

Article

Domestic abuse victim characteristics, England and Wales: year ending March 2021

Characteristics of victims of domestic abuse based on findings from police recorded crime.

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Table of contents

1. [Other pages in this release](#)
2. [Main points](#)
3. [Understanding domestic abuse](#)
4. [Sex](#)
5. [Age](#)
6. [Area](#)
7. [Domestic homicide](#)
8. [Domestic abuse in England and Wales data](#)
9. [Glossary](#)
10. [Data sources and quality](#)
11. [Related links](#)

1 . Other pages in this release

- [Domestic abuse in England and Wales overview: November 2021](#)
- [Domestic abuse prevalence and trends, England and Wales: year ending March 2021](#)
- [Domestic abuse victim services, England and Wales: November 2021](#)
- [Domestic abuse and the criminal justice system, England and Wales: November 2021](#)
- [Redevelopment of domestic abuse statistics: research update November 2021](#)

2 . Main points

Analysis in this publication only provides breakdowns of domestic abuse by victim characteristics for police recorded offences because of the suspension of the Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW) in March 2020. Without CSEW estimates, analysis of victim characteristics is limited. This is because police recorded crime data may be influenced by changes in recording practices and police activity, or by changes in the way victims report to the police.

The following figures represent data supplied from 26 police forces.

- The victim was female in 73% of domestic abuse-related crimes in the year ending March 2021, similar to 74% in the previous year.
- In the year ending March 2021, the highest proportion of female victims of violence against the person offences, identified as domestic abuse-related, were aged 30 to 34 years, whereas male victims were generally older with the highest proportion of victims aged 75 years and over.
- The rate of domestic abuse-related crimes in England and Wales slightly increased from 13 per 1,000 population in the year ending March 2020 to 14 per 1,000 population in the year ending March 2021; this likely reflects improved police recording practices, not necessarily an increase in victims.
- Between the year ending March 2018 and March 2020, 76% of victims of domestic homicide were female, and 14% of victims of non-domestic homicide were female.
- Nearly one in five victims of domestic homicide (18%) were aged 70 years and over; in contrast, 1 in 20 victims of non-domestic homicide (5%) were aged 70 years and over, with the highest proportion of victims being from the younger age groups.

3 . Understanding domestic abuse

Domestic abuse is often a hidden crime that is not reported to the police. Therefore, data held by the police can only provide a partial picture of the actual level of domestic abuse experienced. Many cases will not enter the criminal justice process as they are not reported to the police.

In previous years, estimates including when a victim does not report abuse to the police or to other domestic abuse services have been produced from the Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW). However, the face-to-face CSEW was suspended on 17 March 2020 because of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, and replaced with the Telephone-operated Crime Survey for England and Wales (TCSEW). The TCSEW was specifically designed to continue measuring crime during this period. Concerns around confidentiality and respondent safeguarding led to domestic abuse questions being excluded from the survey. As a result, CSEW estimates of domestic abuse for the year ending March 2021 are not available in this release.

Domestic abuse-related crimes continued to be recorded by police throughout the coronavirus pandemic. As such, victim characteristics data presented in this release are sourced from police recorded crime data. However, in isolation, police recorded crime data does not provide a reliable measure of characteristics of domestic abuse victims. Therefore, figures presented in this release should be interpreted with caution.

Our [Domestic abuse victim characteristics, England and Wales: year ending March 2020](#) article provides our most up to date CSEW estimates.

The Home Office collects data on the number of domestic abuse-related incidents and crimes recorded by the police. Sections 4 to 6 use data from the Home Office Data Hub, a database that contains record level data supplied by force to the Home Office. For the year ending March 2021, 26 police forces supplied data to the Home Office Data Hub. Our [Domestic abuse prevalence and victim characteristics](#) tables detail the police forces that provided data.

