



UK Missing Persons Unit

Missing Persons Data Report 2022/23

Version number: 1.0



Protecting the public from serious and organised crime

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Foreword

The UKMPU Annual Data Report has a very different look this year compared to previous years. It seeks to present the missing person data in a more accessible and user-friendly manner. As in previous years, there are some limitations to the report due to some forces being unable to supply all the data requested. However, the NPCC Missing People portfolio is working closely with the UKMPU to improve data standards and we hope to make significant improvements each year, although it is acknowledged that substantial improvements will only be achieved when the Law Enforcement Database System goes live, which will for the first time, provide a national database of all missing persons reported to the police.

36 forces provided data for the number of missing people calls that they had received in 2022/23. Those forces in England and Wales (35 forces) received 312,901 missing person calls. 34 of those forces had also provided this data for 2021/22. There was an increase of 10% in the number of calls received in 2022/23 compared with the previous year 2021/22 in those forces in England and Wales who provided data for both years but in Scotland, there was a 43% decrease.

There are many reasons why people go missing. A small percentage suffer a fatal outcome, whether that is because of a serious crime, suicide, accident, or misadventure. Others decide to run away or leave their home without informing their family or friends. Some children or vulnerable adults who have every intention of returning home are also reported missing because of their vulnerabilities and the risks that they are exposed to whilst absent. Most missing people return or are located within a short period, with 88.3% of missing people being found within the first 48 hours within England & Wales and 95.3% in Scotland.

With police forces increasingly finding it challenging to meet all types of policing demand, there has been greater focus on ascertaining whether there are any suspicious or concerning circumstances that indicate that a missing person may have suffered, or will suffer, serious harm as the police seek to balance a person's Article 8 right to choose to go missing with their duties to safeguard vulnerable children and adults.

Only a small percentage of missing people are known to suffer serious harm and only 0.30% of cases (or 1 in 330 cases) result in a fatal outcome. Whilst that percentage is small, each fatal outcome has a devastating impact on the families and friends left behind. The challenge for policing is to identify those cases where the missing person has suffered, or is likely to suffer, serious harm. Sometimes it is those cases that are categorised as 'low-risk' that unexpectedly result in a fatal outcome. There has therefore been a national

conversation regarding the extent of the enquiries that must be conducted by the police before making the decision to discontinue an investigation where the initial investigation indicates that the person has chosen to go missing and they are capable of keeping themselves safe. The NPCC Missing People portfolio will report on this issue during the next twelve months.

It is widely recognised that there is disproportionality and potential discrimination in respect of missing people from ethnic minorities, particularly the Black community. However, it should be noted that in those forces who use the 18+1 ethnicity classifications to be consistent with the census data, the disproportionality and variations in risk assessments are not as acute as in those forces who use the 6+1 ethnicity classifications. That indicates that disproportionality can be partially explained by statistical anomalies but not wholly explained. There is no room for complacency and the Police Race Action Plan seeks to understand and address the disproportionality issues and to identify and tackle any conscious or unconscious bias in missing person investigations. The NPCC is working with forces to improve data standards to assist us to better understand potential disparity and discrimination issues in order that we can improve the policing response to missing Black people and their families.

I would like to thank all the Police Officers, Police staff, partner agencies and volunteers who work tirelessly to provide support to missing people and their families. Your professionalism, compassion and dedication are much appreciated and will help us to continue to improve our response to prevention and investigation of missing episodes.



Catherine Hankinson
Deputy Chief Constable



Introduction

This report is the thirtieth in the series of data reports from the UK Missing Persons Unit (UKMPU).

The report contains data and a brief analysis describing missing persons reported to the police in the UK during the financial year 2022/23. This report provides high level statistics and comparisons with previous years; the accompanying statistical tables contain individual force returns and are published separately.

A glossary of terms can be found at the end of the report and includes any type in italics.

As with all of the previously published reports, our statistical analysis is wholly reliant on the data being provided by forces. Changes in systems have resulted in some forces only being able to provide partial returns. We have produced a report that reflects the data we have received.

Methodology and Data Limitations

The 2022/23 Data Return consisted of a standard template of questions, which police forces throughout England and Wales (E&W) were asked to complete. Police Scotland and the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) also completed the template, however they have slight variations in definitions of missing (Police Scotland) and how certain statistics are recorded. The data, therefore, is not entirely consistent, but data extracts are included in this report where possible. The full statistical returns, received from each force, can be found in the accompanying statistical report.

The Data Return template asked police forces in E&W, Scotland and Northern Ireland to provide key statistics on missing person incidents during the financial year 2022/23 covering the following areas:

- Names of their Command and Control and Missing Person systems.
- The numbers of Closing and Opening codes relating to missing persons.
- The total number of incidents and individuals and break downs into adults and children.
- The total number of outstanding missing individuals as of 31st March 2023.
- The total number of long-term missing individuals reported missing prior to the reporting period and who were still missing on the last day of the reporting period - that is, all individuals missing prior to 1st April 2022 who were still missing on 31st March 2023.
- Total numbers of incidents broken down by gender, age and ethnicity.
- The number of incidents by risk assessments made, broken down by gender and person group (adult or child).
- The number of incidents flagged with Mental Health (MH) vulnerabilities or with a Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) marker. These were split by gender and age or person group.
- The number of incidents by the type of harm suffered and person group.
- The total number of fatal outcomes of individuals who were reported missing.
- The number of missing incidents by duration of time missing.

- The numbers of incidents resulting in the missing person being found, and who finds missing people, by person group.
- The number of incidents and individuals by person group, grouped by those that were identified as being in care or not.

While every effort has been taken to standardise the reporting of data to the UKMPU to allow for year-on-year comparisons, changes to reporting practices in some police forces mean that year-on-year comparisons are not always possible.

There are several other reasons why standardisation of reporting is limited, and these include:

- Police forces all operate with different systems, processes and procedures, and not all were able to provide data as required in the UKMPU's Data Return.
- Some police forces were unable to provide breakdowns by person group or by demographics (age, gender or ethnicity). Hence there are differences in the total number of incidents across these sub-categories in the analyses presented.

