

# Experience of Domestic Abuse: Findings from the 2018/19 Northern Ireland Safe Community Survey

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# 1

## Summary Findings

This bulletin presents findings from the self-completion module included within the 2018/19 Northern Ireland Safe Community Survey (NISCS) and focuses on respondents' experience of domestic abuse.

### Experience of Lifetime and Recent Domestic Abuse

- Findings from NISCS 2018/19 estimate that almost a fifth (18.8%) of people aged 16-74 have experienced at least one form of domestic abuse since age 16. In terms of recent domestic abuse, results suggest that around an eighth (12.3%) experienced at least one form within the last three years. For both the lifetime and recent (within the last three years) recall periods, victims were more likely to have experienced non-physical abuse (16.4% and 9.3%).

### Nature of the Worst Incident of Domestic Abuse

- When identified victims were asked to consider their single 'worst' incident of domestic abuse, findings from 2018/19 show that nearly three-quarters of all worst cases of domestic abuse were carried out by someone with whom they had previously been in a relationship (former husband, wife or civil partner (35.5%) or someone they had been formerly dating or seeing casually (16.8%).
- The police in Northern Ireland were made aware of just under half of all 'worst' cases of domestic abuse (45.7%), meaning that they were unaware of the experiences of just over half of victims (54.3%).
- Most victims considered their worst incident of domestic abuse to be a criminal offence (62.2%), around a fifth (20.7%) believed it was 'wrong, but not a crime' and just over one-in-eight (13.1%) accepted it as 'just something that happens'.

### Perceptions of Public Policy to Tackle Domestic Abuse

- Findings indicate that around a fifth (20.4%) of respondents believed that the government and other agencies are doing 'enough' about domestic abuse compared with just over a third (34.1%) who think 'too little' is being done. At 44.2%, respondents were more likely to report that they didn't know whether the government and other agencies were doing enough to address domestic abuse.

## 2 | Introduction

### 2.1 The focus of this publication

This bulletin draws on findings from the 2018/19 Northern Ireland Safe Community Survey (NISCS). The survey was formerly known as the Northern Ireland Crime Survey (NICS) but was renamed following a review in 2017/18. NISCS is a representative, continuous, personal interview survey of the experiences and perceptions of crime of 3,429 adults living in private households throughout Northern Ireland. Previously conducted on an ad hoc basis in 1994/95, 1998, 2001 and 2003/04, the survey began operating on a continuous basis in January 2005.

Based on a self-completion module designed to examine the experiences of, and attitudes to, domestic abuse among NISCS respondents aged 16 to 74 years, the main aims of this publication are to:

1. measure lifetime and recent prevalence of domestic abuse in Northern Ireland, including both in an intimate partner relationship and a wider family setting; and
2. understand the nature and extent of 'worst' incidents of domestic abuse (as determined by the victim).

The report focuses solely on findings from the 2018/19 survey year. While the module has been asked in previous sweeps of the survey, new questions were included in 2018/19 and amendments made to others. The upper age of respondents to whom the module was offered was also extended from 64 to 74 years. These findings are therefore not directly comparable with those from previous years.

Throughout this report key findings are commented on in the text, with full numerical details on each section available in the relevant tables comprising the Tabular Annex (Appendix 1). Figures can also be found in the accompanying Microsoft Excel and Open Data Source documents.

Further background information on the module, including the definitions and breakdowns of categories used, as well as the survey more generally, is available in the Technical Annex (Appendix 2). Additional NISCS reports have been published separately and are available from the [Statistics and Research - NISCS \(opens in a new window\)](#) section on the Department of Justice (DoJ) website.

# 3

## Lifetime Experience of Domestic Abuse

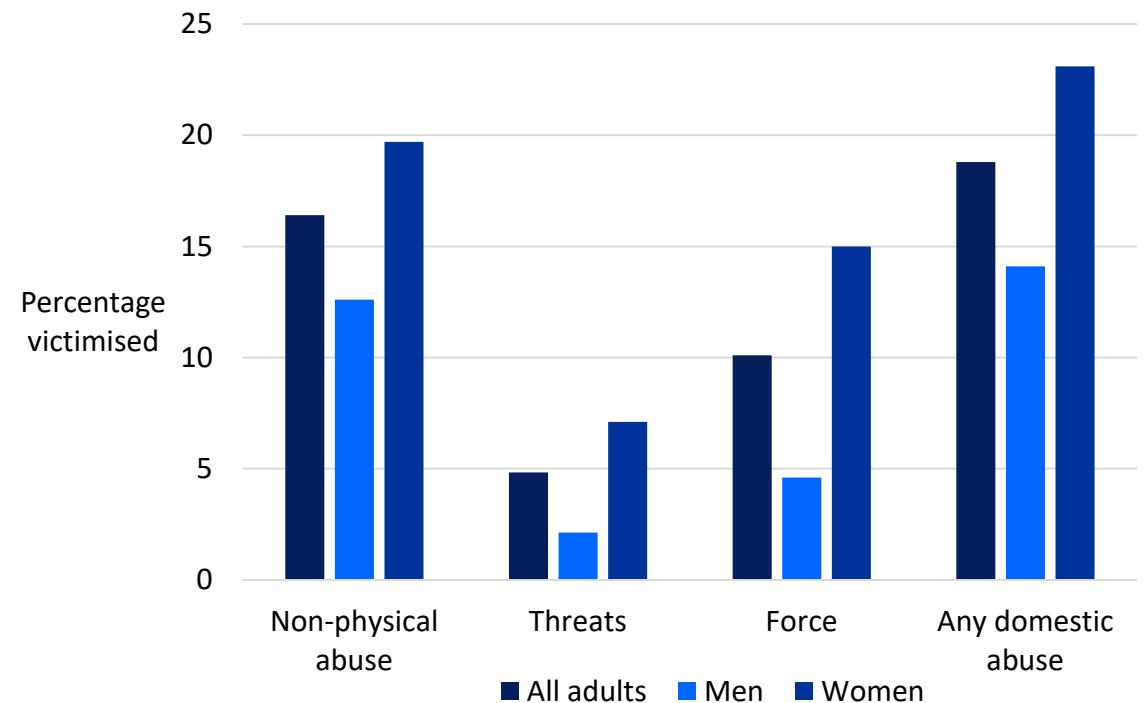
### 3.1 Experience of lifetime domestic abuse

Respondents, aged 16 to 74, were asked about their own personal experience of domestic violence and abuse. Firstly, participants were asked to select from a list whether a partner or family member had done any of the things listed to them in the last three years and also, from the same list, whether they had experienced any since they were aged 16. The individual types of domestic violence and abuse asked about, which covered emotional, financial, sexual and physical abuse, have been subdivided into three main offence groups: non-physical abuse; threats; and force. Further information on the specific offence types and what is included within each group is available in the Technical Annex, Appendix 2.

Table 1 gives the lifetime prevalence rates of domestic abuse, among men and women, since the age of 16. Rates are presented for the main aforementioned offence groups; prevalence rates for the individual offences are given in Table 2.

- Findings from NISCS 2018/19 indicate that almost a fifth, 18.8%, of participants aged 16 to 74 have experienced at least one form of domestic violence or abuse at some stage in their lives since age 16.
- Of the main offence groups considered within the survey, the highest rate was observed for non-physical abuse (16.4%). The rates for force and threats were 10.1% and 4.8% respectively.
- Women (23.1%) were more likely than men (14.1%) to have reported experiencing some form of domestic violence or abuse since the age of 16. This was also the case across each of the offence groups examined.

**Figure 3.1: Lifetime experience of domestic abuse by offence group and gender (%)**

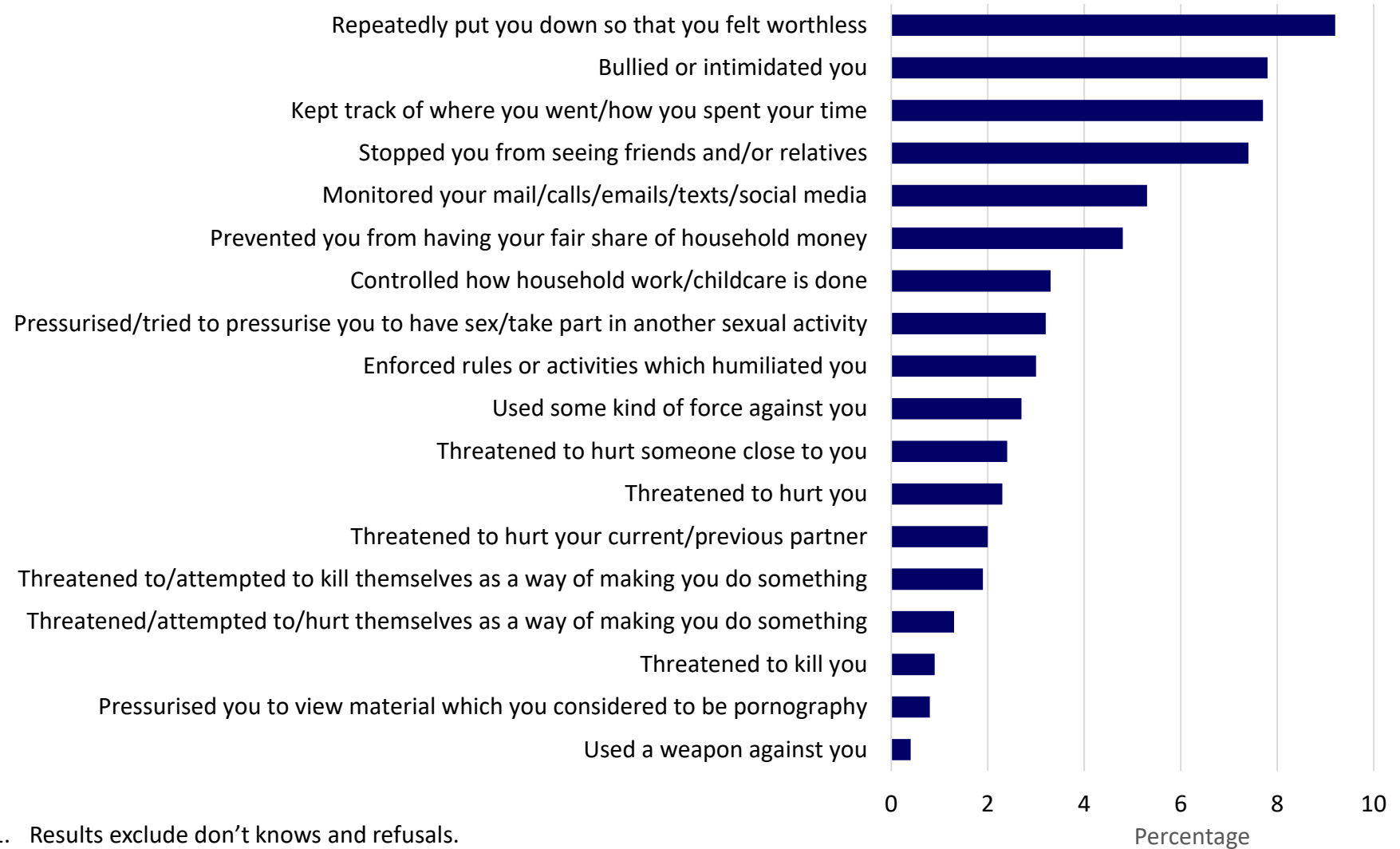


1. Results exclude don't knows and refusals.

### 3 | Lifetime Experience of Domestic Abuse

- When considering the individual offence types, ‘repeatedly put you down’ (9.2%), ‘bullied or intimidated you’ (7.8%), ‘kept track of where you went and how you spent your time’ (7.7%) and ‘stopped you from seeing friends and/or relatives’ (7.4%) displayed some of the highest prevalence rates.
- A similar gender difference emerged to that with the main offence groups whereby women, on the whole, displayed higher prevalence rates than men across the individual offence types. The greatest disparities, in percentage point terms, were observed in the proportions who had reported being repeatedly put down so that they felt worthless (women, 13.6% and men, 4.2%) or were bullied or intimidated (12.1% and 2.9% respectively).

