



# Anti-Social Behaviour Incidents Recorded by the Police in Northern Ireland

## Update to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2023

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The number of anti-social behaviour incidents had been trending downwards since the start of the data series in 2006/07, with levels falling to around three fifths of the initial total by the end of 2019/20. The introduction of lockdown measures and other restrictions relating to the Covid-19 pandemic led to a substantial increase in levels of anti-social behaviour recorded during 2020/21. Following the removal of restrictions, the downwards trend in anti-social behaviour incidents has resumed.

In the 12 months from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2022 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2023:

- There were 47,301 anti-social behaviour incidents in Northern Ireland, a decrease of 10,431 (-18.1%) when compared with the previous 12 months. This is the lowest 12 month figure since the data series began in 2006/07.
- Each month April 2022 through to March 2023 recorded the lowest levels of anti-social behaviour for those months since the start of the data series in April 2006, with the exceptions of August 2022 and February 2023 which recorded the second lowest August and February figures in the data series.
- All eleven policing districts experienced lower levels of anti-social behaviour.
- Ten policing districts experienced an increase in levels of anti-social behaviour between February and March 2023.

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We welcome comment and feedback on these statistics. If you would like to forward your views, receive notification of new publications or be kept informed of developments relating to PSNI statistics, please email your contact details using the email address provided on the cover page.

# 1. Things you need to know about this release

## Coverage

This release is produced in accordance with the pillars and principles set out in the Code of Practice for Statistics.

The Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) publishes figures on the levels and trends in anti-social behaviour in Northern Ireland. As these figures only relate to those anti-social behaviour incidents reported to the police (and may exclude those incidents reported to other agencies, such as local councils), they only provide an indication of the true extent of reported anti-social behaviour. The statistics are collated and produced by statisticians seconded to PSNI from the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA).

An anti-social behaviour incident may include circumstances that would be an offence in law, but where the offence is not of the level of severity that would result in a crime being recorded by the police. Therefore anti-social behaviour incidents are a separate data series that are not included in the police recorded crime data. Collation of data on anti-social behaviour started in 2006/07.

This release presents statistics relating to anti-social behaviour incidents recorded by the police to 31 March 2023 (financial year 2022/23). All tables and charts in the bulletin, along with additional supplementary data, are available from the PSNI website in the [ASB spreadsheet for March 2023 \(opens in a new window\)](#).

The next update covering the 12 months to 30 April 2023 will be published on 8 June 2023. A full publication schedule is available on the [PSNI website \(opens in a new window\)](#).

## Definition of Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB)

**ASB: PERSONAL** – ‘Personal’ is designed to identify ASB incidents that the caller, call-handler or anyone else perceives as either deliberately targeted at an individual or group or having an impact on an individual or group rather than the community at large. It includes incidents that cause concern, stress, disquiet and/or irritation through to incidents which have a serious adverse impact on people’s quality of life. At one extreme of the spectrum it includes minor annoyance; at the other end it could result in risk of harm, deterioration of health and disruption of mental or emotional well-being, resulting in an inability to carry out normal day to day activities through fear and intimidation.

**ASB: NUISANCE** – ‘Nuisance’ captures those incidents where an act, condition, thing or person causes trouble, annoyance, inconvenience, offence or suffering to the local community in general rather than to individual victims. It includes incidents where behaviour goes beyond the conventional bounds of acceptability and interferes with public interests including health, safety and quality of life. Just as individuals will have differing expectations and levels of tolerance so will communities have different ideas about what goes beyond tolerable or acceptable behaviour.

**ASB: ENVIRONMENTAL** – ‘Environmental’ deals with the interface between people and places. It includes incidents where individuals and groups have an impact on their surroundings including natural, built and social environments. This category is about encouraging reasonable behaviour whilst managing and protecting the various environments so that people can enjoy their own private spaces as well as shared or public spaces. People’s physical settings and surroundings are known to impact positively or negatively on mood and sense of well-being and a perception that nobody cares about the quality of a particular environment can cause those effected by that environment to feel undervalued or ignored. Public spaces change over time as a result of physical effects caused, for example, by building but the environment can also change as a result of the people using or misusing that space.

