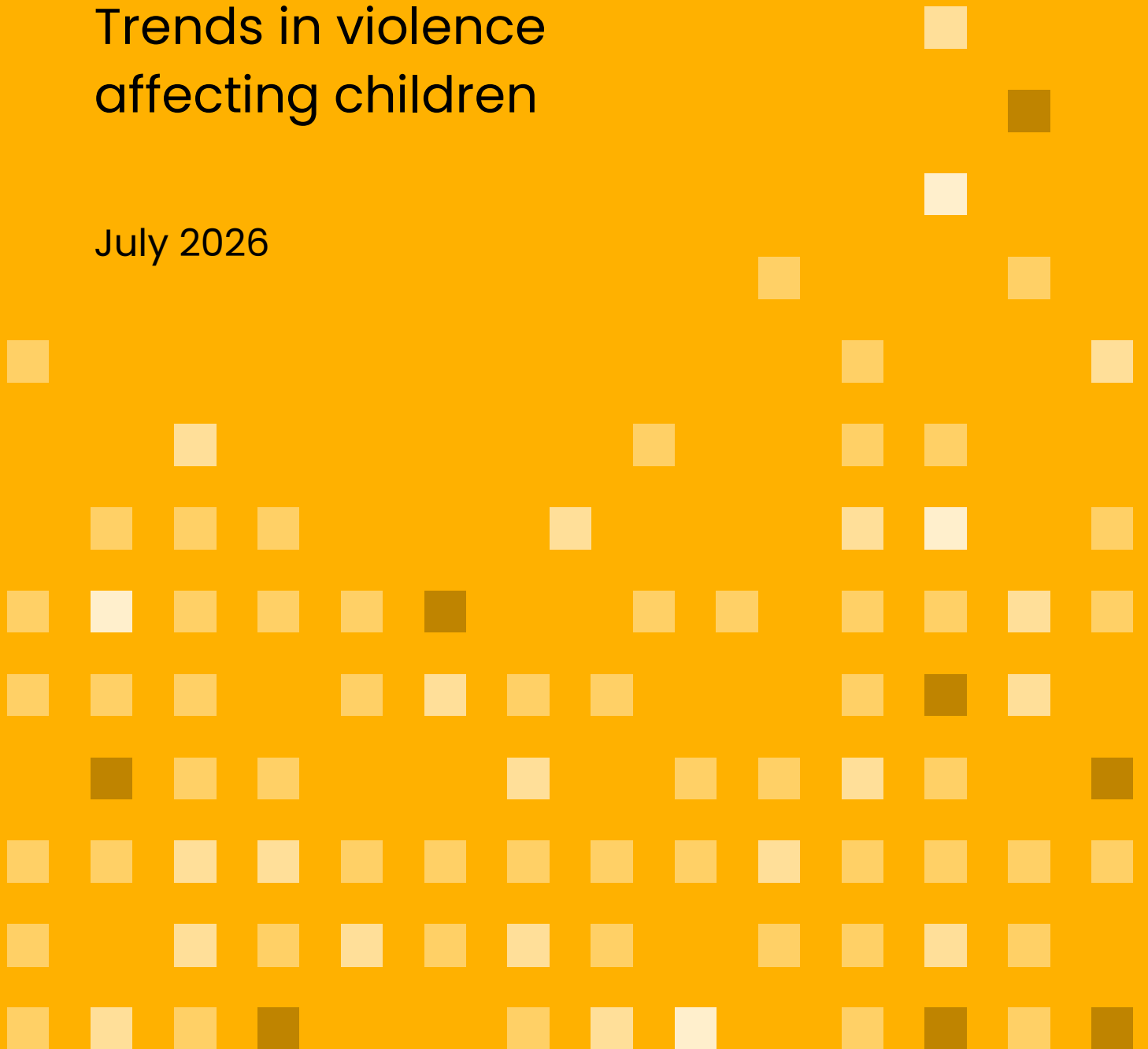


Beyond the Headlines

Trends in violence
affecting children

July 2026



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Acknowledgements

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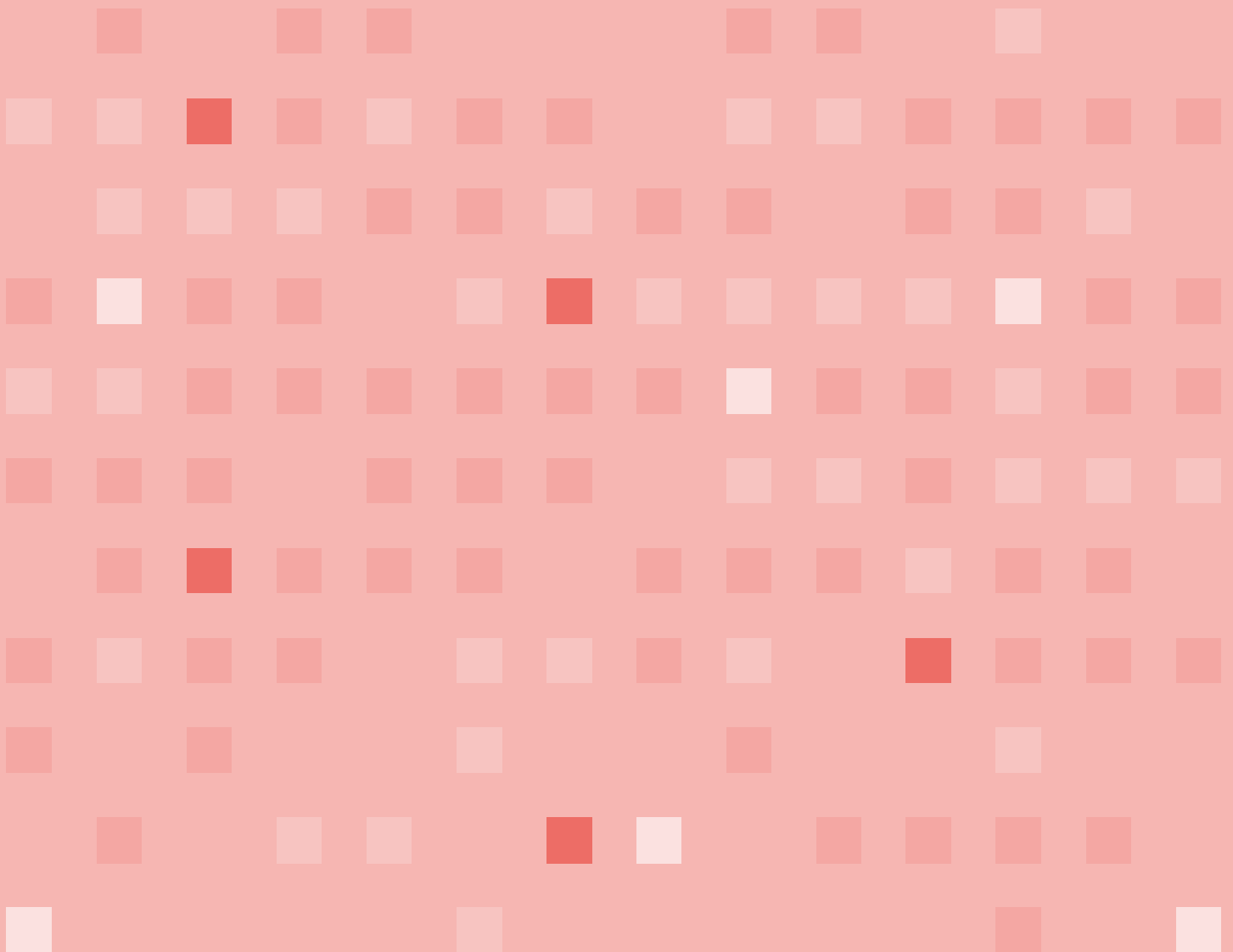
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Part 1

Main findings and summary



Main findings

We use a series of indicators to track key trends in violence affecting children and young people and in six of the sectors that are key to supporting those at risk. These indicators aim to provide a clear national picture of what's happening that can help inform those working to support children and young people. This report provides our latest annual update, using data for 2024/25.

Serious violence affecting children and young people is falling across England and Wales.

In 2023/24, violence affecting children rose.

In the years following Covid, key measures of violence were on a broadly downward trajectory. But in 2023/24, more children were admitted to hospital following knife assault (9% up on 2022/23), more young people were victims of homicide (6% up on 2022/23) and more children were cautioned or convicted for violent offences (12% up on 2022/23).

But the latest data for 2024/25 shows homicides and knife crime fell sharply.

In 2024/25, the number of 16–24-year-old homicide victims fell 41%, from 106 in 2023/24 to 63 in 2024/25, the lowest it's been in over a decade. The number of 0–17-year-olds admitted to hospital for knife assault fell 20%, though it remains higher than it was a decade ago (2014/15). Knife-enabled homicides of 13–19-year-olds fell 59%, from 54 in 2023/24 to 22 in 2024/25.

And fewer children committed violent offences.

In 2024/25, 3,970 10–17-year-olds were cautioned or convicted for violent offences. This is down 3% compared to the previous year (2023/24), down 10% compared to the year before Covid (2019/20) and down 24% compared to 10 years previously (2014/15).

But violence against young women and girls remains a serious and underreported issue.

More boys are being arrested for sexual offences.

The number of children arrested for sexual offences had been falling since 2015/16, reaching a low of 1,979 in 2020/21. Since then, it's risen every year, reaching 3,809 in the latest year (2024/25). This is up 18% on the previous year (2023/24), 74% on the year before Covid (2019/20) and 12% on 10 years before (2014/15). 98% of children arrested are boys.

Tech-facilitated abuse is growing.

The number of children cautioned and convicted for indecent image offences increased dramatically from 2019/20. In 2024/25, it was up 42% on a decade ago (2014/15). In comparison, the total number of children cautioned and convicted for any offence in 2024/25 was 48% down from 2014/15. The number of child-related indecent image offences recorded by the police is now over five times what it was a decade ago (2014/15).

The available data considerably underestimates the true scale.

Only a small percentage of violence against women and girls reaches the attention of the police or other services and once reported, sexual offences are the least likely of all offence types to be successfully investigated by the police (5% in 2024/25). The Office for National Statistics estimates the true number of domestic abuse victims is over 4.5 times the number of domestic abuse crimes that get reported to the police.

Sectors key to supporting children continue to face major pressures.

Policing and youth justice showed some improvements.

In 2024/25, the proportion of crime successfully investigated rose for the second year in a row, up one percentage point (%pt), though it's still only 12%. The proportion of children reoffending fell 1%pt, bringing it to below the previous year (2022/23), the year before Covid (2019/20) and 10 years previously (2013/14). The proportion of Black children in custody fell for the fourth consecutive year, though it's still 22%, nearly four times their population share.

And fewer children were persistently missing school and taken into care.

The proportion of children persistently absent from school fell for the third consecutive year, down 2%pts to 18%. Following 16 years of rising numbers of children being taken into care, the past two years saw them fall. In 2024/25, 81,770 children were looked after, down 2% from the previous year (2023/24).

But pressures on some systems continue to increase.

The number of children referred to mental health services rose for the seventh consecutive year, up 7% to over 1.2 million. Spending on services for young people fell by 8% in real terms. Despite recent improvements, the proportion of children persistently absent from school remains 7%pts over where it was a decade ago (2014/15) and the number of children looked after remains 18% above 2014/15.

Core indicators dashboard

CORE INDICATOR	INDICATOR PERFORMANCE	LATEST VALUE (2024/25)*	CHANGE COMPARED TO...		
			Last year (2023/24)	Pre-Covid (2019/20)	10 years ago (2014/15)**
CHILDREN AFFECTED BY VIOLENCE					
Homicides 16–24-year-old homicide victims	Improving Previously: mixed	63	-40.6%	-55.3%	-26.7%
Knife crime 0–17-year-olds admitted to hospital due to knife assault	Mixed Previously: mixed	409	-19.6%	-26.4%	+32.8%
Justice system involvement Children cautioned and convicted for violent offences	Improving Previously: mixed	3,970	-2.8%	-10.3%	-23.7%
Violence against young women and girls Children arrested for sexual offences	Worsening New indicator	3,809	+18.1%	+74.2%	+11.9%
Disproportionality Proportion of Black children in custody	Mixed Previously: mixed	22.0%	-1.7%pt	-6.2%pt	+0.9%pt
SECTORS AND WIDER SOCIETY					
Policing Successfully investigated crimes	Mixed Previously: mixed	11.6%	+1.2%pt	+0.7%pt	-13.6%pt
Youth justice Children's reoffending rate	Improving Previously: mixed	31.8%	-0.7%pt	-2.5%pt	-11.2%pt

Education Proportion of children persistently absent from school	Mixed <i>Previously: mixed</i>	18.1%	-1.8%pt	+7.3%pt	+7.2%pt
Health Referrals to mental health services	Worsening <i>Previously: worsening</i>	1,215,651	+6.7%	+59.1%	+118.3%
Children's services Children looked after	Mixed <i>Previously: mixed</i>	81,770	-2.1%	+2.2%	+17.7%
Youth sector Local authority expenditure for youth services	Worsening <i>Previously: mixed</i>	£475m	-7.7%	-0.3%	-44.3%

*All figures are for the financial year ending March 2025 (2024/25), except for reoffending rates, which are for children in the criminal justice system in the 2023/24 financial year, and school absence rates, which cover the academic year September to August.

**All figures are compared to the annual figure 10 years ago (2014/15), except for referrals to mental health services, for which the published data only extends back to 2016/17.

Note: percentage point (%pt)

How ratings have been assigned.

For each of the indicators, we've compared the last available annual figures with three different time points: the previous year (2023/24), the year before the Covid pandemic (2019/20) and 10 years ago (or the longest available period if 10 years of data is not available). We've assigned ratings as follows:

Improving

For indicators where, at all three time points, the measure has shown improvement.

Worsening

For indicators where, at all three time points, the measure has got worse.

Mixed

For indicators where there is no clear trend based on the three time points (i.e. some point to improvement while others have worsened).

Executive summary

Beyond the Headlines is our annual look at key trends and data on violence affecting children and young people. We use 11 indicators to track whether things are getting better or worse, and how well the systems that matter most for supporting children and young people are performing.

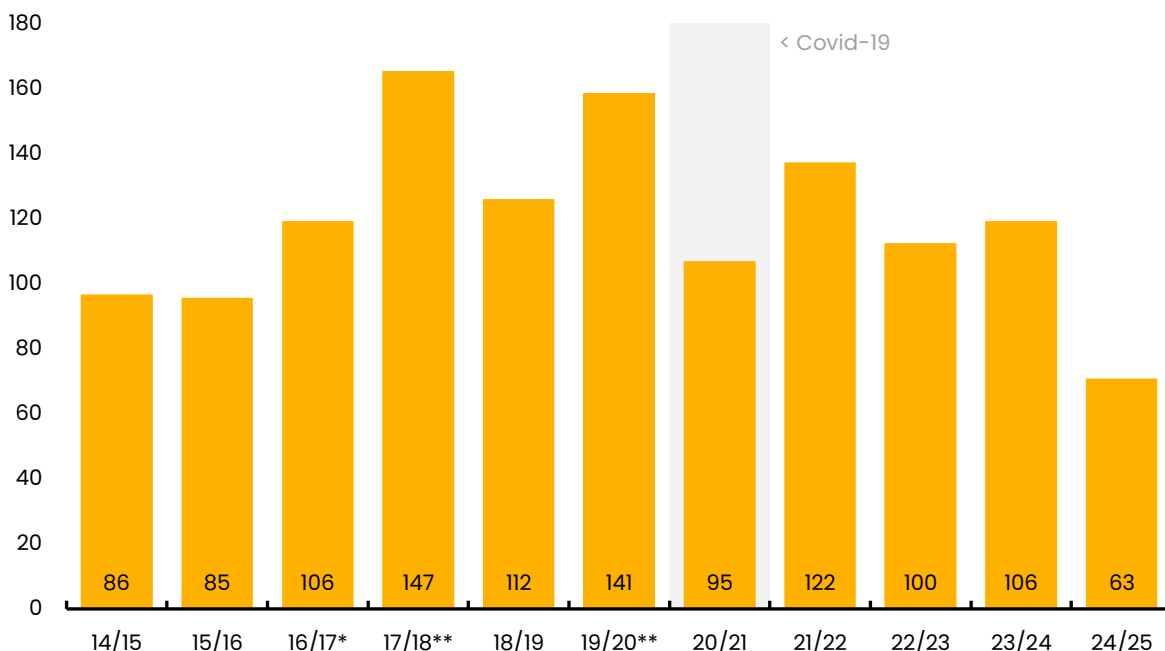
This year we've added a new indicator focused on violence against young women and girls. The report covers up to 2024/25, the latest full year for which data is available. Here's what we found.

Serious violence affecting children and young people is falling across England and Wales.

The latest data for 2024/25 suggests a clear shift: serious violence affecting children and young people is falling across England and Wales. Across the Youth Endowment Fund's three core measures of violence, all show an improving picture compared with the previous year. The number of 16–24-year-old homicide victims fell by 41%, hospital admissions for knife assault among 0–17-year-olds fell by 20%, and cautions and convictions of children for violent offences fell by 3%.^{i ii iii}

The number of young homicide victims reached its lowest point in over a decade.

NUMBER OF HOMICIDE VICTIMS AGED 16–24-YEARS-OLD (ENGLAND AND WALES)



*Victims of the 1989 Hillsborough disaster are included in the published figures for 2016/17. To account for this, we've manually reduced the published figures based on the age profile of the [victims](#)^{iv}.

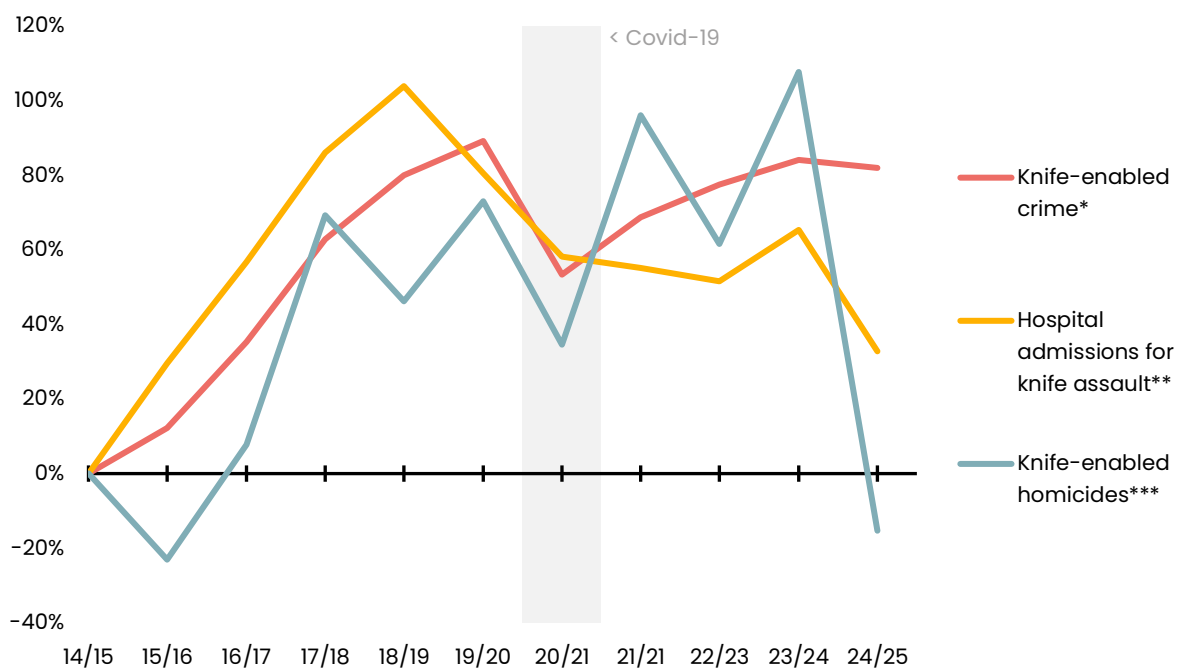
**Figures in these years were affected by several one-off events involving mass casualties. Figures for these years have not been adjusted to take account of these incidents.

Looking in more detail, there were 63 homicide victims aged 16–24 in 2024/25, the lowest figure in over a decade and down from 106 the year before.ⁱ This reflects a wider decline in homicides across all age groups, with the most marked reduction among younger people. For example, homicides among 13–19-year-olds fell by 48%, compared with a 3% fall among those aged 25 and over.