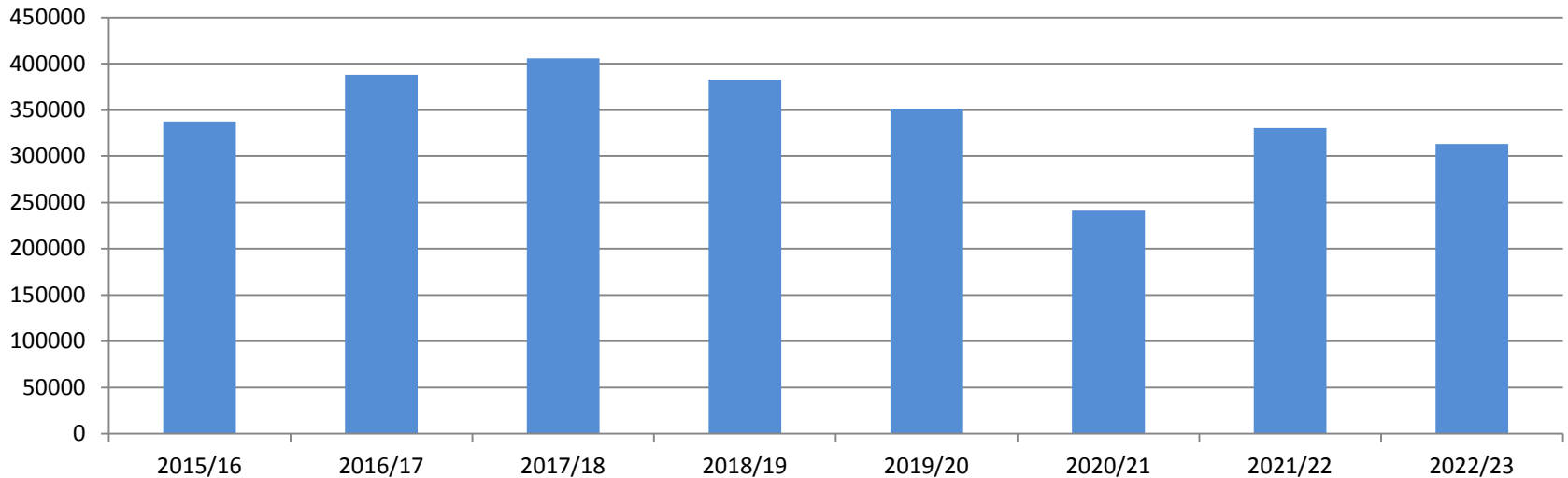
Calls for England, Wales & Scotland

Tables A1 in the statistical report

312,901
Calls (E&W)

- For 2022/23, data was provided by 35 forces from England & Wales (E&W) on the number of missing person-related calls received totalling 312,901.
- A direct comparison between forces (34 police forces from E&W) who provided returns across 2021/22 (278,105 calls) to 2022/23 (306,013 calls) showed a 10% increase in volume.
- Scotland received a total of 17,599 calls in 2022/23, a 43% decrease when compared with the previous year (31,061). Police Scotland name and record missing person incidents differently to E&W and so it is not possible to include them in the overall figures.

Missing related calls recorded by police forces (E&W), 2015-2023



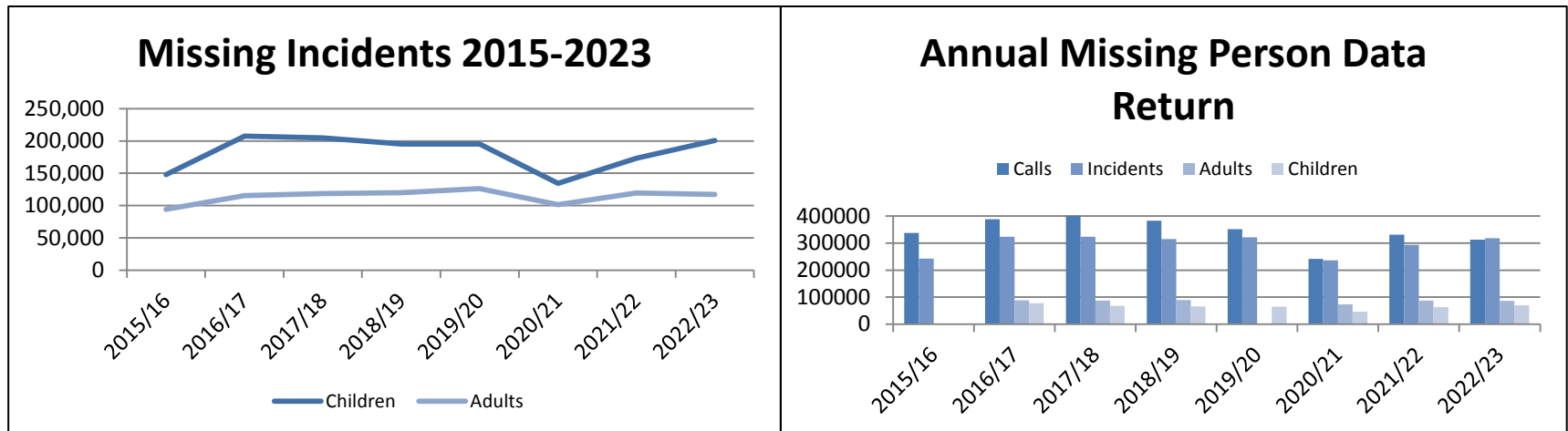
Incidents and Individuals for England & Wales

Tables A1, A2, A3 and B2 in the statistical report

319,745 Incidents

156,454 Individuals

- For 2022/23 all police forces in the UK were able to provide data on both the number of missing incidents and individuals.
- Incidents – 63% (200,704) of missing incidents involved children, 15.7% increase from the previous year.
- Individuals – 45% of missing individuals were recorded as children (69,927) and 55% as adults (86,189).

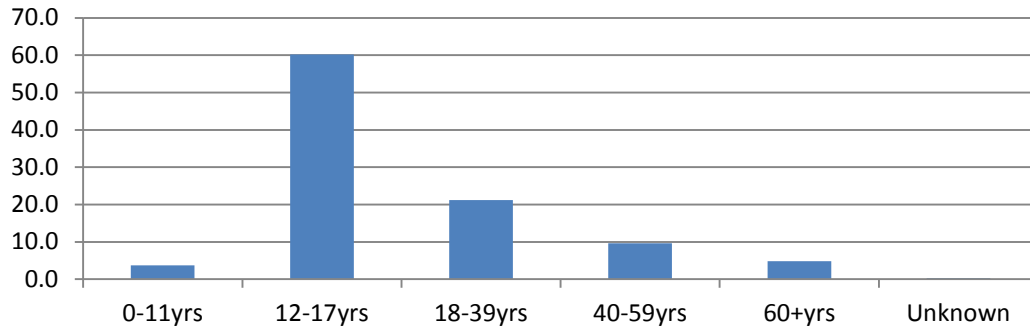


- Scotland – Incidents 17,409 (58% children, 10,158); Individuals 10,454 (41% children, 4,320).
- Northern Ireland – Incidents 9,581 (54% children, 5,211); Individuals 4,284 (27% children, 1,175).

