

Review of compliance with the Code of
Practice for Statistics

Domestic abuse estimates from the Crime Survey for England and Wales

(produced by the Office for National Statistics)

The Office for Statistics Regulation

Statistics should serve everyone, helping enhance knowledge about every section of society and the economy, and people's place within them.

The Office for Statistics Regulation (OSR) provides independent regulation of official statistics produced in the UK. Official statistics are statistics produced by Crown bodies and other organisations listed within an [Official Statistics Order](#), on behalf of the UK Government or the devolved governments.

We aim to enhance public confidence in statistics produced by government by setting the standards that they must meet in [the Code of Practice for Statistics](#). We ensure that producers uphold these standards by conducting reviews of statistics against the **Code**. We also report publicly on system-wide issues and on the way statistics are being used, celebrating when the standards are upheld and challenging publicly when they are not.

Assessments

An assessment is a type of compliance review conducted to determine whether a set of official statistics can be accredited.

Under legislation, assessment is the only tool that allows OSR to grant accredited official statistics status (called National Statistics in the Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007). Accredited official statistics are official statistics that we have independently reviewed and confirmed to comply with the standards of Trustworthiness, Quality and Value in the Code of Practice for Statistics.

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Overview

At the time of this review, the Office for National Statistics (ONS)'s domestic abuse estimates from the Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW) are published as official statistics.

These statistics measure the prevalence of domestic abuse among people aged 16 years and over in England and Wales. These statistics aid the government, law enforcement, victim support charities and academics in preventing and understanding domestic abuse and better supporting victims.

This review considered ONS's work to redevelop the domestic abuse statistics and the extent to which they met the evaluation criteria, with a view to deciding whether to accredit these estimates.

Why we did this review

Following the introduction of the Serious Crime Act 2015, ONS recognised that the domestic abuse statistics were no longer aligned to legislation. To support work to develop new questions, ONS conducted a survey on user requirements, which confirmed that the statistics were not meeting user needs. Following this, ONS undertook extensive redevelopment work over several years.

ONS has now permanently introduced a [new set of domestic abuse questions](#) to the CSEW. These questions aim to better capture data on experiences of domestic abuse, including the offence "controlling and coercive behaviour".

Our initial 2023 [review](#) of the redevelopment of the domestic abuse questions examined whether ONS had done everything possible to ensure that the new questions had been adequately developed in line with the [Code of Practice for Statistics](#). Now that ONS has completed its redevelopment work and introduced the new questions to the CSEW, it has requested that we review the statistics to consider whether they should be awarded [accredited official statistics](#) status.

This review also draws from our 2024 [review](#), which considered quality concerns around the CSEW estimates due to reduced sample size.

This review considers ONS's work to redevelop the domestic abuse questions and produce new estimates of domestic abuse victimisation, the first of which were published in July 2025. Specifically, we considered:

- ONS's transparency about the redevelopment work
- whether the new questions accurately measure experiences of domestic abuse victims

- whether the new questions align with legislation
- the quality of the new estimates
- whether ONS ensured that the new questions and estimates meet user needs
- the clarity and insight of the new estimates

Highlighted findings

- ONS has regularly updated users on the development of the new domestic abuse questions. The April 2023 [update](#) provided a clear and accessible overview of the whole redevelopment process and outlined the criteria that ONS used to assess the success of the new questions.
- ONS worked closely with subject experts and carried out cognitive testing with people from diverse backgrounds to refine the new questions. This work helped ensure that the redevelopment process was robust and that the questions reflect victims' lived experiences.
- The new domestic abuse estimates are reliable and fit for purpose. ONS has shown that the quality of the data – particularly in terms of non-response rates and question precision – is comparable to that of previous estimates. As these figures are part of the wider CSEW dataset, the findings from our 2024 [quality review](#) support their robustness.
- ONS has actively engaged with users and stakeholders throughout the redevelopment process. Engagement activities have included one-to-one meetings with government, academic and third-sector stakeholders, multiple user surveys, and annual stakeholder events to gather feedback and understand user needs.
- There are some areas where engagement could have been strengthened. For example, the winter 2024/25 survey received a limited number of responses, most likely due to its timing over the Christmas and New Year period.
- ONS has presented the statistics clearly and provided useful guidance for interpreting the new estimates. The bulletin in which they are published explains that the new figures are not directly comparable with previous estimates and cannot be adjusted to enable such comparisons.

Our judgement

Based on the findings of this review, it is our view that ONS's domestic abuse estimates from the Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW) comply with the standards of Trustworthiness, Quality and Value in the [Code of Practice for Statistics](#) and should be reinstated as accredited official statistics.

