

Victim Inequality in the Offer of Victim Personal Statements

A follow up report to:

The Silenced Victim: A Review of Victim Personal Statements

Foreword



In the second of my reviews into compliance with the Victims' Code – *The Silenced Victim: A Review of Victim Personal Statements*, I found that a systemic failure to make sure victims have the opportunity to make a Victim Personal Statement (VPS) has left them unfairly silenced within the criminal justice system.

In my Annual Report for 2014/15 I made a commitment to give all victims of crime including vulnerable victims, a voice. I therefore wanted to produce an analytical report, following my review into the VPS, to investigate whether any particular types of victim are less likely to have the opportunity to make a VPS than others. We now know that victims are not always receiving their entitlements in relation to VPS but the question remains: are some victims more disadvantaged receiving these rights in relation to others?

In this report I present the findings from a secondary analysis of data from the Crime Survey for England and Wales. This nationally representative survey asks victims whether

they have been offered the opportunity to make a VPS, whether they actually made one, if they wanted their VPS to be read out loud and if they thought their VPS was taken into account by the criminal justice system. For some of the questions, the number of victims who answered the survey question prevents the data from being broken down further, but here I present an analysis of which types of victims are more or less likely to recall being offered the opportunity to make a VPS in the first place.

The results show that the offer of a VPS is not equal to all victims. Here I find that some groups of victims are less likely to be offered a VPS than others, as I have found significant variations by age, ethnicity, disability, geographical region, crime type and marital status.

I hope that by highlighting the differences between how certain groups of victims are afforded their entitlements to make a VPS, criminal justice agencies will see that there is a long way to go to ensure that all victims have equal access to having their voice heard in the criminal justice system. This will help agencies to put targeted measures in place to ensure that all victims are offered their entitlement to make a VPS; the right not to be a *silenced victim*.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Helena', with a long, sweeping underline.

Summary of key findings

All victims

Very few victims are offered the opportunity to make a VPS (15% in 2014/15 and 16% in 2013/14). About half of those offered a VPS actually make one and the majority of victims who make one think their VPS is taken into account by the criminal justice system.

Age

In 2014/15, incidents with victims aged 25-35 are less likely to be offered a VPS than 2013/14. Incidents with victims aged 75 or older are less likely to be offered a VPS than all incidents put together.

Gender

There is no significant difference between the proportion of men and women who are offered the opportunity to make a VPS.

Disability

In incidents where the victim has a long-standing illness or disability, they are less likely to be offered a VPS in 2014/15 than in the previous year 2013/14.

Marital status

Incidents with widowed victims are more likely to be offered a VPS in 2014/15 than they were in 2013/14 and they are more likely to be offered a VPS than incidents overall. The proportion of incidents with victims who are single or divorced and offered a VPS has gone down significantly since 2013/14.

Ethnicity

Incidents in which the victim is Black are twice as likely to be offered a VPS in 2014/15 compared with 2013/14, and incidents in which the victim is Black are more likely to be offered a VPS than incidents overall.

Religion

There is no significant difference in the likelihood that a victim will be offered a VPS according to their religion.

Area type

There is no significant difference in the likelihood that a victim will be offered a VPS whether they live in an urban or a rural area.

Region

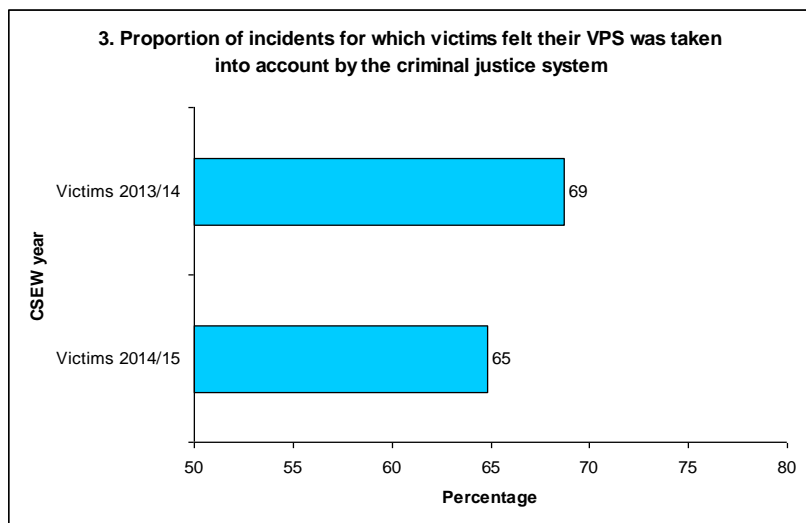
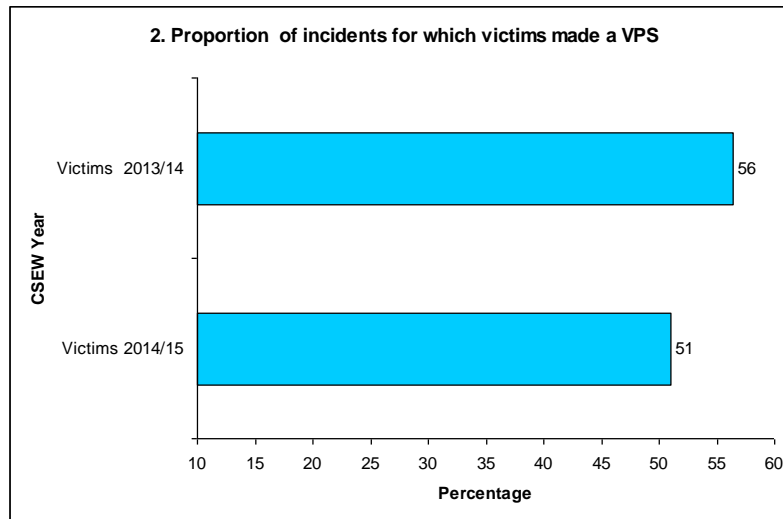
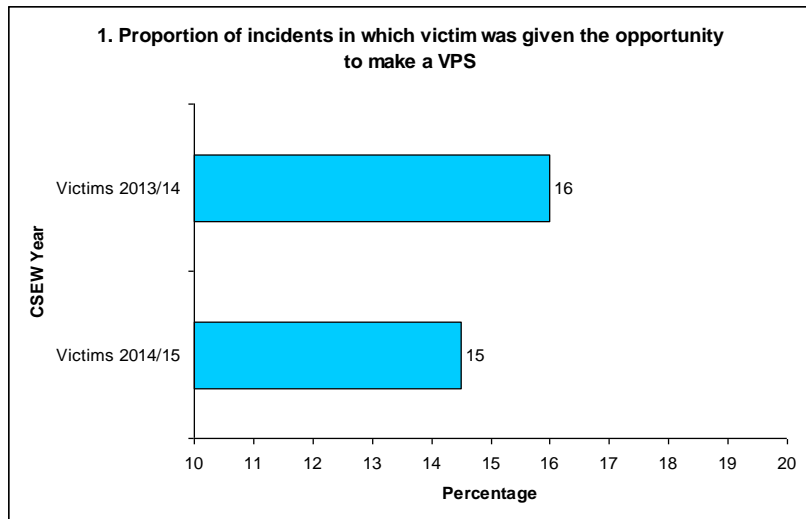
Victims of incidents who live in Wales, the South East, West Midlands and Yorkshire and the Humber are significantly less likely to be offered a VPS in 2014/15 than in 2013/14. Victims in Yorkshire and the Humber are less likely (than victims overall) to be offered a VPS. Incidents with victims in London are more likely to be offered a VPS.

