

# Serious violence peaked after COVID-19 restrictions eased: report

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Serious violence increased by nearly a quarter following the easing of COVID-19 lockdown in England and Wales, according to a new report by Cardiff University.

The University's Violence Research Group (VRG) found an estimated 146,856 people attended A&E for violence-related injury in 2021, up 23% from 2020. Violence peaked in August 2021, reaching pre-pandemic levels, the VRG's 21<sup>st</sup> [annual report](#) states.

The increase represents the biggest yearly rise since records began in 2001—however, overall rates of serious violence in 2021 were lower than in the years prior to the pandemic, with long-term trends showing a steady decline.

Despite concerns COVID-19 restrictions may have increased the risk of serious violence for women and girls, the researchers found no evidence of this.

The report's authors also studied violence in Scotland for the first time, with an estimated 8,549 people attending emergency units for violence-related injury in 2021.

"The easing of restrictions after national COVID-19 related lockdown in England and Wales was linked to the biggest increase in serious violence in a single year since our records began 21 years ago," said Professor Jonathan Shepherd, co-author of the report.

"The easing of restrictions in 2021 was associated with a significant increase in serious violence; by August pre-pandemic levels were reached.

"Our data are the only overall measure of serious violence during the pandemic and provide evidence of how restrictions affected this during a fascinating period. Our findings also point to prevention priorities, such as earlier and more precise targeting of police resources at violence hot spots identified from A&E data. Without this detailed information police are blind to when and where half of this serious violence takes

place."

Data gathered and analyzed by the VRG from 74 emergency units in England and Wales showed that in the 12 months ending 31 December 2021, an estimated 146,856 people attended for treatment of violence-related injuries, up from 27,745 in 2020.

Serious violence increases affected all [age groups](#)—among children aged 0-10 by 42%, among adolescents aged 11-17 by 20%, among [young adults](#) aged 18-30 by 29%, among those aged 31-50 by 20%, and among those aged over 50 by 16%.

Those at highest risk of violence-related injury were males, who at 3.38 per 1,000 residents were more than twice at risk than females, and those aged 18-30 (6 per 1,000 residents).

Overall rates of serious violence in 2021 were lower than in the years before the pandemic, down 24% and 49% compared to 2017 and 2011, for example.

Professor Shepherd said: "The government's 2019 assessment of public health contributions to violence prevention, signed by Sajid Javid when he was Home Secretary, concluded that even if just 5% of community safety partnerships used specified A&E data to guide their work—the tried and tested strategy known as the [Cardiff Model](#)—savings over 10 years would be almost £1bn.

"Serious violence is preventable, not inevitable."

This 21st annual report on serious [violence](#) in England, Wales—and now Scotland—is produced by the Violence Research Group. It includes data from the National Violence Surveillance Network, led by Cardiff University's Professor Vasekaran Sivaraajasingam.

**More information:** Violence in England and Wales in 2021: An Accident & Emergency Perspective, [cdn.roxhillmedia.com/productio ...  
6b4b822ca46b762f.pdf](https://cdn.roxhillmedia.com/production/2022/04/26/6b4b822ca46b762f.pdf)

Provided by Cardiff University

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