



CRIME TRENDS DURING COVID-19

June 2020

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The Approach of An Garda Síochána During the Covid-19 Public Health Crisis

In supporting the COVID-19 public health guidelines, An Garda Síochána has adopted a graduated policing response based on its tradition of policing by consent. This has seen members of An Garda Síochána engage, educate, encourage and, as a last resort, enforce.

The high level of cooperation with An Garda Síochána in *Keeping People Safe* during the public health crisis is evidenced by the low levels of COVID-19 related enforcement required compared to the number of interactions with the public. Out of over one million interactions to date, there have been 302 incidents in which the health related powers have been invoked and 2,018 incidents involving pre-existing powers.

The Garda Commissioner has confirmed that An Garda Síochána will continue to operate as a community-based policing service with a focus on protecting the vulnerable.

On 16 March, a contingency roster was implemented, supported by additional re-allocation and early attestation of new Garda members, which provided an immediate uplift of 20% in capacity and visibility.

An Garda Síochána increased high visibility patrols, checkpoints and community engagement, which has seen some significant proactive policing detections in Drugs, Offensive Weapons, Firearms and Searches.

Crime prevention advice is available on our website <https://www.garda.ie/en/Crime-Prevention/>

Covid-19 Related Enforcement and Incidents

From Wednesday 8 April to Saturday 6 June 2020 inclusive:

- Enforcement Powers under the Health Act, 1947 (as amended) have been invoked in 302 incidents.
 - Two of these incidents occurred at the direction of a medical professional.
 - To date, 82 incidents have resulted in at least one charge or summons.
 - In 73 incidents there has been at least one arrest made. In 48 of the 73, the arrest was made under the Health Act, 1947 (as amended).
- There have been an additional 2,018 crime incidents recorded on PULSE associated with COVID-19.
- Anti-Spit Guards have been used in 70 incidents. Three of the 70 incidents involved persons aged under 18 years.
- There have been 93 incidents recorded which indicate spitting/coughing at a Garda member.

Data Sources and Methodology

All data in this report is based on operational information recorded on PULSE as of 8 June 2020. As it is being reported close to real time, it is liable to change.

COVID-19 Related Enforcement and Incident figures are based on confirmed PULSE records following a series of checks and verifications. Graphs for these incidents are based upon the eight weeks from 12 April to 6 June inclusive.

Crime trend charts in this report compare crime volumes for ICCS crime groups/types of interest. Seven day rolling averages are charted for the time periods 1 January to 6 June 2019 and 2020. Additional charts, for the same time periods, are included to show a measure of 'Domestic Calls' and Formal Notifications to Tusla.

Crime counting rules (CCR) have been applied to all figures quoted and graphs unless otherwise noted. A key impact of applying the crime counting rules is that only the most serious incident is reflected in the crime statistics.

See <https://www.cso.ie/en/methods/crime/methodologydocuments/> for further details.

Spikes on particular dates may be driven by a specific event or occurrence, for example, public holidays and festivals. Such spikes are evident in the possession of drugs for personal use (simple possession) and public order offences charts shown below.

Crime Trends - March to May 2020

The COVID-19 policing response has included increased patrols, checkpoints and community engagements. At the same time, changes in public life and the operation of businesses have impacted on opportunities for crime to occur.

Whilst, given the unique circumstances, comparison with other times is difficult, this report provides an overview of the general trends in various crime types. Crimes reported between March and May 2020 are compared to the same months in 2019. The majority of crime groups are lower than the same time last year; a small number of proactive and enforcement driven crime groups are higher.

Crimes Against the Person

Sexual Offences are 38% lower overall with reductions evident in the two higher volume crimes (**Rape of a Male or Female** is 36% lower, **Sexual Assault** (not aggravated) is 39% lower). There was a notable reduction around the same time as the lockdown measures commenced and they have broadly remained lower ever since. It is not possible to determine if changes in the trends in sexual offences are due to changes in occurrence, reporting rates, a combination of the two or other factors.

Attempts/Threats to Murder, Assaults and Harassments are 24% lower. The highest volume crime type in this group is **Minor Assault** which is 30% lower. Similar to Sexual Offences, there was a notable drop during the middle of March. A key difference is the absence of the spikes in daily figures in 2020 which were seen on the bank holidays in 2019 (St. Patrick's Day, Easter weekend and the May Bank Holiday). Spatial analysis indicates that, in Dublin, the traditional city centre hotspot for assaults has dispersed across multiple suburban areas.

Operation Soteria (Assaults in Public Places) commenced on 1 September 2019. The operation was put in place to reduce assaults and the fear of assaults, and to make public places safer. This is a multi-strand operation with a pro-arrest, early investigation and proactive high visibility policing focus. As part of this operation, An Garda Síochána has been working locally with relevant stakeholders such as vintners, local authorities and NGOs to reduce assaults. The operation also aims to reduce knife crime. While there has been a further decrease in the incidence of assaults over the COVID-19 pandemic An Garda Síochána through Operation

SOTERIA is actively engaging with community groups and younger persons/ adults in response to a number of recent high profile public order incidents.

Assault or Obstruction of a Garda/official, Resisting Arrest incidents are 25% higher than the same months last year and is indicative of the reported coughing/ spitting attacks on members of An Garda Síochána and other persons.

