

## Intimate Partner Violence and Abuse Among Men Who Have Sex With Men

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### Background

Research on intimate partner violence & abuse (IPVA) between men who have sex with men (MSM) remains severely limited, despite growing recognition of unique challenges including specific risk factors, barriers to help-seeking, & lack of dedicated services. This study addresses this gap by exploring the lived experiences of MSM who have experienced IPVA.

### Research Process

A systematic review confirmed the scarcity of UK research & lack of qualitative methodologies in existing studies. Six participants (aged 25-54; four white, two Asian/British Asian; five gay, one pansexual) took part in in-depth interviews, providing rich, nuanced insights from a victim perspective.

### Key Findings

#### **Types of Violence & Abuse**

Findings revealed patterns similar to heterosexual relationships (e.g., physical, sexual, emotional & psychological abuse) plus additional MSM-specific elements including financial abuse, post-separation abuse, & coercion in chemsex contexts (see table 1).

**Table 1.** Established elements from current research

Type of Abuse	Elements Found from Current Research
Identity-based	Racial, spiritual, and philosophical belief-related abuse.
Financial	A wide range of <u>behaviours</u> from withholding funds to applying pressure to spend them.
Post-separation	IPVA did not cease when the relationships ended but formed part of a continuum that left victims fearful and in a state of hypervigilance.
Coercive Control	Victim being coerced into participating in <u>chemsex</u> parties <sup>1</sup> and this included being forced into sexual activity.

### Help-Seeking Barriers

Participants identified significant challenges accessing support:

- Failure to recognise themselves as IPVA victims
- Unawareness of services for men or LGBT+-specific domestic abuse support
- Reluctance to seek help due to perceived threats to masculinity.



### **Reporting to Police**

Multiple barriers prevented police reporting:

- Minimisation of abuse (particularly without physical violence or when deemed 'not serious enough')
- Evidence challenges & difficulty proving IPVA occurred
- Fear of poor treatment, discrimination, & distrust based on past negative experiences

### **Recommendations**

To improve police responses to IPVA among MSM:

- Awareness that perpetrators weaponise multiple identities beyond sexuality;
- Recognise prevalence of financial and post-separation abuse;
- Understanding of how masculinity/gender norms create disclosure/reporting barriers;
- Ensure police officers understand coercion dynamics in relation to chemsex;
- Engage diverse MSM communities (including older MSM) to identify barriers and build trust.

### **Conclusions**

This research highlights the complexity of IPVA within male same-sex relationships. While some MSM sought help post-relationship, they encountered difficulties finding tailored support. Despite police progress in LGBT+ inclusion, significant reluctance to report IPVA among MSM persists, which requires targeted interventions to address unique barriers & rebuild trust.

If you would like to know more, further research is available or please, contact: [rachael2.giles-haigh@northumbria.ac.uk](mailto:rachael2.giles-haigh@northumbria.ac.uk).

