

Violence in England and Wales 2008 An Accident and Emergency Perspective

V Sivarajasingam, JP Wells, S Moore, JP Shepherd

Violence and Society Research Group, Cardiff University, Heath Park, Cardiff, CF14 4XY

Correspondence to Professor Jonathan Shepherd

Tel: 02920 744215 (office); 0777 9490022 (mobile)

Email: shepherdjp@cardiff.ac.uk

Executive Summary

- A sample of 49 Emergency Departments (EDs) and Walk-in Centres in England and Wales, who are certified members of the National Violence Surveillance Network (NVSN), were included in this national study of trends in serious violence.
- Anonymous prospective data relating to age, gender and attendance date of those treated for violence-related injuries were collected from these EDs and Walk-in Centres.
- According to these data there was an overall increase in serious violence of 6.6% in England and Wales in 2008 compared to 2007 and compared with an overall decrease of 12% the year before. This is the first annual increase in overall violence-related ED attendances since 2001.
- Overall in England and Wales an estimated 351,468 people attended EDs for treatment following violence in 2008, 21,000 more than in 2007.
- This overall increase mainly reflected a 24% increase in violence affecting men and women aged 31 to 50. Rates for women increased more than rates for men.
- There were decreases in violence-related ED attendance among children aged 0 to 10 and 11 to 17.

Introduction

Violence is a major contributor to premature death, disability and both psychological and physical injuries.¹ Violence was responsible for over 750 deaths in England and Wales in 2007/2008.² For every fatality, there are hundreds more who are injured and who require hospital treatment. Injuries incur substantial costs to the health sector and society more widely - estimated at billions of pounds per year.³ The Violence and Society Research Group at Cardiff University has, since 2000 developed and continues to maintain the National Violence Surveillance Network (NVSN) of Emergency Departments (EDs) in England and Wales to measure community violence using injury data and to clarify national violence trends. Data from this network demonstrated a decrease in serious violence of 12% in England and Wales in 2007 compared to 2006, the sixth successive annual decrease since 2001.⁴

The aim of the study reported here is to identify overall, gender and age-specific violence-related injury rates and violence trends in England and Wales in and to the year ending 31st December 2008.

Methods

Altogether, a sample of 49 EDs, Minor Injury Units and Walk-in Centres were included in this study. All are certified members of the NVSN (Table 1). Inclusion criteria were the availability of prospective electronic data on violence-related hospital attendances and agreement from the ED clinical leads to take part in the study and to share data. Prospective electronic ED data relating to age, gender and attendance date of patients reporting violence-related injury during the year ending 31st December 2008 were retrieved. As in previous years, ED attendances were categorised by gender and five age groups: 0-10, 11-17, 18-30, 31-50 and 50+ years. The potential bias in selecting this sample of EDs – due to the non-randomised study design – was limited by assigning appropriate weights to the sample ED population so that comparisons could be made with national violence-related injury rates calculated in previous years. The method for calculating appropriate weights is detailed in a previous publication.⁵

Annual assault injury rates (number of injured per 1000 resident population) were computed separately for both genders and for the five age groups. Annual injury

rates for 2008 were compared to injury rates from previous years. In computing national injury rates the following assumptions were made:

- Coverage ratio (total annual attendance at EDs in the sample compared to total annual attendance at all EDs in England and Wales) was the same for both genders and all age groups.
- Resident populations of England and Wales in 2008 and 2007 were similar.

Results

Violence-related A&E attendance

Altogether, 57,259 people injured in violence were treated in the 49 EDs, Minor Injury Units and Walk-in Centres in 2008 (Table 2). Male to female ratio was three to one (41,883 assaults among males; 15,376 assaults among females). Almost half were aged 18 to 30 years (28,154). Age and gender distribution of those seeking treatment following assault during 2008 were similar to previous years.

