

# **Prevalence of domestic violence among lesbians & gay men**

**Data report to Flame TV**

**Laurie Henderson**



**First public release: March 2003**

# Acknowledgments

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**Questionnaire design:** Ford Hickson, Laurie Henderson and Peter Weatherburn (all of Sigma Research and Susie McLean (of the National AIDS Trust).

**Recruitment:** Pride event recruitment at Brighton, Leeds and London was only possible because of the efforts of the people who organise Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual Pride-type events. We would like to warmly thank everyone involved.

Recruitment to the women's survey at events was undertaken by the following Sigma team members: Kate Baker, Kath Dane, Nicola Douglas, Peter Keogh, Dale Brown, Richard Harding, Laurie Henderson, Ford Hickson, Susie McLean, David Reid, Jo Robinson, Justin Schofield, Carlos Valle, Peter Weatherburn and Sonia Williams. Co-ordination of all event recruitment was by Michael Stephens at Sigma Research.

Recruitment to the men's survey was undertaken by 72 health promotion agencies who participated in the design of the *Gay Men's Sex Survey 2000* and / or its distribution in booklet form.

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**Data handling & management:** David Reid, Laurie Henderson and Ford Hickson.

**Analysis & text:** Laurie Henderson, David Reid, Ford Hickson and Peter Weatherburn.

**Funding:** The small-scale survey was commissioned by Flame TV, a television production company which was intending to make a documentary about lesbians' and gay men's experience of domestic violence. A set of questions about this topic was embedded within our sexual behaviour survey which has already been published as *First, Service: Relationships, sex and health among lesbian and bisexual women* (February 2002).

The domestic violence data reported here has not previously been released publically as it was commissioned on the understanding that no data would be published until the television programme had been made and broadcast. This has not happened in the 30 months since this data was reported to Flame TV.

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# 1. Methods

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## 1.1 Women

The women in this sample were recruited at three community-based gay pride events in the summer of 2000 (London Mardi Gras, Brighton Pride and Leeds Hyde Out!). An anonymous self-complete questionnaire (two sides of A4) was offered to women on a clipboard with pen attached. Women completed the questionnaire on the spot and returned it to a sealed return box. Some women approached the stall and requested a questionnaire while others were approached and invited to take part by a team of recruiters. The criteria for inclusion in the sample for analysis was: female and resident in the UK and either: homosexually active in the last year and/or identify as lesbian, gay or bisexual. In total 2049 women were recruited, which resulted in 1911 women in this sample.

## 1.2 Men

The male sample was recruited using a different method than was used for the women. Identical questions were added into the 2000 *National Gay Men's Sex Survey*. This is a community recruited survey done by gay men's organisations and health promoters using a small (A6) booklet. It contained exactly the same six questions about having experienced domestic violence from a regular male partner. The leaflet is designed to be sealed once complete and mailed to a Freepost address.

This leaflet was made available to all health promoters who work with gay men, bisexual men or other men who have sex with men. In total, 27,000 leaflets were sent out to 61 different agencies (although we do not know how many of these were passed on). Agencies distribute the leaflet to gay and bisexual men through community venues and in the course of their work. The inclusion criteria for the men were that respondents are resident in England and Wales and homosexually active in the last year. Overall, 1,485 were returned to the Sigma office which resulted in 1391 in the sample.

## 2. Demographics

### 2.1 Sexual identity

The majority of women identified as lesbian (56%), or gay (17.8%). 9.9% use the term dyke, 8.3% use bisexual, 6.4% don't use a term and amongst those 1.4% who gave another term the majority used transgender or queer.

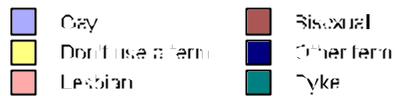
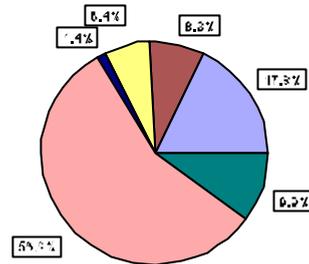


Figure 3.1a: Women's sexual identity

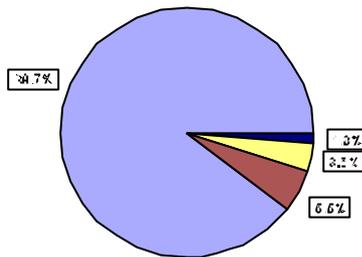


Figure 2.1b: Men's sexual identity

Almost 90% of men identified as gay, 5.5% as bisexual, 3.5% don't usually use a term to identify themselves sexually and amongst those 1.3% who gave another term the majority said 'queer' or homosexual.

