

**Young Peoples Attitudes  
Towards Gendered Violence**

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## **Executive Summary**

### **Purpose of study**

The purpose of this study is to investigate young peoples' awareness of and views about violence and abusive behaviour towards women.

The research has two aims;

- to provide an overview of young peoples' attitudes concerning gendered violence in order to assess whether there have been any changes in attitudes to those documented by an earlier study which documented wide-spread acceptance of forced sex and physical violence against women, and a marked readiness on the part of young people to blame women for men's violence towards them (Burton et al, 1998: 1).
- to examine attitudes towards violence and sexual coercion that occurs within young people's own intimate relationships.

### **The young people**

In this report the views of young people aged 14 to 18 years were sought on a range of violent, coercive and abusive acts and behaviours. The research was carried out in ten secondary schools in four Scottish Education Authorities, in one Further Education College and in youth group settings.

The report draws on a questionnaire-based survey of 1,395 young people and twelve focus group discussions. In structure and content, the questionnaire was informed by similar studies conducted in Britain, the US and Australia. Fifty five percent of those who completed the questionnaire were female and 45% were male. Three fifths (61%) lived with both parents, and almost a quarter (24%) lived with a single parent. Eighty nine percent described themselves as 'white', and 11% were from an ethnic minority background.

### **Attitudes to different forms of violence**

Males tend to take a more pro-violent stance than females.

- Almost twice as many males as females (30% as opposed to 16%) disagreed with the statement *'unless you are defending yourself, there is never a good reason to hit another person'*.
- More than twice as many males as females (33% to 15%) agreed with the statement *'it might not be right, but threatening to hit someone gets you what you want'*.
- Almost three quarters of males agreed with the statement *'you have to stick up for yourself, and sometimes this means getting violent'*.

Young women considered all forms of violence more serious than males.

- Rape and sexual assault was considered '*very serious*' by a high proportion of all young people, although females (98%) were more likely than males (93%) to consider it so.
- Similarly, more females (81%) than males (72%) regarded domestic abuse '*very serious*'; almost two-thirds of females compared to one half of males were more likely to consider physical fighting between boyfriend and girl friend in a dating relationship '*very serious*';
- Slightly more females (72%) than males (70%) regarded racially motivated violence as '*very serious*'.
- Two-thirds of both males and females viewed sectarian violence as '*very serious*'.

### **Violence in young peoples' relationships**

Young people, of both genders, reported experiencing verbal and emotional abuse and physical violence within the context of their own relationships. Twelve percent of young people reported that they had been hurt or frightened within the context of a fight or argument with their partner.

- Two fifths of females had been yelled at by a boyfriend, and over a third stated that they had been put down or humiliated by their boyfriend.
- Nine percent of girls reported being kicked, bit or hit by their boyfriend,
- Sixteen percent of females reported being pushed grabbed or shoved.
- Ten percent reported their partner tried to force them to have sex
- Three percent reported that their boyfriend had actually forced them to have sex.
- Over half of young men reported being yelled at by their girlfriend, and 28% reported being put down or humiliated at least once.
- A fifth of young men said that their girlfriend tried to hit them with something; just under a fifth reported that they had been kicked, bit or hit.
- Almost a third of young men reported that their girlfriend had slapped them; and one quarter said that they had been pushed, grabbed or shoved

Young women were significantly more likely to report inflicting verbal and emotional abuse and violence on their partner, than the young men

- Over half of young women reported yelling loudly at their partner (compared to two fifth of young men)
- Sixteen percent of young women and 6% of young men report slapping their partner;
- Eleven percent of young women and 5 % of young men report that they have threatened to hit their partner;
- Sixteen percent of females compared to 10% of males have pushed, grabbed or shoved their partner;
- Twice as many females as males (10% compared to 5%) report kicking, biting or hitting their partner
- Twice as many females as males (8% compared to 4%) report trying to hit their partner with something.

A relatively small proportion of young people reported experiencing, and conducting coercive sex. As may be expected, young women were more likely to report this

- Ten percent of females said that their boyfriend had tried to force them to have sex, with 3% saying that their boyfriend had forced them to have sex
- Five percent of males admitted trying to force their girlfriends to have sex at least once; with 4% reporting that they had managed to force sex
- Two percent of females said they had forced their boyfriend to have sex

### **Provoking violence**

Although attitudes are not as marked as those found by Burton et al (1998) the findings still point to fairly widespread belief by young people that women can provoke violence by men. This does not imply that such violence is considered acceptable. It does, however, point to the pervasiveness of beliefs about victim precipitation in general, and 'woman-blaming' in particular.

- One in five young men believe that women 'often' provoke violence;
- A quarter of young men believe that women 'often' provoke violence by nagging,
- A third believe that women 'sometimes' provoke violence by the way that they dress, as did over a third of young women.
- Half of the young women felt that women 'sometimes' provoke violence by flirting with other men, as did 46% of young men.
- One in five males and slightly more than one in four females believe that males 'often' provoke violence by females by 'pushing women too far'.
- Over half of females hold the view that men 'sometimes' provoke violence by nagging, and nearly half of males share this view.

### **Domestic abuse**

In the focus group discussions, young people put forward a diverse collection of behaviours, and practices as examples of violent behaviour, including extreme acts of interpersonal physical violence, sexual violence and also identifying emotional, and psychological factors, signalling a clear recognition that a wide range of behaviours, practices and orientations can be considered domestic abuse. There was also an acknowledgement of the cumulative nature of domestic abuse, with recognition that it increases in severity, and that domestic abuse is very rarely a one-off event.

The range of actions and behaviours that are considered to be domestic abuse increases with age, with older respondents more likely than younger respondents to consider not just physical violence, but also other kinds of behaviour to be potentially abusive.

Young people believe domestic abuse to be widespread; that it is not restricted to particular areas or indeed to any particular family configuration or socio economic status of families. That said, the estimates about the extent of domestic abuse given in the survey questionnaires tended to be lower than the current best estimates available. Young women's estimates tend to be higher than young men's. Perceived prevalence increases with age, for both genders.

Almost two fifths of young people claim to personally know someone who has experienced domestic abuse, with 15% answering '*not sure*'. A higher proportion of young women compared to young men claim to know someone who has experienced domestic abuse.

In the focus groups, most young people identified 'stress' factors as a major causal factor that can lead to abuse within the home, although more young women tended to put forward more structural explanations referring to 'patriarchal society' and 'gender relations' as reasons for violence against women in general. For many young people, domestic abuse and alcohol are inextricably linked, with alcohol seen as a 'trigger' precipitating abuse.

There was a relatively high awareness of the deleterious and damaging effects of domestic abuse, both on an individual and a wider social level. Many young people referred to domestic violence leading to depression, lack of self-esteem, and homelessness.

The survey questionnaire listed eleven different actions and behaviours covering physical, sexual, emotional and financial abuse. Young people were asked to say which of the items they would think of as '*domestic abuse*' and which they would think of as '*just something that happens*'.

Whilst those actions involving physical violence are considered the most serious, only two of the eleven items were considered '*just something that happens*' rather than domestic abuse by the majority of the young people. These were '*not talking to partner for long periods of time*', and '*not showing any love or affection to partner*'.

Young women were consistently more likely than young men to consider each of the eleven items to be domestic abuse. Males were more likely than young women to say they didn't know.

Of concern are the one in 20 young men who consider regularly slapping and punching a partner to be '*just something that happens*'. And the one in 14 young men who consider forcing a partner to have sex' to be '*just something that happens*'.

### **Tolerance and Acceptability of violence against women**

In the focus group discussions, the majority of young people expressed a very low tolerance towards violence, at a conceptual level. That said, however, it became evident that as discussion became more focused some young people displayed a higher tolerance for violence against women that occurred within certain contexts, in particular when the woman, through her actions (or inaction) may be perceived as having 'pushed the man too far'. This was also borne out by the survey findings.

The context in which particular incidents take place was held to be significant for establishing whether violent actions are in themselves explicable and/or acceptable, as well as how serious the violence is perceived to be. A very important factor in establishing context appeared to be the relationship between those involved.

In the questionnaire, respondents were provided with 11 situations 'in which some men may hit their female partner' and, for each, were asked to select a response from five options which were (a) given how she/he has behaved, he/she **has a right to hit** her; (b) he's got **good reason to hit** him, but it is not the best way of dealing with it; (c) he shouldn't hit her but you **can understand why** he might want to (d) he **just shouldn't hit** her; (e) don't know.

In the following questions, respondents were given exactly the same list of 11 situations 'in which a women may hit her male partner' and also asked to select a response from the same six options.

The questionnaire findings suggest that female violence towards men is condoned more readily than male violence towards women. A relatively small proportion of young people responded that the man has *a right to hit* a woman under any of the circumstances presented. Yet 20% of males and 17% of females believe that a woman has a right to hit a man if he hits her (compared to 4% males and 7% females who chose this option in circumstances where a man hits a woman). Sixteen percent of males and 11% of females felt that a woman has a right to hit a man where he throws something at her (compared to 5% of males and 3% of females in circumstances where a woman throws something at a man), and; 11% of males and 10% of females believe that a woman has a right to hit a man where he admits to having sex with someone else (compared to 8% of males and 3% of females in circumstances where a woman admits to sex with someone else).

### **Information provision**

Three fifths of young women as compared to one third of young men answered that they would like to receive more information about issues relating to violence against women. In comparison to young women, males appear relatively disinterested in obtaining more information on domestic abuse. This is more marked amongst males in the later stages of schooling.



## **1. Introduction**

This is a study of young peoples' views about violence. The main focus is on violence perpetrated by males on females within the home, but it also encompasses other forms of gendered violence. Young people living in Scotland and ranging from 14 to 18 years of age, were asked for their views about different kinds of violent, coercive and abusive acts and behaviours that may occur in the domestic sphere and also, outside the home, between those involved in intimate relationships. The research explores the young peoples' views on possible reasons for and effects of violence in certain contexts and situations and, in particular, their views concerning the acceptability of such violence. It is intended that the findings from this research may inform the development of strategies for working with young people to challenge and prevent the normalisation of violence against women.

### **1.1. Research aims and objectives**

The main purpose of this research is to gain an understanding of the views of young people concerning male violence towards women in general, and domestic violence in particular. The key aim is to provide an overview of attitudes towards such violence with the primary objective of assessing whether there have been any changes in attitudes since the implementation of a study which was conducted in three local authority areas in England and Scotland in the late 1990's and published by the Zero Tolerance Charitable Trust (Burton et al, 1998). The main area of investigation of the earlier study was young peoples' attitudes towards violence against women, and it involved a set of focus group discussions and an attitudinal survey of 2,039 young people aged between 14 and 21 years. The key findings of this study gave considerable cause for concern, in that the research documented 'wide-spread acceptance of forced sex and physical violence against women' (Burton et al, 1998: 1), and a marked readiness on the part of young people to blame women for men's violence towards them.

A second, and related, aim of the current study is to examine attitudes towards violence that takes place within young people's own intimate relationships ('dating violence') with a particular focus on their attitudes towards sexual coercion within this context. Research evidence has suggested some ambivalence on the part of young people concerning 'what counts' as violence within their own personal relationships (Burman et al, 2001); some ambiguity about the nature of consensual sex (Burton et al, 1998; Burman et al, 2001), with the negotiation of consent in sexual encounters being identified as a particularly problematic issue (Batchelor and Kitzinger, 2000; Batchelor et al, 2001; Jamieson, 1998).

