

HOW LEISURE CENTRES ENABLE SEXUAL PREDATORS:

A Women's Rights Network Investigation, 2025



A report from Women's Rights Network
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10 December 2025



Table of Contents

Foreword by Sharron Davies, MBE	3
Executive Summary	4
Introduction	5
Campaign for change – Red flags	9
Freedom of Information investigation 2025	11
<i>Data and Results</i>	11
<i>How police forces record biological sex</i>	19
<i>Discussion</i>	20
WRN Demands	23
<i>Appendices</i>	24
<i>Appendix A – FOI Questions</i>	24
<i>Appendix B – Response to Q9 Does your force record the sex of offenders as biological sex or as gender identity?</i>	25

Acknowledgements

A huge thank you to the WRN women who helped with the data gathering for this investigation. The unpaid time that women commit to WRN is invaluable, appreciated and has a real impact on the lives of women and girls.

Dedication

This report is dedicated to all women and girls harmed by sexual violence in places where they were participating in sport, exercise or recreational activities.

The failure to protect you is a dereliction of duty.

The same thing happening again and again is unforgivable.

Foreword by Sharron Davies, MBE

I know from my own career the huge benefits that swimming can bring in terms of health and well-being. Each month 4.2 million people use their local swimming pool and that is to be encouraged. However, women and girls face hidden dangers when using their local pools because mixed-sex changing rooms are proving to be a magnet for sexual predators.

This report by the Women's Rights Network (WRN) Sports Group is shocking. Horrendous crimes including rapes, sexual assaults and voyeurism, are occurring daily in our local swimming pool changing facilities – places where females are uniquely vulnerable.

One-third of leisure centres provide NO single-sex changing or shower facilities for female swimmers as local authorities have moved to mixed-sex changing villages, often following Sport England guidance.

Female activity levels are lower than for males and the Government's stated aim is to improve health by increasing the opportunities for women and girls to be active. Swimming is a brilliant way to keep fit, but if women and girls cannot use facilities without the fear of becoming the victim of a sexual crime then public health initiatives will fail at the first hurdle.

What must change?

- *Local authorities must take the issue of male violence against women and girls seriously.*
- *New-build swimming pools must provide single-sex changing facilities as an option.*
- *Current facilities should be risk assessed and altered to provide single-sex areas for female swimmers (for example, cordoning off a section of a mixed-sex changing room for females only).*

We have an epidemic of male violence against women and girls in this country. Every local authority leisure provider should read this report and take action to protect all female swimmers. This is too important to ignore.



Sharron Davies MBE, Olympic and Commonwealth swimming champion, began her swimming career aged 11. She competed in three Olympic Games winning a silver medal in 1980, won two gold medals at the Commonwealth Games in 1978 and holds more than 200 British swimming records.

In addition to a hugely successful media career, Sharron has recently been nominated to sit in the House of Lords in recognition of her work towards the protection of women's sport.

Executive Summary

Building on our 2024 report “Leisure Centres: Putting Women and Girls at Risk”, a new WRN Freedom of Information investigation has provided data on sexual violence in leisure centres.

Based on the data provided, we can reveal that in one year (2023) there were;

**16 rapes, 80 sexual assaults and 65 acts of voyeurism
across 257 leisure centres in England and Wales.**

The majority of victims are female.

Every victim has been catastrophically failed by the leisure industry.

The shocking statistics we have uncovered occur against a backdrop of shrinking access to single-sex changing facilities at swimming pools in the UK.

Mixed-sex changing villages are the default design for new swimming pools and refurbished wet-side changing areas, and they are a magnet for predators. Women and girls are being put at risk of serious sexual crimes because local authorities, sports councils, leisure centre operators and architects do not take women’s safety seriously. They **‘design-in’ harm** and provide opportunities for **avoidable abuse**.

It is important to acknowledge that men who commit these crimes are known to escalate to more serious offences including sexual assault, rape and murder. One of Britain’s most prolific sexual predators used his phone to secretly take intimate images of women¹.

And in 2021, a report on upskirting by the Crown Prosecution Service warned, *“According to our analysis, 15 [out of a total of 46] of the men prosecuted for upskirting since last April were simultaneously charged with other sexual crimes – including child abuse, sexual assault, extreme pornography, and wider voyeurism offences.”*²

Sport England, local councils, leisure centre operators and architects must act now to ensure the safety of women and girls in UK leisure centres.

Women’s Rights Network Demands:

- Sport England immediately withdraws all guidance promoting mixed-sex wet-side facilities as the default option for new and refurbished leisure centres.
- New facilities provide single-sex changing facilities for swimming pool users.
- Councils conduct a risk assessment on safety for women and girls before rubber-stamping plans for changing areas in new or refurbished leisure centres.
- Crime prevention officers are consulted on all design plans, and their expertise is used to help ‘design out’ crime.
- Existing changing villages to be assessed for the risk of sex crimes and robust mitigation measures be applied together with consideration of cost-effective solutions ensuring a female-only space.

