

Article

Sexual offences victim characteristics, England and Wales: year ending March 2022

Characteristics of victims of sexual offences based on data from the Crime Survey for England and Wales and police recorded crime.

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1 . Other pages in this release

- [Sexual offences in England and Wales overview: March 2022](#)
- [Sexual offences prevalence and trends, England and Wales: year ending March 2022](#)

2 . Main points

The Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW) year ending March 2022 shows the following trends:

- an estimated 3.3% of women (798,000) and 1.2% of men (275,000) aged 16 years and over experienced sexual assault (including attempts) in the last year
- a higher proportion of adults aged 16 to 24 years were victims of sexual assault in the last year compared with those aged 25 years and over
- a higher proportion of full-time students were victims of sexual assault in the last year than those in any other occupation type
- a higher proportion of single adults were victims of more sexual assault in the last year than those with any other marital status

Sexual offences recorded by the police do not provide a reliable measure of trends, however, they do provide a good measure of the crime-related demand on the police. Crimes recorded by the police in the year ending March 2022 show the following:

- the victim was female in 86% of sexual offences
- for female victims of rape, the perpetrator was most likely to be an intimate partner (46%), whereas for male victims of rape the perpetrator was most likely to be an acquaintance (38%)

CSEW data for the year ending March 2022 survey are not badged as [National Statistics](#). They are based on six months of data collection between October 2021 and March 2022. Caution should be taken when using these data because of the impact of the reduced data collection period and lower response rates on the quality of the estimates.

3 . Understanding sexual offences

Sexual offences are often hidden crimes that are not always reported to the police. This, combined with changes in reporting trends, can have a significant impact on the numbers recorded. One of the strengths of the Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW) is that it covers crimes that are not reported to the police and provides important context to the police figures.

On 17 March 2020, face-to-face interviewing for the CSEW was suspended because of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, leading to a pause in the collection of data on sexual assault. On 4 October 2021, face-to-face interviewing for the CSEW resumed, enabling the collection of data on sexual assault through the self-completion module to restart. Caution should be taken when using these data because of the impact of the reduced data collection period and the lower response rates on the quality of the estimates.

On the return of face-to-face CSEW interviewing in October 2021, the upper age limit of respondents completing the self-completion modules was removed (it was previously increased from those aged 59 years to those aged 74 years in April 2017).

The Home Office collects data on the number of sexual offences recorded by the police. For the year ending March 2022, 31 police forces supplied data to the Home Office Data Hub. Our [Sexual offences prevalence and victim characteristics tables](#) detail the police forces that provided data.

Sexual offences recorded by the police do not provide a reliable measure of trends. Improvements in police recording practices and increased reporting by victims have contributed to increases in recent years. The figures do, however, provide a good measure of the crime-related demand on the police.

4 . Sex

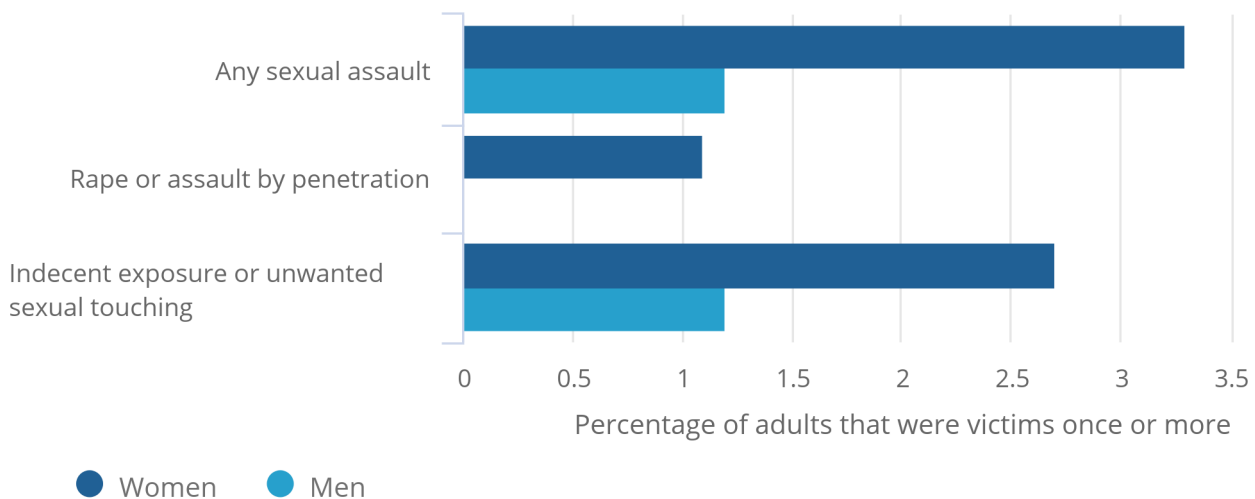
For the year ending March 2022, the Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW) estimated that 798,000 women and 275,000 men aged 16 years and over experienced sexual assault (including attempts) in the last year. This is a prevalence rate of approximately 3 in 100 women and 1 in 100 men (Figure 1). Women were significantly more likely than men to be victims of any sexual assault in the last year.

