



Northern
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Office

Statistics and Research Branch

**Experience of
Domestic Violence:
Findings from the
2007/2008
Northern Ireland
Crime Survey**

Research and Statistical Bulletin 16/2008

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KEY FINDINGS

- ◆ Approximately 1 in 10 respondents (11%) to the 2007/08 Northern Ireland Crime Survey (NICS), aged 16-59, were identified as having been a victim of domestic violence at some stage in their lives. The victimisation rate recorded for female respondents (15%) was higher than that recorded for male respondents (8%).
- ◆ Similar proportions of respondents in the '16-29' (12%) and '30-59' (11%) age groups were identified as having been a victim of domestic violence.
- ◆ Respondents with a Protestant community background (13%) were more likely to report having experienced domestic violence than those with a Roman Catholic community background (9%).
- ◆ The victimisation rate recorded for respondents from the West of Northern Ireland was lower (9%) than that recorded for respondents from either East of Northern Ireland (13%) or Belfast (14%).
- ◆ Twenty-three percent of female victims reported that they had suffered threats and/or force from a partner while they were pregnant.
- ◆ Over half of respondents (54%) who reported a 'worst' incident of domestic violence, reported that the perpetrator was under the influence of alcohol at the time of this incident.
- ◆ Analysis on repeat victimisation revealed that 60% of all victims reported having experienced domestic violence from the same perpetrator on more than one occasion: 34% reported having been victimised four or more times.
- ◆ Almost two thirds of victims (66%) reported that they had suffered injuries as a result of their 'worst' incident. The single most frequently reported type of injury was 'mental or emotional problems' – reported by 35% of victims who experienced a 'worst' incident'.
- ◆ Twenty-seven percent of victims believed that their 'worst' incident had been seen and/or heard by children.
- ◆ Seventy-two percent of victims considered their 'worst' incident to constitute domestic violence.
- ◆ Fifty-two percent of victims considered their 'worst' incident to constitute a crime. A further 26% considered that it was 'wrong, but not a crime' and a further 18% reported that it was 'just something that happens'.
- ◆ One quarter of respondents (25%) reported that the police came to know about their 'worst' incident.
- ◆ Forty-two percent of respondents perceived that the government and its agencies, such as the police and the courts, were doing too little to address the problem of domestic violence.

1. INTRODUCTION

The Northern Ireland Crime Survey (NICS) is a personal and anonymous interview survey of adults living in private households throughout Northern Ireland. Previously conducted on an ad hoc basis in 1994/95, 1998, 2001 and 2003/04, the NICS began operating on a continuous basis in January 2005.

The NICS is an important source of information about levels of crime and public attitudes to crime. The survey is closely modelled on the British Crime Survey (BCS), both in terms of format and content, and the results of the survey are used to monitor government policies and targets.

The main focus of this particular bulletin is the findings from the domestic violence module of the 2007/08 NICS. This module which addresses a series of questions about experiences and views on domestic violence is administered using a computer-assisted self-interviewing (CASI) technique. The CASI approach is adopted as it affords respondents anonymity and confidentiality on a subject that is very sensitive and personal to victims of domestic violence.

In order to give some context to the survey findings, the most recently published police statistics on domestic violence are presented in the first section of this bulletin. It should be emphasised, however, that, as the definition of a 'domestic incident' used by the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) is different from that used for the purposes of the NICS, it is not appropriate to attempt any direct comparison of both sets of statistics.

2. POLICE STATISTICS ON DOMESTIC VIOLENCE¹

The Police Service for Northern Ireland (PSNI) define a domestic incident 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'* (PSNI, 2008). Not all domestic incidents will result in the recording of a crime.

Between 2006/07 and 2007/08 the number of domestic incidents reported to PSNI fell by 2% from 23,456 to 23,076 (Table 2.1). The number of domestic crimes² recorded over the same period fell by 8%, from 10,115 to 9,283. Of all the domestic crimes recorded, over two thirds (69%) were categorised as violent³ offences. Criminal damage and breach of orders accounted for 15% and 13% of total domestic crimes respectively (PSNI, 2008). The remainder (4%) were classified as 'other notifiable offences'.

Where the gender of the victim was known, 76% of adult⁴ victims of domestic crimes recorded by the PSNI in 2007/08 were female.

Footnotes:

1. For consistency with the presentation of statistics throughout the remainder of this bulletin, PSNI percentages have been rounded to the nearest whole number.
2. Includes breach of non-molestation orders.
3. Violent crime includes offences against the person, sexual offences and robbery.
4. Defined as aged 17 and over.

Table 2.1: Domestic incidents and crimes recorded by the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI): 2004/05 – 2007/08

	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08	% change: 2006/07 to 2007/08
Total Number of Domestic Incidents	20,959	23,059	23,456	23,076	-2%
Total Number of Crimes	9,656	10,768	10,115	9,283	-8%

3. NICS SURVEY FINDINGS

While the NICS does not present respondents with an official definition of domestic violence, the CASI questionnaire is designed to include any violence between current or former partners in an intimate relationship. The types of domestic violence covered by the survey include that of a physical, sexual, emotional or financial nature. Table 3.1 below shows the broad categories of domestic violence used throughout this bulletin for the purposes of analysis and the specific forms of domestic violence that fall within each category.

A number of questions in the NICS require respondents to focus on their 'worst' incident of domestic violence. The analysis of the 'worst' incident as reported on in this bulletin incorporates only those forms of domestic violence which fall under options (d) to (k) below [i.e. is restricted to instances of domestic violence which involved an element of (physical) force and/or (frightening) threats].

Table 3.1: Types of domestic violence covered by the Northern Ireland Crime Survey (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 someone 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
	l. Used some other kind of force against you

Notes:

1. Not included in the 2007/08 British Crime Survey (BCS).
2. Considered 'minor' force by both the NICS and the BCS.
3. Considered 'severe' force by the NICS: the BCS includes category 'l' but excludes 'j'.

Historically, and primarily for reasons of maintaining consistency with the BCS, the domestic violence module of the NICS has only been administered to respondents aged 16 to 59. Thus, out of the 3,933 respondents to the 2007/08 NICS, a total of 2,743 fell into the eligible age band. Of these, 2,110 (77%) went on to complete the domestic violence module. The remaining 633 respondents failed to complete the module, either because they had never had a partner or been in a relationship, or because they opted out.

In reporting the results of the domestic violence module, all percentages reported have been weighted to prevent bias towards small households and they have been rounded to the nearest whole number. Any survey is necessarily subject to the vagaries of sampling and its results may correspondingly involve a degree of sampling error. The extent of sampling error is inevitably greater when small numbers are involved. In the present case, this applies particularly to any sub-analyses involving that sub-group of respondents (302 in total) who reported personal experience of domestic violence.