Offence

Incidents in which the victim suffered a violent crime are more likely to be offered a VPS than incidents overall and incidents of bicycle theft and criminal damage and arson are less likely to result in the victim being offered a VPS than incidents overall.

All victims

The majority of victims are still not offered the chance to make a VPS. About a half of those offered a VPS actually make one and victims continue to be more likely to think their VPS is taken into account by the criminal justice system than not.

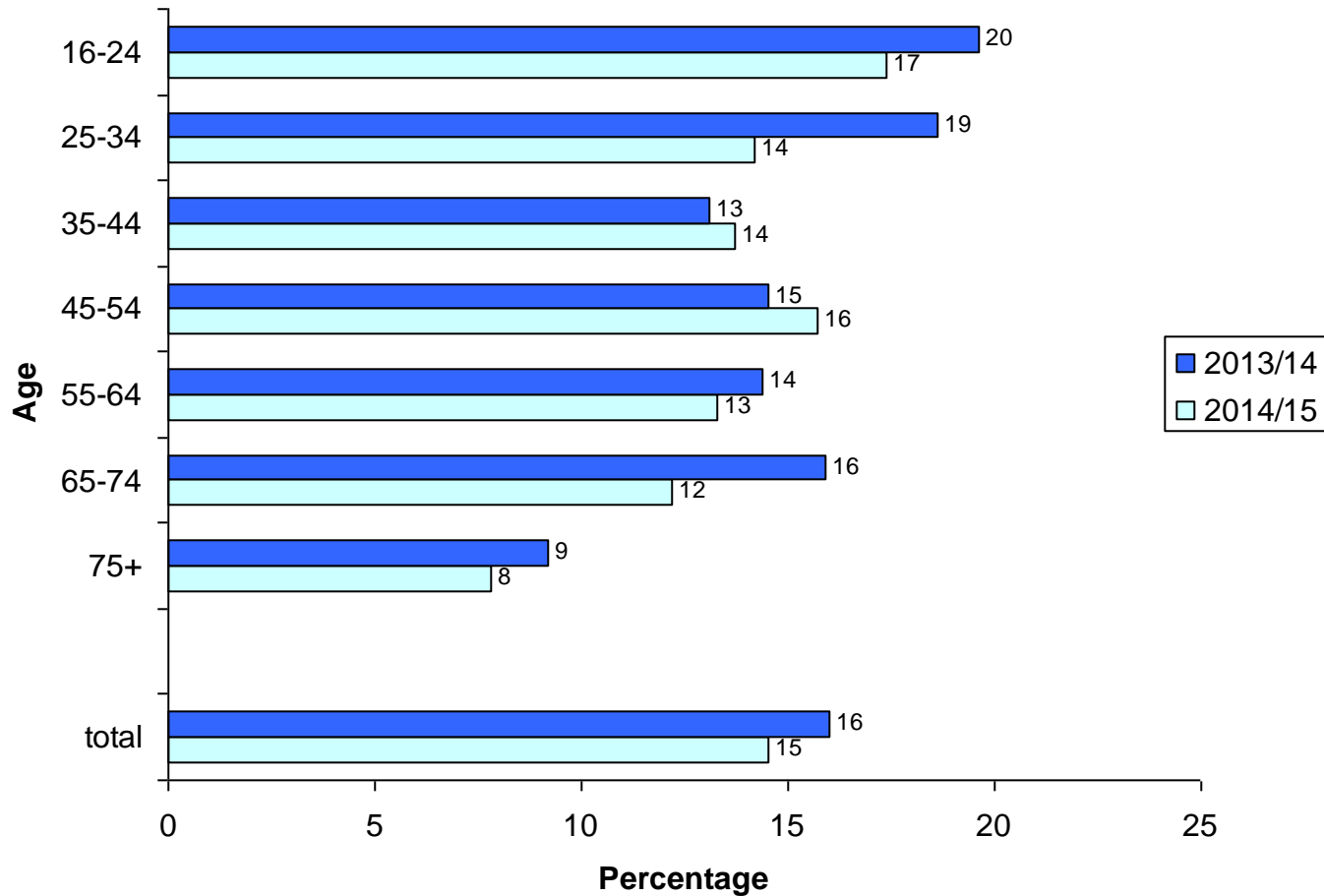


4. 38% of victims wanted their VPS to be read aloud in court in 2014/15

Age

In 2014/15, incidents with victims aged 25-35 are less likely to be offered a VPS than 2013/14. Incidents with victims aged 75 or older are less likely to be offered a VPS than all incidents put together.

