

A third of adults in the UK have admitted to being in a relationship where coercive controlling behaviour took place

Lack of awareness about recent UK law making coercive and controlling behaviour a criminal and domestic abuse offence – only a quarter of UK population aware

UK law firm IBB Law call for greater education and reassurance about protection in light of the research

More than a third of the UK population (34%) have admitted to being a in coercive control relationship according to the latest research published by a leading family law practice at IBB Law. Coercive control in a relationship is described as “any behaviour or pattern of acts of assault, threats, controlling behaviour humiliation and intimidation that results in the victim feeling harmed, punished or frightened by the offender who they are or have been in an intimate personal or family relationship with “

The research was commissioned by IBB Law in November 2018 and conducted by independent research agency 4-Media amongst 2000 UK adults (1000 women/1000 men) aged 18-65.

Yet when the respondents were asked whether they were aware that in 2015 the UK Government had made it law that coercive controlling behaviour is now a criminal offence – carrying a penalty of up to five years in prison and a fine - **only 25% replied 'Yes' with the remaining 75% stating No (46%) and 29% saying them seemed to remember something about it in the news but were not aware about the legal and monetary implications.**

However even with the knowledge that coercive and controlling behaviour is considered a criminal offence and they felt they were a victim of behaviour nearly half (48%) would not report or are unsure whether they would report it to the police or relevant authorities. Just over a quarter of adults (28%) would report the activity immediately whilst a further 45% would wait to see if this was an isolated case and would report it if it happened again.

The main reasons for not reporting their behaviour to authorities was because they are worried how they would be protected, they would worry if their partner ended up in prison and would impact on their lifestyle and family's reputation, they would be worried about splitting up the family or worried their partner would continue with their controlling behaviour.

Further details of the research revealed that a wide range of controlling behaviours (being lied to by their partner regularly, bullying about body size, controlling financial spend, hiding objects, intrusion on privacy etc) was endemic in many UK

relationships (see section below for full details of statistics). However, despite these shocking admissions **four in ten adults (41%) said they would take no action** as either their partner would deny it and they want to keep the peace, they were worried about creating an argument or were scared of their partners' reaction. A quarter of adults admitted that as a result of the actions they ended the relationship/marriage.

Kate Ryan, a family law partner at IBB Law comments

"Mention domestic abuse and many will consider of physical abuse and visible scars. However as our research highlights behind closed doors psychological, emotional and financial abuse in relationships is not an isolated case but endemic in a substantial amount of relationships across the country.

"Coercive and controlling behaviour in a relationship is insidious and the effects can be hugely harming to the victim's mental state. Whilst the Government's move to make this type of behaviour a criminal offence in 2015 is a significant legislative move for family law – the big issue is many are not aware that they have legal rights to report such behaviour and put an end to their misery and entrapment.

"Clearly more needs to be done to educate people in the UK about what steps they can take and crucially how they can feel protected should they feel they are a victim of a coercive and controlling relationship.

"At the same time any person who feels they are a victim should question whether should tolerate this behaviour and whether their potential mental health and good self-esteem should be put on the line for the sake of their partner and family. It is not okay to endure this behaviour and suffer in silence."

For full details of the research and a report please download at

<https://www.ibblaw.co.uk/insights/publications/controlling-or-coercive-behaviour-making-legislation-work-more-effectively>

Further details of the research included

- Four in ten UK adults have been in a relationship where they were convinced their partner was lying to them on a regular basis
- More than a quarter of UK adults have been in a relationship where their partner has regularly bullied or belittled them about their body size - for example telling them their clothes were too small so that they dieted or regularly commenting on other women/men about their favourable body compared to their size
- Nearly a third of adults (30%) had been in a relationship where their partner had restricted their daily activities or controlled which friends or family they could meet

- More than a quarter (26%) had been in a relationship where their partner continually monitored their spending or control how much of their own earned money or allowance they could spend
- More than a quarter (27%) had been in a relationship where they suspected their partner was spying on them and their activity including checking phones, emails, possibly tracking or following them
- 17% have been in a relationship where their partner had deprived them of food such as taking food away or limiting the amount of food
- Nearly a quarter (23%) had been in a relationship where their partner intentionally destroyed possessions or deleted important emails or texts
- Nearly a fifth of respondents (19%) had been in a relationship where their partner had hidden or taken away their phone
- One in ten adults have been in a relationship where they questioned their own judgement, memory, perception and sanity and were concerned about their own mental health.

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