

Article

Partner abuse in detail, England and Wales: year ending March 2023

The amount, type and nature of partner abuse experienced in the last year; information from the Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW).

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Correction

27 December 2023 15:15

A small error occurred in Section 8 where the least common reason why the victim did not tell the police about the partner abuse experienced was “Police did not come when called” instead of “not wanting to go to court”. We apologise for any inconvenience.

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1 . Other pages in this release

- [Domestic abuse in England and Wales overview: November 2023](#)
- [Domestic abuse prevalence and trends, England and Wales: year ending March 2023](#)
- [Domestic abuse victim characteristics, England and Wales: year ending March 2023](#)
- [Domestic abuse and the criminal justice system, England and Wales: November 2023](#)
- [Domestic abuse victim services, England and Wales: 2023](#)
- [Redevelopment of domestic abuse statistics: research update November 2023](#)

2 . Main points

- The Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW) shows, for the year ending March 2023, an estimated 3.0% of people aged 16 years and over had experienced partner abuse in the last year (4.0% for women and 2.1% for men).
- There was a statistically significant decrease in the prevalence of partner abuse experienced by people aged 16 to 59 years in the last year (3.4%) compared with the year ending March 2020 (4.5%).
- The majority of partner abuse victims in the last year (88%) experienced non-physical abuse, 9.0% experienced sexual assault and 16.1% experienced stalking.
- In almost one-third of households where there was a victim of partner abuse, there was at least one child under the age of 16 years living there at the time of the abuse (32.4%); 71.9% of victims reported the child or children did not see or hear the abuse.
- Of partner abuse victims, 16.4% reported that they sustained a physical injury as a result of the abuse and 52.0% experienced a non-physical effect.
- More than four in five victims of partner abuse (81.0%) reported they told someone about the abuse they had experienced in the last year, with 18.9% telling the police.

CSEW data presented in this release for the year ending March 2023 are not badged as [National Statistics](#). They are based on eight months of data collection because of an error in the survey, which resulted in missing data. Caution should be taken when using these data because of the impact of the reduced data collection period on the quality of the estimates. For more information, see Section 2.1 of our [User guide to crime statistics for England and Wales: March 2023](#).

3 . Amount and type of partner abuse experienced

In the year ending March 2023, the Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW) estimated that 3.0% of people aged 16 years and over experienced partner abuse in the last year (4.0% for women and 2.1% for men).

Following the removal of the upper age limit for survey respondents in October 2021, when analysing data over time, we use the 16 to 59 years age range to give a comparable data time series.

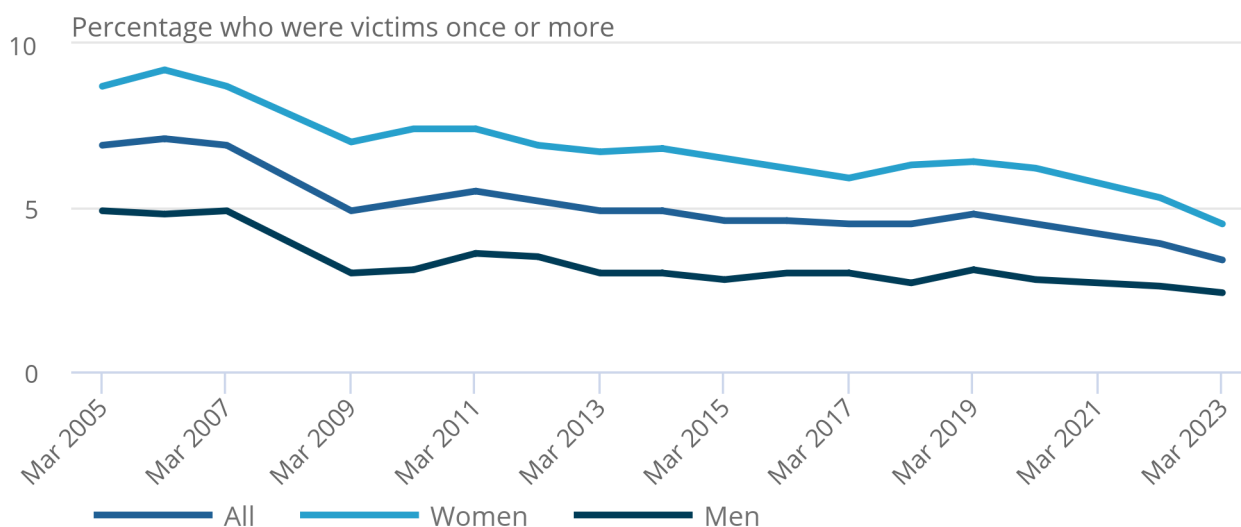
For people aged 16 to 59 years, 3.4% experienced partner abuse in the last year (4.5% for women and 2.4% for men, Figure 1). This was a [statistically significant](#) decrease compared with the year ending March 2020 (4.5%). This was driven by the statistically significant decrease in women experiencing partner abuse compared with the year ending March 2020 (6.2%).

