

Statistical bulletin

# Disability and crime, UK: 2019

An overview of published data on disability and crime in the UK and analysis of the experiences of domestic abuse and sexual assault for disabled adults aged 16 to 59 years in England and Wales. Analysis by age, sex and impairment type.

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## Notice

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This is not the latest release. Please see [Outcomes for disabled people in the UK: 2020](#) for the latest estimates.

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# 1 . Other pages in this release

The Office for National Statistics (ONS) has explored outcomes for disabled people across a number of areas of life, through a series of bulletins - other pages in this release include:

- [Improving disability data in the UK](#)
- [Disability and education](#)
- [Disability and employment](#)
- [Disability and housing](#)
- [Disability, well-being and loneliness](#)
- [Disability and social participation](#)

## Aims of this work

This work aims to present comparable information that uses the Government Statistical Service's (GSS's) harmonised definition of "disability", and as far as possible presents UK analysis alongside intersections with other protected characteristics.

## Definition of disability

For the purposes of this analysis, a person is considered to have a disability if they have a self-reported long-standing illness, condition or impairment, which causes difficulty with day-to-day activities. This definition is consistent with the Equality Act 2010 and the GSS harmonised definition. For further information see the [Glossary](#).

## Article scope

An overview of published data and crime statistics for the UK is provided in this bulletin, however the analysis focuses on the experiences of domestic abuse and sexual assault of adults aged 16 to 59 years in England and Wales. The analysis of domestic abuse and sexual assault aims to address evidence gaps in the outcomes of disabled people, as previous evidence from the Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW) has identified disparities between disabled and non-disabled people in these two crimes. The analysis provided covers two periods, with the most recent data related to year ending March 2019. More information on why this age group has been selected can be found in [Measuring the data](#).

# 2 . Main points

- In the year ending March 2019, the Crime Survey for England and Wales found that almost 1 in 4 (23.1%) disabled adults aged 16 years and over experienced crime (including fraud and computer misuse), compared with 1 in 5 (20.7%) non-disabled adults.
- Around 1 in 7 (14.1%) disabled adults aged 16 to 59 years experienced domestic abuse in the year ending March 2019, compared with 1 in 20 (5.4%) non-disabled adults.
- In the year ending March 2019, disabled women were more than twice as likely to have experienced domestic abuse (17.3%) than non-disabled women (7.0%).
- In the three years ending March 2018, 3.7% of disabled adults aged 16 to 59 years experienced any sexual assault (including attempts), compared with 1.9% of non-disabled adults.
- In the three years ending March 2018, disabled women were almost twice as likely to have experienced any sexual assault in the last year (5.7%) than non-disabled women (3.0%).

### 3 . Experiences of crime

This section contains published data on disability and crime. Confidence intervals were not published alongside these estimates, so differences between disabled and non-disabled people may not be significantly different, unless stated otherwise.

#### Overall experiences of crime

Overall crime rates for disabled adults aged 16 years and over in England and Wales are explored in the [Crime in England and Wales](#) annual bulletin, using data from the Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW). In the [latest findings](#) (year ending March 2019), disabled adults were significantly more likely to have experienced crime in the last year (23.1%) than non-disabled adults (20.7%) (Table D3).

This overall crime estimate comprises specific types of crimes, including personal and household-level crimes. A breakdown by disability status is available for personal crimes, which can be found in the October 2019 data for [Personal Crime Prevalence \(CSEW open data table\)](#).

In the year ending March 2019, personal crimes experienced included the following:

- fraud and computer misuse: 8.8% of disabled adults experienced these crimes, compared with 8.3% of all adults aged 16 years and over
- personal theft: 2.9% of disabled adults experienced this crime, compared with 2.3% of all adults aged 16 years and over
- personal violence: 2.5% of disabled adults experienced this crime, compared with 1.7% of all adults aged 16 years and over

When comparing the experiences of crime above, it is important to note that all adults aged 16 years and over includes disabled adults, therefore the two groups are not mutually exclusive.

