

Chapter 3 – Recorded Offences Involving the use of Weapons

Coverage: **England and Wales**

Date: **13 February 2014**

Geographical Area: **Country**

Theme: **Crime and Justice**

Summary

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.

This chapter presents analyses of offences involving weapons, specifically of firearms and knives or sharp instruments, recorded by police between 2002/03 and 2012/13. Both collections contain data on a range of violent and sexual offences while the firearms collection extends coverage to other offences such as criminal damage.

- In 2012/13, the police recorded 8,135 offences in which firearms were used, a 15% decrease compared with 2011/12. Offences involving knives or sharp instruments also fell by 15% between 2011/12 and 2012/13 (to 26,340). For context, overall police recorded crime fell by 7% over the same period.
- Firearms continue to be used in a small and diminishing proportion of total police recorded crime (0.2%).
- There were 30 fatalities in 2012/13 which resulted from offences involving firearms; 12 fewer than the previous year and the lowest figure since the National Crime Recording Standard (NCRS) was introduced in 2002/03.
- People aged between 15 and 29 made up 62% of seriously or fatally injured firearm victims, while the same age group constitute 20% of the population as a whole.
- The proportion of selected violent and sexual offences involving a knife or sharp instrument was 6% in 2012/13, showing little change since 2010/11.
- Of the 26,340 recorded offences involving a knife or sharp instrument, 13,139 (50%) were robbery and 11,372 (43%) were actual or grievous bodily harm offences.

Offences involving the use of firearms: Introduction

Information is available from the police on whether a firearm is used during any recorded notifiable offence. If a firearm has been used, the Home Office receive additional data about the circumstances of that offence. Data are regularly updated with revised information from the police. The overall firearm offence figures reported here differ slightly from the Crime in England and Wales quarterly releases firstly because of these updates and secondly because this Focus on Violence publication includes extra data on offences involving air weapons.

‘Offences involving firearms’ relates to any notifiable crime 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, are not included in this analysis¹.

The different types of firearms included in this chapter 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 chapter, 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.

Notes

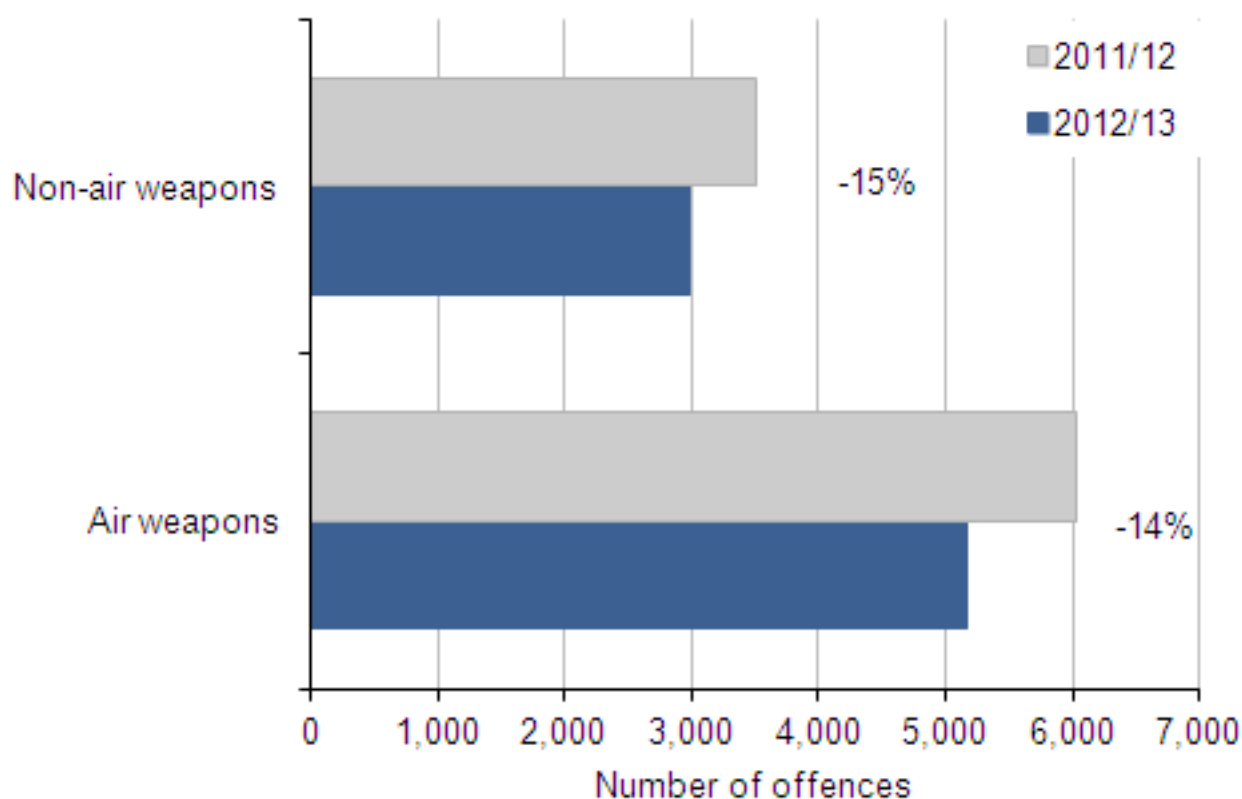
1. See Appendix table A4 in the quarterly crime statistics release for possession of firearm statistics.

Firearms - Prevalence and trends

Offences involving firearms make up a small proportion of overall recorded crime. In 2012/13, they were used in approximately 0.2% of all police recorded offences. This proportion has fallen steadily from the 0.4% recorded in 2002/03 ([Appendix table 3.01 \(1.38 Mb Excel sheet\)](#)). More detail on the use of firearms as a proportion of selected offence types is included later in this section.

In 2012/13, the police recorded 8,135 offences involving a firearm, a fall of 15% compared with the previous year (9,532 offences). There were falls in both air weapon (15%) and non-air-weapon (14%) offences (Figure 3.1). This compares with a decrease of 7% in all offences recorded by the police over the same period.

Figure 3.1 Offences recorded by the police in which firearms were reported to have been used, 2011/12 and 2012/13(1,2)



Notes:

1. Source: Police recorded crime, Home Office.
2. Police recorded crime data are not designated as National Statistics.

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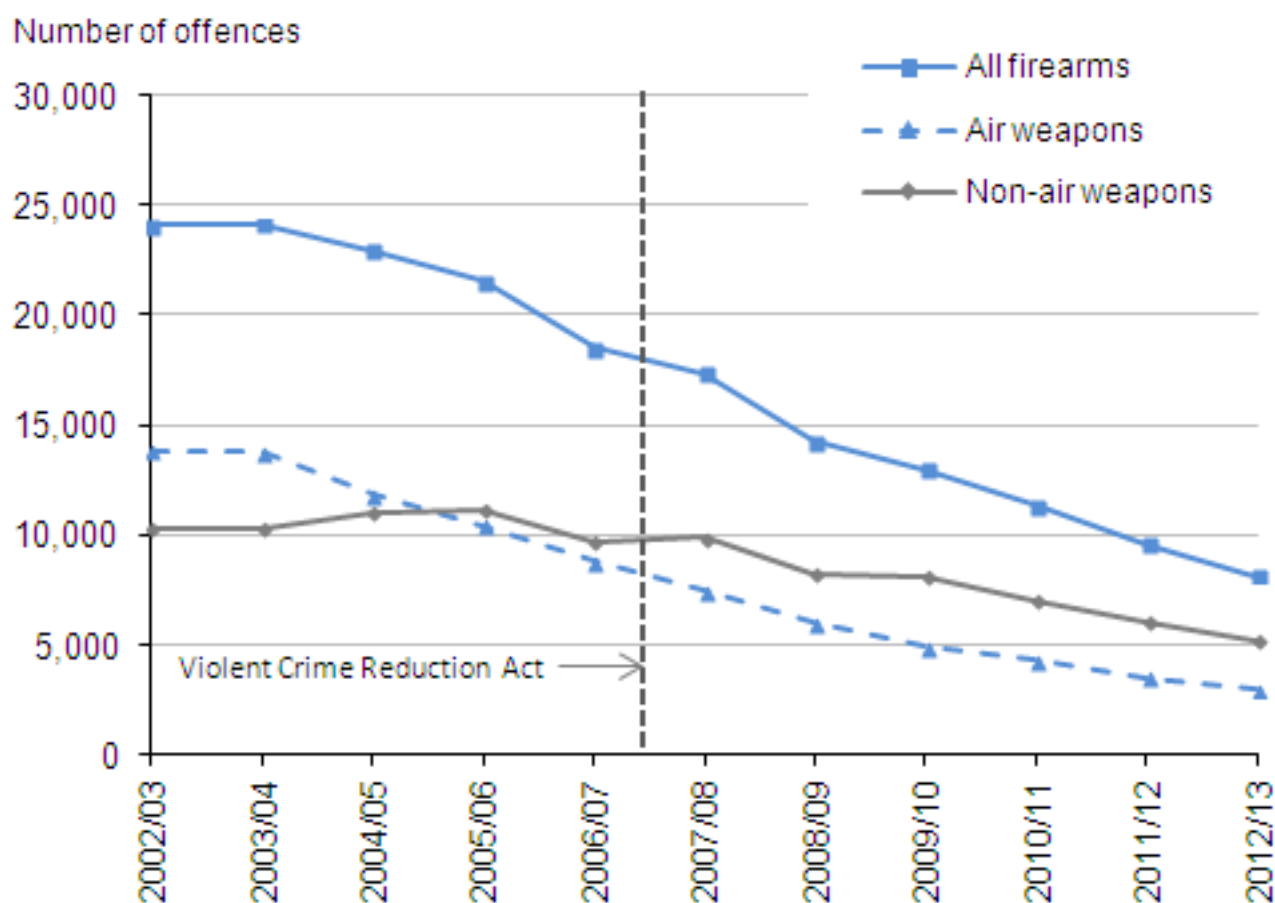
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The number of offences involving firearms has been falling year-on-year since its peak in 2003/04 (when 24,094 offences were recorded) and the latest figure of 8,135 offences represents a fall of two-thirds (66%) since this peak (Figure 3.2). To provide context, this is a greater fall than the 38% decrease in total police recorded crime over the same period.