4 . Sex

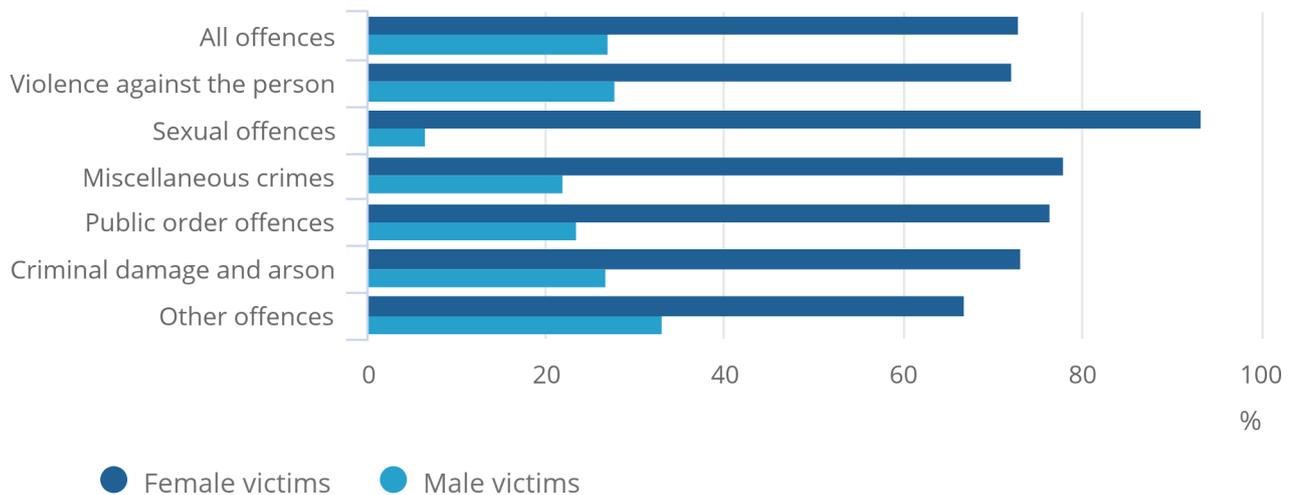
Data supplied from 26 police forces showed the victim was female in 73% of domestic abuse-related crimes recorded by the police in the year ending March 2021. Domestic abuse-related sexual offences had the largest proportion of female victims by offence group, at 93% (Figure 1).

Figure 1: There were more female than male victims of domestic abuse-related crimes

Percentage of domestic abuse-related offences recorded by the police by sex of the victim and selected offence group, England and Wales, year ending March 2021

Figure 1: There were more female than male victims of domestic abuse-related crimes

Percentage of domestic abuse-related offences recorded by the police by sex of the victim and selected offence group, England and Wales, year ending March 2021



Source: Home Office Data Hub – Police recorded crime

Notes:

1. Police recorded crime data are not designated as National Statistics.
2. Based on 26 forces with adequate data.

Over half (53%) of violence against the person offences experienced by female victims were identified as domestic abuse-related, the same as the previous year. In comparison, 26% of violence against the person offences experienced by male victims were identified as domestic abuse-related. This represents a three-percentage point increase compared with the previous year.

Nearly one-third (30%) of sexual offences experienced by female victims were identified as domestic abuse-related, compared with 12% experienced by male victims.