### 2.2 Age

The age of women ranged from 15 to 79, the average (median) was 30 years old (mean 31.4, standard deviation 8.5). Half of the women were between 25 and 36.

The age of men ranged 14 to 78, the average (median) was 34 years old (mean 35.54, standard deviation 11.45). Half of the men were between 27 and 42.

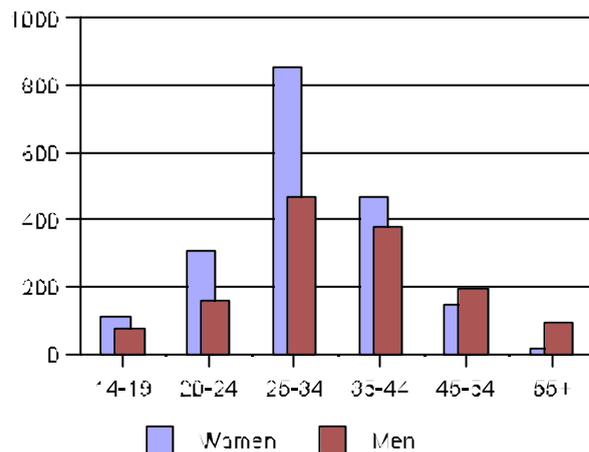


Figure 2.2 Women and Men in 6 age bands.

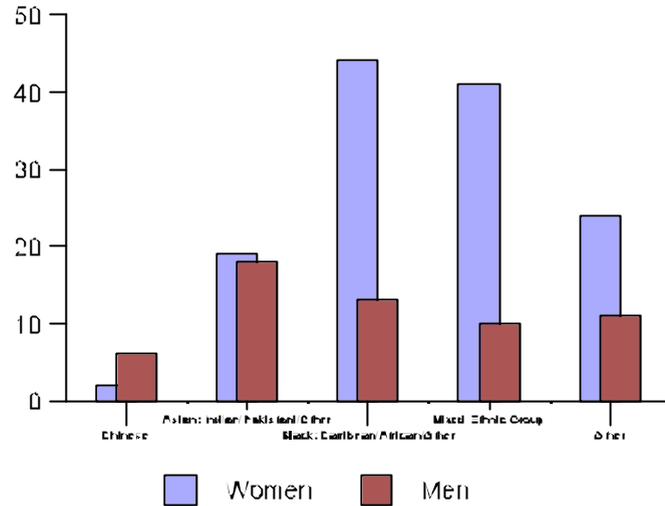
### 2.3 Ethnic Group

The vast majority (93.2%) of **women** identified their ethnicity as white (Irish 7.4%, British 77.9% and 'other' 7.8%). Those who said 'white other' were primarily Australian, American or Western European nationalities.

Figure 2.3 only shows those women and men who described their ethnicity as other than white.

Only 6.8% identified their ethnicity as other than white (0.1% Chinese, 0.8% Asian, 2.3%, Black, 2.1% mixed ethnic group and 1.3% gave an other term).

The vast majority (95.8%) of **men** identified their ethnicity as white (Irish 4.6%, British 86.4% and 'other' 4.8%). Those who said 'white other' were primarily Australian, American or Western European nationalities.



