

Article

# Homicide in England and Wales: year ending March 2018

Analyses of information held within the Home Office Homicide Index, which contains detailed record-level information about each homicide recorded by police in England and Wales.



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Release date:  
7 February 2019

Next release:  
To be announced

## Correction

### 28 February 2019 11:24

A correction has been made, in section 10, to the number of convicted suspects within each age group. This was due to an error that occurred during the production process, which resulted in the ages of convicted suspects being categorised in the wrong age band.

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# 1 . Main points

There were 726 homicides in the year ending March 2018, 20 more (3% increase) than in the previous year. However, recent trends in homicide are affected by the recording of exceptional incidents with multiple victims such as the terrorist attacks in London and Manchester, and events at Hillsborough in 1989. If these are excluded, then the number of homicides increased by 89, or 15%, from 606 to 695. The number of homicides was the highest since the year ending March 2008, when 729 were recorded.

There were 285 homicides where the method of killing was by a knife or sharp instrument, the highest number since the Home Office Homicide Index began in 1946.

The rise in homicide seen in recent years has been most pronounced in male victims and those in younger age groups.

There were 12 offences of homicide per million population, and the homicide rate for males (17 per million population) was just over double that for females (8 per million population).

As in previous years, women were far more likely than men to be killed by partners or ex-partners (33% of female victims compared with 1% of male victims), and men were more likely than women to be killed by friends or acquaintances (25% of male victims compared with 7% of female victims).

## 2 . How is homicide defined and measured?

The term “homicide” covers the offences of murder, manslaughter and infanticide<sup>1</sup>. Murder and manslaughter are common law offences that have never been defined by statute, although they have been modified by statute. The manslaughter category includes the offence of corporate manslaughter which was created by the [Corporate Manslaughter and Corporate Homicide Act 2007](#) which came into force on 6 April 2008. The offence of infanticide was created by the Infanticide Act 1922 and refined by the [Infanticide Act 1938](#) (section 1).

Data presented have been extracted from the Home Office Homicide Index which contains detailed record-level information about each homicide recorded by police in England and Wales. It is continually updated with revised information from the police and the courts and, as such, is a richer source of data than the main recorded crime dataset<sup>2</sup> and is therefore the preferred source for homicide statistics. However, due to the level of detail of the information collected, the Homicide Index does not provide data that are as timely as the main police recorded crime return. More up-to-date headline figures are published as part of the quarterly [ONS Crime Statistics in England and Wales series](#).

In accordance with the [Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007](#), statistics based on the Home Office Homicide Index have been re-assessed against the Code of Practice for Official Statistics and found to meet the required standard for designation as National Statistics<sup>3</sup>. Further information on the interpretation of recorded crime data is provided in the [User guide to crime statistics for England and Wales](#).

Homicide Index data are based on the year when the offence was recorded as a crime, not when the offence took place or when the case was heard in court. While in the vast majority of cases the offence will be recorded in the same year as it took place, this is not always the case. Caution is therefore needed when looking at longer-term homicide trends. For example:

- the 173 homicides attributed to Dr Harold Shipman<sup>4</sup> as a result of Dame Janet Smith's inquiry took place over a long period of time but were all recorded by the police during the year ending March 2003
- the 96 deaths that occurred at Hillsborough in 1989 were recorded as manslaughters in the year ending March 2017 following the verdict of the Hillsborough Inquest in April 2016

Furthermore, where several people are killed by the same suspect, the number of homicides counted is the total number of victims killed rather than the number of incidents. For example, the victims of the Manchester Arena bombing in May 2017 are counted as 22 individual homicides, rather than one incident.

The data in this article refer to the position as at 4 December 2018, when the Homicide Index database was "frozen" for the purpose of analysis<sup>5</sup>. The data will change as subsequent court hearings take place or as further information is received.

The circumstances surrounding a homicide may be complex and it can take time for cases to pass through the criminal justice system (CJS). Due to this, the percentage of homicides recorded in the year ending March 2018 (and, to a lesser extent, those recorded in earlier years) that have concluded at Crown Court is likely to show an increase when the next figures from the Homicide Index are published<sup>6</sup>. Conversely, the proportion of cases without suspects or with court proceedings pending is expected to decrease. This is due to police completing more investigations and as cases pass through the CJS (see "What do we know about suspects" section for further details).

For the purposes of the Homicide Index, a suspect in a homicide case is defined as either:

- a person who has been arrested in respect of an offence initially classified as homicide<sup>7</sup> and charged with homicide, including those who were subsequently convicted
- a person who is suspected by the police of having committed the offence but is known to have died or committed suicide prior to arrest or being charged

Where there are multiple suspects, they are categorised in the Homicide Index as either the principal or a secondary suspect. There is only ever one principal suspect per homicide victim. If there is any conviction information available then the suspect with the longest sentence or most serious conviction is determined to be the principal suspect. In the absence of any court outcome, the principal suspect is either the person considered by the police to be the most involved in the homicide or the suspect with the closest relationship to the victim.

As more than one person can be convicted for a single homicide, the number of people convicted will not necessarily be the same as the number of victims recorded.

## **Notes for: How is homicide defined and measured?**

1. Infanticide is defined as the killing of a baby under 1 year old by their mother while the balance of her mind was disturbed as a result of giving birth.
2. For example, when the police initially record an offence as a homicide it remains classified as such unless the police or courts decide that a lesser offence, or no offence, took place. The offence would be reclassified on the Homicide Index as “no longer recorded” but may remain in the main police recorded crime collection as a homicide.
3. The letter of confirmation can be found on the [UK Statistics Authority](#) website.
4. In previous years, this figure has been incorrectly stated as 172.
5. The Homicide Index is continually updated with revised information from the police as investigations continue and as cases are heard by the courts. The version used for analysis does not accept updates after it is “frozen to ensure the data do not change during the analysis period. See Section 3.1 of the [user guide](#) for more information.
6. In the year ending March 2016 an exercise was carried out with the National Confidential Inquiry at the University of Manchester and Greater Manchester Police to update the Homicide Index with missing CJS outcomes. This led to a decrease in the number of homicides with pending/in progress cases, and a corresponding increase in final outcomes. This exercise was not carried out this year; therefore homicide cases for the year ending March 2017 and 2018 will have a higher number of pending/in progress cases.
7. The homicide may no longer be recorded as such if all the suspects were acquitted.

