

Statistical bulletin

# Crime in England and Wales: year ending March 2021

Crime against households and adults using data from police recorded crime and the new Telephone-operated Crime Survey for England and Wales. Includes the impact of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic on crime and people's perceptions of crime during the May 2020 to March 2021 interview periods.



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## Correction

### 2 November 2021 13:00

A small error occurred when updating the figures for homicide offences involving a knife or sharp instrument for the year ending March 2020. The following components of the release have been updated: Section 4, Figure 5, Other related tables and Police force area tables. We apologise for the inconvenience caused.

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# 1 . Main points

Patterns of crime in the year ending March 2021 have been significantly affected by the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic and government instructions to limit social contact. While there were decreases across a range of individual crime types, particularly theft offences, these were offset by rises in fraud and computer misuse offences, resulting in no change in overall levels of crime.

The Telephone Crime Survey for England and Wales (TCSEW) indicated a 36% increase in fraud and computer misuse offences compared with the year ending March 2019<sup>1</sup> Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW).

TCSEW total crime excluding fraud and computer misuse decreased by 19% compared with the year ending March 2019. This was largely driven by substantial decreases in theft offences (20%). Over the equivalent time-period, total police recorded crime excluding fraud and computer misuse decreased by 13%.

The largest decreases in recorded crime were seen during the three-month period that coincided with the first national lockdown, with a 19% decrease in April to June 2020 compared with April to June 2019.

Although the TCSEW indicated no change in the total number of violence incidents, the total number of victims of violent crime decreased by 28% compared with the year ending March 2019<sup>2</sup>. This was largely driven by falls in violence where the offender was a stranger.

Police recorded crime gives more insight into the lower-volume but higher-harm violence that the survey either does not cover or does not capture well. These data show that compared with the year ending March 2020:

- the number of homicides decreased by 16% to 600 offences
- there was a 14% fall in the number of police recorded offences involving firearms
- there was a 15% fall in offences involving knives or sharp instruments (knife-enabled crime), driven by substantial decreases in periods coinciding with national lockdowns

## Statistician's comment

Commenting on today's figures, Billy Gazard from the Office for National Statistics Centre for Crime and Justice said:

"The coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic has had a significant impact on patterns of crime. There were large decreases in theft offences, such as domestic burglary and theft from the person, as more people stayed at home and limited their social contact.

At the same time, there were substantial increases in fraud and computer misuse offences such as hacking, as fraudsters took advantage of behavioural changes during the pandemic, such as increased online shopping.

The number of people who became victims of violent crime also fell, driven by decreases in violence where the offender was a stranger. This likely reflects a decrease in violence taking place in public spaces during national lockdown restrictions."

## Notes for: Main points

1. The year ending March 2019 face-to-face Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW) data is the latest that is based on a sample that is independent of the year ending March 2021 Telephone-operated Survey for England and Wales (TCSEW) and allows for comparison over time.
2. This is not indicative of levels of domestic abuse during the pandemic. Information on domestic abuse can be found in [Section 7](#).

## 2 . New in this release

The Telephone-operated Crime Survey for England and Wales (TCSEW) began data collection on 20 May 2020 to capture trends in crime while normal face-to-face interviewing was suspended. The TCSEW data refers to respondents' experiences in the 12 months prior to their interview date. This only includes data from interviews conducted from 20 May 2020 to 31 March 2021 and not the whole 12-month period from April 2020.

The sample was formed from respondents who had previously participated in the face-to-face Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW) in the last two years. TCSEW estimates cannot be compared with the year ending March 2020 CSEW estimates because of overlapping reporting periods for some respondents. Therefore, TCSEW estimates are compared with the year ending March 2019 CSEW estimates throughout this bulletin.

[Appendix Table A2](#) presents TCSEW crime for the year ending March 2021. These estimates best reflect the current extent of crime but are not directly comparable with CSEW estimates because of changes to the TCSEW sample and questionnaire.

Findings from our [comparability study](#) showed that TCSEW estimates are comparable with CSEW estimates after certain adjustments are applied. Comparable datasets were created with respondents aged 18 years old and over only and excluding all offences that were recorded through the threats screener question. This was necessary because a change to the wording of the TCSEW threats screener question increased the number of offences that were captured across a range of offence types. All direct comparisons between the year ending March 2021 TCSEW estimates and the year ending March 2019 CSEW estimates are made with the use of comparable datasets. An additional table, [Appendix Table A3](#), presents percentage changes between these estimates. Estimates presented in [Appendix Table A3](#) will be lower than those presented in [Appendix Table A2](#) and underestimate the extent of crime.

Further information on these changes is available in the [Measuring the data section](#).

The Home Office and police forces have continued to roll out a new methodology for identifying recorded offences involving knives or sharp instruments (knife-enabled crime).

Twenty forces have now switched to the NDQIS data collection methodology<sup>1</sup>. It is planned that the new methodology will be rolled out to all forces in England and Wales over the next year. Estimates in this release include a combination of both new and old data collection methods.

For more information, including the differences in data collection methods, please see the methodology note [Police recorded offences involving knives or sharp instruments, methodology changes](#) and [blog](#).

### Notes for: New in this release

1. The 20 forces that have switched to the NDQIS data collection method are: Avon and Somerset, Cambridgeshire, Cleveland, Cumbria, Derbyshire, Devon and Cornwall, Dyfed-Powys, Greater Manchester, Humberside, Leicestershire, Lincolnshire, Merseyside, Metropolitan Police, Northamptonshire, Nottinghamshire, South Wales, South Yorkshire, Sussex, West Midlands and West Yorkshire. Remaining police forces are still submitting knife and sharp instrument offences data via a special collection.

### 3 . Overall estimates of crime

Crime estimates for the year ending March 2021 best reflect the current extent of crime ([Appendix Table A2](#)). However, they are not directly comparable with CSEW estimates (see section 2). Percentages changes are presented using figures adjusted for the differences ([Appendix Table A3](#)).

According to the Telephone-operated Crime Survey for England and Wales (TCSEW), adults aged 18 years and over interviewed in the year ending March 2021 experienced 12 million offences, including fraud and computer misuse offences ([Appendix Table A2](#)). While there were decreases across a range of individual crime types, particularly theft offences, these were offset by rises in fraud and computer misuse offences, resulting in no change in overall levels of crime.

Total crime excluding fraud and computer misuse decreased by 19% compared to the year ending March 2019; this was largely driven by substantial decreases in theft offences (20%; [Appendix Table A3](#)). These decreases were related to the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic and government instructions to limit social contact.

For the crime types and population it covers, the face-to-face Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW) is a better indicator of long-term trends than police recorded crime. It is unaffected by changes in levels of reporting to the police or police recording practices. Our comparability report has shown that TCSEW estimates can be directly compared with these long-term CSEW estimates when certain adjustments are applied ([Appendix Table A3](#)).

Further information on these changes is available in the [Measuring the data](#) section.