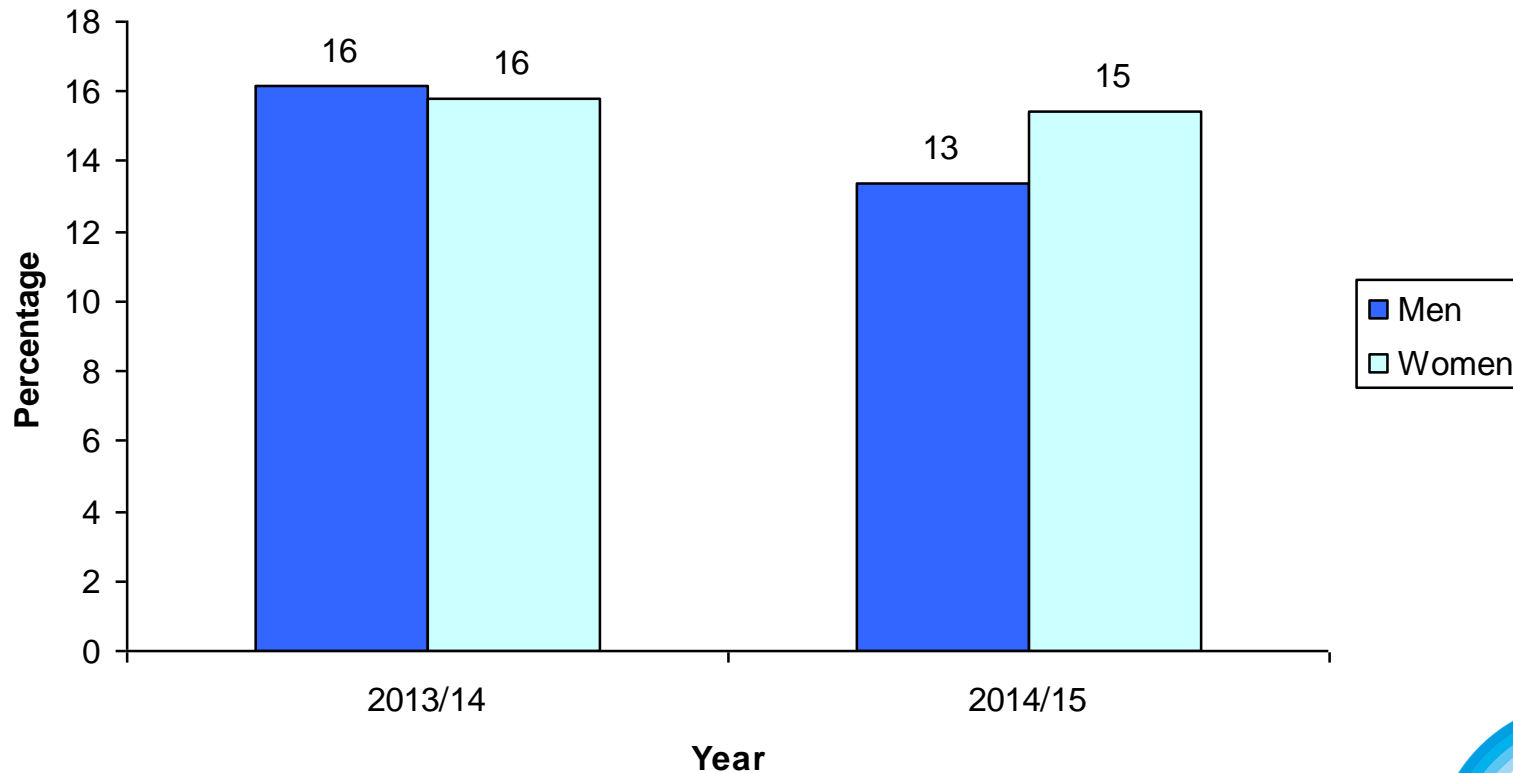
Proportion of incidents in which the victim was given the opportunity to make a VPS by age



Gender

There is no significant difference in being offered the opportunity to make a VPS whether the victim in the incident is a man or a woman.

Proportion of incidents in which the victim was given the opportunity to make a VPS by gender