Age & Gender Distribution of Missing Incidents

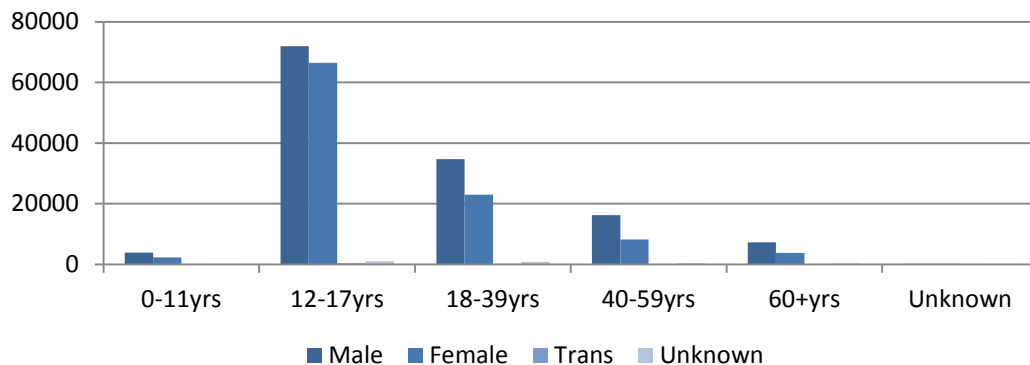
Table C2 & C4 of the statistical report

**Age Distribution England & Wales
(% of Incidents)**



- This data is only available for England and Wales.
- The age distribution is consistent with previous years with the bulk of missing incidents comprising of children aged 12-17 years (60%) with 85% of incidents involving individuals under 40years old.

Age and gender distribution England & Wales (No. of Incidents)



- Males account for 54.3% of all missing incidents, female 43.6%, transgender people represent 0.4% and unknown 1.7%.
- There was a consistent gender disparity across all age groups with males accounting for the majority of incidents.
- The variation was most apparent in the 40-59year age bracket with 65.1% male.

Ethnicity Distribution of Missing Incidents – Forces Using 18+1 Classification

Table C3 & C5

- The category of “White English/ Welsh/ Scottish/ Northern Irish/ British” accounted for 82.5% of all incidents when excluding “Any Other Ethnicity” & “Unknown Ethnicity/Ethnicity Not Stated”.
- The 2021 Census data was compared with the 2022/23 Missing Person Data from police forces. 33 forces (Devon & Cornwall excluded as only a partial return was submitted) returned data in the 18(1+) format and one force (Cumbria) in the 16(+1) format. The 2021 Census data below excludes: “White:Roma” ethnicity category as Police data does not include this category and No Return Forces*.

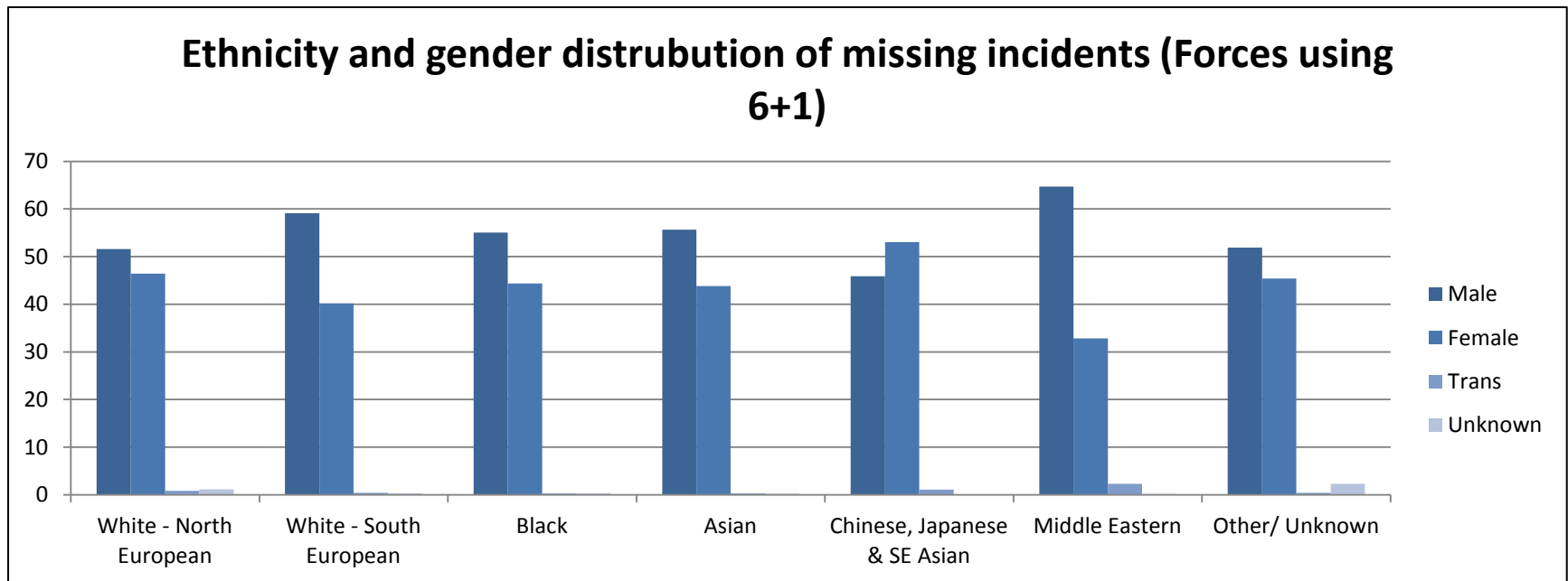
High-Level Ethnicity	Ethnicity Category	2021 Census (Excluding 'White:Roma' & No Return Forces*)		2022-23 Ethnicity distribution of missing incidents		% Difference (2022/23 Missing Incidents - 2021 Census)
		Numbers	Percentage	Numbers	Percentage	
Asian, Asian British or Asian Welsh	Asian, Asian British or Asian Welsh: Bangladeshi	259,858	0.6%	226	0.2%	-0.5%
	Asian, Asian British or Asian Welsh: Chinese	235,175	0.6%	137	0.1%	-0.5%
	Asian, Asian British or Asian Welsh: Indian	1,066,625	2.6%	870	0.6%	-2.0%
	Asian, Asian British or Asian Welsh: Other Asian	487,199	1.2%	2,198	1.5%	0.3%
	Asian, Asian British or Asian Welsh: Pakistani	1,025,158	2.5%	1,689	1.1%	-1.4%
	Total	3,074,015	7.6%	5,120	3.5%	-4.1%
Black, Black British, Black Welsh, Caribbean or African	Black, Black British, Black Welsh, Caribbean or African: African	630,309	1.6%	2,671	1.8%	0.3%
	Black, Black British, Black Welsh, Caribbean or African: Caribbean	238,741	0.6%	1,778	1.2%	0.6%
	Black, Black British, Black Welsh, Caribbean or African: Other Black	122,682	0.3%	2,256	1.5%	1.2%
	Total	991,732	2.4%	6,705	4.5%	2.1%
Mixed or Multiple ethnic groups	Mixed or Multiple ethnic groups: Other Mixed or Multiple ethnic groups	244,505	0.6%	3,030	2.0%	1.4%
	Mixed or Multiple ethnic groups: White and Asian	301,352	0.7%	1,022	0.7%	-0.1%
	Mixed or Multiple ethnic groups: White and Black African	135,143	0.3%	988	0.7%	0.3%
	Mixed or Multiple ethnic groups: White and Black Caribbean	310,567	0.8%	2,097	1.4%	0.7%
	Total	991,567	2.4%	7,137	4.8%	2.4%
Other Ethnic Group	Other ethnic group: Any other ethnic group	416,073	1.0%	3,463	2.3%	1.3%
	Other ethnic group: Arab	146,460	0.4%	334	0.2%	-0.1%
	Total	562,533	1.4%	3,797	2.6%	1.2%
White	White: English, Welsh, Scottish, Northern Irish or British	32,670,002	80.5%	118,647	80.3%	-0.2%
	White: Gypsy or Irish Traveller	52,551	0.1%	161	0.1%	0.0%
	White: Irish	275,423	0.7%	466	0.3%	-0.4%
	White: Other White	1,986,544	4.9%	5,808	3.9%	-1.0%
	Total	34,984,520	86.2%	125,082	84.6%	-1.6%

