

Article

Redevelopment of domestic abuse statistics: research update May 2025

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 of question redevelopment

The way domestic abuse manifests is constantly changing. Because of this and legislative changes, we have undertaken a user engagement, research and testing programme to ensure our statistics continue to provide the most accurate information and meet the needs of users. Through this work, we have developed a new set of survey questions for the Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW).

Given the importance and sensitivities of measuring domestic abuse, we have ensured a rigorous approach to research and testing. We have included input from victims and survivors in the question development process, alongside views from independent experts in the field. We are grateful to everyone who has contributed to this research.

Through our evaluation, we have concluded that the new questions provide a better measure of domestic abuse. Therefore, we have decided to change to using the new survey questions in the CSEW to measure domestic abuse from April 2025. The full evidence behind our decision is provided in our [Evaluating a new measure of domestic abuse article](#).

This means that, from April 2025, our official statistics on domestic abuse will be derived from the new domestic abuse questions. In addition, the estimates published in Section 3 of our [Redevelopment of domestic abuse statistics: research update December 2024 article](#) should now be treated as [official statistics](#).

The new questions provide opportunities to explore and present the lived experiences of victims of domestic abuse to aid government, law enforcement, victim services, academia and the general public in better supporting victims, and in ultimately helping to prevent domestic abuse.

From the new questions, we estimate that, for the survey year ending March 2024, 8.0% of people aged 16 years and over experienced domestic abuse in the last year (equivalent to 3.9 million people). When breaking the figures down by sex, we estimate 9.5% of women (2.3 million) and 6.5% of men (1.5 million) have experienced domestic abuse in the last year.

We estimate 1 in 4 (26.1%) people aged 16 years and over have experienced domestic abuse since the age of 16 years, (equivalent to 12.6 million people). Split by sex, we estimate that 30.3% of women and 21.7% of men have experienced domestic abuse since the age of 16 years (equivalent to 7.4 million and 5.1 million, respectively).

It is not possible to compare the estimates derived from both sets of questions or to adjust the new estimates to enable direct comparisons to be made.

While we advise against making any comparisons, to contextualise the impact of this improvement, the previous CSEW questions estimated that 1 in 5 people aged 16 years and over (20.5%) had experienced domestic abuse since the age of 16 years, for the survey year ending March 2024. Estimates from the year ending March 2005 to the year ending March 2023 remain the official estimates of domestic abuse for those years.

We plan to publish headline estimates from the new questions alongside our Crime in England and Wales: year ending March 2025 bulletin in July, and more detailed estimates in our annual domestic abuse compendium, which will be published later in 2025. We will work with users to provide the support needed to understand the new estimates.

2 . New domestic abuse questions

The questions on domestic abuse are asked as part of the self-completion section of the CSEW. These have largely remained the same since they were introduced in April 2004, allowing for a long, comparable time series. However, there were issues with the data, mainly:

- they did not align with the definition of domestic abuse introduced in the [Domestic Abuse Act 2021](#)
- they excluded the offence of controlling or coercive behaviour which was introduced in the [Serious Crime Act 2015](#)
- they did not measure the number of incidents or frequency of abuse
- there was a greater user need for data to understand the nature of the abuse

Following extensive testing, as outlined in our [Developing a new measure of domestic abuse: April 2023 article](#), new survey questions to measure domestic abuse were added to the CSEW in April 2023, as part of a split-sample trial until March 2025. Half of respondents were asked the new questions, and the other half were asked the existing questions.

To better align with our understanding of domestic abuse and changes to legislation, the new questions incorporate more abuse types than before and ask about a wider range of abusive behaviours. For example, the new questions include behaviours concerning marital status-related abuse and health abuse, which were not previously covered. Other abuse types were partly reflected in the previous questions (for example, economic abuse) but the new questions include a wider range of abusive behaviours that respondents may identify with.

The new questions are split into two parts. The first part asks questions about intimate partner abuse, while the second part asks questions about family abuse. The questions first collect information on experiences since the age of 16 years. Those who report having experienced abuse, are then asked about their experiences in the last year. Respondents are then asked questions on the impacts of the abusive behaviours experienced since the age of 16 years.

