

Article

Homicide in England and Wales: year ending March 2024

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

- There were 570 victims of homicide recorded in year ending (YE) March 2024, 3% lower than the previous year (585 victims); excluding the YE March 2021 when volumes of public space violence were suppressed during coronavirus (COVID-19) lockdown periods, this was the lowest number of homicides recorded since the YE March 2016 (538).
- The number of male victims (414) was similar to the previous year (412), while those who were female fell by 10% (from 173 to 156).
- There were 108 domestic homicides in YE March 2024, a similar number to the previous year (107) and of these, 83 were women and 25 were men; 66 of these victims were killed by a partner or ex-partner.
- The homicide rate, over the three-year period to YE March 2024, was 39.8 victims per million population for the Black ethnic group, over four times higher than for the White ethnic group (8.5 victims per million population).
- Teenage victims were far more likely to be killed by a knife or a sharp instrument (83% of homicides) than were victims of all ages (46%).

2 . Trends in homicide

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

There were 570 victims of homicide in year ending (YE) March 2024, 15 fewer (a 3% decrease) than the previous year (585 victims; [Appendix table 1](#)).

Excluding YE March 2021 when volumes of public space crime were suppressed because of coronavirus (COVID-19) lockdown periods, this was the lowest number of homicides since YE March 2016 when 538 were recorded.

The number of homicides decreased in most regions across England, but there were increases seen in the East Midlands (from 34 to 58), the South West (from 47 to 52), and Wales (from 22 to 27).

Longer-term trends in homicide

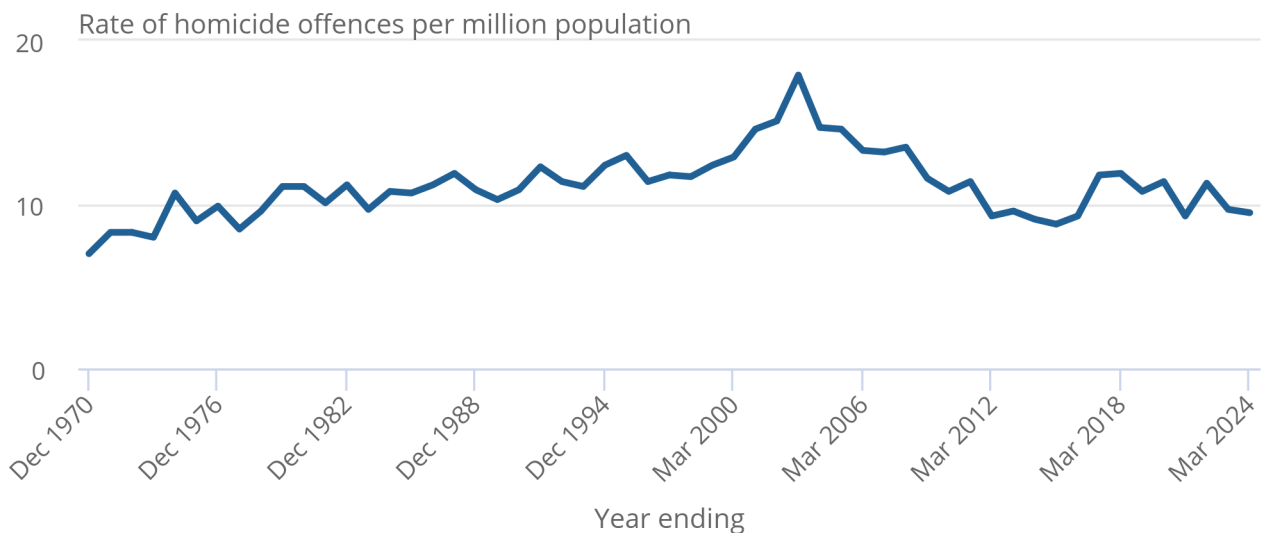
Compared with most other crimes, the homicide rate remains very low, with 9.5 homicides recorded per million population during YE March 2024 (Figure 1).

Figure 1: The homicide rate was similar to the previous year

Homicide rate, England and Wales, year ending (YE) December 1970 to YE March 2024

Figure 1: The homicide rate was similar to the previous year

Homicide rate, England and Wales, year ending (YE) December 1970 to YE March 2024



Source: Homicide Index from the Home Office

Notes:

1. YE December 1987 includes 15 victims of Michael Ryan.
2. YE ending March 2001 includes 58 Chinese nationals who suffocated in a lorry on the way into the UK.
3. YE ending March 2003 includes 173 victims of Doctor Harold Shipman.
4. YE ending March 2004 includes 20 cockle pickers who drowned in Morecambe Bay.
5. YE ending March 2006 includes 52 victims of the 7 July London bombings.
6. YE ending March 2011 includes 12 victims of Derrick Bird shooting.
7. YE ending March 2017 includes 96 victims of Hillsborough and four victims of the Westminster Bridge attack.
8. YE 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. YE ending March 2020 includes 39 human trafficking victims who were found dead in a lorry in Essex.
10. 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.

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](#).