Figure 1: Women were more likely than men to be victims of sexual assault in the last year

Prevalence of sexual assault in the last year for adults aged 16 years and over, by sex and type of abuse, England and Wales, year ending March 2022

Figure 1: Women were more likely than men to be victims of sexual assault in the last year

Prevalence of sexual assault in the last year for adults aged 16 years and over, by sex and type of abuse, England and Wales, year ending March 2022



Source: Crime Survey for England and Wales from the Office for National Statistics

Notes:

1. Data for the year ending March 2022 are not National Statistics. Caution should be taken when using these data because of the impact of the reduced data collection period and lower response rates on the quality of the estimates.
2. The category “any sexual assault” includes attempts.
3. The estimate for “rape or assault by penetration” is unavailable for men because of disclosure constraints.

Following the removal of the upper age limit for survey respondents in October 2021, when comparing CSEW data over time we use the 16 to 59 years age range.

The prevalence of sexual assault experienced by men and women aged 16 to 59 years has not changed significantly in the year ending March 2022, compared with the year ending March 2020, the last time the data were collected. In the year ending March 2022, 3.9% of women and 1.4% of men aged 16 to 59 years had experienced any sexual assault, compared with 3.5% of women and 0.9% of men in the year ending March 2020 (Figure 2).

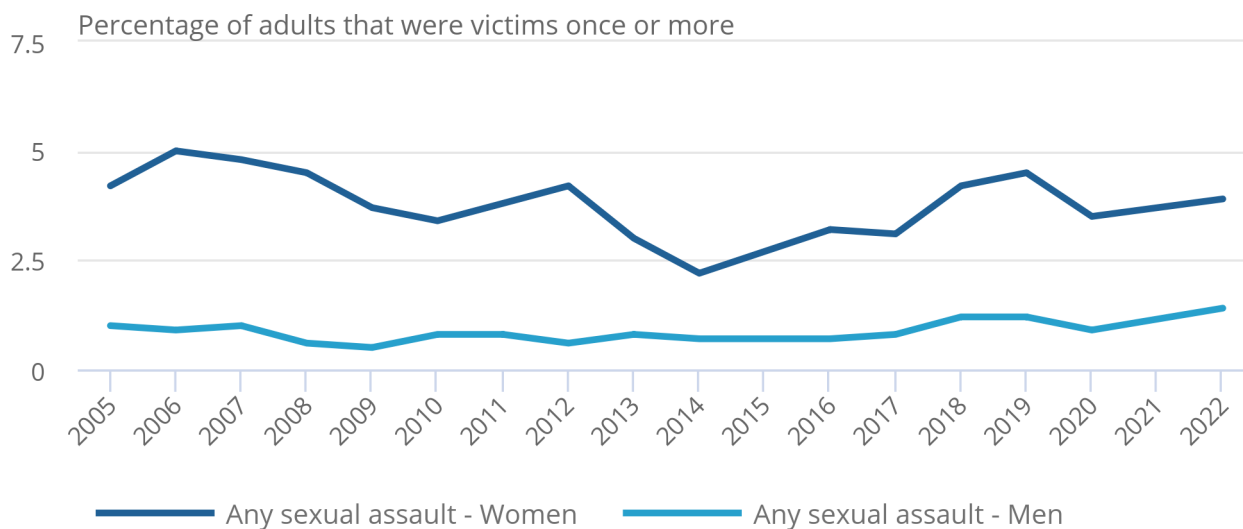
When looking at longer-term trends, the prevalence of sexual assault experienced by women aged 16 to 59 years has fluctuated with increases seen in recent years, whereas the prevalence for men has remained stable.

