

Statistical bulletin

# Crime in England and Wales: year ending Mar 2016

Crime against households and adults, also including data on crime experienced by children, and crimes against businesses and society.



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## Correction

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A correction has been made to Figure 1: Trends in Crime Survey for England and Wales and police recorded crime, year ending December 1981 to year ending March 2016. This was due to a small error when uploading the chart to the website. You can see the original content in the superseded version. We apologise for any inconvenience.

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# 1 . Main points

Latest estimates from the Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW), the best measure of crime trends for the population and offences it covers, showed a 6% fall in the number of incidents against adults for the survey year ending March 2016 (6.3 million, compared with 6.8 million in the previous survey year).

Following the addition of new CSEW questions, the survey estimated there were 3.8 million fraud and 2.0 million computer misuse offences experienced in the 12 months prior to interview. These questions were asked during the second half of the latest survey year; headline estimates will include these new offences for the first time in January 2017 once the questions have been asked for a full 12 months.

The police recorded 4.5 million offences in the year ending March 2016, an annual rise of 8%. However, this series is not considered a reliable indicator of trends in crime; most of the latest rise is thought to be due to improved crime recording practices and processes leading to a greater proportion of reports of crime being recorded in the last year than in the previous year.

CSEW estimates showed no significant change in levels of violence compared with the previous survey year, although it is too early to say whether this represents a change in the long-term downward trend. Police recorded violence against the person offences increased by 27% in the latest year, largely as a result of improvements in crime recording processes and the expansion of the "Violence without injury" sub-category to include 2 additional notifiable offences.

There were 571 homicides recorded by the police in the latest year, which represents a rate of 10 per million population. The latest number was up 34 on the previous year and among the highest recorded in the last 5 years. However, the homicide rate has fallen from 14 per million population a decade ago (year ending March 2006).

CSEW estimates showed no significant change in the proportion of adults (aged 16 to 59) who had been victims of sexual assaults compared with the previous survey year. Police recorded sexual offences increased by 21% in the latest year; this is thought to reflect both an improvement in the recording of sexual offences by the police and an increased willingness of victims to come forward and report these crimes.

Police recorded offences involving the use of knives or sharp instruments increased by 10% in the latest year and offences involving the use of firearms over the same period increased by 4%. While in the past these offences were not thought to be as prone to changes in recording practices by the police, some forces are reporting that the general improvement in recording processes may also be impacting on these categories.

## 2 . Statistician's quote

"This is the first time we have published official estimates of fraud and computer misuse from our victimisation survey, and ONS is leading the world in doing this. Together, these offences are similar in magnitude to the existing headline figures covering all other Crime Survey offences. However, it would be wrong to conclude that actual crime levels have doubled, since the survey previously did not cover these offences. These improvements to the Crime Survey will help to measure the scale of the threat from these crimes, and help shape the response."

John Flatley, Crime Statistics and Analysis, Office for National Statistics, [@ONSJohnFlatley](#) on Twitter.

## 3 . What has changed within this publication?

The previous quarterly bulletin ([Crime in England and Wales: Year ending December 2015](#)) was produced in a new, shorter format, with the aim of making the main messages more accessible. Further changes to the structure and content have been made in this quarterly bulletin.

New questions on fraud and computer misuse were added to the Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW) in October 2015. While these questions have only been included within the CSEW for the second half of the survey year, sufficient data have now been gathered to produce estimates of fraud and computer misuse, and these are included within this release as [Experimental Statistics \(Tables E1 to E13\)](#). These do not currently form part of the headline CSEW estimates, but over time, once more data becomes available, they will be incorporated.

Additional data are being published for the first time, including Experimental Statistics on:

- Action Fraud data at police force area level, based on victim residency; these are presented in [Table E14](#)
- police-recorded crime data on offences that have been flagged as having an online element <sup>1</sup>; these are presented in [Table E15](#)

Alongside this bulletin, we have published an "[Overview of fraud statistics](#)" article; this outlines the definitions used in fraud statistics for England and Wales, describes the main sources of data and provides an overview of what these sources tell us about long-term trends, the characteristics of victims and the nature and circumstances of fraud offences.

Notes:

1. An offence should be flagged where the reporting officer believes that on the balance of probability, the offence was committed, in full or in part, through a computer, computer network or other computer-enabled device.

## 4 . Future publication plans

The briefing note [Improving Crime Statistics for England and Wales – progress update](#) provides an overview of our plans to improve the design, coverage and presentation of crime statistics in England and Wales over the next few years.

Hitherto, the main focus of the commentary in our statistical bulletins has been on numbers of crimes. In the future, alongside continued commentary on numbers, we intend to give more prominence to crime rates to put numbers in the context of the population. We will be seeking advice from the [National Statistician's Crime Statistics Advisory Committee](#) regarding the planned implementation of these presentational changes.

These proposed presentational changes will also be informed by the responses we receive to a [user consultation](#) (running from 6 July to 13 September 2016) regarding the methodology for addressing high frequency repeat victimisation in Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW) estimates.

During the autumn, we hope to publish information regarding an alternative crime measure built upon a police recorded “Crime Severity Score”; this will be based on the premise that some offences are deemed to be more serious than others and hence, not all crimes should be counted equally in aggregated totals (as they currently are). This severity score will initially be presented as Experimental Statistics. We will seek your views on its helpfulness and whether you would like to see such a measure incorporated regularly within future “Crime in England and Wales” releases; this would be presented alongside the existing measures, rather than replacing them.

We intend to continue developing the structure of our quarterly statistical bulletins in future editions, as well as conducting an extensive review of the data tables published with each release. As part of this review we will be seeking your views on whether there is a continuing need for all of the data we publish and whether there are new requirements for data we are not currently producing. We will also be looking at opportunities to exploit new data sources to meet your needs for more detailed information on the nature of crime.

We would welcome any feedback on this new format or any aspect of our improvement programme at: [crimestatistics@ons.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:crimestatistics@ons.gsi.gov.uk).

## 5 . Things you need to know

A crime is an act harmful to an individual (or individuals), a community, society or the State and is punishable by law. Being an illicit activity, by its nature, crime is impossible to measure in its entirety.

These Official Statistics draw on 2 main sources to measure crime levels and trends: the Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW) and police recorded crime; neither of these sources can provide a complete picture and each have different strengths and limitations.

### Crime Survey for England and Wales

The CSEW is a face-to-face victimisation survey in which people resident in households in England and Wales are asked about their experiences of a selected range of offences in the 12 months prior to the interview. For the population and offence types it covers, the CSEW provides the better measure of trends on a consistent basis over time.

The CSEW is able to capture a broad range of victim-based crimes experienced by those interviewed, not just those that have been reported to, and recorded by, the police. However, there are some serious but relatively low-volume offences, such as homicide and sexual offences, which are not included in its main estimates.

The survey now includes fraud and computer misuse for the first time; work that has been completed to address this particular gap is described in the [User Guide to Crime Statistics for England and Wales](#). Until such data are available for 2 complete survey years, comparisons with previous years and analysis of trends will be based on CSEW crime excluding fraud and computer misuse offences.

The CSEW allows for the calculation of estimates based on a variety of different measures, including numbers of incidents of crime, incidence rates (per 1,000 population) and prevalence rates (risk of being a victim of crime). Using the latter (in the same way that numbers of incidents can be calculated from incidence rates), it is possible to calculate numbers of victims of crime based on population estimates and these have been included within this release for the first time. For individual crime types, the numbers of victims will be lower than the numbers of incidents, as some people experience repeat victimisation. This difference will vary by crime type due to differing levels of repeat victimisation.

## Police recorded crime

Police recorded crime figures are restricted to a subset of notifiable offences that have been reported to and recorded by the police. Therefore, while the police recorded crime series covers a wider population and a broader set of offences than the CSEW, it does not include crimes that do not come to the attention of the police or are not recorded by them.

Police recorded crime is, generally, not a reliable measure of trends in crime, since it is prone to changes in recording practices and police activity (for example, a proactive operation on weapon offences) as well as changing behaviour in public reporting of crime. As a result, trends will not always reflect true levels of criminal activity.

Police recorded crime is the principal source of subnational crime statistics and for relatively serious, but low volume, crimes that are not well-measured by a sample survey. It covers victims and sectors excluded from the CSEW sample (for example, residents of institutions, tourists and crimes against commercial bodies), but only, of course, to the extent that such victims report crimes to the police and these are recorded by them.

Following an [assessment of crime statistics](#) by the UK Statistics Authority, published in January 2014, the statistics based on police recorded crime data were found not to meet the required standard for designation as National Statistics. Apparent increases in police recorded crime seen over the last 2 years may reflect a number of factors, including tightening of recording practice, process improvements, increases in reporting by victims and also genuine increases in the levels of crime. Further information is available in the “Quality and methodology” section.

## Time periods covered

The latest CSEW figures presented in this release are based on interviews conducted between April 2015 and March 2016, measuring experiences of crime in the 12 months before the interview. The latest recorded crime figures relate to crimes recorded by the police during the year ending March 2016 (between April 2015 and March 2016). In this release:

- “latest year” (or “latest survey year”) refers to the year (or survey year) ending March 2016
- “previous year” (or “previous survey year”) refers to the year (or survey year) ending March 2015
- any other time period is referred to explicitly

## 6 . What is happening to trends in crime?

### Crime Survey for England and Wales

Latest figures from the Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW) showed that there were an estimated 6.3 million incidents of crime experienced by adults aged 16 and over in the survey year ending March 2016; 6% fewer than in the previous survey year (6.8 million).

These estimates cover crimes against the person (for example, violence or theft from the person) and crimes against households (for example, domestic burglary or criminal damage). The headline estimates currently exclude fraud and computer misuse offences, as questions about these offences were only included in the second half of the survey year (between October 2015 and March 2016).

Results from these new questions have initially been released as [Experimental Statistics](#) and showed there were an estimated 5.8 million fraud and computer misuse offences (3.8 million fraud and 2.0 million computer misuse offences) experienced by adults in the 12 months prior to interview. We plan to incorporate these new offences into the headline CSEW estimates for the year ending September 2016 (due to be published in January 2017), when a full year's interview data will be available for the first time.

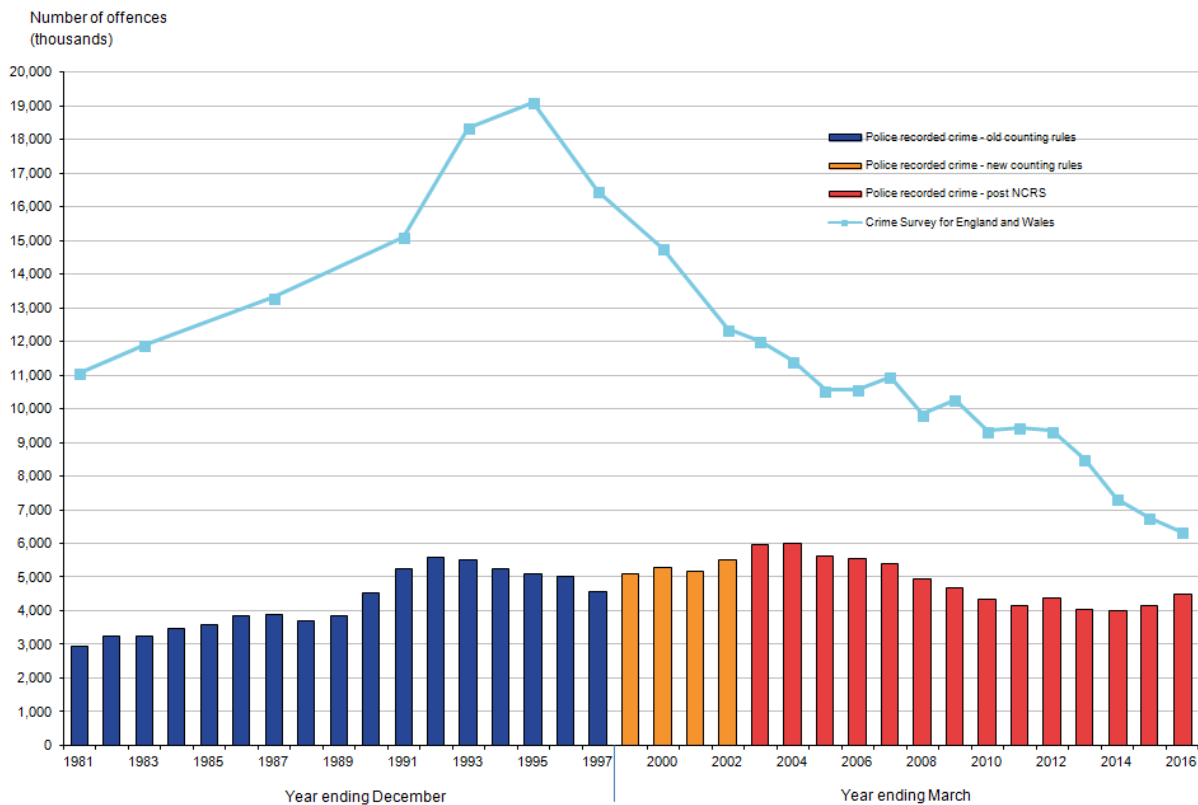
The estimate of 5.8 million fraud and computer misuse offences is similar in magnitude to the current headline estimate covering all other CSEW offences and provides an indication of the scale of the threat from such offences. However, it would be misleading to conclude that this means actual crime levels have doubled, since the survey previously did not cover these fraud and computer misuse offences. It was precisely because these offences were thought to be in such high volume that the decision was made to extend the CSEW to cover them. It will not be until January 2018 that we will be able to release valid year-on-year comparisons of CSEW estimates including the new fraud and computer misuse figures.

Therefore, for year-on-year comparisons and analysis of long-term trends presented in this release, fraud and computer misuse offences are excluded.

Crime covered by the CSEW increased steadily from 1981, before peaking in 1995. After peaking, the CSEW showed marked falls until the survey year ending March 2005. Since then, the underlying trend has continued downwards, but with some fluctuation from year to year (Figure 1).

These figures relate to a broad range of victim-based crimes experienced by the resident household population. However, they exclude some serious (but low volume) offences such as homicide and sexual offences as well as crimes against children.

**Figure 1: Trends in Crime Survey for England and Wales and police recorded crime, year ending December 1981 to year ending March 2016**



Source: Crime Survey for England and Wales, Office for National Statistics / Police recorded crime, Home Office

**Notes:**

1. Police recorded crime data are not designated as National Statistics
2. Prior to the year ending March 2002, CSEW respondents were asked about their experience of crime in the previous calendar year, so year-labels identify the year in which the crime took place. Following the change to continuous interviewing, respondents' experience of crime relates to the full 12 months prior to interview (that is, a moving reference period). Year-labels for year ending March 2002 onwards identify the CSEW year of interview.
3. From the year ending March 2012 onwards, police recorded crime data has included offences from additional sources of data on fraud
4. CSEW data relate to adults aged 16 and over/households.
5. Some forces have revised their data and police recorded crime totals may not agree with those previously published.

Figures from the latest survey year showed that an estimated 15.2% of adults aged 16 and over (equivalent to 7.0 million adults) were a victim of at least one crime<sup>1</sup>.

The likelihood of being a victim of CSEW crime has fallen significantly over time; around 15 in 100 adults were victims in the latest survey year compared with around 23 in 100 a decade ago (in the survey year ending March 2006) and around 40 in 100 in 1995 (the peak survey year).



CSEW estimates of crimes experienced by children aged 10 to 15 are not directly comparable with the main survey of adults, so are not included in the headline total. In the latest survey year, the CSEW estimated that around 13 in 100 children aged 10 to 15 were victims of at least one crime. A total of 844,000 crimes<sup>2</sup> were experienced by children; of this number, 49% were categorised as violent crimes<sup>3</sup> (418,000), while most of the remainder were thefts of personal property (274,000; 32%). Given the small sample size for the 10-to-15-year old element of the CSEW, estimates can fluctuate over time, and as a result trends can be difficult to interpret. Detailed data are available from [Tables F21, F22 and F23](#).

## Police recorded crime

The police recorded 4.5 million offences in the year ending March 2016, an increase of 8% compared with the previous year. Of the 44 forces (including the British Transport Police), 40 showed an annual increase in their recorded crime, which was largely driven by rises in violence against the person and sexual offences.

These increases need to be seen in the context of the renewed focus on the quality of crime recording by the police, in light of the inspections of forces by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMIC), the [Public Administration Select Committee \(PASC\) inquiry](#) into crime statistics and the [UK Statistics Authority's decision](#) to remove the National Statistics designation from police recorded crime statistics. This renewed focus is thought to have led to improved compliance with the National Crime Recording Standard (NCRS), leading to the recording of a greater proportion of crimes coming to the attention of the police.

Police recorded crime increased during most of the 1980s and then fell each year from 1992 to 1997. Expanded coverage of offences in the police recorded crime collection, following changes to the Home Office Counting Rules (HOCR) in 1998 and the introduction of the NCRS in April 2002, saw general increases in the number of crimes recorded by the police. Following these changes, there was a near continual decline in police recorded crime between the years ending March 2004 and March 2014; the only exception was the year ending March 2012, which increased due to the introduction of offences recorded by the National Fraud Intelligence Bureau (NFIB) for the first time. Since the year ending March 2014 onwards, total police recorded crime has increased; although, as previously stated, it is thought this is principally owing to the renewed focus on the quality of crime recording by the police, rather than a genuine increase in crime.

## Other related sources

Neither the CSEW nor police recorded crime figures provide a total picture of crime. Other sources of information help to provide a fuller picture, including administrative data on anti-social behaviour and non-notifiable offences, and the Commercial Victimisation Survey, which provides estimates of crime against selected business premises.

Around 1.8 million incidents of anti-social behaviour (ASB) were recorded by the police (including the British Transport Police) in the latest year, a decrease of 7% compared with the previous year. These are incidents that may still be crimes in law, such as littering or dog fouling, but are not of a level of severity that would result in the recording of a notifiable offence. A [review by HMIC in 2012](#) found that there was a wide variation in the quality of decision-making associated with the recording of ASB. As a result, ASB incident data should be interpreted with caution.

The CSEW also provides some information on ASB; an estimated 28% of respondents reported experiencing or witnessing ASB in their local area in the latest survey year, up from 27% in the previous survey year. This estimate has, however, remained at a similar level (between 27% and 30%) since the data were first collected in the survey year ending March 2012. Further information is available in [Figures F10 and F11 and Tables F24 and F25](#).

In the year ending December 2015 (the latest period for which data are available), there were 1.1 million convictions for non-notifiable offences<sup>4</sup> that were not covered in police recorded crime or the CSEW. This was an increase of 5% from the year ending December 2014, continuing a pattern of similar rises recorded from the year ending December 2014 onwards and is largely driven by increases in the numbers of defendants prosecuted for motoring offences, failure to pay for a motor vehicle licence and TV licence evasion. In addition, there were 21,000 Penalty Notices for Disorder (PND) issued in relation to non-notifiable offences for the year ending December 2015, a decrease of 25% from the year ending December 2014; the majority of these PNDs related to drunk and disorderly behaviour. Further information is available in [Tables F26a and F26b](#).

The CSEW does not cover crimes against businesses and police recorded crime can only provide a partial picture (as not all offences come to the attention of the police). The [Commercial Victimisation Survey](#) provides estimates of crime against business premises<sup>5</sup> in England and Wales and gives some insight into the number of these crimes that go unreported to the police. However, it does not cover all industry sectors and the small sample sizes associated with individual sectors means that caution must be applied when comparing crime rates over time. In the survey year ending December 2015, businesses in the wholesale and retail sector experienced the highest levels of crime – an estimated 4.7 million incidents, a rate of around 12,000 incidents per 1,000 business premises ([Table F27](#)).

The quarterly report "[Crime in England and Wales: Year ending September 2015](#)" contains further commentary on trends in these other sources.

## Notes:

1. In calculating the number of victims of all CSEW crime, all adults resident in a household that had experienced a crime against a household are counted as victims of the crime. Hence, the estimated number of adults who were victims of all CSEW crime is larger than that presented for the number of incidents.
2. The survey of children aged 10 to 15 only covers personal level crime (so excludes household level crime) and, as with the main survey, does not include sexual offences.
3. The majority (76%) of violent crimes experienced in the latest survey year resulted in minor or no injury, so in just over three-quarters of cases the violence is low level.
4. Non-notifiable offences are offences dealt with exclusively by magistrates' courts or by the police issuing of a Penalty Notice for Disorder or a Fixed Penalty Notice. Along with non-notifiable offences dealt with by the police (such as speeding), these include many offences that may be dealt with by other agencies – for example: prosecutions by TV Licensing; or the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency (DVLA) for vehicle registration offences.
5. This is a premises based survey; respondents were asked if the business at their current premises had experienced any of a range of crime types in the 12 months prior to interview.

## 7 . How have trends for individual crime types changed?

The Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW) showed that, for most of the main individual offence categories, the number of incidents of crime continued to decline compared with the previous year; although only the fall in "other household theft" was statistically significant (Table 1a).

The estimated number of "other household theft" incidents in the latest survey year decreased to 672,000, down 12% (from 761,000 in the previous year) and continuing the general downward trend seen for this offence category over the last 4 years.

The fall in “other household theft” contributed to the 8% decrease in the estimated total number of theft offences in the latest survey year (3.7 million, down from 4.0 million in the previous survey year).

While there was a statistically significant increase in the number of robbery incidents (154,000 in the latest survey year), the previous survey year estimate (89,000) was unusually low. Owing to the low number of robbery victims interviewed by the CSEW, estimates for robbery are prone to greater fluctuation than higher volume offence types. The latest figures return CSEW estimates of robbery to those seen 2 years ago and despite the recent increase, the current number of robbery incidents is 36% lower than in the survey year ending March 2011 (5 years ago) and 49% lower than in the survey year ending March 2006 (10 years ago).



**Table 1a: CSEW incidence rates and numbers of incidents for year ending March 2016 and percentage change<sup>1</sup>**

Offence group <sup>2</sup>	Apr '15 to Mar '16		April 2015 to March 2016 compared with:			
			Jan '95 to Dec '95	Apr '05 to Mar '06	Apr '10 to Mar '11	Apr '14 to Mar '15
	Rate per 1,000 population <sup>3</sup>	Number of incidents (thousands) <sup>4</sup>	Number of incidents - percentage change and significance <sup>5</sup>			
Violence	28	1,268	-67 *	-36 *	-33 *	-3
with injury	13	575	-75 *	-47 *	-47 *	-15
without injury	15	693	-56 *	-23 *	-16	9
Robbery	3	154	-55 *	-49 *	-36 *	73 *
Theft offences <sup>6</sup>	..	3,704	-68 *	-35 *	-28 *	-8 *
Theft from the person	8	363	-47 *	-35 *	-34 *	-19
Other theft of personal property	17	764	-63 *	-34 *	-21 *	4
Unweighted base - number of adults	35,324					
Domestic burglary	29	701	-71 *	-32 *	-32 *	-11
in a dwelling	20	495	-72 *	-31 *	-33 *	-11
in a non-connected building to a dwelling	9	206	-68 *	-33 *	-30 *	-9
Other household theft	28	672	-57 *	-17 *	-28 *	-12 *
Unweighted base - number of households	35,248					
Vehicle-related theft	47	878	-79 *	-48 *	-25 *	-5
Unweighted base - number of vehicle owners	28,252					
Bicycle theft	26	327	-50 *	-22 *	-37 *	-14
Unweighted base - number of bicycle owners	16,811					
Criminal damage	50	1,209	-63 *	-54 *	-43 *	-9
Unweighted base - number of households	35,248					
<b>ALL CSEW CRIME<sup>6</sup></b>	..	6,334	-67 *	-40 *	-33 *	-6 *

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

1. More detail on further years can be found in Appendix tables A1 and A2.

2. Section 5 of the User Guide provides more information about the crime types included in this table.

3. Rates for violence, robbery, theft from the person and other theft of personal property are quoted per 1,000 adults; rates for domestic burglary, other household theft, and criminal damage are quoted per 1,000 households; rates for vehicle-related theft and bicycle theft are quoted per 1,000 vehicle-owning and bicycle-owning households respectively.

4. Data may not sum to totals shown due to rounding.

5. Statistically significant change at the 5% level is indicated by an asterisk.

6. It is not possible to construct a rate for all theft offences or CSEW crime because rates for household offences are based on rates per household, and those for personal offences on rates per adult, and the two cannot be combined.

Table 1b provides an alternative measure of crime based upon prevalence rates (risk of being a victim) and numbers of victims. For individual crime types, the numbers of victims will be lower than the numbers of incidents, as people or households can experience repeat victimisation. It is possible that due to repeat victimisation, there will be some differences in short-term trends between the measures based on numbers of incidents and numbers of victims.





