

# Scottish Crime and Justice Survey 2014/15: Partner Abuse



A National Statistics publication for Scotland

CRIME AND JUSTICE

# **2014/15 Scottish Crime and Justice Survey: Partner Abuse**

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Main findings from the 2014/15 Scottish Crime and Justice Survey were published on 15 March 2016. This report provides additional findings and evidence on partner abuse.

## **Acknowledgements**

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## **Comments and Suggestions**

We are committed to continual improvement and would welcome any comments or suggestions on how the SCJS Main Findings report could be improved or adapted in the future. Similarly, if you have any enquiries on any aspects of the survey development then we would welcome your opinions or questions. Please contact the SCJS Project Team.

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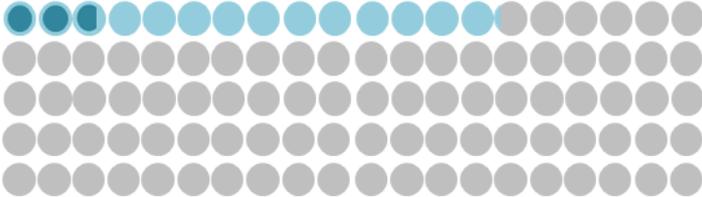
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# Key findings from the SCJS 2014/15 on Partner Abuse in Scotland

## What is the extent of partner abuse?

Since the age of 16, **14.1%** of adults had experienced partner abuse.

In the last 12 months, **2.9%** of adults had experienced partner abuse.

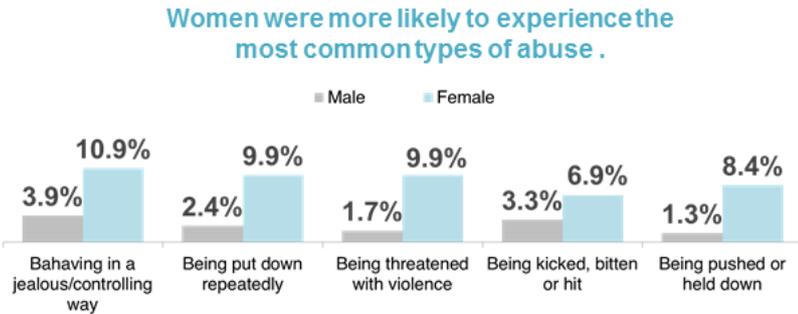


## Key facts about partner abuse experienced in the last 12 months.

Abuse has wide-ranging impacts that manifest in a number of ways.



## Key facts about partner abuse experienced since the age of 16.



## Partner Abuse in Scotland: Key Findings

### The risk of partner abuse

Partner abuse is commonly experienced on multiple occasions, over a long period of time. Over two-thirds (67.5%) of those who reported an incident of partner abuse in the last 12 months also reported at least one incident prior to this period. The risk of partner abuse varied by gender, age, access to money and deprivation, and other types of victimisation.

- Overall, 14.1% of respondents had experienced partner abuse since the age of 16, and 2.9% of respondents had experienced partner abuse in the last 12 months. The risk of partner abuse in the last 12 months did not change between the 2012/13 and 2014/15 survey sweeps.
- A higher proportion of women than men experienced partner abuse in the last 12 months, at 3.4% and 2.4% respectively.
- However, a much higher proportion of women had experienced partner abuse (physical or psychological) since the age of 16 (18.5% of women, compared to 9.2% of men).
- The risk of partner abuse (in the last 12 months) was highest amongst young people aged 16 to 24 years (6.9%) and lowest amongst those aged 65 or over (0.4%).
- Nineteen per cent of respondents living in the 15% most deprived areas of Scotland had experienced partner abuse since the age of 16, compared to 13.2% of those living in the rest of Scotland.
- Almost a quarter (22.5%) of respondents classified as victims of crime in the main SCJS survey had experienced partner abuse since the age of 16, compared to 12.6% of those who were not classified as victims.

### Types of partner abuse

Victims experienced a range of abusive behaviours, both psychological and physical. Victims experienced psychological abuse more commonly than physical abuse.

- On average, those who experienced partner abuse since the age of 16 reported around two different types of physical abuse, and around three different types of psychological abuse.
- The most common types of psychological abuse among victims of partner abuse (since age 16) were having a partner behaving in a jealous or controlling way (7.6%), and being repeatedly put down by a partner (6.4%).
- Among partner abuse victims since the age of 16, some types of psychological abuse were experienced by a higher proportion of women than men. For example, 59.0% of women experienced a partner behave in a jealous or controlling way, compared to 42.4% of men, whilst 53.7%

of women were repeatedly put down by their partner, compared to 25.9% of men.

- The most common types of physical abuse (since age 16) were being kicked or bitten (5.2%), being pushed or held down (5.0%), and having something thrown at you, with the intention of causing harm (4.7%).
- Among partner abuse victims since the age of 16, women were more likely than men to experience physical abuse involving direct contact. For example, being pushed or held down (45.3% women, compared to 14.2% men); being choked, strangled or smothered (22.7% women, compared to 6.6% men) and forced intercourse (20.1% women, compared to 1.9% men).
- Men were more likely than women to experience non-contact violence, specifically, having something thrown at them (40.1% and 30.7% respectively).

### **Relationships and children**

For some victims, the impact of partner abuse extended to the wider family:

- Around a third (33.5%) of those who had experienced partner abuse in the last 12 months were living with the abusive partner at the time of the most recent incident. Just under half (48.3%) of these respondents said that they were still living with the abusive partner at the time of the survey interview.
- Two in five (39.4%) of those who experienced partner abuse in the last 12 months said that children were living in their household when the most recent incident took place.
- Where children were present, nearly two thirds (63.7%) said that the children were present (in or around the house or close by) during the most recent incident.

### **Impact of partner of abuse**

The impact of partner abuse was wide-ranging. Overall, psychological effects were reported more commonly than physical effects. However, not all respondents who experienced partner abuse considered themselves to be a victim. Respondents were more likely to view physical abuse as a crime, compared to psychological abuse. Of those who experienced partner abuse in the last 12 months:

- Around two-thirds (65.2%) reported at least one psychological effect, and 39.6% reported at least one physical effect.
- The most common psychological effect was low self-esteem, reported by 37.4% of victims. A higher proportion of women than men experienced low self-esteem, at 44.5%, and 27.2% respectively.
- Two in five (40.5%) reported two or more psychological effects, whilst one in five (21.9%) reported four or more effects.

- A higher proportion of women than men experienced four or more psychological effects, at 31.1% and 8.8%, respectively.
- The most common physical impacts were; minor bruising or black eyes (21.6%); scratches or minor cuts (15.2%); and severe bruising (8.5%).

### **Perceptions of partner abuse**

- Around a third (32.5%) viewed their experiences of physical abuse (in the last 12 months) as a crime, compared to 17.9% who viewed their experiences of psychological abuse as a crime.
- Just under half (46.3%) of those who had experienced at least one incident of psychological or physical partner abuse since age 16 considered themselves to be a victim of domestic abuse. This proportion was higher amongst women at 56.9%, compared to men at 22.9%.
- While 7.9% of respondents considered themselves to have been a victim of domestic abuse since age 16, this was lower than the proportion that reported incidents of partner abuse in the same period (14.1%).

### **Reporting partner abuse**

Respondents were more likely to tell people from their informal networks about their experiences of abuse, than professionals. Of those who experienced partner abuse in the last 12 months:

- Two thirds (62.8%) had told at least one person or organisation about their most recent (or only) experience of abuse.
- One third (35.1%) told friends and one fifth (18.5%) told relatives about their experiences. A further 13.8% told a doctor, and 11.6% told the police.
- One fifth (19.5%) said that the police came to know about the most recent (or only) incident of partner abuse.
- A quarter (28.0%) of those who experienced partner abuse in the last 12 months appeared to have had told no one about the abuse.
- Men were more likely than women to have told no one about their experiences of abuse (35.0%, compared men, compared with 23.1% respectively).

# 1. The Scottish Crime and Justice Survey

## 1.1 Introduction

The [Scottish Crime and Justice Survey](#) (SCJS) is a large-scale social survey which asks people about their experiences and perceptions of crime. The 2014/15 survey is based on around 11,500 face-to-face interviews with adults (aged 16 or over) living in private households in Scotland.

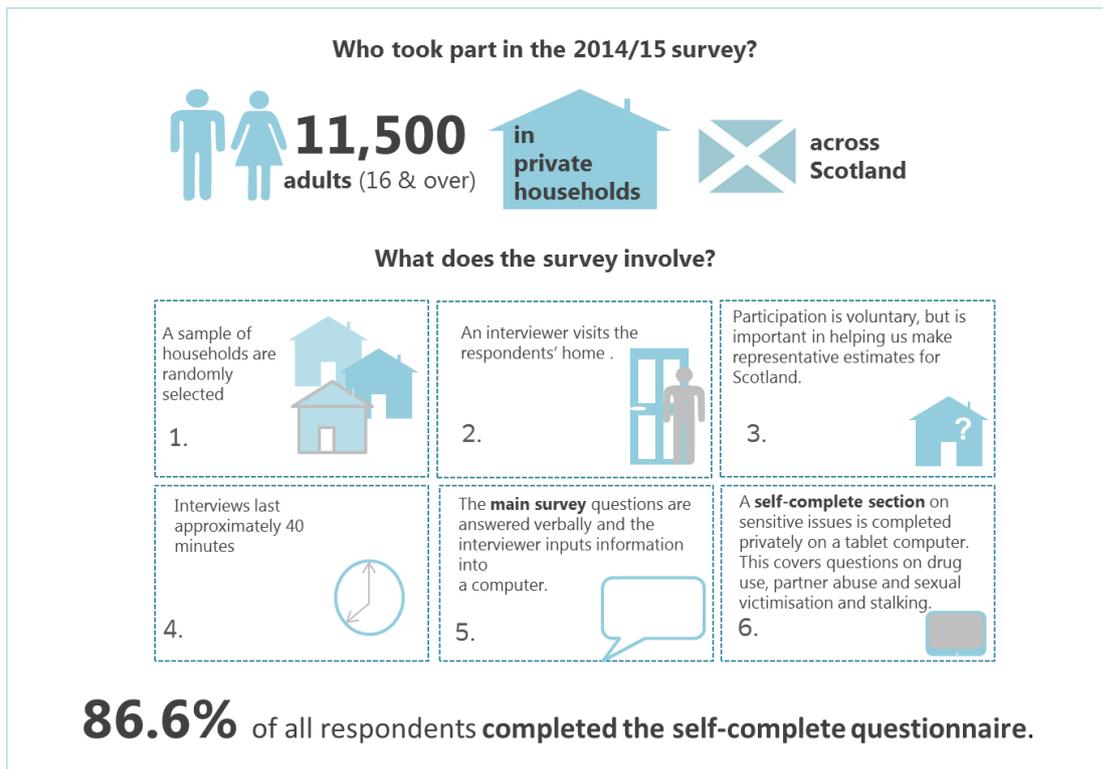
The main aims of the SCJS are to:

- Enable the Scottish population to tell us about their experiences of, and attitudes to, a range of issues related to crime, policing and the justice system; including crime not reported to the police;
- Provide a valid and reliable measure of adults' experience of crime, including services provided to victims of crime;
- Examine trends, over time, in the number and nature of crimes in Scotland, providing a complementary measure of crime compared with police recorded crime statistics;
- Examine the varying risk and characteristics of crime for different groups of adults in the population.

The findings from the survey are used by policy makers across the public sector in Scotland to help understand the nature of crime, target resources and monitor the impact of initiatives to target crime. The results of this survey provide evidence to inform national outcomes and justice outcomes.

This report presents findings from the self-completion module on Partner Abuse. The report provides data and analysis on the extent of partner abuse in Scotland amongst adults aged 16 or over.

## 1.2 Survey design



The design of the 2014/15 SCJS remains broadly similar to the design of the SCJS from 2008/09 to 2012/13:

- **Survey frequency:** Following the completion of the SCJS 2010/11, the SCJS moved to a biennial design. Therefore, no survey ran in 2011/12 or 2013/14<sup>1</sup>.
- **Sample:** the sample is designed to be representative of all private residential households across Scotland (with the exception of some of the smaller islands). A systematic random selection of private residential addresses across Scotland was produced from the Royal Mail Postcode Address File (PAF) and allocated in batches to interviewers. Interviewers called at each address and then selected one adult (aged 16 or over) at random from the household members for interview.
- **Questionnaire:** the questionnaire consists of a modular design completed by the interviewer using Computer-Assisted Personal Interviewing (CAPI) and a self-completion section covering sensitive crimes using Computer-Assisted Self Interviewing (CASI). The most recent questionnaire is available on the SCJS [webpage](#). Questions on sexual victimisation and stalking were included in the self-completion section of the questionnaire, which was undertaken at the end of the main SCJS interview.

<sup>1</sup> From April 2016, the SCJS will revert to a continuous survey of around 6,000 adults each year.

- **Interviews and response rate:** 11,472 face-to-face interviews were conducted in respondents' homes by professional interviewers, with a response rate of 63.8%. Interviews lasted an average of 40 minutes, though there was variation in interview length, depending on the respondent's reported experience. Additional to the main questionnaire, all survey respondents were asked to fill out a self-completion section (on a tablet computer) on more confidential and sensitive issues, including drug taking, partner abuse, sexual victimisation and stalking.

In 2014/15, **9,986 respondents** completed the self-completion module, that is **86.6%** of all respondents. The most common reason for refusing to complete the self-complete questionnaire was 'running out of time' (mentioned by almost half of respondents who refused); more details are provided in the [Technical Report](#) (section 6.6.2). An equal proportion of men and women answered the self-completion questionnaire. However, the proportion of those who completed the self-completion section decreased with age. Further information on response rates can be found in the [Technical Report](#) (section 3.4).

- **Fieldwork:** interviews were conducted on a rolling basis between 1<sup>st</sup> April 2014 and 31<sup>st</sup> May 2015, with roughly an equal number of interviews conducted in each month between April 2014 and March 2015. Challenges in fieldwork delivery were experienced in 2014/15 and as a result, the fieldwork period was extended by two months to increase the achieved sample size.
- **Weighting:** the results obtained were weighted to correct for the unequal probability of selection for interview caused by the sample design and for differences in the level of response among groups of individuals. Given that not all respondents chose to answer the self-completion questionnaire, these data are weighted separately to the main questionnaire (using identical weighting procedures). Further details of the weighting used are provided in the [Technical Report](#) (section 4).

### 1.3 Survey coverage

The SCJS does not aim to provide an absolute estimate for all crime and has some notable exclusions. The SCJS is a survey of adults living in private residential households and, therefore, does not provide information on crimes against adults living in other circumstances (for example those living in institutions or communal residences, such as prisons or hospitals, military bases and student accommodation). Those living in some of the smallest inhabited islands in Scotland are excluded for practical reasons (see Annex 1 of the accompanying Technical Report for details).

## Some notable survey exclusions



Children & Young People (under 16)



Those living in group residences, institutions or those without a fixed address. (e.g. student halls or the homeless population)



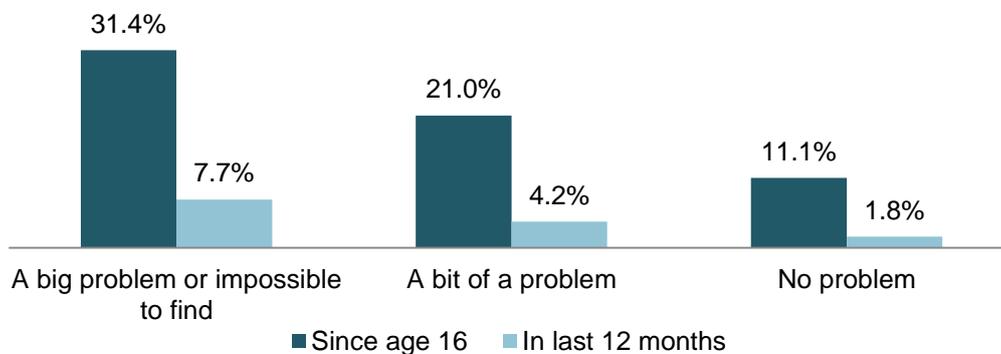
Those living in some of the smallest inhabited islands in Scotland

## 1.4 Conventions used in figures and tables

Each figure or table has a title, the data source (survey year), a base description (the number of people who answered the question), the unweighted base (the number of respondents in each category), and the SPSS variables. For example:

Title

**Figure 1.1 Risk of partner abuse since age 16, and whether the respondent's household could find £100 to meet an unexpected expense (%)**



Variable names: DA\_ANYEV, DA\_ANY12, QDi100 (refused and don't know responses not shown).

Base: All respondents with a partner since age 16 (9,312)

Unweighted base

Variable names

### **1.4.1 Percentages**

Table row or column percentages may not sum to 100 due to rounding.

Percentages presented in tables and figures where they refer to the percentage of respondents, households or crimes that have the attribute being discussed may not sum to 100 per cent. Respondents have the option to refuse answering any question they did not wish to answer and the majority of questions have a 'don't know' option. Percentages for these response categories are generally not shown in tables and figures.

A percentage may be quoted in the report text for a single category that is identifiable in the figures/tables only by summing two or more component percentages. In order to avoid rounding errors, the percentage has been recalculated for the single combined category and therefore may differ by one or two percentage points from the sum of the percentages derived from the figures/tables.

Also, percentages quoted in the report may represent variables that allow respondents to choose multiple responses. These percentages will not sum to 100 per cent with the other percentages presented. They represent the percentage of the variable population that select a certain response category.

### **1.4.2 Table abbreviations**

' - ' indicates that no respondents gave an answer in the category.

'n/a' indicates that the SCJS question was not applicable or not asked in that particular year.

' \* ' indicates that changes are statistically significant at the 95% level.

### **1.4.3 Decimal points**

Results from the self-complete section of the survey are generally reported to one decimal place. The self-complete questionnaire collects information on a range of often rare events, therefore, many of the figures reported are small (often under 1%). There is a range of uncertainty around all survey estimates. As outlined below (in sections 1.4.4 and 1.4.5), statistical testing is conducted to assess whether changes and differences between survey results are statistically significant. Only changes and differences which have been tested and assessed as representing statistically significant are highlighted as such in this report.

### **1.4.4 Survey error**

There may be errors in the recall of participants as to when certain incidents took place, resulting in some crimes being wrongly included in, or excluded from, the reference period. A number of steps in the design of the questionnaire are taken to ensure, as far as possible, that this does not happen (for example repeating key date questions in more detail).

The SCJS gathers information from a sample rather than from the whole population and, although the sample is designed carefully, survey results are always estimates, not precise figures. Estimates can differ from the figures that would have been obtained if the whole population had been interviewed.

It is, however, possible to calculate a range of values around an estimate, known as the confidence interval (also referred to as margin of error) of the estimate. At the 95 per cent confidence level, over many repeats of a survey under the same conditions, one would expect that the confidence interval would contain the true population value 95 times out of 100. This can be thought of as a one in 20 chance that the true population value will fall outside the 95 per cent confidence interval calculated for the survey estimate.

