

# **MALE DOMESTIC VIOLENCE VICTIMS SURVEY 2001**

**Dewar Research**

## **MAIN FINDINGS**

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## MAIN FINDINGS

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Despite the ever increasing evidence of male victimisation in intimate relationships as shown now by well over one hundred gender-neutral population studies, little information exists in the public domain about the particular plight of male victims. This is in contrast to that of female victims, for which there is a considerable amount of information.

This Dewar Research Survey was designed to redress in some small way that imbalance.

For the purpose of this Survey, Dewar Research collaborated with Dr Malcolm George FRSA, a neurophysiologist, who has published widely in academic journals on the issue of domestic violence and related aspects, including the historical context of male victimisation. His latest paper *Invisible Touch* was published in 2003 in the journal *Aggression and Violent Behavior*.

His co-author, David Yarwood, is a chartered civil engineer who has published several studies relating to the issue of domestic violence on behalf of Dewar Research.

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## Introduction

In the autumn of 1998, the *Dispatches* programme carried out a detailed survey of the experiences of over one hundred male victims of domestic violence nation-wide, the largest qualitative survey specifically of male victims ever carried out in this country. A summary of the results of the survey, of the experiences of 100 such victims in the UK, was broadcast on Channel 4 on the 7 January 1999. However, the detailed results have never been published, although most are now available on the Dewar Research website. (See Footnote 1).

One smaller study of 20 male victims had been carried out previously in the Merseyside area in 1994/95 by Stitt and Macklin<sup>(1)</sup>, and a preliminary study of 38 male victims was reported to the Home Affairs Select Committee in 1992<sup>(2)</sup>. Otherwise, knowledge of the particular circumstances and difficulties of male victims has been researched within unpublished post-graduate research studies. (For references, see George, 2003<sup>(3)</sup> or Archer, 2000<sup>(4)</sup>. See also Footnote 2). Thus, whilst the occurrence of male victims in the UK has been established by gender-neutral nationally representative surveys both from academia (eg. Carrado et al, 1996<sup>(5)</sup>) and as part of the British Crime Surveys (eg. Home Office Research Study 191 published in January 1999<sup>(6)</sup>), there is a dearth of knowledge about the particular circumstances of male victims of domestic violence in this country.

The *Dispatches* survey showed that angry women can be as violent as angry men. One third of male victims were attacked whilst they were sleeping, and one third were kicked in the groin. The men were often deprived of sleep. Half stayed with their violent partners for more than five years. Among the reasons the men gave for staying was that they didn't want to walk out on their children, some were frightened as they had nowhere else to go, and others still loved their partner and hoped her behaviour would change. Overall, the picture that emerged was that much of the plight of male victims of domestic abuse by female partners was very similar to the plight of female victims of abuse by male partners.

However, some notable differences emerged. Many of the male victims were very critical of the police. Those who had contacted the police said that their complaints were not taken seriously and in some cases the male victims were themselves treated as the aggressor. One quarter of the men had themselves been arrested instead of the violent female partner. Many of the men had not discussed their partner's violence towards them with anyone else as they feared they would be ridiculed. The survey concluded that there is very little support for male victims of domestic violence nor sources of help for violent women who want to change their behaviour.

### Dewar Research Survey 2001

In 2001, as a follow-up to the *Dispatches* survey, Dewar Research, a private research initiative, in collaboration with Dr Malcolm George of London University, decided to carry out a further qualitative study of the domestic abuse of men in England and Wales, and Ireland, by female partners. The results are summarised in Part 1 of the Main Findings and are based on the responses of 100 male victims, 49 from England and Wales and 51 from Ireland.

The results generally corroborate the findings of the *Dispatches* survey and of Study 191. Male victims face particular difficulties, with almost no publicly funded support services specifically for them, and little public or official sympathy. Indeed, they often face antagonism by the police and social agencies, as evidenced by the significant proportions of male victims who are themselves arrested after seeking help.

A large proportion of father victims are forced to leave the family home, whilst their children remain with the violent mother, and subsequently face considerable difficulties in maintaining meaningful or any contact with the children. The cumulative effect of highlighting the plight only of women victims of domestic violence in public and official policies over the last three decades, whilst no doubt helping many genuine female victims, has also clearly served to ignore or marginalise the plight of genuine male victims and their children.

The Survey did not set out to debate the prevalence of male victims. This has already been well established by gender-neutral studies. This aspect will also be further covered in detail by the forthcoming report on Interpersonal Violence to be published by the Home Office sometime this year, based on a self-completion supplement to the 2001 British Crime Survey for England and Wales.

Suffice to say that male victims have always existed in our society, as well evidenced by George<sup>(3)</sup>. A further illustration not mentioned by George is the carved ledge of a misericord in Holy Trinity Church, Stratford-upon-Avon, Shakespeare's church, which depicts a woman pulling a man's beard, hitting him with a pan, and kicking him, presumably reflecting a well-known aspect of 15th-century life in England. The essential aim of the Dewar Research Survey has been, therefore, to identify and explore the plight of and the particular difficulties faced by male victims in England and Wales and in Ireland.

#### *Questionnaire used*

Dr George provided the initial design of the questionnaire used for the *Dispatches* programme survey. The final version for the *Dispatches* survey was later used in truncated form for the Dewar Research Survey 2001. Thus, the majority of questions asked in the Dewar Research Survey 2001 were exactly the same as those previously asked by the *Dispatches* survey.

The results of these two surveys were thus comparable, the later Dewar Research Survey 2001 generally validating the earlier *Dispatches* survey results.

The results of the two surveys therefore provide, in effect, a combined survey of some 200 male victims of domestic violence in the UK and in Ireland, each survey showing a similar pattern of response, although some small differences between nationalities were noted in their responses to certain questions.

#### **(1) England and Wales**

On the 29 March 2001, BBC-2 broadcast an Esther Rantzen programme 'Battered Husbands - Domestic Violence Against Men', with Dr George advising and contributing to the programme. As a result of the responses to the programme and to Dr George arising from this broadcast, advertisements were placed by Dewar Research in the 2001 spring and summer editions of the magazines published by the charities Families

Need Fathers and ManKind, inviting male volunteers who had experienced any kind of physical assault from a female partner at any time in the last five years (ie. since January 1996) to take part in the Survey.

66 male victims requested a copy of the survey questionnaire to be sent them. Completed questionnaires were received from 50 of these applicants. One of these was subsequently excluded since it related to abusive behaviour suffered by a man from a female neighbour rather than in a couple relationship. The Survey for England and Wales was thus based on the responses received from 49 respondents.

## **(2) Ireland**

In order to find volunteers in Ireland willing to take part in the Survey, Dewar Research collaborated with AMEN (Abused Men) in Navan, County Meath, a voluntary group, founded in 1997, which provides a confidential helpline and support service for male victims of domestic abuse and their children in Ireland. As a result of this, Amen was able to obtain 56 completed questionnaires, 26 directly and a further 30 by telephone questioning.

After review, five of these were subsequently excluded as not being fully responsive. The Survey for Ireland was thus based on the responses from 51 respondents.

The total of 100 responses to the Dewar Research Survey 2001 was thus comparable to the 100 male victims surveyed by the *Dispatches* programme.

## **Supplementary Enquiries**

In order to provide some context for the Dewar Research Survey 2001, supplementary enquiries were made to a random sample of police forces in England and Wales requesting information on the prevalence of male victims reporting domestic violence to their forces and the attitudes and policies of the forces concerning male victims. Enquiries were also made to a range of other agencies.

A summary of the results of these enquiries is given in Part 2 of the Main Findings.

## **Footnotes**

- 1 Details of the *Dispatches* survey on the Dewar Research website ([www.dewar4research.org](http://www.dewar4research.org)) include a transcript of the programme, a summary of findings, and a commentary by Professor Kevin Browne, adviser to the Home Office.
- 2 The authors are aware of a number of student theses produced within degree study programmes in UK universities, which have addressed the issue of male victims of female perpetrated intimate violence. These theses may only be available within the individual's university and hence access is extremely limited, although some may be on microfiche systems. Regrettably, none of these studies appears to have been written up and published in the more widely available academic press.

## References

- (1) Stitt, S. and Macklin, A. (1995). Battered husbands: the hidden victims of domestic violence. Paper presented at the 27th BSA Medical Sociology Conference, University of York, 11/24 September 1995
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- (3) George, MJ. (2003). Invisible touch. *Aggression and Violent Behaviour*, 8 (2003), 23-60
- (4) Archer, J. (2000). Sex differences in aggression between heterosexual partners: a meta-analytic review. *Psychological Bulletin* 126, 651-680
- (5) Carrado, M., George, MJ., Loxam, E., Jones, L., and Templar, D. (1996). Aggression in British heterosexual relationships. *Aggressive Behavior* 22, 401-415
- (6) Mirrlees-Black, C. (1999). Domestic violence: findings from a new British Crime Survey self-completion questionnaire. Home Office Research Study 191. Home Office, London: HMSO, January 1999

# **MALE DOMESTIC VIOLENCE VICTIMS SURVEY 2001**

## **PART 1 RESULTS OF SURVEY**

## SUMMARY OF RESPONSES

The Main Findings report on the experiences of 100 male victims of domestic violence in England and Wales and Ireland as revealed by the Dewar Research Survey 2001, and focus on the kinds of physical assault and threat suffered by male victims, typical injuries received, weapons used, the reasons given by male victims for not reporting violence against them, the responses of the police if they became involved, the responses of counsellors if they also became involved, and the subsequent relationship, if any, with their children.

Details of other aspects covered by the Survey, including fuller details of respondents and their partners, other types of abuse suffered, the male victim's responses to the female partner's abuse, and aspects concerning children involved, are available but not presented in this report.

With just a few exceptions, the men responding to the Survey were both taller and heavier than their violent or abusive female partners. The average age of English and Welsh victims reporting was 43.7 years and of Irish victims 43.4 years. The average ages of the female partner were 38.7 and 40.2 years respectively. The majority of men were either divorced or separated (55% of English and Welsh victims and 53% of Irish victims) at the time of reporting. Only 12% of English and Welsh victims were married compared to 39% of Irish victims. 10% of English and Welsh victims were cohabiting compared to just 2% Irish victims. These differences in marital status no doubt reflect the less liberal divorce laws applying in Ireland, a difference also reflected in the much longer average periods of assault suffered by Irish men. 88% of English and Welsh victims and 96% of Irish victims had children in the family.



## CONCLUSIONS

The experiences reported to the Dewar Research Survey 2001 suggest that genuine male victims of female violence in couple relationships suffer no less physical and emotional consequences than female victims in many instances. Over half had been threatened with a weapon and a significant proportion reported serious forms of injury. One third had been kicked or hit in the genitals, and others burnt or scalded, stabbed, or hit with heavy objects. Male victims are also less likely than female victims to report the violence or abuse against them, and when they do report, are often faced with what appears to be widespread prejudice or discrimination against them by the police, social agencies and courts. About one fifth of male victims were themselves arrested. Little action was taken by the police against female assailants unless the man had a visible and significant injury.

Nearly half of male victims who reported abuse against them were subsequently excluded from the family home, and a significant proportion lost meaningful or any contact with their children, who usually remained with the violent mother. Father victims who report abuse against them by the mother are particularly vulnerable to the consequences of parental separation and the continuing hostility and obstruction of the mother. Only a small proportion of father victims subsequently had regular unimpeded contact with their children. Over three quarters of the 203 children involved witnessed the violence by the mother against the father.

Zero tolerance and pro-arrest policies appear to be directed mainly at men and currently offer little protection to genuine male victims and their children. The responses to the Survey suggest that in a substantial number of emergency attendances, the police did not act either impartially or fairly. A male victim appears to be over twice as likely as a female assailant of being arrested when the police respond to an emergency call. There appears to be a marked reluctance on the part of the police to arrest a violent female partner in a domestic incident. Few violent female partners were arrested, fewer still charged, and fewer still ever convicted.

95% of male victims in the 1998 *Dispatches* survey thought that the police did not treat domestic violence against men at all seriously. Male victims in the Dewar Research Survey 2001 perceived that the police were more likely or willing to believe the woman than the man if she claimed that she was actually the victim, and also that the police were generally dismissive of a man being beaten or abused by a woman. Current policies thus generally do not appear to deal at all with the large extent of female violence or abuse against male partners which does not result in obvious physical injury, but still may have had traumatic effect on both the male victims and any children involved who may have witnessed it.

About half of male victims sought counselling for their partner's aggressive behaviour. The responses suggest that counselling did help some couples but that some counsellors are still reluctant to accept that women can be violent or abusive in couple relationships.

Bias against male victims appears to extend to the courts. Male victims had limited success in obtaining non-molestation and exclusion orders against violent female

partners. None of the male victims responding to the Dewar Research Survey 2001 who had applied for an exclusion order had been granted one, compared to a high success rate by female partners against them.

Overall, the responses from the 100 male victims suggest that, in many cases, male victims are being marginalised by current attitudes and policies in the public domain relating to domestic violence, being reduced, in effect, to the status of second-class citizens.

