



National Assembly for **Wales**  
Cynulliad Cenedlaethol **Cymru**

## **In Figures: Domestic Abuse**

This paper provides a statistical portrait of the incidence and nature of domestic abuse across England and Wales. It includes figures on adults' and children's experiences of domestic abuse and domestic abuse in the criminal justice system.

July 2008



# In Figures: Domestic Abuse

Stephanie Howarth

July 2008

Paper number: 08/040

© National Assembly for Wales Commission 2008

© Comisiwn Cynulliad Cenedlaethol Cymru 2008



## **Executive Summary**

Domestic abuse statistics generally fall in to two categories: figures on domestic abuse in the criminal justice system (for example, police recorded crime, prosecutions, etc) and self-reported experiences of domestic abuse (for example, the British Crime Survey).

The 2006/07 British Crime Survey found that 44 per cent of the victims of domestic abuse reported the incident to the police.

Between 2001/02 and 2006/07, the number of domestic violence incidents recorded through British Crime Survey interviews has fallen by approximately one third. The rate currently stands at 94 incidents per 10,000 adults.

The self-completion questionnaire of the British Crime Survey typically identifies higher levels of domestic abuse than the interviews. The 2006/07 self-completion questionnaire found that 22 per cent of men and 33 per cent of women had experienced at least one incident of domestic abuse since they were 16. Six per cent of men and eight per cent of women had experienced domestic abuse in the last year.

Every year, an estimated 750,000 children witness domestic abuse.

In 2006/07, 83 women and 27 men were killed by their partners or ex-partners. The majority of serious sexual assaults (54 per cent) were carried out by partners or ex-partners.

The number of injunctions orders made for domestic abuse has fallen by 19 per cent between 2002 and 2006.

The conviction rate of domestic abuse cases increased from 59 per cent in 2005 to 66 per cent in 2006. The highest conviction rate was in Crown Courts (75 per cent), which dealt with the most serious cases.



## Contents

<b>1</b>	<b>Introduction .....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>2</b>	<b>Incidence of Domestic Abuse .....</b>	<b>2</b>
2.1	British Crime Survey Interviews .....	2
2.2	British Crime Survey Self-Completion Module .....	3
<b>3</b>	<b>Characteristics of Victims .....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>4</b>	<b>Children and Domestic Abuse .....</b>	<b>6</b>
4.1	Children Witnessing Domestic Abuse .....	6
4.2	Findings from the British Crime Survey .....	6
4.3	Children in Domestic Abuse Refuges .....	6
<b>5</b>	<b>Nature of Abuse.....</b>	<b>7</b>
5.1	Homicide .....	7
5.2	Serious Sexual Assault .....	7
5.3	Partner Abuse .....	7
<b>6</b>	<b>Domestic Abuse in the Criminal Justice System .....</b>	<b>8</b>
6.1	Injunctions .....	8
6.2	Prosecutions and Convictions .....	8
<b>7</b>	<b>The Cost of Domestic Violence.....</b>	<b>10</b>



## In Figures: Domestic Abuse

### 1 Introduction

This paper is part of the *In Figures* series, which aims to provide a statistical portrait of a number of key social and economic issues. This particular issue focuses on statistics relating to domestic abuse.

The Home Office defines domestic violence as

any incident of threatening behaviour, violence or abuse between adults who are or have been in a relationship together, or between family members, regardless of gender or sexuality<sup>1</sup>.

The definition used by the Welsh Assembly Government goes further. Its definition of domestic abuse also specifically includes

emotional abuse, the destruction of a spouse's or partner's property, their isolation from friends, family or other potential sources of support, threats to others including children, control over access to money, personal items, food, transportation and the telephone, and stalking<sup>2</sup>.

Whilst published figures in this area are often labelled as domestic *violence*, rather than domestic *abuse*, in many cases they will cover the wider range of incidents considered to be domestic abuse.

