



Portsmouth Community Safety
Survey
2022
Executive Summary

June 2022

Introduction

The Community Safety survey is carried out every two years, with trained fieldworkers conducting face-to-face structured interviews with Portsmouth residents in various locations across the city. The fieldwork for this survey took place in February and March 2022.

This survey is an opportunity to consult directly with residents and allow them to tell us about their views and experiences of crime and anti-social behaviour (ASB). It is also an important source of data, as it does not rely on residents having reported crimes and ASB to the police or other agencies.

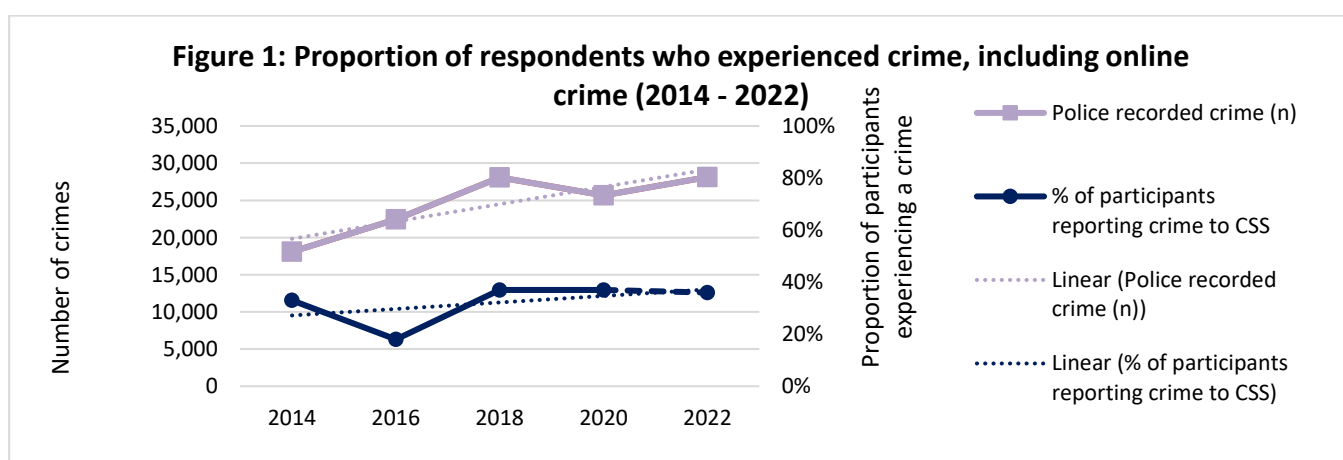
Demographics & Statistical Significance

This is a robust survey; **1,255 Portsmouth residents participated**, and the participants were broadly representative of Portsmouth's population. This allowed for statistical analysis for some of the key questions that we have been asking since 2014. Where there were statistically significant changes, these are referenced in the main text, but more details can be found in Appendix 2.

Victimisation

A quarter of participants reported that they had been a victim of at least one crime in the previous 12 months (excluding online crime), which is a significant reduction from the 2020 survey (25% compared with 37%). However, it is likely that this lower level of victimisation is at least partially due to changes in behaviour brought about by Covid-19 related restrictions and **has been offset by an increase in online crimes.**¹ If online crime is included, then 36% of respondents had been victims of at least one crime in the previous 12 months.

The overall trend since 2014 has been fairly stable, contrasting with police recorded crime levels which have been increasing during this time period. This indicates that the increases in most types of crime reported to the police over this period are likely to be due to changes in the way crime is recorded, rather than genuine increases in crime (Figure 1).



¹ While the reporting period does not include lockdowns, restrictions were still easing in the first couple of months up until May 2022, and it has taken some people longer to go back to their previous lifestyle behaviours.

This survey found that **people with mental health issues were more likely to be victims of crime** than those with other or no disabilities, which is also consistent with other research.² Conversely, those aged over 75 years / retired were less likely to be victims of crime.

Crime Reporting

The most common crimes reported to this survey were: threats/intimidation (7.2% of participants), phishing resulting in money or data stolen (4.9%) and online fraud (4.8%). This compares to 12.1% of respondents being a victim of threats/intimidation in 2020. While online crime has increased, **most other types of crime reported to this survey have reduced or remained stable since 2020.**

This **supports the theory that there has been displacement from some times of crime taking place in public areas to online crimes** as a result of increased use of online platforms for working, socialising and shopping. However, the way this information has been collected has changed this year, so it is not possible to directly compare the volume of online crime reported to previous surveys with this survey.

