

NPoCC SIB Public Safety Events Threat Assessment November 2022

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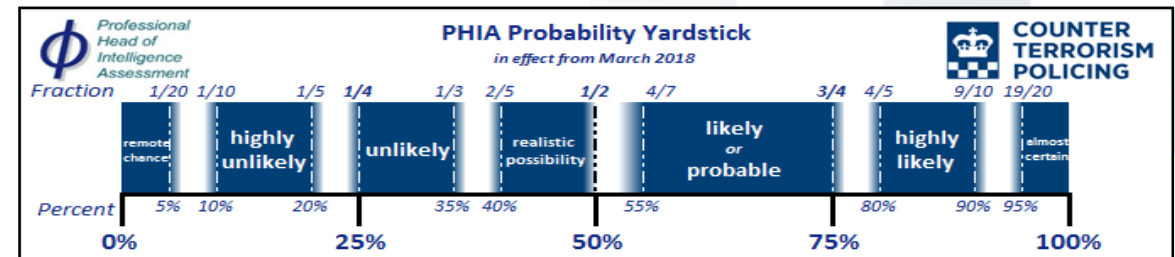
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Purpose

- The purpose of this document is to proportionately and lawfully share information to inform both UK policing and law enforcement stakeholders:
 - To assist them with the development of assessments and event planning in line with policing's core duties.
 - To prevent and detect crime.
 - To keep the peace and to protect life and property.
- This product will provide an assessment of current and emerging trends in the events space, including festivals, arena tours, sporting events and other large or crowded licensed events.
- The product will provide a forward look on factors that may impact on risk and threat for public safety.
- The products will be produced on a monthly basis.
- Please contact NPoCCMailbox-.SIB-Events@met.police.uk with questions or feedback.

Contents

National Assessment	Page 3
Festival Season Overview	Page 4
Dashboard	Page 5
Safeguarding – Spiking	Page 6
Safeguarding - Crowd Dynamics / Behaviour	Page 7
Criminality – Theft from Person	Page 8
External Influences - Protest	Page 9



NPoCC SIB has received reports on 57 events for the period 15 September to 16 November 2022, including reporting of 'Fresher' events for university students. Public safety incidents were reported at 48 of these events. There has been a reduction in reporting of certain types of safeguarding and criminality risks over the period. Sexual incidents and drug usage/dealing reports have declined, however it is assessed as **likely** that these offences are still taking place at the same frequency as over the summer period. Reporting has been sustained regarding issues of crowd behaviour, spiking and environmental protest, with an increase in reporting of the theft of mobile phones.

As the autumn/winter season music tours have commenced there has been an increase in reporting from both police and industry of the theft of mobile phones. This trend is **likely** to be sustained as these environments provide crowd dynamics that are conducive to enabling undetected theft. Mobile phones and other high value goods in crowded spaces are **highly likely** to remain an attractive commodity to steal as a means of financial gain. At one music tour there was reporting of at least 88 phones 'lost', **highly likely** to be stolen with the latest, high value phones more prone to be taken with retail values of high end devices exceeding £1,000 per phone. There is also a **realistic possibility** of safeguarding concerns for the victim of the theft, particularly younger/vulnerable persons with ensuring they get home safely without the security of their phone.

As the festival season ended, the focussed reporting of drink or needle spiking shifted to the University setting with increased events for Freshers at the start of the academic year. There were 17 potential incidents reported to NPoCC SIB that were likely to have student victims or those attending student events. Of note, all victims were female and drink spiking was more likely than needle spiking. There is a **realistic possibility** of drink and needle spiking reporting continuing over the next reporting period due to perceived opportunities in the night time economy, including music tours, in the lead up to Christmas and New Year.

Anti-social and violent behaviour was reported at music, sporting and community events during the period. The behaviour was often influenced by excessive alcohol consumption and at times the behaviour posed risk to attendees and staff. Staff working at events received injuries on some occasions in the course of their duties. It is **highly likely** that inappropriate and disruptive behaviour of attendees will continue to be fuelled by excessive alcohol and/or drug use, especially with the seasonal increase in events in December providing further opportunities for this behaviour to manifest.

