

# Victims statistics

This bulletin presents trends in victims' experience of the criminal justice system from the year ending March 2015 to the year ending March 2019.

The bulletin includes statistical data from the Crime Survey for England and Wales about victims' contact with the police, courts, attitudes to the criminal justice system and the Victims' Code and Witness Charter.

## Contents

|  |    |
|--|----|
| Foreword                                 | 2  |
| Victims and the Police                   | 3  |
| Courts                                   | 9  |
| Attitudes to the Criminal Justice System | 11 |
| Victims' Code and Witness Charter        | 13 |
| Notes                                    | 14 |

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## Contacts

Head of Reviews and Analysis:

Elaine Wedlock

[Elaine.Wedlock@victims.commissioner.org.uk](mailto:Elaine.Wedlock@victims.commissioner.org.uk)

Research Officer:

Julian Molina

[Julian.Molina@victims.commissioner.org.uk](mailto:Julian.Molina@victims.commissioner.org.uk)

## Foreword

2020 offers the potential to transform the victim landscape. At the time of writing, the Domestic Abuse Bill is approaching its second reading, there is a consultation on refreshing the Victims' Code of Practice and we have the promise of a "Victims' Law" later in the year. Other changes include a commitment on the part of the government to recruit an additional 20,000 police officers.

It is so important all of these excellent initiatives are used to address victims' lived experience of the criminal justice system. A failure to listen will be a missed opportunity.

The Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW) is carried out by the Office for National Statistics (ONS) with a nationally representative sample of households across England and Wales. The CSEW is a face-to-face victimisation survey asking residents of households about their experiences of a range of crimes in the 12 months prior to the interview.

For the first time, this report pulls together questions asked of victims of crime and the general public about their views and experiences of the criminal justice system. Looking at CSEW data from the past five years has helped me to understand whether there have been any changes in people's views and experiences in recent years.

The findings show that some interactions between victims and those working in the criminal justice system are positive.

For example, most of victims are satisfied with their initial contact with the police (72.6%), feeling they have been treated fairly (77.1%) and with respect (87.7%). Similarly most victims think they were treated fairly by court staff (87.3%) and with respect (90.5%)

But, there is growing dissatisfaction amongst victims with how cases are handled. About a third (34%) of victims are dissatisfied with the way the police handled the matter, and 1 in 3 (36.2%) victims are dissatisfied with the way the matter was handled by the Criminal Justice System.

More than a third (34.5%) were dissatisfied with the action the police took. More than half (52.2%) of victims don't think the police kept

them well informed about progress in the case, up from 43.5% just four years earlier.

One in five (20.2%) victims say the police didn't come to know about the crime at all because they don't think the police would have bothered or been interested.

The Victims' Code of Practice sets out what support and information victims are entitled to receive. Yet this survey shows four out of five victims of crime have never heard of the Victims' Code.

The current Code is unwieldy for practitioners and impenetrable for many victims. I know the government recognises this and is wanting to bring about change. They need to launch the new Code with gusto. As well as traditional means of providing public information, such as leaflets and on-line pdf documents, we must explore the use of videos, easy-read, infographics and apps.

Until recently, there has been little attempt to monitor compliance with the Code. With victims unaware of their entitlements, the agencies required to deliver them have not been held to account. This research makes clear that they are not universally doing as they should and the risk is that the public starts to withdraw support from the police and the courts. The launch of the new code should indicate the gravity of not complying; that the Government intends to develop a mechanism for accountability from the leadership of all the agencies, with robust systems in place to monitor compliance.

In 2020 we will have the opportunity to address growing victim dissatisfaction in the handling of their cases and it is important we seize it.



Dame Vera Baird QC

Victims' Commissioner for England and Wales

## Victims and the Police

Most victims said that they were satisfied with their contact with the police. But, since 2014-15, there has been a downward trend in satisfaction across questions related to:

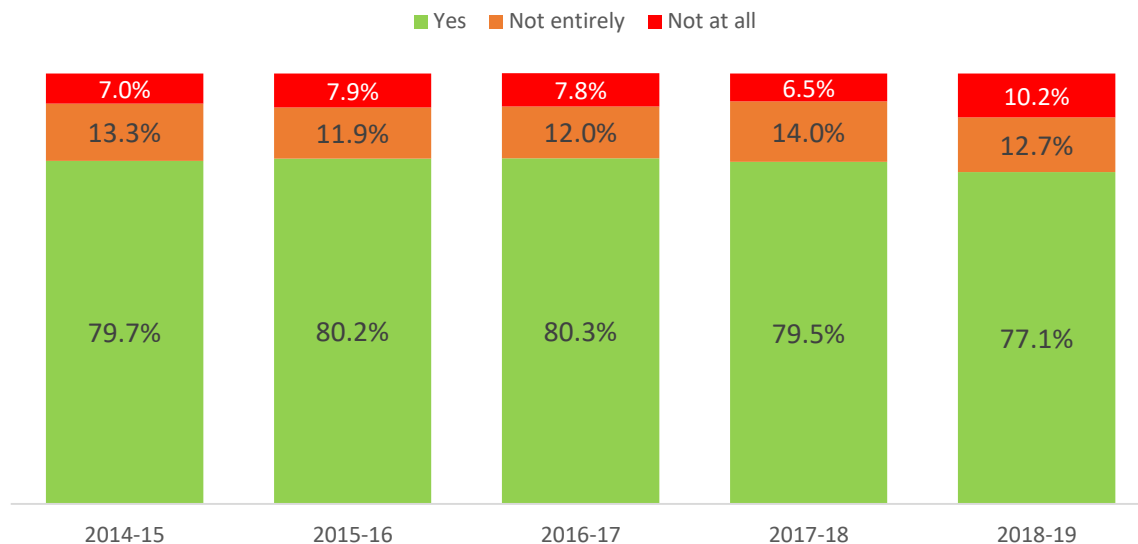
- Whether the police treated victims fairly and with respect;
- The police's, criminal justice system's, handling of the matter;
- Keeping victims informed about progress in the case.

If the police came to know about incidents of crime, victims are asked whether they think the police treated them fairly or with respect.

