

Statistical bulletin

Domestic abuse in England and Wales overview: November 2020

Figures on domestic abuse from the Crime Survey for England and Wales, police recorded crime and a number of different organisations.

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1 . Other pages in this release

This release brings together data on domestic abuse from a range of different organisations. Commentary is split into a number of separate publications:

- [Domestic abuse during the coronavirus \(COVID-19\) pandemic](#)
- [Domestic abuse prevalence and trends](#)
- [Domestic abuse victim characteristics](#)
- [Partner abuse in detail](#)
- [Domestic abuse and the criminal justice system](#)
- [Domestic abuse victim services](#)
- [How domestic abuse data are captured through the criminal justice system](#)

This release supports the [UN 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence Campaign](#) and the statistics are used to monitor progress towards the [Sustainable Development Goals \(SDGs\)](#).

2 . Main points

For the 12-month period to year ending March 2020:

- the Crime Survey for England and Wales showed that an estimated 2.3 million adults aged 16 to 74 years experienced domestic abuse in the last year (1.6 million women and 757,000 men), a slight but non-significant decrease from the previous year
- the police recorded 758,941 domestic abuse-related crimes in England and Wales (excluding Greater Manchester Police)¹, an increase of 9% from the previous year; this continues an ongoing trend that may reflect improved recording by the police alongside increased reporting by victims
- referrals of suspects of domestic abuse-flagged cases from the police to the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) for a charging decision fell 19% to 79,965, from 98,470 in the year ending March 2019
- the charging rate (see [Glossary](#)) was 73%, a decrease compared with the previous two years (74% in the year ending March 2019 and 76% in the year ending March 2018)
- over three-quarters of domestic abuse-related CPS prosecutions were successful in securing a conviction (78%), a similar level to the previous year

Available data sources show that during the coronavirus pandemic:

- there was a 7% increase in police recorded offences flagged as domestic abuse-related between March and June 2020, compared with the same period in the previous year; however, there has been a gradual increase in these offences over recent years, therefore it cannot be determined whether this can be directly attributed to the coronavirus pandemic
- there was generally an increase in demand for domestic abuse victim support services, including a 65% increase in calls and contacts logged by the National Domestic Abuse Helpline between April and June 2020, compared with the first three months of the year
- increases in demand for domestic abuse support were particularly noticeable following the easing of lockdown measures in mid-May, such as a 12% increase in the number of domestic abuse cases handled by Victim Support in the week lockdown restrictions were eased, compared to the previous week; this reflects the difficulties victims faced in safely seeking support during the lockdown
- increases in demand for domestic abuse victim services do not necessarily indicate an increase in the number of victims, but perhaps an increase in the severity of abuse being experienced, and a lack of available coping mechanisms such as the ability to leave the home to escape the abuse, or attend counselling

Statistician's comment

Commenting on today's domestic abuse figures, Helen Ross said:

"Whilst significantly lower compared with 15 years ago, there was little change in the prevalence of domestic abuse estimated by the crime survey in the year ending March 2020.

"The number of domestic abuse related crimes recorded by the police continued to increase in the year ending March 2020; this may reflect improvements in police recording and an increase in victims' willingness to come forward. Up to date evidence shows this increase continued into the lockdown period, however it cannot be determined whether this can be directly attributed to the coronavirus pandemic.

"There has also been an increase in demand for domestic abuse support services during the pandemic, particularly following the easing of lockdown measures in May. Data suggests that experiences of domestic abuse may have intensified during the lockdown and that victims faced difficulties in safely seeking support under these conditions."

Notes for: Main points

1. Data for Greater Manchester Police (GMP) on domestic abuse-related crimes are not included in this publication because of issues with their data supply following the implementation of new IT systems. Any total police recorded crime data refer to England and Wales excluding GMP.