4. THE EXTENT OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE IN NORTHERN IRELAND

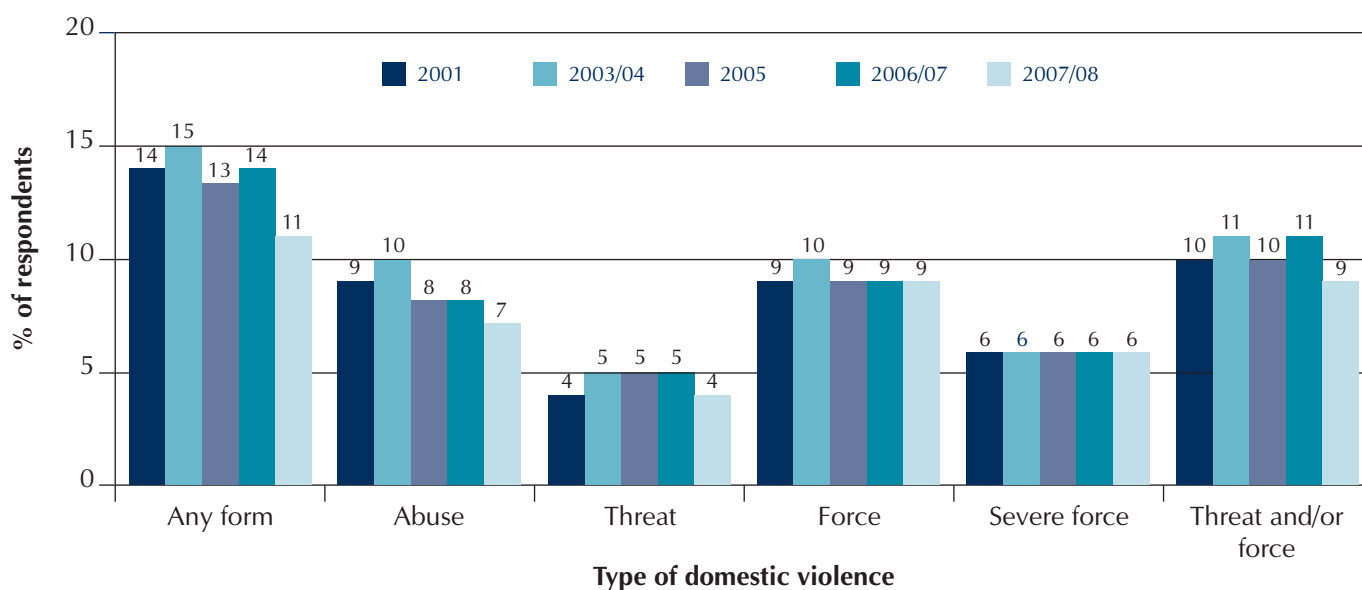
4.1 Prevalence rates

Findings revealed that approximately 1 in 10 (11%) respondents to the 2007/08 NICS who were aged 16-59 had experienced domestic violence as defined in Table 3.1 above. The equivalent figure for 2006/07 was 3 percentage points higher at 14%. As in 2006/07, female respondents were more likely (15%) than male respondents (8%) to report having experienced domestic violence (Figure 4.1).

Lifetime victimisation rates in Northern Ireland have consistently been lower than those recorded in the BCS for England and Wales. Twenty-three percent of respondents to the 2006/07 BCS^{1,2} reported having been a victim of partner abuse during their lifetime.

Analysis of the nature of domestic violence experienced revealed that 7% of respondents reported having been subjected to abuse, 4% to threats, 9% to force and 6% to severe force³ (Figure 4.1).

Figure 4.1: Reported life-time experience of domestic violence by general nature of the violence, NICS 2001- 2007/08



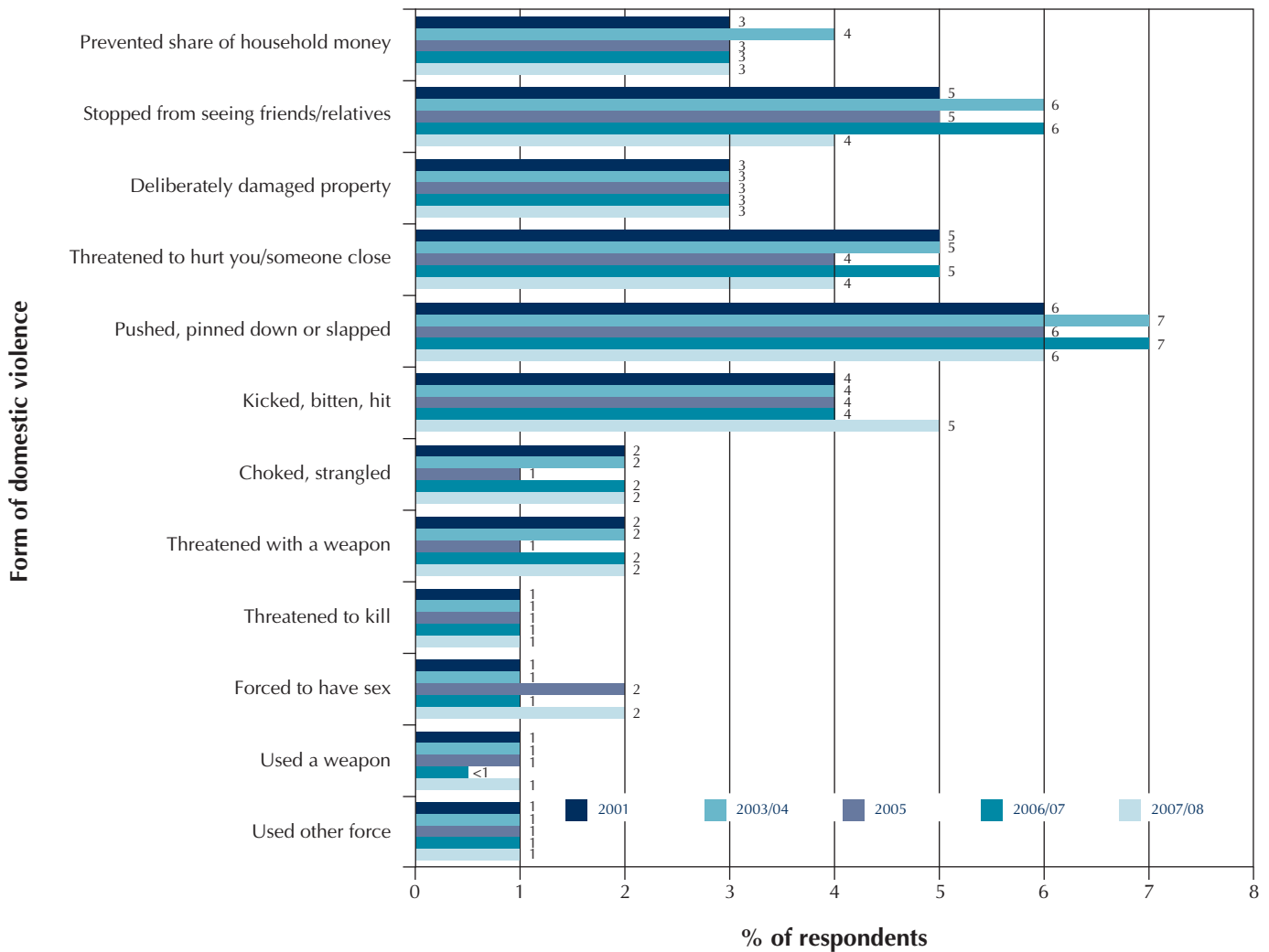
Footnote:

1. The overall total domestic violence victimisation rate for England and Wales cannot be directly compared with the victimisation rate for Northern Ireland as there are some differences in the categories included in the BCS and NICS.
2. The 2007/08 BCS results are not due for publication until January 2009.
3. The 6% of respondents who reported being subjected to severe force are a subset of the 9% who reported being subjected to force in general. The 2 categories are not therefore mutually exclusive.

4.2 Nature of domestic violence

Figure 4.2 shows the different forms of domestic violence experienced by respondents to the NICS for each of the years the survey was run between 2001 and 2007/08. Being ‘pushed, pinned down or slapped’ has consistently come out highest across all tranches of the survey. In the 2007/08 NICS, 6% of respondents reported being subjected to domestic violence of this nature. The 2006/07 BCS and the 2006 Scottish Crime and Victimization Survey (SCVS) findings also revealed this type of domestic violence to be most common in England & Wales and Scotland respectively (Hoare & Jansson, 2008; Hamlyn & Brown, 2007). The other more frequently reported forms of domestic violence identified by the 2007/08 NICS respondents were ‘kicked, bitten or hit’ (5%), ‘stopped from seeing friends/relatives’ (4%) and ‘threatened to hurt you/someone close to you’ (also 4%).

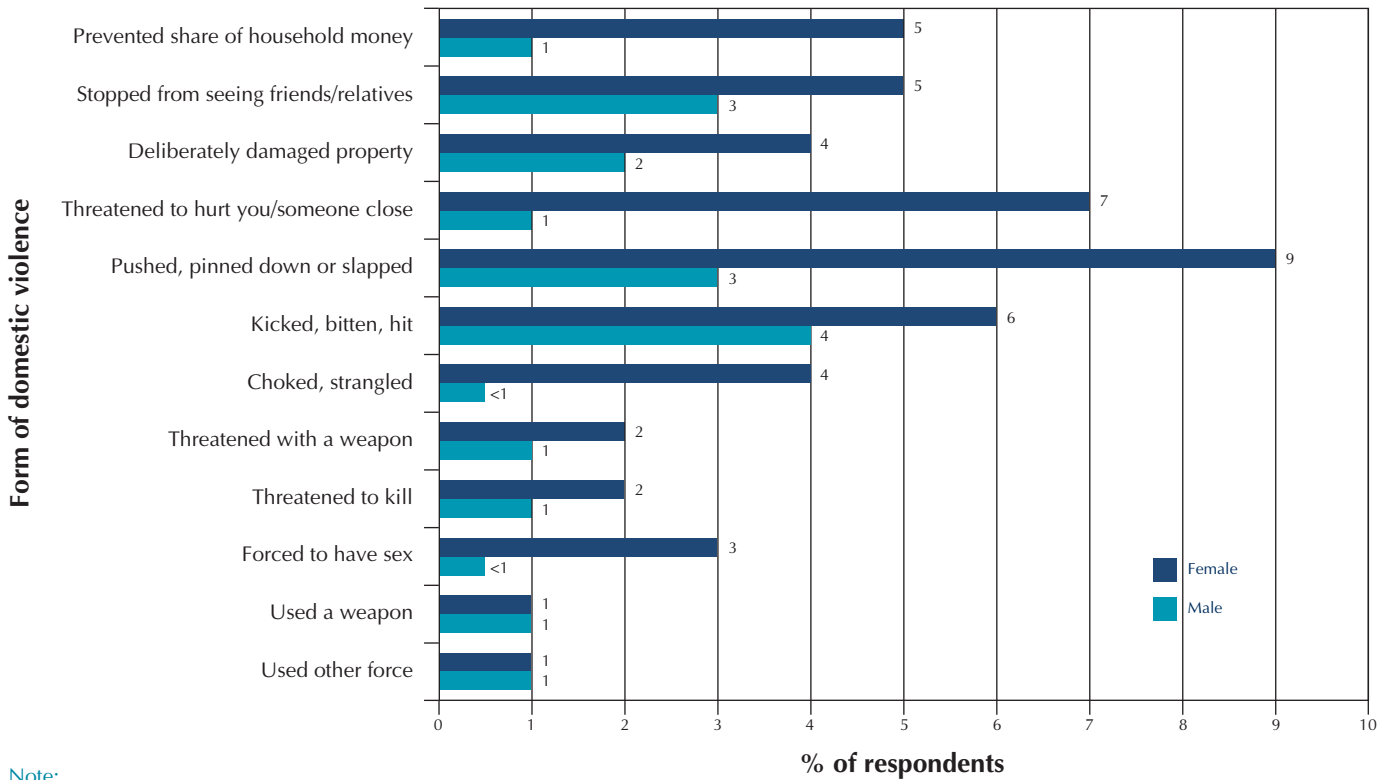
Figure 4.2: Reported life-time experience of domestic violence by specific nature of the violence, NICS 2001 – 2007/08



Note:
1. <1 denotes a value less than 0.5.

Figure 4.3 shows, for the 2007/08 NICS, the proportion of male and female respondents who reported life-time experience of each of the specific types of domestic violence. The types of domestic violence most likely to be reported by female respondents were ‘pushed, pinned down or slapped’ (reported by 9%) or ‘threaten to hurt you/someone close to you’ (reported by 7%). By contrast, the types of violence most frequently reported by male respondents were ‘kicked, bitten or hit’ (reported by 4%), and ‘stopped from seeing friends/relatives’ and ‘pushed, pinned down or slapped’ (both reported by 3%).

