

Article

Domestic abuse prevalence and trends, England and Wales: year ending March 2023

Prevalence, long-term trends and types of domestic abuse experienced by people aged 16 years and over, based on findings from the Crime Survey for England and Wales, and police recorded crime.

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Release date:
24 November 2023

Next release:
To be announced

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1 . Other pages in this release

- [Domestic abuse in England and Wales overview: November 2023](#)
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- [Partner abuse in detail, England and Wales: year ending March 2023](#)
- [Domestic abuse and the criminal justice system, England and Wales: November 2023](#)
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- [Redevelopment of domestic abuse statistics: research update November 2023](#)

2 . Main points

- The Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW) year ending March 2023 estimated that 4.4% of people aged 16 years and over (2.1 million) experienced domestic abuse in the last year.
- There was no significant change in the prevalence of domestic abuse experienced in the last year by people aged 16 to 59 years compared with the previous year, but a significant decrease compared with the year ending March 2020, a year largely unaffected by the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.
- The police recorded 1,453,867 domestic abuse-related incidents and crimes in England and Wales (excluding Devon and Cornwall) in the year ending March 2023; 889,918 of these were recorded as domestic abuse-related crimes.
- The number of domestic abuse-related crimes recorded by police remained similar compared with the year ending March 2022, and was 14.4% higher than the year ending March 2020.

Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW) data presented in this release for the year ending March 2023, are not badged as [National Statistics](#). They are based on eight months of data collection because of an error in the survey, which resulted in missing data. Caution should be taken when using these data because of the impact of the reduced data collection period on the quality of the estimates. For more information, see Section 2.1 of our [User guide to crime statistics for England and Wales: March 2023](#).

3 . Understanding domestic abuse

Domestic abuse is often a hidden crime that is not reported to the police. Therefore, data held by the police can only provide a partial picture of the actual level of domestic abuse experienced. Many cases will not enter the criminal justice process as they are not reported to the police. One of the strengths of the Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW) is that it covers many crimes that are not reported to the police and provides reliable estimates of domestic abuse.

On 4 October 2021, face-to-face interviewing for the CSEW resumed after it was suspended on 17 March 2020 because of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. Crime Survey estimates for the year ending March 2022 onwards have been suspended of their National Statistics status while we assess data quality since the pandemic. For more information see the [Office for Statistics Regulation's Temporary suspension of National Statistics status](#) for estimates from the Crime Survey for England and Wales.

The Home Office collects data on the number of domestic abuse-related incidents and crimes recorded by the police. Domestic abuse-related crimes continued to be recorded by police throughout the coronavirus pandemic, however police recorded crime data, in isolation, do not provide a measure of prevalence to understand the true extent of domestic abuse.

4 . Crime Survey for England and Wales

The Crime Survey for England Wales (CSEW) statistics presented in this release for the year ending March 2023 are not badged as [National Statistics](#). They are based on eight months of data collection because of an error in the survey, which resulted in missing data. Caution should be taken when using these data because of the impact of the reduced data collection period on the quality of the estimates.

Domestic abuse in the last year

The CSEW estimated 2.1 million people aged 16 years and over experienced domestic abuse in the year ending March 2023, equating to a prevalence rate of 4.4%. The latest prevalence estimates for all types of domestic abuse experienced in the last year for people aged 16 years and over were not significantly different compared with the year ending March 2022.

Information on the prevalence of domestic abuse by demographic variables such as sex and ethnicity can be found in our [Domestic abuse victim characteristics, year ending March 2023 article](#).

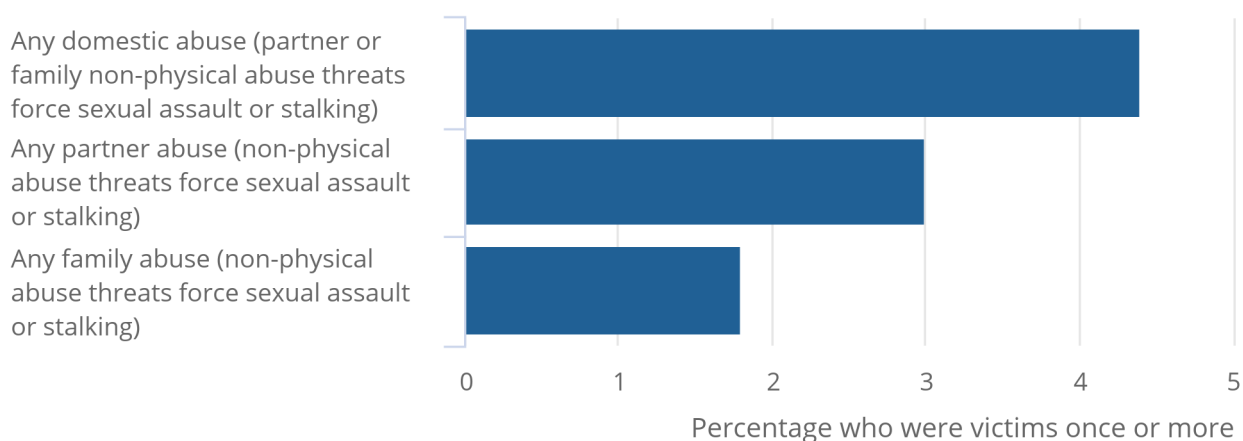
Figure 1 shows a higher percentage of people aged 16 years and over experienced domestic abuse by a partner or ex-partner (3.0%) compared with a family member (1.8%) in the last year.