Figure 1: Partner abuse experienced in the last year decreased for women aged 16 to 59 years compared with pre-coronavirus (COVID-19) levels

Prevalence of partner abuse in people aged 16 to 59 years, by sex, England and Wales, year ending March 2005 to year ending March 2023

Figure 1: Partner abuse experienced in the last year decreased for women aged 16 to 59 years compared with pre-coronavirus (COVID-19) levels

Prevalence of partner abuse in people aged 16 to 59 years, by sex, England and Wales, year ending March 2005 to year ending March 2023



Source: Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW) from the Office for National Statistics

Notes:

1. Data for the year ending March 2023 are not badged as National Statistics. They are based on eight months of data collection because of an error in the survey, which resulted in missing data. Caution should be taken when using these data because of the impact of the reduced data collection period on the quality of the estimates.
2. No data are available for the year ending March 2021 because the Crime Survey for England and Wales was suspended because of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.
3. No data are available for the year ending March 2008 because comparable questions on any domestic abuse, any partner abuse and any family abuse were not included in that year.

Around two in three partner abuse victims (65.7%) reported experiencing non-physical abuse (emotional, financial). Male victims reported experiencing a statistically significant higher level of force (31.8%) than female victims (18.9%). There was a statistically significant higher percentage of female victims (35.0%) who experienced threats compared with male victims (22.5%).

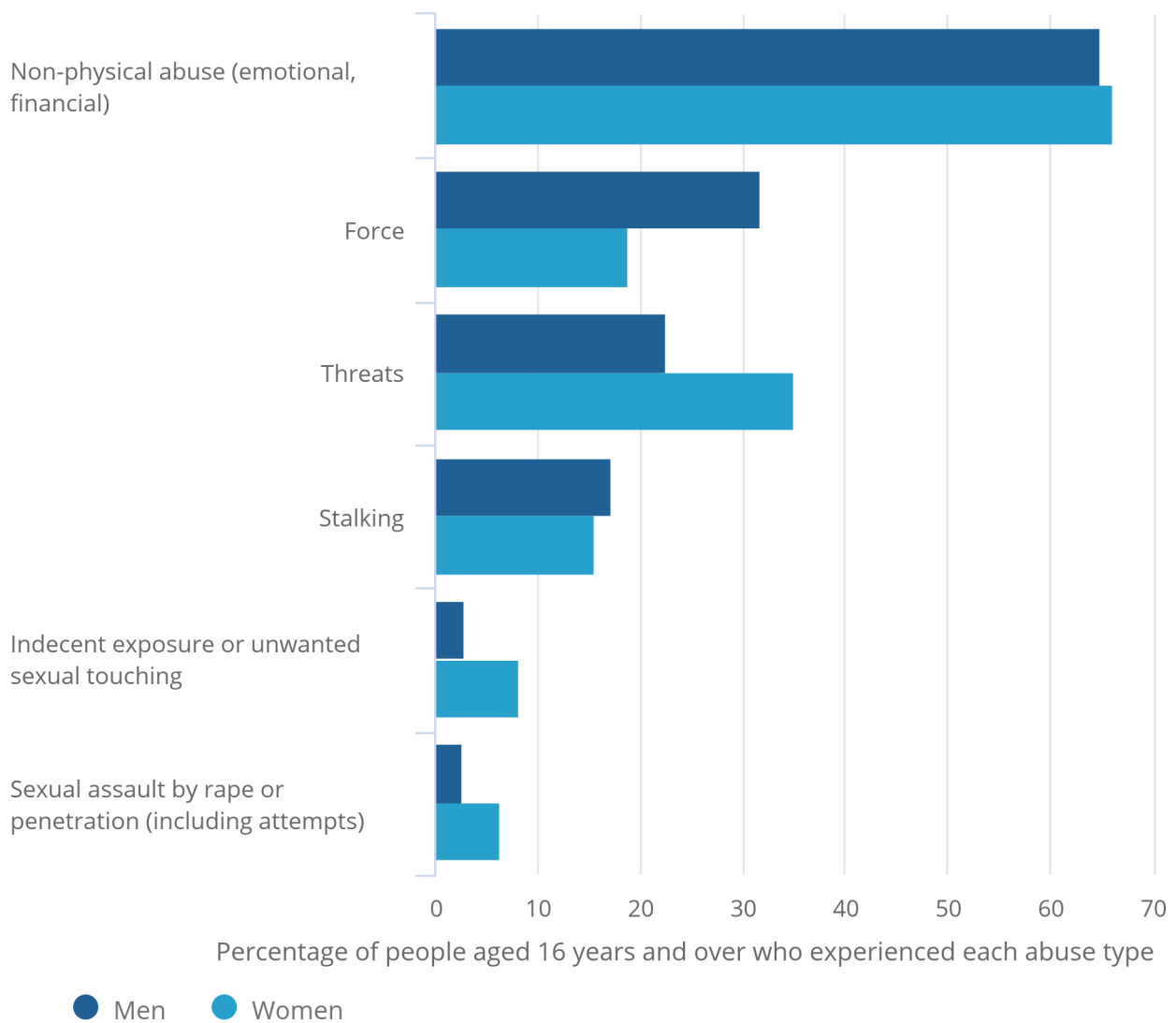
There was no significant difference between female and male victims in the prevalence of experiences of sexual assault by rape or penetration, including attempts, indecent exposure or unwanted touching and stalking (Figure 2).