- The number of offences involving air weapons has fallen by 10,845 offences (78%) since its peak in 2002/03.
- Non-air weapon offences have fallen by almost a half (5,090 offences) since 2002/03, having peaked later at 11,088 offences in 2005/06.

In 2012/13, 63% of offences involving a firearm involved a non-air weapon and 37% involved an air weapon. These proportions are the same as 2011/12. However, over the last decade there has been a gradual increase in the proportion of firearm offences which involve a non-air weapon, rising from 43% in 2003/04 to 63% in the latest year. This reflects the steeper fall in air weapon offences over the time period compared with non-air weapons.

Figure 3.2: Offences recorded by the police in which firearms were reported to have been used, 2002/03 to 2012/13(1,2)



Notes:

1. Source: Police recorded crime, Home Office.
2. Police recorded crime data are not designated as National Statistics.
3. The Violent Crime Reduction Act introduced in October 2007 made it illegal to import or sell imitation firearms and tightened the rules for the manufacture and sale of certain types of air weapon.

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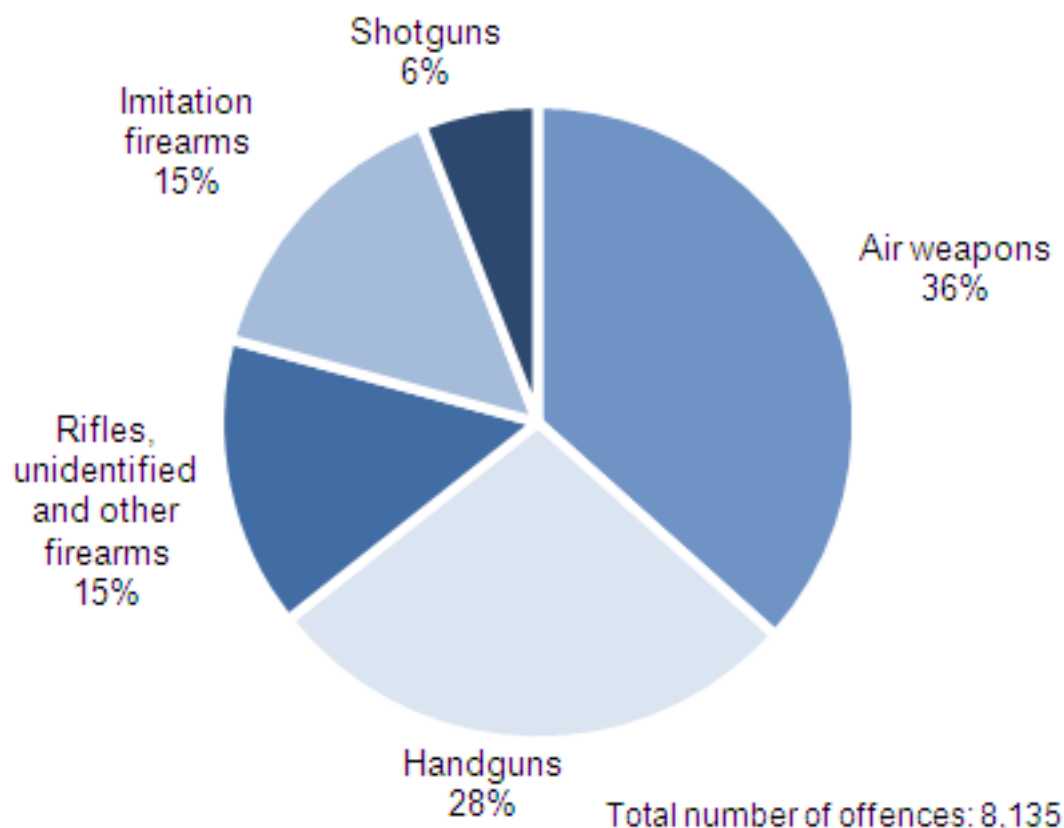
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Individual weapon types

Figure 3.3 shows the proportion of different weapon types used in firearm offences in 2012/13 and Figure 3.4 shows trends in smaller groupings of non-air weapons since 2002/03. The number of offences involving each grouping of non-air weapons as a proportion of the total number of firearm offences has increased gradually since 2002/03. In 2012/13:

- Handguns were used in 28% (2,256) of offences involving firearms, making them the most commonly used firearm after air weapons. Over the longer term, there were 5,549 handgun offences in 2002/03. This figure fell to 4,273 in 2008/09 before sharply declining to the 2,256 offences recorded in 2012/13 (a fall of 47% over this five year period).
- Four hundred and fifty three offences involving shotguns were recorded in 2012/13, 33% or 219 offences lower than the number recorded in 2002/03 and 8% lower than in 2011/12. This is the second consecutive annual fall in shotgun offences, the number of offences having remained fairly stable between 2004/05 and 2010/11 (fluctuating at around 600 offences per year).

Figure 3.3: Offences recorded by the police in which firearms were reported to have been used, by type of principal weapon, 2012/13(1,2)



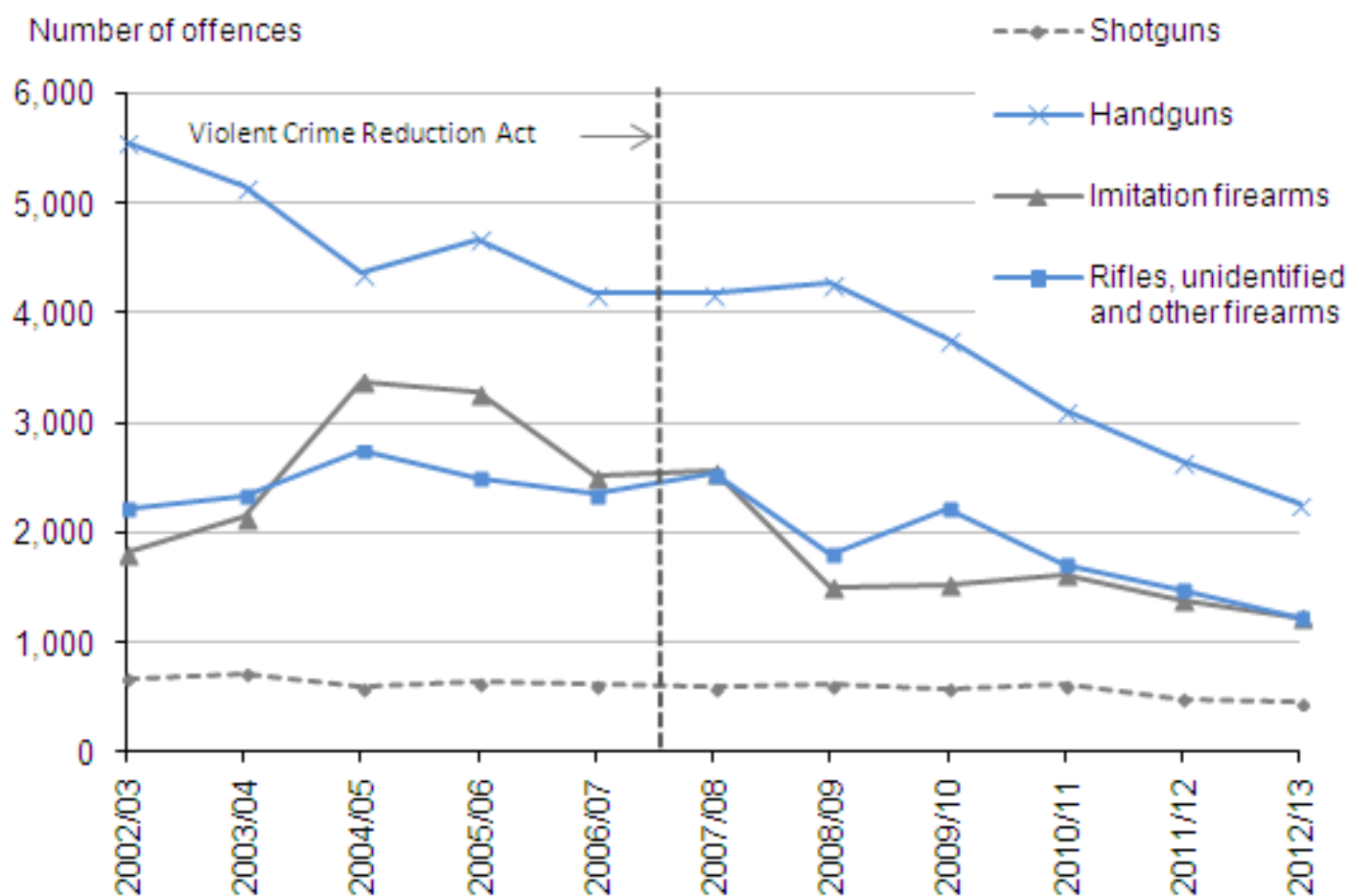
Notes:

1. Source: Police recorded crime, Home Office.
2. Police recorded crime data are not designated as National Statistics.

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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 2012/13(1,2)

**Notes:**

1. Source: Police recorded crime, Home Office.
2. Police recorded crime data are not designated as National Statistics.
3. More explicit guidelines for the classification of weapons introduced on 1 April 2004 may have affected the recording of firearm offences committed using handguns, imitation weapons, and other weapons.
4. The Violent Crime Reduction Act introduced in October 2007 made it illegal to import or sell imitation firearms and tightened the rules for the manufacture and sale of certain types of air weapon.
5. Rifles/others includes starting guns, supposed/type unknown, prohibited firearms (including CS gas) and other firearms.
6. Imitation firearms include weapons such as BB guns and soft air weapons, which can fire small plastic pellets at low velocity.

