

Experiences of men forced-to-penetrate women
in the UK: Context, consequences, and engagement
with the criminal justice system

Project Report

Dr Siobhan Weare, Lecturer in Law,
Lancaster University Law School (Principal Investigator)

Dr Joanne Hulley (Research Assistant)

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Contact: Dr Siobhan Weare, s.weare@lancaster.ac.uk

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Support for survivors

The voices of survivors and extracts from their stories and experiences are at the centre of this project. Consequently, some of what is contained in this report may be difficult to read, especially for survivors. If you feel that you would benefit from advice or support please contact any of the following organisations that support male survivors.

Survivors Manchester

Website: www.survivorsmanchester.org.uk

Telephone: 0161 236 2182

Email: support@survivorsmanchester.org.uk

National Male Survivors Helpline

Telephone: 0808 800 5005

Opening Hours:

Monday, Wednesday, Friday: 9am – 5pm

Tuesday and Thursday: 8am – 8pm

Saturday: 10am – 2pm

Male Survivors Partnership Directory of Services

Website: www.malesurvivor.co.uk/support-for-male-survivors/directory-of-services



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Above all, we would like to acknowledge and thank the brave men who gave up their time to participate in this research. This was often incredibly difficult for them to do, and many of them had never shared their experiences in full before.

We are grateful that they trusted us with their stories. Without these men being willing to “break their silence”, this much-needed research would not have been possible – our heartfelt thanks go to them.



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Survivors Manchester is a survivor-led/ survivor-run voluntary organisation that aims to create and facilitate a safe space for male survivors of sexual abuse and rape to work through personal and sometimes painful issues. Their work is concentrated on empowering men to make their own positive life choices and begin their own unique journey of healing. Survivors Manchester work ethically and adhere to working within the BACP Ethical Framework for Good Practice in Counselling and Psychotherapy.

For more information please visit

www.survivorsmanchester.org.uk.



Key findings

- Participants most frequently reported that the perpetrator was their female partner or ex-partner, and that their forced-to-penetrate experiences were one element of domestic abuse and/or post-separation abuse that they experienced.
- Participants frequently reported being repeatedly victimised. This took a number of forms including: childhood sexual abuse; repeated instances of compelled penetration by the same perpetrator; and varying types of sexual violence from multiple different perpetrators (both male and female).
- Being forced-to-penetrate a woman had substantial negative impacts on men's mental health, emotional well-being, and personal lives and relationships. These impacts included depression; PTSD; suicidal ideation and attempts; feelings of guilt, shame, and self-blame; difficulties in forming relationships; and sexual issues/dysfunction.
- When participants engaged with organisations and services, they were most frequently health-related, for example GPs. However, they did not always disclose their forced-to-penetrate experience(s) as being the reason behind their engagement.
- Specialist male sexual and domestic violence services are important and had a positive impact on those participants who accessed them. However, not all participants were aware of their existence, or were able to access them.
- Men often took several years to disclose their experience(s) to anyone.
- There were numerous barriers to men disclosing and engaging with organisations and services. These included: fear of not being believed; feelings of shame, guilt, and self-blame; lack of knowledge about, and availability of, specialist male sexual and domestic violence support services; and gender expectations around masculinity.
- The majority of participants did not report to the police. Of those that did report the vast majority had negative experiences with the police.
- Participants had overwhelmingly negative perceptions of the police, criminal justice system, and the law. Concerns were raised around: bias against men; disbelief they can be victims of female perpetrated sexual and domestic violence; and inequality of treatment as victims under sexual offences law.
- Reform of the sexual offences legislation was important to participants to ensure male survivors' experiences are appropriately acknowledged and labelled. Suggestions were put forward for law reform, including redefining rape to include forced-to-penetrate cases.
- The majority of participants labelled their forced-to-penetrate experiences as rape, even though this is not reflected in the current law.

1 Introduction

This report is based on a collaborative research study conducted in partnership between Lancaster University Law School and Survivors Manchester between May 2018 – July 2019. It explores the experiences of men who have self-identified as having been forced-to-penetrate women.¹

The term ‘forced-to-penetrate’ (FTP) is used for cases where a man is forced-to-penetrate a woman’s vagina, anus, or mouth with his penis, and without his consent.² This is an under-discussed and under-researched form of sexual violence. The gender dynamics involved, i. e. a female perpetrator and male victim, make this a “hidden-hidden” form of sexual violence. This project report shines a light on men’s FTP experiences by exploring the context within which this form of sexual violence occurs, the consequences it has for male victims, and men’s experiences of engaging with the criminal justice system.

1.1 The Law

The existing legal definitions of rape within the UK all exclude FTP cases. This is because they all require that the perpetrator is male, and that he penetrates the victim (who can be male or female) with his penis.³ For example, within England and Wales rape is defined in section 1 of the Sexual Offences Act (SOA) 2003, and requires the non-consensual and intentional penile penetration of the vagina, anus, or mouth of the victim, without a reasonable belief in the victim’s consent. As can be seen here, the requirement of *penile penetration of the victim* excludes FTP cases from being labelled or prosecuted as rape.

FTP cases are therefore prosecuted under alternative offences. In England and Wales this is under the SOA 2003 section 4: causing a person to engage in sexual activity without consent. Section 4 is one of the more complicated provisions within the SOA 2003 because it creates two separate offences⁴ where the victim is aged 13 or over; one involving non-penetrative sexual activity, and the other involving penetrative activity. It is the penetrative offence that FTP cases are prosecuted under.

However, this offence incorporates a range of non-consensual sexual activity, including:

*where a victim is forced to carry out a sexual act involving their own person, such as masturbation, [where they are forced to] engage in sexual activity with a third party, who may be willing or not, or [where they are forced to] engage in sexual activity with the offender, e. g. a woman forces a man to penetrate her.*⁵

The Crown Prosecution Service make clear that ‘one of the purposes of the offence ... is to create a female equivalent of the offence of rape, which carries the same level of punishment for what amounts to the same type of offending behaviour.’⁶ Despite the CPS’ assertions around the section 4 penetrative offence being equivalent to that of rape, analysis of the sentencing regimes suggests this is not true. Where penetration is involved in a section 4 offence (i. e. , FTP cases), the sentencing range is from a community order to life imprisonment.⁷ This can be compared with rape, where the offence range is 4 years custody to life imprisonment.⁸ Thus whilst the maximum sentence for both offences are the same, the minimum terms are substantially different, suggesting inherent differences between the two offences and the way they are viewed within legal discourse.

Moreover, rape is an offence in and of itself that occupies a specific section of the SOA 2003. In contrast, as seen above, FTP cases are criminalised under section 4 of the Act, which incorporates two offences, and the relevant penetrative offence captures a range of sexual activities, not just FTP cases.

¹ It is also possible for men to be forced-to-penetrate other men, however this research project focused solely on cases involving female perpetrators and male victims.

² Siobhan Weare, “Oh you’re a guy, how could you be raped by a woman, that makes no sense’: towards a case for legally recognising and labelling ‘forced-to-penetrate’ cases as rape’ (2018) *International Journal of Law in Context* 14, 1, 110, 110

³ For the legal definition of rape in Scotland, see *Sexual Offences (Scotland) Act 2009*, section 1; for Northern Ireland, see *Sexual Offences (Northern Ireland) Order 2008*, Article 5.