**Figure 3.2: Lifetime experience of domestic abuse by offence type (%)**



- Results exclude don't knows and refusals.
- List of main offence groups and the individual offences which comprise these groups are given in the Technical Annex, Appendix 2.

# 3

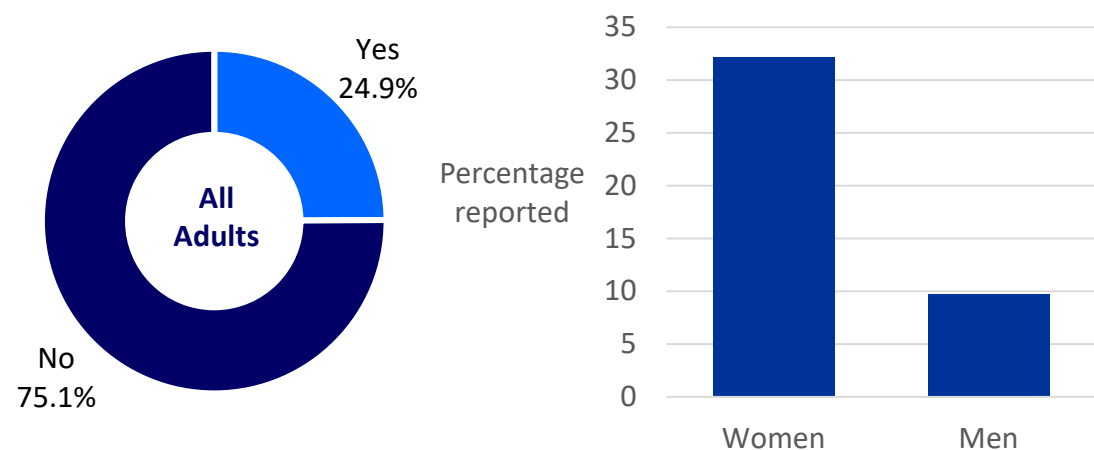
## Lifetime Experience of Domestic Abuse

### 3.2 Reporting of lifetime domestic abuse

Respondents who had experienced some form of domestic abuse since the age of 16 were subsequently asked whether the police ever came to know about any of the incidents. Results are given in Table 3.

- Findings suggest that the police were unaware of the majority of victims' experiences. Just under a quarter, 24.9%, of all victims identified through the survey indicated the police had come to know about any of the incidents.
- Results also indicated that women were more likely than men to report their domestic victimisation, with the police being made aware of almost one-in-three (32.1%) female victims, compared with around one-in-ten (9.7%) male victims.

**Figure 3.3: Reporting of any lifetime domestic abuse to the police (%)**



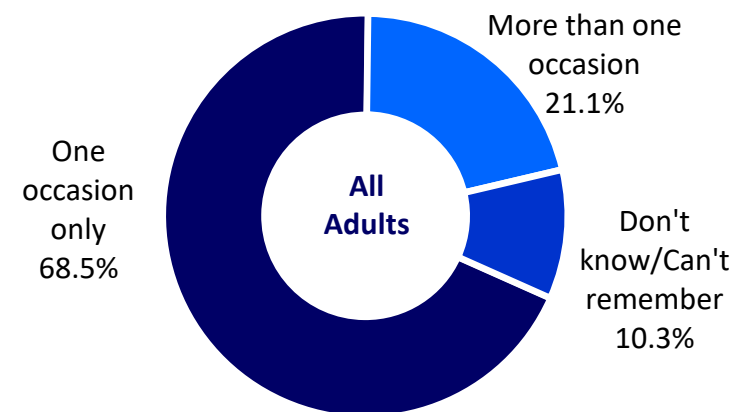
1. Results exclude don't knows and refusals.

### 3.3 Frequency of lifetime domestic abuse

The frequency of victimisation was also gauged with participants being asked whether the abuse they had experienced had happened on one occasion only or on more than one occasion. The proportion providing a don't know/can't remember response is also included, results for which can be found in Table 4.

- At 68.5%, the majority of victims indicated that the domestic abuse occurred on one occasion only compared with 21.1% being victimised more than once. The remaining 10.3% provided a don't know/can't remember response.

**Figure 3.4: Number of occasions domestic abuse was experienced (%)**



1. Results exclude refusals.
2. Percentages may not sum to 100 due to rounding.

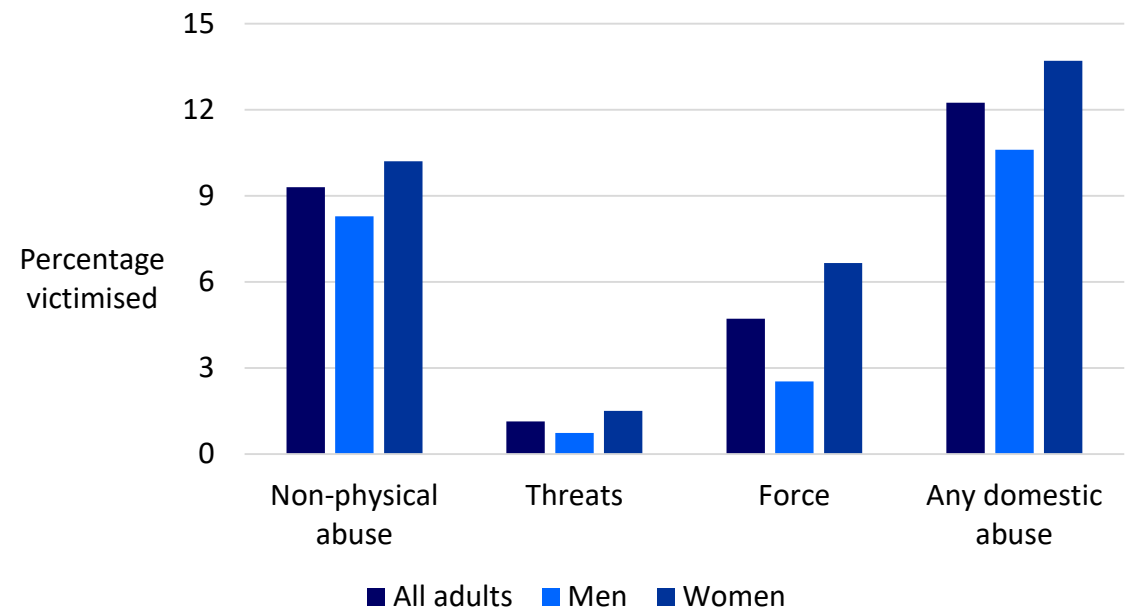
# 4 | Recent Experience of Domestic Abuse

## 4.1 Experience of recent domestic abuse (in the last three years)

To reflect the fact that people’s circumstances, lifestyles, and thus, associated levels of risk of domestic abuse change over time it is important to examine the experience of domestic abuse in recent years. Due to sample size limitations it has been decided to focus in particular on people’s experiences in the three years prior to interview, rather than the normal one-year recall associated with crime victimisation analyses covered by the survey. Tables 5 and 6 show prevalence (victimisation) rates for domestic abuse within the three years prior to interview, by both the main categories used and individual offence types respectively.

- At 12.3% in 2018/19, results estimate that around one-in-eight adults had experienced at least one form of domestic abuse within the previous three years.
- Similar to the lifetime rates, findings indicate that respondents were more likely to have experienced non-physical abuse in the last three years with the rate at 9.3%. The equivalent rates for force and threats were 4.7% and 1.1% respectively.
- When considering results for men and women, the prevalence rates for any domestic abuse in the last three years, as well as for each of the main categories considered, were more closely aligned when compared with equivalent lifetime rates of domestic abuse. Within the previous three years, 10.6% of men and 13.7% of women had experienced domestic abuse. These compare with lifetime prevalence rates of 14.1% and 23.1% respectively.