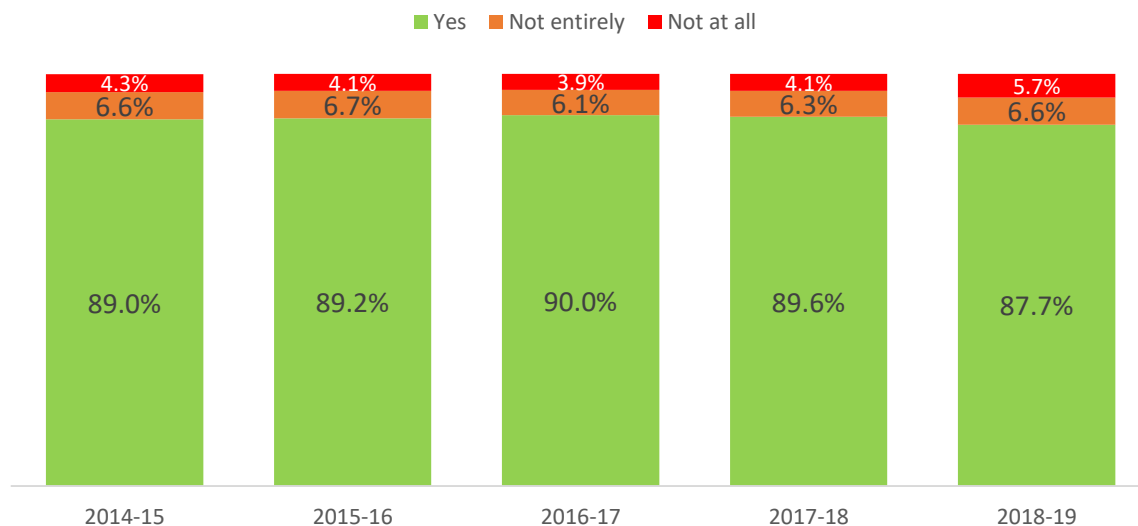
The percentage of victims who thought the police treated them fairly decreased from 79.7% in 2014-15 to 77.1% in 2018-19. The percentage of victims who thought they were 'not entirely' treated fairly was 12.7% in 2018-19. This did not significantly change over the five-year period. The percentage of victims who thought they were 'not at all' treated fairly increased from 7% in 2014-15 to 10.2% in 2018-19.

The percentage of victims who thought they were treated with respect was at a five-year low in 2018-19. The percentage of victims who thought the police treated them with respect decreased from 90% in 2016-17 to 87.7% in 2018-19. The percentage of victims who thought the police had 'not at all' treated them with respect increased from 4.3% in 2014-15 to 5.7% in 2018-19.

Do you think the police treated you fairly?

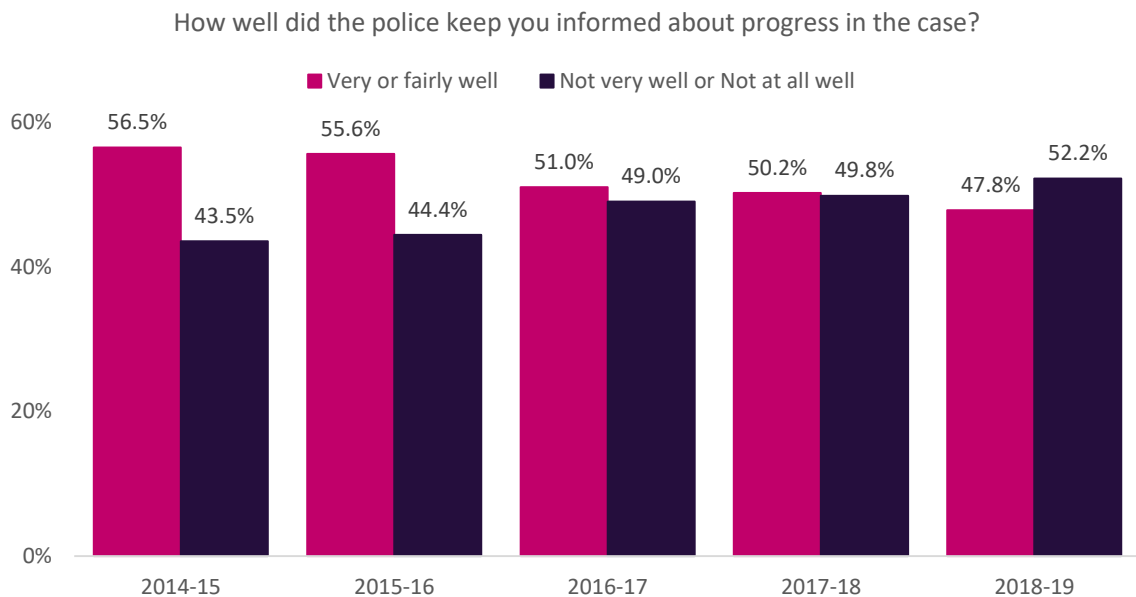
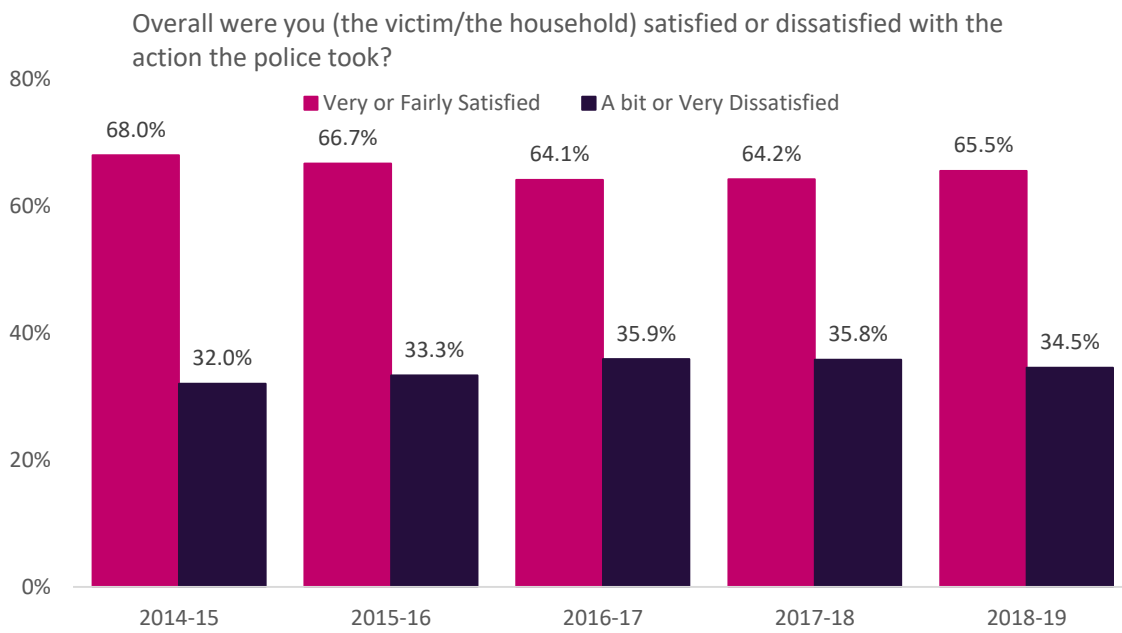


Do you think the police treated you with respect?



The percentage of victims who were satisfied with the action the police was 65.5% in 2018-19. This did not significantly change over the five-year period.

The percentage of victims who said the police kept them well informed about progress in the case has fallen from 56.5% in 2014-15 to 47.8% in 2018-19.



The percentage of victims who were satisfied with reporting the matter was 72.6% in 2018-19. This did not significantly change over the three year period.