In the intimate partner questions, respondents are asked about abusive behaviours experienced by their current partner, ex-partner(s), or both. Within the family abuse questions, respondents are asked about abusive behaviours experienced from one or more family members aged 16 years or over.

We have also made changes to the way questions are asked and the format in which they 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. This means that they can select whether they have experienced the abusive behaviour by a current partner, ex-partner(s), or both.

More information on the differences between the question sets can be found in our [Evaluating a new measure of domestic abuse article](#).

Following a full evaluation, we made the decision to stop the split-sample trial and include the new domestic abuse questions on the CSEW permanently from April 2025, replacing the existing questions. We could not continue with the split-sample trial because of the impact on the quality of the domestic abuse estimates, as well as the sexual assault and stalking estimates, because all would continue to be affected by reduced sample sizes.

The findings of our full evaluation, including evidence for each of our 12 evaluation criteria, are presented in our [Evaluating a new measure of domestic abuse article](#). A summary of the evidence is provided in this article.

3 . User survey results

Alongside our [Redevelopment of domestic abuse statistics: research update December 2024](#), we published a user survey. The survey was publicised to users through the article and by email. It was open to anyone with an interest in our statistics on domestic abuse and the redevelopment of the questions on the Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW). We asked for feedback on:

- the content of the new questions
- the new estimates
- the methodology used to produce the new estimates
- supporting information around the estimates and the trial outputs

The survey ran between 3 December 2024 and 5 January 2025. We received 14 responses in total from users from the following backgrounds:

- charities and the voluntary sector (46.2%)
- think tanks and academia (30.8%)
- central and devolved governments (23.1%)

These survey findings were one component of our evaluation of the new questions, along with the substantial cognitive testing, previous user feedback and data analysis outlined in our [Evaluating a new measure of domestic abuse article](#).

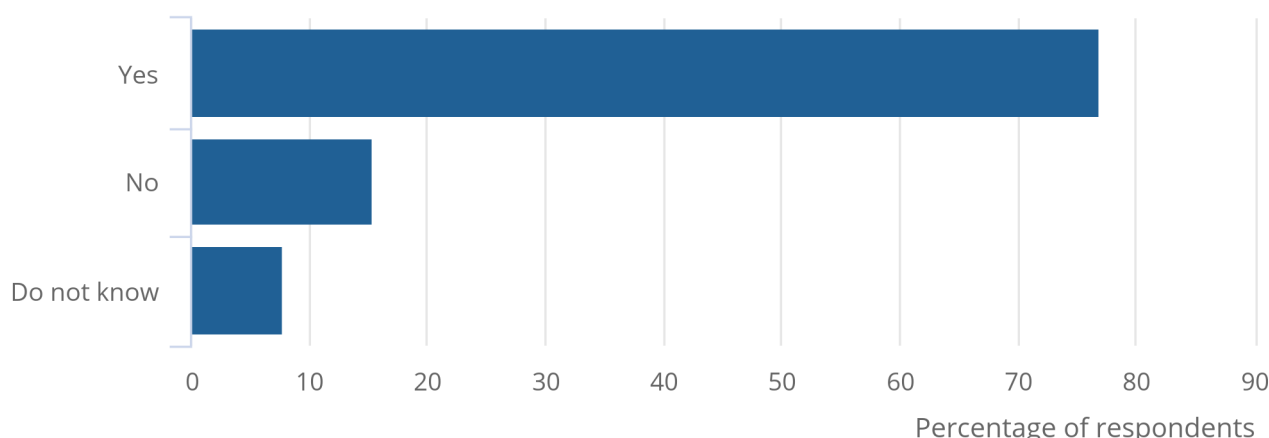
The survey findings showed that over three-quarters (76.9%) of users thought we should replace the existing CSEW domestic abuse questions with the [new domestic abuse questions \(PDF, 471KB\)](#) we had been trialling on the survey since April 2023 (Figure 1).

