

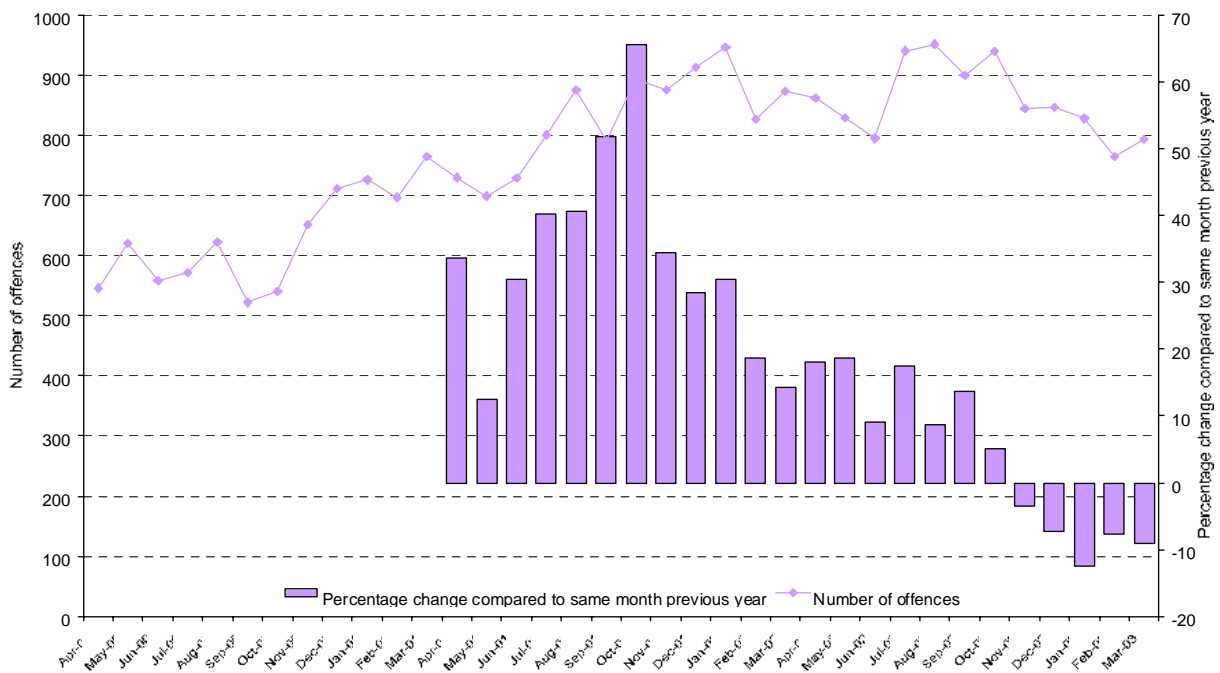
Gun Crime - Latest Trends

The detailed annual statistics on firearm offences in England and Wales will be published in January 2004. However, due to the heightened public interest at present around the issue of gun crime we are making this summary information available now, at the same time as we release the latest quarterly statistics on crime in England and Wales. This data is **provisional**. Given the interest we also plan to release such provisional data earlier in future years.

- The total number of firearm offences in England and Wales in 2002-03 (excluding those involving air weapons) was around 10,250 or three per cent higher than in 2001-02. The increase in the preceding year, reported last January, was 35 per cent.

The following data provides early estimates of the statistics on firearms offences (excluding airguns) due to be published in January 2004. The statistics for the last 24 months are also provided. These figures are provisional but we are confident that the final figures are not likely to change. The individual offences which involved the use of these guns have already been reported in the totals in 'Crime in England and Wales 2002-03'. It is normal to publish detailed information on firearms annually, later in the year, once details of the weapon used and level of injury are known.

Firearm offences (excluding air weapons) in England & Wales, April 2000 to March 2003



The above chart shows that comparing each month with the same month in the preceding year, the increase in firearms offences was sharpest in Autumn 2001, had been slowing since then and since November 2002 has been registering actual year-on-year reductions. However, overall the statistics for 2002-03 show a 3 per cent rise.

A firearm offence is any offence in which a firearm was 'used', whether fired, used as a blunt instrument or in a threat. Two thirds of these offences (6950) involved the firearm being used as a 'threat', but in around 17% (1750) the firearm was fired at a person and an injury resulted. Three quarters of these cases the injury was slight, but in one quarter it was more serious, including eighty incidents last year in which the injury proved fatal (down from the 95 recorded in 2001-02). Nearly two thirds of the firearms offences (excluding air weapons) occur in just three Metropolitan forces. The Metropolitan Police account for 41 per cent (4200) of the total, Greater Manchester 12 per cent (1200) and West Midlands 11 per cent (1100).

In most parts of England and Wales, the incidence of firearm offences is very low, and the chances of becoming a victim of a shooting are extremely rare. The risk of a fatal shooting in England and Wales is still one of the lowest in the world.