

# Men and boys' experiences of domestic abuse



# **We can't end domestic abuse without listening to the voices of men and boys.**

**We want to end domestic abuse for everyone, for good. In order for us to get there, we need to open up the conversation about abuse and relationships to include men and boys.**

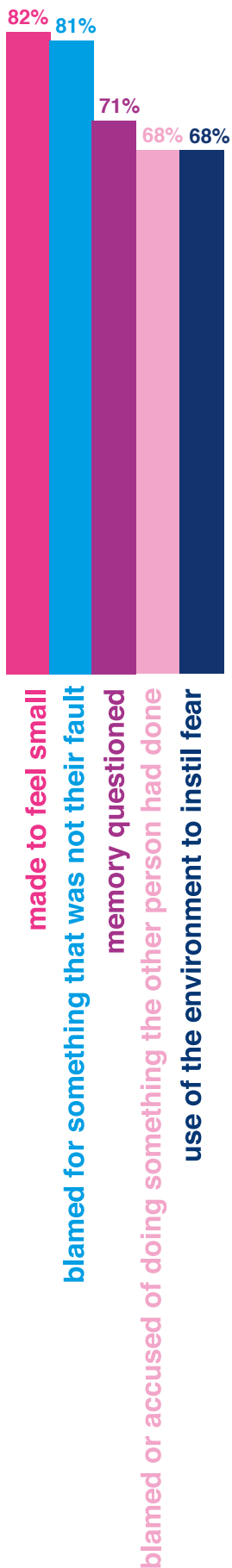
In Summer 2019, as part of a wider programme to gather the voices of men and boys from all backgrounds, we asked male survivors of domestic abuse from across the UK to share their experiences with us. More than 200 men responded to the survey. This is the start of an ongoing conversation with men and boys, and these results will continue to inform our work. We want to thank all the men who took part; together we will end domestic abuse for everyone and for good.

## **Key findings include:**

---

### **Dynamics of abuse**

**“If the abuse was physical, I feel I would have been able to assign meaning, understand it. But there was no violence. It was the gradual wearing down of who I was and ownership over all that I did...Before I knew it, I had to look at the floor when I was in public and account for my every move and thought.”**



- The average length of abuse was **four years**
- The most common behaviours experienced were being put down or intentionally **made to feel small (82%)**, **being blamed for something that was not their fault (81%)**, having their memory questioned or been told that they're imagining things they know to be true (**71%**), being blamed or accused of doing something the other person had done (**68%**), and **use of the environment to instil fear** – for example throwing objects, slamming doors (**68%**).
- A small but notable proportion of respondents had experienced abuse related to their gender or sexuality: **policing of sexuality** or gender presentation (**10%**), **threats to 'out' sexuality (9%)**, threatened with **revenge porn (7%)**, refusal to use **preferred pronouns (4%)** and threat to **disclose HIV status (1%)**

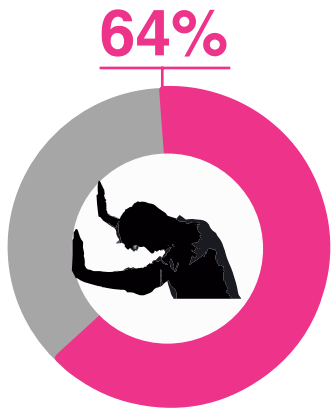
## Impact of abuse

**“The impact of the abuse continues as I try to understand what happened to me. I have become incredibly isolated by my experiences and recognise I have PTSD”**

All respondents were given a list of 32 possible impacts that the behaviours experienced may have had on them and asked to tick all that applied.

Top 5 Impacts (all)	Yes	No
Anxiety, or continuously on edge or alert	96%	3%
Loss of confidence	94%	3%
Loneliness and/or isolation	91%	7%
Embarrassment or shame	90%	7%
Low self-esteem or worthlessness	90%	6%

- Nearly two thirds (**64%**) of respondents said that the behaviours experienced lead to them **feeling suicidal** or having suicidal thoughts. A third (**33%**) had **self-harmed**.
- Over half (**54%**) were physically hurt. This included severe bruising or cuts (37%), scarring (15%), broken bones (10%) and poisoning (9%).
- Four in five (**80%**) said that the behaviour they experienced **affected their mental health a lot**, with 18% saying it was affected a little. For 62% this was a long-term affect.