Because of this variation, changes in estimates between survey years or between population subgroups may occur by chance. In other words, the change may simply

#### **1.4.5 Statistical significance**

We are able to measure whether changes in data across years, or differences between categories, are likely to be the case using standard statistical tests. From these, we can conclude whether differences are likely to be due to chance, or represent a real difference in the underlying population.

Many of the tests for statistical significance in this report, particularly when examining results by different demographic sub-groups, were carried out using the Pearson chi-square test in SPSS<sup>2</sup>, based on individual scaled data. All significant changes highlighted in this report were found to be statistically significant at the  $p \leq 0.05$  level.

The assessments of statistical change over time which are presented in this report use estimated confidence intervals around survey results to examine whether the change is statistically significant. The estimated confidence intervals used in these tests use generic SCJS design factors of 1.2 for 2014-15 results. More detail on the derivation of these confidence intervals and design factors is available in Chapter 11 of the SCJS [Technical Report](#).

Only increases or decreases that are statistically significant at the 95 per cent level are described as changes within this report and in the tables and figures these are identified by asterisks. Where no statistically significant change has been found between two estimates, this has been described as showing 'no change'. The presentation of uncertainty and change in this report reflect best practice guidance produced by the Government Statistical Service (GSS)[\[4\]](#).

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<sup>2</sup> While the analysis for the SCJS main findings report was mainly conducted in [SAS](#) and statistical significance assessed there and using the [SCJS Statistical Testing Tool](#), the analysis for the self-completion reports utilised related functionality in SPSS to assess for statistical significance and report significance consistently at the 95% level.

### 1.4.6 Accessing Survey Data

Information on how to access SCJS data is available on the [Data Access](#) section of our webpage.

## 1.5 Key definitions and measures

Respondents are asked about their experiences of partner abuse **within the last 12 months** and additionally, their experiences of sexual victimisation **since the age of 16**.

**Partners:** The report focuses on abuse carried out by partners, against adults aged 16 or over. A partner is defined as ‘any boyfriend, girlfriend, husband, wife or civil partner’.

**Partner abuse:** The SCJS definition of partner abuse is consistent with the definition adopted by the police in recording domestic abuse:

‘any form of physical, non-physical or sexual abuse, which takes place within the context of a close relationship, committed either in the home or elsewhere. This relationship will be between partners (married, co-habiting or otherwise) or ex-partners.’

However, it should be noted that there is no single, universally accepted definition of domestic abuse. The Scottish Government defines domestic abuse, set out in the [National Strategy to Address Domestic Abuse in Scotland](#) (2000), as follows:

‘Domestic abuse (as gender-based abuse), can be perpetrated by partners or ex-partners and can include physical abuse (assault and physical attack involving a range of behaviour), sexual abuse (acts which degrade and humiliate women and are perpetrated against their will, including rape) and mental and emotional abuse (such as threats, verbal abuse, racial abuse, withholding money and other types of controlling behaviour such as isolation from family or friends). (National Strategy for Domestic Abuse 2000)<sup>3</sup>.

This is consistent with a body of academic literature that distinguishes between coercive control and situational couple violence (see Johnson, 2001. Also Stark, 2007, 2009, 2010; Myhill, 2015).

**Coercive control:** Johnson (2001) distinguishes between different types of partner abuse. Coercive control refers to an on-going process whereby one partner (most commonly a man) uses various means (to hurt, humiliate, intimidate, exploit, isolate and dominate the other partner (most commonly a woman). Coercive control can extend beyond physical violence, to a range of tactics, including financial, sexual

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<sup>3</sup> ‘Preventing Domestic Abuse. A National Strategy’.  
<http://www.gov.scot/Publications/2003/09/18185/26440>

and behavioural control, for example, depriving a partner of money, controlling their communications, or regulating how a partner dresses.

Using large-scale American survey data, Johnson (2006) found that situational couple violence was largely gender-symmetric, whilst coercive control was strongly gendered. Similarly, based on analysis of data from the Crime Survey of England and Wales, Myhill (2015) found that although the prevalence of situational violence appeared fairly symmetrical, coercive controlling abuse was highly gendered, with women overwhelmingly the victims.

Situational couple violence refers to specific abusive acts perpetrated by one or both partners (both men and women), without an underlying dynamic of domination and control.

### **1.5.1 Asking about partner abuse:**

Respondents are asked to identify which, if any, of the following psychological and physical abusive behaviours they have experienced since the age of 16, and in the previous 12 months:

#### **Psychological abuse**

- Stopped you having your fair share of the household money or taken money from you.
- Stopped you from seeing friends and relatives.
- Repeatedly put you down so that you felt worthless.
- Behaved in a jealous or controlling way.
- Forced you to view material which you considered to be pornography.
- Threatened to kill or attempted to kill themselves as a way of making you do something or stopping you from doing something.
- Threatened to, attempted to or actually hurt themselves as a way of making you do something or stopping you from doing something.
- Threatened you with a weapon, for example an ashtray or a bottle.
- Threatened to hurt you.
- Threatened to hurt someone close to you, such as your children, family members, friends or pets.
- Threatened to hurt your other/previous partner.
- Threatened to kill you.

#### **Physical partner abuse**

- Pushed you or held you down
- Kicked, bitten, or hit you
- Thrown something at you with the intention of causing harm
- Choked or tried to strangle/smother you
- Used a weapon against you, for example an ashtray or a bottle.

- Forced you or tried to force you to have sexual intercourse when you did not want to
- Forced you or tried to force you to take part in another sexual activity when you did not want to

Note that the definition of partner abuse is not introduced to respondents at the beginning of the survey and they are not asked about ‘partner abuse’ or ‘domestic abuse’ in the questionnaire until the final question.

A full transcript of the [survey questionnaire](#) is available on the SCJS website

### **Box 1.1 Partner abuse and the law**

In Scotland, a public consultation on a draft offence of Domestic Abuse concluded on 1 April 2016. The draft offence provides for a general offence of “domestic abuse” that covers the whole range of conduct that can make up a pattern of abusive behaviour within a relationship: both physical violence and threats which can be prosecuted using the existing criminal law and other behaviour amounting to coercive control or psychological abuse, which it may not be possible to prosecute using the existing law.

In England and Wales, Section 76 of the Serious Crime Act 2015<sup>4</sup> created a new offence of controlling or coercive behaviour in an intimate or family relationship.<sup>5</sup> Prior to this, case law indicated the difficulty in proving a pattern of behaviour that amounted to harassment within an intimate relationship.

Crown Prosecution Service guidelines define coercive behaviour as ‘an act or a pattern of acts of assault, threats, humiliation and intimidation or other abuse that is used to harm, punish, or frighten their victim.’<sup>6</sup> Controlling behaviour is defined as ‘a range of acts designed to make a person subordinate and/or dependent by isolating them from sources of support, exploiting their resources and capacities for personal gain, depriving them of the means needed for independence, resistance and escape and regulating their everyday behaviour.’

### **1.5.2 Partner abuse, sexual victimisation and stalking**

There may be some overlap between the incidents of partner abuse detailed in this report, and incidents of sexual victimisation and stalking, which are asked about in a separate part of the self-completion questionnaire (and examined separately in the [Sexual Victimisation and Stalking](#) report). Given that sexual/victimisation and partner abuse can involve similar behaviours and experiences, it is possible that some incidents detailed in this report are duplicated in the Sexual Victimisation and Stalking report. It is also possible that some partner abuse detailed in this report

<sup>4</sup> See: <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2015/9/section/76/enacted>

<sup>5</sup> *A criminal offence of domestic abuse* <https://consult.scotland.gov.uk/criminal-law-and-sentencing-team/criminal-offence-domestic-abuse>

<sup>6</sup> See ‘Domestic Abuse Guidelines for Prosecutors’: [http://www.cps.gov.uk/legal/d\\_to\\_g/domestic\\_abuse\\_guidelines\\_for\\_prosecutors/#a02](http://www.cps.gov.uk/legal/d_to_g/domestic_abuse_guidelines_for_prosecutors/#a02)

constituted sexual victimisation and stalking, but were not viewed or reported as such by respondents.

### 1.5.3 Comparisons with crimes and offences

Incidents of partner abuse recorded in the self-completion module are not directly comparable with legal crimes and offences. In part, this is because some types of psychological abuse and coercive control cannot usually be prosecuted under the existing criminal law.<sup>7</sup> In addition, the SCJS asks respondents a limited number of follow-up questions about their experiences (in order to avoid causing possible distress), which prevents the accurate classification of incidents. For further details on comparable crimes in the SCJS 2014/15, see the [Offence Coding Manual](#).

## 1.6 Structure of the Report

The report is split into three substantive chapters that present data for the majority of questions contained in the self-completion questionnaire and is supported by summary Annex Data Tables. The report also draws on existing academic and policy evidence and literature to provide further context for the findings. The report does not include in-depth, multivariate statistical analysis that would explore the more complex underlying relationships within the data.

[Chapter 2](#) examines the overall and varying prevalence and incidence of partner abuse amongst adults in Scotland. The analysis is based on two reference periods: abuse since the age of 16, and in the last 12 months.

[Chapter 3](#) provides more context and detailed analysis of the headline findings. The chapter examines different types of partner abuse, offender/victim relationships, the presence of children, the impact of partner abuse and perceptions of partner abuse. This chapter also presents new findings on children and partner abuse from the longitudinal [Growing Up in Scotland](#) study.

[Chapter 4](#) examines reporting behaviour. The chapter examines which individuals and/or organizations the respondents are most likely to tell about their experiences of abuse. The chapter also looks at patterns of reporting (and non-reporting) to the police, reasons for non-reporting, and if reported, how satisfied respondents were with the police response.

The **Annexes** provide summary results and further background information.

**Annex 1** provides additional data tables.

**Annex 2** describes the methodology.

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<sup>7</sup> See 'Domestic Abuse Consultation launched' (22/12/2015)  
<http://news.scotland.gov.uk/News/Domestic-abuse-consultation-launched-20b4.aspx>

## 2. The Overall and Varying Risk of Partner abuse

### 2.1 Summary of findings

Partner abuse is commonly experienced on multiple occasions, over a long period of time. Over two-thirds (67.5%) of those who reported an incident of partner abuse in the last 12 months also reported at least one incident prior to this period. The risk of partner abuse varied by gender, age, access to money and deprivation, and other types of victimisation.

- Overall, 14.1% of respondents had experienced partner abuse since the age of 16, and 2.9% of respondents had experienced partner abuse in the last 12 months. The risk of partner abuse in the last 12 months did not change between the 2012/13 and 2014/15 survey sweeps.
- A higher proportion of women than men experienced partner abuse in the last 12 months, at 3.4% and 2.4% respectively.
- However, a much higher proportion of women had experienced partner abuse (physical or psychological) since the age of 16 (18.5% of women, compared to 9.2% of men).
- The risk of partner abuse (in the last 12 months) was highest amongst young people aged 16 to 24 years (6.9%) and lowest amongst those aged 65 or over (0.4%).
- Nineteen per cent of respondents living in the 15% most deprived areas of Scotland had experienced partner abuse since the age of 16, compared to 13.2% of those living in the rest of Scotland.
- Almost a quarter (22.5%) of respondents classified as victims of crime in the main SCJS survey had experienced partner abuse since the age of 16, compared to 12.6% of those who were not classified as victims.

## 2.2 Introduction

This chapter presents the findings on the extent of partner abuse amongst adults in Scotland. The chapter examines the overall and varying prevalence and incidence of partner abuse, since age 16 and in the last 12 months. Note that using the SCJS definition, partner abuse can only occur if someone had a partner at the time. Almost all survey respondents (93.3%,  $n = 9,312$ ) reported having had at least one partner since the age of 16, and 69.3% ( $n = 6,925$ ) of all survey respondents reported having contact with a partner or ex-partner in the last 12 months.

## 2.3 Overall risk of SCJS partner abuse

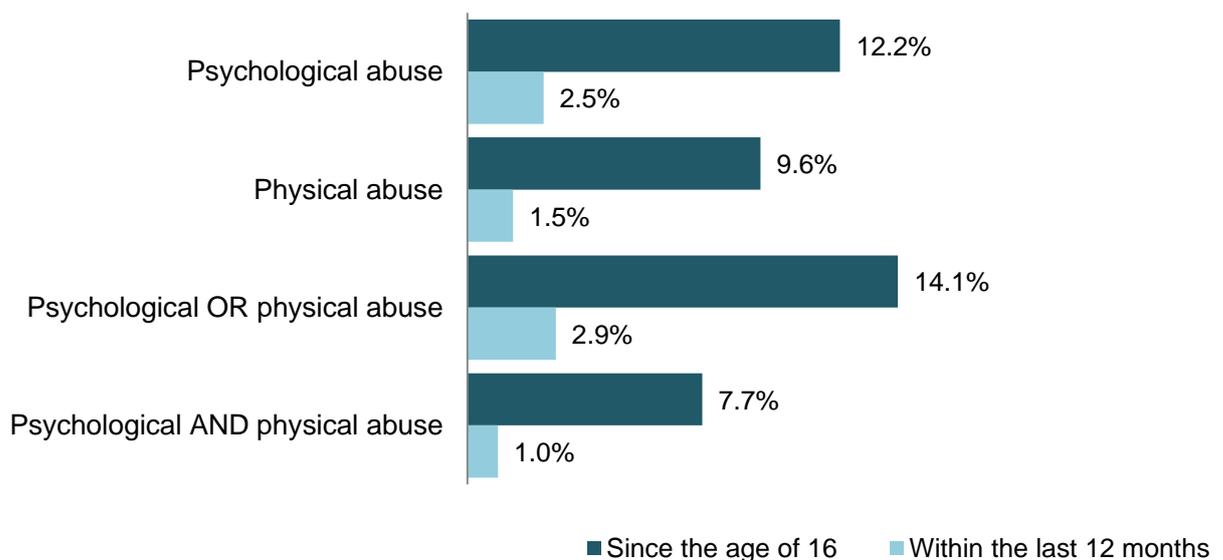
Overall, 14.1% of respondents ( $n = 9,312$ ) had experienced at least one incident of partner abuse, either psychological *or* physical, since the age of 16.

The risk of psychological abuse was higher than the risk of physical abuse. Breaking this down further, 12.2% of respondents experienced at least one incident of psychological abuse since the age of 16, 9.6% reported at least one incident of physical abuse, and 7.7% reported both psychological *and* physical abuse.

Looking at the last 12 months only, 2.9% of respondents experienced at least one incident of partner abuse. Within this group, 2.5% reported at least one incident of psychological abuse, and 1.5% reported at least one incident of physical abuse.

**Figure 2.1** summarises these results.

**Figure 2.1 Risk of experiencing partner abuse since age 16 and in the last 12 months**  
SCJS 2014/2015



Base: All respondents with a partner since age 16 (9,312), all respondents with contact with a partner/ex-partner in the last 12 months (6,925)

Variable name: DA\_1i\_ANY DA\_1iii\_ANY DA\_ANYEV DA\_ANY12 DA\_BOTH12 REL\_0i

## 2.4 Risk of partner abuse over time

**Table 2.1** shows the trends in the risk of partner abuse since age 16 between 2008/09 and 2014/15.<sup>8</sup>

Between 2008/09 and 2014/15, the overall risk of experiencing any partner abuse saw a decrease from 18.2% to 14.1%. Looking at the different types of abuse in this period, the risk of psychological abuse decreased from 15.1% to 12.2%, whilst the risk of physical abuse decreased from 13.2% to 9.6%.<sup>9</sup>

Looking just at the last two survey sweeps, there was no statistically significant change in the risk of partner abuse (psychological and physical) between 2012/13 and 2014/15.

**Table 2.1 Risk of partner abuse since the age of 16, 2008/09 to 2014/15**

	2008/09	2009/10	2010/11	2012/13	2014/15	% change 2008/09-2014/15	% change 2012/13-2014/15
Psychological abuse	15.1%	13.4%	13.4%	12.0%	12.2%	-2.8%*	0.4%
Physical abuse	13.2%	11.9%	12.0%	9.2%	9.6%	-3.7%*	0.4%
Any psychological or physical abuse	18.2%	16.4%	16.3%	13.8%	14.1%	-4.2%*	0.3%
Both psychological and physical abuse	10.0%	8.9%	9.1%	7.4%	7.7%	-2.3%*	0.3%
<i>Base</i>	10,110	12,729	10,397	9,648	9,312		

SCJS changes which are statistically significant at the 95% level are highlighted with an \*

Bases: All respondents who had a partner since the age of 16

Variable names: DA\_1i\_ANY DA\_1iii\_ANY DA\_ANYEV

<sup>8</sup> Comparable questions on the experience of partner abuse have been asked in each sweep of the SCJS since 2008-09.

<sup>9</sup> The SCJS asks respondents if they have experienced a range of abusive physical behaviour. In 2012/13, the wording 'thrown something at you' was changed to 'thrown something at you with the intention of causing harm'. This change may have contributed to a fall in the proportion of positive responses (from 8% in 2010/11, to 5% in 2012/13).

**Table 2.2** below shows the trend in the risk of partner abuse in the last 12 months, between 2008/09 and 2014/15.<sup>10</sup>

Between 2008/09 and 2014/15, the overall risk of experiencing any partner abuse decreased from 4.2% to 2.9%. Looking at the two categories of partner abuse, the risk of psychological abuse decreased from 3.4% to 2.5%, and the risk of physical abuse decreased from 2.2% to 1.5%.

Looking just at the last two survey sweeps, between 2012/13 and 2014/15, the risk of partner abuse, both psychological and physical, did not change. The small difference in the risk of psychological abuse shown in **Table 2.2** (2.3% and 2.5% respectively) is not statistically significant, whilst in both sweeps, 1.5% had experienced physical abuse.

**Table 2.2 Risk of partner abuse (in last 12 months), 2008/9 to 2014/15**

*SCJS 2008-09 to 2014/2015*

	2008/09	2009/10	2010/11	2012/13	2014/15	% change 2008/09-2014/15	% change 2012/13-2014/15
Psychological abuse	3.4%	2.9%	2.4%	2.3%	2.5%	-0.9%*	0.1%
Physical abuse	2.2%	1.7%	1.7%	1.5%	1.5%	-0.7%*	0.0%
Any psychological or physical abuse	4.2%	3.5%	3.1%	2.8%	2.9%	-1.3%*	0.1%
Both psychological and physical abuse	1.4%	1.1%	1.1%	1.0%	1.0%	-0.4%	0.0%
<i>Base</i>	<i>6,748</i>	<i>9,471</i>	<i>7,652</i>	<i>7,180</i>	<i>6,925</i>		

SCJS changes which are statistically significant at the 95% level are highlighted with an \*

Base: All who have had contact with a partner in the last 12 months

Variable names: DA\_ANYEV DA\_ANY12 REL\_0i

Figures in this table are rounded to maintain compatibility with previous reports. The equivalent data to one decimal point is shown in Figure 2.1.