Figure 2: There was no significant change in the prevalence of sexual assault for both men and women in the year ending March 2022, compared with the year ending March 2020

Prevalence of sexual assault in the last year for adults aged 16 to 59 years, by sex, England and Wales, year ending March 2005 to year ending March 2022

Figure 2: There was no significant change in the prevalence of sexual assault for both men and women in the year ending March 2022, compared with the year ending March 2020

Prevalence of sexual assault in the last year for adults aged 16 to 59 years, by sex, England and Wales, year ending March 2005 to year ending March 2022



Source: Crime Survey for England and Wales from the Office for National Statistics

Notes:

1. No data point is available for the year ending March 2021 because sexual assault questions were not asked on the Telephone-operated Crime Survey for England and Wales (TCSEW).
2. Data for the year ending March 2022 are not National Statistics. Caution should be taken when using these data because of the impact of the reduced data collection period and lower response rates on the quality of the estimates.
3. The category “any sexual assault” includes attempts.

Data supplied from 39 police forces showed the victim was female in 86% of sexual offences recorded by the police in the year ending March 2022. Similarly, more victims of rape offences recorded by the police were female (91%) than male (9%). These figures are similar to those for the previous year.

5 . Age

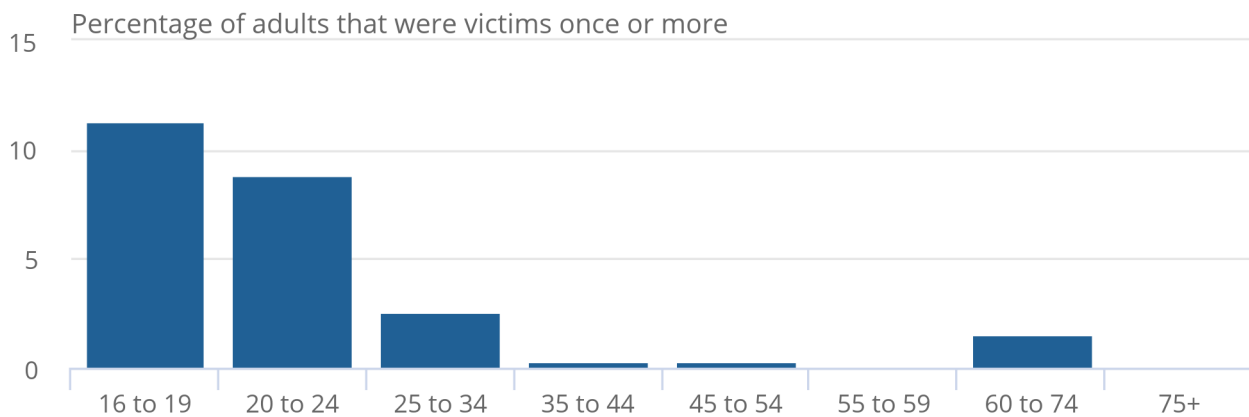
The Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW) year ending March 2022 showed that a significantly higher proportion of adults aged 16 to 19 years and 20 to 24 years (11.3% and 8.8%, respectively) were victims of sexual assault in the last year compared with those in other age groups (Figure 3).

