

# Domestic abuse QMI

Quality and Methodology Information for domestic abuse detailing the strengths and limitations of the data, methods used and data uses and users.

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Release date:  
25 November 2022

Next release:  
To be announced

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# 1 . Output information

- National statistic: no
- Survey name: Crime Survey for England and Wales
- Data collection: a variety of survey and administrative data
- Frequency: annually
- How compiled: from data submitted by various suppliers and charitable organisations and CSEW survey data
- Geographic coverage: England and Wales

## 2 . About this Quality and Methodology Information report

This quality and methodology report contains information on the quality characteristics of the data (including the European Statistical System five dimensions of quality) as well as the methods used to create it.

The information in this report will help you to:

- understand the strengths and limitations of the data
- learn about existing uses and users of the data
- reduce the risk of misusing data
- help you to decide suitable uses for the data
- understand the methods used to create the data

## 3 . Important points

- The face-to-face Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW) was suspended on 17 March 2020 because of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. The Telephone-operated Crime Survey for England and Wales (TCSEW) was specifically designed to allow us to continue measuring crime during this period.
- Concerns around confidentiality and respondent safeguarding limited the types of questions asked in the TCSEW, specifically those relating to domestic abuse. As a result, the CSEW domestic abuse estimates were not available in our [release for the year ending March 2021](#).
- Data collection for the face-to-face CSEW resumed on 4 October 2021, with the upper age limit for the self-completion modules on domestic abuse, sexual assault and stalking removed. Data based on six months of CSEW interviews have been used in our [articles for the year ending March 2022](#). These estimates are not National Statistics and should be interpreted with caution.
- Our [release on domestic abuse in England and Wales](#) includes data on the different stages of the criminal justice process for cases of domestic abuse, and data on service provision for victims of domestic abuse.
- The bulletin includes a number of different data sources to provide a more coherent picture of domestic abuse; it is not possible to directly compare each of the datasets because of differences in timescales and reference periods, and because they do not all count the same thing.
- Caveats are provided throughout to make it clear where a comparison can be made and where it may be more difficult or not possible to directly compare data sources.
- Data from the Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW) up to the year ending March 2020, the Home Office Homicide Index and the Ministry of Justice are classified as [National Statistics](#).
- Following concerns about the quality and consistency of crime recording practice, police recorded crime data were assessed against the [Code of Practice for Statistics](#) and found not to meet the required standard for designation as [National Statistics](#), therefore, police recorded crime and outcomes data from the Home Office are classified as official statistics.
- All other data included in the release are sourced from administrative datasets that do not fall within the scope of official statistics.

## 4 . Quality summary

## Overview of the Domestic abuse in England and Wales release

The release has been produced in response to a recommendation made by His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) in their [2015 progress report \(PDF, 1.5MB\)](#) on the police response to domestic abuse. It stated that organisations should work together to:

"develop a dataset relating to domestic abuse which will enable more thorough analysis of how domestic abuse is dealt with in a force area."

The aim of the release is to bring together data on domestic abuse to provide a clearer understanding of the prevalence of domestic abuse, victim service provision and the criminal justice system's response to both victims and perpetrators. We hope that this will enable appropriate action to be taken to improve victims' experiences, and that knowing appropriate support is available will encourage more victims to report abuse.

The face-to-face Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW) was suspended on 17 March 2020 because of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. The Telephone-operated Crime Survey for England and Wales (TCSEW) was specifically designed to allow us to continue measuring crime during this period. However, concerns around confidentiality and respondent safeguarding limited the types of questions asked in the TCSEW, specifically those relating to domestic abuse. As a result, CSEW domestic abuse estimates were not available in our [release for the year ending March 2021](#).

Starting from 4 October 2021, we reintroduced the face-to-face CSEW. This enabled a return to full topic coverage, including collecting data relating to sexual victimisation and domestic abuse.

For Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW) data and police recorded crime data, our [Crime Statistics Quality and Methodology Information report](#) contains important information on:

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

## Uses and users of the Domestic abuse in England and Wales release

We publish data on domestic abuse in England and Wales on an annual basis. There is considerable interest from a range of users. These include:

- elected national and local representatives (such as MPs, police and crime commissioners and local councillors)
- the Home Office and other government agencies
- police forces
- those delivering support or services to victims of crime
- lobby groups
- journalists
- academic researchers
- teachers
- students

The data can be used for a variety of purposes, including:

- development and monitoring of crime and justice policy
- public safety campaigns
- raising awareness of particular forms of crime
- academic research

Providing breakdowns of victim characteristics allows a greater depth of understanding about domestic abuse. The main user groups of domestic abuse statistics and how they use the data provided are varied. The classes of use are identified by the UK Statistics Authority in their monitoring brief, [The Use Made of Official Statistics \(PDF, 125.6KB\)](#).

### **Informing the general public's choices**

The measures published provide insight into the levels and trends of domestic abuse, as well as the number of domestic abuse-related crimes recorded by the police, in England and Wales.

Further breakdowns, such as by abuse type, region, and characteristics of victims, allow a greater depth of understanding about domestic abuse.

The number of domestic abuse-related crimes recorded by the police is another important measure of crime. This information can help the public in holding elected representatives to account and in making choices about who they will vote for.

Bringing together data on domestic abuse covering the different stages of the criminal justice system and service provision for victims can help encourage more victims to report abuse, knowing that there is appropriate support available.

### **Decision making about policies, programmes and projects**

Data on domestic abuse-related crimes are important in informing government policy making to improve victims' experiences of the criminal justice process.

These data allow the effectiveness of implemented policies relating to crime to be monitored and measured over a period of time.

### **Resource allocation**

Data can be used to help determine the allocation of government resources to several organisations. For example, police forces might get more or less funding based on the number of crimes reported in respective police force areas, and grants given to charities based on crime statistics, such as victim support groups.

### **Informing public marketing campaigns**

Data can be used to support campaigns that aim to raise awareness of important issues, for example, sexual assault or domestic violence.

### **Supporting third sector activity**

A range of lobby groups use crime statistics to help raise awareness of issues, such as variations in victimisation by socio-demographic characteristics such as age and sex.

Organisations can use crime statistics to bid for funding for projects that aim to raise awareness of and tackle crime problems.

### **Facilitating academic research**

Both the CSEW and police recorded crime are core sets of data on the levels and trends of domestic abuse in England and Wales. The annual CSEW dataset is also available as microdata as part of the UK Data Service. As a result, these data are widely used by academics studying topics in this area.

# Strengths and limitations of the Domestic abuse in England and Wales release

## Strengths:

- a regular annual release provides timely data to users
- data from different sources can lead to an improved victim experience and an increase in reported abuse
- data provide a clearer understanding of the criminal justice system's response to victims and perpetrators of domestic abuse
- Our [domestic abuse data tool](#), which is published alongside the release allows users to explore data for police force areas in more detail and compare these with similar areas within England and Wales

## Limitations:

- data collection for the face-to-face CSEW resumed on 4 October 2021. Data based on six months of CSEW interviews rather than 12 months have been used in our [articles for the year ending March 2022](#), therefore estimates should be treated with caution
- the different datasets included in the release do not relate to the same cases given the different timescales and reference periods used to collect the data, and do not count the same things; therefore each of the numbers cannot be directly compared
- 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 by users to enable them to understand the national and local picture of domestic abuse
- data relating to the criminal justice system and specialist domestic abuse services only refer to cases of domestic abuse that become visible to the police and services; cases that enter the criminal justice system may drop out at any stage of the process

## Improvements to the Domestic abuse in England and Wales release

As part of ongoing work to improve our publications, the format of the domestic abuse release was changed in 2019. The commentary on topics covered in our [previous domestic abuse in England and Wales](#) publication is now split into a number of separate releases. These can all be found linked from our [Domestic abuse in England and Wales overview](#) release page.