Figure 1: Three-quarters of users felt the new domestic abuse questions should be included permanently

Percentage of user survey respondents who selected each response option when asked whether the new domestic abuse questions should permanently replace the existing ones, December 2024 to January 2025

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Percentage of user survey respondents who selected each response option when asked whether the new domestic abuse questions should permanently replace the existing ones, December 2024 to January 2025



Source: Winter 2024 to 2025 domestic abuse user survey from the Office for National Statistics

We asked users to what extent they agreed with the statement:

"The new domestic abuse questions accurately capture the lived experiences of domestic abuse victims."

Of the 13 responses to this question, 53.8% of people either "agreed" or "strongly agreed", 7.7% "neither agreed or disagreed" and 38.5% "disagreed" or "strongly disagreed".

When asked whether they thought some abuse types were missing from the questions, half of users felt there were, with the other half feeling the questions captured all types. In addition, specific requests were made for:

- broader questions on technology-facilitated abuse
- questions specifically identifying faith-based abuse
- questions on child victims witnessing domestic abuse

We acknowledge that we have not included questions covering every abuse type. However, we are confident, based on our testing with victims, that victims of those missing abuse types will still be able to identify with some of the abusive behaviours we ask about in the new questions. As a result, they will be included as a victim in our overall measures of domestic abuse. We have previously asked about the respondent's perceptions of children witnessing domestic abuse, as part of our nature of partner abuse follow-up module. We plan to review that module in the future and how it can work alongside the new domestic abuse questions. We will review the question about children witnessing domestic abuse as part of this work.

The survey also asked if there were any groups of victims that would not be identified through the new questions. Over half of respondents (53.8%) felt that this was the case, specifically noting:

- child victims of domestic abuse
- those in communal establishments
- male victims
- victims with learning difficulties
- transgender and gender nonconforming victims

As the CSEW surveys people aged 16 years and over who are resident in households in England and Wales, its scope does not extend to children or those living in communal establishments. To meet the data need for child victims of domestic abuse, we have a separate project exploring the feasibility of a survey to measure child abuse in the UK. We plan to pilot that survey later in the year and include questions about witnessing domestic abuse. For more information see our [Exploring the feasibility of a survey measuring child abuse in the UK article](#).

Alongside our [Redevelopment of domestic abuse statistics: research update December 2024 article](#), we published a set of trial outputs, using data from the new questions. We then asked users for feedback on these to help inform our future domestic abuse outputs.

The trial outputs published were not designed to be a final set of data tables, but instead to provide an example of the type of data we could release from the new questions. Although the table formats were similar to the CSEW tables currently published as part of our annual [Domestic abuse prevalence and victim characteristics dataset](#), the new questions allow for the publication of estimates on a greater number of abuse types.

We also included tables on the types of physical abuse victims had experienced since the age of 16 years and the frequency of physical abuse experienced, to give an idea of the types of new tables we could produce.

Findings from the user survey showed that 45.5% of respondents were "very satisfied" or "quite satisfied", 18.2% were "neither satisfied or dissatisfied", and 36.4% were "dissatisfied" or "very dissatisfied" with the trial outputs.

We received a range of feedback suggesting additional tables. However, there was no clear consensus from users on what we should publish in the future beyond the data presented in the trial outputs.

Where possible, we will add users' suggestions to our publication plan for future outputs. However, some of the information users requested would not be possible, as collecting the information is beyond the scope of the redevelopment work, or the information is not captured by the new questions.

The CSEW data collected will, in time, be available through the [UK Data Service](#), meaning users can conduct their own analysis of the data and produce their own breakdowns. We are always open to ideas on additional tables that can be produced from the new questions and users can contact us with suggestions at crimestatistics@ons.gov.uk.

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".

Around 4 in 5 users (81.8%) found it "very easy" or "quite easy" to access the trial outputs, while the remaining 18.2% found it "neither easy nor difficult". As a result, we plan to publish future outputs using estimates from the new questions using a similar format. For more information on the accessibility of the outputs produced from the new questions, see Section 8 of our [Evaluating a new measure of domestic abuse article](#).

