

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE
England and Wales 2007/08

REPORT

on

**Pilot study of data
provided by 9 Police Forces**

Dewar Research

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Dewar Research is an independent initiative which collates information available in the public domain in order to encourage more informed debate of social issues

Introduction

In late November 2008 and early 2009, statistics of recorded incidents of domestic related non-sexual violence against the person (VAP) during the year 2007/08 were sought by *Dewar Research* from 11 police forces in England and Wales. The forces were selected to provide a representative sample of both county and metropolitan areas.

Useful information was provided by nine of these forces, and is the subject of this summary report. The estimated (mid 2006) total population of these force areas was 21.5 million, representing just over 40% of the total population served by police forces in England and Wales.

The overall results revealed no real surprises, and generally confirmed those published by other contemporary sources. However, details and review of the information may still be of interest to those keenly following the issue of domestic violence, and are thus given in this report.

The information sought from forces included a breakdown by sex, ethnicity, age, and category of offence, for victims and for accused, and details of arrests and disposal of cases. Some of the nine forces responding were unable to provide the full range of such information, and others some information not in the form requested. However, the range of the information provided was sufficient to yield a useful picture of police reporting of domestic related violence against the person in 2007/08.

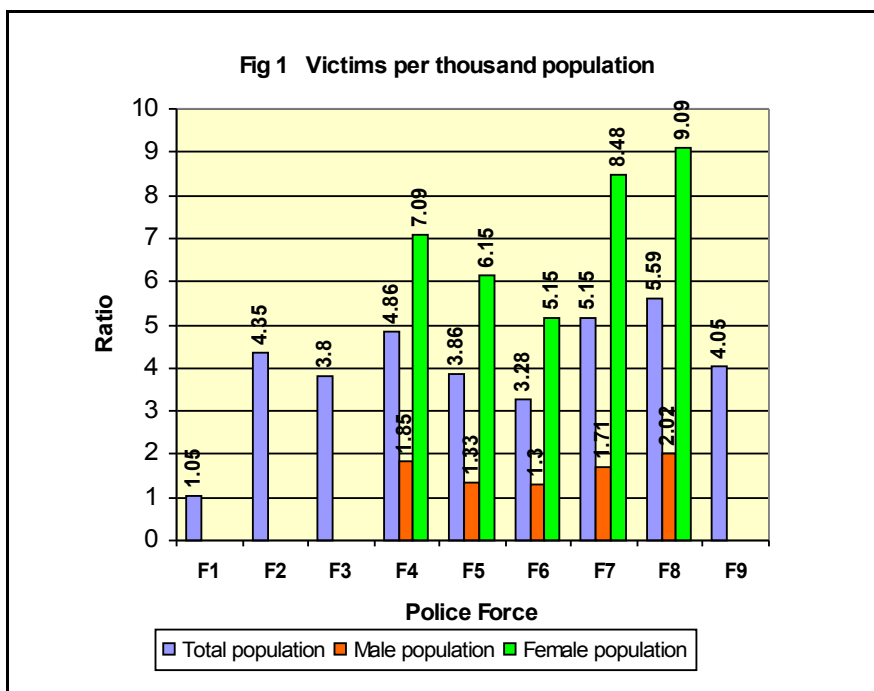
Domestic related violence against the person was intended to reflect violence in a domestic setting, such as family and partner violence or abuse. Generally, the police responses followed this, although only three forces provided separate statistics for family and partner/ex-partner non-sexual violence or abuse. Some forces also included statistics relating to violence or abuse outside the domestic setting, such as harassment, and, in one case, violence in the workplace. Such information was excluded from the review.

The responding police forces are not identified in this review but are given the references F1 to F9.

Overall picture

Prevalence of victims

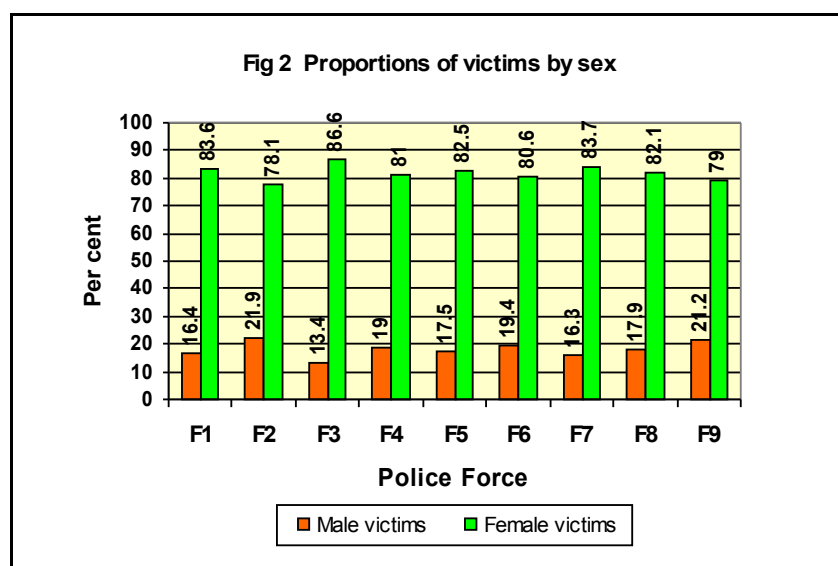
The prevalence of non-sexual domestic violence is given in Figure 1 for the nine forces responding expressed as the ratio of the numbers of victims recorded by the police per thousand population in the force area.