Domestic abuse statistics generally fall into two categories. The first captures domestic abuse recorded as part of the criminal justice system. This can include figures on offences recorded by the police, injunctions, prosecutions and convictions for domestic abuse. These figures are useful for understanding how much domestic abuse is reported to the police and how it is dealt with once within the criminal justice system. However, latest figures from the British Crime Survey estimate that only 44 per cent of the victims of domestic abuse report the offences to the police<sup>3</sup>. Given this, figures showing recorded domestic abuse may not provide a full picture of its incidence. The second type of statistics on domestic abuse, self-reports, capture this more fully. The most widely known example of statistics of this kind is the British Crime Survey, where a random sample of people are asked to report on their own experiences of crime, including domestic abuse.

This paper will begin by providing figures from the British Crime Survey, followed by information from the Crown Prosecution Service and finally some findings on the cost of domestic abuse. All figures refer to England and Wales.

---

<sup>1</sup> [Home Office domestic violence webpage](#) [on 30 June 2008]

<sup>2</sup> Welsh Assembly Government, [Tackling Domestic Abuse: The All Wales National Strategy](#), March 2005

<sup>3</sup> Home Office, [Crime in England and Wales, 2006/07](#), July 2007

## 2 Incidence of Domestic Abuse

### 2.1 British Crime Survey Interviews

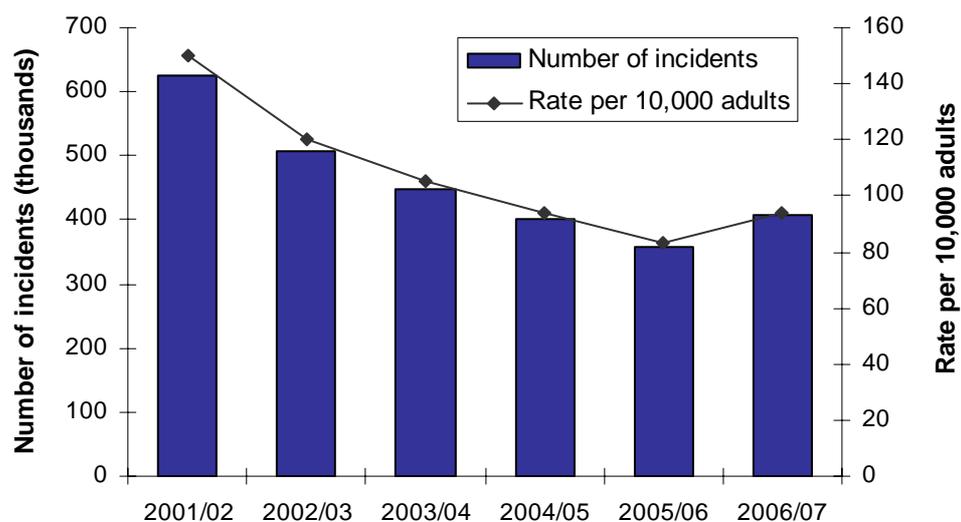
The British Crime Survey (BCS) records information on levels of crime experienced by participants during the previous year. This information is obtained through face-to-face interviews. Unlike police offence statistics, the BCS includes incidents of crime that were not reported to the police or not recorded by the police. Table 1 shows the number of domestic violence incidents recorded by the BCS each year since 2001/02. Table 1 also gives this figure as a rate per 10,000 adults. This information is given in chart format in Figure 1.

**Table 1. Domestic violence incidents since 2001/02**

	Number of incidents	Rate per 10,000 adults
2001/02	626,000	150
2002/03	506,000	120
2003/04	447,000	105
2004/05	401,000	94
2005/06	357,000	83
2006/07	407,000	94

Source: British Crime Survey<sup>4</sup>

**Figure 1. Domestic violence incidents since 2001/02**



Source: [British Crime Survey](#)

<sup>4</sup> Ibid, p33

The number of domestic violence offences has fallen by approximately a third between 2001/02 and 2006/07. This brings the rate of offences per 10,000 adults down from 150 to 94.

Women's Aid has argued that the incidence of domestic violence may be higher than figures in the BCS suggest<sup>5</sup>. Respondents to the BCS are given the opportunity to record up to five incidents of the same type of crime. As domestic violence is characterised by repeated episodes of abuse, the upper limit of five incidents may mean that victims are not able to record all instances they have experienced.

