

Online and Offline Stalking Victimization in the Crime Survey for England and Wales

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Introduction

- CPS define stalking as “*a pattern of Fixated, Obsessive, Unwanted and Repeated behaviour which is intrusive.*”
- They also define cyberstalking as “*Stalking or harassment can take place on the internet and via other technologies*”.
- Captures various behaviours such as:
 - Location tracking,
 - Monitoring of online/offline behaviours,
 - Constant communication.
- The CSEW is one method used to measure the prevalence of these and other crimes since the 1980s.



CSEW & Stalking

- CSEW is carried out **annually** and focuses on the crimes people experienced:
 - In the last **12 months**,
 - Since they were **16**.
- Types of **perpetrator**:
 - Current or ex-partner,
 - Family member,
 - Anyone.
- Includes 3 self-completion modules: '**Domestic Abuse, Sexual Victimization, and Stalking**'.
 - Within this module **6** behaviours of stalking are asked about.

Our Research Questions

- (1) What is the **prevalence and scope** of cyberstalking compared to physical and cyber-enabled stalking?
- (2) What **demographic groups** are more likely to experience cyberstalking?
- (3) Are there any links between the participants' **experiences** and their **perception** of whether it was a crime?



Stalking Variables

- **Cyberstalking** was introduced to the CSEW in 2012/13, with the addition of these two questions:
 - ... has ... ever sent you more than one unwanted **email** or **social network message** that was obscene or threatening and which caused you fear, alarm, or distress?
 - ... has ... ever put personal, obscene, or threatening **information about you on the internet** on more than one occasion and which caused you fear, alarm, or distress?
- We split offline stalking into 2 variables:
 - **Physical stalking** ((1) **waited or loitered** outside your home or workplace on more than one occasion and (2) **followed** you around and **watched** you on more than one occasion)
 - **Cyber-enabled stalking** ((1) sent you more than one unwanted **letter, text message or card** that was either obscene or threatening and (2) made more than one obscene, threatening, nuisance or silent **phone call** to you)
- This sample includes **147,711** people



Perception Variables

- **Perception** of the experience was introduced in the 2014/15 wave with the question:
 - You said that you have been pestered or harassed by someone in some way in the last 12 months. Which one of these do you think best describes what happened to you?
 - It was a crime,
 - It was wrong, but not a crime
 - It was just something that happens
 - None of these
 - Don't know/Can't remember
 - Don't wish to answer
- This sample includes **4577** people



Data Overview

- This dataset is nationally representative, more prominent demographics include:
 - Women,
 - White people,
 - Heterosexual people.
 - 45-59 year olds (this is less prominent).
- Some groups are collated in keeping with safe researcher standards.

Table 1: Descriptive statistics for the full sample (N=147,711)

		Weighted %
Cyberstalking by any perpetrator in the last 12 months	No	98.54
	Yes	1.46
Cyberstalking by a domestic perpetrator in the last 12 months	No	99.53
	Yes	0.47
Cyber-enabled stalking by any perpetrator in the last 12 months	No	97.79
	Yes	2.21
Cyber-enabled stalking by a domestic perpetrator in the last 12 months	No	98.47
	Yes	1.53
Physical stalking by any perpetrator in the last 12 months	No	98.72
	Yes	1.28
Physical stalking by a domestic perpetrator in the last 12 months	No	99.66
	Yes	0.34
Sex	Male	49.83
	Female	50.17
Age	16-24	19.12
	24-34	23.85
	35-44	22.39
	45-59	34.64
	60+	19.98
Ethnicity	White	84.91
	non-White	15.09
Sexual orientation	Heterosexual	93.47
	LGB or other	3.99
	Don't wish to answer	2.54

Notes: Crime Survey for England and Wales 2014-2020. * p<.05, ** p<.01, *** p<.001.

LGB=Lesbian, gay, or bisexual.



