

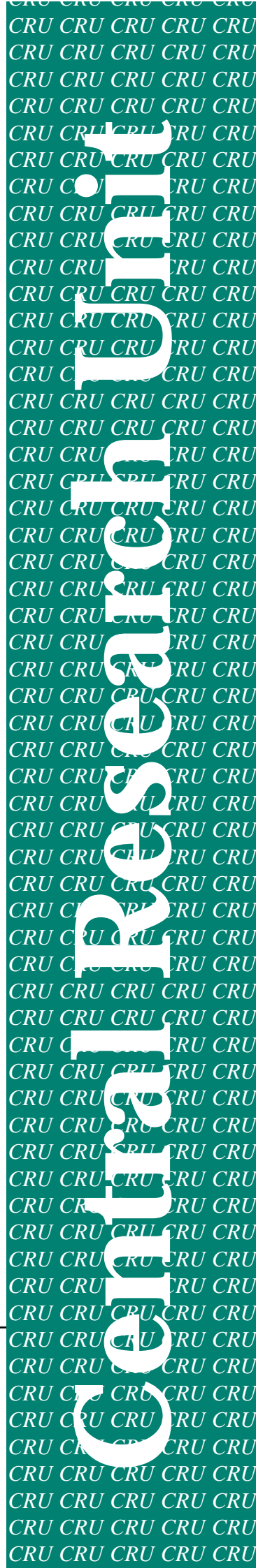
# DOMESTIC ABUSE AGAINST MEN IN SCOTLAND



SCOTTISH EXECUTIVE

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Domestic Abuse  
Against Men  
in Scotland



# **DOMESTIC ABUSE AGAINST MEN IN SCOTLAND**

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## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

### **Aims**

The main aims of this report are to:

- Estimate the prevalence of domestic abuse perpetrated against men in Scotland;
- Gauge the nature, frequency, and seriousness of this abuse;
- Document and examine the perspectives of those men who had been abused, and;
- Assess the adequacy of levels of service provision for men who have experienced domestic abuse in Scotland.

The report is sensitive to the various definitions of ‘domestic abuse’ adopted by the Scottish Executive, Scottish Crime Survey, statutory and non-statutory service providers for abused men in Scotland, and the perspectives of abused men themselves, although it focuses predominantly on victimisation by partners and ex-partners.

This report begins with an overview of the literature on domestic abuse against men, setting out the controversies that have imbued research in the UK, North America and Australasia on this topic. The report endeavours to make sense of the discovery of relatively high rates of domestic abuse against men in national crime surveys, especially the Scottish Crime Survey 2000. The report proceeds to provide:

- An analysis of the contrasting pictures of domestic abuse evident in the statistical data derived from Scottish Police records for 1999 and 2000 *and* the findings of the Scottish Crime Survey 2000;
- An outline of the characteristics of male victims in relation to both male non-victims and female victims of domestic abuse;
- In-depth accounts of the abuse experienced by a sample of the men identified as victims of ‘domestic violence’ in the Scottish Crime Survey 2000;
- A summary of the arguments for and against specialist service provision for abused men in Scotland.

### **Research Design**

There were four key components to the research design:

- A statistical analysis of incident data recorded by the Scottish Police with regards to variations in police responses to domestic abuse, and the demographic characteristics of both victims and perpetrators;
- A supplementary statistical analysis of the Scottish Crime Survey 2000 data on men’s victimisation;



- In-depth narrative interviews with 30 of the 90 men identified as ‘victims of domestic abuse’ in the Scottish Crime Survey 2000;
- Telephone interviews with service providers who deal with victims of domestic abuse.

## **Main Findings**

The smaller proportions of male victims of domestic abuse identified in the statistics recorded by the police (relative to the Scottish Crime Survey 2000) are largely explicable in terms of two factors:

1. Respondents misunderstanding the focus of the self-completion component of the Scottish Crime Survey. Over one in four male respondents appear to have misinterpreted the ‘domestic abuse’ questions used in the self-completion questionnaire.
2. The nature of male victims’ experiences and their patterns of reporting to the police. Relative to female victims of domestic abuse, male victims *in general* were less likely to have been repeat victims of assault, to have been seriously injured, and to report feeling fearful in their own homes. These factors, coupled with the embarrassment many male victims felt, helped explain the infrequency with which male victims of domestic abuse came to the attention of the Scottish Police. Some of the male victims of domestic abuse identified in the Scottish Crime Survey 2000 were also assailants and therefore did not wish to draw themselves to the attention of the police.

The assailant was male in six per cent of cases of domestic abuse against men reported to the Scottish Police in 1999 and 2000. There is presently no independent data source that can be used to verify whether men who live with male partners are at a greater or smaller risk of abuse than men who live with female partners.

In 2000 those who perpetrated domestic abuse against men were slightly less likely to have had their acts deemed criminal by the Scottish Police than those who perpetrated domestic abuse against women. Perpetrators against men were also slightly less likely to be referred to the Procurator Fiscal. These aggregate differences in police action were partly a consequence of the smaller proportion of ex-partners amongst those who perpetrated abuses against men. The findings of the Scottish Crime Survey 2000 suggest that gender differences in the nature and severity of abuse experienced by men and women were also partly responsible for these differences in police action.

There was some limited evidence to suggest that the police had been referring assailants in same-sex couples to the Procurator Fiscal less frequently than assailants in opposite sex couples. Those men who abused male partners or ex-partners were more likely to have had no further action taken against them by the police than those men who abused female partners or ex-partners.

The Scottish Crime Survey 2000 suggests that in 1999 male victims of domestic abuse tended to be poorer than men who were not victims, although this financial disadvantage fell predominantly on those male victims who were divorced or separated. Male victims of domestic abuse tended to report better health and higher incomes than female victims. Male victims were also less likely to have lived in rented accommodation than female victims.

It is impossible to do justice to the diversity of male victims' experiences in this short summary. Nonetheless, the qualitative research upon which this report is based shows that domestic abuse against men can take life-threatening forms and can have lasting effects. Some of the male victims interviewed experienced a range of abuses from their partners. This abuse took emotional, financial, and physical forms. However, many of the male victims in our sample described their partners' abuses as relatively rare and inconsequential in the longer term. Few men cited abuse as reasons for having left their partners. Abuse frequently occurred when relationships were in crisis or 'breaking up', and/or when access to children had to be negotiated between partners who were living apart.

## **Conclusions**

Neither abused men's nor service providers' responses suggested that there is presently a need for an agency whose specific remit is to support male victims of domestic abuse in Scotland. Neither does there currently appear to be a need for refuges for abused men, although some male victims would benefit from support and advice regarding housing and welfare. Men who are trying to separate from abusive partners may benefit from the provision of alternative accommodation (for themselves and their children) and better legal and financial support. However, there is some evidence to indicate that abused men are not making full use of the pre-existing support services available to them, perhaps suggesting that some service providers need to publicise their remit more widely.

## **INTRODUCTION**

The debate about men's victimisation by partners is one that undergoes periodic revivals of interest. These revivals occur as new commentators discover – and sometimes exaggerate - the limitations of existing research about domestic abuse and the interpretive task this research presents to those who engage with it. For simplicity, the controversy about male victims of domestic abuse can be organised around the following five themes:

1. The extent to which men and women are 'equal victims' of domestic abuse. Do male victims endure the same abuses as women, as frequently and with the same consequences?
2. The extent to which recorded crime statistics accurately reflect different rates of abuse - for men and women, as well as gay men and straight men - as opposed to differential treatment by criminal justice agencies.
3. The extent to which women's violence towards male partners constitutes a reaction to the experience of prior or continuing abuse. Are women's assaults on men typically defensive and reactionary responses to anticipated threats and/or the experience of cumulative provocation?
4. The level and nature of abuse in gay men's relationships, and concomitantly the extent to which 'domestic abuse' is connected to cultural constructions of masculinity and heterosexuality.
5. The implications of evidence of men's victimisation for service providers. Is there a need for specialist services for male victims of domestic abuse? Are male victims' needs quantitatively and qualitatively the same as the needs of female victims?

This report documents research that aimed to examine the various positions in this controversy, focussing especially on the evidence available in Scotland.

### **Structure of the Report**

Our answers to these questions are structured as follows:

- Chapter One provides an overview of the predominantly British and US literature on this topic, outlining the key perspectives and research studies that inform it.
- Chapter Two provides an analysis of the statistical data that details the incidents of domestic abuse that came to the Scottish Police's attention between April 1999 and December 2000.
- Chapter Three summarises the findings of the Scottish Crime Survey 2000 regarding domestic abuse, adding our own additional analysis of the differences between male and female victims and the general population, in terms of their health, income and marital status.
- Chapter Four documents our endeavours to trace and re-interview a sample of those men who disclosed experiences of threats or force by a partner in the

Scottish Crime Survey 2000. This chapter progresses to analyse the narrative accounts provided to us by 22 men who had been abused by their partners.

- Chapter Five documents the findings of the telephone interviews we conducted with those who provide services for male victims of abuse in Scotland, setting out how these agencies currently respond to men who say they are victims, and how they feel this service provision should be developed.
- Chapter Six summarises the main findings of this research project, the strengths and limitations of the data upon which these findings are based, and the new research questions these findings pose.

## CHAPTER ONE - LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter summarises the different theoretical perspectives on domestic abuse against men, and assesses these perspectives in the light of the available research data.

### Feminist Perspectives on Domestic Abuse

The voluminous literature on the issue of domestic abuse owes much to the work of feminist scholars, researchers and activists. Throughout the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s feminists sought to raise awareness of the pervasiveness, persistence and effects of domestic abuse, whilst also acquiring resources and establishing services that would help women and children to live without fear for their personal safety (Dobash & Dobash, 1979; Hester et al., 1995; Kelly, 1988). Amongst feminists there are disagreements about the most appropriate ways to understand and research domestic abuse (Kelly, 1990), but most feminist perspectives on domestic abuse make reference to the *continuum* of emotional, physical, sexual and financial abuses women experience in intimate relationships (Kelly, 1988); and this continuum's relation to the *material inequalities*, *institutional values* and *historically embedded social practices* that confer power and privilege on men.

Within this framework men are often conceptualised either as perpetrators or as complicit bystanders whose failure to effectively challenge the abuses perpetrated by other men sustains women's victimisation (Hearn, 1998). In much feminist research into domestic abuse men's victimisation is only acknowledged within the context of women's defensive and retaliatory responses to the cumulative experience of harassment, intimidation and violence (Ammons, 2001; Lees, 1997).

For certain commentators the lack of recognition given to 'battered men' is interpreted as indicative of: the hegemony of a powerful 'feminist matriarchy' (Rome, 2001); the 'taboo' status of men's victimisation (George, 2001); and the collusive silence that protects female 'family terrorists' from public exposure (Pizzey, 2001). Certainly, there is long history of domestic abuse cases being caricatured in terms of 'nagging wives' attacking 'hen-pecked husbands' (Brogden & Harkin, 2000; Stitt & Macklin, 1995). But this caricaturing has a cultural history that predates feminism (Hammerton, 1992). Indeed, feminism has played a central role in debunking those myths that trivialise, pathologise or otherwise sensationalise violence perpetrated by women (Cameron, 1996; Chesney-Lind, 1997; Worrall, 1990).

If feminist research treats men's accounts of victimisation by women with scepticism, it is probably because male *perpetrators* of domestic abuse often depict themselves as victims in order to exonerate themselves from blame (Gondolf, 1988; Hearn, 1998; Wolflight, 1999). As a consequence, deciding how and whether to acknowledge men's accounts of victimisation constitutes a problem for academics and practitioners alike, as feminist social workers have explained (Featherstone & Trinder, 1997). Indeed, the polarising of the debate in terms of 'female victims' and 'male perpetrators' can obscure as much as it illuminates (Gadd, 2000; Newburn & Stanko, 1994). Not all men who are victims of women's violence are perpetrators, and not all victims of domestic abuse define themselves as heterosexual (Vickers, 1996). But identifying which men are victims, which are perpetrators, and which are both victims and perpetrators is an unenviable task.

## **‘Family Violence’ Research**

The paradigm of research that has devoted most energy to this task is often referred to as ‘family violence research’. This paradigm is closely associated with the work of US scholars Murray Straus and Richard Gelles (Straus & Gelles, 1986). Straus and Gelles devised the ‘Conflict Tactics Scale’ (CTS), a measure of the controlling and abusive ‘tactics’ couples sometimes use against each other. Using the CTS, Straus and Gelles administered two sweeps of *The National Family Violence Survey* (NFVS) to representative samples of the US population of heterosexual married respondents - one in 1975, the other in 1985<sup>1</sup>. Both sweeps uncovered similar levels of partner violence perpetrated by men and women. In about half of the cases where violence was encountered both partners were abusive to each other. The remaining half was divided, almost equally, between those cases where men were the primary perpetrators and those cases where women were the primary perpetrators.

During the 1980s some men’s rights activists used these findings to argue that funding sources for women’s refuges should be shared more equitably with equivalent services for men (Pagelow, 1984). However, Straus (1993) queried the ‘equal combatants’ interpretation of his research findings, as did a number of contributors to a debate hosted by the American journal *Social Work* in the late 1980s (McNealy & Robinson-Simpson, 1988; Saunders, 1988). Even though the CTS does not include questions about those forms of violence (like sexual assault, choking, suffocating and stalking) that women are more likely to experience, *and* although it under-samples those whose victimisation is most likely to be severe (i.e. women living in refuges, divorced and separated women), the two sweeps of the NFVS nevertheless revealed that women sustain more injuries than men<sup>2</sup> (Flood, 1999; Straus, 1993).

## **Recent Crime Surveys**

Although the CTS remains a focal concern in the debate about men’s victimisation, its claims are increasingly eclipsed by the findings of *crime* surveys based on much larger samples. In the 1980s some commentators argued that the CTS was a methodologically better measure of abuse prevalence rates because many people do not recognise their experiences of abuse as ‘criminal victimisation’. Perhaps aided by increased public awareness about domestic abuse, together with the use of more nuanced terminologies and question formats<sup>3</sup>, crime surveys in the UK, US and Canada have since proved themselves capable of detecting abuse which interviewees do not themselves consider ‘criminal’ – although whether the impact of this is different for men and women is still a matter for debate.

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<sup>1</sup> Further studies using modified versions of the CTS (and typically smaller samples) have been conducted subsequently in the US (Brush, 1993) and also in Canada (Lupri, 1990 referenced in Cook, 1997: 11) and Australia (Headey et al., 1999).

<sup>2</sup> Subsequent self-report studies of women living in refuges suggest that the majority of battered women perceive their own violence as self-defence (Saunders, 1986). Likewise self-report studies of US women arrested by the police for partner violence also show that around two-thirds of female ‘perpetrators’ use violence to protect themselves or in retaliation for previous victimisation (Hamberger, 1997). Of course, these subsequent studies do not capture men’s perspectives on the contexts in which ‘family conflict’ occurs. But they do, at the very least, call into question the use of the NFVS findings to make inferences about either the relative impact of victimisation on men and women, or the relative culpability of male and female victims (Saunders, 1988).

<sup>3</sup> See Chapter Three for examples of these.

## The British and Scottish Crime Surveys

The use of the self-completion questionnaires in the 1996 *British and Scottish Crime Surveys* revealed considerably higher rates of domestic abuse amongst the general population than previous UK surveys had suggested<sup>4</sup>. This was all the more remarkable given that the surveys narrowed their focus to ‘partner abuse’, as opposed to abuse by *any household member*. The effect of this increased detection was more pronounced amongst male respondents than amongst females.

**Table 1.1 Domestic Assault and Abuse in the SCS and BCS 1996**

Type of Abuse	SCS 1996 respondents who experienced abuse within the last year (%)		BCS 1996 respondents who experienced abuse within the last year (%)	
	Men	Women	Men	Women
Domestic Assault (measured in the main sweep)	0.1	0.6	0.4	1.3
Forced or threatened / frightened (measured in the self completion questionnaire)	4.0	6.0	4.2	4.2

As Table 1.1 (above) indicates, in 1996<sup>5</sup> the proportion of men reporting experiences of force or threat in the self-completion component of the Scottish Crime Survey was over forty times the proportion reporting ‘domestic assaults’ in the survey’s main-sweep (MVA, 1998)<sup>6</sup>. The proportion of women who reported having experienced force or threats from their partner using the Scottish Crime Survey’s 1996 self-completion questionnaire was ten times higher than the proportion reporting ‘domestic assault’ in the main-sweep. When a computer assisted self-interviewing methodology was introduced into the British Crime Survey in 1996 the proportion of men who reported having been forced or frightened by a partner was ten times the proportion who reported domestic assaults in the main sweep. The proportion of women who reported being forced or frightened in the self-completion component of the BCS 1996 was just over three times the proportion who reported domestic assaults in the main sweep (Kershaw et al., 2000).

In England and Wales this enhanced level of reporting produced data suggesting that similar proportions of men and women (four per cent) had experienced some form of domestic abuse within the last twelve months. In Scotland in 1995 gender differences remained, but narrowed. The Scottish Crime Survey 1996 reported that four per cent of men and six per cent of women in Scotland had experienced force or threats from their

<sup>4</sup> The phrasing and ordering of questions in the SCS 1996 was not identical to the phrasing and ordering of questions in the BCS 1996. The SCS 1996 focussed on a partner or ex-partner saying ‘threatening things’, whereas the BCS focused on a partner or ex-partner having ‘ever said things to you that frightened you’. Whereas the SCS simply asked respondents whether their partners or ex-partners had ever used force towards them, the BCS introduced its questions about ‘force’ by telling interviewees that ‘[P]eople often use some force in a relationship’.

<sup>5</sup> See Chapter Four for our re-analysis of the SCS 2000 data on domestic abuse.

<sup>6</sup> Unlike the BCS figures, the percentages for experiences of force or threat in the SCS are rounded to 1s.f. (MVA, 1998: 34-37).

partners or ex-partners within the last twelve months. Neither of the crime surveys indicated that women and men were 'equal victims'. In England and Wales in 1995 women were (Mirrlees-Black, 1999):

- Twice as likely as men to have been injured by a partner;
- Three times more likely than men to have suffered frightening threats;
- One and a half times more likely than men to have been assaulted three or more times, and;
- One and a half times more likely than men to say a current or former partner had ever assaulted them.

Likewise, MVA (1998) reported that in 1995 women in Scotland were:

- More likely than men to have been injured at least once by a partner;
- Twice as likely as men to have ever experienced threats or force by a partner.

Throughout the UK, pushing, shoving and grabbing were found to be the most common forms of force used against both male and female victims. Female victims were much more likely than male victims to have been choked, strangled, suffocated, or forced to have sex than were male victims. However, in 1995 Scottish men were much more likely to say they have been stabbed or cut by a partner than were Scottish women<sup>7</sup>. In England and Wales slightly over half of all domestic assault victims said they had also used some force against their partner at the time of the incident. Women were slightly more likely to report this than men (Mirrlees-Black, 1999: 35-36)<sup>8</sup>.

### **Other Assaults and Homicides in the UK**

The overriding finding from all Scottish and British Crime Surveys is that men, unlike women, are at a considerably greater risk of assault from acquaintances and strangers than intimates<sup>9</sup>. This finding is also evidenced in research into homicide. In Scotland women are two and a half times more likely than men to be killed by their partners. In England and Wales women are over four and a half times more likely to be killed by a partner<sup>10</sup> (Soothill et al., 1999). Furthermore, Scottish men are eight times more likely to be killed by an acquaintance than by a partner, whilst in England and Wales men are only two times more likely to be killed by an acquaintance than a partner (Soothill et al., 1999)<sup>11</sup>.

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<sup>7</sup> By 1999 this was no longer the case. See Chapter Three of this report.

<sup>8</sup> Crime survey data on victims' violence towards partners has not been collected in Scotland.

<sup>9</sup> Especially young men, poor men and ethnic minority men.

<sup>10</sup> In the US, Australia and Canada there are approximately three times as many partner homicides against women as there are against men (Headey et al., 1999; Locke, 2000; Rennison & Welchans, 2000).

<sup>11</sup> The vast majority of partner homicides in Scotland are recorded as having occurred in circumstances of 'rage or quarrel' (Soothill et al., 1999: 27)



## **Domestic Abuse Prevalence Rates in the USA and Canada**

The US *National Crime Victimization Survey* 2000 (NCVS) suggests relatively low rates of domestic abuse. In 1998 0.75 per cent of women and 0.015 per cent of men in the US disclosed intimate partner violence to NCVS researchers: a ratio of five to one (Rennison & Welchans, 2000). However, the subsequent *National Violence Against Women Survey* 2000 (NVAW)<sup>12</sup> found higher rates of victimisation amongst the general population of the US. According to Tjaden and Thoennes (2000) 1.8 per cent of US women and 1.1 per cent of men had been *either* raped, physically assaulted, or stalked by a partner within the twelve months prior to interview. Nearly one in four women in the US, compared to one in every fourteen men, reported being *either* raped or physically assaulted by an intimate partner at some point in their lifetime.

The 1999 *Canadian General Social Survey* (CGSS)<sup>13</sup> discovered more equivocal rates of partner assault amongst men and women (Pottie Bunge, 2000). In the CGSS eight per cent of women and seven per cent of men reported some form of spousal violence (excluding emotional abuse) committed against them by a partner or ex-partner *within the past five years*. Four per cent of men and four per cent of women reported violence by a current partner. However, in line with other recent national surveys, the CGSS found that female victims were much more likely to have endured severe and repeated forms of violence, suffered injury, sought medical attention, and to have reported fearing for their lives as a consequence of violence.

### **Qualitative Studies of Male Victims**

Two qualitative studies of male victims of domestic abuse have been commissioned in the UK to date, and there is at least one published in the US and another in Australasia. All four of these studies are based - almost exclusively - upon semi- and unstructured interviews with non-representative, 'convenience' samples of self-identifying 'male victims'.

#### ***'Battered Husbands' in the North-West of England***

In their study *'Battered Husbands': The Hidden Victims of Domestic Violence*, Stitt and Macklin (1995) interviewed 20 male victims of female-on-male abuse aged between 19 and 72 years old. All of the men in Stitt and Macklin's sample had endured severe forms of physical abuse, ranging from stabbing, having teeth knocked out, being scalded with boiling water, attacks to their genitalia and being beaten with implements. Some respondents were still living with abusive partners, in some cases to protect their children.

Many of the men in this study claimed their partners had consciously sought to subject them to embarrassment and stigma by trying to injure them on the face and arms so that others would see. In most cases the abuse also involved verbal, emotional and psychological forms of cruelty. However, in common with female victims of domestic abuse, many of the male victims argued that the fear of further violence, together with the emotional abuse, was worse than the actual physical harm done, even if this was extensive. Some female partners were said to have constantly threatened to attack men in their sleep, told the police that self-inflicted injuries were caused by the man, flirted with

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<sup>12</sup> This survey involved telephone interviews with 8,000 US men and 8,000 women.

<sup>13</sup> This survey involved telephone interviews with 14,269 women and 11,607 men aged 15 or older.

other men, damaged the man's clothes, or threatened to take their children away from them.

Only one of Stitt and Macklin's 20 respondents said that he was 'occasionally' to blame for instigating the violence. Eighteen said they were 'never' responsible, and one abstained from answering this question. Twelve of the men cited 'causes' for their partner's aggression, including alcoholism, post-natal depression, childbirth, PMS, eating disorders, retirement and unemployment. Eight, however, said that violence was just part of their partner's 'normal behaviour'.

In the Stitt and Macklin study, on the few occasions when the police had been called, it was the male victims, as opposed to female perpetrators, that were arrested. Consequently, Stitt and Macklin (1995: 6) argue that many of the men ended up coping alone through,

*Total withdrawal, mainly from contact with other males, isolation, and an acceptance that they were indeed 'weak', 'inadequate', 'not a real man' and 'wimps'. They felt de-skilled, powerless, even impotent... Invariably, the males perceived the situation for battered men as being worse than for battered women because the latter were not imprisoned by stereotypical attributes which militate against even acknowledging that female-on-male abuse exists.*

### ***Male Victims in Northern Ireland***

For their report to the Northern Ireland Domestic Violence Forum *Male Victims of Domestic Violence*, Brogden and Harkin (2000) interviewed fifty men, aged between 29 and 60, who said they had been victims of domestic violence. Three of these men had been in abusive relationships with male partners. The remaining forty-seven were victims of abuse perpetrated by female partners.

Brogden and Harkin present a similar picture of men's experiences of domestic violence to that of Stitt and Macklin. Few of the assaults described by the men in Brogden and Harkin's study were isolated incidents. Many of the male victims had endured a combination of biting, scratching and pulling, having things thrown at them and being hit with domestic instruments. However, attacks to the genitalia, knifings, and scaldings, along with a miscellaneous list of cruel and unusual behaviours were also reported. Again, some men reported being attacked whilst asleep, although spontaneous assaults were more common. Yet, few regarded the physical attacks as the worst aspect of the abuse:

*Most respondents regarded emotional abuse as more sustained and significant than physical violence, resulting in cumulative effects, including the destruction of self-confidence and self-esteem, demoralisation, depression, suicidal impulses, nervous breakdown and mental instability...Abuse was often cumulative and relentless. (Brogden & Harkin, 2000: 42)*

Some men reported threats to harm children (both born and unborn) and claimed that their partners would routinely deride their sexual potency in front of others (including their children) to humiliate them further. Others reported being ridiculed for their reluctance to fight back, despite constant fear for their lives. However, according to Brogden and Harkin, sleep deprivation was probably the most pervasive form of abuse endured by male victims. Some women were said to use the threat of making false

allegations to the police to control male victims. Indeed, some men said they had been wrongfully arrested. Other respondents reported being attacked by other men who wrongly assumed that the woman involved was the victim. In some parts of Northern Ireland, fear of reprisals by the paramilitaries is also an issue if others assume the man is the abusive partner.