Figure 3: Adults aged 16 to 24 years were more likely to be victims of sexual assault in the last year than other age groups

Prevalence of sexual assault in the last year for adults aged 16 years and over, by age, England and Wales, year ending March 2022

Figure 3: Adults aged 16 to 24 years were more likely to be victims of sexual assault in the last year than other age groups

Prevalence of sexual assault in the last year for adults aged 16 years and over, by age, England and Wales, year ending March 2022



Source: Crime Survey for England and Wales from the Office for National Statistics

Notes:

1. Data for the year ending March 2022 are not National Statistics. Caution should be taken when using these data because of the impact of the reduced data collection period and lower response rates on the quality of the estimates.
2. Estimates for adults aged 55 to 59 years and 75 years and over are unavailable because of disclosure constraints.

The CSEW does not ask those aged under 16 years about their experience of sexual assault but has previously asked adults to recall retrospectively their experience of sexual assault before the age of 16 years (for more information, see our [Child sexual abuse in England and Wales: year ending March 2019 article](#)). Information from the Home Office Data Hub can provide some insight into the victimisation of those aged under 16 years, however, this only includes cases recorded by the police.

Data supplied from 31 police forces showed that in the year ending March 2022, females aged 10 to 34 years were disproportionately more likely to be victims of sexual offences than other age groups. For example, while 5% of the female population were aged 15 to 19 years, this age group accounted for 24% of police recorded sexual offences where the victim was female (Figure 4).

Males aged 5 to 34 years were disproportionately more likely to be victims of sexual offences. For example, while 6% of the male population were aged 10 to 14 years, this age group accounted for 19% of police recorded sexual offences (Figure 4).

Figure 4: Police recorded crime showed that females aged 15 to 19 years and males aged 10 to 14 years were most likely to be victims of sexual offences

Distribution of victims of sexual offences by age and sex, police recorded crime (31 forces), year ending March 2022

Notes:

1. Police recorded crime data are not designated as National Statistics.
2. Police recorded crime data based on 31 forces that provided data through the Home Office Data Hub. Data have not been reconciled with forces.

Download the data

[.xlsx](#)

6 . Marital status

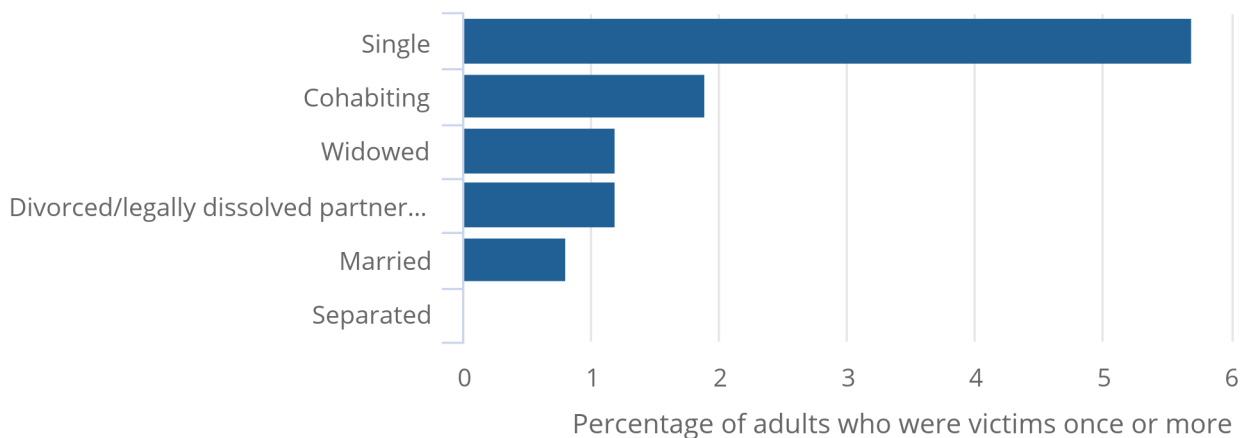
For the year ending March 2022, the Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW) showed that 5.7% of adults aged 16 years and over who were single experienced sexual assault; this is significantly higher than adults with any other marital status (Figure 5).