*No Return Forces include: Cheshire, Derbyshire Devon & Cornwall, Greater Manchester, Merseyside, Metropolitan, Northamptonshire & Staffordshire

Ethnicity and Gender Distribution of Missing Incidents – Forces Using 6+1 Classification

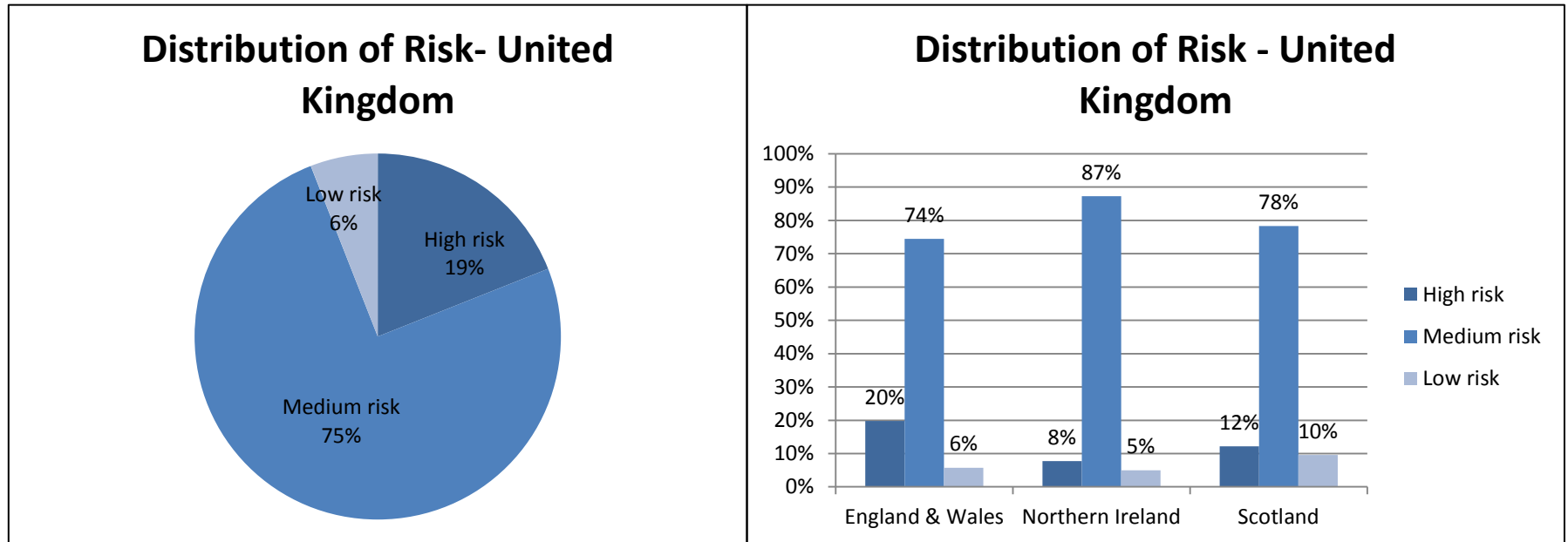
Table C3a & C5a

- 7 police forces in England and Wales returned ethnicity data using the 6+1 including: Cheshire, Derbyshire, Devon & Cornwall (partial return), Merseyside, Metropolitan, Northamptonshire and Staffordshire.
- The “Other/Unknown” ethnicity category accounted for 7.9% (6157) of all missing incidents.



Distribution of Incidents by Risk Level

Table D1

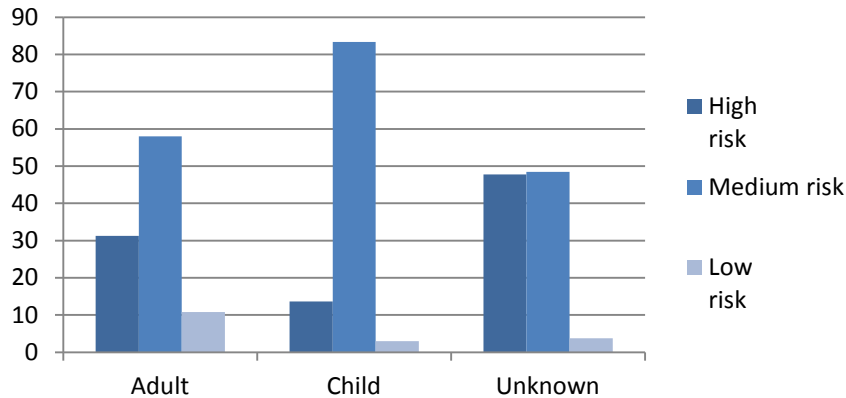


- 75% of incidents were categorised as Medium Risk.
- There were some differences between devolved regions. In Northern Ireland only 7.7% of incidents were recorded as High Risk when compared with 12.1% for Police Scotland. It should be noted that Police Scotland have a risk based definition of missing: “anyone whose whereabouts is unknown and: where the circumstances are out of character OR the context suggests the person may be subject to crime OR the person is at risk of harm to themselves or another”.
- At force level, the differences were even more pronounced. Staffordshire and Cheshire both recorded more than 50% of their incidents as High Risk, being 59% and 73.8% respectively.