## How is Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) recorded?

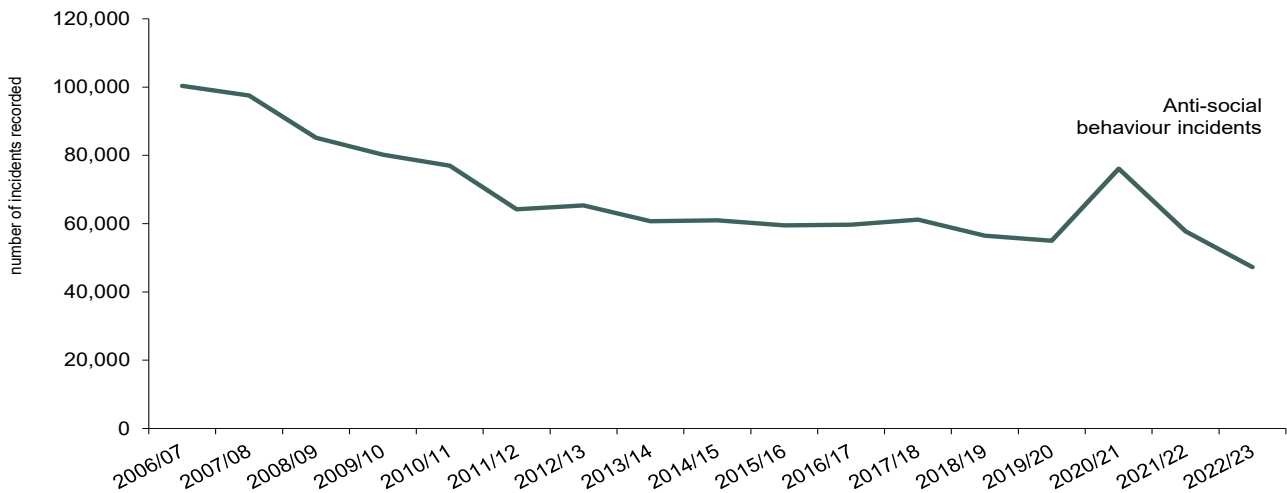
Anti-social behaviour incident data are output from a command and control system which is used to respond to calls for service from members of the public by prioritising the call and tasking the appropriate police response. Each incident is closed off using codes and definitions set out in the [National Standard for Incident Recording \(NSIR, opens in a new window\)](#), designed to provide a common approach to be followed by police forces in England, Wales and Northern Ireland in classifying the broad range of calls for service received.

These figures should be interpreted as 'calls for service' rather than as figures which reflect the true level of victimisation. As they relate only to those anti-social behaviour incidents reported to the police (and may exclude incidents reported to other agencies such as local councils), they only provide an indication of the true extent of reported anti-social behaviour.

## 2. What is happening to levels of anti-social behaviour over the longer term?

Since 2006/07 there has been a general decline in the number of anti-social behaviour incidents recorded. Lockdown measures in relation to Covid-19 were introduced on 23rd March 2020 and had a substantial impact on levels. The number of anti-social behaviour incidents recorded in 2020/21 rose by 38 per cent when compared with 2019/20 and was the highest level recorded in the ten years to 2020/21. As restrictions were eased and removed throughout 2021/22 there was a substantial fall in the number of anti-social behaviour incidents, and the level recorded in 2021/22 was 24% lower than in the previous year. This reduction continued in 2022/23, with the number of anti-social behaviour incidents falling to less than half of the level seen at the start of the series. [Figure 1]

