

UNPUBLISHED EXCERPT OF DRAFT VERSION OF Hohl and Stanko (2015)

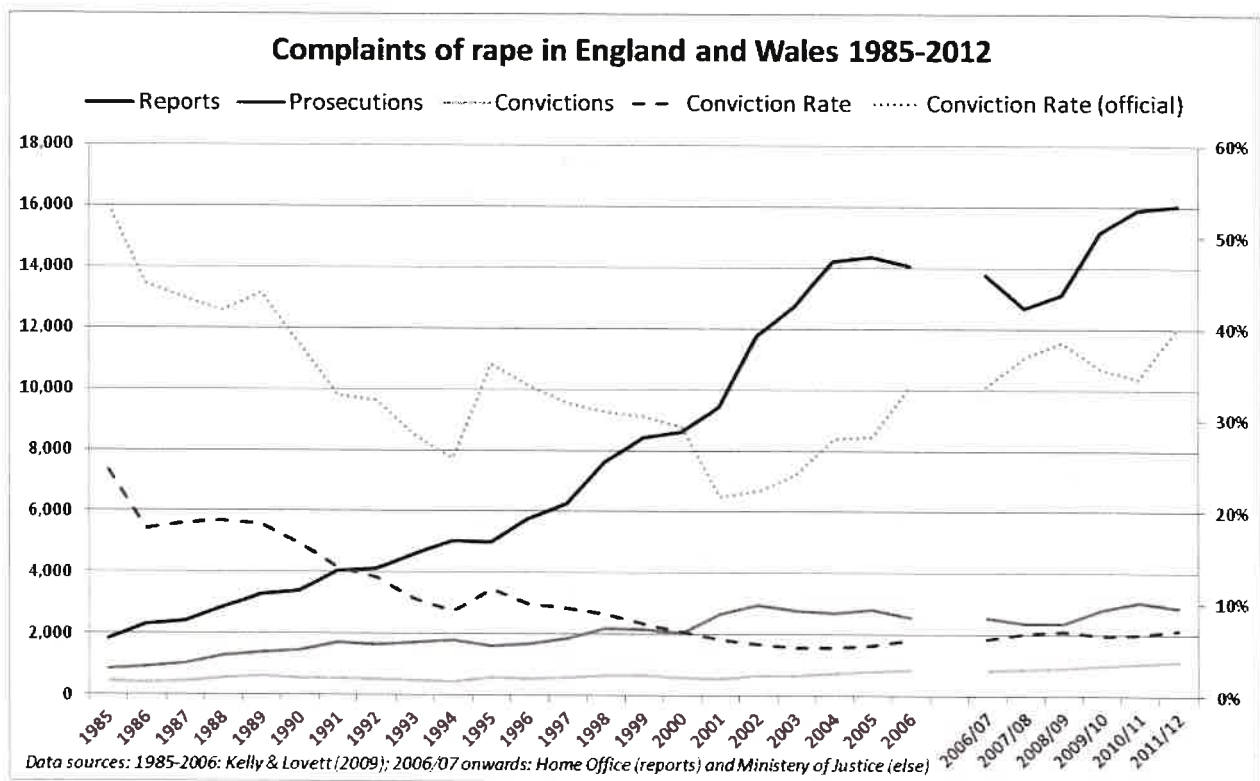
The attrition of rape allegations in England and Wales

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Findings Part I: Trends in attrition 1985 – 2012