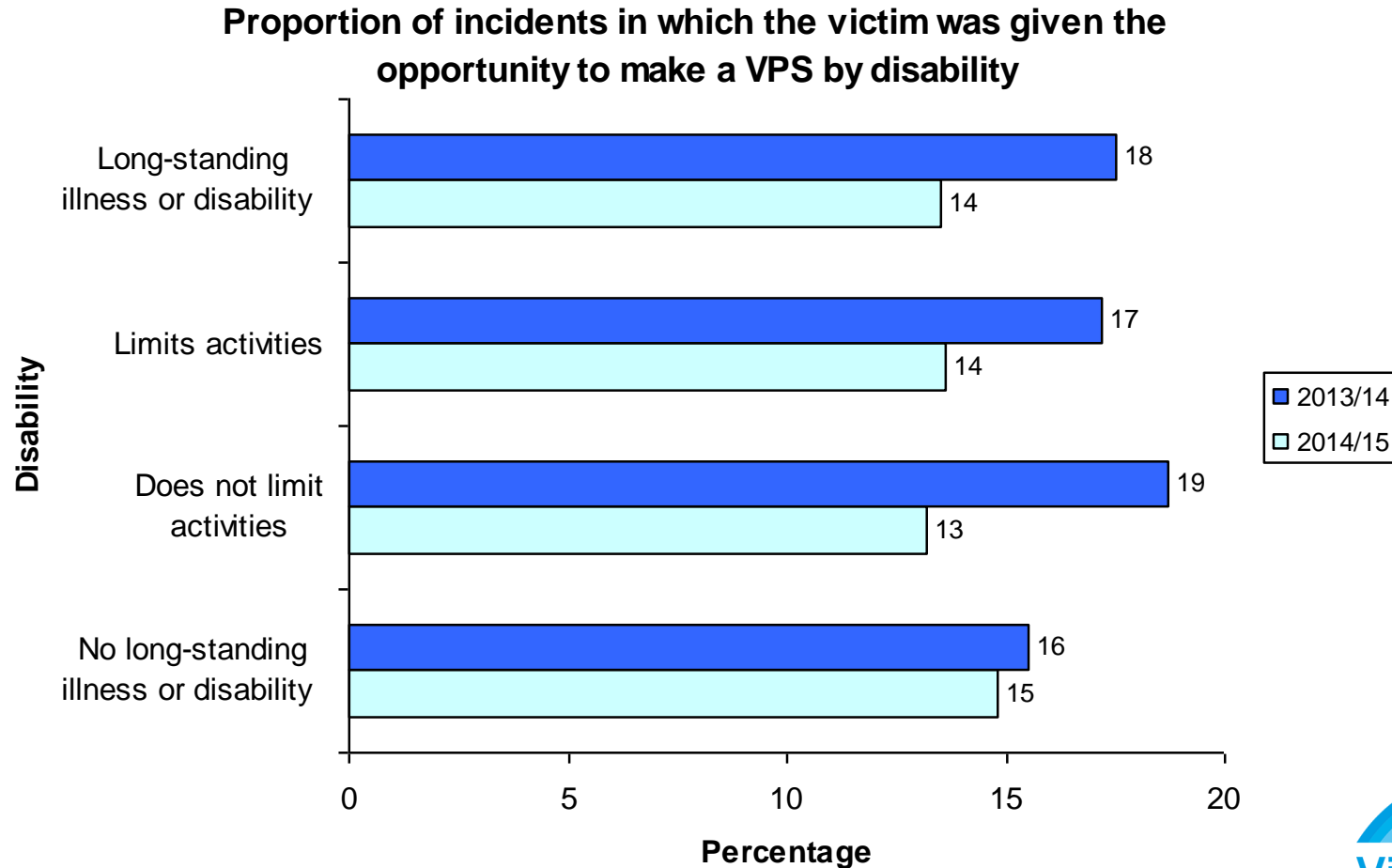


CSEW 2013/14 Base all respondents: (2,778), CSEW 2014/15 Base all respondents: (2,552)

N.B: All percentages are rounded. The levels in the bar charts represent un-rounded percentages and so there may appear to be some difference in levels with the same label. E.g. in 2013/14 16.2% of men and 15.8% of women were offered the opportunity to make a VPS.

Disability

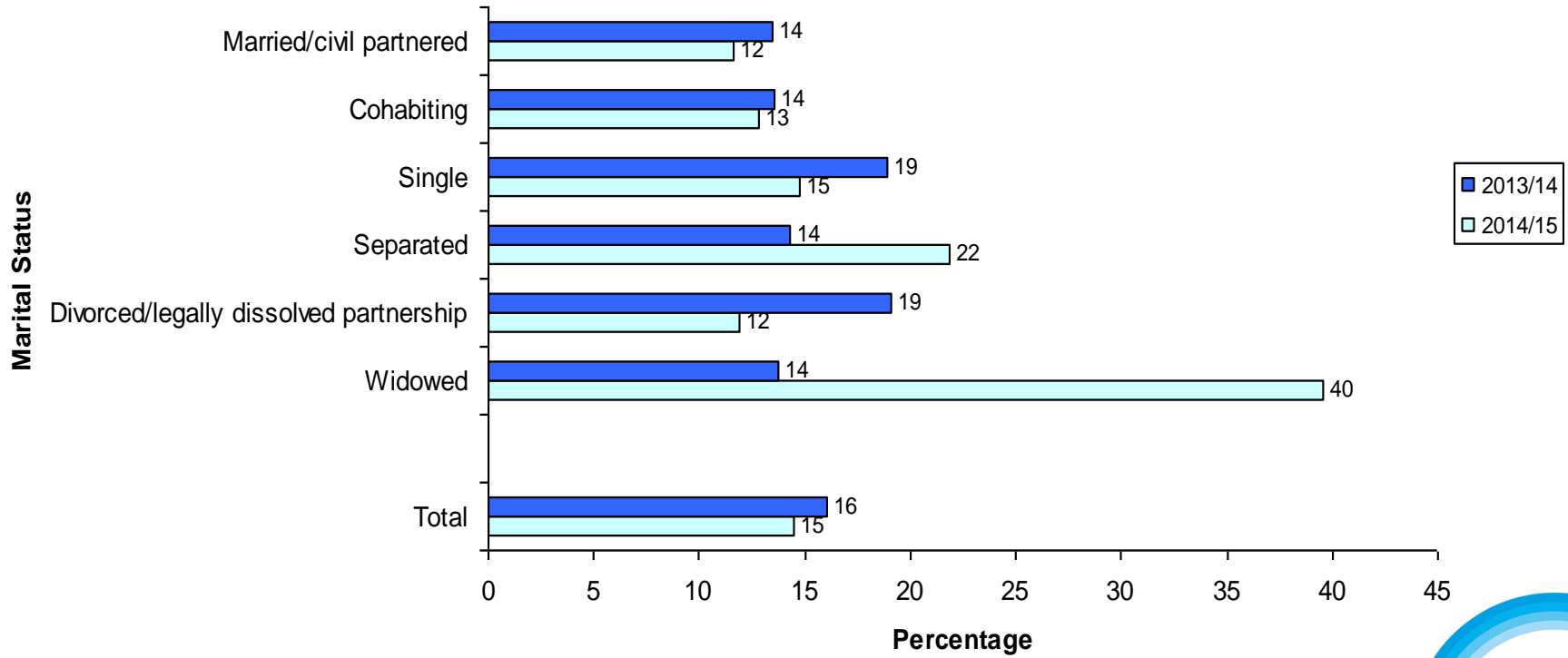
In incidents where the victim has a long standing illness or disability, victims are significantly less likely to be offered a VPS in 2014/15 than 2013/14.



