

Article

# Sexual offences in England and Wales: year ending March 2017

Analyses on sexual offences from the year ending March 2017 Crime Survey for England and Wales and crimes recorded by police.



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## Correction

**20 December 2018 12:00**

Errors have occurred in section 6 due to a methodological issue. We have corrected these errors. You can see all previous versions of this data on the previous versions page. We apologise for any inconvenience.

This article has been superseded by [Sexual offending: victimisation and the path through the criminal justice system](#).

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# 1 . Main points

This article has been superseded by [Sexual offending: victimisation and the path through the criminal justice system](#).

- The Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW) is the preferred measure of trends in the prevalence of sexual assault since this is unaffected by changes in police activity, recording practices and propensity of victims to report such crimes.
- The CSEW estimated that 20% of women and 4% of men have experienced some type of sexual assault since the age of 16, equivalent to an estimated 3.4 million female victims and 631,000 male victims.
- An estimated 3.1% of women (510,000) and 0.8% of men (138,000) aged 16 to 59 experienced sexual assault in the last year, according to the year ending March 2017 CSEW; no significant change from the previous year's survey.
- There has been no significant change in the prevalence of sexual assault measured by the CSEW between the year ending March 2005 (2.6%) and the year ending March 2017 (2.0%) surveys.
- The CSEW showed that around 5 in 6 victims (83%) did not report their experiences to the police.
- The increase in sexual offences recorded by the police is thought to be driven by improvements in recording practices and a greater willingness of victims to come forward to report such crimes, including non-recent victims.

## 2 . How are sexual offences defined and measured?

This article includes information on sexual offences from two sources:

- the self-completion modules of the Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW) on sexual assaults experienced by men and women aged 16 to 59<sup>1</sup> resident in households<sup>2</sup> in England and Wales
- sexual offences reported to and recorded by the police

Headline CSEW prevalence estimates for sexual assault included within this article have previously been published in July 2017<sup>3</sup>. This article provides more detailed findings and includes information on the nature of incidents experienced. The latest police recorded crime data for the year ending March 2017 included within this article have previously been published in January 2018 alongside the [Crime in England and Wales: year ending September 2017](#) bulletin. More detailed findings from the Home Office Data Hub are provided in this article and additional breakdowns by police force area are included within the [Appendix Tables](#) published alongside this article.

### Crime Survey for England and Wales

Sexual assaults measured by the CSEW cover rape or assault by penetration (including attempts), and indecent exposure or unwanted touching. They are measured as part of the self-completion module<sup>4</sup> on domestic abuse, sexual assault and stalking<sup>5</sup>.

The use of self-completion on tablet computers to collect such information allows respondents to feel more at ease when answering these sensitive questions, due to increased confidence in the privacy and confidentiality of the survey. While some questions are asked about sexual assaults in the face-to-face section of the interview, a very small number are willing to disclose such sensitive incidents to the interviewer. Therefore, these figures are too unreliable to report and these data are excluded from the headline CSEW estimates. The self-completion section of the survey provides the most reliable source of CSEW data on sexual assaults.

There are two headline measures of sexual assault in the CSEW: one relates to experiences since the age of 16 and the other is limited to those experiences in the 12 months prior to interview.

An additional self-completion module asking victims about the nature of incidents of rape or assault by penetration (including attempts) experienced is included in the CSEW on a rotating basis. This module was included in the year ending March 2017 CSEW, the first time in three years that the module has been run. Findings from this module are included in this article.

Unlike estimates from face-to-face interviews, estimates from the self-completion module are not affected by the current method of handling high-frequency repeat victimisation, which caps the number of reported incidents at five<sup>6</sup> (see [Improving estimates of repeat victimisation derived from the Crime Survey for England and Wales](#) for more information). Self-completion modules provide estimates of victims rather than incidents, and no cap is applied to this data.

One of the strengths of the CSEW is that it covers many crimes that are not reported to the police. The under-reporting of crime to the police is known to be particularly acute for sexual offences, with many more offences committed than are reported to and recorded by the police. The CSEW provides reliable estimates of the prevalence of sexual assaults using a consistent methodology that is not affected by changes in recording practices and police activity or by changes in the propensity of victims to report to the police.

All changes reported in this article, based on the CSEW, are statistically significant at the 5% level unless stated otherwise.

## **Sexual offences recorded by the police**

Sexual offences recorded by the police cover a broader range of offences than the CSEW including rape, sexual assault, sexual exploitation of children, exposure and voyeurism, and other sexual offences. There are a number of different offence codes for rape and sexual assault, depending on the age and sex of the victim. Sexual offences recorded by the police are grouped into two main categories – rape and other sexual offences.

The term “sexual assault” in police recorded crime refers to one type of sexual offence, that is the sexual touching of a person without their consent. This differs from the CSEW term of “sexual assault”, which is used to describe all types of sexual offences measured by the survey.

Police recorded crime figures are not directly comparable with the estimates from the CSEW, given the broader range of sexual offences covered in police recorded crime (for example, sexual exploitation of children, incest and sexual grooming). In addition, [Home Office Counting Rules](#) for recorded crime will differ in some respects from the Crime Survey in the way in which incidents are counted.

The data held by the police can only provide a partial picture of the level of sexual offences experienced in England and Wales because of a high level of under-reporting to the police. The police figures are also prone to changes in recording practices and the propensity of victims to report to the police, which can make interpreting trends difficult.

The [Crime-recording: making the victim count](#) report, published by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) in November 2014, found that levels of under-recording by the police were particularly pronounced for sexual offences (which were under-recorded by 26% nationally). More [recent Crime Data Integrity inspections](#) carried out by HMICFRS<sup>7</sup> indicate that there is evidence of improvements in the recording of sexual offences made by forces since 2014. However, the level of improvement varies between forces and some forces have further work to do to ensure that all reports of crime are recorded correctly. Therefore, the increases in police recorded sexual offences as a result of improved recording may continue for some time.

High-profile coverage of sexual offences and the police response to reports of non-recent sexual offending is another factor that is likely to influence police recording of sexual offences. For example, Operation Yewtree, which began in 2012, and more recently, allegations by former footballers, alongside a [dedicated police operation](#) set up to investigate these. Such operations are likely to have an ongoing influence on victims' willingness to come forward to report both recent and non-recent offences.

Given the different factors affecting the reporting and recording of these offences, these data do not currently provide a reliable indication of current trends in sexual offences. Although police recorded crime cannot give a reliable estimate of trends, it does provide information about demands on the police in relation to sexual offences.

The Home Office is continuing to implement an improved data collection system called the Data Hub. This allows the police to provide more detailed information to the Home Office, enabling a greater range of analyses to be carried out. Such details include characteristics of victims and associated aggravating factors of crime. The Home Office is continuing to develop and implement this system across all 44 police forces in England and Wales. Selected data on sexual offences for the year ending March 2017 is provided from a subset of forces that were able to supply detailed data of sufficient quality and are published as Experimental Statistics in advance of all forces being able to do so.

## **Notes for: How are sexual offences defined and measured?**

1. The upper age limit for the self-completion module increased to 74 years from April 2017.
2. The CSEW does not cover the population living in group residences or other institutions (for example, care homes or halls of residence), nor does it cover the population not resident in households (for example, tourists or visitors), or crimes against the commercial or business sector.
3. Published alongside the [Crime in England and Wales: year ending March 2017](#) bulletin.
4. "Self-completion" means that the respondent reads the questions themselves and records their answers directly onto a laptop.
5. This module was first included in the CSEW in 2001 and then on a continuous basis since April 2004. The 2001 module differed from the one used since the year ending March 2005 and therefore the year ending March 2005 is used as a baseline for trends.
6. The current methodology for handling high-frequency repeat victimisation is under review and work is ongoing to change the current cap of five to a lighter cap derived by applying the 98th percentile of victim incident counts for each crime type.
7. These reports were published during 2016 and 2017, and the most recent reports were published on 28 November 2017.

## **3 . How prevalent are sexual assaults?**

## Sexual assaults experienced since the age of 16

The year ending March 2017 Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW) estimated that 12.1% of adults aged 16 to 59 have experienced sexual assault (including attempts) since the age of 16, equivalent to an estimated 4 million victims ([Appendix Tables 1 and 2](#)).

