

# Healthy Place

## Community Cohesion and Crime

### Introduction:

How safe an area is, and how well-connected people are with their communities, are both key factors that determine people's health. As well as the direct physical impacts of violent crime, exposure to crime can also affect mental health<sup>1</sup>. Merton is a safe borough with low crime rates relative to London and England<sup>2</sup>.

### Crime

Compared to London, crime across Merton has remained steady, and low for the past two years<sup>3</sup>. Among all the types of crime reported, violent and sexual offences followed by anti-social behaviour remain the sources of Merton's highest crime rates, as seen in Table 1 below. While crime rates are generally low, hospital admissions for violence are higher than expected.

*Table 1: Crime indicators comparing Merton, London, and England.*

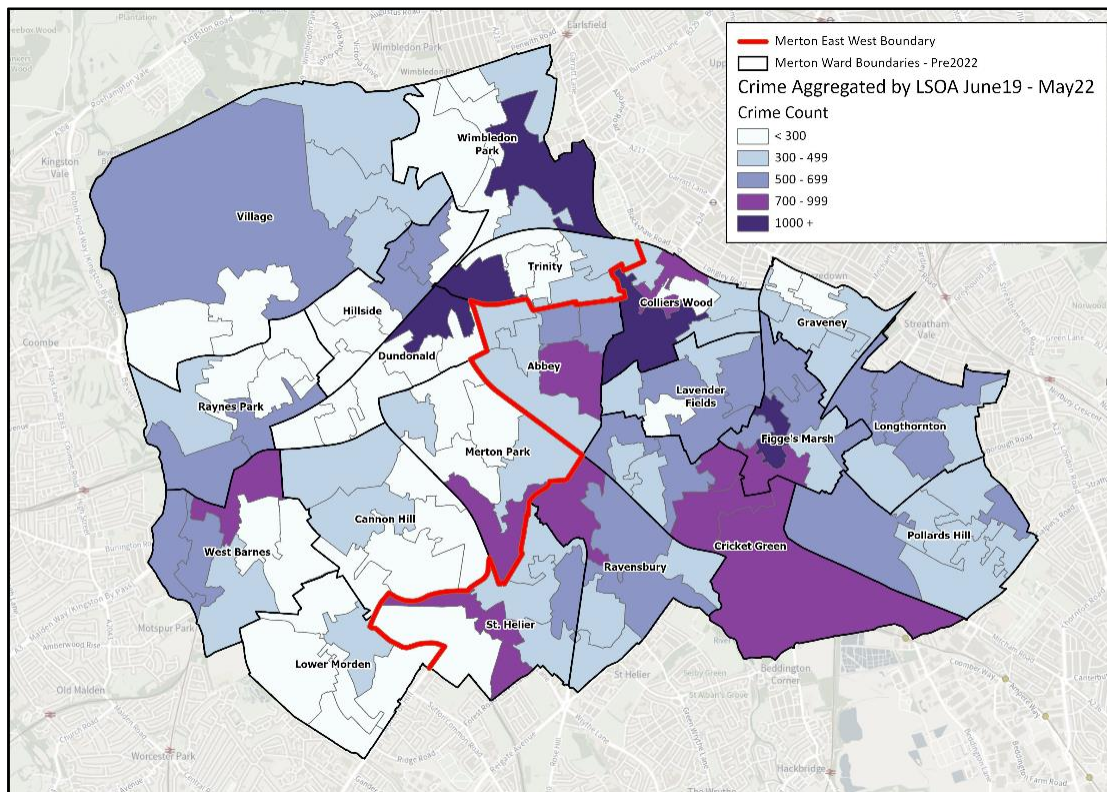
Indicator	Merton	London	England
Crime rate per 1,000 people, May 22 <sup>2</sup>	5.8	8.4	7.1
Children aged 10–17 years entering the youth justice system, crude rate per 1000, 2020/21 <sup>4</sup>	2.6	3.5	2.8
First time entrants to the youth justice system per 100,000, 2020 <sup>5</sup>	163.8	222.6	171.2
% Of offenders re-offending, 2019/20 <sup>6</sup>	25.8%	26.4%	25.4%
Hospital admissions for violence including sexual violence, directly standardised rate per 100,000, 2018/19 – 2020/21 <sup>7</sup>	48.4	44.3	41.9

Knife crime has seen an increase from 1.0 per 1,000 knife crime offences (November 2020 – November 2021), to 1.5 per 1,000 population between November 2021 and November 2022, amounting to 300 knife crime offences<sup>8</sup>. Meanwhile in the Mitcham Town Centre burglary has seen a reduction.

The map (Figure 1) below illustrates the volume of crimes reported at ward level across Merton, highlighting higher crime reporting across the east of the borough with pockets of high crime also reported in the west of the borough<sup>9</sup>. Figge's Marsh, Trinity, Dundonald,

Wimbledon Park, and Collier's Wood are Merton wards with pockets of the highest crime rates<sup>9</sup>.