**Figure 2.3: Number of women and men by minority ethnic group**

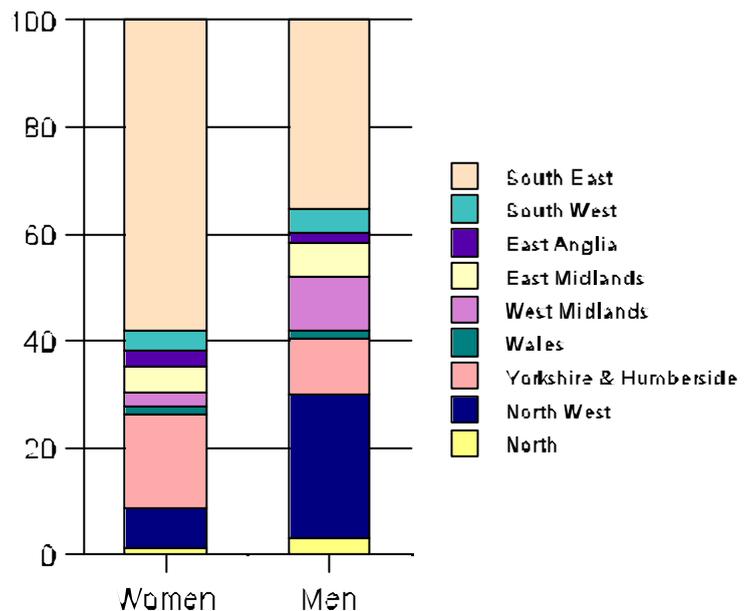
Only 4.2% of men identified their ethnicity as other than white (0.4% Chinese, 1.3% Asian, 1.0% Black, 0.9% mixed ethnic group and 0.9% gave an other term).

### 2.4 Region of Residence

Both surveys asked 'Which local authority do you live in?'. This information was then used to group women and men living in United Kingdom standard regions (See figure 2.4).

Over half (58.1%) the **Women** surveyed are currently living in the South East region and one fifth (17.7%) in Yorkshire & Humberside. This reflects the sites where women were recruited (Pride events in these regions).

There are, however, women from every region in England and Wales: 7.2% were recruited in the North West, 1.3% in the North,



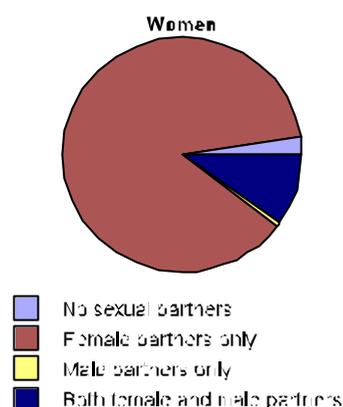
**Figure 2.4: % of women and men living in UK Standard Regions**

1.6% in Wales, 2.3% in the West Midlands, 5.0% in the East Midlands, 3.0% in East Anglia and 3.7% in the South West.

**Men** living in England and Wales were included in this survey and the geographical distribution includes men from all standard regions and reflects the distribution of the survey by agencies throughout this area. One third (35.3%) of men live in the South East region, 27.0% in the North West, 10.4% in Yorkshire and Humberside, 10.0% in the West Midlands, 6.3% in the East Midlands, 4.4% in the South West, 3.0% in the North, 2.2% in East Anglia and 1.5% in Wales.

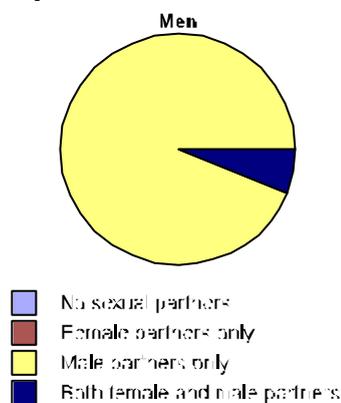
## 2.5 Gender of Sexual Partners

The majority of **women** (86.9%) had only female sexual partners in the previous year, One in ten (9.6%) have both male and female sexual partners, 2.6% had no sexual partners in the previous year and 0.9% had only had sex with males.



**Figure 2.5a: Women's sexual partners in the last year.**

Only men who were homosexually active were included in the **men's** survey. The majority of those surveyed (94.1%) had sex with men only and the remaining (5.9%) had sex with both men and women, in the last year.