Figure 2: Both men and women experienced more non-physical than physical partner abuse

Type of partner abuse experienced in the last year by people aged 16 years and over, by sex, England and Wales, year ending March 2023

Figure 2: Both men and women experienced more non-physical than physical partner abuse

Type of partner abuse experienced in the last year by people aged 16 years and over, by sex, England and Wales, year ending March 2023



Source: Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW) from the Office for National Statistics

Notes:

1. Respondents are asked to select all types of abuse they have experienced in the last year.
2. Sexual assault by rape or penetration includes attempts.
3. Data for the year ending March 2023 are not badged as National Statistics. They are based on eight months of data collection because of an error in the survey, which resulted in missing data. Caution should be taken when using these data because of the impact of the reduced data collection period on the quality of the estimates.

Victims of partner abuse in the last year were asked to state the sex of the person or people who abused them. A higher proportion of male victims reported that the perpetrator(s) was female (44.2% compared with 15.6% male).

A higher proportion of female victims reported that the perpetrator was male (56.0% compared with 3.1% female). Caution should be taken interpreting these figures because of the relatively large proportion of “don’t know” or “don’t wish to answer” responses for these questions.

4 . Context of partner abuse

Partner abuse victims leaving shared accommodation

Victims of partner abuse in the last year were asked if they shared accommodation with their abusive partner, whether they left that shared accommodation, and other information about the shared accommodation. If the victim had more than one abusive partner, these questions were asked of the most recent abusive partner.

Around one-fifth (18.9%) of partner abuse victims that reported abuse in the last year stated they currently shared, or had previously shared, accommodation with their abusive partner. Of these victims, 30.1% reported leaving the accommodation because of the abuse, even if it was for only one night.

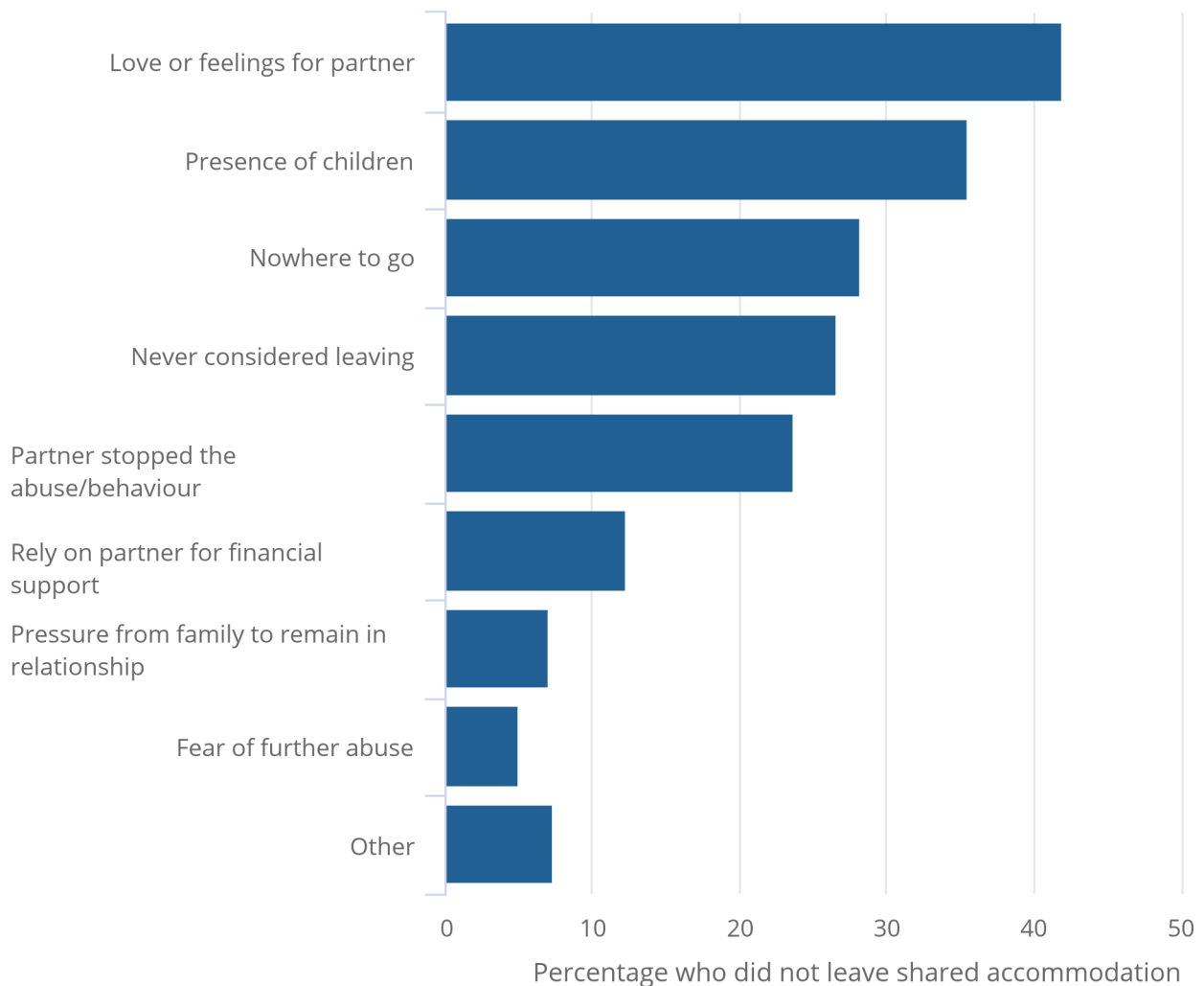
For both men and women, the most common reason for not leaving the accommodation they shared with an abusive partner was “love or feelings for partner”, followed by the presence of children. (Figure 3).