**Figure 4.1: Recent (last three years) experience of domestic abuse by offence group (%)**



1. Results exclude don't knows and refusals.

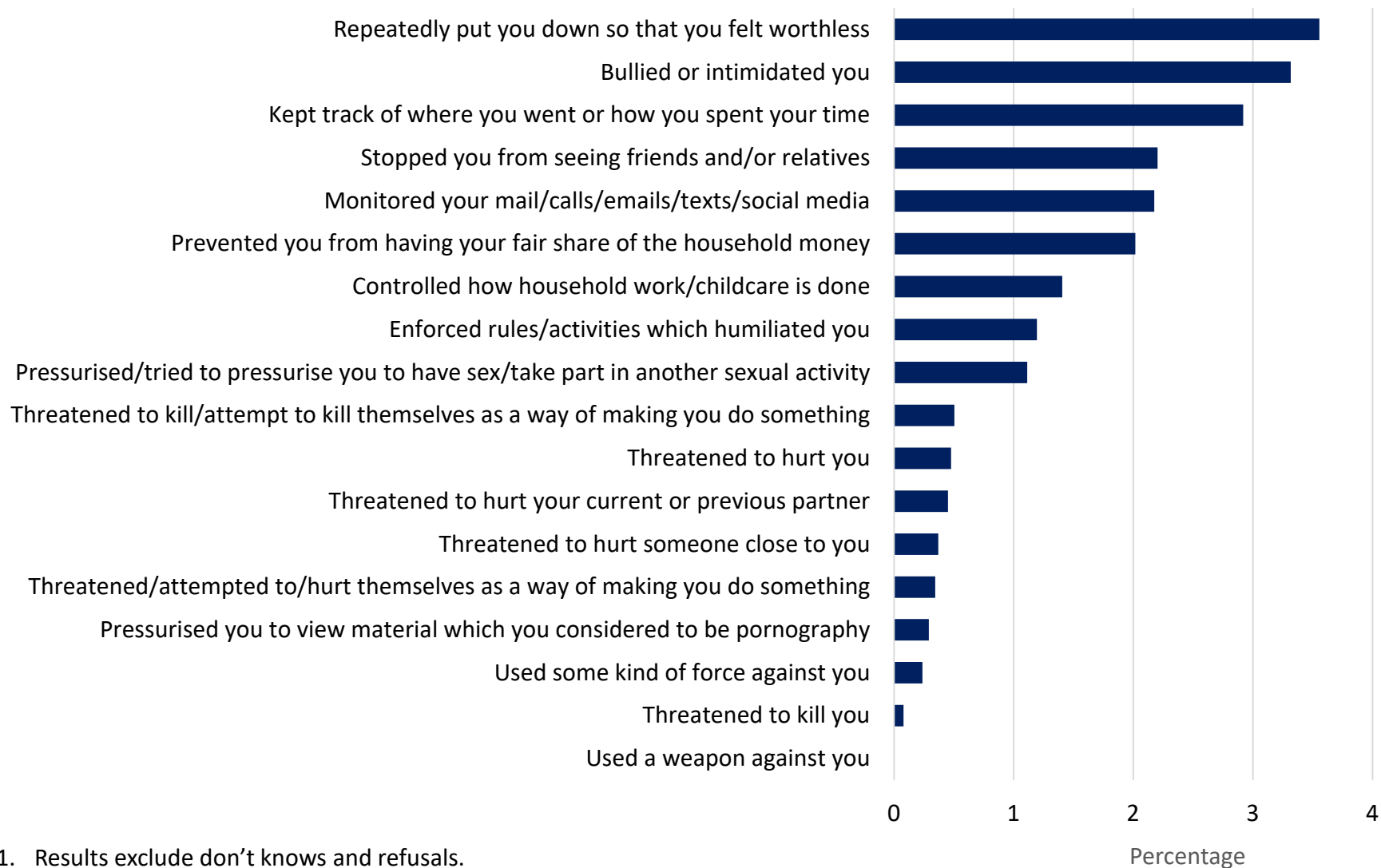


# 4

## Recent Experience of Domestic Abuse

- In terms of the more detailed offences considered, findings for recent victimisation experienced show a similar pattern to lifetime abuse, whereby the same offence types were amongst the most prevalent. For example, as was the case for lifetime abuse, ‘repeatedly put you down’ and ‘bullied or intimidated you’ were also among the offences more likely to have been experienced in the last three years (3.6% and 3.3% respectively).
- When consideration is given to the gender breakdown for individual offence types, a similar pattern was observed to that for the main offence groups where rates for recent victimisation for men and women were more aligned when compared with lifetime rates.

**Figure 4.2: Recent (last three years) experience of domestic abuse by offence type (%)**



1. Results exclude don't knows and refusals.
2. List of main offence groups and the individual offences which comprise these groups are given in the Technical Annex, Appendix 2.

# 5 | Nature of the Worst Incident of Domestic Abuse

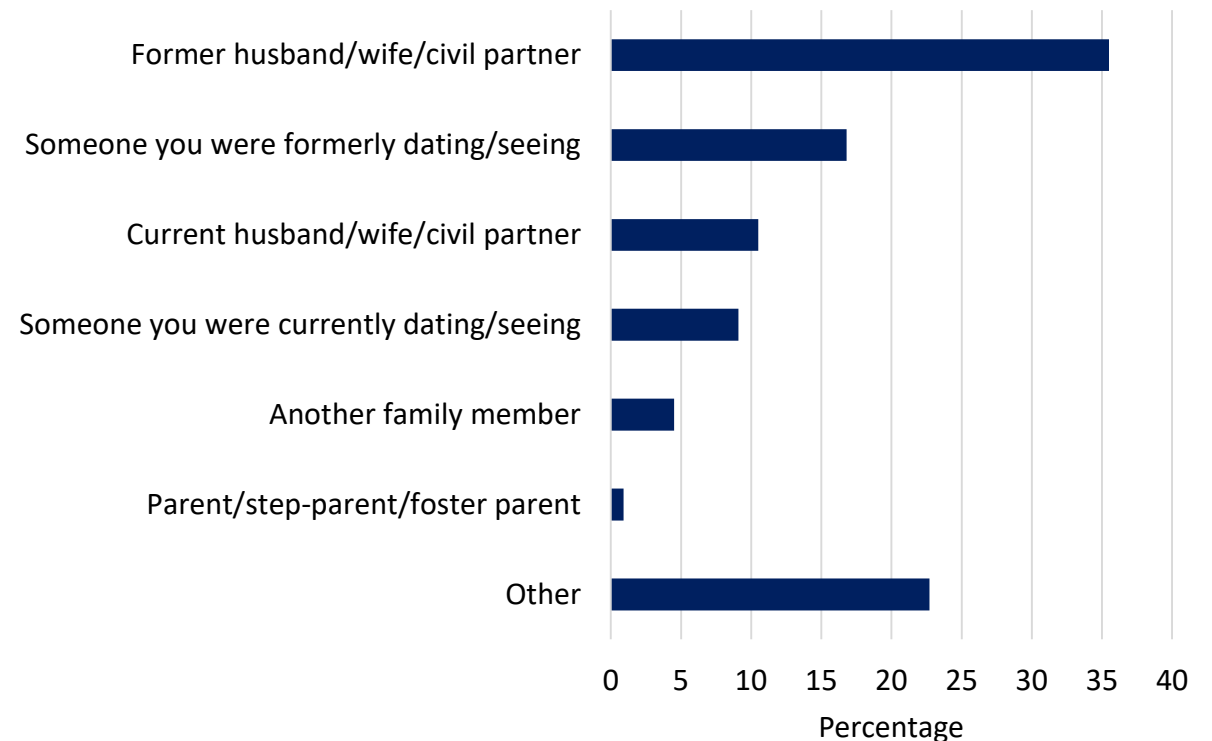
A range of follow-up questions were asked of respondents who had reported they had been a victim of domestic abuse, on at least one occasion since the age of 16. These questions sought to obtain additional information on the nature and characteristics of the single 'worst' incident of domestic abuse experienced by the respondent (as determined by the victim), which may, or may not, have been the most recent.

## 5.1 Relationship of perpetrator to victim in worst incident of domestic abuse

Based on characteristics of the worst incident, NISCS 2018/19 findings suggest that adults in Northern Ireland are more likely to have been a victim of domestic abuse from a former partner.

- Results show that more than one-in-three (35.5%) of all worst cases of domestic abuse were carried out by a former husband, wife or civil partner, with a further 16.8% involving someone they were formerly dating or seeing casually. When combined, almost one-in-five (19.6%) were in the setting of a current relationship, with 10.5% being a current husband, wife or civil partner and 9.1% someone the respondent was currently dating or seeing casually.

Figure 5.1: Relationship of perpetrator to victim in worst incident of domestic abuse (%)



1. Results exclude don't knows and refusals.

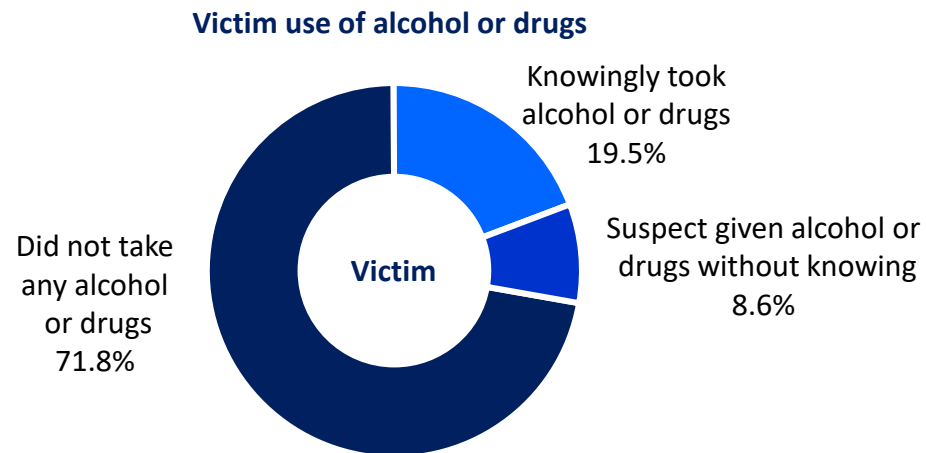
# 5 | Nature of the Worst Incident of Domestic Abuse

## 5.2 Influence of alcohol in worst incident of domestic abuse

Thinking about their worst incident, respondents who had been a victim of domestic abuse were asked two separate questions about the consumption of alcohol. Firstly, participants were asked whether the person or people who did it were under the influence of drugs or alcohol. Subsequently, respondents were also asked whether they had drunk any alcohol or taken any drugs beforehand or whether they suspected someone had given them more or stronger alcohol or drugs than they had intended to drink or take, without them knowing at the time. Results for both are presented in Tables 8 and 9 respectively.

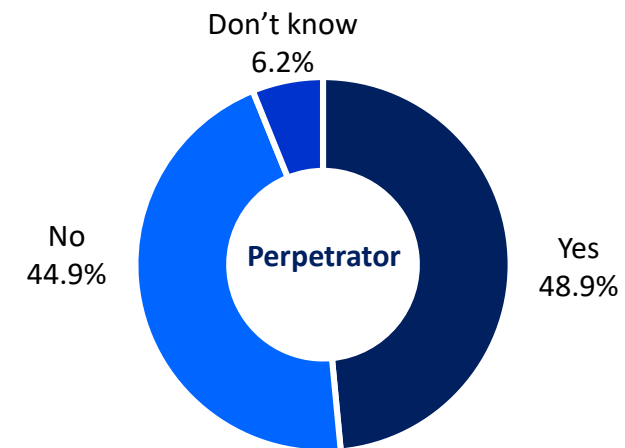
- More than seven-in-ten NISCS victims (71.8%) reported that they had not consumed any alcohol or taken any drugs in the lead up to what they considered as their worst incident of domestic abuse, while almost one-in-five (19.5%) reported they had consumed alcohol or taken drugs beforehand.
- In terms of the perpetrator, the proportion reporting that alcohol and drugs had not been consumed was similar to the proportion stating alcohol or drugs had been involved prior to their worst incident. Results suggest that 48.9% of perpetrators were under the influence of alcohol or drugs, with 44.9% reporting that alcohol or drugs had not been involved in the incident.