Assault injury rates

Overall, 9.6 per 1,000 males and 3.4 per 1,000 females were treated at EDs, Minor Injury Units and Walk-in Centres in England and Wales during 2008 for injuries sustained in violence (Table 2). Overall, the estimated annual injury rate was 6.5 per 1,000 residents. Those at highest risk were those aged 18 to 30 years (17.8 per 1,000 residents) followed by those aged 11 to 17 (11.7 per 1,000 residents), those aged 31 to 50 (6.8 per 1,000 residents, those aged 51 and over (1.2 per 1000 residents) and those aged 0 to 10 (0.4 per 1000 resident population).

Trends in violence

Overall, there was an increase in violence-related ED attendances in England and Wales in 2008 of 6.6% compared to 2007. Proportionately, increases for females (9.6%) were higher than for males (4.3%), compared to attendances in 2007 (Figure 1, Table 3). All age groups except those aged 0 to 17 years showed increases in violence-related ED attendance in 2008 compared to 2007; the groups where numbers increased most were those aged 31 to 50 years (24%) and over 50s (20%). As in 2007, violence-related injury attendances at EDs were most frequent on Saturdays and Sundays and least frequent during the month of February. Injury-related attendances peaked in May and August of 2008 (Figure 2a and 2b).

Discussion

Against a background of successive annual falls in overall violent crime in England and Wales according to injury data, this study showed that an estimated 351,468 people in England and Wales attended EDs, Minor Injury Units and Walk-in Centres for medical treatment following assaults in 2008 – an increase of 6.6% (of just over 21,000) in assault-related hospital attendances compared to 2007. This is still lower than the estimated 364,000 people who sought medical treatment following violence in 2006.

Since 2001, violence-related hospital attendances in England and Wales have declined, culminating in the greatest annual decrease in 2007 (12%).^{4,6,7} However, there were clear increases in violence in which males, females and those aged 18 years and over were injured in 2008 compared to the previous year. There was a 24% increase in risk of sustaining injury in violence for those aged 31 to 50.

According to the British Crime Survey (BCS), the number of BCS violent crimes experienced by adults in England and Wales decreased by 12 per cent between 2006/07 and 2007/08⁸, precisely the same decrease identified from ED data. Police-recorded violence against the person also fell, by eight per cent, during the same period, resulting in the lowest levels of recorded violence since 2002/03.⁸

The reasons for differences in trends between violence recorded by EDs and the police are not entirely clear, but earlier and more frequent detection, by means of CCTV and better targeted policing, is known to prevent injury. Interestingly, up until 2008 these trends were in opposite directions suggesting that higher rates of police detection, far from signalling an increase in violence, were beneficial in reducing harm. According to police records, between April to June 2007 and April to June 2008 there was a 29% increase in grievous bodily harm (GBH) with intent, a third of which can be explained by changes in the counting rules.⁹ Over half the BCS (51%) and police recorded (52%) violence in England and Wales in 2007/08 resulted in no physical injury and therefore no hospital treatment.⁸

In the study reported here, the risk of victimisation varied by age and gender as in previous years, with men, in particular young men, being at greatest risk of victimisation according to the BCS and ED data.^{4,7} Violence affecting those aged 0 to 10 years showed a substantial decrease (of 73%) in 2008 compared to 2007 according to ED data. This reverses the trend observed in the previous year. However, this

interpretation has to be viewed with caution due to the small numbers of 0 to 10 year old children included in the sample and the non-randomised study design.

Variation in violence-related ED attendance by day was similar to previous years – there was more serious violence during weekends than on weekdays. Lowest assault-related attendance occurred in February with peak attendance in August, consistent with previous findings.^{4,7}

References

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4. http://www.cardiff.ac.uk/dentl/resources/Trends_in_violence_2007.pdf
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8. <http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/pdfs08/hosb0708.pdf>
9. <http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/pdfs08/hosb1408supp.pdf>

