

JSNA Health and Wellbeing Profile 2023/24

Sexual violence and harassment

Summary Points

- The rate of sexual offences in Bristol in 2022/23 was 3.5 per 1,000 population, significantly higher than the national average (3 per 1,000 population).
- The prevalence of sexual assault is likely to be far greater than the number of recorded offences
- Nearly a third of people in Bristol feel that sexual harassment is an issue (QoL survey 2023/24).

Findings

Nationally police recorded crime for sexual offences has been increasing year on year since 2012/13 (see figure 1). [Note - Police recorded data needs to be treated with caution, high levels of non-reporting and changes in reporting (which can reflect the impact of high-profile incidents, media coverage or campaigns) mean that it is difficult to identify trends. The overall trend is also difficult to disentangle from the impact of lockdowns. Nationally there was a noticeable drop in recorded offences during the Spring 2020 lockdown before a return to previous levels in the July to September 2020 quarter¹].

In Bristol, the rate of sexual offences has mirrored the national profile but is significantly higher. The 2022/23 rate of 3.5 per 1,000 population is a slight decrease on the previous year, which is the highest rate recorded, but remains significantly higher than the England average (3.0%). Compared to the other English core cities, Bristol has the second lowest rate, Sheffield is lowest (2.5%) and Manchester the highest (5.7%). This reflects the same position as the previous year.

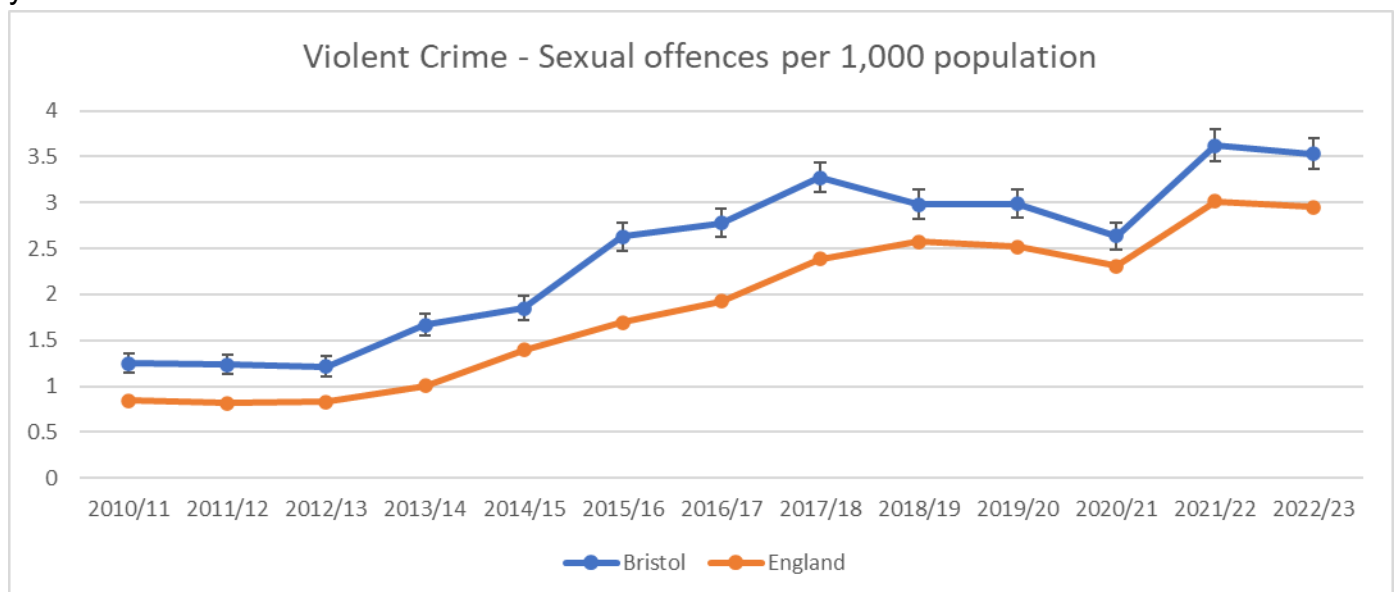


Figure 1: Figures calculated by the Office for Health Improvement and Disparities' (OHID) Population Health Analysis Team using crime data supplied by the Home Office and population data supplied by Office for National Statistics (ONS).

¹<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/earendingseptember2021#domestic-abuse-and-sexual-offences>

Rate of Sexual Offences by Ward

Figure 2 below shows a significant increase in the rate of recorded sexual offences in many wards across Bristol. Hotwells & Harbourside, Central and Filwood have all experienced significant increases for the second year running when compared to the previous year. However, it is possible that rates were lower than usual during 2020/21 (and part of 2021/22) due to the Covid-19 restrictions on the night-time economy and the requirement to stay at home (national lockdown) during some of this period.

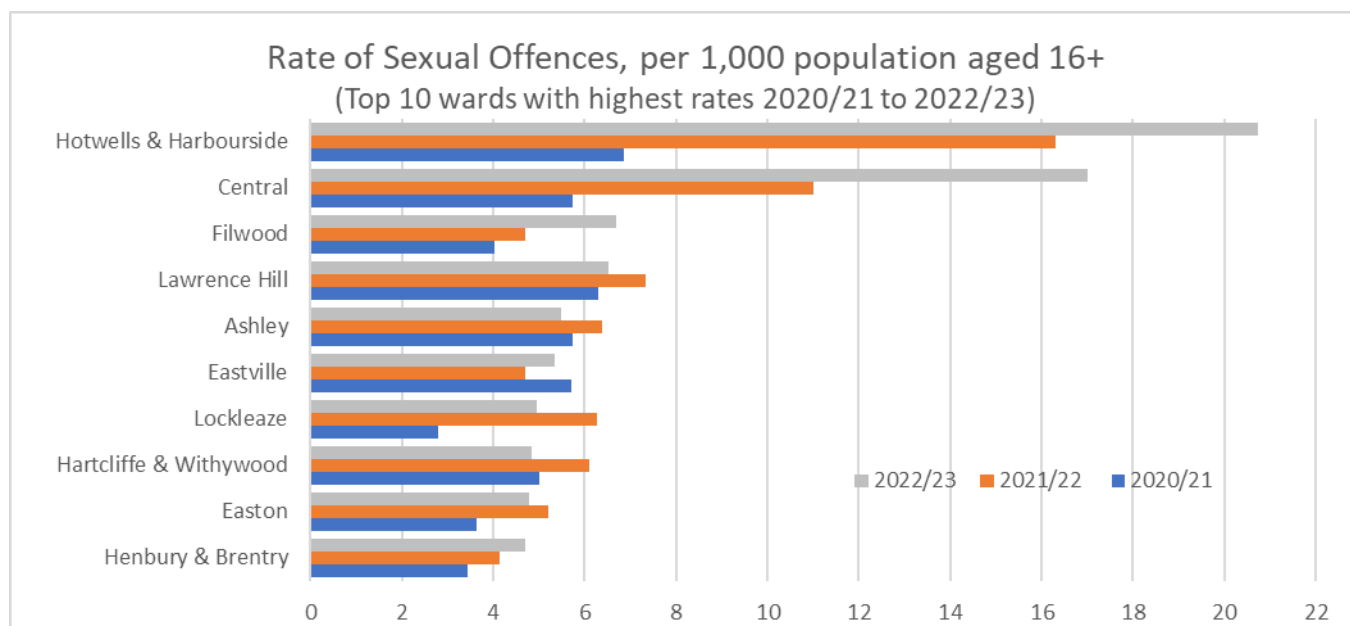


Figure 2: Source: Avon & Somerset Constabulary, ONS Population Estimates

Estimates from the Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW)

The following findings have been extracted from the ONS bulletin for [Crime in England and Wales: year ending September 2023](#): Latest available estimates from the CSEW for the year ending March 2023 showed that 2.1% of people aged 16 years and over had experienced sexual assault (including attempted offences) in the last year. For analysing data over time, we use the 16 to 59 years age range to give a comparable time series.

The CSEW for the year ending March 2023 estimated 2.7% of people aged 16 to 59 years had experienced sexual assault (including attempted offences) in the last year. There was no significant change compared with the year ending March 2022 (2.7%) or the year ending March 2020 (2.2%). The CSEW can also provide important context for police figures, for example latest estimates showed that fewer than one in six victims of rape or assault by penetration reported the crime to the police.

Police recorded sexual offences decreased by 3% in the year ending September 2023 (191,186 offences) compared with the previous year (198,106 offences). However, this was a 17% increase compared with the pre-coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic year ending March 2020 (163,326 offences).

Of all sexual offences recorded by the police in the year ending September 2023, 36% (67,938) were rape offences. This was a 4% decrease from 70,423 offences in the year ending September 2022.