Corresponding ratios for male victims ranged from 1.3 (F6) to 2.02 (F8) and from 5.15 (F6) to 9.09 (F8) for female victims.

Sex of victims

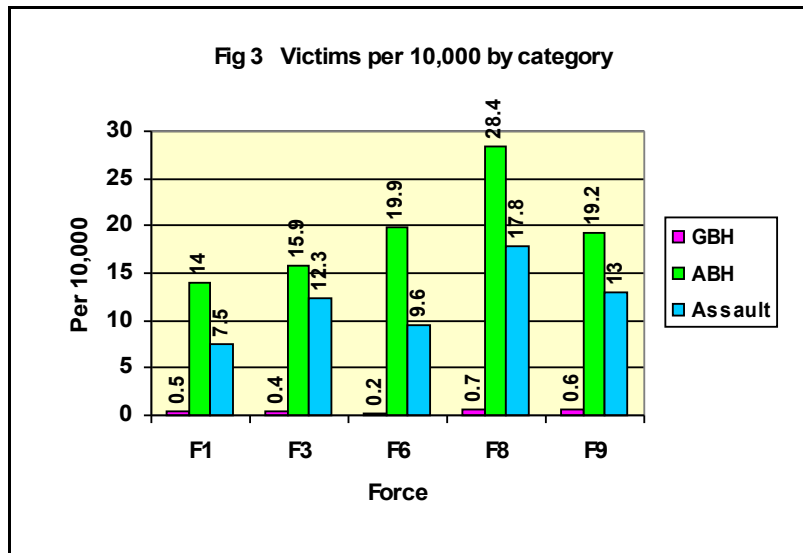
The proportions of victims by sex are shown on Figure 2.



Proportions of male victims of non-sexual domestic violence ranged from 13.4% (F3) to 21.9% (F2) of total victims. The corresponding proportions of female victims ranged from 78.1% (F2) to 86.6% (F3).

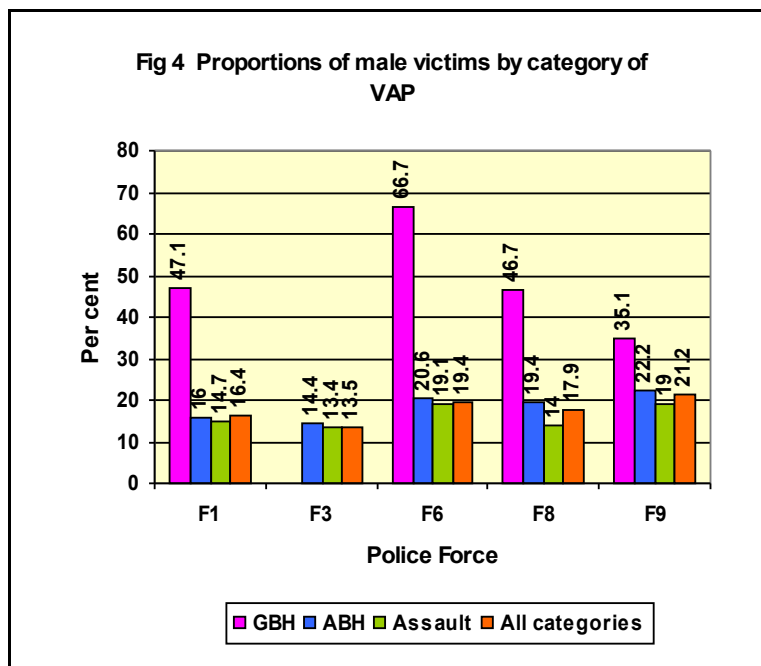
Severity of violence (by category)

As probably to be expected, the largest categories of non-sexual domestic violence were actual bodily harm (ABH) and common assault (CA). The more serious forms of violence, homicide and grievous bodily harm, formed a small minority of recorded assaults. The statistics for five forces are given on Figure 3, as victims per ten thousand of population in the force area for each of the three categories.



Victims per ten thousand for ABH ranged from 14 (F1) to 28.4 (F8), and for common assault from 7.5 (F1) to 17.8 (F8). The higher figures for F8 reflect higher victimisation rates generally, see Figure 1 above.