**Table 1b: CSEW prevalence rates and numbers of victims for year ending March 2016 and percentage change<sup>1</sup>**

Offence group <sup>2</sup>	Apr '15 to Mar '16	April 2015 to March 2016 compared with:				
		Jan '95 to Dec '95	Apr '05 to Mar '06	Apr '10 to Mar '11	Apr '14 to Mar '15	
	Percentage, victims once or more <sup>3</sup>	Number of victims (thousands) <sup>4</sup>	Numbers of victims - percentage change and significance <sup>5</sup>			
Violence	1.8	824	-57 *	-29 *	-31 *	1
with injury	0.9	417	-65 *	-39 *	-41 *	-3
without injury	0.9	430	-50 *	-20 *	-20 *	4
Robbery	0.3	127	-54 *	-45 *	-35 *	49
Theft offences <sup>6</sup>	10.6	4,868	-62 *	-26 *	-25 *	-7 *
Theft from the person	0.7	338	-48 *	-34 *	-32 *	-17
Other theft of personal property	1.5	679	-59 *	-33 *	-20 *	7
Unweighted base - number of adults	35,324					
Domestic burglary	2.3	554	-69 *	-29 *	-32 *	-13 *
in a dwelling	1.6	385	-71 *	-30 *	-35 *	-15 *
in a non-connected building to a dwelling	0.7	176	-68 *	-29 *	-27 *	-9
Other household theft	2.3	551	-48 *	-8 *	-25 *	-9 *
Unweighted base - number of households	35,248					
Vehicle-related theft	4.0	748	-75 *	-43 *	-23 *	-2
Unweighted base - number of vehicle owners	28,252					
Bicycle theft	2.3	296	-47 *	-18 *	-32 *	-10
Unweighted base - number of bicycle owners	16,811					
Criminal damage	3.7	905	-57 *	-47 *	-36 *	-1
Unweighted base - number of households	35,248					
ALL CSEW CRIME <sup>7</sup>	15.2	6,983	-57 *	-29 *	-26 *	-4

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

Notes:

1. More detail on further years can be found in Appendix tables A3 and A8.

2. Section 5 of the User Guide provides more information about the crime types included in this table.

3. Percentages for violence, robbery, theft from the person and other theft of personal property are quoted for adults; percentages for domestic burglary, other household theft, and criminal damage are quoted for households; percentages for vehicle-related theft and bicycle theft are quoted for vehicle-owning and bicycle-owning households respectively.

4. Where applicable, numbers in sub-categories will not sum to totals, because adults/households may have been a victim of more than one crime.
5. Statistically significant change at the 5% level is indicated by an asterisk.
6. This is the estimated percentage/number of adults who have been a victim of at least one personal theft crime or have been resident in a household that was a victim of at least one household theft crime.
7. This is the estimated percentage/number of adults who have been a victim of at least one personal crime or have been resident in a household that was a victim of at least one household crime.

The 8% increase in the number of police recorded crimes in the latest year compared with the previous year was largely driven by increases in violence against the person offences (up 27% to 994,444), criminal damage and arson offences (up 7% to 539,909), public order offences (up 28% to 204,616) and sexual offences (up 21% to 106,378). Improvements in crime recording practices and processes by the police and, particularly for sexual offences and those related to domestic abuse, an increase in the willingness of victims to come forward and report, are thought to be the main drivers of this change.

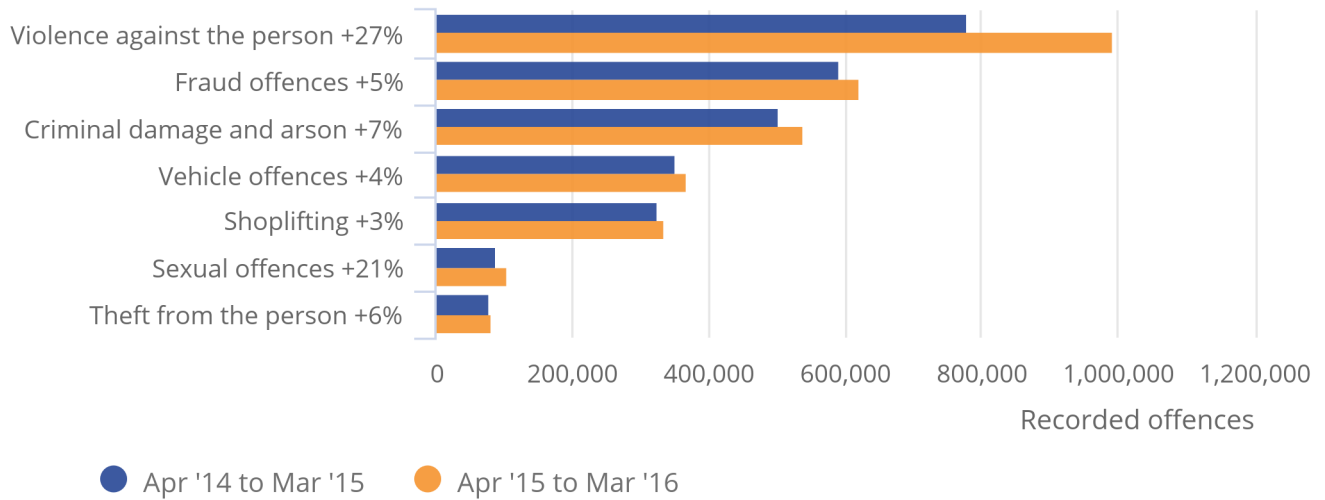
While total theft offences recorded by the police have remained broadly similar, there have been increases in the sub-categories of vehicle offences (up 4% to 366,715), shoplifting (up 3% to 336,708) and theft from the person (up 6% to 83,315) offset by decreases in burglary (down 3% to 400,361) and bicycle theft (down 7% to 86,616) (Table 2).

There was a 5% increase in the number of fraud offences recorded in England and Wales (up to 621,027) compared with the previous year. The increase was due to the number of fraud offences referred by Cifas, which increased by 16%; in contrast, offences recorded by Action Fraud decreased by 3% and offences referred by Financial Fraud Action UK (FFA UK) decreased by 5%.

Figure 2 focuses on selected police recorded crime offences with notable changes in the latest year compared with the previous year.

**Figure 2: Selected police recorded crime offences in England and Wales and percentage change between year ending March 2015 and year ending March 2016<sup>1</sup>**

Figure 2: Selected police recorded crime offences in England and Wales and percentage change between year ending March 2015 and year ending March 2016<sup>1</sup>



Source: Police recorded crime, Home Office

Notes:

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



**Table 2: Police recorded crimes - rate, number and percentage change for year ending March 2016 <sup>1,2,3</sup>**

Offence group	Apr '15 to Mar '16		April 2015 to March 2016 compared with:		
	Rate per 1,000 population	Number of offences	Apr '05 to Mar '06	Apr '10 to Mar '11	Apr '14 to Mar '15
			Number of offences - percentage change		
VICTIM-BASED CRIME	60	3,451,940	-30	-4	9
Violence against the person offences	17	994,444	19	49	27
Homicide	0	571	-25	-11	6
Violence with injury <sup>4</sup>	8	431,258	-21	17	15
Violence without injury <sup>5</sup>	10	562,615	91	90	39
Sexual offences	2	106,378	76	97	21
Rape	1	35,798	148	125	22
Other sexual offences	1	70,580	54	86	20
Robbery offences	1	50,904	-48	-33	1
Robbery of business property	0	5,421	-38	-30	0
Robbery of personal property	1	45,483	-49	-34	1
Theft offences	31	1,760,305	-36	-16	0
Burglary	7	400,361	-38	-23	-3
Domestic burglary <sup>6</sup>	3	193,773	-36	-25	-2
Non-domestic burglary	4	206,588	-40	-22	-4
Vehicle offences	6	366,715	-54	-18	4
Theft of a motor vehicle	1	82,047	-66	-30	8
Theft from a vehicle	4	239,082	-53	-24	1
Interfering with a motor vehicle	1	45,586	-36	52	19
Theft from the person	1	83,315	-33	-10	6
Bicycle theft	2	86,616	-23	-21	-7
Shoplifting	6	336,708	14	10	3
All other theft offences <sup>6</sup>	8	486,590	-37	-22	-1
Criminal damage and arson	9	539,909	-54	-22	7
OTHER CRIMES AGAINST SOCIETY	8	441,007	-14	-8	9
Drug offences	3	147,557	-17	-37	-13
Trafficking of drugs	0	25,402	0	-21	-6
Possession of drugs	2	122,155	-20	-39	-15
Possession of weapons offences	0	25,502	-36	-3	16
Public order offences	4	204,616	-8	18	28
Miscellaneous crimes against society	1	63,332	-15	32	21
TOTAL FRAUD OFFENCES <sup>7</sup>	11	621,017	..	..	5

Source: Police recorded crime, Home Office

1. Police recorded crime data are not designated as National Statistics.
2. Police recorded crime statistics based on data from all 44 forces in England and Wales (including the British Transport Police).
3. Appendix tables A4 and A7 provide detailed footnotes and further years.
4. Includes attempted murder, intentional destruction of viable unborn child, causing death by dangerous driving/careless driving when under the influence of drink or drugs, more serious wounding or other act endangering life (including grievous bodily harm with and without intent), causing death by aggravated vehicle taking and less serious wounding offences.
5. Includes threat or conspiracy to murder, harassment, other offences against children and assault without injury (formerly common assault where there is no injury).
6. All other theft offences now includes all 'making off without payment' offences recorded since year ending March 2003. Making off without payment was previously included within the fraud offence group, but following a change in the classification for year ending March 2014, this change has been applied to previous years of data to give a consistent time series.
7. Total fraud offences cover crimes recorded by the National Fraud Intelligence Bureau via Action Fraud, Cifas and Financial Fraud Action UK. Action Fraud have taken over the recording of fraud offences on behalf of individual police forces. Percentage changes compared with earlier years are not presented, as fraud figures for year ending March 2006 and year ending March 2011 covered only those crimes recorded by individual police forces. Given the addition of new data sources, it is not possible to make direct comparisons with earlier years.

Offences involving firearms<sup>1</sup> increased by 4% (to 5,127 offences in the latest year) compared with the previous year (4,911 offences). However, this was largely driven by a 22% increase in offences involving imitation and other firearms such as BB guns<sup>2</sup>. In comparison, offences involving handguns, shotguns and rifles increased by 2%.

Offences that involved a knife or sharp instrument<sup>3</sup> also showed an increase (10%, to 28,664 offences<sup>4</sup>) during the latest year. However, we have seen a general downward trend in this series over the longer-term and hence, the latest figures are 12% lower than in the year ending March 2011.

More detailed commentary on trends in violent offences, sexual offences, offences involving weapons and fraud offences is included in subsequent sections of this release. In addition, we are in the process of producing a series of overview articles, each focusing on a specific crime type, that will provide information on long-term trends, victim profiles and the nature of incidents (where available). The first of these, an [overview on fraud statistics](#), has been published alongside this release; articles on other crime and justice topics will be published in due course. In the meantime, the quarterly report "[Crime in England and Wales: Year ending September 2015](#)" contains further commentary on these topics.

## Notes:



1. Firearms include shotguns; handguns; rifles; imitation weapons such as BB guns or soft air weapons; other weapons such as CS gas or pepper spray and stun guns; and unidentified weapons. These figures exclude conventional air weapons, such as air rifles.
2. A type of air gun that fires spherical projectiles.
3. Only selected violent offences can be broken down by whether a knife or sharp instrument was used. These are: homicide; attempted murder; threats to kill; assault with injury and assault with intent to cause serious harm; robbery; rape; and sexual assault.
4. Includes data from all police forces, including Thames Valley, who have reported that they had previously undercounted offences following the implementation of their new crime recording system; section 10 of this release has more information regarding this issue.

## 8 . Interpreting trends in violent crime

Violent crime covers a wide range of offences, from minor assaults such as pushing and shoving that result in no physical harm through to serious incidents of wounding and homicide.

For the population and offences that it covers, the Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW) provides the better measure of trends in violent crime. The police recorded crime series is restricted to violent offences that have been reported and recorded to the police and does not provide a reliable measure of trends.

Following criticism of the methodology for handling high frequency repeat victimisation in CSEW estimates, particularly with regard to violent crime, we commissioned an independent review of the current and alternative methods for addressing repeat victimisation. This review was published on 6 July 2016 alongside a [user consultation](#) (running until 13 September 2016) seeking feedback on the review's recommendations.