Figure 1: Approximately one in 25 people experienced domestic abuse in the year ending March 2023

Prevalence of domestic abuse in the last year, for people aged 16 years and over, by perpetrator-relationship, England and Wales, year ending March 2023

Figure 1: Approximately one in 25 people experienced domestic abuse in the year ending March 2023

Prevalence of domestic abuse in the last year, for people aged 16 years and over, by perpetrator-relationship, England and Wales, year ending March 2023



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

Notes:

1. Data for the year ending March 2023 are not badged as National Statistics. They are based on eight months of data collection because of an error in the survey, which resulted in missing data. Caution should be taken when using these data because of the impact of the reduced data collection period on the quality of the estimates.
2. Partner abuse refers to abuse carried out by a partner or ex-partner.
3. Some victims may have experienced both partner and family abuse in the last year.

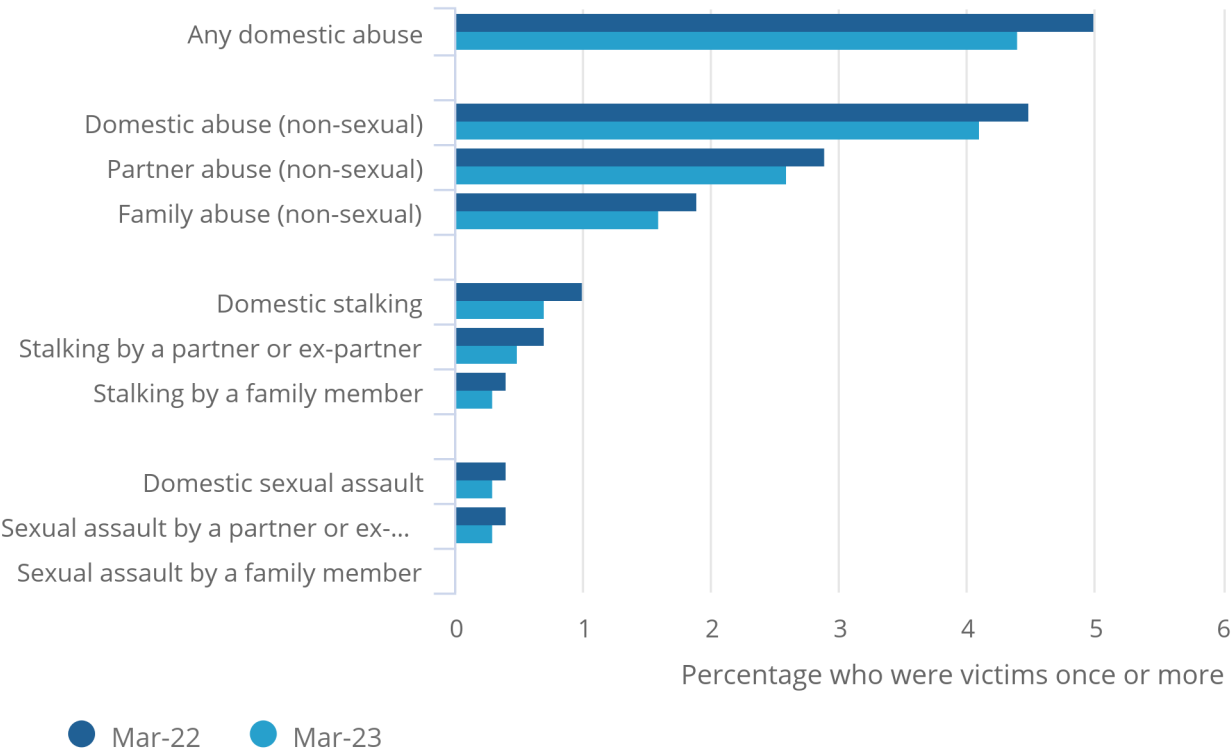
In the year ending March 2023, non-sexual domestic abuse was experienced by 4.1% of people aged 16 years and over compared with 4.5% in the previous year (Figure 2). Domestic stalking was experienced by 0.7% of people and domestic sexual assault was experienced by 0.3% of people in the last year, compared with 1.0% and 0.4% respectively, in the year ending March 2022. Differences seen for all types of abuse in the last year for people aged 16 and over, compared with the year ending March 2022, were not statistically significant.