5 . Age

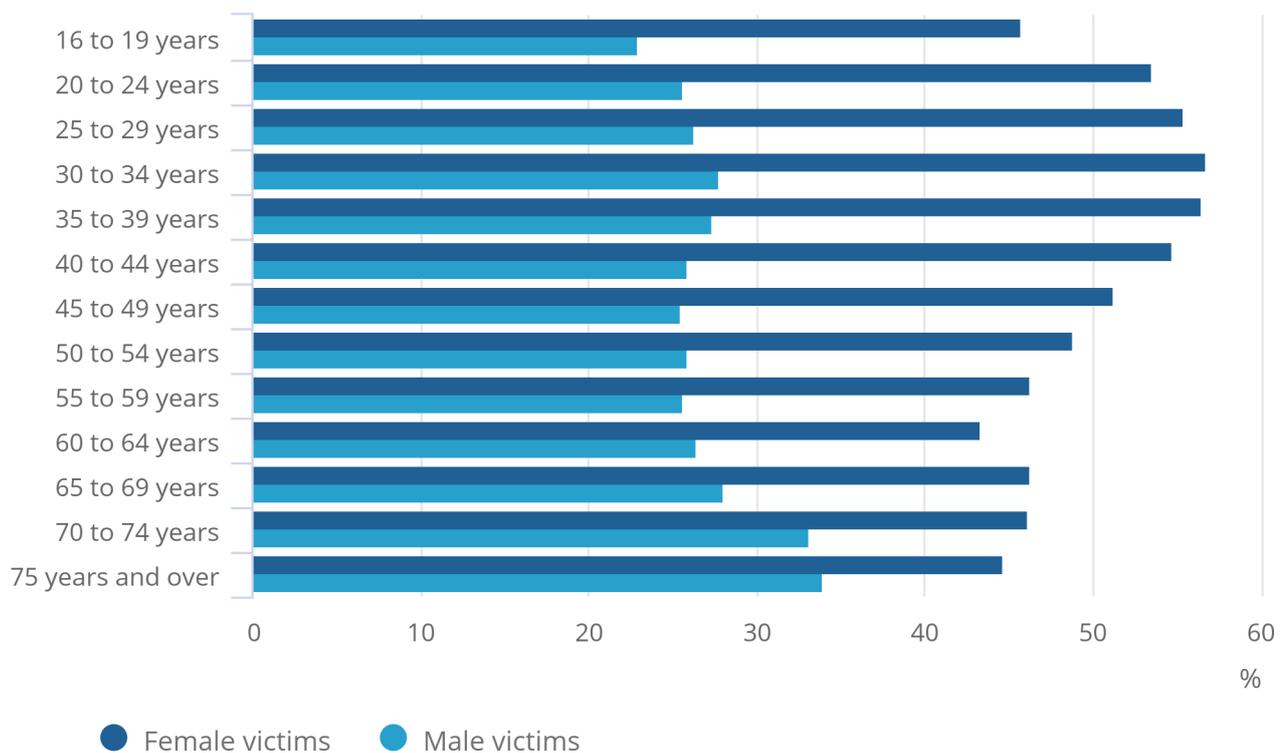
Data supplied from 26 police forces showed that violence against the person offences that were identified as being domestic abuse-related differed by age. For female victims, the proportion of these offences was generally higher for those in younger age groups. The highest proportion was in the 30- to 34-year-old age category (57%). For male victims, the proportion of police recorded violence against the person offences that were identified as domestic abuse-related was higher in the older age groups. The highest proportion was in those aged 75 years and over (34%).

Figure 2: Violence against the person offences identified as domestic abuse-related varied by age and sex of victims

Proportion of violence against the person offences recorded by the police that were identified as domestic abuse-related by sex and age, year ending March 2021

Figure 2: Violence against the person offences identified as domestic abuse-related varied by age and sex of victims

Proportion of violence against the person offences recorded by the police that were identified as domestic abuse-related by sex and age, year ending March 2021



Source: Home Office Data Hub – Police recorded crime

Notes:

1. Police recorded crime data are not designated as National Statistics.
2. Based on 26 forces with adequate data.

6 . Area

In England and Wales, the rate of domestic abuse-related crimes for the year ending March 2021 rose slightly to 14 per 1,000 population, compared with 13 per 1,000 population in the year ending March 2020.

In the year ending March 2021, the rate of violence against the person domestic abuse-related offences increased slightly to 11.3 per 1,000 population from 10.5 the previous year in England and Wales.

Since the year ending March 2019, the highest rates of domestic abuse-related crimes have been recorded in the North East region. In contrast, the lowest rates were recorded in London (Table 1). Although this could reflect differences in the rates of domestic abuse across regions, it could also reflect regional differences in the reporting of domestic abuse to the police, and how the police subsequently record these offences.

Table 1: The rate of domestic abuse-related crimes were highest in the North East and lowest in London
Rate of domestic abuse-related offences per 1,000 population from the year ending March 2019 to year ending March 2021 by English region and Wales

Region	All domestic abuse-related crimes Apr 2020 to Mar 2021	All domestic abuse-related crimes Apr 2019 to Mar 2020	All domestic abuse-related crimes Apr 2018 to Mar 2019
England and Wales	14.2	13.4	12.6
North East	19.2	18.9	19.4
North West	16.8	15.7	15.3
Yorkshire and The Humber	18.0	17.9	17.2
East Midlands	13.8	13.8	11.4
West Midlands	16.5	13.6	12.2
East of England	13.7	13.2	11.1
London	10.5	10.0	9.9
South East	13.0	12.5	11.8
South West	11.1	11.0	9.8
Wales	13.3	13.5	13.2

Source: Home Office Data Hub – Police recorded crime

Notes

1. Police recorded crime data are not designated as National Statistics.
2. Population figures used are mid-year population estimates provided by the Office for National Statistics.
3. Numbers will be affected by the size of the resident population relative to the transient or visiting populations. Therefore, they may over-represent the number of crimes relative to the real population of potential victims.
4. Total rate for England and Wales includes offences recorded by British Transport Police. However, no rates are given for British Transport Police as their data are not provided for specified geographical areas.