⁴ *R v Courtie* [1984] AC 463

⁵ Crown Prosecution Service, ‘Rape and sexual offences – Chapter 2: Sexual Offences Act 2003 – Principal Offences, and Sexual Offences Act 1956 – Most commonly charged offences – Legal guidance’ (N. D. CPS) Available at: www.cps.gov.uk/legal-guidance/rape-and-sexual-offences-chapter-2-sexual-offences-act-2003-principal-offences-and

⁶ *Ibid*

⁷ Sentencing Council, ‘Sexual offences: Definitive guide’ (2014, Sentencing Council). Available at: www.sentencingcouncil.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/Sexual-Offences-Definitive-Guideline-web5.pdf p21

⁸ *Ibid*, p9

1.2 Research context

Prior to 2017 no research exploring the issue of FTP cases in the UK had been published. However, this form of sexual violence had been considered as part of research studies conducted in other countries, most notably the USA.⁹ Unfortunately, much of the existing research is largely outdated, with the majority of studies being conducted in the 1980s and 1990s.¹⁰

A few, more recent studies have been conducted, but they explore the issue of compelled penetration alongside other forms of sexual violence experienced and perpetrated by both men and women,¹¹ making it difficult to focus specifically on the FTP issue. Moreover, much of the international research examines specific male populations, typically college/university students,¹² which can make the findings difficult to translate to the wider population. Finally, existing research in this area is overwhelmingly quantitative in nature, thus limiting the more detailed understanding that is often only achieved when qualitative data are included.

The lack of research on FTP cases in the UK prompted the first empirical study in this area to be conducted by Weare in 2016-17. This study, involving over 150 participants, used an online survey to collect qualitative and quantitative data on men's most recent FTP experiences. It evidenced for the first time in the UK the existence of this specific form of sexual violence, with the findings providing important insights into the experiences of male survivors.¹³ Survivors shared details about a variety of issues relating to their most recent FTP experience, including the aggressive strategies used by women in such cases, the labels they attached to their experiences, and the impact that this form of sexual violence had on their lives.

The research project underpinning this report builds upon the first path-breaking study from 2017. The more comprehensive and detailed accounts presented here can improve understandings of the context, complexities, and consequences of compelled penetration for male survivors, providing clearer insights into men's lived experiences, and allowing recommendations to be made to practitioners and policy-makers working in this area.



⁹ See, e. g. Michele Black, Kathleen Basile, Matthew Breiding et al. 'The National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey (NISVS): 2010 Summary Report' (2010, National Center for Injury Prevention and Control and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention) Available at: www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/pdf/nisvs_report2010-a.pdf

¹⁰ See, e. g. Charlene Muehlenhard and Stephen Cook 'Men's Self-Reports of Unwanted Sexual Activity' (1988) *Journal of Sex Research* 24, 58–72; Lucia O'Sullivan, E. Byers, and Larry Finkelman 'A Comparison of Male and Female College Students' Experiences of Sexual Coercion' (1998) *Psychology of Women Quarterly* 22, 177–195

¹¹ See e. g. Barbara Krahe and Anja Berger, 'Men and women as perpetrators and victims of sexual aggression in heterosexual and same-sex encounters: A study of first-year college students in Germany' (2013) *Aggressive Behavior*, 39, 391–404; Paulina Tomaszewska and Barbara Krahe, 'Sexual aggression victimization and perpetration among female and male university students in

Poland; (2018) *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, 33, 571–594.

¹² Michelle Davies and Paul Rogers, 'Perceptions of male victims in depicted sexual assaults: A review of the literature' (2006) *Aggression and Violent Behavior*, 11, 367–377.

¹³ Siobhan Weare, 'Forced-to-penetrate cases: Lived experiences of men – Baseline research findings' (2017, Survivors Manchester / Lancaster University). Available at: http://eprints.lancs.ac.uk/87216/7/Forced_to_Penetrate_Cases_Lived_Experiences_of_Men_Project_Report.pdf; Siobhan Weare, 'From coercion to physical force: Aggressive strategies used by women against men in 'forced-to-penetrate' cases in the UK' (2018) *Archives of Sexual Behavior*, 47(8), 2191–2205; Siobhan Weare, 'I feel permanently traumatised by it': Physical and emotional impacts reported by men forced-to-penetrate women in the UK' (2018) *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1177/0886260518820815>

2 Research Overview

2.1 Research questions

This study sought to address four fundamental questions:

1. What are the contexts within which men's FTP cases take place?
2. What are the consequences for men who are FTP women?
3. Which agencies and organisations are men engaging with regarding their experiences?
4. How do men's experiences and perceptions of the law and criminal justice system enhance or constrain reporting and engagement with criminal justice agencies?

2.2 Research design and data analysis

In order to respond to these questions, semi-structured interviews were conducted with 30 men who self-identified as having been FTP a woman. Survivors were invited to participate in several ways. A website¹⁴ was created for the project, which provided interested parties with detailed information about the project's aims and what involvement would entail. The study was also publicised nationally via online, print, and social media, with many leading third sector organisations who support male survivors also sharing details of the project. Several participants from Weare's earlier study had expressed a desire to participate in future research opportunities and provided contact information accordingly. Publication of, and ensuing publicity around, the findings from the 2017 study also resulted in several men independently coming forward to express interest in sharing their stories in future research.

Participants were able to choose whether they wanted to be interviewed face-to-face at Survivors Manchester's premises, or via telephone or Skype. The use of semi-structured interviews allowed for structured discussion around the project's research questions. It also allowed the researchers the flexibility to follow up and discuss important issues that emerged within individual interviews. The interview schedule was intentionally kept broad so that the diversity of participants' experiences could be captured through their own words. The length of the interviews varied considerably (between approximately 30 and 120 minutes), depending on how much detail the male survivors chose to disclose about their experiences. The interviews were recorded and transcribed. The interview transcripts were reviewed by the researchers independently, with each drawing out key themes that emerged. Following this "manual" analysis, computer aided analysis was undertaken using NVivo. The overarching themes identified by the researchers, and the project's research questions were used to inform the initial coding of the data. As the coding progressed, additional themes (nodes) were identified. Coding queries were run to explore associations between the themes identified.

Underpinning this project's design, data collection, and data analysis methods were survivors' voices. It is their lived experiences that are at the heart of both this project and this project report.

2.3 Ethical considerations

Protecting the well-being of both the participants and the researchers was a central consideration. Ethical approval was gained from the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences and Management School Research Ethics Committee at Lancaster University. To ensure informed consent, all participants were provided with a detailed information sheet prior to interview, outlining the research project, its aims, and explaining the interview process. They then completed and signed a consent form, which was also signed by the interviewing researcher. Interviews were recorded and audio files transferred onto researchers' password protected computers in encrypted files. Recordings were deleted following transcription to protect participants' identities. Interview transcripts were anonymised, with identifying information removed, and all electronic documents were password protected. To ensure participant anonymity, participants were assigned numerical identities.

The interviews required participants to share, and thus re-live, difficult experiences involving sexual violence. Therefore, it was made clear to participants that they did not need to answer any questions that they were uncomfortable with, and that they could end the interview at any time. Both prior to, and following the conclusion of, the interview, participants were provided with details of support services that they could access. This information was also included on the project website. A 'triage' service was put in place with Survivors Manchester, so that any participants who needed immediate specialist support could receive it.

¹⁴ <http://wp.lancs.ac.uk/forced-to-penetrate-cases>

3 Research findings

3.1 What are the contexts within which men's forced-to-penetrate experiences took place?

Domestic abuse

Men most frequently reported that they were FTP their female partner within an abusive intimate relationship. Compelled penetration in this context was reported by half (15) of the participants who were interviewed. As a result, for many men this form of sexual violence was experienced alongside other forms of abuse within the relationship, including psychological and financial abuse, coercive control, threats and intimidation, and physical violence.

'The physical violence was first and then that sort of escalated into sexual violence' Participant 26.

'I had to pay any money I made into her account, couldn't see the family accounts, couldn't see anything ... I just had to show her my statement so she knew that I'd transferred everything that I'd made through to her account' Participant 16.

