



Serious Violence Strategic Needs Assessment January 2026

Purpose and Objectives

The Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act 2022 includes a Serious Violence Duty that is discussed in the Serious Violence Duty & National Context section, below. This duty includes a requirement for local partnerships to complete a Strategic Needs Assessment to understand how violence is affecting their communities and to help them develop a violence prevention strategy.

It is the primary purpose and objective of this document to fulfil this requirement as it applies to the area served by Wiltshire Police, and thus the areas served by the Swindon and Wiltshire Community Safety Partnerships.

Guidance on implementing the Serious Violence Duty, published jointly by the Department of Health & Social Care, the Home Office, and Public Health England, notes the following:

A multi-agency or partnership approach to local health issues is often called a 'public health approach'. However, there are six guiding principles of public health which use a broader set of skills than just partnership working. The underlying principles of a public health approach are that it is:

- Focused on a defined population, often with a particular health risk in common
- Done with and for communities
- Not constrained by organisational or professional boundaries
- Focused on developing long term as well as short term solutions
- Based on data and intelligence to identify the burden on the population, including any inequalities
- Rooted in evidence of effectiveness to tackle the problem.

The critical importance of a public health approach is underlined by Ofsted published research into multi-agency responses to serious youth violence, which includes in its conclusions that: "They (multi-agency strategic leads) should address the underlying causes through a public health approach".

Key Findings

- Swindon and Wiltshire are, overall, safer than comparable areas, and safer than the average for England and Wales;
- A very significant majority of our community are at negligible risk by virtue of age, gender, income, sexuality, etc, and when and where they work, reside, study, relax or travel. However, different members of our community do not share an “equality of risk” of becoming victims of serious violence.
- In the year to September 2025 Wiltshire Police recorded 764 crimes which fall within the definitions applicable to the Serious Violence Duty as it is applied across Swindon and Wiltshire, with a cost to society in excess of £13 million;
- However, crime is under reported. We therefore estimate the true figures to be significantly higher, and calculate the real overall cost of Serious Violence in our area to exceed £26 million per year. Thus there are more victims, more offenders, more family members impacted, than we know about;
- We identify two broad types of problem:
 - *Concentrations of situational serious violence in time and place*: victim vulnerability is typically temporary, and based on their presence at that place at that time. We can – and do – identify these hotspots and map them temporally and spatially, right down to specific micro-locations, such as taxi ranks, alleyways, street segments, at particular times on particular days.
 - *Serious violence where victim vulnerability, and offending behaviour, are the key factors*. There may be less geographic and temporal concentration – essentially the risk ‘bubble’ moves with the individual – although the individual’s location in space and time will follow a pattern.
- Positively, we conclude that Serious Violence across Swindon and Wiltshire **is** responsive to correctly designed interventions. We know enough to design these interventions now - and, indeed, are already so doing;
- We also observe that the concentrations of risk, and crime, in terms of people (offenders and victims), locations, times, circumstances, that we outline as applicable to Serious Violence in this Strategic Needs Assessment, are also applicable to other forms of crime and disorder. We expect initiatives and interventions targeted at reducing Serious Violence to have an impact on these other issues, and that further potential reductions in harm will be achieved from well-designed interventions.

Recommendations

Not everyone shares the same risk of serious violence – some people and places are more at risk than others. Therefore, we have split our recommendations to understand and plan interventions addressing the two types of violence - situational violence which happens in certain places and times, and non-situational violence which is linked to personal vulnerability and behaviour.

- Young People & Robbery – boys aged 12-18, especially aged 15, are often involved in robberies as victims and offenders. Analyst capacity is required to research this and understand why, so interventions can be designed to reduce harm.
- Hotspots and the Night Time Economy – use data to send police and partners to the right places at the right times by ensuring analyst capacity to identify areas of concern.
- Assault with Injury (GBH & above) – understand the impact of vulnerabilities in the disproportionate number of victims who are males aged 31-35 by ensuring analyst capacity to identify this.
- Examine repeat victim data - look at people who are victims more than once as this helps to protect them and learn what makes them vulnerable.
- Use proven rules and tools - continue investing in evidenced practice e.g. focused deterrents, by following the Youth Endowment Fund toolkit to work with children, and Ofsted 2024 report on Youth Violence Review.

- Review under reporting – some crimes are not reported, especially in certain sectors. Work with partners to improve this.
- Improve data sharing to create a shared picture – sharing information e.g. Information Sharing to Tackle Violence Minimum Dataset (ISTV) between partners helps us to act faster and more effectively as well as plan and problem solve more efficiently using evidenced models e.g. Common Recognised Information Picture (CRIP).
- Delivery Planning - use the Needs Assessment to create a plan with clear actions which includes evaluation to show if interventions work.

The Serious Violence Duty and the National Context

The Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act 2022 includes a Serious Violence Duty that requires:

- Local Authorities
- Police
- Fire & Rescue authorities
- Specified Criminal Justice agencies
- Health Authorities

. . . to work cooperatively to formulate an evidence-based analysis of the problems associated with serious violence in the area, and then produce and implement a strategy detailing how they will respond to those particular issues. Educational authorities, prisons, and youth custody agencies may also be required to work with those bodies as a result of this Duty. The legislation grants these authorities the power to share data and information with each other for the purpose of preventing and reducing serious violence.

It requires specified authorities for a local government area to:

- *“Work together and plan to prevent and reduce serious violence, including identifying the kinds of serious violence that occur in the area, the causes of that violence (so far as it is possible to do so), and to prepare and implement a strategy for preventing, and reducing serious violence in the area.”*

Measures of success or Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) are:

- A reduction in hospital admissions for assaults with a knife or sharp object;
- A reduction in knife-enabled serious violence;
- A reduction in all non-domestic homicides.

These three KPIs are included in the standardized reporting framework of each of the two Community Safety Partnerships (Swindon and Wiltshire) within the Wiltshire Police Force Area.

Following public consultation in July 2019, the Government announced that it would bring forward legislation introducing a new Serious Violence Duty (SVD) on responsible authorities which will ensure relevant services work together to prevent and reduce serious violence. The government also announced that it would amend the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 to ensure that serious violence is an explicit priority for Community Safety Partnerships (CSPs), and make sure that they have a strategy in place to tackle violent crime.