ONS has undertaken significant work to redevelop the domestic abuse questions to better capture the experiences of victims and meet the needs of users. However, based on our findings and engagement with users, we have concluded that some areas for improvement remain. We have set out [four recommendations](#) for ONS to take forward to improve the quality and value of these statistics.

Next steps

We expect ONS to consider implementing our recommendations to enhance the quality and value of the statistics and strengthen the effectiveness of future user engagement activities.

Introduction

Background to the statistics

- 1.1 ONS's Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW) asks respondents about their experiences of a range of crime types, including domestic abuse. The questions on domestic abuse victimisation are asked as part of a self-completion module. These questions have largely remained the same since they were introduced in April 2004. The domestic abuse statistics are published in ONS's quarterly [Crime in England and Wales statistical bulletin](#) and the annual [Domestic abuse in England and Wales overview](#).
- 1.2 The prevalence measures derived from the domestic abuse questions in the CSEW are ONS's preferred measures for estimating domestic abuse. Police recorded crime statistics, which are based on crimes reported to police forces in England and Wales, do not provide a good indicator of trends in domestic abuse over time due to changes in how police record crime and priorities and changes in the willingness of victims to report a crime.
- 1.3 The Serious Crime Act 2015 introduced the offence of "controlling and coercive behaviour". Between April 2017 and March 2019, ONS developed and tested new questions on controlling and coercive behaviour. It added these questions to the CSEW on a split-sample basis, where half the sample was asked the old questions and half was asked the new questions.
- 1.4 ONS's [analysis](#) of the data collected from these new questions showed uncertainty in whether they adequately captured the experiences of victims of controlling and coercive behaviour. ONS therefore decided that further development of the questions was needed.
- 1.5 ONS conducted a user survey in 2020 to better understand users' needs and concerns with the questions. The findings revealed that the domestic abuse questions did not meet user needs for a measure of the number of incidents or frequency of abuse. The survey also revealed that users wanted more information on the nature of abuse. The questions and estimates then drifted further from definitions set out in legislation with the introduction of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021.
- 1.6 Given these issues, ONS decided to redevelop the domestic abuse questions to meet user needs and keep pace with the changes in legislation.
- 1.7 ONS started the second round of question redevelopment in autumn 2020, commissioning a consortium of topic experts to undertake a full review of the questions. The new questions were then developed after multiple rounds of

cognitive testing and extensive user engagement. ONS added these questions to the CSEW in April 2023, again on a split-sample basis.

- 1.8 ONS published the [criteria](#) that it used to evaluate the success of these new questions in April 2023. The evaluation criteria were set out in line with our [Code of Practice for Statistics](#) and Eurostat's [European Statistics Code of Practice](#), covering areas like relevance and reliability. For full detail of ONS's evaluation criteria, see [Annex 2](#). ONS published its [evaluation report](#) using the criteria in May 2025.
- 1.9 ONS permanently introduced the new set of domestic abuse questions into the CSEW in April 2025. The questions are designed to more accurately capture data on experiences of domestic abuse, including the offence of controlling and coercive behaviour.
- 1.10 The CSEW domestic abuse estimates feed into ONS's new combined prevalence measure of domestic abuse, sexual assault and stalking. This measure is the main metric that will be used to gauge the success of the UK Government's mission to halve violence against women and girls (VAWG) in a decade.

Our approach

- 1.11 Our 2023 [review](#) of the redevelopment of the domestic abuse questions examined whether the new domestic questions had been adequately developed in line with the [Code of Practice for Statistics](#). We considered ONS's approach to redevelopment, including how it engaged with stakeholders and how it explained the redevelopment process and updated users on progress.
- 1.12 Now that ONS has completed its redevelopment work and added the new questions to the CSEW, ONS asked us to review the statistics again with a view to awarding them [accredited official statistics](#) status.
- 1.13 This review assesses whether the new questions and estimates meet user needs, their effect on quality, and the clarity and insight that they offer.
- 1.14 We gathered evidence from desk research and engagement with key users of the statistics and reviewed a range of documents published by ONS, including:
 - all research updates on the redevelopment of the domestic abuse statistics published between November 2021 and May 2025 ([November 2021](#), [November 2022](#), [November 2023](#), [December 2024](#), [May 2025](#))
 - the [Evaluating a new measure of domestic abuse](#) report
 - the [Developing a new measure of domestic abuse: April 2023](#) report

- supplementary documents, including the [Quality Methodology and Information report](#) and the [accompanying supplementary tables](#)
 - ONS's user engagement documentation
- 1.15 We also reviewed the [Developing and Testing New Domestic Abuse Questions and Approach for the Crime Survey for England and Wales](#) report authored by the academics that worked on the redevelopment of the domestic abuse questions. Additionally, we considered the findings from our 2024 review of the impact of a reduced sample size on the CSEW estimates' quality.
- 1.16 We spoke to several key users of the domestic abuse statistics. We conducted three interviews between July 2025 and August 2025 with users from the third sector and academics. We also looked for user views in the media.

