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Experience of Domestic Violence: Findings from the 2005 Northern Ireland Crime Survey

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KEY FINDINGS

- ◆ Findings revealed that 13% of respondents claimed to have been victims of domestic violence at some time in their lives, with females reporting a higher victimisation rate than males (16% compared with 10%) (Figure 1.1 and Figure 2.1).
- ◆ A greater proportion of 16-29 year-olds claimed to have been victims of domestic violence than those aged 30-59 years (16% and 12% respectively) (Figure 2.2). The difference was more marked for females with 20% of females aged 16-29 being victimised compared with 14% of females aged 30-59. This compared with 11% of males aged 16-29 and 10% of males aged 30-59.
- ◆ Religion appeared to have no bearing on the likelihood of being a victim of domestic violence. Catholic respondents (13%) were equally likely to have experienced domestic violence as Protestant respondents (13%) (Figure 2.3).
- ◆ Respondents from the Belfast area had higher victimisation rates than residents in the East or West of Northern Ireland (16%, 13% and 12% respectively) (Figure 2.4). The higher urban victimisation rate was more pronounced for females – 21% of females living in Belfast compared with 14% and 15% living in East and West of Northern Ireland respectively. This compared with 9%, 10% and 9% respectively for males.
- ◆ Seventeen percent of all female victims had suffered threats and/or force from a partner while they were pregnant. For over half of these females (56%), the violence had started during their pregnancy.
- ◆ Analysis on repeat victimisation revealed that almost half (49%) of all victims experienced domestic violence from the perpetrator of their worst incident on more than one occasion; over a quarter (27%) were victimised many times i.e. four times or more (Figure 4.1). A greater proportion of females than males experienced repeat victimisation – 57% compared with 27%.
- ◆ Over three fifths (62%) of victims sustained injuries as a result of their 'worst' incident (Table 4.1). Sixty-eight percent of females and 49% of males reported injuries after their worst incidents while female injured victims were five times as likely to suffer severe injuries as male injured victims, 15% and 3% respectively (Figure 4.2).
- ◆ Sixty-two percent of victims considered their worst incident to be domestic violence (Figure 4.3). A higher proportion of females than males believed their worst incident constituted domestic violence, 67% and 50% respectively.
- ◆ Less than half of victims (44%) believed their worst incident constituted a crime, while 14% accepted it as 'just something that happens' (Figure 4.4). Female victims were more than three times as likely as male victims to classify their worst incident as a crime, 54% and 17% respectively.
- ◆ The police came to know about less than a quarter (24%) of worst incidents (Figure 4.5) and 23% of all the domestic violence incidents identified through the 2005 NICS. The police were twice as likely to come to know about a worst incident experienced by a female than a male (29% compared with 14%).
- ◆ Approximately two fifths (42%) of all respondents thought that the government and its agencies, such as the police and courts, were not doing enough about domestic violence. Less than 1 in 5 (19%) felt enough was being done to address the problem (Table 5.1).

INTRODUCTION

This bulletin is based on findings from the 2005 Northern Ireland Crime Survey (NICS), a personal and anonymous interview survey of 3,692 adults living in private households throughout Northern Ireland. Previously conducted in 1994/95, 1998, 2001 and 2003/04, the NICS began operating on a continuous basis in January 2005. This bulletin is based on the findings from the field work carried out from January to December 2005 and outlines key results derived from a computer-assisted self-interviewing (CASI) module in the NICS asking about domestic violence. To enable comparisons with the British Crime Survey, the equivalent survey for England and Wales, only respondents to the NICS aged from 16 to 59 were asked to complete the domestic violence module.

Of the 3,692 respondents who took part in the 2005 NICS, 2,545 were aged 16 to 59 and were therefore eligible to complete the domestic violence module. However, 437 individuals within this age category did not complete the module, leaving a valid base number (n) of 2,108.

The CASI approach was adopted as it emphasised anonymity and confidentiality on a subject that is very sensitive and personal to victims of domestic violence. While no official definition of domestic violence was presented to respondents the CASI questionnaire was designed to include any violence between current or former partners in an intimate relationship. The violence may include physical, sexual, emotional, financial or social abuse (Table I). A substantial section of the questionnaire focused on what each respondent considered their 'worst' incident, which must have included an element of (physical) force and/or (frightening) threats (options 'd' to 'k' [excludes option 'l'] in Table I).

Table I: Types of domestic violence identified by the NICS

Category	Form of domestic violence
Abuse	a. Prevented you from having your fair share of the household money
	b. Stopped you from seeing friends or relatives
	c. Deliberately damaged your property ¹
Threat	d. Frightened you, by threatening to hurt you or some one close to you
Force	e. Pushed you, held or pinned you down or slapped you ²
	f. Kicked you, bitten you, or hit you with a fist or something else, or threw something at you that hurt you ³
	g. Choked or tried to strangle you ³
	h. Threatened you with a weapon, such as a stick or a knife ³
	i. Threatened to kill you ³
	j. Forced you to have sex when you didn't want to ^{1,3}
	k. Used a weapon against you, e.g. a knife ³
	l. Used some other kind of force against you

Notes:

1. Not included in the domestic violence section of the 2005/06 BCS

2. Considered 'minor' force

3. Considered 'severe' force

The bulletin aims to consider domestic violence in Northern Ireland under the following five headings:

1. The extent of domestic violence in Northern Ireland
2. The risk factors associated with domestic violence victimisation
3. The characteristics of domestic violence victimisation
4. The experience of domestic violence
5. Policy responses to domestic violence in Northern Ireland

During 2004/05 the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) established a baseline measure of incidents and crimes with a domestic motivation and this measure was continued during 2005/06. A domestic incident¹ is defined as any incident of threatening behaviour, violence or abuse (psychological, physical, sexual, financial or emotional) by one family member against another or adults who are or have been intimate partners, regardless of gender, and whether a crime has occurred or not. Not all domestic incidents will result in the recording of a crime (PSNI, 2006).

In 2005/06 the PSNI responded to 23,059 domestic incidents which resulted in 9,353 domestic crimes² being recorded. These figures represent a 10% increase on the number of domestic incidents and a 10% increase in the number of recorded crimes between 2004/05 and 2005/06 (Table II). Two thirds (7,206) of all³ the domestic crimes were categorised as violent (offences against the person, sexual offences and robbery), 6 of which were murders, 15% as criminal damage and 13% as breach of non-molestation orders (PSNI, 2006).

Table II: Domestic incidents and crimes recorded by PSNI 2004/05 to 2005/06

	2004/05	2005/06	increase ⁴ %
Total number of domestic incidents	20,959	23,059	+10
Total number of crimes:			
including breach of orders	9,656	10,768	+12
excluding breach of orders	8,508	9,353	+10

Of the 9,353 crimes with a domestic motivation recorded by the PSNI in 2005/06, three times as many included female victims aged 17 and over compared with male victims aged 17 and over (69% and 23% respectively). These figures are similar to 2003/04 – 71% and 22% respectively.

Police statistics cannot provide the full extent of domestic violence as many incidents are not reported. In addition, the police figures cannot provide an insight into a victim's personal experience or perceptions of domestic violence. Hence, it is necessary to complement the police figures with information drawn from the NICS which, within the limitations of both sampling and non-sampling error, provides a more complete measure of domestic violence in Northern Ireland (Freel & Robinson, 2005).

SURVEY FINDINGS⁵

All percentages stated in this bulletin have been weighted to prevent bias towards small households and have been rounded to the nearest whole number. Further information can be obtained in the technical notes section at the end of the bulletin.

1. The definition of domestic violence used by the PSNI to compile these statistics (PSNI, 2005/06) differs from that used in the NICS therefore the statistics are not directly comparable.
2. Do not include assault on police or breach of non-molestation orders. The breach of a non-molestation order has been recorded as a notifiable offence under the Home Office Counting rules since 1st April 2005. Prior to this date the number of breaches of these orders was available but not the number cleared or the clearance rate.
3. Do not include assault on police but include breach of non-molestation orders.
4. PSNI percentages have been rounded to the nearest whole number to be consistent with rest of bulletin.
5. Analysis of data contained in this bulletin required each question to be asked to a minimum of 100 respondents.