The way in which violence is conceptualised and seen by young people is important. Mid-adolescence and young adulthood is a time when many young people begin to form intimate relationships with their peers. In the US, for example, where most studies of 'dating violence' amongst young adults have been carried out, it is estimated that violence within such relationship begins at around 15 – 16 years of age (Bethke and Dejoy, 1993). Reports of young women's victimisation range between 20%-50% (Riggs and O'Leary 1996), with one study finding that 45% of women reported experiencing some form of sexual coercion during their formal educational years, with 20% of men admitting to perpetrating this kind of behaviour (DeKeseredy and Kelly, 1998).

Mid-adolescence and young adulthood is also considered to be an appropriate time for the implementation of strategies to reduce the extent to which young people may later become involved in violent relationships. In order to assist the formulation of policies and develop strategies for preventive work, to challenge traditional stereotypes of gender roles and prevent the normalisation of violence towards women, it is necessary to gain an understanding of the attitudes of young people towards violence and abusive behaviour.

Specific research objectives are as follows:

- to provide an overview of young peoples' attitudes towards gendered violence with the particular objective of assessing whether there have been any changes in attitudes since the implementation of the earlier Zero Tolerance study
- to examine young peoples' attitudes concerning sexual coercion.
- to identify what young people understand as 'domestic abuse' and what sort of behaviours they include under the term
- to provide an indication of young peoples' views concerning the acceptability of domestic abuse (under what, if any, circumstances is some form of violence considered to be acceptable or permissible)
- to explore the influences on attitudes to domestic abuse
- to identify the sources of information about domestic abuse (e.g. media, peers, school-based initiatives) used by young people
- to find out whether young people wish further information on domestic abuse and sexual coercion.

## **1.2. Background to the study**

The earlier Zero Tolerance study found that one in two young men and one in three young women thought that hitting a woman or forcing her to have sex was justifiable in certain contexts, such as if the woman was 'nagging' or had cheated on her male partner (Burton et al, 1998: 2). Nineteen percent of young men thought that it was acceptable for a man to force a woman to have sex if she were his wife; 15% thought that it would be acceptable to force a long-term girlfriend, and; 10% thought that it would be acceptable for a man to force a woman into sex 'if he were so turned on he can't stop.' Furthermore, one in six young men said that they might personally use force in the context of marriage (Burton et al, 1998: 11-13). More than one in two young men thought that

women provoked violence in a range of contexts and, in particular, by the way that they dress (Burton et al, 1998:15).

The Zero Tolerance study also revealed a lack of clarity amongst young people about the nature of consent and consensual sex, with some young men believing that there was a point beyond which a woman relinquished the right to say 'no' to sex, and also some confusion amongst young people about 'date rape'. Young women also reported that they found saying 'no' to intercourse during sexual intimacy problematic (Burton et al, 1998: 22-23). Group norms and peer pressure were identified as important influences. Young men reported feeling under pressure to have sex and, sometimes, ambivalent about their own sexual responses. There was evidence of social disapproval of hitting women, but sexual harassment and assault were seen as acceptable and tolerated. Taken in sum, these findings pointed to the pervasiveness of misogynistic views amongst young people, and cast a dismal light on their understanding of intimate relations. Importantly, the research revealed that not only did young people have complacent attitudes towards violence against women but implied that these attitudes might influence their future relationships and actions.

The nature of the relationship between attitudes and behaviour is complex and highly contested (Saunders et al, 1987; Gelles and Loseke, 1993; Gelles, 1997). Attitude is held to be of central importance for those who posit a link between beliefs regarding the acceptability of violence and the actual perpetration of violence. Underpinning this is the conviction that, where a perpetrator of domestic abuse considers physical or other forms of force acceptable and/or justifiable, then he will see his actions as valid and even necessary. Whilst there is support for an association between violence and attitudes endorsing domestic abuse (Munroe et al, 1997; Riggs, et al, 2000; Schumacher et al, 2001), research findings into the influence of attitudinal factors on the perpetration of domestic abuse are not consistent. Some studies have linked notions of patriarchal masculinity, an adherence to rigid gender roles, a sense of male entitlement, and adverse attitudes towards women with the perpetration of interpersonal violence. For adolescent males in particular, peer group attitudes have been identified as playing a role in encouraging sexual aggression towards women (Heise, 1998). Violence-supporting beliefs and endorsement of the chastisement of women (particularly when they are considered to have transgressed stereotypical gender roles by being unfaithful or 'disobedient') have also been identified as salient (Walby and Myhill, 2001; Heise, 1998).

The notion of altering attitudes to change actual and/or potential behaviour, or to prevent violence from becoming entrenched behaviour, lies behind many interventions, particularly those aimed at young people. The Zero Tolerance study identified a clear need for education and preventive work with young people, and was instrumental in the development of the educational intervention programme, known as the Respect initiative<sup>1</sup>, which promotes innovative policy and best practices for targeting root causes of male violence.

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<sup>1</sup> This initiative was implemented by a partnership including the Scottish Executive and Zero Tolerance Charitable Trust

Scotland has recognised the social problem of violence against women, acknowledging it as a major issue that affects the social, emotional and financial wellbeing of women and their families, and resulting in significant social and economic costs to the community. Tackling domestic abuse has been designated a national priority (Scottish Executive, 2003). In recent years, the Scottish Executive has implemented a raft of multi agency strategies to tackle domestic abuse, placing strong emphasis on the importance of prevention (see *Preventing Violence Against Women: Action Across the Scottish Executive*, 2001;). In 2003, the Scottish Executive publication *Abuse, Preventing Domestic Abuse: A National Strategy* outlined a holistic preventative strategy, the ultimate objective of which is to 'change attitudes, behaviour and culture in such a way as to secure the progressive elimination of violence against women' (2003:8). The Strategy involves primary prevention measures, embodied in public awareness raising and education, as well as five key shorter-term objectives: training strategies, work with men who use violence, legislation, workplace strategies and services for women, children and young people. This Strategy provides the context for all prevention work ongoing in Scotland, including Zero Tolerance.

As part of the primary prevention approach, the Respect educational intervention strategy has the objective of empowering young people with useful knowledge, skills, and understanding and promoting positive, non-violent relationships based on equality and respect. The Respect initiative comprises three educational packs: one for primary schools, one for secondary schools and one for informal youth work settings. It involves teachers, youth workers and health promotion specialists in its delivery. Education and awareness-raising are prioritised, and its key aims are:

- to encourage young people to develop healthy relationships
- to promote respect for self, respect for others and to respect difference
- to challenge and decrease the tolerance of violence against women amongst young people
- to encourage a sense of social responsibility

By challenging behaviour and the normative roles boys and girls are expected to ascribe to, as well as the myths that surround male violence against women, it is hoped to foster a climate that no longer tolerates such violence.

The Respect pilot programme was evaluated by the Scottish Executive in 2002 (<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/cru/kd01/green/ztpr-00.asp>) and the evaluation suggested that it did contribute to altering young people's attitude towards violence. For example, it found that after the pilot, there was a large rise in the proportion of young women who disagreed with the statement that "girls can provoke violence and abuse because of how they dress or behave. However, it also highlighted various areas of concern, including enduring evidence of gender stereotyping amongst pupils and young people, which support the need for the ongoing development of preventative initiatives.

### **1. 3. Research methodology**

This research study focuses on the views and attitudes of young people aged between 14 to 18 years. The research employed a survey questionnaire and focus groups. The target group were accessed mainly through schools and youth groups. A sample of 1,500 was sought for the survey and 12 focus groups were conducted.

#### *1.3.1. Survey questionnaire*

In the construction of the questionnaire, as well as formulating specific questions which addressed the aims and objectives of the study, it was also important to develop a set of questions that would be appropriate for the Scottish context. This required careful consideration of both the language and structure of the questions, and also the format of the questionnaire. In constructing the questionnaire, we drew on questions that had been developed and implemented in previous studies of young people's attitudes towards domestic violence. We utilised several of the questions used in the earlier study by Burton et al (1998), particularly those which focused on attitudes toward forms of violence and tolerance of different sorts of violence, and this allows for some limited comparison to be made with some of the findings from this study. In devising questionnaire items we also drew heavily on several other recent studies of young people's attitudes to violence implemented in Britain, the United States and Australia (O'Connor, 1992; MacGowan, 1997; CRC-Donovan, 1999; Indermauer, 2001; Kelly and Regan, 2001; Mullender et al 2002). Where appropriate, questions from these studies were adapted for use with young people in Scotland and, in the case of some of the questions utilised in the Australian study by CRC-Donovan (1999), incorporated with no changes.

A draft self-completion questionnaire was produced, discussed and amended following feed-back from the research sponsors and advisory group. The questionnaire was pre-tested with two single sex groups and then amended, following feed-back. The revised questionnaire was then piloted with a mixed sex group and further refined. Following completion of the questionnaire, in both the pre-test and pilot stages, participants were asked about the nature and wording of questions, how easily they were understood, and the length of the questionnaire.

### 1.3.2. Definitions

In relation to violence that takes place within the domestic sphere, the definition adopted in this study is that of 'domestic abuse' as used by Scottish Women's Aid:

*Domestic abuse is the physical, mental and/or sexual abuse of a woman by someone with whom she is or has been in a relationship.*

This definition focuses on behaviour which is recognisable within the criminal law, and also acknowledges the wider context within such behaviour can take place. Scottish Women's Aid state that physical abuse can include slapping, punching, strangling, using weapons, scalding, and burning. Mental abuse can include humiliation and degradation, keeping the woman from contact with her family and friends, making threats against the woman or her children, and calling her names. Sexual abuse can include being forced to take part in sexual acts against her will, being sexually assaulted with objects, and being raped.<sup>2</sup>

The Scottish Executive has also adopted the term 'domestic abuse' to register that violence against women may involve many forms of behaviour including physical abuse, mental abuse, sexual abuse, emotional abuse and financial abuse. The term is also used to imply that abusive behaviours are cumulative, and occur with increasing severity over time

In the survey questionnaire, attitudes to physical abuse and sexual abuse are explored, as well as attitudes to abuse which involves psychological, emotional and financial factors. It was our specific intention to include examples of non-physical forms of abuse and, in line with other studies to employ a range of actions covering emotional, financial, and verbal abuse.

Young people's attitudes towards domestic abuse primarily relate to that occurring between men and women living together, although attitudes towards violence in young peoples own intimate relationships with their peers ('dating violence') are also explored. The questionnaire does not cover all other forms of abuse that may occur within the domestic sphere, such as child abuse, or elder abuse, although attitudes toward sibling abuse are explored to a limited extent.

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<sup>2</sup> see <http://www.scottishwomensaid.co.uk>

Whilst there is research evidence that both men and women engage in abusive behaviours in relationships, both the nature and effects of women's violence is not equivalent to men's violence (see, for example, Bagshaw and Chung, 2000; Gadd et al, 2004). In the questionnaire, however, young peoples' attitudes are explored in relation to both male and female violence. Although it is widely acknowledged that domestic abuse (and 'dating violence') are overwhelmingly perpetrated by males on their female partners, the inclusion of questions designed to elicit attitudes concerning female violence towards their male partners was deliberate. The ways in which young people conceptualise and frame violence against women alongside other forms of violence and in different contexts is particularly relevant. The inclusion of such questions allows for the possibility of reflection on the part of the young people taking part, and also allows for exploration of the importance of gender.