## KEY FINDINGS FROM THE SURVEY

Key findings from responses by the 100 male victims to the Dewar Research Survey 2001 included the following:

### *Kinds of physical assault*

- 50% were threatened with a weapon
- 33% were kicked in the genitals
- 16% received burns or scalds
- 10% were stabbed

### *Frequency of physical violence*

- 75% were assaulted once a month or more frequently
- 21% of English and Welsh victims were assaulted either daily or several times a week compared to 33% of Irish victims

### *Number of times assaulted*

- over two thirds were assaulted more than 10 times
- 22% of English and Welsh victims and 37% of Irish victims were assaulted more than 50 times

### *Period assaults experienced*

- English and Welsh victims suffered assaults for an average period of 6 years and Irish victims about 10 years

### *Injuries suffered*

- 40% suffered severe bruising to the body
- about 25% suffered serious cuts or wounds to the skin
- 16% of English and Welsh victims were burnt or scalded
- 5% were knocked unconscious

### *Response to partner's violence*

- the great majority acted passively and non-violently
- 27% of English and Welsh victims threatened to call the police but only 12% of Irish victims
- less than 8% of English and Welsh victims and 2% of Irish victims retaliated physically

### *Emotional effects*

- 43% of English and Welsh victims and 35% of Irish victims suffered impotence or sexual problems
- 10% of English and Welsh victims and 18% of Irish victims attempted suicide
- 55% of English and Welsh victims and 41% of Irish victims had to give up their home
- 40% had to give up their job

### *Child witness of abuse against fathers*

- 74% of English and Welsh victims and 85% of Irish victims claimed that their children had actually seen the violence against them

*Reporting abuse to the police*

- 51% of English and Welsh victims and 31% of Irish victims had tried to report the abuse to the police

*Reasons for not reporting to the police*

- 62% of English and Welsh victims and 70% of Irish victims believed that the police would not believe them, or that they would not help if the victim was a man (62% and 80% respectively)
- 54% of English and Welsh victims and 30% of Irish victims put up with the abuse to protect the children
- 50% of English and Welsh victims and 30% of Irish victims feared that they would lose their children
- 58% of English and Welsh victims and 27% of Irish victims did not think the assaults were serious enough to report

*Calls to police using emergency number*

- female assailants called the police nearly as often as the male victim in the case of English and Welsh victims (53% of occasions compared to 59%) but more often in the case of Irish victims (65% compared to 55%)

*Police responses if attending first emergency call*

- about 35% claimed that the police had totally ignored what they had to say
- 47% of English and Welsh victims had been threatened with arrest for 'breach of the peace' despite being the victim
- 21% of English and Welsh victims and 18% of Irish victims had themselves been arrested
- 29% of English and Welsh victims and 21% of Irish victims claimed that the police had only spoken to the female partner and ignored actual evidence that the male victim had been assaulted
- only 3% of female partners had been arrested

*Arrests by police in response to emergency calls*

- about one third of those arrested were male victims either simply for 'breach of the peace' or because the female assailant had pressed for it
- 27% of English and Welsh victims reported that they had been arrested because the police had said that 'they had to arrest someone'
- the female partner was most likely to be arrested if the male victim had a visible and significant injury

*Number of assaults before calling the police*

- 48% of English and Welsh victims and 74% of Irish victims suffered 10 assaults or more before first calling the police
- 33% of English and Welsh victims and 52% of Irish victims suffered 20 assaults or more

*Period suffering violence before first calling the police*

- English and Welsh victims suffered an average of about 3 years before first calling the police compared to about 8 years for Irish victims

*Reasons given by male victims for police not arresting their violent partner*

- 52% of English and Welsh victims and 30% of Irish victims said the police had said it was his word against hers, so they could not act
- 52% of English and Welsh victims and 30% of Irish victims said the police had dismissed their complaint of abuse out of hand
- 42% of English and Welsh victims and 52% of Irish victims reported that the police had readily believed the female partner when she claimed that she was actually the victim
- one quarter of victims said that the police had just not believed their complaint that they were the victim
- even when the police did accept that the man was the victim, 39% of English and Welsh and 19% of Irish victims said that the police would still not arrest the female partner, but only give her a verbal warning or caution

*What circumstances applied if your partner was arrested*

- mainly only when clear and significant injury had been sustained by the male victim or when the female partner was herself aggressive to the police

*Outcome of partner's arrest*

- only 6% of English and Welsh victims and 12% of Irish victims reported that the arrested female partner had been charged
- no female partners were convicted in the case of English and Welsh victims and the partners of only 6% of Irish victims

*Counselling*

- half of male victims had sought counselling for their violent partners and counselling took place in over 80% of these cases
- 45% of English and Welsh victims and 23% of Irish victims said that counsellors accepted that the female partner was the violent partner
- 30% of English and Welsh victims and 27% of Irish victims said that counsellors had tried to confront the violent female partner with her behaviour
- 30% of English and Welsh victims and 23% of Irish victims said that the counsellor had ignored their concerns about the female partner's violence
- 20% of victims said the counsellor had advised that the only thing to do was to split up

*Action under family law*

- English and Welsh victims reported twice as many female spouses filing for divorce as male spouses (96% compared to 50%), while more Irish male spouses did this than female spouses (19% compared to 13%)
- 46% of English and Welsh victims and 69% of Irish victims had non-molestation orders granted by the courts against them to their violent female partners
- only 6% of English and Welsh victims and 9% of Irish victims had non-molestation orders granted by the courts to them against their violent female partners
- 46% of English and Welsh victims and 38% of Irish victims had exclusion orders granted against them by the courts
- no exclusion order was granted by the courts to any male victim against a violent female partner

*Father's current status with children*

- 21% of English and Welsh victims and 15% of Irish victims had no contact with their children
- 18% of English and Welsh victims and 7% of Irish victims had no contact despite court orders
- one quarter of English and Welsh fathers had indirect contact only or had given up trying to see their children
- only 8% of English and Welsh victims and 11 % of Irish victims had regular unimpeded contact with their children

*Mother's attitude towards you as a father*

- 67% of English and Welsh victims and 59% of Irish victims said that the mother will do anything she can to destroy his fathering role
- 62% of English and Welsh victims and 55% of Irish victims thought that the mother was poisoning the children against him
- 62% of English and Welsh victims and 48% of Irish victims complained that the mother obstructed contact with his children frequently
- 44% of victims perceived the mother to be absolutely hostile to contact

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Detailed tabulation of the responses to the Dewar Research Survey 2001 are given in the next section. The results of the 1998 *Dispatches* survey are also given for comparison where these correspond to the Dewar Research items and results.

### **Kinds of physical assault and threat suffered by male victims Table 1**

Although the majority of physical assaults suffered by male victims involved just pushes, grabs, and minor scratches, a significant number of victims reported much more serious forms, including punches to the head and body, kicks to the body and in some instances the head or face, hits with heavy objects, and heavy objects thrown at them. Over 50% were threatened with a weapon, and over 25% reported a threat to kill them. One third were hit or kicked in the genitals and a similar proportion threatened with such action. 16% of victims reported receiving burns or scalds and about one tenth reported being stabbed. More than 12% reported an attempt to strangle or choke them.

Weapons or objects used were those generally immediately to hand, including crockery, kitchen utensils (eg. frying pan), knife or dagger, cutlery, breadknife, scissors, work tool such as a hammer or mallet, rolling pin, light furniture, heavy household object, and a range of miscellaneous items including candlestick, poker, umbrella, ashtray, telephone, electric iron, Hoover, golf club, pool cue, hurling stick, shoe, and shovel.

### **Frequency of physical violence Table 2**

Over two thirds of male victims reported physical violence against them once a month or more frequently, the remainder less than once a month or just a few times a year. Irish victims suffered more frequency than English and Welsh victims, one third (33%) reporting violence either daily or several times a week compared to 21% of English and Welsh victims.

### **Number of times assaulted Table 3**

Over two thirds of victims also reported being assaulted more than 10 times, with 22% of English and Welsh victims and 37% of Irish victims being assaulted more than 50 times. Only a small proportion (less than 12%) reported less than 4 assaults. These proportions suggest that the majority of male victims who reported to the Survey suffered repeated assault by their female partner.

### **Length of time assaults experienced Table 4**

The period of time during which assaults were experienced ranged from 3 months to 24 years, with a mean of just under 6 years for English and Welsh victims and about 10 years for Irish victims. As previously suggested, the longer period for Irish victims possibly reflects the enforced longer periods married couples have had to stay together because of less liberal divorce laws in Ireland and more stigma attached to divorce.

### **Injuries suffered Table 5**

Although about 90% of victims reported largely minor scratches or bruising, significant numbers reported more serious forms of injury, such as severe bruising on the body (about 40%), nose or lip bleeds (38% of English and Welsh victims but 55% for Irish victims) and serious cuts or wounds to the skin (about 25%). Smaller proportions

reported serious forms of injury such as burn or scald (16% of English and Welsh victims but just 5% of Irish victims), broken nose, broken rib or ribs, broken jaw or cheekbone and fractured skull. About 5% reported being knocked unconscious. Other reported injuries included tinnitus, cut eye, deep scratches, broken fingers, fractured wrist, headaches, stomach upsets, injured jaw and neck, anxiety and depression.

Overall, the responses reported suggest that about one third suffered significant or serious injury.

### **Response to partner's violence      Table 6**

The great majority of male victims tried not react to their partner's violence, either by trying to reason with her (76%), walking away or leaving the room (67% of English and Welsh victims and 82% of Irish victims), trying to avoid her blows (65% of English and Welsh victims but just 31% of Irish victims), leaving the house and coming back later (over 50%), and suffering her blows with no reaction (47% of English and Welsh victims but just 18% of Irish victims). 67% of English and Welsh victims and 45% of Irish victims reported restraining her or pushing her away. A sizeable proportion also told her to stop and control herself. Only 27% of English and Welsh victims and just 12% of Irish victims threatened to call the police, suggesting that male victims do not see this course of action as either plausible or likely to benefit them, particularly in Ireland.

Only a minority of victims reported reacting more strongly. A proportion threatened physical violence against their partner if she continued (16% of English and Welsh victims and 10% of Irish victims), but only a small minority actually retaliated physically (less than 8% of English and Welsh victims and 2% of Irish victims).

### **Emotional effects or problems suffered by male victims      Table 7**

The majority of victims reported a range of emotional effects or problems suffered as a result of partner violence against them, these possibly exacerbated by the existing lack of support services in the public domain for male victims coupled with a perception of generally unsympathetic attitudes towards them by the police and social agencies.

High proportions reported loss of confidence/self esteem (80%), 'always walking on eggshells' (82% of English and Welsh victims and 75% of Irish victims), living in constant anxiety (69% of English and Welsh victims and 80% of Irish victims), and mistrust of women generally (61% of English and Welsh victims and 53% of Irish victims). Substantial proportions also reported inability to concentrate at work, feeling 'absolutely rotten', unable to cope with everyday life, severe depression, suicidal thoughts and loss of weight and appetite. Over one third experienced impotence or sexual problems (43% of English and Welsh victims and 35% of Irish victims), and a significant minority attempted suicide (10% of English and Welsh victims and 18% of Irish victims).

Other substantial problems reported by male victims included a neglect of their own interests, losing contact with friends and family, and neglecting their work, health, and finances. 55% of English and Welsh victims and 41% of Irish victims had to give up their home, and about 40% of all victims had to give up their job. 49% of Irish victims reported losing contact with their children.



**Child witness of abuse against fathers      Tables 8b and 8c**

The great majority of fathers reported that their children had witnessed the violence or abuse against them by the mother. 86% of English and Welsh victims and 94% of Irish victims reported that their children had either seen or heard the violence. Over three quarters reported that their children had actually seen it (74% of English and Welsh victims and 85% of Irish victims).

These proportions are significantly higher than those generally reported for children witnessing parental violence, which are largely related to violence against mothers. If this is the case, it suggests either that mothers are less inhibited than fathers from using parental violence in the presence or proximity of children or that fathers are more discreet in its use.

The majority of male victims with children reported that the children stayed with the mother after parental separation. This implies that not only have a high proportion of these children witnessed violence against the father by the mother but that they are thereafter also cared for by the violent mother, apparently with the tacit approval of the police, social agencies and the courts. Such lenient treatment of mothers is in sharp contrast to the harsher attitudes shown towards violent or abusive fathers by these same authorities, particularly as it is claimed by some advocates that parental violence is often a prelude to or concurrent with violence against the children.

**Reporting abuse to the police      Table 9a**

No more than half of male victims had ever tried to report violence or abuse against them by a female partner to the police. 51% of English and Welsh victims had tried to do this but only 31% of Irish victims. The *Dispatches* survey revealed a similar proportion of 51%.

It is difficult to reconcile such relatively high proportions reporting with the known significant under-reporting generally by male victims (even more than female victims), particularly of minor incidents or injury. One possibility is that the male victims responding to both this Survey and the *Dispatches* survey were particularly sensitive to the issue of male victims of domestic violence and thus, although their experiences may be generally applicable, their initiatives in reporting to the police are not typical. Moreover, the proportions reporting might reflect neither the prevalence of serious complaint nor the number of complaints by male victims actually recorded by the police, bearing in mind the generally negative perceptions of male victims towards reporting domestic violence against them, coupled with often unfavourable outcomes if they do report.