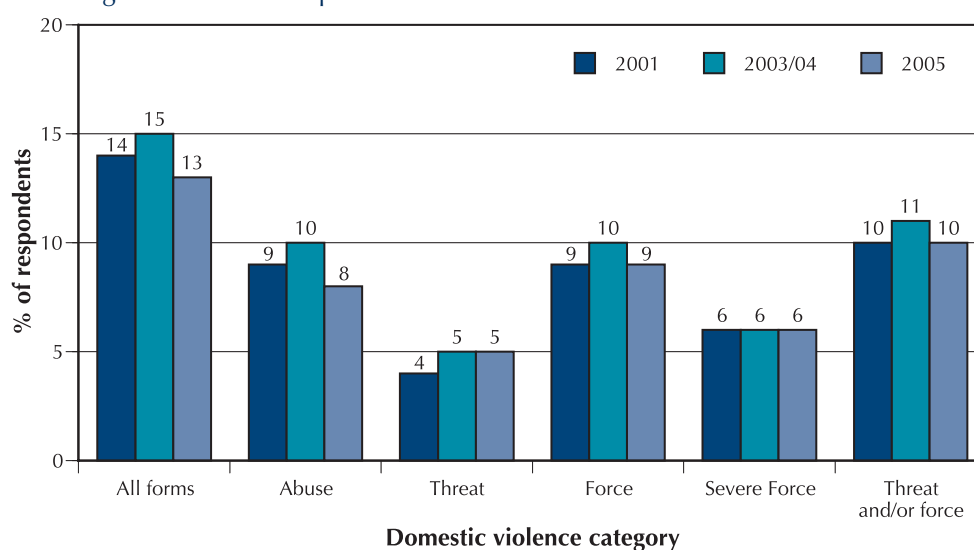
1. THE EXTENT OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE IN NORTHERN IRELAND

1.1 Prevalence rates

Findings reveal that 13% of respondents to the 2005 NICS who were aged 16-59 had experienced domestic violence, as defined in Table I, during their life-time. This represents a 2 percentage point decrease from 2003/04. Six percent of respondents claimed to have been victims in the 3 years prior to the interview. A higher percentage of females (16%) than males (10%) claimed to have been victims of domestic violence. Persons aged 16-29 were also more likely to have been victims than persons aged 30-59, 16% compared with 12% respectively.

Eight percent of respondents were subjected to abuse, 5% to threats, 9% to force and 6% to severe force. The proportions experiencing abuse and force represent a decrease on 2003/04 while proportions experiencing threats or severe force have remained the same (Figure 1.1). Force was the most likely type of domestic violence experienced by females (11%) while males were equally likely to experience abuse or force (6%).

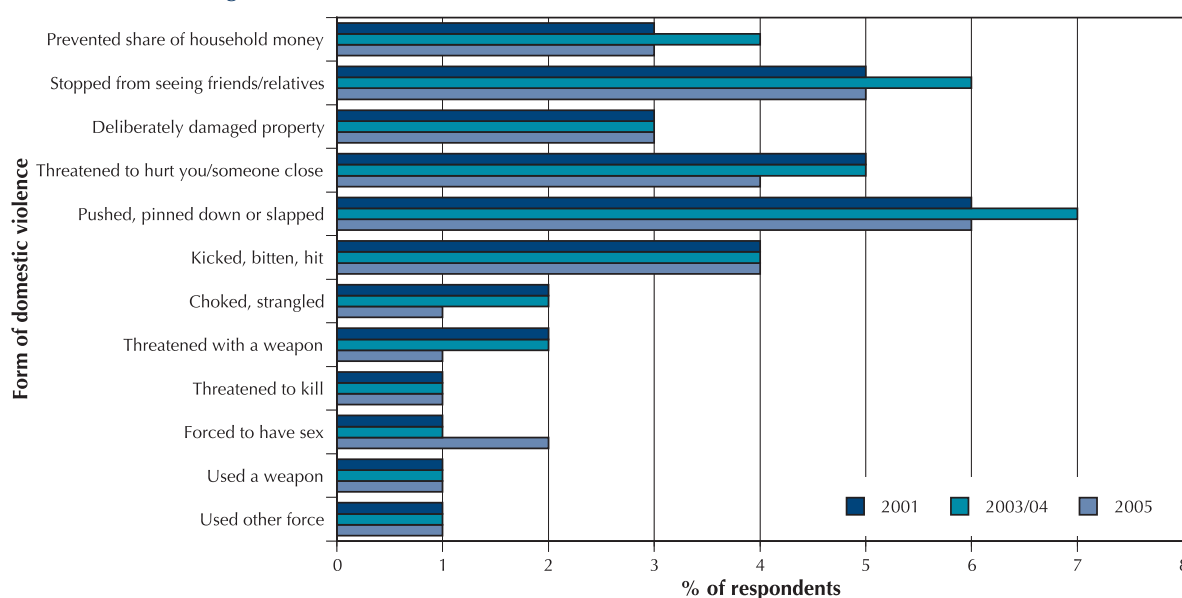
Figure 1.1: Life-time prevalence of domestic violence in Northern Ireland



1.2 Nature of Domestic Violence

Figure 1.2 shows the different forms of domestic violence that respondents to the NICS experienced from 2001 to 2005. The most common type of domestic violence that respondents were subjected to was “pushed, pinned down or slapped”, 6% in 2005 compared with 7% in 2003/04. The next most likely forms of domestic violence identified in the past 3 surveys were “stopped from seeing friends/relatives”, 5% in 2005 and 6% in 2003/04 and “threatened to hurt you/someone close to you”, experienced by 4% of respondents in 2005 and 5% in 2003/04.

Figure 1.2: Forms of domestic violence identified in Northern Ireland



1.3 Comparison with 2005/06 British Crime Survey⁶

Table 1.1 shows the comparative figures for prevalence of domestic violence in Northern Ireland compared with England and Wales as identified by the 2005/06 British Crime Survey (BCS). The findings suggest that victimisation rates in Northern Ireland are consistently lower than in England and Wales. Twenty-eight percent of females and 17% of males in England and Wales claimed to be victims of intimate partner abuse during their lifetime compared with 15% of females and 10% of males in Northern Ireland.

Table 1.1: Comparative prevalence rates of domestic violence in Northern Ireland and England & Wales (%)

Nature of violence	2005		2005/06	
	Northern Ireland		England & Wales ¹	
	Female	Male	Female	Male
Domestic abuse, threats or force	15	10	28	17
Prevented you from having your fair share of household's money	5	1	7	3
Stopped you from seeing friends or relatives	5	4	11	8
Domestic threats or force	13	6	21	11
Frightened you by threatening to hurt you or someone close to you	8	2	10	1
Domestic force	11	5	19	10
Minor force (pushed you, held you down or slapped you)	9	2	15	4
Severe force	7	4	14	9
Kicked, bit or hit you with a fist or threw something at you that hurt you	5	3	10	7
Choked or tried to strangle you	3	1	5	1
Threatened you with a weapon such as a stick or a knife	2	1	3	2
Threatened to kill you	1	<1	3	1
Used a weapon against you e.g. a knife	1	1	2	1
Used some other kind of force against you	1	1	5	2

Notes

1. Prevalence rates for England & Wales have been rounded to the nearest whole number to enable direct comparison with Northern Ireland. Published findings from the BCS (Jansson, 2007) are presented to one decimal place.

2. '<1' denotes values less than 0.5%.

6. Proportions are computed differently to allow for comparison with 2005/06 BCS intimate partner abuse (non-sexual).

2. THE RISK FACTORS ASSOCIATED WITH DOMESTIC VIOLENCE VICTIMISATION

“Risk factors merely describe the distribution of inter-personal violence through the population. They assist analysis of causation but do not substitute for one.”

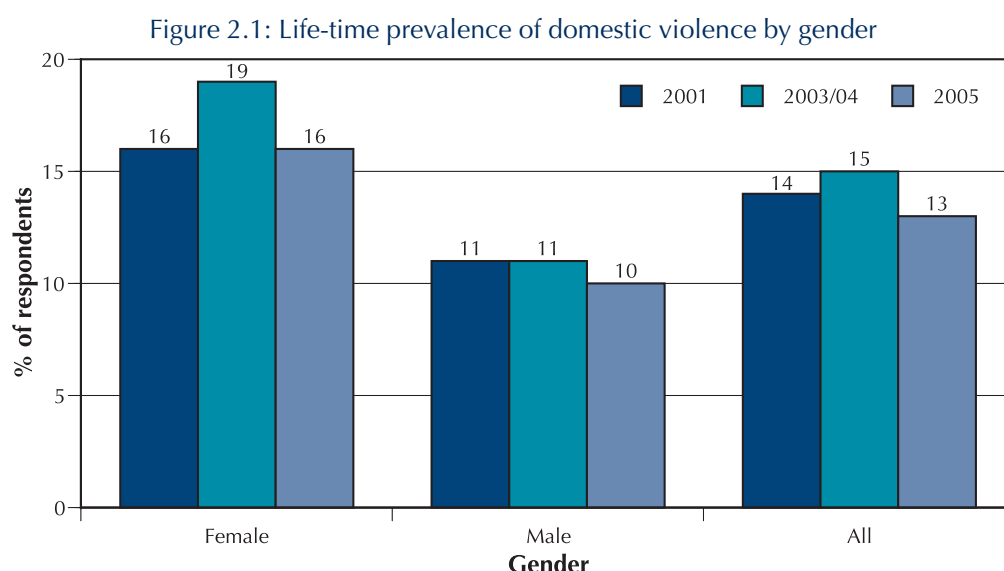
(Walby & Allen, 2004)

In other words statistical analysis of the domestic violence module of the 2005 NICS can highlight that particular demographics or personal attributes may be more frequent but cannot infer a cause and effect relationship between such risk factors and domestic violence.