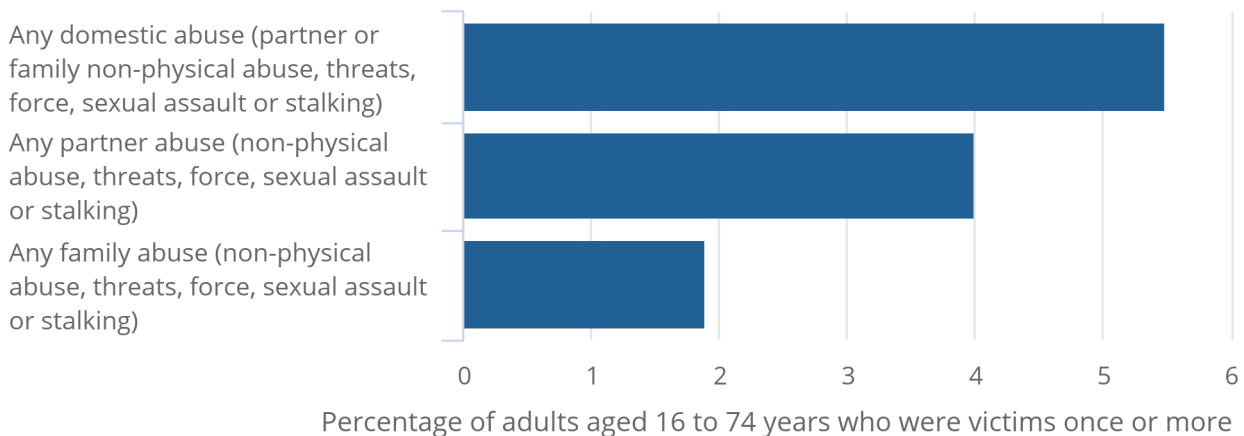
3 . Latest figures for the year ending March 2020

Figure 1: A higher percentage of adults were victims of partner abuse than family abuse

Prevalence of domestic abuse in the last year for adults aged 16 to 74 years, by perpetrator-relationship, England and Wales, year ending March 2020

Figure 1: A higher percentage of adults were victims of partner abuse than family abuse

Prevalence of domestic abuse in the last year for adults aged 16 to 74 years, by perpetrator-relationship, England and Wales, year ending March 2020



Source: Office for National Statistics - Crime Survey for England and Wales

Notes:

1. Partner abuse refers to abuse carried out by a partner or ex-partner.
2. Some victims may have experienced both partner and family abuse in the last year.

According to the Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW) year ending March 2020, an estimated 5.5% of adults aged 16 to 74 years (2.3 million people) experienced domestic abuse in the last year (Figure 1). As seen in previous years, a higher percentage of adults experienced abuse carried out by a partner or ex-partner (4.0%) than by a family member (1.9%).

The police recorded a total of 1,288,018 domestic abuse-related incidents and crimes in England and Wales (excluding Greater Manchester Police)¹ in the year ending March 2020. Of these, 41% (529,077) were incidents not subsequently recorded as a crime. The remaining 59% (758,941) were recorded as domestic abuse-related crimes.

More information on the prevalence of domestic abuse can be found in the [Domestic abuse prevalence and trends, England and Wales: year ending March 2020](#) publication.

Notes for: Latest figures for the year ending March 2020

1. Data for Greater Manchester Police (GMP) on domestic abuse-related incidents and crimes are not included in this publication because of issues with their data supply following the implementation of new IT systems. Any total police recorded crime data refer to England and Wales excluding GMP.