A similar pattern is seen in hospital admissions following knife assaults.ⁱⁱ In 2024/25, 409 children aged 0–17 were admitted to hospital, 100 fewer than the previous year. Over the last decade, numbers peaked at 628 in 2018/19 and, aside from a rise in 2023/24, have declined each year since. Even so, levels remain 33% higher than in 2014/15.

Knife crime was down in the latest year.

PERCENTAGE CHANGE IN KNIFE-RELATED HOSPITAL ADMISSIONS, HOMICIDES AND POLICE-RECORDED CRIMES SINCE 2014/15

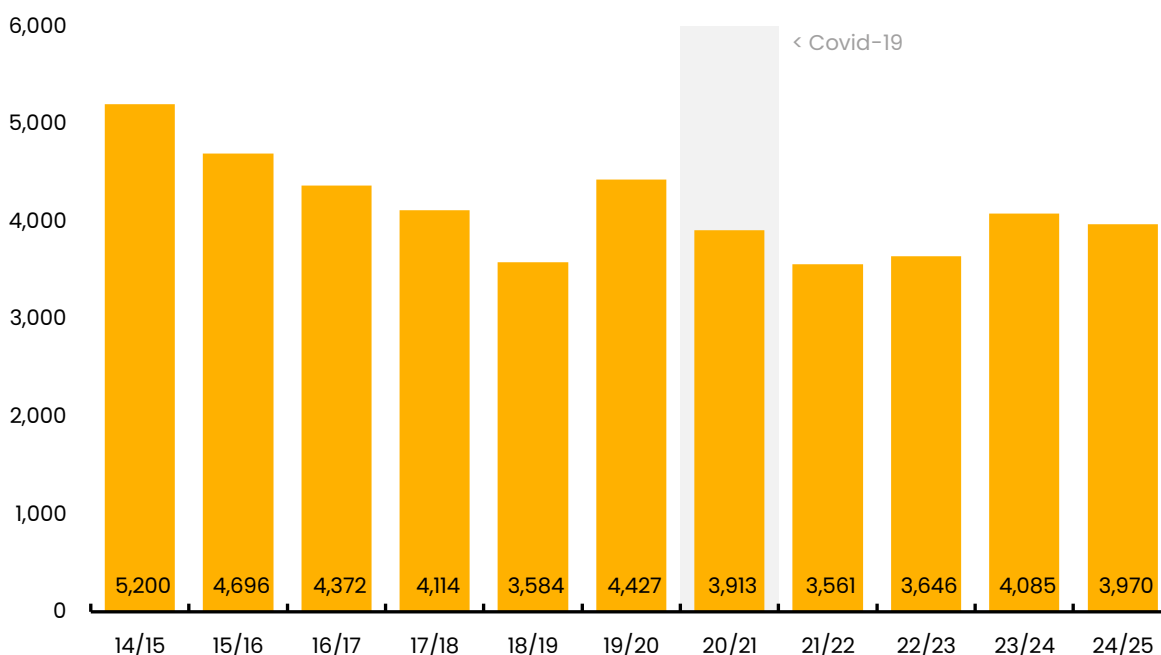


*All ages, England and Wales; **0–17-year-olds, England; ***13–19-year-olds, England and Wales.

When we look at violent offences — including violence against the person, robbery and sexual offences — there were 3,970 children cautioned or convicted in 2024/25.ⁱⁱⁱ This is below the previous year (4,085), below pre-Covid levels (4,427) and below 10 years ago (5,200). The overall decline in the latest year was driven by falls in violence against the person (7%), although this was partly offset by a rise in robbery, which increased by 8% year on year.

Fewer children were involved in the justice system for violent offences.

NUMBER OF 10–17-YEAR-OLDS CAUTIONED AND CONVICTED FOR VIOLENT OFFENCES (ENGLAND AND WALES)



Over the past decade, the total number of children in custody has fallen, but this has not affected all groups equally. Between 2014/15 and 2020/21, the number of White children in custody fell by 58%, compared with a 26% fall among Black children.^v As a result, the proportion of Black children in custody rose to a peak of 29% in 2020/21, despite Black children making up around 6% of 10–17-year-olds in England and Wales. While both the number and proportion of Black children in custody have fallen since then, Black children remained significantly overrepresented in 2024/25, accounting for 22% of those in custody whose ethnicity was known, compared with their population share of around 6%.

But violence against young women and girls remains a serious and underreported issue.

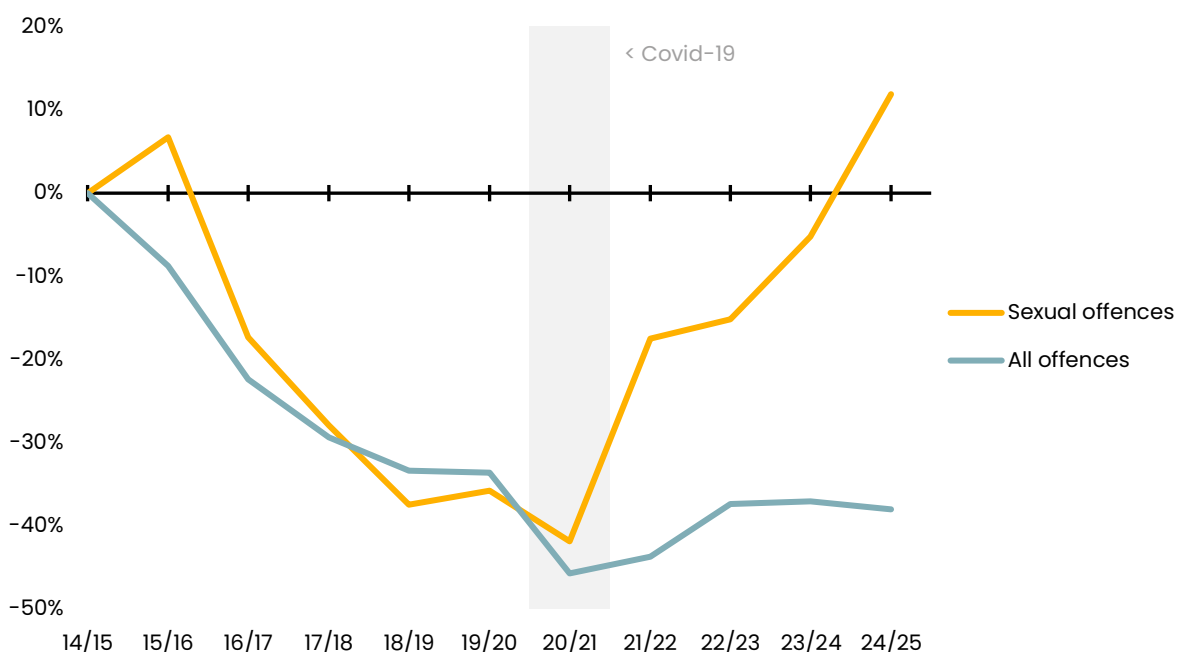
While the latest available data suggests we're moving in the right direction for reducing children's involvement in violence, sadly, the same can't be said for violence against young women and girls. The latest data points to a growing problem, with more children being arrested for sexual offences than at any point in the past decade.^{vi}

The number of children arrested for sexual offences reached 3,809 in 2024/25 (the latest year). This is up 18% on the previous year (2023/24), up 74% compared with pre-Covid levels (2019/20) and up 12% on 10 years ago (2014/15). Boys make up 98% of those arrested.

Looking more closely at data on different offence types, the number of children cautioned and convicted for indecent image offences (including taking, possessing or distributing illegal images of children) has increased substantially over time.ⁱⁱⁱ The total number of indecent image offences recorded by the police was more than five times higher in 2024/25 than a decade ago.^{vii}

The number of boys arrested for sexual offences is growing.

PERCENTAGE CHANGE IN NUMBER OF CHILDREN ARRESTED FOR SEXUAL AND ALL OFFENCES SINCE 2014/15 (ENGLAND AND WALES)



Our new indicator on violence against women and girls (VAWG) has been introduced to reflect this distinct form of harm in children's lives. Given that there's limited standalone national data on VAWG involving children, including this measure helps bring greater attention to violence against young women and girls and reinforces the need for a stronger focus on prevention. However, it's important to note that the measure significantly underestimates the true scale of harm.

Sectors key to supporting children continue to face major pressures.

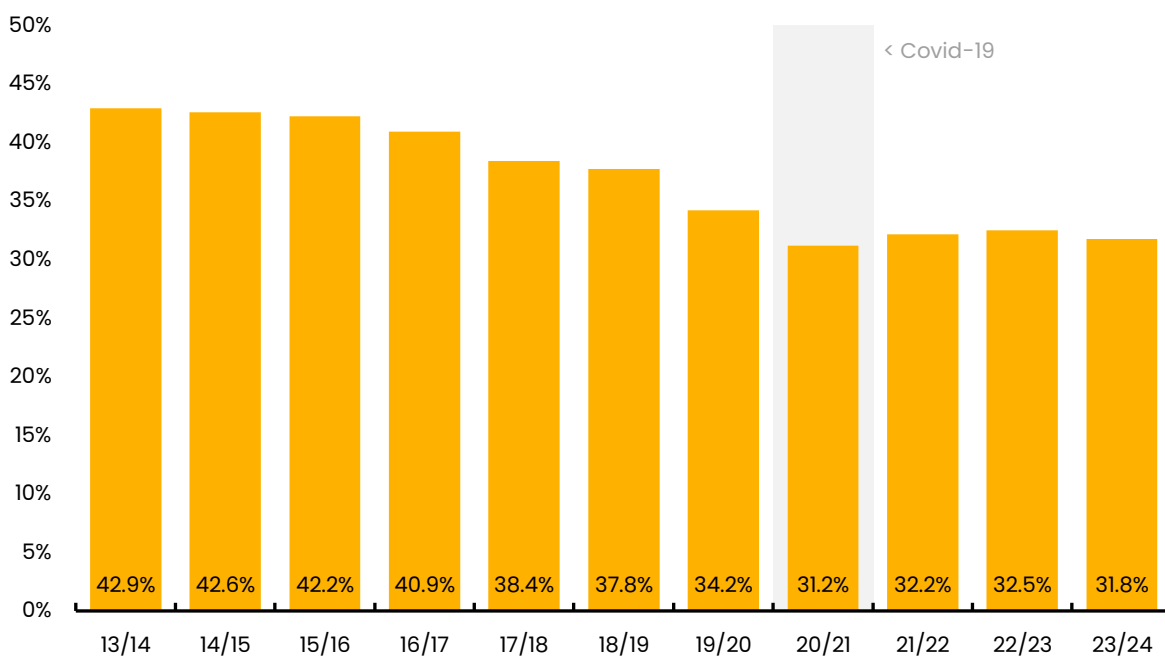
To understand how the services that make the biggest difference in protecting children from violence are performing, we track a range of indicators that reflect both progress and the ongoing challenges faced by professionals and services in these sectors.

Across the sectors, three broad patterns emerge.

In **youth justice**, progress in the latest year continues a long-term trend of improvement, as children's reoffending rates have continued to fall.^v In 2023/24, 32% of children reoffended — a marginal decrease of one percentage point from the previous year (2022/23), but a substantial reduction compared with a decade ago (2013/14), when the rate was 43%.

The proportion of children who reoffend has fallen once again.

PROPORTION OF CHILDREN WHO REOFFENDED (ENGLAND AND WALES)



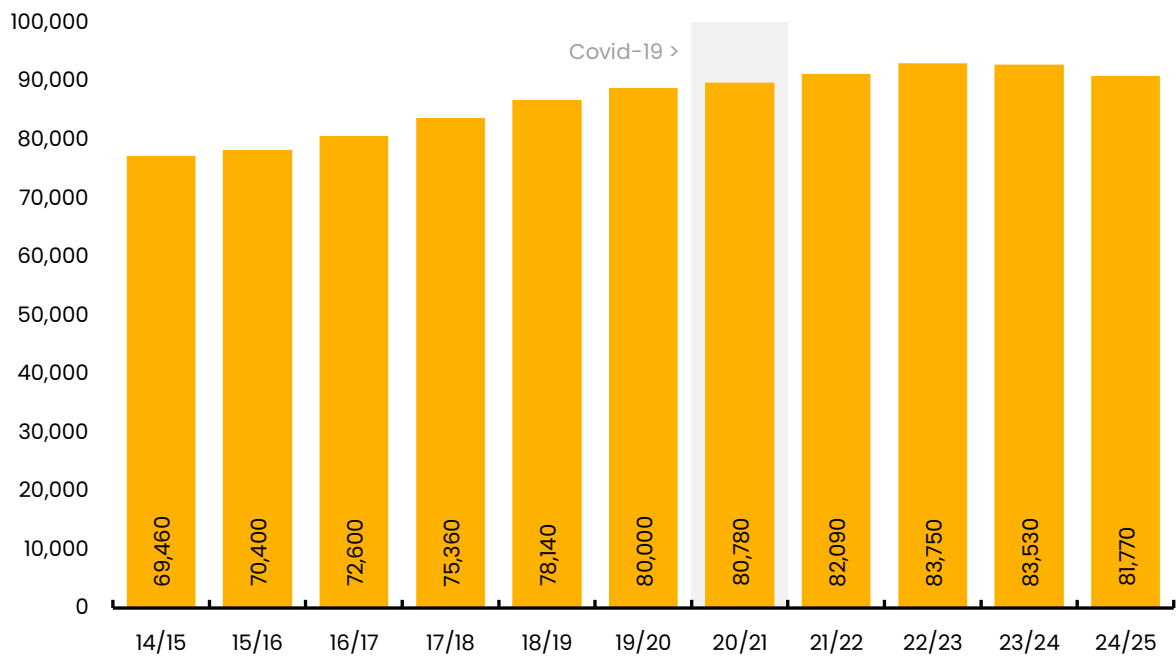
In other sectors, there has been recent improvement, but this sits against a backdrop of longer-term challenges. In **policing**, the proportion of police-recorded crimes that result in a successful investigation outcome has risen for the third consecutive year, reaching 12%, up one percentage point on the previous year (2023/24).^{viii} However, this remains less than half the level seen a decade ago.

In **education**, keeping children in school helps protect them from involvement in serious violence, which is why we track the proportion of persistently absent children. Rates were relatively stable at around 11% in the years before Covid, before rising sharply to a peak of 23% in 2021/22.^{ix} They have declined each year since, but remain high at 18% in 2024/25.

In **children’s services**, the number of children looked after by the local authority has fallen for a second consecutive year following a long period of increase since 2008.^x This matters because children in care are disproportionately affected by serious violence. As of 31 March 2025, 81,770 children were being looked after in England — down 2% from the previous year, but still 18% higher than 10 years ago.

The number of children looked after is down.

NUMBER OF LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN AS OF 31 MARCH (ENGLAND)



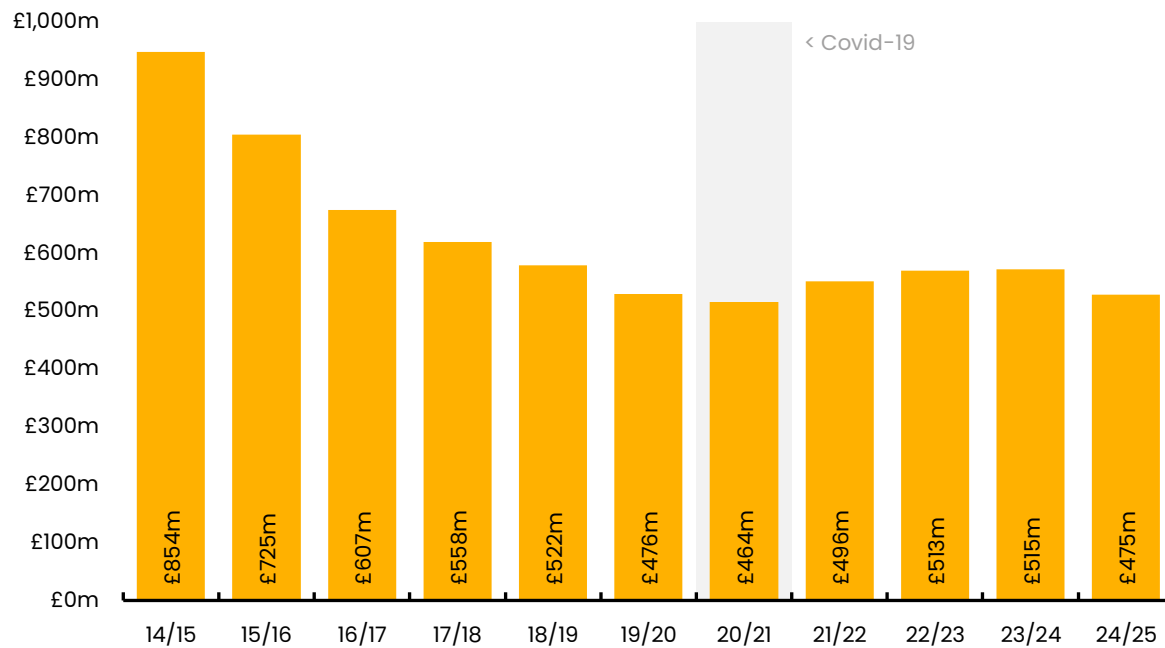
But in a smaller number of sectors, worsening pressures in the latest year continue a decade-long decline.

In **health**, the number of children referred to National Health Service (NHS)-funded mental health, learning disability and autism services continued to rise in 2024/25.^{xi} Over 1.2 million children were referred, a 7% increase on the previous year and equivalent to 9% of all children in England. This is more than double the number in 2016/17, the earliest comparable year. In Wales, the trend is less consistent, with referrals rising by 19% in 2023/24 but falling by 5% in the latest year (2024/25).^{xii}

And in **youth services**, spending on services for young people has fallen substantially over the past decade.^{xiii xiv} After a period of continued real-terms decline, spending began to stabilise and then increase in recent years, but fell again in 2024/25. Total real-terms spending on youth services was £475 million – down from the previous year in both cash and real terms and 44% lower than in 2014/15.

Spending on services for young people has fallen once again.

TOTAL LOCAL AUTHORITY EXPENDITURE ON SERVICES FOR YOUNG PEOPLE, REAL 2023/24 PRICES (ENGLAND AND WALES)

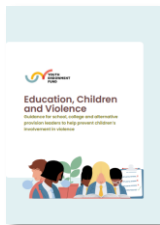


Change is possible.

Violence affecting children and young people is preventable. The improvements across our core measures of violence in the latest data show that progress is possible. Sustaining that progress will require continued focus on children most vulnerable to violence, alongside investment in the approaches and services that evidence shows make the biggest difference.

To help make this happen, we've produced evidence-based guidance for practitioners, commissioners and policymakers. These reports set out practical, actionable recommendations to help prevent violence, strengthen the systems that support children and make it easier to put what works into practice.

Follow the links below to access guidance for your sector.