**Figure 1 Trends in anti-social behaviour incidents recorded by the police since 2006/07**

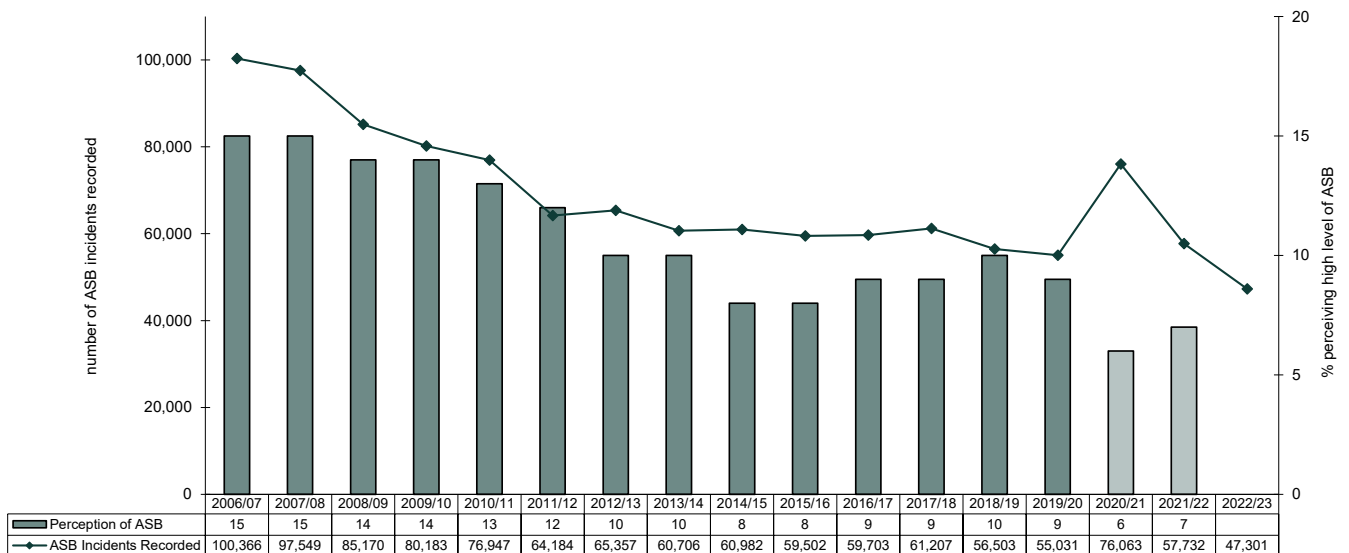


### Comparison of levels of anti-social behaviour recorded by police with perceptions of anti-social behaviour from the Northern Ireland Safe Community

Respondents to the Northern Ireland Safe Community Survey are asked to rate how much of a problem different types of anti-social behaviour are in their area. The latest available figures covering the period April 2021 to March 2022 show that 7% of respondents perceived a high level of anti-social behaviour in their area. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, changes were made to the survey's methodology to the extent that figures for 2020/21 and 2021/22 must be considered separately from previous figures in the data series, 2003/04 to 2019/20. For this reason the Perception of ASB data points for 2020/21 and 2021/22 are presented differently to the previous data series.

Further information on these findings and the changes made to the survey is available in the [Findings from the 2021/22 Northern Ireland Safe Community Telephone Survey \(opens in a new window\)](#).

**Figure 2 Levels of anti-social behaviour incidents recorded by the police and percentage perceiving high level of anti-social behaviour as identified through the Northern Ireland Safe Community Survey, 2006/07 to latest available**

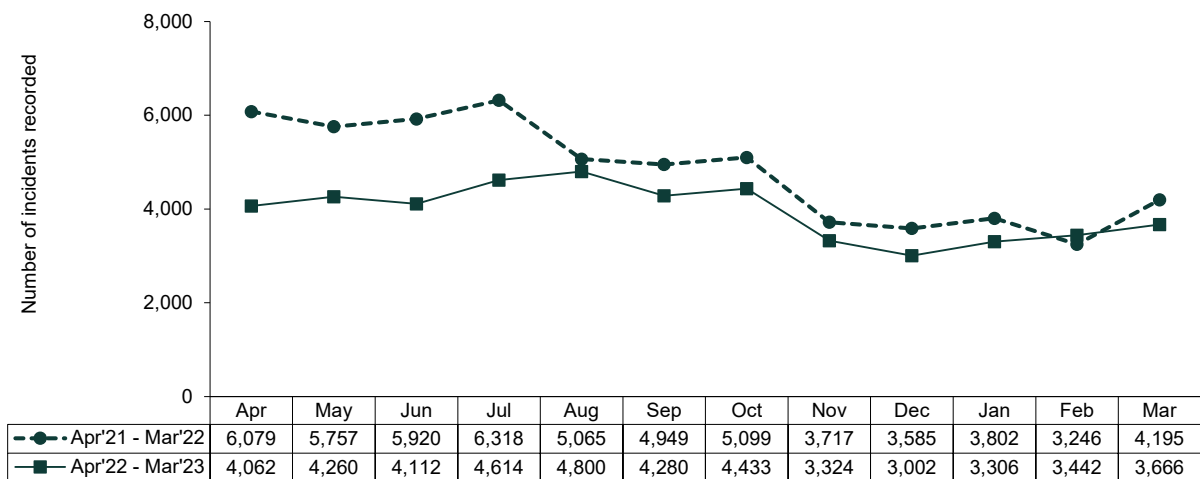


### 3. What has been happening to levels of anti-social behaviour over the last two years?

In the 12 months from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2022 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2023:

- There were 47,301 anti-social behaviour incidents in Northern Ireland, a decrease of 10,431 (-18.1 per cent) on the previous 12 months. This is the lowest 12 month figure since the data series began in 2006/07. [Table 1]
- Lockdown measures in relation to Covid-19 were first introduced on March 23<sup>rd</sup> 2020. By 15<sup>th</sup> February 2022, all Covid-19 legal restrictions were replaced by guidance.
- The initial introduction of lockdown measures resulted in substantially higher levels of anti-social behaviour incidents when compared with the same months in the previous year. [Figure 4 and Figure 5]
- Between April 2022 and March 2023, each month has recorded lower levels of anti-social behaviour when compared with the same month in the previous year, with the exception of February 2023 which was the first month since March 2021 to record a higher level of anti-social behaviour when compared with the same month in the previous year. [Figure 3].
- Each month April 2022 through to March 2023 recorded the lowest levels of anti-social behaviour for those months since the start of the data series in April 2006, with the exception of August 2022 which recorded the second lowest August level in the data series, and February 2023 which recorded the second lowest February level in the data series. [[OpenDataNI website, Anti-Social Behaviour Monthly Data \(opens in a new window\)](#)]
- The latest month (March 2023) was 224 incidents higher than February 2023 [Figure 3]. Levels during March had been higher than those in February in each year since the data series began in 2006/07.

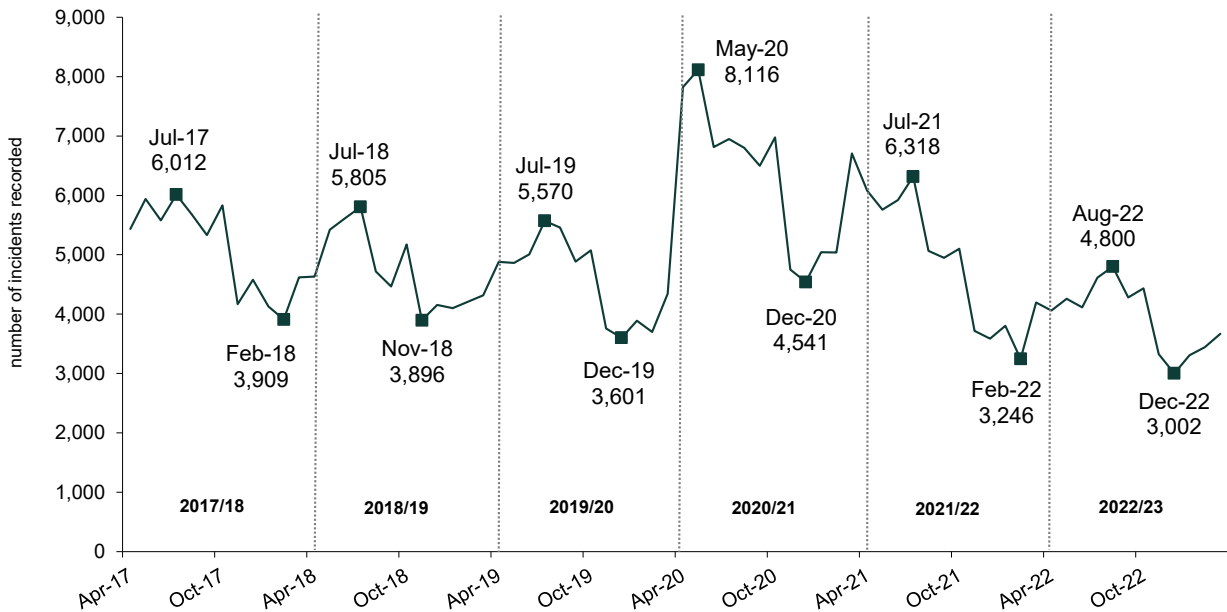
**Figure 3 Anti-social behaviour incidents recorded by the police April 2021 to March 2023**