Future development will continue to fill gaps in domestic abuse data by looking at new data sources to create a more comprehensive resource for users. Additionally, the measure of domestic abuse in the Crime Survey for England and Wales will be developed to better reflect lived experiences of domestic abuse victims.

## 5 . Quality characteristics of the Domestic abuse in England and Wales release

## Relevance

The data collated within this release provide a clearer understanding of the prevalence of domestic abuse, victim characteristics and the criminal justice system's response to both victims and perpetrators of domestic abuse. It is hoped that this understanding will lead to better support for abuse victims and an increased willingness of victims to report their experiences.

Data on domestic abuse in England and Wales receive considerable interest from a range of users. The 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 \(SDGs\)](#).

See the [Section 4: Quality summary](#) for more information on the Uses and users of the domestic abuse in England and Wales release.

An [interactive domestic abuse data tool](#) published alongside the release allows users to explore data for police force areas in more detail and compare these with similar areas within England and Wales.

## Accuracy and reliability

The release includes data from a number of data sources, the majority of which are based on administrative records.

More information on the accuracy of each of the data sources is given in the [Main data sources and their accuracy section](#).

Data relating to the criminal justice system and specialist domestic abuse services only refer to cases of domestic abuse that become visible to the police and services; cases that enter the criminal justice system may drop out at any stage of the process.

Since the Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW) was suspended in March 2020, the Telephone-operated Crime Survey for England and Wales (TCSEW) was designed to allow us to continue measuring crime during the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. However, concerns around confidentiality and respondent safeguarding limited the types of questions asked in the TCSEW, specifically those relating to domestic abuse. As a result, CSEW domestic abuse estimates were not available in the [release for the year ending March 2021](#).

Data collection for the face-to-face CSEW resumed on 4 October 2021. Data based on six months of CSEW interviews rather than 12 months have been used in our [articles](#) for the year ending March 2022, therefore estimates should be treated with caution.

For more detail on the accuracy and reliability of the data from the CSEW see our [Crime in England and Wales QMI](#).

## Coherence and comparability

The data included in the release come from several sources, so direct comparisons cannot be made between figures. This is because the way organisations collect data on domestic abuse can differ on timescales, reference periods and on methods of identification. They also do not count the same things; for example, some record the number of victims or defendants, while others record the number of incidents or offences that occurred.

These factors, together with the time lag between the stages in the criminal justice process, mean that each part of the release does not refer to the same cohort of cases and so comparisons cannot be made across sections. For example, a case reported to the police in one year may not appear with an outcome after investigation until the next year. Or a case with a prosecution outcome in one year may have been initially reported to the police in a previous year.

For most data sources, comparisons can be made over time. However, domestic abuse-related crimes recorded by the police can be affected by changes in levels of reporting to the police or police recording practices. Comparisons of these data over time need to take account of the introduction of new legislation and changes to the Home Office Counting Rules, which will subsequently make an impact on the volume of cases passing through the criminal justice system.

## Concepts and definitions

Domestic abuse is not limited to physical violence. It can include 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 under the age of 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.

## Geography

Data on domestic abuse are available at national level for England and Wales. Some datasets are also available at regional and police force area level.

## Accessibility and clarity

Our recommended format for accessible content is a combination of HTML web pages for narrative, charts and graphs, with data being provided in usable formats such as CSV and Excel. Our website also offers users the option to download the narrative in PDF format. In some instances, other software may be used, or may be available on request. Available formats for content published on our website, but not produced by us, or referenced on our website but stored elsewhere, may vary. For further information, contact Meghan Elkin via email at [crimestatistics@ons.gov.uk](mailto:crimestatistics@ons.gov.uk).

