

Article

Homicide in England and Wales: year ending March 2019

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



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1 . Main points

- There were 671 victims of homicide in the year ending March 2019, 33 fewer (5%) than the previous year, the first fall since the year ending March 2015.
- Although there was a fall in the number of victims, this was partly due to the inclusion of several homicide incidents with multiple victims in the previous year; the number of separate homicide incidents increased from 644 to 662 (up 3%).
- The fall in homicide was driven by a fall in male victims, decreasing from 484 to 429 (down 11%).
- Homicides of young victims, aged 16 to 24 years, fell after a large peak the previous year, down from 148 to 113 (down 24%).
- The number of female victims increased from 220 to 241 (up 10%); the second consecutive annual increase and the highest number since the year ending March 2006.
- Female victims (aged 16 years and over) were more likely to be killed by a partner / ex-partner (38%, 80 homicides), while male victims were more likely to be killed by a friend or acquaintance (27%, 105 homicides).
- The most common method of killing continued to be by a sharp instrument, with 259 homicides by this method, a fall of 23 offences (down 8%) compared with the previous year.
- The homicide rate was 11 per million population, with the rate for males (15 per million population) around double that for females (8 per million population).

2 . How is homicide defined and measured?

The term “homicide” covers the offences of murder, manslaughter¹ and infanticide.² 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. These figures provide much more detail about the nature and circumstances of homicide offences than the main police recorded crime dataset. However, the level of detail in the Homicide Index means that these data take longer to collect and analyse than the more basic counts of recorded offences in the main recorded crime dataset. Headline figures, covering a more recent period, on the number of recorded homicides are published as part of the quarterly [Crime in England and Wales](#) bulletin.

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 so. Caution is therefore needed when looking at longer-term homicide trends. For example:

- 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
- the 173 homicides attributed to Dr Harold Shipman³ 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

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.

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

- a person who has been charged with a homicide offence, including those who were subsequently convicted and those awaiting trial
- a person who is suspected by the police of having committed the offence but is known to have died or committed suicide.

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.

Notes for: How is homicide defined and measured?

1. 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.
2. 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.
3. In previous years, this figure has been incorrectly stated as 172.

3 . What do trends in homicide look like?

There were 671 offences currently recorded as homicides in the year ending March 2019.¹ This was 33 fewer (5% decrease) than in the previous year ([Appendix Table 1](#)).

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 very low, with 11.4 homicides recorded per million population during the year ending March 2019, a similar rate to the previous two years.

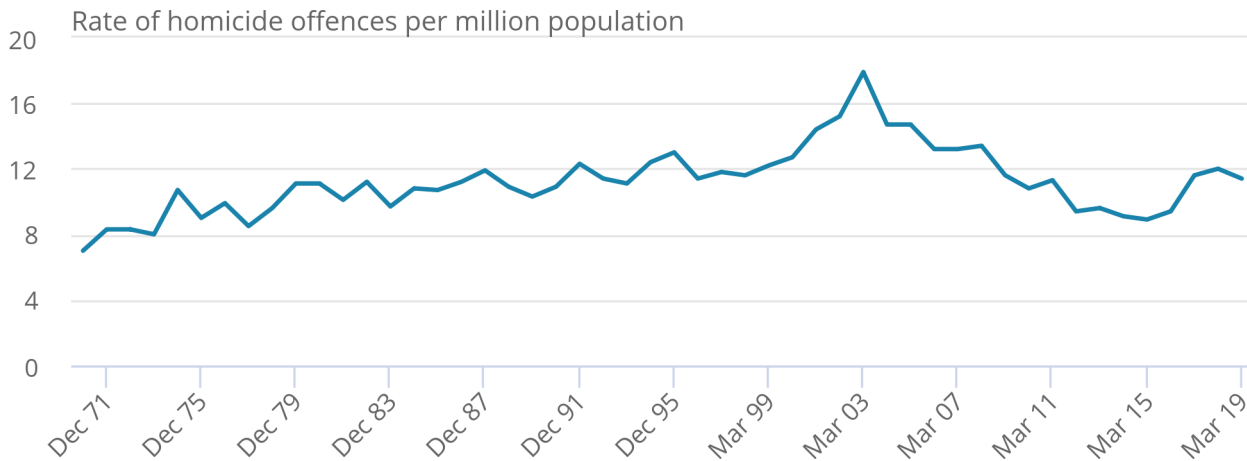
The number of homicides increased from around 300 per year in the early 1960s to over 700 per year in the early years of this century. This was at a faster rate than population growth over the same period, with the rate of homicide increasing from around 6 per million population in the early 1960s to 15.2 by the year ending March 2002.² However, from the peak in this year, the volume of homicides generally decreased while the population of England and Wales continued to grow. The rate of homicide fell to 8.9 per million population in the year ending March 2015, before increasing until the year ending March 2018 (12.0). The latest year shows the first fall in homicides since the year ending March 2015, and a slight decrease in the homicide rate (Figure 1).

Figure 1: Homicide rates have decreased, following three consecutive years of increases

Homicide rate, England and Wales, year ending December 1970 to year ending March 2019

Figure 1: Homicide rates have decreased, following three consecutive years of increases

Homicide rate, England and Wales, year ending December 1970 to year ending March 2019



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). It also includes 11 victims from the Shoreham air crash.

In the 1960s, the proportion of homicide victims was fairly evenly split between males and females. Since then trends in homicide have generally been driven by changes in the number of male rather than female victims. Over the longer term, the number of female victims has tended to fluctuate between 200 and 250 a year³ from the 1960s. In contrast, the number of male victims increased, reaching an average of around 550 a year between year ending March 2001 to year ending March 2005 (See Figure 2). 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 323 male victims of homicide, the lowest number in a quarter of a century.