### Main findings

Over the longer-term, levels of violent crime measured by the CSEW have shown substantial falls.

CSEW findings for the latest survey year, however, show no change in levels of violence compared with the previous survey year, although it is too early to say whether this represents a change in the long-term downward trend. Research from Cardiff University, based upon a survey of hospital emergency departments and walk-in centres in England and Wales, [shows a similar trend in violence-related attendances for treatment](#).

There was a 27% increase in violence against the person offences recorded by the police in the latest year compared with the previous year and the latest figures represent the highest number recorded in a 12-month period since the introduction of the National Crime Recording Standard (NCRS) in April 2002.

Improvements in crime recording processes and practices by the police are thought to be the main drivers behind recent trends in violent against the person offences rather than a “real” increase in such offences. Furthermore, the expansion of the harassment category (a sub-category of “Violence without injury”) in April 2015 to include 2 additional offences<sup>1</sup> that were previously non-notifiable, has also contributed to the rise. Further details are available under the sub-heading “Police recorded crime” within this section.

The police recorded 571 homicides in the latest year, 34 more than in the previous year, an increase of 6%. This is among the highest number of homicides recorded in any 12-month period over the last 5 years, however, over the longer-term, there has been a general downward trend in recorded homicides. The recording of homicides is not prone to changes in recording practice by the police.

# Crime Survey for England and Wales

CSEW violence includes incidents with and without injury, covering both completed and attempted incidents.

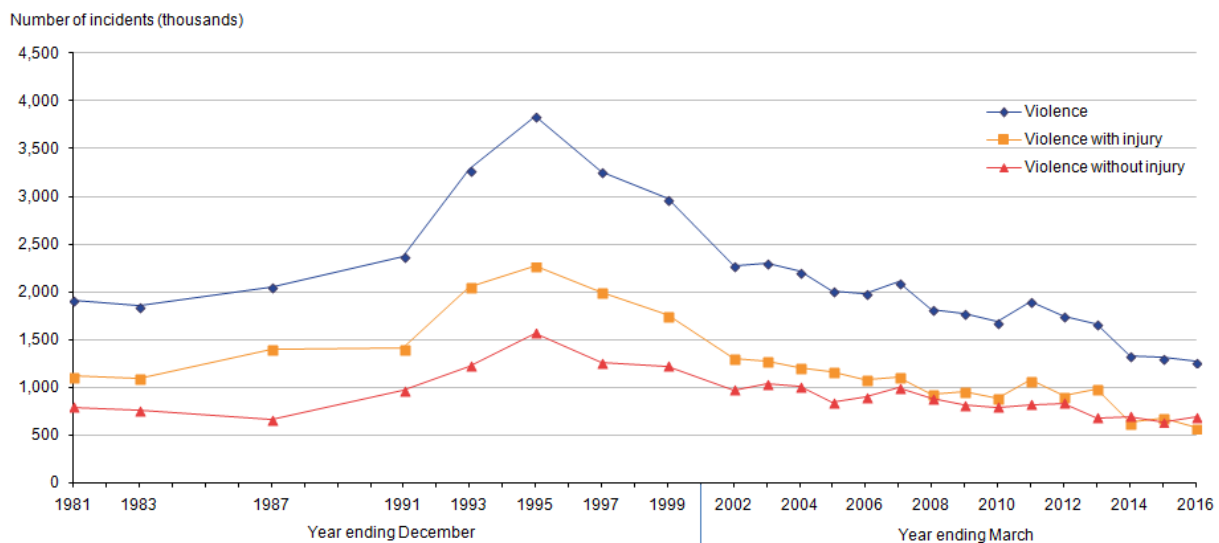
Latest CSEW data showed there were an estimated 1.3 million incidents of violence experienced by adults aged 16 and over in the latest survey year; no change from the previous survey year (the apparent 3% fall was not statistically significant). There was an apparent 15% decrease in the sub-category of “violence with injury” and an apparent 9% increase in the sub-category of “violence without injury”, although neither of these changes were statistically significant (Figure 3).

The estimated number of CSEW violence incidents rose sharply through the early 1990s (peaking in 1995) and then fell steeply until the survey year ending March 2002. The underlying trend in violence between the survey year ending March 2002 and survey year ending March 2014 has been declining, but the last two survey years indicate a slowing rate of decline.

Around 2 in every 100 adults were a victim of CSEW violent crime in the latest survey year, compared with around 3 in 100 adults in the survey year ending March 2006 and 5 in 100 adults in 1995 (the peak year).

Estimates of violence against 10 to 15 year olds, as measured by the CSEW, can be found in [Table F22](#).

**Figure 3: Trends in violence, Crime Survey for England and Wales, year ending December 1981 to year ending March 2016**



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

**Notes:**

1. Prior to the year ending March 2002, CSEW respondents were asked about their experience of crime in the previous calendar year, so year-labels identify the year in which the crime took place. Following the change to continuous interviewing, respondents' experience of crime relates to the full 12 months prior to interview (that is, a moving reference period). Year-labels for the year ending March 2002 onwards identify the CSEW year of interview.

Recent trends in violent crime, as shown by the CSEW, are also reflected in evidence from [research conducted by the Violence and Society Research Group at Cardiff University](#). Findings from their annual survey, covering a sample of hospital emergency departments and walk-in centres in England and Wales, show that serious violence-related attendances in 2015 were broadly similar to the level recorded in 2014 following a declining trend seen in earlier years. In addition, the most recent provisional National Health Service (NHS) data available on assault admissions to hospitals in England showed that, for the 12 months to the end of April 2015, there were 28,992 hospital admissions for assault, a reduction of 8% compared with figures for the preceding 12 months<sup>2</sup>.

## Police recorded crime

Violent offences in police recorded data are referred to as “violence against the person” and include homicide, violence with injury and violence without injury<sup>3</sup>. As with the CSEW, both actual and attempted assaults are included in the figures.

There was a 27% increase in the number of violence against the person offences recorded by the police in the latest year (up to 994,444) compared with the previous year. Improvements in crime recording practices and processes are thought to be a significant driver of this change.

The “violence without injury” sub-category showed an increase of 39% over the same period (up to 562,615 offences), while the “violence with injury” sub-category showed a smaller increase of 15% (up to 431,258 offences).

The increase in “violence without injury” is partially due to a 90% rise in harassment offences in the latest year compared with the previous year (up to 155,809 from 81,796). The rise in harassment is almost entirely the result of the expansion of this category in April 2015 to include 2 additional notifiable offences<sup>4</sup> that were previously not included in the police recorded crime series. These are “Disclosure of private sexual photographs and films with the intent to cause distress or anxiety” and “Sending letters with intent to cause distress or anxiety”<sup>5</sup>; the latter thought to account for around 95% of these newly added offences<sup>6</sup>. Overall, the expansion of the harassment category is thought to account for around half of the increase in “violence without injury”<sup>6</sup>.

The increase in the “violence with injury” sub-category includes a 20% rise in the number of attempted murder offences (a volume increase of 114) in the latest year. Attempted murder has risen in 26 of the 44 police forces (including the British Transport Police) in England and Wales; these figures may also have been influenced by improvements in crime recording. Prior to the recent tightening of recording practices, it is possible that some police officers may have been applying Crown Prosecution Service charging standards (guidelines on what charges should be brought against suspects) when deciding what type of crime to record rather than basing the decision on the Home Office Counting Rules (HOCR), which require offences to be recorded in line with the criminal offence committed. Attempted murder is an important example of this potential issue, as offences may have previously been recorded (and charged) as another type of violent crime that is easier to prove in court, such as “assault with intent to cause serious harm”.

Every police force recorded a rise in violence in the latest year compared with the previous year. In percentage terms, the largest increase was reported by West Yorkshire Police, which recorded an additional 21,749 offences compared with the previous year (an increase of 76%, up to 50,264). Other large increases included Warwickshire Police (up 71%, to 8,387 offences), Northumbria Police (up 64%, to 21,678) and West Mercia Police (up 58%, to 22,932) ([Tables P1 and P3](#)).

Recent changes in recording practice make interpreting trends in violence against the person offences difficult. The latest figures represent the highest number of recorded violence against the person offences in a 12-month period since the introduction of the NCRS in April 2002; 18% above that recorded at the previous peak of the financial year time series in the year ending March 2005.

It is known that violent offences are more prone than some other offences to subjective judgement about whether or not to record a crime. The [Crime-recording: making the victim count](#) report, published by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMIC), found that "violence against the person" offences had the highest under-recording rates across police forces in England and Wales. Nationally, an estimated 1 in 3 (33%) violent offences that should have been recorded as crimes were not. The "Quality and methodology" section has more information.

Action taken by police forces to improve their compliance with the NCRS is likely to have resulted in the increase in the number of offences recorded<sup>7</sup>. It is thought that recording improvements are more likely to affect relatively less serious violent offences and explains the larger increase in the sub-category "violence without injury" compared with "violence with injury".

A number of forces have indicated that the rise in recorded violence is a result of a greater proportion of reports of crime being recorded rather than a genuine rise in violent crime. For example, [data from the Metropolitan Police Service](#) showed that while police recorded violence against the person increased by 14% in the latest year, the number of "calls for service" (for example, emergency and non-emergency calls from members of the public) relating to violent crime decreased by 4% over the same period.

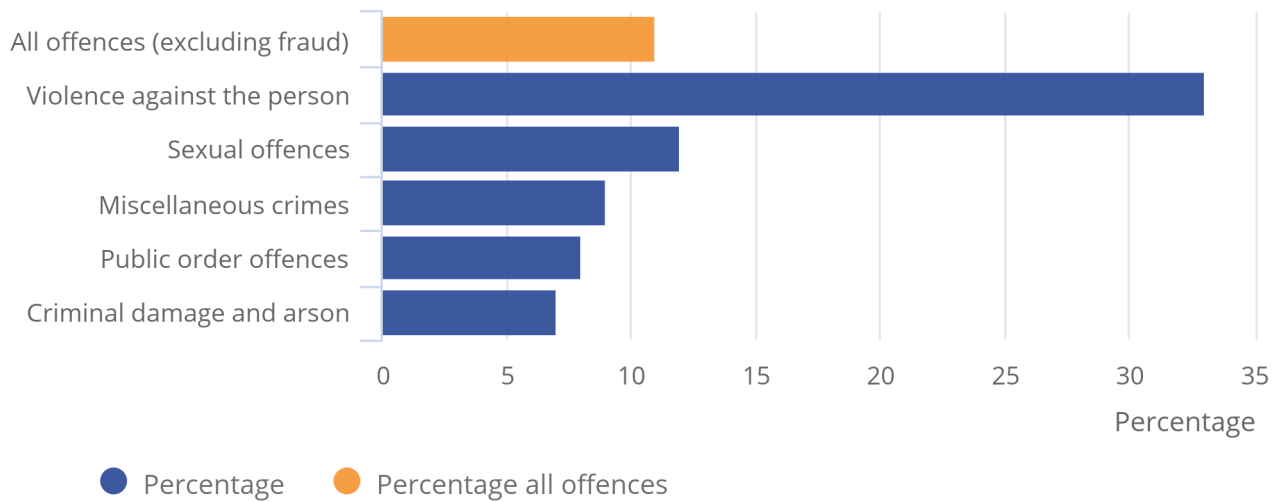
## Domestic abuse

Another possible factor behind the rise in police recorded violent offences is an increase in the reporting of domestic abuse and the subsequent recording of these offences by the police. In 2015, an [HMIC report detailed the improvements in the police response to domestic abuse](#) that had taken place across England and Wales. It concluded that recent increases in the number of domestic abuse-related crimes were due, in part, to police forces improving their recording of domestic abuse incidents as crimes and to forces actively encouraging victims to come forward to report these crimes.

The Home Office has been collecting information from the police, since April 2015, on whether recorded offences are related to domestic abuse. Crimes are "flagged" as being domestic abuse-related by the police if the offence meets the government definition of domestic violence and abuse<sup>8</sup>. Data for the year ending March 2016 (the first full year) showed that violence against the person offences were the most likely to be flagged, with 33% of such offences flagged as domestic abuse-related. The offence group with the next highest proportion of offences flagged was sexual offences (12%) (Figure 4).

**Figure 4: Proportion of offences recorded by the police in England and Wales which were flagged as domestic abuse-related, selected offence groups, year ending March 2016<sup>1</sup>**

Figure 4: Proportion of offences recorded by the police in England and Wales which were flagged as domestic abuse-related, selected offence groups, year ending March 2016<sup>1</sup>



Source: Police recorded crime, Home Office

**Notes:**

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

At present, given that only one full year's data on offences flagged by the police as being domestic abuse-related are available, it is not possible to compare levels with earlier years.