Prevalence and Scope of stalking types

- Most **common** stalking type experienced is **cyber-enabled** stalking.
- **Cyberstalking** increased at a **faster rate** across the time period than physical stalking.
- **69.23%** of participants stalked via **cyber-enabled** means were stalked **‘domestically’**.
- Only **32.19%** of participants are **cyberstalked** **‘domestically’**

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Prevalence and Scope of stalking types

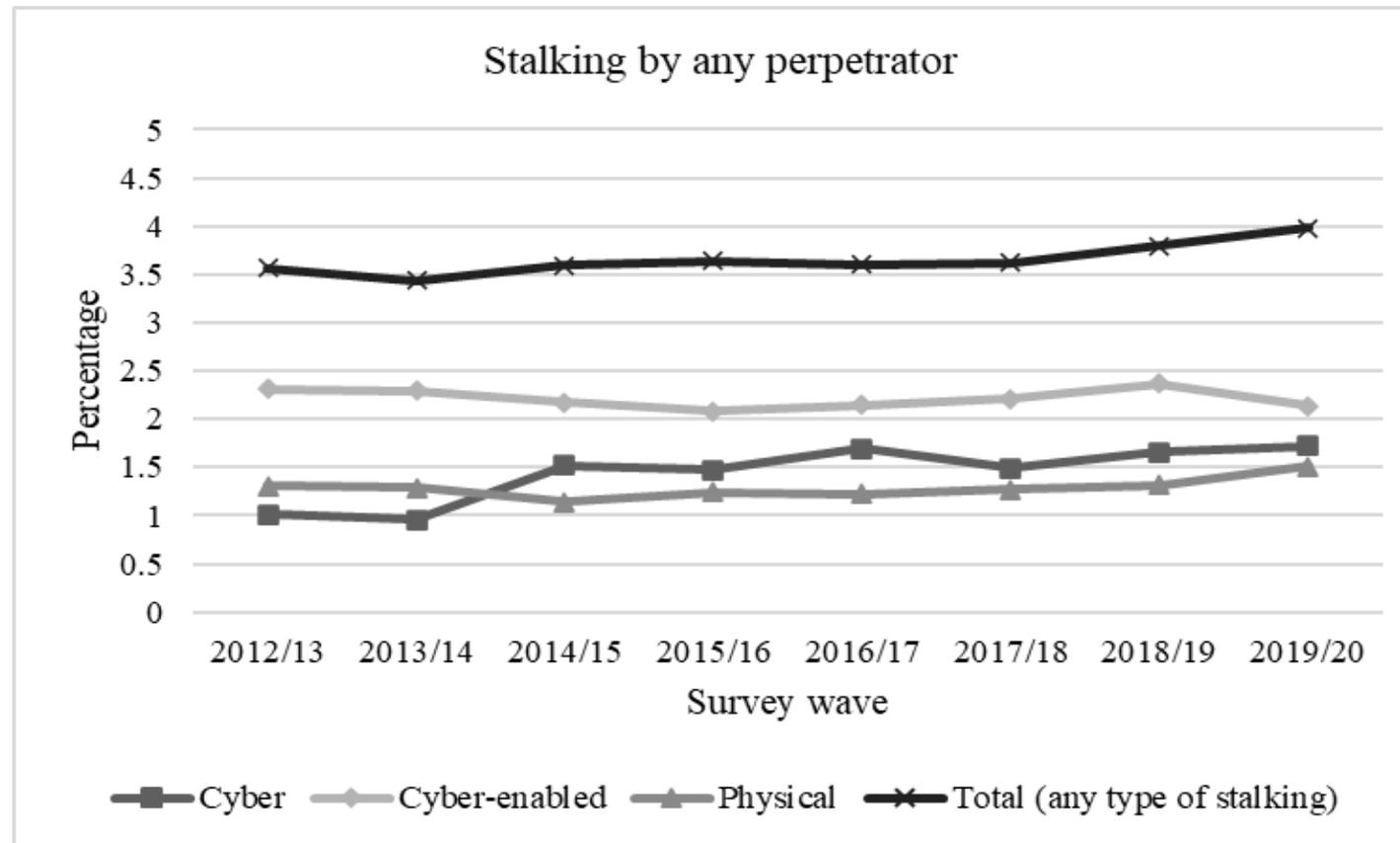


Figure 1: Trend in types of stalking by any perpetrator in the last 12 months between 2012/13 and 2019/20 based on the Crime Survey for England and Wales.



Cyberstalking and demographic groups

Table 2: Logistic regression of stalking victimisation by any perpetrator and by domestic perpetrator in the past 12 months, Odds Ratios (OR) and 95% Confidence Interval (CI), reported (N=147,711).