The SVD focuses on tackling the root causes of violence through a programme of early interventions with young people and local communities. Statutory partners will work together to tackle serious violence and share local knowledge and data to support an evidence-based, multi-agency, ‘public health’ approach to tackling violent crime.

As part of the duty, areas need to produce a Strategic Needs Assessment (SNA) to understand the picture of serious violence in the local area, as well as understanding some of the causes of violence. Outputs from the SNA should inform the local strategy, which should contain bespoke solutions to prevent and reduce serious violence in the area.

The Wiltshire and Swindon Definition of Serious Violence

The Wiltshire and Swindon Serious Violence Joint Steering Group have adopted the WHO definition as defined in the World Report on Violence and Health (WRVH), which states that violence is:

“The intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, against oneself, another person, or against a group or community, that either results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, maldevelopment, or deprivation.”

Most notably our definition excludes domestic violence, driving offences and sexual assault and rape. These forms of violence are managed in other areas of partnership working, and do not align with the focus of the Serious Violence Duty KPIs. This work will attempt to focus on violence in public spaces, specifically violence with the use of a weapon/knives/bladed articles.

Effectively, in terms of Police and partner datasets, we:

- ✘ Exclude Domestic Abuse flagged crimes / Hospital ED attendances in which the casualty’s relationship with the assailant recorded would suggest the incident falls within the multi-party definition of Domestic Abuse;
- ✘ Exclude Sexual Violence;
- ✘ Exclude driving related offences;
- ✓ Include weapons offences;
- ✓ Include Robbery;
- ✓ Include Violence Against the Person offences equating to GBH and above, thus excluding Common Assault, ABH, Stalking and Harassment¹.

¹ In respect of Police data, in this report we use the recorded offence, there are occasions where the crime type recorded does not equate with the crime type with which a suspect is subsequently charged.

Notes on data and statistical bias

Data used in this report is for the period 01/10/2024 to 30/09/2025, where available. Rolling twelve months data is typically used for “snapshot” summaries of volumes. Crimes and Incidents up to the date of publication of this report are included as available in research and analysis into issues emerging from the base data period. It is sometimes necessary to use data for periods that ended some months earlier, most particularly for benchmarking and comparison with other areas, as there are typically time lags in the availability of this information.

Where possible, this report uses the actual date of the crime or incident for analysis, such as those from the police and other emergency services. This approach helps to accurately identify patterns and develop effective interventions. However, comparisons with other areas are typically based on recorded dates due to data availability. Using occurrence dates can cause recent crime figures to appear lower since incidents can be reported long after they occur. Geographic data might also have inaccuracies, as victims or witnesses might not always provide precise locations. These inconsistencies can be corrected during detailed analysis.

Reporting rates vary significantly across crime types and communities, with serious violence like homicide and wounding being almost fully reported, but crimes such as rape and other sexual offences significantly underreported, with only 30% and 6% respectively estimated to be reported.

Reporting also differs across demographics, with crimes like burglary more likely to be reported by individuals in affluent areas, while vulnerable or marginalised groups, such as care leavers or exploited young people, may underreport crimes they experience.

This leads to skewed and unrepresentative data, potentially hindering effective policing and resource allocation. Crest Advisory’s 2023 report highlights the disparity between youth and professional perceptions of rising youth violence and the lower levels reflected in police data, largely due to underreporting. They suggest that only four in ten crimes are reported to the police, emphasising the need for combining qualitative and quantitative data to better understand and address youth vulnerability and violence. The Serious Violence Duty aligns with this, by encouraging multi-agency collaboration to combat the root causes of violence.

When assessing data, it is also necessary to assess the degree to which numbers, or more particularly shifts in numbers, are actually measuring the activity of community safety partners and commissioned services, as opposed to the underlying issues themselves. This is most evident in examples provided by drug offences but may apply to linked offences, such as bladed or offensive weapons found during a search for drugs, or even in unrelated fields where reporting increases as a result of successful Police or partnership initiatives.