Figure 2: There were no statistically significant differences across domestic abuse types compared with the year ending March 2022

Prevalence of domestic abuse in the last year for people aged 16 years and over, by type of abuse, England and Wales, year ending March 2022 to year ending March 2023

Figure 2: There were no statistically significant differences across domestic abuse types compared with the year ending March 2022

Prevalence of domestic abuse in the last year for people aged 16 years and over, by type of abuse, England and Wales, year ending March 2022 to year ending March 2023



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

Notes:

1. Crime Survey estimates for the year ending March 2022 onwards are not designated as National Statistics. Caution should be taken when using these data because of the potential impact of lower response rates on data quality.
2. Data for the year ending March 2023 are based on eight months of data collection because of an error in the survey, which resulted in missing data. Caution should be taken when using these data because of the impact of the reduced data collection period on the quality of the estimates.
3. Sexual assault categories include attempts.
4. Abuse carried out by a partner includes abuse carried out by an ex-partner.
5. The sum of the overarching domestic abuse categories is not the sum of the sub-categories, as victims who have experienced more than one type of abuse will be included in multiple categories.

Following the removal of the upper age limit for survey respondents in October 2021, when analysing data over a longer time period, we use the 16 to 59 years age range to give a comparable time series.

In the year ending March 2023, for people aged 16 to 59 years, the prevalence rate of domestic abuse was 5.1%. This was not significantly different compared with the previous year ending March 2022 (5.7%). However, there was a significant decrease when compared with the year ending March 2020 (6.1%), a year largely unaffected by the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic (Figure 3).

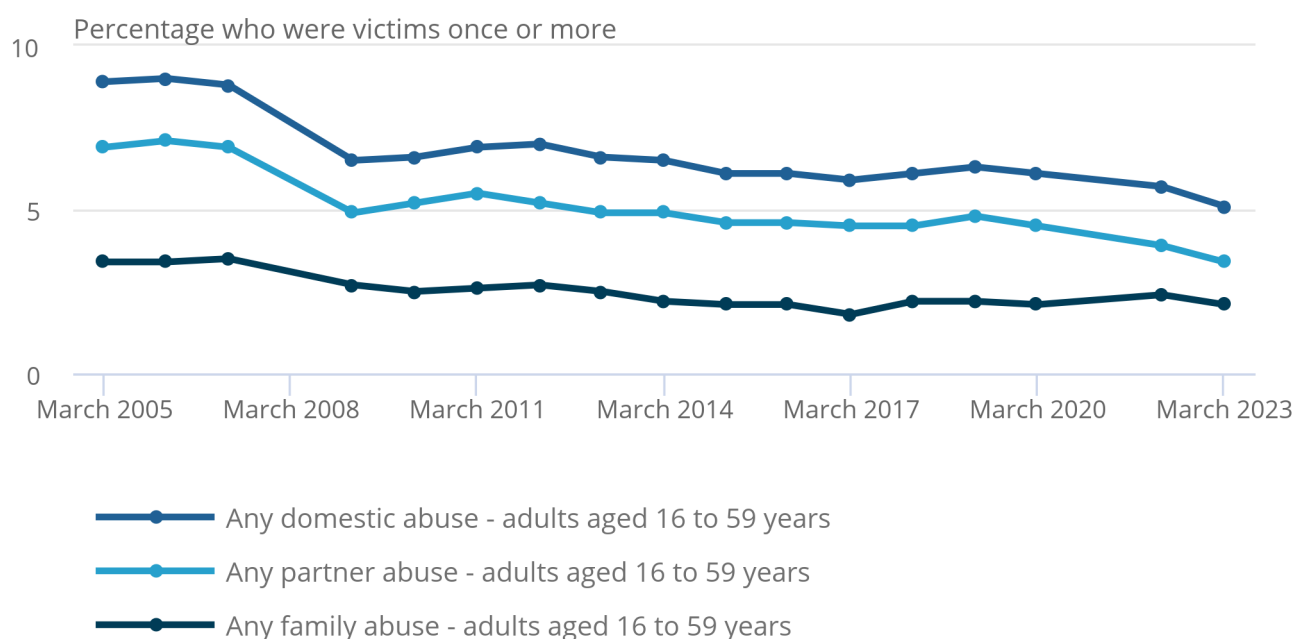
This decrease was largely caused by the statistically significant decrease seen in the prevalence of partner abuse compared with the year ending March 2020 (4.5% to 3.4%). Decreases were specifically caused by significant decreases in non-sexual partner abuse and stalking by a partner or ex-partner. There has been little change in the prevalence of family abuse compared with the previous year and the year ending March 2020.