Calls and Incidents relating to Domestic Abuse are higher. This is a longer-term trend, in part driven by work to encourage reporting by state and non-state bodies over recent years. They have increased by 25% overall in the year to date. A consistent increase is evident since the end of March/early April, coinciding with the launch of Operation Faoiseamh and the public health travel restrictions. There is a proactive policy to support these vulnerable injured parties. The aim is to make return visits/communications (callbacks) with those who have experienced any incident related to domestic abuse within seven days of the incident. Callback compliance rates have been higher throughout 2020. They have also increased consistently since the beginning of Operation Faoiseamh and the commencement of lockdown measures in the middle of March 2020 (*CCR not applied*). **Breaches of Domestic Violence Order incidents** are 10% higher than the same time last year.

Formal Notifications to Tusla are 18% higher. Compared to the same time last year, rates were similar or lower during March, higher rates are apparent in April and May (*CCR not applied*). This is associated with the increase in domestic abuse calls as, where children are present, it is Garda policy to notify Tusla.

Crimes Against Property

Property Crime has shown some of the most striking and consistent reductions compared to last year. For the three ICCS groups overall: **Burglaries** are 44% lower; **Thefts** are 37% lower; and **Robberies** are 30% lower. This is reflective of both the reduced opportunities with people being at home, shops being closed etc. and also the unprecedented level of Garda presence on the ground. **Aggravated Burglary** is an exception and has increased from 68 incidents in 2019 to 87 in 2020 (+28%). This may, in part, be a reflection of more people being at home.

Within the overall theft group, **Theft from Shop** is the highest volume. These incidents are 39% lower, which is not unexpected with many shops being closed. **Thefts from the Person** have seen the largest reductions in the group and are 62% lower.

Despite the overall reductions in property crimes and opportunities, there have been increases in a number of crimes which are reflective of proactive policing, increased Garda presence and enforcement/intervention before more serious and/or other crimes are committed: **Trespassing** has increased by 12%; **Possession of an Article (with intent to burgle, steal, demand)** has increased from 71 to 81 incidents (+10%); and **Interfering with vehicle (with intent to steal)** has increased from 298 to 307 incidents (+3%).

Given the overall reductions in property crime, another enforcement led crime, **Handling or Possession of Stolen Property** has not reduced by as much as may have been expected, reducing from 318 incidents in 2019 to 309 in 2020 (-3%).

Fraud, Deception and Related Offences are 21% lower overall, however, some incident types are showing increases on PULSE. These include some of the cyber enabled incidents which may reflect attempts to exploit the COVID-19 related crisis for financial gain: **Account Take Over Frauds** have increased from 81 to 126 (+56%); **Phishing/Vishing/Smishing Frauds** have increased from 75 to 109 (+45%); and **Shopping/Online Auction Fraud** has increased from 94 to 146 (+55%). The Garda National Economic Crime Bureau (GNECB) and local detective units remain very active in monitoring and investigating these crimes, a number of high-profile cases have been highlighted recently.

Crimes Against Society

Controlled Drugs Offences are 10% higher overall. This group is driven by two higher volume crimes; **Possession for Sale or Supply** is 18% higher and **Simple Possession (personal use)** is 7% higher (these increases are at the same rate when the CCR are not applied to reflect all incidents). Comparative increases to last year would be higher were it not for the spike in incidents of simple possession in May 2019. Increased numbers of checkpoints and Garda presence on the ground has driven a consistently higher rate of Possession for Sale or Supply incidents since early April.

The Garda Commissioner, on 13 March 2020, when announcing An Garda Síochána's measures to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic, highlighted that resources assigned to specialist units, including drugs units, were not affected by these measures. An Garda Síochána had commenced a process to establish/re-invigorate Drugs Units in each Garda Division. This was a first step in preparedness for Operation Tara. Divisional Drug Units are now established in every Garda Division. The uninterrupted policing of organised crime at a

national level and considerable increase in the size of Divisional Drugs Units at a local level, during the policing of the COVID-19 pandemic, has contributed to this success in seizing controlled drugs and in the apprehension of those involved in the sale and supply of the substances involved. In addition, the significant increase in the number of members of An Garda Síochána circulating in communities and engaged in checkpoints throughout the State, has also presented an obstacle to the movement of criminals.

An Garda Síochána has a well-established Drug Related Intimidation Reporting Programme. Each Garda Division has selected and appointed an Inspector with the specific responsibility for the implementation of the Drug Related Intimidation Reporting Programme. Implementing this programme in conjunction with the National Family Support Network, An Garda Síochána will deal with any complaint of drug related intimidation or advice sought in relation to this issue, with the utmost safety and effective means in order to afford the person or family subject to the threat the best level of security, advice and support which can be offered. Most importantly An Garda Síochána will deal with this issue in the utmost confidential and secure fashion. Anyone who is a victim of Drugs Related Intimidation or has information on drugs related intimidations can contact the Garda Confidential Line 1800 666 111 or The Family Support Network: 01 8980148, info@fsn.ie, www.fsn.ie.

Weapons and Explosives Offences are +8% higher. The majority of this group are incidents of **Possession of Offensive Weapons** (not firearms), e.g. knives, and these are 16% higher than the same three months in 2019 reflective of checkpoints and enforcement.

Damage to Property crimes are 19% lower overall due to Criminal Damage reductions, however, **Arson (Criminal Damage by Fire)** is 9% higher. In contrast to other crime types, there have been a number of spikes in Arson in March and April 2020 which were not seen in 2019. During May, figures were more comparable to 2019.

Public Order Offences are 13% lower. This reduction, similar to Assaults, is almost entirely driven by the absence of spikes around the bank holiday weekends. Those aside, figures are remarkably similar. Whilst **Drunkenness Offences** are 28% lower, **Public Order Offences** (threatening/abusive behaviour etc.) are only 6% lower - reflective of the use of pre-existing powers to protect public health. There has also been an increase in incidents of **Public Mischief - annoying phone calls and wasting police time**, from 31 in 2019 to 64 in 2020 (+106%).