Like Stitt and Macklin's battered husbands, some of Brogden and Harkin's respondents said they had been too embarrassed to tell peers what had happened. Other respondents reported feeling uncomfortable about the mixture of disbelief and accusation that typically followed disclosure. Concealment was a relatively common way in which male victims 'coped', as were 'withdrawal from social interaction', 'turning the other cheek', 'lying' about the causes of injuries, 'alcoholism', 'physical exercise', working long hours and 'leaving the family home'. Some men reported chronic weight loss, self-harming, overdosing, together with mental health problems as consequences of the abuses they had endured. Nevertheless, some men in Brogden and Harkin's sample had received valuable support from friends, although sympathetic and helpful responses from statutory service providers were apparently a rarity.

### ***'Abused Men' in the US***

In his book *Abused Men* Phillip W. Cook (1997) documents his analysis of thirty US male victims. Like their British counterparts, Cook's male victims expressed an unwillingness to hit back because of traditional gender stereotypes. Like British male victims, the American sample also mentioned their desire to conceal their victimisation from friends and family, their fear of being perceived as wimps, and their investment in the belief that family matters should be kept private, as factors that inhibited them from seeking support. Some of the men in Cook's sample claimed their partners had made false accusations of partner abuse and child sexual abuse against them in order to retain custody of their children<sup>14</sup>.

### ***Abused Men In Australia and New Zealand***

Lewis and Sarantakos (2001) report on a qualitative study of forty-eight Australisian men abused by female partners. Most of the men in this study were contacted via 'men's support groups'. The most common abuse described by Lewis and Sarantakos' sample was 'unreasonable and unprovoked verbal attack'. Physical abuse, limiting the man's friendships, child abuse, and 'inappropriate and improper use of money' were other abuses described by the men in this sample. At the more 'psychological' end of the abuse continuum, some men reported being labelled 'inadequate', being told that their children were not theirs, and being subject to malicious allegations of violence. In spite of their conclusion that "women are equally dangerous and destructive at home" (p.8), Lewis and Sarantakos point out that the physical abuse they uncovered did not appear to be as severe as that reported in studies of female victims.

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<sup>14</sup> Also like Stitt and Macklin and Brogden and Harkin, Cook did not elicit any accounts of male victims' violence towards partners, in spite of his self-acknowledged indebtedness to the 'family violence' paradigm of research.

## Gay Men's Experiences of Domestic Abuse

There is a relative dearth of academic research into domestic abuse in gay men's and lesbian women's relationships. This is more noticeable in the UK than in the US, partly because the BCS and SCS do not collect data explicitly about the sex of victims' partners. As a consequence there are no reliable prevalence rates on which to base an analysis of gay men's experiences of domestic abuse within the UK. In fact, many of the research findings about this issue have emerged in projects primarily concerned with sexual minorities' experiences of 'hate crimes' (Richardson & May, 1999) and clinical studies of men who have been sexually assaulted (Mezey & King, 2000).

Nevertheless, Soothill et al.'s (1999) homicide research suggests that gay men are at increased risk of partner homicide relative to heterosexual men and women. Lesbian women appear to be much less likely to be killed by their current or former partners. Soothill et al. report that between 1985 and 1994 none of the women killed by partners in Scotland were killed by women, whereas 21 per cent of the men killed by partners were killed by men.

The US *National Violence Against Women Survey* also suggests that men living with male partners are at a greater risk of domestic abuse. Tjaden and Thoennes (2000) report that women living with male partners are almost three times more likely than women living with female partners to report having ever been *either* raped, physically assaulted or stalked by a partner. Conversely, US men living with male partners are over two times more likely than men living with female partners to report having ever been *either* raped, assaulted or stalked by a partner.

However, the risk of assault that gay male partners pose to each also needs contextualising in terms of the risk posed by male strangers and acquaintances. One recent Scottish 'self-completion' survey of 246 gay men living in Edinburgh uncovered rates of violent victimisation four times the national average (Morrison & MacKay, 2000). This exceptionally high rate of victimisation was largely a consequence of the number of stranger assaults perpetrated against gay men, only one in ten violent incidents being perpetrated by a 'partner, friend or relative'.

The few qualitative accounts of gay men's experiences of domestic abuse suggest that gay men typically endure similar continuums of physical, emotional, sexual and financial abuses to those more widely recognised as characterising the experiences of heterosexual male and female victims. However, there are some issues that are unique to gay men that can prolong and exacerbate their experiences of abuse (Elliot, 1996; Mondimore & Hopkins 2000; Vickers, 1996). These include:

- The threat of 'outing' to family members, employers, landlords, isolating gay male victims from potential sources of support;
- Perpetrators persuading partners that their behaviour is an expression of 'masculinity', not domestic abuse;
- The lack of service provision for gay men, and the limited legal recognition afforded to gay couples (enabling perpetrators to dissuade victims from seeking support or justice);

- Homophobic attitudes, which serve to ‘blame’ gay and lesbian people for their own victimisation on the basis of their sexual difference. Some perpetrators tell victims who had previous female partners that they are not ‘really’ gay and thus relationship problems are attributed to the victim’s sexuality. Concomitantly, some gay victims of male rape attribute their victimisation to their sexual orientation (Etherington, 1995)<sup>15</sup>.

## Summary

The finding that women report more injuries and repeat victimisation is one that has been consistently demonstrated in recent UK and US national crime surveys as well as research conducted using the CTS. Nevertheless, different methodologies and question formats uncover vast variations in the ratios of male to female victims of domestic abuse. For example, the self-completion methodologies used in the 1996 Scottish and British Crime Surveys uncovered higher rates of domestic abuse amongst men and women than the interviewer-guided main sweep questions about domestic ‘assaults’. The results of the main sweep surveys indicate that women were at a much greater risk of domestic assault than men were. However, the self-completion methodologies uncovered rates of domestic abuse against men closer to the rates uncovered for women. Without greater standardisation of methodologies across countries it remains impossible to tell whether different gender ratios reflect real national differences, as opposed to methodological artefacts. It cannot be assumed that North American or Australasian men’s experiences of abuse are necessarily the same as the experiences of men living in the UK.

The available survey evidence suggests that fewer men than women are victims of domestic abuse. However, qualitative studies reveal that those men who are victims often find the experience of abuse severely emotionally and physically harmful. Nevertheless, the finding uncovered in US family violence research that some male victims are also perpetrators has yet to be adequately investigated in either quantitative or qualitative research studies in the UK. Similarly, there is a lack of UK research documenting the nature and prevalence of domestic abuse amongst same-sex couples.

Disbelief and lack of service provision are both factors that can compound male victims’ experience of abuse regardless of their sexual orientation. The limited qualitative research on this topic suggests that there are some differences in the nature and context of the abuses experienced by gay and heterosexual men, as well as between male and female victims generally, although there are also many similarities.

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<sup>15</sup> The picture is further complicated by the fact that many male rapes happen between acquaintances who are not necessarily in sustained dating relationships, and also by evidence suggesting that the many male rapists consider themselves heterosexual (McMullen, 1990). The extent to which male victims of sexual assault are able to come to terms with their experience of victimization depends considerably on the availability of support from peers, partners and professionals, as well as the individuals’ own coping strategies.

## **CHAPTER TWO – DOMESTIC ABUSE AGAINST MEN RECORDED BY THE SCOTTISH POLICE**

### **Introduction**

In both the UK and the US an alternative source of information about domestic abuse is increasingly available in the form of statistical bulletins that collate police incident data. This data is typically derived from:

- What members of the public tell control room telephone operators when they make 999 calls, and;
- The paperwork returned by police officers after they have visited the scenes of domestic abuse incidents.

Some academics (Hope et al., 2001; Sherman et al., 1989; Warner & Pierce, 1993) believe that the increase in the number of households containing a telephone, together with the growth of centralised police patrol dispatch systems, renders this ‘call data’ a fairly reliable indicator of the temporal and spatial distribution of crime and disorder. Unlike official crime statistics and the statistics produced through crime victimisation surveys, police call data is collected continuously, based as it is, on the public’s requests for help 24 hours a day, 365 days of the year.

However, as noted in Chapter One, some research suggests that certain groups – like male victims of domestic abuse – are less likely to call the police than others. Likewise, other commentators (Cook, 1997; Stitt & Macklin, 1995) argue that men’s victimisation is not taken seriously by the police, and that making malicious accusations against men is one aspect of the abuse some female partners perpetrate. Of course, other research has demonstrated that some female perpetrators of violence are treated unduly harshly by the criminal justice system (Ammons, 2001; Lees, 1997; Worrall, 1990), the social circumstances in which women offend often being oversimplified in the evidence presented to sentencers. In short, statistics based on the police records regarding reports of domestic abuse do not ‘speak for themselves’. Meaningful sense of these statistics can only be made when carefully cross-referenced with other sources of data about the same phenomenon.

### **The Scottish Police Database**

The information the police receive about incidents of domestic abuse is of considerable use to policy-makers, senior police officers, and those various agencies to which the police are accountable. It is also of potential use to police officers themselves, for example, when they have to attend addresses where domestic abuse has been previously reported, arrests have recently been made, interdicts apply, or additional protection has been requested. Consequently, the Report of HM Inspectorate of Constabulary (1997) *Hitting Home* recommended standardising the collation of data about the domestic abuse incidents Scottish Police attend. The report urged:

1. *That the standard definition of domestic violence to be developed by The Scottish Office in consultation with forces include the sub-categories of: crimes of personal violence (non-sexual and sexual); other crimes (such as breach of the*

*peace, threats, and vandalism); and abuse which does not amount to crime; and that the definition be adopted by all forces as soon as it is agreed.*

2. *That all forces record domestic incidents so that they can be reviewed individually and in total, using the sub-categories referred to in recommendation 1.*

This second recommendation was implemented in Scotland by requiring all officers who visit domestic abuse incidents to complete *paperwork returns*. The implementation of these recommendations made possible the publication of two successive statistical bulletins documenting “Domestic Abuse Recorded by the Police” (Scottish Executive 2000, 2001). The current ACPOS definition reads<sup>16</sup>:

*Domestic abuse is any form of physical, non-physical, or sexual abuse which takes place within the context of a close relationship, committed either in the home or elsewhere. This relationship will be between partners (married, co-habiting or otherwise) or ex-partners. (Scottish Executive, 2001: 1)*

## **Uses and Limitations of the Data**

The Scottish Executive’s statistical bulletins document the types of domestic abuse incidents reported to the police, the sex and ages of victims, the sex and ages of perpetrators, the extent of repeat victimisation, the locations of incidents, the relationships between victims and perpetrators, and the actions taken by the police. Between April and December 1999, the police returned details on 26,000<sup>17</sup> incidents of domestic abuse. During the same nine-month period in 2000 this figure rose by three per cent to 26,729 incidents. Throughout the *whole* of 2000, the police returned details on 36,000<sup>18</sup> incidents of domestic abuse.

However, it is important to recognise that these statistics cannot be taken to reflect the actual nature and extent of domestic abuse in Scotland. The police can only record those incidents of domestic abuse that come to their attention. As discussed in the next chapter, the Scottish Crime Survey 2000 shows that the vast majority of domestic abuse incidents are *not* reported to the police. The way in which the police classify and respond to incidents of domestic abuse depends considerably on the evidence available to them at the scene, and/or the willingness of victims to make a formal complaint. However, the nature of policing requires individual officers to exercise discretion in the classification of those incidents they attend, since this classification sends a message to the perpetrator about the gravity of the offence, as well as the legal and criminal ramifications of that perpetrator’s past and future actions (Goodall & McKay, 1998).

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<sup>16</sup> In 1999 the definition was slightly different. Hence, the first of these bulletins (Scottish Executive 2000: 1) documented the returns of officers attending incidents of ‘domestic violence’, which was ‘*in most cases...between partners...or ex-partners*’ (our emphasis).

<sup>17</sup> The appendix in the 1999 Bulletin reports statistics for a total of 25,894 incidents, which is rounded up to 26,000 within the main body of the Bulletin. Our dataset comprised 25,728 cases, and the analyses reported in this chapter refer to our dataset. This disparity in numbers is due to the sex of the victim not being recorded in 166 incidents.

<sup>18</sup> The appendix in the 2000 Bulletin reports statistics for a total of 36,416 incidents, which is rounded down to 36,000 within the main body of the Bulletin. Our dataset comprised 36,351 cases, and the analyses reported in this chapter refer to our dataset. This disparity in numbers is due to the sex of the victim not being recorded in 65 incidents.

The following sections of this chapter use the datasets upon which the Statistical Bulletins are based to examine differences, at both regional and national levels, in:

- The proportions of male victims encountered by the Scottish Police relative to the number of female victims;
- The proportions of male victims abused by male partners relative to the proportions abused by female partners;
- The proportions of ex- and current partners amongst those who perpetrate abuse against male and female victims;
- The proportions of incidents that constitute crimes for the various victim groupings, and;
- The types of action taken by the police in incidents involving the various victim groupings.

### **Rates of Domestic Abuse Recorded by the Scottish Police**

The overall Scottish incidence of reported domestic abuse rose from 529 per 100,000 in 1999 to 712 per 100,000 in 2000. Some forces appear to have encountered more incidents of domestic abuse relative to the size of the population they are responsible for<sup>19</sup>, although as argued below, much of the discrepancy may be due to different recording practices regarding the classification of incidents in which no crime was said to have been committed.

### **Sex of Victims and Perpetrators**

The vast majority of incidents reported to the Scottish Police are recorded as incidents involving male perpetrators abusing female victims<sup>20</sup>. As Table 2.1 reveals, the police data suggest that there was little change in the ratios of male to female victims and perpetrators in the last two years in question.

**Table 2.1: Incidents of domestic abuse in terms of the sex of the victim and perpetrator**

Victim / Perpetrator	Percentage of all incidents of domestic abuse	
	1999	2000
Female / Male	92.3	92.1
Male / Female	7.0	7.2
Male / Male	0.4	0.4
Female / Female	0.3	0.3
TOTAL	100.0	100.0

<sup>19</sup> For example, in both 1999 and 2000 the area with the highest rate of reported domestic abuse was Grampian (766 and 882 per 100,000 respectively). In 1999 the area with the lowest rate of reported domestic abuse was Central with 363 per 100,000. In 2000 the area with the lowest rate was Dumfries and Galloway with 457 per 100,000.

<sup>20</sup> See Stanko (2001) for similar figures for England & Wales.



In short, the number of male victims that came to the attention of the police remained between seven and eight per cent of the total number of incidents during 1999 and 2000. Ninety-four per cent of the time when men were victims, the perpetrator was female. In the remaining six per cent of cases when men were victims of domestic abuse the perpetrator was a male partner.

Yet, despite this consistency in the aggregate figures for both years, some forces witnessed changes in the *proportions* of male and female victims they encountered between 1999 and 2000.

**Table 2.2: Incidents of domestic abuse involving male victims by Scottish Police area**

Force Area	Incidents in which the victim was male (1999) (%)	Incidents in which the victim was male (2000) (%)
Central	7.8	8.7
Dumfries & Galloway	6.3	11.9
Fife	7.2	3.9
Grampian	8.2	8.4
Lothian & Borders	5.5	5.1
Northern	7.1	9.8
Strathclyde	8.4	8.2
Tayside	5.4	9.4
SCOTLAND	7.3	7.2

Both Dumfries and Galloway and Tayside appear to have witnessed pronounced increases in the proportions of male victims encountered by the police. The reverse trend appears to have occurred in Fife.

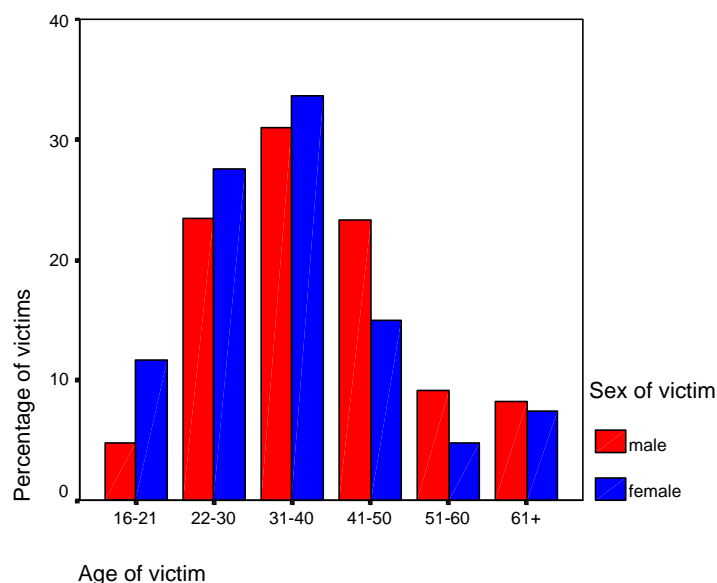
### **Male victims and the sex of their assailants by police area**

The proportion of incidents of abuse against men that were perpetrated by women was close to the 94 per cent mean in most police regions in Scotland in both 1999 and 2000. In two forces (Fife and Northern) 99 to 100 per cent of the perpetrators of domestic abuse against men were female. In other forces the proportion of female perpetrators against men was slightly below the overall mean. In Tayside the police reported that in 1999 over one in 11 (nine per cent) of all domestic abuse calls against men involved a male perpetrator. In Grampian the rate was higher still (12 per cent in 1999, 11 per cent in 2000). In 1999 Lothian and Borders police also encountered a comparatively high rate of male assailants (13 per cent), which then decreased (to seven per cent) in 2000.

### **The distribution of ages for victim and perpetrator**

Although female victims tended to be slightly younger than male victims, the modal frequencies for the ages of male and female victims were in the range 31 to 40 years, across both 1999 and 2000.

**Figure 2.1: The age distribution of male and female victims recorded by the police**



The mean age of female victims in 2000 was 34 years, compared to 38 years for male victims. The distribution of ages for male and female *perpetrators* of domestic abuse is very similar to the age distribution for male and female victims.

### **Relationship between victim and perpetrator**

Male victims were significantly<sup>21</sup> more likely to be abused by a current partner than were female victims. In 30 per cent of incidents involving female victims the perpetrator was an ex-spouse or ex-partner. In 28 per cent of incidents involving male victims the perpetrator was an ex-spouse or ex-partner<sup>22</sup>.

### **Previous experiences of domestic abuse for male and female victims**

Because the data for 1999 is incomplete in important sections, our analysis of the data regarding the number of previous experiences of domestic abuse encountered by victims relies exclusively on the data for 2000<sup>23</sup>. The majority (65 per cent) of incidents the police attended involved victims with no previous recorded experiences of domestic abuse<sup>24</sup>. This was especially the case for male victims. The police had no record of previous experiences of domestic abuse for 77 per cent of male victims compared with 63 per cent of female victims<sup>25</sup>. Male victims were less likely than female victims to have experienced previous abuse. For example, 19 per cent of male victims compared to 28 per cent of female victims were recorded as having experienced between one and

<sup>21</sup> Throughout this report a probability level of .05 is used as the critical level of significance. The level .05 demonstrates that the probability of this observable difference being due to chance is below 5%. In this case  $p = .005$  (Pearson Chi-Square = 8.020), indicating that it is very unlikely that the difference occurred by chance.

<sup>22</sup> The vast majority of incidents (93%) take place in the homes of either victims and/or perpetrators. Male victims (5.3%) appear to be involved in more incidents in the street than female victims (5.1%), but these differences are not statistically significant.

<sup>23</sup> In 1999 the Scottish Police did not record this information for 21% of all incidents, compared to 10.3% in 2000.

<sup>24</sup> It is unclear whether the time frame, to which this previous experience of domestic abuse refers, includes incidents before 1<sup>st</sup> January 2000.

<sup>25</sup> This difference was statistically significant; Pearson Chi Square = 182.280;  $p < .001$ .

three previous incidents of domestic abuse. Male victims were also less likely than female victims to have had four or more previous incidents come to the police's attention (four per cent of male victims compared with nine per cent of female victims).

Male victims of male perpetrators were significantly more likely than male victims of female perpetrators to have experienced at least one previous incident of domestic abuse<sup>26</sup>. Thirty-three per cent of male victims of male perpetrators compared to 23 per cent of male victims of female perpetrators were recorded as having experienced one or more previous incidents of domestic abuse. Furthermore, seven per cent of male victims of male perpetrators, compared to four per cent of male victims of female perpetrators were recorded as having experienced four or more previous incidents of abuse.

In short, women appear to be more likely to be known to the police as repeat victims of domestic abuse. Men who have had male partners appear to be more likely to be known to the police as repeat victims than men who have had female partners.

### **Classification of Incidents as 'not crimes or offences'**

After an incident of domestic abuse is reported to the police, the officers who attend have to decide whether or not the incident constitutes an offence, a crime<sup>27</sup>, or neither of these. In 2000, the Scottish Police classified 63 per cent of incidents involving male victims as neither crimes nor offences. The comparative figure for female victims was 56 per cent. This disparity represents a statistically significant difference<sup>28</sup>. As Figure 2.2 illustrates there appear to be some variations by force in terms of the practice of 'no criming'<sup>29</sup>. Some police forces rarely record incidents as crimes or offences when no further action is taken, whereas other police forces always record incidents as crimes or offences, irrespective of whether they plan to take action against the perpetrators<sup>30</sup>. Not only do such disparities in recording practice affect the proportion of incidents that lead to the recording of a crime or offence (which in 2000 ranges from 23 per cent in Central to 94 per cent in Dumfries and Galloway), but they also influence the proportion of recorded crimes and offences that are subsequently referred to the Procurator Fiscal.

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<sup>26</sup> Pearson Chi Square = 7.218; p = .007.

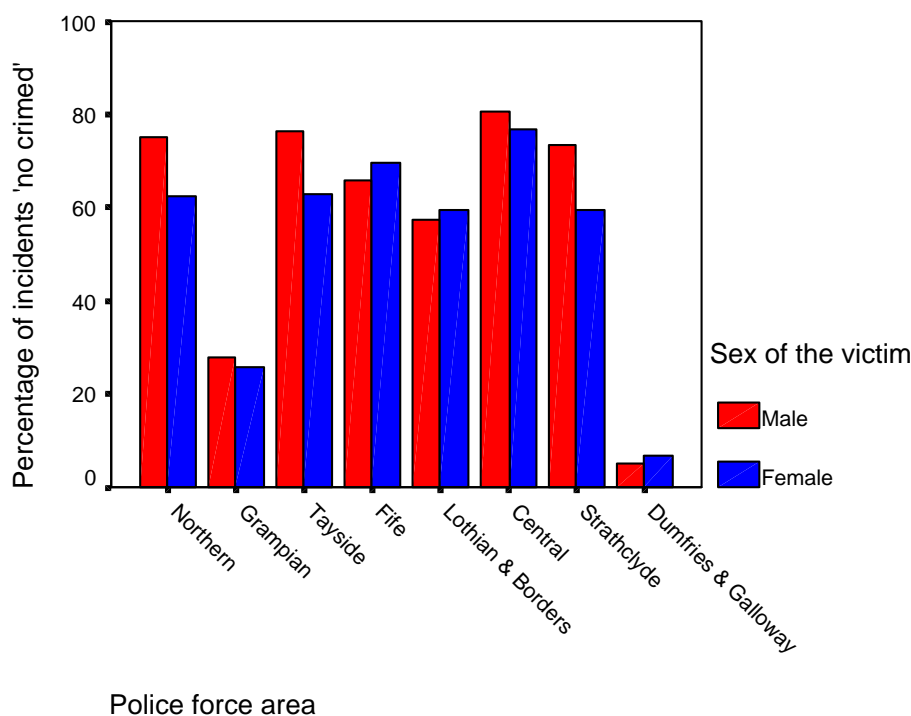
<sup>27</sup> In the Statistical Bulletin (Scottish Executive, 2001: 4), crimes are defined as being "*generally* regarded as more serious than offences". For convenience we use these words interchangeably in this report.

<sup>28</sup> Pearson Chi-Square = 57.211; p < .001.

<sup>29</sup> We use the term 'no criming' to refer to incidents in which the offence type is reported by the police as 'not a crime', not to question the police classification of these incidents.

<sup>30</sup> See Scottish Executive (2001: 6).

**Figure 2.2: Incidents of domestic abuse ‘no crimed’ in Scotland by gender of victim and police force area**



For example, Grampian and Dumfries and Galloway ‘no crime’ a minority of incidents (26 per cent and six per cent respectively), whereas the other six forces in Scotland record the majority of incidents as neither crimes nor offences<sup>31</sup>. Nevertheless, police forces that generally ‘no crime’ incidents do so at similar rates for male and female victims. For example, Dumfries and Galloway classify most incidents of domestic abuse as either crimes or offences, irrespective of whether the victim is male or female.

Incidents involving male victims are ‘no crimed’ at slightly higher rates than incidents involving female victims in five police forces (Northern, Tayside, Central, Strathclyde and Grampian); these differences are statistically significant in three forces (Northern<sup>32</sup>, Tayside<sup>33</sup> and Strathclyde<sup>34</sup>). Three forces (Dumfries & Galloway, Fife and Lothian & Borders) ‘no crime’ incidents involving male victims at slightly lower rates than incidents involving female victims. However, these differences are small and do not reach a level of statistical significance. In short, incidents involving male victims are ‘no crimed’ at a slightly higher rate than incidents involving female victims in Scotland. These differences, although slight and variable between forces, appear to be independent of particular forces’ policies on the criminalisation of domestic abuse.

