

Wiltshire's Young People Survey - exploring attitudes and views of domestic abuse in relationships



Research funded by Government
Office South West

Report July 2009

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Section A: Background & Context

In 2008, Wiltshire undertook a three month period of consultation in preparation for the second Wiltshire Domestic Abuse Strategy. As part of this consultation process a wide variety of stakeholders were engaged with, including young people through the Wiltshire Assembly of Youth panel, as well as young people that have been living with the effects of domestic abuse and had been referred to local specialist support. Consequently some interesting attitudes were identified as well as an understanding of what domestic abuse is and who it can affect.

"Not sure what I can offer to this session as I am only 14 and things like this only happen to adults who are married..."

Source: Member of Wiltshire Assembly of Youth panel.

"Without raising awareness, people might not know that they are in a relationship that is abusive / controlling."

Source: Young ex-service user.

To date there is not a vast amount of research dedicated to domestic abuse and young people (16 and under) although over recent years at a national level there have been a small number of attitudinal surveys undertaken that have begun to explore young people's views about domestic abuse. In 2005 the NSPCC in conjunction with Sugar Magazine conducted an online survey collecting results from 2000 teenage girls and in September 2008 Bliss Magazine in partnership with Women's Aid designed a similar online survey. The results published from these pieces of research revealed some shocking results, including:

"4% of teenage girls were subjected to regular attacks by their partner."

"16% had been hit at least once."

"31% thought that it was 'acceptable' for a boy to act in an aggressive way if his girlfriend has cheated on him."

"6% girls between 13-19, with an average age of 15, had been forced to have sex with their boyfriend and 1 in 3 forgave him and stayed with him."

(Source: Sugar magazine and NSPCC online survey 2005;
Teen Abuse survey of Great Britain.)

"One in four 16 year old girls know of someone else who has been hurt or hit by someone they are dating."

"One in six 15 year old girls and more than one in four 16 year old girls who took part in the survey (27%) have been hit or hurt in some way by someone they were dating."

(Source: Bliss Magazine and Woman's Aid online survey 2008)

It was identified that a young people's survey in Wiltshire would provide some insightful information into the views and attitudes of young people on relationships and domestic abuse. Subsequently funding was secured from the Government Office South West (GOSW) 2008/09 funding stream to commence with a survey in 2009. This was the first survey of this kind to be conducted in Wiltshire.

Section B: Aims of the Research

The aims of the research were to gain the following:

- An understanding of young peoples views of relationships
- Young peoples views and attitudes of domestic abuse/violence
- Valuable information that will assist in the development of future service provision and awareness raising opportunities

Section C: Methodology

The research was pursued as a paper survey and conducted within a programme of activities delivered to young people in secondary schools exploring healthier relationships and raising the awareness of domestic abuse. Wiltshire developed a 'Theatre in Education' (TiE) programme called the 'Power of Love', which was designed in conjunction with the South Wiltshire Domestic Abuse Forum and a local script writer and delivered by a local theatre company. The programme consists of a powerful piece of drama (1hr), followed by a (1hr) workshop session including the hot seating of the characters with some cross examination from the audience. The education programme aimed to:

- Challenge young people's attitudes of tolerance towards violence
- Help young people to achieve positive relationships based on mutuality and respect

The programme was delivered to 14 schools across Wiltshire to pupils in years 9, 10 and 11 (13 -15yrs age group) throughout January and February 2009.

Prior to the performance young people were asked to take some time to complete the anonymous tick-box paper survey.

Section D: Survey Respondents

There were 1,027 fully completed surveys returned of which 56% were from female respondents (N=573) and 44% were from male respondents (N=454).

The ethnicity recorded by the young persons is represented in the table below:

Table 1: *Ethnicity of respondents*

Ethnicity	Number (n)	Percentage (%)
White	967	93.9
Mixed	35	3.4
Asian	16	1.6
Black	4	0.4
Other	7	0.7

Section E: Views

What do you think about relationships?

Is abuse/violence against someone ever ok?

75% of respondents (N=761) said 'no never', and 23.6% (N=240) said 'sometimes abuse or violence was ok'. 14 respondents answered 'yes always' representing 1.4%.

Do you think it is ever OK for a man to...

