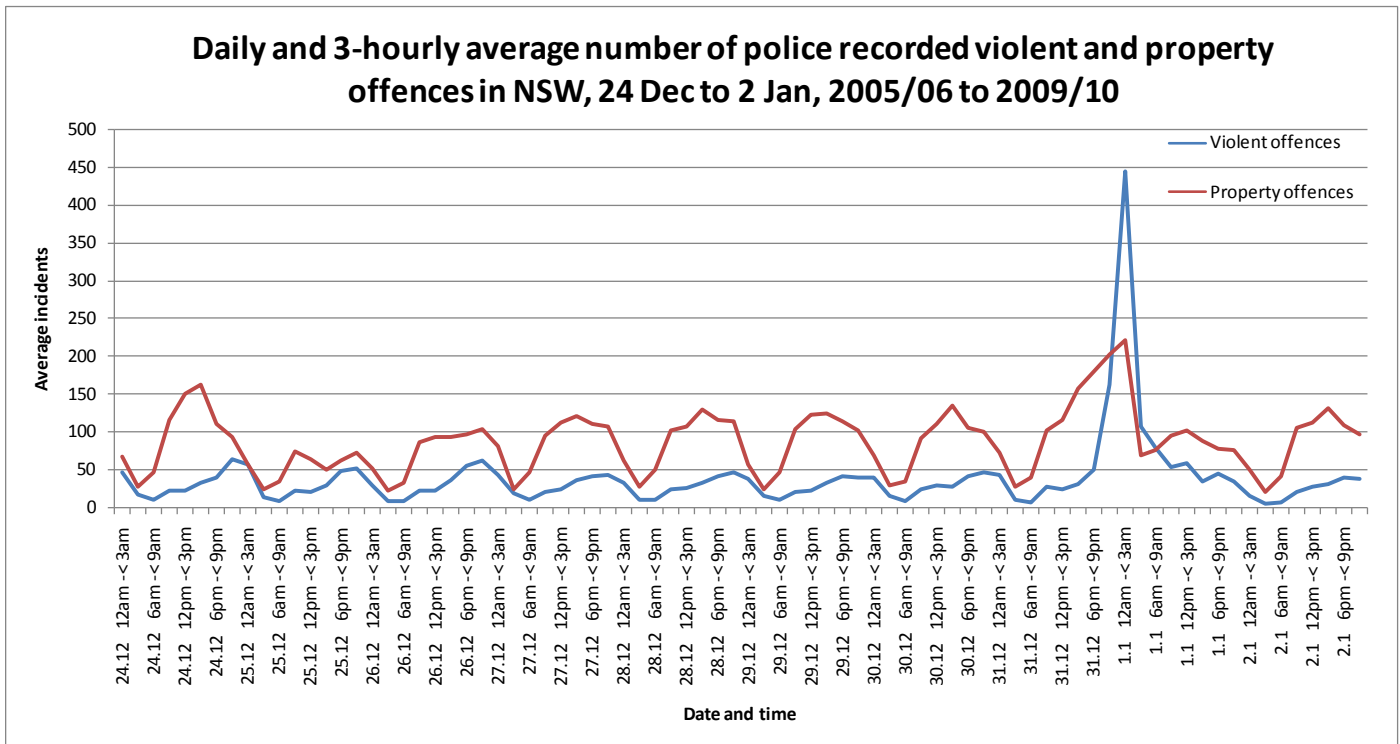


Does crime increase over Christmas and New Year?

The NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research is often asked whether crime increases over the Christmas and New Year period. In response to these enquiries, we have carried out an analysis of crime statistics for selected offences.

The graph below shows the average number of criminal incidents recorded by NSW Police occurring on each day and for each time period between 24 December to 2 January¹. The averages were calculated by considering criminal incidents recorded by the NSW Police as occurring on these dates for five consecutive years from 2005/06 to 2009/2010.



As can be seen, there is an obvious spike in violent offences² on New Years Eve between 9pm and midnight and early on New Years Day between midnight and 3am. The number of recorded incidents of violent offences between these times on New Year is more than nine times that of other days in the period. In addition, half of the violent offences on New Years Eve and New Years Day are recorded as occurring between 9pm on New Years Eve and 3am on New Years Day. These spikes are likely due to higher levels of alcohol consumption and social interaction.

In contrast, recorded violent offences are relatively stable around Christmas Day. As can be seen above, the incidence pattern between Christmas Eve and 30 December as well as across the various time periods during this time remains consistent.

The pattern for property offences³ is similar to that for assault. The incidence of property crime is generally steady over the period with the exception of a large increase on New Years Eve and Day between 6pm on New Years Eve and 3am on New Years Day (by over 50%). There is also a small peak on Christmas Eve in the afternoon followed by a slight decrease over Christmas Day.

Source: NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research (unpublished data reference jh10-9454 at 22 Dec 2010).

¹ Unlike most of the Bureau's Recorded Crime Statistics reports, the current analysis was calculated using the date of the incident, rather than the date when the incident was reported to police. This is because, in some cases, incidents are reported long after they take place and the victim is unsure of the actual date on which the incident occurred. Incidents where there was any doubt about the date of occurrence were excluded from the current analysis.

² 'Violent offences' includes murder, sexual offences, assault and robbery.

³ 'Property offences' includes break and enter dwelling and non-dwelling, motor vehicle theft, steal from person/dwelling/retail store/motor vehicle, stock theft, fraud and other theft.