### *1.3.3. Research locations*

The research was carried out in secondary schools in four Scottish Education Authorities, in one Further Education college and in youth group settings in one of the local authority areas.

Although 26 schools were approached, only ten schools gave permission for the research to take place, six of these were located in two local authorities in the east of Scotland, and the remaining four in two authorities in the west of Scotland. In each school, the aim was to approach all S4, S5.s and S6 pupils to take part, although this was not feasible in all ten participating schools, due to the onset of the examination period, and practical constraints within individual schools.

When permission was gained, a member of the research team visited the school, explained the research to staff and pupils and distributed information sheets and consent forms. Where young people were aged under 16 years, then a system of parental written consent followed by young person written assent was employed. Those aged 16 and over provided their own written consent to participate in the research. The researchers returned to the school one to two weeks later, to implement the questionnaires during a standard class period. A contact list of national and local support and advice agencies was distributed to each pupil taking part on the survey. The lists were also displayed prominently throughout each participating school, and guidance teachers were provided with extra copies.

#### *1.3.4. Focus groups*

The target group for the focus group element of the study, as for the survey element, was young people aged 14 to 18 years. Twelve (same age and same-sex) groups were set up, six female groups and six male groups. Group composition was based on school year rather than absolute age, so there were four groups each of S3, S4 and S5/6 pupils. Numbers of young people participating in each group ranged from four to seven, with a total of 64 young people taking part in a focus group. Most were secondary school pupils, or young people attending structured youth groups. The school-based groups all took place within a school setting. Within each group, all respondents were known to each other, and some were friends.

The particular techniques used were designed to facilitate communication amongst young people (Hazel, 1995). Themes of particular interest were:

- What sort of behaviours and actions 'count' as domestic violence
- Attitudes towards violence in general and domestic violence in particular
- Causes and effects of domestic violence
- Attitudes towards coercive sex and the nature of consent in 'dating' relationships.

## **2. The survey data**

The questionnaire comprised 35 questions divided into six sections. The first and sixth sections covered demographic data; the second investigated views on gender relations and relations between the sexes; the third section explored dating relationships; the fourth section focused on different types of violence, and; the fifth section focused on understandings and awareness of domestic abuse

### **2.1. Demographics of sample**

A total of 1,437 questionnaires were returned, and 1,395 questionnaires form the basis for the quantitative analysis. Although self-completion was considered the optimum method because of the sensitive nature of the topic, some questionnaires invariably contained some internal validity problems. Specifically, where questionnaires contained high numbers of missing values, and where multiple responses were ticked where only one was valid, then these were not included in the analysis.

Of the total 1,395 participants, 55% were female (757) and 45% were male (632).<sup>3</sup> The age distribution is slightly skewed towards younger respondents, with 55% aged under 16 years, and 45% aged 16 and over. Just under a fifth were aged 17 years and over (19% or 260). The age distribution is due mainly to one school sampling only S3 pupils, older pupils being on examination leave in two schools and, in another two schools, relatively few students in S5 and S6.

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<sup>3</sup> Gender was not recorded on six questionnaires



**Table 2.1. Age distribution of the sample**

<i>Age</i>	<i>All</i>		<i>Female</i>	<i>Male</i>
	<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>%</i>
14	319	23	24	22
15	446	32	32	32
16	368	26	26	27
17	232	17	16	17
18	23	2	2	2
Total	1,393*	100	100	100

\* 2 missing values

The majority of the young people (n = 1,368) were accessed within schools. The remaining 27 (2%) were accessed via a further education college and five youth clubs. Ten of those accessed via a youth club were also attending school.

The questionnaire was distributed in ten schools in four local authority areas; two areas situated in the west of Scotland and two in the east of the country.

**Table 2.2. School year**

<i>Year</i>	<i>Total</i>		<i>Female</i>	<i>Male</i>
	<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>%</i>
S3	398	29	30	28
S4	434	31	30	33
S5	318	23	24	22
S6	228	17	16	17
Total	1,378	100	100	100

Of the ten participating schools, six were located in the east and four in the west. Just under three fifths of the school sample (59%) were generated in the east of Scotland, and just over two-fifths (42%) in the west of Scotland. The following table shows the distribution by school year in the two regions.

**Table 2.3. Distribution by school year and region.**

	S3 <i>%</i>	S4 <i>%</i>	S5 <i>%</i>	S6 <i>%</i>
East of Scotland	33	79	68	55
West of Scotland	67	22	32	45

The numbers of S3 pupils are higher in the west partly because, in one large school the questionnaire was distributed only to S3 pupils, as older pupils were taking exams, and in two schools in the east S3s were taking exams at the time the questionnaire was implemented. Similarly, the numbers of S4 pupils are higher in the east as exams were in progress in the west at the time that the questionnaire was implemented. Almost three quarters of the young people aim to continue in full-time education on leaving school with four fifths of girls (81%) and a lower proportion of boys (58) answering this. Four percent of girls and 18 % of boys consider training as an option, whilst 8% of girls and a significantly higher number of boys (17%) report they would like a paid job. Less than 1% reported they would like to start a family.

**Table 2.4. Aims on leaving school**

	<i>All %</i>	<i>Female %</i>	<i>Male %</i>
Full Time Education	71	81	58
Training	11	4	18
Paid Job	12	8	17
Start a family	<1	<1	<1
Unpaid Work	2	2	1
Don't Know	4	4	5

\* 56 missing values

The sample was analysed by post-code sector<sup>4</sup>, and sorted using the Carstairs deprivation index (Carstairs and Morris, 1992) as constructed from the 2001 Census (McLoone, 2004)<sup>5</sup>. McLoone (2004) restructured the 2001 distribution of deprivation scores into Deprivation Category (DEPCAT) variables. Of the 1,395 questionnaires analysed 1,211 were successfully linked to their respective Carstairs and DEPCAT scores. DEPCAT scores range from 1 (most affluent) to 7 (most deprived).

Table 5 shows the DEPCAT scores obtained for the data. The highest proportion of young people, that is approximately one third, reside in DEPCAT 6. Although there is a spread across sectors, overall there are a higher proportion of young people from more deprived postal sectors than more affluent sectors.

<sup>4</sup> A postcode sector is the set of unit postcodes that are the same apart from the last two characters.

<sup>5</sup> Carstairs scores are derived by combining selected variables taken from small area Census data, in order to create a composite score, and are used as a method of quantifying levels of relative deprivation or affluence in different localities. As McLoone (2004;1) points out, the Carstairs scores are not a measure of the extent of *individual* material wellbeing or relative disadvantage but are rather a summary measure applied to *populations* contained within small geographic localities

**Table 2.5. Deprivation category using post-code sector**

DEPCAT	Sample		Scotland %
	n	%	
1	5	<1	1
2	101	8	17
3	140	12	24
4	147	12	22
5	198	16	12
6	399	33	9
7	221	18	6
Total	1, 211		

Table 6 shows that most young people (61%) lived with both parents, and almost a quarter (24%) lived with a single parent. A smaller proportion (12%) lived with a mother and her partner or a father and his partner (reconstituted family) with a very small proportion (2%) living with neither biological parent but with another family member or friend.

**Table 2.6. Who young people live with**

	<i>All</i>		<i>Female</i>		<i>Male</i>	
	<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>
Both Parents	849	61	458	61	391	62
Single Parent	333	24	184	24	149	24
Reconstituted Family	167	12	93	12	74	12
Other (e.g grandparent)	34	2	20	3	14	2
Total	1,383**	100	755	100	628	100

\* 8 missing values

There was a high representation of ethnic minorities (11%) in the sample.<sup>6</sup> Seven percent described themselves as Asian; 2% described themselves as mixed race, 1% as Black British and 1% as with African Caribbean.

**Table 2.7. Ethnic Origin**

<i>Ethnic origin</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>
Asian	94	7
African Caribbean	16	1
Black British	10	1
Mixed Race	28	2
White	1,181	89
Total	1,329	100

\* 66 missing values

Almost four fifths of the young people (89%) described themselves as white. Sixty six chose not to answer the question

<sup>6</sup> The 2001 Census records the size of the ethnic minority population in Scotland as just over 100,000, or 2% of the population.

Fifty six (4%) young people stated that they had a disability, but only a small number provided any information on their disability, which was stated as either hearing impairment or visual impairment, with a small number giving dyslexia.

As found by Burton et al, 1998, the question which generated the most confusion in this survey was that which asked about sexual orientation. There was a high number of missing values for this question (n=85), which may be due a number of factors - the sensitivity of the question, the fact that some participants either did not understand the question, or quite simply did not want to answer it, or the fact that this was the last question at the end of the questionnaire. The following table presents the codable responses, and shows that the majority of young people (96%) gave their sexual orientation as heterosexual.

**Table 2.8. Reported Sexual Orientation**

	<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>
Heterosexual	1,258	96
Bi-Sexual	29	2
Gay	11	1
Lesbian	12	1
Total	1,310	100

\* 85 missing values

## **2.2. Attitudes towards gender relations and gender inequalities**

A short section of questions attempted to explore young peoples attitudes towards relations and inequalities between males and females.

The first question in this section provided a list of 13 attitudinal statements about relations between the sexes, such as '*overall, there are more things that girls are better at than boys*' and '*women should be responsible for raising children and doing housework*'. The results are provided in Table 9.

**Table 2.9. Attitudes towards relations between the sexes**

	<i>Strongly agree</i> %	<i>Agree</i> %	<i>Disagree</i> %	<i>Strongly Disagree</i> %	<i>Don't Know</i> %
There are more things that boys are better at					
Females (n=754)	1	12	54	25	7
Males (n= 631)	18	34	28	5	14
There are more things that girls are better at					
Females (n= 751)	7	24	47	14	8
Males (n=626)	3	17	50	12	18
Boys have more freedom					
Females (n=754)	13	47	29	4	7
Males (n= 631)	10	32	35	8	14
Girls have more freedom					
Females (n=619)	1	4	76	12	8
Males (n=507)	3	13	57	11	16
Boys realise girls are their equals					
Females (n=748)	2	33	43	8	14
Males (n= 627)	10	50	25	5	11
Boys and girls have an equal chance to enjoy spare time					
Females (n=749)	18	61	13	2	6
Males (n=628)	31	58	6	1	4
Boys and girls have equal chance to have career					
Females (n=752)	25	50	18	3	4
Males (n= 631)	33	47	15	1	3
Girls prefer boys to be in charge of relationship					
Females (n=751)	3	14	53	14	16
Males (n=630)	7	19	34	6	35
Boys prefer girls to be in charge of relationship					
Females (n=747)	3	13	47	11	27
Males (n=629)	5	15	45	10	26
Women should be responsible for children/housework					
Females (n=752)	2	6	34	56	3
Males (n=626)	11	22	40	21	6
Men should be responsible for children/housework					
Females (n=752)	3	8	47	35	7
Males (n=628)	3	13	49	29	7
Men should take control of relationships / be head of household					
Females (n=751)	2	10	4	33	7
Males (n=629)	12	30	37	10	11
Women should take control of relationships / be head of household					
Females (n=751)	4	10	54	23	8
Males (n=630)	1	11	58	16	13

Over half of young males (52%) agreed/strongly agreed with the statement that *'Overall, there are more things that boys are better at than girls'* whereas three fifths (61%) of young females disagreed/strongly disagreed with the converse statement that *'Overall, there are more things that girls are better at than boys'*. Fourteen percent of boys returned a 'don't know' in response to the former statement, and 18% returned 'don't know' for the latter.