### Types of Crimes and Offences

In 1999, 21 per cent of all domestic abuse incidents were classified as petty assaults. In 2000 this figure remained stable at 19 per cent of all incidents. In both 1999 and 2000, 18 per cent of all domestic abuse incidents were treated as breaches of the peace. The proportion of domestic abuse incidents that were recorded as serious offences also

<sup>31</sup> The mean rate of ‘no criming’ for the remaining six regions was 62%.

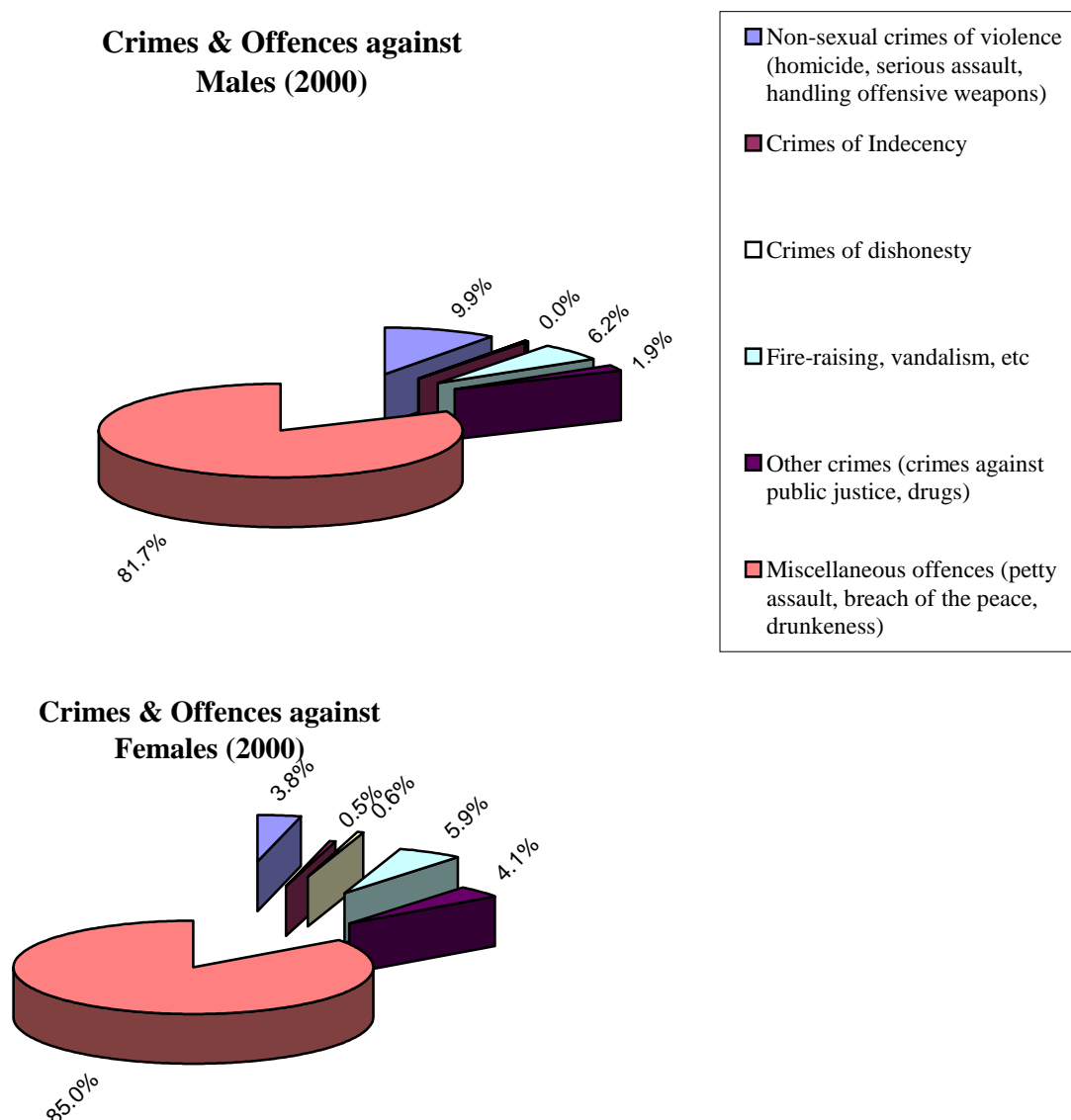
<sup>32</sup> Pearson Chi-Square = 11.334;  $p = .001$ .

<sup>33</sup> Pearson Chi-Square = 15.012;  $p < .001$ .

<sup>34</sup> Pearson Chi-Square = 98.925;  $p < .001$ .

remained stable (five and seven per cent for 1999 and 2000 respectively). Where a crime was recorded it was most likely to be vandalism (three per cent in 2000, 1.6 per cent in 1999) or non-sexual violence (two per cent in 2000, 1.5 per cent in 1999). As Figures 2.3 and 2.4 indicate, slightly different patterns of offences and crimes were recorded for male victims and female victims across both years. For example, male victims were less likely than female victims to report crimes of indecency, but were more likely to report non-sexual crimes of violence. Nevertheless, four out of every five offences or crimes committed against men and women were petty assaults or breaches of the peace.

**Figures 2.3 and 2.4: Types of crimes committed against male and female victims**

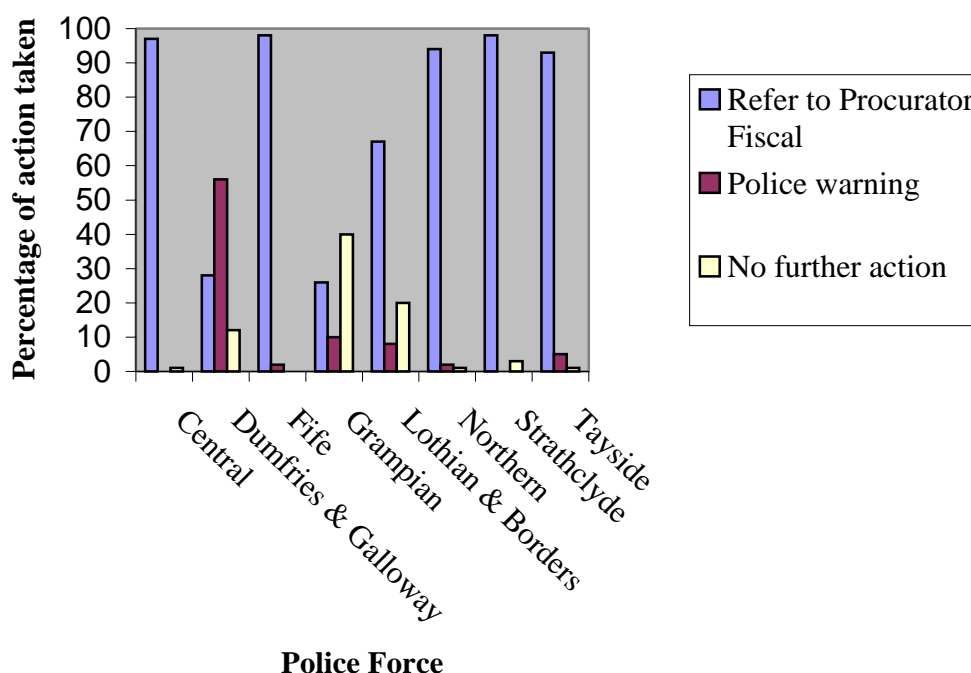


### Police Action

Some police forces consistently referred almost all identified perpetrators of domestic abuse to the Procurator Fiscal during 1999 and 2000, e.g. Central (92 per cent in 1999 and 97 per cent in 2000), Fife (85 per cent in 1999 and 98 per cent in 2000), Northern (94 per cent in both 1999 and 2000), Strathclyde (95 per cent in 1999 and 98 per cent in 2000) and Tayside (83 per cent in 1999 and 93 per cent in 2000). Other forces had lower rates of referral to the Procurator Fiscal, e.g. Dumfries and Galloway (30 per cent in 1999

and 28 per cent in 2000), Grampian (28 per cent in 1999 and 26 per cent in 2000) and Lothian and Borders (58 per cent in 1999 and 67 per cent in 2000). As Figure 2.5 (below) illustrates, Dumfries and Galloway, Grampian, and Lothian and Borders all made greater use of ‘police warnings’ in 2000 than the other five forces. This greater use of ‘police warnings’ may help explain why Dumfries and Galloway, Grampian, and Lothian and Borders referred proportionally fewer identified perpetrators to the Procurator Fiscal despite identifying a greater proportion of incidents as crimes.

**Figure 2.5: Action taken by the police by police force area in 2000**



When crimes of domestic abuse were committed against male victims in 2000, the police were significantly less likely to refer the case to the Procurator Fiscal than when the victim was female<sup>35</sup>. The police referred 67 per cent of cases involving female perpetrators of abuse against male victims to the Procurator Fiscal compared with 74 per cent of cases involving male perpetrators against female victims<sup>36</sup>. When the victim was male, the police were almost twice as likely to issue a warning to the assailant<sup>37</sup>.

<sup>35</sup> Pearson Chi-Square = 30.478;  $p < .001$ .

<sup>36</sup> This represented a statistically significant difference; Pearson Chi-Square = 23.926;  $p < .001$ .

<sup>37</sup> This represented a statistically significant difference; Pearson Chi-Square = 38.860;  $p < .001$ .

**Table 2.3<sup>38</sup>: The rates of police action by the sexes of the victim/perpetrator**

Victim / perpetrator	Action taken as a percentage of each group of victims/perpetrators (2000)				Total number of incidents
	Refer to Procurator Fiscal	Police Warning	Other Action	No Further Action	
Female / Male	74.2	5.9	6.9	13.1	33,458
Male / Female	66.8	10.7	8.6	13.9	2,612
Male / Male	56.3	11.3	14.1	18.3	158
Female / Female	55.1	8.2	14.3	22.4	112
MEAN	73.6	6.2	7.0	13.2	36,340

As Table 2.3 indicates, the police take ‘no further action’ or ‘other action’<sup>39</sup> more often in incidents involving same-sex couples. This accounts for the relatively low percentage of referrals to the Procurator Fiscal in 2000 for incidents in which male victims are abused by male partners. When we dichotomised the above groups of victims and perpetrators into same-sex and opposite-sex couples, there was a statistically significant difference in the nature of the police action taken. The police were more likely to have taken ‘no further action’ and ‘other actions’ for the same-sex couples than they were for the opposite-sex couples<sup>40</sup>.

#### **Why are incidents against male victims less likely to be referred to the Procurator Fiscal?**

Although incidents against male victims were less likely to be categorised as crimes *and* less likely to be referred to the Procurator Fiscal, this seemingly lesser ‘criminalisation’ of those who perpetrate abuse against men is not necessarily a consequence of ‘police bias’ in favour of women. The lesser criminalisation of offences against men may be a consequence of both sex differences in victims’ willingness to make an official complaint and/or sex differences in the context and nature of the abuse encountered. In Scotland, police decisions about whether or not to refer to the Procurator Fiscal are heavily circumscribed by the availability of *corroborating evidence*, and concomitantly, the *complainer being willing to make an official complaint* (Goodall & McKay, 1998).

Whether or not male victims were more or less willing than female victims in 2000 to make official complaints is impossible to tell from this dataset. Similarly, whilst there is some evidence to suggest that male victims experience the various types of domestic abuse at different rates to female victims (Figures 2.3 & 2.4, p19), it is impossible to know whether the abuse experienced by male and female victims is different in *both* its severity and conspicuousness. However, there is some evidence to suggest that corroborating evidence was more likely to be available in cases involving female victims.

<sup>38</sup> The numbers used to calculate the percentages in Table 2.3 differ greatly between the four groups. For example, only 27 female perpetrators against female victims were referred to the Procurator Fiscal compared with 10,906 male perpetrators against female victims.

<sup>39</sup> ‘Other action’ typically entails referrals to Domestic Abuse Liaison Officers, Family Welfare Liaison Officers, Victim Support, Social Services, refuges or Housing Agencies, and/or advising the victim, perpetrator, or relatives.

<sup>40</sup> Pearson Chi-Square = 20.998;  $p < .001$ .

When the Scottish Police encounter incidents in which an ex-partner is present in the complainant's home it is likely to be clear whether or not the ex-partner is unlawfully intruding and/or breaching the peace. Moreover, complainants might be more willing to make official complaints if they are no longer in a relationship with the accused<sup>41</sup>. Hence, one of the reasons why male perpetrators against female victims were more likely to be arrested and referred to the Procurator Fiscal than female perpetrators against male victims is probably attributable to the slightly greater proportion of ex-partners amongst the male perpetrator population. In 2000, the police were significantly more likely to deem incidents of abuse against women 'crimes' if the perpetrator was an ex-partner (as opposed to a current spouse or cohabitee)<sup>42</sup>. Similarly, in incidents where ex-partners perpetrated domestic abuse against male victims, the police were significantly more likely to refer the case to the Procurator Fiscal than when the incident involved a current spouse or cohabitee<sup>43</sup>. Female perpetrators who were ex-partners were thus more likely to have had their behaviour deemed criminal<sup>44</sup> and referred to the Procurator Fiscal<sup>45</sup> than female perpetrators who were either married or co-habiting with their (male) victims.

In short, the smaller proportion of ex-partners amongst the population of perpetrators who abuse men is *part* of the explanation as to why incidents involving male victims have been less likely to be deemed criminal by the police, and have resulted in fewer referrals to the Procurator Fiscal.

## Summary

The Scottish Police statistics present a fairly 'orthodox' picture of men and women's involvement in domestic abuse incidents. The vast majority of incidents involve male perpetrators abusing female victims. The Scottish Police encounter many more repeat female victims than repeat male victims, and many more female victims of ex-partners than male victims of ex-partners. Police responses to male victims have to be understood, at least in part, in terms of the different contexts in which domestic abuse takes place, i.e. in same-sex and opposite-sex relationships, between partners and ex-partners, and between partners with no previous histories of abuse and those already known to them.

Although the police statistics suggest that male victims of male perpetrators come to the police's attention more frequently as repeat victims (than male victims of female partners) it is unclear whether this is evidence of a greater prevalence (or seriousness) of repeat victimisation amongst male same-sex couples, differential reporting rates, or a greater willingness amongst the police to record repeated incidents of abuse between male partners.

Similarly, variations between forces may reflect either real geographical differences in rates of abuse, different reporting patterns for different sub-sections of the population, or variations in recording practices. However, sudden changes in the rates of incidents against male victims and the proportion of male victims victimised by male partners suggest that these differences are to some extent driven by police policy and/or recording practices.

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<sup>41</sup> See also Hoyle, 1998 for a similar conclusion about English victims of domestic abuse.

<sup>42</sup> Pearson Chi-Square = 166.063;  $p < .001$ .

<sup>43</sup> Pearson Chi-Square = 9.466;  $p < .001$ .

<sup>44</sup> Pearson Chi-Square = 35.213;  $p < .001$ .

<sup>45</sup> Pearson Chi-Square = 9.603;  $p = .002$ .



The statistics suggest a complex picture of police action. When men were victims the police seem to have been less likely to deem as crimes the actions of female perpetrators, relative to the other couple groupings. When men were perpetrators the police appear to have been more likely to deem the incident a crime or an offence than when women were perpetrators. It is impossible to tell from this dataset the extent to which police action was mediated by the severity of the incidents, perpetrators' responses to the police at the scene, and/or the victims' wishes. Nevertheless, the statistics do lend support to the hypothesis that the greater criminalisation of incidents perpetrated by men (and lesser criminalisation of incidents perpetrated against men) owes much to the *slightly greater concentration of ex-partners in the population of male perpetrators who abuse women*. The police appear to have used warnings more frequently in incidents involving male victims than in incidents involving female victims. The police have tended to take 'no further action' or 'other action' more frequently when the abuse has involved same-sex couples than when it has involved opposite-sex couples.

## CHAPTER THREE – MALE VICTIMS IN THE SCOTTISH CRIME SURVEY 2000<sup>46</sup>

### The Main Sweep of the Scottish Crime Survey 2000

MVA interviewed 5,059 people for the Scottish Crime Survey (SCS) 2000, all of whom answered questions in the main sweep. A sub-sample of 1,876 people aged 16-59 (all of whom had a partner or contact with an ex-partner at the time) also answered an additional self-completion questionnaire that dealt with issues around drug use and domestic abuse. The additional analyses provided in this chapter are based on those 1,876 responses. It is important to note that these 1,876 responses refer to abuse perpetrated by partners and ex-partners only, to the exclusion of abuse perpetrated by other relatives and household members.

The main sweep of the SCS 2000 uncovered very different rates of domestic abuse to the self-completion questionnaire. When asked in the main sweep whether they had experienced violence involving a partner, ex-partner, household member or other relatives only 0.25 per cent of men and 1.28 per cent of women responded positively<sup>47</sup>. The findings of the main sweep suggested that women were over five times more likely than men to have experienced a *domestic assault* within the previous twelve months. Men were two and half times more likely than women to be victims of violent crime in the previous twelve months, but most of this violence was perpetrated by acquaintances and strangers – only five per cent was ‘domestic’. Conversely, domestic violence was by far the most common form of violent crime perpetrated against women – 64 per cent of violent crime against females being ‘domestic’ (MacPherson, 2002).

More men and women reported experiences of domestic violence in the 2000 main sweep than in the 1996 main sweep. This was probably because in the 2000 main sweep a new question was introduced. In previous sweeps respondents were asked only whether they had been ‘threatened’ or ‘assaulted’. In 2000 respondents were also asked:

*Apart from anything you have already mentioned, in the time since the 1<sup>st</sup> January 1999, has any member of your household (aged 16 or over) deliberately hit you with their fists, or with a weapon of any sort, or kicked you, or used force on you in any way. (MVA, 2000: 3)*

In Scotland in 1995 three per cent of men had experienced violent crime in the last twelve months. In 1999 the figure rose to five per cent. However, in 1995 only three per cent of the assaults on men were ‘domestic’. The percentage of assaults on men that were ‘domestic’ rose to five per cent when the new question was introduced in 1999. In comparison, in 1995 two per cent of women had experienced a violent crime within the last twelve months, 30 per cent of which was ‘domestic’. The percentage of assaults on women that were ‘domestic’ rose to 64 per cent when the new question was introduced in

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<sup>46</sup> When analyses were being carried out for this chapter, the report on the domestic violence questions from the SCS 2000 had not been finalised. Hence, some figures in this chapter do not exactly match those quoted in MacPherson (2002). The weighting factors used in MacPherson’s (2002) analyses mean that percentages cannot be simply calculated from the raw numbers supplied. In our own analyses we did not apply the weightings. What is important, given the relatively small samples involved, are the relationships between figures for men and for women rather than the somewhat spurious accuracy achieved through the presentation of percentages.

<sup>47</sup> These figures are based on the rounded percentages in MVA (2002: 5-6).

1999. In short, the new question elicited more reports of domestic violence from the Scottish population, although this increase was much less marked for men.

### **The SCS Self-completion Questionnaire**

The use of the domestic abuse self-completion questionnaire – in both the SCS 1996 and SCS 2000 - uncovered rates of victimisation amongst men half the size of those rates reported for women<sup>48</sup>. This was in spite of the self-completion questionnaire's focus on partners and ex-partners, to the exclusion of abuse perpetrated by 'other relatives and household members' referred to in the main sweep questions. Having answered a number of questions about drug use, those responding to the SCS 2000 self-completion questionnaire encountered a section about:

*Things which may have happened between you and your partner. By a partner we mean anyone you have been married to or anyone you have had a relationship with (in other words, any husband, wife, boyfriend or girlfriend).*

Respondents were then asked if any of their current or ex-partners had ever:

- Said frightening things to them (such as threatening to harm them or someone close to them, such as their children).
- Used force towards them (this included grabbing, pushing, shaking, hitting, kicking etc).

Respondents were instructed to describe their relationship with the person in question, before commenting on;

- the frequency of threats<sup>49</sup> and force they experienced;
- the injuries they sustained;
- whether they went to see a doctor;
- whether they considered the act to be 'a crime';
- whether the police were informed;
- the nature of the force used;
- whether the person responsible had been drinking or using drugs at the time;
- whether any children saw or heard what happened on any occasion, and;
- whether they felt they were a victim of domestic violence<sup>50</sup>.

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<sup>48</sup> Slightly fewer men reported experiences of domestic abuse in 1999 than in 1995.

<sup>49</sup> Like MVA we use the term 'threats' to refer to the question about 'frightening things'. We appreciate these two things are not necessarily equivalent, and do this only for brevity. Likewise we use the term 'forced' to refer to reports of 'force' in the past tense, although we recognise that in some cases this entails definitional imprecision.

In response to these questions, two to three times as many women reported incidents of domestic abuse than men did. On the basis of the findings of this self-completion questionnaire MacPherson (2002) estimated that in Scotland in 1999:

- Nineteen per cent of women and eight per cent of men had experienced either *threats or force* from a partner at some point in their lifetime.
- Fifteen per cent of women and five per cent of men had experienced both *threats and force* from a partner at some point in their lifetime.
- Five per cent of women and two per cent of men had experienced *threats* within the last twelve months.
- Five per cent of women and two per cent of men had experienced *force* within the last twelve months.
- Six per cent of women and three per cent of men had experienced either *threats or force* within the last twelve months.
- Four per cent of women and two per cent of men had experienced both *threats and force* within the last twelve months.

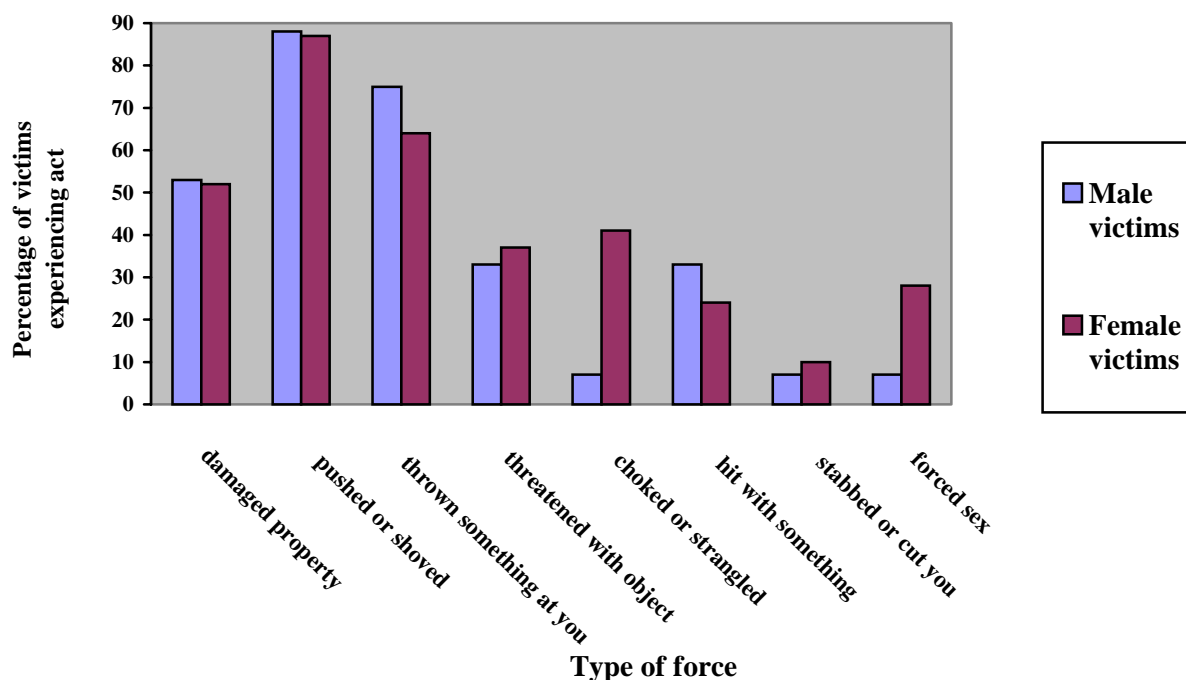
Men and women in the age group 16 to 24 years were more likely than older age groups to have received force or threats within the last twelve months. However, men in this age group were much less vulnerable to victimisation than women. Female victims were twice as likely as male victims to report that threats had taken place ‘at least once a week’, and six times more likely to say that force had taken place ‘at least once a week’.

Those respondents who indicated that they had been forced or threatened within the last twelve months were asked if their partner or ex-partner had done any of the following eight things to them: damaged their property, pushed or shoved them, thrown something at them, threatened them with an object, choked or strangled them, hit them with something, stabbed or cut them, and forced sex on them. Sixteen men and 55 women responded to these questions, although response rates were as low as 14 (for men) and 50 (for women) on some questions – notably the questions about being choked or strangled, cut or stabbed, or forced to have sex.

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<sup>50</sup> Note that respondents were not asked whether they considered themselves to be victims of ‘domestic abuse’.

**Figure 3.1: Nature of force by gender of victim**



Consistent with the findings of the British Crime Survey 1996 (Mirrlees-Black, 1998), the SCS 2000 uncovered that being pushed and shoved was the most common form of force used against partners (87 per cent of female victims and 88 per cent of male victims reported that this had happened), followed by having things thrown at them (64 per cent of female victims and 75 per cent of male victims), and damage to property (52 per cent of female victims and 53 per cent of male victims). In contrast to the findings of the 1996 Scottish Crime Survey, in the SCS 2000 a smaller proportion of male than female victims reported being stabbed or cut. Male victims were significantly less likely than female victims to report being choked or strangled<sup>51</sup>. This is the only variable out of the eight for which there was a statistically significant difference between male and female victims' responses.