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The Violent Crime Reduction Act 2006 was introduced during a period of declining offences involving the use of imitation firearms and air weapons. The Act, introduced in October 2007, made it illegal to import or sell imitation firearms and tightened the rules for the manufacture and sale of certain types of air weapon. It is not possible to assess the exact impact of this legislation although the use of imitation firearms and air weapons continued to fall following its introduction (Figure 3.2 and Figure 3.4).

How firearms were used

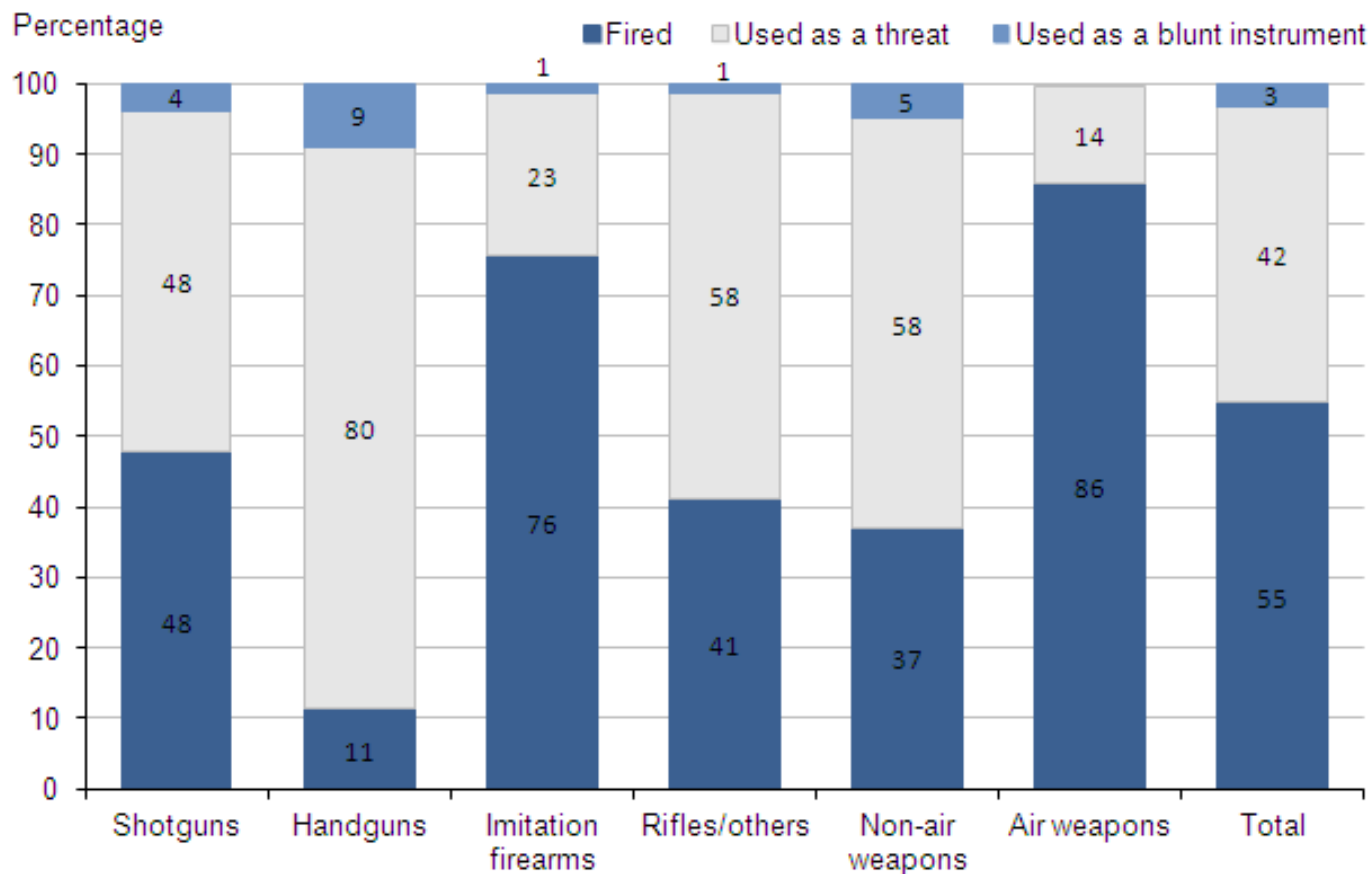
Firearms are recorded by police as either being fired, used as a threat or used as a blunt instrument. In 2012/13, of the 8,135 offences recorded by the police:

- The firearm was fired in 55% of cases (4,451 offences).
- The firearm was used as a threat in 42% of cases (3,416 offences).
- The firearm was used as a blunt instrument in 3% of cases (268 offences).

The likelihood of a weapon being fired varies considerably by weapon type (Figure 3.5). In 2012/13:

- Air weapons were fired in 86% of the 2,977 offences in which they were involved and were therefore the most likely weapon to be fired of the main firearm categories. This could reflect that air weapon offences largely do not come to the attention of police unless they are fired.
- Handguns were used in 2,256 offences, were fired in 11%, used as a threat in 80% and used as a blunt instrument in 9% of cases.
- Shotguns were used in 453 recorded offences and of these were fired and used to threaten in equal proportions (48%).
- All firearms were used as a blunt instrument in a small minority of offences for every weapon type.

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, 2012/13(1,2)



Notes:

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

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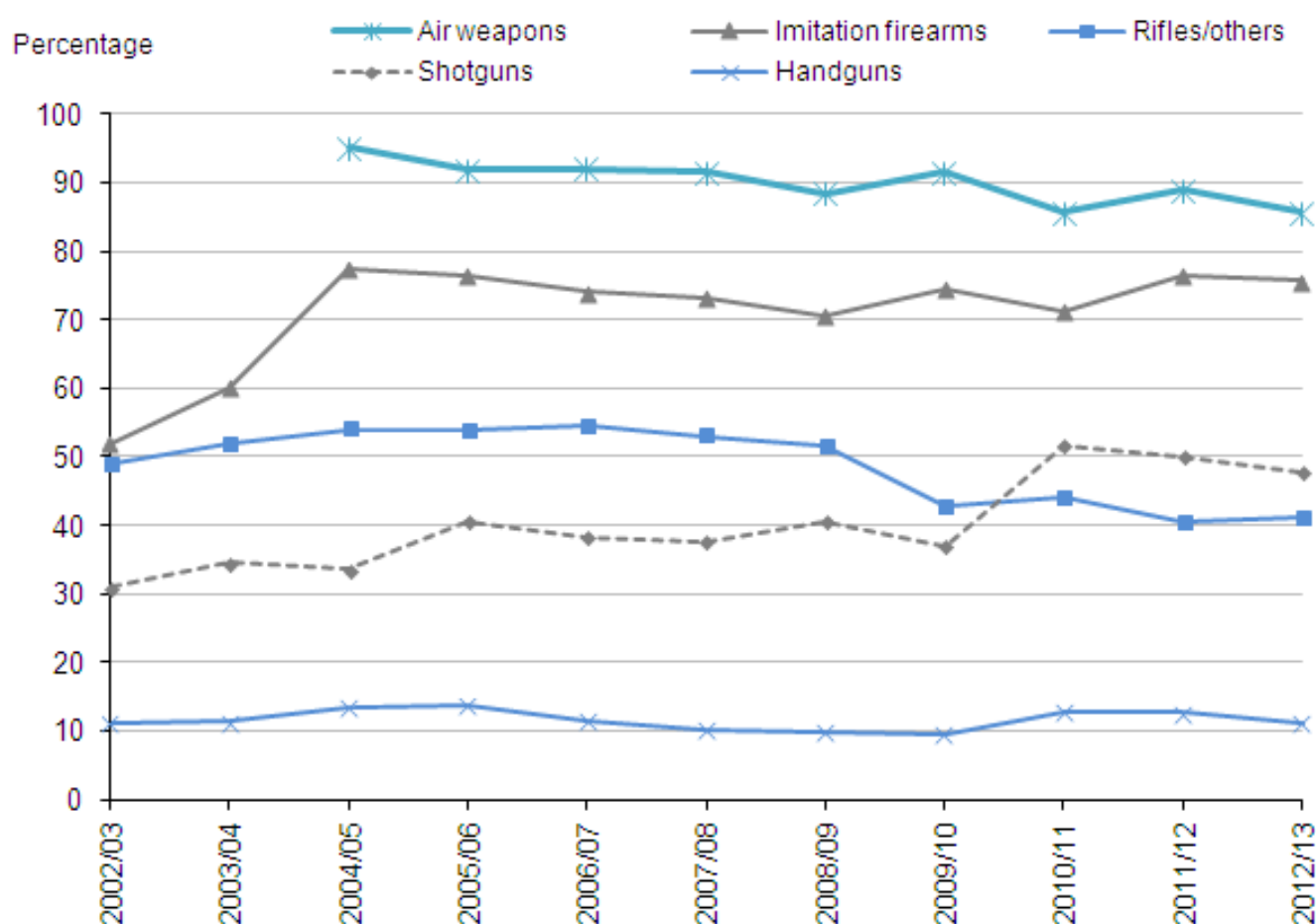
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Between 2002/03 and 2007/08 there was a steady downward trend in the likelihood of a weapon being fired. In 2004/05 firearms were fired in 70% of offences in which they were involved, by 2007/08 the proportion had fallen to 62% ([Appendix table 3.03 \(1.38 Mb Excel sheet\)](#)), a change largely due to the fall in offences involving air weapons, which over time have consistently been the most likely to be fired (in around 80-90% of offences). In each of the five years since 2008/09 firearms were fired in just over half of the offences in which they were involved. A breakdown of the proportion of offences involving firearm types in which the weapon was fired is shown in Figure 3.6.

- In 2004/05 (when recording of these data started) air weapons were fired in 95% of offences, compared with 86% in 2012/13.
- Rifles/other firearms have shown a similar proportional decrease in the instances in which they are fired, falling from 49% in 2002/03 to 41% in 2012/13.
- The proportion of shotgun offences in which the weapon is fired has increased from 31% in 2002/03 to 48% in 2012/13, although this figure has fallen slightly in each of the last two years.
- The likelihood of handguns being fired has remained relatively stable since 2002/03 (fluctuating between 9% and 14%).

Figure 3.6: Proportion of offences involving firearms in which they were reported to have been fired, by principal weapon type, 2002/03 to 2012/13(1,2)



Notes:

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

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Injuries sustained in offences involving firearms

Injuries sustained as a result of offences involving firearms are graded by the police as being slight, serious (requiring a stay in hospital or involving fractures, concussion, severe general shock, penetration by a bullet or multiple shot wounds) or fatal. It is also possible to identify how many victims were on-duty or off-duty police officers.

In 2012/13, there were 1,668 offences involving firearms which resulted in injury, a fall of 16% on the previous year and in line with the drop of 15% in all offences involving firearms. The 1,668 offences which resulted in injury in 2012/13 is one fifth (21%) of the total number of recorded offences involving firearms, a similar proportion to each year since 2002/03 ([Appendix table 3.05 \(1.38 Mb Excel sheet\)](#)).

Severity of injuries sustained

In line with the large falls in the number of offences involving firearms recorded by the police, there have been substantial decreases in all types of injury sustained resulting from these offences.

- There were 30 fatalities resulting from firearms offences in 2012/13, this compares with 42 recorded in 2011/12 and is fewer than half the number recorded in 2002/03. As in previous years, fatal injuries continue to constitute fewer than 1% of the total number of firearm offences
- Serious and slight injuries have both fallen by approximately two-thirds between 2002/03 and 2012/13 (serious injuries from 572 to 204 and slight injuries from 3,903 to 1,434). Serious injuries have remained at around 3% and slight injuries have fluctuated between 14% and 21% since 2002/03.

Since 2002/03 there has not been any drastic change in the numbers of different injury types as a proportion of the total number of offences which resulted in injury ([Appendix table 3.05 \(1.38 Mb Excel sheet\)](#)).

Injuries to police officers

In 2012/13, two police officers suffered a fatal injury as a result of offences involving firearms (Table 3.1); both were victims of the Dale Cregan shootings in September 2012. In each of the last three years, the number of police officers suffering any type of injury from offences involving firearms has been lower than each year prior to 2009/10 with the exception of 2008/09.

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 2012/13(1),(2)


England and Wales

Year	Total	Fatal injury	Serious injury ³	Slight injury
Number of offences				
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

Table notes:

1. Source: Police recorded crime, Home Office.
2. Police recorded crime data are not designated as National Statistics.
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.

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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 (for example, 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 \(1.38 Mb Excel sheet\)](#)).

- Air weapons were the least likely weapon to cause a fatal or serious injury in 2012/13; no fatal injuries resulted from the use of air weapons and around 1% of offences in which the weapon was fired resulted in serious injury.

- Non-air weapons were much more likely to result in injury than air weapons. Overall more than half of offences in which the weapon was fired resulted in an injury (2% were fatal, 8% were serious and 46% were slight).
- Fatalities were associated with two types of firearm: shotguns and handguns. Fatal injuries resulted from 7% of instances where handguns were fired and from 6% of those in which shotguns were fired in 2012/13.
- More broadly, almost 1 in 3 offences in which a handgun was fired resulted in serious or fatal injury, while this figure was 1 in 4 for shotguns.

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, 2012/13(1),(2)

England and Wales

Weapon type	Number of offences	Percentages ³				
		Fired	Of those fired:			
			Fatal injury	Serious injury ⁴	Slight injury	No injury
Shotguns	453	48	6	18	13	64
Handguns	2,256	11	7	24	15	54
Imitation firearms ⁵	1,225	76	-	1	60	39
Rifles/ others ⁶	1,224	41	-	9	50	41
Non-air weapons	5,158	37	2	8	46	45
Air weapons	2,977	86	-	1	12	86
Total	8,135	55	1	4	27	69

Table notes:

1. Source: Police recorded crime, Home Office.
2. Police recorded crime data are not designated as National Statistics.
3. Percentages may not sum due to rounding.
4. 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.
5. Imitation firearms include weapons such as BB guns and soft air weapons, which can fire small plastic pellets at low velocity.

6. Includes starting guns, supposed/type unknown, prohibited firearms (including CS gas) and other firearms.

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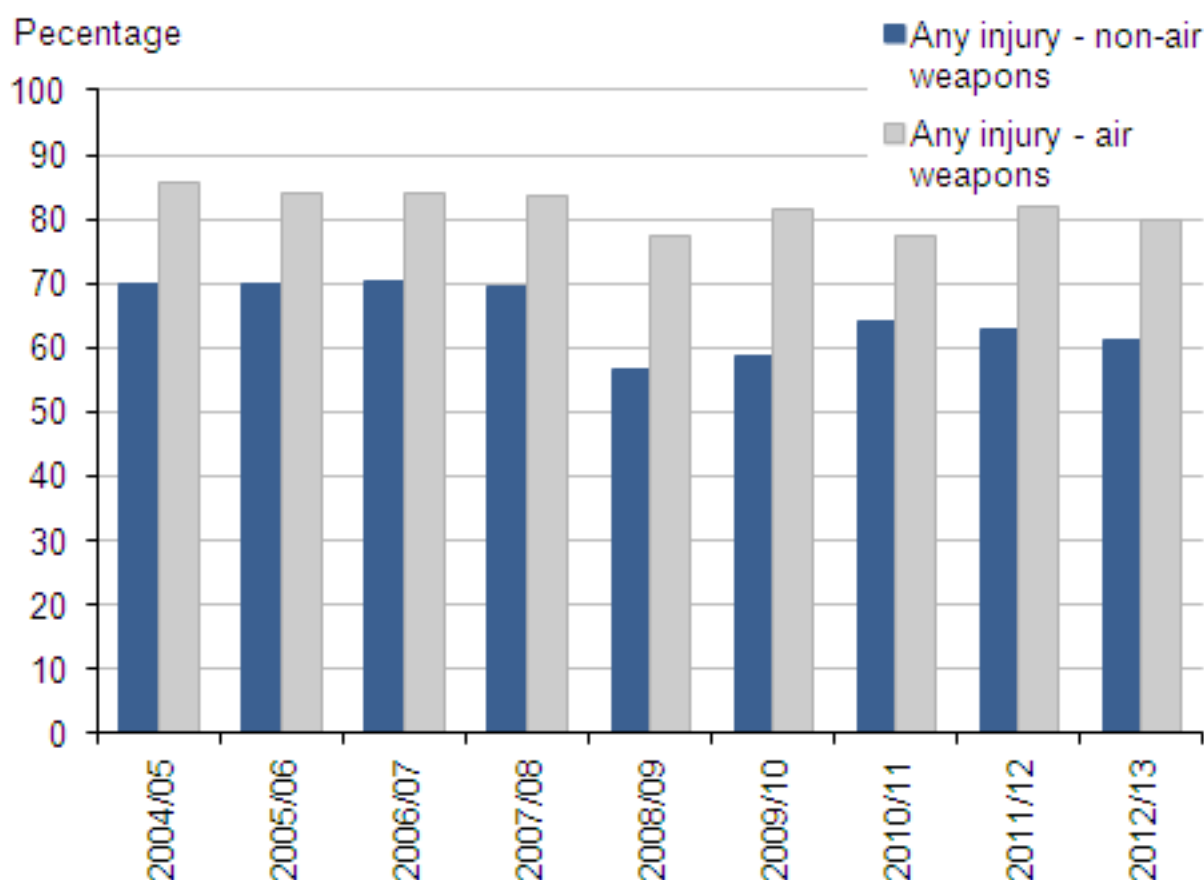
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It is important to highlight that although a very small minority of air weapon offences result in injury, in the vast majority of cases (typically between 70 and 80% of offences) they are used to commit criminal damage (see below); an offence which is not associated with victim injury ([Appendix table 3.08 \(1.38 Mb Excel sheet\)](#)).

Although overall air weapons are associated with fewer injuries than non-air weapons, when they are used in violence against the person offences this pattern is reversed; the proportion of injuries sustained as a result of air weapon violence against the person offences has in fact been consistently higher than that of non-air weapons (Figure 3.7). This reflects the higher proportion of instances in which air weapons are fired compared with non-air weapons.

Figure 3.7: Proportion of police recorded violence against the person offences involving firearms which resulted in injury(1,2,3,4) 2004/05 to 2012/13



Notes:

1. Source: Police recorded crime, Home Office.
2. Police recorded crime data are not designated as National Statistics.

3. Prior to 2004/05 air weapon offences were recorded as homicide, attempted murder, other violence against the person, robbery, burglary, criminal damage or other offences. Unlike non-air weapons, data on the specific offences that constitute these groups is not held therefore the correction relating to 'other violence against the person' offences (described in the Overview chapter) can only be applied to air weapon data from 2004/05 onwards.
4. Injuries could be caused by either the firearm being fired or used as a blunt instrument.