For information regarding conditions of access to data:

- [terms and conditions \(for data on the website\)](#)
- [accessibility](#)

## Timeliness and punctuality

The [Domestic abuse in England and Wales release](#) is published on an annual basis. The data included in the release are the latest available at the time of publishing. Information on the time period of each of the data sources included in the release is given in the [Main data sources and their accuracy section](#).

## Notes for: Quality characteristics of the Domestic abuse in England and Wales data



1. Controlling behaviour is a range of acts designed to make a person subordinate and/or dependent by isolating them from sources of support, exploiting their resources and capacities for personal gain, depriving them of the means needed for independence, resistance and escape and regulating their everyday behaviour.
2. Coercive behaviour is an act or a pattern of acts of assault, threats, humiliation and intimidation or other abuse that is used to harm, punish, or frighten their victim.

## 6 . Methods used to produce the Domestic abuse in England and Wales release

### Main data sources and their accuracy

Statistics on domestic abuse are produced separately by several different organisations in England and Wales. When taken in isolation, these statistics may not provide the context required by users to enable them to understand the national and local picture of domestic abuse. [The Domestic abuse in England and Wales overview](#) brings together the data sources outlined in the data from public bodies section below.

Previous [domestic abuse in England and Wales releases](#) include analysis of data from the Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW). This covers adults aged 16 to 74 years who are resident in households in England and Wales and who completed the self-completion section of CSEW on domestic abuse, sexual assault, and stalking.

The face-to-face Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW) was suspended on 17 March 2020 because of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. The Telephone CSEW was specifically designed to allow us to continue measuring crime during this period. However, concerns around confidentiality and respondent safeguarding limit the types of questions asked in the TCSEW, specifically those relating to domestic abuse. As a result, CSEW domestic abuse estimates were not available in our [release for the year ending March 2021](#).

Data collection for the face-to-face CSEW resumed on 4 October 2021. Data based on six months of CSEW interviews rather than 12 months have been used in our [articles for the year ending March 2022](#), therefore estimates should be treated with caution. The face-to-face CSEW resumed data collection with the upper age limit for the self-completion modules on domestic abuse, sexual assault and stalking removed.

Our [Crime Statistics Quality and Methodology Information report](#) contains further information on the TCSEW.

### Office for National Statistics

Data from the Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW) are used to present analysis covering adults aged 16 years and over who are resident in households in England and Wales and who completed the self-completion section of CSEW on domestic abuse, sexual assault, and stalking. Our most recent data are for the year ending March 2022.

### Home Office

Police Incident and Police Recorded Crime data for England and Wales are used to present analysis on crimes recorded by the police that were identified as domestic abuse-related since April 2015. This includes data on domestic abuse-related stalking and harassment and coercive and controlling behaviour, which became an offence on 29 December 2015. Incidents refer to domestic abuse-related incidents that did not get recorded as a crime. The most recent data are for the year ending March 2022.

Police outcomes data for England and Wales are collected through the Home Office Data Hub, a record-level crime system, which police forces have been progressively switching over to. The most recent data are for the year ending March 2022.

Home Office Homicide Index data for England and Wales are continually updated with revised information from the police as investigations continue and as cases are heard by the courts. The version used for analysis does not accept updates after it is "frozen" to ensure the data do not change during the analysis period. Analysis combines data for a three-year period due to year-to-year variability in the volume of homicides recorded. The most recent data are for the year ending March 2019 to the year ending March 2021.

## **Crown Prosecution Service**

Referrals, prosecutions and convictions data for England and Wales contains information on cases where a domestic abuse flag has been applied at the beginning of a case or applied later in the prosecution process if a domestic abuse relationship becomes apparent. Due to a time lag between each stage of the criminal justice process, data for referrals, prosecutions and convictions may not refer to the same cohort of cases. CPS data include adult and child defendant and victim data and therefore do not strictly align with the government definition of domestic abuse. The most recent data are for the year ending March 2022.

