Domestic Abuse

Definition

- Behaviour of a person ("A") towards another person ("B") is "domestic abuse" if— (a) A and B are each aged 16 or over and are personally connected, and (b) the behaviour is abusive.
- Behaviour is "abusive" if it consists of any of the following— (a) physical or sexual abuse; (b) violent or threatening behaviour; (c) controlling or coercive behaviour; (d) economic abuse; (e) psychological, emotional or other abuse.
  The Domestic Abuse Act (2021)[1]

Summary points

- The rate of domestic abuse related incidents and crimes per 1,000 population (aged 16 and over) was 32.2 per 1,000 for Bristol in 2025/26.
- For Bristol in 2025/26, 44% of all recorded domestic abuse related crimes were a repeat incident.
- In Bristol, females over the age of 16 are 2.4 times more likely to be a victim of a domestic abuse related crime than males (2025/26).
- Women in the 30-39 year old age bracket are most likely to experience a domestic abuse related crime (2025/26).
- Police recorded domestic abuse-related crimes were significantly higher in the North and West (Outer) and South Bristol sub-localities than the Bristol average (2024/25).

Findings

Nationally[2], 816,493 domestic abuse-related crimes were recorded by the police in England and Wales in the year ending March 2025, a 4.1% decrease compared to the previous year (851,062) which in part reflects recent changes in police recording practices.

The Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW) estimated that 7.8% of people aged 16 years and over (9.1% women and 6.5% men) experienced domestic abuse in the year ending March 2025; this equates to an estimated 3.8 million people aged 16+ (2.2 million women and 1.5 million men).

A significantly higher proportion of people aged 16 to 19 years (18.2%) and 20 to 24 years (12.9%) were victims of domestic abuse in the last year compared with those in age categories of 25 years and over[3].

For year ending March 2025, most differences between domestic abuse estimates across different ethnic groups from the Crime Survey for England and Wales were found not to be significant. However, there was a significantly higher proportion of people aged 16 years and

[1] Domestic Abuse Act 2021 (legislation.gov.uk)
[2] Domestic abuse in England and Wales overview - Office for National Statistics (ons.gov.uk)
[3] Domestic abuse victim characteristics, England and Wales - Office for National Statistics (ons.gov.uk)

over in the Black ethnic group (11.5%), who experienced domestic abuse in the last year, compared with those in the Asian or Asian British group (6.1%).

Of crimes recorded by the police[4]:

- In the year ending March 2025, the victim was female in 72.1% of domestic abuse-related crimes
- Between the year ending March 2022 and the year ending March 2024, 69.6% of victims of domestic homicide were female compared with 11.4% of victims of non-domestic homicide.

In 2024/25, the rate of domestic abuse related crimes and incidents was 26.8 per 1000 for England[5], a slight decrease on the previous year (27.1%). Based on local police data, 7,727 domestic abuse flagged crimes with victims over the age of 16 and 5,542 domestic abuse incidents (across all ages) were recorded[6] in Bristol in 2025/26, an increase of 5% and 12% in crimes and incidents respectively compared to 2024/25. The rate of domestic abuse related incidents and crimes per 1,000 population (aged 16 and over) was 32.2 per 1000, an increase from 30.0 per 1000 in 2024/25. Of those crimes and incidents that were recorded 58.2% met the definition of a crime, down from 59.8% in 2024/25. For Bristol in 2025/26, where victim age was recorded, 44% of all domestic abuse related crimes with victims aged 16 and over were a repeat offence[i], similar to 2024/25. Repeat offences are defined as multiple offences committed against the same victim within 12 months of the latest offence.

Equalities data: Local data on the rate of domestic abuse related crimes [ii]by ward is available for 2025/26 and highlights a significant variation in rates across the city, from 4.1 per 1000 in Clifton Down to 45.6 per 1000 population in Hartcliffe & Withywood (Figure 1).

