

## Article

# Domestic abuse prevalence and trends, England and Wales: year ending March 2022

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

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# 1 . Other pages in this release

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## 2 . Main points

- The Crime Survey for England and Wales year ending March 2022 estimated that 5.0% of adults aged 16 years and over (2.4 million) experienced domestic abuse in the last year.
- There was no significant change in the prevalence of domestic abuse experienced by adults aged 16 to 59 years in the last year compared with the year ending March 2020, a year largely unaffected by the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic and the last time the data were collected.
- The police recorded 1,500,369 domestic abuse-related incidents and crimes in England and Wales in the year ending March 2022; 910,980 of these were recorded as domestic abuse-related crimes.
- The number of domestic abuse-related crimes has continued to increase in recent years with the latest figure 7.7% higher than the year ending March 2021, and 14.1% higher than the year ending March 2020.
- As the survey showed no change when compared with before the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, the increase in domestic abuse-related crimes recorded by the police may reflect increased reporting.

Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW) data presented in this release for the year ending March 2022, are not badged as [National Statistics](#). They are based on six months of data collection between October 2021 and March 2022. Caution should be taken when using these data due to the impact of the reduced data collection period and lower response rates on the quality of the estimates.

## 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. The return of face-to-face interviewing allowed the collection of data on domestic abuse to restart. Caution should be taken when using these data because of the impact of the reduced data collection period and the lower response rates on the quality of the estimates.

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

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

## Domestic abuse in the last year

The Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW) estimated 2.4 million adults aged 16 years and over experienced domestic abuse in the year ending March 2022. This is a prevalence rate of approximately 5 in 100 adults (Figure 1).

Information on the prevalence of domestic abuse by demographic variables such as sex and ethnicity can be found in the [Domestic abuse victim characteristics, year ending March 2022](#) article.

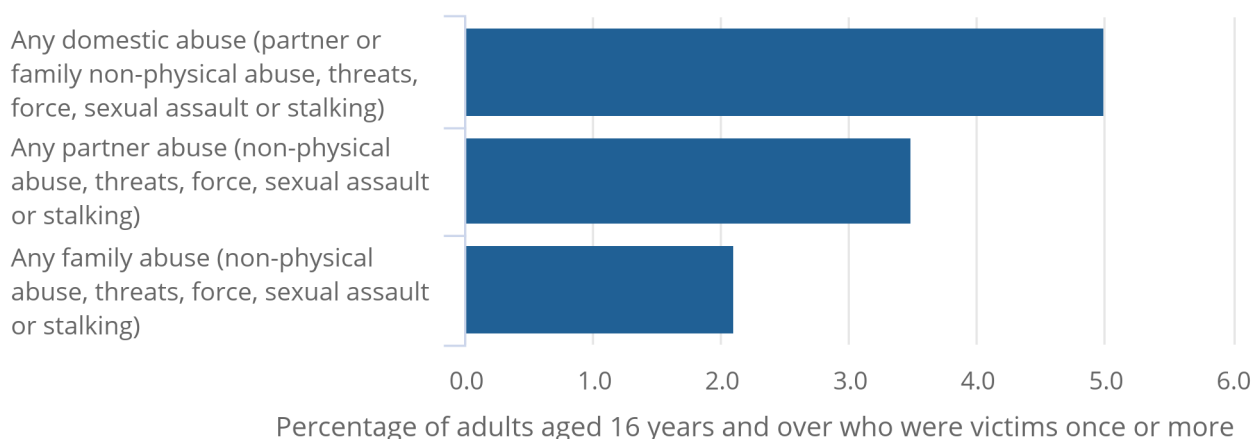
Figure 1 shows a higher percentage of adults experienced domestic abuse by a partner or ex-partner (3.5%) than by a family member (2.1%) in the last year.