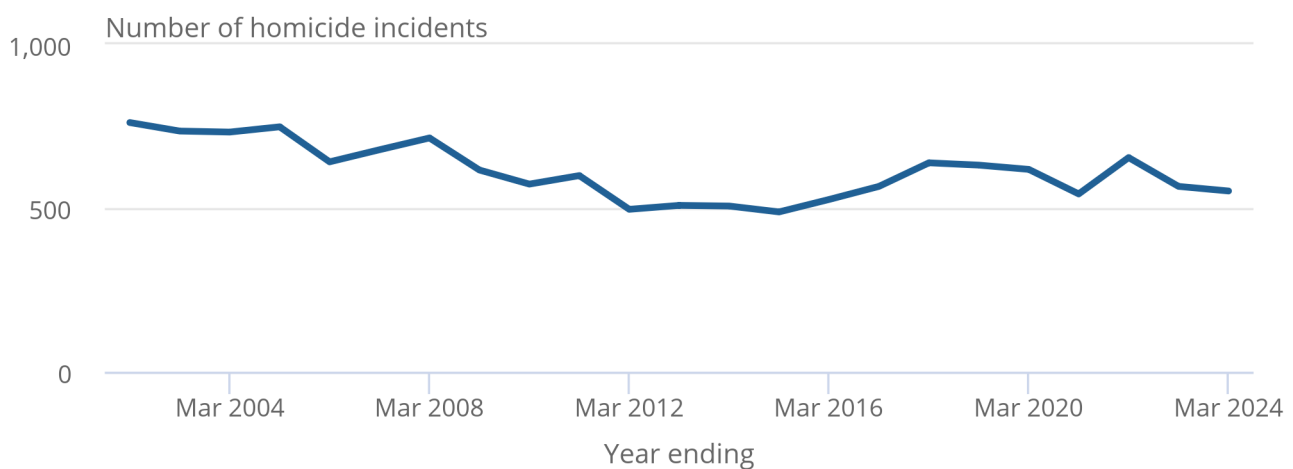
Homicide trends can be affected by single incidents involving multiple victims. In YE March 2024, there were 552 separate homicide incidents, 14 fewer than the previous year (566 homicide incidents) ([Appendix table 2](#)). Figure 2 shows the number of separate homicide incidents, rather than number of victims, as an alternative picture on trends.

Figure 2: The number of homicide incidents has fallen slightly compared with the previous year

Number of homicide incidents, England and Wales, year ending (YE) March 2002 to YE March 2024

Figure 2: The number of homicide incidents has fallen slightly compared with the previous year

Number of homicide incidents, England and Wales, year ending (YE) March 2002 to YE March 2024



Source: Homicide Index from the Home Office

The number of incidents recorded in YE March 2024 was not [statistically significantly](#) different than the previous year, although it was significantly lower than YE March 2022.

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

3 . Variations in homicide victimisation by personal characteristics

Demographic factors discussed in this section are not necessarily independently related to homicide. 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 the risk of being a victim. Further information can be found in [The social patterning of deaths due to assault in Scotland, 1980 to 2005: population-based study](#).

Sex

As in previous years, the majority of homicide victims in year ending (YE) March 2024 were male, making up almost three-quarters of all victims (73%) with around a quarter being female (27%). However, there continued to be important distinctions between the sexes in their risk of being victims of different types of homicide.

There were 414 male victims in the last year, a similar number compared with the previous year (412), while the number of female victims decreased by 10% (from 173 to 156).

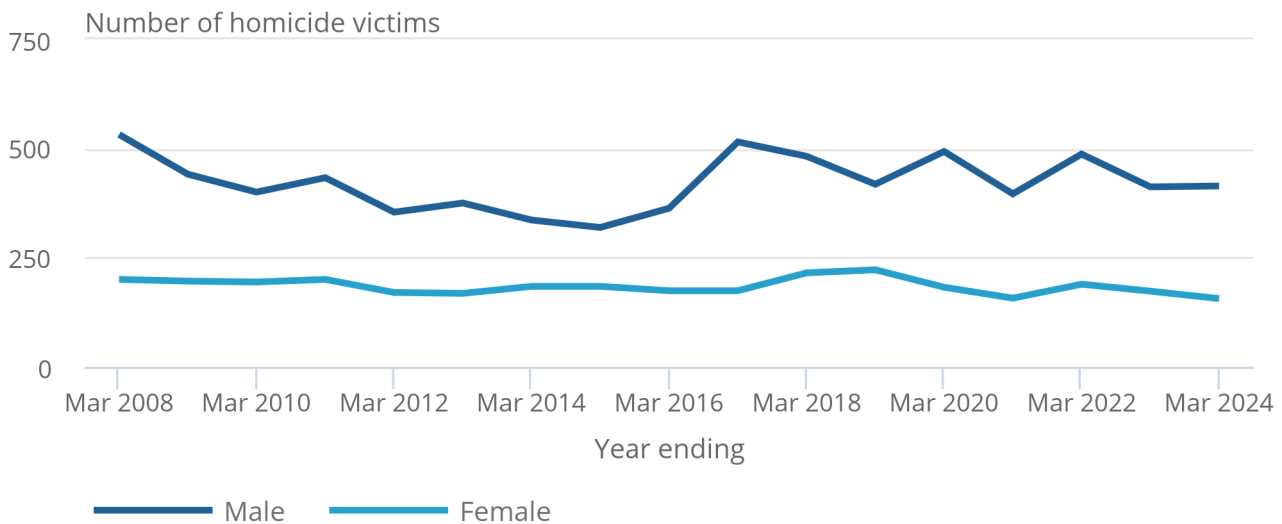
For both male and female victims, where a suspect had been charged, most suspects were male. This was the case in 88% (99) of female victims and 93% (292) of male victims ([Appendix table 34](#)).

