

Article

Redevelopment of domestic abuse statistics: research update December 2024

Update on the ongoing research to redevelop statistics on domestic abuse from the Crime Survey for England and Wales.

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1 . Overview

The way domestic abuse manifests is constantly changing. To ensure our statistics continue to provide the most accurate information and meet the needs of users, we have undertaken a user engagement, research and testing programme to improve the collection of data on domestic abuse.

New survey questions to measure domestic abuse were added to the Crime Survey for England and Wales in April 2023 as part of a split-sample trial until March 2025. Half of respondents are asked the new questions and the other half are asked the existing questions.

Our previous [Developing a new measure of domestic abuse: April 2023 methodology](#) presented these new questions alongside our plans for evaluating their success. This was supplemented by our [Redevelopment of domestic abuse statistics: research update November 2023 article](#), which provided greater detail on the research questions we would answer to assess the evaluation criteria.

This article provides an update of our progress on answering the research questions, with a particular focus on the data collected from the new survey questions and accompanying analysis.

Hearing your views is a key part of our evaluation. We would like you to submit your feedback on the redevelopment of domestic abuse statistics through [a survey](#) that will run between 3 December 2024 and 5 January 2025.

2 . Assessing the evaluation criteria

In April 2023 we outlined the criteria we would use to evaluate the success of the new questions. We then published the research questions that would be used to assess the evaluation criteria. Over the last year we have been analysing the data received, along with information from other sources, to answer the research questions and assess the evaluation criteria. This section summarises some of this work. Further information on the full evaluation will be published in spring 2025 when a decision as to whether we include the new questions permanently will be made.

Defining a victim of domestic abuse

Under the relevance quality dimension, one of our evaluation criteria is "Data collected from the new questions can produce prevalence estimates and breakdowns at the same level of detail as is currently produced". Within this criterion is research question 1.5 "How do we define a victim based on the behaviours they have experienced?"

The existing domestic abuse questions on the Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW) do not align with the definition of domestic abuse introduced in the [Domestic Abuse Act 2021](#). To define a victim of domestic abuse using the new survey questions, we have therefore aimed to align as closely to the definition in the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 as possible, within the constraints of what it is feasible to ask respondents within a limited number of survey questions.

The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 states that victims of domestic abuse are "aged 16 and over and are personally connected to each other". It outlines that behaviour is abusive if it consists of any of the following:

- physical or sexual abuse
- violent or threatening behaviour
- controlling or coercive behaviour
- economic abuse
- psychological, emotional or other abuse

The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 also states that "it does not matter whether the behaviour consists of a single incident or a course of conduct".

Therefore, for two of our prevalence measures (since the age of 16 years and in the last year) based only on the abusive behaviours experienced questions, we will define someone as a victim of domestic abuse if they have selected one or more of the abusive behaviours. Our [extensive cognitive testing of the new survey questions](#) with both victims and non-victims of domestic abuse showed that while the abusive behaviours included within the questions aligned as closely as possible to the types of behaviours outlined in the Domestic Abuse Act 2021, they were also understood by all and reflected lived experiences.

Deriving prevalence measures

The second research question within our evaluation criterion "Data collected from the new questions can produce prevalence estimates and breakdowns at the same level of detail as is currently produced" is 1.6 "Can we derive prevalence measures to the same level of detail as we currently do?"

Alongside this article we have published a set of trial outputs in our [Redevelopment of domestic abuse statistics, data from split sample trial, England and Wales: year ending March 2024](#) dataset showing what we could produce annually if we included the new domestic abuse questions permanently. The outputs focus on two of our prevalence measures which estimate domestic abuse since the age of 16 years and in the last year. These measures are based on the new abusive behaviour questions and are underpinned by the definition of a victim of domestic abuse outlined previously in this section.