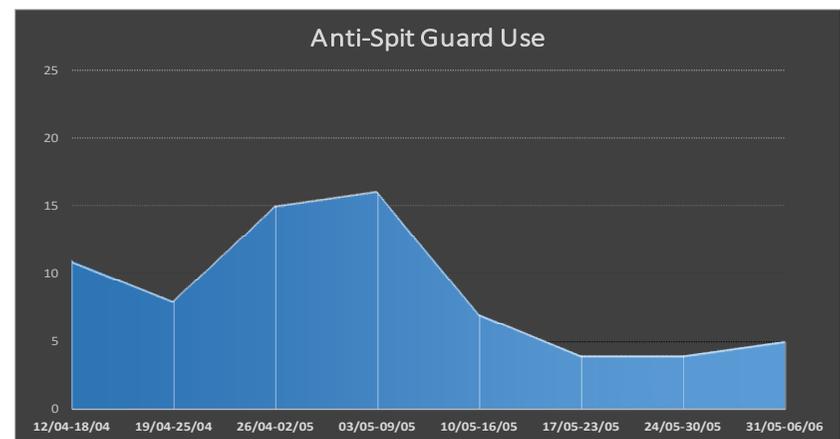
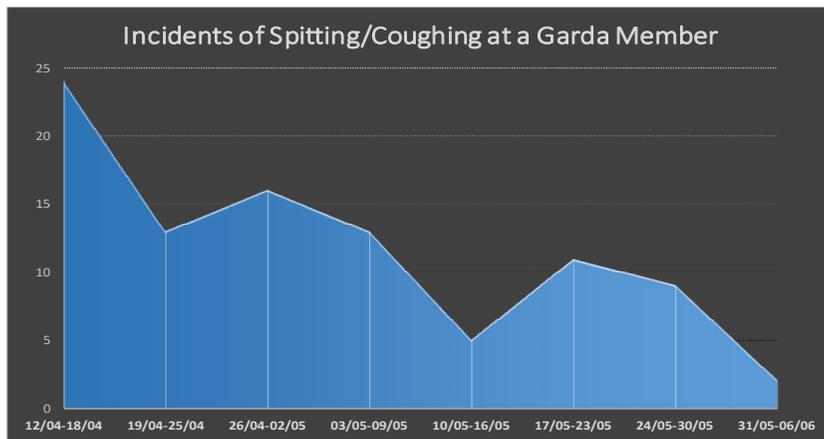
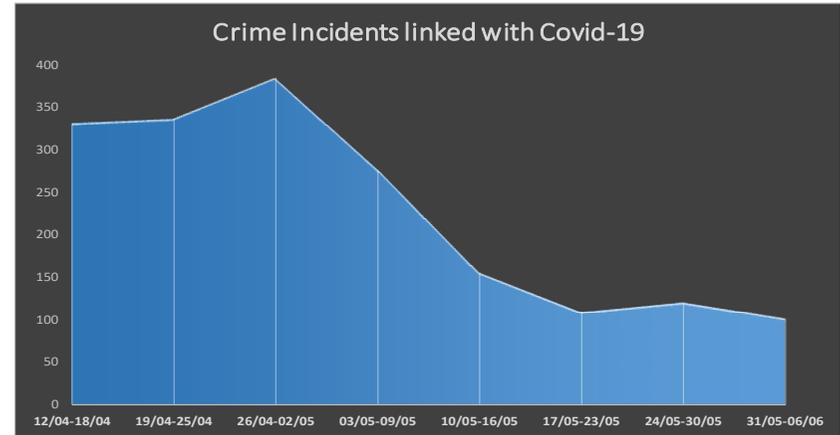
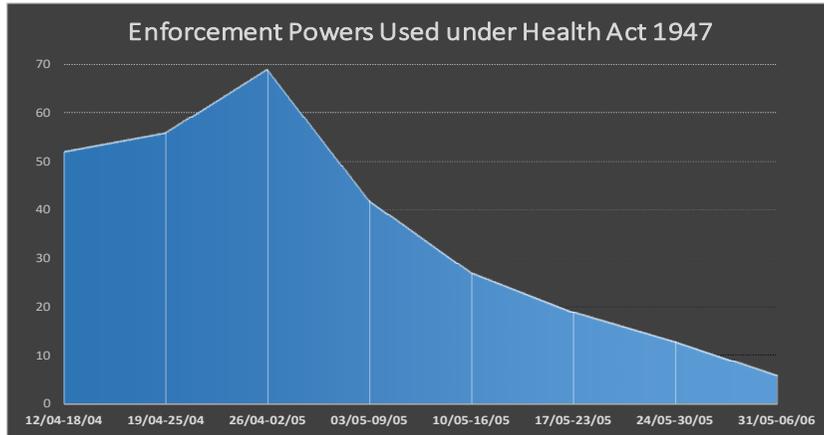
Roads Policing

Road Fatalities were higher than during the same period in 2019 but this was due to the substantially higher number of fatal collisions in March (18). April and May were both lower (8 in each month) as would be expected given the significant reduction in traffic volumes since the COVID-19 restrictions, especially since the commencement of the 'lockdown' at the end of March.