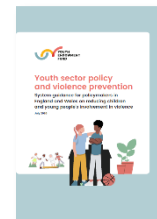
[For education leaders](#)



[For education policymakers](#)



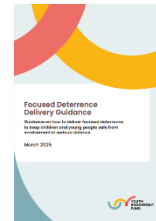
[For commissioners of youth work](#)



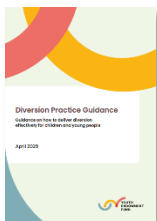
[For youth work policymakers](#)



[For children's services leaders](#)



[For police forces implementing focused deterrence](#)



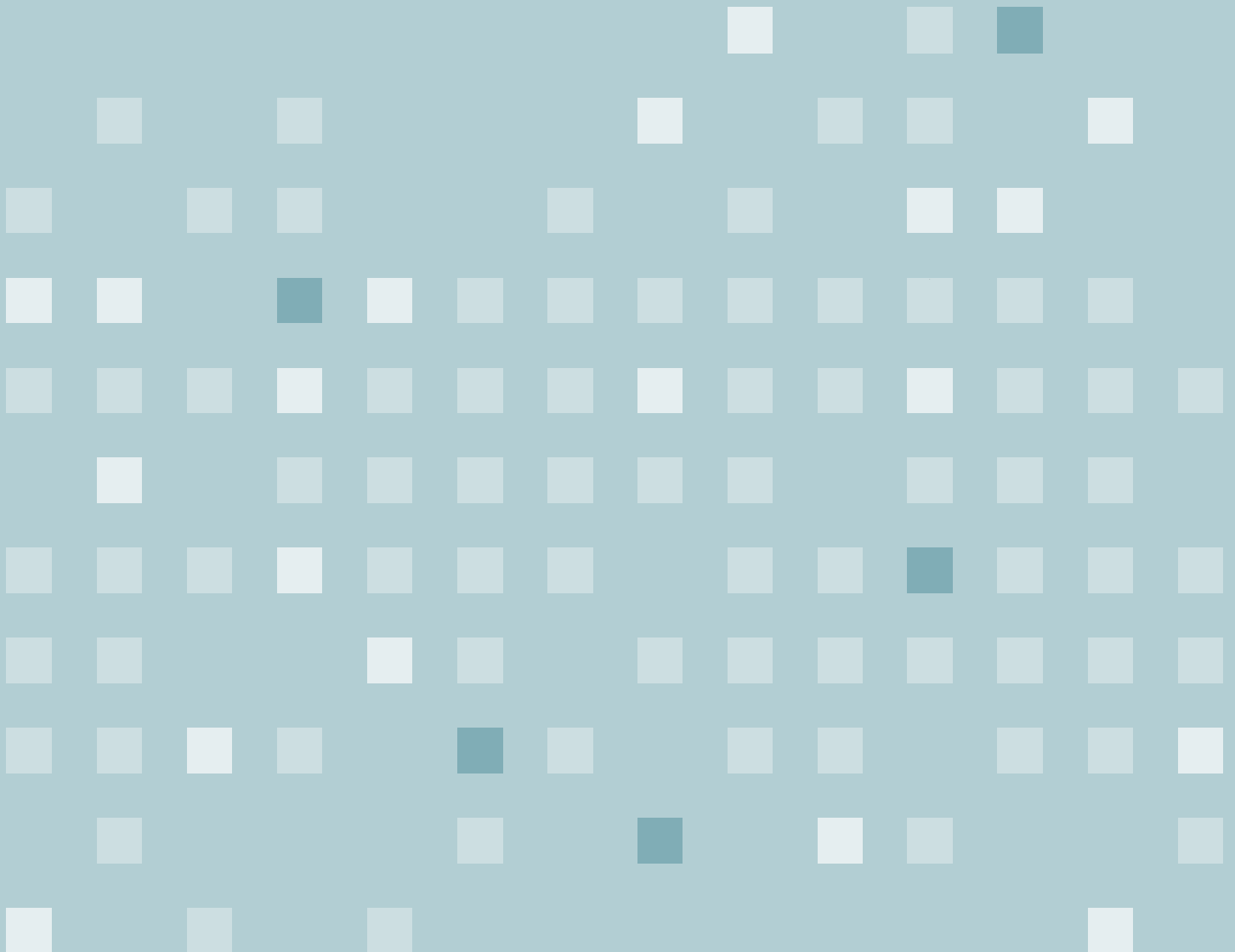
[For police forces and youth justice services implementing diversion](#)



[For youth justice policymakers](#)

Part 2

Methodology



Background and approach

In 2024, we launched our [core indicators dashboard](#). This includes 11 indicators we're using to track whether violence affecting children and young people is getting better or worse and how the sectors most important to supporting them are doing. The dashboard includes three core measures of violence affecting children and young people, a measure of racial disproportionality in the youth justice system and measures for six of our seven [sectors](#) of interest. This year, we've also added a measure of violence against young women and girls. The purpose of these indicators is to provide a clear account of what's happening to violence affecting children and young people in England and Wales and the context shaping their lives. This report is our second full yearly update since we launched the dashboard. It summarises data for 2024/25.

Background and purpose

Are crime and violence getting worse? Are more children and young people being affected? How is society equipped to support them? Answering these questions and understanding the context we're operating in is crucial to achieving our mission of preventing children from becoming involved in violence. However, to answer these questions, we rely on a variety of data sources, all with their own limitations, that sometimes provide competing accounts of what's going on.

In 2024, we launched our [core indicators dashboard](#). The purpose of this is to provide a clear and simple picture of how children and young people's involvement in violence is changing. Is it getting better or worse? And what's happening to the sectors that support them? We've approached this by looking at the most reliable published data and selecting 11 key indicators, which we're tracking over time. Five of the indicators relate to children's involvement in violence, including one focused on racial disproportionality. Six relate to the sectors that support them. For each of these indicators, we've assigned a rating based on whether it's improving, worsening or mixed.

This is our second annual update since we launched the dashboard. This report summarises the latest data for 2024/25 – the first year of the current parliament – and what this tells us about trends in violence affecting children and young people and the sectors that support them.

WHAT DO WE MEAN BY SECTORS?

To help us make the biggest difference, at the Youth Endowment Fund (YEF), we've identified seven sectors in which we'll use evidence to find out what works and what needs to change so that children are better supported and violence decreases. These sectors have been selected for a number of reasons. First, they align with the professions that work most closely with vulnerable children. Second, there are clear gaps in the evidence within these sectors, where research and funding can help. And third, we think changes in policies and practice in these areas could lead to lasting positive change for children and young people, their families and communities.

TABLE 1. SUMMARY OF YOUTH ENDOWMENT FUND SECTORS

SECTOR	SUMMARY
Policing	How can evidence-based policing best prevent violence – including through working with other organisations where the police are not the lead?
Youth justice	How do we best support arrested children to prevent them from becoming involved in violence?
Neighbourhoods*	How do we support neighbourhoods and communities to keep children safe?
Education	What should happen in schools, colleges and alternative provision settings to prevent children from becoming involved in violence?
Health	How do we use therapy to keep children safe from becoming involved in violence?
Children's services	How do we best support families and carers and help them create a safe, loving environment at home?
Youth	How can a trusted adult outside the family help keep a child safe, and what positive activities can support young people from becoming involved in violence?

For each sector, YEF is funding programmes and research to build a better understanding of what works to prevent violence, making the evidence accessible and campaigning for change.

**No suitable measure could be found for neighbourhoods, so it was excluded from the dashboard.*

The YEF has a particular focus on racial disproportionality. As this report shows, children from minority ethnic backgrounds are overrepresented in the criminal justice system, particularly Black children. What leads to this overrepresentation is a complex mix of individual, societal and system-level drivers. Biases in offending data, which typically report only those who have been arrested or charged rather than underlying patterns of offending, can also compound the disproportionality seen. It is beyond the scope of this report to fully unpack the influence each of these factors plays. However, it's important to emphasise that many of the issues that put children most at risk of involvement in violence overlap. And the intersection of different forms of disadvantage – including poverty, racism and lack of access to support – can compound these risks.

Selection of measures

What indicators have we selected to measure the prevalence of violence affecting children and young people?

No single data source provides a complete picture of what's happening to children affected by violence. Police figures tell us what crimes get recorded, but many crimes go unreported or undetected. Data from the justice system tells us which children have been cautioned or convicted, which relies on someone being caught and charged. Other data, for example, children who are treated in a hospital for knife assault, only focuses on the rarest and most extreme forms of violence.

To provide a comprehensive picture, we originally chose three core measures of violence:

- The number of 16–24-year-olds who've been victims of homicide.
- The number of 0–17-year-olds admitted to a hospital due to assault with a knife or sharp object.
- The number of children cautioned and convicted for violent offences.

This year, we've added a fourth violence measure, specifically of violence against young women and girls. We know that gendered and relationship violence is a serious issue among children and young people^{xv}, but official measures^{xvi} of violence against women and girls (VAWG) don't include children under the age of 16. To provide a measure of VAWG involving children, we have chosen:

- The number of children arrested for sexual offences.

In addition to these four measures, we also use an indicator that tracks racial disproportionality in youth offending outcomes. Here, we're using the proportion of children in custody who are Black.

What indicators have we selected to measure our sectors of interest?

The purpose of selecting indicators in the core sectors that the YEF works with is to try to understand what is going on for young people at a national level, what challenges the professionals and services supporting them face and how these have changed over time.

Measuring how well-equipped individual sectors are to support children and protect them from violence is challenging. In some cases, we only have figures for the number of children being supported, and in other cases, we have figures for how much money is being spent.

As with previous years, one sector we haven't provided an indicator for is neighbourhoods. Our focus on neighbourhoods is about applying place-based approaches to addressing crime and violence by working with local organisations, systems and communities in specific local areas affected by violence. This hyper-local focus makes it difficult to choose one core indicator to track over time and summarise at a national level.

The table below summarises all 11 indicators and the data sources used.

TABLE 2. SUMMARY OF KEY INDICATORS

AREA/SECTOR	INDICATOR	SOURCE
1. Homicide	16–24-year-old homicide victims (England and Wales)	Home Office – Homicide Index
2. Knife crime	0–17-year-olds admitted to hospital due to knife injury (England)	National Health Service Digital – hospital admitted patient care records
3. Justice system involvement	Cautions and convictions of children for violent offences (England and Wales)	Ministry of Justice – criminal justice statistics quarterly
4. NEW: Violence against young women and girls	Arrests of children for sexual offences (England and Wales)	Home Office – stop and search, arrests and mental health detentions
5. Disproportionality	Proportion of children in custody who are Black (England and Wales)	Youth Justice Board – annual statistics
6. Policing	Recorded crimes that were successfully investigated (England and Wales)	Home Office – crime outcomes in England and Wales
7. Youth justice	Proportion of 10–17-year-old offenders who reoffended (England and Wales)	Youth Justice Board – annual statistics
8. Education	Proportion of pupils persistently absent from school (England)	Department for Education – pupil absence in schools in England
9. Health	Referrals to secondary mental health services (England)	National Health Service Digital – Mental Health Bulletin
10. Children’s services	Number of looked after children (England)	Department for Education – children looked after statistics
11. Youth	Local authority expenditure for youth services (England and Wales)	Department for Education and StatsWales – local authority and school expenditure statistics

How ratings have been assigned.

For each of the indicators, we've compared the last available annual figures (2024/25) with three different time points: the previous year (2023/24), the year before the Covid pandemic (2019/20) and 10 years ago (or the longest available period if 10 years of data is not available).

The first time point comparison provides a view of how the indicator has performed in the most recent period. The second provides a sense of how the measure has performed since the pandemic. Covid had a significant disruptive effect on many areas of society, and how the indicator performs today relative to where it was before Covid provides a sense of whether or not it has recovered or surpassed levels prior to the pandemic-related disruption. The third comparison provides a view of how the indicator is currently performing against the longer-run trend.

We've assigned ratings as follows:

Improving

For indicators where, at all three time points, the measure has shown improvement.

Worsening

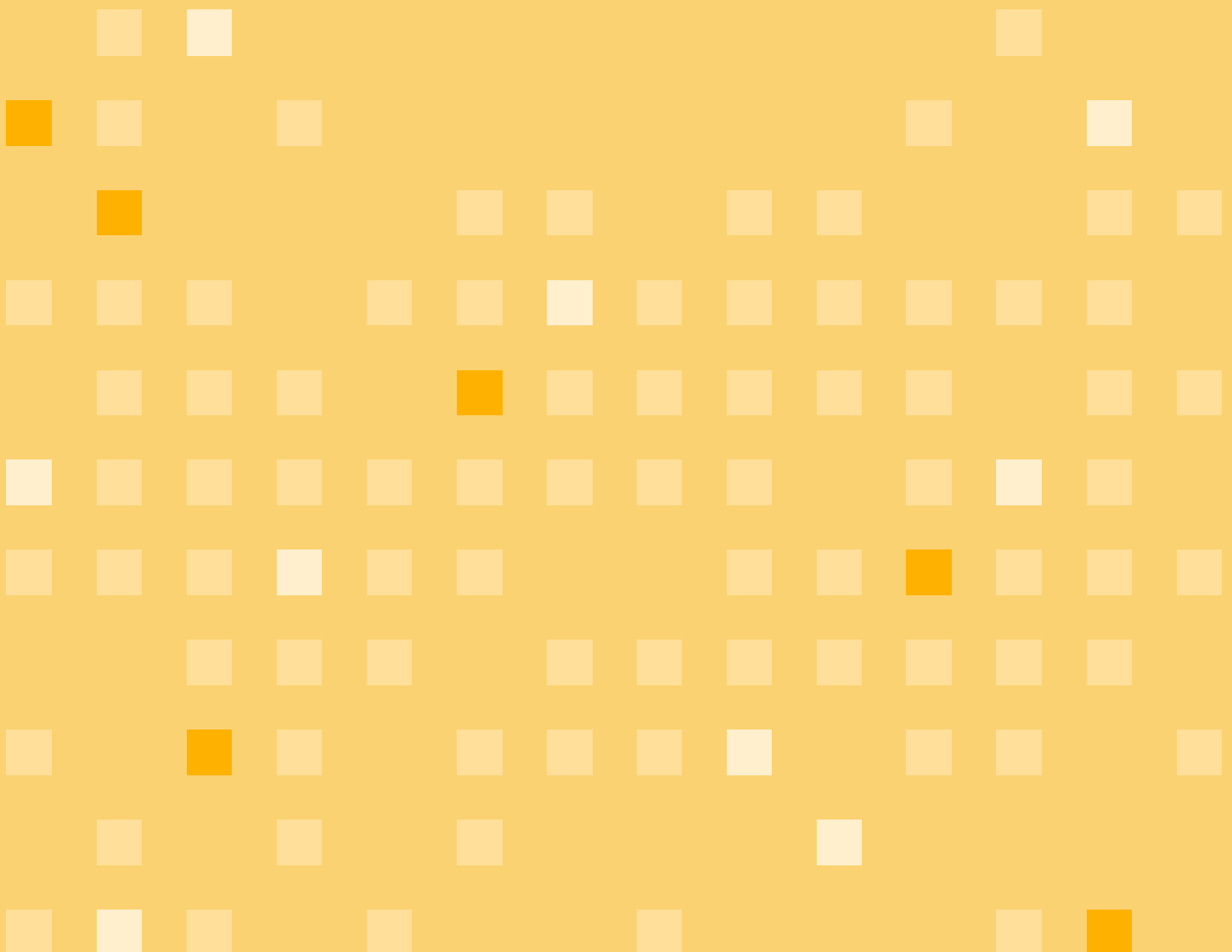
For indicators where, at all three time points, the measure has worsened.

Mixed

For indicators where there is no clear trend based on the three time points (i.e. some point to improvement while others have worsened).

Part 3

Detailed findings



1. Homicides

CORE INDICATOR	INDICATOR PERFORMANCE	LATEST VALUE (2024/25)	CHANGE COMPARED TO...		
			Last year (2023/24)	Pre-Covid (2019/20)	10 years ago (2014/15)
Homicides 16–24-year-old homicide victims	Improving	63	-40.6%	-55.3%	-26.7%

COMMENTARY

In last year’s update, our homicide indicator had a **mixed** rating – the number of young people who were victims of homicide in 2023/24 was slightly higher than in the previous year (2022/23) and up compared to 10 years previously (2013/14), but down 25% compared to the year before Covid (2019/20). The latest year (2024/25) showed a marked fall in the number of 16–24-year-old homicide victims, to the lowest it’s been in recent record – down 41% compared to the previous year (2023/24), less than half the year before Covid (2019/20) and 27% down compared to 10 years previously (2014/15). Overall, the latest figures show an **improving** picture.

HOW ARE WE MEASURING HOMICIDES?

Homicides provide a measure of the most extreme consequences of violence. We’re using the Home Office’s [Homicide Index](#)ⁱ to measure how many 16–24-year-olds lose their lives from homicide each year. We’ve used data for 16–24-year-olds, as the published data isn’t broken down for 10–17-year-olds specifically (the age range we use across most other measures). Whilst there is data for 13–19-year-olds, due to the small numbers, this is highly variable year on year, so we’ve chosen not to use data for this age group as our core indicator.

Homicide figures are generally seen as one of the more accurate measures of violence, as the data isn’t typically affected by changes in reporting, with nearly all homicides being reported and recorded. Despite this, some events, such as acts of terrorism, can have a disproportionate impact on the figures in a single year. This, combined with the fortunately low numbers for younger age groups, means figures for individual years can be subject to volatility.

FINDINGS

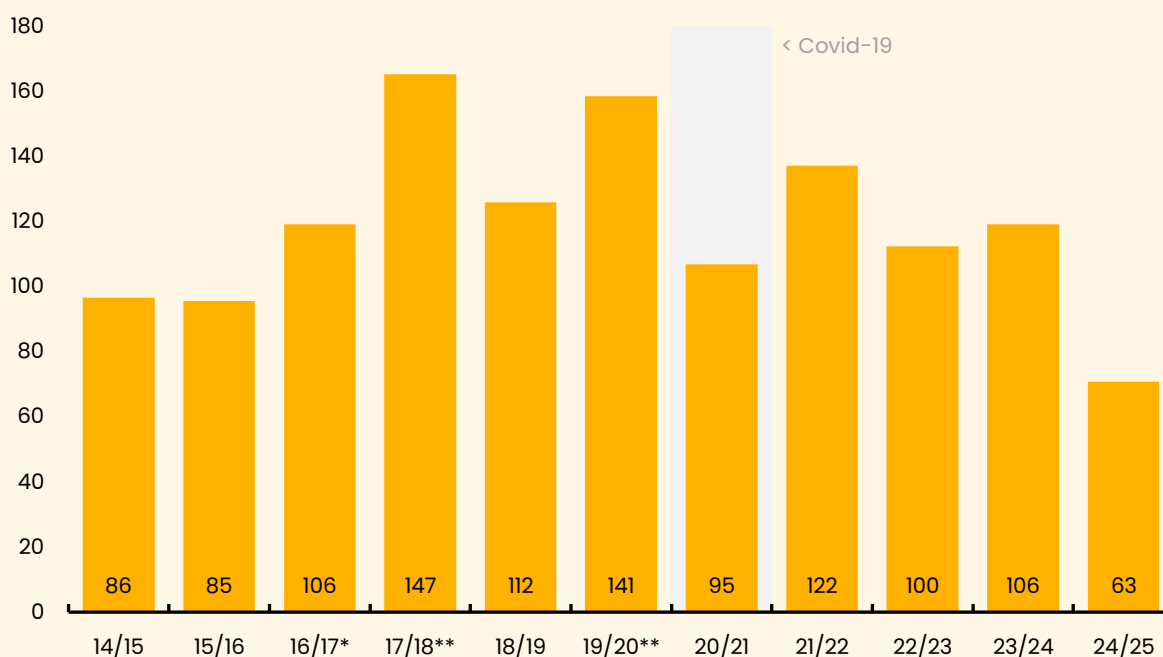
The number of young homicide victims reached its lowest point in over a decade.

Data from the Home Office's Homicide Index shows that the total number of homicides in England and Wales peaked in the early 2000s.ⁱ In the years from 2004/05 to 2014/15, they fell by around a third, from a total of 778 homicides across all ages in 2004/05 to a low of 504 in 2014/15.

However, homicides – along with other indicators of serious violence – rose sharply in the mid-2010s. The number of victims aged 16–24 increased by 73% between 2015/16 and 2017/18, up from 85 to 147 victims per year. It's important to note that the figure for 2017/18 is somewhat inflated due to the victims from mass casualty events, such as the Manchester Arena bombing. Since then, homicides have fluctuated year on year but have been broadly on a downward trend.

The latest data for 2024/25 saw the number of 16–24-year-old victims fall 41% year on year, from 106 victims in 2023/24 to 63 victims in 2024/25. This figure is less than half what it was in the year before the Covid pandemic (55% down from 2019/20) and is down 27% compared to 2014/15, making it the lowest it's been in over a decade.