In line with the Domestic Abuse Act 2021, we have published estimates on the following abuse types:

- emotional abuse
- economic abuse
- health-related abuse
- marital status-related abuse
- threatening abusive behaviours
- physical abuse
- domestic sexual assault
- domestic stalking

This is a more comprehensive list of abuse types than can be provided from the existing questions and will provide greater detail on victim's experiences of abuse.

A single measure of controlling or coercive behaviour has not been produced because we are unable to capture all the information required within the survey questions to align to the offence of controlling or coercive behaviour introduced in the [Serious Crime Act 2015](#). In addition, each of the abuse types we collect information on include large elements of controlling or coercive behaviours as outlined in the [Controlling or coercive behaviour: statutory guidance framework](#) making it extremely difficult to separate what is controlling or coercive behaviour and what isn't. However, the estimates from each of the abuse types include behaviours that would be considered controlling or coercive. We anticipate the prevalence measure accounting for abusive behaviours and their impacts will provide a measure that is more closely aligned to the definition of controlling or coercive behaviour in the Domestic Abuse Act 2021.

More information and analysis of the data presented in the trial outputs is provided in Section 3: Analysis of data from the new questions.

Domestic abuse profiles

The measures outlined so far account for abusive behaviours but not the impact of those behaviours. Research question 1.9 "Are we able to model domestic abuse profiles from the data we collect from the new questions?" is part of our evaluation criterion assessing whether methods for producing abuse profiles have been tested and shared with users.

We are developing a measure that accounts for both the abusive behaviours victims experience and the impacts of those behaviours. This will be for experiences since the age of 16 years. Through this we aim to present information on different types of victims of domestic abuse. For example, we may want to differentiate victims of "one-off" or infrequent abuse where the impact felt is reported as "limited", from those suffering ongoing, coercive abuse.

The statistical methods to produce this measure are more complex than when impacts are excluded. We plan to publish more information on our progress in spring 2025 alongside the full evaluation of the new domestic abuse questions.

Comparability of estimates

Under the timeliness and punctuality quality dimension, one of our evaluation criteria is "The comparability between estimates produced using the new questions and the existing time series is clear to users". Our research has concluded that should the new domestic abuse questions be introduced on the CSEW permanently, then we would not be able to compare the new estimates with the existing estimates.

This is because the new domestic abuse survey questions collect information on a wider range of abusive behaviours than the existing questions. For example, in the existing questions, respondents are asked one question about their experience of non-physical abuse (emotional or financial). Respondents are provided three examples of emotional or financial abuse but cannot state which of the three examples they have experienced. In contrast, in the new questions, respondents are asked about their experiences of 10 different behaviours covering emotional and economic abuse. Respondents can select which of the 10 behaviours they have experienced. By including a wider range of abusive behaviours within the questions, it provides respondents with a greater opportunity to align their lived experiences.

In addition, we are collecting data on more abuse types than before. For example, the new questions include behaviours relating to marital status-related abuse and health-related abuse which are not covered by the existing questions. Therefore, it follows that by asking questions on a wider range of abuse types and behaviours, we will identify more victims, and as such the resulting estimates from the new questions will not be comparable with the existing estimates.

Alongside this, there have also been changes to the way questions are asked and the format in which questions are presented. For example, in the new questions, respondents who state they have a current partner and have had an ex-partner are presented with a grid containing two options to select; whether they have experienced the abusive behaviour from either a current partner or and an ex-partner.

This was implemented as a result of research outlined in our [Redevelopment of domestic abuse statistics: research update November 2022 article](#), which found that asking respondents to think about any domestic abuse they have experienced by a partner presented a challenge to some victims, as those who are still living in an abusive relationship often do not recognise what they are experiencing as abuse.

Prompting a respondent to think specifically about their current partner increases the likelihood that this type of abuse is recorded by respondents. The existing questions do not give respondents this prompt. This means that the new questions are likely to result in a greater number of respondents identifying as victims of domestic abuse, and as such is another reason why the resulting estimates from the new questions will not be comparable with the existing estimates.