Figure 5: Single adults were more likely to experience sexual assault

Prevalence of sexual assault in the last year for adults aged 16 years and over, by marital status, England and Wales, year ending March 2022

Figure 5: Single adults were more likely to experience sexual assault

Prevalence of sexual assault in the last year for adults aged 16 years and over, by marital status, England and Wales, year ending March 2022



Source: Crime Survey for England and Wales from the Office for National Statistics

Notes:

1. Data for the year ending March 2022 are not National Statistics. Caution should be taken when using these data because of the impact of the reduced data collection period and lower response rates on the quality of the estimates.
2. Marital status may have changed as a result of the abuse.
3. The estimate for "separated" is unavailable because of disclosure constraints.

7 . Occupation

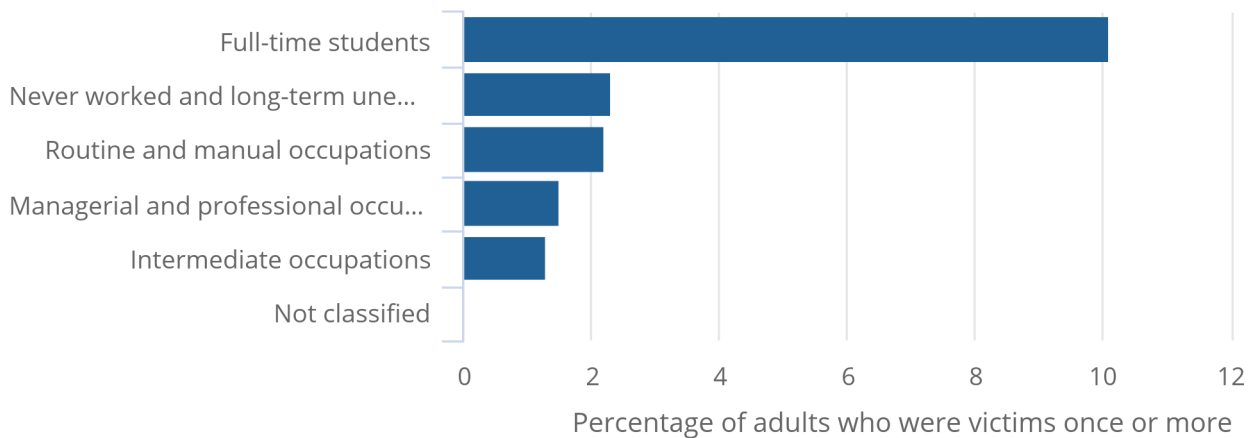
For the year ending March 2022, the Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW) showed that, of adults aged 16 years and over, those who were full-time students were more than four times as likely to have experienced sexual assault within the last year than those with any other occupation type (Figure 6). It is likely that some of the differences seen by occupation type are also linked to age.

Figure 6: Full time students were more likely to experience sexual assault than those in any other occupational group

Prevalence of sexual assault in the last year for adults aged 16 years and over, by occupational group, England and Wales, year ending March 2022

Figure 6: Full time students were more likely to experience sexual assault than those in any other occupational group

Prevalence of sexual assault in the last year for adults aged 16 years and over, by occupational group, England and Wales, year ending March 2022



Source: Crime Survey for England and Wales from the Office for National Statistics

Notes:

1. Data for the year ending March 2022 are not National Statistics. Caution should be taken when using these data because of the impact of the reduced data collection period and lower response rates on the quality of the estimates.
2. The estimate for "Not classified" is unavailable because of disclosure constraints.

8 . Area

Police recorded crime data by region shows that the highest rate of sexual offences in the year ending March 2022 was recorded in the North East (3.7 per 1,000 population; Figure 7). The lowest rate was recorded in London (2.9 per 1,000 population).