The increase in homicide between the year ending March 2015 and year ending March 2018 reflected a 50% rise in the number of male victims (an increase from 323 to 484).

In the latest year, there has been a decrease in the number of homicides, again due to a change in the number of male victims which decreased by 11%.⁴ Conversely the number of female victims has continued to increase.⁵

Compared with other offences, homicides are relatively low-volume, and year-on-year variations need to be interpreted with some caution. This is partly because trends can be affected by mass fatality homicide incidents. In the year ending March 2019, there were 662 separate homicide incidents,⁶ an increase of 3% from the 644 the previous year ([Appendix Table 2](#)). This contrasts to the 5% decrease in victims seen over the same period. This was due to a number of high fatality homicide incidents in the year ending March 2018, including the Shoreham air crash (11 victims) and the terrorist attacks in London (nine victims) and Manchester (22 victims).

The number of incidents recorded in the year ending March 2019 was not statistically significantly⁷ different compared with the previous year but remains significantly higher compared with the year ending March 2017 ([Appendix Table 3](#)). The number of separate homicide incidents in the year ending March 2019 (662) was the highest since the year ending March 2008 (712).

Notes for: What do trends in homicide look like?

1. In all, 675 deaths were initially recorded but by 5 December 2019, four were no longer recorded as homicides.
2. Excluding the year ending March 2003, when 173 victims of Harold Shipman were recorded following the Dame Janet Smith Inquiry.
3. There are occasional years where the number of female victims has been higher than 250.
4. From 484 to 429.
5. From 220 to 241 (10%).
6. A homicide incident can involve one or more victims but is only counted as one incident (Homicide Index statistics are based on number of victims). Homicide incident trend data therefore are not affected by mass fatality homicides such as terrorist attacks.
7. 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 were most likely to be victims of homicide?

Sex

As in previous years, the majority of homicide victims in the year ending March 2019 were male. Just under two-thirds were male victims (64%) and just over a third were female (36%).

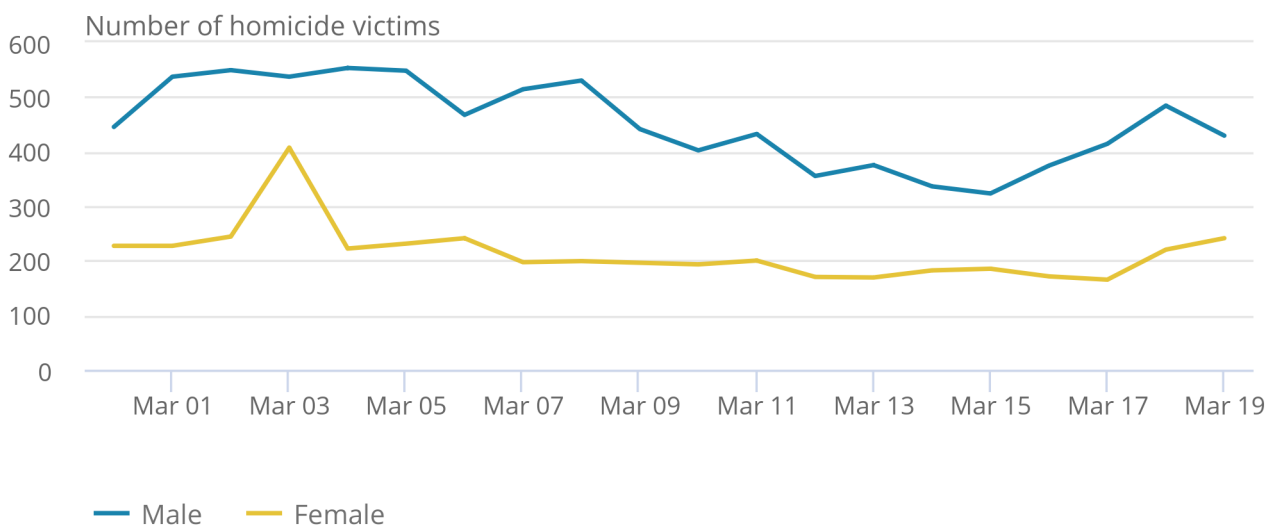
The number of female victims in the year ending March 2019 was the highest since the year ending March 2006 (also 241) and represented the second consecutive annual increase.¹ For more information on homicide trends by sex, see section 3 "[What do trends in homicide look like?](#)".

Figure 2: The number of male homicide victims has decreased whilst the number of female victims has increased in the latest year

Number of homicide victims, England and Wales, year ending March 2000 to year ending March 2019 (excluding Hillsborough victims)

Figure 2: The number of male homicide victims has decreased whilst the number of female victims has increased in the latest year

Number of homicide victims, England and Wales, year ending March 2000 to year ending March 2019 (excluding Hillsborough victims)



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, 10 male victims of terrorist attacks that involved multiple victims and 11 male victims of Shoreham air crash.

The homicide rate for males (15 per million population) was around twice that for females (8 per million population), a pattern that was consistent with previous years ([Appendix Table 4](#)). However, it should be noted that the nature of homicides differs between men and women, as discussed in the "[How were victims and suspects related?](#)" section of this article.

Age

The most common age-group for victims of homicides recorded in the year ending March 2019 was 25- to 34-year-olds (136 victims). This was followed by 16- to 24-year-olds (113 victims), and 35- to 44-year-olds (107 victims) and 45- to 54- year-olds (107 victims). (Figure 3).