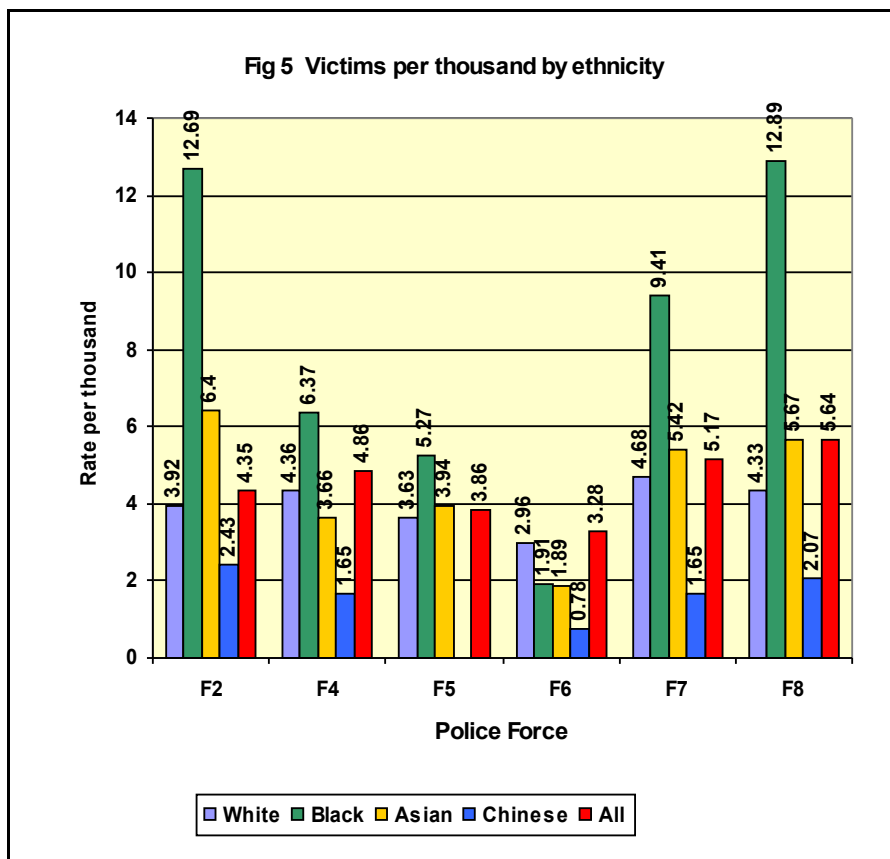
Proportions of male victims by category of violence are shown on Figure 4.



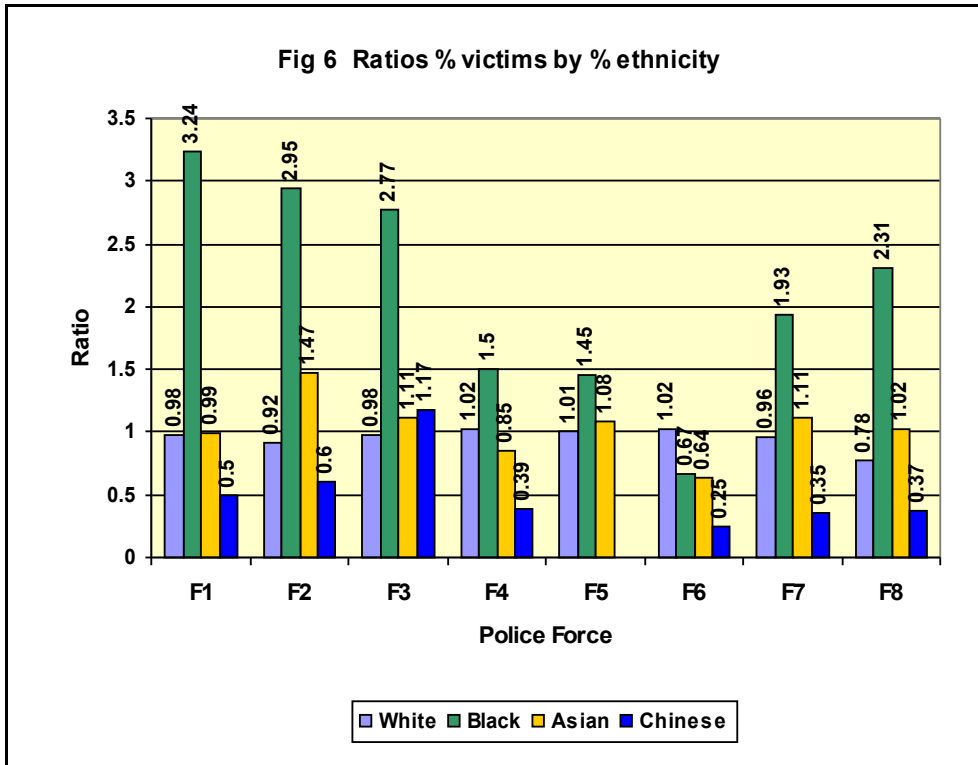
As can be seen, although the total numbers of GBH cases are relatively small, the proportions of male victims in this category are significantly higher than for the other categories, over three times in the case of F6 and over double in the cases of F1 and F8. This suggests either a high level of detected serious female assault on males or that the police are more likely to take seriously those males suffering more serious domestic violence than those suffering lesser violence.