Two fifths of girls (60%) agree that boys have more freedom than girls, compared to one third (33%) who do not agree. Boys were fairly equally divided, with 42% of boys agreeing that boys have more freedom than girls, and 43% disagreeing. Relatively low percentages of girls and boys, 5%, and 16% respectively, agreed with the statement that girls have more freedom than boys.

Two fifths of boys (60%) agreed with the statement that that *'Boys realise girls are their equals'* whereas only just over two thirds of girls (35%) agreed. There was a fairly high degree of certainty however, from both genders, that boys and girls have an equal chance to enjoy their spare time, with 89% and 79% respectively agreeing with the statement. Somewhat similarly, there was also a high degree of certainty that boys and girls have an equal chance in life to have a career of their choice, with 80% of males and 75% of females agreeing to the statement.

Over two thirds of girls (67%) disagreed with the statement that 'girls prefer boys to be in charge of the relationship' and 16% of girls did not know. There was a higher level of uncertainty amongst boys, with over one third (35%) responding 'don't know'. Over a quarter (26%) of boys agreed with the statement, and 40% disagreed.

The converse statement *'boys prefer girls to be in charge of the relationship'* generated almost equal uncertainty amongst boys and girls, with 26% and 27% respectively recording 'don't know'. Similar percentages of boys and girls both agreed (16% and 20% respectively) and disagreed (58% and 55%, respectively) that boys prefer girls to be in charge of relationships.

The findings concerning the statements about domestic labour are difficult to interpret. Few females (8%) agreed that *'women should be responsible for raising children and doing the housework'*, compared to one third (33%) of males, which seems to reveal gendered ideas from males about the division of domestic labour. Yet, 61% of males disagreed that women should be responsible, and 82% of females disagreed with the statement that *'men should be responsible for raising children and doing the housework'*.

Forty two percent of males and 12% of females agreed that men should take control of relationships and be the head of the household. However, relatively few of either gender agreed that this was a role for women, in that 14% of females and 12% of males agreed with the statement that women should take control of relationships and be the head of the household.

Participants were also asked whether, in their view, girls and boys are treated differently when growing up. There was relatively little difference in responses by gender. Half (50%) of female participants and 47% of males answered 'Yes' they did think there was differential treatment, compared to 17% of females and 19% of males who answered 'No' they did not. A third of both females (33%) and males (34%) were 'not sure'.

A follow-up open-ended question probed for what respondents who answered 'yes' felt were the main differences in treatment. Not all young people took the opportunity to provide more information on what they considered to be the key differences. Of the 319 that did, approximately a third identified the greater freedom afforded to boys in comparison to girls, for example, *'Boys can stay out later. You always have to know where the girl is, she is more vulnerable. Reason – rape.'* This was similar to that found in the study by Burton et al (1998) and indeed, is a frequently cited example of gender difference in child-rearing (e.g. Sharpe, 1976). Approximately two fifths considered parental control to be much greater for boys, and, specifically, that girls mobility at night and when unaccompanied by adults is much more constrained, for example *'Women are seen as weaker so are attacked more (it's less safer for women)'*. A small number (10) of young people identified girls' responsibility for domestic chores as a main difference in treatment, as one girl stated *'Boys are given more practical, building jobs to do – and girls are given more games that are about keeping a house and playing happy families.'*

The questionnaire sought young people's opinions on sex between a man and women before marriage. Here there was a fair degree of congruence between the genders. Seventy percent of females and 72% of males thought sex before marriage between a man and a woman was 'okay'; 7% of females and 6% of males believed it was always or mostly wrong, and; 3% of both genders believed it was sometimes wrong. Nineteen percent of females and 17% of males thought that 'it depends' and 2% of both did not know.

The next question asked for opinions about sex between a male and female aged under 16 years. There were more gender differences in response. Whereas 29% of males thought it was 'okay' for a boy and girl aged under 16 years to have sex, only 14% of females thought so; and 34% of males thought it 'depends' as compared to 44% of females, perhaps revealing the importance of contextual factors. Twenty eight percent of females and 24% of males thought that it was always or mostly wrong, and 11% of females and 9% of males thought it was 'sometimes wrong'.

These findings were also analysed by ethnicity, revealing some clear differences amongst females from different ethnic backgrounds. Almost half (49%) of females from an ethnic minority background responded that sex between under 16 year olds was 'always wrong', compared to 13% of 'white' females, and; 47% of 'white' females thought it 'depends' as compared to 19% of those from an ethnic minority background. For males, 30% of those from an ethnic minority background thought it was 'always wrong' compared to 9% of 'white' males; 17% ethnic minority males thought it 'depends' compared to 27% of 'white' males, and: one quarter of ethnic minority males thought it was 'okay' compared to a slighter higher 30% of 'white' males.

### **2.3 Relationships**

The next section of questions focused on young peoples' own relationships. The first question in this section established whether the young person had ever had a boyfriend or girlfriend. Eighty one percent answered 'Yes'.

Only those who answered 'Yes' to this question were asked to answer the next three questions which explored their relationships in more detail. A list of 11 hypothetical actions and behaviours that people may do to each other during an argument were provided, and the young people were asked to record their experience of each action or behaviour, stating, first, whether their boyfriend or girlfriend had ever done it to them (using the options, 'never', 'once or twice' or 'more than twice') and second, whether they had ever done it to their boyfriend/girlfriend (again, using the same closed options). Table 10 presents the findings in terms of what the respondents reported had been done to them in the context of their relationships, and Table 11 presents the data on what they reported they had done to their boyfriend/girlfriend.



**Table 2.10. Whether done to young person by girlfriend/boyfriend**

	<i>Never %</i>	<i>Once or twice %%</i>	<i>More than Twice %</i>
Yelled loudly at you			
Females	60	30	10
Males	50	35	16
Put you down/humiliated you			
Females	69	26	6
Males	73	23	5
Hit/kicked or smashed object			
Females	86	9	5
Males	85	10	5
Threatened to hit you			
Females	92	6	2
Males	79	14	6
Slapped you			
Females	94	5	2
Males	69	23	8
Pushed/grabbed/shoved you			
Females	84	14	2
Males	75	19	6
Kicked, bit or hit you			
Females	91	7	2
Males	81	14	5
Tried to hit you with something			
Females	94	5	1
Males	88	8	3
Tried to hold/restrain you			
Females	90	8	2
Males	89	8	3
Tried to force you to have sex			
Females	90	8	2
Males	93	4	4
Forced you to have sex			
Females	97	2	1
Males	95	2	4

Turning to those actions and behaviours which young people stated had been done to them, and looking first at the experience of females in the sample, 40% reported that they had been yelled at by a boyfriend at least once, and 32% stated that they had been put down or humiliated at least once. Nine percent of girls reported being kicked, bit or hit at least once, 16% reported being pushed grabbed or shoved. Ten percent reported their partner tried to force them to have sex, and 3% reported that their partner had forced them to have sex.

Turning to males in the sample, over half reported being yelled at by a girlfriend at least once, and 28% reported being put down or humiliated. Twenty percent reported that their girlfriend tried to hit them with something; almost a third (32%) reported that their girlfriend had slapped them; and one quarter (25%) reported that they had been pushed, grabbed or shoved, and 19% reported that they had been kicked, bit or hit. Eight percent of males reported that their partners had tried to force them to have sex, and 6% reported that they had been forced to have sex.

Looking at what young people reported having done to their boyfriend or girlfriend, Table 11 shows that over half (53%) of females reported yelling loudly at least once, compared to 40% of boys. Just under a quarter (22%) of both males and females admit to putting down or humiliating their girlfriend or boyfriend.

Females are consistently more likely than males to report engaging in the actions and behaviours listed in the question. Sixteen percent of girls, compared to 6% of boys report slapping at least once; 11% of females compared to 5% of males say that they have threatened to hit at least once; 16% of females compared to 10% of males report that they have pushed, grabbed or shoved at least once; 10% of females and 5% of males report kicking, biting or hitting at least once; 8% of females and 4% of males report trying to hit their boyfriend or girlfriend with something.

More males (12%) than females (6%) report trying to hold or restrain their boyfriend or girlfriend.

In terms of sexual acts, a rather worrying 4% of males admit trying to force sex, and 5% report having actually forced sex.

**Table 2.11. Whether done by young person to boyfriend/girlfriend**

	<i>Never %</i>	<i>Once or twice %%</i>	<i>More than Twice %</i>
Yelled loudly at him/her			
Females	46	41	12
Males	60	32	8
Put them down/humiliated them			
Females	78	18	4
Males	78	19	3
Hit/kicked or smashed object			
Females	92	6	2
Males	91	7	2
Threatened to hit them			
Females	89	9	2
Males	95	3	2
Slapped them			
Females	84	13	3
Males	94	4	2
Pushed/grabbed/shoved them			
Females	84	13	3
Males	90	9	1
Kicked, bit or hit them			
Females	91	7	3
Males	95	3	2
Tried to hit them with something			
Females	92	6	2
Males	96	3	1
Tried to hold/restrain them			
Females	94	5	1
Males	87	10	2
Tried to force them to have sex			
Females	99	<1	<1
Males	95	3	2
Forced them to have sex			
Females	98	1	1
Males	96	2	2

Young people were asked whether they had ever been frightened or physically hurt by any argument or fight with a boyfriend or girlfriend. As shown in Table 12, this question yielded similar percentages for both males and females, with 88% of both reporting that they had not been physically frightened or hurt within the context of a fight or argument with a boyfriend/girlfriend. However, 12% of both males and females reported that they had been hurt and/or frightened.

**Table 2.12. Whether young person physically hurt or frightened**

	<i>All %</i>	<i>Female %</i>	<i>Male %</i>
Physically frightened	7	8	6
Physically hurt	3	2	4
Frightened and physically hurt	2	2	2
None of above	88	88	88

These findings were also analysed by age. Table 13 shows some slight differences between younger and older participants. Ten percent of females over 16 years old reported feeling frightened as compared to 7% of younger females. Conversely, a higher proportion of younger males (8%) reported feeling frightened than older males (5%).

**Table 2.13. Whether young person physically hurt or frightened, by gender and age**

		<i>Frightened %</i>	<i>Physically hurt %</i>	<i>Frightened and physically hurt %</i>	<i>None of these %</i>
Females	Under 16	7	1	3	89
	16 and over	10	2	2	86
Males	Under 16	8	3	2	88
	16 and over	5	5	1	89

#### **2.4. Awareness of the extent of violence in dating relationships**

All young people, whether they had ever been in a relationship or not, were asked to estimate the extent of violence within the context of an intimate dating relationships involving people of their own age group. They were given six options from ‘*it happens in most relationships*’, ‘*lots of relationships*’, ‘*a few relationships*’, ‘*hardly any relationships*’ to ‘*it happens in no relationships*’. This question also included a ‘*don’t know*’ option. Table 14 shows the proportions of young people selecting each response, by gender.

Eight percent of all young people consider it happens in ‘*most relationships*’, with a further 24% believing it happens in ‘*lots of relationships*’. Forty three percent consider it happens in ‘*a few relationships*’ and just 1% think it does not happen at all. There are some similarities, but more differences across gender, with 8% of both males and females considering that it occurs in ‘most relationships’. Thirteen percent of females and 15% of males didn’t know. A higher proportion of girls (26%) as opposed to boys (21%) believe it happens in ‘lots of relationships’, and a higher proportion of boys (13%) as opposed to girls (8%) believe it happens in ‘hardly any relationships’. Of course, these terms are not quantifiable, and these findings need to be considered in the light of the findings which suggest that what young people consider ‘counts’ as violence varies considerably.