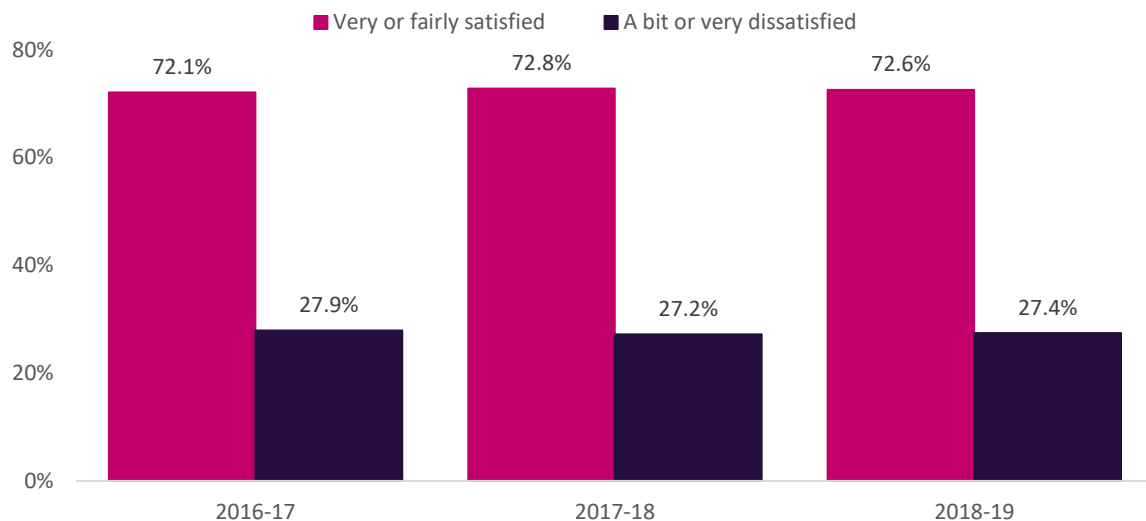
Victims are asked the reasons why the police did not come to know about the matter.

The percentage of victims who said the police did not come to know about the matter because the police could have done nothing increased from 24.6% in 2014-15 to 32.2% in 2018-19.

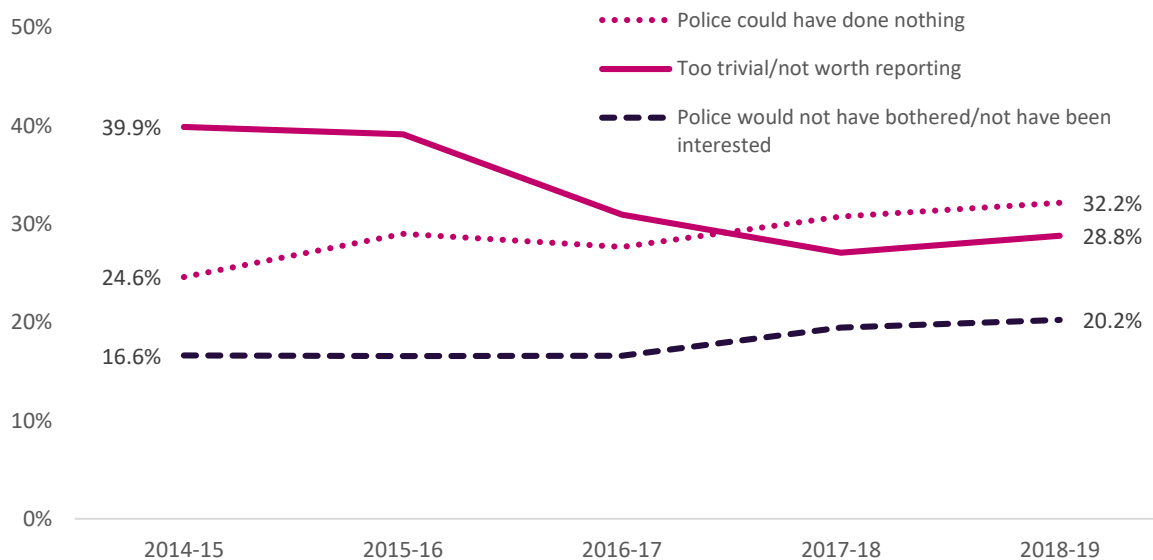
The percentage of victims who said it was due to the matter being too trivial and not worth reporting decreased from 39.9% in 2014-15 to 28.8% in 2018-19.

The percentage who said it was because the police would not have bothered or interested increased from 16.6% in 2014-15 to 20.2% in 2018-19.

Thinking about your initial contact with the police, overall, were you satisfied or dissatisfied with the way in which you were able to report the matter



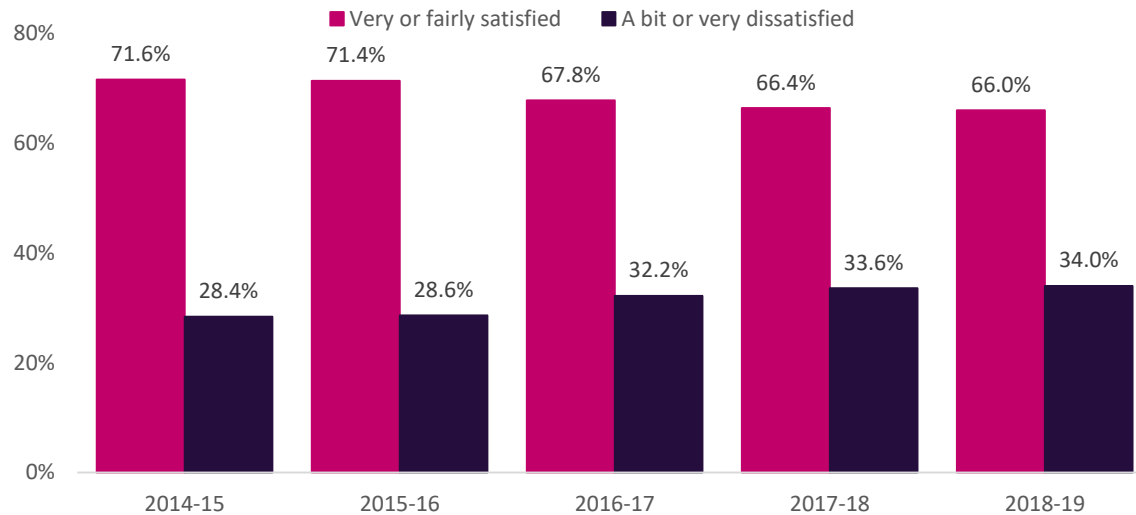
Top three reasons why the police did not come to know about the incident



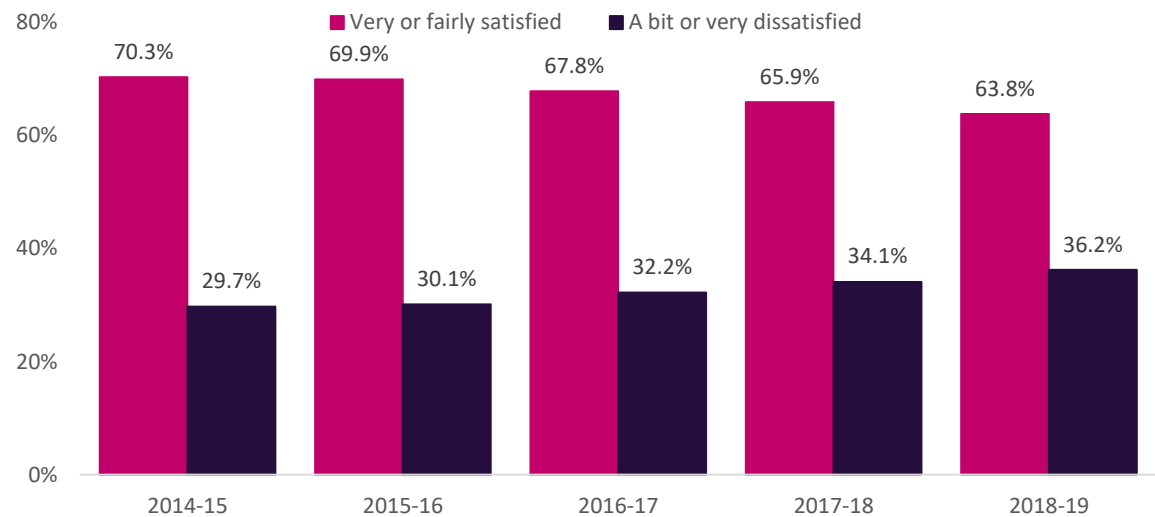
The percentage of victims who were satisfied with the police handling of the matter has also decreased every year since 2014-15, from 71.6% to 66%.