Protest has taken place at a number of events, all of them using the events as a platform to raise awareness of environmental concerns. A protest took place at the ATP Laver Cup, in the form of direct action whereby a protester lit themselves on fire, causing increased risk to the venue and those in attendance. This direct action was reported through national media and gained moderate traction. This tactic is rarely seen in the UK and it is **unlikely** to increase significantly throughout sporting or other events as a means of protest. There is a **realistic possibility** that high-profile events over the next month will be utilised as further platforms for protest. In addition events that are perceived to have a large environmental impact, including issues such as contentious sponsors, have a **realistic possibility** of triggering protest.



National Assessment

After a hiatus for many events due to Covid-19, there was some return to normality with a busy festival season over summer 2022. NPoCC SIB received reporting on 264 different events over the period May to September 2022, where reporting across most public safety themes peaked in August 2022 (Chart 1). A total of 47.1% of the events were of a festival event type, the majority of which were music themed. Reporting also incorporated events such as concerts, sporting and community events.

Despite events being hosted, there were still a number of significant challenges as a consequence of the EU Exit and Covid-19 pandemic. This resulted in increased reporting of staffing issues, including staff shortages and quality of candidate, and issues with supply chains. These gaps increased the risk impacting on safeguarding and criminality across the summer period, with reports of criminality and infiltration of staff working at events. It is **likely** these challenges will continue into the 2023 season with evolving reasons such as the impact of the economic crisis and recession.

The behaviour of attendees at times impacted on the capacity and capability of organisers, requiring additional support from local policing resources. This behaviour was often influenced by excessive alcohol consumption and/or illegal drug use. However, the impact of social media and media reporting was also **highly likely** to have distorted the extent of behaviour in some scenarios, including events at music festivals over the August bank holiday weekend.

The number of reported arrests have been relatively low compared to pre-pandemic levels. However, there has been evidence of a range of criminality (particularly drug dealing) at events. The dealing of nitrous oxide re-emerged at electronic dance music festivals, activity of which is **likely** to have been facilitated by organised criminality due to monetary value and volume of drugs. Other criminality reported has included violence, theft, and sexual offending. It is **highly likely** that other aspects of criminality has taken place but not reported to security or police.

Safeguarding was reported by most forces as a significant risk. This has included violence against women and girls (VAWG), sexual incidents, and vulnerabilities through excess alcohol and illegal drug consumption. Overall incident numbers were low, in line with the night time economy setting. The exception was over the August bank holiday weekend where there was a sharp rise in reporting, however it is **likely** other factors such as awareness campaigns and access to medical facilities accounted for some of the increase.