As in previous years, children under the age of 1 had the highest rate of homicide (45 per million population), followed by those aged 16 to 24 years (18 per million population).

The overall fall in homicide victims in the latest year was driven by a decline in victims aged 16 to 24 years, which fell from 148 to 113 (24% decrease) ([Appendix Table 4](#)). This followed a large peak² in year ending March 2018 (148 victims). This category was one of the only ones to see a decrease in the number of female victims.

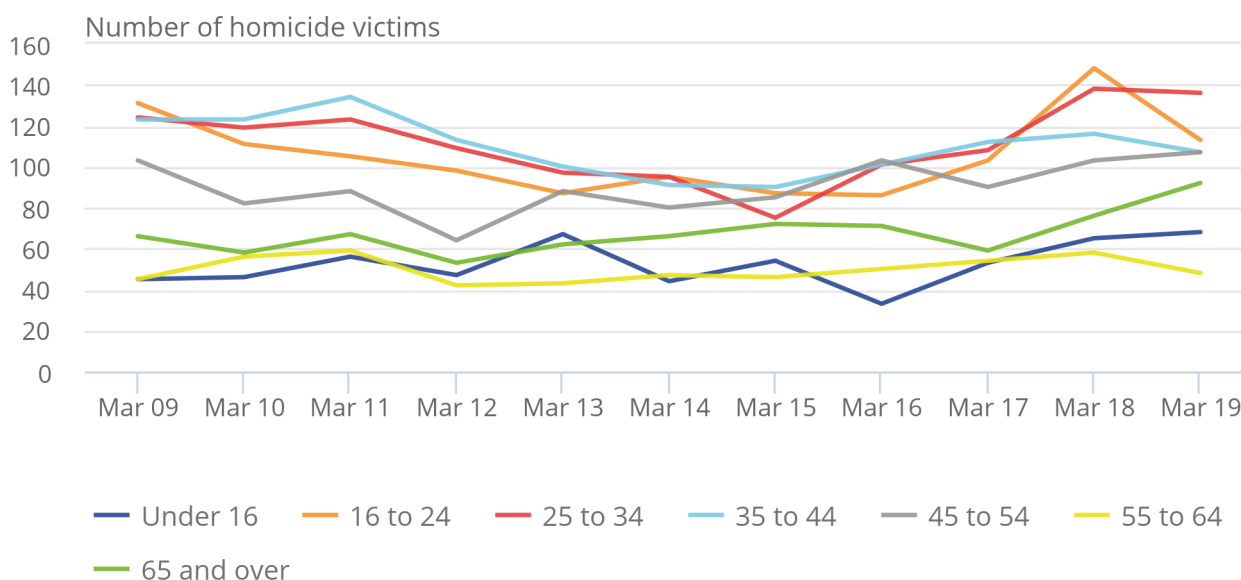
The largest volume increase was for homicide victims aged 65 years and over, from 76 to 92. This was due to an increase in female victims in this age category, which rose by 25 homicides (33 to 58). Within this category the largest increase was seen in the number of victims killed by "negligence or neglect" (from 6 to 16).

Figure 3: Younger victims aged 16 to 24 years have seen the largest decrease in homicides following a peak last year

Number of homicide victims, England and Wales, year ending March 2009 to year ending March 2019 (excluding Hillsborough victims)

Figure 3: Younger victims aged 16 to 24 years have seen the largest decrease in homicides following a peak last year

Number of homicide victims, England and Wales, year ending March 2009 to year ending March 2019 (excluding Hillsborough victims)



Source: Home Office – Homicide Index

Notes:

1. Data for the year ending March 2017 do not match [Appendix Table 4](#) as Hillsborough victims are excluded from this analysis.

Ethnicity

Just under three-quarters (475 or 71%) of all homicide victims in the year ending March 2019 were from the White ethnic group.³ This was a decrease of 33 victims (from 508) compared with the year ending March 2018.

There were 97 Black victims in the last year, accounting for 14% of all victims. This is an increase of four homicides compared with the previous year and the highest number of Black victims since 2001 to 2002 (106).

There were 42 (6%) victims in the Asian (Indian sub-continent) ethnic group and 24 (4%) in the Other group. These proportions have remained relatively stable over the last decade ([Appendix Table 5](#)).

There were clear differences in the age-profile between different ethnic groups. For the year ending March 2019, White and Asian homicide victims were split relatively evenly across the age categories whereas almost half of black victims were found in the 16 to 24 years age-group (48%; Figure 4).