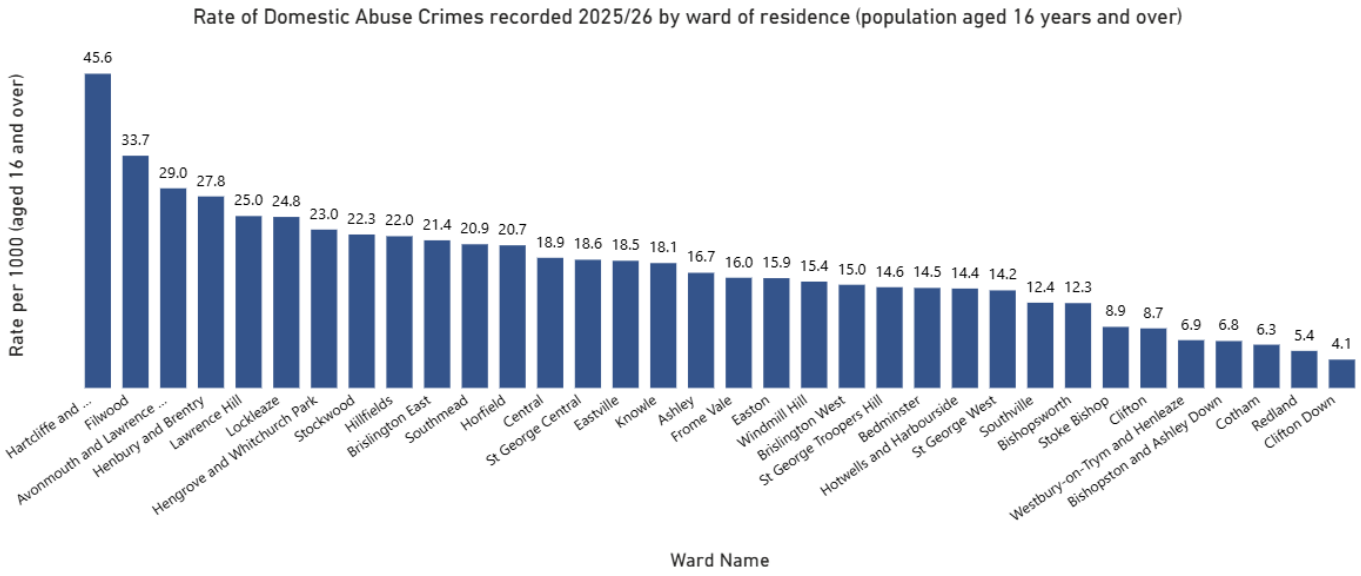


Figure 1**:** Rate of domestic abuse incidents and crimes 2025/26; Source: Avon & Somerset Constabulary

[4] Domestic abuse victim characteristics, England and Wales - Office for National Statistics (ons.gov.uk)
[5] Public Health Outcomes Framework 2026 Public health profiles - OHID (phe.org.uk)
[6] Police recorded data. **Note;** This data is unlikely to reflect the true extent of offending and should be used with caution. It is from the Police live data system so may change. Rates are per incident not per person, so could include multiple offences against 1 victim.

There is an association between domestic abuse and poverty. Existing analysis in the UK and internationally have consistently found vulnerability to DVA to be associated with low income, economic strain, and benefit receipt[7]. Hartcliffe and Withywood is one of the most socio-economically deprived wards in Bristol according to local data.[8]

For the year ending March 2025, the Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW) estimated that 2.2 million women and 1.5 million men aged 16 years and over experienced domestic abuse in the last year. This is a prevalence rate of approximately 9 in 100 women and 6 in 100 men.

The CSEW showed that a significantly higher percentage of adults with a disability (13.4%) experienced domestic abuse in the last year than those without (6.7%).

For the year ending March 2025, the CSEW showed that a higher proportion of adults who lived in single-parent households (23.7%) experienced domestic abuse in the last year than those living in no-children households (7.2%) or households with other adults and children (8.1%), however, household structure may have changed as a result of abuse experienced.