Figure 3: Domestic abuse prevalence has significantly decreased compared with the year before the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic

Prevalence of domestic abuse in the last year among people aged 16 to 59, England and Wales, year ending March 2005 to year ending March 2023

Figure 3: Domestic abuse prevalence has significantly decreased compared with the year before the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic

Prevalence of domestic abuse in the last year among people aged 16 to 59, England and Wales, year ending March 2005 to year ending March 2023



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

Notes:

1. Crime Survey estimates for the year ending March 2022 onwards are not designated as National Statistics. Caution should be taken when using these data because of the potential impact of lower response rates on data quality.
2. Data for the year ending March 2023 are based on eight months of data collection because of an error in the survey, which resulted in missing data. Caution should be taken when using these data because of the impact of the reduced data collection period on the quality of the estimates.
3. Data are not available for the year ending March 2021 because the Crime Survey for England and Wales was suspended due to the Coronavirus pandemic.
4. Data are not available for the year ending March 2008 because comparable questions on any domestic abuse, any partner abuse and any family abuse were not included in that year.
5. Partner abuse refers to abuse carried out by a partner or ex-partner.

Domestic abuse since the age of 16 years

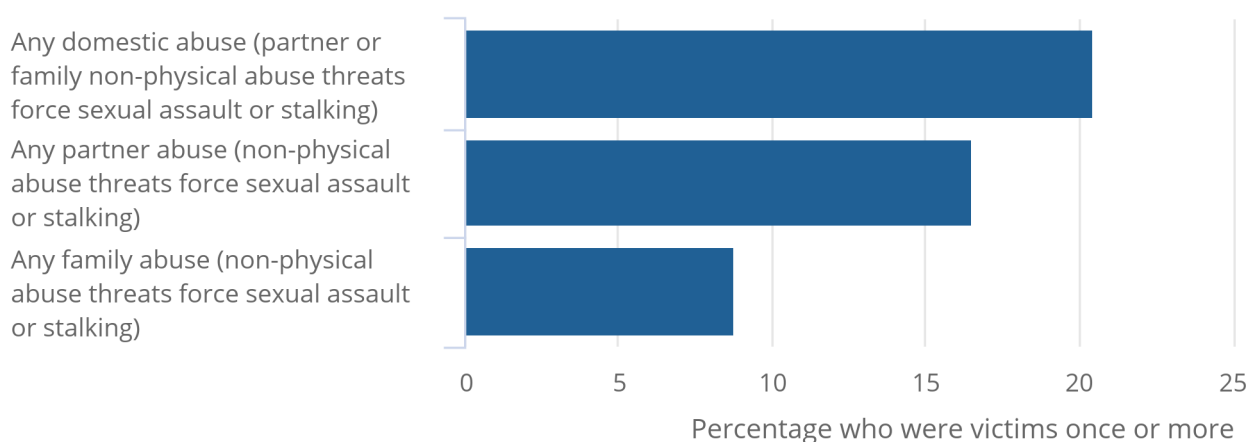
The year ending March 2023 CSEW showed that an estimated 9.8 million people aged 16 years and over had experienced domestic abuse since the age of 16 years. This equates to a prevalence rate of approximately one in five people aged 16 years and over (Figure 4).

Figure 4: Approximately one in five people had experienced domestic abuse since the age of 16 years

Prevalence of domestic abuse since the age of 16 years for people aged 16 years and over, by perpetrator-relationship, England and Wales, year ending March 2023

Figure 4: Approximately one in five people had experienced domestic abuse since the age of 16 years

Prevalence of domestic abuse since the age of 16 years for people aged 16 years and over, by perpetrator-relationship, England and Wales, year ending March 2023



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

Notes:

1. Data for the year ending March 2023 are not badged as National Statistics. They are based on eight months of data collection because of an error in the survey, which resulted in missing data. Caution should be taken when using these data because of the impact of the reduced data collection period on the quality of the estimates.
2. Partner abuse refers to abuse carried out by a partner or ex-partner.
3. Some victims may have experienced both partner and family abuse since the age of 16 years.