Figure 4.3: Reported life-time experience of domestic violence by gender and by specific nature of the violence, NICS 2007/08



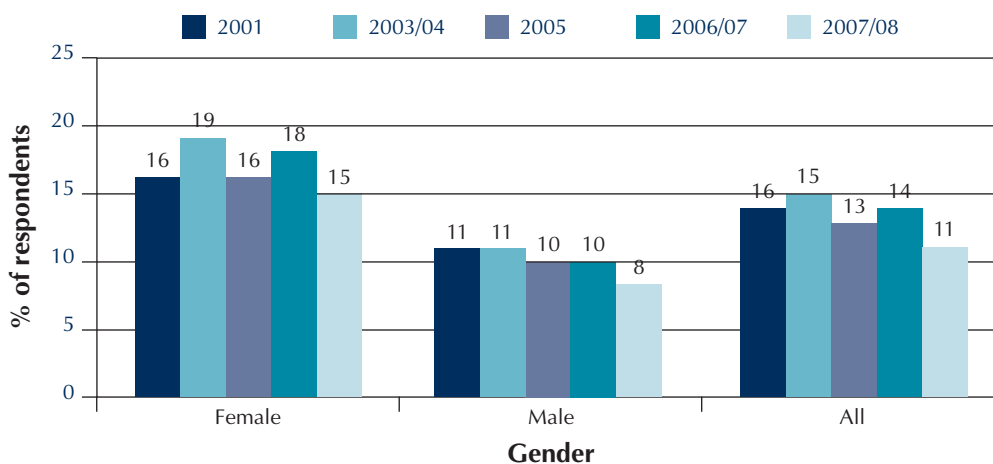
Note:
1. <1 denotes a value less than 0.5.

5. THE RISK FACTORS ASSOCIATED WITH DOMESTIC VIOLENCE VICTIMISATION

5.1 Gender

As reported earlier (see 4.1), the findings from the 2007/08 NICS suggest a higher prevalence of domestic violence among females than among males (15% and 8% respectively) (Figure 5.1). While these figures indicate that females are more vulnerable to domestic violence, they also suggest that a relatively substantial proportion of males may experience domestic violence during their lifetime.

Figure 5.1: Reported life-time experience of domestic violence by gender, NICS 2001-2007/08



Kimmel (2002) stated that women’s violence against men in domestic relationships does happen but that it is different from men’s violence against women in that it is far less injurious, and less likely to be motivated by a desire to dominate or control their partner. These beliefs are shared by Belknap and Melton (2005) who, in their research review, concluded that intimate partner abuse is gendered as males are more likely to be the perpetrators. They point out, however, that it is necessary to recognise that there are females who are abusive and violent to their intimate male partners. Kimmel (2002) states that compassion and adequate intervention strategies must explore the full range of domestic violence – not only that both women and men are capable of using violence but also the different rates of injury and the different types of violence.

The NICS 2007/08 findings revealed female respondents to be about twice as likely (11%) as male respondents (5%) to report having being subjected to a form of domestic violence which involves an element of force (Table 5.1). They were also much more likely to report having been subjected to threatening behaviour (7% of female respondents compared with 1% of male respondents).

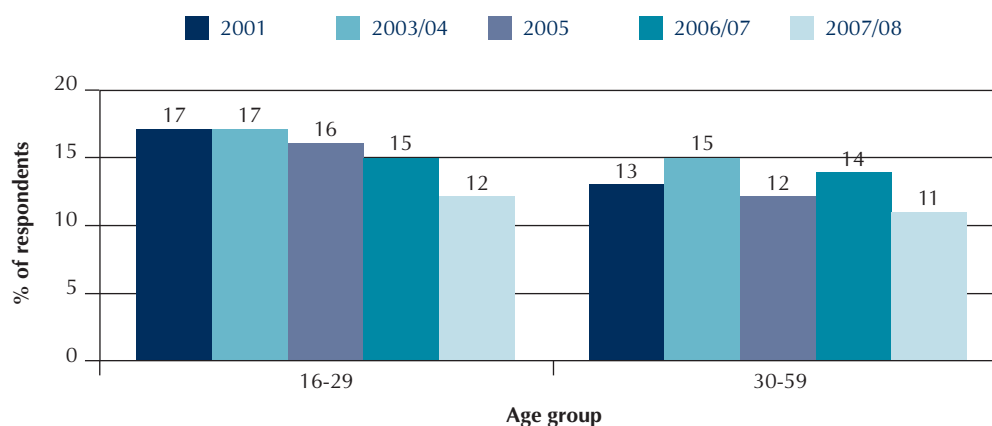
Table 5.1: Reported life-time experience of the various forms of domestic violence by gender, NICS 2003/04-2007/08

	2003/04		2005		2006/07		2007/08	
	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Abuse	11	7	9	6	9	7	9	5
Threat	8	2	8	2	9	2	7	1
Force	13	5	11	6	13	5	11	5
Severe force	7	4	7	5	8	4	8	4
Threat and/or force	15	6	13	6	15	6	12	6
All forms	19	11	16	10	18	10	15	8

5.2 Age

Historically, a marginally higher prevalence of domestic violence has been recorded for those aged 16-29 than for those aged 30-59. In the 2007/08 NICS, 12% of 16-29 year olds claimed to have been victims of domestic violence compared with 11% of 30-59 year olds. (Figure 5.2) The equivalent figures for the 2006/07 survey were 15% and 14% respectively.

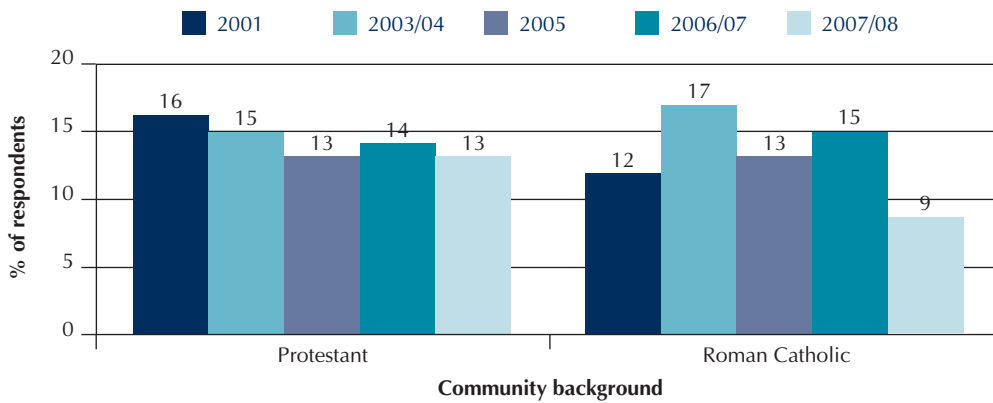
Figure 5.2: Reported life-time experience of domestic violence by age, NICS 2001-2007/08



5.3 Community background

Respondents with a Protestant community background were slightly more likely (13%) than those with a Roman Catholic community background (9%) to report having experienced domestic violence at some stage in their lifetime (Figure 5.3). In the 2006/07 survey, the lifetime victimisation rates recorded for both groups were similar with 14% of respondents with a Protestant community background and 15% of those with a Roman Catholic community background reporting life-time experience of domestic violence.

