

# Abuse and neglect: recorded offences

## Indicator 4 — Number of recorded sexual offences against children

### Key messages

- There were a total of 23,663 sexual offences against children recorded by the police in the UK in 2012/13.
- There were 6,296 rapes of children recorded by police in England and Wales.
- There were 521 rapes and attempted rapes in Scotland and Northern Ireland in 2012/13.

### Why is this measure important?

This measure shows the number of sexual offences committed against children recorded by the police. The data covers a range of sexual offences, including rape, sexual assault, sexual activity with a minor and child grooming. The data does not reflect the total number of sexual offences committed against children, but it does provide an important picture of the amount of sexual abuse committed against children that comes to the attention of the police and is then recorded as an offence.

### What are the limitations of the data?

Police-recorded crime statistics suffer from under-reporting and therefore do not reflect the actual number of offences committed. Trends in the data may reflect increased public awareness and changes in policing rather than an increase in incidence.

The focus of police-recorded crime statistics is on offences, rather than victims of crime. This can make it hard to establish the total number of sexual offences committed against children as offence types cover different age groups, with the majority relating to children aged under 16 only. The NSPCC has addressed this issue by making Freedom of Information (FOI) requests to all police forces in England and Wales asking for the number of recorded sexual offences against under 18s. Figures for offences against under 18s are also available for Northern Ireland.

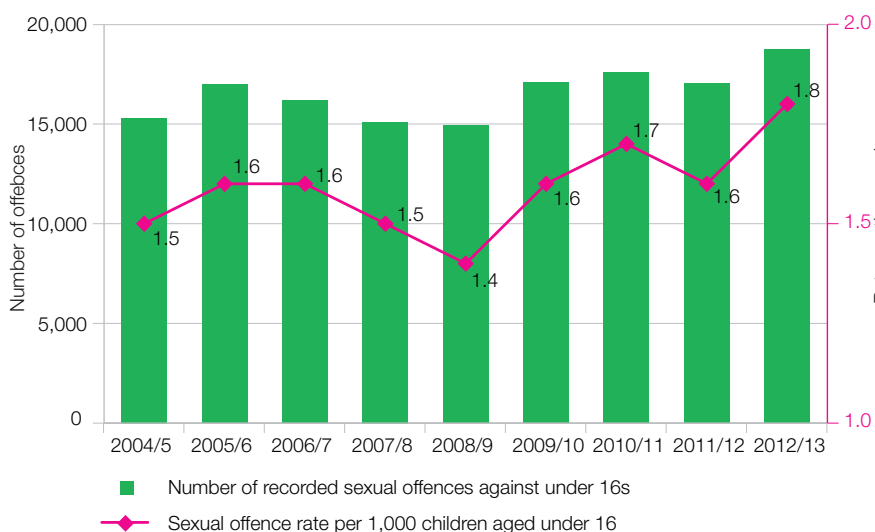
In January 2014 the UK Statistics Authority removed the National Statistics designation from recorded crime data in England and Wales following concerns about the data's reliability.\*

### Data availability and comparability

Data is available for all four nations showing recorded offences for the last decade. However, data for England and Wales is combined, preventing a full comparison between the individual nations. Legislation, offence categories and recording methods are not identical across the UK and so direct comparisons need to be treated with caution. Due to changes in legislation, it is not possible to use Scottish data to establish trends. Figures for offences committed against under 18s are available for England and Wales and Northern Ireland, but not for Scotland.

## England and Wales: official statistics

### Number and rate of recorded sexual offences against children aged under 16



**Latest figure:** 19,112 recorded offences against children in 2012/13 (18,744 excluding offences that include victims up to the age of 18 – abuse of a position of trust and abuse of children through prostitution and pornography). This is a rate of 1.8 sexual offences per 1,000 children aged under 16.

**Trend:** The number of recorded sexual offences against children aged under 16 increased by 23 per cent between 2004/5 and 2012/13. There has been a 10 per cent increase in the last year. Rates have remained fairly stable, ranging between 1.4 and 1.8 sexual offences per 1,000 children aged under 16.

For the last six years the NSPCC has sent out FOI requests to every police force in England and Wales, to gather more data about the child victims of sexual offences. This data is examined in greater detail overleaf.

\*UK Statistics Authority (2014) *Assessment of compliance with the code of practice for official statistics: statistics on crime in England and Wales*.

