

Road Safety Offence Analysis

Drug Drivers – Jan-Apr 2020

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1. Aim

This document examines offence data related to individuals arrested for Drug Driving in Essex during the first four months of 2020. It includes previous arrest data from Essex Athena, to show other recent arrests and offences linked to each individual. Athena offences comprise offences each individual was arrested for in Essex since 1st April 2015. This is not a criminal record check or full offending history, but does indicate the extent to which each individual is of recent or current interest to Essex Police for adverse reasons.

A comparison will be made to examine if the profile of drug driver has changed since COVID restrictions came in to place. Recent similar work on drink drivers provides a comparison between the profiles of drink and drug drivers is included verbatim in section 4.c.

2. Executive Summary

- 750 people were arrested for Drug-Driving in Essex between 1st January and 30th April 2020.
- 36% of those arrested had one or more previous arrest for a criminal (non-driving) offence since April 2015 - between them this comprises 4,619 previous criminal offences.
- Only 5% had a previous driving offence serious enough to be recorded on Athena.
- An additional 1,646 criminal (non-driving) offences were recorded for these individuals during their Drug Drive custody episode in 2020.
- The most common criminal offences recorded for the group were Drugs offences, Burglary & Theft and Violence offences.
- Over 70% of drug drivers were males aged under the age of 35.
- During 2020, into the period of COVID restrictions, the following trends have been observed:
 - Increase in the number of Drug Drive arrests by Essex Police and all arrests by the RCU (Road Crime Unit).
 - Decrease in demand from STORM incidents on the RCU.
 - Decrease in the number of Drink Drive arrests by Essex Police.
 - Decrease in the number of collisions involving both Drink and Drug Drivers.
 - No change in the profile of those arrested for Drug Driving in terms of age, gender and previous offending.

These observations indicate that while there may be fewer Drink Drivers on the road (fewer caught, fewer collisions) the number of Drug Drivers has not changed by very much, but a larger proportion of them are being caught because Essex Police are able to Police the roads more proactively.

This has important implications for Roads Policing post COVID, in that it indicates there are many more drug drivers out there that could be caught, dealt with and prevented from causing injury on the roads, who are not being caught because of other demands on resources.

3. Recommendations

- 1) Continue to focus enforcement resources on both drink and drug driving in order to:
 - Reduce the very high risk of injury collisions these behaviours create
 - Gain wider benefits of crime detection and prevention
- 2) Shift emphasis of driver impairment road safety initiatives towards drug driving while the night-time economy remains effectively closed.

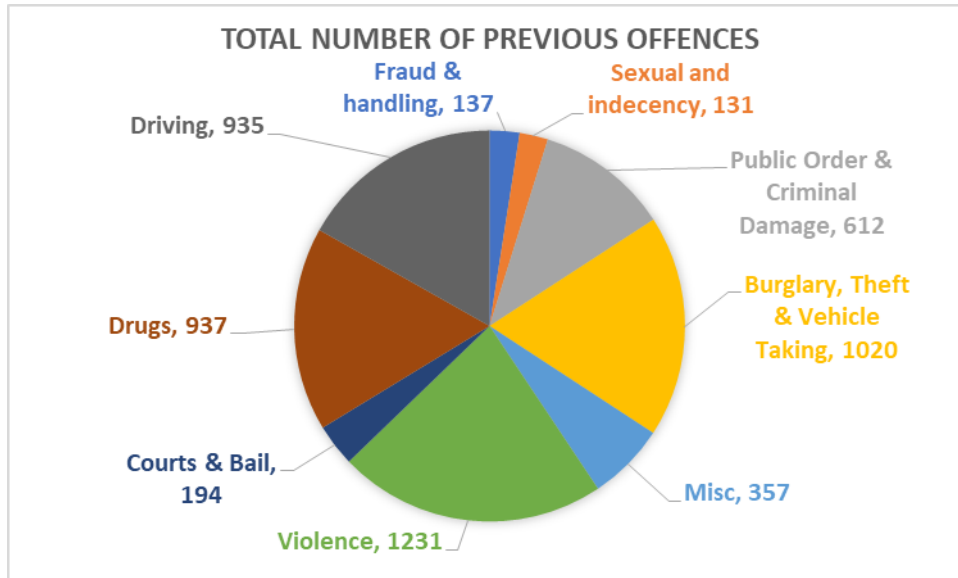
3) Offender profile

a. Previous arrests and offences

So far during 2020 there have been 750 Drug Drive arrests, of these:

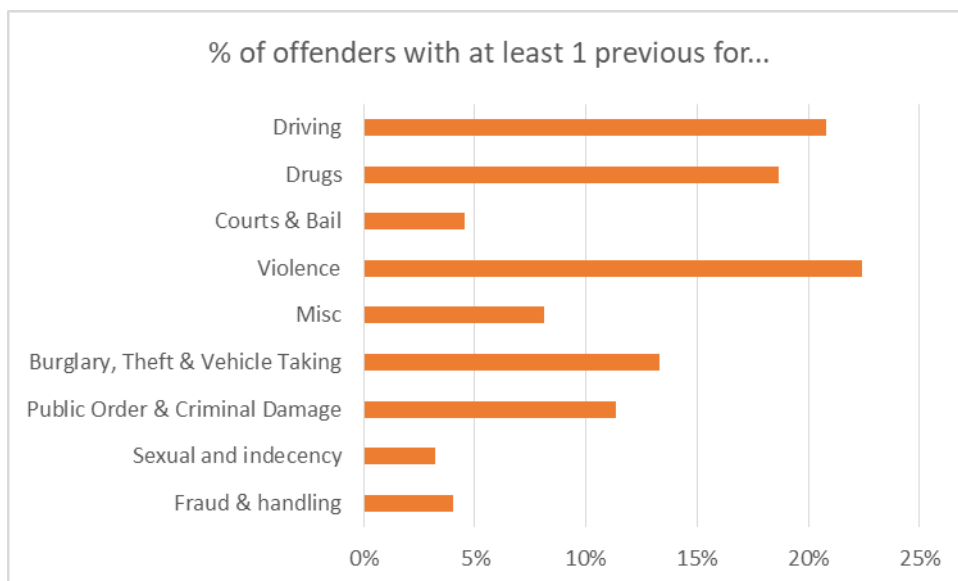
- 438 (58%) have no previous arrests on Athena
- 41 (5%) have a previous arrest for driving offences only
- 271 (36%) have one or more previous arrest for a criminal offence

The following offences are recorded on Athena for the detained persons, *prior* to their Drug Drive arrest in 2020:

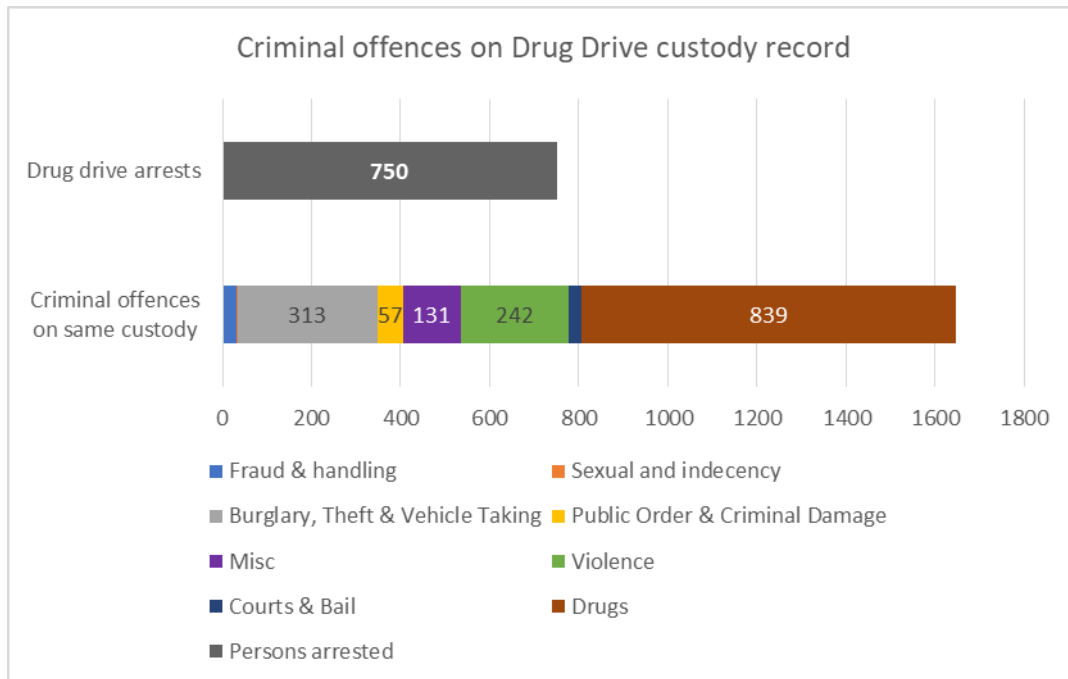


This gives a total of 5,554 previous offences for the 2020 drink drivers, including 935 previous driving offences.

Not every 2020 Drug Drive offender had previous arrests so the following chart shows the percentage of this cohort who had 1 or more previous arrest, by offence grouping. Please note, if somebody had previous for multiple offence types they will show in more than one of the categories below.



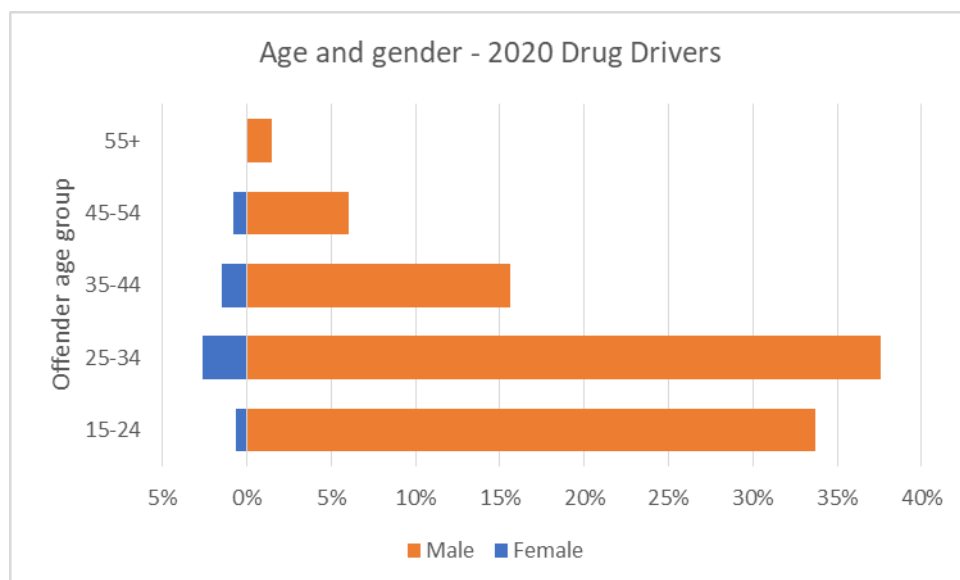
At the time of their arrest in 2020, the following offences were recorded on the same custody record for the 750 Drug Drivers in Essex:



This shows that the 750 Drug Drive arrests involved detained persons suspected of involvement in a further 1,646 criminal offences, the most common of which were, Drugs offences, Burglary & Theft, Violence and Miscellaneous offences. The most common Miscellaneous offences included things like harassment, and obstructing a constable.

b. Age and gender

The graph below shows the age and gender distribution of drug drivers.