Nevertheless, 53 per cent (n=10) of male victims reported that they had sustained an injury as a consequence of the force used against them, compared to 70% (n=40) of female victims in 1999. This finding suggests that many of those men identified as victims of domestic abuse had experienced relatively severe assaults on at least one occasion, even if most of the abuse experienced by these men would not have caused injury (as Figure 3.1 indicates). However, none of the men reported going to see the doctor as a consequence of the force they had experienced, compared with 44% (n=7) of women. This may be because there were very few men who reported being subjected to the kinds of force most likely to cause injuries that require medical attention, i.e. being stabbed or cut, forced into sex, and/or choked or strangled.

The police were three times more likely to be informed of abuse against women than men (47 per cent of female victims (n=27) compared with 16 per cent of male victims (n=3)). This may be partly attributable to male victims' tendency not to consider the abuse they have experienced 'criminal'. Only five per cent (n=1) of the male victims interviewed for the SCS 2000 indicated that they felt the abuse they had experienced constituted 'a

<sup>51</sup> Pearson Chi-Square = 6.212; p = .013.

crime', compared with 43 per cent of female victims (n=24)<sup>52</sup>. Rather, male victims tended to define their experiences as either 'just something that happens' (53 per cent, n=10) or 'wrong, but not a crime' (42 per cent, n=8). Male victims (39 per cent, n=35) were significantly less likely than female victims (77 per cent, n=225) to define their experience as 'domestic violence'<sup>53</sup>.

Men and women's perceptions of the abuse were often related to whether or not they sustained injuries. Eighty per cent of men (n=8) and 83 per cent of women (n=33) who reported sustaining injuries as a result of force from their partners or ex-partners considered themselves to be victims of domestic violence. All of those male victims (n=8) who considered themselves victims of crime and/or domestic violence had been injured as a consequence of their partner's behaviour. Conversely, only half of the non-injured female victims defined themselves as victims of domestic violence (n = 8), and only one quarter of the non-injured female victims considered the abuse to be 'a crime' (n = 4).

### ***Estimating incidents reported to the police***

One question we wanted to explore using the Scottish Crime Survey 2000 was whether the gender ratio of calls to the police (as reported in Chapter Two) reflected different patterns of victimisation and reporting for men and women. If, for example, the patterns of victimisation and reporting do not help explain the low proportion of male victims in police statistics one might infer that many men who see themselves as victims are not being recognised as such by the police.

For the purposes of comparison with the calls to the police data we set about calculating the different rates at which male and female victims of 'force' and 'threat' contacted the police using the SCS (2000) datasets. The SCS asked those who had experienced force or threats within the last twelve months whether the police *ever* came to know about *any* of the incidents when their partners 'used force'. Sixteen percent (n = 3) of male victims compared with forty-seven percent (n = 27) of female victims stated that the police had come to know about at least one of these incidents. Hence, less than one in six incidents of victimisation against male victims had been reported to the police, compared with almost one in two incidents against female victims.

As we have already explained, MacPherson (2002) reports that six per cent of women and three per cent of men in Scotland had experienced threats or force within the last twelve months. If we assume that the police come to know about 47 per cent of those six per cent of women who had experienced force or threats, and 16 per cent of those three per cent of men who had experienced force or threats, one can attempt a *very rough and tentative estimation* of the gender ratio of calls to the police.

In 1999 the adult<sup>54</sup> Scottish population was 4.1 million: two million men and 2.1 million women<sup>55</sup>. Using the rates of abuse uncovered in the SCS 2000 self-completion questionnaire, one would expect 60,000 men (three per cent of two million) and 126,000 women (six per cent of 2.1 million) to have experienced some form of force or threat from a partner in the previous year. On MacPherson's estimates, one might expect the police to actually receive information regarding 9,600 men (16 per cent of 60,000) and

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<sup>52</sup> This difference is statistically significant. Pearson Chi-Square = 8.125; p = .004.

<sup>53</sup> Pearson Chi-Square = 45.543; p < .001.

<sup>54</sup> 16 years old and above.

<sup>55</sup> Office for National Statistics (General Register Office for Scotland, 2001).

59,000 women (47 per cent of 126,000). Such a rough estimate would lead one to expect that 85 per cent of calls to the police would be about female victims, and 15 per cent would be about male victims.

This estimate reaffirms the impression given in the statistical bulletins and wider literature that the vast majority of calls to the police are about women's victimisation. It also, however, might lead one to suspect that men's victimisation by partners is being undercounted or under acknowledged by the police – the statistical bulletin suggesting that men are victims in seven per cent of cases, not 15 per cent. However, this latter hypothesis is not necessarily supported by our re-estimation. Our estimate is not a precise calculation. It is based on some assumptions that over-count the number of incidents against men likely to come to the police's attention. The calculation is not sensitive to the issue of repeat victimisation, differential levels of tolerance to repeat victimisation amongst men and women, and the relationship of both of these factors to individual victims' willingness to report. The SCS (2000) data suggests much higher levels of repeat victimisation amongst women, raising the (strong) possibility that women will have experienced more incidents of abuse and will have reported on more occasions than the statistics about the police 'ever' coming to know about it can reveal.

Therefore this 85 per cent rough estimate should be seen as an absolute minimum figure for the proportion of calls to the police in which the victim is female. Research that is based on detailed information about repeat victimisation in the previous year and sensitive to the relationship between repeat victimisation and calls to the police, would almost certainly uncover a ratio of male to female incidents of victimisation much closer to the 93: 7 inferred in the Statistical Bulletin (Scottish Executive, 2000).

### ***Safety, substances and the presence of children***

We cross-tabulated responses provided in the self-completion questionnaire with those given to questions in the main sweep to investigate whether there were any other relevant variables which distinguished male victims of 'force or threats' from female victims of 'force or threats'. We discovered that male victims were:

- Significantly more likely than female victims to report feeling 'very' or 'fairly safe' in their own homes<sup>56</sup>. Ninety-eight per cent of male victims said this, compared to 85 per cent of female victims.
- Significantly less likely than female victims to report that their partner had been drinking at the times when force was used<sup>57</sup>.

There were no significant differences between male and female victims in terms of:

- Reporting that children had heard any of the domestic abuse incidents.
- Whether the perpetrator had used drugs.

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<sup>56</sup> Pearson Chi-Square = 10.249; p < .001.

<sup>57</sup> Pearson Chi-Square = 10.312; p = .016.

### *Income, health and housing*

Further analyses revealed a number of demographic differences between male and female victims and non-victims of force and threats by partners. For example:

- Victims of domestic abuse were more likely to live in rented accommodation than non-victims<sup>58</sup>. This trend was more marked when the victim was female (60 per cent) than when the victim was male (46 per cent)<sup>59</sup>.
- Victims of abuse said they would find it harder to get immediate access to money in a hurry<sup>60</sup> and had lower household incomes<sup>61</sup> than non-victims. Female victims were typically poorer than male victims, reflecting – at least in part - the greater poverty of women in the wider Scottish population.
- Female victims (49 per cent) were significantly more likely to be separated or divorced than male victims (31 per cent)<sup>62</sup>.
- Female victims (52 per cent) were significantly more likely to be unemployed or in part-time employment than male victims (19 per cent)<sup>63</sup>. Again, this trend reflected general patterns of employment for men and women in Scotland, not a clear victimisation effect.
- Female victims were significantly less likely to report having ‘good’ health than both female non-victims<sup>64</sup> and male victims<sup>65</sup>. Male victims did not generally report poorer health than male non-victims.

In short, it seems that victims experience more financial hardship than non-victims, and that patterns of financial hardship are likely to be more acute for female victims than for male victims. Research on female victims suggests that this financial hardship is often a consequence of factors connected to victimisation (for example, separation or divorce, partners denying each other access to money, etc.) although women living in financially insecure households are also often at greater risk of abuse (Walby & Myhill, 2000).

Interestingly, when we compared the financial status of male victims and non-victims *who were married*, the relevance of financial hardship seemed less clear-cut. In particular, male victims who were married were similar to married male non-victims in terms of their financial income, role as main wage earner, and in their ability to get immediate access to money. Financial differences between male and female married victims were also less pronounced. Married male victims were significantly more likely than married female victims to be main wage earners, although there were no observable

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<sup>58</sup> Pearson Chi-Square = 72.081;  $p < .001$ .

<sup>59</sup> This difference was also statistically significant; Pearson Chi-Square = 5.615;  $p = .018$ .

<sup>60</sup> For example, 65 per cent of victims stated that they would find it a problem obtaining immediate access to £100, compared with 42 per cent of non-victims. This difference was statistically significant; Pearson Chi-Square = 73.590;  $p < .001$ .

<sup>61</sup> Seventy-five per cent of victims recorded their earnings as less than £20,000 per year compared with 54 per cent of non-victims. This difference was statistically significant; Pearson Chi-Square = 41.532;  $p < .001$ .

<sup>62</sup> Pearson Chi-Square = 6.398;  $p = .011$ .

<sup>63</sup> Pearson Chi-Square = 24.347;  $p < .001$ .

<sup>64</sup> Pearson Chi-Square = 18.429;  $p < .001$

<sup>65</sup> Pearson Chi-Square = 4.909;  $p < .027$ .



differences with regards to married men and women's annual household incomes and abilities to get immediate access to money.

## Summary

The introduction of a new question about domestic assaults in the main sweep of the SCS appeared to elicit more reports of abuse than the original main sweep question format. These extra reports were mostly elicited from women. Self-completion questions about experiences of force or threats from partners seemed to elicit many more positive responses from male and female respondents than the interviewer-guided questions about assault used in the main sweep. This methodological effect may be due to both the enhanced levels of confidentiality the self-completion questionnaire facilitated, together with its capacity to deal with abuses which commonsensically were not regarded as sufficiently serious to call 'assaults'.

The self-completion questionnaire uncovered many more men who had experienced force or threats from partners, and concomitantly, a narrower gap between the sexes in terms of rates of (what might be called) 'domestic abuse'. The findings of the self-completion questionnaire suggest that rates of domestic abuse against women were around two times higher than men's, irrespective of whether one takes the 'previous twelve month' figure or the 'lifetime' figure. Whilst rates of injury against men were fairly high, female victims were slightly more likely to sustain injury, and were much more likely to go to the doctor. Using the findings of the SCS alone one cannot tell whether this was because male victims were more reluctant than women to go the doctor or because the injuries men sustained were less severe. Findings indicating that women were more likely to be strangled, cut or stabbed, and/or forced into sex lend support to the latter hypothesis.

Men were less likely than women to perceive their partners' force and threats as either 'domestic violence' or a 'crime'. However, whether victims perceived their experience as either 'domestic violence' or 'a crime' depended significantly on whether an injury was sustained. Those male victims who did not report injuries in the SCS 2000 tended not to define themselves as victims of domestic violence. These non-injured men rarely considered the abuse they had experienced as crimes. In fact, male victims were generally less likely than female victims to feel unsafe in their own homes, suggesting that domestic abuse is often less detrimental to the quality of life of male victims – although there were obviously exceptions to this rule.

Both male and female victims were likely to be poorer than non-victims, but economic disadvantage tended to be more acute for female victims, reflecting income inequalities between men and women in the general population of Scotland *and* relatedly the greater poverty experienced by single mothers in the UK (Oakley & Rigby, 1998). Female victims were more likely than male victims *and* female non-victims to report ill health. Conversely, male victims reported similar levels of health to male non-victims. Male victims were less likely to be divorced, less likely to live in rented accommodation and more likely to be in full-time employment than female victims. Some of the differences experienced by victims in terms of income levels and housing seemed to be mediated by marital status, and therefore may have been indirectly related to victimisation in many cases.

Comparing the SCS data on incidence and reporting with the data in the Scottish Executive's Statistical Bulletins (2000 & 2001) we found little evidence to suggest that men's experiences of victimisation were being systematically misrecognised by the police to a greater degree than women's experiences of victimisation were.

## CHAPTER FOUR – ABUSED MEN’S PERSPECTIVES

### Introduction

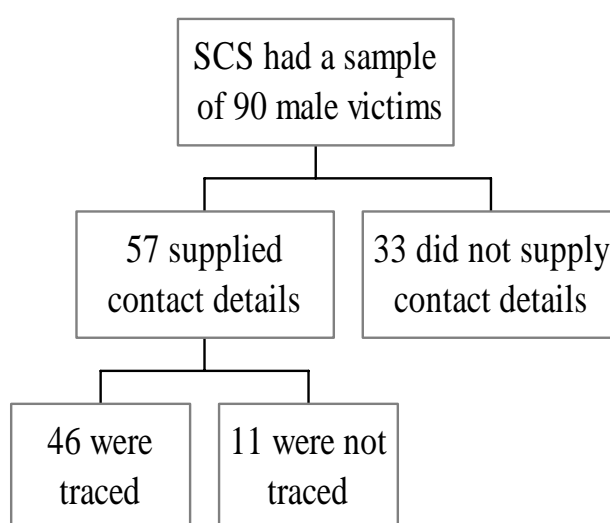
Whilst there are undoubtedly fewer male victims of domestic abuse than female victims in Scotland, the findings of the SCS 2000 self-completion questionnaire suggest that one in twelve men will be forced or threatened by a partner at some point in their life. In order to seek a better understanding of these abused men’s experiences and perspectives we retraced as many of those 90 men who had disclosed experiences of force or threat from partners in their self-completion responses to the SCS 2000 as we could. We asked those men who we successfully retraced whether they would be willing to participate in in-depth interviews about their experiences.

### Retracing Male Victims

When people undertake the SCS they are asked if they can be re-contacted if further research projects would benefit from their co-operation. Of those 90 men who disclosed some experiences of force or threat some 63 (70 per cent) responded positively to this question – slightly below the average (78 per cent) for the main sweep. We had insufficient contact details regarding six of these 63 men, hence, the maximum sample size we could possibly glean for our follow-up interviews was 57.

We made telephone contact with as many of these 57 men as possible, and wrote to all those whom we were unable to speak to. By using letters and telephone calls we managed to retrace 40 men from the original sample. We also visited the homes of most of those who did not reply to us, and managed to locate a further six men in this way. As indicated in Figure 4.1, in total we managed to make contact with 46 of the 57 men for whom we had some contact details<sup>66</sup>.

**Figure 4.1: Contacting SCS respondents**



<sup>66</sup> Of those 11 who were not traced, one did not report any victimisation in the SCS self-completion questionnaire according to the spreadsheets we received from MVA.

During the fieldwork we encountered 13 respondents who claimed to have never experienced any form of threat or force from a partner. We interviewed eight of these non-victim men in person. However, there were five men who said that it would be pointless to interview them because they had never experienced force or threats from their partners and ex-partners. Two of these men said they had never had partners, and in any case, neither of these men should have been given the self-completion questionnaire (one was under 16 years of age and the other was 71 years old<sup>67</sup>).

Those who were unwilling to participate in an in-depth interview were asked if they would simply confirm or deny the accuracy of the SCS record (either by telephone or by post). In total:

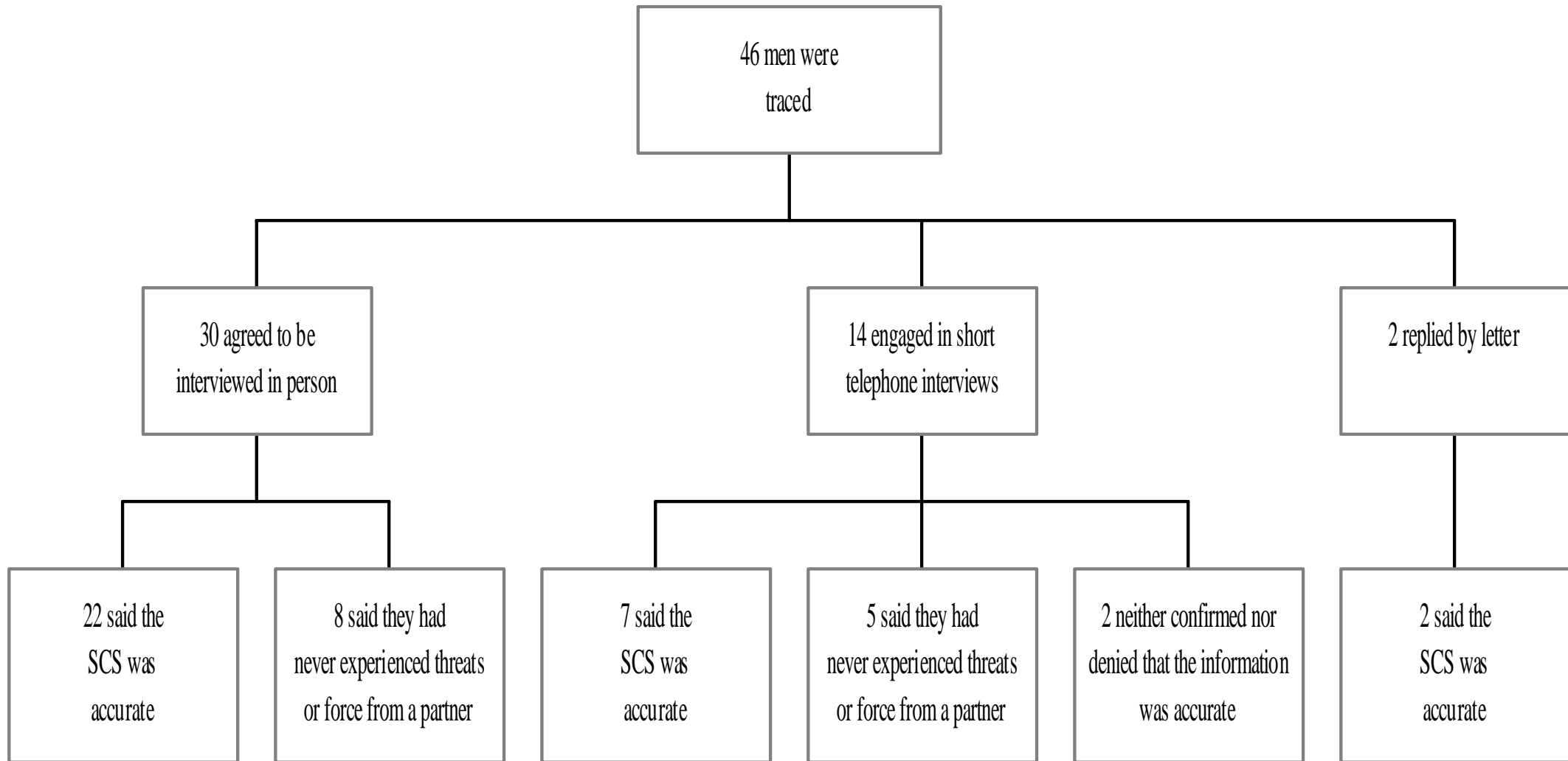
- Thirty-one men confirmed the accuracy of their record to us.
- Thirteen refuted the record, claiming not to have been forced or threatened by a partner.
- Two of the men we traced neither confirmed nor denied the accuracy of their record.

As Figure 4.2 indicates we interviewed 22 of these ‘confirmers’ and eight of these ‘refuters’ in-depth.

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<sup>67</sup> The self-completion questionnaire was only intended for respondents in the age range 16 to 59, and the SCS main sweep was for respondents of age 16 years and above.

**Figure 4.2: Responses of traced sample**



On the basis of these findings we believe that the actual rates of domestic abuse against men in Scotland are between 50 and 70 per cent of the figures quoted in MacPherson's (2002) analysis of the self-completion questionnaire<sup>68</sup>.

### **Qualitative Interviewing Methodology**

Those men who did agree to be interviewed in person (whether they turned out to be victims of domestic abuse or not) were given a choice of a male or female interviewer. Only one man specifically requested a female interviewer. No one requested a male interviewer. All interviewees were offered £10 to participate, however some men were subsequently offered £20<sup>69</sup>. All of our interviewees were asked whether they wanted to be interviewed in their own homes or in a location nearby. Four men accepted the offer of having an alternative venue arranged for them, although one of these did not show up for interview. One man was interviewed at his workplace, at his request.

The interview techniques we used were adapted from the Free Association Narrative Method (FANIM) depicted by Wendy Hollway and Tony Jefferson (2000). In short, the FANIM involves inviting interviewees to take as much time as they need to answer one 'big' interview question. Interviewees are encouraged to tell their story in their own words, whilst the interviewer facilitates with active listening, nods, and 'hmms'. Subsequent questions typically probe the actual narrative disclosed by the interviewee<sup>70</sup>. All interviews were tape-recorded (and subsequently transcribed and anonymised).

Having initially checked to see if their interviewee had any questions about the research, our interviewers would move on to collect a few basic demographic details: the interviewee's age, occupation, religion, marital status, living arrangements and the ages of any children. Our interviewers then said to the interviewee:

*You mentioned when you were interviewed for the Scottish Crime Survey that you had experienced threatening and/or forceful behaviour within a relationship you had with your current/ex-partner. Can you tell me the story of that relationship in your own words?*

The question would be tailored to the data we already had about the interviewee from the SCS 2000. Our interviewers only asked subsequent pre-planned questions<sup>71</sup> if the interviewee did not come on to talk about these issues in their own narrative account. At the end of the interview our interviewers asked interviewees if there was 'anything else they wanted to ask or tell them'. Our interviewers then asked their interviewee a few questions about their contact with service providers for victims.

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<sup>68</sup> We tested to see if our sample of interviewees were similar to those men who participated in the SCS self-completion questionnaire but were not interviewed by us (see Appendix A). Finding our sample to be broadly representative, we set about re-estimating rates of domestic abuse against men in Scotland, taking into account the number of victims counted in error (see Appendix B).

<sup>69</sup> Those that were paid £20 were typically those who were slow to respond to our invitation to participate. We thought these men might be more forthcoming if they were offered a larger financial incentive.

<sup>70</sup> The main difference between our approach and that advocated by Hollway and Jefferson, is that Hollway and Jefferson went back to their interviewees a second time in order to explore absences, avoidances and contradictions in the primary narrative. This was not feasible within the timescale and budget for our research.

<sup>71</sup> See Appendix C.

## Reasons for Inaccurate Reports of Abuse in the SCS 2000<sup>72</sup>

When we encountered men who said the responses recorded about them in the SCS self-completion questionnaires were inaccurate, we endeavoured to see if there were any reasons for these inaccuracies. Of course it is possible that some of these men fabricated stories – perhaps to avoid having to discuss their experiences of domestic abuse - but the impressions we formed from meeting these men and hearing their stories is that this was rarely, if ever, the case. Many of the men seemed genuinely surprised and, in some cases, annoyed that such information had been recorded about them. Two men were visibly upset about the insinuation that they had experienced domestic abuse. One man explained that he had never had a partner, and two interviewees invited their wives to verify their accounts.

Some of the reasons for misreporting were more comprehensible than others. For example, one man (Doug) who had been attacked by his girlfriend's other partner described an incident that was both 'domestic' (in the broader sense of the term) and serious. Doug depicted an incident in which his girlfriend's (female) partner had threatened him with a gun. Likewise another man (Leonard) had been involved in verbal altercations with a friend regarding his marriage. Both of these men may have wanted to draw issues to the attention of the SCS even though these issues were not strictly within the remit of the survey.

However, other cases centred on attacks that were clearly outside of an ongoing relationship. Three men reported having been assaulted by strangers in public places. We can only hypothesise that these men misread (or failed to read) the introduction to the self-completion questionnaire, being unaware that this part of the survey (unlike the main sweep) dealt exclusively with force and threat used by *partners*. Likewise, some men disclosed incidents of crime and disorder that were connected to their home lives but were not what is conventionally thought of as incidents of 'domestic abuse'. These men included: Clive, who had been frightened by 'trick or treaters' and had a bicycle stolen from his garden; Jonathon, who regularly intervened during physical and verbal altercations between men outside his home; Bill, whose front door was kicked down by a drug addict; and Ronald, who had rubbish thrown into his garden and had his fence set alight by local children.

### Men who had been abused by Partners

Only one of these 22 men had been abused by a male partner. The other 21 had been threatened or had force used against them by female partners. All were white, and described themselves as either 'Scottish' or 'British'. Three of the men interviewed were still living with an 'abusive partner', the remainder either lived alone (n=8), with other family members (n=4) or new (non-abusive) partners (n=7). Hardly any of these men had sought the support of statutory service providers following their victimisation. Consistent with the findings of the SCS 2000, the police were the agency most likely to come to know about the domestic abuse. Yet, only four of the 22 'confirmers' had been in contact with the police because of domestic abuse incidents.

For simplicity, we have categorised these 22 men into four groups on the basis of how they sought to depict themselves. As we shall indicate, in some cases, the men's

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<sup>72</sup> All names quoted are pseudonyms. For brevity we have appended our case summaries of the 22 'confirmers' who we interviewed in-depth. See Appendix B.

depictions of themselves as 'victims' did not correspond neatly with the details of the abuse they described. The four groups are as follows:

1. *Primary Instigators* – These are men who admitted that they instigated most of the abuse in their relationships (n = 1).
2. *Equal Combatants* – These men argued that their relationships were equally abusive on both sides (n = 4).
3. *Retaliators* – These men admitted having been abusive to their partners, but argued that this abuse occurred in the context of more prolonged or serious levels of abuse perpetrated against them by their partners (n = 8).
4. *Non-Retaliatory Victims* – These men said they were victims of their partner's abuse, but had never retaliated and had only used force to restrain partners who were physically attacking them (n = 9).