2.1 Gender

Research findings are contradictory, suggesting on one hand, symmetry with men and women equally likely to perpetrate violence against an intimate partner, and, on the other hand, asymmetry, with men the primary perpetrators of violence against women partners (Dobash & Dobash, 2004). These contradictory research findings not only have implications for academic research but also for policies and interventions.

Findings from the 2005 NICS imply that there is a higher prevalence of domestic violence among females than males (16% and 10% respectively.) The gender differential is less in 2005 than in 2003/04, 6 percentage points compared with 8 respectively (Figure 2.1). While these figures indicate that females are more vulnerable to domestic violence (1 in 6) they also suggest that a relatively high proportion of males (1 in 10) are likely to experience domestic violence during their lifetime. Table 2.1 shows the prevalence rates for females were higher for all types of domestic violence.



The PSNI recorded that three times as many victims of domestic crime were females aged 17 and over compared with males aged 17 and over in 2005/06 (69% and 23% respectively). NICS analysis revealed that 65% of NICS respondents who claimed to be victims of domestic violence were females aged 16 and over and 35% were males aged 16 and over⁷.

Table 2.1: Domestic violence victimisation rates by category and gender (%)

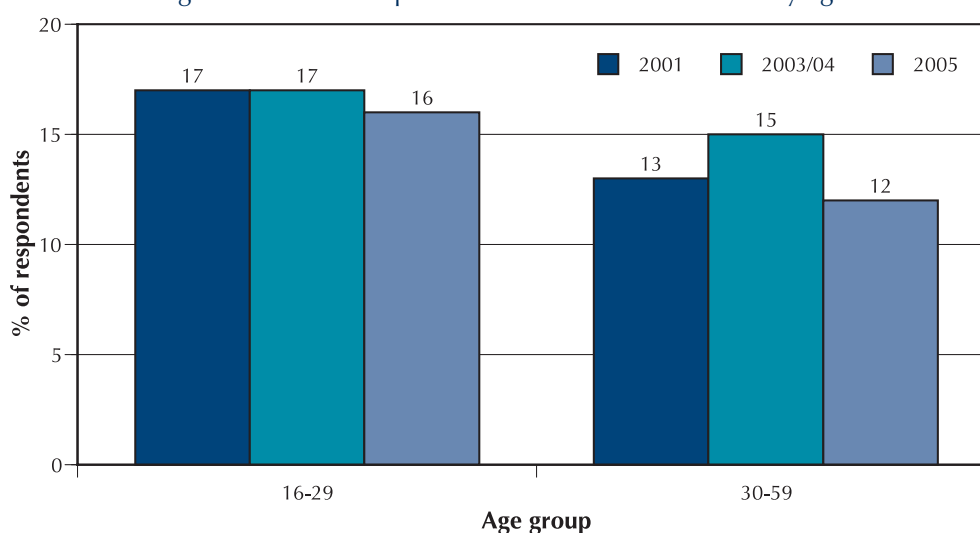
	2001		2003/04		2005	
	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male
Abuse	10	7	11	7	9	6
Threat	6	1	8	2	8	2
Force	11	6	13	5	11	6
Severe force	7	5	7	4	7	5
Threat and/or force	13	7	15	6	13	6
All forms	16	11	19	11	16	10

7. Male and female composition of the 2005 NICS similar to 2001 census

2.2 Age

The findings from the 2005 NICS indicate that younger people (16-29) are more likely to be a victim of domestic violence than older people (30-59), 16% and 12% respectively (Figure 2.2). The difference in the prevalence rates for the two age groups has become more marked since 2003/04 when the proportions were 17% and 15% respectively. This trend is similar to England and Wales and the Republic of Ireland as the 2005/06 BCS (Jansson, 2007) and the National Study of Domestic Abuse 2005 (NSDA) (Watson & Parsons, 2005) findings show a reduction in victimisation rates with increase in age. The 2005 NICS findings suggest that the difference in victimisation by age is more marked for females with 20% of females aged 16-29 reporting to have been a victim compared with 14% of females aged 30-59. This compares with 11% of males aged 16-29 and 10% of males aged 30-59.

Figure 2.2: Life-time prevalence of domestic violence by age

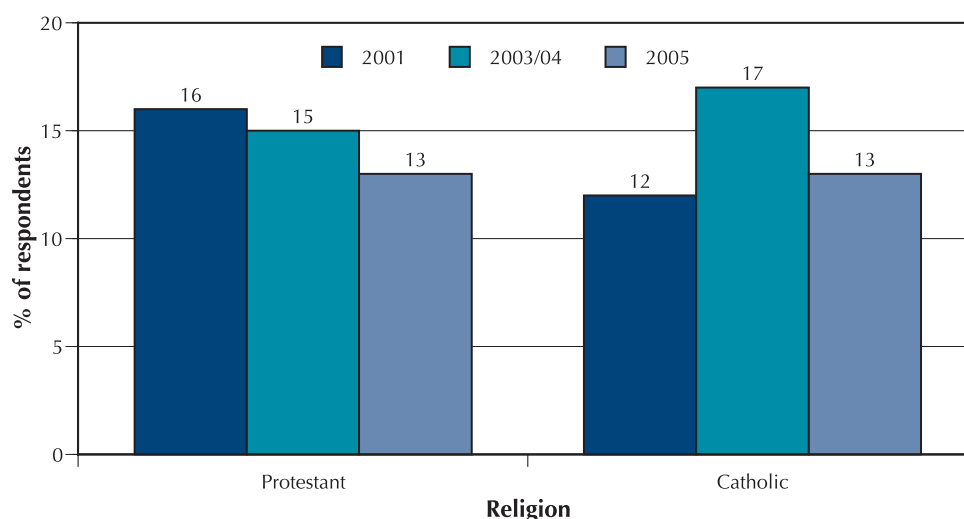


Although the higher victimisation rate reported by younger people (16-29 year-olds) could be suggestive of increasing levels of domestic violence over time, this may not necessarily be the case. Given that younger people today may enter into a greater number of 'domestic' relationships (Mirrlees-Black & Byron, 1999), there is a greater likelihood they will experience violence within this context. Equally, young people may be more likely to define their experiences as relevant to the survey and are more open to talk about such events. Conversely, it may be that older people are more reluctant to disclose this personal information, or that with the passing of time, details of incidents that took place longer ago are less likely to be recalled in a survey setting (Freel & Robinson, 2005).

2.3 Religion

Figure 2.3 suggests that religious affiliation has no bearing on the likelihood of being a victim of domestic violence. Equal proportions (13%) of Catholic and Protestant respondents were identified as victims. The proportion of Catholics who claimed to be victims was slightly higher than Protestants in 2003/04 (17% and 15% respectively) and slightly lower in 2001 (12% and 16% respectively).

Figure 2.3: Life-time prevalence of domestic violence by religion

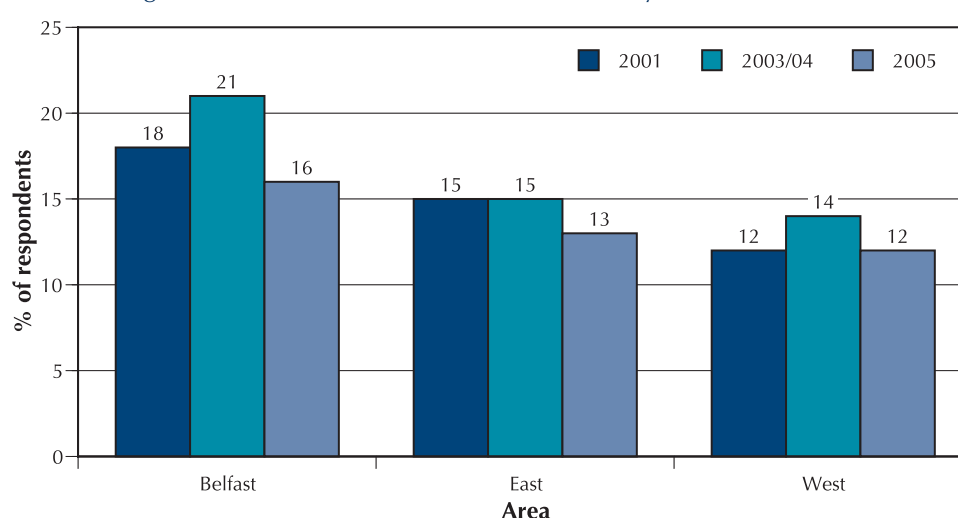


2.4 Area of residence

For the purposes of analysis, Northern Ireland was divided into 3 regions: Belfast, East Northern Ireland and West Northern Ireland. The findings suggest that prevalence rates of domestic violence are higher in urban areas as 16% of respondents in Belfast claimed to be victims of domestic violence compared with 13% in the East and 12% in the West of Northern Ireland. These trends are similar to 2003/04 except that the difference between urban and rural has decreased from 7 percentage points in 2003/04 (21% in Belfast and 14% in West) to 4 percentage points in 2005 (Figure 2.4).

