



Domestic violence statistics

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This note presents some of the available statistics on the extent and nature of domestic violence. Measuring the extent of domestic violence is hampered by the absence of a statutory definition of the problem, the reluctance of victims to report their experiences, and the framing of a single meaningful statistic on the 'level' of domestic abuse.

Estimates from the Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW) indicate that 2.0m adults experienced domestic abuse in the year 2011/12.

Details of legislation and government policy on domestic violence, and contact information for organisations supporting those affected by this issue, can be found in the Library Standard Note SN/HA/3989 [Domestic Violence](#).

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1 Difficulties in measuring domestic violence

The absence of a statutory definition of domestic violence¹ means that until recently there has been no official recording of domestic violence incidents. Difficulties in measuring the extent and nature of domestic violence, however, go well beyond these definitional issues. Domestic violence is a very private crime. Victims of domestic violence are less likely than victims of other forms of violence to report their experiences to the authorities because of beliefs that their abuse is not a matter for police involvement, their experiences too trivial, or from fear of reprisal. There is thus significant under-reporting of domestic abuse by victims, and it is acknowledged that data on reported incidents and cases prosecuted, which has recently started being collected by the criminal justice system, represents the tip of the iceberg.

Unlike other crimes, it is often difficult to separate occurrences of domestic violence into discrete 'incidents': abuse may be continuous (e.g. living under a threat), or may occur with such frequency that the victim cannot reliably count the instances. Even if it were possible to put a figure on individual offences, and hence calculate a domestic violence 'rate', this would not be a particularly telling reflection of the number of people at risk². Any statistic describing the 'level' of domestic violence must be interpreted with care. The proportion of individuals recently experiencing abuse, rather than the number of domestic violence incidents, is for most purposes a more meaningful indicator.

2 Data from the Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW)

2.1 Background

The most reliable estimates of the extent of domestic violence come from the Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW) formally the British Crime Survey (BCS). The CSEW asks people about their experience as victims. Being a household survey, it picks up more crime than the official police figures, as not all crimes are reported to the police, let alone recorded by them.

Two sets of figures are available from the CSEW: the first, collected from the survey's inception in 1981, come from the results of face-to-face interviews; the second, available from 2004/05, come from confidential self-completion modules, which respondents complete in private by responding to questions on a computer. The unwillingness of respondents to reveal experience of domestic violence to an interviewer means that the first measure significantly underestimates the extent of domestic violence.

¹ The terms 'domestic violence' and 'intimate partner violence' cover a range of behaviour, much but not all of which is criminal. For the purposes of this note (and for most working definitions), it excludes other forms of interpersonal abuse that might take place in a domestic environment (e.g. between parent and child, or patient and carer). Until recently, there were a number of different "official" definitions of domestic violence; for more details see Library Standard Note SN/HA/3989 [Domestic Violence](#)

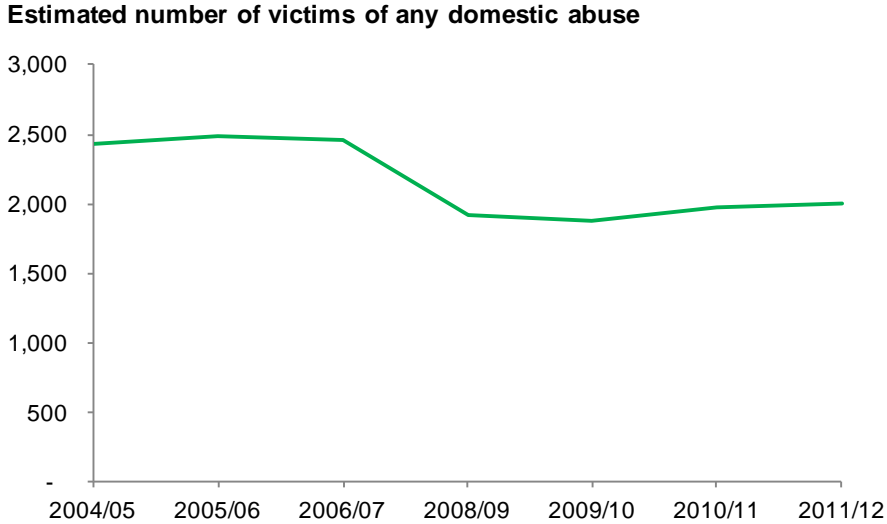
² In particular, the *incidence rate* of domestic violence (i.e. number of instances per 10,000 people), is likely to be far lower than the *prevalence rate* (i.e. number of people experiencing abuse per 10,000 people) due to repeat victimisation.