### Figure 1: One in 20 adults experienced domestic abuse in the year ending March 2022

Prevalence of domestic abuse in the last year for adults aged 16 years and over, by perpetrator-relationship, England and Wales, year ending March 2022

#### Figure 1: One in 20 adults experienced domestic abuse in the year ending March 2022

Prevalence of domestic abuse in the last year for adults aged 16 years and over, by perpetrator-relationship, England and Wales, year ending March 2022



Source: Office for National Statistics - Crime Survey for England and Wales

#### Notes:

1. Data for the year ending March 2022 are not badged as National Statistics. They are based on six months of data collection from the face-to-face Crime Survey for England and Wales between October 2021 and March 2022. Caution should be taken when using these data due to the impact of the reduced data collection period and lower response rates 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.

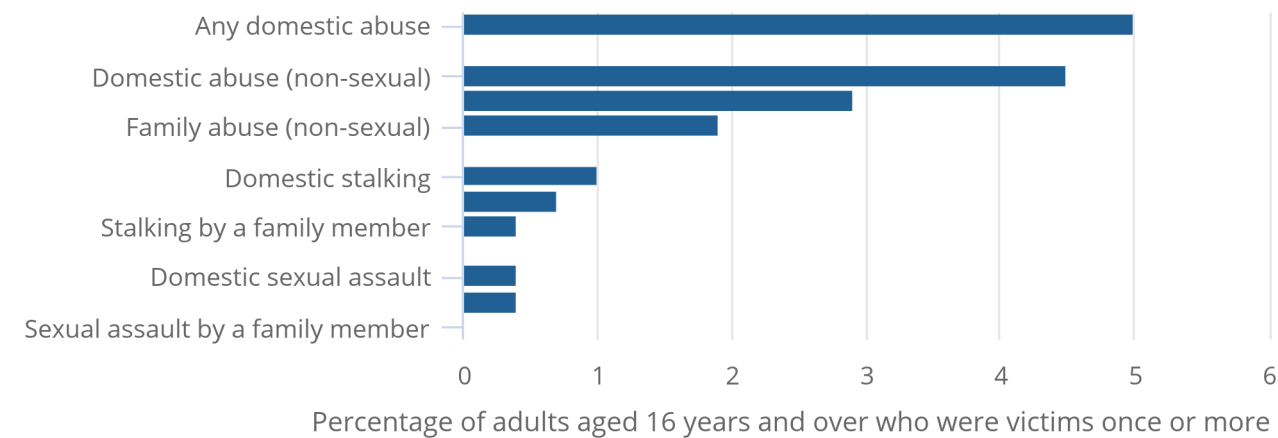
Figure 2 shows that non-sexual domestic abuse was experienced by the highest percentage of adults aged 16 years and over (4.5%) in the year ending March 2022. Domestic stalking was experienced by 1.0% of adults, and domestic sexual assault was experienced by 0.4% of adults in the year ending March 2022.

**Figure 2: Non-sexual domestic abuse was experienced by the highest percentage of adults aged 16 years and over**

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

Figure 2: Non-sexual domestic abuse was experienced by the highest percentage of adults aged 16 years and over

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



Source: Office for National Statistics - Crime Survey for England and Wales

Notes:

1. Data for the year ending March 2022 are not badged as National Statistics. They are based on six months of data collection from the face-to-face Crime Survey for England and Wales between October 2021 and March 2022. Caution should be taken when using these data due to the impact of the reduced data collection period and lower response rates 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. The estimate for sexual assault by a family member has been suppressed because of disclosure constraints.

Following the removal of the upper age limit for survey respondents in October 2021, when analysing data over time, we use the 16 to 59 years age range to give a comparable time series. In the year ending March 2022, for adults aged 16 to 59 years, the prevalence rate of domestic abuse was 5.7%. This was not significantly different to the year ending March 2020, a year largely unaffected the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, and the last time the data were collected (Figure 3).