### **Primary Instigators**

Adam was a manual worker in his mid-twenties who did not see himself as a 'victim of domestic violence'. Indeed, he began his account by describing the time when he was arrested for assaulting his partner. Adam's violence took place in the context of his recurring sexual jealousy - the one time his partner had ever struck out at him coincided with him 'questioning her' about where she had been, and him gesturing as if he was going to kick her in the head. There was some evidence in Adam's narrative to suggest he was still using his children to control his partner. Adam was never prosecuted for his violence, his then fiancée having asked the police to drop the charges<sup>73</sup> against him. Adam had a history of heavy drinking and getting into fights with other men who 'stared' at his fiancée. Adam had never sought any counselling or support to address his violent temper.

### **Equal Combatants**

In our appendix case summaries the equal combatants are referred to as Barry (a soldier in his mid-thirties), Charlie (a professional worker in his early forties), Daniel (a farmer in his early thirties), and Eddie (an unemployed man in his late forties). Of these four men, only Charlie identified himself as a 'victim of domestic violence' in the Scottish Crime Survey 2000. Indeed, Daniel described a relationship in which there was no violence, only the kind of 'heated arguments' that (he felt) separating couples often have<sup>74</sup>. The 'threats' used against Daniel mostly seemed to be connected with his partner's reluctance to 'settle down' with him and her subsequent infidelity.

In contrast, Barry, Charlie, and Eddie described physically violent relationships in which their partners seemed to have sustained more injuries than they had. Interestingly, all three of these men said that they were provoked by their partners' words, behaviours or actions. These three men had much in common with Adam in terms of the way in which

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<sup>73</sup> In Scotland it is the Procurator Fiscal who usually brings charges against people. Colloquially though, the term 'pressing charges' is often used to refer to the complainant giving a statement to support the charge made.

<sup>74</sup> This was in spite of the fact that he had ticked the 'force' box in the SCS 2000 self-completion questionnaire.



they each rationalised their own violent behaviour. Nevertheless, Barry, Charlie, and Eddie varied considerably in terms of socio-economic and demographic characteristics, as well as in their levels of educational achievement.

Barry described a relationship with an underlying 'violent atmosphere' in which he would become 'riled' by Amy's ability to 'push the right button' during arguments. These arguments would often end in reciprocated bouts of violence. Amy had hit Barry with objects, and Barry had caused Amy to crack her head against a wall. Barry was arrested and charged for his violence, although Amy later had the charges against him dropped, after Barry had reminded her how a conviction would 'finish his career'. Interestingly, Barry described the police's response as helpful.

Although Barry and Amy had been to *Couple Counselling* they had since separated. Like several of the other military men we interviewed, Barry blamed the problems in his marriage on the social isolation and loneliness his career imposed on his partner. Also, like several other men in our sample, Barry attributed Amy's aggression to her physiology – 'postnatal depression' - and her inability to trust him. Amy apparently perceived the problem more in terms of Barry's heavy drinking, absence from the family home (which included his two children), and (alleged) infidelity.

Unlike Barry, Charlie was still living with his partner, Maureen. Charlie told us that some recent aspects of his relationship were 'too raw' to disclose. He described a 'stormy' marriage of 21 years during which he and his partner had used force against each other every couple of months. Although he claimed his violence was usually 'a counter to her original aggression', Charlie's account revealed that he had, at times, squared up to Maureen provoking her to hit him. Charlie's account also revealed that Maureen had sustained bruising to her face so severe that she could not work. Charlie said he had sustained cuts and scratches as a consequence of Maureen's behaviour, but this had not resulted in days off work or medical treatment. Charlie attributed the problems in his marriage to: Maureen's insecurities about his fidelity<sup>75</sup>; the fact that Maureen's mother had been murdered by an abusive (second) husband; and Maureen's tendency to dispute their problems in public.

Like Charlie, Eddie was still living with his wife (Doris). Eddie described both himself and his wife as 'handicapped'<sup>76</sup>. When asked more specifically about his relationship with Doris, Eddie told us how Doris would be violent when she had been drinking. Eddie described only one instance of his wife's violence; Doris scratching Eddie 'all over' when he spent £5 of their rent money. Eddie also claimed that Doris's drinking caused him to be violent; her drunkenness would get 'on his wick'. Eddie was particularly open in disclosing his violent behaviour towards Doris, describing times when he would bruise her, choke her and lock her in a room. Eddie also told us how he had avoided marking Doris's face because this would enable the police to arrest him. Eddie said he had stopped short of killing Doris because he did not want to be arrested, and because he had memories of being a victim of his father's violence. Eddie said he did, however, routinely threaten to call the police (and his mother-in-law) when Doris was drunk and irritating him.

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<sup>75</sup> Insecurities that appeared to be grounded.

<sup>76</sup> Learning disabled.

## Retaliators

These eight men are referred to as Frank (an unemployed factory worker in his late fifties); Gary (a labourer in his early forties); Harry (a street orderly in his early forties and the only gay man in our sample); Ivan (an unemployed manager in his fifties); Jimmy (presently a restaurant worker, but formerly a soldier, in his forties); Kenny (a sales director and trainee psychotherapist in his fifties); Liam (an engineer in his mid forties) and Michael (an engineer in his fifties). Three of these men considered themselves ‘victims of domestic violence’ (Gary, Ivan and Michael). These three men were the only retaliators to have received medical treatment for their injuries. Frank did not know whether he considered himself a ‘victim of domestic violence’ or not. The remaining four men (Harry, Jimmy, Kenny and Liam) did not consider themselves to be ‘victims of domestic violence’. The police had only come to know about incidents of domestic abuse in Gary and Jimmy’s relationships.

Gary and Michael’s stories were quite similar. Both men had married women who subjected them to life-threatening forms of violence (attacks that resulted in substantial blood loss) and both of these men’s partners had had violent reputations (Gary’s partner had killed her subsequent boyfriend). Likewise, both men described assaulting their partners in retaliation (punching and threatening to hit), and relationships in which abusive arguments were commonplace. Both men indicated that they felt so embarrassed that they had lied to friends and family about the source of injuries that they had sustained. This embarrassment, together with a desire not to publicise their problems, had protected their partners from being arrested<sup>77</sup>. Gary, however, had been arrested and fined for his own violence, whereas Michael had not.

Gary attributed his wife’s (Deborah) violence to her addictions to alcohol and Valium. He also said that Deborah had threatened to kill him, broken his window, and feigned injuries to get him arrested. Gary also claimed that after they had separated, Deborah had instructed her brother and another male friend to assault him. Deborah also harassed Gary by making nuisance telephone calls. Michael was still traumatised by the injury he sustained 20 years ago when his wife stabbed him in the back with a knife. Infidelity and a marriage based largely on an unexpected pregnancy were recurrent themes in Michael’s account of the abuse he experienced.

In contrast to Gary and Michael’s accounts, the abuse described in Ivan’s relationship was mostly verbal, although he had also been slapped and hit on the arm with a spade by his former partner (the latter incident requiring medical attention). Ivan depicted his ex-wife as a ‘drama queen’, and considered her reluctance to let him walk away from verbal confrontations as a form of abusive ‘force’. During one such incident Ivan had trapped his ex-wife’s finger in a door that he was using as a barrier (for which she needed medical attention). Infidelity and jealousy were sources of tension in Ivan’s relationship. The police were never notified of these incidents, but Ivan and his ex-wife did discuss their abusiveness in *Couple Counselling*.

Frank was the only ‘retaliator’ who had not experienced any force, only arguments. Frank told us how his wife, Hilary, and their children had left the family home to live in sheltered accommodation. Hilary subsequently moved back to their home and changed the locks, forcing Frank to live with another member of her family. Frank said that Hilary

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<sup>77</sup> Gary resisted the pressure put on him by the police to have his partner charged with serious assault.

had ‘threatened to kill’ him but maintained he was ‘never really frightened’ of her. He also said that he might have threatened Hilary, but that he could not remember a specific incident.

All four of those men (Harry, Kenny, Jimmy and Liam) who did not consider themselves ‘victims’ described turbulent relationships that occasionally became physically abusive. Harry, the only gay man we interviewed, had been involved in abusive relationships with two men (the first both physically and mentally abusive, the second, predominantly physical). The clandestine nature of this first relationship helped sustain the abuse for fifteen years. Aside from the physical fights, Harry’s partner had been repeatedly unfaithful (using prostitutes, bringing another male partner to live in their home, and planning a marriage to a woman). The abuse in Harry’s second relationship was more of a ‘one-off’ incident. This incident involved Harry retaliating against his partner who had first grabbed him by the throat. Harry had found the support of Gay Men’s Health particularly ‘helpful’.

Kenny described some ‘wrestling matches’, instigated by his wife, in which they would both lose control. Kenny claimed that these wrestling matches coincided with the onset of his wife’s menopause. The most severe of these occasions occurred when Kenny had dragged his wife down the stairs, and she had scratched his hands. Likewise, Liam described a relationship with an ex-girlfriend in which they had both hit each other in the face during rows. Liam said that this only happened a couple of times.

Jimmy’s experiences of abuse were slightly more complex, not least because he had been assaulted by two different partners (his ex-wife, Ann, and his ex-girlfriend, Mandy). Most of the incidents described in Jimmy’s marriage were relatively trivial (e.g. Ann throwing toast and water at him). On the one occasion that Ann had punched him, Jimmy had been ‘playing rough’ with their son who had started to cry<sup>78</sup>. Jimmy responded by putting Ann up against the wall and threatening to punch her. Ann called the police, but neither she nor Jimmy pressed charges. Jimmy mentioned that the threat of being charged acted as a deterrent that prevented him from hitting Ann, not because he was concerned about being prosecuted, but because an arrest would alert his Commanding Officer to his behaviour. Jimmy’s flirting, together with the isolation his job imposed on Ann, were both factors he mentioned as exacerbating the problems in his marriage. Like Michael, Jimmy had not planned to marry his wife until she unexpectedly ‘fell pregnant’.

Jimmy also described being hit with shoes and a screwdriver by his subsequent girlfriend Mandy. The police came to see Jimmy several days later because Mandy alleged that Jimmy had dislocated her knee (for which he later received a warning from the Procurator Fiscal). Jimmy also described a much more serious assault perpetrated by a male stranger in a pub, during which he sustained a broken jaw.

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<sup>78</sup> By this time Jimmy’s ex-wife had been awarded legal custody of their son.

## Non-Retaliatory Victims

The non-retaliatory victims are referred to as: Neil (unemployed and in his forties); Oliver (ex-armed forces and in his early thirties); Patrick (early forties and self employed); Robert (a sales manager in his mid thirties); Simon (a nurse in his mid forties); Trevor (self employed and in his mid twenties); Vince (a police officer in his late thirties); Warren (a house husband in his fifties) and Zac (unemployed and in his mid twenties). Five of these men considered themselves to be ‘victims of domestic violence’ (Neil, Oliver, Robert, Simon and Warren). The remaining four (Patrick, Trevor, Vince and Zac) did not consider themselves ‘victims of domestic violence’. The police had not come to know about any domestic abuse incidents concerning these men, although Zac’s partner had unsuccessfully attempted to take out an interdict against him. None of these nine men were still living with their abusive partners.

Patrick and Trevor’s experiences were similar. Both of these men described isolated incidents of domestic abuse, occurring in otherwise peaceful relationships. Trevor’s ex-fiancée had ‘swung’ him into a window during an argument. Although the window had broken, Trevor did not sustain any injuries. Shortly after the birth of their first child, Patrick’s wife had threatened him with a knife during an argument over something that Patrick considered ‘trivial’. Although Patrick was not hurt, he described himself as being ‘worried’, and then ‘livid’, about his wife’s behaviour.

Robert told our interviewer how his ex-girlfriend had started to ‘lift her hand’ against him in the last six months of their relationship, describing how she had punched him in the face and on his body. Like Robert, Vince also had a relationship where his ex-girlfriend became more violent as he tried to leave her. Vince explained that his girlfriend’s violence typically occurred when they had both been drinking. Vince’s ex-girlfriend had smashed a glass into his wrist and had punched him. In hindsight, Vince considered these incidents ‘funny’, although he did not see them this way at the time.

Likewise, Zac belittled the actions of the three partners he claimed had abused him. Zac described the behaviour of these three women as ‘amusing’ and was especially derisory regarding these women’s reasons for feeling annoyed with him. Zac’s partners’ opposition to his desire to work long hours was a recurrent theme in his account, as was his partners’ previous histories of abuse at the hands of other men. Despite Zac’s separation from each of his partners shortly before or after they became pregnant, Zac reiterated how important he considered long-term relationships to be.

The incidents of abuse Zac described by his first partner involved her throwing objects and using a knife against him (although he provided us with few details regarding the knife incident, and was dismissive about the impact of this on him). In the account of his ‘violent’ marriage, Zac described his wife’s ‘tantrums’. However, he later indicated that his wife had only become ‘hysterical’ when he had accidentally put his ‘hand on her throat’. Zac argued that the emotional abuse he experienced from his third partner was ‘worse’ than the physical abuse he experienced from his previous partners. Zac described his ex-girlfriend’s attempts to make him look like ‘an idiot’ in the company of others as especially hurtful.

The issue of embarrassment and humiliation was also a feature of Warren’s account. Warren complained how his ex-wife would get drunk and expose herself in front of his workmates. Also like Zac, Warren tended to belittle his partner’s violence as childlike.

Warren's ex-wife had thrown shoes at him (for which he sought hospital treatment) and had scratched him with her hands. Warren contextualised his ex-wife's violence in terms of her previous experiences of a violent partner. Nevertheless, Warren also described his own experiences as a victim of childhood sexual abuse. Warren considered his ex-wife's infidelity as an act of violence against him, and was evasive when questioned about whether he was violent towards her. Warren did, however, take pride in having physically removed his ex-wife's lover from their house. He also indicated that he exercised considerable control over his wife's finances and daily routine.

Infidelity was also an important theme in Simon, Oliver and Neil's accounts. Simon's ex-wife admitted her infidelity just a few days after the two of them were married, and he was distraught when she told him that she no longer wanted to have children with him. Simon said that from then on his ex-wife kept trying to provoke him into hitting her. Simon maintained that he never rose to these provocations mentioning that he had 'horrendous' memories of his father's violence towards his mother.

Oliver too had seen the effect of his father's violence on his mother, and offered this as a reason for not retaliating against his abusive ex-girlfriend, Jenny. Oliver's job required him to be away from home for long periods to Jenny's dissatisfaction. Jenny would kick and slap Oliver (although this never caused injury). Jenny had also threatened to abort their child and leave Oliver if he did not give up his job and on one occasion attempted to stab him with a knife. Shortly after this, Oliver was subject to a severe assault by a male stranger, which left him hospitalised for a year, physically disabled and with slight brain damage. Whilst Oliver was in hospital Jenny aborted their child, emptied their joint bank account and left him for another man. It was this, not the physical violence, that upset and angered Oliver the most.

Finally, Neil described an ex-wife (Kate) who was abusive when drunk, accusing him of infidelity. Neil told us of a series of minor incidents when he had threatened to call the police. He also explained how Kate's violent temper made him 'terrified' for the safety of his children. The two main incidents Neil described to us involved: a time when Kate had punched him in the back with a set of keys (causing cuts and bruising) whilst he was holding their daughter (in order to prevent Kate from leaving with her); and another time when Kate had hit him causing him to split his eye on their car door. Neil also described how Kate had hit him when he was drunk in the presence of other family members. At the time of interview, Neil had sole custody<sup>79</sup> of his children and Kate was receiving psychiatric help.

## Summary

In retracing those men counted as victims of domestic abuse in MacPherson's (2002) report, we uncovered a number of men who said they had never been forced nor threatened by any of their partners. Our suspicion is that the use of self-completion interviewing techniques introduced a greater level of misunderstanding amongst interviewees than was hitherto the case. The men who inaccurately reported experiences of force or threats from partners seemed to have misread the self-completion questions,

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<sup>79</sup> The *Children (Scotland) Act 1995* replaced the terms 'custody' and 'access' with 'contact' and 'residence'. However, many people, like Neil still use the terms 'custody' and 'access' when referring to legal rulings made after 1995.

interpreting these questions to be about crimes connected to their *home/domestic lives* or *violence in general*.

Using a narrative interview method we elicited in-depth accounts of 22 men's experiences of domestic abuse perpetrated by partners, (plus eight in-depth accounts from men who had not experienced domestic abuse from partners). These 22 men's experiences of domestic abuse varied greatly. Although only one man (Adam) identified himself as the primary instigator of abuse in his relationship, three (Barry, Charlie, and Eddie) out of the four who depicted relationships in which they felt their partners were equally abusive admitted perpetrating severe assaults. At times, the adoption of a discourse of victimisation in these three men's narratives seemed to be more to do with the men's desire to justify the violence they had themselves perpetrated than detailing the abuse which had been perpetrated against them.

Likewise, the two retaliators (Gary and Michael) who were *victims* of life-threatening forms of domestic abuse had also been repeat perpetrators. Furthermore, two retaliators (Jimmy and Frank) and two non-retaliators (Zac and Warren) presented accounts of abuse that were so contestable and contradictory that a persuasive case could be made for placing these men in categories which contravened the terms they used to describe themselves. Jimmy, Warren and Zac all avoided detailing the circumstances that precursored the assaults on them. These three men provided rather ambiguous accounts of their own accidental (Zac), defensive (Jimmy), and 'twisted' (Warren) responses to their partner's 'abusiveness'. Similarly, Frank's lapses of memory, together with his revelation that his wife had left to find sheltered accommodation with her children, could lead one to question whether this man really had been more sinned against than sinning. Also of note is the fact that the relatively infrequent incidents of abuse experienced by Kenny and Liam were matched by their own physically violent responses, even if (in their view) their partners usually 'started' the altercations.

In short, our suspicion was that at least half of the partners of the men who had experienced some form of force or threat would have also been able to offer accounts of repeat domestic abuse perpetrated against themselves. We suspect that these partners would have described abuse that was criminal, as well as psychological (perhaps highlighting the men's infidelity and use of children to get their own way). Differentiating perpetrators from victims in these cases is an irreconcilably contentious task.

Another way of considering the issue is to differentiate those men who actually referred to themselves as 'victims' from those who did not. Out of the 22 men who had experienced 'force' or 'threats', only nine perceived themselves as 'victims of domestic violence'. Most of these nine men also described relationships in which they themselves were either not abusive (n = 5), or were only abusive in retaliation (n = 3). Only one of the equal combatants (Charlie) defined himself as a 'victim'. Thus, those men who had used little or no force against their partners were more likely to view themselves as 'victims' than those who had used force. Those men who had injured their partners, or had at times instigated the violence, were less likely to view themselves as 'victims of domestic violence', although there were exceptions to this (e.g. Oliver). Men for whom the violence had been an isolated incident were also reluctant to portray themselves as 'victims'.

Four out of the five men in our sample who had received medical treatment because of their injuries considered themselves to be ‘victims’. Of the four men who had been in contact with the police (for their own alleged violent behaviour against their partners) only one considered himself a victim (Gary). This man had been strongly encouraged by the police to press charges against his partner, even though they had arrested him previously as a perpetrator of domestic abuse.

In fact, all four of the men who had been in contact with the police as a consequence of domestic abuse indicated that they had physically assaulted their partners on at least one of the occasions when the police had been involved. In all four cases the police had been alerted to incidents in which the men were themselves at least partly responsible for the abusive behaviour taking place. None of the men we interviewed claimed to have been wrongfully arrested, although Gary maintained that his partner had made a malicious complaint to the police about him, feigning injury to exaggerate the extent of her victimisation.

Other men’s accounts of victimisation seemed less controvertible to our interviewers. Some of our interviewees had experienced genuinely harrowing forms of abuse. For example, Harry (a retaliator) appeared to have endured persistent mental cruelty and physical abuse at the hands of one of his partners, as had Neil (a non-retaliatory victim). In these two cases the abuse seemed to escalate as the men’s relationships came to an end. This observation about the termination of relationships also resonates with the accounts of Vince, Robert and Daniel. Both Vince and Robert described partners who became physically abusive when they tried to leave, although Vince claimed to be largely unaffected by this. Daniel implicated his ex-wife’s new partner in his victimisation, although this was purely verbal. In contrast, Trevor and Gary experienced violence from men known to their partners after their respective break-ups. Trevor, along with Patrick and Oliver described isolated – but potentially serious – violent incidents from their partners during relatively short relationships. In Oliver’s case, a range of other psychological and financial abuses accompanied the physical violence.

Only four men indicated that they had lived in fear of their partners (Harry, Neil, Gary and Michael), although the majority mentioned feelings of embarrassment (and/or humiliation) at having been abused by women. A few men (especially Neil and Oliver) complained about the lack of support services for men, but most preferred not to involve the police. *Couple Counselling* appeared to be the most favoured source of support for men, perhaps because this organisation enables abusive partners to work through their problems without criminal justice intervention<sup>80</sup>.

Recurrent themes in the 22 men’s accounts included: infidelity and mistrust, their own and/or their partner’s excessive drinking, and their partner’s feelings of social isolation. These feelings of isolation were invariably connected to the men’s own absence from the family home, the men’s long working hours and/or busy social lives. Many of our interviewees attributed their partners’ violence to (uncontrollable) biological and psychological ‘causes’<sup>81</sup>, although it is debatable whether all of the women in question would have endorsed these explanations (Worrall, 1990). Interestingly, two of the men (Barry and Patrick) who attended counselling with their partners underplayed the psychological support they had received, stressing their partner’s needs above their own.

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<sup>80</sup> See Chapter Five.

<sup>81</sup> Such as post-natal depression, pre-menstrual tension and the menopause.

Nine of the men we interviewed had also been involved in fights with other men. As one might anticipate given the survey evidence discussed in Chapter One of this report, these fights often involved more serious assaults than the men had experienced from their partners. An unexpectedly high number of male victims had served in the armed forces. All four of the men who served in the forces cited aspects of military life that contributed significantly to the problems in their relationships. None of the male victims we interviewed said they were members of men's/father's rights groups. Four men (Eddie, Oliver, Simon and Kenny) mentioned memories of their fathers' abusiveness as reasons for restraining their aggression during altercations with partners, although it is worth noting that this restraint did not always preclude actual violence. These cases demonstrate the limitations of social-learning and/or cultural-transmission theories as explanations for men's violence and restraint in intimate relationships (Gadd, 2002).



## CHAPTER FIVE - SERVICE PROVISION FOR MALE VICTIMS

### Introduction

The final stage of our research project sought to discover what kinds of service provision exists in Scotland for adult men who have been abused by their partners. We contacted the following service providers to ask if they had a representative willing to participate in a short-telephone interview:

- The eight Scottish Police Services;
- Domestic Abuse Forums and Working Groups;
- *Victim Support*;
- *Couple Counselling*<sup>82</sup>;
- Specialist Organisations providing services for gay men;
- Campaigning groups for men's rights;
- Specialist organisations providing services for male victims of domestic and sexual abuse.

Each organisation was supplied with a list of questions in advance of the interview (see Appendix E). In total, 43 agencies provided representatives who took part in this phase of the research. Thirty-three of these representatives engaged in tape-recorded telephone interviews with us. A further ten replied to our questions by email and/or post.

### The Police

All eight of the Scottish Police Services provided responses to our questionnaire. Those who responded were either Domestic Abuse Liaison Officers (DALOs) (n = 2), or the more senior officers responsible for overseeing police work in this area (n = 6). The police's role in relation to domestic abuse victims is more complex than that of other agencies. As the ACPOS *Domestic Abuse Policy* document (2001: 2) explains, the aim of the Scottish Police is 'to provide a professional, caring, and victim-centred approach to victims of domestic abuse and their families' prioritising:

- The safety and wellbeing of victims and their families;
- The full investigation of all domestic incidents;
- The arrest and detention of the offender where sufficient evidence allows;
- Working in partnership with support agencies;

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<sup>82</sup> *Couple Counselling* was previously called 'Marriage Guidance' in Scotland and is now 'Relate' in England & Wales.

- Providing the Scottish Executive with statistical data to enable effective monitoring of domestic abuse in Scotland.

In all forces most officers receive training in dealing with domestic abuse. This training takes the form of attendance at workshops on issues around ‘protection, prevention and provision’. Some DALOs receive further training on a degree-accredited course about ‘Domestic Violence’ that touches upon issues related to men’s victimisation. Two forces (Strathclyde and Grampian) also have a trained officer to deal specifically with sexual minorities who become victims of crime.

Although the police response to domestic abuse is ‘offence-led’ and hence non-gender specific, most of the DALOs we spoke to had few contacts with male victims. This was possibly a consequence of both the DALOs’ tendency to concentrate on repeat victims, and the lower take-up rates amongst male victims when support is offered. All of the police representatives mentioned that they often struggled to find suitable agencies to refer male victims to, apart from *Victim Support*.

When we asked officers what aspects of their service provision they would develop or change if their budget was doubled, most officers prioritised the following things:

- Increased numbers of staff in order to improve response times and conduct follow up visits (especially in rural areas);
- More training about the issue of domestic abuse for divisional (non-specialist) officers, and;
- The integration of examples of good practice piloted in other forces.