**Reasons for not reporting to the police      Table 9b**

The main reasons given by male victims for not reporting violence or abuse against them by a female partner to the police related to their own inhibitions about reporting and a strong perception amongst most victims that the police would not help a male victim or indeed would disbelieve or victimise him. The *Dispatches* survey found that 78% of victims felt that the police did not take domestic violence by women seriously. The validity of such perceptions appears to be corroborated by the actual experience of police response to their complaint reported by many male victims.

Male inhibitions included feelings of embarrassment and shame at being assaulted by a

woman (58% of English and Welsh victims and 77% of Irish victims), and a wish not to allow others to find out about the assault (38% of English and Welsh victims but 66% of Irish victims). Perceptions about the police included the belief that they would not believe you (62% of English and Welsh victims and 70% of Irish victims), that they would not help if the victim was a man (62% of English and Welsh victims and 80% of Irish victims), and that they would indeed victimise you because you are a man (38% of English and Welsh victims and 66% of Irish victims).

44% of English and Welsh victims and 55% of Irish victims did not report because their partner had threatened to tell the police that she was actually the victim, a threat which had to be taken seriously in view of the perceptions by male victims about police prejudice against them.

Other reasons given by significant proportions of male victims for not reporting included the hope that their partner would change and stop being violent (69% of English and Welsh victims but just 30% of Irish victims), too much love for the partner to report her (50% of English and Welsh victims and 43% of Irish victims), a fear that he would lose his children (50% of English and Welsh victims but just 30% of Irish victims), and a desire to put up with the abuse to protect the children (54% of English and Welsh victims and 32% of Irish victims).

58% of English and Welsh victims but only 27% of Irish victims did not report to the police because they did not think the assaults were serious enough. Others felt that the violence would escalate if they told the police or they feared that their partner would counter by claiming child abuse against him (31% of English and Welsh victims).

The overall picture implied by such responses suggests that male victims need much more public and official encouragement and support to more readily report violence or abuse against them by a female partner, in particular if it is serious and children are involved. Also, the negative perceptions of male victims about the police need to be addressed, primarily by the police themselves in acting, and being seen to act, more impartially and fairly when responding to complaints by male victims.

### **Calls to police using emergency number      Table 10**

Although it would be expected that calls for help by male victims to the police would normally be made by them, this appears to be not necessarily the case. The female assailant called the police herself using the emergency number nearly as often as the male victim did in the case of English and Welsh victims (53% of occasions compared to 59%) but more often in the case of Irish male victims (65% compared to 55%). What female assailants reported to the police in these circumstances is not known. However, based on the outcomes reported by the male victims, it seems likely that many of such calls made by the female assailant were actually to falsely report claims of violence against her, presumably in order to influence subsequent police action against the actual victim, her male partner.

Preconceived police attitudes about the probability of the woman being usually the victim in domestic incidents, coupled with the inflexibility of 'zero tolerance' policies in which someone has to be arrested, most usually the man often irrespective of circumstances, do nothing to discourage female assailants from making false allegations, which are usually believed based on the reported experience of male

victims, as commented below.

### **Police response if attending first emergency call      Table 11**

Male victims reported substantial bias in the police response to their predicament. Although about half of victims reported that the police when attending the first emergency call tried to be impartial in their response, by speaking to both parties and by trying to get details of events from both, about an equal proportion reported that the police had acted in a hostile manner to them or had simply identified the female partner as the victim because she had claimed this. About 35% of victims reported that the police had totally ignored what they had to say, and a significant proportion reported that the police had pressurised them to leave the home, even though they were the victims (35% of English and Welsh victims and 24% of Irish victims).

Almost half (47%) of English and Welsh victims reported that they had been threatened with arrest for 'breach of the peace', despite being the victim. Indeed, a significant proportion of male victims were themselves actually arrested (21% of English and Welsh victims and 18% of Irish victims). This compares with the 25% revealed by the *Dispatches* survey.

About one quarter of victims reported that the police only spoke to the female partner and ignored actual evidence that the male victim had been assaulted (29% of English and Welsh victims and 21% of Irish victims).

In contrast, little action was taken when the police accepted that the female partner had indeed been violent. In such cases, victims reported that the police would just try to diffuse the situation and leave (32% of English and Welsh victims and 24% of Irish victims), simply make a report (38% in the case of English and Welsh victims), give sympathetic advice (15% of English and Welsh victims but only 6% of Irish victims), or do nothing and leave (24% of English and Welsh victims but just 6% of Irish victims).

Only 3% of victims reported that the violent female partner had been arrested.

The conclusion from these responses is that the police in a substantial proportion of emergency attendances do not act either impartially or fairly, being seemingly reluctant to accept that women can be the assailants in domestic incidents, and also similarly reluctant to deal firmly with them when they do accept that this is the case. The startlingly low proportion of female arrests (3%) and the much higher proportion of male victim arrests (about 20%) suggests a considerable and widespread level of bias in police responses.

### **Arrests by police in response to emergency calls      Table 12**

A male victim appears to be over twice as likely as a female assailant of being arrested when the police respond to an emergency call. About one third of those arrested were male victims either simply for 'breach of the peace', or because the female assailant had pressed for it. 27% of English and Welsh male victims arrested reported that this had been because the police had said that 'they had to arrest someone'. This appears to suggest that, in some forces, police policy is to arrest the man, irrespective of circumstances.

The female partner was most likely to be arrested if the male victim had a visible and

significant injury (13% of English and Welsh victims and 18% of Irish victims) and sometimes if the male victim pressed for this (13% of English and Welsh victims). 27% of Irish victims were arrested without being told why.

These responses suggest that police forces which have a pro-arrest policy when dealing with domestic violence incidents direct it largely at men, even though they may be the victims. Only when the male victim has a visible injury is a female assailant likely to be arrested. Such policies thus generally do not deal at all with the large extent of female violence or abuse against male partners which does not result in obvious physical injury but still may have had traumatic effect on both the male victim and any children involved who have witnessed it. Whilst there is increasing concern in the public domain to protect female victims of comparable male abuse, such pro-arrest policies, if not applied impartially and fairly, reflect little equivalent concern to protect genuine male victims and their children.

### **Number of assaults before calling the police      Table 13a**

Most male victims suffered repeated assaults before first calling the police. 48% of English and Welsh victims and 74% of Irish victims reported suffering 10 assaults or more before calling, and 33% of English and Welsh victims and 52% of Irish victims 20 assaults or more. 22% of Irish victims suffered more than 50 assaults before seeking police help compared to only 7% English and Welsh victims.

English and Welsh victims were more likely than Irish victims to suffer fewer assaults before calling the police, 29% compared to 17% for 3 or less assaults.

The responses show that overall Irish male victims suffer more assaults than English and Welsh victims, and for longer (see below), before first calling the police. There are a number of factors which may account for this, including differences in attitudes, divorce law and social expectations, and perceptions about the help (or lack of it) expected from the police. The number of assaults suffered before first reporting the abuse also relates to the time over which they occur before reporting. It is possible, also, that the higher proportions of Irish victims themselves arrested unreasonably when the police became involved (because their partner had pressed for it (73%) or without being told why (27%)), might well inhibit them more than their English and Welsh counterparts from seeking police help earlier.

### **Period suffering violence before first calling the police      Table 13b**

Irish victims suffer for much longer periods on average than English and Welsh victims before first calling the police, about 8 years compared to about 3 years. Periods ranged from 1 month to 15 years for English and Welsh victims and from 3 months to 25 years in the case of Irish victims.

### **Reasons given by male victims for police not arresting their violent partner Table 14**

As observed above, there appears generally to be a marked reluctance on the part of the police to arrest a violent female partner in a domestic incident. Reasons given by male victims suggest that the police are more likely to believe a woman's claim that she is the victim rather than the man, unless there is evidence of injury to the man, and they are generally dismissive of a man being beaten by a woman.

52% of English and Welsh victims and 30% of Irish victims reported that the police said it was his word against hers and so they could not act. The same proportions applied to male victims telling the police of an assault which the police dismissed out of hand. 42% of English and Welsh victims and 52% of Irish victims reported that the police had readily believed the female partner when she claimed that she was the victim and not him. These proportions compare with 43% revealed by the *Dispatches* survey. About one quarter of male victims reported that the police had just not believed their complaint that they were the victim.

26% of English and Welsh victims and 15% of Irish victims reported that the lack of action on the part of the police was because they had not actually told the police about the assault against them. 26% of English and Welsh victims and 22% of Irish victims thought that there had been insufficient evidence for the police to justify the arrest of their female partner because they had no physical injury.

When the police did accept that the man was indeed the victim, significant proportions of male victims reported that the police still would not arrest the female partner (39% of English and Welsh victims and 19% of Irish victims), in some cases because it would affect children involved. In a small proportion of cases, the police would only give the female partner a verbal warning or caution (10% of English and Welsh victims and 7% of Irish victims). A smaller proportion (about 6%) reported that the police had claimed that the female partner's violence had been in self-defence.

These responses suggest that the police, in contrast to their general readiness to arrest a male partner accused of violence or abuse, particularly if a pro-arrest policy applies, are noticeably reluctant to believe the complaints of male victims and to apply similar constraints to female assailants, unless there is evidence of injury to the male victim.

#### **What circumstances applied if your partner was arrested**      **Table 15**

Since generally few female assailants are arrested, the number of male victims responding on this question was limited to 5. The few responses indicated, however, that arrests were made mainly when injury had been sustained by the male victim and when the female assailant was herself aggressive to the police.

#### **Outcomes of partner's arrest**      **Tables 16a and 16b**

In addition to few violent female assailants being arrested as a result of domestic incidents, male victims reported that few of these were charged after arrest, and fewer of those charged were actually convicted. Thus, only a small number of female assailants ever appear in court.

Only 6% of English and Welsh male victims reported that their partner had been charged and none of these was convicted. The proportions were slightly higher for Irish male victims with 12% reporting their female assailants being charged and 6% reporting them being convicted (ie. half those charged).

Home Office Research Study 191 indicated that over a lifetime the proportion of male victims of physical assault in couple relationships was about 40% of the total, with one third of injured victims being male and one quarter of 'chronic' victims also being male, proportions corroborated by other reputable gender-neutral research. Such low charging and conviction rates for female assailants revealed by this Survey suggest,

therefore, that they substantially under-represent the real extent of female violence or abuse in couple relationships. Significant under-reporting by male victims of abuse no doubt plays a part in this. However, the Survey responses also suggest that negative or prejudiced attitudes of the police towards male victims plays a bigger part, since as well as being perceived to be unfair and discriminatory, such attitudes in turn reinforce or indeed justify the inhibition of male victims to report.

The results of the *Dispatches* survey lend support to this suggestion, 95% of male victims saying that they thought that the police treated domestic violence against men either “not very seriously” or indeed “not all seriously” (**Table 16c**).

### **Counselling      Tables 17a and 17b**

About half of male victims reported that they had sought counselling for their partner's aggressive behaviour, slightly more in Ireland (57%). Counselling took place in over 80% of these cases.

A larger proportion of English and Welsh counsellors than Irish counsellors accepted that the female partner was the violent partner (45% compared to 23%), and 30% of English and Welsh victims and 27% of Irish victims reported that the counsellor had tried to confront the violent female partner with her behaviour. A larger proportion of Irish counsellors than English and Welsh counsellors accepted the situation and tried to help both parties (55% compared to 20%). About 20% of victims reported that the counsellor had advised that the only thing to do was to ‘split up’.

However, a significant proportion of male victims reported that the counsellor had ignored their concerns about the female partner's violence (30% of English and Welsh victims and 23% of Irish victims) and a smaller proportion reported that the counsellor had actually accused the male victim of being the violent partner (10% of English and Welsh victims and 5% of Irish victims), or that they had only accepted that the female partner had acted in self-defence (5% of English and Welsh victims and 14% of Irish victims).

The responses suggest that counselling did help some couples but that some counsellors are reluctant to accept that women can be assailants in couple relationships.

### **Action under family law      Table 18**

Action under family law as a result of domestic violence focussed on divorce proceedings, child proceedings, and exclusion and non-molestation court orders.

English and Welsh victims reported that twice as many female spouses filed for divorce as male spouses (96% compared to 50%), whereas the proportions reported by Irish victims indicated slightly more male spouses doing this (19% compared to 13% of female spouses).

Large proportions of English and Welsh male victims applied for residence/custody of their children (81%) or for contact/visitation rights (85%). Much smaller proportions were reported by Irish victims, 53% and 38% respectively.

Male victims reported that far more non-molestation orders were sought by their female

partners (54% of English and Welsh victims and 28% of Irish victims) than by them (15% and 19% respectively), and far more were obtained by the female partners (46% of English and Welsh victims and 22% of Irish victims) than by them (12% and 9% respectively), indicating a much lower success rate for Irish male victims than their female partners (about 47%).

Even greater disparity applied to exclusion orders. Male victims reported far more exclusion orders sought by their female partners (46% of English and Welsh victims and 69% of Irish victims) than by them (12% and 22% respectively). Such orders were granted by the courts to female partners (46% of English and Welsh and 38% of Irish victims) but none were granted to male victims in either country. English and Welsh female partners thus had a success rate of almost 100%, almost double that of Irish female partners (about 55% ), whereas male victims had a startlingly nil success rate.