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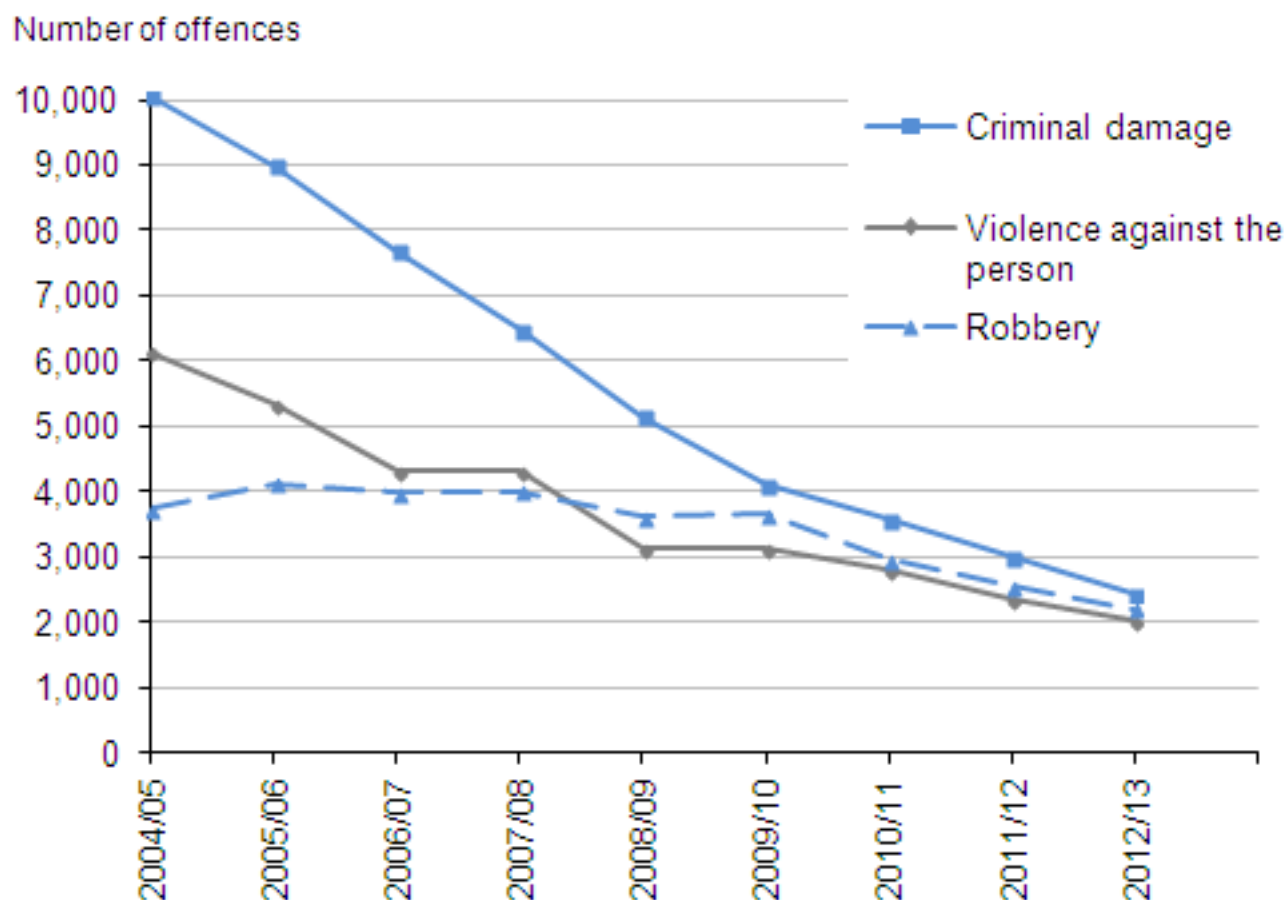
Types of offences where firearms are used

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 2012/13 (Figure 3.8; [Appendix table 3.08 \(1.38 Mb Excel sheet\)](#)).

- Violence against the person offences increased between 2002/03 and 2004/05 before steadily decreasing to 2,017 by 2012/13.
- Between 2002/03 and 2003/04 the number of robberies involving firearms decreased 14% to 4,117. They remained at around this level until 2009/10 and have since fallen a further 40% to 2,206 offences in 2012/13.
- Criminal damage offences have been falling sharply over the last decade. The 2,426 offence recorded in 2012/13 represents a fall of 78% since 2003/04.

Figure 3.8: Offences recorded by the police in which firearms were reported to have been used by selected offence type, 2004/05 to 2012/13(1,2,3)



Notes:

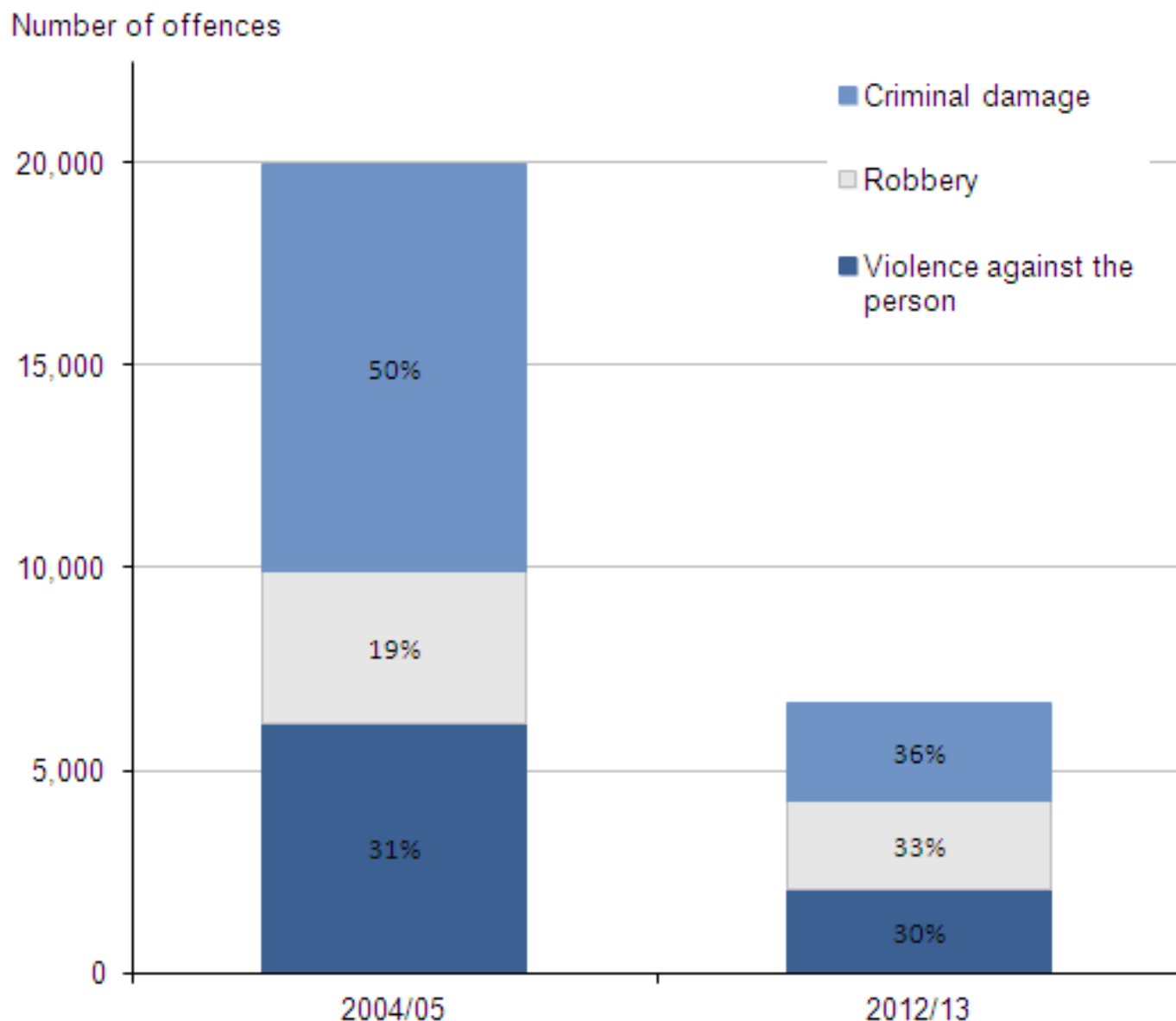
1. Source: Police recorded crime, Home Office.
2. Police recorded crime data are not designated as National Statistics.
3. Prior to 2004/05 air weapon offences were recorded as homicide, attempted murder, other violence against the person, robbery, burglary, criminal damage or other offences. Unlike non-air weapons, data on the specific offences that constitute these groups is not held therefore the correction relating to 'other violence against the person' offences (described in the Overview chapter) can only be applied to air weapon data from 2004/05 onwards.
4. The Violent Crime Reduction Act introduced in October 2007 made it illegal to import or sell imitation firearms and tightened the rules for the manufacture and sale of certain types of air weapon.

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In addition to a large fall in the total number of offences involving firearms in the last decade there has also been a shift in the proportions of offences involving firearms made up of violence against the person (less than 2% of which are homicide), robbery and criminal damage. Of the 8,135 offences involving firearms in 2012/13, 30% were violence against the person offences, 33% were robbery offences, 36% were criminal damage offences, a more even distribution compared with 2004/05 (Figure 3.9).

Figure 3.9: Offences recorded by the police in which firearms were reported to have been used by selected offence type, 2004/05 and 2012/13(1,2,3)



Notes:

1. Source: Police recorded crime, Home Office.
2. Police recorded crime data are not designated as National Statistics.
3. Prior to 2004/05 air weapon offences were recorded as homicide, attempted murder, other violence against the person, robbery, burglary, criminal damage or other offences. Unlike non-air weapons, data on the specific offences that constitute these groups is not held therefore the correction relating to 'other violence against the person' offences (described in the Overview chapter) can only be applied to air weapon data from 2004/05 onwards.