Ethnicity of victims

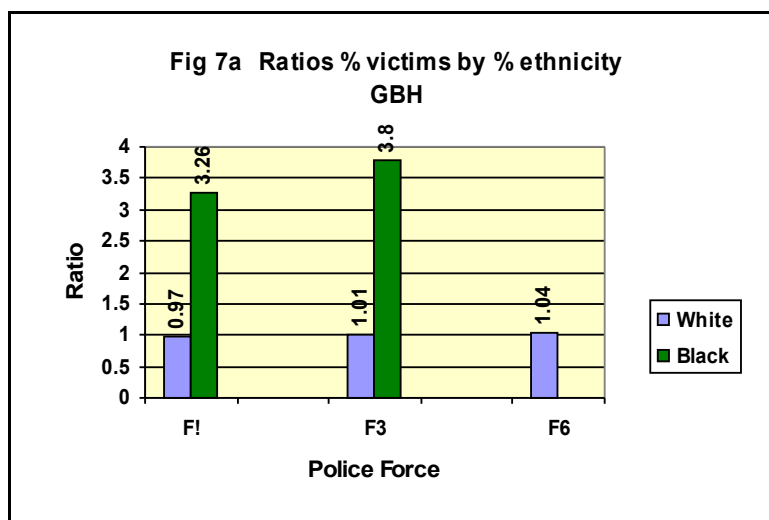
Comparison of victimisation by ethnicity is shown on Figure 5 for six forces. In the case of two of these forces (F2 and F8), Black victimisation at over 12.0 per thousand is more than double that of the other ethnic groups. Only in one force (F6) is it more comparable. Asian victimisation is generally comparable with that for White people, while Chinese victimisation is consistently lower than that for all the other groups in the case of all six forces.

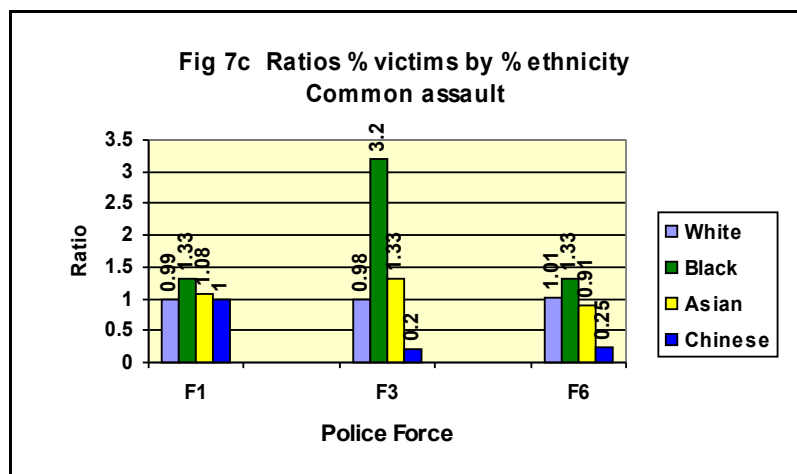
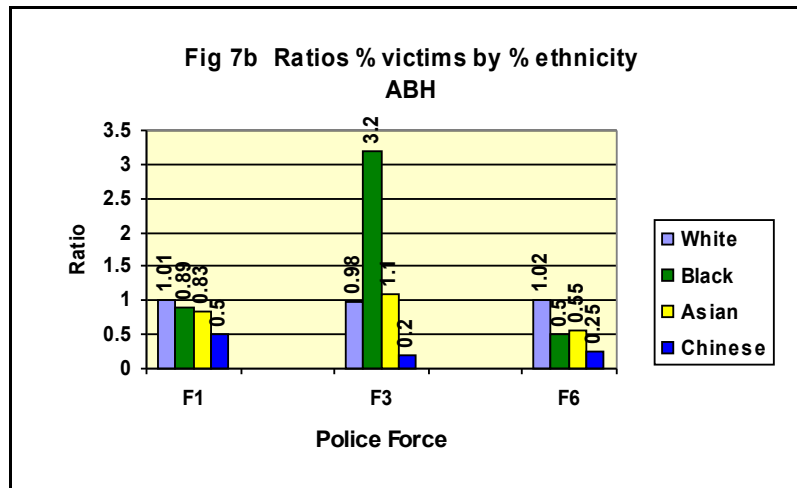


Ratios of the per cent of the numbers of victims in each ethnic group against the per cent of the population in each ethnic group, are shown in Figure 6. This presents a similar pattern to that of the numbers of victims shown in Figure 5, the Black group being substantially higher than all the other groups, with a maximum ratio of 3.24 (F1), and the Chinese consistently lower, with one exception, a high of 1.17 (F3).



