

**Deputy Chair of the UK Statistics Authority  
Professor Sir Roger Jowell CBE**

Keir Starmer QC  
Director of Public Prosecutions  
Crown Prosecution Service  
50 Ludgate Hill  
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EC4M 7EX

30 March 2009

Dear Mr Starmer

**Consultation on the CPS policy for prosecuting cases of domestic violence**

I am writing to you about a matter raised with the UK Statistics Authority by John Mays, Chair of PARITY. I understand this relates to earlier correspondence between Mr Mays and the CPS in September and October 2008, although I am not aware of the response that the CPS made at that time.

PARITY is concerned about a statement in an explanatory document<sup>1</sup> to *A Consultation on the CPS policy for prosecuting cases of domestic violence* in which, under the heading 'What is domestic violence?', the document states

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

The same comment is also made in the consultation document itself. PARITY argues that this assertion is inconsistent with the results of Home Office studies of intimate and interpersonal violence in England and Wales.

The Statistics Authority's Monitoring & Assessment Team have looked in to this point and their observations are set out in the enclosed note.

I hope these observations are helpful in clarifying the point at issue. It would appear that whilst the Home Office evidence does point to a majority of victims being women, the phrase 'overwhelming majority' is not justified in this context.

I am copying this letter to John Mays, Chair of PARITY.

Yours sincerely



M. J. STEVENS  
P.P.

**Professor Sir Roger Jowell CBE**

<sup>1</sup> [http://www.cps.gov.uk/consultations/dv\\_paper.html#02](http://www.cps.gov.uk/consultations/dv_paper.html#02)

## UK Statistics Authority

The observations below are based on consideration of PARITY's letter of 22 February 2009 to the chair of the UK Statistics Authority, the CPS document 'A Consultation on the CPS policy for prosecuting cases of domestic violence', and an analysis of existing official statistics on the subject of domestic violence.

1. Parity has taken issue with a specific statement: 'However, the evidence shows that the overwhelming majority of victims are women and abusers men'. Notwithstanding the possibility that there may be inconsistencies between the CPS' definition of domestic violence and the definition used in the HO's British Crime Survey (BCS)-based statistics (see below), the statement appears to be inconsistent with the evidence of which we are aware on the gender split of victims of domestic violence.
2. National Statistics on domestic violence are available, for example, within the Home Office Statistical Bulletin: Homicides, Firearm Offences and Intimate Violence 2007/08<sup>2</sup>. Overall, these indicate that male victims represent around 40% of all domestic violence victims for 2007/8.
3. Table 3.04 of this Home Office Statistical Bulletin, for example, deals with the estimated numbers of male and female victims aged 16 to 59, during 2007/08. This table shows, for most categories of intimate violence, that while the majority of victims were women, there was also a substantial proportion of male victims.
4. Specific statistics from Table 3.04, relating 2007/08, include, for example:
  - For the category 'Any domestic abuse', of the total 1,688,000 estimated victims, 727,000 (i.e. 43%) were male.
  - For the category 'Any partner abuse', of the total 1,412,000 estimated victims, 641,000 (i.e. 45%) were male.
  - For the category 'Any family abuse', of the total 524,000 estimated victims, 198,000 (i.e. 38%) were male.
5. Page 57 of the same Bulletin also reports, in respect of adult victims (aged 16 to 59) of any domestic abuse since the age of 16, that "Women were more likely than men to have experienced intimate violence across all types of abuse ..." and that "Overall, three in ten (30%) women and two in ten (20%) men had experienced any domestic abuse since the age of 16 ... These figures are equivalent to an estimated 4.8 million female victims of any domestic abuse since the age of 16 and 3.2 million male victims...". For the 2007/08 period, the comparative figures (see Table 3.01 of the Bulletin) were 6% of women and 4.5% of men.
6. Although other sources of domestic violence statistics exist, the HO's Statistical Bulletins are considered to be the most reliable, being based on a self-evaluation supplementary module of the BCS:
  - A recognised problem with the reporting of domestic violence is that victims are less likely to report incidents to police, or via face-to-face BCS interviews, than when self-reporting such as in completing the BCS's supplementary self-completion module.

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<sup>2</sup> <http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/pdfs09/hosb0209.pdf>

- The annual HO publication 'Crime in England and Wales' does make estimates of the level of domestic violence, but these are based on reported crime rather than victims' perceptions of abuse. The HO's Crime in England and Wales publication for 2007/08<sup>3</sup> recognises (p60) that 'The BCS provides a generally more reliable trend measure of violent crime' as the BCS '... is not affected by changes in reporting, police recording and local policing activity...'. It also notes (p61) that the BCS's self-completion modules aim to better capture information relating to domestic violence as respondents may not wish to disclose sensitive information in a face-to-face interview.
  - The HO website<sup>4</sup> also recognises that '... because of under reporting, we know that their police statistics do not give us a full picture on the levels of domestic violence'.
  - Research by Dewar Research<sup>5</sup> also comments on the greater reliability of the HO/BCS supplementary statistics. e.g. for the 2005/06 BCS supplement, Dewar reports that the proportions for male victims given in the BCS supplement (at around 40%) was almost double that found by the routine (i.e. face-to face interview) BCS.
7. The CPS statement would have benefited from an indication of the nature, source or reliability of the evidence on which it was based.

**Monitoring & Assessment Team**  
**March 2009**

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<sup>3</sup> see <http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/crimeew0708.html>

<sup>4</sup> see: <http://crimereduction.homeoffice.gov.uk/dv/dv03a.htm>

<sup>5</sup> see: [www.mankind.org.uk/PDFs/DVGovtStatsJan08.pdf](http://www.mankind.org.uk/PDFs/DVGovtStatsJan08.pdf)