

Understanding Victim Withdrawal in London

A MOPAC Evidence & Insight Report

A set of scales, with a fragmented appearance

Key information

Publication type: General

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Background

Improving the service provided to victims of crime in London remains at the heart of the Mayor's agenda for policing and safety.

Victim attrition - that is people who have reported to the police being the victim of a crime leaving the justice process before their case has been concluded - has been a long-standing issue in London and around the country. In 2022, London's Independent Victims' Commissioner, Claire Waxman OBE, commissioned the Evidence and Insight (E&I) Team in the Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime (MOPAC) to undertake this research to fully understand when, but also crucially why, victims are disengaging from the justice process.

In July 2025, MOPAC published the findings of this research, alongside recommendations from the London Victims' Commissioner.

This is the first research product of its kind, providing a comprehensive look at victim attrition across crime types and throughout victims' journeys, from first reporting the crime all the way through to a court outcome. The research looked at over 270,000 crimes reported to the police between April 2021 and March 2022 - looking at data from several years ago was necessary due to the length of the justice process meaning that cases take years to conclude. The research focused on select priority offences with one victim and one or no suspect, including Arson, Criminal Damage, Robbery, Public Order, Violence Against the Person, and Sexual Offences. The research also looked at CPS data from April 2021 through March 2025, and Home Office outcome codes from April 2021 through March 2024.

Insights

Victim attrition is a national issue

- Nationally, victim withdrawal from investigations has been stable over recent years (39% withdraw). The MPS are slightly better compared to the national average (36% vs 39%).
- CPS data indicates that the proportion of non-convictions due to victim withdrawal has remained relatively stable, ranging between 27% - 32% nationally. London fares slightly better here also.
- Reaching a finalised prosecution in London takes considerably longer.

Victim withdrawal differs across crime types, by location, and occurs at different stages of the process

- Higher harm/complex cases see higher withdrawal: 69% for Adult Rape, 59% for Domestic Abuse, 51% for CSA, 50% for Adult Sexual Offences.
- Withdrawal varies across London. The largest variances are seen for Domestic Abuse (16pp range), Adult Sexual Offences (15pp range) & Serious Youth Violence (25pp range).
- The Central East Basic Command Unit (BCU) had significantly lower rates while West Area BCU had significantly higher rates of withdrawal. While overall rates may be influenced by crime type makeup at BCU level - particularly Domestic Abuse rates - the reasons for differing rates at crime type level are unclear.
- Victims of non-sexual offences generally withdraw within 12 weeks, while victims of Sexual Offences & Child Sexual Abuse withdraw later. Similar factors drive early & overall withdrawal.

Certain aspects make victim withdrawal more likely

Across all crime types, the strongest variables that predicted withdrawal were:

- Victims of Rape were 3.2 times more likely to withdraw.
- Victims knowing the suspect - when the suspect was a current or ex-partner, the victim was x2.1 times more likely to withdraw.
- When the offence takes place in a private place - offences that took place in a private residential venue were 2.3 times more likely to end in withdrawal, offences that occurred in hotels/hostels 2.2 times more likely to end in withdrawal.
- When the suspect was young - where the suspect was under 18 years old, the case was 2.1 times more likely to end in withdrawal.

There were some unique aspects within specific offences, for example:

- Within Hate Crime, the presence of a domestic incident flag or a knife crime feature were key drivers of withdrawal.
- For non-intimate partner Domestic Abuse, withdrawal is more likely when it is an HBV offence.

- For Serious Youth Violence offences, withdrawal was more likely when the suspect was known on the Police National Computer (PNC) or the offence was reported or found by the police.

Certain aspects make victim withdrawal less likely

Victims are less likely to withdraw from Robbery, Arson & Criminal damage cases.

Across all crime, the strongest variables that predicted a lower likelihood of withdrawal were:

- The arrest of the suspect - when the suspect was arrested at the scene we found 2.6 times fewer withdrawals. Arrests at a later stage saw 3.7 times fewer withdrawals.
- A delay in reporting - offences reported over a year later saw 1.6 times fewer withdrawals.
- When reported by a third-party authority.
- When there is a young victim.
- When there is a repeat victim.

Victims were clear on their expectations

- Victims' feedback highlighted the desire to move on, avoid re-traumatisation, the length of the criminal justice process, worry about repercussions from the offender and a lack of support from officers/wider agencies as influential in withdrawing.
- They suggested better emotional understanding, clear updates from police & wider policy changes would encourage them to stay engaged.
- This is consistent with [MOPAC victim surveys](#) demonstrating the importance of ease of contact, police actions, follow up & fair treatment.

Police data often lacks detail to fully understand victim withdrawal

- Gaps & inconsistencies in data hinder full oversight & improvement. For example, officer-recorded victim ethnicity was 'unknown' in over one-third of cases, & officer-recorded suspect ethnicity was missing for 35% of cases, with self-defined suspect ethnicity missing in 78%.
- Additionally, there were inconsistent outcome codes & suspect details, & reasons for victim withdrawal were not systematically captured.

Read the full report

[Understanding Victim Withdrawal in London - MOPAC Evidence & Insight](#)

Read the London Victims' Commissioner response

[The London Victim Attrition Review - Reflections and Recommendations](#)

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