

Article

# Domestic abuse victim services, England and Wales: November 2019

Information on services that are available to victims of domestic abuse in England and Wales.

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# 1 . Summary

Referrals made to specialist domestic abuse services, including independent domestic violence advisors (IDVAs) and multi-agency risk assessment conferences (MARACs), were most commonly made by the police in the year ending March 2018. While other agencies such as social care and health care services are already involved in the response to domestic abuse, such involvement is not widespread.

## 2 . Things you need to know about this publication

Commentary on topics covered in the previous domestic abuse in England and Wales publication is now split into a number of separate publications. This is part of ongoing work to improve our publications. To allow for the work to take place, this page has been created using data already reported within our [Domestic abuse in England and Wales: year ending March 2018](#) publication. No new data or insight have been added, however we plan to update this publication in 2020. Other commentary discussing domestic abuse in England and Wales can be found in the [Domestic abuse in England and Wales overview](#).

To provide insight into how domestic abuse services respond to victims of domestic abuse, we have sourced data from a range of organisations. These data are sourced from non-governmental, administrative datasets and are not classified as official statistics.

The following services are included in this publication:

[ManKind Initiative](#)  
[Refuge](#)  
[SafeLives](#)  
[Suzy Lamplugh Trust](#)  
[Victim Support](#)  
[Welsh Women's Aid](#)  
[Women's Aid Federation of England](#)

For more information on these organisations, and the data each collect, see [Annex 1: Information on the services and service providers featured in this publication](#).

## 3 . Availability of domestic abuse services

This section provides data on the availability of refuge and domestic abuse helpline services in England and Wales. These data are reported by Women's Aid (data from Routes to Support). It also provides data on the number of independent domestic violence advisors (IDVAs) and multi-agency risk assessment conferences (MARACs) in England and Wales. These data are reported by SafeLives.

For more information on the organisations featured in this publication, and the data each collects, see [Annex 1: Information on the services and service providers featured in this publication](#).

### Refuge services

A domestic abuse refuge service provides emergency temporary accommodation for victims of domestic abuse with a planned programme of therapeutic and practical support.

Routes to Support<sup>1</sup> provides snapshot figures, taken in May each year, on the availability of refuge services<sup>2</sup> in England and Wales.

It includes figures on the number of bed spaces available within refuges. Data for Wales are only available from 2017. The number of refuge services in England has decreased from 294 in 2010, to 269 in 2018. Despite this, the number of bed spaces available in refuges in England<sup>3</sup> increased from 3,467 in 2010 to 3,813 in 2018. For Wales, in 2018, there were 33 available refuge services, and 279 bed spaces ([Appendix Tables 7 and 8](#)).

These figures do not provide information on which specific access and support needs these services are able to support. Refuges can vary in size and some cannot support specific groups of people, for example, those with high-level mental health needs or physical disabilities. Services can vary according to the different types and levels of support that they provide.

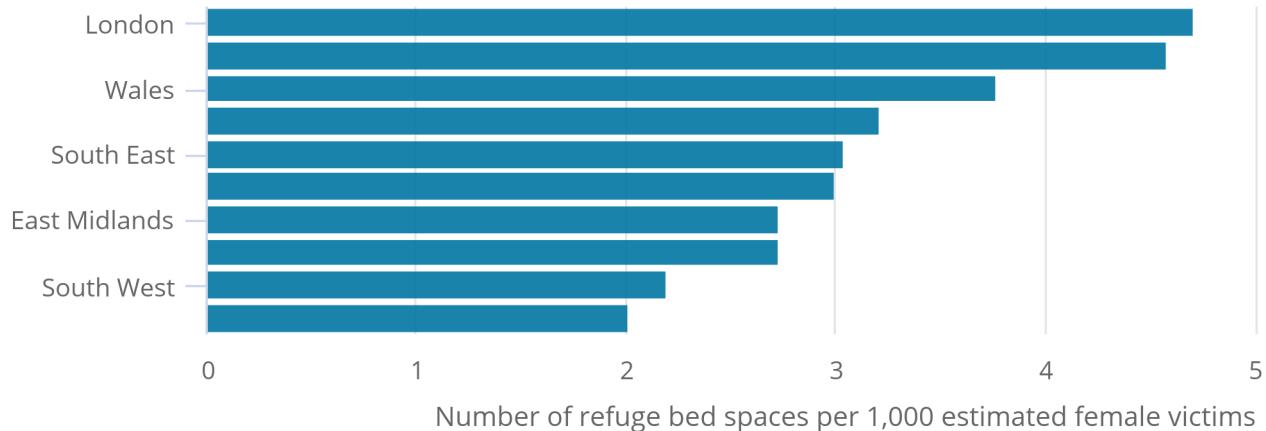
To allow comparisons to be made across regions of England and Wales, the number of refuge bed spaces available per 1,000 estimated female victims of domestic abuse is used. The estimated number of female victims of domestic abuse is taken from adults aged 16 to 59 years who completed the self-completion section of the Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW) for the year ending March 2018. From this, it was found that the number of bed spaces available ranged geographically from two to five bed spaces per 1,000 estimated female victims of domestic abuse (Figure 1).

**Figure 1: The number of bed spaces available by region was between two and five per 1,000 estimated female victims of domestic abuse**

Refuge bed spaces by region, England and Wales, 2018

Figure 1: The number of bed spaces available by region was between two and five per 1,000 estimated female victims of domestic abuse

Refuge bed spaces by region, England and Wales, 2018



Source: Women's Aid Federation of England and Welsh Women's Aid – data from Routes to Support, the UK violence against women and girls service directory

Notes:

1. Data from Women's Aid Federation of England and Welsh Women's Aid are not classified as official statistics.
2. Data on refuge bed spaces are snapshot figures gathered on one day each year. These figures do not provide information on which specific access and support needs these services are able to support, for example some services will not be able to support women with drug and/or alcohol dependency support needs.
3. These data exclude services in the Channel Islands and those that are UK wide.
4. The number of refuge bed spaces per 1,000 estimated female victims of domestic abuse has been calculated using estimates from the Crime Survey for England and Wales year ending March 2018.

## Helplines

Community-based services are services which are delivered to domestic abuse survivors within the community (for example helplines, outreach programmes, support groups and counselling). This publication focuses primarily on helplines, however data on other community-based services can be found within the [appendix tables](#).

