

Article

Domestic abuse victim services, England and Wales: 2022

Information on services that are available to victims of domestic abuse in England and Wales.

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Release date:
7 September 2022

Next release:
To be announced

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1 . Main points

Demand for domestic abuse victim services generally continued the increasing trends seen in the year ending March 2021; a year affected by the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. However, Crime Survey for England and Wales data showed no significant change in the number of victims who had experienced domestic abuse compared with the year ending March 2020. Further [analysis of all domestic abuse data](#) will be published later this year.

- In the year ending March 2022, the National Domestic Abuse Helpline delivered 50,791 support sessions through phone call or live chat; similar to the previous year which was affected by the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.
- The total number of calls received by Welsh Women's Aid's Live Fear Free Helpline increased by 18.1% to 35,491 in the year ending March 2022.
- The ManKind Initiative responded to a total of 2,230 calls across England and Wales in the year ending March 2022; a 2.5% decrease compared with the previous year.
- The number of refuge bed spaces has increased in recent years in England to 4,332 in 2022 but remains 23.2% below the minimum number of bed spaces recommended by the Council of Europe; only London and the West Midlands exceeded the minimum recommended bed spaces.
- In the year ending March 2021, 61.9% of referrals of women to refuge services in England were declined and 40.2% of referrals of women in Wales were declined; the main reason in England being because of a lack of capacity to support survivors and in Wales because the refuge was unable to meet survivor support needs.
- The number of cases discussed at multi-agency risk assessment conferences (MARACs) in England and Wales increased by 5.6% to 114,067 in the year ending March 2022, compared with 108,036 in the year ending March 2021.

2 . Availability of domestic abuse services

Refuge services

Routes to Support data from Women's Aid Federation of England show the number of [refuge services](#) in England has generally remained stable since 2019. There were 268 in 2022 compared with 267 in 2019.

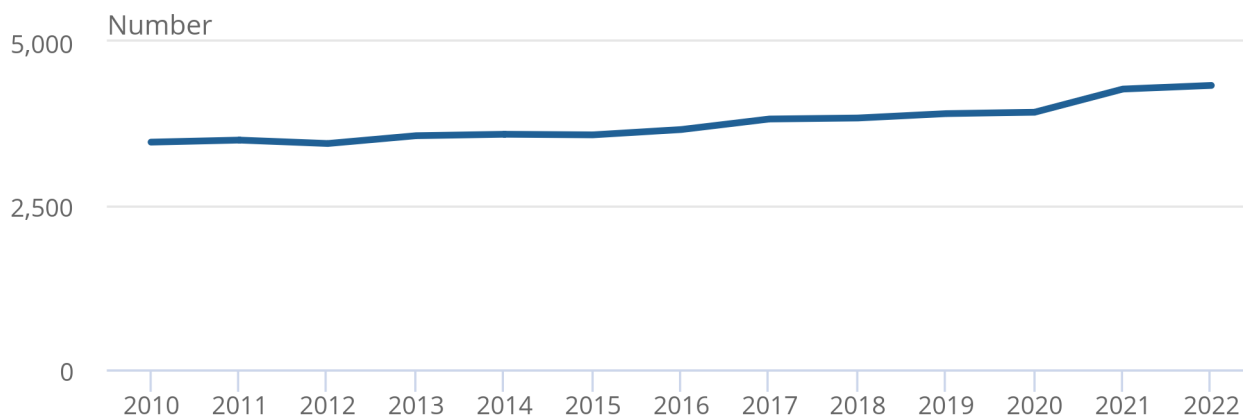
In contrast, the number of refuge bed spaces available in England has been increasing since 2015. There were 3,578 bed spaces in 2015 compared with 4,332 bed spaces in 2022 (Figure 1). Despite this improvement, the number of refuge bed spaces in England remains 23.2% below the Council of Europe's recommendation of one space per 10,000 population.