Figure 3: The number of female homicide victims has decreased in the latest year, while the number of male victims was similar to last year

Number of homicide victims, England and Wales, year ending (YE) March 2008 to YE March 2024

Figure 3: The number of female homicide victims has decreased in the latest year, while the number of male victims was similar to last year

Number of homicide victims, England and Wales, year ending (YE) March 2008 to YE March 2024



Source: Homicide Index from the Home Office

Notes:

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

The latest annual homicide rate for males (14.0 per million population) was almost triple that for females (5.1 per million population) ([Appendix table 4](#)).

Age

The most common age-group for victims of homicides recorded in YE March 2024 was those aged 16 to 24 years (105 victims), closely followed by those aged 35 to 44 years (103 victims) (Figure 4).

As in previous years, children aged under one year had the highest rate of homicide for a single year of age (20.8 per million population, 13 offences). Considering broader age-groups, those aged 16 to 24 years had a relatively high rate (at 16.4 per million population). Within this age group, the rate for males was 28.8 per million, compared with 3.5 per million for females ([Appendix table 4](#)).

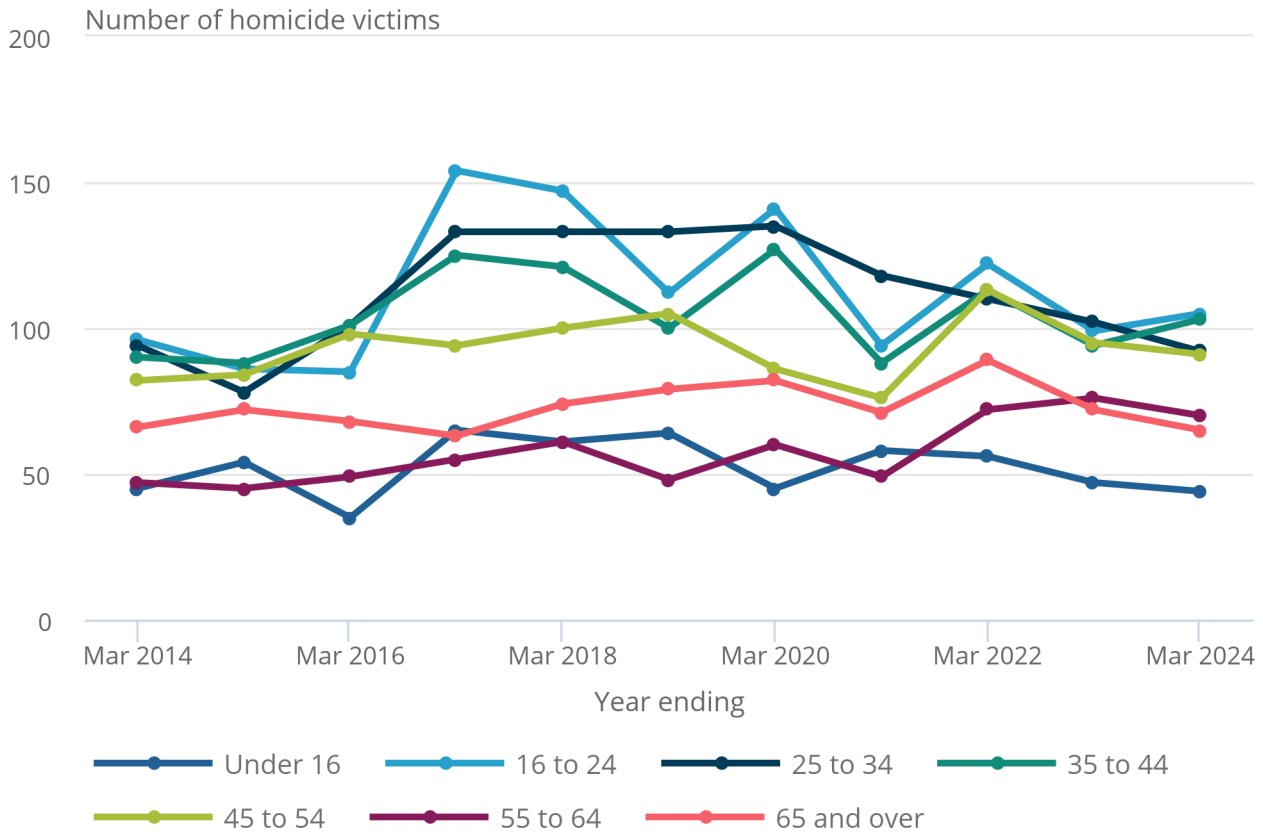
There were 64 homicides where the victim was a teenager (aged 13 to 19 years). In around 8 in 10 (83%) of these, the method of killing was with a knife or sharp instrument ([Appendix table 10](#)). This compared with 46% for all homicide victims. See [Section 5: The most common methods of killing](#) for more detail on sharp instrument (including knives) homicides.

