

Article

# The nature of violent crime in England and Wales: year ending March 2024

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

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## Table of contents

1. [Main points](#)
2. [Crime Survey for England and Wales estimates](#)
3. [Violence with and without injury](#)
4. [Homicide](#)
5. [Offences involving use of weapons](#)
6. [Domestic abuse](#)
7. [Sexual offences](#)
8. [Stalking](#)
9. [Harassment](#)
10. [Data on the nature of violent crime](#)
11. [Glossary](#)
12. [Data sources and quality](#)
13. [Related links](#)
14. [Cite this article](#)

# 1 . Main points

Violent crime covers a variety of offences, ranging from violence with and without injury to homicide, as well as offences that are likely to cause fear or distress, like stalking and harassment.

While there is no single measure of violent crime, the Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW) has shown gradual decreases in violence with and without injury, and domestic abuse, over the last ten years. It has also indicated a rise in sexual assault. Over the same time period, trends in CSEW stalking and police recorded homicide have remained relatively flat.

The latest estimates from the year ending (YE) March 2024 CSEW showed no statistically significant changes across the different types of violence experienced, compared with the previous year. Among people aged 16 years and over living in households:

- 4.8% had experienced domestic abuse in the last year (approximately 2.3 million people)
- 3.2% (approximately 1.5 million people) had experienced stalking in the last year
- 2.1% (approximately one million people) had experienced sexual assault in the last year
- 0.7% (approximately 351,000 people) and 0.5% (approximately 256,000 people) had experienced violence with and without injury where the perpetrator was a stranger, or a non-domestic acquaintance in the last year, respectively
- 8.9% had experienced some form of harassment in the last year (approximately 4.3 million people); this estimate is not comparable with the previous year

Women were more likely to have experienced violent crime. A higher proportion of women experienced domestic abuse (6.6%), stalking (4.0%), sexual assault (3.4%), and harassment (11.2%) in the last year, compared with men (3.0%, 2.3%, 0.8% and 6.6%, respectively). However, men accounted for a higher proportion of victims of violence with and without injury where the perpetrator was a stranger (1% of men, compared with 0.4% of women).

Police recorded crime data for YE March 2024 showed that:

- the number of homicides (583 offences) were similar to YE March 2023 (581 offences); 72% of homicide victims were male and 28% were female
- offences involving knives or sharp instruments, excluding Greater Manchester Police, increased by 4% (to 50,510 offences), compared with YE March 2023 (48,409 offences), but were still 3% lower than YE March 2020 (51,982 offences)
- offences involving firearms increased by 6% (to 6,447 offences), compared with YE March 2023 (6,060 offences), attributed mainly to a 23% rise in imitation firearms

## 2 . Crime Survey for England and Wales estimates

The Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW) remains the best estimate of long-term trends in violence with and without injury, domestic abuse, sexual assault, and stalking against people aged 16 years and over living in private households.

Violence with and without injury incidents are included in CSEW headline crime estimates. They provide a good indication of the prevalence of violence with or without injury where the perpetrator is an acquaintance or a stranger. However, the prevalence of domestic violence is known to be underestimated, as victims may be reluctant to disclose in the presence of an interviewer.

Because of the sensitive nature of the subject matter, domestic abuse, sexual assault, and stalking are covered by the CSEW in a self-completion section of the survey and are reported separately from the headline estimates. Harassment has only recently been introduced into the CSEW, so there are no trend data available.

Homicide and offences involving weapons are not covered by the CSEW, but are well recorded by the police.

For further information, see [Section 12: Data sources and quality](#). Our [User guide to crime statistics for England and Wales: March 2024](#) also provides detailed information about the CSEW and police recorded crime data.

### 3 . Violence with and without injury

While the Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW) provides a good indication of the prevalence of violence with or without injury where the perpetrator is an acquaintance or a stranger (non-domestic violence), it underestimates the prevalence of domestic violence because victims may be reluctant to disclose in the presence of an interviewer. See [Section 6: Domestic abuse](#) for our preferred domestic abuse prevalence estimate.