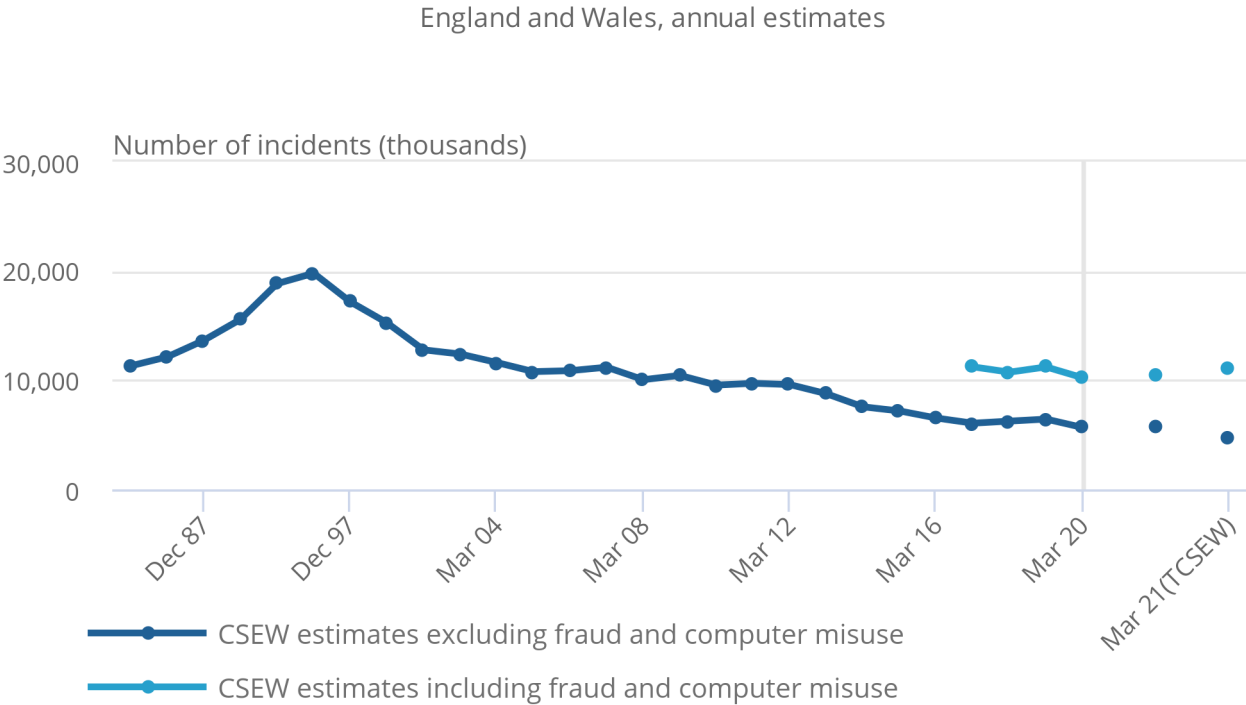
Since the mid-1990s, there have been long-term falls seen in overall CSEW crime estimates (Figure 1). Long-term trends vary by crime types. For all headline figures, including a data time series, see [Appendix tables](#).

**Figure 1: Crime estimates from the CSEW December 1981 to March 2020, and TCSEW estimates for May 2020 to March 2021 interviews**

England and Wales, annual estimates

Figure 1: Crime estimates from the CSEW December 1981 to March 2020, and TCSEW estimates for May 2020 to March 2021 interviews

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Source: Office for National Statistics - Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW) and the Telephone-operated Crime Survey for England and Wales (TCSEW)

Notes:

1. Data from the TCSEW are published as Experimental Statistics.
2. Data on this chart refer to different time periods: 1981 to 1999 refer to crimes experienced in the calendar year; and from year ending March 2002 onwards the estimates relate to crimes experienced in the 12 months before interview, based on interviews carried out in that financial year.
3. TCSEW data presented here for 2021 are not comparable with CSEW estimates. CSEW data relate to adults aged 16 years and over or to households. TCSEW data relate to adults aged 18 years and over or to households. See [Appendix Table A3](#) for comparable data.
4. New questions on fraud and computer misuse were incorporated into the CSEW from October 2015. The questions were asked of half the survey sample from October 2015 until September 2017 and have been asked of a full sample from October 2017.

## Likelihood of victimisation

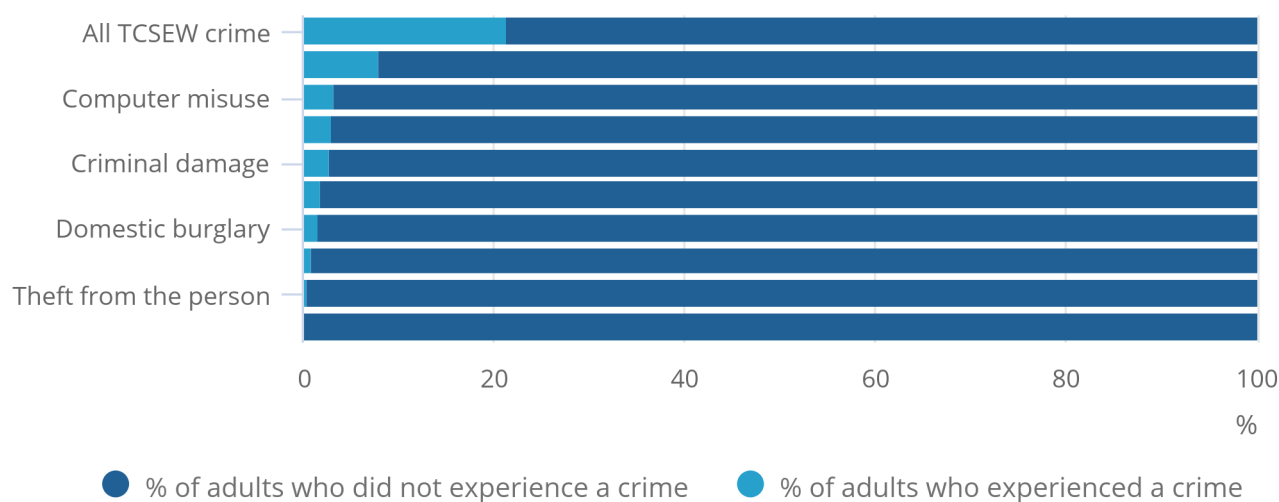
The latest estimates show that 8 in 10 adults did not experience any of the crimes asked about in the TSCEW in the year ending March 2021 (Figure 2).

**Figure 2: The likelihood of being a victim of crime varies by crime type**

England and Wales, May 2020 to March 2021 interviews

Figure 2: The likelihood of being a victim of crime varies by crime type

England and Wales, May 2020 to March 2021 interviews



**Source:** Office for National Statistics - Telephone-operated Crime Survey for England and Wales (TCSEW)

**Notes:**

1. Data from the TCSEW are published as Experimental Statistics.
2. Percentages for violence, robbery, theft from the person, fraud and computer misuse are quoted for adults. Percentages for domestic burglary and criminal damage are quoted for households. Percentage for vehicle-related theft and bicycle theft are quoted for vehicle or bicycle owning households.
3. For all TCSEW crime, including fraud and computer misuse, this is the estimated percentage 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 CSEW also showed that the likelihood of being a victim of crime varied by demographic characteristics. For more information, see the [annual trend and demographic tables](#).