We therefore advise that the estimates produced using the new questions are not comparable with the existing time series and comparisons should not be made. We plan to publish a further explanation on the comparability of the estimates in our full evaluation next year.

Presentation of data

Under the accessibility and clarity quality dimension, we included the evaluation criterion "estimates produced using the new questions are presented in a format that is easily available and clear to users". Within this criterion is research question 5.1 "Are domestic abuse data from the new questions presented in a similar format to how they are currently and do the new data tables meet accessibility requirements?"

Alongside this article we have published a set of trial outputs. When designing the trial outputs we have aimed to keep the style and table ordering similar to the CSEW tables currently published in our [Domestic abuse prevalence and victim characteristics dataset](#), which meet accessibility requirements.

Although the table formats are similar, the quantity of estimates for different abuse types and victim-perpetrator relationships has increased. We have also included tables on the types of physical abuse victims have experienced since the age of 16 years and the frequency of physical abuse experienced.

These trial outputs are published in part to answer this research question, but to also seek feedback from users. At this stage, the contents of the tables are provisional and are subject to change in the future based on the feedback we receive and the decision as to whether the new domestic abuse questions are included permanently.

3 . Analysis of data from the new questions

The data presented in this section are derived from the new domestic abuse questions that are being trialled on the Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW). Statistics presented in this section are [official statistics in development](#) and are subject to change as we evaluate the data further and finalise methods. They are presented here to aid users in providing feedback as part of the evaluation of the new survey questions and should not be used in any communication about the prevalence of domestic abuse.

These are not accredited official statistics on domestic abuse and should not be used for policy- or decision-making. They are published as trial outputs from the development of new survey questions that are different to those currently used in the production of the accredited official statistics on domestic abuse and are not directly comparable.

The prevalence measures are derived from the new abusive behaviour questions and have been produced using the definition of a victim based on the [Domestic Abuse Act 2021](#) as described in Section 2: Assessing the evaluation criteria. These measures do not take into account the impact of the abuse.

Measuring overall prevalence

Data collected from the new domestic abuse questions showed that 8.0% of people aged 16 years and over experienced domestic abuse in the last year for year ending March 2024. This is equivalent to 3.8 million people aged 16 years and over.

