

DISPATCHES : 'BATTERED MEN' SURVEY (1998)

DETAILED SURVEY RESULTS

The programme *Dispatches* is periodically screened by Channel 4 TV in the UK as a documentary series which tackles social and political subjects. It is one of the major ground-breaking documentary TV series in the UK and enjoys a good reputation for covering difficult social problems sensitively, yet incisively.

In late 1998, *Dispatches* undertook a survey of male victims of domestic violence. A summary of the results of the survey highlighting the experiences of 100 male victims was broadcast on Channel 4 on the 7 January 1999 under the title "Domestic Violence on Men". The programme was produced by First Frame Publications (London, UK) for Channel 4 and the producer was Lynn Ferguson. (Ms Ferguson had previously produced a programme in this series which tackled the issue of male rape).

The study was based on a survey instrument supplied by Dr Malcolm George, who co-operated in the initial production phase of the programme. The survey results were analysed by Dr Kevin Browne, an advisor to the Home Office on Domestic Violence. A summary of his analysis is given in a separate document. These detailed survey results should be read in conjunction with Dr Browne's analysis.

A full script of the broadcast programme content, a summary of the programme and results, and details of the responses received by the helpline run by BSS Wales after the broadcast, are also available from Dewar Research.

Background information

In April 1998, *Dispatches* broadcast two programmes on battered women, entitled "Men Behaving Badly". As part of the research for these, a specially commissioned survey was carried out which focused on the response of the police and courts to reports of domestic violence against women. It turned out to be the largest survey of its kind in Britain - almost 400 women filled in detailed questionnaires.

Following transmission, *Dispatches* received a large number of calls from men, requesting that a programme be made about male victims of violence in the home. They claimed that abuse by women could be just as serious and criticised the media for ignoring this under-reported problem.

Since very little research had been done on this subject, *Dispatches* decided to conduct yet another survey, this time focussing wholly on male victims.

Methodology

A very detailed questionnaire was devised - 23 pages in total - with the assistance of Les Davidson, the programme consultant. (Les Davidson at that time ran M.A.L.E - the only helpline for male victims of domestic abuse and violence in the UK) [since closed down due to lack of Government funding].

A dedicated phone line was then set up to take calls from men in confidence. Male victims were given the option of answering the questions on the phone, or being sent a questionnaire to fill in personally.

The questionnaires were distributed in a variety of ways. *Dispatches* contacted men's groups and people working in the field of domestic violence, asking them to put male victims in touch with the *Dispatches* team. The team placed advertisements in local newspapers in 13 cities in the UK. They also sent posters to GP practices, hospital accident and emergency units, police domestic violence units, and researchers also put them up in pub toilets around the country.

Criteria for Inclusion

The definition of 'domestic violence' was the same as for the "Men Behaving Badly" *Dispatches* programme - serious and repeated physical violence and or mental cruelty, over a sustained period of time.

Some 140 completed questionnaires were returned or filled in over the phone. In the event, almost a third were excluded for two main reasons:

- (i) because the physical assaults were very minor and or infrequent (e.g. the occasional slap) and therefore not what most ordinary people would term domestic violence;
- (ii) because closer analysis suggested that the women may have been violent solely or mainly in self defence - i.e. the degree of reciprocal violence was equal or greater than that to the man.

While *Dispatches* accepted that many personal relationships involve mutual violence of a serious nature, a decision was taken at the outset only to include cases where any ordinary viewer would agree that the man was a 'genuine' victim.

Evidentiary Issues

While questionnaires could be filled in anonymously - men were told that there was no need to give their names - all contributors were asked if they were willing to be contacted for 'further information'. In the event, nine out of ten men did give their names, along with a 'safe' telephone number at which researchers could contact them in secrecy.

The production team spoke to over half the men who gave their names. Follow-up telephone interviews or meetings lasted a minimum of two hours. This was done in order to check the validity and credibility of as large as possible a sample of replies. In addition, and wherever possible, men were requested to provide documentary or taped evidence to help support their claims.