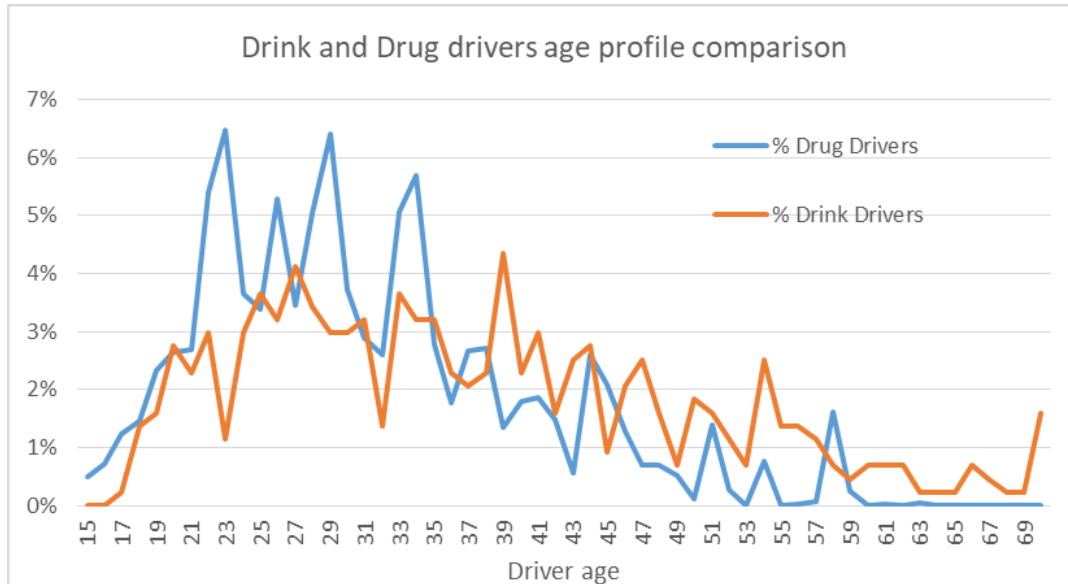


This shows drug drivers were overwhelmingly young and male, with over 70% being males under the age of 35.

c. Comparison with Drink Drivers

THIS SECTION IS COPIED FROM RECENT SIMILAR WORK FOCUSING ON DRINK DRIVERS

The following table makes comparison between the profiles of Drink Drivers in this cohort, with similar previous work around Drug Drivers.



This shows that while there are similarities in the age profile of drink and drug drivers, drug drivers tend to be younger, with drink drivers having a flatter age profile curve. The average age of drink drivers was 37, compared to 30 for drug drivers.

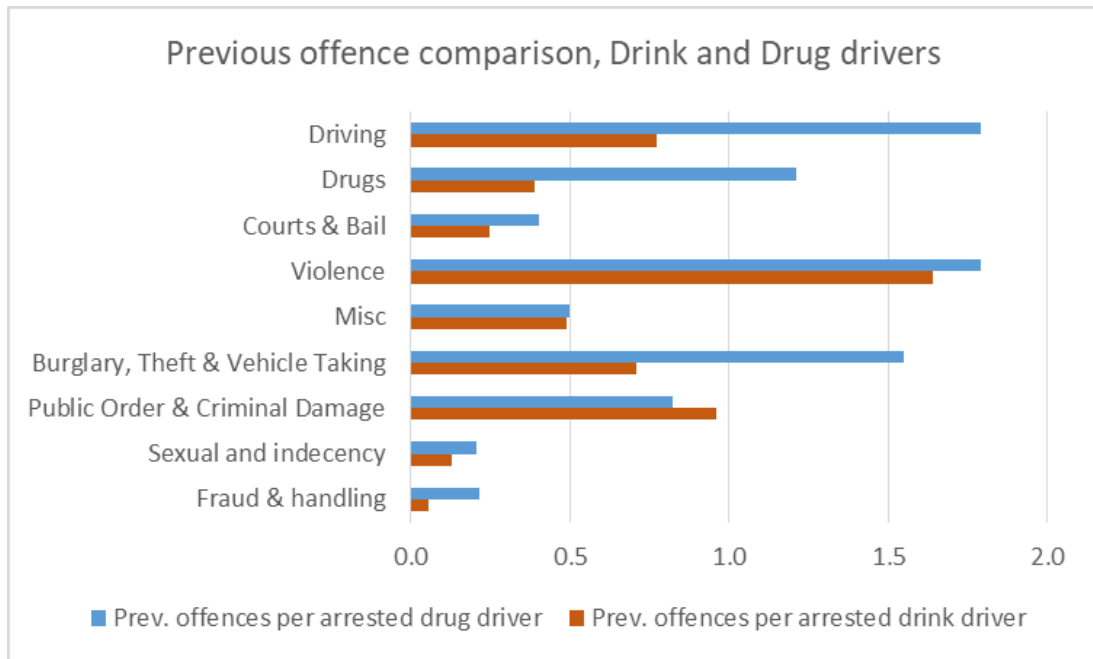
There are also a higher proportion of females within the drink driving group;