Indecent exposure or unwanted sexual touching (11.5% of adults aged 16 to 59, 3.8 million victims) was more common than rape or assault by penetration (including attempts) (3.4%, 1.1 million victims).

An estimated 3.6% of adults have experienced domestic sexual assault (including attempts), that is sexual assault perpetrated by a partner or family member. Around three times as many adults experienced sexual assault (including attempts) by a partner (3.1%) than by a family member (0.9%).

More information on domestic abuse can be found in [Domestic abuse: findings from the Crime Survey for England and Wales, year ending March 2017](#).

## Sexual assaults experienced in the last year

The year ending March 2017 CSEW estimated that 2.0% of adults aged 16 to 59 experienced sexual assault (including attempts) in the previous 12 months, equivalent to an estimated 646,000 victims (Figure 1; [Appendix Tables 1 and 3](#)).

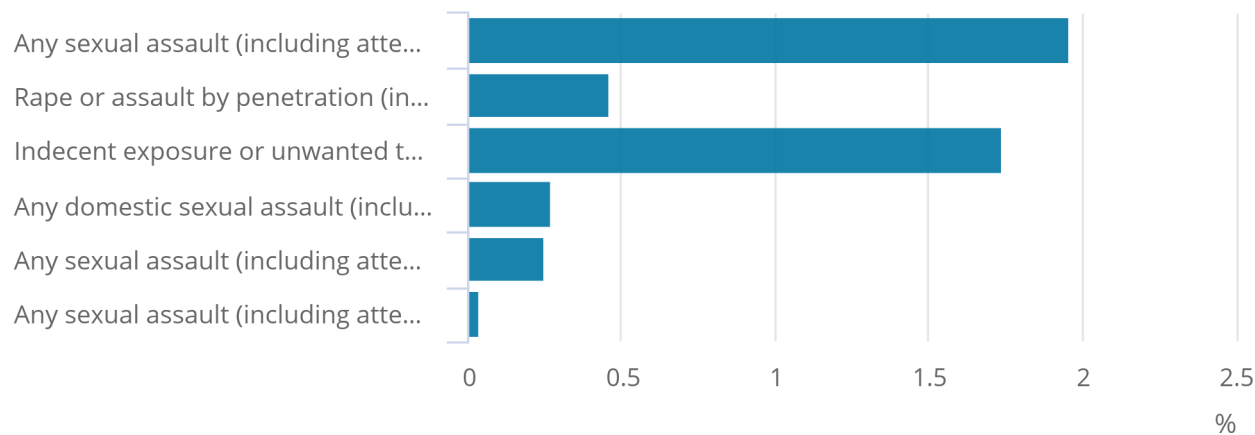
An estimated 1.7% of adults aged 16 to 59 experienced indecent exposure or unwanted sexual touching in the last year, around three times as many as had experienced rape or assault by penetration (including attempts) (0.5%).

Figure 1: Prevalence of sexual assault in the last year for adults aged 16 to 59, by type of sexual assault

Year ending March 2017, Crime Survey for England and Wales

Figure 1: Prevalence of sexual assault in the last year for adults aged 16 to 59, by type of sexual assault

Year ending March 2017, Crime Survey for England and Wales



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

Notes:

- 1. Domestic sexual assault includes both sexual assault by a partner and by a family member.

## 4 . Sexual offences recorded by the police

Police recorded crime statistics must be interpreted with caution. The police can only record crimes that are brought to their attention and for many types of offence these data cannot provide a reliable measure of levels or trends as they can be affected by varying policing priorities, activity and changes in crime-recording practices. This is particularly the case with sexual offences and recent trends have been driven by a number of these factors. However, the police figures provide useful insight into the changing demands on the police and how this may impact further downstream in the criminal justice system.

There were a total of 121,187 sexual offences recorded by the police in England and Wales in the year ending March 2017 ([Appendix Table 8](#)), equating to 2.1 sexual offences per 1,000 population ([Appendix Table 9b](#)).

The number of sexual offences recorded increased by 14% compared with the previous year and is now at the highest level recorded since the introduction of the National Crime Recording Standard (NCRS) in April 2002. The rate of year-on-year increases, however, has slowed over recent years and the latest increase is considerably less than that seen in the previous two years (38% and 20% respectively). This trend can be seen in both rape and other sexual offences (Figure 2). However, the latest available figures for the [year ending September 2017](#) suggest that the rate of year-on-year increases is rising again. Given the different factors affecting the reporting and recording of these offences, these data do not currently provide a reliable indication of current trends in sexual offences.

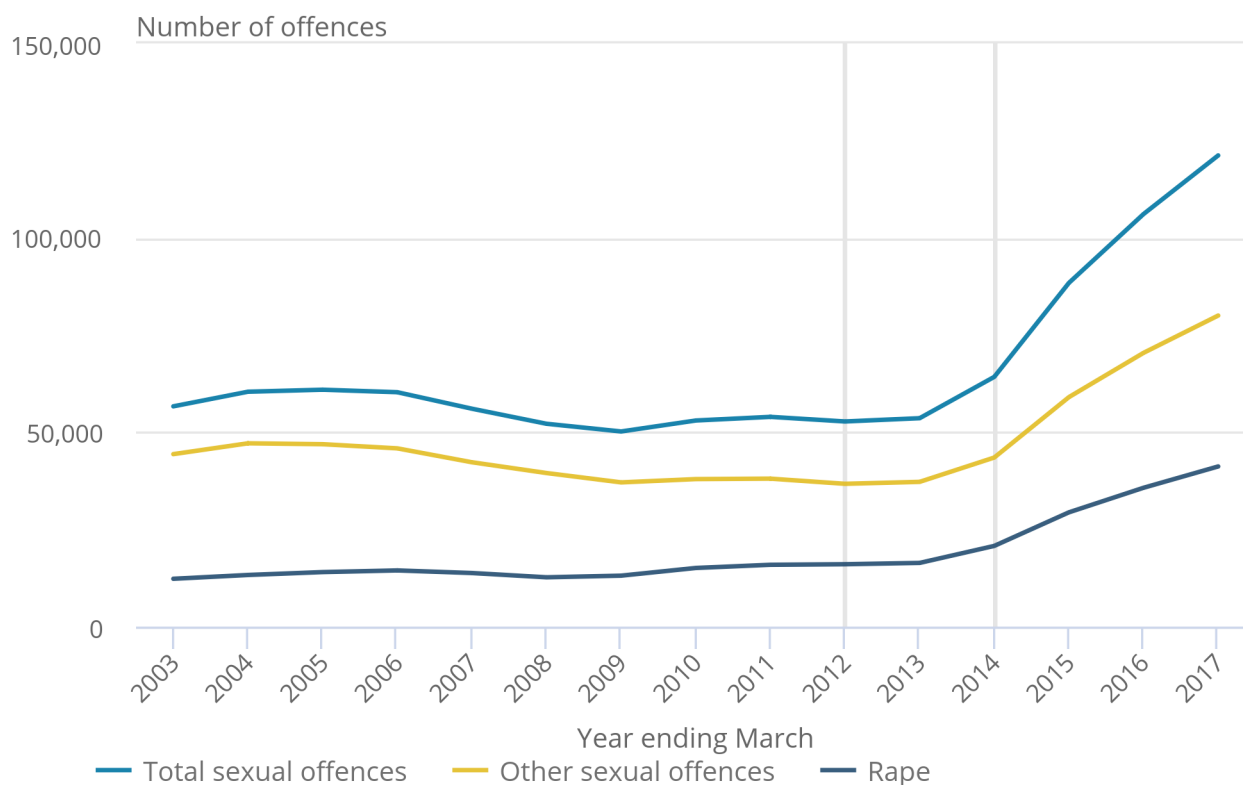


**Figure 2: Police recorded sexual offences, by offence type, year ending March 2003 to year ending March 2017**

Figure 2: Police recorded sexual offences, by offence type, year ending March 2003 to year ending March 2017

October 2012:  
Operation  
Yewtree  
is launched

November 2017:  
HMICFRS publishes  
critical report  
significant under-recor  
of  
sexual  
offences



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

**Notes:**

1. Police recorded crime data are not designated as National Statistics.
2. The National Crime Recording Standard (NCRS) was introduced in April 2002, although some forces adopted NCRS practices before the standard was formally introduced. Figures before and after that date are not directly comparable. The introduction of NCRS led to a rise in recording in year ending March 2003 and, particularly for violent crime, in the following years as forces continued to improve compliance with the new standard.
3. Includes the British Transport Police.
4. The Sexual Offences Act 2003, introduced in May 2004, altered the definition and coverage of sexual offences.
5. HMICFRS refers to Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services.