Figure 4: Levels of homicide were similar to the previous year for most age groups but show fluctuation over time

Number of homicide victims, England and Wales, year ending (YE) March 2014 to YE March 2024

Figure 4: Levels of homicide were similar to the previous year for most age groups but show fluctuation over time

Number of homicide victims, England and Wales, year ending (YE) March 2014 to YE March 2024



Source: Homicide Index from the Home Office

Notes:

1. YE March 2017 includes 96 victims of Hillsborough and four victims of the Westminster Bridge attack.
2. YE 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.
3. YE March 2020 includes 39 human trafficking victims who were found dead in a lorry in Essex.

Ethnicity

Almost two-thirds (370 or 65%) of homicide victims in YE March 2024 were from the White ethnic group (based on the ethnicity identified by the investigating police officer). This compared with 82% of people identifying as being in the White ethnic group at the time of the last Census of Population in England and Wales in 2021. This was an 8% decrease compared with YE March 2023 (404 victims) and the lowest annual figure since ethnicity data were first collected in YE March 1997.

There were 95 victims identified as being from the Black ethnic group in YE March 2024, accounting for 17% of all victims. This was four times higher than the 4% of people identifying as being in the Black ethnic group in Census 2021. The number of Black victims has been fairly consistent over the last six years, fluctuating between 95 and 100 homicides each year.

There were 49 victims in the Asian ethnic group (9% of all victims). This was in proportion to the 9% of people identifying as being in the Asian ethnic group in Census 2021. The number of Asian victims was 5 higher than the previous year (44) ([Appendix table 6](#)).

Accounting for different population sizes, those from the Black ethnic group had the highest rates of victimisation ([Appendix table 7](#)). In the three years to YE March 2024, average rates per million population were over four times higher for Black people (39.8 per million population) than those from the White ethnic group (8.5), and around three times higher than Asians (12.5).

Homicide rates for all ethnic groups in the last three years were similar to those in the previous three-year period to YE March 2021 ([Appendix table 7](#)).

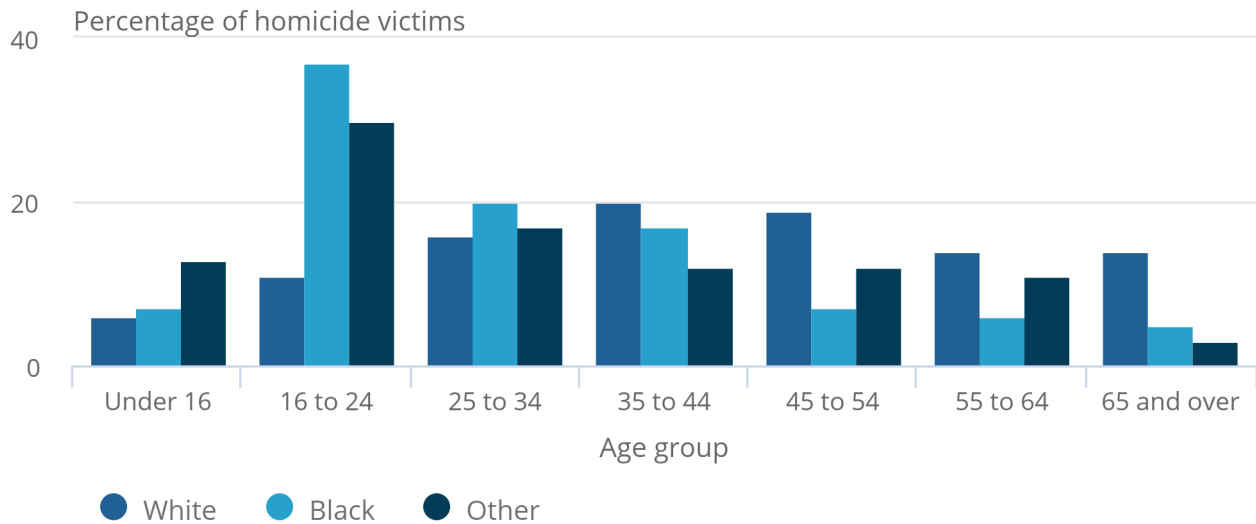
There were clear differences in the age-profile of victims between different ethnic groups. Over a third of Black victims (37%) were aged 16 to 24 years, whereas this was a much lower proportion for White victims (11%) (Figure 5; [Appendix table 5](#)). This will partly reflect the different age distributions of ethnic groups in the population. For further information see our [Ethnic group by age and sex, England and Wales: Census 2021 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 (YE) March 2024

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 (YE) March 2024



Source: Homicide Index from the Home Office

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 subcontinent), Asian, Mixed or Multiple ethnic groups 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. Among adult victims there were also different patterns in the relationships with suspects between men and women.

Adult victims

Adult female victims (defined as those aged 16 years and over) were most commonly killed by a partner or ex-partner (42%) or a family member (18%) in the year ending (YE) March 2024. For adult males, the suspected killer was more commonly a friend or acquaintance (24%) or a stranger (20%). In 23% of adult male homicides and 25% of adult female homicides, no suspect had been charged at the time of analysis (this includes homicide offences where all suspects have been acquitted). This number will fall as police investigations continue.

There were 108 domestic homicides in YE March 2024, a similar number compared with the previous year (107). Over three-quarters of victims of domestic homicide were women (77%) and almost a quarter were men (23%).

Of the 108 domestic homicides, 66 victims were killed by a partner or ex-partner (down from 73), 25 by a parent or son or daughter (up from 19) and 17 by another family member (up from 15).