Such proportions reinforce the perception of bias against male victims of domestic violence also applying in the courts. The nil success rate of male victims in obtaining exclusion orders possibly reflects in part the reality that most children stay with the mother on parental breakdown, even though she may have been the violent partner. Courts are thus reluctant to exclude the mother and children from the family home in such circumstances. Father victims of domestic violence thus suffer a 'double whammy', with no recognition of their plight as a victim coupled with the loss of home and daily contact with their children.

#### **Father's current status with children      Table 19**

Although a majority of male victims reported that they still had some contact with their children, but not as much as they would like (59% of English and Welsh victims and 41% of Irish victims), significant proportions reported that they had no contact whatsoever (21% of English and Welsh victims and 15% of Irish victims) or very little contact, despite court orders (18% and 7% respectively). Nearly one quarter of English and Welsh father victims had only indirect contact or had given up trying to see their children because of the difficulties.

Only a small proportion of father victims reported having regular unimpeded and generous contact with their children (8% of English and Welsh victims and 11% of Irish victims). A mere 3% of English and Welsh victims reported having residence/custody of their children compared to 11% of Irish victims. Curiously, 30% of Irish father victims reported still living in the same household together, compared to 10% of English and Welsh victims.

The responses suggest that over half of English and Welsh father victims have real contact difficulties, so compounding their plight as victims of domestic violence. Irish fathers appear to fare slightly better in this respect, mainly because a larger proportion are still living in the same household. It is perhaps not surprising, therefore, that many father victims prefer not to report their plight but put up with it in order to remain with, and in some cases possibly to protect, their children.

#### **Mother's attitude towards you as a father      Table 20**

A large proportion of victims reported hostile or very negative attitudes by mothers towards them as fathers. Only 13% of mothers accepted that the victim was a good father, despite their differences.

Negative attitudes reported included the perception that she will do anything she can to destroy his fathering role (67% of English and Welsh victims and 59% of Irish victims) and that she thinks he is irrelevant as a father to his children (64% of English and Welsh victims and 55% of Irish victims). 62% of English and Welsh victims and 57% of Irish victims thought that the mother was poisoning his children against him.

A substantial proportion of father victims reported that the mother obstructed contact with their children frequently (62% of English and Welsh victims and 48% of Irish victims), and about 44% of victims perceived her to be absolutely hostile to contact. About one quarter of English and Welsh father victims thought that the mother had moved further away deliberately in order to make contact more difficult.

Based on these responses, the overall picture for the majority of father victims is most discouraging, in particular their vulnerability to the continuing hostility and obstruction of the mother, who after all was the violent partner. This situation for father victims is unlikely to change until the particular plight of male victims of domestic violence is recognised and taken more seriously by statutory and public authorities, police, social agencies, and the courts. Meanwhile, in many cases, male victims are being marginalised by current attitudes and policies in the public domain relating to domestic violence, being reduced, in effect, to the status of second-class citizens.



## DETAILED TABULATIONS OF RESPONSES

For comparison, the result of the *Dispatches* survey of 1998 are also given where these correspond to the Dewar Research Survey 2001 items and results.

| <b>Table 1</b>  | <b>Dewar Research 2001</b> | <b>Ireland</b>     | <b>Dispatches 1998</b> |
|---|----------------------------|--------------------|------------------------|
| <b>Kinds of physical assault and threat suffered by men</b> | <b>E + W</b>               |                    | <b>UK</b>              |
| <i>Number of respondents</i>                                | 49                         | 50                 | 100                    |
|   |                            | <i>percentages</i> |                        |
| • push or grab  | 88                         | 78                 | }                      |
| • slap  | 76                         | 80                 | } 86                   |
| • scratch   | 65                         | 40                 | 63                     |
| • bite  | 25                         | 22                 | 33                     |
| • punch to body   | 67                         | 62                 | 70                     |
| • punch to face or head                                     | 59                         | 46                 | 63                     |
| • head-butted   |                            | 8                  |                        |
| • kick to body  | 59                         | 52                 | 54                     |
| • kick to head or face                                      | 12                         | 14                 | 17                     |
| • kick or hit to genitals                                   | 33                         | 36                 | 33                     |
| • hit with heavy object                                     | 27                         | 42                 | 39                     |
| • burn or scald   | 16                         | 16                 | 16                     |
| • stab  | 12                         | 8                  | 22                     |
| • strangle or choke   | 12                         | 14                 | 16                     |
| • attempt to suffocate                                      | 4                          | 6                  | 6                      |
| • heavy object thrown                                       | 61                         | 68                 | 69                     |
| • object(s) in house smashed                                | 74                         | 62                 | 79                     |
| • threaten to kick or hit genitals                          | 31                         | 34                 | 20                     |
| • threaten with weapon                                      | 51                         | 54                 | 61                     |
| • threaten to kill  | 27                         | 40                 | 43                     |

### Weapons or objects reported used

| <i>Dewar Research</i>          |                           | <i>Dispatches</i>              |
|--------------------------------|---------------------------|--------------------------------|
| <b>E + W</b>                   | <b>Ireland</b>            | <b>UK</b>                      |
| crockery, eg mug, plate, cup   | knife, dagger             | knife or sharp object          |
| kitchen utensil, eg frying pan | crockery, eg mug, plate   | kitchen utensil, eg frying pan |
| light furniture, eg stool      | kitchen implement         | work tool, eg hammer           |
| dumb-bell                      | cutlery                   | rolling pin                    |
| book, bible                    | breadknife, scissors      | mallet or heavy tool           |
| brush                          | work tool, eg hammer      | heavy household object         |
| shoe                           | light furniture, eg chair | wooden object                  |
| glass ashtray                  | brush, mop                |                                |
| aerosol can                    | candlestick, poker        |                                |
| telephone                      | umbrella                  |                                |
| remote control                 | electric iron, Hoover     |                                |
| sharp indented ring            | pen, clock, coathanger    |                                |
| pool cue                       | shoe, stiletto heel       |                                |
| log                            | golf club                 |                                |
| food                           | hurling stick             |                                |
|                                | shovel                    |                                |
|                                | photoframe                |                                |

| <b>Table 2</b><br><b>Frequency of physical violence</b><br><i>Number of respondents</i> | <b>Dewar Research 2001</b> |                | <i>Dispatches 1998</i> |
|---|----------------------------|----------------|------------------------|
|   | <b>E + W</b>               | <b>Ireland</b> | <b>UK</b>              |
|   | 47                         | 46             |                        |
|   | <i>percentages</i>         |                |                        |
| • daily   | 6                          | 15             |                        |
| • several times a week  | 15                         | 18             |                        |
| • several times a month   | 19                         | 39             |                        |
| • about once a month  | 24                         | 4              |                        |
| • less than once a month  | 4                          | -              |                        |
| • a few times a year  | 32                         | 24             |                        |

| <b>Table 3</b><br><b>Number of times assaulted</b><br><i>Number of respondents</i> | <b>Dewar Research 2001</b> |                | <i>Dispatches 1998</i> |
|--|----------------------------|----------------|------------------------|
|  | <b>E + W</b>               | <b>Ireland</b> | <b>UK</b>              |
|  | 47                         | 48             |                        |
|  | <i>percentages</i>         |                |                        |
| • once   | 6                          | -              |                        |
| • 2 - 3 times  | 6                          | 8              |                        |
| • 4 -10 times  | 26                         | 19             |                        |
| • 11 - 20 times  | 34                         | 17             |                        |
| • 21 - 50 times  | 6                          | 19             |                        |
| • more than 50 times   | 22                         | 37             |                        |

| <b>Table 4</b><br><b>Length of time assaults experienced</b><br><i>Number of respondents</i> | <b>Dewar Research 2001</b> |                  | <i>Dispatches 1998</i> |
|--|----------------------------|------------------|------------------------|
|  | <b>E + W</b>               | <b>Ireland</b>   | <b>UK</b>              |
|  | 45                         | 44               |                        |
| • range  | 5 mths to 24 yrs           | 3 mths to 24 yrs | <1 yr to 15+ yrs       |
| • mean   | 68.2 mths                  | 118.3 mths       |                        |
| • median   | 48 mths                    | 120 mths         |                        |

| <b>Table 5</b><br><b>Injuries suffered</b><br><i>Number of respondents</i> | <b>Dewar Research 2001</b> |                | <i>Dispatches 1998</i> |
|--|----------------------------|----------------|------------------------|
|  | <b>E + W</b>               | <b>Ireland</b> | <b>UK</b>              |
|  | 45                         | 40             | 96                     |
|  | <i>percentages</i>         |                |                        |
| • minor scratches or bruising  | 91                         | 88             | 97                     |
| • nose or lip bleeds   | 38                         | 55             | 41                     |
| • severe bruising on body  | 38                         | 40             | 39                     |
| • serious cuts/wounds to skin  | 22                         | 25             | 21                     |
| • burns or scalds  | 16                         | 5              | 11                     |
| • broken nose  | 2                          | 8              | 3                      |
| • broken rib or ribs   | 2                          |                | 4                      |
| • broken jaw or cheekbone  |                            | 5              |                        |
| • fractured skull  | 2                          |                |                        |
| • major blood loss   | 2                          |                |                        |
| • life threatening injury  | 2                          |                |                        |
| • knocked unconscious  | 4                          | 5              | 4                      |
| • serious head injury  |                            |                | 10                     |
| • broken arm or leg  |                            |                | 3                      |
| • broken teeth   |                            |                | 2                      |
| • black eye or bruising to face  |                            |                | 34                     |
| • difficulty in breathing or fainting                                      |                            |                | 10                     |
| • lasting physical scar  |                            |                | 15                     |

Other injuries reported: tinnitus, cut eye, deep scratches, broken fingers, fractured wrist, headaches, stomach upset, injured jaw and neck, anxiety and depression.

|  | Dewar Research 2001<br>E + W | Ireland            | Dispatches 1998<br>UK |
|--|------------------------------|--------------------|-----------------------|
| <b>Table 5</b>                             |                              |                    |                       |
| <b>Response to partner's violence</b>      |                              |                    |                       |
| <i>Number of respondents</i>               | 49                           | 49                 | 100                   |
|  |                              | <i>percentages</i> |                       |
| • try and reason with her                  | 76                           | 76                 | 72                    |
| • walk away or leave room                  | 67                           | 82                 | 77                    |
| • restrain her or push her away            | 67                           | 45                 | 73                    |
| • try and avoid her blows with no reaction | 65                           | 31                 |                       |
| • tell her to stop and control herself     | 55                           | 27                 |                       |
| • leave the house and come back later      | 51                           | 57                 | 65                    |
| • suffer her blows with no reaction        | 47                           | 18                 |                       |
| • threaten to call the police              | 27                           | 12                 |                       |
| • threaten physical violence if she cont'd | 16                           | 10                 | 12                    |
| • hit her back as hard as she hit          | 8                            | 2                  | 5                     |
| • slap her face to bring her to her senses | 6                            | -                  |                       |
| • hit her back harder than she hit         | -                            | 2                  | 2                     |

Other responses reported: call police, professional help, shout for help, cry, go to bed and lay down, shout at her, use minimum force to stop her violence, threaten to consult doctor, lock himself in room, go into the shed, go to his room with children, stay completely quiet, go to the pub, move out.

**Table 7**  
**Emotional effects or problems suffered**

|                                     | 49 | 51                 | 100 |
|-------------------------------------|----|--------------------|-----|
| <i>Number of respondents</i>        |    | <i>percentages</i> |     |
| • always walking on 'eggshells'     | 82 | 75                 | 60  |
| • loss of confidence/self esteem    | 80 | 80                 | 71  |
| • inability to concentrate at work  | 78 | 57                 |     |
| • fear of incurring her displeasure | 71 | 33                 |     |
| • living in constant anxiety        | 69 | 80                 | 79  |
| • feeling of being isolated         | 65 | 45                 |     |
| • loss of sleep/insomnia            | 61 | 78                 | 65  |
| • mistrust of women generally       | 61 | 53                 | 61  |
| • feeling absolutely 'rotten'       | 57 | 55                 |     |
| • unable to cope with everyday life | 47 | 51                 |     |
| • severe depression                 | 47 | 61                 | 58  |
| • suicidal thoughts                 | 47 | 57                 | 44  |
| • impotence or sexual problems      | 43 | 35                 | 24  |
| • become terrified of her           | 39 | 37                 |     |
| • loss of weight or appetite        | 35 | 61                 | 41  |
| • suicide attempts                  | 10 | 18                 | 12  |
| Other problems reported:            |    |                    |     |
| • neglect own interests             | 79 | 55                 |     |
| • lose contact with friends         | 77 | 76                 | 57  |
| • neglect your work                 | 68 | 55                 |     |
| • neglect your health               | 64 | 47                 |     |
| • give up your home                 | 55 | 41                 | 41  |
| • neglect your finances             | 51 | 33                 |     |
| • lose contact with your family     | 49 | 59                 | 29  |
| • give up job                       | 40 | 39                 | 33  |
| • lose contact with children        |    | 49                 |     |

|   | Dewar Research 2001<br>E + W | Ireland                  | Dispatches 1998<br>UK |
|---|------------------------------|--------------------------|-----------------------|
| <b>Table 8a</b>   |                              |                          |                       |
| <b>Children in family</b>                                     |                              |                          |                       |
| <i>Number of respondents</i>                                  | 49                           | 50<br><i>percentages</i> | 97                    |
| • yes   | 88                           | 96                       | 87                    |
| • no  | 12                           | 4                        | 13                    |
| Total number of father's children involved:                   |                              |                          |                       |
|   |                              | <i>numbers</i>           |                       |
| • boys  | 33                           | 59                       |                       |
| • girls   | 34                           | 77                       |                       |
| <b>Table 8b</b>   |                              |                          |                       |
| <b>Did children see or hear abuse against you?</b>            |                              |                          |                       |
| <i>Number of respondents</i>                                  | 43                           | 48<br><i>percentages</i> |                       |
| • yes   | 86                           | 94                       |                       |
| • no  | 9                            | 6                        |                       |
| • not sure  | 5                            | -                        |                       |
| <b>Table 8c</b>   |                              |                          |                       |
| <b>Did children see violence against you?</b>                 |                              |                          |                       |
| <i>Number of respondents</i>                                  | 43                           | 46<br><i>percentages</i> |                       |
| • yes   | 74                           | 85                       |                       |
| • no  | 16                           | 9                        |                       |
| • not sure  | 10                           | 6                        |                       |
| <b>Table 9a</b>   |                              |                          |                       |
| <b>Did you ever try to report the abuse to the police?</b>    |                              |                          |                       |
| <i>Number of respondents</i>                                  | 49                           | 49<br><i>percentages</i> | 95                    |
| • yes (including 'yes?')                                      | 51                           | 31                       | 51                    |
| • no  | 49                           | 69                       | 49                    |
| <b>Table 10b</b>  |                              |                          |                       |
| <b>Reasons for not reporting to the police</b>                |                              |                          |                       |
| <i>Number of respondents</i>                                  | 26                           | 44<br><i>percentages</i> | 90?                   |
| • hoped your partner would change and stop being violent      | 69                           | 30                       |                       |
| • thought the police would not believe you                    | 62                           | 70                       |                       |
| • thought the police would not help you because you are a man | 62                           | 80                       | 63                    |
| • did not think assaults serious enough                       | 58                           | 27                       | 50                    |
| • felt embarrassed and shame at being assaulted by a woman    | 58                           | 77                       | 62                    |
| • feared your partner's friends/family would beat you up      | 58                           | 14                       |                       |
| • decided to put up with abuse to protect the children        | 54                           | 32                       |                       |
| • loved your partner too much to report her                   | 50                           | 43                       | 44                    |
| • feared you would lose your children                         | 50                           | 30                       | 6                     |
| • partner threatened to tell police you were violent to her   | 44                           | 55                       | 49                    |

|  | Dewar Research 2001<br>E + W | Ireland | Dispatches 1998<br>UK |
|--|------------------------------|---------|-----------------------|
| • thought police might victimise you because<br>you are a man  | 38                           | 66      | 54                    |
| • did not want others to find out about the abuse              | 38                           | 66      | 48                    |
| • feared relationship would end                                | 35                           | 23      |                       |
| • feared your partner would say you had<br>abused the children | 31                           | 18      |                       |
| • feared your partner might kill you if you<br>reported her    |                              | 11      |                       |
| • feared violence might escalate if you told<br>the police     | 27                           | 43      | 26                    |
| • family or friends advised you not to report her              | 8                            |         |                       |
| • fear of ridicule   |                              |         | 38                    |
| • police do not take domestic violence by<br>women seriously   |                              |         | 78                    |

**Table 10**  
**Who called police using emergency number?**

| <i>Number of respondents</i> | 34 | 31<br><i>percentages</i> | 95? |
|------------------------------|----|--------------------------|-----|
| • you                        | 59 | 55                       | 30  |
| • your partner               | 53 | 65                       | 51  |
| • someone else               | 18 | 10                       | 4   |
| • neighbour                  | 12 | 6                        | 12  |
| • your children              | 3  | 13                       | 2   |

**Table 11**  
**Response of police if they attended first emergency call**

| <i>Number of respondents</i>  | 34 | 33<br><i>percentages</i> |
|---|----|--------------------------|
| • spoke to both you and your partner                                | 62 | 55                       |
| • acted in a hostile manner to you                                  | 53 | 39                       |
| • tried to get details of events from both of you                   | 47 | 42                       |
| • threatened to arrest you for 'breach of the peace'                | 47 | 9                        |
| • identified your partner as the victim just<br>because she said so | 44 | 36                       |
| • decided only to make a report                                     | 38 |                          |
| • totally ignored what you had to say                               | 35 | 36                       |
| • pressurised you to leave home                                     | 35 | 24                       |
| • just tried to diffuse situation and leave                         | 32 | 24                       |
| • ignored actual evidence that you had been<br>assaulted            | 29 | 21                       |
| • only spoke to your partner  | 24 | 27                       |
| • identified you were the victim but did nothing<br>and left        | 24 | 6                        |
| • arrested you  | 21 | 18                       |
| • identified you were the victim and gave<br>sympathetic advice     | 15 | 6                        |
| • threatened your partner with arrest for 'breach<br>of the peace'  | 12 | -                        |
| • arrested your partner   | 3  | 3                        |

|  | Dewar Research 2001<br>E + W | Ireland | Dispatches 1998<br>UK |
|--|------------------------------|---------|-----------------------|
| <b>Table 12</b>  |                              |         |                       |
| <b>Arrests by police in response to emergency call one or more times</b> |                              |         |                       |
| <i>Number of respondents</i>   | 15                           | 11      |                       |
|  | <i>percentages</i>           |         |                       |
| • you were arrested for 'breach of the peace'                            | 33                           | 27      |                       |
| • you were arrested only because your partner pressed for it             | 33                           | 73      |                       |
| • you were arrested as your partner had a visible injury                 | 27                           | 18      |                       |
| • you were arrested, the police said they had to arrest someone          | 27                           | -       |                       |
| • your partner was arrested as you had a visible injury                  | 13                           | 18      |                       |
| • your partner was arrested only because you pressed for it              | 13                           | -       |                       |
| • your partner was arrested for 'breach of the peace'                    | 7                            | -       |                       |
| • you were arrested without being told why                               | 7                            | 27      |                       |

**Table 13a**  
**Number of assaults on you before first calling the police**

| <i>Number of respondents</i> | 27                 | 23 |
|------------------------------|--------------------|----|
|                              | <i>percentages</i> |    |
| • once                       | 7                  | -  |
| • 2 - 3 times                | 22                 | 17 |
| • 4 - 10 times               | 22                 | 9  |
| • 11 - 20 times              | 15                 | 22 |
| • 21 - 50 times              | 26                 | 30 |
| • more than 50 times         | 7                  | 22 |

**Table 13b**  
**Period you suffered her violence before first calling the police**

| <i>Number of respondents</i> | 27              | 22               |
|------------------------------|-----------------|------------------|
| • range                      | 1 mth to 15 yrs | 3 mths to 25 yrs |
| • mean                       | 38.6 mths       | 8.2 yrs          |
| • median                     | 24 mths         | 6 yrs            |

**Table 14**  
**Why do you think the police did not ever arrest your partner?**

| <i>Number of respondents</i>                                  | 31                 | 27 | 53? |
|---|--------------------|----|-----|
|   | <i>percentages</i> |    |     |
| • police said it was your word against hers, so could not act | 52                 | 30 | 49  |
| • you told police of an assault but they dismissed it         | 52                 | 30 |     |
| • police dismissive of man being beaten by a woman            | 48                 | 33 |     |
| • your partner said you were violent and they believed her    | 42                 | 52 | 43  |
| • police knew you were the victim but would not arrest her    | 39                 | 19 |     |
| • you did not tell police about assault                       | 26                 | 15 | 4   |
| • insufficient evidence since you had no physical injury      | 26                 | 22 | 23  |
| • you told police of an assault but they didn't believe you   | 23                 | 22 | 26  |

|  | Dewar Research 2001<br>E + W | Ireland | Dispatches 1998<br>UK |
|--|------------------------------|---------|-----------------------|
| • you told police of an assault but wanted no action taken   | 13                           | 30      | 21                    |
| • police did not arrest her because it would affect children | 13                           | 7       |                       |
| • police would only give her a verbal warning or caution     | 10                           | 7       | 19                    |
| • police said her violence was in self-defence               | 6                            | 7       |                       |

**Table 15****If your partner was arrested for violence against you, what circumstances applied?**

| Number of respondents   | 4                  | 1   |
|---|--------------------|-----|
|   | <i>percentages</i> |     |
| • you had sustained an injury although not a serious one      | 100                | -   |
| • you had sustained a serious injury                          | 25                 | 100 |
| • your partner had assaulted you and was aggressive to police | 25                 | -   |
| • police arrested her to deter her from using violence        | 25                 | -   |
| • police arrested her because she was also drunk or on drugs  | 25                 | -   |

**Table 16a****Was your partner charged with an offence against you?**

| Number of respondents | 17                 | 16 |
|-----------------------|--------------------|----|
|                       | <i>percentages</i> |    |
| • yes                 | 6                  | 12 |
| • no                  | 94                 | 88 |

**Table 16b****Was your partner convicted of an offence against you?**

| Number of respondents | 16                 | 17 |
|-----------------------|--------------------|----|
|                       | <i>percentages</i> |    |
| • yes                 | -                  | 6  |
| • no                  | 100                | 94 |

**Table 16c****Generally, how seriously do you think police treat domestic violence against men?**

| Number of respondents  | 94                 |
|------------------------|--------------------|
|                        | <i>percentages</i> |
| • very seriously       | -                  |
| • quite seriously      | 4                  |
| • not very seriously   | 24                 |
| • not at all seriously | 71                 |

**Table 17a****Did you or your partner seek counselling about her abusive behaviour?**

| Number of respondents | 48                 | 47 |
|-----------------------|--------------------|----|
|                       | <i>percentages</i> |    |
| • yes                 | 48                 | 57 |
| • no                  | 52                 | 43 |

**Table 17b****Response of counsellor, if counselling occurred**

| Number of respondents                                | 20                 | 22 |
|--|--------------------|----|
|  | <i>percentages</i> |    |
| • accepted that your partner was the violent partner | 45                 | 23 |

|  | Dewar Research 2001<br>E + W | Ireland | Dispatches 1998<br>UK |
|--|------------------------------|---------|-----------------------|
| • ignored your concerns about her violence altogether        | 30                           | 23      |                       |
| • tried to confront your partner with her behaviour          | 30                           | 27      |                       |
| • accepted the situation and try to help you both            | 20                           | 55      |                       |
| • only gave counselling to you                               | 20                           | 18      |                       |
| • only gave counselling to your partner                      | 20                           | -       |                       |
| • told you the only thing was for you to split up            | 20                           | 18      |                       |
| • only accepted that you were both violent to each other     | 10                           | -       |                       |
| • accused you of being the violent partner                   | 10                           | 5       |                       |
| • only accepted that your partner was acting in self-defence | 5                            | 14      |                       |

**Table 18****If any action under family law, what happened?**

| <i>Number of respondents</i>                                   |    |                    |
|--|----|--------------------|
|  | 26 | 32                 |
|  |    | <i>percentages</i> |
| • your partner filed for divorce against you                   | 96 | 13                 |
| • you applied for contact/visitation rights with your children | 85 | 38                 |
| • you applied for residence/custody of your children           | 81 | 53                 |
| • your partner sought a non-molestation order against you      | 54 | 28                 |
| • you filed for divorce against your partner                   | 50 | 19                 |
| • your partner applied to have you excluded from the home      | 46 | 69                 |
| • your partner obtained a non-molestation order against you    | 46 | 22                 |
| • you applied for measures to protect your children            | 46 | 25                 |
| • you were excluded from the home by court order               | 46 | 38                 |
| • you sought a non-molestation order against your partner      | 15 | 19                 |
| • you applied to have your partner excluded from the home      | 12 | 22                 |
| • you obtained a non-molestation order against your partner    | 12 | 9                  |
| • your partner was excluded from the home by court order       | -  | -                  |

**Table 19****What is your current status with your children now?**

| <i>Number of respondents</i>                                    |    |                    |      |
|---|----|--------------------|------|
|   | 39 | 46                 |      |
|   |    | <i>percentages</i> |      |
| • you have contact with them, but would like more               | 59 | 41                 | }    |
| • you have no contact whatsoever                                | 21 | 15                 | }    |
| • you have very little contact with them, despite a court order | 18 | 7                  | }    |
| • you have no direct contact, only indirect, eg letters, etc    | 13 | 7                  | }    |
| • you have given up trying to see your children                 | 10 | -                  | } 85 |
| • you are still living in the same household together           | 10 | 30                 | }    |
| • you have regular unimpeded and generous contact               | 8  | 11                 | }    |
| • you have residence/custody of them                            | 3  | 11                 | } 15 |



|   | Dewar Research 2001<br>E + W | Ireland | Dispatches 1998<br>UK |
|---|------------------------------|---------|-----------------------|
| <b>Table 20</b>   |                              |         |                       |
| <b>What is your partner's attitude to you as a father?</b>        |                              |         |                       |
| <i>Number of respondents</i>                                      | 39                           |         | 44                    |
|   | <i>percentages</i>           |         |                       |
| • she will do anything she can to destroy your<br>fathering role  | 67                           | 59      |                       |
| • she thinks you are irrelevant as a father to<br>your children   | 64                           | 55      |                       |
| • she has or is poisoning your children against you               | 62                           | 57      |                       |
| • she obstructs contact with your children<br>frequently          | 62                           | 48      |                       |
| • she is absolutely hostile to contact                            | 44                           | 43      |                       |
| • she has aligned a child(ren) totally on her side<br>against you | 39                           | 34      |                       |
| • she influences the children negatively but<br>not seriously     | 31                           | 27      |                       |
| • she has moved away to make contact more<br>difficult            | 26                           | 11      |                       |
| • she accepts you are a good father, despite your<br>differences  | 13                           | 14      |                       |
| • she does not influence the children either way                  | -                            | 5       |                       |

## **MALE DOMESTIC VIOLENCE VICTIMS SURVEY 2001**

### **PART 2 SUPPLEMENTARY ENQUIRIES**

## PREVALENCE OF MALE VICTIMS

### General

There is a substantial difference in the prevalence and proportion of male victims of domestic violence revealed by gender-neutral studies and those recorded by police forces. All gender-neutral studies to date have consistently shown an almost equal numerical culpability in physical and other aggression between the sexes in couple relationships. There are now over one hundred such reputable studies published worldwide supporting this conclusion. See for instance, Archer, 2000<sup>(1)</sup> and Fiebert, 1999<sup>(2)</sup>.