The 2005/06 BCS findings also suggest that there is a higher rate of domestic violence in urban areas compared with rural areas but the difference is more marked among females than males (Jansson, 2007). Watson & Parsons (2005) reported that women in the Republic of Ireland who live in towns have a substantially higher risk of lifetime abuse (20%) than women living in cities, villages or rural areas (16%, 9% and 11% respectively). Analysis of the 2005 NICS findings indicated that the higher urban victimisation rate was more pronounced for females – 21% living in Belfast compared with 14% and 15% living in East and West of Northern Ireland respectively. Area of residence did not appear to affect victimisation rates for males – 9% in Belfast compared with 10% and 9% in East and West of Northern Ireland respectively.

Figure 2.4: Prevalence of domestic violence by area of residence



2.5 Pregnancy

McWilliams & McKiernan (1993) found that many women who are victims of domestic violence reported that it is particularly common during pregnancy. Bergen (1998) cited that one third of her sample of 40 survivors of wife rape with whom she carried out in-depth interviews spoke about the increase in physical abuse and sexual violence they experienced during pregnancy. Bergen (1998) postulated that the increase was possibly because the pregnancy represented [the perpetrator's] loss of control over them. Another theory is that the abuser, threatened by his wife's [or partner's] attention being diverted anywhere but toward him creates crises that force the focus of attention on him (Hendricks & McKean, 1995).

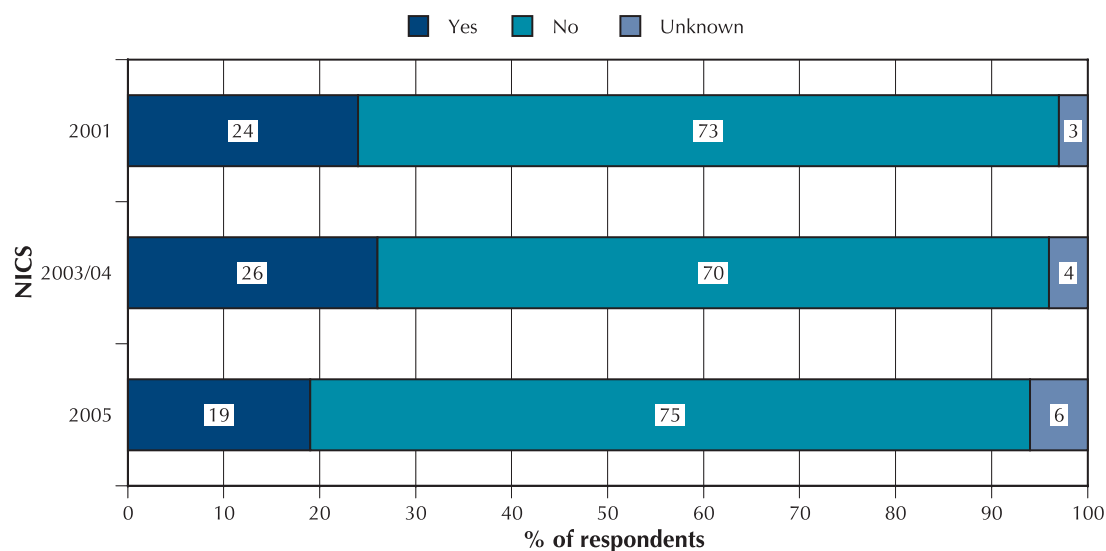
The 2005 NICS findings revealed that 17% of all female victims were subjected to threats and/or force while they were pregnant. For over half of these victims (56%) the domestic violence started during the pregnancy. Watson & Parsons (2005) refer to research conducted amongst pregnant women attending a hospital in the Republic of Ireland which found that 16% had been physically or sexually abused in the previous 12 months. The authors of the research reported that 98% of the women believed they should be asked about domestic violence by their doctor. The authors recommended that doctors should ask all pregnant women about their experiences of abuse as "pregnant women suffering from abuse may decide to tell their GP for the first time because she feels it is necessary to protect her child in utero" and they added "if you ask, women find it easier to tell" (Ryan, 2003).

A successful pilot scheme to ask pregnant women routinely about domestic violence was undertaken by midwives at the Royal Jubilee Maternity Unit in conjunction with Belfast and Lisburn Women's Aid and NI Women's Aid Federation. Other HSS Trusts then introduced the routine enquiry (DHSS&PS & NIO, 2005) and from March 2007 it has become policy for the procedure to be rolled out across all maternity units.

2.6 Presence of children

Ruddle & O'Connor (1992) argue that witnessing domestic violence between parents can have the effect of teaching children that violence is a legitimate response to problems. Nearly one fifth (19%) of worst incidents⁸ of domestic violence identified by the 2005 NICS were seen and/or heard by children, a decrease of 7 percentage points since the 2003/04 NICS (Figure 2.5). However the majority of the worst incidents were not witnessed by children, 75% in 2005 and 70% in 2003/04. It should be emphasised that these data relate to the worst incident of domestic violence (as defined by the victims), rather than a typical, incident.

Figure 2.5: Proportion of worst incidents seen or heard by children



8. From this section onwards the bulletin presents findings based on the worst incident only. A definition of the 'worst incident' can be found in the Introduction.

3 THE CHARACTERISTICS OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE VICTIMISATION

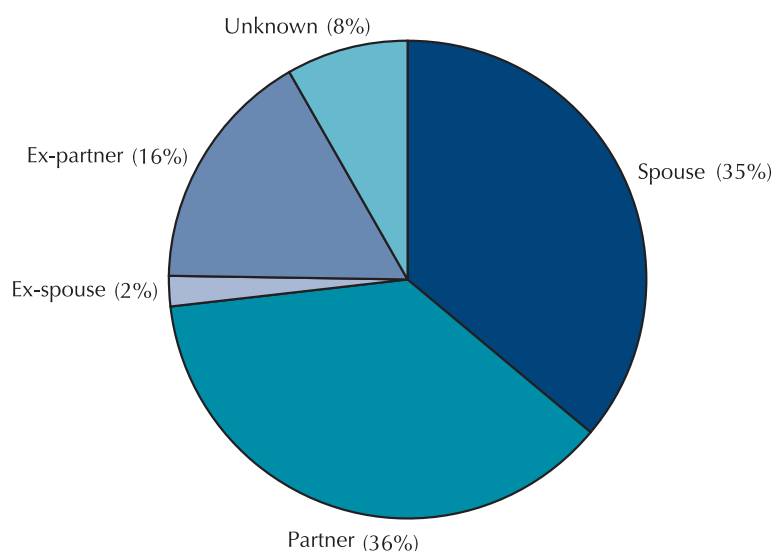
3.1 Relationship of offender to victim

Due to the design of this survey all perpetrators are people who have been in an intimate relationship with, and are therefore known by, the victim. The majority of worst incidents (89%) took place within a heterosexual relationship, a proportion that increases to 97% when 'unknown' responses are excluded. The 2005 NICS findings revealed that 3% of the victims who experienced at least one element of threat or force were in a homosexual relationship, five times as many in male-male as female-female relationships. In her report on the Broken Rainbow Conference, Jones (2002) claimed that lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) people experience domestic violence and abuse just as heterosexual people do, and in at least the same numbers, but there is a lack of reliable data on the extent of domestic violence within the LGBT community.

Within the heterosexual relationships identified by the NICS, three quarters (75%) involved a male perpetrator and a female victim and one quarter (25%) involved a female perpetrator and male victim. Dobash & Dobash (2004) suggest that intimate partner violence is primarily an asymmetrical problem of men's violence to women, and women's violence does not equate to men's in terms of frequency, severity, consequences and the victim's sense of safety and well being. Gadd et al (2002) reported that in follow-up interviews with the male respondents identified as 'male victims' by the Scottish Crime Survey 2000 some had endured genuinely harrowing experiences whilst others had experienced troubling incidents but not prolonged forms of domestic violence and some had not experienced domestic abuse at all.