Reliability of the Survey Results

The *Dispatches* team were aware that they could not prove unequivocally that all 100 men included in the survey were telling the truth. The greatest problem researchers face in substantiating the accounts of 'battered men' is that only a small minority currently report to the police. However, both the consultant and the production team were satisfied that the overall results of the survey are reasonably reliable. Firstly, it is the largest qualitative survey of male victims of domestic violence ever carried out in this country. Secondly, as explained above, greater efforts than normal were made to substantiate the men's accounts.

It may be worth pointing out that in all similar self-reporting surveys of women, responses have been taken at face value.

N.B. While some men did question why these checks were being made, the production team were at pains to point out that it was the 'credibility gap' in society at large, that made them necessary.

SUMMARY OF RESULTS

Injuries

66% of the men said that their partner had used a weapon, and 22% said they had been stabbed. The severity of the assault was the same as for women victims. Male victims had been kicked, punched, scratched, clawed, bitten, stabbed, bruised, hair pulled out, and burnt with cigarette ends. One man had suffered broken ribs, others black eyes, broken fingers, damaged kidneys, and one a perforated eardrum.

33% of men had been kicked in the groin. 33% had been attacked whilst asleep or in bed (with pillow over face, knives, hammers, hairpins, etc). This appears to be a characteristic of husband battering which happens much less often with battered wives.

Non-physical abuse included sleep deprivation (slapping, nudging, etc to keep awake), taunts about sexual prowess, hidden car keys, and damaged clothes.

Duration

48% of the men had put up with persistent violence for 2 years before they told someone, due to the shame/embarrassment/humiliation of admitting violence against them by a woman, particularly to male workmates or friends.

73% of the men claimed that they did not retaliate when assaulted but simply restrained or pushed their partner away. Non-retaliation often made the violence worse.

Partners tried to control them, sometimes to an excessive degree; accused them of affairs to justify their aggression. Victims said that they were trapped in a downward spiral.

49% of the men stayed with a violent partner for more than 5 years, reasons given including that they still loved her, marriage vows are for 'better or for worse', and not wanting to desert the children. Some avoided going home after work as much as possible.

Similar to female victims, male victims suffered from low self-esteem, social isolation, depression, suicidal urges.

Police

49% of the men never sought help from the police, since they felt that the police would be unsympathetic or indeed disbelieve them. Women tend to be believed, and men are not perceived as victims. Men are unwilling to call for help when attacked by women. Indeed, violent women are more likely to call the police after they have attacked their partner, since they know that the police are more likely to believe any 'story' she tells.

Police will arrest a man on the basis of a woman's allegations, but not vice-versa. Women can put on an 'innocent act' even when they are the aggressors. Even when a woman admits she has attacked the man, the police still tend to arrest the man. The police offer no protection to male victims ("there's nowt we can do") and usually take no action against a violent woman, particularly if the incident occurs in her property.

25% of the men were themselves arrested when the police were called.

Police policy is to remove one person from a violent household to prevent a further 'breach of the peace'. In almost all cases, this is the man, even when he is the obvious victim. 89% of the men felt that the police did not take their complaints seriously. In consequence, male victims were untrusting of the police. They feel no-one will help.

Female aggressors

In only 7% of cases was the female aggressor arrested; of these only one was charged, and this charge was later dropped.

Interviews with some of the violent women confirmed the general picture given by the male victim; persistent abuse, attacks with weapons, clawing or scratching, biting, stabbing, kneeling in the genitals, all with no provocation. All confirmed that their partners never hit back.

There has been little research into female domestic aggression.

31% of the men said that their partner had a drink or drugs problem, 18% a diagnosed mental condition, and the rest claimed that their partner was in control of her actions.

29% of the men said that their partner had a history of family violence.

Children

Most children involved knew what was going on. 54% of the mothers had also been physically violent to their children.

Treatment for violent women

There are few treatment services available outside prison for violent women, although sometimes a GP will refer for counselling.

MAIN FINDINGS OF THE SURVEY

N.B. Numbers may add up to less than 100 if some men did not answer that question. Numbers will add up to more than 100, if it was a multiple choice question.

Demographic spread

84% of the male respondents lived in England; 4% in Scotland, 3% in Wales and 9% in Northern Ireland.

