



BRIEFING PAPER

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Homicide Statistics

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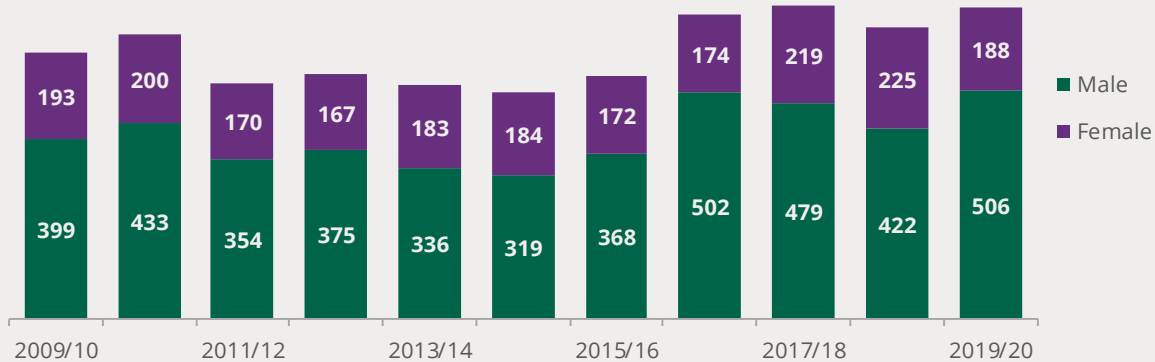


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Homicide Summary

Homicide victims by gender, England and Wales

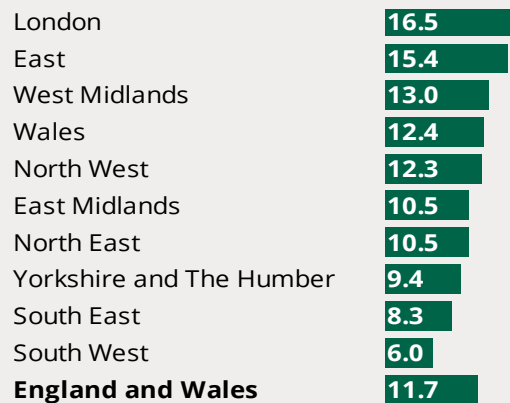


Homicide rates by region in England and Wales

For the year ending 31 March 2020 there were 695 recorded homicides in England and Wales – a rate of 11.7 per million population. London had the highest homicide rate at 16.5 per million population. The South West had the lowest with 6 per million population.

Homicides by region

Per million population



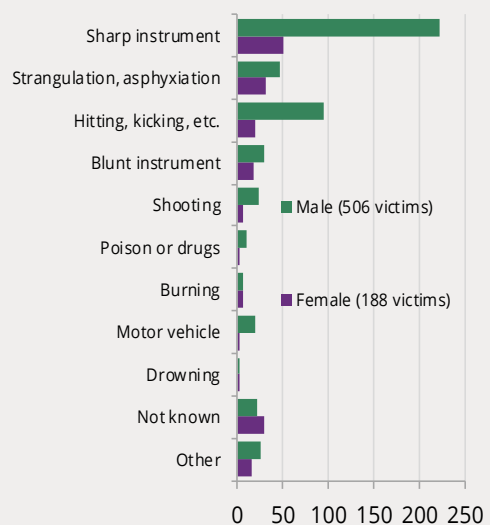
Homicide by method of killing in England and Wales

The most common method of killing (40%) in 2019/20 was use of a sharp instrument (275 out of 695 victims). This was the most common method of killing both male and female victims at 44% and 27% respectively.

Strangulation and asphyxiation was the next most prevalent method of death for females (31 out of 188 victims). The second most common for men involved hitting, kicking, etc (95 out of 506 victims). As a proportion of all homicides, hitting, kicking, etc was also the second most common for all victims accounting for 17% of deaths (115 deaths).

Homicides by method of killing

Year ending March 2020, England and Wales



1. Definitions

Homicide is the killing of one person by another. In England and Wales, the two main criminal offences are murder and manslaughter.¹ Other homicide offences include [infanticide](#) (the killing of a baby under 1-year-old by their mother while the balance of her mind was disturbed as a result of giving birth etc.), causing [death through careless and dangerous driving](#), and [corporate manslaughter](#).²

1.1 Murder

[Crown Prosecution Service \(CPS\) guidance](#) says that the crime of murder is committed where a person is of “sound mind and discretion” (i.e. sane); unlawfully kills (outside the realms of self-defence or other justified killing); any reasonable creature (human being); in being (born alive and breathing through its own lungs – *Rance v Mid-Downs Health Authority* (1991)); under the Queen’s Peace; with intent to kill or cause grievous bodily harm (GBH).³

1.2 Manslaughter

There are three “partial” defences to murder, which would reduce the offence to one of “voluntary manslaughter”. These are:

- 1) diminished responsibility;
- 2) loss of control (which replaced the previous partial defence of provocation);
- 3) and where the survivor of a joint suicide pact took part in the killing of another person in the pact (or was a party to that other person being killed by a third person).

According to the [CPS](#), involuntary manslaughter can be committed in one of two ways:⁴

Death caused by a grossly negligent (though otherwise lawful) act or omission on the part of the defendant, where that act or omission carried an obvious and serious risk of death (“gross negligence manslaughter”); and

Death caused by conduct taking the form of an unlawful act involving a danger of some physical harm, whether or not the defendant realised this (“unlawful act manslaughter”)

¹ CPS, *Homicide: Murder and Manslaughter, Legal Guidance*, accessed 3 June 2018

² *Infanticide Act 1938* Chapter 36: CPS, *Road Traffic Offences - Guidance on Charging Offences arising from Driving Incidents*, accessed 3 June 2018; *Corporate Manslaughter and Corporate Homicide Act 2007* Chapter 19

³ CPS, *Homicide: Murder and Manslaughter, Legal Guidance*, accessed 3 June 2018

⁴ CPS, *Homicide: Murder and Manslaughter, Legal Guidance*, accessed 3 June 2018

In general, the term “involuntary manslaughter” is used to describe a manslaughter falling within 2 and 3, whilst 1 is referred to as “voluntary” manslaughter.

1.3 Suspect

According to the [Home Office \(Homicide Index\)](#), a suspect in a homicide case is defined as: ⁵

- A person who has been arrested in respect of an offence initially classed as homicide and charged with homicide, including those who were subsequently convicted; or
- A person who is suspected by the police of having committed the offence but is known to have died or committed suicide prior to arrest/ being charged.

It is possible for more than one suspect to be charged per homicide victim, and sometimes no suspect is ever charged. This means that the number of suspects is not the same as the number of offences or the number of victims.

Where multiple suspects are identified they are categorised as either the principal or secondary suspect(s). There can only be one principal suspect per homicide victim. Where there is the absence of a court outcome, the principal suspect is either the person considered by the police to be “most involved in the homicide” or with the closest relationship to the victim.

1.4 Joint Enterprise

A secondary suspect can be held liable for the principal’s act under common law principles of secondary.

In 2016, the Supreme Court ruled that in a situation where two (or more) people committed a crime together, if one of these people committed an additional crime, the other person(s) could also be liable for the additional offence. This is deemed to be the case if the secondary person(s) **intended** to assist or **encourage** the primary person to the second offence, even if they did not commit it themselves.

More information on Joint Enterprise, including its prior (and sometimes controversial) legal interpretations such as “Parasitical accessory liability” (PAL) can be found in The House of Commons Library’s [Joint Enterprise 2018 Debate Pack](#).

⁵ ONS, *Focus on violent crime and sexual offences, England and Wales: year ending March 2016*, Chapter 2, 9 February 2017

2. Recorded homicides in England and Wales

2.1 Home Office analysis of homicide trends

In March 2020, the Home Office published a report on [Trends and Drivers of Homicide](#) analysing trends in England and Wales up to 2017/18. The report notes that analysing homicide trends is not a straightforward task:

The analysis showed that homicide is a complex, non-homogenous crime. Everyone agrees there are different types of homicide. But pinning those types down into useful analytical categories is problematic. Categories like alcohol-related, drug-related, domestic and gang related are not mutually exclusive, and overlap with other types of categorisation like infanticide, intimate partner homicides, robbery homicides and sexually-motivated homicides. This makes explaining trends difficult even though those trends display clear patterns that beg for a simple explanation.⁶

The report argues that there are two types of trend driving homicide. A long wave impacting many nations and a series of locally-specific short waves. The long wave saw a rise in homicide from 1960 to around 1990. Though the drivers for the long wave are disputed, it is believed to be partly driven by demographics and the baby boomer generation raising the numbers of young people in the 60s and 70s. Other possible drivers for the long wave include:

- cultural change from Victorian restraint to the more hedonistic 1960s and 1970s followed by a reversion in the 1990s
- a rise then fall in societal-level risk factors, which occurred in multiple nations
- the mass-marketisation of illegal drugs and Criminal Justice System response that ultimately followed.