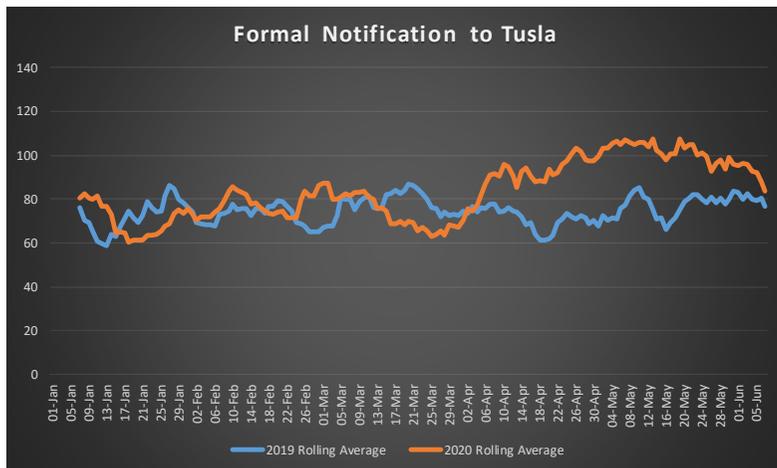
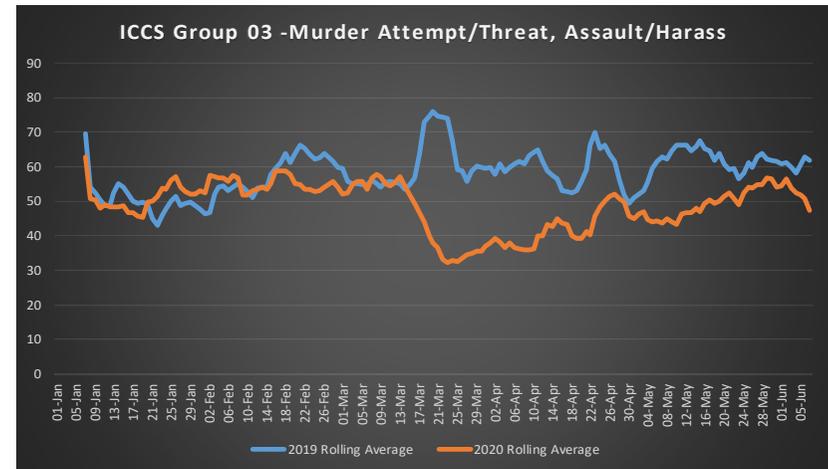
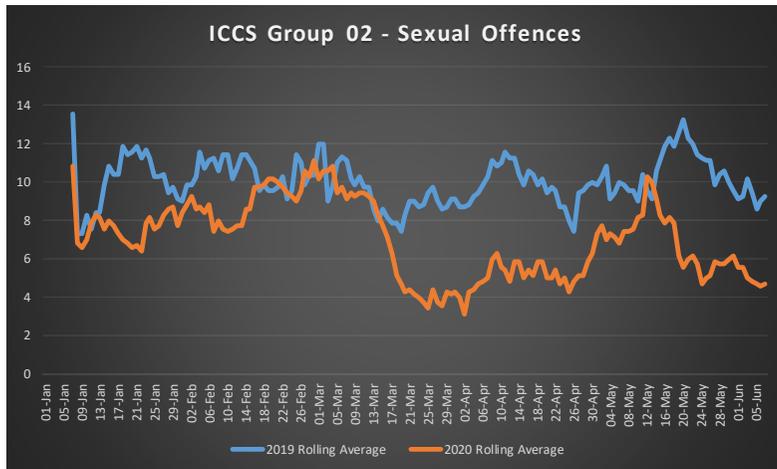
There has been a substantial decrease in serious and minor injury as well as material damage only collisions compared to the same three months last year.

There have been an extensive number of COVID-19 checkpoints, at which Garda members are cognisant of all criminal legislation and not just Public Health regulations.

COVID-19 Related Enforcement and Incidents



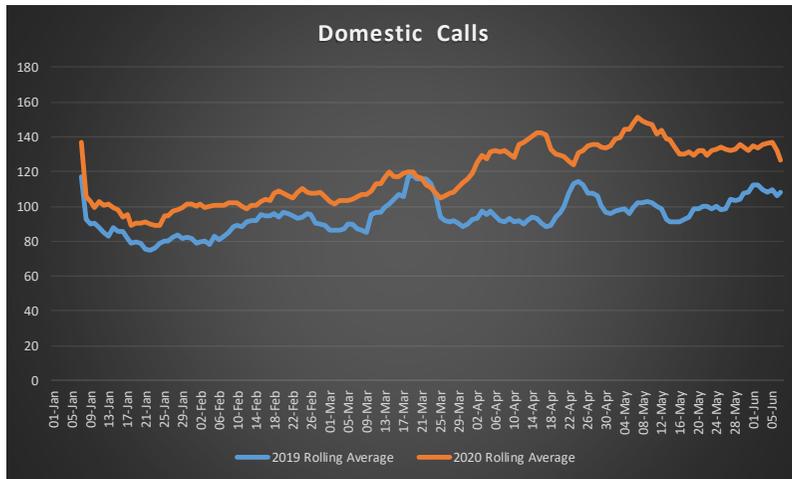
Crime Trends Charts



Formal Notification to Tusla group includes all valid incidents of type 'Formal Notification to Tusla Child and Family Agency' whether the associated originating PULSE incident is crime or non-crime.

Multiple notification incidents are created from a single crime/non-crime incident where more than one child is present.