Figure 1: The number of bed spaces available in England has been increasing since 2015

Number of refuge bed spaces in England, 2010 to 2022

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Number of refuge bed spaces in England, 2010 to 2022



Source: Women's Aid Federation of England – data from Routes to Support, the UK violence against women and girls service directory

Notes:

1. Data from Women's Aid Federation of England are not classified as official statistics.
2. Information on service types and refuge spaces in England comes from snapshots taken in May each year. The data can be used to see net change and do not show the number of services that change provider as part of the commissioning process. This is because the number of services changing provider fluctuates during the year.
3. For refuge services, data on the number of units (bed spaces) can give us an idea of how their capacity changes over time. One unit refers to accommodation for one woman or one woman and her children. Units can vary in size and the number of children they can house, they can be in shared houses, self-contained units or dispersed accommodation.
4. These data exclude services in the Channel Islands and those that are UK wide.

Of all the English regions, London has exceeded the recommended number of bed spaces since 2018. For the last two years, the West Midlands has also exceeded the recommended number of bed spaces.

For Wales, in 2020, there were 34 refuge services and 284 refuge bed spaces. The number of refuge services in Wales is not available for 2021 and 2022.

The ManKind Initiative provide data on the availability of domestic abuse services for men. The number of services offering refuge or safe house bed spaces to male victims in the year ending March 2022 was 37. This number has remained relatively stable since the year ending March 2019 where there were 35.

Helplines

Women's Aid's Routes to Support data presents annual snapshot figures for a range of domestic abuse services in England and Wales. The database shows that the number of domestic abuse helpline services in England has been increasing since 2019 from 130 to 148 in 2022.

Multi-agency risk assessment conferences (MARACs)

A [multi-agency risk assessment conference](#) (MARAC) is a meeting where information is shared on the highest-risk domestic abuse cases between representatives from a range of agencies.

There were 249 MARACs in England and Wales in the year ending March 2022; this number has remained stable since the year ending March 2019 (Table 1). The number of cases discussed has increased by 21.3% over the same period, from 94,035 in the year ending March 2019 to 114,067 in the year ending March 2022.

The percentage of repeat cases has also increased over time from 29.7% in the year ending March 2019 to 33.1% in the year ending March 2022. A repeat MARAC case is one in which a further incident is identified within 12 months of a previous referral.

Table 1: The number of cases discussed at multi-agency risk assessment conferences (MARACs) has been increasing since the year ending March 2019
England and Wales, year ending March 2019 to year ending March 2022

	Year ending March 2019	Year ending March 2020	Year ending March 2021	Year ending March 2022
Number of MARACs	251	251	253	249
Number of cases discussed	94,035	99,966	108,036	114,067
Recommended number of cases discussed	93,230	92,880	90,860	92,790
Number of cases discussed per 10,000 adult females	40.3	43.0	47.6	49.2
Percentage of repeat cases	29.7	31.2	33.0	33.1

Source: SafeLives

Notes

1. SafeLives data are not classified as official statistics.
2. MARAC data changes year on year so will not be the same as data in previous publications.

3 . Characteristics of service users

Helplines

In the year ending March 2022, the National Domestic Abuse Helpline, run by Refuge, delivered 50,791 support sessions through phone call or live chat (Figure 2). This remained similar to the year ending March 2021; a year affected by the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.

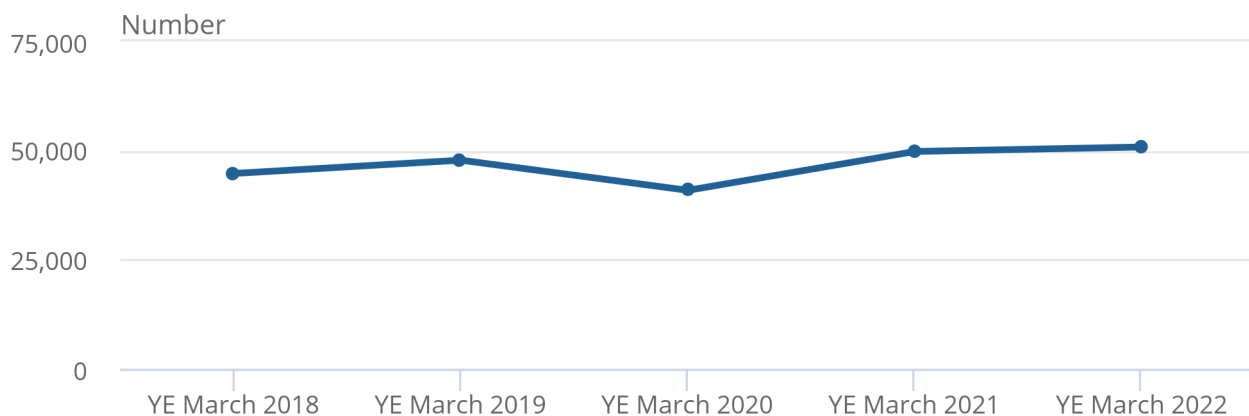
Contract award and service implementation, following a competitive tendering process to run the National Domestic Abuse Helpline, occurred in the year ending March 2020.