## 4. What are the trends in levels of anti-social behaviour?

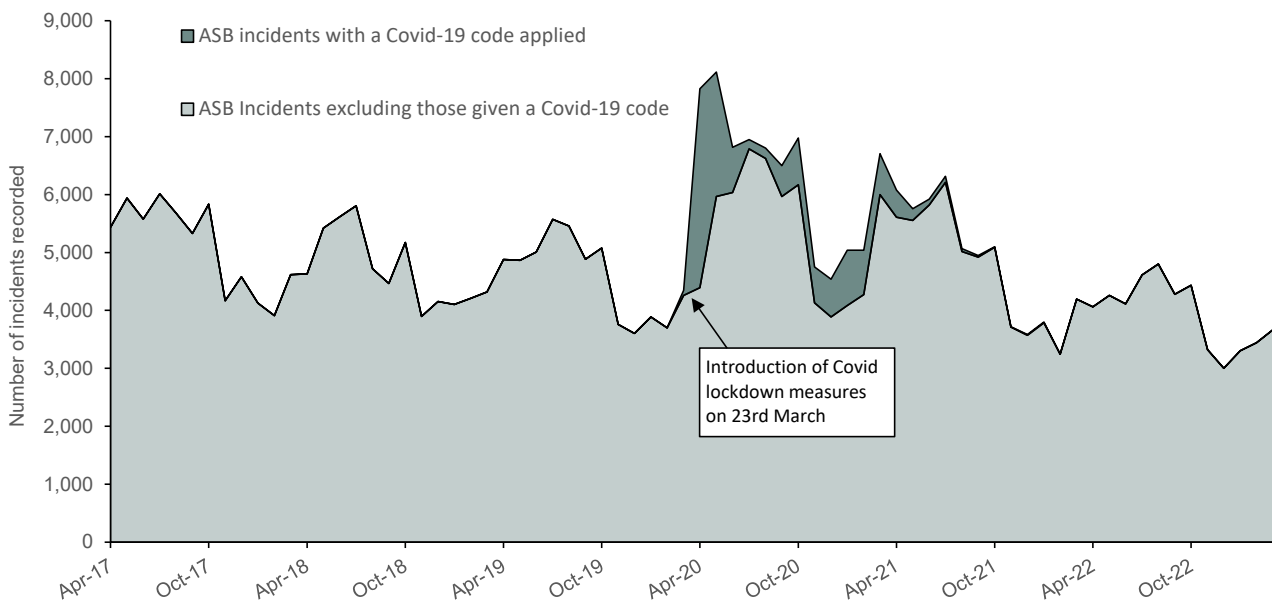
Anti-social behaviour incidents tend to show higher levels in July, August and October of each year. There is usually a sharp fall in incidents between October and November, followed by lower levels between November and February/March. Figure 4 shows this pattern over the last six financial years and the effects of the lockdown measures in place during the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020/21.

**Figure 4 Anti-social behaviour incidents recorded by the police each month April 2017 to March 2023, showing highest and lowest levels in each financial year**



Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, lockdown measures were first introduced in Northern Ireland on 23rd March 2020 and these have had a substantial impact on levels of anti-social behaviour. From 27th March 2020 calls received by the police were able to have codes applied that indicated the call was related to Covid-19. Figure 5 shows the number of anti-social behaviour incidents in each month since April 2017. The application of the Covid-19 code and the effect this has had on the total number of anti-social behaviour incidents is also shown.