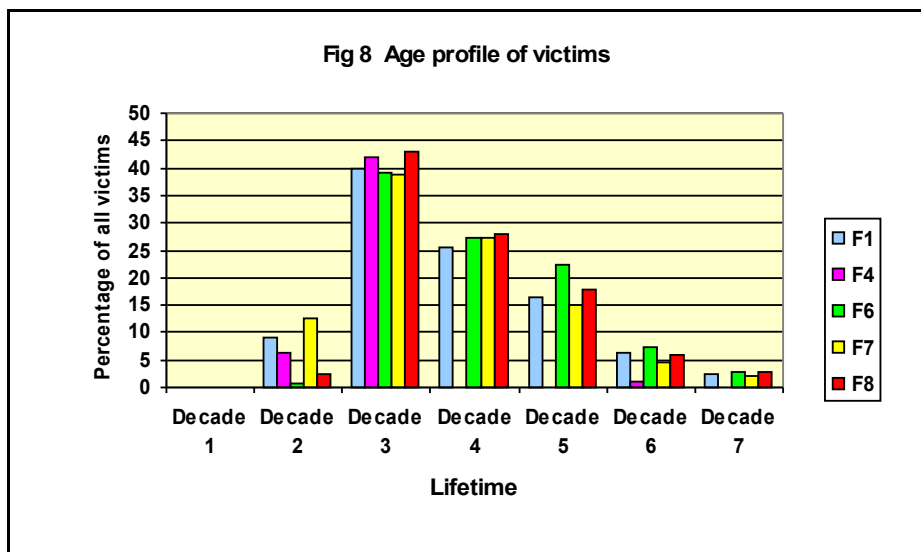
Ratios of the per cent of the numbers of victims in each ethnic group against the per cent of the population in each ethnic group are similarly shown for three categories of VAP in Figures 7a (GBH), 7b (ABH) and 7c (common assault) respectively. These again reveal Black dominance in each category of VAP, with the Chinese again the lowest. The White and Asian groups are generally similar for each category.



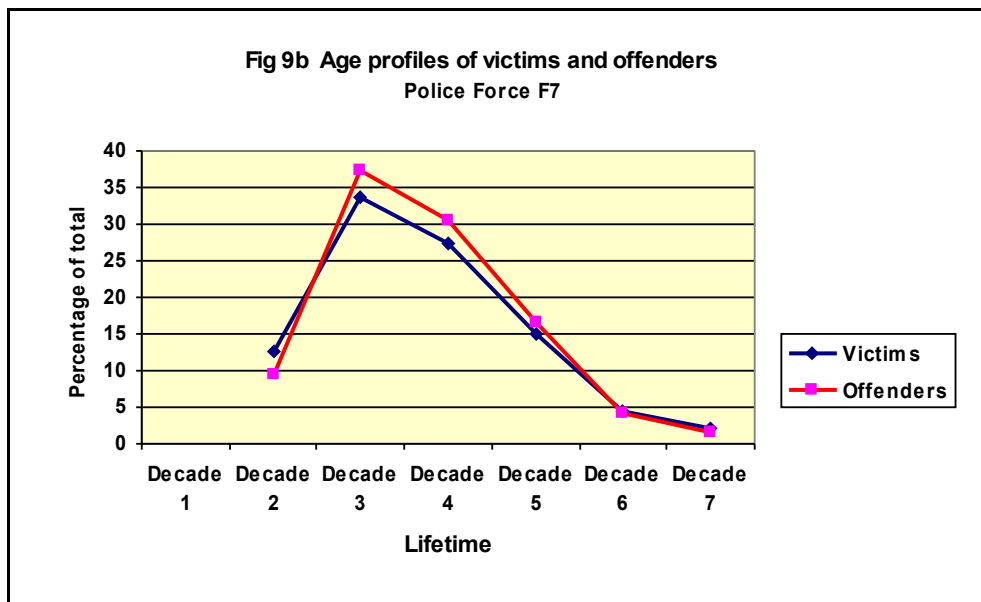
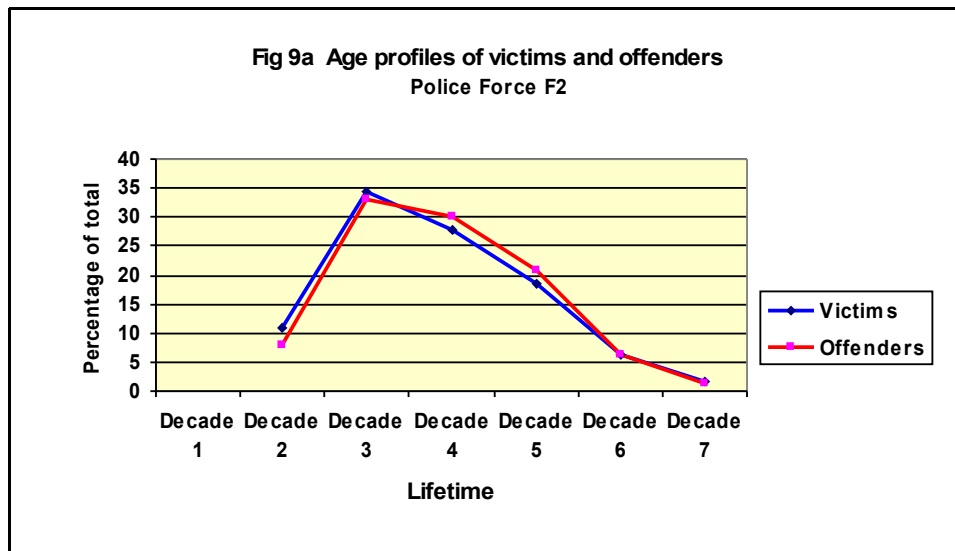