### 3 . What do trends in homicide look like?

When the police initially record an offence as a homicide it remains classified as such unless the police or courts decide that a lesser offence, or no offence, took place. In all, 730 deaths were initially recorded as homicides by the police in the year ending March 2018. By 4 December 2018, four were no longer recorded as homicides<sup>1</sup>, giving a total of 726 offences currently recorded as homicides. This is 20 more (3% increase) than in the previous year ([Appendix Table 1](#)). However, recent trends in homicide are affected by the recording of exceptional incidents with multiple victims such as the terrorist attacks in London and Manchester, and events at Hillsborough in 1989<sup>2</sup>. If these are excluded, then the number of homicides increased by 89, or 15%, from 606 to 695. Drivers of this increase are explored further in later sections.

To put the number of homicides in context, incidence rates show the volume of offences as a proportion of the resident population. The incidence rate for homicide remains relatively low, with 12.4 homicides recorded per million population during the year ending March 2018. The rate is slightly higher than the previous year (10.4 homicides per 1 million population), when the 96 Hillsborough cases recorded in the year ending March 2017 are excluded.

Historically, the number of homicides increased from around 300 per year in the early 1960s to over 800 per year in the early years of this century. This was at a faster rate than population growth over the same period. However, from the peak in the year ending March 2003 to the year ending March 2015, the volume of homicides generally decreased while the population of England and Wales continued to grow. In the latest three years, the number of homicides has increased. However, the homicide rate for the year ending March 2018 was still similar to the homicide rate ten years ago (12.4 homicides per 1 million population compared with 13.4 homicides per 1 million population – Figure 1).

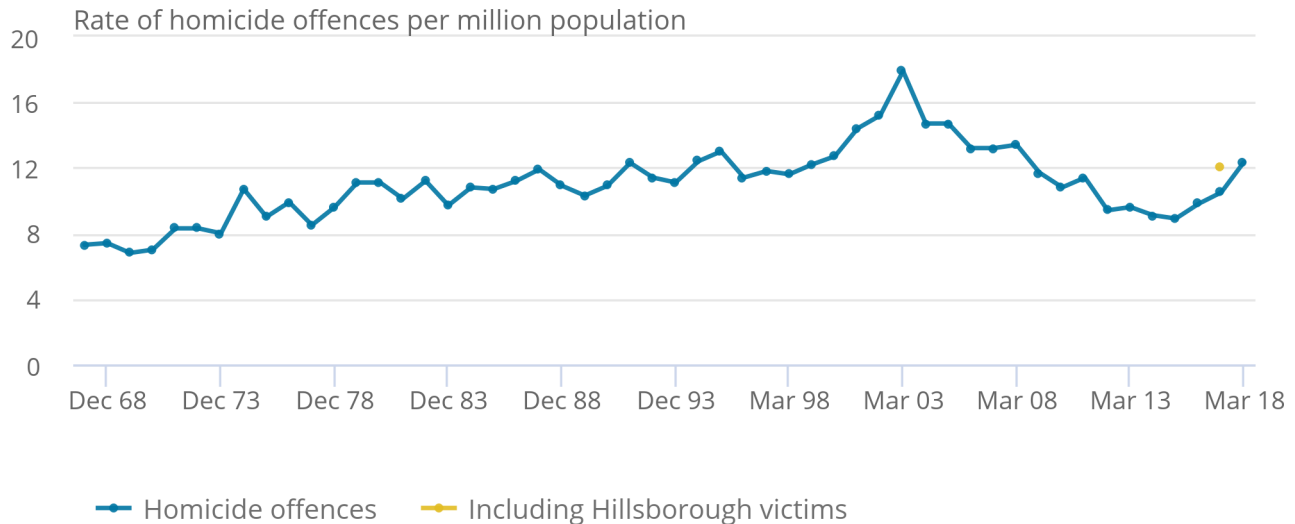
**Figure 1: Homicide rates declined since peaking in the year ending March 2003, but have risen over the last three years**

England and Wales, year ending December 1967 to year ending March 2018

Figure 1: Homicide rates declined since peaking in the year ending March 2003, but have risen over the last three years

2017 inc  
Hillsbor

England and Wales, year ending December 1967 to year ending March 2018



Source: Home Office - Homicide Index

Notes:

1. Year ending December 1987 includes 15 victims of Michael Ryan.
2. Year ending March 2001 includes 58 Chinese nationals who suffocated in a lorry en route into the UK.
3. Year ending March 2003 includes 173 victims of Dr Harold Shipman.
4. Year ending March 2004 includes 20 cockle pickers who drowned in Morecambe Bay.
5. Year ending March 2006 includes 52 victims of the 7 July London bombings.
6. Year ending March 2011 includes 12 victims of Derrick Bird.
7. Year ending March 2017 includes 96 victims of Hillsborough and four victims of the Westminster Bridge attack.
8. Year ending March 2018 includes 31 victims of the terrorist attacks that involved multiple victims, including the Manchester Arena bombing, and the London Bridge attack).

Trends in homicide over the last 50 years have generally been driven by changes in the number of male rather than female victims. In the 1960s, the proportion of homicide victims was fairly evenly split between males and females. While the number of female victims tended to fluctuate between 200 and 250 a year<sup>3</sup> from the 1960s until year ending March 2011, the number of male victims increased from around a similar number to an average of around 550 a year between year ending March 2001 to year ending March 2005.

In the period after this, there was a fall in the number of male victims which drove the downward trend in homicide during this time. In the year ending March 2015, there were 324 male victims of homicide, the lowest number in a quarter of a century. Since then, there has been an increase in the number of homicides, with the number of male victims increasing from 324 in the year ending March 2015 to 499 in the year ending March 2018, an increase of 54%. This is at the highest level since the year ending March 2008, when there were 530 male homicides.

While the increase in male victims has contributed most to the overall increase in homicides, in the last year there was also an increase in female victims, from 185 to 227. Of these, 21 were victims of the terrorist attacks seen in 2017<sup>4</sup>. Excluding terrorist-related homicides, the number of female homicide victims in the last year (206) was the highest since the year ending March 2006 (213).