Within the overall increase:

- police recorded rape increased by 15% (to 41,186 offences) compared with the previous year
- other sexual offences increased by 14% (to 80,001)
- sexual offences against children<sup>1</sup> contributed over one-third (41%; 6,129 offences) to the total increase

For a subset of forces providing data to the Home Office Data Hub, 27% of sexual offences recorded in the year ending March 2017 were non-recent offences (those that took place more than 12 months before being recorded by the police). Non-recent offences increased by 16% compared with the year ending March 2016. Over the last five years, the number of non-recent sexual offences recorded by the police has more than tripled<sup>2</sup>. This rise is in line with an overall increase in the number of sexual offences recorded over the same period, with non-recent offences accounting for between 25% and 27% of all sexual offences reported in any given year. While non-recent offences remain an important contributor to the latest rise in sexual offences (33%<sup>3</sup>), the increase in current offences (those that took place within 12 months of being recorded by the police) were the main driver.

### **Notes for: Sexual offences recorded by the police**

1. This includes “rape of a male or female child under 16”, “rape of a male or female child under 13”, “sexual assault on a male or female child under 13”, “sexual activity involving a child under 13 or under 16” and “abuse of children through sexual exploitation”.
2. Based on findings from the Home Office Data Hub (HODH) from a subset of forces.
3. Based on findings from the Home Office Data Hub (HODH) from a subset of forces.

## **5 . What are the long-term trends in sexual assault?**

As police recorded crime data cannot currently be used to provide a reliable indication of trends in sexual offences, this section uses Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW) data only.

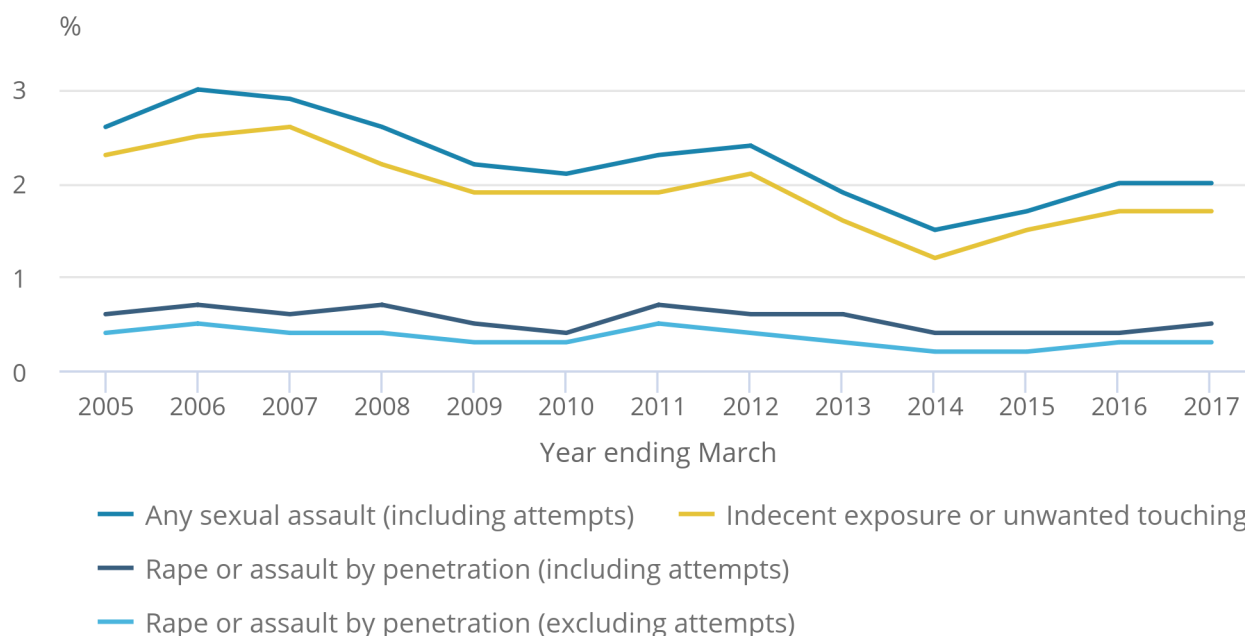
The overall prevalence of sexual assault experienced by adults aged 16 to 59 in the last 12 months has not changed significantly since the year ending March 2005 CSEW, ranging between 1.5% and 3.0% over this period (Figure 3). However, there has been a significant decrease in the prevalence of indecent exposure or unwanted sexual touching experienced in the last 12 months, from 2.3% in the year ending March 2005 to 1.7% in the year ending March 2017.

**Figure 3: Prevalence of sexual assault in the last year for adults aged 16 to 59, by type of sexual assault**

Year ending March 2005 to year ending March 2017, Crime Survey for England and Wales

## Figure 3: Prevalence of sexual assault in the last year for adults aged 16 to 59, by type of sexual assault

Year ending March 2005 to year ending March 2017, Crime Survey for England and Wales



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

### Notes:

1. The sample size is lower for the years ending March 2011 to March 2013 than for other years due to use of a split-sample experiment in these years. The methodological note titled [Split sample for intimate personal violence 2013-14](#) provides further information.
2. New questions were introduced into the survey from the year ending March 2013, and estimates from this year onwards are calculated using these new questions. Estimates for earlier years are calculated from the original questions with an adjustment applied to make them comparable to the new questions.

## 6 . Which groups of people are most likely to be victims of sexual assault?

The personal characteristics of Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW) respondents are asked about at the time of their interview; some of these characteristics may differ to what they were at the time they experienced sexual assault. Victimisation varied by a number of personal characteristics ([Appendix Tables 10 and 11](#)), but many of these characteristics will be closely associated (for example, marital status and age) so caution is needed in the interpretation of the effects of these different characteristics when viewed in isolation.

## Sex

As in previous years, women were significantly more likely to have experienced sexual assault in the last year than men (3.1% compared with 0.8%). This is true for all types of sexual assault, with the exception of sexual assault by a family member, where there was no significant difference. The year ending March 2017 CSEW showed that in the last year ([Appendix Tables 1 and 3](#); Figure 4):

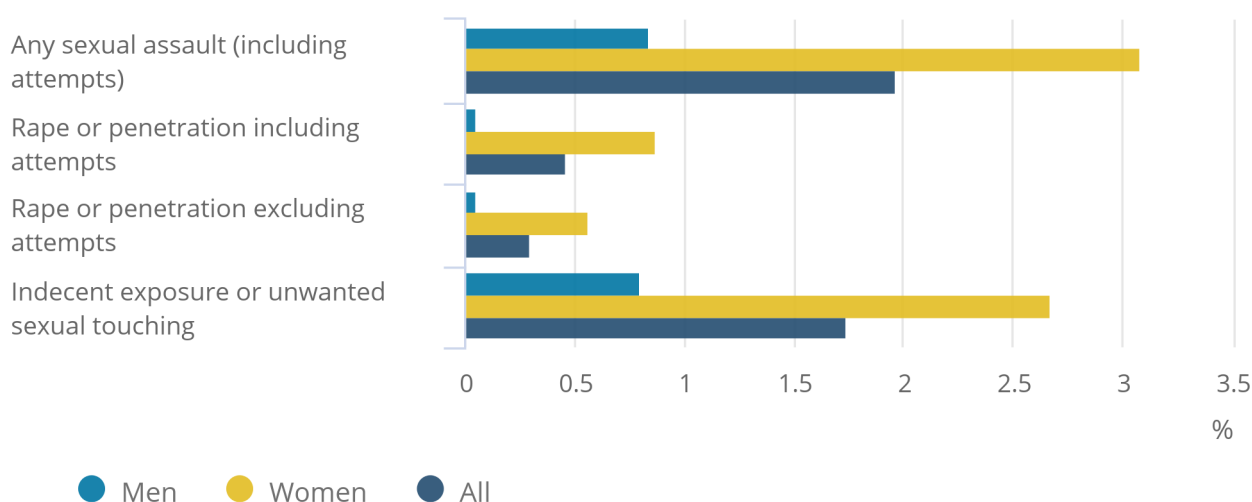
- indecent exposure and unwanted sexual touching was experienced by around three times as many women as men (2.7% compared with 0.8%)
- fewer than 0.1% of men had experienced rape or assault by penetration (including attempts) compared with 0.9% of women