Chart 1: Public Safety Themes, May to September 2022

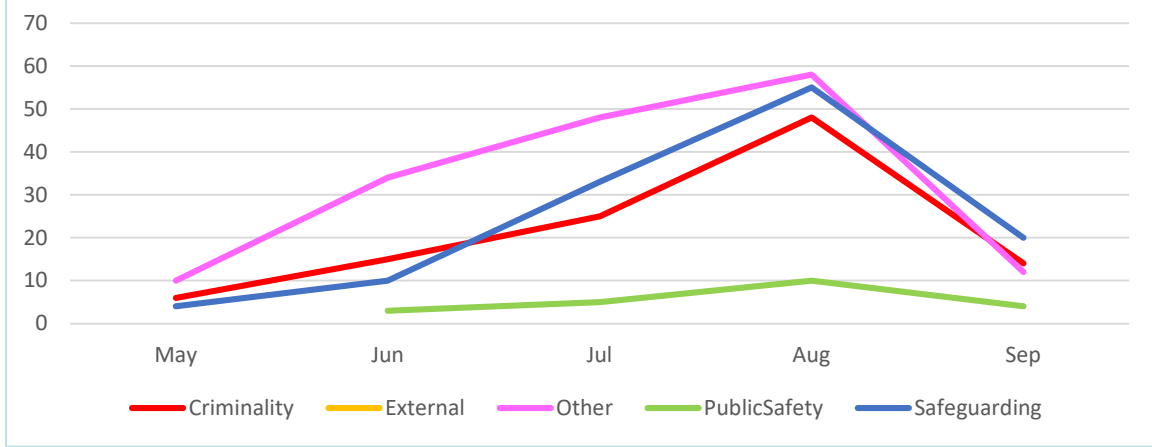
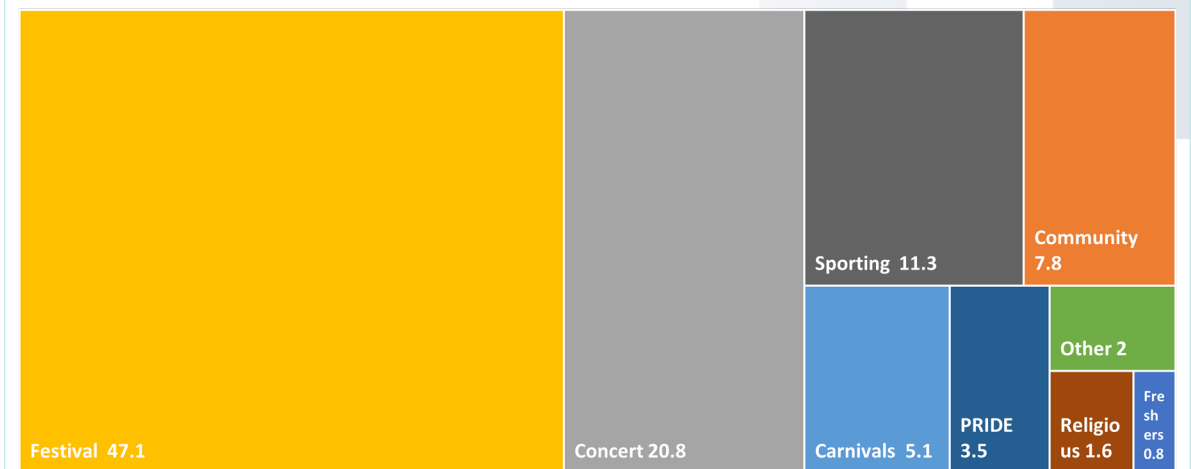
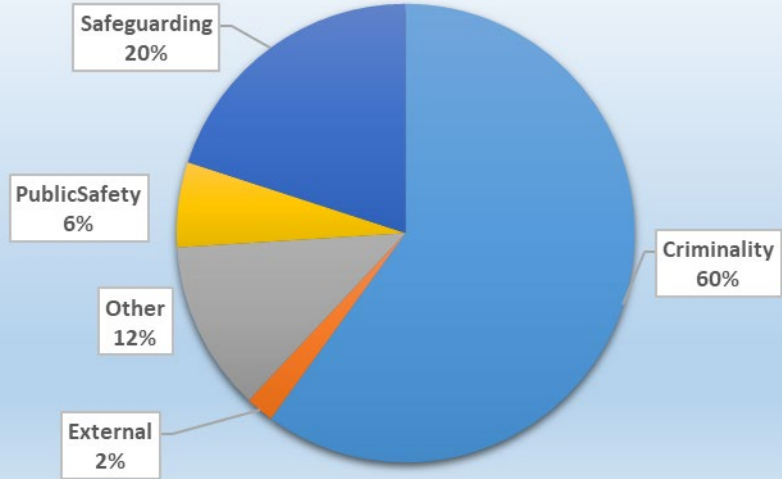