Of all adult female victims, 6 in 10 (60%) were a result of domestic homicides (83). Of these 83 female victims, all but six were killed by a male suspect ([Appendix table 34](#)).

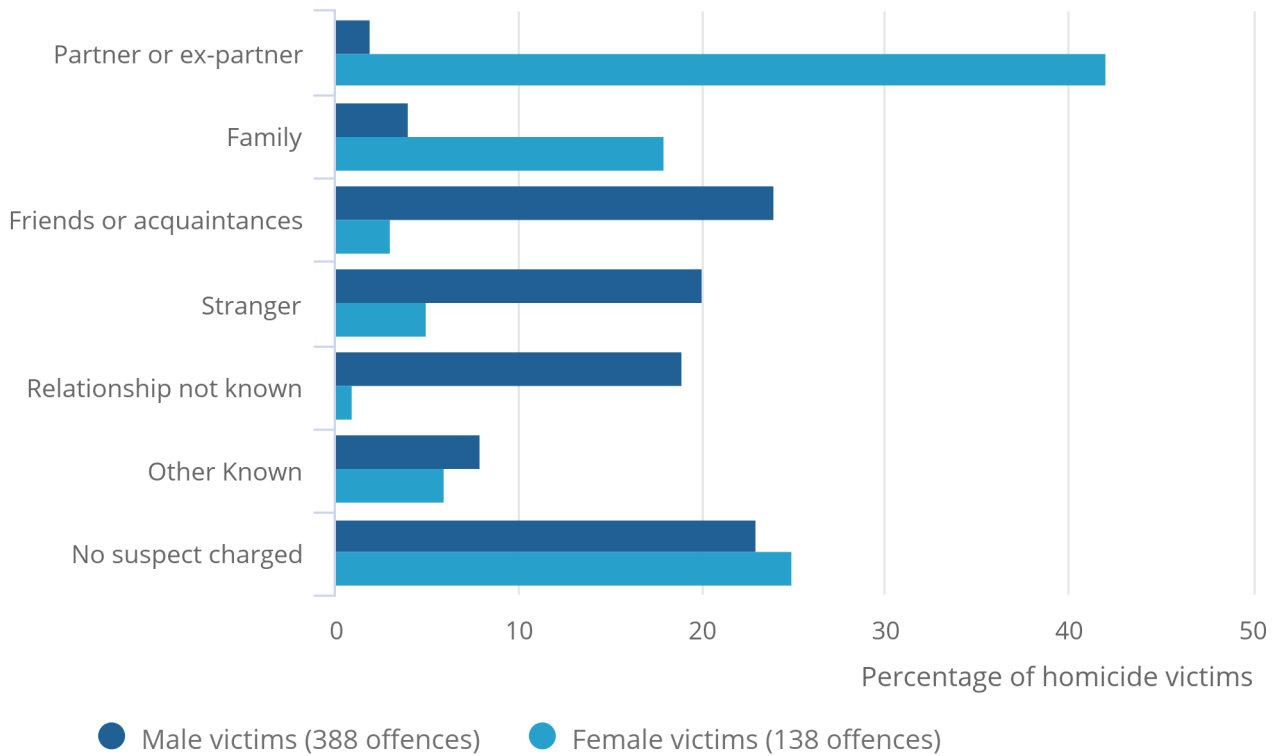
In contrast, males were much less likely to be the victim of a domestic homicide, with 6% (25) of male homicides being domestic related in YE March 2024, a similar proportion to the previous year.

Figure 6: The most common suspect for female homicide victims aged 16 years and over was a partner or ex-partner

Relationship of victims aged 16 years and over to principal suspect, England and Wales, year ending (YE) March 2024

Figure 6: The most common suspect for female homicide victims aged 16 years and over was a partner or ex-partner

Relationship of victims aged 16 years and over to principal suspect, England and Wales, year ending (YE) March 2024



Source: Homicide Index from the Home Office

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), adulterous relationship.

Child victims

There were 44 victims of homicide aged under 16 years in YE March 2024; 26 boys and 18 girls. As at 6 December 2024, there were 19 victims aged under 16 years (43%) 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 YE March 2023, 38% of victims aged under 16 years had no suspect charged as at 12 December 2023; this had fallen to 28% by 6 December 2024 and the proportion where the suspect was a parent or step-parent had increased from 35% to 45%.

As in previous years, the most common suspect, where recorded, was a parent or step-parent (43%, 19 offences).

It remains relatively uncommon for those aged under 16 years to be killed by a stranger, with two such offences in YE March 2024.

Further information on suspect characteristics is provided in [Section 8: Suspects in homicide cases](#).

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; 46%). Excluding the victims of Hillsborough, over the last decade the proportion of homicide offences committed by a sharp instrument has fluctuated between 37% and 46% each year.

There were 262 homicides committed using a knife or other sharp instrument recorded in year ending (YE) March 2024, an increase of 8% compared with the previous year (243 offences). The latest number of such victims (262) was similar to the average over the last seven years (261 offences; [Appendix table 8](#)).

There was a slight decrease in the number of White victims killed by a sharp instrument (from 138 to 133) and a slight increase in the number of Black homicide victims (from 64 to 67). Of these 67 Black homicide victims, 34 were aged under 25 years ([Appendix table 12](#)).