Findings

Transparency about the redevelopment work

- 2.1 ONS has regularly updated users of its progress on developing the new domestic abuse questions. For instance, the [Developing a new measure of domestic abuse: April 2023](#) update gives a clear, transparent and accessible overview of the entire question redevelopment process. It sets out the criteria that ONS used to evaluate the success of the new questions.
- 2.2 ONS published an [evaluation](#) of the new questions in May 2025. The evaluation report presents detailed evidence on whether the new questions have met the evaluation criteria and is open and transparent about the areas where the statistics and accompanying tables can be improved. To make it easier for users to follow the progress of its evaluation, ONS should consider publishing a simple table summarising the evaluation criteria and the extent to which they have been met.

Measuring experiences of domestic abuse victims

- 2.3 ONS involved topic experts in drafting the new questions and in undertaking cognitive testing with individuals from diverse backgrounds to refine the questions. Involving experts from the outset helped ensure that the redevelopment process was robust and that the new questions reflect the lived experiences of victims.
- 2.4 ONS awarded the research contract to redevelop the domestic abuse questions to a consortium led by the Centre for Gender and Violence Research at the University of Bristol. It also involved the College of Policing and various domestic abuse charities and victim support organisations, including Women's Aid Federation of England, Men's Advice Line, IMKAAN and Welsh Women's Aid. The Home Office, the Domestic Abuse Commissioner's Office and academics were also consulted throughout the redevelopment process.
- 2.5 The consortium had clear aims from the start to develop and test new questions on domestic abuse for the CSEW to improve the headline prevalence measure, including frequency of abuse, to develop a way of measuring controlling or coercive behaviour within the overall prevalence measure, and to develop a measure of the impact of abuse. When drafting the questions, to ensure that they were accurately capturing the correct data, the consortium considered:
 - a. the difficulty of reflecting the subtle nature of controlling or coercive behaviours, and the possibility that victims may not recognise such behaviours as abusive while still in the relationship

- b. how to design questions that accurately reflect the experiences of both female and male victims
 - c. how to mitigate against the possibility that experiences which are not abusive are reported by survey respondents as such
- 2.6 The suitability of the questions was tested in multiple ways. The consortium used online focus groups and interviews with domestic abuse victims to explore question framing and determine if they covered victims' experiences. The survey questions were then amended based on the findings from these focus groups and interviews. The questions underwent cognitive testing with victims as well as with members of the public who had not experienced domestic abuse. These tests indicated that the questions worked well for both intimate partner abuse and family abuse and that non-physical abuse questions were clear and well received.
- 2.7 Prior to adding the new questions to the survey, ONS commissioned Verian (the contractor for the CSEW) to undertake usability testing of the questions to ensure that they work within the context of the self-completion module when handed to a respondent on a laptop or tablet. The testing involved face-to-face interviews with individuals with lived experience of domestic abuse and individuals with no experience of domestic abuse. ONS made minor amendments to the questions based on the results of this testing, including adding instructions about how to respond to questions and the reference period for questions.
- 2.8 Feedback from most users suggests that these new questions accurately measure what they are seeking to – the lived experiences of victims of domestic abuse. ONS told us that based on its one-to-one meetings with stakeholders and engagement with expert stakeholder groups, most users were happy that the new questions captured the experiences of victims.
- 2.9 ONS's winter 2024/25 user survey asked users if they thought that the new questions accurately captured the lived experiences of victims of domestic abuse. The survey showed that 53.8% of people either "agreed" or "strongly agreed" that they do. However, the same survey also highlighted that 38.5% of users did not think that the new questions accurately captured the lived experiences of victims of domestic abuse. Users specified that faith-based abuse and technology-facilitated abuse were missing. While none of the questions specifically ask about these abuse types, cognitive testing with victims from a range of demographics found that they felt the new questions aligned with their lived experiences. Users also noted that the crime survey did not cover child victims witnessing domestic abuse and some other populations.
- 2.10 Of all the respondents, 76.9% agreed that the new survey questions should be permanently added to the CSEW. Based on the findings from the user survey and

broader user engagement, ONS decided to roll out the questions to the full sample of CSEW respondents permanently from April 2025.