In England and Wales, the rise in homicides extended into the early 2000s, attributed to a short wave of mainly male on male weapons cases. Recent increases in homicides up to 2017/18, share similar features to those in the early 2000s with the same drivers to suggest that it will be a short wave. Short waves are linked to the destabilisation of illicit drug markets where:

The evidence suggests that for a short period, one type of homicide dominates due to social transmission rather than changes in structural factors. That is, a relatively small group of individuals, known to each other in some way, are suddenly drawn into a pattern of violence due to a gang

⁶ Home Office, [Trends and drivers of homicide: Main findings](#), p.55, 5 March 2020

beef, or competition related to a change in supply or demand of illicit drugs, or some similar mechanism.

The last two increases in England and Wales also fit this pattern. *There is little published evidence on why homicide rose to a peak in the early 2000s and fell sharply thereafter. It occurred when economic and policing measures were generally favourable. But there is evidence of drug-market destabilisation at that time as a select group of mainly Jamaican sellers came to the UK following aggressive enforcement to expel them from the US. A similar rise in crack-cocaine use has occurred since 2014, in line with the recent homicide surge. This time the advances in data have captured the increase in drug-related cases more clearly.⁷*

The report also noted a strong geographical link between homicide in England and Wales and deprivation. Since 1981 more than 50% of homicides occur within the 30% most deprived areas with victims and suspects showing similar trends.⁸

2.2 Homicide figures for England and Wales

Data on homicide is not available from the Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW) as it collects survey data from victims. Homicide figures are available from Police Recorded Crime Data through the Home Office's Homicide Index.

Deaths are recorded as those which are "initially" and "currently" classified as such. The number of homicides recorded in a year will be revised moving forwards, usually declining, as offences are reclassified as: 'no crime'; as court proceedings find that the victim committed suicide; that no offence took place; or that the case should be reclassified to a lesser offence. For example, in year ending March 2020, 703 deaths were initially recorded as homicides by the police and by 15 December 2020, 8 were no longer recorded as homicides, giving a total of 695 offences currently recorded as homicide. Previously recorded figures may also be revised upwards when undiscovered crimes come to light.⁹

A homicide is presented in the official statistics against the year in which the police recorded it. This is not always the year in which the offence took place, the year in which the accused is brought to trial, or the year in which a person was found guilty (or innocent) of homicide.

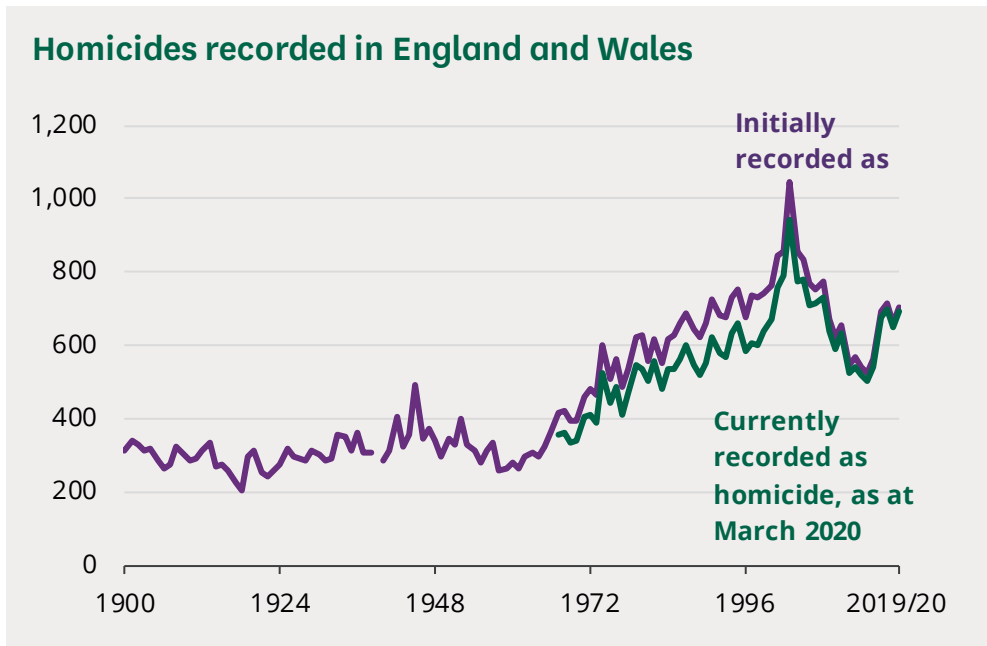
The chart on the following page shows that the number of homicides generally increased from the 1960s until the early 2000s. There has been a steady decrease in recorded homicides from 2002/03, when they reached a peak at 944 (year ending March 2003 includes 172 homicides

⁷ *Ibid*; pp10-11

⁸ *Ibid*; p.20

⁹ ONS, *Homicide in England and Wales: year ending March 2020*, 25 February 2021

committed by Dr Harold Shipman) to a low of 511 in 2014/15. The number of recorded homicides has risen in each year since.



Sources:

Data for 1899-1968: Home Office, *Historical Crime Data, 1898-2002*, 21 April 2016, Accessed Jan 2018.

Data for 1969-2018/19: ONS, *Homicide in England and Wales: year ending March 2020*, 25 February 2021, Table 1

In the year ending 31st March 2020, the latest full financial year for which statistics are available, 695 deaths were “currently” attributed to homicide (as at 15 December 2020). This is an increase of 47 (7%) on the year to 31st March 2019. Figures in 2019/20 have already been revised down from 703 deaths initially recorded as homicide – a reduction of 8. This figure includes the 39 human trafficking victims who were found dead in a lorry in Essex. The figures may also be subject to further revisions moving forwards, as explained above.¹⁰

It is worth noting that the number of homicides is relatively small and wide variations can occur easily - not too much should be inferred from these annual variations.

Current levels (695 homicides) equal a rate of 12 per million population in 2019/20. In the five years prior to 2016/17 they have been recorded at between 9 and 10 homicides per million of population, some of the lowest rates since 1973. Since 2016/17, homicides have been recorded at between 11 to 12 homicides per million population. (Please see Appendix Table A1 [here](#))

¹⁰ ONS, *Homicide in England and Wales: year ending March 2017*, 8 February 2018

2.3 Homicides by Police Force Area

Under the *Police Act 1996* (as amended), the Home Secretary can request for chief constables of forces in England and Wales to provide regular statistical data on the number of crimes they record. All data must be in accordance with the [Home Office Counting Rules](#) to ensure consistency. Data for homicides by Police Force is published quarterly.¹¹

For the year ending 31 March 2020 there were 695 recorded homicides in England and Wales – a rate of 11.7 per million population. The Essex Police force had the highest homicide rate at 33.6 per million population. This was due to the 39 human trafficking victims who were found dead in a lorry in Essex. Cleveland and Dyfed-Powys had the second highest recorded homicide rate of around 19 per million population followed by West Midlands (17.1 per million population). Surrey had the lowest rate of 2.5 recorded homicides per million population.¹²

Homicides by region

Per million population

London	16.5
East	15.4
West Midlands	13.0
Wales	12.4
North West	12.3
East Midlands	10.5
North East	10.5
Yorkshire and The Humber	9.4
South East	8.3
South West	6.0
England and Wales	11.7

Source: ONS, *Homicide in England and Wales: year ending March 2020*, 25 February 2021, Table 20

The chart opposite shows the number of homicides per million population by region in England and Wales.

The map on the next page displays homicide rates per 100,000 population by police force areas in the year ending March 2020 and 2011/12 for comparison.