The most commonly used sharp instrument was a kitchen knife (109 homicides) in YE March 2024, up 8% on the previous year (101). Information on other types of sharp instrument can be found in [Appendix table 9](#). Additional analysis shows that a kitchen knife was more likely to be used in domestic sharp-instrument homicides (76%) compared with non-domestic sharp-instrument homicides (33%).

Other methods of killing

The second most common method of killing was by "kicking or hitting", accounting for 99 homicides (17% of the total). As in previous years, the majority (82%) of victims killed in this way were male.

Over 1 in 10 (12%) female victims were killed by "strangulation, asphyxiation" (18 victims). In contrast, a much smaller proportion of male victims (3%; 14) were killed this way. These figures reflect the different nature and circumstances of homicides by sex of victim.

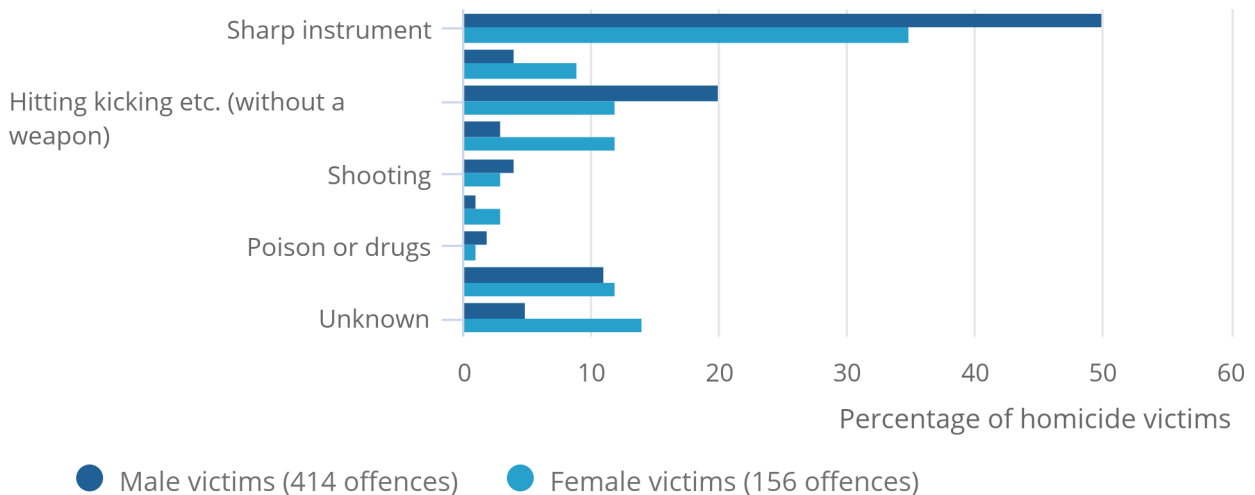
There were 22 homicide victims killed by shooting in YE March 2024 (4% of all homicides), seven fewer than the previous year. This was the lowest number since YE March 2015 (when there were 20 such homicides).

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 (YE) March 2024

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 (YE) March 2024



Source: Homicide Index from the Home Office

Notes:

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

6 . Circumstances and location of homicides

Circumstances of homicide

As at 6 December 2024, the apparent circumstances were not known for 18% of homicides (100 offences) recorded in year ending (YE) March 2024. This proportion was similar to the previous year and is likely to decrease as the police carry out further investigations.

Around half (54%, 309 offences) of all homicide cases were thought to have resulted from a quarrel, a revenge attack or a loss of temper, in YE March 2024. This was a similar proportion compared with previous years. This proportion was higher where the principal suspect was known to the victim (67%), compared with when the suspect was unknown to the victim (43%) ([Appendix table 18](#)).

Furtherance of theft or gain accounted for 6% of homicides (37 offences), and 4% (25 offences) occurred during irrational acts.

Location of homicides

Homicides were most likely to have taken place in a residential setting. There were 299 victims killed in these settings in YE March 2024, a similar number as the previous year (303).

The number of victims killed in a street, path or alleyway has been gradually increasing since YE March 2015, but with considerable fluctuation between years. Over a quarter of homicides in the latest year took place in a street, path or alleyway (28%; 159) compared with 19% (95) in YE March 2015 ([Appendix table 19](#)).

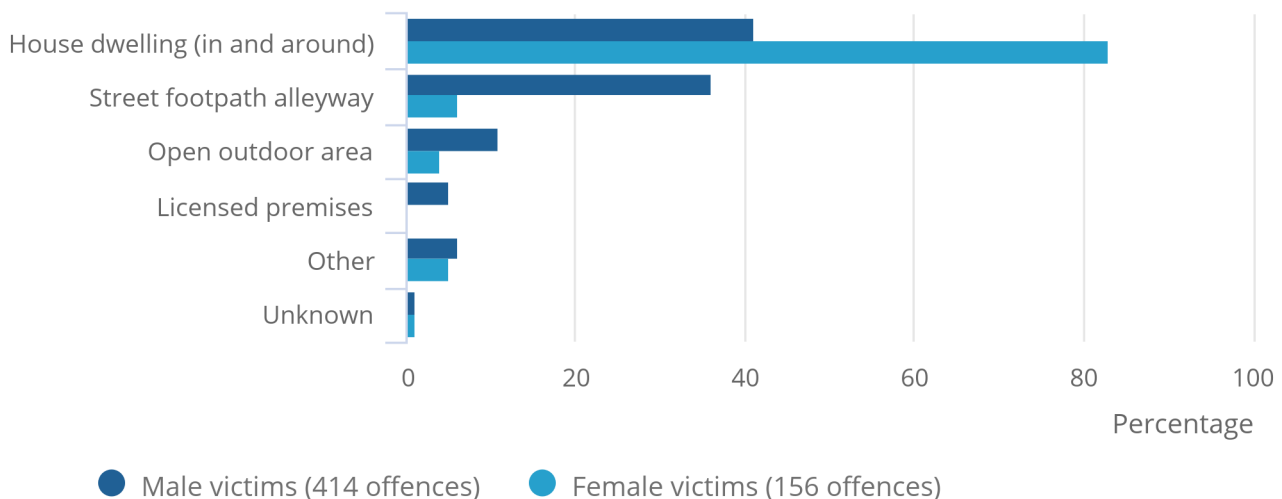
The patterns in homicide location for female and male victims, seen in Figure 8, reflect differing victim-suspect relationships and circumstances described earlier ([Appendix table 19](#)).