Distribution of Incidents by Age, Gender and Risk Level

Table D2

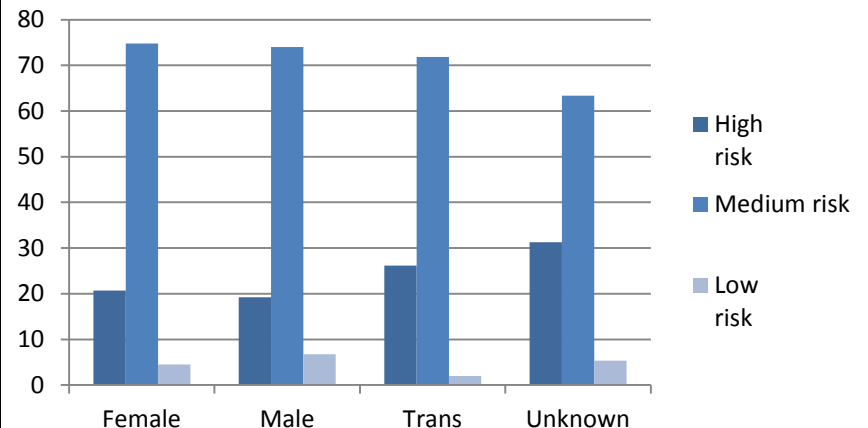
Risk Distribution by Age



- As with previous years missing incidents involving adults are more likely to be recorded as High Risk than those involving children (31% compared to 14%).
- 83% of missing incidents involving children were recorded as Medium Risk compared with 58% of incidents involving adults.

- The differences in the distribution of risk categories by gender was more similar.
- However, a slightly higher number of missing incidents involving trans people were recorded as High Risk when compared to incidents involving males or females (26% compared to 21% for females and 19% for males).
- N.B. College of Policing has renamed category of “No apparent risk” will be changed to “Very Low Risk”.

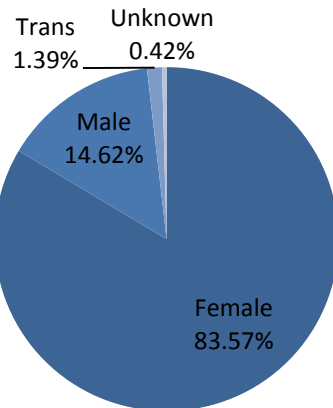
Risk Distribution by Gender



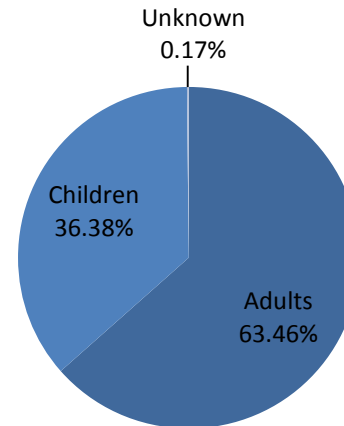
Distribution of Incidents by Vulnerability, Gender and Age

Table D3/D4/D5

**Child Sexual Exploitation by Gender
(England, Wales & Northern Ireland)**

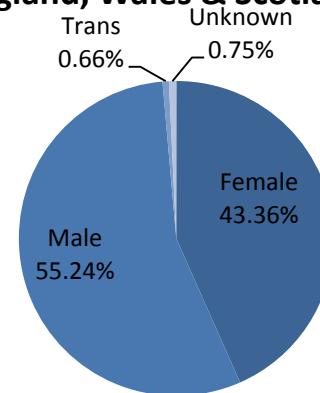


**Mental Health Incidents by Age
(England, Wales & Scotland)**



- Child Sexual Exploitation – 14,593 missing incidents were reported with a CSE flag (data only available from England, Wales & Northern Ireland).
- Mental Health – 54,288 missing incidents had a MH flag (data from England, Wales & Scotland)

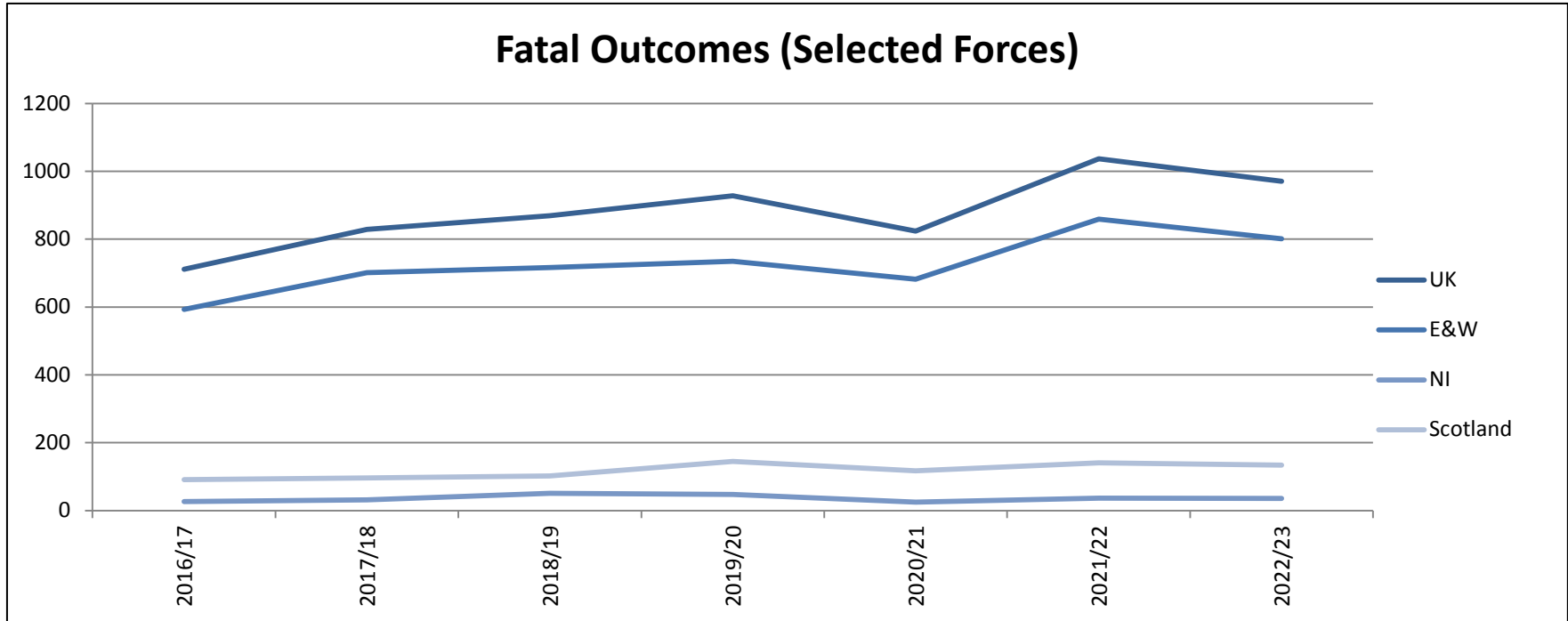
**Mental Health Incidents by Gender
(England, Wales & Scotland)**



