

An Analysis of Male Victimization

by

Dr Malcolm George

based on

Home Office Research Study 191 (HORS 191)

Domestic Violence: Findings from a new British Crime Survey self-completion questionnaire

Catriona Mirrlees- Black, Home Office 1999

Summary of results

- 4.2% of women and 4.2% of men reported physical assault by a current or former partner in the last year
- 5.9% of women and 4.9% of men reported physical assault and/or frightening threats in the last year
- women were twice as likely as men to report injury in the last year
- 6.6 million incidents were estimated in 1995, of which 2.9 million resulted in some injury
- women were three times more likely to suffer frightening threats
- 12% of women and 5% of men reported assault on three or more occasions
- 23% of women and 15% men reported physical assault across a life-time
- 26% of women and 17% of men reported assault and/or frightening threats across a life-time
- 16-24 age group reported assaults most
- pushing, grabbing, etc were the most common forms of assault, but slapping, punching, and kicking were reported in nearly half of cases
- 47% of women and 31% of men reported injury although most only minor injury
- three quarters of chronic victims were female
- 99% of assaults against women were by men, 95% of assaults against men were by women
- alcohol was identified in 32% of assaults, drugs in 5%
- at time of interview, women were less likely to be living with their assailant than men, and chronic victims less likely than intermittent
- virtually no male victims considered the assaults a crime
- women, especially chronic victims, were much more likely to agree that they were a 'victim of domestic violence' than were men
- victims who had been injured, frightened or upset were most likely to report
- incidents perceived as a crime were most likely to be reported to the police

The survey of some 10,000 men and women between the ages of 16 and 59 in England and Wales was undertaken in 1995 as a specialised part of the 1996 British Crime Survey (BCS) using CASI, a computer aided entry system for respondents to answer questions about domestic violence.

Trends in Prevalence Rates drawn from Home Office Research

Between 1981 and 1995, estimated incidents of domestic violence in England and Wales showed an increase of 242%, in part reflecting a greater willingness to report.

In the main 1996 BCS, 1.3% of women and 0.7% of men reported one or more incidents of domestic violence, ie. about 1% of the population in total of England and Wales. Half had only experienced one assault, one fifth two, and the rest three or more.

Changes in reporting 1981-1995

	% of male/female population age 16 to 59					
	<u>1981</u>	<u>1983</u>	<u>1987</u>	<u>1991</u>	<u>1993</u>	<u>1995</u>
Women	0.5	0.5	0.7	0.9	1.6	1.3
Men	0.1	0.2	0.2	0.3	0.6	0.7
Proportion of male victims, %	17	29	22	25	27	35

The CASI Based Survey – HORS 191

The questionnaire was tested on groups of women at women's refuges. It was asked on a face-to-face basis by interviewers in the respondent's own room. Face-to-face interviews are said to be better at eliciting responses from women about sensitive topics such as domestic violence. Men prefer to answer questions more anonymously by a paper and pen exercise.

Different methods of asking questions produces different percentage responses. This explains the discrepancy between prevalence rates recorded by routine British Crime Surveys and those by the survey of domestic violence reported under HORS 191 using the CASI instrument. Similarly, there will be differences between surveys such as the BCS, which are conducted on the basis of perceptions of 'crime', and population surveys in which respondents are asked specifically about what happened when they argued with a partner.

The results in HORS 191 were analyzed according to whether victims identified were 'intermittent' or 'chronic' victims. Intermittent victims were defined as those assaulted once or twice, and chronic victims as those assaulted three or more times.

Respondents to the survey were asked about life-time occurrence and last-year occurrence.

The questions asked included the experience of threats of assault (which women report more prevalently than men) and sexual assault (which women are likely to experience more prevalently than men). Hence, the structure of the questionnaire should produce a greater prevalence of female victims.

Proportion of victims who told someone about last assault (page 52)

66% of male chronic and 66% of male intermittent victims did not tell anyone.

Some 30% did tell someone. (cf. with 62% of female chronic and 50% of female intermittent victims who told someone).

Police - only 8% of male chronic and 4% of male intermittent victims told police of last assault

Medical - only 3% of male chronic and 2% of male intermittent victims told medical staff of last assault

Injury to male victims is an important factor that leads them to tell someone else and for the police also to get to know.

63% of male chronic and 80% of male intermittent victims stated that assaults experienced were 'just something that happens'. Only 6% and 1% respectively saw it as a crime against them (cf. 39% of female chronic victims who saw it as a crime).