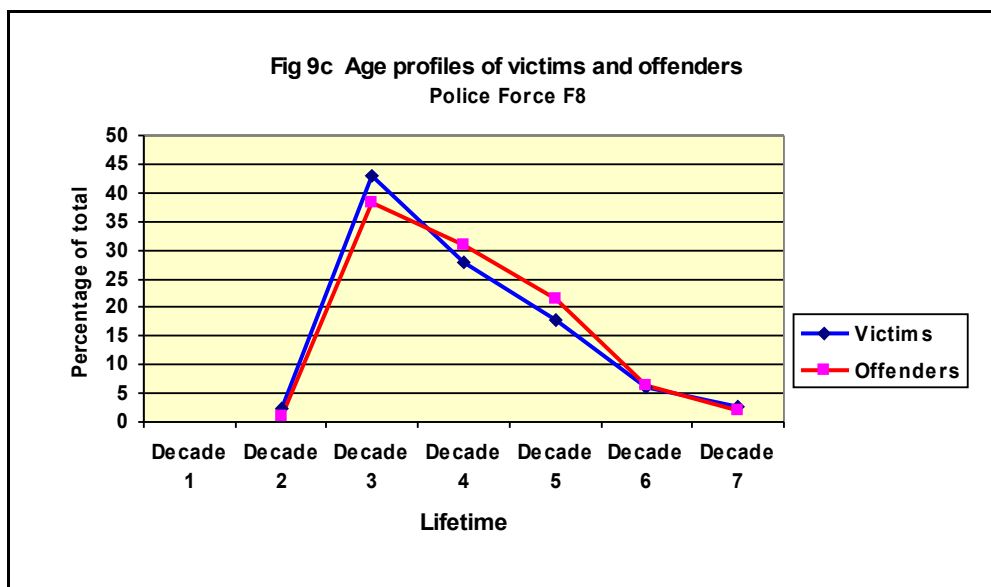
Age profile

An age profile of victims recorded by six forces, showing the percentage of victims in each age decade, is given on Figure 8. The 21 to 30 age group shows the highest percentage of victims in each force at about 40%. Over 80% of all victims are within the three decades from age 21 to age 50.



Typical age profiles for both victims and offenders are shown for three forces on Figures 9a, 9b, and 9c. The general patterns are similar for each force, with a clear peak occurring in the third age decade (21 to 30). Except for force F7, the disposition of victims and offenders is remarkably similar, suggesting almost equal numbers of victims and offenders in each age decade.



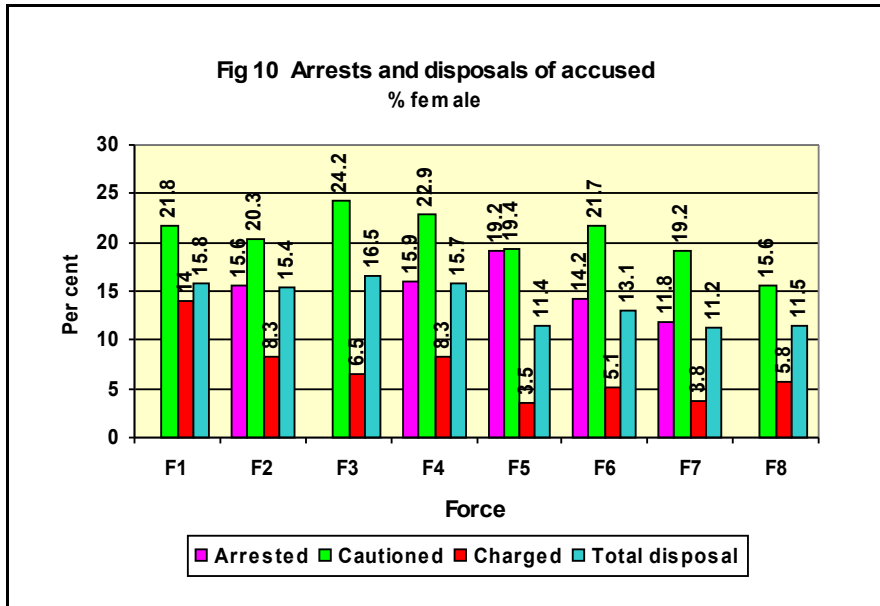


Arrests and disposals

The proportions of accused females out of the total of arrests and of disposals for both sexes, are shown on Figure 10 for eight forces. These indicate that, compared to the proportion arrested, a higher proportion of accused females than accused males were cautioned, and a lower proportion were charged. Although not shown, the reverse situation applied to accused males, ie. a smaller proportion were cautioned than arrested and a higher proportion were charged.