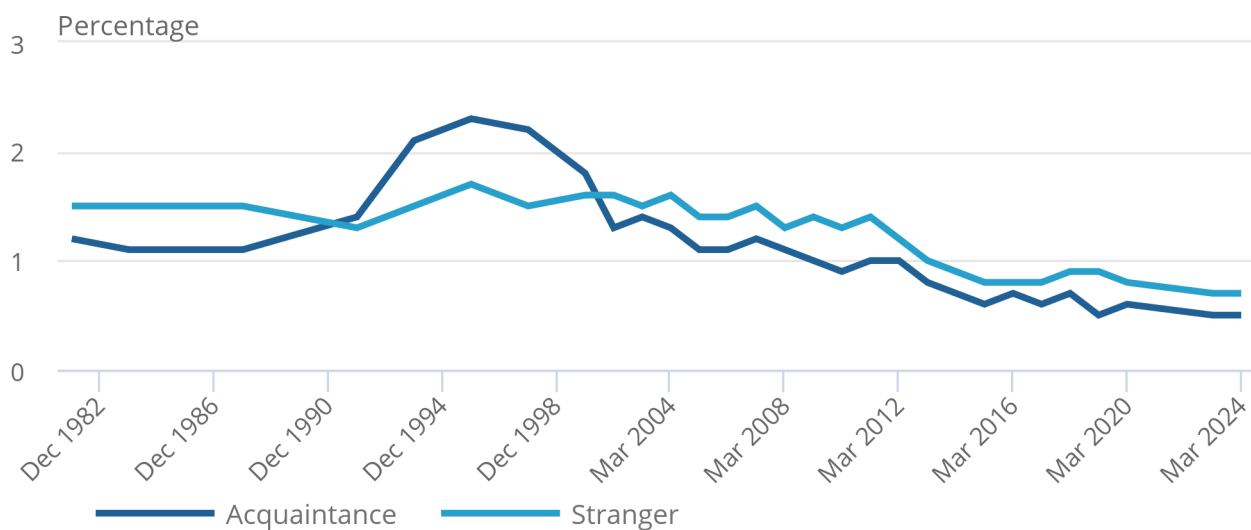
In YE March 2024, approximately 0.5% of people aged 16 years and over experienced violence with or without injury where the perpetrator was an acquaintance, and 0.7% experienced this where the perpetrator was a stranger. There were no statistically significant changes, compared with YE March 2023. See Figure 1 in our [Crime in England and Wales: Appendix tables](#).

**Figure 1: No change in violence with and without injury, compared with the previous year**

England and Wales, year ending (YE) December 1981 to YE March 2024

Figure 1: No change in violence with and without injury, compared with the previous year

England and Wales, year ending (YE) December 1981 to YE March 2024



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

**Notes:**

1. Data on this chart refer to different time periods. From 1981 to 1999, estimates refer to crimes experienced in the calendar year. From year ending (YE) March 2002 onwards, the estimates relate to crimes experienced in the 12 months before interview, based on interviews carried out in that financial year.
2. Data from the CSEW for YE March 2023 and YE March 2024 are not designated as accredited official statistics.

The CSEW showed that in YE March 2024:

- a higher proportion of men were a victim of violence with or without injury where the perpetrator was a stranger (1%) than women (0.4%)
- a higher percentage of younger people were a victim of violence with or without injury, with the highest rate of victimisation among those aged 16 to 24 years where the perpetrator was a stranger (2.2%) or an acquaintance (1.3%)
- a higher proportion of people with disabilities were a victim of violence with or without injury where the perpetrator was an acquaintance (1%) than those without disabilities (0.4%) (Nature of violent crime appendix tables)

The CSEW estimated that victims sustained a physical injury in 42% of violent incidents in YE March 2023. The most common type of injury experienced was minor bruising or black eye (25% of violent incidents). More serious injuries like cuts (7%) or broken bones (2%) were less common. Victims received some form of medical attention in 11% of violent incidents, with 7% having attended an accident and emergency department. See our [Nature of crime: violence dataset](#).

## 4 . Homicide

The police recorded 583 homicides in year ending (YE) March 2024, similar to YE March 2023 (581 offences).

Homicide offences made up 0.03% of all violence against the person offences recorded by the police. The rate of homicide in the population remains relatively low, at 9.7 homicides per 1 million people. There was no change from YE March 2023.

There was a 5% decrease in the number of attempted murder offences in YE March 2024, to 856 offences.

Figures from the Home Office Homicide Index for YE March 2024 showed that 72% of homicide victims were male and 28% were female. See our [The nature of violent crime: appendix tables](#). However, women are more likely to be killed by someone they knew than men. For example, 70 of the 100 domestic homicide victims in the year ending March 2023 were women. See our [Appendix tables: homicide in England and Wales](#).

More information and data related to homicide can be found in our [Homicide in England and Wales articles](#).

## 5 . Offences involving use of weapons

### Offences involving firearms

Offences involving firearms make up a small proportion of overall police recorded crime. In year ending (YE) March 2024, firearms were used in approximately 0.2% of all police recorded offences. During these incidents where a firearm (excluding air weapons) was involved, there was an even split between whether the firearm was fired (49%) or used as a threat (49%). See our [Offences involving the use of weapons: data tables](#).

The number of offences involving firearms (excluding air weapons) recorded by the police increased by 6% in the last year (to 6,447 offences), compared with YE March 2023 (6,060 offences). This is mainly because of a 23% rise in imitation firearms. During the same time period, the number of offences involving lethal barreled and other firearms being fired decreased by 15% (from 814 to 692 offences).

## Knife or sharp instrument offences

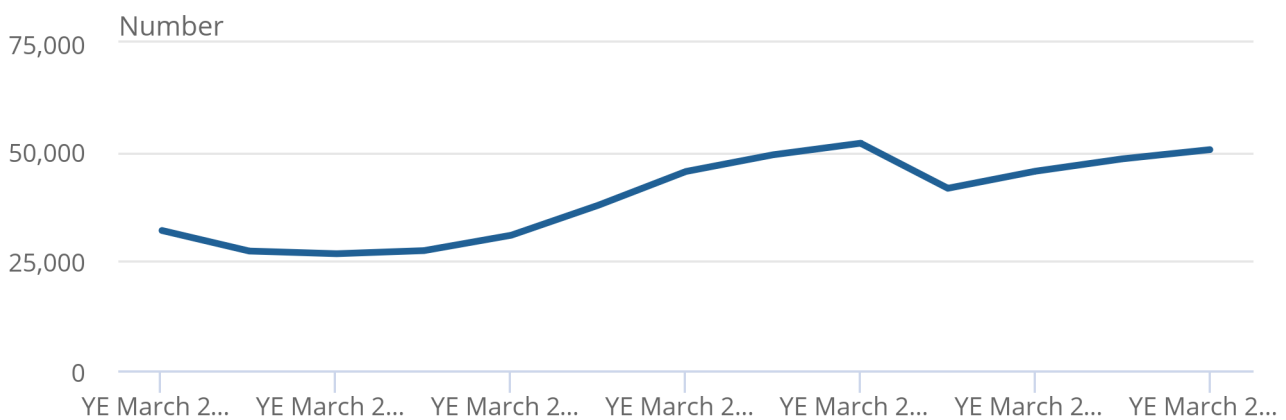
Offences involving knives or sharp instruments recorded by the police rose by 4% (50,010 offences) in YE March 2024, compared with the previous year (48,409 offences). Of these offences, 22,167 (44%) were for assault with injury, or assault with intent to cause serious harm, and 21,226 (42%) were used in a robbery. These figures exclude the Greater Manchester Police.

**Figure 2: The number of recorded offences involving a knife or sharp instrument has increased, following a fall during the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic**

England and Wales, year ending March 2024

Figure 2: The number of recorded offences involving a knife or sharp instrument has increased, following a fall during the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic

England and Wales, year ending March 2024



**Source: Police recorded crime from the Home Office**

**Notes:**

1. Police recorded crime data are not designated as accredited official statistics.

NHS data help to provide further insight into offences involving weapons. NHS hospitals in England and Wales reported 3,897 admissions for assault by a sharp object between April 2023 and March 2024. This is an increase of 3%, compared with the previous year. See our [Offences involving the use of weapons: data tables](#).