However, since the year ending March 2005, the CSEW has included a self-completion questionnaire module on intimate violence, for persons aged 16 to 59 only, which provides a measure of the proportion of people who have been victims of domestic abuse in this age group over time.

Most recent estimates from this self-completion section of the CSEW for the latest survey year showed that the proportion of all adults aged 16 to 59 who had been victims of domestic abuse in the last year (including attempted offences) had remained the same as for the previous survey year (both 6.1%). These figures have remained between 6.1% and 7.0% since the survey year ending March 2009, albeit with some year-on-year fluctuation and the underlying trend since the survey year ending March 2012 has been downwards ([Table S41](#)).

Data from the previous survey year<sup>9</sup> showed that women, and especially younger women, were more likely to be victims of domestic abuse than other demographic groups (for example, 12.6% of women aged 16 to 19 were victims in the last year).

## Homicide

Unlike many other offences in the “violence against the person” category, the recording of homicides is not prone to changes in recording practice by the police.

The police recorded 571 homicides in the latest year, 34 more than in the previous year, which represents an increase of 6% ([Tables F3a and F3b](#))<sup>10</sup>. In the latest year, there were 2 months with a relatively high number of recorded homicides (June 2015, 72 and November 2015, 65), while the comparator year (ending March 2015) included a month with a relatively low number of recorded homicides (May 2014, 30) – this resulted in a relatively large volume increase in the latest year. These increases were spread across a number of police force areas.

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, which was at a faster rate than population growth over that period. Over the past decade, the volume of homicides has generally decreased while the population of England and Wales has continued to grow. The rate of homicide has fallen by just under a third (31%) between the year ending March 2006 and the latest year, from 14 homicides per million of the population to 10 homicides per million.

There is more detailed information on trends and the circumstances of violence in [Focus on Violent Crime and Sexual Offences: Year ending March 2015](#). Information on violent crimes such as modern slavery, female genital mutilation (FGM) and hate crime is available in the “Violent crime” section of the [Crime in England and Wales: Year ending September 2015](#) release.

### Notes:

1. Disclosure of private sexual photographs and films with the intent to cause distress or anxiety” and “Sending letters with intent to cause distress or anxiety”.
2. Based on the latest available National Health Service (NHS) [Hospital Episode Statistics](#) and [Hospital admissions due to assault \(dated 24 July 2015\)](#). These data do not include figures for Wales and relate to activity in English NHS hospitals.
3. There are some closely related offences in the police recorded crime series, such as public order offences, that have no identifiable victim and are contained within the “Other crimes against society” category.
4. The 2 additional harassment offences are included within all 12 months data for the latest year (ending March 2016) while the comparator year data (ending March 2015) do not include these additional offences. In future quarterly releases, the comparator year will begin to include the additional harassment offences and we therefore expect to see the extent of the increase in the “violence without injury” subcategory lessen.
5. In addition to letters, this offence also covers electronic communications such as emails, text messages and those sent via social media.
6. Based on data from 35 forces supplied via the Home Office Data Hub.
7. The inspections took place over the period December 2013 to August 2014; this falls within the time period covered by the comparator year in this release (ending March 2015).
8. Any incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive or threatening behaviour, violence or abuse between those aged 16 or over who are, or have been, intimate partners or family members regardless of gender or sexuality.
9. The latest published data in [Focus on Violent Crime and Sexual Offences: Year ending March 2015](#); data for the survey year ending March 2016 are due for release in February 2017.
10. Homicide includes the offences of murder, manslaughter, corporate manslaughter and infanticide. Figures from the Homicide Index for the time period April 2014 to March 2015, which take account of further police investigations and court outcomes, were published in [Focus on Violent Crime and Sexual Offences: Year ending March 2015](#) on 11 February 2016.

## **9 . No change in CSEW sexual offences; police recorded offences continue to rise**

### **Main findings**

The most recent estimates from the self-completion questionnaire module in the Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW) on intimate violence showed that the proportion of adults aged 16 to 59 who had been victims of sexual assaults in the last year (including attempted offences) had not significantly changed between the latest survey year (2.0%, equivalent to 645,000 victims) and the previous survey year (1.7%).

There was an increase of 21% in sexual offences recorded by the police in the latest year compared with the previous year (106,378 offences); this includes a 22% increase in rape and a 20% increase in other sexual offences. However, it is not thought that police recorded crime data currently provide a reliable indication of trends in sexual offences. The increases are believed to have resulted from both an improvement in the recording of sexual offences by the police and an increased willingness of victims to come forward and report these crimes to the police.

## Crime Survey for England and Wales

Due to the small number of sexual offences identified in the face-to-face interview section of the CSEW, estimates of the volume of incidents are prone to fluctuation and therefore not included in the main CSEW estimate of crime. Since the year ending March 2005, the CSEW has included a self-completion module on intimate violence, for persons aged 16 to 59 only, which provides an improved measure of the proportion of people who have been victims of sexual offences in this age group.

Most recent headline estimates from this self-completion section of the CSEW showed that the proportion of all adults aged 16 to 59 who had been victims of sexual assaults in the last year (including attempted offences) had not significantly changed between the latest survey year (2.0%) and the previous survey year (1.7%). These figures have remained at around 2.0% since the survey year ending March 2009, albeit with some year-on-year fluctuation ([Table S41](#)).

Data from the previous survey year<sup>1</sup> showed that women, and especially younger women, were more likely to be victims of sexual assault than other demographic groups (for example, 9.0% of women aged 16 to 19 were victims in the last year).

Detailed findings from the self-completion module for the previous CSEW year are available in [Focus on Violent Crime and Sexual Offences: Year ending March 2015](#); detailed findings for the latest CSEW year are planned for release in the "Year ending March 2016" edition in February 2017.

### Police recorded crime

There was an increase of 21% in the number of sexual offences recorded by the police in the latest year compared with the previous year (up to 106,378; [Tables F6a and F6b](#)). Sexual offences have reached the highest volume recorded since the introduction of the National Crime Recording Standard (NCRS) in April 2002 and it is only the second time that the total number of offences has exceeded 100,000 in a 12-month period (the first time being in the year ending December 2015). The rate of year-on-year increases, however, is slowing; it was 29% in the year ending December 2015 and the latest increase is considerably less steep than those seen in the years ending March, June and September 2015 (37%, 41% and 36% respectively).

Police recorded rape increased by 22% (to 35,798 offences) compared with the previous year, while other sexual offences increased by 20% (to 70,580). Offence categories that directly relate to sexual offences against children<sup>2</sup> contributed 41% to the total increase in the number of sexual offences recorded by the police.

Between the year ending March 2008 and the year ending March 2013, the trend in sexual offences was broadly flat with small increases recorded in some years. Since the year ending March 2013, police recorded sexual offences have risen consistently. In the year ending March 2014, the increases were generally driven by a rise in the recording of historical offences (those that took place more than 12 months before being recorded by the police), whereas the increases seen throughout the previous and latest years (particularly the most recent quarters) have been largely due to a rise in current offences (those that took place within 12 months of being recorded by the police)<sup>3</sup>.

Overall, the increases are believed to have resulted from both an improvement in the recording of sexual offences by the police and an increased willingness of victims to come forward and report these crimes to the police, and hence we feel these data do not currently provide a reliable indication of trends in sexual offences.

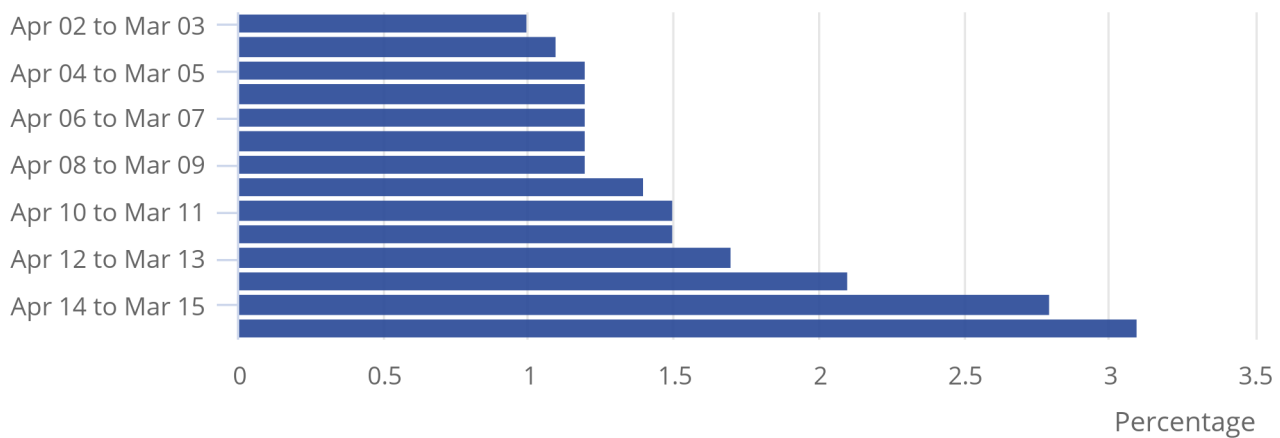
The [Crime-recording: making the victim count](#) report, published by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMIC) in late 2014, found that sexual offences had been substantially under-recorded (by 26% nationally) and led to police forces reviewing and improving their recording processes<sup>4</sup>. Additionally the high-profile coverage of sexual offences, and the police response to reports of historic sexual offending (for example, through Operation Yewtree which began in 2012) are likely to have had an effect on the willingness of victims to come forward and report offences of this nature.



Police recorded sexual offences represent a small proportion of all victim-based crime (excluding fraud). Figure 5 illustrates that there have been almost continual year-on-year increases in the proportion of police recorded victim-based crime comprising sexual offences since the year ending March 2003 (the only exception being the year ending March 2007) and these increases have become more pronounced over the last 4 years (more than doubling over this period).

**Figure 5: Police recorded sexual offences as a percentage of victim-based crime in England and Wales, year ending March 2003 to year ending March 2016<sup>1</sup>**

Figure 5: Police recorded sexual offences as a percentage of victim-based crime in England and Wales, year ending March 2003 to year ending March 2016<sup>1</sup>



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

**Notes:**

1. Police recorded crime data are not designated as National Statistics
2. Percentages derived from figures published in Appendix Table A4 which includes the number of Victim-based crimes (row 6) and the number of sexual offences (row 109) recorded by the police

More information on interpreting longer-term trends in these offences can be found in [An Overview of Sexual Offending in England and Wales](#) and [Focus on Violent Crime and Sexual Offences: Year ending March 2015](#).

**Notes:**

1. The latest published data in [Focus on Violent Crime and Sexual Offences: Year ending March 2015](#); data for the survey year ending March 2016 are due for release in February 2017.
2. This includes “Rape of a male / female child under 16”, “Rape of a male / female child under 13”, “Sexual assault on a male / female child under 13”, “Sexual activity involving a child under 13 / under 16” and “Abuse of children through sexual exploitation”.
3. Based on findings from the Home Office Data Hub; these were discussed in detail in [Crime in England and Wales, period ending March 2014](#).
4. More information can be found in [Crime in England and Wales: Year ending September 2015](#).

## 10 . Police recorded offences involving weapons continue to rise

Some of the more serious offences in the police recorded crime data (violence against the person, robbery and sexual offences) can be broken down by whether or not a knife or sharp instrument was involved <sup>1</sup>.

Data are also available for police recorded crimes involving the use of firearms (that is, if a firearm is fired, used as a blunt instrument, or used as a threat).

As offences involving the use of weapons are relatively low in volume, the Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW) is not able to provide reliable estimates for numbers of such incidents.

### Main findings

In the latest year the police recorded 28,664 offences involving a knife or sharp instrument, a 10% increase compared with the previous year. While in the past these offences were not thought to be prone to changes in recording practices by the police, some forces are reporting that the general improvement in recording processes may be impacting on these categories. Currently available evidence suggests a complex picture in which the latest rise could reflect a mix of both improvements in recording processes and a genuine rise in knife crime.

Offences involving firearms in the latest year increased by 4% (to 5,127 offences) compared with the previous year; this was largely driven by an increase in offences involving imitation and other firearms such as BB guns and soft air weapons.

### Offences involving knives or sharp instruments<sup>2</sup>

In the latest year, the police recorded 28,664 offences involving a knife or sharp instrument, a 10% increase <sup>3</sup> compared with the previous year (26,041, Table 3). There has been a general downward trend in this series over the longer-term and the latest figures are 12% lower than in the year ending March 2011.