**Figure 5.2: Influence of alcohol or drugs in worst incident of domestic abuse (%)**



1. Results exclude don't knows and refusals.
2. Includes being given 'more' or 'stronger' alcohol without victim knowing.

**Perpetrator under the influence of alcohol or drugs**



1. Results exclude refusals.

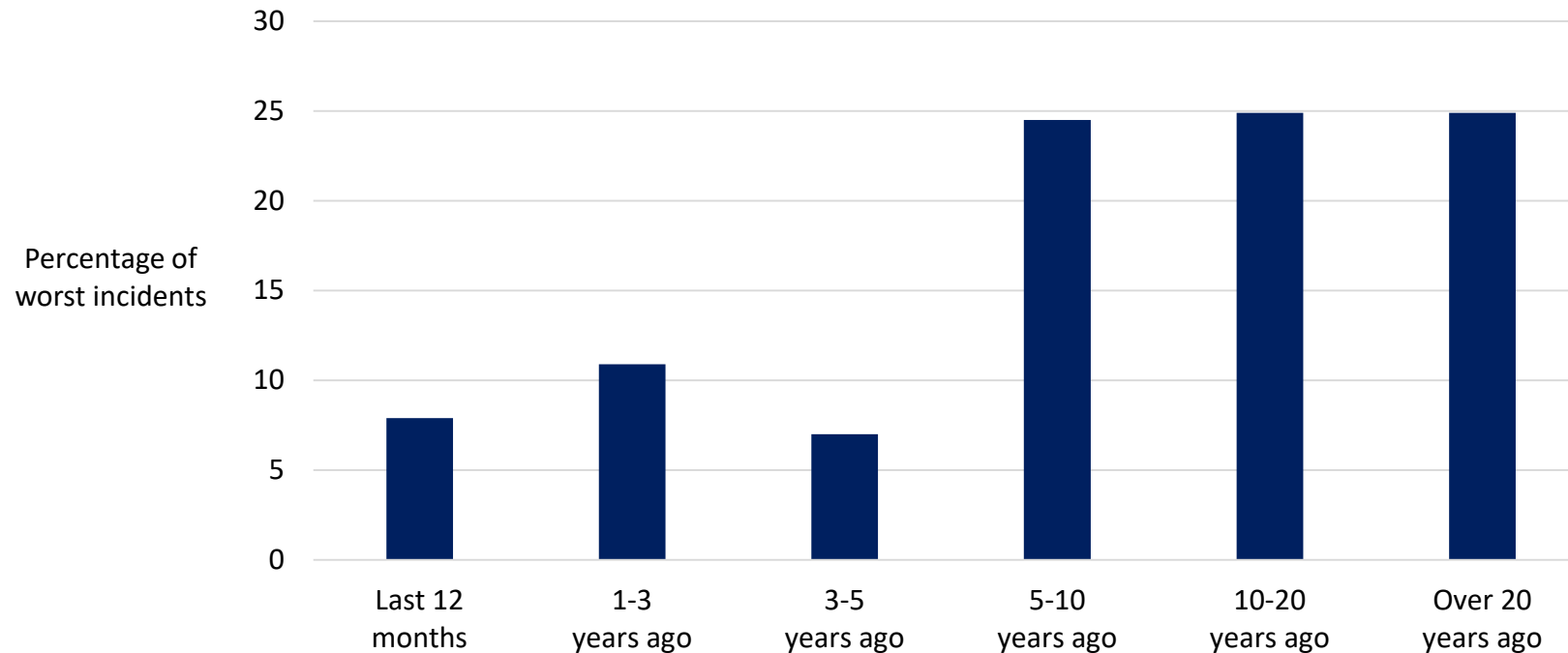
# 5 | Nature of the Worst Incident of Domestic Abuse

## 5.3 How long ago the worst incident of domestic abuse took place

As part of the set of questions on their single worst incident, victims of domestic abuse were asked to indicate how long ago this worst incident took place with findings suggesting that the vast majority of incidents had taken place at least five years ago.

- Almost three-quarters (74.3%) of victims reported that their worst incident had taken place more than five years prior to their interview. Of these, almost a quarter (24.9%) had occurred more than two decades ago. However, for around one-in-thirteen (7.9%) participants their worst incident had occurred within 12 months before interview.

**Figure 5.3: When worst incident of domestic abuse happened (%)**



1. Results exclude don't knows and refusals.

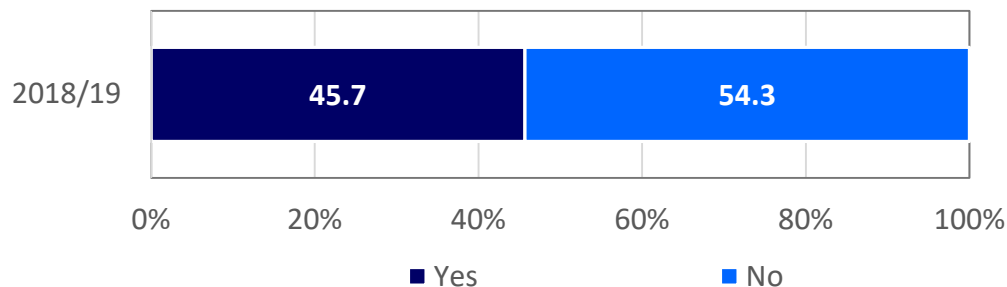
# 5 Nature of the Worst Incident of Domestic Abuse

## 5.4 Reporting of the worst incident of domestic abuse to the police and satisfaction with police

As outlined in section 3.2, when considering domestic abuse experienced by respondents since the age of 16, NISCS 2018/19 findings suggest that the vast majority of incidents were unreported to the police. As part of the follow-up questions which ask about the nature of their worst incident, participants were again asked whether the police came to know about it. Respondents who had indicated that the police were aware of the incident were then asked how satisfied they were with the way the police handled the matter throughout the investigation. A four point scale was used ranging from 'very satisfied' to 'very dissatisfied'; a 'too early to say' option was also included. For those where it had not been reported to police, the reason(s) was sought as to why the police had not come to know about it. Results for these can be found in Tables 11 to 13.

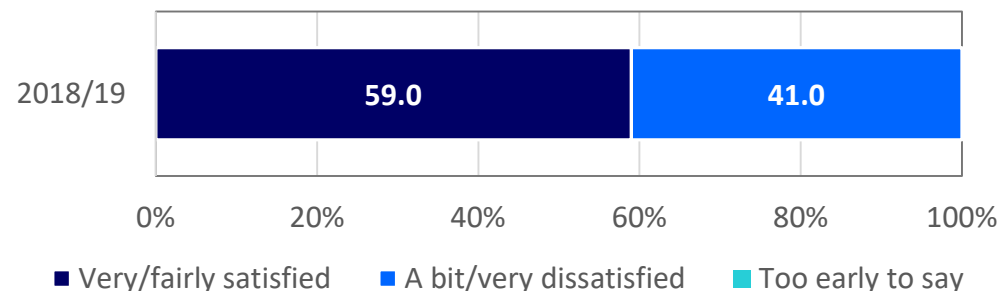
- Overall, the police were made aware of 45.7% of all worst cases of domestic abuse, a higher proportion when compared with the figure for lifetime incidents reported (24.9%). Of the respondents who indicated that the police had come to know about the incident, almost three-in-five, 59.0%, expressed satisfaction with how the police handled the matter throughout the investigation.
- For those that were unreported to the police, the main reason cited for the police not becoming aware of it was 'private matter/dealt with the matter ourselves' (77.7%).

**Figure 5.4: Reporting of worst incident to the police (%)**



1. Results exclude don't knows and refusals.

**Figure 5.5: Satisfaction with the police (%)**



1. Results exclude don't knows and refusals.
2. No respondents selected the 'Too early to say' option.

# 5 | Nature of the Worst Incident of Domestic Abuse

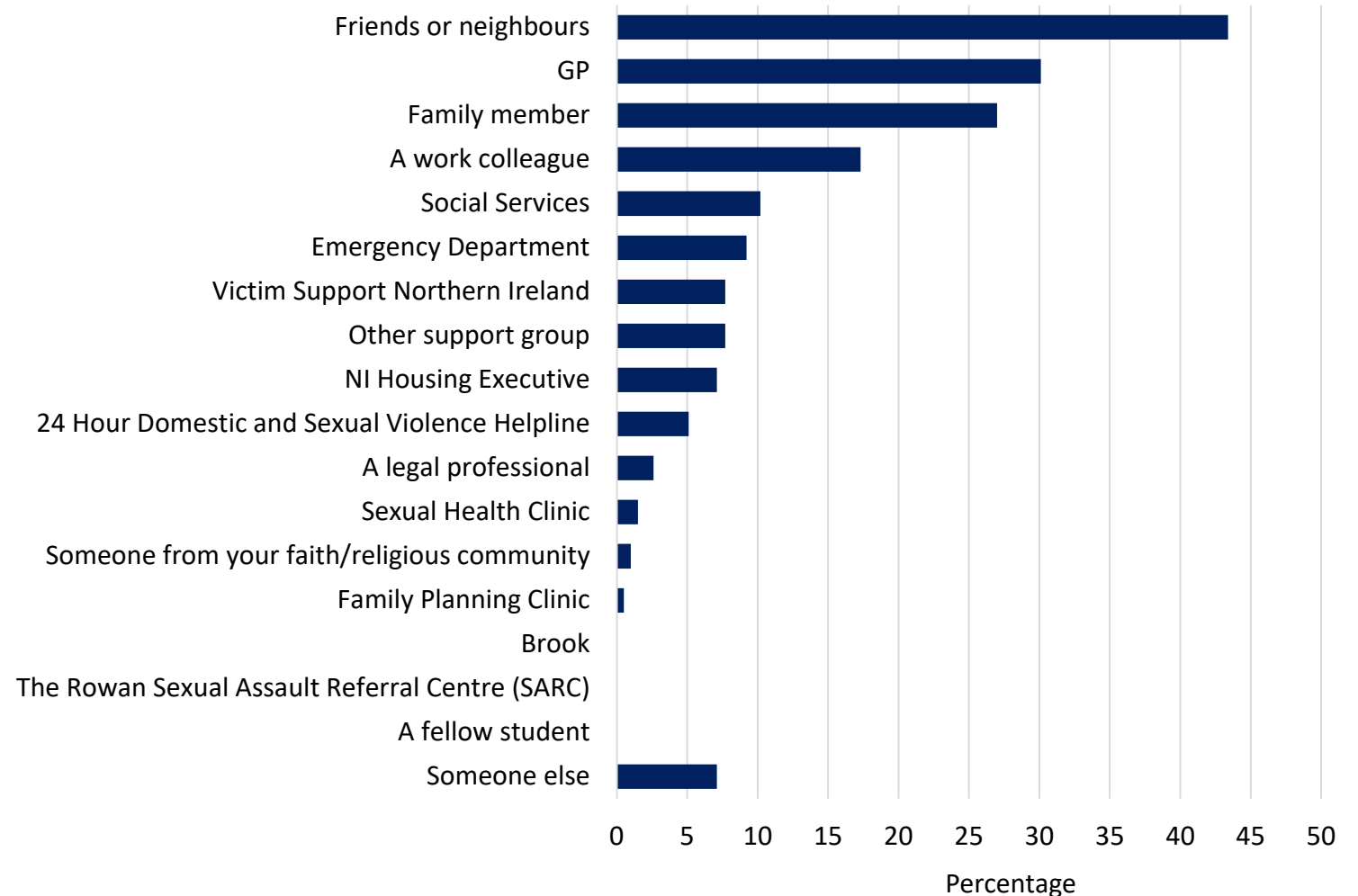
## 5.5 Awareness of worst incident by other individuals and organisations

Regardless of whether or not the police had come to know about their worst incident, respondents who had been a victim of domestic abuse were asked if they had told any other individual or organisation about it.