LGBT + survivors experience similar forms of domestic abuse as their heterosexual cisgender peers and disclose abuse from both intimate partners and family members, however experiences differ across and between groups within the LGBT+ community; LGBT+ people's experiences of abuse are frequently linked to their sexual orientation and gender identity. Current studies estimate that 60% to 80% of LGBT+ victims/survivors have never reported incidents to the police or attempted to find advice or protection from services. As well as this, black and minoritised LGBT+ people appear more likely to experience domestic abuse from family members, in addition to intimate partners.[9]

In Bristol, females over the age of 16 are 2.4 times more likely to be a victim of a domestic abuse related crime in Bristol than males. Women in the 30-39 year old age bracket are most likely to experience a domestic abuse related crime (at a rate of 42.2 per 1000). See Figure 2 and Figure 3 for the rate of domestic abuse related offences by gender and age.

Domestic abuse affects women from all ethnic groups, and there is no evidence to suggest that women from some ethnic or cultural communities are any more at risk than others. However, the form the abuse takes may vary; in some communities, for example, domestic abuse may be perpetrated by extended family members, or it may include forced marriage, or female genital mutilation (FGM)[10]. Whatever their experiences, women and men from Black, Asian or minoritised communities are likely to face additional barriers to receiving the help that they need.

[7] University of Bristol (2016), Evidence and policy review: Domestic violence and poverty: A Research Report for the Joseph Rowntree Foundation
[8] Ward profile Tool - Deprivation - Hartcliffe and Withywood
[9] Galop_domestic abuse.indd
[10] Women's Aid 2021 https://www.womensaid.org.uk/the-survivors-handbook/women-from-bme-communities/

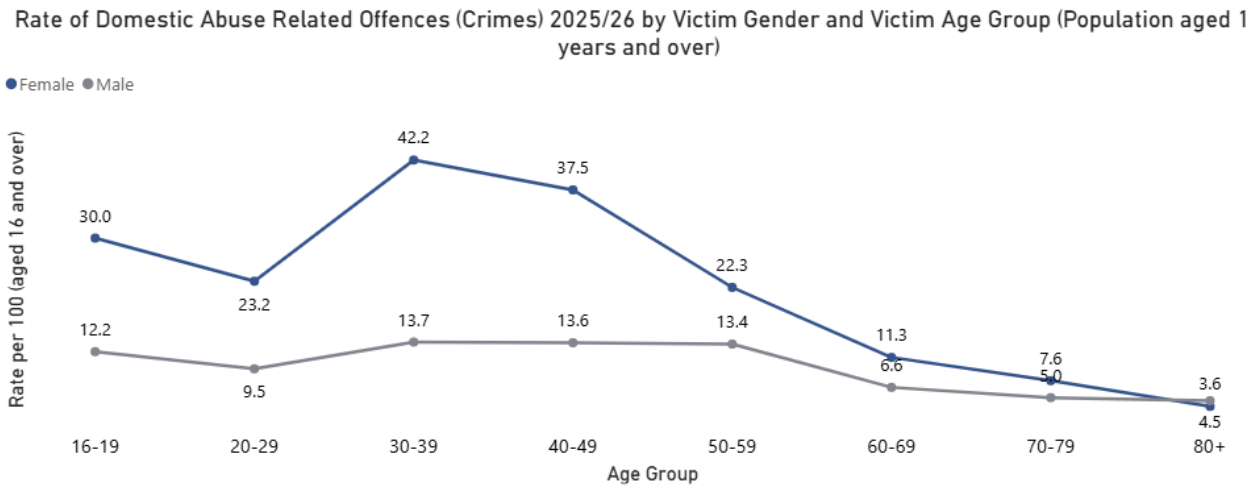


Figure 2: Rate of Domestic Abuse Related offences (crimes) 2025/26 by gender and age; Source: Avon & Somerset Constabulary, ONS Mid-Year Population Estimates 2024