All but one of the offence groups for which data are collected showed increases, including 26% increases in both “attempted murder” and “threats to kill” involving a knife or sharp instrument. The category of “assault with injury and assault with intent to cause serious harm” showed the largest rise in terms of volume of offences (up 15%, from 13,103 to 15,015).

The majority of police forces (37 of the 44) recorded a rise in offences involving knives and sharp instruments compared with the previous year. The largest contributor to the total rise was West Midlands Police (accounting for 19% of the increase). Data for police force areas are published in the Home Office's [knife crime open data table](#)<sup>4</sup>.



**Table 3: Selected violent and sexual offences involving a knife or sharp instrument recorded by the police, year ending March 2011 to year ending March 2016 and percentage change <sup>1,2,3,4,5,6</sup>**

England and Wales

	Apr '10 to Mar '11	Apr '11 to Mar '12	Apr '12 to Mar '13	Apr '13 to Mar '14	Apr '14 to Mar '15	Apr '15 to Mar '16	Apr '15 to Mar '16 compared with previous year
	Number of selected offences involving a knife or sharp instrument						Percentage change
Attempted murder	240	246	198	248	273	343	26
Threats to kill	1,462	1,183	1,188	1,317	1,718	2,170	26
Assault with injury and assault with intent to cause serious harm <sup>7</sup>	13,941	12,621	11,343	11,551	13,103	15,015	15
Robbery	16,438	16,417	13,194	11,910	10,312	10,473	2
Rape	258	237	190	261	321	329	2
Sexual assault <sup>8</sup>	93	72	88	97	127	120	-6
Total selected offences	32,432	30,776	26,201	25,384	25,854	28,450	10
Homicide <sup>9</sup>	237	211	195	204	187	214	14
Total selected offences including homicide	32,669	30,987	26,396	25,588	26,041	28,664	10
	Rate per million population - selected offences involving a knife or sharp instrument						
Total selected offences including homicide	587	552	467	449	454	499	

Source: Police recorded crime, Home Office

- Police recorded crime data are not designated as National Statistics.
- Police recorded crime statistics based on data from all 44 forces in England and Wales (including the British Transport Police).
- Police recorded knife and sharp instrument offences data are submitted via an additional special collection. Proportions of offences involving the use of a knife or sharp instrument presented in this table are calculated based on figures submitted in this special collection. Other offences exist that are not shown in this table that may include the use of a knife or sharp instrument.
- Data from Surrey Police include unbroken bottle and glass offences, which are outside the scope of this special collection; however, it is not thought that offences of this kind constitute a large enough number to impact on the national figure.
- Numbers differ from those previously published due to Sussex Police revising their figures to exclude unbroken bottles.
- An audit of Thames Valley Police into the recording of knife and sharp instrument offences since the introduction of their new recording system in April 2014 has revealed that they were previously under-counting these offences. Data for the year ending March 2016 have been revised, but data for the year ending March 2015 have not; it is likely that the percentage changes presented are slightly higher than they would be once the year ending March 2015 data are revised.
- Changes to offence codes in April 2012 mean the category of assault with injury and assault with intent to cause serious harm is not directly comparable with previous years. Appendix table A4 contains more details.
- Sexual assault includes indecent assault on a male/female and sexual assault on a male/female (all ages).

9. Homicide offences are those currently recorded by the police as at 1 June 2016 and are subject to revision as cases are dealt with by the police and by the courts, or as further information becomes available. They include the offences of murder, manslaughter, infanticide and, as of year ending March 2013, corporate manslaughter. These figures are taken from the detailed record level Homicide Index (rather than the main police collection for which forces are only required to provide an overall count of homicides, used in Appendix table A4). There may therefore be differences in the total homicides figure used to calculate these proportions and the homicide figure presented in Appendix table A4.

Comparing the latest year with the year ending March 2011, with the exceptions of robbery and homicide, there have been increases in the numbers of offences where a knife or sharp instrument was used. Increases in the latest year are consistent with increases in the overall level of these offences; for example, the 15% rise in the number of “assault with injury and assault with intent to cause serious harm” offences involving a knife or sharp instrument mirrors the 15% rise seen in all incidents of these offences.

The latest 26% increase in attempted murders involving a knife or sharp instrument may have been influenced by improvements in crime recording, with offences previously being more likely to be recorded according to the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) charging standard rather than the Home Office Counting Rules and the National Crime Recording Standard (NCRS). For example, they might have been recorded (and charged) as another type of violent crime that is easier to prove in court, such as “assault with intent to cause serious harm”.

While in the past offences involving a knife were generally not thought to be prone to changes in recording practices, some forces have suggested that recording process improvements may have been a factor driving the recent increases.

However, there has also been some indication that the latest rise may represent a real change to the downward trend seen in recent years. For example, in relation to the capital, data from the London Ambulance Service showed a 9% rise in ambulance incidences resulting from assaults involving a knife injury (for the year ending October 2015, compared with the year ending October 2014; which overlaps with the first 6 months of the crime figures reported in this bulletin)<sup>5</sup>.

Other evidence, albeit focused on the most serious knife-related crimes relating to hospital admissions for assault with a sharp instrument<sup>6</sup>, have shown little change over the past year following declines in previous years. For the year ending April 2015 (the latest available time period), there were 3,614 admissions for assault with a sharp instrument compared with a peak of 5,720 in the year ending March 2007<sup>7</sup>, although such incidents may not be representative of all knife-related crime.

Taken together, this suggests the picture is a complex one, which could reflect improvements in recording processes but also a genuine rise in knife crime.

“Possession of an article with a blade or point” offences also rose by 16% to 11,517 offences in the latest year. This figure can often be influenced by increases in targeted police action in relation to knife crime.

Further analysis on offences involving knives or sharp instruments has been published in [Focus on Violent Crime and Sexual Offences: Year ending March 2015](#).

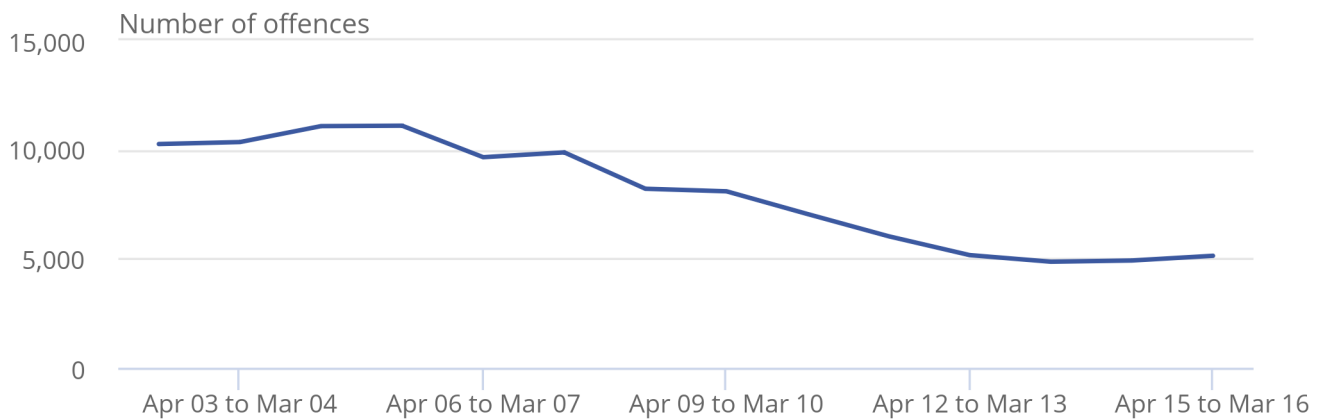
## Offences involving firearms

Similar to the breakdown of offences involving knives or sharp instruments, statistics are available for police recorded crimes involving the use of firearms<sup>8</sup>. Firearms are taken to be involved in an offence if they are fired, used as a blunt instrument against a person, or used as a threat. [Focus on Violent Crime and Sexual Offences: Year ending March 2015](#) has more detailed information on trends and the circumstances of offences involving firearms, including figures based on a broader definition of the types of firearm involved<sup>9</sup>.

Offences involving firearms in the latest year increased by 4% (to 5,127 offences) compared with the previous year. However, this was largely driven by a 22% increase in offences involving imitation and other firearms such as BB guns<sup>10</sup>; by comparison, offences involving handguns, shotguns and rifles increased by 2%. The increase in firearm offences followed a general downward trend and the overall level remained 54% below its peak (in the year ending March 2006) (Figure 6).

**Figure 6: Trends in police recorded crime in England and Wales involving the use of firearms, year ending March 2003 to year ending March 2016**

Figure 6: Trends in police recorded crime in England and Wales involving the use of firearms, year ending March 2003 to year ending March 2016



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

**Notes:**

1. Police recorded crime data are not designated as National Statistics
2. Firearms include: shotguns; handguns; rifles; imitation weapons such as BB guns or soft air weapons; other weapons such as CS gas or pepper spray; and stun guns; and unidentified weapons. They exclude conventional air weapons, such as air rifles.

Offences involving firearms are thought to be less likely to have been affected by changes in recording practices due to their serious nature. However, there may be similar process improvements as seen with knife-related offences, given the increases seen in the less serious firearms categories.

**Notes:**



1. These are: homicide; attempted murder; threats to kill; assault with injury and assault with intent to cause serious harm; robbery; rape; and sexual assault.
2. A sharp instrument is any object that pierces the skin (or in the case of a threat, is capable of piercing the skin), for example a broken bottle.
3. An audit into the recording of knife and sharp instrument offences by Thames Valley Police has revealed that they had been under-counting these offences since the introduction of their new recording system in April 2014. Data for the latest year (ending March 2016) have been revised, but data for the previous year (ending March 2015) have not; hence, the 10% rise is likely to slightly overstate the actual increase. If data from Thames Valley Police are excluded, the latest year-on-year increase in the total number of offences involving a knife or sharp instrument is 9%.
4. This source excludes homicides committed using a knife or sharp instrument.
5. [Monthly Ambulance Service Incidents, Ward, November 2015](#), contains details of London Ambulance Service incidents, between November 2014 and October 2015, by type of injury.
6. While it is a requirement to record every hospital admission, completing the field for external cause is not always done.
7. Based on the latest available National Health Service (NHS) [Hospital Episode Statistics](#) and [Hospital admissions due to assault \(dated 24 July 2015\)](#). These data do not include figures for Wales and relate to activity in English NHS hospitals. A graph based on financial years is available in the [Focus on Violent Crime and Sexual Offences: Year ending March 2015](#) release.
8. Firearms include shotguns; handguns; rifles; imitation weapons such as BB guns or soft air weapons; other weapons such as CS gas or pepper spray and stun guns; and unidentified weapons. These figures exclude conventional air weapons, such as air rifles.
9. The broader definition of firearms includes conventional air weapons, such as air rifles.
10. A type of air gun that fires spherical projectiles.

## 11 . New estimate of 5.8 million CSEW fraud and computer misuse offences

The extent of fraud is difficult to measure because it is a deceptive crime; victimisation is often indiscriminate, covering organisations as well as individuals. Some victims of fraud may be unaware they have been a victim of crime, or that any fraudulent activity has occurred for some time after the event. Others might be unwilling to see themselves as victims or reluctant to report the offence to the authorities, feeling embarrassed that they have fallen victim. The level of fraud reported via administrative sources is thought to significantly understate the true level of such crime.

While the Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW) estimates will include crimes that have not been reported to the authorities, being a household survey, they will not capture fraud against organisations. It is also likely that some victims of fraud, especially those who suffered significant financial losses, may not have the confidence to allow an interviewer into their home to conduct an interview.

## Main findings

Based on Experimental Statistics from new fraud and computer misuse questions that were added to the CSEW from October 2015, adults aged 16 and over experienced an estimated 5.8 million fraud and computer misuse incidents in the 12 months prior to interview; 3.8 million of these were fraud incidents and 2.0 million were computer misuse incidents. These data are only based on interviews with half of the sample of respondents conducted during the second half of the survey year, but have been grossed up to provide an estimate covering the entire survey year.

In the latest year, there was a 5% increase in the number of fraud offences recorded in England and Wales (up to 621,017 offences) compared with the previous year. The increase was owing to fraud offences referred by Cifas, which increased by 16% (up to 298,968) compared with the previous year.