## 6 . Domestic abuse

The Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW) estimated that 4.8% of people aged 16 years and over experienced domestic abuse in year ending (YE) March 2024. This is not a statistically significant change, compared with YE March 2023. For the definition of domestic abuse, see [Section 11: Glossary](#). A higher proportion of women than men had experienced domestic abuse in the last year (6.6%, compared with 3.0%, respectively).

There has been a gradual decrease in domestic abuse over the last 10 years. The CSEW for YE March 2024 estimated that 5.4% of people aged 16 to 59 years had experienced domestic abuse in the last year, compared with 6.5% in YE March 2014. See our [CSEW: Annual supplementary tables](#).

The police recorded 857,810 domestic abuse-related crimes in YE March 2024, including 672,864 violence against the person offences. The proportion of violence against the person offences that were identified as domestic abuse-related was 33%.

Police recorded crime from the Home Office Data Hub, which is representative of 18 police forces that provided data, showed that a greater proportion of violent offences against women were committed by an intimate partner. For female victims, 41% of suspects were intimate partners, compared with 22% for male victims. See our [The nature of violent crime: appendix tables](#).

More data related to domestic abuse, and information on the strengths and limitations of each data source, can be found in our [Domestic abuse in England and Wales overview: November 2023 bulletin](#).

## 7 . Sexual offences

The Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW) estimates for the survey year ending (YE) March 2024 showed that 2.1% of people aged 16 years and over experienced sexual assault, including attempted offences, in the last year. There was no change from the previous year. A higher proportion of women (3.4%) than men (0.8%) had experienced sexual assault.

Although there is year-to-year volatility in these estimates, over the last 10 years there appears to have been an increase in sexual assault. The CSEW for YE March 2024 estimated 2.6% of people aged 16 to 59 years had experienced sexual assault, including attempts, in the last year, compared with 1.5% in YE March 2014. See our [Crime in England and Wales: Annual supplementary tables](#).

More data related to sexual offences can be found in our [Sexual offences in England and Wales overview: year ending March 2022 bulletin](#).

## 8 . Stalking

Estimates from the Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW) showed that trends in stalking have been fairly flat over the last 10 years. See our [Crime in England and Wales: Annual supplementary tables](#). In the survey year ending (YE) March 2024, an estimated 3.2% of people aged 16 years and over had experienced stalking in the last year. Approximately 0.9% of people had experienced domestic stalking, with 0.7% stalked by a partner and 0.3% stalked by a family member. See our [Stalking: findings from the Crime Survey for England and Wales: year ending March 2024 dataset](#).

The CSEW showed that in YE March 2024:

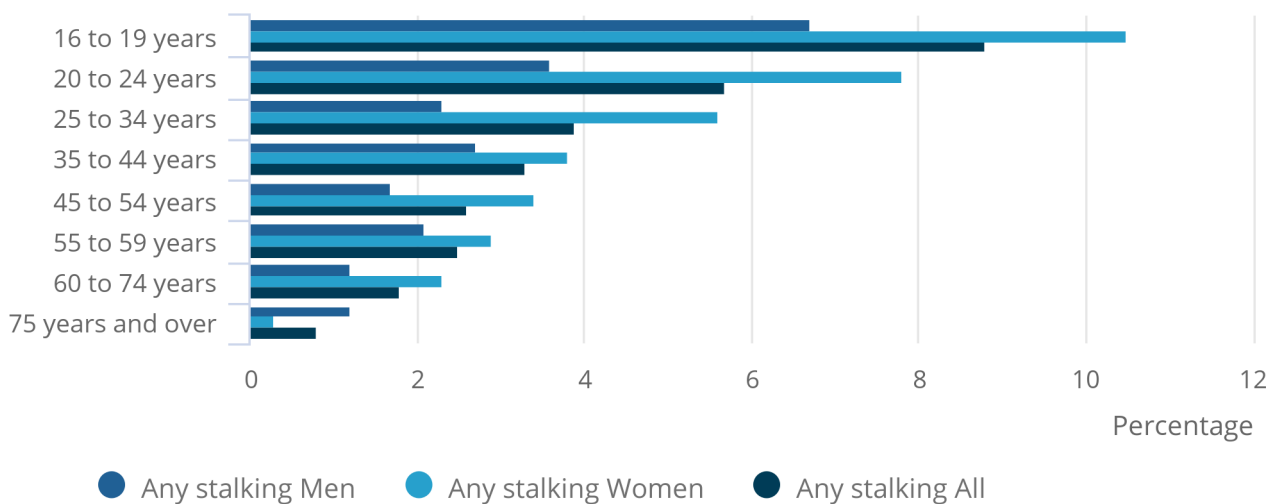
- a higher proportion of women experienced stalking (4.0%) than men (2.3%)
- a higher percentage of younger people experienced stalking, with the highest rate of victimisation among those aged 16 to 19 years (8.8%)
- a higher proportion of single people (6%) experienced stalking than those who were married or in a civil partnership (1.6%), or cohabiting (3%)
- a higher proportion of households with a single person and one or more children (12%) had experienced stalking than those in households with multiple people and one or more children (3.5%), and households with no children (2.8%)