Compared with other offences, homicides are relatively low-volume, and year-on-year variations need to be interpreted with some caution. However, a statistical analysis of trends<sup>5</sup> shows the number of homicide incidents recorded ([Appendix Table 23](#)) in the year ending March 2018 was a statistically significant increase (at the 95% level) compared with the previous year. This indicates that the rise in homicide reflects a genuine change rather than being a result of natural fluctuation.

### **Notes for: What do trends in homicide look like?**

1. For example, following further investigation the police determined that the case was a suicide not a homicide.
2. The 96 offences of manslaughter from Hillsborough and crime related to four of the victims of the Westminster Bridge attack were recorded in the year ending March 2017. The 22 victims from the Manchester Arena bombing, the eight victims from the London Bridge attack, and one further victim of the Westminster Bridge attack were recorded in the year ending March 2018.
3. There are occasional years where the number of female victims has been higher than 250.
4. There were 17 female victims from the Manchester Arena Bombing, three female victims from the London Bridge attack and one female victim from the Westminster Bridge attack who died in April 2017.
5. Further information on the methodology can be found in Section 11 of the Homicide chapter of "[Focus on violent crime and sexual offences, England and Wales: year ending March 2016](#)".

## **4 . Which groups of people are most likely to be victims of homicide?**

### **Sex**

As in previous years, the majority of homicide victims in the year ending March 2018 were male (69%, 499 victims) and 31% were female (227 victims).

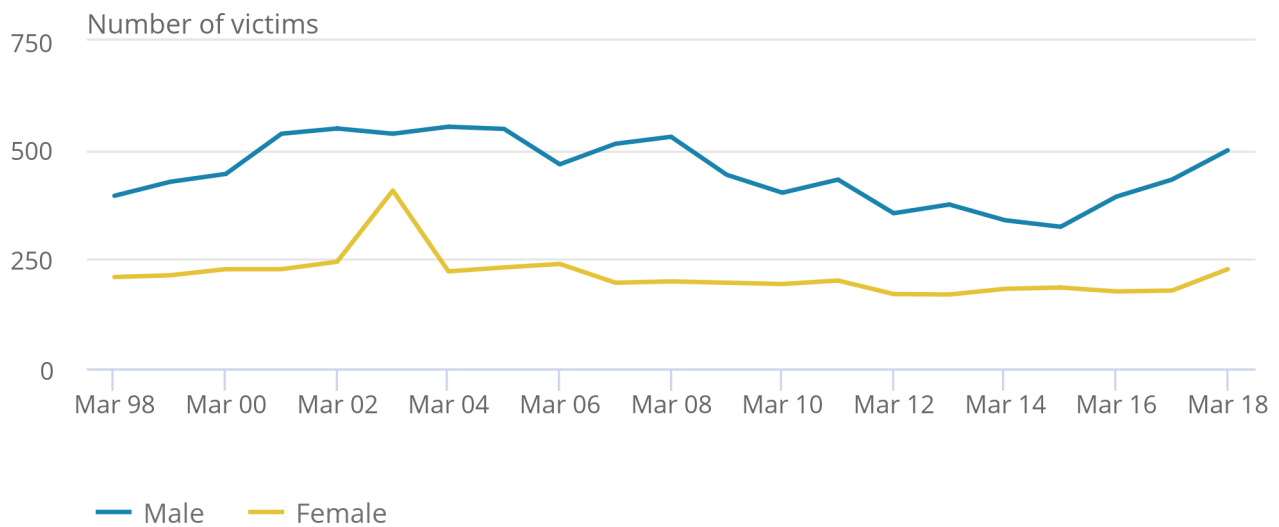
The number of male victims has increased at a faster rate than females in recent years. The figure of 499 male victims of homicide was an increase of 54% from 324 in the year ending March 2015. In contrast, the number of female homicide victims had remained broadly flat until increasing by 49 homicides (28%, excluding Hillsborough victims) in the year ending March 2018. (Figure 2).

**Figure 2: The number of male homicide victims has increased at a faster rate than females in recent years (excluding Hillsborough victims)**

England and Wales, year ending March 1998 to year ending March 2018

Figure 2: The number of male homicide victims has increased at a faster rate than females in recent years (excluding Hillsborough victims)

England and Wales, year ending March 1998 to year ending March 2018



Source: Home Office - Homicide Index

Notes:

1. Year ending March 2003 includes 43 male and 130 female victims of Dr Harold Shipman.
2. Year ending March 2017 excludes 89 male and seven female victims of Hillsborough.
3. Year ending March 2017 includes two female and three male victims of terrorist attacks.
4. Year ending March 2018 includes 21 female and 11 male victims of terrorist attacks.

The homicide rate for males (17 per million population) was around twice that for females (eight per million population), a pattern that is consistent with previous years ([Appendix Table 3](#)). However, it should be noted that the nature of homicides differs between men and women, as discussed in the [“How are victims and suspects related?” section](#) of this article.



## Age

The most common age-group for victims of homicides recorded in the year ending March 2018 was 16- to 24-year-olds (152 victims). This was closely followed by 25- to 34-year-olds (140 victims), and 35- to 44-year-olds (119 victims) and 45- to 54-year-olds (108 victims).

As in previous years, babies under the age of 1 had the highest rate of homicide (26 per million population), along with those aged 16 to 24 years (24 per million population).

Homicide victims aged 16- to 24 years and aged 25- to 34 years had the largest volume increases for the year ending March 2018 compared with the previous year. Victims aged 16- to 24 years increased by nearly a half (45%, 105 to 152, excluding Hillsborough victims). The number of homicides in this age group has been relatively flat over recent years (excluding Hillsborough victims), with the increase in the last year mainly seen among male victims. This, in part, reflects the increase in serious violence in London and other cities where young adults have been disproportionately affected. Victims aged 25- to 34 years increased by over a fifth (23%, 114 to 140); with increases seen among both male and female victims.