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To place these trends into context, in 2002/03 firearms were involved in 1.2% of the total number of these three offence types. In 2012/13 this proportion was 0.6%, meaning the fall in the number of these offences involving firearms has been greater than the total fall for the three offence types. Consistent with the overall downward trend described above, firearms were involved in a smaller proportion of each offence type in 2012/13 than in 2002/03 with the largest proportional fall being in violence against the person and criminal damage offences ([Appendix table 3.01 \(1.38 Mb Excel sheet\)](#)).

To focus on the use of specific weapon types, in 2012/13:

- Fourteen per cent of recorded offences involving air weapons were violence against the person, 1% were robbery and 70% were criminal damage offences ([Appendix table 3.09 \(1.38 Mb Excel sheet\)](#)).
- Thirty-one per cent of the recorded offences involving non-air weapons were violence against the person, 42% were robbery and 6% were criminal damage offences.

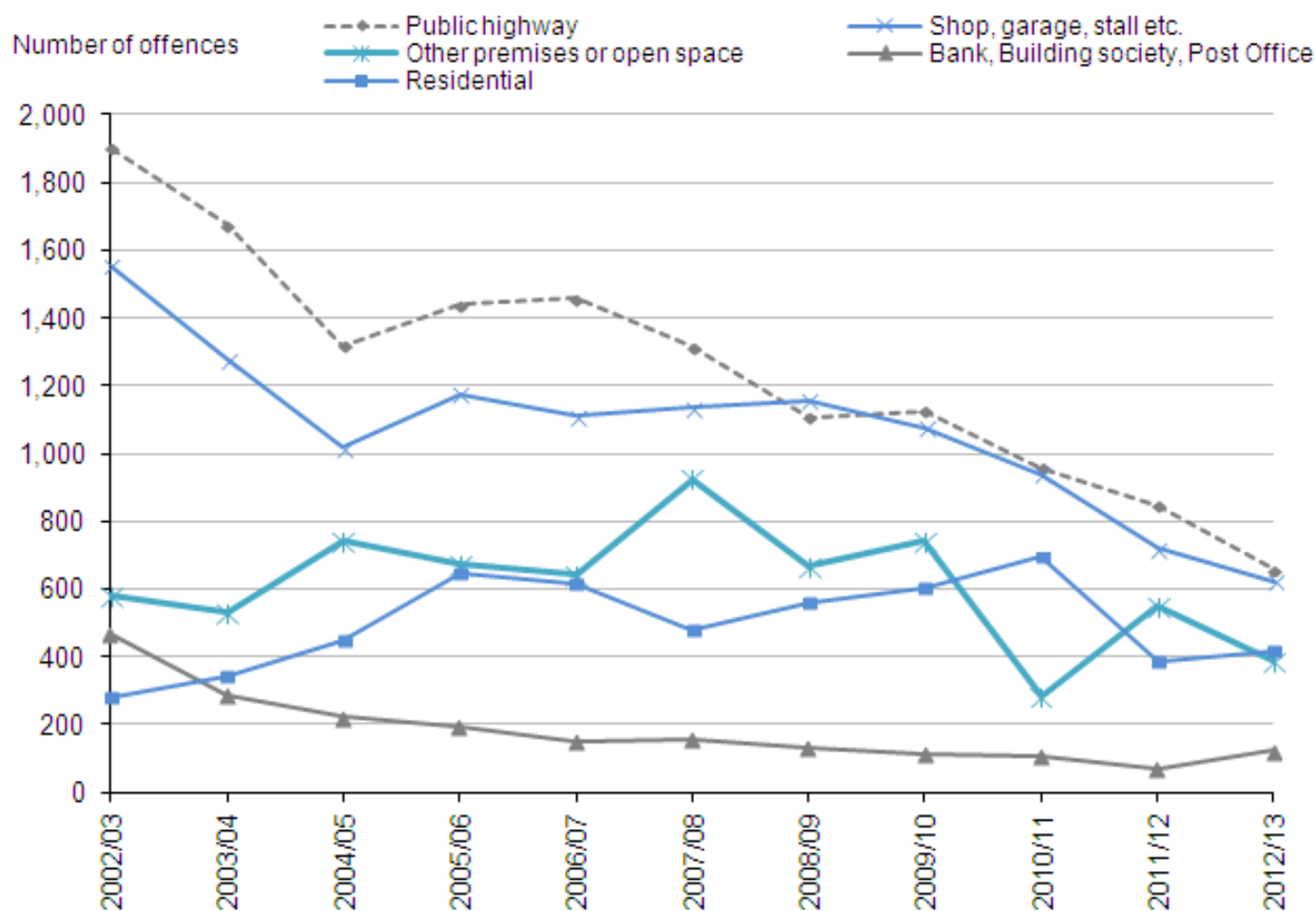
Location of robberies involving a firearm

In 2012/13, of the 2,206 recorded robbery offences involving firearms, almost a third (30%; 656 offences) were committed on public highways, 28% were committed in shops and garages (621 offences) and 19% were committed in a residential location (417 offences; Figure 3.10; [Appendix table 3.10 \(1.38 Mb Excel sheet\)](#)).

- Robberies on public highways and shops and garages have been broadly decreasing since 2002/03.
- Robberies committed in residential premises and 'other' areas have fluctuated considerably since 2002/03. The 417 robberies committed on residential premises in 2012/13 is nearly 50% (137 offences) higher than the number recorded in 2002/03 but remains below the 2008/09 peak of 557 offences.
- There were 122 robberies of banks, building societies and Post Offices which involved firearms, an increase of 53 on the previous year. While these numbers are relatively small and prone to fluctuation, this is the highest number since 2008/09, when 130 were recorded, and follows a decade of falls in crimes of this type.

In 2012/13, 63% robberies involving firearms were committed with a handgun, 21% involved another type of firearm and in 15% of offences the firearm was unidentified ([Appendix table 3.11 \(1.38 Mb Excel sheet\)](#)).

Figure 3.10: Number of robberies in which firearms were reported to have been used, by location of offence, 2002/03 to 2012/13(1,2,3)



Notes:

1. Source: Police recorded crime, Home Office.
2. Police recorded crime data are not designated as National Statistics.
3. These crimes are classified as robberies but are mostly break-ins where firearms have been used immediately before or at the time of stealing items from a residential property, and in order to steal these items. If firearms are used instead in the getaway, the crime is classified as a burglary.

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Geographical distribution of firearm offences

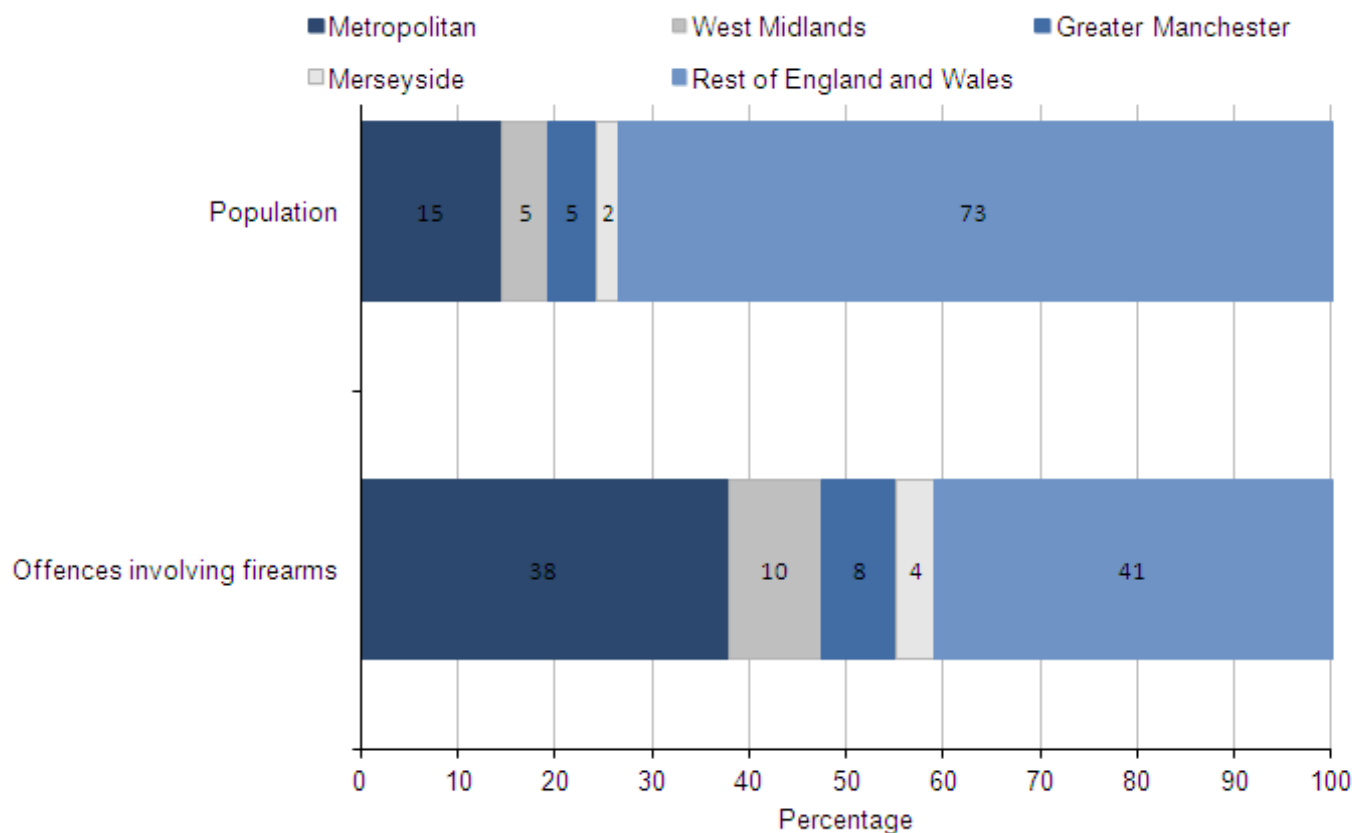
As in previous years, offences involving the use of non-air weapons (which tend to be used in more serious offences) are geographically concentrated. Around three in every five (59%) offences recorded in 2012/13 occurred in four police force areas: Metropolitan, West Midlands, Greater Manchester and 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 3.11; [Appendix table 3.12 \(1.38 Mb Excel sheet\)](#)).