This survey found that only just over half (**58%**) of crimes of crimes experienced by participants were reported; with most being reported to the police (**49% of all crimes disclosed**) rather than any other agency. This is higher than the previous survey in 2020 (46%) but the same level as in 2016 (58%).

A separate question about online crime was included in the survey for the first time this year. A similar proportion of online crime was reported (59%), although online crime was mostly reported to banks (42%) or the relevant company/website (30%), and only 22% was reported to the police.

Knife Crime

Almost half of the participants thought knife crime was a problem in Portsmouth (46%) which is a 5 percentage point³ increase from 2020, although most held these beliefs because of what they had seen in the news or on social media, or heard from others. **Despite the increase in the perception of knife crime being a problem, the proportion of participants having witnessed, or experienced knife crime was similar to 2020:**

- Seen someone carrying a weapon (10%)
- Witnessed knife crime (4%)
- Experienced knife crime (1%)

While this survey found that knife crime has not increased since 2020, knife crime continues to be visible in the community and continued focus on knife-enabled serious violence is recommended.

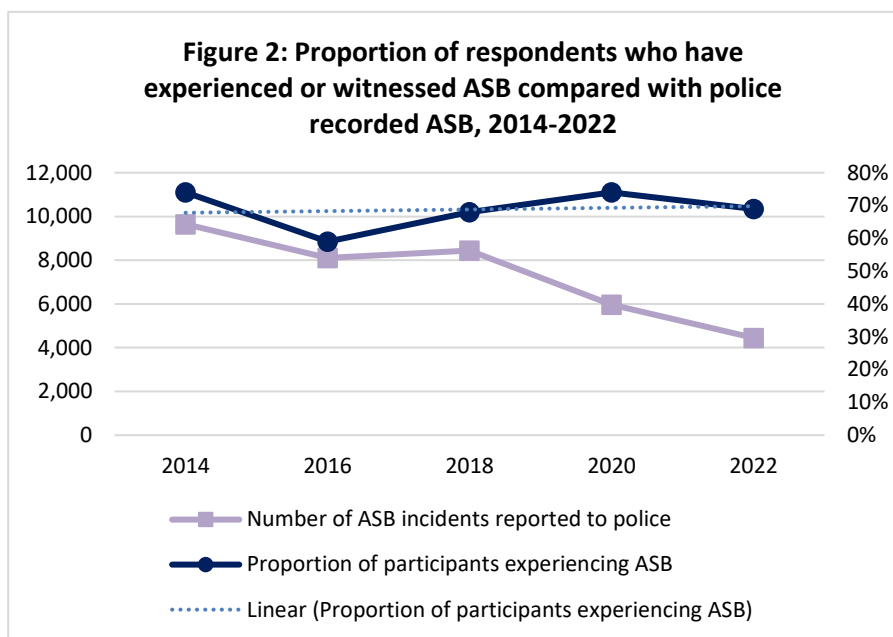
² See [Final-Strategic-Assessment-2020-21-09.12.21-Public.pdf \(saferportsmouth.org.uk\)](#)

³ A **percentage point** is the unit for the arithmetic difference of two percentages. For example, moving up from 40 percent to 44 percent is an increase of 4 percentage points (but a 10-percent increase) in the quantity being measured.

Anti-Social Behaviour

Levels of **ASB reported to this survey have been fairly stable overall since 2014**, contrasting with the reducing trend seen in police recorded ASB (Figure 2).

This continues to support the view that levels of ASB have not changed but instead residents are less likely to report it to the police. This may not necessarily be a negative thing if residents are reporting to other agencies instead.



The most reported ASB issues to this survey were:

- People hanging around (19%),
- People using/supplying drugs (18%), and
- Noise in the street (15%).

While the proportion of participants reporting drug misuse has reduced (from 21% in 2020) levels are still much higher than 2018 or earlier, showing that this is still an issue for our residents.

Although percentages cannot be directly compared because the methodologies are different, the Crime Survey of England and Wales for 2019 found **the second most commonly experienced or perceived behaviour was 'people using or dealing drugs' which shows that this is a national issue, and not unique to Portsmouth, and may correlate with reductions in funding for drug treatment**. The comparison of the two surveys demonstrates that the ASB experienced in Portsmouth is broadly similar to the national picture, but that **street drinking and intimidating behaviour are perceived to be causing more issues locally** than nationally.