Figure 3: The most common reason for a victim not leaving accommodation shared with an abusive partner was "love or feelings for partner"

Reasons victim did not leave the shared accommodation with the abusive partner, people aged 16 years and over, England and Wales, year ending March 2023

Figure 3: The most common reason for a victim not leaving accommodation shared with an abusive partner was "love or feelings for partner"

Reasons victim did not leave the shared accommodation with the abusive partner, people aged 16 years and over, England and Wales, year ending March 2023



Source: Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW) from the Office for National Statistics

Notes:

1. If the victim had experienced abuse by more than one person in the last 12 months, the question was asked of the most recent relationship.
2. Data for the year ending March 2023 are not badged as National Statistics. They are based on eight months of data collection because of an error in the survey, which resulted in missing data. Caution should be taken when using these data because of the impact of the reduced data collection period on the quality of the estimates.

Presence of children in partner abuse victimisations

The [Domestic Abuse Act 2021](#) states a child who sees, hears or experiences the effects of domestic abuse and is related to the adult victim or perpetrator is also a victim themselves.

In 32.4% of cases of partner abuse, there was at least one child under the age of 16 years living in the household.

Where children were present in the household, in 15.4% of cases the children saw or heard what happened, in 71.9% of cases the respondent stated that the children did not see or hear what happened, and in 12.8% of cases the respondent did not know whether the children saw or heard what happened, or did not wish to answer.

5 . Effects of partner abuse on the victim

Of partner abuse victims, 16.4% reported that they sustained some sort of physical injury as a result of the abuse. The most common types of injuries sustained were minor bruising or black eye (11.3%) and scratches (7.2%). The overall prevalence of any physical injury to victims of partner abuse was greater for male victims (22.2%) than female victims (13.6%).

Victims of partner abuse were also presented with a list of other non-physical effects and were asked if they had sustained any of these as a result of the abuse. Over half of partner abuse victims experienced non-physical effects (52.0%). Broken down by sex, this was similar for male and female victims (53.0% and 51.5%, respectively).