Sexual Harassment

Self-reported data from the Bristol Quality of Life survey 2023/24² indicates that 33.2% people feel that “sexual harassment is an issue in Bristol”, a slight decrease on the previous year (34.6%). By sub-locality, the highest % of residents who feel sexual harassment is an issue live in the Inner City (43.8%) and the lowest live in North and West (Outer) (29.3%). By ward breakdown residents say that sexual harassment is more of an issue in Lawrence Hill (51.3%), Ashley (44.5%) and Hillfields (42.1%) and less of an issue in Bishopston & Ashley Down (22.7%), Hotwells & Harbourside (22.5%) and Hengrove & Whitchurch Park (21.2%) – the ward with the lowest level of concern - see figure 3.

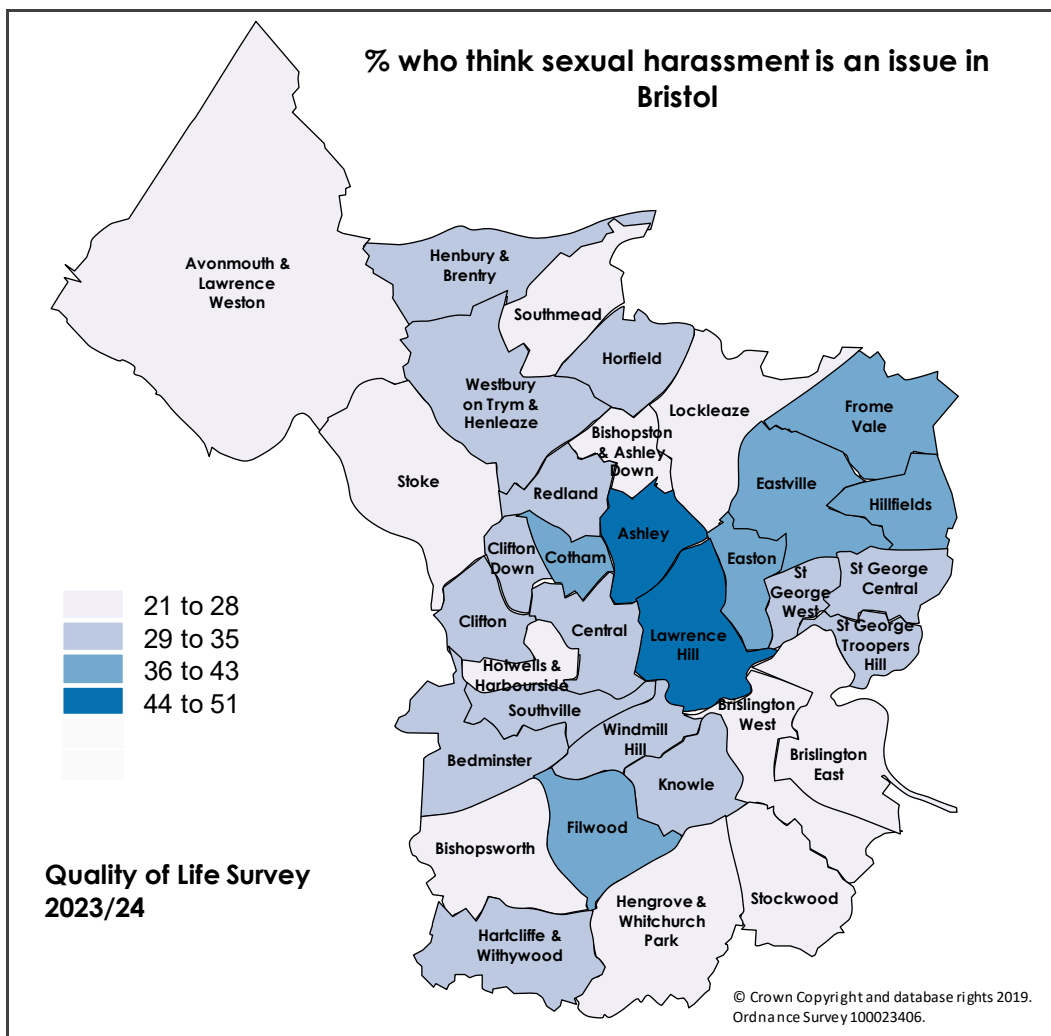


Fig 3: Source: Bristol Quality of Life survey 2023/24

Equalities data: Sexual harassment in Bristol was felt to be a significantly higher issue for some equalities groups when compared to the Bristol average of 33.2%, including Lesbian, Gay

² [The quality of life in Bristol - bristol.gov.uk](https://www.bristol.gov.uk/quality-of-life)

and Bi-sexual (LGB) people (49.5%) and young people aged 16 to 24 (53.8%) . 36.9% of females felt that sexual harassment was an issue compared to 28.7% of males.

Further data / links:

- Public Health Outcomes Framework: <https://fingertips.phe.org.uk/profile/phof>

Date updated: March 2024**Next update due:** March 2025