**Figure 4: Prevalence of sexual assault in the last year for adults aged 16 to 59, by sex and type of sexual assault**

Year ending March 2017, Crime Survey for England and Wales

Figure 4: Prevalence of sexual assault in the last year for adults aged 16 to 59, by sex and type of sexual assault

Year ending March 2017, Crime Survey for England and Wales



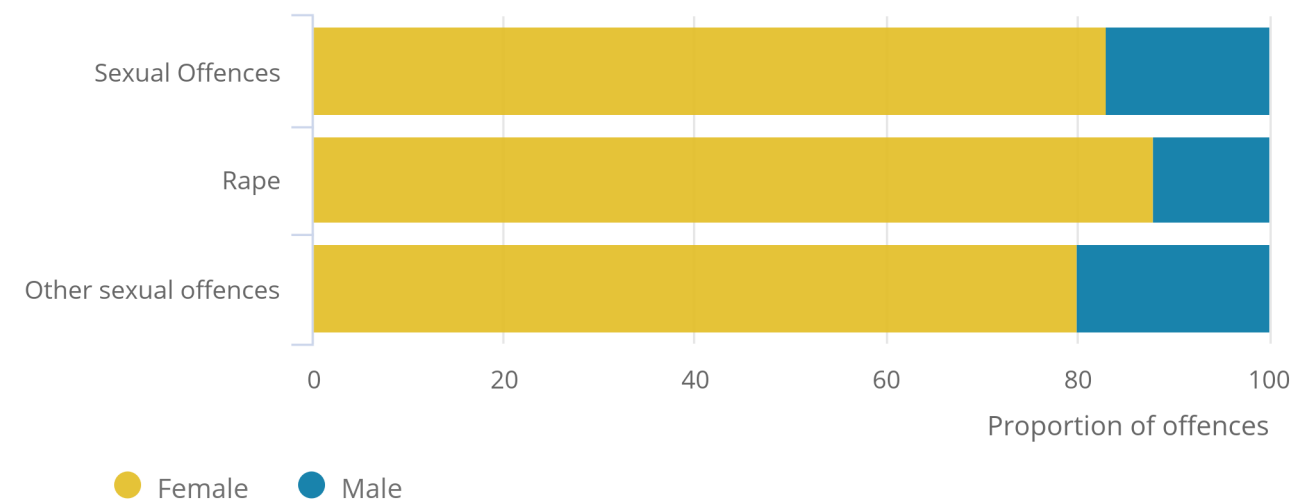
Source: Crime Survey for England and Wales, Office for National Statistics

Data on the prevalence of sexual assault since the age of 16 by sex can be found in [Appendix Table 1](#).

Data from the Home Office Data Hub show that in the year ending March 2017, females were victims in 88% of rape offences recorded by the police, with the remaining 12% males (Figure 5). Similarly, more victims of other sexual offences recorded by the police were female (80%) than male (20%).

**Figure 5: Sexual offences recorded by the police, by sex of victim, police recorded crime (35 forces), year ending March 2017**

Figure 5: Sexual offences recorded by the police, by sex of victim, police recorded crime (35 forces), year ending March 2017



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

**Notes:**

- 1. Police recorded crime data are not designated as National Statistics. In accordance with the Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007, figures from the Homicide Index have been reassessed against the Code of Practice for Official Statistics and found to meet the required standard for designation as National Statistics.
- 2. Police recorded crime data based on 35 forces that provided data via the Home Office Data Hub or in manual return. Data have not been reconciled with forces.

**Age**

Those in the younger age groups were more likely to be victims of sexual assault than those in the older age groups ([Appendix Table 10](#)). The prevalence of sexual assault decreased as age increased, and this was true for both men and women (Figure 6).

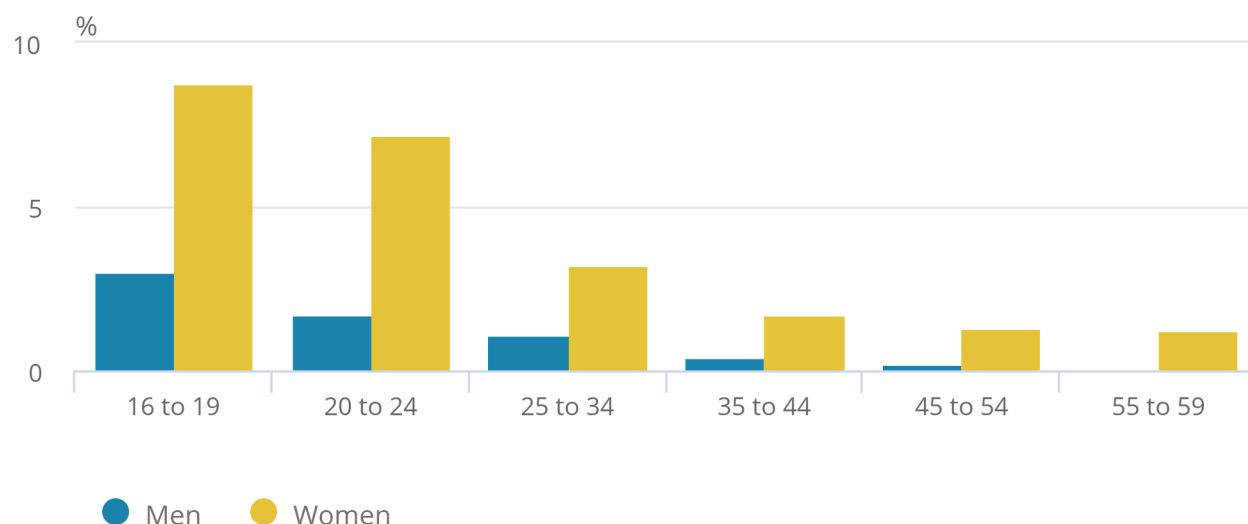
Those aged 16 to 19 and aged 20 to 24 were significantly more likely to be victims of sexual assault in the last 12 months than any other age group. This was true for indecent exposure or unwanted touching, but there was no significant difference between those aged 20 to 24 and those aged 25 to 34 for rape or assault by penetration (including attempts).