Figure 2: The number of support sessions delivered by the National Domestic Abuse Helpline increased for the second year

Number of support sessions delivered by the National Domestic Abuse Helpline in England, year ending (YE) March 2018 to YE March 2022

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Number of support sessions delivered by the National Domestic Abuse Helpline in England, year ending (YE) March 2018 to YE March 2022



Source: Refuge – National Domestic Abuse Helpline

Notes:

1. Refuge data are not classified as official statistics.
2. The 24-hour freephone National Domestic Abuse Helpline (run by Refuge) is available on 0808 2000 247, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.
3. A support session is defined by a phone conversation or live chat conversation provided by the National Domestic Abuse Helpline.

Of callers to the National Domestic Abuse Helpline in the year ending March 2022 who were asked:

- 88.6% were female
- 31.1% were aged 31 to 39 years
- 60.9% were white

The latest data showed the percentage of callers increased across all five ethnic groups except the white ethnic group when compared with the year ending March 2021.

Of callers to the National Domestic Abuse Helpline in the year ending March 2022, where the abuse type was recorded:

- 82.3% experienced psychological or emotional abuse
- 74.4% experienced controlling behaviour
- 56.4% experienced threatening or intimidating behaviour

In the year ending March 2022, the total number of calls received by Welsh Women's Aid's Live Fear Free Helpline increased 18.1% to 35,491 compared with the previous year. The highest proportion of calls were responding to women survivors (49.0%) and to calls from other agencies (41.3%).

In the year ending March 2022, the ManKind Initiative responded to a total of 2,230 calls across England and Wales. This was a 2.5% decrease from 2,288 in the year ending March 2021, but an increase compared with the year ending March 2020 (1,855). In the year ending March 2022, 77.2% of callers were male victims, and 22.8% of callers were calling on behalf of the victim.

The majority (95.5%) of male victims calling the helpline reported that the perpetrator was a female partner or ex-partner. The most common types of abuse reported by victims were:

- psychological abuse (92.6%)
- coercive control (79.4%)
- physical abuse (68.6%)

Multi-agency risk assessment conferences (MARACs) and multi-crime services

Victims at high risk from domestic abuse discussed at MARACs vary by their personal characteristics. Of the 114,067 cases discussed at MARACs in England and Wales in the year ending March 2022:

- 6.3% involved a male victim
- 15.8% involved a Black, Asian or racially minoritised victim
- 8.7% of victims were identified as having a disability
- 1.4% of victims were identified as lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender (LGBT)

Small proportions of domestic abuse victims with the characteristics referenced in the MARAC data may demonstrate disparities in service provision for some groups, as well as low levels of identification and recording.

There was a total of 141,961 children in households where a case was discussed at a MARAC in the year ending March 2022. This number has increased each year since the year ending March 2019 and corresponds with an increase in the total number of cases discussed at MARACs each year. The presence of children in these cases is defined differently across MARACs. As a result, these figures should be treated with caution.