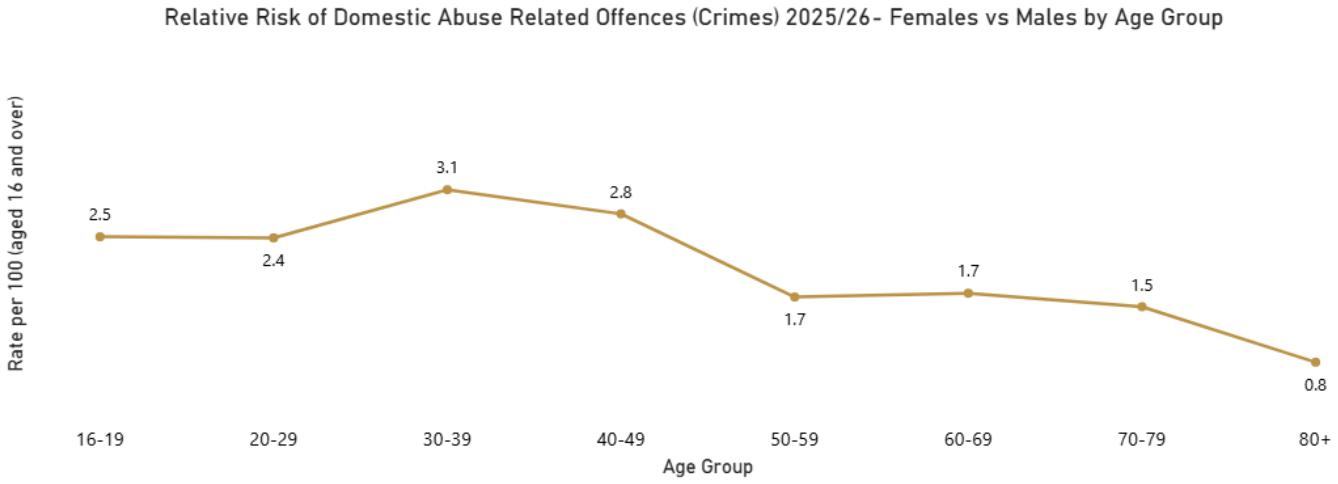


Figure 3: Relative Risk of Domestic Abuse Related Offences (Crimes) 2025/26 – Females vs Males by Age Group; Source: Avon & Somerset Constabulary, ONS Mid-Year Population Estimates 2024

Public perception of Domestic Abuse

The 2024/25 Quality of Life[11] survey found 6.3% of people perceive domestic abuse as a private matter, this increased to 9.6% in the 10% most deprived areas. By sub-locality, 7.8% of people living in South Bristol perceive domestic abuse to be a private matter, nearly twice that of residents living in the North and West (Inner) areas (4.1%). Further breakdown at ward level shows that the highest percentage of people who think domestic abuse is a private matter live in Stockwood (14.2%) and Hartcliffe & Withywood (13.1%) and the lowest live in Southville (2.0%) – see Figure 4.

