

# PARITY

## Equal Rights for Men and Women

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Received

Dear Sir Michael,

### Gross misrepresentation of official statistics

The Crown Prosecution Service launched a public consultation on 7 August last year on rape and domestic violence policies, with responses due by the 29 October 2008.

On page 5 (copy attached) of the consultation explanatory document, under the heading "What is domestic violence", the following assertion was made:

**"However, the evidence shows that the overwhelming majority of victims [of domestic violence] are women and abusers men."**

Such interpretation is totally at variance with the results of detailed studies by the Home Office of intimate and interpersonal violence in England and Wales, of which six<sup>(1)</sup> have now been carried out since the first in 1995. Such studies are the most authoritative official sources available of the prevalence and circumstances of domestic violence in England and Wales. They all reveal consistently a substantial level of female aggression in both family and partner relationships. We do not believe that the Crown Prosecution Service has any equivalent comprehensive evidence to justify such a generalised, and sexist, assertion.

I attach a copy of Table 3.01 taken from the latest Home Office study for year 2007/08, published last month (22 January 2009)<sup>(1)</sup>, which demonstrates the high level of male victimisation in such relationships. For convenience, I summarise below the key findings relating to the 12-month period preceding the study.

Prevalence of intimate violence by category among adults ages 16 to 59

Percentages	2007/08 BCS		
	Men	Women	% Male
Any domestic abuse (incl sexual)	4.5	6.0	42.9
Any family abuse (incl sexual)	1.2	2.0	37.5
Any partner abuse (incl sexual)	4.0	4.8	45.5
Partner abuse – non sexual	4.1	4.9	45.5
Non-physical	2.6	3.4	43.3
Threats or force	2.1	2.7	43.7
Force - Minor	1.0	1.6	38.5
Force - Severe	1.4	1.5	48.3

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These findings clearly indicate that the proportions for male victimisation during this period were over 40% of total male plus female victims for most categories of general and partner physical abuse, and indeed as high as 48.3% for the category of 'severe force'. Similar results applied in the previous Home Office study for 2006/07, which was available to the Crown Prosecution Service to refer to at the time of preparing its consultation document.

Such authoritative Home Office study results showing an almost equal proportion of male victims suffering domestic violence are totally at odds with the unqualified assertion made by the Crown Prosecution Service that the 'overwhelming' number of victims are women.

PARITY therefore wrote formally twice (in September and October last autumn) to the Director of Public Prosecutions, then Sir Ken Macdonald QC,) to challenge or explain this curious assertion. A satisfactory response was not forthcoming, and nor was the assertion withdrawn from the consultation document or qualified.

In the circumstances, PARITY regards the generalised assertion by the Crown Prosecution Service in the consultation document as a gross misrepresentation of reputable official statistics. Such misrepresentation suggests a political rather than a statistical bias, which, if indeed is the case, would be highly reprehensible for a key agency within the criminal justice system.

Since our own efforts to correct the assertion have failed, and since this is an issue of considerable public importance, I would respectfully request the UK Statistics Authority to take the matter up with the Crown Prosecution Service to ensure that in future they adhere impartially to good practice in relation to official statistics.

Yours sincerely,

  
John Mays  
Chair PARITY



Reference (1)

Year 1995: Home Office Research Study 191, January 1999. Table A.3.1  
Year 2001: Home Office Research Study 276, March 2004. Table 2.3  
Year 2004/05: Home Office On-line Report 12/06, 2006. Table A.1  
Year 2005/06: Home Office Statistical Bulletin 02/07, 25 January 2007. Table 3.1  
Year 2006/07: Home Office Statistical Bulletin 03/08, 31 January 2008. Table 3.01  
Year 2007/08: Home Office Statistical Bulletin 02/09, 22 January 2009. Table 3.01



**make this clearer.]**

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## What is domestic violence?

There is no specific statutory offence of domestic violence. "Domestic violence" is a general term that describes a range of controlling and coercive behaviour, which is used by one person to maintain control over another with whom they have, or have had, an intimate or family relationship. It is the cumulative effect of abuse, whether physical, psychological, sexual, emotional or financial, that has a particularly damaging effect on the victim. Domestic violence occurs throughout society, amongst people of all ethnicities, sexualities, ages, disabilities, immigration statuses, religions or beliefs, and socio-economic backgrounds. Men and women can both be victims. However, the evidence shows that the overwhelming majority of victims are women and abusers men. Taking action against domestic violence is therefore included as part of the CPS Violence against Women Strategy.

The Government definition of domestic violence (agreed in 2004) is:

"any incident of threatening behaviour, violence or abuse [psychological, physical, sexual, financial or emotional] between adults who are or have been intimate partners or family members, regardless of gender or sexuality."

