

Summary of Luton's Crime

Luton is the largest town within the county of Bedfordshire, one of the Home Counties located in the south-east of England, and has been designated as a Unitary Authority in its own right. It is served by several transport links, including three main-line railway stations and London Luton Airport, one of the four London International airports. The M1 motorway also passes through Luton, linking Luton to destinations both North and South. This high level of road, rail and air connections means that Luton's transport infrastructure is such that it is one of the most accessible destinations from within mainland Europe.



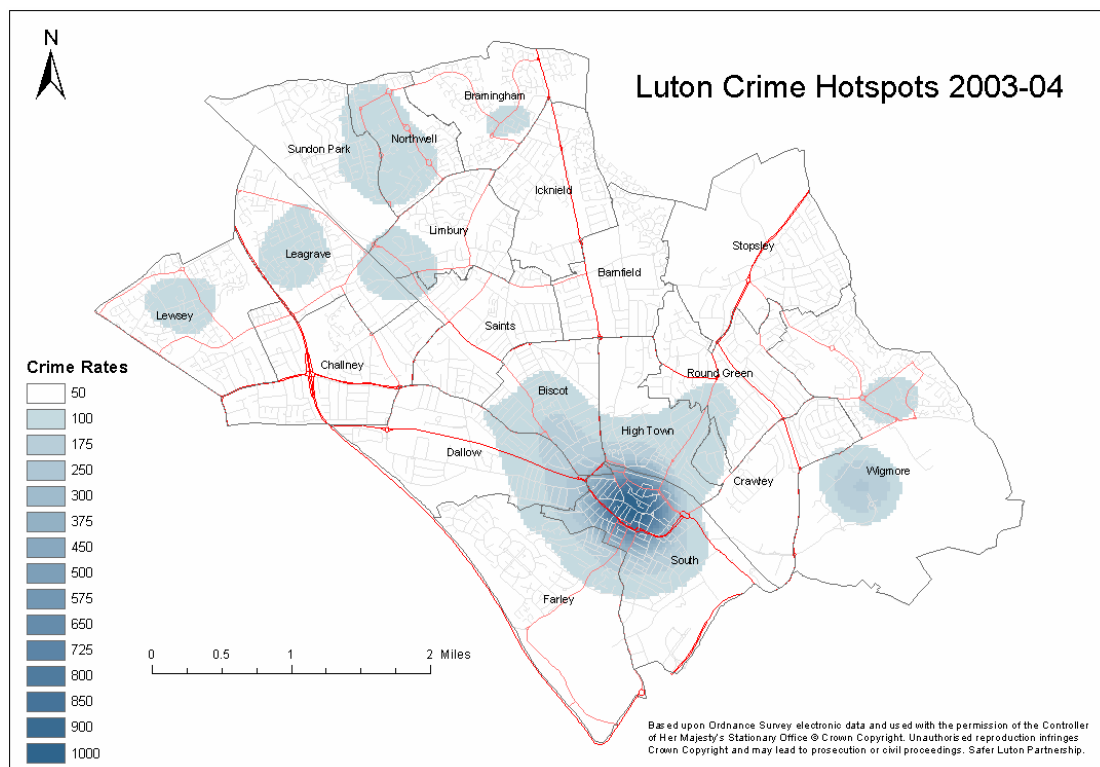
There are a number of factors unique to Luton which contribute to its diversity in retail and leisure opportunities as well as the range of individuals that live or migrate to the area:

- Luton is the home of several national and multinational companies, taking advantage of the diverse skills present in the local workforce
- Luton has a close proximity to London (approximately 35 miles) means that Luton is also well within the commuter belt to London
- Luton has one of the largest covered shopping centres within the UK, situated in the town centre
- Luton is a university town, attracting large numbers of both national and international students to the town
- Luton hosts the renowned Luton International Carnival, which is second largest street festival in the UK, only smaller in the number of visitors per year to London's Notting Hill Carnival.