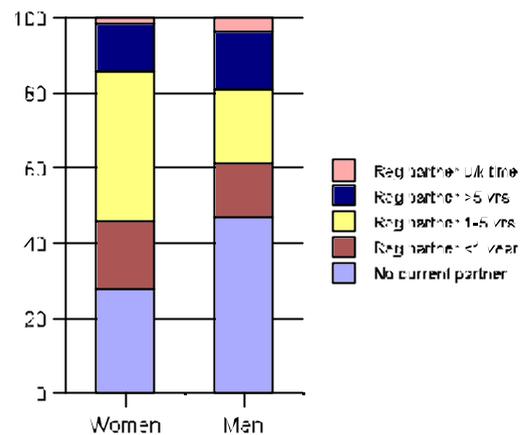


**Figure 2.5b: Men's sexual partners in the last year.**

## 2.6 Same sex relationship status

Almost three quarters of **women** (72.3%) currently had a regular female sexual partner. 39.4% of the entire sample had been in their current relationship for between 1 to 5 years, 18.4% less than one year, 12.9% over five years and 1.6% were in a regular relationship but failed to specify the duration.

Just over half of the **men** surveyed (52.8%) currently had a regular male sexual partner. 19.7% of the entire sample had been in their current relationship for between 1 to 5 years, 15.2% for longer than 5 years, 14.3% less than one year and 3.6% were in a regular relationship but failed to specify the duration.



**Figure 2.6: Same sex partnerships**

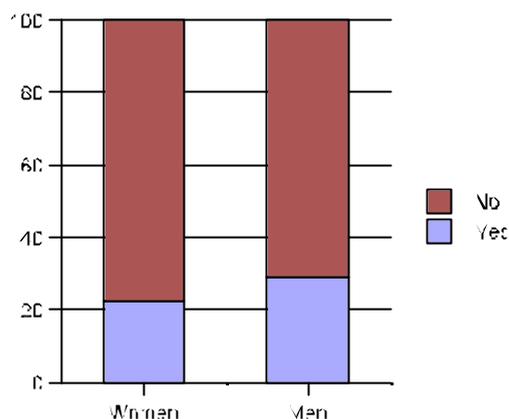
### 3. Experiences of physical, emotional & sexual abuse

A set of identical questions on physical, sexual or mental abuse and regular same sex partners were asked in both surveys.

#### 3.1 Ever suffered physical, sexual, mental abuse from a regular same sex partner

Almost a quarter of the entire sample of **women** (22%) had ever suffered physical, sexual or mental abuse or violence from any regular female sexual partner (78% had not). The abuse happened once only to 3% and 19% had suffered some recurrent abuse.

Almost a third of the entire sample of **men** (29%) had ever suffered physical, sexual or mental abuse or violence from any regular male sexual partner (71% had not). The abuse happened once only to 5% and 24% had suffered some recurrent abuse.



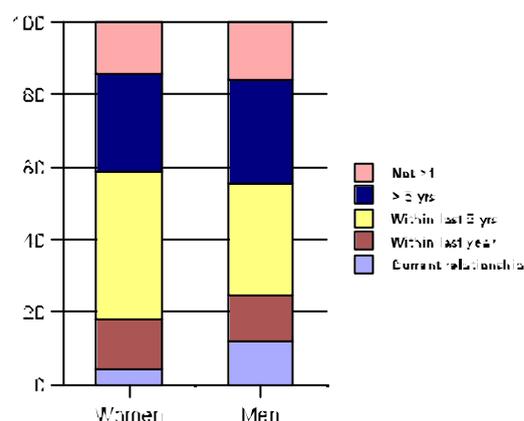
**Figure 3.1 Ever suffered abuse from regular same sex partner**

***THE REMAINDER OF THIS REPORT WILL ONLY REFER TO THOSE WHO REPORTED HAVING EVER BEING ABUSED IN A SAME SEX RELATIONSHIP.***

#### 3.2 Suffered abuse more than once over a period of time

Of those **women** who had ever been abused by a regular female partner, 14.1 % had not suffered abuse more than once. 4.0% were suffering repeated abuse in their current regular relationship, 13.9% had been repeatedly abused in the last year, 40.8% in the last five years and 27.2% over five years ago.

Of those **men** who had ever been abused by a regular male partner, 15.8% had not suffered abuse more than once. 12.0% were suffering repeated abuse in their current regular relationship, 12.7% had been repeatedly abused in the last year, 30.8% in the last five years and 28.8% over five years ago.