As a form of intimate partner violence, many of the participants noted that being FTP their female partner was principally about being controlled by her.

'She pushed and criticised me and abused me emotionally, physically ... and this, the forced to penetrate was actually pretty much a combination of her just exerting her control over me...' Participant 8.

'So, for me the sexual abuse, the forced to penetrate, was just one of a number of controlling tactics of domestic abuse [she used] ... I certainly did not recognise at the beginning, how that was used as a controlling technique' Participant 5.

Consequently, men sometimes associated their FTP experience(s) as being a form of psychological, rather than physical, abuse. This was illustrated by Participant 16; *'I had become completely dehumanised ... I know how she manipulated the situation to get what she wanted and then how she attempted to normalise it in the aftermath.'*

Men also reported being FTP an ex-partner, that is to say that at least one FTP incident occurred following the end of the intimate relationship, as a form of post-separation abuse. Consequently the female perpetrator was most frequently reported as being a participants' partner at the time, or their ex-partner.

Other contexts

Other contextual factors were also reported with varying frequencies. Alcohol was often involved. For example two men reported having their drinks spiked with some kind of drug on nights out and were subsequently FTP an acquaintance. Other participants reported that they and/or the female perpetrator had consumed alcohol prior to the FTP incident/s. Several participants indicated that they believed the female perpetrator compelled penetration with the intention of her becoming pregnant, sometimes resulting in a successful pregnancy (discussed in more detail in section 3. 2).

Repeat Victimisation

Two thirds of the men reported being repeatedly victimised. For many this involved being FTP the same woman on multiple occasions. This is perhaps unsurprising when it is remembered that half of the participants reported compelled penetration as being one form of abuse they experienced within their intimate relationships. The frequency of FTP incidents with their female partners varied, but for some it happened regularly.

Other men reported being FTP different women on different occasions;

'Well there are two instances in which I, I think I can say I was, some people would say, forced ... the first after the end of my first year at university ... the second experience happened at the end of university [had just graduated]' Participant 11.

Experiencing other forms of sexual violence, as well as abuse, from women was also reported;

'I've experienced sexual assault by a woman, I've experienced forced to penetrate, I've experienced domestic violence' Participant 15.

Two of the men disclosed that they had suffered sexual violence from men as well as women. For example, participant 17 explained how he was raped by a man at a party. Finally, five of the men revealed that their repeat victimisation involved abuse that occurred within their childhoods (perpetrated by both men and women).

'I was ... at least once or twice a month being forced to have sex against my will' Participant 28

3.2 What are the consequences for men who are forced-to-penetrate women?

Findings from this study echo those found in Weare's earlier study on the significant negative impacts and harms that compelled penetration has on men.¹⁷ Conducting interviews and collecting qualitative data in this study enabled more detailed insights to be gathered into the consequences of this form of sexual violence for male survivors. It should be noted here that in some instances it was difficult for men to separate out the specific impacts of their FTP experience(s) from the impacts of other abuse they had suffered. This most frequently arose where participants had experienced compelled penetration in the context of an abusive intimate relationship. Thus some of the consequences discussed below may also be, at least partially, attributable to other abuse that participants experienced either at other times in their lives, during the same time period as their FTP experience(s), or both.

Five participants indicated that their experiences had had limited or short-term impacts on their lives. This was the sentiment of Participant 20 who explained; *'it hasn't had a huge impact on myself, it hasn't had a huge impact on how I view relationships, it didn't really have a big impact on how I viewed that relationship. It made me uncomfortable for a few days but then I kind of just sort of moved past it.'*

For the other 25 participants, the impacts of the FTP experiences(s) were overwhelmingly negative. Whilst they varied in severity, these impacts were frequently substantial and long-lasting.

Mental health

Over two-thirds of the participants experienced detrimental impacts in relation to their mental health. Varying degrees of anxiety and depression were disclosed. For some men it was their FTP experience that triggered this, for example; *'I was depressed for quite a long time, so yeah. But ... looking back now, that was the trigger, that was the trauma'* (Participant 29). For others, their experience of compelled penetration exacerbated existing depression and/or anxiety.

Flashbacks were experienced and panic attacks were also reported. For example, Participant 26 explained *'I started having flashbacks and it was just horrendous ... I thought the flashbacks were never going to go away ...'* Participants also disclosed that they had difficulties with sleeping, sometimes because they were suffering from nightmares.

Several of the men used the term 'trauma' to describe both what happened to them and the subsequent impact on their lives. Four of the men disclosed that they had been diagnosed with PTSD.

'I've been diagnosed with PTSD ... [the] trauma and stuff, the impact has just been colossal, absolutely colossal.'
Participant 15.

'She forced her fists into my mouth and I've had severe PTSD flashbacks about this fist in the mouth thing.'
Participant 26.

Others suspected that they were suffering from PTSD, but for numerous reasons had not been officially diagnosed, sometimes because they had not disclosed their FTP experience to relevant professionals.

Six men made reference to considering, or attempting, suicide.

'I mean it's taken me, mentally, mental health wise it's taken me to extremely dark places and suicide ideation, I've not attempted, but you know it felt like I've been on the cusp of making an attempt, and even to this day it's still, obviously it's a big thing, it still triggers me in a negative sense' Participant 25.

'I came out of it and I didn't know what to do ... within a year of coming out of the relationship erm, I'd tried to commit suicide with a very very serious attempt on my life post psychosis ... I only just got through that suicide attempt, only just survived' Participant 18.

Participants disclosed that they had been prescribed medication to help them with their mental health. However, for two of them, taking the medication had negative knock on effects on their physical health. For Participant 18 this was significant weight gain;

'through being mentally ill and being put on particular medication to try and stabilise me, I put six stone on in six months ... It's caused me major weight gain ... I'm probably about eight stone heavier than I was at the time.'

Participant 12 had a reaction to the medication he was prescribed when he had trouble sleeping, giving him a priapism. He subsequently had to have surgery which resulted in him experiencing sexual dysfunction;

'I ended up having a bad reaction to the tablets, er I got rushed to hospital and erm [it] left me damaged ... I'm permanently damaged from that. I can't get proper erections liked I used to now.'

¹⁷ Siobhan Weare, "I Feel Permanently Traumatized By It": Physical and Emotional Impacts Reported by Men Forced to Penetrate Women in the United Kingdom' (2018) *Journal of Interpersonal Violence* DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1177/0886260518820815>

Emotional well-being

Participants reported experiencing a range of emotions following their FTP experience(s). These were overwhelmingly negative. References to guilt and self-blame were common. These feelings related to their actions just prior to, or at the time of the compelled penetration incident(s), which meant that they felt in some way responsible for what had happened to them. For example, Participant 1 was FTP an acquaintance after his drink was spiked on a night out with friends. He explained;

'Of course it's all those things that you know that you shouldn't [do], you should never let somebody else buy you a drink, you should never, you know, because I even, like there were so many opportunities I think she put it in as soon as she was walking back from the bar.'

Others explained feelings of guilt and self-blame because they felt they had "allowed" FTP to happen. Often this related to them "not fighting back", or to the fact that they obtained and sustained an erection so they must have in some way been consenting.

'I just think it was basically, I kind of caused it because I didn't make more of an effort to say "no" or physically push her off. It's kind of my fault really because I let it happen' Participant 21.

'There was guilt, there was shame, erm guilt that I'd let it happen to me and was still happening, shame that it was happening to me. I didn't know what to do. Guilt and shame that I didn't know what to do. I did not know what to do ...' Participant 16.

'Someone being forced it would be like well you have to be aroused, sexually aroused, so he had to be kind of into it to a certain extent' Participant 29.