- 18% of drink drivers are female
- 4% of drug drivers are female

There is a considerable difference in the number of previous arrests between the two groups:

- 23% of drink drivers with one or more previous arrest for a non-driving criminal offence
- 43% of drug drivers with one or more previous arrest for a non-driving criminal offence

The offending profiles of the drink and drug driver cohorts are compared below:

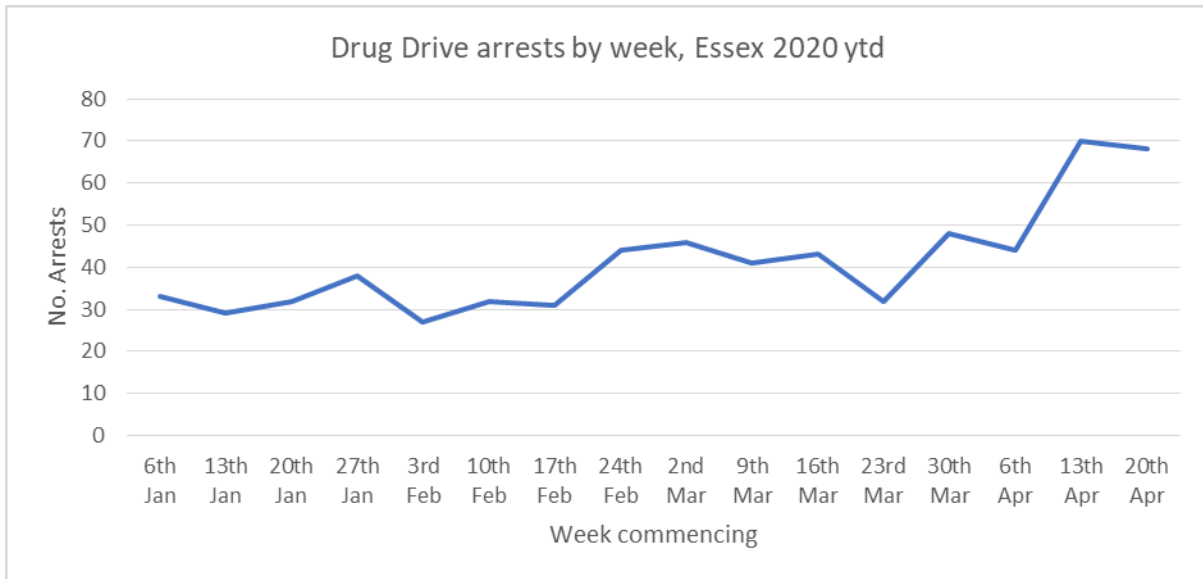


This shows that the drug driver cohort have more previous offences than drink drivers of all types, except for public order. However the previous offence rates for violence and miscellaneous are very close.

