

Article

Homicide in England and Wales: year ending March 2022

Analyses of information held within the Home Office Homicide Index, which contains detailed record-level information about each homicide recorded by police in England and Wales.



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1 . Main Points

- Homicide returned to pre-coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic levels, with 696 victims in the latest year; this is 130 more (a 23% increase) than the year ending March 2021 when government restrictions meant there was less social contact.
- The homicide rate was 11.7 per million population, with the rate for males (16.9 per million population) more than twice that for females (6.6 per million population).
- The homicide rate over the three-year period to the year ending March 2022 was 39.7 per million population for the Black ethnic group, approximately four times higher than for the White ethnic group (8.9 per million population).
- Approximately 4 in 10 homicides were committed using a knife or sharp instrument (282 homicides); a 19% increase compared with the previous year, and the highest annual total since the Homicide Index began in 1946 (similar to the previous high of 281 in the year ending March 2018).
- There were 69 homicide victims aged 13 to 19 years, of these, 51 were killed by a knife or sharp instrument.
- There were 134 domestic homicides in the year ending March 2022, 18 more than the previous year, and a similar number to the average over the last decade (129).
- Males accounted for 72% of homicide victims in the latest year, but 93% of convicted suspects.

2 . Trends in homicide

As homicide is a relatively low-volume offence, there will be fluctuations in numbers from year to year. This is especially true where data have been broken down further for analysis. Figures should therefore be interpreted with caution.

There were 696 victims of homicide in the year ending March 2022, 130 more (a 23% increase) than the previous year (566 victims; [Appendix table 1](#)). However, the previous year covered extended time periods where coronavirus (COVID-19) restrictions were in place to limit social contact. It is thought that these restrictions led to a fall in the level of public space homicides in this year. The number of homicides in the latest year is similar to the four pre-pandemic years, from the year ending March 2017 (688 victims) to the year ending March 2020 (677 victims, including 39 victims from the Grays lorry tragedy in 2019).

Longer term trends in homicide

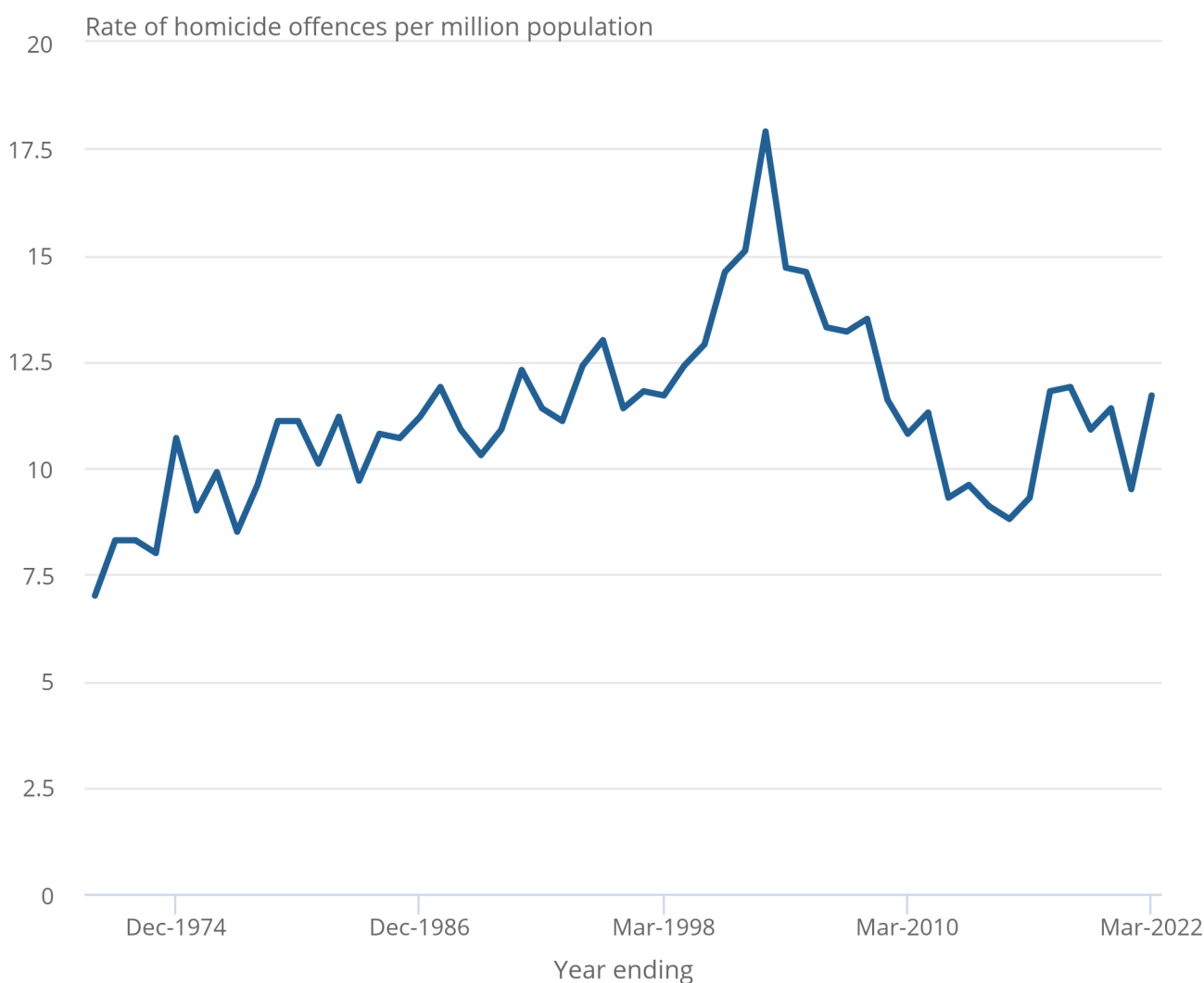
Compared with most other crimes, the homicide rate remains very low, with 11.7 homicides recorded per million population during the year ending March 2022. The latest year showed an increase, following the lifting of the COVID-19 public health restrictions (Figure 1).