'I've always had this ideology that's been put into my mind by other people that if I get erect, doesn't that mean I want sex?' Participant 24.

Participant 9 directly associated these feelings with masculinity and expectations around men's sex roles explaining: *'the masculinity thing was a bit of a weird thing cause I was just. . yeah. I think that's probably why I was putting the blame on myself because I was thinking "well I'm the bloke, I'm the person that's kind of in charge in that situation surely".'*

Feelings of shame were also common. These feelings were often cited as a key reason why men would not disclose what happened to them to friends, family, and/or professionals.

'But there's no way I would tell them exactly what happened to me. I couldn't live with the shame.' Participant 10.

'It was in the back of my mind that I ought to report it, but I didn't and it was embarrassment, shame, you know all, possibly even thinking "well maybe I'm the only person this has ever happened to, maybe I'm the only man that's ever experienced this"' Participant 19.

'There wasn't anybody ... I could think about telling, because I used to, I mean I used to look in the mirror a lot and feel shame and disgust so I thought 'I can't look at anybody else and tell them that'' Participant 30.

Linked to these feelings of guilt, self-blame, and shame was poor self-worth. This was explained by Participant 16;

'what sort of woman wants a man like that, a man who couldn't protect himself and his family and who let that happen to him, all of those things ...?'

Anger was also frequently reported, with men feeling this emotion for different reasons. For example, Participant 9's anger directly related to having experienced compelled penetration; *'[it] was one of the reasons I was quite an angry person at that time ...'* The anger of participants 8 and 12 was directed towards the female perpetrator for what she had done. *'The thing that I'm angry about is that like she knew I didn't wanna be with her, she knew I didn't wanna have sex with her, especially towards the last few months'* (Participant 12). Feelings of anger also stemmed from the legal and societal responses to men's sexual victimisation, especially when this is perpetrated by women. It was felt that there was a silence in relation to men's FTP experiences, which meant they were not able to discuss what happened to them or to label it as they saw fit.

'It really gets me very angry when, on the news you hear about, you know, rape and me too and everything and you think "well actually I'm not even allowed to say that I was raped", you know, it's actually deeply hurtful and it really does make me quite angry' Participant 28.

'Not being able to tell people – It's like, it makes me so angry. And there's no-one you can talk to about it, there's no-one you can go to about it' Participant 12.

Relationships

Almost all of the participants indicated that their FTP experiences had negatively impacted their personal lives and relationships in some way. 14 men reported that they had experienced varying types of sexual dysfunction since their FTP experience(s). This included erectile dysfunction; *'when I started trying to have another relationship, I found that I was having impotence problems'* (Participant 7). A lack of libido or reduced sex drive, as well as a desire to avoid sex and sexual relationships was also discussed:

'I think that's changed me as a person because I've totally gone off sex now, I'm with a partner, we haven't been sexual for. . I dunno how long now, four or five months erm, and I don't know why you know? Maybe it's something that this has done to me, erm, I dunno, it's just struggling to commit to a relationship fully in a way that a woman might want ...' Participant 24.

'I've not had sex ... since then ... not once' Participant 15.

'I've always found [sex] difficult since. The act of penetration actually scares me ... to be honest I tend to avoid it ... I'm fine with hugging, kissing, embracing and most other things, it's when it comes to that final act, it's like ... there's a mental block comes down' Participant 30.

Linked to the above, 18 participants reported difficulties in forming new romantic relationships, often citing difficulty in trusting new partners. This is perhaps to be expected when it is remembered that FTP incidents most frequently involved partners and ex-partners.

'I find at the moment I haven't got trust like I used to, I mean I find it a bit like er, I don't trust like, women, in a way, like, the way I used to. I feel like as if it could happen again' Participant 3.

'It affects how I view relationships, I'm single at the moment by choice' Participant 13.

For some this inability to trust others and develop new relationships extended to include any and all relationships, not just intimate ones. For example Participant 12 explained;

'I can't form relationships with people I just don't trust them, I'm scared of getting close to people.'

It is perhaps unsurprising then that loneliness and isolation were also reported;

'it's quite a lonely, crappy existence at the moment ... and it's all because of this' (Participant 12).

'I've had no relationships, anything, nothing. I've never had a relationship with a woman again'

Participant 15.

Personal life

Nine participants reported that their careers were impacted, they were unable to work, or that they lost their jobs. This was typically as a result of the severe mental health impacts that they experienced.

'I've gone off work through it in a roundabout kind of way but I never directly addressed "this is something that happened to me, and it clearly messed with my head, to a huge extent." It massively affected my life' Participant 29.

'Now I just sort of lock myself away, I stay at home, I'm not working anymore' Participant 24.

'I'm nowhere near recovered really. I'm still under the mental health system, I've not worked full time since then' Participant 18.

Men also reported experiencing varying levels of harassment from the female perpetrator following the FTP incident(s). Typically these men had been in an intimate relationship with the woman at the time of the compelled penetration.

'The woman who did this was a stalker, er we had a brief relationship but she went onto stalk me for two and half years. She followed me to [City A], she stalked me in [City B], she assaulted me in [City B], they were all witnessed. She stalked me to [City A], she stalked my wife and son for months ...' Participant 15.

'She wasn't gonna let me go, I was a possession to her, I was a thing, erm she couldn't just leave me alone and let me get on, she had to harass, and then there was just like a 5, 6 year campaign of harassment from her, from her family, they'd follow me to my place of work, in the mornings erm, wherever I worked ... they'd try getting in there ... I think on one occasion they were trying to film me on a phone, proper intimidation stuff ... the harassment went on up until quite recently' Participant 12.

The impact on the lives of four men was so great that they explicitly stated that they had been fundamentally changed as people as a result. For example, Participant 16, who was FTP his partner in an abusive relationship, explained;

'I don't recognise myself anymore as a person or a man.'

As noted earlier in the report, several participants explained that they felt the female perpetrator compelled penetration with the intention of her becoming pregnant. For four of these men, one significant consequence of their FTP experience(s) is that they had a child.

'She knew I didn't wanna have a kid to her, she knew I didn't wanna be with her and then after the fact I found out she went round bragging about what she did. She openly admitted that she tried to trap me and she got a kid out of me and she was bragging about it to all her friends' Participant 12.

'I told friends, I told family, her family to say "look this is what she did and then now she comes and says that she's pregnant"' Participant 2.

Participant 27 explained that he did not know for sure if the child that was born to the female perpetrator was his;

'A couple of months later, well 9 months, she disappeared to [city name] and I don't know whether I've got a child or not because she had a child before she disappeared.'

3.3 Which agencies and organisations are men engaging with regarding their forced-to-penetrate experiences?

Engaging with support services

Engagement with agencies and organisations was very mixed. Typically men engaged with health-related organisations for support in dealing with the impacts of their FTP experiences. For those men who accessed support, it was most frequently from GPs, counsellors, therapists, and specialist male sexual and domestic violence support services.

At the outset it should be noted that men who accessed more general organisations, ie. their GPs, did not always disclose their FTP experience(s) as the reason for their visit. Instead they focused on the impacts and “symptoms” arising as a result, for example anxiety, depression, insomnia, etc., seeking support to address these issues. This was the case for over a third of the participants.

Interviewer: *‘You were prescribed the Sertraline to help with anxiety, did you speak to your GP about the reasons behind it, the forced-to-penetrate?’*

Participant: *‘No, no, no, no. I just um, did a very short explanation of the key points and then moved on. Simply because ... well, what else can I say?’*
Participant 13.

Interviewer: *‘So did you go to your GP to access the counselling?’*

Participant: *‘Yes, but I didn’t, I just said I had problems with anxiety and depression’.*

Interviewer: *‘You didn’t talk to them about being forced-to-penetrate?’*

Participant: *‘Not to the GP I didn’t, no.’* Participant 30.