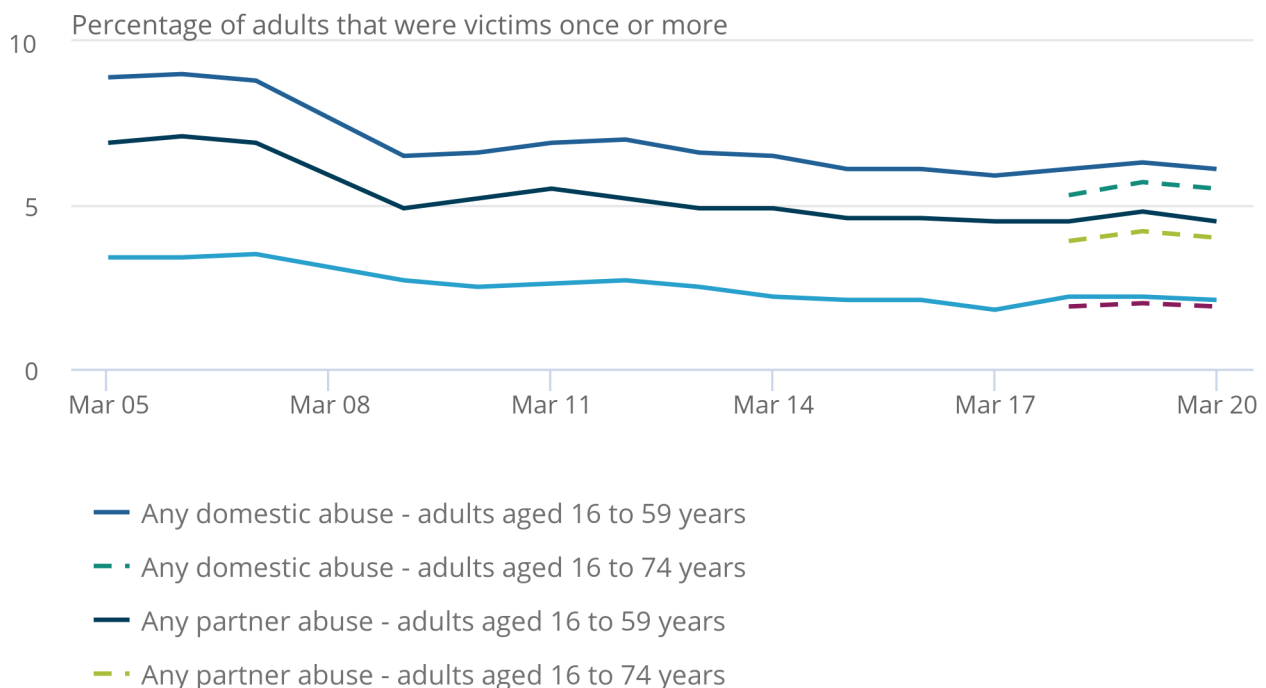
4 . Trends over time

Figure 2: Domestic abuse estimated by the survey has not changed significantly over the last year

Prevalence of domestic abuse in the last year for adults aged 16 to 59 years and 16 to 74 years, England and Wales, year ending March 2005 to year ending March 2020

Figure 2: Domestic abuse estimated by the survey has not changed significantly over the last year

Prevalence of domestic abuse in the last year for adults aged 16 to 59 years and 16 to 74 years, England and Wales, year ending March 2005 to year ending March 2020



Source: Office for National Statistics - Crime Survey for England and Wales

Notes:

1. No data is available for the year ending March 2008 because comparable questions on any domestic abuse, any partner abuse and any family abuse were not included in that year.
2. Partner abuse refers to abuse carried out by a partner or ex-partner.
3. From April 2017, the upper age limit for the self-completion module was increased to ask all respondents aged 16 to 74 years.

There was no significant difference in the prevalence of domestic abuse experienced in the last year, for men and women aged 16 to 74 years in the year ending March 2020 compared with the year ending March 2019.

When analysing data over a longer time period we use the 16 to 59 years age range, as the change in the upper age limit for survey respondents (from 59 to 74 years)¹ was introduced in April 2017. The cumulative effect of small year-on-year reductions, including a significant decrease in the year ending March 2009, has resulted in a significantly lower prevalence of domestic abuse experienced by adults aged 16 to 59 years in the year ending March 2020, compared with the year ending March 2005 (Figure 2). For example, 4.0% of men and 8.1% of women aged 16 to 59 years had experienced domestic abuse within the last year in the year ending March 2020. This compared with 6.5% of men and 11.1% of women in the year ending March 2005.