Ethnicity

91% were White (British or white European), 6% Asian and 1% Black (African or Caribbean). 90% of couples were from the same ethnic group; and 10 per cent were mixed race relationships.

PRESENT MARITAL STATUS OF RESPONDENTS

	No.	%
Single	11	11%
Married or cohabiting	21	21%
Divorced or separated	67	68%
Widowed	0	0
TOTAL	99	100%

AGE OF RESPONDENTS

	No.	%
18-21	0	0%
22-25	0	0%
26-35	19	19%
36-50	61	61%
51-65	18	18%
Over 65	2	2%
TOTAL	100	100%

EDUCATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS - M/F

	Men		Women	
	No.	%	No.	%
None	5	5%	8	10%
O'level(s) or GCSE	12	12%	29	37%
A' level(s)	5	5%	6	8%
College, HNC, HND, or trade qualification	28	29%	20	26%
University degree	10	10%	4	5%
Professional qualification	38	39%	11	14%
TOTAL CASES	98	100%	78	100%

JOB OR OCCUPATION AT TIME OF ABUSE - M/F

	Men		Women	
	No.	%	No.	%
Top professional job (<i>Lawyers, businessmen, etc.</i>)	24	24%	11	11%
Other professional job (<i>Doctors, teachers, etc.</i>)	41	41%	29	29%
Office or white-collar job	2	2%	15	15%
Skilled manual job	16	16%	2	2%
Non-skilled manual job	1	1%	8	8%
Unemployed	11	11%	7	7%
Sick or retired	4	4%	1	1%
Housewife or full time carer	1	1%	26	26%
TOTAL CASES	100	100	99	100

COMPARATIVE STRENGTH

	No.	%
Man stronger	68	70%
About the same strength	18	19%
Man less strong	11	12%
TOTAL COUPLES	97	100%

COMPARATIVE HEIGHTS

	No.	%
Man very much taller (over 7 inches)	33	34%
Man much taller (5-6 inches)	26	27%
Man taller (3-4 inches)	15	15%
About the same (1-2 inch difference)	22	23%
Man shorter (3-4 inch difference)	1	1%
Man much shorter (5+ inch difference)	0	0%
TOTAL COUPLES	97	100%

TYPES OF PHYSICAL VIOLENCE & THREATS

	No.	%
She smashed things in the house	79	79%
She threw a heavy object at him	69	69%
She pushed or slapped him	86	86%
She scratched his face	63	63%
She bit him – anywhere	33	33%
She punched him in the body	70	70%
She punched him in the face or head	63	63%
She kicked him in the body	54	54%
She kicked him in the face or head	17	17%
She threatened to kick him in the genitals	20	20%
She hit or kicked him in the genitals	33	33%
She threatened him with a weapon	61	61%
She threatened to kill him	43	43%
She hit him with a heavy object	39	39%
She burned or scalded him	16	16%
She strangled or choked him	16	16%
She tried to suffocate him	6	6%
She stabbed him with a knife/ sharp object	22	22%

WEAPONS USED

	No.	%
Knife or other sharp object	34	51%
Hammer, mallet or heavy tool	8	12%
Rolling pin or other piece of wood	12	18%
Kitchen pots or pans - e.g. frying pan	16	24%
Heavy household object	25	37%
Other weapon	24	36%

TYPES OF PHYSICAL INJURIES SUFFERED

	No.	%
Minor scratches or bruises	93	97
Nose or lip bleeds	39	41
Severe bruising to the body	37	39
Black eye or bruising to the face	33	34
Broken teeth	2	2
Difficulty in breathing or fainting	10	10
Knocked unconscious	4	4
Serious head injuries	10	10
Serious cuts or wounds to the body	20	21
Broken arms or legs	3	3
Broken ribs	4	4
Broken nose, jaw, or cheekbone	3	3
Burns – anywhere	11	11
Lasting physical scars	14	15