Response options included a range of individuals and organisations, from which more than one response could be selected. Results are presented in Table 14.

- NISCS 2018/19 findings suggest that victims were more likely to tell friends or neighbours (43.4%), their GP (30.1%) or family, including their husband, wife, civil partner, partner, other family member or relatives (27.0%), about their worst incident.
- Among those least likely to have been selected were Brook, The Rowan Sexual Assault Referral Centre or a fellow student; none of the respondents sampled indicated they had told these individuals/organisations.

Figure 5.6: Individuals or organisations made aware of the worst incident (%)



1. Results exclude don't knows and refusals.
2. Family member option included husband, wife, civil partner, partner, other family member or relatives.

# 5 Nature of the Worst Incident of Domestic Abuse

## 5.6 Impact of the worst incident of domestic abuse

When capturing information on the nature of victims' worst incidents, respondents were asked whether they had suffered any of the following:

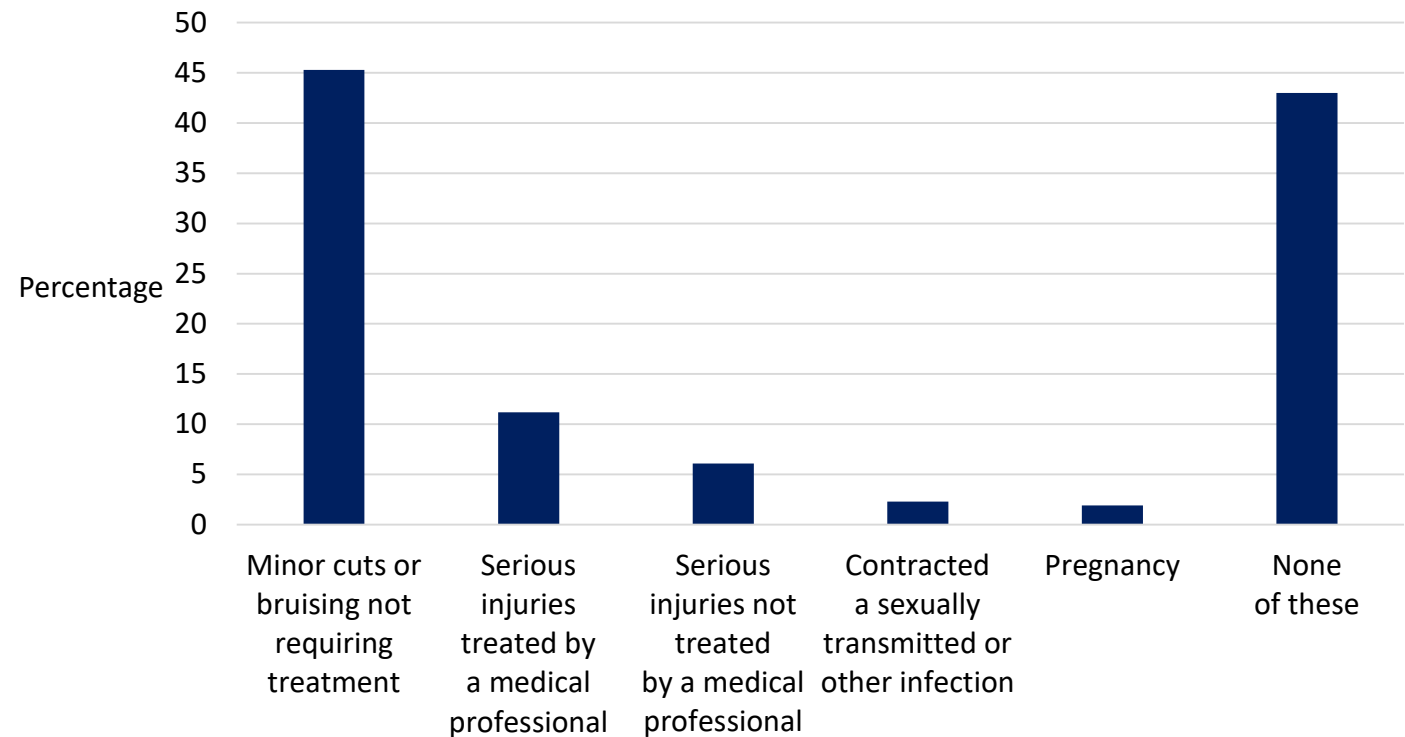
1. minor cuts or bruising that did not require treatment
2. serious injuries that were not treated by a medical professional
3. serious injuries that were treated by a medical professional
4. pregnancy
5. contracted a sexually transmitted infection, or other infection

Victims were then asked whether they had suffered from any psychological or emotional problems, selecting from a list those they had experienced; respondents could select more than one response. For both questions a none of these option was also included. Results are given in Tables 15 and 16.

Respondents who had indicated that they had experienced any of these physical, psychological or emotional problems were subsequently asked whether they sought any medical help or any other intervention as a result of these; figures for which are given in Table 17.

- With regards to any physical impact of their worst incident, victims were more likely to have suffered minor cuts or bruising that did not require treatment (45.3%). A similar proportion, 43.0%, had not suffered from any of the options listed.

**Figure 5.7: Any physical impact suffered as a result of the worst incident of domestic abuse (%)**



1. Results exclude don't knows and refusals.

## 5 Nature of the Worst Incident of Domestic Abuse

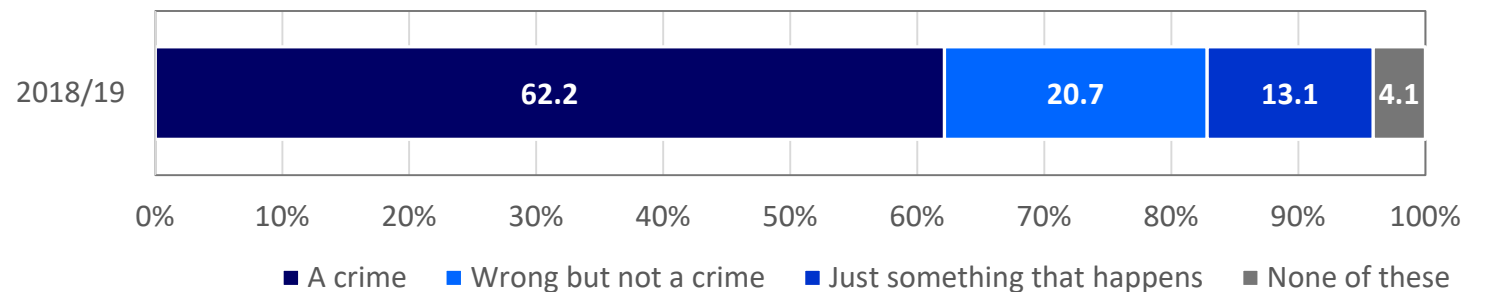
- When victims were asked about any emotional or psychological impact they suffered, 'low self esteem' (64.4%), 'depression' (60.2%), 'fear' (55.1%) and 'anxiety or panic attacks' (54.2%) were among those most likely to be cited. 'Isolation from children' (1.7%) and 'felt forced to terminate a pregnancy' (0.8%) were some of the least likely impacts to have been selected.
- There was almost an equal split in those who had, and had not, sought help. Findings suggest that 50.9% got medical help or other intervention as a result of their problems with the remaining 49.1% indicating no help had been sought.

### 5.7 Victims' perceptions of domestic abuse

While the definition of domestic violence and abuse adopted by the DoJ was outlined to respondents when completing the module (see Appendix 1), those who suffer such abuse may hold a different definition. In turn, NISCS respondents were asked how they would now describe their worst incident with the alternative response options being: it was a crime; it was wrong, but not a crime; and it is just something that happens. Again, a none of these response option could be selected. Results are given in Table 18.

- Findings suggest that the majority of victims, 62.2%, considered their worst incident of domestic abuse to be a criminal offence, a fifth (20.7%) felt it was wrong but not a crime and just over one-in-eight (13.1%) considered it as just something that happens.