Finally, the user survey asked for feedback on the supporting information we provided throughout the redevelopment process. Most users (76.9%) either "strongly agreed" or "agreed" with the statement:

"It is clear why the estimates produced using the existing questions and estimates produced using the new questions are not comparable."

In addition, we asked to what extent users agreed with the statement:

"The benefits of the new estimates outweigh the benefits of maintaining a comparable time series with the existing questions".

Over half (61.5%) of users "strongly agreed" or "agreed", 30.8% "neither agreed nor disagreed" and 7.7% "disagreed" or "strongly disagreed".

We recognise that maintaining the existing time series and comparability of estimates was important for some users. However, through our full evaluation, we have concluded that the new questions allow us to better capture the lived experiences of domestic abuse victims and produce better-quality data. We will continue to make clear to users in future publications that the new data are not comparable with existing estimates. In addition, we will work with users to provide the support needed to understand the new estimates.

4 . Abuse profiles

When the new domestic abuse survey questions were developed, they were designed with the intention that the abusive behaviour and impact questions could be used together to profile different types of victims of domestic abuse, as outlined in Section 3 of our [Redevelopment of domestic abuse statistics: research update November 2022 article](#).

Through taking this approach, we plan to produce abuse profiles. The profiles will show the spectrum of victims based on their experiences since the age of 16 years. However, it will not be possible to differentiate between when the abusive behaviours occurred and when the impacts of those behaviours were felt. Behaviours and their impacts could be recent or could date back many years.

The new questions were trialed on the Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW) on a split sample from April 2023. During this trial, we prioritised the development of the methodology for defining a victim, as outlined in Subsection 4.2 of our [Evaluating a new measure of domestic abuse article](#) , and the overall evaluation of the questions. This has been conducted while continuing the publication of data in our [Domestic abuse in England and Wales overview bulletin](#).

Deriving the profiles is more complex than deriving the two prevalence measures presented in Section 3 of our [Redevelopment of domestic abuse statistics: research update December 2024 article](#). For this reason, progress towards the production of the abuse profiles has been slower, and limited information has been shared with users to date.

We are currently exploring a cluster analysis approach to derive abuse profiles for victims who have experienced domestic abuse since the age of 16 years. The aim is to apply clustering techniques to identify distinct subgroups, or clusters, of victims who experience similar levels of abusive behaviours and impacts. We are exploring the feasibility of applying hierarchical methods to find the optimum number of clusters.

Although we are unable to share any results at this stage, while we continue to explore methods, we aim to share more information in our annual domestic abuse compendium, publishing later in 2025. We remain flexible in our choice of methodology and will communicate further as we progress.

5 . Future developments

Following extensive evaluation, we have decided to include the new domestic abuse questions on the Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW) permanently from April 2025 onwards, fully replacing the existing questions. The new questions provide opportunities to explore and present the lived experiences of victims of domestic abuse to aid government, law enforcement, victim services, academia and the general public in better supporting victims and ultimately in helping to prevent domestic abuse.

The full findings of our evaluation of the new questions are provided in our [Evaluating a new measure of domestic abuse article](#). There remain areas where we will seek to make improvements over the coming months and years, and we have plans in place for this.

We plan to publish headline estimates from the new questions alongside our Crime in England and Wales: year ending March 2025 bulletin in July, as well as more detailed estimates in our annual domestic abuse compendium, publishing later in 2025.

We are extremely grateful to everyone involved in the redevelopment of the domestic abuse survey questions. We look forward to future engagement to help shape the new domestic abuse outputs, as we continue to develop them following the permanent inclusion of the new questions.

Users can contact us with suggestions of additional tables to include in the new outputs at crimestatistics@ons.gov.uk.

6 . Related links

[Evaluating a new measure of domestic abuse](#)

Article | Released 16 May 2025

Evaluation of questions to measure domestic abuse in the Crime Survey for England and Wales.

[Redevelopment of domestic abuse statistics: research update December 2024](#)

Article | Released 3 December 2024

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 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.

[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.

7 . Cite this article

Office for National Statistics (ONS), released 16 May 2025, ONS website, article, [Redevelopment of domestic abuse statistics: research update May 2025](#)