## Trends in police recorded crime

Improvements to recording processes and practices by the police, expansions of the recorded crime collection to include new offences, variations in police activity, more victims reporting crime, and genuine increases in some types of crime, have made substantial contributions to rises in recorded crime over the last five years. This effect has been more pronounced for some crime types, and for many types of offence, these figures do not provide reliable trends in crime.

The police recorded 5.4 million crimes in England and Wales in the year ending March 2021, a 10% decrease from the previous year. This reduction was apparent across all regions of England and in Wales with decreases of between 5% and 18% in police recorded crime (excluding fraud and computer misuse).

Total recorded crime, including fraud and computer misuse, has fluctuated across the year ending March 2021. Although a small proportion of these fluctuations will be the result of seasonal effects on crime trends, most of the differences can be attributed to the introduction and subsequent easing of national lockdown restrictions throughout the year.

Total recorded crime saw substantial falls during April 2020 compared with April 2019 (26% decrease), coinciding with the introduction of the first national lockdown (Figure 3). Police recorded crime remained lower across subsequent months compared with respective months in 2019 but the difference narrowed as lockdown restrictions were gradually eased over the summer. Levels of recorded crime were only 4% lower in September 2020 compared with September 2019. Crime levels again decreased substantially as national lockdowns were reintroduced. Police recorded crime was 18% and 15% lower in January and February 2021 compared with the respective months in 2020. A phased exit out of lockdown began on 8 March 2021, with recorded crime 7% higher in March 2021 than in March 2020, when the first national lockdown was introduced.

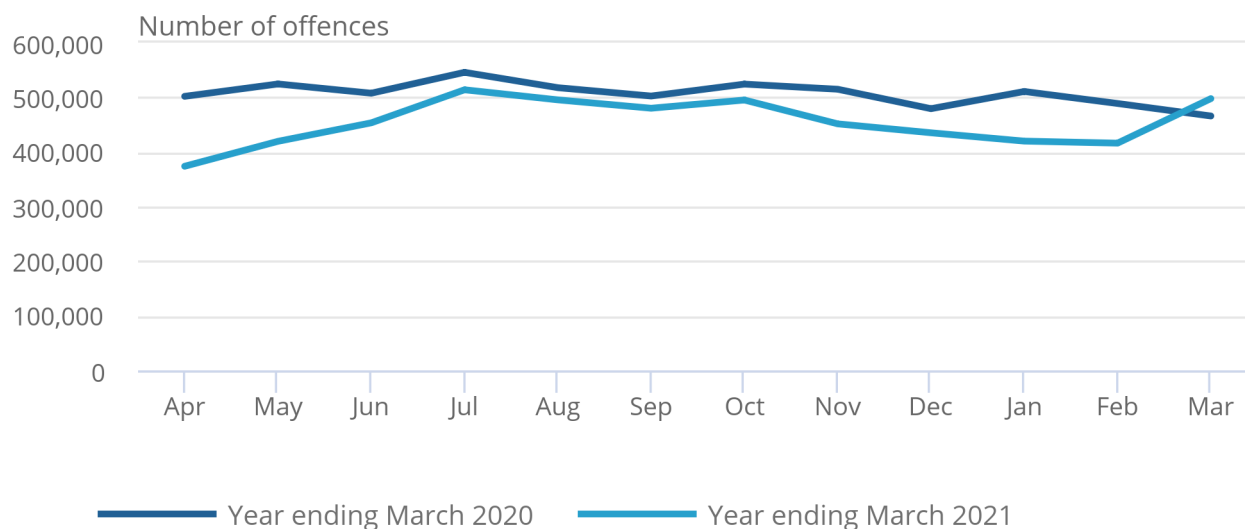


### Figure 3: Police recorded crime fluctuated with changes in national lockdown restrictions

England and Wales, monthly figures (April 2019 to March 2020 and April 2020 to March 2021)

#### Figure 3: Police recorded crime fluctuated with changes in national lockdown restrictions

England and Wales, monthly figures (April 2019 to March 2020 and April 2020 to March 2021)



Source: Home Office – Police recorded crime

#### Notes:

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

The CSEW and police recorded data can be used together to develop a more complete picture of crime (Table 1).

Information on case outcomes can be found in [Home Office Crime outcomes in England and Wales](#).

Table 1: Overview of main crime types  
England and Wales

Offence	Number of incidents	Annual % change <sup>3</sup>	Comparison year	Source
<b>Violence</b>	1,574,000	-15 (NS)	2019	TCSEW/CSEW
<b>Homicide</b>	600	-16	2020	PRC
<b>Knife or sharp instruments</b>	44,286	-15	2020	PRC
<b>Theft</b>	2,968,000	-20	2019	TCSEW/CSEW
<b>Burglary</b>	267,931	-30	2020	PRC
<b>Vehicle offences</b>	337,104	-28	2020	PRC
<b>Robbery</b>	59,615	-34	2020	PRC
<b>Fraud</b>	4,640,000	24	2019	TCSEW/CSEW
<b>Computer misuse</b>	1,749,000	85	2019	TCSEW/CSEW

Source: Office for National Statistics – Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW) and the Telephone-operated Crime Survey for England and Wales (TCSEW), Home Office - Police recorded crime (PRC)

#### Notes

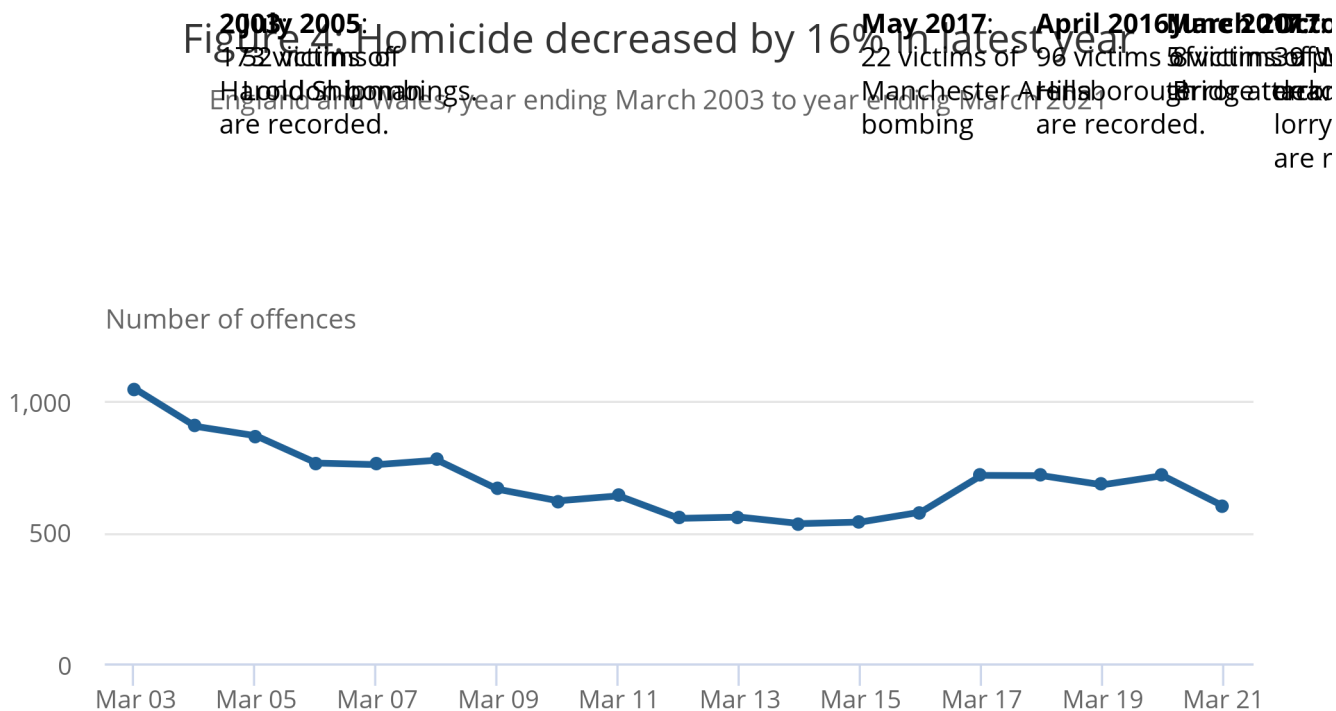
1. Police recorded crime data are not designated as National Statistics.
2. Data from the Telephone-operated Crime Survey for England and Wales are published as Experimental Statistics, which are in the testing phase and not yet fully developed.
3. Percentage changes for crime survey estimates are based on newly created comparable CSEW/TCSEW datasets.
4. NS: this change is not statistically significant at the 5% level.