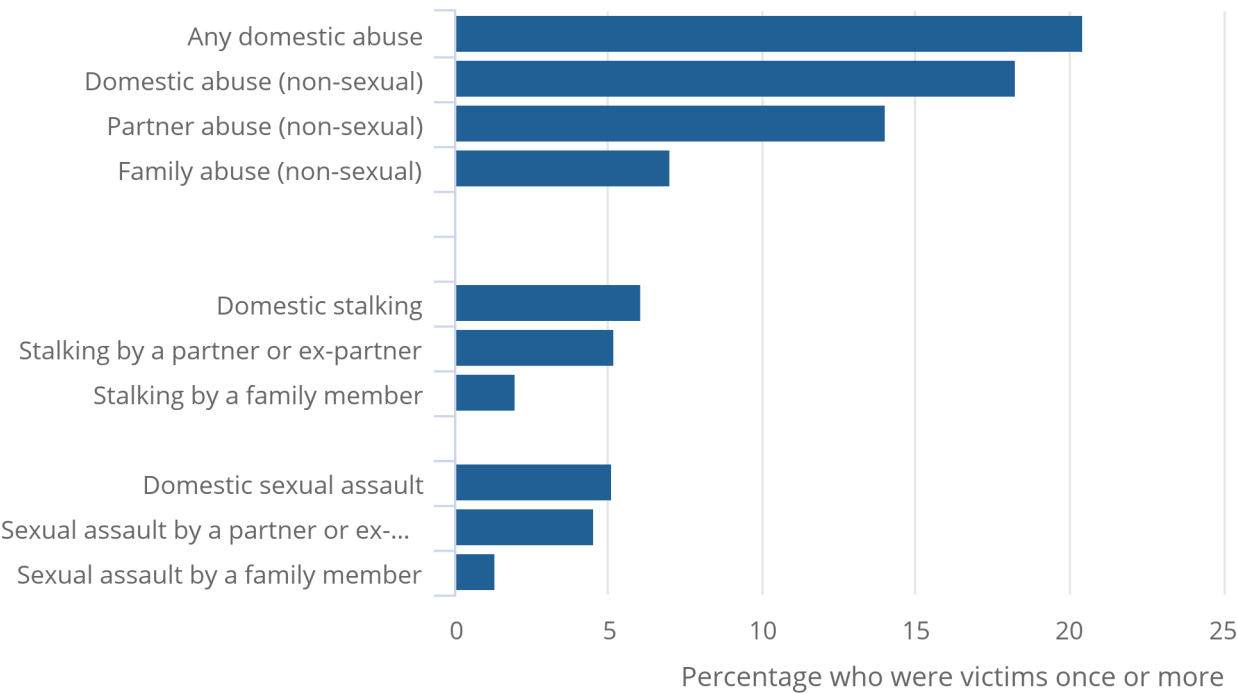
Figure 5 shows that non-sexual domestic abuse was experienced by 18.3% of people since the age of 16 years in the year ending March 2023. Around 14.0% of victims experienced non-sexual domestic abuse by a partner or ex-partner and 7.0% experienced non-sexual domestic abuse by a family member since the age of 16 years.

Figure 5: Non-sexual domestic abuse was experienced by 18.3% of people since the age of 16 years

Prevalence of domestic abuse since the age of 16 years for people aged 16 years and over, by type of abuse, England and Wales, year ending March 2023

Figure 5: Non-sexual domestic abuse was experienced by 18.3% of people since the age of 16 years

Prevalence of domestic abuse since the age of 16 years for people aged 16 years and over, by type of abuse, England and Wales, year ending March 2023



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

Notes:

1. Data for the year ending March 2023 are not badged as National Statistics. They are based on eight months of data collection because of an error in the survey, which resulted in missing data. Caution should be taken when using these data because of the impact of the reduced data collection period on the quality of the estimates.
2. Sexual assault categories include attempts.
3. Abuse carried out by a partner includes abuse carried out by an ex-partner.
4. The sum of the overarching domestic abuse categories is not the sum of the sub-categories, as victims who have experienced more than one type of abuse will be included in multiple categories.

5 . Police recorded crime

Data for Devon and Cornwall Police Force Area have not been included in the year ending March 2023 because of issues with their supply of data following the implementation of new force IT systems. Therefore, when comparing data over time, data for Devon and Cornwall have been excluded from all years [note 1].

The police recorded 1,453,867 domestic abuse-related incidents and crimes [note 2] in England and Wales in the year ending March 2023. This was a 0.8% decrease from the previous year (from 1,466,270) but remained 7.9% higher than the year ending March 2020 (from 1,347,536) [note 3].

In the year ending March 2023, there were 563,949 domestic abuse-related incidents [note 4], continuing the downward trend seen before the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic (Figure 6).