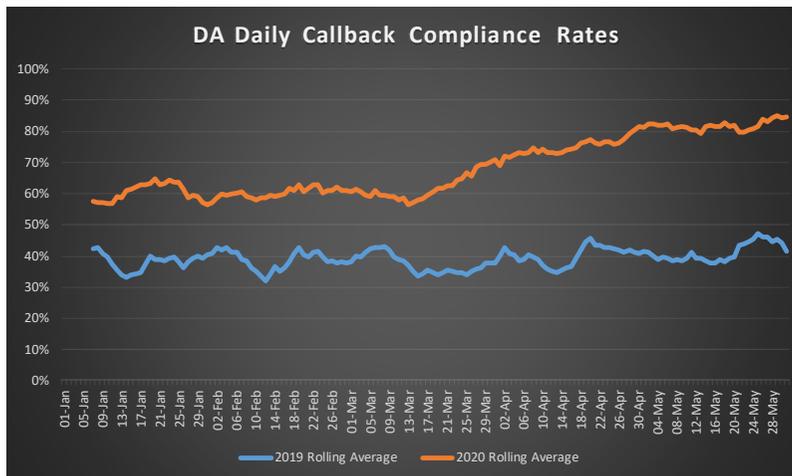
Crime counting rules are not applied.



Domestic Calls includes any of the following PULSE incident types:

- Breach of Interim Barring Order;
- Breach of Protection Order;
- Breach of Barring Order;
- Breach of Safety Order;
- Domestic Dispute - No Offence Disclosed;
- Breach of Emergency Barring Order; and
- Any PULSE incident with a domestic abuse motive indicated.

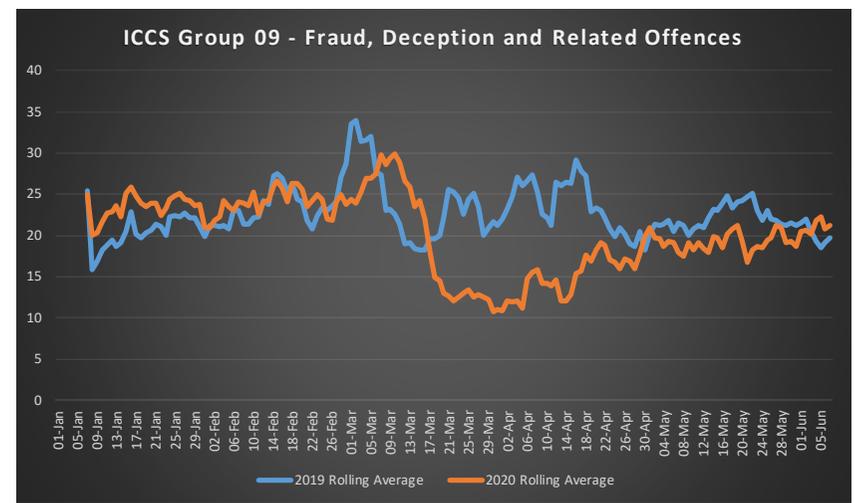
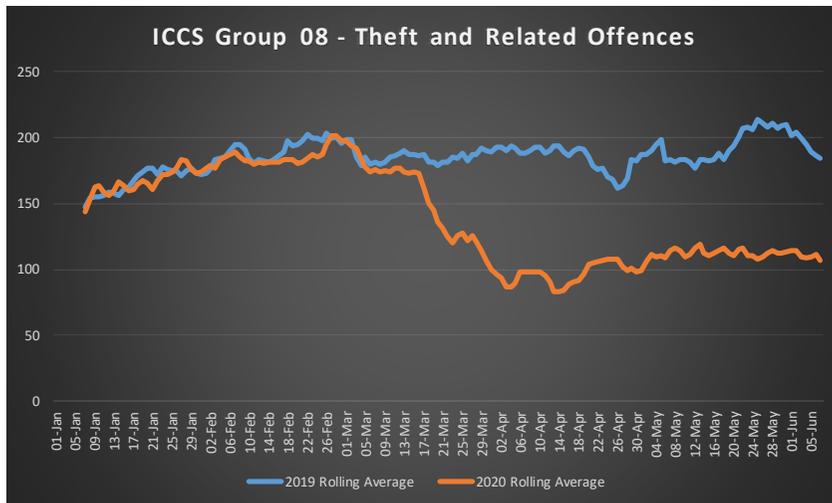
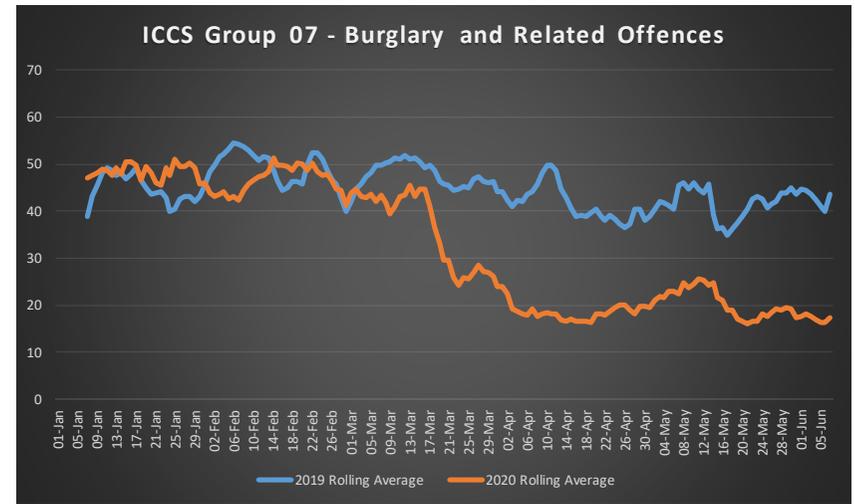
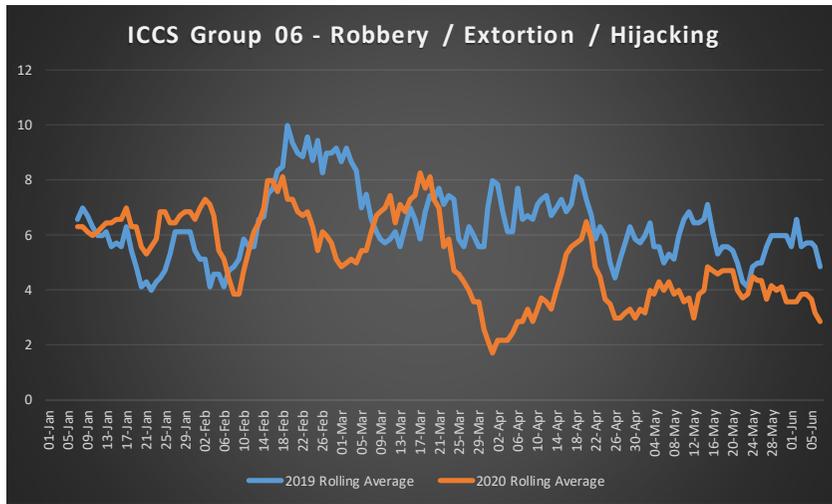
Also counted are incidents where the Computer Aided Dispatch (CAD) call type is 'DVSA'. CAD incidents that later become PULSE incidents matching the previous criteria are not counted a second time but will be included regardless of subsequent incident type recorded. Figures are taken from the daily operational report and the crime counting rules are not applied.