	Stalking by any perpetrator						Difference in coefficients (z-score)		
	Cyber		Cyber-enabled		Physical		Cyber vs Cyber-enabled	Cyber vs Physical	Cyber-enabled vs Physical
	OR	95% CI	OR	95% CI	OR	95% CI			
<i>Gender (ref.=male)</i>									
Female	1.866	(1.679-2.074)	2.275	(2.084-2.483)	1.973	(1.757-2.214)	-2.82	-0.69	1.93
<i>Age (ref.=16-24)</i>									
24-34	0.638	(0.554-0.735)	0.663	(0.590-0.746)	0.679	(0.585-0.787)	-0.41	-0.59	-0.25
35-44	0.583	(0.507-0.670)	0.637	(0.568-0.715)	0.477	(0.410-0.556)	-0.96	1.89	2.94
45-59	0.410	(0.357-0.471)	0.469	(0.419-0.526)	0.361	(0.311-0.419)	-1.47	1.22	2.74
<i>Ethnicity (ref.=White)</i>									
Non-white	0.730	(0.620-0.861)	0.765	(0.670-0.874)	1.019	(0.869-1.195)	-0.43	-2.85	-2.71
<i>Sexual orientation (ref.=heterosexual)</i>									
LGB or other	2.239	(1.870-2.681)	1.829	(1.560-2.146)	2.024	(1.648-2.488)	1.65	0.72	-0.76
Don't wish to answer	0.584	(0.396-0.861)	0.620	(0.465-0.828)	0.924	(0.654-1.304)	-0.25	-1.73	-1.73
<i>Survey wave</i>	1.073	(1.049-1.098)	0.998	(0.980-1.017)	1.020	(0.994-1.047)	4.87	2.88	-1.39
<i>Constant</i>	0.013	(0.011-0.015)	0.022	(0.019-0.025)	0.013	(0.011-0.016)			
	Stalking by domestic perpetrator						Difference in coefficients (z-score)		
	Cyber		Cyber-enabled		Physical		Cyber vs Cyber-enabled	Cyber vs Physical	Cyber-enabled vs Physical
	OR	95% CI	OR	95% CI	OR	95% CI			
<i>Gender (ref.=male)</i>									
Female	2.940	(2.425-3.563)	2.325	(2.092-2.584)	3.246	(2.563-4.110)	2.09	-0.64	-2.53
<i>Age (ref.=16-24)</i>									
24-34	0.653	(0.517-0.823)	0.688	(0.599-0.791)	0.919	(0.694-1.217)	-0.39	-1.84	-1.80
35-44	0.671	(0.534-0.843)	0.650	(0.567-0.745)	0.786	(0.596-1.037)	0.24	-0.87	-1.21
45-59	0.351	(0.275-0.448)	0.447	(0.389-0.512)	0.431	(0.324-0.574)	-1.69	-1.08	0.22
<i>Ethnicity (ref.=White)</i>									
Non-white	0.513	(0.381-0.690)	0.778	(0.664-0.912)	0.776	(0.563-1.070)	-2.43	-1.86	0.02
<i>Sexual orientation (ref.=heterosexual)</i>									
LGB or other	2.045	(1.527-2.739)	1.646	(1.348-2.010)	1.931	(1.336-2.791)	1.20	0.24	-0.74
Don't wish to answer	0.601	(0.288-1.252)	0.555	(0.385-0.799)	1.624	(0.890-2.963)	0.19	-2.05	-2.99
<i>Survey wave</i>	1.049	(1.010-1.089)	0.988	(0.967-1.010)	0.985	(0.940-1.032)	2.73	2.06	0.11
<i>Constant</i>	0.003	(0.003-0.005)	0.015	(0.013-0.018)	0.002	(0.002-0.003)			

Notes: Crime Survey for England and Wales 2012-2020. LGB=Lesbian, gay, or bisexual.

Table created by Madeleine Janickyj using Microsoft Excel. Data source: [Crime Survey for England and Wales, 2023]



Stalking and perception of crime

Table 3. Multinomial logistic regression on whether those who experienced stalking in the past 12 months see it as a crime, wrong but not a crime, just something that happens (base), or none of these, Relative Risk Ratios (RRR) and 95% Confidence Interval (CI) reported (N=4577)