‘I went to the GP and I said “this is what’s happening”. I told them everything apart from the sexual abuse because I was embarrassed. I was hideously embarrassed to talk about it’ Participant 16.

GPs frequently referred participants for counselling, or prescribed them medication to deal with mental health and physical impacts they were experiencing, for example anti-depressants, anti-anxiety medication, and sleeping tablets.

Men reported accessing counselling, either through the NHS (typically by referrals from their GP) or privately. Their experiences were mixed. Several of them highlighted the issues of long waiting lists and short treatment times, especially where they were accessing counselling through the NHS.

‘From the NHS point of view it’s a very sorry tale. I got put onto various erm talking therapy sessions ... what was happening with each one of these, they were all time limited to about between 6 and 12 sessions, so you’d take the first 3 or 4 sessions just to sort of feel safe, erm, you know 5 and 6 you’d start opening up and then that’s it, it’s canned, until you’re left having opened, taken the top off of Pandora’s box as it were’ Participant 23.

‘The waiting list was quite long. I had to wait about a year until I ended up seeing someone’ Participant 12.



Whilst several participants reported positive counselling experiences, others noted that the counsellors they accessed were not specialists at dealing with male survivors of sexual violence (sometimes because they had not disclosed their FTP experience(s) to their GP prior to the referral). This often impacted the extent to which they benefitted from counselling, or resulted in a negative experience for them.

‘So I turned up at [name of] Hospital and erm, I was talking to someone on I think, second or third session, I actually brought this up, right? And she was so unbelievably horrified, she quickly changed the subject ... she didn’t want to know, she didn’t recommend that I go to see anybody, she didn’t talk about that further or anything, you know, anything related. And I thought “well, OK, well I’ve talked to a medical professional about it and they changed the subject, so [laughs] well what chance have I got?’” Participant 10.

‘I have accessed support ... but it’s like an all women’s service effectively so they will kind of be like, you know, I’ve had an assessment and they said they will do counselling but it will be female, which is kind of fine in a way, but it’s not really ideal. I think if it was the other way round and it was a woman who had experienced sexual assault from a man and the service was delivered by men, I don’t think that would be tolerated’ Participant 29.

Specialist male domestic and sexual violence services

The importance of specialist male sexual and domestic violence services was noted by seven participants. These men had either accessed these services, or were aware that they existed.

'I looked for counselling services for men who've been raped. Because I class myself as being raped'
Participant 17.

'I've been through a couple, ManKind have been good and another local one, they were quite good'
Participant 28.

The difference that accessing a specialist organisation can make was described by Participant 26. He had been waiting for counselling on the NHS but in the meantime had been able to access counselling through a local specialist sexual violence support organisation who supported male survivors. He explained:

'I did eventually get to see an NHS psychologist and I had 12 sessions with her, but I was already seeing [specialist service] at the time and [they] were way better. The NHS psychologist didn't really get me, I don't think ... the guy who I had as a counsellor [at the specialist service] erm, worked specifically with men and he was really good.'

Other participants reported that there were no specialist services for male survivors in their area, or that they were unaware that such services existed until they were signposted to them as part of this research project. For example, Participant 30 said, *'I mean I wasn't aware that these people existed until I was in contact with you.'* There was also a sense that there was a general lack of support available to male survivors of sexual and domestic violence. This was explained by Participant 16:

'There are very few refuges in the UK for women, there are next to none for men ... The places that you reach out to, [city 1] domestic abuse service, is for women ... the local charities that feed into local social services, are supporting women so there's no upcycle then to support male victims of domestic violence, which is why you get internal emails like "this bloke's been pestering us, can we just ignore him?" which you know, if you're desperately trying to get out, is horrific.'

Other agencies and organisations

Participants also reported engaging with other organisations. However, this was not usually directly as a result of their FTP experience(s), but as a result of the domestic abuse they experienced more broadly, and/or the breakdown of their relationships. These men were involved in family court proceedings in relation to accessing their children, or attempting to divide assets during divorce proceedings. Where children were involved, participants also noted being involved with CAFCASS, and/or social services. All of the men who were engaged in these processes and with these organisations found them to be overwhelmingly negative. The sentiment was that these agencies were disbelieving of men's experiences of female perpetrated sexual and domestic abuse and that they were consequently ill-equipped at dealing with such cases.

'The first person who I tried to tell something about it to, erm ... not all of it but the sort of sexual control part of it, I tried to talk about that to a CAFCASS officer and she went "I don't want to hear" and covered her ears'
Participant 26.

'The only way I can kind of accept it is that I didn't give her the money, I fought it. I took it to court and a judge decided against me and, if you were to read the judgment with the knowledge that I have, you would see that the judgment is completely biased ... I even broke down in the witness box and said how she'd sexually assaulted me and she'd abused me for years in all sorts of ways ... and the judge asked me if I wanted to take a break, and actually I did ... and I thought the judge would have sympathy with that. But no. Completely not. The judgment reads as if I'm a liar and as if I'm the abusive one'
Participant 8.

'I don't want to sound angry or bitter, I'm not bitter but I am certainly angry erm but the bias throughout the legislation – the court process, the police process, social services and CAFCASS is un-fucking believable'
Participant 16.

Participants also engaged with the police in various capacities, and their experiences are discussed below in section 3.4.

'I managed to find quite accidentally, erm ... a specialist male survivor organisation ... and I went along to one of their meetings, and it took me three meetings before I said anything, I was just listening. Because I thought it was only me, and then there's all these other guys ... They were really brilliant. They saved my life when I found them, because like I said before I thought it was only me'
Participant 26.



Lack of engagement

Men who did not engage with organisations and services sometimes instead relied upon support from their family and friends. However, at its most extreme participants had never told anyone about their FTP experience(s) prior to being interviewed for this research project. This was the case for three men.

'I've never really discussed this. As I say, I think when we broke up and this relationship was done and dusted I feel like maybe I got my closure there ...' Participant 24.

Even when men did access support or disclose to family and friends, a common theme was the length of time it took following their FTP experience(s) for them to share what had happened, with it often being many years later.

'I told no-one, spoke about it to no-one, I didn't even admit it to myself from that day, from the age of thirteen ... until I was erm, forty ... fifty three' Participant 23.

It is also noteworthy that some men, especially those who had also experienced other forms of abuse in their intimate relationships, did not always disclose their FTP experiences when help-seeking or speaking to friends and family. The sexual abuse was particularly difficult for the men to disclose.

'I've explained a little to my sister at one point about what was going on but I didn't say that [wife] insisted that I have sex ...' Participant 19.

Interviewer: *'So you've never told friends about this?'*

Participant: *'No. My mum and dad don't know, you know, I haven't discussed it with them at all. They just think that we had that big row ... and then erm. . and then we split up, that's what they think'* Participant 7.

Barriers to engaging with organisations and agencies

Participants identified numerous barriers to engaging with organisations and agencies, as well as help-seeking more broadly from friends and family. Many of these related to the emotions participants felt about what had happened to them. The most prominent of these were shame, guilt, and self-blame (discussed at 3. 2).

Men were also concerned that they would not be believed or would not be taken seriously.

'Nobody believes you if you're a bloke' Participant 13.

'We're scared to talk about it and embarrassed and when we do talk about it, we're not believed, because we're men. How can a man possibly be abused? Look at him, he's a man' Participant 16.

As can be seen from the quotes above, masculinity and its associated gender stereotypes were also relevant here. For example, the idea that men are not, or cannot be, sexually abused by women, as well as sex role stereotypes that position heterosexual men as always welcoming and enjoying all sexual contact with women.