TYPES OF MENTAL ABUSE SUFFERED

	No.	%
Criticised or insulted him	86	88%
Said no one else would want him	51	52%
Accused him of being a 'wimp'	52	53%
Said he could do nothing right	51	52%
Rarely let him see his friends	49	50%
Rarely let him see his family	47	48%
Rarely let him go out on his own	45	46%
Constantly checking up on him	47	48%
Extremely jealous without reason	58	59%
Damaged personal belongings	65	66%
Seriously overspent family budget	50	51%
Ridiculed his sexual 'performance'	40	41%
Prevented him from sleeping	53	54%
Blamed him for her abuse	68	69%
Taunted him to be violent to her	76	78%
Locked him in a room or in the house	24	24%
Locked him out of the house	54	55%
Humiliated him in front of others	67	68%
Lied about him to friends or family	81	83%
Told others she was the victim	81	83%
Lied that he abused the children	32	33%
Stopped him seeing the children	65	66%

EFFECTS OF THE ABUSE

	No.	%
Living in constant anxiety	79	79%
Living in constant fear	37	37%
Lost confidence or self esteem	71	71%
Always 'walking on eggshells'	60	60%
Loss of sleep or insomnia	65	65%
Loss of weight or appetite	41	41%
Impotence or sexual problems	24	24%
Fear or mistrust of women generally	61	61%
Difficulty in forming new relationships with women	55	55%
Severe depression	58	58%
Suicidal thoughts	44	44%
Suicide attempt(s)	12	12%
Lost or forced to give up job	33	33%
Forced to give up home	41	41%
Lost or forced to lose contact with friends	57	57%
Lost or forced to lose contact with family	29	29%
Lost or forced to lose contact with children	49	49%

WHERE PHYSICAL VIOLENCE TOOK PLACE

	No.	%
At home, behind closed doors	92	95%
A public place	17	17%
In bed while asleep	30	31%
Only when no witnesses	47	48%
In front of family	9	9%
In front of friends	28	29%

HOW LONG SUFFERED THE ABUSE

	No.	%
Less than 1 year	5	5%
1 - 2 years	21	21%
3 - 5 years	25	25%
6 - 10 years	27	27%
11 - 15 years	16	16%
Over 15 years	6	6%
TOTAL	100	100%

HOW LONG SUFFERED BEFORE CONFIDING IN ANYONE

	No.	%
0 - 11 months	35	37%
1 - 1.11 years	10	11%
2 - 2.11 years	12	13%
3 - 3.11 years	5	5%
4 - 4.11 years	6	6%
Over 5 years	27	28%
All cases	95	100%

WHAT PREVENTED HIM FROM LEAVING SOONER

	No.	%
He still loved her	35	35%
He didn't love her, but still felt a responsibility towards her	24	24%
She said she was sorry and promised to stop the abuse	24	24%
He had nowhere else to go	20	20%
Financial reasons - he couldn't afford to leave	28	28%
He was afraid for the children's safety/welfare	44	44%
He believed he would lose custody of the children	50	50%
He feared she'd deny him contact with the children	50	50%
She told him that she'd deny him contact with the children	41	41%
Concern for her - he was afraid she'd harm herself	19	19%
She threatened to commit suicide if he left.	11	11%
She threatened to kill him if he left	7	7%
Other	20	20%

MAIN REASON THAT PREVENTED HIM FROM LEAVING SOONER

	No.	%
He still loved her	23	25%
He didn't love her, but still felt a responsibility towards her	6	6%
She said she was sorry and promised to stop the abuse	3	3%
He had nowhere else to go	2	2%
Financial reasons - he couldn't afford to leave	2	2%
He was afraid for the children's safety/welfare	17	18%
He believed he would lose custody of the children	10	11%
He feared she'd deny him contact with the children	10	11%
She told him that she'd deny him contact with the children	6	6%
Concern for her - he was afraid she'd harm herself	0	0
She threatened to commit suicide if he left.	2	2%
She threatened to kill him if he left	0	0
Felt a duty towards marriage vows	5	5%
Other main reasons given: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "If I left I would be a failure". • "Why should I leave - I've done nothing wrong" • "I used to think that perhaps I made her do it" • "I love my son!" • "There were psychological ties" "I loved my children too much" • "I didn't think I would find anyone else - she was my first girlfriend" • "Religion" 	8	9%
TOTAL	94	100%

SITUATIONS WHERE FORCE OR VIOLENCE USED AGAINST PARTNER

(Multiple choice. Total valid questionnaires = 74)