The British Crime Survey conducts some analysis on repeat victimisation. Face-to-face interviews with respondents in 2006/07 found that 58 per cent of the victims of domestic violence experienced one incident of abuse, 20 per cent were victims on two occasions and 23 per cent were victims of domestic violence on three or more occasions. Domestic violence has the highest rate of repeat victimisation of all types of crime.

## **2.2 British Crime Survey Self-Completion Module**

Owing to the sensitive nature of domestic abuse, some respondents are unwilling to disclose information on this subject in face-to-face interviews. For this reason, the British Crime Survey introduced a self-completion module which includes questions on sensitive topics such as domestic abuse. The self-completion module is completed by respondents under the age of 60. Respondents confidentially record their answers to a series of sensitive questions via a computer-aided questionnaire. Analysis has found that this has led to higher reporting of domestic abuse than the traditional face-to-face interview approach. Results from the 2005/06 self-completion module found that prevalence rates for domestic abuse were five times higher in face-to-face interviews<sup>6</sup>.

The results from the self-completion module for 2006/07 are analysed in a supplementary volume to Crime in England and Wales 2006/07<sup>7</sup>. Figures are given for domestic abuse, partner abuse and family abuse. In this instance, domestic abuse is defined as non-physical abuse (emotional or financial), threats, force, sexual assault or stalking carried out by a current or former partner or other family member. Partner abuse is abuse carried out by a current or former partner, while family abuse refers to abuse carried out by a family member other than a partner.

Some of the key findings are presented below.

- **Since the age of 16**, 22 per cent of men and 33 per cent of women had experienced at least one instance of domestic abuse. This included non-physical abuse (emotional or financial), threats, sexual assault or stalking by a partner, former partner or family member.

<sup>5</sup> Women's Aid, [British Crime Survey underestimates domestic violence statistics](#), 27 June 2007

<sup>6</sup> Home Office, [Crime in England and Wales, 2006/07](#), p61, July 2007

<sup>7</sup> Home Office, [Homicides, Fire Arm Offences and Intimate Violence 2006/07](#), January 2008



- **Since the age of 16**, 19 per cent of men and 29 per cent of women had experienced partner abuse, and 9 per cent of men and 12 per cent of women had experienced family abuse.
- **In the previous year**, 6 per cent of men and 8 per cent of women had experienced domestic abuse.
- Findings from the 2004/05 self-completion module show that within the previous year, 22 per cent of victims of partner abuse had been abused 6 times or more, with 7 per cent being abused more than 50 times. A higher percentage of men were abused more than 50 times than women (9 per cent and 5 per cent respectively).
- Of the people that had experience partner abuse in the last year, 62 per cent of men and 83 per cent of women told someone they were being abused by their partner. 9 per cent of men and 16 per cent of women told the police. Where victims did not tell the police, the most common reason was that the victims thought it was too trivial, followed by thinking it was a private or family matter. A larger proportion of men felt that the abuse was too trivial compared to women (70 per cent and 47 per cent respectively).

### 3 Characteristics of Victims

Analysis of the 2005/06 BCS self-completion module<sup>8</sup> produced some findings on the characteristics of victims of non-sexual partner and family violence. The key findings are summarised below.

- Incidence of partner and family abuse was highest in people under the age of 24, with the incidence decreasing with age.
- There was very little difference in the incidence of partner and family abuse across ethnic groups.
- Women in bad health experienced a higher incidence of partner abuse than women in good health.
- Married men and women had lower rates of partner and family abuse. The highest incidence of partner abuse by marital status was among separated women. Single people also had a higher than average incidence of abuse, but this may be linked to age.
- Family abuse was less common in respondents in managerial and professional socio-economic groups.
- Although there was no difference in the incidence of partner abuse across England and Wales, Wales had a slightly higher incidence of family abuse in women.
- Women with children have a higher incidence of partner and family abuse than women without children and men with or without children.
- Owner occupiers were less likely to experience partner abuse. Levels of partner and family abuse were higher than average for both men and women in the social renting sector.
- People who visited the pub three times or more a week were more likely to experience partner abuse. Women who visited the pub three times or more a week were more likely to experience family abuse, but in this case the same was not true for men.