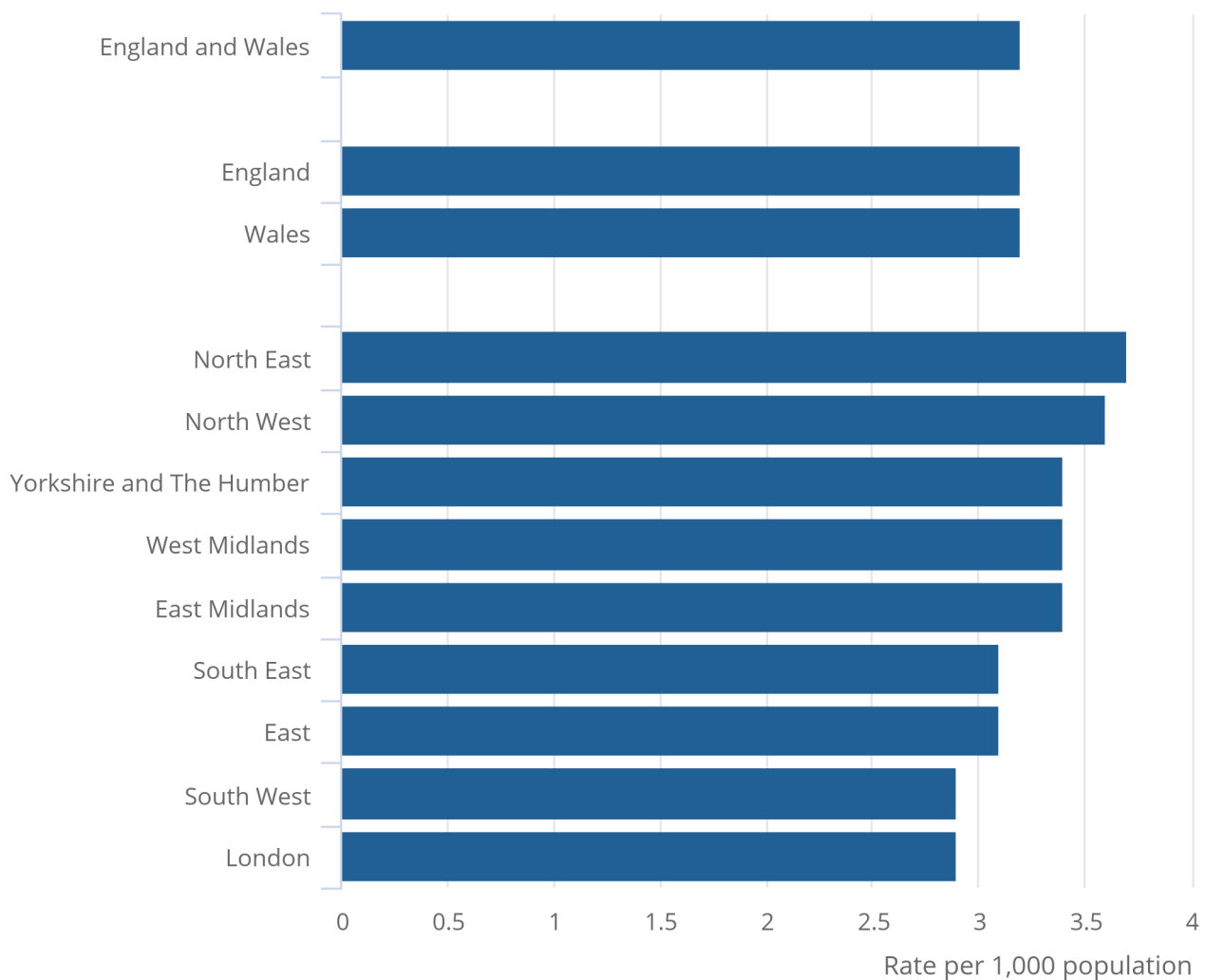
Sexual offences recorded by the police do not provide a reliable measure of trends, however, they do provide a good measure of the crime-related demand on the police. Although the data may reflect regional differences in the rates of sexual offences, it could also reflect regional differences in the reporting of sexual offences to the police and how the police subsequently record these offences.