## England and Wales

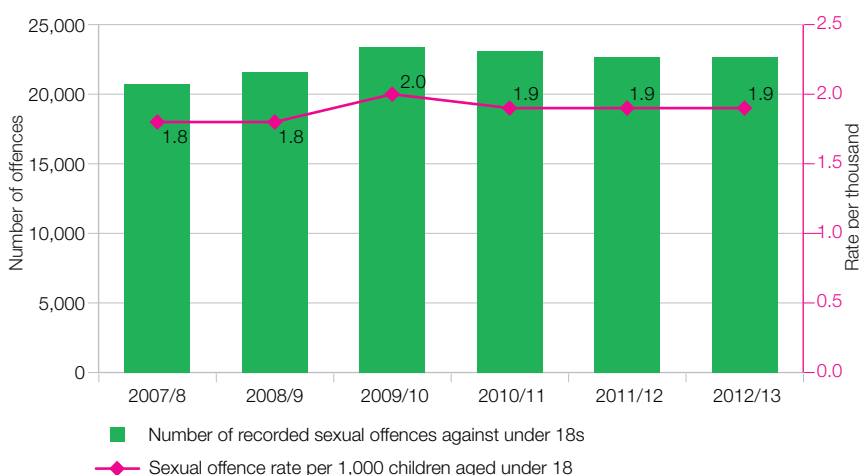
Offence category	Number of offences
Sexual assault on a male child under 13	1,267
Rape of a female child under 16	2,793
Rape of a female child under 13	2,365
Rape of a male child under 16	353
Rape of a male child under 13	785
Sexual assault on a female child under 13	4,172
Sexual activity involving a child under 13	2,175
Sexual activity involving a child under 16	4,461
Abuse of position of trust of a sexual nature (includes under 18s)	192
Abuse of children through prostitution and pornography (includes under 18s)	176
Sexual grooming	373
<b>Total</b>	<b>19,112</b>

In 2012/13 there were:

- 5,158 recorded offences of rape of a girl under 16 (2,365 offences of rape of a female child under 13 and 2,793 of rape of a female child under 16).
- 4,172 offences of sexual assault against girls aged under 13.
- 1,138 recorded offences of rape of boys aged under 16 (785 offences of rape of a male child under 13 and 353 of rape of a male child under 16).
- 1,267 recorded offences of sexual assault against boys aged under 13.

## England and Wales: NSPCC FOI requests

Number and rate of recorded sexual offences against children aged under 18

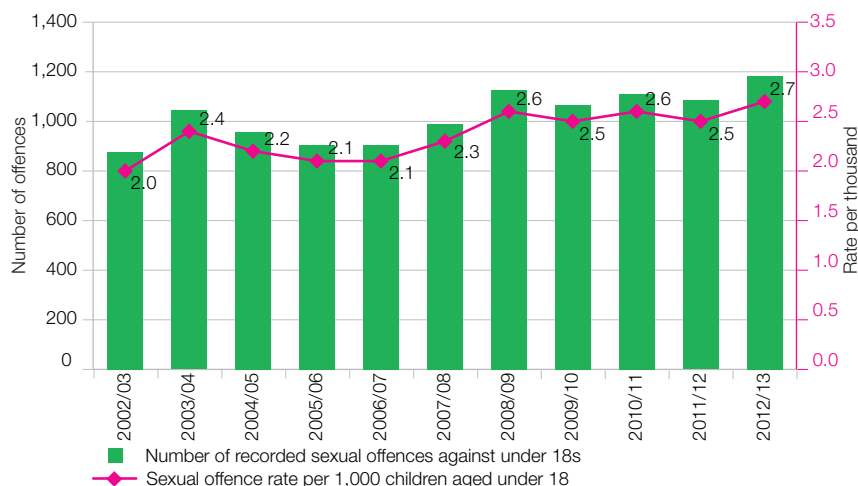


**Latest figure:** 22,654 recorded sexual offences against children aged under 18 in 2012/13, a rate of 1.9 sexual offences per 1,000 children aged under 18.

**Trend:** The total number of recorded sexual offences against under 18s peaked at 23,390 in 2009/10. Since then the number has been going down every year. The rate of sexual offences per 1,000 children aged under 18 has remained stable at between 1.8 and 2.0 per 1,000 under 18s. The contrast between a declining number of sexual offences against under 18s, compared to an increasing number against under 16s can be explained by a rise in the number of offences against young children. For example, the NSPCC's FOI requests found that the number of recorded sexual offences against under 10s increased by over 16 per cent between 2011/12 and 2012/13.

## Northern Ireland

Number and rate of recorded sexual offences against children aged under 18



**Latest figure:** 1,182 recorded sexual offences against children aged under 18 in 2012/13; a rate of 2.7 sexual offences per 1,000 under 18s.

**Trend:** The number of recorded sexual offences and the offence rate has been slowly increasing in recent years, from 875 (two offences per 1,000 children under 18) in 2002/3 to 1,182 (2.7 offences per 1,000 children under 18).