**Figure 3: Younger people were more likely to be victims of stalking**

Prevalence of stalking in the last year for people aged 16 years and over by age and sex, England and Wales, year ending (YE) March 2024

Figure 3: Younger people were more likely to be victims of stalking

Prevalence of stalking in the last year for people aged 16 years and over by age and sex, England and Wales, year ending (YE) March 2024



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

Notes:

1. Data from the CSEW for YE March 2024 are not designated as accredited official statistics.

More information on the nature of stalking is available in our article, [‘I feel like I am living someone else’s life’: one in seven people a victim of stalking.](#)



## 9 . Harassment

According to the Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW), 8.9% of people aged 16 years and over reported experiencing some form of harassment in the survey year ending (YE) March 2024. While the police only record harassment where the behaviour has occurred on more than one occasion, CSEW harassment captures a wider range of experiences, including single incidents. Approximately 30% of CSEW respondents who had experienced harassment reported multiple incidents of harassment that were related.

The CSEW showed that in the YE March 2024:

- a higher proportion of women experienced harassment (11.2%) than men (6.6%), particularly sexual harassment (7.1% of women, compared with 2.7% of men)
- a higher percentage of young people aged 16 to 19 years experienced harassment (19.8%) than those in older age groups
- a higher proportion of people with disabilities experienced harassment (15.3%) than those with no disabilities (7.5%)
- a higher proportion of gay, lesbian (21%) and bisexual people (35%) experienced harassment, compared with heterosexual people (8.4%)

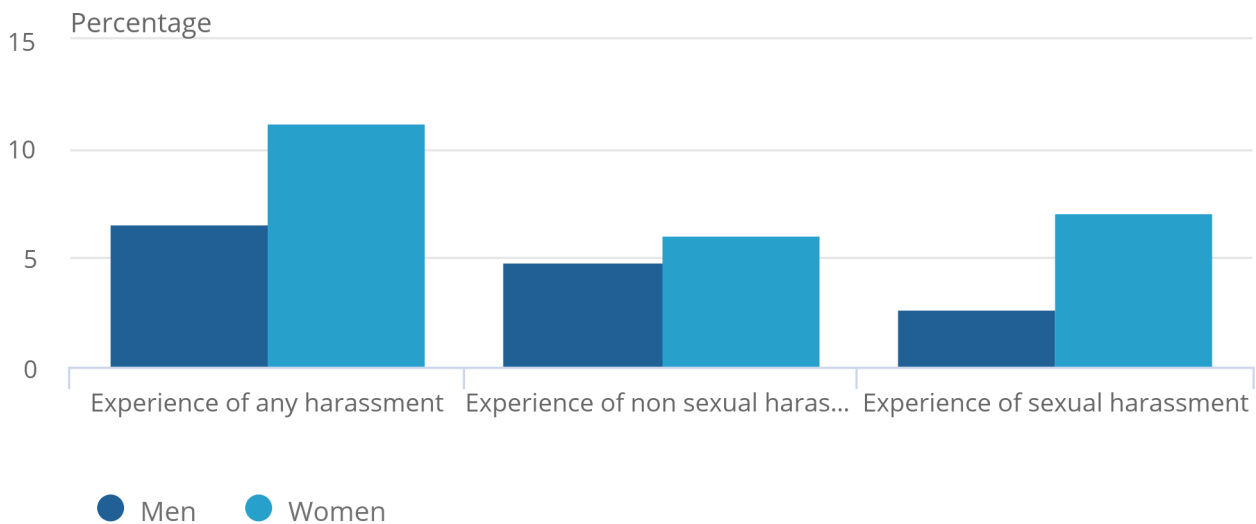
See our [Experiences of harassment prevalence and nature tables, England and Wales](#).