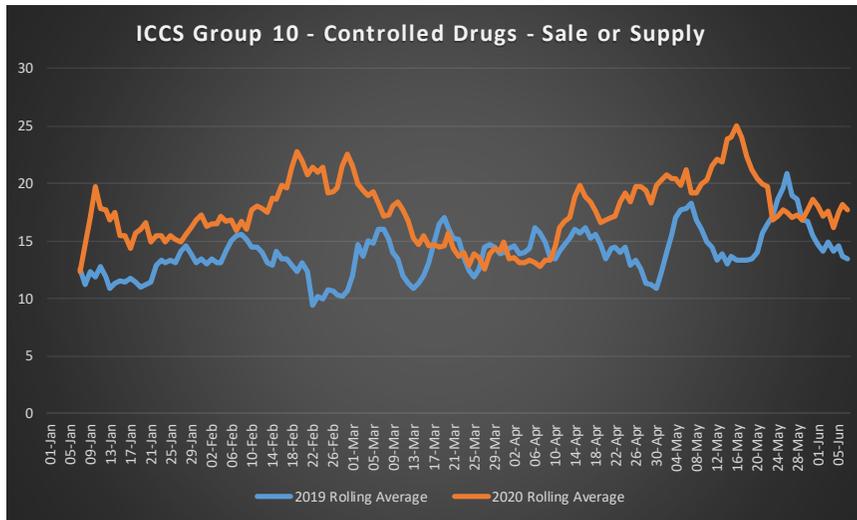


Callbacks includes all incidents within the Domestic Calls group (described above) with the exception of CAD only incidents which do not exist in PULSE (e.g. cancelled calls). Only incidents with an Injured Party recorded are included. Injured Party may be recorded on the Victim Engagement screen or otherwise linked directly with the PULSE incident.

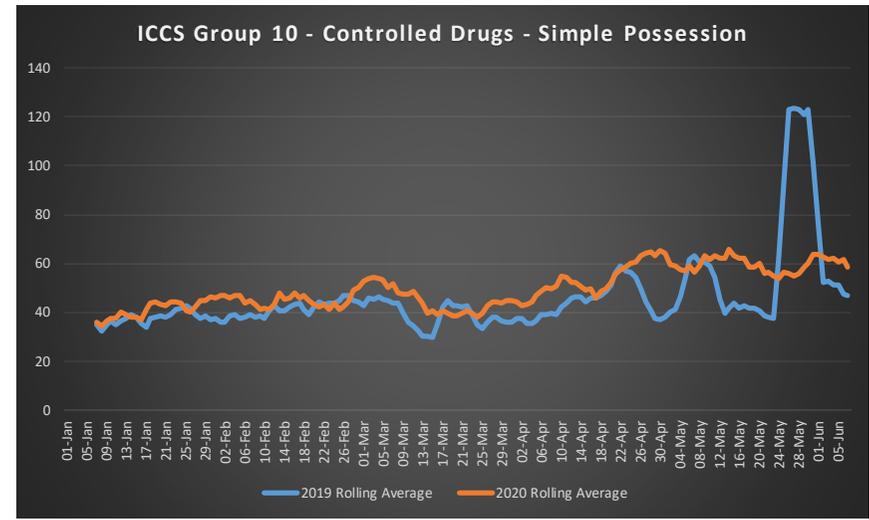
A callback must occur within seven days of the incident being reported. Contact type is any of "In Person", "Email" or "Phone Call". For "Phone Call", "contact made" must be recorded as "Y" (i.e. a successful call).

Data reflects incidents with a Reported Date up to 31 May 2020 to allow 7 days for the callback to be completed.

