

Just 1 in 14 crimes leads to prosecution

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The number of rapes recorded by police resulting in a charge is now at 1.4 per cent
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About one in 14 crimes recorded by the police leads to a suspect being charged — the lowest rate since records began, Home Office figures show.

The proportion of crimes recorded in a year resulting in a charge or summons has slumped from about one in seven in 2015, as police struggle to complete investigations and get suspects to court.

Politicians and criminologists said that public confidence in the justice system was being eroded.

The proportion of crimes recorded in a year that led to a charge or summons in the same period has been in decline since 2015, when the figures were first published.

Between September 2015 and September 2018 it fell from 14 per cent to 8.4 per cent. In the year to September the figure declined again to 7.3 per cent — about one in 14 cases. The number of rapes recorded by police resulting in a charge is now at 1.4 per cent, the official figures showed.

David Wilson, emeritus professor of criminology at Birmingham City university, said that the figures were “abysmal”. He said: “It reveals that the current state of policing is in deep crisis. It is not going to be solved by simply putting more bobbies on the beat to replace the reduction between 2010 and 2019. In the hare and tortoise race that is crime and criminality, the hare is winning.”

Professor Wilson said that if people believed that the police were not going to charge suspected criminals, they would be tempted to provide their own security if they could afford it. This would create a further division in society, he warned.

Yvette Cooper, the former chairwoman of the Commons home affairs select committee, said that the decline in prosecutions was “extremely concerning”.

“The public need to have confidence that the criminal justice system is finding, prosecuting and convicting criminals,” she said.

Chief constable Andy Cooke, National Police Chiefs’ Council lead, said that the further fall in the charging rate was concerning but not surprising.

“In the past decade, we’ve dealt with more complex crimes and increasing demand while our resources fell,” he said. “Changes to recording mean we now record more crimes that have no realistic prospect of conviction.”

The Home Office figures show that only 7.3 per cent or 366,000 crimes recorded by police in the year to September had ended in a suspect being summonsed or charged. In addition, 1.4 per cent of the crimes reported led to a caution while 2.3 per cent ended in an informal warning.

Sarah Green, of the End Violence Against Women campaign group, called the rape charging rate of 1.4 per cent “an outrage”. She said: “Many of us have reached a point of no confidence in the criminal justice system leaders to deal in any way with sexual violence.”

Ms Green said that the low figure would encourage rapists to believe that they could get away with the crime.

Cases in which the victim did not support criminal proceedings had risen from 8.7 per cent to 22.8 per cent since 2015. In about 1.1 million recorded crimes, the victim did not support action, including 900,000 cases in which a suspect was identified.

Overall, in about 43.4 per cent of cases, police finished the investigation without a suspect being identified.