Figure 5.3: Reported life-time experience of domestic violence by community background, NICS 2001-2007/08

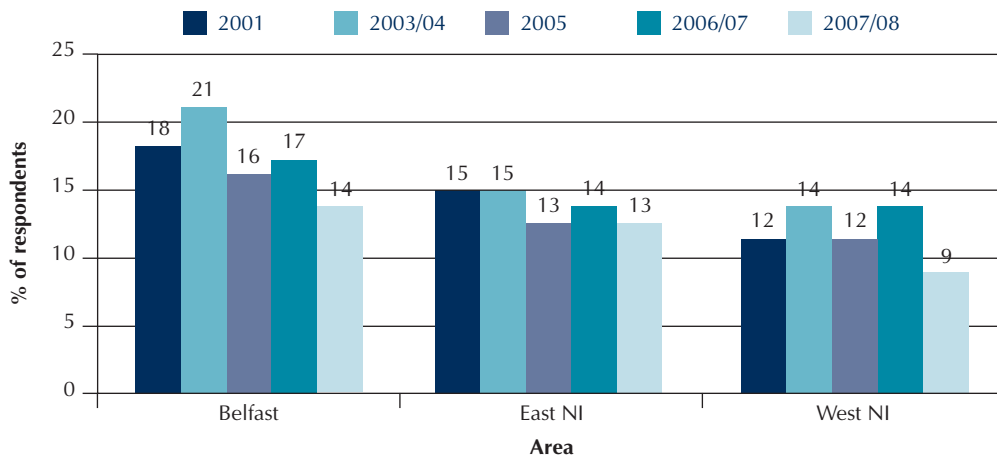


5.4 Area of residence

For the purposes of analysis, Northern Ireland was divided into 3 regions: Belfast, East of Northern Ireland and West of Northern Ireland. A lower victimisation rate was recorded for respondents from West of Northern Ireland (9%) than for those from either the Belfast area (14%) or from East of Northern Ireland (13%) (Figure 5.4).

When respondents' home addresses were categorised into urban or rural, the rate of domestic violence victimisation was found to be 13% for those living in an urban area and 9% for those living in a rural area. Analysis by gender revealed that 8% of males and 17% of females living in urban areas reported having experienced domestic violence. The equivalent figures for rural areas were lower with 7% of males and 11% of females reporting such experience.

Figure 5.4: Reported life-time experience of domestic violence by area of residence, NICS 2001 – 2007/08



5.5 Pregnancy

Mezey and Bewley (1997) highlighted the increased dangers to women and their unborn children during pregnancy as research had indicated that domestic violence may commence or escalate during this time.

In the 2007/08 NICS, almost one quarter (23%) of female victims of domestic violence reported being subjected to threats or force while they were pregnant. For half of this group (17 out of the 34), the domestic violence started during the pregnancy.

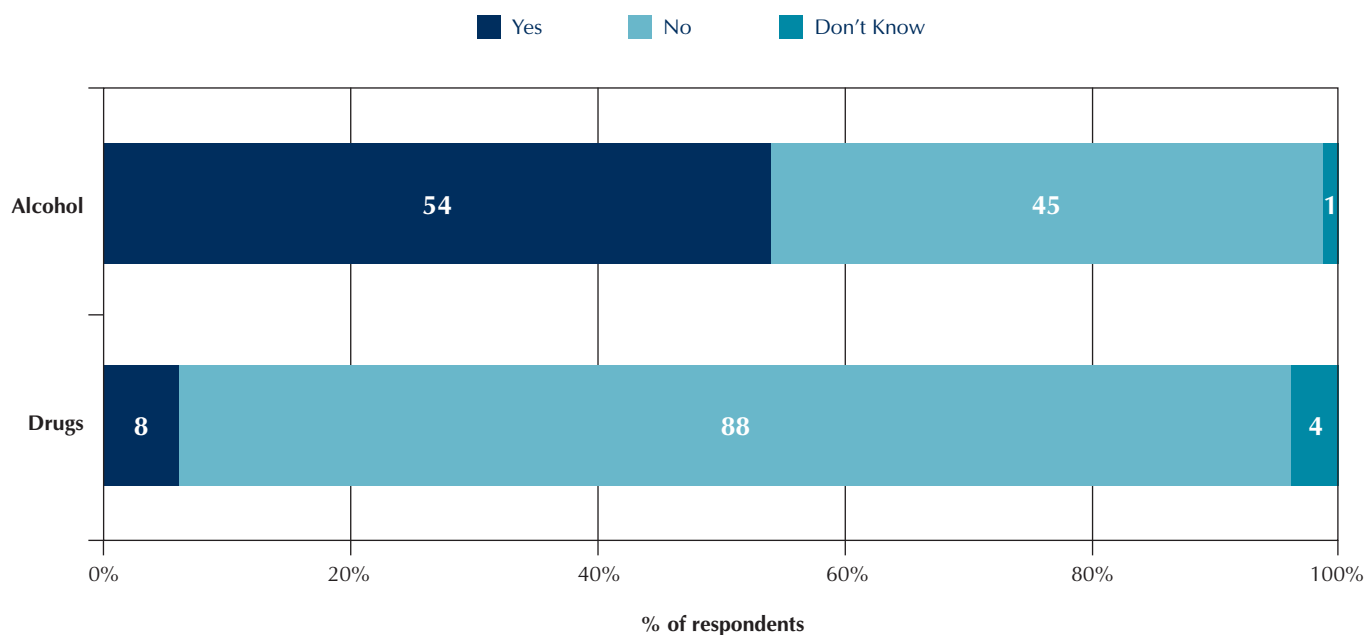
A successful pilot scheme to ask pregnant women routinely about domestic violence was undertaken by midwives at the Royal Jubilee Maternity Unit in conjunction with Belfast and Lisburn Women’s Aid and NI Women’s Aid Federation. Other HSS Trusts subsequently introduced the routine enquiry (DHSS&PS & NIO,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

5.6 Alcohol and drug abuse

Over half of respondents (54%) who experienced a ‘worst’ incident of domestic violence, reported that the perpetrator was under the influence of alcohol at the time of this incident (Figure 5.5). These findings are similar to those from the 2005 National Study of Domestic Abuse (NSDA) in the Republic of Ireland where 57% of perpetrators had been drinking at the time of a serious incident (Watson & Parsons, 2005).

Eight percent of victims perceived that the perpetrator of their ‘worst’ incident was under the influence of drugs at the time of the incident (Figure 5.5). This represents a fall of 1% on the equivalent figure from the 2006/07 NICS (9%).