**Table 2.14. Young peoples estimation of the extent of violence in dating relationships**

	<i>All %</i>	<i>Females %</i>	<i>Males %</i>
Most relationships	8	8	8
Lots of relationships	24	26	21
A few relationships	43	44	42
Hardly any relationships	10	8	81
No relationships	1	1	1
Don't know	14	13	15

The findings on perceived incidence of violence within relationships were also analysed by age, showing a high degree of consistency between responses of older and younger females, but some differences amongst males, with 10% of younger males believing it happens in '*most relationships*', compared with 6% of older males; and almost half of older males (47%) believing it happens in '*a few relationships*' compared to 38% of younger males.

**Table 2.15. Young peoples estimation of the extent of violence in dating relationships, by gender and age**

		<i>Most %</i>	<i>Lots %</i>	<i>Few %</i>	<i>Hardly any %</i>	<i>None %</i>	<i>Don't know</i>
Under 16	Female	8	26	44	8	1	14
	Male	10	22	38	12	1	18
16 and under	Female	8	26	45	8	1	16
	Male	6	20	47	14	1	12

## 2.5. Attitudes to different forms of violence

The young people were asked for their views on a range of different forms of violence. Question 19 provided a series of eight statements, six of which concerned the use of violence in conflict situations, and two which concerned gendered behaviour. Respondents were asked whether they agreed or disagreed with the statements.

Questions on attitudes towards violence were designed to include not only those acts of severe physical violence but also other areas of dispute and force.

Table 16 shows that strong agreement was found with the statement '*Unless you are defending yourself, there is never a good reason to hit another person*' with 78% of females and 65% of males agreeing. Yet, agreement (although less strong and with a different gender inflection) was also found with the statement '*Its not always wrong to hit someone, sometimes they provoke it*', with 57% of girls and 69% of boys agreeing. This should not be seen as contradictory, rather it indicates that both statements might apply in certain circumstances.

Overall, looking at the statements relating to the use of violence, males can be seen to take a more pro-violent stance than females with, for example, a higher proportion of males (30% as opposed to 16% of females) disagreeing with '*unless you are defending yourself, there is never a good reason to hit another person*'; a higher proportion (33% to 15%) agreeing to '*it might not be right, but threatening to hit someone gets you what you want*'; a higher proportion (71% as opposed to 54% of females) agreeing to '*you have to stick up for yourself, and sometimes this means getting violent*', and 69% of males as opposed to 55% of females agreeing to '*Some people deserve to get hit.*'

There was gender congruence and relatively strong agreement by both males (49%) and females (46%) to the statement '*most men are unable to control their temper*'. Interestingly, there was lesser agreement but some congruence regarding the statement '*most women are unable to control their temper*' with 30% of females and 37% of males agreeing, and 57% of females and 51% of males disagreeing.

Young people were also asked for their views on a range of different kinds of violence, and asked to rate each one from '*very serious*', '*quite serious*' and '*not serious*'. They were also given the option of answering '*don't know*'.

Table 17 shows the young peoples' views. The different forms of violence have been ranked in the tables in terms of perceived seriousness by young people. It seems clear that young people view physical violence as serious, but there is also some evidence to suggest that the relationship between the parties involved is important in any consideration of seriousness of violence with, for example, fights between brothers and sisters considered less serious than that between those in an intimate relationship.

There is no clear gender difference in ranking, although on the whole females considered all forms of violence more serious than males. As may be expected, rape and sexual assault was considered '*very serious*' by a very high proportion of the young people, although females (98%) were more likely than males (93%) to consider it so.

**Table 2.16. Attitudes towards different forms of violence, by gender**

	<i>Females %</i>	<i>Males %</i>
Unless you are defending yourself, there is never a good reason to hit another person		
Strongly agree	28	28
Agree	50	37
Disagree	14	23
Strongly disagree	2	7
Don't know	6	5
It might not be right, but threatening to hit someone gets you what you want		
Strongly agree	1	4
Agree	14	29
Disagree	55	41
Strongly disagree	23	16
Don't know	7	11
Its not always wrong to hit someone, sometimes they provoke it		
Strongly agree	6	18
Agree	51	51
Disagree	27	18
Strongly disagree	8	8
Don't know	8	6
Raising your voice at people makes them take notice of you		
Strongly agree	6	14
Agree	47	51
Disagree	34	23
Strongly disagree	5	5
Don't know	8	8
You have to stick up for yourself, and sometimes this means getting violent		
Strongly agree	11	27
Agree	43	44
Disagree	32	17
Strongly disagree	9	7
Don't know	7	6
Most men are unable to control their temper		
Strongly agree	13	14
Agree	33	35
Disagree	36	32
Strongly disagree	6	12
Don't know	11	7
Most women are unable to control their temper		
Strongly agree	4	11
Agree	26	26
Disagree	50	40
Strongly disagree	7	11
Don't know	13	12
Some people deserve to get hit		
Strongly agree	12	38
Agree	33	31
Disagree	24	14
Strongly disagree	22	9
Don't know	10	8

Females (81%) were also significantly more likely than males (72%) to regard fights between husband and wife in the home as *'very serious'*. Females (72%) were also very slightly more likely than males (70%) to view racially motivated violence as *'very serious'*. Two-thirds (67%) of both males and females viewed sectarian violence as *'very serious'*.

**Table 2.17. Young peoples views on the seriousness of different types of violence**

	<i>Very Serious</i> %	<i>Quite Serious</i> %	<i>Not Serious</i> %	<i>Don't Know</i> %
Sexual assault/rape				
Females	98	1	1	<1
Males	93	3	1	3
Fights in home between husband/wife				
Females	81	17	1	1
Males	72	20	4	4
Racially motivated violence				
Females	72	22	3	4
Males	70	21	5	4
Sectarian violence				
Females	67	27	3	4
Males	67	22	7	4
Fights between girlfriend and boyfriend (in dating relationships)				
Females	63	33	3	1
Males	50	38	8	4
Fights between adults (in public)				
Females	27	63	9	2
Males	29	51	16	4
Punch-ups/fights between boys				
Females	10	61	28	2
Males	12	52	32	3
Punch-ups/fights between girls				
Females	10	60	28	2
Males	12	52	32	4
Physical fights between brothers/sisters				
Females	4	29	64	3
Males	5	30	62	4

Almost two-thirds (63%) of females compared to one half of males (50%) were more likely to consider physical fighting between boyfriend and girl friend in a dating relationship *'very serious'*. Eight percent of boys compared to 3% of girls regarded this as *'not serious'*.

Very slightly more males (29%) than females (27%) regarded physical fights between adults in a public place as *'very serious'*, although a higher proportion of males (16%) than females (9%) regarded such fights as *'not serious'*.



Females were more likely than boys to regard boy-on-boy (61%) and girl-on-girl (60%) fights and punch-ups as *'quite serious'*, compared to 52% of boys considering both as *'quite serious'*. Sibling fights, on the other hand were regarded as relatively unserious, with 62% of girls and 64% of boys regarding them as *'not serious.'*

## 2.6. Provoking violence

Two questions attempted to gauge young people's views regarding whether men and women ever provoked violence. The first asked for opinions on whether *females* ever provoke violence *by males*, and the second asked whether *males* ever provoke violence *by females*. A list of six contexts and behaviours were given, and respondents asked to record whether such behaviour provoked violence *'often'*, *'sometimes'*, or *'never'*. Respondents could also answer *'don't know'*.

Tables 18 and 19 show the findings from these questions. Looking first at young people's views on whether females ever provoke violence by men, Table 18 reveals that one in five males believe that they do so *'often'*. A quarter of males believe that women *'often'* provoke violence by nagging, and nearly half (48%) believe that they do so *'sometimes'*.

Half (50%) of the young women felt that women *'sometimes'* provoke violence by flirting with other men, as did 46% of young men. Thirty percent of males believed that this is *'often'* the case. A third of young men (33%) believed that women *'sometimes'* provoke male violence by the way that they dress, as did a slightly higher proportion (36%) of young women.

**Table 2.18. Young peoples views on whether females ever provoke violence by males, by gender**

	<i>Often</i> %	<i>Sometimes</i> %	<i>Never</i> %	<i>Don't know</i> %
Push men too far				
<i>Females</i>	12	60	16	13
<i>Males</i>	20	55	11	14
Nagging/not stopping arguing				
<i>Females</i>	15	59	17	10
<i>Males</i>	25	48	14	12
Not treating men with respect				
<i>Females</i>	7	48	29	16
<i>Males</i>	15	48	22	15
Two timing their partner				
<i>Females</i>	25	52	12	10
<i>Males</i>	28	52	10	11
Flirting with other men				
<i>Females</i>	24	50	16	10
<i>Males</i>	30	46	13	10
The way they dress				
<i>Females</i>	10	36	37	10
<i>Males</i>	13	33	37	17

These findings point to fairly widespread belief that women ‘provoke’ violence. This does not imply that such violence is considered acceptable. It does, however, point to the pervasiveness of beliefs about victim precipitation in general, and ‘woman-blaming’ in particular.

Table 19 shows young people's views on whether males ever provoke violence by females. There are some interesting differences here, particularly when contrasted with the responses shown in Table 18.

One in five males and slightly more than one in four females believe that males ‘often’ provoke violence by females by ‘pushing women too far’. Over half of females (58%) hold the view that men ‘sometimes’ provoke violence by nagging, and nearly half of males (48%) hold this view.

A similar proportion of males (45%) and females (46%) believe men ‘never’ provoke violence by the way that they dress, which is in marked comparison to views about female provocation.

A fairly high proportion of females (38%) and males (39%) believe that men often provoke violence by two-timing their partner.

**Table 2.19. Young peoples views on whether males ever provoke violence by females, by gender**

	<i>Often %</i>	<i>Sometimes %</i>	<i>Never %</i>	<i>Don't know %</i>
Push women too far				
<i>Females</i>	22	56	12	11
<i>Males</i>	20	52	15	12
Nagging/not stopping arguing				
<i>Females</i>	12	58	16	13
<i>Males</i>	13	48	26	13
Not treating women with respect				
<i>Females</i>	27	47	16	11
<i>Males</i>	21	46	20	13
Two timing their partner				
<i>Females</i>	38	45	9	9
<i>Males</i>	30	43	13	13
Flirting with other women				
<i>Females</i>	34	45	11	10
<i>Males</i>	31	43	14	12
The way they dress				
<i>Females</i>	7	27	46	19
<i>Males</i>	7	28	45	20

## 2.7. Gender differences in use of violence

Perceptions of gender differences were also explored in the next set of questions. The young people were asked whether they thought there was a difference between a male being violent to a female and a female being violent to a male. There was, in fact, little difference in terms of gender. Over half of males (54%) and females (53%) answered 'yes'; over a third of males (35%) and females (36%) said 'no', and; 10% of both genders answered 'not sure'.

These findings were also analysed by age. This revealed some differences of opinion between older and younger females, with 58% of younger girls thinking there was a difference, compared to 47% of older ones who held the same view.