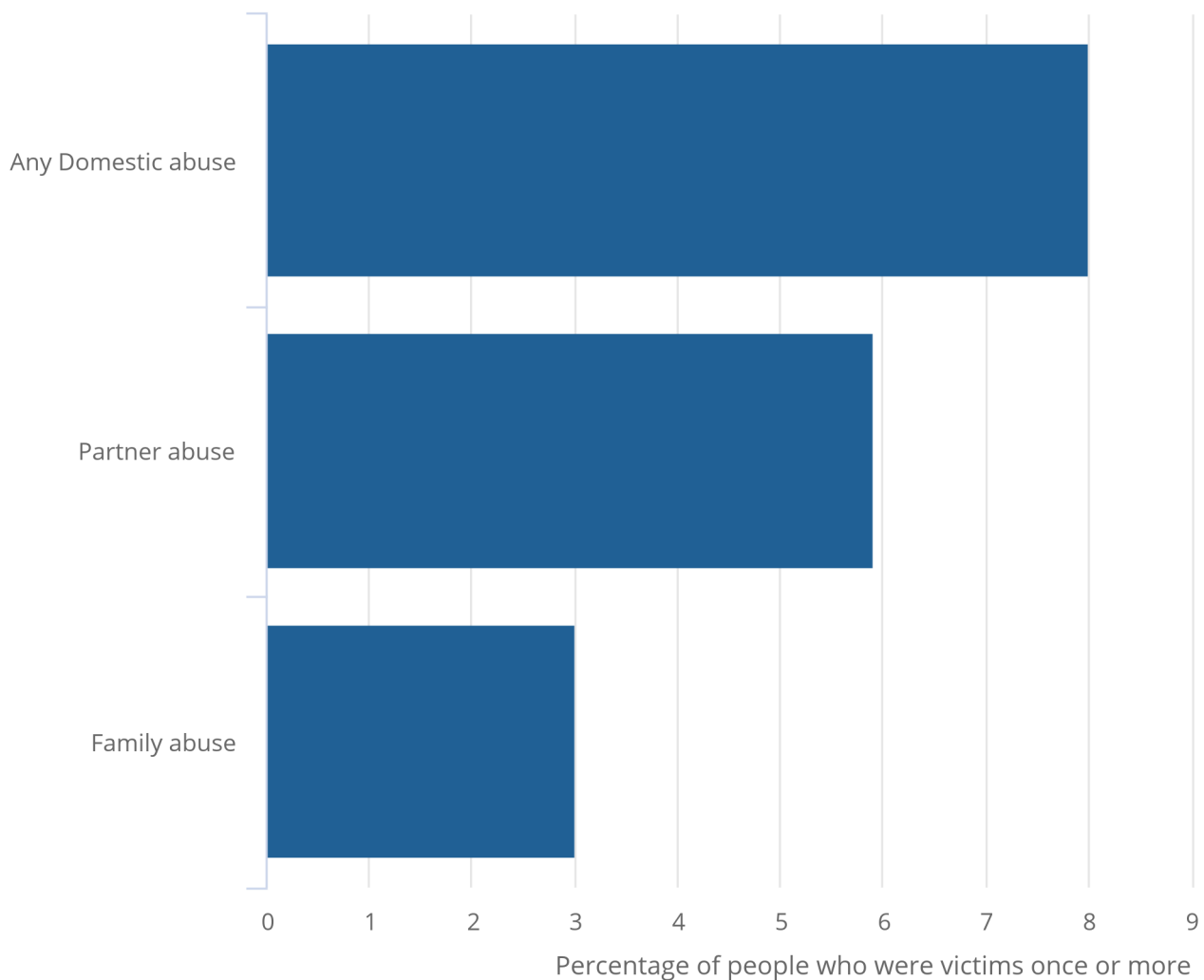
Broken down by perpetrator relationship, it is estimated that 5.9% of people aged 16 years and over experienced partner abuse by a current or ex-partner in the last year and 3.0% experienced abuse by a family member in the last year for the year ending March 2024 (Figure 1).

Figure 1: Approximately 8 in 100 people experienced domestic abuse in year ending March 2024

Prevalence of domestic abuse in the last year from new domestic abuse questions, for people aged 16 years and over, by perpetrator-relationship, England and Wales, year ending March 2024

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Prevalence of domestic abuse in the last year from new domestic abuse questions, for people aged 16 years and over, by perpetrator-relationship, England and Wales, year ending March 2024



Source: Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW) from the Office for National Statistics

Notes:

1. Data presented are official statistics in development. They are derived from the new domestic abuse questions in the Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW) and are not comparable with other domestic abuse estimates produced from the CSEW.
2. Data presented are based on a split sample. Caution should be taken because of the impact of the reduced sample size on the quality of the data.

Just over one-quarter of people aged 16 years and over (26.1%) had experienced domestic abuse since the age of 16 years. This equates to approximately 12.6 million people