	No.	%
In self defence – when he was afraid she'd hurt him	54	73%
In retaliation – because she was violent to him	19	26%
During arguments - when she pushed him too far	14	19%
When drunk and he could not control himself	0	0
Other	25	34%

MAIN SITUATION WHERE FORCE OR VIOLENCE USED

(Men requested to choose one only. Total valid questionnaires = 64)

	No.	%
In self defence – when he was afraid she'd hurt him	42	66%
In retaliation – because she was violent to him	11	17%
During arguments - when she pushed him too far	5	8%
When drunk and he could not control himself	0	0
Other	6	9%
Total cases	64	100%

HIS RESPONSE TO HER VIOLENCE

(Multiple choice - i.e. all responses to her violence.)

	No.	%
He'd try to reason with her	72	72%
He'd walk away or leave the room	77	77%
He'd leave the house and come back later	65	65%
He'd threaten physical violence if she continued	12	12%
He'd restrain her, or push her away	73	73%
He'd use the minimum force to stop her violence	55	55%
He'd hit her back as hard as she hit him	5	5%
He'd hit her back harder than she hit him	2	2%
Other response	32	32%

REASONS FOR NOT (ALWAYS) REPORTING TO THE POLICE

(N.B. Multiple choice. This question was also answered by men who did, eventually, call the police.)

	No.	%
He loved her too much to report her	40	44%
He didn't think the assaults were serious enough.	45	50%
He was too embarrassed or ashamed.	56	62%
He didn't want anyone else to find out.	43	48%
He was afraid of being ridiculed.	34	38%
He feared more violence by his partner if he told the police	23	26%
His partner threatened more violence if he told the police.	7	8%
His partner threatened to kill him if he told the police.	5	6%
His partner said she'd tell the police that he was violent to her.	44	49%
Because he's a man, afraid the police wouldn't believe him.	57	63%
Because he's a man, he was afraid the police would blame him.	49	54%
The police don't take domestic violence by <u>women</u> seriously.	70	78%
Other - afraid he would lose the children.	5	6%

WHETHER MAN EVER CALLED POLICE

	No.	%
Yes	47	51%
No	48	49%
ALL CASES	95	100%

WHETHER POLICE EVER GOT INVOLVED

	No.	%
Yes	72	76%
No	23	24%
ALL CASES	95	100%

NUMBER OF TIMES POLICE INVOLVED, & WHO CALLED

	No.	%
By Man	86	30
By Partner	145	51
By a Child	7	2
By Neighbour	35	12
By someone Else	10	4
Total Number of Times Called	283	100%

WHETHER MAN OR PARTNER CALLED THE POLICE MORE OFTEN

	NO	%
Man	24	36
Partner	34	52
Both same number of times	8	12
TOTAL CASES	66	100%

WHETHER PARTNER EVER ARRESTED

	No.	%
Yes, always	2	3%
Yes, sometimes	3	4%
No, never	66	93%
ALL CASES	95	100%

WHY MAN THINKS PARTNER WASN'T ARRESTED

(N.B. Only those cases where there was police involvement. Multiple choice)

	No.	%
He told police there was no assault, when she had	2	4%
Insufficient evidence - there were no physical injuries	12	23%
Insufficient evidence - they said it was my word against hers	26	49%
They didn't believe him	14	26%
They didn't treat it seriously.	26	49%
They assumed it was his fault.	17	32%
He didn't want to press charges.	11	21%
She said that he was violent first - and they believed her.	23	43%
The police believed him but they gave her a verbal warning only.	10	19%
They believed her account and asked him to leave the house	16	30%
They believed her account and arrested him	15	28%

Other Reasons (verbatim):	16	30%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There was no crime committed as far as they were concerned. • I was black – just like Steven Lawrence • Not sure why • I never told them that it had happened before. • My aim was that the situation be defused and no further escalation in violence. • The police were never made aware of her physical violence. • Neither party wanted to press charges. • She was a convincing liar. • It was a civil incident. • Too trivial – just a doorstep lecture. • Police probably believed me but still asked me to leave and assumed the child was safe with her. • Police said it is a domestic. • They just brushed it off. • Police sat on the fence when they placed statement in the file. 		

