Robberies involving a firearm

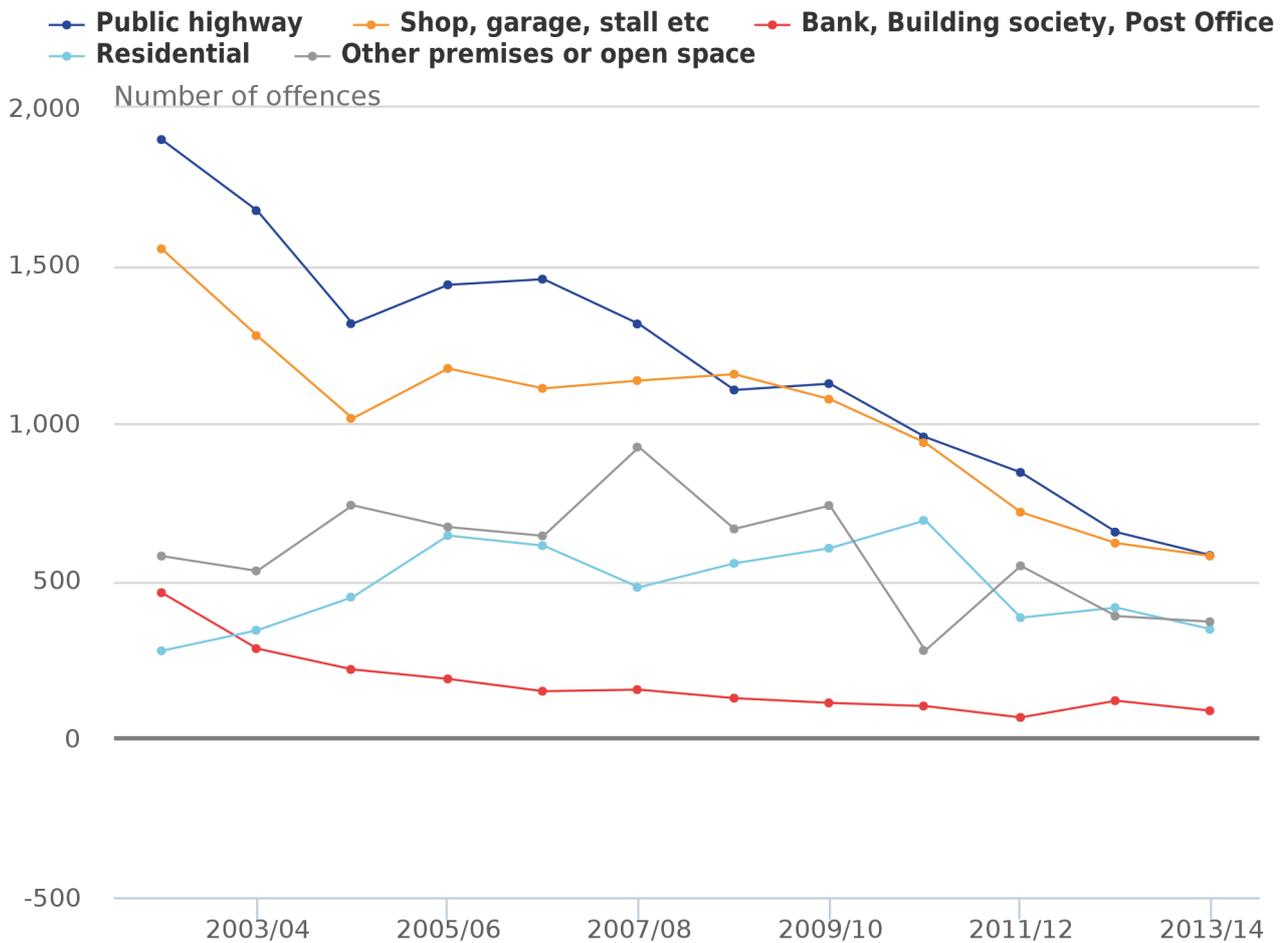
According to police recorded crime figures for 2013/14, around 90% of all robberies were of personal property and the remaining 10% were of business property⁴. However, among robberies involving a firearm, 62% involved personal property and 38% business property in 2013/14. In 2013/14, only 2% of personal robberies involved the use of a firearm, compared with 12% of robbery of business property (data not shown).