7 . Domestic homicide

Sex

Home Office Homicide Index data for the year ending March 2018 to the year ending March 2020¹ show that 76% of victims of domestic homicide were female (276 victims). In contrast, most victims of non-domestic homicides over the same time period were male (86%, or 834 victims).

Age

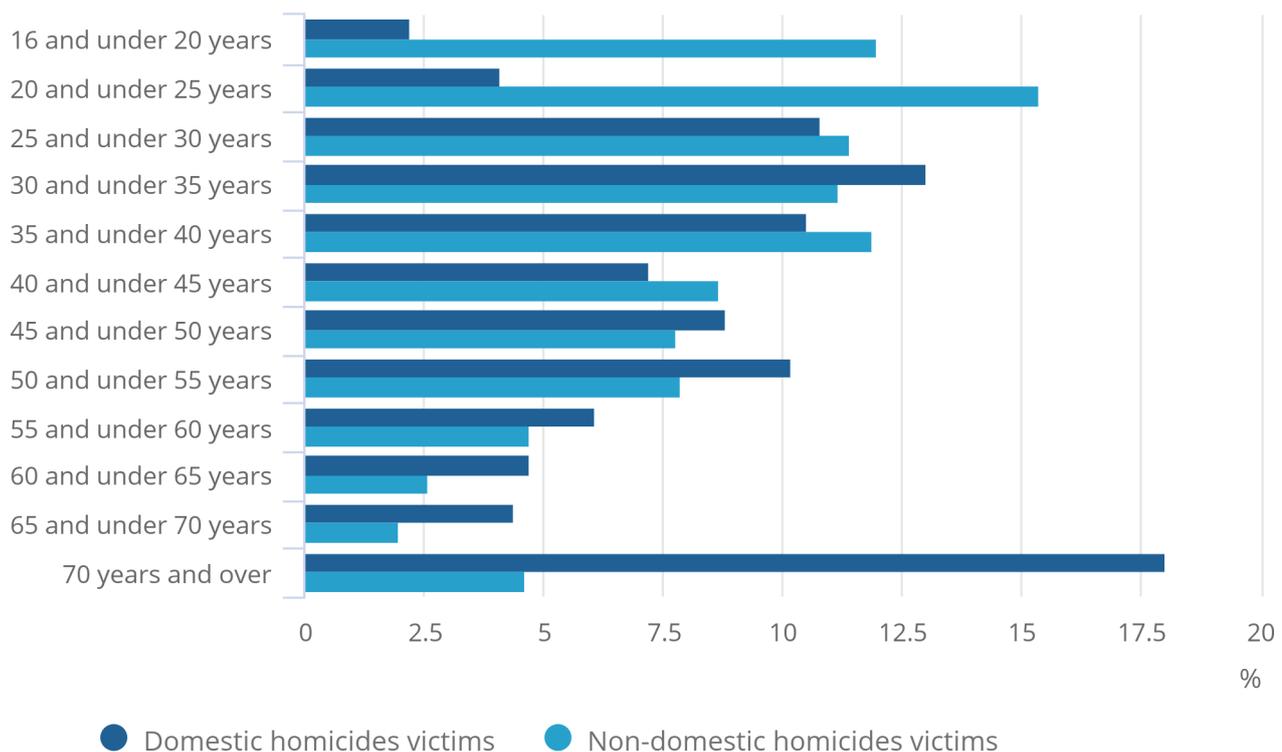
Between the year ending March 2018 and the year ending March 2020¹, the highest proportion of domestic homicide victims were aged 70 years and over (18%). The highest proportion of non-domestic homicide victims fell within the 20- to 24-year-old age category (15%) (Figure 3).

Figure 3: The largest proportion of domestic homicide victims were aged 70 years and over

Percentage of homicide victims by homicide-type and age, England and Wales, year ending March 2018 to March 2020

Figure 3: The largest proportion of domestic homicide victims were aged 70 years and over

Percentage of homicide victims by homicide-type and age, England and Wales, year ending March 2018 to March 2020



Source: Home Office – Homicide Index

Notes:

1. As at 15 December 2020; figures are subject to revision as cases are dealt with by the police and by the courts, or as further information becomes available.
2. Excludes cases with no suspects and homicide offences where all suspects have been acquitted at court.