A helpline is a telephone service that offers information, advice or support to callers about particular issues. A domestic abuse helpline offers these services to victims of domestic abuse and their families, friends, colleagues and others calling on their behalf.

Routes to Support collects snapshot data on an annual basis for a range of domestic abuse services in England and Wales<sup>4</sup> ([Appendix Table 7](#)). The database shows that the number of domestic abuse helpline services in England and Wales increased by 14% between 2017 and 2018 (from 132 to 151).

## Independent domestic violence advisors (IDVAs) and practitioners

Independent domestic violence advisors (IDVAs) are professionally qualified, specialist domestic abuse workers, who support high-risk victims of domestic abuse.

Since 2014, SafeLives has counted the number of IDVAs in England and Wales. According to the 2017 [practitioner survey](#), there were 897 full-time equivalent IDVAs working in England and Wales, of which 782 were IDVAs for victims at high risk from domestic abuse. This is 26% lower than the 1,059 IDVAs in England and Wales recommended by SafeLives in 2017<sup>5</sup>. The number of full-time equivalent IDVAs varied by region. London was the only area to meet the SafeLives recommended number of IDVAs (147 compared with the 141 recommended) ([Appendix Table 2](#)).

In 2017, the survey was extended to cover all types of domestic abuse practitioners including IDVAs, ISVAs (Independent sexual violence advisors)<sup>6</sup>, outreach workers, refuge workers, young people's specialists, children's support workers and perpetrator workers. In England and Wales, the 2017 survey recorded a total of 2,609 domestic abuse practitioners. One-third of these were full-time equivalent IDVA workers, and just over one-quarter were outreach workers (Table 1).

Table 1: Domestic abuse full-time equivalent (FTE) practitioners in England and Wales, by support type, 2017  
England and Wales

	Number	Percentage
IDVAs - all risk levels	897	34.4
Outreach workers	691	26.5
Refuge workers	452	17.3
Young person's violence advisors	182	7.0
Independent sexual violence advisors	165	6.3
Children's support workers	150	5.7
Perpetrator case workers	73	2.8
Total domestic abuse practitioners	2,609	100.0

Source: SafeLives Practitioner Survey, 2017

### Notes

1. Data from SafeLives are not classified as official statistics. [Back to table](#)

SafeLives did not receive a response from all domestic abuse services and did not contact all statutory bodies who may provide domestic abuse services. Despite this, the survey provides the clearest picture of domestic abuse practitioner provision across England and Wales.

## Multi-agency risk assessment conferences (MARACs)

A multi-agency risk assessment conference (MARAC) is a meeting where information is shared on the highest-risk domestic abuse cases between representatives from a range of agencies. After sharing all relevant information about the circumstances for a particular victim, the representatives discuss options for increasing the victim's safety and turn these into a coordinated action plan. For more information on MARACs, see [Annex 1: Information on the services and service providers featured in this publication](#).

There were 256 MARACs in England and Wales in the year ending March 2018, and 88,461 cases were discussed. This equates to 38 cases discussed per 10,000 adult females<sup>7</sup> which falls just below SafeLives' recommended number<sup>8</sup> of 40 cases discussed per 10,000 adult females (Table 2). This could suggest that not enough high-risk domestic abuse cases are being referred to a MARAC, or that some have been dealt with in another forum. For example, some areas will have a "pre-MARAC" meeting, such as a multi-agency safeguarding hub (MASH) meeting, so not all high-risk cases identified will make it to a MARAC meeting.

Table 2: Cases discussed at multi-agency risk assessment conferences (MARACs), year ending March 2018  
England and Wales

	<b>Number</b>
Number of MARACs	256
Number of cases discussed	88,461
Recommended number of cases discussed	93,220
Number of cases discussed per 10,000 adult females	38
Recommended number of cases per 10,000 adult females	40

Source: SafeLives

### Notes

1. Data from SafeLives are not classified as official statistics. [Back to table](#)

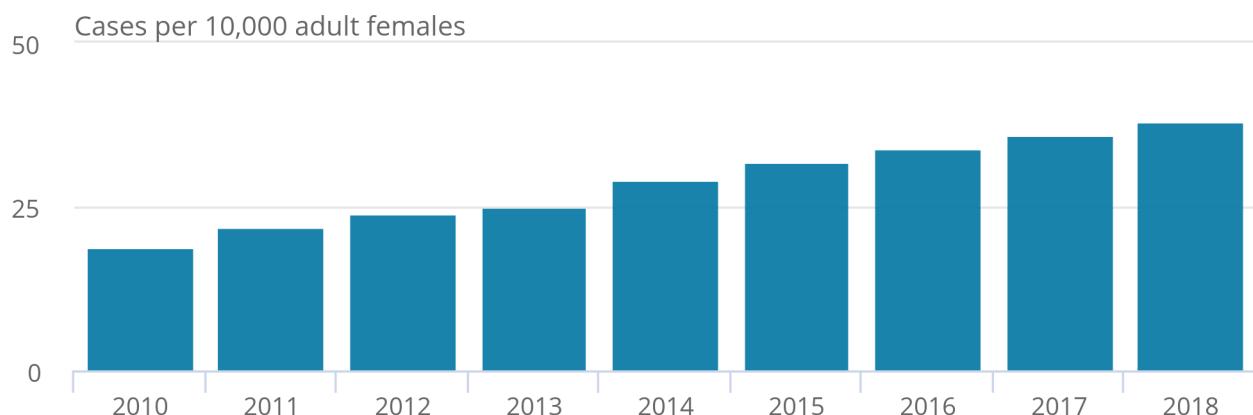
The number of cases per 10,000 adult females discussed at MARACs varied by police force area. In the year ending March 2010, the number of cases discussed at MARACs was 19 per 10,000 adult females. This doubled to 38 per 10,000 adult females in the year ending March 2018 (Figure 2).

**Figure 2: The number of cases discussed at multi-agency risk assessment conferences (MARACs) doubled between 2010 and 2018**

Number of cases discussed per 10,000 adult females, England and Wales, year ending March 2010 to year ending March 2018

Figure 2: The number of cases discussed at multi-agency risk assessment conferences (MARACs) doubled between 2010 and 2018

Number of cases discussed per 10,000 adult females, England and Wales, year ending March 2010 to year ending March 2018



**Source:** SafeLives

**Notes:**

1. Data from SafeLives are not classified as official statistics.
2. The population data are from the 2011 Census.
3. The increase in the number of cases does not automatically translate into an increase in domestic abuse, only an increase in its reporting.

