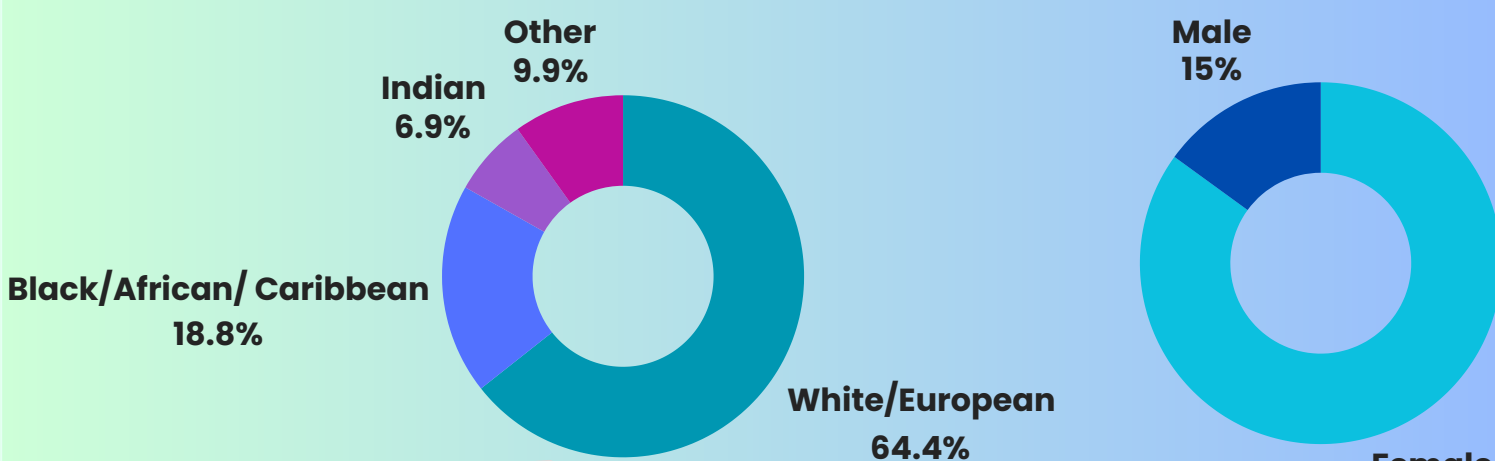


# Domestic abuse screening in mental health settings: Insights and challenges

We reviewed 20 journal articles and this infographic summarises their key findings

## Lack of diverse representation in service user samples



Different sexualities were not examined or reported

A wide range of mental health issues were represented

Two-thirds of the studies used specific tools to identify DA

Women Abuse Screening Tool (WAST) was the most validated method

### Limitations of screening tools

- ✗ The majority do not assess all forms of DA, particularly non-violent abuse
- ✗ Tools are not designed for use with diverse groups of survivors e.g., males, ethnic minorities, different sexual orientations
- ✗ Lack of validation means their utility for practice is unclear

### Service users reported barriers to disclosing DA

- Shame
- Fear of not being believed
- Threats from partners
- Fear of re-traumatisation

### Professionals reported barriers to asking about and responding to DA

- Privacy concerns
- Limited access to training
- Role uncertainty
- Time constraints
- Lack of resources

### What helps in identifying DA?

- Routine inquiry incorporated into clinical assessment
- Therapeutic engagement
- Structured forms, visually presenting questions

### Training professions in relation to DA screening and response creates:

- ✓ Improved perceived ability to ask about and respond to DA in professionals
- ? Very limited evidence of positive outcomes with survivors. **One** study found survivors perceived a significant reduction in DA

Training components that enhance professionals' confidence in identifying DA

- Skill development regarding talking to and direct communication with patients (e.g., role play)
- Knowledge about DA
- Providing a safe training environment for open discussion
- Using practical examples and first-hand survivor accounts
- Longer, repeated and more comprehensive training sessions

### Practice

- **Holistic Framework:** Establish a comprehensive identification and response framework to support DA survivors effectively
- **Effective Screening:** Implement screening methods to facilitate survivor disclosure, considering their likelihood of accessing mental health services
- **Comprehensive Training:** Thorough training to address barriers, enhance readiness, and equip professionals to respond to DA disclosures
- **Cultural Sensitivity:** Develop and implement culturally sensitive approaches for screening and intervention

### Recommendations

#### Policy

- Survivor Engagement: Involve DA survivors to ensure survivor-focused frameworks
- Inclusion of Protocols: Advocate for the inclusion of DA screening protocols into policy

### Research

- **Create** screening tools that function in practice settings and accommodate diverse populations and mental health contexts
- **Longitudinal studies** to assess the effectiveness of screening protocols and interventions
- Examine and **identify the barriers and facilitators** to DA disclosure across diverse communities to reduce health inequalities