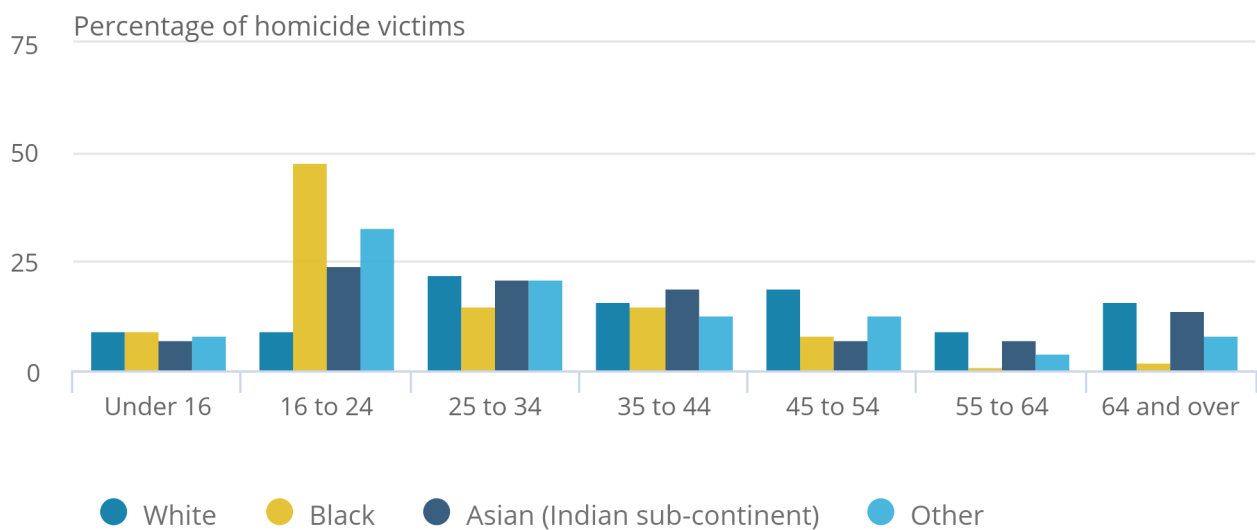
The overall decrease in the number of victims aged 16 to 24 years between year ending March 2018 and year ending March 2019 reported on in [Section 4](#) was not seen amongst Black victims; there was one more homicide in this age group than last year. The biggest decrease for Black victims was seen in those aged 25 to 34 years (from 25 to 15).

Figure 4: Almost half of Black homicide victims were aged between 16 to 24 years old

Percentage of homicide victims, by age and ethnicity, England and Wales, year ending March 2019

Figure 4: Almost half of Black homicide victims were aged between 16 to 24 years old

Percentage of homicide victims, by age and ethnicity, England and Wales, year ending March 2019



Source: Home Office – Homicide Index

Notes:

1. Officer identified classification.

Notes for: Which groups of people were most likely to be victims of homicide?

1. Excludes 7 victims of Hillsborough recorded in the year ending March 2017.
2. Analysis excludes 96 victims of Hillsborough.
3. Officer identified ethnicity classification.

5 . How were victims and suspects related?

Adult victims

There were large differences in the profile of victim-suspect relationships between men and women victims. In the year ending March 2019, female victims were more likely to be killed by a partner or ex-partner or a family member, while male victims were more likely to be killed by a friend or acquaintance, stranger or other known person.

Almost half (48%) of adult female homicide victims were killed in a domestic homicide (99). This was an increase of 12 homicides compared with the previous year. In contrast, 8% of male victims were victims of domestic homicide (30) in the latest year. This was an increase of six homicides compared with the previous year.

In almost 4 in 10 female homicide victims aged 16 years or over, the suspect was their partner or ex-partner (38%, 80 homicides). This was an increase of 17 homicides compared with the previous year. However, the 63 homicides in the previous year was the lowest number in the last 40 years.¹ Over the last 10 years there was an average of 82 female victims a year killed by a partner or ex-partner.

In contrast, there were only 4% of male victims aged 16 years and over where the suspect was their partner or ex-partner (16 homicides, [Appendix Table 11](#), Figure 5).

For adult male victims, the suspect was most likely to be a friend or social acquaintance (27%, 105 men). The suspect was less likely to be a friend or social acquaintance when the victim was female (8%, 16 women).

The suspect was a stranger for just over one-fifth of male victims (22%, 85 victims). This was a decrease of 40% compared with the previous year (141 victims), when there was a large peak. The 85 victims in the last year sees a return to the levels seen between the year ending March 2014 to the year ending March 2016 ([Appendix Table 11](#)). The suspect was less likely to be a stranger when the victim was female (6%, 13 victims).

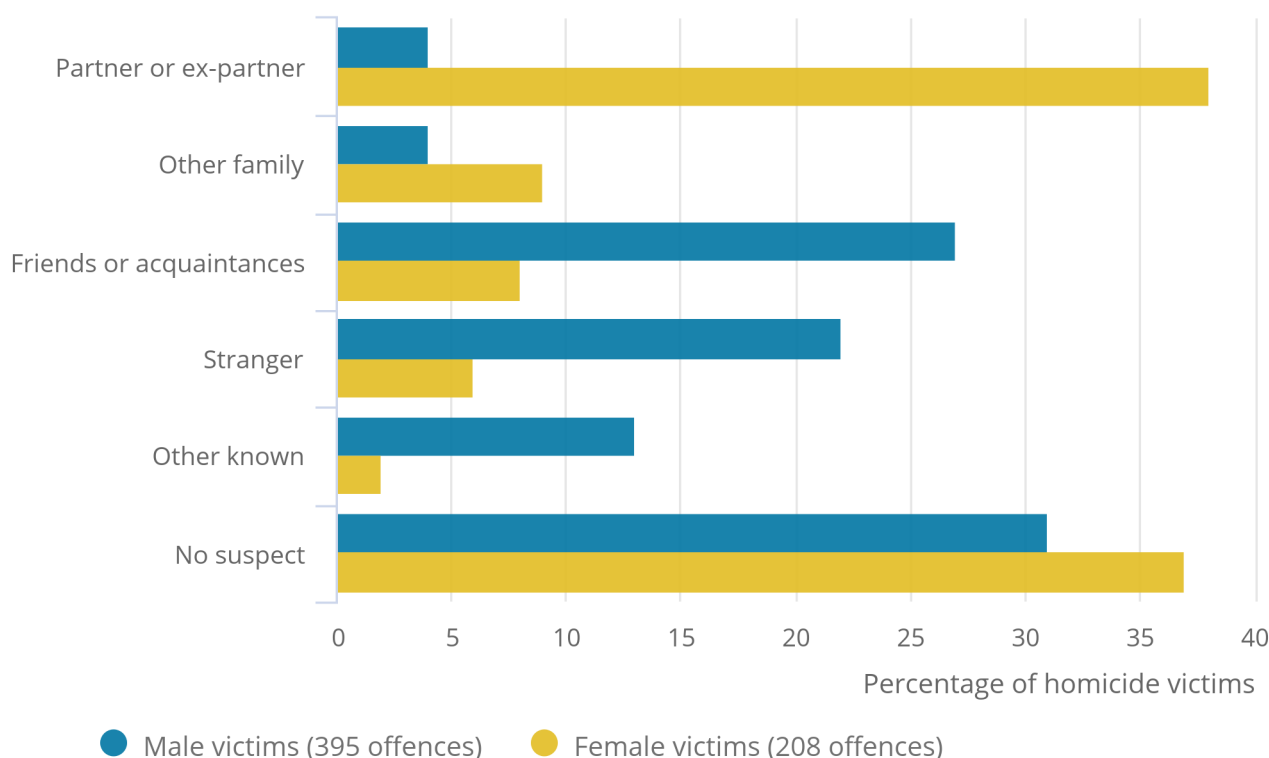
In 37% of female homicides recorded in the year ending March 2019, no suspect had been identified for the offence at the time of analysis (76 victims). The percentage of male victims with no suspect identified was similar, at 31% (124 victims). These numbers are likely to decrease as the police continue their investigations.