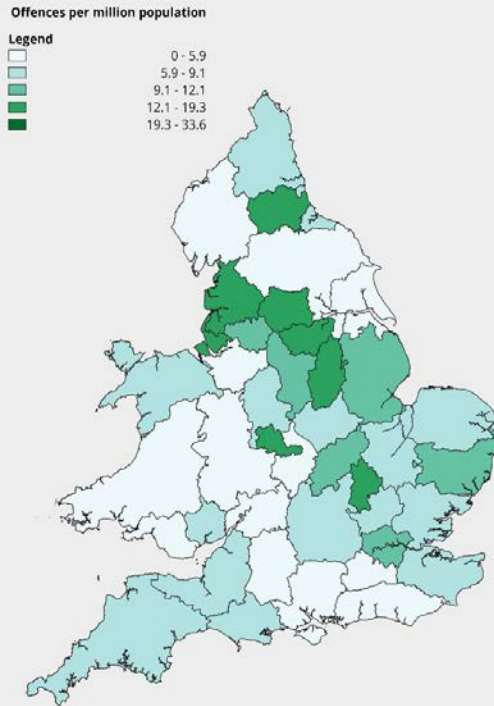
¹¹ Home Office, *Counting rules for recorded crime*, 2 July 2018

¹² More information on the number and rates of homicides by Police Force can be found in the [Appendix Table A2](#)

Homicide offences recorded by the police

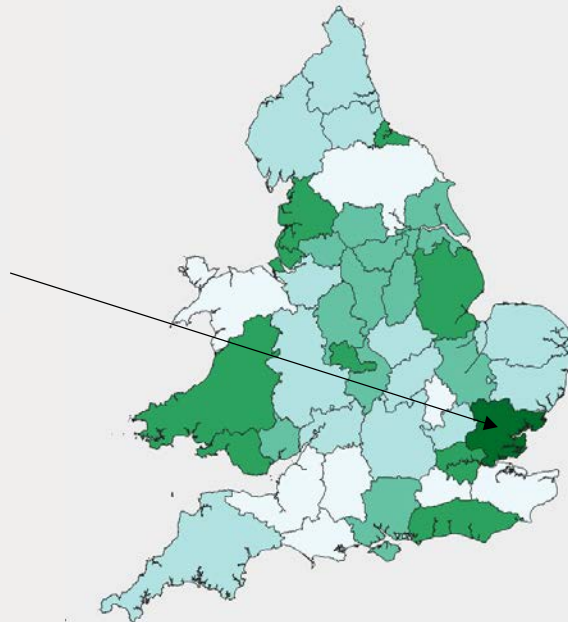
England and Wales, year ending March 2012 and 2020

2011/12



2019/20

Essex in 2019/20 includes the 39 human trafficking victims who were found dead in a lorry in Essex

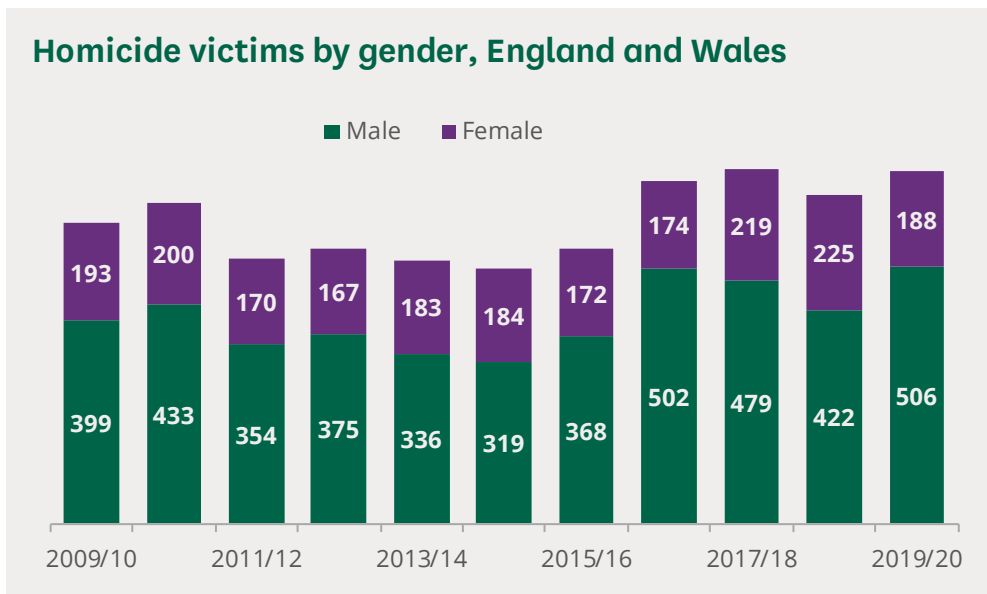


3. Characteristics of the victims

The [Homicide in England and Wales: year ending March 2020](#) report published in February 2021 includes detailed statistics about homicide victims' characteristics.

3.1 Gender

In 2019/20, just under three quarters (73%) 506 of the total 695 victims of offences currently recorded as homicide were male and over a quarter were female (188 or 27%).¹³



Source: ONS, [Homicide in England and Wales: year ending March 2020](#), 25 February 2021, Table 4

3.2 Age

In 2019/20, children below the age of one were most at risk of homicide with 28 offences per million population.¹⁴ This was an decrease compared with 45 per million population in 2018/19.

Of adult male homicides, those between the ages of 16 and 24 are most at risk, with 38 homicides per million population – a rate more than treble that of the rate across all age groups.¹⁵



Source: ONS, [Homicide in England and Wales: year ending March 2020](#), 25 February 2021, Table 4

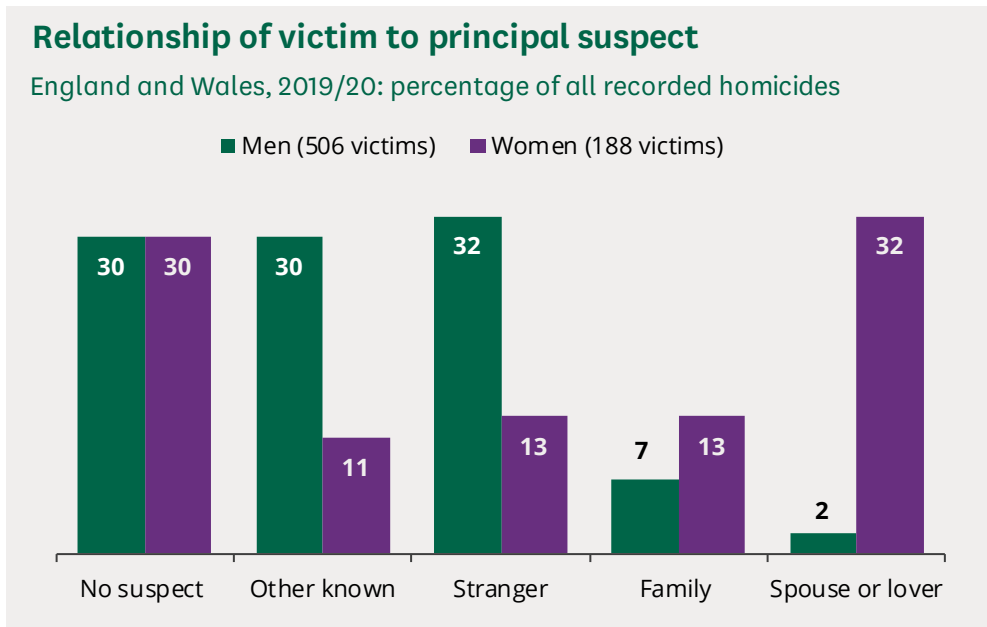
¹³ Year ending March 2020 includes 1 homicide victim with unknown gender.

¹⁴ ONS, [Homicide in England and Wales: year ending March 2020](#), Appendix table 4, 25 February 2021

¹⁵ *Ibid*;

3.3 Relation to principal suspect

Information is recorded on the relationship of the victim of a homicide to the principal suspect. The chart below shows the latest available data.



Source: ONS, *Homicide in England and Wales: year ending March 2020*, 25 February 2021, Table 11b

As the chart shows, the majority of homicides involve principal suspects who are known to the victim. This is more pronounced among women. In 2019/20, 32% of men and 13% of women were killed by a stranger. Since, 2007/08 between 21% and 34% of men were killed by a stranger, while for women rates ranged from 10% to 19%.