Description of Place and Population

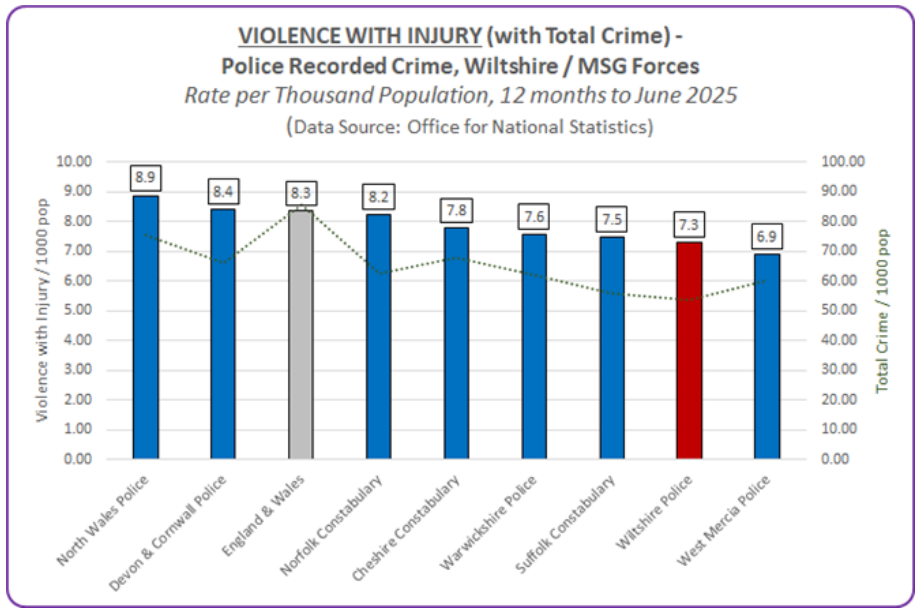
- Local government in Wiltshire is the responsibility of two local authorities – Wiltshire Council, whose headquarters are at County Hall in Trowbridge, and Swindon Borough Council. A number of City and Town councils across the area are responsible for provision of some local services, which may include combinations of CCTV, street cleaning, play parks, sports facilities and open spaces.
- The ONS mid-year population estimates for June 2024 assess the population of the pan-Wiltshire area at 767,575, with 238,417 resident within the area of Swindon Borough Council, and 523,700 within Wiltshire Council.
- Swindon has a population density (mid-2024) of 1,060 per square kilometre, compared with 161 per km² in Wiltshire, reflecting their respective urban / rural characters. The major urban areas in Wiltshire are:
 - Salisbury, population 47,054 (the sole city in Wiltshire);
 - Amesbury (12,676), Bradford on Avon (9,865), Calne (19,732), Chippenham (36,092), Corsham (10,888), Cricklade (4,031), Devizes (19,472), Downton (2,953), Ludgershall (5,390), Malmesbury (7,181), Marlborough (8,833), Melksham (18,271), Mere (2,807), Pewsey (3,797), Royal Wootton Bassett (13,006), Tidworth (10,692), Tisbury (2,270), Trowbridge (37,169), Warminster (18,016), Westbury (16,404), and Wilton (4,305).
- The median age of people resident in Swindon is 39.8, compared with 44.8 in Wiltshire. In general the comparative age profiles show a higher proportion in Swindon at all ages up to age 50, and a higher proportion in Wiltshire after that. There is a dip in the number of 19-22 year olds resident across both areas, most pronounced for females in Wiltshire.
- Swindon and Wiltshire have a relatively small ethnic minority population – less than 10% of the population are from ethnic minority groups (non-white British), while 90.1% identify as White British – compared with 73.5% of people across England as a whole. Eight neighbourhoods in Swindon have more than half of all residents from a non-White British background. Manchester Road (where 91.6% of residents are from a non-White British ethnic group) and Bathurst Road (86%) are the most ethnically diverse areas in Swindon, while Tidworth North West (39.1%) is the most diverse area of Wiltshire. Swindon has a particularly large Indian community - 7.6% of Swindon's population identify as from Indian ethnic groups, which is over double the national average (3.3%).
- Deprivation – there is evidence of local concentration of deprivation, suggesting a high degree of inequality within Wiltshire and Swindon, with evidence of pockets of extremely high deprivation. Drilling down to small area level reveals some of these neighbourhood inequalities and deprivation hotspots. Swindon ranks among the most deprived 30% of Local Authorities in terms of Local Concentration of deprivation (the levels of deprivation among the most deprived neighbourhoods). Swindon contains 12 neighbourhoods ranked among the most deprived 10% in the country - up from 8 in 2015, suggesting the poorest neighbourhoods in the town are becoming increasingly deprived. Trowbridge John of Gaunt - Studley Green is the most deprived neighbourhood in Wiltshire and the only neighbourhood to be ranked among the most deprived 10% in England.

Benchmarking against other Areas

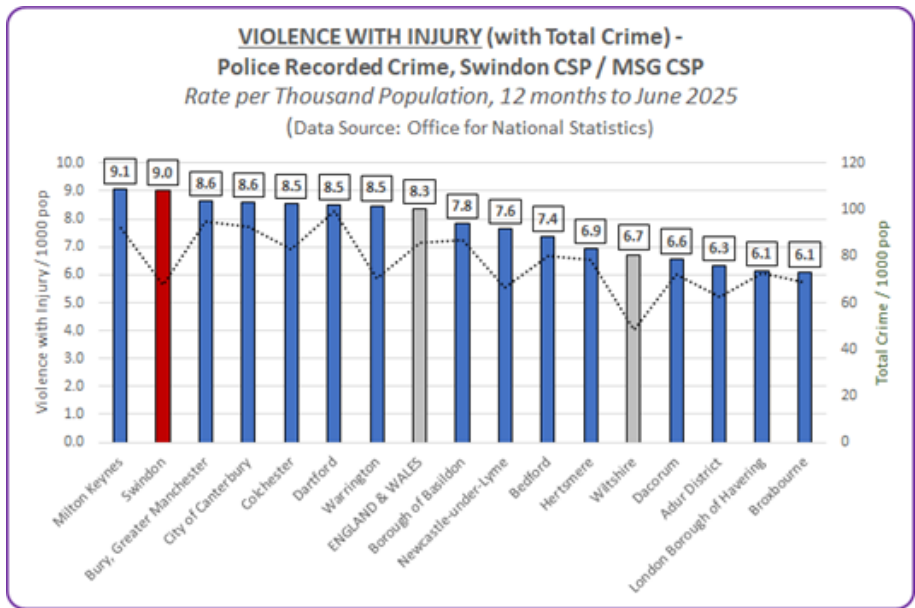
Undertaking a benchmarking exercise helps us to understand how performance and risk differ in Swindon and Wiltshire from other areas, especially when we look at areas that most resemble ours. These are known as our “*Most Similar Group*” (MSG), and are the police force and local authority areas which are most demographically and economically similar to Swindon and Wiltshire. We can also compare with the England and Wales national average.

Violence with injury

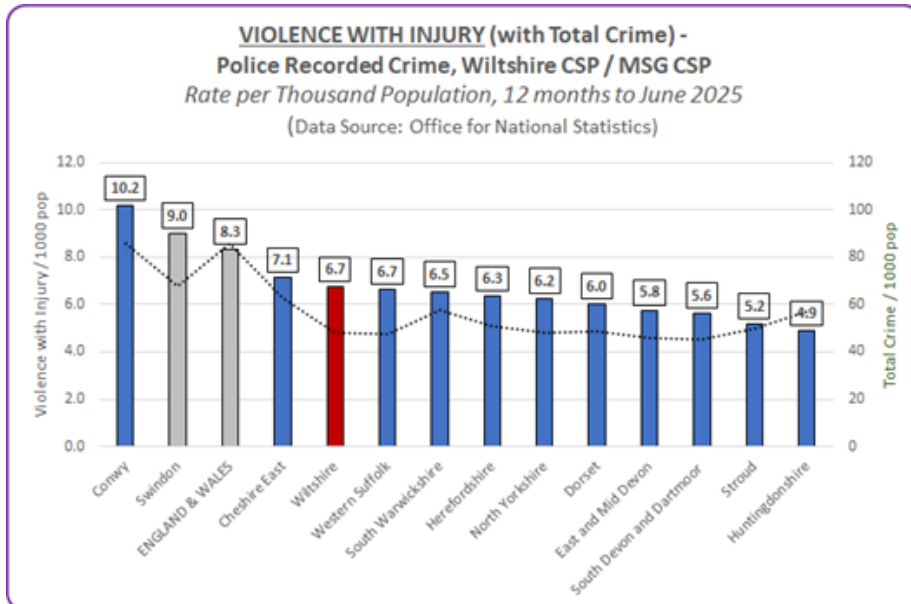
Violence with Injury is a significantly wider classification / definition than “*Serious Violence*” and will include Domestic Abuse related violent crime:



- At 7.3 per thousand population, recorded Violence with Injury in the area served by Wiltshire Police is the second lowest in its MSG, and also below the national average of 8.3.