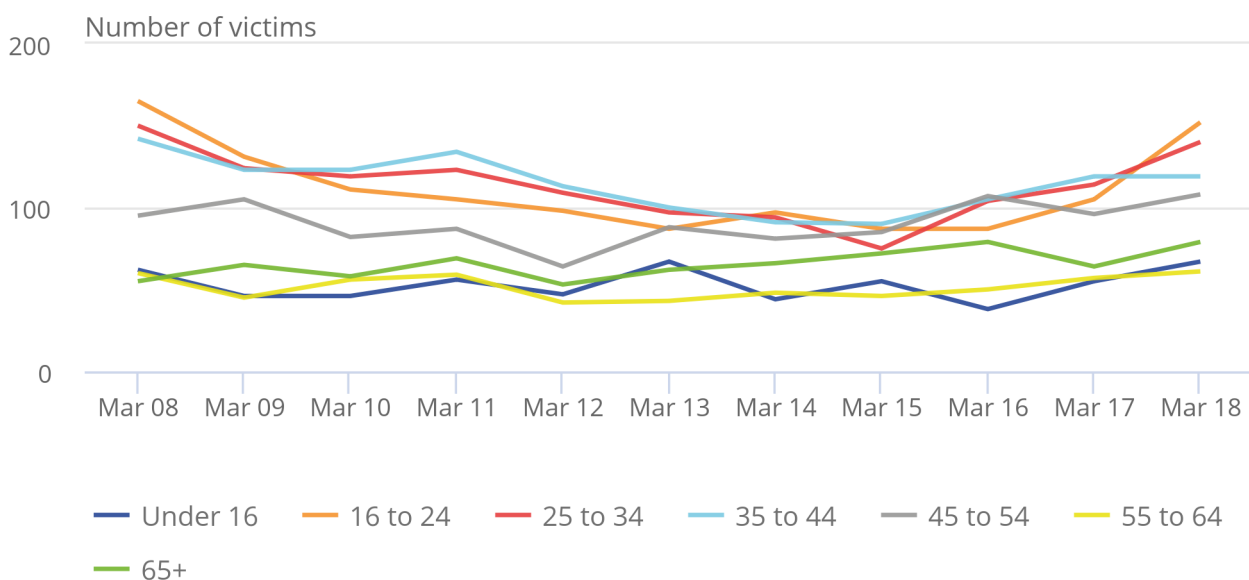
There were only two age categories that saw a fall amongst female victims; those aged 35- to 44 years decreased from 42 to 29, and those aged over 75 years decreased by from 24 to 22.

### Figure 3: Recent increases in homicide have been seen across most victim age categories (excludes Hillsborough victims)

England and Wales, year ending March 2008 to year ending March 2018

### Figure 3: Recent increases in homicide have been seen across most victim age categories (excludes Hillsborough victims)

England and Wales, year ending March 2008 to year ending March 2018



Source: Home Office - Homicide Index

## 5 . How are victims and suspects related?

### Adult victims

There were large differences in the victim-suspect relationship between men and women. A third of women were killed by their partner or ex-partner<sup>1</sup> (33%, 63 homicides) in the year ending March 2018. This is the fewest number of women aged 16 years and over killed by a partner or ex-partner in the last 40 years<sup>2</sup>, although this may change as police investigations continue and the Homicide Index is updated. In contrast, only 1% of male victims aged 16 years or over were killed by their partner or ex-partner (seven homicides, [Appendix Table 8](#), Figure 4).

Men were most likely to be killed by a stranger, with over one in three (35%, 166 victims) killed by a stranger in the year ending March 2018. This was an increase of 51% compared with the previous year (110 victims). Women were less likely to be killed by a stranger (17%, 33 victims).

Among homicide victims, one in four men (25%, 115 men) were killed by friends or social acquaintances, compared with around one in fourteen women (7%, 13 women).

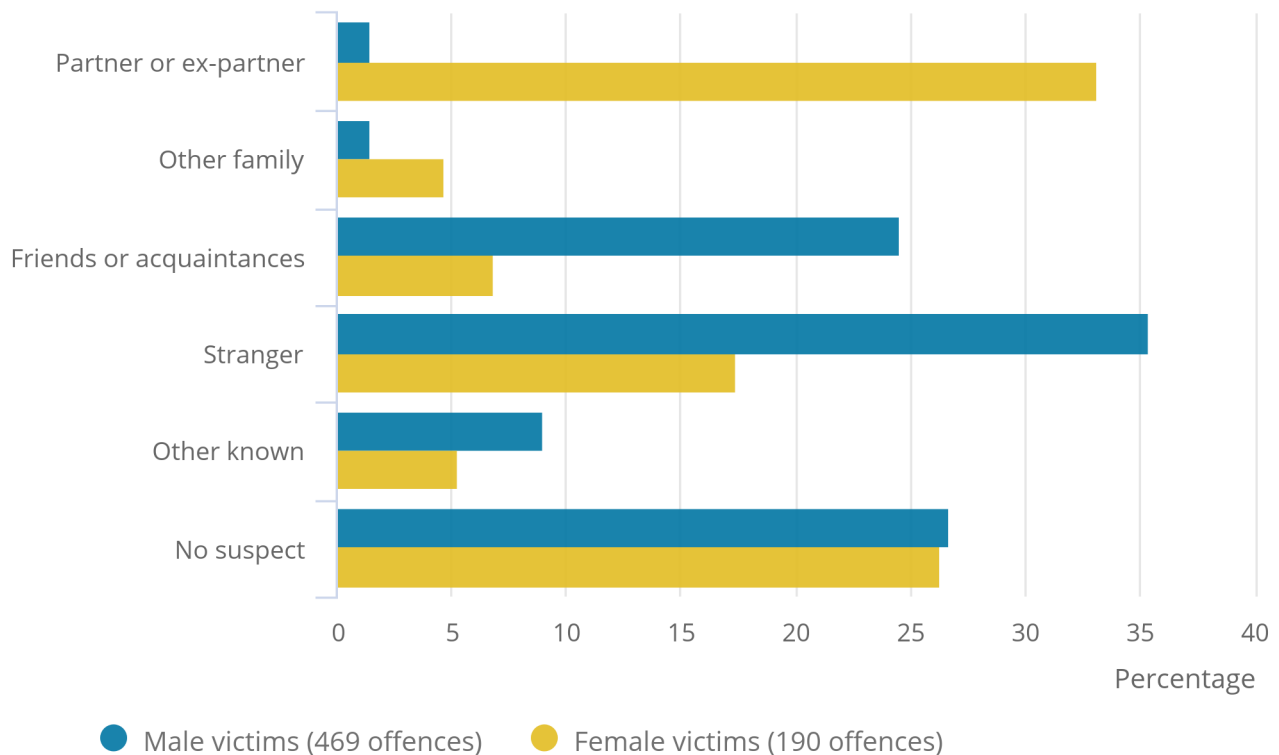
In 26% of female homicides recorded in the year ending March 2018, no suspect had been identified for the offence at the time of analysis (50 victims). The percentage of male victims with no suspect identified was similar, at 27% (125 victims).