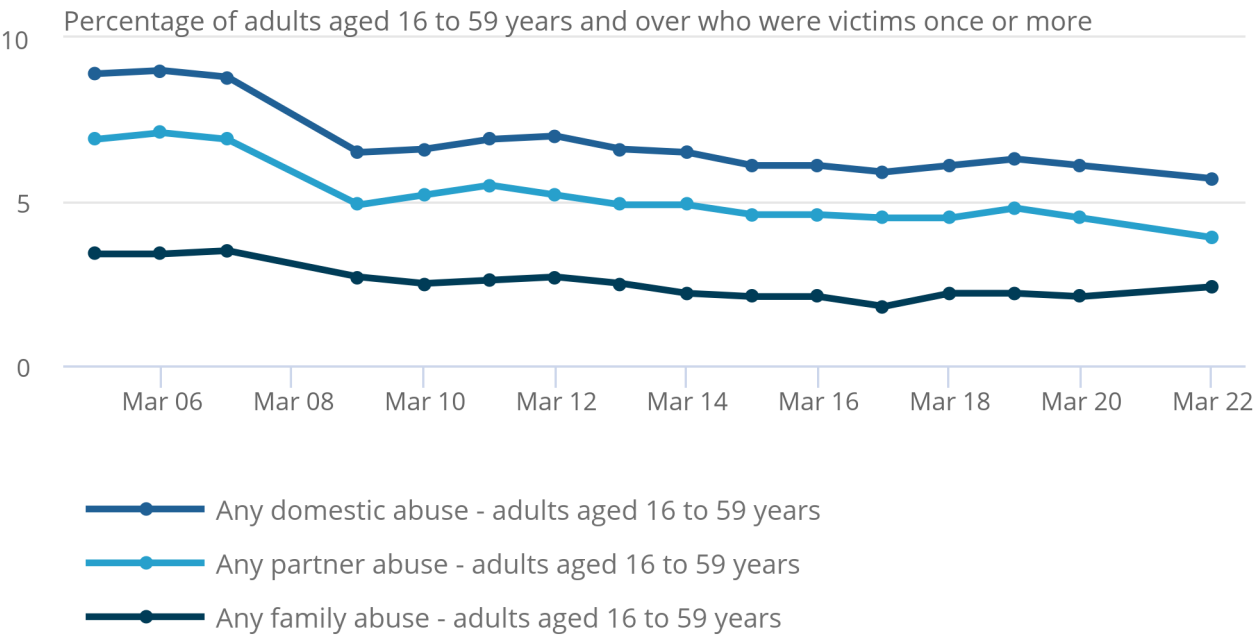
The prevalence of partner abuse has remained similar with no significant change seen in the year ending March 2022 (3.9%) compared with the year ending March 2020 (4.5%). Similarly, there has been little change in the prevalence of family abuse.

**Figure 3: Domestic abuse prevalence has not changed significantly compared with the year before the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic**

Prevalence of domestic abuse in the last year among adults aged 16 to 59 years, England and Wales, year ending March 2005 to year ending March 2022

Figure 3: Domestic abuse prevalence has not changed significantly compared with the year before the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic

Prevalence of domestic abuse in the last year among adults aged 16 to 59 years, England and Wales, year ending March 2005 to year ending March 2022



Source: Office for National Statistics - Crime Survey for England and Wales

Notes:

1. Data for the year ending March 2022 are not badged as National Statistics. They are based on six months of data collection from the face-to-face Crime Survey for England and Wales between October 2021 and March 2022. Caution should be taken when using these data due to the impact of the reduced data collection period and lower response rates on the quality of the estimates.
2. No data are available for the year ending March 2021 because the Crime Survey for England and Wales was suspended due to the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.
3. No data are 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.
4. Partner abuse refers to abuse carried out by a partner or ex-partner.