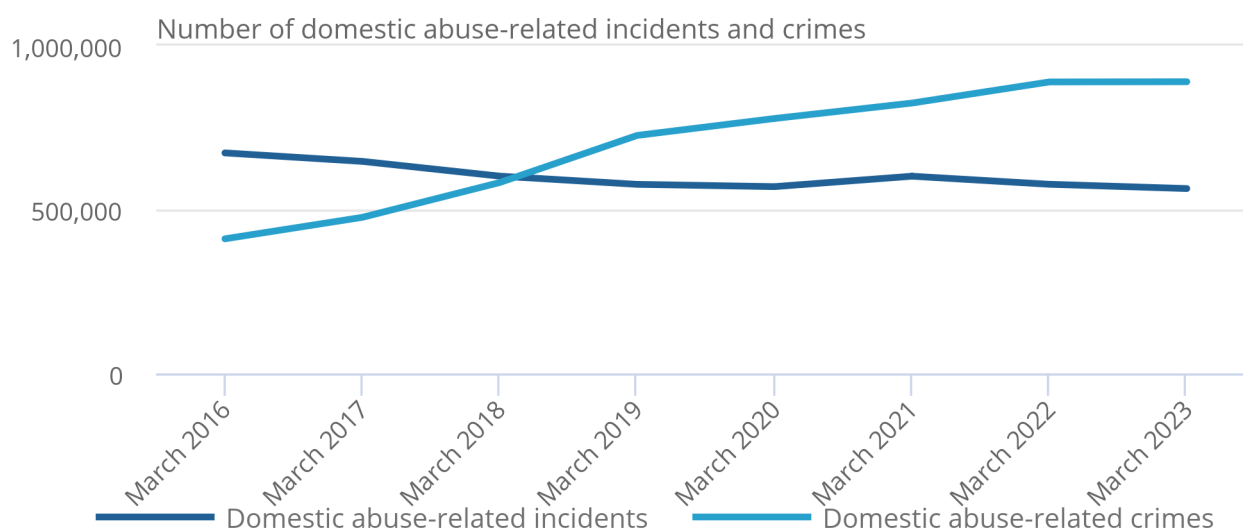
Domestic abuse-related crimes remained similar to the previous year, 889,918 compared with 889,311, and were 14.4% higher than the year ending March 2020, a year largely unaffected by the coronavirus pandemic (777,726 crimes). Increases seen in previous years may be, in part, driven by increased willingness and confidence of victims to report domestic abuse-related crimes.

Figure 6: Domestic abuse-related incidents decreased while domestic abuse-related crimes remained similar to the previous year

Number of domestic abuse-related incidents and crimes recorded by the police, England and Wales (excluding Devon and Cornwall), year ending March 2016 to year ending March 2023

Figure 6: Domestic abuse-related incidents decreased while domestic abuse-related crimes remained similar to the previous year

Number of domestic abuse-related incidents and crimes recorded by the police, England and Wales (excluding Devon and Cornwall), year ending March 2016 to year ending March 2023



Source: Police recorded crime from the Home Office

Notes:

1. Police recorded crime data are not designated as National Statistics.
2. Domestic abuse-related incidents cover reports where, after initial investigation, the police have concluded that no notifiable crime was committed.
3. Data for Devon and Cornwall Police Force Area have not been included in the year ending March 2023 because of issues with their supply of data following the implementation of new force IT systems. Therefore, when comparing data over time, data for Devon and Cornwall have been excluded from all years.

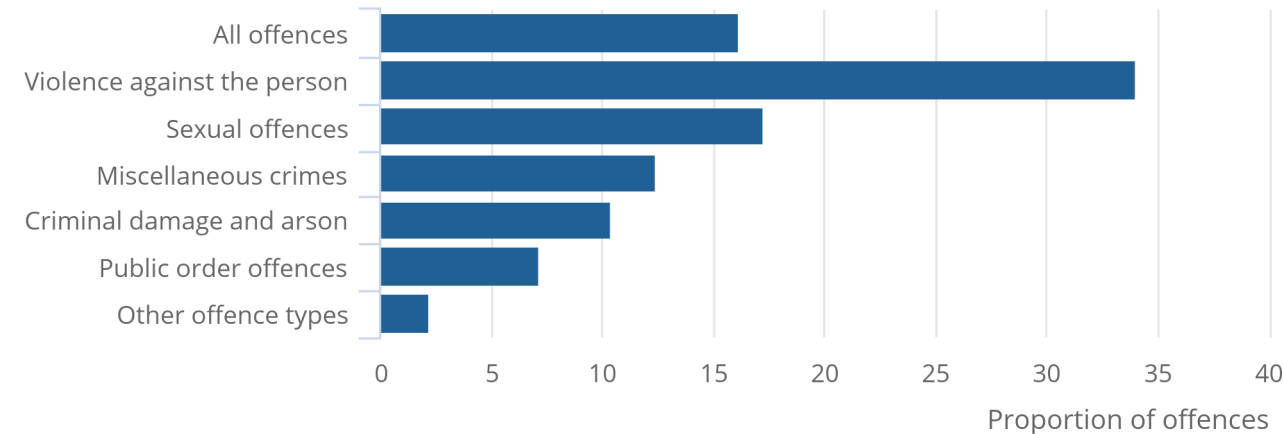
In the year ending March 2023, domestic abuse-related crimes represented 16.2% of all offences recorded by the police. Violence against the person had the highest proportion of offences identified as domestic abuse-related (34.0%) in the year ending March 2023 (Figure 7).