**Figure 4: Most female homicide victims were killed by a partner or ex-partner with males most likely to be killed by a stranger**

England and Wales, year ending March 2018

**Figure 4: Most female homicide victims were killed by a partner or ex-partner with males most likely to be killed by a stranger**

England and Wales, year ending March 2018



Source: Home Office - Homicide Index

Notes:

1. Partner or ex-partner includes adulterous relationship, boyfriend or girlfriend, common-law spouse or cohabiting partner, ex-spouse, ex-common-law spouse or ex-cohabiting partner, ex-boyfriend or ex-girlfriend, spouse (including civil partner).

### Child victims

There were 67 victims of homicide aged under 16 years in the year ending March 2018. A quarter of victims aged under 16 years were killed by a parent or step-parent (25%, 17 offences), a lower proportion than in recent years<sup>3</sup> and a decrease from 32 offences the previous year. However, as at 4 December 2018, there were 28 victims aged under 16 years (42%) for whom no suspect had been identified. This number is likely to fall as police investigations continue.

It is rare for under-16s to be killed by a stranger. Excluding the six homicides of children at the Manchester Arena terror attack, there were four offences where the victim was killed by a stranger, the same as the previous two years.

### **Notes for: How are victims and suspects related?**

1. Changes have been made to the categorisation of the relationship of the victim to the suspect. The new categories better reflect the nature of the relationship. Emotional rival and lover's spouse have been moved from the "partner or ex-partner" category to "other known". Carer, health worker or patient and customer client have been moved from "stranger" to "other known".
2. The Homicide Index holds comparable data on the relationship between victim and suspect from 1977.
3. In previous years, around a half to three-quarters of victims aged under 16 years were killed by a parent.

## **6 . What are the most common methods of killing?**

As in previous years, the most common method of killing, for both male and female victims, was by a knife or other sharp instrument. There were 285 such homicides (39% of the total) recorded in the year ending March 2018 ([Appendix Table 4](#)). This was an increase of 73 (34%) compared with the previous year. Over the last decade, the proportion of offences committed by a sharp instrument has fluctuated between 35% and 40%<sup>1</sup>. For more information on sharp instrument homicides, see section 7. "Highest number of sharp instrument homicides seen in year ending March 2018".

The second most common method of killing was "kicking or hitting", accounting for 106 homicides (15% of the total), a slightly lower proportion than seen over the previous decade (around a fifth, 20%). As in previous years, the majority (87%) of victims killed in this way were male.

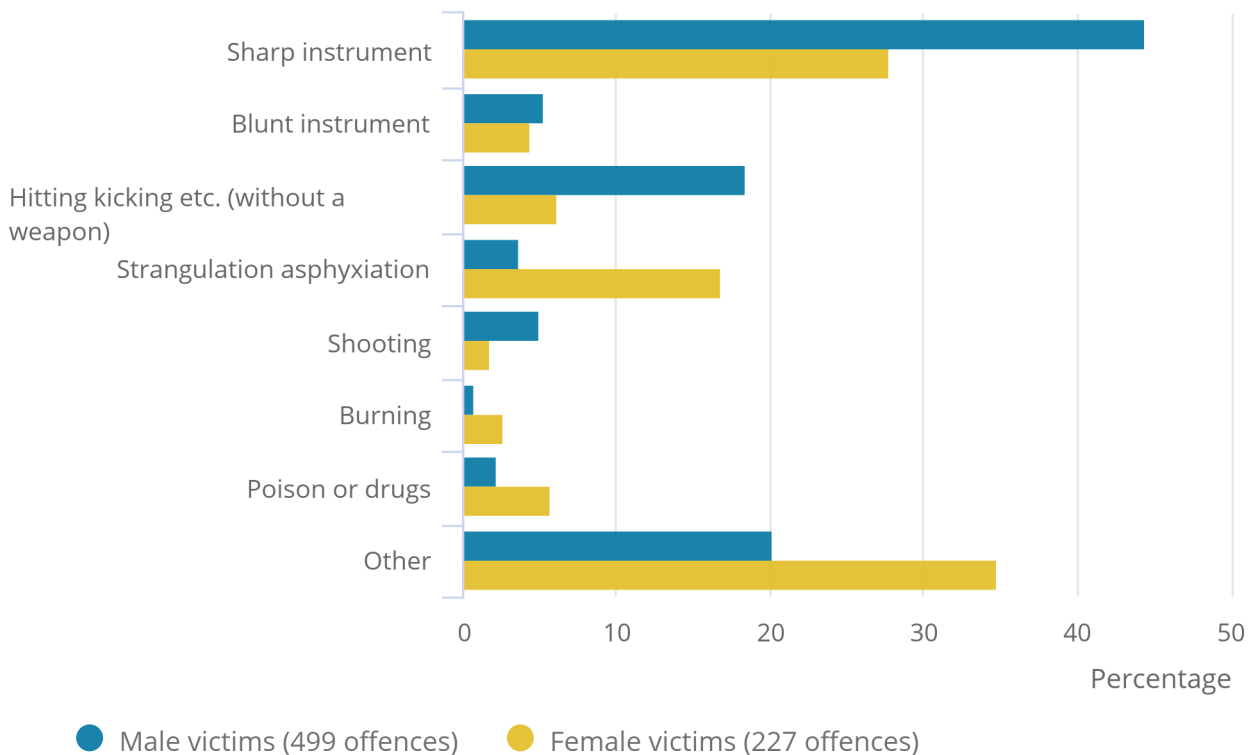
There were 29 homicide victims killed by shooting in the year ending March 2018, three fewer than the previous year. The number of homicides by shooting has fluctuated between 21 and 32 over the last six years. In the previous five years<sup>2</sup>, there were between 39 and 60 homicides by shooting a year and the number of these offences is 45% lower than a decade ago.