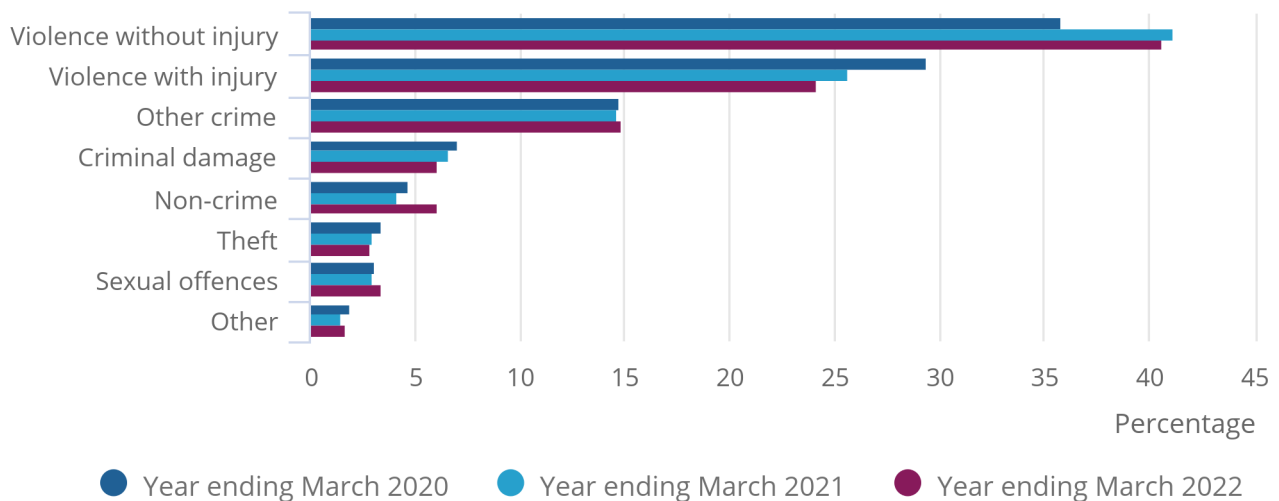
Multi-crime service cases, supporting all victim, disaggregated by crime type, show that 40.6% of valid cases flagged as domestic abuse-related were for violence without injury in the year ending March 2022; a slight decrease compared with the previous year (Figure 3).

Figure 3: The proportion of domestic abuse cases for violence with injury has declined in recent years, while the proportions for violence without injury remains high

Percentage of valid multi-crime service cases flagged as domestic abuse by crime category, England and Wales, year ending March 2020 to year ending March 2022

Figure 3: The proportion of domestic abuse cases for violence with injury has declined in recent years, while the proportions for violence without injury remains high

Percentage of valid multi-crime service cases flagged as domestic abuse by crime category, England and Wales, year ending March 2020 to year ending March 2022



Source: Victim Support

Notes:

1. Victim Support data are not classified as official statistics.
2. Valid cases refer to cases excluding those with the following statuses: duplicate case; consent not received within desired timescale; incorrect or insufficient contact information; safe phone contact data not provided for domestic violence and hate crime referrals; cancelled; consent to contact denied; does not meet contract criteria; insufficient crime details; living outside of Victim Support area or abroad; other agency.
3. Sexual offences include rape, and other sexual offences. Theft includes theft from person, bicycle theft and other theft. Other includes burglary from a dwelling, burglary from a non-dwelling, fraud and forgery, arson, homicide and unknown.
4. Data may not sum 100 because of rounding.

The victim was male in 21.4% of the multi-crime cases which were flagged as domestic abuse-related in the year ending March 2022, while for cases discussed at MARACs, a much smaller proportion of victims were male (6.3%).

Independent domestic violence advisors (IDVAs)

[IDVA services](#) support high-risk victims of domestic abuse. IDVA services are run by multiple providers within England and Wales.

Victim Support have provided data on clients accessing their IDVA services in England and Wales. In the year ending March 2022, 13.5% of clients accessing their IDVA services were male and 82.7% were female.

Insights, an outcomes measurement programme operated by SafeLives, collects information on the personal characteristics of clients entering IDVA services in England and Wales. In the year ending March 2022 Insights data shows that the majority of clients (94.3%) were female and just over half of all clients were aged under 34 years.

4 . Victim interactions with domestic abuse services

Refuge and community-based services

In the year ending March 2021 there were 28,370 referrals of women to refuge services run by Women's Aid in England, of which 61.9% were declined (Table 2). This is similar to the previous year where 62.9% of referrals were declined.

In Wales, there were 2,197 referrals of women to refuge services run by Welsh Women's Aid in the year ending March 2021, of which 40.2% were declined. This is higher than the previous year where 34.2% of referrals were declined.

The main reason for referrals to be declined in England was because of a lack of capacity to support survivors and in Wales because the refuge was unable to meet survivor support needs. See the [Women's Aid Domestic Abuse Report 2022 \(PDF, 1.009KB\)](#) for further information.