- Hit a women
- Hit a women if she is his girlfriend
- Hit a women if she is his wife
- Hit a women if she won't stop arguing
- Hit a women if she is not treating him with respect
- Hit a women if she has slept with someone else

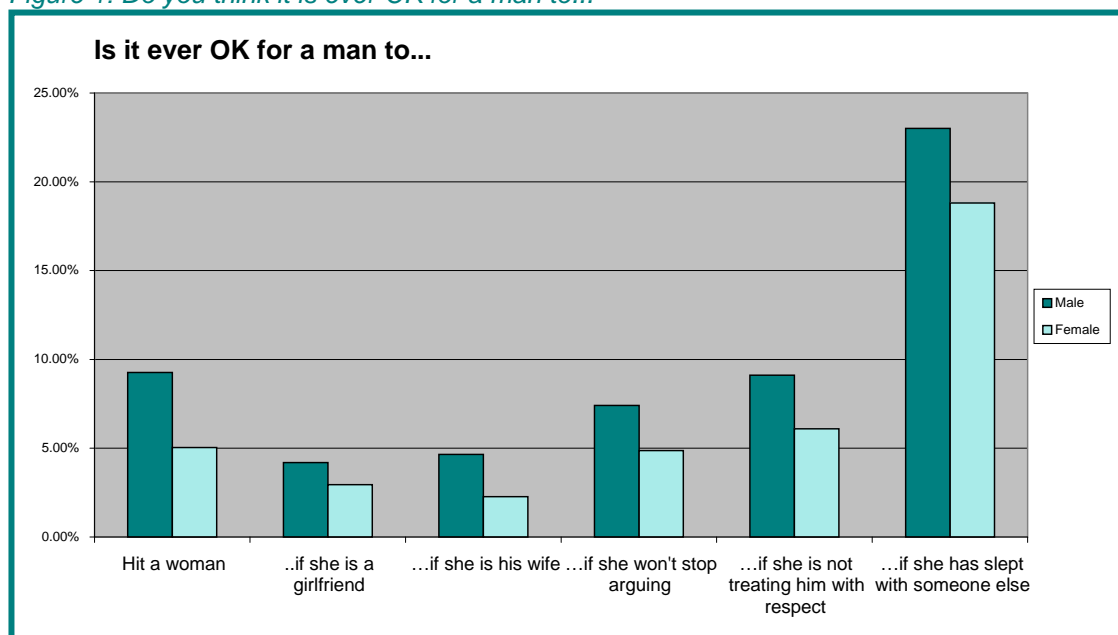
Figure 1 (below) illustrates the percentage of male and females that believe a man hitting a woman in certain circumstances is 'always' or 'sometimes' OK.

In every circumstance provided a larger proportion of male respondents than female respondents believed that it was 'always' or 'sometimes' OK to hit a woman. It's also interesting to see that the reasons provided for hitting a woman in relation to one other were valued with similar importance by both male and female respondents.

A woman sleeping with someone else superseded all the other reasons for a man to hit a women with 23% of male respondents and 19% of female respondents believing that it was 'always' or 'sometimes' OK. 9% of males and 6% females thought that if a woman was not treating a man with respect that it was 'always' or 'sometimes' OK for a man to hit a women.

Nearly twice as many respondents thought it was 'always' or 'sometimes' OK to hit a women compared to hitting a woman if she is a man's wife or his girlfriend. These results are significant as they seem to indicate that there is a belief that it's more acceptable for a man to hit women in general than hit his partner.

Figure 1: Do you think it is ever OK for a man to...



Do you think it is ever OK for a woman to...

- Hit a man
- Hit a man if he is her boyfriend
- Hit a man if he is her husband
- Hit a man if he won't stop arguing
- Hit man if he is not treating her with respect
- Hit a man if he has slept with someone else

Figure 2 (below) illustrates the percentage of male and females that believe a woman hitting a man in certain circumstances is 'always' or 'sometimes' OK.