Similar proportions of married and unmarried couples experienced threats or force from their partners – 35% and 36% respectively. The 2005/06 BCS found that married women had lower odds of victimisation than cohabiting, single or separated/divorced women (Jansson, 2007). Findings from the 2005 NSDA suggest that people who are separated or divorced are at a much higher risk of experiencing abuse in their present relationship, in more than one relationship and in the last year than those in other marital statuses (Watson & Parsons, 2005). Approximately three quarters (73%) of the worst incidents identified by the 2005 NICS were perpetrated by then current spouses or partners while 18% were committed by former spouses or partners (Figure 3.1).

Figure 3.1: Relationship of offender to victim in worst incident



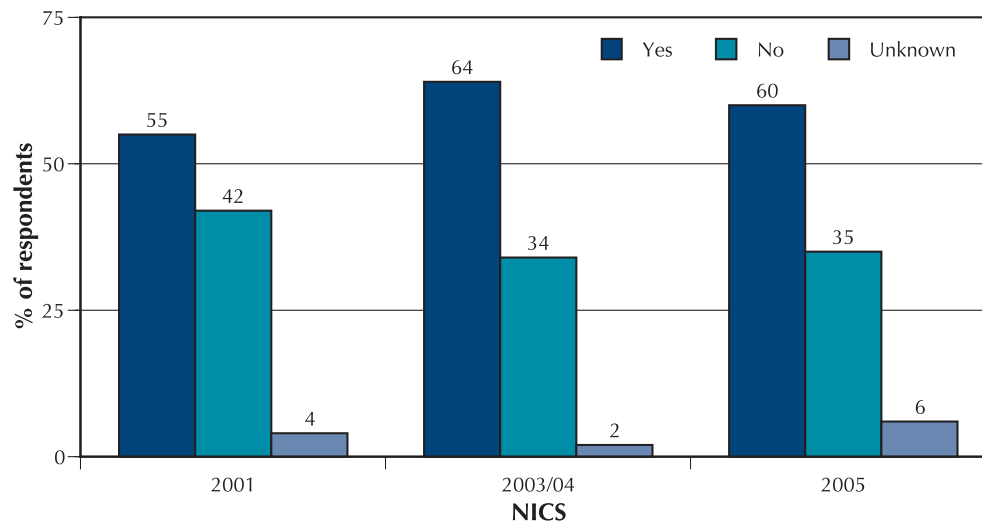
3.2 Cohabiting

Sixty percent of respondents related that their worst incident took place while they were living with the perpetrator, a slight decrease on the 64% identified in the 2003/04 NICS (Figure 3.2). Watson & Parsons (2005) reported that 69% of victims identified by the 2005 NSDA in the Republic of Ireland were living with their partner when they experienced serious physical abuse.

The majority of victims (78%) identified by the 2005 NICS split up with the assailant following the worst incident. However, 3% of these respondents had re-entered the relationship by the time of the survey. This pattern is consistent with the view that leaving an abusive relationship is a process that takes place over a long period of time rather than something which is done once and for all (Anderson & Saunders, 2003). Nearly three quarters (73%) of those who split up (even temporarily) cited the domestic abuse as the main reason for the split. In contrast, 15% of respondents who were subjected to domestic threats or force remained in the relationship.

The domestic threats and force completely stopped for over half (51%) of the victims who split up with their partner and over one tenth (11%) claimed it lessened. However, 5% believed the perpetrator's behaviour got worse after they split up, 12% claimed the abuse changed to a different form of behaviour, such as harassment and 2% said it stayed about the same. For a minority of those who had separated from their partners (4%), the violent behaviour only started after they split up (Sixteen percent of victims didn't know, couldn't remember or didn't wish to answer).

Figure 3.2: Cohabiting with the assailant at the time of the worst incident



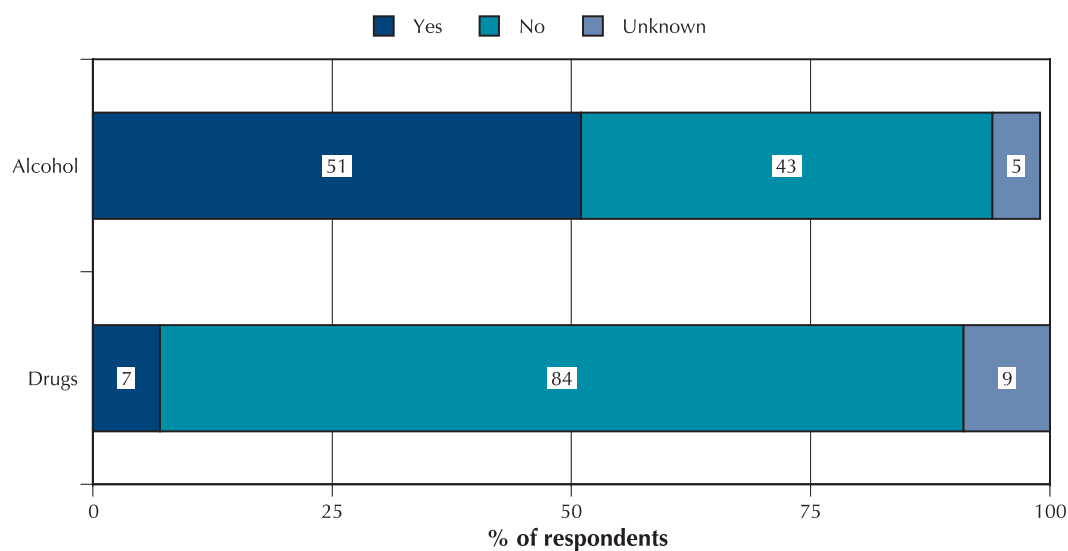
3.3 Alcohol and drug abuse

Some would take the view that there are certain weaknesses characteristic of men who assault their wives [or partners], one of which is susceptibility to alcohol or drug abuse (McWilliams & McKiernan, 1993) while Dobash & Dobash (1992) argue that alcohol may be more of an excuse for rather than a cause of violence. Victims, identified by the 2005 NICS, claimed that over half (51%) of the perpetrators were under the influence of alcohol at the time of their worst incident (Figure 3.3), a 4 percentage point decrease from 2003/04. These findings are similar to those from the 2005 NSDA where 57% of perpetrators had been drinking at the time of the serious incident (Watson & Parsons, 2005).

Findings from the 2005/06 BCS suggest that frequency of pub visits was associated with partner abuse among men and women. More frequent visits were associated with increased odds of experiencing intimate violence (Jansson, 2007). Such findings leave it unclear whether it may be the social pattern or alcohol consumption or, indeed, both that is causative here. The position is potentially further complicated by a possible gender difference, in that Watson and Parsons (2005) found in the Republic of Ireland that: "it is more likely that the abusive partner had been drinking where women were abused (67%) than where men were abused (31%)".

Only a minority (7%) of victims identified by the 2005 NICS stated that the perpetrators of their worst incident were under the influence of drugs at the time of their worst incident, a decrease of 3 percentage points on the findings in 2003/04 (Figure 3.3).

Figure 3.3: The influence of alcohol and drug abuse in the worst incident



3.4 Criminality of perpetrator

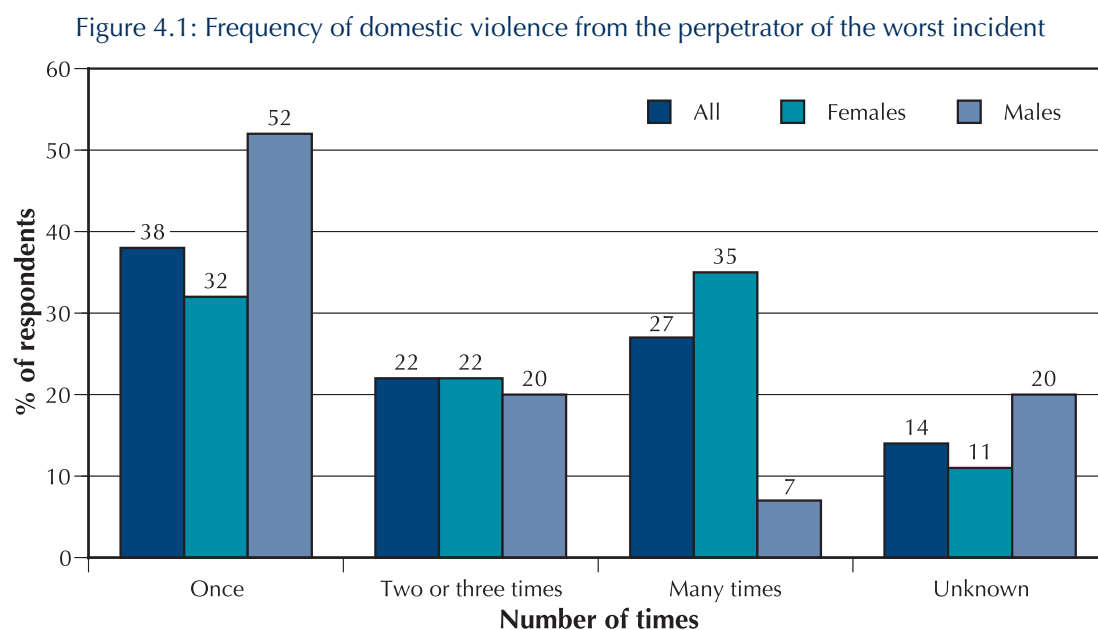
Walby & Allen, (2004) investigated whether perpetrators of domestic violence fit the pattern in which a person with a criminal record is more likely to commit another crime than someone who has not. Findings from the 2001 BCS implied that those perpetrators who were known by the victim to have a criminal record were more likely to commit more severe forms of domestic violence than those who did not. Respondents to the 2005 NICS were asked if the perpetrator of their worst incident had a criminal record. It should be noted that the findings are likely to reflect an undercount of the extent of a criminal record since not all partners will be aware of such. One tenth (10%) of victims reported that they knew their assailant had a criminal record. The majority (78%) claimed that the perpetrator, as far as they knew, had no criminal record and 12% either didn't know or didn't wish to answer.