Figure 5.8: Victims' perceptions of their worst incident of domestic abuse (%)



1. Results exclude don't knows and refusals.



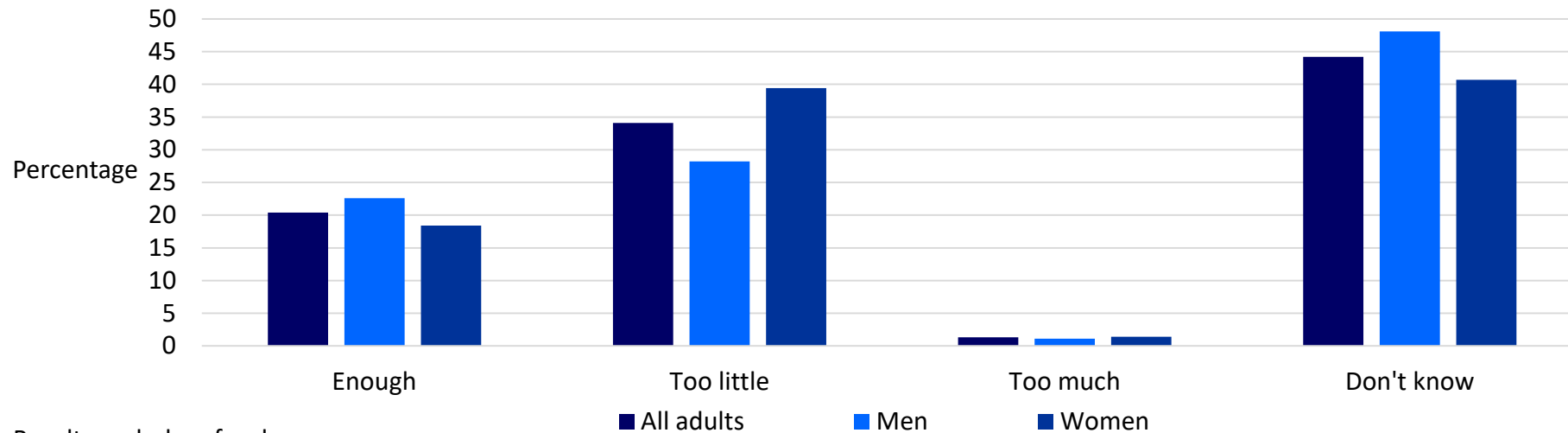
# 6 | Perceptions of Public Policy to Tackle Domestic Abuse

## 6.1 Perceptions of public policy to tackle domestic abuse

Finally, regardless of whether or not they experienced domestic abuse, views were sought from all respondents to the module on whether they thought the government and agencies, such as the police (PSNI), Public Prosecution Service (PPS) and courts, are doing enough about domestic abuse, findings for which are given in Table 19. The response options were enough, too little or too much. A don't know response was also included.

- A fifth (20.4%) of respondents believed that the government and agencies were doing enough about domestic abuse, while over a third (34.1%) thought too little was being done. When asked, a substantial proportion, more than two-in-five (44.2%), provided a don't know response, indicating they were unsure as to whether the police and agencies are dealing sufficiently with domestic abuse.
- Women (39.4%) were more likely than men (28.2%) to believe too little was being done about domestic abuse while, in contrast, men were more likely than women to consider the government and agencies were doing enough (22.6% and 18.4% respectively). A higher proportion of men than women expressed uncertainty as to whether enough was being done, with 48.1% and 40.7% respectively, offering a don't know response when asked.

**Figure 6.1: Perceptions of whether the government and agencies are doing enough about domestic abuse (%)**



1. Results exclude refusals.

## Appendix 1: Tabular Annex

Table 1: Lifetime prevalence of domestic abuse among adults aged 16-74 by offence group and gender (%)<sup>1</sup>

% victims once or more, since age 16	Men	Women	All adults
<b>Any domestic abuse</b>	<b>14.1</b>	<b>23.1</b>	<b>18.8</b>
Non-physical abuse	12.6	19.7	16.4
Threats or force	5.2	15.9	10.9
Threats	2.1	7.1	4.8
Force	4.6	15.0	10.1
Unweighted base	913	1,100	2,013

Source: Northern Ireland Safe Community Survey (NISCS) 2018/19.

1. Results exclude don't knows and refusals.
2. See Table 20 (Appendix 2) for the individual offence types comprising each offence group.

**Table 2: Lifetime prevalence of domestic abuse among adults aged 16-74 by offence type and gender (%)<sup>1,2</sup>**

<b>% victims once or more, since age 16</b>	<b>Men</b>	<b>Women</b>	<b>All adults</b>
Prevented you from having your fair share of the household money	3.2	6.2	4.8
Controlled how household work or childcare was done	2.3	4.1	3.3
Enforced rules or activities which humiliated you	1.0	4.8	3.0
Repeatedly put you down so that you felt worthless	4.2	13.6	9.2
Kept track of where you went or how you spent your time	5.7	9.4	7.7
Monitored your mail, calls, emails, texts or social media	3.6	6.8	5.3
Stopped you from seeing friends and/or relatives	4.8	9.8	7.4
Threatened to hurt someone close to you, such as your children, family members, friends or pets	0.6	4.0	2.4
Threatened to hurt your current/previous partner	0.8	3.0	2.0
Threatened to hurt you	1.3	3.3	2.3
Threatened to kill you	0.4	1.2	0.9
Bullied or intimidated you, for example by punching walls or destroying property	2.9	12.1	7.8
Pressurised or tried to pressurise you to have sex or take part in another sexual activity when you didn't want to	1.1	5.2	3.2
Pressurised you to view material which you considered to be pornography	0.3	1.3	0.8
Threatened to kill or attempted to kill themselves as a way of making you do something	1.0	2.7	1.9
Threatened to, attempted to, or actually hurt themselves as a way of making you do something	1.1	1.5	1.3
Used some kind of force against you, for example choking, kicking, biting, pushing, slapping	1.7	3.6	2.7
Used a weapon against you, for example a knife	0.5	0.2	0.4
Unweighted base	913	1,100	2,013

Source: Northern Ireland Safe Community Survey (NISCS) 2018/19.

1. Results exclude don't knows and refusals.
2. Respondents could select more than one response.

**Table 3: Proportion of any lifetime domestic abuse reported to the police by gender (%)<sup>1</sup>**

<b>% reporting any domestic abuse, since age 16</b>	<b>NISCS 2018/19</b>	<b>Unweighted base</b>
Men	9.7	122
Women	32.1	270
<b>All adults</b>	<b>24.9</b>	<b>392</b>

Source: Northern Ireland Safe Community Survey (NISCS) 2018/19.

1. Results exclude don't knows and refusals.

**Table 4: Lifetime domestic abuse - number of occasions abuse took place (%)<sup>1</sup>**

<b>Frequency of domestic abuse (%)</b>	<b>Men</b>	<b>Women</b>	<b>All adults</b>
One occasion only	n<100	68.7	68.5
More than one occasion	n<100	20.5	21.1
Don't know/can't remember	n<100	10.8	10.3
Unweighted base	35	116	151

Source: Northern Ireland Safe Community Survey (NISCS) 2018/19.

1. Results exclude refusals.

**Table 5: Recent (last three years) prevalence of domestic abuse among adults aged 16-74 by offence group and gender (%)<sup>1</sup>**

<b>% victims once or more, last three years</b>	<b>Men</b>	<b>Women</b>	<b>All adults</b>
<b>Any domestic abuse</b>	<b>10.6</b>	<b>13.7</b>	<b>12.3</b>
Non-physical abuse	8.3	10.2	9.3
Threats or force	3.2	7.4	5.4
Threats	0.7	1.5	1.1
Force	2.5	6.7	4.7
Unweighted base	904	1,090	1,994

Source: Northern Ireland Safe Community Survey (NISCS) 2018/19.

1. Results exclude don't knows and refusals.
2. See Table 20 (Appendix 2) for the individual offence types comprising each offence group.

**Table 6: Recent (last three years) prevalence of domestic abuse among adults aged 16-74 by offence type and gender (%)<sup>1,2</sup>**

<b>% victims once or more, last three years</b>	<b>Men</b>	<b>Women</b>	<b>All adults</b>
Prevented you from having your fair share of the household money	2.0	2.1	2.0
Controlled how household work or childcare was done	1.4	1.4	1.4
Enforced rules or activities which humiliated you	0.5	1.8	1.2
Repeatedly put you down so that you felt worthless	1.7	5.2	3.6
Kept track of where you went or how you spent your time	2.4	3.4	2.9
Monitored your mail, calls, emails, texts or social media	1.9	2.5	2.2
Stopped you from seeing friends and/or relatives	2.0	2.4	2.2
Threatened to hurt someone close to you, such as your children, family members, friends or pets	0.0	0.7	0.4
Threatened to hurt your current/previous partner	0.3	0.6	0.5
Threatened to hurt you	0.5	0.5	0.5
Threatened to kill you	0.0	0.2	0.1
Bullied or intimidated you, for example by punching walls or destroying property	1.4	5.0	3.3
Pressurised or tried to pressurise you to have sex or take part in another sexual activity when you didn't want to	0.4	1.8	1.1
Pressurised you to view material which you considered to be pornography	0.2	0.4	0.3
Threatened to kill or attempted to kill themselves as a way of making you do something	0.3	0.7	0.5
Threatened to, attempted to, or actually hurt themselves as a way of making you do something	0.2	0.5	0.3
Used some kind of force against you, for example choking, kicking, biting, pushing, slapping	0.1	0.4	0.2
Used a weapon against you, for example a knife	0.0	0.0	0.0
Unweighted base	904	1,090	1,994

Source: Northern Ireland Safe Community Survey (NISCS) 2018/19.

1. Results exclude don't knows and refusals.
2. Respondents could select more than one response.

**Table 7: Relationship of the perpetrator to the victim in the single worst incident of domestic abuse (%)<sup>1</sup>**

<b>Relationship of perpetrator to victim (%)</b>	<b>NISCS 2018/19</b>
Current husband, wife or civil partner	10.5
Former husband, wife or civil partner	35.5
Someone currently dating or seeing casually	9.1
Someone formerly dating or seeing casually	16.8
Parent, step parent or foster parent	0.9
Another family member	4.5
Other	22.7
Unweighted base	148

Source: Northern Ireland Safe Community Survey (NISCS) 2018/19.

1. Results exclude don't knows and refusals.

**Table 8: Influence of alcohol in the single worst incident of domestic abuse – victim use of alcohol (%)<sup>1</sup>**

Percentage (%)	NISCS 2018/19
Did not drink any alcohol or take any drugs	71.8
Knowingly drank alcohol or took drugs	19.5
Suspect given alcohol or drugs without knowing <sup>2</sup>	8.6
Unweighted base <sup>3</sup>	116

Source: Northern Ireland Safe Community Survey (NISCS) 2018/19.

1. Results exclude don't knows and refusals.
2. Includes being given 'more' or 'stronger' alcohol without victim knowing at the time of the incident.

**Table 9: Influence of alcohol in the single worst incident of domestic abuse – perpetrator under the influence of alcohol (%)<sup>1</sup>**

Percentage (%)	NISCS 2018/19
Yes	48.9
No	44.9
Don't know	6.2
Unweighted base	150

Source: Northern Ireland Safe Community Survey (NISCS) 2018/19.

1. Results exclude refusals.



**Table 10: How long ago the single worst incident of domestic abuse took place (%)<sup>1</sup>**

Percentage (%)	NISCS 2018/19
Last 12 months	7.9
Between 1-3 years ago	10.9
Between 3-5 years ago	7.0
Between 5-10 years ago	24.5
Between 10-20 years ago	24.9
More than 20 years ago	24.9
Unweighted base	152

Source: Northern Ireland Safe Community Survey (NISCS) 2018/19.