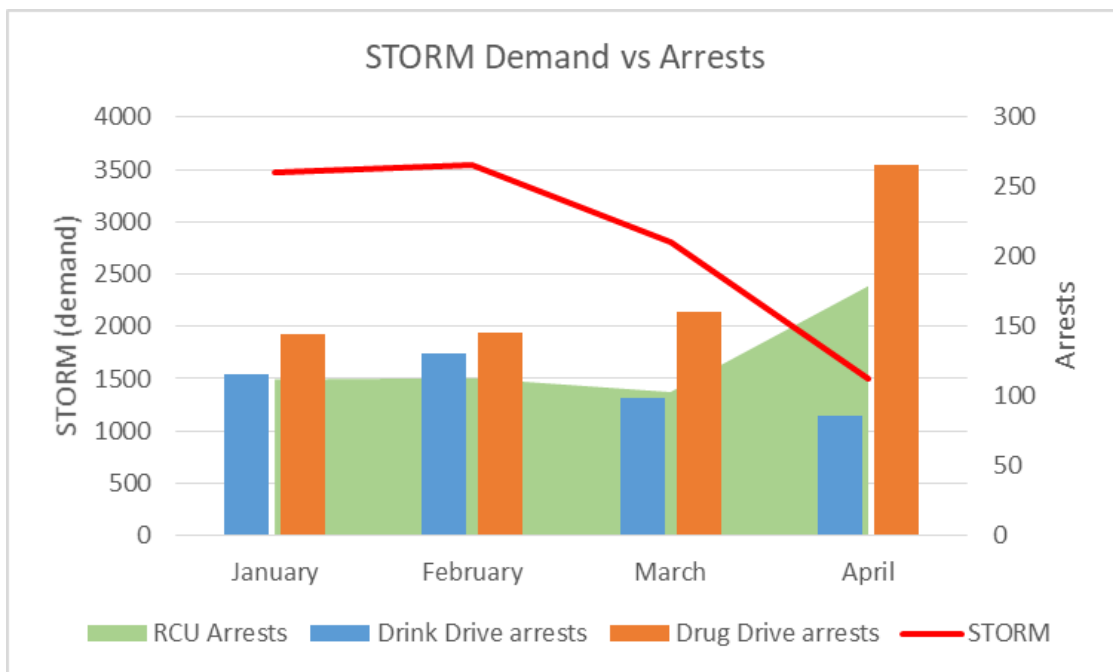
4) Changes during 2020

a. Number of arrests

The chart below shows the number of Drug Drive arrests per week in Essex since 6th January.



There was a slight increase in February followed by a much more marked increase when the COVID restrictions were implemented. The chart below examines other data for Essex Police that may give some clues as to the reason for this. It compares monthly arrest figures for Drink and Drug driving, with demand (as measured by STORM incidents), and arrests made by the Road Crime Unit (RCU). Note: not all drink and drug driving arrests are made by RCU, and RCU make other types of arrest.



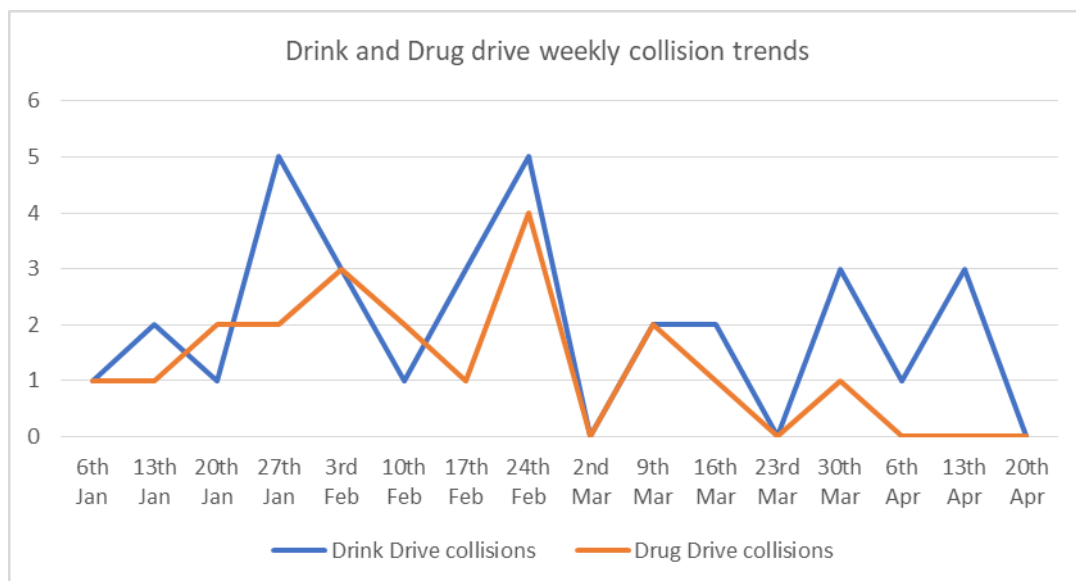
This shows that while arrests for Drug Driving have increased, there was a decrease in Drink Drive arrests. There are likely to a multitude of factors for this trend, however it does suggest the following:

- RCU have been able to be more proactive, making more arrests with reduced demand to attend STORM incidents.
- Increased capacity for RCU (and potentially other front line resources?) has enabled more drug drivers to be caught.
- The fact that at the same time the numbers of drink drivers has reduced leads us to the inferences that:
 - o Closing of the night time economy has reduced the opportunity and motivation to drink drive.
 - o Home working/lockdown means drinkers have less reason to drive.
 - o Drug drivers have a lifestyle that is largely unaffected by COVID restrictions, as it already exists outside of mainstream society.

This data therefore indicates that there has been a real reduction in Drink Driving, but no real change in the amount of Drug Driving – simply more of the Drug Drivers are being caught because the Police have more capacity to proactively Police the roads.

b. Collisions

The following chart provides an examination of collision contributory factors where drink or drugs were recorded.



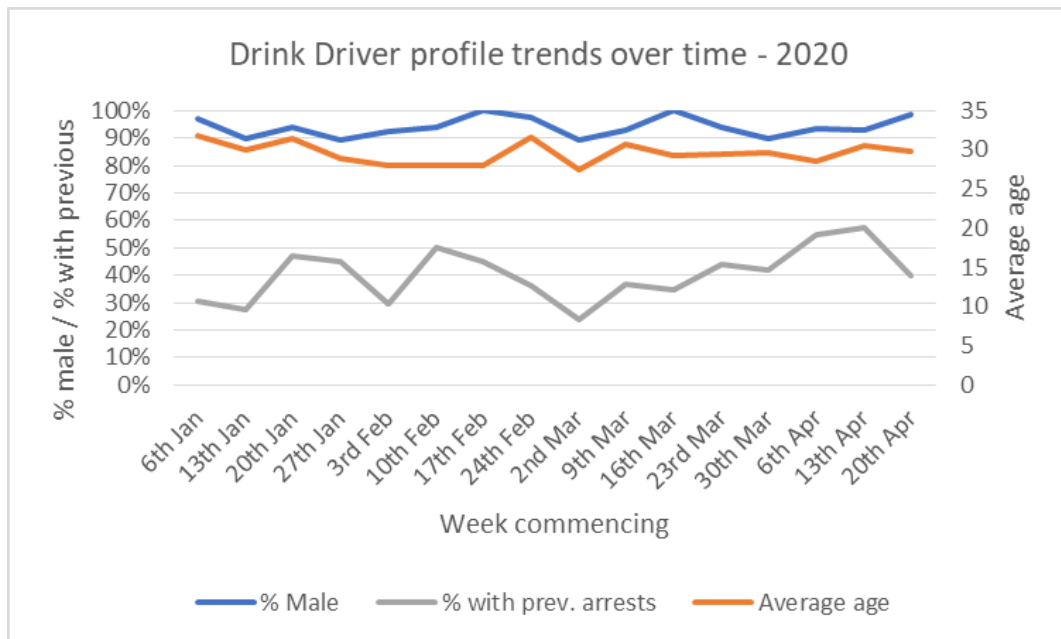
This shows a reduction in both drink and drug driving collisions. If total traffic volumes were constant then this would suggest a reduction in the total number of drink and drug drivers. However, since total traffic volumes have reduced by around 62%¹ then part of this reduction may be fewer other road users for impaired drivers to hit. This suggest that the differing trends in Drink and Drug drive arrests may be because:

- There are fewer Drink drivers on the road.
- The number of Drug drivers has not changed by very much, but a larger proportion of them are being caught.

