

## **Consultation on the British Crime Survey intimate personal violence questionnaire**

Thank you for the opportunity to respond on behalf of the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC) to the three specific issues identified in appendix 1 of the analysis of the split-sample experiment. I'm happy for these comments to be published alongside a statement setting out your future approach early next year.

### **1. Choice of question set used for intimate personal violence module in future**

The alternative question set should be used from April 2012 onwards. It provides a more likely accurate measure of prevalence. The increase in reporting of some aspects of intimate personal violence found in responses to the alternative question set appears, at least in part, to be due to participants being asked to respond to each type of violent act individually; and to them being provided with more choice in their responses. This is consistent with our experience of the pilot stage of a survey of teenage partner violence;<sup>1</sup> here participants were more forthcoming when asked about each act individually as opposed to being given a long list to choose from. It may be that participants only report the most severe forms of behaviours from a long list or fail to read the entire list properly.

### **2. Amendments to questions**

There is no justification for including the filter question on sexual assault - it acts as a barrier to participants recognising their experience as serious. It has not fulfilled its purpose – that of reducing the parental refusal rate to the 10-15 year old survey.

If the alternative question set is to be used further amendments will be necessary to reduce the risk of reporting experiences that should not be classed as intimate personal violence. The significant increase of questions above those of the current question set, especially, with respect to stalking the questions that elicit information on nuisance and silent callers, and with regard to sexual assaults the questions concerning indecent exposure, need to be given more and better context. Both need to state that the act must itself have caused discomfort or distress.

As to future amendments to the module:

- the main British Crime Survey should include questions regarding intimate personal violence experienced by those under the age of 16
- or the 10-15 age survey should include partner as a category in relation to violent and threatening behaviour.

At present all questions on intimate personal violence focus exclusively on the experiences of respondents since they were aged 16. Given the prevalence and severity of teenage experiences of intimate violence, and the youth of the victims, demonstrated by recent NSPCC research<sup>2</sup> it seems that this age restriction now

---

<sup>1</sup> Barter, Christine, McCarry, Melanie, Berridge, David and Evans, Kathy (2009) Partner exploitation and violence in teenage intimate relationships. London: NSPCC

<sup>2</sup> Wood, Marsha, Barter, Christine and Berridge, David (2011) 'Standing on my own two feet': disadvantaged teenagers, intimate partner violence and coercive control. London: NSPCC.

needs reconsideration. As intimate personal violence questions are not included in the 10-15 year old survey there is no data on this aspect of intimate violence. Given, as the research cited above shows, young people rarely approach adults, including professionals, for assistance in relation to their victimisation, these experiences of intimate personal violence will also not be included in official crime figures. Even then, if young people do report intimate violence, the police are not obliged to record domestic violence incidents for under 17's.

A range of questions in the 10-15 year old survey do focus on violent and threatening behaviours. However, no questions specifically ask if these were undertaken by a partner. The NSPCC's research (Barter et al) shows that unless young people are directly asked about intimate personal violence they will not report their experiences under general victimisation questions.

Without either questions regarding the experiences of under 16s in the main BCS, or the inclusion of partner as a category in the 10 -15 age survey, the BCS adds to the invisibility of these experiences in official statistics, effectively excluding young people's intimate, personal and violent victimisation from all official data sources.

### 3. Publication of time-series data

A full break in the BCS time series is acceptable in exchange for the improved coverage of victimisation that would be achieved through either of the amendments regarding the age of victims proposed above. This also holds for the more immediate adoption of the alternative question set.

Lisa Harker,  
Head of Strategy and Development: child protection, policy and practice

---

Available at:

[http://www.nspcc.org.uk/Inform/research/findings/standing\\_own\\_two\\_feet\\_wda84543.html](http://www.nspcc.org.uk/Inform/research/findings/standing_own_two_feet_wda84543.html)  
[accessed 03 October 2011]

Barter, Christine, McCarry, Melanie, Berridge, David and Evans, Kathy (2009) Partner exploitation and violence in teenage intimate relationships. London: NSPCC. Available at: [http://www.nspcc.org.uk/Inform/research/findings/partner\\_exploitation\\_and\\_violence\\_wda68092.html](http://www.nspcc.org.uk/Inform/research/findings/partner_exploitation_and_violence_wda68092.html) [accessed 03 October 2011].