

# Violence against women and children

## THE EXTENT OF THE PROBLEM

### Introduction

The Women's Support Project works against violence against women and children. We aim to raise awareness of the extent and effects of violence against women and children and to support those affected by violence. Issues addressed include prostitution and other forms of commercial sexual exploitation, incest, child sexual abuse, rape and sexual assault and domestic abuse. Areas of work include support, advocacy and information, provision of resources, training, public education and multi agency working.

This leaflet is intended to give an overview of existing data on violence against women and children.

### Domestic Abuse

#### Domestic Abuse Recorded by the Police in Scotland, 2007–2008

The following information is taken from the Scottish Government Statistical bulletin 'Domestic Abuse Recorded by the Police in Scotland, 2007–2008'. These are described as incidents of domestic abuse recorded by the police. The bulletin reports the most serious crime/offence associated with each incident. It should be recognised that the statistics presented cover only the incidents of domestic abuse recorded by the police – not all incidents of domestic abuse come to the attention of the police.

Police forces in Scotland returned details covering 49,655 incidents of domestic abuse in 2007–08, a 2% increase compared to the 48,801 incidents recorded in 2006–07. This continues the steady increase in incidents reported since 1999–2000, when the bulletin was launched. Half (50%) of the incidents led to the recording of a crime or offence.

- The most common crime or offence recorded in 2007–08 remained the offence of minor assault, 22% (10,994) of all incidents, with breach of the peace, 16% (7,736), the second most common.
- Overall, the incidence of domestic abuse reported to the police in 2007–08 was 965 per 100,000 population, compared to 954 per 100,000 population in 2006–07.
- Incidents with a female victim and male perpetrator represented 85% of all incidents of domestic abuse where this information was recorded, down by just under two per cent from 2006–07. This percentage has gradually decreased since 2000–01, when it was 91%.

- For those incidents where information was available on whether or not the victim had previously been recorded as being a domestic abuse victim, 54% of the cases involved known repeat victimisation compared to 57% in 2006–07.
- When looking at the incidence per 100,000 population, females are at most risk of being victims of domestic abuse when aged between 22 and 25 years and males when aged between 31 and 35 years.
- Incidents of domestic abuse recorded by the police involving co-habitees or partners accounted for 44% of all cases, with more cases recorded relating to co-habitees (24%) than to partners (20%); incidents involving spouses accounted for a further 16%. In 38% of cases, the victim and perpetrator were ex-partners or ex-spouses, increasing from 30% in 2000–01.
- The overwhelming majority of incidents of domestic abuse took place in a home/house (90% of all incidents where the location was recorded). This was more likely if the victim and perpetrator cohabited i.e. were a 'spouse' or 'co-habitee' (95% of all incidents where location was recorded).

(The Scottish Government, November 2008)  
<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications>

#### Glasgow Pilot Domestic Abuse Court

The Glasgow Pilot Court started in October 2004 within 'G' Division.

The evaluation of the Pilot recorded that there was overwhelming support for a specialist court approach to domestic abuse. A service ASSIST (Advocacy, Support, Safety, Information Services Together) was set up to ensure victims, including children and young people were supported throughout the court process. To date (December 08) ASSIST has dealt with 3,196 referrals and 2,362 children and young people.

Of cases proceeding to trial 81% resulted in the accused being found guilty, as compared to 73% for the comparison court. The most common disposal used by the court was a probation order (34%), admonishment (28%), imprisonment (18%), fine (18%), and Community Service Order (4%).

Glasgow rolled out to 'A' Division in November 2008 and ASSIST has dealt with 66 referrals and 41 children and young people (December 08).

A 'Toolkit to Aid the Development of Specialist Approaches to Cases of Domestic Abuse' has been produced (May 2008), by Clare Connelly, [www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2008/06/19153924](http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2008/06/19153924).

Furthermore Scottish Government has set out a context of responding to Domestic Abuse in Scotland through its National Domestic Abuse Delivery Plan. <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2008/06/17115558/9>

### Scottish Women's Aid, Annual Statistics, 2006–2007

The following information was collected by Scottish Women's Aid and the network of 39 Scottish Women's Aid affiliated groups across Scotland. These figures do not include statistics from Glasgow, Inverclyde and Motherwell Women's Aid groups.

- 5,373 women and 6,619 children requested refuge accommodation. Only 23% (1,248) of the women and 20% (1,354) of the children were able to be accommodated.
- Only four groups were able to provide refuge to more than half of women who requested it, with only one group being able to meet 100% of refuge requests.
- 68% of those that weren't provided with refuge accommodation were not admitted due to a lack of refuge space, for 11% refuge was inappropriate, 12% of women declined space and 9% the reason was not known.