Information is available on where the robberies took place. In 2013/14, of the 1,971 recorded robbery offences involving a firearm, almost a third (30%; 581 offences) were committed on public highways, 29% were committed in shops and garages (580 offences) and 18% were committed in a residential location (346 offences, Figure 3.8, [Appendix table 3.10 \(1.42 Mb Excel sheet\)](#)).

- Robberies involving a firearm on public highways and shops and garages have been broadly decreasing since 2002/03, from 3,452 offences in this year to 1,161 in 2013/14.
- Robberies involving a firearm committed in residential premises and ‘other’ areas have fluctuated considerably since 2002/03. The 346 robberies committed on residential premises in 2013/14 is 24% (66 offences) higher than the number recorded in 2002/03 but is well below the 2010/11 peak of 693 offences.
- In 2013/14 the police recorded 90 robberies of banks, building societies and Post Offices which involved a firearm, 25% less than the number recorded in 2012/13 (122 offences) and 80% less than the 2002/03 figure (464 offences).

In 2013/14, 64% of robberies involving firearms were committed with a handgun, 22% involved another type of firearm and in 14% of offences the firearm was unidentified ([Appendix table 3.11 \(1.42 Mb Excel sheet\)](#)).

Figure 3.8: Number of robberies in which firearms were reported to have been used, by location of offence, 2002/03 to 2013/14



Source: Police recorded crime - Home Office

Notes:

1. Police recorded crime data are not designated as National Statistics

Notes for types of offences where firearms are used

1. See the Overview chapter for more detail on the increase in overall police recorded violence.
2. [Crime Statistics, period ending March 2014, Office for National Statistics](#)
3. [Crime Statistics, period ending March 2014, Office for National Statistics](#)
4. See [Appendix table A4 \(417.5 Kb Excel sheet\)](#) in the quarterly crime statistics release for numbers of robbery offences.

9 . Geographical distribution of firearm offences

As in previous years, offences involving the use of non-air weapons (which tend to be used in more serious offences) are geographically concentrated. Around three in every five (57%) offences recorded in 2013/14 occurred in four police force areas: Metropolitan, West Midlands, Greater Manchester and Merseyside, all of which cover large urban areas. In comparison, just over a quarter (27%) of the population of England and Wales reside in the areas covered by these four forces (Figure 3.9, [Appendix table 3.12 \(1.42 Mb Excel sheet\)](#)).

In 2013/14, there were 9 firearm offences per 100,000 people in England and Wales. For the four urban forces mentioned above the rates were¹:

- 19 offences per 100,000 in the Metropolitan police force area
- 19 per 100,000 in the West Midlands police force area
- 15 per 100,000 in the Merseyside police force
- 15 per 100,000 in the Greater Manchester police force area

Figure 3.9: Proportion of firearm offences, excluding air weapons, in four police force areas and the rest of England and Wales, compared with population profile of those forces, 2013/14



Source: Police recorded crime, Home Office, and Mid-2013 population estimates, Office for National Statistics.

Notes:

1. Police recorded crime data are not designated as National Statistics

Notes for geographical distribution of firearm offences

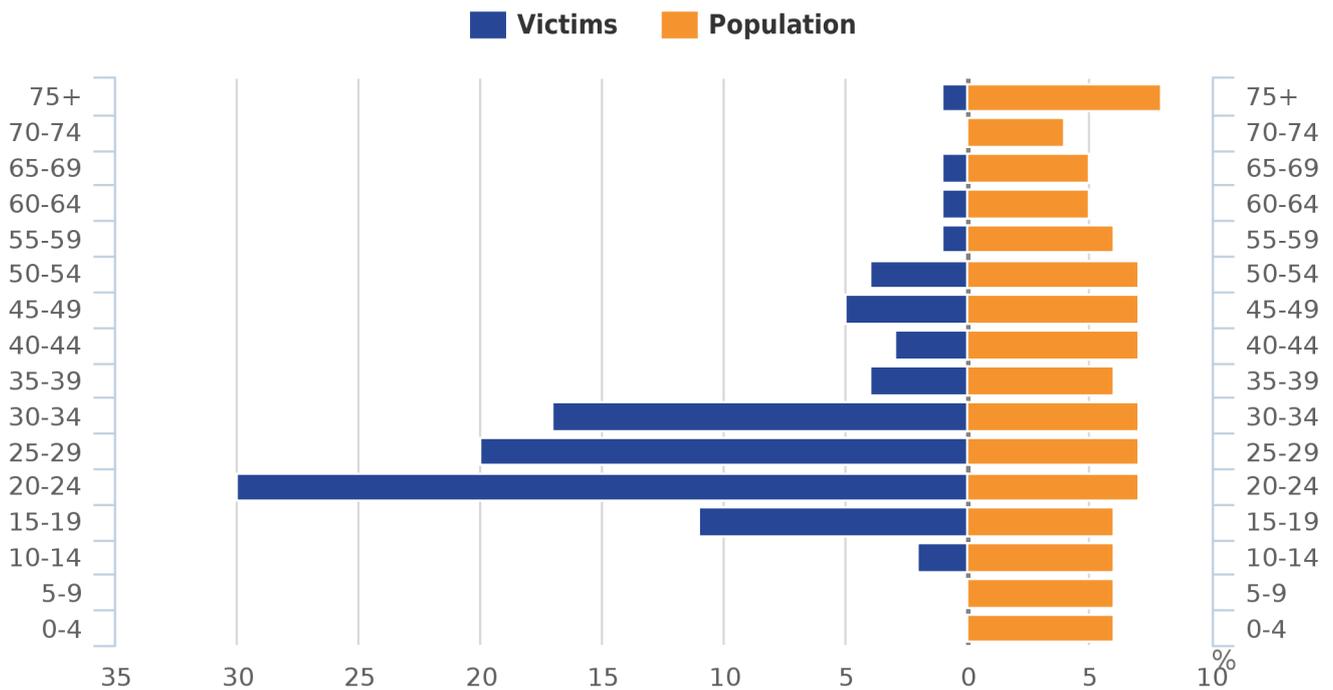
1. Population estimates are based on number of people resident in each police force area while number of offences recorded may include those committed against non-residents, for example people who travel into the city to work. This could partly explain the differences in rates between those areas with large non-resident populations (e.g. cities) and those with lower non-resident populations.

10 . Firearm offences by victim characteristics

As in previous years, in 2013/14 there was variation in the risk of being a victim of an offence involving a non-air weapon by age¹.

- Of the non-air weapon offences in which the age of the victim was known (87% of all instances), 53% of victims were aged between 15 and 34 even though they make up only 26% of the population of England and Wales.
- People aged 60 years and over were less likely to become victims, accounting for 4% of victims of non-air weapon offences but comprising 23% of the population.
- When the analysis is restricted to victims who were seriously or fatally injured (173 victims for whom age was known) the difference is even more pronounced: 15 to 34 year olds formed 77% of victims, while 3% of victims were aged 60 years or over (Figure 3.10).

Figure 3.10: Age profile of fatally and seriously injured firearm victims, excluding air weapons, compared to population profile for England and Wales, 2013/14



Source: Police recorded crime, Home Office, and Mid-2013 population estimates, Office for National Statistics

Notes:

1. Police recorded crime data are not designated as National Statistics.

Of the 4,045 (84%) offences involving non-air weapons in which victim ethnicity was recorded², 66% of victims were White (2,695 offences), 17% were Asian (698), 13% were Black (538) and 3% (124) were from other minority ethnic groups.

By way of comparison, 2012 population estimates (based on the 2011 Census) indicate that 86% of the population of England and Wales were White, 8% were Asian, 3% were Black and the remaining 3% were of other ethnicities. Black and Asian people are therefore over represented and White people under represented as victims of such offences. However, it should be noted that these results have not been age-standardised and there is a relationship between age and being a victim of offences involving firearms. In addition, the age profile of the population varies by ethnicity, for example the Black ethnic group has a younger age profile than White³.