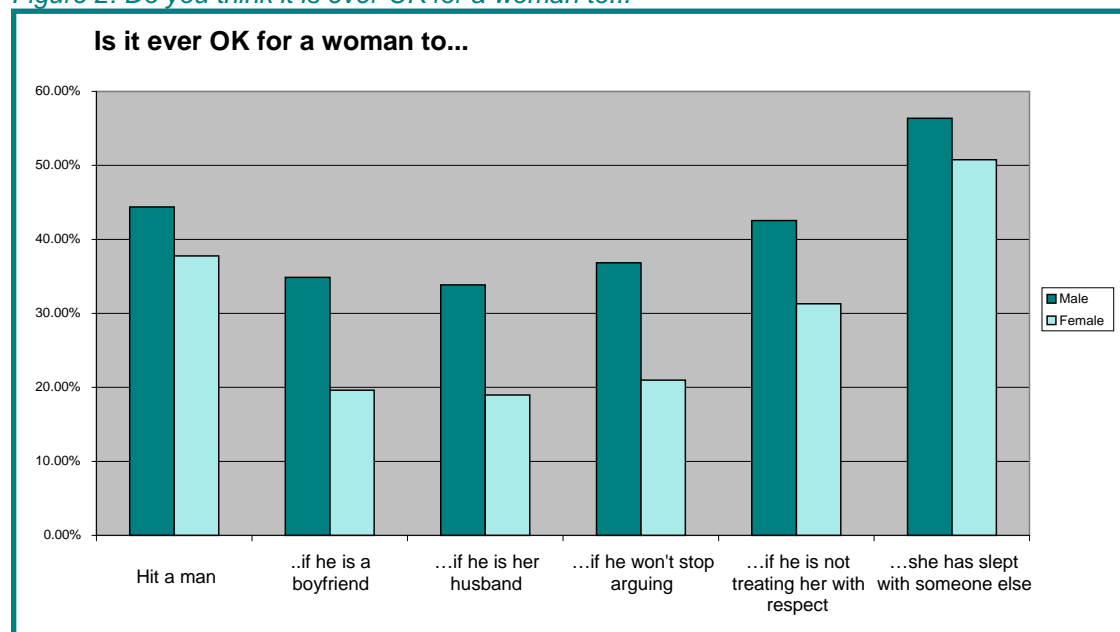
When respondents were asked the same question reversing the abusive situation; with a woman hitting a man the results were significantly different to the above. In fact the data shows that it's believed, by both male and female respondents, to be much more acceptable for a woman to hit a man and for each and every circumstance provided.

44% of males and 38% of females thought that it was 'always' or 'sometimes' OK for a woman to hit a man, compared to 9% of males and 6% of females expressing that it was 'always' or 'sometimes' OK for a man to hit a woman. This huge statistical gap is evident of a significant gender disparity in perceptions about abuse.

A man sleeping with someone else was the most believed and justified reason for a woman to hit a man with a huge 56% of male respondents and 51% of female respondents believing that it was 'always' or 'sometimes' OK. Similarly, but not quite as significant in terms of numbers; 42% of males and 31% females thought that if a man was not treating a woman with respect that it was 'always' or 'sometimes' OK for a woman to hit a man.

Again in every circumstance a larger proportion of male respondents than female respondents believed that it was 'always' or 'sometimes' OK to for a woman to hit a man and again the reasons provided for hitting a man relative to one another were valued with similar importance to both male and females.

Figure 2: Do you think it is ever OK for a woman to...



Do you think people use abuse/violence in a relationship because...