Figure 1: The homicide rate has increased to pre-coronavirus (COVID-19) levels, following a decrease the previous year

Homicide rate, England and Wales, year ending December 1970 to year ending March 2022

Figure 1: The homicide rate has increased to pre-coronavirus (COVID-19) levels, following a decrease the previous year

Homicide rate, England and Wales, year ending December 1970 to year ending March 2022



Source: Home Office – Homicide Index

Notes:

1. Year ending December 1987 includes 15 victims of Michael Ryan.
2. Year ending March 2001 includes 58 Chinese nationals who suffocated in a lorry on the way into the UK.
3. Year ending March 2003 includes 173 victims of Dr Harold Shipman.
4. Year ending March 2004 includes 20 cockle pickers who drowned in Morecambe Bay.
5. Year ending March 2006 includes 52 victims of the 7 July London bombings.
6. Year ending March 2011 includes 12 victims of Derrick Bird shooting.
7. Year ending March 2017 includes 96 victims of Hillsborough and four victims of the Westminster Bridge attack.
8. Year ending March 2018 includes 31 victims of the terrorist attacks that involved multiple victims, including the Manchester Arena bombing, and the London Bridge attack. It also includes 11 victims from the Shoreham air crash.
9. Year ending March 2020 includes 39 human trafficking victims who were found dead in a lorry in Essex.

Further information on the longer-term trends in homicide since the 1960s can be found in [Section 2 of our Homicide in England and Wales: year ending March 2021 bulletin](#).

As homicide is a relatively low-volume offence, year-on-year variations need to be interpreted with some caution. This is partly because trends can be affected by single incidents involving multiple victims (such as the Grays lorry incident in 2019 and the Manchester Arena bombing in 2017).

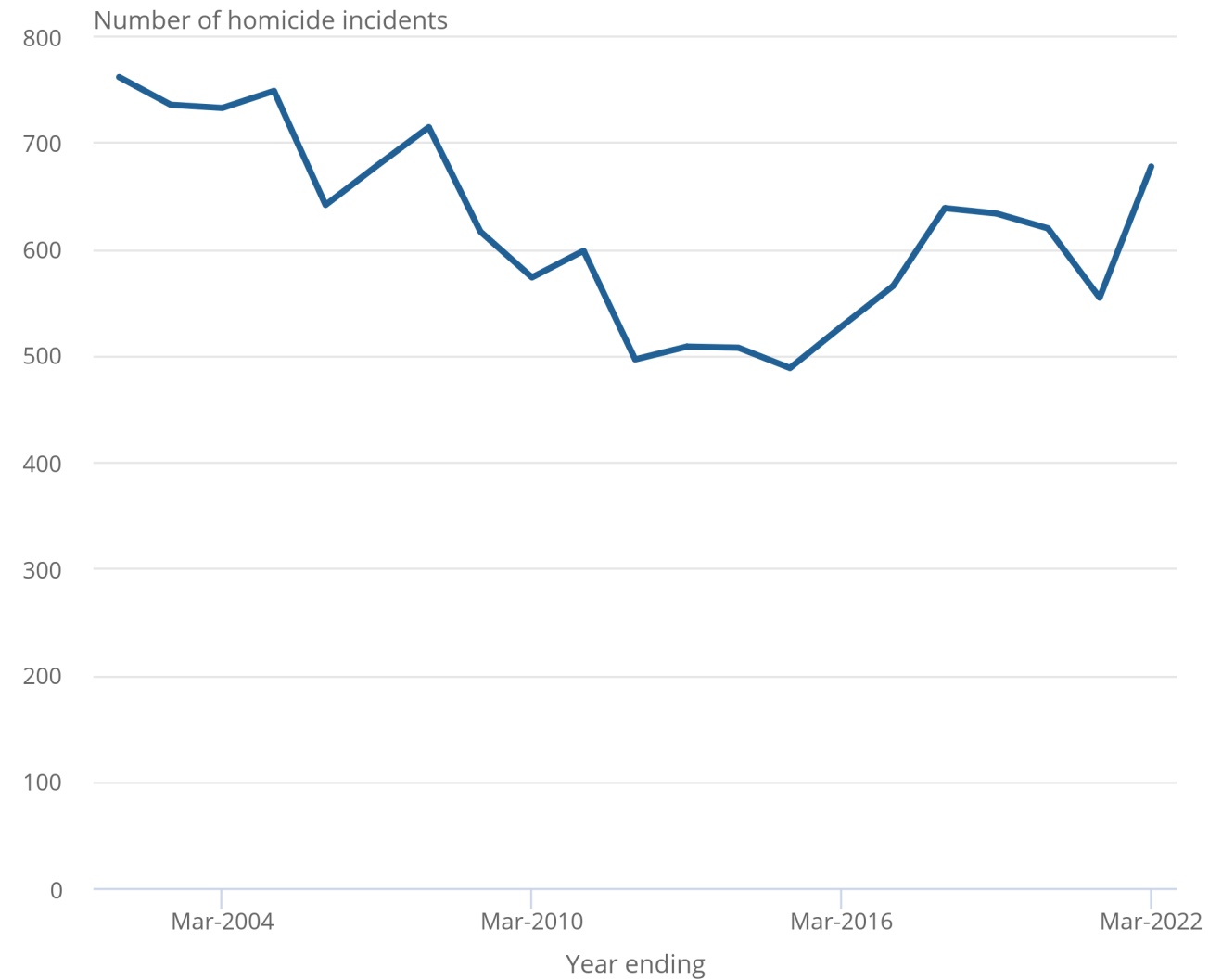
In the year ending March 2022, there were 677 separate homicide incidents, the highest number since the year ending March 2008 (714 homicide incidents) ([Appendix table 2](#)). Figure 2 shows the number of separate homicide incidents, rather than number of victims, as an alternative picture on trends.

Figure 2: The number of homicide incidents has increased following a slight downward trend over the three previous years

Number of homicide incidents, England and Wales, year ending March 2002 to year ending March 2022

Figure 2: The number of homicide incidents has increased following a slight downward trend over the three previous years

Number of homicide incidents, England and Wales, year ending March 2002 to year ending March 2022



Source: Home Office – Homicide Index

The number of incidents recorded in the year ending March 2022 was statistically significantly higher compared with the previous year. In contrast, there was no significant difference between the latest year and the three years pre-pandemic. However, the number of incidents in the latest year was significantly higher than each of the eight years between the year ending March 2010 and the year ending March 2017.

Further information on the methodology used to test statistical significance can be found in [Section 12](#).

3 . Variations in homicide victimisation by personal characteristics

Demographic factors discussed in this section are not necessarily independently related to homicide and the findings only report on differences between estimates. Although sex, age and ethnicity are important factors in homicide, there are likely to be many other factors that cannot be examined using the Homicide Index data. For example, socioeconomic indicators at the individual and neighbourhood level are also likely to be related to being a victim of homicide (further information can be found in [The social patterning of deaths due to assault in Scotland, 1980–2005: population-based study](#)).