---

<sup>8</sup> Home Office, [Homicides, Fire Arm Offences and Intimate Violence 2005/06](#), January 2007

## 4 Children and Domestic Abuse

### 4.1 Children Witnessing Domestic Abuse

In 2000, the NSPCC interviewed almost 3,000 18-24 year olds as part of a study on child abuse and neglect. They found that 26% of the young people interviewed had witnessed domestic violence between parents at least once, while 5% of the interviewees witnessed constant or frequent violence<sup>9</sup>.

In a report published in 2002, the Department of Health cited research which estimated that in the UK 750,000 children a year witness domestic violence<sup>10</sup>. The same report stated that almost three-quarters of children on the 'at risk' register live in households where domestic violence occurs.

### 4.2 Findings from the British Crime Survey

Evidence from the 2005/06 self-completion module of the British Crime Survey found that women with children in the household were more likely to experience partner and family abuse. Men with children in the household were more likely to experience family abuse, but not partner abuse<sup>11</sup>.

The previous year's self-completion module asked women if they had ever been abused while pregnant. One-third of women who had experienced partner abuse had been pregnant at some point during the violent relationship. Of those women, 43 per cent stated that their partner had used, or threatened to use, force while they were pregnant<sup>12</sup>.

### 4.3 Children in Domestic Abuse Refuges

In 2006-07, Welsh Women's Aid carried out some research regarding children living in domestic abuse refuges. They found that nearly half of all residents of Welsh Women's Aid refuges were children. Of these children, 8% were on the 'at risk' register during 2006-07<sup>13</sup>.

<sup>9</sup> Communities and Culture Scrutiny Committee Paper (CC(3)-13-08 Paper 3, [Evidence for Committee Inquiry into Domestic Abuse – NSPCC Cymru](#), 3 July 2008

<sup>10</sup> Department of Health, [Women's Mental Health: Into the Mainstream](#), October 2002

<sup>11</sup> Home Office, [Homicides, Fire Arm Offences and Intimate Violence 2005/06](#), January 2007

<sup>12</sup> Home Office, [Homicides, Fire Arm Offences and Intimate Violence 2006/07](#), January 2008

<sup>13</sup> Communities and Culture Scrutiny Committee Paper (CC(3)-11-08 Paper 1a, [Evidence for Committee Inquiry into Domestic Abuse – Welsh Women's Aid](#), 19 June 2008

## 5 Nature of Abuse

### 5.1 Homicide

According to recorded crime figures for 2006/07, 68 per cent of female homicide victims knew the main or only suspect of their murder, compared to 44 per cent of men. Of those that knew the suspect, 65 per cent of female victims were killed by their partner or ex-partner, compared to 11 per cent of male victims<sup>14</sup>. This equates to 83 women and 27 men killed by a partner or ex-partner. In 2006/07, 22 women and 44 men were killed by a family member other than a partner or ex-partner.

### 5.2 Serious Sexual Assault

The following findings come from the self-completion module of the 2005/06 BCS<sup>15</sup>. Respondents who had experienced at least one incident of serious sexual assault since they were 16 were asked about their relationship with the offender of the most recent assault. Of these, 56 per cent of women reported that the offender was their partner or ex-partner. The figure for all people (men and women combined) was 54 per cent. Owing to the small sample involved, robust estimates could not be produced for men separately. 3 per cent of respondents said that the offender was a relative other than their partner.

### 5.3 Partner Abuse

Figures from 2006/07 BCS interviews (therefore not including answers from the self-completion module) found that no physical injury was sustained in 32 per cent of domestic violence incidents. This figure was much lower than for other categories of violent crime (i.e. mugging, stranger and acquaintance violent crimes). Where an injury was sustained, the most common type was minor bruising/black eye, followed by serious bruising.

Figures from the self completion module for 2004/05<sup>16</sup> investigated psychological effects, as well as physical injuries. This analysis found that 48 per cent of men and 58 per cent of women who had experienced partner abuse in the last year sustained some form of physical injury or emotional effect. The most common injury or effect for men was scratches while for women it was mental or emotional problems. Minor bruising/black eye was the second most common injury or effect for both sexes. Overall, 3 per cent of the people who had experienced partner abuse in the last year had tried to commit suicide.

