



## Five things you should know about the scale of sexual abuse in Britain (content note)

[The Mirror](#) has published a piece today which claims to evidence the scale of sexual abuse in Britain. Whilst we support any endeavour to expose the reality of sexual violence and we acknowledge that factually the graphs are correct, [the Mirror](#) has failed to state the most important fact about the reality of sexual abuse in the UK: precisely who the perpetrators are. Every time an article is published which does not examine the identity of perpetrators, it makes it easier for perpetrators to continue.

The main fact that the Mirror missed is that the vast majority of perpetrators of sexual violence are men. It is men who rape women, children and other men. The vast majority of perpetrators of sexual violence and assault are men. This is the reality and we need to talk about this clearly without falsifying data or ignoring information which makes us uncomfortable.

We also need to deconstruct the statistics that the Mirror has posted as fact:

1. 1 in 20 children have been sexually abused.

Media coverage tends to make parents wary of "stranger danger", but the figures, released by the [NSPCC](#), show that over 90% of children who have experienced sexual abuse were abused by someone they knew.

This statistic is widely used by the [NSPCC](#) who actually use the term "contact sexual abuse" and who do not make it clear on their website or [research paper](#) what they define as "contact sexual abuse" and "non-contact sexual abuse". Separating the two types of sexual abuse does not demonstrate the reality of children's experiences. It also ignores the fact that the vast majority of victims, whether by family members, members of the community, or 'strangers' are girls.

Unfortunately, the number of child victims is [much higher](#) with many children never disclosing and many people fundamentally misunderstanding what the term 'child sexual abuse' covers. We need to extend the definition to include children who are groomed and the reality of sexual harassment of children, including that of teenage girls by teenage boys with schools and adult men in public spaces.

We have written before of our concerns about the ["stranger danger"](#) advice and how it puts children at risk so we are glad that the Mirror has made this clear.

2. 18,916 sexual crimes against children under 16 were recorded in England and Wales in 2012/13. These include offences of sexual grooming, prostitution and pornography, rape and sexual assault. They comprise 35% of all sexual crimes (53,540 in total) recorded in England and Wales in 2012/13.

The key word in this statement is "recorded". We know that many children never disclose and



many who do are simply not believed. We need to be clear when using this statistic that it does not represent the total of child victims but only those who become known to authorities (and that those authorities bother to believe the children).

3. Nearly one thousand teachers have been accused of sex with a student.

A [BBC Newsbeat investigation](#) found that between 2008 and 2013 almost one thousand teachers and school staffs were been suspended, disciplined or dismissed after being accused of having sex with a student. Around one in four are facing charges over the allegations.

As the figures were obtained via an FOI to 200 councils (though only 137 responded), they don't include teachers and staffs at private schools or academies, so the overall number is likely to be higher.

This is an important statistic to include because frequently the abuse of students in schools gets ignored. But, these teachers have not been accused of "sex with a student". Sex requires consent. Children are not legally competent to consent to sex and this includes 16 - 18 year olds in "relationships" with adults in a position of authority. We need to be clear that this is child sexual abuse. We also need to be clear that this is only the tip of the iceberg in terms of sexual violence experienced by children within schools which includes everything from sexual harassment, unwanted touching, threats, posting images on social media and rape. Steubenville was not an isolated case. The sexual abuse of children within schools occurs daily and is frequently left unacknowledged or the victims blamed.

4. Over 43,000 individuals were registered as sexual offenders in England and Wales as of 31 March 2013.

The reason for the considerable increase, according to the Ministry of Justice, is that more people are being sentenced for sexual offences. The average custodial sentence length is also increasing.

Many sexual offenders are required to register for long periods of time, with some registering for life. This has a cumulative effect on the total number of offenders required to register at any one time.

Again, those who are registered as sexual offenders, and whom are almost entirely male, are just the tip. The number of actual sexual offenders within the UK is much higher as many victims do not report and those who do are not believed. The rape [conviction rate](#) in England and Wales is appalling. Between 65 000 - 95 000 people, mostly women, are estimated to be raped each year. Approximately 1 170 rapists are convicted. The vast majority of sexual offenders will never be registered.

5. Last year saw a [9% rise in sexual offences](#) and this – at least in part – is due to Jimmy Savile

This is the largest increase since records began. A total of 55,812 sexual offences were



recorded across England and Wales in the year ending June 2013. Within this, the number of offences of rape increased by 9%. According to the ONS, there is evidence to suggest that as a consequence of the Jimmy Savile inquiry.

The rise in **reported** cases is not "due to Jimmy Savile". It is a consequence of the public investigations into the allegations against Jimmy Savile, many of which were made during his lifetime and his victims ignored or labelled liars. However, whilst we can assume that the increase is due to more victims reporting their experiences, it is also possible that sexual offences are themselves increasing.

The reality of sexual violence in the UK is that it is far more common than most people believe and the media actually reports. It is almost entirely perpetrated by men against the bodies of women, children and other men. If we want to stop sexual violence, we need to start naming the perpetrators, challenging rape myths and holding the media accountable for both minimising and sensationalising sexual violence for profit. Publishing these 5 Facts does not help the women and children that the Mirror has distressed with their poor coverage of rape trials. If the Mirror truly wants to help, they need to stop publishing rape myths.