THE SAFEST CHANGING ROOM IS A SINGLE-SEX CHANGING ROOM

¹ <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2025/nov/14/sex-offender-chao-xu-jailed-for-life>

² <https://www.cps.gov.uk/cps/news/upskirting-public-urged-report-offenders-prosecutions-double>

Introduction

Women's Rights Network has long campaigned for single-sex changing provision and sports. Our 2024 report "Leisure Centres: Putting Women and Girls at Risk"³ was the impetus for campaigns to:

1. Ensure that 'women-only' or 'ladies' swimming sessions means female-only, and,
2. Fight for access to single-sex changing facilities for women and girls in all swimming pools.

Supreme Court judgment

On April 16, 2025, the historic Supreme Court (SC) ruling in the case of For Women Scotland versus Scottish Ministers clarified Equality law⁴ and reflected what WRN have consistently been advocating – that women-only means no men; not even those with a Gender Recognition Certificate.



Marion Calder and Susan Smith of For Women Scotland

This, of course, includes women-only swimming sessions.

However, since the SC ruling many organisations, including ukactive on whom the UK leisure industry heavily relies for guidance, have delayed updating their policies saying they are obliged to wait for an updated Code of Practice from the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC).

In effect, this leaves the leisure industry in a position of *status quo*.

Our research published in the 2024 Leisure Centre report found that in England and Wales, only 25 of 133 'women-only' or ladies-only' swimming sessions exclude males (who identify as women). In Scotland, three out of six 'women-only' sessions guaranteed female only access.

Policies must align with the outcome of the SC ruling, which is clear; it is lawful to provide women-only sessions in leisure centres, and to robustly protect those women-only sessions from male intrusion. As it always was, and as it should be.

³ <https://www.womensrights.network/post/when-women-only-means-mixed-sex>

⁴ <https://forwomen.scot/20/04/2025/uk-supreme-court-the-judgment/>

Mixed-sex changing

The provision of single-sex changing facilities in UK swimming pools is shrinking; a problem we had underestimated at the time our 2024 report was published.

Leisure centres have faced severe financial pressures in the past five to six years. The COVID-19 pandemic resulted in prolonged closures of facilities and a slow return to normality closely followed by a huge spike in energy costs triggered by the Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2021. Swimming pools have become a very expensive enterprise for Councils and operators to run and as a result, the Government has handed out large sums of money to keep leisure centres afloat and to improve energy efficiency^{5,6}. These taxpayer handouts, totalling more than £60 million in England in 2023 and £6.3 million in Wales in 2024-2025, are being used to refurbish existing leisure centres, and to develop new facilities and leisure hubs.

Local authorities and architects heavily rely on Sport England guidelines when planning new swimming pools and waterparks. In their 2013 guidance, Sport England promote **village-style changing** as the 'preferred option'⁷ leading to this type of open plan, mixed-sex changing area becoming the blueprint for new and refurbished swimming pools.



Example of a village-style changing area that replaced single-sex changing rooms during a leisure centre refurbishment of wet-side facilities⁸.

According to data collected from all areas of the UK for our 2024 Leisure Centre report, around 30% of local authorities provide no single-sex changing or showering facilities for pool users.

⁵ <https://www.sportengland.org/news/swimming-pool-support-fund-keeps-leisure-centres-afloat>

⁶ <https://www.sportengland.org/news-and-inspiration/swimming-pool-support-fund-helps-facilities-prepare-future>

⁷ <https://www.sportengland.org/guidance-and-support/facilities-and-planning/design-and-cost-guidance/swimming-pools#:~:text=Our%20design%20guide%20was%20updated,been%20updated%20in%20Appendix%202.>

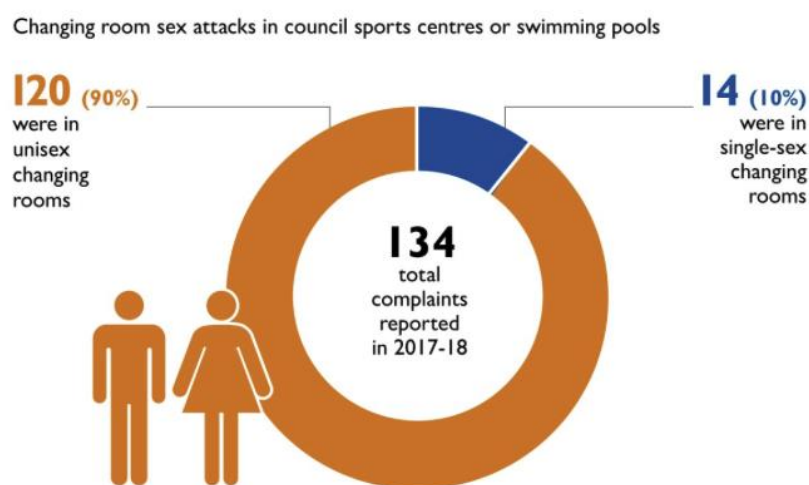
⁸ <https://www.thewestmorlandgazette.co.uk/news/15134690.changing-village-to-be-created-at-kendal-leisure-centre-as-part-of-450000-investment/>

As part of our Leisure Centre campaign work over the past year, we have become aware of many new leisure centre building projects up and down the country. In every case we have investigated, the plans propose a wet-side, mixed-sex changing area. In many instances, but not all, this includes two, lockable open-plan rooms that can be used as sex-segregated areas specifically for school children.