Ensuring the new questions align with legislation

- 2.11 One of the main aims of ONS's redevelopment work was to align the new questions with the government definitions of domestic abuse in the Domestic Abuse Act 2021. ONS's evaluation report explains how the estimates produced using the new questions closely align with the definitions in the Act.
- 2.12 ONS found that the new questions align or partially align with 48 out of the 82 (58.5%) example behaviours in the Home Office's [Domestic Abuse Statutory Guidance](#). It found that technology-facilitated abuse and abuse relating to faith are the behaviours that are least covered by the new questions. Reasons given for questions not aligning with the definitions in the Act include the information being outside the scope of the redevelopment work, not being able to capture the behaviour in a victimisation survey and having limited space in the survey.
- 2.13 ONS also considered how closely the new questions align with the definitions of controlling and coercive behaviour set out in the Serious Crime Act 2015. Again, the evaluation report outlines where the questions match closely with the legal definition.
- 2.14 ONS provides some explanation on key areas where the survey does not align with the behaviours listed in the statutory guidance, for example, explaining that faith-based abuse and verbal abuse are not well covered by the new questions. ONS also invites users to contact the ONS Centre for Crime and Justice if they would like more-detailed information about which example behaviours listed in the statutory guidance are covered by the questions and which are not.

Recommendation 1. To ensure user needs are being met, ONS should monitor the level of interest in more-detailed information about which example behaviours listed in the statutory guidance are covered under the new questions and which are not and consider publishing a guide.

The quality of the new estimates

OSR review of the CSEW estimates

- 2.15 In October 2024, we reinstated the accredited official statistics status of all CSEW estimates, including the old domestic abuse estimates, after having [temporarily suspended](#) the accreditation in July 2022 due to quality concerns. A key concern was the substantial drop in the overall response rates from 70–76% before the COVID-19 pandemic to 42% in 2022–23 and how this may have impacted the quality of the CSEW estimates. These quality issues are also relevant to the new

domestic abuse estimates, as ONS used data collected on a split-sample basis between April 2023 and September 2024 to produce the estimates in the July 2025 [quarterly bulletin](#).

- 2.16 In our [letter](#) confirming the reaccreditation of the CSEW estimates, we said that we were satisfied that ONS had demonstrated that the quality of the current estimates was broadly similar to that of the pre-pandemic estimates, and considered that ONS provided enough reassurance to users that the lower response rate had limited impact on the quality of the estimates. We encouraged ONS to continue to monitor the quality of the estimates.

Impacts of the new questions on non-response rates

- 2.17 Two of ONS's criteria for [evaluating](#) the success of the new questions are as follows:
- a. They do not lead to a significant increase in non-response rates.
 - b. They do not lead to a significant increase in non-response bias.
- 2.18 Collecting data on a split-sample basis allowed ONS to examine non-response in the sample. ONS reported that the overall non-response rate for the new questions was 1.4 percentage points higher than for the existing questions (3.2% compared with 1.8% based on a sample size of just under 20,000 for each set of questions). Deeper analysis showed that the non-response rates largely stemmed from the family abuse questions, where non-response was 2.1 percentage points higher (4.3% for the new questions compared with 2.2% for the old questions).
- 2.19 ONS said that it expected to see an increase in the non-response rates and thought that this may be due to the extra length and detail of the new questions. ONS speculated that the larger increase in non-response for family abuse questions occurs because most respondents will have already answered many questions on partner abuse before they are asked about family abuse.
- 2.20 ONS also analysed the characteristics of non-respondents (such as ethnicity and age) to identify any potential impact and bias on the estimates derived from the new questions. It found that the non-response rates remained low, and all specific characteristics followed this trend. ONS did not explain the non-response rates for these characteristics in the evaluation report, but it did publish the data in the [supplementary tables](#).
- 2.21 After considering ONS's investigations, we do not have concerns about non-response. The overall non-response rate for the new questions has increased, but this increase has been slight, and the rate remains low across all respondent characteristics. We understand why this has not affected ONS's decision to include

the new questions and welcome ONS's transparency about its analysis of non-response. It is good that ONS is continuing to monitor this aspect of the quality of the statistics and exploring the factors that may be causing the increase in non-response. We encourage ONS to engage with experts here and to publish any findings from this work so that users are informed about how the non-response rates impact the quality of the new domestic abuse estimates.

