

Statistical bulletin

Sexual offences in England and Wales overview: year ending March 2025

Data on sexual offences from year ending March 2025 Crime Survey for England and Wales and police recorded crime.

Contact:
ONS Centre for Crime and
Justice
crimestatistics@ons.gov.uk
+44 2075 928695

Release date:
4 November 2025

Next release:
To be announced

Table of contents

1. [Other pages in this release](#)
2. [Main points](#)
3. [Crime Survey for England and Wales](#)
4. [Police recorded crime](#)
5. [Data on sexual offences in England and Wales](#)
6. [Glossary](#)
7. [Data sources and quality](#)
8. [Related links](#)
9. [Cite this statistical bulletin](#)

1 . Other pages in this release

This release brings together data on sexual offences from the Crime Survey for England and Wales and police recorded crime from the Home Office. Commentary is split into a number of separate publications:

- [Sexual offences prevalence and trends, England and Wales: year ending March 2025](#)
- [Sexual offences victim characteristics, England and Wales: year ending March 2025](#)
- [Nature of sexual assault by rape or penetration, England and Wales: year ending March 2025](#)
- [Redevelopment of sexual victimisation statistics: research update November 2025](#)

2 . Main points

- The Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW) provides the best measure of victimisation and estimated that 1.9% of people (3.0% of females and 0.7% of males) aged 16 years and over were victims of sexual assault (including attempts) in year ending (YE) March 2025 survey; this equates to around 900,000 people (739,000 females and 162,000 males).
- Approximately 15.9% of people aged 16 years and over (7.7 million) had experienced sexual assault (including attempts) since the age of 16 years; 1.9 million (4.0%) were a victim of rape (including attempts), 7.3% of females (1.8 million) and 0.5% of males (129,000).
- For victims who had experienced rape or assault by penetration (including attempts) since the age of 16 years, over half (54.7%) were assaulted by a partner or ex-partner and around one in seven (14.7%) reported the most recent assault to the police.
- Despite no significant change in the prevalence of sexual assault experienced by people aged 16 to 59 years in the last year (2.4%) compared with YE March 2024 (2.6%), there has been a significant increase, compared with YE March 2015 (1.7%), after previously decreasing from YE March 2005 survey to YE March 2014 survey.
- The volume of sexual offences recorded by the police has been increasing over the last decade; sexual offences recorded by the police do not provide a reliable measure of trends, with increases likely to reflect a number of factors including improvements in police recording practices and changes in reporting by victims.
- The latest figures for YE March 2025 show an increase of 11% to 209,079 police recorded offences, compared with the previous year; over half of this increase can be attributed to the recording of two new sexual offences introduced in the Online Safety Act 2023.

3 . Crime Survey for England and Wales

Sexual assault in the last year

The Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW) estimated around 900,000 people aged 16 years and over experienced sexual assault in year ending (YE) March 2025 (739,000 females and 162,000 males). This equates to a prevalence rate of approximately 1.9% of people (3.0% of females and 0.7% of males).

Figure 1 shows unwanted sexual touching was the most common type of sexual assault experienced by people aged 16 years and over in the last year (1.4%) compared with rape or assault by penetration (including attempts) (0.2%).