## Domestic abuse since the age of 16 years

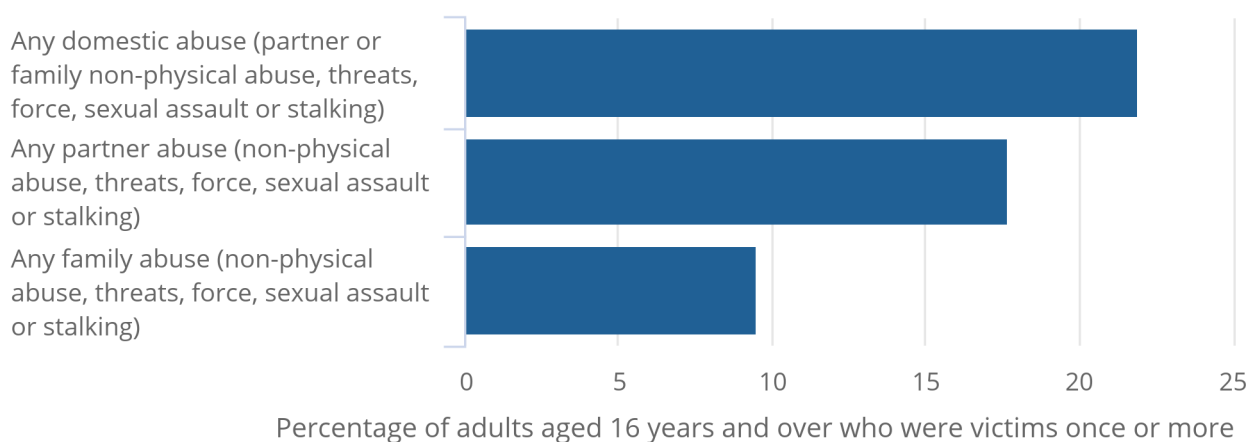
The year ending March 2022 CSEW showed that an estimated 10.4 million adults aged 16 years and over had experienced domestic abuse since the age of 16 years. This equates to a prevalence rate of approximately 22 in 100 adults (Figure 4).

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

Prevalence of domestic abuse since the age of 16 years for adults aged 16 years and over, by perpetrator-relationship, England and Wales, year ending March 2022

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

Prevalence of domestic abuse since the age of 16 years for adults aged 16 years and over, by perpetrator-relationship, England and Wales, year ending March 2022



Source: Office for National Statistics - Crime Survey for England and Wales

#### Notes:

1. Data for the year ending March 2022 are not badged as National Statistics. They are based on six months of data collection from the face-to-face Crime Survey for England and Wales between October 2021 and March 2022. Caution should be taken when using these data due to the impact of the reduced data collection period and lower response rates 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 the abuse type experienced by the highest percentage of adults since the age of 16 years (19.4%). Twice as many victims experienced non-sexual domestic abuse by a partner or ex-partner (15.0%) than by a family member (7.3%) since the age of 16 years.