Precision of the new estimates

- 2.22 As the estimates from the domestic abuse questions are based on a sample of the population, the estimates are accompanied by a measure of uncertainty relating to how the estimate might differ from the "true value". Confidence intervals indicate the degree of uncertainty of an estimate and help in determining how precise or close an estimate is to the "true value". They specify a range of values likely to contain the unknown population value. These values are defined by lower and upper limits. For the domestic abuse estimates, ONS uses 95% confidence intervals. This means that if the questions were asked again to 100 different samples of similar size and nature, 95 times out of 100, the resulting estimate would fall somewhere between the upper and lower limits.
- 2.23 To assess the level of uncertainty of the new estimates, ONS compared the widths of the 95% confidence intervals around the estimates from the old and new questions. Although the estimates and confidence intervals are not directly comparable, if the confidence interval was considerably wider for estimates generated from the new questions compared with estimates generated from the old questions, it could suggest that there were issues with the accuracy and reliability of the estimates from the new questions.
- 2.24 The precision of the new estimates appears to be robust. ONS found that the confidence intervals are slightly wider for the estimates derived from the new questions compared to estimates from the old questions. However, the difference is fairly minimal, which should give users confidence in the quality of the new estimates. For instance, for the "domestic abuse since the age of 16 years" estimate, the confidence interval for the estimate derived from the new questions was 2.1 percentage points, compared with 1.9 percentage points for the estimate derived from the old questions.

Our judgement on the quality of the new estimates

- 2.25 We are satisfied that the quality of the new domestic abuse estimates is sufficient to meet the needs of users. Although we have not conducted an in-depth review of quality of the new domestic abuse estimates, based on the findings from our reaccreditation of the CSEW estimates and ONS's evaluation of non-response and precision, the new domestic abuse estimates appear to be similarly robust to other CSEW estimates.

Ensuring the new questions and estimates meet user needs

- 2.26 ONS has engaged effectively with users and stakeholders through a variety of channels and throughout the redevelopment work. ONS has had one-to-one meetings with stakeholders in government, academia and the third sector. It ran multiple user surveys at different points throughout the development process to understand user needs and seek feedback on its work. ONS also hosted annual stakeholder events, where the stakeholders were given the opportunity to ask questions and provide feedback. [Annex 4](#) summarises ONS's main user engagement activities since summer 2020.
- 2.27 We welcome ONS's proactive and collaborative approach to user engagement. Throughout the redevelopment process, ONS has demonstrated a willingness to maintain open dialogues, meeting or consulting with a wide variety of users in a range of ways. At each stage of question development, ONS sought feedback from stakeholders and addressed their views and implemented their suggestions where possible.
- 2.28 For example, measuring the impact of abuse on victims, such as their mental health, confidence or their physical health, was highlighted as essential by many users of the domestic abuse statistics. Users said that having data on impact is an important aspect of understanding how victims experience domestic abuse. As a result of this feedback, ONS developed questions that would measure the impact of domestic abuse on victims. After further testing and positive feedback from users, ONS decided to add the impact questions to the new domestic abuse questions.
- 2.29 Another good example of ONS seeking views from users and acting on their feedback is the October 2022 stakeholder event. Stakeholders were given the opportunity to provide feedback about whether the new questions would meet their needs and share their views on the redevelopment process. ONS said that the feedback gathered was generally positive, with 84.6% of attendees either "very confident" or "somewhat confident" that the new questions would address the issues with the existing questions. Users did raise some areas of concern, such as the importance of ensuring that there was no sex bias in the questions. ONS amended the questions to address their concerns.
- 2.30 Not all user engagement activities were as effective as they could have been. For example, ONS ran a user survey between December 2024 and January 2025 to gather feedback on the content of the new questions, the new estimates, the methodology used to produce the new estimates and the supporting information around the estimates and the trial outputs. ONS only received 14 responses (compared to 39 in its 2020 survey) – a small number for a topic of high public interest with an engaged user base.

2.31 The low response rate was likely due to the survey running for one month over Christmas and New Year, when many stakeholders are busy. ONS told us the survey was run at this time to allow enough time to analyse responses and make a decision about rolling out the new questions permanently by the end of March 2025. The limited response rate to the winter 2024/25 survey underscores the need for a more strategic approach to timing and promotion, especially given the high public interest in domestic abuse statistics.

Recommendation 2: ONS should consider what lessons it can learn from its timings around the winter 2024/25 survey to improve future survey planning and maximise the opportunity for users to share their views.