Figure 5.5: Perceived influence of alcohol and drug abuse in ‘worst’ incident, NICS 2007/08



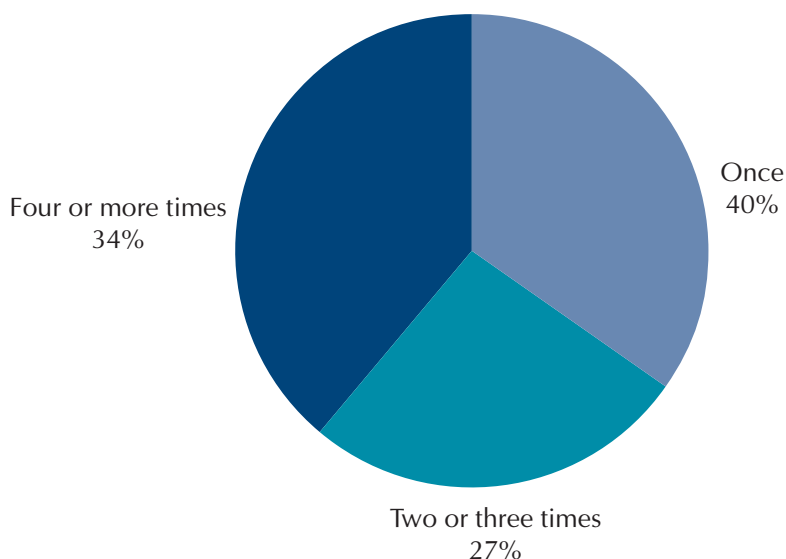
6. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE VICTIMISATION

6.1 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 2007/08 NICS revealed that 60% of victims reported having experienced domestic violence from the same perpetrator more than once: 34% reported having been victimised four or more times (Figure 6.1).

Figure 6.1: Frequency of domestic violence from the perpetrator of the ‘worst’ incident, NICS 2007/08



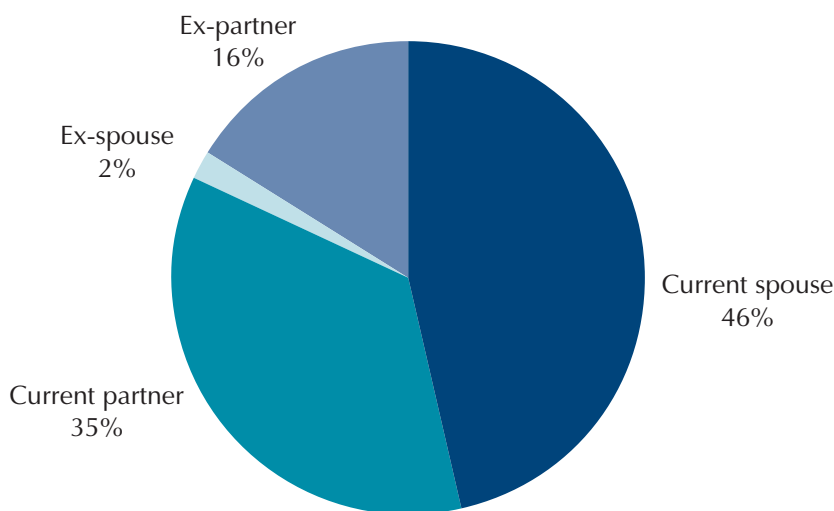
Note:

1. The percentages do not add to 100 due to rounding.

6.2 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. Seventy percent of ‘worst’ incidents involved a male perpetrator and a female victim. Eighty-one percent of all ‘worst’ incidents identified by the 2007/08 NICS were perpetrated by the then current spouse or partner while 19% were committed by former spouses or partners (Figure 6.2).

Figure 6.2: Relationship of offender to victim in ‘worst’ incident, NICS 2007/08



Note:

1. The percentages do not add to 100 due to rounding.

6.3 Cohabiting

Of respondents to the 2007/08 NICS who experienced a 'worst' incident of domestic violence, 68% reported that this incident had taken place while they were living with the perpetrator. In the Republic of Ireland, 69% of victims identified by the 2005 NSDA, were living with their partner when they experienced serious physical abuse (Watson & Parsons, 2005).

In the 2007/08 NICS, the majority of victims (84%) reported that they had split up with the assailant since the 'worst' incident. A further 15% of respondents reported that they remained in the relationship. The remaining 2% reported that they split up for a time but subsequently got back together again. Just over three quarters (77%) of those who split up (even temporarily) cited abusive behaviour as the main reason for the split.

The findings also revealed that the domestic threats and force stopped completely for approximately two thirds (65%) of the victims who split up (even temporarily); for 8%, the situation had got better. However, 4% of respondents considered that the perpetrator's behaviour had remained the same after the split and 5% reported that it had actually got worse. In addition, a small minority of respondents (4%) reported that the violent behaviour only started after they split up.

6.4 Criminality of perpetrator

Respondents to the 2007/08 NICS were asked if the perpetrator of their 'worst' incident had a criminal record before the incident. Fifteen percent of victims were of the view that their assailant had a criminal record. The majority (77%), however, reported that, as far as they knew, the perpetrator did not have a criminal record. The remaining 8% of respondents did not know whether or not the perpetrator had a criminal record.

7. THE EFFECTS OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

7.1 Injuries sustained in 'worst' incident

Sixty-six percent of victims who experienced a 'worst' incident, reported that they had sustained injuries as a result of this incident (Table 7.1). Analysis of the nature of injuries received revealed that overall 41% of respondents reported that they had sustained a minor injury, 24% reported a moderate injury and 12% reported a severe injury. In addition, 35% of respondents reported that they had experienced mental or emotional problems. All of these figures represent an increase compared with the equivalent figures for the 2006/07 NICS. These increases were especially notable in respect of severe and moderate injuries (up by 8 and 3 percentage points respectively).

Analysis of the specific nature of the injury received showed 'mental or emotional problems' to be more frequently reported (35%) than any single injury of a physical nature.

Of the physical injuries covered by the 2007/08 NICS, 'minor bruising or black eye' (32%), followed by severe bruising (21%) and scratches (17%) were most frequently reported.

Almost one third (32%) of victims who sustained injuries as a consequence of their 'worst' incident, reported that they had consulted a doctor, nurse or other health professional about their injuries.

Table 7.1: Injuries sustained in 'worst' incident of domestic violence, NICS 2001- 2007/08

	2001	2003/04	2005	2006/07	2007/08
	%	%	%	%	%
Any injuries	54	67	62	64	66
No injuries	-	28	30	24	28
Mental or emotional problems	30	36	33	34	35
Minor injuries	-	40	41	39	41
Minor bruising or black eye	24	32	30	30	32
Scratches	17	15	17	17	17
Other physical injuries	4	4	3	6	4
Moderate injuries	-	24	24	21	24
Severe bruising	17	20	17	16	21
Bleeding from cuts	8	11	14	10	7
Severe injuries	-	6	8	4	12
Internal injury	2	2	4	1	3
Broken bones/teeth	5	4	6	4	10

7.2 Presence of children

Research suggests that children suffer the effects of domestic violence in a number of different ways. Domestic violence can impact on their behaviour and emotional well-being as well as affecting their cognitive abilities and attitudes (Humphreys & Mullender, 2000). Other research suggests that the majority of children whose mother is being abused are aware of it, often more so than their parents realise (Abrahams, 1994).