The percentage of victims who were satisfied with the criminal justice system's handling of the matter has fallen every year since 2014-15, from 70.3% to 63.8%.

Overall, were you/(the victims) satisfied or dissatisfied with the way the police handled the matter?



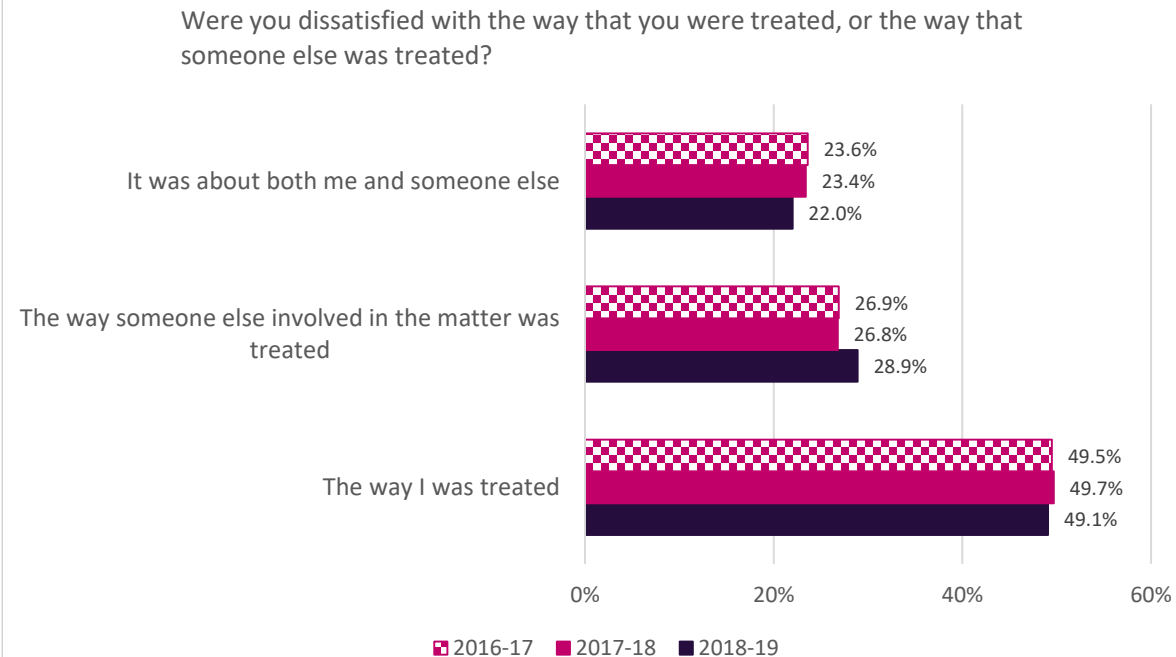
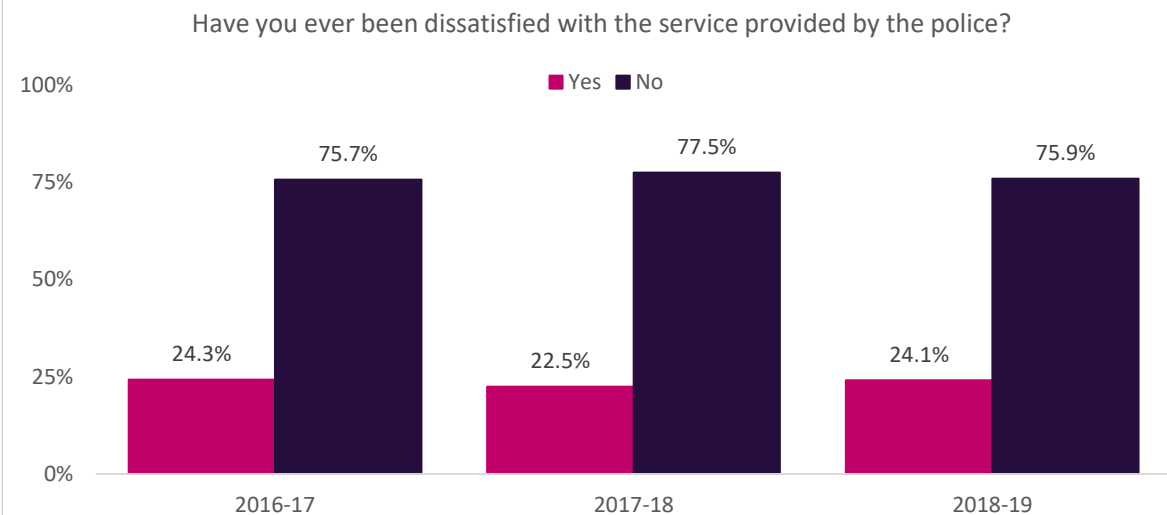
Overall, thinking about your contact with the CJS, that is all agencies you've mentioned including the police, how satisfied were you with their handling of the matter?



Victims are asked if they have ever been dissatisfied with the service provided by the police.

The percentage of victims who had ever been dissatisfied with the service provided by the police increased from 22.5% in 2017-18 to 24.1% in 2018-19.

Of these victims, most were dissatisfied with the way they were treated (49.1%). Other victims were dissatisfied with the way someone else involved in the matter was treated (28.9%) or said it was about 'both me and someone else' (22%).