**Notes for: Availability of domestic abuse services**

1. Routes to Support is the UK violence against women and girls directory of services and refuge vacancies run in partnership by Scottish Women's Aid, Welsh Women's Aid, Women's Aid Federation of England and Women's Aid Federation of Northern Ireland.
2. These data do not reflect the quality of services offered and the staff available to operate these services.
3. A time series of these data is not available for Wales.
4. A time series of these data is not available for Wales prior to 2017.
5. Recommendations are SafeLives', based on typical IDVA caseloads, MARAC cases and estimated number of victims at high risk of serious harm or murder. For more information, see page 7 of the [full report](#).
6. An independent sexual violence advisor (ISVA) is a professionally qualified domestic abuse worker that supports victims of sexual assault, sexual abuse and rape. The victims that ISVAs work alongside would have reported their abuse to the police, or would be considering reporting to the police.
7. This figure is based on the adult female population because it is mainly female victims referred to a MARAC, and SafeLives' recommendations are built on analysis of female victims.
8. [This recommended figure is built from analysis of female victims based on Domestic violence, sexual assault and stalking: Findings from the British Crime Survey, published in 2004.](#)

## 4 . Characteristics of service users

This section provides information on the personal characteristics of victims using helplines, refuge services, IDVAs and MARACs in England and Wales. It includes data reported by the ManKind Initiative, the Suzy Lamplugh Trust, SafeLives and Victim Support.

We also publish data on the personal and household characteristics of domestic abuse victims in England and Wales from the Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW). Therefore, victim characteristic breakdowns provided here can be considered alongside data from the CSEW for [the year ending March 2017](#) and the [year ending March 2018](#) to obtain a fuller picture of the victim profile. More recent CSEW data on the characteristics of domestic abuse can be found in [Domestic abuse victim characteristics, England and Wales: year ending March 2019](#).

For more information on the organisations featured in this publication, and the data each collects, see [Annex 1: Information on the services and service providers featured in this publication](#).

### Refuge services

The Women's Aid Annual Survey provides more detailed information on the women using refuge services in England ([Appendix Table 25](#)). The survey for England includes questions covering the previous financial year and a census day and week. The census day for refuge services was 4 July 2017 and 105 organisations running 168 refuge services in England responded to this part of the survey.

Of the 2,182 women ([Appendix Tables 24 and 25](#)) using refuge services:

- 62% had children under the age of 18 years in refuge
- 38% had mental health support needs
- 12% required multilingual interpreting support

## **Helplines**

In the year ending March 2018, the ManKind Initiative (a charity that supports male victims of domestic abuse) responded to a total of 1,816 calls. [Appendix Tables 10 and 11](#) show that 72% of callers identified as male, and 28% of callers were calling on behalf of the victim.

In terms of the abuse experienced, [Appendix Tables 11 and 27](#) show that 95% of victims calling the helpline reported that the perpetrator was a female partner or ex-partner. The most common types of abuse reported by victims were emotional abuse (95%), physical abuse (64%) and psychological abuse (35%).

In the year ending March 2018, the National Stalking Helpline, run by the Suzy Lamplugh Trust, responded to a total of 4,659 contacts.

[Appendix Table 17](#) shows that of the people calling the National Stalking Helpline who had experienced stalking by an ex-partner or family member in the year ending March 2018:

- 80% identified as female
- 80% identified as heterosexual
- 74% identified as white
- 73% reported having no disability
- 44% reported having no religion

In terms of the abuse experienced by those being stalked by an ex-partner or family member, [Appendix Tables 18 and 19](#) show that:

- 95% of callers reported that they were being stalked by their ex-partner
- 78% of callers reported that their stalker was male
- the most common types of stalking behaviours reported by callers to the helpline were unwanted texts (48%), phone calls (41%) and visits to the caller's house or workplace (37%)

## **Independent domestic violence advisors (IDVAs)**

Insights, an outcomes measurement programme operated by SafeLives, collects information on the personal characteristics of clients entering IDVA services. The data on clients accessing IDVA services for the year ending March 2018 show that:

- 96% were women
- 87% were white British or Irish
- 64% had children living in their household at the time
- 42% had mental health problems in the last 12 months
- 15% had a disability

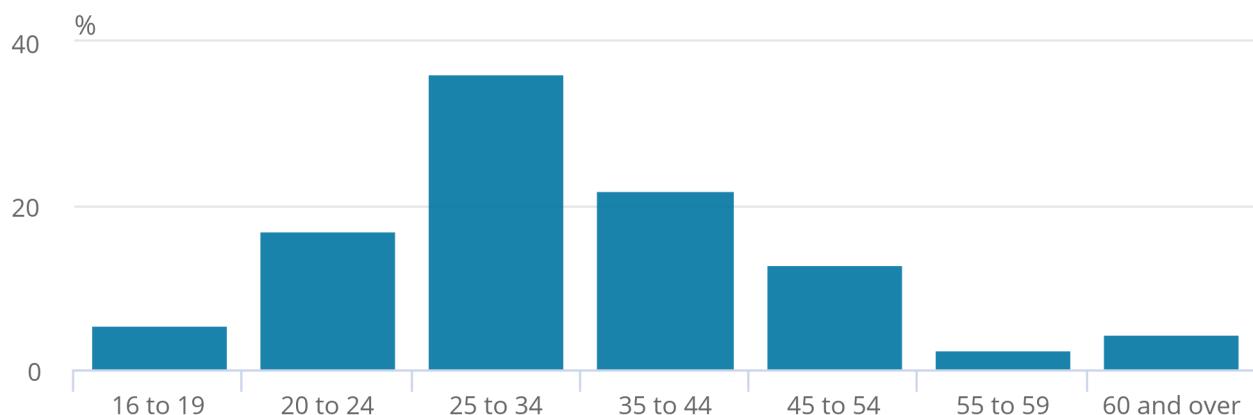
As shown in Figure 3, 75% of clients accessing IDVA services in the year ending March 2018 were aged 20 to 44 years.

