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Sexual Offence Reports Rise in Cambridgeshire Amid Broader National Trend

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— Categories: Crime



The number of sexual offences reported to police in Cambridgeshire saw a sharp increase last year, according to new figures, with data pointing to a wider national trend and a possible rise in victims' willingness to come forward.

New figures released by the Home Office show that Cambridgeshire Constabulary recorded 2,880 sexual offences in the 12 months to March 2025, marking a 17% increase from the previous year. This equates to 401 more offences compared to the year ending March 2024. The total includes crimes such as rape and other forms of sexual assault.

The rise coincides with a new estimate from the Office for National Statistics (ONS) suggesting that one in eight women aged 16 and over in England and Wales was a victim of either sexual assault, domestic abuse, or stalking during 2024. For men, the figure was one in 12. Combined, this means roughly one in 10 adults suffered from one of these forms of abuse last year, translating to more than five million victims.

The ONS data is based on the Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW), which uses face-to-face interviews to measure experiences of crime, including those not reported to police. It is the first time the ONS has estimated the overall prevalence of these three forms of abuse combined.

Within Cambridgeshire, the highest number of reported sexual offences was in Peterborough, which recorded 975 crimes, a rate of 4.5 offences per 1,000 people. This makes it one of the highest rates nationally, ranking 52nd out of more than 300 areas assessed by the government. Fenland and Cambridge followed, each recording a rate of 2.9 sexual offences per 1,000 residents, with 303 and 419 incidents respectively.

Detective Chief Inspector Helen Tebbit from Cambridgeshire Constabulary's Protecting Vulnerable People Department acknowledged the rise, stating: "We acknowledge the 16.8% rise in recorded sexual offences in Cambridgeshire in the 12 months to March 2025, as reported by the Office for National Statistics. While any increase is concerning, this trend is consistent with national patterns; only one police force in England and Wales did not record a rise."

She added that Cambridgeshire's rate remains below the national average of 3.4 offences per 1,000 people, and in line with regional figures. "District-level variations should be interpreted with care. Differences in population size, reporting behaviour, support service availability, and the timing or reclassification of offences can all influence the data," she said.

The force believes the rise may be partly due to improvements in how victims are supported and greater trust in law enforcement. "We believe this increase is, in part, a result of our ongoing work to improve victim care, enhance officer training, and strengthen partnerships with local agencies. We are committed to tackling sexual violence, supporting victims, and ensuring every report is taken seriously," Tebbit stated.

Nationally, concerns remain that even these figures may not reveal the full extent of abuse. The End Violence Against Women Coalition (EVAW) raised issues with the new ONS measure, arguing it does not account for all forms of violence against women and girls (VAWG).

Rebecca Hitchen, Head of Policy & Campaigns at EVAW, said: “This new, combined measure of domestic abuse, sexual violence and stalking fails to capture the full spectrum of VAWG incidents, including online abuse, so-called ‘honour’-based abuse, child abuse and sexual harassment. Our concern is that this measure has been created for the ease of government, rather than trying to truly represent the scale and impact of violence against women and girls.”

Hitchen stressed the need for stronger action and input from a wider range of experts and communities. “There is no more time to waste. We need a plan from the top that sets out clearly how the government intends to tackle this national crisis.”

“We’re calling for a further consultation process to be opened so that there is transparency and a clear structure around how the VAWG sector and VAWG experts can inform and guide the development of the government’s approach to measuring VAWG and the delivery of its mission to halve it,” she added.