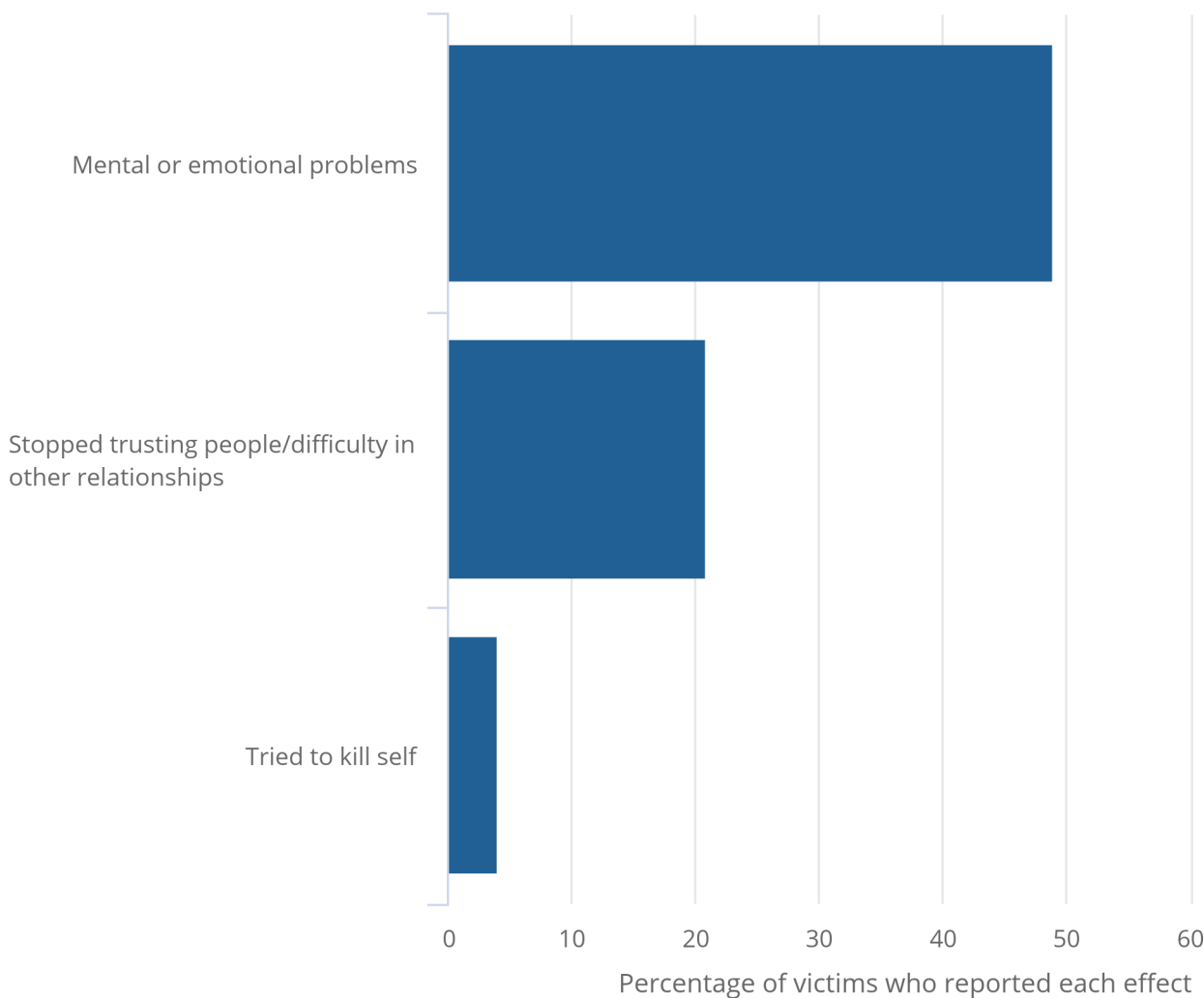
For both male and female victims, the category most commonly reported was “mental or emotional problems” followed by “stopped trusting people or difficulty in other relationships” (Figure 4).

Figure 4: The most common non-physical effect of partner abuse was "mental or emotional problems"

Non-physical effects of partner abuse for people aged 16 years and over, England and Wales, year ending March 2023

Figure 4: The most common non-physical effect of partner abuse was "mental or emotional problems";

Non-physical effects of partner abuse for people aged 16 years and over, England and Wales, year ending March 2023



Source: Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW) from the Office for National Statistics

Notes:

1. The response option "other effect (including becoming pregnant or contracting a disease)" has been removed because of disclosure constraints.
2. Data for the year ending March 2023 are not badged as National Statistics. They are based on eight months of data collection because of an error in the survey, which resulted in missing data. Caution should be taken when using these data because of the impact of the reduced data collection period on the quality of the estimates.

Partner abuse victims who had sustained a physical injury or had experienced other effects as a result of the partner abuse were also asked if they had received medical attention. Just over one-quarter (27.5%) of partner abuse victims who had experienced any physical injury or other effects also received some sort of medical attention.

Victims who had received medical attention were also asked where they received it, with 73.6% of victims doing so at a GP or doctor's surgery, 27.9% at a specialist mental health or psychiatric service and 15.7% went to a hospital's Accident and Emergency department.

6 . Victim perception of partner abuse

Victims of partner abuse were asked whether they perceived what had happened to them to be domestic violence. Nearly half of partner abuse victims (49.3%) reported that they did not think what had happened to them was domestic violence, compared with 25.9% who thought it was domestic violence and 24.8% who did not know or did not wish to answer.