<http://www.scottishwomensaid.org.uk>

## Wife Rape, Marriage and the Law

A 1991 survey looked at a representative sample of 1,007 married women in the UK. Whilst this survey was carried out some time ago, it has interesting statistics and information relevant to Scotland.

Results included the following information:

- Wife Rape is 7 times more common than rape by a stranger
- 1 in 7 women (14%) had been raped by their husbands
- In almost half of all rapes (44%) violence was used or threatened
- 1 in 5 women were pregnant when raped
- 1 in 3 women raped with violence, or the threat of violence were pregnant
- 80% of the women were living with their husbands when the rape took place
- 91% of the women had never reported it and never discussed it with any official agency

Reports of rape within marriage were much higher in Scotland. The women were interviewed in Glasgow. The incidence of rape amongst these women was twice as high (26%) as the rest of the country (13%).

(Kate Painter, "Wife Rape, Marriage and the Law", University of Manchester, 1991)

## Rape

Scottish Police and Court Statistics for 2006–2007:

Recorded by the Police	922
Cases prosecuted	65
Convictions for rape	27

(Scottish Government, March 2008)

The above figures demonstrate the very low conviction rate for rape cases with only 2.9% of reported cases resulting in a conviction. In addition to this it is widely acknowledged that many rapes and sexual assaults go unreported.

Studies have identified a range of possible factors that discourage women from reporting rape to the police. These include:

- Not recognising the incident as a rape
- Fear of not being believed
- Fear of being blamed
- Lack of confidence in the criminal justice process

(L Kelly & L Regan, "Rape: Still a Forgotten Issue", Child and Women Abuse Studies Unit, London Metropolitan University, 2003)

In the year 2006–2007, Rape Crisis Centre, Glasgow received 1509 calls from survivors of sexual violence. The helpline received a further 828 calls from agencies making a referral and 78 calls from family members and friends of survivors.

(Rape Crisis Glasgow Annual Report, 2007)

## Child Sexual Abuse

In 1991 the Child and Woman Abuse Studies Unit (CWASU) at London Metropolitan University produced a report on their exploratory study of the prevalence of sexual abuse. CWASU surveyed 1244 young people between the ages of 16 and 21 throughout Britain. The study found:

*"One in two girls and one in four boys will experience some form of sexual abuse before their eighteenth birthday. In this survey ... 59% of young women and 27% of young men reported at least one sexually intrusive experience before they were 18. Sexual abuse, here, is defined broadly including 'flashing', being touched, being pressured to have sex and attempted and actual assaults/rapes. Abuse was committed by both adults and peers. Almost a third of these incidents occurred before the age of 12."*

Overwhelmingly abusers were male. 85% when abusers were peers and 95% when abusers were adults.

One of the difficulties in gathering information about the prevalence of sexual abuse is the difficulty in clearly defining what is meant by abuse. CWASU found that if flashing, abuse attempts which were successfully resisted, and 'less serious' forms of abuse by peers were excluded, then the prevalence figures are 1 in 5 for women and 1 in 14 for men.

(*"An Exploratory Study of the Prevalence of Sexual Abuse in a Sample of 16-21 Year Olds"*, Child and Woman Abuse Studies Unit, London Metropolitan University, 1991)

<http://www.cwasu.org/>

In 2003 and 2004, 28% of the calls Childline received were calls about sexual abuse. The vast majority (93%) of the children and young people who had called were being abused by someone they knew, and approximately one third of them who had disclosed abuse were not believed.

Although almost all callers wanted the abuse to stop, complex reasons for nondisclosure included: feeling responsible for the abuse; caring for the abuser; fearing break-up of their family or parents' relationship; upsetting others; causing trouble and not being believed.

Most (94%) sexual abuse cases recorded details of the perpetrator. In total, 48% of perpetrators were a parental figure, 38% being the child's 'natural' parent; most commonly the father (71% of 'natural' parents). Only 7% of all perpetrators were strangers. Overall, four fifths of perpetrators were male. Boys were nearly as likely to report abuse by males as abuse by females. For girls the majority of cases featured abuse by males.