**Figure 6: Prevalence of sexual assault in the last year for adults aged 16 to 59, by age and sex**

Year ending March 2017, Crime Survey for England and Wales

## Figure 6: Prevalence of sexual assault in the last year for adults aged 16 to 59, by age and sex

Year ending March 2017, Crime Survey for England and Wales

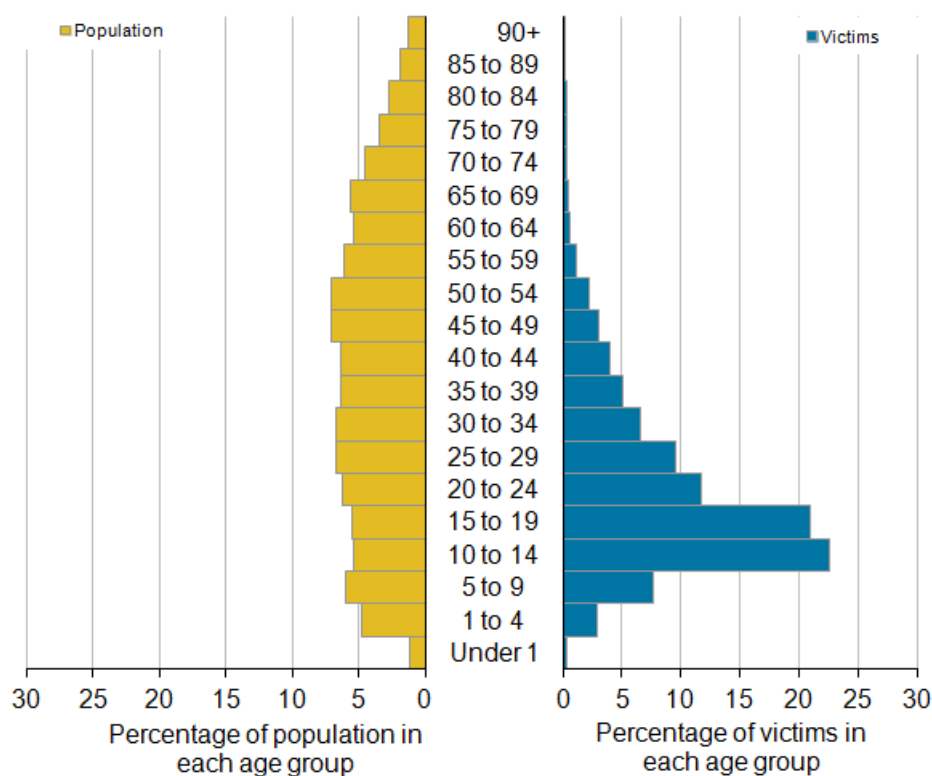


Source: Crime Survey for England and Wales, Office for National Statistics

The CSEW does not ask those under aged 16 about their experience of sexual offences, but has previously asked adults aged 16 to 59 to recall retrospectively their experience of sexual assault before the age of 16 (see [Abuse during childhood: Findings from the Crime Survey for England and Wales, year ending March 2016](#) for more information). Information from the Home Office Data Hub can provide some insight into victimisation of those under 16, however, this will only include those cases known to the police and thus understate the volume of such criminality.

Information from the Home Office Data Hub shows that females aged 10 to 24 were disproportionately more likely to be victims of sexual offences recorded by the police, particularly those aged 10 to 14 and 15 to 19. For example, while 5% of the female population were aged 10 to 14, this age group accounted for 23% of police recorded sexual offences where the victim was female (Figure 7). Males aged 5 to 19 were also disproportionately more likely to be victims of sexual offences (Figure 8). For example, while 6% of the male population were aged 10 to 14, this age group accounted for 30% of police recorded sexual offences where the victim was male.

**Figure 7: Distribution of female population and female victims of police recorded sexual offences, by age, Home Office Data Hub (28 forces), year ending March 2017**

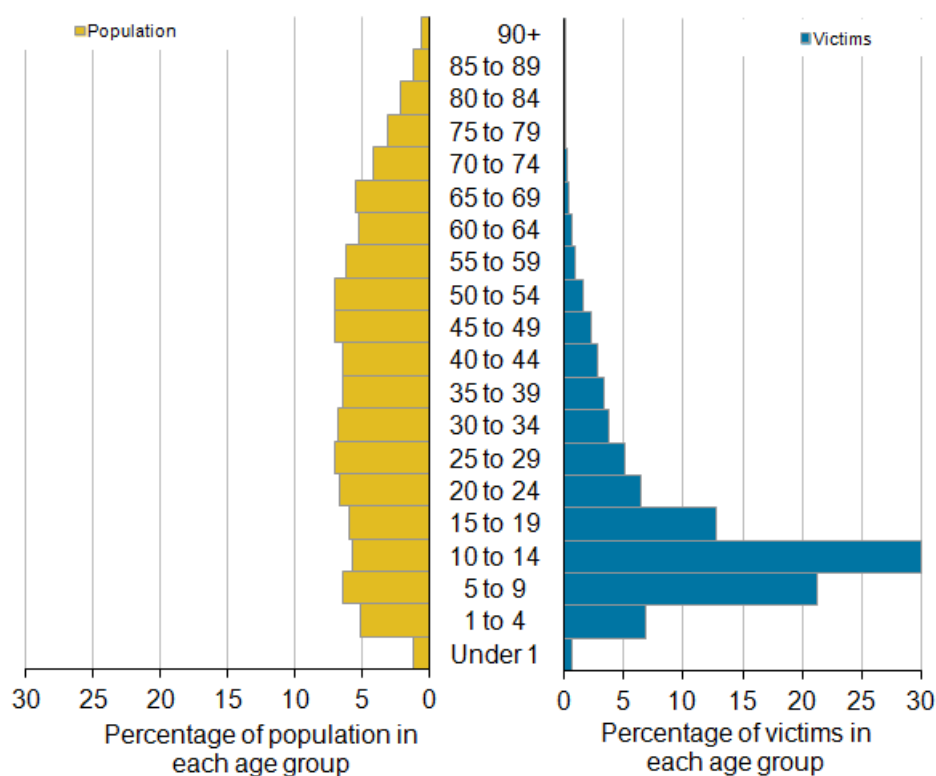


Source: Home Office Data Hub

**Notes:**

1. Police recorded crime data are not designated as National Statistics.
2. Police recorded crime data based on 28 forces that provided data via the Home Office Data Hub. Data have not been reconciled with forces.
3. Population figures are based on the Office for National Statistics population estimate for England and Wales.

**Figure 8: Distribution of male population and male victims of police recorded sexual offences, by age, Home Office Data Hub (28 forces), year ending March 2017**



Source: Home Office Data Hub

**Notes:**

1. Police recorded crime data are not designated as National Statistics.
2. Police recorded crime data based on 28 forces that provided data via the Home Office Data Hub. Data have not been reconciled with forces.
3. Population figures are based on the Office for National Statistics population estimate for England and Wales.

## Other characteristics

Single women were more likely to have been victims of sexual assault (6.4%) than women with other marital statuses, in particular those who were married or civil partnered (1.2%) (Figure 9). Single men were more likely to experience sexual assault (1.6%) than men who were married or civil partnered, cohabiting, or widowed.

Women with a long-term illness or disability were more likely to be victims of sexual assault in the last 12 months than those without a long-term illness or disability (5.3% compared with 2.7%). There was no significant difference among men (1.0% compared with 0.8%).

Students (6.4%) were more likely to have been a victim of sexual assault in the last year than adults of other occupations.

Women living in a household with no children (3.8%) were significantly more likely to be a victim of sexual assault than women living in a household with other adults and children (2.0%), but there was no significant difference compared with single adults with children (3.0%). The same was true for men, with men living in a household with no children (1.0%) being significantly more likely than men living with other adults and children (0.5%) to be a victim of sexual assault, but there was no significant difference compared with single adults with children (0.8%).