Figure 5: For the majority of female homicide victims aged 16 years and over, the suspect was their partner or ex-partner

Relationship of victims aged 16 years and over to principal suspect, England and Wales, year ending March 2019

Figure 5: For the majority of female homicide victims aged 16 years and over, the suspect was their partner or ex-partner

Relationship of victims aged 16 years and over to principal suspect, England and Wales, year ending March 2019



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 68 victims of homicide aged under 16 years in the year ending March 2019. This was the highest number since year ending March 2004 (71). For almost a third of child victims the suspect was a parent or step-parent (31%, 21 offences), a similar proportion to the previous year (29%). However, as at 5 December 2019, there were 36 victims aged under-16 years (53%) for whom no suspect² had been identified. This number is likely to fall as police investigations continue.

It is uncommon for under-16-year olds to be killed by a stranger with five such offences in the last year, similar to previous years.

For more information on suspects characteristics, see section 9 "[What do we know about suspects](#)".

Notes for: How were victims and suspects related?

1. The Homicide Index holds comparable data on the relationship between victim and suspect from 1977.
2. Includes homicide offences where all suspects have been acquitted.

6 . What were the most common methods of killing?

Sharp instrument (including knives)

As in previous years, the most common method of killing, for both male and female victims, was by a sharp instrument (including knives). Over the last decade, the proportion of homicide offences committed by a sharp instrument has fluctuated between 35% and 40%.¹

There were 259 sharp instrument homicides recorded in the year ending March 2019, a fall of 8% compared with the previous year ([Appendix Table 6](#)). This was the first decrease seen in four years. The previous year saw the highest number of homicides by this method (282)² since the Home Office Homicide Index began in 1946.

The decrease was principally seen in the number of male victims, which fell from 219 to 198 (10%). The number of female victims fell by two. Male victims aged 18 to 24 years saw the largest fall over the last year, decreasing from 70 to 56 homicides, this follows a large peak the previous year ([Appendix Table 7](#)). Although the number of sharp instrument homicides has fallen this year, the 259 homicides is the second highest annual total in the last ten years.

The latest figures show 6 out of 10 sharp instrument homicide victims were White (61%, 159 homicides), a decrease of 19 compared with the previous year. Just under a quarter (23%; 60 victims) were Black, a decrease of eight compared with the previous year ([Appendix Table 8](#)). Of these 60 homicides, 36 victims were aged 16 to 24 years.

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".

Other methods of killing

The second most common method of killing was "kicking or hitting", accounting for 106 homicides (16% of the total). As in previous years, the majority (75%) of victims killed in this way were male.

Around one in six (17%) of female victims were killed by "strangulation, asphyxiation" (41 victims), this was the second most common method of killing for female victims. In contrast a much smaller proportion (3%) of male victims were killed in this way.

