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## 2008-09 Scottish Crime and Justice Survey - Partner Abuse

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### 2 The extent of partner abuse

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#### 2.1 Summary

Since the age of 16, 18% of those who had at least one partner had experienced one of the forms of partner abuse and five per cent of those who had a partner or were in contact with an ex-partner in the last 12 months reported experiencing at least one form of partner abuse in the last 12 months. This included:

- Four per cent who said they had experienced any of the forms of psychological partner abuse in the last 12 months;
- Three percent who had experienced any of the forms of physical partner abuse in the last 12 months.

Experience of partner abuse in the last 12 months was similar for males and females (both five per cent) and was higher for:

- Younger adults aged 16-24 (13%);
- Victims of other crimes (10%);
- Those living in the 15% most deprived areas of Scotland (10%).

For 45% of those experiencing any form of partner abuse in the last 12 months this had happened once and for 11% it had happened twice. Three per cent experiencing partner abuse in the last 12 months said there were too many incidents to count in that period and 27% said they did not want to answer or they did not know / could not remember how many incidents they had experienced in the last 12 months.

#### 2.2 Introduction

This chapter looks at the extent of partner abuse among adults in Scotland as measured by the SCJS in 2008-09. It covers:

- The overall risk of experiencing partner abuse, including the percentage who experienced at least one incident since the age of 16 as well as in the last 12 months;
- How the risk of partner abuse in the last 12 months varied by different demographic, experiential and socio-economic sub-groups;
- The frequency of partner abuse, looking at the number of incidents measured in the SCJS in 2008-09 experienced in the last 12 months.

#### 2.3 Presence of partner

By definition, partner abuse can only occur where a partner is present in someone's life. Therefore, at the start of the abuse section, adults were asked if they had a partner since the age of 16 and in the last 12 months.

Almost all adults (92%) reported having had a partner at some stage since they were 16 and 70% reported having had a partner or contact with an ex-partner in the last 12 months.

Only those who have had a partner at all since the age of 16 were asked the questions on experience of partner abuse and therefore only this group of adults were included in the analysis for this report. In some instances the report

presents data on partner abuse since the age of 16, though the majority of the report focuses on abuse happening in the last 12 months. [6 \[http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2009/12/14103249/121\]](http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2009/12/14103249/121) Where abuse in the last 12 months is examined in more detail, information was collected about the most recent / only incident experienced in that period.

## 2.4 Risk of partner abuse

Five per cent of those who had a partner or were in contact with an ex-partner in the last 12 months reported experiencing at least one form of partner abuse in that period as measured by the SCJS in 2008-09. As Figure 2.1 shows, the risks of experiencing psychological or physical abuse were similar:

- Four per cent of adults who had a partner or were in contact with an ex-partner in the last 12 months said they had experienced psychological abuse, including mental, emotional or financial abuse;
- Three per cent of adults who had a partner or were in contact with an ex-partner in the last 12 months had experienced physical abuse, including sexual abuse.