<sup>10</sup> The results for risk of partner abuse in the last 12 months in this section of the report are based on those respondents who said that they had contact with their partner/ex partners in the previous 12 months (REL\_0i, 6,925). In later sections of the report, we consider all experiences reported by the 238 respondents who provided information on abuse within the last 12 months.

## 2.5 The varying risk of partner abuse

The risk of partner abuse in Scotland varied by different population characteristics. This section examines the relationship between gender, age and socio-economic status on the risk of partner abuse, since the age of 16 and in the last 12 months. Note that the analysis examines these factors in isolation, and that more advanced statistical modelling would be required to establish the combined or interactive effects of each factor.

### 2.5.1 Gender

Looking at the 12 month period, the overall risk of partner abuse was higher for women than men, at 3.4% and 2.4% respectively<sup>11</sup>.

Women were more likely to experience psychological abuse than men, at 3.1% and 1.9% respectively. However, the risk of physical abuse did not vary between men and women, at 1.4% and 1.5% respectively.

Looking at the longer time period, there were statistically significant differences in victimisation between men and women. The overall risk of partner abuse since the age of 16 women was around two times the level reported by men, at 18.5% and 9.2% respectively.

A higher proportion of women than men reported psychological abuse since the age of 16 (16.5% women, compared to 7.5% men respectively). Likewise, the proportion of women reporting physical abuse was higher, at 12.8% and 5.9% respectively. **Table 2.3** shows the results.

**Table 2.3 Risk of partner abuse in the last 12 months and since age 16, by gender (%)**

In last 12 months	In last 12 months		Since age 16	
	Men	Women	Men	Women
Psychological abuse	1.9%	3.1%	7.5%	16.5%
Physical abuse	1.4%	1.5%	5.9%	12.8%
Psychological or physical abuse	2.4%	3.4%	9.2%	18.5%
Both psychological and physical abuse	0.9%	1.2%	4.2%	10.9%

Base: All respondents with a partner since age 16 (men 4,167, women 5,145), all respondents with contact with a partner/ex-partner in the last 12 months (men 3,319, women 3,606)

Variable names: DA\_1i\_ANY DA\_1iii\_ANY DA\_ANYEV DA\_ANY12 DA\_BOTH12 QDGEN REL\_0i

<sup>11</sup> This difference is on the borderline of statistical significance ( $p=0.05$ ).

## Box 2.1 Gender symmetry and asymmetry

The results in Section 2.4.1 show that there is a small, but statistically significant, difference in the overall risk of partner abuse within the last 12 months. A number of studies have reported equal or near equal victimisation rates for men and women. These include the 1996 British Crime Survey [BCS] (Mirrlees-Black 1999), and 2001 BCS (Walby & Allen 2004), as well as large-scale national surveys in North America.

However, when respondents are asked about their experiences of partner abuse since the age of 16, a much larger proportion of women than men report experiences of abuse. Rather the longer-term measure shows that the risk of psychological and physical partner abuse was higher amongst women than men.

This asymmetrical finding is consistent with a body of academic research that distinguishes between situational and coercive partner abuse (Johnson, 2001, 2006). For example, analysis of data from the Crime Survey of England and Wales (Myhill, 2015) indicates that 'coercive control is highly gendered and is significantly more damaging to its primarily female victims than is situational violence'.

### 2.5.2 Risk of different types of partner abuse and gender

#### Psychological abuse

Respondents were asked if they had experienced twelve different types of psychological abuse since the age of 16.

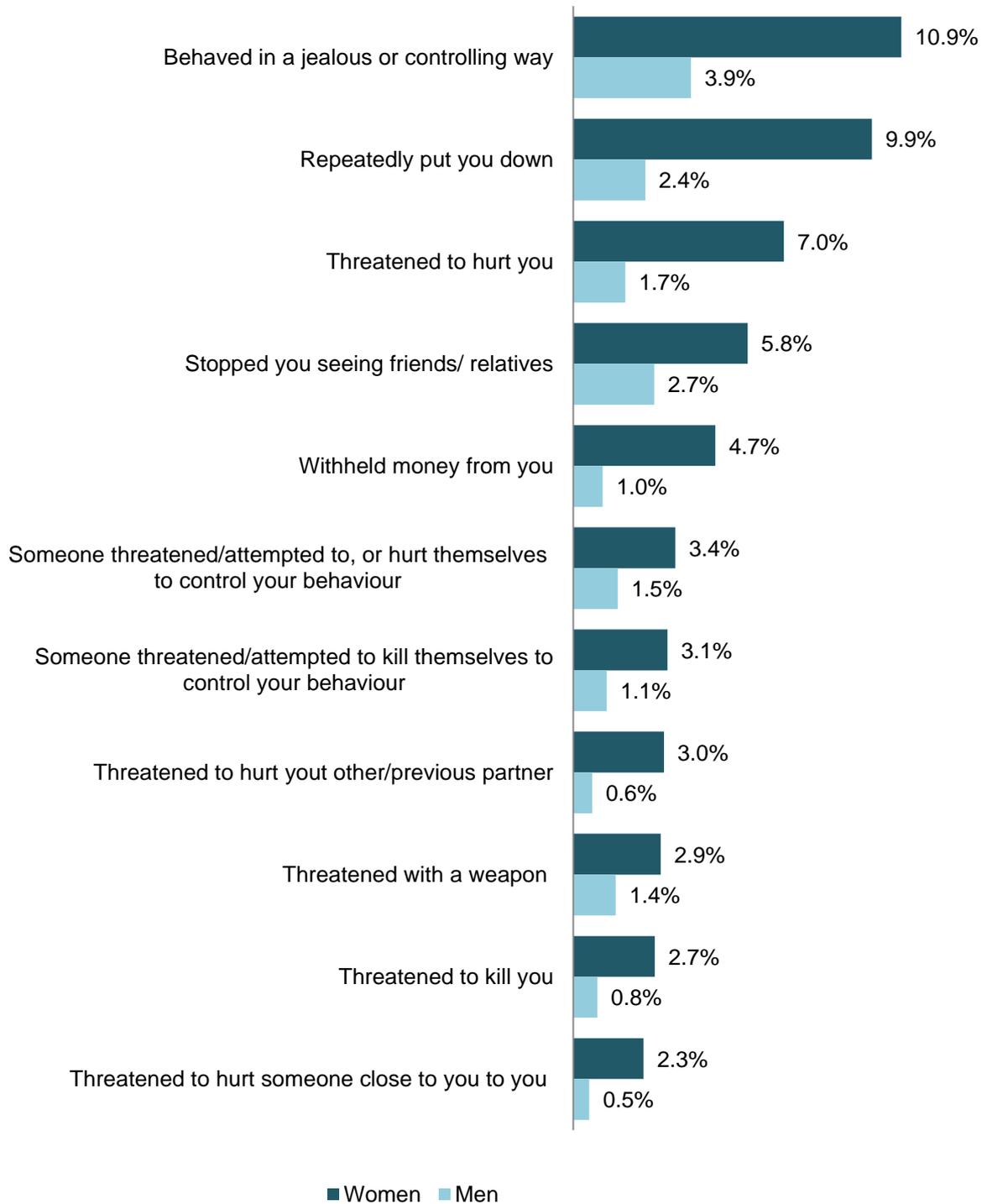
Overall, the most commonly reported form of psychological abuse was a partner behaving in a jealous or controlling way (7.6%), followed by being put down repeatedly, and made to feel worthless (6.4%). A further 4.5% stated that a partner had threatened to hurt them, and 4.3% said that a partner had stopped them from seeing friends and relatives.

However, these findings were highly gendered. Across all twelve categories, the proportion of women that reported abuse was higher than the proportion of men. For example:

- 10.9% of women had experienced a partner behaving in a jealous or controlling way, compared to 3.9% of men;
- 9.9% of women experienced being repeatedly put down, and made to feel worthless, compared to 2.4% of men, and;
- 7.0% of women said that their partner had threatened to hurt them, compared to 1.7% of men.

**Figure 2.2** shows the risk of different types of psychological abuse since the age of 16, broken down by gender.

**Figure 2.2 Risk of different types of psychological abuse since age 16, by gender (%)**



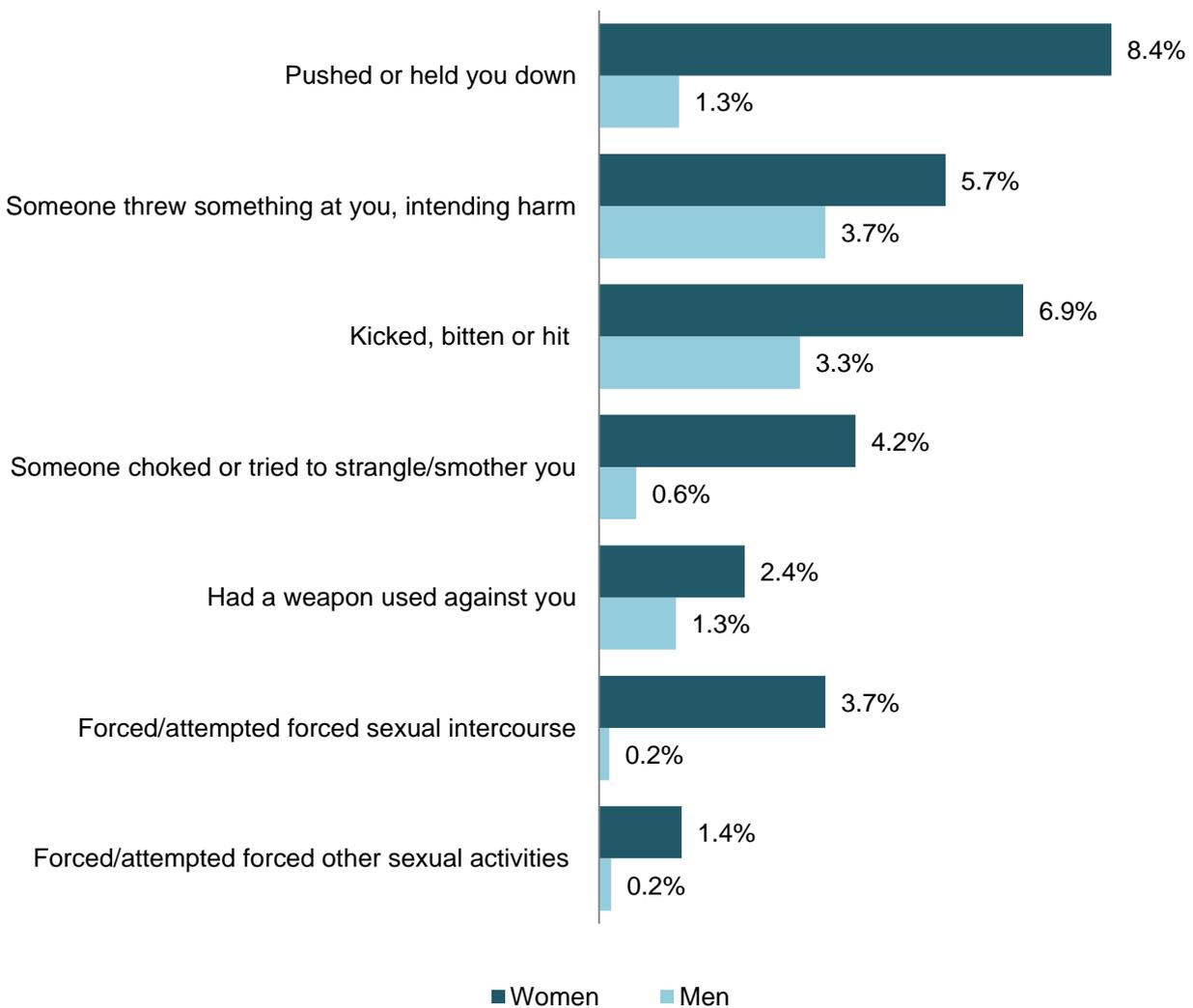
Base: All respondents with a partner since age 16: men (4,167) women (5,145)  
 Variable names: DA\_1i\_QDGEN

## Physical abuse

Respondents were asked if they had experienced seven different types of physical abuse since the age of 16.

**Figure 3.3** shows the risk within each category by gender. Again, the risk of physical abuse was higher for women in all seven categories. The most common type of physical abuse amongst women was being pushed or held down, which was reported by 8.4% of female respondents, compared to 1.3% of male respondents, followed by being kicked, bitten or hit, which was reported by 6.9% of women, compared to 3.3% of men.

**Figure 2.3 Risk of different types of physical abuse since age 16, by gender (%)**



Base: All respondents with a partner since age 16: men (4,167) women (5,145)

Variable names: DA\_1iii\_QDGEN

### 2.5.3 Age

The risk of partner abuse varied by age, both within the last 12 months, and since the age of 16.

**Table 2.4** shows the risk of partner abuse in the last 12 months was highest among the 16 to 24 years age-group at 6.9%. Amongst the 55 to 64 years age-group, the equivalent figure was 1.4%, whilst those aged 65 or over were least likely to report partner abuse, either in the last 12 months, or since age 16. Looking at partner abuse since the age of 16, the risk was highest amongst the 35 to 44 years age-group, at 19.0%, and lowest amongst those aged 65 or over, at 5.0%.

**Table 2.4 Risk of partner abuse (psychological or physical) in last 12 months and since age 16, by age (%)**

Age group	Within the last 12 months (%)	Since age 16 (%)
16 to 24 years	6.9%	15.4%
25 to 34 years	3.8%	17.8%
35 to 44 years	3.2%	19.0%
45 to 54 years	2.8%	18.0%
55 to 64 years	1.4%	12.2%
65 years or over	0.4%	5.0%

Base: All respondents with a partner since age 16 (9,312), all respondents with contact with a partner/ex-partner in the last 12 months (6,925)

Variable names: DA\_ANYEV DA\_ANY12 QDAGE (in age groups) REL\_0i

Taking this analysis further, **Table 2.5** shows the risk of partner abuse broken down by age and gender.

**Table 2.5 Risk of partner abuse (psychological or physical) in last 12 months and since age 16, by age and gender (%)**

Age group	Within the last 12 months (%)		Since age 16 (%)	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
16 to 24 years	5.7%	8.0%	11.4%	19.1%
25 to 34 years	3.5%	4.1%	12.3%	23.0%
35 to 44 years	2.8%	3.6%	12.6%	25.0%
45 to 54 years	2.1%	3.5%	10.8%	24.5%
55 to 64 years	1.7%	1.0%	7.4%	16.6%
65 years or over	0.2%	0.7%	2.6%	7.0%

Base: All respondents with a partner since age 16 (9,312), all respondents with contact with a partner/ex-partner in the last 12 months (6,925)

Variable names: DA\_ANYEV DA\_ANY12 QDGEN QDAGE (in age groups) REL\_0i

**Table 2.5** shows that within the last 12 months, the risk of partner abuse was highest for young women aged 16 to 24, at 8.0%. This finding is generally consistent with other UK and international surveys, which show that women under 25 are at highest risk of experiencing abuse in the past year (Mirrlees-Black 1999, Walby & Allen 2004). See Box 2.3 for a further discussion of abusive relationships and age.

Looking at the longer term period, the risk of partner abuse was highest amongst women aged 35 to 44 years: a quarter of women in this age group had experienced partner abuse since the age of 16.

### **Box 2.3 Abusive relationships and age**

It is important to note that the findings presented above may reflect a greater willingness amongst younger women to disclose violence (Mirrlees-Black 1999, Bunge & Locke 2000) and that some studies have found no association between the risk of partner abuse and age (Gillioz 1997).

Only 7% of women in the 65 years or over age-group reported experiences of partner abuse since the age of 16. This result is lower than might be anticipated, given that life-time prevalence would be expected to increase with age. The underlying explanation is outwith the scope of this report; however, it may be that older people are less willing to report their experiences, or there may be a cohort effect, whereby older people were less likely to experience partner abuse than later cohorts.

In a review of the available literature on partner abuse and age, Barnish found varying relationships between different types of partner abuse and age (2004, p.27). For example, some studies found a curvilinear relationship, with women under 30 and those over 50 at greater risk (Black et al 2001). A study by Piispa (2002) reported that for a substantial group of older women, physical violence decreased with time, but was replaced by ongoing psychological abuse.

#### **2.5.4 Deprivation and available income**

The risk of partner abuse varied significantly in terms of neighbourhood deprivation both since the age of 16, and in the last 12 months. Around one in five (19.0%) of those living in the fifteen per cent most deprived areas of Scotland reported abuse since age 16, compared to 13.2% of those living in the rest of Scotland. Similarly, 4.1% of those living in the fifteen per cent most deprived areas reported abuse in the last 12 months, compared to 2.7% of those living in the rest of Scotland.

These findings are broadly consistent (but not directly comparable) with findings from the Crime Survey for England and Wales<sup>12</sup>, which show that women living in households in the 20% most deprived areas of England were more likely to be

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<sup>12</sup> Crime Survey of England and Wales (2014, p.13) *Chapter 4 - Intimate Personal Violence and Partner Abuse*. Online at: [www.ons.gov.uk/ons/dcp171776\\_352362.pdf](http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/dcp171776_352362.pdf)

victims of domestic abuse (9.1%), compared to women in other areas (5.6% for the 20% least deprived areas and 6.7% in other areas).

#### 2.5.4.1 Available income

The risk of SCJS partner abuse was also associated with available income, both since the age of 16, and in the last 12 months. Respondents were asked how easy it would be for the household to find £100 to meet an unexpected expense. Unlike measures of neighbourhood deprivation, this question addresses the issue of immediate access to funds within a household. See **Box 2.4** for a further discussion of this measure, as used in analysis of the British Crime Survey.

The risk of partner abuse since the age of 16 was higher amongst those who stated that it would be 'a big problem' or 'impossible' to find £100 to meet an unexpected expense, compared to those who stated it would be 'no problem', at 31.3% and 11.1% respectively.

Similarly, the risk of partner abuse in the last 12 months was higher amongst those who said it would be 'a big problem' or 'impossible' to find £100 to meet an unexpected expense, compared to those who said that it was not a problem, at 7.7% and 1.9% respectively. **Figure 2.4** presents these findings and **Box 2.5** provides further context to these findings.

#### Box 2.4 Available income and gender.

This measure was used in a Home Office research study on domestic abuse using British Crime Survey<sup>13</sup> data. The study highlighted that the ability to find £100 at short notice is associated with a sizeable difference in risk for both men and women. It is especially the case for women and especially for domestic violence.

The research found that Women are three and a half times more likely to be subject to domestic violence if they found it impossible to find £100 at short notice than if this was no problem, while for men the ratio is two and a half.