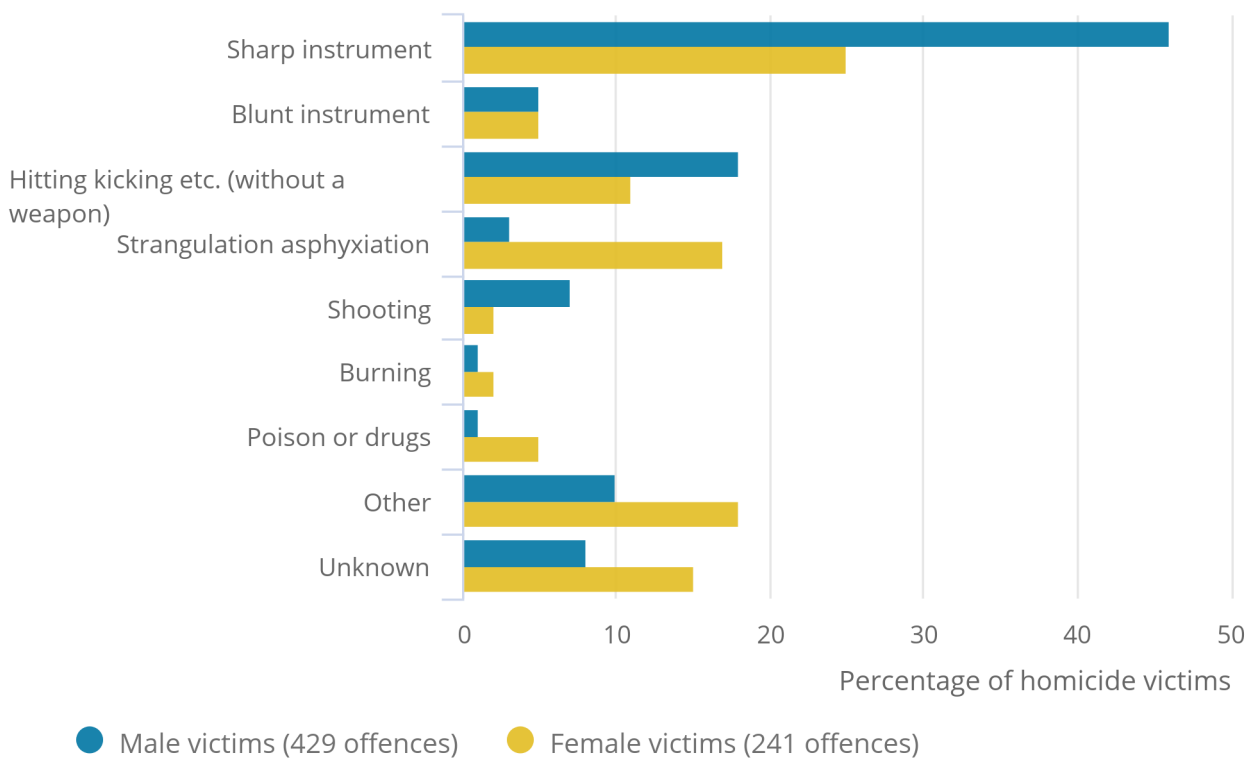
There were 32 homicide victims killed by shooting in the year ending March 2019 (5% of all homicides), four more than the previous year. Over the last decade, the proportion of homicide offences committed by shooting has fluctuated between 4% and 9%. The number of these offences is 18% lower than a decade ago.

Figure 6: Use of a sharp instrument was the most common method of killing in homicide offences

Percentage of recorded homicides, England and Wales, year ending March 2019

Figure 6: Use of a sharp instrument was the most common method of killing in homicide offences

Percentage of recorded homicides, England and Wales, year ending March 2019



Source: Home Office – Homicide Index

More detailed information on offences involving a firearm can be found in the [Offences involving the use of firearms](#) article and [Appendix Tables](#). More recent headline figures on offences involving firearms and those involving knives can also be found as part of the quarterly [Crime in England and Wales bulletin](#).

Notes for: What were the most common methods of killing?

1. The proportion was 37% in the year ending March 2017 if the Hillsborough manslaughters are excluded.
2. In the year ending March 2018 release, 285 of these offences were reported. Since then police investigations have found that two offences were due to self-defence and one was a suicide, therefore they have been removed from the Homicide Index.

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

Circumstances of homicide

In the year ending March 2019, just over half (51%, 341 offences) of all homicide cases resulted from a quarrel, a revenge attack or a loss of temper. This was a similar proportion compared with previous years. This proportion was higher where the principal suspect was known to the victim (64%), compared with when the suspect was unknown to the victim (38%). There was little difference between male and female victims. ([Appendix Table 13](#))

Furtherance of theft or gain accounted for 7% of homicides (47 offences), and 5% (31 offences) occurred during irrational acts. As at 5 December 2019, the apparent circumstances were not known for 19% of homicides (128 offences) recorded in the year ending March 2019. This figure is similar to the previous year and is likely to decrease as the police carry out further investigations.

Location of homicides

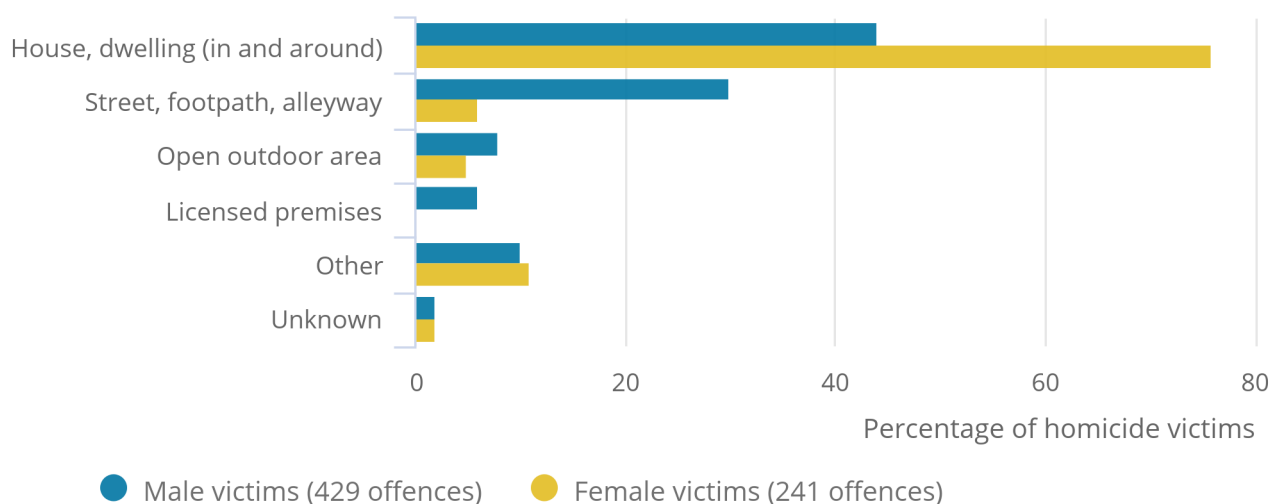
Female victims were most likely to be killed in or around a house or dwelling or residential home (71%, 170 offences for year ending March 2019). This compares with 39% of male homicides (168 offences). Just under a third (30%) of male homicides took place in a street, path or alleyway (129 offences) compared with only 6% of female homicides (14 offences). These patterns reflect differing victim-suspect relationships and the circumstances of the homicide ([Appendix Table 15](#)).