Finally, there are also likely to be important socio-economic factors in offences involving firearms that cannot be examined using police recorded crime data. There is evidence from other studies that suggests that ethnicity is just one of many factors in violent incidents in general. [Leyland and Dundas](#) (2009), for example, investigated Scottish homicides between 1980 and 2005, and concluded that “contextual influences of the neighbourhood of residence might be more important than individual characteristics in determining the victims of assault”.

Notes for firearm offences by victim characteristics

1. Age breakdowns are not available for all air weapons offences.
2. Ethnicity data are based on visual identification by the police.
3. 2011 Census results are published on the ONS website.

11 . Offences involving knives or sharp instruments: Introduction

Seven of the more serious types of offence in the recorded crime data (homicide, threats to kill, assault with injury /assault with intent to cause serious harm, robbery, attempted murder, rape and sexual assault) can be broken down by whether or not a knife or sharp instrument was involved¹. Statistics on offences recorded by the police involving a knife or sharp instrument are also published on a quarterly basis in the Crime in England and Wales release.

Unlike the data for firearms, the police do not provide detailed information at an offence level in this collection. For this reason it is not possible to analyse victim characteristics or the particular type of sharp instrument used.

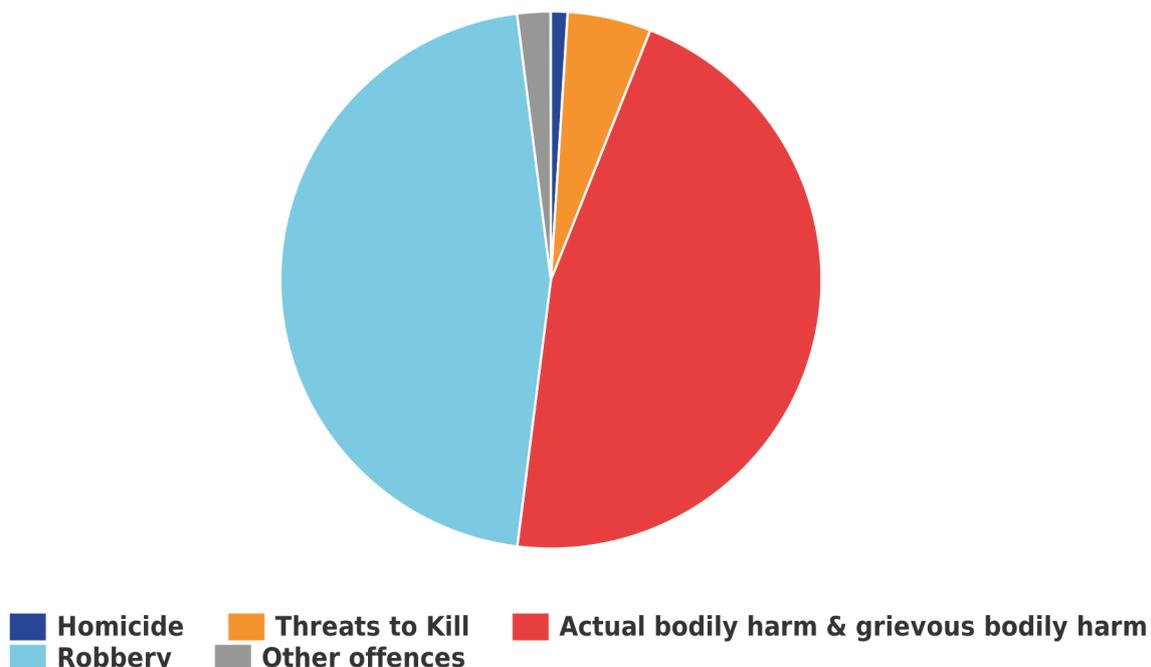
Notes for offences involving knives or sharp instruments: Introduction

1. A sharp instrument is any object that pierces the skin (or in the case of a threat, is capable of piercing the skin), for example a broken bottle.