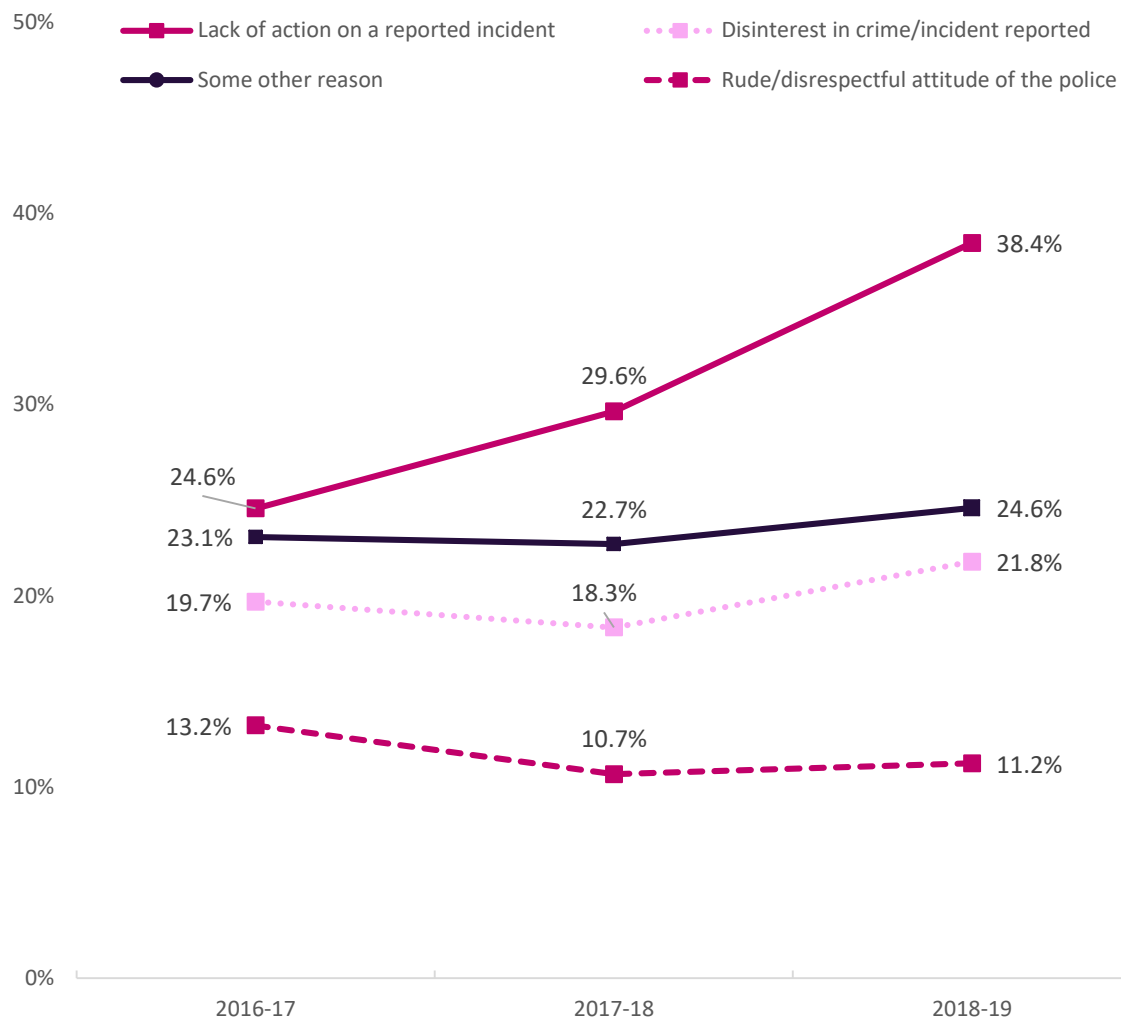
The most frequent reasons that victims gave about the time they were unhappy or dissatisfied with the service received by the police was the lack of action on a reported incident, some other reason, police disinterest in the crime or incident reported, and the rude or disrespectful attitude of the police.

The percentage of victims who said it was due to the police lack of action to act on a reported incident increased from 24.6% in 2016-17 to 38.4% to 2018-19.

The percentage of victims who said it was due to the police's disinterest in the crime or incident reported increased from 18.3% in 2017-18 to 21.8% in 2018-19.

**Note:** more than one response is possible, percentages may not add up to 100.

Top four reasons for being unhappy or dissatisfied with the service that respondents received from the police





## Courts

Respondents were asked about whether they had been involved in a court case (in either a criminal, civil, or family courts) during the past two years – excluding when someone had been to court as a juror.

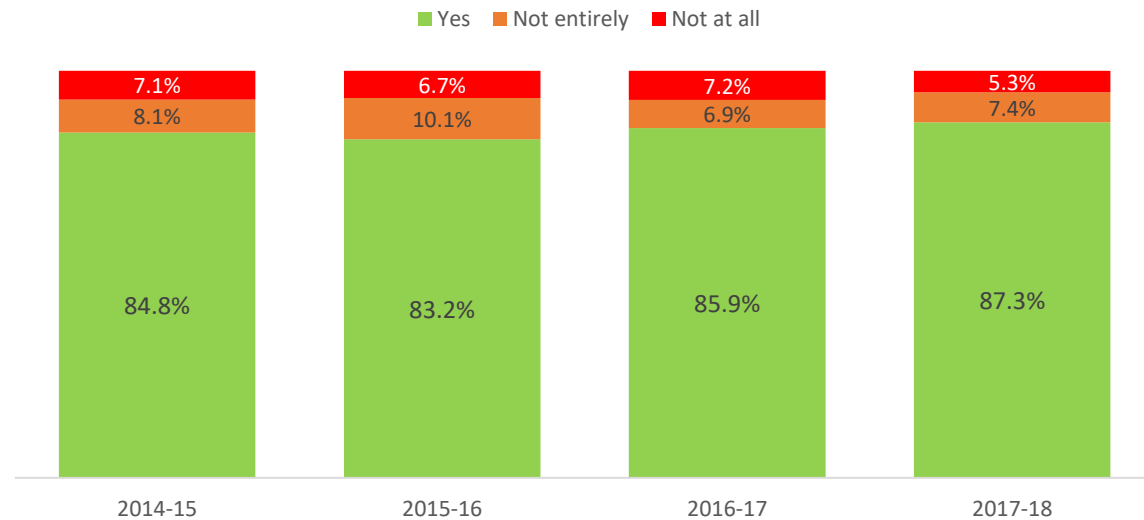
The percentage of respondents who had personally been involved in any court case in the last two years decreased from 4.6% in 2014-15 to 3.7% in 2018-19.

The percentage who thought court staff treated them fairly was 87.3% in 2017-18. This did not significantly change over the four-year period.

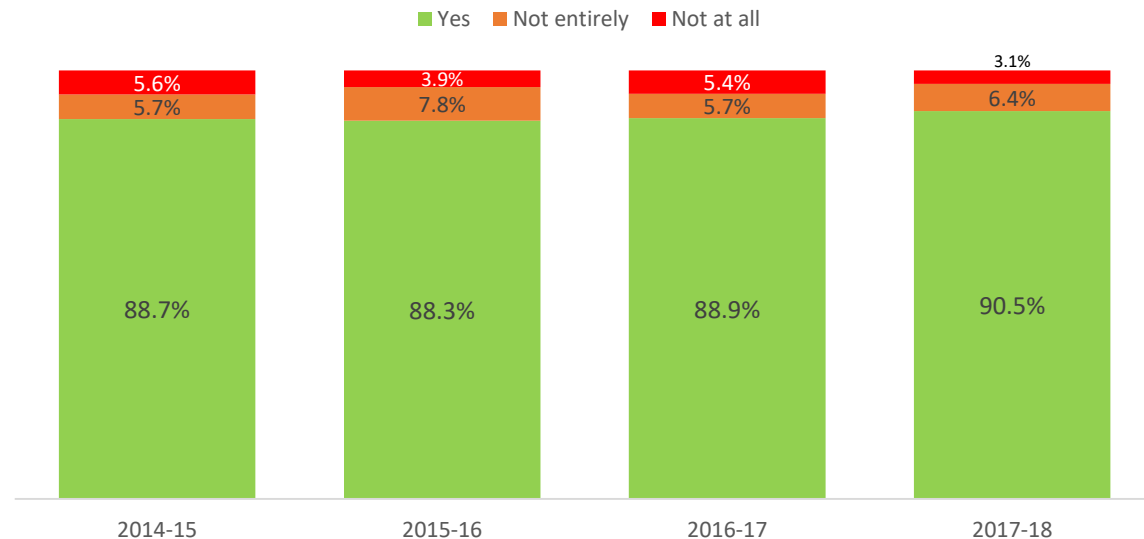
The percentage who thought court staff treated them with respect was 90.5% in 2017-18. This did not significantly change over the four-year period.

