



# Portsmouth Community Safety Survey 2024 Executive Summary

May 2024

## 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 2024.

This survey is an opportunity to consult directly with residents and encourage 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. The findings inform the annual Strategic Assessment of Crime, Anti-social Behaviour, Reoffending and Substance Misuse<sup>1</sup> which recommends Community Safety Priorities to the Health & Wellbeing Board.

This survey has been running for over 20 years, in various formats. Small changes have been made to the questionnaire over time to improve the usefulness of the data collected, but crucial elements of the survey have remained comparable enabling a long-term comparison and the identification of patterns and trends.

## Demographics

This is a robust survey; **1,054 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 and the statistical results can be found in Appendix 3 of the main report.

## Victimisation

**About a quarter of survey participants reported that they had been a victim of at least one crime in the previous twelve months** (from March/April 2023 to February/March 2024), **rising to 38% when online crimes were included**. It is important to note that while the sample for this survey is broadly similar to Portsmouth's population, there are some sections of the community who may not be represented and who may experience different levels of crime (for example businesses, those in residential homes/hospitals or prison).

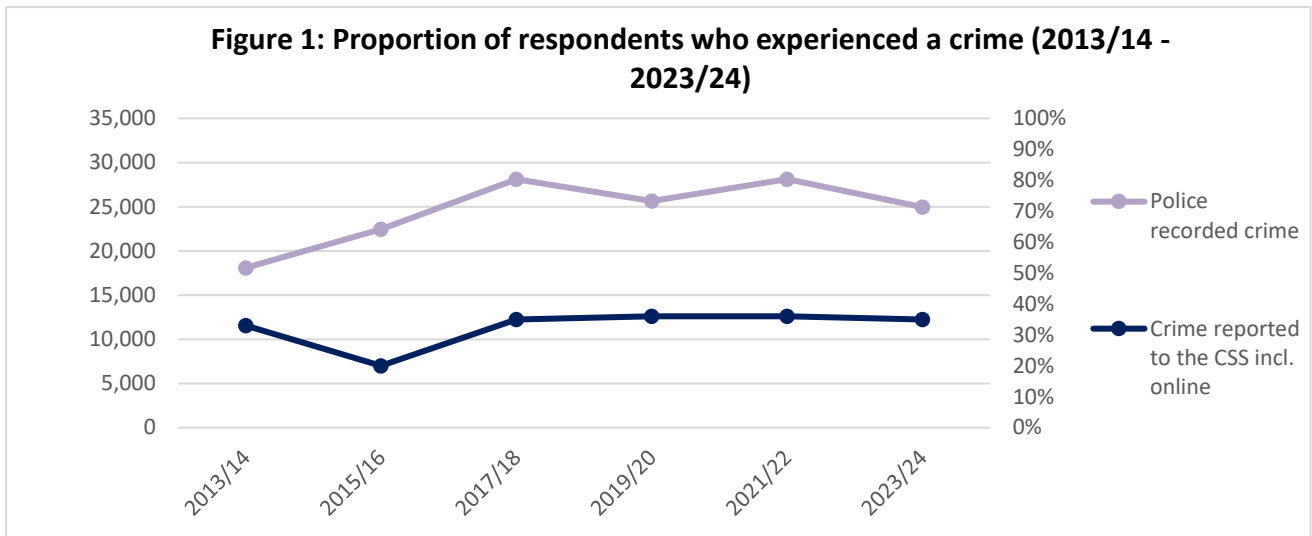
**There has been a stable trend in victimisation reported to the survey since 2014** with the exception of the 2016 survey<sup>2</sup> (Figure 1). However, this stability in overall victimisation hides patterns in individual crime types.

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<sup>1</sup> [Strategic Assessments - Safer Portsmouth](#)

<sup>2</sup> It is not clear why levels of crime reported to the survey in 2016 were statistically significantly lower than the other years.

This survey found that **people with multiple disabilities and those who gave their occupation as sick/disabled were more likely to be victims of crime**, while those aged over 65 years/retired were less likely to be victims of crime.<sup>3</sup>



The most common crimes experienced in the previous 12 months and reported to this survey were: online fraud (7.6% of participants), threats/intimidation (5.7%), phishing resulting in money or data stolen (4.7%), sexual harassment/assault (2.8%) and hate crime (2.8%). **Most types of crime reported to this survey have reduced or remained stable since 2022**, with the exception of slight increases in online fraud, sexual assault/harassment and theft from a car or motorbike.