## 4 . Homicide

The police recorded 600 homicide offences in the year ending March 2021, a 16% decrease from last year (716 offences). The year ending March 2020 included the Grays lorry incident which involved the death of 39 migrants. Excluding this incident from the previous year's homicide count (from 716 to 677 offences), the number of homicides show an 11% decrease (to 600 offences) in the year ending March 2021.

**Figure 4: Homicide decreased by 16% in latest year**

England and Wales, year ending March 2003 to year ending March 2021



Source: Home Office – Police recorded crime

**Notes:**

1. The dates shown for the London terrorist attacks in 2005 and 2017, and the Manchester arena bombing in 2017, correspond to when the events occurred, rather than when the homicides were recorded by the police.
2. Data on homicide offences given in these police recorded crime data will differ from data from the Home Office Homicide Index.

The rate of homicide in England and Wales remains low at 10 per 1 million people in the year ending March 2021.

The number of homicides where a knife or sharp instrument was involved decreased from 275 to 238 offences in the year ending March 2021. Of all recorded homicides in the latest year, the method of killing was by knife or sharp instrument in 39% of offences.

For the latest headline figures relating to homicide and more detailed figures including data time series, see [Appendix tables](#) and [Other related tables](#). For Police Force Area breakdowns see [Police Force Area data tables](#).



## 5 . Knife or sharp instrument offences

Police recorded crime provides a better measure than the Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW) of higher harm but less common types of violence, such as those involving a knife or sharp instrument (knife-enabled crime).

Figures referenced in this section are not directly comparable with those previously published because of a change in knife or sharp instrument data collection practices.

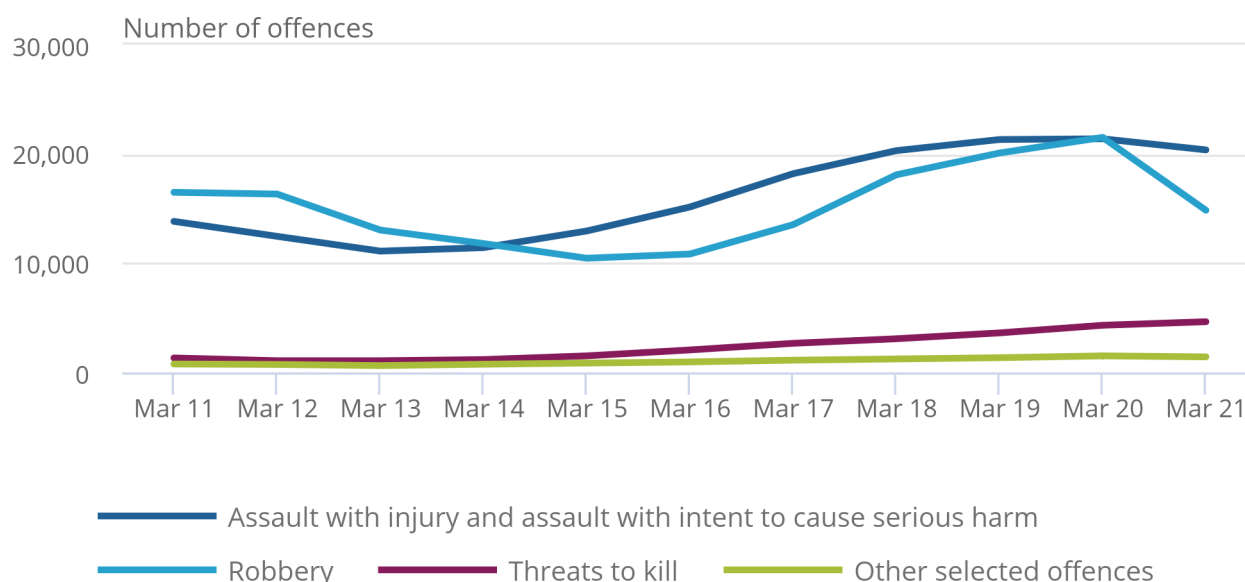
There was a 15% decrease in knife-enabled crime recorded by the police in the year ending March 2021 (44,286 offences) compared with the previous year. The largest decreases were seen in April to June 2020 and January to March 2021 with offences down by 20% and 22% compared with the respective periods in the previous year. These periods coincided with national lockdowns and the highest levels of restrictions.

**Figure 5: Knife-enabled crime decreased in the latest year driven by decrease in robbery offences**

England and Wales (excluding Greater Manchester Police), year ending March 2011 to year ending March 2021

## Figure 5: Knife-enabled crime decreased in the latest year driven by decrease in robbery offences

England and Wales (excluding Greater Manchester Police), year ending March 2011 to year ending March 2021



Source: Home Office - Police recorded crime

### Notes:

1. Greater Manchester Police reviewed their recording of offences involving knives or sharp instruments in December 2017 which revealed that they were under-counting these offences. Previous data were not revised at the time and therefore data from Greater Manchester Police are excluded to allow for comparison over time.
2. An adjustment has been made to data prior to the year ending March 2020 for police forces who are now using the NDQIS tool and the total for England and Wales. As more police forces switch to the NDQIS tool, historical data for these forces and for England and Wales will continue to be updated. For more information on the adjustment to the time series and the differences in data collection methods, please see the methodology note [Police recorded offences involving knives or sharp instruments: methodology changes](#).
3. Other selected offences include rape, attempted murder, homicide, and sexual assault.

Knife or sharp instrument offences are concentrated in urban areas<sup>1</sup>. Decreases in the year ending March 2021 were observed in the three geographical areas with the highest volume of knife-enabled crime:

- London<sup>2</sup> saw a 31% decrease
- West Midlands saw an 9% decrease
- Greater Manchester saw a 5% decrease

Police recorded “possession of an article with a blade or point”<sup>3</sup> offences similarly fell by 11% to 20,465 in the year ending March 2021.