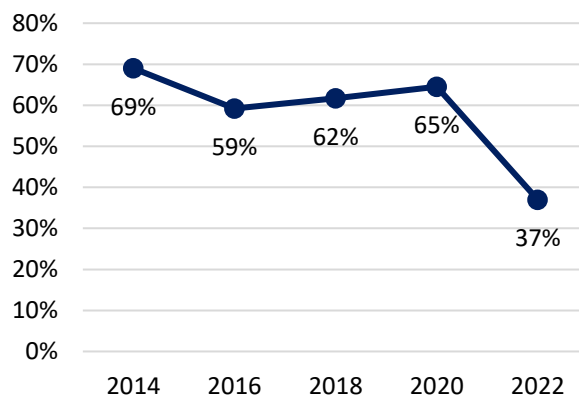
The **largest increase was seen in the category of traffic issues**, which includes a variety of behaviours such as people cycling on pavements, parking inconsiderately, using streets as rat runs, and more recently E-scooters used in a way that causes a nuisance. Additionally, when the 'other' category was analysed, **E-scooters were mentioned by 4.9% (n61) respondents making it a notable additional ASB issue for residents**.

Fear of Crime

Fear of crime has reduced substantially, with 37% (n794) worried about being a victim of crime in 2020, compared to previous years where between 60-70% were worried (Figure 3).

This could be due to a change in patterns of behaviour during the pandemic, with many more people working from and spending more time at home. Additionally, during lockdown periods, some communities pulled together, and some people looked out for their neighbours more than usual. This sense of community may have had a positive effect on fear of crime. However, this increase is likely to be temporary and caution should be taken when interpreting this result.

Figure 3: Proportion of respondents who were worried about being the victim of crime, 2014 - 2022



Just over half of participants (54%) said there were areas of Portsmouth they avoided because they felt unsafe. Women were more likely to feel unsafe than men (64% and 44% respectively), and the likelihood of feeling unsafe was also higher for those who were sick/disabled (65%).

Somerstown and Buckland are the areas where the most people felt unsafe or were avoided (16% and 12% respectively). **This has been the case for the last twenty years.** While this is largely due to a 'bad reputation', there are currently also **concerns about groups or gangs, dodgy people and drug use or dealing.**

The City Centre did not rank in the top ten most unsafe areas prior to 2014 but was identified as the third or fourth most unsafe/commonly avoided area from 2016 onwards and for similar reasons to Somerstown and Buckland.

Women's Safety

There was a request raised at the extraordinary City Council meeting on 7th December 2021 for a Safety Audit to allow Portsmouth residents to share their views about how public lighting and CCTV could be improved to promote safer streets and a safer public domain for women and girls. It was decided that the final Community Safety Survey questions could be amended slightly to enable the survey to collect this information.

The places that **women most avoided or felt unsafe** were similar to those mentioned by males, although generally a slightly higher proportion of women felt unsafe in these areas than men: **Somerstown (19%), City Centre (13%) and Buckland (12%) were the most commonly mentioned areas.** Most participants reported feeling unsafe or avoiding neighbourhood areas and very few women specified particular roads or locations.

Overall, most female participants felt unsafe because they had heard that these areas had a **bad reputation**, although some participants provided more concrete reasons such as **drug issues, a high crime rate, groups or gangs hanging around or poor lighting**. This, together with the fact that residents have reported feeling unsafe in these areas since the survey began 20 years ago, means that there is scope for doing further work to improve the reputation of these areas, alongside work to tackle drug misuse and crime.

Overwhelmingly female participants felt that a greater police presence in these areas would help them feel safer, but other solutions were mentioned, including **better lighting and CCTV, also more provision/activities for young people, tackling drug misuse and providing education/awareness**.

The Police and Crime Commissioner for Hampshire has committed to recruiting an extra 600 officers across Hampshire to improve police visibility reduce crime, although it will take time before all the new officers complete their training and are deployed. There has also recently been a review of, and improvements to, lighting and CCTV in the city as part of the Safer Streets Initiative,⁴ so it is recommended that the findings of this survey are used as part of an evidence base for any further, targeted infrastructure work in the identified areas and for more positive communications to try and reduce the reputational issues.

⁴ See Appendix 6 in the main report for a summary of Safer Streets Work