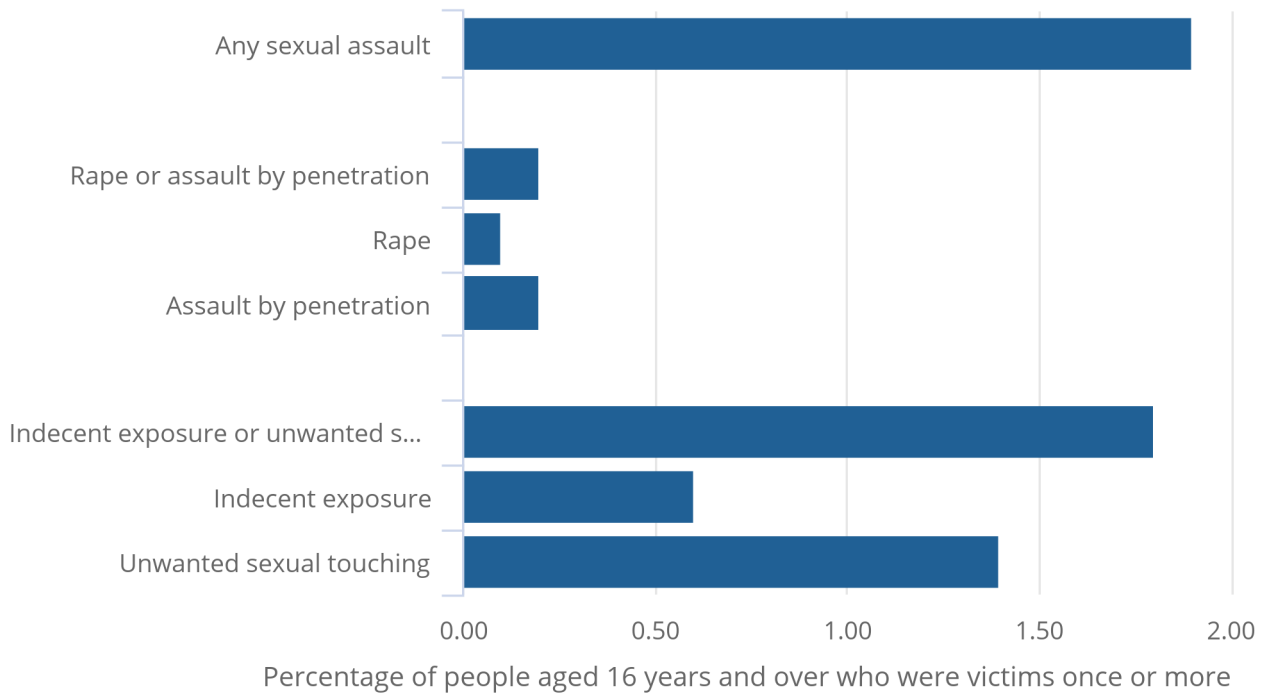
More information on the prevalence of sexual offences can be found in our [Sexual offences prevalence and trends, year ending March 2025 article](#).

Figure 1: Unwanted sexual touching was the most common type of sexual assault experienced in the last year

Prevalence of sexual assault in the last year, among people aged 16 years and over, by type of abuse, England and Wales, year ending March 2025

Figure 1: Unwanted sexual touching was the most common type of sexual assault experienced in the last year

Prevalence of sexual assault in the last year, among people aged 16 years and over, by type of abuse, England and Wales, year ending March 2025



Source: Crime Survey for England and Wales from the Office for National Statistics

Notes:

1. Data for year ending March 2025 are based on a half sample. Caution should be taken because of the impact of the reduced sample size on the quality of the data.
2. The categories "any sexual assault", "rape or assault by penetration", "rape" and "assault by penetration" include attempts.

Trends over time

Following the removal of the upper age limit in October 2021 for survey respondents answering the self-completion module, when analysing data over time, we use the 16 to 59 years age range to give a comparable time series.