## Other sources of data

The latest available provisional admissions data for NHS hospitals in England and Wales reported a 14% decrease in admissions for assault by a sharp object in the year ending March 2021 (to 4,080 admissions).

For data relating to knife-enabled crime see [Other related tables](#), for geographic breakdowns see [Police Force Area data tables](#) and for sharp instrument homicides see [Appendix tables: homicide in England and Wales](#). Data related to stop and searches can be found in the Home Office publication [Police powers and procedures](#).

## Notes for: Knife or sharp instrument offences

1. Data cannot be compared across all police forces because of changes in data collection methods. Twenty police forces have now switched to the NDQIS data collection method. Remaining police forces are still submitting knife and sharp instrument offences data via a special collection. For more information, please see the methodology note [Police recorded offences involving knives or sharp instruments: methodology changes](#).
2. Includes the Metropolitan and City of London Police Force Areas.
3. Offences of “possession of an article with a blade or point” are covered separately by a specific recorded crime category, which is the specific crime of possessing an article with a blade or point illegally.

## 6 . Offences involving firearms

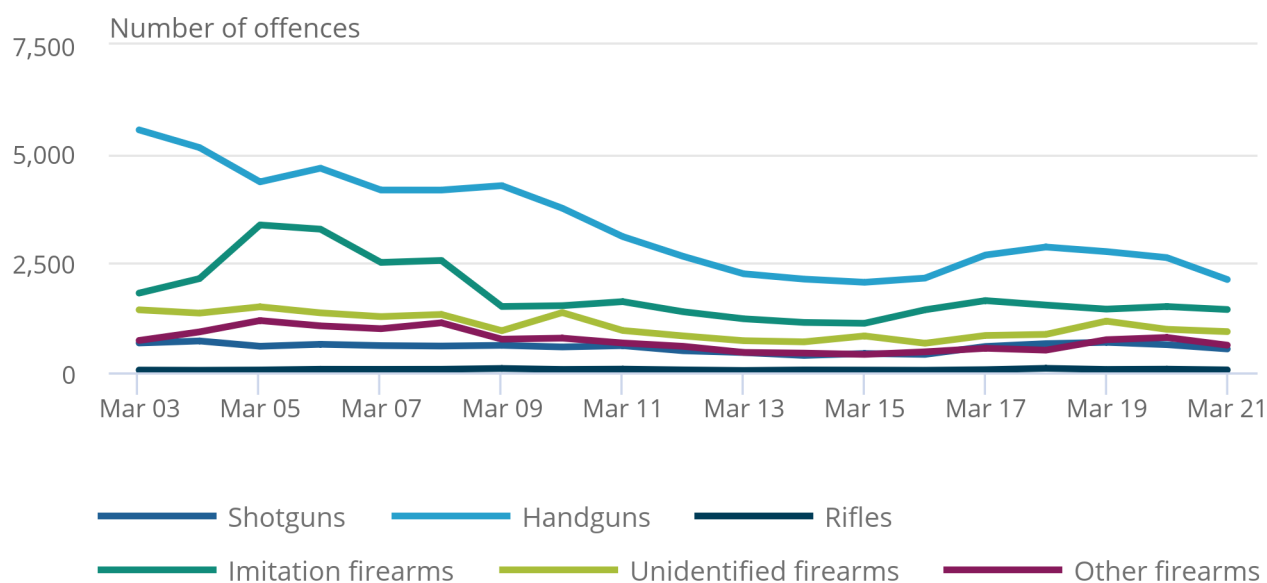
Recorded offences involving firearms decreased by 14% to 5,709 offences in the year ending March 2021 compared with the previous year (6,622 offences). This decrease can be attributed to national lockdown restrictions that occurred throughout the year. Offences involving firearms were at their lowest level since the year ending March 2016.

**Figure 6: Crimes involving firearms show an 14% decrease compared with the previous year**

England and Wales year ending March 2003 to year ending March 2021

Figure 6: Crimes involving firearms show an 14% decrease compared with the previous year

England and Wales year ending March 2003 to year ending March 2021



Source: Home Office - Police recorded crime

### Notes:

1. More explicit guidelines for the classification of weapons introduced on 1 April 2004 may have increased the recording of firearm offences, particularly those committed by imitation weapons.
2. Firearms data are provisional. Excludes offences involving the use of conventional air weapons, such as air rifles and offences recorded by British Transport Police. Includes crimes recorded by police where a firearm has been fired, used as a blunt instrument against a person or used as a threat.
3. Most police forces have made data quality and recording improvements which means data from earlier years are not directly comparable with recent years. Some forces have also revised data, which means data may not match earlier publications.
4. Imitation firearms include replica weapons, as well as low-powered weapons which fire small plastic pellets, such as BB guns and soft air weapons.
5. Other firearms include CS gas and pepper spray, stun guns and other weapons.



For data relating to offences involving weapons see [Offences involving the use of weapons: data tables](#). For data relating to offences involving firearms see [Other related tables](#).

## 7 . Types of violence

The Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW) provides the best picture of the overall trend in violent crime and is a more reliable measure of long-term trends in domestic abuse, sexual assault, stalking and harassment.

Estimates from the Telephone-operated Crime Survey for England and Wales (TCSEW) showed that there were 1.6 million violent offences in the year ending March 2021 ([Appendix Table A2](#)). Using a comparable dataset (see [Appendix Table A3](#)), there was no significant change in total violence compared with the year ending March 2019.

**Figure 7: CSEW shows long term reductions in violent crime**

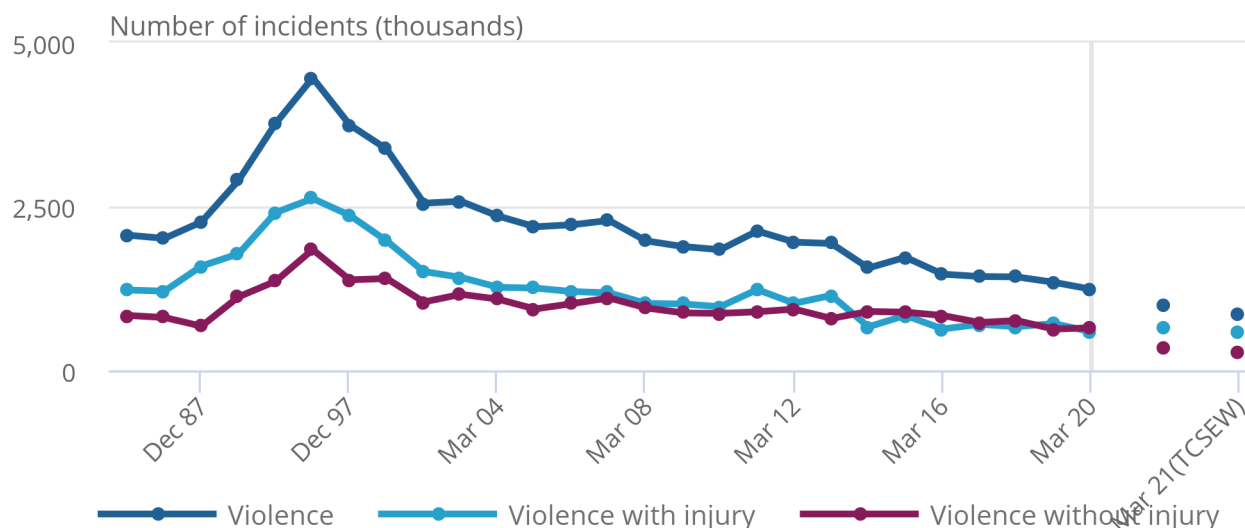
England and Wales, annual estimates

Figure 7: CSEW shows long term reductions in violent crime

England and Wales, annual estimates

In March 2020 face-to-face interviewing was suspended owing to COVID-19 causing a break in the CSEW time-series