From 2007/08 to 2015/16, over 70% of female victims and around half of male victims knew the principle suspect prior to their killing. Since then, over half of female victims and less than half of male victims knew the principal suspect. Prior to 2017/18 among female victims, 40% to 52% were killed by a present or former partner. This proportion fell to 30% in 2017/18, rose to 39% in 2018/19, then fell again to 32% in 2019/20. Whilst for men this accounted for 5% or less of cases from 2009/10. Females generally were twice as likely to be killed by family members than men.

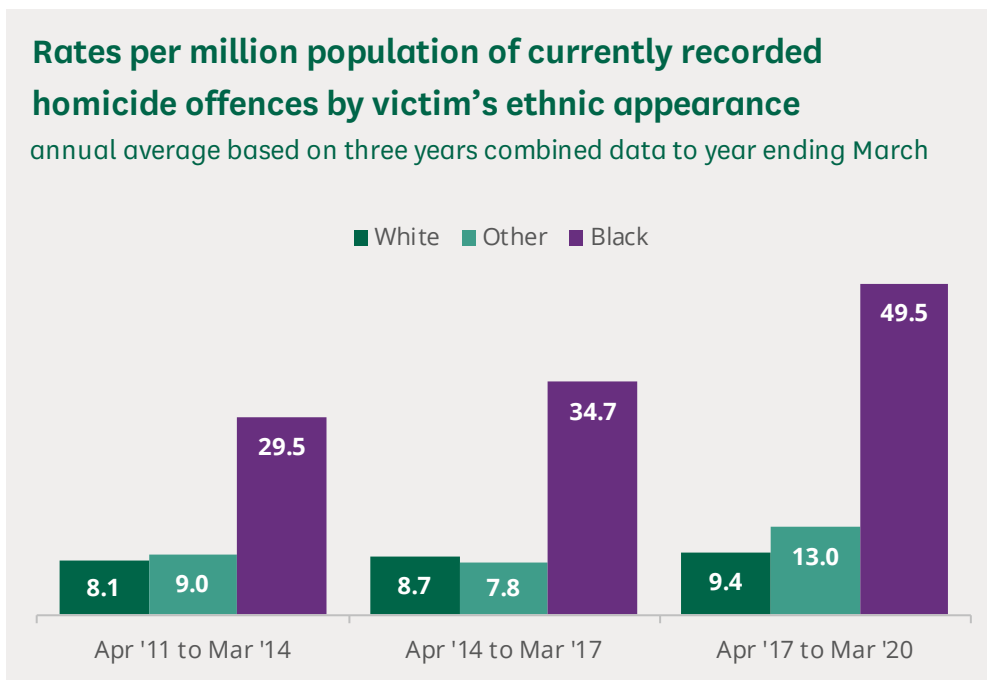
3.4 Ethnicity of the victim and suspect

Information about race of the homicide victims is available in the [Homicide in England and Wales: year ending March 2020](#) report. Please note that information about race provided in this publication is based on police officer identified racial groups.

The chart on the following page shows the rate per million population of currently recorded homicide offences by the victim's ethnic appearance. The figures are given as an annual average, based on three

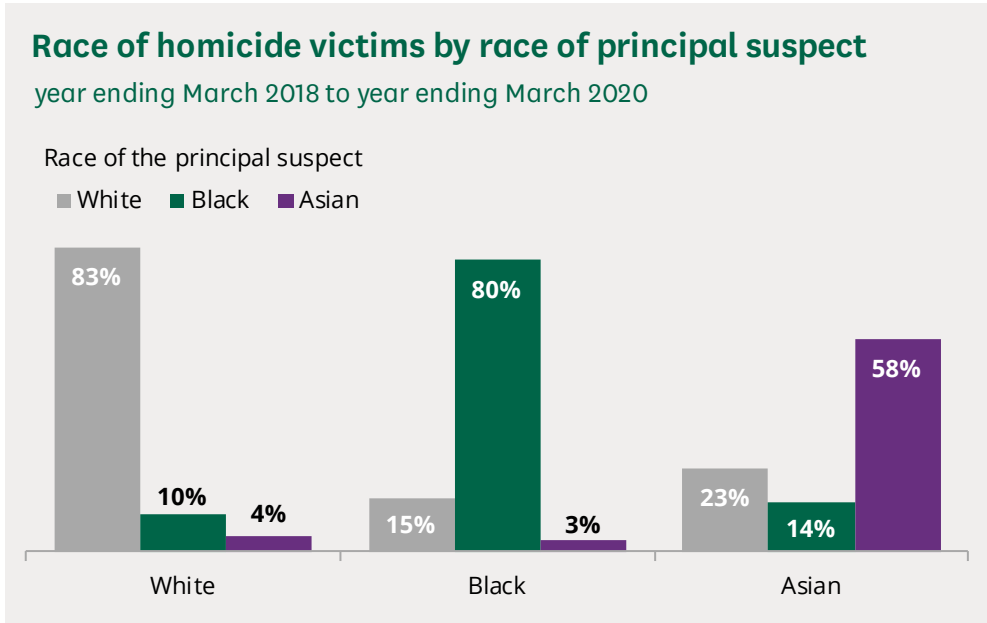
years combined data. Homicide rates per million are highest for victims who were black and rose by 20 points from 29.5 per million in the three years from April 2011 to March 2014 to 49.5 million in the same period between 2017 to 2020.

In comparison, over the same period, the rate for victims who were white increased from 8.1 to 9.4 per million. While those who were of Asian or 'mixed/multiple ethnicities' termed as 'Other' increased from 9 to 13 per million. The calculated rate from 2017 to 2020 for those in the 'Other' cohort included the 39 human trafficking victims who were found dead in a lorry in Essex in October 2019.



Source: ONS, *Homicide in England and Wales: year ending March 2020*, 25 February 2021, Table 6

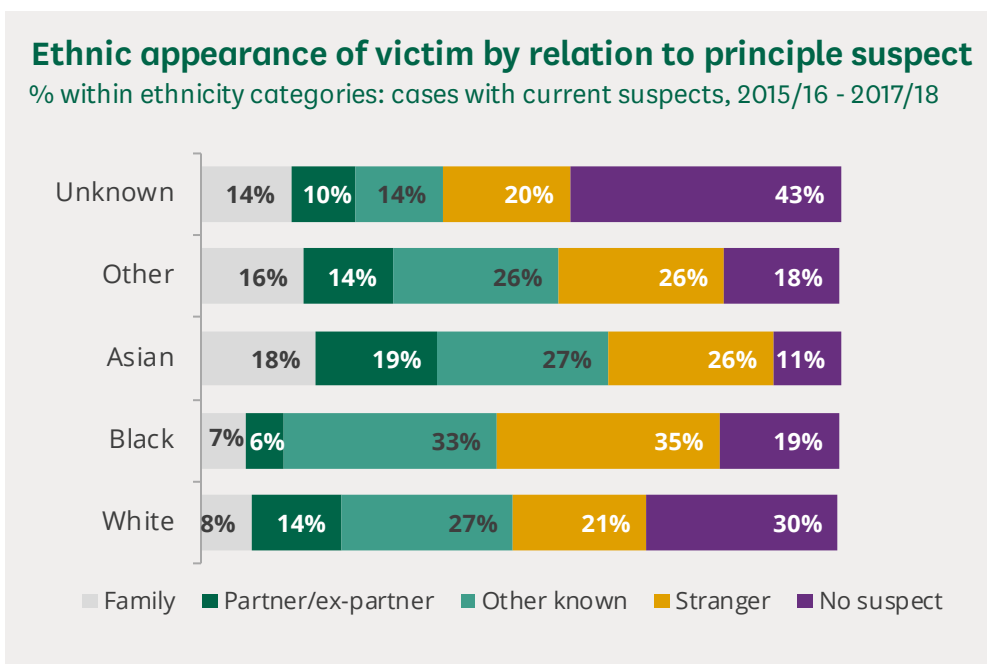
The known ethnic breakdown of victims and suspects in 866 homicides between 2017/18 to 2019/20 is shown in the chart below. Data suggest that in the majority of cases, where the race of the principal suspect was identified, it was the same as the victim's: 83% of White suspects' victims were identified as White; 80% of black suspects' victims were Black and in 58% of cases involving Asian victims the principal suspect was also Asian.



