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# **An Overview of Sexual Offending in England and Wales**

Ministry of Justice, Home Office & the  
Office for National Statistics

Statistics bulletin

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## Chapter 1: Executive Summary

### Victimisation through to police recording of crimes

Based on aggregated data from the 'Crime Survey for England and Wales' in 2009/10, 2010/11 and 2011/12, on average, 2.5 per cent of females and 0.4 per cent of males said that they had been a victim of a sexual offence (including attempts) in the previous 12 months. This represents around 473,000 adults being victims of sexual offences (around 404,000 females and 72,000 males) on average per year. These experiences span the full spectrum of sexual offences, ranging from the most serious offences of rape and sexual assault, to other sexual offences like indecent exposure and unwanted touching. The vast majority of incidents reported by respondents to the survey fell into the other sexual offences category.

It is estimated that 0.5 per cent of females report being a victim of the most serious offences of rape or sexual assault by penetration in the previous 12 months, equivalent to around 85,000 victims on average per year. Among males, less than 0.1 per cent (around 12,000) report being a victim of the same types of offences in the previous 12 months.

Around one in twenty females (aged 16 to 59) reported being a victim of a most serious sexual offence since the age of 16. Extending this to include other sexual offences such as sexual threats, unwanted touching or indecent exposure, this increased to one in five females reporting being a victim since the age of 16.

Around 90 per cent of victims of the most serious sexual offences in the previous year knew the perpetrator, compared with less than half for other sexual offences.

Females who had reported being victims of the most serious sexual offences in the last year were asked, regarding the most recent incident, whether or not they had reported the incident to the police. Only 15 per cent of victims of such offences said that they had done so. Frequently cited reasons for not reporting the crime were that it was 'embarrassing', they 'didn't think the police could do much to help', that the incident was 'too trivial or not worth reporting', or that they saw it as a 'private/family matter and not police business'

In 2011/12, the police recorded a total of 53,700 sexual offences across England and Wales. The most serious sexual offences of 'rape' (16,000 offences) and 'sexual assault' (22,100 offences) accounted for 71 per cent of sexual offences recorded by the police. This differs markedly from victims responding to the CSEW in 2011/12, the majority of whom were reporting being victims of other sexual offences outside the most serious category.

This reflects the fact that victims are more likely to report the most serious sexual offences to the police and, as such, the police and broader criminal justice system (CJS) tend to deal largely with the most serious end of the spectrum of sexual offending. The majority of the other sexual crimes recorded by the police related to 'exposure or voyeurism' (7,000) and 'sexual activity with minors' (5,800).