Estimate the confidence in the CSEW data and the time



Source: Office for National Statistics – Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW) and Telephone-operated Crime Survey for England and Wales (TCSEW)

### Notes:

1. Data from the TCSEW are published as Experimental Statistics.
2. Data on this chart refer to different time periods: 1981 to 1999 refer to crimes experienced in the calendar year; and from year ending March 2002 onwards the estimates relate to crimes experienced in the 12 months before interview, based on interviews carried out in that financial year.
3. TCSEW data presented here for 2021 are not comparable with CSEW estimates. CSEW data relate to adults aged 16 years and over or to households. TCSEW data relate to adults aged 18 years and over or to households. See [Appendix Table A3](#) for comparable data.

Although the TCSEW indicated no change in the total number of violence incidents, the total number of victims of violent crime decreased by 28% compared with the year ending March 2019 ([Appendix Table A3](#)). This was largely driven by falls in the prevalence of violence where the offender was a stranger. This likely reflects a decrease in violence taking place in public spaces during national lockdown restrictions. These estimates of violence are not indicative of levels of domestic abuse during the pandemic.

Police recorded crime also showed falls in violence with injury (14% decrease to 465,678 offences) and violence without injury offences (7% decrease to 679,489) in the year ending March 2021 compared with the previous year.

## Domestic abuse

Domestic abuse-related crimes and sexual offences recorded by the police do not provide a reliable measure of trends in these types of crime. Improvements in police recording practices and increased reporting by victims have contributed to increases in recent years, although this effect is thought to be diminishing. The figures do, however, provide a good measure of the crime-related demand on the police.

The police recorded 844,955 offences (excluding fraud) flagged as domestic abuse-related in the year ending March 2021. This represents a 6% increase from 798,607 offences in the previous year. This included 672,383 violence-against-the-person offences flagged as domestic abuse-related, a 7% increase compared with the year ending March 2020.

It is difficult to determine the levels of domestic abuse in England and Wales using police recorded data because of gradual increases in recent years following changes in recording practices. In addition, we were unable to draw upon analysis from the crime survey because we were unable to collect data on domestic abuse as concerns around confidentiality and respondent safeguarding limit the types of questions asked in the TCSEW.

Given this, we cannot conclude whether there has been an increase in the number of victims of domestic abuse. However, data from victim services suggests that experiences of domestic abuse may have intensified during periods of national lockdown and that victims faced difficulties in safely seeking support under these conditions.

Further information and data related to domestic abuse can be found in Domestic abuse in [England and Wales overview: November 2020](#).

## Sexual assault

The number of sexual offences recorded by the police showed a 9% decrease in the year ending March 2021 (148,114 offences) compared with the previous year.

In the year ending March 2021 rape offences recorded by the police fell by 6% (55,696 offences). Rape accounts for 38% of all sexual offences recorded by the police. This is the second year-on-year decrease; prior to the year ending March 2019, the number of rape offences had been increasing annually. This trend is likely to reflect the diminishing impact of recording improvements as well as the effects of national lockdown restrictions. The fall in rape this year was driven by large decreases in April to June 2020, with offences 21% lower than in the respective period in 2019. The number of rapes in subsequent quarters for the year ending March 2021 were similar to their respective periods in the previous year.

Further data related to sexual offences can be found in the [Sexual offences in England and Wales overview: year ending March 2020](#) publication.

For more detailed figures relating to violent crime, including a data time series, see [Appendix tables](#).

CSEW data on the prevalence of domestic abuse, sexual assault and stalking for the year ending March 2020 can be found in Table S42 in [Annual supplementary tables](#).

For information about Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) inspections of police recorded crime and incident data quality see our [User guide to crime statistics for England and Wales: Measuring crime during the Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) pandemic](#).

## 8 . Theft offences

The Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW) is the most reliable indicator for long-term trends in the more common types of crime experienced by the general population, such as theft.

There were 3 million incidents of theft estimated by the Telephone-operated Crime Survey for England and Wales (TCSEW) for the year ending March 2021, a 20% decrease compared with the year ending March 2019 ([Appendix Table A3](#)). This large fall is because of a 47% decrease in theft from person offences (212,000 offences) and a 33% reduction in domestic burglary offences (440,000 offences).

Police recorded theft offences decreased by 32% in the year ending March 2021 compared with the previous year (to 1.3 million offences). This was driven by decreases in offences such as: theft from the person (56%), shoplifting (36%), burglary (30%) and vehicle offences (28%).

Police recorded robbery offences decreased by 34% in the year ending March 2021 compared with the previous year, to 59,615 offences. This contrasts with the upwards trend seen since the year ending March 2015.

These falls were driven by national lockdown restrictions, with non-essential shops and the night-time economy being closed and people spending more time in their homes.

For the latest headline figures relating to theft and for more detailed figures, including time series, see [Appendix tables](#).

Figure 8: CSEW shows long-term reductions in theft offences

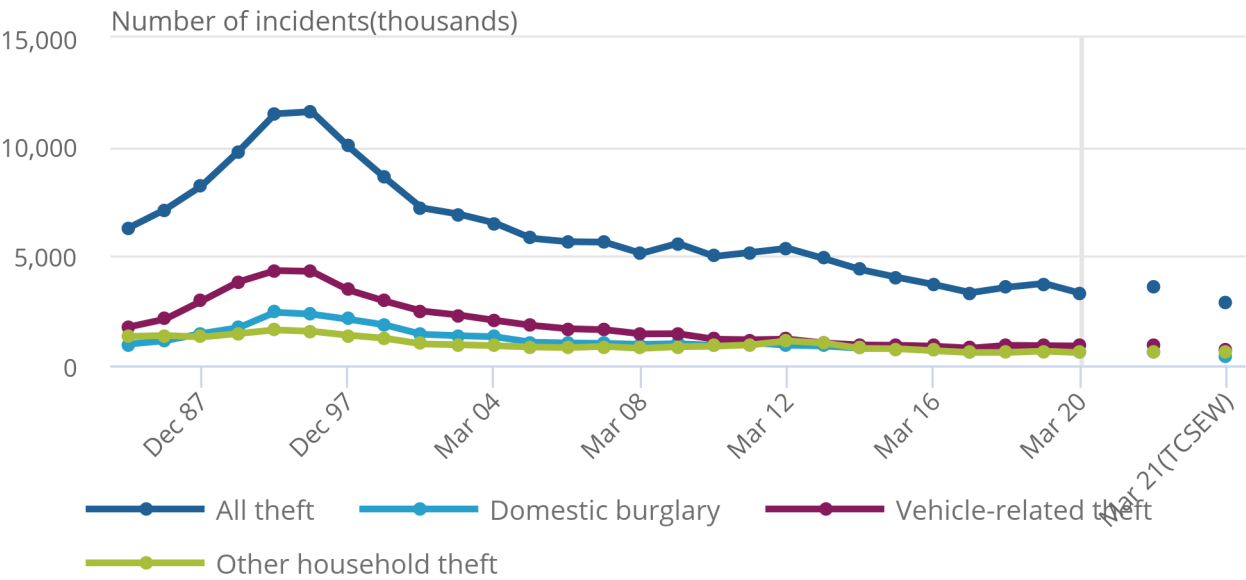
England and Wales, annual estimates

Figure 8: CSEW shows long-term reductions in theft offences

England and Wales, annual estimates

In March 2020 face-to-face interviewing was suspended because of COVID-19 causing a break in the CSEW time-series

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Source: Office for National Statistics – Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW) and Telephone-Operated Crime Survey for England and Wales (TCSEW)

Notes:

1. Data from the TCSEW are published as Experimental Statistics.
2. Data on this chart refer to different time periods: 1981 to 1999 refer to crimes experienced in the calendar year; and from year ending March 2002 onwards the estimates relate to crimes experienced in the 12 months before interview, based on interviews carried out in that financial year.
3. TCSEW data presented here for 2021 are not comparable with CSEW estimates. CSEW data relate to adults aged 16 years and over or to households. TCSEW data relate to adults aged 18 years and over or to households. See [Appendix Table A3](#) for comparable data

## 9 . Fraud

Estimates from the Telephone-operated Crime Survey for England and Wales (TCSEW) showed that there were 4.6 million fraud offences in the year ending March 2021, a 24% increase compared with the year ending March 2019 ([Appendix Table A3](#)). This included increases in consumer and retail fraud, advance fee fraud and other fraud and may represent fraudsters taking advantage of behaviour changes possibly related to the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, such as increased online shopping and increased savings. For example, advance fee fraud offences included scams where victims transferred funds to fraudsters for postal deliveries; other fraud included investment opportunity scams. Although there has been an increase in fraud offences, only 24% of these offences resulted in loss of money or property, with no or only partial reimbursement.

Reported fraud offences are recorded and collected by the National Fraud Intelligence Bureau (NFIB) from Action Fraud and two industry bodies, Cifas and UK Finance. Action Fraud (the public-facing national fraud and cybercrime reporting centre) reported a 28% rise in fraud offences (to 398,022 offences) compared with the year ending March 2020. The data showed a 57% increase in “online shopping and auctions” fraud in the latest year (from 62,509 to 97,927 offences) and a 44% increase in “financial investment fraud” (from 14,024 to 20,260 offences).

The NFIB data showed referrals from Cifas and UK Finance (who report instances of fraud where their member organisations have been a victim) decreased by 7% (to 310,495 offences) and 4% (to 98,120 offences) compared with the year ending March 2020 respectively. These trends need to be interpreted in the context of differences in coverage and fraud types captured by each reporting body.

Many cases recorded separately by UK Finance (via a fraud reporting database called CAMIS) are not reported to the NFIB because they hold insufficient information to be of value from an intelligence perspective. UK Finance reported an 8% increase in fraud incidents (to 3.1 million incidents) in CAMIS. This was driven by a 16% increase in remote purchase fraud (to 2.5 million incidents). There was also a 75% increase in remote banking fraud (to 87,874 incidents) which reflects the greater number of people now regularly using internet, telephone and mobile banking, and the attempts by fraudsters to take advantage of this.

For the latest headline figures relating to fraud and for more detailed figures, including a data time series, see [Appendix tables](#), [Other related tables](#) and [Police Force Area tables](#).

## 10 . Computer misuse

Estimates from the Telephone-operated Crime Survey for England and Wales (TCSEW) showed that there were 1.7 million computer misuse offences in the year ending March 2021. This was an 85% increase compared with the year ending March 2019, largely driven by a 162% increase in “Unauthorised access to personal information (including hacking)” offences ([Appendix Table A3](#)). This included victims’ details being compromised via large-scale data breaches, and victims’ email or social media accounts being compromised, and sometimes used to request money from their contacts.

The National Fraud Intelligence Bureau (NFIB) also reported a 55% increase in “Hacking – personal” offences referred by Action Fraud (from 3,481 to 5,390 offences).

For the latest headline figures relating to computer misuse and for more detailed figures see [Appendix tables](#) and [Other related tables](#).

## 11 . Anti-social behaviour

The police recorded 2 million incidents of anti-social behaviour (ASB) in the year ending March 2021. This was an increase of 48% compared with the year ending March 2020, following consistent decreases over the past ten years. The largest increase was seen in April to June 2020, with incidents up 83% compared with April to June 2019. This increase may reflect the reporting of breaches to public health restrictions, as most police forces include breaches reported to them by members of the public as an ASB incident.

The TCSEW showed that 29% of adults personally witnessed or experienced anti-social behaviour in their area in the last 12 months.

Estimates from the TCSEW showed that 50% of all adults noticed individuals breaching virus restrictions in their local area since the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. Of these, 7% reported the breach to the police.

TCSEW estimates also showed that 9% of adults experienced being insulted, called names, threatened or shouted at in public spaces in the year ending March 2021. Where a specific perceived reason for the harassment was given, the most common was because of the coronavirus pandemic (20%). This included experiences related to social distancing and lockdown restrictions.

The most common non-coronavirus-related perceived reason for these experiences was their education, income level or job (10%), followed by race or ethnicity (8%). A higher proportion of females (8%) thought that the reason for their experience was their gender, compared with fewer than 1% of males.

## 12 . Crime data

[Crime in England and Wales: Appendix tables](#) Dataset | Released on 22 July 2021 Long-term trends in Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW) crime, estimates from the Telephone-operated Crime Survey for England and Wales (TCSEW) and police recorded crime, by offence type.

[Crime in England and Wales: Coronavirus and crime tables](#) Dataset | Released on 22 July 2021 Information from a new module of questions included in the Telephone-operated Crime Survey for England and Wales (TCSEW) around perceptions of crime, the police and anti-social behaviour during the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, and feelings of safety and experiences of harassment. Data on children's online activity are also presented.

[Crime in England and Wales: Other related tables](#) Dataset | Released on 22 July 2021 Firearms, knife and sharp instrument offences, offences involving a corrosive substance, hospital admissions for assault with sharp objects, fraud, offences flagged as domestic abuse-related, corruption, child sexual abuse and child exploitation. Data tables also include information on anti-social behaviour, perceptions, and non-notifiable incidents. The data contained in these tables are from the following sources: police recorded crime, NHS hospital admissions data, fraud data from the National Fraud Intelligence Bureau and UK Finance CAMIS database and figures from the Ministry of Justice Criminal Justice Statistics.

[Crime in England and Wales: Annual trend and demographic tables](#) Dataset | Released on 22 July 2021 Data from the Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW) showing breakdowns of victimisation over time and by various demographic characteristics.

[Crime in England and Wales: Police Force Area data tables](#) Dataset | Released on 22 July 2021 The number of police recorded crimes, percentage change from previous year and rate per 1,000 population by offence group, and firearms and knife, sharp instrument and fraud and anti-social behaviour offences by Police Force Area.