Source: ONS, *Homicide in England and Wales: year ending March 2020*, 25 February 2021, Table 28

3.5 Ethnicity and relationship to victim

The chart below shows the latest data on the relationship between homicide victims and the principal suspect by race. Asians are more likely than any other ethnic group to be killed by a family member or a partner/ ex-partner, whereas White and Black victims are more likely to be killed by a friend or acquaintance. Black victims are also more likely to be killed by a stranger.



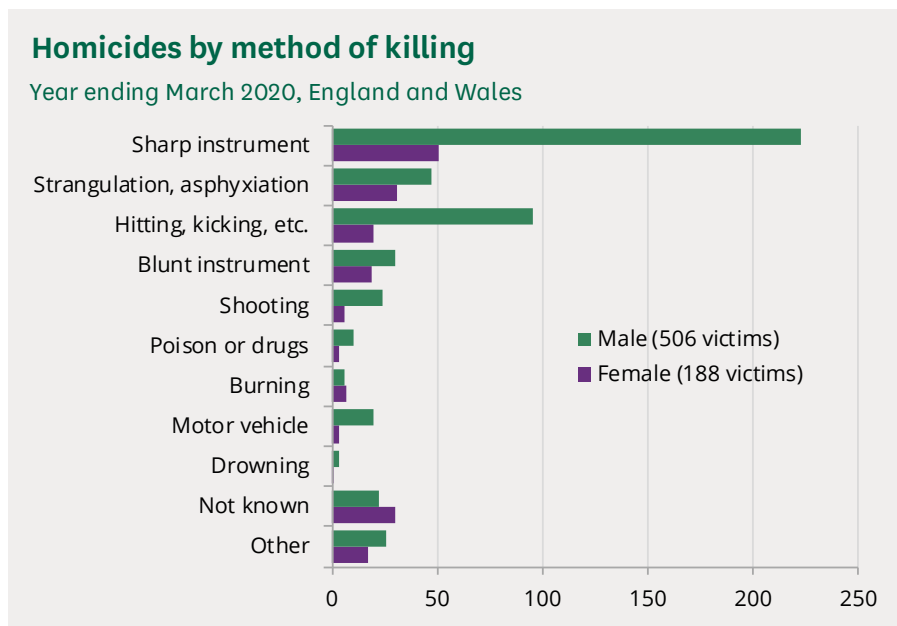
Note: Other known combines for 'Other' and 'Friend/acquaintance'

Source: Ministry of Justice, *Race and the Criminal Justice System 2018*, 28 November 2019, Table 3.06

4. Method of killing

Information about the method of killing is available in [Homicide in England and Wales: year ending March 2020](#). The latest edition was published in February 2021 and provides data for 2019/20 (as at 15 December 2020). The chart below shows a breakdown of homicides by method of killing and gender of the victim in 2018/19.

The most common method of killing (40%) in 2019/20 was use of a sharp instrument (275 out of 695 victims). This was the most common method of killing both male and female victims at 44% and 27% respectively.



Source: ONS, [Homicide in England and Wales: year ending March 2020](#), 25 February 2021, Table 7a

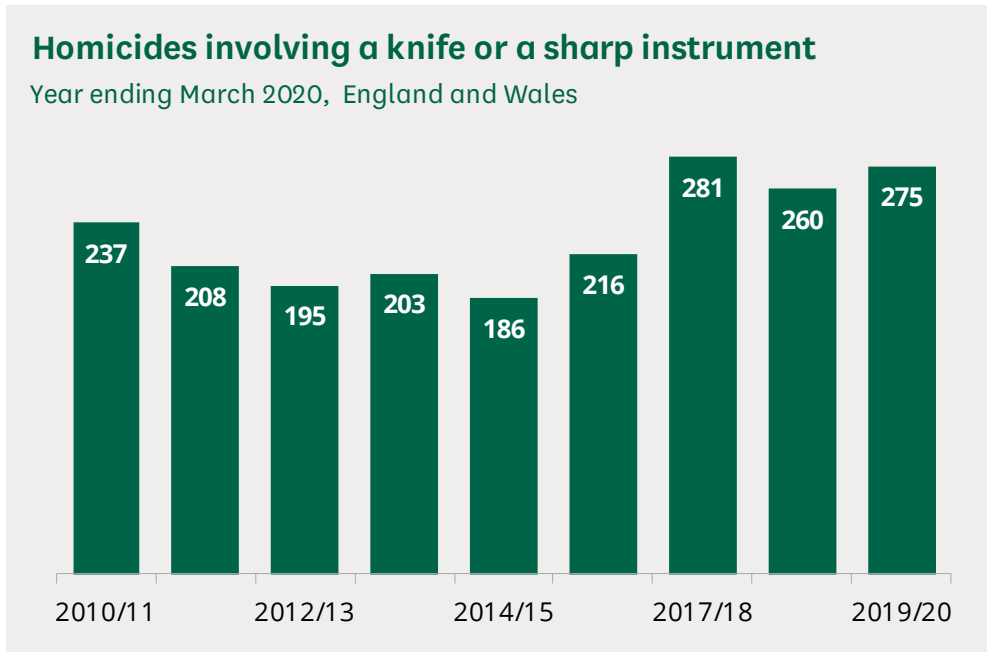
Strangulation and asphyxiation was the next most prevalent method of death for females (31 out of 188 victims). The second most common for men involved hitting, kicking, etc (95 out of 506 victims). As a proportion of all homicides, hitting, kicking, etc was also the second most common for all victims accounting for 17% of deaths (115 deaths).

4.1 Sharp objects

Since 2006/07 sharp instruments have been the method of killing in between 30% and 40% of homicides each year. The number of homicides carried out with sharp instruments increased to 275 in the year ending 31 March 2020 from 260 in the previous year. This was an increase of 6%. As a proportion of homicides committed, it remained 40%.

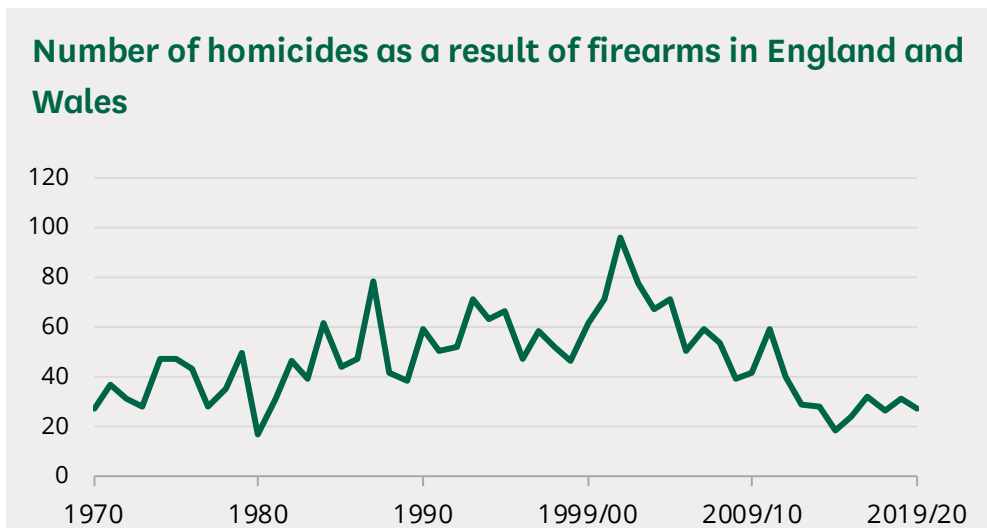
The chart below shows that the number of homicides in this category decreased from 237 in 2010/11 to 186 in 2014/15 before rising to a high of 281 in 2017/18. The 275 recorded in 2019/20 was the second

highest number recorded since 2010/11. In 2019/20, homicides accounted for around 0.6% of all offences involving a sharp instrument.¹⁶



Source: ONS, *Homicide in England and Wales: year ending March 2020*, 25 February 2021, Table 7a

4.2 Firearms



Sources:

Home Office, *Crime in England and Wales*, Various years

Home Office, *Criminal Statistics England & Wales*, Annual Command Papers, Various Years

ONS, *Homicide in England and Wales: year ending March 2020, Appendix table 10*, 25th February 2021,

¹⁶ ONS, *Crime in England and Wales: Other related tables, year ending March 2020*,

Table F3. The figures provided for homicides in this release concerning the use of a knife or a sharp instrument differ from those provided in the ONS *Homicide in England and Wales: year ending March 2020* statistics as figures from the Greater Manchester Police (GMP) have been excluded and were recorded on the 22 May 2020 as opposed to 15 December 2020.