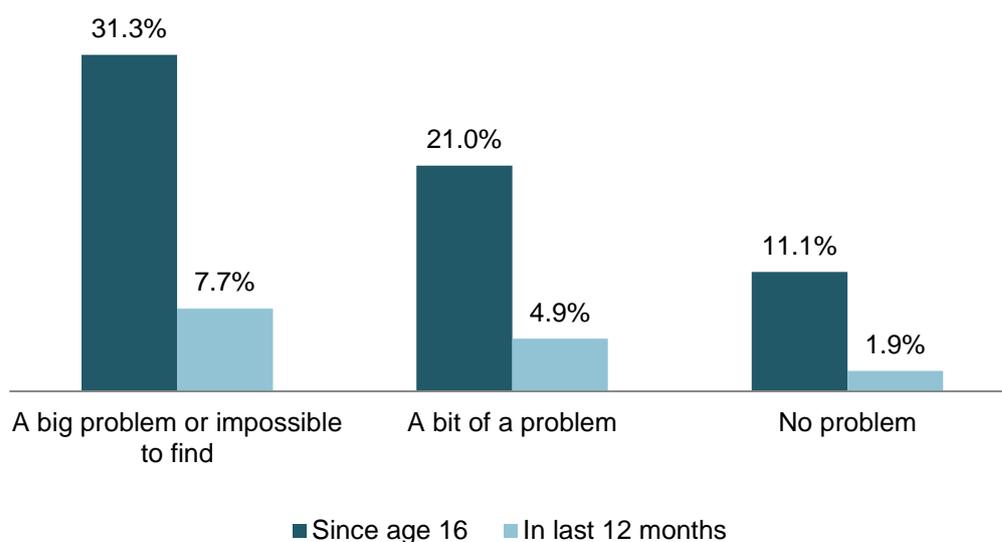
The SCJS found no difference in experiences of partner abuse between men and women who would find it a 'big problem' or 'impossible' to find £100 to meet an unexpected expense.

However, Section 3.3.1 highlights gender differences in the types of psychological abuse experienced, indicating that more women experience a partner stopping them having access to household money, or taking money from them (25.5% of women, compared to 10.6% of men).

<sup>13</sup> Access the report here -

<http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20110218135832/rds.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/pdfs04/hors276.pdf>

**Figure 2.4 Risk of partner abuse since age 16, and whether the respondent's household could find £100 to meet an unexpected expense (%)**



Variable names: DA\_ANYEV, DA\_ANY12, QDi100 (refused and don't know responses not shown) REL\_0i.

Base: All respondents with a partner since age 16 (9,312), all respondents with contact with a partner/ex-partner in the last 12 months (6,925)

### Box 2.5 Abusive relationships and deprivation

The findings in this report are consistent with British Crime Survey data that found women in lower income households and/or living in council properties were at significantly greater risk of partner abuse (Mirrlees-Black 1999, Walby & Allen 2004).

The relationship between partner abuse and deprivation is complex. For example, it may be that financial pressure exacerbates the risk of partner abuse. Alternatively, it may be that economic resources can make it easier to leave abusive relationships (WHO 2002, Campbell 2002, Walby & Allen 2004). Saunders (2002) found that women in employment, with comparatively higher socio-economic status were more likely to leave abusive relationships. In this respect, higher socio-economic status may provide some protection against the risk of partner abuse recurring.

#### 2.5.5 Victim status

The risk of partner abuse was associated with other types of victimisation. Almost a quarter (22.5%) of those who classified as victims<sup>14</sup> in the main SCJS survey had experienced partner abuse at least once since the age of 16. This compares to 12.6% of those who were not classified as victims.

<sup>14</sup> A victim is defined as a respondent who reported crimes or offences in the main questionnaire (excluding sexual offences and threats) that are within the scope of the survey, took place in Scotland, and occurred within the reference period.

Looking at the shorter 12 month period, 6.0% of those classified as victims in the main SCJS survey had experienced at least one type of partner abuse, compared to 2.3% of those who were not classified as victims.

## 2.6 Frequency of partner abuse

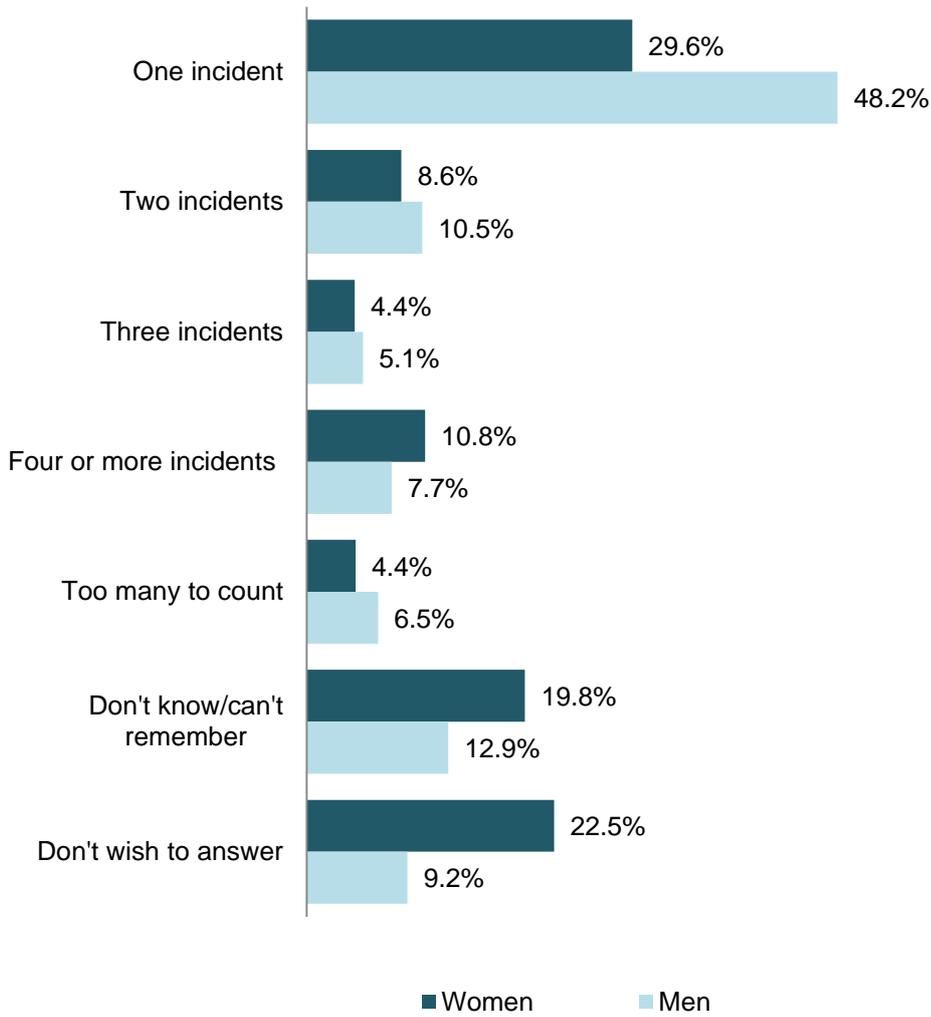
Respondents who reported partner abuse within the last 12 months ( $n = 238$ ) were asked how many incidents of abuse they had experienced within this time period. Overall, 37.3% had experienced one incident, 9.4% experienced two incidents, 4.7% experienced three incidents, and 9.5% experienced four or more incidents. A further 5.3% said that there were too many incidents to count. Overall, around a third of respondents said that they either didn't know (17.0) or didn't want to answer (17.0%). **Figure 2.5** below presents the findings.

The incidence of abuse varied by gender. Of those who had experienced partner abuse in the last 12 months, a higher proportion of men than women reported only one incident (48.2% men, compared to 29.6% women). There was no difference in the proportion of males and females reporting more than one experience of abuse (29.8% and 28.2% respectively), however, a higher proportion of women than men didn't wish to answer this question (22.5% women, compared to 9.2% of men)<sup>15</sup>.

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<sup>15</sup> This question response category is further explored in variable DA\_6CHK available in the underlying dataset.

**Figure 2.5 Partner abuse incidents experienced in the last 12 months (%)**



Base: Adults who had experienced partner abuse (psychological or physical) in the last 12 months (men 89, women, 149)

Variable name: DA\_6

## 3. The Nature and Impact of Partner Abuse

### 3.1 Summary of findings

#### Types of partner abuse

Victims experienced a range of abusive behaviours, both psychological and physical. Victims experienced psychological abuse more commonly than physical abuse.

- On average, those who experienced partner abuse since the age of 16 reported around two different types of physical abuse, and around three different types of psychological abuse.
- The most common types of psychological abuse among victims of partner abuse (since age 16) were having a partner behaving in a jealous or controlling way (7.6%), and being repeatedly put down by a partner (6.3%).
- Among partner abuse victims since the age of 16, some types of psychological abuse were experienced by a higher proportion of women than men. For example, 59.0% of women experienced a partner behave in a jealous or controlling way, compared to 42.4% of men, whilst 53.7% of women were repeatedly put down by their partner, compared to 25.9% of men.
- The most common types of physical abuse (since age 16) were being kicked or bitten (5.2%), being pushed or held down (5.0%), and having something thrown at you, with the intention of causing harm (4.7%).
- Among partner abuse victims since the age of 16, women were more likely than men to experience physical abuse involving direct contact. For example, being pushed or held down (45.3% women, compared to 14.2% men); being choked, strangled or smothered (22.7% women, compared to 6.6% men) and forced intercourse (20.1% women, compared to 1.9% men).
- Men were more likely than women to experience non-contact violence, specifically having something thrown at them at 40.1% and 30.7% respectively.

#### Relationships and children

For some victims, the impact of partner abuse extended to the wider family:

- Around a third (33.5%) of those who had experienced partner abuse in the last 12 months were living with the abusive partner at the time of the most recent incident. Just under half (48.3%) of these respondents said that they were still living with the abusive partner at the time of survey interview.

- Two in five (39.4%) of those who experienced partner abuse in the last 12 months said that children were living in their household when the most recent incident took place.
- Where children were in the household, nearly two thirds (63.7%) said that the children were present (in, or around the house or close by) during the most recent incident.

### **Impact of partner of abuse**

The impact of partner abuse was wide-ranging. Overall, psychological effects were reported more commonly than physical effects. However, not all respondents who experienced partner abuse considered themselves to be a victim. Respondents were more likely to view physical abuse as a crime, compared to psychological abuse. Of those who experienced partner abuse in the last 12 months:

- Two-thirds (65.2%) reported at least one psychological effect, and 39.6% reported at least one physical effect.
- The most common psychological effect was low self-esteem, reported by 37.4% of victims. A higher proportion of women than men experienced low self-esteem, at 44.5%, and 27.2% respectively.
- Two in five (40.5%) reported two or more psychological effects, whilst one in five (21.9%) reported four or more effects.
- A higher proportion of women than men experienced four or more psychological effects, at 31.1% and 8.8%, respectively.
- The most common physical impacts were; minor bruising or black eyes (21.6%); scratches or minor cuts (15.2%); and severe bruising (8.5%).

### **Perceptions of partner abuse**

- Around a third (32.5%) viewed their experiences of physical abuse (in the last 12 months) as a crime, compared to 17.9% who viewed their experiences of psychological abuse as a crime.
- Just under half (46.3%) of those who had experienced at least one incident of psychological or physical partner abuse since age 16 considered themselves to be a victim of domestic abuse. This proportion was higher amongst women at 56.9%, compared to men at 22.9%.
- While 7.9% of respondents considered themselves to have been a victim of domestic abuse since age 16, this was lower than the proportion that reported incidents of partner abuse in the same period (14.1%).

## 3.2 Introduction

This chapter examines different types of partner abuse experienced by victims, victim-offender relationships and the presence of children, the impact of abuse, and victim perceptions of partner abuse.

## 3.3 Types of partner abuse

Respondents were asked if they have experienced a range of abusive behaviours, both psychological and physical. As reported in **Section 2.2**, 12.2% of respondents had experienced at least one incident of psychological abuse since the age of 16, and 9.6% had experienced at least one incident of physical abuse.

This section of the report examines different types of abuse amongst those who had reported at least one incident of partner abuse since age 16 ( $n = 1,427$ ) in more detail. The findings show that victimization was likely to involve multiple types of abuse.

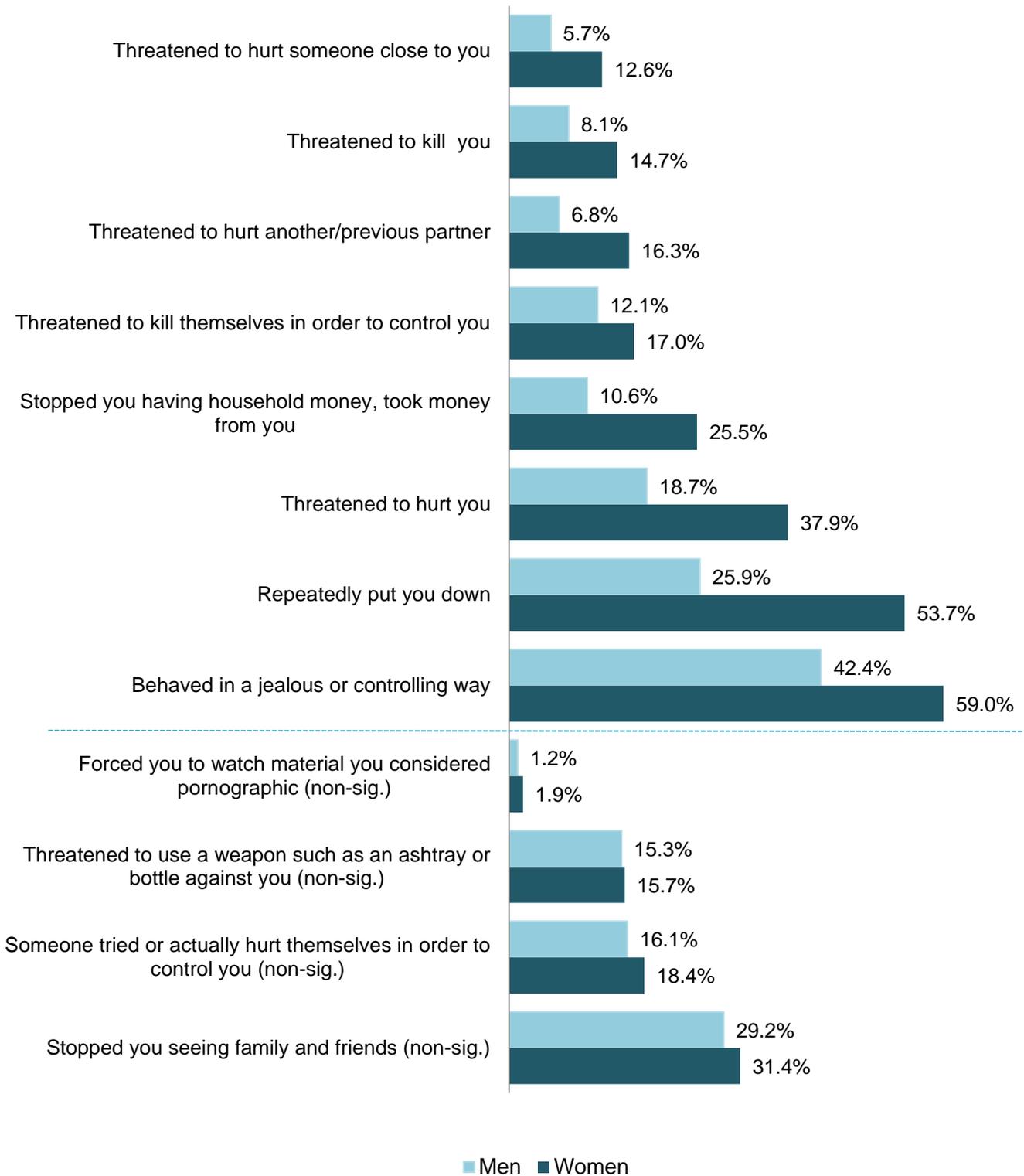
### 3.3.1 Psychological abuse

Looking only at those who had experienced partner abuse since the age of 16, on average, victims had experienced three different types of psychological abuse. A higher proportion of women than men had experienced eight different types of psychological abuse.

In four categories, the differences between women and men were *not* statistically significant. These were: being stopped from seeing friends and family; someone attempting or actually hurting themselves in order to control you; being threatened with a weapon (such as an ashtray or bottle) and; being forced to watch material the respondent viewed as pornographic.

**Figure 3.1** below presents the results.

**Figure 3.1 Types of psychological abuse experienced by victim since age 16, by gender (%)**



Non-significant differences between men and women are denoted 'non-sig.'

Base: All experiencing at least one type of partner abuse since age 16: men (393) women (1,034)

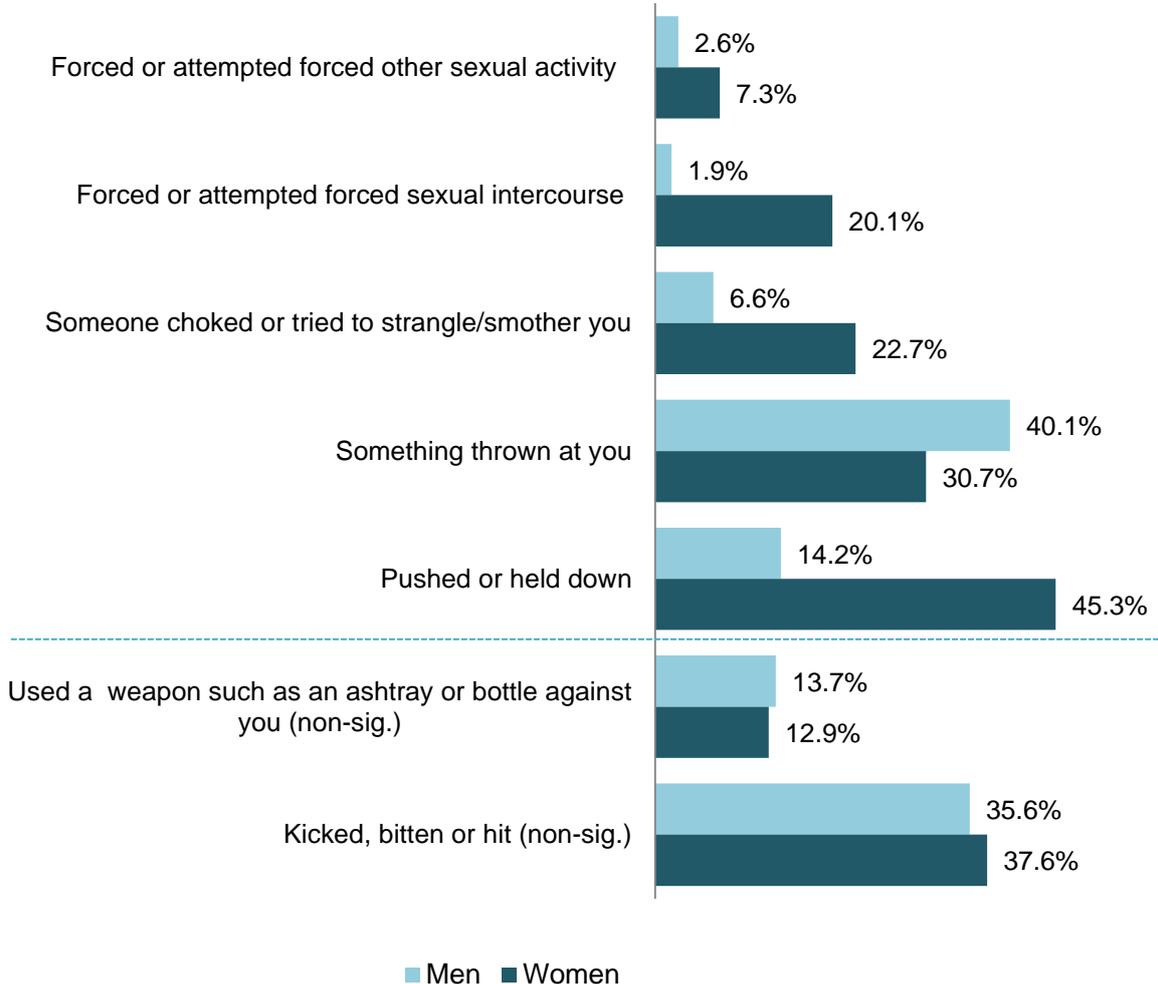
Variable names: DA\_1i\_QDGEN DA\_ANYEV

### 3.3.2 Physical abuse

Again, looking at those who had experienced partner abuse since the age of 16, on average, victims had experienced two different types of physical abuse. A higher proportion of women than men had experienced four different types of physical abuse. These were: being pushed or held down; being choked, strangled or smothered; forced intercourse, and other forced sexual activities.