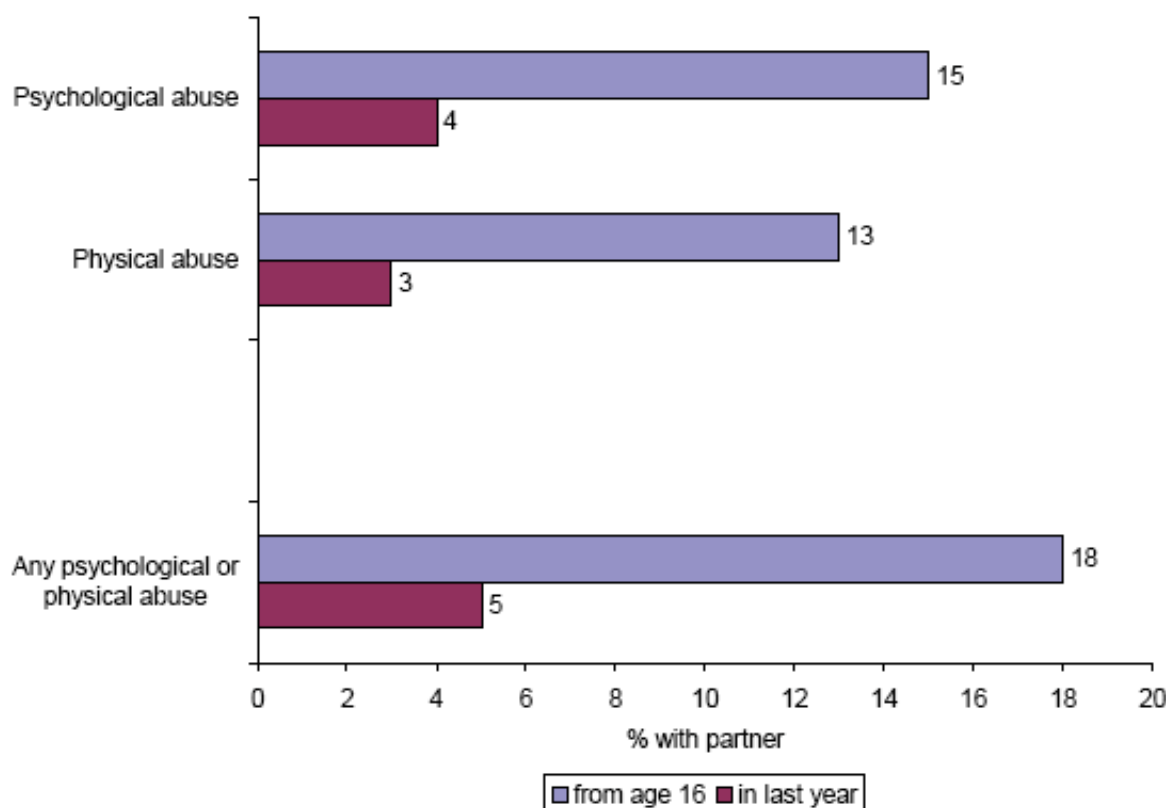
In order to provide a more general picture of the risk of partner abuse, adults were also asked whether they had experienced partner abuse since the age of 16 (Figure 2.1). Of those who had a partner since the age of 16:

- Overall, almost two in ten (18%) had experienced at least one incident of abuse from a partner;
- 15% had experienced at least one incident of psychological abuse;
- 13% had experienced at least one incident of physical abuse.

**Figure 2.1: Risk of experiencing at least one form of partner abuse**

SCJS 2008-09

All who have had a partner since the age of 16 (base: 10,110); all who have had a partner or been in contact with an ex-partner in the last year (base: 6,816)



One in ten (10%) adults who had a partner since the age of 16 had experienced both psychological abuse and physical abuse from a partner since that age. Two per cent of adults had experienced both forms of abuse in the last 12 months.

Trends in the estimates of the prevalence of partner abuse cannot be identified due to differences between the SCJS 2008-09 and the SCVS 2005-06 as described in annex 2.

## 2.5 Variation in risk

This section explores how the risk of experiencing partner abuse as measured by the SCJS 2008-09 varies on average among different groups of adults in Scotland. However, the analysis only presents simple one-to-one relationships based on demographic, experiential or area characteristics, rather than more complex inter-relationships that might be identified through statistical modelling. Further details of the percentages of different sub-groups experiencing partner

abuse are presented in annex 1.

Among adults who had a partner in the last 12 months there was no difference between men or women in the proportion experiencing partner abuse. Figure 2.2 shows differences in the risk of partner abuse in the last 12 months among the other sub-groups:

- Younger adults were more likely to have experienced abuse by a partner in the last 12 months, with rates varying from 13% of 16-24 year olds experiencing psychological or physical abuse to one per cent of those aged 60 or older;
- Those who were victims of at least one crime as measured through the main SCJS 2008-09 questionnaire were more likely to have experienced partner abuse (10%) than were those who had not been the victim of at least one such crime (four per cent);
- Experience of partner abuse also differed by deprivation level, with a higher risk to adults in the 15% most deprived areas of Scotland compared with the rest of Scotland (10% and five per cent respectively). <sup>7</sup>