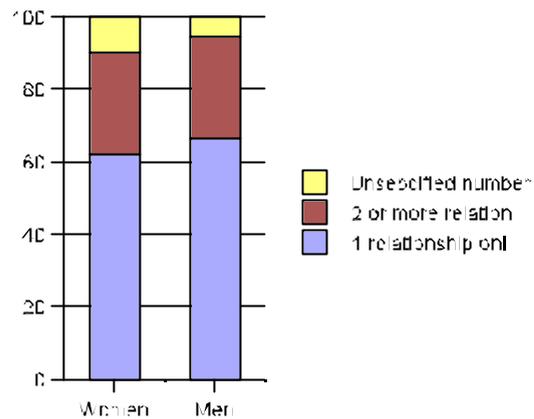


**Figure 3.2 Repeated abuse over a period of time.**

### 3.3 Number of regular relationships where abuse was suffered

**Women** who were abused more than once suffered the abuse in an average (median) of one relationship (mean 1.44, standard deviation 0.86). The number of relationships ranged from 1 to 10 and 75% had between 1 and 2 abusive relationships.

61.9% had suffered recurrent abuse in one relationship only, 28.5% in two or more relationships and 9.7% did not specify how many relationships this had happened in.



**Figure 3.3 Number of relationships abuse suffered in**

**Men** who were abused more than once suffered the abuse in an average (median) of one relationship (mean 1.49, standard deviation 1.61). The number of relationships ranged from 1 to 27 and 75% of men had between 1 and 2 abusive relationships.

66.2% of the men had suffered recurrent abuse in one relationship only, 28.2% in two or more relationships and 5.6% did not specify how many relationships this had happened in.

### 3.4 Period of Abuse

For women in abusive relationships the average (median) length of time that they suffered abuse was 18 months (mean 28 months, standard deviation 38 months). Abuse duration ranged from less than one month to 31 years and 50% suffered for between 6 and 36 months.

For men in abusive relationships the average (median) length of time that they suffered abuse was also 18 months (mean 29 months, standard deviation 39 months). Abuse duration ranged from less than one month to 29 years and 50% suffered for between 4 and 36 months.

### 3.5 Type of abuse

For those who had ever experienced abuse the difference between women and men for types of abuse are marginal. In both men and women the most common form of abuse were emotional or mental abuse such as 'insults, put downs or belittling'. Almost as many reported being physically attacked or hit.

<b>% of those who have ever been abused and abuse experienced</b>		
<b>In that relationship were you?</b>	<b>Women %</b>	<b>Men %</b>
Sexually abused/ forced to have sex	18.3	22.0
Physically attacked or hit	56.0	54.5
Physically injured, including bruising	37.4	42.3
Physically injured, needing medical attention	14.3	18.3
Regularly insulted, put down or belittled	58.6	60.8
Isolated from friends and/or family	40.4	41.3
Monitored or checked-up on all the time	35.5	34.7
Ever in fear of your life	17.8	22.0
Other types of abuse	15.7	14.3

The 'Other' category for women were primarily acts of abuse that are considered emotional (12) and mental (13) abuse. These included 'constant harassment', humiliation, 'mind games', 'extreme jealousy', and abusive phone calls among others. For the men, the 'Other' category was more diverse than the women's, but primarily also contained abuse that is considered mental (13) and emotional (13) such as 'sleep deprivation', 'torturous mind games', 'treated like a servant' and 'threats of violence'. But other responses included several thefts of money, financial blackmail, arson attacks, fraud, and infection with HIV.

A further analysis was conducted to examine whether there were any relationships between the various types and time-scales of abuse described above. When we describe a relationship as (statistically) significant we mean that the chance of that relationship occurring by chance is less than 5%.

### **3.6 Relationship between experiencing abuse more than once and the number of relationships abuse occurred in**

There was no relationship between these variables for either women or men.

### **3.7 Length of time experiencing abuse and type of abuse experienced**

Generally where there was a relationship between type of abuse and length of time experiencing abuse within a relationship. Those answering yes to some types of abuse tended to have experienced that abuse for a longer time period than others no describing that type of abuse.

