

Male Domestic Violence Abuse

Distortion of issue

Although recognised for many centuries, the problem of domestic violence first became a real political issue in western societies in the early 1970s. In the UK, Erin Pizzey founded in Chiswick in 1971 the first refuge for abused women and their children in Britain. She was later to write that “of the first 100 women who came to the refuge, 61 were as violent or as violent prone as the men they had left”.

Since then, the issue has been polarised and distorted, largely by sexual politics, into female victims and male perpetrators. Government and public policies and funding in the UK are still largely based on this perception.

This, despite the wealth of academic studies published worldwide in the past three decades, coupled with successive government studies in the past twenty years, all showing a significant level of female aggression or abuse in intimate relationships. Such studies suggest that, in intimate couple relationships affected by abusive behaviour, women initiate this against male partners in about a quarter of cases, men in another quarter, and the rest is mutual.

Although women tend to be more harmed or frightened by violent abuse, and are more likely to be injured or victims of repeated assaults, significant proportions of male victims are also severely assaulted and about one third of those injured are men.

Male victims

The prescription of domestic violence as a woman’s problem, and not a social problem affecting both sexes and their children, is now strongly entrenched in societal attitudes in most western democracies including the UK. It extends particularly to Government, local authorities and other public bodies, including police forces, social agencies, children’s charities, and even the judiciary.

The result has been to largely ignore or subordinate the plight of male victims, and consequently support services for them are hugely inferior to those in place for female victims and geographically totally inadequate.

This public indifference to them, not only deters many male victims from reporting intimate abuse against them, even when they have suffered severe violence, but also reinforces stereotypical attitudes towards them by police forces and social agencies, so that if they do report, they are often disbelieved or ridiculed. Indeed, surveys of male victims have reported that about one in five male victims are themselves arrested and not the female assailant.

PARITY

August 2017.

Male Domestic Violence Abuse

Father victims are especially disadvantaged, since if they do report, the chances are that it is they who will be ousted from the family home and subsequently lose any meaningful contact, or indeed any contact at all, with their children, who are allowed to remain with the violent mother by the courts and social agencies.

Some facts about male victims in England and Wales

- Men account for about one third of all victims in intimate relationships, the proportion rising with the severity of the abuse suffered by them.
- Police records of domestic violence incidents show much lower proportions of male victims reporting than this, about 20% in recent years. Partly because of 'macho' attitudes and anticipated unsympathetic police responses, male victims tend to under-report even more than female victims, particularly younger men who experience only minor assault.
- It is thought that there are several hundred publicly funded refuges for abused women and their children in England and Wales, but **only a handful** specifically for abused men and their children, although some of the women's refuges do allocate a few places for men and their children on an ad hoc basis. Generally, however, women's refuges prohibit any men or older male children from the premises.
- There are a few small charities, funded mainly by donations, helping male victims. In contrast, the national charities helping women victims receive substantial public funding.
- Abused fathers wishing to leave the family home with their children face a possible charge of abducting the children as well as nowhere to go with them except bed and breakfasts. Not all local authorities provide emergency accommodation for male victims and their children. Many abused fathers therefore continue to 'live' with the violence in order to protect their children.
- Local authorities at present receive multi-million grants each year in government funding essentially to support female domestic abuse victims, but nothing proportionate to support male victims. Indeed, authorities appear to be still measured by government on the support they specifically give female victims (by performance indicator BV 225). The result is that local authorities are discouraged from providing any support to specifically help male victims and their children in their areas since they receive no specific government funding for this. This, despite their over-arching Gender Equality Duty.
- The government response to this inequality is that local authorities must show a 'need' by male victims for such support funding. Based on the numbers of actual male victims, including fathers, revealed by government studies, the need for some funded support is surely obvious.
- Government funding for male victims at present appears to extend essentially to one national helpline.
- The persisting lack of government funding for male victims in the light of its own research evidence, in defiance of the Gender Equality Duty, appears to be unduly influenced by cost and by sexual politics at high level.
- Strategies on domestic violence and funding provision produced annually by government for state agencies to implement are still primarily aimed at female victims. Men account for between one third and one half of all victims in intimate relationships, the proportion rising with the severity of the abuse suffered by them.

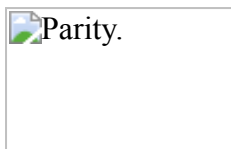
A challenge for the future

Domestic violence is a social problem affecting both sexes, albeit to different extents. Ignoring the plight of male victims is not only inequitable, but is unlikely to solve the problem. It also ignores the plight of their children, which could be argued is a form of official child abuse if the father victim is ousted and they are left with a violent mother.

It is now time for government to officially recognise the problem and to produce and fund and see implemented a nation-wide strategy to help victims of both sexes, including support especially for those charities at present involved in helping male victims.

PARITY

August 2017.



Male Domestic Violence Abuse

A confidential self-completion module was again used as a supplement to the 2015/16 British Crime Survey for England and Wales, in order to obtain in confidence the experiences of a nationally representative sample of people, this year of just under twenty thousand men and women between the ages of 16 and 59.

The results were first published in February 2017 by the Office for National Statistics (British Crime Survey), Focus on violent crime and sexual offences. England and Wales: year ending March 2016, with an associated Compendium by Emma Wright, 9 February 2017.

In general, the Survey found similar prevalence rates of intimate violence to those revealed in previous years.

Table 1 Estimated numbers of victims of intimate violence during the year ending March 2016, England and Wales.

Type of violence	Men 1000s	Women 1000s	Total 1000s	% Male
Any domestic abuse	716	1272	1989	36
Domestic abuse - Non-physical	491	845	1336	36.7
Domestic abuse - Threats or force	353	640	993	35.5
Domestic abuse - Threats	239	512	751	31.8
Domestic abuse - Force	207	364	572	36.2
Any partner abuse	489	1028	1517	32.2
Any family abuse	322	360	682	47.2
Partner abuse - Non-sexual	451	891	1342	33.7
Family abuse – Non-sexual	296	315	611	48.3
Sexual assault (incl attempts)	111	533	645	17.2
Stalking	450	759	1210	37.2

Source: ONS. (British Crime Survey) Focus on violent crime and sexual offences. England and Wales: Year ending March 2016. See ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/crimeandjustice/compendium/

[focusonviolentcrimeandsexualoffences/yearendingmarch2016](https://ons.gov.uk/file?uri=/peoplepopulationandcommunity/crimeandjustice/datasets/appendixtablesfocusonviolentcrimeandsexualoffences/yearendingmarch2016/fovappendixtables.xls). Data tables can be found on ons.gov.uk/file?uri=/peoplepopulationandcommunity/crimeandjustice/datasets/appendixtablesfocusonviolentcrimeandsexualoffences/yearendingmarch2016/fovappendixtables.xls

The risk of intimate violence varies by demographic, socio-economic and lifestyle characteristics. Characteristics that were independently associated with an increased risk of intimate violence across all the forms included marital status (in particular being unmarried), housing tenure, age (under the age of 45), and having a limiting disability or illness.

PARITY

August 2017.