

# The Impact of Intimate Partner Violence on Job Loss and Time Off Work in the UK

*Dr. Niels Blom and Vanessa Gash, DPhil, City, University of London*

## Key Findings

- 3.6% of those who experienced intimate partner violence lost their jobs given the abuse
- 10.5% of those who experienced intimate partner violence took a period of leave from work
- Of those who took leave, 20.4% took 1-3 weeks and 25.9% took a month or more
- The risks of job loss were similar for all five forms of intimate partner violence examined
- Victim-survivors noted their ongoing reticence to disclose abuse to relevant managers

## Context and Aims

Domestic abuse (DA) is a common occurrence though it remains under-reported. Using the best available data for the UK, the Office for National Statistics (ONS) estimates that 2.1 million adults will have experienced DA in the year ending March 2023 (ONS 2023). DA has been estimated to cost the economy in England and Wales £14 billion in lost outputs. While declines in output reflect both direct measures of time off work and proxies of the effects of violence on productivity (Oliver, et al. 2019), current estimates do not include assessments of job loss. Moreover, not all forms of violence and abuse are included in current costings, such as coercive control, though it is increasingly recognised to have significant effects (Lohmann et al. 2024). In response, this report examines the effects of different forms of Intimate Partner Violence and Abuse (IPVA), a subset of those who experience DA, on both job loss and time off work. The research thereby provides new insights of the costs of violence to the economy.

## Data and method

We used five cross-sectional waves of the Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW) with data fielded during: 2004/05, 2008/09, 2010/11, 2012/13 and 2017/18 (ONS 2023). Given the questionnaire wording we focus on IPVA, in contrast to DA, which excludes abusive behaviours from other family members. We examined whether people took leave because of their exposure to abuse, and if so, the amount of leave taken. We also examined job loss resulting from exposure to IPVA. The analysis is restricted to those who were employed at the time that they experienced IPVA. Here it is worth noting that of all survey participants who experienced IPVA, the majority were employed (79.1% of men and 65.3% of women). We pooled multiple waves of the CSEW and obtained a sample of 5,359 survey participants who experienced IPVA in the 12 months before the interview. We distinguish between five different forms of IPVA, allowing for an assessment of possible differential effects by abuse type. We distinguish between those who experienced; physical violence/abuse, sexual violence/abuse, stalking, coercive or controlling behaviour, and/or those who were threatened with abuse by a current or former intimate partner in the past 12 months. A complete account of these classifications, alongside a description of the data and the statistical techniques applied is provided in the appendix.

Our statistical analyses are supplemented with the views and voices of those with lived experience of IPVA. The inclusion of those with lived experience is a key aim of the VISION research consortium<sup>1</sup>. Lived experience participants' views were collected from a panel which included men and women, as well as those from a range of ethnic backgrounds

## Findings

Of those who were employed when they experienced IPVA, 55.9% experienced controlling behaviours, 38.0% physical violence, 27.0% were threatened, 23.5% were stalked and 5.8% experienced some form of

sexual violence or abuse by a (former) partner (figure 1). There were clear differences in prevalence by sex, with women disproportionately exposed to threats (34.0% compared to 15.3% for men), to being stalked (23.5% compared to 19.6% for men) and to sexual violence or abuse by a (former) partner (7.3% compared to 3.4% for men). Additionally, compared to men, women were more likely to experience multiple types of violence and abuse.

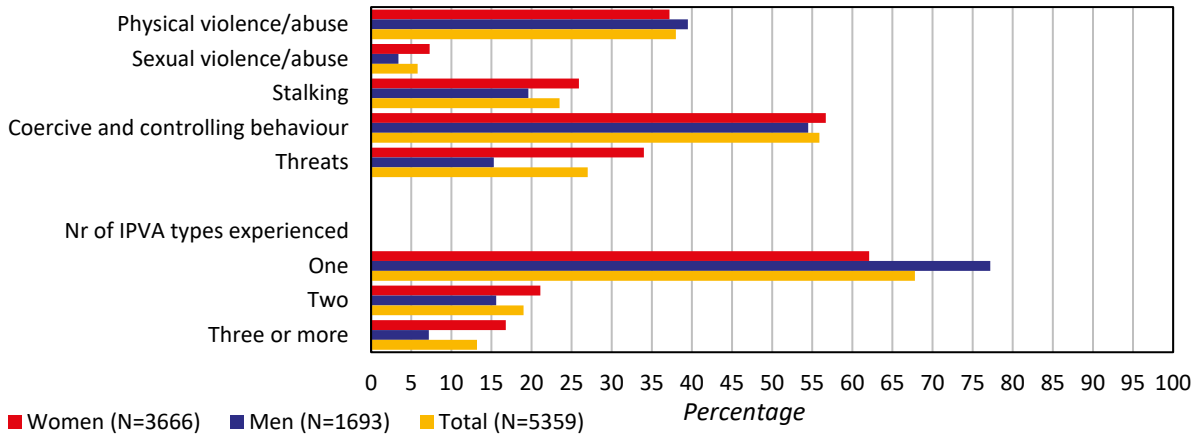


Figure 1. Types of intimate partner violence and abuse experienced by female and male victim-survivors.

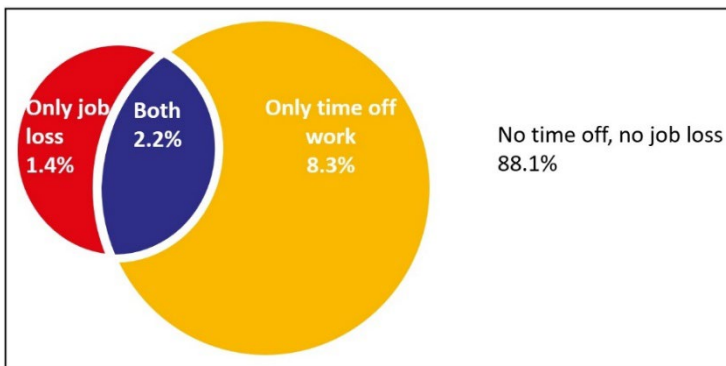


Figure 2. Overlap between taking time off work and losing job among intimate partner violence and abuse victim-survivors.

Of all participants who were exposed to IPVA, figure 2 shows that 3.6% lost their job in the past year and 10.5% took time off because of the abuse they experienced. There is substantial overlap between those who lost their job and those who took time off work: 2.2% of employed people who experienced IPVA both took time off and lost their job. That means that of those who took time off, 20.9% lost their job as a result of the violence/abuse.

Of those who took leave following IPVA, figure 3 shows that 23.4% took 2 days or less, 30.3% between 3 and 6 days, 20.4% took 1 to 3 weeks, and 25.9% took a month or longer. Thus, when people took leave, about half took a week or more.

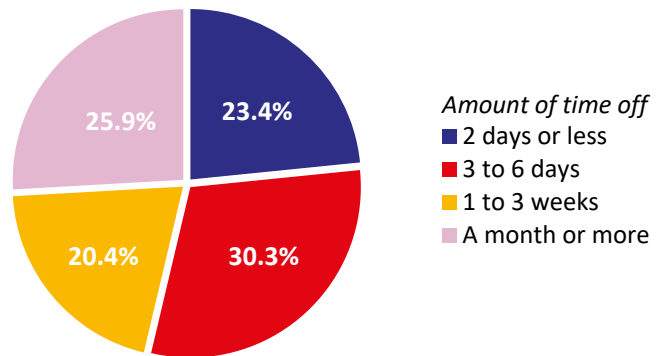


Figure 3. Amount of time off among victim-survivors taking leave.

*Predictors of Job loss*

We found job loss to be associated with all five forms of IPVA. Of note was the high risk of job loss for those who experienced stalking (6.5%) which was similar to the rate for those who experienced sexual violence (6.6%)<sup>ii</sup> (figure 4). Similarly, 5.8% of those who were threatened with abuse by an intimate partner lost their job, as did 4.9% of those who experienced coercive or controlling behaviours. Lastly, 3.7% of those who experienced physical violence lost their job. We found a cumulative effect of experiencing multiple types of IPVA, with those reporting one type of violence/abuse having a 2.2% risk of job loss, which rose to 10.2% for those who reported three or more different types of abuse.

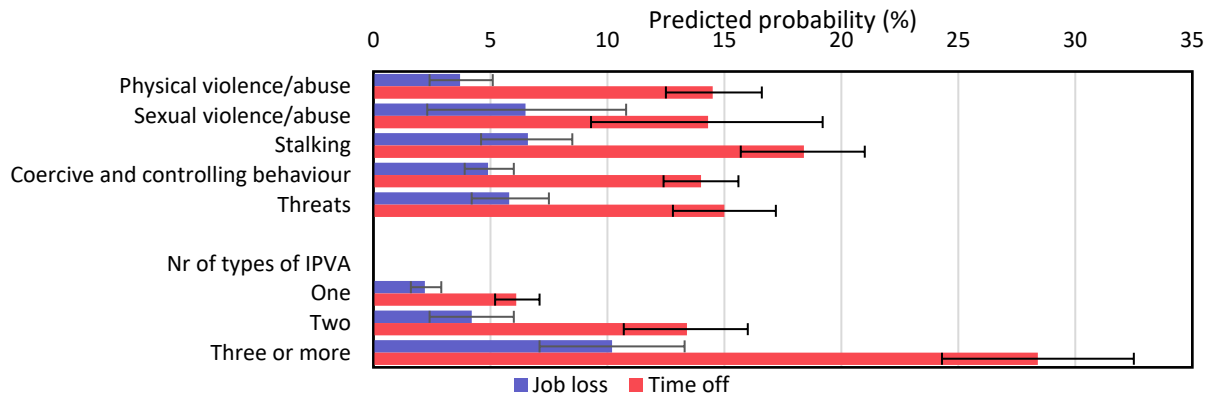


Figure 4. Average marginal effect for time off and loss of job (N=5,488). Predicted probability and 95% confidence interval reported. See also tables A1 and A2 in the appendix.

*Predictors of Leave*

Our models established that all five types of violence and abuse by a (former) partner were associated with a significant rise in the need to take leave (see also table A2 in the appendix). Moreover, we found that those who experience multiple types of IPVA are more likely to take leave from work; 6.1% of victim-survivors experiencing one type of IPVA took time off which rose to 28.4% among those experiencing three or more types of IPVA.

Among those who took time off following IPVA, neither the type of violence/abuse nor the cumulative effect was associated with the amount of time off people took (table A2 in the appendix).

*Insights from those with Lived Experience*

We supplement our statistical analyses with the views and voices of those with lived experience of IPVA and present key points raised in discussions with them here. There was a strong consensus from those with lived experience that they would not feel comfortable approaching HR with their experiences of DA and IPVA. The panel noted that there were confidentiality risks for them should HR not adequately store or secure their records of incidents of abusive behaviour. It was noted that disclosure in small companies presented particular risks to confidentiality.

Panel members noted the importance of being able to present as well and ‘untainted by abuse’ in the workplace, with some noting that they did not want the significant negative mental health effects of their abuse to be known at work. Some also noted a fear of being declared ‘unfit for work’, should the mental health effects be widely known and noted that it was important for them to ‘save face’ at work. They feared that if HR or management knew of their experiences they would become ‘a marked person’.

There was also a strong sense among the group that if you had prior experience of violence and abuse, colleagues and/or co-workers appeared to pick up on this, even in the absence of making any disclosures, and that this too had negative repercussions at work. Some spoke of cycles of victimization, with many

panel members noting that they felt they experienced multiple disadvantages at work because some people could sense their victimhood. This reinforced the desire to hide and or refrain from disclosing further abusive behaviours to relevant managers.

### **Discussion and Conclusions**

We found shared risks of job loss and leave for each of the five different forms of IPVA examined and also found a cumulative effect for those exposed to multiple forms of abuse. IPVA was found to have significant and detrimental socio-economic effects, with 3.6% of people who experienced IPVA in the past 12 months losing their jobs as a result of the violence experienced. Moreover, a noteworthy minority of 10.5% took a period of leave from their jobs. Of those who took leave, 20.4% took between 1 and 3 weeks off and 25.9% took a month or longer. That only 1 in 10 of those who experience IPVA took leave is notable given the known detrimental impact of IPVA on victim-survivors' mental and physical health. The low take up is concerning as leave should support employees to access the necessary medical, legal and/or social supports during a time of considerable distress. Leave is also thought to facilitate employee retention, with the risk that workers may otherwise leave employment if unable to access the necessary support and respite services during working hours.

Our analysis of leave take up may reflect a series of factors we cannot control for with the data used. First, workplaces may differ in their willingness and ability to facilitate leave take up for IPVA victim-survivors on their payroll. Second, we can expect variation in workplaces willingness to facilitate leave take up for different workers, with higher status or harder to replace workers more likely to be supported to pursue leave as a job retention strategy. Third, IPVA victim-survivors will vary in their need for, and in their desire and ability to take, leave. Finally, there remain considerable psychological and social barriers to disclosure of IPVA to relevant managers in the workplace, not least given ongoing negative attitudes towards those who experience IPVA. Indeed, many victim-survivors of IPVA may never disclose their experiences of IPVA therefore and even if they do, they may feel unable to access leave provision for fear of negative repercussions at work. These tendencies were confirmed in panel discussions with those with lived experience of IPVA who were almost unanimous in their sense that they faced considerable risks by disclosing any experiences of abusive behaviours to management or HR at work.

While this report examined the direct effects of IPVA for victim-survivors we can also expect indirect effects for their colleagues. The workplace is affected by virtue of the job loss or leave taken by those who experience IPVA, particularly if cover for absent colleagues' job tasks is not easily obtained. Yet, we can anticipate colleagues to be affected in other ways. Buka *et al.* (2001) distinguish between 'indirect/secondary' victimisation which describes those who witness others' violent victimisation and 'tertiary' victimisation, referring to those who, after the event, are presented with an account of direct victimization. Indeed, we increasingly recognise the occupational risks of 'secondary traumatic stress' to those who regularly interact with traumatised service users (e.g. Figley 1995; Salston and Figley 2003). Moreover, though data is scant, some have found that IPVA can occur at the workplace and that work colleagues can be targeted by perpetrators as part of their campaign against their primary victim (TUC 2014). Given these anticipated, but under-explored, effects further research will be vital going forward.

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<sup>1</sup> Further details can be viewed here: <https://vision.city.ac.uk/lived-experience-across-vision/>

<sup>ii</sup> This higher number than the overall risk of time off and job loss is because of the high level of people experiencing multiple times of IPVA, which is strongly associated with higher risks of job loss and time off.

## Appendix

### Data description

In this report we use data from the Crime Survey of England and Wales (CSEW). The items were administered via laptop self-completion in the context of a face to face interview. Disclosure rates on sensitive topics tend to be higher by self-completion (Touraneau et al., 2000), including when respondents might otherwise feel uncomfortable revealing directly to the interviewer. The data was analysed under special licence via the UK Data Service (UKDS) SecureLab. The UKDS Securelab provides researchers with access to data deemed too sensitive to be released to researchers under a typical end user license. To access data provided via the Securelab, researchers need to undergo an additional round of ethics release to obtain access, and as they are not allowed to download the data to their own computers or servers, are required to access the data remotely. Moreover, outputs using the data can only be used for analysis and eventual publication once checked by the UKDS for disclosure risks.

We use the CSEW waves 2004/05, 2008/09, 2010/11, 2012/13, and 2017/18 as the questions on the socioeconomic impact of IPVA were only available for these years. The pooled sample has N=152,374 respondents who started the self-completion questionnaire. Next, we select on these who were a victim of IPVA in the last 12 months (N=7,038), which is necessary as the questions relating to the socio-economic impacts of IPVA are only asked of this group. Of this group, we selected participants those who were employed at the time of the abuse (N=6,413) and select on non-missingness of the dependent variables: time off work and job loss, as well as the key independent variables (N=5,359). For the last dependent variable, amount of time taken off work, we only include those who have said they took time off work and had full information on the amount of time taken off which led to an N of 602 cases for analysis. Survey participants were able to report multiple types of victimisation. Our measure of sexual violence and abuse included rape, attempted rape, sexual threats, flashing, and touching without consent. Full details are provided in the appendix.

We used weighted multivariate logistic regression to analyse whether people took leave or lost their job due to their experiences of IPVA, and we presented these using average marginal effects (Table A1). The factors added as controls were sex, ethnicity, age and the year of the survey. Duration of leave was analysed using weighted ordinal logistic regression and was not adjusted for ethnicity due to cell size restrictions.

The data used is highly regarded in its collection of indicators on abusive behaviours, yet there are gaps in our knowledge particularly for those who analyse cross-over effects between violence and the workplace. We would benefit from both firm-level and individual-level data which identifies whether employers are supportive of leave take-up or not, and we would benefit from individual-level data to discern whether experiences of IPVA occurred at the workplace or not.

### Measurements

Variable description is based on survey wave 2017/18 unless otherwise specified. Previous modules differed slightly in the way the question was asked or the order, but the question content was the same.

#### Period of leave taken, dichotomous variable:

In the last 12 months, did you have to take any time off work because of [the/any of the] abuse you suffered? Y/N

#### Amount of leave taken, categorical variable:

And how much time did you take off work altogether in the last 12 months? If you were off work for more than one period please try to estimate as best you can the total amount of time you were off. 2 days or less, 3 to 6 days, 1 to 3 weeks, a month or more. (only asked in the case of partner abuse)

#### Job loss, dichotomous variable:

And did you lose your job or have to give up work as a result of [the/any of the] abuse you suffered [in the last 12 months]? Y/N

#### Physical violence/abuse, dichotomous variable:

Has a partner or ex-partner used force on you in the last 12 months? For example, they may have pushed you, slapped you, hit, punched or kicked you, choked you or used a weapon against you. Y/N



Threat, dichotomous variable:

And has a partner or ex-partner frightened or threatened you in any way in the last 12 months? Y/N

Controlling behaviour, dichotomous variable (based on 2012/13, slightly different in some other years):

And which, if any, of these things has a partner done to you in the last 12 months, that is, since the first of [date]?

1. Prevented you from having your fair share of the household money
2. Stopped you from seeing friends and relatives
3. Repeatedly belittled you to the extent that you felt worthless

Sexual violence and abuse (any): dichotomous variable:

Yes to any of the following:

Has a partner or ex-partner indecently exposed themselves to you (i.e. flashing) in a way that caused you fear, alarm or distress in the last 12 months?

Has a partner or ex-partner touched you in a sexual way (e.g. touching, grabbing, kissing or fondling) in the last 12 months, when you did not want it?

In the last 12 months, has a partner or ex-partner ever

1. penetrated your [mouth, vagina or anus/mouth or anus] with their penis
2. penetrated your [vagina or anus/anus] with an object (including their fingers)
3. attempted to penetrate your [mouth, vagina or anus/mouth or anus] with their penis
4. attempted to penetrate your [vagina or anus/anus] with an object (including their fingers)

when you made it clear that you did not agree or when you were not capable of consent?

And which, if any, of these things has someone done to you in the last 12 months, that is, since the first of [date] that caused you fear, alarm or distress. Sexually threatened you (e.g. demanded sex when you did not want it, followed or cornered you in a sexually threatening way). Your husband/wife/civil partner, your partner/boyfriend/girlfriend, your ex-husband/wife/civil partner, a previous partner/boyfriend/girlfriend, your date. (based on 2012 module)

Stalking, dichotomous variable:

Yes on any of the following

In the last 12 months has a partner or ex-partner

- (1) sent you more than one unwanted letter, text message or card that was either obscene or threatening
- (2) made more than one obscene, threatening, nuisance or silent phone call to you
- (3) partner waited or loitered outside your home or workplace on more than one occasion in a manner
- (4) followed you around and watched you on more than one occasion in a manner which caused you fear, alarm or distress?

**Results**

Table A1. Average marginal effect for time off and loss of job (N=5,488). Predicted probability and 95% confidence interval (CI) reported.

	Job loss fully sample (N=5359)		Time off full sample (N=5359)	
	Predicted probability	95% CI	Predicted probability	95% CI
Physical violence/abuse	0.037	[0.024,0.051]	0.145	[0.125,0.166]
Sexual violence/abuse	0.065	[0.023,0.108]	0.143	[0.093,0.192]
Stalking	0.066	[0.046,0.085]	0.184	[0.157,0.210]
Coercive and controlling behaviour	0.049	[0.039,0.060]	0.140	[0.124,0.156]
Threats	0.058	[0.042,0.075]	0.150	[0.128,0.172]
<i>Nr of types of IPV</i>				
One	0.022	[0.016,0.029]	0.061	[0.052,0.071]
Two	0.042	[0.024,0.060]	0.134	[0.107,0.160]
Three or more	0.102	[0.071,0.133]	0.284	[0.243,0.325]

Notes: These estimates are derived from models which control for; ethnicity, sex, age and time period.

Table A2. Logistic regression models for time off and loss of job (N=5,359), and ordinal logistic models for amount of time off (N=602)

	Job loss (N=5,359)		Time off (N=5,359)		Amount of time off (N=602)	
	OR	SE	OR	SE	OR	SE
<b>Physical violence/abuse</b>	1.077	0.269	1.967***	0.238	0.832	0.176
<b>Sexual violence/abuse</b>	2.032~	0.787	1.507~	0.349	0.617	0.235
<b>Stalking</b>	2.540***	0.531	2.609***	0.312	1.136	0.213
<b>Coercive and controlling behaviour</b>	2.419***	0.579	2.284***	0.276	1.026	0.201
<b>Threats</b>	2.223***	0.486	1.982***	0.245	1.252	0.262
<b>Gender (Ref=Female)</b>						
Male	1.903**	0.412	0.742*	0.101	0.859	0.192
<b>Ethnicity (Ref=White)</b>						
Non-White	1.303	0.404	1.474*	0.282		
<b>Age</b>	0.993	0.008	1.013**	0.005	1.016~	0.009
<b>Wave</b>	1.020	0.023	0.989	0.013	1.025	0.021
<b>Constant</b>	0.009***	0.003	0.023***	0.005		
Cut 1					0.590	0.239
Cut 2					2.312*	0.951
Cut 3					5.790***	2.456

Notes: Calculations based on the Crime Survey for England and Wales 2004/05, 2008/09, 2010/11, 2012/13, and 2017/2018.

\*\*\* p<.001, \*\* p<.01, \* p<.05, ~ p<.10

While job loss and taking time off following sexual violence and abuse is only significant at the p<.10 level, this is most likely due to the low number of people reporting sexual violence.