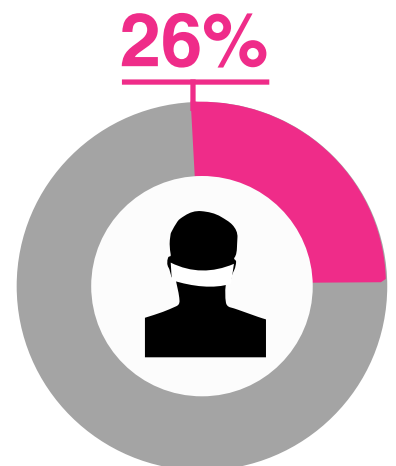


Nearly two thirds (64%) of respondents said that the behaviours experienced lead to them feeling suicidal or having suicidal thoughts.

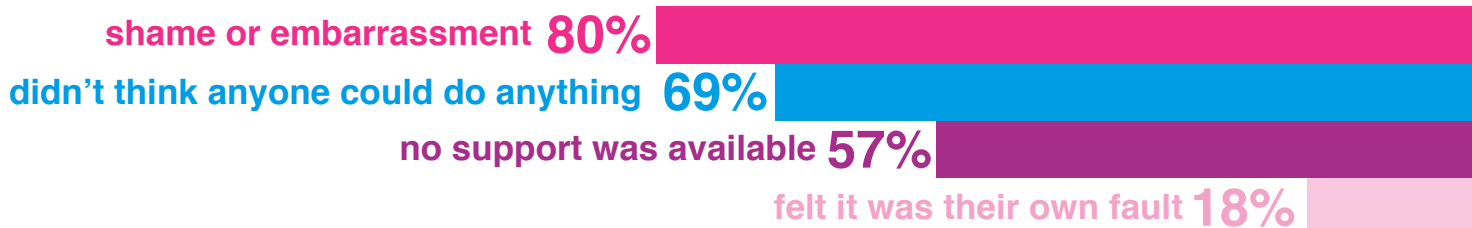
## Experiences of help seeking and support

“People still don’t get it. Because you’re a man they think you can stick up for yourself, that you’re not as vulnerable as a woman. But I know if my male partner had got hold of a knife on certain occasions when he lost it I just know he would’ve used it on me. The reason I fled in the end.”

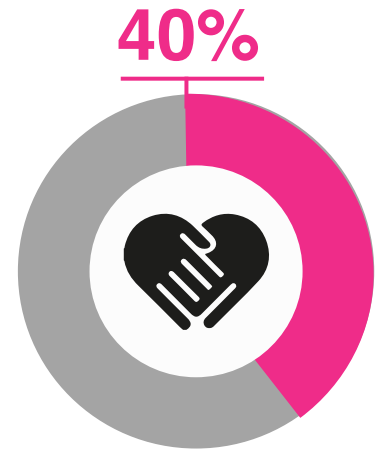
- **72% of respondents told someone** about the abuse and/or the impact it had. The most common person to tell was a **family member (71%), friend** or neighbour (60%) or counsellor/therapist (48%).
- **26% did not tell anyone.** The most common reasons for this were **shame or embarrassment (80%),** they **didn’t think anyone could do anything** to help (69%), they did not know where to go (57%) and **no support was available (57%).** One in six (18%) didn’t tell anyone because they **felt it was their own fault.**



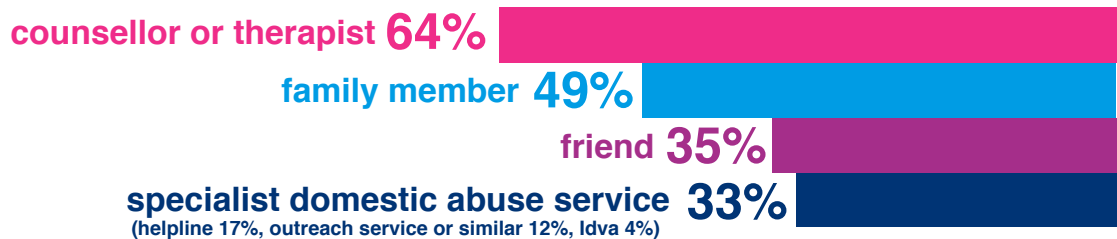
didn’t tell anyone



- **40% received some form of help or support.** This was most commonly from a **counsellor or therapist (64%)**, a **family member (49%)** or **friend (35%)**. A third (**33%**) of respondents received support from a **specialist domestic abuse service** (17% from a helpline, 12% from an outreach service or similar, and 4% from an Idva).



**received some form of help or support.**



- **58% did not receive help or support.** The most common reason for this were that support was **not available for male victims (48%)**, **shame** or embarrassment (**39%**) or that the person or organisation they went to **did not believe them (22%)**.

**“Please please tell someone. And know that when you survive this you are worthy of love. That you can and will find ways to feel safe. And don’t ever feel ashamed when the memory and shadow of that trauma appears. You are stronger than it and you WILL feel safe again”**