Data on crime in Scotland are available from the [Scottish Government](#), which uses the Scottish Crime and Justice Survey (SCJS). These [data \(XLS, 955KB\)](#) show that in 2017 to 2018, 14.9% of disabled adults aged 16 years and over experienced crime, compared with 11.8% of non-disabled adults (Table 1.01b). It is important to note that these estimates for Scotland are not directly comparable with the estimates for England and Wales.

Overall crime rates for Northern Ireland are not available by disability status. However, some types of crime have been disaggregated by disability status. Further information on other publications is available in [Related links](#).

## Hate crime

Hate crime is collected on the CSEW covering adults aged 16 years and over, with estimates from the survey last published by the [Home Office](#) in October 2018 and will next be published in 2021. These data show that in the three years ending March 2018 there were an estimated 52,000 incidents of disability-motivated hate crime in England and Wales per year.

Experiences of hate crime using survey data for Scotland and Northern Ireland are not available. However, hate crime statistics for Scotland are available in the [Developing Information on Hate Crime Recorded by the Police in Scotland](#) report published by the Scottish Government and from the Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service (COPFS) in the [Hate Crime in Scotland](#) report. Similarly, hate crime statistics for Northern Ireland are available from the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) in the [Hate Motivation Statistics](#) statistical bulletin.

## Children's experiences of crime

Data on children's (aged 10 to 15 years) experiences of crime by disability status are available in the [Crime in England and Wales: Annual Trend and Demographic Tables - Table D5](#). These data show that 21.0% of disabled children experienced victimisation of crime in the last year, compared with 10.0% of non-disabled children. Data on children's experiences of crime by disability status are not available for Scotland and Northern Ireland.

## 4 . Perceptions of crime

This section contains published data on disability and crime. Confidence intervals were not published alongside these estimates, so differences between disabled and non-disabled adults may not be significantly different.

The Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW) collects information on perceptions of the police, criminal justice system, crime and anti-social behaviour for adults aged 16 years and over by disability status. These estimates can be found in the [Crime in England and Wales: Annual supplementary tables](#).

In the year ending March 2019, some examples of these measures by disability status included:

- ratings of the local police: 50.9% of disabled adults said their local police were doing a good or excellent job, compared with 58.9% of non-disabled adults (Table S2)
- perceptions of changing crime levels: 52.1% of disabled adults said local crime had gone up "a little" or "a lot" in the past few years, compared with 49.0% of non-disabled adults (Table S29)
- feeling safe: 63.6% of disabled adults said they felt "very or fairly" safe when walking alone after dark, compared with 81.3% of non-disabled adults (Table S38)

The Scottish Crime and Justice Survey (SCJS) collects information on perceptions of crime for adults aged 16 years and over by disability status. It is important to note that these estimates may not be directly comparable with those for England and Wales because of differences in definitions, methodology and data collection. These estimates can be found in the [Volume 1 Data Tables Demographics and Geography](#).

In 2017 to 2018, some examples of these measures by disability status included:

- ratings of the local police: 50.2% of disabled adults said they felt confident that the police in their local area could prevent crime, compared with 54.2% of non-disabled adults (Table 1.41b)
- perceptions of changing crime levels: 26.5% of disabled adults said they felt there had been “a little” or “a lot” more crime in their local area in the last two years, compared with 20.8% of non-disabled adults (Table 1.03b)
- feeling safe: 64.8% of disabled adults said they felt "very or fairly" safe when walking alone in their local area after dark, compared with 80.4% of non-disabled adults (Table 1.05b)

The Northern Ireland Crime Survey (NICS) collects information on the perceptions of crime-related issues, including the police and justice, crime and anti-social behaviour, for adults aged 16 years and over by disability status. It should be noted that these estimates may not be directly comparable with those for England and Wales because of differences in definitions, methodology and data collection. These estimates can be found in the [Northern Ireland Crime Survey](#) tables.