**Figure 4: Women were more likely than men to experience harassment**

Prevalence of harassment in the last year for people aged 16 and over by sex, England and Wales, year ending (YE) March 2024

Figure 4: Women were more likely than men to experience harassment

Prevalence of harassment in the last year for people aged 16 and over by sex, England and Wales, year ending (YE) March 2024



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

Notes:

1. Data from the CSEW for YE March 2024 are not designated as accredited official statistics.

## 10 . Data on the nature of violent crime

### [The nature of violent crime: appendix tables](#)

Dataset | Released 26 September 2024

Data from the Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW) and Police recorded crime. Data are included on prevalence and characteristics of victims.

### [Nature of crime: violence](#)

Dataset | Released 30 January 2024

Annual data from the CSEW, including when and where incidents happened and the victim's perception of the incident.

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

Dataset | Released 26 September 2024

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

### [Stalking: findings from the Crime Survey for England and Wales](#)

Dataset | Released 26 September 2024

Stalking experienced by women and men, including numbers, type and personal characteristics, based on annual findings from the CSEW.

## 11 . Glossary

### Domestic abuse

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

- are a partner
- are an ex-partner
- are a relative
- have or 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 also recognises children under the age of 18 years who see, hear, or experience the effects of the abuse as a victim of domestic abuse, if they are related to or have a parental relationship to the adult victim or perpetrator of the abuse.

## Homicide

Homicide includes the offences of murder, manslaughter, corporate manslaughter, and infanticide.

## 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 only refers to the sexual touching of a person without their consent.

## Stalking and harassment

Stalking is defined in the CSEW as two or more incidents causing distress, fear, or alarm. This can include receiving obscene or threatening unwanted letters, emails, text messages or phone calls, having had obscene or threatening information about them placed on the internet, waiting or loitering around home or workplace, or following or watching.

For the definition of harassment, see Section 6: Glossary of our [Experiences of harassment in England and Wales: December 2023 bulletin](#).

## Violence with and without injury

Violent crime covers a range of offence types, from minor assaults, like pushing and shoving that result in no physical harm, to murder. This includes offences where the victim was intentionally stabbed, punched, kicked, pushed, or jostled, as well as offences where the victim was threatened with violence, regardless of injury.

## Offences involving use of weapons

An offence is recorded by the police as involving a knife or sharp instrument when the weapon is present during the offence, or the threat is believed to be real. The weapon does not necessarily have to be used. These data are based on a special collection that includes homicide, attempted murder, threats to kill, assault with injury, assault with intent to cause serious harm, robbery, rape, and sexual assault.

Offences involving a firearm include those where a firearm is fired, used as a blunt instrument, or used as a threat. Firearms include shotguns, handguns, rifles, imitation weapons like BB guns or soft air weapons, other weapons like CS gas, pepper spray and stun guns, and unidentified weapons. Firearms exclude conventional air weapons like air rifles.

More information and definitions can be found in Section 5: Offence types of our [User guide to crime statistics for England and Wales: March 2024](#).

## 12 . Data sources and quality

Crime statistics rely on data collected from the Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW) and police recorded crime.

The CSEW is primarily an interviewer-administered face-to-face victimisation survey in which people (aged 16 years and over) resident in households in England and Wales are asked about their experiences of a selected range of incidents in the 12 months prior to the interview. It provides important information on long-term trends in crime from the year ending (YE) December 1981 to the YE March 2024.