In 2012/13, there were 9 firearm offences per 100,000 people in England and Wales. For the four urban forces mentioned above the rates were¹:

- 24 offences per 100,000 in the Metropolitan police force area.
- 18 per 100,000 in the West Midlands police force area.
- 15 per 100,000 in the Merseyside police force.
- 14 per 100,000 in the Greater Manchester police force area.

Figure 3.11 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, 2012/13(1,2)



Notes:

1. Source: Police recorded crime, Home Office.
2. Police recorded crime data are not designated as National Statistics.
3. The population figures are based on mid-2012 projections from the Office for National Statistics.

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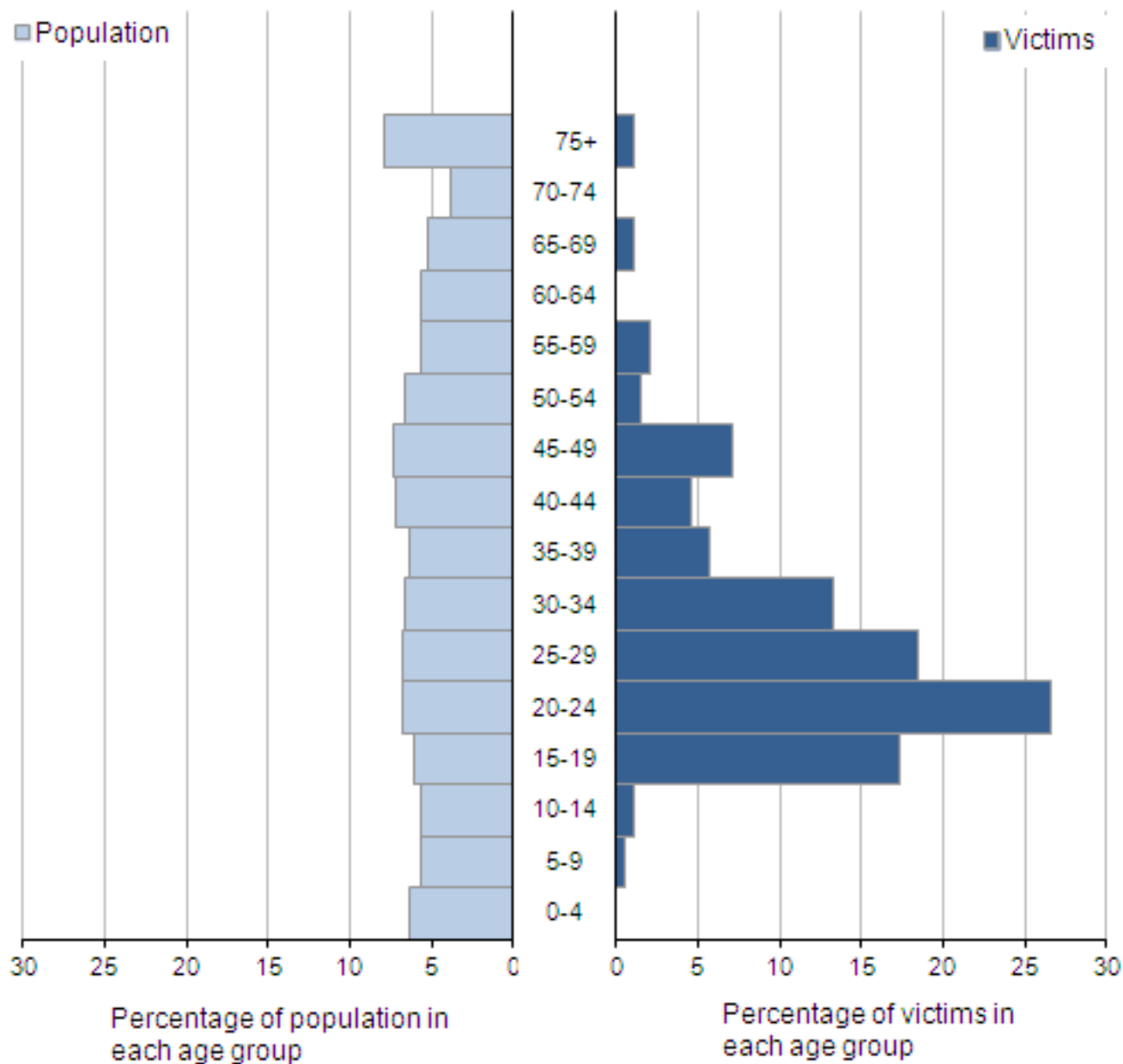
1. Population estimates are based on number of people resident in each police force area while number of offences recorded may include those committed against non-residents, for example people who travel into the city to work. This could partly explain the differences in rates between those areas with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

Firearm offences by victim characteristics

As in previous years, in 2012/13 there was variation in the risk of being a victim of an offence involving a non-air weapon by age.

- Of the non-air weapon offences in which the age of the victim was known (91% of all instances), 43% of victims were aged between 15 and 29 even though they make up only 20% of the population of England and Wales.
- People aged 60 years and over were less likely to become victims, accounting for 5% 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 (196 victims for whom age was known) the difference is even more pronounced: 15 to 29 year olds formed 62% of victims, while 2% of victims were over 60 years old (Figure 3.12).

Figure 3.12: Age profile of fatally or seriously injured firearm victims, excluding air weapons, compared to population profile for England and Wales, 2012/13(1,2)



Notes:

1. Source: Police recorded crime, Home Office.
2. Police recorded crime data are not designated as National Statistics.
3. Excludes four cases where victim age was unknown.
4. The population figures are based on mid-2012 projections from the Office for National Statistics.

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(34.5 Kb)

Of the 4,499 (87%) offences involving non-air weapons in which victim ethnicity was recorded, 66% were White (2,949 offences), 17% were Asian (752), 15% were Black (669) and 3% (129) 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% Asian, 3% were Black and the remaining 3% were of other ethnicities. Black and Asian victims are therefore over represented and White victims are under represented but there are other important factors which must be considered in the interpretation of this finding. Firstly, 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 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”. When analysing overall CSEW violence, the 2009/10 survey ([Flatley et al.](#), 2010) showed that ethnic groups other than white do not have a higher risk of being a victim of CSEW violence. While the CSEW looks at violence overall (and does not cover homicide), and the Leyland and Dundas study is for Scotland, this does provide some evidence that other socio-factors may also be important.

Notes

1. 2011 Census results are published on the ONS website.

Misappropriated (stolen) firearms

Additional information on the number of firearms that are ‘misappropriated’, that is stolen, obtained by fraud or forgery, or handled dishonestly is also collected by the police. However, to reduce the burden on police forces, the Home Office stopped collecting information on stolen firearms on 1 April 2013 and as such this data will not appear in future publications.

The number of firearms recorded by the police as being stolen has fluctuated between 2,000 and 3,000 in the past ten years. During 2012/13, 2,155 firearms were stolen, a similar level to the previous year (2,133; [Appendix table 3.15 \(1.38 Mb Excel sheet\)](#)).

Overall in 2012/13, the majority of firearms (69%) that were stolen were taken from residential premises, this pattern is also observed for each of the different firearm types ([Appendix table 3.16 \(1.38 Mb Excel sheet\)](#)).

Offences involving knives or sharp instruments: Introduction

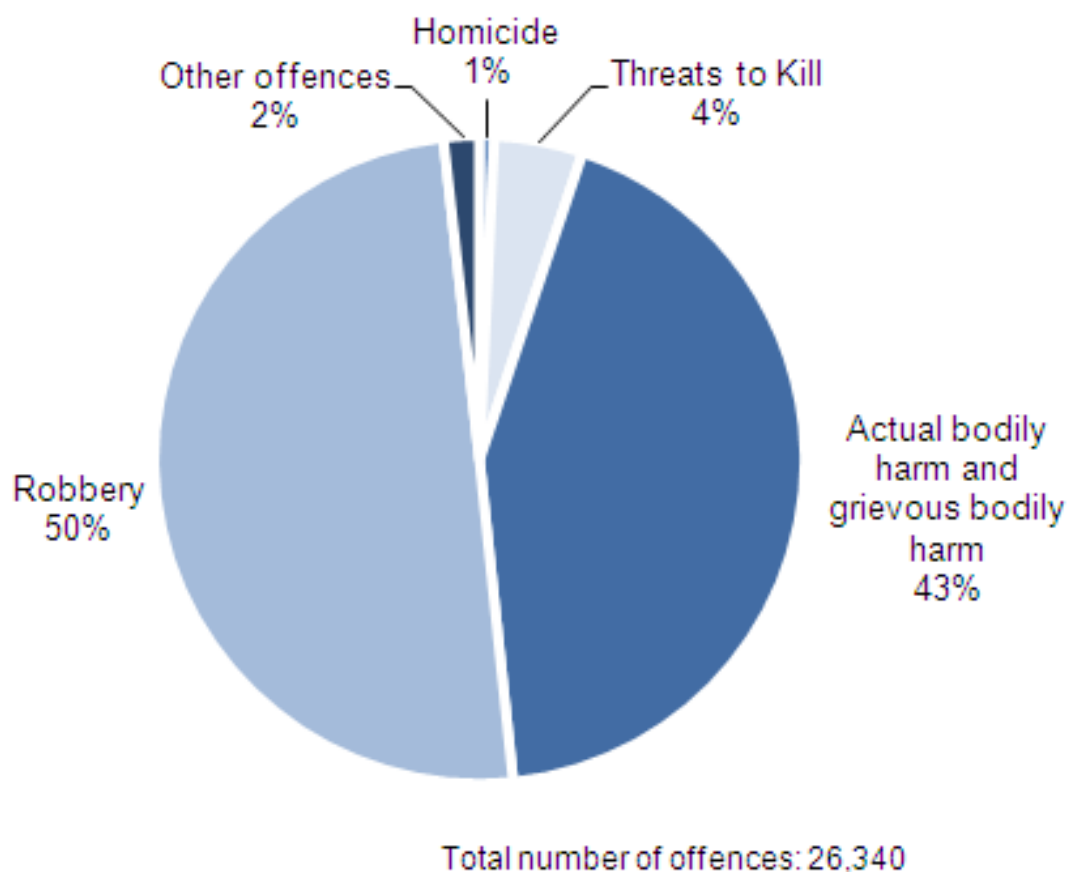
Seven of the more serious types of offence in the recorded crime data (homicide, threats to kill, actual and grievous bodily harm, robbery, attempted murder, rape and sexual assault) can be broken down by whether or not a knife or sharp instrument was involved. Data are regularly updated with revised information from the police. 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. The knife and sharp instrument offence figures reported in this publication differ slightly from the Crime in England and Wales quarterly releases because of these updates.