Sex

As in previous years, the majority of homicide victims were male. In the year ending March 2022, around 7 in 10 of all victims were male (72%) and around 3 in 10 were female (28%).

The number of male and female victims increased in the last year, following a decrease the previous year. However, the number of female victims (198) and male victims (498) were at similar levels to the years prior to coronavirus (COVID-19) restrictions. For those female victims where a suspect had been charged, 95% (122) of those suspects were male. Similarly, for male victims, 91% (311) of the suspects were also male. ([Appendix table 32](#)).

Figure 3: The number of male and female homicide victims has increased in the latest year following a decrease the previous year

Number of homicide victims, England and Wales, year ending March 2008 to year ending March 2022

Figure 3: The number of male and female homicide victims has increased in the latest year following a decrease the previous year

Number of homicide victims, England and Wales, year ending March 2008 to year ending March 2022



Source: Home Office – Homicide Index

Notes:

1. Year ending March 2017 includes 89 male and seven female victims of Hillsborough.
2. Year ending March 2017 includes one female and three male victims of the Westminster Bridge attack.
3. Year ending March 2018 includes 21 female, 10 male victims of terrorist attacks that involved multiple victims and 11 male victims of Shoreham air crash.
4. Year ending March 2020 includes 30 male and 9 female victims whose bodies were found in a lorry in Essex.

The latest annual homicide rate for males (17 per million population) was more than double that for females (7 per million population), [Appendix table 4](#). However, it should be noted that the nature of homicides differs between males and females, as discussed in [Section 4](#).

Age

The most common age group for victims of homicides recorded in the year ending March 2022 was those aged 16 to 24 years (122 victims) (Figure 4).

As in previous years, children aged under one year had the highest rate of homicide (29 per million population). This rate fluctuates from year to year because of the low number of victims in this age group. This was followed by those aged 16 to 24 years (19 per million population).

There were 69 homicides where the victim was a teenager (aged 13 to 19 years). In around three-quarters (74%) of these homicides, the method of killing was a knife or sharp instrument ([Appendix table 9](#)). This compared with 41% for all homicides victims. See [Section 5](#) for more detail on sharp instrument (including knives) homicides.

There was an increase in levels of homicide for most age categories compared with the previous year, apart from those aged under 1, 1 to 4 years and those aged 25 to 34 years, which decreased by 10, 4 and 6 homicides, respectively ([Appendix table 4](#)). Trends by age group fluctuate because of low numbers (Figure 4).

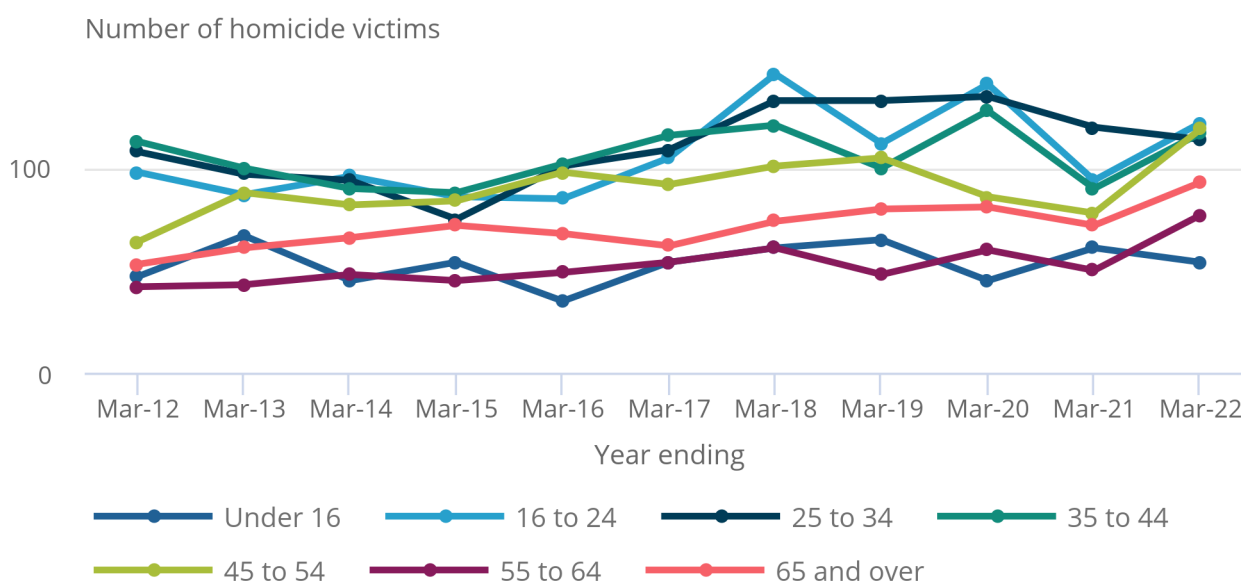
The largest percentage increase in the latest year was in the number of victims aged 45 to 54 years and 55 to 64 years (which rose by 53% and 54%, respectively). There were 119 victims aged 45 to 54 years and 77 victims aged 55 to 64 years, the highest annual number of victims on record for those age groups since the Homicide Index began in 1946 (Figure 4).

Figure 4: There was an increase in homicide victims in most age groups in the latest year, apart from those aged under 16 and 25 to 34 years

Number of homicide victims (excluding Hillsborough victims), England and Wales, year ending March 2012 to year ending March 2022

Figure 4: There was an increase in homicide victims in most age groups in the latest year, apart from those aged under 16 and 25 to 34 years

Number of homicide victims (excluding Hillsborough victims), England and Wales, year ending March 2012 to year ending March 2022



Source: Home Office – Homicide Index

Notes:

1. Data for the year ending March 2017 do not match Appendix table 4 as Hillsborough victims are excluded from this analysis.

Ethnicity

Over seven in ten (496 or 71%) of all homicide victims in the year ending March 2022 were from the White ethnic group (Officer identified ethnicity classification). This was an increase of 110 victims compared with the year ending March 2021, and 71 higher than the 425 victims in the pre-coronavirus (COVID-19) period of year ending March 2020. The number of White victims was the highest since the year ending March 2018, when there were 501 victims.

There were 91 victims identified as being from the Black ethnic group in the last year, accounting for 13% of all victims. This was a decrease of five homicides compared with the previous year. The number of Black victims has been consistent over the last six years, averaging 93 homicides a year.