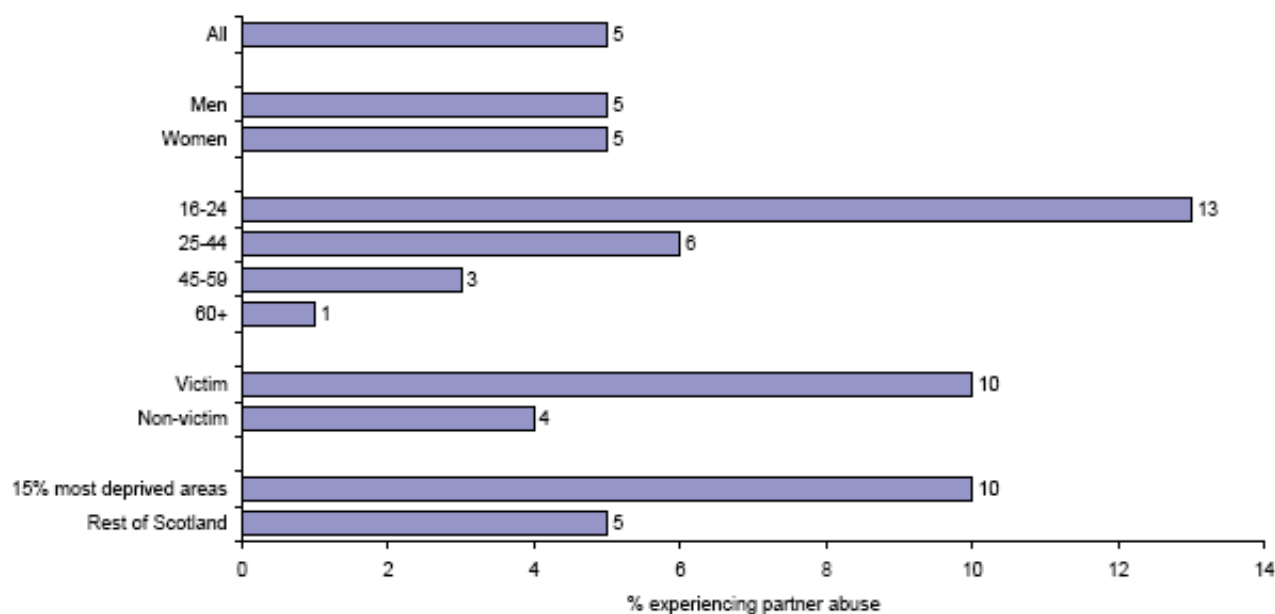
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**Figure 2.2: Percentage of adults in each group experiencing any psychological / physical partner abuse in the last 12 months**

SCJS 2008-09

All in each group who have had partner / had contact with an ex-partner in the last 12 months (base: 6,816, all); <sup>8</sup>

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In general variations in risk were similar both for partner abuse in the last 12 months and since the age of 16, although some differences were evident:

- A significant gender divide was evident when looking at all experiences since the age of 16. For example, over one in five (21%) women said they had experienced any psychological or physical abuse as measured by the SCJS in 2008-09 compared with one in seven (15%) men;
- Experience of any form of partner abuse since 16 was similar for those aged 16-24 and 25-44 (24% and 25% respectively). Thereafter the percentage decreased to 19% of 45-59 year olds and seven per cent of those aged 60 or over;
- Examining the combined effects of age and gender showed that woman aged 25-44 were at significantly greater risk of experiencing partner abuse as measured by the SCJS in 2008-09 since the age of 16 than males of the same age and females overall (30% compared with 19% of males of the same age and compared with 21% of females overall).

It might have been expected that older people would have reported a greater risk as they have had more years in which to experience partner abuse since the age of 16. In fact, higher levels of partner abuse were reported by younger adults. There are a number of reasons why this might be the case. For example it could be due to increased recognition of different forms of behaviour as unacceptable among younger adults or to increased willingness of younger adults to acknowledge partner abuse had occurred. Alternatively it could signal an increase in partner abuse over time. Another reason might be the way respondents answer some time-based questions, with those experiencing abuse in the more recent past more likely to say they have had the experience since the age of 16 than those whose experience

of abuse was longer ago. Further research would be required to establish the particular reasons for the age effects reported here.