4 THE EXPERIENCE OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

4.1 Repeat victimisation

Inter-personal violence is frequently marked by very high rates of repeat victimisation, where the same person is subject to multiple incidents of the same type of event (Walby & Allen, 2004). The 2005 NICS revealed that nearly half (49%) of victims experienced domestic violence from the perpetrator of their worst incident on more than one occasion and over a quarter (27%) were victimised 'many times' (that is, four times or more), similar findings to 2003/04 (49% and 26% respectively). A greater proportion of females than males experienced repeat victimisation – 57% compared with 27% (Figure 4.1). The proportion of females victimised two or three times has decreased by 6 percentage points from 2003/04 while the proportion victimised many times has increased by 5 percentage points.

As a caveat, this analysis cannot account for repeat victimisation by multiple perpetrators and as a consequence it may not reflect the full extent of repeat victimisation. That is, a victim who has been assaulted once by the 'worst' perpetrator may have been victimised in a similar manner by other assailants (Freel & Robinson, 2005).



4.2 Injuries

Sixty-two percent of victims identified by the 2005 NICS sustained injuries as a result of their worst incident, a decrease of 5 percentage points from 2003/04 (67%) yet higher than 2001 (54%) (Table 4.1). The most frequently reported type of injury was 'mental or emotional problems' – reported by one third (33%) of the victims recalling their worst incident, a slight decrease on the 36% in 2003/04 yet higher than 2001 (30%). Out of all the persons in the Republic of Ireland, whom the 2005 NSDA identified as being severely abused, almost half listed emotional incidents as being the worst from their perspective; women and men were very similar in this respect (Watson & Parsons, 2005).

The next most commonly inflicted injury was 'minor bruising or black eye' which was experienced by 30% of victims in 2005, slightly less than in 2003/04 (32%) yet higher than in 2001 (24%). The 2005 NICS findings revealed a continued increase in the proportion of victims suffering from 'bleeding from cuts' and 'internal injuries' from 2001 while the proportion suffering from 'broken bones/teeth' and 'scratches' has increased since 2003/04.

Table 4.1: Injuries sustained in worst incident of domestic violence (%)¹

	2001	2003/04	2005
Any injuries	54	67	62
No injuries	-	28	30
Mental or emotional problems	30	36	33
Minor injuries	-	40	41
Minor bruising or black eye	24	32	30
Scratches	17	15	17
Other physical injuries	4	4	3
Moderate injuries	-	24	24
Severe bruising	17	20	17
Bleeding from cuts	8	11	14
Severe injuries	-	6	8
Internal injury	2	2	4
Broken bones/teeth	5	4	6

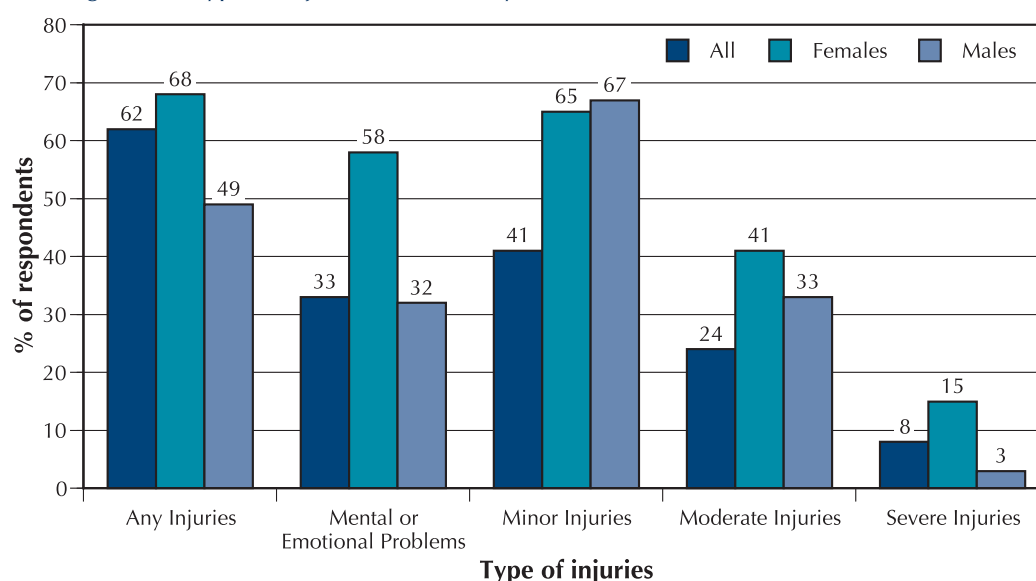
Note

1. Percentage baseline for 'any injuries' is the number who suffered from at least one form of threat or force while baseline for types of injuries is the number who were injured as a result of their worst incident.

When the injuries are grouped as shown in Table 4.1 the findings revealed that 1 in 12 (8%) victims sustained severe injuries as a result of their worst incidents, an increase of 2 percentage points from 2003/04. Almost a quarter (24%) of victims received moderate injuries and 41% suffered minor injuries – similar findings to 2003/04. Approximately a third of injured victims (32%) consulted a doctor, nurse or other health professional about their injuries, a similar proportion to 2003/04 (34%).

Despite the debate over whether domestic abuse is symmetrical or asymmetrical with respect to gender, there is little dispute that women are more likely than men to be physically injured (Watson and Parsons, 2005). The 2005 NICS findings revealed that 68% of females and 49% of males reported injuries as a result of their worst incidents while five times as many female injured victims as male injured victims suffered severe injuries – 15% and 3% respectively (Figure 4.2). Of those victims whose worst incident resulted in severe injuries 94% were female and 6% were male.

Figure 4.2: Type of injuries sustained by males and females in their worst incident



It should be emphasised that these data concern the worst (as defined by the victim), rather than a typical, incident. Through concentrating solely on a single event it is probable that those subject to repeat victimisation would have an additional cumulative effect that is not captured here.

4.3 Victims' perception of domestic violence

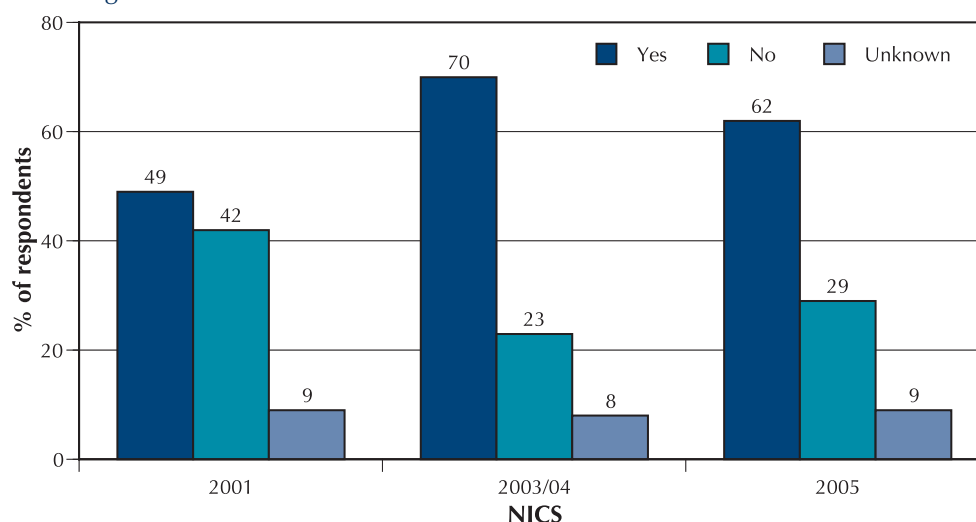
"Definitions of domestic violence have shifted over time and vary in their inclusivity however usually involve a constellation of abusive, controlling behaviours aimed at establishing or maintaining power and dominance."