We include the following offences and crime-related experiences as violent crimes in this article: homicide, violence with and without injury, domestic abuse, sexual assault, stalking and harassment, and offences involving weapons. Although robbery and hate crime involve violence, we cover these offences elsewhere. For more information on robbery, see our [Property crime tables, England and Wales dataset](#) and our [Nature of crime: robbery dataset](#). For more information on hate crime, see the Home Office's [Hate crime, England and Wales, 2022 to 2023 second edition bulletin](#).

It is important to note that it is possible for survey respondents to be repeat victims of violent crime and they may be a victim of more than one type of violent crime in the last year.

Police recorded crime data are supplied to us by the Home Office. They are responsible for the collation of recorded crime data supplied by the 43 territorial police forces of England and Wales, plus the British Transport Police. These data are supplied to the Home Office on a monthly basis for each crime within their notifiable offence list.

The recorded crime figures are collated through a live administrative system that is continually updated as police forces submit data. Data in this article represent a “snapshot” of the live database taken on 14 June 2024 to include data up to the end of March 2024.

More quality and methodology information on strengths, limitations, appropriate uses, and how the data were created is available in our [Crime in England and Wales Quality and Methodology Information \(QMI\)](#) and our [User guide to crime statistics for England and Wales: March 2024](#).

### Strengths and limitations

#### Crime Survey for England and Wales

The Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW) includes crimes that are not reported to, or recorded by the police, but is limited to crimes against people resident in households and does not cover all crime types.

The CSEW is a better indicator of long-term trends for the crime types and population it covers than police recorded crime. This is because it is unaffected by changes in levels of reporting to the police or in police recording practices. The victimisation methodology and the crime types included in the main count of crime have remained comparable since the CSEW began in 1981.

The CSEW gathers information from a sample, rather than from the whole population. The sample is designed to be as accurate as possible, given practical limitations like time and cost constraints. Therefore, the estimates contain some uncertainty and are not precise figures. This can impact how changes in the estimates should be interpreted. View more information on [how we measure and communicate uncertainty for our surveys](#).

The accredited official statistics status of CSEW estimates has been temporarily suspended. The Office for Statistics Regulation (OSR) is currently reviewing [our request for reaccreditation](#), following our [CSEW data quality review](#). Our review showed that the quality of CSEW data for YE March 2023 was broadly similar to CSEW data for YE March 2020, when they were last accredited official statistics.

When analysing long-term trends for domestic abuse, sexual assault, and stalking, we use the age range of 16 to 59 years to give a comparable time series. This is because data has only been collected for older age groups since YE March 2022. Harassment was only recently introduced into the CSEW, so there are no trend data available. Current year estimates for harassment cannot be compared with YE March 2023 because of changes to the CSEW questionnaire.

## Police recorded crime

Police recorded crime has wider offence coverage and population coverage than the CSEW. It is the primary source of local crime statistics and is a good measure of offences that are well reported to, and well recorded by, the police, including lower-volume crimes like homicide. The time lag between occurrence of crime and reporting results tends to be short and this provides an indication of emerging trends.

Police recorded crime excludes offences that are not reported to, or not recorded by, the police. Trends can be influenced by changes in recording practices, police activity or public reporting of crime, making it difficult to make long-term comparisons. There are also concerns about the quality of recording and that crime is not recorded consistently across police forces or over time.

Police recorded crime data are not designated as accredited official statistics.

For more information, see our [Crime in England and Wales QMI](#) and our [User guide to crime statistics for England and Wales: March 2024](#).

## 13 . Related links

[‘I feel like I am living someone else’s life’: one in seven people a victim of stalking](#)

Article | Released 26 September 2024

Analysis highlighting the scale and severity of stalking.

[Guide to finding crime statistics](#)

Methodology | Last revised 24 July 2024

A guide that directs users to the best sources for different crime statistics.

[Crime in England and Wales: year ending March 2024](#)

Bulletin | Released 24 July 2024

Crime against households and adults, including data on crime experienced by children, and crimes against businesses and society.

## 14 . Cite this article

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