FIGURE 1.1. NUMBER OF HOMICIDE VICTIMS AGED 16–24-YEARS-OLD (ENGLAND AND WALES)

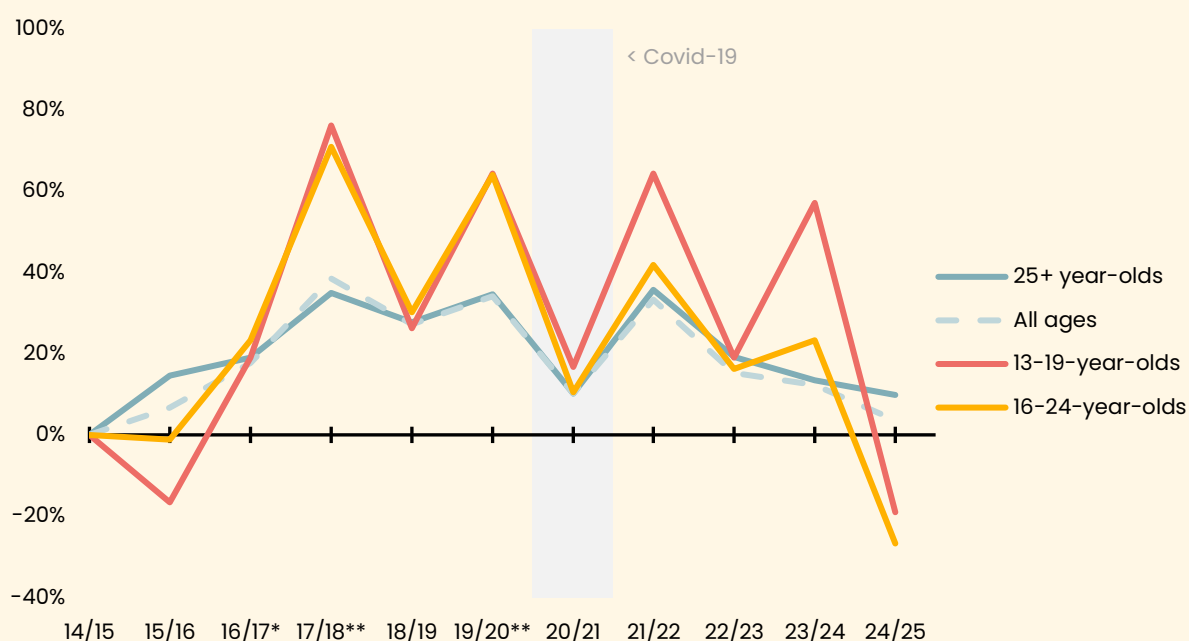


**Victims of the 1989 Hillsborough disaster are included in the published figures for 2016/17. To account for this, we've manually reduced the published figures based on the age profile of the victims^{iv}*

***Figures in these years were affected by several one-off events involving mass casualties, including the Westminster Bridge attack, the Manchester Arena bombing, the London Bridge attack and the human trafficking victims who were found dead in a lorry in Essex. Figures for these years have not been adjusted to take account of these incidents.*

The latest data for 2024/25 saw a fall in the number of homicides across all ages, but the biggest falls were among young victims. Published figures on homicide victims from the Homicide Index aren't broken down for adolescents specifically, but data is provided for 13–19-year-olds. Thirty-four 13–19-year-olds were victims of homicide in 2024/25, nearly half the number the year before (66 victims in 2023/24) and the lowest it's been in the past decade. In comparison, the number of homicide victims aged 25 and above fell by just 3% year on year. This means that 13–19-year-olds accounted for 6.5% of homicide victims in 2024/25, compared to 11.7% the year before (2023/24) and the lowest it's been since 2015/16.

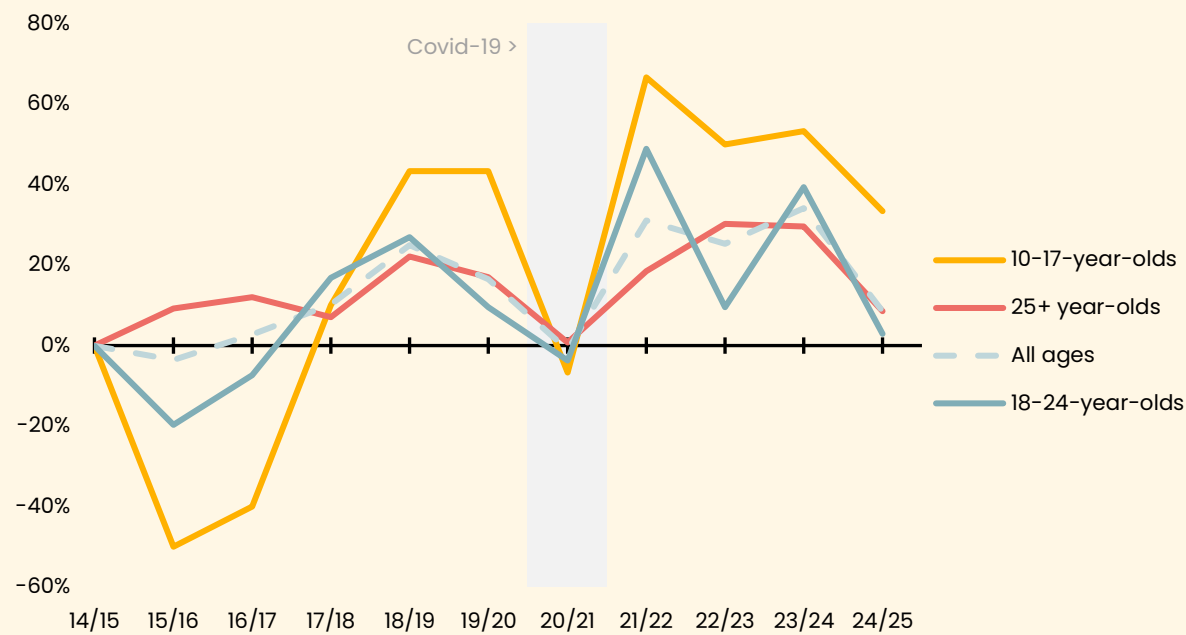
FIGURE 1.2. PERCENTAGE CHANGE IN THE NUMBER OF HOMICIDE VICTIMS SINCE 2014/15, BY AGE GROUP (ENGLAND AND WALES)



The number of children convicted of committing homicide fell.

Data from the Ministry of Justice on who's been convicted for homicide (defined as murder, manslaughter and infanticide) shows that the number of children committing homicides had also grown in the past decade.ⁱⁱⁱ In the latest figures, this too fell – from 46 children convicted in 2023/24 to 40 in 2024/25 – but it remains 33.3% up on where it was 10 years ago (2014/15). In comparison, the number of adults convicted of homicide fell more sharply in the latest year – down 19.6% compared to 2023/24 and just 6.7% up on where it was 10 years ago (2014/15).

FIGURE 1.3. PERCENTAGE CHANGE IN CONVICTIONS FOR HOMICIDE SINCE 2014/15, BY AGE GROUP (ENGLAND AND WALES)



2. Knife crime

CORE INDICATOR	INDICATOR PERFORMANCE	LATEST VALUE (2024/25)	CHANGE COMPARED TO...		
			Last year (2023/24)	Pre-Covid (2019/20)	10 years ago (2014/15)
Knife crime 0–17-year-olds admitted to hospital due to knife assault	Mixed	409	-19.6%	-26.4%	+32.8%

COMMENTARY

In last year’s update, our knife crime indicator had a **mixed** rating – the number of children admitted to hospital for knife assault rose for the first time since 2018/19, but remained 8% down compared to the year before Covid (2019/20). The latest data shows that the picture is still **mixed**. The number of admissions in 2024/25 fell once more, down 20% from the previous year (2023/24) and down 26% compared to the year before Covid (2019/20). But despite these falls, it remained 33% up compared to 10 years ago (2014/15). Other indicators also point to knife crime falling in 2024/25, with falls in police-recorded knife-enabled crimes and homicides involving knives.

HOW ARE WE MEASURING KNIFE CRIME?

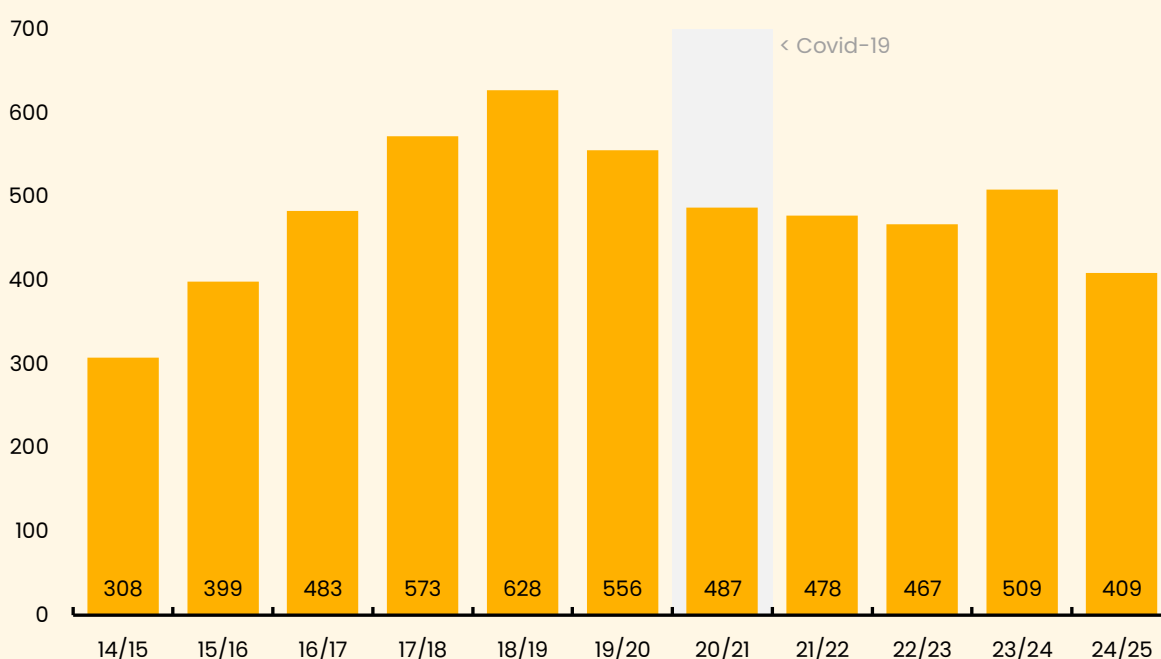
To measure changes in knife crime affecting young people, we use the number of 0–17-year-olds admitted to hospital per year in England, where the cause for admission was assault with a sharp object.ⁱⁱ Hospital admissions data can be viewed as a more reliable guide to trends in knife violence than police (e.g. reported crime) or justice (e.g. sentencing) figures, as hospital admissions data is less susceptible to changes in levels of activity by the police or the courts or changes in recording, reporting or sentencing practices over time compared to these other sources. These figures are for England only, as equivalent data is not available for Wales.

FINDINGS

Knife crime was down in the latest year.

In line with other forms of serious violence (such as homicides), the number of hospital admissions for knife assault in England rose sharply in the mid-2010s.ⁱⁱ The number of children admitted to hospital with knife-related injuries peaked in 2018/19 at 628 and has since been falling, with 2023/24 an exception to this general trend. The latest figures for 2024/25 show knife-related hospital admissions are once again falling. From April 2024 to March 2025, 409 children aged 0–17 were admitted to hospital following a knife assault – a considerable 20% fall from the year before. This is the lowest it's been since 2015/16, but it remains up 33% compared to 10 years previously (2014/15).

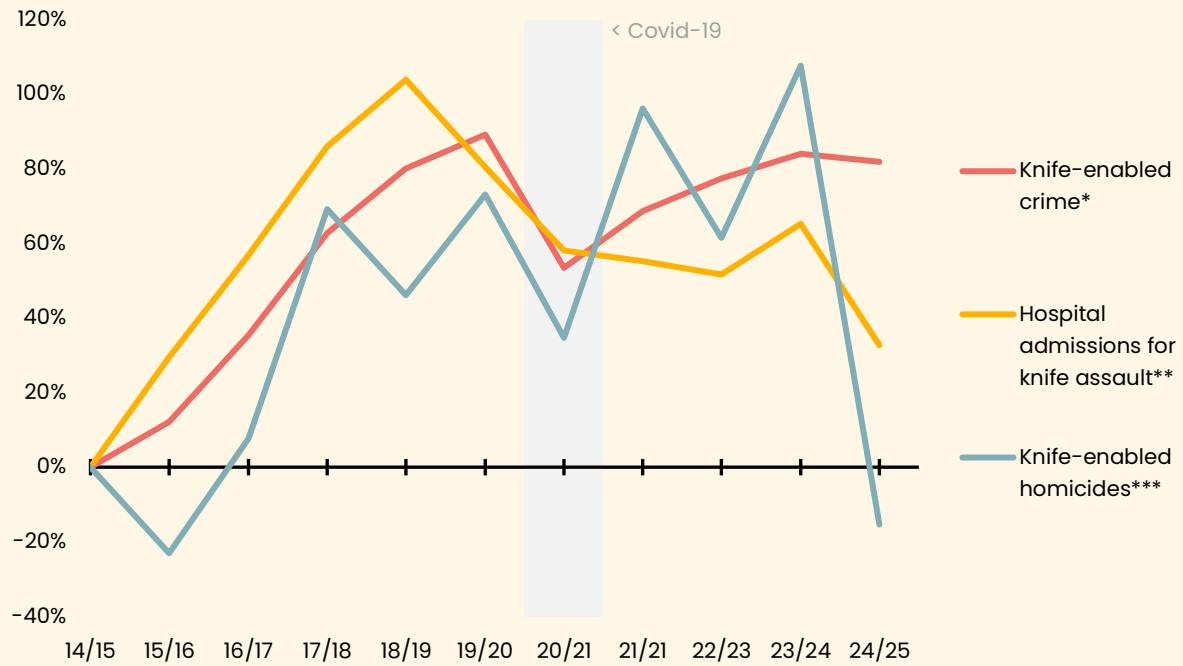
FIGURE 2.1. HOSPITAL ADMISSIONS OF 0–17-YEAR-OLDS FOR KNIFE ASSAULT (ENGLAND)



Other measures of knife crime also point to a fall in the latest year (2024/25). Police-recorded knife-enabled crime had been consistently rising throughout the past decade, with the exception of 2020/21, the year of the Covid pandemic^{vii} Some of this is likely related to recent improvements made to the recording of knife-enabled crime.^{xvii} However, in the latest data it fell, down 1.2% from 2023/24. Every police force recorded a fall in the number of knife-enabled offences from 2023/24 to 2024/25, with the exception of Suffolk, which saw a 5% increase. The areas with the highest total numbers of recorded offences showed some of the greatest falls. London saw a 36% fall year on year, West Midlands numbers fell 33% and Greater Manchester 38%, compared to a total fall of 30% across all of England and Wales.

Knife-enabled homicides showed an even more dramatic fall.ⁱ The number of 13–19-year-olds killed in homicides involving knives more than halved – falling from 54 in 2023/24 to 22 in 2024/25. This is the lowest it's been since 2015/16 (20 knife-enabled homicides) and is 15% down compared to 10 years previously (26 in 2014/15).

FIGURE 2.2. PERCENTAGE CHANGE IN KNIFE-RELATED HOSPITAL ADMISSIONS, HOMICIDES AND POLICE-RECORDED CRIMES SINCE 2014/15



All ages, England and Wales; **0–17-year-olds, England; *13–19-year-olds, England and Wales.*

3. Justice system involvement

CORE INDICATOR	INDICATOR PERFORMANCE	LATEST VALUE (2024/25)	CHANGE COMPARED TO...		
			Last year (2023/24)	Pre-Covid (2019/20)	10 years ago (2014/15)
Justice system involvement Children cautioned and convicted for violent offences	Improving	3,970	-2.8%	-10.3%	-23.7%

COMMENTARY

Last year, our justice system involvement indicator had a **mixed** rating – the number of cautions and convictions of children for violent offences was up on the previous year (2022/23) but remained lower than the year before Covid (2019/20) and 10 years previously (2013/14). The latest data shows the picture is now **improving** – the number of cautions and convictions for 2024/25 was down 2.8% compared to the previous year (2023/24), down 10% compared to the year before Covid (2019/20) and down 24% compared to 10 years previously (2014/15).

How are we measuring justice system involvement?

The aim of this measure is to get a sense of how many children become involved in the criminal justice system in relation to violence. To do this, we've used the number of cautions and convictions given to children for violent offences, as reported by the Ministry of Justice.ⁱⁱⁱ We consider violent offences to include violence against the person (including offences such as assault and homicide), robbery (which is theft with the use or threat of force) and sexual offences (including rape and other sexual offences). This year, we've adapted our measure to count the number of children cautioned or convicted for violent offences, rather than the number of proven offences committed by children.

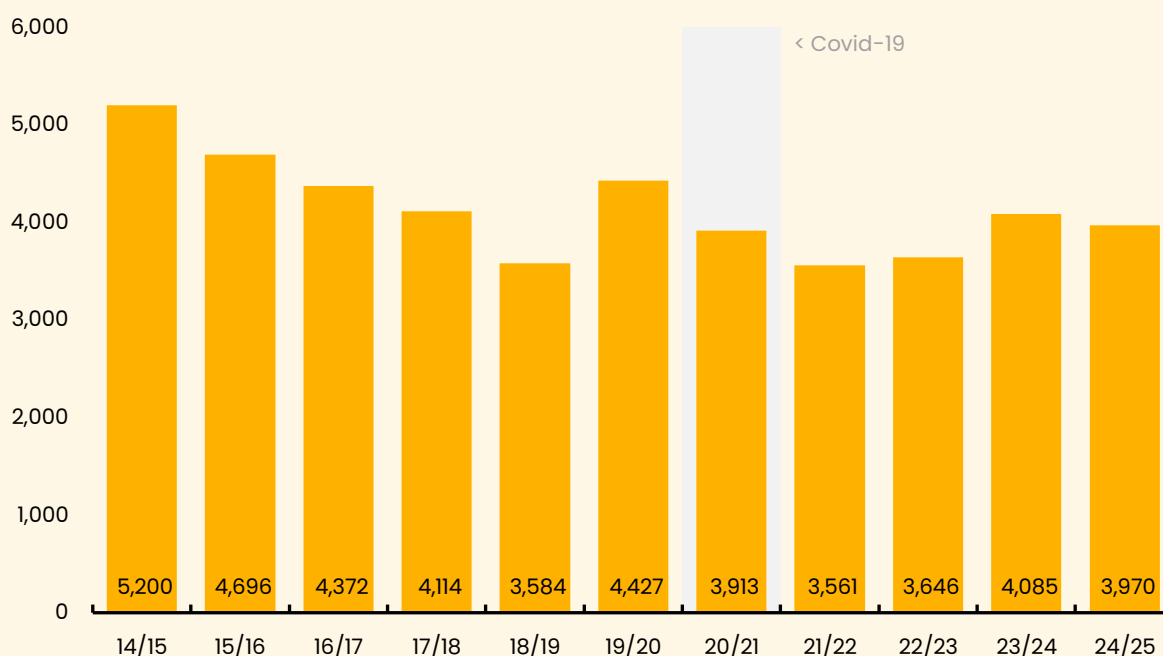
It's important to bear in mind that other factors – such as how readily crimes are reported, the priority the police give to prosecuting certain types of offences and how successful they are at identifying and charging suspects – will affect the number of children with proven offences. This indicator may, therefore, not provide a fully accurate measure of the underlying amount of violent crime and how it has changed over time.

FINDINGS

Fewer children were involved in the justice system for violent offences.

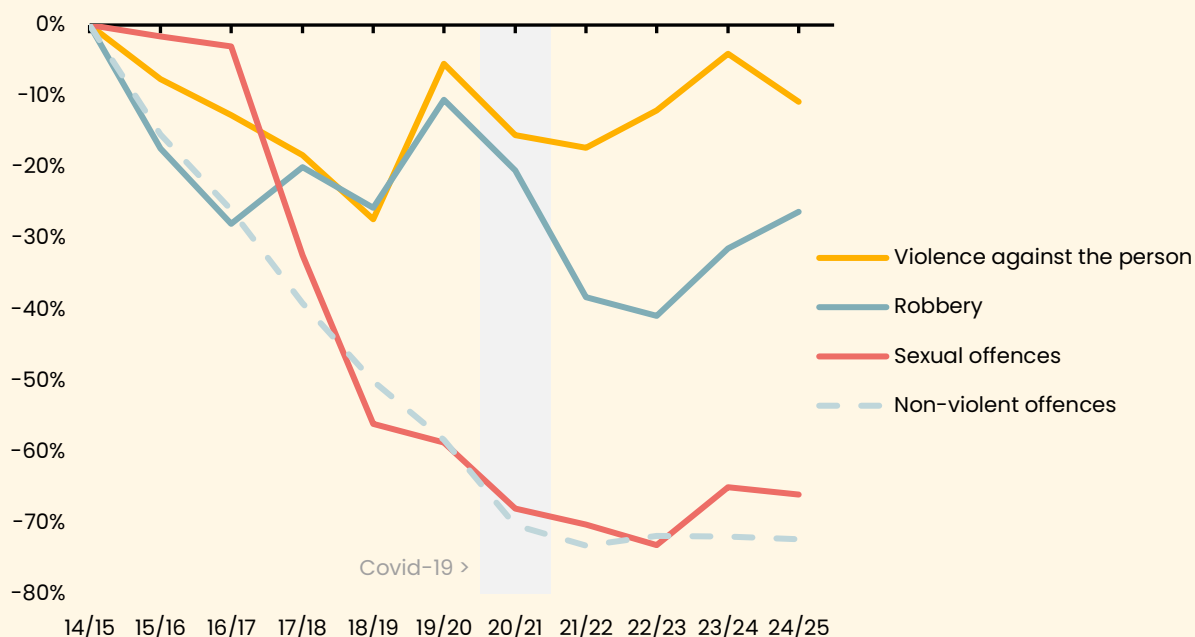
In 2006, the number of children cautioned and convicted for violent offences peaked, with a high of 23,115 cautions and convictions for violence against the person, robbery and sexual offences.ⁱⁱⁱ Since then, numbers have been on a broadly downward trend, falling 84% from 2006 to 2018/19. In 2019/20, they rose – up to 4,427 children cautioned or convicted for violence in the year – before falling during Covid. In the past two years, numbers have risen slightly, perhaps as courts work through the backlog of cases exacerbated by the pandemic. However, in the latest year, the number fell again, down 2.8% from 2023/24 to 3,970 children cautioned and convicted in 2024/25. While it remains higher than the lows seen this decade, it's down 10.3% compared to the 2019/20 (the year before Covid) and down 23.7% compared to 10 years ago (2014/15).

FIGURE 3.1. NUMBER OF 10–17-YEAR-OLDS CAUTIONED AND CONVICTED FOR VIOLENT OFFENCES (ENGLAND AND WALES)



The fall in cautions and convictions for violent offences was mainly driven by a fall in violence against the person. This accounted for 64% of violent offending in 2024/25 and fell 7% year on year. In contrast, cautions and convictions for robberies rose in 2024/25, up 8% compared to the previous year (2023/24). But it remains 18% below where it was in the year before Covid (2019/20) and 26% below where it was 10 years previously (2014/15).

FIGURE 3.2. PERCENTAGE CHANGE IN CAUTIONS AND CONVICTIONS OF CHILDREN FOR VIOLENT OFFENCES SINCE 2014/15 (ENGLAND AND WALES)



Not all areas of the country saw these falls. Twenty-five of 43 police forces (58%) saw reductions in the number of children cautioned and convicted for violent offences from 2023/24 to 2024/25. West Midlands (-4%), Greater Manchester (-23%) and West Yorkshire (-22%) – some of the areas with the highest numbers – saw a fall year on year. But London – the area with the highest absolute number – saw an increase. The number of children cautioned and convicted for violent offences rose 6% in London from 580 in 2023/24 to 617 in 2024/25.

4. Violence against young women and girls

CORE INDICATOR	INDICATOR PERFORMANCE	LATEST VALUE (2024/25)	CHANGE COMPARED TO...		
			Last year (2023/24)	Pre-Covid (2019/20)	10 years ago (2014/15)
Violence against young women and girls Children arrested for sexual offences	Worsening	3,809	+18.1%	+74.2%	+11.9%

COMMENTARY

This is the first year we’re introducing an indicator that specifically measures violence against young women and girls. The latest data shows the picture is **worsening** – the number of children arrested for sexual offences in 2024/25 was up 18.1% compared to the previous year (2023/24), up 74.2% compared to the year before Covid (2019/20) and up 11.9% compared to 10 years previously (2014/15).

What is violence against women and girls?

Violence against women and girls (VAWG) refers to a range of behaviours including but not limited to domestic abuse, stalking, and sexual assault, harassment and exploitation. While anyone can be a victim of these behaviours, it’s overwhelmingly disproportionately women and girls who are affected, and primarily men and boys who are perpetrators.^{xvi} For example, girls account for 79% of child sexual abuse and exploitation victims (CSAE), 77% of child sexual abuse images online and 97% of AI-generated images.^{xviii xix} Boys make up over 80% of those identified as responsible for CSAE, 98% of children cautioned and convicted for indecent image offences and 99% of those cautioned and convicted for sexual offences.^{xx iii}

We know that VAWG is a serious issue affecting children; nearly half (47%) of teenagers in relationships have experienced or used emotional or physical abuse in their relationship.^{xv} We also know that the majority of VAWG experienced by children is committed by other children. For example, 64% of indecent image offences reported in 2024 were committed by children.^{xx} For around three quarters of 10–15-year-old rape victims, the suspect was aged between 10 and 19 years old.^{xx} There is also often overlap between the children experiencing and committing these types of violence. For example, our survey of 13–17-year-olds found that 73% of those who’d engaged in controlling and abusive behaviours in their relationships had also been a victim of it themselves.^{xv} For these reasons, our current focus is on peer-on-peer violence.

Despite the importance of this issue, there's very little data on VAWG involving children that's available at a national level annually. It's extremely challenging to gain accurate estimates of the prevalence of VAWG, perhaps more so than any of our other indicators. This is due to its complex and often hidden nature. The government have committed to halving VAWG by 2034, including children in this goal.^{xvi} However, the core metric being used to track progress only includes individuals aged 16 and above (the minimum age at which domestic abuse is currently recognised as a crime).

What is our core measure of violence against young women and girls?

Our aim was to create an indicator that:

1. Measures VAWG affecting children specifically.
2. Focuses on those causing harm.
3. Is based on publicly available national data, published annually.

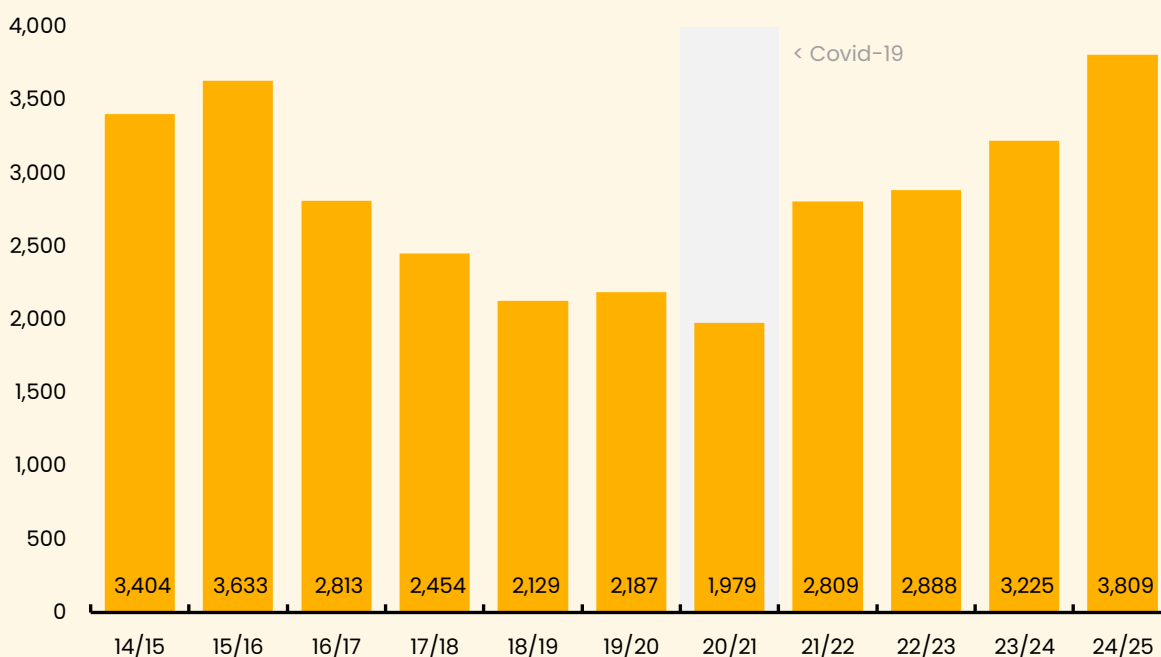
To do this, we're using the number of children arrested for sexual offences as our core indicator of VAWG.^{vi} It's the best measure we have, given the constraints above. It provides us a measure of children's involvement in VAWG that we can track over time and isn't affected by system changes such as increased use of diversion for children in the same way as data on cautions and convictions are.

But it's important to note it will be affected by other changes in reporting and policing, even more so than other types of violent offence, given the nature of the crime. It also only measures one form of VAWG; it doesn't include offences such as stalking, harassment or image-based abuse, for example. Due to these factors, it's a considerable underestimate of the total prevalence of VAWG affecting children. It's also not exclusively a measure of violence affecting female victims; we don't know victims' genders. Finally, being arrested doesn't mean that an individual is necessarily guilty of the suspected offence.

FINDINGS

The number of children arrested for sexual offences is growing.

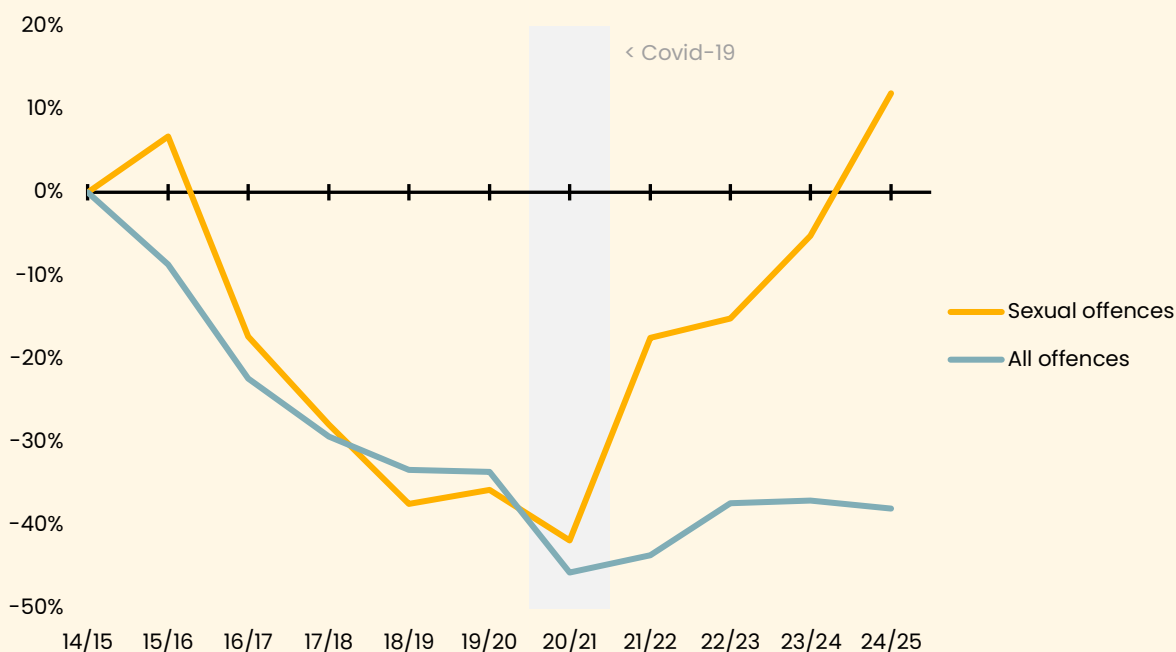
The number of children arrested for sexual offences had been broadly falling since 2009/10.^{vi} It rose from 2012/13 to 2015/16 but fell again to a low of 1,979 during the year of the pandemic (2020/21). Since then, it's risen every year, reaching 3,809 in 2024/25 (the latest year). It's now up 18.1% on the previous year (2023/24), up 74.2% on the year before Covid (2019/20), and has climbed back up to 11.9% over where it was 10 years ago (2014/15). Nearly all children arrested for sexual offences are boys, accounting for 98% of arrests over the past decade.

FIGURE 4.1. NUMBER OF 10–17-YEAR-OLDS ARRESTED FOR SEXUAL OFFENCES (ENGLAND AND WALES)

For context, the number of children arrested for any type of offence had also been falling prior to the pandemic, then rose in the two years following. But in the past two years it's fallen once more, and in 2024/25, it was 38% down compared to where it was in 2014/15. Adults show a similar pattern to children, although adult arrests for sexual offences have grown even more in the years since Covid. In the latest year (2024/25), the number of adults aged 20 and above arrested for sexual offences was up 17% on the previous year (2023/24) and up 69% on the year before Covid (2019/20).

The increase we're seeing in arrests for sexual offences has a few possible drivers. We've labelled the indicator as worsening because more children are being arrested for sexual offences. However, based on our measure, we can't necessarily say that more children are committing sexual offences. The change could reflect a real increase in the number of children committing sexual offences, but it could also reflect more positive contextual and system changes. For example, an increase in the number of victims reporting their experiences to the police and in police taking action on these reports.

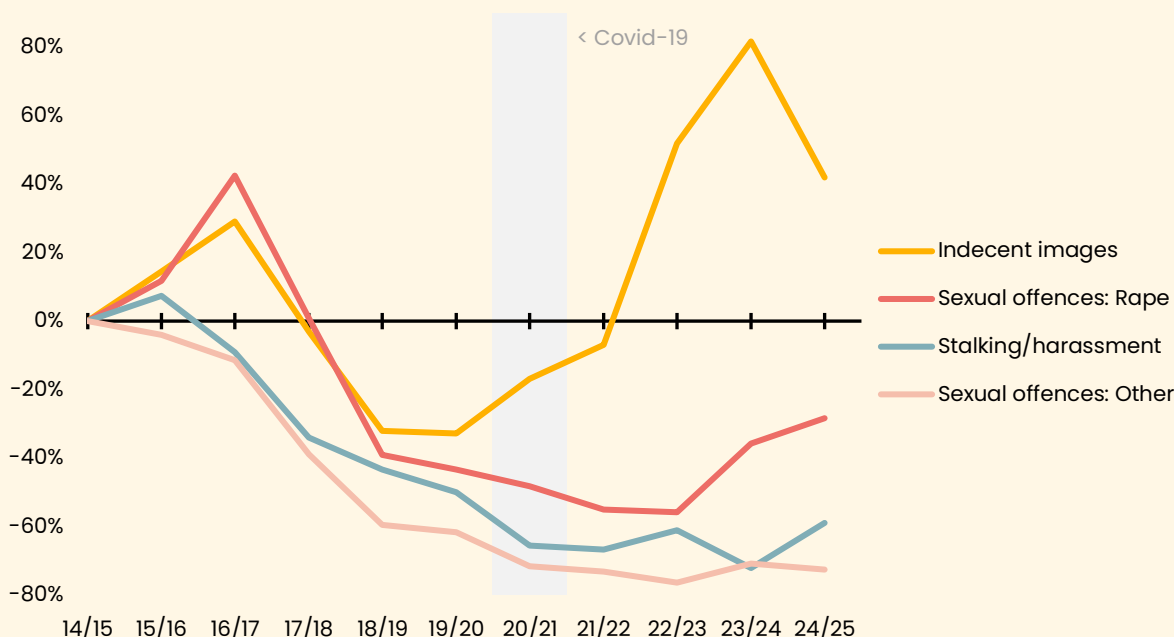
For context, the number of children proven to have committed sexual offences shows a different picture. In 2024/25, 262 children received cautions or convictions for sexual offences. This is up compared to the low of 205 seen in 2022/23, but 66% down compared to where it was a decade ago. However, we expect this change to be affected by increased use of diversions of children away from formal criminal justice processes as well as difficulties in prosecuting sexual offences specifically.

FIGURE 4.2. PERCENTAGE CHANGE IN NUMBER OF CHILDREN ARRESTED FOR SEXUAL AND ALL OFFENCES SINCE 2014/15 (ENGLAND AND WALES)

Indecent image offences have become more common.

Data on cautions and convictions of children are available at a more granular offence level than arrests are, allowing us to look at changes in children's involvement in VAWG-related offences beyond just sexual offences. This shows us that other forms of VAWG show different trends. Most notably, the number of children cautioned and convicted for indecent image offences (i.e. taking, possessing or distributing illegal images of children), which aren't counted under the umbrella of sexual offences, has grown considerably since Covid.ⁱⁱⁱ In 2024/25 it was up 42% on a decade ago (2014/15). In comparison, the total number of children cautioned and convicted for any offence in 2024/25 was 48% down from 2014/15.

This likely reflects a real increase in tech-facilitated abuse affecting children. The total number of indecent image offences recorded by the police in 2024/25 was over five times the number a decade ago (2014/15).^{xxi} The Internet Watch Foundation continues to find more child sexual abuse images online year on year.^{xix} Many of these are so-called self-generated images.

FIGURE 4.3. PERCENTAGE CHANGE IN THE NUMBER OF CHILDREN CAUTIONED AND CONVICTED OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS-RELATED OFFENCES SINCE 2014/15 (ENGLAND AND WALES)

Criminal justice measures of VAWG significantly underestimate the true prevalence.

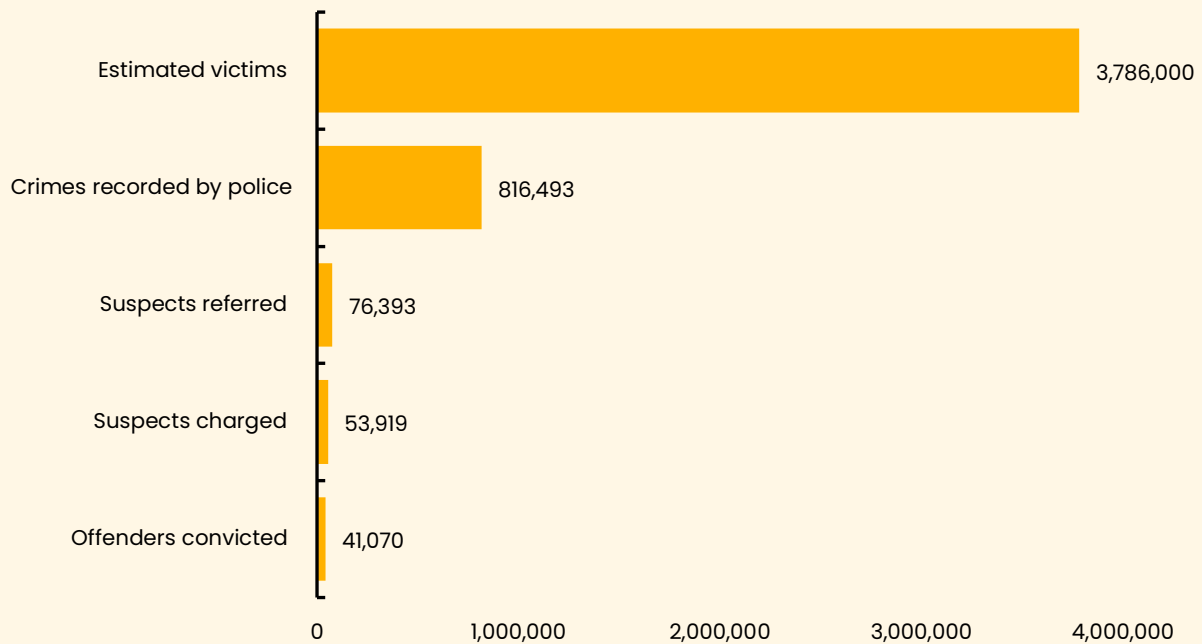
All crime data is affected by the functioning of the policing and justice systems, and so is limited in the extent to which it reflects true levels of violence. VAWG-related offences are particularly susceptible to this, due to the nature of the crime. Changes in cultural context, reporting, recording, policing and justice practices can all affect the extent to which VAWG-related offences are accurately reflected in the data. Victims not recognising abuse or feeling unable to report experiences to the police, police not identifying abuse, offence codes not accurately capturing VAWG, domestic abuse not being recorded as a crime for under 16s, and challenges in collecting evidence and in proving offences all mean that police and justice data significantly underestimate the true levels of VAWG. Police data shows us that sexual offences are the least likely of all offence types to be successfully investigated by the police.^{vii} In 2024/25, only 5% of sexual offences recorded by the police resulted in a charge or summons, out of court disposal, diversionary activity or were taken into consideration by a court when sentencing for a related offence, compared to 12% of all offences.

Unfortunately, we don't have many national estimates of the number of children who are victims of VAWG that we can track reliably over time. The Office for National Statistics (ONS) estimates that 3.8 million people aged 16 and above experienced domestic abuse in the latest year (2024/25).¹ ^{xxii} The number of domestic abuse-related crimes recorded by the police in the same year was less than a quarter of this (816,493 police-recorded crimes). Also in the same year, 76,393 suspects were referred by the police to the Crown Prosecution Service for a charging decision on a suspected domestic abuse-related crime,

¹ This is the headline metric the government are using to track progress against their VAWG strategy. It's based on the ONS' new measure of domestic abuse from the Crime Survey of England and Wales (CSEW). It focuses on individuals aged 16 and above because 16 is the legal age at which domestic abuse is recognised as a crime and the minimum age of CSEW respondents.

representing just 9.4% the number of police-recorded crimes and only 2% the estimated number of domestic abuse victims. Of these, 53,919 suspects were charged and 41,070 convicted. This means that the number of individuals convicted of committing domestic abuse-related crimes is equivalent to just 1.1% of the number of individuals estimated to have been victims of domestic abuse. In other words, the true prevalence of domestic abuse in England and Wales is at least between 50 and 92 times the prevalence indicated by justice system data, but likely even more.

FIGURE 4.4. OFFICE FOR NATIONAL STATISTICS DOMESTIC ABUSE ESTIMATES FROM VICTIMS TO CONVICTED OFFENDERS, 2024/25 (ENGLAND AND WALES)



5. Disproportionality

CORE INDICATOR	INDICATOR PERFORMANCE	LATEST VALUE (2024/25)	CHANGE COMPARED TO...		
			Last year (2023/24)	Pre-Covid (2019/20)	10 years ago (2014/15)
Disproportionality Proportion of Black children in custody	Mixed	22.0%	-1.7%pt	-6.2%pt	+0.9%pt

COMMENTARY

In last year’s update, our disproportionality indicator had a **mixed** rating – the proportion of children in custody on an average month who were Black was lower than in the previous year (2022/23) and the year before Covid (2019/20), but higher than 10 years previously (2013/14). This latest data shows the picture is still **mixed** – the proportion of Black children in custody was down again compared to the previous year (2023/24) and the year before Covid (2019/20), but remained slightly higher than 10 years previously (2014/15).

What is our core measure of disproportionality?

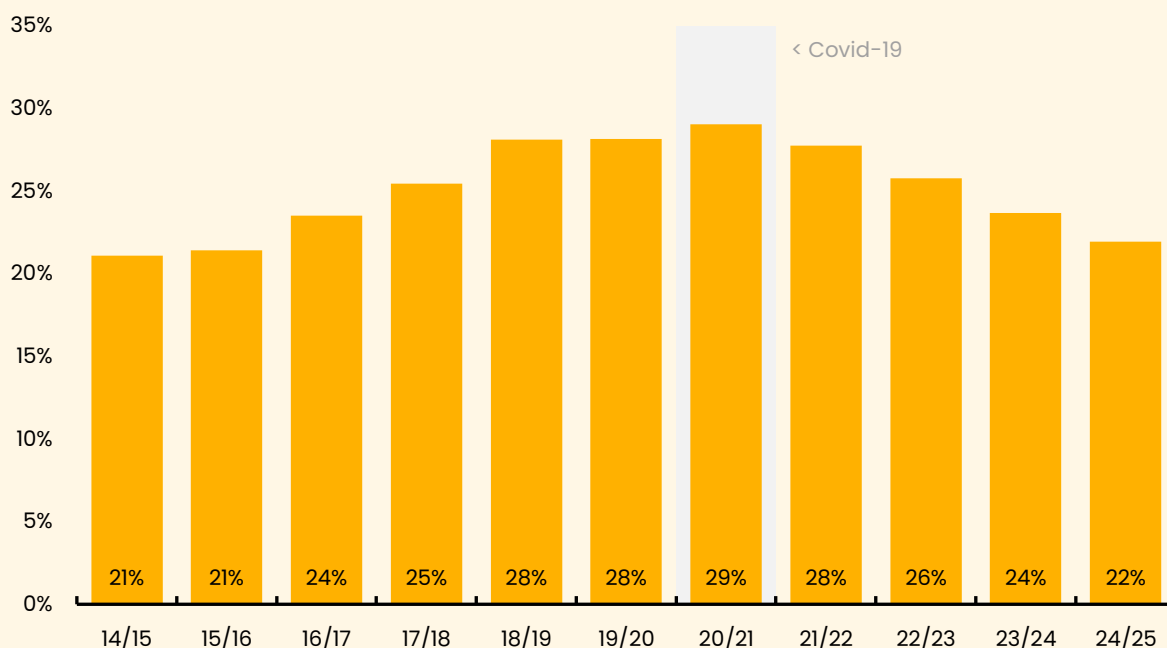
It’s widely accepted that there are significant racial disparities in the youth justice system and who’s affected by violence, particularly when it comes to Black children. It’s important that this remains central to our thinking about violence. For this reason, one of our core focuses is racial disproportionality. One of the areas where this disproportionality is most stark is among children serving custodial or prison sentences. To track this, we’ve used the proportion of children in custody on an average month who are from any Black background.^v For a more in-depth look at racial disproportionality in violence affecting young people, see our 2025 report.^{xxiii}

FINDINGS

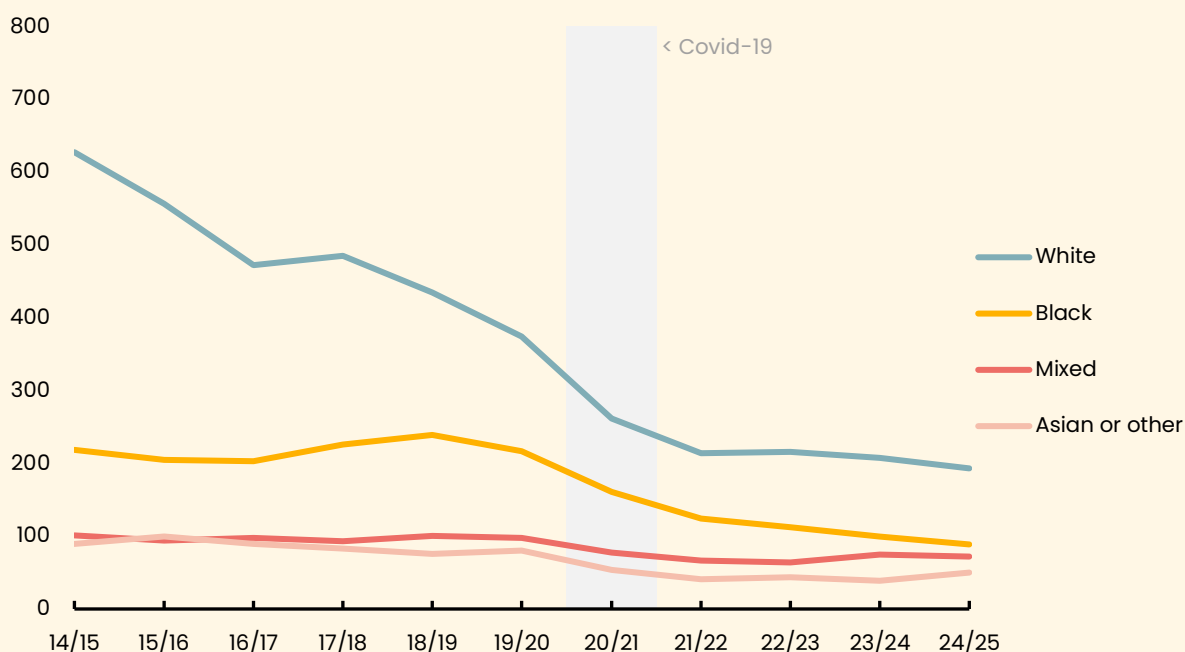
Fewer Black children are in custody.

Over the past decade, the total number of children serving custodial sentences has fallen, but this hasn't impacted children of all races equally.^v From 2014/15 to 2020/21, the number of White children in custody on an average month fell by 58%. In comparison, the average number of Black children in custody fell by only 26%. This led to the share of Black children in custody rising to a high of 29% in 2020/21, despite Black children accounting for only 6% of 10–17-year-olds in England and Wales. Since then, both the absolute number and the share of Black children in custody have fallen. In the latest year (2024/25), it fell once more, to the lowest it's been since 2015/16. But Black children remain significantly overrepresented. In 2024/25, the number of children in custody in an average month was 418. Of these, 89 were Black children, making up 22% of those whose race was known – still 0.9 percentage points (%pts) up from a decade ago and nearly four times their population share.^{xxiv}

FIGURE 5.1. PROPORTION OF THE AVERAGE MONTHLY CHILD CUSTODY POPULATION WHO ARE BLACK (ENGLAND AND WALES)



In comparison, Mixed race children had been slowly but steadily becoming more overrepresented. In 2023/24, Mixed race children were the only group to show an increase in the number of children in custody, up by 17% on the previous year (2022/23). This year the number has fallen slightly, but they now account for 18% of the average monthly child custody population, despite making up only 6% of 10–17-year-olds in England and Wales. In the latest year (2024/25), the number of children from Asian and Other backgrounds in custody rose, to account for 12% of the population, but this is still an underrepresentation in comparison to their total population share (14%).

FIGURE 5.2. AVERAGE MONTHLY CHILD CUSTODY POPULATION BY RACE (ENGLAND AND WALES)

But Black children remain overrepresented at every stage of the justice system.

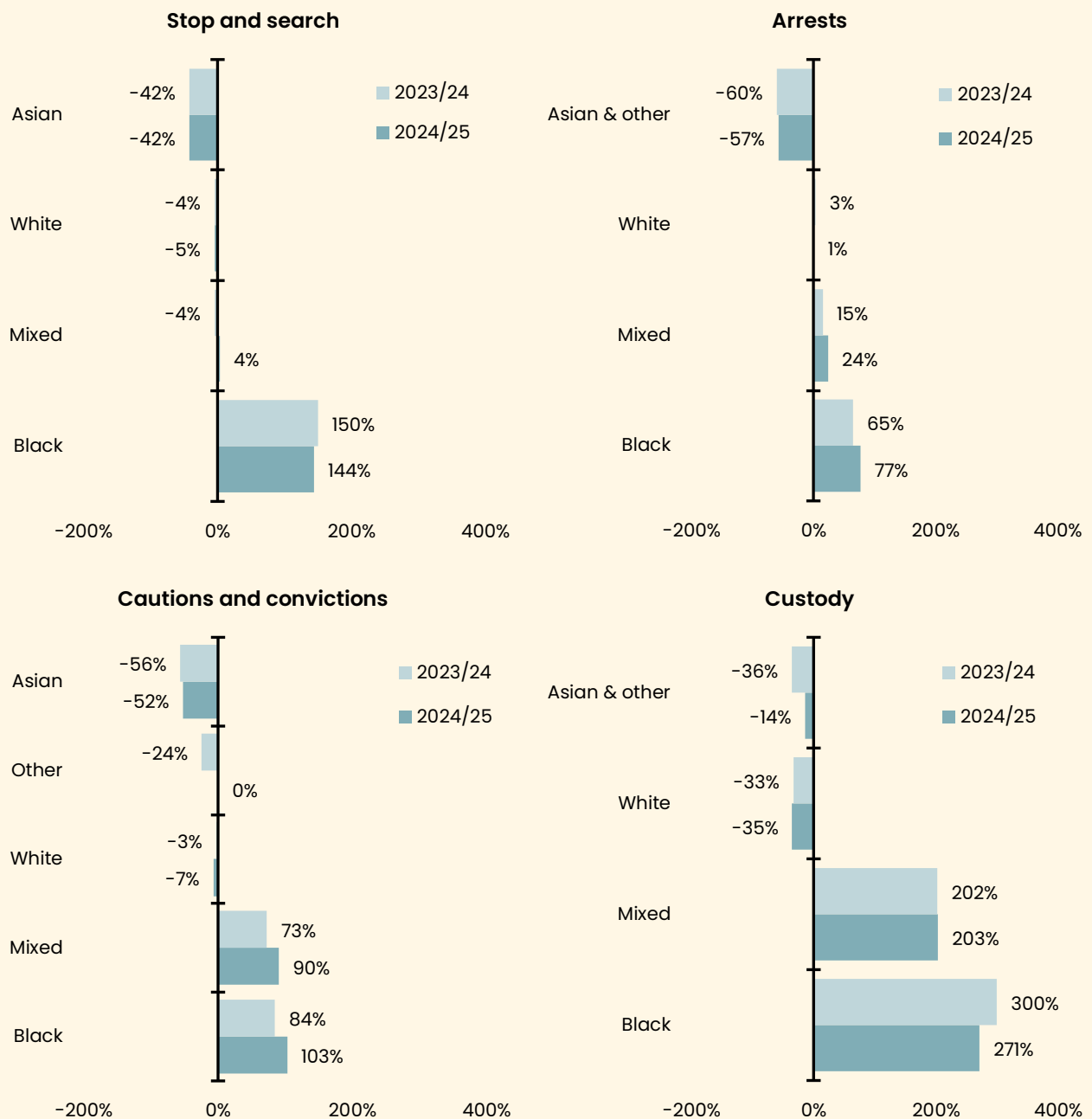
Black and Mixed race children are also overrepresented at other stages of the youth justice system. Over the past four to five years, this disproportionality has improved somewhat, particularly in terms of stop and search and arrests of Black children.^{vi} In 2020/21 (the earliest year for which we have stop and search data by age and race), 18% of children stopped and searched self-defined as Black, making them over three times as likely (+211%) to be stopped and searched compared to their population share. In the latest year (2024/25), this has fallen to 14% of all stops and searches. While this indicates some improvement, Black children remain 2.5 times as likely (+144%) to be stopped and searched as their population share.

Arrests have shown more consistent improvement over the past four years. In 2020/21, Black children made up 15% of children arrested; in 2024/25, they made up 10% – making them 77% more likely to be arrested compared to their population share. However, this is slightly up on where it was the previous year (2023/24).

Disproportionality in cautions and convictions has remained fairly steady over recent years, with Black children accounting for 11–12% of children cautioned and convicted annually, around double their share of the England and Wales population.^v The latest year (2024/25) saw a slight increase from 11% to 12%, making them twice as likely (+103%) to be cautioned and convicted compared to their population share.

The only stage at which Black children are underrepresented is diversions. Black children are half as likely to receive diversion from the youth justice system compared to White children and remain less likely to receive diversionary outcomes even when controlling for the seriousness of the offence.^{xxv xxvi}

FIGURE 5.3. UNDER- AND OVERREPRESENTATION* OF CHILDREN RELATIVE TO THEIR POPULATION SHARE AT DIFFERENT STAGES OF THE JUSTICE SYSTEM BY RACE, 2023/24 VERSUS 2024/25 (ENGLAND AND WALES)

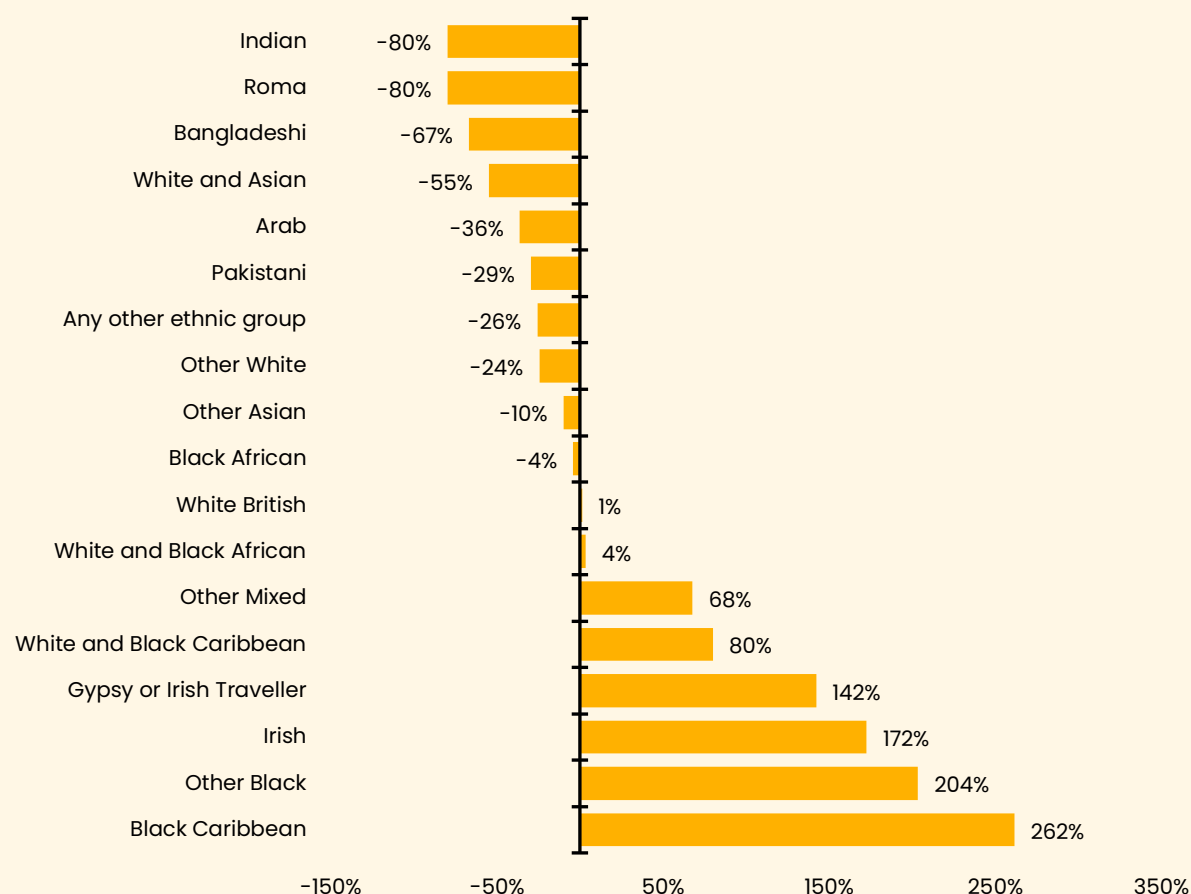


Black children also remain disproportionately likely to be victims of serious violence. In 2024/25, 34% of homicide victims aged 16–24 were Black – over six times their population share (5% of 16–24-year-olds in England and Wales). This is roughly the same proportion as the previous year (2023/24), despite the overall reduction in the number of young people who lost their lives.

Looking only at race masks underlying differences.

Much of the data we report on is only available broken down by broad racial groups (e.g. Black, White, Asian). However, it's important to continue to emphasise that considering racial disproportionality by looking only at race masks the underlying patterns of violence and justice system involvement experienced by specific communities and groups of children. Below are the figures for arrests – one set of figures published with a breakdown by ethnic groups.

FIGURE 5.4. UNDER- AND OVERREPRESENTATION OF CHILDREN ARRESTED RELATIVE TO THEIR POPULATION SHARES BY ETHNIC GROUP, 2023/24 (ENGLAND AND WALES)



The disproportionate representation of Black children in arrests is particularly driven by the overrepresentation of those from Black Caribbean and Other Black backgrounds.^{vi} In the latest year (2024/25), they were 262% and 204%, respectively, more likely to be arrested compared to their population share. In comparison, Black African children were slightly underrepresented.

There is also significant overrepresentation in some smaller groups that can be overlooked when examining differences by race. For example, children from Gypsy and Irish Traveller backgrounds, who are classified as 'White', are 142% more likely to be arrested compared to their share of the population. In the 2024/25 inspection survey of children in custody, 8% of respondents identified as being from a traveller community, despite them making up less than 1% of the child population in England and Wales.^{xxvii} They are the most overrepresented group in child custody.

6. Policing

CORE INDICATOR	INDICATOR PERFORMANCE	LATEST VALUE (2024/25)	CHANGE COMPARED TO...		
			Last year (2023/24)	Pre-Covid (2019/20)	10 years ago (2014/15)
Policing Successfully investigated crimes	Mixed	11.6%	+1.2%pt	+0.7%pt	-13.6%pt

COMMENTARY

In last year’s update, our policing indicator had a **mixed** rating – the proportion of recorded crimes that resulted in a successful outcome was down compared to the year before Covid (2019/20) and 10 years previously (2013/14), but had risen compared to the previous year (2022/23). The latest data shows the picture continues to be **mixed** – the proportion of successful outcomes in 2024/25 was up compared to the previous year (2023/24) and the year before Covid (2019/20) but remains down compared to 10 years previously (2014/15).

What is this sector, and how are we measuring it?

The police aim to prevent and solve crimes, provide support to victims, administer out of court disposals and collaborate with other organisations to provide targeted support where necessary. We use the proportion of crimes that are successfully investigated by the police as our core measure for policing.^{vii} We consider a crime to be successfully investigated or have a successful outcome if it resulted in (1) a charge or summons, (2) a formal or informal out of court disposal, (3) a diversionary activity (i.e. Outcome 22) or (4) being taken into consideration by a court.² Outcome 22 isn’t formally recorded as a positive outcome by the police, but evidence suggests that pre-court diversion can reduce reoffending and violence, and YEF believes it should be considered a positive outcome for children.^{xxviii xxix} However, we know that diversion practice varies considerably. Depending on various factors, children are likely to experience different consequences and opportunities for support.

It’s important to remember that this indicator can be affected by changes in the way crimes and outcomes are reported.

