

Domestic abuse QMI

Quality and Methodology Information for domestic abuse detailing the strengths and limitations of the data, methods used and data uses and users.

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1 . Output information

National Statistic	No
Survey name	Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW)
Data collection	A variety of survey and administrative data
Frequency	Annually
How compiled	From data submitted by various suppliers/charitable organisations and CSEW survey data
Geographic coverage	England and Wales

2 . About this Quality and Methodology Information report

This quality and methodology report contains information on the quality characteristics of the data (including the European Statistical System five dimensions of quality) as well as the methods used to create it.

The information in this report will help you to:

- understand the strengths and limitations of the data
- learn about existing uses and users of the data
- reduce the risk of misusing data
- help you to decide suitable uses for the data
- understand the methods used to create the data

3 . Important points

Important points about the Domestic abuse in England and Wales release

- The release on [domestic abuse in England and Wales](#) includes data on the different stages of the criminal justice process for cases of domestic abuse, and data on service provision for victims of domestic abuse.
- The release includes a number of different data sources to provide a more coherent picture of domestic abuse; it is not possible to directly compare each of the datasets because of differences in timescales and reference periods, and because they do not all count the same thing.
- Caveats are provided throughout to make it clear where a comparison can be made and where it may be more difficult or not possible to directly compare data sources.
- Data from the Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW), the Home Office Homicide Index and the Ministry of Justice are classified as [National Statistics](#).
- Following concerns about the quality and consistency of crime recording practice, police recorded crime data were assessed against the [Code of Practice for Statistics](#) and found not to meet the required standard for designation as National Statistics¹, therefore, police recorded crime and outcomes data from the Home Office are classified as [official statistics](#).
- All other data included in the release are sourced from administrative datasets that do not fall within the scope of official statistics.

Notes for: Important points

1. The [full assessment report \(PDF, 221KB\)](#) can be found on the UK Statistics Authority website.

4 . Quality summary

Overview of the Domestic abuse in England and Wales release

The release has been produced in response to a recommendation made by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) in their 2015 [progress report \(PDF, 1.5MB\)](#) on the police response to domestic abuse. It stated that organisations should work together to:

“develop a dataset relating to domestic abuse which will enable more thorough analysis of how domestic abuse is dealt within a force area.”

The aim of the release is to bring together data on domestic abuse to enable appropriate action to be taken to improve victims' experiences of the criminal justice process. It is hoped that knowing appropriate support is available will encourage more victims to come forward to report abuse. It also provides a clearer understanding of the criminal justice system's response to perpetrators of domestic abuse.

The way in which data on domestic abuse are collected differs between sources and organisations. Data are collected over different timescales, and can be based on offences, victims, suspects or defendants. Data can also vary in the way that cases are identified.

These factors, together with the time lag between the stages in the criminal justice process, mean that each part of the release does not refer to the same cohort of cases and so direct comparisons cannot be made across sections. For example, a case reported to the police in one year may not appear with an outcome after investigation until the next year. Or, a case with a prosecution outcome in one year may have been initially reported to the police in a previous year.

Throughout the release, caveats are provided to make it clear where a comparison can be made and where it may be more difficult or not possible to directly compare data sources.

For Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW) data and police recorded crime data, the [Crime Statistics Quality and Methodology Information report](#) contains important information on:

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

Uses and users of the Domestic abuse in England and Wales release

Data on domestic abuse in England and Wales promotes significant interest from a range of users. These include:

- elected national and local representatives (such as MPs, police and crime commissioners and local councillors)
- the Home Office and other government agencies
- police forces
- those delivering support or services to victims of crime
- lobby groups
- journalists
- academic researchers
- teachers
- students

The data can be used for a variety of purposes, including:

- development and monitoring of crime and justice policy
- public safety campaigns
- raising awareness of particular forms of crime
- academic research

They also help to ensure that information on trends in domestic abuse offences in England and Wales are available to help inform the choices and decisions of the general public. Providing breakdowns of victim characteristics allows a greater depth of understanding about domestic abuse.