Victims were also asked whether they thought what had happened to them was a crime. The most common response was that it was "wrong but not a crime" (28.5%), followed by it was "a crime" (22.6%) and 17.5% reported it was "just something that happens".

7 . Sources of support sought by victims of partner abuse

Victims of partner abuse in the last year were asked who they had spoken to about the abuse they had experienced. For the purpose of this analysis these have been split into three types of support: someone known personally to them (for example, a friend or relative), someone in a professional organisation (for example, police, health professionals or a local council department), and someone in another support organisation (for example, Victim Support or a helpline).

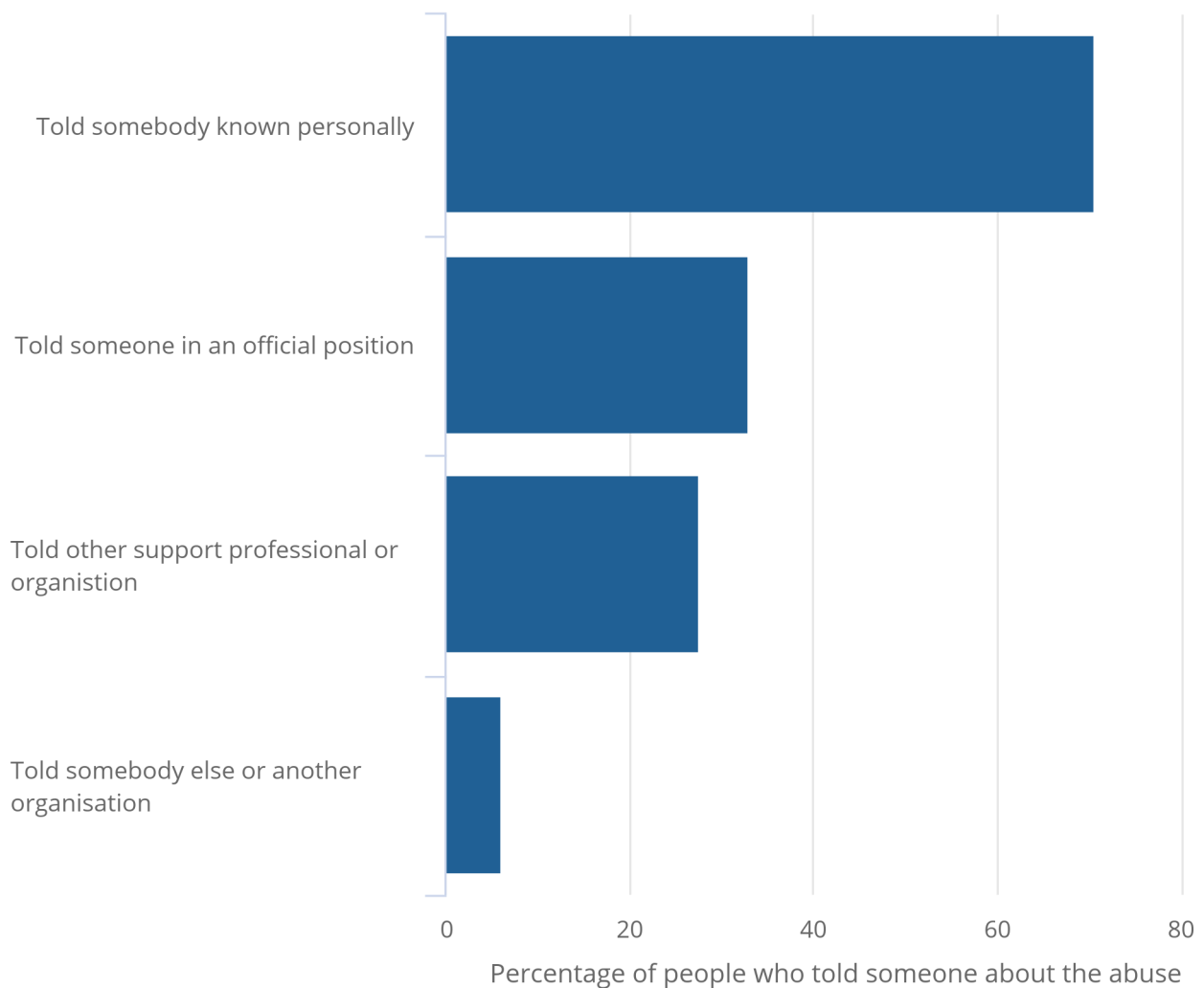
In 81.0% of cases, victims of partner abuse reported they told someone about the abuse they had experienced in the last year. When participants were asked who they had told about the abuse, they most frequently reported that they had told someone they knew personally (Figure 5).