Figure 7: Both female and male homicide victims were most likely to be killed in or around a house or dwelling

Percentage of recorded homicides, England and Wales, year ending March 2019

Figure 7: Both female and male homicide victims were most likely to be killed in or around a house or dwelling

Percentage of recorded homicides, England and Wales, year ending March 2019



Source: Home Office – Homicide Index

Notes:

1. "House, dwelling (in and around)" includes residential homes.
2. "Other" includes all other locations including other public places.

8 . Drug- and alcohol-related homicides

The number of drug- and alcohol-related¹ 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 2017 to the year ending March 2019). The section is based on all victims and suspects from incidents recorded in that period.

According to the Homicide Index, in the last three years almost a third (31%) of homicide victims were under the influence of alcohol and/or illicit drugs² at the time of the homicide: 19% had been drinking alcohol, 6% had been taking an illicit drug, and 6% were under the influence of both. The proportion under the influence of alcohol and /or illicit drugs was higher among male victims (36%) than female victims (21%).

The figures for suspects were similar to victims. Almost a third (31%) of homicide suspects were found by the police to have been under the influence of alcohol and/or drugs at the time of the homicide, of which, 18% had been drinking alcohol, 5% had been taking an illicit drug, and 9% were under the influence of both ([Appendix Table 16](#)).

A quarter (25%) of homicide victims were known to be drug users, and 13% were known to be drug dealers. These proportions were even higher among suspects: 42% were known to be drug users and around a quarter (24%) 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" (5%) or "stealing drug proceeds" (5%). ([Appendix Table 17](#))

The proportion of homicides that have involved drug users or dealers, or have been related to drugs in any way, have increased over the last decade, from 36% in the year ending March 2009 to 47% in the year ending March 2019. In the last year, there were 313 homicides that involved drug users or dealers or were in some way drug-related, a slightly lower number than the previous year (319) ([Appendix Table 18](#)).

Notes for: Drug- and alcohol-related homicides

1. Information on drug and alcohol use is recorded by the police from toxicology reports, suspect and witness statements.
2. Illicit drugs include all controlled drugs (class A to C) under Schedule 2 of the [Misuse of Drugs Act 1971](#) (and subsequent amendments).

9 . What do we know about suspects?

Homicide cases are often complex and can take time to reach an outcome in court. The percentage of homicides recorded in most recent years that have concluded in court is likely to increase when the next figures from the Homicide Index are published, while those without suspects or with court proceedings pending is expected to decrease.

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. Table 1 shows that the number of homicides where no suspect has been charged is reduced over time as the police have had longer to conclude investigations.

Table 1: Number of suspects for initially recorded homicide victims
Year ending March 2017 to year ending March 2019

	Apr 2016 to Mar 2017	Apr 2017 to Mar 2018	Apr 2018 to Mar 2019	Apr 2016 to Mar 2017	Apr 2017 to Mar 2018	Apr 2018 to Mar 2019
	Number			Percentage		
No suspects charged	114	163	224	17	23	33
One	327	382	343	47	54	51
Two	71	76	52	10	11	8
Three or more	47	56	44	7	8	7
Suspects acquitted ¹	131	35	12	19	5	2
All initially recorded homicides	690	712	675			

Source: Home Office – Homicide Index

Notes

1. Year ending March 2017 includes 95 victims of Hillsborough. [Back to table](#)

Investigative and court outcomes

In total, there were 637 suspects as at 5 December 2019 relating to the 675 homicides initially recorded in the year ending March 2019 ([Appendix Table 22](#)).

The 637 suspects had the following outcomes:

- court proceedings were pending for 304 suspects (48%)
- court proceedings had concluded for 316 suspects (50% of all suspects)
- 17 suspects had committed suicide or died (3%)

In the three years from the year ending March 2017 to the year ending March 2019, 79% of suspects indicted for homicide, where we have information on a court outcome, were found guilty of homicide, 14% were acquitted, and 4% were convicted of a lesser offence ([Appendix Table 23](#)).

The case outcomes for suspects of homicides recorded in the year ending March 2019 ([Appendix Table 24](#)) will change as cases progress through the criminal justice system and more information becomes available.