In one category (having something thrown at you), the proportion of men was higher than the proportion of women (40.1% men, compared to 30.7% women). In two categories, the gender difference was not statistically significant. These were having a weapon (such as an ashtray or bottle) used against you, and being kicked, bitten or hit. **Figure 3.2** shows the results.

**Figure 3.2 Types of physical abuse since age 16, by gender (%)**



Non-significant differences between men and women are denoted 'non-sig.'

Base: All experiencing at least one type of partner abuse since age 16: (men (393) women (1,034))

Variable name: DA\_1iii

The findings in **Figure 3.2** suggest that the act of physically striking someone (with or without a weapon) is common to both sexes. However, women are likely than men to experience contact-based forms of restraint and abuse, such as pushing, choking and sexual violence; whereas men are more likely than women to

experience non-contact forms of violence, such as throwing objects. These are qualitatively different forms of violence, and point towards a greater severity of violence against female victims than men.

### **3.4 Relationships and children**

Respondents who had experienced partner abuse since the age of 16 and in the last 12 months were asked about their relationships with the abusive partner/s.

Of those who had experienced at least one incident of partner abuse since the age of 16 ( $n = 1,427$ ), nearly three quarters (71.0%) reported having only one abusive partner. A further 13.0% reported that they had two abusive partners since they were 16, and 9.0% reported having had three or more abusive partners. The remaining respondents either did not wish to answer (5.0%) or did not know (2.0%).

Looking at respondents who had experienced partner abuse within the last 12 months ( $n = 238$ ), a third (33.5%) said that they were living with the abusive partner at the time of the most recent incident. The most common type of relationship arrangement (at the time of the most recent incident) was living together as a couple (31.7%), followed by marriage (23.3%). More than a quarter (29.0%) stated that they did not want to answer this question.

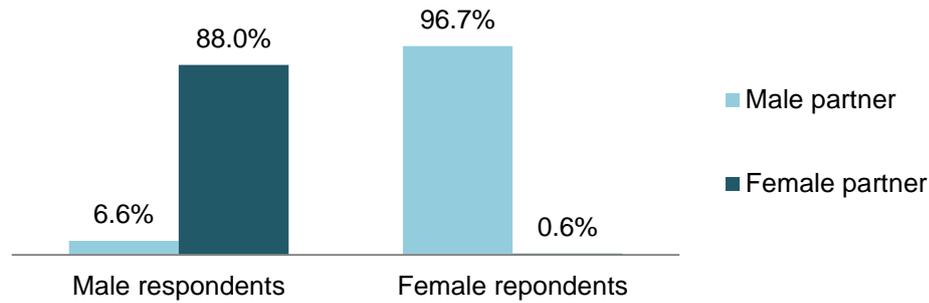
Nearly half (48.3%) of those who had experienced at least one incident of partner abuse in the last 12 months and were living with the responsible partner at that time, said that they were still living with the abusive partner at the time of the survey.

#### **3.4.1 Gender and sexual orientation**

Respondents were asked to state the gender of any abusive partners. Of those who had experienced partner abuse since the age of 16, 68.8% said the abuser was male, and 27.7% said the abuser was female. Less than one per cent stated that both male and female partners had perpetuated abuse.

Breaking this down by the gender of respondents, **Figure 3.3** show that abusive partners were overwhelmingly of the opposite gender. That said, however, male respondents were more likely to be victims of a male perpetrator than women were to be victims of a female perpetrator.

**Figure 3.3 Gender of abusive partners, by gender of respondent (%)**



Base: All experiencing partner abuse since age 16 (men 393, women, 1,034).

Variable names: DA\_1vi QDGEN

### 3.4.2 Presence of children

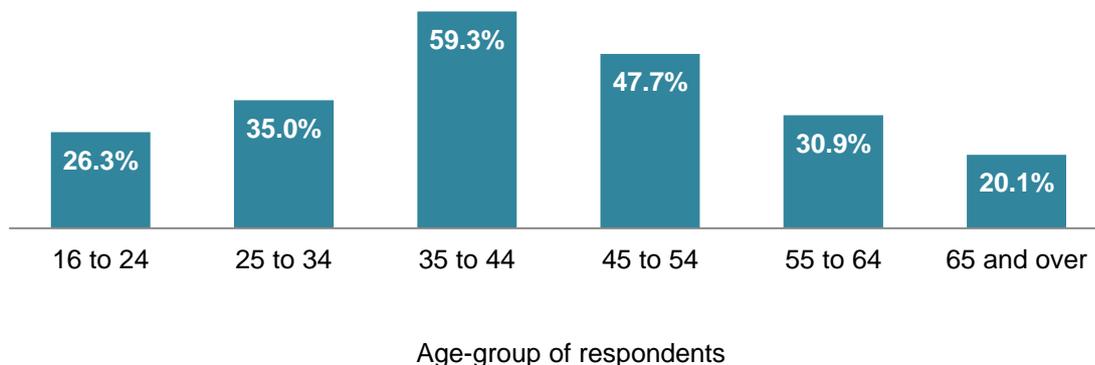
Respondents who reported at least one incident of partner abuse in the last 12 months were asked whether any children were living with them at time of the most recent incident and, if so, whether the children were present during the incident or involved in any way.

More than a third (39.4%) of those who had reported at least one incident of partner abuse in the last 12 months ( $n = 238$ ) said that children were living in the household when the most recent incident took place.

As might be expected (given the age-distribution of child-bearing), the presence of children varied by the age of respondents. Those aged 35 to 44 were most likely to report that children lived in the house at the time of the most recent incident (59.3%), compared to 26.3% in the youngest age bracket (16 to 24 years), and 20.1% in the oldest age bracket (65 or over). It is important to note, however, that some groups have small base sizes, particularly amongst those aged 65 or over.

**Figure 3.4** shows the results.

**Figure 3.4 Whether children were living in the household when most recent abuse took place, by age group (%)**



Bases. All experiencing at least one type of partner abuse in 12 months: 16-24 (27) 25-34 (58) 35-44 (54) 45-54 (55) 65 and over (12)

Variable names: DA\_2, QDAGE

### 3.4.3 The impact of partner abuse on children

Of those who reported partner abuse in the last 12 months *and* said that there were children living in the house ( $n = 94$ ), nearly two thirds (63.7%) said that the children were present (in or around the house or close by) during the most recent incident.

Amongst these respondents ( $n = 65$ ), three quarters (75.3%) said that the children saw or heard what happened. Within this group of respondents ( $n = 46$ ), nearly a fifth (18.8%) said that children had become involved in the incident, and just over a quarter (26.0%) said that the children experienced emotional or psychological effects (such as difficulty sleeping, low self esteem, anxiety) as a result. Whilst the low base numbers mean that these results should be treated with caution, they are generally consistent with a wider body of evidence on the impact of domestic abuse and children (see **Box 3.1**).

#### Box 3.1 The impact of partner abuse on children

Partner abuse can impact on children and young people, both directly or indirectly. A study by Mullender et al (2000) found that the most common response amongst children was fear, which often persisted after the abuser had left, and led to sleeping difficulties and nightmares. Holden (2003) observed that children were likely to be intimidated by abusers, and face abuse themselves. There is also an established link between domestic abuse and physical abuse of children (World Health Organisation, 2002).

Evidence suggests that boys exposed to partner abuse committed by men may learn a model of abusive, misogynistic behaviour that they imitate in later life. For example, a number of studies have drawn links between witnessing domestic abuse as a child, and partner violence perpetuated by adult males (Saunders 1993, Holtzworth-Munroe et al 1997, Riggs et al 2000, Jewkes 2002).

In Scotland, an evaluation of the IVY (Interventions for Vulnerable Youth) project (Moodie and Anderson, 2015) found that exposure to violence in the home was a high risk factor for predicting violence amongst young people. Seventy six per cent of those referred to the IVY project had witnessed domestic violence in the home, and 28 out of the 42 young people assessed as part of the project had been exposed to violence in the home.

The next part of the report presents evidence on children and abuse from the longitudinal [Growing Up in Scotland study](#). The data provide further important insights into the impact of partner abuse on children and families, and are published here for the first time.

### 3.5 Growing Up in Scotland study and partner abuse

The Growing Up in Scotland Study (GUS) is a large-scale, longitudinal study of two representative cohorts of children, born in 2004/05 and 2010/11 and living in Scotland. Most data is collected from the child's main carer, usually the child's mother, through interviews conducted in the family home on an annual or biennial basis.

In 2010/11, in a self-completion section of the questionnaire, the main carers of children in the older cohort - Birth Cohort 1- - were asked about their experiences of partner abuse over the previous six year (since the birth of the cohort child). Carers were asked about a range of abusive behaviours, which broadly overlap with those asked about in the SCJS,<sup>16</sup> however for the GUS analysis they are classified differently, into physical, controlling and threatening abuse as follows:

#### **Physical abuse:**

- Pushed you or held you down
- Kicked, bitten or hit you
- Choked or tried to strangle/smother you
- Used a weapon against you (e.g. an ashtray or a bottle)
- Forced you or tried to force you to take part in any sexual activity when you did not want to

#### **Controlling abuse:**

- Stopped you having a fair share of household money or took money from you
- Repeatedly put you down so that you felt worthless
- Behaved in a jealous or controlling way (e.g. restricting what you can do, who you can see, what you can wear)

#### **Threatening abuse:**

- Threatened to hurt you
- Threatened to hurt someone close to you (e.g. your children, friends, pets)
- Threatened to, attempted to, or actually hurt themselves as a way of making you do something or stopping you from doing something
- Threatened you with a weapon (e.g. an ashtray or a bottle)
- Threatened to kill you

Whilst the study does not provide trend data on partner abuse, or nationally representative prevalence rates, it can provide reliable data on the proportion of 6-year old children living with a main carer who had experienced partner since their (the child's) birth. The study also benefits from the long-term involvement of respondents<sup>17</sup>. This means that respondents may have been more comfortable answering personal questions, compared to those involved in one-off studies.

<sup>16</sup> The SCJS also includes a number of additional types of abuse (see **Section 1.5.1**).

<sup>17</sup> By 2010/11, main carers in Birth Cohort 1 had been interviewed up to 6 times (in some cases by the same interviewer) in annual face-to-face sweeps.

The findings presented in this part of the report are based on weighted responses from 3,553 respondents. To ensure consistency, the analysis is restricted to mothers (including adoptive, foster and step mothers). The GUS study is not a National Statistics product.

These questions were put to GUS participants in 2010/11. As **Chapter 2** showed, the overall risk of experiencing partner abuse has decreased between 2010/11 and 2014/15 (see **Table 2.1**). This means that the current proportion of 6 year olds living with a main carer who experienced partner abuse may be smaller than estimated in this section.

### 3.5.1 GUS prevalence and frequency of partner abuse

In 2010/11, 14% of 6-year old children were living with a main carer who had experienced partner abuse since the child's birth. Looking at the categories of abuse experienced in this period, 11% of 6-year olds were living with a main carer who had experienced controlling abuse, 7% with a main carer who had experienced physical abuse and 6% with a main carer who had experienced threatening abuse. Some children (4%) were living with a main carer who had experienced all three forms of partner abuse since their birth, 3% with a main carer who had experienced two forms and 7% with a main carer who had experienced one form of partner abuse.

Over half (56%) of the main carers who had experienced partner abuse by the time their child reached his/her 6<sup>th</sup> birthday stated that they had experienced abuse more than once, and 15% had experienced abuse 'too many times' to count'. **Table 3.1** shows the results.

**Table 3.1 GUS frequency of partner abuse, among main carers of children aged 6 who had experienced any form of partner abuse since the birth of the child (%)**

<i>Frequency of any type of GUS partner abuse</i>	<i>%</i>
One time	18%
Two or three times	25%
Four or five times	10%
Six or more times	6%
Too many to count	15%
Don't know/ can't remember	14%
Don't wish to answer	11%
Unweighted Base	422

### 3.5.2 GUS circumstances of mothers and partner abuse

Consistent with the demographics of SCJS partner abuse shown in **Section 2.5.4**, the findings from GUS show that the prevalence of partner abuse amongst mothers was higher amongst mothers from the most deprived areas of Scotland, and in the lowest income bracket (quintile). The prevalence of partner abuse amongst mothers

was also higher amongst those with lower levels of educational attainment, **Tables 3.2 to 3.6** show the results.

Note that the results in this section are based on the circumstances of mothers when their child was aged 10 months old (GUS asks about abuse within a 6-year period, and cannot identify circumstances at the exact time of abuse).

**Table 3.2 GUS prevalence of partner abuse (by child's 6th birthday) by neighbourhood deprivation (around the time of child's birth) (%)**

Type of abuse	Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation- quintile				
	Most deprived	2nd	3rd	4th	Least deprived
Controlling abuse	15%	13%	10%	8%	6%
Physical abuse	10%	9%	6%	6%	4%
Threatening abuse	8%	7%	6%	5%	3%
Any form of partner abuse	18%	17%	12%	11%	9%
Unweighted Base	563	547	717	714	721

**Table 3.3 GUS prevalence of partner abuse (by child's 6th birthday) by household income (around the time of child's birth) (%)**

Type of abuse	Equivalised household income - quintile				
	Bottom	2nd	3 <sup>rd</sup>	4th	Top
Controlling abuse	21%	12%	9%	6%	4%
Physical abuse	15%	9%	5%	4%	3%
Threatening abuse	13%	6%	5%	3%	2%
Any form of partner abuse	24%	16%	12%	8%	7%
Unweighted Base	419	566	589	732	672

**Table 3.4 GUS prevalence of partner abuse (by child's 6<sup>th</sup> birthday) by mother's level of education (around the time of child's birth) (%)**

Type of abuse	Mother's education				
	No qualifications	Lower level Standard Grades and Vocational qualifications	Upper level Standard Grades + Intermediate Vocational qualifications	Higher Grades and Upper level Vocational qualifications	Degree level academic and vocational qualifications
Controlling abuse	15%	14%	13%	10%	7%
Physical abuse	8%	10%	10%	7%	4%
Threatening abuse	8%	8%	8%	6%	3%
Any form of partner abuse	18%	16%	17%	13%	9%
Unweighted Base	190	169	764	1,107	1,030

**Table 3.5** below shows that the prevalence of partner abuse fell as the mother's age increased: 30% of mothers aged under 20 at the time of the child's birth had experienced partner abuse, falling to 10% among those aged 40 or over.

**Table 3.5 GUS prevalence of partner abuse (by child's 6th birthday) by age of mother at time of child's birth (%)**

Type of abuse	Mother's age (at time of child's birth)			
	Under 20	20-29	30-39	40 and over
Controlling abuse	24%	13%	7%	7%
Physical abuse	21%	8%	4%	5%
Threatening abuse	18%	7%	3%	2%
Any form of partner abuse	30%	16%	9%	10%
Unweighted Base	130	1,152	1,852	124

### 3.5.3 Growing Up in Scotland Study: Conclusions

The fact that 14% of 6 year olds were living with a main carer who experienced some form of partner abuse suggests that such abuse affects the lives of many children. Future GUS analysis is likely to explore the impact that having a main carer who experienced partner abuse has on longer-term outcomes for children.

The evidence has confirmed a link between the experience of partner abuse and socio-economic disadvantage. While socio-economic disadvantage could be a causal factor in the abuse it is also possible that it was a result of having left an abusive partner. The GUS evidence also shows, for the first time, the extent to which young mothers are at a particularly high risk of partner abuse.

## 3.6 Impact of partner abuse

SCJS respondents who reported at least one incident of partner abuse within the last 12 months ( $n=238$ ) were asked about the impact of the most recent (or only) incident.

Respondents were asked about a range of impacts or effects, which can be broadly categorised as either psychological or physical in nature. A higher proportion of respondents reported at least one psychological effect (65.2%), compared to those who reported at least one physical effect (39.6%).

### Box 3.2 Partner abuse and homelessness

The SCJS sample does not include homeless populations, or those living in residential settings such as hostels. However, a study of homeless women by Shelter found that domestic abuse was the single most quoted reason for becoming homeless, cited by 40% of respondents (Women's Aid, 2013).