In contrast, police forces in England and Wales record proportions of male victims of domestic violence generally lower than 25% of the total, and usually between 10 and 20%. In Ireland in 2000, the police recorded a proportion of 16% male complainants of domestic violence out of a total of 10,877 recorded incidents, up from 11% of the total the previous year<sup>(3)</sup>. Police statistics of course reflect a wide range of considerations, including force policy decisions, priorities and recording methods, etc, which make them unreliable in judging the actual prevalence of domestic violence.

The difference between the findings of academic studies and those drawn from government sponsored crime survey and criminal justice statistics is well recognised in the field of domestic violence.

### Gender-neutral studies

The largest study of domestic violence published to date in England and Wales was carried out in 1995 as a supplement to the 1996 British Crime Survey, when ten thousand men and women between the ages of 16 and 59 were asked to report their experience of domestic violence by means of a confidential self-completion questionnaire. The questionnaire was designed to maximise the willingness of victims, particularly female victims on whom it was initially trialled, to report to the survey incidents of domestic assaults and threats made against them. The survey results therefore provide valuable findings on the extent of domestic violence in England and Wales, especially as they were presented under the authority of Home Office Research Study 191 published in January 1999<sup>(4)</sup>.

Study 191 revealed that 4.2% of men and 4.2% of women responding reported physical assault against them by a partner during the 12 month-period preceding the survey, a proportion of 50% of male victims. In the longer term, 15% of men and 23% of women reported physical assault against them by a partner at some time in their lives, a proportion of 40% of male victims. The Study also revealed that women tended to be more harmed and more frightened than men by domestic violence. Even so, one third of injured victims and one quarter of chronic victims (of repeated assaults) were male.

An academic study by Carrado et al<sup>(5)</sup> of domestic violence in heterosexual relationships involving some 2,000 adult British men and women had previously been published in 1996, being the only nationally representative gender neutral study of domestic violence outside of government sponsored research.

This study had also looked at long-term experience, asking about the experience of assaults either across all respondent's relationships or in their current relationship. This

found that 18% of men and 13% of women reported having experienced an assault across all their relationships with 11% of men and 5% of women reporting an assault by their current partner.

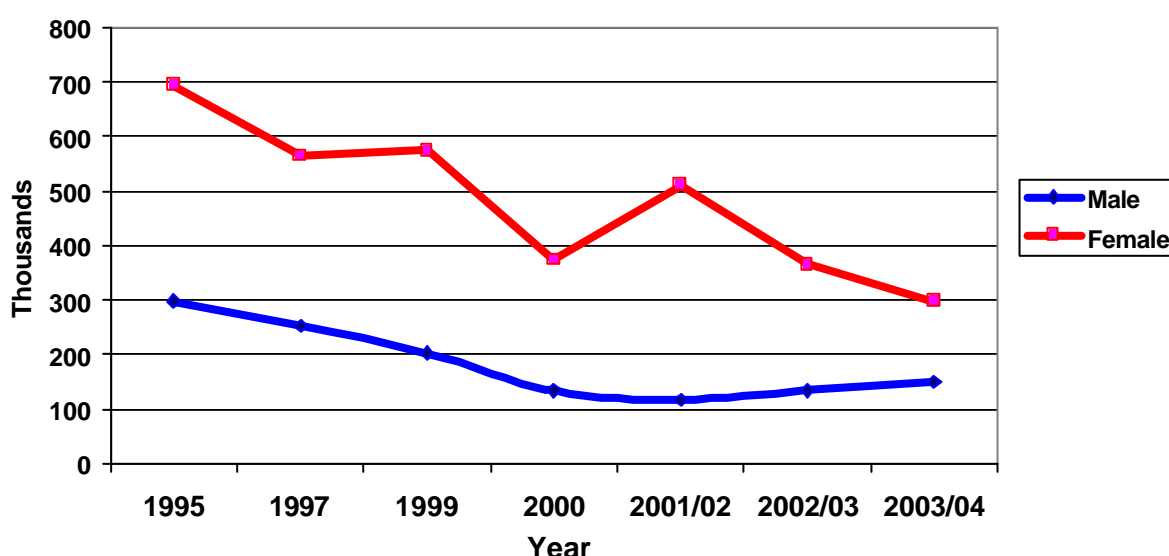
Estimates of the numbers of violent domestic incidents are also given by regular British Crime Surveys (BCS) for England and Wales. However, the BCS estimates are based on people reporting what they perceive as ‘crimes’ committed against them. Since many people, in particular younger men, do not regard a minor physical domestic assault against them by a partner as a ‘crime’, and thus do not report it when interviewed, the BCS estimates probably underestimate the total numbers of male victims of violent domestic incidents more than those of female victims.

BCS results for the preceding calendar year were published every two years up until year 2000. The frequency was increased to once each year in 2001. In July 2002, a new annual publication *Crime in England and Wales*<sup>(6)</sup> was introduced which combines the reporting of BCS results and of police recorded crime.

The numbers of both male and female victims of violent domestic incidents estimated by the BCS fell significantly over the nine-year period 1995 to 2004, those involving male victims declining from 298,000 in 1995 to 150,000 in 2003/2004 (50%), and involving female victims from 694,000 in 1995 to 298,000 in 2003/2004 (57%). Over the same period, and based on these estimates, the proportion of male victims averaged about 27%, varying from 30% of total victims in 1995 to 34% in 2003/2004, with an inexplicable one-off low of 19% in 2001/02. These estimated proportions of male victims are significantly lower than the 50% reported by Study 191 for year 1995.

The declining trends for both male and female victims given by the BCS estimates over the period 1995 to 2004 are indicated on Figure 2.1.

**Fig 2.1 Estimated Numbers of Incidents of Domestic Violence England and Wales 1995 - 2004**



Sources: Home Office private communication, January 2003  
 Crime in England and Wales 2002/03, Table 5a  
 Crime in England and Wales 2003/04, Table 5.01

A supplementary Home Office report on the results of a special self-completion module on inter-personal violence (including domestic violence) contained in the year 2001 BCS, which should give further indication of the extent of domestic violence and the proportion of male victims, is still in the course of preparation (October 2004).

No comparable government surveys of domestic violence in Ireland have been published. The only significant gender-neutral study in Ireland of which Dewar Research is aware is a self-report survey of 530 men and women with relationship problems presenting to the Marriage and Relationship Counselling Services (MRCS) and reported on by Dr Kieran McKeown and colleagues in April 2001<sup>(7)</sup>. The survey found that domestic violence had occurred in about half (48%) of these relationships, with about seven in ten (71%) experiencing it in the past year.

The survey also found that, where it occurs, domestic violence within couple relationships tended to be mutual in a third of all cases (33%), female perpetrated in four out of ten couples (41%), and male perpetrated in a quarter of couples (25%). In other words, the study found that, among MRCS clients, women were more likely than men to be the perpetrators of domestic violence. The vast majority of women (80%) and men (78%) agreed with their partner's response to the questions asked, suggesting to the authors that such self-reported prevalence is quite reliable.

The proportions of people in this survey reporting intimate assaults are higher than would occur in the general population, but this would be expected with people actively seeking relationship counselling.

Across all available studies, a significant incidence of male victims of domestic violence is reported. Whereas academic studies suggest that the numbers of men experiencing domestic assault are as high as the numbers of women, recent crime surveys and criminal justice statistics seem to indicate a proportion of male victims of about only one third of total victims.

Numerous explanations have been offered for this discrepancy between different types of study. Interested readers are referred to Dutton, 1994<sup>(8)</sup>, Archer, 2000<sup>(1)</sup> and George, 2003<sup>(9)</sup> in this respect.

## **Police statistics**

The availability of useful data on domestic violence in England and Wales varies considerably from force to force. Some forces record a fairly good breakdown of total recorded incidents including by sex, age, relationship, type of aggression, and ethnicity of both victims and assailants. However, many forces cannot or are unwilling to provide such breakdown. Some can give only total recorded incidents or only a limited breakdown.

In a 1997 study of police statistics obtained from 24 forces in England and Wales, of which 13 provided some or a good degree of breakdown, Yarwood<sup>(10)</sup> found that the proportions of male victims of notifiable crimes of violence (which at that time excluded common assault) ranged from 7.9% to 46.6%, with an average of 21.0%. For total incidents recorded, comprising physical and non-physical, the proportions of male victims were lower, ranging from 3.6% to 13.9%, with an average of 12.9%, suggesting a lower rate of reporting by male victims of less serious offences against them.

Yarwood also found a pattern of higher proportions than average for younger male victims under 16 (30 to 50% of total victims of notifiable crimes of violence in this age group) and also for older male victims over 60 (25 to 60%).

### Year 2000/01 police statistics

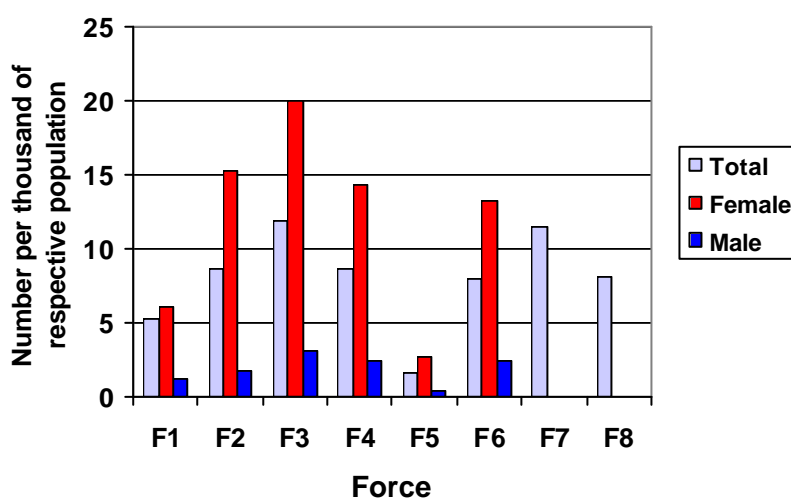
For the purpose of the Dewar Research Survey 2001 of male victims of domestic violence, a random selection of 15 of the 43 police forces in England and Wales were approached to obtain more recent information. Statistics on recorded incidents of domestic violence for the year 2000/01, with varying degrees of breakdown, were obtained from eight of these forces, comprising five non-metropolitan and three metropolitan forces, including London, in all representing about 36% of the total population. Four forces declined to respond and three forces did not reply at all.

The information received varied in scope and usefulness. However, sufficient was obtained to provide some indication of the prevalence of total incidents recorded, the proportions of physical or sexual incidents recorded, and a breakdown by sex, age, seriousness of offence, and relationship. The response generally reflected that found by Yarwood in 1997.

#### Prevalence

Total incidents recorded, in number per thousand of respective population, for the eight forces responding, are shown on Figure 2.2. Prevalence ranged from 1.63 to 11.9 for all victims, from 2.7 to 20.0 for female victims, and from 0.49 to 3.24 for male victims. Although the prevalence of female victims in general greatly exceeded that of male victims, the highest male prevalence (recorded by force F3) slightly exceeded the lowest female prevalence (recorded by force F5).

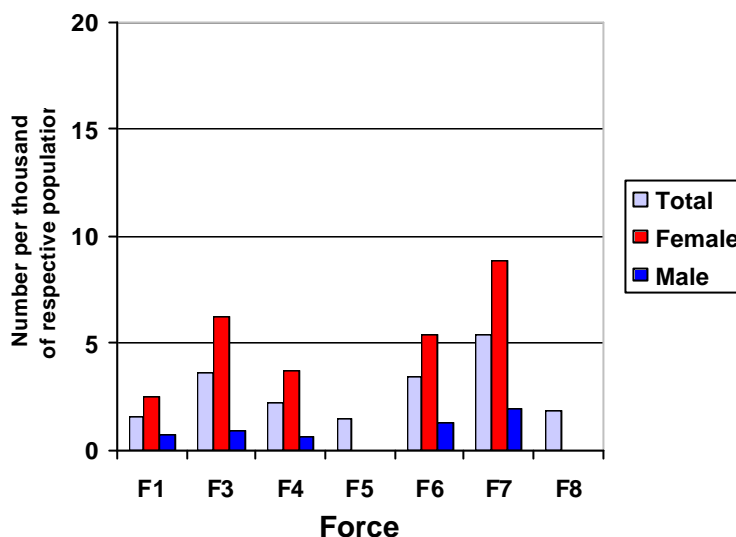
**Fig 2.2 Total Incidents Recorded Prevalence All Ages**



Notes: Proportion of population: 36.1%  
Recorded incidents in 12-month period during year 2000/01

Figure 2.3 shows the prevalence of recorded incidents by seven forces involving physical or sexual assault for all ages. These ranged from 1.45 to 5.41 per thousand of respective population for both sexes, from 0.59 to 1.85 per thousand for male victims and from 2.49 to 8.77 per thousand for female victims.