It is alarming that the default option for new swimming pools is mixed-sex village-style changing facilities with no apparent regard for safeguarding risks or mitigation measures that might protect women and girls when vulnerable in a state of undress and ignoring how the vast majority of women feel about 'gender-neutral' changing areas.

Sex crimes in leisure centres

The starting point for this investigation of sex crimes in leisure centres was *The Sunday Times* report that 120 of 134 complaints of sexual assaults / voyeurism in leisure centres and public swimming pools in 2017-18 occurred in mixed-sex facilities⁹.



There is no doubt that mixed-sex changing areas attract predatory males. But the situation in changing villages is compounded by the design of cubicles and shower areas. Walls between cubicles do not protect privacy when there are large gaps beneath and above. Mixed-sex shower areas are sometimes enclosed on three sides thereby hiding those inside from the view of patrolling lifeguards and on-duty staff.

Village-style changing areas, inadequacies in cubicle design and the ubiquity of mobile phones have led to wholesale, widespread voyeurism in leisure centre swimming pools that is out of control. In one particularly horrific case, two men were jailed for voyeurism after being caught with at least 6,000 images of women and girls filmed in mixed-sex changing rooms¹⁰. During our research, we came across numerous court reports where the perpetrators of sex crimes were multiple offenders, often returning to leisure centre facilities to prey on different women and girls.

⁹ <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/unisex-changing-rooms-put-women-in-danger-8lwbp8kgk>

¹⁰ <https://www.lbc.co.uk/news/swimming-pool-voyeurism-jailed-adam-dennis-robert-morgan/>

In their 2025 safeguarding document ‘Wavepower’, Swim England say that mobile phone voyeurism disproportionately affects girls; in their words, it is not a ‘gender neutral practice’.

Earlier in 2025, WRN was contacted by a whistleblower telling us that Swim England called an emergency meeting of its safeguarding officers after a spike in reports of voyeurism at public leisure centres used for swimming competitions – seven incidents involving young female victims were reported in January 2025 alone.

While those responsible for the safeguarding of young women and girls at swimming pools are trying to improve behaviour in changing rooms, the critical factor remains the most obvious fixable problem – changing room design.

Sticking plasters

In response to rising reports of ‘sexual harassment and intimidation’ in gyms and leisure centres, the Sport England initiative ‘This Girl Can’, together with ukactive, CIMPSA (Chartered Institute for the Management of Sport and Physical Activity; the professional development body for the UK’s sport and physical activity sector workforce) and Women’s Aid, launched the ‘Safer Spaces to Move Hub’ in July 2025^{11,12}. Free-to-access resources include an operational handbook of policies, procedures and guidance, staff training e-modules and guides on the implementation of practical solutions for facilities¹³.

Nothing in the ‘Safer Spaces to Move Hub’ literature addresses sex crimes in mixed-sex changing areas.

It’s no surprise that women are taking matters into their own hands and creating female-only gyms where women can feel safe when training, showering and changing.

¹¹ <https://www.sportengland.org/news-and-inspiration/guidance-gyms-and-leisure-centres-safer-women>

¹² <https://saferspacestomove.ukactive.com/>

¹³ [All Resources](#)

Campaign for change – Red flags

Single-sex changing facilities are the gold standard because they **eliminate the primary risk** to women and girls - the presence of males.

This is the core message of the WRN Red Flag campaign launched in the summer of 2025¹⁴.

Local WRN groups have been in action at leisure centres where sex crimes have occurred in changing villages, and at new leisure centres designed with mixed-sex wet-side changing facilities.

A Red Flag map (see Figure 1) and video created to support the campaign – Is Your Leisure Centre Safe? - is available on our YouTube channel¹⁵.