1. Results exclude don't knows and refusals.

**Table 11: Reporting of the single worst incident of domestic abuse to the police (%)<sup>1</sup>**

Percentage (%)	Men	Women	All adults
Yes	n<100	46.7	45.7
No	n<100	53.3	54.3
Unweighted base	34	114	148

Source: Northern Ireland Safe Community Survey (NISCS) 2018/19.

1. Results exclude don't knows and refusals.

**Table 12: Overall satisfaction with the way the police handled the incident of domestic abuse (%)<sup>1</sup>**

Percentage (%)	NISCS 2018/19
Very or fairly satisfied	59.0
A bit or very dissatisfied	41.0
Too early to say	0.0
Unweighted base <sup>2</sup>	68

Source: Northern Ireland Safe Community Survey (NISCS) 2018/19.

1. Results exclude don't knows and refusals.
2. Statistics derived from unweighted bases of less than 100 should be viewed with caution to avoid drawing unwarranted conclusions from the data.

**Table 13: Reasons for not reporting the single worst incident of domestic abuse to the police (%)<sup>1,2</sup>**

Percentage (%)	NISCS 2018/19
Private matter / dealt with matter ourselves	77.7
Too trivial / no loss / police would not / could not do anything	27.3
Common occurrence	10.7
Consequences to home life / too embarrassed to report it / didn't know how to report it	8.3
Fear of reprisal	6.6
Inconvenient to report	5.0
Dislike or fear of police / previous bad experience of the police or courts	2.5
Reported to other authorities	0.0
Other <sup>3</sup>	10.7
Unweighted base <sup>4</sup>	79

Source: Northern Ireland Safe Community Survey (NISCS) 2018/19.

1. Results exclude don't knows and refusals.
2. Respondents could select more than one response.
3. Other category includes 'it was partly my/a relative's/a friend's fault', 'because offender(s) not responsible for their actions', 'thought someone else had already reported the incident', 'tried to report it but was not able to contact the police' and 'didn't want to get anyone into trouble'.
4. Statistics derived from unweighted bases of less than 100 should be viewed with caution to avoid drawing unwarranted conclusions from the data.

**Table 14: Awareness of the single worst incident of domestic abuse – whether any other individual or organisation came to know about it (%)<sup>1,2</sup>**

Percentage (%)	NISCS 2018/19
GP	30.1
Emergency Department	9.2
Sexual Health Clinic	1.5
Family Planning Clinic	0.5
Brook	0.0
Victim Support Northern Ireland	7.7
The Rowan Sexual Assault Referral Centre (SARC)	0.0
24 Hour Domestic and Sexual Violence Helpline	5.1
Other support group	7.7
NI Housing Executive	7.1
Social Services	10.2
Husband, wife, civil partner, partner, other family member, or relatives	27.0
Friends or neighbours	43.4
A work colleague	17.3
A fellow student	0.0
Someone from your faith / religious community	1.0
A legal professional	2.6
Someone else	7.1
Unweighted base	131

Source: Northern Ireland Safe Community Survey (NISCS) 2018/19.

1. Results exclude don't knows and refusals.
2. Respondents could select more than one response.

**Table 15: Any physical impact as a result of the single worst incident (%)<sup>1,2</sup>**

<b>Percentage (%)</b>	<b>NISCS 2018/19</b>
Minor cuts or bruising that did not require treatment	45.3
Serious injuries that were not treated by a medical professional	6.1
Serious injuries that were treated by a medical professional	11.2
Pregnancy	1.9
Contracted a sexually transmitted infection, or other infection	2.3
None of these	43.0
Unweighted base	143

Source: Northern Ireland Safe Community Survey (NISCS) 2018/19.

1. Results exclude don't knows and refusals.
2. Respondents could select more than one response.

**Table 16: Any psychological or emotional problems as a result of the single worst incident (%)<sup>1,2</sup>**

Percentage (%)	NISCS 2018/19
Difficulty sleeping / nightmares	44.9
Depression	60.2
Low self-esteem	64.4
Fear	55.1
Anxiety / panic attacks	54.2
Tried to kill myself	14.4
Isolation from family / friends	28.8
Feeling unable to attend work / college / university	22.9
Felt forced to terminate a pregnancy	0.8
Stopped trusting people / difficulty in other relationships	28.0
Isolation from children in the household	1.7
Deliberately hurt myself	7.6
Started doing things that weren't good for me to help me cope (for example binge drinking / taking drugs / smoking / binge eating)	21.2
Other negative effects other than physical injuries	9.3
None of these	16.1
Unweighted base	81

Source: Northern Ireland Safe Community Survey (NISCS) 2018/19.

1. Results exclude don't knows and refusals.
2. Respondents could select more than one response.

**Table 17: Medical help/intervention sought as a result of the physical, psychological or emotional problems suffered (%)<sup>1, 2</sup>**

Percentage (%)	NISCS 2018/19
Yes	50.9
No	49.1
Unweighted base <sup>3</sup>	81

Source: Northern Ireland Safe Community Survey (NISCS) 2018/19.

1. Results exclude don't knows and refusals.
2. Based only on those victims who had responded that they suffered any physical, psychological or emotional problems.
3. Statistics derived from unweighted bases of less than 100 should be viewed with caution to avoid drawing unwarranted conclusions from the data.

**Table 18: Victims' descriptions of their single worst incident of domestic abuse (%)<sup>1</sup>**

Percentage (%)	Men	Women	All adults
A crime	n<100	71.0	62.2
Wrong, but not a crime	n<100	18.9	20.7
Just something that happens	n<100	7.7	13.1
None of these	n<100	2.4	4.1
Unweighted base	33	114	147

Source: Northern Ireland Safe Community Survey (NISCS) 2018/19.

1. Results exclude don't knows and refusals.

**Table 19: Perceptions of whether the government and other agencies are doing enough about domestic abuse by gender (%)<sup>1</sup>**

<b>Percentage (%)</b>	<b>Men</b>	<b>Women</b>	<b>All adults</b>
Enough	22.6	18.4	20.4
Too little	28.2	39.4	34.1
Too much	1.1	1.4	1.3
Don't know	48.1	40.7	44.2
Unweighted base	939	1,130	2,069

Source: Northern Ireland Safe Community Survey (NISCS) 2018/19.

1. Results exclude refusals.



## Appendix 2: Technical Annex

### About the NISCS Domestic Abuse Self-completion Module

Since 2001, the NISCS has administered a self-completion module on domestic violence/abuse using computer-assisted self-interviewing (CASI), a technique which affords anonymity and confidentiality to respondents on a subject matter that could be very sensitive and personal to victims. The module remained largely unchanged until 2008/09 when it was revised to include a sub-element covering sexual violence and abuse. A number of methodological, analytical and presentational changes to the domestic abuse component of the survey had been made. However, following a review of the wider survey during 2017/18, further amendments were made to the module, including:

- the upper age of respondents to whom the module was offered was extended from 64 to 74 years;
- the offence types asked about were amended while new questions were also added;
- the module focused on the lifetime (since age 16) and three year recall periods; and
- domestic abuse was asked about collectively, with no separation of partner and family abuse.

As part of the introduction to the module, respondents were advised of the government's definition of domestic violence and abuse, that is:

‘threatening, controlling, coercive behaviour, violence or abuse (psychological, virtual, physical, verbal, sexual, financial or emotional) inflicted on anyone (irrespective of age, ethnicity, religion, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation or any form of disability) by a current or former intimate partner or family member.’

As referenced, within this bulletin, two measures of domestic abuse are adopted: lifetime; and the last three years. Lifetime prevalence is a good indicator of the percentage of NISCS respondents who have experienced domestic abuse at some point in their lives since age 16. However, it does not necessarily provide an indication of current victimisation levels. While previously last year prevalence rates were used as an indicator of recent levels of domestic abuse, the small number of victims identified through the NISCS made it difficult to measure change in trends. Consequently, this module focused on experience during the last three years as well as lifetime rates as it provides both a timeframe and a larger base number (of victims) by which to analyse trends in recent domestic abuse prevalence rates. A proportion of the NISCS self-completion module also asks follow-up questions to victims of domestic abuse in order to ascertain further details about the nature of the single worst incident, as determined by the victim.

Within the context of this report, the concept of domestic abuse, which covers a range of emotional, financial, sexual and physical abuse, is subdivided into the following three main offence groups: non-physical abuse; threats; and force. As shown in the following table, each of these are made up of a number of the individual offence types asked about.

**Table 20: Offence types that comprise the domestic abuse offence groups within the NISCS 2018/19**

Offence Group	Offence Type
<b>Non-physical abuse</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prevented you from having your fair share of the household money, or taken money from you</li> <li>• Controlled how household work or childcare was done</li> <li>• Enforced rules or activities which humiliated you</li> <li>• Repeatedly put you down so that you felt worthless</li> <li>• Kept track of where you went or how you spent your time</li> <li>• Monitored your mail, calls, emails, texts or social media</li> <li>• Stopped you from seeing friends and/or relatives</li> </ul>
<b>Threats</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Threatened to hurt someone close to you, such as your children, family members, friends or pets</li> <li>• Threatened to hurt your current/previous partner</li> <li>• Threatened to hurt you</li> <li>• Threatened to kill you</li> </ul>
<b>Force</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bullied or intimidated you, for example by punching walls or destroying property</li> <li>• Pressurised or tried to pressurise you to have sex or take part in another sexual activity when you didn't want to</li> <li>• Pressurised you to view material which you considered to be pornography</li> <li>• Threatened to kill or attempted to kill themselves as a way of making you do something</li> <li>• Threatened to, attempted to, or actually hurt themselves as a way of making you do something</li> <li>• Used some kind of force against you, for example choking, kicking, biting, pushing, slapping</li> <li>• Used a weapon against you, for example a knife</li> </ul>

## Domestic Abuse Module Sample Size

Of the 2,971 NISCS 2018/19 respondents aged between 16 and 74 years, 836 refused to participate in the domestic abuse self-completion module, resulting in a final sample size of 2,135 completing the module. Rather than the sensitivity of the topic, the main reasons given for non-participation in the domestic abuse module related to time constraints (linked to the location of the module towards the end of the interview) or the unease of the respondent in using a laptop without assistance.

Respondents were assured in advance of the interviews that any information they provided would be treated as entirely confidential and that the level of detail produced in publications or in any subsequent analyses would not allow for identification of individuals. Given the sensitivity of the topic, respondents were given the option to skip questions they did not wish to answer.