In 2017 to 2018, some examples of these measures by disability status included:

- ratings of local police: 63.7% of adults with a long-standing illness or disability said they had confidence in the local police, compared with 69.3% of adults with no long-standing illness or disability ([Table 3.1](#))
- extent of worry about crime: 7.1% of adults with a long-standing illness or disability said they were "very worried" about overall crime, compared with 4.2% of adults with no long-standing illness or disability ([Table A6.1](#))
- feeling safe: 7.2% of adults with a long-standing illness or disability said they felt "very unsafe" walking alone in their area after dark, compared with 3.5% of adults with no long-standing illness or disability ([Table A6.1](#))

## 5 . Domestic abuse

This section explores experiences of domestic abuse for adults aged 16 to 59 years in England and Wales during two time periods; year ending March 2014 and year ending March 2019.

Any differences discussed are statistically significant at the 5% level unless stated otherwise. In some instances, the variability surrounding the estimates means that it is not possible to comment on differences between and within the disabled and non-disabled populations. However, a full breakdown of the analysis can be found in the [Disability and crime dataset](#).

It should be noted that domestic abuse is collected through the survey's self-completion module and so is not included in the overall main estimate. Therefore, domestic abuse estimates cannot be compared with the measure of overall crime for adults aged 16 years and over.

In the year ending March 2019, around 1 in 7 (14.1%) disabled adults aged 16 to 59 years experienced any form of domestic abuse in the last year in England and Wales, compared with 1 in 20 (5.4%) non-disabled adults of the same age. Similar proportions were observed in the year ending March 2014 (14.4% and 5.6% respectively).

## Disabled women were more than twice as likely to experience domestic abuse than non-disabled women, and almost twice as likely than disabled men.

In the year ending March 2019, women were more likely to have experienced domestic abuse than men regardless of disability status. Figure 1 shows that around 1 in 6 (17.3%) disabled women experienced domestic abuse in the last year, compared with 1 in 15 (7.0%) non-disabled women. In comparison, disabled men were more than twice as likely (9.0%) to have experienced domestic abuse in the year ending March 2019 than non-disabled men (3.7%).

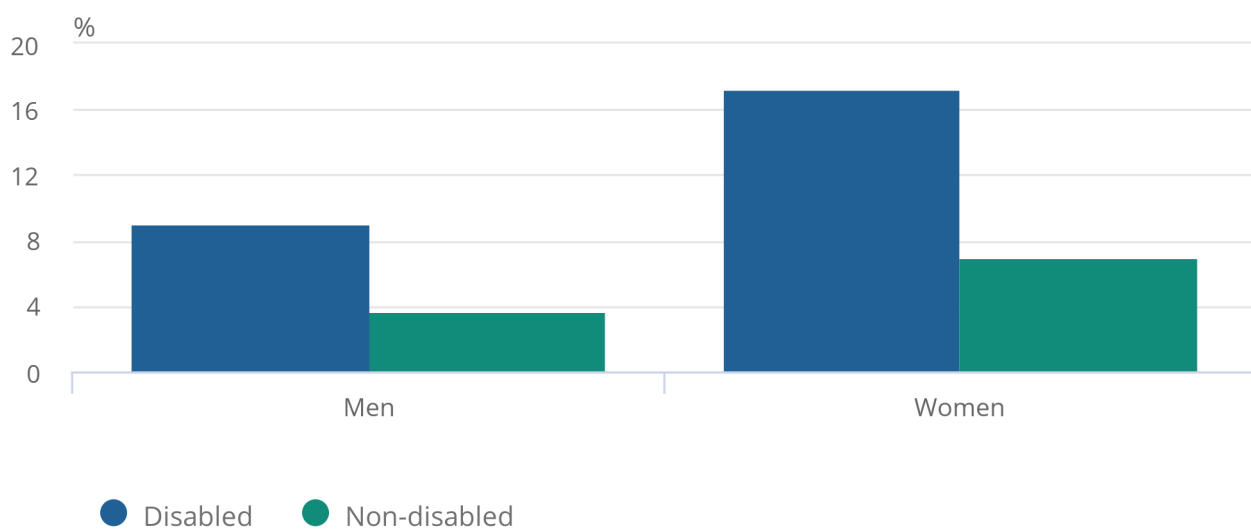
Rates of domestic abuse for disabled and non-disabled adults have not changed significantly from five years ago (year ending March 2014).