Luton itself has the same composition as many parts of London with respect to the geographic, socio-economic and demographic variables that interact to affect crime levels, a fact borne out by the Home Office in creating the thirteen Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership (CDRP) families. These families were defined specifically for the purpose of comparing crime and disorder rates between similar areas. Luton was placed into family group 3, along with 16 other CDRPs, 14 of which are London Metropolitan areas.

In comparison with its family group, Luton has shown an above average increase in the level of crime from 2001-02 to 2003-04. In 2001-02 Luton ranked in the 63rd percentile for its family group (meaning that Luton's level of crime is greater than or equal to 63% of the members of the family group), whereas in 2003-04 its ranking was in the 75th percentile.

These offences are not evenly distributed around Luton, and geographic analysis has shown that there are higher concentrations of crime within the inner central wards (i.e. those containing or neighbouring the town centre). This is shown in the diagram below by the darker shading. There are also smaller areas containing higher concentrations of crime within some of the outlying wards within Luton, although these areas do not show as high a crime rate per capita as the hotspot within the town centre. There is also a clear correlation between the level of crime and other socio-economic variables such as deprivation.



Town and city centres tend to be the primary point for retail outlets, business premises, leisure facilities and communications links. As such the majority of the offences in the town centre reflect the composition of facilities and venues within the area, with the majority of crimes being theft and fraud related (linked to the many retail outlets) or violence related (linked to the pub and nightclub trade).

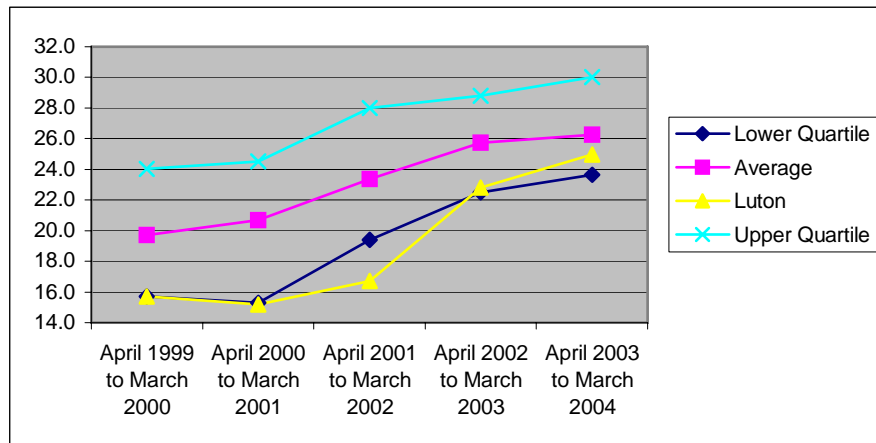
Within this overall picture there were individual variations amongst the key crime types (violence against the person, sex offences, robbery, burglary dwelling, theft of motor vehicle and theft from motor vehicle), with a clear distinction being found between property crime and violent crime. Property crimes (burglary dwelling, theft of motor vehicles and theft from motor vehicles) all decreased in volume from 2001-02 to 2003-04, but violent crimes (violence against the person, sex offences and robbery) all increased within the same time period.

This key difference between the incidence of violent and property crime within Luton, is similar to the findings across the country (*British Crime Survey, 2004*). In Luton, 56.6% of the recorded crimes between April 2002 and March 2004 were property related, whereas only 15.8% of the crimes were violence related.

Violent Crime

Violent crime (violence against the person, sex offences and robbery) accounts for 15.8% of all recorded crime within Luton. There has been a small decrease (4.3%) between 2002-03 and 2003-04, and Luton is below the CDRP family group average, meaning that it compares well to similar CDRPs.

