

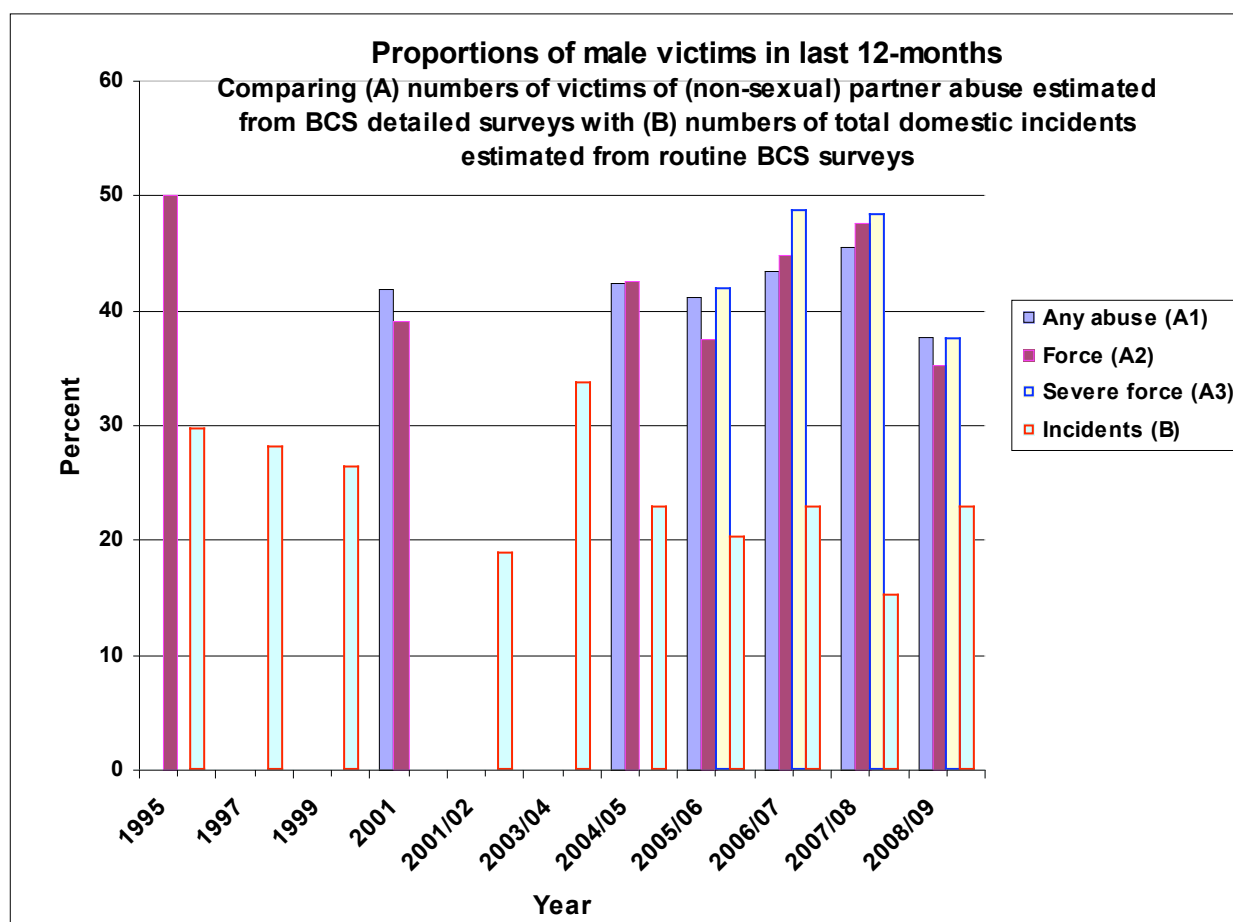
Partner abuse in England, Wales and Scotland

England and Wales 1995 to 2008/09

Estimated numbers of incidents and of victims

Government surveys, conducted by the Home Office, estimate the extent of domestic violence in two main ways, by the numbers of incidents against victims and by the numbers of victims. The first measure, mainly provided by routine British Crime Surveys (BCSs), gives much higher totals of domestic incidents against women than against men, the proportions of total male victims based on these totals ranging from about 15% to 34% during the period 1995 to 2008/09. The second measure of interpersonal violence, mainly provided by detailed computerised self-completion questionnaires supplementary to the BCSs, gives significantly higher proportions of male victims of non-sexual partner abuse, particularly for the more severe forms of assault, ranging from about 38% to almost 50%. These surveys also give separate estimates for family abuse, sexual abuse, and stalking.