	Model 1						Model 2					
	Crime		Wrong but not a crime		None of these		Crime		Wrong but not a crime		None of these	
	RRR	95% CI	RRR	95% CI	RRR	95% CI	RRR	95% CI	RRR	95% CI	RRR	95% CI
Cyberstalking	1.794	(1.466-2.194)	1.089	(0.901-1.316)	0.576	(0.409-0.811)						
Cyber-enabled stalking	1.877	(1.470-2.398)	1.195	(0.954-1.498)	0.744	(0.502-1.103)						
Physical stalking	2.670	(2.129-3.348)	1.240	(0.998-1.540)	0.767	(0.521-1.130)						
At least one domestic perpetrator	1.322	(1.063-1.644)	1.162	(0.954-1.415)	0.866	(0.629-1.191)						
<i>Stalking (ref.=only cyber)</i>												
Only cyber-enabled							1.209	(0.925-1.579)	1.218	(0.967-1.533)	1.160	(0.807-1.667)
Only physical							1.474	(1.088-1.998)	1.276	(0.978-1.666)	1.302	(0.863-1.965)
Cyber + cyber-enabled							2.149	(1.572-2.938)	1.531	(1.156-2.030)	0.691	(0.416-1.148)
Cyber + physical							2.595	(1.324-5.086)	1.243	(0.644-2.398)	0.770	(0.241-2.456)
Cyber-enabled + physical							3.031	(1.969-4.666)	1.455	(0.962-2.201)	1.132	(0.586-2.185)
All							5.937	(3.832-9.200)	1.507	(0.971-2.339)	0.336	(0.114-0.993)
<i>Gender (ref.=male)</i>												
Female	1.435	(1.176-1.751)	1.249	(1.045-1.491)	1.204	(0.902-1.606)	1.446	(1.185-1.764)	1.255	(1.051-1.499)	1.202	(0.901-1.602)
<i>Age (ref.=16-24)</i>												
24-34	1.591	(1.206-2.099)	1.133	(0.890-1.442)	1.624	(1.076-2.453)	1.599	(1.212-2.110)	1.144	(0.898-1.456)	1.618	(1.071-2.444)
35-44	1.878	(1.408-2.505)	1.391	(1.081-1.790)	1.536	(0.994-2.376)	1.896	(1.421-2.530)	1.413	(1.097-1.819)	1.525	(0.986-2.359)
45-59	2.190	(1.660-2.889)	1.246	(0.976-1.590)	1.661	(1.096-2.517)	2.180	(1.653-2.877)	1.253	(0.982-1.599)	1.660	(1.095-2.516)
<i>Ethnicity (ref.=White)</i>												
Non-white	1.079	(0.800-1.455)	0.998	(0.760-1.312)	1.465	(0.981-2.187)	1.077	(0.799-1.453)	0.991	(0.754-1.303)	1.466	(0.982-2.188)
<i>Sexual orientation (ref.=heterosexual)</i>												
LGB or other	0.755	(0.535-1.068)	0.886	(0.656-1.197)	0.681	(0.389-1.190)	0.747	(0.528-1.056)	0.879	(0.651-1.188)	0.679	(0.388-1.187)
Don't wish to answer	0.817	(0.400-1.668)	1.128	(0.602-2.116)	1.359	(0.554-3.337)	0.816	(0.400-1.666)	1.124	(0.600-2.108)	1.362	(0.555-3.344)
Survey wave	1.034	(0.979-1.093)	1.007	(0.958-1.058)	1.029	(0.950-1.115)	1.032	(0.977-1.090)	1.005	(0.957-1.056)	1.029	(0.950-1.115)
Constant	0.227	(0.150-0.344)	1.559	(1.080-2.251)	0.345	(0.183-0.651)	0.434	(0.290-0.650)	1.647	(1.163-2.333)	0.199	(0.111-0.358)

Notes: Crime Survey for England and Wales 2014-2020. LGB=Lesbian, gay, or bisexual.



What are *(potential)* reasonings behind these views?

- Stalking is a gendered crime and impacts women more often than men; women are **more often aware of the risks**.
- Young people spend **more time online** than other age groups & many tech abuse behaviours are **becoming normalized**.
- **Past experience** with law enforcement may impact their view:
 - **Less police officers feel confident** identifying cyberstalking vs typical stalking behaviours,
 - People may have received **dismissive responses** in the past.
- People may see that if something has not yet been criminalised, it may not be **‘wrong enough’**.





Conclusions

- Over the last decade, cyberstalking has increased in prevalence faster than other stalking types and cyber-enabled stalking has decreased.
- The same groups most at risk of physical stalking (women, young people, and LGB participants) are also at risk of cyber and cyber-enabled stalking.
- Most common view was their experience was wrong but not a crime.
- Participants are more likely to view physical stalking as a crime than cyberstalking.



Thank you!



Janickyj, M., Blom, N. & Tanczer, L.M. (2025). Online and Offline Stalking Victimization in the Crime Survey for England and Wales: Its Predictors and Victim/Survivors' Views on Criminalisation. *The British Journal of Criminology*.



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