

NO EXCUSE
for Abuse

C+D



Crimes in pharmacies: The extent and severity of crimes – including violence – pharmacy teams faced over 2019-21

Key Findings:

- At least **1,437** reports of violent crimes in pharmacies were reported to the police in 2021
- Violent crime accounted for **17.9%** of all crimes in pharmacies reported in 2021
- At least **27,385** incidents of crime were reported to the police between 2019 and 2021
- While the frequency of threats of abuse and violence grew over the pandemic, pharmacy teams reported fewer crimes to the police

Background:


- Between October 2021 and January 2022, C+D sent out requests for data under the Freedom of Information Act to all police authorities in the UK
- All 45 police forces responded to C+D's requests for 2019 and 2020 data, while 35 of these were able to share it
- 44 forces responded to requests for 2021, with 33 of the authorities granting C+D the data
- Police Scotland did not provide any data, as extracting the relevant information "would cost well in excess" of the current cost threshold of FOI requests to police authorities.

- Violent crime includes violence against a person, public order offences, arson and criminal damage


Weapons wielded against pharmacy teams

An array of [weapons were wielded against pharmacy team members](#) – and at times members of the public too – over the three-year period, including **rocks, crowbars and pistols**.


Which **weapons** have been used against pharmacies and pharmacy teams?




Knives Sharp or bladed instruments were the weapons most frequently used, with Cambridgeshire Constabulary alone recording seven incidents involving knives over the three-year period.



Fists and boots several police forces recorded incidents involving physical force, including “head butting”, “punching”, “spitting”, “bent wrists”, and “bleeding”




Use of force Leicestershire Police said that in 2021, the forceful shutting of a door resulted in a broken arm



Firearms Staffordshire Police, the Police Service of Northern Ireland, and the Metropolitan Police all reported incidents involving firearms and handguns

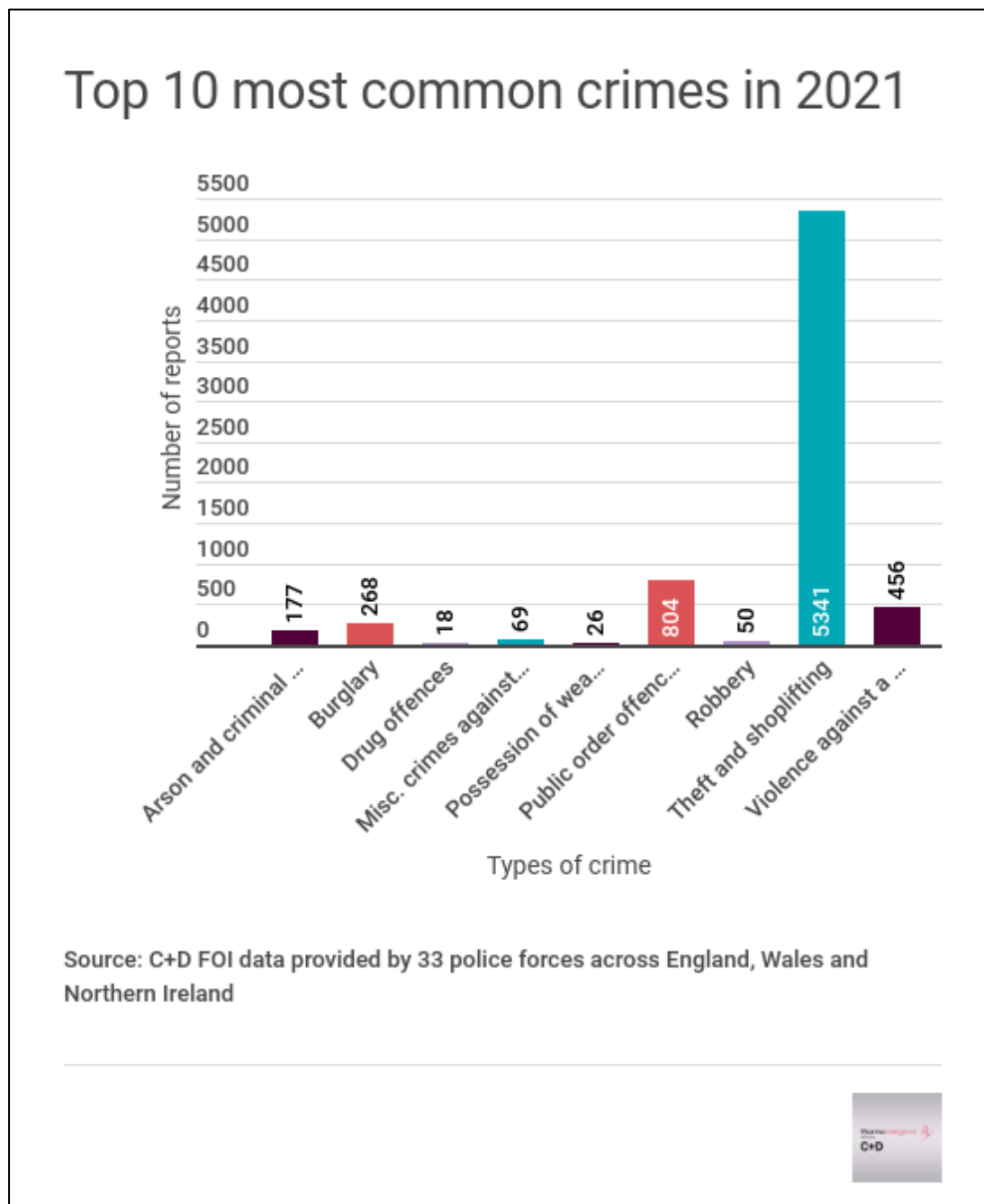
Source: Responses to C+D's FOI requests to police forces