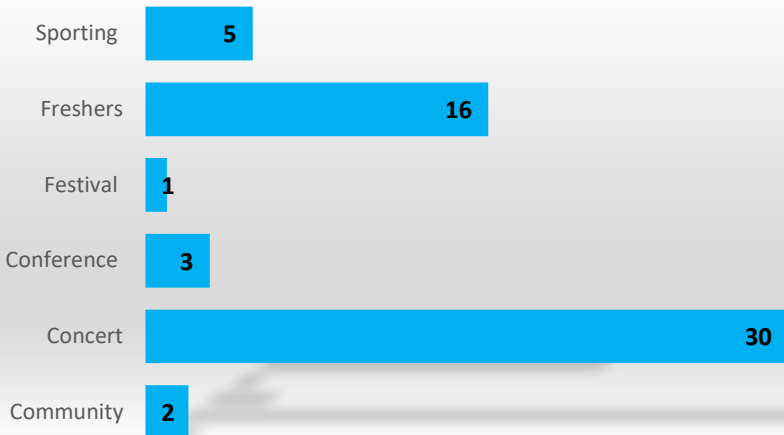
Chart 2: Type Of Event May-September 2022 (%)



Thematic Distribution - 15 September to 16 November 2022



Event Type – 15 September to 16 November 2022



Criminology was widely reported over the period, accounting for 60% of the reported incidents. Assaults and theft from the person were the most reported offence types.

The type of events where public safety or criminology was identified has now changed from the festival environment to indoor venues, including concerts and Fresher events. It is **likely** reporting will continue to be higher for music concerts over the winter period, coinciding with an increase in music tours.

Indoor venues, particularly used for music events, are beginning to report increases in thefts at concerts. Many of these environments provide crowd dynamics conducive for the criminology.

Excessive alcohol consumption has influenced behaviour in venues leading to incidents of assaults and hate crime. It is **highly likely** these types of criminology and behaviour will be sustained over the next reporting period.

Criminology Type 15 September to 16 November 2022



National Assessment

As the festival season ended, focus shifted to the University academic year with increased numbers of Freshers events at the start of the academic year. It was assessed younger, vulnerable students who may be away from home and experiencing independence for the first time were more likely to be vulnerable to spiking incidents. There were 17 potential victims reported to NPoCC SIB that were likely to be students or attending student events. There is a **realistic possibility** other incidents will have occurred but not reported to police. Drink spiking was overwhelmingly the main method reported, rather than the use of a needle, often utilising the opportunities of a crowded bar and/or nightclub environment.

Although testing has taken place for most incidents, not all have been confirmed as spiking or were negative results. It is **likely** some perceived spiking incidents were the result of other factors such as excessive alcohol consumption or consented drug taking. There is a **realistic possibility** of spiking incidents taking place to commit sexual offences, one report stating that spiking had affected capability to consent to sexual activity. Universities and student unions took measures such as drinks covers, panic alarms and spike testing kits to mitigate risk.

Incidents of Note

Over the reporting period there has been a total of 17 potential spiking incidents linked to the student community across five policing regions. Only one incident referred to a needle stick injury, the rest more likely to be drink spiking. Reporting of note includes:

- Two reports from the West Midlands region reference a positive result for ‘K2’ a synthetic version of tetrahydrocannabinol (THC – Spice) upon testing.
- Three reports indicate victims being approached by suspects, with drinks bought for individuals and friends. It is perceived that the drinks bought may have been spiked.
- All victims were female in the reports sent to NPoCC.

Forward Look

There is a **realistic possibility** of drink and needle spiking reporting at indoor arenas and events, such as music tours and concerts. Other crowded events including sporting, celebratory, conference and religious events also have a **realistic possibility** of providing greater opportunity for those wishing to cause harm through needle or drink spiking.

It is **likely** that further coverage of spiking in national media and on social platforms that coincide with police and partnership campaigns will encourage reporting. Debate and traction is increasing in the media, with calls for needle spiking to be made a criminal offence in its own right. There is a **realistic possibility** of protest if it is perceived government and police are not addressing spiking of women, as seen in October 2021.