2.2 CSEW data

The CSEW estimates of domestic abuse³ are based on a relatively broad definition covering male and female victims of partner or family non-physical abuse, threats, force, sexual assault or stalking. The latest statistics show that:⁴

- Some 7% of women and 5% of men were estimated to have experienced domestic abuse in the 2011/12, equivalent to an estimated 1.2 million female and 800,000 male victims.
- Overall, 31% of women and 18% of men had experienced any domestic abuse since the age of 16. These figures were equivalent to an estimated 5.0 million female victims of domestic abuse and 2.9 million male victims between the ages of 16 and 59.

The chart below shows the estimated number of victims of any domestic abuse reported in the self-completion module on intimate violence in the CSEW since 2004/05.⁵



Levels of domestic abuse experienced have generally declined in 2004/05 there were just over 2.4m victims compared to approximately 2.0m in 2011/12, this is a statistically significant reduction of 18%. However, the estimated number of victims increased by 26,000 when comparing 2010/11 and 2011/12.

3 Police data

Domestic violence offences are not published within the centrally collected police recorded crime series. Such offences are not specifically defined by law and details of the individual circumstances of offences are not collected.

However police forces do collect domestic violence incident data which is provided at police force area level. This information has been collected by the Home Office, and can be found in the appendix, however, it is unaudited and has not been classified as an official statistic.

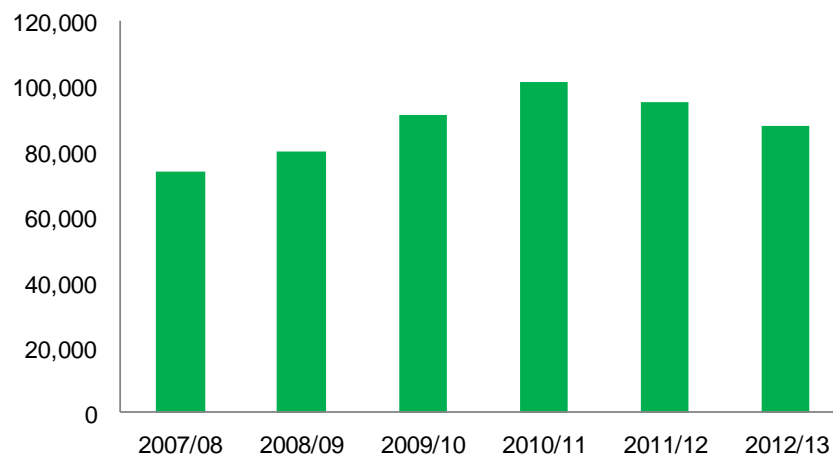
³ Domestic abuse includes non-physical abuse, threats, force, sexual assault or stalking carried out by a current or former partner or other family member. 'Domestic abuse' is not directly comparable to the main CSEW 'domestic violence' category
⁴ ONS, *Focus on: Violent Crime and Sexual Offences, 2011/12*, Feb 2013
⁵ Data is not available for 2007/08

4 Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) data

The *Violence against women crime report* is an annual publication from the Crown Prosecution Service which contains a *chapter* on domestic violence crimes.

In 2012/13, there were 88,110 domestic violence cases that were referred to the CPS - a fall of 7% on 2011/12 but higher than the number of cases referred to the CPS in 2007/08:

Domestic violence cases reported to the CPS



This is not the same as the total number of people arrested for the offence. Between arrest and referral to the CPS the police may decide that no crime has been committed or that there is insufficient evidence to proceed.

Of the cases referred to the CPS the decision to charge was made in 64.6% of cases, a slight fall in proportion from 2011/12 when 65.6% were charged.