(Barnish, 2004)

Although there was no official definition provided to the 2005 NICS respondents, the CASI questionnaire included any type of physical, emotional or mental abuse, outlined in the introduction, between current or former partners in an intimate relationship. The definitions used by those suffering domestic violence will strongly influence whether or not they think their experience can be described as domestic violence. In turn, this may have some bearing on whether or not they choose to seek specific help (Freel & Robinson, 2005).

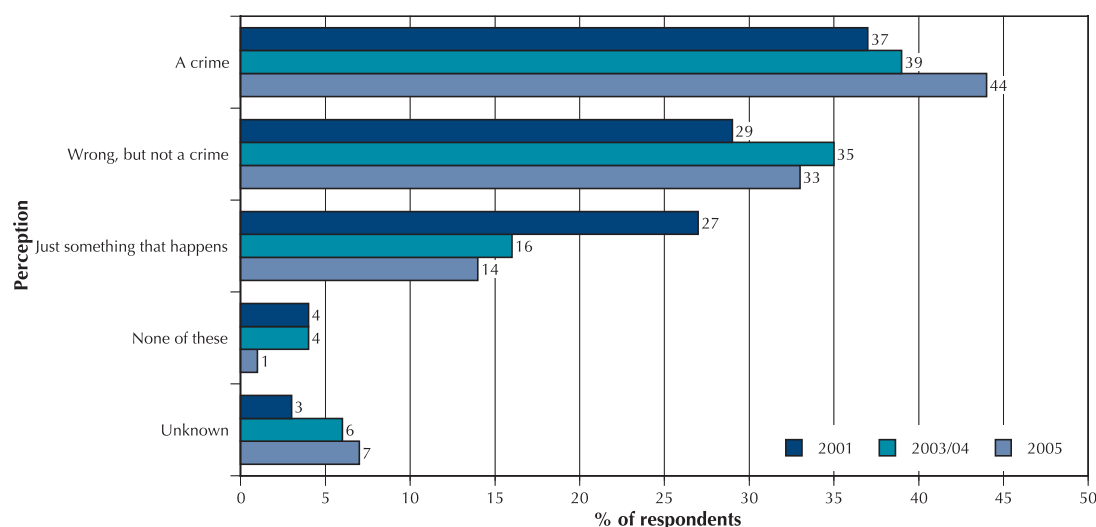
Sixty-two percent of victims identified by the 2005 NICS considered their worst incident to constitute domestic violence, less than the 70% in 2003/04 figure yet higher than in 2001 (49%) (Figure 4.3). The findings revealed a gender difference in perceptions. Two thirds of females (67%) and half of males (50%) believed their worst incident constituted domestic violence. When the worst incident resulted in an injury, victims were more likely to believe they had experienced domestic violence – three quarters (75%) compared with 62%.

Figure 4.3: Whether victim classifies worst incident as domestic violence



The government's "Tackling Violence at Home" strategy declares that domestic violence is an abhorrent and often hidden crime (DHSS&PS & NIO, 2006) but less than half (44%) of the victims of domestic violence considered their worst incident to be a crime (Figure 4.4). This figure represents a 5 percentage point increase on 2003/04. One in three (33%) thought it was wrong but not a crime and one in seven (14%) considered it just something that happens. Female victims were more than three times as likely as males to classify their worst incident as a crime, 54% and 17% respectively. Victims were more likely to believe the perpetrator had committed a crime if they believed they had experienced domestic violence (63%).

Figure 4.4: Whether victim considers worst incident a crime

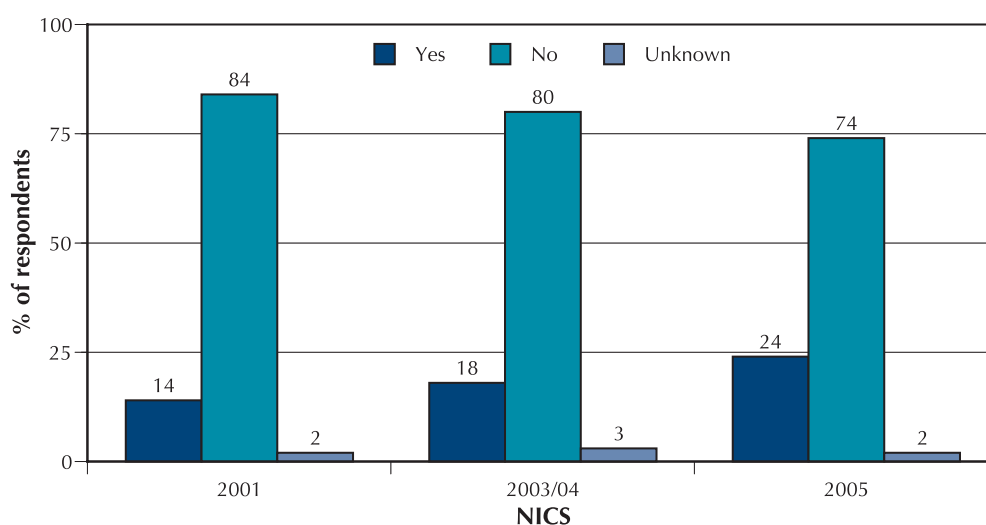


4.4 Reporting to the Police

Only a small proportion of [domestic] assaults are reported to the police, with women under 25 and those in households with above average income less likely to involve the police (Barnish, 2004). Barnish (2004) cites that the need for self-protection is weighed in the balance with factors such as embarrassment, family privacy and fear of reprisal. The police came to know about less than a quarter (24%) of worst incidents of domestic violence identified by the 2005 NICS, an increase of 6 percentage points on 2003/04 (Figure 4.5). Twenty-three percent of victims who experienced any form of domestic violence claimed that the police came to know about the incident. These figures are comparable with the 2005 NSDA, which found that only a quarter of those severely affected by abuse told the Gardai (Watson & Parsons, 2005).

Watson & Parsons (2005) believe these findings are in keeping with other research that indicates that those who experience abuse in a relationship are more likely to confide in a friend or family member than to seek help from the Criminal Justice System or agencies working in the area of domestic violence. Analysis of the 2005 NICS findings revealed that the police are twice as likely to come to know about a worst incident experienced by a female than a male (29% to 14% respectively).

Figure 4.5: Proportion of worst incidents reported to the police



If victims believed their worst incident constituted a crime, the police were more likely to come to know about it – 43% compared with 9% when the victim didn't consider it a crime (Table 4.2).

Table 4.2: Victims' perceptions of their worst incident as a crime and reporting it to the police (%)

Perception of worst incident	Reported to the police?	
	Yes	No
A crime	43	57
Not a crime	9	91

4.5 Support for victims

UK surveys indicate that the majority of victims tell no-one about their abuse, choosing to coping strategies which include trying to find rational explanations for violence and appeasement (Barnish, 2004). Forty-two percent of the victims of domestic violence identified by the 2005 NICS told no-one about their worst incident (Table 4.3). Men were more likely than women to tell no-one, 51% and 38% respectively. Over half of the victims (55%) told someone about their worst incident. This was most likely to be a friend, relative or neighbour. A greater proportion of females (60%) than males (44%) told someone about their worst incident.

Table 4.3 gives a breakdown of who victims of domestic violence turned to for support and shows that the police are the second most frequently approached group. Six percent of victims told someone at work about their worst incident. The government is now seeking the help of employers in raising awareness of the serious issue of domestic violence and guidelines for employers on developing a workplace policy on domestic violence and abuse were launched in May 2006 (DHSS&PS & NIO, 2006).

Table 4.3: Who victims told about their worst incident (%)

	2001	2003/04	2005
Police (came to know)	14	18	24
Friends, relatives, neighbours	42	47	43
Partner's friends, relatives, neighbours	6	6	5
Someone at work	4	4	6
Women's refuge	1	2	1
Women's group/centre, Women's Aid	<1	1	3
Men's group/project	1	<1	<1
Victim Support (Northern Ireland)	1	2	1
Religious group/leader	1	1	1
Social services	1	0	3
Housing executive	1	2	2
Social security agency	1	1	1
Solicitor (sought legal advice)	4	7	9
Courts	2	1	2
Someone else	4	1	3
No-one	45	41	42

Note

1. '<1' denotes values less than 0.5%

4.6 Specialist programmes for perpetrators

Since 1997 the Probation Board for Northern Ireland (PBNI) have delivered a “Men Overcoming Domestic Violence” (MODV) programme for male perpetrators of domestic violence. The aim of the 6 month intensive intervention programme is to increase the participants’ understanding of their actions and awareness of the consequences (Shevlin et al, 2005). The statistical evaluation concluded that participants reported statistically significant changes on a number of psychological variables related to aggression and violent behaviour (Shevlin et al, 2005).