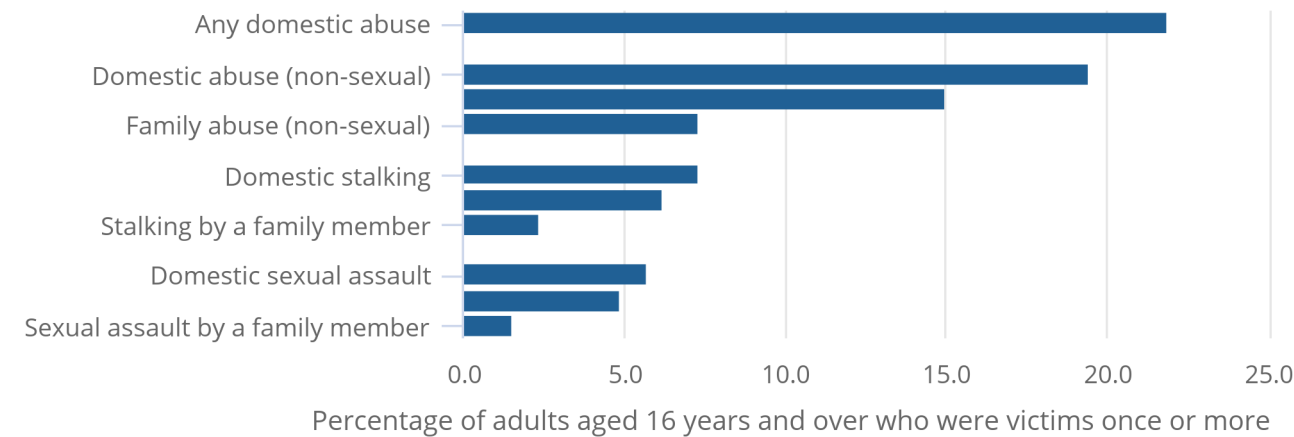


**Figure 5: Non-sexual domestic abuse was experienced by the highest percentage of adults since the age of 16 years**

Prevalence of domestic abuse since the age of 16 years for adults aged 16 years and over, by type of abuse, England and Wales, year ending March 2022

Figure 5: Non-sexual domestic abuse was experienced by the highest percentage of adults since the age of 16 years

Prevalence of domestic abuse since the age of 16 years for adults aged 16 years and over, by type of abuse, England and Wales, year ending March 2022



Source: Office for National Statistics - Crime Survey for England and Wales

Notes:

1. Data for the year ending March 2022 are not badged as National Statistics. They are based on six months of data collection from the face-to-face Crime Survey for England and Wales between October 2021 and March 2022. Caution should be taken when using these data due to the impact of the reduced data collection period and lower response rates 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

The police recorded 1,500,369 domestic abuse-related incidents and crimes [note 1] in England and Wales in the year ending March 2022. This was an increase of 120,113 compared with the year ending March 2020 and an increase of 40,706 from the previous year [note 2].

In the year ending March 2022, there were 589,389 domestic abuse-related incidents [note 3], returning to similar levels seen before the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic after an increase in the year ending March 2021 (Figure 6).

Domestic abuse-related crimes continued the increasing trend seen over recent years, rising by 7.7% compared with the previous year (from 845,734 to 910,980) and by 14.1% compared with the year ending March 2020, a year largely unaffected by the pandemic. Some of this increase may be, in part, driven by increased willingness and confidence of victims to report domestic abuse-related crimes.

Since the year ending March 2019, the number of domestic abuse-related crimes recorded by the police in England and Wales has exceeded the number of domestic abuse-related incidents (Figure 6).

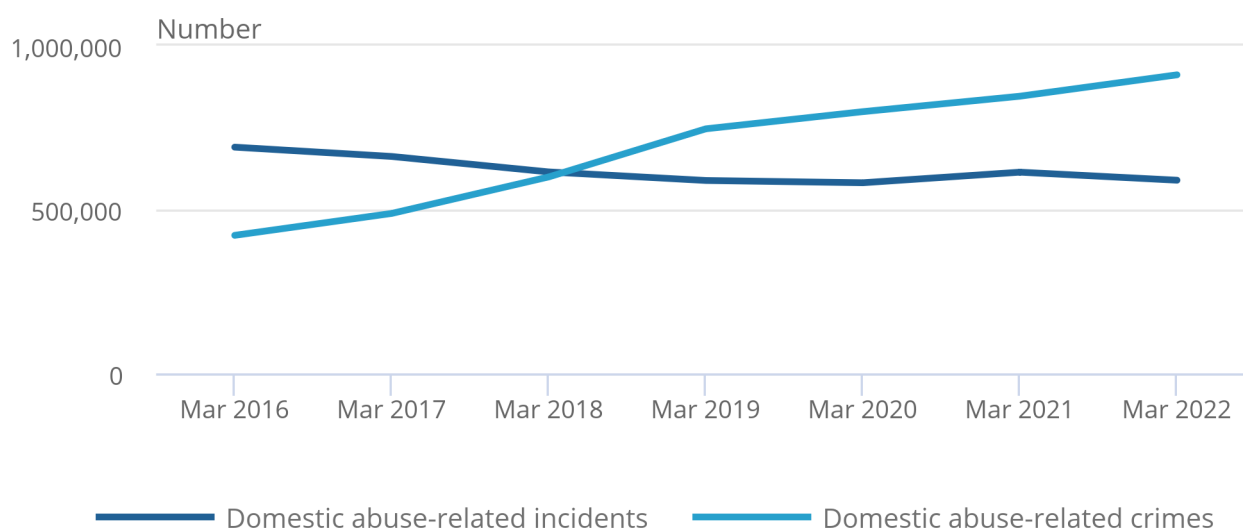
In the year ending March 2022, domestic abuse-related crimes represented 17.1% of all offences recorded by the police.