Approximately 4% of victims of recorded homicide (30 people) in 2019/20 were shot. This was 2 fewer people than in 2018/19, but is proportionally of a similar level. The chart below shows the number of homicides since 1970 as a result of firearms.

Following the banning of large calibre handguns from July 1997, and all handguns from 1998, the use of firearms in homicide increased, peaking at 96 in 2001/02. Since then, numbers decreased and current statistics show some of the lowest numbers since the 1980s. The chart shows a spike in the year ending March 2011 which includes the 12 victims of the Derrick Bird shooting.

Of the firearms used to commit homicide in 2019/20, 7 were recorded as licensed and 15 were recorded as unlicensed.¹⁷

In total, there were 9,406 offences involving a firearm in 2019/20 - a 6% decrease on 2018/19. There were 27 homicides in 2019/20 which involved a firearm 7 less than in 2018/19 (34).¹⁸

¹⁷ ONS, *Homicide in England and Wales: year ending March 2020*, appendix table 10, 25 February 2021

¹⁸ ONS, *Offences involving the use of weapons: data tables: year ending March 2020*, Table 8, February 2021

5. Sentencing and convictions

5.1 Outcomes

The [Police recorded crime and outcomes open data](#) provides the latest data for 2018/19 and 2019/20. As of March 15 2021, of homicides recorded to date in 2019/20, charges have been made in 438 cases (64%). The number of cases in 2019/20 not to have been assigned an outcome was 180 (26%).

The table below provides more detail on outcomes for the last two years.

Outcomes of Homicide Offences				
England and Wales, year ending 31st March				
	2018/19 ^a		2019/20 ^a	
	Number	%	Number	%
Charged/Summoned	439	65%	438	64%
Not yet assigned an outcome	129	19%	180	26%
Evidential difficulties (suspect identified; victim supports action)	64	9%	44	6%
Prosecution prevented or not in the public interest	23	3%	20	3%
Investigation complete - no suspect identified	15	2%	3	0%
Evidential difficulties (victim does not support action)	2	0.3%	1	0.1%
Responsibility for further investigation transferred to another body	5	1%	3	0.4%
Grand Total	677	100%	689	100%

Note:

Total number of currently homicides in 2018/19 and 2019/20 differs to homicide data in this table because of the time data was recorded

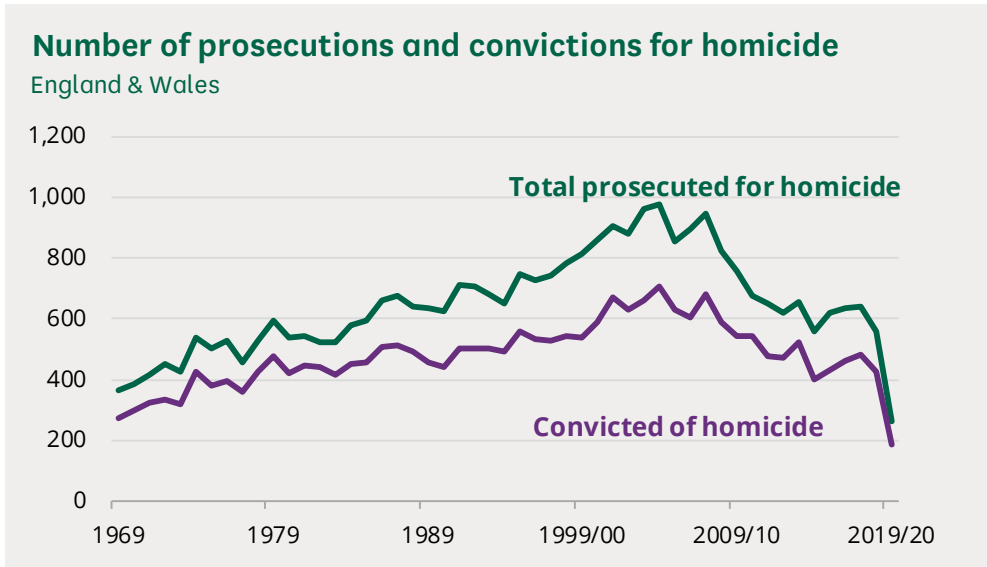
Source: Home Office, [Crime Outcomes in England and Wales](#), Open Data year ending March 2019 and 2020, Accessed 15 March 2021

5.2 Convictions

Statistics are available for the number of people found guilty or with a charge proven for murder or homicide in England and Wales each year since 1967.

For the latest years, statistics are likely to change as many cases are yet to be decided. The following chart shows the number of offences initially indicted for homicide compared with the number of convictions. The sharp fall in 2019/20 may be attributed to the Covid-19 pandemic and the increase in court backlogs.¹⁹

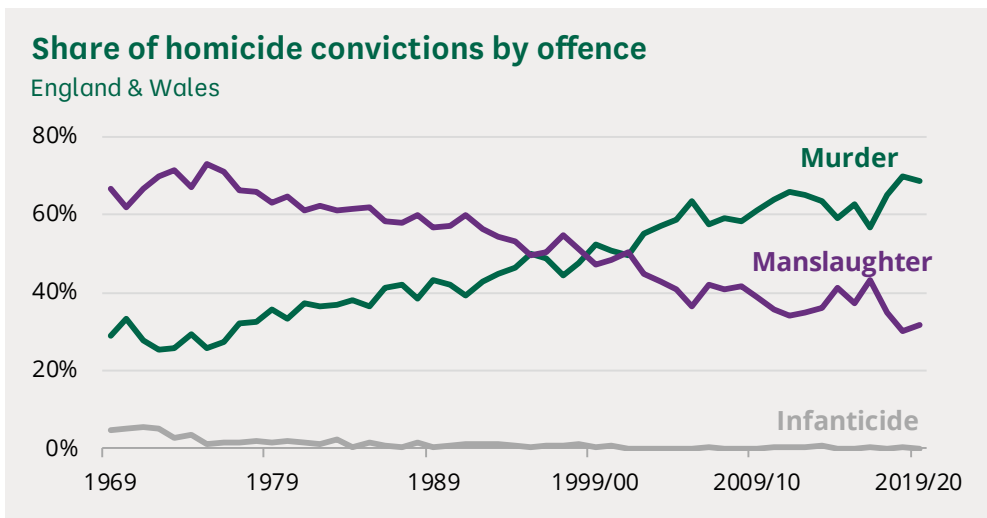
¹⁹ CPS data summary Quarter 3 2020-2021



Note: Figures as at 15 December 2020; figures are subject to revision as cases are dealt with by the police and by the courts, or as further information becomes available.

Source: ONS, *Homicide in England and Wales: year ending March 2020*, 25th February 2021, Table 22

The chart below shows that the proportion of homicide convictions for murder as a total of all homicide convictions has been increasing, whilst the proportion of homicide convictions for manslaughter has been decreasing. In 2019/20, around 68% of convictions are for murder, whilst around 32% are for manslaughter. In comparison, in 1967 around 25% of convictions were for murder, 67% for manslaughter and 7% for infanticide (compared to 0% in 2019/20).