Figure 7: Violence against the person had the highest proportion of offences identified as domestic abuse-related

Percentage of offences recorded by the police that were identified as domestic abuse-related, England and Wales (excluding Devon and Cornwall), year ending March 2023

Figure 7: Violence against the person had the highest proportion of offences identified as domestic abuse-related

Percentage of offences recorded by the police that were identified as domestic abuse-related, England and Wales (excluding Devon and Cornwall), year ending March 2023



Source: Police recorded crime from the Home Office

Notes:

1. Police recorded crime data are not designated as National Statistics.
2. Data for Devon and Cornwall Police Force Area have not been included in the year ending March 2023 because of issues with their supply of data following the implementation of new force IT systems.

The police recorded 223,704 domestic abuse-related stalking and harassment offences in the year ending March 2023, accounting for a quarter of all domestic abuse-related crimes. The majority of domestic abuse-related stalking and harassment offences fell within the stalking subgroup category (43.8%), followed by the malicious communications subgroup category (35.9%; Figure 8).

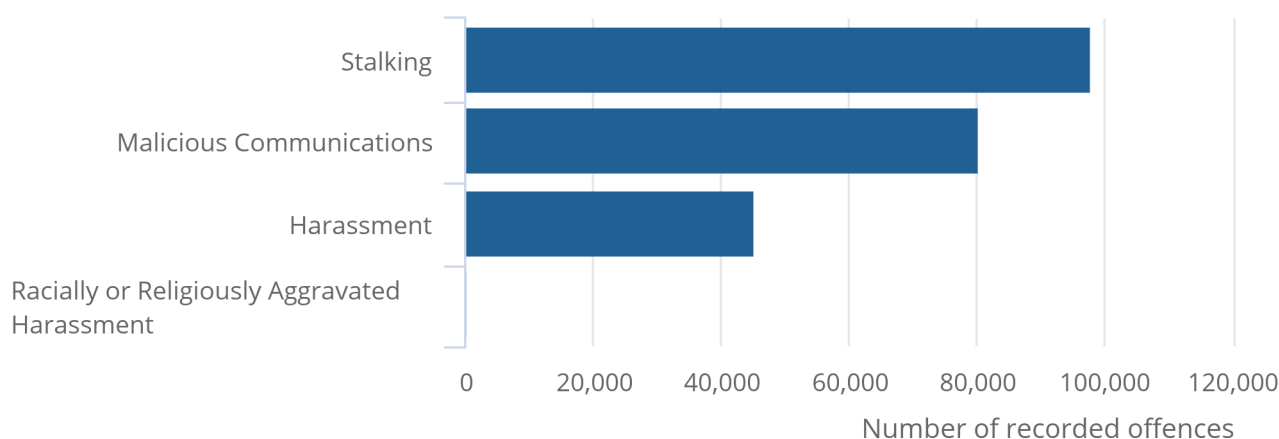
Following a change to the [Home Office crime recording rules](#) (as explained on the GOV.UK website) in April 2020, offences counted within the stalking subgroup category increased. The change meant that cases where a course of conduct was reported between a victim and their former partner must be recorded as "stalking", unless the police were satisfied that the matter amounted to harassment in law only. Therefore, data from the year ending March 2021 onwards are not directly comparable with previous years.

Figure 8: Stalking and malicious communications were the sub-group categories with the highest number of domestic abuse-related stalking and harassment offences

Number of domestic abuse-related stalking and harassment offences recorded by the police, by offence, England and Wales (excluding Devon and Cornwall), year ending March 2023

Figure 8: Stalking and malicious communications were the sub-group categories with the highest number of domestic abuse-related stalking and harassment offences

Number of domestic abuse-related stalking and harassment offences recorded by the police, by offence, England and Wales (excluding Devon and Cornwall), year ending March 2023



Source: Police recorded crime from the Home Office

Notes:

1. Police recorded crime data are not designated as National Statistics.
2. Stalking and harassment offences include harassment, malicious communications, racially or religiously aggravated harassment and stalking.
3. Stalking and harassment is a sub-group of the Violence Against the Person offence-group.
4. From April 2020 a change to the Home Office Counting Rules means all cases where a course of conduct is reported between a victim and their former partner must be recorded as 'stalking' unless the police are satisfied that the matter amounts to harassment in law only.
5. Data for Devon and Cornwall Police Force Area have not been included in the year ending March 2023 because of issues with their supply of data following the implementation of new force IT systems.

Controlling or coercive behaviour

There were 43,774 offences of coercive control recorded by the police in England and Wales (excluding Devon and Cornwall) in the year ending March 2023. This is compared with 41,039 in the year ending March 2022. The rise in coercive control offences over recent years may be attributed to improvements made by the police in recognising incidents of coercive control and using the new law accordingly. More information on the Serious Crime Act 2015 can be found on the [Legislation.gov.uk website](https://legislation.gov.uk).

Domestic homicide

Analysis on data from the Home Office Homicide Index combines data for a three-year period to account for the year-to-year variability in the volume of homicides.