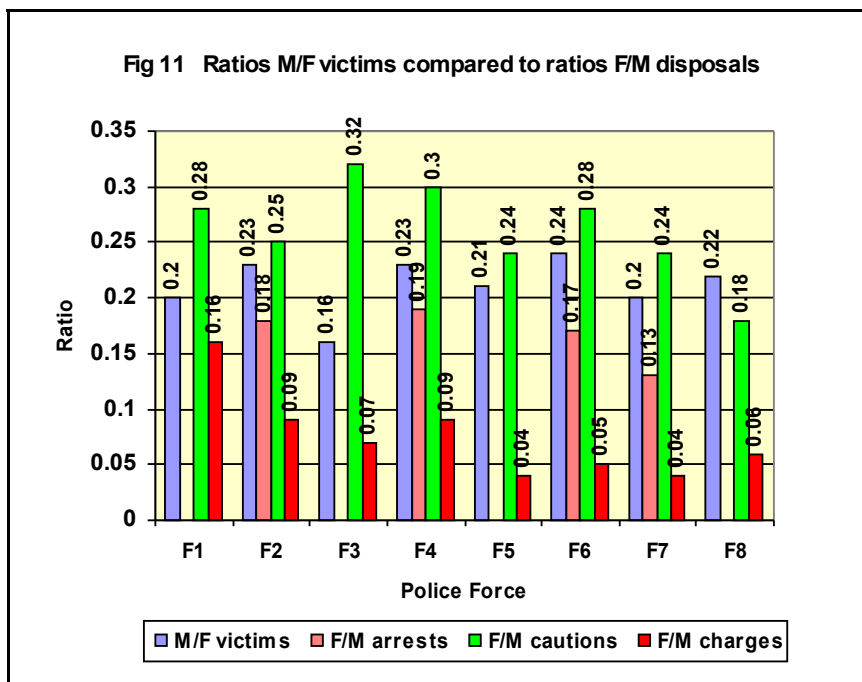
For the four forces which provided this information, the proportions of accused females who were arrested, out of the total of accused males and females who were arrested by each force, ranged between 11.8% (F7) and 19.2% (F5). For all eight forces, the proportions of accused females who were cautioned ranged from 15.6% (F7) to 24.2% (F3) of total cautions by each force, significantly higher than the proportions of arrests. The proportions of accused females who were charged ranged from 3.5% (F5) to 14.0% (F1) of the totals of accused males and females charged by each force, generally much less than the proportions for arrests.

Such comparisons suggest that either the violence committed by an accused female is not as severe generally as that of comparable accused male, or that accused females are treated generally more leniently than accused males.



This disparity of outcome is further illustrated by Figure 11. This shows, for the four forces which provided this information, lower arrest rates for accused females than the corresponding proportion of male victims. For example, in the case of force F2, the ratio of male to female victims recorded by the force was 0.23, but the proportion of female (to male) accused was significantly lower at 0.18. Part of the difference might be that some male victims were assaulted by other males, but this same-sex factor may well also apply to female victims.

Generally, the chart shows for accused females proportionally higher caution ratios and lower charging ratios than corresponding arrest ratios for female to male accused, and likewise when compared with the ratio of male to female victims.



Discussion

Although this pilot study is relatively small-scale, the information provided by the nine police forces is generally consistent with that of other contemporary sources. Indeed, since it was undertaken in 2008/09, more information about intimate violence has become available, particularly from the authoritative Home Office detailed surveys of intimate violence in England and Wales, now carried out annually.

The existence of a significant level of male victimisation by domestic violence is still not fully accepted in the UK. Since the first women's refuge was established by Erin Pizzey in Chiswick in 1971, the issue of domestic violence has become polarised into women as victims and men as perpetrators. This mindset is still entrenched at all levels in society, despite the Home Office annual surveys⁽¹⁾ which consistently show a substantial level of male domestic related victimisation, ie. that at least one third of all victims of domestic violence are male, including in the category of 'severe force'.

Over 275 academic studies have now been published worldwide, albeit mostly in other western democracies and of younger age groups, collectively showing that women, by their own admission, can be as aggressive as men in intimate relationships, and can initiate the aggression as often. This suggests that bi-directional aggression or abuse is the norm in the majority of violent couple households. Any official policies or priorities which ignore this aspect, therefore, are not only inequitable, but are unlikely to be effective.

The pilot study found that police forces in 2007/08 were recording a proportion of male victims of between 15 and 20%. Such proportion is about half that estimated by the Home Office detailed surveys, and suggests either a substantial level of under-reporting by male victims to the police, much more than that of female victims, or that the police are responding inadequately, or inequitably, to male victimisation.

The apparent disparity found by the study in the treatment of male and female victimisation by the police and prosecuting authorities, reflected in arrest and disposal rates and ratios, suggests either that female domestic abuse of males is generally less severe (or perceived as less severe) than that by males on females, or that female offenders are treated generally more leniently. Another factor may be that genuine male victims are often disbelieved⁽²⁾. Indeed, a significant proportion of male victims claim, in responding to surveys of male victims or to help-lines, that they themselves were arrested rather than the abusive female partner⁽³⁾.

Men of course on average are more physically powerful than comparable women, and statistics show that more women are injured by domestic abuse than men and more are affected by chronic violence. However, in compensation for less muscular strength, women tend to use weapons to hand, or attack the man when he is vulnerable, eg. when asleep. Interestingly, the study revealed a high proportion of female culpability in instances of GBH.

Women also tend to be the main carers of children, and this responsibility no doubt is taken into account when deciding on the disposal of arrested female offenders. Even so, the suspicion remains that a more lenient approach is taken with female offenders. Despite the Home Office estimates of at least one third of domestic violence victims being male, including of severe assault, official Crown Prosecution Service statistics show that only about 7% of those prosecuted for domestic related violence offences are female. The low charging rates illustrated above (Figure 10) for accused females accused are consistent with this.