Marital Status

Since 2013/14, there has been a significant increase in the proportion of incidents in which the victim is widowed where the victim is given the opportunity to make a VPS. Incidents involving widowed victims are more likely to be offered a VPS than incidents overall. The proportion of incidents with victims who are single or divorced and offered a VPS has gone down significantly since 2013/14.

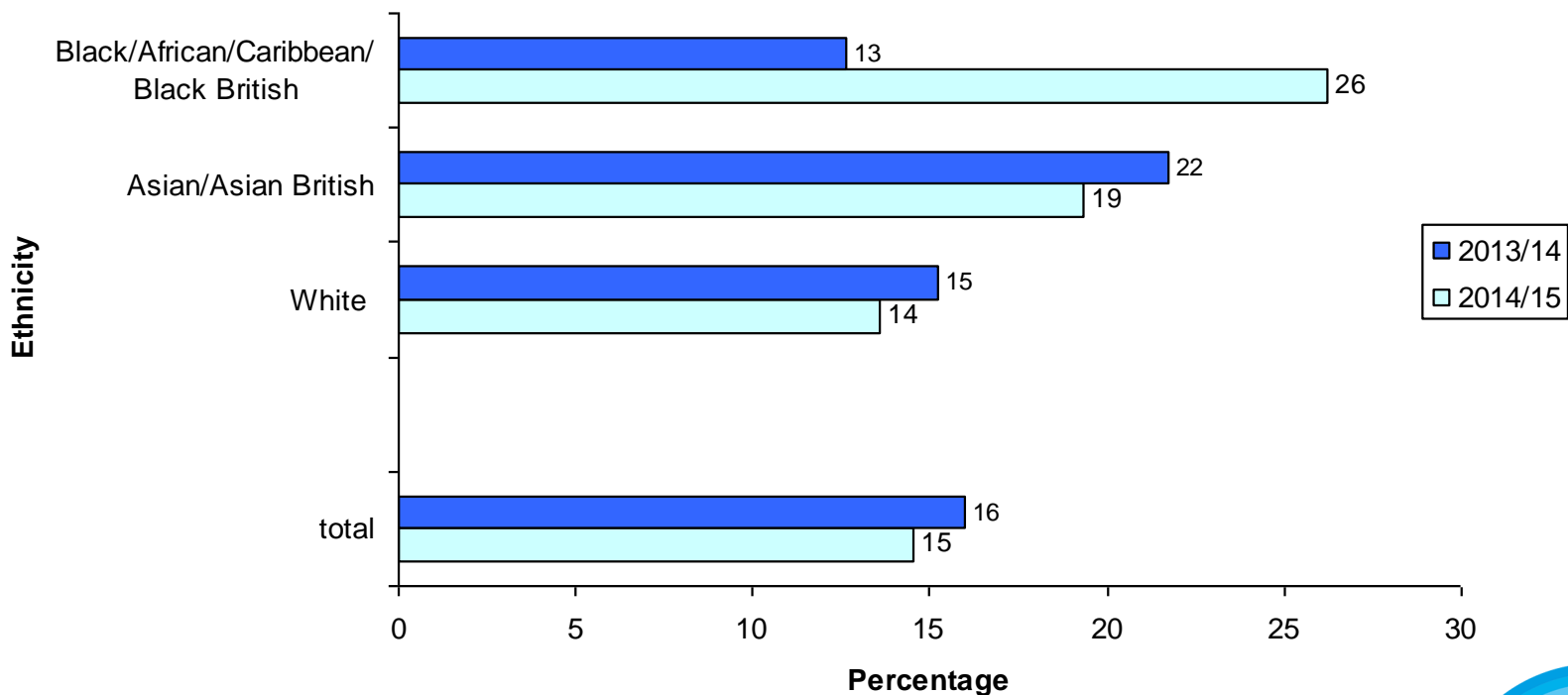
Proportion of incidents in which the victim was given the opportunity to make a VPS by marital status