Table 1 shows the main user groups of domestic abuse statistics and how they use the data provided. The column on the left lists the classes of use identified by the UK Statistics Authority in their monitoring brief, [The Use Made of Official Statistics \(PDF, 125.6KB\)](#). The right column provides more detail on how the data fit that class of use.

Table 1: Main user groups and uses of data on domestic abuse

Class	Description
Informing the general public's choices	<p>Level of crime in England and Wales: the measures published provide insight into the levels and trends of domestic abuse, as well as the number of domestic abuse-related crimes recorded by the police, in England and Wales.</p> <p>Further breakdowns, such as by abuse type, region, and characteristics of victims, allow a greater depth of understanding about domestic abuse.</p> <p>Number of crimes recorded: the number of domestic abuse-related crimes recorded by the police is another important measure of crime. This information can help the public in holding elected representatives to account and in making choices about who they will vote for.</p> <p>Supporting victims: bringing together data on domestic abuse covering the different stages of the criminal justice system and service provision for victims can help encourage more victims to report abuse, knowing that there is appropriate support available.</p>
Decision making about policies, programmes and projects	<p>Polymaking: data on domestic abuse-related crimes are important in informing government policy making to improve victims' experiences of the criminal justice process.</p> <p>Policy monitoring: such data allow the effectiveness of implemented policies relating to crime to be monitored and measured over a period of time.</p>
Resource allocation	<p>Public sector: data can be used to help determine the allocation of government resources to several organisations. For example, police forces might get more or less funding based on the number of crimes reported in respective police force areas, and grants given to charities based on crime statistics, such as victim support groups.</p>
Informing public marketing campaigns	<p>Safety and awareness campaigns: these data can be used to support campaigns that aim to raise awareness of important issues, for example, sexual assault or domestic violence.</p>
Supporting third sector activity	<p>Lobbying: a range of lobby groups use crime statistics to help raise awareness of issues, such as variations in victimisation by socio-demographic characteristics such as age and sex.</p> <p>Funding applications: organisations can use crime statistics to bid for funding for projects that aim to raise awareness of and tackle crime problems.</p>
Facilitating academic research	<p>Both the CSEW and police recorded crime are core sets of data on the levels and trends of domestic abuse in England and Wales. The annual CSEW dataset is also available as microdata as part of the UK Data Service. As a result, these data are widely used by academics studying topics in this area.</p>

Strengths and limitations of the Domestic abuse in England and Wales release

Strengths:

- a regular annual release provides timely data to users
- data from different sources can lead to an improved victim experience and an increase in reported abuse
- data provide a clearer understanding of the criminal justice system's response to victims and perpetrators of domestic abuse
- the domestic abuse data tool which is published alongside the release allows users to explore data for police force areas in more detail and compare these with similar areas within England and Wales

Limitations:

- the different datasets included in the release do not relate to the same cases given the different timescales and reference periods used to collect the data, and do not count the same things; therefore each of the numbers cannot be directly compared
- statistics on domestic abuse are produced separately by a number of different organisations in England and Wales; when taken in isolation, these statistics may not provide the context required by users to enable them to understand the national and local picture of domestic abuse
- data relating to the criminal justice system and specialist domestic abuse services only refer to cases of domestic abuse that become visible to the police and services; cases that enter the criminal justice system may drop out at any stage of the process

Improvements to the Domestic abuse in England and Wales release

As part of ongoing work to improve our publications, the format of the domestic abuse release was changed in 2019. The commentary on topics covered in the [previous domestic abuse in England and Wales](#) publication is now split into a number of separate releases. These can all be found linked from the [Domestic abuse in England and Wales overview](#) release page.

Future development will continue to fill gaps in domestic abuse data by looking at new data sources to create a more comprehensive resource for users.

5 . Quality characteristics of the Domestic abuse in England and Wales release

Relevance

The data collated within this release provide a clearer understanding of the criminal justice system's response to both victims and perpetrators of domestic abuse. It is hoped that this understanding will lead to better support for abuse victims and an increased willingness of victims to report their experiences.

Data on domestic abuse in England and Wales receive significant interest from a range of users. See the [Uses and users of the domestic abuse in England and Wales release](#) in Section 4 for more information.