### Figure 1: Disabled women were more than twice as likely to have experienced domestic abuse than non-disabled women

Adults aged 16 to 59 years, England and Wales, year ending March 2019

#### Figure 1: Disabled women were more than twice as likely to have experienced domestic abuse than non-disabled women

Adults aged 16 to 59 years, England and Wales, year ending March 2019



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

## Disabled adults were more likely to experience domestic abuse than non-disabled adults, regardless of age

In the year ending March 2019, disabled adults were more likely to have experienced any form of domestic abuse than non-disabled adults in their age group. This is not significantly different when compared with the prevalence of domestic abuse five years ago (year ending March 2014).

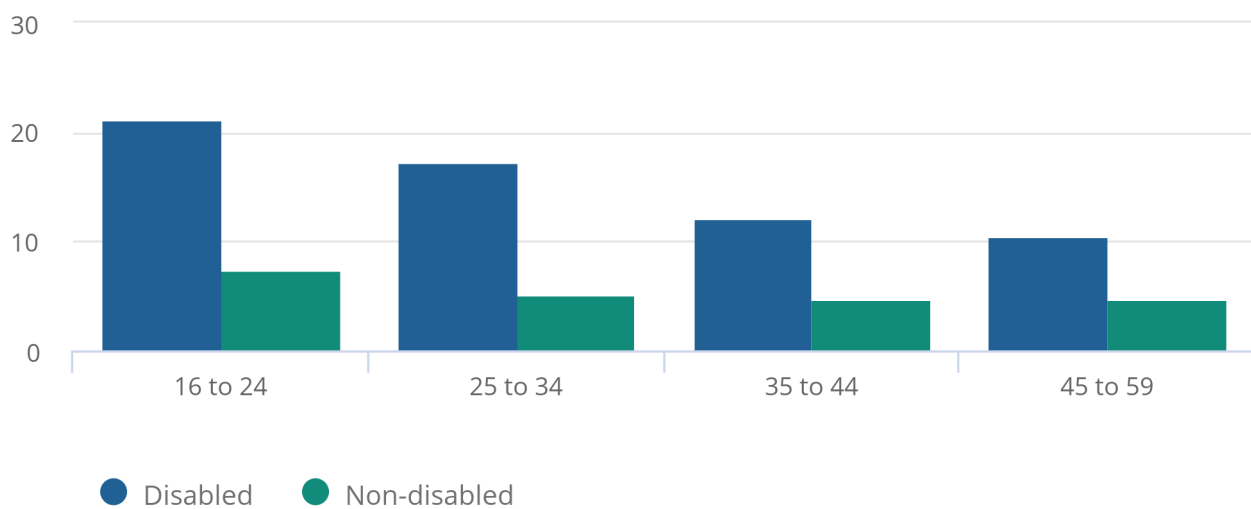
Figure 2 shows that disabled adults aged 16 to 24 years were almost three times more likely to have experienced any form of domestic abuse (21.2%) than non-disabled adults of the same age (7.4%). Disabled adults in the youngest age group were significantly more likely to have experienced domestic abuse than those in the oldest age group (aged 45 to 59 years) (10.5%).

**Figure 2: Disabled adults aged 16 to 24 years were more likely to have experienced domestic abuse than disabled adults aged 45 to 59 years**

Adults aged 16 to 59 years, England and Wales, year ending March 2019

Figure 2: Disabled adults aged 16 to 24 years were more likely to have experienced domestic abuse than disabled adults aged 45 to 59 years

Adults aged 16 to 59 years, England and Wales, year ending March 2019



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

In the year ending March 2019, a higher proportion of disabled adults aged 16 to 59 years who reported a mental health impairment had experienced domestic abuse (22.2%), compared with adults reporting an impairment related to dexterity (14.7%), mobility (13.2%), stamina, breathing or fatigue (12.4%), vision (11.7%) or "other" (10.1%). The estimates observed in the year ending March 2019 were not significantly different to those observed in the year ending March 2014.