Key results showing the estimated proportions of male victims in the last 12-months from both the routine BCSs and the detailed supplementary surveys over the years 1995 to 2008/09 are given in the table below. Sources are given at the end of this briefing.



Before 2001, the routine BCSs were carried out generally every two years. Since 2001, estimated numbers of domestic incidents have been given in the Home Office *Crime in England and Wales* annual publications. The estimates are based on people reporting experiences against them perceived by them as crimes. Since not all people regard domestic abuse against

them, even if serious, as a crime, particularly young men, and therefore may not report it (or wish to admit it) to crime surveys, these routine Home Office crime estimates are likely to significantly under-estimate the actual extent of domestic abuse incidents, particularly against younger men. The totals for domestic incidents also include all family member incidents and not just those between partners.

In 1995, the Home Office introduced a detailed computerised self-completion questionnaire specifically on domestic violence as a supplement to the routine BCS. This asked people whether they had been abused or assaulted by a partner or family member either in the previous 12 months or since the age of 16. This resulted in the publication in January 1999 under Home Office Research Study 191 of the first detailed Government study of the prevalence and outcomes of domestic violence in England and Wales. The results showed much higher proportions of male victims of non-sexual partner abuse than implied by the routine BCSs.

A second detailed study was carried out in 2001 as a supplement to the BCS that year, with results published in March 2004 under Home Office Research Study 276. A third similar study of interpersonal violence was carried out in 2004/05, and detailed studies have since been carried out on annual basis as supplements to the routine BCSs.

The higher proportions of male victims of non-sexual partner abuse estimated by the detailed surveys, are consistent with the results of academic studies of aggression between dating and live-in couples, with now over 250 such studies published world-wide. These all show a substantial level of female aggression in such relationships, with women admitting initiating aggression in about one quarter of cases, men similarly in a quarter, and with mutual aggression admitted in the rest. Although women tend to be more harmed or frightened by domestic violence and more tend to be injured, men can also suffer similarly physically and emotionally, and about one third of those injured are men.

Government policy

Since domestic violence became a political issue in the late 60s and early 70s, Government policy and funding has tended to focus mainly on women as the victims. This is still largely the case, despite the Government's own detailed studies published since 1999 showing a substantial level of male victimisation, and despite the wealth of academic research now available on the issue also showing almost equal culpability between the sexes. Even in August 2008, a consultation document published by the Crown Prosecution Service, on the prosecution of domestic violence cases, contained the assertion that "the overwhelming majority of victims are female".

This polarisation of the issue into female victims and male perpetrators has resulted in the plight and needs of male victims being largely ignored in public policy, as exemplified by the Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) campaign initiated by the Government in autumn 2009. Although there are some signs that this neglect is starting to be addressed, there is still a widespread lack of meaningful support services for male victims, and a lack of information about those services that do exist. DV forums tend to publicise information mainly directed at women victims. Police initiatives on the issue, with some exceptions, are usually targeted only at male perpetrators.

Particular plight of male victims

Although the experiences of male and female victims have much in common, and both sexes can suffer physical and emotional harm, the plight of male victims of partner abuse is compounded by:

- A greater reluctance to report, even when injured or suffering chronic abuse
- More likelihood of being disbelieved or even ridiculed if they do
- A greater likelihood of being themselves arrested

- A dearth of effective support services including emergency accommodation - male victims being often directed to bed and breakfasts or hostels unsuitable for fathers with children
- A greater likelihood of being themselves removed from the family home with a high risk of subsequent loss of meaningful, or any, contact with their children, and risk of an adverse effect on their career prospects
- A greater difficulty in obtaining court orders against violent female partners
- The institutionalised effects of official policies and practice still negatively influenced against them by entrenched and hostile perspectives based on women as victims and men as perpetrators, so that a holistic and more equitable approach is ignored, and little government funding made available for male victims.

The 2008 Report⁽¹⁾ published by the House of Commons Home Affairs Select Committee, following its Inquiry into Domestic Violence in England and Wales, largely ignored the plight of male victims, although it did recommend the provision of more emergency accommodation for them but, unlike for women victims, subject to 'means-testing'.