THE SAFEST CHANGING ROOM IS A SINGLE-SEX CHANGING ROOM

¹⁴ <https://www.womensrights.network/post/red-flag-campaign>

¹⁵ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fNcAR69BJMQ>

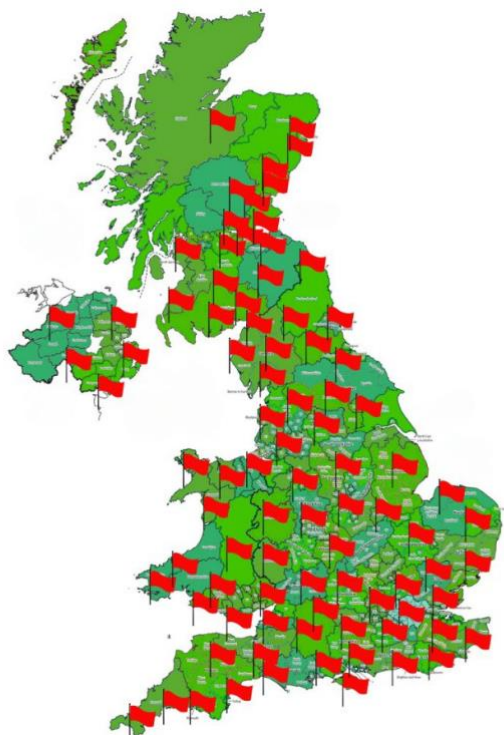


Figure 1: WRN Red Flag map

Red flag map created by the WRN Sports Group using information compiled from an online search of sex crimes in swimming pools¹⁶.

Each red flag represents at least one crime where a conviction has been secured.

In all cases, the perpetrator is male.

Data and information are crucial for monitoring the safety of women and girls using leisure facilities, and informing the decisions made by Councils, architects and leisure centre operators.

Anecdotal evidence of male predators in changing villages is regularly presented to us, and there are numerous news headlines about leisure centre sex offenders found guilty and sentenced in court.

As a matter of public interest, we have conducted a Freedom of Information investigation into violence against women and girls in leisure centres, the data from which further strengthens our case.

¹⁶ <https://x.com/WomensRightsNet/status/1946103625916317801>

Freedom of Information investigation 2025

In the summer of 2025, nine questions were sent to individual police forces of England and Wales asking about the number of reports of sexual assault, rape and voyeurism in leisure centres with swimming pools in the period between 1st January and 31st December 2023.

The questions are listed in Appendix A.

To facilitate the FOI requests, a *non-exhaustive* list of leisure centres with swimming pools (approximately 5-15 addresses) in the relevant region was provided in each individual request to police forces.

Data and Results

England

Data from our FOI questions to police forces across England are summarised in Table 1.

Responses have been received from 35 of 38 police forces we contacted in England, with **no response** from Gloucestershire Constabulary, Lincolnshire Police and Warwickshire Police at the time of writing.

The request for data was **fully refused by 10 of the 35 responsive police forces**:

- In four cases this was due to a low number of results leading to a high chance of identification, citing Section 40(2) Personal information as grounds for this refusal.
- In six cases the request was refused on the basis of cost, although Essex Police provided their response to a previous FOI request they received from another individual in November 2024 which is presented in Table 2 but isn't included in any detailed analysis in this report.

In some cases, part of the request was refused citing Section 40(2) Personal information as grounds for withholding information and this is annotated as 'n.d.' (not determined) in the data table.

Cells within the data table may also be annotated as 'n.d.' if the response to a question was 'Information not held' or 'No information'.

Rather than refuse the request, Northumbria Police and Nottinghamshire Police recorded low numbers of offences as '<5' (less than 5); these data are not included in further analysis due to the ambiguity of the response.

The exact location where the offence took place is often not recorded in enough detail by the police to provide an accurate response to Questions 4 and 5; as these data are very limited, they are not included in detailed analysis but are provided in the summary table for information.

In one case (Durham Constabulary), the sex of one victim was not recorded, and it is possible that this is also the case in other data sets.

Headline statistics - England

Valid data from **220 leisure centre addresses** across **23 police forces** in England indicate that in the period between 1st January 2023 and 31st December 2023 there were:

10 reports of rape,
78 reports of sexual assault and
58 reports of voyeurism.

In total, there were **146 reported sex crimes in one year**. In at least 100 of these cases (69%), the victim was female.

Where data are recorded, the perpetrator was male in 89 out of 117 cases (76%); this doesn't align with Ministry of Justice statistics that indicate 91% of those prosecuted for sexual offences are adult men¹⁷. It is possible that among the responses we received, one perpetrator is responsible for more than one reported crime, or that the sex of the perpetrator was not recorded in some cases.

In seven cases (5%), the perpetrator was a male member of staff.