Figure 7: The North East had the highest rate of sexual offences recorded by the police

Rate of sexual offences recorded by the police for adults aged 16 years and over, by type of abuse, English regions and Wales, year ending March 2022

Figure 7: The North East had the highest rate of sexual offences recorded by the police

Rate of sexual offences recorded by the police for adults aged 16 years and over, by type of abuse, English regions and Wales, year ending March 2022



Source: Police recorded crime from the Home Office

Notes:

1. Police recorded crime data are not designated as National Statistics.
2. Based on mid-2021 Census population estimates for England and Wales.

9 . Relationship to Perpetrator

Data supplied by 24 police forces for the year ending March 2022 showed that male victims of rape or other sexual offences were most likely to be acquaintances with the perpetrator (38%). In comparison, the victim-perpetrator relationship for female rape victims was most likely an intimate partner (46%), but an acquaintance for other sexual offences (36%).

For more information on victim-perpetrator relationship for rape or sexual assault by penetration (including attempts), see our [Nature of sexual assault by rape or penetration, England and Wales: year ending March 2020 article](#).

10 . Sexual offences in England and Wales data

[Sexual offences prevalence and victim characteristics](#) Dataset | Released 23 March 2023 Sexual offence numbers, prevalence and victim characteristics, including breakdowns by type of incident, sex, victim-perpetrator relationship and location based upon findings from the Crime Survey for England and Wales and police recorded crime.

[Sexual offences victim services](#) Dataset | Released 23 March 2023 Data from different organisations on the availability of services for victims of sexual offences and the characteristics of service users.

11 . Glossary

Sexual assault

The term "sexual assault" in the Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW) is used to describe all types of sexual offences measured by the survey. It includes rape or assault by penetration (including attempts), and indecent exposure or unwanted touching. The term "sexual assault" in police recorded crime refers to one type of sexual offence, that is, the sexual touching of a person without their consent.

Sexual offence

Sexual offences recorded by the police cover a broader range of offences than are measured by the CSEW including rape, sexual assault, sexual activity with minors, sexual exploitation of children, and other sexual offences. There are a number of different offence codes used for rape and sexual assault, depending on the age and sex of the victim.

12 . Data sources and quality

Further quality and methodology information can be found in our [Sexual offences in England and Wales overview: year ending March 2022](#).

Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW)

For reasons outlined in [Section 2: Main points](#) and [Section 3: Understanding sexual offences](#), CSEW estimates for the year ending March 2022 are not badged as National Statistics and should be treated with caution.

Sexual assault, as measured in the self-completion section of the CSEW, combines the following different types of abuse:

- rape (including attempts)
- assault by penetration (including attempts)
- indecent exposure
- unwanted sexual touching

The CSEW collects information on these types of assault carried out by a partner (including a former partner), a family member other than a partner, someone else known, and a stranger.

The CSEW term "sexual assault" differs from the term "sexual assault" used in police recorded crime data. For more information see [How the police measure sexual assault](#).

More information about the CSEW can be found in our [User guide to crime statistics for England and Wales: March 2020](#).

How the police measure sexual assault

The Home Office collects data on the number of sexual offences recorded by the police. Sexual offences are grouped into the following four main categories:

- rape
- sexual assault
- sexual activity with minors
- other sexual offences

Some data tables provided by the Home Office combine the last three categories to create an "Other sexual offences" category. This category covers a broader range of offences than the CSEW, for example, sexual exploitation of children, incest and sexual grooming.

The CSEW uses the term "sexual assault" to describe all types of sexual offences measured by the survey, whereas police recorded crime refers to one specific type of sexual offence - the sexual touching of a person without their consent.

13 . Related links

[Nature of sexual assault by rape or penetration, England and Wales: year ending March 2020](#) Article | Released 18 March 2021 Information from the Crime Survey for England and Wales on the amount, type and nature of sexual assault by rape or penetration (including attempts) experienced since the age of 16 years.

[Sexual offending: victimisation and the path through the criminal justice system](#) Article | Released 13 December 2018 An overview of sexual offending in England and Wales, using a range of National Statistics and official statistics from across the crime and criminal justice system.

14 . Cite this article

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