It is important to note that respondents are asked about any conditions or illnesses they have at the time of the interview. This may differ from the time they experienced the abuse and may have changed as a result of the abuse. Therefore, caution should be taken when interpreting these data.

It is not possible to comment on the differences between many of these impairment types because of the variability surrounding the estimates. However, a full breakdown of the prevalence of domestic abuse by impairment type can be found in the [Disability and crime dataset](#) (Table 4).



The Scottish Crime and Justice Survey (SCJS) collects data on the prevalence of partner abuse in Scotland for disabled adults. This analysis can be found in the [Volume 6](#) tables, but may not be directly comparable with the analysis published in this bulletin because of changes in definitions, methodology and data collection.

The Northern Ireland Crime Survey (NICS) collects data on experiences of domestic violence in Northern Ireland for disabled men and women. This analysis can be found in the [Northern Ireland crime survey domestic violence tables](#), but may not be directly comparable with the analysis in this bulletin because of changes in definitions, methodology and data collection.

## 6 . Sexual assault

This section explores experiences of sexual assault for adults aged 16 to 59 years in England and Wales during the three-year combined period year ending March 2016 to year ending March 2018. Any differences discussed are statistically significant at the 5% level unless stated otherwise.

Estimates on sexual assault in this section also include attempts of sexual assault. In some instances, the variability surrounding the estimates means that it is not possible to comment on differences between and within the disabled and non-disabled populations. However, a full breakdown of the analysis can be found in the [Disability and crime dataset](#).

It should be noted that sexual assault is collected through the survey's self-completion module and so is not included in the overall main estimate. Therefore, sexual assault estimates cannot be compared with the measure of overall crime for adults aged 16 years and over.

In the three years ending March 2018, 3.7% of disabled adults aged 16 to 59 years reported experiencing any sexual assault in the last year in England and Wales, compared with 1.9% of non-disabled adults.

In the three years ending March 2018, women were more likely to have experienced sexual assault than men, regardless of disability status. However, the disparity between men and women was higher for disabled adults compared with non-disabled adults. Figure 3 shows that disabled women were over five times more likely to have experienced sexual assault in the last year (5.7%) than disabled men (1.1%).

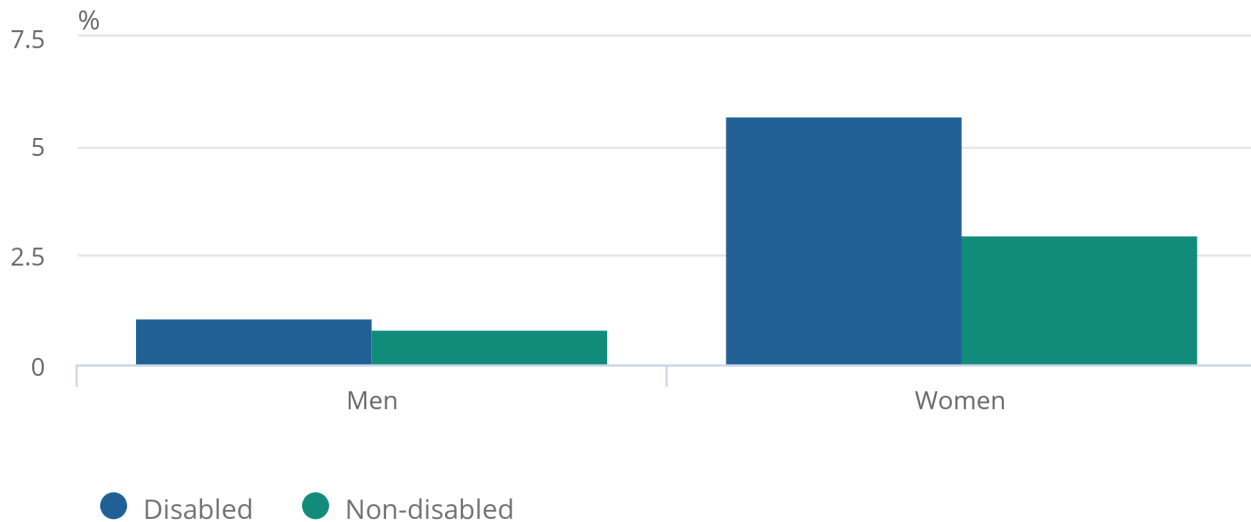
There was a significant difference (2.7 percentage points) between the rates of sexual assault for disabled and non-disabled women, while similar rates of sexual assault were observed for disabled and non-disabled men. This suggests the combination of these protected characteristics makes disabled women most likely to experience sexual assault.