12 . Prevalence and trends in knives and sharp instruments

In 2013/14, knives or other sharp instruments were involved in a total of 25,972 offences recorded by the police, a decrease of 2% compared with 2012/13 (26,553). By contrast there was a 3% rise in the overall number of these seven selected offences recorded by the police over the same period¹. This 3% rise is in part likely to be due to changes in police recording. See the Overview chapter for further information. The decrease in knife offences was driven by a fall in robbery; all other offences increased over the same period ([Appendix table 3.15 \(1.42 Mb Excel sheet\)](#)). Over 90% of knife or sharp instrument offences were either robbery (11,928 offences) or assault with injury/assault with intent to cause serious harm offences (11,910 offences). Homicides involving a knife or sharp instrument made up around 1% of the total number of knife or sharp instrument offences (Figure 3.11).

Figure 3.11: Offences recorded by police in which a knife or sharp instrument was used, 2013/14



Source: Police recorded crime and Homicide Index, Home Office

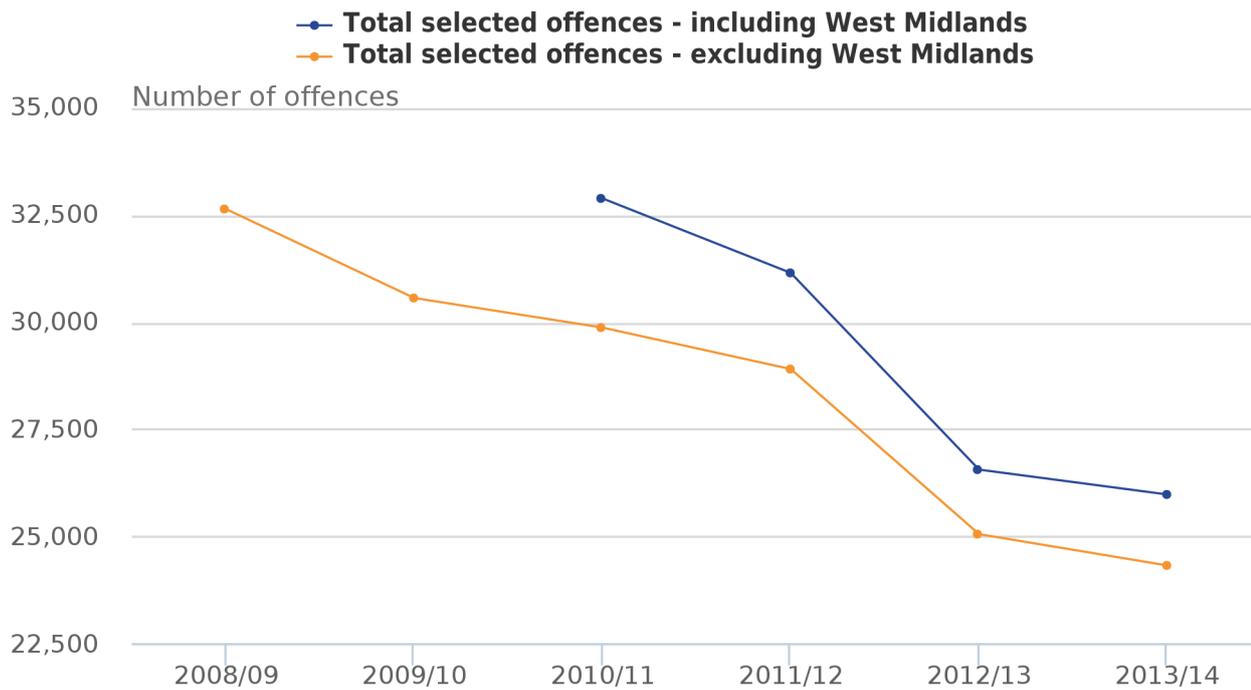
Notes:

1. Police recorded crime data are not designated as National Statistics.
2. 'Other offences' includes: attempted murder, rape and sexual assault.