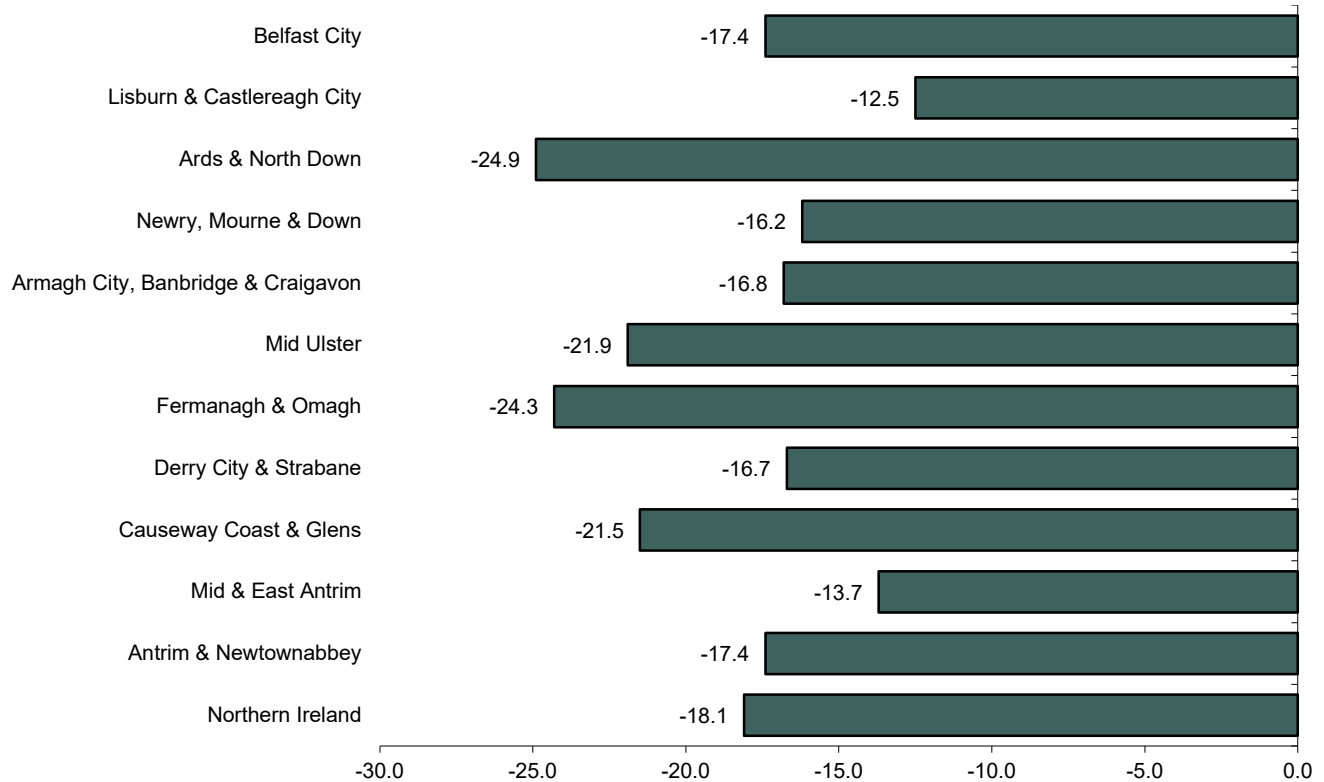
**Figure 5 Anti-social behaviour incidents recorded by the police each month April 2017 to March 2023, showing the impact of Covid-19 Related incidents**



## 5. What has been happening in policing districts?

When comparing the current and previous 12 months, all eleven policing districts showed lower levels of anti-social behaviour. Ten policing districts showed higher levels in March 2023 compared with February 2023. [Table 1 and [ASB spreadsheet for March 2023 \(opens in a new window\)](#) Pivot Table]

**Figure 6 Anti-social behaviour incidents recorded by the police in the 12 months to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2023 compared with the previous 12 months; percentage change by policing district**



**Table 1 Anti-social behaviour incidents recorded by police by policing district**

Policing district	ASB incidents Apr'21-Mar'22	ASB incidents Apr'22-Mar'23	change	% change
Belfast City	17,039	14,077	-2,962	-17.4
<i>East</i> <sup>1</sup>	2,948	2,547	-401	-13.6
<i>North</i> <sup>1</sup>	4,802	3,957	-845	-17.6
<i>South</i> <sup>1</sup>	6,292	5,018	-1,274	-20.2
<i>West</i> <sup>1</sup>	2,997	2,555	-442	-14.7
Lisburn & Castlereagh City	3,350	2,931	-419	-12.5
Ards & North Down	4,506	3,383	-1,123	-24.9
Newry, Mourne & Down	4,822	4,041	-781	-16.2
Armagh City, Banbridge & Craigavon	6,290	5,233	-1,057	-16.8
Mid Ulster	3,014	2,353	-661	-21.9
Fermanagh & Omagh	2,766	2,094	-672	-24.3
Derry City & Strabane	4,528	3,770	-758	-16.7
Causeway Coast & Glens	3,842	3,017	-825	-21.5
Mid & East Antrim	3,945	3,404	-541	-13.7
Antrim & Newtownabbey	3,630	2,998	-632	-17.4
No district assigned	0	0	0	-
<b>Northern Ireland</b>	<b>57,732</b>	<b>47,301</b>	<b>-10,431</b>	<b>-18.1</b>

<sup>1</sup> Belfast City policing district has four local policing teams based in Lisburn Road (South), Tennent Street (North), Strandtown (East) and Woodbourne (West).