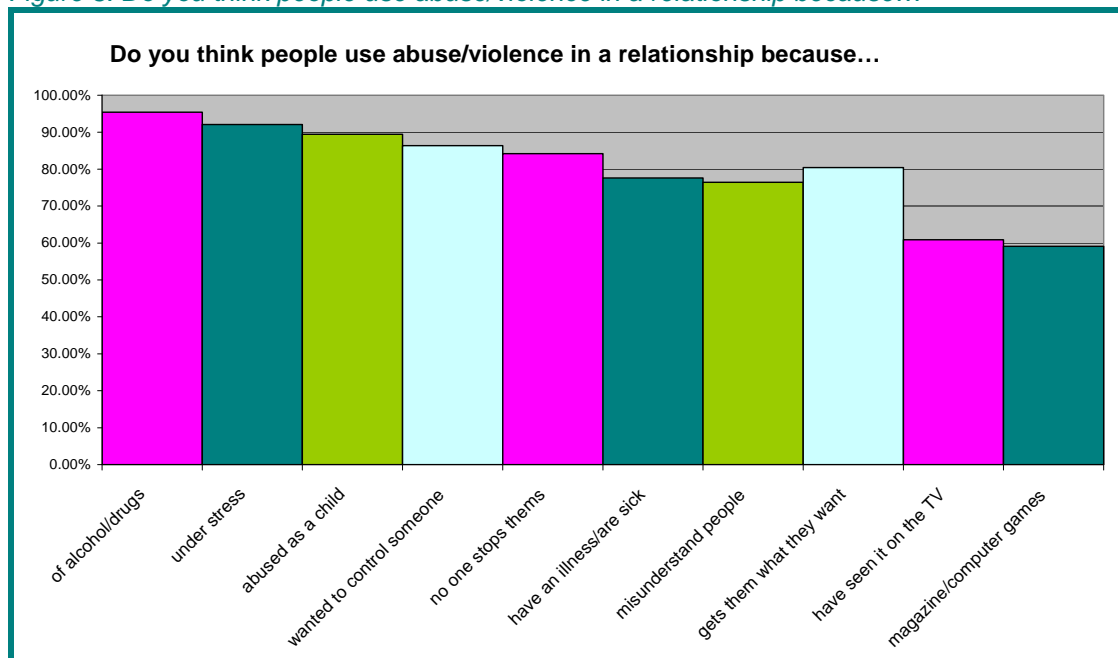
- Of alcohol/drugs
- They are under stress
- They were abused as a child
- They wanted to control someone
- No one stops them
- They have an illness/are sick
- They misunderstand people
- It gets them what they want
- They have seen it on TV
- Magazines, in computer games

When respondents were asked for the reasons why people might use violence in relationships the top reasons were as follows: 95% of respondents believed the use of alcohol/drugs was 'always' or 'sometimes' a reason for why violence was used, 92% thought stress, 90% thought those that were abused as a child was a factor, 86% believed the abuser wanted to control someone, 84% thought no one stopped the abuser and 80% acknowledged that it gets the abuser what they want. However the other reasons were not far behind in prominence, in order; those that have an illness are sick (78%), misunderstand people (76%), seen it on TV (61%) and magazines and/or computer games (59%).

11% of respondents stated that violence was 'always' used in a relationship because no one stopped the abuser, 10% stated it was 'always' because no one stopped the abuser and finally 8% stated it was 'always' because of the use of alcohol/drugs.

Figure 3 illustrates the opinions of all respondents regarding the reasons for the use of abuse/violence.

Figure 3: Do you think people use abuse/violence in a relationship because...



Do you think people ever deserve abuse/violence in a relationship because of...

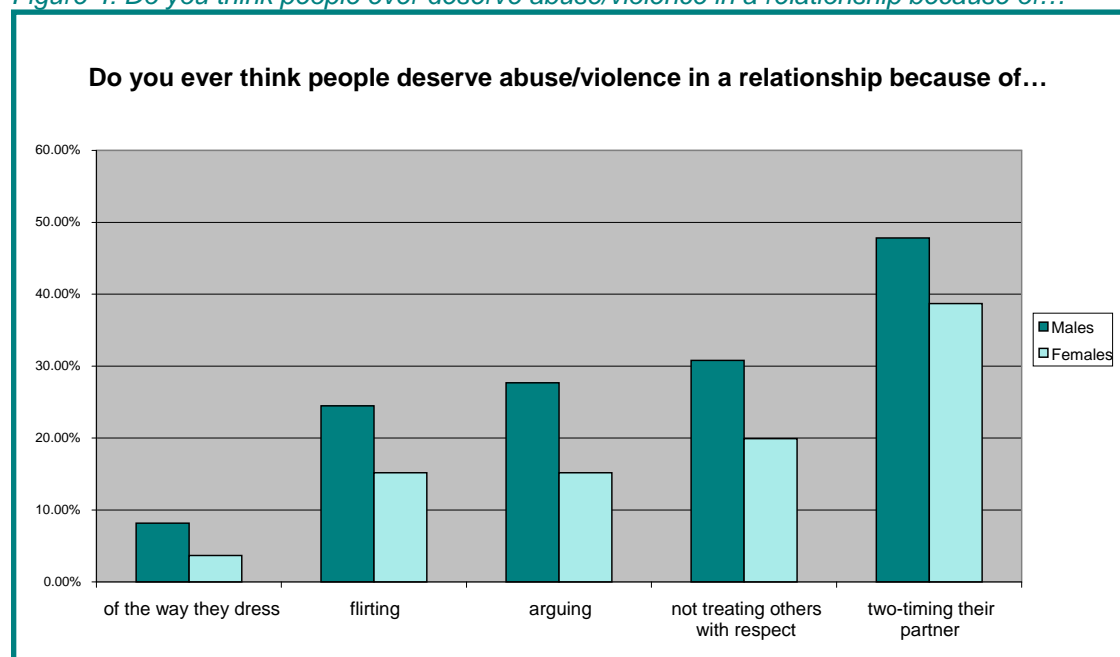
- The way they dress
- Flirting
- Arguing
- Not treating others with respect
- Two-timing their partner