Figure 1: Map of aggregated crime counts by Merton LSOAs, June 2019 to May 2022. Source: Data.Police.UK<sup>9</sup>.



### Sexual and domestic violence

Domestic violence accounts for 13.6% of all recorded crime in Merton, and 72% of victims are female. Between October 2021 and October 2022 there were 499 domestic abuse violence with injury offences reported by the Met Police in Merton<sup>10</sup>. As part of The London Mayor's refreshed Violence Against Women and Girls strategy, the London Assembly produced a March 2022 Violence Against Women and Girls report, which highlighted that violence against women across the capital has increased, particularly domestic violence, which has seen a 72% increase on the past year<sup>11</sup>.

The evidence around whether the pandemic has led to an increase in domestic violence is complex<sup>12</sup>. Data on sexual and domestic violence in the UK is collected through two main mechanisms – the National Crime Survey (NCS) and through police reporting. The ONS were unable to draw upon analysis from the crime survey because we were unable to collect data on domestic abuse because of concerns around confidentiality and respondent safeguarding. However, ONS recognises that police-recorded domestic abuse-related crimes have been higher since the pandemic and there are reports of increased demand on services<sup>13</sup>.

Data for London appears to confirm this rise in police reported events of domestic abuse locally<sup>14</sup>. Data from the Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime shows an increase of 18.2% in domestic abuse cases and an increase of 30.1% in sexual violence cases when compared with pre-pandemic levels<sup>15</sup>. However domestic abuse reports for Merton (2021/22) are down compared to the previous financial year and are lower than that in 2019-20.

Reported number of sexual offences have risen steeply in Merton, and this followed the Sarah Everard murder. Historic reports (over a year old) remain a feature of the data. That said, all sexual offences still only represent 3% of all crime compared to violence which is over 30% in Merton<sup>15</sup>. The national police recording has been on a steady increase for several years, not just during the pandemic. It should be noted the ONS National Crime Survey shows little change in the prevalence of domestic abuse. Whilst Merton Police reports are lower, LBM services report increased demand during the pandemic period.

### Community Cohesion

The Merton Story 2021 considered a range of assets including the network of 7 local libraries used as community hubs and clusters of schools. Merton has a rich and diverse voluntary and community sector. Due to the complexity of its structure and regulatory processes the exact number is difficult to capture. Merton Connected's state of the sector report 2021 draws on data from the Charity Commission<sup>16</sup>. 204 charities are based in Merton, with 428 charities based elsewhere that include Merton as an area of benefit. Those registered locally are noted to have around 4,400 volunteers. The pandemic has had wide ranging impacts on the sector which are detailed in the report.

Data suggests that the charity sector is shrinking in Merton, as some organisations have ceased to operate, and a decrease has been recorded in new organisations registering as charities. Challenges for the sector include funding and affordable premises. In terms of stakeholders, Merton's voluntary sector works primarily with other community organisations (81%), Merton Connected (77%) and Merton Council (60%). Overall, it is estimated that the coordinated efforts of 43 community voluntary organisations in Merton a total of 61,815 residents were supported during a year. 67% of this support came through information and advice services, followed by befriending / social activities (47%), Education (42%), Emotional/ Psychological Support (40%) and Arts and Leisure (40%).

National data has shown the pandemic inspired empathy and motivated community cohesion – 40% of people reported shopping for people who were self-isolating and 32% reported helping someone in their community with a pandemic related problem<sup>17</sup>.

### Service User and Resident Views

Surveys of Merton residents highlight Merton residents feel less safe than over recent years, particularly after dark – though there are conflicting data from the different surveys regarding the extent of this decrease in perceptions of safety<sup>18</sup>. Crime is the top concern for young people surveyed.

## Recommendations

We will continue to monitor data around domestic violence.

## Further Information:

- Merton Data, Crime and Community Safety:  
<https://data.merton.gov.uk/crime-and-community-safety/#/view-report/6cff7cc3f47c411b9aaba5e5883363b8/iaFirstFeature/G3>