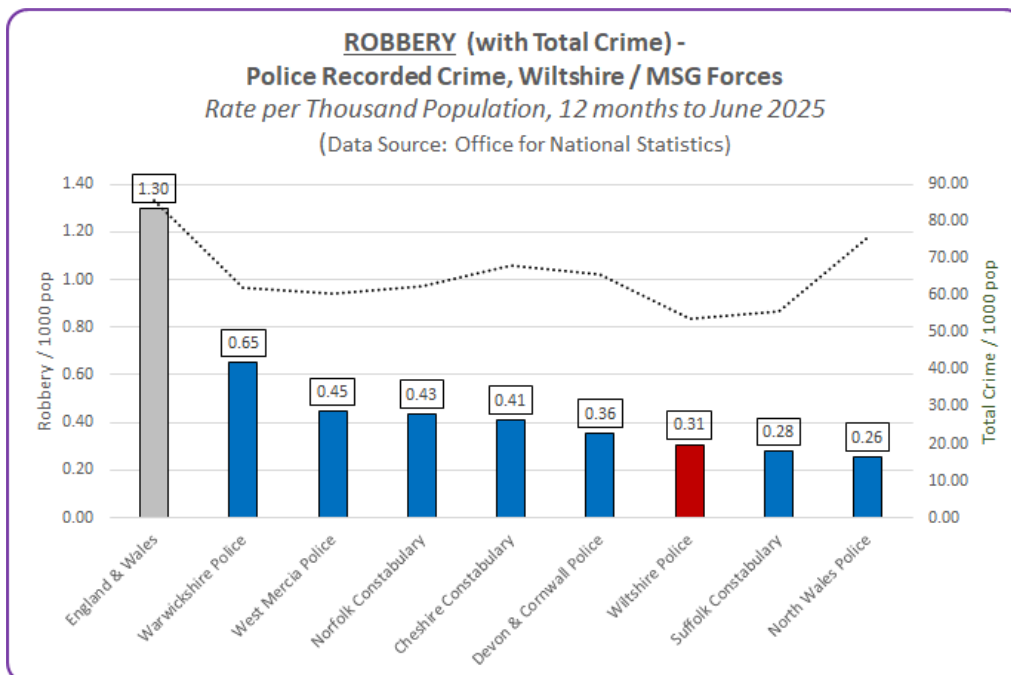


- At 9.0 per thousand population, recorded Violence with Injury in Swindon is in the upper range of its MSG, and slightly above the national average.

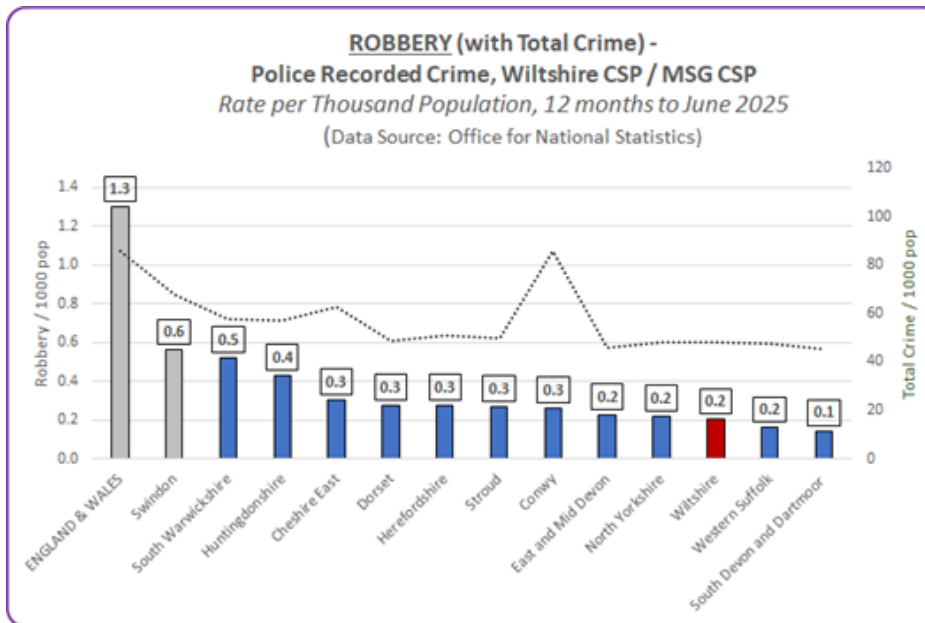
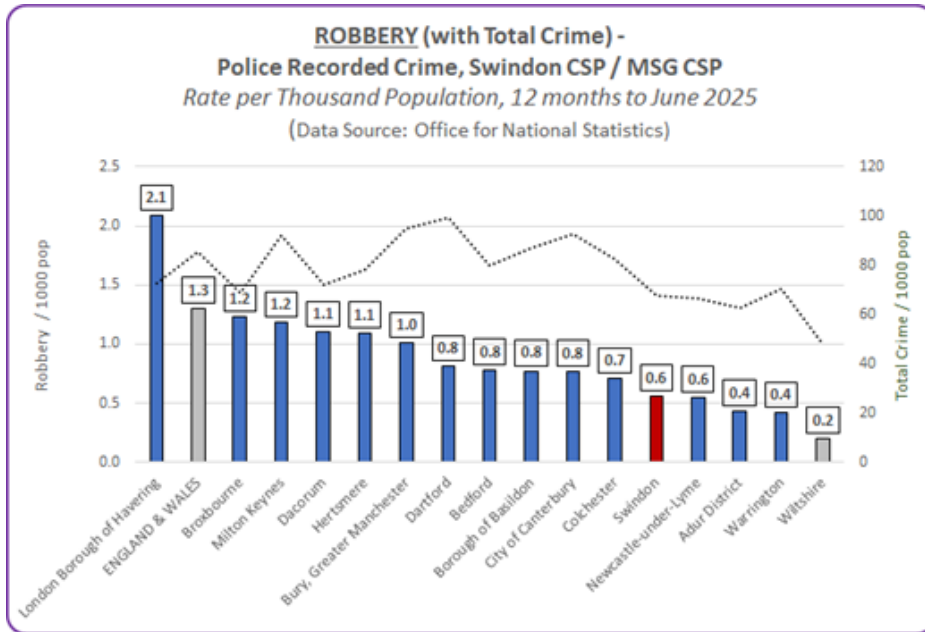


- At 6.7 per thousand population, recorded Violence with Injury in the area served by Wiltshire council is in the mid range of its MSG, and below the national average.