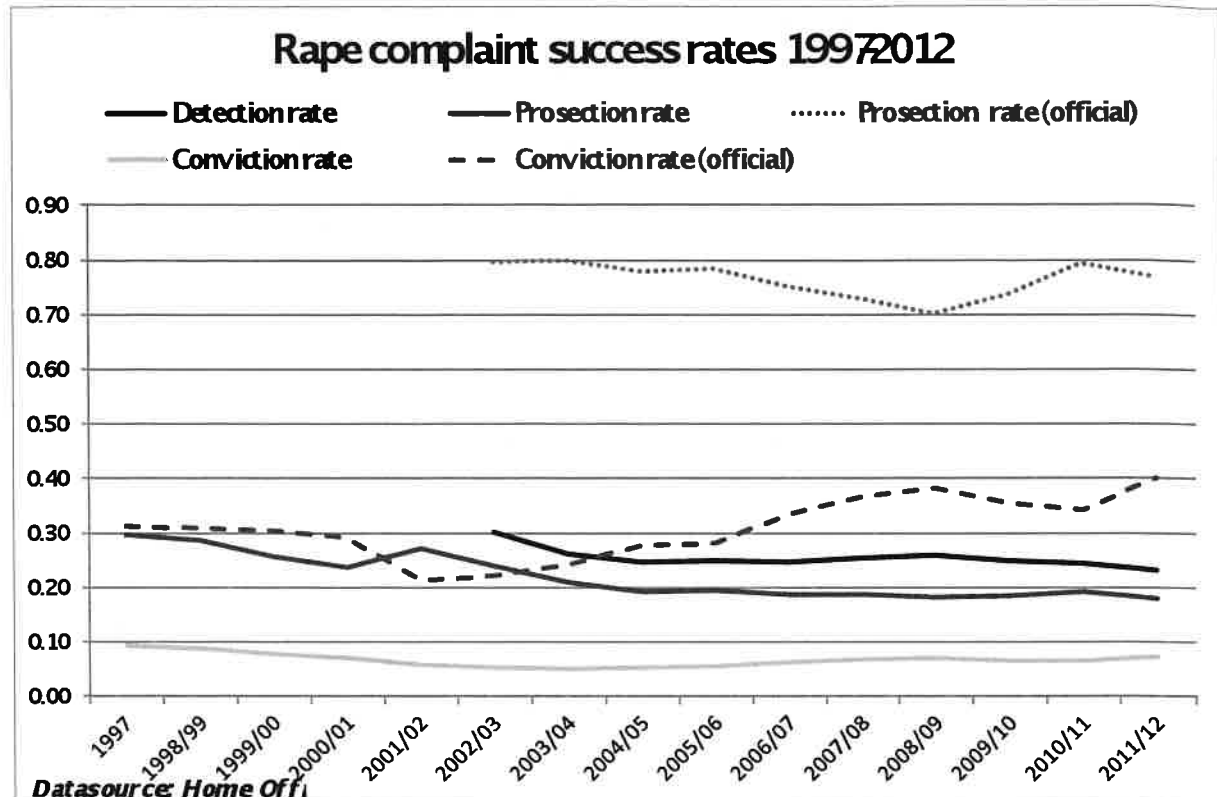
The number of rapes recorded by police in England and Wales increased dramatically since 1985 (Graph 1). The increase is commonly attributed to changes in societal attitudes towards rape that make it easier for women to come forward, and greater confidence in the police and courts to adequately treat rape victims and rape complaints (Temkin and Krahe 2008). This increase is slowing down since 2010. The number of sanction detections, prosecutions and convictions of rape has slowly increased from 1985 to 2002 but increase has been stagnant for the ten years since 2002.



Graph 1. Trends in the attrition of rape allegations in England and Wales, 1985-2012.

Graph 2 shows that the percentage of recorded rapes that result in a sanction detection (detection rate) has decreased from 30% to 23% between 2002 and 2012. Government-body reports and academic reports differ in their definition of the prosecution rate. Whilst the former calculate it based on the unchanging number of sanction detections, the latter base it on the increasing number of recorded offences. Calculated based on recorded offences, the prosecution rate is falling since 1997

(from 30% in 1997 to 18% in 2012). If calculated based on sanction detections, the prosecution rate has been fluctuating between 70% and 80% in the 1997-2012 period. Finally, conviction rates calculated based on recorded offences have decreased by 2%-3% since 1997 (to 7% in 2011/12). If calculated based on sanction detections, the conviction rate dropped from 30% in 1997 to 22% in 2002/3 and then slowly increased to 40% in 2011/12.



Graph 2. Trends in detection, conviction and prosecution rates, 1997-2012.

In sum, the government-body painted picture differs dramatically from that painted by academics. Whilst the former declare the last decade a success, academics would conclude the opposite: the attrition problem has worsened. The series of legal changes, regular inspections, revised ACPO guidelines and government-commissioned reviews outlined above do not appear to have been accompanied by a seismic reduction of the attrition problem. Attrition is still high at every stage of the criminal justice process and still only a fraction (7%) of police recorded rape allegations result in a conviction. Detection rates are declining dramatically. A much smaller proportion of rape complaints now reach the CPS, and depending on how rates are calculated, a smaller proportion of cases results in a prosecution and still less results in a conviction. This finding raises the question of why the number of rape allegations is so at odds with the number of successful criminal justice outcomes as to produce such high attrition rates. What are the factors that lead to attrition?