**Figure 3: 75% of clients accessing services in the last year were aged 20 to 44 years**

Ages of clients accessing independent domestic violence advisor (IDVA) services, England and Wales, year ending March 2018

### Figure 3: 75% of clients accessing services in the last year were aged 20 to 44 years

Ages of clients accessing independent domestic violence advisor (IDVA) services, England and Wales, year ending March 2018



Source: SafeLives – Insights independent domestic violence advisor (IDVA) dataset

**Notes:**

1. Insights IDVA data are not classified as official statistics.

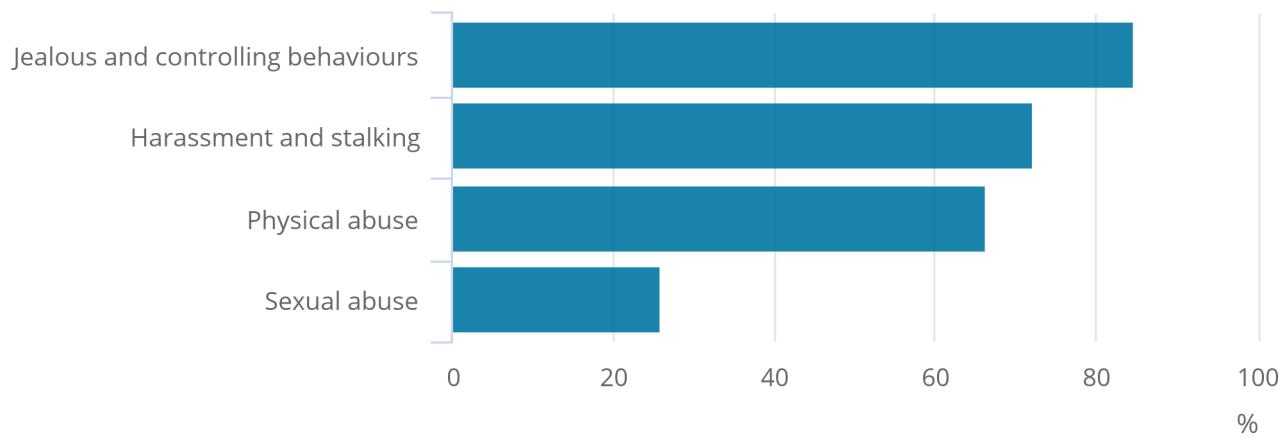
Over 90% of clients using IDVA services in the year ending March 2018 had experienced domestic abuse from an intimate partner, ex-partner or intermittent intimate partner ([Appendix Table 13](#)), with 85% experiencing jealous and controlling behaviours three months prior to intake<sup>1</sup> (Figure 4).

#### **Figure 4: Over 90% of clients using services in the last year had experienced domestic abuse from a partner in the three months prior to intake**

Types of abuse experienced by independent domestic violence advisor (IDVA) clients in the three months prior to intake, England and Wales, year ending March 2018

#### **Figure 4: Over 90% of clients using services in the last year had experienced domestic abuse from a partner in the three months prior to intake**

Types of abuse experienced by independent domestic violence advisor (IDVA) clients in the three months prior to intake, England and Wales, year ending March 2018



Source: SafeLives – Insights independent domestic violence advisor (IDVA) dataset

Notes:

1. Insights IDVA data are not classified as official statistics.

### **Multi-agency risk assessment conferences (MARACs) and multi-crime services**

Victims at high risk from domestic abuse discussed at multi-agency risk assessment conferences (MARACs) vary by their personal characteristics. Of the 86,360 cases<sup>2</sup> discussed at MARACs in England and Wales in the year ending March 2018 ([Appendix Tables 15 and 16](#)):

- 5% involved a male victim
- 17% involved a black ethnic minority victim
- 6% of victims had a disability
- 1% identified themselves as lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender (LGBT)

Small proportions of domestic abuse victims with the particular characteristics referenced in the MARAC data ([Appendix Tables 15 and 16](#)) demonstrate the disparities in service provision for some groups, as well as low levels of identification and recording. The proportion of domestic abuse victims discussed at MARACs who were recorded as having these characteristics varied considerably by police force area ([Appendix Tables 15 and 16](#)).

There were a total of 114,427 children in households where a case was referred to a MARAC in the year ending March 2018 ([Appendix Table 14](#)). The presence of children in these cases is defined differently across MARACs. For example, some MARACs require that a child was present in the household at the time of the abuse and others state that the child witnessed the domestic abuse. As a result, these figures should be treated with caution.

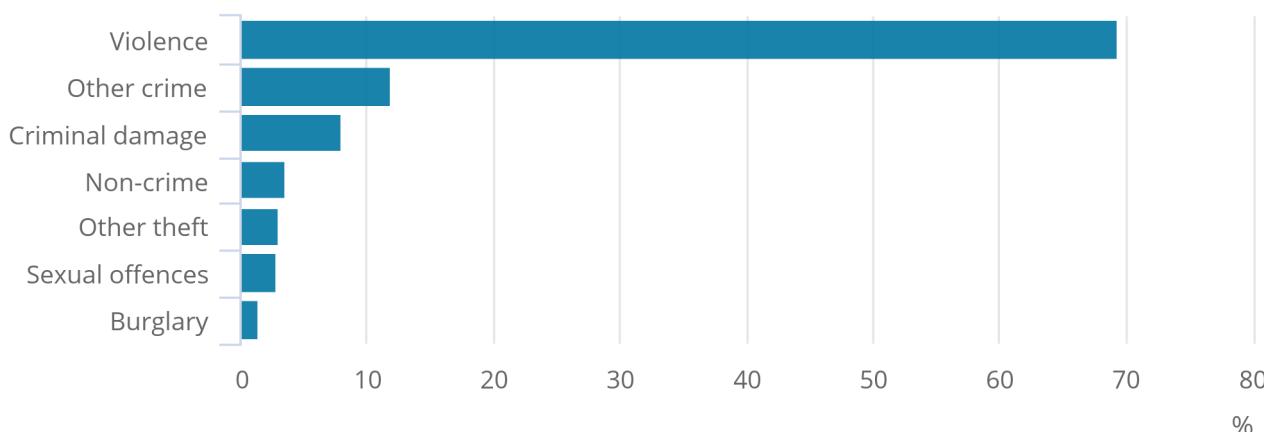
Multi-crime service cases, disaggregated by crime type, show that over two-thirds (69%) of valid cases flagged as domestic abuse-related were for violence against the person in the year ending March 2018 (Figure 5).

**Figure 5: Over two-thirds of domestic abuse-related cases in the last year were for violence against the person**

Multi-crime service cases flagged as domestic abuse-related, broken down by crime category, England and Wales, year ending March 2018

**Figure 5: Over two-thirds of domestic abuse-related cases in the last year were for violence against the person**

Multi-crime service cases flagged as domestic abuse-related, broken down by crime category, England and Wales, year ending March 2018



**Source:** Victim Support

**Notes:**

1. Victim Support data are not classified as official statistics.
2. Valid cases refer to cases excluding those with the following statuses: duplicate case; consent not received within desired timescale; incorrect or insufficient contact information; safe phone contact data not provided for domestic violence and hate crime referrals; cancelled; consent to contact denied; does not meet contract criteria; insufficient crime details; living outside of Victim Support area or abroad; other agency.

The victim was male in just over one-fifth<sup>3</sup> of the cases which were flagged as domestic abuse-related in the year ending March 2018 (21%, [Appendix Table 22](#)). This contrasts to the sex breakdown of victims accessing specialist domestic abuse services such as IDVAs and MARACs, where a much smaller proportion of victims were male (4% and 5%, respectively). Although this could be explained by the larger proportion of women who are victims of domestic abuse<sup>4</sup>, it could also indicate that male victims are less likely than female victims to be aware of or engage with specialist domestic abuse services.

Male victims are also deemed less likely to be eligible for these types of support in terms of their risk level, and are therefore dealt with through multi-crime services. In the same year, the majority of valid multi-crime service cases flagged as domestic abuse-related were referred by the police (95%, [Appendix Table 23](#)).

### Notes for: Characteristics of service users

1. Intake refer to clients entering the IDVA service.
2. This figure is slightly smaller than the England and Wales figure, because Sussex could not provide a sex breakdown of cases.
3. Valid cases refer to cases excluding those with the following statuses: duplicate case; consent not received within desired timescale; incorrect or insufficient contact information; safe phone contact data not provided for domestic violence and hate crime referrals; cancelled; consent to contact denied; does not meet contract criteria; insufficient crime details; living outside of VS area or abroad; other agency.
4. See the [Domestic abuse victim characteristics, England and Wales: year ending March 2019](#) publication for more information on prevalence of domestic abuse in men and women.

## 5 . Victim interactions with domestic abuse services

This section provides data on how victims interact with domestic abuse services, with an emphasis on how victims come to access the services, as well as the changes for independent domestic violence advisor clients at intake compared to exit<sup>1</sup> from the service.

Data are reported from Women's Aid, the ManKind Initiative, and SafeLives.

For more information on the organisations featured in this publication, and the data each collects, see [Annex 1: Information on the services and service providers featured in this publication](#).

### Accessing services

Referrals to domestic abuse services can be made by a number of different agencies (or by the victim directly). As such, access to and provision of services is not reliant on reporting the domestic abuse to the police. For more information on how an incident of domestic abuse is brought to the attention of a domestic abuse service, and how incidents progress through criminal justice system see the publication [How domestic abuse data are captured through the criminal justice system](#).

## **Refuge and community-based services**

Table 3 outlines the number of referrals of women made to refuge and community-based services (which include helplines) in England and Wales in the year ending March 2017. Data for England are obtained by the Women's Aid Federation of England's Annual Survey. Data from Wales are obtained by the Welsh Women's Aid Annual Survey. Although Welsh Women's Aid also collects some data on referrals of men ([Appendix Table 4](#)), for comparative purposes, their data refer to referrals of women only.

In England there were 19,764 referrals to 154 refuge services, and 96,225 referrals to the 75 community-based services<sup>2</sup>. Of the referrals to refuge services, 49% were declined. Of the referrals to community-based services, 15% were declined.

In Wales, there were 2,481 referrals to refuge services, and 7,365 referrals to community-based services. Data from Wales are based on 24 organisations running 29 specialist domestic abuse services. Of the referrals to refuge services, 32% were declined. Of the referrals to community-based services, 2% were declined.

Table 3: Referrals of women to refuge and community-based services in England and Wales, year ending March 2017  
England and Wales

	<b>Number of referrals</b>	
	<b>England</b>	<b>Wales</b>
<b>Refuges</b>		
Referrals	19,764	2,481
Accepted	7,480	1,351
Declined	9,638	796
Support not accepted by client	2,229	332
Missing data	417	:
<b>Community-based services</b>		
Referrals	96,225	7,365
Accepted	71,676	5,801
Declined	14,546	163
Support not accepted by client	8,100	1,098
Missing data	1,903	:

Source: Women's Aid Federation of England and Welsh Women's Aid - Women's Aid Annual Survey

#### Notes

1. Data from Women's Aid Federation of England and Welsh Women's Aid are not classified as official statistics. [Back to table](#)
2. Data for England and Wales are presented separately because they are sourced from two different data collections. [Back to table](#)
3. These figures cannot provide a full picture of demand for refuge services. Some survivors may not disclose abuse and some may not have been referred to a refuge because referring agencies may already be aware that a refuge is full or cannot meet their needs. [Back to table](#)
4. These data only refer to services that responded to the survey, and it is not known how these results compare with the services not included in the survey. [Back to table](#)
5. Data on refuges in England are based on 95 organisations running 154 refuge services, and 75 organisations running 131 community-based services. Data from Wales are based on 24 organisations running 29 specialist domestic abuse services. [Back to table](#)
6. Numbers of referrals accepted or declined for Wales will not sum to the total due to missing data and extended referral periods. Missing data for England refers to where it is not known if the referrals were accepted or declined. [Back to table](#)
7. : Denotes not available. [Back to table](#)

For both England and Wales, around one-third of those who were declined refuge services were declined because the refuge had a lack of space to support the client ([Appendix Tables 5a and 5b](#)).

For England, the most common reason for declining community-based service referrals was not being able to contact the client (51%) and the client not wanting support (36%, [Appendix Table 5b](#))<sup>3</sup>. It can be difficult for a survivor of domestic abuse to decide to accept support, as well as to talk to someone about the abuse, which may explain these findings.

Furthermore, there are limitations on the number of beds available in each space which, depending on the number of children seeking refuge with them, may reduce the options available to a victim.

Routes to Support has provided additional vacancy data from refuge services in London as part of a project with London Councils, including information on the migration of women seeking refuge from domestic abuse in the capital. In the year ending March 2018, over half of women (55%) moved from one London borough to another to access refuge services, and around one-fifth (19%) moved from outside London (Table 4). This broadly corresponds to data from the [Women's Aid Annual Survey 2017](#), which shows that 68% of women moved across local authority boundaries in England to seek refuge.