[Crime in England and Wales: Quarterly data tables](#) Dataset | Released on 22 July 2021 Data from Home Office police recorded crime broken down into quarterly and monthly time periods.

## 13 . Glossary

### Computer misuse

Computer misuse is when fraudsters hack or use computer viruses or malware to disrupt services, obtain information illegally or extort individuals or organisations.

### Criminal damage

Criminal damage results from any person who, without lawful excuse, destroys or damages any property belonging to another, either intending to destroy or damage any such property or being reckless as to whether any such property would be destroyed or damaged.

### Fraud

Fraud involves a person dishonestly and deliberately deceiving a victim for personal gain of property or money or causing loss or risk of loss to another. The majority of incidents fall under the legal definition of “Fraud by false representation” – where a person makes a representation that they know to be untrue or misleading (for example, banking and payment card frauds and dating scams). Telephone-operated Crime Survey for England and Wales (TCSEW) estimates cover a broad range of fraud offences, including attempts, involving a loss and incidents not reported to the authorities.

### Overall theft offences

Telephone-operated Crime Survey for England and Wales (TCSEW) theft offences include all personal and household crime where items are stolen, including theft from the person, other theft of personal property, domestic burglary, vehicle-related theft, and bicycle theft.

### Robbery

Robbery is an offence in which force, or the threat of force, is used either during or immediately prior to a theft or attempted theft. Mugging is an informal term for robbery. In this bulletin, we use the term “robbery”.

### Violent crime

Violent crime covers a range of offence types from minor assaults, such as pushing and shoving that result in no physical harm, to murder. This includes offences where the victim was intentionally stabbed, punched, kicked, pushed or jostled, as well as offences where the victim was threatened with violence, regardless of injury.

More information and further definitions can be found in the “offence type” section of the [User guide to crime statistics for England and Wales: Measuring crime during the Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) pandemic](#).

## 14 . Measuring the data



## Telephone-operated Crime Survey for England and Wales (TCSEW)

Estimates from the TCSEW are derived from a total of 36,801 telephone interviews conducted with household residents in England and Wales aged 18 years and over between 20 May 2020 and 31 March 2021.

The Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW) estimates continue to provide important information in relation to longer-term trends in crime from year ending December 1981 to year ending March 2020. TCSEW provides estimates of crime for the year ending March 2021 only.

[Appendix Table A2](#) presents TCSEW crime for the year ending March 2021. These estimates best reflect the current extent of crime but are not directly comparable with CSEW estimates because of changes to the TCSEW sample and questionnaire.

Findings from our [comparability study](#) showed that TCSEW estimates are comparable with CSEW estimates after certain adjustments are applied. Comparable datasets were created with the following changes:

- the population of study is restricted to those aged 18+
- overlapping data periods must not be used for the main estimates of crime
- incidents derived from the threat and harassment screener question must be removed from both the current and comparator years for the main estimates of crime

All direct comparisons between the year ending March 2021 TCSEW estimates and the year ending March 2019 CSEW estimates are made with the use of these comparable datasets. An additional table, [Appendix Table A3](#) presents percentage changes between these estimates. Estimates presented in [Appendix Table A3](#) will be lower than those presented in [Appendix Table A2](#) and underestimate the extent of crime.

Further information is available in the [comparability study](#) and [User guide to crime statistics for England and Wales: Measuring crime during the Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) pandemic](#).

As we are collecting data in a new survey mode, the telephone-operated survey estimates are presented within this release as [Experimental Statistics](#).

## Police recorded crime

Police recorded crime data are supplied to us by the Home Office, who are responsible for the collation of recorded crime data supplied by the 43 territorial police forces of England and Wales, plus the British Transport Police. These data are supplied to the Home Office on a monthly basis for each crime within the [notifiable offence list](#).

The recorded crime figures are collated via a live administrative system that is continually being updated as forces submit data. The data represent a “snapshot” of the live database taken on 9 June 2021 (for data up to the end of March 2021).

Figures may differ slightly from those published in subsequent bulletins for the same period, although this does not mean that the figures previously published were inaccurate at the time that they were reported. Police recorded crime data are not designated as [National Statistics](#).

For more information on how we are measuring crime during the pandemic, see our [Quality and Methodology Information report](#).

## 15 . Strengths and limitations

## Police recorded crime

Police recorded crime has wider offence coverage and population coverage than the Telephone-operated Crime Survey for England and Wales (TCSEW). It is the primary source of local crime statistics and is a good measure of offences that are well-reported to and well-recorded by the police, including lower volume crimes (for example, homicide). In addition, the time lag between occurrence of crime and reporting results tends to be short, providing an indication of emerging trends.

Police recorded crime excludes offences that are not reported to, or not recorded by, the police. Trends can be influenced by changes in recording practices, or police activity and public reporting of crime, making it difficult to make long-term comparisons. There are also concerns about the quality of recording and that crime is not recorded consistently across police forces.

## Telephone-operated Crime Survey for England and Wales (TCSEW)

Although the TCSEW was set up in a short timeframe in response to developing world events, findings from our [comparability study](#) showed that TCSEW estimates are comparable with CSEW estimates with the use of newly created comparable datasets. However, TCSEW estimates cannot be compared with the year ending March 2020 CSEW estimates because of overlapping reporting periods for some respondents.

For more information see our [Quality and Methodology Information report](#).

## 16 . Related links

[Guide to finding crime statistics](#) Methodology | Released 27 July 2021 A guide that directs you on where best to find different crime statistics.

[Nature of crime tables: year ending March 2020](#) Dataset | Released 3 September 2020 Annual data from the Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW). Data include when incidents happened, information about offenders, the victim's perception of the incident. Available for: violence, criminal damage, personal and other theft, bicycle theft, other household theft, vehicle-related theft, robbery, burglary and fraud and computer misuse.

[Property crime tables](#) Dataset | Released 3 September 2020 Annual data from the Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW) and metal theft offences recorded by the police, including demographic and offence type breakdowns and time series data.

[Childhood vulnerability to victimisation in England and Wales: year ending March 2017 to year ending March 2019](#) Bulletin | Released 5 November 2020 Victimisation and negative behaviours of children aged 10 to 15 years living in a household with an adult who reported experiencing domestic abuse, substance misuse and mental ill-health (the so-called "toxic trio" factors) based on findings from the Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW).

[Online bullying in England and Wales: year ending March 2020](#) Article | Released 16 November 2020 Estimates of the prevalence and nature of online bullying among children using data from the 10- to 15-year-olds' Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW).

[Domestic abuse in England and Wales overview: November 2020](#) Bulletin | Released 25 November 2020 Figures on domestic abuse from the Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW), police recorded crime and a number of different organisations.

[Drug misuse in England and Wales: year ending March 2020](#) Article | Released 9 December 2020 An overview of the extent and trends of illicit drug use for the year ending March 2020. Data are from the Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW).

[Homicide in England and Wales: year ending March 2020](#) Article | Released 25 February 2021 Analyses of information held within the Home Office Homicide Index, which contains detailed record-level information about each homicide recorded by police in England and Wales.

[Statistics relating to knife or sharp instrument offences in England and Wales](#) Database | Released 22 July 2021 Experimental database bringing together all official statistics relating to knife or sharp instrument offences in England and Wales.