In the 2007/08 NICS, over one quarter (27%) of victims who experienced a 'worst' incident believed that this incident had been seen and/or heard by children.

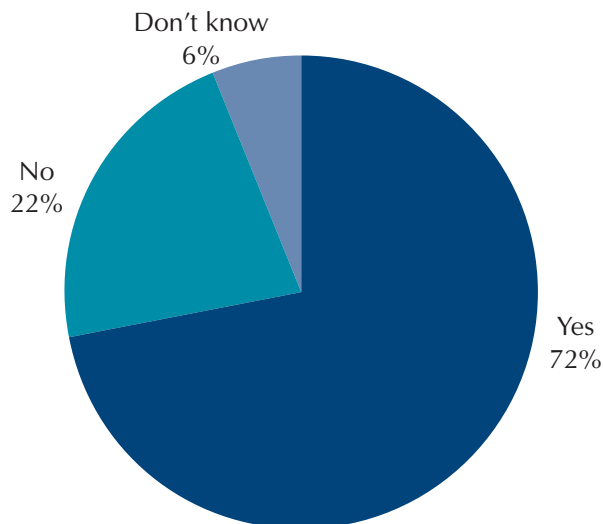
7.3 Was 'worst' incident a form of domestic violence?

As mentioned earlier in this bulletin, no official definition of domestic violence is provided to NICS survey respondents. They are simply asked at the outset of the domestic violence module if they had ever experienced any of 12 different forms of abuse, threat or force from a current or former intimate partner (see Table 3.1).

When subsequently asked if they believed the 'worst' incident of threat or force they had experienced constituted domestic violence, 72% of respondents considered that it did (Figure 7.1): the equivalent figure for NICS 2006/07 was lower at 64%.

In addition, respondents whose 'worst' incident resulted in injury were about twice as likely (86%) as those who had not sustained injury (42%) to consider that the incident amounted to domestic violence.

Figure 7.1: Whether victim classifies 'worst' incident as domestic violence, NICS 2007/08



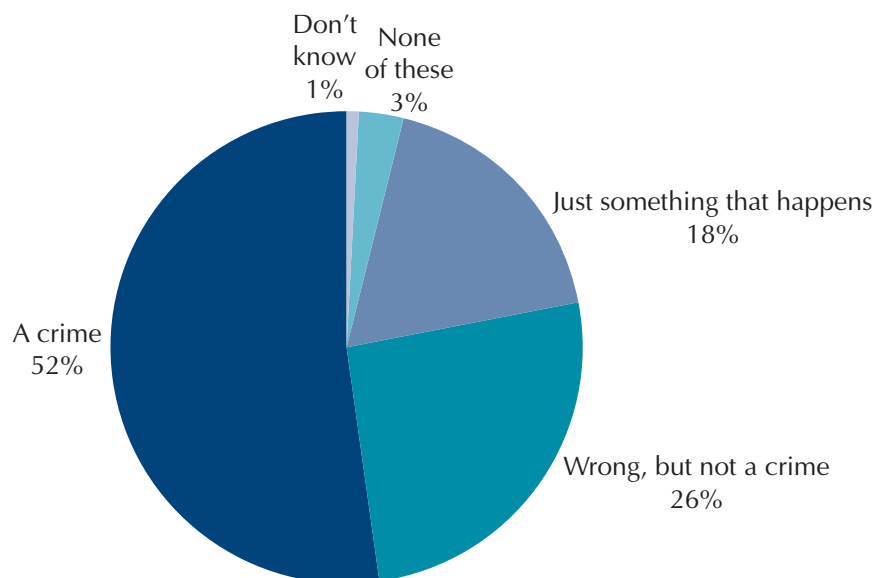
7.4 Was 'worst' incident a crime?

The government's 'Tackling Violence at Home' strategy declared domestic violence to be an abhorrent and often hidden crime (DHSS&PS & NIO, 2005). In the 2007/08 NICS, 52% of victims of threat or force considered their 'worst' incident to constitute a crime (Figure 7.2). A further 26% of respondents believed their 'worst' incident to be 'wrong but not a crime' and 18% considered that 'it was just something that happens'.

The comparable findings in the 2006/07 NICS were that 43% of respondents considered their 'worst' incident to be a crime and 35% considered that it was 'wrong but not a crime'.

Victims who believed that their 'worst' incident constituted domestic violence were more likely to believe that a crime had been committed (66%) than those who did not consider the incident to constitute domestic violence (7%).

Figure 7.2: Whether victim considers 'worst' incident a crime, NICS 2007/08.



7.5 Reporting to the police

The 2007/08 NICS findings revealed that the police came to know about one quarter (25%) of 'worst' incidents of domestic violence. The equivalent figure in respect of all forms of domestic violence (i.e. in addition to the 'worst' incident) was 29%.

Victims who believed that their 'worst' incident constituted a crime were three times more likely to report that the police came to know about it than victims who did not believe that a crime was involved (39% and 11% respectively) (Table 7.2)

Table 7.2: Perception of 'worst' incident as a crime by whether or not it was reported to the police, NICS 2007/08.

Perception of 'worst' incident	Reported to the police?	
	Yes	No
	%	%
A crime	39	61
Not a crime	11	89

7.6 Support for victims

Survey respondents were asked if they told anyone else apart from the police about their 'worst' incident of domestic violence. Over half (55%) of the 2007/08 NICS respondents reported that they told 'friends, relatives or neighbours' (Table 7.3). The other sources respondents were most likely to report relating their 'worst' incident to were 'someone at work' (7%) or 'partner's friends, relatives and neighbours' (6%).

Compared with the 2006/07 NICS, there has been a notable increase in the proportion of respondents reporting that they related their 'worst' incident to 'friends, relatives and neighbours' (up from 45% to 55%).

The government is seeking the help of employers in raising awareness of the serious issue of domestic violence. Hence guidelines for employers on developing a workplace policy on domestic violence and abuse were launched in May 2006 (DHSS&PS & NIO, 2006). The survey results would suggest that since this initiative was launched, there has been an increase, albeit of modest magnitude, in the proportion of domestic violence victims opting to speak to 'someone at work' on matters related to domestic violence (up from 3% in 2006/07 to 7% in 2007/08).