Table 4: Borough of origin of women accessing refuge services in London, year ending March 2018

	Number	Percentage
Own borough	34	3
Other borough	661	55
Unknown London borough	80	7
Outside London	229	19
Unknown	200	17
Missing	0	0
Total	1,204	100

Source: Women's Aid Federation of England - data from Routes to Support, the UK violence against women and girls service directory

#### Notes

1. Data from Women's Aid Federation of England are not classified as official statistics. [Back to table](#)

## Helplines

In the year ending March 2018, one-third of calls to the National Domestic Violence Helpline and 39% of calls to the Live Fear Free Helpline were made by either current or historical survivors of domestic abuse ([Appendix Tables 34 and 37](#)). Around half (45%) of survivors calling the National Domestic Violence Helpline were referred to a domestic or sexual violence service ([Appendix Table 38](#)). Over one-third (36%) of survivors who called the Live Fear Free Helpline were referred to other agencies offering a range of services including money matters, child contact services and alcohol and substance misuse services ([Appendix Table 35](#))

The ManKind Initiative collects data using a list of questions designed to support a structured response to the caller, to guide the caller as they talk through their experiences, and to help the charity understand the types of domestic abuse experienced by the victim. These questions do not take precedence over what a victim needs from a conversation, therefore, for the year ending March 2018, 82% of callers have answers recorded against them (1,072 out of a total of 1,301 calls made by victims). Just over 70% of victims calling the ManKind Initiative in the year ending March 2018 were signposted to information, 93% were signposted to other services and 97% were offered emotional support ([Appendix Table 27](#)).

## **Multi-agency risk assessment conferences (MARACs)**

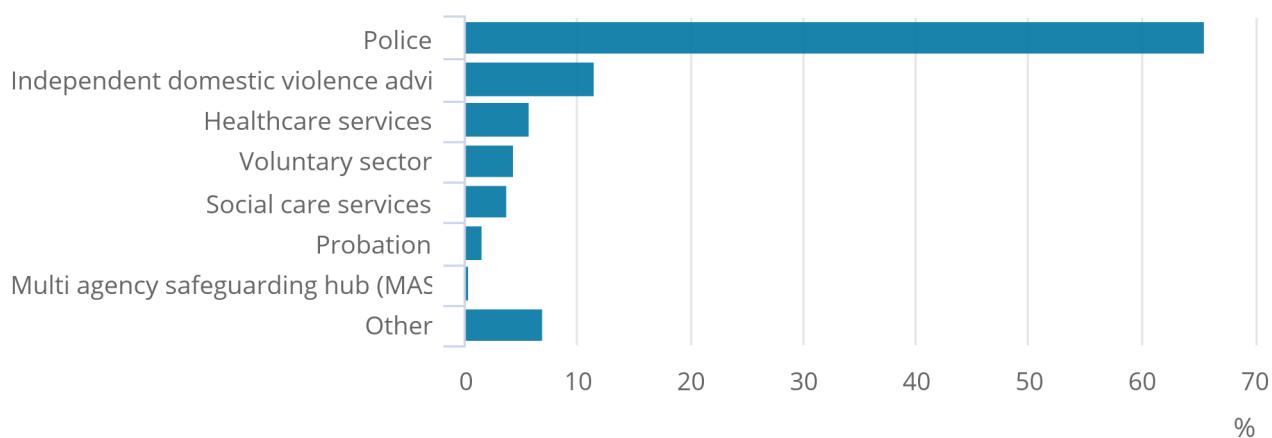
Victims of domestic abuse cannot self-refer to a multi-agency risk assessment conference (MARAC); they are always referred by an agency such as the police or health workers. The police should complete a domestic abuse, stalking and harassment and honour-based violence (DASH) risk assessment (consisting of approximately 25 questions) at any domestic abuse incident they attend. Alongside professional judgement and expertise from the police, this risk assessment will determine whether a referral should be made to a MARAC<sup>4</sup>. Signs of potential escalation should also lead to a MARAC referral. Two-thirds of MARAC cases were referred by the police in the year ending March 2018 (66%, Figure 6).

**Figure 6: The police referred two-thirds of multi-agency risk assessment conference (MARAC) cases in the year ending March 2018**

Sources of referrals to multi-agency risk assessment conferences (MARACs), England and Wales, year ending March 2018

**Figure 6: The police referred two-thirds of multi-agency risk assessment conference (MARAC) cases in the year ending March 2018**

Sources of referrals to multi-agency risk assessment conferences (MARACs), England and Wales, year ending March 2018



**Source:** SafeLives

**Notes:**

1. Data from SafeLives are not classified as official statistics.
2. The number of MARAC referrals by each source are not presented as whole numbers, because the referral can be made by more than one service.
3. Other refers to education, housing, or another agency.
4. Healthcare services consist of referrals from a primary care service, a secondary service or acute trust, mental health or substance abuse services.
5. Social care services consist of referrals from adult social care or children's social care.

However, not all MARAC cases are referred by the police, because the victim may not want the police to be involved. There will also be some police domestic abuse-related incidents that will have been referred to a MARAC by somebody else.

Over one-quarter of cases discussed at MARACs across England and Wales were repeat cases (28%). A repeat MARAC case is one in which a further incident is identified within 12 months of a previous referral. Any agency may identify this further incident regardless of whether it has been reported to the police<sup>5</sup>. Incidents that occur more than 12 months after the last MARAC referral do not constitute a repeat incident but instead would constitute a new referral to a MARAC. The proportion of repeat cases discussed at MARACs varies across police forces ([Appendix Table 14](#)).

## Independent domestic violence advisors (IDVAs)

The [Insights dataset](#) for the year ending March 2018 contains 2,591 unique individual cases at intake and 2,142 matched cases at exit<sup>6</sup>. These cases were drawn from 21 independent domestic violence advisor (IDVA) services across England and Wales that used the SafeLives Insights outcome measurement service. Just under one-fifth (18%) of cases were repeat cases at intake ([Appendix Table 28](#))<sup>7</sup>.

According to Insights, the most common referral route to an IDVA service was the police (61%), followed by self-referrals (13%, Table 5). Fewer referrals to IDVA services were made by health services and other universal<sup>8</sup> domestic violence services ([Appendix Table 29](#)).