Coercive and controlling behaviour data for England and Wales relate to the number of offences of coercive and controlling behaviour recorded in magistrates' courts, in which a prosecution commenced, as recorded on the CPS case management system. The most recent data are for the year ending March 2022.

Domestic abuse-related stalking and harassment data for England and Wales relate to the number of domestic abuse-related stalking and harassment offences recorded in magistrates' courts, in which a prosecution commenced, as recorded on the CPS case management system. The most recent data are for the year ending March 2022.

## **His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS)**

Data on arrests, bails, voluntary attendance, child protection referrals, domestic violence disclosures, domestic violence protection orders and notices for England and Wales are collected for the purposes of inspection. Not all police forces could provide data on each variable to HMICFRS. Calculations for England and Wales are based on those forces that could provide data. The most recent data are for the year ending March 2022.

## **Ministry of Justice**

Coercive and controlling behaviour data for England and Wales cover a different time period to CPS data on coercive and controlling behaviour. The most recent data are for the year ending December 2021.

Data on domestic violence remedy orders granted by family courts are split into two types: a non-molestation order and an occupation order. The most recent data are for the year ending March 2022.

## **Karma Nirvana**

Karma Nirvana run the Honour Based Abuse Helpline supporting, empowering, and educating those impacted so they can live a life free of abuse. Data for England is sourced from the Karma Nirvana Honour Based Abuse Helpline. The most recent data are for the year ending March 2022.

## **ManKind Initiative**

The ManKind Initiative operates a confidential helpline available for all men across the UK suffering from domestic violence or domestic abuse by their current or former wife or partner (including same-sex partner). Data for England and Wales is sourced from the ManKind Initiative helpline. The most recent data are for the year ending March 2022.

Domestic abuse services supporting male victims for England and Wales data is sourced from The ManKind Initiative maintained service directory which covers providers of services for men. Most of these services offer support to women as well as men. The most recent data are for the year ending March 2022.

## **Refuge**

Data are from the National Domestic Abuse Helpline for England run by Refuge. The national service is for women experiencing domestic violence, their family, friends, colleagues, and others calling on their behalf. The most recent data are for the year ending March 2022.

## **SafeLives**

SafeLives provide multi-agency risk assessment conferences (MARACs) data for England and Wales. A MARAC is a meeting where information is shared on the highest risk domestic abuse cases between representatives of local police, health, child protection, housing practitioners, independent domestic violence advisors (IDVAs), probation and other specialists from the statutory and voluntary sectors. Data are based on 249 MARACs in England and Wales in the year ending March 2022.

Independent Domestic Violence Advisors (IDVAs) data for England and Wales is sourced from SafeLives who operate a specialist outcomes measurement programme, Insights, which is a tool that allows for the collection and analysis of frontline support information. IDVAs complete an Insights form throughout the support period. Insights data for the year ending March 2020 include cases captured at intake and exit of the IDVA service, as well as cases where there was a criminal justice outcome. The most recent data are for the year ending March 2022.

From 2014 to 2019 SafeLives has also counted the number of IDVAs, through their Domestic Abuse Practitioner Survey, to identify how many IDVAs are supporting victims and survivors of domestic abuse across England and Wales. This survey did not run in 2020 and was discontinued from the year ending 2022 onwards.

## **Suzy Lamplugh Trust**

The National Stalking Helpline, run by the Suzy Lamplugh Trust, for England and Wales provides data from the helpline, which provides advice and guidance to individuals experiencing stalking, their family or friends, and professionals supporting them. The most recent data are for the year ending March 2022.

## **Victim Support**

Independent Domestic Violence Advisors (IDVAs) service provision data for England and Wales is sourced by Victim Support, which is one of the largest single IDVA providers in England and Wales. The most recent data are for the year ending March 2022.

Multi-crime services data for England and Wales contains information on Victim Support run multi-crime services that pick up lower risk level domestic abuse cases and cases where victims do not wish to engage with specialist organisations. Data on multi-crime service cases identified as domestic abuse are collated by Victim Support. The most recent data are for the year ending March 2022.

