

Statistical bulletin

Child abuse in England and Wales: January 2020

Statistics and research on child abuse in England and Wales, bringing together a range of different data sources from across government and the voluntary sector.

Contact:
Meghan Elkin
crimestatistics@ons.gov.uk
+44 (0)207592 8695

Release date:
14 January 2020

Next release:
To be announced

Table of contents

1. [Other pages in this release](#)
2. [Main points](#)
3. [What do we know about the prevalence of child abuse?](#)
4. [Child abuse in England and Wales data](#)
5. [Glossary](#)
6. [Measuring the data](#)
7. [Strengths and limitations](#)
8. [Related links](#)

1 . Other pages in this release

This release brings together our analysis and research on child abuse in England and Wales. The analysis includes a range of indicators from different data sources and organisations. Findings can be found on the following pages:

- [Child abuse extent and nature, England and Wales: year ending March 2019](#)
- [Child emotional abuse in England and Wales: year ending March 2019](#)
- [Child neglect in England and Wales: year ending March 2019](#)
- [Child physical abuse in England and Wales: year ending March 2019](#)
- [Child sexual abuse in England and Wales: year ending March 2019](#)

Later this year, we will release statistics on child abuse and the criminal justice system. Findings from a feasibility study to determine whether a new survey could effectively measure the current scale and nature of child abuse and neglect will also be published later in 2020.

2 . Main points

Child abuse is an appalling crime against some of the most vulnerable in society. It is something that is not often discussed or well understood, and there has been a lack of complete statistics. For the first time, we have compiled a range of indicators from different data sources to enable better understanding of the extent and circumstances of child abuse. Our statistics on abuse experienced in childhood in England and Wales include data on sexual abuse, physical abuse, emotional abuse and neglect.

- The Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW) estimated that one in five adults aged 18 to 74 years experienced at least one form of child abuse, whether emotional abuse, physical abuse, sexual abuse, or witnessing domestic violence or abuse, before the age of 16 years (8.5 million people).
- In addition, an estimated 1 in 100 adults aged 18 to 74 years experienced physical neglect before the age of 16 years (481,000 people); this includes not being taken care of or not having enough food, shelter or clothing, but it does not cover all types of neglect.
- An estimated 3.1 million adults aged 18 to 74 years were victims of sexual abuse before the age of 16 years; this includes abuse by both adult and child perpetrators.
- Prevalence was higher for females than males for each type of abuse, with the exception of physical abuse where there was no difference.
- Many cases of child abuse remain hidden; around one in seven adults who called the National Association for People Abused in Childhood's (NAPAC's) helpline had not told anyone about their abuse before.
- It is possible to identify 227,530 child abuse offences recorded by the police in the year ending March 2019.
- Childline delivered 19,847 counselling sessions to children in the UK where abuse was the primary concern in the year ending March 2019; sexual abuse accounted for nearly half (45%) of these and has become the most common type of abuse counselled by Childline in recent years.
- At 31 March 2019, 52,260 children in England were the subject of a child protection plan (CPP) and 2,820 children in Wales were on the child protection register (CPR) because of experience or risk of abuse or neglect; neglect was the most common category of abuse in England and emotional abuse was the most common in Wales.
- At 31 March 2019, 49,570 children in England and 4,810 children in Wales were looked after by their local authority because of experience or risk of abuse or neglect.
- Around half of adults (52%) who experienced abuse before the age of 16 years also experienced domestic abuse later in life, compared with 13% of those who did not experience abuse before the age of 16 years.

Statistician's comment

"Child abuse is an appalling crime against some of the most vulnerable in society, but it is also something that is little discussed or understood. Today's release is ONS's first attempt to fill an important evidence gap on this critical issue.

"Measuring the extent and nature of child abuse is difficult because it is usually hidden from view and comes in many forms. Bringing data together from different sources helps us better understand both the nature of child abuse and the potential demand on support services."

Alexa Bradley, Centre for Crime and Justice, Office for National Statistics

Finding help

If you or someone you know has experienced abuse, help is available: