

Older women's experiences of domestic abuse, and barriers to support'

Dr Elizabeth Martin

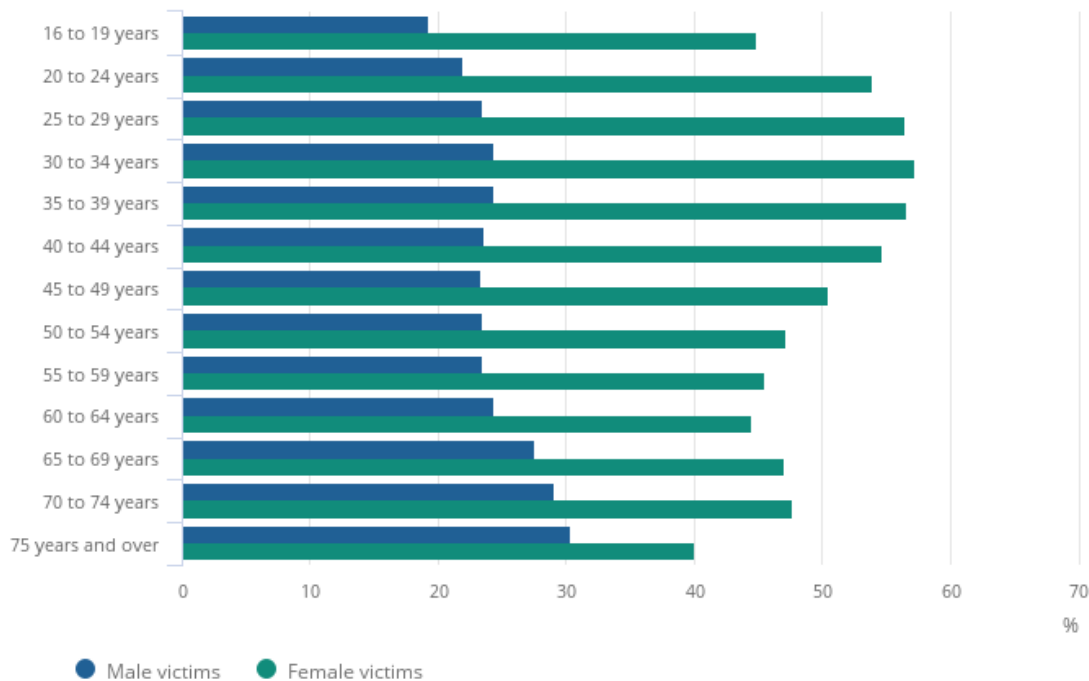
e.a.martin@qub.ac.uk

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Figure 5: Proportion of violence against the person offences flagged as domestic-abuse related varied by age

Proportion of violence against the person offences recorded by the police in England and Wales which were flagged as domestic abuse-related, by age and sex of victims, year ending March 2020



Source: Home Office Data Hub – Police recorded crime

Previous research:

- Lazenbatt, A. Devaney, J., Gildea, A., (2010)
Older Women's Lifelong Experience Of Domestic Violence In Northern Ireland
 - Most of the women had experienced domestic abuse throughout their lives
 - Older women are less likely to seek help
 - Psychological abuse had the strongest impact on their physical and mental health

Name	Age	Occupation	Number of abusive relationships
Alison	56	Health Care Professional	Four
Brenda	50	Housewife	Two
Carla	62	Business Owner	One
Dorinda	64	Shop Worker	One
Emily	59	Health Care Professional	Three
Francis	66	Housewife	One

- “The thing that sticks out in my mind was putting my wedding dress on, and I had wee sleeves down to here, and I was pulling them down so that no-one could see that I had bruises on both of my arms from where he had nipped me and nipped me...” (Carla)

- “He organised to go and see this house where we are living now. We moved there and I wasn’t happy...it was in the middle of nowhere...whenever we were buying the house he made me sell my car for the deposit...” (Dorinda)
- “I remember waiting on him coming home from his job...he came first, and that was it, you know, as long as he was alright then, the rest of us...would be okay like...” (Carla)

- “I have a couple of good friends, I have one friend that I can sorta tell so much so...but I have another friend, she’s good like, but I can’t confide in her at all...even now...I’m feeling all right telling you this but I couldn’t sit down and talk to her about what happened...”(Carla)

- “I just didn’t know who to turn to...”(Emily)
- “I tried going to my doctor, but couldn’t bring myself to ask for help...”(Francis)
- “I volunteered with Women’s Aid when I was younger, but it never even came into my mind to go to them when I was older and needed help...”
(Alison)

- “I went to a solicitor...just to find out, if I did leave, you know my rights and everything else, and she said oh you need to leave...then a few weeks later she sent me a bill, to my house...”(Carla)

- “He just picked me up and banged my head against the wall, and my face was black and blue next day, so I went to the hospital...I went to the hospital cause I was worried, and they asked me to please please get the police, and I had promised his mum that I wouldn't get the police...” (Francis)

- “I just have a feeling that he will be maybe saying bad things to you about me...and I want you to know I’ve always looked after him...” (Alison)
- “ack she is such a lovely woman, and so proud of me...I can’t let her down...so she doesn’t really need to know, does she...?” (Brenda)

- “I says ak it’s just wee courses and that come up, and I just make it up as I go along...it is difficult, but I don’t want her to know like, like the extent of it, I says oh no, no, it is all good stuff, and put *the face* on when I go home, when inside I want just to *scream...*” (Carla)

- “Because I am older I feel as if I really should have known better...but better to keep on brushing it under the carpet and keep covering it up...it’s the shame, the shame that is attached to it is unbelievable...especially when surrounded by much younger women...I just couldn’t speak up in front of them...”
(Alison)

- “Sure they were all wee young ones...they saw me as a mammy figure, came to me for advice...I couldn’t let them down and tell them I was struggling as much if not more than they were...” (Dorinda)

- “It is almost as if you disappear off people’s radar as you get older, and before you realise it you are on your own...” (Alison)
- “My doctor says are you not angry with him, I says I’m angry with myself for putting up with it...” (Carla)

- “I really to have another relationship, I want to have that respect and, you know, look after each other...”(Alison)
- “It’s not that easy, cause I do love him, it’s the way he treats me....”(Brenda)

- “I would owe who I am now to Women’s Aid I think, cause I might still be going round and round in circles going crazy...” (Francis)
- “I came to Women’s Aid because I needed somebody to...my head was nearly away, I didn’t know where to go, or who to talk to, or what to do, and my doctor told me about Women’s Aid and I thought...they will listen to me...” (Brenda)

Long term impact of abuse

- “Someday I am going to lose the plot, just disappear...I’m thinkin and thinkin and thinkin about it...everything just seems to be fight fight fight every day...” (Brenda)
- “I would say I’m doing pretty well, trying to look after myself...but he can still get back into my head again, and I can feel it physically...” (Carla)
- “I remember somebody saying to me you know, what was your personality like before...and I says I don’t know...and I really don’t know...so it’s just taking every day as it comes...” (Dorinda)

In Summary:

- Many older women are unaware of services which are available
- Some older women are unable to recognise abuse until they have left the relationship
- More conversations need to take place, both amongst professionals, but also society as a whole
- Given the right support, with time and patience the lives of these women **can** be improved

Final words...

- “I have a wedding coming up soon, and I bought this dress, I always said I wanted like a red dress...which I was never allowed to wear, so me daughter went and ordered me a red dress, and its beautiful! And I’m thinking like I’m actually going to be able to wear this, and nobody’s going to say that’s too tight, that’s too low, you’re not wearing that...” (Carla)