Robbery

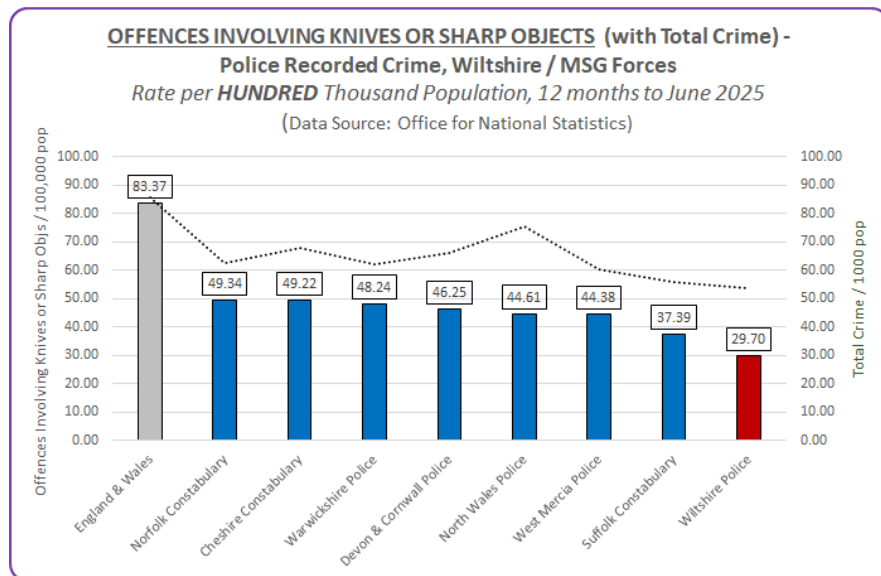


- At 0.31 per thousand population, recorded Robbery in the area served by Wiltshire Police is towards the lower end of its MSG, and very significantly below the national average of 1.3.

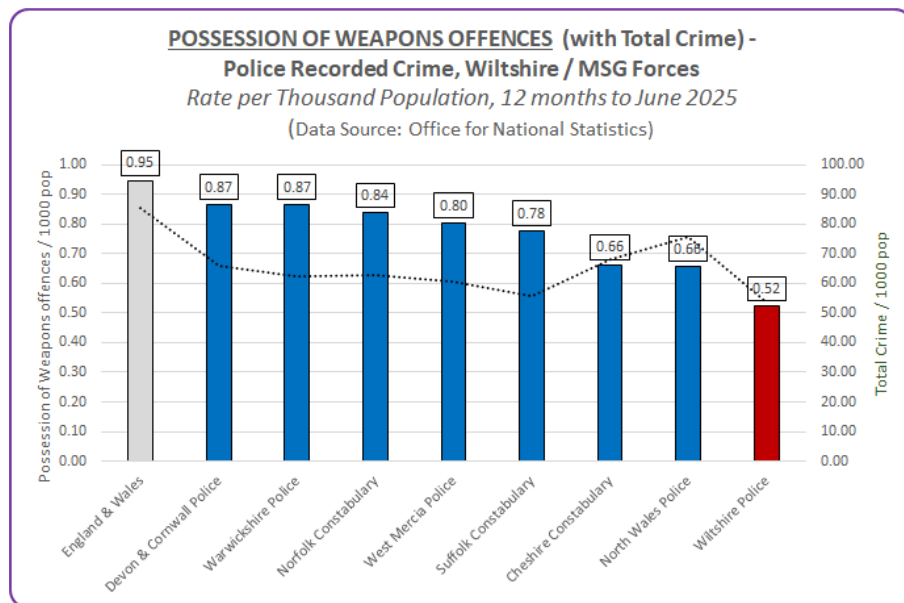


- Recorded Robbery numbers in both Swindon and Wiltshire are towards the lower ends of both their respective MSDs, and very significantly below the national average.

Offences Involving Knives or Sharp Objects



- At 29.7 per hundred thousand population, recorded offences involving knives or sharp objects in the Wiltshire Police force area are the lowest in its MSG, and also very significantly below the national average of 83.37. It is a similar picture with Possession of Weapons offences:



The Scale of Serious Violence in Wiltshire and Swindon

Whilst the data from the previous section highlights the low rates of violent crime and related offences in the Wiltshire PFA in comparison with the rest of England and Wales, it is important for us to understand what serious violence is occurring - and why, to whom, by whom, when and where. These are all questions the answers to which we summarise in the rest of this report.

According to our definition of Serious Violence as laid out above, there were 725 offences recorded by Police as having occurred in the twelve month period to 30 September 2025. The 725 crimes span 25 different specific offences but fall into the following four categories.

CRIME CATEGORY	POLICE RECORDED CRIME	FLAGGED WEAPONS	FLAGGED YOUTH or CHILD	WEAPONS and CHILD / YOUTH	ALCOHOL	DRUGS
Homicide / Attempted Homicide	5					
Possession Of Weapons	376		17.0%		5.1%	4.8%
Robbery	227	26.4%	24.2%	6.2%	6.6%	4.0%
Violence With Injury (GBH & Above)	156	30.1%	14.1%	2.6%	14.7%	5.8%
TOTAL	764	27.9%	18.6%	4.7%	7.5%	4.7%

Home Office multipliers attempt to quantify the degree of under-reporting of crime in our communities, these vary from about 1:1 for the most serious violence (homicide and serious wounding), meaning that there is negligible under recording of this type of crime, through to 53.6:1 for Fraud, 3.4:1 for Rape, and 16.5:1 for other Sexual Offences. The suggested Home Office multiplier for Violence with Injury is 2.6:1.