# Northern Ireland

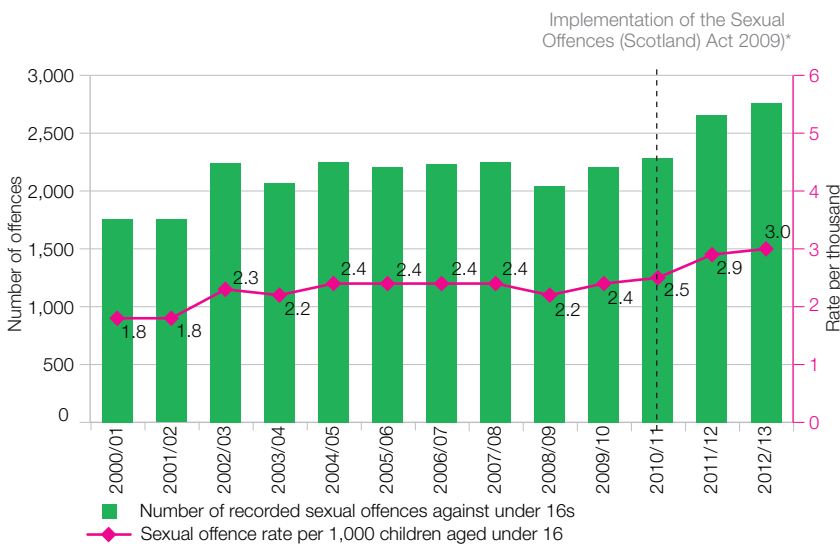
Offence category	Number of offences
Rape (including attempts)	236
Sexual assaults/sexual activity	769
Exposure and voyeurism	41
Obscene publications etc and protected sexual material	124
Other sexual offences	12
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,182</b>

In 2012/13 there were:

- 1,182 sexual offences against children aged under 18 recorded by police in 2012/13.
- A fifth (236) were rapes or attempted rapes.
- Nearly two-thirds (769) were sexual assaults or sexual activity with a child.

# Scotland: official statistics

## Number and rate of recorded sexual offences against children aged under 16



**Latest figure:** 3,369 recorded sexual offences against children in 2012/13 (2,758 excluding offences that include victims up to the age of 18 – procurement of sexual services from child under 18; procurement of a child under 18 for pornography; taking, distribution etc of indecent photos of children; and sexual abuse of trust of a person under 18). This is a rate of three sexual offences per 1,000 children aged under 16.

**Trend:** Not available due to introduction of new legislation relating to sexual offences in December 2010.

\*The Sexual Offences (Scotland) Act 2009 came into force on 1 December 2010 and introduced a number of new “protective” offences which criminalise sexual activity with children and mentally disordered persons. Due to these changes in legislation, comparisons over time should be treated with caution. The new legislation resulted in some increases in sexual offences; however it is likely that the effect will be to change the distribution of crimes among subcategories. For example, crime previously categorised as lewd and libidinous practices will now be classed as sexual assault.

Offence category	Number of offences
Rape or attempted rape of a child aged 13 to 15	170
Rape or attempted rape of a child aged under 13	115
Sexual assault of a child aged 13 to 15	312
Sexual assault of a child aged under 13	322
Sexual activity involving a child aged 13 to 15	473
Sexual activity involving a child aged under 13	114
Taking, distribution, possession etc. of indecent photos of children (includes under 18s)	595
Grooming of children for purposes of sexual offences	21
Lewd and libidinous practice (includes under 18s)*	842
Sexual abuse of trust (includes under 18s)	11
Other sexual offences (some include under 18s)	394
<b>Total</b>	<b>3,369</b>

In 2012/13 there were:

- 285 recorded offences of rape or attempted rape against children aged under 16 (170 rapes or attempted rapes of children aged 13 to 15 and 115 rapes or attempted rapes of children under 13).
- 634 recorded offences of sexual assault of a child aged under 16 (312 sexual assaults of a child aged 13 to 15 and 322 sexual assaults of children aged under 13).

\*Offences in the category “lewd and libidinous practices” cover sexual offences against children committed prior to 1 December 2010 under previous legislation.

### Data sources

**England and Wales:** ONS (2014) *Crime in England and Wales year ending September 2013*. (All figures used are for year ending 31 March); NSPCC (various dates) FOI requests sent to all police forces in England and Wales.

**Scotland:** Scottish Government Recorded crime statistics (Data provided to NSPCC).

**Northern Ireland:** PSNI Statistics Branch (2013) *Trends in police recorded crime in Northern Ireland 1998/99 to 2012/13*. (Data provided to NSPCC).