17

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/crimeandjustice/datasets/sexualoffendingministryofjusticeappendingtables>

Table 1: FOI investigation – Sex crimes in leisure centres in England in 2023

Question number	1	2	3	-	4	5	6	7	8
Area Force	No. of reports of sexual assault	No. of reports of rape	No. of reports of voyeurism	Total no. of reports	No. of reports from mixed-sex village changing rooms	No. of reports from single sex changing rooms	No. of reports committed by a male	No. of reports committed by a male member of staff	No. of reports involving a female victim
Avon and Somerset	1	n.d.	2	3	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.
Bedfordshire	Refused on grounds of cost.								
Cambridgeshire	Refused based on low numbers and high chance of identification.								
Cheshire	6	0	8	14	0	2	6	0	8
Cleveland	10	0	3	13	n.d.	n.d.	6	n.d.	7
Cumbria	0	1	0	1	0	0	1	0	1
Derbyshire	Refused on grounds of cost.								
Devon and Cornwall	12	0	4	16	n.d.	n.d.	12 (4 n.d.)	n.d.	13
Dorset	4	0	1**	5	n.d.	n.d.	5	3	5
Durham	3	0	1	4	n.d.	n.d.	4	2	3
Essex	Refused on grounds of cost*.								
Gloucestershire	No response.								
Greater Manchester	Refused based on low numbers and high chance of identification.								
Hampshire and IOW	Refused on grounds of cost.								
Hertfordshire	Refused on grounds of cost.								

Question number	1	2	3	-	4	5	6	7	8
Area Force	No. of reports of sexual assault	No. of reports of rape	No. of reports of voyeurism	Total no. of reports	No. of reports from mixed-sex village changing rooms	No. of reports from single sex changing rooms	No. of reports committed by a male	No. of reports committed by a male member of staff	No. of reports involving a female victim
Humberside	6	0	5	11	1	n.d.	6	0	3
Kent	1	0	1	2	n.d.	n.d.	1, 1 unknown	0, 1 unknown	2
Lancashire	1	1	1	3	n.d.	n.d.	2, 1 unknown	0	3
Leicestershire	7	0	5	12	5	1	12	2	10
Lincolnshire	No response.								
Merseyside	6	0	4	10	4	0	2	0	3
Metropolitan police	Refused based on low numbers and high chance of identification.								
Norfolk	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Northamptonshire	0	0	0	0	-	-	-	-	-
Northumbria	<5	0	<5	n.d.	<5	<5	<5	0	<5
North Yorkshire	3	0	0	3	1	-	3	0	3
Nottinghamshire	0	0	<5	<5	<5	0	<5	0	<5
South Yorkshire	Refused based on low numbers and high chance of identification.								
Staffordshire	0	0	n.d.	n.d.	0	0	n.d.	0	n.d.
Suffolk	11	0	3	14	1	0	9	0	11

Question number	1	2	3	-	4	5	6	7	8
Area Force	No. of reports of sexual assault	No. of reports of rape	No. of reports of voyeurism	Total no. of reports	No. of reports from mixed-sex village changing rooms	No. of reports from single sex changing rooms	No. of reports committed by a male	No. of reports committed by a male member of staff	No. of reports involving a female victim
Surrey	n.d.	6	4	10	n.d. (1)	n.d.	9 (1 not recorded)	0	9
Sussex	2	1	1	4	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.	2
Thames Valley	Refused on grounds of cost.								
Warwickshire	No response.								
West Mercia	2	0	11	13	n.d.	n.d.	10	n.d.	10
West Midlands	1	1	4	6	n.d.	n.d.	5, 1 n.d.	n.d.	6
West Yorkshire	1	0	0	1	n.d.	n.d.	1	0	0
Wiltshire	1	0	0	1	0	1	1	0	1
Total	78	10	58	146	-		95 (plus at least 11 not recorded)		100

Table 2: Essex Police - previous FOI correct as of 06 November 2024

Criminal offence	2024	2023	2022	2021	2019
Exposure	2	4	2	2	5
Rape of a female (16 or over)	1	2	3	1	2
Sexual assault on a female (including attempted)	5	8	13	8	11
Sexual assault on a male	Total 8				
Harassment	Total 11				
Stalking	Total 12				
Total	10	21	20	3	10

Location Premises type is 'Sports Club', 'Spa', 'Swimming Pool', or 'Leisure Centre' or
Location Premises Name containing 'Gym', 'Health Club', 'Leisure', 'Fitness',
'Swimming Pool' or 'Sports Club'.

Wales

Data from our FOI questions to police forces in Wales are summarised in Table 3.

Responses have been received from all four police forces of Wales; Dyfed-Powys, Gwent, North Wales and South Wales.

The request for data was **fully refused by Gwent Police** due to a low number of results leading to a high chance of identification.

Headline statistics - Wales

Valid data from **37 leisure centre addresses** across **three responsive police forces** in Wales indicate that in the period between 1st January 2023 and 31st December 2023 there were:

**6 reports of rape,
2 reports of sexual assault and
7 reports of voyeurism.**

In total, there were **15 reported sex crimes in one year**. In at least 11 of these cases (73%), the victim was female.

The perpetrator was male in 13 out of 15 cases (87%).

In one case the perpetrator was a male member of staff.