'The sexual stuff, um there's always the assumption that I must have enjoyed it!!! It's sex, I am a man, therefore I must have enjoyed it. No. No I didn't. No I absolutely bloody didn't!' Participant 26.

'Talking about the fact that your ex-partner used to get drunk and force herself on you, rape you essentially, it's like most blokes' fantasy isn't it? Down the pub you know, she gets a bit drunk, she gets a bit frisky "yay! Oh that would be fantastic! I would love a bit of that!" No you really wouldn't, you bloody wouldn't, it's not the way that you think it is' Participant 16.

The idea of "male pride" and expectations around masculinity also featured as barriers to engagement. For example, Participant 9 explained; *'I mean there is support in the sense that there are sites and stuff, but again, male pride and stuff.'* This was reiterated by Participant 20; *'There's a few reasons why that is [haven't told anyone], I mean the first is, there's the nonsense, macho pride kind of part of it.'*

As noted earlier, lack of knowledge about, and the availability of, specialist male sexual and domestic violence support services were also barriers to engagement for participants.

'It took me 6 years really to talk about it you know?' Participant 26.

'You'd be just so absolutely ashamed that you wouldn't know what to say or who to say it to because you'd be thinking you weren't a man anymore I guess' Participant 9.

3.4 How do men's experiences and perceptions of the law and criminal system enhance or constrain reporting and engagement with criminal justice agencies after their forced-to-penetrate experiences?

Men who reported to the police

The majority of participants had not reported their FTP experiences to the police. Five men had, and this was typically in the context of reporting the wider domestic abuse that they had experienced from their female partner. It is noteworthy that other participants had involved the police because of the domestic violence they were experiencing, but did not disclose the sexual abuse to the police.

Three participants who had the police involved in some capacity indicated that their experiences were positive or had positive elements. For example, Participant 7, who experienced compelled penetration in the context of domestic abuse, disclosed his FTP experience(s) as well as other abuse he had experienced to the police. He noted that the police officers he engaged with were '**really, really good**.' Participant 5 had more of a mixed experience (he did not report his FTP experiences but did disclose the rest of the abuse he was experiencing). Two officers involved in his case were '**skilled**' and '**diligent**'. However, his experience overall was a negative one (noted below).

Negative experiences with police were far more common than positive ones. Two men who were suffering domestic abuse experienced the police returning the perpetrator to their home.

'The neighbours called the police, they came and arrested her and to cut a long story short, erm they released her without charge quite a long time later and then brought her back to the house at half past four in the morning, even though she didn't live here, they brought her, a different shift they didn't know what had happened previously, just brought her back to the house and I had a 40 minute stand-off saying "no"'

Participant 26.

'The police bail [perpetrator] back to my house ... I own the home. We're not married. There's no kids, I've had the house for fourteen years, why would the police bail a female perpetrator back? ... and their response was "well she had nowhere to go, she'd have been homeless." OK, flip it over, the same case – I'm taken out of town, I'm in A&E, catalogue of injuries, all horrific and what do the same police force do? OK not the same officer – the police drop me at a night shelter for the homeless' Participant 5.

Participant 26 explained how when he was interviewed about the FTP experience(s) he reported, an officer stated he must have enjoyed what happened to him:

'I went along and I waited for a little bit and then two female officers came and escorted me into a little room and the one that was in charge had this great big sheaf of papers and she was leafing through, then she looked me in the eyes and said "it says here that she squeezed your testicles – well you must have enjoyed it or you'd have reported it sooner". . . and I was speechless, that was it. I couldn't say anything after that. I was just gone.'

Participant 23 felt that the police had not offered him the support that is promised for victims of sexual violence.

'You see a lot of police saying that if you wanna report don't worry there'll be lots of support and we will treat you with courtesy and care and. . . none of that happened to me ... rocked up and there was nothing. There was two police officers, nobody else, I was ushered into this room and sat down, you know, there was no "are you comfortable? Would you like a cup of tea?" or anything, it was like "okay, let's go". They did explain what they were gonna do, put the video in and things but it was like "sit down and let's go" ... At the end of it was "right, thank you very much and goodbye", so there was no... "How are you? Here's some leaflets, this is Fred he is someone who's gonna talk to you and make sure. . ." there was none of that it was like reporting that your car had been stolen ... You know, "come in make a statement on video, thank you very much, here's your crime number and bugger off. Don't call us and we won't call you" sort of thing.'

Participant 18 noted that he ended up reporting to two police forces because of a '**procedural deficiency**'. He initially reported to his local police force, but because the offence had taken place elsewhere he also ended up reporting to that force as well. He felt the second police force had dealt with him better than the first; '**they were much more professional, much more sympathetic, much more erm. . . they followed things, they did things right.**'

Perceptions of the police and criminal justice system

Participants were overwhelmingly negative in their perceptions of the police and criminal justice system and this impacted on their decisions not to report or to engage in the criminal justice process. Many felt that there was no point in reporting to the police because they would not be believed or would not be taken seriously.

'If I'd have gone to the police, the police wouldn't have taken me seriously' Participant 10.

'What are they gonna say to me? They'd tell me to . . . bugger off, they'd say "don't be so stupid." What are they gonna say? Even if I did it immediately afterwards "oh I've just been raped by a woman" what would they say?' Participant 17.

Participant 12 explained how he believed his race would impact the police's response to him, and increase the chances of them not believing him.

'And if a black guy calls up the police [laughing] right, and says "look, I'm being bullied into having sex, blah, blah, blah erm, it's getting quite violent, she's trying to cut her wrists if I don't have sex with her" they, they'd laugh me off the phone . . . You're not gonna be taken seriously if you're a white guy, but if you're a black guy complaining about something like this and the perpetrator's a white girl, you're not gonna be, you are definitely definitely not gonna be taken seriously.'

Participant 16 explained how he believed that a culture of disbelief is found throughout the criminal justice system, right up to the judiciary.

'That judge is going to look at you and they're going to look at her and they're going to go "there's no way that this man is domestically abused by this woman" because the judge recognises legislatively that it can happen but the level of education is not filtered down and including judges where they actually appreciate that it happens an awful lot.'

Concerns around disbelief were often exacerbated by the fact that the men achieved (unwanted) erections, which allowed the compelled penetration to happen. This was explained by Participant 29, who noted; *'Someone being forced it would be like well you have to be aroused, sexually aroused, so he had to be kind of into it to a certain extent, so there's an extra layer.'* Moreover, men were acutely aware of the issue of their physical stature and the impact this could have on them being believed. More specifically, the fact that the men were taller, heavier, and physically stronger than the female perpetrators.

'I mean I'm just under six foot and I'm about twelve and a half stone so I'm not a big bloke, but I'm a lot bigger than her, she's five foot one, so again, you know? There's that disparity as well' Participant 26.

'I was thinking about it. I thought, actually, "what are the chances of there being anything successful happening here?" . . . A man who is six foot two, not slightly built, you know, I play rugby . . . getting a successful conviction for that' Participant 7.

A further barrier to engaging with the criminal justice process related to evidence, more specifically the lack of evidence men had to support the report they would be making.

'At the end of the day there's only going to be my word against hers, so I don't think that there's going to be any mileage in reporting it to the police' Participant 8.

'I just thought obviously I could have gone to the police and obviously told them what happened but then at the end of the day, then they'd need really strong evidence, don't they?' Participant 3.

The overwhelming perception of participants was that the justice system only recognises men as perpetrators of sexual violence, and not women, and that in turn women are only recognised as victims, not perpetrators. Consequently there was a belief that both the police and criminal justice system (as well as society more widely) are only focused on the experiences of female victims of sexual violence and exclude the experiences of male victims, especially where the perpetrator is female.