[11] Bristol Quality of Life

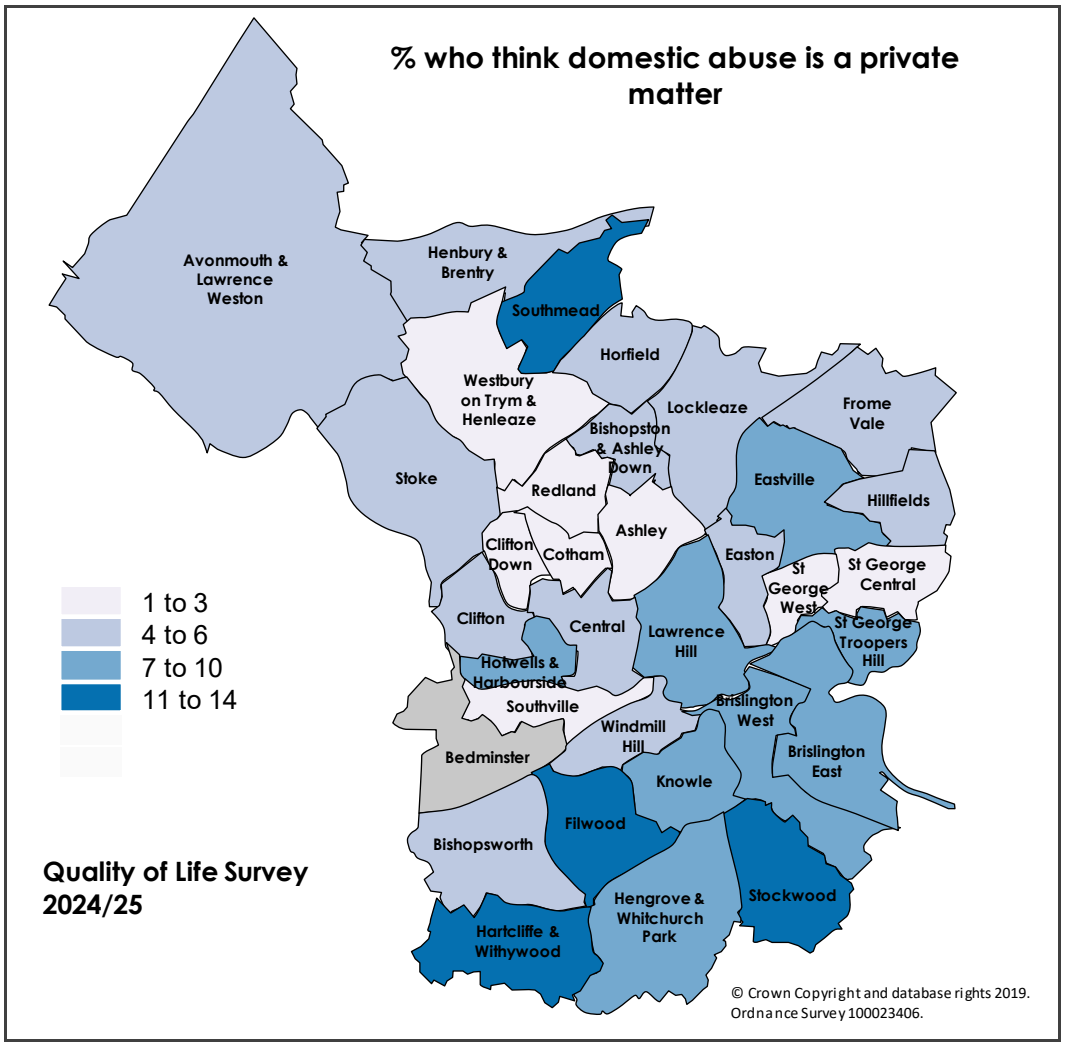


Figure 4 - % who think domestic abuse is a private matter. Source: QoL survey 2024/25.

Equalities data: Over twice as many Black people (16.7%) and people aged 65 and over (13.5%) perceive domestic abuse as a private matter compared to the city average (6.3%). Other groups where perception was statistically significantly higher than the city average include disabled people (11.1%), people of Muslim faith (19.0%), people who rent from housing associations (15.2%), people who rent from the local authority (14.5%), and people with no qualifications (22.9%.

Impact of the Cost of Living Crisis

There is evidence to suggest that the cost-of-living crisis is having an impact on domestic abuse survivors. Research by Women's Aid (2022)[12] found that two thirds (66%) of survivors responding said that their abusers were now using the cost-of-living increase and concerns about financial hardship as a tool for coercive control. The cost-of-living crisis has also impacted on victims ability to leave. Almost three quarters (73%) of women who lived with and had financial links with their abuser said that the cost of living crisis had either prevented them from leaving or made it harder for them to leave.

[12] The cost of living - Women's Aid (womensaid.org.uk)

Further data / links / consultations:

- Fingertips data - Domestic Abuse
- ONS: Domestic abuse victim characteristics England and Wales
- https://www.gov.uk/crime-justice-and-law/violence-against-women-and-girls

Date updated: June 2026 **Next update due:** June 2027