Comparative Violent Crime Rates CDRP Family Group 3



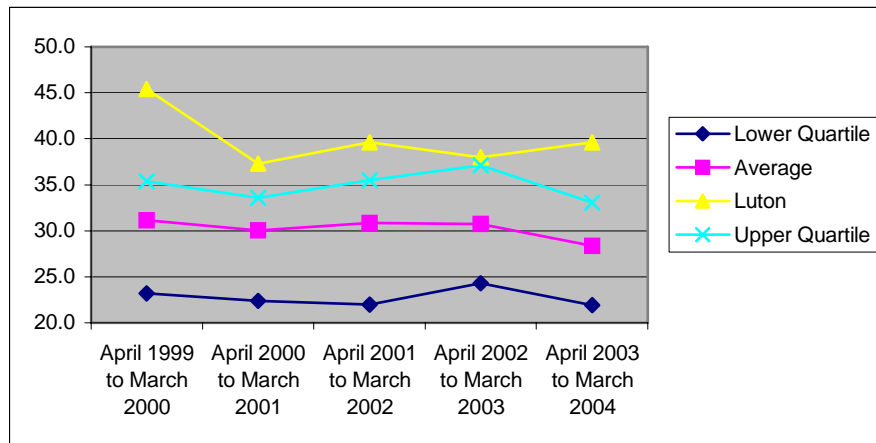
The vast majority of violent crimes within Luton are less serious (such as common assault) rather than more serious. The town centre is the largest and most significant hotspot within Luton for both violence against the person and robbery. This is likely to be attributable to the large number of late night economy venues (especially public houses and nightclubs) in that location, and is therefore linked to alcohol consumption. These violent incidents within the town centre occur more often during the weekends and more often during night-time hours. The younger section of the population (particularly 16 to 24 year olds) is much more likely to be both the victim and the offender of crimes involving violence against the person.

Other specific categories of violent crime, such as domestic violence, are increasing. With regards to racially motivated incidents, it was found that during 2003-04 the Indian/Pakistani/Bangladeshi ethnic group was disproportionately present as both the victims and offenders of racial harassment. The Black ethnic group was present primarily as the victims, but also was responsible for slightly more offences than their presence in the overall population anticipated.

Property Crime

In Luton, 56.6% of the recorded crimes between April 2002 and March 2004 were property related (burglary dwelling, burglary other, theft and handling, theft of and theft from motor vehicles and criminal damage). Luton compares poorly to the other members of the CDRP family group with regard to property crime, as it has consistently had higher rates.

Comparative Property Crime Rates CDRP Family Group 3



Burglary dwelling offences are one of the biggest challenges to crime reduction within Luton, this can be seen by looking at the crime trends for 2002-03 to 2003-04 as for all key crime types there was a decrease, except for burglary dwelling which increased by 38.3%.

Vehicle crime (theft of motor vehicle and theft from motor vehicle) has experienced a downwards trend in recent years, as from 2002-03 to 2003-04 there was an overall decrease of 11.4%, although Luton is still well above the CDRP family group average for vehicle crime. Motor vehicle crime within Luton is primarily located within one of two hotspots, the town centre and the airport, due to the fact that both of these areas have several car parks. Overall, as with the rest of the country, theft of vehicles is not as widespread as theft from vehicles.

Theft and related offences cover a very wide spectrum of criminal behaviours, and have remained at a constant level from 2002-03 to 2003-04. Shoplifting is the single largest sub-crime within the theft category with 24% of the total, followed by theft from person (similar to robbery but with no threat or violence employed) with 14% of total. Both of these crime types are disproportionately located within the town centre, however the other theft types show no such geographic pattern.

For further details please consult the Luton Crime and Disorder Audit

Luton has a complex arrangement of geographic, socio-economic and demographic factors that interact to produce a unique crime and disorder profile, which in turn lead to an uneven distribution of crime victimisation. The partnership approach to crime reduction attempts to address each of these disparate factors by designing appropriate interventions. By allowing each partner agency to work to its strengths the workload is intelligently divided and managed, and objective tasks are carried out by specialist agencies to produce desired outcomes.