This survey found that just over half (**54%**) of crimes (excluding online crime) experienced by participants during 2023/24 were reported; with most being reported to the police (**44%**) rather than any other agency. A greater proportion of online crime was reported (64%), most commonly to a bank or credit card company with only 13% of online crime being reported to police.

## Knife Crime

Almost half of the participants thought knife crime was a problem in Portsmouth (44%) in 2024, which is similar to previous years, and most held these beliefs because of what they had seen in the news or on social media or heard from others. **The proportion of participants having witnessed, or experienced knife crime during 2023/24 was also similar to previous years:**

- Seen someone carrying a weapon (11%)
- Witnessed knife crime (4%)
- Experienced knife crime (1%)

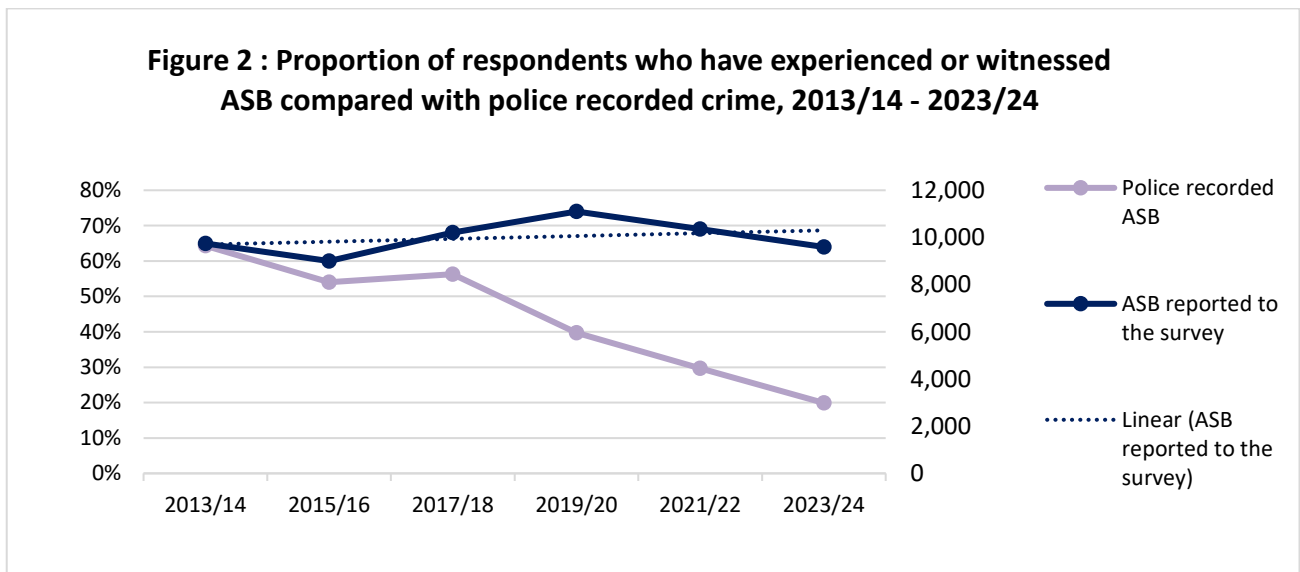
<sup>3</sup> While statistical tests were not conducted on groups within groups, it should be noted that there was a slightly higher proportion of over 75 year olds who had multiple disabilities. However, this sub group were not more likely to be a victim of crime (13%).

Produced by the Public Health Intelligence Team: Sam Graves & Dave Creasey  
Please contact [csresearchers@portsmouthcc.gov.uk](mailto:csresearchers@portsmouthcc.gov.uk) for further information

While this survey found that knife crime reported to the survey has not increased since 2019/20, **the number of young people seen carrying knives has been increasing** and knife crime continues to be visible in the community.

## Anti-Social Behaviour

Levels of **anti-social behaviour (ASB) reported to this survey have been fairly stable overall since 2013/14**, although there has been a reduction since the peak in 2019/20. This contrasts with the substantial reducing trend seen in police recorded ASB over the last decade (Figure 2).