**Of the 16 incidents recorded in a changing room,
14 (88%) occurred in a mixed-sex village changing room.**

Table 3: FOI investigation – Sex crimes in leisure centres in Wales in 2023

Question number	1	2	3	-	4	5	6	7	8
Area Force	No. of reports of sexual assault	No. of reports of rape	No. of reports of voyeurism	Total no. of reports	No. of reports from mixed-sex village changing rooms	No. of reports from single sex changing rooms	No. of reports committed by a male	No. of reports committed by a male member of staff	No. of reports involving a female victim
Dyfed-Powys	0	0	0	0	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Gwent	Refusal based on low numbers and high chance of identification.								
North Wales	0	0	1	1	1	0	1	0	1
South Wales	2	6	6	14	6	1	12	1	10
Total	2	6	7	15	7	1	13	1	11

n.a. – not applicable

How police forces record biological sex

As part of this FOI investigation, we included a question on the integrity of data on biological sex recorded by the police in England and Wales.

We asked, *“Does your force record the sex of offenders as biological sex or as gender identity?”*

The responses, where received, are presented in Appendix B.

Of the **26 police forces in England** that provided a response to the question,

- **7** stated unequivocally that they record biological sex.
- **4** forces can record both biological sex and self-identified gender identity.
- **7** describe gender identity, self-defined gender, stated gender or ‘chosen sex’ as the information recorded.
- **2** forces align with the Annual Data Requirements – to record personal details as per biological sex or Gender Recognition Certificate.
- **1** response was ‘as identified / described by the victim’.
- **2** said they base information on ‘perceived gender’ if not voluntarily provided.
- **3** forces gave no useful information.

In **Wales**, Gwent, North Wales and South Wales forces are in alignment with the Annual Data Requirements – to record personal details as per biological sex or Gender Recognition Certificate, while Dyfed-Powys are recording gender identity.

For the purposes of this report, we assumed that all our FOI questions have been answered accurately (on the basis of biological sex), but from the responses we have received to our question, accurate data are not guaranteed in most cases.

Discussion

Our FOI investigation into violence against women and girls reveals shocking levels of criminal behaviour in leisure centres.

We calculate that across 257 leisure centres throughout England and Wales there were:

16 rapes, 80 sexual assaults and 65 acts of voyeurism in 2023.

This amounts to three serious sex crimes a week in 2023 across the leisure centres included in our investigation. As there are approximately 860 leisure centres in England and Wales^{18,19} the true figure will be much higher.

We can assume that the vast majority of incidents of voyeurism occurred in mixed-sex changing rooms based on our Red Flag map research of sex crimes in swimming pools¹⁵ where in all cases the perpetrator is male, and the fact that there are no women serving time in prison for voyeurism in UK prisons²⁰.

This is not a new issue; predators have always targeted changing rooms. But by encouraging the spread of mixed-sex village changing areas, Sport England, local councils, leisure centre operators and architects are enabling predatory men and increasingly exposing women and girls to a high degree of risk when vulnerable.

There is no excuse; these horrific statistics cannot be ignored.

Consultations on planning and design are important and a time during the new-build process when intervention is possible.

A Hertfordshire Constabulary Crime Prevention officer refused to support the planning application for mixed-sex changing in a new swimming pool in Stevenage^{21,22}. The officer cited 76 recorded crimes in 2024/25 at the existing swimming pool which has village changing, and said,

"Issues around crime, disorder and the fear of crime do not appear to have been considered within this scheme."

The officer suggested redesigning the facility as *"doing so would also demonstrate that the issue of violence towards women and girls has been considered"*.

WRN is monitoring new leisure centre building projects and refurbishments with the intention of asking questions on safety for women and girls and presenting evidence of the increased risks of mixed-sex village changing.

Existing mixed-sex changing villages must be assessed for risks to the safety of women and girls and operators must consider cost-effective solutions ensuring a female-only space.

¹⁸ <https://www.sportengland.org/news/new-funding-help-keep-leisure-centres-pools-afloat#:~:text=There%20are%20more%20than%202%2C000,the%20future%2C%E2%80%9D%20he%20said.>

¹⁹ <https://www.swimwales.org/locations/>

²⁰ <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2025/may/27/secret-spy-cameras-voyeurism-uk>

²¹ ['Voyeurism' concerns ahead of decision on new Stevenage leisure centre | The Comet](#)