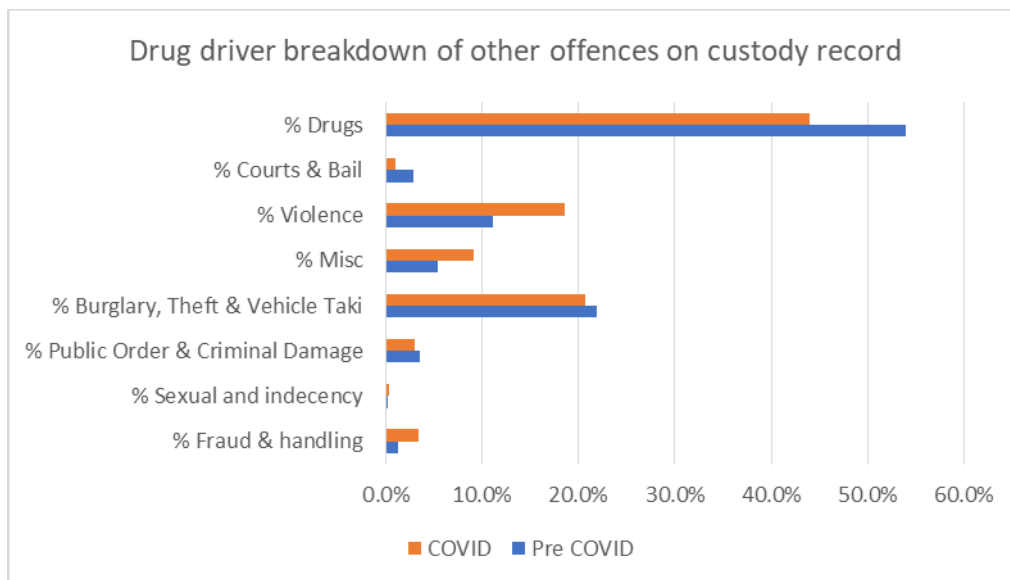
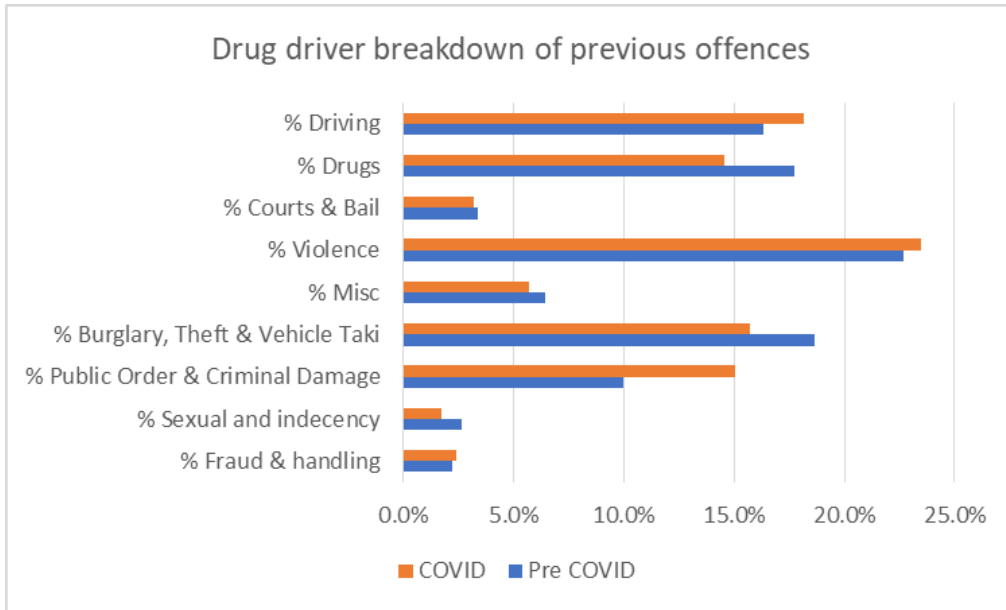
¹ Cubbin, W. RSA-20-497 COVID measures impact version 2, Safer Essex Roads Partnership 2020.

c. Offender profile

The chart below indicates, that on the three measures used there have been no changes in the profile of people arrested for drink driving in Essex between the start of the year and the COVID-restrictions period.



The next two charts compare the types of previous offences recorded for drug drivers, and the other offences recorded on their custody record for their 2020 drug-drive arrest.



These show very little change between the pre-COVID and current periods in both previous arrest history and current arrest circumstances. This lends further weight to the view that the types of people Drug Driving have not changed, but increased proactive policing has allowed a larger proportion of Drug Drivers to be arrested.