The percentage who thought they were 'not at all' treated fairly decreased from 5.6% in 2014-15 to 3.1% in 2017-18.

Do you think court staff treated you fairly?



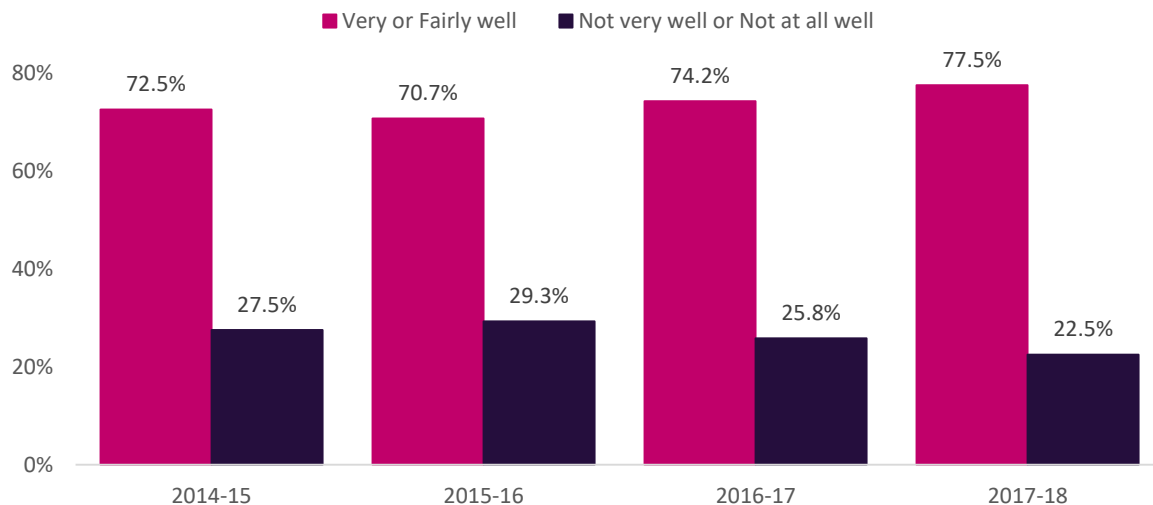
Do you think court staff treated you with respect?



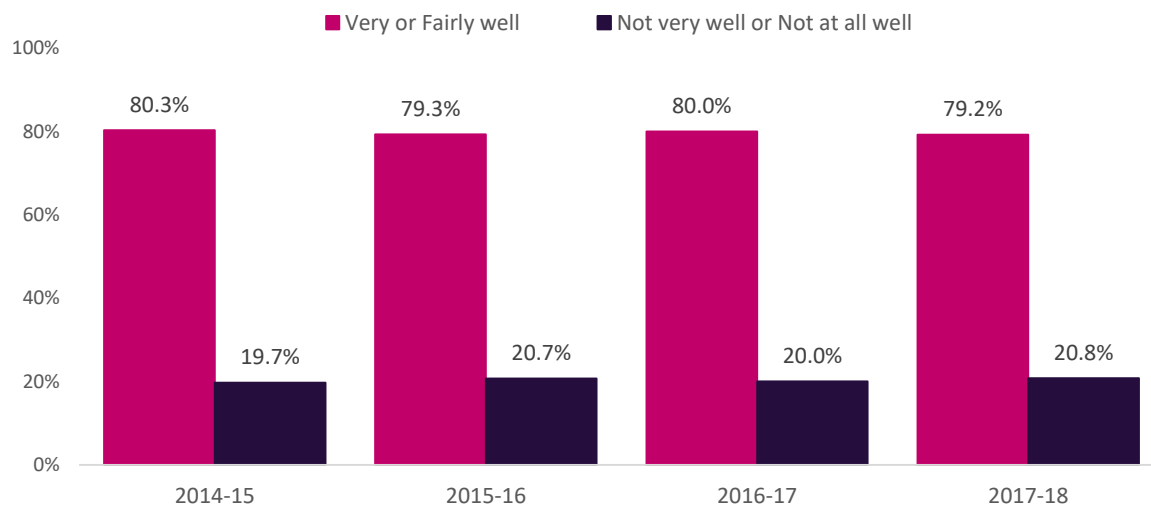
The percentage of respondents who said they were kept either very or fairly well informed about what would happen in court in advance of attending increased from 72.5% in 2014-15 to 77.5% in 2017-18.

The percentage of respondents who said they were kept either very or fairly well informed about what was happening while in court was 79.2% in 2017-18. This did not significantly change over the four-year period.

How well were you kept informed about what would happen in court in advance of attending?



How well were you kept informed about what was happening while in court?



## Attitudes to the Criminal Justice System

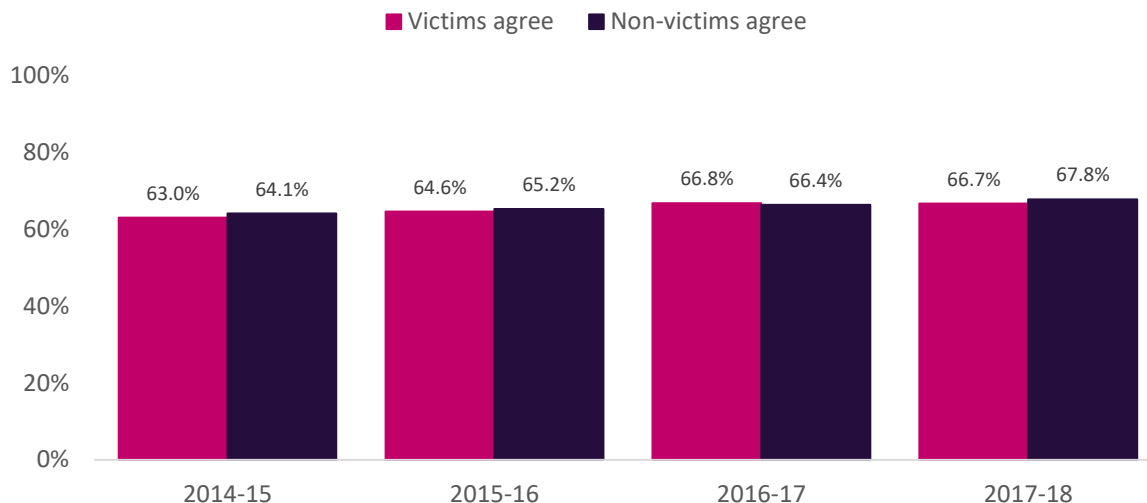
The percentage of victims who agreed that the criminal justice system gives victims and witnesses the support they need increased from 63% in 2014-15 to 66.7% in 2017-18.