Age, sex and ethnicity of convicted suspects

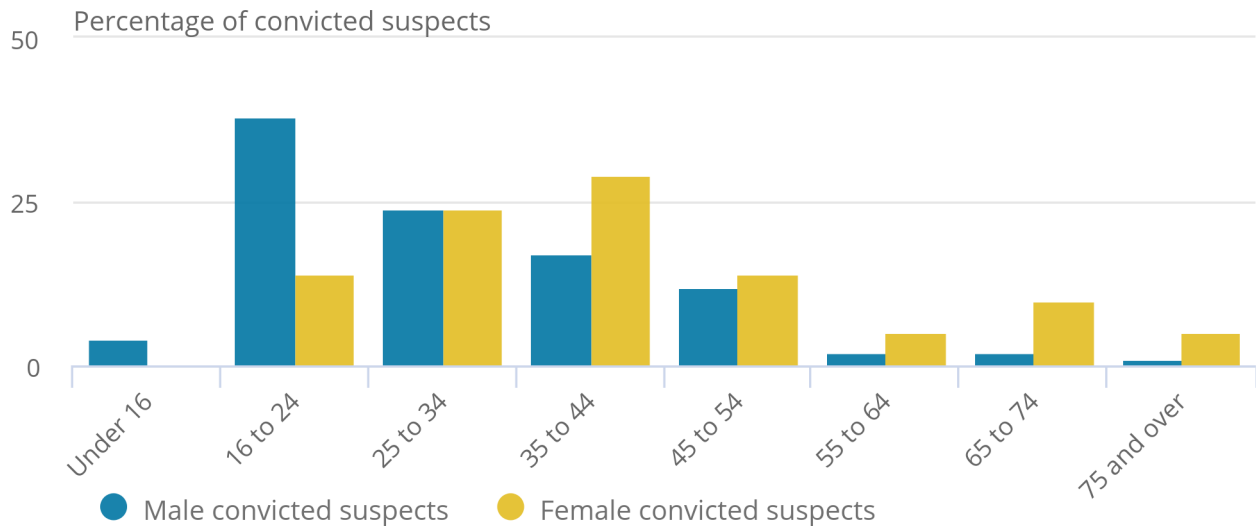
As in previous years, the majority of suspects convicted of homicide were male (229; 92%). Over one-third of convicted male suspects were aged 16- to 24-years-old (38%), with 24% being 25- 34-years-old and 17% being 35- to 44-years-old. Female suspects tended to be older, with 13 of the 21 suspects convicted in the year ending March 2019 being 35 years or older ([Appendix Table 26](#) and Figure 8).

Figure 8: Male suspects convicted of homicide show a younger age profile than female suspects

Percentage of convicted suspects, England and Wales, year ending March 2019

Figure 8: Male suspects convicted of homicide show a younger age profile than female suspects

Percentage of convicted suspects, England and Wales, year ending March 2019



Source: Home Office – Homicide Index

For the three-year period year ending March 2017 to the year ending March 2019, when looking at the principal suspect of a homicide offence – over two-thirds (70%) of suspects convicted of homicide were White, almost one in five (18%) were Black, 9% were Asian and 3% were in the “Other” ethnic category ([Appendix table 27](#)).

10 . International homicide comparisons

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

[Eurostat](#) figures show that police recorded intentional homicide offences generally decreased across EU Member States from 2008 to 2014, before fluctuating to 2017. Lithuania had the highest rate of homicide in 2017 (45.3 per million population) and Luxembourg had the lowest (3.4 per million population). England and Wales had a similar rate to many European countries.

The [Scottish Government](#) annual homicide figures showed the number of homicide cases recorded by the police in Scotland increased by 2% in the year ending March 2019, from 59 to 60. Over the ten-year period from 2009 to 2010 to 2018 to 2019, the rate of homicides has fallen from 15.7 to 11.2 homicides victims per million population.

The [Police Service of Northern Ireland](#) figures show that there were 26 homicide offences recorded by the police in Northern Ireland in the year ending March 2019 (13.8 victims per million population), one fewer offence than the previous year.

The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) publish a [Global Study on Homicide](#) which gives a comprehensive overview of intentional homicide across the world. The most recent of these was published in 2019 and showed that the global average homicide rate stands at 61 per million population in 2017. Central America and South America, at 259 and 242 per million population, respectively, were the subregions with the highest average homicide rates in 2017.¹ The subregions with the lowest levels of homicide, at around 10 per million population were Southern, Western and Northern Europe, East Asia and Oceania (Australia and New Zealand).

The [Department of Justice and Federal Bureau of Investigation](#) publish figures showing that the homicide rate in the United States of America in 2018 was 50 per million population a decrease from 2017 (58 per million population).

Notes for: International homicide comparisons

1. Excluding all the subregions of Africa, for which complete data are not available.

11 . Quality and methodology

The term “homicide” covers the offences of murder, manslaughter and infanticide. Murder and manslaughter are common law offences that have never been defined by statute, although they have been modified by statute. The manslaughter category includes the offence of corporate manslaughter which was created by the [Corporate Manslaughter and Corporate Homicide Act 2007](#) 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. The Homicide Index is continually updated with revised information from the police as investigations continue and as cases are heard by the courts. The version used for analysis does not accept updates after it is “frozen” to ensure the data do not change during the analysis period. The data in this article refer to the position as at 5 December 2019.¹ The data will change as subsequent court hearings take place or as further information is received.

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.² Further information on the Homicide Index is provided in the [User guide to crime statistics for England and Wales](#).

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, 675 deaths were initially recorded as homicides by the police in the year ending March 2019. By 5 December 2019, four were no longer recorded as homicides.

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

Homicides are recorded to be “domestic” when the relationship between a victim aged 16 years and over and the perpetrator falls into one of the following categories: spouse, common-law spouse, cohabiting partner, boyfriend or girlfriend, ex-spouse, ex-cohabiting partner or ex-boyfriend or girlfriend, adulterous relationship, son or daughter (including step and adopted relationships), parent (including step and adopted relationships), brother or sister, other relatives.

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

Homicide figures differ between countries for various reasons, including: There are different definitions of homicide between countries, although definitions vary less than for some other types of crimes. There are differing points in the criminal justice systems at which homicides are recorded, for instance, when the offence is discovered or following further investigation or court outcome. Figures for England and Wales are for completed homicides (that is excluding attempted murder) but, in some countries, the police register any death that cannot immediately be attributed to other causes as homicide.

Notes for: Quality and methodology

1. See Section 3.1 of the [User guide](#) for more information.
2. The letter of confirmation can be found on the [UK Statistics Authority](#) website.