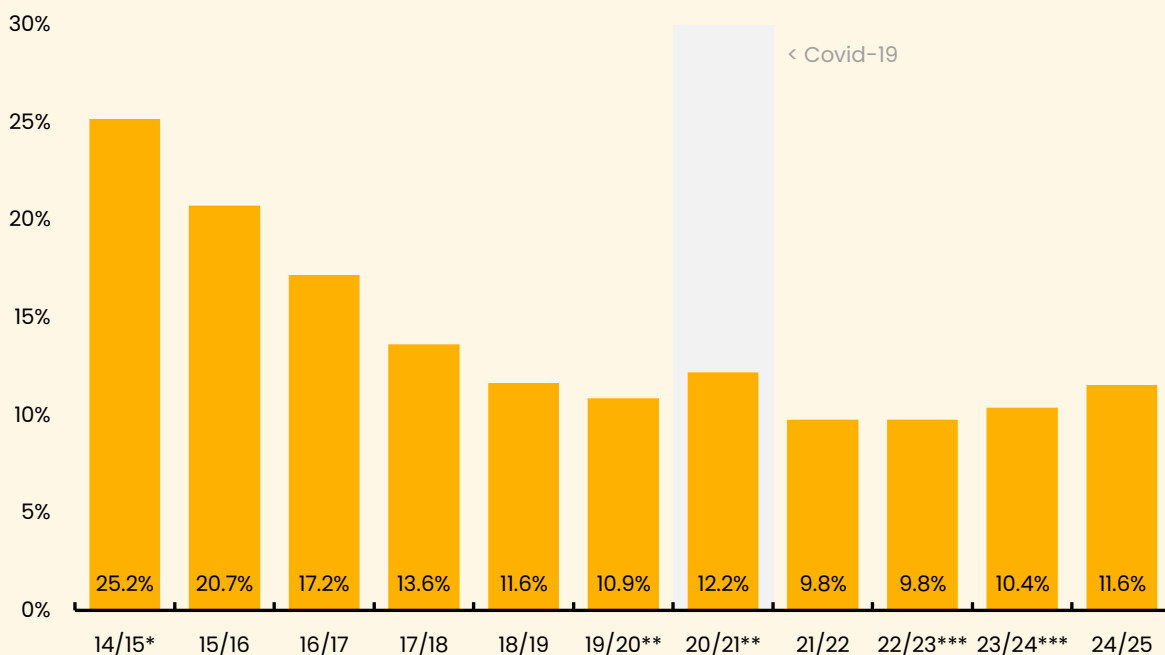
² When someone convicted of an offence admits to other similar offences, which are then taken into consideration at sentencing.

FINDINGS

The proportion of crimes successfully investigated by the police has risen incrementally over the past two years.

Over the past decade, the number of crimes recorded by the police annually has risen, while the total number of those crimes that are successfully investigated has fallen.^{vii} As a consequence, the proportion of crimes successfully investigated by the police has also fallen. However, in recent years the growth in police-reported crime has stalled and the number of crimes successfully investigated has started to rise. In 2024/25, the number of successfully investigated crimes rose for the third year in a row. The total proportion of police-recorded crimes with successful outcomes rose to 11.6%, up 1.2%pts on the previous year and up 0.7%pts on the year before Covid (2019/20).³ But the total proportion of successful outcomes remains less than half its level 10 years ago.

FIGURE 5.1. PROPORTION OF POLICE-RECORDED CRIMES WITH SUCCESSFUL OUTCOMES (ENGLAND AND WALES)



* Based on data from 38 out of 43 forces. ** Excluding data from Greater Manchester police. *** Excluding data from Devon and Cornwall police.

Violent crimes show a similar pattern to that of all offences. In 2024/25, 9.9% of violence against the person crimes recorded by the police had successful outcomes, up from 9.3% in 2023/24. Robberies and sexual offences were even less likely to result in a successful outcome. In 2024/25, it was 8.0% for robberies (up on 7.1% in 2023/24) and 5.4% for sexual offences (down from 5.8% in 2023/24).

³ We consider a crime to have a successful outcome if it resulted in (1) a charge or summons, (2) a formal or informal out of court disposal, (3) a diversionary activity (i.e. Outcome 22) or (4) being taken into consideration by a court at sentencing, when the suspect is convicted of a similar offence.

7. Youth justice

CORE INDICATOR	INDICATOR PERFORMANCE	LATEST VALUE (2023/24)	CHANGE COMPARED TO...		
			Last year (2022/23)	Pre-Covid (2019/20)	10 years ago (2013/14)
Youth justice Children's reoffending rate	Improving	31.8%	-0.7%pt	-2.5%pt	-11.2%pt

COMMENTARY

In last year's update, our youth justice indicator had a **mixed** rating – children's reoffending rates were slightly up on the previous year (2021/22) but down compared to the year before Covid (2019/20) and 10 years previously (2012/13). This latest data shows the picture is now **improving** – children's reoffending rates are down compared to the previous year (2022/23), the year before Covid (2019/20) and 10 years previously (2013/14).

What is this sector, and how are we measuring it?

The aim of the youth justice system in England and Wales is to prevent children from offending and reoffending. One of the main predictors of a child becoming involved in violence is being arrested for lower-level offences. But what happens to children after the point of arrest – including whether they're diverted away from formal court processes and what forms of support they're given – can significantly affect whether children go on to reoffend.

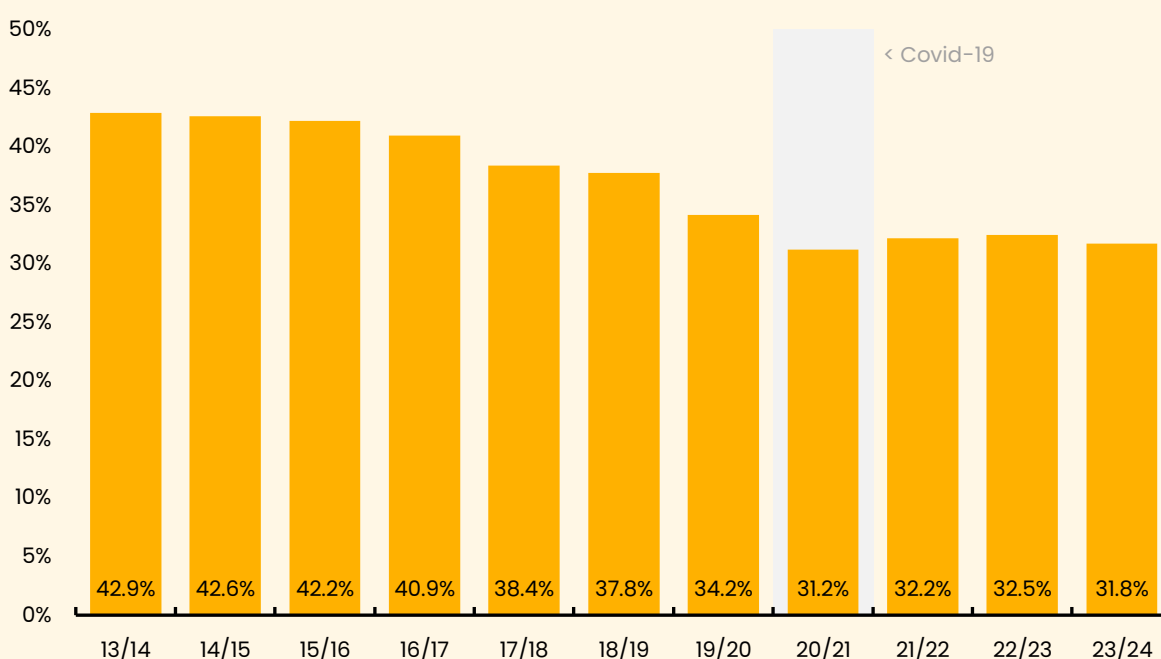
We use children's reoffending rates as our core measure to track the youth justice sector.^v An offence is considered as reoffending if it leads to a caution or conviction within 18 months of a previous offence (at the point either when a caution or conviction was served or a period in custody ended). It's important to note that measures of reoffending, particularly when split by type of offence or reoffender characteristics, are affected by the functioning of the police and the justice system.

FINDINGS

The proportion of children who reoffend has fallen once again.

Children's reoffending rates fell consistently between 2013/14 and 2020/21 – down from 43% to 31%.^v After the Covid pandemic, they rebounded slightly – rising in 2021/22 and in 2022/23. In the latest year (2023/24), they fell once more, down 0.7%pts to 31.8%. This represents 4,614 children who've reoffended, a similar number to 4,649 the previous year (2022/23) but nearly 80% down compared to the number 10 years ago (22,462 in 2013/14). However, those children who have reoffended have committed more reoffences on average. The average number of reoffences increased to 4.44 per person in 2023/24, compared to 4.34 in 2022/23 and 3.41 in 2013/14.

FIGURE 7.1. PROPORTION OF CHILDREN WHO REOFFENDED (ENGLAND AND WALES)



8. Education

CORE INDICATOR	INDICATOR PERFORMANCE	LATEST VALUE (2024/25)	CHANGE COMPARED TO...		
			Last year (2023/24)	Pre-Covid (2018/19)	10 years ago (2014/15)
Education Proportion of children persistently absent from school	Mixed	18.1%	-1.8%pt	+7.3%pt	+7.2%pt

COMMENTARY

In last year’s update, our education indicator had a **mixed** rating – the proportion of children persistently absent from school was down from the previous year (2022/23) but up compared to the year before Covid (2018/19) and 2013/14. This latest data shows that the picture is still **mixed** – persistent absence fell again compared to the previous year (2023/24) but remains higher than the year before Covid (2018/19) and 10 years previously (2014/15).

What is this sector, and how are we measuring it?

Schools and other education settings aim to provide a safe and positive place for learning and to help children realise their potential. Absence from school (missed attendance, as well as temporary suspension and permanent exclusion) not only impacts students’ attainment but is also associated with involvement in violence.^{xxx} This impact, combined with the stark increase in absence since the pandemic, makes absence a priority for the sector.

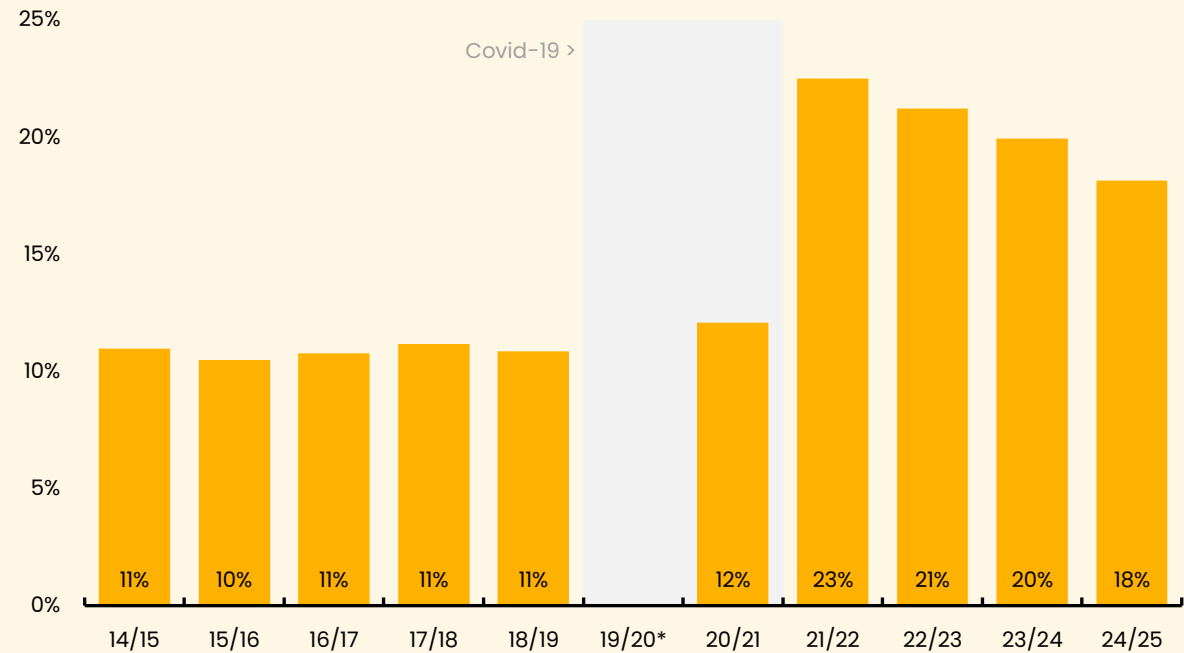
We’re using Department for Education (DfE) data on the proportion of children persistently absent from school in primary, secondary and special schools in England as our core indicator for the education sector.^{ix} A child is considered persistently absent if they miss 10% or more of possible lessons. Due to differences in how these measures are reported, we have only included data for England, not Wales.

FINDINGS

The proportion of children persistently absent fell for the third consecutive year but remains high.

Prior to Covid, the proportion of children persistently absent was fairly stable year on year.^{ix} However, after the pandemic, rates of absence in England reached record highs – jumping from 11% in 2018/19 to 23% in 2021/22. Since then, rates have slowly been falling again. In 2024/25, 18.1% of pupils in state-funded primary, secondary and special schools were persistently absent from school. This is the third year in a row that persistent absence rates have fallen, but they remain 7.3%pts above where they were before Covid (2018/19). In alternative provision settings, the rate increased slightly in the latest year, to 83.6%.

FIGURE 8.1. PROPORTION OF CHILDREN PERSISTENTLY ABSENT FROM PRIMARY, SECONDARY AND SPECIAL SCHOOLS, BY ACADEMIC YEAR (ENGLAND)

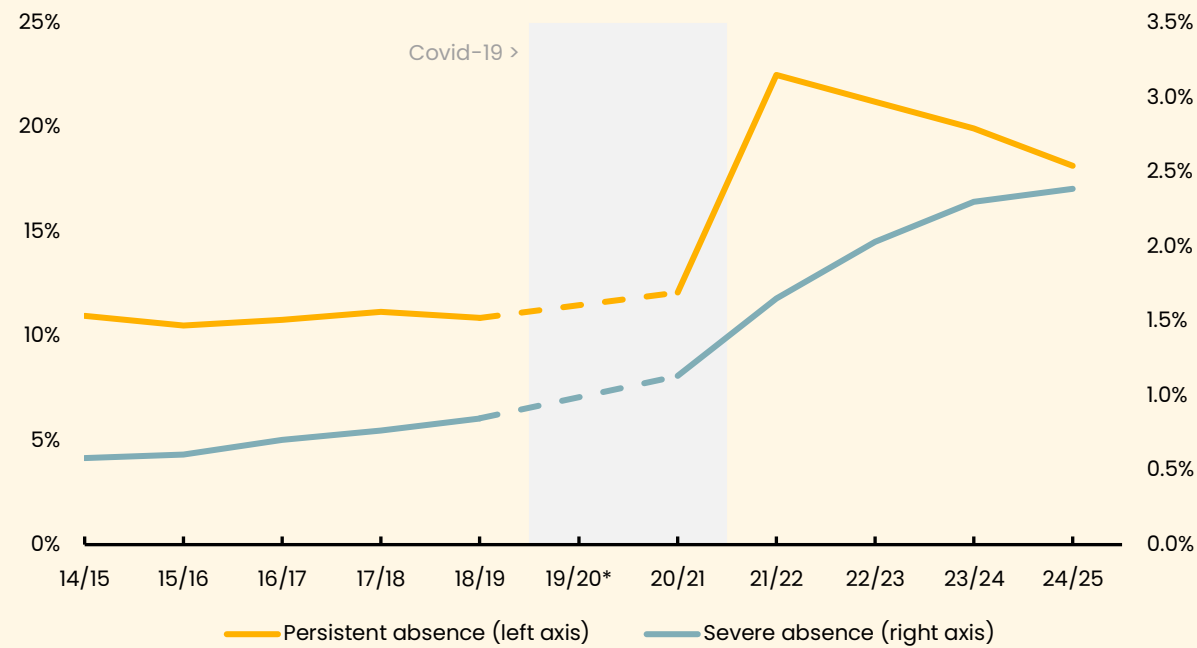


**Data not reported due to Covid.*

The proportion of children severely absent from school continues to rise.

While the proportion of children persistently absent from school has been falling recently, the proportion of children severely absent (missing 50% or more of possible sessions) has continued to increase. The overall rate is low – 2.4% of pupils in primary, secondary and special schools in England in 2024/25 – but it's up from 2.3% the year before and nearly three times the 0.8% rate prior to Covid-19 (2018/19). In alternative provision the severe absence rate is now 40.4%, compared to 39.2% the year before (2023/24) and 29.9% pre-Covid (2018/19).

FIGURE 8.2. PROPORTION OF CHILDREN PERSISTENTLY AND SEVERELY ABSENT FROM PRIMARY, SECONDARY AND SPECIAL SCHOOLS (ENGLAND)



**Data not reported due to Covid.*

9. Health

CORE INDICATOR	INDICATOR PERFORMANCE	LATEST VALUE (2024/25)	CHANGE COMPARED TO...		
			Last year (2023/24)	Pre-Covid (2019/20)	10 years ago (2014/15)
Health Referrals to mental health services	Worsening	1,215,651	+6.7%	+59.1%	+118.3%

COMMENTARY

In last year’s update, our health indicator had a **worsening** rating – the number of children referred to mental health services was up compared to the previous year (2022/23), the year before Covid (2019/20) and seven years previously (2016/17). This latest data shows the picture continues to be **worsening** – the number of referrals in 2024/25 was up again compared to the previous year (2023/24), as well as the year before Covid (2019/20) and eight years previously (2016/17).⁴

What is this sector, and how are we measuring it?

Poor mental health can be a risk factor for serious violence. Rates of weapon carrying are higher among children with mental health problems, including conduct problems and hyperactivity, as well as those who self-harm. We also know that [receiving talking therapies](#) can reduce violence and associated behaviours.^{xxxi}

We’ve used the total number of children in contact with [NHS-funded secondary mental health, learning disability and autism services](#) as our core measure for mental health.^{xi} This measure captures children who have been referred to these services by their GPs or other healthcare professionals and includes both those who have received services and those who are still waiting to be seen. By using this measure, we aim to capture the children most likely to need professional help. But it’s important to remember that it depends on whether a child or their family seeks treatment and whether they receive a referral. This can be affected by changes in awareness and diagnosis.

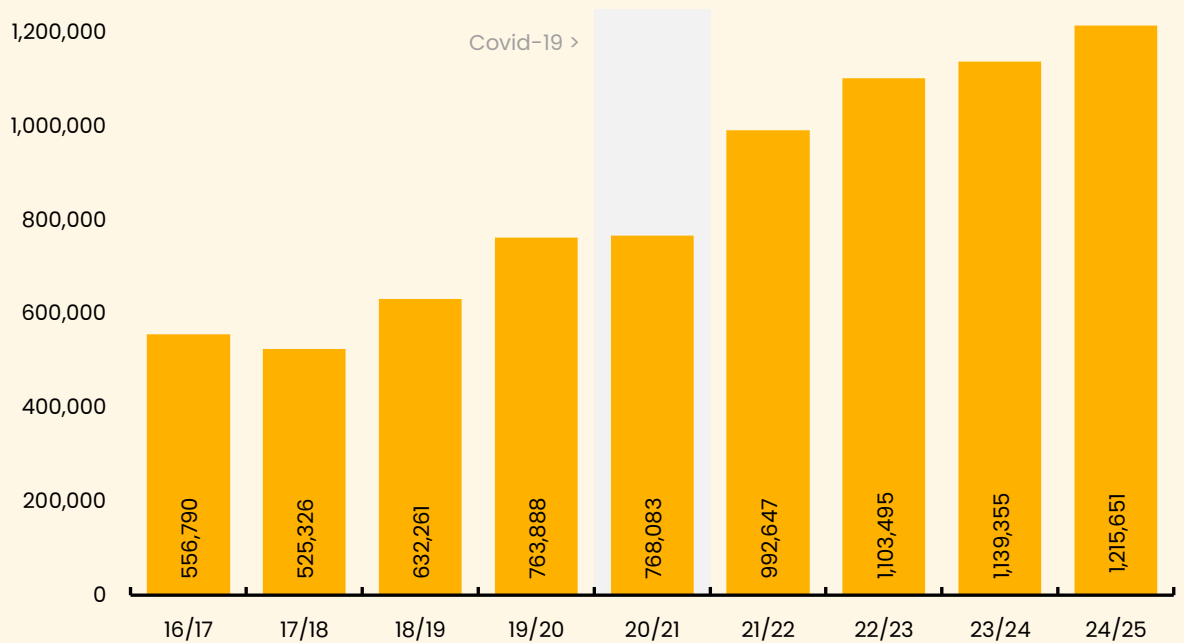
⁴ Unlike for other measures, comparable referrals data is only available from 2016/17 onward, meaning we don’t have a full 10 years’ worth of data to compare the long-run trend.