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

Percentage of recorded homicides, England and Wales, year ending (YE) March 2024

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

Percentage of recorded homicides, England and Wales, year ending (YE) March 2024



Source: Homicide Index from the Home Office

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

In the last three years (year ending (YE) March 2022 to YE March 2024), over a third (36%) 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 (41%) than female victims (22%), similar to previous years.

The figures for suspects were similar to those for victims. Around a third (32%) 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 20](#)).

A third (33%) of victims were known to be drug users, and 16% to be drug dealers. These proportions were higher among suspects, with almost half (48%) known to be drug users and over a quarter (29%) to be drug dealers. In a small proportion of cases, the police identified the suspects' motive as "obtaining drugs" (6%) or "stealing drug proceeds" (5%) ([Appendix table 21](#)).

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 42% in YE March 2014 to 56% in YE March 2024. However, in the latest year, the volume of such homicides (322) was similar to the previous year (320) ([Appendix table 22](#)).

[Appendix table 23](#) shows an alternative way of categorising homicides that involved illicit drugs into three groups: systemic, economic compulsive, and/or psychopharmacological ([See Section 11: Glossary](#) for definitions). In YE March 2024, 168 (29% of total homicides) met the criteria for one or more of these categories. Of these:

- 100 homicides (18% of total homicides) were systemic homicides
- 39 homicides (7% of total homicides) were economic compulsive homicides
- 74 homicides (13% of total homicides) were psychopharmacological homicides

These categorisations are based on the Goldstein tripartite framework. See our [Measuring drug-related homicide methodology: February 2024](#) for more information.

8 . Suspects in homicide cases

Homicide cases are often complex and can take considerable time to reach an outcome in court.

Last year's bulletin reported that in year ending (YE) March 2023, 26% of homicide cases had no suspects charged as at 12 December 2023 when data were extracted from the Homicide Index for analysis. This has since fallen to 20% (as at 6 December 2024) as police have had more time to conclude investigations. This number will fall further in future years.

Table 1: Number of suspects for initially recorded homicide victims, YE March 2022 to YE March 2024
Numbers and percentages as at 6 December 2024

	Apr 2021 to Mar 2022	Apr 2022 to Mar 2023	Apr 2023 to Mar 2024	Apr 2021 to Mar 2022	Apr 2022 to Mar 2023	Apr 2023 to Mar 2024
	Number			Percentage		
No suspects charged	145	117	131	21	20	23
One suspect	389	328	320	57	56	56
Two suspects	58	47	57	8	8	10
Three or more suspects	68	68	54	10	12	9
Suspects acquitted [note 1]	25	26	13	4	4	2
All initially recorded homicides	685	586	575			

Source: Homicide Index from the Home Office

Notes

1. Figures are subject to revision as cases are dealt with by the police and by the courts or as further information becomes available.

Investigative and court outcomes

In total, there were 651 suspects charged as at 6 December 2024 relating to the 575 homicides initially recorded in YE March 2024 ([Appendix table 27](#)).

Court proceedings had concluded for 415 suspects (64% of all suspects) and 15 had died (2% of all suspects). Court proceedings were pending for 217 suspects (33% of all suspects).

In the three years from YE March 2022 to YE March 2024, 80% of suspects indicted for homicide, where we have information on a court outcome, were found guilty of homicide, 14% were acquitted and 3% were convicted of a lesser offence ([Appendix table 28](#)).

The case outcomes for suspects of homicides recorded in YE March 2024 ([Appendix table 28](#)) will change as cases progress through the criminal justice system and more information becomes available.