There were 84 (12%) victims in the Other ethnic group, higher than the previous year (63) but lower than the pre-pandemic year ending March 2020 (121) ([Appendix table 5](#)).

Although the majority of homicide victims were White, accounting for different population sizes shows that Black people had higher rates of victimisation ([Appendix table 7](#)). In the three years to year ending March 2022, average rates per million population were around four times higher for Black victims than White victims or victims of other ethnicities.

Homicide rates across all ethnic groups over the last three years increased compared with the three-year period to year ending March 2016. The homicide rate for Black victims has shown the biggest increase, from 24.5 to 39.7 per million population. This compares with the rate for White victims, which increased from 8.0 to 8.9 per million population ([Appendix table 7](#)).

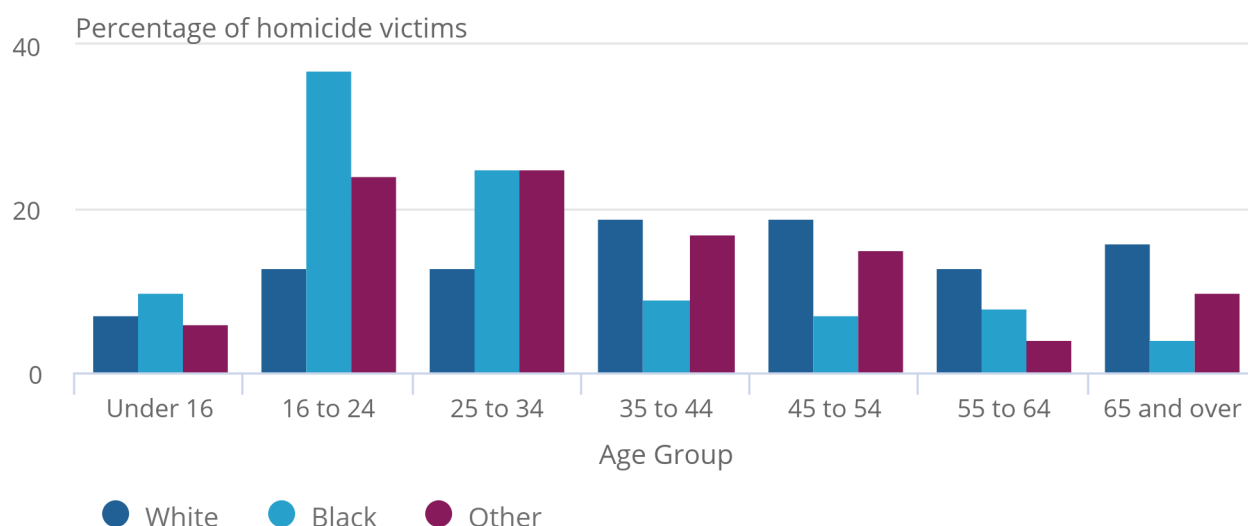
There were clear differences in the age profile of victims between different ethnic groups. Over a third of Black victims (37%) were aged 16 to 24 years, whereas this was a much lower proportion for White victims (13%) (Figure 5; [Appendix table 5](#)). This will partly reflect the different age distributions of ethnic groups in the population, for further information see our [Population estimates by ethnic group and religion, England and Wales: 2019 article](#).

Figure 5: Over a third of Black homicide victims were aged between 16 to 24 years

Percentage of homicide victims, by age and ethnicity, England and Wales, year ending March 2022

Figure 5: Over a third of Black homicide victims were aged between 16 to 24 years

Percentage of homicide victims, by age and ethnicity, England and Wales, year ending March 2022



Source: Home Office - Homicide Index

Notes:

1. Officer identified classification
2. From 1 April 2021, ethnicity categories were changed on the Homicide Index to be consistent with Office for National Statistics (ONS) census groupings. To enable a time series, "Other" has been grouped to include Asian (Indian sub continent), Asian, mixed or multiple ethnicities and any other ethnic group. Previous ethnicity data can be found in our [Homicide in England and Wales: year ending March 2021](#) article.

4 . The relationship between victims and suspects

As in previous years, there were important differences between adult and child victims in their relationship with suspects. For that reason, our analysis examines patterns separately.

Adult victims

There were large differences in the profile of victim-suspect relationships between male and female victims aged 16 years and over. In the year ending March 2022, female victims were more commonly killed by a partner or ex-partner (33%) or a family member (13%). For males the suspected killer was more commonly a friend or acquaintance (18%), stranger (15%) or other known person (9%).

There were 134 domestic homicides in the year ending March 2022, an increase of 18 (16%) compared with the previous year. This is the highest number since the year ending March 2019 (140).

Of the 134 domestic homicides, 78 victims were killed by a partner or ex-partner (up from 69), 40 were killed by a parent, son or daughter (up from 28) and 16 were killed by another family member (down from 19).

Almost half (46%) of adult female homicide victims were killed in a domestic homicide (84). Of the 84 female victims, 81 were killed by a male suspect ([Appendix table 32](#)).

Males were much less likely to be the victim of a domestic homicide, with only 11% (50) of male homicides being domestic related in the latest year, a similar proportion to the previous year.

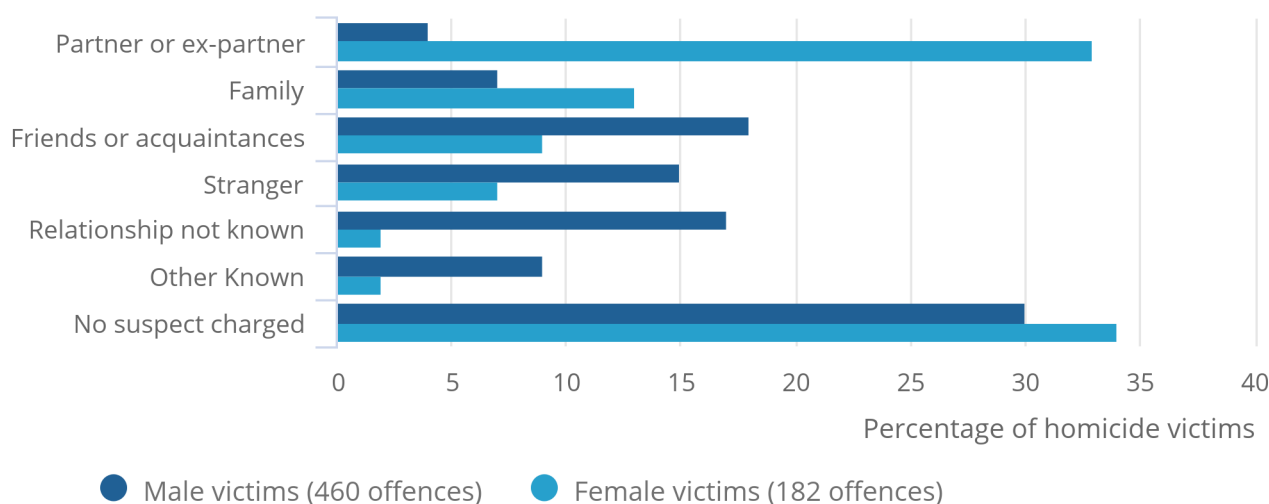
In a third of all female adult victims, the suspect was their partner or ex-partner (33%, 60 homicides).