Nature of violence and consequences (page 35 et seq)

Types of assault (Fig 5.1, page 37)

	<u>% of most recent incidents</u>			
	Male		Female	
	<u>Int</u>	<u>Chr</u>	<u>Int</u>	<u>Chr</u>
Push, shove, grab	60	64	63	69
Kick, slap, hit	47	57	32	56
Weapon used	5	8	2	9

Prevalence by groups

Age

Men aged 20-59 showed, in a number of 4-year groups, a higher prevalence than women.

eg. in 30-34 age group, 6.2% of victims in 1996 CASI were male, 4.7% female; in 40-44 age group, 3.1% of victims were male, 2.1% female.

Biggest difference male/female was the preponderance of female victims over male in the 16-19 age group (10.1 % against 7%).

Ethnic group

4.3% of victims were white males as opposed to 4.2% of white females. In other ethnic groups, females were more victimised than males, particularly those of Indian/Asian origin.

Marital status

Women separated from a partner were most likely to have reported victimisation in the last year (22%). Married and cohabiting women were least at risk (2.3%).

Cohabiting men (8%) were at higher risk than married men (3%), with separated men between (5%).

Table 6.2 (page 44) indicated that 54% of life-time male chronic victims and 41% of last-year male chronic victims were assaulted by a spouse or ex-spouse compared to 33% and 46% having been assaulted by a 'current partner'.

The commentary notes that women's violence was more likely to occur within the context of an ongoing relationship.

70% of male chronic and 71% of male intermittent life-time victims were living with their assailant at time of the last assault, and 60% and 68% of last-year male victims (cf. figures for women of 69%, 61% and 59%, 53% respectively).

Table 6.3 (page 45) indicated that 59% of male chronic and 71% of male intermittent life-time victims, and 96% and 85% of last-year male victims, were still living with their assailant at the time of the survey.

Important Note

The involvement of men's partners in the interview increased the chance

of men admitting that they had been assaulted (page 98) - partners encouraged them or reminded them of incidents when the man had been assaulted by his female partner. In other words, men tended to under-report assaults made against them by female partners.

Injury

Female chronic victims were most likely to seek medical help, 20% had. Women (47%) were more likely than men to report being injured (31%), but most people reported only minor injury (bruising). 58% of female chronic victims reported injury in last incident. Figure 5.2 (page 38) gave a distribution of types of injuries.

	<u>% of most recent incidents</u>			
	Men		Women	
	<u>Int</u>	<u>Chr</u>	<u>Int</u>	<u>Chr</u>
Bruises	15	25	32	58
Scratches	19	28	8	22
Cuts	5	13	4	15
Broken bone	0.5	1	1	6
Other	2	9	5	19

Table A5.1 (page 75) gave the time since the most recent incident of domestic assault

	<u>%</u>			
	Male		Female	
	<u>Int</u>	<u>Chr</u>	<u>Int</u>	<u>Chr</u>
Within last year	28	29	21	17
1 to 5 years	38	33	37	31
6-10 years	17	22	19	24
> 11 years	15	9	21	26

In other words, almost two thirds of chronic male victims reported they had suffered their last assault within the last five years, compared to less than half (48%) of chronic female victims. It can be hypothesised either that the prevalence of men

being victimised has increased in the last five years or that men are less concerned about reporting assaults that happened more than a few years ago. Alternatively also, women do not seem to forget being assaulted by a male partner easily, given that 47% of female victims reported incidents that happened more than 11 years ago as opposed to 24% of male victims.

Which Men are assaulted?

An interesting finding is looking at the men who most reported being assaulted by a female partner. Two groups stand out: men who are unemployed and men who are house owners.

In Figure 4.3 of the report, the prevalence of assaults by household income was shown. Household income was split into three categories: £5,000 or less, £5,000-£20,000 and £20,000+. The average household income for 1995 in the UK was £19,000. The graph showed that it was only in those households where the income was well below the average (ie. £5,000 and below) that the prevalence of assaults against women was in excess of assaults against men (10% women as compared to 4.4% men). In the middle income group, the prevalence of people reporting domestic assault was equal between the sexes at 3.7% for each sex. **In the higher income group (ie. household income above £20,000), there was a higher percentage of male victims than female victims (4.2% as compared to 3.0%).**

The Police

When victims of domestic violence come to police attention, they will be usually referred to Victim Support. Of course, relatively few male victims report to the police. Interestingly, the survey revealed that the small percentage of male victims that did come to police attention reported that they were not referred on to Victim Support. This suggests that, generally, the police did not deal sympathetically with male victims. This perception is supported by the fact that many male victims reported that they were dissatisfied with responses to them by the police.