England, Wales and Northern Ireland compared

In 2021 alone, violent crime accounted for **13.4%** of all crimes in pharmacies reported in Northern Ireland, **18.1%** of all crimes in England and a staggering **20.5%** of all crimes in pharmacies reported in Wales.

Most common crimes reported in 2021



Hardest hit areas

Of 31 UK police authorities that shared data with C+D for all three years, [police in five areas](#) across England, Wales and Northern Ireland each recorded **more than 1,200 reports** of crimes committed in pharmacies over the three-year period, accounting for over a third of all crimes reported.

#NoExcuseForAbuse campaign

In light of the investigation findings, C+D is calling on health and social care commissioners across the UK to provide funding to help pharmacies pay for additional security measures, for example panic buttons, CCTV and body cams.

Sign the petition [here](#)

Investigation explained:

How did C+D get hold of this data?

Between October 2021 and January 2022, C+D sent out requests for data under the Freedom of Information (FoI) Act to all police authorities in the UK – 43 in England and Wales, as well as Police Scotland and Police Service Northern Ireland.

45 police forces responded to C+D's requests for 2019 and 2020 data, while 35 of these were able to share it. 44 police forces responded to requests for data for 2021, with 33 of the authorities granting C+D the data.

What information did C+D request?

C+D asked each police authority a series of questions: the total number of crimes committed in pharmacies in 2019, 2020 and 2021; the total number of assaults or violent crimes; and a breakdown of the number of different types of crime that had occurred during those years.

The final question asked for additional details of the crimes – including the date, time, any weapons used, injuries and products or items targeted, and whether there had been any suspects arrested or cautioned in relation to the crime.

How representative are the figures for each region?

Police forces conducted searches of their crime management system, using location codes of crimes to decide whether it was relevant to C+D's request.

Location codes differ depending on the force, with most using "chemist" or "pharmacy" when entering data for the sector. The Cumbria Constabulary, for example, completed searches for any crimes where the premises' name contained 'chemist' or 'pharma', as they were unable to tell from the crime notes if the location is registered as a pharmacy.

The results were then filtered to remove any incidents that were recorded at a pharmacy location but in fact happened nearby on the street and were separate from the pharmacy or happened at other locations within a hospital but recorded as the pharmacy.

Suffolk and Norfolk Constabularies also told C+D that an incident location search "may not bring back all crimes occurring in a pharmacy or chemist if the name is not recorded in the premises name field or has not been labelled as a chemist in the premises type field".

This indicates that more crimes may have been committed in pharmacies between 2019 and 2021.

Can the data be compared between different police forces?

In their responses, police authorities stressed that their data should not be directly compared with information provided by other forces, as "the systems used for recording these figures are not generic, nor are the procedures used locally in capturing the data".

How were "violent crimes" classified?

C+D identified violent incidents as those classified as: "violence against a person" or "assault" – with or without injury; public order offences; arson and criminal damage.

For the purposes of this investigation, C+D did not include "sexual offences" as a violent crime, unless the police force specified that the incident involved assault.

Date of preparation: April 2022