A few officers also mentioned the need for:

- More publicity to encourage male and female victims to report to the police;
- Extending partnerships with those other agencies that are better equipped to support victims;
- The linking of databases (i.e. child and family protection) to allow better identification of those who are at risk, and;
- Fast tracking for perpetrators using ‘domestic abuse courts’.

Only one officer identified ‘a need for a specific service provision for male victims of abuse’. Other officers said there was not a need for *more* provision, only a need to assure male victims, especially gay male victims, that the police are sufficiently aware of the problem and that *Victim Support* was there to service them. One of these officers also pointed to the need to establish the size and characteristics of the population of male victims before more service provision is put in place.

### **Domestic Abuse Forums and Working Groups**

Domestic Abuse Forums, Working Groups and Partnerships were created to foster and develop effective and strategic multi-agency approaches to the problem of domestic

abuse. Forums aim to implement, at a local level, the Scottish Executive's 2000 National Strategy of 'Prevention, Protection and Provision' (Henderson, 2000). Within most forums *Women's Aid* and the police typically take leading roles, although the following agencies and workers are often significantly involved: Local Health Authorities, Victim Support, the Benefits Agency, Education and Welfare Officers, Child Protection Officers, Mental Health Workers, Social Services, the Procurator Fiscal, Solicitors, Rape Crisis, Housing Agencies, Drug and Alcohol Workers, representatives from Children's Panels, *Family Mediation*, and Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender groups (LGBT).

There were 32 such forums (or equivalent organisations) in Scotland at the time we commenced this research. We endeavoured to contact all 32 of these, and succeeded in eliciting responses from 22. Nineteen of these 22 organisations referred to themselves as Domestic Abuse Forums, Domestic Abuse Working Groups or Domestic Abuse Partnerships. The remaining three were organisations specifically concerned with 'male violence against women and children'. For convenience we refer to all 22 of these organisations as 'forums' in the remainder of this report.

All of the forums subscribed to the definition of domestic abuse detailed by *The Scottish Partnership on Domestic Abuse* for the Scottish Executive (see Henderson, 2000: 2). But eight added that their work included same-sex relationships and that a minority of domestic abuse cases involve women being abusive to men. Three forums had also adopted their own gender-neutral definitions.

The training programmes provided within domestic abuse forums typically cover a broad range of themes including:

- The debunking of myths about domestic abuse;
- Understanding the 'double victimisation' of some women (lesbian, elderly, disabled), as well as the heterogeneity of female and child victims of domestic abuse;
- The provision of legal advice and advocacy, places of refuge, benefits and housing, etc., and;
- Awareness raising amongst members of the public and practitioners.

These programmes are used to train workers from member organisations and non-member public sector workers. Two forums had developed training packages that promote gender-neutral themes (such as 'citizenship' and 'respect') for use within schools. Although not specifically concerned with domestic abuse against men, these packages aim to promote healthy, respectful relationships amongst the general population.

When asked whether the issue of male abuse arose during the training sessions, nearly all of the representatives said that someone invariably asks 'What about men?'. Most responded by saying that the majority of victims are women and children, and consequently the needs of male victims are not usually prioritised. All of the forum representatives explained that the skills taught during training sessions about 'domestic abuse' were not completely transferable to situations involving male victims.

When the representatives from the forums were asked what they would do if their budgets were doubled, the following priorities were mentioned:

- The development and expansion of training within forums, and the promotion of best practice amongst public sector organisations and private companies;
- Preventative work with children and young people;
- Expanding the number of workers available to co-ordinate forums and work with children in refuges;
- Awareness raising work amongst the general public;
- Making services more accessible to people living in remote and rural areas; and,
- More refuge buildings, spaces and ‘cluster’ housing.

Only one representative prioritised the development of services for male victims. Many representatives stressed that the difficulties men face in approaching generic services are also experienced by women. More than half of the representatives said they believed the number of male victims to be too small to merit *new* service provision. Several went on to highlight past attempts to make such provision which had failed because of a ‘lack of demand’. For some, the issues surrounding teenage boys living in women’s refuges, together with the complexities of working with male perpetrators were considered more immediate issues. Encouraging the greater involvement of non-abusive men in campaigning against domestic abuse was also highlighted as an important priority by some forum representatives.

Many forum representatives hoped initiatives for male victims would come from men themselves. The reasons given for this were two-fold. First, certain forum members felt that men themselves should initiate campaigns on behalf of male victims, just as women have initiated campaigns on behalf of female victims. Second, several forum representatives argued that men experiencing domestic abuse face issues that are not identical to those experienced by women and children:

*Abuse against women is something that is related to women’s general position in society. Its about inequality and lack of power and its about abuse of power... I’m not sure that those things would apply in the same way to address issues of abuse against men. (Forum representative)*

### ***Couple Counselling in Scotland***

*Couple Counselling* provides a counselling service for people in intimate relationships. Many couples attend together, although *Couple Counselling* also counsels individuals. Clients do not have to pay for the service, but can make a donation. There are 14 affiliated *Couple Counselling* agencies across Scotland. All *Couple Counselling* volunteers receive two years generic training at university.

We interviewed one counsellor who represented the views of the service in Scotland. In this counsellor’s experience physical aggression between two male partners is more common than women’s physical abuse against men. Amongst those heterosexual couples

that use *Couple Counselling*, it is usually the man who is violent. This counsellor maintained that an aim of *Couple Counselling* is to reduce the need for abused women to have to report their partners to the police. Counsellors encourage male perpetrators to take responsibility for their physical violence, and urge both partners to undertake more activities independent of each other.

This counsellor claimed that when women are abusers, the abuse typically takes the form of constant undermining and goading. This counsellor stressed that partner abuse often starts after the birth of children, some men complaining about the abuse that followed after they had ‘hassled’ partners to give them more ‘attention’.

### ***Victim Support in Scotland***

*Victim Support* is a nation-wide service, funded primarily by central government, to offer emotional and practical support to people affected by crime. Volunteers have a basic training in issues that affect victims. Volunteers can also undertake advanced training in domestic and sexual abuse issues. The *Victim Support* representative we spoke to claimed that in 2001 1,116 victims of domestic abuse contacted *Victim Support* in Scotland, of whom 123 were men.

*Victim Support* does not differentiate between male and female victims in terms of the level and quality of service offered. However, the representative we spoke to explained that because *Victim Support* works in the absence of other services for male victims of domestic abuse, the male victims its workers encounter often need more sustained assistance than the female victims they encounter. The representative argued that men’s needs are often ‘more immediate and apparent’ than women’s. The representative we spoke to said that if *Victim Support* received more funding it would develop its work with ethnic minority communities, male victims, the young, the homeless, refugees and asylum seekers.

### **Specialist Organisations providing services for gay men**

We interviewed five representatives of specialist organisations providing services for gay men in Scotland.<sup>83</sup> Three of these representatives spoke on behalf of several LGBT organisations. Much of the work undertaken by these organisations focuses on HIV prevention and generic health issues. In Scotland none of these specialist organisations were established to deal specifically with domestic abuse, although work with victims and perpetrators has gradually become integrated into existing LGBT counselling services. However, LGBT organisations refer most male victims to *Victim Support* and *Couple Counselling*. One LGBT worker insisted that statutory service providers should do more to reach victims of domestic abuse within the gay community. Another worker reiterated that not all gay men want to access services *exclusively* for gay men.

All of the LGBT workers we spoke to were concerned that there are insufficient support services for male victims. Some also expressed disappointment at the way men are discussed within domestic abuse forums, explaining that some of these organisations oversimplify the complexity of gender relations and the power dynamics intrinsic to intimate relationships.

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<sup>83</sup> Most of these organisations provide services for lesbian, gay, bi-sexual and transgendered people, and hence for conciseness we use the term LGBT to refer to both those organisations working with various sexual minorities and those working exclusively with gay men.

*There is a lot to be gained by developing an approach to the problems of domestic abuse which has a gendered analysis of the situation at its core without creating divides. (LGBT worker)*

The vast majority of specialist organisations for sexual minorities claimed to be under-resourced, and there are relatively few such agencies outside Scotland's 'central belt'. All of the LGBT workers we spoke to expressed a keen interest in partnership work with other agencies. We were told by some workers that most LGBT services do not want to specialise in domestic abuse, even though individual workers are interested in sitting on domestic abuse forums.

### **Campaigning groups for Men's Rights**

We contacted two organisations specifically concerned with campaigning for men's rights in the UK. One of these organisations was unable to respond to our questionnaire in full, saying that our questionnaire had prompted his organisation to conduct its own in-house research on their client groups' experiences of domestic abuse. Although *domestic violence* is not a core issue for this organisation's membership, the wider term *domestic abuse* addresses issues of a central concern to many of this organisation's members. The representative from this organisation explained that he considers:

*The widespread denial of contact with children for no good reason...highly abusive of non-resident parents, who are of course mainly fathers...It is also, and more importantly, abusive of the children concerned. (Men's Rights campaigner)*

The second men's rights organisation responded in full to our questionnaire. Although not specifically concerned with 'male victims', abused men had approached this organisation through their website, in response to publicity material, and because they had been referred by other organisations campaigning for men's rights. These abused men are typically offered 'counselling' as well as 'advice' on how best to deal with the police. Abused men contacting this organisation are sometimes referred to Social Work Departments and Housing Departments.

This organisation does not 'accept either women or homosexuals as members'. The representative from this organisation went on to say:

*[W]e...offer no advice [to gay men] other than to get out of the relationships. [W]e have no interest in encouraging individuals to continue a lifestyle that makes them more prone to physical and mental illness, and ...a dramatically reduced life expectancy. (Men's Rights campaigner)*

The representative from this organisation told us that if his agency's budget were to be doubled the money would be spent on campaigning for legal reform. He also added that his organisation was apprehensive about the development of a parallel service to *Women's Aid* for men, arguing that such organisations have a tendency to 'exploit victims' and 'exaggerate statistics' to ensure their continued existence.

## **Specialist organisations providing services for male victims of domestic and sexual abuse**

We attempted to contact four organisations that had been set up to deal specifically with male victims of domestic and/or sexual abuse. Two of these (one in England and one in Scotland) had closed down before our research commenced.

The third organisation we contacted had not yet opened to the public, although its workers were accepting some referrals. This organisation will provide advice and counselling support to men and children who are victims of domestic abuse, provide facilities to enable non-resident parents to maintain contact with their children, and offer transport assistance to men who have to move home. This organisation plans to make its services available to women, even though its ethos has prevented it from joining the local domestic abuse forum.

The fourth organisation within this category offered a telephone helpline for men in Scotland who have been sexually abused either as children or as adults. The police had referred a few men who had experienced domestic abuse to this helpline. However, when we asked the representative from this helpline if his organisation would help more male victims of domestic abuse were it given the funding to do so, he replied negatively, insisting that his organisation's remit is to concentrate solely on male victims of sexual abuse.

### **Summary**

Because of the size and significance of certain organisations we could not interview an even distribution of representatives from each. We interviewed more representatives from the police and domestic abuse forums because these organisations have regional representatives across Scotland. The representatives from the police and from the forums tended to share similar perspectives on the issue of male victims of domestic abuse. For example, both the police and the forums are committed to multi-agency work in the field of domestic abuse interventions. When asked what forms of service provision or training they would change or develop, the forums and the police both prioritised the need for more staff (on the ground and in supervisory/coordinator roles), together with more awareness raising and training.

Police and forum representatives alike highlighted the need to identify the size and nature of the problems experienced by male victims in Scotland. In addition, police officers mentioned the need to publicise existing services available to men (especially *Victim Support*), although like many within the forums, police representatives tended to emphasise the need for work that broadly raises awareness about 'domestic abuse' (rather than narrowly about 'male victims'). Many forum members and the police are reluctant to foster the development of new services specifically for male victims whilst men are not making use of those services already in place.

*Victim Support* was a service that was identified by the majority of police and forum representatives as an agency that could help male victims. However, one officer pointed out that many men 'do not naturally think of Victim Support'. Interestingly, the majority of the representatives from LGBT organisations agreed with the aforementioned police/forum perspective, arguing that the needs of gay male victims of domestic abuse should be addressed primarily by pre-existing statutory services for victims, not through

discrete specialist services. Many of the representatives from LGBT organisations said that statutory service providers could do more to advertise that they are willing and able to work with gay male victims (as opposed to just accepting referrals as and when they arrive).

However, the representative from *Couple Counselling* we spoke to added two caveats to the argument for generic service provision. First, the *Couple Counselling* representative explained that it is important to establish services for those victims who do not wish to have their partners arrested and/or prosecuted. This could be a problem for some users of *Victim Support*, who are typically referred by the police. Second, the needs of heterosexual male victims and gay male victims of domestic abuse are often different to each other, and from those of female victims.

However, one could respond to this first argument by pointing out that such policies encourage victims to stay with abusive partners who are unlikely to change (Burton et al., 1998), and that violence within the home should not be exempted from criminalisation – criminalisation serving an important ‘symbolic’ function (Edwards, 1991). Equally, one could respond to this second argument (about specialist needs) by saying that training should be provided to foster versatility amongst pre-existing statutory service providers.

The representatives from the men’s rights organisations also argued that statutory service providers should address the needs of male victims. However, these campaigning groups are also arguing for more broad-ranging legal reforms. Nevertheless, one of the men’s rights representatives was clear that the social change he desired was not for all men, only ‘straight men’. This representative expressed some particularly disturbing misconceptions about gay men.

The fact that some projects established for male victims of domestic abuse have closed down was cited by some forum representatives as evidence of a lack of demand for service provision in this area, but some of those who established these specialist services would argue that their organisations closed through lack of funding, and concomitantly, their incapacity to adequately publicise their work. There are relatively few organisations in which there is overwhelming support for developing greater and more specialised services for male victims. There are even fewer people from ‘specialist’ organisations (either for male victims, gay men or men’s rights) willing to commit themselves to such an endeavour, although most would welcome another organisation taking this initiative. To date, only one locally based organisation is currently taking this initiative in Scotland.



## CHAPTER SIX - SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

In this report we have detailed the first study of male victims of domestic abuse that has explicitly sought to integrate analyses of police statistics, together with the findings of survey research and men's in-depth accounts of victimisation.

This research uncovered that a number of men (over one in four) had inaccurately reported experiences of force or threats from a partner in the SCS 2000 self-completion questionnaire. Taking this into account, we argued that fewer men in Scotland are victims of domestic abuse than has previously been reported. Even so, the number of men who had experienced force or threats from current or former partners was not inconsequential<sup>84</sup>.

We did not attempt to calculate how many female respondents inaccurately reported experiences of abuse in the SCS 2000 because we did not retrace any female respondents. Whilst it is plausible that some women inaccurately reported experiences of abuse in the SCS 2000, we note that one of the key factors that led men to report inaccurately was less pertinent for women. In 1999 ninety-five per cent of the violence experienced by men in Scotland was not domestic (MVA, 2000). Some men mistakenly reported this other violence as 'domestic violence' in the self-completion component of the SCS 2000. Only 36 per cent of the violence experienced by women in Scotland was not domestic. Hence there was smaller potential for female respondents to make this error. Needless to say, some male and female respondents who had experienced domestic abuse probably did not report these experiences in the SCS 2000 through fear of exposure, reprisal, shame, embarrassment or forgetfulness.

Whilst Scottish Crime Survey data indicated that in 1999 male victims of domestic abuse fell disproportionately within the 16-21 year old group, the police data depicted a slightly older profile. However, both sources of data suggested a fairly even distribution of male victims across the age range. Police data implied that the age range for both male and female victims is grouped predominantly around the 31-40 years age group. Police data also suggested that both male and female perpetrators were predominantly in the 31-40 year age range, although female victims and female perpetrators tended to be slightly younger than male victims and male perpetrators.

Analyses of the Scottish Crime Survey 2000 suggested that male victims were more likely than female victims to be still cohabiting with perpetrators of abuse. However, the majority of male victims in our follow-up sample had subsequently separated, suggesting that male victims tend not to leave abusive partners *immediately* after abusive incidents. Further research is needed to quantify the proportions of men living with male partners in the general population of Scotland (relative to the proportion of men living with female partners) before a definitive statement can be made regarding whether or not 'gay' men are at a greater risk of domestic abuse. A case could be made for undertaking further research, based on snowball samples, on experiences of abuse amongst ethnic and sexual minority populations.

Our qualitative research found recurrent themes amongst those men who had experienced domestic abuse. Men who worked in the armed forces appeared to be over-represented in our sample, as were men who were violent themselves, men whose partners felt socially

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<sup>84</sup> See Chapter Three of this report.

isolated, and men in relationships in which one or both partners drank excessively. The Scottish Crime Survey 2000 suggested that male victims of domestic abuse tended to be poorer than men who were not victims, although it appears as if this financial disadvantage falls predominantly on those male victims who are divorced or separated. Male victims of domestic abuse tended to report better health and higher incomes than female victims, and were less likely to live in rented accommodation.

Both Scottish Police and Scottish Crime Survey data suggest that repeat physical violence is comparatively rare amongst male victims. Many of the men we interviewed had had a number of abusive arguments with their partners (which some respondents had reported as repeat victimisation in the SCS 2000). Only rarely did these abusive arguments involve actual physical assaults.

The effects of being forced or threatened by partners varied immensely amongst male victims. Many of the men we spoke to trivialised the abuse they had experienced. The majority did not consider themselves to be either 'victims' of 'crime' or of 'domestic violence', although many were embarrassed by the abuse they had experienced. Only a few of the men that we spoke to had sustained serious injuries as a consequence of their partners' violent behaviours. A few of the men who were seriously injured had lived in fear for their own and their children's safety. More commonly though, the male victims we interviewed admitted to being more upset and/or angry about the *breakdown* of relationships in which abuse had occurred than the actual abuse itself. Separations between abused men and their partners occasionally resulted in distressing disputes over child custody, the family home and shared finances.

Sometimes abuse against men related to one partner's hesitance to relinquish a relationship, contrary to the wishes of the other partner. This study found that when men stayed with abusive partners they tended to do so because they expected the abuse to be an isolated incident, possible to overcome, and/or because they blamed themselves for their partners' unhappiness. Many of the abused men we spoke to stressed that most of the time the positive aspects of their relationships outweighed their partners' abusiveness. Our analyses suggested that those abused men who stayed only for their children and/or through financial necessity were in the minority.

Male victims also varied in terms of what they labelled 'abuse'. Some men adopted definitions which focussed narrowly on the use of physical force, whilst others defined abuse in terms of their partners' infidelity, reluctance to trust them, restricted access to their children, and being forced to discuss relationship problems at inopportune times. Although practically and ethically difficult, there is a need for research which explores in-depth both victims' and perpetrators' perspectives on the same incidents in order to glean a clearer understanding of the dynamics of abusive domestic relationships.

At the time of writing, statutory service providers for victims have relatively few contacts with men who claim to have been abused by partners or ex-partners. Very few men report their experiences of abuse to the police. This low level of reporting, together with the smaller number of repeat and serious domestic assaults on men, probably explains why men feature so infrequently in the statistical records produced by the Scottish Police. Our analysis of men's accounts of their victimisation indicated that the police often encountered abused men on the occasions when the men themselves either instigated attacks on their partners or had retaliated physically against them. Despite this, the four

abused men in our sample who had contact with the police were satisfied with the responses they received.

Police statistics suggest that those who perpetrated abuse against men in 2000 were less likely than those who perpetrated abuse against women to be arrested or referred to the Procurator Fiscal. This aggregate difference appears to be attributable, at least in part, to the smaller proportion of ex-partners amongst the female perpetrator population relative to the male perpetrator population. Men who abused male partners were less likely than men who abused female partners to be referred to the Procurator Fiscal. Men who abused female partners were less likely to have 'no further action' taken against them by the police than men who abused male partners. Research that moves beyond the aggregate statistics contained in the Executive's Bulletins is needed to glean a more nuanced account of police responses to male and female victims of domestic abuse.

The police, amongst other statutory service providers, did seem concerned about the lack of referral agencies available to support abused men. This may be a particular problem because many abused men do not see themselves as victims, and/or do not wish to have their partners arrested. This may explain why some abused men do not perceive *Victim Support* as a suitable service for them. Other abused men in our sample were also abusers themselves. In combination these three factors may explain why so few abused men wished to draw themselves to the attention of criminal justice agencies. It may also explain why most of those men in our sample who did seek support approached workers outside the criminal justice system (e.g. psychotherapists, local religious leaders, General Practitioners and health workers).

Domestic Abuse Forums in Scotland currently make little provision for male victims, although most member agencies maintain that the services they provide are open to both men and women. Likewise, domestic abuse issues are rarely central concerns of specialist Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) organisations, although many of these specialist organisations told us they would like to see statutory services do more for sexual minority populations experiencing domestic abuse. The small number of male victims, these victims' geographical dispersion, and the relative under-resourcing of agencies that provide specialist services for gay men and/or abused men are all factors that make the case for urging pre-existing statutory service providers to advertise more widely their capacity to meet the needs of men experiencing domestic abuse. This report finds little evidence of a need to establish specialist organisations to deal exclusively with male victims of domestic abuse. It finds a stronger case for ensuring that those men who want to leave abusive partners are not hindered by financial constraints, the absence of alternative housing and/or the lack of affordable legal assistance.

## APPENDIX A - THE REPRESENTATIVENESS OF OUR SUB-SAMPLE

Using a series of chi-square tests we checked to see if the 46 men we traced were statistically similar to the 44 men we could not trace in terms of their levels of victimisation, time frame when victimised, relationships with the perpetrators, and whether they considered themselves 'victims'. Observable differences between these groups would indicate that our sample did not represent the group and delimit the inferences that could be made about the general population of male victims using our results.

We found:

- No significant differences between the two groups regarding the time of their abuse; chi-square tests showed that similar proportions of men in both groups reported abuse prior to 1999<sup>85</sup> and since 1999<sup>86</sup>.
- No significant difference between the two groups based upon whether the men thought they were victims of domestic violence or not<sup>87</sup>.
- No significant difference between the two groups with regards to the victims' relationship with the perpetrator<sup>88</sup>.

We ran similar tests to see if there were any significant differences between the 30 men we interviewed in person and the larger sample of 60 who we did not interview, in terms of the timing of the abuse, whether they thought they were victims, and their relationships with the perpetrator. Again, we found no significant differences.

However, when we compared the demographic composition of our sample of 46 men with the remaining 44 victims whose details we received, it became apparent that our group was not similar in some important respects. Whilst there were no significant differences based on factors such as age, marital status and experience of living in rented accommodation, we did observe significant differences based upon long-term illness, employment status, social class, annual income and the ability to gain access to money quickly.

The group of 46 men about whom we obtained qualitative information were, collectively, more likely to report having a long-standing illness than the 44 men who we were not able to contact<sup>89</sup>. The group of 46 men were also more likely to be in full-time employment<sup>90</sup>, have an annual income of over £20,000<sup>91</sup>, be in a higher social class band<sup>92</sup> and have no problem gaining immediate access to £20<sup>93</sup>, £100<sup>94</sup> and £1,000<sup>95</sup> than

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<sup>85</sup> Pearson Chi-Square = .059; p = .808

<sup>86</sup> Pearson Chi-Square = .122; p = .727

<sup>87</sup> Pearson Chi-Square = 1.562; p = .211

<sup>88</sup> Pearson Chi-Square = 2.096; p = .553.

<sup>89</sup> Pearson Chi-Square = 4.788; p = .025.

<sup>90</sup> Pearson Chi-Square = 4.255; p = .037.

<sup>91</sup> Pearson Chi-Square = 6.236; p = .012.

<sup>92</sup> Pearson Chi-Square = 10.210; p = .001.

<sup>93</sup> Pearson Chi-Square = 4.586; p = .029.

<sup>94</sup> Pearson Chi-Square = 8.897; p = .003.

<sup>95</sup> Pearson Chi-Square = 5.711; p = .018.

those men whom we were unable to contact. In short, these 46 men were in poorer health, but generally wealthier than the full SCS sample.

We conducted these same tests for the demographic composition of the 30 men with whom we conducted in-depth interviews. In contrast to the tests with the 46 men, the sub-sample of 30 men were generally similar to the 60 men who were not interviewed in-depth. No significant differences were observed for factors such as age, marital status, long-term illness, employment status, annual income, experience of living in rented accommodation and the ability to gain quick access to money. Indeed, the only demographic feature that we tested for which highlighted any statistically significant difference between the 30 men interviewed in depth and the 60 not interviewed in-depth was social class. The composition of the sub-sample of 30 men interviewed in-depth was skewed slightly more towards bands A, B and C1 than the larger sample of 60 men not interviewed in-depth<sup>96</sup>.

### **Differences between the ‘confirmers’ and the ‘refuters’**

We tested to see if there were any significant differences between those men who were ‘confirmers’ and those who were ‘refuters’. Our rationale for doing this was to see if there was any way in which those men who said that the SCS 2000 record was inaccurate could have been identified without further follow-up interviews. Unfortunately, we found *no significant* differences between the confirmers and refuters that would enable this kind of predictive differentiation. For example, confirmers were twice as likely as refuters to tick the box saying that they considered themselves to be ‘victims of domestic violence’, but two men who were discovered to be refuters also ticked this box. One of these men claimed the violent incident he was referring to in the SCS involved a stranger in a shop. This man was heavily intoxicated at the time of our interview with him. The other man who inaccurately described himself as a victim of domestic abuse refuted these claims by telephone, explaining that he had never participated in the Scottish Crime Survey, that he had never been in a relationship, and also that he was 71 years old. This man insisted that no-one else of the same (or similar) name had ever lived at his address.

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<sup>96</sup> Pearson Chi-Square = 4.941; p = .023.