'It didn't even occur to me that it [reporting to the police] was a sensible option, it wasn't even a, I didn't feel it was a practical option for me . . . Because . . . the . . . [sighs] women are not seen as abusers . . . and men are seen as abusers' Participant 8.

'So it would be my word against hers really, that's it and to be honest at the end of the day, nowadays it's like, the woman's word always overtakes the men's in this type of situation, but it's happened' Participant 3.

'The whole legal, social cultural system is designed around the guys being the bad person' Participant 13.

'I never expected to be discriminated against just because I'm a man, that never occurred to me, that that was something that was possible, you know?' Participant 26.

Linked to this was a concern raised by several participants that the female perpetrator would make false counter-allegations of rape or domestic abuse, which would be believed by the police over their initial report of their FTP experience(s). It should be noted here that four men reported that the threat of making false counter-allegations was used by female perpetrators.

'She said if I ever told anybody, or if I ever left, um she'd tell the police that . . . I raped her . . . and there's nothing a guy can do because you know, even though it's false, even though at one point they might be cleared, it's still absolutely life-ruining because you don't lose the tag, you know as a guy you don't lose the tag of rape, ever' Participant 10.

'She said "what are you gonna do? I'll start screaming rape and you're up in court tomorrow, do you think they'll believe anything you've got to say?'" Participant 27.

Perceptions and understanding of the law

The majority of men were aware that FTP cases were not labelled as rape within English law (even if their understanding of the legal definition of rape was not otherwise completely accurate).

'I know that it's not classed as rape, which I think is wrong' Participant 8.

'The forced to penetrate, ever since it happened I've been reading up on the internet and stuff like that ... and when it comes to rape laws and things like that, the definition of rape is forced penetration of a woman, erm. . that's basically it, that's pretty much how the law stands. It's, the law was built and designed to protect fifty percent of the population' Participant 12.

Whilst participants were often aware that FTP was not legally recognised as rape, they were less clear on what it would be criminalised as (under the Sexual Offences Act, 2003 s. 4, causing a person to engage in sexual activity without consent).

'I don't really know what the law would define it as' Participant 9.

'I'm not sure of the legal definition but. . because I know it's very complicated' Participant 30.

There was a frequent sense amongst participants that there was inequality in the way that the law treated FTP cases because of the fact that the perpetrator was female and the victim male. Some expressed this through an analogy that if the sex of the victim and perpetrator were reversed then things would be different.

'On the telly or radio, a woman can slap a bloke and everyone will laugh ... but if a bloke slaps a woman that is not comedy. That's disgraceful and you know, you'll have The Guardian going into meltdown the following day, saying how terrible it is. And terrible it is too, that you know, what the police need to do is start saying "we have stories of men who are" you know, the police need to start to campaign to say "rape is rape, you know, forced penetration, whether it's male on male, female on male, male on female, whatever it is – is rape." Full stop. There's no. . you know' Participant 28.

'If I was a woman then yes it would be without, you know without... without any doubt but erm, yeah as I say as far as I know as well, the law doesn't carry any weight or penalties for any of that'– Participant 9.

'But you know, they'll change these definitions to impose more of a consequence on men and ... vilify I think in most cases men, but when it comes to a woman doing the same to a man, then they "ah well that's not technically rape", "no that's not, we can't charge them with rape", so "women don't rape ... "it's like well, come on, really?' Participant 10.

Law reform

Participants were asked about whether they thought there was a need for law reform in relation to FTP cases. The general consensus was that law reform was needed, but there were a variety of perspectives on what form it should take. Some participants suggested that the legal definition of rape should be altered to include FTP cases.

'I think the definition should be changed, so that forced to penetrate is classed as rape' Participant 8.

'If the sexual offences had an updated version and they include FTP within rape that would be, I would fully support that' Participant 15.

Other men were not necessarily sure of how they would like the law to be reformed, but were keen that there was equality of treatment regardless of the sex of the perpetrator and the victim.

'I think there does need to be a non-gendered approach to sexual offences' Participant 23.

'I'm a big believer in equality and I mean, if the same thing is done to two people, it should be the same offence' Participant 30.

'The law needs to be reviewed in light with those enhanced levels of understanding and to reflect the impact, and if we're saying that a man cannot be raped, we are immediately devaluing his experience and the impact on him' Participant 5.



Labelling experiences

Participants were also asked about how they have labelled their FTP experiences. Similarly to the discussion on law reform there were a variety of responses. However, it is notable here that men most frequently labelled their FTP experience(s) as rape, with over half of participants using this term.

'Although I know what the law definition of rape is ... my definition of rape would be having sex with someone without their consent and therefore this is it'
Participant 22.

'Well I mean if you were looking at it from the perspective from if it was a woman and I was a man, then it would be rape because it wasn't consensual sex, so that's what it would be' Participant 9.

Other participants preferred to use different terminology for example forced-to-penetrate or sexual assault.

'I typically go with the forced-to-penetrate I guess because it feels a little uncomfortable to use the label of rape, or being raped, or something ...' Participant 14.

'I'm a victim of sexual assault, that I've been sexually assaulted ... I wouldn't call it rape, that's too, in my head that's too kind of, extreme' Participant 29.

A couple of the participants were unsure of how to most appropriately label what happened to them. For example, Participant 21 who described:

'I'm still very conflicted. I still bounce in between, "well it wasn't anything really"... And then other days, I think "well no, it was abuse."'

Several participants raised concerns that in labelling or discussing their experiences, they did not want to minimise, or be perceived as minimising, the experiences of other victims of sexual violence, particularly women.

'You kind of feel like you're reducing their victimhood, it's like they've really suffered from having this, and I haven't so it feels like when I sort of put myself into their category, I'm like "ah yeah this thing happened to me, it was okay actually", it feels like it would cheapen their experiences and their emotions sometimes'
Participant 20.

'To me, it doesn't seem as a big a crime as a man doing it to a woman for some reason. It seems a lesser, lesser. You know?' Participant 21.

'That's the language – "I. Was. Raped"' Participant 5.

4 Recommendations

Drawing on the experiences of participants shared in this report, eight key recommendations are made for improving responses to male FTP victims, as well as male victims of female perpetrated sexual and domestic violence more generally.

1. Societal awareness and understanding of forced-to-penetrate cases and female-on-male sexual violence must improve.

Many participants felt isolated and unable to discuss their FTP experiences because of the silence that exists around this form of sexual violence. Compelled penetration and other forms of female perpetrated sexual violence are rarely discussed in society and thus there is a lack of awareness and understanding of men's experiences. The silence around this issue is further reinforced by powerful and pervasive gender and sex stereotypes around men and masculinity, which are left unchallenged by a failure to discuss them. The overall result is often a sense of disbelief that men can experience serious sexual violence from women, and that even if they do, the impacts on them are minimal or non-existent. The findings presented in this report highlight the importance of raising awareness of female-on-male sexual violence and FTP cases.

Awareness can be raised in multiple ways, for example; through responsible press reporting of female-on-male sexual violence, incorporating explorations of this form of sexual violence within soap and drama storylines, and creating space within which men's stories can be told and voices heard, e. g. through art and drama performances. In raising societal awareness of men's FTP experiences the aim is not, and should not be, to detract attention from, or undermine, the experiences of other sexual violence survivors (regardless of gender), but instead should allow for the recognition of FTP cases as a specific, gendered, form of sexual violence.

2. When men disclose that they are victims of domestic violence to any organisations or services, they should be routinely asked whether they have also experienced sexual violence within the relationship.