Notes for: Domestic homicide

1. As at 15 December 2020; figures are subject to revision as cases are dealt with by the police and by the courts or as further information becomes available.

8 . Domestic abuse in England and Wales data

[Domestic abuse prevalence and victim characteristics](#)

Dataset | Released 24 November 2021

Domestic abuse numbers, prevalence, types, and victim characteristics, based upon police recorded crime.

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

Dataset | Released on 24 November 2021

An interactive Excel-based data tool for domestic abuse statistics. It allows users to explore data for their police force area in more detail and compare with other areas.

9 . Glossary

Domestic abuse

Domestic abuse is not limited to physical violence and can include a range of abusive behaviours. It can also be experienced as repeated patterns of abusive behaviour to maintain power and control in a relationship. The [Domestic Abuse Act 2021](#) defines domestic abuse as any incident or pattern of incidents between those aged 16 years and over who:

- are a partner
- are an ex-partner
- are a relative
- have, or there has been a time when they each have had, a parental relationship in relation to the same child

The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 outlines the following behaviours as abuse:

- physical or sexual abuse
- violent or threatening behaviour
- controlling or coercive behaviour
- economic abuse
- psychological, emotional, or other abuse

The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 recognises children aged under 18 years who see, hear, or experience the effects of the abuse, as a victim of domestic abuse, if they are related or have a parental relationship to the adult victim or perpetrator of the abuse.

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.

Domestic abuse-related incidents

Incidents of domestic abuse that were reported to the police, but following investigation, do not amount to a crime or offence according to the National Crime Recording Standards. These can be added to domestic abuse-related crimes to create a total picture of the demand that domestic abuse puts on the police.

Domestic homicide

An offence of murder, manslaughter, or infanticide, where the relationship between a victim aged 16 years and over and the perpetrator falls into specific categories. These categories include spouse, common-law spouse, cohabiting partner, boyfriend or girlfriend, ex-spouse, ex-cohabiting partner or ex-boyfriend or girlfriend, adulterous relationship, son or daughter (including step and adopted relationships), parent (including step and adopted relationships), brother or sister, and other relatives.

Homicide suspect

A suspect in a homicide case is defined as either a person who has been arrested in respect of an offence initially classified as homicide and charged with homicide, including those who were subsequently convicted, or a person who is suspected by the police of having committed the offence but is known to have died or committed suicide prior to arrest or being charged.

10 . Data sources and quality

Further quality and methodology information can be found in the [Domestic abuse in England and Wales overview: November 2021](#).

Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW)

Previous domestic abuse in England and Wales releases include analysis of data from the Crime Survey in England and Wales (CSEW). For reasons outlined in [Section 3](#), CSEW estimates are not available for the year ending March 2021.

More information about the CSEW can be found in our:

- [User guide to crime statistics for England and Wales](#)
- [Domestic abuse QMI](#)
- [How domestic abuse data are captured through the criminal justice system](#) article

Work to improve the data collected to measure domestic abuse from the CSEW is ongoing. More information can be found in our [Redevelopment of domestic abuse statistics: research update November 2021](#) article.

How the police measure domestic abuse

The Home Office collects data on the number of domestic abuse-related incidents and the number of domestic-abuse related crimes. More information on domestic abuse-related incidents and crimes can be found in our [Domestic abuse QMI](#) and our [How domestic abuse data are captured through the criminal justice system](#) article.

Home Office Homicide Index

The Home Office Homicide Index provides data on whether homicides are "domestic". The Homicide Index contains detailed record-level information about each homicide recorded by police in England and Wales.

Analysis on data from the Homicide Index within this publication combines data for a three-year period (year ending March 2018 to year ending March 2020) to account for the year-to-year variability in the volume of homicides. More information can be found in our [How domestic abuse data are captured through the criminal justice system](#) article.

11 . Related links

[How domestic abuse data are captured through the criminal justice system](#)

Article | Released 24 November 2021

Information on the stages of the criminal justice process in England and Wales, and how data are captured at each stage.

[Redevelopment of domestic abuse statistics: research update November 2021](#)

Article | Released 24 November 2021

Update on the ongoing research to redevelop statistics on domestic abuse from the Crime Survey for England and Wales.