Fatal Outcomes

Table E3

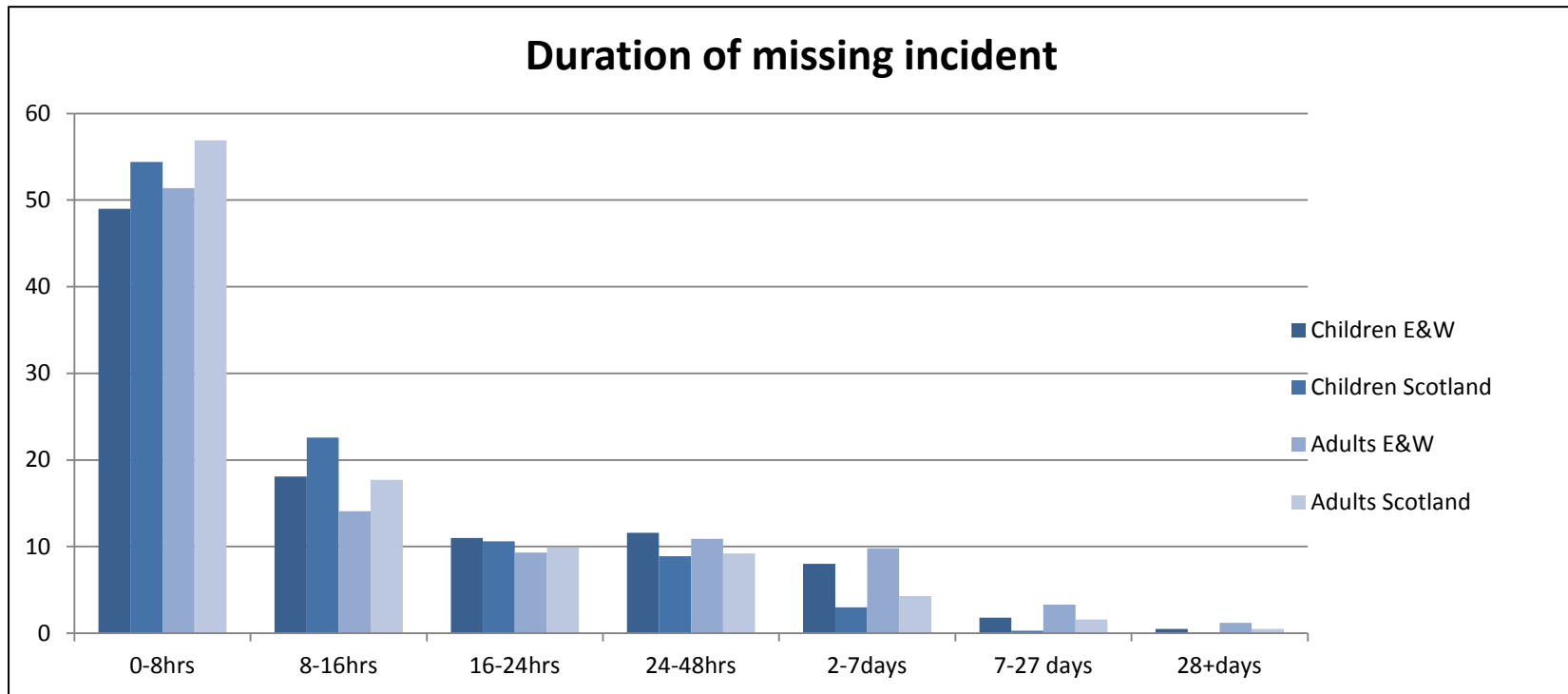
Fatal Outcomes (Selected Forces)



- In 2022/23, 0.30% of missing incidents resulted in a fatal outcome (971 deaths), a 6.4% reduction when compared to the previous year.
- The annual comparison of the total number of fatal outcomes is difficult due to incomplete historical data, as such the annual reduction in the number of fatal outcome cases should be viewed through this context.
- In 2022/23, 96% of fatal outcomes involved adults (934) and 4% (36) involved children, no data is available on the cause of death for these incidents.
- This is the first year there has been a reduction in the number of fatal outcome cases in the UK, with the exception of 2020 (due to the impact of Covid-19) since reporting began.

Duration of Missing Incident

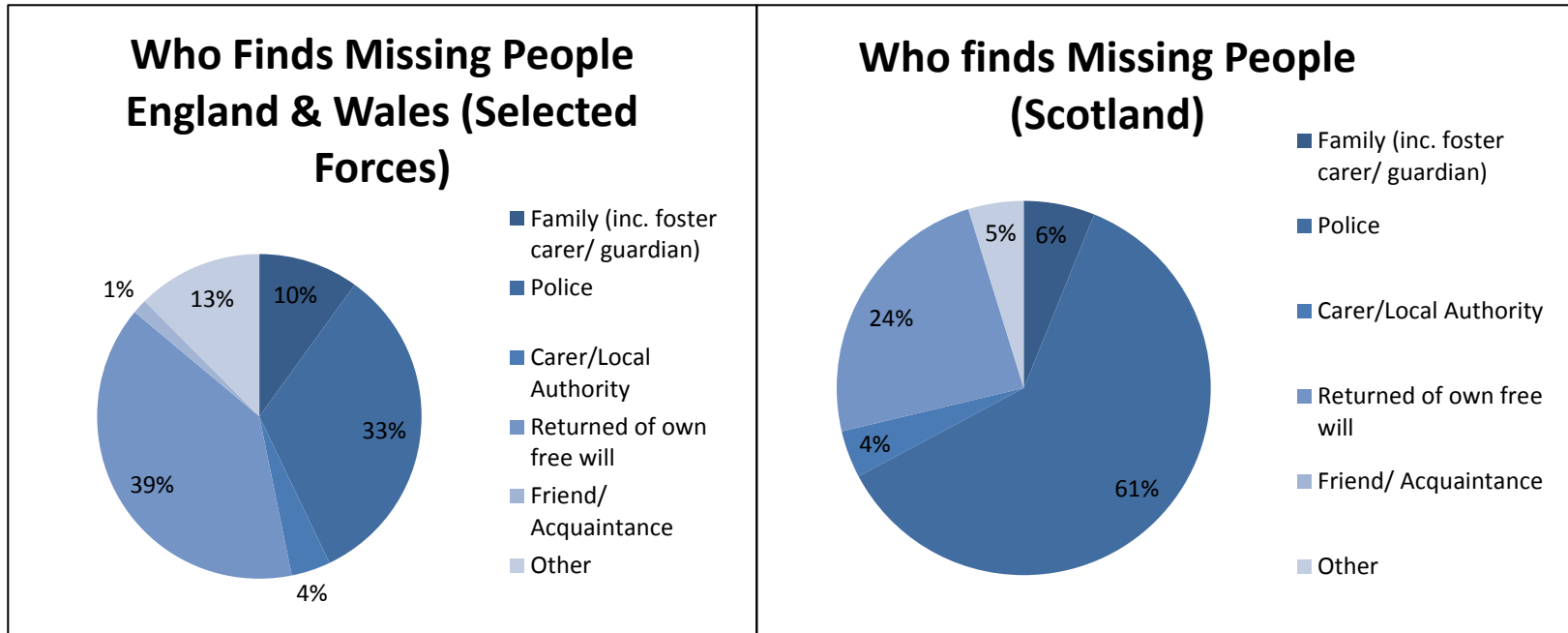
Table E4



- 36 Police forces in England and Wales and Police Scotland were able to provide data regarding the duration of missing incidents, no data was returned from the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI).
- In England and Wales 0.5% of children recorded as missing are still missing after 28 days and 1.2% of adults recorded as missing are still missing after 28 days i.e. those individuals were still considered to be missing persons. In Scotland, the figures were 0.1 % and 0.3% correspondingly.
- 78% of all missing incidents involving children in England and Wales were resolved within 24 hours, increasing to 90% at 48 hours. Figures for Scotland were 88% of incidents resolved within 24 hours for children and 97% within 48 hours.