Figure 6: For the majority of female homicide victims aged 16 years and over where a suspect had been identified the suspect was their partner or ex-partner

Relationship of victims aged 16 years and over to principal suspect, England and Wales, year ending March 2022

Figure 6: For the majority of female homicide victims aged 16 years and over where a suspect had been identified the suspect was their partner or ex-partner

Relationship of victims aged 16 years and over to principal suspect, England and Wales, year ending March 2022



Source: Home Office – Homicide Index

Notes:

1. Partner or ex-partner includes boyfriend or girlfriend, common-law spouse or cohabiting partner, ex-spouse, ex-common-law spouse or ex-cohabiting partner, ex-boyfriend or ex-girlfriend, spouse (including civil partner) and adulterous relationship.

Child victims

There were 54 victims of homicide aged under 16 years in the year ending March 2022. As in previous years, the most common suspect was a parent or step-parent (26%, 14 offences). However, as at 6 December 2022, there were 25 victims aged under 16 years (46%) for whom no suspect had been charged (this includes homicide offences where all suspects have been acquitted). This number will fall as police investigations continue. For example, for the year ending March 2021, 46% of victims aged under 16 years had no suspect charged as at 10 December 2021; this has now fallen to 33% and the proportion where the suspect was a parent or step-parent has increased from 42% to 54% (as at 6 December 2022).

It is very rare for those aged under 16 years to be killed by a stranger, with five such offences in the last year, similar to previous years.

There is more information on suspect characteristics in [Section 8](#).

5 . The most common methods of killing

Sharp instrument (including knives)

As in previous years, the most common method of killing, for both male and female victims, was by a sharp instrument (including knives; 41%). Over the last decade, the proportion of homicide offences committed by a sharp instrument has fluctuated between 36% and 42%, (the proportion was 36% in the year ending March 2017 if the Hillsborough manslaughter cases are excluded).

There were 282 homicides committed using a knife or other sharp instrument recorded in the year ending March 2022, an increase of 19% compared with the previous year ([Appendix table 8](#)). This was the highest annual total since the Homicide Index began in 1946 and similar to the previous high of 281 in the year ending March 2018.

The increase was driven by an 18% increase in the number of male victims, which rose from 184 to 218. The largest volume increase was seen for male victims aged 16 to 17 years, increasing from 10 to 24 homicides. ([Appendix table 10](#)).

The latest figures show that under two-thirds of sharp instrument homicide victims were identified as White (63%, 177 homicides), an increase of 36 compared with the previous year. Just over a fifth (21%; 59 victims) were identified as Black, a similar number to the previous year (57). Of these 59 Black homicide victims, 25 were aged 16 to 24 years ([Appendix table 11](#)).

There is more information on the characteristics of victims in [Section 3](#).

Other methods of killing

The second most common method of killing was by “kicking or hitting”, accounting for 116 homicides (17% of the total). As in previous years, the majority (89%) of victims killed in this way were male.

Over one in eight (14%) female victims were killed by “strangulation, asphyxiation” (27 victims). In contrast, a much smaller proportion (5%; 24) of male victims were killed this way.

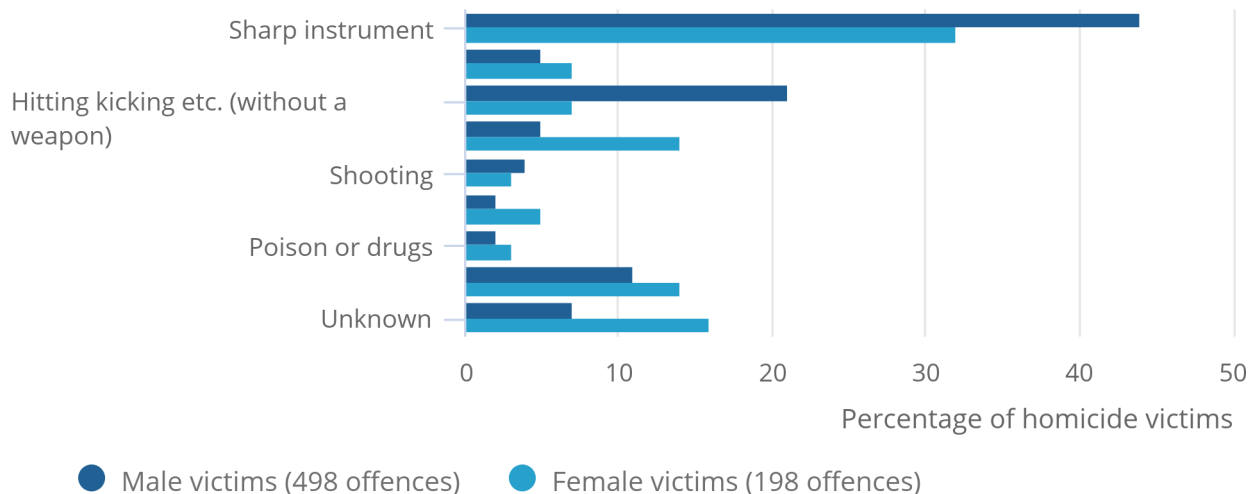
There were 28 homicide victims killed by shooting in the year ending March 2022 (4% of all homicides), seven fewer than the previous year. The number of these offences is 30% lower than a decade ago (40 in the year ending March 2012).

Figure 7: Use of a sharp instrument was the most common method of killing in homicide offences.

Percentage of recorded homicides, England and Wales, year ending March 2022

Figure 7: Use of a sharp instrument was the most common method of killing in homicide offences.

Percentage of recorded homicides, England and Wales, year ending March 2022



Source: Home Office – Homicide Index

Notes:

1. “Other” includes explosion, motor vehicle, drowning and other methods of killing.