---

<sup>14</sup> Home Office, [Homicides, Fire Arm Offences and Intimate Violence 2006/07](#), January 2008

<sup>15</sup> Ibid, p96

<sup>16</sup> Ibid p88

## 6 Domestic Abuse in the Criminal Justice System

### 6.1 Injunctions

Two types of order relating to domestic violence can be made. The first, non-molestation orders, prohibit particular behaviour or general molestation. The second, occupation orders, define or regulate the rights of occupation of the home. Power of arrest must be attached to an order if the respondent has used or threatened violence against the applicant of the order or a child. Statistics on injunctions are collected by the Ministry of Justice. Table 2 shows the number of orders made in each year since 2002 and the percentage that included power of arrest.

**Table 2. Domestic violence orders made since 2002**

Year	Orders made	% with power of arrest
2002	36,762	92.7
2003	36,268	92.7
2004	32,922	92.2
2005	31,719	93.2
2006	29,870	93.3

Source: Ministry of Justice<sup>17</sup>

The number of orders made in 2006 was 29,870. This is 19 per cent lower than in 2002. The number of orders made has fallen each year since 2002, while the percentage of orders with power of arrest attached has remained relatively stable.

### 6.2 Prosecutions and Convictions

The Crown Prosecution Service set a national target to increase the proportion of domestic violence cases successfully prosecuted to 64 per cent. This was exceeded in 2006-07, with just over 65 per cent of cases being prosecuted. In response, the CPS set a new target for successful prosecutions of 70 per cent by April 2008.

For the last five years the Crown Prosecution Service has carried out a domestic violence snapshot which counts and analyses domestic violence cases finalised in December of that year. The latest snapshot available relates to December 2006<sup>18</sup>. Some key findings from the snapshot are summarised below:

- The conviction rate for domestic violence was 66 per cent, an increase of 7 percentage points on the previous year.
- Of the 34 per cent of cases that were not successfully convicted, 30 per cent were dropped by the CPS and 4 per cent were found not guilty after trial. The most common reason cited for the CPS dropping a case was evidential reasons.

<sup>17</sup> Ministry of Justice, *Judicial and Court Statistics 2006*, November 2007

<sup>18</sup> Crown Prosecution Service, *Domestic Violence Monitoring Snapshot: Cases Finalised in December 2006*, July 2007



- Convictions rates were higher in Crown Courts (75 per cent); however they only dealt with the most serious cases, which are much smaller in number.
- Guilty pleas increased from 52 per cent in 2005 to 56 per cent in 2006.
- The number of victims retracting their statement decreased from 30 per cent in 2005 to 28 per cent in 2006.

## 7 The Cost of Domestic Violence

In 2004, Sylvia Walby, an academic in the field of domestic abuse, published findings on the cost of domestic violence to public services, employers and the victims of abuse<sup>19</sup>. Using a method based on the Home Office framework for costing crime, she estimated that the total cost of domestic violence to the state, employers and victims was around £23 billion. This can be broken down as follows:

- £1 billion for the Criminal Justice System, the largest component of that being allocated to the police.
- £1.2 billion to the NHS for the treatment of physical injuries and £176 million for the cost of mental health care.
- £0.25 billion for social services, mainly relating to children caught up in domestic violence.
- £0.16 billion for the provision of emergency housing.
- £0.3 billion in civil legal services, about half of which is borne by the victim.
- Lost economic output of around £2.7 billion a year due to sickness absence as a result of injuries sustained. Approximately half of this is borne by the victim through lost wages.
- A human and emotional cost of £17 billion. This is based on an established “willingness-to-pay” approach, which places a value on the avoidance of fatalities or injuries by estimating what individuals would be willing to pay for a small decrease in the risk of such an incident. The inclusion of the human and emotional cost ensures that this is taken into account in the policy-making context<sup>20</sup>.

---

<sup>19</sup> Walby, S., [The Cost of Domestic Violence](#), September 2004

<sup>20</sup> For more information on the calculation of the human and emotional cost, see section 11 of [The Cost of Domestic Violence](#).