Who Finds Missing People

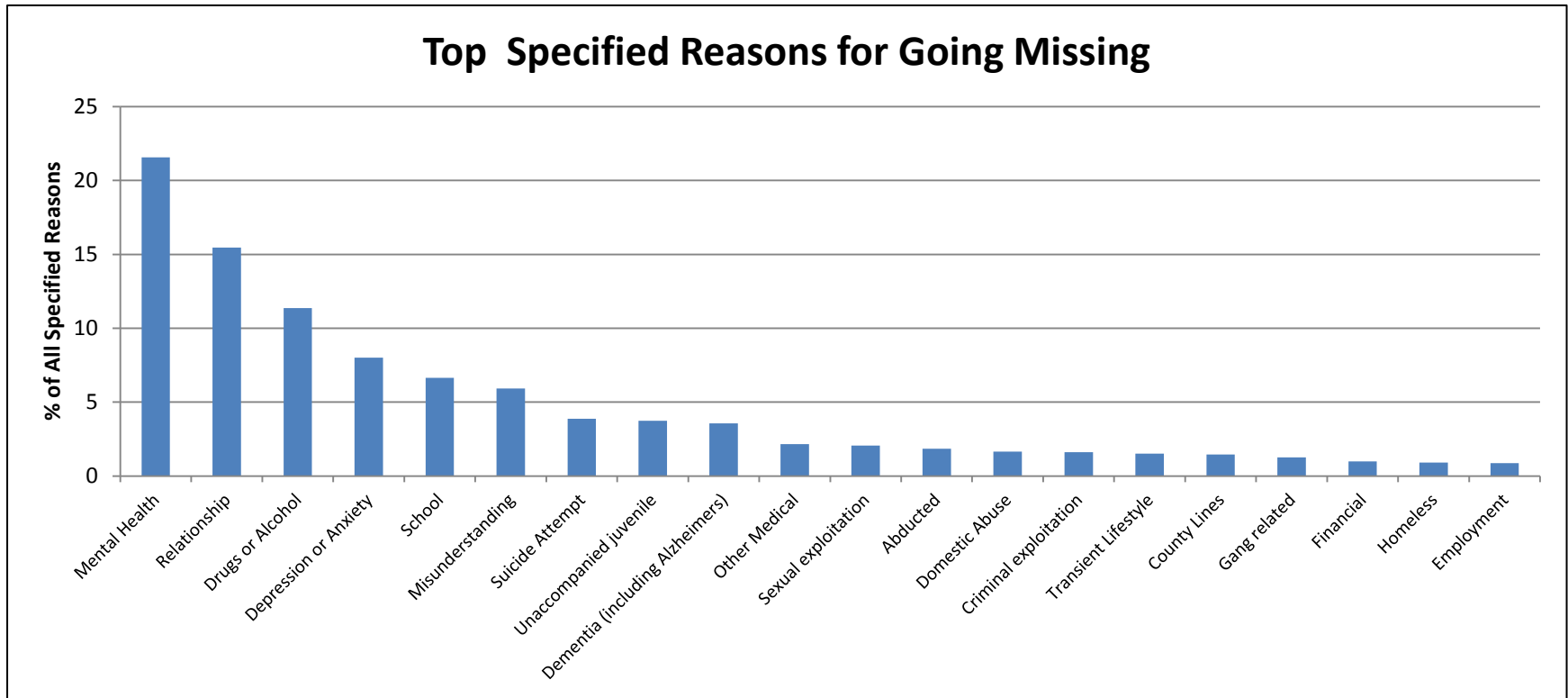
Table E5



- This data was available for 30 forces in England and Wales and for Police Scotland.
- In England and Wales, missing people were most likely to return of their own free will (39% of incidents), whilst in 33% of incidents they were found by the police. The reverse was true in Scotland, with 61% recorded as being found by the police whilst only 24% returned of their own free will.
- Children were more likely than adults to return of their own free will after a missing incident for both England & Wales (43%) and Police Scotland (27%).

Reason for Going Missing

Table E6



- The top 4 reasons for going missing are in line with reports from the previous year (Mental Health, Relationship, Drugs/Alcohol, and Depression/Anxiety), and account for 56% of incidents where a reason was specified.
- Whilst Mental Health was the most common reason for adults going missing (15.6%), Relationship was the most prevalent factor for children (9.3%).
- This data was available for selected forces in England and Wales, no data was returned from Police Scotland or PSNI.