## 2.6 Number of incidents experienced

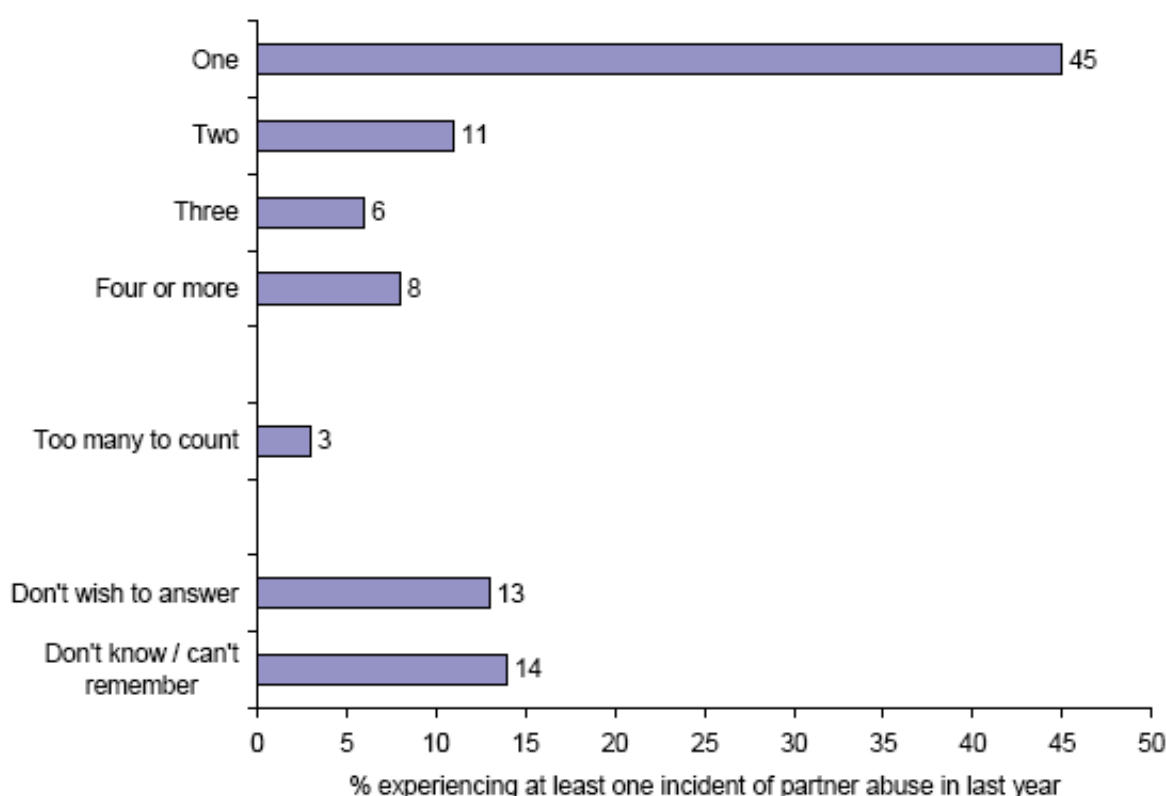
Those experiencing any form of partner abuse as measured by the SCJS 2008-09 in the last 12 months were asked how many incidents they had experienced in that time (Figure 2.3).

- The majority of adults experiencing partner abuse in the last 12 months said the abuse occurred only once or twice (45% and 11% respectively) in the last 12 months. The proportion saying this had happened once was higher for men (52%) than for women (37%);
- For six per cent, partner abuse happened three times in the last 12 months while for eight per cent it had happened four or more times;
- A small proportion of adults who had experienced partner abuse in the last 12 months (three per cent) said it had happened too many times to count;
- In addition, almost three in ten did not answer the question saying they did not wish to answer (13%) or did not know / could not remember (14%). The proportion saying they did not know / could not remember was higher for women (18%) than for men (10%).

**Figure 2.3: Number of partner abuse incidents in the last year**

SCJS 2008-09

All experiencing at least one form of partner abuse (psychological or physical) in the last 12 months (base: 348)



## 2.7 Stalking and harassment by (ex) partners

The SCJS 2008-09 also asked separately about incidents involving stalking and harassment, which, if perpetrated by the partner or ex-partner of the adult experiencing it, may be part of a course of conduct alongside other forms of partner abuse. Forms of stalking or harassment measured in the SCJS 2008-09 included: unwanted correspondence; obscene telephone calls; someone waiting outside or being followed. <sup>9</sup>

<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2009/12/14103249/12>

Of all adults (including those who had not been in a relationship in the period) six per cent had experienced some form of stalking and harassment in the last 12 months. The risk of experiencing any form of stalking and harassment was broadly the same for those who had a partner or contact with an ex-partner in the last 12 months (seven per cent). Examining the links between partner abuse and stalking and harassment in more detail showed:

- Among those who had experienced partner abuse in the last 12 months, 33% had also experienced stalking and harassment in the last 12 months;

- In 12% of stalking and harassment experienced in the last 12 months, the offender was the partner of the person experiencing it;

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