

**Domestic Abuse Analytical Paper
Justice Analytical Services
Scottish Government
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Introduction

Information relating to domestic abuse is available from a number of statistical bulletins within the Crime and Justice series published by the Scottish Government. These relate to data collected at different stages of the criminal justice system or to data from a household survey in Scotland.

This analytical paper collates, presents and discusses the main statistics on domestic abuse in Scotland from two principal sources of statistics, namely police recorded incidents of domestic abuse and the Scottish Crime and Justice Survey (SCJS). Each source has different strengths and limitations but together they provide a more comprehensive picture of domestic abuse in Scotland and help to measure the extent and impact of domestic abuse in Scotland. This paper is based on statistics for 2010-11, the most recent year for which statistics are available from both sources. The paper does not present new statistics but collates previously published information.

The incidents recorded by the police are the primary source of detailed and reliable information relating to the characteristics of victims and perpetrators of domestic abuse incidents recorded by the police at a police force, and Scotland, level. The data provides information about trends in the number of incidents of domestic abuse recorded by the police as well as the characteristics associated with these incidents.

The SCJS is a large-scale continuous survey measuring adults' experience and perceptions of crime in Scotland, based on in-home face-to-face interviews conducted annually with adults (aged 16 or over) living in private households in Scotland.

For reference, the most recent publications providing statistics from these two sources can be accessed via the following links:

- [Domestic Abuse recorded by the police in Scotland, 2010-11 and 2011-12](#)
- [Scottish Crime and Justice Survey Partner Abuse report 2010-11](#)

These statistical bulletins are used to inform *Scotland Performs* (<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2007/11/13092240/9>)

Statistics on domestic abuse are important in terms of providing evidence on the following National Outcomes:

National Outcome 5	'our children have the best start in life and are ready to succeed',
National Outcome 8	'we have improved the life chances for children, young people and families at risk',
National Outcome 9	'we live our lives safe from crime, disorder and danger',
National Outcome 11	'we have strong, resilient and supportive communities where people take responsibility for their own actions and how they affect others'.

These statistics are also used to inform *The Strategy for Justice in Scotland*. (<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Justice/justicestrategy>),

One of the priorities within *The Strategy for Justice in Scotland* is “Reducing crime, particularly violent and serious organised crime”. One of the approaches is to “take strong action to tackle domestic abuse and violence against women, including providing support to victims from key frontline services and working with perpetrators through our ground-breaking Caledonian system”.

For reference, statistics on domestic abuse based on data collected at a later point in the criminal justice system are available. The most recent bulletin is available via the following link:

- [Criminal Proceedings in Scotland 2011-12](#)

Note that this paper does not examine longer term trends, the wider research literature and victimisation trends.

Chapter 1 – Main Differences between sources

This chapter provides an overview of the main differences between the two sources of statistics on domestic abuse in relation to the definitions used, data collection methodology, data collection unit and time period.

1.1 Definition of domestic abuse

Police definition

The definition used in statistics of domestic abuse recorded by the police is ‘...any form of physical, sexual or mental and emotional abuse [that] might amount to criminal conduct and which takes place within the context of a relationship. The relationship will be between partners (married, cohabiting, civil partnership or otherwise) or ex-partners. The abuse can be committed in the home or elsewhere.’

SCJS definitions – partner abuse

Like the police definition, the Scottish Crime and Justice Survey focuses on abuse carried out by a partner and specifically includes abuse experienced since the age of 16. The definition of partner used in the questionnaire included boyfriend, girlfriend, husband, wife or civil partner. Partner abuse in the SCJS includes psychological and physical forms of abuse. The definition of psychological abuse includes emotional, financial and other forms of psychological abuse. The definition of physical abuse includes sexual and other forms of physical abuse.

All respondents to the SCJS, who have had a partner at any point since the age of 16, were asked a series of questions about whether they had experienced different forms of partner abuse (psychological and physical). Where respondents identified they had experienced such an incident, they were recorded as being a victim of partner abuse. An additional question is also asked of the same group about whether they perceive themselves to be a victim of domestic abuse.

Other forms of abuse of a domestic nature, such as that between parents and children for example, are not included in the collection of police recorded incidents of domestic abuse data or in the SCJS partner abuse report.

1.2 Data collection methodology

Domestic abuse recorded by the police

- Based on figures provided by the former eight Scottish police forces (for the period April 2010-March 2011)
- Covers incidents which are recorded by the police
- Provides data for Scotland as well as for police force and local authority areas
- As only incidents reported to the police are recorded, some under-reporting may occur since there will be incidents which are not brought to the attention of the police.

The 2011-12 publication on incidents of domestic abuse recorded by the police, published on the 30 October 2012, can be accessed via this link: [Domestic Abuse recorded by the police in Scotland, 2010-11 and 2011-12](#)

Partner Abuse report from the Scottish Crime and Justice Survey

The Scottish Crime and Justice Survey (SCJS) is a large-scale continuous survey measuring adults' experience and perceptions of crime in Scotland. It is based on 13,000 interviews carried out annually with adults (aged 16 or over) living in private households in Scotland. The survey is conducted face-to-face and in-home and is administered by specifically trained professional interviewers using Computer Assisted Personal Interviewing (CAPI).

This report identifies the extent of partner abuse, both since the age of 16 and in the last 12 months. It examines the nature and impact of partner abuse and explores the extent to which people or organisations were informed about the abuse, including contact with the police about the most recent / only incident experienced.

- In 2010-11, there were 13,010 respondents to the main Scottish Crime and Justice Survey.
- The partner abuse section of the SCJS is self-completed by the interviewee to ensure confidentiality and to encourage the interviewees to respond to questions they might not otherwise discuss. There were 10,999 respondents to this module.
- The survey provides data which can be used to examine trends in the number and nature of crime in Scotland over time.

The Partner Abuse report from the SCJS, published on 20 December 2011, can be accessed via this link: [Partner Abuse module of the 2010-11 Scottish Crime and Justice Survey.](#)

Further information on the background of the SCJS can be found in the technical report, which can be accessed via the following link:

<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/Doc/933/0122908.pdf>

1.3 Data collection unit

Domestic abuse recorded by the police

Domestic abuse recorded by the police in Scotland is based on **incidents** of domestic abuse. It is likely that some of the incidents will involve repeat victims or perpetrators. As a result, incident numbers will be higher than the actual number of victims or perpetrators. Not all incidents will result in the recording of a crime or offence.

Partner Abuse report from the Scottish Crime and Justice Survey

Information on experience of partner abuse was collected through the self-completion section of the questionnaire. The report identifies the extent of partner abuse, both since the age of 16 and in the last 12 months. The survey data are therefore based on a **person's** experiences of partner abuse.

It is also worth noting that survey respondents will be 16 or over and are asked about their experiences of partner abuse since the age of 16. Incidents of police recorded crime may involve victims who are under the age of 16. Quality checks are carried out against the age difference of victims and perpetrators to ensure only partners and ex-partners are included in recorded crime data and that any other relationships such as parent and child etc. are not included in the data. In 2010-11 there were 26 incidents involving a victim and perpetrator who were both under the age of 16.

1.4 Time period

Domestic abuse recorded by the police

Data on the number of incidents of domestic abuse are collected in an annual return taken from the Scottish police forces recording systems and are based on incidents recorded by the police during the financial year collection period, 1 April to 31 March each year.

Partner Abuse report from the Scottish Crime and Justice Survey

The Scottish Crime and Justice Survey is conducted biennially and interviews for the 2010-11 survey began in April 2010 and ran continuously until March 2011. The survey involves interviewing a randomly selected adult in 13,000 households across Scotland per year. Interviews are conducted on a rolling basis over the course of a year and respondents are asked about incidents experienced in the 12 months prior to the month of interview.

As such, the SCJS 2010-11 is based on interviews conducted between the 1st of April 2010 and 31st of March 2011, with the rolling recall period actually extending over 23 months so is not directly comparable with any one year.

There may be errors in the recall of participants as to when certain incidents took place, resulting in some incidents being wrongly included in or excluded from the reference period.

Chapter 2 provides a comparison of the main findings from the two main sources of domestic abuse data in relation to a number of key factors.

As 2010-11 is the most recent year for which data is available from the SCJS, police recorded incidents of domestic abuse data has also been provided for 2010-11 for comparison purposes throughout this paper. Note however that police recorded incidents of domestic abuse data for 2011-12 is available via the following web link: [Domestic Abuse recorded by the police in Scotland, 2010-11 and 2011-12](#)

Chapter 2 - Main Findings from Sources of Domestic Abuse Data

Comparison of 2010-11 data

	Domestic Abuse Recorded by the Police in Scotland, 2010-11 Statistical Bulletin	SCJS 2010-11 Partner Abuse Module	
		(experiencing abuse in last 12 months; Base 7,652)	(ever experiencing abuse since age of 16; Base 10,397)
Prevalence/extent of abuse	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There were 55,698 incidents of domestic abuse recorded in 2010-11. This represents a rate of 1,067 per 100,000 population 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 3% of those who had a partner, or were in contact with an ex-partner, in the last 12 months reported experiencing at least one form of partner abuse in that period. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 16% of those who had a partner since the age of 16 had experienced at least one incident of partner abuse since that age.
Gender of Victims	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Female victims accounted for 83% of recorded domestic abuse incidents and male victims, 17% (where gender of victim was known). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Among adults who had a partner or contact with an ex-partner in the last 12 months, there was no difference between the percentage of women and men who said that they had experienced partner abuse in that period – both 3%. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 19% of women and 13% of men who had a partner since the age of 16, said they had experienced at least one incident of partner abuse.
Gender of Perpetrators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Where information was recorded on the gender of the perpetrator, 83% were male and 17% were female. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Among those who had experienced partner abuse in the last 12 months, in the most recent / only incident, 54% of offenders were male and 39% were female. (7% did not wish to answer). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 61% of respondents who had experienced partner abuse since the age of 16, said that the abusive partner was male. This compares with 37% where the abusive partner was female (2% did not answer).
Gender of victim/perpetrator	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 81% of incidents involved a female victim and a male perpetrator, with 16% involving a male victim and a female perpetrator. Incidents involving a female victim and female perpetrator or a male victim and a male perpetrator each accounted for 1% of incidents. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Of those who had experienced partner abuse in the last 12 months, 92% of women said that their most recent / only abusive partner at the time was male and 82% of men said their most recent / only abusive partner at the time was female. Of those who had experienced partner abuse in the last 12 months, 8% of men said their most recent /only abusive partner at that time was male and 3% of women said their most recent /only abusive partner at that time was female. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In the majority of cases, those who had experienced partner abuse since the age of 16 were of the opposite gender to their abusive partners. Just 5% of men and 2% of women were of the same gender as their abusive partners.

<p>Age groups of victims</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The highest rate of incidents of domestic abuse per 100,000 population among female victims was for those aged 22-25 years. The highest rate for males was for those aged 31-35 years. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Younger adults were more likely to have experienced abuse by a partner in last 12 months, with rates varying from 8% of 16-24 year olds (both males and females) who had contact with a partner or ex-partner in that time to less than 0.5% of those aged 60 or older. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Of those adults who have had a partner since the age of 16, those in the 25-44 age group (both males and females) showed the highest percentage, 20% and 27% respectively, experiencing partner abuse since the age of 16.
<p>Number of incidents experienced by victims</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Where information on repeat incidents was available, 55% of incidents involved victims who had previously experienced domestic abuse. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 35% of adults who had experienced psychological or physical partner abuse in the last 12 months said the abuse occurred only once in that time, 18% said 2-3 times, 2% said 4 or more times and 5% said too many times to count. 36% either didn't want to answer or didn't know/couldn't remember. 	<p>Note that a question on number of incidents was not asked of those ever experiencing abuse since the age of 16.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 69% of adults who had experienced psychological or physical partner abuse since the age of 16 had one abusive partner. 24% had more than one abusive partner since that age. (7% did not know / could not remember or did not wish to answer).
<p>Crimes</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In 2010-11, of the 55,698 incidents recorded by the police, 32,370 (58%) resulted in the recording of a crime/offence. Where a crime or offence was recorded, 72% of incidents were referred to the procurator fiscal, 18% resulted in other action (such as referral to support groups etc) and 10% of recorded incidents resulted in no further action being taken. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 44% of women thought the most recent / only incident of physical abuse they experienced in the last 12 months was a crime compared with 14% of men. 30% of women thought the most recent / only incident of psychological abuse they experienced in the last 12 months was a crime compared with 9% of men. 17% of those who experienced partner abuse in the last 12 months said the police did come to know about the most recent / only incident. This was higher among women (24%) than men (9%). 	<p>Note that a question on perception of an incident was not asked of those ever experiencing abuse since the age of 16.</p>

Chapter 3 – What does the data tell us about Domestic Abuse in Scotland?

3.1 Introduction

This chapter highlights the main findings from these two data sources. Following a brief discussion of the potential uses of the sources, it highlights the key findings from the data and illustrates the potential ways in which the sources can be used to provide more comprehensive insights into the reporting and experiences of domestic abuse in Scotland.

3.2 Use of data sources

Whilst the data from the police recorded incidents of domestic abuse data and SCJS survey can be utilised in a variety of ways, it is evident that they have different strengths and limitations. As such, it is necessary to use caution when comparing figures from the two sources.

The police recorded statistics are based on a count of the **number of incidents** of domestic abuse recorded by the police and a victim may be involved in any number of incidents over the recording period. The SCJS estimates **the number of respondents** to a household survey who have been victims of partner abuse. Details of incidents are based solely on the most recent incident. It is therefore not possible to compare the two data sources directly.

The police recorded incidents of domestic abuse statistics provide a long term trend series but not all incidents come to the attention of the police. The SCJS is a nationally representative sample survey but subject to error associated with sampling and respondent recalling past events. Further details of the main differences between the two sources are given in Chapter 1.

There are however a number of advantages of using more than one data source. Notably, the SCJS survey is useful in providing information about the scale of the under reporting of incidents to the police. It also provides insights into *how* individuals experience partner abuse and, in particular, about the number of incidents that individuals have experienced during a given period of time.

Despite the evident differences between the police recorded data and SCJS survey data, it is notable that together the two sources provide a more comprehensive picture of domestic abuse in Scotland and help to measure the extent and impact of this abuse.

3.3 Summary of main findings

- There were 55,698 incidents of domestic abuse recorded by the police in 2010-11. However, we know from the SCJS survey data that not all incidents of domestic abuse are reported to and recorded by the police. 17% of those who had experienced partner abuse (as defined by the survey), in the last 12 months said the police came to know about the most recent incident they experienced.

- According to the SCJS survey, 11% of (the 118) respondents experiencing partner abuse in the last 12 months told the police about the most recent / only incident. In particular, men were less likely than women to tell someone about the domestic abuse incident.
- However the police often came to know about the abuse from sources other than the respondents, this included friends, relatives and doctors. Where the police were not informed, the most prevalent reasons for not reporting the incident were that it was a private matter, that it was too trivial, and that it could be dealt with personally.
- The SCJS survey data revealed a notable gender difference in respondents' perception of the incident. Women were more likely than men to view the most recent / only incident of partner abuse as a crime, particularly in relation to physical abuse. Men were more likely to say both forms of abuse (physical and psychological) were 'just something that happens'.
- Men were also less likely to view themselves as victims of domestic abuse (based on their understanding of this term). The findings thus highlight notable gender differences in the reporting and perception of partner abuse and in the perception of being a victim. The following sections explore the findings in further detail.

3.4 Incidence of domestic abuse / partner abuse

Police recorded statistics are based on a count of the number of incidents of domestic abuse recorded by the police. **In 2010-11 there were 55,698 recorded incidents.** This is an increase of 7% on the 51,926 incidents recorded in 2009-10 and continues the generally increasing trend. The number of incidents recorded in 2010-11 represents a rate of 1,067 per 100,000 population.

In less than a fifth (17%) of recorded domestic abuse incidents in 2010-11, the victim was male and in over four fifths (83%) of incidents the victim was female (where the gender of the victim was known).

However, a victim may be involved in any number of incidents over the recording period. Domestic abuse data collected from the police is based on **incidents** of domestic abuse. Victims may therefore appear in relation to several different incidents but it is not possible to identify individual victims. As a result, the number of victims of domestic abuse recorded by the police will be lower than the number of incidents recorded. The SCJS survey data provides information on the number of incidents experienced by individual victims.

The data gathered by the SCJS survey provides an **estimate** of the number of respondents to a household survey who have been victims of partner abuse in the past 12 months. Details of incidents are based solely on the most recent incident. In data collected from the SCJS Partner Abuse Module 2010-11, the 'best' estimate is that 99,000 adults (46,000 male and 53,000 female) had experienced psychological or physical abuse in the last 12 months. The police recorded 55,698 incidents of domestic abuse in 2010-11. However, as stated earlier, it is likely that some of the

incidents will involve repeat victims or perpetrators and as a result, incident numbers will be higher than the actual number of victims or perpetrators.

According to the SCJS survey, 3% of those who had a partner or were in contact with an ex-partner in the last 12 months reported experiencing at least one form of partner abuse in that period. This was the same for both men and women. Of those who had a partner since the age of 16, 16% had experienced at least one incident of abuse from a partner since age 16 (19% of women and 13% of men). The risk of experiencing partner abuse was very similar to that measured in the SCJS 2009/10.

Whilst caution should be used when comparing figures from these two sources, data derived from the SCJS is nevertheless useful in providing further information about how individuals experience partner abuse and, in particular, about the number of incidents that individuals have experienced in that time.

Indeed, whilst data collected from the SCJS survey revealed that just over a third (35%) of adults who had experienced partner abuse in the last 12 months said the abuse occurred only once in that time, 11% said the abuse occurred twice in the last 12 months, for 7% of adults it had happened three times and 2% said it had happened four or more times. Moreover, 5% said it had happened too many times to count. However almost a fifth (19%) did not wish to answer and a further 16% didn't know or couldn't remember. It is therefore not possible to estimate the number of incidents of partner abuse experienced by these respondents in the past 12 months.

Comparing the two sources suggests that not all incidents of domestic abuse come to the attention of the police, however due to differences in the data, it is not possible to estimate the exact extent of under reporting. Additionally, as the partner abuse module is a self-completion part of the survey by the respondent, it may be that some victims do not complete the survey out of fear of what might happen, particularly if their partner is present or likely to come into the room.

3.5 Reporting of domestic abuse/partner abuse

In 2010-11, of the 55,698 incidents recorded by the police, 32,370 (58%) resulted in the recording of a crime/offence, and 23,196 incidents were reported to the Procurator Fiscal (72% of incidents where a crime or offence was recorded).

We know that not all incidents of domestic abuse come to the attention of the police. However, it is not possible to find out from police recorded information whether victims are more likely to tell the police if the incident involves a crime or offence, or if incidents going unreported are considered less serious by the victim.

The SCJS partner abuse report, which contains a section on the reporting of incidents, builds upon police recorded data by examining the scale of under reporting of the most recent/only incident in the last 12 months, to the police. This includes providing data on the possible reasons for non-reporting of partner abuse incidents. In addition, the survey provides specific information about who else the victims are likely to inform about incidents of partner abuse.

Reporting to the police

The SCJS partner abuse report reveals that **just over a tenth (11%) of respondents who had experienced partner abuse in the last 12 months had told the police about the most recent / only incident.**

As only 11% of respondents informed the police, it is therefore likely that a percentage of victims came to the attention of the police through third party reporting or because the police were there at the time of the incident or found out in some other way.

In a separate question in the SCJS survey, respondents were also asked whether the police *came to know* about the most recent / only incident of partner abuse experienced in the last 12 months. 17% said that the police did come to know about the incident. This was higher among women (24%) than men (9%).

In the most recent / only incident of partner abuse experienced in the last 12 months that the police came to know about, 66% of those who had experienced said it was recorded as a crime. Note however that the base size for responses was low (61) and figures should be treated with caution.

Informing other persons/organisations

Responses from those who had experienced partner abuse in the last 12 months revealed that **61% of respondents had told at least one person or organisation about their most recent / only incident, and 29% had not.** Of those who had told at least one person or organisation, 37% told a friend, 20% told a relative, 11% told the police, 11% told a doctor and 19% told someone else (work colleague, counsellor / therapist, support organisation). 29% did not tell any person or organisation about the most recent / only incident they experienced.

In terms of gender, **just over two fifths (42%) of male victims did not tell anyone about the abuse they experienced, compared with just under one fifth (19%) of female victims.** This may, in part, be due to the fact that men were less likely to view what happened to them as a crime, or to see themselves as a victim of domestic abuse than women were.

Reasons for not informing the police

In cases where the police did not come to know about the most recent incident of partner abuse experienced in the last 12 months, **the reasons given for not reporting were as follows:** 30% said it was a private, personal or family matter, 25% felt it was too trivial/not worth reporting, 22% said they dealt with the matter themselves, 8% said the police could not have done anything about it, 5% said it would have been inconvenient or too much trouble, 5% said the police would not have bothered or not been interested and 5% said they were frightened that it would make matters worse.

The data collected by the survey therefore not only helps to provide a better estimate of the scale of domestic abuse which is going unreported, but also provides some idea as to the reasons for non-reporting of incidents.

3.6 Perception of Incident

The victim's perception of what has happened is likely to affect how they deal with abuse and whether or not they tell anyone. Therefore, information provided in the SCJS survey about perceptions of the incidents can help provide a better understanding about why domestic abuse may or may not come to the attention of the police.

The partner abuse report of the SCJS, reveals that of those who had experienced physical partner abuse in the last 12 months, 29% considered the most recent incident to be a crime (44% female, 14% male), 23% considered it to be wrong, but not a crime (25% female, 21% male) and 24% considered it to be just something that happens (11% female, 37% male).

Of those experiencing psychological abuse in the last 12 months, 21% considered it a crime (30% female, 9% male), 32% considered it wrong but not a crime (30% female, 34% male) and 26% considered it to be just something that happens (24% female, 28% male).

The survey thus highlights how women were more likely than men to view the most recent / only incident of partner abuse as a crime, particularly in relation to physical abuse. Men were more likely to say both forms of abuse (physical and psychological) were just something that happens.

3.7 Perception of being a victim

To add further context to the SCJS findings, respondents who had ever had a partner were asked at the end of the partner abuse section whether they felt that they personally had ever been the victim of domestic abuse. (Note that the term domestic abuse was not defined in the question so respondents' answers were based on their understanding of this term. It is possible their self-definition of the term could have been influenced by the preceding questions on partner abuse in the SCJS, though it is not possible to determine this through the survey results.)

The survey data revealed that fewer people identified themselves as being the victims of domestic abuse (self-defined) since the age of 16 (8%) than were identified in the survey as being victims of partner abuse since that age (16%).

Again there were differences in perceptions between men and women with notably a higher percentage of women than men identifying themselves as being victims of domestic abuse since the age of 16 (12% of women compared with 3% of men). As a result, the gap between the self-definition of being a victim of domestic abuse and the SCJS 2010/11 definition of partner abuse was narrower for women than for men.

Women were more likely to have experienced partner abuse as defined by the SCJS 2010 /11 since the age of 16 (19%) than they were to define themselves as a victim of domestic abuse since that age (12%);

Men were over three times as likely to have experienced partner abuse as defined by the SCJS 2010/11 (13%) than to say they had been a victim of domestic abuse (3%)

Chapter 4 – Summary

This analytical paper collates, presents and discusses the main statistics on domestic abuse in Scotland from two principal sources of statistics on domestic abuse, namely police recorded incidents of domestic abuse and the Scottish Crime and Justice Survey (SCJS).

Each source has different strengths and limitations but together they provide a more comprehensive picture of domestic abuse in Scotland and help to measure the extent and impact of domestic abuse in Scotland. These statistics also provide evidence in the development of the Scottish Government's strategy to tackle violence against women, including domestic abuse.