Figure 5: Victims more often told someone they knew personally about the abuse

Who victim had told personally about the partner abuse experienced in the last year, people aged 16 years and over, England and Wales, year ending March 2023

Figure 5: Victims more often told someone they knew personally about the abuse

Who victim had told personally about the partner abuse experienced in the last year, people aged 16 years and over, England and Wales, year ending March 2023



Source: Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW) from the Office for National Statistics

Notes:

1. Data for the year ending March 2023 are not badged as National Statistics. They are based on eight months of data collection because of an error in the survey, which resulted in missing data. Caution should be taken when using these data because of the impact of the reduced data collection period on the quality of the estimates.

8 . Reporting partner abuse to the police

For victims of partner abuse, 18.9% reported the abuse to the police. There was no significant difference in the proportion of victims who told the police about the partner abuse they experienced in the year ending March 2023 compared with the year ending March 2022 (13.3%).

In cases where partner abuse victims did not report the abuse to the police, the most common reason given was that the abuse was too trivial or not worth reporting (43.3%). In contrast, the least common reason cited was “Police did not come when called” where 1.0% of partner abuse victims stated this reason.

In incidents where the police came to know about the abuse, respondents were asked what actions were taken by the police. The police took some sort of action in 61.1% of cases that they knew about.

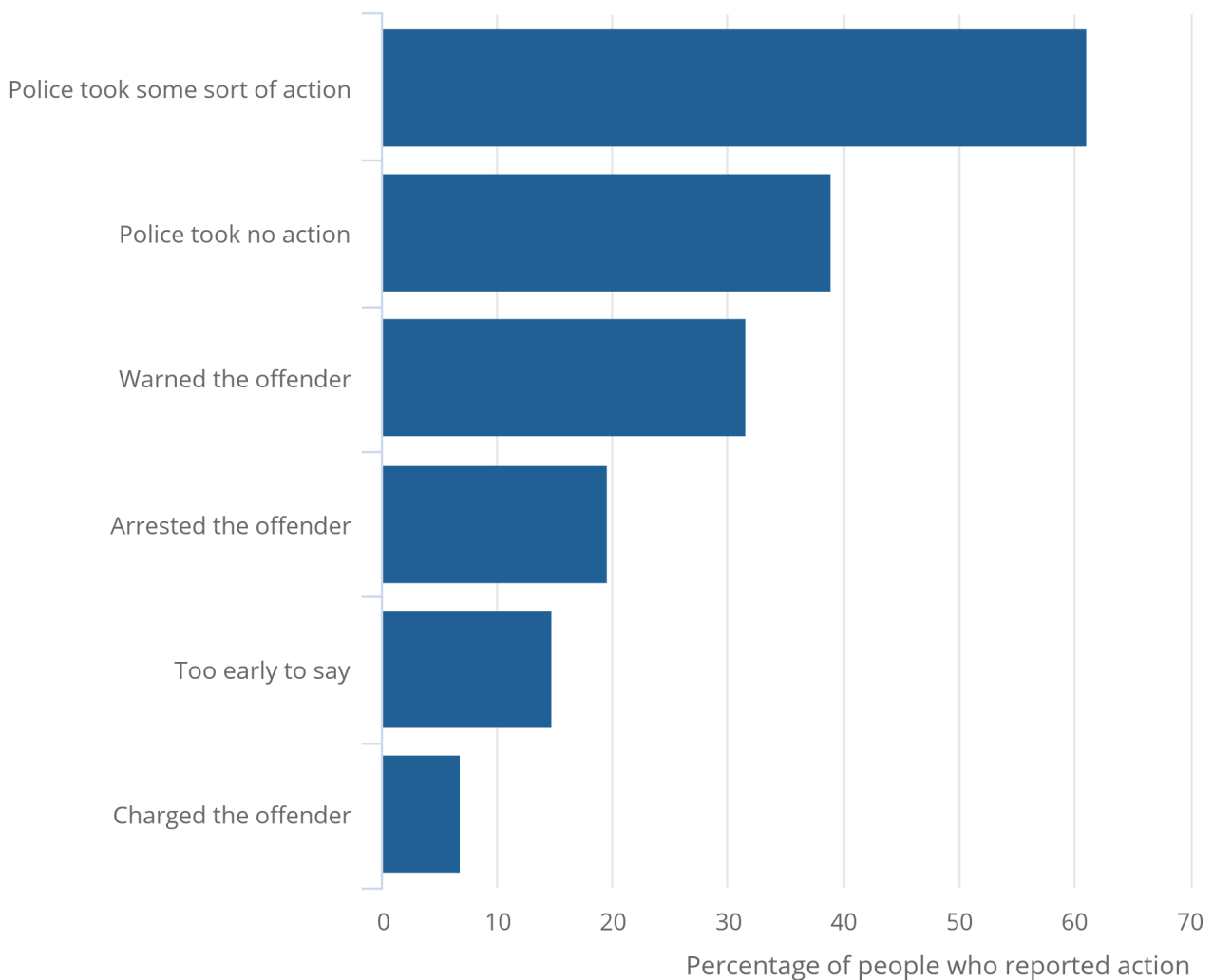
The most common action taken by the police was to warn the offender (31.6%) or arrest the offender (19.5%, Figure 6). In 6.9% of cases the offender was charged. Caution should be taken as this estimate only includes cases where both the abuse and police charge took place in the last 12 months.