For respondents who were not victims in the previous 12 months, the percentage who agreed also increased from 64.1% in 2014-15 to 67.8% in 2017-18.

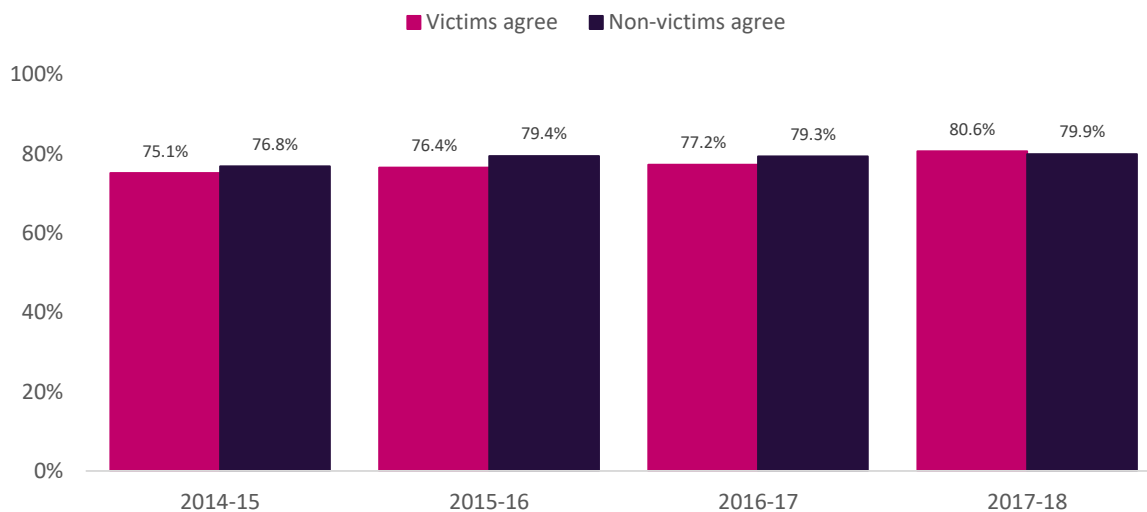
The percentage of victims who agree that the criminal justice system takes into account the views of victims and witnesses increased from 75.1% in 2014-15 to 80.6% in 2017-18.

For respondents who were not victims in the previous 12 months, the percentage who agreed also increased from 76.8% in 2014-15 to 79.9% in 2017-18.

How much would you agree or disagree that... The CJS gives victims and witnesses the support they need?



How much would you agree or disagree that... The CJS takes into account the views of victims and witnesses?



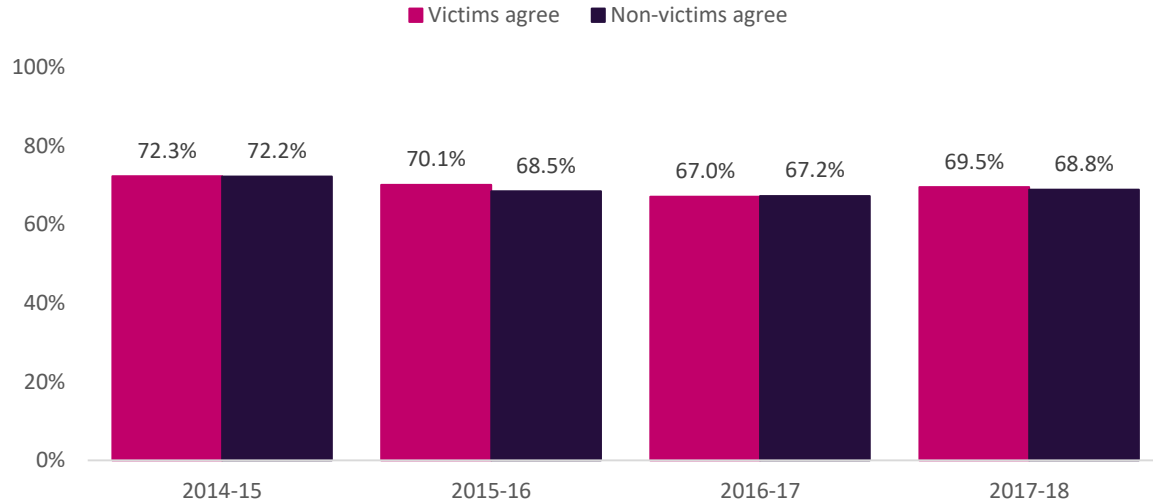
The percentage of victims who agree that the criminal justice system is too soft on those accused of committing a crime decreased from 72.3% in 2014-15 to 69.5% in 2017-18.

For respondents who were not victims in the previous 12 months, the percentage who agreed also decreased from 72.2% in 2014-15 to 68.8% in 2017-18.

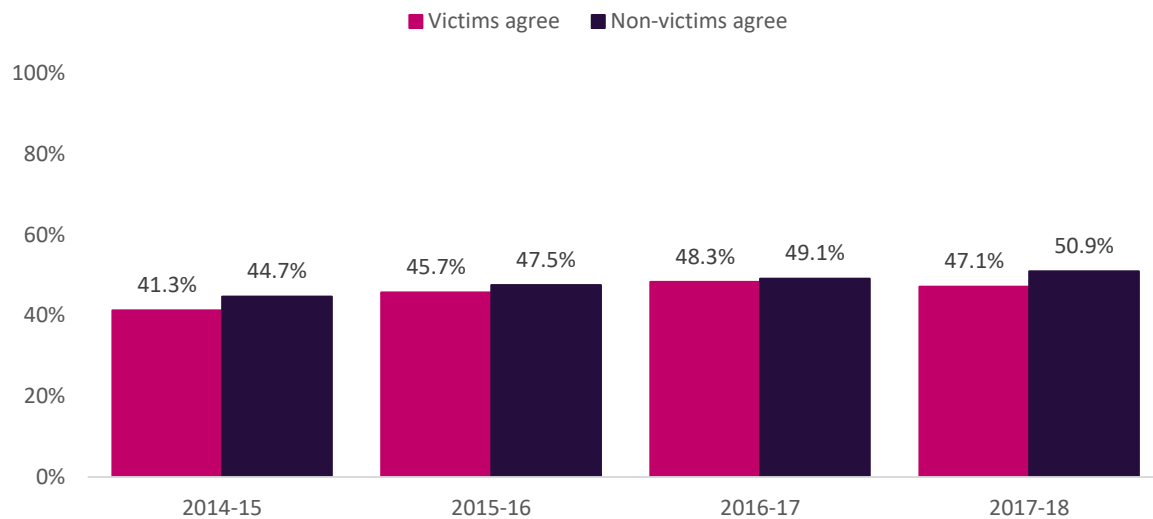
The percentage of victims who agree that the criminal justice system achieves the correct balance between the rights of the offender and the rights of the victims increased from 41.3% in 2014-15 to 47.1% in 2017-18.

For respondents who were not victims in the previous 12 months, the percentage who agreed also increased from 44.7% in 2014-15 to 50.9% in 2017-18.

How much would you agree or disagree that... The CJS is too soft on those accused of committing a crime?