Table 1**Hospitals included in the study (n=49)**

Blackburn Royal Infirmary
 Blackburn Urgent Care Centre
 Burnley Urgent Care Centre
 Bury General
 Calderdale Royal
 Cheltenham General
 Chesterfield and North Derbyshire Royal
 Chorley District
 Conquest (St Leonards-on-Sea)
 County (Louth)
 Derbyshire Royal
 Eastbourne District General
 Friarage (Northallerton)
 Frimley Park
 Glan Clwyd (Rhyl)
 Gloucestershire Royal
 Grantham
 Hinchingsbrooke (Huntingdon)
 Huddersfield Royal Infirmary
 Ipswich
 John Coupland (Gainsborough)
 Johnsons (Spalding)
 King George (Goodmayes)
 Kingston (Kingston-upon-Thames)
 Leicester Royal Infirmary
 Lincoln
 Lister (Chelsea)
 North Devon District (Barnstaple)
 North Manchester General
 Peterborough District
 Pilgrim (Boston)
 Prince of Wales (Bridgend)
 Queens (Romford)
 Queen Mary's (Sidcup)
 Rochdale Infirmary
 Royal Bournemouth
 Royal Devon and Exeter (Wonford)
 Royal Hampshire County (Winchester)
 Royal Preston
 Russells Hall (Dudley)
 Salisbury District
 Scunthorpe General
 Skegness
 South Tyneside District
 Stepping Hill (Stockport)
 Stoke Mandeville
 The Royal Oldham
 University Hospital (Hartlepool)
 University Hospital of Wales (Cardiff)

Table 2: Violence injury rates by age and gender 2008: patients who attended 49 EDs and Walk-in Centres in England and Wales for treatment following violence-related injury.

Gender	N	%
Male	41,883	73
Female	15,376	27
Total	57,259	100

Age group (years)	N	%
0 to 10	485	0.8
11 to 17	9082	15.9
18 to 30	28,154	49.2
31 to 50	16,369	28.6
50+	3,169	5.5
Total	57,259	100

Annual assault injury rate (per 1000 residents)	
Male	9.6
Female	3.4
Total	6.5
0 to 10	0.4
11 to 17	11.7
18 to 30	17.8
31 to 50	6.8
50+	1.2

Figure 1: Trends in violence in England and Wales (1999 to 2008).