The downward trend in prevalence over time is driven by reductions in the prevalence of partner abuse, which has decreased from 6.9% to 4.5% over the same period.

The number of domestic abuse-related crimes recorded by the police in England and Wales (excluding Greater Manchester Police)² in the year ending March 2020 increased by 9% compared with the previous year. This continues an ongoing trend which may be, in part, driven by general police improvements in offence-recording practices, as well as an increase in domestic abuse-related incidents coming to the attention of the police. The increase could also indicate an increased willingness of victims to come forward to report domestic abuse³.

More information on the long-term trends in domestic abuse and the characteristics of victims can be found in the [Domestic abuse prevalence and trends, England and Wales: year ending March 2020](#) and [Domestic abuse victim characteristics, England and Wales: year ending March 2020](#) publications.

Notes for: Trends over time

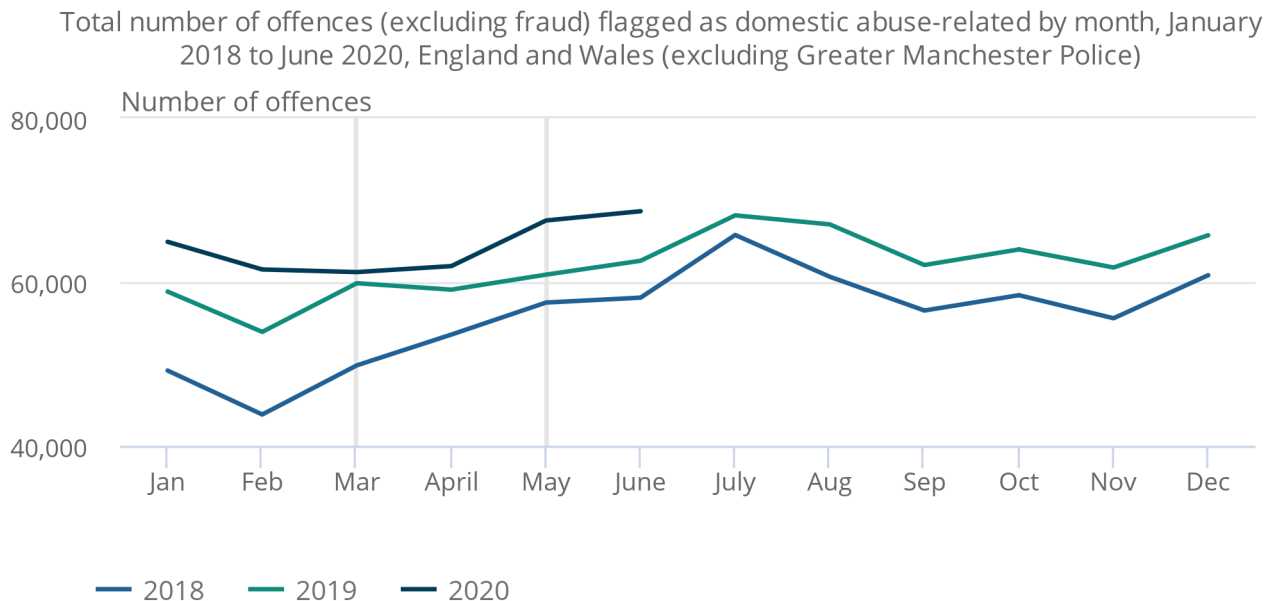
1. The age range for respondents eligible for the domestic abuse, sexual assault and stalking self-completion module of the Crime Survey for England and Wales was expanded in April 2017, changing from adults aged 16 to 59 years to adults aged 16 to 74 years. Where analysis requires more than the last three years of data, the 16 to 59 years age range is used.
2. Data for Greater Manchester Police (GMP) on domestic abuse-related incidents and crimes are not included in this publication because of issues with their data supply following the implementation of new IT systems. Any total police recorded crime data refer to England and Wales excluding GMP.
3. Once every three years, the Crime Survey for England and Wales asks further questions on the circumstance of partner abuse experienced. The latest figures showed no significant difference in the total proportion of victims of partner abuse who told the police about the abuse they experienced in the year ending March 2018 compared with the year ending March 2015. However, these figures do not represent all victims of domestic abuse. We're planning a full review of the domestic abuse questions in the Crime Survey. This will consider how we can ask victims of domestic abuse about who they reported their experience to.