As a result of this, the true picture of offending, according to Home Office multipliers, is likely to be closer to:

Crime Sub Group	Police Recorded Crime	Home Office Multiplier	Wiltshire Multiplier	Estimated True Volume
Homicide / Attempted Homicide	5	1:1		5
Possession Of Weapons	376		34:1	12,784
Robbery	227	4.3:1		976
Violence With Injury (GBH & Above)	156	2.6:1		406
TOTAL	764			14,171

Home Office analysis to estimate the economic and social costs of different offences, dating from 2018, have been updated to account for inflation. Applying these to the volumes for the twelve month period to September 2025, as detailed earlier in this section, we get the following estimated totals:

Crime Sub Group	Cost per Crime (Home Office)	Cost per Crime (Adjusted)	Volume (Police Recorded)	Total Cost (£)	Estimated True Volume	Estimated True Total Cost (£)
Homicide	3,217,740	3,217,740	2	6,435,480		6,435,480
Attempted Homicide		21,075	3	63,225		63,225
Possession of Weapons		2,060	376	774,560	12,784	774,560 ²
Robbery	11,320	11,320	227	2,569,640	976	11,049,452
Violence with Injury	14,050	21,075	156	3,287,700	406	8,548,020

TOTAL			764	13,130,605	14,171	26,870,737
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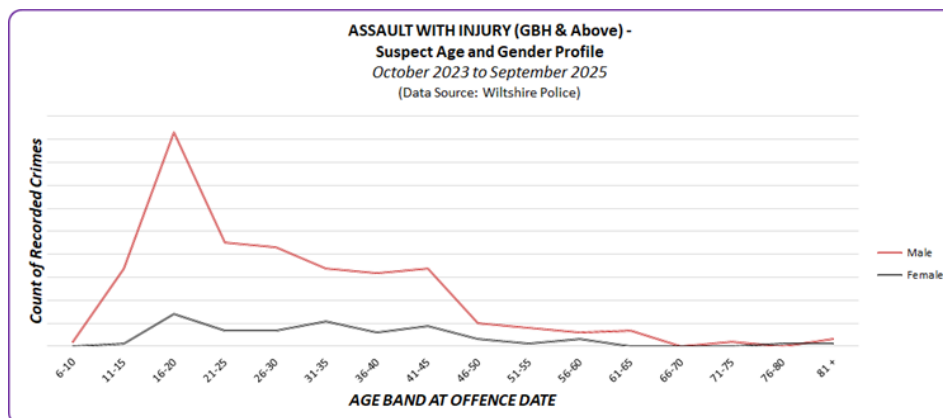
We therefore estimate that the cost of Serious Violence in Swindon and Wiltshire in the twelve months to September 2025 was in excess of £26 million, broadly twice that that would be indicated by Police data alone.

Understanding offenders in Wiltshire and Swindon

Of the 764 recorded crimes relevant to the Serious Violence Duty, in the twelve month period to 30th September 2025, 568 have an identified suspect (defined as linked to the crime as either 'Suspect' or 'Arrested'). There are actually 705 suspects, as 95 of the crimes have more than one suspect. These 705 comprise 616 discreet individuals, with 68 being 'Suspect' or 'Arrested' in two or more of the 764 crimes.

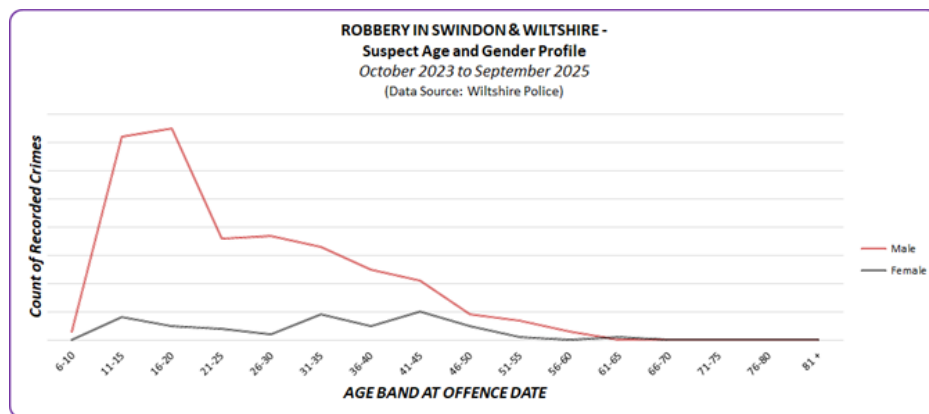
- Estimating unobserved and uncounted population sizes is routine for biologists, conservationists and ecologists. We can apply those techniques to estimate numbers of violent offenders of whom we are not directly aware.
- The age and gender distribution of known offenders is remarkably consistent across all three major crime types relevant to the Serious Violence Duty:
 - Offending by males is disproportionately high;
 - Robbery: boys and young men aged 14 to 18 are the most overrepresented group as offenders. In both 2023-24, and 2024-25, the peak offending age was 15 years (exactly the same as for victimisation);
 - Assault With Injury (GBH & above): peak offending ages are 17 and 20, with a generally higher level between ages 15 and 22;
 - Possession of Weapons offences: boys aged 15 to 17 are the most over represented group as recorded offenders.
- Offender profile derived from Great Western Hospital Emergency Department data indicate that only 14% of offenders were reported as female, with a further 11% where there were multiple assailants including both males and females. With male victims of male assailants (the most common combination), the most numerous Victim / Offender relationship was 'Stranger'.
- We are able to draw on pre-existing national and local research that details the vulnerabilities and risk factors of children who have perpetrated violence, or are at most risk of carrying weapons or being drawn into gang related activity. These include:
 - Poor school attendance or exclusion;
 - Exposure to parental substance misuse;
 - Exposure to poor parental mental health;
 - Lack of positive male role model / poor parental relationship;
 - Exposure to parental domestic abuse / violence.