Ethnicity

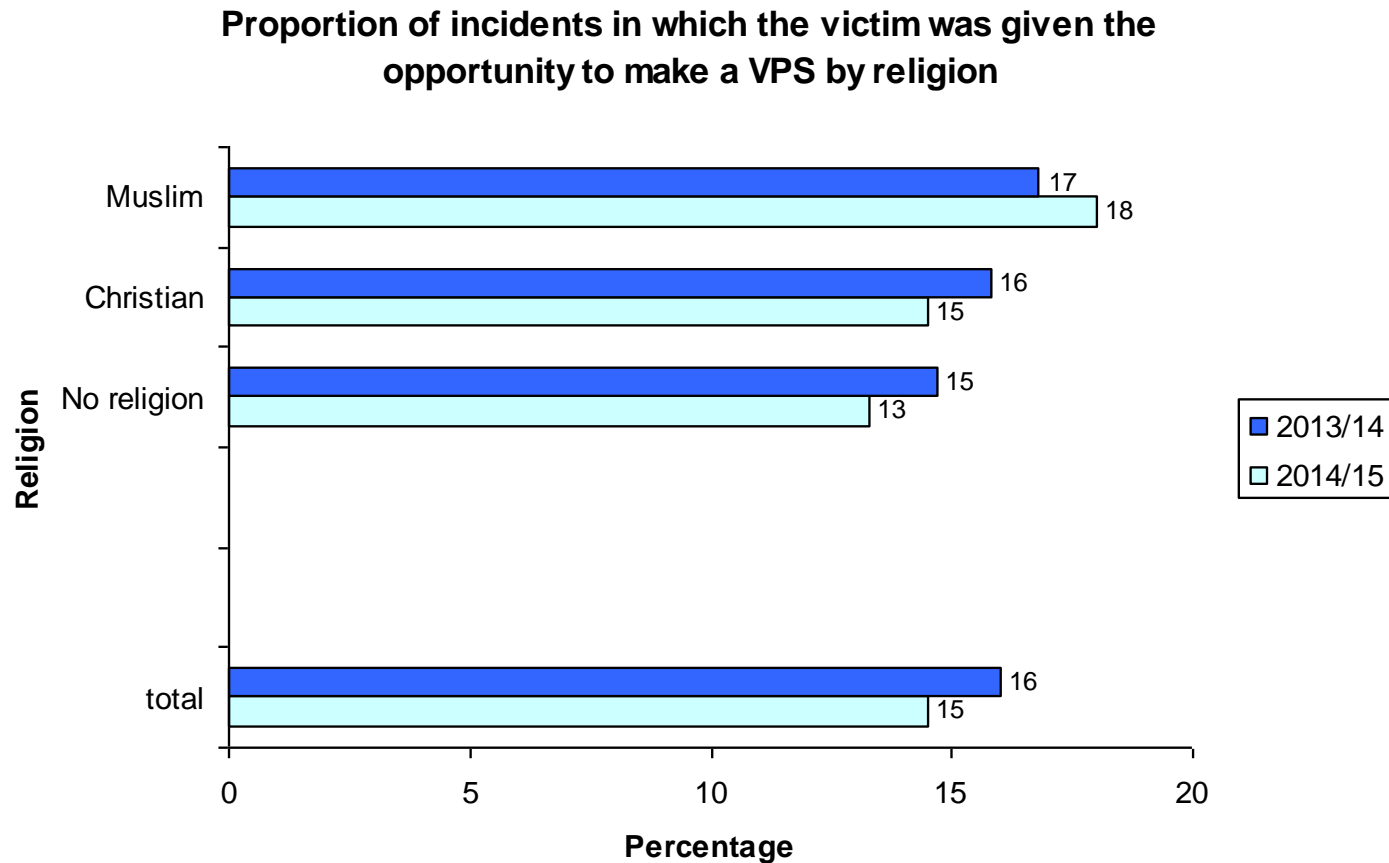
Incidents in which the victim is Black and they have been offered a VPS has more than doubled since 2013/14. Incidents in which the victim is Black are significantly more likely to be offered a VPS than incidents overall.

Proportion of incidents in which the victim was given the opportunity to make a VPS by ethnicity



Religion

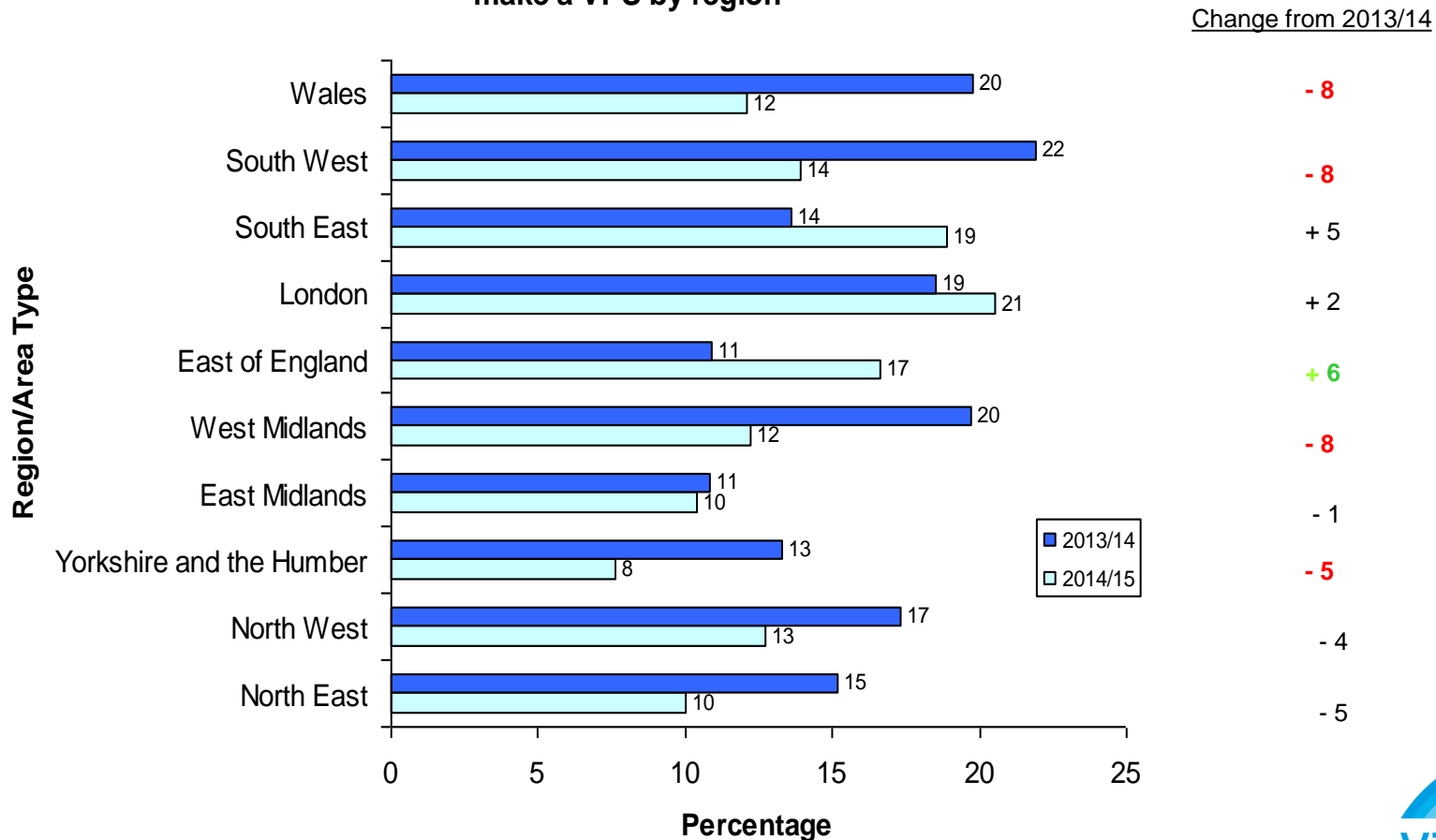
There is no significant difference in the likelihood of a victim being offered a VPS by their religion.