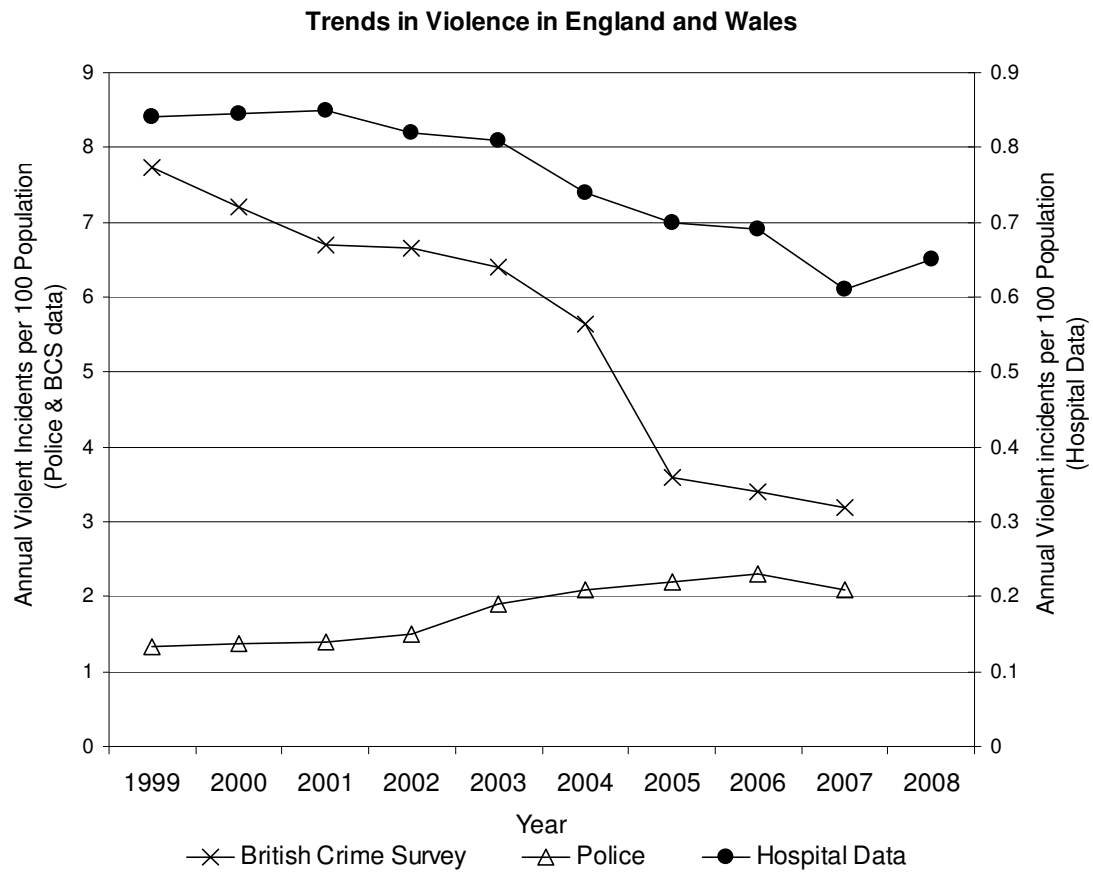
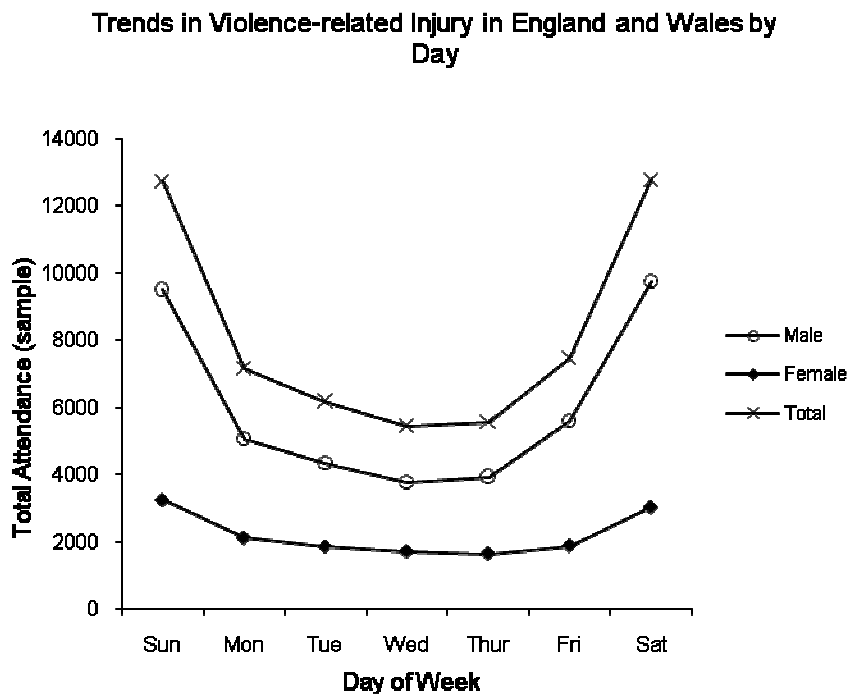


Table 3: Percentage change in serious violence in England and Wales (ED data).

	Males	Females	Total
2000 – 2001	0	3.5	1
2001 – 2002	0	-7.7	-4.5
2002 – 2003	0.5	-2.3	-0.8
2003 – 2004	-9.6	-4.6	-8.8
2004 – 2005	-6.8	-11	-6.9
2005 – 2006	2	-8	-2
2006 – 2007	-13	-11	-12
2007 - 2008	4.3	9.6	6.6

Figure 2a and 2b: Trends in violence-related injury in England and Wales 2008.

2a



2b