**Table 2.20. Gender differences in use of violence, by gender and age**

		Yes %	No %	Not Sure %
Under 16	Female	58	32	10
	Male	53	36	11
16 and over	Female	47	42	11
	Male	56	34	10

The questionnaire probed for possible differences between a male being violent to a female and a female being violent to a male. Those who answered 'yes' were given a list of seven possible reasons and asked to tick all that apply. These were '*males are bigger/stronger*'; '*females are smaller/weaker*'; '*males hit the most/hardest*'; '*females don't hit very hard*'; '*males don't know when to stop*'; '*not right for a male to hit a female*'; '*society views it as wrong*'

Overall, the most common reason provided was '*males are bigger/stronger*', followed by the rather more moralistic, '*not right for a male to hit a female*', and the view that '*males hit the most/hardest*'.

Those that answered 'no' to the question is there a difference in a male being violent to a female, and a female being violent to a male, were provided with a list of four possible reasons, which were; '*females are just as violent as males*'; '*females don't know when to stop*'; '*females hit hard*'; '*it's okay for a girls to hit a guy*'. The most common reason given for there being no difference between male and female violence was '*females are just as violent as males*'.

## 2.8. Attitudes towards domestic abuse

A set of questions examined young people's awareness and attitudes towards domestic abuse. An initial question asked whether respondents had heard of the term. Of the 1,395 respondents, 46 (3%) stated that they had not.

There were different estimates regarding the prevalence of domestic abuse. Forty percent of all respondents thought that it happened in 1 in 5 households; 30% estimated it happened in 1 in 10 households, and; 13% in 1 in 20 households. Young women's estimates tend to be higher than young men's, although on the whole differences are not especially marked.

**Table 2.21. Awareness of domestic abuse/violence by gender**

	1 in 2 %	1 in 5 %	1 in 10 %	1 in 20 %	1 in 50 %	1 in 100 %
Female	6	42	29	11	7	4
Male	5	37	30	15	8	4
All	6	40	30	13	8	4

40 missing values

Perceived prevalence increases with age. Estimates by older females tend to be higher than their younger counterparts, with 46% compared to 38% estimating that it occurs in 1 in 5 households. Slight differences between older and younger females emerge for the lower estimates. This pattern is similar for males. Taken together, these findings suggest that young people believe domestic abuse to be widespread. Just 4% of respondents gave estimates at the lower end of 1 in 100 households. However, the estimates given by young people are lower than the current best estimates available.

**Table 2.22. Awareness of domestic abuse/violence by gender and age**

		1 in 2 %	1 in 5 %	1 in 10 %	1 in 20 %	1 in 50 %	1 in 100 %
Under 16	Female	7	39	29	12	8	5
	Male	6	38	28	15	10	3
16 and over	Female	6	46	29	11	6	3
	Male	5	37	33	15	6	4

Some differences can be discerned at the regional level. On the whole, estimates of young people living in the east of Scotland tend to be higher than those living in the west. Regional differences seem most marked between young women. Whereas 47 % of young women in the east estimate it occurs in 1 in 5 households, a much lower proportion (35%) of females in the west believe this estimate to be correct. Yet, 10% of females in the west believe domestic abuse occurs in every second household, compared to just 4% who hold this opinion in the east. These findings do however need to be considered in relation to those concerning differences in in-school implementation of educational and awareness-raising material.

**Table 2.23. Awareness of domestic abuse/violence by gender and region**

	1 in 2		1 in 5		1 in 10		1 in 20		1 in 50		1 in 100	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
East of Scotland												
<i>Females</i>	17	4%	210	47%	125	28%	62	14%	20	4%	15	3%
<i>Males</i>	14	4%	130	37%	117	33%	48	14%	30	9%	11	3%
West of Scotland												
<i>Females</i>	30	10%	104	35%	94	32%	22	7%	35	12%	13	4%
<i>Males</i>	17	7%	96	37%	68	27%	44	17%	21	8%	11	4%

Respondents were asked whether they knew anyone who has experienced domestic abuse. Possible answers were ‘yes’, ‘no’ and ‘not sure’.

**Table 2.24. Knowing someone experiencing domestic abuse , by gender**

	<i>All</i> %	<i>Females</i> %	<i>Males</i> %
Yes	38	45	30
No	47	41	55
Not sure	15	14	15

The findings are provided in Table 24, which shows that 38% of young people claim to know someone who has experienced domestic abuse, with 45% answering that they do not, and 15% answering ‘not sure’. A much higher proportion of young women (45%) compared to young men (30%) claim to know someone.

## 2.9. Definitions of domestic abuse

Question 23 probed what the young people thought would be defined as domestic abuse. They were given a list of items, which included a full range of actions covering physical, sexual, emotional and financial abuse, and asked to say which of the items they would think of as ‘domestic abuse’ and which they would think of as ‘just something that happens’. They could also answer ‘don’t know’. In its formulation, this question draws heavily on Australian research (Indermaur et al, 2001).

Young people perceive a range of behaviours (from not talking to one’s partner for a long time to regular slapping or hitting) on a scale from ‘just something that happens’ to ‘domestic abuse’ with, as might be expected, physical violence scenarios seen as most serious.

In common with that found by Indermauer et al (2001) only two of the eleven items were considered *'just something that happens'* rather than domestic abuse by the majority of the young people. These were *'not talking to partner for long periods of time'*, which 87% of females and 86% of males considered *'just something that happens'* and *'not showing any love or affection to partner'* which was considered to be *'just something that happens'* by 80% of females and 76% of males. A fair proportion, however, were not sure whether these items were domestic abuse with, respectively, 8% and 10% of females and, 9% and 13% of males answering *'don't know'* for the two items.

There was also some uncertainty on how to classify a further four items. These were *'not allowing partner money for their own use'* with 14% of females and 13% of males answering *'don't know'*; *'not letting partner see family or friends'*, with 9% of females and 10% of males unsure; *'constant yelling at partner'* with 8% of both answering *'don't know'* and; *'constant put downs and humiliation of partner'* with 9% of both males and females unsure. Table 25 shows the results for the total sample, by gender.

**Table 2.25. Definitions of domestic abuse, by gender**

	<i>Just something that happens %</i>	<i>Domestic abuse %</i>	<i>Don't know %</i>
Not talking to partner for long periods of time			
<i>Females</i>	87	5	8
<i>Males</i>	86	5	9
Not showing any love or affection to partner			
<i>Females</i>	80	9	10
<i>Males</i>	76	12	13
Constant yelling at partner			
<i>Females</i>	21	71	8
<i>Males</i>	20	72	8
Constant put downs and humiliation of partner			
<i>Females</i>	17	75	9
<i>Males</i>	17	74	9
Not letting partner see family/friends			
<i>Females</i>	13	79	9
<i>Males</i>	16	75	10
Not allowing partner money for their own use			
<i>Females</i>	19	67	14
<i>Males</i>	17	69	13
Not letting partner leave the house			
<i>Females</i>	4	88	7
<i>Males</i>	6	87	7
Threatening to hit partner			
<i>Females</i>	3	93	4
<i>Males</i>	8	86	7
Threatening to harm partners family			
<i>Females</i>	3	92	5
<i>Males</i>	5	88	7
Throwing things at partner			
<i>Females</i>	3	94	2
<i>Males</i>	5	88	7
Slapping/punching on one or two occasions			
<i>Females</i>	3	93	4
<i>Males</i>	8	87	5
Slapping/punching regularly			
<i>Females</i>	1	96	2
<i>Males</i>	5	91	5
Forcing partner to have sex			
<i>Females</i>	2	95	3
<i>Males</i>	7	87	7

More definite views were held by the young women and the young men on how to classify the items '*not letting partner leave the house*' (88% and 87%); '*threatening to hit partner*' (93% and 86%); '*threatening to harm partners family*' (92% and 88%); '*throwing things at partner*' (94% and 88%); '*slapping/punching on one or two occasions*' (93% and 87%); '*slapping/punching regularly*' (96% and 91%) and; '*forcing partner to have sex*' (95% and 87%). It is notable, however, that young women were consistently more likely to consider each of the behaviours to be domestic abuse than young men. Males were more likely than young women to say they didn't know.

Of concern are the one in twenty young men who consider regularly slapping and punching a partner to be '*just something that happens*'. Perhaps even more worrying are the one in fourteen young men who consider forcing a partner to have sex' to be '*just something that happens*'.

All responses were counted to ascertain the proportion of young people that considered all items to be domestic abuse. One in fifty considered all 13 items to be domestic abuse, whilst one in twenty of the total sample consider none of the 13 items to be domestic abuse. Almost two fifths (39%) considered 11 of the items to be domestic abuse (the exceptions being the first two items in Table 25). One in 100 young people consider that all of the 13 items to be '*just something that happens*'.

Older respondents, of both genders, were more likely to consider more items to be domestic abuse, suggesting that that the range of actions and behaviours that are considered to be domestic abuse increases with age. This finding however needs also be read in the light of the fact that S4 students and above are much more likely than S3 students to have had access to educational and domestic abuse awareness—raising material in school.

## **2.10. Tolerance and acceptability of violence against women**

The research by Burton et al (1998) found that a high proportion of young people found violence against women to be acceptable behaviour. In general, research into young people's views on violence tends to show that violence, in all its forms, is viewed negatively, and often with abhorrence (see, for example, Batchelor et al, 2001; Stanko, 2003). Yet there are also certain circumstances and instances where interpersonal violence may be considered acceptable and, even, justifiable (Stanko, 2003; Worrall and Alder, 2004). Here, the situational context and the type of relationship that exists between those involved in the conflict are key and seem more significant than any belief concerning the general appropriateness of violence. Some studies have noted the tendency of young people to 'shift ground' as it were and move from an initial condemnation of violence to a more accepting, empathic stance that sees violence as justifiable or acceptable in that context (e.g., Burman, 2004). This is more evident in qualitative research encounters where there is an opportunity to develop and elaborate on particular scenarios.



Two questions (25a and 25b) attempted to tap into young people's attitudes towards violence, and in so doing drew heavily on the structure and content of questions used in the Australian study conducted by Indermauer and his colleagues (1999; 2001). In question 25a, respondents were provided with 11 situations 'in which some men may hit their female partner' and, for each, were asked to select a response from five options. In question 25b, respondents were given exactly the same list of 11 situations 'in which a women may hit her male partner' and also asked to select a response from the same six options. The options were:

- (a) given how she/he has behaved, he/she **has a right to hit** her/him
- (b) he's/she's got **good reason to hit** him/her, but it is not the best way of dealing with it
- (c) he/she shouldn't hit her/him, but you **can understand why** he/she might want to
- (d) he/she **just shouldn't hit** her/him
- (e) don't know

This is a key question, in that it relates to different acts of male to female, and female to male violence. Table 26 shows acceptability of male to female violence. As perhaps may be expected, there are some situations where violence is seen by most young people as largely unacceptable. These tended to be situations which involved arguments or unwillingness to do certain things, and which, conceivably, could occur in many relationships.

Table 26 shows that, overall, a relatively small proportion of young people responded that the man has a *right to hit* a woman under any of the circumstances presented. From Table 26, it can be seen, first, that the young males in the sample were more likely than young females to respond in this way to all circumstances presented (except the situation where the woman *threatens or tries to leave* where 1% of both genders gave this response) and; second, that the situation which had the highest proportion of young people responding that the man *has a right to hit* her was that where the woman *admits to sex with someone else* (3% of females and 8% of males chose option (a)), and that where the woman *hits him* (4% of females and 7% of males).

Table 26 also shows that females are consistently much more likely than males to select option (d) (*he just shouldn't hit her*) for all situations, regardless of whether they involved physical violence or not. In response to the situation where a female keeps nagging a male, one in five males selected option (c) (*he shouldn't hit her but can understand why*).