## Figure 6: Domestic abuse-related incidents decreased while domestic abuse-related crimes increased

Number of domestic abuse-related incidents and crimes recorded by the police, England and Wales, year ending March 2016 to year ending March 2022

### Figure 6: Domestic abuse-related incidents decreased while domestic abuse-related crimes increased

Number of domestic abuse-related incidents and crimes recorded by the police, England and Wales, year ending March 2016 to year ending March 2022



Source: Home Office - Police recorded crime

#### 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.

In the year ending March 2022, the proportion of offences identified as domestic abuse-related in all offence groups decreased compared with the previous year, except for "other offence types". This reflects decreases in overall police recorded crime (excluding fraud and computer misuse) in the year ending March 2021, owing to the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.

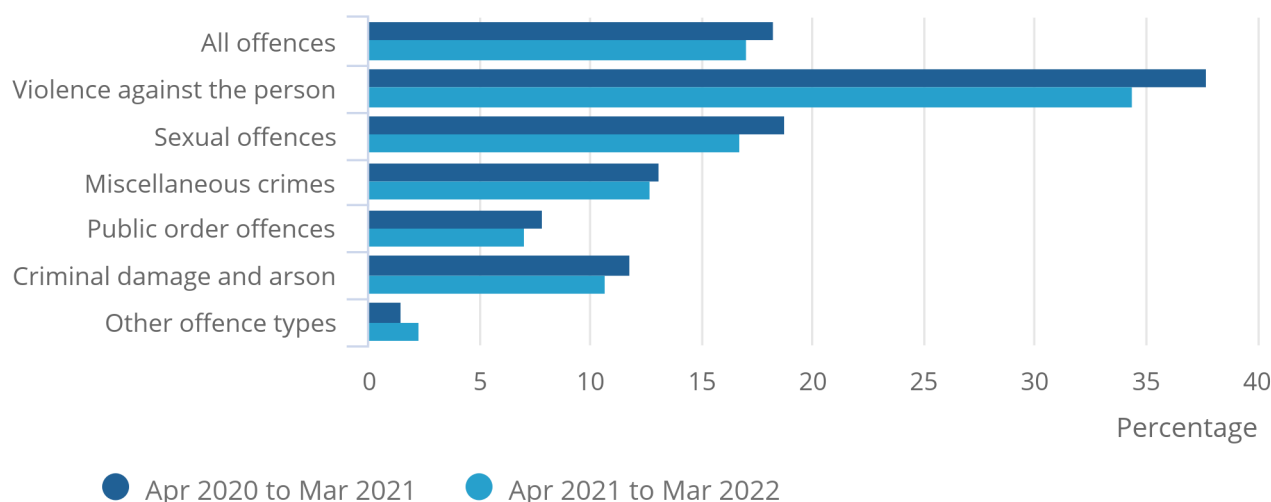
Violence against the person had the highest proportion of offences identified as domestic abuse-related (34.4%) in the year ending March 2022 (Figure 7).

**Figure 7: Most offences recorded by the police which were identified as domestic abuse-related decreased in the year ending March 2022**

Percentage of offences recorded by the police that were identified as domestic abuse-related, England and Wales, year ending March 2021 and year ending March 2022

Figure 7: Most offences recorded by the police which were identified as domestic abuse-related decreased in the year ending March 2022

Percentage of offences recorded by the police that were identified as domestic abuse-related, England and Wales, year ending March 2021 and year ending March 2022



**Source: Home Office - Police recorded crime**

**Notes:**

1. Police recorded crime data are not designated as National Statistics.

The police recorded 234,045 domestic abuse-related stalking and harassment offences in the year ending March 2022, 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 (42.6%), followed by the malicious communications subgroup category (36.4%; Figure 8).

