

Article

Domestic abuse and the criminal justice system, England and Wales: November 2021

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

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1 . Other pages in this release

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- [How domestic abuse data are captured through the criminal justice system](#)

2 . Main points

Here we look at outcomes of domestic abuse cases in the criminal justice system in the year coinciding with the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. This follows our [initial analysis](#) on the impacts of the early stage of the pandemic. Analysis presented suggests outcomes of domestic abuse-related cases in the criminal justice system generally followed patterns seen over recent years.

- The police recorded 845,734 domestic abuse-related crimes in England and Wales in the year ending March 2021; this is a 6% increase compared with the previous year, continuing an increasing trend that may reflect improvements seen in reporting over the last few years.
- The police made 33 arrests per 100 domestic abuse-related crimes in the year ending March 2021; the same as in the previous year (in the 38 police forces that supplied complete data in both years).
- Referrals of suspects of domestic abuse-flagged cases from the police to the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) for a charging decision decreased by 3%, from 79,965 in the year ending March 2020 to 77,812 in the year ending March 2021, in England and Wales.
- The CPS domestic abuse-related [charging rate](#) in England and Wales decreased for the third year running to 70% in the year ending March 2021, compared with 76% in the year ending March 2018.
- The average number of days to charge domestic abuse-related cases in England and Wales increased to 18 in the year ending March 2021, compared with 15 in the year ending March 2020 and 9 in the year ending March 2019.
- The number of domestic abuse-related CPS prosecutions in England and Wales decreased for the fifth year in a row to 54,515 in the year ending March 2021.
- The percentage of prosecutions leading to a conviction increased for the sixth year running to 78% in the year ending March 2021.

3 . Domestic abuse and the criminal justice system data

[Domestic abuse and the criminal justice system](#)

Dataset | Released on 24 November 2021

Data from across the government on responses to and outcomes of domestic abuse cases in the criminal justice system.

[Domestic abuse in England and Wales – Data tool](#)

Dataset | Released on 24 November 2021

An interactive Excel-based data tool for domestic abuse statistics. It allows users to explore data for their police force area in more detail and compare with other areas.

4 . Glossary

Other important terms used in this publication are listed in the glossary section of our [How domestic abuse data are captured through the criminal justice system](#) article.

Charging rate

The number of suspects of Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) domestic abuse-flagged cases that were charged as a proportion of all cases that resulted in a legal decision to charge, prosecute or issue an out-of-court disposal.

Convictions

Cases where the defendant was convicted following a prosecution, comprising:

- conviction after trial: cases in which the defendant pleaded not guilty, but was convicted after the evidence was heard
- guilty plea: where the defendant pleaded guilty
- proof in absence: cases comprising of lesser offences, which were heard by the court in the absence of the defendant

Domestic abuse

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

Prosecutions

All cases where the defendant(s) were charged, summonsed in court, or charged by way of a postal requisition during the period. This includes those proceeding to a trial or guilty plea, those discontinued and those which could not proceed.

5 . Data sources and quality

This publication presents data on responses to and outcomes of domestic abuse cases from different stages of the criminal justice system. Data are sourced from the Home Office, Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS), the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) and the Ministry of Justice (MoJ).

The data are not directly comparable because they are collected on different bases (for example, victims, crimes, suspects or defendants), and different timescales and reference periods are used to collect the data. Cases may also drop out at any stage of the process. Further information on how domestic abuse cases flow through the criminal justice system and the data sources used in this publication can be found in our [How domestic abuse data are captured through the criminal justice system](#) article.

How the police measure domestic abuse

More information on police measures of domestic abuse can be found in our [Domestic abuse prevalence and trends, England and Wales: year ending March 2021](#) and [How domestic abuse data are captured through the criminal justice system](#) articles.

6 . Related links

[How domestic abuse data are captured through the criminal justice system](#)

Article | Released 24 November 2021

Information on the stages of the criminal justice process in England and Wales, and how data are captured at each stage.

[Domestic abuse during the coronavirus \(COVID-19\) pandemic, England and Wales: November 2020](#)

Article | Released 25 November 2020

Indicators from a range of data sources to assess the impact of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic on domestic abuse in England and Wales.