## APPENDIX B – RE-ESTIMATING RATES OF MALE VICTIMISATION

There are two factors that make it difficult to estimate the rates of domestic abuse for men, taking into account the high number of ‘refuters’. First, the numbers we are dealing with are particularly small, making it difficult to make any statistically sound inferences. Second, there were eleven men in our sub-sample who had been recorded in the SCS self-completion questionnaire as having experienced force or threats from a partner within the last twelve months. Of these eleven, six turned out to be refuters. This inaccuracy in the last twelve months figures has a ‘knock-on’ effect on the statistics for experiences of force or threat *ever*. This is because the lifetime statistics are based on a composite of ‘before 1<sup>st</sup> January 1999’ and ‘post-1<sup>st</sup> January 1999’ incidents.

In MacPherson’s report it states that, “8 per cent...of men reported having experienced either threats or force” (2002: 10). We obtained follow-up information regarding 44 of the original group of 90 men who had reported some form of ‘threats or force’ to the SCS. Of these 44 men, only 33 reported having actually suffered some form of classifiable ‘threats or force’, which equates to 75 per cent of the sample. On this basis, we estimate that only 75 per cent (n=68) of the original sample of 90 men will have experienced some form of ‘domestic abuse’. The recalculation of 68 men as a percentage of the original sample (n=1,201) equates to five point seven per cent of the male population having ever been subjected to threats or force from their partner or ex-partner, compared to MacPherson’s eight per cent estimate.

Using similar calculations to those described above we set about *guesstimating* the annual rates of threatening or forceful behaviour against men by a partner or ex-partner. Our ‘best’ guesstimates are as follows:

- Five per cent of men in Scotland experience force at some point in their lifetime from a partner or ex-partner (compared with MacPherson’s figure of seven per cent).
- Slightly less than four per cent (3.7 per cent) of men in Scotland experience threats from a partner at some point in their lifetime (compared with MacPherson’s figure of six per cent).
- Nearly six per cent (5.7%) of the Scottish male population aged between 16-59 have ever experienced threats or force from a partner (compared with MacPherson’s figure of eight per cent).
- Three and a half per cent of men in Scotland have experienced both *threats and force* from a partner at some point in their lifetime (compared with MacPherson’s figure of five per cent).

Modifying MacPherson’s calculations to take account of our findings, we guesstimate that:

- Slightly over one per cent (1.2 per cent) of men had experienced *threats* within the twelve months before the SCS (2000) interviews were conducted (compared with MacPherson’s figure of two per cent).

- Around one per cent (1.3 per cent) of men had experienced *force* within the twelve months before the SCS (2000) interviews were conducted (compared with MacPherson's figure of two per cent).
- One and a half per cent of men had experienced *either* threats or force within the twelve months before the SCS (2000) interviews were conducted (compared with MacPherson's figure of three per cent).
- Slightly over one per cent (1.1 per cent) of men had experienced *both* threats and force within the twelve months before the SCS (2000) interviews were conducted (compared with MacPherson's figure of two per cent).

## APPENDIX C – IN-DEPTH INTERVIEW GUIDES

### Narrative Interview Guide

1. You mentioned when you were interviewed for the Scottish Crime Survey that you had experienced threatening and/or forceful behaviour within a relationship you had with your current/ex-partner. Can you tell me the story of that relationship in your own words?
  
2. Can you tell me more about when you first met X?
  
3. Can you tell me about the times when you were threatened by X (or felt threatened by X)? Can you tell me about any times when X used force against you?
  
4. Can you tell me about any times when you think X may have felt threatened by you? Can you tell me about the times when you may have used force against X?
  
5. Have there been times when you may have felt sexually harassed, threatened or pressured by X? Can you tell me about the times when X may have felt sexually harassed, threatened or pressured in this way?
  
6. Can you tell me about other relationships you may have had where you experienced threatening or forceful behaviour from a partner?



### **Questionnaire about contact with service providers**

1. Could you tell me which of the following agencies, if any, you have come into contact with because of your experiences of threatening or forceful behaviour within the home? You may have mentioned some of them already?

The Police

Social services

Procurator Fiscal

Relate/Couples Counseling

GP or hospital

Citizen's Advice Bureau

Solicitor

Other

*NB: Interviewer repeats for each agency mentioned.*

2. What was the response of that agency?

3. How helpful did you find that agency?

4. What do you think could be done to improve that agency's service?

5. Would you contact that agency again?

## **APPENDIX D – CASE SUMMARIES**

### **Primary Instigators**

#### *Adam*

Adam was a manual worker in his mid-twenties who had indicated in the Scottish Crime Survey that his ex-partner had used force against him. Adam did not perceive himself to be a 'victim of domestic violence'. Adam's opening response to our interviewer's question about the relationship in which he had 'experienced force' was to say 'that was more to do with me being violent towards her'. A couple of weeks before he was due to marry Adam had been out drinking (heavily) with some friends, when a man he 'never knew too well' claimed to have kissed his fiancée (June). Adam left the pub immediately to confront June, who denied the accusation – and still did at the time of interview. Nevertheless, Adam physically attacked June, pushing and shoving her, in front of their daughter (who was so frightened she was physically sick). On this occasion it took five police officers to restrain Adam.

Adam was charged with domestic assault and breach of the peace, but June persuaded the police to drop these charges. However, June was unwilling to go ahead with the wedding. Adam described a history of sexual jealousy in his relationship, whereby he would routinely pick fights with men who 'stared' at June when they were socialising. Adam also described an incident in which June had used force against him. Adam claimed that she 'went absolutely mental' after he had started 'questioning her' about 'where she had been'. June initiated the physical attack after Adam had 'jokingly' swung his 'foot right back' as if he was going to put his 'foot in her face'.

There was some evidence to suggest Adam was using his children to control June. Despite his claim that people still see them as 'just like a couple', June had had to call the police when Adam refused to return his daughters to her and her new partner – an act that was in breach of their custodial arrangements.

### **Equal Combatants**

#### *Barry*

Barry was in his mid-thirties and worked for the armed forces. Barry had indicated in the Scottish Crime Survey that his current wife had threatened him and used force against him on a couple of occasions in the twelve months prior to interview. However, by the time of our interview with Barry he had separated from his wife, Amy. Amy retained custody of their two children, enabling Barry to continue with his full-time occupation. Barry did not consider himself to be a 'victim of domestic violence'.

Barry described a relationship with an underlying 'violent atmosphere' that frequently erupted into 'major barnies' that would last for 'days and days'. He argued that it takes a lot to get him 'riled' but that Amy was able to 'push the right button at the right time'. During the arguments Barry stated that both he and Amy would 'get in such a rage with each other...[that] She'd push me up against the wall and slap me...I'd push her back'. Barry talked at length about one particular incident when he returned home 'quite drunk' and actual violence ensued. Barry admitted his 'temper was straight up there like a rocket'. On this occasion he 'said something really quite nasty to her' and Amy attacked

him with 'whatever she had in her hand'<sup>97</sup>. Barry retaliated by pushing Amy 'up against the wall', causing her to fall back and 'crack' her head. Barry also marked Amy's throat on this occasion. Amy called the police, who took Barry to his officer's mess where he resided for the following two weeks. Amy later 'apologised and dropped all charges', although Barry had also told Amy that by contacting the police, she had 'finished his career'.

Barry cited Amy's loneliness and 'jealousy' as underlying causes of the 'violent atmosphere' between them. Indeed, Amy had been 'dragged' a 'million miles away' from 'everything she knew and everything she'd grown up with' as a consequence of Barry's job. Nonetheless, Barry felt that Amy should have made more of an effort to make friends and participate in the army's clubs: 'all she was interested in was the kids'. Barry also claimed that Amy had tried to 'change' him, but felt 'frustrated' at her failure to do so.

Barry's work was very important to him. He claimed the 'work hard, play hard' culture he inhabited frequently kept him away from home, and he found it 'frustrating' that Amy was reluctant to attend his work functions. Amy 'didn't trust' that Barry was remaining faithful to her whilst he was at these functions, and had 'accused' him of 'sleeping with someone else'. Barry denied the accusation and once again, 'packed a bag and went' to stay at the officers' mess. Amy also threatened to inform Barry's boss that he was an 'alcoholic'; an accusation which Barry described as 'nonsensical'. Barry had also received threats from Amy's father.

The geographical distance between Amy and her family most likely exacerbated the 'postnatal depression', which Barry implicated in the conflicts between them. Barry said:

*She would take it out on me, the frustration would come out on me, the depression would come out on me...and it is actually quite soul destroying to watch someone go down that road. And also...she wouldn't understand that she needed help.*

Barry's reaction to his marital problems was to 'just get on with it'. Nevertheless, Barry and Amy did attend Couple Counselling, which, he claimed, did help Amy 'to get better', even though it did not save their marriage. Curiously, Barry agreed with the contention that the police had been 'helpful', despite the fact that on the one occasion when he had contact with them they had charged him as a perpetrator of domestic abuse.

### *Charlie*

Charlie was a university educated professional worker in his early forties. He had lived with his wife Maureen for 21 years. Charlie and Maureen had married sixteen years ago, and subsequently had three children together, with whom they still lived. Charlie had indicated in the Scottish Crime Survey that he had experienced force from his current wife both prior to, and since, January 1999. In his response to the Scottish Crime Survey, Charlie said that these incidents of force would occur every couple of months, that he had sustained cuts and scratches on at least one of these occasions, and that he believed himself to be a 'victim of domestic violence'.

In his qualitative interview, Charlie described some serious episodes of reciprocated physical abuse, although for the most part he would insinuate that Maureen was the primary instigator; his 'aggression' acting as a 'counter to her original violence'. The

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<sup>97</sup> Barry said this was probably a saucepan.

first time Maureen had ever used force against him was during the second year of their relationship. Maureen threw a teapot at Charlie (which missed him) in response to him telling her ‘the relationship was finished’<sup>98</sup>. Friends of Charlie and Maureen’s came to perceive their relationship as ‘stormy’, the two of them frequently ‘bickering’ about ‘silly things’ in other people’s company. Charlie was quick to explain that he tends to ‘clam up’ and described Maureen’s desire to ‘discuss’ things in public as ‘distasteful and embarrassing’.

Although Charlie was proud that the two of them were ‘still together...and still happy’, it became apparent that his relationship with Maureen frequently became abusive. For example, there had been at least two occasions when Maureen had either slapped or punched Charlie and he had retaliated by ‘really’ hitting her. Charlie described one of these occasions thus:

*She punched me, erm, and so it was quite painful and I reacted by punching her right back, and I lost it. I lost it completely and I really punched her badly that time, erm...I think I had actually bruised her ... I’d given her a bruise on her face... and she couldn’t go into work and I met her [supervisor] and I explained to him what happened.*

There were (at least) two recurring stories through which Charlie contextualised the ‘intense’ ‘conflicts’ and ‘violence’ in his marriage. The first was the murder of Maureen’s mother by her stepfather, who ‘killed her with his bare hands’. The stepfather had a history of ‘paranoid’ jealousy, alcoholism, and recurring physical violence. The second was connected to Maureen’s ‘insecurities’. Charlie said Maureen suspected he was having ‘a relationship’ with his office junior, having discovered that he had lied about going to lunch at the woman’s house. The woman in question had previously told Maureen that she was attracted to Charlie. The police had never come to know about any of the domestic abuse, although Maureen had been to her GP following one ‘violent incident’.

#### *Daniel*

Daniel was a farmer in his early thirties who lived with his fiancée, Heather. Daniel and Heather each had one child from their previous marriages, and both children also lived with them. Daniel indicated to the Scottish Crime Survey that prior to 1999 he had experienced force from his ex-wife, Georgina, but that he did not consider himself a ‘victim of domestic violence’. In his qualitative interview Daniel confirmed that the incidents did indeed involve his ex-wife (Georgina), but denied that she had used force. Instead he described a series of ‘heated arguments’ precipitating their separation and subsequent divorce. Daniel cited Georgina’s infidelity as the main reason for the breakdown of their marriage. Daniel had also engaged in ‘violent arguments’ with Georgina’s lover during the separation.

Daniel described his relationship with Georgina as ‘argumentative’ from the outset, money often proving a source of dispute. Things started to get ‘heavy’ after Georgina had commenced her affair. Daniel explained that ‘there was abusive stuff’, but this was ‘purely all verbal’, ‘never anything physical’. Daniel explained that Georgina ‘wasn’t

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<sup>98</sup> However, earlier in the interview Charlie emphasised ‘at no time have I ever left Maureen, I’ve never left the home, and she’s never left me, erm. We always seem to resolve it in the end’. Friends of Charlie and Maureen’s were ‘shocked’ that the two of them had ‘stayed together’.

ready to settle down' and related the abuse to 'normal arguments' stemming from the breakdown of their marriage.

### *Eddie*

Eddie was in his late forties, unemployed and lived with his wife, Doris. Eddie described both himself and his wife as 'handicapped' (learning disabled). In the Scottish Crime Survey Eddie had disclosed that he had experienced force from his partner prior to January 1999, but he did not consider himself a 'victim of domestic violence'. Eddie misunderstood our opening reference to 'force and threats', and hence responded by documenting the harassment he had experienced from local people subsequent to his conviction for (sexually) 'interfering with a wee boy' 20 years ago.

Soon after leaving hospital (having been sectioned) Eddie met his wife in a homeless hostel where he was living. Eddie described his relationship with Doris as 'a bit of a hassle'. Although Eddie insisted that he does 'love her', he also said 'I do want to leave, but I'd end up back at a hostel'. In the two times our interviewers met Eddie he talked about a particular instance when Doris had assaulted him because he had taken £5 from their rent money. On this occasion, Doris 'fought like a cat'. Eddie suffered scratches all over his face, back and body. Eddie said he could have had Doris 'charged', but he refrained from doing so. Eddie had never notified the police of Doris's violence although he had threatened to tell both the police and Doris's mother about her behaviour.

Eddie attributed Doris's violence to her drinking. He also attributed his own violent outbursts to *her* drinking and her getting 'on his wick'. Eddie was forthcoming in disclosing his own violence, explaining how he had marked Doris's body (as opposed to her face) so that people would not notice. He also took pride in his capacity to keep sufficient control over himself so that Doris did not *die* as a consequence of him 'choking' her. Eddie stated, 'If I did kill her, if I choked her, the police can charge me. I try to keep away from that'.

Although Eddie and his wife were both violent to each other, his account suggested that his wife sustained bruises on many more occasions than he did – 'she goes black and blue'. Eddie also attributed his own violent temper to the brutal beatings his father inflicted on him; beatings that continued well into Eddie's adult life. Eddie explained that many of the violent arguments between him and Doris were as a result of him reacting to her claims that his parents did not love him. Eddie maintained that his memories of his father's violence had, on occasion, stopped him from killing Doris.

## **Retaliators**

### *Frank*

Frank was an unemployed factory worker in his late fifties who lived alone. He had indicated in his self-completion questionnaire that an ex-partner had made threats towards him, but he did not know whether this constituted domestic violence. This partner turned out to be his second wife, Hilary. Frank and Hilary had been together 15 years, before they divorced seven years before the time of interview. Much of Frank's account was vague, and in places, highly ambiguous.

Frank told our interviewer that his marriage had 'deteriorated from bad to worse', and that he and Hilary were 'fighting *all the time*, arguing', even though he was 'working 12 hour shifts, seven days a week'. Frank also claimed that his redundancy and the financial

consequences of this coincided with their break-up. However, later in the interview Frank changed his mind about this, pointing out that he had accrued considerable savings as a result of the overtime he had worked. Frank said that his wife had ‘threatened to kill him, but that, [he]...was never really frightened of her...She was just threatening to do this and do that...Most of it was all talk’.

Hilary left Frank and moved with their children to sheltered housing, but some five weeks later she returned home and changed the locks in their house. Frank was forced to reside with a relative of Hilary’s. Frank said there was never any actual physical violence in his relationship and that mostly their arguments were about petty things. Frank said he may have threatened Hilary but he could not actually remember a specific time. Frank did not have any problems seeing his children after the marriage break-up. He never contacted any agencies or service providers as a result of Hilary’s threats.

### *Gary*

Gary was a labourer in his early forties who lived with his father. He was separated from his wife, who lived with his two children. Gary indicated in the Scottish Crime Survey that he had experienced threats and force from an ‘ex-girlfriend’ prior to January 1999, and that he felt he was a ‘victim of domestic violence’. In our interview Gary revealed that it was actually his ex-wife, Deborah, who had assaulted and threatened to kill him. At times he had felt that he was ‘living on a knife-edge’.

Gary described Deborah as a ‘fiery’ woman who would ‘get violent’ if he ‘said anything she disagreed with’. Gary listed numerous incidents during which Deborah had subjected him to serious forms of violence. These included times when she had punched him, ‘sliced’ him with a knife, hit him over the head with a bottle, set fire to the bed (although he was not in it) and tried to ‘claw’ his eyes out. However, the severest incident Gary recounted was the time when Deborah had ‘smashed’ a crystal lamp over his head, after an argument in which she had told him that he was not the father of her child. The injuries sustained as a consequence of this blow to his head resulted in Gary losing three pints of blood. Gary was taken to hospital on this occasion and given a transfusion.

Not all of Deborah’s attacks were successfully implemented. Gary recalled one time when he had moved to embrace his ex-wife:

*So I looks down and I’ve seen the bloody knife in her hand, and she’s putting her arms around me and she’s ready. She’s gonna plunge it into my back. I looked down at the side and there’s four knives sitting at the side of the bed and I’m thinking, ‘This is pre-meditated, she’s thought about this one’...So I kicked her out the door, and she’s going down the road shouting that I’d better watch my back...that I was going to get my head cut off, I was as good as dead...*

In ‘hindsight’, Gary attributed Deborah’s ‘mood swings’ to her ‘cross addiction’ (to alcohol and Valium). He also explained how Deborah was later convicted for the manslaughter of a subsequent boyfriend - for which she was sentenced to four years imprisonment (having strangled and set fire to him). Gary regretted not having pressed charges against Deborah whilst they were together – the police having urged him to press charges against her for ‘serious assault’ following the ‘lamp’ attack. Gary explained that if he had done so, Deborah would have received help earlier and ‘might never have done a jail sentence’.

Gary had sometimes 'retaliated' with violence against Deborah whilst they were together. On two of these occasions he had been charged and fined by the police. Gary recalled one incident during which he 'pinned her against the wall with one hand' and was ready to strike her, but withdrew. He also claimed that Deborah had feigned injury in order to get him arrested. On one occasion she had allegedly 'flung herself down the stairs to give herself a bruising...black eye and a bust nose'.

Gary regretted that his eldest son had 'witnessed a few cases' of the violence between him and Deborah, explaining that he had seen 'more than he should of for a boy his age'. Gary also told us that at the time of the assaults he had lied to people about what had happened, explaining scratches on his face by claiming to have fallen into a hedge. Gary explained that he was reluctant to 'wash [his] dirty laundry in public'. Gary emphasised that he was physically much larger than Deborah and that he suspected that this would render his ex-wife's violence a source of humour for others and embarrassment for himself. Gary did, however, take great pride in the fact that he had 'battered' Deborah's brother (an ex-army sergeant) on the occasion when Deborah had instructed her brother to 'set about' Gary.

Gary had never received any form of counselling for his victimisation (or indeed, his own violence). Social services only had contact with the family when legal guardianship of the children was awarded to Gary's mother-in-law.

### *Harry*

Harry was a street orderly in his early forties who lived alone. He had disclosed to the Scottish Crime Survey 2000 that an ex-partner had threatened him, but he did not consider himself to be a 'victim of domestic violence'.

The first relationship Harry spoke to our interviewer about was with a man called Colin, whom he lived with for fifteen years. Much of the abuse Harry detailed seemed to stem from the clandestine nature of his relationship. Colin did not want many people to know that Harry and himself were a couple. Harry maintained that Colin held 'the power' in the relationship, and that 'the majority' of arguments were started by Colin. Harry would often feel 'frightened' when Colin began to shout, 'screech' or go 'crazy'. When talking about the abuse, Harry claimed that it was 'more mental' than physical, although once or twice he and Colin had ended up 'on the floor fighting'.

One example of the mental abuse endured by Harry was when Colin moved another man into their home and initiated a sexual relationship with him. Furthermore, Colin and Harry's relationship was premised on an unequal division of domestic labour. Harry said that when Colin moved his new lover into the house he (Harry) continued to do 'the washing and the ironing and made all of their meals...[and] just went along with it'. Subsequently, Colin told Harry that he was going to get married to a woman (Hazel), but still insisted that his relationship with Harry should continue. Colin and Harry's relationship endured silences that could last up to 'four or five weeks' often resulting from Colin's jealousy about Harry's friendships. Colin also had a relationship with a male prostitute. Colin would also, at times, pressure Harry into sex: 'if he wanted sex, you'd give him sex...always on his terms'.

Harry had approached *Gay Men's Health* for support after he and Colin separated. Harry described *Gay Men's Health's* response as 'helpful', especially because it was 'gay

related' and because the people he spoke to 'listened' to him and were 'patient' with him. Nevertheless, Harry had since had an abusive relationship with another man (Luke). During this relationship Luke became very jealous of Harry's ex-boyfriend (with whom Harry lived) thinking that 'something had happened' between them. This incident culminated in Luke 'grabbing' Harry by the 'throat'. On this occasion, Harry 'retaliated' by hitting Luke back.

#### *Ivan*

Ivan was an unemployed manager in his fifties, who was separated from his second wife. When interviewed by the Scottish Crime Survey Ivan indicated that his second wife had used force towards him and that he considered himself a 'victim of domestic violence'.

During our qualitative interview Ivan told the story of how he met up again with an ex-fiancée of his (Lisa), some time after his first marriage had terminated. Lisa and Ivan subsequently married. Ivan described this relationship as initially 'exciting', but one that swung from 'loving to argumentative', as Lisa was a bit 'Jekyll and Hyde' and 'a drama queen'. Ivan said that there were only a few times when Lisa was actually violent towards him. The first occasion Ivan described as 'a slap'. The second incident evolved from an argument and culminated in Lisa hitting Ivan with a spade.

The bruise Ivan sustained on this second occasion was big enough for people to inquire about it, and for him to show his GP. However, Ivan decided not to tell people that Lisa had assaulted him because he felt the incident was an 'isolated' one. Ivan stressed that most of the violence was 'oral' and insisted there were times when Lisa was particularly 'venomous'. Some of the incidents of 'force' Ivan mentioned did not involve actual assaults, only Lisa 'pursuing' him when he wanted to walk away from a confrontation. On one such occasion Ivan had used the door as a 'barrier', 'trapping' Lisa's finger in the door. Lisa had to seek medical treatment as a consequence.

Ivan contextualised the conflicts in his relationship with Lisa in terms of his feelings of being 'excluded' from her relationships with the children from her first marriage, her failure to consult him on important family decisions, arguments over household chores, her infidelity the first time they were courting (20 years ago), and her incapacity to trust his fidelity (because he had been unfaithful to his first wife).

Ivan and Lisa sought assistance in their relationship from *Couple Counselling*, although initially Lisa felt that Ivan should attend and that 'she shouldn't'. During the counselling Ivan said that he and Lisa spoke about the violence. Ivan 'had a lot of respect for the work that *Couple Counselling* did with [them]'.

#### *Jimmy*

Jimmy was in his early forties and worked in a restaurant. He had previously been in the armed forces. When he was interviewed for the Scottish Crime Survey he indicated that the partner he was with prior to 1999 had used force against him, although he did not consider himself a 'victim of domestic violence'. Our interviewer discovered that the 'force' referred to incidents involving Jimmy's first wife (of six months), Ann, and two assaults perpetrated by another (subsequent) ex-girlfriend, Mandy.

Jimmy and Ann had been together only a week when she 'fell pregnant', so Jimmy did the 'dutiful thing and marr[ied] her'. During his interview Jimmy talked about the 'strain'



on his relationship caused by being away with his work; a strain which was compounded because Ann ended up living in an army camp 'in the middle of nowhere'.

Jimmy claimed he and Ann had many rows. The first time Ann used actual force Jimmy described thus: 'she lost her rag, she just threw toast at me'. On another occasion Ann started 'eff-ing and blinding' after their infant son (George) put the glass of a broken beer bottle in his mouth – glass that Jimmy claimed to have cleared away. Jimmy told Ann to 'clean it up' herself. Ann also threw a glass of water over Jimmy when he said he was too tired to have sex with her. Jimmy did not blame the failure of his marriage entirely on Ann. He said he 'flirt[ed]' and 'went out and lived dangerously'.

Jimmy said that when these arguments started he would 'just walk away.' After custody of George had been awarded to Ann, she and Jimmy had their 'biggest...row'. Ann 'shouted' at Jimmy for 'playing rough with' George, who had started to cry. When Jimmy persisted, he felt 'this punch, coming up smacking me in the face.' He 'got up in a temper' and then,

*put her up against the wall, threw her into a chair, I raised my fist, but I went you're not worth it...and rubbed her nose in it. Didn't hit her, just sorta rubbed her nose.*

After this incident Ann called the police, but Jimmy told them that she had assaulted him. The police asked Jimmy if he wanted to press charges against Ann, but he said it 'wasn't worth it'. According to Jimmy, the police had told Ann that if she was not happy she should find herself an 'alternative' place to stay. Jimmy thought the police 'were great' but he said it would have been better had they conducted a follow-up,

*cos when they walk out, God knows what can happen...I could've gone out that night, come back, smacked her head in.*

Jimmy described times when he could have 'smacked [Ann] in the mouth' but maintained that the punishment he would have received from the military police stopped him,

*they punish you twice...you get called into a court first, and then you get charged again for bringing the uniform into disrepute.*

Jimmy described a relationship with his ex-girlfriend (Mandy) where she had poured drink over him and 'tried to stab' him with her high heels when he was asleep. Jimmy said he 'wasn't bothered' about this and couldn't feel 'anything'. When Jimmy told Mandy that he was moving out, an argument started. Mandy hit Jimmy with her shoes and 'tried stabbing' him with a screwdriver. Jimmy took a clog and hit her with it, 'just across the leg to stop her following' him. The police questioned Jimmy over allegations that he had 'dislocated her knee.' Jimmy responded by showing the police his 'marks from the high heel shoes' and 'grazes' from the 'screwdriver', and said 'if she's prosecuting me I'll prosecute her'. Jimmy was sent a warning from the Procurator Fiscal, stating that if he offended again he would be prosecuted.