Table 7.3: Who victims told about their 'worst' incident, NICS 2001-2007/08

	2001	2003/04	2005	2006/07	2007/08
	%	%	%	%	%
Police (came to know)	14	18	24	19	25
Friends, relatives, neighbours	42	47	43	45	55
Partner's friends, relatives, neighbours	6	6	5	8	6
Someone at work	4	4	6	3	7
Women's refuge	1	2	1	1	1
Women's group/centre, Women's Aid	<1	1	3	2	4
Men's group/project	1	<1	<1	0	0
Victim Support (Northern Ireland)	1	2	1	2	3
Religious group/leader	1	1	1	4	1
Social Services	1	0	3	2	1
Housing Executive	1	2	2	2	0
Social Security Agency	1	1	1	1	0
Solicitor (sought legal advice)	4	7	9	6	4
Courts	2	1	2	1	1
Someone else	4	1	3	1	1

Note: 1. <1 denotes a value less than 0.5

7.7 Specialist programmes for perpetrators

NICS respondents were asked if they were aware if the perpetrator of their 'worst' incident had received any form of help or treatment either before or after the incident. The pattern of response on this was only marginally different from 2006/07, with the majority of respondents (69%) reporting that they were not aware of the perpetrator having attended any specialist type programme (Table 7.4). The types of programme which respondents were most likely to report perpetrators having attended were 'counselling or therapy for mental health problems' (9%), 'anger management programme' (5%) and 'help or treatment for alcohol abuse' (4%).

Table 7.4: Specialist programmes used by perpetrators, NICS 2007/08

	%
Help or treatment for alcohol abuse	4
Help or treatment for drug abuse	1
Counselling or therapy for mental health problems	9
Anger management programme	5
Domestic violence treatment programme	<1
None of these	69
Don't know	16

Notes:

1. <1 denotes a value less than 0.5.
2. Percentages do not add to 100 as respondents could give more than one response to the question.

8. PUBLIC OPINION ON GOVERNMENT POLICY TO TACKLE DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

8.1 Government initiatives to 'Tackle Violence at Home'

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, 2005).

The Action Plan which accompanied the 'Tackling Violence at Home' strategy included proposals for (i) implementation of policies by a range of departments and (ii) roll-out of a media and educational campaign to increase awareness of domestic violence among the whole community (DHSS&PS & NIO, 2005; DHSS&PS & NIO, 2006).

The workplace policy on domestic violence and abuse and the routine enquiry policy in maternity units are two examples of policy responses to domestic violence in Northern Ireland.

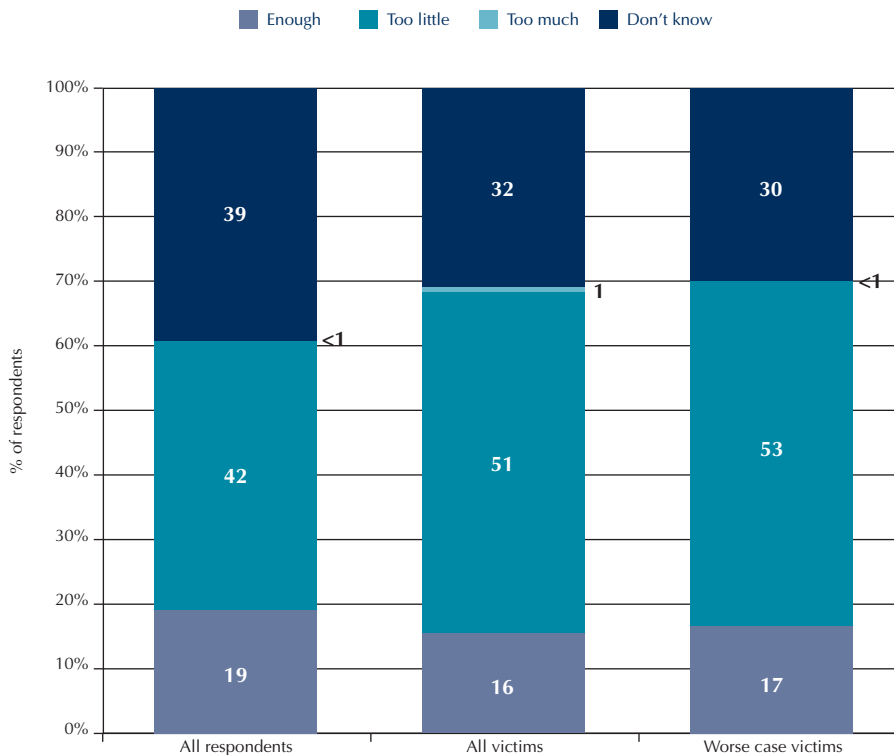
8.2 Perceptions of public policy priorities

Survey respondents were asked whether they thought the government and agencies, such as the police and courts, were doing enough about domestic violence. Overall, approximately one fifth of respondents (19%) believed that the government and its agencies were doing enough (Figure 8.1). A much higher proportion (42%), however, expressed the view that too little was being done (the equivalent figure for 2006/07 was 41%).

The views of victims on this issue were less favourable, with over half of respondents in both the ‘all victims’ (51%) and ‘worst case victims’ (53%) classifications expressing the view that the government and its agencies were doing too little.

Compared with the 2006/07 NICS results, there were falls across all three respondent classifications in the proportion of respondents who believed that the government was doing enough about domestic violence. This fall was especially marked for ‘all victims’ (down from 22% to 16%) and ‘worst case victims’ (down from 23% to 17%). Conversely there were corresponding increases in the proportions of respondents who believed that the government was doing too little. The proportion of respondents who opted for the ‘don’t know’ response option was only marginally different from 2006/07.

Figure 8.1: Is the government and its agencies doing enough about domestic violence? NICS 2007/08



TECHNICAL NOTES

The initial NICS 2007/08 sample consisted of 6,736 addresses randomly selected from the Land and Property Services 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: Sample stratification

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 6,051 occupied addresses, from which attempts were made to interview one randomly selected adult respondent at each address.

Selecting only one person from 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.

In January 2005, the NICS began operating on a continuous basis. This bulletin refers to fieldwork undertaken during the financial year April 2007 to March 2008, which involved complete interviews with 3,933 people aged 16 and over. This represents an eligible overall response rate for the survey of 65%.

Historically, and primarily for reasons of maintaining consistency with the British Household Survey (BCS), the domestic violence module has only been administered to respondents aged 16-59. Thus, out of the 3,933 respondents in the initial sample, 2,743 were in the eligible age band. However, 580 of these respondents refused to complete the domestic violence module and a further 53 were deemed ineligible as they had never had a partner/been in a relationship. The final valid sample for the domestic violence module was therefore 2,110, representing a response rate of 77%. A demographic profile of the final sample is presented in Table ii.

Table ii: Sample Profile

		Unweighted number	Unweighted %	Weighted %
Gender	Male	930	44	45
	Female	1180	56	55
Age Group	16-29	482	23	25
	30-59	1628	77	75
Community Background	Protestant	1072	43	50
	Roman Catholic	911	51	44
	Other ¹	127	6	6
Area	Belfast	319	15	14
	East N.I.	1035	49	49
	West N.I.	756	36	37

Note 1:
'Other' category includes none, missing, refused, etc.

Respondents were assured in advance 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 (i.e. refusals, missing etc.). 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 certain 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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