## References:

- <sup>1</sup> Crime and Violence [Internet]. Healthy People 2020. 2020 [cited 30 September 2022]. Available from: <https://wayback.archive-it.org/5774/20220414155949/https://www.healthypeople.gov/2020/topics-objectives/topic/social-determinants-health/interventions-resources/crime-and-violence>
- <sup>2</sup> Merton Data – Crime & Community Safety [Internet]. Merton Data. [cited 30 September 2022]. Available from: <https://data.merton.gov.uk/crime-and-community-safety/#/view-report/6cff7cc3f47c411b9aaba5e5883363b8/iaFirstFeature/G3>
- <sup>3</sup> Merton Data – Crime & Community Safety [Internet]. Merton Data. [cited 30 September 2022]. Available from: <https://data.merton.gov.uk/crime-and-community-safety/#/view-report/6cff7cc3f47c411b9aaba5e5883363b8/iaFirstFeature/G3>
- <sup>4</sup> Office for Health Improvement and Disparities. Wider Determinants of Health [Internet]. Fingertips. [cited 30 September 2022]. Available from: <https://fingertips.phe.org.uk/wider-determinants#page/1/gid/1938133073/pat/15/ati/402/are/E09000024/iid/90848/age/211/sex/4/cat/-1/ctp/-1/yrr/1/cid/4/tbm/1>
- <sup>5</sup> Office for Health Improvement and Disparities. Wider Determinants of Health [Internet]. Fingertips. [cited 30 September 2022]. Available from: <https://fingertips.phe.org.uk/wider-determinants#page/1/gid/1938133073/pat/15/ati/402/are/E09000024/iid/90848/age/211/sex/4/cat/-1/ctp/-1/yrr/1/cid/4/tbm/1>
- <sup>6</sup> Office for Health Improvement and Disparities. Wider Determinants of Health [Internet]. Fingertips. [cited 30 September 2022]. Available from: <https://fingertips.phe.org.uk/wider-determinants#page/1/gid/1938133073/pat/15/ati/402/are/E09000024/iid/90848/age/211/sex/4/cat/-1/ctp/-1/yrr/1/cid/4/tbm/1>
- <sup>7</sup> Office for Health Improvement and Disparities. Wider Determinants of Health [Internet]. Fingertips. 2022 [cited 30 September 2022]. Available from: <https://fingertips.phe.org.uk/wider-determinants#page/1/gid/1938133073/pat/15/ati/402/are/E09000024/iid/90848/age/211/sex/4/cat/-1/ctp/-1/yrr/1/cid/4/tbm/1>
- <sup>8</sup> MPS Crime Dashboard [Internet]. Monthly Crime Data New Cats. Metropolitan Police Service; 2018. [cited 16 December 2022, last update 12 December 2022]. Available from: <https://public.tableau.com/app/profile/metropolitan.police.service/viz/MonthlyCrimeDataNewCats/Coversheet>
- <sup>9</sup> Home | data.police.uk [Internet]. Data.police.uk. [cited 30 September 2022]. Available from: <https://data.police.uk/>
- <sup>10</sup> MPS Crime Dashboard [Internet]. Monthly Crime Data New Cats. Metropolitan Police Service; 2018. [cited 16 December 2022, last update 12 December 2022]. Available from: <https://public.tableau.com/app/profile/metropolitan.police.service/viz/MonthlyCrimeDataNewCats/Coversheet>

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- <sup>11</sup> Violence Against Women and Girls - Police and Crime Committee [Internet]. London Assembly. 2022 [cited 30 September 2022]. Available from: [https://www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/pcc\\_vawg\\_report\\_march\\_2022\\_final.pdf](https://www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/pcc_vawg_report_march_2022_final.pdf)
- <sup>12</sup> Bhalotra S. What are the effects of lockdown and recession on domestic violence? [Internet]. Economics Observatory. 2020 [cited 30 September 2022]. Available from: <https://www.economicsobservatory.com/what-are-effects-lockdown-and-recession-domestic-violence>
- <sup>13</sup> Domestic abuse in England and Wales overview [Internet]. Office for National Statistics. 2021 [cited 30 September 2022]. Available from: <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/crimeandjustice/bulletins/domesticabuseinenglandandwalesoverview/november2021>
- <sup>14</sup> Office for Health Improvement and Disparities. Public health profiles [Internet]. Fingertips. [cited 30 September 2022]. Available from: <https://fingertips.phe.org.uk/search/domestic%20abuse#page/4/gid/1/pat/6/ati/402/are/E09000024/iid/92863/age/164/sex/4/cat/-1/ctp/-1/yr/1/cid/4/tbm/1/page-options/car-do-0>
- <sup>15</sup> MPS FY 2021/22 Crime Statistics [Internet]. Metropolitan Police. [cited 30 September 2022, last update 8 April 2022]. Available from: <https://www.met.police.uk/sd/stats-and-data/met/year-end-crime-statistics-21-22/>
- <sup>16</sup> State of the Voluntary and Community Sector in Merton 2021 [Internet]. Merton Connected. 2021 [cited 30 September 2022]. Available from: <https://www.mertonconnected.co.uk/uploads/docs/MVSC%20State%20of%20the%20Sector%202021%20Final%20V2%20new%20logo.pdf>
- <sup>17</sup> Lasko-Skinner R, Sweetland J. Food In A Pandemic. From Renew Normal: The People's Commission on Life After COVID-19 [Internet]. Food Standard Agency. 2021 [cited 30 September 2022]. Available from: <https://www.food.gov.uk/sites/default/files/media/document/fsa-food-in-a-pandemic-march-2021.pdf>
- <sup>18</sup> Merton Council. Appendix 1 – Public Consultation and Survey Results.