**Figure 5: Use of a knife or other sharp instrument was the most common method of killing in homicide offences**

England and Wales, year ending March 2018

**Figure 5: Use of a knife or other sharp instrument was the most common method of killing in homicide offences**

England and Wales, year ending March 2018



Source: Home Office - Homicide Index

Notes:

1. 'Other' includes all other apparent methods and where method is unknown.

More detailed information on knife crime and offences involving a firearm can be found in the [offences involving the use of weapons data tables](#).

**Notes for: What are the most common methods of killing?**

1. The proportion was 35% in the year ending March 2017 if the Hillsborough manslaughter cases are excluded.
2. The year ending March 2008 to the year ending March 2012.

## 7 . Highest number of sharp instrument homicides seen in year ending March 2018

As stated earlier, there were 285 knife and sharp instrument homicides recorded in the year ending March 2018, the highest number since the Home Office Homicide Index began in 1946. The previous high was in the year ending March 2008 when there were 268 homicide victims killed by knife or a sharp instrument.

There were increases in sharp instrument homicides for both male victims (from 161 to 222; up 38%) and female victims (from 51 to 63; up 24%). Male victims aged 16- to 24 years and 25- to 34 years saw the biggest increases over the last year, with victims aged 16- to 24 years increasing from 54 to 86 homicides, and victims aged 25- to 34 years increasing from 37 to 54 homicides. ([Appendix Table 5](#))

The latest figures show just under two-thirds of sharp instrument homicide victims were White (63%, 179 homicides), while a further quarter (25%; 70 victims) were Black. This is both the highest number and proportion of Black victims of sharp instrument homicides since these data were first collected in the year ending March 1997. The previous highest was in the year ending March 2009, when there were 58 Black victims (23% of all sharp instrument homicides in that year, 256). Of these 70 homicides recorded in the last year:

- 55 were recorded by the Metropolitan Police
- In 80% (56) of the homicides, the location of the offence was a public place (compared with 44% of overall homicides)

Black men aged 16- to 24 years experienced the largest increase in sharp instrument homicides (78% increase, from 23 to 41 homicides).

There are likely to be important socio-economic factors in homicides that cannot be examined using Homicide Index data. There is evidence from other studies that suggests that ethnicity is just one of many factors in homicides and violent incidents in general. Leyland and Dundas (2009), for example, investigated Scottish homicides between 1980 and 2005, and concluded that “contextual influences of the neighbourhood of residence might be more important than individual characteristics in determining the victims of assault”.

The Serious Violence Strategy, published by the Government in 2018, states “the evidence on links between serious violence and ethnicity is limited. Once other factors are controlled for, it is not clear from the evidence whether ethnicity is a predictor of offending or victimisation”.<sup>1</sup>

The number of White victims was the highest since the year ending March 2008 (191 victims). There were large increases in sharp instrument homicides among White men aged 16 to 24 years (58% increase, from 19 to 30 homicides), and those aged 25- to 34 years (57% increase, from 21 to 33 homicides).

### Notes for: Highest number of sharp instrument homicides seen in year ending March 2018

1. Page 35, [HM Government Serious Violence Strategy, April 2018](#)

## 8 . What do we know about the circumstances and location of homicides?

## Circumstances of homicides

The latest figures show just over half (51%, 373 offences) of all homicide cases resulted from a quarrel, a revenge attack or a loss of temper. This is a similar proportion compared with the previous year (excluding Hillsborough victims). This proportion was higher where the principal suspect was known to the victim (67%), compared with when the suspect was unknown to the victim (40%). There was little difference between males and females. ([Appendix Table 11](#))

Furtherance of theft or gain accounted for 6% of homicides (47 offences), and 3% of homicides (21 offences) occurred during irrational acts<sup>1</sup>. As at 4 December 2018, the apparent circumstances were not known for 22% of homicides (161 offences) recorded in the year ending March 2018 ([Appendix Table 10](#)). This figure is similar to the previous year and is likely to decrease as the police carry out further investigations.

## Location of homicides

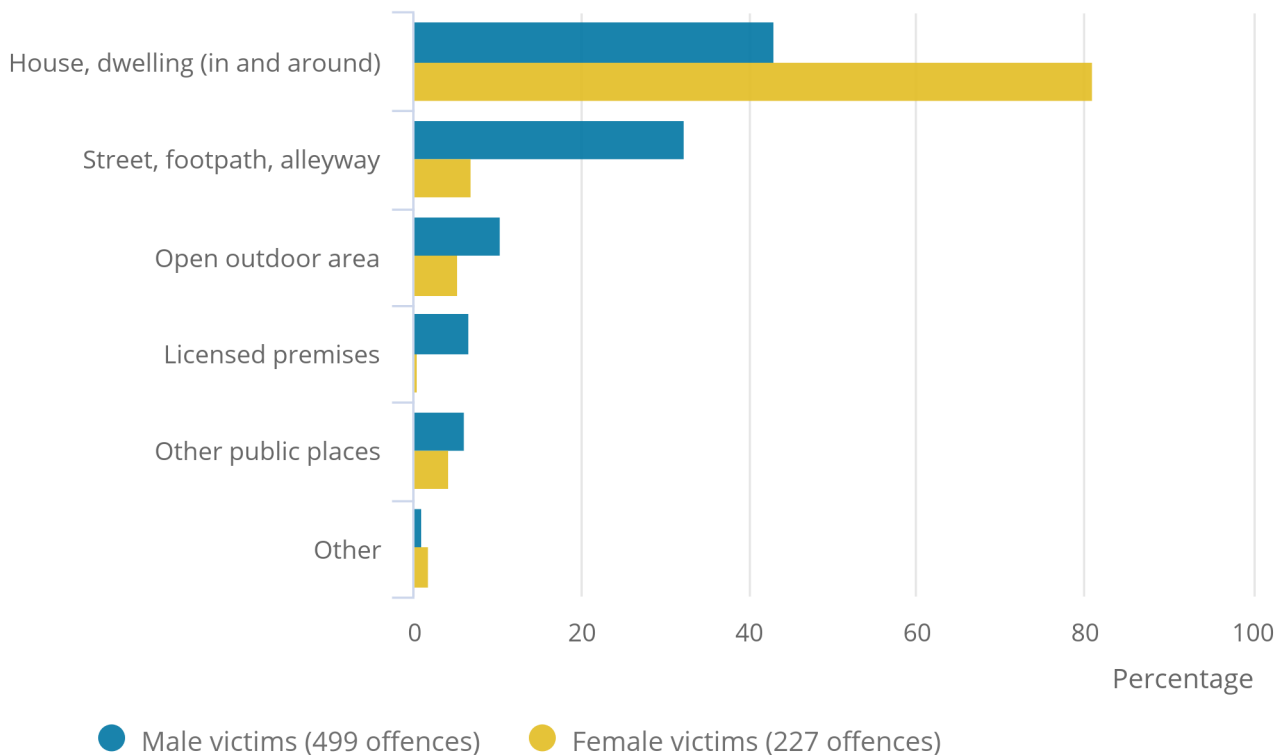
Female victims were most likely to be killed in or around a house or dwelling or residential home (77%, 174 offences for year ending March 2018). This compares with 40% of male homicides (200 offences). Around a third (32%) of male homicides took place in a street, path or alleyway (161 offences) compared with only 7% of female homicides (16 offences). These patterns reflect differing victim-suspect relationships presented in the section above ([Appendix Table 12](#)).