All five of the above reasons provided were thought to be deserved reasons for abuse/violence by the respondents to various degrees, although a partner cheating on a relationship was again the most prevalent reason for respondents believing that abuse is deserved. 48% of males and 38% of females answered that abuse was 'always' or 'sometimes' deserved in this situation. As figure 4 shows, 31% of male and 20% of female respondents thought that 'not treating others with respect' was a deserved reason for abuse/violence followed closely by 28% males and 15% females that were of the opinion 'arguing' was a deserved reason for abuse.

Whilst 'flirting' and 'the way they dress' were the lowest ranking reasons for abuse they were by no means insignificant figures. Flirting accounted for 24% of males and 15% of female respondents answering that this was 'always' or 'sometimes' a deserved reason for abuse.

The pattern of a larger proportion of male respondents compared to female respondents deeming abuse as 'always' or 'sometimes' OK is again evident here.

Figure 4: Do you think people ever deserve abuse/violence in a relationship because of...



Are people to blame for the violence they may experience in a relationship?

Over half of respondents, 54% (N=521) believed that 'yes sometimes' people were to blame for the abuse/violence, compared to 42% (N=413) who answered 'no never' and 4% (N=38) who answered 'yes always'.

Section F: Knowledge

What do you know about Domestic Violence/Abuse?

How common do you think domestic abuse/violence is...

- against women?
- against men?

80% of respondents thought that either 1 in 3 or 1 in 4 women suffered from domestic abuse as illustrated in figure 5 below, against the national statistic of 1 in 4 women, the large majority of respondents were therefore close in their estimation. However 9% of respondents thought that the statistic was as high as 1 in 2 women. Domestic abuse against men was perceived to be much more common than it is, with just over 50% believing that between 1 in 3 and 1 in 4 men suffered from domestic abuse. However 24% were right in thinking that the statistic was 1 in 6. 21% of respondents believed that the statistic was as low as 1 in 15 men.

Figure 5: How common do you think domestic violence/abuse is against women?