Aside from his contacts with the police, Jimmy did not receive any support or help from other agencies or organisations regarding domestic abuse, but he had some contact with *Victim Support* following a serious assault by a man in a pub.

### *Kenny*

Kenny was a sales director and trainee psychotherapist in his mid-fifties. He had been married to Erica for 32 years, with whom he had three children (all of whom were now adults, but still lived with Kenny and Erica). When interviewed for the Scottish Crime Survey, Kenny maintained that he had experienced force from his wife but did not consider himself to be a 'victim of domestic violence'.

Before the interview commenced, Kenny said he was willing to do anything to make his marriage work. He said that one of his reasons for taking part in our qualitative interview was so that he could verbalise his feelings in an attempt to understand his relationship better. Kenny had become a Catholic when he and Erica first married so that religion was not a reason 'for division' between them. Kenny described his marriage to Erica as 'settled and stable' and insisted that it was only in 'the last few years' that 'problems' had arisen. Kenny attributed these problems to Erica's 'menopause', 'pressure' (on them both), the need to spend more 'time' together, and his own experience of the conflicts between his mother and stepfather when he was a child.

Kenny struggled to provide specific examples of Erica's force towards him, aside from 'wrestling matches' in which they sometimes both 'los[t] control'. Often the problem was that Kenny hadn't said 'something that she wanted' him 'to say'. Kenny said that his own failings as a husband were often reasons for his and Erica's 'rows and rucks'. (He cited times he hadn't confided in Erica, and times when he had been late home as examples).

Kenny said he would sometimes try to use 'restraining' force against Erica – typically holding her wrists, physically shoving her away from him, and on one occasion dragging her down the stairs - 'more to defuse the situation rather than actually be aggressive'. Kenny explained that when he raised his 'tone of voice to the same level as hers [and was] aggressive properly' Erica often became tearful. As a result of their 'wrestling matches' Kenny had suffered scratches on his arms and nail marks on the back of his hands. Erica had sustained bruising on her thigh as a result of Kenny being 'too forceful'. Kenny said things were improving between him and Erica, that the violence was under control and they were increasingly 'sharing' their problems. He added, 'at the end of the day I feel remorseful and heartbroken it happened and lots of apologies afterwards'.

To the best of Kenny's knowledge his children were not aware of the violent arguments between him and Erica. Neither the police nor social services had been contacted regarding these incidents.

### *Liam*

Liam was an engineer in his mid forties. He disclosed to the Scottish Crime Survey 2000 that he had experienced force from an ex-girlfriend, but that he did not consider himself a 'victim of domestic violence'. The relationship to which Liam was referring was with a woman called Jane whom he dated 20 years previously. Liam described Jane as a 'possessive' and 'jealous' woman who had a 'fiery temper'. Jane wanted to see Liam every night, which Liam found 'a bit of a strain'. Jane's demands also meant that Liam had less time to play sport, a pastime he particularly enjoyed. When asked about his relationship with Jane, Liam said,

*we had a few rows – but nothing serious, usually... I wasn't beaten up badly or anything, I wasn't battered, she just used to hit me now and again...strike out at me.*

Liam disclosed that 'a couple of times' Jane 'punched [him] in the face', and on at least one occasion she gave him a black eye. She had also pulled a 'shaving thing off the wall' and 'threw it' at him. Liam maintained that on these occasions he would 'restrain' Jane and try 'to pacify her'. When he did 'retaliate' it was 'more in self-defence than actually trying to injure her'. Liam described one incident when he 'pushed her...on the bed' and another when he 'slapped her round the face'.

Liam and Jane went on holiday together fourteen years after their relationship had ended. This holiday proved turbulent. Liam maintained that his relationship with Jane 'put [him] off' women 'for a wee bit'. Liam never approached any agencies for support or help in conjunction with Jane's behaviour.

### *Michael*

Michael was an engineer in his fifties. Michael had disclosed to the Scottish Crime Survey that his ex-wife (Sheila) had threatened him and used force against him. He considered himself a 'victim of domestic violence'.

Michael and Sheila, 'had to get married' when she 'fell pregnant', despite his reluctance to do so. Michael described Sheila as both 'really pleasant' and 'a hard nut' but admitted that he 'didn't really love' her. Michael's mother was 'dead against the marriage' because she knew of Sheila's 'violent reputation'. After the birth of their daughter, Michael and Sheila's relationship 'deteriorat[ed]', and both of them were 'unfaithful'. Michael said he was 'not a violent person', although he admitted to fighting with Sheila's younger brother on a couple of occasions.

When asked about his marriage, Michael maintained that the violence 'probably wasn't that frequent' but that it dominated his memory of their time together: 'it's a lot of what I remember of the relationship'. Usually when Sheila would begin 'ranting and raving' Michael would 'walk away'. Michael insisted, 'it wasn't a problem' or 'a major threat' when she 'used her fists' as 'I could hit her a lot harder than she could hit me...and that would sorta keep her away'.

One night following an argument over Michael's infidelity, Sheila 'stabbed' Michael in the back with a knife as he was walking away from her. Michael did not realise that he had been stabbed until he went outside and discovered his 'back was wet' with his own blood. Michael received treatment for his injury at the local hospital and when he went home that night he slept downstairs. The next day, Michael described how Sheila was 'even more violent' (Sheila attempted to 'kick' and 'thump' him). Michael found it 'surprising' that Sheila 'wasne sorry'. 'A while after' this had happened Michael left Sheila and started divorce proceedings, citing their mutual unfaithfulness.

Apart from the hospital, Michael did not approach any other agencies for support or help. At the time that he was stabbed Michael told people that a stranger had attacked him. He did not want the police to be involved and he did not want people to know his wife was the perpetrator. Although this incident took place 20 years prior to interview it was still deeply distressing for Michael to talk about.

## Non-Retaliatory Victims

### *Neil*

Neil was in his early forties and had separated from his wife several years earlier. Neil's wife, Ruth, had assaulted and threatened him on numerous occasions, and he told the Scottish Crime Survey that he did perceive this as 'domestic violence'. Neil had given up work on the advice of a solicitor, who told him this was necessary if he wanted to regain custody of them. Neil had won his custody case<sup>99</sup>, even though she had taken the children away from him when they separated. Neil still lives with his two sons and daughter.

Neil described a ten-year marriage that was mostly happy. However, he argued that as time went by Ruth became a 'Jekyll and Hyde character' who was increasingly abusive when drunk. The most serious incident that happened was when Ruth punched him a few times in the back with a set of keys. This incident happened close to the time of the ending of Neil's marriage, a time when he was holding their two-year-old daughter to stop Ruth leaving with her. On this occasion, Neil was badly bruised and cut.

Over the years there had been a number of other more minor incidents, most of which centred around Ruth's 'extreme jealousy'. Neil said he witnessed Ruth's 'violent temper...more than the physical side of it': a temper that made him 'terrified' for his children's safety. Ruth frequently accused Neil of infidelity, and was suspicious of the times when his work required him to stay away overnight or when he attended office parties to which partners were not invited. Neil insisted that Ruth had no reason to be jealous. Another time when Ruth had hit Neil, her force caused him to split his eye on his car door. On this occasion Neil had tried to prevent Ruth from taking their car because she was drunk. Ruth had also hit Neil in front of other family members when he was drunk. As a consequence of Ruth's behaviour, Neil gave up drinking – and had not had a drink in eight years.

Neil said that he had never hit Ruth, although he had on several occasions threatened to report her to the police. However, Neil had never told the police, or sought help from any other agency (except a solicitor) because of his 'pride'. Ruth has since sought psychiatric help. Neil explained that Ruth had a particularly 'unhappy childhood'.

### *Oliver*

Oliver was a civil servant in his early thirties who had previously been forced to leave the army after a stranger assault left him with physical disabilities and slight brain damage. He considered himself a 'victim of domestic violence', because his ex-partner (prior to 1999) had attempted to stab him with a kitchen knife. The story Oliver told of his relationship was one in which his partner, Karen, tired of him being away from home for long periods of time because of his work. Karen had told him that if he did not leave his job she would terminate her pregnancy and leave him.

*One night I was coming back home after being away...she ran at me with a knife...[and] tried to slash me a couple of times, but...I was able to defend myself.*

Oliver conceded that his relationship 'always had problems'. Oliver said Karen was very possessive, although it was actually her that had an affair; he had always remained faithful. Oliver did not like Karen spending his income whilst he was away. On the occasion when Karen attempted to stab Oliver, they had just had an argument regarding

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<sup>99</sup> His solicitor having used her 'apology letters' as evidence of her abusiveness.

the condition their home was in (Oliver said there was dog faeces 'all over the floor'). There had also been more minor incidents of abuse in Oliver and Karen's relationship; times when Karen had kicked or slapped Oliver without causing serious injury. Oliver said he never retaliated, except to hold Karen's hands to stop her. Oliver attributed his restraint to having seen the effects of his father's violence on his mother.

Oliver was never able to resolve his conflicts with Karen because he ended up in hospital for almost a year as a consequence of a stranger assault. During the time Oliver was in hospital Karen had an abortion, emptied their joint bank account and initiated a relationship with another man. It was this subsequent behaviour that appeared to hurt Oliver the most. Oliver said that he had told very few people about the violence he experienced from Karen, mostly because he expected people to tell him to 'sort it out' himself.

### *Patrick*

Patrick was a self-employed man in his early forties who was married and lived with his wife and only child. Patrick had indicated to the Scottish Crime Survey that he had been subjected to threats and force prior to 1999 from an ex-girlfriend, but did not feel he had been a victim of 'domestic violence'. However during the course of the interview Patrick revealed that it was actually his current wife, Julia, who had threatened him with a knife; the incident in question occurring shortly after the birth of their child, seven years prior to the interview.

Patrick could not recall the exact reasons as to how the incident arose, but suggested that he 'was probably antagonising' Julia in some way. Patrick said that the build-up to the argument was probably regarding 'something trivial'. Patrick was not actually hurt during this episode as he sought refuge in the toilet, but admitted to being 'a tad worried', because Julia had 'lost the plot'.

After the incident, Patrick said he was 'livid' about his wife's behaviour. Patrick then went on to contextualise conflicts in his relationship in terms of Julia's 'desperate' desire for a child, the impact of IVF treatment on his sex drive (for which he sought counselling) and Julia's postnatal depression (for which she received counselling).

Patrick was keen to stress that the incident in which Julia 'had a knife in her hand' was the 'one and only time' that she had ever threatened him in any way. Patrick described his relationship with Julia as being like 'best mates'. Neither Patrick nor Julia sought any support or intervention from the police or any other agency as a result of the abusive incident.

### *Robert*

Robert was a sales manager in his mid thirties who lived with his wife and two children. Robert's responses to the self-completion questionnaire were contradictory, as he had stated that he did not have a partner or contact with an ex-partner at the time of the survey. However, Robert went on to claim that he had experienced force from his current wife prior to 1999, although he did not consider himself a victim of 'domestic violence'. In our interview with Robert, we ascertained that the person involved was not actually Robert's current wife, but an 'ex-girlfriend' (Alison) he dated twelve or thirteen years ago.

Robert's relationship with Alison lasted a year and a half. He said things 'went pear shaped' during the last six months, when she started to 'lift her hand' towards him. Robert described Alison as having 'a fiery temper', which he attributed to the fact that she had 'ginger hair'. Alison would frequently 'swear' at Robert and had punched him 'in the face...and in the body'. Robert also recalled how Alison would sometimes 'catch' him 'on the cheekbone or maybe the jaw, [or] give me a slap on the head'. Robert elaborated, 'It wasnae like one hit and away sort of thing, she used to go mental'. These attacks would happen 'two or three times a day'.

Robert claimed that the reason Alison 'liked to have her own way' was because her 'mother and father spoilt her' (she was an 'only' child). Alison tended to react with violence when she did not get her own way, for example, when Robert refused to go shopping or to the cinema with her. Robert steadfastly denied having ever physically retaliated against Alison. He never sought support or help from the police or any other agency during this time, believing that he 'could handle it' on his own.

### *Simon*

Simon was a nurse in his mid forties who lived with his wife and four children. Simon had indicated in his self-completion questionnaire that his ex-wife had used force against him and that he considered himself a 'victim of domestic violence'. He confirmed these details during the qualitative interview.

Simon explained that he and his ex-wife, Carrie had been engaged for eighteen months prior to getting married, the two of them having met at their local church. Simon described a 'gentle relationship', that nevertheless fell apart 'days after the wedding' when Carrie told him that 'she'd been having sex with somebody' else whilst they were engaged. She also declared that she 'wasn't going to have any more children'. Simon revealed that this disclosure 'almost destroyed' the relationship because Carrie had previously intimated that they would have children together. Simon and Carrie's marriage subsequently terminated only 'a few weeks' later.

Simon said he became 'stuck in a house with this woman who was always looking to fight'. Despite the fact that he was 'bigger' and 'stronger' than Carrie, Simon said that she was 'a very physical woman, so when we had a row she would always try and give me a slap'. Simon also claimed that Carrie would often follow him from room to room trying to provoke him. He described one such occasion where:

*She was going so mad trying to hit me with different things, I actually had to hold her on the couch, just hold her down to stop her swinging about. And she kept shouting, 'this is what you want, this is what you want. You want to hit me'. I says, 'I haven't hit you, stop hitting me'.*

Simon vowed he would 'never become like...[his] father'; a man who had perpetrated some 'absolutely horrendous' beatings on Simon's mother.

Simon and Carrie sought counselling from their local bishop. Simon described the process as 'totally unrewarding' on account of the fact that the bishop merely talked about 'the gospels involved in the church'. Simon and Carrie also spoke to a professional counsellor, who was coincidentally a fellow member of their church. Despite Simon and Carrie not mentioning her 'aggression' this counsellor proved much more 'helpful'.

### *Trevor*

Trevor<sup>100</sup> was in his mid twenties, self employed and lived at home with his family. Trevor indicated to the Scottish Crime Survey that he had experienced threats from an ex-girlfriend prior to 1999 but did not consider himself a 'victim of domestic violence'. Trevor told us that whilst his ex-girlfriend had never threatened him, she had used force against him. Trevor had been threatened and assaulted by brothers, male neighbours and male friends of girls he had been in relationships with. Trevor said he had arranged for friends of his to retaliate against these men.

The one incident of force that Trevor had experienced from a partner was not disclosed to the Scottish Crime Survey. Trevor recounted this incident in a light-hearted manner during his interview, describing how his ex-fiancée (Louisa) had 'swung' him into a window during an argument. Trevor insisted that the only force he used against Louisa was to grab her wrists to prevent her from hitting him. Trevor did not sustain any injuries on this occasion, although the window was broken. Apparently, the incident was 'pretty much resolved as soon as it happened', although Trevor alleged that Louisa harassed him with phone calls in the three months following their subsequent break-up.

### *Vince*

Vince was police officer in his late thirties who lived with his girlfriend. He had disclosed to the Scottish Crime Survey that an *ex-girlfriend* (Tracey) of his had said frightening things to him and used force against him. Vince did not consider himself to be a 'victim of domestic violence'.

Vince told us that the incidents of domestic violence were 'just me falling out with girlfriends...It was really funny looking back on it now but at the time it wasn't'. Vince gave several examples of when Tracey had assaulted him. Vince talked about one time when Tracey went 'absolutely loopy' and smashed a glass into his wrist. On this occasion, a few men in the pub also became violent towards Vince, believing that Vince was physically abusing his girlfriend. Vince said he was in fact 'trying to calm her down, obviously by holding her by the arms'.

On other occasions Tracey had punched Vince 'quite hard', and on one occasion had 'nearly broke' his nose. The majority of the incidents occurred when both Vince and Tracey had been drinking. Vince suggested that the violence was typically triggered by his 'flirtatious' behaviour. Vince said that towards the end of his and Tracey's relationship the violence became more regular, occurring every four or five weeks. Whenever he tried to end the relationship she would often become 'a bit mad'. On no occasion did Vince go to the hospital. Vince said his injuries were 'never that bad'. Vince added that if he encountered a male victim of domestic abuse in his police work he would 'talk the guy out of' pressing charges, because 'that's what you do'.

### *Warren*

Warren was a 'house husband' in his fifties who had previously been a railway worker. Warren indicated in the Scottish Crime Survey that he had experienced threats and force from his ex-wife (Lily) and that he considered himself 'a victim of domestic violence'.

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<sup>100</sup> Trevor had not been randomly selected to take part in the Scottish Crime Survey, as MVA had originally interviewed him whilst at a friend's house.

Warren told us how Lily had been in a violent relationship before they were married. When Warren and Lily first met, Lily was 'very frightened' of upsetting Warren. On one occasion she feared Warren was going 'to kill her' because she had broken a plate – a reaction Warren attributed to her previous experiences of living with an abusive man. Yet after Warren and Lily were married, Warren said Lily became 'over confident' as a result of the 'freedom' and 'new world of experience' their relationship afforded her. Warren claimed Lily would invite young boys round to the house like a 'queen bee'. Warren also described Lily as being 'strop[er]y' and a 'heavy drinker' and claimed that she would 'expos[e] herself' on nights out when Warren was present. Warren complained that their house would always be untidy and that their daughters would not be fed properly. Warren also detailed how Lily was 'seeing somebody' else, something he considered to be a form of 'violence' against him.

When talking of the force, Warren told our interviewer how Lily would throw shoes at him. Warren claimed he still had a bruise on his ankle from an incident some fifteen years ago when Lily had done this. At the time Warren sought hospital treatment for the injury caused. Warren also told our interviewer how Lily would 'hit and scratch' him. He described Lily's actions as like 'a very frustrated child hitting her mother'. When asked about his reactions to Lily's behaviour, Warren said, he would 'never...hit a woman', although he was less concerned about being 'violent' to other men. Nevertheless, Warren also added, 'maybe I was hurting her emotionally', because he was (psychologically) 'twisted' (implicating the affects of his own history of childhood sexual abuse). Although Warren described his sex life with Lily as 'reasonably good' certain things she would do 'used to scare the shit out of [him]'.

Warren had contacted the Citizen's Advice Bureau for financial advice after he and Lily separated. Warren said he did not contact social services because he held them in such low regard. Both of his children were on the child protection register. After their separation, Warren retained custody of the children, although the children actually went to live with Warren's parents. Warren never approached the police about the domestic abuse he experienced as he said he couldn't see 'what they could have done'.

### *Zac*

Zac was in his mid twenties and unemployed at the time of our interview with him. Zac had indicated to the Scottish Crime Survey that he had experienced threats and force from both an ex-partner and his wife. Zac disclosed that he had had bones broken, been choked, had things thrown at him and had been threatened with an object. He also claimed that children had been present during at least one of these incidents. Zac considered himself a 'victim of domestic violence'.

Zac told our interviewer of three relationships in which he felt he had been abused by a partner. In three relationships Zac had physical force used against him. There was also emotional abuse in his third relationship. Zac contextualised the abuse within all three of his relationships in terms of his desire to work long hours (sometimes 18 hours a day) to earn money. This created tension within his relationships on account of his partners' 'possessiveness'. Zac also detailed his partners' previous histories of abuse at the hands of other men as a causal factor of the domestic abuse. Another recurrent theme in Zac's narrative was his separation from his partners either shortly before or shortly after they had each given birth to his (three) children (one with each partner)<sup>101</sup>. These separations

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<sup>101</sup> Zac and Jemma had broken up before they found out she was pregnant.



occurred despite his insistence that 'If you're going to go out with somebody, you [should] try and make it last as long as possible'. Zac stated that:

*everything in life is meant for you one way or another and its – me being mistreated by women to me is because I must have been mistreating them in some way and I don't particularly know how, but I must have been doing it somehow.*

Jemma moved in with Zac shortly after their relationship began (when he was about 16 years old), after an altercation with her stepfather that culminated in Zac punching him. Jemma's violence towards Zac apparently began with 'just a gentle slap or a push', but progressed to Jemma throwing things<sup>102</sup> at him. On one occasion, Jemma had tried to hit Zac on the head with her stiletto heel, an act Zac belittled by describing it as 'amusing'. Zac dealt with his subsequent feelings of 'aggression' by hitting 'doors and pillows'. Eventually Zac felt he had to 'get out' of the relationship, for fear that he would have 'end[ed] up hitting her back'. The 'last straw' was when Zac awoke to find Jemma putting a bread knife to his throat, with the threat, 'keep mistreating me and I'll kill you'. Zac responded to this by saying, 'cut my throat, I'm going back to sleep'. Zac claimed that in other incidents Jemma had attacked him from behind with a knife, which had 'scarred' him on his back 'for life'.

Jemma had Zac's child after they had separated, but Zac claimed that Jemma did not want him 'to have anything to do with' their daughter. Just prior to the interview Zac had resumed contact with this daughter, subsequent to receiving a letter from the Child Support Agency.

Less than two years after this break-up Zac married a woman called Kerry. Zac described Kerry as 'the only person I'm actually in love with still' and that she was only violent 'when she was pregnant'. He then partially retracted this explaining, 'it wasn't violence as such...more like a sort of kid's tantrum...and then she would burst into tears'. Zac attributed Kerry's violence to psychiatric problems connected to having been raped as a teenager. According to Zac, if he 'put [his] hand on her throat by accident...it would bring back a bad memory' and Kerry would become 'hysterical'.

Zac left Kerry after he had an affair with Nina (his third partner), less than twelve months into the marriage. Despite the fact that this was just before the birth of their daughter, Zac was still present at the birth and would see his daughter 'two or three times a week'. Recently Kerry had attempted to get an interdict out against Zac (because of his alleged harassment of her); something Zac described as being 'quite funny' because Kerry was 'laughed out of court'. Zac was in the process of consulting a lawyer about gaining access to his daughter.

When asked about the violence in his relationship with Nina, Zac said that:

*Nina wasn't only physical. Physical doesn't bother me because I've got a very, very high pain tolerance<sup>103</sup>, so somebody hitting me doesn't hurt anyway...With her it was a lot more emotional and a lot more mental...she would put me down a lot and sort of try and disgrace [sic] me.*

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<sup>102</sup> Such as 'hairspray cans and HP batteries' and a 'platform shoe'.

<sup>103</sup> Zac told us he had been in martial arts training since he was six years old.

Zac claimed Nina's behaviour resulted from her need to be 'in control'. When Nina 'did lash out' she would often hit Zac with kitchen implements, typically a spoon or spatula. She had also 'stabbed' him with a knife and a fork. Zac said that when he 'started fighting back and basically made her feel [inferior]...that made her fight even more'. Zac described Nina's tendency to try to make him 'look like an idiot in front of everybody' as worse than the physical abuse. Zac also said Nina had fabricated stories about having slept with other men to try and 'hurt' him.

Zac claimed he was rejected from the marines because of a detached retina, an injury that was the result of Nina hitting him on the side of the face with a TV remote control. Zac elaborated, 'I could have made something of my life' and, 'she's taken that away from me basically because of her violence'. Zac had never contacted the police because of his victimisation, explaining that he was 'too embarrassed'. Zac had, however, spoken to a local church minister on one occasion, which he described as being 'a wee bit' helpful.

## APPENDIX E - QUESTIONNAIRE FOR SERVICE PROVIDERS

### Questionnaire for Service Providers Dealing with Male Victims of Domestic Abuse

#### 1. Your Service Users

- a. Approximately how many victims of domestic abuse contact your service per year?
- b. What proportion of these victims are male?
- c. What proportion of these male victims reported abuse by male partners?

#### 2. Service Provision

- a. What kinds of services does your agency provide for victims of domestic abuse?
- b. In what ways are the services you provide for male victims different to those that you provide for female victims?
- c. Do you make any additional service provision for gay and lesbian people?

#### 3. Training

- a. Do you have a standard domestic abuse training programme for workers in your agency? If so, what are the training programme's key components?
- b. Does the programme make any particular reference to male victims of domestic abuse? Gay and lesbian victims of domestic abuse? Disabled victims? Elderly victims? Homeless victims? Child victims?
- c. How many of your workers undertake more specialist training programmes?
- d. Do these specialist programmes make any reference to male victims of domestic abuse? Gay and lesbian victims of domestic abuse? Disabled victims? Elderly victims? Homeless victims? Child victims?

#### 4. Your Agency's Aspirations

- a. If your agency's budget was doubled for the next financial year what aspects of your service provision and/or training would you seek to develop or expand?
- b. Do you think there is a need for better service provision for male victims of abuse?
- c. If so, do you see a role for your own agency in making this provision?

#### 5. Your Publicity

- a. Have you got any publicity material (leaflets etc.), which your agency provides to victims of domestic abuse and which you would be willing to send us?

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