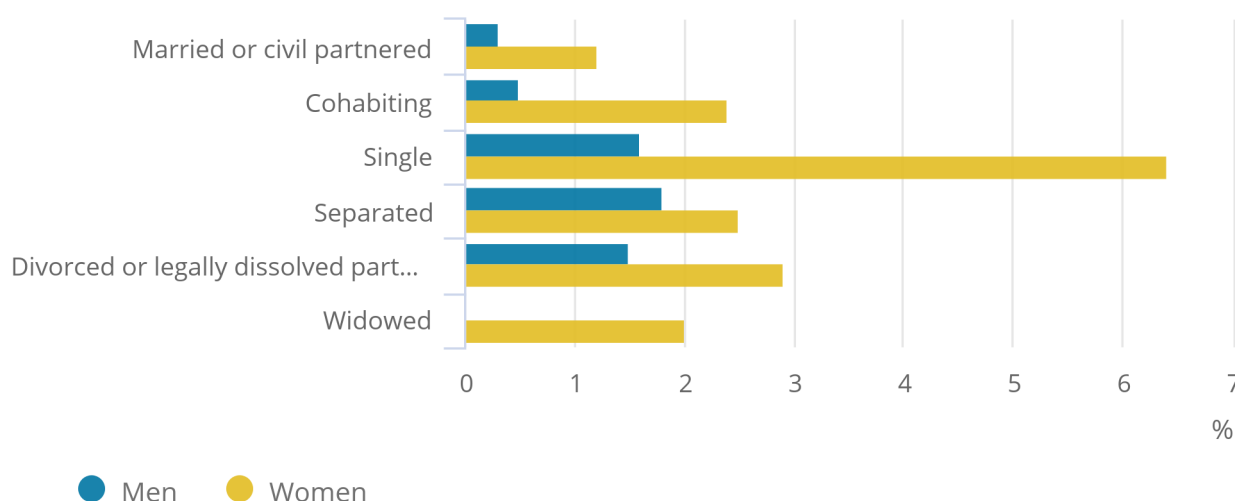


**Figure 9: Prevalence of sexual assault in the last year for adults aged 16 to 59, by marital status and sex**

Year ending March 2017, Crime Survey for England and Wales

## Figure 9: Prevalence of sexual assault in the last year for adults aged 16 to 59, by marital status and sex

Year ending March 2017, Crime Survey for England and Wales



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

### Notes:

1. The number of widowed men in the CSEW who said they were sexually assaulted in the last year was zero.

## 7 . How are victims and perpetrators related?

The survey module on domestic abuse, sexual assault and stalking<sup>1</sup> asks whether or not respondents have experienced sexual assault by anyone, and if they have they are then asked if they have experienced sexual assault by a partner or ex-partner, or a family member. These questions refer to all experiences of sexual assault since the age of 16, rather than just the most recent. This means that respondents may report abuse from multiple categories of partner or ex-partner, family member or anyone else. While it is possible to tell if a respondent has experienced sexual assault from a partner or ex-partner and a family member from these questions, it is not possible to tell whether or not they have also experienced sexual assault by another offender, such as a stranger. For this reason, the following results ([Appendix Table 12](#)) are as a percentage of all respondents who have experienced that type of sexual assault.

Although the Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW) is a large sample survey, there are a relatively small number of victims of sexual assault when separated by victim-offender relationship in any one year. Consequently, analysis on victim-offender relationship has been completed on a dataset combining the three survey years ending March 2015 to March 2017. The analysis shows:

- female victims were around five times as likely to experience rape or assault by penetration (including attempts) by a partner or ex-partner than a family member (55% compared with 10%)
- male victims were around three times as likely to experience rape or assault by penetration (including attempts) by a partner or ex-partner than a family member (39% compared with 13%)
- both female and male victims of indecent exposure or unwanted touching were around three times as likely to have been assaulted by a partner or ex-partner than a family member (24% compared with 8% for women, 15% compared with 5% for men)

The CSEW module on the nature of sexual assault by rape or penetration (including attempts) asks about the relationship of the perpetrator to the respondent. The relationship refers to the most recent experience of sexual assault since the age of 16 only. Where respondents have experienced sexual assault by rape or penetration (including attempts) more than once, it is not possible to establish the victim-offender relationship for all of these experiences.

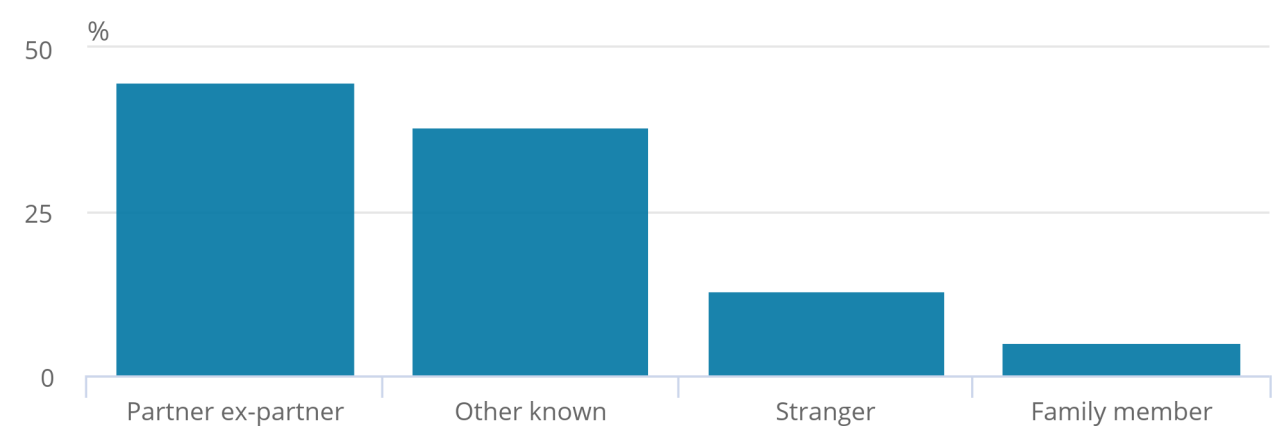
For the majority of female victims of rape or assault by penetration (including attempts), the offender was a partner or ex-partner (45%) or someone who was known to them other than as a partner or family member (38%). One-seventh of female victims reported the offender as a stranger (13%, Figure 10). This information is not available for men as the number of victims of rape or assault by penetration (including attempts) measured by the survey was too small to provide robust results.

**Figure 10: Victim-offender relationship for rape or assault by penetration (including attempts) experienced since age 16 by women aged 16 to 59**

Year ending March 2017, Crime Survey for England and Wales

Figure 10: Victim-offender relationship for rape or assault by penetration (including attempts) experienced since age 16 by women aged 16 to 59

Year ending March 2017, Crime Survey for England and Wales



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

Notes:

- 1. If the victim had experienced more than one sexual assault by rape or penetration (including attempts), the question was asked of the most recent incident.
- 2. Percentages may sum to more than 100, as multiple perpetrators could be identified.
- 3. "Other known" includes date, friend, neighbour, an acquaintance (outside work or school or college or university), person in a position of trust or authority (not at work, school or university), colleague or peer from work or school or college or university.

Data from the Home Office Data Hub for the year ending March 2017 covering 35 police forces shows that approximately one-third (33%) of rape offences against females were (suspected to be) committed by an intimate partner<sup>2</sup>, compared with 11% of rape offences against males (Figure 11). This is notably different from the CSEW, which showed that almost half (45%) of sexual assaults by rape or penetration (including attempts) against females were committed by a partner or ex-partner ([Appendix Table 15](#)). This may be because rapes within a relationship are less likely to be reported to the police than rapes committed by strangers.

Rape by an other family relative<sup>3</sup> accounted for a higher proportion of rape offences against males than against females (20% compared with 10%). For other sexual offences, the proportion of offences committed by an other family relative was similar for both male and female victims (15% and 14% respectively).

In the year ending March 2017, the majority of relationships between the victim and the suspect for rape offences were classed as “other”<sup>4</sup>, particularly for male victims (69% compared with 57% for female victims). Further analysis, using a subset of forces<sup>5</sup> ([Appendix Table 31](#)), identified that for relationships classified as “other”, 58% were where the victim and suspect were known acquaintances, 19% were where the suspect was a stranger, and 23% were where the relationship between the victim and suspect was unknown (mainly because a suspect had not been identified).

**Figure 11: Police recorded rape and other sexual offences, by sex of victim and relationship of victim to suspect, police recorded crime (35 forces), year ending March 2017**

Figure 11: Police recorded rape and other sexual offences, by sex of victim and relationship of victim to suspect, police recorded crime (35 forces), year ending March 2017



Source: Police recorded crime, Home Office

**Notes:**

1. Police recorded crime data are not designated as National Statistics.
2. Police recorded crime data based on 35 forces that provided data via the Home Office Data Hub or in a manual return. Data have not been reconciled with forces.

**Notes for: How are victims and perpetrators related?**

1. This self-completion module is included in the CSEW annually.
2. "Intimate partner" refers to all partner and ex-partner relationships, not just where the couple were married or in a civil partnership, but also including co-habiting partners and those considered in a relationship.
3. "Other family relative" is comprised of family members other than partners, including those who are in-laws, adopted, step or half relatives.
4. "Other" relationship comprises other sexual relationships such as casual sexual partners, acquaintances, strangers and cases where the relationship status has not been identified or is unknown.
5. Based on 10 forces who provided detailed relationship data via the Data Hub at a disaggregated level.

## 8 . Nature of sexual assault by rape or penetration

The self-completion module on the nature of sexual assault by rape or penetration (including attempts) asked in the year ending March 2017 Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW) provides more detail on the circumstances of these types of sexual assaults experienced by respondents since the age of 16. For those who had experienced more than one incident, only the most recent incident was asked about as long as the respondent was at least 16 when the incident occurred. All the results in this section include attempted rape or assault by penetration.