Table 5: Referral routes to independent domestic violence advisors (IDVAs) in England and Wales, year ending March 2018

	Percentage	
	Insights	Victim Support
Police	61	64
Self-referrals	13	6
Multi-agency risk assessment conference (MARAC)	6	1
Domestic violence and sexual violence services	6	2
Health services	5	5
Children and young people services	5	2
Housing	1	0
Specialist services	1	2
Other	2	18
Not recorded	:	0

Source: SafeLives - Insights IDVA dataset and Victim Support - IDVA dataset

### Notes

1. Insights IDVA data and Victim Support data are not classified as official statistics. [Back to table](#)
2. Data may not sum to 100 due to rounding.,These questions were mandatory on the Insights IDVA form. [Back to table](#)

## Beyond service access

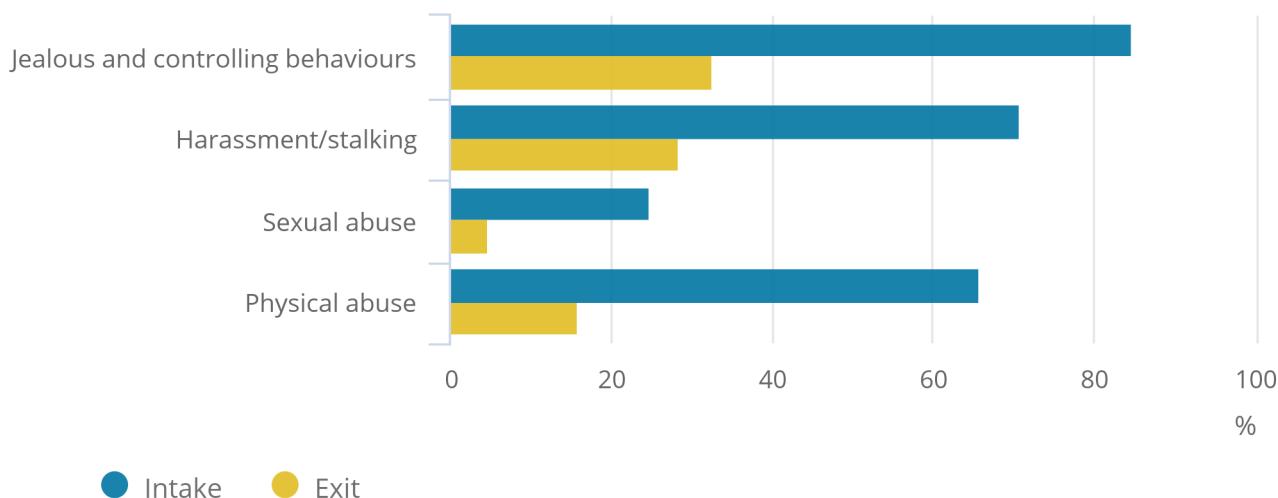
The Insights dataset records the profile of abuse experienced by IDVA clients at intake and at exit of the service. For every type of abuse, the experience of abuse decreased following exit from IDVA services (Figure 7). In particular, the proportions of clients experiencing physical abuse decreased from 66% at intake to 16% at exit. Similarly, the proportions of clients experiencing jealous and controlling behaviour decreased from 85% at intake to 33% at exit.

**Figure 7: The proportion of clients experiencing abuse decreased after accessing independent domestic violence advisor (IDVA) services**

Profile of abuse experienced by independent domestic violence advisor clients at intake compared with exit, England and Wales, year ending March 2018

Figure 7: The proportion of clients experiencing abuse decreased after accessing independent domestic violence advisor (IDVA) services

Profile of abuse experienced by independent domestic violence advisor clients at intake compared with exit, England and Wales, year ending March 2018



Source: SafeLives – Insights independent domestic violence advisor (IDVA) dataset

Notes:

1. Insights IDVA data are not classified as official statistics.
2. These data are based on clients exiting IDVA services. There will be some clients who have intake forms submitted within the reporting period, but are still accessing services and therefore are not included in the exit data.

At entry to IDVA services, 71% of the sample taken were not living with their perpetrator ([Appendix Table 13](#)). At exit of the service, this increased to 85% of clients not living with their perpetrator. Despite not living together, one-third of clients (33%) reported ongoing contact with their perpetrator, with the most common reason for this being child contact (63%, [Appendix Table 30](#)).

## **Notes for: Victim interactions with domestic abuse services**

1. Intake refer to clients entering the IDVA service, exit refers to clients leaving the IDVA service.
2. The 154 refuge services, and 75 community-based services are the number that responded to the Women's Aid Annual Survey in the year ending March 2017 – not the total amount of services in England.
3. Reasons for declining community-based services were not available for Wales.
4. A score of 14 or more will result in a MARAC referral.
5. A further incident includes any one of the following types of behaviour, which, if reported to the police, would constitute criminal behaviour: violence or threats of violence to the victim (including threats against property); or, a pattern of stalking or harassment; or rape or sexual abuse. Where a repeat victim is identified by any MARAC agency, that agency should refer the case to the MARAC, regardless of whether the behaviour experienced by the victim meets the local referral threshold. To identify repeat victims of domestic abuse regardless of to whom it is reported, all MARAC agencies should have the capacity to flag their files following the latest referral so that they are aware if a service user experiences a repeat incident
6. The number of cases in the IDVA dataset has decreased from 6,287 cases at intake and 5,177 exit forms in the year ending March 2016. This is because fewer services were using Insights in the year ending March 2018 compared with previous years. This is because of the move to a new Insights system and has not had an impact on the findings of the IDVA dataset, as they have remained similar over time.
7. Cases are deemed repeats if the client has returned to the service after their case was previously closed (or made inactive).
8. Services available to all members of the public on behalf of the state, such as health, adult and children's social care, and housing.

## **6 . More about domestic abuse**

Other commentary discussing domestic abuse in England and Wales, and quality and methodology information, can be found in the [Domestic abuse in England and Wales overview](#).

## **7 . Annex 1: Information on the services and service providers featured in this publication**

### **ManKind Initiative**

The [ManKind Initiative](#) is a domestic violence charity based in the United Kingdom. The ManKind Initiative is at the forefront of providing support for male victims of domestic abuse and is the first domestic abuse service to supply data on male victims.