Age, sex and ethnicity of convicted suspects

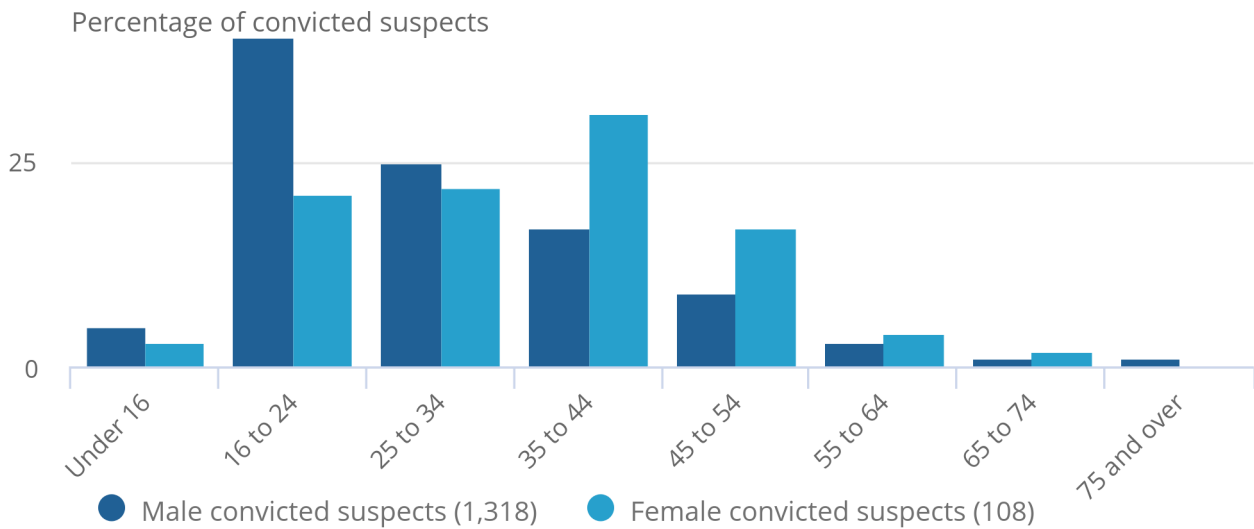
For the three-year period YE March 2022 to YE March 2024, most suspects convicted of homicide were male (1,318 or 92%). Figure 9 shows the age-profile of suspects convicted of homicide.

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 (YE) March 2022 to YE March 2024

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 (YE) March 2022 to YE March 2024



Source: Homicide Index from the Home Office

For the three-year period YE March 2022 to YE March 2024, when looking at the principal suspect of a homicide offence, around two-thirds (64%) of those convicted were identified as White. This was a lower representation than in the general population (around 82%), based on Census 2021 population figures.

Around one in five (20%) suspects were identified as Black, five times higher than their representation in the general population (4%). Around 1 in 10 (9%) suspects were identified as Asian, a similar proportion to that seen in the general population ([Appendix table 33](#)). 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 (see [Section 12: Data sources and quality](#)).

The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) published an updated [Global study on homicide 2023](#), which showed that the global homicide rate was 58 per million population in 2021. The Americas and Africa, at 150 and 127 per million population, respectively, were the regions with the highest average homicide rates in 2021. In this context, England and Wales had a relatively low rate of homicide (9.5 per million population) in year ending (YE) March 2024.

Latest published data from [UNODC](#) show that the USA had a rate of 58 per million population in 2023.

Figures from [Eurostat](#) show that the homicide rates in 2022 for the EU and European Economic Area (EEA) ranged from 0.0 per million population in Liechtenstein to 40.5 per million population in Latvia. Compared with countries in the EU, the UK nations had middling homicide rates. The [Scottish Government annual homicide figures](#) showed that the rate of homicides in Scotland was 10.4 per million population in YE March 2024, slightly higher than the previous year (9.5). The [Police Service of Northern Ireland homicide figures](#) show there were 13 homicides recorded by the police in Northern Ireland in YE March 2024, a rate of 6.8 per million population.

10 . Data on homicide in England and Wales: year ending March 2024

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

Dataset | Released 6 February 2025

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 1 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.

Drug-related homicide categories:

- systemic homicides are those arising from the fact that prohibition of drugs creates an illegal market, in which grievances cannot be reconciled through normal judicial channels so they may be settled through violence
- economic compulsive homicides arise if illicit drug users have to steal to fund their drug use; as a result, it is possible that a homicide may occur in the act of robbery or burglary
- psychopharmacological homicides occur as a result of the psychological effects that drugs have on those who take them such as increased aggression or disinhibition

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. Statistics based on the Home Office Homicide Index are accredited official statistics and were [independently reviewed by the Office for Statistics Regulation](#) in 2016. They comply with the standards of trustworthiness, quality and value in the [Code of Practice for Statistics](#) and should be labelled "accredited official statistics". 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 2024. 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 year ending (YE) March 2017 following the verdict of the Hillsborough Inquest in April 2016 (the death of the 97th victim was recorded in 2021 to 2022). Additionally, the 173 homicides attributed to Doctor 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 YE 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, including by suicide.

When the police initially record an offence as a homicide it remains classified as such unless the courts decide that a lesser offence, or no offence, took place. In all, 575 deaths were initially recorded as homicides by the police in YE March 2024. By 6 December 2024, five were no longer recorded as homicide.

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-2021 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.

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 Section 11 of our [Focus on violent crime and sexual offences, England and Wales: year ending March 2016 article](#).

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.

Homicide figures differ between countries and are not directly comparable 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.

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](#).

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

13 . Related links

[Measuring drug-related homicide methodology: February 2024](#)

Methodology | Released 8 February 2024

Information on how Goldstein's tripartite framework has been applied to drug-related homicides using Home Office Homicide Index data.

[Guide to finding crime statistics](#)

Methodology | Released 24 July 2024

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: March 2024](#)

Methodology | Released 24 July 2024

Quarterly statistics on crime levels and trends in England and Wales, including detailed information on datasets used to compile our crime statistics.

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

Bulletin | Released 30 January 2025

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

14 . Cite this article

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