### 3.6.1 Psychological impact

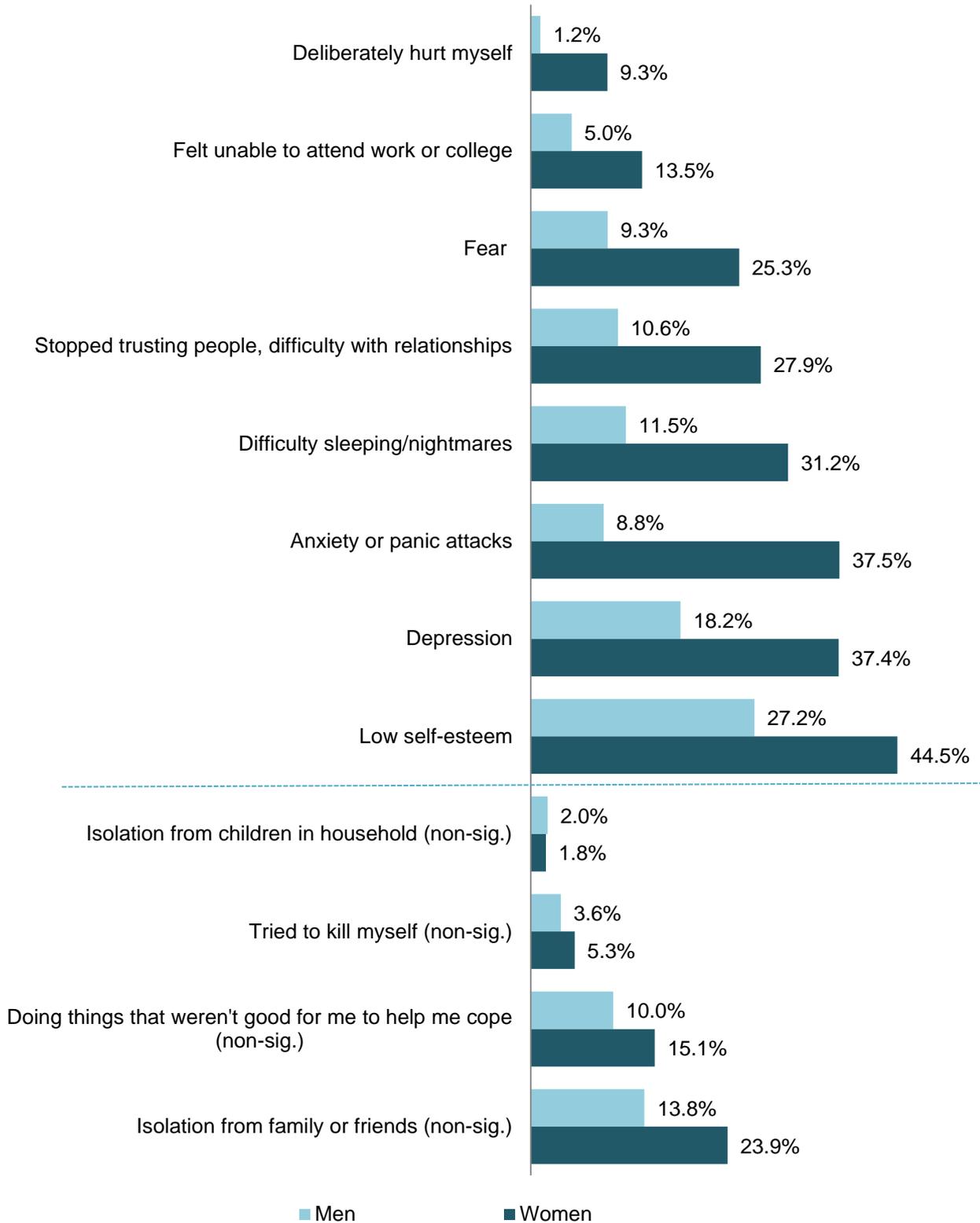
As noted previously, of those who had experienced partner abuse in the last 12 months, 65.2% reported at least one psychological effect. The most common impact was low self-esteem, which was reported by 37.4% of all victims. A higher proportion of women than men experienced low self-esteem, at 44.5% and 27.2% respectively.

Overall, women were more likely to report psychological effects than men. Looking at the psychological impact amongst those who reported partner abuse in the last 12 months, 74.4% of women reported at least one psychological effect, compared to 52.1% of men. Relatedly, 43.5% of men said that they did not experience any of the listed psychological effects, compared to 17.9% of women.

**Figure 3.5** below shows that women were more likely than men to report anxiety and panic attacks, difficulty sleeping and depression, fear, low self-esteem, loss of trust and difficulty with relationships, depression, feeling unable to attend work or college, and deliberate self-harm.

In four categories, the gender difference was not statistically significant. These were: doing things that weren't good for me to help me cope; isolation from children; isolation from family or friends; and attempting suicide.

**Figure 3.5 Reported psychological effects of most recent/only incident of partner abuse within the last 12 months (%)**



Non-significant differences between men and women are denoted 'non-sig.'

Base: Adults who experienced partner abuse in last 12 months (women 149, men 89).

Variable name: DA\_9\_13 to DA\_9\_12, QDGEN

### Box 3.3 The impact of psychological abuse

Psychological abuse can have a profound negative effect on mental health. A study by Dutton et al (1999) found that high levels of psychological abuse significantly predicted post traumatic stress disorder and acute stress. A qualitative study by Humphreys and Thiara (2003) reported intense fear amongst victims, an undermined sense of self, high levels of trauma-related stress and alcohol dependency, by way of coping.

#### 3.6.2 Physical impact

Of those who had experienced partner abuse in the last 12 months ( $n = 238$ ), 39.6% reported at least one physical effect. The most common physical effects were: minor bruising or black eyes (21.6%); scratches or minor cuts (15.2%); and severe bruising (8.5%). A further 8.5% said that they did not wish to answer the question. Unlike the psychological impacts in **Figure 3.5**, there were no significant differences between men and women in the physical impacts.

#### 3.6.3 Cumulative effect of partner abuse

To recap, **Section 3.4** showed that of those who had experienced partner abuse in the last 12 months ( $n = 238$ ), 65.2% reported at least one psychological effect, and 39.6% reported at least one physical effect.

Breaking these results down further indicates that the cumulative impact of partner abuse is more likely to be psychological in nature. A quarter (24.6%) experienced only one psychological effect. A further 40.5% experienced more than one effect, with 12.2% experiencing two effects, 6.4% experiencing three effects, and 21.9% experiencing four or more effects. Just over a quarter (28.5%) had experienced none of the listed psychological effects, and 6.3% did not want to answer.

A lower proportion experienced multiple physical effects. Again, looking at those who had experienced partner abuse in the last 12 months, just over a quarter (27.8%) reported only one physical effect. A further 11.8% experienced more than one effect, with 6.6% experiencing two effects, 2.7% experiencing three effects and 2.5% experiencing four or more effects. Just over half (51.9%) experienced none of the listed physical effects and 8.5% did not want to answer.

#### 3.6.4 Cumulative abuse and gender

The cumulative impact of psychological abuse varied by gender. Whilst a similar proportion of women and men reported one psychological effect (22.9% women and 25.7% men), a higher proportion of women than men reported four or more psychological effects, at 31.1% and 8.8% respectively.

By contrast, the cumulative impact of physical abuse did not vary by gender. Note that more advanced statistical analysis is required to gauge the cumulative impact of both physical and psychological abuse. **Table 3.6** shows the results.

**Table 3.6 Count of psychological and physical effects of partner abuse in the last 12 months, by gender (%)**

Number of effects reported	Psychological		Physical	
	% men	% women	% men	% women
One	22.9%	25.7%	35.9%	22.1%
Two	14.4%	10.7%	7.2%	6.2%
Three	5.9%	6.7%	0.0%	4.6%
Four or more	8.8%	31.1%	2.0%	2.9%
Did not want to answer	4.3%	7.7%	6.6%	9.8%
None of the listed effects	43.5%	17.9%	48.3%	54.5%

Base: All who experienced partner abuse in last 12 months (women 149, men 89).

Variable names: DA\_9 DA\_8 QDGEN

### 3.7 Perceptions of partner abuse

Respondents who had experienced partner abuse in the last 12 months were asked if they viewed the abuse as a crime. Separately, respondents who had experienced partner abuse since the age of 16 were asked if they considered themselves to be a victim of domestic abuse.

The term ‘domestic abuse’ is not introduced to respondents until the final question in the self-completion module, and is *not* predefined for respondents. Rather, the aim is to capture respondents’ own understandings of abuse.

#### 3.7.1 Perception of partner abuse and crime

Overall, respondents were more likely to view physical abuse as a crime, compared to psychological abuse. Nearly a third (32.5%) regarded their experiences of physical abuse (in the last 12 months) as a crime, whereas less than a fifth (17.9%) regarded their experiences of psychological abuse as a crime.

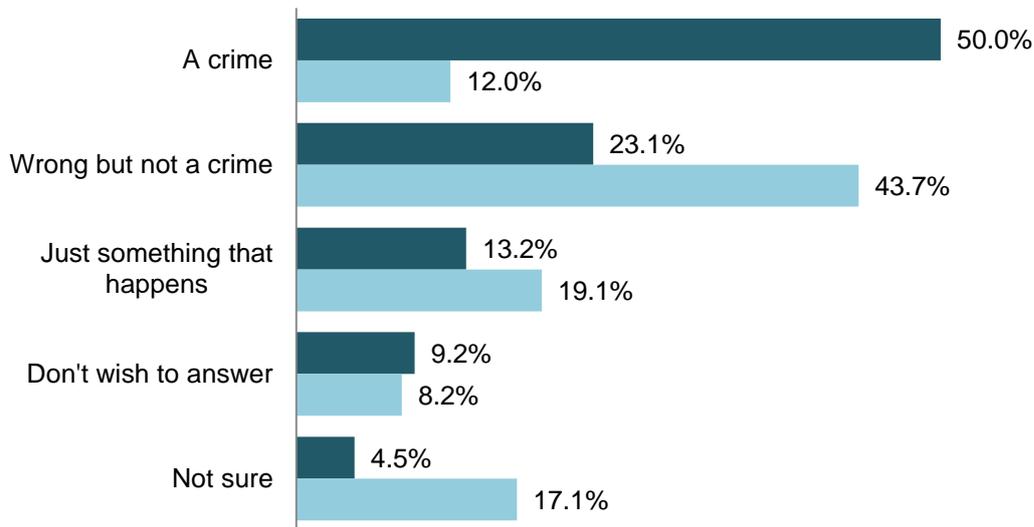
Respondent’s perceptions of partner abuse and crime also varied by gender. In general, women viewed their experiences of abuse more critically, compared to men. Half of women (50.0%) viewed their experiences of physical abuse as a crime, compared to 12.0% of men. Similarly, a higher proportion of women than men viewed their experiences of psychological abuse as a crime, at 25.9% and 5.1% respectively. Meanwhile, a higher proportion of men than women described their experiences of physical abuse as ‘wrong, but not a crime’, at 43.7% and 23.1% respectively.

A higher proportion of men than women appeared uncertain as to how to interpret their experiences of partner abuse. For example, 17.1% of male victims said that they were not sure if their experience/s of physical abuse were a crime, compared

to 4.5% of women. Similarly, 20.0% of men said they were not sure if their experience/s of psychological abuse were a crime, compared to 4.4% of women. **Figure 3.6** presents the results.

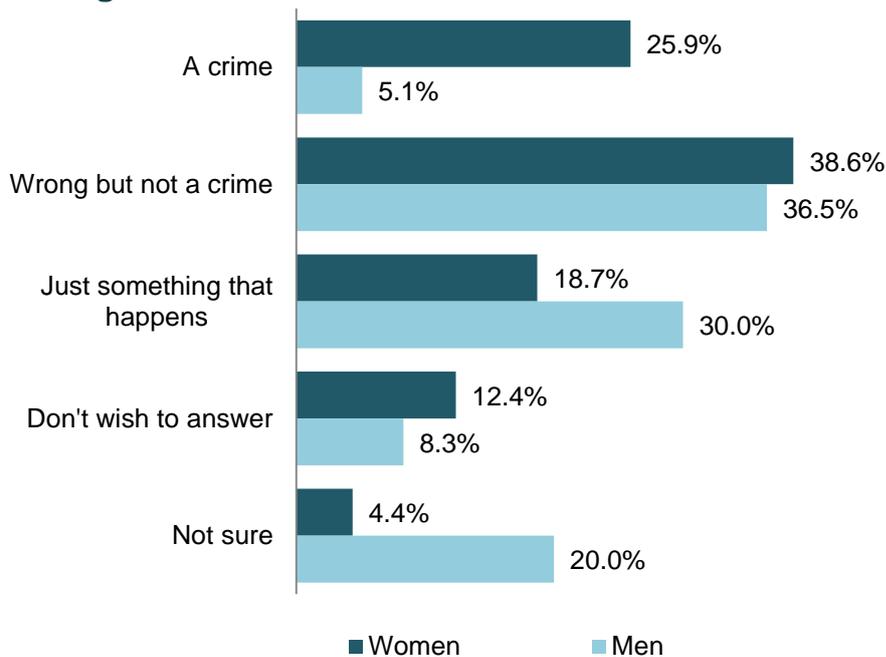
**Figure 3.6 Victims perceptions of physical and psychological partner abuse in the last 12 months, by gender (%)**

**Physical abuse**



Base: All who experienced physical abuse in last 12 months: men (51) women (81)  
 Variable names: DA\_19 QDGEN

**Psychological abuse**



Base: All who experienced psychological abuse in last 12 months: men (71) women (132)

### 3.7.2 Perceptions of victimization

Overall, 7.9% of all respondents ( $n = 9,312$ ) considered themselves to have been a victim of 'domestic abuse' since the age of 16, lower than the proportion that had experienced at least one incident of SCJS partner abuse in the same time-period (14.1%).

Breaking these results down by gender, the proportion of women who felt they had been a victim of domestic abuse since the age of 16 (12.3%) was lower than the proportion that had experienced at least one incident of partner abuse in the same time-period (18.5%).

However, this disparity was more pronounced for men, with only 2.9% of men considering themselves to have been a victim of domestic abuse since the age of 16, while 9.2% had reported at least one incident of SCJS partner abuse in the same period.

Looking at those who had experienced at least one type of SCJS partner abuse since the age of 16, less than half (46.3%) viewed themselves as a victim of domestic abuse. Again, a higher proportion of women than men viewed themselves as victims of domestic abuse, at 56.9% and 22.9% respectively.

Of those who defined themselves as having been a victim of domestic abuse, 16.9% did not report any incidents in the survey. The reasons for this disparity are out-with the scope of this report, although it could result from the respondent's interpretation of the term. For example, domestic abuse could apply to a range of different experiences and scenarios, including abuse by family members other than partners. There may also be an overlap with the questions on stalking, harassment and sexual victimisation (which are asked in a different section of the self-completion questionnaire). It is also possible that respondents did not want to recount their experiences.

Overall, the findings in this section suggest that the way in which people interpret their experiences of partner abuse are complex. The gap between respondents' experiences and perceptions of partner abuse may also tap into different histories of abuse (cumulative, multiple), and/or reflect wider societal attitudes towards partner abuse. **Box 3.4** summarizes findings on public attitudes towards partner abuse (Reid et al., 2015) from the Scottish Social Attitudes Survey (SSA) 2014.<sup>18</sup> These results suggest that people's attitudes tap into ideas about victim culpability and mitigating circumstances, and are likely to vary by demographic characteristics, including age and gender.

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<sup>18</sup> The SSA is carried out by ScotCen Social Research. The 2014 survey involved 1,501 interviews with a representative probability sample of the Scottish population. The findings discussed here are reported in the [Attitudes to violence against women in Scotland](#) report (Reid et al. 2014).

### Box 3.4 Public attitudes to partner abuse

The Scottish Social Attitudes Survey, 2014 found that over 9 in 10 people thought that physical abuse of a partner was seriously wrong, regardless of whether the perpetrator and victim was male or female.

When asked about a hypothetical scenario in which the husband has found out his wife had had an affair, attitudes were less critical towards the husband. In this scenario, around half (54%) thought that the man's behaviour was 'very seriously wrong'. Older people and those with stereotyped views on gender roles were less likely to think that the man slapping his wife after she has had an affair was seriously wrong and caused her harm, and more likely to think that the wife should forgive her husband.

Abuse perpetuated by men appeared to be viewed more critically than abuse perpetuated by women. For example, a higher proportion felt it was 'very seriously wrong' for a man to get angry and slap his wife (92%), compared to a wife slapping her husband (81%). Similarly, 94% said it was seriously wrong when a man criticised his wife, whereas 88% thought it was seriously wrong when a woman criticised her husband. Fifty per cent thought that a husband trying to stop his wife going out with friends was 'very seriously wrong', compared to 23% who thought this if a wife was trying to stop her husband going out.

Attitudes also varied by demographic characteristics. Women were more likely to feel that a man criticising his wife was wrong (77% women, compared with 68% men), as were those in the highest income group, compared to the lowest income group (77% compared with 64%). Those with higher levels of formal education were also more likely to think that a husband trying to stop his wife going out was 'very seriously wrong'. Younger people, those on higher incomes and those who did not hold stereotypical views on gender roles were all more likely to think that a woman criticising her husband was 'very seriously wrong'. Women were also more likely than men to see controlling behaviour as wrong, irrespective of the gender of the victim. Older people were more likely to think that financially controlling behaviour was wrong and harmful; 40% of those aged 65 or over thought it would cause 'a great deal of harm' compared with only 26% of those aged 18 to 29 years old.

A smaller proportion (39%) believed it was 'very seriously wrong' for a man to tell his wife to change her clothes before going on a night out. Asked about a scenario in which the wife had had an affair, a smaller proportion said that a husband telling his wife to change her clothes before going out was wrong. This suggests that certain circumstances are seen to excuse the behaviour and mitigate its seriousness.

## 4. Reporting Partner Abuse

### 4.1 Summary of findings

Respondents were more likely to tell people from their informal networks about their experiences of abuse, rather than professionals. Over a quarter of those who experienced partner abuse in the last twelve months appeared to tell no one about their experiences. Of those who experienced partner abuse in the last 12 months:

- Two thirds (62.8%) had told at least one person or organisation about their most recent (or only) experience of abuse.
- One third (35.1%) told friends and one fifth (18.5%) told relatives about their experiences. A further 13.8% told a doctor, and 11.6% told the police.
- One fifth (19.5%) said that the police came to know about the most recent (or only) incident of partner abuse.
- A quarter (28.0%) of those who experienced partner abuse in the last 12 months had told no one.
- Men were more likely than women to have told no one about their experiences of abuse (35.0%, compared men, compared with 23.1% respectively).

### 4.2 Introduction

This chapter examines reporting behaviour by victims of partner abuse. The chapter looks at the people and organizations that victims told about their experiences of abuse in the last 12 months, including the police. The chapter also examines those who told no one about their experiences, and people's reasons for not reporting partner abuse to the police. For those who did contact the police, the chapter examines satisfaction with the police response.