<sup>2</sup> '-' indicates that a percentage change is not reported because the base number of incidents is less than 50.

Please Note: Policing district totals will not add to the Northern Ireland total as there will be some incidents not allocated to a policing district (e.g. incidents occurring on a motorway or those with an unrecognised address).

## 6. Background and Data Quality

### Data collection and data accuracy

Data on anti-social behaviour incidents reported to the police have been compiled since the NSIR was introduced in April 2006. Between April 2006 and March 2011, ASB incidents were split into fourteen different incident types, and these categories were used as the basis on which ASB incident levels were reported. Following Home Office national guidance introduced on 1 April 2011 on how police forces record ASB incidents, the existing approach was changed to focus more on the needs of the caller or risk to the caller rather than the previous approach which centred on categorising the type of ASB incident. As a result the number of ASB incident types has been reduced from fourteen to three. The focus is now on how the ASB incident being reported impacts on the caller, with emphasis placed on identifying the vulnerable individuals, communities and environments most at risk.

While the national guidance and incident types for recording anti-social behaviour changed from 1 April 2011, the overall levels before and after this change appear to be sufficiently comparable for a time series of figures recorded under both the previous and the current guidance to be produced. However it should be noted that the figures prior to 1 April 2011 exclude the incident type 'Hoax Calls to Emergency Services', which was one of the fourteen incident types in use between 2006/07 and 2010/11. Incidents of this nature were removed from the Anti-Social Behaviour category and placed in the Public Safety and Welfare category from the start of April 2011. This incident type was removed from figures prior to 1 April 2011 to maintain data comparability.

As anti-social behaviour incidents are extracted from an operational system whose primary function is to prioritise and respond to calls for service from members of the public, the data will always be subject to change. Incidents of anti-social behaviour are not individually checked for compliance with the National Standard for Incident Recording by the PSNI's Statistics Branch. However Statistics Branch conduct audits of anti-social behaviour incidents as required. Common types of errors in the application of incident closure codes identified through the audit process are fed back to relevant staff.

### How the data is used

Anti-social behaviour incident statistics have been collated by PSNI since 2006/07. They are used widely within PSNI as management information and to monitor performance against the Policing Plan. The figures are also used by government departments and other voluntary and statutory agencies to inform debate and policy development regarding anti-social behaviour in Northern Ireland.

### Additional data available to accompany this release

This release provides an overview of anti-social behaviour incidents recorded by the police in the 12 months to March 2023 (financial year 2022/23). Additional data is available to supplement the information contained in this bulletin. The data is available in both excel spreadsheet format and open document spreadsheet format on the [PSNI website \(opens in a new window\)](#).

A dataset providing monthly data since 2008/09 is available on the [OpenDataNI website \(opens in a new window\)](#) and is updated with in-year data on a quarterly basis (updates in late July, October, January and May).

### Web links to other information you may be interested in

[Police Recorded Crime Statistics \(opens in a new window\)](#) The latest publications, along with those that have been archived.

[Northern Ireland Safe Community Survey \(opens in a new window\)](#), with survey results available on the Department of Justice website

Figures are available for a range of additional geographic areas through the [NISRA Data Portal \(opens in a new window\)](#). These figures are updated on an annual basis.

Provisional management information drawn from police anti-social behaviour and crime figures, published at street level each month, is available through the [police crime mapping website \(opens in a new window\)](#). The figures on the crime mapping website will differ from those provided in this release as they have been extracted from the police administrative system on different dates, and also require a grid reference in order to be mapped.

[Anti-Social Behaviour in England & Wales \(opens in a new window\)](#) are included within the publications on Crime in England and Wales, which are available from the Crime and justice webpage (see section on Other related figures).

Copies of other PSNI publications are available from the [PSNI website \(opens in a new window\)](#).