Since becoming a charity in 2001, it has provided training and support for statutory agencies (primarily the police and local authorities). It also runs campaigns to ensure that equal recognition is given to male and female victims of domestic abuse. Further to this, the ManKind Initiative operates a confidential helpline available for all men across the UK suffering from domestic abuse.

## The Suzy Lamplugh Trust

The [Suzy Lamplugh Trust](#) is a charity that aims to reduce the risk of stalking, violence and aggression through campaigning, education and support. The Suzy Lamplugh trust runs a freephone National Stalking Helpline which provides advice and guidance to individuals experiencing stalking, their family or friends, and the professionals supporting them.

Data available from the National Stalking Helpline can provide an indication of the profile of individuals contacting the helpline who have experienced stalking in a domestic relationship, by either an ex-partner or a family member ([Appendix Tables 17 and 18](#)).

## Refuge

[Refuge](#) is a UK-wide charity that provides specialist support for women and children who are victims of domestic abuse. Refuge offers a range of services such as community outreach, emergency refuge accommodation, support workers and independent domestic violence advisors (IDVAs).

An IDVA is a professionally qualified, specialist domestic abuse worker who supports domestic abuse victims at high risk<sup>1</sup> from murder or serious harm.

Refuge runs a freephone 24-hour National Domestic Violence Helpline for victims of domestic abuse, previously in partnership with the charity Women's Aid. The helpline is a national service both for women experiencing domestic violence, as well as family, friends, colleagues and others calling on their behalf. From 31 October 2019, the National Domestic Violence Helpline has been run solely by Refuge.

## SafeLives

[SafeLives](#) is a UK-wide domestic abuse charity that has a strategy to stop domestic abuse before it starts. SafeLives obtains information from services, survivors and statistics to support people to become safe and well and to rebuild their lives.

SafeLives operates a specialist outcomes measurement programme called '[Insights](#)'. Insights is a tool that allows for the collection and analysis of frontline support information. IDVAs from various providers complete an 'Insights form' throughout the support period. These forms capture important demographic information and details of the abuse being experienced, as well as allowing changes to those experiences to be tracked over time.

SafeLives is also responsible for collecting data from every multi-agency risk assessment conference (MARAC) in England, Wales and Northern Ireland, and from some MARACs in Scotland.

A multi-agency risk assessment conference (MARAC) is a meeting between representatives from a range of services in which information is shared on the highest risk domestic abuse cases. Attendees include: local police, healthcare practitioners, child protection practitioners, housing practitioners, IDVAs, probation workers and other specialists from the statutory and voluntary sectors. After sharing all relevant information about the circumstances for a particular victim, the representatives discuss options for increasing the victim's safety and turn these into a coordinated action plan.

The primary focus of the MARAC is to safeguard the adult victim, but it is also a forum for highlighting risk posed to linked individuals by the same perpetrator(s). Both those linked individuals, and the perpetrator(s), should be the subject of similar coordinated planning either at the MARAC or at linked forums that safeguard children and manage the behaviour of the perpetrator(s).

All MARACs fall within police force area boundaries, but police force areas can have more than one MARAC, depending on the size of the area and structure of the local authorities. This means that MARACs vary in size.

At the center of a MARAC is the working assumption that no single agency or individual can see the complete picture of a victim's life, but all may have insights that are crucial to their safety. The victim does not attend the meeting but is represented by an IDVA who advocates on their behalf and holds statutory agencies to account.

The collection of MARAC data began in 2004 and, since 2010, [a national overview of MARACs covering England and Wales](#) has been available.

## Victim Support

[Victim Support](#) is an independent charity dedicated to supporting victims of crime and traumatic incidents in England and Wales. For victims of domestic abuse, it offers outreach services to provide practical and emotional support. Victim Support is also one of the largest single independent domestic violence advisor (IDVA) providers in England and Wales.

Victim Support collates data on referrals to IDVA services ([Appendix Table 20](#)). It also runs both specialist domestic abuse services and wider multi-crime services (commissioned by Police and Crime Commissioners). The multi-crime services pick up lower-risk domestic abuse cases and cases where victims do not wish to engage with specialist organisations. Victim Support also collates data on multi-crime service cases flagged as domestic abuse-related.

## Women's Aid Federation of England

Women's Aid is the national charity working to end domestic abuse against women and children. It is a federation of over 180 organisations who provide just under 300 local life-saving services to women and children across the country.

Women's Aid Federation of England distributes an [annual online survey](#) to all domestic abuse services (both refuge services and community-based services) for female victims in England listed on the Routes to Support database. The survey collects information on service users' needs, experiences and demographic information, as well as data on the services they use, and the numbers of referrals accepted and declined by services.

## Routes to Support

[Routes to Support](#) is the UK's Violence Against Women and Girls directory of services and refuge vacancies, run in partnership by Scottish Women's Aid, Women's Aid Federation of Northern Ireland, Welsh Women's Aid, and Women's Aid Federation of England. The directory provides comprehensive data on all domestic abuse services including, but not limited to, those run by Women's Aid members. Routes to Support is supported and part-funded by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government.

Routes to Support is a secure database and its primary purpose is to operate as a referral tool for the domestic abuse services sector. The data are obtained directly from the services listed on the system in the form of an initial questionnaire when the service registers. This is followed by an annual update form, which every service must complete to provide information about changes to provision. Data are further updated on an ongoing basis as Women's Aid are made aware of changes, and as new services are set up or takeovers tendered.

## **Welsh Women's Aid**

[Welsh Women's Aid](#) runs the Live Fear Free Helpline, funded by the Welsh Government. The Live Fear Free Helpline is primarily for those suffering from domestic abuse and sexual violence, but calls can be made regarding any form of violence against women, and the caller will be referred to a service in their area. Data from these helplines give insight into those who use these services, as well as how victims are signposted once they call the helplines.

Welsh Women's Aid conducts a separate data collection covering domestic abuse service provision in Wales. At the end of each quarter during the reporting period, Welsh Women's Aid collects a range of data from member organisations. This includes the number of clients supported and referred in that period, support needs of service users, types of abuse experienced by clients, locality and demographics.

### **Notes for: Annex 1: Information on the services and service providers featured in this publication**

1. Victims at high risk are determined using the Domestic Abuse, Stalking and Harassment and Honour-based Violence (DASH) Risk Identification Checklist, professional judgement and where repeat incidents are occurring.