The results for all adults presented in this section are dominated by the responses of female victims as the number of men interviewed who had experienced rape or assault by penetration (including attempts) was small.

### Offender characteristics

The vast majority of respondents who had experienced rape or assault by penetration since they were 16 reported that the offender(s) were male (99%), with 65% of victims reporting that the offender was a male aged between 20 and 39 ([Appendix Table 13](#)).

The majority of victims reported being assaulted by a single offender (70%), with 20% assaulted by two offenders, 5% by three offenders, and 4% by more than three offenders ([Appendix Table 18](#)).

### Location

The most common location for rape or assault by penetration to occur was the victim's home (39%), followed by the offender's home (24%). The assault had taken place in a park, other open public space or on the street for 9% of victims ([Appendix Table 16](#)).

### Number of incidents

Nearly half of victims of rape or assault by penetration had been a victim more than once since the age of 16 (48%), with around one fifth of respondents (21%) reporting being a victim more than three times ([Appendix Table 17](#)).

## Involvement of alcohol or drugs

Respondents who reported they had been victims of rape or assault by penetration since they were 16 were asked whether they thought the offender (or offenders) was under the influence of alcohol or drugs and whether they were under the influence of alcohol or drugs themselves at the time of the incident<sup>1</sup>.

In their most recent rape or assault by penetration (including attempts), 38% of victims reported that the offender (s) were under the influence of alcohol. The same proportion of victims (38%) said they were under the influence of alcohol themselves ([Appendix Table 19](#)).

Fewer victims reported that the offender was under the influence of drugs (8%) and that they themselves were under the influence of drugs they had chosen to take (2%). In addition, 6% of victims reported that they thought that the offender had drugged them during the last incident of rape or penetration (including attempts) they had experienced ([Appendix Table 19](#)).

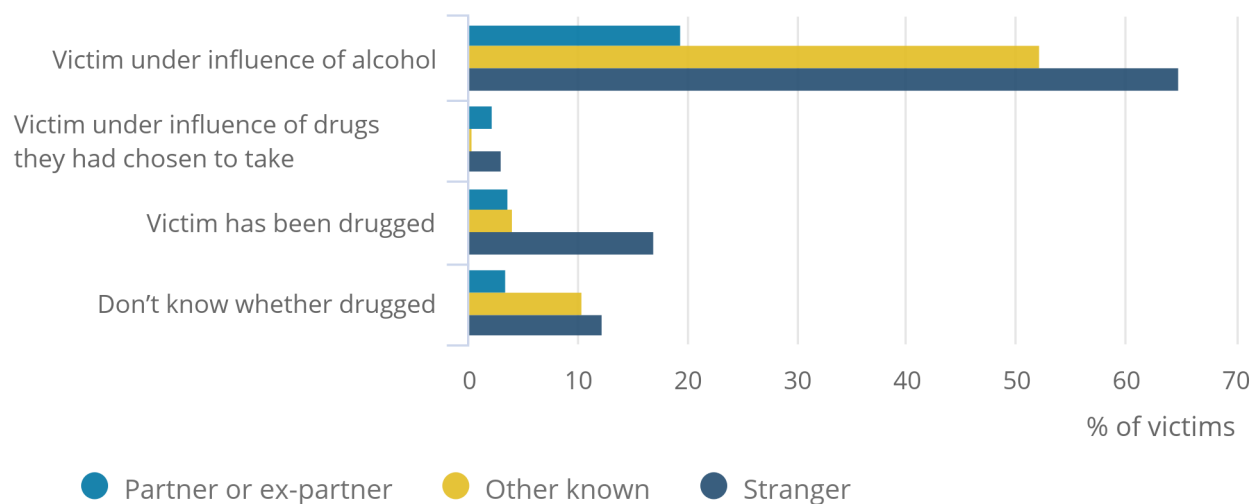
More victims were under the influence of alcohol when the offender was a stranger (65%) compared with when the offender was a partner or ex-partner (19%, Figure 12). A similar pattern was evident for whether the victim thought the offender had drugged them – 17% when the offender was a stranger, 4% when the offender was a partner or ex-partner.

**Figure 12: Influence of alcohol and drugs in rape or assault by penetration (including attempts) experienced since age 16 by adults aged 16 to 59, by victim-offender relationship**

Year ending March 2017, Crime Survey for England and Wales

Figure 12: Influence of alcohol and drugs in rape or assault by penetration (including attempts) experienced since age 16 by adults aged 16 to 59, by victim-offender relationship

Year ending March 2017, Crime Survey for England and Wales



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

Notes:

1. If the victim had experienced more than one sexual assault by rape or penetration (including attempts), question was asked of the most recent incident.
2. Figures are not published for CSEW estimates based on less than 50 respondents and so the 'family member' victim-offender relationship is not presented here.
3. "Other known" includes date, friend, neighbour, an acquaintance (outside work or school or college or university), person in a position of trust or authority (not at work, school or university), colleague or peer from work or school or college or university.

Information on the involvement of alcohol as a factor in sexual offences is also available from the Home Office Data Hub, which contains a field where police forces can identify whether the offence was "alcohol-related". It was not mandatory for forces to populate this field in the year ending March 2017, but a standard definition for usage was introduced in April 2016.

The analysis for alcohol-related sexual offences is based on 31 forces providing data using the alcohol-related aggravating factor flag in the Data Hub. These forces accounted for around 76% of sexual offences in England and Wales in the year ending March 2017, and include the Metropolitan Police, who alone recorded 15% of sexual offences in England and Wales in this year, and 19% of sexual offences in the 31 forces that the analysis was based on. The analysis may not be representative of all forces in England and Wales and data have not been reconciled with forces and are therefore subject to revision. The Home Office continues to work with police forces to ensure the consistency and comparability of the victim information they supply to the Home Office.

In the year ending March 2017, 9% of sexual offences recorded by the police were flagged as alcohol-related. This is the same proportion as in the year ending March 2016<sup>2</sup>, however, the two years are not directly comparable as a different set of police forces were used in the analysis each year.

The offence of “other miscellaneous sexual offences” had the highest proportion of offences that were alcohol-related (22%), although it only accounted for less than 1% of sexual offences. “Rape of a female aged 16 and over” (18% of which were flagged as alcohol-related) and “sexual assault on a female aged 13 and over” (14%) were more common and respectively accounted for 22% and 25% of all police recorded sexual offences. Sexual offences most likely to be flagged as alcohol-related are shown in Figure 13<sup>3</sup>.

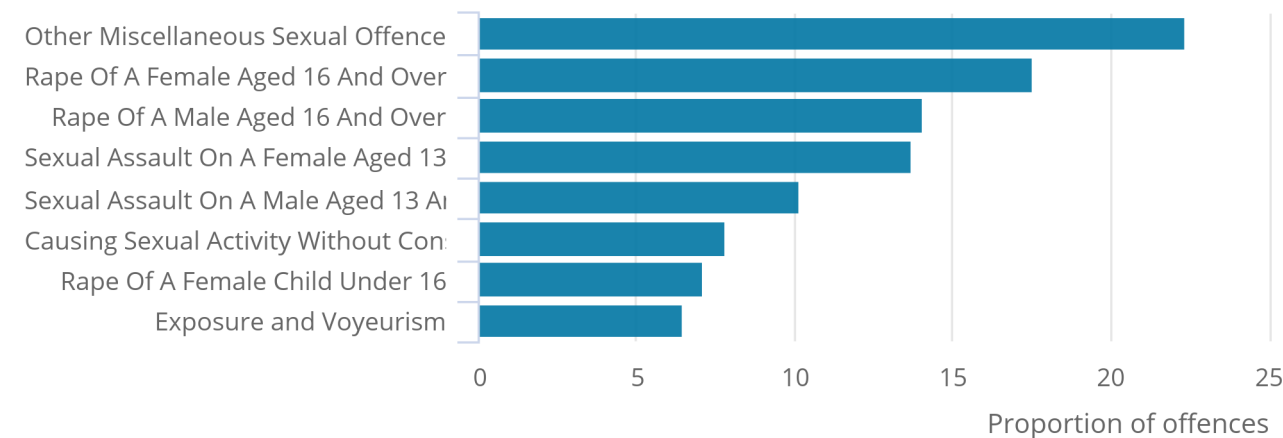


**Figure 13: Proportion of selected sexual offences recorded by the police which were "alcohol-related", Home Office Data Hub (31 forces)**

Year ending March 2017

Figure 13: Proportion of selected sexual offences recorded by the police which were "alcohol-related", Home Office Data Hub (31 forces)

Year ending March 2017



Source: Home Office Data Hub

Notes:

1. Police recorded crime data are not designated as National Statistics.
2. Police recorded crime data based on 31 forces that provided data via the Home Office Data Hub. Data have not been reconciled with forces.
3. Selected sexual offences were those offences with the highest proportion of the alcohol-related flag.
4. Recording an alcohol-related factor for crimes was optional for forces in this year but a standard definition for usage was introduced in April 2016.