Accuracy and reliability

The release includes data from a number of data sources, the majority of which are based on administrative records.

More information on the accuracy of each of the data sources is given in the [Main data sources and their accuracy section](#).

For more detail on the accuracy and reliability of the data from the Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW) see the [Crime in England and Wales QMI](#).

Coherence and comparability

The data included in the release come from a number of sources, and direct comparisons cannot be made between figures. This is because the different sources of data do not always relate to the same cases, as often different timescales and reference periods have been used during collection. They also do not count the same things; for example, some record the number of victims or defendants, while others record the number of incidents or offences that occurred.

Comparisons of the same data sources over time can be made, for example, comparison of domestic abuse-related crimes recorded by the police. However such data can be affected by changes in levels of reporting to the police or police recording practices. For example, comparisons of the data over time need to take account of the introduction of new legislation and changes to the Home Office Counting Rules, which will subsequently impact on the volume of cases passing through the criminal justice system.

Concepts and definitions

Domestic abuse is not limited to physical violence. It can include repeated patterns of abusive behaviour to maintain power and control in a relationship. In 2012 the government published guidance which recognised this and defined domestic violence and abuse as:

“Any incident or pattern of incidents of controlling¹, coercive², 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. It can encompass, but is not limited to, the following types of abuse:

- psychological
- physical
- sexual
- financial
- emotional"

With the exception of coercive and controlling behaviour, which was introduced as a criminal offence on 29 December 2015, other acts of domestic abuse fall under generic offence categories in police recorded crime and criminal justice data, such as assault with injury.

Geography

Data on domestic abuse are available at national level for England and Wales. Some datasets are also available at regional and police force area level.

Accessibility and clarity

Our recommended format for accessible content is a combination of HTML web pages for narrative, charts and graphs, with data being provided in usable formats such as CSV and Excel. Our website also offers users the option to download the narrative in PDF format. In some instances, other software may be used, or may be available on request. Available formats for content published on our website, but not produced by us, or referenced on our website but stored elsewhere, may vary. For further information, contact Nick Stripe via email at crimestatistics@ons.gov.uk.

For information regarding conditions of access to data:

- [terms and conditions \(for data on the website\)](#)
- [accessibility](#)

Timeliness and punctuality

The Domestic abuse in England and Wales release is published on an annual basis. The data included in the release are the latest available at the time of publishing. Information on the time period of each of the data sources included in the release is given in Table 2.

Notes for: Quality characteristics of the Domestic abuse in England and Wales data

1. Controlling behaviour is a range of acts designed to make a person subordinate and/or dependent by isolating them from sources of support, exploiting their resources and capacities for personal gain, depriving them of the means needed for independence, resistance and escape and regulating their everyday behaviour.
2. Coercive behaviour is an act or a pattern of acts of assault, threats, humiliation and intimidation or other abuse that is used to harm, punish, or frighten their victim.

6 . Methods used to produce the Domestic abuse in England and Wales release

Main data sources and their accuracy

Statistics on domestic abuse are produced separately by several different organisations in England and Wales. When taken in isolation, these statistics may not provide the context required by users to enable them to understand the national and local picture of domestic abuse. This release brings together the following sources.