Looking at the 'don't know' responses, males appear to be less sure than females, in that 3-5% of females responded with a 'don't know', compared to 7-9% of males.

**Table 2.26. Young peoples acceptability/justification of male to female violence**

	<i>Has right to hit her %</i>	<i>Good reason %</i>	<i>Can understand %</i>	<i>Shouldn't hit her %</i>	<i>Don't know %</i>
Argues with him/refuses to do what he tells her					
<i>Females</i>	1	1	9	86	3
<i>Males</i>	3	3	12	76	6
Keeps nagging him					
<i>Females</i>	1	2	13	81	3
<i>Males</i>	2	3	21	69	6
Threatens or tries to leave him					
<i>Females</i>	1	4	20	73	3
<i>Males</i>	1	5	18	69	7
Hits him					
<i>Females</i>	4	14	47	30	5
<i>Males</i>	7	16	35	36	6
Throws something at him					
<i>Females</i>	2	15	42	37	4
<i>Males</i>	6	17	32	39	7
Admits having sex with another person					
<i>Female</i>	3	12	42	39	4
<i>Males</i>	8	14	33	37	7
Accuses him of being unfaithful, when he isn't					
<i>Females</i>	1	5	24	66	4
<i>Males</i>	2	6	23	61	7
Refuses to have sex with him					
<i>Females</i>	1	2	8	86	3
<i>Males</i>	2	4	11	75	7
Turns the children against him					
<i>Females</i>	2	8	36	51	5
<i>Males</i>	6	9	32	45	8
Gives all her attention to the children					
<i>Females</i>	1	2	9	84	4
<i>Males</i>	2	2	13	75	8
Humiliates him in front of his friends					
<i>Females</i>	2	2	28	64	5
<i>Males</i>	3	6	30	54	7

Table 27 shows the findings relating to female to male violence. There are some interesting gender differences, suggesting that female violence towards men is condoned more readily than male violence towards women. Most notably, the proportion of young people, of both genders, choosing option (a) she *has a right to hit* him is markedly higher than that when the gender roles are reversed. Twenty percent of males and 17 % of females believe that a woman has a right to hit a man if he hits her (this is compared to 4% and 7% respectively who chose this option in circumstances where a man hits a woman). Sixteen percent of males and 11% of females felt that a woman has a right to hit a man where he throws something at her; 11% of males and 10% of females felt that a woman has a right to hit a man where he admits to having sex with someone else.

**Table 2.27. Young peoples acceptability/justification of female to male violence**

	<i>Right to hit him %</i>	<i>Good reason %</i>	<i>Can understand %</i>	<i>Shouldn't hit him %</i>	<i>Don't know %</i>
Argues with her/refuses to do what he tells him					
<i>Females</i>	1	2	10	84	3
<i>Males</i>	2	3	14	74	8
Keeps nagging her					
<i>Females</i>	1	2	14	80	3
<i>Males</i>	1	4	17	71	7
Threatens or tries to leave her					
<i>Females</i>	2	5	18	72	3
<i>Males</i>	2	6	19	64	8
Hits her					
<i>Females</i>	17	24	34	23	3
<i>Males</i>	20	20	22	31	8
Throws something at her					
<i>Females</i>	11	21	33	31	4
<i>Males</i>	16	20	24	31	9
Admits having sex with another person					
<i>Female</i>	10	16	35	35	4
<i>Males</i>	11	17	29	36	8
Accuses her of being unfaithful, when she isn't					
<i>Females</i>	3	7	27	59	4
<i>Males</i>	4	9	26	52	9
Refuses to have sex with her					
<i>Females</i>	2	2	11	82	4
<i>Males</i>	3	5	13	70	9
Turns the children against her					
<i>Females</i>	4	8	34	50	5
<i>Males</i>	7	10	31	45	8
Gives all his attention to the children					
<i>Females</i>	2	2	15	77	4
<i>Males</i>	2	5	16	68	9
Humiliates her in front of her friends					
<i>Females</i>	4	4	28	60	4
<i>Males</i>	3	10	29	50	8

### 2.11. Need for information on domestic abuse

A set of questions explored the extent to which young people had been provided with information about domestic abuse within school, the nature of this information and the mode of delivery, and whether young people would welcome more information about the issues raised in the questionnaire.

Thirty five percent of young people said that they had been provided with information about domestic abuse in the school setting, with a higher proportion of males (40%) to females (34%) answering in this way. Forty percent claimed that they hadn't been given any information within schools (41% females and 38% males), and almost a quarter (23%) answered 'not sure' to the question.

Of those that answered that they had received information, half stated that this had been provided via a presentation or discussion in class led by a teacher. Nineteen percent said this was via a presentation or discussion led by someone from outside the school, and 20% stated that they had been provided with printed material on domestic abuse in school.

Looking at responses to this question by school year, Table 28 shows that it would appear that, in this sample, pupils in S3 are more likely to have had information on domestic abuse than older groups.

**Table 2.28. Provision of information about domestic abuse by school year**

<i>School year</i>	<i>Yes %</i>	<i>No %</i>	<i>Not Sure %</i>
S3	42	34	24
S4	29	46	25
S5	37	38	25
S6	41	39	20
Not in school	42	53	5

These findings were analysed by region, and it was found that pupils in the west of Scotland appear to be twice as likely as those in the east of Scotland to have been provided with information on domestic abuse within school. This findings needs to be treated with some caution as this could be due to the particular schools that participated in the study.

Young people tend not to readily disclose their experiences of violence domestic abuse or relationship violence — except perhaps to their friends and peers. Provision of appropriate information within a school setting is very important, as some young people may fail to access information about violence independently.

In response to the question, 'would you like to learn more about the issues raised in this questionnaire', a much higher proportion of females (59%) than males (34%) answered 'yes'. There is only a slight difference in terms of age here, in that slightly more of those under 16 years, (49%), than those aged 16 years or over (45%) responded in the affirmative.

Table 29 shows that, overall, there is a higher proportion of females who state that they would like more information on issues covered in the questionnaire, in all years, but particularly in S3 and S5. In comparison, males appear relatively disinterested in obtaining more information on domestic abuse, and this is more marked amongst older males in the later stages of schooling.

**Table 2.29 Need for More information, by school year**

<i>School Year</i>	<i>Yes %</i>	<i>No %</i>
S3		
Female	64	26
Male	43	57
S4		
Female	52	48
Male	35	65
S5		
Female	66	34
Male	29	71
S6		
Female	53	47
Male	25	75

### **3. Findings from the focus group discussions**

In order to increase the likelihood that participants would be inclined to be responsive, and to encourage open and wide-ranging discussion, the groups were purposively single sex. Six all female groups and six all male groups were formed, based on school year rather than absolute age, with four groups each of S3, S4 and S5/6 pupils. Numbers of young people participating in each group ranged from four to seven, with a total of 64 young people taking part in a focus group discussion. Within each group, all respondents were known to each other, and some were friends.

Older participants, and especially older females tended to be much more vocal in the group context, and also tended to draw on their own experiences in the group discussions. On the whole, the younger groups (those in S3 and, to some extent, S4) were far less forthcoming in the groups. The views of younger participants on domestic abuse seemed much more unformed than those of their older counterparts, but this is unsurprising.

Key themes of particular interest in the focus group discussions were young peoples' conceptualisations of violence, and the acceptability of different forms of violence; their definitions of domestic abuse; the perceived incidence and causes of domestic abuse; attitudes towards domestic abuse; and, attitudes towards coercive sex and the nature of consent in 'dating' relationships.

### **3.1. Conceptualising violence**

Like others researching violence from the perspective of young people, we were aware that the word 'violence' is very rarely used by young people in every day discourse. Rather, an array of terms are employed to describe a spectrum of unruly and violating behaviours from paradigmatic acts of interpersonal criminal violence, to threats, to verbal intimidation and aggressive posturing (see Burman et al, 2003). This was also evident in the groups discussed here. Violence is an evocative subject; as a term, 'violence' is at once both generic and highly contested. There are a range of competing discourses defining and conceptualising it, but using the word 'violence' also implies that we share a common understanding of what it means. 'Violence' nevertheless means different things to different people.

Young peoples' definitions and views about violence, are shaped by social and personal factors, and by their own lived experiences. In the different groups, young people put forward a diverse collection of behaviours, and practices as examples of violent behaviour, including extreme acts of interpersonal physical violence, sexual violence and also identifying emotional, and psychological factors, signalling a clear recognition of a wide range of behaviours, practices and orientations. Within the groups, young peoples' views on what sort of actions and behaviours 'counted' as violence were changeable and, at times, contradictory. Partly this is due to tensions and disputes between participants, the challenges which are mounted to individual or group-held views, debates over alternative view points, shifts in opinion, and reflection.

Most young people, of all age groups, voiced an outright condemnation of all forms of violence, denouncing it as 'pointless', 'stupid', 'disgusting', 'never worth it', a 'last resort' or a sign of mental defectiveness or immaturity. Some, however, used the relationship between those involved to justify violence in certain contexts. The context in which particular incidents take place was held to be highly significant for establishing whether violent actions are in themselves explicable and/or acceptable, as well as how serious the violence is perceived to be. A very important factor in establishing context appeared to be the relationship between those involved. So, for example, fights between siblings were largely discounted, and held to be 'not serious' and 'not real violence', although it was acknowledged by many young people to be an extremely common, and often fairly significantly physically harmful, form of interpersonal violence. In this example, the violence is 'explained away' by the relationship between those involved (siblings) and plenty of tentative (and not so tentative) explanations and/or justifications for such fights and violent behaviour.

For many young people, violence is read and 'understood' using the twin lenses of interpersonal relationship and social context. Despite violence being condemned at a general level, at the same time, there was also a strong tendency to offer some kind of explanation for it. Not unexpectedly, there were some gender differences within the justification narratives, and young males, in particular, seemed to be more readily able to construct reasons and justifications for violence. For young males, violence was about 'revenge' or 'protecting yourself'. For some, it was also a major means of constructing or maintaining their 'macho' identities. Young women, on the other hand, tended to justify the use of violence on more pragmatic grounds, in terms of self-defence, or survival, or the prevention of bullying.

*'You've got too stick up for yourself, especially if people pick on you. Otherwise there's no chance for you in some schools.'* **(S4 girl)**

### **3.2. Definitions of domestic abuse**

It is important to note that most young people tended to use the term 'domestic violence' in the focus groups, rather than 'domestic abuse', perhaps reinforcing the point that the language used by young people does not necessarily reflect prevailing discourse.

In common with the survey findings, there was a fairly wide variation in young peoples' definitions, although on the whole there was a recognition that domestic abuse was not restricted solely to acts of physical violence and all groups acknowledged that it can involve a range of behaviour, including psychological, emotional, financial abuse. Some young people gave memorable definitions, for example, one S5 male referred to domestic abuse as '*emotional slaughter*'

There was a tendency however to disregard verbal and forms of emotional abuse:

*'Everyone has a bit of a screaming match sometimes ... I don't think that is domestic abuse.'* **(S5 girl)**

*Putting your partner down verbally is putting your partner down. You could do a mocking, like a light hearted, oh yeah, whatever. That starts a fight, doesn't it? I don't know because sometimes I do that, and sometimes I do it in a more serious way. I don't see that as a domestic abuse type thing, because that is just what everybody does, I think'* **(S5 girl)**

*It would be quite bad if it was one person shouting at the other person, and they couldn't stand up for themselves. If they were both arguing, then I would see that as domestic abuse'* **(S5 boy)**

There was a clear acknowledgement in most groups of the cumulative nature of domestic abuse, with some recognition that domestic abuse often increases in severity, and that is very rarely a one-off event. That said, frequency of occurrence was also seen as a defining factor. As an S4 boy



said ' If it happens once and they have an apology and say 'I'm sorry' then it is alright , but if it is continuous and it goes on and on, well ....' .