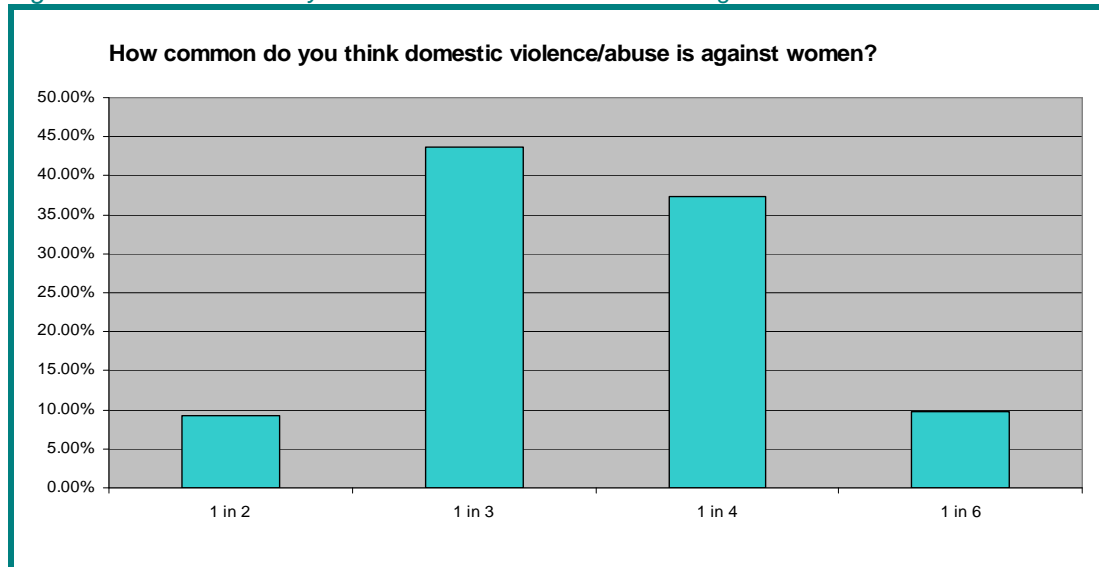
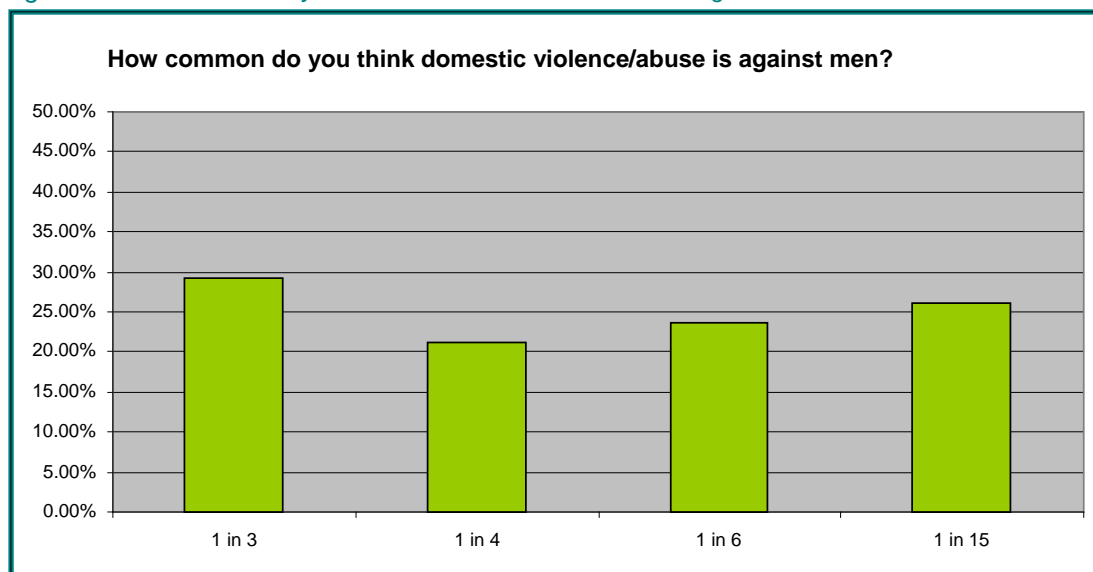


Figure 6: How common do you think domestic violence/abuse is against men?



How many incidents of DA were reported to Wiltshire Police between April 2007 and March 2008?

74% of respondents thought that there were either 2,200 or 2,900 incidents of DA reported in 2007-08, in contrast to the actual figure which was just in excess of 3,600 incidents. Only 15% of respondents were right in thinking there were 3,600 incidents reported. The remaining 11% of respondents believed there were 1,600 reported incidents.

Which of the following are examples of domestic violence/abuse?

In order to gain an understanding of what the respondents understood by the term domestic violence/abuse they were asked to tick the examples that they believed constituted violence/abuse. 13 options were provided to choose from, listed below, and respondents could tick as many as they wished.

- Hitting and punching another person
- Throwing things at another person
- Breaking another persons' belongings
- Shouting and name calling
- Threats, i.e. to withhold money
- Lying to friends and family about you
- Putting you down in front of other people
- Cheating on you and breaking your trust
- Telling you where you can/can't go and who you can see
- Checking up on your movements
- Threatening to kill you or your family
- Having sex with you when you don't want to have sex
- Bullying you by text

Figure 7 illustrates what respondents thought were examples of domestic violence/abuse, ranked in order of perception.

Overall 'hitting and punching another person', 'threatening to kill you or your family', 'throwing things at another person', 'having sex with you when you don't want to have sex' were all ranked by over 80% of respondents as domestic abuse/violence, the highest ranking at 91% was 'hitting and punching another person', the most physical act on the list.