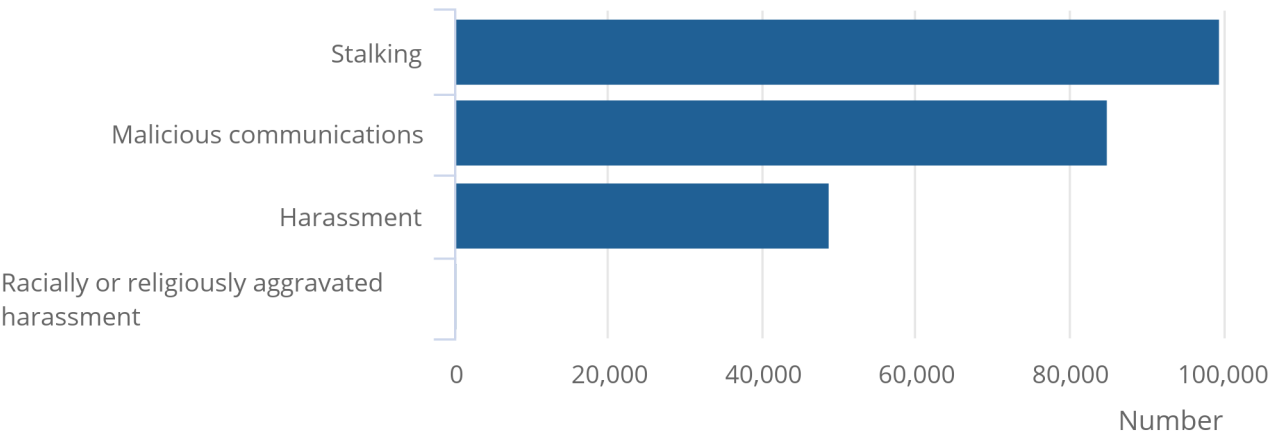
Following a change to the Home Office [Counting rules for recording crime](#) in April 2020, offences within the stalking sub-group category increased. The change means cases where a course of conduct is reported between a victim and their former partner must be recorded as "stalking" unless the police are satisfied that the matter amounts to harassment in law only. Therefore, data for years ending March 2021 and March 2022 are not comparable with previous years.

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

Number of domestic abuse-related stalking and harassment offences recorded by the police, by offence, England and Wales, year ending March 2022

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

Number of domestic abuse-related stalking and harassment offences recorded by the police, by offence, England and Wales, year ending March 2022



Source: Home Office - Police recorded crime

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.

Controlling or coercive behaviour

There were 41,626 offences of coercive control recorded by the police in England and Wales in the year ending March 2022. This is compared with 33,954 in the year ending March 2021 and 24,856 in the year ending March 2020. 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.

## Domestic homicide

There were 373 domestic homicides recorded by the police in the three-year period between year ending March 2019 and year ending March 2021. This represents approximately 1 in 5 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 the [Domestic abuse victim characteristics, year ending March 2022](#) article.

### Notes for: Police recorded crime

1. 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.
2. 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 then a crime recorded on 1 April.
3. 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 25 November 2022

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 25 November 2022

Data from the Crime Survey for England and Wales on stalking including numbers, types, and victim characteristics.

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

Dataset | Released on 25 November 2022

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 Crime Survey for England and Wales (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 the [Domestic abuse in England and Wales overview](#).

### Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW)

For reasons outlined in Section 4, CSEW estimates for the year ending March 2022 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](#)
- [Domestic abuse QMI](#)
- [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 2022 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 2019 to year ending March 2021) 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

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

Article | Released 25 November 2022

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

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

Article | Released 25 November 2022

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, 2021 to 2022](#)

Article | Released 20 October 2022

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



## 10 . Cite this article

Office for National Statistics (ONS), released 25 November 2022, ONS website, article, [Domestic abuse prevalence and trends, England and Wales: year ending March 2022](#)