There was some variation in the acceptability of abuse involving physical violence as these contrasting statements illustrate. Whereas one S5 girl said 'a wee hit here and there is not bad' another S4 girl said 'all violence should be taken seriously and not tolerated at all'.

### **3.3. Causes of domestic abuse**

Young people in the groups seemed at times preoccupied with identifying and discussing causes of domestic abuse, possibly as some means for understanding how, and under what circumstances, abuse can occur. Many young people referred to 'stress factors' and mental health issues as 'root' causes of domestic abuse, along with factors such as 'jealousy' (triggered through perceived unfaithfulness), 'paranoia', although more girls tended to eschew these sorts of factors in favour of more structural explanations referring to 'patriarchal society' and 'gender relations' and 'negative masculinity' as lying at the heart of domestic abuse. There was however a recognition, by some young people, that domestic abuse involves the abuse of power in social relations.

*'It s all about control isn't it?. Its about making someone do something that you want them to do and making them afraid not to do what you want them to do (S4 boy).*

Problems with self-esteem and self-confidence and insecurity (on the part of the perpetrator) were also commonly perceived as causal factors leading to domestic abuse. In some groups, the young people seemed engaged in a struggle in trying to align the assignation of responsibility and/or blame for the abuse with the need to show compassion and understanding of perpetrators.

*I don' t think it is their fault, really, I think whoever is actually abusing, doing the abusing, is ill. They must have something wrong with them. He is not in the right state of mind. So it is not really their fault (S5 girl)*

Interestingly, perhaps the most commonly cited factor precipitating domestic abuse was the consumption of alcohol, and often this was linked with drug use. Drink was identified by many young people as a major cause of all kinds of interpersonal violence.

Another set of perceived causes of domestic abuse cohered around the idea of the 'cycle of abuse' - 'if it happened to them when they were younger' (S3 boy) and 'if they grew up with it' (S4 girl). Beliefs about the intergenerational transmission of violence were fairly widespread, and there was overall a consensus in all groups that violence produces violence.

In line with the survey findings, there was also some suggestion of women-blaming with younger respondents, of both genders, expressing more of a willingness to believe that women were somehow responsible for the violence

and abuse perpetrated against them. This was also evident to some extent in the justification narratives, with a small number citing examples such as women 'stepping out of line', women being sexually unfaithful to partners, and women 'neglecting their responsibilities', as the following example illustrates:

*Some women, ken, they just dinnae care, they mebbe get drunk and don't look after their kids an' that. But just a few are like that , most women dinnae act like that, do they ? (S4 girl)*

Overall, there was a relatively high awareness of the deleterious and damaging effects of domestic abuse, both on an individual and a wider social level. Many young people referred to domestic abuse leading to depression, lack of self-esteem, and homelessness.

### **3.4. Perceived incidence of domestic abuse**

There was a fairly wide variation in perceived incidence of domestic abuse in the focus groups, from 'quite a lot' (S3 boy) to 'all the time' (S4 girls) to 'its quite rare' (S4 girls).

There was however, agreement across most young people that domestic abuse could (and did) occur 'in all types of homes' (S5 boy) and was not restricted to particular geographical areas or indeed to any particular family configuration or socio economic status of families.

*Domestic violence<sup>7</sup> is quite a private thing, I think. It is not openly talked about but it should be more because people then come out with what happened to them. It could just be happening next door and you don't know about it. It should be talked about more (S6 girl).*

*Sometimes people just put up with it. They don't report it. They just think it is not really domestic violence, it is just maybe that 'my husband is a wee bit stressed at work' or just something not very important. They are just going to think 'leave it and it won't happen again', but it happens again and they leave it again (S5 girl).*

Young people cited their main sources of information about domestic abuse to come from the media (especially television programmes and films). Older females however were more likely to cite magazines as a key source of information. This highlights the importance of the media as a source of information in young peoples lives. Indeed, several young people thought that media campaigns were the most powerful forms of communication for issues which are pertinent to young peoples' lives, from anti-smoking and drinking adverts to campaigns which highlight violence against women.

A relatively small number of young people referred to school-based initiatives or class-room discussions as sources of information about domestic abuse.

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<sup>7</sup> The young people in the focus groups tended to use the term 'domestic violence'

### 3.5. Attitudes towards violence against women

It is important to note that the majority of young people expressed a very low tolerance towards violence, at a conceptual level. That said, however, it became evident that as discussion in the groups became more focused some young people began to display a higher tolerance for violence against women that occurred within certain contexts, in particular when the woman, through her actions (or inaction) may be perceived as having 'pushed the man too far'. In about a third of the groups, participants began to offer tentative explanations to justify this kind of violence. There was a worrying tendency amongst young people to position and portray the woman as a 'deserving victim'. It is important to note that this was not restricted to male violence against women, but was also evident in young peoples' attitudes concerning violence in general. The idea of the provocative and therefore 'deserving victim' was a prevalent view.

The following is taken from a group discussion involving girls in S5 and S6.

*1<sup>st</sup> girl: I think women tend to wind men up. They make them really angry and they can't control their temper.*

*Researcher: How will a woman wind a man up?*

*2<sup>nd</sup> girl: Just saying things that she knows is going to get him annoyed, maybe just for a joke. Just keep on going. Arguing and not letting the point go ....*

*3<sup>rd</sup> girl: ..... Constant nagging and that. They know how far to go when they wind 'em up. They know the breaking point.*

### 3.6. Relationships

In common with other studies (e.g. DeKeseredy & Schwartz, 1998; O'Connor, 1992) young people in this study reported experiencing and inflicting violence and abuse in the context of their own relationships. There were also a small number of young men surveyed who reported forcing their girlfriend to have sex. Focus group discussion on the issues of consensual and coercive sex yielded a range of views on the place of coercion within the context of an intimate relationship. For some young women, pressure to have sex was identified as 'a bit of a myth'

*Its not like, noticeable. Its not like I have never had any of my friends saying to me 'you should have sex' or 'you should do it before you are sixteen. I've never had that. Most of the people that I know just end up having sex when they are in a relationship with someone that they want to be with. (S4 girl)*

*I wouldn't know what it would be like to be in that position. I would think that it would be totally unacceptable and I think I would have the confidence to say no.' (S5 girl)*

For many young people, however, coercive sex is normalised, as one girl put it 'it happens all the time ... its just something you have to deal with'. Several of the older girls spoke about being put under pressure to participate in sexual

acts with boys they were going out with, and also by boys with whom they were not going out with, when they really did not want to, either because they were scared or embarrassed or were simply unprepared. A small proportion said that such pressure was pretty much continuous and hard to resist and normalised within peer groups. Whilst refusing boys who were 'friends' or peers was identified as relatively easy to deal with for most girls, refusing a boyfriend is regarded as much more problematic, primarily because of the perceived risk of losing him to another, more willing partner.

*Guys do force girls. He could force her, not through physical means, but he could force her through saying at 'if you don't have sex with me I am going to chuck you ' or 'if you don't have sex with me I am going to go and tell everybody in your class that you are frigid (S4 girl)*

For young men, peer pressure is also ever-present.

*'People say you're sad if you have not had sex ' (S4 boy)*

*' Friends can push you into it, having sex. You might not want to, and you may feel bad about it, and you might get a girl pregnant or something .....but you have to try to ... (S4 boy)*

*It just becomes more of a thing when you get older, I guess. More and more and more people are doing it ... A lot of people do it at our age too, but not as much. I think people understand more at this age. If a guy wanted to, but the girl didn't, most people would understand because you are not at the legal age or whatever, but when you get older you are and you would kind of expect them to do it, I think (S3 boy)*

*Even folk who are strong willed and are sexually comfortable, and they do go out and do it , people are just saying they are just doing it because they want to be seen in a certain way, and it is just not for their own reasons (S5 girl).*

## 4. Conclusion

Young peoples' attitudes towards violence and domestic abuse are complex, and often unpredictable. They are rarely clear cut and sometimes contradictory. Whilst, in a general sense, most young people view violence and abuse negatively, it is clear that, for some types of violence and abuse, in some situations, they consider it acceptable and, perhaps, justifiable. This is not so dissimilar to the findings of Burton et al (1998) and others that have researched young peoples' views about violence (e.g. Barter and Renolds, 2003; Burman, 2004; Mullender et al, 2002). Most young people know that violence and abuse is unacceptable. However, some young men and young women do still think that it is acceptable to be violent towards a woman under certain circumstances, or force her to have sex.

Both the questionnaire findings and the focus group discussions with young people show that some forms of violence can be discursively constructed as 'normal' (e.g. physical fights between those in intimate relationships) or 'natural' (e.g. fights between siblings) or 'acceptable' (e.g. hitting a nagging

wife) or 'justifiable' (e.g. hitting a partner who has slept with someone else), rather than harmful or abusive. Considered in these terms, it is not difficult to see how these forms of behaviour can get overlooked or tolerated.

Despite improvements in the extent of public awareness and understanding in Scotland, there remains some misunderstanding amongst young people of the nature of domestic abuse, and in particular the processes of victimisation. The research has identified that some young people continue to consider that women and girls provoke violence and abuse through their own actions, or inactions, and could be to blame for the violence that they experience at the hands of men. The focus group discussions allowed the issue of acceptability of violence to be explored in more detail, showing that some young people display a higher tolerance for violence against women that occurs within certain contexts, in particular when the woman, through her actions (or inaction) may be perceived as having 'pushed the man too far' or transgressing rigid and stereotypical gender roles. Rather depressingly, the prevalence of the view of the 'deserving victim' is in common with the earlier findings of Burton et al (1998). This suggests that relatively little has changed in this regard since that earlier study.

Peer pressure to engage in sexual relations appears to be fairly common place amongst young people, particularly for older girls. In addition to the need for more research to be undertaken on the patterns and dynamics of victimisation in relation to sexual coercion of young women, the prevalence of such pressure also suggests the need for more attention to be paid to the risks and effects of sexual coercion, and the development of more targeted intervention and awareness-raising in this area.

More encouragingly, there was evidence in this research that many young people acknowledge domestic abuse to be a very pervasive problem, affecting all kinds of households, across all cultures, and incomes. On the whole, the research also found evidence of a more informed view amongst young people of the many types of violence and abuse that that can be characterised as domestic abuse, including forms of financial, emotional, sexual, physical and psychological abuse. On the whole, this research found less tolerance of gendered violence than was evidenced in the earlier study by Burton et al (1998), and in this regard, attitudes seemed to have improved.

If we are to develop age and gender specific strategies and interventions with the aim of challenging gender stereotypes and the normalisation of violence against women, and if we are committed to the delivery of public safety, then we need to take seriously the views and attitudes of young people. The more knowledge and information that is gathered about violence, the better we are able to contribute to its minimisation in every day life. After all, violence is preventable. Young people are one of society's best resources. It is essential that a dynamic approach is adopted in the development of effective preventive work, utilising material and resources that draw on the experiences and views of young people. Consulting with, and listening to, young people, carefully and systematically, with attention to issues of gender, and diversity, remains important for the prevention of the problem of domestic abuse.

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