- 2.32 To gather further evidence on the effectiveness of ONS's approach to user engagement, we spoke to several key users of the statistics that had been involved in the redevelopment process. We also monitored public comments on the evaluation report and domestic abuse estimates published in July 2025.
- 2.33 As noted above, many users were positive about the engagement and the extent to which the new estimates meet their needs. There were, however, some specific gaps highlighted. For example, one charity pointed to areas where the statistics do not meet their needs, such as children's experience of domestic abuse not being captured. ONS explains in its [evaluation report](#) that only those aged 16 or over can participate in the CSEW. However, the survey does ask respondents about threats to someone or something they care about, and as such, some child victims may be captured by the survey.
- 2.34 ONS is continuing to explore the feasibility of a survey to measure the prevalence of child abuse, and in June 2024, it published a [report](#) on its work so far. ONS also explained that it will be reviewing the questions previously present in the "nature of partner abuse" module, which covers the respondent's perception of children witnessing domestic abuse.
- 2.35 Some users we spoke to told us that it was unclear which types of questions refer to which types of abuse, and it was unclear what questions they are based on. These users also told us that they would have liked more data to evaluate the impact of the new questions.
- 2.36 Another user expressed frustration that the redevelopment has led to a break in the long-term time series, making it so that the new estimates are not comparable with the old estimates. However, ONS explained in its evaluation report that most users believed that improving the headline estimates was more important than maintaining the existing time series.
- 2.37 In the [evaluation report](#), ONS sets out its view that it has listened to users and implemented changes where possible, but it has not been able to meet everyone's

requirements. The report states that 70% of the unique user requirements gathered throughout the redevelopment work have either been fully or partially met through the new questions.

- 2.38 We recognise that it is not possible to meet the needs of all users, and we consider that ONS has set out to balance the requirements and priorities of a wide range of users. ONS has been clear with users about which needs it has and has not met and details the reasons for this in its evaluation article. This engagement with users should continue, and any unmet user need should be identified and considered transparently alongside other resource and constraints and organisational priorities.

Recommendation 3: ONS should continue to engage with users to ensure that enough information is published to enable users to use the new statistics and the underlying data. Relevant information includes:

- a. which estimates are linked to which questions
- b. guidance for users seeking to undertake trend analysis or analysis over time

Clarity and insight of the new estimates

- 2.39 ONS published the first estimates from the new questions in the [Crime in England and Wales: year ending March 2025](#) bulletin. The presentation of the statistics is insightful, and ONS has provided clear guidance for interpreting the new estimates. For instance, the bulletin explains that the new estimates are not directly comparable with older estimates and that it is not possible to adjust the new estimates to make these comparisons.
- 2.40 ONS received specific feedback and suggestions for improvement in the winter 2024/25 survey. For instance, users found it helpful to have a table showing the prevalence of physical abuse, since the age of 16 years, by type of physical abuse and sex. This table was generated from the new questions. ONS plans to include the new table in its annual domestic abuse overview. Users also requested that ONS publish a time series table similar to those in the existing tables for domestic abuse prevalence and victim characteristics. ONS published a time series comparing estimates from the year ending March 2025 with those from the year ending March 2024 in the [Crime in England and Wales: year ending March 2025](#) bulletin.
- 2.41 The [evaluation report](#) stated that ONS will include many of the suggestions for more data or detailed breakdowns in its plans for future outputs, including the annual domestic abuse overview. We will monitor these future outputs and follow up with ONS to understand the extent to which it has implemented these user suggestions.

2.42 Whilst ONS's [user guide](#) to crime statistics for England and Wales talks about the split sample, the quarterly bulletin does not mention that the estimates are only based on half of the domestic abuse sample. Given that these estimates are widely used and feed into the combined prevalence measure used to monitor the UK Government's mission to halve violence against women and girls, we consider that ONS should be transparent about the reduced sample size, as it may impact the conclusions drawn from the statistics.

Recommendation 4: To support user interpretation of the domestic abuse estimates, ONS should set out in the statistics bulletin that estimates from April 2023 to March 2025 are based on only half of the domestic abuse sample.

Annex 1: List of recommendations from this review

Based on our findings and engagement with users, we have concluded that some areas for improvement remain. We have set out four recommendations for ONS to take forward to improve the quality and value of these statistics.

We expect ONS to consider implementing our recommendations to enhance the quality and value of the statistics and strengthen the effectiveness of future user engagement activities.

Recommendation 1: To ensure user needs are being met, ONS should monitor the level of interest in more-detailed information about which example behaviours listed in the statutory guidance are covered under the new questions and which are not and consider publishing a guide.

Recommendation 2: ONS should consider what lessons it can learn from its timings around the winter 2024/25 survey to improve future survey planning and maximise the opportunity for users to share their views.