In 2011/12 70,702 defendants were prosecuted, a fall of 11% on 2011/12 but a 42% increase on 2005/06.

CPS domestic violence prosecutions and convictions

	Prosecutions	Convictions	Convictions as a proportion of prosecutions
2005/06	49,782	29,719	59.7%
2006/07	57,361	37,383	65.2%
2007/08	63,819	43,977	68.9%
2008/09	67,094	48,465	72.2%
2009/10	74,113	53,347	72.0%
2010/11	82,187	59,101	71.9%
2011/12	79,268	58,138	73.3%
2012/13	70,702	52,549	74.3%

Source: CPS, Violence against women and girls report 2012/13

The number of offenders successfully convicted in 2011/12 was 52,549. This represented 74% of completed prosecutions – the highest level in the period 2005/06 to 2012/13.

Appendix

Domestic abuse incidents recorded by the police

	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12
Cleveland	10,964	12,205	13,381	15,042	14,883
Durham	8,615	..	..	13,025	13,330
Northumbria	25,803	26,809	27,951	28,167	27,406
Cheshire	4,872	5,606	5,648	5,887	4,186
Cumbria	4,998	4,718	5,279	6,455	6,422
Greater Manchester	..	69,334	65,897	..	47,496
Lancashire	22,953	25,413	27,604	27,615	29,465
Merseyside	29,033	30,169	27,319	31,069	32,511
Humberside	13,531	14,026	14,879	16,409	17,014
North Yorkshire	5,728	5,937	3,235	7,504	7,336
South Yorkshire	16,013	15,825	20,129	23,725	24,079
West Yorkshire	30,348	28,444	27,830	34,742	36,725
Derbyshire	16,425	17,145	17,841	18,363	14,797
Leicestershire	9,818	10,776	10,843	12,492	17,172
Lincolnshire	1,665	7,125	..	7,232	8,762
Northamptonshire	9,586	10,479	10,627	10,857	11,898
Nottinghamshire	4,228	4,817	4,858	4,670	5,532
Staffordshire	20,096	21,471	12,577	16,193	16,457
Warwickshire	7,288	7,908	7,961	7,855	7,805
West Mercia	..	15,100	..	16,431	16,523
West Midlands	37,897	40,980	46,829	41,494	30,137
Bedfordshire	7,603	8,095	8,721	9,137	8,250
Cambridgeshire	8,911	10,764	11,589	12,830	11,249
Essex	17,826	24,658	22,472	21,385	26,876
Hertfordshire	11,280	11,780	11,675	11,675	12,644
Norfolk	7,596	7,178	9,129	8,546	9,878
Suffolk	5,490	6,373	7,379	7,556	7,471
London, City of ²	116	106	131	107	90
Metropolitan Police	84,026	111,738	119,884	121,314	118,079
Hampshire	23,468	21,313	24,391	24,009	24,206
Kent	20,141	20,710	21,332	21,633	22,509
Surrey	10,803	10,779	12,349	12,731	11,755
Sussex	14,519	14,902	15,905	17,384	16,732
Thames Valley	26,286	27,204	30,837	32,186	32,715
Avon and Somerset	10,612	14,906	15,695	15,648	15,356
Devon and Cornwall	23,789	25,846	25,659	24,972	25,521
Dorset	5,946	6,519	6,654	6,946	7,425
Gloucestershire	2,836	9,125	..	..	..
Wiltshire	6,433	6,242	5,722	4,584	4,413
Dyfed-Powys	2,836	2,201	1,983	2,004	2,325
Gwent	..	..	..	443	8,948
North Wales	9,860	11,059	10,797	10,766	12,901
South Wales	..	15,858	8,352	28,016	27,656
<i>England and Wales</i>	580,238	741,643	721,344	739,099	796,935

Source:

ONS, Focus on: Violent crime and sexual offences, 2011/12

Notes:

Domestic abuse incidents are defined as any incidence of threatening behaviour, violence or abuse (psychological, physical, sexual, financial or emotional) between adults, aged 18 and over, who are or have been intimate partners or family members, regardless of gender or sexuality.

.. Denotes 'not available'.