There were 370 domestic homicides recorded by the police in the three-year period between year ending March 2020 and year ending March 2022. This represents approximately one in five of all homicides where the victim was aged 16 years and over during this period.

More information on the characteristics of victims of domestic homicide can be found in our [Domestic abuse victim characteristics, year ending March 2023 article](#).

Notes for: Police recorded crime

1. Data for Devon and Cornwall Police Force Area have not been included in the year ending March 2023 because of issues with their supply of data following the implementation of new force IT systems.
2. Domestic abuse-related incidents cover reports where, after initial investigation, the police have concluded that no notifiable crime was committed. Incidents of domestic abuse that result in a crime being recorded by the police are included in the data on domestic abuse-related crimes. The number of domestic abuse-related incidents and crimes gives a better picture of the demand that domestic abuse puts on the police.
3. There may be some cases where an incident is recorded and then a crime subsequently recorded in a different time period, for example, an incident recorded on 31 March, a crime recorded on 1 April.
4. An example of a domestic abuse-related incident that does not amount to a crime would be two family members having a loud argument, a third party calls the police, the police attend and calm the situation down, but no notifiable crime has taken place.

6 . Domestic abuse in England and Wales data

[Domestic abuse prevalence and victim characteristics](#)

Dataset | Released 24 November 2023

Domestic abuse numbers, prevalence, types and victim characteristics, based upon findings from the Crime Survey for England and Wales and police recorded crime.

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

Dataset | Released 24 November 2023

Stalking experienced by women and men, including numbers, type and personal characteristics, based upon annual findings from the Crime Survey for England and Wales.

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

Dataset | Released 24 November 2023

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.

7 . Glossary

Controlling or coercive behaviour

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

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 and over who:

- are a partner
- are an ex-partner
- are a relative
- have, or there has been a time when they each have had, a parental relationship in relation to the same child

The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 outlines the following behaviours as abuse:

- physical or sexual abuse
- violent or threatening behaviour
- controlling or coercive behaviour
- economic abuse
- psychological, emotional, or other abuse

The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 recognises children under the age of 18 years who see, or hear, or experience the effects of the abuse, as a victim of domestic abuse if they are related or have a parental relationship to the adult victim or perpetrator of the abuse.

Domestic abuse-related crimes

Incidents of domestic abuse that resulted in a crime being recorded by the police and are included in police recorded crime.

Domestic abuse-related incidents

Incidents of domestic abuse that were reported to the police, but following investigation, do not amount to a crime or offence according to the National Crime Recording Standards. These can be added to domestic abuse-related crimes to create a total picture of the demand that domestic abuse puts on the police.

Domestic homicide

An offence of murder or manslaughter where 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, other relatives.

Stalking

Defined in the CSEW as two or more incidents (causing distress, fear or alarm) of 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.

8 . Data sources and quality

Further quality and methodology information can be found in our [Domestic abuse in England and Wales overview: November 2023 bulletin](#).

Crime Survey for England and Wales

For reasons outlined in Section 4, Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW) estimates for the year ending March 2023 are not badged as National Statistics and should be treated with caution.

More information about the CSEW can be found in:

- our [User guide to crime statistics for England and Wales](#)
- our [Domestic abuse QMI](#)
- our [How domestic abuse data are captured through the criminal justice system article](#)

Work to improve the data collected to measure domestic abuse from the CSEW is ongoing. More information can be found in our [Redevelopment of domestic abuse statistics: research update November 2023 article](#).

How the police measure domestic abuse

The Home Office collects data on the number of domestic abuse-related incidents and the number of domestic abuse-related crimes. More information on domestic abuse-related incidents and crimes can be found in our [Domestic abuse QMI](#) and our [How domestic abuse data are captured through the criminal justice system article](#).

Home Office Homicide Index

The Home Office Homicide Index provides data on whether homicides are "domestic". The Homicide Index contains detailed record-level information about each homicide recorded by police in England and Wales.

Analysis on data from the Homicide Index within this publication combines data for a three-year period (year ending March 2020 to year ending March 2022) to account for the year-to-year variability in the volume of homicides. More information can be found in our [How domestic abuse data are captured through the criminal justice system article](#).

9 . Related links

[Domestic abuse quality and methodology information \(QMI\)](#)

Article | Released 24 November 2023

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

[Statistics on so called 'honour-based' abuse offences, England and Wales, 2022 to 2023](#)

Article | Released 19 October 2023

Home Office release containing statistics about so called 'honour-based' abuse (HBA)-related offences and incidents recorded by the police in England and Wales.

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

Article | Released 24 November 2023

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

10 . Cite this article

Office for National Statistics (ONS), published 24 November 2023, ONS website, article, [Domestic abuse prevalence and trends, England and Wales: year ending March 2023](#)