6 . Circumstances and location of homicides

Circumstances of homicide

In the year ending March 2022, more than half (53%, 370 offences) of all homicide cases resulted from a quarrel, a revenge attack or a loss of temper. This was a similar proportion compared with previous years. This proportion was higher where the principal suspect was known to the victim (62%), compared with when the suspect was unknown to the victim (46%).

Furtherance of theft or gain accounted for 4% of homicides (31 offences), and 3% (22 offences) occurred during irrational acts.

As at 6 December 2022, the apparent circumstances were not known for 19% of homicides (133 offences) recorded in the year ending March 2022. This figure was similar to the previous year and is likely to decrease as the police carry out further investigations.

Location of homicides

Homicides were most likely to take place in or around a house or dwelling. There were 356 victims killed in these settings in the year ending March 2022, an increase of 55 compared with the previous year and the highest number since the year ending March 2011 (385).

The number of victims killed in a street, path or alleyway has been gradually increasing since the year ending March 2015, with considerable fluctuation between years. Over a quarter of homicides in the latest year took place in a street, path or alleyway (27%;188) compared with 19% (95) in year ending March 2015 ([Appendix Table 18](#)).

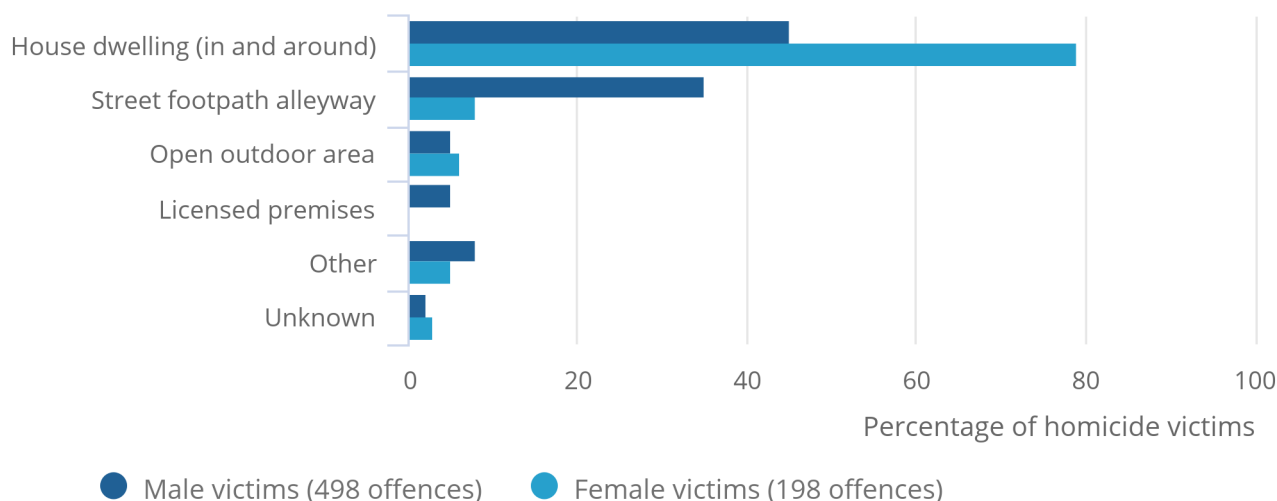
The patterns in homicide location for female and male victims, seen in Figure 8, reflect differing victim-suspect relationships and circumstances ([Appendix table 18](#)).

Figure 8: Female homicide victims were most likely to be killed in or around a house or dwelling while male victims were most likely to be killed in public places

Percentage of recorded homicides, England and Wales, year ending March 2022

Figure 8: Female homicide victims were most likely to be killed in or around a house or dwelling while male victims were most likely to be killed in public places

Percentage of recorded homicides, England and Wales, year ending March 2022



Source: Home Office – Homicide Index

Notes:

1. "House, dwelling (in and around)" includes residential homes.
2. "Other" includes all other locations including other public places.

7 . Drug- and alcohol-related homicides

The analysis and commentary in this section focuses on data combined from the last three years (the year ending March 2020 to the year ending March 2022) because of the low number of drug- or alcohol-related homicides in each category. The section is based on all victims and suspects charged from incidents recorded in that period.

According to the Homicide Index, in the last three years a third (33%) of victims were thought to be under the influence of alcohol and/or illicit drugs at the time of the homicide.

The proportion under the influence of alcohol and/or illicit drugs was higher among male (37%) than female victims (24%), similar to the analysis in previous years.

The figures for suspects were similar to that for victims. Over a quarter (29%) of homicide suspects were recorded by the police to have been under the influence of alcohol and/or drugs at the time of the homicide ([Appendix table 19](#)).

In a third (33%) of cases, the victim or suspect was under the influence of alcohol. In almost a quarter (23%) of cases, the victim or principal suspect was under the influence of illicit drugs (data not shown).

Almost a third (32%) of victims were known to be drug users, and 15% were known to be drug dealers. These proportions were higher among suspects with 46% known to be drug users and a fifth (29%) known to be drug dealers. These proportions were higher among male than female suspects. In a small proportion of cases, the police identified the suspects' motive as "obtaining drugs" (4%) or "stealing drug proceeds" (5%) ([Appendix table 20](#)).

The proportion of homicides that have involved drug users or dealers, or have been related to drugs in any way, has increased over the last decade, from 43% in the year ending March 2012 to 52% in the year ending March 2022. In the last year, there were 360 homicides that were thought to involve drug users or dealers or were in some way drug-related, 58 more than the previous year (302) ([Appendix table 21](#)). This was the highest number since the Home Office began collecting this information in the year ending March 2008.

8 . Suspects in homicide cases

Homicide cases are often complex and can take time to reach an outcome in court. View more information on suspects in homicide cases in our [Homicide in England and Wales: year ending March 2021 bulletin](#).

For the year ending March 2021, 29% of homicide cases had no suspects charged as at 10 December 2021 when data was extracted from the Homicide Index for analysis. This has now fallen to 22% (as at 6 December 2022) as police have had longer to conclude investigations.