## **Women's Aid Federation of England and and Welsh Women's Aid**

Routes to Support is a UK-wide online database, which contains information about domestic abuse and other violence against women services, which are available for women and children throughout the UK; the database is representative of all domestic abuse services for women. Data provides snapshot figures gathered on one day each year on the different types of domestic abuse services and refuge bed spaces available in England and Wales. The most recent data for England and Wales are for the year ending March 2022 and the year ending March 2020 respectively.

## **Welsh Women's Aid**

Data collection on refuge and community-based services for Wales is a separate data collection covering domestic abuse service provision in Wales. Data include information from organisations running specialist domestic abuse services offering refuge-based support, floating support services and community outreach services. Welsh Women's Aid also collect some data on referrals of men and children. The most recent data are for the year ending March 2022.

The Live fear free helpline for Wales provides data from the helpline for those suffering with domestic abuse and sexual violence. The most recent data are for the year ending March 2022.

## Women's Aid Federation of England

The Women's Aid Annual Survey was distributed to all domestic abuse services for female victims in England listed on the Routes to Support database, comprising both refuge services and community-based services. Questions covered the previous financial year and a census day and week. The most recent data are for the year ending March 2020.

From the year ending March 2021 onwards the annual survey was replaced with On Track, which is designed to create a live, sector-wide, national dataset providing evidence of survivor needs, support delivered and service outcomes. The most recent data are for the year ending March 2022.

### How we analyse and quality assure the data

Several methods were used to ensure the quality of the Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW) data collection operation by both Kantar Public, the survey contractor, and the Office for National Statistics (ONS). Kantar Public has robust quality management systems in place, which are formally accredited, and endorsed and supported at a corporate level. More information can be found in our [annual technical reports](#).

We also have quality management systems in place to further quality assure the data when they come to us for final preparation and publication; any errors identified through these checks are returned to Kantar Public for validation or correction. Checks are also carried out within the team throughout the data production process before final publication.

Regarding police recorded crime, prior to submitting data to us, the Home Office Police Data Collection Section (PDCS) and Home Office Statistics Unit carry out internal quality assurance of the recorded crime data. Any anomalies or errors identified through these checks result in a report being returned to the relevant force for validation or correction. Prior to publication of any crime statistics, verification checks are also carried out, asking individual forces for confirmation that the data accords with that held on their own systems. For more information, see Chapter 3 of our [User guide to crime statistics for England and Wales](#).

All other data included in the publication are quality assured by the individual data suppliers and further checks are carried out by our team on receipt of the data. Any discrepancies are queried with the supplier for validation.

### How we disseminate the data

Our [Domestic abuse in England and Wales release](#) is published annually on the ONS website. This includes a number of separate publications describing the main patterns and trends in the datasets. Our [Domestic abuse in England and Wales data tool](#) is also provided to allow users to explore data for police force areas in more detail.

### How we review the data

Our [bulletin on domestic abuse in England and Wales](#) has been produced in response to a recommendation made by HMICFRS in their [2015 progress report \(PDF, 1.49MB\)](#) on the police response to domestic abuse. It said that organisations should work together to "develop a dataset relating to domestic abuse, which will enable more thorough analysis of how domestic abuse is dealt with in a force area".

User feedback has been obtained during its development through discussions with domestic abuse organisations, academics and police force staff.

## 7 . Other information

### Useful links

[Domestic abuse in England and Wales overview: November 2022](#)

Bulletin | Released 25 November 2022

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

[Crime in England and Wales QMI](#)

Methodology | Revised 21 July 2022

Provides a range of information that describes the quality of the data used in our regular publications.

## 8 . Cite this methodology

Office for National Statistics (ONS), released 25 November 2022, ONS website, methodology, [Domestic abuse QMI](#)