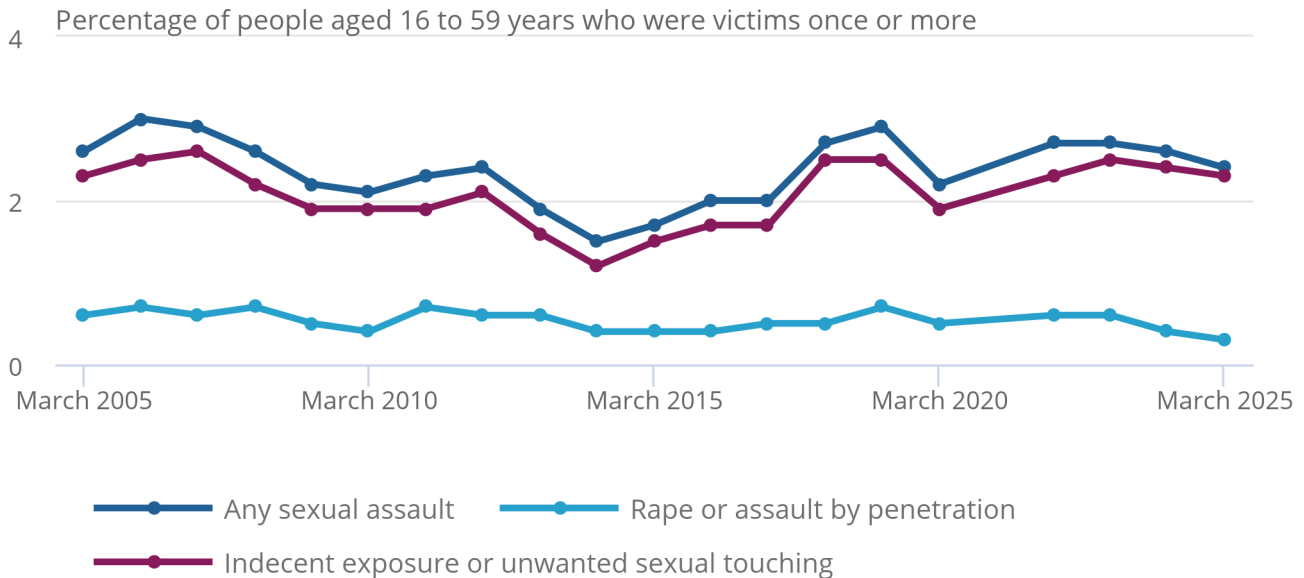
The prevalence of sexual assault among people aged 16 to 59 years has fluctuated between 1.5% and 3.0% over the last 20 years. Although there was no significant change in the prevalence of sexual assault between YE March 2025 (2.4%) and YE March 2024 (2.6%), compared with 10 years ago there has been an increase in sexual assault, after previously decreasing from YE March 2005 to YE March 2014 surveys. In YE March 2025 survey, 2.4% of people aged 16 to 59 years had experienced sexual assault, compared with 1.7% in YE March 2015 survey.

Figure 2: Sexual assault prevalence was significantly higher in the year ending (YE) March 2025 survey than a decade ago (YE March 2015)

Prevalence of sexual assault in the last year, among people aged 16 to 59 years, England and Wales, year ending March 2005 to year ending March 2025

Figure 2: Sexual assault prevalence was significantly higher in the year ending (YE) March 2025 survey than a decade ago (YE March 2015)

Prevalence of sexual assault in the last year, among people aged 16 to 59 years, England and Wales, year ending March 2005 to year ending March 2025



Source: Crime Survey for England and Wales from the Office for National Statistics

Notes:

1. No data are available for year ending (YE) March 2021 as the Crime Survey for England and Wales was suspended because of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.
2. Data for YE March 2022 are not designated as accredited official statistics. Caution should be taken when using these data, because the quality of estimates may be affected by the reduced data collection period and lower response rates.
3. Data for YE March 2023 are based on eight months of data collection because of an error in the survey, which resulted in missing data. Caution should be taken when using these data because of the impact of the reduced data collection period on the quality of the estimates.
4. Data for YE March 2024 and YE March 2025 are based on a half sample. Caution should be taken because of the impact of the reduced sample size on the quality of the data.
5. The categories “any sexual assault” and “rape or assault by penetration” include attempts.

4 . Police recorded crime

Many incidents of sexual assault do not come to the attention of the police. This is why the estimated number of victims from the Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW) is higher than the number of police recorded offences.

Sexual offences recorded by the police do not provide a reliable measure of trends over time. Improvements in police recording practices, introduction of new offences, and increased reporting by victims are likely to have contributed to increases in the level of offences in recent years. The figures do, however, provide a good measure of the crime-related demand on the police.

A total of 209,079 sexual offences were recorded by the police in England and Wales in year ending (YE) March 2025, an increase of 11% (20,435 offences) compared with YE March 2024 (Figure 3).

This increase can be partially attributed to the introduction of new legislation. The [Online Safety Act 2023](#) introduced two new sexual offences: "Sharing or threatening to share intimate photograph or film" and "Sending etc photograph or film of genitals". With police forces beginning to record these offences from 31 January 2024, the impact on the offences "88C Other Miscellaneous Sexual Offences" and "88E Exposure and Voyeurism", which they are recorded under, can be fully seen in YE March 2025 data. The increase in the number of offences recorded therefore may not be the result of an increase in crimes occurring, but instead a reflection of new offences being captured that were not previously recognised by law.

By looking at the two new offences added to offence codes 88C and 88E, we can identify the impact these offences have had on the overall total number of sexual offences recorded by the police. Figures relating to the new offence within offence code 88C exclude Humberside Police.