Figure 6: The police took action in nearly two-thirds of reported cases of partner abuse

Action taken by the police in reported partner abuse cases for people aged 16 years and over, England and Wales, year ending March 2023

Figure 6: The police took action in nearly two-thirds of reported cases of partner abuse

Action taken by the police in reported partner abuse cases for people aged 16 years and over, England and Wales, year ending March 2023



Source: Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW) from the Office for National Statistics

Notes:

1. Data for the year ending March 2023 are not badged as National Statistics. They are based on eight months of data collection because of an error in the survey, which resulted in missing data. Caution should be taken when using these data because of the impact of the reduced data collection period on the quality of the estimates.

Victims who told the police about the partner abuse they experienced were asked how satisfied they were with the outcome, whether they felt safer as a result of the outcome, and how helpful they found the police.

Over half (60.4%) were either very satisfied (32.8%) or fairly satisfied (27.7%) with their experience with the police and Crown Prosecution Service. In 47.5% of cases, victims felt safer as a result of the action, while 26.4% felt less safe.

9 . Partner abuse data

[Partner abuse in detail, England and Wales: year ending March 2023](#)

Dataset | Released 24 November 2023

The prevalence and nature of partner abuse; annual data from the Crime Survey for England and Wales.

[Stalking: findings from the Crime Survey for England and Wales](#)

Dataset | Released 24 November 2023

Stalking experienced by women and men, including numbers, type and personal characteristics, based upon annual findings from the Crime Survey for England and Wales.

10 . Glossary

Domestic abuse

Domestic abuse is not limited to physical violence and can include a range of abusive behaviours. It can also be experienced as repeated patterns of abusive behaviour to maintain power and control in a relationship. The [Domestic Abuse Act 2021](#) defines domestic abuse as any incident or pattern of incidents between those aged 16 years and over who:

- are a partner
- are an ex-partner
- are a relative
- have, or there has been a time when they each have had, a parental relationship in relation to the same child

The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 outlines the following behaviours as abuse:

- physical or sexual abuse
- violent or threatening behaviour
- controlling or coercive behaviour
- economic abuse
- psychological, emotional, or other abuse

The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 recognises children under the age of 18 years who see, or hear, or experience the effects of the abuse, as a victim of domestic abuse if they are related or have a parental relationship to the adult victim or perpetrator of the abuse.

Partner abuse

Within the Crime Survey in England and Wales (CSEW), partner abuse is a subcategory of domestic abuse, which includes:

- non-sexual abuse – physical force, emotional or financial abuse, or threats to hurt the respondent or someone close to them, carried out by a current or former partner
- sexual assault – rape or assault by penetration (including attempts), or indecent exposure or unwanted touching carried out by a current or former partner
- stalking – two or more incidents (causing distress, fear or alarm) of receiving obscene or threatening unwanted letters, emails, text messages or phone calls, having had obscene or threatening information about them placed on the internet, waiting or loitering around home or workplace, or following or watching by a current or former partner

Stalking

Defined in the CSEW as two or more incidents (causing distress, fear or alarm) of receiving obscene or threatening unwanted letters, emails, text messages or phone calls, having had obscene or threatening information about them placed on the internet, waiting or loitering around home or workplace, or following or watching.

11 . Data sources and quality

Further quality and methodology information can be found in the [Domestic abuse in England and Wales overview](#).

Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW)

For reasons outlined in Section 2, CSEW estimates for the year ending March 2023 are not badged as National Statistics and should be treated with caution.

More information about the CSEW can be found in our:

- [User guide to crime statistics for England and Wales](#)
- [Domestic abuse QMI](#)
- [How domestic abuse data are captured through the criminal justice system article](#).

Work to improve the data collected to measure domestic abuse from the CSEW is ongoing. More information can be found in our [Redevelopment of domestic abuse statistics: research update November 2023 article](#).

12 . Related links

[How domestic abuse data are captured through the criminal justice system](#)

Article | Released 24 November 2023

Information on the stages of the criminal justice process in England and Wales, and how data are captured at each stage.

[Domestic abuse quality and methodology information \(QMI\)](#)

Article | Released 24 November 2023

Quality and Methodology Information for domestic abuse detailing the strengths and limitations of the data, methods used, and data uses and users.

13 . Cite this article

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