This supports the view that levels of ASB have not changed substantially, 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 common ASB issues occurring in 2023/24 reported to the survey were:

- People using/supplying drugs (15%),
- Traffic issues (12%), and
- People hanging around (11%).

**While the proportion of participants reporting drug misuse has reduced (from 21% in 2019/20) levels are still much higher than 2017/18 or earlier**, showing that this is still an issue for our residents.

The findings of this survey cannot be directly compared with the Crime Survey for England and Wales as the methodologies and ASB categories are different. However, the most recent CSEW for the period ending March 2023<sup>4</sup> found that the most common ASB types causing a fairly or very big problem

<sup>4</sup> [Crime Survey for England and Wales \(CSEW\) estimates of personal and household crime, anti-social behaviour, and public perceptions, by police force area, year ending March 2023 - Office for National Statistics](#)

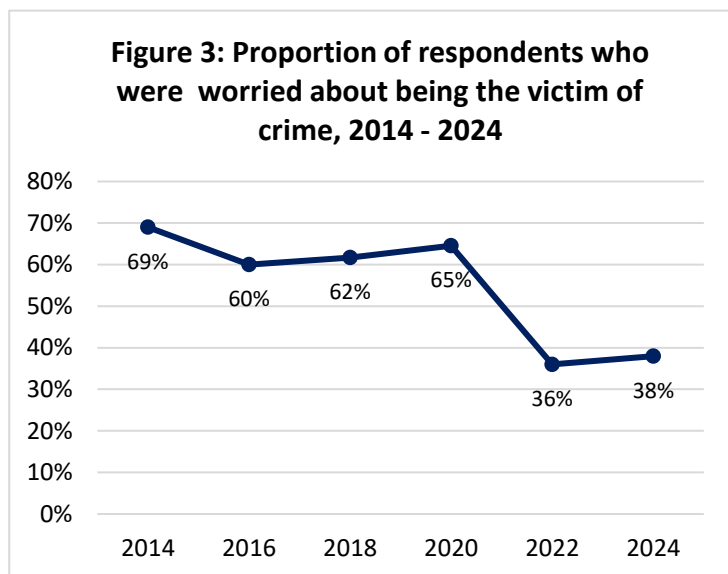
nationally were rubbish/litter, people using/dealing drugs and teenagers hanging around. The comparison of the two surveys demonstrates that the **ASB experienced in Portsmouth is broadly similar to the national picture, but that traffic issues are perceived to be causing more issues locally**, while litter/rubbish is not perceived to be such a big problem.

Since the 2022 survey, there have been reductions in most types of ASB reported, however, **traffic issues** which included motorbike nuisance, e-scooter issues, parking inconsiderately or using streets as rat runs, **had increased slightly (by 1.6 percentage points)**.

## Fear of Crime

Fear of crime has remained lower than it was prior to the Covid-19 pandemic, with 38% of participants reporting that they were worried about being the victim of a crime in 2024 (Figure 3). Those who feared being a victim of crime (excluding online crime) were more likely to have been a victim of crime in the previous 12 months.

The reduction in 2022 was thought to be linked 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. While this effect was thought to be temporary, there may be lasting aspects, such as people feeling more connected to their neighbours or working from home more.



Just over half of participants said there were areas of Portsmouth they avoided because they felt unsafe. Women were more likely to feel unsafe than men (63% and 40% respectively).

**For the first time since this question was asked in 2001, the City Centre / Commercial Road area was the area where residents felt most unsafe or avoided (13%).** The City Centre **has been increasingly negatively perceived over the last decade.** Residents were most likely to feel this way when it was dark or at night, but 21% of those who said they felt unsafe there specified that this was at any time. The main reasons given were groups/ gangs hanging around, alcohol-related ASB, drug use/dealing and homeless people.

## Women's Safety

There was a request raised at the extraordinary City Council meeting on 7<sup>th</sup> 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: **City Centre (18%), Somerstown (15%), and Buckland (15%) were the most commonly mentioned areas.** Most reported feeling unsafe or avoiding neighbourhood areas, while very few specified particular roads or locations.

Participants commonly felt that a greater police presence in these areas would help them feel safer, but other solutions were mentioned, including better lighting and CCTV, regeneration or environmental improvements, more provision/activities for young people, tackling drug misuse and providing education/awareness.