Table 2: Data sources

Data supplier	Data	Time period	Geography	Important points
Data supplier	Data	Time period	Geography	Important points
Office for National Statistics	Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW)	Year ending March 2020	England and Wales	Analysis presented in the release covers adults aged 16 to 74 years who are resident in households in England and Wales and who completed the self-completion section of CSEW on domestic abuse, sexual assault and stalking.
Home Office	Police Incident data Police Recorded Crime	Year ending March 2020	England and Wales	Data on crimes recorded by the police that were flagged as domestic abuse-related have been collected since April 2015. This includes data on domestic abuse-related stalking and harassment and coercive and controlling behaviour, which became an offence on 29 December 2015. Incidents refer to domestic abuse-related incidents that did not get recorded as a crime.
Home Office	Police Outcomes data	Year ending March 2020	England and Wales	Collected through the Home Office Data Hub, a record-level crime system, which police forces have been progressively switching over to. 29 police forces provided adequate domestic abuse outcomes data for the year ending March 2020.
Home Office	Home Office Homicide Index	Year ending March 2017 to year ending March 2019	England and Wales	The Home Office Homicide Index is continually updated with revised information from the police as investigations continue and as cases are heard by the courts; the version used for analysis does not accept updates after it is "frozen" to ensure the data do not change during the analysis period. Analysis combines data for a three-year period due to year-to-year variability in the volume of homicides recorded.
Crown Prosecution Service (CPS)	Referrals, prosecutions and convictions	Year ending March 2020	England and Wales	A domestic abuse flag may be applied at the beginning of a case, or applied later in the prosecution process if a domestic abuse relationship becomes apparent. Due to a time lag between each stage of the criminal justice process, data for referrals, prosecutions and convictions may not refer to the same cohort of cases. CPS data include adult and child defendant and victim data and therefore do not strictly align with the government definition of domestic abuse, which only applies to those cases where both the victim and perpetrator are aged 16 years or over.
Crown Prosecution Service (CPS)	Coercive and controlling behaviour data	Year ending March 2020	England and Wales	Data relate to the number of offences of coercive and controlling behaviour recorded in magistrates' courts, in which a prosecution commenced, as recorded on the CPS case management system.
Crown Prosecution Service (CPS)	Domestic abuse-related stalking and harassment	Year ending March 2020	England and Wales	Data relate to the number of domestic abuse-related stalking and harassment offences recorded in magistrates' courts, in which a prosecution commenced, as recorded on the CPS case management system.

Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS)	Arrests, bails, voluntary attendance, child protection referrals, domestic violence disclosures, domestic violence protection orders and notices	Year ending March 2020	England and Wales	Data from HMICFRS are collected for the purposes of inspection. Not all police forces could provide data on each variable to HMICFRS. Calculations for England and Wales are based on those forces that could provide data.
Ministry of Justice (MoJ)	Coercive and controlling behaviour data	Year ending December 2019	England and Wales	MoJ data cover a different time period to CPS data on coercive and controlling behaviour.
Ministry of Justice (MoJ)	Domestic violence remedy orders	Year ending March 2020	England and Wales	Two types of domestic violence remedy order can be granted by the family courts – a non-molestation order and an occupation order.
SafeLives	Multi-agency risk assessment conferences (MARACs)	Year ending March 2019 to year ending March 2020	England and Wales	A MARAC is a meeting where information is shared on the highest risk domestic abuse cases between representatives of local police, health, child protection, housing practitioners, independent domestic violence advisors (IDVAs), probation and other specialists from the statutory and voluntary sectors. Data are based on 247 MARACs in England and Wales in the year ending March 2020.
SafeLives	Independent Domestic Violence Advisors (IDVAs)	Year ending March 2016 to year ending March 2020	England and Wales	SafeLives operate a specialist outcomes measurement programme, Insights, which is a tool that allows for the collection and analysis of frontline support information. IDVAs complete an Insights form throughout the support period. Insights data for the year ending March 2020 include cases captured at intake and exit of the IDVA service, as well as cases where there was a criminal justice outcome. From 2014 to 2019 SafeLives has also counted the number of IDVAs, through their Domestic Abuse Practitioner Survey, to identify how many IDVAs are supporting victims and survivors of domestic abuse across England and Wales. This survey did not run in 2020.
Women's Aid Federation of England and Welsh Women's Aid	Routes to Support	2010 to 2019 for England, 2017 to 2020 for Wales	England and Wales	A UK-wide online database, which contains information about domestic abuse and other violence against women services, which are available for women and children throughout the UK; the database is representative of all domestic abuse services for women. Provides snapshot figures gathered on one day each year on the different types of domestic abuse services and refuge bed spaces available in England and Wales.
Women's Aid Federation of England	Women's Aid Annual Survey	Year ending March 2017 to year ending March 2019	England	This survey is distributed to all domestic abuse services for female victims in England listed on the Routes to Support database, comprising both refuge services and community-based services. Questions cover the previous financial year and a census day and week.