### 4.3 Who do victims tell about their abuse?

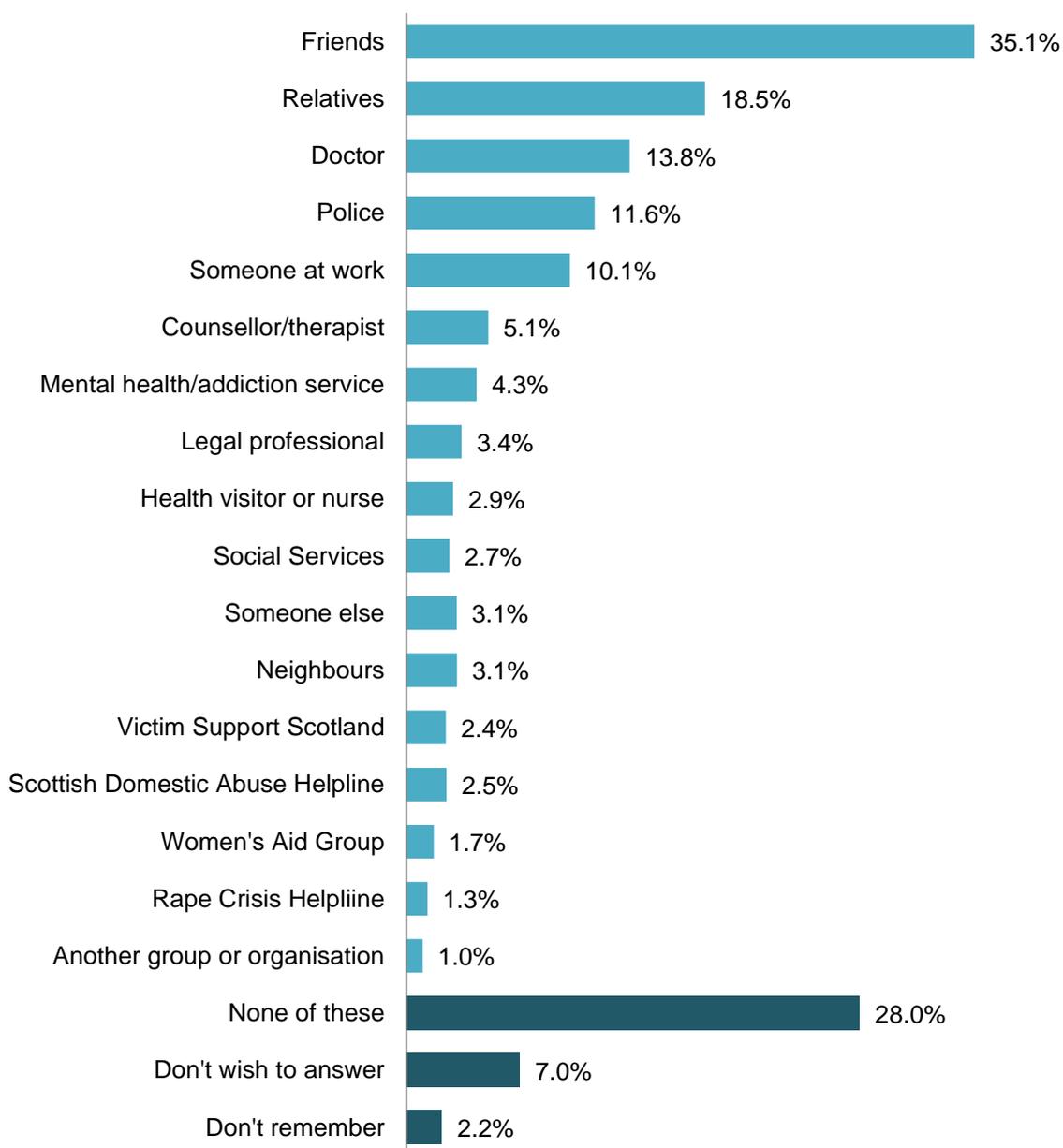
Respondents who had experienced partner abuse within the last 12 months ( $n = 238$ ) were asked who they told about the most recent (or only) incident. Of this group, almost two-thirds (62.8%) had told at least one person or organisation about the most recent incident. A higher proportion of women than men had told at least one person or organisation about their experiences of abuse (68.1% women, compared to 55.2% men).

Respondents were most likely to have told friends (35.1%) and relatives (18.5%) about the most recent incident of abuse. In terms of contact with professionals, 13.8% told a doctor, and 11.6% reported the incident to the police. An additional 10.1% had told someone at work.

A smaller proportion of respondents reported the abuse to other professionals, such as counsellor or therapists, mental health or addiction services, social services and legal professionals. Other agencies included Women’s Aid Group, Victim Support Scotland and the Scottish Domestic Abuse Helpline. A small proportion also stated that they had told ‘someone else’ (3.1%) or ‘another group or organization’ (1.0%).

Below, **Figure 4.1** shows the people or organizations that respondents told about their most recent (or only) experience of partner abuse in the last 12 months.

**Figure 4.1 People or organizations told about the most recent incident of partner abuse in the last 12 months**



Base: All who experienced partner abuse in the last 12 months (238)

Variable name: DA\_10

Results are not shown for organisations where the proportion of respondents was 1% or fewer. These were: Midwife, Housing Department, Benefit Agency, Men’s advice line and Any other helpline.

### 4.3.1 Respondents who appeared to tell no one about their experiences

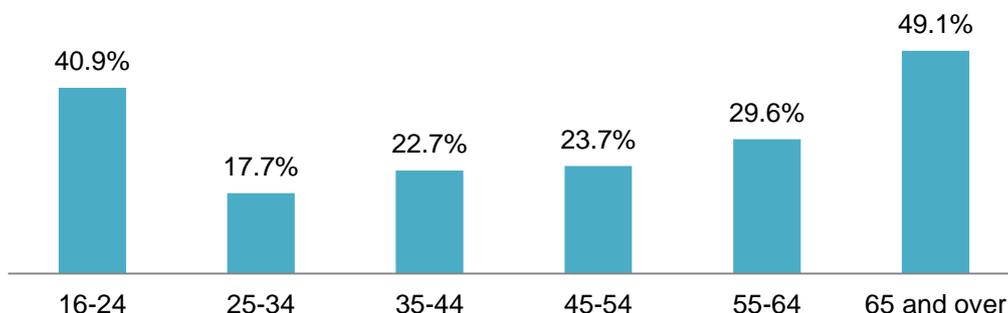
More than a quarter of those (28%) who had experienced partner abuse within the last 12 months said that they did not tell any of the organisations or individuals listed.

Given that respondents are offered a wide range of responses, including broad categories such as 'other groups or organisations' and 'someone else', it is likely that this group told no-one about their experiences. *Based on this assumption*, this section examines the small group that appeared to tell no one about their experiences of abuse ( $n = 59$ ). Whilst the base size is small, the results provide insights into those whose experiences of abuse otherwise remained unknown.

Men were more likely than women to have told no one about their experiences of abuse (35.0% men, compared with 23.1% women).

Looking at the age of respondents, the likelihood of telling no one was highest amongst those aged 65 or over (49.1%). There was, however, no clear-cut generational effect. Two fifths of those in their early twenties (40.9%) appeared to have told no one about their experiences of abuse in the last 12 months. **Figure 4.2** shows the results.

**Figure 4.2 Proportion of respondents who told no one about their experience/s of partner abuse in the last 12 months, by age group (%)**



Base: All who experienced psychological abuse in last 12 months and said they had told none of the listed organisations or individuals about their experiences (59)

Variable name: DA\_10\_no

Whether or not a respondent told another organisation or individual about his or her experiences did not necessarily reflect the severity or frequency of abuse. For example, of those who reported two or more incidents of partner abuse in the last 12 months ( $n = 70$ ), just under a fifth (18.7%) told no one about their experiences, whilst 19.6% of those who felt that they had been a victim of domestic abuse had told no one.

## 4.4 Reporting to the police

Respondents who had experienced at least one incident of partner abuse in the last 12 months were asked whether the police ‘came to know about’ the most recent incident. This question captures whether the police came to know about the abuse, regardless of whether the victim reported the incident themselves, or if the police found out in some other way (e.g. if someone reported on behalf of the victim).

A fifth (19.5%)<sup>19</sup> of those who experienced partner abuse in the last 12 months ( $n = 238$ ) stated that the police came to know about the most recent incident. This proportion is similar to the reporting rate for SCJS stalking and harassment (18.9%) and forced sexual intercourse (16.8%). It is, however, lower than the average reporting rate for all SCJS crime (38%), published in the [2014/15 Main Findings report](#). Within the main survey, reporting rates ranged from 28% for ‘other household theft (including bicycle theft)’, to 62% for housebreaking.

Of those who had experienced more than one incident of partner abuse within the last 12 months ( $n = 215$ ) 20.2% stated that the police came to know about all, or some of the other incidents (aside from the most recent incident).

Unlike the 2012/13 sweep (in which 32% women said the police came to know about the most recent incident, compared to 9% men) the 2014/15 SCJS found no statistically significant differences in reporting to the police between men and women.

### 4.4.1 Reporting and the criminal justice system

Of those who said that the police knew about the most recent incident of partner abuse ( $n = 55$ ), just over three quarters (77.7%) said the incident was reported as a crime. Of those cases where the most recent incident was reported as a crime ( $n = 41$ ), 35.8% said that the crime report had resulted in prosecution. The low bases mean that these figures should be treated with caution. However, the findings are consistent with academic evidence that highlights the high rate of attrition for domestic abuse offences within the criminal justice system (Hester, 2006; Barrow-Grint, 2016).

### 4.4.2 Reasons for not informing the police

When asked the reasons for *not* reporting the most recent incident of partner abuse to the police ( $n = 162$ ), the most common reasons given were that the abuse was a private, personal or family matter (34.4%), that those involved had dealt with the incident (31.8%), or that the abuse was too trivial/not worth reporting (25.2%). Around one-in-ten (9.3%) said that they did not wish to answer the question, and 11.4% stated ‘another reason’.

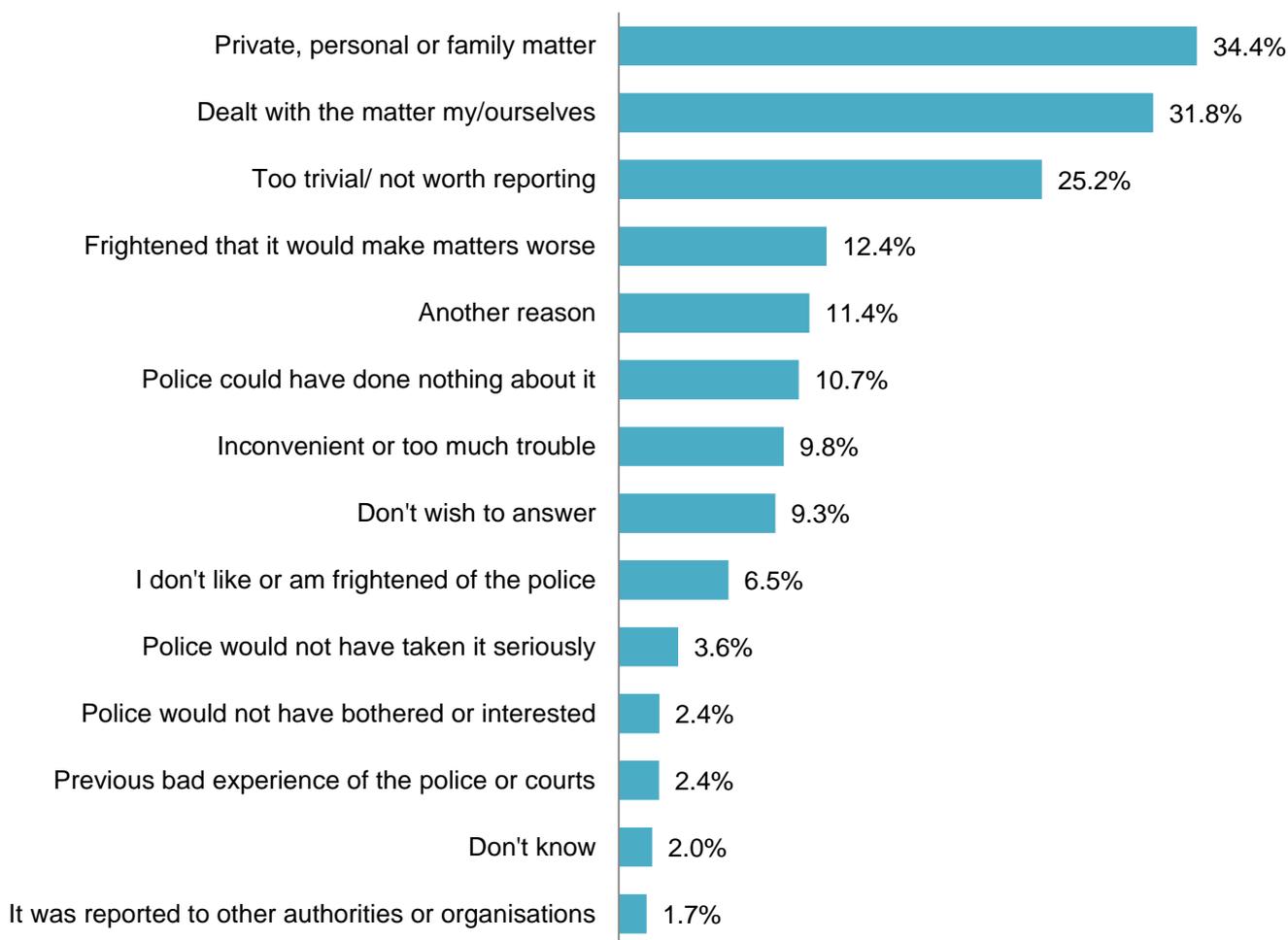
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<sup>19</sup> This figure is higher than the proportion of victims who told the police about abuse (outlined in Section 4.3.). This is because the question captures abuse that the victim may not have reported themselves, but that the police came to know about in another way.

A higher proportion of women than men said that the abuse was too trivial to report, at 32.1% and 16.6% respectively. Also, a higher proportion of women than men said that telling the police would make matters worse (17.8% women, compared to 5.6% men).

**Figure 4.3** presents the range of reasons given by respondents.

**Figure 4.3 Most common reasons why the most recent/only incident of partner abuse experienced in the last 12 months was not reported (%)**



Base: Adults experiencing partner abuse within the last 12 months where police did not come to know about the most recent/only incident (162).

Variable name: DA\_11i

#### 4.4.3 Level of satisfaction with police

Respondents who stated that the police came to know about the most recent/only experience of partner abuse in the last 12 months ( $n = 55$ ) were asked about their satisfaction with the police response.

Of these respondents, 47.4% were very or quite satisfied with the police response, 41.3% were very or quite dissatisfied. A further 11.3% said that they were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied. Again, due to the low bases, these results should be treated with caution.

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## Annex 1. Data Tables

The following data tables provide data for some of the key measures of partner abuse. Notes on how to read and interpret these tables are provided below. :

**Partner abuse** as measured by the SCJS 2014/2015 is any psychological or physical abuse undertaken against a man or a women carried out by a male or female partner or ex-partner (including any boyfriend, girlfriend, husband, wife or civil partner). The SCJS asks respondents about 7 types of physical abuse, as detailed in Section 1.5.1.

**Psychological abuse** includes emotional, financial and other forms of psychological abuse. The SCJS asks respondents about 12 types of psychological abuse, as detailed in Section 1.51.

**Experienced any psychological/physical abuse** means that a respondent had experienced at least one of the forms of SCJS psychological *or* at least one of the forms of SCJS physical partner abuse.

**Experienced both psychological and physical abuse** means that a respondent has experienced at least one of the SCJS forms of psychological *and* at least one of the forms of SCJS physical partner abuse presented to respondents.

**Deprivation** is measured using the [Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation](#) (SIMD). The SIMD is an area-based (geographic) measure of deprivation that identifies small area concentrations of multiple deprivation across all of Scotland. Breakdowns in this report are for those living in the 15% most deprived areas, and those living in the remaining areas of Scotland.

**Victim status** indicates whether a respondent was the victim of a crime as measured by the main 2015/2015 SCJS questionnaire.

**Age-group** In addition to the variables in the survey, for the purposes of this report, an additional age variable was constructed, which classified the age variable (QDAGE) into the following age groups: 16 to 24, 25 to 34, 35 to 44, 45 to 54, 55 to 64, 65 or over.

**Table A 1: % who experienced partner abuse since age 16 by demographic variables  
SCJS 2014/2015**

	Any psychological abuse	Any physical abuse	Any psychological or physical abuse	Psychological and physical abuse
<b>All</b>	12.2%	9.6%	14.1%	7.7%
<b>Gender</b>				
Male	7.5%	5.9%	9.2%	4.2%
Female	16.5%	12.8%	18.5%	10.9%
<b>Age</b>				
16 – 24	14.3%	7.6%	15.4%	6.4%
25 – 34	16.2%	12.2%	17.8%	10.7%
35 – 44	16.1%	12.9%	19.0%	10.0%
45 – 54	15.6%	13.3%	18.0%	10.9%
55 – 64	10.0%	9.0%	12.2%	6.8%
65 or over	4.1%	3.3%	5.0%	2.4%
<b>Age/gender</b>				
Male 16 – 24	10.8%	5.6%	11.4%	4.8%
Male 25 – 34	10.6%	8.3%	12.3%	6.6%
Male 35 – 44	9.7%	8.7%	12.6%	5.9%
Male 45 – 54	8.3%	8.0%	10.8%	5.5%
Male 55 – 64	5.9%	3.9%	7.4%	2.4%
Male 65 or over	2.0%	1.6%	2.6%	0.9%
Female 16 – 24	17.4%	9.5%	19.1%	7.9%
Female 25 – 34	21.6%	15.9%	23.0%	14.6%
Female 35 – 44	22.2%	16.7%	25.0%	14.0%
Female 45 – 54	22.2%	18.2%	24.5%	15.9%
Female 55 – 64	13.8%	13.8%	16.6%	11.1%
Female 65 or over	5.8%	4.8%	7.0%	3.5%
<b>Victim status</b>				
Non victim	10.8%	8.4%	12.6%	6.6%
Victim	20.6%	16.4%	22.5%	14.4%
<b>Deprivation</b>				
15% most	16.9%	14.0%	19.0%	11.8%
Rest of Scotland	11.4%	8.8%	13.2%	7.0%

Base: All respondents with a partner since age 16 (9,312). Variable names: DA\_1i, DA1\_iii

**Table A 2: % who experienced partner abuse in the last 12 months by demographic variables**

**SCJS 2014/2015**

	Any psychological abuse	Any physical abuse	Any psychological or physical abuse	Psychological and physical abuse
<b>All</b>	2.5%	1.5%	2.9%	1.0%
<b>Gender</b>				
Male	1.9%	1.4%	2.4%	0.9%
Female	3.1%	1.5%	3.4%	1.2%
<b>Age</b>				
16 - 24	6.2%	2.7%	6.9%	2.0%
25 - 34	3.4%	2.0%	3.8%	1.6%
35 - 44	2.6%	1.9%	3.2%	1.3%
45 - 54	2.4%	1.6%	2.8%	1.2%
55 - 64	1.2%	0.6%	1.4%	0.4%
65+	0.2%	0.3%	0.4%	0.0%
<b>Age/gender</b>				
Male 16 - 24	4.6%	2.5%	5.7%	1.5%
Male 25 - 34	2.6%	2.1%	3.5%	1.2%
Male 35 - 44	2.2%	1.6%	2.8%	1.0%
Male 45 - 54	1.6%	1.7%	2.1%	1.2%
Male 55 - 64	1.4%	0.8%	1.7%	0.6%
Male 65 or over	0.1%	0.2%	0.2%	0.1%
Female 16 - 24	7.6%	2.8%	8.0%	2.4%
Female 25 - 34	4.0%	2.0%	4.1%	1.9%
Female 35 - 44	3.0%	2.2%	3.6%	1.6%
Female 45 - 54	3.1%	1.5%	3.5%	1.1%
Female 55 - 64	0.9%	0.4%	1.0%	0.3%
Female 65 or over	0.4%	0.3%	0.7%	-
<b>Victim status</b>				
Non victim	1.9%	1.1%	2.3%	0.8%
Victim	5.4%	3.3%	6.0%	2.7%
<b>Deprivation</b>				
15% most	3.5%	2.5%	4.1%	1.9%
Rest of Scotland	2.3%	1.3%	2.7%	0.9%

Base: All respondents who had contact with a partner/ex-partner in the last 12 months (6,925)

Variable names: DA\_1i, DA\_1iii, REL\_0i

**Table A1.3: Estimates of the number of adults in Scotland who had experienced partner abuse since the age of 16 by gender (000s)**

Numbers of incidents (000s)	Best estimate (000s)	Higher estimate (000s)	Lower estimate (000s)	Confidence Interval
Experienced any form of SCJS psychological abuse since age 16				
<b>All</b>	<b>500</b>	<b>534</b>	<b>466</b>	<b>34</b>
<i>Male</i>	145	165	125	20
<i>Female</i>	355	383	327	28
Experienced any form of SCJS physical abuse since age 16				
<b>All</b>	<b>391</b>	<b>419</b>	<b>364</b>	<b>28</b>
<i>Male</i>	115	132	97	17
<i>Female</i>	276	298	254	22
Experienced any form of SCJS physical or psychological abuse since age 16				
<b>All</b>	<b>576</b>	<b>612</b>	<b>540</b>	<b>36</b>
<i>Male</i>	178	200	157	22
<i>Female</i>	398	427	368	29
Experienced both SCJS physical or psychological abuse since age 16				
<b>All</b>	<b>315</b>	<b>339</b>	<b>291</b>	<b>24</b>
<i>Male</i>	82	96	67	14
<i>Female</i>	234	253	214	19

**Table A 3: % who experienced different types of psychological abuse since age 16, by demographic characteristics (%) (continued over)**

SCJS 2014/2015

	Withheld your fair share of household money or took money from you	Stopped you from seeing friends and relatives	Repeatedly put you down so that you felt worthless	Behaved in a jealous or controlling way
<b>All</b>	2.9%	4.3%	6.4%	7.6%
<b>Gender</b>				
Male	1.0%	2.7%	2.4%	3.9%
Female	4.7%	5.8%	9.9%	10.9%
<b>Age</b>				
16 – 24	1.3%	5.2%	5.3%	9.8%
25 – 34	3.2%	6.0%	7.7%	10.5%
35 – 44	3.3%	6.2%	9.0%	10.6%
45 – 54	4.8%	5.0%	9.0%	9.8%
55 – 64	2.9%	3.7%	5.5%	4.8%
65 or over	1.8%	1.0%	2.3%	2.2%
<b>Age/gender</b>				
Male 16 – 24	0.5%	4.4%	2.5%	6.8%
Male 25 – 34	1.4%	3.7%	3.7%	6.4%
Male 35 – 44	1.3%	3.9%	4.3%	4.9%
Male 45 – 54	2.0%	2.2%	2.0%	4.7%
Male 55 – 64	0.3%	2.5%	1.5%	1.1%
Male 65 or over	0.2%	0.4%	0.7%	0.9%
Female 16 – 24	2.1%	5.9%	7.9%	12.5%
Female 25 – 34	4.9%	8.3%	11.4%	14.3%
Female 35 – 44	5.2%	8.3%	13.4%	15.9%
Female 45 – 54	7.3%	7.6%	15.4%	14.4%
Female 55 – 64	5.4%	4.9%	9.3%	8.3%
Female 65 & over	3.0%	1.5%	3.5%	3.2%
<b>Victim status</b>				
Non victim	2.6%	3.8%	5.5%	6.5%
Victim	4.9%	7.6%	11.1%	13.8%
<b>Deprivation</b>				
15% most	5.0%	7.1%	9.0%	10.4%
Rest	2.6%	3.9%	5.9%	7.1%

**Table A 3 (cont.) % who experienced different types of psychological abuse since age 16, by demographic characteristics (%) (continued over)**

	Forced you to watch material you considered pornographic	Threatened or attempted to kill themselves in order to control you	Threatened, attempted to or actually hurt themselves in order to control you	Threatened you with a weapon, for example an ashtray or a bottle
<b>All</b>	0.2%	2.2%	2.5%	2.2%
<b>Gender</b>				
Male	0.1%	1.1%	1.5%	1.4%
Female	0.4%	1.3%	3.4%	2.9%
<b>Age</b>				
16 – 24	0.3%	2.3%	2.9%	1.5%
25 – 34	0.2%	3.2%	3.6%	1.8%
35 – 44	0.4%	3.1%	4.1%	3.1%
45 – 54	0.2%	2.9%	3.1%	3.2%
55 – 64	0.2%	1.7%	1.3%	2.5%
65 or over	0.2%	0.5%	0.6%	1.0%
<b>Age/gender</b>				
Male 16 – 24	0.2%	0.9%	1.8%	0.4%
Male 25 – 34	-	2.2%	1.9%	1.3%
Male 35 – 44	0.3%	1.3%	2.2%	2.6%
Male 45 – 54	0.1%	0.9%	2.3%	1.8%
Male 55 – 64	-	0.7%	0.5%	1.3%
Male 65 or over	0.1%	0.6%	0.3%	0.8%
Female 16 – 24	0.3%	3.5%	3.9%	2.6%
Female 25 – 34	0.4%	4.1%	5.1%	2.3%
Female 35 – 44	0.5%	4.8%	5.9%	3.6%
Female 45 – 54	0.3%	4.7%	3.8%	4.5%
Female 55 – 64	0.4%	2.6%	2.1%	3.7%
Female 65 & over	0.2%	0.4%	0.8%	1.2%
<b>Victim status</b>				
Non victim	0.2%	1.8%	2.1%	1.9%
Victim	0.6%	4.1%	4.5%	3.6%
<b>Deprivation</b>				
15% most	0.3%	3.6%	3.1%	4.4%
Rest	0.2%	1.9%	2.4%	1.8%

**Table A 3 (cont) % who experienced different types of psychological abuse since age 16, by demographic characteristics**

	Threatened to hurt you	Threatened to hurt someone close to you	Threatened to hurt your other / previous partner	Threatened to kill you
<b>All</b>	4.5%	1.5%	1.9%	1.8%
<b>Gender</b>				
Male	1.7%	0.5%	0.6%	0.7%
Female	7.0%	2.3%	3.0%	2.7%
<b>Age</b>				
16 – 24	4.8%	1.4%	1.6%	1.2%
25 – 34	5.1%	1.8%	3.1%	1.8%
35 – 44	5.3%	2.2%	3.0%	2.1%
45 – 54	6.6%	2.0%	2.3%	2.8%
55 – 64	4.3%	1.3%	1.4%	2.0%
65 or over	1.5%	0.5%	0.3%	0.8%
<b>Age/gender</b>				
Male 16 – 24	2.1%	0.2%	0.7%	-
Male 25 – 34	1.8%	1.1%	1.2%	0.7%
Male 35 – 44	1.9%	0.6%	1.1%	1.5%
Male 45 – 54	2.4%	0.6%	0.6%	0.9%
Male 55 – 64	1.9%	0.5%	0.4%	0.4%
Male 65 or over	0.6%	0.1%	-	0.7%
Female 16 – 24	7.2%	2.5%	2.4%	2.3%
Female 25 – 34	8.3%	2.4%	4.8%	2.8%
Female 35 – 44	8.5%	3.7%	4.8%	2.7%
Female 45 – 54	10.5%	3.2%	3.9%	4.5%
Female 55 – 64	6.7%	2.1%	2.4%	3.5%
Female 65 & over	2.3%	0.8%	0.5%	0.9%
<b>Victim status</b>				
Non victim	4.1%	1.2%	1.5%	1.6%
Victim	7.0%	3.0%	3.9%	3.0%
<b>Deprivation</b>				
15% most	7.9%	2.8%	2.8%	3.9%
Rest	3.9%	1.3%	1.7%	1.4%

Base: All respondents with a partner since age 16 (9,312); Variable names: DA\_1i, DA\_1iii

**Table A 4: % who experienced different types of physical abuse since age 16, by demographic characteristics (continued over).**

	Pushed you or held you down	Kicked, bitten, or hit you	Thrown something at you with the intention of causing harm	Choked or tried to strangle/ smother you
<b>All</b>	5.0%	5.2%	4.7%	2.5%
<b>Gender</b>				
Male	1.3%	3.3%	3.7%	0.6%
Female	8.4%	6.9%	5.7%	4.2%
<b>Age</b>				
16 – 24	4.4%	3.9%	3.6%	1.9%
25 – 34	6.3%	5.9%	5.8%	2.5%
35 – 44	7.3%	7.2%	7.3%	3.7%
45 – 54	7.2%	7.5%	6.7%	3.8%
55 – 64	4.3%	5.2%	4.4%	2.5%
65 or over	1.4%	1.9%	1.2%	0.8%
<b>Age/gender</b>				
Male 16 – 24	1.3%	2.5%	3.4%	0.3%
Male 25 – 34	1.3%	3.9%	5.3%	0.5%
Male 35 – 44	2.7%	5.4%	5.8%	1.0%
Male 45 – 54	2.0%	4.8%	4.6%	1.0%
Male 55 – 64	0.7%	2.1%	2.7%	0.4%
Male 65 or over	-	0.9%	0.9%	0.4%
Female 16 – 24	7.2%	5.2%	3.7%	3.3%
Female 25 – 34	11.1%	7.7%	6.2%	4.4%
Female 35 – 44	11.7%	8.9%	8.8%	6.2%
Female 45 – 54	11.9%	10.0%	8.6%	6.4%
Female 55 – 64	7.7%	8.1%	6.1%	4.5%
Female 65 & over	2.5%	2.6%	1.4%	1.1%
<b>Victim status</b>				
Non victim	4.5%	4.5%	4.0%	2.2%
Victim	8.2%	9.4%	8.9%	4.3%
<b>Deprivation</b>				
15% most	8.0%	8.8%	8.1%	4.2%
Rest	4.5%	4.6%	4.2%	2.2%

**Table A 4 (cont.) % who experienced different types of physical abuse since age 16, by demographic characteristics**

	Used a weapon against you	Forced you/ tried to force you to have sexual intercourse	Forced you/tried to force you to take part in another sexual activity
<b>All</b>	1.8%	2.0%	0.8%
<b>Gender</b>			
Male	1.3%	0.2%	0.2%
Female	2.4%	3.7%	1.4%
<b>Age</b>			
16 – 24	1.3%	1.1%	0.9%
25 – 34	1.9%	2.3%	1.0%
35 – 44	2.3%	2.6%	1.2%
45 – 54	3.0%	3.0%	1.1%
55 – 64	2.1%	2.1%	0.8%
65 or over	0.6%	1.0%	0.2%
<b>Age/gender</b>			
Male 16 – 24	0.4%	-	0.2%
Male 25 – 34	1.9%	0.4%	0.3%
Male 35 – 44	1.6%	0.2%	0.5%
Male 45 – 54	2.2%	0.3%	0.4%
Male 55 – 64	0.8%	-	-
Male 65 or over	0.4%	0.1%	0.1%
Female 16 – 24	2.1%	2.1%	1.5%
Female 25 – 34	1.9%	4.0%	1.6%
Female 35 – 44	3.0%	5.0%	1.8%
Female 45 – 54	3.6%	5.5%	1.7%
Female 55 – 64	3.3%	4.1%	1.6%
Female 65 & over	0.8%	1.8%	0.3%
<b>Victim status</b>			
Non victim	1.6%	1.8%	0.6%
Victim	3.5%	3.2%	2.1%
<b>Deprivation</b>			
15% most	4.0%	2.9%	1.5%
Rest	1.5%	1.9%	0.7%

Base: All respondents with a partner since age 16 (9,312)

Variable names: DA\_1i, DA\_1iii

## Annex 2. Data Strengths and Limitations

### Summary: data strengths and limitations

SCJS Strengths	SCJS Limitations
Captures information about crimes that are not reported to the police (including sensitive issues such as domestic abuse or drug abuse).	Does not cover all crimes (e.g. homicide or 'victimless' crimes such as speeding).
Provides information on multiple and repeat victimisation (up to 5 incidents in a series).	Does not cover the entire population (e.g. children, homeless people or people living in communal accommodation).
Good measure of trends since 2008/09.	Unable to produce robust data at lower level geographies.
Analyses risk for different demographic groups and victim-offender relationships.	Difficult to measure trends between survey sweeps in rarer forms of crime (such as more serious offences).
Provides attitudinal data (e.g. fear of crime or attitudes towards the justice system).	Estimates are subject to a degree of error.

One of main strengths of crime and victimisation surveys such as the SCJS is that they provide a complementary measure of crime to police recorded crime statistics. Police recorded crime is a measure of crime that police come into contact with. However, it is well established that people may be unwilling to report crimes for a range of reasons, including a perceived lack of benefit, fear of reprisal, vulnerability, an inability to identify assailants or unwillingness to bring the victims conduct to the attention of the police. People are also less likely to report some types of crime than others (for example, people are less likely to report sexual than property crimes). Police practices can also influence recorded crime, for example, officers may not record all crimes reported by the public.

These factors are unlikely to affect SCJS data. For example, people's attitudes toward the police are unlikely to affect SCJS data, nor are the data affected by police recording practices. SCJS data also provide a measure of prevalence, that is, the risk of experiencing different types of crime in a given time period. By contrast, police recorded crime can only measure incidence or the number of crimes. In addition, the SCJS collects demographic information, providing richer insights into *who* is experiencing crime. Furthermore, follow-up questions about

incidents allow the SCJS to capture respondent's attitudes to the criminal justice system, including reasons for not reporting crimes to the police.

### **Sampling and crime type limitations**

The main limitations of the SCJS result from sampling, and the types of crimes surveyed. In terms of sampling, the survey is of adults aged 16 and over, living in private residential households only. As such, the survey excludes persons under the age of 16, the homeless, and populations living in residences such as care homes, halls of residences, hospitals, prisons or other communal accommodation.

### **Survey Error**

As discussed in the report introduction, the SCJS gathers information from a sample rather than from the whole population and survey results are always estimates, not precise figures. This means that they are subject to a level of uncertainty. To estimate the extent of this uncertainty, 95% confidence intervals for the statistics are calculated to define bands within which the 'true' value of survey estimates are likely to lie (i.e. that value which would be obtained if a census of the entire population was undertaken). These confidence intervals are particularly important when making comparisons of SCJS estimates over short timescales.

### **Non-quantifiable errors: recall and accuracy**

SCJS estimates are also subject to a margin of non-quantifiable error. For example: there may be errors in the recall of participants as to when certain incidents took place; respondents may have claimed to have reported a crime to police when they had not, feeling that this was the socially acceptable response; some incidents could also be inaccurately recorded by interviewers, or miscoded by the wider survey team. Although a number of steps in the design and implementation of the survey are taken to reduce such errors, they can never be fully eliminated.

There may be errors in the recall of participants as to when certain incidents took place, or the number of incidents that took place. This is particularly relevant to collecting data on more sensitive topics, which may be cumulative and ongoing. For example, it may be difficult for respondents to recall the exact number of incidents. Also, respondents may not want to either remember or report some experiences.

For further details on the respective advantages and limitations of SCJS data see the introduction to the [2014/15 Main Findings Report](#) and the [Technical Report](#).

### **Survey design changes**

The collection of survey data on crime and victimisation in Scotland has undergone several major changes in methodology. Changing crime survey methodology in Scotland has implications for making comparisons across survey designs. As previous surveys had smaller sample sizes, estimates from earlier

surveys are subject to a higher degree of uncertainty, and this report therefore focuses on the period from 2008-09 onwards.

### **Self-report data advantages**

One of main strengths of crime and victimisation surveys is that they provide a complementary measure of crime to police recorded crime statistics. The limitations of police recorded crime are well established. For example, people may be unwilling to report crimes for a range of reasons, including a perceived lack of benefit, fear of reprisal, vulnerability, an inability to identify assailants, or an unwillingness to bring the victims conduct to the attention of the police. Some types of crime are also less likely to be reported than others. For example, sexual crimes are less likely to be reported to the police than property crimes. Police recorded crime may also be influenced by police practices, for example, officers may not record all crimes that are reported to the police.

The SCJS self-complete section is unlikely to be influenced by attitudes towards the police and are unaffected by police recording procedures. It is designed to allow respondents to answer questions on more sensitive and personal topics privately. Self-report data can capture crimes and experiences of a sensitive nature that respondents may be unwilling to report to the police, or to disclose in a face-to-face survey situation. For example, evidence from the Crime Survey of England and Wales shows that respondents are more likely to report sensitive issues in the self-completion module than in face-to-face interviews (2014; 3). Section 7.7 of the [Technical Report](#) discusses the self-complete section of the questionnaire in more detail.

Unlike police recorded crime (which measures incidence or the number of crimes), the SCJS can also provide a measure of prevalence, that is, the risk of experiencing different types of crime within a certain time period. The survey also provides information on respondent's reasons for not reporting experiences/crimes to the police, and on their attitudes towards the criminal justice system more broadly.

### **Self-report data limitations**

A number of factors may affect the self-report data (as well as other types of survey data). These include the wording of questions and the presence or skills of the interviewer. The presence of other people in the house may also influence results. Although the self-completion module allows respondents to answer in relative privacy, respondents may be unwilling to disclose personal or distressing details.

Another important limitation to consider is where self-completion interviews on sensitive topics are administered by the interviewer, at the request of respondents, who, for example, do not wish to use the laptop/tablet to complete the interview themselves. In 2014/15 87% of respondents completed the self-completion section: 71% entered their answers directly in to the tablet PC themselves and 16% asked the interviewer to administer the questionnaire for them. Of those where the interviewer administered the self-completion, in five per

cent of cases, the respondent completed the section themselves after the first few questions being administered by the interviewer. Steps are taken by the SCJS trained interviewers to ensure that the number of self-complete interviews that are interviewer-administered are minimised and this is monitored closely by the SCJS team and our survey contractors.

Under-reporting and under-representation is also a concern of this survey. For example, it is likely that there will be an under-representation of some groups, e.g. those who take drugs. In part, this will be due to the fact that some people who use drugs may live in accommodation not covered by a survey of private households (such as the SCJS) including, for example, hostels, prisons and student halls of residence. The survey is likely to under-represent those with the most problematic or chaotic drug use, some of whom may live in accommodation previously described and some of whom may live in private households covered by the survey, yet they may be rarely be at home or be unable to take part in an interview due to the chaotic nature of their lives.

Despite using Computer Assisted Self-completion Interviewing (CASI) for this module, it is likely there will be some underreporting of illicit drug use, partner abuse and sexual victimisation and stalking among survey respondents. For example, each of these are sensitive topics, and illicit drug use is an illegal activity and as such some individuals may have felt uncomfortable reporting that they have taken illicit drugs, despite reassurances about confidentiality and anonymity.

Questions cover past use over varying periods (ever, in the last year and in the last month) and it is possible that some respondents may simply forget experiences, particularly if they last took it a long time ago.

## **A National Statistics publication for Scotland**

The United Kingdom Statistics Authority has designated these statistics as National Statistics, in accordance with the Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007 and signifying compliance with the Code of Practice for Official Statistics.

Designation can be interpreted to mean that the statistics: meet identified user needs; are produced, managed and disseminated to high standards; and are explained well.

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### **How to access background or source data**

The data collected for this social research publication:

are available via the [UK Data Service](#).

may be made available on request, subject to consideration of legal and ethical factors. Please contact [Scottish Crime and Justice Survey@gov.scot](mailto:Scottish_Crime_and_Justice_Survey@gov.scot) for further information.

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