The process of referral for the MODV programme was normally through the courts as part of a probation order or by other statutory agencies. Voluntary referral places were rare yet there was a realisation of the need to offer all perpetrators the opportunity to look at their abusive behaviour (Kremer, 2004). The Non Violent Relationship Project (NVRP) commenced in 2003 and adopted a multi-faceted approach. The project team developed a three-pronged strategy that challenges perpetrators of domestic violence (court mandated and voluntary), supports partners of those perpetrators and also provides a preventative education programme for young people. Although the NVRP remains in its infancy early indications suggest that this joined-up approach translates into effective and responsive intervention strategies that work (Kremer, 2004).

Barnish (2004) believes that most domestic violence programme evaluation studies do not have sufficiently rigorous designs to enable firm conclusions to be drawn about effectiveness. Two recent reviews of studies, considered methodologically sound, calculated overall effect sizes for domestic violence perpetrator programmes and found small positive effects (Barnish, 2004). However Barnish cites that evidence suggests that programmes have relatively little impact on levels of psychological abuse – fewer women report attitude change than report reductions in re-assault. Many experts conclude that interventions may need to be considerably longer and more intensive and multi-dimensional if they are to impact significantly on underlying thinking (Barnish, 2004).

The 2005 NICS findings revealed that only 1% of perpetrators of the worst incidents were known to have sought help directly from a domestic violence treatment programme, the same proportion as in 2003/04. However, five percent of perpetrators went for counselling or therapy for mental health problems, 3% sought help or treatment for alcohol abuse, 2% for drug abuse and 2% for anger management (Table 4.4). Two thirds of the perpetrators of victims’ worst incidents did not seek help from any source.

Table 4.4: Specialist programmes used by perpetrators

Specialist Programme	%
Help or treatment for alcohol abuse	3
Help or treatment for drug abuse	2
Counselling or therapy for mental health problems	5
Anger management programme	2
Domestic violence treatment programme	1
None of these	66

5. POLICY RESPONSES TO DOMESTIC VIOLENCE IN NORTHERN IRELAND

Watson and Parsons (2005) argue that future policy formulation must reflect the fact that both women and men experience severe domestic abuse, albeit men to a far lesser extent than women. In October 2005 the government published the “Tackling Violence at Home” strategy and action plan for addressing domestic violence and abuse in Northern Ireland. It set out a vision for the future, with aims and targets focusing on preventive measures and on the provision of better protection, justice and support services for victims and their children (DHSS&PS & NIO, 2006). The workplace policy on domestic violence and abuse and the routine enquiry policy in maternity units are only two examples of policy responses to domestic violence in Northern Ireland. The Action Plan which accompanied the “Tackling Violence at Home” strategy includes proposals for implementation of policies by many departments and roll-out of a media and educational campaign to increase awareness of domestic violence among the whole community (DHSS&PS & NIO, 2006).

5.1 Perceptions of public policy priorities

The proportion of respondents who believe that the government is doing enough about domestic violence in Northern Ireland has increased from 14% in 2001 and 15% in 2003/04 to 19% in 2005 (Table 5.1). Across all respondents, 42% deem that the government is doing too little, a decrease on the 47% in 2003/04. However, among victims a higher proportion believe the government is doing too little – 55% of all victims and nearly three fifths (59%) of victims of threat and/or force. Both these figures represent an increase on 2003/04 (Table 5.1).

Table 5.1: Is the government and its agencies doing enough about domestic violence (%)?

	All Respondents ¹			Non Victims ²			All Victims ³			Worst Victims ⁴		
	2001	2003/04	2005	2001	2003/04	2005	2001	2003/04	2005	2001	2003/04	2005
Enough	14	15	19	14	15	19	13	16	19	15	19	20
Too little	48	47	42	47	46	40	54	54	55	54	52	59
Too much	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	<1	1	0	<1	1
Don't know	37	34	36	38	36	38	31	26	22	30	26	18
Unknown	1	2	2	1	2	2	1	4	3	2	4	3

Notes

1. All respondents to the NICS Domestic Violence module
2. Respondents who have never experienced any form of domestic violence
3. Respondents who have been victims of some form of domestic violence
4. Respondents who have been victims of threats and/or force
5. '<1' denotes values less than 0.5%

5.2 Government Initiatives and Performance Indicators

The “Tackling Violence at Home” strategy points out that an accurate assessment of the real levels of domestic violence will not be possible until there is progress in changing attitudes so that all victims of domestic violence feel safe in revealing the abuse they have experienced. While one of the main goals of the strategy is to bring about an overall reduction in domestic violence and abuse, there is recognition that it will be difficult to measure this accurately, particularly in the early years. However, a range of performance indicators under the 3 headings: Prevention, Protection and Justice, and Support was developed to measure the success of the strategy (DHSS&PS & NIO, 2006).

The NICS is used as one of the tools to measure performance against the following 4 performance indicators:

- ◆ The % increase in respondents who considered that government and agencies are doing enough about domestic violence;
- ◆ The % increase in number of cases reported to the police;
- ◆ The % increase in the number of victims believing that they had experienced domestic violence;
- ◆ The % increase in the number of respondents who think domestic violence is a crime.

Significance testing was employed to measure the 4 performance indicators above and the prevalence of domestic violence since 2003/04. The most statistically significant increase was the increase from 15% of respondents considering the government was doing enough about domestic violence in 2003/04 to 19% in 2005. In addition the decrease in the lifetime prevalence rates for domestic violence from 15% to 13% was statistically significant.

TECHNICAL NOTES

The initial sample consisted of 6,420 addresses randomly selected from the Valuation and Lands Agency domestic property database. The full list of addresses was stratified into three regions – Belfast, East of Northern Ireland and West of Northern Ireland (Table i).

Table i: District council areas forming Northern Ireland regions

Region	District Council Area
Belfast	Belfast
East of Northern Ireland	Antrim, Ards, Ballymena, Banbridge, Carrickfergus, Castlereagh, Craigavon, Down, Larne, Lisburn, Newtownabbey, North Down
West of Northern Ireland	Armagh, Ballymoney, Coleraine, Cookstown, Derry, Dungannon, Fermanagh, Limavady, Magherafelt, Moyle, Newry & Mourne, Omagh, Strabane

Visits to each address by an interviewer from the NISRA Central Survey Unit resulted in an eligible sample of 5,737 occupied addresses, from which attempts were made to interview one randomly selected respondent at each address.

Selecting only one person at each address means that individuals living in large households have a lower chance of being included in the sample than those living in small households. Accordingly, the data presented in this publication have been weighted by household size to prevent a bias towards small household sizes.

The NICS became a continuous survey in January 2005. This report refers to the fieldwork during the calendar year from January 2005 to December 2005 when 3,692 persons aged 16 years and over took part. Of these, 2,545 respondents were aged between 16 to 59 years and eligible to complete the domestic violence module. These responses were extracted for the analyses contained in this publication. However, 401 of these respondents refused to take part in the domestic violence module while a further 36 respondents had never been in a relationship, giving a final sample size of 2,108. This represents an eligible response rate of 83%. A demographic profile of the final sample is presented in Table ii.

Table ii Sample Profile

		Unweighted number	Unweighted %	Weighted %
Gender	Male	942	45	46
	Female	1,166	55	54
Age Group	16-29	477	23	26
	30-59	1,631	77	74
Religion	Protestant	1,142	54	54
	Catholic	827	39	39
	Other	139	7	7
Area ¹	Greater Belfast	311	15	14
	East N.I	1,029	49	50
	West N.I	741	36	37

Note

1. Excludes 27 missing values

Respondents were assured in advance of the interviews that any information they provided would be treated as entirely confidential and that the level of detail produced in publications or in any subsequent analyses would not allow for identification of individuals.

Non-valid responses have been excluded from the analyses. Percentages may not always sum to 100 due to the effect of rounding to the nearest whole number or because respondents could give more than one response to some questions.

The use of self-reported surveys to obtain information on domestic violence has its limitations. Firstly, sampling private households inevitably excludes victims who may have been homeless or living in residential institutions at the time of the survey. Secondly, some respondents will be reluctant to disclose information relating to their experiences of domestic violence regardless of the level of confidentiality.

Finally, due to a combination of both sampling and non-sampling error, any sample is unlikely to reflect precisely the characteristics of the population.

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NOTES

NOTES

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