Refuge	National domestic abuse helpline	Year ending March 2018 to year ending March 2020	England	A national service for women experiencing domestic violence, their family, friends, colleagues and others calling on their behalf.
Welsh Women's Aid	Data collection on refuge and community-based services	Year ending March 2018 to year ending March 2020	Wales	A separate data collection covering domestic abuse service provision in Wales; data for the year ending March 2020 include information from 19 organisations running 65 specialist domestic abuse services offering refuge-based support, floating support services and community outreach services. Welsh Women's Aid also collect some data on referrals of men and children.
Welsh Women's Aid	Live fear free helpline	Year ending March 2018 to year ending March 2020	Wales	A helpline for those suffering with domestic abuse and sexual violence.
Suzy Lamplugh Trust	National Stalking Helpline	Year ending March 2017 to year ending March 2020	England and Wales	The helpline provides advice and guidance to individuals experiencing stalking, their family or friends, and professionals supporting them and is run by the Suzy Lamplugh Trust.
Victim Support	Independent Domestic Violence Advisors (IDVAs)	Year ending March 2016 to year ending March 2020	England and Wales	Victim Support is one of the largest single IDVA providers in England and Wales and also collate data on IDVA service provision.
Victim Support	Multi-crime services	Year ending March 2016 to year ending March 2020	England and Wales	Victim Support run multi-crime services that pick up lower risk level domestic abuse cases and cases where victims do not wish to engage with specialist organisations. Data on multi-crime service cases flagged as domestic abuse are collated by Victim Support.
ManKind Initiative	ManKind Initiative helpline	Year ending March 2017 to year ending March 2020	England and Wales	The ManKind Initiative operates a confidential helpline available for all men across the UK suffering from domestic violence or domestic abuse by their current or former wife or partner (including same-sex partner).
ManKind Initiative	Domestic abuse services supporting male victims	March 2019 to March 2020	England and Wales	The ManKind Initiative maintain a service directory which covers providers of services for men. The majority of these services offer support to women as well as men.

Source: Office for National Statistics

How we analyse and quality assure the data

Several methods are used to ensure the quality of the Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW) data collection operation by both Kantar Public, the survey contractor, and the Office for National Statistics (ONS). Kantar Public has robust quality management systems in place, which are formally accredited, and endorsed and supported at a corporate level. More information can be found in the [annual technical reports](#).

We also have quality management systems in place to further quality assure the data when it comes to us for final preparation and publication; any errors identified through these checks are returned to Kantar Public for validation or correction. Checks are also carried out within the team throughout the data production process before final publication.

Regarding police recorded crime, prior to submitting data to us, the Home Office Police Data Collection Section (PDCS) and Home Office Statistics Unit carry out internal quality assurance of the recorded crime data. Any anomalies or errors identified through these checks results in a report being returned to the relevant force for validation or correction. Prior to publication of any crime statistics verification checks are also carried out, asking individual forces for confirmation that the data accords with that held on their own systems. For more information, see Chapter 3 of the [User guide](#).

All other data included in the publication are quality assured by the individual data suppliers and further checks are carried out by our team on receipt of the data. Any discrepancies are queried with the supplier for validation.

How we disseminate the data

Domestic abuse in England and Wales is published annually on the ONS website. The release includes a number of separate publications describing the main patterns and trends in the datasets. A [data tool](#) is also provided to allow users to explore data for police force areas in more detail.

How we review the data

The release on [domestic abuse in England and Wales](#) has been produced in response to a recommendation made by HMICFRS in their 2015 [progress report \(PDF, 1.49MB\)](#) on the police response to domestic abuse. It said that organisations should work together to “develop a dataset relating to domestic abuse, which will enable more thorough analysis of how domestic abuse is dealt with in a force area”.

User feedback has been obtained during its development through discussions with domestic abuse organisations, academics and police force staff.

7 . Other information

Useful links

[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, police recorded crime and a number of different organisations.

[Crime in England and Wales QMI](#)

Methodology | Revised 17 July 2020

Provides a range of information that describes the quality of the data used in our regular publications.