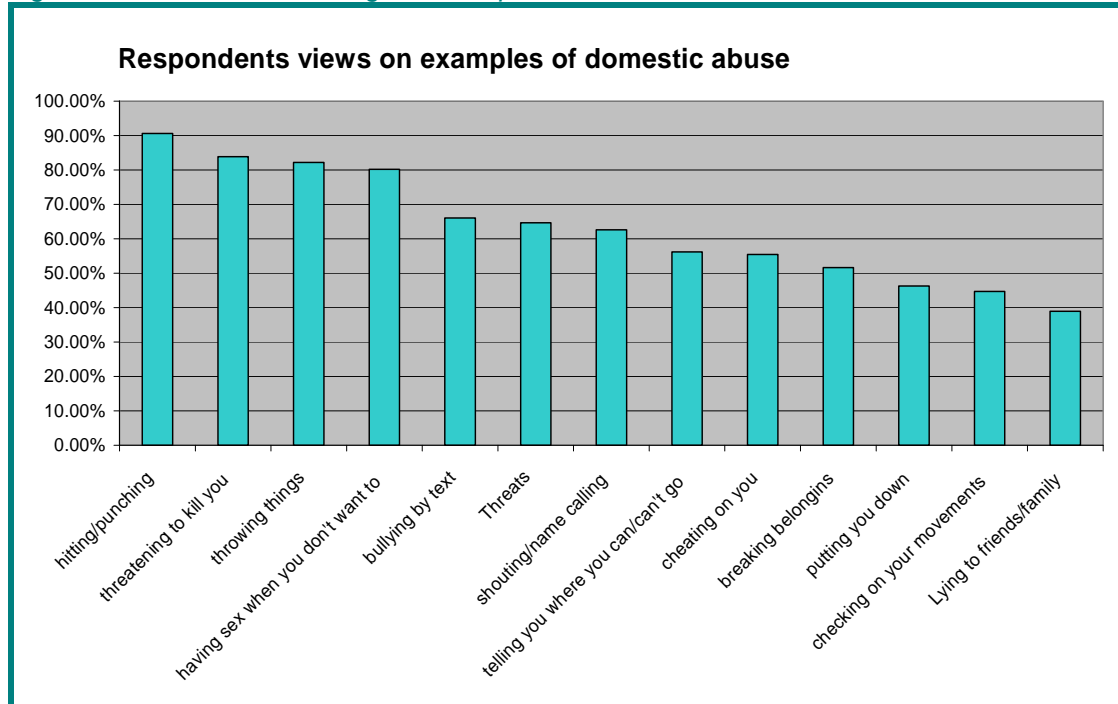
The next highest categories were 'bullying you by text', 'threats i.e. to withhold money' and 'shouting and name calling' all classed as domestic abuse/violence by 63% to 66% respondents.

Just over half of respondents felt that 'telling you where you can/can't go and who you can see', 'cheating on you and breaking your trust' and 'breaking another persons' belongings' were all forms of abuse.

Less than half of respondents thought that 'putting you down in front of other people', 'checking up on your movements' and 'lying to friends and family about you' constituted abuse.

It's evident that the more physical examples provided were seen by the respondents as domestic violence/abuse or the 'threat' of harm whilst some of the less visible forms of abuse were not viewed by as many respondents as abuse. For example 37% of those completing the survey felt that 'shouting/name calling' and 54% felt that 'putting you down' were not abuse.

Figure 7: Which of the following are examples of domestic violence/abuse?



Section G: Experience

The final part of the survey asked respondents if they had ever witnessed any of the examples of abuse previously provided and if that had who they would tell about it.

Have you witnessed any of the above?