Detailed study of male victims

Experiences reported to a 2001 detailed study⁽²⁾ of the experiences of 100 male victims of domestic violence suggested that in many instances male victims of female violence in couple relationships suffered no less physical and emotional consequences than female victims. Over half had been threatened with a weapon and a significant proportion reported serious forms of injury. One third had been kicked in the genitals, and others burnt or scalded, stabbed, or hit with heavy objects. Male victims were also less likely than female victims to report the violence or abuse against them, and when they did report, were often faced with what appeared to be widespread prejudice or discrimination against them by the police, social agencies and courts. About one fifth of male victims were themselves arrested. Little action was taken by the police against female assailants unless the men had a visible and significant injury.

Nearly half of male victims who reported abuse against them were subsequently excluded from the family home, and a significant proportion lost meaningful or any contact with their children, who usually remained with the violent mother. Father victims who reported abuse against them by the mother were particularly vulnerable to the consequences of parental separation and the continuing hostility and obstruction of the mother. Only a small proportion of father victims subsequently had regular unimpeded contact with their children. Over three quarters of the 203 children involved witnessed the violence by the mother against the father.

Zero tolerance and pro-arrest policies appeared to be directed mainly at men and offered little protection to genuine male victims and their children. The responses to the survey suggested that in a substantial number of emergency attendances, the police did not act either impartially or fairly.

A male victim appeared to be over twice as likely as a female assailant of being arrested when the police responded to an emergency call. There appeared to be a marked reluctance on the part of the police to arrest a violent female partner in a domestic incident. Few violent female partners were arrested, fewer still charged, and fewer still ever convicted.

Bias against male victims appeared to extend to the courts. Male victims had limited success in obtaining non-molestation and exclusion orders against violent female partners. None of the male victims responding to the survey who had applied for an exclusion order had been granted one, compared to a high success rate by female partners against them.

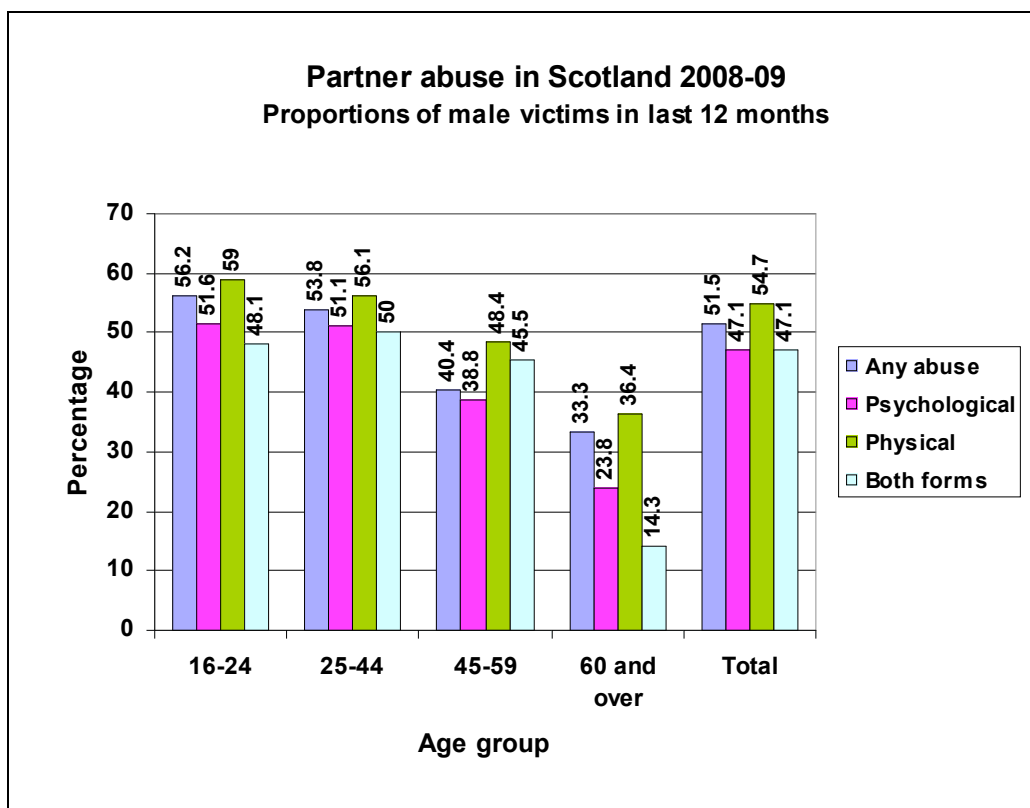
The results of the study followed a similar pattern to those of other surveys and academic studies, and were consistent with the results of the 1998 *Dispatches* survey which used virtually the same survey instrument and also reported on 100 male victims (for details, see Dewar Research website at www.dewar4research.org). Although there has been some change in attitude in England and Wales since 2001 with wider public recognition of the existence and plight of male

victims, there appears to be still widespread bias against male victims on the part of the police and social agencies. There are still no accredited treatment programmes for female perpetrators, and few violent women are arrested or charged in domestic incidents. Public funding to support male victims and their children is still an exception, and only a handful of emergency refuge places are available for them.