### Figure 3: Disabled women were almost twice as likely to have experienced any sexual assault in the last year than non-disabled women

Adults aged 16 to 59 years, England and Wales, three years ending March 2018

### Figure 3: Disabled women were almost twice as likely to have experienced any sexual assault in the last year than non-disabled women

Adults aged 16 to 59 years, England and Wales, three years ending March 2018



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

### Disabled adults were more likely to experience sexual assault than non-disabled adults regardless of their age

Disabled adults aged 16 to 24 years were more likely to have experienced sexual assault (including attempts) (9.6%) than disabled adults in all other age groups and were almost twice as likely to have experienced sexual assault than non-disabled adults of the same age (5.3%).

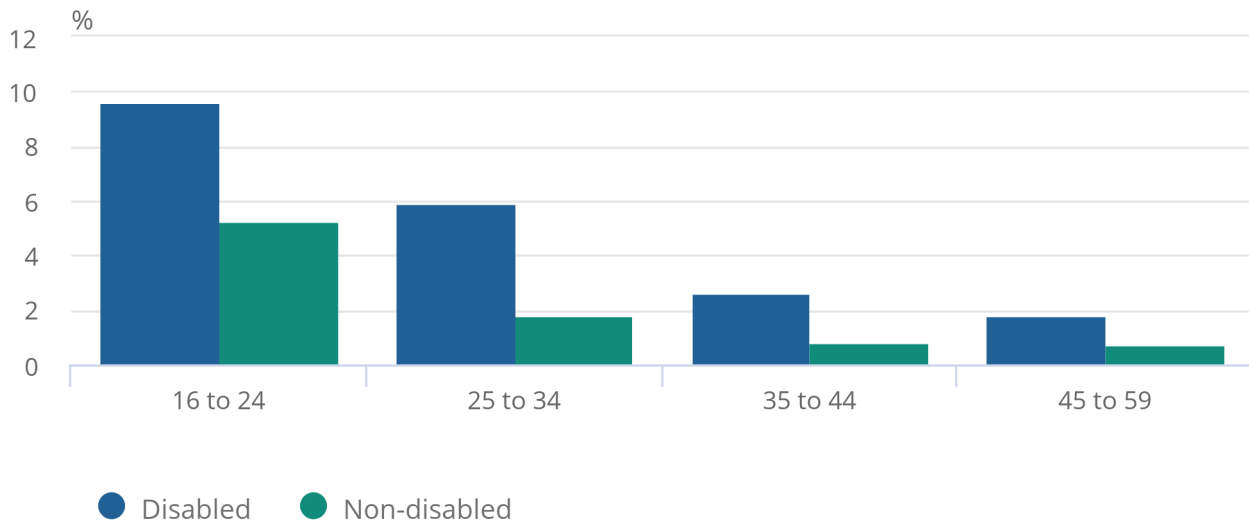
Disabled adults aged 35 to 44 and 45 to 59 were less likely to have experienced sexual assault (2.6% and 1.8% respectively) than younger disabled adults but were around three times more likely to report sexual assault than non-disabled adults of the same age (0.8% and 0.7% respectively) (Figure 4).

