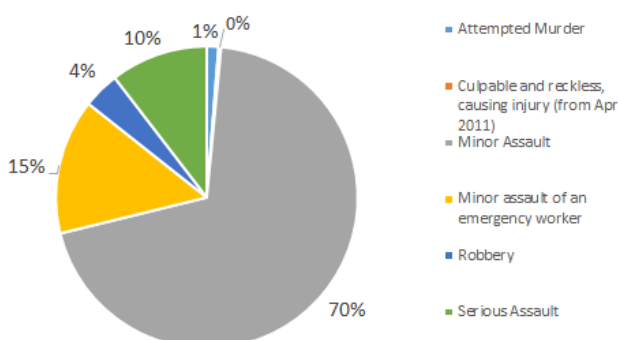


Police and Fire Scrutiny Report
Inverclyde Council
April 2019

SPOTLIGHT ON VIOLENCE IN INVERCLYDE 2018/19
POLICE SCOTLAND

Violence Overview

The term 'violence' incorporates a range of crimes involving attempted or actual harm to other persons, and includes the following crimes: Common assault (including assault of an emergency worker); Serious assault (including culpable and reckless conduct causing injury); Robbery (including assault with intent to rob); Attempted murder; Murder. 84% of violence recorded in Inverclyde in 2018/19 was classed as 'minor violence' - assaults which did not result in fractures, internal injuries, severe concussion, or lacerations/any other injury which may lead to impairment or disfigurement.



Domestic Violence

Domestic abuse is defined as abuse perpetrated by partners or ex-partners and can include violent crime in addition to sexual, mental and emotional abuse.ⁱ While 26% of minor violence and 11% of serious violence had a domestic element in 2018/19, there were 21



fewer recorded crimes of violence with a domestic element in 2018/19 YTD compared to the same period in the previous year. Domestic abuse and violence presents specific challenges to police in bringing perpetrators to justice, with research highlighting that domestic abuse often involves a low reporting rate and reluctance of victims in engaging and cooperating with police.ⁱⁱ In addition, the vast majority of domestic abuse is 'hidden' in nature - occurring in private domestic dwellings, limiting the potential use of opportunities present in public space violence, such as CCTV, presence of independent witnesses and forensic

opportunities. In Inverclyde, 78% of recorded domestic violence occurred in private settings. Further analysis identified that 42% of all violent crime against females had a domestic component, with the vast majority of domestic violence being perpetrated against females (76%). This is broadly consistent with previous research focused on the wider UK picture.ⁱⁱⁱ

Uncooperative Complainers/Witnesses

The acquisition of accurate and comprehensive statements from all those involved within the criminal justice process, including witnesses, victims and suspects.^{iv} Without cooperative victims and witnesses, significant challenges are faced by police in arresting and charging suspects for crimes of violence. In the current year, one third of recorded violent crimes in Inverclyde involved uncooperative complainers or key witnesses - a proportion that increased to nearly 43% in relation to serious assaults in particular.

Relationship of Victim and Offender

Analysis indicates that at least half of victims of serious violence in Inverclyde knew their attacker, though it is assessed this proportion is likely to be significantly higher. Due to the high proportion of uncooperative complainers, the nature of the relationship between the victim and suspect in many cases was not possible to establish. Notably, research has shown that victims of violence are more likely to refuse to cooperate if they knew the offender in any way, than if the offender was a stranger.^v



Victim and Offender Characteristics^{vi}

While minor violence was disproportionately targeted towards females (53% of the total), the opposite pattern was observed in relation to serious violence, with over 80% of victims of these crimes being male. The likelihood of being victim of a violent crime was highest between the ages 25 and 34 years, with more than a quarter of victims falling into this age category. A similar pattern was

identified in relation to offenders, with a high concentration (30%) of accused for violent crimes being aged in the mid-20s to mid-30s. 81% of all violent crime involved a male accused, a proportion which increased to 89% in relation to serious violent crime. Demonstrating the strong link between social deprivation and exclusion, it was found at least 55% of violent offenders in Inverclyde were unemployed at the time of the offence. Unemployment was also identified as a risk factor for victimisation in violent crime, with a significant proportion (42%) of complainers identified as unemployed at point of their victimisation.

Alcohol

Research in the UK and beyond increasingly highlights the role of alcohol consumption in people becoming victims of violence and perpetrators of violence.^{vii}

This continues to be the case in Inverclyde, with approximately 37% of all violence being recorded as 'alcohol-related' in the current period. Alcohol was found to feature in a significant proportion of both 'public' and 'private' space violence in Inverclyde, featuring in at least 38% of private space violence and 40% of public space violence. Alcohol also featured in over 40% of recorded domestic violence.

Location

48% of violence occurred in private space, 52% public space, continuing a long term, gradual shift towards private space observed in previous years. Public space violence fell by nearly 12% compared to 2017/18 PYTD, while private space violence increased by nearly 2.5%. It is assessed this shifting pattern of violence is the result of a variety of factors, but not least the gradual move towards the consumption of alcohol and social activity focused in private settings, as opposed to public licensed premises.^{viii} A significant proportion (40%) of private space violence has a domestic element.

Weapon Usage

Over 75% of all violence did not involve the use of a weapon, instead involving

physical violence such as punching, kicking etc. While minor violence infrequently involved the use of bladed weapons and other objects with a high potential for harm, these crimes most commonly exclusively involved physical violence such as kicking and punching, and occasional involvement of thrown objects or use of blunt objects to cause injury. However, in the case of serious violent crime, weapon usage was much more common - and in particular the use of sharp and bladed weapons, with 62% of crimes involving the use of weapons such as knives, blunt objects such as batons and hammers, and 'makeshift' or household items such as poles, bottles and bricks. As with Scotland in general, the issue of knife crime remains pertinent in Inverclyde, with bladed weapons featuring in at least 29% of serious violent crimes.



ⁱ SPI (2010) 'Domestic Abuse (Scotland) Bill.

ⁱⁱ Birdsal, N. (2018) 'Intimate Partner Violence Victimology: Factors Affecting Victim Engagement with the Police and Criminal Justice System'. *University of Central Lancashire Library*.

ⁱⁱⁱ Hester, M. (2009) 'Who Does What to Whom? Gender and Domestic Violence Perpetrators'. Violence Against Women Research Group, University of Bristol.

^{iv} Milne, R., & Bull, R. (2003) 'Interviewing by the Police'. In: Carson, D., & Bull, R. (eds): *Handbook of Psychology in Legal Contexts*. John Wiley & Sons Ltd.

^v Felson, R.B., & Lantz, B. (2015) 'When are victims unlikely to cooperate with the police?' *Aggressive Behavior*, 42 (1): 97 - 108.

^{vi} Note that analysis of victim and offender characteristics is limited to those crimes where data is available. For example, no offender data is available in relation to undetected crimes.

^{vii} World Health Organization (2005) 'Alcohol and Interpersonal Violence: Policy Briefing'.

^{viii} BBC News (2017) 'Violent crime 'moving into homes''. 04/05/2017