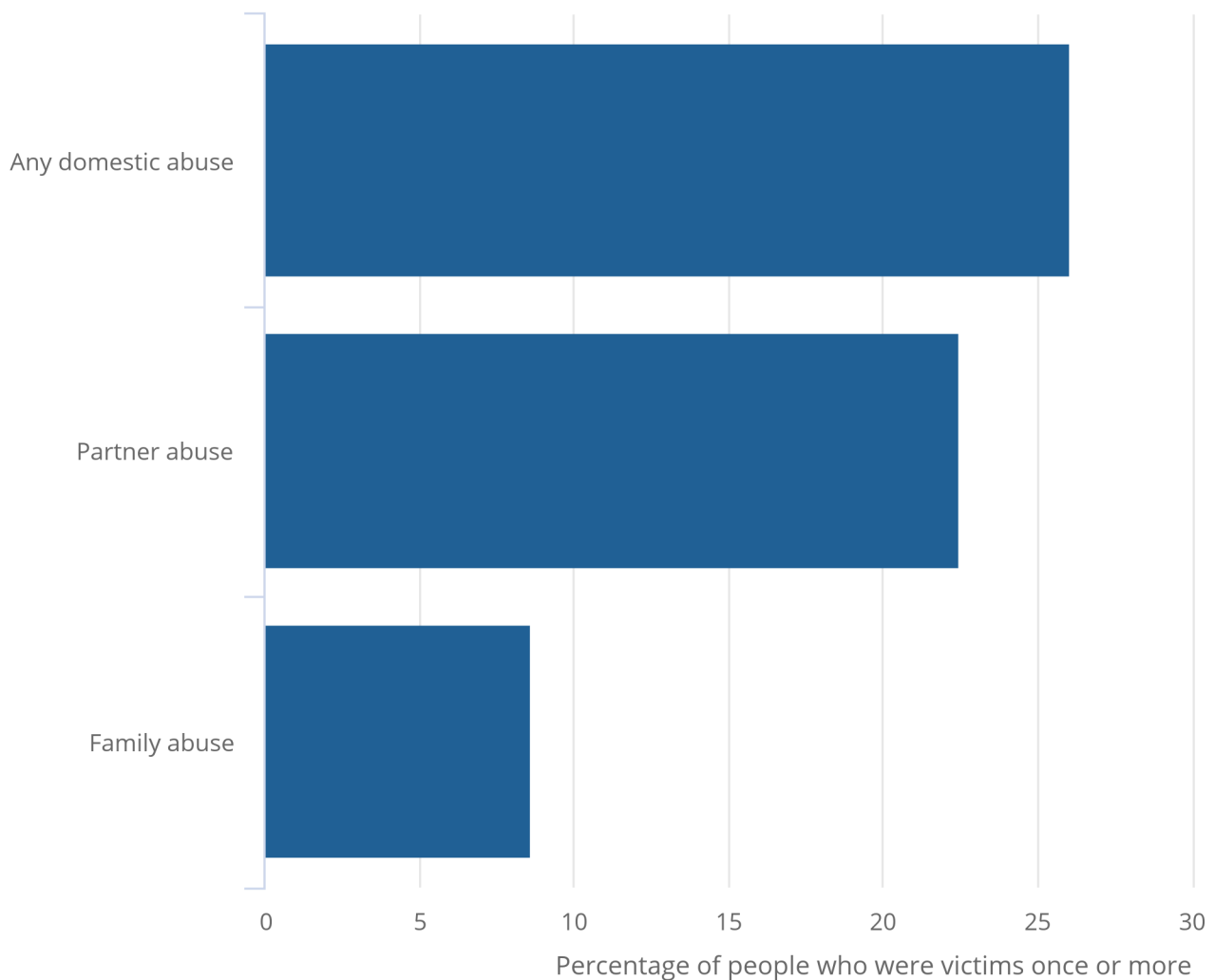
Broken down by perpetrator relationship, it is estimated that 22.5% of people experienced abuse by a partner since the age of 16 years and 8.6% experienced abuse by a family member since the age of 16 years (Figure 2).