Specifically, the length of time experiencing abuse was longer:

- among those who reported being physically injured including bruising (women and men)
- among those who reported being physically injured, needing medical attention (women and men)
- among those who reported being regularly insulted, put down or belittled (women and men)
- among those who reported being isolated from friends and/or friends (women and men)
- among those who reported being monitored or checked up on all the time (men only)
- among those who reported being ever in fear of their lives (men only)
- among those who reported being physically attacked or hit (men only)

The length of time experiencing abuse was shorter:

- among those who reported being sexually abused or forced to have sex (men only)

### 3.8 Abuse over time and type of domestic violence

We found evidence of a significant relationship between having experienced abuse once or more and the following types of abuse.

As can be seen in the table below those who have suffered abuse once only are consistently less likely to report being physically injured including bruising, insulted, isolated from friends and family or monitored and checked up on.

Types of abuse	Women				
	Once only	When relationship occurred			
		Current Rel.	last year	last 5 years	>5 years
Sexually abused/forced to have sex	No relationship				
Physically attacked or hit	No relationship				
Physically injured including bruising	18.8%	30.8%	40.7%	39.0%	44.9%
Physically injured needing medical attention	No relationship				
Regularly insulted put down or belittled	29.2%	38.5%	66.7%	64.9%	62.2%
Isolated from friends and/or family	12.5%	38.5%	44.4%	46.8%	44.3%
Monitored and checked-up on all the time	14.6%	30.8%	35.2%	39.0%	41.8%
Ever in fear of your life	No relationship				
Other types of abuse	No relationship				

For men, a similar pattern is observed. However, those who reported being ever in fear of their life were least likely to report abuse as occurring once only or in their current relationship.

Types of abuse	Men				
	Once only	When relationship occurred			
		Current Rel.	last year	last 5 years	>5 years
Sexually abused/forced to have sex	No relationship				
Physically attacked or hit	No relationship				
Physically injured including bruising	22.6%	43.2%	34.0%	49.2%	46.2%
Physically injured needing medical attention	No relationship				
Regularly insulted put down or belittled	17%	70.5%	66.0%	71.7%	63.2%
Isolated from friends and/or family	9.4%	43.2%	52.0%	44.2%	48.1%
Monitored and checked-up on all the time	No relationship				
Ever in fear of your life	9.4%	9.1%	30.0%	21.7%	30.2%
Other types of abuse	7.5%	13.6%	26.0%	18.3%	7.5%

### 3.9 Abuse reported to the police

The majority of **women** who had been abused had not reported that abuse to the police (86.9%). Only 13.1% had reported that abuse and 3.8% had reported abuse to the police more than once.

The majority of **men** who had been abused had not reported that abuse to the police (81.2%). Only 18.8% had reported that abuse and 5.3% had reported abuse to the police more than once.

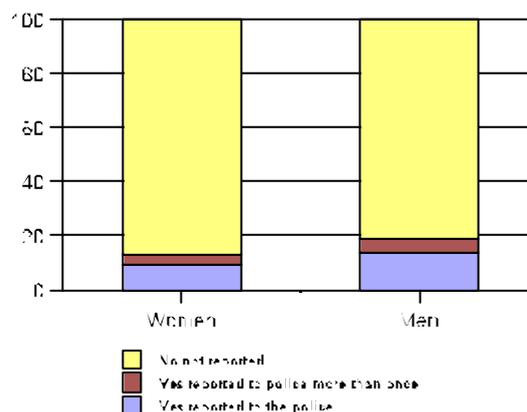


Figure 3.9 : Reports of abuse to police

### **3.10 Type of abuse and reports of any abuse to police**

For both women and men, reporting any abuse to police was associated with the type of abuse suffered.

Men and women were more likely to report to the police abuse featuring:

- physical attack
- physical injury including bruising
- physical injury needing medical attention
- fear for life

In addition, among the women but not the men, reporting any abuse to police was significantly associated with experience of sexual abuse.

### **3.11 Length of time experiencing abuse in a relationship and reporting any abuse to police**

We found no evidence of a relationship between the length of time in months they experienced abuse and whether they reported any abuse to the police.

### **3.12 Abuse over time and reporting of abuse to police**

We found no evidence for a relationship between having experienced abuse once or more and reporting any abuse to the police.

<ends>