## Crime Survey for England and Wales

New questions on fraud and computer misuse were added to the CSEW in October 2015. Sufficient data have now been gathered to produce estimates, based on these new questions, as [Experimental Statistics](#). These data build upon the findings from the recent field trial of the newly developed survey questions – which can be found in the methodological note: [CSEW Fraud and Cyber-crime development: Field trial – October 2015](#) – however, the 2 sets of figures should not be directly compared, as methodological refinements were made following the trial.

Based on these new questions, adults aged 16 and over experienced an estimated 3.8 million incidents of fraud (Table 4), with just over half of these (51%; 1.9 million incidents) being cyber-related<sup>1</sup>.

The most common types of fraud experienced were “Bank and credit account” fraud (2.5 million incidents; 66% of the total), followed by “Non-investment” fraud – such as fraud related to online shopping or fraudulent computer service calls (1.0 million incidents; 28% of the total).

In addition, adults experienced an estimated 2.0 million computer misuse incidents; around two-thirds (68%; 1.4 million incidents) of these were computer virus related and around one-third (32%; 0.6 million incidents) were related to unauthorised access to personal information (including hacking).

Further data from the new CSEW fraud and computer misuse questions are presented in [Tables E1 to E13](#).

**Table 4: CSEW fraud and computer misuse - numbers of incidents for year ending March 2016 (Experimental Statistics)<sup>1,2</sup>**

England and Wales	Adults aged 16 and over
Offence group	Number of incidents (thousands)
Fraud	3,761
Bank and credit account fraud	2,472
Non-investment fraud	1,042
Advance fee fraud	108
Other fraud	138
Computer misuse	2,006
Computer virus	1,357
Unauthorised access to personal information (including hacking)	649
Unweighted base - number of adults	9,163

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

1. Experimental Statistics are those which are in the testing phase and not yet fully developed. They are published in order to involve users and stakeholders in their development, and as a means to build in quality at an early stage.

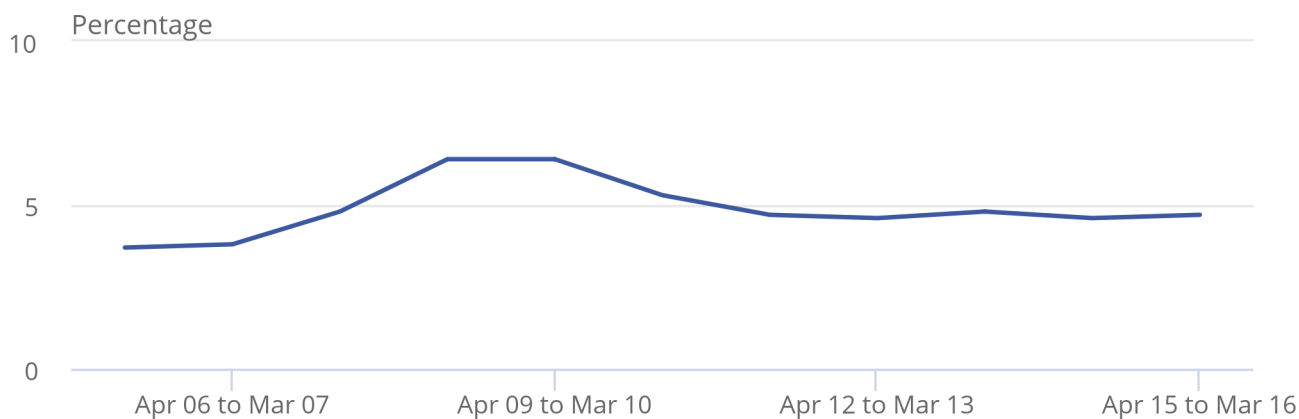
2. New victimisation questions on fraud and computer misuse were incorporated into the CSEW from October 2015. Initial estimates are based on approximately 9,000 cases gathered between October 2015 and March 2016. The questions are currently asked of half the survey sample to test for detrimental effects on the survey as a whole and help ensure that the historical time series is protected.

In addition to these new data covering a wide spectrum of fraud, for the last decade, the survey has included a supplementary module of questions on plastic card (bank and credit card) fraud.

The results from this supplementary module show that 4.7% of plastic card owners were victims of card fraud in the latest survey year, a similar level to the previous survey year (4.6%) and closely aligning with the findings from the new Experimental Statistics for the same period (4.5% of all adults, equivalent to 4.8% of plastic card owners). The trend in levels of plastic card fraud measured by this supplementary module has remained fairly stable over the last few years, following a rise between the survey years ending March 2006 and March 2010 and a subsequent fall between the survey years ending March 2010 and March 2012 (Figure 7). Data from these questions provide an indication of whether an individual has been a victim of plastic card fraud, but do not provide any information on the number of times this occurred or the scale of any loss that may have been experienced.

**Figure 7: Proportion of Crime Survey for England and Wales plastic card users who had been a victim of plastic card fraud in the last year, year ending March 2006 to year ending March 2016 <sup>1</sup>**

Figure 7: Proportion of Crime Survey for England and Wales plastic card users who had been a victim of plastic card fraud in the last year, year ending March 2006 to year ending March 2016<sup>1</sup>



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

**Notes:**

1. The data on this chart refer to crimes experienced in the 12 months before interview, based on interviews carried out in that year.

At this early stage, the existing estimates from the supplementary module on plastic card fraud and from the new Experimental Statistics on bank and credit account fraud appear to closely align. Given that these types of offence comprise around two-thirds (66%) of the new fraud estimate, trends in plastic card fraud from the supplementary module could provide an illustration of how the trends in other frauds may have behaved in recent years, in the absence of the data being collected.

The “[Overview on fraud statistics](#)” article published alongside this release provides more detailed findings from the new CSEW fraud data.

**Recorded fraud offences**

The police recorded crime series incorporates offences reported to Action Fraud (the national fraud and cybercrime reporting centre) as well as those reported to the National Fraud Intelligence Bureau (NFIB) by 2 industry bodies: Cifas and Financial Fraud Action UK (FFA UK). The volume of such incidents referred to the police is significantly lower than the estimates from the new CSEW fraud and computer misuse questions. However, while the survey provides a better indication of the threat of such crimes, it will tend to be dominated by lower harm cases than the administrative data, which will tend to be focused on the more serious end of the spectrum.

In the latest year, there was a 5% increase in the number of fraud offences recorded in England and Wales (up to 621,017 offences) compared with the previous year ([Tables 18a and 18b](#)); this was owing to offences referred by Cifas, which increased by 16% (up to 298,968). In contrast, fraud offences recorded by Action Fraud decreased by 3% (down to 222,502) and those referred by FFA UK decreased by 5% (down to 99,547 offences) compared with the previous year.

Victims of fraud may report incidents to Action Fraud via an online reporting tool or via a telephone helpline. In July 2015, the company that was contracted to provide the call centre service went into administration. This led to an immediate downscaling of the call centre operation. A new contractor, who was due to take over the Action Fraud call centre in April 2016, was asked to take over operations early in August 2015. As at the end of the latest reporting period, it is thought that call centre operations were still not running at full capacity.

Monthly volumes of fraud offences recorded by Action Fraud during the period April to June 2015 (covering the immediate period before the previous call centre service contractor went into administration) was higher than seen in 2014. In contrast, the number of offences recorded between July 2015 and March 2016 (predominantly covering the period with the new call centre arrangements in place) were lower than the totals recorded for the same period the previous year. This discrepancy in the latest trends suggests that the level of fraud in the latter part of the latest year may have been subject to under-reporting since the change in operation of the Action Fraud call centre, and therefore, the latest trends in Action Fraud data should be interpreted with caution.

The largest increase in the separate categories of fraud referred to the NFIB in the latest year was “Banking and credit industry” fraud (up 15% to 367,182 offences). Almost all of this increase was in offences reported to the NFIB via Cifas (up 28% to 242,721 offences). This rise was seen principally in the sub-category of frauds relating to “Cheque, plastic card and online bank accounts” and is thought to have resulted from an increase in the volume of reported identity frauds in account applications (for example, applying to open a plastic card account using the identity of an innocent party).

“Insurance fraud” accounted for a relatively small proportion of total fraud offences (2%), but the number of offences increased by 26% from the previous year. This is thought to have resulted specifically from a rise in insurance application frauds, largely due to an increase in the number of individuals attempting to get a cheaper policy by fraudulent means. Initiatives such as [MyLicence](#) and the [Insurance Fraud Register](#) may also be improving the insurance industry’s detection of such frauds.

Several major categories of fraud saw decreases in the latest year; these included “Telecom industry fraud (misuse of contracts)”, which fell by 22% and “Advance fee payments”, which fell by 21% compared with the previous year.

The fall in “Advance fee payments” is in contrast with the increase that was recorded in this category in the year ending September 2015. Data on this type of fraud come solely from reports to Action Fraud and therefore the changes seen may be related to potential under-recording caused by the reduction in capacity of the Action Fraud call centre since August 2015 rather than a real change in the level of these frauds.

A full breakdown of the types of fraud offences referred to the NFIB by Action Fraud, Cifas and FFA UK in the latest year is presented in [Table A5](#).

Concerning offences recorded by Action Fraud, unlike other crime types (for which recorded crime data are submitted by individual police forces), subnational breakdowns have not previously been available. This reflects both Action Fraud’s role as the national reporting centre for fraud, and the fact that such offences often cross geographical boundaries and can be difficult to pin down to geographic territories.

Following work conducted by the Home Office and Action Fraud, a police force area breakdown of Action Fraud data based on where the victim resides has now been produced. These data are published as Experimental Statistics and presented in [Table E14](#). In contrast with most other crimes, these data showed there was generally less variation in rates of fraud by police force area, although rates in London and southern areas were slightly higher than those in northern areas.

Further details on the different categories of fraud and how data on them are collected are available in Section 5.4 of the [User Guide](#).

## Card and bank account fraud not reported to the police

Data referred to the NFIB by Cifas and FFA UK are known to exclude a significant volume of card and bank account fraud. Cifas do not collect information on some types of plastic card fraud, including “Remote purchase” frauds (those frauds where the cardholder and card are not present at the point of sale, such as use of the card online, over the phone or by mail order), fraud resulting from cards being lost or stolen, or ATM fraud. While FFA UK does collect this information, it only refers crimes to the NFIB in cases where there is intelligence value for the police to aid in investigating and detecting fraud.

FFA UK does, however, collect information from its members on a broader range of bank account and plastic card frauds than those referred to the NFIB using a system referred to as CAMIS and data from this source are shown in [Table F20](#)<sup>2</sup>. While these figures are at UK level only, they offer a broader picture of the scale of bank account and plastic card fraud. It is important to note that these data also include those cases referred by FFA UK to the NFIB (presented in [Table F18a](#)) and many of them will also be included in the CSEW; for example, individual account holders whose bank has also referred the incident to the NFIB.

In the latest year, FFA UK reported 1.7 million cases of frauds on UK-issued cards, cheque fraud and remote banking fraud (internet, telephone and mobile banking)<sup>3</sup>, an increase of 32% from the previous year. This compares with a 5% decrease in the level of these frauds that were reported by FFA UK to the NFIB. The cases reported to the NFIB are those with intelligence value to the police and are less likely to include incidences of “Remote purchase” fraud, which are an important driver in the overall increase in FFA UK data from CAMIS. FFA UK have attributed recent rises to the growth in sophisticated online attacks such as data breaches and malware.

In general, the FFA UK figures have been consistent with those shown by the CSEW trend in plastic card fraud, with levels peaking around 2008 to 2010 followed by falls in subsequent years that were likely to be related to the introduction of chip card technology. However, the apparent small (non-statistically significant) increase in prevalence of plastic card fraud measured by the CSEW is in contrast to the trend observed in FFA UK data from CAMIS (which showed a 32% rise in the latest year). It is not currently clear what lies behind this apparent inconsistency; the time lag in the CSEW is a possible factor.

Further information on trends in payment industry fraud based on industry data collated by FFA UK is available in [Fraud the Facts 2016](#).

### Notes:

1. Based on whether the internet or any type of online activity was related to any aspect of the offence.
2. FFA UK publish data on the volume of incidents of frauds on all payment types (including ‘Remote purchase’), alongside data on financial fraud losses by the value of losses to customers. Latest figures for 2015 are available in their report [2015: Financial Fraud Figures](#) published in March 2016.
3. It is important to note that number of cases relates to the number of accounts defrauded, rather than the number of victims.