HOW SERIOUSLY MAN FEELS POLICE TREATED HIS COMPLAINTS

	No.	%
Very seriously	0	0
Quite seriously	6	11%
Not very seriously	19	37%
Not at all seriously	27	52%
ALL CASES	52	100%

HOW SERIOUSLY MAN FEELS POLICE TREATED HER COMPLAINTS

	No.	%
Very seriously	25	49%
Quite seriously	17	33%
Not very seriously	7	14%
Not at all seriously	2	4%
ALL CASES	51	100%

WAS THE MAN ARRESTED?

	No.	%
Yes	19	25%
No	56	75%
TOTAL	75	100%

GENERALLY, HOW SERIOUSLY POLICE TREAT DOMESTIC VIOLENCE TO MEN?

	No.	%
Very seriously	0	0
Quite seriously	4	4%
Not very seriously	23	24%
Not at all seriously	67	71%
ALL CASES	94	100%

WHETHER MADE AWARE BY POLICE OF SPECIALIST DOMESTIC VIOLENCE OFFICERS

	No.	%
Yes, on all occasions	6	8%
Yes, on some occasions	11	15%
No, on no occasions	58	77%
TOTAL CASES	75	100%

WHETHER PARTNER HAD CHILDREN

	No.	%
Yes	85	87%
No	12	13%
TOTAL CASES	97	100%

WHETHER FEMALE PARTNER WAS PHYSICALLY VIOLENT TO CHILDREN

	No.	%
Yes	46	54%
No	32	38%
Don't Know	8	12%
TOTAL	85	100%

WHETHER MAN HAD CONTACT PROBLEMS, AFTER SEPARATION

	No.	%
Yes	57	85%
No	10	15%
Total Cases	77	100%

DID PARTNER HAVE DRINK OR DRUGS PROBLEM?

	No.	%
Yes	29	31%
No	64	69%
TOTAL	89	100%

DID PARTNER SUFFER FROM A DIAGNOSED MENTAL HEALTH PROBLEM?

	No.	%
Yes	12	18%
No	54	82%
TOTAL	66	100%

WHAT MENTAL HEALTH PROBLEM?

	No.	%
Clinical depression	4	40%
Manic depression	3	30%
Personality disorder	1	10%
PMT or PMS (pre-menstrual)	0	0%
Post-natal depression	0	0%
Eating disorder - bulimia or anorexia	1	10%
Other	1	10%
TOTAL	10	100%

WHETHER PARTNER CAME FROM VIOLENT FAMILY

	No.	%
Yes	28	29%
No	13	14%
Don't know	55	57%
TOTAL	96	100%

WHETHER PARTNER PHYSICALLY OR SEXUALLY ABUSED AS A CHILD

	No.	%
Yes	19	20%
No	21	23%
Don't know	54	57%
TOTAL	94	100%

WHETHER PARTNER ABUSED BY OTHER MALE IN ADULT RELATIONSHIP

	No.	%
Yes	15	16%
No	24	26%
Don't know	54	58%
TOTAL CASES	93	100%

WHETHER PARTNER WAS VIOLENT TO OTHER MEN IN ADULT RELATIONSHIP

	No.	%
Yes	33	35%
No	5	5%
Don't know	56	60%
TOTAL CASES	94	100%

HOW MANY OTHER MALE PARTNERS?

	No.	%
1	21	73%
2	4	14%
3	1	3%
4	1	3%
5	0	0%
6-10	2	7%
Over 10	0	0%
TOTAL CASES	29	100%

WHETHER PARTNER HAS A CRIMINAL RECORD

	No.	%
Yes	11	11%
No	64	67%
Don't know	21	22%
TOTAL CASES	96	100%

WHAT PARTNER HAS A CRIMINAL RECORD FOR

(Total valid questionnaires = 9. Some women had a criminal record for more than one offence.)

	No.	%	Type of criminal offence
Violence to him	0	0%	
Violence to others	3	18%	Murder, ABH, assault
Dishonesty offences	12	70%	Theft, shoplifting, fraud, deception,
Other type of offence	2	12%	Drug related offences
TOTAL CASES	17	100%	100%