FINDINGS

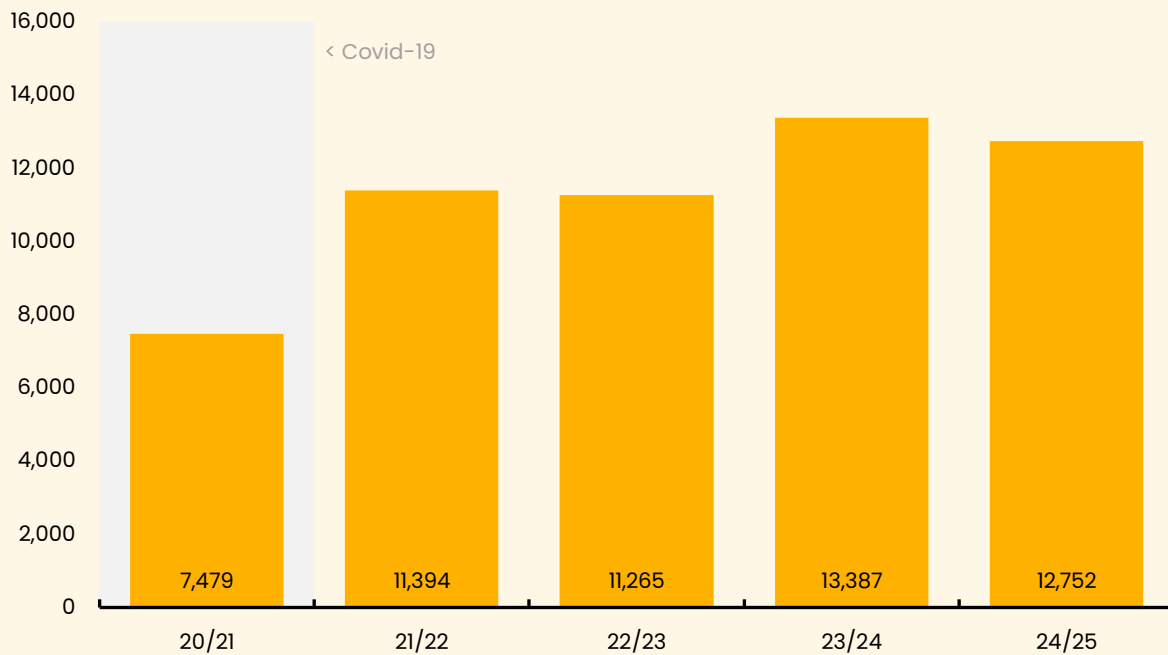
Pressures on children’s mental health services continue to increase.

Following six consecutive years of increasing referrals to NHS-funded mental health services, the latest data shows that the number of children referred increased again.^{xi} In 2024/25, over 1.2 million children were referred – a 7% increase from the year before and equivalent to 9% of all children in England.^{xxxii} The number of referrals is more than double what it was in 2016/17, the earliest year for which we have comparable data. In Wales, the number of children referred to mental health services also rose in 2023/24 – up by 19% from 2022/23 to 13,387 referrals.

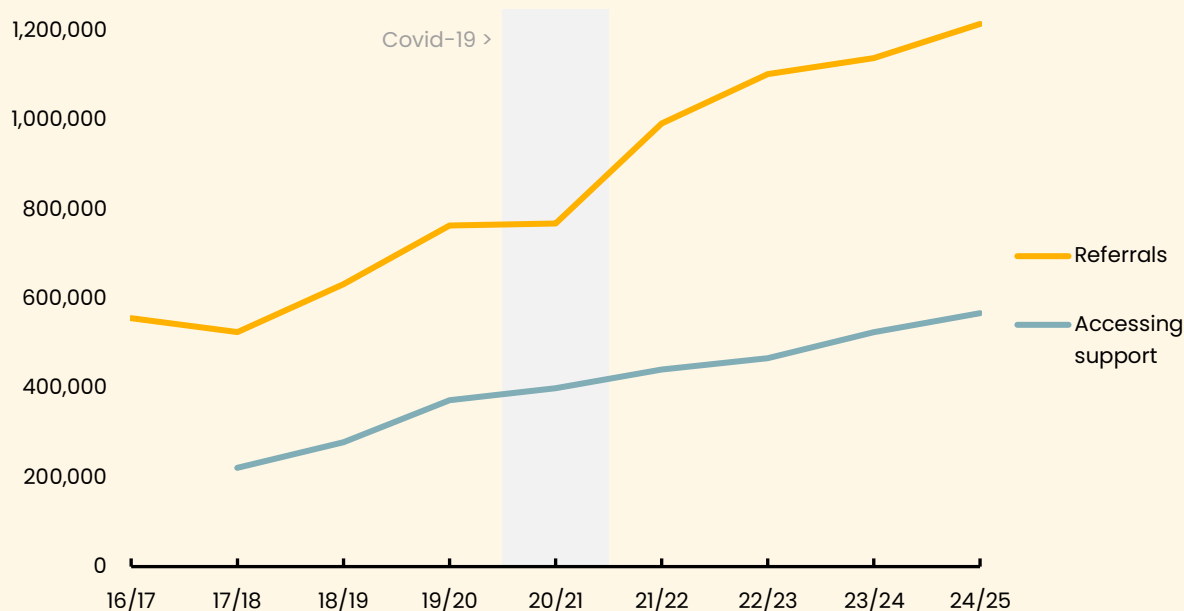
FIGURE 9.1. CHILDREN REFERRED TO NHS-FUNDED MENTAL HEALTH, LEARNING DISABILITY AND AUTISM SERVICES (ENGLAND)



The picture is slightly different for Wales. The earliest available child data is from 2020/21 and the number of children referred annually has shown a less consistent trend since then in comparison to England. In 2024/25, 12,752 children were referred to Local Primary Mental Health Support Services in Wales.^{xii} This is down 5% compared to the previous year (2023/24) and equivalent to 2% of all children in Wales.

FIGURE 9.2. CHILDREN REFERRED TO LOCAL PRIMARY MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT SERVICES (WALES)

The system appears to be having difficulty meeting the needs of this growing number of children. The number of children accessing support after referral to NHS mental health services has been rising steadily for at least seven years, but at a lower rate than the rise in referrals.^{xi} This means there's a significant gap between the number of children being referred to NHS mental health services and those accessing support, and it's been growing over time. In 2024/25, the number of children in England accessing services post-referral increased by 8.2% to 567,727. But this remains less than half (47%) the number referred in the same year.

FIGURE 9.3. NUMBER OF CHILDREN REFERRED TO AND ACCESSING SUPPORT FROM NHS-FUNDED MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES (ENGLAND)

The large gap between referrals and support could be related to several factors. For example, children may not receive support after a referral because they're judged not to need it. However, other data indicates that the increase in referrals likely does reflect a real need for mental health support. In 2022/23, the [NHS Mental Health of Children and Young People survey](#) estimated that the proportion of children with a probable disorder had been increasing since 2016/17 and was up to 20% of all children in England.^{xxxiii} A more recent [analysis](#) conducted by the Children's Commissioner showed that the number of children referred to services because they were in crisis (i.e. in acute distress, often self-harming or suicidal) has risen.^{xxxiv} In 2024/25, 60,889 children were referred for being in crisis, up by 2.0% from 2023/24.

10. Children’s services

CORE INDICATOR	INDICATOR PERFORMANCE	LATEST VALUE (2024/25)	CHANGE COMPARED TO...		
			Last year (2023/24)	Pre-Covid (2019/20)	10 years ago (2014/15)
Children’s services Children looked after	Mixed	81,770	-2.1%	+2.2%	+17.7%

COMMENTARY

In last year’s update, our children’s services indicator had a **mixed** rating – the number of children looked after was down compared to the previous year (2022/23), but up compared to the year before Covid (2019/20) and 10 years previously (2013/14). This latest data shows the picture continues to be **mixed** – the number of children looked after has fallen again in 2024/25, but remains up compared to the year before Covid (2019/20) and 10 years previously (2014/15).

What is this sector, and how are we measuring it?

Local authority children’s services exist to support families dealing with challenging situations and provide children with a safe and protective home, particularly in cases where a child may be at risk of neglect, abuse or other forms of harm. Children known to local authority children’s services are more likely to be exposed to the risk factors associated with later offending.^{xxxv} One group of children particularly at risk of harm is those looked after by the local authority, who also show significantly higher rates of serious violent offending compared to the general child population.^{xxxvi}

For this reason, we are using the number of children looked after by the local authority in England as of 31 March of each year as our core indicator for this sector.^{xiii} Welsh data isn’t yet available for the latest year. A child is considered looked after if they are provided with accommodation for longer than 24 hours or a court has ordered them to be placed in the care of the local authority or for adoption. An analysis by the Department for Education and the Ministry of Justice shows that 28% of looked after children go on to offend, and 10% commit a serious violent offence.^{xxxv} These rates compare to 5% of all children committing any offence and 1% committing a serious violent offence.

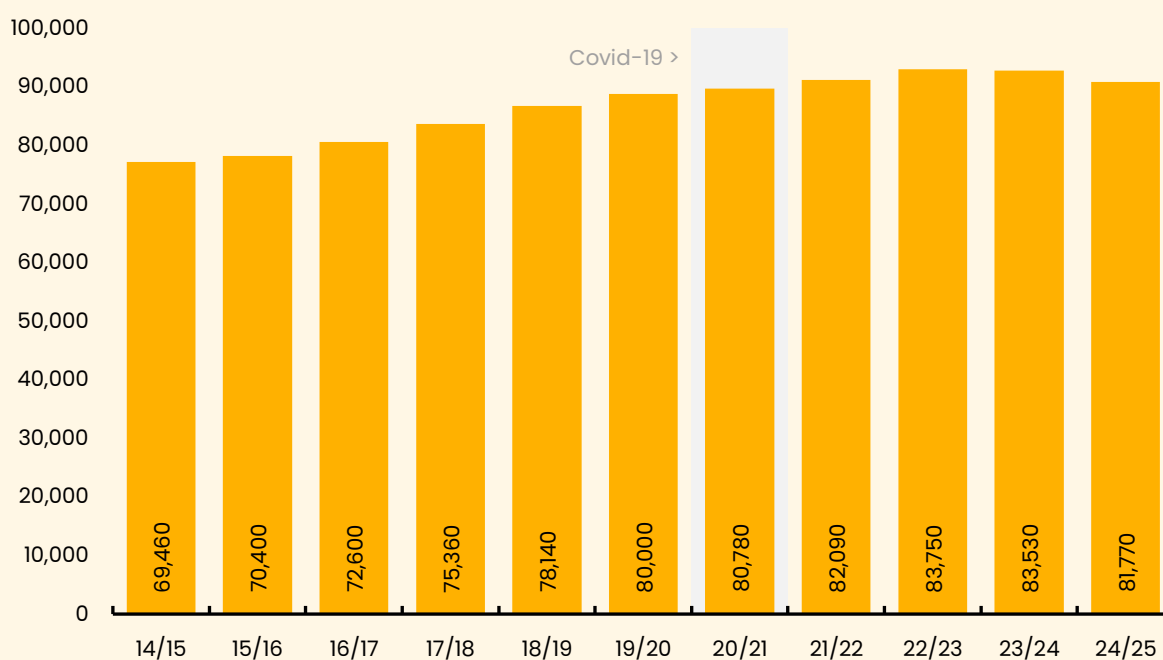
FINDINGS

The number of children looked after is down in the latest figures.

The number of children looked after by the local authority had been consistently rising since 2008, until last year when it fell for the first time in 16 years.^{xiii} This year, the number fell again. As of 31 March 2025, 81,770 children were being looked after by the local authority in England, down 2.1% from where it was at the same time the previous year. But it remains up on where it was before Covid and 17.7% up on where it was 10 years ago (2014/15).

The most common reason a child becomes looked after is due to abuse or neglect (67%, based on figures for England). The majority of children looked after are in foster placements (67%), 12% are in children's homes and secure children's homes, 9% are in supported accommodation, 6% are with parents or another person with parental responsibility, 2% have been placed for adoption and the remainder are in other settings.

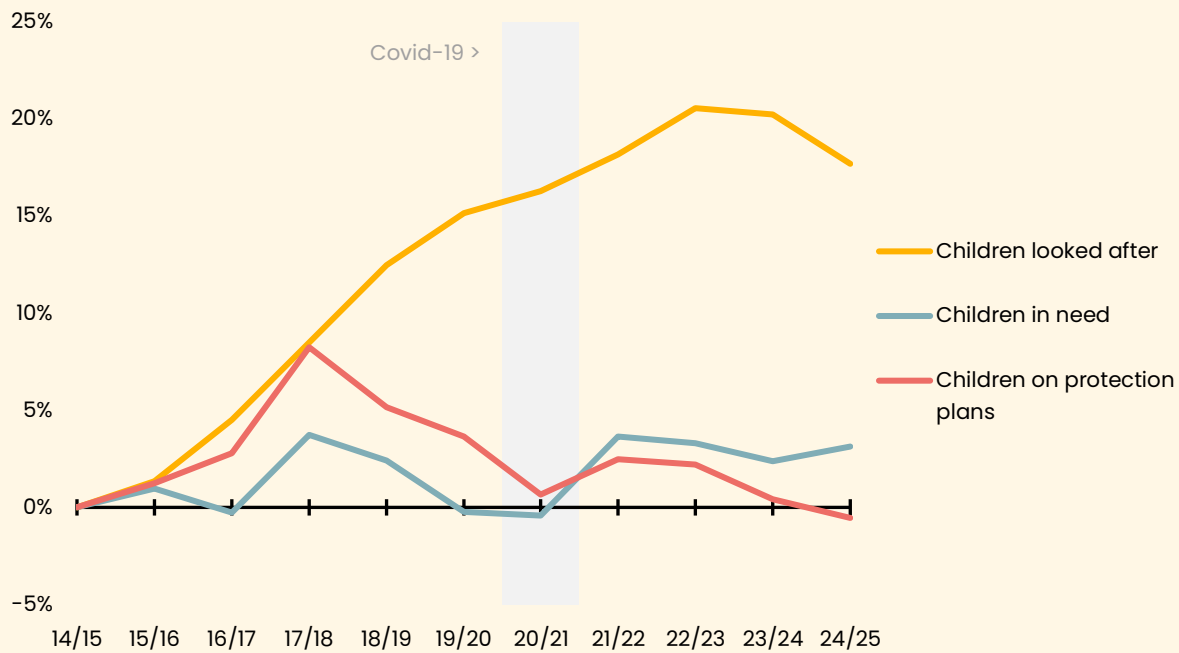
FIGURE 10.1. NUMBER OF LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN AS OF 31 MARCH (ENGLAND)



The other main groups of children known to local authority children's services (children in need, children on protection plans) have shown markedly different historical trends compared to children looked after.^{xxxvii}

The number of children in need – an initial stage when children are referred to children's social care services – has fluctuated over the past 10 years. In 2024/25, it showed the opposite trend to children looked after and rose by 0.7%, to 402,400 children in England, bringing it to 3% above 2014/15 levels. The number of children on child protection plans – a higher level of intervention set up when a child is judged to be at risk of harm – was rising until a spike in 2017/18, after which it has mostly been falling. In 2024/25, it fell again, by 1.0%, to 49,420 children, bringing it to 1% below 2014/15 levels.

FIGURE 10.2. PERCENTAGE CHANGE IN THE NUMBERS OF CHILDREN IN NEED, ON CHILD PROTECTION PLANS AND LOOKED AFTER AS OF 31 MARCH (ENGLAND)



11. Youth sector

CORE INDICATOR	INDICATOR PERFORMANCE	LATEST VALUE (2024/25)	CHANGE COMPARED TO...		
			Last year (2023/24)	Pre-Covid (2019/20)	10 years ago (2014/15)
Youth sector Local authority expenditure for youth services	Worsening	£475m	-7.7%	-0.3%	-44.3%

COMMENTARY

In last year’s update, our youth sector indicator had a **mixed** rating – total local authority real-terms expenditure on youth services was up compared to the previous year (2022/23) and the year before Covid (2019/20), but remained considerably down compared to 10 years previously (2013/14). This latest update shows the picture is now **worsening** – expenditure in 2024/25 has once again fallen, down compared to the previous year (2023/24) and the year before Covid (2019/20), as well as 10 years ago (2014/15).

What is this sector, and how are we measuring it?

Youth services can provide young people with important spaces and sources of support outside of the home. Participation in positive activities, such as sports, and access to trusted adults or mentors may also be effective in reducing children’s involvement in crime and violence.^{xxxviii} Some evidence suggests that cuts to youth clubs^{xxxix} during the 2010s may have led to an increase in crime.

We’ve used combined spending on young people’s services in England and Wales as our core measure to give us a broad picture of what’s happening in the youth sector.^{xiii xiv} This includes universal provision (e.g. leisure and cultural and sports-based activities, often based in youth centres) and targeted provision (e.g. substance misuse or teenage pregnancy services). We’ve adjusted these numbers to account for inflation using GDP deflators.^{xi}

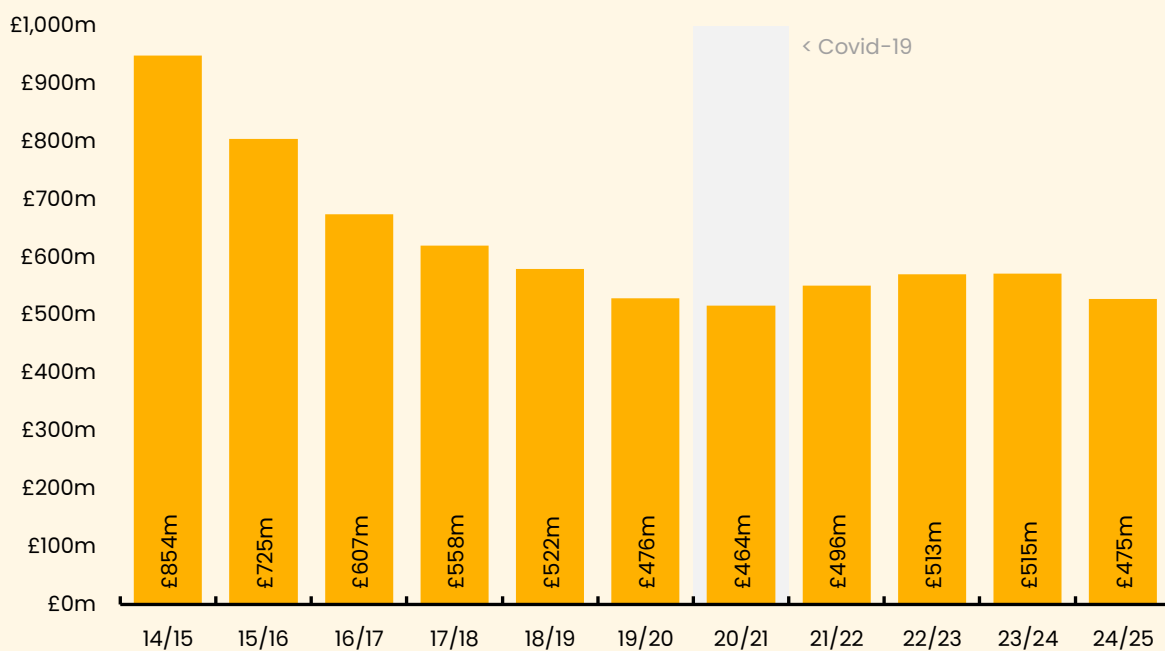
It should be noted that there are other routes to providing services for young people that are not accounted for here. For example, in 2019/20, £35 million was allotted to set up Violence Reduction Units, with the aim of tackling serious violence at a local level. At least 20% of this funding was to be used for interventions specifically with young people.^{xii}

FINDINGS

Spending on services for young people has fallen once again.

For more than 10 years, spending on services for young people fell continually in real terms, up until 2021/22.^{xiii xiv} It began increasing in the past three years, but the latest year (2024/25) has seen another fall in spending. Total real-terms spending on youth services was £475 million in 2024/25. This was down from the previous year both in cash terms (before adjusting for inflation) and real terms (taking inflation into account). It fell to just below spending in 2019/20 (by 0.3%) and 44% down compared to 10 years ago (2014/15).

FIGURE 11.1. TOTAL LOCAL AUTHORITY EXPENDITURE ON SERVICES FOR YOUNG PEOPLE, REAL 2023/24 PRICES (ENGLAND AND WALES)



Part 4

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hello@youthendowmentfund.org.uk



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