**Figure 4: Disabled adults aged 16 to 24 years were more likely to have experienced sexual assault than older adults with a disability**

Adults aged 16 to 59 years, England and Wales, three years ending March 2018

Figure 4: Disabled adults aged 16 to 24 years were more likely to have experienced sexual assault than older adults with a disability

Adults aged 16 to 59 years, England and Wales, three years ending March 2018



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

In the three years ending March 2018, a higher proportion of adults with a social or behavioural impairment, as well as those with a mental health impairment, experienced sexual assault (including attempts) in the last year (9.0% and 6.8% respectively), compared with those reporting any other type of impairment. However, this did not hold true for adults reporting an impairment related to learning, understanding or concentrating, where there was no significant difference.

It is important to note that respondents are asked about any conditions or illnesses they have at the time of the interview. This may differ from the time they experienced the abuse and may have changed as a result of the abuse. Therefore, caution should be taken when interpreting these data.

It is not possible to comment on the differences between many of these impairment types because of the variability surrounding the estimates. However, a full breakdown of the prevalence of sexual assault by impairment type can be found in the [Disability and crime dataset](#) (Table 8).

The Scottish Crime and Justice Survey (SCJS) collects data on the prevalence sexual victimisation in Scotland. This analysis can be found in the [Volume 7](#) tables, but may not be directly comparable with the analysis published in this bulletin because of changes in definitions, methodology and data collection.

## 7 . Disability and crime data

### [Disability and crime dataset](#)

Dataset | Released 2 December 2019

Proportions of adults aged 16 to 59 years that experienced domestic abuse and sexual assault by disability status in England and Wales. Analysis by country, age, sex and impairment type.

## 8 . Glossary

The definitions included in this glossary apply to the analysis using data from the Crime Survey for England and Wales.

### Disability

To define disability in this publication we refer to the [Government Statistical Service \(GSS\) harmonised “core” definition](#): this identifies “disabled” as a person who has a physical or mental health condition or illness that has lasted or is expected to last 12 months or more, that reduces their ability to carry-out day-to-day activities.

The GSS definition is designed to reflect the definitions that appear in legal terms in the [Disability Discrimination Act 1995](#) (DDA) and the subsequent [Equality Act 2010](#).

The GSS harmonised questions are asked of the respondent in the survey, meaning that disability status is self-reported.

### Impairment

This refers to health conditions affecting any of the following areas, using the GSS harmonised principle:

- vision (for example, blindness or partial sight)
- hearing (for example, deafness or partial hearing)
- mobility (for example, walking short distances or climbing stairs)
- dexterity (for example, lifting and carrying objects or using a keyboard)
- learning, understanding or concentrating
- memory
- mental health
- stamina, breathing or fatigue
- socially or behaviourally (for example, associated with autism, attention deficit disorder or Asperger's syndrome)
- other (please specify)

Respondents were asked to select all impairments that applied to them.

## Domestic abuse

Domestic abuse measured in the Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW) combines the following types of abuse, which have occurred in the 12 months prior to the interview:

- non-sexual abuse by a partner or family member
- sexual assault carried out by a partner or other family member
- physical force, emotional or financial abuse
- stalking carried out by a partner or other family member

## Sexual assault

Sexual assault measured in the CSEW covers the following incidents carried out by any perpetrator, which have occurred in the 12 months prior to the interview:

- rape (including attempts)
- assault by penetration (including attempts)
- causing sexual activity without consent
- indecent exposure or unwanted touching

## Statistical significance

All differences reported in this bulletin are statistically significant at the 5% level unless stated otherwise.

# 9 . Measuring the data

## Crime Survey for England and Wales

The analysis presented in this bulletin uses data from the Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW). This is a face-to-face victimisation survey, which asks approximately 35,000 respondents aged 16 years and over residing in households in England and Wales about their experiences of crime in the 12 months prior to the interview. The survey also asks for opinions on different crime-related issues such as the police and criminal justice system and perceptions of crime and anti-social behaviour. Individuals residing in group residences (for example, care homes or halls of residence) or other institutions are not included in the CSEW sample.