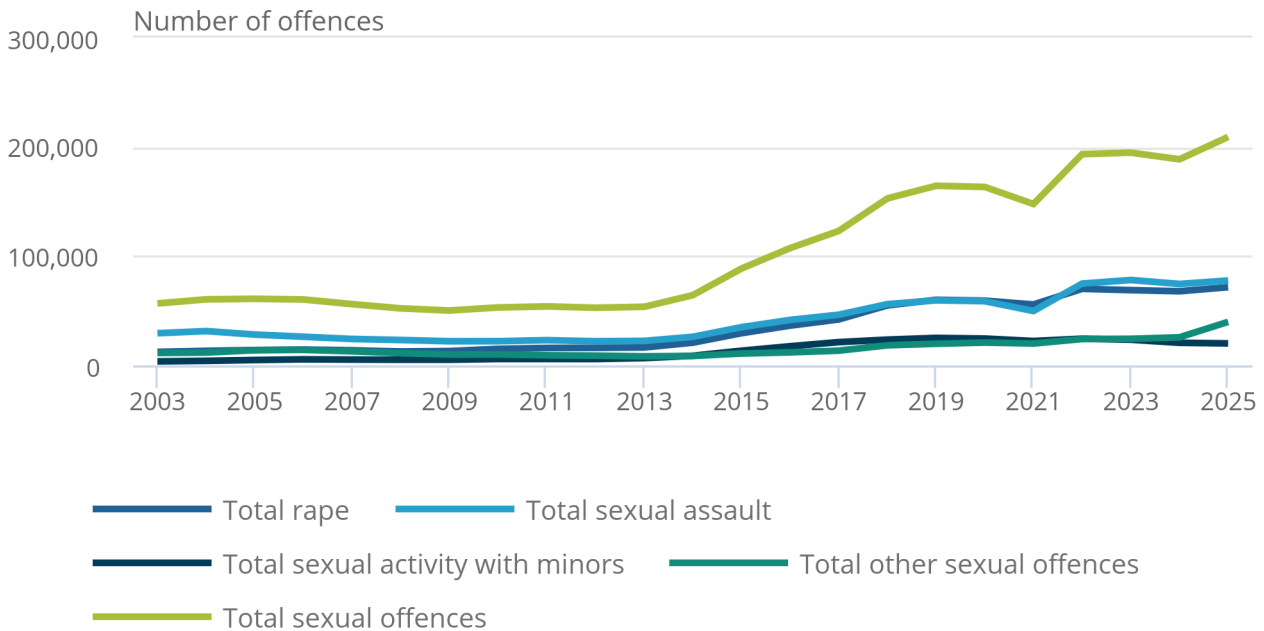
The two new sexual offences accounted for over half (around 13,000 offences) of the 11% increase recorded by the police between YE March 2024 and YE March 2025. Excluding these two new offences, there was an increase of 4% (around 7,500 offences) in the total number of sexual offences recorded by the police in YE March 2025 compared with YE March 2024.

Figure 3: Increase in police recorded sexual offences following small changes in recent years

Police recorded sexual offences, by offence type, England and Wales, year ending March 2003 to year ending March 2025

Figure 3: Increase in police recorded sexual offences following small changes in recent years

Police recorded sexual offences, by offence type, England and Wales, year ending March 2003 to year ending March 2025



Source: Police recorded crime from the Home Office

Notes:

1. Police recorded crime data are not designated as accredited official statistics.
2. The Sexual Offences Act 2003, introduced in May 2004, altered the definition and coverage of sexual offences.
3. From July 2016, the Home Office counting rules regarding rape were changed to record rape on a per-offender basis.
4. Operation Yewtree is the police investigation into allegations of sexual abuse, launched in the wake of the Jimmy Savile scandal.
5. HMICFRS stands for His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services.
6. The Online Safety Act 2023, passed in October 2023, introduced two new sexual offences.

5 . Data on sexual offences in England and Wales

[Sexual offences prevalence and victim characteristics, England and Wales](#)

Dataset | Released 4 November 2025

Numbers, prevalence, types and victim characteristics, based on findings from the Crime Survey for England and Wales and police recorded crime.

