Revision

Domestic abuse

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This issue contains an exercise to make you think about what lies behind published statistics — in this case, statistics on domestic abuse. It is important to remember that statistics have to be interpreted and evaluated in order to judge their usefulness and also what they tell us about the issue in question.

There are also some specimen short-answer questions to help practise and revise the important topic of Families and Households.

The PowerPoint slides pick out some of the key findings from the latest British Social Attitudes report.

Statistics on domestic abuse

The following information comes from the Office for National Statistics (ONS) report ‘Domestic Abuse in England and Wales: year ending March 2018.’

You can look at the full report here: www.tinyurl.com/y37o5ntu

The report points out that the figures used come from annual data from a variety of sources — the Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW), police recorded crime and other organisations, including charities and domestic abuse helplines. The following paragraph is taken from the ‘Main Points’ summary of the report. Read it, and then answer the questions.

Over recent years there has been little change in the prevalence of domestic abuse estimated by the crime survey, while the number of cases recorded by the police has increased. However, the majority of cases do not come to the attention of the police, and many of those that do, do not result in a conviction for the perpetrator of the abuse.

Questions

1 Why is it important for our understanding of crime to include data from the CSEW?
2 Give two reasons why, given that the estimate taken from the CSEW shows little change, the number of cases recorded by the police has increased?
3 Explain briefly why (i) the majority of cases do not come to the attention of the police, and (ii) of those that do, many do not result in a conviction.
Definition

As with any concept, it is important to know how ‘domestic abuse’ is defined and therefore measured. While most people probably focus on physical abuse, the term has a much wider definition. Where physical abuse is involved, this is usually defined as ‘domestic violence.’ Domestic abuse involves a range of other behaviours. The current cross-government definition of domestic violence and abuse is as follows:

*Any incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive, threatening behaviour, violence or abuse between those aged 16 or over who are, or have been, intimate partners or family members regardless of gender or sexuality. It can encompass, but is not limited to, the following types of abuse:*

- psychological
- physical
- sexual
- financial
- emotional

Question

Briefly explain why it is important to include the range of types of behaviour listed above in definitions of domestic abuse, rather than simply focus on physical violence.

Prosecutions and convictions

Roughly 70% of domestic abuse cases referred to the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) result in a suspect being charged. Of these cases, about one quarter (24%) were unsuccessful in securing a conviction, equating to almost 21,000 prosecutions. The diagram below from the CPS shows the reasons for these unsuccessful prosecutions. Look carefully at the figure and answer the questions that follow.
Question

Among the most common reasons for an unsuccessful prosecution were Retraction (where the victim takes back the complaint) at 25.5% and Victim non-attendance at court (26.1%). Suggest two reasons why victims might either retract their statement or fail to attend court.

Domestic abuse by gender

Most people see domestic abuse as something inflicted on women by men. However, while in a minority, there are male victims of this crime. The ONS report states that an estimated two million adults aged 16–59 experienced domestic abuse in the year ending March 2018, equating to about 6 in 100 adults. Women were about twice as likely to be victims as men (7.9% compared to 4.2%). This equates to an estimated 1.3 million female victims and 695,000 males. The report points out that research suggests that when the relatively new offence of coercive and controlling behaviour is taken into account, the differences between male and female victims will become more apparent. Look at the figure below and answer the question following it.
Question
Identify and explain two reasons why the figures for domestic abuse are lower for men than for women.

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