5 . Latest figures for the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic

Figure 3: The total number of offences flagged as domestic abuse-related increased during the lockdown period, continuing long-term gradual increases observed in recent years

Total number of offences (excluding fraud) flagged as domestic abuse-related by month, January 2018 to June 2020, England and Wales (excluding Greater Manchester Police)

Figure 3: The total number of offences flagged as domestic abuse-related increased during the lockdown period, continuing long-term gradual increases observed in recent years



Source: Home Office – police recorded crime

Notes:

1. Police recorded crime data are not designated as National Statistics.
2. April 2020 to June 2020 data are provisional and have not been fully reconciled with police forces.
3. Data for Greater Manchester Police (GMP) on domestic abuse-related offences are not included in this publication because of issues with their data supply following the implementation of new IT systems.

The police recorded 259,324 offences (excluding fraud) flagged as domestic abuse-related in the period March to June 2020. This represents a 7% increase from 242,413 in the same period in 2019. This included 206,492 violence against the person offences flagged as domestic abuse-related, a 9% increase compared with the same period in 2019.

However, the number of offences flagged as domestic abuse-related has been gradually increasing in recent years, and therefore it is not possible to determine what impact the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic may have had on the increases in 2020 (Figure 3).

Data sourced from a range of victim services indicates that there was an increase in demand for support for victims of domestic abuse during the pandemic, particularly following the easing of lockdown measures. Whilst we cannot conclude whether there has been an increase in the number of victims of domestic abuse, the data suggests that experiences of domestic abuse may have intensified during the lockdown and that victims faced difficulties in safely seeking support under these conditions.

Results from Women's Aid June provider survey showed that during the first few months of the pandemic, an increase in demand was reported by:

- 58% of 26 refuge services
- 80% of 30 community-based services
- 91% of 22 online support services
- 81% of 31 telephone support services

It was also largely expected that demand would increase after lockdown measures eased.

There were increases in demand for helplines between April and June 2020, such as a 65% increase in calls and contacts to the National Domestic Abuse Helpline compared with the first three months of 2020. This does not necessarily indicate an increase in the number of victims of domestic abuse, but perhaps an increase in the severity of abuse being experienced, combined with a lack of availability of usual coping mechanisms such as the ability to leave the home to escape the abuse, or attend counselling sessions.

There were also increases in visits to victim service websites, for example, a 700% increase in the number of visits to the National Domestic Abuse Helpline website in April to June 2020, compared with the first three months of the year. Whilst some of this increase may be driven by victims, this follows the targeted [#YouAreNotAlone media campaign](#) launched in April 2020, which may also have increased the number of people seeking to learn how to spot signs of domestic abuse, or how to support victims.

6 . Domestic abuse in England and Wales data

[Domestic abuse during the coronavirus \(COVID-19\) pandemic – Appendix tables](#)

Dataset | Released 25 November 2020

Indicators from a range of data sources to assess the impact of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic on domestic abuse in England and Wales.

[Domestic abuse prevalence and victim characteristics – Appendix tables](#)

Dataset | Released 25 November 2020

Domestic abuse numbers, prevalence, types and victim characteristics, based upon findings from the Crime Survey for England and Wales and police recorded crime.

[Domestic abuse and the criminal justice system – Appendix tables](#)

Dataset | Released 25 November 2020

Data from across the government on responses to and outcomes of domestic abuse cases in the criminal justice system.

[Partner abuse in detail – Appendix tables](#)

Dataset | Released 25 November 2019

Data from the Crime Survey for England and Wales on the prevalence and nature of partner abuse.

[Domestic abuse victim services – Appendix tables](#)

Dataset | Released 25 November 2020

Data from different organisations on the availability of domestic abuse services and the characteristics of service users.