(*"Children and Young People's Concerns About Their Sexual Health and Well-Being"*, The Centre for Research on Families and Relationships and Childline Scotland, 2006)

<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2007/02/13111657/2>

## Prostitution

In Scotland prostitution itself is not illegal, but there is legislation covering the various activities surrounding prostitution such as soliciting and living off immoral earnings. The first piece of Scottish legislation enabling the buyers of sex to be charged with a prostitution-related offence was introduced on October 15th 2007. The Prostitution (Public Places) (Scotland) Act 2007 makes it an offence to solicit or loiter in a public place for the purpose of obtaining the services of a person engaged in prostitution. As at November 2008, 204 men had been arrested across Scotland. 94 of these men were arrested in Strathclyde. Women selling sex can be charged with soliciting under the Civic Government (Scotland) Act 1982. In 2006-07 there were 718 offences relating to prostitution recorded by the police in Scotland; Strathclyde Police recorded 307 of these. The Scottish Executive report, "Being Outside" (2005), estimated that approximately 1400 women were involved in street prostitution in Scotland. In addition to this, there is an unknown number involved in indoor prostitution. Base 75, a drop-in centre in Glasgow for women involved in prostitution had 517 women use their service in 2006.

Women become involved in prostitution for a variety of reasons. The Routes Out of Prostitution Social Inclusion Partnership (Glasgow) reported in 2003 that the top five issues for women attending their Intervention Team were; drug misuse, homelessness/housing, child sexual abuse, mental health, trauma, sexual violence in prostitution (Routes Out Annual Report, 2003). Women and girls may find themselves pushed into prostitution but it is the demand from men to buy women and girls that drives prostitution.

Currently, the global prostitution industry is estimated to make US\$52 billion dollars a year. To keep the sex industry in business, women are trafficked to, from and through every region in the world. The value of this global trade in women as commodities for sex industries is estimated to be between seven and twelve billion dollars annually.

(Professor Donna Hughes, 2000)

Sweden decriminalised selling sex and criminalised buying sex in 1999. Official estimates in 2007 suggest there's 80% less street prostitution there compared to 1998. It is estimated that about 400 women are trafficked into Sweden

each year, compared with 6,000 – 15,000 being trafficked into neighbouring Nordic countries. (Agneta Borg, Head of Stockholm Prostitution Unit, 2007)

A Scottish study of 110 men that had paid for sex found that:

- Their average age was 37 with a range of 18–77
- 74% had first bought sex by the age of 25
- 45% first bought sex when they were with others
- 56% had bought sex outdoors
- 80% had bought sex indoors
- 56% had bought sex whilst abroad

(Macleod, Farley, Anderson & Golding, "Challenging Men's Demand for Prostitution in Scotland", Women's Support Project, 2008)

[www.womenssupportproject.co.uk](http://www.womenssupportproject.co.uk)

## Conclusion

Collating accurate statistics on violence against women and children can be problematic due to various reasons. The Scottish Government Literature Review on Violence Against Women (March, 2005) found that "differences in data systems and data collection, uncertainty about how to overcome 'double counting', and concerns about the legal aspects of data sharing, are some of the issues currently under debate."

It is estimated that between 1 in 2 and 1 in 10 women will experience some form of violence in their lives. Women experience violence at different points in their lives, and significant numbers of women experience more than one type of violence. For example a study of women in prostitution in San Francisco found that 82% of the women had experienced physical assault and 68% had experienced sexual assault whilst in prostitution. In addition to this, 57% of the women had also experienced sexual assault in childhood.

Violence against women and children happens across all ethnic and socioeconomic groups but a person's environment can influence their experience. For example women who have a disability or women from a minority ethnic group may experience additional obstacles to reporting the abuse due to being more dependent upon their abuser, who may be their main carer or interpreter.

("Violence Against Women: A literature review", Scottish Government, March 2005)

<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2005/03/20895>

In addition to the high level of recorded violence against women, research shows that women report a very high level of fear of crime and violence. This fear of crime can be understood when we look at the statistics and see that women are most likely to be assaulted by someone they know and within their own homes. As highlighted in this leaflet recording 'incidents' of abuse does not truly reflect the impact of abuse on the lives of survivors.

All of the above would suggest that the statistics we currently have on violence against women and children only provide us with an indication of the extent and impact of this violence within our lives.

## Information & Support

Further resources about violence against women and children can be found under "Library & Resources" on the Women's Support Project website. The following helplines provide support to individuals who have been affected by the issues covered in this bulletin:

- Rape Crisis Scotland Helpline:  
08088 01 03 02
- Scottish Domestic Abuse Helpline:  
0800 027 1234

## women's support project

granite house, 31 stockwell street, glasgow G1 4RZ

tel: (0141) 552 2221 fax: (0141) 552 1876

email: [wsp@btconnect.com](mailto:wsp@btconnect.com)

[www.womenssupportproject.co.uk](http://www.womenssupportproject.co.uk)

minicom (text phone for deaf people): (0141) 552 9979

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