**Figure 6: Female homicide victims were most likely to be killed in or around a house or dwelling while most male homicides took place in the street**

England and Wales, year ending March 2018

Figure 6: Female homicide victims were most likely to be killed in or around a house or dwelling while most male homicides took place in the street

England and Wales, year ending March 2018



Source: Home Office - Homicide Index

Notes:

1. 'House, dwelling (in and around)' includes residential homes.
2. 'Other' includes all other locations including unknown.

**Notes for: What do we know about the circumstances and location of homicides?**

1. Homicides classified as irrational acts cover those offences where there is evidence that the offender was suffering substantial mental illness. These do not account for all homicides committed by mentally ill people, as offences with an apparent motive (for example, during a quarrel or robbery) are instead included under the respective circumstance. Higher overall totals for homicides committed by those suffering mentally illness are quoted elsewhere ([National Confidential Inquiry into Suicide and Homicide by People with Mental Illness](#)).



## 9 . Drug- and alcohol-related homicides

The number of drug- and alcohol-related<sup>1</sup> homicides fluctuates from year to year, so the analysis and commentary in this section focuses on data combined from the last three years (the year ending March 2016 to the year ending March 2018). The section is based on all victims and suspects.

According to the Homicide Index, in the last three years a third (32%) of homicide victims were under the influence of alcohol and/or illicit drugs<sup>2</sup> at the time of the homicide: 20% had been drinking alcohol, 5% had been taking an illicit drug, and 6% were under the influence of both. This proportion was higher among male victims (36% were under the influence of alcohol and/or illicit drugs) than female victims (21%).

The figures for suspects were similar to victims. A third (32%) of homicide suspects were reported by the police to have been under the influence of alcohol and/or drugs at the time of the homicide, of which, 20% had been drinking alcohol, 5% had been taking an illicit drug, and 7% were under the influence of both ( [Appendix Table 13](#)).

There are several other drug-related fields on the Homicide Index ( [Appendix Table 14](#)). Around a quarter (24%) of homicide victims were known to be drug users, and one in nine (11%) were known to be drug dealers. These proportions were even higher among suspects: over a third (38%) were known to be drug users and around one in five (20%) were known to be drug dealers. These proportions were generally higher among males than females.

In a small proportion of cases, the police flagged the suspects' motive as "obtaining drugs" (4%) or "stealing drug proceeds" (4%). ( [Appendix Table 14](#))

The number of homicides that have been "drug-related"<sup>3</sup> in any way has increased slightly over the last decade, from 40% in the year ending March 2008 to 44% in the year ending March 2018. In the last year, there were 322 homicides that were in some way drug-related, the highest number since these data were first collected in the year ending March 2008 ( [Appendix Table 15](#)).

### Notes for: Drug- and alcohol-related homicides

1. Information on drug and alcohol use is recorded by the police from toxicology reports, witness statements and suspect's confession.
2. Illicit drugs include all controlled drugs (class A to C) under Schedule 2 of the [Misuse of Drugs Act 1971](#) (and subsequent amendments).
3. An offence is "drug-related" if any of the following variables are positive: victim illegal drug user; victim illegal drug dealer; suspect illegal drug user; suspect illegal drug dealer; victim has taken a drug; suspect has taken a drug; suspect had motive to obtain drugs; suspect had motive to steal drug proceeds; drug-related.

## 10 . What do we know about suspects?

More than one suspect may be charged per homicide victim and in some cases no suspect is identified or charged (Table 1). Therefore, the number of suspects is not the same as the number of offences. The number of cases with no suspect is likely to decrease as the police continue their investigations.

Table 1: Number of suspects for initially recorded homicide victims, year ending March 2015 to year ending March 2018  
England and Wales

	Apr '14 to Mar '15	Apr '15 to Mar '16	Apr '16 to Mar '17	Apr '17 to Mar '18	Apr '14 to Mar '15	Apr '15 to Mar '16	Apr '16 to Mar '17	Apr '17 to Mar '18
	Number of recorded homicides				Percentages			
No suspects charged	84	106	247	207	16	18	34	28
One	352	371	352	395	67	64	49	54
Two	59	54	74	71	11	9	10	10
Three or more	33	50	47	57	6	9	7	8
All initially recorded homicides	528	581	720	730	100	100	100	100

Source: Homicide Index - Home Office

#### Notes

1. As at 4 December 2018 figures are subject to revision as cases are dealt with by the police and by the courts or as further information becomes available. [Back to table](#)
2. Year ending March 2017 includes 96 victims of Hillsborough which are included in the no suspect category. This will be updated in the next article following the outcome of the Hillsborough trial. [Back to table](#)
3. Year ending March 2018 includes 31 homicide victims of terrorist attacks where the suspects died or committed suicide. [Back to table](#)

## Investigative and court outcomes

In total, there were 685 suspects as at 4 December 2018 relating to the 730 homicides initially recorded in the year ending March 2018 ([Appendix Table 18](#)). Of these, the majority were male (93%, 634 suspects), a similar proportion to previous years.