Offender profiles, Police data – Assault With Injury (GBH & Above):



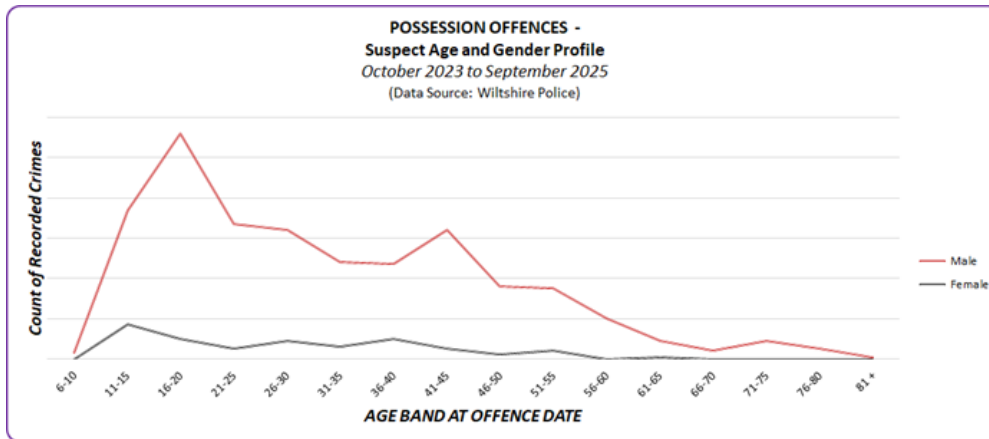
- Peak offending ages are 17 and 20, with a generally higher level between ages 15 and 22.
- Across both 2023/24 and 2024/25, there was a slight dip in recorded offending at specific age 19.

Offender profiles, Police data – Robbery:



- This graph has a very, very similar profile to that plotting Victim Age and Gender Profile (see next section).
- Offending by males is disproportionately high – a pattern that we see continued consistently across other crime types relevant to the Serious Violence Duty.
- Boys and young men aged 14 to 18 are, based on recorded crime, the most overrepresented group as Robbery offenders.
- In both 2023-24, and 2024-25, the peak offending age was 15 - exactly the same as for victimisation.

Offender profiles, Police data – Possession of Weapons offences:



- Boys aged 15 to 17 are, based on recorded crime, the most overrepresented group as recorded offenders for this type of crime, with the most numerous specific crime being Having an article with a blade or point in a public place.

- The Millennium Cohort Study (MCS) is a UK nationally representative birth cohort study following an initial sample of over 19,000 individuals born around the millennium (Sep 2000–Jan 2002). Analysis based on 13,277 cohort members at the age of 17, in 2018-19 found that:
 - At age 17, 6.4% of young people reported carrying or using a weapon in the preceding year. This was an increase from age 14 where 3.7% reported this. At age 17 the prevalence for males (8.8%) was more than twice that for females (3.9%).

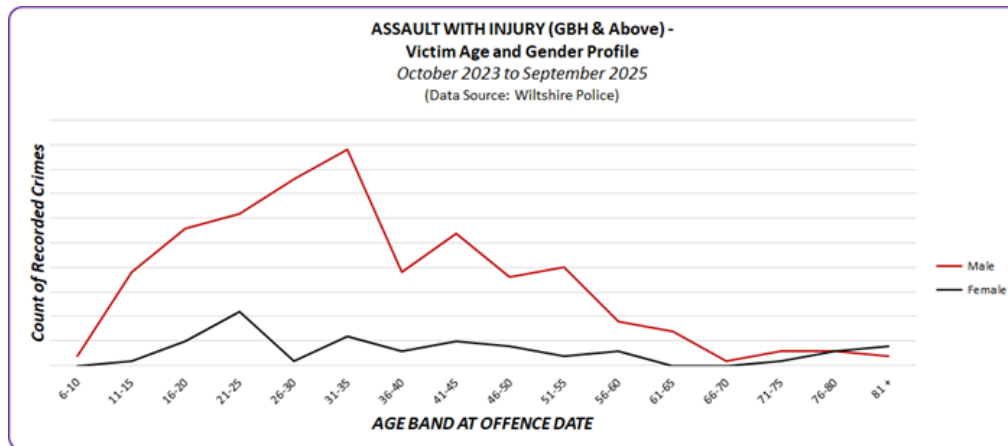
- However, a specific survey in Swindon concluded that it was likely that around 4% of their sample of school students aged 14-16 had carried a knife on one or more occasions in the previous year.

Understanding victims in Wiltshire and Swindon

Of the 764 recorded crimes relevant to the Serious Violence Duty, in the twelve month period to 30th September 2025, 462 have an identified victim of whom we have full details. These consist of 446 discreet individuals (15 individuals were victims of more than one relevant crime in the period).

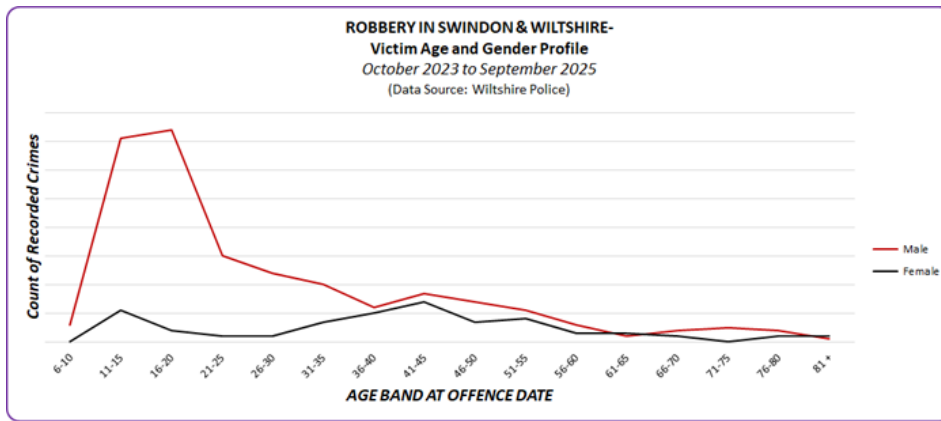
- Repeat victimisation is a significant factor, observable in local data and national research findings.
- The age and gender distribution of victims is relatively consistent across all three major crime types relevant to the Serious Violence Duty:
 - Robbery: boys and young men aged from 12 years old to 18 are most at risk of becoming victim, with a peak age of 15;
 - Assault With Injury (GBH & above): males aged 31 to 35 are, based on recorded crime, the group most at risk, with males aged between 16 and 34 also at disproportionately high risk. Overall, the peak age of victimisation was 33 but males aged 15 were again disproportionately represented;
 - Possession of Weapons offences: outside of 'simple possession' crimes (which are offences against the state), males aged between 11 years old and 20 are disproportionately victim.
- Ambulance and hospital data: male victims outnumber female at all ages, except the very young and the over 65s.