Recommendation 3: ONS should continue to engage with users to ensure that enough information is published to enable users to use the new statistics and the underlying data. Relevant information includes:

- a) which estimates are linked to which questions
- b) guidance for users seeking to undertake trend analysis or analysis over time

Recommendation 4: To support user interpretation of the domestic abuse estimates, ONS should mention in the statistics bulletin that estimates from April 2023 to March 2025 are based on only half of the domestic abuse sample.

Annex 2: ONS' evaluation criteria

ONS' evaluation criteria	ONS' assessment of whether criteria have been met
The new questions and proposed outputs meet the priority requirements of users.	Criteria met: User engagement throughout redevelopment ensured that requirements were documented, assessed and prioritised, and feedback was continuously sought to ensure that these were being met. User feedback about the move to the new questions is positive, and indicated that the proposed outputs will meet the majority of user requirements.
The majority of users are satisfied with the outputs produced from the new questions.	Criteria partially met: The findings from the winter 2024/25 user survey showed that 45.5% of respondents were "very satisfied" or "quite satisfied" with the trial outputs. ONS is seeking to improve on this, but mentioned that when speaking one to one with users, they expressed being largely satisfied with the new questions.
Data collected from the new questions can produce prevalence estimates and breakdowns at the same level of detail as is currently produced.	Criteria met: The trial output tables published in December 2024 included prevalence estimates for more abuse types than are available from the existing questions. The new questions also provide the opportunity to publish more-detailed breakdowns. ONS plans to continue developing these outputs based on user need.
Methods for producing abuse profiles have been tested and shared with users.	Criteria not currently met: ONS is currently exploring a cluster analysis approach to derive abuse profiles alongside hierarchical methods to determine the optimum number of clusters. While ONS is currently unable to share any results while it explores methods, it aims to share more information in its annual domestic abuse compendium later in 2025.
The new questions accurately measure lived experiences of victims of domestic abuse.	Partially met: In the latest user survey, of the 13 responses to the statement "The new domestic abuse questions accurately capture the lived experiences of domestic abuse victims", 53.8% of people either "agreed" or "strongly agreed"; 7.7% "neither agreed or disagreed"; and 38.5%

	<p>"disagreed" or "strongly disagreed". This demonstrates that some users may not be completely satisfied with the contents of the new questions, though the majority (76.9%) want the questions to be included permanently on the survey.</p> <p>ONS continues to engage with users and is monitoring this matter.</p>
The new questions do not lead to a significant increase in non-response rates.	<p>Criteria met: Although the non-response rates for the new questions are higher, the increase was expected. And while the non-response rates have almost doubled in some cases, the overall non-response rate for the new questions remains relatively small.</p>
The new questions do not lead to a significant increase in non-response bias.	<p>Criteria met: Analysis from ONS generally showed that the non-response rates in the new questions had a slightly higher rate than the existing questions. However, the rates remained low, and there were no specific characteristics that did not follow this trend.</p>
The new questions do not negatively affect the timeliness and punctuality of our domestic abuse publications.	<p>Partially met: When producing the trial outputs, ONS found that the time taken for production was similar to the time taken to produce the existing outputs. Because of the greater number of estimates being produced, marginally more resource will be required. The new domestic abuse profiles are still under development; therefore, there is uncertainty about how they will impact on timeliness.</p>
The comparability between estimates produced using the new questions and the existing time series is clear to users.	<p>Criteria met: The latest user survey asked users to what extent they agree with the following statement: "It is clear why the estimates produced using the existing questions and estimates produced using the new questions are not comparable."</p> <p>Of the respondents, 76.9% "strongly agreed" or "agreed" with the statement.</p>

<p>Estimates produced using the new questions closely align with government definitions of domestic abuse, for example the Serious Crime Act 2015 and Domestic Abuse Act 2021, and any differences are clear to users.</p>	<p>Partially met: The Domestic Abuse Statutory Guidance, provided alongside the Domestic Abuse Act 2021, lists 82 example abusive behaviours. The new questions align or partially align with 48 (58.5%).</p> <p>Home Office's Controlling or coercive behaviour: statutory guidance framework, which accompanies the definition provided in the Serious Crime Act 2015, provides 38 examples of behaviours within the range of controlling or coercive behaviour. In all, 23 (60.5%) of these behaviours aligned with the new questions.</p>
<p>Estimates produced using the new questions are presented in a format that is easily available and clear to users.</p>	<p>Criteria met: In the latest user survey, ONS asked users how easy they found it to access the trial outputs. Of those, 81.8% (around four in five users) found it "very easy" or "quite easy" to access them, while the remaining 18.2% found it "neither easy nor difficult".</p> <p>Most users (72.7%) found it "very easy" or "quite easy" to interpret the data presented in the trial outputs, with 18.2% finding it "neither easy nor difficult" and 9.1% finding it "difficult" (Figure 12).</p>
<p>Supporting information about the changes to the questions, and estimates produced using them, is easily available and clear to users.</p>	<p>Criteria met: ONS asked users to what extent they agreed with the following statement:</p> <p>"Supporting information about the changes to the questions and estimates is easily available and clear."</p> <p>The majority of respondents (61.5%) either "strongly agreed" or "agreed" with this statement; 15.4% "neither agreed nor disagreed"; and 23.1% "disagreed" or "strongly disagreed".</p>