Numbers of long-term missing individuals

Table E9

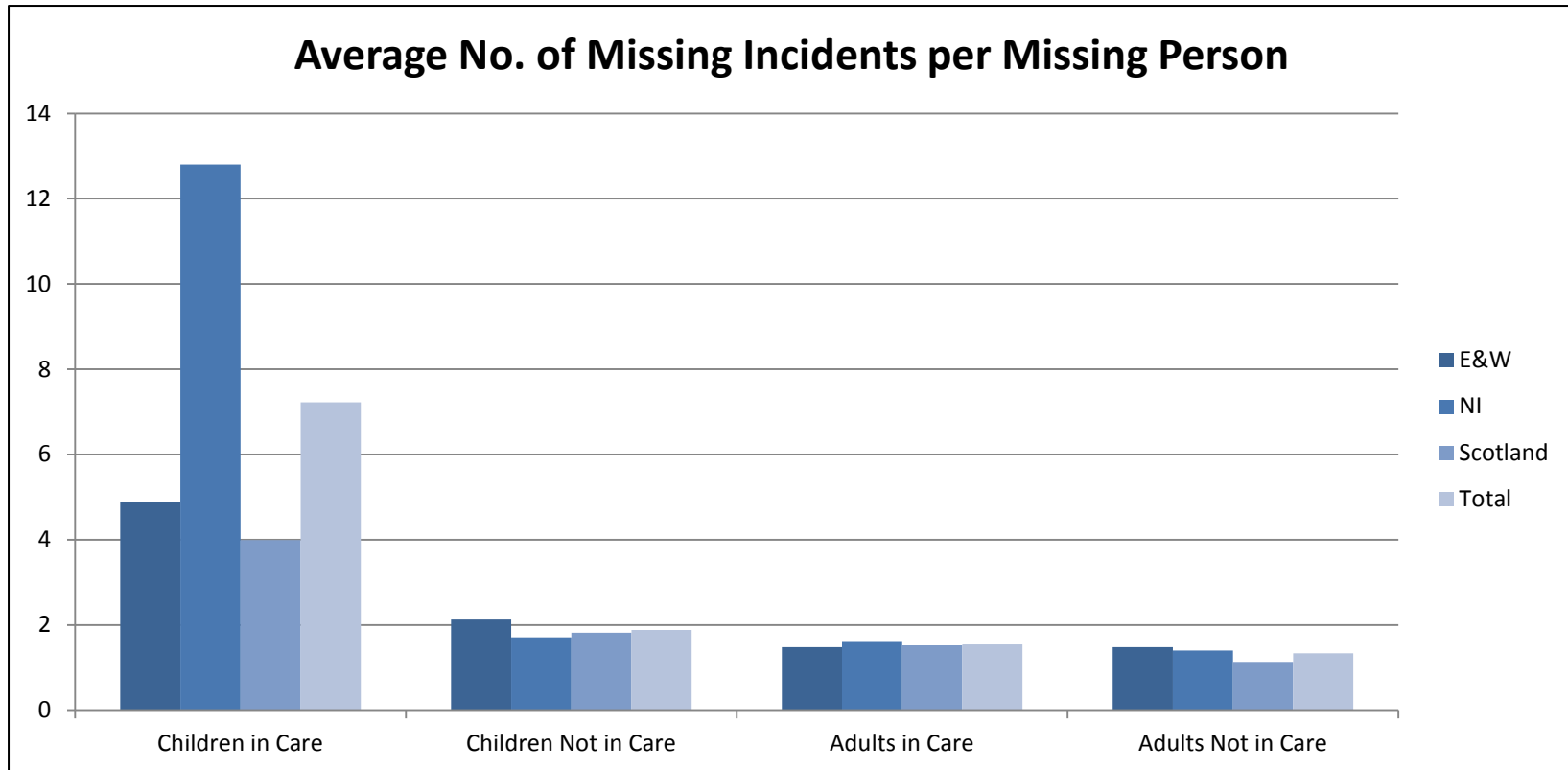
ENGLAND AND WALES	Child	Adult	Unknown	Total
Number of newly reported missing individuals in 2022/23 and still not found by the end of the reporting period	814	579	1	1402
All reported missing individuals in 2022/23 excluding those that went missing within 28 days prior to 31/Mar/2023	562	364	2	928
Number of Long Term missing Individuals	1477	2622	3	4102

SCOTLAND	Child	Adult	Unknown	Total
Number of newly reported missing individuals in 2022/23 and still not found by the end of the reporting period	1	21	0	22
All reported missing individuals in 2022/23 excluding those that went missing within 28 days prior to 31/Mar/2023	1	21	0	22
Number of Long Term missing Individuals	0	616	0	616

NORTHERN IRELAND	Child	Adult	Unknown	Total
Number of newly reported missing individuals in 2022/23 and still not found by the end of the reporting period	7	19	0	26
All reported missing individuals in 2022/23 excluding those that went missing within 28 days prior to 31/Mar/2023	0	4	0	4
Number of Long Term missing Individuals	12	48	0	60

Missing From Care

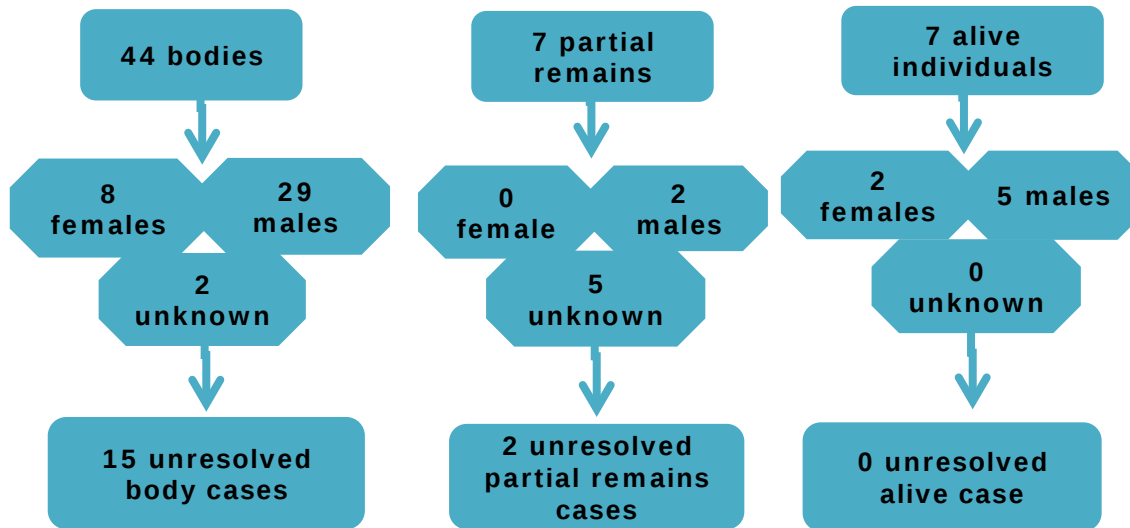
Table F1



- This data was available for 40 forces including both PSNI and Police Scotland.
- In England and Wales children in care account for 20% of all children (12,616 individuals) who go missing but make up 36% of all incidents involving children (65,231 incidents).
- In Northern Ireland children in care constitute 21% (273) individuals and 66% incidents (3,495), whilst in Scotland they make up 25% (1,067) individuals and 42% (4,255) incidents.

Unidentified Found People and Remains

Table G1 and G2 in the statistical report (Data taken directly from UKMPU database)



As of 31st March 2023, the UKMPU held 1,033 unidentified cases across the UK. This includes 814 bodies, 159 body parts and 60 alive individuals. This figure is cumulative including the total number of records over all reporting years. For many of the alive individuals, these will be cases of alive, abandoned babies, therefore longstanding cases on the UKMPU database Hermes.

- The UKMPU collects information from police forces on individuals who are found alive but cannot be immediately identified. These individuals may be unable to provide personal details at the time of being found for reasons such as injuries sustained or medical conditions, e.g. amnesia or dementia.
- Information is also collected from police forces and coroners on unidentified deceased bodies and remains (body parts), and from overseas law enforcement agencies where it is believed there may be a link to the UK. The UKMPU stores this information on its database, Hermes, and uses it, together with details of missing person reports, to cross match (link) the missing and the found. These figures are inclusive of Police Scotland and PSNI.
- Records held by the UKMPU date back to the 1950s and many of the unresolved cases are historic remains located prior to the development of DNA analysis as a means of identifying individuals or body parts. Sadly, it is unlikely that those cases will be identified, however, work continues to identify new lines of enquiry in the hope of an identification being made.