## Domestic abuse and sexual assault data

The domestic abuse and sexual assault data presented in this bulletin are collected in the CSEW self-completion module. For these questions, respondents are given a tablet computer to complete their answers. This module covers crimes such as domestic abuse, sexual assault and stalking, where respondents are asked if they have experienced a range of different behaviours. Prior to 2017, the self-completion module was asked of adults aged 16 to 59 years living in households in England and Wales. In April 2017, eligibility was extended to cover adults aged 16 to 74 years.

The domestic abuse data within this bulletin cover adults aged 16 to 59 years during two time periods; year ending March 2014 and year ending March 2019. To ensure comparability between the two time points, the domestic abuse estimates are based on adults aged 16 to 59 years, despite the availability of data for those aged 60 to 74 in 2019. Any differences commented on in the respective sections are statistically significant at the 5% level unless stated otherwise.

Small sample sizes of adults experiencing sexual assault has resulted in three annual datasets being combined into one dataset covering a three-year period ending March 2018. For this reason, no comparable time point is available. As this dataset includes periods prior to 2017, the analysis on sexual assault in this bulletin covers adults aged 16 to 59 years. Any differences commented on in the respective sections are statistically significant at the 5% level unless stated otherwise.

## 10 . Strengths and limitations

### Strengths

- The Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW) is a large nationally representative sample survey that provides a good measure of long-term crime trends for the offences and the population it covers (that is, those resident in households).
- The survey covers crime not reported to the police and is not affected by changes in police recording practice, is a reliable measure of long-term trends.

### Limitations

- Small sample sizes observed for domestic abuse and sexual assault has resulted in greater variability surrounding the estimates for the disabled population, limiting the conclusions that can be drawn from this analysis.
- In this bulletin, domestic abuse and sexual assault are measures of crime for adults aged 16 to 59 years collected through the survey's self-completion module. Therefore, they cannot be compared with the measure of overall crime for adults aged 16 years and over.

A full list of the strengths and limitations of the Crime Survey for England and Wales can be found in the [Quality and methodology](#) section of the Crime in England and Wales statistical bulletin.

## 11 . Related links

### [Crime in England and Wales: year ending March 2019](#)

Statistical bulletin | Released 18 July 2019

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

### [Domestic abuse in England and Wales: year ending March 2019](#)

Statistical bulletin | Released 25 November 2019

How domestic abuse is dealt with at the local level within England and Wales, using annual data from the Crime Survey for England and Wales, police recorded crime and a number of different organisations.

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

Article | Released 13 December 2018

Sexual offences statistics from the Crime Survey for England and Wales and police recorded crime.

### [Datasets - Scottish Crime and Justice Survey](#)

Dataset | Released March 2019

Results from the Scottish Crime and Justice Survey, covering the main survey by demographic and geography breakdowns and topics including stalking and harassment, partner abuse and sexual victimisation.

### [Northern Ireland Crime Survey](#)

A survey of the experiences and perceptions of crime of approximately 4,000 adults living in private households throughout Northern Ireland. Topics include experiences of crime and perceptions of policing, justice and organised crime.

### [Crime and disabled people report \(EHRC\)](#)

Statistical report | Released 6 September 2016

Crime and disabled people: measures of disability-related harassment for England, Wales and Scotland, using data from the Crime Survey for England and Wales and the Scottish Crime and Justice Survey.

### [Hate Crime, England and Wales, 2018 to 2019](#) (PDF, 1.42MB)

Statistical bulletin | Released 15 October 2019

Home Office statistics about hate crime offences recorded by the police in England and Wales.

### [Disability pay gaps in the UK: 2018](#)

Article | Released 2 December 2019

Earnings and employment for disabled and non-disabled people in the UK, raw disability pay gaps and factors that affect pay for disabled people.