Table 1: Number of suspects for initially recorded homicide victims, year ending March 2020 to year ending March 2022

Numbers and percentages as at 6 December 2022

	Apr 2019 to Mar 2020	Apr 2020 to Mar 2021	Apr 2021 to Mar 2022	Apr 2019 to Mar 2020	Apr 2020 to Mar 2021	Apr 2021 to Mar 2022
	Number			Percentage		
No suspects charged	138	124	212	20	22	30
One	349	315	360	51	55	52
Two	62	67	52	9	12	7
Three or more	110	54	60	16	9	9
Suspects acquitted [note 1]	30	14	15	4	2	2
All initially recorded homicides	689	574	699			

Source: Home Office - Homicide Index

Notes

1. As at 6 December 2022; figures are subject to revision as cases are dealt with by the police and by the courts or as further information becomes available.
2. Home Office statisticians and police forces have undertaken a review of homicide data to update suspect data, court outcomes and cancelled crimes. Totals shown in this table will not match previously published figures.

Investigative and court outcomes

In total, there were 760 suspects charged as at 6 December 2022 relating to the 699 homicides initially recorded in the year ending March 2022 ([Appendix table 25](#)).

Court proceedings were pending for 328 suspects (43% of all suspects). At the time of publication, for the year ending March 2021, this proportion was 56%.

Court proceedings had concluded for 405 suspects (53% of all suspects) and 26 had committed suicide or died (3% of all suspects).

In the three years from the year ending March 2020 to the year ending March 2022, 80% of suspects indicted for homicide, where we have information on a court outcome, were found guilty of homicide, 13% were acquitted, and 4% were convicted of a lesser offence ([Appendix table 26](#)).

The case outcomes for suspects of homicides recorded in the year ending March 2022 ([Appendix Table 26](#)) will change as cases progress through the criminal justice system and more information becomes available.

Age, sex and ethnicity of convicted suspects

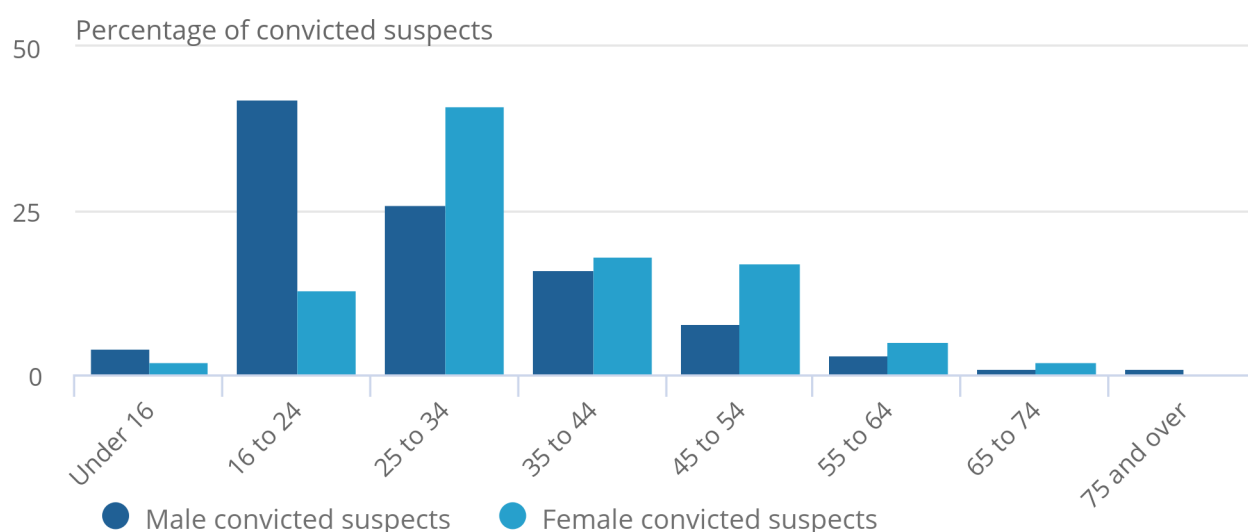
For the three-year period year ending March 2020 to the year ending March 2022, the vast majority of suspects convicted of homicide were male (1,153; 93%) (Figure 9).

Figure 9: Male suspects convicted of homicide show a younger age profile than female suspects

Percentage of convicted suspects, England and Wales, three years combined – year ending March 2020 to the year ending March 2022

Figure 9: Male suspects convicted of homicide show a younger age profile than female suspects

Percentage of convicted suspects, England and Wales, three years combined – year ending March 2020 to the year ending March 2022



Source: Home Office – Homicide Index

For the three-year period year ending March 2020 to the year ending March 2022, when looking at the principal suspect of a homicide offence, around two-thirds (70%) of those convicted were identified as White. This was a lower representation than in the general population (around 82%), based on Census 2021 population estimates. Around one in five (16%) suspects were identified as Black, four times higher than the general population (4%) ([Appendix table 31](#)). Differences in these figures are likely to be related to the ethnicity of the population differing by age, region and socioeconomic factors, which have not been taken into account.

9 . International homicide comparisons

There are issues surrounding the comparability of international homicide data, therefore caution should be taken in comparing homicide rates across countries.

Homicide figures differ between countries for various reasons, including:

- different definitions of homicide between countries
- differing points in the criminal justice systems at which homicides are recorded, for instance, when the offence is discovered or following further investigation or court outcome
- figures for England and Wales are for completed homicides (that is excluding attempted murder) but, in some countries, the police register any death that cannot immediately be attributed to other causes as homicide

Key homicide data from different countries

Figures from [Eurostat](#) show that Latvia had the highest rate of homicide in the EU in 2020 (48.8. per million population). In 19 countries the rate was below 10 per million. Luxembourg had the lowest rate, at 3.2 per million population.

The [Scottish Government](#) annual homicide figures showed that the rate of homicides in Scotland has continued to fall, from 10.8 victims per million population in 2020 to 9.7 in 2021 to 9.7 in 2021 to 2022.

The [Police Service of Northern Ireland](#) figures show there were 24 homicides recorded by the police in Northern Ireland in the year ending March 2022.

The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) published a [Global study on homicide](#), which showed that the global average homicide rate was 61 per million population in 2017. Central America and South America, at 259 and 242 per million population, respectively, were the sub-regions with the highest average homicide rates in 2017.

The [Department of Justice and Federal Bureau of Investigation](#) recently moved to a new method of collecting homicide data, figures show that there were 14,677 homicides in the United States of America in 2021. The most recently published rate for homicide was for 2020, which was 65 per million population.

10 . Homicide in England and Wales: year ending March 2022 data

[Appendix tables: homicide in England and Wales](#)

Dataset | Released 9 February 2023

Findings from the analyses based on the Homicide Index recorded by the Home Office, including long-term trends, sex of the victim, apparent method of killing and relationship to victim.