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

Offences involving knives or sharp instruments: Prevalence and trends

In 2012/13, knives or other sharp instruments were used in a total of 26,340 offences recorded by the police, a fall of 15% compared with 2011/12 and more than double the 7% fall in total recorded crime over the same period. Over 90% of knife or sharp instrument offences were for robbery (13,139 offences) or actual/grievous bodily harm offences (11,372 offences). Homicides involving a knife or sharp instrument made up around 1% of the total number of knife or sharp instrument offences (Figure 3.13).

Figure 3.13 Offences recorded by police in which a knife or sharp instrument was used, 2012/13(1,2)



Notes:

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

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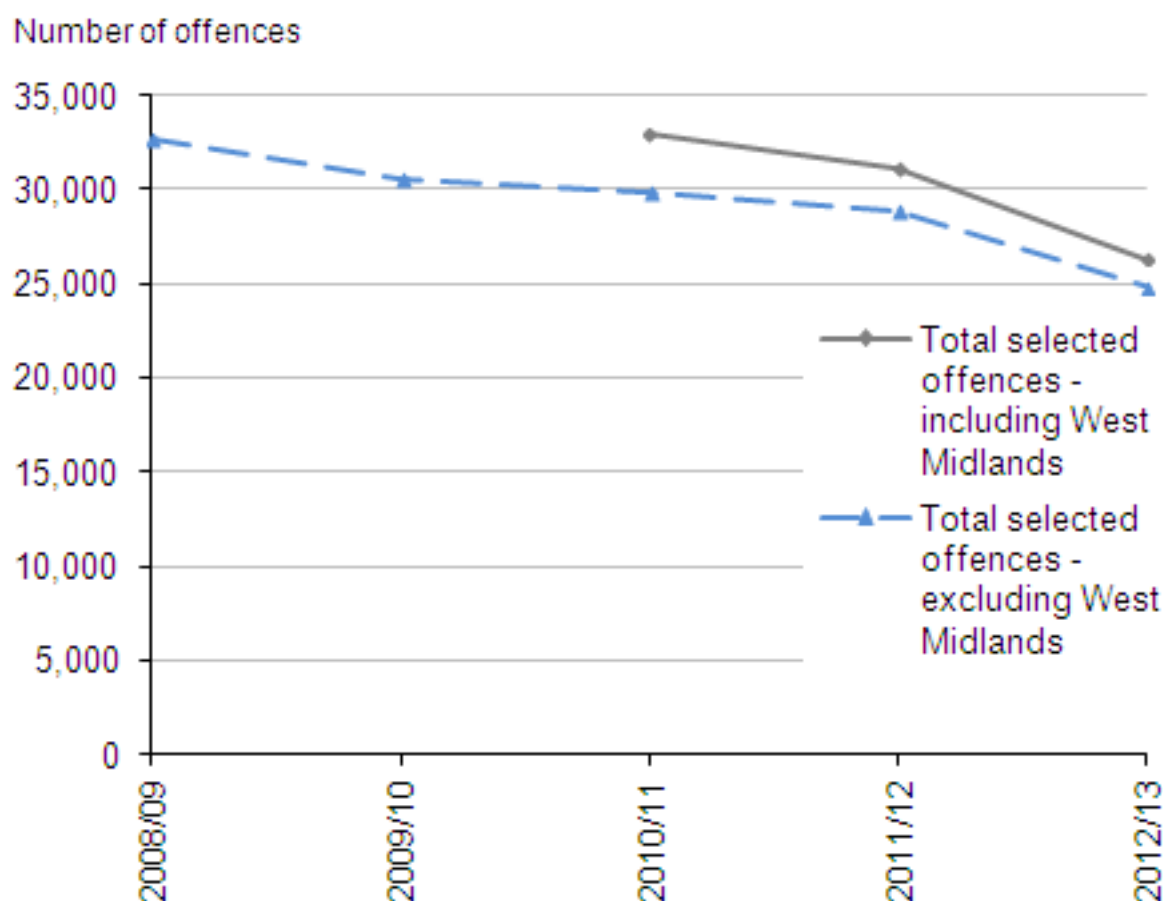
(33.5 Kb)

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. Two forces (Surrey and Sussex) continue to record offences involving unbroken bottles and glass in their 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 three years from 2010/11, offences involving a knife or sharp instrument fell 20% from 32,889 to 26,340, with a large part of this decrease occurring between 2011/12 and 2012/13 (Figure 3.14). With the exception of sexual assault, all of the selected offences involving knives or sharp instruments described above decreased by around 20% during this three year period ([Appendix table 3.17 \(1.38 Mb Excel sheet\)](#)).

The extended trend beginning 2008/09, which excludes West Midlands police, is broadly similar to the trend for all forces beginning 2010/11: both show decreases in recent years with the sharpest fall being between 2011/12 and 2012/13. The total number of offences for the extended trend is shown in Figure 3.14, while more detail on individual offence trends is given in [Appendix table 3.18 \(1.38 Mb Excel sheet\)](#).

Figure 3.14: Number of police recorded offences involving a knife or sharp instrument, including and excluding West Midlands PFA, 2008/09 to 2012/13(1,2)



Notes:

1. Source: Police recorded crime and Homicide Index, Home Office.
2. Police recorded crime data are not designated as National Statistics.
3. Offences included in figures are all those listed in figure 3.13.

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Although the number of knife crime offences has fallen in recent years, the number as a proportion of total police recorded offences in which they have been used has changed little. Over the three 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 2012/13 ([Appendix table 3.19 \(1.38 Mb Excel sheet\)](#)).

Geographical distribution of offences involving knives or sharp instruments

The Metropolitan Police recorded 43% (11,375 offences) of all knife or sharp instrument offences.

This figure is equivalent to 137 offences per 100,000 population, three times the rate of England and Wales as a whole and more than double the rate of Greater Manchester (the force with the next highest rate). In forces other than the Metropolitan Police, those covering urban areas typically recorded more offences involving knives or sharp instruments and had higher offence rates per 100,000 population than those in rural areas ([Appendix table 3.20 \(1.38 Mb Excel sheet\)](#)).¹

Notes

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 (for example. cities) and those with lower non-resident populations.

Hospital admissions for assault with knives or sharp instruments

Although injuries resulting from offences involving knives or sharp instruments are not recorded by the police, some data for England is available from the NHS Hospital Episodes Statistics¹. The recording of the cause of hospital admission is not mandatory so the figures should be treated with some caution.

Between 2011/12 and 2012/13, hospital admissions for assault with sharp instruments fell by 14% (641 admissions) to 3,849. This follows a period of steady decline between 2006/07 and 2011/12 from 5,720 to 4,490, a fall of 22% over this period ([Appendix table 3.19 \(1.38 Mb Excel sheet\)](#)).

Between 2008/09 and 2012/13, hospital admissions for assault with sharp instruments and police recorded offences involving knives or sharp instruments have followed a similar pattern, although, as expected, the absolute number of recorded knife crime offences is considerably higher. Both are at their lowest level recorded in the last five years, having fallen sharply between 2011/12 and 2012/13 (Figure 3.15).

Figure 3.15: 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 2012/13(1,2)



Notes:

1. Source: Police recorded crime and Homicide Index, Home Office; Hospital Episode Statistics, NHS Health and Social Care Information Centre.
2. Police recorded crime data are not designated as National Statistics.
3. All Welsh PFAs and West Midlands PFA are excluded.

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(33 Kb)

Notes

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

References

Flatley, J, Kershaw, C, Smith, K, Chaplin, R and Moon, D, eds, 2010, '[Crime in England and Wales 2009/10](#)', Home Office statistical bulletin 12/10

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

Leyland, A H, and Dundas, R, 2009, '[The social patterning of deaths due to assault in Scotland, 1980-e2005: population-based study](#)' Journal of Epidemiological Community Health 64 (2010) pp 432 439

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

Background notes

1. A list of the organisations given [pre-publication access](#) to the contents of this bulletin can be found on the ONS website.
2. 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.

While data relating to the Homicide Index used in this release is covered by the de-designation of all data based on police recorded crime, Home Office and ONS statisticians do not have significant concerns about the accuracy of recording of homicides. However, ONS accepts that there is currently insufficient evidence to provide that assurance. The ONS will work with partners to obtain fuller information on the quality of the Homicide Index and will request a re-assessment by the UK Statistics Authority in due course.

Data from the Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW) continues to be badged as National Statistics, in accordance with the Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007 and signifying compliance with the Code of Practice for Official Statistics.

For more information on statistics designated as National Statistics, see background note 3.

3. 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.

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