[Nature of sexual assault by rape or penetration, England and Wales](#)

Dataset | Released 4 November 2025

Victim and perpetrator relationship, circumstances and impacts for sexual assault by rape or penetration, based on findings from the Crime Survey for England and Wales.

6 . Glossary

Crime Survey for England and Wales

The Crime Survey for England and Wales (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 range of crimes in the 12 months before the interview. Respondents to the survey are also asked about their attitudes towards different crime-related issues, such as the police and the criminal justice system, and perceptions of crime and anti-social behaviour. Estimates used within this publication are based on the CSEW self-completion modules on sexual assault.

Police recorded crime

Police recorded crime data are supplied 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. The data are an important indicator of police workload but, unlike the CSEW, do not include crimes that have not been reported to the police.

Sexual assault

In the Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW), the term "sexual assault" is used to describe all types of sexual offences measured by the survey. It includes rape or assault by penetration (including attempts), and indecent exposure or unwanted sexual touching.

In police recorded crime figures, the term "sexual assault" refers to one type of sexual offence, that is, the sexual touching of a person without their consent.

Sexual offence

In police recorded crime figures, "sexual offences" cover a broader range of offences than are measured by the CSEW, including:

- rape
- sexual assault
- sexual activity with minors
- sexual exploitation of children
- other sexual offences

There are a number of different offence codes used for rape and sexual assault, depending on the age and sex of the victim.

7 . Data sources and quality

The sexual offences data included in this release are sourced from the Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW) and police recorded crime. Further quality and methodology information on strengths, limitations and appropriate uses of the data is available in the [Crime in England and Wales QMI](#).

One of the strengths of the CSEW is that it covers many crimes that are not reported to the police and provides important context to police figures. Under-reporting to the police is particularly acute for sexual offences, with many more offences committed than are reported to and recorded by the police. The CSEW provides reliable estimates of the prevalence of sexual assaults using a consistent methodology that is not affected by changes in recording practices and police activity, the introduction of new offences, or by changes in the propensity of victims to report to the police. While the CSEW provides the best available estimate of trends in the prevalence of sexual assault, it cannot be used to make any inferences about demands on the police.

Police recorded crime and outcomes data from the Home Office are classified as official statistics but not accredited official statistics. [Accredited official statistics](#) are a subset of [official statistics](#) that have been certified by the UK Statistics Authority as compliant with its Code of Practice for Statistics. CSEW data on sexual assault are classified as accredited official statistics.

For year ending (YE) March 2024 and YE March 2025, CSEW estimates on sexual assault are based on a half sample. Caution should be taken because of the impact of the reduced sample sizes on the quality of the estimates.

The Online Safety Act 2023 introduced two new sexual offences: "Sharing or threatening to share intimate photograph or film" and "Sending etc photograph or film of genitals". These new offences were first recorded by police forces on 31 January 2024. Their introduction has had an impact on police recorded crime data on sexual offences for YE March 2025 and caution should be taken when making comparisons with figures for previous years. More recent data on the number of sexual offences recorded by the police can be found in our latest [quarterly Crime in England and Wales bulletin](#).

To ensure our CSEW statistics on sexual assault continue to provide the most accurate information, meet the needs of users, and align with recent legislative changes, we have been undertaking a user engagement, research and testing programme to improve the collection of data. Through this work, we have developed a new set of survey questions on sexual victimisation. These new questions fully replace the previous questions and were included on the CSEW from October 2025. Further details on the development of the new questions can be found in our [Redevelopment of sexual victimisation statistics: research update November 2025 article](#).

8 . Related links

[Sexual offending: victimisation and the path through the criminal justice system](#)

Article | Released 13 December 2018

An overview of sexual offending in England and Wales, using a range of National Statistics and official statistics from across the crime and criminal justice system.

[Developing a combined measure of domestic abuse, sexual assault and stalking, England and Wales: July 2025](#)

Article | Released 24 July 2025

Method for producing a combined measure of domestic abuse, sexual assault and stalking from the Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW).

[Domestic abuse in England and Wales overview: November 2024](#)

Bulletin | Released 27 November 2024

Figures on domestic abuse from the Crime Survey for England and Wales, police recorded crime and other organisations.

9 . Cite this statistical bulletin

Office for National Statistics (ONS), released 4 November 2025, ONS website, statistical bulletin, [Sexual offences in England and Wales overview: year ending March 2025](#)