Source: ONS, *Homicide in England and Wales: year ending March 2020*, 25th February 2021, Table 21

5.3 Sentences

Murder has carried a mandatory life sentence in England and Wales since capital punishment was suspended in 1965.²⁰

As at 31 March 2020, there were 7,071 prisoners serving life sentences (including for offences other than homicide) – a 1% increase on the year ending 31st March 2019. Of these, there were 64 whole-life prisoners, with 2 additional life prisoners being treated in secure hospitals.²¹

5.4 Prison population

At 30th June 2020, there were 6,480 prisoners serving sentences for homicide. Of these, 5,626 were for murder, and 854 were for manslaughter (including corporate manslaughter). Males made up the larger proportion of inmates at 6,125, whilst females amounted to 355.²²

There were 286 deaths of prisoners in custody in the 12 months to March 2020, of which 3 were homicide.²³

5.5 Reconvictions

A proven re-offence is defined as any offence committed within one year of a prior offence, or within a further six month waiting period to allow the offence to be proven in court, that leads to a court conviction, caution, reprimand or warning.²⁴

Between April 2009 and March 2020, a total of 38 suspects were convicted of homicide having been previously convicted of homicide. Of the 38 suspects convicted for homicide, 26(68%) did so after being released or having their sentence for a previous homicide conviction terminated. 12 were convicted while serving a sentence for homicide. Figures for convictions while serving a sentence for homicide only covers homicides in prison or other secure institutions. In the year ending March 2020, there were no recorded homicide convictions, where a suspect had been previously convicted of homicide as at 15 December 2020. These figures are subject to change as more information becomes available or as more cases are dealt with by the police and courts.²⁵

²⁰ [Legislation.gov.uk, Murder \(Abolition of Death Penalty\) Act 1965, 2017](https://legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1965/1)

²¹ Ministry of Justice, *Offender Management Statistics quarterly, England and Wales, October to December 2019*

²² MOJ, *Offender Management Statistics Quarterly, England and Wales, January to March 2020*, Table A1.5i

²³ MOJ, *Safety in custody summary tables to December 2019*, 30 April 2020, Table 1

²⁴ MOJ, *Proven Reoffending Statistics Quarterly Bulletin, July 2017 to September 2017*, 25th July 2019, p.2

²⁵ ONS, *Homicide in England and Wales: year ending March 2020*, 25th February 2020, Table 26

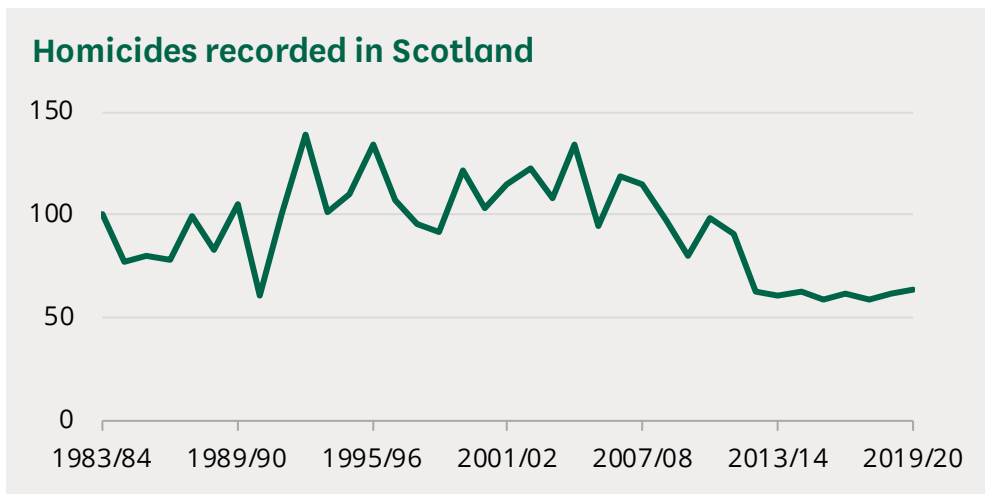
6. Scotland and Northern Ireland

Scotland and Northern Ireland record crime separately to England and Wales. The [Scottish Government](#) publishes Scottish homicide data, and the [Police Service of Northern Ireland](#) publishes Northern Irish homicide data.

6.1 Scotland

In 2019/20, 64 cases of homicide were recorded in Scotland, an increase of 2 compared with the 62 cases recorded in 2018/19.

The chart below shows that figures peaked in 1991/92 at 139 (largely attributed to homicides outside of the City of Glasgow but within Strathclyde) and have been decreasing gradually since.



Source: Scottish Government, [Homicide in Scotland 2019-2020: statistics](#), 27 October 2020, Historic data table

Unlike England and Wales, the number of offences in Scotland represents the number of complete acts of homicide, regardless of the number killed. This is demonstrated in the table below.

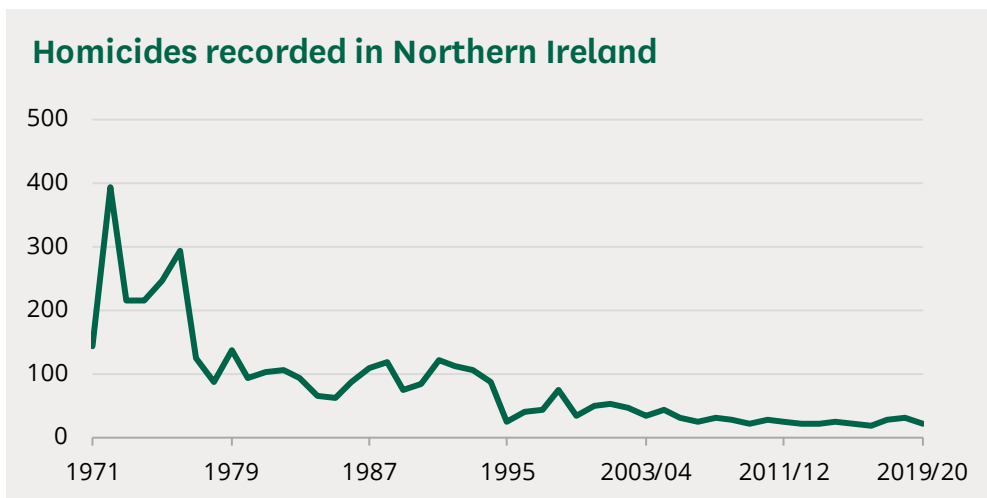
Number of homicide cases, victims and accused, Scotland											
	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20
Total number of cases	80	98	91	63	61	62	59	62	59	62	64
Cases by number of victims:											
1	78	97	90	63	60	62	59	59	59	61	64
2+	2	-	-	-	1	-	-	3	-	1	-
Total number of victims	82	100	93	63	62	62	59	65	59	63	64
Total number of victims per million population(1)	15.7	19.0	17.5	11.9	11.6	11.6	11.0	12.0	10.9	11.6	11.7
Cases by number of accused:											
1	53	68	66	45	47	50	48	48	45	41	54
2	20	19	13	11	8	9	9	5	8	10	6
3+	3	10	10	6	5	4	1	6	5	8	3
unsolved	1	1	2	1	-	-	1	3	1	3	1
Total number of accused	121	142	127	85	90	81	69	78	81	85	76

Source: Scottish Government, [Homicide in Scotland 2019-2020: statistics](#), 27 October 2020, Table 1

6.2 Northern Ireland

In 2019/20, there were 20 homicides currently recorded in Northern Ireland. A decrease from 29 in 2018/19. In 2016/17 there were 18 recorded homicides - the lowest number of since 1969.

The chart below shows that the number of recorded homicide offences peaked in 1972 at 393 towards the start of the Northern Ireland conflict (1968-98). It has since decreased and remained below 50 from 1999/00 onwards.

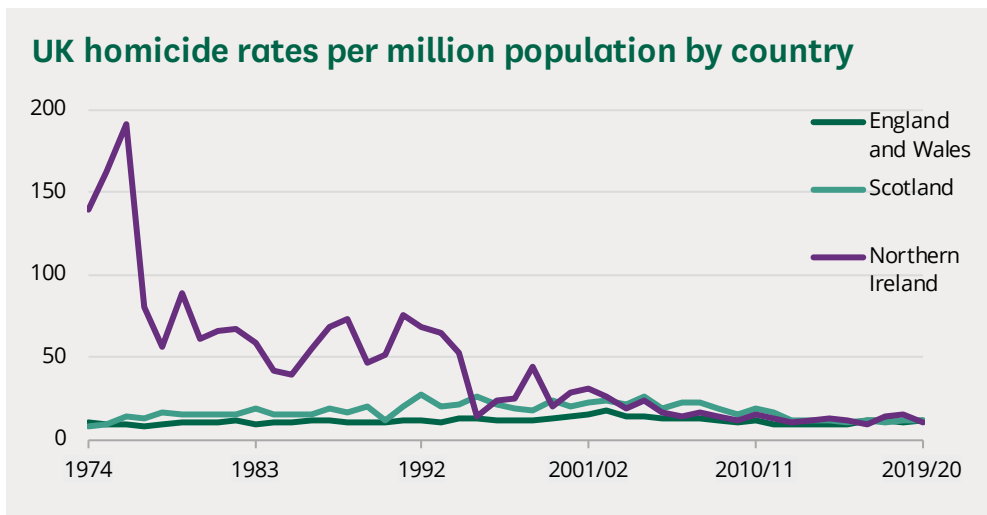


Source: Police Service of Northern Ireland, *Police recorded crime Annual Trends 1998/99 to 2019/20*, 8 November 2019 Tables 2.2 & 2.3

6.3 Comparison

Until the 1960s, Northern Ireland experienced relatively low homicide rates. After this, levels increased considerably during the Troubles, before gradually returning to rates similar to the rest of the UK by the end of the 1990s.