The disparity between ethnic groups found by the study was of interest. The much higher prevalence amongst Black people than for other ethnic groups, recorded by five of the six forces providing this information (Figure 5), was fairly clear-cut, and largely applied to metropolitan force areas. Moreover, the higher prevalence applied similarly to each of the three categories of VAP offence. In contrast, the prevalence for the Chinese group was welcomingly low.

The age profiles found by the study produced no surprises. Although domestic violence occurs in all social and economic groups and ages, it is found mostly in younger age groups, and especially younger cohabiting couples. The study excluded consideration of social, economic, or marital status.

Summary of conclusions

Tentative conclusions for domestic related non-sexual violence against the person, based on the police records for year 2007/08 provided for this study, may be summarised as follows.

- Victimization rates for females were about four times those for males.
- The proportion of male victims recorded by the police varied between forces but was generally in the range of 15 to 20% of all victims. Similar proportions applied to non-sexual partner violence.
- The majority of recorded assaults were classified as ABH followed by common assault. Homicide and GBH formed only a very small proportion of cases. Male victims accounted for nearly a half of GBH assaults.
- Black victimisation was substantially higher than for other ethnic groups, and Chinese victimisation smaller.
- The peak age for victimisation was 21 to 30, followed by the next age decade of 31 to 40. Victimization in the 51 to 60 decade was about half that of the peak. Victimization in these three age decades accounted for about 80% of all victims.
- The age profiles of victims and of offenders were remarkably similar.
- Female offenders appear to be treated more leniently than male offenders, with fewer proportionally arrested, more proportionally cautioned, and fewer proportionally charged.

References

(1) For example, the latest such survey. Home Office Statistical Bulletin 01/11, Homicides, Firearm Offences and Intimate Violence 2009/10, 20 January 2011, Tables 3.01 and 3.03

This estimated (Table 3.03) that 931 thousand women and 510 thousand men had been victims of partner abuse (including sexual) in the last year, a proportion of male victims of 35.5% of the total. The survey also estimated (Table 3.01) that 1.5% of women and 0.8% of men had been victims of 'severe assault' by a partner in the last year, a proportion of male victims of 34.8% of the total. Such proportions of male victims are slightly lower than in previous years but of the same order. In other words, at least one third of victims of partner violence are male.

(2) Particular plight of male victims. Although the experiences of male and female victims have much in common, and both sexes can suffer physical and emotional harm, the plight of male victims of partner abuse compared generally to female victims is compounded by:

- A greater reluctance to report, even when injured or suffering chronic abuse
- More likelihood of being disbelieved or even ridiculed if they do
- A greater likelihood of being themselves arrested
- A dearth of effective support services including emergency accommodation – male victims being often directed to bed and breakfasts or hostels unsuitable for fathers with children
- A greater likelihood of being themselves removed from the family home with a high risk of subsequent loss of meaningful, or any, contact with their children, and risk of an adverse effect on their career prospects
- A greater difficulty in obtaining court orders against violent partners
- The institutionalised effects of official policies and practice still negatively influenced against them by entrenched and hostile perspectives based on women as victims and men as perpetrators, so that a holistic and more equitable approach is ignored, and almost no government funding made available for male victims.

(3) The few detailed studies undertaken in this country specifically of male victims [eg. *Dispatches* (1998)⁽⁴⁾, *Dewar Research* (2001)⁽⁵⁾] have reported that in about half of incidents, it was the female assailant who called the police and, when they arrived, insisted that she was the victim, a claim the police tended to believe unless the man had obvious injuries. These studies also found that over 20% of the male victims reported that they had themselves been arrested rather than the female assailant.

A 2010 study by the charity ManKind Initiative⁽⁶⁾ reporting on the detailed experiences of 69 of the 600 male victims who had phoned the ManKind domestic violence helpline in 2009, concluded that the prevalence of making false allegations against male partners by women assailants, was a common practice. 56% of the male victims said that they had been threatened by the female assailant that she would make a false allegation to the police if his plight was ever revealed. In those cases (72%) where the police had been involved, 67% of the male victims reported that their female partner had made false allegations to the police, ie. in about half of all cases.

Such findings, albeit largely anecdotal, suggest that genuine male victims of domestic violence are particularly vulnerable to false allegations being made against them by an abusive female partner. The making, or threat of making, false allegations to the police or other authorities is thus a powerful weapon available particularly to women, since generally they tend to be believed unless it is clear-cut that it is the man who is the primary victim.

(4) *Dispatches* (1998). 'Battered Men' Survey: Detailed Survey results. [A Summary of the results of this survey by the *Dispatches* programme highlighting the experiences of 100 male victims of domestic violence in the UK was broadcast on Channel 4 on the 7 January 1999]. On Dewar Research website at www.dewar4research.org.

(5) George, Malcolm J. and Yarwood, David J. (2004). Male Domestic Violence Victims Survey 2001 - Main Findings. *Dewar Research*, October 2004

(6) Report of false allegations to the ManKind Initiative helpline, ManKind Initiative, Taunton, 12 September 2010