An *adult* is any person aged 18 years and over and *family members* are defined as mother, father, son, daughter, brother, sister and grandparents, whether directly related, in-laws or step-family. The definition is supported by an explanatory text that makes it clear that domestic violence includes female genital mutilation, forced marriage and so-called "honour crimes".

This definition replaced the various definitions used by individual Government departments and agencies and has helped to improve joint working practices and monitoring.

**Because domestic violence amongst people of all ages needs to be dealt with seriously, and because victims' and children's safety issues and defendant accountability are so important to us, we will also apply our domestic violence policy when dealing with criminal offences that occur in**

Table 3.01 Prevalence of intimate violence by category among adults aged 16 to 59, by sex

Percentages	2007/08 BCS					
	Since the age of 16			In the last year		
	Men	Women	All	Men	Women	All
	% victims once or more					
Any domestic abuse (partner or family non-physical abuse, threats, force or sexual assault) <sup>1</sup>	20.0	30.2	25.2	4.5	6.0	5.3
Any partner abuse (non-physical abuse, threats, force or sexual assault) <sup>2</sup>	16.8	26.5	21.7	4.0	4.8	4.4
Any family abuse (non-physical abuse, threats, force or sexual assault) <sup>2</sup>	7.5	10.0	8.7	1.2	2.0	1.6
Partner abuse (non-physical abuse, threats or force) - non-sexual <sup>2</sup>	17.1	26.7	22.0	4.1	4.9	4.5
Non-physical abuse (emotional, financial)	11.2	18.8	15.1	2.6	3.4	3.0
Threats <sup>3</sup> or force	10.3	19.7	15.1	2.1	2.7	2.4
Threats <sup>3</sup>	1.3	10.1	5.8	0.2	1.4	0.9
Force	10.0	17.9	14.0	2.0	2.2	2.1
- Minor	4.6	14.0	9.4	1.0	1.6	1.3
- Severe	8.1	12.9	10.5	1.4	1.5	1.4
Family abuse (non-physical abuse, threats or force) - non-sexual <sup>2</sup>	7.7	9.6	8.7	1.4	2.1	1.8
Non-physical abuse (emotional, financial)	4.4	5.9	5.2	0.9	1.2	1.0
Threats <sup>3</sup> or force	4.4	6.0	5.2	0.6	1.2	0.9
Threats <sup>3</sup>	1.1	2.3	1.7	0.1	0.4	0.3
Force	3.8	5.1	4.5	0.5	1.0	0.8
- Minor	1.7	3.3	2.5	0.2	0.6	0.4
- Severe	2.9	3.5	3.2	0.4	0.6	0.5
Any sexual assault (including attempts)	3.0	23.3	13.3	0.4	3.0	1.7
Serious sexual assault including attempts	0.6	5.3	3.0	0.1	0.6	0.4
Serious sexual assault excluding attempts	0.4	4.2	2.3	0.1	0.4	0.2
- Rape including attempts <sup>4</sup>	0.5	4.6	2.6	0.1	0.5	0.3
- Rape excluding attempts <sup>4</sup>	0.3	3.7	2.0	0.1	0.3	0.2
- Assault by penetration including attempts <sup>5</sup>	0.2	1.8	1.0	0.0	0.3	0.1
- Assault by penetration excluding attempts <sup>5</sup>	0.1	1.3	0.7	0.0	0.2	0.1
Less serious sexual assault	2.7	22.2	12.6	0.3	2.7	1.6
<i>Unweighted base</i>	11,021	12,634	23,655	10,940	12,486	23,426

1. Domestic abuse refers to non-physical abuse, threats, force or sexual assault carried out by a current or former partner or other family member.

2. Partner abuse refers to abuse carried out by a current or former partner; family abuse is mutually exclusive, referring to abuse carried out by a family member other than a partner (father/mother, step-father/mother, or other relative). The apparent anomalies between prevalence rates of non-sexual abuse and any abuse are due to the exclusion of 'don't know' responses and refusals from the analysis (only valid responses are included) which affects base sizes and thus prevalence rates.

3. Threats are classified as an affirmative response to the statement 'frightened you by threatening to hurt you/someone close'.

4. Rape is the legal category of rape introduced in legislation in 2003. It is the penetration of the vagina or anus without consent and penetration of the mouth by a penis without consent.

5. Assault by penetration is a legal offence introduced in 2003. It is the penetration of the vagina or anus with an object or other body part without consent.

6. For prevalence risks of elements making up these categories see Table 3.02.

7. The bases given are for any partner abuse; the bases for the other measures presented will be similar.