Region

Victims of incidents in Wales, the South West, West Midlands and Yorkshire and the Humber have seen a significant decrease in the offer of a VPS since 2013/14, whilst there is a significant increase in the offer of a VPS to victims of incidents in the East of England. Victims in Yorkshire and the Humber are significantly less likely to be offered a VPS than victims overall and victims in London are significantly more likely to be offered a VPS than in incidents overall.

Proportion of incidents in which the victim was given the opportunity to make a VPS by region

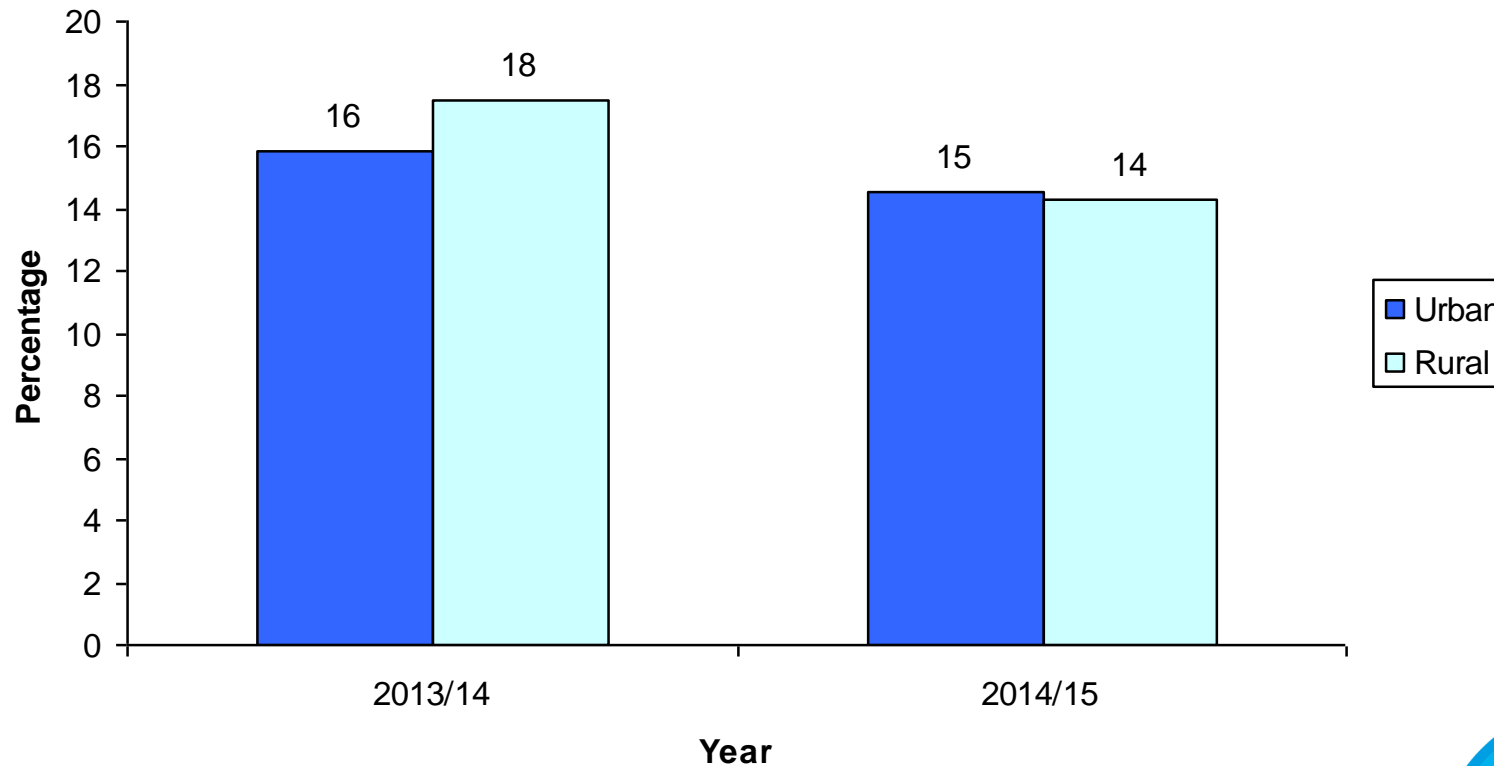


Figures in red show a significant decrease. Figures in green show a significant increase.