Figure 2: Over a quarter of people experienced domestic abuse since the age of 16 years

Prevalence of domestic abuse since the age of 16 years from new domestic abuse questions, for people aged 16 years and over, by perpetrator-relationship, England and Wales, year ending March 2024

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Prevalence of domestic abuse since the age of 16 years from new domestic abuse questions, for people aged 16 years and over, by perpetrator-relationship, England and Wales, year ending March 2024



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Measuring prevalence by sex

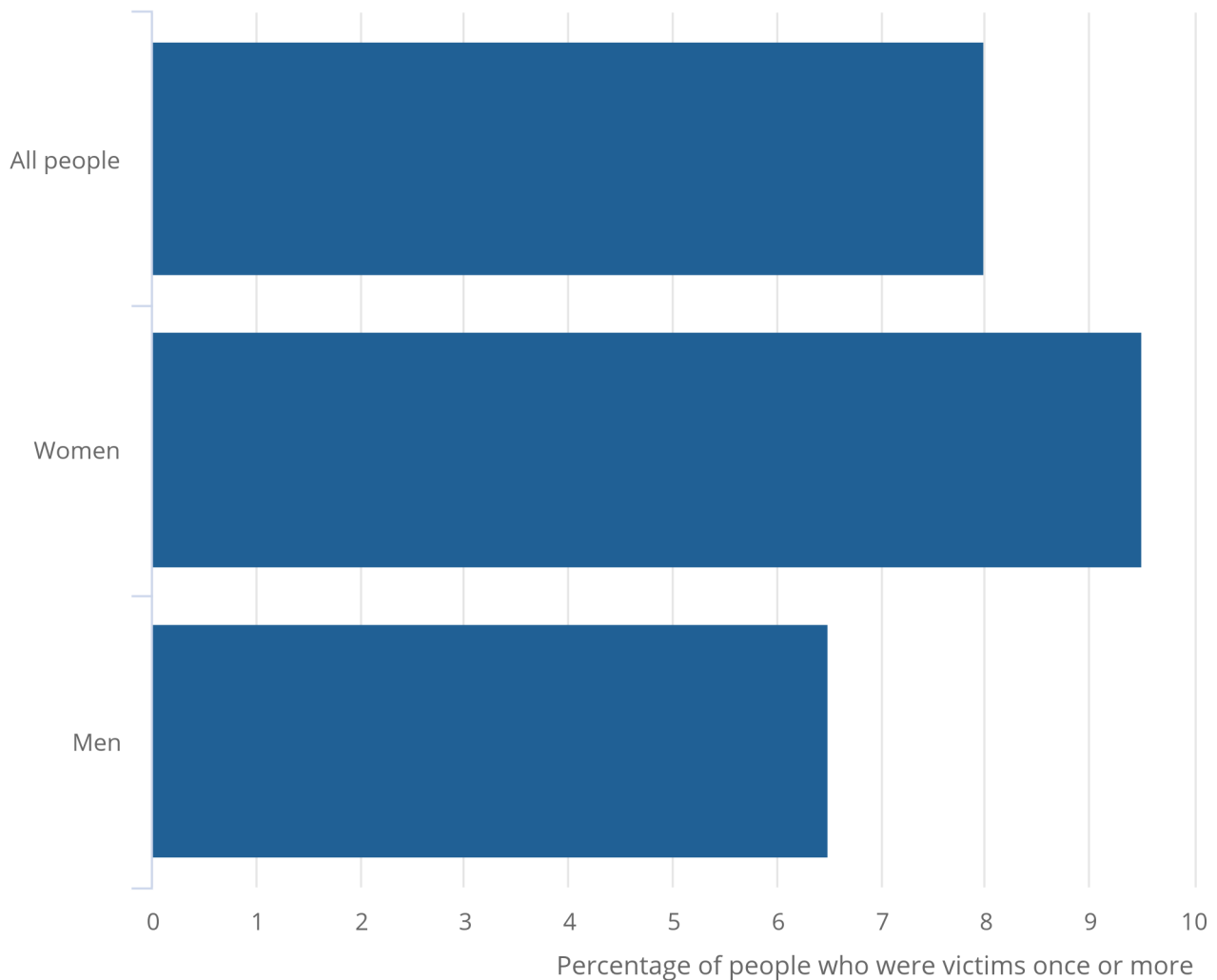
For year ending March 2024, using the new domestic abuse questions, it is estimated that 2.3 million women and 1.5 million men experienced domestic abuse in the last year. This is a prevalence rate of 9.5% and 6.5% respectively (Figure 3). Compared with men, a statistically significant higher proportion of women experienced domestic abuse, partner abuse and family abuse in the last year.