## Points to note about this publication

- As referenced earlier in this Technical Annex, changes have been made to the module from 2018/19 therefore findings are not comparable with previous sweeps of the survey.
- Some of the findings presented within this report are based on low numbers, less than 100; this is particularly so for the follow-up questions asked only of those who had been a victim of domestic abuse. Findings which are based on low numbers should be viewed with caution to avoid drawing unwarranted conclusions from the data.
- Table 7 outlines the relationship of the perpetrator to the victim at the time of the single worst incident. The 'Other' category combines a number of response options presented to the respondent for this question, excluding partners and family members. These respondents have identified themselves as being a victim of domestic abuse, however, the specific circumstances for those included within the 'Other' category are not known.
- Victims who had indicated they had sought medical help or other intervention as a result of physical, psychological or emotional problems suffered were subsequently asked where they had sought help. However, results are not included within the report due to the low number of responses.
- The Department of Justice does not routinely publish NISCS estimates where the unweighted base is less than 100 cases, however for findings contained within this specific report, this has been reduced to 50.

The following sections provide information on the survey more generally, including some background to the survey, the frequency and sample size and sampling and fieldwork.

## About the NISCS

Closely mirroring the format and core questions of the CSEW, the NISCS is an important source of information about community safety issues such as levels of, and public attitudes to, crime and anti-social behaviour. Its results play an important role in informing and monitoring government policies and targets. Within the [2016-21 Draft Programme for Government \(Opens in a new window\)](#) (PfG) and the [Northern Ireland Civil Service Outcomes Delivery Plan \(Opens in a new window\)](#), the Department of Justice lead on Indicator 1 related to reducing crime. Survey findings also informed the assessment of the Northern Ireland Policing Board's [Strategic Outcomes for Policing in Northern Ireland 2016-2020 PDF \(Opens in a new window\)](#) and [Annual Policing Plan 2019-20 \(Opens in a new window\)](#).

An alternative, but complementary, measure of crime to offences recorded by the police, the main aims of the NISCS are to:

- measure crime victimisation rates experienced by people living in private households regardless of whether or not these crimes were reported to, or recorded by, the police;
- monitor trends in the level of crime, independent of changes in reporting levels or police recording practices;
- measure people's perceptions of and reactions to crime (for example, the level and causes of crime, the extent to which they are concerned about crime and the effect of crime on their quality of life);
- measure public confidence in policing and the wider criminal justice system; and
- collect sensitive information, using self-completion modules, on people's experiences regarding crime-related issues, such as domestic abuse.

Recorded crime figures cannot, by their nature, provide an impression of the extent of concern about crime (often described as 'fear of crime') among different sections of the community. Hence, it is necessary to complement the police figures with information drawn from the NISCS, which, for the crime types it covers, provides a more complete measure of the extent and impact of crime against private households and their adult occupants. Further information on recorded crime statistics can be found in the [Police Service of Northern Ireland \(PSNI\) User Guide to Police Recorded Crime Statistics in Northern Ireland \(Opens in a new window\)](#).

While some of the core interviewer-administered modules for NISCS 2018/19 were (generally) based on CSEW 2018/19, some modification has been necessary to reflect local issues and the fact that the smaller NISCS sample size would not have generated robust results for follow-up questions asked of small sub-sections of the sample.

## Frequency and sample size of the NICS/NISCS

Initially, the then NICS was conducted on an ad hoc basis, before becoming a biennial survey in 2001. At that time, the Community Attitudes Survey (CAS) was also being conducted on a continuous basis, facilitating annual reports on topics linked to crime, policing and the criminal justice system. Increasingly, however, the CSEW was becoming a key vehicle to track progress against Public Service Agreement (PSA) and other targets related to the criminal justice and health sectors in England and Wales. Hence, interest increased among officials and Ministers in what the NICS had to offer in terms of direct comparison, while, in light of the improved security situation, many of the issues originally covered by CAS were becoming less relevant.

Accordingly, it was decided that a more effective use of resources would be to discontinue CAS at the end of 2003 and to move fieldwork for the NICS to a continuous basis with effect from January 2005. This would facilitate the monitoring of annual trends and more regular direct comparison with England and Wales. It was also decided to increase the target achieved sample size for the NICS from 3,000 to 4,000. This would contribute to increased accuracy of headline results and generate more robust analyses for various socio-demographic characteristics.

However, unavoidable budgetary pressures resulted in the need to reduce the target achieved sample size; a moderate decrease was first made in-year 2013/14, from 4,000 to 3,500, with a full sample reduction to 2,000 first being implemented in 2014/15. Following a review of the survey during 2017/18 (details of which can be found in the [NISCS 'User Documentation' \(Opens in a new window\)](#) section of the DoJ website), the target sample size has been increased with effect from April 2018 onwards. It is anticipated that around 3,500 interviews will now be achieved annually.

Additional information, covering issues such as sampling design and methodology is available within the NISCS [User Guide \(Opens in a new window\)](#) and associated [Quality Report \(Opens in a new window\)](#).

## Sampling and fieldwork

The initial NISCS 2018/19 sample consisted of 7,500 addresses, randomly selected from the NISRA Address Register (NAR). The NAR is developed within NISRA and is primarily based on the Land and Property Services (LPS) POINTER database. Visits to each address by an interviewer from the NISRA Central Survey Unit resulted in an eligible sample of 6,534 occupied addresses, from which attempts were made to interview one randomly selected adult respondent at each address. Selecting only one person at each address means that individuals living in large households have a lower chance of being included in the sample than those living in small households. Accordingly, the data presented in this publication have been weighted by household size to prevent a bias towards small household sizes.

In January 2005, the then NICS began operating on a continuous basis. This bulletin refers primarily to fieldwork undertaken during the financial year 1 April 2018 to 31 March 2019, which involved complete interviews with 3,429 people aged 16 years and over. This represents an eligible response rate of 52%.

Respondents were assured in advance of the interviews that any information they provided would be treated as entirely confidential and that the level of detail produced in publications or in any subsequent analyses would not allow for identification of individuals. The interviews typically lasted under an hour for non-victims, although those involving respondents who disclosed several crimes could last much longer.

## Rounding, error and statistical significance

Don't knows (where appropriate), refusals and non-valid responses have been excluded from the analyses. Percentages may not always sum to 100 or numbers may not sum to an overall total due to the effect of rounding to the nearest whole number, or because respondents could give more than one response. Full, unrounded figures are available in the accompanying Microsoft Excel and Open Data Source versions of the Tabular Annex.

Due to a combination of both sampling and non-sampling error, any sample is unlikely to reflect precisely the characteristics of the population. Because NISCS estimates are subject to sampling error, differences between estimates from successive years of the survey or between population subgroups may occur by chance. As a result of the sample reduction in recent years, the respective confidence limits of any percentages from the survey were wider than was the case previously and the margin of difference between findings required to achieve 'statistical significance' was widened accordingly. This means that absolute differences in percentages which would previously have been 'statistically significant' with the larger numbers then sampled (and the much narrower range of error for any findings) may not necessarily be found to be statistically significant with the reduced sample size. This should be borne in mind when considering the findings presented from the survey.

## Sample profile for NISCS 2018/19

Group	Sub-Group	Unweighted Number	Unweighted %	Weighted %
Sex	Men	1,576	46	47
	Women	1,853	54	53
Age Group	16-24	222	6	10
	25-34	464	14	13
	35-44	597	17	18
	45-54	540	16	17
	55-64	621	18	18
	65-74	527	15	14
	75+	458	13	10
Religion	Catholic	1,429	42	42
	Protestant	1,575	46	46
Area Type	Rural	1,287	38	40
	Urban	2,142	62	60
Policing District	Antrim and Newtownabbey	220	6	6
	Ards and North Down	270	8	8
	Armagh, Banbridge and Craigavon	353	10	11
	Belfast	660	19	18
	Causeway Coast and Glens	298	9	9
	Derry and Strabane	272	8	7
	Fermanagh and Omagh	260	8	7
	Lisburn and Castlereagh	262	8	8
	Mid and East Antrim	259	8	8
	Mid Ulster	234	7	8
	Newry, Mourne and Down	341	10	10
Multiple Deprivation Measure Rank <sup>1</sup>	1 <sup>st</sup> quintile (most deprived)	651	19	17
	2 <sup>nd</sup> quintile	710	21	20
	3 <sup>rd</sup> quintile	716	21	22
	4 <sup>th</sup> quintile	707	21	22
	5 <sup>th</sup> quintile (least deprived)	645	19	19
Vehicle-owning households		2,788	81	86

1. Rank order of super output areas (derived from 2017 Multiple Deprivation Measure).

## Appendix 3: National Statistics Status



National Statistics status means that our statistics meet the highest standards of trustworthiness, quality and public value, and it is our responsibility to maintain compliance with these standards.

The designation of these statistics as National Statistics was confirmed in July 2020 following a [Compliance Check \(Opens in a new window\)](#) by the [Office for Statistics Regulation \(Opens in a new window\)](#). The statistics last underwent a full assessment against the [Code of Practice \(Opens in a new window\)](#) in 2012/13.

As part of the recent compliance check, we have made the following improvements:

- published a [Future Programme of Work \(Opens in a new window\)](#) that details the list of developments that the department plan to scope in terms of feasibility of implementation.



## Appendix 4: References

Department of Justice (2023) Northern Ireland Safe Community Survey User Guide

<https://www.justice-ni.gov.uk/publications/northern-ireland-crime-survey-user-guide> (Opens in a new window)

Department of Justice (2023) Northern Ireland Safe Community Survey Quality Report

<https://www.justice-ni.gov.uk/publications/northern-ireland-crime-survey-quality-report> (Opens in a new window)

Northern Ireland Executive (2016) Programme for Government 2016-21 and Outcomes Delivery Plan

<https://www.executiveoffice-ni.gov.uk/topics/making-government-work/programme-government> (Opens in a new window)

Northern Ireland Policing Board (2019) Annual Policing Plan 2019-20

<https://www.nipolicingboard.org.uk/publication/annual-policing-plan-2019-20> (Opens in a new window)

Northern Ireland Policing Board (2016) Strategic Outcomes for Policing in Northern Ireland 2016-2020

<https://www.nipolicingboard.org.uk/publication/strategic-outcomes-policing-2016-2020> (Opens in a new window)

Office for National Statistics (ONS) (2019) Crime in England and Wales: year ending March 2019

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/crimeandjustice/bulletins/crimeinenglandandwales/yearendingmarch2019> (Opens in a new window)

Police Service of Northern Ireland (2022) User Guide to Police Recorded Crime Statistics in Northern Ireland (Updated December 2022)

<https://www.psni.police.uk/about-us/our-publications-and-reports/official-statistics/police-recorded-crime-statistics> (Opens in a new window)