The 685 suspects had the following outcomes:

- court proceedings were pending for 342 suspects (50%)
- court proceedings had concluded for 322 suspects (47% of all suspects)
- 19 suspects had committed suicide or died (3%)
- the remaining two suspects had no proceedings taken on advice of the Director of Public Prosecutions.

In the three years from the year ending March 2016 to the year ending March 2018, 79% of suspects indicted for homicide with a court outcome were found guilty of homicide, 15% were acquitted, and 4% were convicted of a lesser offence ([Appendix Table 19](#)). Similar [criminal justice statistics](#) produced by the Ministry of Justice show that the conviction ratio (the number of convictions within a given period divided by the number of prosecutions in the same period) for homicide offences in the year ending March 2018 was 87% <sup>1</sup>.

The case outcomes for suspects of homicides recorded in the year ending March 2018 ([Appendix Table 18](#)) are likely to change as cases progress through the CJS and more information becomes available.

## Age and sex of convicted suspects

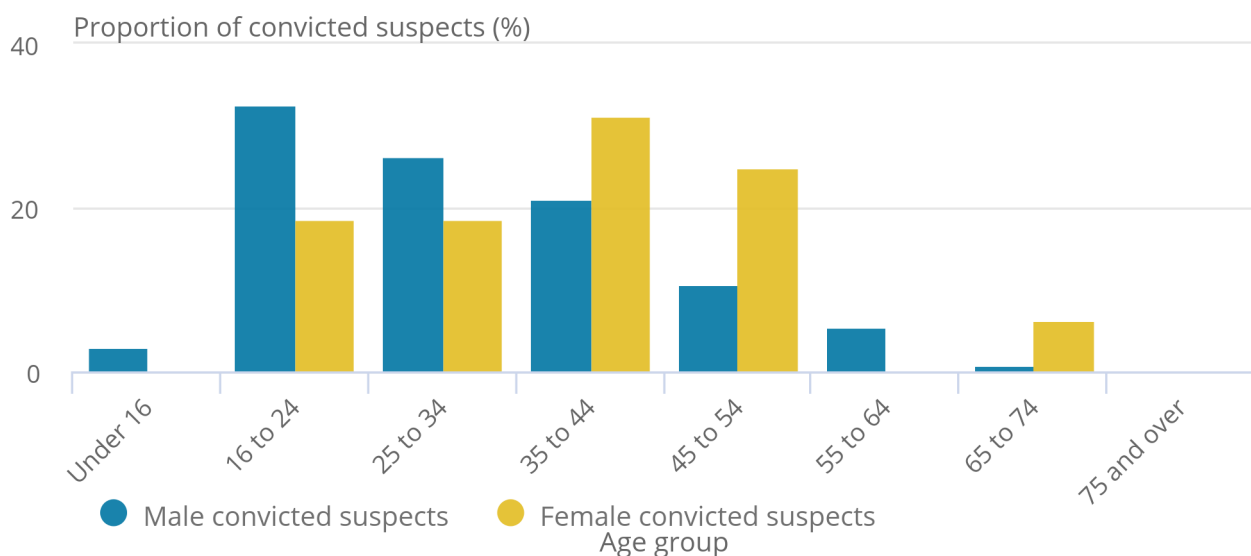
As in previous years, the majority of suspects convicted of homicide were male (236; 94%). One-third (33%) of convicted male suspects were aged between 16 and 24 years old, with 26% being 25 to 34 years old and 21% being 35 to 44 years old. Female suspects tended to be older, with 10 of the 16 suspects convicted in the year ending March 2018 being 35 years or older ([Appendix Table 21](#) and Figure 7).

**Figure 7: Male suspects convicted of homicide show a younger age profile than female suspects**

England and Wales, year ending March 2018

Figure 7: Male suspects convicted of homicide show a younger age profile than female suspects

England and Wales, year ending March 2018



Source: Home Office - Homicide Index

### Notes for: What do we know about suspects?

1. Offenders found guilty in a given year may have been proceeded against in previous year. This series has fluctuated between 67% and 88% in the last decade.

# 11 . International homicide comparisons

There are issues surrounding the comparability of international homicide data<sup>1</sup>, therefore caution should be taken in comparing homicide rates across countries.

[Eurostat](#)<sup>2</sup> figures show that police recorded intentional homicide offences consistently decreased across EU Member States from 2008 to 2014, before an increase in 2015 followed by a decrease in 2016 continuing the 2008 to 2014 trend.

The [Scottish Government](#) publish annual homicide figures, and the most recently published report showed the number of homicide cases recorded by the police in Scotland decreased by 5% in the year ending March 2018, from 62 to 59. Over the ten-year period from 2008 to 2009 to 2017 to 2018, the number of homicide cases in Scotland fell by 39% (38 cases) from 97 to 59.

The [Police Service of Northern Ireland](#) figures show that there were 27 homicide offences recorded by the police in Northern Ireland in the year ending March 2018, an increase of 10 offences compared with the previous year.

The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) publish a [Global Homicide Handbook](#) which gives a comprehensive overview of intentional homicide across the world. The most recent of these was published in 2014, and showed that the global average homicide rate stands at 62 per million population. Southern Africa and Central America had rates over four times higher than that (above 240 victims per million population). Meanwhile, with rates some five times lower than the global average, Eastern Asia, Southern Europe and Western Europe were the sub-regions with the lowest homicide rates.

The [Department of Justice and Federal Bureau of Investigation](#) publish figures showing that the homicide rate in the United States of America in 2017 was 54 per million population.

## Notes for: International homicide comparisons

1. There are different definitions of homicide between countries, although definitions vary less than for some other types of crimes; differing points in criminal justice systems at which homicides are recorded, for instance, when the offence is discovered or following further investigation or court outcome; the figures are for completed homicides (that is excluding attempted murder) but, in some countries, the police register any death that cannot immediately be attributed to other causes as homicide.
2. Eurostat is the statistical office of the European Union situated in Luxembourg. Its mission is to provide high quality statistics for Europe. While fulfilling its mission, Eurostat promotes the following values: respect and trust, fostering excellence, promoting innovation, service orientation, professional independence.