Table 2: Referrals of women to refuge services, England and Wales, year ending March 2020 and year ending March 2021

	Year ending March 2020	Year ending March 2021
England Total referrals	28,657	28,370
% Accepted	37.1	38.1
% Declined	62.9	61.9
Wales Total referrals	2,136	2,197
% Accepted	51.6	43.8
% Declined	34.2	40.2
% Support not accepted by client	13.4	15.2

Source: Women's Aid Federation of England - On Track data and Welsh Women's Aid - Women's Aid Annual Survey

Notes

1. Data from Women's Aid Federation of England and Welsh Women's Aid are not classified as official statistics.
2. Data for England and Wales are presented separately because they are sourced from two different data collections.
3. Data may not sum to 100 because of rounding.
4. These figures cannot provide a full picture of demand for refuge services. Some survivors may not disclose abuse, and some may not have been referred to a refuge because referring agencies may already be aware that a refuge is full or cannot meet their needs.
5. Estimates for refuge referrals received, declined, and accepted are calculated as the ratio of women housed to refuge space or turned away from services, using On Track applied to services. Estimates do not use On Track data that are listed on Routes to Support for the same region.

In the year ending March 2021 there were 225,534 referrals of women to community-based services run by Women's Aid in England (Table 3), an increase of 17.3% compared with the previous year. Of these, 45.0% were declined. This is the same as the previous year.

In Wales there were 20,950 referrals to community-based services run by Welsh Women's Aid in the year ending March 2021, of which 7.9% were declined (Table 3). This is lower than the year ending March 2020 (9.2%).

Table 3: Referrals of women to community-based services, England and Wales, year ending March 2020 and year ending March 2021

	Year ending March 2020	Year ending March 2021
England Total referrals	192,289	225,534
% Accepted	55.0	55.0
% Declined	45.0	45.0
Wales Total referrals	17,406	20,950
% Accepted	62.3	63.1
% Declined	9.2	7.9
% Support not accepted by client	23.7	24.3

Source: Women's Aid Federation of England - On Track data and Welsh Women's Aid - Women's Aid Annual Survey

Notes

1. Data from Women's Aid Federation of England and Welsh Women's Aid are not classified as official statistics.
2. Data for England and Wales are presented separately because they are sourced from two different data collections.
3. Data may not sum to 100 because of rounding.
4. These figures cannot provide a full picture of demand for community-based services. Some survivors may not disclose abuse, and some may not have been referred to a community-based service because services which meet their needs are not available.
5. Estimates for community-based services referrals received, declined, and accepted are calculated as the ratio of women supported or turned away to individual service type (outreach, independent domestic violence advisors (IDVA), floating support) for responding services applied to services not using On Track that are listed on Routed to Support for the same region.

Helplines

Because of the nature of domestic abuse helplines, where the priority is to assist the caller, information about victim interactions with these services may not be recorded for all calls. The data presented in this section reflect those calls for which this information was recorded.

In the year ending March 2022, just over a third (35.6%) of survivors calling the National Domestic Abuse Helpline in England, who were signposted to another service, were signposted to a domestic or sexual violence service.

In the year ending March 2022, a third (33.3%) of survivors who called the Live Fear Free Helpline in Wales were referred to other agencies offering a range of different services, while 19.6% were referred to housing services (excluding refuge services).

In England and Wales, the majority (99.5%) of victims calling the ManKind Initiative helpline in the year ending March 2022 were offered emotional support, 95.9% were signposted to other services, and 64.5% were signposted to information.

Data provided by Karma Nirvana for England show that in the year ending March 2022, 2,274 cases were supported by their Honour Based Abuse Helpline. For each case, the prompt for initial contact was recorded and in 6.9% of cases, domestic abuse was the prompt for calling the helpline. This only includes callers where no element of honour-based abuse was disclosed.

Despite this, data for the same year shows that 80.7% of perpetrators were either a partner, ex-partner, or a family member of the victim. This highlights that although the prompt to contact the helpline may not be flagged as domestic abuse, the victim to perpetrator relationship could be domestic related.

5 . Domestic abuse victim services data

[Domestic abuse victim services](#)

Dataset | Released 7 September 2022

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

6 . 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, or 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.