**Fig 2.3 Incidents Involving Physical or Sexual Assault Prevalence All Ages**



Notes: Proportion of population: 35.2%  
Recorded incidents in 12-month period during 2000/01

#### *Physical or sexual assault*

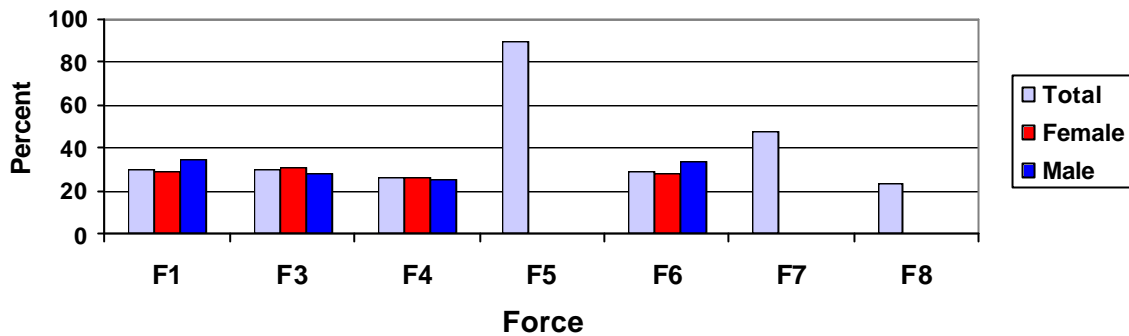
The proportions of total incidents involving physical or sexual assault are shown, for the eight forces, on Figure 2.4. Proportions ranged from 23.3% to 47.1% for seven of the eight forces, with only one force (F5) recording a higher figure (of 89.1%). For the six forces providing a breakdown by sex, proportions were similar for both sexes, ranging from 24.8% to 34.2% for male victims and from 26.1% to 29.1% for female victims.

These generally low proportions suggests that a substantial number of incidents recorded, possibly over one half of total incidents in some forces, are non-physical for both male and female victims. Statistics of total incidents recorded by police forces, when not clearly qualified, thus do not necessarily reflect the actual level of serious domestic abuse.

**Fig 2.4 Incidents Involving Physical or Sexual Assault**

**Proportion of Total Incidents**

All Ages



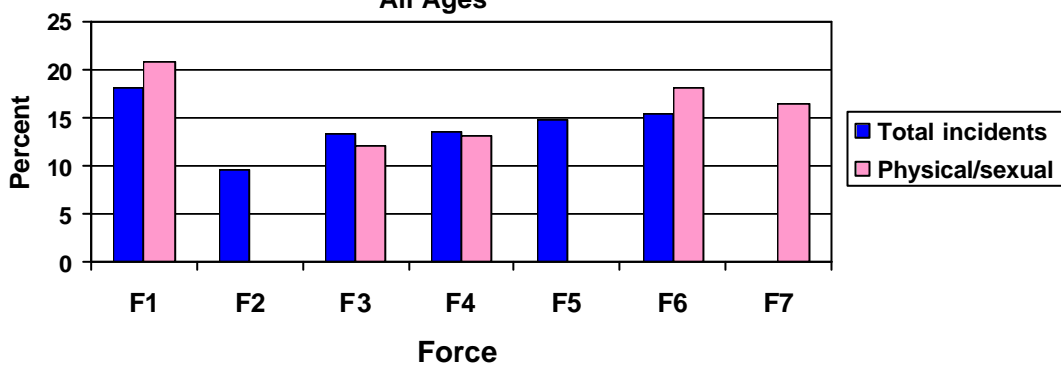
Notes: Proportion of population: 35.2%  
Recorded incidents in 12-month period during year 2000/01

*Proportions of male victims*

Proportions of male victims are shown on Figure 2.5 both for total incidents recorded, given by six forces, and for incidents involving physical or sexual abuse, provided by five forces. Generally, there was little significant difference between the proportions for total and for physical or sexual abuse incidents recorded by each of these forces. For total incidents recorded, the proportions ranged from 9.6% of the total to 18.2%, slightly higher than found by Yarwood. For incidents recorded involving physical or sexual abuse, the proportions of male victims ranged from 12.1% to 20.8% of incidents, generally similar to that found previously by Yarwood.

**Fig 2.5 Proportions of Male Victims**

All Ages



Notes: Total incidents – proportion of population: 18.8%  
Physical or sexual abuse – proportion of population: 30.3%  
Recorded incidents in 12-month period during year 2000/01

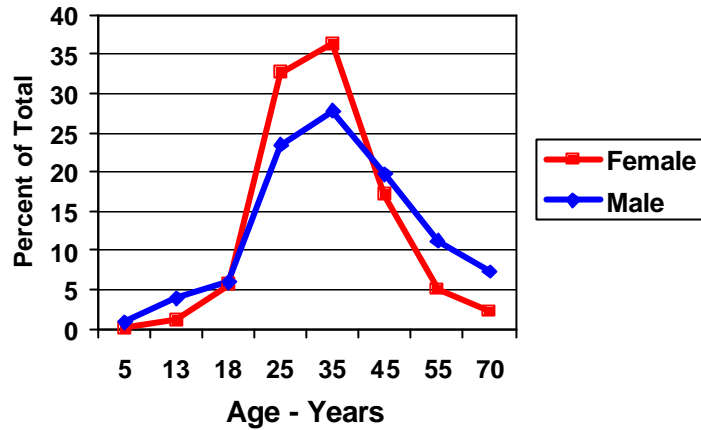
*Distribution by age*

A typical pattern of distribution by age or age group for total incidents is shown on Figure 2.6 for force F4. A similar distribution applied to the other three forces providing this breakdown. The pattern indicates a consistently higher distribution of female



victims than male victims in the age range from 16 to 40 and a higher distribution of male victims in the lower and older age groups. About two thirds of female victims were in the 16 to 40 age range compared to about one half of male victims.

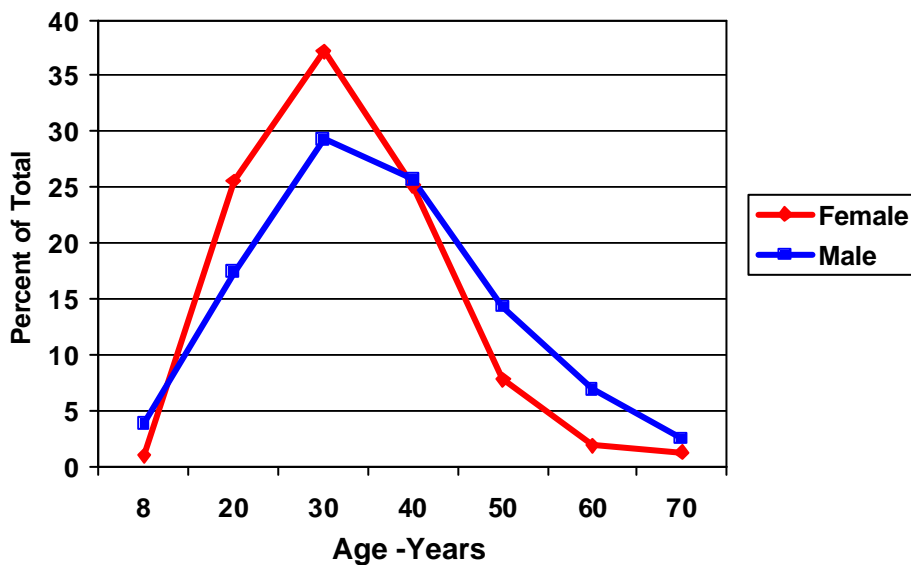
**Fig 2.6 Total Incidents Recorded  
Force F4 - Distribution by Age of Victims**



Note: Recorded incidents during year 1/4/00 to 31/3/01

A similar pattern of distribution by age applied also to incidents recorded involving physical or sexual assault. A typical distribution is shown on Figure 2.7 for force F5. Again, the bulk of female victims were in the 16 to 40 age range, and higher proportions of male victims than female victims were in the lower and older age groups.

**Fig 2.7 Incidents Involving Physical or  
Sexual Assault  
Force F5 - Distribution by Age of Victims**



Note: Recorded incidents during year 1/1/01 to 31/12/01

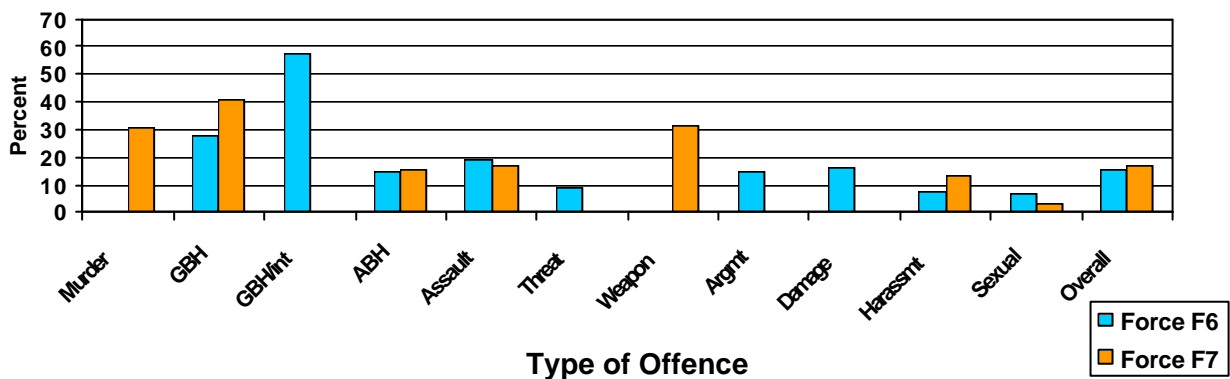
Such distribution is compatible with notions of gender stereotyping, with women in their reproductive years being seen as more vulnerable than men of similar age, whereas in younger and older age groups both sexes are perceived as being equally vulnerable.

*Proportions of male victims by type of offence*

Proportions of male victims by type or seriousness of offence for total incidents recorded are shown on Figure 2.8 for two forces. Such distribution is possibly typical and indicates significantly higher proportions than average of male victims for the more serious physical offences, such as domestic homicide and grievous bodily harm (GBH). This possibly reflects a more realistic recording by police forces of serious physical domestic assault against male victims than of less serious assaults against them.

In the case of force F6, with an average proportion of male victims of violence against the person (VAP) of about 17%, the proportion of 27.7% suffering domestic GBH was considerably higher than this average, and the proportion of 57.7% suffering domestic GBH with intent was substantially higher, ie. a higher proportion than for female victims. For force F7, with an average proportion of male victims of VAP also of about 17%, the proportions of male victims of domestic homicide and of GBH were 31% and 41% respectively, both considerably higher than the average.

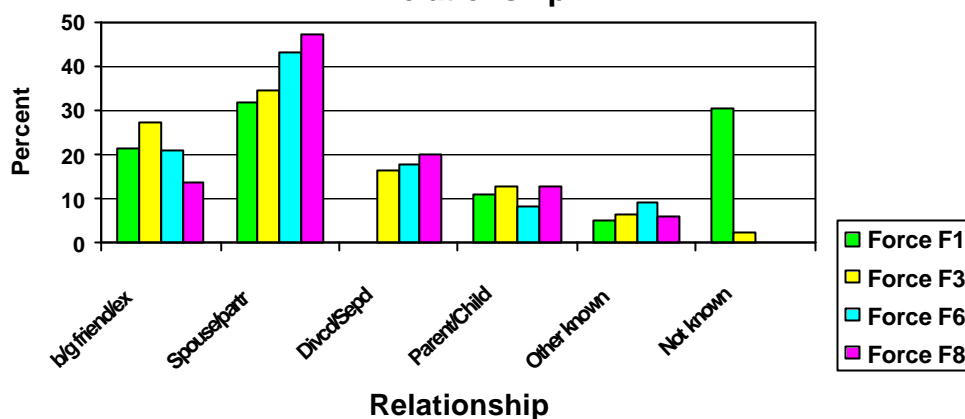
**Fig 2.8 Total Incidents Recorded  
Proportions of Male Victims**



*Distribution by relationship*

The pattern of distribution of victims by relationship for total incidents recorded, for the four forces which provided this information is shown on Figure 2.9. The distribution indicates that about 60% of incidents involved spouses or partners and boy/girlfriends or ex boy/girlfriends, and a further 20% or so divorced or separated partners. A similar distribution applied to incidents involving physical or sexual abuse.

**Fig 2.9 Total Incidents Recorded  
Relationship**



### *Ethnicity*

Only one force provided data on ethnicity and this was inconclusive.