Annex 3: Timeline of the redevelopment process

November 2015–March 2017: Questions to measure controlling or coercive behaviour were developed through the ONS Domestic Abuse Statistics Steering Group.

April 2017: ONS introduced a split-sample experiment on the CSEW to assess whether the controlling and coercive behaviour questions were fit for purpose.

April 2019: ONS published [an analysis of the controlling or coercive behaviour questions](#) showing uncertainty in whether they adequately capture victims of the offence. ONS concluded that the questions require further development and removed the controlling and coercive behaviour questions from the survey.

Summer 2020: A user survey was conducted to better understand user needs from the statistics.

December 2020–June 2021: A review and mapping exercise of the questions asked on domestic abuse in the CSEW was undertaken by a consortium led by the University of Bristol, also involving the College of Policing, Women's Aid and Men's Advice Line.

November 2021: ONS awarded a research contract to redevelop the domestic abuse statistics to a consortium led by the Centre for Gender and Violence Research at the University of Bristol. This also involved the College of Policing, Women's Aid Federation of England, Men's Advice Line, IMKAAN and Welsh Women's Aid.

November 2021: ONS published its [Redevelopment of domestic abuse statistics: research update November 2021](#)

2022–early 2023: ONS undertook further work on the domestic abuse questions based on recommendations from University of Bristol, including qualitative testing with victims.

November 2022: ONS published its [Redevelopment of domestic abuse statistics: research update November 2022](#).

April 2023–March 2025: New domestic abuse questions were introduced into the CSEW on a split-sample basis.

November 2023: ONS published its [Redevelopment of domestic abuse statistics: research update November 2023](#). This update breaks down ONS's evaluation criteria for the new questions.

December 2024: ONS published the trial outputs and invited feedback from users as part of the [Redevelopment of domestic abuse statistics: research update December 2024](#).

April 2025: The new questions were introduced into the CSEW on a permanent basis.

May 2025: ONS published its [Redevelopment of domestic abuse statistics: research update May 2025](#) and its [evaluation of the new domestic abuse questions](#).

Annex 4: ONS' user engagement throughout the redevelopment process

Summer 2020: ONS carried out a user survey to understand more about how users of the CSEW domestic abuse statistics made use of the data.

November 2020: ONS awarded a research contract to a consortium led by the University of Bristol also involving the College of Policing, Women's Aid and Men's Advice Line. The work took place between December 2020 and the end of June 2021.

Stakeholder meeting, March 2021: An online meeting was held with 18 core stakeholders. The aim of the meeting was to review the early findings on the current headline measure of domestic abuse, measuring the frequency of acts of abuse, measuring coercive and controlling behaviour, and measuring impact.

Stakeholder event, October 2021: An online stakeholder event was held. The event was open to anyone with an interest in statistics on domestic abuse. During the event, ONS provided an update, on the consortium's recommendations, responded to questions about the research and their future plans for the domestic abuse statistics, and addressed concerns raised by users.

November 2021: ONS awarded a research contract to redevelop the domestic abuse statistics to a consortium led by the Centre for Gender and Violence Research at the University of Bristol, which also involved the College of Policing, Women's Aid Federation of England, Men's Advice Line, IMKAAN and Welsh Women's Aid.

Stakeholder feedback, February 2022: Feedback was gathered from core stakeholders on an initial set of draft survey questions which had been developed by the consortium.

Office for Statistics Regulation review, April 2023: We praised ONS's extensive user engagement when developing the questions.

One-to-one meetings with users, April 2023–onwards. ONS met with users on a one-to-one basis to discuss users' requirements in more detail and answer any questions about the new questions.

Winter 2024/25 survey: ONS asked for feedback on the content of the new questions, the new estimates, the methodology used to produce the new estimates and the supporting information around the estimates and the trial outputs. Fourteen users responded.

One-to-one meetings with stakeholders, January 2025–July 2025: Meetings were solely focussed on discussing the new domestic abuse questions.

Stakeholder event, June 2025: 70+ stakeholders were invited to a webinar on the domestic abuse statistics.