<https://www.irishmirror.ie/news/irish-news/crime/new-figures-show-worrying-surge-28327594>

National Assessment

Anti-social and violent behaviour was reported at music, sporting and community events during the period. Incidents at music concerts included shows of Pop, Soul/Motown, and Hip-Hop which infers this behaviour is not unique to one particular music genre.

Staff working at events have been injured through the behaviour of those present, most likely occurring as staff attempt to eject attendees from the venue. It is **highly likely** that this type of alcohol influenced behaviour will continue, placing staff and other attendees at risk of harm and injury. Social media has been used to encourage behaviour that has a **realistic possibility** of impacting on safety. A TikTok influencer was reported urging attendees to force entry to a concert venue. This attracted large groups of people looking to cause disruption. It is **likely** a minority of social influencers will at times encourage action through social media platforms in order to gain followers, and this will cause disruption and potential harm.

Incidents of Note

Incidents of assault and inappropriate behaviour was reported across events impacting on attendees, staff, and policing resources. Examples include:

- October 2022: LGBT+ event (West Midlands) - at least two individuals were removed for the use of derogatory, threatening, and homophobic language directed at others in attendance.
- October 2022: Rugby League World Cup (West Yorkshire) – security staff were injured when trying to eject an individual.
- November 2022: Firework Display (Cumbria) – intoxicated males were urinating in public causing concerns for exposure to attendees. Three dispersal orders were also issued. A member of security staff was injured after a firework was thrown at him. There were also reports of youths throwing fireworks into a children’s play area.
- November 2022: UK Hip-Hop concert (Metropolitan) – a TikTok influencer invited his followers to attend a venue in the London area where a UK hip-hop act was performing. This attracted large crowds of people looking to cause disruption. There was an increase in ejections and disruptive behaviour stretching both police and security resources as a consequence. Other behaviour across the two days where this act were performing included aggressive behaviour, including towards staff and fighting.
- November 2022: UK Hip-Hop concert (West Yorkshire) – there was reporting of assaults on officers during the arrest of a suspect. The suspects friend attempted to stop the arrest by filming the incident. Other assaults were reported at the concert. There has been social media and national media reporting of other behaviour issues on this tour.

Forward Look

It is **highly likely** that disruptive behaviour of attendees will continue fuelled by excessive alcohol and /or drug consumption. The increase in indoor music events and festive/celebratory events in December will **highly likely** provide further opportunities for this behaviour.

Certain music tours have a **realistic possibility** of providing an opportunity for disruptive anti-social behaviour that in certain environments is **likely** to lead to more serious incidents of violence. It is **likely** this behaviour will be circulated on social media.

It is **likely** that social media influencers will use some events to further their social media presence and followers in ways that may impact on the safety of the event.

National Assessment

Mobile phone theft offences were reported at eight different concerts, over seven music tours at indoor venues. Retrospective reporting for the period also indicated further tours and concerts were targeted. It is **highly likely** this figure is not representative nationally and more theft of mobile phones occurred but were not reported. The close crowd dynamics enables potential offenders to avoid detection and presents a normalised scenario to be in close contact. There is a **realistic possibility** that music tours assessed by criminals as providing more opportunities for theft will be targeted on multiple dates of the tour.

It is **likely** organised pickpocketing criminal groups are targeting these crowded events. A male apprehended on suspicion of theft had previously been stopped at several UK festivals over the summer, with a history of theft and violent robberies across Europe.

It is **likely** some who are challenged by security staff will offer false names and details to hinder checks on their identity. It is also **likely** similar false details will be used by teams to buy valid tickets online to gain entry for the purpose of theft. There is also a **realistic possibility** that tickets will also be bought from touts near the venue.

As a consequence of the thefts, there is a **realistic possibility** that the vulnerability of some of the victims may increase. Any significant volume of thefts at concerts for a younger audience is **likely** to present safeguarding issues to the venue/organiser to ensure the victims can safely contact people and return home.