Victim profiles, Police data – Assault With Injury (GBH & Above):



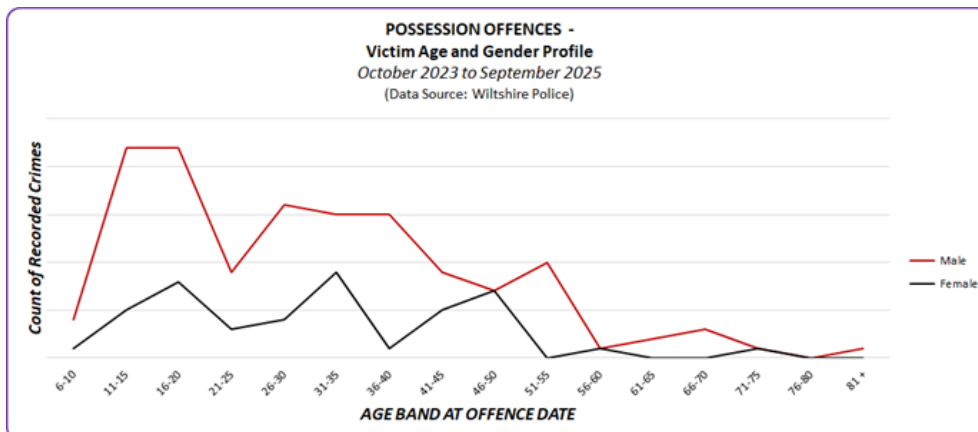
- Males aged 31 to 35 are, based on recorded crime, the group most at risk of becoming victims of GBH and above violent crime that is not Domestic Abuse related, with males aged between 16 and 34 also at disproportionately high risk. Overall, the peak age of victimisation was 33 but males aged 15, as per Robbery above, are also disproportionately represented.
- Interestingly, the peak age of victimisation – 31 to 35 – was also the age band with the highest percentage (63%) of victims having a warning flag (such as Drugs, Weapons, Ailment) on Police systems. Percentages with a warning flag were hugely disproportionate, when compared to the general population, in all age bands between 11 and 80.

Victim profiles, Police data – Robbery:



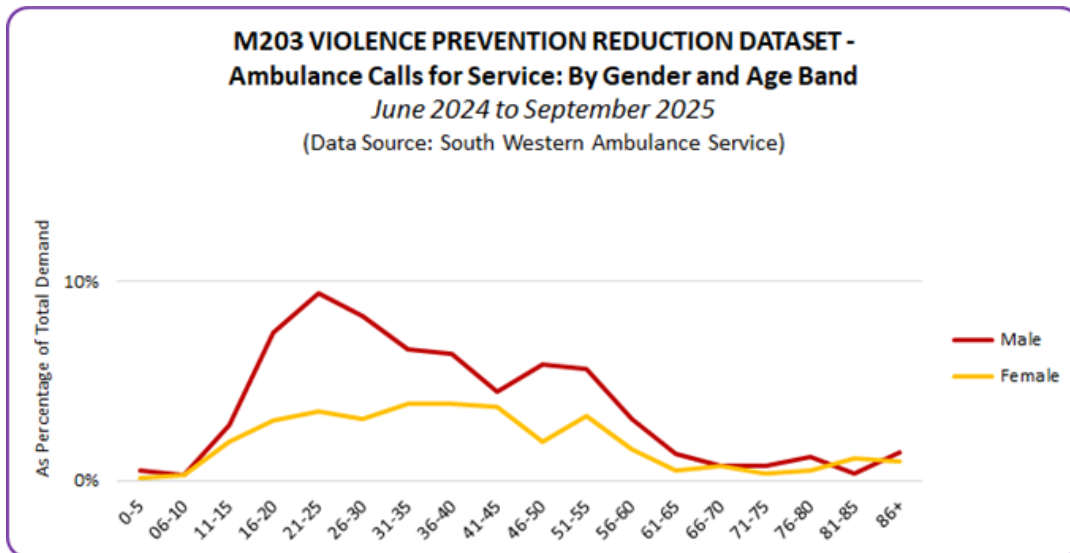
- This graph has a very, very similar profile to that plotting Offender Age and Gender Profile.
- Boys and young men aged 12 to 18 are, based on recorded crime, the group most at risk of becoming victims of Robbery. In both 2023-24, and 2024-25, the peak age of victimisation was 15.
- 37% of victims of Robbery aged 11-15 had a warning flag (such as Drugs, Weapons, Child at Risk, or Mental Health) on Police systems. Although very high compared to all 11-15 year olds in general, it is nonetheless considerably lower than the average of 58% for victims aged between 21 and 60. This suggests that whilst other risk factors are significant, being a child is itself a disproportionate risk.

Victim profiles, Police data – Possession of Weapons offences:



- Although 'simple possession' crimes are offences against the state, there are a number of crimes within this grouping that do have specific victims. The predominating crimes in this category that do have individuals as victim are *Threaten with a blade or sharply pointed article in a public place*; *Threaten with an offensive weapon in a public place*; and *Threaten a person with a blade or sharply pointed article in a private place*.
- Males aged between 11 years old and 20 are disproportionately victims of these crimes.

Victim profile derived from South Western Ambulance Service NHS Foundation Trust data:



- Male victims outnumber female at all ages between 11 and 65.

Understanding the locations of serious violence in Wiltshire and Swindon

- “*The Iron Law of Troublesome Places*”: in Police, Ambulance, Hospital ED, Fire & Rescue data, we see multiple evidence of geographical concentration of violence and harm;
- As well as concentration in space, we note significant temporal concentrations - violence is highly concentrated at particular times as well as at particular places. We use this data to send police and partners to the right places at the right times.
- We have identified hotspots across four urban areas that total less than 0.025% of the area of Swindon and Wiltshire, yet account for between 10 and 12% of each and every serious violence metric applied.