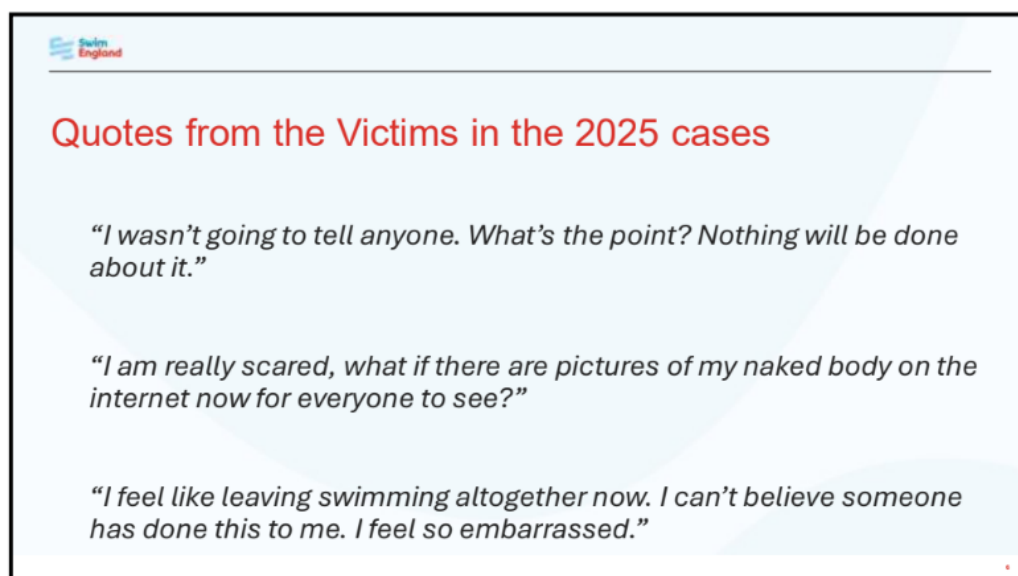
²² <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/cdxqll74xnpo>

Impact on women and girls

These crimes often have a devastating impact on the victims.

The government has stated it wants to encourage women to be more active, but women and girls will not come back to a swimming pool if they feel unsafe in the changing rooms.

Some responses from female victims of mobile phone voyeurism are listed in the Swim England report from their safeguarding meeting held in February 2025:



A teenage girl who was sexually assaulted by a man in a swimming pool while she was showering told the court,

"I was crying myself to sleep and walking to school with puffy eyes.

"I couldn't cope with the thoughts that plagued my mind. I suffered vivid nightmares, those same scenes playing on repeat in my head. I had countless panic attacks. I was constantly battling my own thoughts.

*"To this day, the smell of chlorine makes my muscles tense."*²³

It is likely that crimes in leisure centres are under-reported²⁴; a climate of minimisation, lack of faith in reporting mechanisms and fear of reliving the event means that women and girls tend to resort to routine avoidance of unsafe situations and / or behaviour modification rather than reporting an incident and following up with the police.

These crimes should also be seen within the wider context of offending patterns, and the fact that men who commit supposedly 'minor' sexual offences such as upskirting and indecent exposure are known to escalate to increasingly violent crimes.

The Angiolini Inquiry into the horrific murder of Sarah Everard highlighted the missed opportunities to stop Wayne Couzens, and then Minister for Victims and Safeguarding, Laura Farris said, "We accept her further recommendations on non-contact offences and the

²³ <https://www.hulldailymail.co.uk/news/hull-east-yorkshire-news/teenage-girl-sexually-assaulted-shower-10284059>

²⁴ <https://www.britisoccrim.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/BSCN-Summer-2022-VAWG-in-public-spaces.pdf>

escalatory risk that they may pose.”²⁵. And ‘Escalation in the severity of offending behaviour’, a report by the Ministry of Justice notes, “Offences related to kerb crawling, and voyeurism, also had very strong positive associations [with sexual homicide]”²⁶.

It is time to stop the normalisation of violence against women and girls in leisure centres

²⁵ <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/government-accepts-all-recommendations-made-by-angiolini-inquiry>

²⁶ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/escalation-in-the-severity-of-offending-behaviour>

WRN Demands

- Sport England must immediately withdraw all guidance promoting mixed-sex wet-side facilities as the default option for new and refurbished leisure centres.
- New facilities must provide single-sex changing facilities for swimming pool users.
- Councils must conduct a risk assessment on safety for women and girls before rubber-stamping plans for changing areas in new or refurbished leisure centres.
- Crime prevention officers are consulted on all design plans, and their expertise is used to help 'design out' crime.
- Existing changing villages must be assessed for the risk of sex crimes and robust mitigation measures must be applied together with consideration of cost-effective solutions ensuring a female-only space.

THE SAFEST CHANGING ROOM IS A SINGLE-SEX CHANGING ROOM



Appendices

Appendix A – FOI Questions

- 1 How many reports have been made to your police force of sexual assault which are alleged to have taken place in leisure centres, swimming pools, health clubs and spas between 1 January 2023 and 31st December 2023?

- 2 How many reports have been made to your police force of rape which are alleged to have taken place in leisure centres, swimming pools, health clubs or spas between 1 January 2023 and 31st December 2023?

- 3 How many reports have been made to your police force of voyeurism (all forms of covert surveillance whether using a recording device or in person) which are alleged to have taken place in leisure centres, swimming pools, health clubs or spas between 1 January 2023 and 31st December 2023?

- 4 How many of the above points 1, 2 & 3 were reported to have taken place in a mixed-sex, open plan village style changing area?

- 5 How many of the above points 1, 2 & 3 were reported to have taken place in a single-sex changing room?