Figure 3: A higher proportion of women than men were victims of domestic abuse in the last year

Prevalence of domestic abuse in the last year for people aged 16 years and over from new domestic abuse questions, by sex, England and Wales, year ending March 2024

Figure 3: A higher proportion of women than men were victims of domestic abuse in the last year

Prevalence of domestic abuse in the last year for people aged 16 years and over from new domestic abuse questions, by sex, England and Wales, year ending March 2024



Source: Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW) from the Office for National Statistics

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For the year ending March 2024, it is estimated that 30.3% of women and 21.7% men experienced domestic abuse since the age of 16 years. This is equal to 7.4 million women and 5.1 million men. Similarly to the in the last year prevalence measure, a statistically higher proportion of women experienced domestic abuse, partner abuse and family abuse since the age of 16 years compared with men.

Measuring prevalence by age

Using data collected from the new domestic abuse questions for year ending March 2024, estimates show a significantly higher proportion of people aged 16 to 19 years were victims of domestic abuse in the last year (18.7%) compared with all other age groups. In contrast, a significantly lower proportion of people aged 75 years and over were victims of domestic abuse in the last year (2.7%) compared with all other age groups (Figure 4).

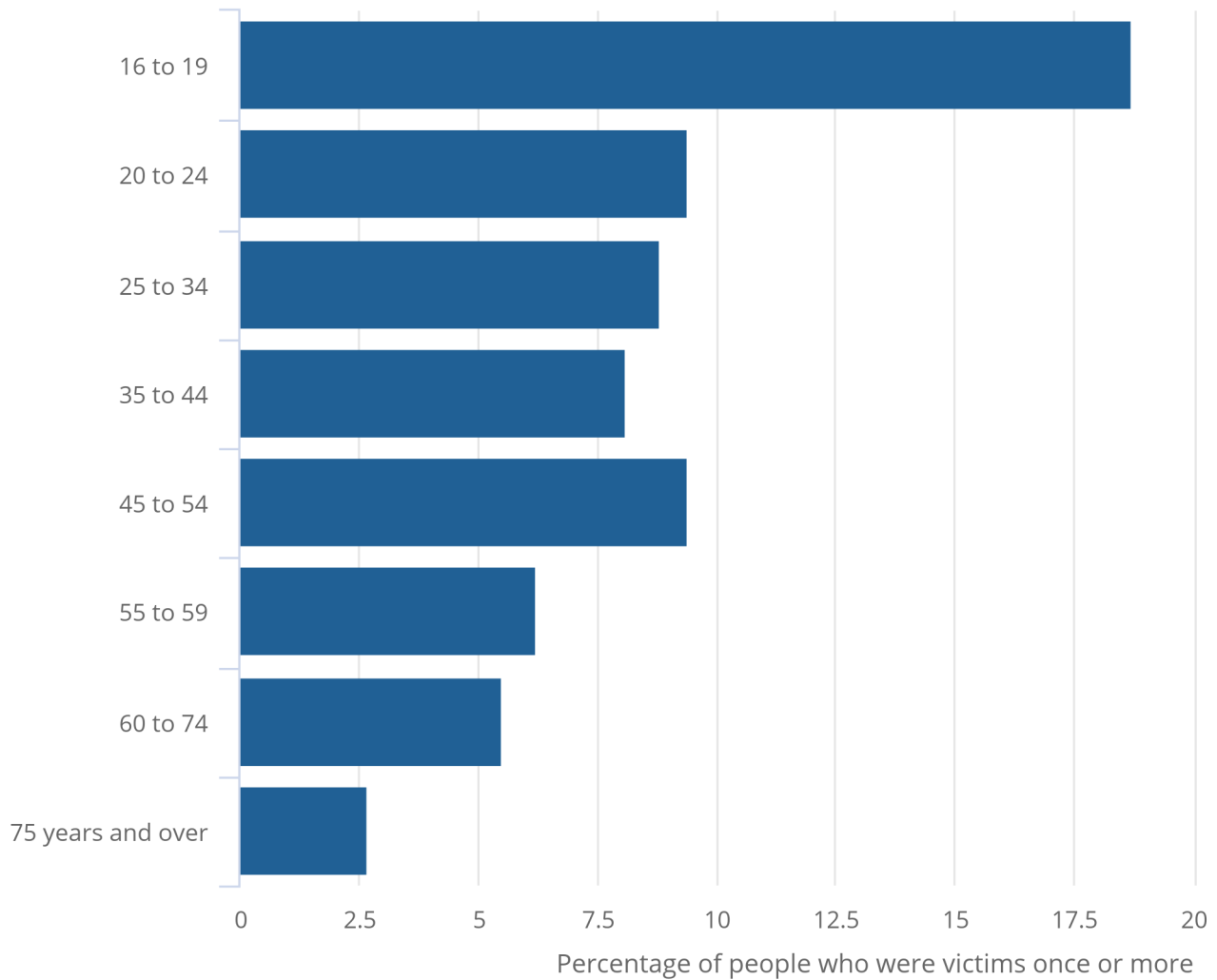
Further work to understand the prevalence of domestic abuse across different age groups is ongoing as part of our evaluation of the new domestic abuse questions.