[Stalking: findings from the Crime Survey for England and Wales](#)

Dataset | Released 25 November 2020

Data from the Crime Survey for England and Wales on stalking including numbers, types and victim characteristics.

[Domestic abuse in England and Wales – Data tool](#)

Dataset | Released 25 November 2020

An interactive tool exploring data at police force area level.

7 . Glossary

Charging rate

The charging rate is the number of suspects of Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) domestic abuse-flagged cases that were charged as a proportion of all those that resulted in a legal decision.

Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW)

The CSEW is a face-to-face victimisation survey in which people resident in households in England and Wales are asked about their experiences of a range of crimes in the 12 months prior to the interview. Respondents to the survey are also asked about their attitudes towards different crime-related issues, such as the police and the criminal justice system, and perceptions of crime and anti-social behaviour.

Domestic abuse

Domestic abuse is not limited to physical violence. It can include repeated patterns of abusive behaviour to maintain power and control in a relationship. It includes abuse carried out by a partner, ex-partner or family member. The [government's definition](#) of domestic violence and abuse recognises this and defines domestic abuse as:

“Any incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive, threatening behaviour, violence or abuse between those aged 16 or over who are, or have been, intimate partners or family members regardless of gender or sexuality. It can encompass, but is not limited to, the following types of abuse:

- psychological
- physical
- sexual
- financial
- emotional”

Domestic abuse-related crimes

Incidents of domestic abuse that resulted in a crime being recorded by the police and are included in police recorded crime.

Police recorded crime

Police recorded crime data are supplied by the Home Office, who are responsible for the collation of recorded crime data supplied by the 43 territorial police forces of England and Wales, plus the British Transport Police. The data are an important indicator of police workload but, unlike the CSEW, do not include crimes that have not been reported to the police or incidents that the police decide not to record as crimes.

8 . Measuring the data

The domestic abuse data included in this release are sourced from the Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW), police recorded crime, other government organisations and domestic abuse services.

The [User guide to crime statistics for England and Wales](#) provides detailed information about the crime survey and police recorded crime data.

The [Domestic abuse quality and methodology information \(QMI\)](#) report and the [Crime in England and Wales QMI](#) report contain important information on:

- the strengths and limitations of the data
- the uses and users of the data
- how the output was created
- the quality of the output including the accuracy of the data

For further information about the data sources available from the criminal justice system see [How domestic abuse data are captured through the criminal justice system](#).

9 . Strengths and limitations

Statistics on domestic abuse are produced separately by a number of different organisations in England and Wales. When taken in isolation, these statistics may not provide the context required to understand the national and local picture of domestic abuse.

Data from the Crime Survey for England and Wales, the Home Office Homicide Index and the Ministry of Justice are classified as National Statistics. Police recorded crime and outcomes data from the Home Office are classified as official statistics. [National Statistics](#) are a subset of [official statistics](#) that have been certified by the UK Statistics Authority as compliant with its Code of Practice for Statistics. All other data included in this release are sourced from administrative datasets that do not fall within the scope of official statistics.

The way in which data on domestic abuse are collected differs between sources and organisations. The data are not directly comparable, since they are collected on different bases (for example, victims, crimes, suspects or defendants) and may not cover the same cohort because of variation in the time taken for cases to progress through the criminal justice system. As such it is necessary to look at the data presented in its entirety as each individual stage of the system is, in part, influenced by activity at a prior stage.

Alongside this release we have published a [data tool](#) that allows users to explore domestic abuse data for police force areas in more detail and compare these with similar areas within England and Wales.

10 . Related links

[Crime in England and Wales: year ending June 2020](#)

Bulletin | Released 28 October 2020

Crime against households and adults, also including data on crime experienced by children, and crimes against businesses and society.

[Sexual offending: victimisation and the path through the criminal justice system](#)

Article | Released 13 December 2018

An overview of sexual offending in England and Wales, using a range of National Statistics and official statistics from across the crime and criminal justice system.