## 12 . Quality and methodology

## Data sources – coverage and coherence: Crime Survey for England and Wales

The Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW; previously known as the British Crime Survey) is a face-to-face survey in which people resident in households in England and Wales are asked about their experiences of crime in the 12 months prior to the interview. It covers both children aged 10 to 15 and adults aged 16 and over, but does not cover those living in communal establishments (such as care homes, student halls of residence and prisons), or crimes against commercial or public sector bodies.

The CSEW is able to capture a broad range of victim-based crimes<sup>1</sup> experienced by those interviewed, not just those that have been reported to, and recorded by, the police. It covers a broad range of victim-based crimes experienced by the resident household population. However, there are some serious, but relatively low volume offences, such as homicide and sexual offences, which are not included in its main estimates. Although, at the end of the main interview there is a self-completion element (via a tablet computer), where adults aged 16 to 59 are asked about their experience of domestic abuse and sexual violence, and these results are reported separately<sup>2</sup>.

A major strength of the CSEW has been its ability to compare crime types over time and for this reason the CSEW has changed little over the last 30 years. However, the way in which criminals are operating is changing and they can now take advantage of new technologies, such as the internet, to both expand the scope of existing crime types and develop new ones. Nowhere has this been more apparent than in fraud and cybercrime. As questions aimed at identifying fraud and other cyber offences were not part of the original survey design, it had not previously been possible to include these new offences in the main estimate of CSEW crime.

To address this issue, new questions relating to fraud and computer misuse were introduced onto half the survey sample from October 2015. Sufficient data have now been gathered to produce estimates of fraud and computer misuse and these are published within the “Crime in England and Wales” release for the first time. Details regarding the process in obtaining these new fraud and computer misuse estimates are available in the “[Overview on fraud statistics](#)” article.

Since it began, the CSEW has been conducted by an independent (from government or the police) survey research organisation using trained interviewers to collect data from sampled respondents; the interviewers have no vested interest in the results of the survey. For the crime types and population groups it covers, the CSEW has a consistent methodology and is unaffected by changes in levels of public reporting to the police, recording practice or police activity. As such, the survey is widely seen to operate as an independent reality-check of the police figures. The independence of the survey has been further strengthened by the transfer of responsibility from the Home Office to the Office for National Statistics (ONS) in April 2012.

The CSEW has a higher number of reported offences than police recorded crime as the survey is able to capture all offences by those interviewed, not just those that have been reported to the police and then recorded. However, it does cover a narrower range of offences than the police recorded crime collection.

In 2009, the CSEW was extended to cover children aged 10 to 15, and this release also incorporates results from this element of the survey. However, the main analysis and commentary is restricted to adults and households due to the long time series for which comparable data are available.

The CSEW has a nationally representative sample of around 35,000 adults and 3,000 children (aged 10 to 15 years) per year. The response rates for the latest survey year were 72% for adults and 66% for children. The survey is weighted to adjust for possible non-response bias and to ensure the sample reflects the profile of the general population.

## **Data sources – coverage and coherence: Police recorded crime and other sources**

Police recorded crime figures are restricted to a subset of notifiable offences that have been reported to and recorded by the police. Therefore, while the police recorded crime series covers a wider population and a broader<sup>3</sup> set of offences than the CSEW, it does not include crimes that do not come to the attention of the police or are not recorded by them.

Police recorded crime figures are supplied by the 43 territorial police forces of England and Wales, plus the British Transport Police, via the Home Office, to us. Data on fraud are sourced from Action Fraud, the UK's national fraud reporting centre; Cifas, the UK-wide fraud and financial crime prevention service; and Financial Fraud Action UK, who co-ordinate fraud prevention activity for the financial services industry.

Police recorded crime is the principal source of subnational crime statistics and for relatively serious, but low volume, crimes that are not well measured by a sample survey. It covers victims (including, for example, residents of institutions and tourists as well as the resident population) and sectors (for example, commercial bodies) excluded from the CSEW sample. Recorded crime has a wider coverage of offences, for example, covering homicide, sexual offences and crimes without a specific, identifiable victim (referred to as "Other crimes against society") not included in the main CSEW crime count. Police recorded crime also provides good measures of well-reported crimes, but does not cover any crimes that are not reported to, or discovered by, the police. It is also affected by changes in reporting and recording practices. Like any administrative data, police recorded crime will be affected by the rules governing the recording of data, by the systems in place and by operational decisions in respect of the allocation of resources.

As well as the main police recorded crime series, there are additional collections providing detail on offences involving the use of knives and firearms, which are too low in volume to be measured reliably by the CSEW.

## **Strengths and limitations of the Crime Survey for England and Wales and police recorded crime**

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## Crime Survey for England and Wales

### Strengths

Large nationally representative sample survey that provides a good measure of long-term crime trends for the offences and the population it covers (that is, those resident in households)

Consistent methodology over time

Covers crimes not reported to the police and is not affected by changes in police recording practice; therefore is a reliable measure of long-term trends

Coverage of survey extended in 2009 to include children aged 10 to 15 resident in households

Independent collection of crime figures

### Limitations

Survey is subject to error associated with sampling and respondents recalling past events

Excludes crimes against businesses and those not resident in households (for example, residents of institutions and visitors)

Headline estimates exclude offences that are difficult to estimate robustly (such as sexual offences) or that have no victim who can be interviewed (for example, homicides and drug offences)

Previously, excluded fraud and cybercrime[4]

## Police recorded crime

### Strengths

Has wider offence coverage and population coverage than the CSEW

Good measure of offences that are well-reported to the police

Primary source of local crime statistics and for lower-volume crimes (for example, homicide)

Provides whole counts (rather than estimates that are subject to sampling variation)

Time lag between occurrence of crime and reporting results tends to be short, providing an indication of emerging trends

### Limitations

Excludes offences that are not reported to, or not recorded by, the police and does not include less serious offences dealt with by magistrates' courts (for example, motoring offences)

Trends can be influenced by changes in recording practices or police activity

Not possible to make long-term comparisons due to fundamental changes in recording practice introduced in 1998 and the year ending March 2003[5]

There are concerns about the quality of recording – crimes may not be recorded consistently across police forces and so the true level of recorded crime may be understated

## Accuracy of the statistics: Crime Survey for England and Wales

Since the CSEW is based on a sample of the population, estimates have a margin of quantifiable and non-quantifiable error associated with them. Non-quantifiable error includes:

- when respondents have recalled crimes in the reference period that actually occurred outside that period (“telescoping”)
- crimes that did occur in the reference period that were not mentioned at all (either because respondents failed to recall a fairly trivial incident or, conversely, because they did not want to disclose an incident, such as a domestic assault)
- respondents saying they reported crimes to police when they did not (a “socially desirable” response)
- some incidents reported during the interview being miscoded (‘interviewer or coder error’)

Unless stated otherwise, all changes in CSEW estimates described in the main text are statistically significant at the 5% level. Since the CSEW estimates are based on a sample survey, it is good practice to publish confidence intervals alongside them; these provide a measure of the reliability of the estimates and can be found in the [User Guide tables](#). Further information on statistical significance can be found in Chapter 8 of the [User Guide](#).

## Accuracy of the statistics: Police recorded crime

Police recorded crime figures are a by-product of a live administrative system that is continually being updated as incidents are logged as crimes and subsequently investigated. The police return provisional figures to the Home Office on a monthly basis and each month they may supply revised totals for previously supplied months. The Home Office Crime and Policing Statistics team undertake a series of validation checks on receipt of the data and query outliers with forces who may then re-submit data. Details of these validation checks are given in Section 3.3 of the [User Guide](#), and the differences in data published between the current and preceding publications can be found in [Table QT1a](#).

Police recording practice is governed by the Home Office Counting Rules (HOCR) and the National Crime Recording Standard (NCRS). The HOCR have existed in some form since the 1920s, with substantial changes in 1998. The NCRS was introduced in April 2002 following a critical report from Her Majesty’s Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMIC) in 2000 (Povey, 2000), which showed that there was a problem with differing interpretation of the HOCR that resulted in inconsistent recording practices across forces.

Following an [assessment of crime statistics](#) by the UK Statistics Authority, published in January 2014, the statistics based on police recorded crime data have been found not to meet the required standard for designation as National Statistics.

In their report, the UK Statistics Authority set out 16 requirements that needed addressing for the statistics to meet National Statistics standards. We are working in collaboration with the Home Office Crime and Policing Statistics team and HMIC to address these requirements. A [summary of actions taken in response to these requirements](#) is available.

Full details on the history of the assessment and auditing of the quality and accuracy of police recorded crime statistics carried out in recent years is given in Section 3.3 of the [User Guide](#). Since the UK Statistics Authority assessment decision, HMIC have undertaken an inspection of the integrity of police recorded crime (carried out between December 2013 and August 2014), which reviewed a total of 10,267 reports of crime recorded between November 2012 and October 2013 across all 43 police forces in England and Wales.

The final report on findings from the HMIC inspections, [Crime-recording: making the victim count](#), was published on 18 November 2014 and separate [crime data integrity force reports](#) for each of the 43 police forces in England and Wales were published on 27 November 2014.

HMIC concluded that, across England and Wales as a whole, an estimated 1 in 5 offences (19%) that should have been recorded as crimes were not. The greatest levels of under-recording were seen for violence against the person offences (33%) and sexual offences (26%). However, there was considerable variation in the level of under-recording across the different offence types investigated. For other crime types: an estimated 14% of criminal damage and arson offences that should have been recorded as crimes were not; 14% of robbery offences; 11% of burglary offences; and 17% of other offences (excluding fraud).

The renewed focus on the quality of crime recording means that caution is needed when interpreting statistics on police recorded crime. While we know that it is likely that improvements in compliance with the NCRS have led to increases in the number of crimes recorded by the police, it is not possible to quantify the scale of this, or assess how this effect varied between different police forces. In volume terms, police recorded crime for England and Wales as a whole has increased by 8% in the latest year compared with the previous year and 40 police forces (including the British Transport Police) have recorded overall increases in levels of crime.

Apparent increases in police force area data may reflect a number of factors, including tightening of recording practice, increases in reporting by victims and also genuine increases in the levels of crime. It is thought that incidents of violence are more open to subjective judgements about recording and thus more prone to changes in police practice. A number of forces have also shown large increases in sexual offences, which are thought to reflect both a greater willingness among victims to report such crimes and improved compliance with recording standards for sexual offences.

More information regarding the coverage, coherence and accuracy of the CSEW and police recorded crime can be found in the [User Guide to Crime Statistics for England and Wales](#), the [Crime Statistics Quality and Methodology Information report](#) and (for CSEW only) the [CSEW technical report](#).

## Quality and methodology information

The [Crime in England and Wales Quality and Methodology Information](#) document contains important information on:

- the strengths and limitations of the data
- the quality of the output: including the accuracy of the data, how it compares with related data
- uses and users
- how the output was created"

## Notes:

1. Victim-based crimes are those offences with a specific identifiable victim. These include the CSEW categories of “Violence”, “Robbery”, “Theft offences”, “Criminal damage” (and recently “Fraud” and “Computer misuse”) and the police recorded crime categories of “Violence against the person”, “Sexual offences”, “Robbery”, “Theft offences” and “Criminal damage and arson”.
2. [Focus on Violent Crime and Sexual Offences: Year ending March 2015](#) has more detailed information.
3. The coverage of police recorded crime is defined by the Notifiable Offence List, which includes all indictable and triable-either-way-offences (offences which could be tried at a Crown Court) and a few additional closely related summary offences (which would be dealt with by magistrates’ courts). Appendix 1 of the [User Guide](#) has more information on the classifications used for notifiable crimes recorded by the police.
4. From 1 October 2015, the offence coverage of the CSEW was extended to include fraud experienced by the adult population. Estimates from these new questions have been published for the first time in this ‘Crime in England and Wales’ release.
5. Section 3.3 of the [User Guide](#) has more information.

## 13. Background notes

1. The Crime in England and Wales quarterly releases are produced in partnership with the Home Office who collate and quality assure the police recorded crime data presented in the bulletins. Home Office colleagues also quality assure the overall content of the bulletin.
2. [National Statistics](#) are produced to high professional standards set out in the [Code of Practice for Official Statistics](#). They undergo regular quality assurance reviews to ensure that they meet customer needs. They are produced free from any political interference.
3. The [UK Statistics Authority](#) has designated this statistical bulletin as a National Statistics output, in accordance with the [Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007](#) and signifying compliance with the Code of Practice for Official Statistics.
4. However, statistics based on police recorded crime data have been assessed against the Code of Practice for Official Statistics and found not to meet the required standard for designation as National Statistics. The [full assessment report](#) can be found on the UK Statistics Authority website.