**Method used by offender in committing rape or assault by penetration**

- For over half (58%) of victims, physical force had been used by the offender to try to make the respondent have sex with them, and over 1 in 10 victims (12%) reported that the offender had choked or tried to strangle them.
- Around a quarter (26%) of victims reported that the offender frightened them or threatened to hurt them, and 7% of victims reported that the offender frightened or threatened to hurt someone or something close to the victim.
- Nearly a fifth (18%) of victims were asleep or unconscious during the most recent incident of sexual assault by rape or penetration they had experienced ([Appendix Table 21](#)).
- In 8% of reported cases, threats to kill the victim were made by the offender.

## Notes for: Nature of sexual assault by rape or penetration

1. Some respondents to these questions on the influence of drink or drugs responded, “Don’t know or Can’t remember” or “Don’t want to answer”. Those who answered “Don’t want to answer” were excluded from the analysis.
2. See [Chapter 5 of Focus on Violent Crime and Sexual Offences: year ending March 2016](#).
3. Selected sexual offences were those offences with the highest proportion of the alcohol-related flag.

## 9 . Reporting of sexual assault by rape or penetration

Those who had experienced rape or assault by penetration (including attempts) since the age of 16 were asked who they had personally told. Nearly one-third of victims (31%) had not told anyone about their most recent experience, while 58% told someone they knew personally and 30% told someone in an official position. Around one in six (17%) had told the police ([Appendix Table 22](#)).

Despite the low level of reporting to the police, in cases where the victim reported the incident to the police, three-quarters of victims (75%) reported that they found the police to be very or fairly helpful at first contact, and 63% reported that they found the police to be very or fairly helpful during the investigation ( [Appendix Table 23](#)).

Nearly half of victims who had told the police did so because they wanted to prevent it happening to others (49%) or because they thought it was the right thing to do (46%, [Appendix Table 24](#)).

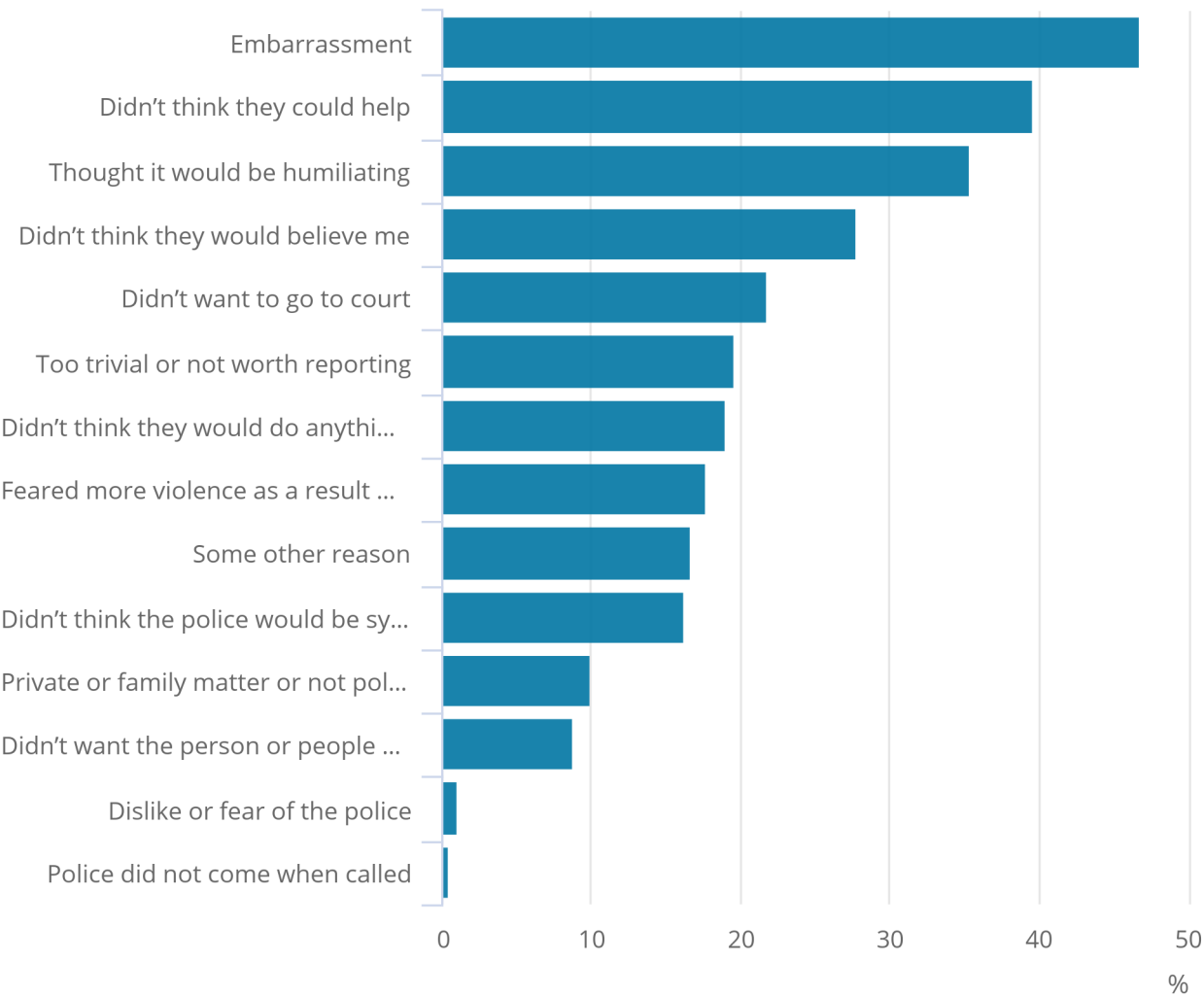
Of those who had told someone but hadn’t told the police, nearly half said it was due to being embarrassed (47%), around two-fifths thought the police could not help (40%), and a third said they thought it would be humiliating (35%) (Figure 14, [Appendix Table 26](#)).

**Figure 14: Reasons why victims aged 16 to 59 of rape or assault by penetration (including attempts) experienced since age 16 did not tell the police**

Year ending March 2017, Crime Survey for England and Wales

Figure 14: Reasons why victims aged 16 to 59 of rape or assault by penetration (including attempts) experienced since age 16 did not tell the police

Year ending March 2017, Crime Survey for England and Wales



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

Notes:

- 1. If the victim had experienced more than one sexual assault by rape or penetration (including attempts), question was asked of the most recent incident.
- 2. This question was asked of those who had told someone, but had not told the police.
- 3. Percentages may sum to more than 100, as more than one option could be selected.

Victims of rape or assault by penetration (including attempts) were more likely to view their experience as a crime than victims of other types of crime. For example, the majority (72%) of victims of rape or assault by penetration (including attempts) felt that what had happened to them was a crime ([Appendix Table 28](#)) compared with 57% of victims of violence with injury.

## **10 . How does sexual assault by rape or penetration affect victims?**

Nearly two-fifths of victims (39%) reported suffering physical injuries from the most recent incident of rape or assault by penetration (including attempts) they had experienced since age 16. Minor bruising or a black eye were the most common physical injuries (27%).

Nearly two-thirds (63%) of victims suffered mental or emotional problems as a result, while around half (53%) reported having problems trusting people or having difficulty in other relationships. 1 in 10 victims attempted suicide as a result.

The most recent incident of rape or assault by penetration resulted in 3% of victims becoming pregnant and 3% of victims contracting a disease ([Appendix Table 29](#)).