From the stories of men who had experienced FTP within the context of domestic abuse, it was clear that many of them had not disclosed the sexual violence they were experiencing. They often found their FTP experiences amongst the most difficult to discuss. By asking men if they have experienced any sexual violence within the relationship, it makes clear to them that organisations and services acknowledge that men can be victimised by women in this way. This is important in combating some of the negative perceptions that men may have about not being believed and the system being biased against men, and provides a direct opportunity for men to disclose.

3. All services and organisations that are likely to engage with forced-to-penetrate victims need training on this form of sexual violence to enable them to respond appropriately and positively to male victims.

Participants reported that being FTP a woman often had substantial and long-lasting negative impacts on their mental and emotional well-being, as well as on their personal lives. Men engaged with a range of organisations and services, mostly for support, including GPs, counsellors, and therapists. These services, and others, e. g. A&E departments, social workers, CAFCASS, the Family Court etc. , need to be aware of this form of sexual violence and the impacts it can have. Training should recognise the diversity of men's experiences (as illustrated in this report), and enable services to respond appropriately and positively. This training should directly address pervasive gender stereotypes that staff may have around masculinity, sex roles, and sexual and domestic violence.

Services and organisations need to be aware that men can experience this (and other) forms of sexual violence from women, and be open to discussing this with men who disclose, as well as those who do not. For example, several participants noted that they had gone to their GP for support in dealing with the impacts of their FTP experience(s), but had not disclosed what happened to them. GPs should be confident in probing more into why men may be experiencing the mental health problems they have come in to discuss, and respond appropriately if they disclose the sexual violence they have experienced. Appropriate responses include signposting to specialist male domestic and sexual violence services.

4. Specialist male sexual and domestic violence support services need to be better funded and signposted across the country.

Participants who accessed specialist services were clear about their importance and benefits. Unfortunately, not all men were aware that such services existed, or there were no such services in their geographical area. Signposting to specialist male services needs to be improved. This can be done by the services themselves, as well as by other organisations that male victims may engage with, for example GPs, the police, and other health-related organisations. Alongside this, provision of these specialist services needs to be improved so that all men can access them, regardless of where they live. This requires appropriate funding to ensure that:

1. These services exist, and
2. That they can deliver a high-quality service to male survivors without extensive waiting lists.

As highlighted in this report, men can take years to disclose the abuse they have experienced. When they gather the courage to disclose and attempt to access support, they should not have to travel outside of their geographic area, or sit on a waiting list for months. They should be able to access high-quality specialist services almost immediately.

5. All organisations that could engage with male forced-to-penetrate victims need to be aware of barriers to men's engagement and actively work to dismantle these barriers.

There were multiple and complex barriers that prevented men from engaging with services, organisations, and the police. All organisations (including health services, the police, family courts, social services etc) who could engage with male FTP victims need to recognise these barriers and work to understand them. They also need to actively work to dismantle them in order to maximise men's engagement. There are numerous ways this could be done, for example:

- Explicitly acknowledging in publicly available printed materials that men being FTP/ experiencing sexual violence from women can, and does happen.
- Being inclusive of female-to-male sexual violence in the language and examples used in (publicly available) organisational policies and documents.
- Including female-to-male sexual violence as part of mandatory staff training and making this publicly known so that male victims are aware of staff knowledge in this area.

6. Police responses to male victims of domestic and sexual violence need to improve. All police forces should be trained about forced-to-penetrate cases.

The participants who engaged with the police reported negative experiences on the whole. This, combined with the negative perceptions that were reported about the police and criminal justice system, highlights the need for police forces to improve their responses to male victims of domestic and sexual violence perpetrated by women. As part of improving this response all forces should be trained about FTP cases to understand the experiences of male victims. A number of suggested improvements were also identified by participants. These included:

- Officers being aware of the gender and sex role stereotypes they may hold and not letting these affect their practices.
- Creating a supportive and safe environment for men when they report so that they feel as if they are believed, as well as actually being believed. As part of this, specially trained sexual and domestic violence officers should be routinely reminded that victims and perpetrators can be of any sex and be clear on how to respond appropriately and positively in instances of female-to-male violence being disclosed.
- Not making assumptions around men's disclosures, for example that because they are victims of a female perpetrator, they would rather report to a male officer. Provide men with choices and listen to them.
- Improving communication with survivors. This relates to keeping men up-to-date with their cases, but also to communication between forces, e. g. where the victim has reported to one force, but the crime took place in the geographical location of another.
- Signposting men to male specific sexual and domestic violence support services, or if these are not available in the area, to other appropriate sources of support.

As part of improving their responses to male victims of female-perpetrated sexual violence, forces could also regularly acknowledge that this occurs, e. g. through poster/ social media campaigns, as well as ensuring that their websites and publicly available policies use inclusive language and examples when addressing domestic and sexual violence. This will give men increased confidence in coming forward and reporting their experiences.

7. Reforming the law of rape to include forced-to-penetrate cases should be considered.

Participants were aware that the current legal definition of rape excludes FTP cases. This is because the legal definition in section 1 of the Sexual Offences Act 2003 requires penile penetration of the victim's anus, vagina, or mouth by the perpetrator. Therefore, only men can be recognised as principal offenders of rape (women can be secondary offenders, i.e. accomplices). Participants were not, however, aware that what they experienced was criminalised under section 4 of the Sexual Offences Act 2003; causing a person to engage in sexual activity without consent. As discussed at the beginning of the report, this is a very different offence with a different sentencing regime (see section 1. 1). Suggestions for law reform were put forward by participants, including redefining rape to include FTP cases. When participants were asked how they labelled their FTP cases, the most frequently used label was 'rape'. There is therefore a clear disconnect between how male FTP victims label their experiences, and how the law does so.

The importance of appropriately labelling experiences of sexual violence within the criminal law is well-recognised, and therefore serious consideration needs to be given to reforming the law of rape to incorporate FTP cases. There are multiple ways this could be done, including the introduction of a completely gender-neutral definition of rape, or the introduction of a new offence of rape by compelled penetration which specifically covers FTP cases. There are likely to be challenges associated with any law reform approach and therefore further research in this area, and consultation with relevant stakeholders is needed.

8. An Ending Intimate Violence Against Men and Boys Strategy should be introduced that sits alongside the existing Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy.

Participants had overwhelmingly negative perceptions of the criminal justice system and the law. They felt that the justice system and police were biased against men, and that in particular there was no clear recognition that men could be victims of domestic and sexual abuse at the hands of a female perpetrator. There were also concerns that by talking about their experiences or labelling them a certain way, participants would be detracting from the experiences of female victims of sexual and domestic violence, something which was not their aim. There is currently (and rightly) a Home Office Violence against Women and Girls (VAWG) Strategy which provides an overview of the actions being taken by government agencies on tackling VAWG. Male victims of crimes are also considered within this strategy, specifically male victims of sexual, domestic, and honour-based violence and abuse. Whilst the Home Office recently published a 'Position statement on male victims of crimes considered in the cross-Government strategy on Ending Violence Against Women and Girls', this still does not result in the VAWG strategy adequately addressing the experiences of male victims. Incorporating the experiences of men and boys, historically almost as a footnote or add-on, within the VAWG strategy risks the experiences of male victims being overlooked or minimised.

Creating a separate strategy for men and boys would directly address some of the concerns raised by male participants in this study around bias against, and disbelief of, men's experiences of sexual and domestic violence within the criminal justice system. It would also support, reflect, and underpin the other recommendations called for in this report. By calling for the creation of an Ending Intimate Violence Against Men and Boys Strategy, we are adding the evidence presented in this report, and our voice, to those that have already done so, including the former Victims' Commissioner Baroness Newlove and the Men and Boys Coalition.





Lancaster University
Law School

Bowland North, Lancaster University, LA1 4YN | UK