Before 2010/11, there were known inconsistencies in knife or sharp instrument recording practices between police forces. West Midlands police force included unbroken bottle and glass offences in their returns but have excluded these offences in line with other forces since 2010/11 (see Chapter 5 of the User Guide). As such, the data since 2010/11 are not comparable with those from earlier years. One force (Surrey) continues to record offences involving unbroken bottles and glass in its knife or sharp instrument returns; however the estimated number of such offences is small enough that it is not likely to impact on national trends. Thus, the years from 2010/11 onwards are broadly comparable, while in order to extend the time series further back it is necessary to exclude West Midlands.

In the four years from 2010/11, the number of recorded offences involving a knife or sharp instrument fell 21% from 32,890 to 25,972 (Figure 3.12). Most of this decrease occurred between 2011/12 and 2012/13. The total number of offences for the extended trend is shown in Figure 3.12, while more detail on individual offence trends is given in [Appendix table 3.16 \(1.42 Mb Excel sheet\)](#).

Figure 3.12: Number of police recorded offences involving a knife or sharp instrument, including and excluding West Midlands PFA, 2008/09 to 2013/14



Source: Police recorded crime and Homicide Index, Home Office

Notes:

1. Police recorded crime data are not designated as National Statistics.
2. Offences included in figures are those listed in figure 3.11.

Despite the large reduction over the four years for which there are complete police force area data, the proportion of police recorded crimes for the seven selected offences in which a knife or sharp instrument was used has fallen only slightly, from 7% in 2010/11 to 6% in 2013/14 (data not shown). This is because the equivalent offences that did not involve a knife or sharp instrument have also been falling, but at a slower rate.

Notes for prevalence and trends in knives and sharp instruments

1. [Crime Statistics, period ending March 2014, Office for National Statistics](#)

13 . Geographical distribution of offences involving knives or sharp instruments

The Metropolitan Police Service (MPS) recorded 39% (10,062 offences) of all knife or sharp instrument offences in England and Wales in 2013/14. This figure is equivalent to 120 offences per 100,000 population, almost three times the rate of England and Wales as a whole and around double the rate of Greater Manchester and West Midlands (the forces with the next highest rates). In forces other than the MPS, those covering urban areas typically recorded more offences involving knives or sharp instruments and had higher offence rates per 100,000 population than those covering rural areas ([Appendix table 3.17 \(1.42 Mb Excel sheet\)](#))¹.

Notes for geographical distribution of offences involving knives or sharp instruments

1. Population estimates are based on number of people resident in each police force area while number of offences recorded may include those committed against non-residents, for example people who travel into the city to work. This could partly explain the differences in rates between those areas with large non-resident populations (e.g. cities) and those with lower non-resident populations.

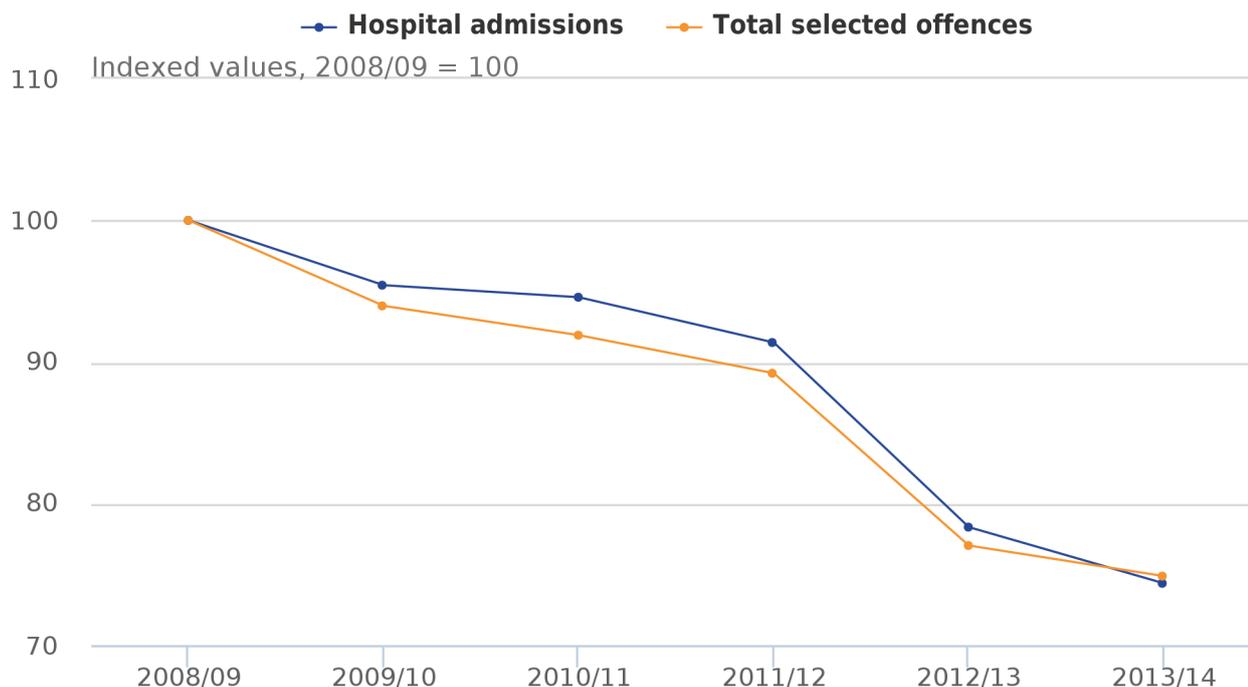
14 . Hospital admissions for assault with knives or sharp instruments