Figure 4: A higher percentage of people aged 16 to 19 years were victims of domestic abuse in the last year than all other age groups

Prevalence of domestic abuse in the last year for people aged 16 years and over from new domestic abuse questions by age, England and Wales, year ending March 2024

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Prevalence of domestic abuse in the last year for people aged 16 years and over from new domestic abuse questions by age, England and Wales, year ending March 2024



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4 . Future developments

The new domestic abuse questions will continue to be included on the Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW) on a split-sample basis until the end of March 2025.

As part of our evaluation, we are seeking feedback from users on the outputs published alongside this article. Our survey is open between 3 December 2024 and 5 January 2025 and can be accessed via our [survey page](#). The findings from the survey will contribute to answering the research questions outlined in our [Redevelopment of domestic abuse statistics: research update November 2023 article](#).

In early 2025 we will make a final assessment of the evaluation criteria and use this to decide whether to include the new questions on the CSEW permanently from April 2025. We will share the decision with stakeholders and aim to publish the full evaluation in spring 2025.

5 . Related links

[Domestic abuse in England and Wales overview: November 2024](#)

Bulletin | Released 27 November 2024

Figures on domestic abuse from the Crime Survey for England and Wales, police recorded crime, and other organisations.

[Redevelopment of domestic abuse statistics: research update November 2023](#)

Article | Released 24 November 2023

Update on the ongoing research to redevelop statistics on domestic abuse from the Crime Survey for England and Wales.

[Developing a new measure of domestic abuse: April 2023](#)

Article | Released 5 April 2023

An overview of the redevelopment of questions to measure domestic abuse in the Crime Survey for England and Wales.

[Redevelopment of domestic abuse statistics: research update November 2022](#)

Article | Released 25 November 2022

Update on the ongoing research to redevelop statistics on domestic abuse from the Crime Survey for England and Wales.

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

Article | Released 24 November 2021

Update on the ongoing research to redevelop statistics on domestic abuse from the Crime Survey for England and Wales.

[Developing a measure of controlling or coercive behaviour](#)

Article | Released 18 April 2019

Initial research into new questions aimed at identifying controlling or coercive behaviour.

6 . Cite this article

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