How much would you agree or disagree that... The CJS achieves the correct balance between the rights of the offender and the rights of the victims?



## Victims' Code and Witness Charter

The Code of Practice for Victims of Crime is part of the government's strategy to put victims first, make the system more responsive and easier to navigate.

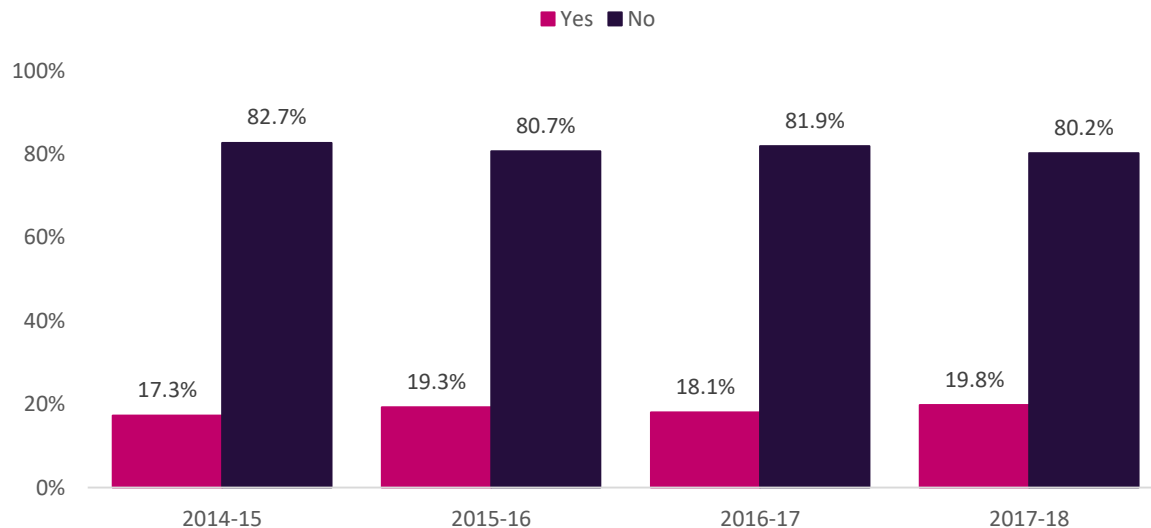
The Code sets out the services that must be provided to victims of crime by organisations in England and Wales. The Code also sets a minimum standard for these services.

The percentage of victims who had heard of the Code of Practice for victims of crime increased from 17.3% in 2014-15 to 19.8% in 2017-18.

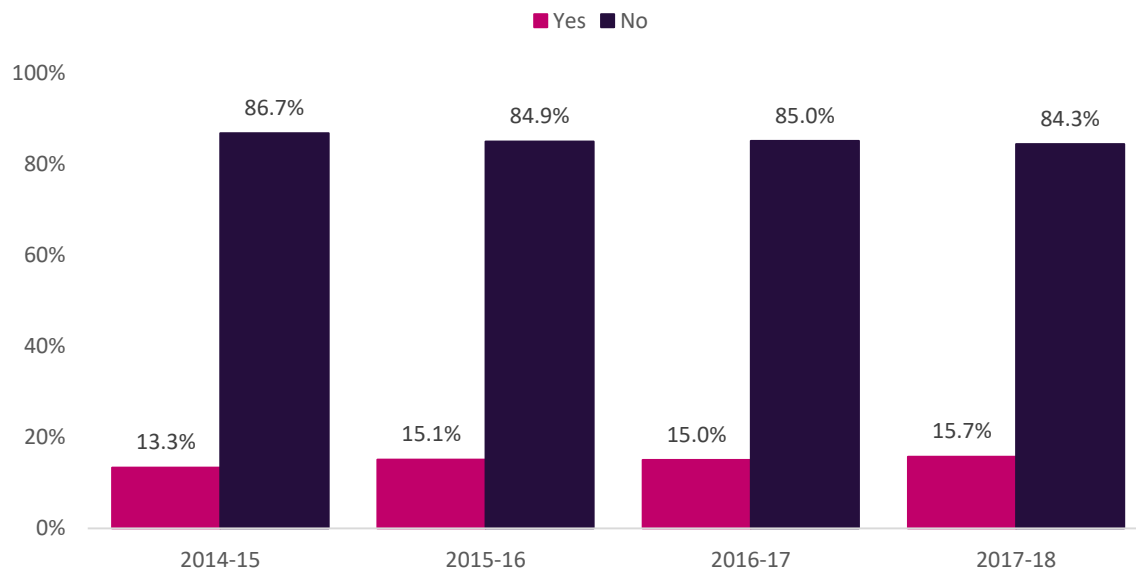
The Witness Charter sets out the standards of care that witnesses can expect if they are a witness to a crime or incident in England and Wales.

The percentage of victims who had heard of the Witness Charter increased from 13.3% in 2014-15 to 15.7% in 2017-18.

Before this interview had you heard of the Code of Practice for victims of crime?



Before this interview had you heard of the Witness Charter?



# Notes

## How the bulletin was prepared

The statistics in this bulletin are derived from the Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW) (formerly British Crime Survey). The CSEW covers all crimes for adults aged 16 and over. The CSEW is a face-to-face victimisation survey asking residents of households about their experiences of a range of crimes in the 12 months prior to the interview. The CSEW uses a stratified random sampling method to select respondents. The CSEW is subject to (a) sampling error as the CSEW is not a census, and (b) non-sampling error such as issues with respondents recalling past events.

This bulletin refers to 'victims', which is defined by the CSEW as anyone who has experienced a range of crimes in the 12 months prior to the interview.

The bulletin was prepared by an Office of National Statistics' (ONS) Approved Researcher using Crime Survey microdata accessed through the ONS Secure Research Service. This research project was approved by an ONS Research Accreditation Panel.

The bulletin presents annual figures at the national level. Annual percentage totals were prepared using SPSS after removing response types for some questions, i.e. 'Don't knows'. Each percentage total was weighted: (1) c11weighti – for incident-based analysis of data from the victim form database; (2) c11indivwgt – for individual-based analysis of attitudinal questions from the non-victim form and others. Frequency table outputs were given publication-level clearance by ONS Research Support.

Analysis of percentage totals was conducted by calculating the percentage change over the one to five-year period. Finally, percentage changes were tested for statistical significance at a .05 level. Only those year-on-year changes that were found to be statistically significant are reported in this bulletin.

## Note from the Office for National Statistics

*"This work was produced using statistical data from ONS. The use of the ONS statistical data in this work does not imply the endorsement of the ONS in relation to the interpretation or analysis of the statistical data. This work uses research datasets which may not exactly reproduce ONS aggregates."*

## Further information

Crime Survey for England and Wales:

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/surveys/informationforhouseholdsandindividuals/householdandindividualsurveys/crimesurveyforenglandandwales>

Crime in England and Wales: year ending March 2019:

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/crimeandjustice/bulletins/crimeinenglandandwales/yearendingjune2019>

ONS Crime and Justice methodology:

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/crimeandjustice/methodologies/crimeandjusticemethodology>

The ONS Approved Researcher Scheme:

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/aboutus/whatwedo/statistics/requestingstatistics/approvedresearcherscheme>