Incidents of Note

- September - October 2022: Metalcore act (International tour) – an early warning report was received from Europe regarding theft of mobile phones at a concert of metalcore genre. The act performed in October in the UK where there were reports of 70 lost phones from the event.
- October 2022: Post-hardcore act (National tour) - multiple reports were received of theft of phone from a concert in West Yorkshire. One complainant mentioned other people also looking for their phones. Many discarded phone cases were reported on the floor near the stage. Industry stated at least 12 stolen phones were reported to their staff. There were additional retrospective updates on the dates of this tour from industry indicating further thefts – London area- 35 'lost' phones, Hampshire – 41.
- November 2022: Alternative rock act (Metropolitan) – a male was caught with his hand in someone else's pocket and was subsequently stopped by the security team. He was known for previous mobile phone theft at concerts and festivals in the UK and across Europe. Although no property was discovered on his person, it was identified that he was using false details and purchasing tickets to concerts and festivals using fake details with others. (Police and Industry Returns).
- Industry and police have reported on mobile phone thefts on other tours over October and November including for concerts of Metal, Alternative/Indie, Hip-Hop, and Rock music genres.



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Future Look

It is **likely** indoor venues, particularly music tours will be targeted where crowd dynamics are conducive to enabling undetected theft. Mobile phones and other high value goods in crowded spaces are **highly likely** to remain an attractive commodity to steal for individuals and groups as a means of financial gain.

Organised groups are **likely** to target varied dates on specific tours across the country, in order to evade recognition.

It is **likely** that offenders will continue to use false details both online and in person in an attempt to deter identification.

There is a **realistic possibility** that any safeguarding issues arising as a consequence of a theft has the potential to gain negative traction on social media.

National Assessment

Protest activity has taken place at four events over the reporting period, all of which have used protests as a platform to raise awareness for environmental concerns. Three conference-type events were targeted, which caused slight short term disruption to the proceedings. It is **likely** that these conferences were targeted due to those in attendance having the capability and influence over environmental change and policy.

An environmental protest took place at the ATP Laver Cup, in the form of direct action whereby a protester lit themselves on fire, causing increased risk to the venue and those in attendance. This direct action was reported through national media and gained moderate traction. This tactic is rarely seen in the UK and it is **unlikely** to increase significantly throughout sporting or other events as a means of protest.

Incidents of Note

- September: ATP Laver Cup (Metropolitan) – a male entered the O2 arena tennis event and poured lighter fuel over the floor and his arm it alight. The cause was for the climate group ‘End UK Private Jets’.
- October: Energy Conference (Metropolitan) – Just Stop Oil (JSO) protested at the event, a high-profile summit of fossil fuel companies. Approximately 20 persons with banners and flags took part in the protest with some individuals sat in the road.
- October: Conservative Party Conference (West Midlands) - Green Peace protesters interrupted the Prime Minister’s speech on the final day of the Conference. Two females stood up, shouted in the Prime Minister’s direction and displayed a banner that read ‘Who voted for this?’
- October: Climate Change Conference (Metropolitan) – disruption by protesters took place at the event which was attended by those linked to oil and their banking financiers.

Forward Look

There is a **realistic possibility** of protest at high profile events that are taking place over the next month. This has a **realistic possibility** of including sporting events and concerts, either due to a live televised feed, or for the likelihood of the action gaining traction on social media and national media.

It is **likely** protest groups will seek to find alternative targets within sporting and other events which are not directly linked to the cause to take advantage of media exposure and increase support for their campaign.

It is **likely** that sporting institutions or events that are sponsored by companies that are perceived as impacting on the environment or are associated directly/indirectly with human rights issues will attract protest. The sponsorship of British Cycling by the company Shell has at the time of writing already triggered direct protest action, and this is **likely** to continue at such institutions.



<https://www.telegraph.co.uk/tennis/2022/09/23/laver-cup-protester-sets-arm-fire-court/>



<https://cyclingtips.com/2022/11/british-cycling-respect-right-to-protest-as-cyclists-demonstrate-at-hq/>



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