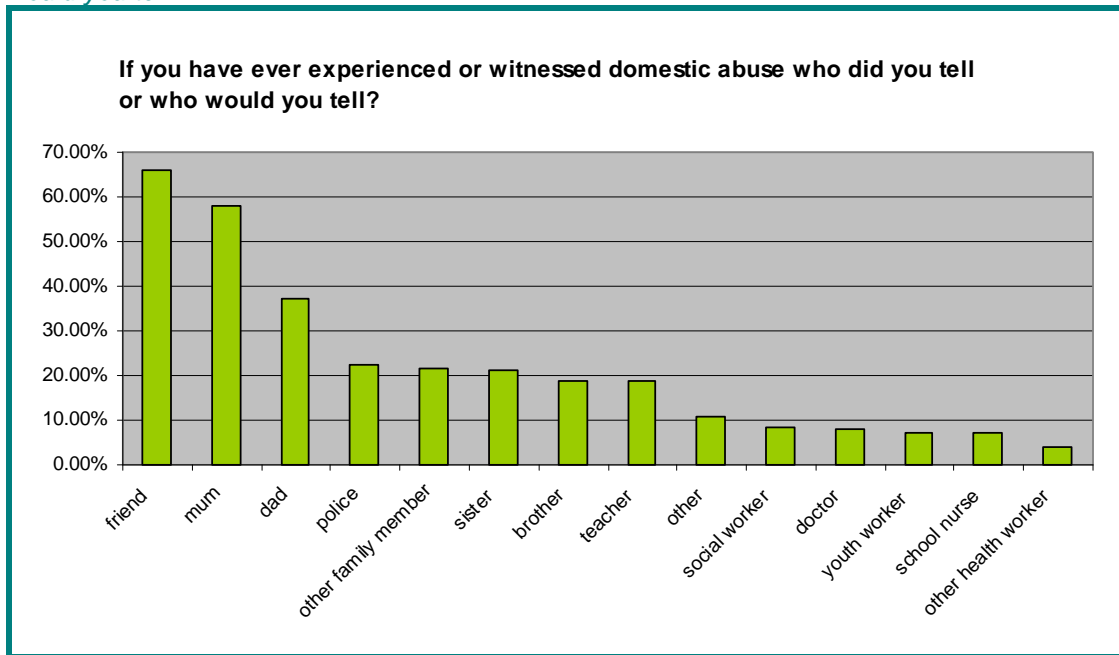
56% of respondents to this question (N=533) had witnessed some of the above examples of domestic abuse.

If you have ever experienced or witnessed any of the above who did you tell or who would you tell?

Out of the total 1027 respondents only 70% answered this question (N=720). This could be because it was the end of the survey and interest was becoming worn or because 30% of the respondents would not tell any of the suggested people.

However by far the most chosen people to tell about witnessing or experiencing domestic abuse were friends, chosen by 66% of respondents (N=474) and their mum with 58% of respondents (N=418), see figure 8. Following this 37% would tell their dad and only 22% would tell the Police a similar figure to those that would tell another family member or their sister. Just less than 20% would confide in their brother or a teacher and well under 10% would approach a social worker, doctor, youth worker, school nurse or other health worker.

Figure 8: If you have ever experienced or witnessed domestic abuse who did you tell or who would you tell?



Section H: Key Findings

- Nearly a **quarter of respondents believed that 'sometimes' abuse or violence was OK** with a small proportion, 1.4%, stating it was 'always' OK.
- A **partner sleeping with someone else** was the most prominent reason respondents (both male and female) believed justified abuse or violent behaviour followed by 'not being treated with respect'.
- A significantly **larger proportion of male respondents than female respondents thought that abuse/violence was 'sometimes' or 'always' OK**, regardless of whether the abuse was from a man directed towards a woman or a woman towards a man and regardless of circumstance too.
- It was deemed by both male and female respondents **more acceptable for a woman to hit a man** no matter what the motivation was. For example nearly two and a half times more respondents (both male and female) thought that a woman hitting a man for sleeping with someone else was 'always' or 'sometimes' OK compared to a man hitting a woman for the same reason. **Over six times** more respondents considered it 'always' or 'sometimes' OK for a woman to hit a man than a man to hit a woman.
- Respondents felt that **alcohol/drugs, stress, being abused as a child, and the abuser wanting to control someone** were the significant **reasons for violence** in a relationship although all of the reasons provided were thought to contribute quite highly.
- **Over half** of those asked thought that **people were 'sometimes' to blame for violence they may experience** in a relationship and **4% thought they were 'always' to blame**.
- Respondents were generally **more aware of the prevalence of domestic violence against women** than domestic abuse against men although almost three quarters underestimated the number of reported incidents in 2008-2009.
- The more **physical forms of abuse were classed as domestic abuse/violence** more often than the less visible forms of abuse such as behaviour like 'checking on your movements'.
- **56%** of respondents had **witnessed domestic abuse**.
- A **friend and a mum were the most likely confidants** concerning the witnessing or experiencing of abuse, interestingly professionals such as the police, a teacher, social worker or a doctor, were much less likely to be confided in.