- 6 How many of the above points 1, 2 & 3 were reported to have been committed by a male?

- 7 How many of the above points 1, 2 & 3 were reported to have been committed by a male member of staff?

- 8 How many of the above points 1, 2 & 3 were reported to have involved a female victim?

- 9 Does your force record the sex of offenders as biological sex or as gender identity?

Appendix B – Response to Q9 Does your force record the sex of offenders as biological sex or as gender identity?

England

Force	Response
Avon and Somerset Police	Avon and Somerset police record personal details of suspects as per their biological sex or Gender Recognition Certificate, in accordance with Home Office guidelines. We also have a further option to record separately by gender, and the occurrence log could also detail any further specifics the suspect wishes to share.
Bedfordshire Police	Refused on cost.
Cambridgeshire Constabulary	Refused on grounds of low numbers.
Cheshire Constabulary	Gender is identified in Force as officer perception. So if the offender refuses to give their identity, the identity will be recorded as what the officer perceives.
Cleveland police	We don't have any information on biological or gender identity used in recording. (Misinterpreted the question)
Cumbria Constabulary	We record both gender identity and sex, sex was used for this request.
Derbyshire Constabulary	Refused on cost.
Devon and Cornwall Police	Biological
Dorset Police	Dorset Police records in line with biological sex where this information is relevant and required.
Durham Constabulary	The nominal records on Durham Constabulary's crime recording database record Gender Identity.
Essex Police	Refused on cost.
Gloucestershire Constabulary	No response at the time of writing.
Greater Manchester Police	Refused on Personal Information.
Hampshire and IOW Constabulary	Refused on cost.
Hertfordshire Constabulary	Refused on cost.
Humberside Police	Humberside Police custody record a person's gender through self-identification of gender identity.

Force	Response
Kent Police	Kent Police records self-defined gender.
Lancashire Constabulary	Lancashire Constabulary records both biological sex of suspects and their self-identified gender.
Leicestershire Constabulary	The data recoded is for biological sex.
Lincolnshire Police	No response at the time of writing
Merseyside Police	Biological sex.
Metropolitan Police Service	Sent a link to a Google search using Q9 as the search term.
Norfolk Constabulary	Offences are recorded as per the person's stated gender.
Northamptonshire Police	The force record offenders' biological sex.
Northumbria Police	The information system used to create and store person records categorises this information as 'sex'.
North Yorkshire Police	Biological sex.
Nottinghamshire Police	This will be based on either how they have identified or their perceived gender if not provided by the individual.
South Yorkshire Police	Refused on Personal Information.
Staffordshire Police	Staffordshire Police currently records sex according to the instructions contained in ADR 153 from the 2025/26 Annual Data Requirement from Police Force in England and Wales that sex should be recorded in line with information on the individual's birth certificate or gender recognition certificate. However, this is subject to an ongoing national review.
Suffolk Constabulary	Offences are recorded as per the person's stated gender.
Surrey Police	As identified/described by the victim.
Sussex Police	There is no NICHE based policy in place for the recording of sexual identity on offenders outside the current Force policy for recording of this information across the board, so there is no further information.
Thames Valley Police	Refused on cost.
Warwickshire Police	No response at the time of writing
West Mercia Police	Both biological sex and gender identity would be recorded once a suspect has been arrested or interviewed, unless

Force	Response
	the information is available at the time.
West Midlands Police	Biological.
West Yorkshire Police	Directed to https://www.westyorkshire.police.uk/freedom-of-information/march-2025-foi-2427145-25-gender-crime-recording Self ID.
Wiltshire Police	Gender is recorded as Chosen Sex.

Wales

Force	Response
Dyfed-Powys	We record offenders gender identity on the current recording system.
Gwent	"...we record this in line with information that is on their birth certificate or if they have a gender recognition certificate, and not what they identify as."
North Wales	<p>North Wales Police do not hold a specific policy/information on this topic. We record information according to the Home Office guidance:</p> <p>2023/24 Annual Data Requirement from Police Forces</p> <p>Error! Objects cannot be created from editing field codes.</p>
South Wales	<p>We record as 'sex at birth', unless all conditions within the Gender Recognition Act 2004 are met meaning the person will be entitled to be legally recognised in their acquired gender.</p> <p>The Gender Recognition Act 2004 aims to provide legal recognition for transsexual people. This means that a transsexual person who has satisfied all the conditions contained in the Act will be entitled to be legally recognised in their acquired gender, for example, be issued with a new birth certificate in the acquired gender. Section 20 of the Gender Recognition Act 2004 provides for the commission of gender-specific offences. This section of the Act means that if, for example, a female to male transsexual commits an offence that only a male can commit then if all the conditions are met, that person can still commit the offence. This really only applies to sexual offences.</p>

The **Women's Rights Network** (WRN) is a rapidly growing grassroots network of women from England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland whose primary focus is to defend the sex-based rights of women.