Helpline

A helpline is a telephone service that offers information, advice, or support to callers about particular issues. A domestic abuse helpline offers these services to victims of domestic abuse and their families, friends, colleagues and others calling on their behalf. Local, community-based helplines are distinct from the 24-hour National Domestic Abuse Helpline. Many survivors may speak to both services, as the national helpline provides referrals to services in their local area, alongside refuge referrals, emotional support, risk assessment and safety planning, and information on rights and options.

Honour-based abuse

The [Domestic Abuse Act 2021 Statutory Guidance](#) defines honour-based abuse as incidents which have or may have been committed to protect or defend the perceived honour of the family and/or community, or in response to individuals trying to break away from constraining 'norms' of behaviour that their family or community is trying to impose. Honour-based abuse can include physical, emotional, or psychological abuse and occur in specific contexts, not all of which represent domestic abuse under the Domestic Abuse Act 2021. However, honour-based abuse is typically carried out by a member or members of the family or extended family and is likely to involve behaviours specified in the statutory definition of domestic abuse in the Domestic Abuse Act 2021.

Independent domestic violence advisors (IDVAs)

Independent domestic violence advisors (IDVAs) are professionally qualified, specialist domestic abuse workers, who support high-risk victims of domestic abuse.

Multi-agency risk assessment conferences (MARACs)

A multi-agency risk assessment conference (MARAC) is a meeting where information is shared on the highest-risk domestic abuse cases between representatives from a range of agencies. After sharing all relevant information about the circumstances for a particular victim, the representatives discuss options for increasing the victim's safety and turn these into a coordinated action plan.

Refuge service

A domestic abuse refuge service provides emergency temporary accommodation for victims of domestic abuse with a planned programme of therapeutic and practical support.

7 . Data sources and quality

This publication is part of our domestic abuse statistics release. It presents information on services that are available to victims of domestic abuse in England and Wales. Other commentary discussing domestic abuse in England and Wales can be found in the [Domestic abuse in England and Wales overview](#).

Data sources

To provide insight into how domestic abuse services respond to victims of domestic abuse, we have sourced data from a range of organisations. These data are sourced from non-governmental, administrative datasets and are not classified as official statistics.

The following services are included in this publication:

[Karma Nirvana](#)

[ManKind Initiative](#)

[The National Domestic Abuse Helpline, run by Refuge](#)

[SafeLives](#)

[Suzy Lamplugh Trust](#)

[Victim Support](#)

[Welsh Women's Aid](#)

[Women's Aid Federation of England](#)

For further information about the data sources available from the victim services see Section 7 of our [Domestic abuse victim services, England and Wales: November 2020 article](#) and Section 6 of our [Domestic abuse quality and methodology information \(QMI\)](#).

Quality

More quality and methodology information on strengths, limitations, appropriate uses, and how the data were created is available in our [Domestic abuse quality and methodology information \(QMI\)](#).

8 . Future developments

We will publish [further analysis of all domestic abuse data](#) later this year.

9 . Related links

[Domestic abuse in England and Wales overview: November 2021](#)

Statistical bulletin | Released 24 November 2021

Figures on domestic abuse from police recorded crime and a number of different organisations.

[Domestic abuse prevalence and trends, England and Wales: year ending March 2021](#)

Article | Released 24 November 2021

Long-term trends and types of domestic abuse experienced by adults, based on findings from police recorded crime.

[Domestic abuse victim characteristics, England and Wales: year ending March 2021](#)

Article | Released 24 November 2021

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

[Domestic abuse and the criminal justice system, England and Wales: November 2021](#)

Article | Released 24 November 2021

Responses to and outcomes of domestic abuse-related cases in the criminal justice system.

[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.

[Crime in England and Wales: year ending March 2022](#)

Statistical bulletin | Released 21 July 2022

Crime against households and adults using data from police recorded crime and the Telephone-operated Crime Survey for England and Wales. Includes the impact of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic on crime and people's perceptions of crime during the April 2021 to March 2022 interview periods. See Section 12 for information on our upcoming user consultation on the future of the Crime Survey for England and Wales.

10 . Cite this article

Office for National Statistics (ONS), released 7 September 2022, ONS website, article, [Domestic abuse victim services, England and Wales: 2022](#)