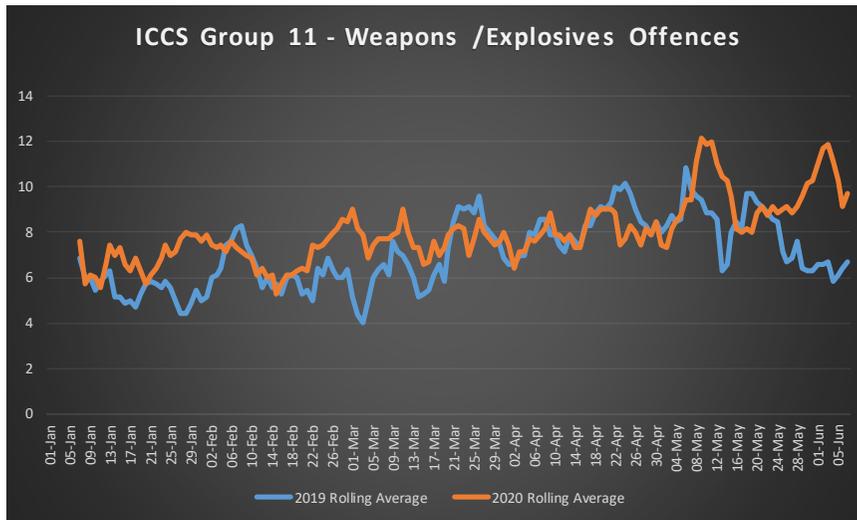




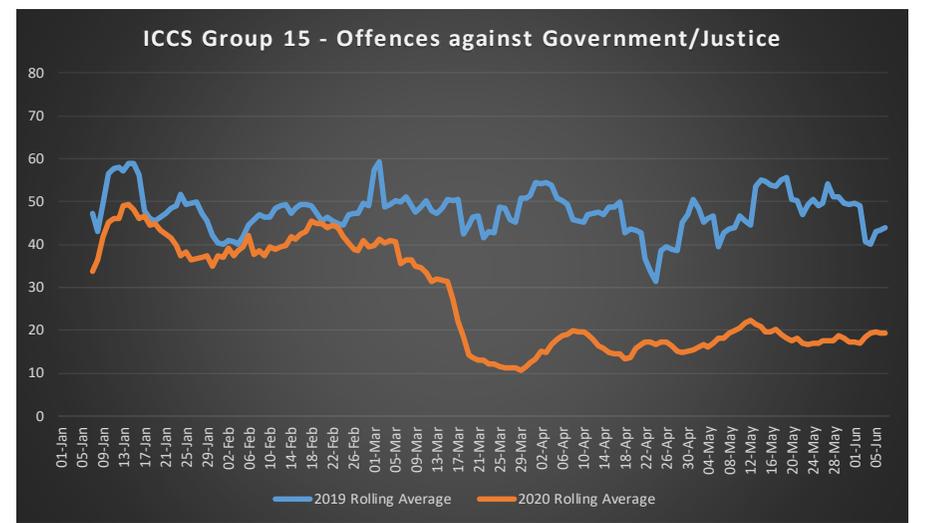
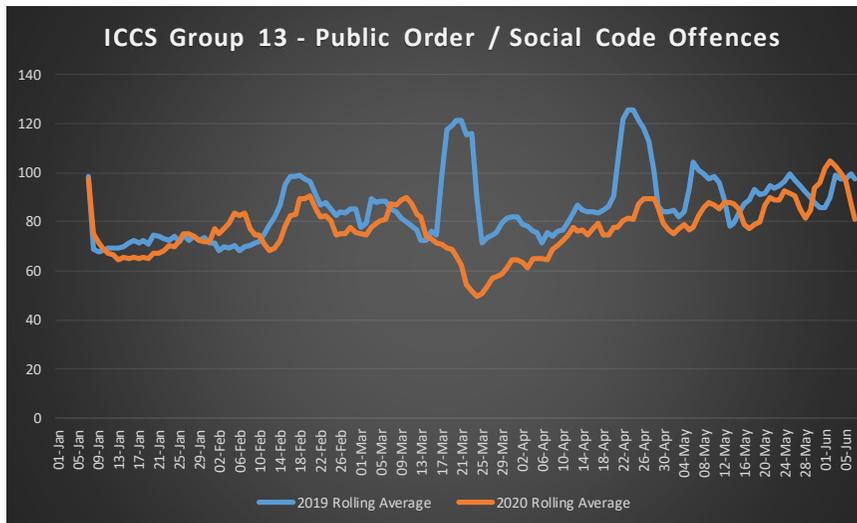
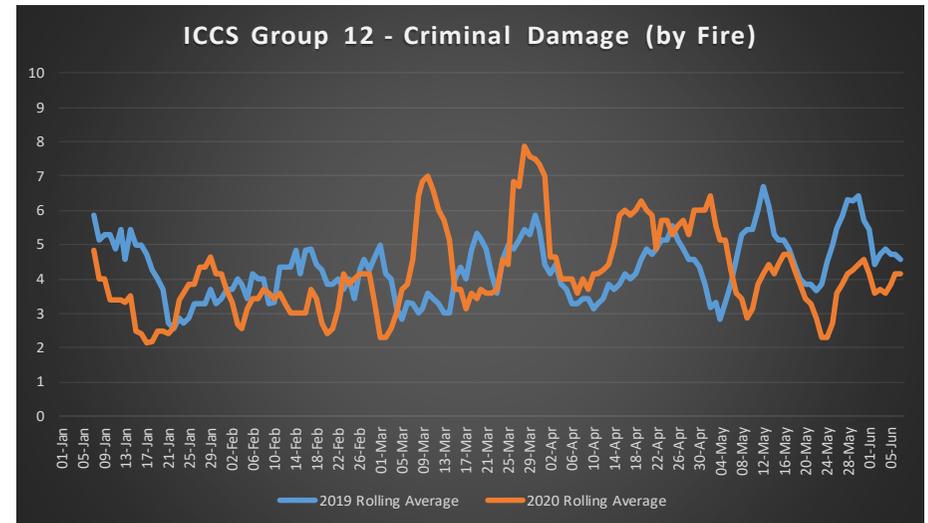
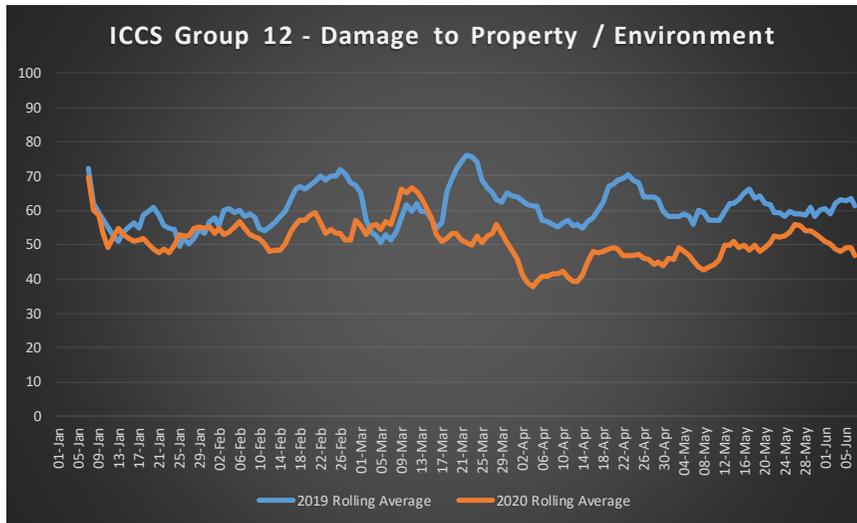
Crime Counting Rules are not applied to incidents within this group.