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- (9) George, M.J. (2003). Invisible touch. *Aggression and Violent Behavior* 8 (2003), 23-60
- (10) Domestic Violence Statistics 1995/96, England and Wales: Summary of information provided by Police Forces in response to private enquiry. David JD Yarwood, Dewar Research, June 1997

## **POLICIES AND ATTITUDES TOWARDS MALE VICTIMS**

Policies and attitudes towards male victims of domestic violence were sought also from the several police forces approached and from a range of agencies and organisations which had or appeared to have an interest in the issue, including some which had representatives on the Greater London Authority (GLA) advisory group on domestic violence.

The general impression gained from the responses was that there was, or had been, a historic lack of concern and of support services specifically for male victims, both amongst police forces and other agencies and organisations. Despite the significant number of male victims across the country, and official statistics to prove this, almost all publicity and information material is still aimed at female victims. Although lip-service is paid to equal opportunities policies, the reality appears to be that male victims are still dealt with in a subordinate way. Indeed, there is evidence that a significant number of male victims are themselves arrested after seeking help instead of the female assailant.

Public authority and domestic violence forum strategies and policies are still concerned almost exclusively with female victims, eg. the November 2001 GLA Strategy document on domestic violence, which effectively marginalised both the actual numbers of male victims and their needs. This distortion of the issue reflected the theme of several high profile conferences in 2001 and early 2002 which focused almost exclusively on domestic violence by men against women and the impact on children whilst ignoring similar female violence against males.

Police forces claim to be able to offer equal in-house support to male victims, but generally, unlike female victims who can be directed to women's refuges or local authority priority emergency accommodation, they have no external services they can refer male victims to other than Victim Support. Other statutory agencies appear to have little interest in the particular plight of victim fathers.

There are no publicly funded refuges available anywhere in England and Wales specifically for male victims and their children. Even The Salvation Army has no temporary accommodation available specifically for male victims and their children, although the need for this is being reviewed by the Army. In Ireland, we are aware of only one support service specifically for male victims, AMEN, located in Navan, Co. Meath.

### **Police forces**

In addition to seeking statistics for the study, police forces were also questioned on their force policies and attitudes towards male victims of domestic violence. Six of the eight forces provided information in response to this enquiry, most of it albeit of a brief or limited nature. The responses to the particular questions asked are summarised in Appendix 1.

#### *General or specific policy on male victims*

The six forces responding claimed that policies and guidelines applied to all victims regardless of gender, and they had no general or specific policy on male victims. However, one force (F1) did have specific guidance for officers dealing with minority ethnic and religious groups, gay and lesbian relationships, etc. Another force (F6)

emphasised making full use of their relevant powers of “intrigue and arrest”, [so as to] avoid the “dangers” of seeking conciliation between the parties when an assault had taken place. One might question whether it is the duty of the police to prevent conciliation in minor or single ‘one-off’ domestic disputes.

#### *Children and male victims*

Generally, force policies focus on the safety of the victim, irrespective of gender, and of any children. Guidelines require that the protection and safety of children should be of paramount concern. None of the four forces responding to this question admitted to a bias against adult male victims in this respect.

#### *Procedure when shared culpability*

Only three forces responded to this question. For them, force policy is that both parties are dealt with if there is obviously shared culpability, although the presence and age of any children involved may detract from an equal outcome for both parents. The possibility that shared culpability might be the norm in the majority of violent households, as some American researchers have concluded, appears to be absent from force policy considerations.

#### *Particular difficulties in dealing with male victims*

All three forces responding on this reported various difficulties in dealing with male victims. One force (F1) admitted that male victims tended to be more reluctant to report domestic abuse against them: also, that there are fewer external support services that can be offered them.(eg. the equivalent of women’s aid for female victims). Two other forces confirmed the lack of support agencies for referral of male victims, and one force (F3) stated that there was virtually no support or publicly funded accommodation available for male victims. A fourth force (F5) accepted that their current force policy did not reflect some of the difficulties encountered in dealing with male victims, and the policy was being reviewed in this respect.

#### *In-house services*

Three forces confirmed that the same in-house support services were available equally to male and female victims. However, one force (F3) admitted that the “majority of [their DV unit] staff are female”, although “two male DV co-ordinators were available for male victims”. In-house support services for male victims comprised mainly advice from DV co-ordinators and referral to Victim Support (F1) .

#### *Specific support services for male victims*

Only one force (F1) responded on this. Their support services for male victims included options on how to reduce the risk of repeat assault, according to the level of risk and circumstances, eg. panic alarm and support for re-housing, services presumably also available to female victims.

#### **Other agencies and organisations**

Enquiries were sent to 12 other selected agencies and organisations to find out whether they had any formal policy or stance in respect of domestic violence victims, in particular of male victims and the provision of services for them. Most had been represented on the GLA Advisory Group. Only one of the 12 did not respond. Two other organisations replied but had no comments to offer.

Generally, there was little positive response from any of the respondents on the question of male victims. Most appeared unaware of the results of Study 191 and other reputable gender-neutral research showing a substantial proportion of male victims in couple relationships. Although there were some indication of a growing awareness on the part of some of the respondents to the prevalence and needs of male victims, as well as female victims, no response suggested any prompt or vigorous change in attitudes to address these.

This inertia no doubt stems from the persistent marginalisation of male victims in government and other policies and publications on domestic violence during the past two decades, and the consequent absence of or unsympathetic publicity for them.

#### *Crown Prosecution Service*

The Policy Directorate of the Crown Prosecution Service confirmed that their policy was to respond appropriately to the needs of all victims of domestic violence regardless of their gender or that of the abuser. They were aware of the lack of support services for male victims, and gave assurance that the Directorate would continue to monitor research findings to ensure that their policy was “relevant and appropriate”. In response to a query about the low prosecution rate reported of female assailants, the Directorate affirmed that their Code for Crown Prosecutors on domestic violence would not permit decisions on prosecution of assailants to be made on “the basis simply of gender”.

#### *London Probation Area Service*

The London Probation Area Service confirmed that at present, the Area had no specific programmes for male victims. They were also unaware of any treatment programmes existing for female assailants.

#### *Audit Commission*

As part of its duties, the Audit Commission encourages local authorities to review services which cut across conventional services boundaries, domestic violence services being one such category. At present, the Commission appears to have no informed contribution to make on this issue but stated that they intended to make an appropriate contribution when they had inspected more such services and had developed their “evidence base”.

#### *Magistrates Association*

The Magistrates Association had no separate policy for male victims. The Association accepted that the GLA Action Plan on domestic violence appeared not to specifically recognise male victims and that “perhaps that should be addressed”.

#### *(London) Housing Corporation*

The [London] Housing Corporation also had no formal strategy on domestic violence but expected housing associations to have wide enough policies to include any victim of domestic violence, irrespective of gender. So far as the Corporation was aware, no London local authority had “identified and prioritised a need” to provide a refuge for male victims of domestic violence. The Corporation appeared not to appreciate that this non-identification might be largely due to a lack of research into such needs.

### *Victim Support*

Victim Support claimed to make no distinction between male or female victims of domestic violence, young or old. They admitted, however, that their training programmes were currently aimed at volunteers and staff working with female victims, “because this is where most of the information on this subject can be found”. However, a resolution passed unanimously at the Victim Support 2001 AGM proposed that they should bring forward their work on male victims as soon as possible, although this will depend entirely on resources being available for this in the following financial year (2002/03).

### *National Relate*

National Relate recognised that counselling was only one tool in responding to domestic violence, and they saw it as good practice to work alongside other organisations on this. Their Senior Practice Consultant responsible for developing Relate practice on domestic violence affirmed that a Relate counsellor would always take the concerns of a male victim seriously.

### *The Salvation Army*

At present, The Salvation Army has no dedicated services for male victims of domestic violence and their children, whereas they have six centres specifically for ‘families’ with female heads. In each of these, there is some element of ‘refuge’ for abused women and their children, although only one centre is designated as a “family refuge shelter”. In 2001, the Army maintained 51 centres for 3,095 homeless men and four centres for 166 homeless women. It is understood that the Army plans to introduce a new assessment and admission programme that will more easily identify the underlying, as distinct from the presenting, needs of applicants, and so enable the Army to review the needs of all clients.

### *NSPCC*

The NSPCC still took the view that the majority of cases of domestic violence and abuse are committed by men, although they acknowledged that the prevalence of male victims is under-reported. Their focus had thus been primarily on women victims and their children. However, the NSPCC admitted to being particularly concerned that it had not been engaging men, particularly in the early stages of parenting, and affirmed that this is a major priority for them at this time, which should result in more awareness of the actual extent of male victimisation.

**Appendix 1**

**POLICIES AND ATTITUDES  
Responses by Police Forces to Questionnaire**

|      | Question  | Force F1   | Force F2   | Force F3  |
|------|---|--|--|---|
| 5(a) | <i>Does the Force have any general or specific policy on male victims?</i>  | General DV policy is inclusive for all types of victims. Specific guidance is included for differing groups, eg. minority ethnic and religious groups, gay and lesbian relationships, etc                                  | See new DV policy.   | In relation to policies and attitudes, our Force Policy and Operating Guidelines reflect the issue that victims of DV can be female, male or exist in same sex relationships and is not gender specific.  |
| 5(b) | <i>If the parties involved have dependent children, does this affect on-the-spot decisions by Officers in the case of male victims?</i>                   | Policy provides guidance that safety of all parties including children is paramount.   | No information available to report on this question.   | Officers are encouraged to make decisions on the circumstances of individual incidents, whilst taking into account many issues. However, the safety of the victim and any children is always of paramount importance, whether the victim is male or female.   |
| 6    | <i>What policy does the Force have when Officers find there has been, or is, mutual violence or conflict between the parties, ie. shared culpability?</i> | Policy states that all crimes disclosed should be recorded and investigated thoroughly. If evidence points to culpability on both sides, the case will be dealt with accordingly (ie. both crimes effectively dealt with). | Where there is shared culpability, officers indicate these details on the DV report (FSU9).  | On some occasions, officers take action by arresting both parties in order to prevent a renewal of Breach of the Peace, and/or investigate offences where there are counter allegations made. The Force Policy reflects positive and firm action in all cases reported. However, this is then backed up with a 'Repeat Victimization Policy'. |
| 7    | <i>Has the Force found that there are particular difficulties in dealing with male victims? If so, could these please be indicated?</i>                   | Male victims tend to be more reluctant to report. In addition, there are fewer external support services they can be offered (eg. equivalent of women's aid for female victims). However, some agencies are available.     | Yes - There is a lack of support agencies to be able to refer men to. The DV Officer however will offer the same level of advice to a victim regardless of their gender or sexual orientation. | There is little or no support/accommodation available for male victims.   |
| 8(a) | <i>Do the support services which the Force can offer in-house to female victims also apply equally to male victims?</i>                                   | All victims are dealt with equally and are offered [the] same in-house support based on risk, need, etc  | Yes.   | Throughout the [Force] area there are 12 specialist DV units who offer information and advice equally to male victims. The majority of staff are female. However, there are two male DV co-ordinators available.  |
| 8(b) | <i>If so, could these services please be indicated?</i>   | Advice from DV co-ordinators (police officers). Referral to Victim Support.  |  |   |
| 8(c) | <i>If not, could the in-house support services the Force has available for male victims please be indicated?</i>  | Options to reduce risk of repeat, according to level of risk/circumstances, etc. eg. panic alarm, support for re-housing.  |  |   |



## Appendix 1 (cont'd)

**POLICIES AND ATTITUDES**  
**Responses by Police Forces to Questionnaire**

|      | Question  | Force F4  | Force F5   | Force F6   |
|------|---|---|--|--|
| 5(a) | <i>Does the Force have any general or specific policy on male victims?</i>  | [The Force does] not have any general or specific policy on male or female victims. Our DV policy relates to all victims regardless of gender.          | See Force current DV Policy.<br><br>However, the current policy does not reflect some of the difficulties encountered in dealing with male victims of DV. The DV Policy is currently under review. In addition, the Force uses the services of Victim Support. | The Force policy in respect of DV is that we have an overriding duty to protect victims (irrespective of gender) and children from violence. We treat it as seriously as any other form of violent crime by making full use of the relevant powers of intrigue and arrest, avoiding the dangers of seeking conciliation between the assailant and victim when an assault has taken place. The Force wishes to make no other statement in relation to its policy. |
| 5(b) | <i>If the parties involved have dependent children, does this affect on-the-spot decisions by Officers in the case of male victims?</i>                   | [The Force treats] the protection, safety and welfare of children as paramount, again regardless of whether we are dealing with male or female parents. |  |  |
| 6    | <i>What policy does the Force have when Officers find there has been, or is, mutual violence or conflict between the parties, ie. shared culpability?</i> | See DV leaflets   |  |  |
| 7    | <i>Has the Force found that there are particular difficulties in dealing with male victims? If so, could these please be indicated?</i>                   | See DV leaflets.  |  |  |
| 8(a) | <i>Do the support services which the Force can offer in-house to female victims also apply equally to male victims?</i>                                   | See DV leaflets.  |  |  |
| 8(b) | <i>If so, could these services please be indicated?</i>   | See DV leaflets.  |  |  |
| 8(c) | <i>If not, could the in-house support services the Force has available for male victims please be indicated?</i>  | See DV leaflets.  |  |  |