11 . Glossary

Homicide Offences

A collective term referring to the offences of murder, manslaughter and infanticide. Murder and manslaughter are common law offences that have never been defined by statute, although they have been modified by statute. The manslaughter category includes the offence of corporate manslaughter, which was created by the [Corporate Manslaughter and Corporate Homicide Act 2007](#) and came into force on 6 April 2008. The offence of infanticide was created by the Infanticide Act 1922 and refined by the Infanticide Act 1938 (section 1). Infanticide is defined as the killing of a baby aged under one year by their mother while the balance of her mind was disturbed as a result of giving birth.

Homicide incident

A homicide incident can involve one or more victims but is only counted as one incident, while Homicide Index statistics are based on the number of victims. Therefore, homicide incident trend data are not affected by mass fatality homicides such as terrorist attacks.

12 . Data sources and quality

Data presented have been extracted from the Home Office Homicide Index which contains detailed record-level information about each homicide recorded by police in England and Wales. The Homicide Index is 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. The data in this article refer to the position as at 6 December 2022. The data will change as subsequent court hearings take place or as further information is received.

Homicide Index data are based on the year when the offence was recorded as a crime, not when the offence took place or when the case was heard in court. While in the majority of cases the offence will be recorded in the same year as it took place, this is not always so. Caution is therefore needed when looking at longer-term homicide trends. For example, the 96 of the 97 deaths that occurred at Hillsborough in 1989 were recorded as manslaughters in the year ending March 2017 following the verdict of the Hillsborough Inquest in April 2016. Additionally, the 173 homicides attributed to Dr Harold Shipman as a result of Dame Janet Smith’s inquiry took place over a long period of time but were all recorded by the police during the year ending March 2003.

Furthermore, where several people are killed by the same suspect, the number of homicides counted is the total number of victims killed rather than the number of incidents. For example, the 39 victims of human trafficking found in a lorry in Grays, Essex, in October 2019 are counted as 39 individual homicides.

For the purposes of the Homicide Index, a suspect in a homicide case is defined as either; a person who has been charged with a homicide offence, including those who were subsequently convicted and those awaiting trial, or a person who is suspected by the police of having committed the offence but is known to have died or committed suicide.

When the police initially record an offence as a homicide it remains classified as such unless the police or courts decide that a lesser offence, or no offence, took place. In all, 699 deaths were initially recorded as homicides by the police in the year ending March 2021. By 6 December 2021, three were no longer recorded as homicides.

Where there are multiple suspects, they are categorised in the Homicide Index as either the principal or a secondary suspect. The suspect with the longest sentence or most serious conviction is determined to be the principal suspect. In the absence of any court outcome, the principal suspect is either the person considered by the police to be the most involved in the homicide or the suspect with the closest relationship to the victim. Homicides are recorded to be “domestic” when the relationship between a victim aged 16 years and over and the perpetrator falls into one of the following categories: 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, or other relatives.

Homicides classified as irrational acts cover those offences where there is evidence that the offender was suffering substantial mental illness. These do not account for all homicides committed by mentally ill people, as offences with an apparent motive (for example, during a quarrel or robbery) are instead included under the respective circumstance. Higher overall totals for homicides committed by those suffering mental illness are quoted elsewhere ([National confidential inquiry into suicide and safety in mental health](#)).

Three-year averages are used to calculate homicide rates by ethnicity because of the low numbers of victims in some groups. Rates are based on the Office for National Statistics (ONS) mid-2022 population estimates. The Other ethnicities category reported in this article includes Asian and Mixed or multiple ethnicities, to enable population statistics to match the categories in the Homicide Index. Demographic factors are not necessarily independently related to homicide. Differences in homicide rates by ethnicity are likely to be influenced by variations in demographic and socioeconomic indicators across ethnic groups. These factors have not been taken into account in these figures.

Information on drug and alcohol use is recorded by the police from toxicology reports and suspect and witness statements.

The Poisson distribution can be applied to the number of homicide incidents per year, with the number of these incidents being large enough to approximate the normal distribution. A statistical test (in this case a Z-test) can be used to determine if the counts in each year were statistically significantly different from one another at the 95% confidence level (that is, whether there has been a true change in the underlying risk). Further information on this methodology can be found in Chapter 11 of the Homicide chapter of [Focus on violent crime and sexual offences, England and Wales: year ending March 2016](#).

Home Office statisticians have undertaken an extensive data quality exercise on suspect information, cancelled crimes and court outcomes for historical data. Information on these areas published in the tables may therefore differ from recent years, with data now being more complete.

Strengths and limitations

The Home Office Homicide Index contains detailed record-level information about each homicide recorded by police in England and Wales. These figures provide much more detail about the nature and circumstances of homicide offences than the main police recorded crime dataset. However, the level of detail in the Homicide Index means that these data take longer to collect and analyse than the more basic counts of recorded offences in the main recorded crime dataset. Headline figures, covering a more recent period, on the number of recorded homicides are published as part of our quarterly [Crime in England and Wales bulletin](#).

In accordance with the [Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007](#), statistics based on the Home Office Homicide Index have been re-assessed against the Code of Practice for Official Statistics and found to meet the required standard for designation as National Statistics. The letter of confirmation can be found on the [UK Statistics Authority](#) website.

Further information on the Homicide Index can be found in our [User guide to crime statistics for England and Wales](#).

13 . Related links

[Guide to finding crime statistics](#)

Methodology | Released 21 July 2022

Crime statistics are produced by multiple departments across government. The aim of this guide is to collate the main sources of crime statistics, broken down by potential areas of interest, to provide a more efficient way to find the crime statistics needed.

[User guide to crime statistics for England and Wales: measuring crime during the coronavirus \(COVID-19\) pandemic](#)

Methodology | Released 26 January 2023

Quarterly statistics on crime levels and trends during the coronavirus pandemic. Includes details on the datasets used to compile our crime statistics.

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

Bulletin | Released 26 January 2023

Crime against households and adults using data from police recorded crime and the Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW).

[The nature of violent crime in England and Wales: year ending March 2022](#)

Article | Released 9 November 2022

An overview of the extent of violent crime in England and Wales, including long-term trends, use of weapons and victim characteristics.

[Offences involving the use of weapons: data tables](#)

Dataset | Released 30 November 2022

Data tables relating to offences involving weapons as recorded by police and hospital episode statistics.

14 . Cite this article

Office for National Statistics (ONS), released 9 February 2023, ONS website, article, [Homicide in England and Wales: year ending March 2022](#)