Crime Counting Rules are not applied to incidents within this group.



Possession of an Offensive Weapon (non-firearm) constitutes approximately 85% of offences in this group.



Breach of Bail (64%) and Breach of other orders (24%) constitute the volume offences in this group.

Tables

Crimes Against The Person

CRIMES AGAINST THE PERSON				
ICCS Group / ICCS or PULSE Types	2019 01/03 - 31/05	2020 01/03 - 31/05	Difference	% Change
02 - Sexual Offences	907	565	-342	-38%
0211 - Rape of a male or female	219	141	-78	-36%
0215 - Sexual assault (not aggravated)	490	297	-193	-39%
03 - Attempts/Threats to Murder, Assaults, Harassments and Related Offences	5,559	4,227	-1,332	-24%
0321 - Assaults causing harm	1,221	894	-327	-27%
0323 - Assault or obstruction of Garda/official, resisting arrest	163	204	+41	+25%
0324 - Minor assault	3,422	2,408	-1,014	-30%

Crimes Against Property and Frauds

CRIMES AGAINST PROPERTY AND FRAUDS				
ICCS Group / ICCS or PULSE Types	2019 01/03 - 31/05	2020 01/03 - 31/05	Difference	% Change
06 - Robbery, Extortion and Hijacking Offences	578	405	-173	-30%
07 - Burglary and Related Offences	4,031	2,244	-1,787	-44%
0711 - Aggravated burglary	68	87	+19	+28%
0712 - Burglary (not aggravated)	3,892	2,076	-1,816	-47%
0713 - Possession of an article (with intent to burgle, steal, demand)	71	81	+10	+14%
08 - Theft and Related Offences	17,374	10,872	-6,502	-37%
0812 - Interfering with vehicle (with intent to steal item or vehicle)	298	307	+9	+3%
0821 - Theft from person	1,095	412	-683	-62%
0822 - Theft from shop	6,423	3,929	-2,494	-39%
0831 - Handling or possession of stolen property	318	309	-9	-3%
09 - Fraud, Deception and Related Offences	2,077	1,643	-434	-21%
Account Take Over Fraud (PULSE)	81	126	+45	+56%
Phishing/Vishing/Smishing Frauds (PULSE)	75	109	+34	+45%
Shopping/Online Auction Fraud (PULSE)	94	146	+52	+55%

Crimes Against Society

CRIMES AGAINST SOCIETY				
ICCS Group / ICCS or PULSE Types	2019 01/03 - 31/05	2020 01/03 - 31/05	Difference	% Change
10 - Controlled Drug Offences	5,800	6,385	+585	+10%
1021 - Possession of drugs for sale or supply	1,307	1,540	+233	+18%
1022 - Possession of drugs for personal use	4,238	4,523	+285	+7%
11 - Weapons and Explosives Offences	720	777	+57	+8%
1131 - Possession of offensive weapons (not firearms)	581	675	+94	+16%
12 - Damage to Property and to the Environment	5,634	4,545	-1,089	-19%
1211 - Arson	394	430	+36	+9%
1212 - Criminal damage (not arson)	5,189	4,064	-1,125	-22%
13 - Public Order and other Social Code Offences	8,276	7,181	-1,095	-13%
1312 - Public order offences	4,436	4,173	-263	-6%
1313 - Drunkenness offences	2,591	1,860	-731	-28%
1322 - Trespass on lands or enclosed areas	628	702	+74	+12%
15 - Offences against Government, Justice Procedures and Organisation of Crime	4,394	1,764	-2,630	-60%
1516 - Public mischief-annoying phone calls and wasting police time	31	64	+33	+106%
1551 - Breach of Domestic Violence Order (protection, safety, barring)	837	924	+87	+10%

Roads Policing

ROADS POLICING				
Traffic Collisions	2019 01/03 - 31/05	2020 01/03 - 31/05	Difference	% Change
Fatal Collisions	26	32	+6	+23%
Serious and Minor Injury Collisions	1,468	646	-822	-56%
Material Damage (No Injury) Collisions	10,372	4,771	-5,601	-54%