Further information on trends in offences involving knives or sharp instruments for England is available from the NHS Hospital Episodes Statistics¹.

Between 2012/13 and 2013/14, hospital admissions for assault with sharp instruments fell by 5% (195 admissions) to 3,654. This follows a period of steady decline between 2006/07 and 2012/13 from 5,720 to 3,849; a fall of a third (33%) over this period ([Appendix table 3.18 \(1.42 Mb Excel sheet\)](#)).

As expected, the absolute number of recorded knife crime offences is considerably higher than hospital admissions for assault. However, between 2008/09 and 2013/14, trends in hospital admissions for assault with sharp instruments and police recorded offences involving knives or sharp instruments have tracked each other very closely. Both are at their lowest level recorded in the last six years, having fallen sharply between 2011/12 and 2012/13 before a less steep fall in the last year (Figure 3.13).

Figure 3.13: Indexed admissions to NHS hospitals with injuries from assault with a sharp object and police recorded offences involving a knife or sharp instrument, England, 2008/09 to 2013/14



Source: Police recorded crime, Home Office, and Hospital Episode Statistics, NHS Health and Social Care Information Centre

Notes:

1. Police recorded crime data are not designated as National Statistics
2. All Welsh police force areas and West Midlands are excluded

Notes for hospital admissions for assault with knives or sharp instruments

1. [Hospital Episode Statistics](#) records describe episodes (periods) of continuous in-patient care under the same consultant.

15. References

Health and Social Care Information Centre (HSCIC), 2013, '[Provisional Monthly Hospital Episode Statistics for Admitted Patient Care, Outpatients and Accident and Emergency Data – April 2012 to March 2013](#)'

Office for National Statistics, 2014, '[Crime Statistics, period ending March 2014](#)'

Public Administration Select Committee, 2014, '[Caught red handed: Why we can't count on police recorded crime statistics](#)'

UK Statistics Authority, 2014, '[Assessment of compliance with the Code of Practice for Official Statistics: Statistics on Crime in England and Wales](#)'

16. Background notes

1. If you have any queries regarding crime statistics for England and Wales please email crimestatistics@ons.gsi.gov.uk.

2. Details of the policy governing the release of new data are available by visiting www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/assessment/code-of-practice/index.html or from the Media Relations Office email: media.relations@ons.gsi.gov.uk

The United Kingdom Statistics Authority has designated these statistics as National Statistics, in accordance with the Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007 and signifying compliance with the Code of Practice for Official Statistics.

Designation can be broadly interpreted to mean that the statistics:

- meet identified user needs;
- are well explained and readily accessible;
- are produced according to sound methods; and
- are managed impartially and objectively in the public interest.

Once statistics have been designated as National Statistics it is a statutory requirement that the Code of Practice shall continue to be observed.