Scotland 2008-09

The Scottish Crime and Justice Survey (SCJS) is a large scale continuous survey measuring people’s experiences and perceptions of crime in Scotland, based on 16,000 in-home face-to-face interviews conducted annually with adults aged 16 and over living in private households in Scotland. The SCJS 2008-09 focused specifically on abuse carried out by a partner or ex-partner. Partner abuse as defined in the SCJS 2008-09 included psychological and physical forms of abuse. The definition of psychological abuse included emotional, financial and other forms of psychological abuse. The definition of physical abuse included sexual and other forms of physical abuse. The survey identified the extent of partner abuse, both in the last 12 months and since the age of 16.

The results showed a high similarity with those of the detailed surveys of intimate abuse carried out annually in England and Wales, including a substantial level of male victimisation. [See chart below]. Of particular interest, are the higher proportions of male victims than of female victims in the two younger age groups (16 to 44) for both psychological and physical abuse.



ManKind Initiative
December 2009

References

England and Wales

- (1) **Domestic Violence, Forced marriage and “Honour” – Based Violence.** Sixth Report of Session 2007-08, House of Commons Home Affairs Committee. HC263-1, 13 June 2008
- (2) **Male Domestic Violence Victims Survey 2001.** Malcolm J George and David J Yarwood. MAIN FINDINGS, October 2004. Dewar Research, Ascot

Sources for information given on chart:

Detailed BC Surveys:

| | | |
|--|-------------|---------------------------|
| Year 1995: Home Office Research Study 191, January 1999. Table A.3.1 | % male (m): | A2 50.0 |
| Year 2001: Home Office Research Study 276, March 2004. Table 2.3 | % m: | A1 41.9, A2 39.0 |
| Year 2004/05: Home Office On-line Report 12/06, 2006. Table A.1 | % m: | A1 42.3, A2 42.6 |
| Year 2005/06: Home Office Statistical Bulletin 02/07, 25 January 2007. Table 3.1 | % m: | A1 41.2, A2 37.5, A3 41.9 |
| Year 2006/07: Home Office Statistical Bulletin 03/08, 31 January 2008. Table 3.01 | % m: | A1 43.4, A2 44.9, A3 48.6 |
| Year 2007/08: Home Office Statistical Bulletin 02/09, 22 January 2009, Table 3.01 | %m: | A1 45.5, A2 47.6, A3 48.3 |
| Year 2008/09: Home Office Statistical Bulletin 11/09, Vol 1, July 2009, Table 3.11 | %m: | A1 37.7, A2 35.3, A3 37.5 |

Routine BC Surveys:

| | | |
|--|------|------|
| Year 1995: 1996 British Crime Survey. HOSB 19/96. Table A4.4 | % m: | 29.6 |
| Year 1997: 1998 British Crime Survey. HOSB 21/98. Table A2.3 | % m: | 28.0 |
| Year 1999: 2000 British Crime Survey. HOSB 18/00. Table A6.6 | % m: | 26.3 |
| Year 2001/02: Crime in England and Wales 2001/02. HOSB 07/02. Table 6.01 | % m: | 18.8 |
| Year 2003/04: Crime in England and Wales 2003/04. HOSB 10/04. Table 5.01 | % m: | 33.6 |
| Year 2004/05: Crime in England and Wales 2004/05. Table 5.01 | % m: | 22.9 |
| Year 2005/06: Crime in England and Wales 2005/06. HOSB 12/06. Table 5.01 | % m: | 20.2 |
| Year 2006/07: Crime in England and Wales 2006/07. Table 3.03 | % m: | 22.9 |
| Year 2007/08: Crime in England and Wales 2007/08, Table 3.03 | %m: | 15.2 |
| Year 2008/09: Crime in England and Wales 2008/09, Table 3.01 | %m: | 22.9 |

Scotland

Source for information given on chart:

Scottish Crime and Justice Survey 2008-09, Partner Abuse, December 2009. Annex 1, Table A1.2