The following chart shows homicide rates per million population for the countries of the UK.



Sources:

Police Service of Northern Ireland, [Police recorded crime Annual Trends 1998/99 to 2019/20](#), Tables 2.2 & 2.3; Scottish Government, [Homicide in Scotland 2019-2020: statistics](#), 27 October 2020, Historic data table; Data for 1967-2016/17: ONS, [Homicide in England and Wales: year ending March 2020](#), 25 February 2021, Table 1, ONS, [Estimates of the population for the UK, England and Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland](#)

7. International comparison

Homicide rates vary greatly across the globe and this section provides an international context for homicide in the UK.

7.1 Countries

Whilst comparing homicide statistics and crime rates across countries it is important to recognise the definition of offences vary. For example, use of the term 'homicide' to denote manslaughter, murder and infanticide is common in many countries, but not all. Different social and economic conditions, as well as legal and criminal justice systems, are amongst some of the reasons affecting definitions.

In terms of recording statistics, there are differing points throughout various criminal justice systems at which homicides are recorded. For example, it may be when the offence is discovered or on completion of legal proceedings. In other countries, the police will record a death as homicide if it cannot immediately be attributed to other causes.²⁶

Recent trends globally show a general decline in homicide rates. Some of the explanations for this include increased incarceration, receding drug markets, innovations in policing, improvements in the economy, increased immigration and the legalization of abortion. One study has attributed and linked the general decline witnessed globally in homicide rates to ageing populations.²⁷

The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC)'s [Global Homicide Handbook](#) was most recently published in 2019, and describes a global average homicide rate of 61 homicides per million population.²⁸ Regionally It also showed that the Americas (172) and Africa (130) were much higher than the global average.²⁹ Asia (23), Europe (30) and Oceania (28) all had much lower rates than the global average.

A selection of countries' homicide rates are displayed in the following chart. These include the majority of OECD countries and some others.

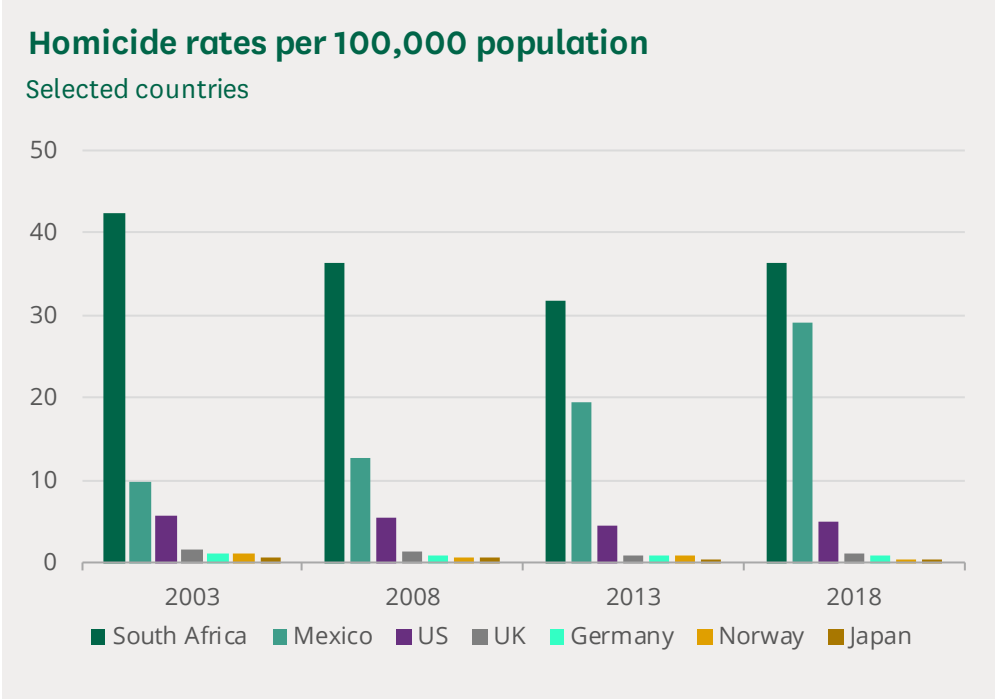
Of these countries, South Africa has a far higher homicide rate than the rest, last recorded in 2018 at 36.4 per 100,000 population with the next highest being Mexico with a rate of 29.1. Japan had the lowest homicide rate of 0.3 which was roughly 121 times less than South Africa. Please see [Appendix table A7](#) for more detailed figures.

²⁶ ONS, *Homicide in England and Wales: year ending March 2018*

²⁷ The Conversation, *Homicide is declining around the world-but why?* 4 November 2019

²⁸ UNODC, *Global study on homicide, 2019*, p11. Please note that figures are given as rates per 100,000. In 2017 there were 6.1 homicides per 100,000 population where multiplying by 10 gives you rates per million population.

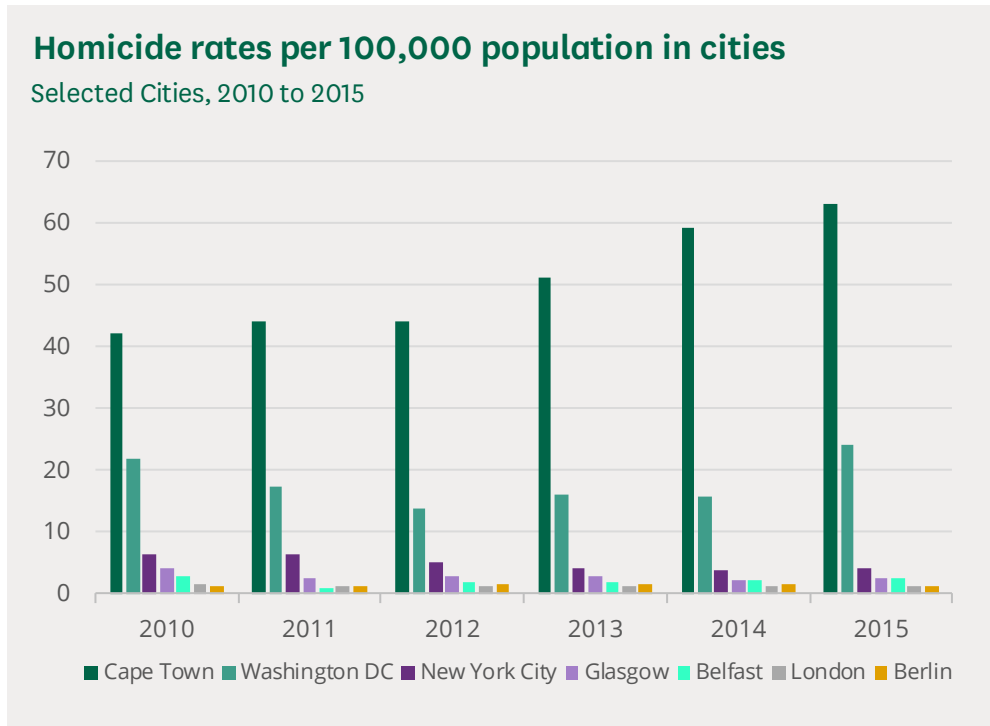
²⁹ *Ibid*; p.21. The scale of homicide is difficult to determine in Africa as raw statistics for many countries are not available. Figures for Pacific states are also likely to be underreported.



Source: United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, *Global Study on Homicide Data*

7.2 Major cities

The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) produces statistics on homicide in cities globally up to 2017. The following chart shows homicide rates per 100,000 population in selected major cities from 2010 to 2015. Data from 2015 onwards is less complete.



Sources:

United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, *Homicide counts and rates* (2000-2017).
 DC Metropolitan Police Department, 2017, *Homicide closure rates*,
 United States Census Bureau, 2017, *Population and Housing Unit Estimates*
 Cape Town figures are from the *University of Cape Town's Centre of Criminology*

Further data for more cities can be found in Appendix table A8 [here](#).
 Generally speaking, homicide rates in European cities tend to be lower than those of major US cities. The rate of 8.5 per 100,000 population in Paris for 2015 can be attributed to the various terrorist attacks experienced in the city in that year.

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