Area type

There is no significant difference in the offer of a VPS whether the incident is associated with a victim living in an urban or a rural area.

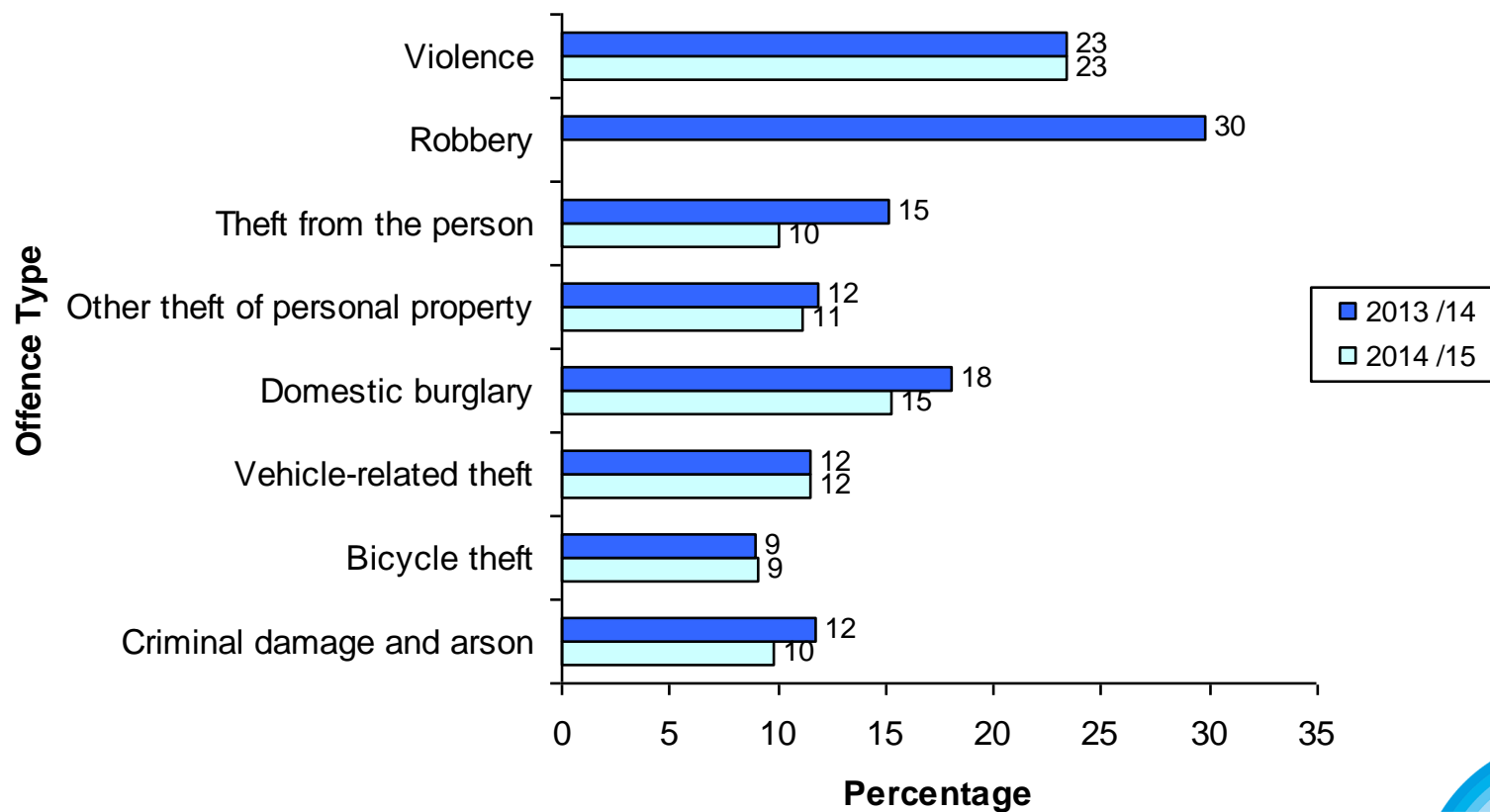
Proportion of incidents in which the victim was given the opportunity to make a VPS by area type



Offence

Incidents of violence are more likely to result in a victim being offered a VPS than incidents overall. Incidents of bicycle theft and criminal damage and arson are less likely to be offered a VPS than incidents overall.

Proportion of incidents in which the victim was given the opportunity to make a VPS by offence



Methodology

Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW): The CSEW, formerly known as the British Crime Survey (BCS), is a face-to-face survey asking people who are resident in households in England and Wales about their experiences of a range of crimes in the past year. The random sample survey interviews both adults and children, though the VPS questions are not included in the survey of children. The survey is conducted on a continuous basis with around 35,000 adults and 3,000 children aged 10 to 15 years old interviewed each year.

Statistical Significance Testing: All differences and changes reported are statistically significant at the 95% confidence level unless otherwise stated. This means the probability of any given difference happening by chance is low (at most one in 20). However findings should be treated with caution owing to the small number of CSEW respondents that were asked questions on Victim Personal Statements.

VPS Questions and Unweighted Bases: CSEW 2013/14 and 2014/15

CSEW Question	2013/14 Unweighted Base	2014/15 Unweighted Base
Victims of crime have an opportunity to make a formal statement to the police about how the crime affected them financially, physically or emotionally or in any other way. This is called a Victim Personal Statement. Did the police give you this opportunity?	2,778	2,522
Did you make a Victim Personal Statement?	402	307
Did you say you wanted your Victim Personal Statement read aloud in court?	Not asked	137
Do you feel that what you said in your Victim Personal Statement was taken into account by the Criminal Justice System?	170	123